

Ensign

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Isaiah, by Ernest Meissonier

Elder Randall K. Bennett of the Seventy teaches that we should pay careful attention when apostles and prophets quote from or bear witness of the words of other apostles and prophets (see page 18 of this issue). Many modern and ancient prophets have testified of the truth of Isaiah's words, including Nephi (see 1 Nephi 15:20), Jacob (see 2 Nephi 6:4), and Abinadi (see Mosiah 14).

Isaiah's words, however, have an even greater advocate. Of the prophet Isaiah, the Savior Himself told the righteous Nephites, "Great are the words of Isaiah." He admonished them to "search these things" and then emphasized, "A commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently" (3 Nephi 23:1).

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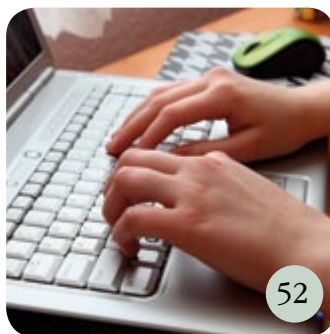
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A MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
March 2012 Volume 42 • Number 3

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Dieter F. Uchtdorf

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some of which is available only
online.

READ DAUGHTERS IN MY KINGDOM ONLINE

The First Presidency has encouraged
members to study *Daughters in My
Kingdom: The History and Work of
Relief Society* and allow its timeless
truths and inspiring examples to
influence their lives. Enjoy it online
at <http://lds.org/relief-society/daughters-in-my-kingdom/manual>.

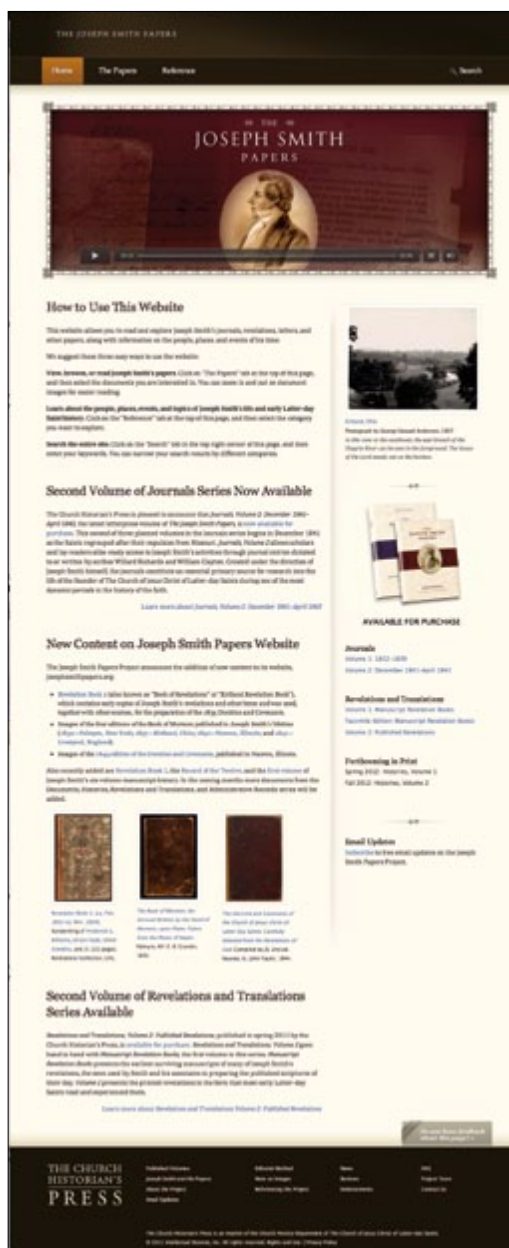
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**By President
Dieter F. Uchtdorf**

Second Counselor in the
First Presidency



WHY DO WE NEED Prophets?

Because Heavenly Father loves His children, He has not left them to walk through this mortal life without direction and guidance. The teachings of our Heavenly Father are not the ordinary, predictable, run-of-the-mill kind you can pick up in paperback at the local bookstore. They are the wisdom of an all-powerful, all-knowing celestial Being who loves His children. Encompassed in His words is the secret of the ages—the key to happiness in this life and in the world to come.

Heavenly Father reveals this wisdom to His children on earth through His servants the prophets (see Amos 3:7). From the days of Adam, God has spoken to His children through appointed oracles who are charged with revealing His will and counsel to others. Prophets are inspired teachers and are always special witnesses of Jesus Christ (see D&C 107:23). Prophets speak not only to the people of their time, but they also speak to people throughout all time. Their voices echo through the centuries as a testament of God's will to His children.

Today is not different from ages past. The Lord does not love the people of our day any less than in past times. One of the glorious messages of the Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ is that God continues to speak to His



children! He is not hidden in the heavens but speaks today as He did in ancient days.

Much of what the Lord reveals to His prophets is intended to prevent sorrow for us as individuals and as societies. When God speaks, He does so to teach, inspire, refine, and warn His children. When individuals and societies ignore their Heavenly Father's instructions, they do so at the risk of trial, torment, and toil.

God loves all His children. That is why He pleads so earnestly with us through His prophets. Just as we want what is best for our loved ones, Heavenly Father wants what is best for us. That is why His instructions are so crucial and sometimes so urgent. That is why He has not abandoned us today but continues to reveal His will to us through His prophets. Our fate and the fate of our world hinge on our hearing and heeding the revealed word of God to His children.

God's priceless instructions to humankind are found in the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. In addition, the Lord speaks to us through His servants, as He will again at the upcoming general conference.

To all who wonder if such a thing can be—who might



ask, “Is it possible that God speaks to us today?”—with all my heart I invite you to “come and see” (John 1:46). Read the word of God as found in the scriptures. Listen to general conference with an ear willing to hear the voice of God given through His latter-day prophets. Come, hear, and see with your heart! For if you seek “with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, [God] will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 10:4). By and through this power, I know that Jesus Christ lives and directs His Church through a living prophet, even President Thomas S. Monson.

Brothers and sisters, God does speak to us today. And He desires that all His children listen to and heed His voice. As we do so, the Lord will bless and uphold us greatly, both in this life and through the worlds to come. ■

PROPHETS AND APOSTLES SPEAK TODAY

The divine work of the prophets and apostles never ceases. Between general conferences, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles continue to teach and minister to the world. “Prophets and Apostles Speak Today,” a section of LDS.org, documents the ongoing ministry of these Church leaders with videos, photos, and articles (available in several languages).

Learn from them about their ministry. Listen to and read their testimonies of the Savior. View and read about their messages of love and hope to members wherever they bear witness, whether at Church headquarters in Salt Lake City or as they fulfill assignments throughout the world.

Visit lds.org/study/prophets-speak-today to learn more about prophets and apostles speaking today.

YOUTH

Led by a Living Prophet

By Christy Ripa

When I was 16, I had the opportunity to attend general conference in person for the first time. My family was living in western Oregon, USA, and we drove to Utah to attend conference and to drop off my older brother at the missionary training center.

I went to the conference with a desire to be taught by the Holy Ghost. As a result, I received a manifestation from the Spirit that I probably would

not have received had I not prepared myself.

During one of the sessions, everyone stood and sang the congregational hymn, "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah." As we sang, I had the distinct impression to look around the Conference Center. I did and was struck by the power of the unity of the thousands of people there as we all raised our voices in praise to God.

Then I had an experience where I felt like Nephi when he saw the vision of the tree of life, for the Spirit told me, "Look" (see 1 Nephi 11–14). I looked at President Thomas S. Monson and felt that the unity of the Church existed because we are led by a living prophet. Through the witness of the Holy Spirit, I know President Monson is the true prophet for our day, and I know that Jesus Christ leads this Church through him.

CHILDREN



Noah
Go right



Moses
Go down



Mormon
Go left



Moroni
Go left



John the Baptist
Go right



Peter
Go right



Joseph Smith
Go up

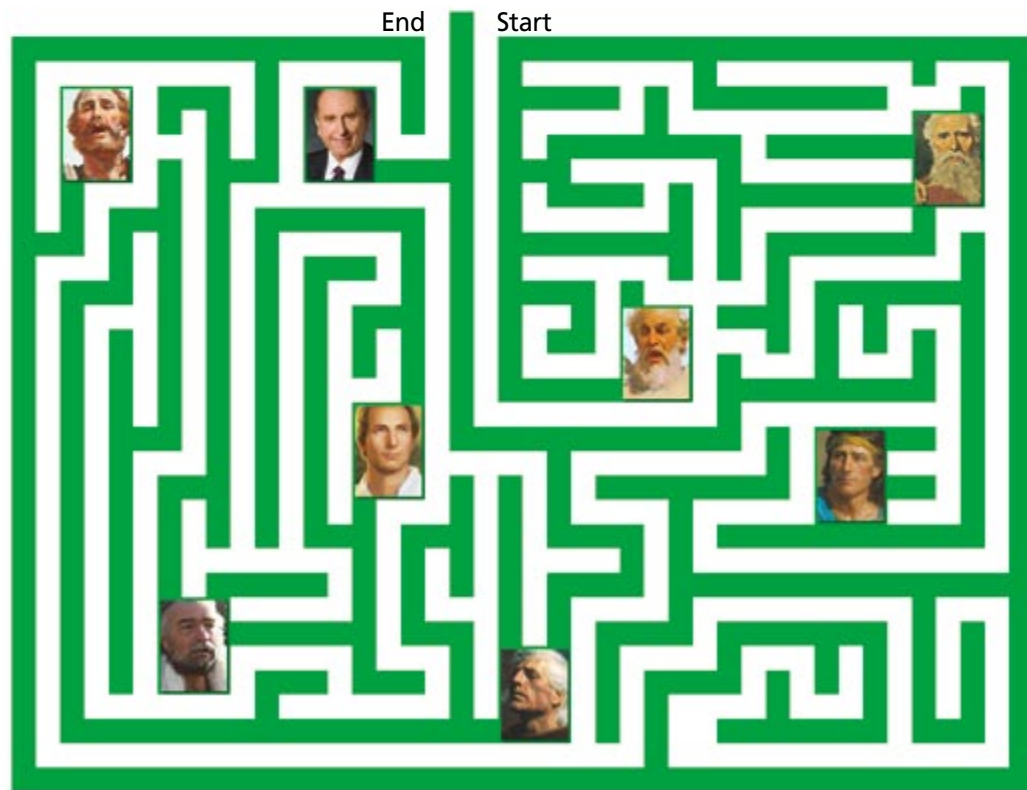


President Thomas S. Monson
Go up

Following the Prophet Makes Me Happy

Heavenly Father has given us prophets to guide us and teach us so we can be happy.

Find your way through the maze by following the instructions provided by each prophet. Match each picture in the maze with the one from the list above that tells you which way to go.



FROM LEFT: DETAIL FROM NOAH'S PREACHING SCORDED, BY HARRY ANDERSON © IRI; MOSES THE LAWGIVER, BY TED HENNINGER © IRI; DETAIL FROM MORMON ABRIDGING THE PLATES AND MORONI BURYING THE PLATES, BY TOM LOVELL © IRI; DETAIL FROM PREPARE YE THE WAY, BY HARRY ANDERSON © PACIFIC PRESS PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION, MAY NOT BE COPIED; DETAIL FROM HE IS RISEN, BY DAN BURR; DETAIL FROM PROPHET OF THE LORD, BY DAVID UNDSLEY, MAY NOT BE COPIED

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.



Faith, Family, Relief

Daughters in My Kingdom

We are daughters of our Father in Heaven. He knows us, loves us, and has a plan for us. Part of that plan includes coming to earth to learn to choose good over evil. When we choose to keep God's commandments, we honor Him and acknowledge our identity as daughters of God. Relief Society helps us remember this divine heritage.

Relief Society and its history strengthen and support us. Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president, said: "As daughters of God, you are preparing for eternal designations, and each of you has a female identity, nature, and responsibility. The success of families, communities, this Church, and the precious plan of salvation is dependent on your faithfulness. . . . [Our Heavenly Father] intended Relief Society to help build His people and prepare them for the blessings of the temple. He established [Relief Society] to align His daughters with His work and to enlist their help in building His kingdom and strengthening the homes of Zion."¹

Our Father in Heaven has given us specific work to help build His Kingdom. He has also blessed us with the spiritual gifts we need to accomplish this specific work. Through Relief Society, we have opportunities to use our gifts to strengthen families, help those in need, and learn how to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said



of discipleship: "By patiently walking in the path of discipleship, we demonstrate to ourselves the measure of our faith and our willingness to accept God's will rather than ours."²

Let us remember we are daughters of God and strive to live as His disciples. As we do so, we will help build God's kingdom here on earth and become worthy to return to His presence.

From the Scriptures

Zechariah 2:10; Doctrine and Covenants 25:1, 10, 16; 138:38–39, 56; "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" (*Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129)

What Can I Do?

1. How can I help my sisters reach their potential as daughters of God?
2. How can I apply in my life the counsel and warnings given to women in Doctrine and Covenants 25?

From Our History

On April 28, 1842, the Prophet Joseph Smith said to the sisters in Relief Society: "You are now placed in a situation in which you can act according to those sympathies which God has planted in [you]. . . . If you live up to your privileges, the angels cannot be restrained from being your associates."³

Recognizing the power of Relief Society to serve others and to help individuals increase in faith, Zina D. H. Young, third Relief Society general president, promised the sisters in 1893, "If you will dig in the depths of your own hearts you will find, with the aid of the Spirit of the Lord, the pearl of great price, the testimony of this work."⁴

NOTES

1. Julie B. Beck, "Daughters in My Kingdom": The History and Work of Relief Society," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 112, 114.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "The Way of the Disciple," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2009, 76.
3. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 4:605.
4. Zina D. H. Young, "How I Gained My Testimony of the Truth," *Young Woman's Journal*, Apr. 1893, 319.

WE SUSTAIN OUR Leaders

Latter-day Saints believe that Jesus Christ Himself is the head of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He calls, through inspiration, prophets and apostles to lead His Church. The Lord has given these leaders authority to call others to serve in the Church, such as members of the Seventy. Apostles and Seventy extend callings to stake presidents, who call bishops, who call members to serve in various positions in their wards. Thus priesthood authority and revelation guide Church callings from the Churchwide level to local congregations.

We have an opportunity to sustain—support, help, pray for—each of these people in their callings. We indicate our willingness to do so by raising our right hands when their names are read to us in general conference, stake conference, ward or branch conference, or sacrament meeting. Raising our hands is a sign to us, to them, and to the Lord that we will sustain them.

Raising our hands to sustain someone is not like voting that person into

office. The person has already been called by the Lord to serve in that calling by one who has the priesthood authority to extend such a calling. Our sustaining is a vote of confidence in the person, because we recognize that he or she has been called of God through priesthood leaders we sustain.

We can sustain the General

Authorities and our local leaders and officers in several ways:

- By our faith and prayers in their behalf.
- By following their counsel.
- By helping when they ask us.
- By accepting callings they extend to us.

Sustaining our leaders is evidence of our goodwill, faith, and fellowship. ■



BELOW: PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN LUKE; RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH BY LESLIE NILSSON; PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY CRAIG DIMOND AND WELDEN C. ANDERSEN

1. We sustain the General Authorities of the Church.



2. We can show, by raising our hands, that we will sustain our local leaders and others who are called to serve us.



4. We sustain our leaders by accepting callings, for callings are extended to us "by those who are in authority" (Articles of Faith 1:5).



3. We sustain our leaders by following their counsel.



5. We sustain our leaders by praying for them (see D&C 107:22).



"You will all abide the pledge you have given to the Lord and to one another by the uplifted hand, that you all mean to uphold and sustain these officers in all these various organizations, that . . . you will do everything you can to help them, to benefit them, bless them, and encourage them in the good work in which they are engaged."

President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918), *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 218–19.

For more information, see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), chapter 24; and *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith* (2011), chapter 6.



How do we guide our children without becoming helicopter parents?



HELPING WITHOUT HOVERING

Five ways to help your children become independent.

By Mark D. Ogletree

There are not many things more rewarding than raising righteous and successful children. At the same time, few things in life are as taxing and demanding as being a good parent. Years ago, President James E. Faust (1920–2007) declared, “In my opinion, the teaching, rearing, and training of children requires more intelligence, intuitive understanding, humility, strength, wisdom, spirituality, perseverance, and hard work than any other challenge we might have in life.”¹

One of the challenges facing parents today is a tendency to hover over their children and become overprotective to the point of being so involved that children can’t function or make decisions for themselves. Such overparenting is often referred to in today’s culture as “helicopter parenting.”

Such parents have wonderful intentions. However, by constantly hovering over their children, they send the message that they have little faith that their son or daughter can make it through the day without their aid. Helicopter parents may even interfere in the lives of their adult children, negotiating salaries for their child’s first job and coming to his or her defense against employers, difficult neighbors, or seemingly unfair Church leaders. These parents cushion their children’s lives as they make sure that their problems are solved and that pain, harsh reality, and the natural consequences of living in a fallen world are minimized.

This parenting style competes with the gospel teaching that during our mortal probation we will and must face trials, heartaches, and struggles. These challenges can serve to develop our character, forge our identity, strengthen our faith, and expand our commitment to the Savior. Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (1915–1985) explained that “life never was intended to be easy. It is a probationary estate in which we are tested physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually.”²

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve adds, “Salvation is not a cheap experience.” That is why, Elder Holland believes, the work of salvation “is supposed to require some effort, something from the depths of our soul.”³

So how do we learn to protect our children from harm without becoming helicopter parents? Here are five suggestions you might consider.

1. Look for opportunities to allow your children to do things for themselves, even if it means more work for you.

I am aware of a wonderful family of faithful Church members. The mother and father are devoted, loving parents. However, their teenage children are not allowed to pour their own juice or make their own breakfast. Their parents do those things for them. The mother has explained that this is her way of maintaining control of “her kitchen” and keeping it clean.

Of course cleanliness and order in the home are important. But perhaps some extra chaos and clutter caused by amateur chefs in the kitchen is worth it if it means your children are learning how to cook and clean up after themselves. Allowing and even expecting children to do things on their own prepares them to live independently in the future. Parents should try to not do things for their children that they can do for themselves.

President Boyd K. Packer has written, “I think one of the major mistakes in teaching children is the tendency for parents to be bothered when children want to participate and to learn something. . . . Our children were allowed to help when they were little, urged to help when they grew a little older, and sometimes ordered to help when they were teenagers. They have, accordingly, learned to do many things for themselves, and very expertly.”⁴

2. Teach your children to work.

Children who learn to work enjoy high levels of self-esteem and confidence. They discover that the world does not revolve around them and that they are happier when they focus on the needs of others. Elder D. Todd Christofferson has explained that work can even help our children negotiate some of life’s pain and discouragement: “By work we sustain and enrich life. It enables us to survive the disappointments and tragedies of the mortal experience. Hard-earned achievement brings a sense of self-worth. Work builds and refines character [and] creates beauty.”⁵

If our children learn to appreciate work while they are young, then they will be better prepared when they are older to provide for themselves, shoulder their responsibilities in their own future families, and serve in the Church.

3. Teach your children that choices have consequences.

Children need to understand that they cannot simply do whatever they want and then have things work out exactly how they want. Consider giving your children clear communication about rules in your home and what will

happen if those rules are disobeyed—and then consistently follow through with the consequences when necessary.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve has counseled, “Just as God has bestowed some gifts on all of His mortal children without requiring their personal obedience to His laws, parents provide many benefits like housing and food even if their children are not in total harmony with all parental requirements. But, following the example of an all-wise and loving Heavenly Father who has given laws and commandments for the benefit of His children, wise parents condition some parental gifts on obedience.”⁶

If we attempt to mitigate or erase the consequences of our children’s choices, our children may have a difficult time understanding and following divine laws.

4. Stand up and be courageous.

Even as we limit how much we interfere in our children’s lives, we should be careful that we do not become too permissive. Parents today may feel more peer pressure as adults than they ever did as youth. Children are often quick to point out what “other parents” allow their children to do. Teens may challenge their parents on any number of issues, including whom to date, when to date, how late to stay out, whether or not sleepovers should be allowed, and what movies are appropriate. Many parents cave in to their children’s wishes, so those who stand up for the right and follow prophetic counsel may find themselves in the minority.

Elder Larry R. Lawrence of the Seventy recently spoke about the need for courageous parenting. He warned parents about some of the moral lapses that can take place when children spend the night at friends’ homes.⁷ Many parents today would love to put an end to sleepovers but are not willing to battle their children over the issue. Elder Lawrence explained in his talk that parents need to be more concerned with following the Lord than pacifying their children: “What the world really needs is courageous parenting from mothers and fathers who are not afraid to speak up and take a stand.”⁸

Elder Lawrence continued, “It takes courage to gather children from whatever they’re doing and kneel together as a family. It takes courage to turn off the television and the computer and to guide your family through the pages of the scriptures every day. It takes courage to turn down other invitations on Monday night so that you can reserve that evening for your family. It takes courage and willpower to avoid overscheduling so that your family can be home for dinner.”⁹

5. Allow your children to have heartaches and setbacks.

All people will face disappointments and unpleasant experiences at some point in their lives. If children can learn how to handle less-than-ideal situations when they are young, they will be more resilient and resourceful as adults. Help your children to see that they can develop creative solutions for their problems instead of ignoring or avoiding them. For example, if a teenage son or daughter doesn’t like a certain school class, find out the real reasons why. Then consider discussing with your child ways to improve the circumstances before using the last resort of transferring out of the class. In this way you help your child resolve concerns and find solutions that will magnify his or her knowledge and abilities.

Good parenting sometimes means allowing our children to fail and to deal with some heartbreaking



Allowing children to do things on their own prepares them to live independently in the future.

experiences. President Thomas S. Monson reminds us that “life was never intended to consist of a glut of luxury, be an easy course, or filled only with success. There are those games which we lose, those races in which we finish last, and those promotions which never come. Such experiences provide an opportunity for us to show our determination and to rise above disappointment.”¹⁰

As parents help their children make righteous decisions by letting them experience natural consequences, they will foster strong, independent, spiritually minded leaders in the kingdom. It takes courage, faith, spiritual sensitivity, patience, and persistence, but the rewards are eternally worth it. ■

For more on helping your children cope with difficulty, see Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin’s talk “Come What May, and Love It,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 26.

NOTES

1. James E. Faust, “The Greatest Challenge in the World—Good Parenting,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 33.
2. Bruce R. McConkie, “The Dead Who Die in the Lord,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 106.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Missionary Work and the Atonement,” *Liahona*, Oct. 2001, 31–32; *Ensign*, Mar. 2001, 15.
4. Boyd K. Packer, *Teach Ye Diligently* (1975), 114, 115.
5. D. Todd Christofferson, “Reflections on a Consecrated Life,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 17.
6. Dallin H. Oaks, “Love and Law,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 28.
7. See Larry R. Lawrence, “Courageous Parenting,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 98.
8. Larry R. Lawrence, “Courageous Parenting,” 98.
9. Larry R. Lawrence, “Courageous Parenting,” 100.
10. Thomas S. Monson, “Go For It!” *Ensign*, May 1989, 44.

MUCH MORE THAN A Nursery Manual

How parents are using Behold Your Little Ones to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ to their families.

Parents are using the nursery manual to teach simple gospel truths to children like Mitch, who learned that praying can help him not be afraid of thunderstorms.

As all parents know, raising children is a challenge. Parents want to follow the Lord's direction to "teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord" (D&C 68:28), but many struggle to know *how* to teach children the gospel in ways that are engaging and clear. Some parents wonder how to interest little children who have short attention spans, wiggly bodies, and a limited vocabulary. Many parents of children with intellectual disabilities or physical challenges hunger to find ways to help their children understand the gospel.

Behold Your Little Ones helps provide a solution. In addition to being the course of study for nursery-age children, the manual is designed for families to use at home. In the following stories, parents testify how using the nursery manual helped them teach their children with confidence, simplicity, and power.

Teaching Family Home Evening

One Sunday Elizabeth Fewkes realized that her 18-month-old daughter could

identify colors, animals, and famous animated characters, but she did not recognize pictures of the Savior. "It was a wake-up call for me," Elizabeth says. "I hadn't given priority to teaching her the most essential knowledge—the gospel of Jesus Christ. I had mistakenly thought she was too young to understand, too young to benefit from family home evening."

Although Elizabeth now recognized what she needed to do, she was unsure how to do it. She and her husband, Gary, decided to try using *Behold Your Little Ones* for family home evening lessons. They quickly discovered its value. "It became my inspiration and guide on how to teach our daughter," Elizabeth says. Two weeks after a lesson about Jesus, their daughter noticed a replica of the *Christus* statue and ran up to it. She pointed and said excitedly, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!"

"We are grateful for the inspired *Behold Your Little Ones* manual," Elizabeth says. "It has helped us fulfill a sacred responsibility of parenthood—teaching our daughter the gospel."





A MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE

"Parents, look into the eyes of your young children—their minds are receptive. They are ready to learn pure and simple gospel truths. Don't wait; teach them now! *Behold Your Little Ones* is a valuable resource to assist you.

"As I helped my four-year-old grandson prepare a family home evening from *Behold Your Little Ones*, he was thrilled with his efforts and the whole family benefited. Next to the scriptures, I consider this manual the most valuable resource for young families. I do hope every family will use it."

Rosemary M. Wixom,
Primary general president

Helping Converts, Uniting Families

Brian and Rebecca Garcia initially began using *Behold Your Little Ones* to teach their nursery-age sons during family home evening. However, the family soon discovered that these simple lessons were meaningful to older family members as well.

Brian joined the Church in 2006 with his 12-year-old daughter, Melissa, just a few months before he married Rebecca. Even now after being members for a few years, the family finds that the manual's focus on basics reinforces their understanding of gospel principles. For instance, after one family home evening lesson on prayer, the Garcias set a goal to pray together each evening. This habit brought increased peace and unity to their home.

Melissa, now an older teen, sees the nursery manual as a source for concise, clear doctrine. She uses it as the basis for her family home evening lessons and adds insights she has gained in seminary. The manual has increased her confidence in sharing the gospel, preparing her for future teaching opportunities.

"The manual has helped unite our family," says Rebecca, "as we learn and reinforce the beautifully simple truths of the gospel."

Helping Children with Disabilities

Russell and Leta-Kaye Hansen have been using *Behold Your Little Ones* with their children—ages one, three, and four—for two years. The family has found that the manual is especially helpful in teaching four-year-old Mitch, who has autism.

When Russell and Leta-Kaye began using the manual in family home evening, they couldn't tell how much Mitch comprehended. "One Monday night when Mitch was three,"

Leta-Kaye says, "skimming through the nursery manual, I found a picture I knew Mitch would recognize—a mother and son in reverent prayer.¹ Warmth filled my heart when I saw that the accompanying story was about how the Holy Ghost helped a small boy who was afraid of a thunderstorm."

At this time a series of thunderstorms had been sweeping through the area, and Mitch was often scared. "Because his autism makes him extremely sensitive to noise, Mitch was terrified of thunder," Leta-Kaye continues. "A single dark cloud was enough to send him cowering under the kitchen table. Even when we prayed with him, the comfort didn't last beyond the embrace."

As Leta-Kaye taught about how the Holy Ghost helps us and related the story about the boy and the thunderstorm, Mitch was riveted, Leta-Kaye says. "He insisted on holding the picture, and he patted the faces rhythmically. Here was a tangible representation of his own bitter struggle. In the days that followed, he frequently requested to hold the picture. Instead of darting immediately under the table when the rain began to fall, he would come to us, indicating with folded arms his desire to pray. We saw peace descend upon him even in the midst of the storm."

Leta-Kaye says that even a year later, every time they brought out the nursery manual, Mitch turned to the picture of the boy praying with his mom and "fervently related its story in his painstaking, simple language," sharing this heartfelt testimony with his mom: "Holy. Ghost. Jesus. Christ. Help. Mitch. No. Scares. Wind. Thunder."

"The beautiful, concise lessons help us teach Mitch and his sisters the gospel in a way they can understand," Leta-Kaye says.

“The manual has helped unite our family,” says Rebecca Garcia, “as we learn and reinforce the beautifully simple truths of the gospel.”



“These lessons bring the peace of the Spirit to our home.”

Teaching Children to Recognize the Spirit

Edgar and Olivia Cobán struggled to find a solution for their four-year-old son’s behavior problems in church. “Though our son, Ruben, had been in Primary for a year and a half,” Olivia says, “he didn’t enjoy attending and often misbehaved. I was concerned by his teachers’ reports and continually tried to remedy his behavior.”

One day as Olivia prayed for help, she received an answer. “I understood my focus had been all wrong,” she says. “I had been so concerned with fixing my son’s behavior that I had missed the main reason I wanted him to attend church—to develop a testimony of the gospel through the witness of the Holy Ghost.” Olivia realized that her priority needed to be helping Ruben feel

the Spirit. Though the family faithfully held family home evenings and scripture study, she felt Ruben needed individual gospel instruction. She decided to teach him at home, one on one. “I wanted to focus on helping him to feel the Spirit and to have a positive experience with learning the gospel,” Olivia says.

She taught him a lesson from *Behold Your Little Ones* once a week for several months. “Following the nursery manual made it easy for me,” Olivia says. “The activities, songs, pictures, and stories easily held Ruben’s attention, and he loved his ‘at-home Primary.’ We had tender experiences as I shared my testimony with him on his level.”

Ruben’s behavior at church improved, and he now looks forward to attending Primary each week. ■

NOTE

1. *Behold Your Little Ones*, 30.

To order Behold Your Little Ones for your family, go to store.lds.org. The manual, including pictures and activity pages, can be accessed online as well at lds.org/manual/primary. You can also order other excellent resources for teaching children from the store, including the Gospel Art Book, The Friend magazine, the illustrated scripture stories, and the Family Home Evening Resource Book.

By Elder
Randall K. Bennett
Of the Seventy



Follow THE PROPHET

I met the angel who would become my wife at an institute party the second night I was home from my mission. Although Shelley and I grew up in Canada several hundred miles apart and had never met before, we got to know each other well over the following months. When I had proposed three times and been turned down because she was committed to serving a mission, she finally accepted my proposal after I promised her that we would serve missions together after raising a family. She accepted an engagement ring on December 22, 1976.

But in the days that followed, both of us felt unsettled—not about marrying each other but about the ring. Let me explain.


A Decision to Follow the Prophet

In the weeks leading up to our engagement, Shelley and I had spent significant time talking about how we wanted to raise our family and what we wanted our marriage to be like. One of the things at the center of that discussion was our determination to always follow the prophet.

Two months before we were engaged, we listened to lots of talks at the October 1976 general conference reinforcing the principles of self-reliance. This was a topic that

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) and others had been consistently teaching for several years. Both Shelley and I had grown up knowing the importance of growing a garden, having a supply of food, and being generally prepared. But in that general conference, the theme of preparation seemed especially prevalent. Some speakers made reference to the Teton Dam flood that had occurred in June. Among them was Barbara B. Smith (1922–2010), the Relief Society general president, who emphasized the importance of self-reliance—specifically, acquiring a year’s supply of food, as was counseled at the time.¹ President Kimball, in the closing session of the conference, reminded Latter-day Saints of the scripture in Luke 6:46, where the Savior says, “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” President Kimball then exhorted the Saints to let the messages of conference follow them into their “homes and . . . future lives.”²

After our engagement, as Shelley and I contemplated the beginning of our marriage and family life, these messages were ringing in our ears. Unbeknownst to each other, both of us were thinking about how to start home storage for our family. To obey the counsel of



*An
engagement ring
usually represents a com-
mitment. But for my wife and
me, not having an engagement
ring represented our commit-
ment to the Lord and His
prophets.*

that time, we needed to start acquiring a year's supply of food. But how were we supposed to do it? We were students—and would be for years to come—and didn't have a lot of money. The Holy Ghost gave both of us, separately, the same answer: we needed to sell the engagement ring.

But how was I supposed to ask Shelley to do that? I had *just given* her the ring. What would she think about my asking her to sell it so we could buy some oats and flour and rice? Meanwhile, she was worrying too. What would I think, she wondered, if she were to approach me about selling the ring I had picked out for her? Would it hurt my feelings?

But the prompting each of us had felt was too strong to ignore, and the more each of us thought about it, the more glaring that diamond ring became. When Shelley raised the subject a few days after Christmas, I was relieved that she had arrived at the same conclusion I had. In many ways, it was a tremendous confirmation to both of us about the choice of whom we were going to marry. To know that our priorities and values were in sync with the other's and with the prophet of God was tremendously reassuring. I was so grateful for her willingness to make such a sacrifice to follow the prophet.

Please don't misunderstand me and

please don't sell your rings! Buying or wearing an engagement ring isn't wrong. In fact, our married children all have lovely and appropriate rings. There are many ways we can follow the prophets and apostles and apply their counsel to our personal lives. But because the Spirit had directed *us* to follow the prophet by selling our engagement ring, in our case the choice was between keeping the ring and following the prophet. This helped us establish two patterns in our home from the very beginning: following the prophet and following the personal, spiritual promptings we received.

Responses to Our Decision

The jewelry store where I had purchased the ring was closed for about a week following Christmas, but at the first opportunity after it reopened, I went to talk to the jeweler. I fully expected him to refuse to offer me a refund; after all, the ring had been worn and was considered used. I prepared myself for this reaction and expected to have to sell the ring secondhand at a significant loss. But to my amazement, the jeweler's heart was softened. I walked out with cash in hand—and my mouth hanging open in astonishment at how the Lord had opened the way for us to be obedient.

Not everyone received our decision so well. When our friends—including those who were members of the Church—learned what we had done and saw the small leather band I'd fashioned for Shelley to wear, they

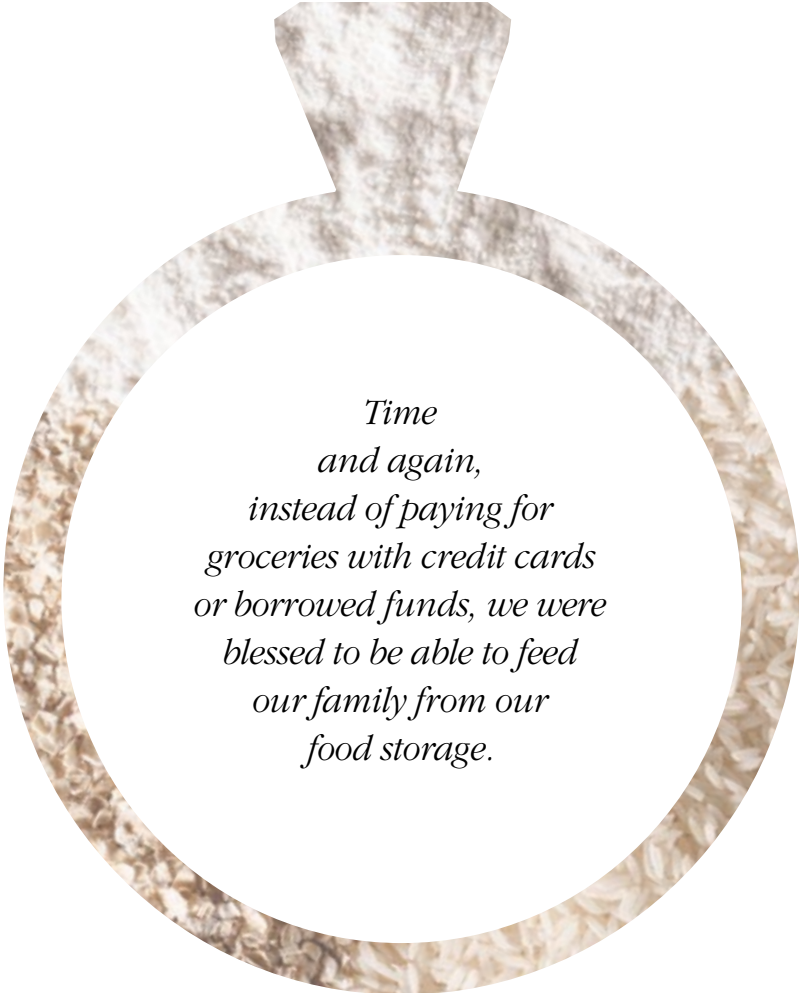
told us we were crazy. Other women Shelley's age couldn't believe she'd been willing to do what she had done. Very few were encouraging or supportive.

Shelley was strong and knew that she would be OK no matter what people thought; she had confidence in knowing that she was following the prophet. And that was more important than anything else. But the Lord provided us with a tender mercy in the form of two friends who helped us feel that we weren't alone.

My friend Bob and I had introduced Fran to the Church in high school. All three of us later served missions, and after Fran returned from her mission, she and Bob became engaged. When they came to share their good news with Shelley and me, we learned that instead of buying an engagement ring, they had also decided to use the funds to buy food storage. It was interesting to all four of us that the Spirit had directed us to do similar things. Our commitment to following the Holy Ghost and the living prophet added a new dimension to our friendship, which has lasted more than 40 years.

Blessings from Obedience

Shelley and I began buying basic foods for our home storage in January 1977 and continued to purchase bit by bit until we were married in April of that year. Prior to our wedding, we stored the food at my parents' home.



*Time
and again,
instead of paying for
groceries with credit cards
or borrowed funds, we were
blessed to be able to feed
our family from our
food storage.*

Shelley wore the leather band as a wedding ring for a long time while I finished undergraduate studies and then dental school. Over the course of pursuing education, our family moved many times. We became accustomed to lugging buckets of wheat from apartment to apartment, house to house, and city to city. Our friends started to avoid us every time we moved, but in later years, we felt profound gratitude for having followed the counsel of Church leaders.

When I graduated from dental school and began a dental practice, Shelley and I had two children and literally no funds. Gratefully, we were able to live on part of what we had

acquired in food storage just before our marriage. Our obedience to prophetic counsel blessed our lives again more than a decade after we were married, when I had completed more schooling and was in an orthodontic residency. We were again out of money, and instead of paying for groceries with credit cards or borrowed funds, we were blessed to be able to feed our family (which now included four children) from our supply.

In the years since, we have been blessed in many other ways by heeding the prophetic word. We have learned not to question the validity of what the prophets and apostles teach or to wonder if it makes sense.

We have learned that by acting—and acting immediately—on their counsel, our lives are blessed.

Learning to Listen to the Prophetic Word

Some might call our actions blind obedience. But we have the Lord's personal promise that the prophets will never lead us astray.³ Knowing this helps us hear their voices as we would hear His own (see D&C 1:38).

We've also learned that living prophets typically *invite* us to do things; they don't often use words like *command* or *exhort*. Their way is kind and gentle, but that doesn't give us an excuse not to follow. When Shelley and I have taken invitations as commandments, we have always been blessed.

We have also learned to discern their direction by listening for such phrases as "I've been pondering . . ." or "Something that has been on my mind is . . ." or "I feel to tell you . . ." or "Let me offer some counsel about . . ." or "It would be my hope that . . ." These and similar phrases are clues to help us know what is on the minds and in the hearts of the Lord's anointed servants.

One other thing that helps us hear the Lord's voice as we listen to prophets and apostles is to pay especially close attention when they quote other prophets or apostles. The Lord has taught that He will establish His word by the mouth of two or three witnesses (see 2 Corinthians 13:1; D&C 6:28).

Because the message of self-reliance was repeated so many times in that general conference before we got engaged, my wife and I felt that the message was particularly pertinent for us at that time. We were inspired to follow that counsel in a visible way. However, following the prophet isn't always about outward displays of devotion; often our obedience manifests itself in smaller, more personal ways. Regardless of whether others know about our obedience or not, the Lord does. And He will bless us for our obedience and open ways to make it possible.

Today Shelley wears a traditional wedding band, but she has kept her leather one as a keepsake all these years. To us it is a symbol of our early decision to make always following the prophet's counsel an integral part of our family life. Now as we watch our children raise their children, we are grateful that faithfully following the Lord's prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, is part of their family life as well. To us this obedience is a wonderful legacy and is as tangible a token of covenant keeping as an engagement ring might have been. ■



Today Shelley wears a traditional wedding band, but she has kept the leather one (below) all these years. To us it is a symbol of our early decision to follow the prophet.



NOTES

1. See Barbara B. Smith, "She Is Not Afraid of the Snow for Her Household," *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 121–22.
2. Spencer W. Kimball, "A Program for Man," *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 110.
3. See Harold B. Lee, "The Place of the Living Prophet, Seer, and Revelator" (address to seminary and institute of religion faculty, July 8, 1964), 13; Marion G. Romney, in Conference Report, Oct. 1960, 78; *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, ed. G. Homer Durham (1946), 212–13.



By Elder
Bruce A. Carlson
Of the Seventy



THE BLESSINGS OF Magnifying Our Callings

*I learned for myself that as we
“magnify our office unto the Lord,”
He will bless us and watch over us.*

The day after graduating from college, I was commissioned a second lieutenant in the United States Air Force. From there I began a series of training and operational flying assignments, as a fighter pilot, that saw my new bride and me move every few months over the next four years. Those moves included a yearlong tour in Southeast Asia at the close of the Vietnam War.

Our fifth move was an assignment to Bergstrom Air Force Base in Austin, Texas. Our constant moving meant that even though we always actively served in the Church, we, as new members, were unfamiliar with Church administration and leadership service.

My assignment at Bergstrom AFB was to fly an OV-10 Bronco, a small two-engine turboprop used for observation and support. The OV-10 was fully acrobatic, cruised at speeds up to 350 mph (563 kph), and looked a lot like an oversized dragonfly with a large, clear bubble canopy protruding out the front, allowing the pilot an unobstructed view.

Just before my arrival in Texas, I flew this aircraft into combat and felt confident about my ability to pilot it through almost any circumstance.

During my new assignment to Bergstrom, I was away from home about half the time because my group supported all of the army and air force units west of the Mississippi River.

Before my wife and I had even settled into our home, we were invited to meet the stake president early one Saturday morning. As a young father and an inexperienced convert to the Church, I was surprised by the invitation. We had a cordial visit, during which I laid out my travel and temporary duty schedule. Despite my heavy travel schedule, the stake president called me to serve as the elders quorum president in our ward. As he concluded the interview, he sensed my concern over what I thought would be a very difficult assignment given that we were new to a large ward and that I was gone almost half of every month.

He looked me in the eye and promised me that if I would do my best—my absolute best—to magnify my calling when I was home, the Lord would bless me with success. Then he added, “And the Lord will protect and watch over you while you are away from your family.”

I was buoyed up by his promise of success in this challenging new calling, but I didn’t think much more about the promise that I would be protected and watched over. I was, after all, young, confident in my abilities, and a combat veteran.

The stake president, two marvelous counselors, and a patient bishop helped me to understand the significance of my calling. As a result, I found great joy in serving the brethren in our growing quorum. Because of the work of many, our home teaching percentages improved, we enjoyed convert baptisms, and we spent many hours together serving ward members.



MAGNIFYING OUR CALLINGS

“What does it mean to magnify a calling? It means to build it up in dignity and importance, to make it honorable and commendable in the eyes of all men, to enlarge and strengthen it, to let the light of heaven shine through it to the view of other men. And how does one mag-

nify a calling? Simply by performing the service that pertains to it. An elder magnifies the ordained calling of an elder by learning what his duties as an elder are and then by doing them. As with an elder, so with a deacon, a teacher, a priest, a bishop, and each who holds office in the priesthood.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “The Call of Duty,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 38–39.

Several months later I was returning one Saturday evening from two weeks of flight training at a western base, and I stopped with a second airplane in El Paso, Texas, for fuel. It was late, and the other pilot, in a second OV-10, suggested that we get a room in El Paso, have a good meal, sleep late the next morning, and get home mid-afternoon on Sunday in time for the football games on

television. I was tired and hungry and agreed it would be great to get a good night’s sleep, but I recalled my stake president’s guidance and knew that he would expect me to be at an early Sunday morning priesthood executive committee meeting and the other Sunday meetings that would follow.

I convinced the other pilot that we should be on our way. Then I called Vicki, who, along with our two-year-old son, would pick me up at the base three hours later.

Because I had flown as lead from California to El Paso, it was the other pilot’s turn to lead our two-ship formation. About halfway to Bergstrom it grew dark and the weather turned foul. I flew in close formation behind the leader for the last half of the flight. About 15 miles from the air base, in darkness and in rough weather we began our approach to the field. We lined up the runway at about 1,000 feet (300 m) above the ground, just below the thick clouds and in and out of rain showers.

About the time we were approaching the field to land, my concerned wife looked outside at the impending stormy weather and felt prompted to kneel with our son and ask a loving Heavenly Father to protect me and bring me safely home.

Over the approach-end of the runway, following standard landing procedure, the leader executed a sharp 180-degree turn to slow down enough to extend the landing gear and flaps in preparation for the descending final turn to landing.

Following the leader, I counted to five and pulled the throttles back to idle and simultaneously rolled the aircraft into a 60-degree banked turn. Just as I pulled on the flight-control stick to tighten up the turn, the main oil line failed on the right engine. Oil pressure was needed to hold the engine propeller at the precise pitch called for by the throttle position. When the oil line failed, the propeller’s three blades rotated 90 degrees within the propeller hub. As the propellers rotated, they created extremely high



drag loads on the engine, similar to someone trying to pull three large oars through water.

This excessive load caused the engine to fail, sparking an engine fire. The loss of thrust on the right engine forced the airplane to yaw upward into the nighttime storm clouds. A relatively simple landing had turned into a dangerous problem compounded by the storm clouds.

A key part of military flight training is learning to handle in-flight emergencies. With the illumination of the fire-warning light, I instinctively followed emergency procedures—shutting down the right engine and discharging the fire extinguisher. As I turned my attention from the flight instruments while focusing on the emergency, I experienced a severe case of spatial disorientation. I was no longer sure which way was up or down in the thick clouds.

During those few seconds in the darkness, a few hundred feet above my waiting family, I

struggled to make sense of what I saw on the instrument panel and worked to overcome the compelling instinct to follow my senses rather than the instruments. At that instant—with a clarity I cannot explain but with a power I can never deny—I knew with a confidence that defied the situation that I must turn left. I followed the prompting and almost instantly found my way out of the clouds and on final approach to the lighted runway.

Rolling down the runway, I recalled my stake president's promise: the Lord would watch over me if I did my best to magnify my duties as elders quorum president. I did do my best during that busy time of my life, and the stake president's promise was fulfilled.

I learned for myself that as we “magnify our office unto the Lord . . . by laboring with our might,” the Lord will not only bless us with “spotless [garments] at the last day” (Jacob 1:19) but will also protect us and watch over us. ■

My concerned wife looked outside at the impending stormy weather and felt prompted to kneel with our son and ask a loving Heavenly Father to protect me and bring me safely home.

PREPARING FOR **GENERAL** CONFERENCE

Our family learned that studying general conference can invite the Spirit into our lives on a daily basis.

By Mark A. Barrionuevo

My family and I find that the best way to prepare for the next general conference is by immersing ourselves in the counsel given in the previous one. When my wife has a free moment, she reads the conference issue of the *Ensign*. Then she strives to apply the teachings she learns. For example, she told me that Elder David A. Bednar's talk on improving the quality of our prayers has helped her more earnestly seek charity in raising our two rambunctious sons.¹

Reviewing the last conference is something I try to do too. As I walk to school each morning, I listen to one address and then ponder and pray, allowing the teachings of the prophets to settle in my heart and mind. I converse with Heavenly Father regarding my upcoming day and my responsibilities as a husband, father, Latter-day Saint, student, and citizen.

One morning Elder L. Tom Perry's talk "Let Him Do It with Simplicity" felt especially pertinent to my circumstances.² Elder Perry applied the principles taught by Henry David Thoreau in *Walden* to simplifying our lives by fueling spirituality and obtaining relief from the stress of the

world. Because of the demands of my schooling, family outings for us are precious and rare. One summer prior to Elder Perry's address, however, we visited Walden Pond, spending a reflective moment inside a re-creation of Thoreau's cabin. We made the most of that afternoon by wading in Walden Pond and building sand castles on the beach. After returning home, our family thanked Heavenly Father for His creations that we had enjoyed together.

Months later as I trudged down snow-covered sidewalks, I recalled that sweet summer day. As a result of that experience and Elder Perry's message, I more clearly understood how spending time with my family is crucial to living a deliberate gospel-centered life.

In addition to listening to talks individually, on Sunday mornings our family listens to a conference talk on our computer as we get ready for church. Once my wife and I even found our four-year-old asking our younger son to be quiet so he could listen to President Thomas S. Monson.

The teachings of our Savior through the mouths of modern prophets are a blessing to our family. Seeking to include the prophets, seers, and revelators in our daily lives has opened the



way for the Holy Ghost to become our constant guide. We indeed echo the words of the hymn: “We thank thee, O God, for a prophet.”³

By frequently studying the counsel given in general conference, my wife and I have a stronger grasp on the recent teachings of the Lord by the time the next general conference

comes around. We are spiritually edified and are more fully prepared to receive His current teachings through His servants the prophets. ■

NOTES

1. See David A. Bednar, “Pray Always,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 41–44.
2. See L. Tom Perry, “Let Him Do It with Simplicity,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 7–10.
3. “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” *Hymns*, no. 19.

FOCUSING ON CONFERENCE

In addition to studying past conference addresses, consider these ideas to help you learn from the current conference:

- Pray and fast to receive answers to your prayers through the words of the speakers.
- Approach conference with specific questions in mind.
- Complete all chores, shopping, and other errands before conference so you can focus on listening.
- Get good rest the nights before conference so your mind will be ready to receive inspiration.
- Take notes of the impressions, promptings, and insights you receive.

MORE ON THIS TOPIC

The following articles are available at LDS.org:

1. Paul V. Johnson, “The Blessings of General Conference,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 50–52.
2. “Preparing Our Children for General Conference,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2009, 23–27.



Visiting Teaching

UNDERSTANDING THE POWER OF MINISTERING

Our Heavenly Father needs us to follow a higher path and demonstrate our discipleship by sincerely caring for His children.

During Christ's mortal life, He ministered to others. As we desire to be His disciples, we must look to Him as our example. He taught, "The works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do" (3 Nephi 27:21). The New Testament is filled with examples of Christ's ministering. He revealed to the woman of Samaria that He was the Messiah. He healed Peter's mother-in-law. He restored the daughter of Jairus to her parents and Lazarus to his grieving sisters. Even as He suffered on the cross, the Savior "expressed concern for His mother, who by then was likely a widow in need of watchcare."¹ On the cross, He asked John to watch over His mother.

By the Relief Society General Presidency



Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president, said: “Through Relief Society [and visiting teaching] we practice being disciples of Christ. We learn what He would have us learn, we do what He would have us do, and we become what He would have us become.”²

Understanding the Power of Ministering

Ministering and providing relief to others have always been the heart of Relief Society. “Throughout the years, Relief Society sisters and leaders have learned one step at a time and have improved in their ability to watch over others,” said Sister Beck. “There have been times when sisters have focused more on completing visits, teaching lessons, and leaving notices when they have stopped by their sisters’ homes. These practices have helped sisters learn patterns of watchcare. Just as people in the time of Moses concentrated on keeping long lists of rules, the sisters of Relief Society have at times imposed many written and unwritten rules upon themselves in their desire to understand how to strengthen one another.

“With so much need for relief and rescue in the lives of sisters and their families today, our Heavenly Father needs us to follow a higher path and demonstrate our discipleship by sincerely caring for His children. With this important purpose in mind, leaders are now taught to ask for reports about the spiritual and temporal well-being of sisters and their families and about service rendered. Now visiting teachers have the responsibility to ‘sincerely come to know and love each sister, help her strengthen her faith, and give service.’”³

Our Relief Society history, *Daughters in My Kingdom*, and *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* teach us how we can follow a higher path and demonstrate our discipleship:

- Pray daily for those you visit teach and their families.
- Seek inspiration to know the needs of your sisters.
- Visit your sisters regularly to comfort and strengthen them.
- Contact your sisters frequently through visits, phone calls, letters, e-mail, text messages, and simple acts of kindness.
- Greet your sisters at church.
- Help your sisters when they have an illness or other urgent need.
- Teach your sisters the gospel from the scriptures and the Visiting Teaching Message.
- Inspire your sisters by setting a good example.
- Report your sisters’ spiritual and temporal well-being to a Relief Society leader.⁴

Focusing on Ministering

We are the Lord’s hands. He is dependent upon each of us. The more we see our visiting teaching assignment as one of the most important responsibilities we have, the more we will minister to those we visit.

1. We will provide experiences that invite the Spirit and help our sisters increase in faith and personal righteousness.
2. We will care deeply about those we visit and help them strengthen their homes and families.
3. We will take action when our sisters are in need.

Following is the example of Maria and Gretchen—visiting teachers who understand the power of ministering. Here we can see that now visiting teachers have the opportunity to visit separately or together. They can count their “caring” whether or not they visit together and give the message. They can take appropriate action without being asked. They



ACHIEVING THE MIRACULOUS

"When we strive with faith nothing wavering to fulfill the duties appointed to us, when we seek the inspiration of the Almighty in the performance of our responsibilities, we can achieve the miraculous."

President Thomas S. Monson, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 91.

can actively seek, receive, and act on personal revelation to know how to respond to the spiritual and temporal needs of each sister they visit.

Rachel was expecting her first baby and had to remain in bed for most of her pregnancy. Her visiting teachers prayed for inspiration to know the best ways to help her. Maria, who lived nearby, was able to help at Rachel's home on most days before work. One day she cleaned part of the bathroom; the next day she cleaned the rest of it. Another day she vacuumed the living room, and the next day she made lunch for Rachel. And so her ongoing ministering continued as she did laundry, dusting, or whatever Rachel needed.

Gretchen phoned Rachel often to brighten her day. Sometimes they talked and laughed. Other times Gretchen and Maria visited with Rachel at her bedside and shared their testimonies, scripture reading, or the Visiting Teaching Message. And after Rachel's baby was born, they continued to help her.

Throughout this time, Maria and Gretchen also worked with the Relief Society presidency to coordinate other care Rachel and her family needed. The Relief Society presidency counseled with the bishop and the ward council so home teachers and others could provide additional assistance.

Ministering became sweeter as these sisters developed love for one another and as they shared spiritual experiences. As visiting teachers we can follow these same patterns and principles of ministering and receive the same blessings.



Ministering as Christ Did

"As committed disciples of the Savior, we are improving in our ability to do the things He would do if He were here," said Sister Beck. "We know that to Him it is our caring that counts, and so we are trying to concentrate on caring about our sisters rather than completing lists of things to do. True ministry is measured more by the depth of our charity than by the perfection of our statistics."⁵

As visiting teachers we will know we are successful in our ministry when our sisters can say: "My visiting teachers help me grow spiritually. I know my visiting teachers care deeply about me and my family, and if I have problems, I know they will help me." By following a higher path as visiting teachers, we are participating in the Lord's miraculous work and accomplishing the purposes of Relief Society to increase faith and personal righteousness, strengthen families and homes, and help those in need. ■

NOTES

1. *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 3.
2. *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 7.
3. Julie B. Beck, "What I Hope My Granddaughters (and Grandsons) Will Understand about Relief Society," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 112.
4. See *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 123.
5. *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 112–13.

HOW HAS VISITING TEACHING BEEN STRENGTHENED?

Following is a summary of the changes to the visiting teaching program. We encourage Relief Society leaders and visiting teachers to read chapter 9 of *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* to review the specific details of these changes. We also encourage you to read chapter 7 of *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* to gain vision, insight, and understanding of the power of ministering and its essential role in visiting teaching. (These two books can be found online at LDS.org.)

ASSIGNING VISITING TEACHERS	
1. The Relief Society presidency, not just the president, is responsible for visiting teachers.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.2.2.
2. When a Relief Society leader gives a sister her visiting teaching assignment, the leader helps the sister understand that visiting teaching is an important spiritual responsibility to fulfill.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.5; 9.5.1.
3. The Relief Society presidency conducts ongoing training for visiting teachers on how to be more effective in ministering to those they visit. Training can be given in Relief Society on the first Sunday of the month or in another Relief Society meeting.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.5.

COUNSELING WITH OTHERS	
1. The Relief Society presidency meets regularly with visiting teachers to discuss the spiritual and temporal welfare of those in need and to make plans to help them. Visiting teachers may assist the Relief Society presidency in coordinating short-term or long-term service for sisters in need.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.5; 9.5.1; 9.5.4.
2. The Relief Society presidency counsels together regularly to discuss the spiritual and temporal welfare of those in need.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.3.2; 9.5.4.
3. In ward or branch council meetings, the Relief Society president shares appropriate information from visiting teaching reports so that ward or branch leaders can counsel together on how to help those with spiritual and temporal needs.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 4.5.1; 5.1.2; 6.2.2.
4. The bishop or branch president may invite the Relief Society president to ward or branch priesthood executive committee (PEC) meetings as needed to coordinate home teaching and visiting teaching assignments.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.3.1.
5. The Relief Society presidency and the young single adult leader meet regularly to ensure that visiting teaching assignments help address the needs of young single adults.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.7.2; 16.3.3.

ORGANIZING AND OVERSEEING VISITING TEACHING

1. The bishop or branch president and the Relief Society presidency counsel together and prayerfully consider local needs to determine the structure of visiting teaching. (Sisters should not be organized in groups for the purpose of visiting teaching since they minister to individual needs.) The bishop or branch president approves each assignment.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.5.2.
2. Where possible, the presidency assigns sisters in companionships of two. <i>Handbook 2</i> provides other options to meet local needs. The presidency counsels with the bishop or branch president about using the following options: a. Temporarily assigning only home teachers or only visiting teachers to certain families. Or leaders may alternate the monthly visits of home teachers and visiting teachers. b. Asking full-time sister missionaries to help with visiting teaching on a limited basis, with approval of the mission president.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.5.2; 9.5.3.
3. Visiting teaching is not just a monthly visit; it is ministering. To watch over and strengthen sisters in their individual needs, visiting teachers have ongoing contact with them through visits, phone calls, e-mails, letters, or other means. Leaders give special priority to ensuring the following sisters are cared for: sisters coming into Relief Society from Young Women, single sisters, new members, recent converts, newly married sisters, less-active sisters, and those with special needs.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.5.1; 9.5.2.

REPORTING VISITING TEACHING

1. Visiting teachers are asked to report special needs and service given—in other words, their ministering. Count the caring instead of just counting visits.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.5.4.
2. The Relief Society president gives the bishop or branch president a monthly visiting teaching report. This report includes the special needs and service rendered by visiting teachers and a list of sisters not contacted.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.5.4.

DAUGHTERS *in My Kingdom*

Making a Difference

In the foreword of *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society*, the First Presidency encourages readers “to study this book and allow its timeless truths and inspiring examples to influence your lives.”¹ Following are testimonies from some men and women for whom this inspired book has made a difference:

“There is a spirit in this book that is tangible. I could actually feel it changing my heart.”

—Shelley Bertagnoli

“Reading *Daughters in My Kingdom* has inspired me to be a more devoted husband and father and to keep my covenants with greater dedication.”

—Aaron West

“As I read about the Relief Society sisters in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, they became real to me and I felt their faith. They knew that as we

serve others with the pure love of Christ, we become what the Lord wants us to be. That is the purpose of Relief Society, and it applies to everyone—single or married, young or old. It applies to me.”—Katrina Cannon

“I have lived in Chile, Argentina, Brazil, and the United States, but wherever I go, I know I am part of a wonderful circle of sisters—a heritage of strong, faithful women.”—Marta Bravo

“Working on *Daughters in My Kingdom* as a graphic designer was a rare and extraordinary experience. In our first meeting, Sister Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president, bore her testimony to us that the book was coming forth under revelation and the instruction of living prophets. From that first day, revelation guided everything. Every time any one of us read from the book’s pages, we were touched by the Spirit and changed for the better. It happened to me, and I watched it happen to editors, designers,

illustrators, production artists, and press employees.”—Tadd Peterson

“I realized that I am a part of something better. As I draw strength from Relief Society, I can become something better also.”—Jeanette Andrews

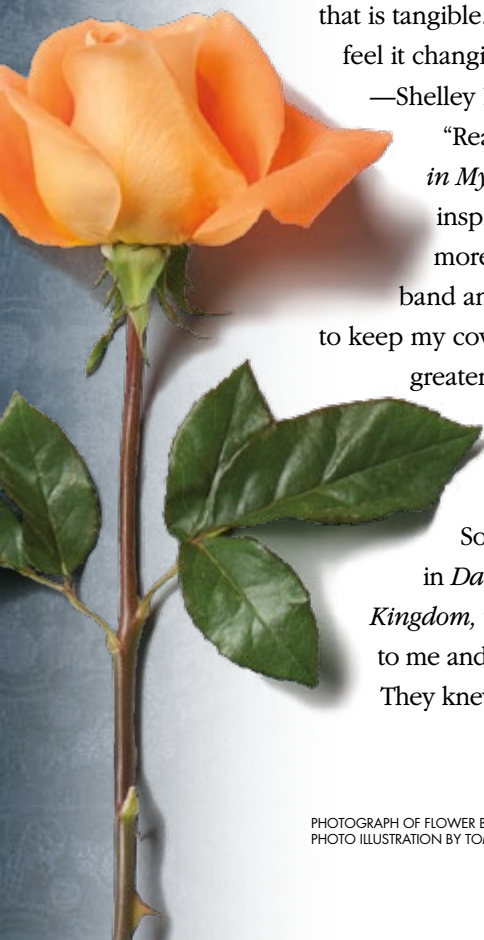
“This history is a powerful resource that can help men and women around the world to recognize the value of women as daughters of God and their significant role in His kingdom.”—Susan Lofgren

“I once thought that I had to be like everyone else. Now I realize that each sister has different circumstances, strengths, and weaknesses, but each sister is important.”—Nicole Erickson

“*Daughters in My Kingdom* has had a profound impact on me as a bishop. I bear testimony of the great power that comes when the Relief Society and the priesthood are inseparably yoked together.”—Mark Staples ■

NOTE

1. *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), ix.





LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF LDS CHURCH ARCHIVES; RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPHS BY TOM SMART, STUART JOHNSON, AND GERRY AVANT;
COURTESY OF DESERET NEWS; GENERAL CONFERENCE PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND

Have I Done Any Good in the World Today?

LIFE EXPERIENCES OF PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON

By Heidi S. Swinton

I was serving with my husband, then the president of the England London South Mission, when the phone rang on June 18, 2008. It was President Thomas S. Monson. He began in his usual friendly fashion, one of the trademarks of his ministry: “How is the mission? How is your family? How is jolly old England?” And then he paused and said, “I have been talking with Frances, I have prayed about it, and I would like you to write my biography.”

Needless to say, I was honored and immediately overwhelmed. He then suggested that if I got started the next morning, I could be halfway done by the time we came home. We had one year left of our three-year call.

President Monson teaches, “Whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies.”¹ I have come to appreciate that promise.

How do you write about the life of a prophet? You begin not at the keyboard but on your knees.

I recognized early that this would not be a

typical biography outlining dates, times, places, and travels. It was the account of a man prepared before the world was and called of God “to guide us in these latter days.”² *Humbling* is the best description. *Daunting*, *challenging*, and *consuming* follow close behind.

The Lord has said, “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38). Hearing the Lord speak through His prophet since Thomas S. Monson’s call to the holy apostleship in 1963 is where I began. I spent months reading the hundreds of messages President Monson has given in myriads of settings. I read biographies of all the Presidents of the Church and of many noted religious leaders. I studied the early Church in Scotland, Sweden, and England, where President Monson’s ancestors hail from; the Depression that so influenced his youth; and World War II and its aftermath with a divided Germany. (President Monson spent 20 years supervising this area of the



Left: President Monson—then Elder Monson—on the steps of the Church Administration Building in 1967. Above, from top: In his office in 2011; with Elder M. Russell Ballard at the groundbreaking of the Joseph F. Smith Building at Brigham Young University in 2002; at the Laie Hawaii Temple rededication in 2010; with his wife, Frances, following the April 2008 general conference.



Top: A portrait of President Monson in the 1960s. Above: With members and missionaries in Germany. Below, from left: As bishop of the Sixth-Seventh Ward with his counselors; talking with Boy Scouts; visiting the Tongan Mission in 1965.

Church.) I read his autobiography prepared in 1985 for just his family and later his daily journal of 47 years. I interviewed Church leaders who worked with him in many parts of the world and members who were touched profoundly by his ministry. I engaged a dear friend and history scholar, Tricia H. Stoker, to help with research. She had served on the writing committees of several *Teachings of Presidents of the Church* manuals and understood how to research the life of a prophet.

I interviewed President Monson in monthly video conferences from England and then, after returning home to Utah, in person while working from his office for 14 months. In every case I felt his warmth, as if we were sitting down at the kitchen table. He spoke of childhood and family, his call by President David O. McKay (1873–1970), and the influence of mentors like President J. Reuben Clark Jr. (1871–1961); President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973); and Elder Mark E. Petersen (1900–84), to name a few.

He learned Christlike living at home, where charity—the pure love of Christ—compassion, and a desire to lift and bless the lives of others were the standard and where, though his parents did not read him the scriptures, they lived them.

His focus on serving the one reaches back to his growing up on the west side of Salt Lake City, “between the railroad tracks,” as he likes to say, in the bottom of the Depression. His neighbors and friends had little in terms of material goods, but they had each other, and that was enough. Many close to him, including some of his favorite uncles, were not members of the Church. Religious affiliation held no barriers; he came to love people for people. His parents opened their hearts to everyone. President Monson has never left those moorings.

He is an unusual man who has reverence for everyone he meets and who is interested in their lives, worries, and challenges. He relates to a visiting dignitary from a foreign country with the same attention he does



the man who polishes his desk at night. Clearly, one of the measures of his greatness is that he can relate to anyone and finds he can learn something from each person he meets.

If, as President Monson says, an organization is the lengthened shadow of its leader,³ then the desire to lift, encourage, engage, involve, and rescue others one by one is our mandate. This way of living mirrors the example of the Savior, who “went about doing good, . . . for God was with him” (Acts 10:38).

President Monson has long been calling us to be more like the Savior. When I interviewed President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, he confirmed what I had come to understand. President Monson, he said, “is more Christlike than the rest of us.”⁴

For more than half a century, President Monson has given the suits off his back to the destitute. He has sat at the bedside of the ill and elderly. He has given countless blessings to people in hospitals and in their homes. He has turned the car around to make a quick visit to one friend and rushed from meetings to speak at the funeral of another. (If you ask him how many he counts on that list of friends, he will say, “At least 14 million.”) He will go to someone in a wheelchair who has a hard time coming to him, “high-five” a group of teenagers, and wiggle his

*Put simply,
President
Monson does
what most
people only
think about
doing.*

ears at deacons on the front row. He exhibits great reverence for the lives of those he describes as “unnoticed and unrecognized,” known to few but their Father in Heaven.

Put simply, President Monson *does* what most people only *think* about doing.

His messages are filled with true accounts (he never calls them “stories”) that teach gospel principles. He explains: “The actions whereby we demonstrate that we truly do love God and our neighbor as ourselves will rarely be such as to attract the gaze and admiration of the world. Usually our love will be shown in our day-to-day associations with one another.”⁵

In all his ministry around the globe, perhaps some of the most gripping experiences were the years he supervised the Church behind the Iron Curtain. When my husband and I finished our mission in 2009, we went to Germany to walk the ground President Monson walked, talk to the members he so loved, and feel the influence of his years of service. What we found were hearty priesthood holders who wept as they spoke of his consistent visits, his love for Jesus Christ, and his encouragement and concern. We stood in the now-abandoned, dilapidated factory building in Görlitz where in 1968 President Monson stood at the podium and promised the haggard East German Latter-day Saints all the blessings that the Lord had for His children—if they were faithful. That day they sang with such fervor: “If the way be full of trial, Weary not! . . . Jesus never will forsake us, Weary not.”⁶ He had come under the direction of the First Presidency to the Saints’ rescue. Two decades later, with the Berlin wall still standing, these East German Latter-day Saints had stakes, meetinghouses, patriarchs, missionaries, and a temple. And then the wall came down, and the Saints were reunited with their families and as a country.

President Monson often says, “There are no coincidences” as he makes the point that his experiences in life have taught him to always look for the Lord’s hand.⁷

One of the great East German leaders was Henry Burkhardt, who worked closely and was with President Monson for two decades at the scene of all the pivotal



events in that country. Brother Burkhardt was a man who served so faithfully and at such great risk all those years behind the Iron Curtain as the Church's representative to the government. He served, among other positions, as a Church leader and as president of the the Freiberg Temple.

I asked him what stood out in his mind as the singular moment in President Monson's ministry. I expected him to mention the meeting in Görlitz, the dedication of the country in 1975, the organization of the first stake, the dedication of the Freiberg Temple, or the meeting with Herr Honecker, East Germany's highest Communist official, when President Monson asked permission for missionaries to enter the country and other missionaries to leave the country to serve in other lands. Given the death squads that patrolled the wall, the query sounded almost ludicrous, but Herr Honecker responded, "We have watched you all these years, and we trust you. Permission granted." Which one of these events would Brother Burkhardt choose?

Tears began to flow down his cheeks as he responded: "It was December 2, 1979." I couldn't register in my mind a major event attached to that date. "Tell me about it," I said.

"It was the day President Monson came to East Germany to give my wife, Inge, a blessing." President Monson had a weekend without an assignment, and he flew from the United States to Germany for just that purpose. Sister Burkhardt had been in the hospital for nine weeks with complications from surgery, and her condition was deteriorating. President Monson had recorded in his journal, "We joined our faith and our prayers in providing her a blessing."⁸ He had gone thousands of miles with his only free time in months—to the rescue.

"Let us ask ourselves the questions," he has said, "Have I done any good in the world today? Have I helped

President Monson is constantly reminding us to reach out to one another.

anyone in need?" What a formula for happiness! What a prescription for contentment, for inner peace. . . . There are hearts to gladden. There are kind words to say. There are gifts to be given. There are deeds to be done. There are souls to be saved."⁹

Such is the ministry of President Monson. He is always reaching out to the weary, the lonely, the

faint hearted. As Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles says, "The Lord had to make Thomas Monson big because of the size of his heart."¹⁰

When the prophet dedicated the Curitiba Brazil Temple on June 1, 2008, he called a lad up to assist him at the cornerstone ceremony. A photographer suggested someone take off the boy's hat for a picture. The boy had no hair and was obviously undergoing cancer treatments. President Monson lovingly put his arm around him and helped him place mortar on the wall. One of those accompanying the President mentioned it was time to go back in the temple to finish the dedication on schedule. President Monson shook his head. "No," he said, "I want to call up one more." Looking over the crowd, he settled on a woman at the back, and as their eyes met, he motioned for her to come forward. He put his arm around her and with loving care escorted her to the wall to finish the cornerstone sealing.

The day after the dedication, Elder Russell M. Nelson of

the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who had also been at the dedication, asked President Monson how he knew the woman was the boy's mother.

"I didn't know," he replied, "but the Lord knew."

It was not many months later that the boy

Right: President and Sister Monson at the dedication of the Nauvoo Illinois Temple in 2002; President Monson speaking at the April 2008 general conference, when he was sustained as President of the Church; at the cornerstone ceremony for the Oquirrh Mountain Utah Temple in 2009; with a longtime friend in Ontario, Canada, in June 2011.



died. Elder Nelson says: “You can imagine what [the experience at the dedication] meant to the mother of that family. That was the Lord’s way of saying, ‘I know you, I am concerned for you, and I want to help you.’ That’s the kind of man we’ve got in this prophet of God.”¹¹

At a time when texting and e-mailing have replaced sitting down together, President Monson is constantly reminding us to reach out to one another. He shared this message through the words of a member who wrote him a letter: “The prayers of people are almost always answered by the actions of others.”¹² He often points to the counsel from the Lord: “I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up” (D&C 84:88). President Monson appreciates that so often *we* are those angels for each other. Alma committed the Saints at the Waters of Mormon to “bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light” (Mosiah 18:8); President Monson is calling us to live that covenant.

I have been the recipient of his bearing up others’ burdens. There came a time when he could see the weight of the responsibility of his biography weighing me down. He invited me into his office and with the gentlest and kindest voice said, “How can I help?”

My heart could not resist his overture, and I poured out my feelings of inadequacy, the intimidating nature of the task, and the volume of material to capture, organize, and synthesize. I wanted so desperately to get it right—for him. Our exchange was one of my most precious mortal

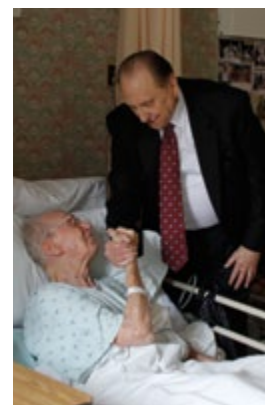
experiences. I felt like I was at the Pool of Bethesda and the Savior had lifted the drape and reached down to bear me up. President Monson understands the saving power of the Atonement and counts it a privilege to be sent by the Lord to bear up another.

“Reach out to rescue the aged, the widowed, the sick, the handicapped, the less active,” he has said, and then he has led the charge. “Extend to them the hand that helps and the heart that knows compassion.”¹³

His regard and interest in others are a measure of his testimony of the Savior Jesus Christ: “By learning of Him, by believing in Him, by following Him, there is the capacity to become like Him. The countenance can change; the heart can be softened; the step can be quickened; the outlook enhanced. Life becomes what it should become.”¹⁴ ■

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Duty Calls,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 44.
2. “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” *Hymns*, no. 19.
3. See Kellene Ricks, “BYU Leader Begins ‘Lord’s Errand,’” *Church News*, Nov. 4, 1989, 3.
4. Boyd K. Packer, in Heidi S. Swinton, *To the Rescue* (2010), 1.
5. Thomas S. Monson, “To Love as Jesus Loves,” *Instructor*, Sept. 1965, 349.
6. “If the Way Be Full of Trial, Weary Not,” *Deseret Sunday School Songs* (1909), no. 158; see also Thomas S. Monson, “Patience—a Heavenly Virtue,” *Liahona*, Sept. 2002, 7; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 61.
7. Thomas S. Monson, in *To the Rescue*, 60.
8. Thomas S. Monson, in *To the Rescue*, 1.
9. Thomas S. Monson, “Now Is the Time,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2002, 69; *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 60.
10. Richard G. Scott, in *To the Rescue*, 162.
11. See *To the Rescue*, 521.
12. In Thomas S. Monson, “Be Thou an Example,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 45.
13. Thomas S. Monson, Salt Lake City South Stake Conference Broadcast, Oct. 18, 2009, unpublished.
14. Thomas S. Monson, “The Way of the Master,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Jan. 2003, 4.



This article is excerpted from an address delivered during a regional stake and district conference broadcast to Africa on November 21, 2010.

The Gospel Culture

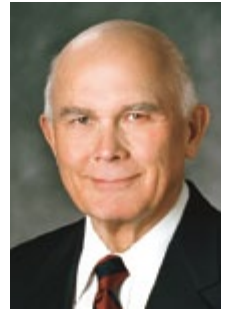
In the famous movie *The African Queen*, two refugees from World War I violence in East Africa are trying to reach the relative safety of Lake Victoria. After surviving many near disasters, their boat, *The African Queen*, is stranded in a marsh. Unable to tell which way the current is flowing and surrounded by high growth, the two refugees become disoriented and discouraged. At the end of their energy and faith, they are about to give up and die.

Then, in a moment of high drama, the camera through which we are viewing their peril rises, and with new perspective we see their true location. Out of sight to them, but just a few meters away, are the long-sought liberating waters of Lake Victoria.

The gospel of Jesus Christ explains our journey in mortality and shows us our destination in eternity. Like the refugees on *The African Queen*, we are fleeing evil and disaster. There are obstacles all around us. We labor hard to reach our goals. Sometimes we see no signs of progress. We can become exhausted and discouraged. We may even lose sight of our destination. But we must not give up. If we could only see above our current circumstances and know our true location on the journey to eternal life, we would realize what great progress we are making.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD M. ROWNEY





**By Elder
Dallin H. Oaks**
Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

This gospel culture comes from the plan of salvation, the commandments of God, and the teachings of the living prophets. To help its members all over the world, the Church teaches us to give up any personal or family traditions or practices that are contrary to this gospel culture.





The gift of the Holy Ghost is the gift God has given to sustain us in our difficult journey through mortality when we walk by faith.

Relying on the Holy Ghost

Fortunately, our Savior has given us a direction finder and guide that will help us even when we cannot see beyond discouraging obstacles. I refer to the gift of the Holy Ghost. But we must be willing to use and rely on this divine gift, and we must keep it in good repair.

President Wilford Woodruff (1807–98), who served as President of the Church during some of its most difficult times, taught this about the importance of the Holy Ghost: “Every man or woman that has ever entered into the church of God and been baptized for the remission of sins [and received the gift of the Holy Ghost] has a right to revelation, a right to the Spirit of God, to assist them in their labors.”¹

President Woodruff explained that “this Spirit reveals, day by day, to every man who has faith, those things which are for his benefit.”² This is the gift God has given to sustain us in our difficult journey through mortality when we walk by faith.

If we are to have this precious guidance, we must keep the commandments. President Woodruff taught: “The Holy Ghost will not dwell in an unholy tabernacle. If you would enjoy the full powers and gifts of your religion, you must be pure. If you are guilty of weakness, follies and sins, you must repent of them; that is, you must thoroughly forsake them.”³

The Lord has commanded us to attend sacrament meeting every week to partake of the sacrament (see D&C 59:9–12). When we do that, repenting of our sins and renewing our promises to serve the Lord and always remember Him and keep His commandments, we have the precious promise that we will “always have his Spirit to be with [us]” (D&C 20:77). This is how we can see beyond the obstacles and discouragements of this life to guide us to our heavenly home.

President Thomas S. Monson has declared: “We are surrounded by immorality, pornography, violence, drugs, and a host of other ills which afflict modern-day society. Ours is the challenge, even the responsibility, not only to keep ourselves ‘unspotted from the world’ (James 1:27) but also to guide our children and others for whom we have responsibility safely through the stormy seas of sin surrounding all of us, that we might one day return to live with our Heavenly Father.”⁴

Truly we need the guidance of the Spirit, and we must be diligent to do those things necessary to have the companionship of that Spirit. Specifically, we must keep the commandments, pray, study the scriptures, and repent weekly as we partake of the sacrament.

A Distinctive Way of Life

As a way to help us keep the commandments of God, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have what we call a gospel culture. It is a distinctive way of life, a set of values and expectations and practices common to all members. This gospel culture comes from the plan of salvation, the commandments of God, and the teachings of the living prophets. It guides us in the way we raise our families and live our individual lives. The principles stated in the proclamation on the family are a beautiful expression of this gospel culture.⁵

To help its members all over the world, the Church teaches us to give up any personal or family traditions or practices that are contrary to the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ and to this gospel culture. In this we heed the warning of the Apostle Paul, who said that we should not let anyone “spoil [us] through philosophy . . . after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8).

When it comes to giving up false traditions and cultures, we praise our younger people for their flexibility and progress, and we appeal to our older members to put away traditions and cultural or tribal practices that lead them away from the path of growth and progress. We ask all to climb to the higher ground of the gospel culture, to practices and traditions that are rooted in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Many African traditions are consistent with the gospel culture and help our members keep the commandments of God. The strong African family culture is superior to

that of many Western countries, where family values are disintegrating. We hope the examples of love and loyalty among members of African families will help us teach others these essential traditions in the gospel culture. Modesty is another African strength. We plead with youth elsewhere to be as modest as most of the young people we see in Africa.

In contrast, some cultural traditions in parts of Africa are negative when measured against gospel culture and values. Several of these concern family relationships—what is done at birth, at marriage, and upon death. For



We praise our younger people for their flexibility and progress, and we appeal to our older members to put away traditions and cultural or tribal practices that lead them away from the path of growth and progress.

example, some African husbands have the false idea that the husband rests while the wife does most of the work at home or that the wife and children are just servants of the husband. This is not pleasing to the Lord because it stands in the way of the kind of family relationships that must prevail in eternity and it inhibits the kind of growth that must occur here on earth if we are to qualify for the blessings of eternity. Study the scriptures and you will see that Adam and Eve, our first parents, the model for all of us, prayed together and worked together (see Moses 5:1, 4, 10–12, 16, 27). That should be our pattern for family

life—respecting each other and working together in love.

Another negative cultural tradition is the practice of *lobola*, or bride price, which seriously interferes with young men and women keeping the commandments of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. When a young returned missionary must purchase his bride from her father by a payment so large that it takes many years to accumulate, he is unable to marry or cannot do so until he is middle-aged. This conflicts with the gospel plan for sexual purity outside marriage, for marriage, and for child rearing. Priesthood leaders should teach parents to discontinue this practice,

When we follow the commandments of the Lord and the counsel of His leaders regarding marriage, we can call on Him to bless us in all other things.



and young people should follow the Lord's pattern of marriage in the holy temple without waiting for the payment of a bride price.

Some other cultural practices or traditions that may conflict with gospel culture are weddings and funerals. I ask you not to make plans in connection with weddings and funerals that would cause you to go deeply into debt. Avoid extensive travel and expensive feasts. Excessive debt will weaken or prevent your ability to pay tithing, to attend the temple, and to send your children on missions. Make plans that will strengthen—not weaken—your future Church activity.

The Importance of Marriage

We live in a wicked world. In saying this, I think first of the willful taking of life, which has occurred so frequently in tribal and national conflicts in Africa and elsewhere. God has also commanded that we not rob people of their property by stealing or fraud. Another great wickedness is the violation of the commandment "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14) and all the related commandments by which God has revealed that the great powers of procreation—given for His purposes—should be employed only within the bonds of marriage. It is sinful to engage in sexual relations outside of marriage.

We live in a day when marriage is looked on as an option, not a necessity. For example, unwed mothers give birth to 40 percent of all children now being born in the United States. Many people live together without marriage. The children born from those relationships do not have the security of parents committed to one another by the marriage God ordained for our first parents in the Garden of Eden.⁶

Marriage is essential, but in Africa and in other nations, we must ask, what kind of

marriage? There are formal marriages authorized by law, and there are various customary or tribal marriages that can be entered into and discontinued without much formality. The Lord's standard—formalized in the requirements we have for sealing a marriage in the temple—is a marriage that is as permanent as the laws of man can make it.

I reaffirm the counsel Church leaders have given that husbands and wives should not separate for long periods, such as for foreign or other distant employment. In too many cases, such separations are followed by serious sin. Separations lead to the breaking of eternal covenants, which causes heartache and loss of blessings. In modern revelation the Lord has commanded, "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else" (D&C 42:22). When we follow the commandments of the Lord and the counsel of His leaders regarding marriage, we can call on Him to bless us in all other things.

The Blessings of Tithing

Tithing is a commandment with a promise. The words of Malachi, reaffirmed by the Savior, promise those who bring their tithes into the storehouse that the Lord will "open . . . the windows of heaven, and pour [them] out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." The promised blessings are temporal and spiritual. For tithe payers, the Lord promises that He will "rebuke the devourer" and that "all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land" (Malachi 3:10–12; see also 3 Nephi 24:10–12).

I believe these promises apply to the nations in which we reside. When the people of God withheld their tithes and offerings, God condemned the "whole nation" (Malachi 3:9). Similarly, I believe that when many citizens of a



I believe that when many citizens of a nation are faithful in the payment of tithes, they summon the blessings of heaven upon their entire nation.



Now that the Church is strong in its center stakes, we counsel members to remain, to build up the Church in their homelands. We encourage this by building temples all over the world.

nation are faithful in the payment of tithes, they summon the blessings of heaven upon their entire nation. The Bible teaches that “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (Galatians 5:9; see also Matthew 13:33) and that “righteousness exalteth a nation” (Proverbs 14:34). This much-needed blessing can be called down by faithfulness in paying tithing.

The payment of tithing also brings the individual tithe payer unique spiritual as well as temporal blessings. During World War II my widowed mother supported her three young children on a meager schoolteacher’s salary. When I became conscious that we went without some desirable things because we didn’t have enough money, I asked my mother why she paid so much of her salary as tithing. I have never forgotten her explanation: “Dallin, there might be some people who can get along without paying tithing, but we can’t because we are poor. The Lord has chosen to take your father and leave me to raise you children. I cannot do that without the blessings of the Lord, and I obtain those blessings by paying an honest tithing. When I pay my tithing, I have the Lord’s promise that He will bless us, and we must have those blessings if we are to get along.”

As a lifelong recipient of those blessings, I testify to the goodness of our God and His bounteous blessings to His tithe-paying children.

Building Up the Church

As we seek to establish the Church in Africa and other nations, we must have third- and fourth-generation faithful Latter-day Saint families in our leadership and membership. Faithful Latter-day Saints who move to another country weaken the Church in their homeland. Of course the Church does not *forbid* its members from moving from one place to another to better themselves, but it has been many years since

the Church has *encouraged* such emigration.

Long ago, Latter-day Saints were encouraged to gather to Zion in America to establish the Church and build temples there. Now that the Church is strong in its center stakes, we counsel members to remain, to build up the Church in their homelands. We encourage this by building temples all over the world.

Following the Lord’s way is not easy. The Lord has warned us again and again, directly and through His servants, that the world will hate us for doing things differently—the Lord’s way (see John 15:19).

The good news is that when we do the Lord’s work in the Lord’s way, we are assured of His blessings to help us. “I will go before your face,” He has said. “I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up” (D&C 84:88).

Loving One Another

How grateful we are for the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. It tells us who we are. When we understand our relationship to God, we also understand our relationship to one another. This includes our relationship to our spouse and our children—eternal relationships if we keep the commandments and make and keep sacred temple covenants.

All men and women on this earth are the offspring of God, spirit brothers and sisters, whatever their color or citizenship. No wonder God’s Only Begotten Son commanded us to love one another. What a different world it would be if brotherly and sisterly love and unselfish assistance could cross over all boundaries of tribe, nation, creed, and color. Such love would not erase all differences of opinion and action, but it would guide each of us to focus our efforts on cooperative actions with

our neighbors rather than on hatred or oppression of them.

I affirm the great truth that our Heavenly Father loves all His children. This is an immensely powerful idea that children can begin to understand through the love and sacrifice of their earthly parents. Love is the most powerful force in the world. I pray that every parent is providing the kind of loving example that encourages the rising generation to understand the love of God toward them and the great desire of our Heavenly Father that all of His children on earth do what is necessary to qualify for the choicest blessings of eternity.

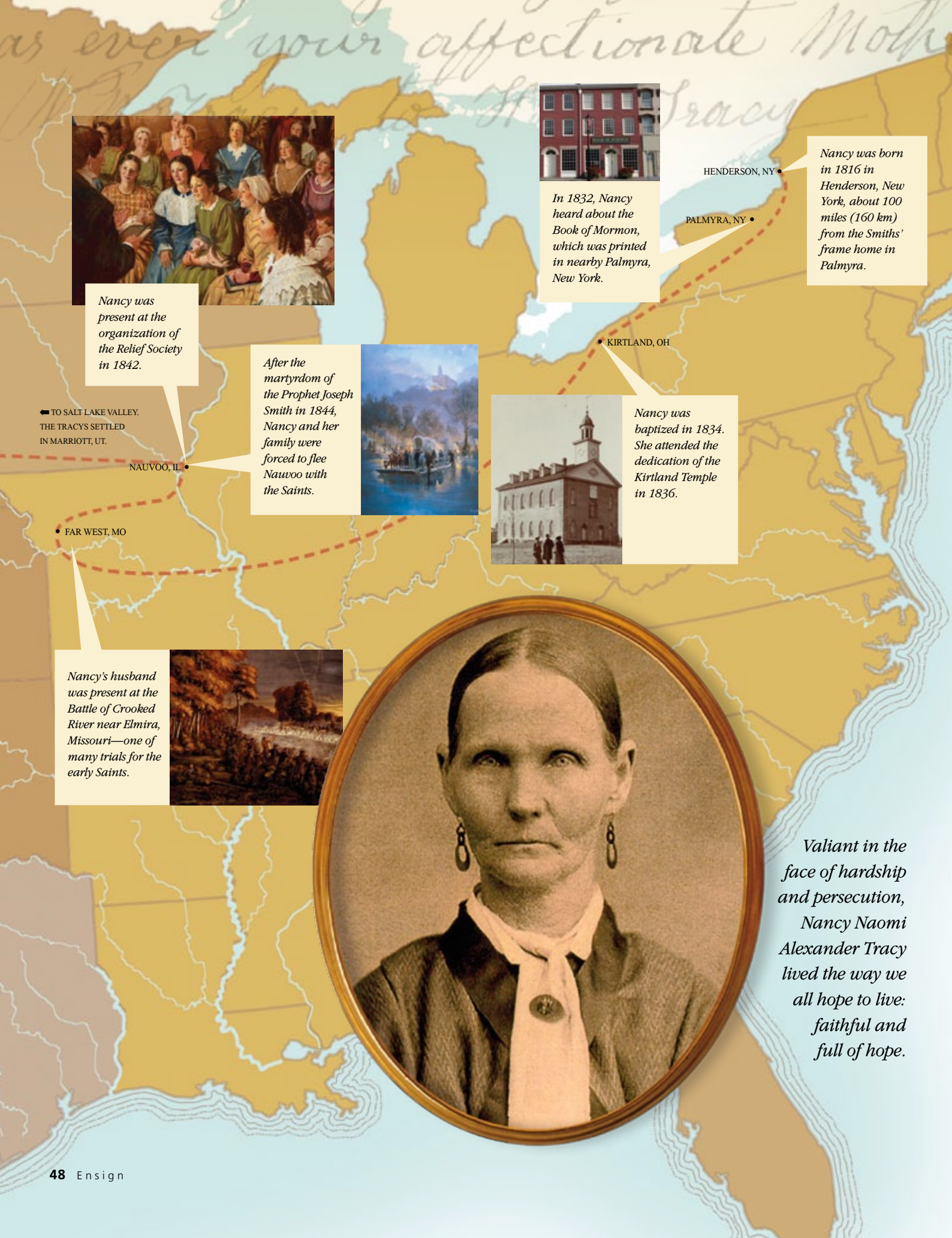
We have His gospel, and we need to keep the commandments to enjoy His choicest blessings. I bear testimony of this and ask the blessings of our Heavenly Father upon each of you. ■

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* (2004), 49.
2. *Teachings: Wilford Woodruff*, 51.
3. *Teachings: Wilford Woodruff*, 54.
4. Thomas S. Monson, "Heavenly Homes, Forever Families," *Liahona*, June 2006, 67–68; *Ensign*, June 2006, 99–100.
5. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
6. See *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.



What a different world it would be if brotherly and sisterly love and unselfish assistance could cross over all boundaries of tribe, nation, creed, and color.



Nancy was present at the organization of the Relief Society in 1842.



In 1832, Nancy heard about the Book of Mormon, which was printed in nearby Palmyra, New York.

HENDERSON, NY

PALMYRA, NY

Nancy was born in 1816 in Henderson, New York, about 100 miles (160 km) from the Smiths' frame home in Palmyra.

TO SALT LAKE VALLEY.
THE TRACYS SETTLED
IN MARRIOTT, UT.

NAUVOO, IL

FAR WEST, MO

After the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1844, Nancy and her family were forced to flee Nauvoo with the Saints.



Nancy was baptized in 1834. She attended the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in 1836.

KIRTLAND, OH

Nancy's husband was present at the Battle of Crooked River near Elmira, Missouri—one of many trials for the early Saints.



Valiant in the face of hardship and persecution, Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy lived the way we all hope to live: faithful and full of hope.



Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy:

FAITHFUL PIONEER

By Rachel Cope

In her 80th year, 19th-century convert Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy wrote an account of her life's history "for the benefit of [her] posterity."¹ Although her autobiography describes the "hardships, poverty, and persecutions" she faced after embracing the gospel in 1834, it also provides an example of conversion as a lifelong process rather than a single event. Nancy's story makes it clear that she understood the importance of recognizing and then remaining committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Her Early Years

Nancy was born on May 14, 1816, in Henderson, New York, USA (about 100 miles [160 km] northeast of Palmyra, New York). This area has become known for the frequent religious revivals that occurred there in the early 19th century. The denominational diversity that resulted from such movements certainly influenced Nancy's family. Her mother was a Baptist and her father a Universalist. Her aunt and uncle joined the Presbyterian church, and her maternal grandmother, with whom she lived following her father's passing, was a devout Methodist. Consequently, Nancy attended meetings at a variety of churches from a young age.

In early 19th-century America, young women were particularly prone to religious seeking and its accompanying revival attendance. Consequently, there were an estimated

three female converts for every two male converts within Protestantism.² Like so many of her friends and peers, Nancy had a strong interest in religion that was piqued as a result of camp meetings held by the Methodist church in an area near her grandparents' home in Herkimer County, New York. She attended expecting to experience conversion.

Although Nancy participated actively in various revival meetings and longed to find religion, she was disappointed in her search. "I wanted with all my heart to be good," she wrote, "but I could feel no different."

Because the messages she heard did not satisfy her, Nancy continued to seek. Her consistent desire to experience conversion and her commitment to revival attendance, combined with her belief that she, too, could experience the Spirit's presence in her daily life, played an important role in preparing her to recognize the restored gospel.

At the age of 16, Nancy felt prompted to return to Henderson, New York, so she could be near her mother. Upon her return home, she resumed her education and soon became acquainted with a young man named Moses Tracy. They were married on July 15, 1832, after a brief courtship.

Finally Finding the True Gospel

During the summer of 1832, Nancy heard "rumblings about a gold bible" that "made quite an excitement." Shortly thereafter, traveling preachers who called

themselves Mormon missionaries entered the area. Nancy decided to attend one of their meetings out of curiosity that had risen due to the various rumors she had heard about them. As she listened to a missionary named David Patten deliver the message, she experienced something that “was better felt than described.”

She explained further, “I well remember his powerful sermon on the first principles of the Gospel as taught by the Savior and his apostles. O how plain and beautiful and easy to understand. I believed with my whole soul and I could see that I had been preserved from uniting with other creeds . . . [I] told the folks that for the first time I had heard the true Gospel preached by David Patten who had been chosen as an Apostle, ordained and set apart to teach the pure doctrine of our Savior. They laughed at me and cried, ‘Delusion, false prophets,’ and so on. But the seed had taken root.”

Nancy had discovered what she had been searching for; she recognized and accepted the restored gospel immediately. She finally “felt different.”

Like many women converts in 19th-century America, Nancy would lead her husband to church. She shared her experience with him and encouraged him to “hear and investigate” for himself. They awaited the return of missionaries. Eventually, Parley P. Pratt visited their neighborhood. Moses attended a meeting with Nancy, “and his eyes began to be opened.” He read the Bible and contemplated the messages he had heard. On May 10, 1834, Nancy and Moses were baptized and confirmed members of the Church.

Commitment to the Restored Gospel

The remainder of Nancy’s life illustrates how conversion requires more than belief, baptism, and confirmation; it necessitates the daily decision to remain committed to the gospel despite temptations and trials. The seed that had



In her later years, Nancy lived in Marriott, Utah, where despite continued hardship, she remained faithful.

taken root when she recognized gospel truths required constant cultivation.

Nancy’s first major test of faith came when Moses and she felt that they should gather with the Saints in Kirtland, Ohio. Although saddened by the thought of leaving the home she loved in New York, and fearful that she might never see family members and friends again, she chose to trust the guidance of a prophet and the whisperings of the

Spirit. Heartbreak was tempered by the confirmation that she was doing the Lord’s will.

In March 1836, Nancy and Moses had the privilege of attending the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. She described the Pentecost-like event as “two of the happiest days of my life.” This experience prepared Nancy spiritually for the sacrifices ahead.

At the time, the Saints living in Missouri were experiencing significant challenges. Nonetheless, Nancy and Moses were asked to make the long and arduous trek to Far West, Missouri. With a testimony built on a foundation of faith, they moved to Missouri despite their concerns.

Upon arrival Nancy discovered that Church members in Far West were living in destitute conditions. Likewise, her family’s clothing and shoes were worn out, and they had little money and no shelter. Nancy and Moses built a cabin and pieced their temporal lives back together. Conditions improved slowly, and Nancy believed they had finally “found a permanent resting place.”

But such was not to be. Nancy’s husband, Moses, volunteered to fight in what became known as the Battle of Crooked River. This was a skirmish between Latter-day Saints and a unit of the Missouri Militia in 1838; it was followed by the conflict known as the Missouri Mormon War and the issuance of the governor’s infamous extermination order, which ordered the removal of all Latter-day

er this time I can tell you
have forgot that it is a

Saints from the state. In the Battle of Crooked River, Elder David Patten, the missionary who had introduced Nancy to the gospel, was killed. Problems in Missouri continued to mount. As a result, yet another move became inevitable, this time to Nauvoo, Illinois.

“Well, here we were again,” Nancy wrote, “to start anew to make another home with nothing but our hands and brains to begin with. We were not conquered in spirit but determined to live our religion and stand by the principles of the Gospel and help to build up the kingdom of God on the earth.”

Joys of Nauvoo

During the 19th century, many women in the United States and Great Britain established benevolent societies so they could formally engage in reform and charitable work. In Nauvoo, a small group of LDS women decided to form such a society of their own. They shared their plan with the Prophet Joseph Smith, who explained that he would help them establish something even better than a benevolent society. On March 17, 1842, the prophet officially organized the Relief Society “under the priesthood after the pattern of the priesthood.”³ The sisters were to not only give temporal aid but also engage in the work of salvation.⁴

By attending Relief Society and other Church meetings, and by studying and pondering upon gospel truths, Nancy nurtured her testimony and continued to develop her relationship with God. She took advantage of opportunities to receive instruction from the Prophet Joseph, particularly when he addressed the Relief Society sisters. Of one such experience she recalled, “He opened the meeting by prayer. He was so full of the Spirit of the Holy Ghost that his frame shook and his face shone and looked almost transparent.” Such moments became imprinted on her heart and mind and encouraged her to remain committed as further trials unfolded.

Moving Again

By the early 1840s, enemies from both within and without the Church turned against the Prophet Joseph Smith. In describing such conditions, Nancy wrote:

“The clouds had begun to gather. It was not all sunshine now in Nauvoo. The opposing element was at work. The prophet was harassed with false brethren and apostates trying to prefer charges against him and bring him before the courts, but they could not prove anything against him. And for what reason was this tirade against him? It was because he was a prophet of the living God and because he had chosen to lay the foundation of the kingdom of God on the earth in this last dispensation. This has been the case in every age of the world when there has been a prophet to lead the people of God. They have been persecuted in like manner, and this is still another testimony of the divinity of this work.”

The Tracys were out of town when Joseph Smith was martyred on June 27, 1844. “When we got back,” Nancy recalled, “we received the heart rending news that our prophet was slain in Carthage jail. We were horror stricken.”

Soon the Saints had to move again. Before departing for the Rocky Mountains, Nancy received her endowment in the Nauvoo Temple. This decision certainly provided spiritual fortification as she embarked upon the journey west. After arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, she and Moses established a home in Marriott, near Ogden. Nancy remained faithful until her death in 1902 at the age of 86.

Nancy Tracy, like many early converts to the Church, suffered extreme hardships while continually being uprooted from her home and chased away by those who opposed her faith. Nevertheless, she bore a subtle yet powerful testimony of the importance of conversion—not just the initial moment in which one recognizes truth, or the experience of entering into baptismal covenants, but also the journeys that lead to and follow those sacred experiences. Nancy testified that God had actively blessed her throughout her life, and her memoirs remind us of the importance of remaining engaged in the conversion process. ■

NOTES

1. Except as noted, all quotes and biographical information are from Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy, autobiographical writings, 1880–1899, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
2. Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: “Women’s Sphere” in New England, 1780–1835* (1997), 132.
3. *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 12.
4. See *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 9–25.



A CALL FOR INDEXERS WORLDWIDE

Since the introduction of FamilySearch indexing in 2006, over 800 million records have been digitized. But the work is not done, and the need for indexers worldwide is growing.

By Heather F. Christensen
Church Magazines

When Hilary Lemon of Utah, USA, returned home from her mission, she had a few months before she would start school again. Looking for ways to productively use her time, she began to help with online FamilySearch indexing. She started indexing in English but soon realized there were indexing opportunities in other languages—including Portuguese, the language she had learned on her mission.



FAMILYSEARCH IS EASY TO USE

Along with the rest of the youth in the Chorley England Stake, Makenzie, age 15, was invited by her stake presidency to index 200 names. "Two hundred turned into 2,000!" recalls Makenzie. "It's really fast and easy to index. There are prompts to help you understand names and places. I've shared my knowledge of indexing with my family and friends by showing them how to create their own account and demonstrating how simple and enjoyable it is."

"Since I served my mission in Portugal, I was interested in the indexing projects listed for Brazil and Portugal. My interest spiked when I saw a project from Setúbal, Portugal, one of the areas where I served," says Hilary.

Hilary is one volunteer who is helping meet FamilySearch's ever-growing need to index records in non-English languages. Like the other 127,000 active volunteers, Hilary is extracting the names and events of those who have passed on so that members can find the information they are seeking and complete their ancestors' ordinance work in the temple.

What Is Indexing?

FamilySearch indexing is the process of reading digitized versions of physical records—such as census, vital, probate, and church records—and typing the information they contain into an online searchable database. Through this work, indexing volunteers make it possible for members and other family history researchers to easily locate their ancestors' information on the Internet.

Indexing has brought a simplicity and ease to family history work. "In the past if you were looking for relatives, you had to wind through microfilm. When you found a family

member you were looking for, you might be able to find connecting names. So you would rewind and wind the microfilm again and again," says József Szabadkai, an indexer in Hungary.

Today FamilySearch continues to gather historical records from governments and record custodians all over the world. But instead of simply filming the records and making the films available to researchers, FamilySearch employees scan them into the indexing program. Volunteers pull up these images on their computers and type in the information as they see it. In this way, the information is digitized and can be found through the search function on FamilySearch.org while researchers sit in the comfort of their own homes.

How Far Has Indexing Come?

Since FamilySearch indexing's introduction in 2006, volunteer indexers have made significant progress—transcribing about 800 million records thus far. But the work is far from done. The Granite Mountain Records Vault in Salt Lake City, where the filmed records are stored and protected, contains some 15 billion records—and more records are constantly being added. These records





FINDING TIME FOR FAMILY HISTORY

Many people can't seem to find time to work on family history. Jonni Sue Schilaty of Utah, USA, found a way to fit indexing into her schedule. "I love indexing!" says Sister Schilaty. "When my husband and I take road trips, I download batches to my laptop, then go offline while I'm in the car. When we arrive, I go online, upload the completed batches, and then download more for the way home. I take advantage of every minute I can to index and find that these car trips work well for me."

hold information about billions of people from over 100 countries and include more than 170 languages.

Robert Magnuski, a Church-service missionary and active indexer from Poland, is experiencing firsthand the demand for more non-English volunteers. "Due to partition of the country from 1772 to 1918, Poland's records were kept in four languages: Russian, German, Latin, and Polish," he explains. Because most of Poland's indexers speak Polish, they started by indexing the Polish records. This still leaves work to be done on the Russian, German, and Latin records. With the help of volunteers worldwide who have experience with various languages, family history seekers throughout the world can find their ancestors—no matter the language their vital information was recorded in.

To make these records accessible, the indexing program has been made available online in 11 languages: Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Swedish. People who speak any of these languages—whether it's a native language or acquired through

missionary service, schooling, or other training—are encouraged to sign up and begin indexing records.

How Do I Get Started?

Getting started as a volunteer indexer is quick and easy. Follow the instructions at **indexing.familysearch.org** to download the program onto your computer. Next, set up an account, and then select a group, or "batch," of records to index. Records have been grouped into small batches of 20 to 50 names to allow volunteers to spend as little or as much time as they would like indexing. Each batch takes about 30 minutes to complete, but you can stop partway through and return to it later because the program will save the work you have done. If you are unable to finish the batch within a week, it will automatically become available for others to complete.

Batches from countries around the world are being provided for indexing as records from those countries are acquired by FamilySearch. Brother Szabadkai is from Hungary, but he began indexing records in English and Afrikaans until records from his own country were available. "It was one of the happiest moments when the first Hungarian batch was announced in the beginning of 2011," says Brother Szabadkai. "Many Hungarian members—young and old—have registered and become 'maniac' indexers since that time." Brother Szabadkai's enthusiasm stems from the hope that many of his own ancestors will be found as these records are transcribed. "As we build up this



fantastic database, we will be able to find more of our family names, saving time and helping our ancestors receive their saving ordinances faster.”

What If I Don't Have the Latest Technology?

In various parts of the world, obtaining a computer and Internet access presents a challenge for some who are eager to index. This is the situation leaders in the Mexico City Zarahemla Stake faced when they decided to get the youth involved in indexing. Because not all of the youth had computers in their homes, stake leaders decided to reserve a local school's computer labs after hours for them to use.

The youth then worked to index Mexican census records from 1930. “As the youth reviewed the documents,” says Bishop Darío Zapata Vivas, “they imagined people moving from house to house collecting all this information without knowing that someday their efforts would assist the Lord’s work of bringing ‘to pass the immortality and eternal life of man’” (Moses 1:39).

Through the creative efforts of the stake leaders to obtain the needed technology, the youth and other members of the stake were able to index over 300,000 records within one month.

As demonstrated by the youth of the Zarahemla stake, if you don't own your own computer, you can still participate. The indexing program can run on any computer with Internet access, including at other members' homes, in family history centers, at



meetinghouses, and even at schools or libraries where permissible.

The Blessings of Indexing

The Portuguese documents Sister Hilary Lemon indexed were baptismal records from over two centuries ago. The pages were faded and the elaborate handwriting was hard to read, but she persevered through the project as she thought of the names on the page as people waiting for their work to be performed in the temple.

“More than once as I indexed, I felt a sweet, firm impression that one day a Portuguese Latter-day Saint would open up that baptismal record that I had indexed and find his or her ancestor,” says Hilary. “Now that a temple is planned for Lisbon, Portugal, I know that there will come a day when the members there will find their ancestors because of the work that’s being done through FamilySearch indexing.”

With the help of volunteers like Sister Lemon, more records will be preserved and the way will be opened for those who have gone before to partake of the full blessings of the gospel. ■

*For more information, please visit **indexing.familysearch.org** or contact your ward or branch family history specialist.*

ANYONE CAN INDEX

Indexing is designed for people in all stages of life—including students, stay-at-home moms, businesspeople, or retirees. David and Bernice Blyde served seven full-time missions and are settled at home in New Zealand, where they continue to serve. “There is always something you can do within the Church to keep busy and active,” says Sister Blyde. “Indexing has fulfilled that need for us.” Since 2009 Sister Blyde has indexed over 180,000 names. “It’s exciting to be engaged in this wonderful resource,” she says. “This work is vital to finding our ancestors and giving them the opportunity to progress.”



Virtual Reality, Actual

Her story followed a familiar pattern. She had reconnected with an old flame on a social networking site.

"We started e-mailing each other once a week," my friend said to me. "Then twice, then every day. Now I find myself obsessed with what I am going to write to him. I reread things he writes to me. I know what you are probably going to say, but I don't want to give up his friendship. It is what I live for right now."

Then came her questions. "Do you think I have a problem? Do you think I should tell my husband? What do you think I should do?"

After asking a few questions, I found that her experience was nearly identical to what mine had been. She was caught up in the excitement of a new relationship, and she spent the majority of her free time developing it. She hid her new friendship from her husband. The emotional energy that she was putting into the new relationship should have been invested in her marriage. What at first seemed an innocent renewal of an old acquaintance had crossed dangerous boundaries, and she was unaware (or refused to see) that she was involved in an emotional relationship that could easily turn into a physical affair. It was something I had let happen to me, and I feared she was on the same path.

Based on my own experience, I have identified seven early warning signs that you are involved in an inappropriate online relationship.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVE STOKER



A woman with blonde hair is sitting on a brown couch, looking down at a laptop keyboard. She is wearing a blue short-sleeved shirt. The background is a textured brown wall.

Risks

Seven ways to guard against inappropriate online relationships.

Couples, you may find great benefit to reading this article together with your spouse.



BE FAITHFUL

"Be faithful in your marriage covenants in thought, word, and deed. Pornography, flirtations, and unwholesome fantasies erode one's character and strike at the foundation of a happy

marriage. Unity and trust within a marriage are thereby destroyed. One who does not control his thoughts and thus commits adultery in his heart, if he does not repent, shall not have the Spirit, but shall deny the faith and shall fear (see D&C 42:23; 63:16)."

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–1995), "Being a Righteous Husband and Father," *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 50.

1. You are withdrawing from your spouse.

Maintaining a healthy marriage takes effort, and I've learned that when either spouse stops taking care of the marriage, it is in danger. In my situation, my husband and I had created a marriage where we were dependent on each other to feel good about ourselves. When raising children and dealing with financial insecurity put pressure on our marriage, it stopped feeling good, and we invested less in each other. When we talked, it was mainly about daily logistics—not our feelings, thoughts, or interests. There was little money for dating.

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) taught: "Why all of these broken homes? What happens to marriages that begin with sincere love and a desire to be loyal and faithful and true one to another? . . . I find selfishness to be the root cause of most of it."¹

He also taught that marriage "is a union between a man and a woman under the plan of the Almighty. It can be fragile. It requires nurture and very much effort."²

2. You are hiding communications with your friend from your spouse.

If you feel you need to keep the relationship a secret, it's inappropriate. I convinced myself that my husband wouldn't be concerned about my communications with another man, but still I didn't tell him. Elder

Marvin J. Ashton (1915–1994) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles warned: "No [person] will ever be totally free who is living a lie. . . . We should ever bear in mind that a wrong isn't right just because many people do it. A wrong deed isn't right just because it hasn't become visible."³

3. You are preoccupied with and day-dream about your friend.

Even if you don't have a physical relationship with your online friend, your thoughts can reveal that the relationship is inappropriate. I asked my friend how much time she spends online writing to the other person. Then I asked her how much time she spends *thinking* about what she is going to write to the other person. The way we spend our mental energy is an indicator of our true focus. Although we may be able to keep our inappropriate thoughts hidden from the people around us, Heavenly Father "knoweth the secrets of the heart" (Psalm 44:21).

4. You are sharing your thoughts, feelings, and problems with your online friend instead of your spouse.

Such emotional relationships damage marriages. After some years of not communicating effectively, my husband and I grew apathetic about changing our patterns. Sharing my thoughts, feelings, and ideas with a different person simply seemed easier. This was a grave mistake. President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) counseled, "If you are married, avoid flirtations of any kind. . . . What may appear to be



harmless teasing or simply having a little fun with someone of the opposite sex can easily lead to more serious involvement and eventual infidelity. A good question to ask ourselves is this: Would my spouse be pleased if he or she knew I was doing this? Would a wife be pleased to know that her husband lunches alone with his secretary? Would a husband be pleased if he saw his wife flirting and being coy with another man? My beloved brothers and sisters, this is what Paul meant when he said: ‘Abstain from all appearance of evil’ (1 Thessalonians 5:22).”⁴

5. Your online friend seems to understand you better than your spouse does. You find yourself anticipating when you can communicate or be with your online friend again.

I know of people who organize their day around the time they will communicate with their new online friend. For some, they have become so dependent on the way they feel and represent themselves online that it has become the highlight of their day.

I’ve learned that as exciting and promising as a new relationship may seem, its true destructive nature is inevitably revealed in time. President Benson described this situation: “There may be momentary pleasure. For a time it may seem like everything is wonderful. But quickly the relationship will sour. Guilt and shame set in. We become fearful that our sins will be discovered. We must sneak and hide, lie and cheat. Love begins to die. Bitterness, jealousy, anger, and even hate begin to grow. All of these are the natural results of sin and transgression.”⁵



THINGS AS THEY REALLY ARE

“Almost everywhere we turn, there are those who would have us believe that what was once considered immoral is now acceptable. I think of the scripture, ‘Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness’ (2 Nephi 15:20; see also Isaiah 5:20). . . . We are reminded in the Book of Mormon that chastity and virtue are precious above all things.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “True to the Faith,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2006, 18.

6. You are not interested in being close to your spouse, emotionally or physically.

Emotional closeness is as important to a marriage as physical intimacy. When a person loses interest in being close to a spouse—emotionally or physically—that person may make the mistake of looking elsewhere for that closeness. President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) taught, “The tender flower would wither and die without food and water. And so love, also, cannot be expected to last forever unless it is continually fed with portions of love, the manifestation of esteem and admiration, the expressions of gratitude, and the consideration of unselfishness.”⁶

7. When confronted about having feelings toward someone other than your spouse, you justify your actions to yourself and others.

Husbands and wives do have positive relationships with members of the opposite sex. Friendships are important at all stages of life. However, this fact is often used to rationalize inappropriate behavior. Remember the pattern outlined by Elder ElRay L. Christiansen (1897–1975), Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve: “Now, the adversary knows that a little sin will not stay little, and he welcomes any and all into his kingdom by first trying to get us to lie a little, then helping us to try to justify ourselves in so

doing or to cheat or to steal. . . . He knows full well that, if continued, such diversions soon result in regrets, sorrows, and losses, because they lead us into greater sinfulness.”⁷

I don’t know any Latter-day Saint who intends to turn a friendship into an extramarital affair. I know *I* never imagined such devastation. But emotional affairs *are* affairs, and they damage relationships, even when they don’t involve sexual infidelity.⁸ In a revelation given to the elders of the Church in 1831, the Lord commanded, “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart” (D&C 42:22). President Benson said: “What does it mean to love someone with all your heart? It means to love with all your emotional feelings and with all your devotion.”⁹ Emotional attachment to someone who is not our spouse makes it impossible to love our spouse as the Lord commanded. The resulting heartache and feelings of betrayal are difficult to imagine when such relationships begin, but they can be devastating.

Ending an Improper Relationship

My advice to my friend was simple: end it. End the online friendship, no matter how awkward or difficult. Tell your spouse. Counsel with your bishop. Develop a pattern of happiness that is not dependent on others. Recognize that secret actions have consequences, and those who develop online friendships will most likely come to experience regret, pain, confusion, and shame. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said, “If an improper relationship is developing, sever it. Many of these influences, at least initially, may not technically be evil, but they can blunt



FOR MORE ON THIS TOPIC:

Kenneth W. Matheson, “Fidelity in Marriage: It’s More Than You Think,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2009, 12–16.

“What Prophets and Apostles Teach about Chastity and Fidelity,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1998, 38–41.

Terrance D. Olson, “Truths of Moral Purity,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1998, 42–49.



REMEMBERING CHRIST

“Most people in trouble end up crying, ‘What was I thinking?’ Well, whatever they were thinking, they weren’t thinking of Christ.

. . . Surely it would guide our actions in a dramatic way if we remembered that every time we transgress, we hurt not only those we love, but we also hurt Him, who so dearly loves us. But if we do sin, however serious that sin may be, we can be rescued by that same majestic figure, He who bears the only name given under heaven whereby *any* man or woman can be saved (see Acts 4:12). When confronting our transgressions and our souls are harrowed up with true pain, may we all echo the repentant Alma and utter his life-changing cry: ‘O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me’ (Alma 36:18).”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Place No More for the Enemy of My Soul,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2010, 46.

our judgment, dull our spirituality, and lead to something that could be evil.”¹⁰

My sin was never worth the pain it caused me, my spouse, and the rest of our family. I hope that others who find themselves in dangerous online situations can have a similar change of heart—the kind that is possible only through the Lord Jesus Christ. ■

NOTES

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “What God Hath Joined Together,” *Ensign*, May 1991, 73.
2. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Walking in the Light of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 99.
3. Marvin J. Ashton, “This Is No Harm,” *Ensign*, May 1982, 11.
4. Ezra Taft Benson, “The Law of Chastity,” in *1987–88 Brigham Young University Devotional Addresses* (1988), 52.
5. Ezra Taft Benson, “Chastity,” 51.
6. Spencer W. Kimball, “Marriage and Divorce,” *1976 Devotional Speeches of the Year* (1977), 150.
7. ElRay L. Christiansen, “Power Over Satan,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 24.
8. Ronald T. Potter-Efron and Patricia S. Potter-Efron, *The Emotional Affair: How to Recognize Emotional Infidelity and What to Do about It* (2008), 15.
9. Ezra Taft Benson, “To the Fathers in Israel,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 50.
10. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Place No More for the Enemy of My Soul,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 45.



Sunday

IN A FOXHOLE

By Bruce DeYoung

The majority of my platoon had been killed earlier that week in a massive firefight. Our team had just come back from an extensive patrol near the Cua Viet River in Vietnam, and I was struggling with the harsh realities of war. It was Sunday—one of the few when we weren't in combat—and I was sharing a foxhole with two marines. In the afternoon I began my one-hour shift to stand watch while the others left for a break. I was grateful for these moments of privacy because they gave me the opportunity, with priesthood permission, to hold my own personal sacrament meetings. I was the only Latter-day Saint in our battalion.

Earlier that week I had saved some hard crackers so I could use them for my sacrament. I took out the crackers, filled a little can of water, and carefully placed them on a towel. I was living out of a small pack, and my resources were scant. I sang an opening hymn and offered a prayer thanking Heavenly Father for the opportunity to hold a sacrament meeting and for the peace of the day.

In this prayer and in others during that lonely time, I learned to pour out my heart to Him. Being in combat and facing the tragedies of war helped me recognize what I was truly thankful for. Heavenly Father was the only one

I could talk to about my worries and fears. At the conclusion of my prayer, I felt a closeness to Him and a feeling of peace and comfort. I sang a sacrament hymn and thought of my family attending their sacrament meeting at home that day. After the hymn, I knelt and read the sacrament prayers from Moroni chapters 4 and 5 of my miniature Book of Mormon, asking Heavenly Father to bless the bread and water before I partook of it.

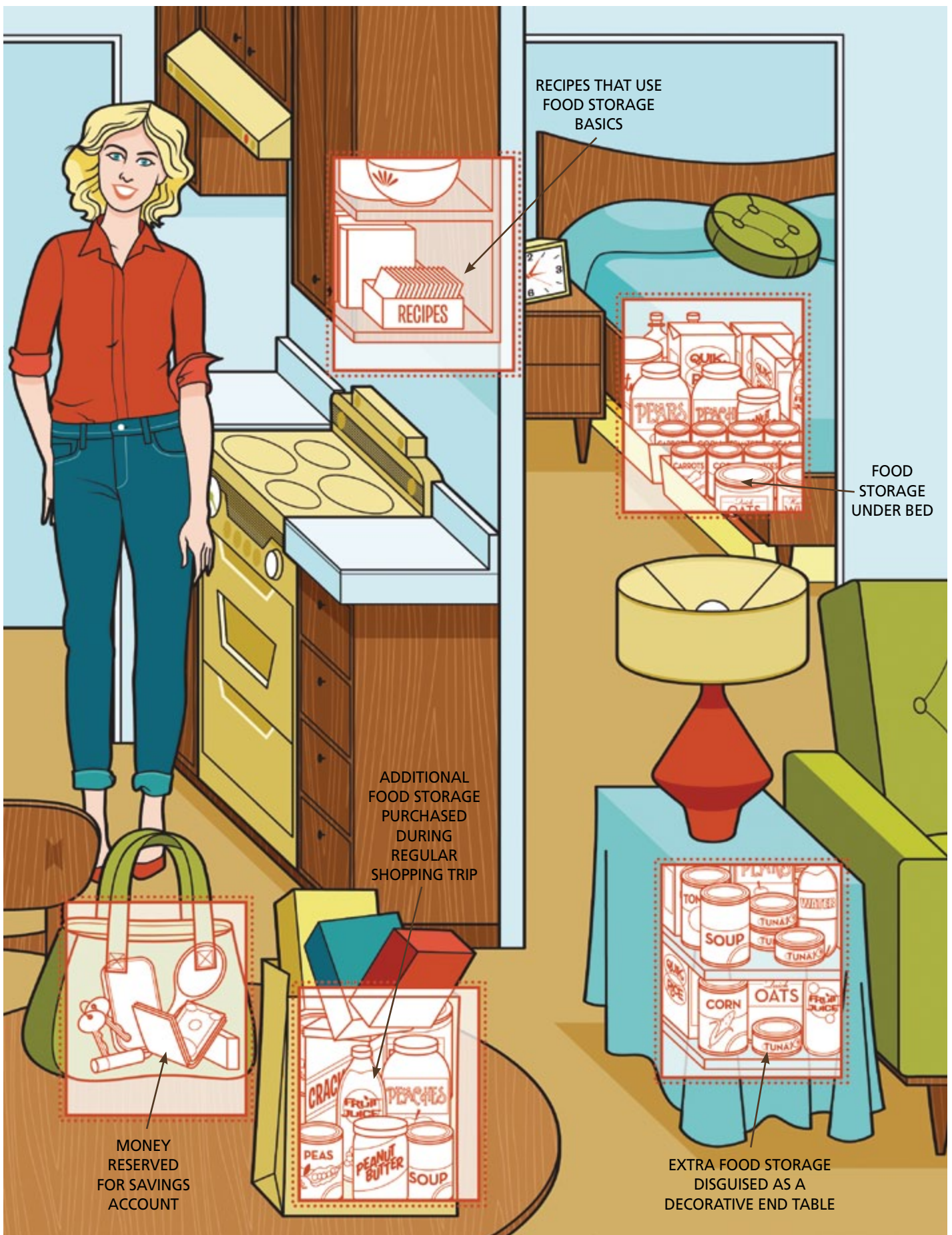
I loved these little meetings and was sad when they came to a close. I ended by singing the hymn “I Need Thee Every Hour.”¹ I was alone in a foxhole, but in my mind I was singing with a congregation of Saints.

With tears running down my cheeks, I knelt and closed with a prayer. I thanked Heavenly Father for the hymns and for watching over me. I recognized His hand in all things. It brought me comfort to be reminded that the Lord was aware of my prayers and efforts to draw near to Him.

These simple but powerful meetings helped me find the peace and comfort I was seeking at such a dark and lonely time. Even in the battlegrounds of war, I could still feel the Spirit and the Lord's love for me. ■

NOTES

1. *Hymns*, no. 98.



RECIPES THAT USE
FOOD STORAGE
BASICS

FOOD
STORAGE
UNDER BED

ADDITIONAL
FOOD STORAGE
PURCHASED
DURING
REGULAR
SHOPPING TRIP

MONEY
RESERVED
FOR SAVINGS
ACCOUNT

EXTRA FOOD STORAGE
DISGUISED AS A
DECORATIVE END TABLE

Everyday Home Storage

Making home storage a part of our everyday lives.

By Emily Jamison

When my husband, Brian, was a graduate student, we worked hard to stretch his small income so that I could stay home full time with our children. During one semester, unexpected school expenses significantly depleted our savings. We approached the birth of our second daughter with little more than condiments left in our refrigerator. Anxious about the future and unsure of what to do, I prayed.

As I prayed, my feelings of concern gave way to a calming reassurance that the Lord would provide. I'm not sure what I expected, but what the Lord sent was an idea: I recalled that my mother-in-law had given us some food storage a few months earlier. I searched through recipes, and the Lord inspired me with ways to use the canned goods to make tasty, nutritious meals. Although it took some creativity, our food storage sustained us over the next few months until the end of the semester.

That struggle helped me realize the importance of family home storage. My husband and I resolved to make a conscious effort to acquire more food, water, and savings for our growing family. For us, the best way to accomplish this was to find small ways to make family home storage a part of everyday life.

Starting Small

Over the next several months, I began to gradually build our home storage. Before each grocery shopping trip, I checked my list for items that would keep for at least three months and purchased additional quantities of those items. I made sure to buy food that was part of my family's normal diet, which made it easier to rotate through it on a regular basis. Every few months, I bought wheat, rice, flour, and oats until we had built up a long-term supply. Our parents and others saw our determination to gather food storage, and they gave us some of their surplus. I frequently experimented with the storage items, using them to make homemade tortillas, bread, pasta, seasoned rice, and granola rather than purchasing these products from the grocery store. I also learned how to make my own yogurt and cheese using powdered milk. Whenever I wanted to make a certain recipe, I would consider whether I could make it from scratch and substitute ingredients that I already had in my house rather than purchase ingredients from the store.

Because we had limited space, we had to be creative. We kept our food storage under the bed. We also covered boxes and buckets of supplies with tablecloths and used them as decorative end tables.



BUDGET ALLOCATING MONEY FOR FOOD STORAGE AND SAVINGS

hard, but it enabled us to build our home storage and be better prepared for the future.

Facing Adversity

Having met our home storage goals, we enjoyed a sense of security—for about a month. Then one morning a police officer called and asked me to come to the hospital emergency room right away. Brian had been in a bicycle accident on his way to school. Even though he had been wearing a helmet, he had sustained a traumatic brain injury.

When I got to the hospital and saw him in a coma-like state, I was scared. I was afraid that he might not live, or that if he did, that he might not be able to talk, read, or lead a normal life. Would he be able to continue his schooling? I felt anxiety not only about him but about our family's future.

The doctors could offer no assurance that Brian would recover. But that day he received a priesthood blessing in which he was promised that he would fully recover and that his brain would function properly again, according to his and my faith. At that moment the Spirit whispered comfort to me and confirmed that the promises in the blessing would come to pass. With resolve, I chose to have faith and dismiss all doubts.

When my mind turned to how we would get by in the coming months, I was grateful that we had gotten our home storage in order. I knew that our family's immediate needs would be taken care of for several months before I would need to consider obtaining employment.

Because our basic needs were met, I was able to focus on supporting Brian during his recovery while also remaining at home to care

"We encourage Church members worldwide to prepare for adversity in life by having a basic supply of food and water and some money in savings."

The First Presidency, All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Home Storage (2007).

"With careful planning, you can, over time, establish a home storage supply and a financial reserve."

The First Presidency, All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Home Storage (2007).

Reestablishing our savings—our "financial storage"—was also important. Instead of dwelling on the limitations of our small earnings, we focused on making saving a regular practice. With every paycheck, we paid our tithing and then designated a percentage of the remaining funds to deposit into our savings account. Anytime we happened to receive extra income, we put the money in savings rather than use it to buy new furniture, fancy electronics, or other unnecessary items.

We made an effort to live on less. We separated our wants and needs by determining if items were essential or simply nice to have. Essentials included tithing, food, and shelter. We also decided that a phone was a necessity, but we chose a more basic option rather than the latest technology. We had resolved early in our marriage to not incur credit card debt. When Brian or I were tempted to buy something beyond our means, we helped each other maintain perspective.

As we took small steps, our savings and food supply grew at a steady rate. Within a year we had a long-term supply of grains, a three-month supply of food and water, and several months' worth of savings. Living on less was

For more information, visit the home storage section of providentliving.org or refer to the pamphlet *All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Home Storage*.

for our two girls. Priesthood blessings, prayers, and special fasts helped Brian recover quickly. He spent only five weeks in the hospital. Only three months after the accident, he was ready to go to work and school part time.

Moving Forward with Faith

Brian soon recovered his health enough to work full time, but by then the worldwide recession had hit. Most of his co-workers had been laid off, and his former position was no longer available. While Brian searched for adequate employment, we lived off of our food storage and savings. Through some temporary jobs, kind help from friends and family, and the blessings of the Lord, we did not have to go into debt, even though Brian's search for employment went on for months.

When more than a year had gone by, we had very little left in savings and our food storage was running low. Although our circumstances seemed bleak, we had faith that the Lord would provide. Just in time, Brian was offered a position with income that was more than sufficient to meet our expenses. As soon as we were able, we recommenced our efforts to build our savings and food supply.

For us, home storage has become more than an item on a to-do list. It is an important part of Heavenly Father's plan to provide for our families. Having our three-month supply helps us feel empowered and secure even during troubled times. We have reaped spiritual and temporal rewards by following the Lord's counsel. When we are doing all we can to provide for ourselves and our families, He makes up the difference. He loves us, and He'll make sure that our needs are met. We take comfort in knowing that as we move forward with faith, our family is prepared for whatever lies ahead. ■

START ESTABLISHING FAMILY HOME STORAGE TODAY

Here are some helpful tips to start establishing food storage and a financial reserve:

- Designate an area in your home where you can keep your food storage.
- Each time you go grocery shopping, pick up a few nutritious items that will store for several months to add to your storage.
- Stock up on items when they are on sale, and buy in bulk when practical. Be sure to check expiration labels before you make the purchase.
- Buy only items you know you'll use so you can easily rotate through your food storage.
- Store water in sturdy plastic juice or soft drink bottles that you have emptied and rinsed.
- Order basic long-term food items such as wheat, flour, and oats from a Church home storage center or other trustworthy organization.
- Designate a percentage of your monthly budget for food storage.
- Start putting a percentage of your income or a certain dollar amount in a savings account each month.

- Help others establish home storage by giving food storage items or money for savings accounts as gifts.



YOU SPEAK RUSSIAN?

Although we were very busy, my husband, Daniil, and I decided we should visit the Preston England Temple one more time before the end of 2009. It takes two buses and almost six hours to get to the temple from the small Scottish town where we live.

The morning we planned to leave dawned cloudy and rainy, but we were happy to be going to the temple. While we waited an extra hour to

catch the second bus at the transfer point, it began pouring rain and getting cold.

However, the hope that we would soon be in the temple warmed our hearts. When we arrived in Preston, we felt a strong impression to go immediately to the temple. We were hungry and dripping wet, but we listened to the Holy Ghost.

When we entered the temple, a friendly temple worker asked for our temple recommends. He took off his glasses and looked again at the names on our recommends.

“Are you from Russia?” he asked in astonishment.

“Yes,” we answered, a bit surprised at his reaction.

“So you speak Russian?” he asked.

“Of course,” we said.

He then picked up the telephone and called someone.

When we arrived in Preston, England, we felt a strong impression to go immediately to the temple.



Soon the temple president approached us. Through his glasses, we could see he had tears in his eyes. “You are angels from God!” he said with a smile, asking that we follow him. We followed him and soon saw a confused young missionary with temple workers standing around him.

It turned out that this missionary was from Armenia and spoke Russian. He had been called to serve in the England London Mission but had not yet learned English. There was not a single Russian-speaking person in the missionary training center adjacent to the temple. On that day he was supposed to receive his endowment, but temple workers had been unable to communicate with him—that is, until a thoroughly soaked Russian couple walked in.

Daniil immediately asked to accompany the young missionary. The missionary was overjoyed and later said he had felt a special spirit when we arrived.

I am grateful that despite our busy schedules and the rainy weather, my husband and I still decided to visit the temple that day so we could help a Russian-speaking son of God in Great Britain. I am grateful for temple blessings, which brighten our lives with a special light and purpose. I know that if we will heed the promptings of the Holy Ghost, He will lead us back to our heavenly home—just as He led my husband and me to the house of the Lord that day. ■

Anna Nikiticheva, Scotland

I NOTICED THEM NOT

While recently reading the Book of Mormon, I came upon the following admonition: “Why do ye . . . suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not?” (Mormon 8:39).

Instead of feeling the peace and comfort I usually find in the scriptures, I was overcome by a lingering feeling of sadness. I had long recognized that I am not a particularly observant person. I had allowed myself to get so involved in my life, my callings, and my family that I just didn’t notice the challenges other people were having.

I knew I wasn’t doing all I could “to bear one another’s burdens, that they [might] be light; . . . to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:8–9). I wanted to change; I wanted to be better. I simply didn’t know how. I prayed that the Lord would help me.

My answer came in an unexpected and unwanted way when I contracted a chronic illness. It slowly took away all my cumbersome busyness. As the disease progressed, I had to give up my outside activities, my callings, and my Church attendance. I’m house-bound, I’m lonely, and I feel unnoticed.

I pray that someday the Lord will heal me. When He does, I promise



I prayed that the Lord would help me be a better person. My answer came in an unexpected and unwanted way.

myself that I will never be so blind again. When I arrive at church, I will look to see who is sitting alone and who is not attending that day. I will take time each week to overcome my shyness and visit somebody who is sick or afflicted or just in need of a friend. I will love my brothers and sisters every day—not just on Sunday or during Church activities.

I will remember and, I hope, be worthy to hear the Lord’s approbation: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40). ■

Shelli Proffitt Howells, California, USA

I DIDN'T WANT TO SERVE

When I was 11, at a regional conference in Johannesburg, South Africa, President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) shook my hand and said, “You’re going to go on a mission and be a fine missionary someday.”

Most young men would have cherished those words forever. Not me. For the next 10 years I had no desire to serve a mission. I was more concerned with success in sports and my social life. I thought that giving up two years would throw all that away. During interviews with my branch

and stake presidents, I would come up with excuses as to why I didn’t want to serve.

At 21, still with no desire to serve a mission, I visited my family in the United States, in Iowa. They had moved there the year before. While in Iowa I had the chance to go to the Winter Quarters Nebraska Temple with the local singles branch. I wasn’t endowed, so I figured I’d perform baptisms for the dead.

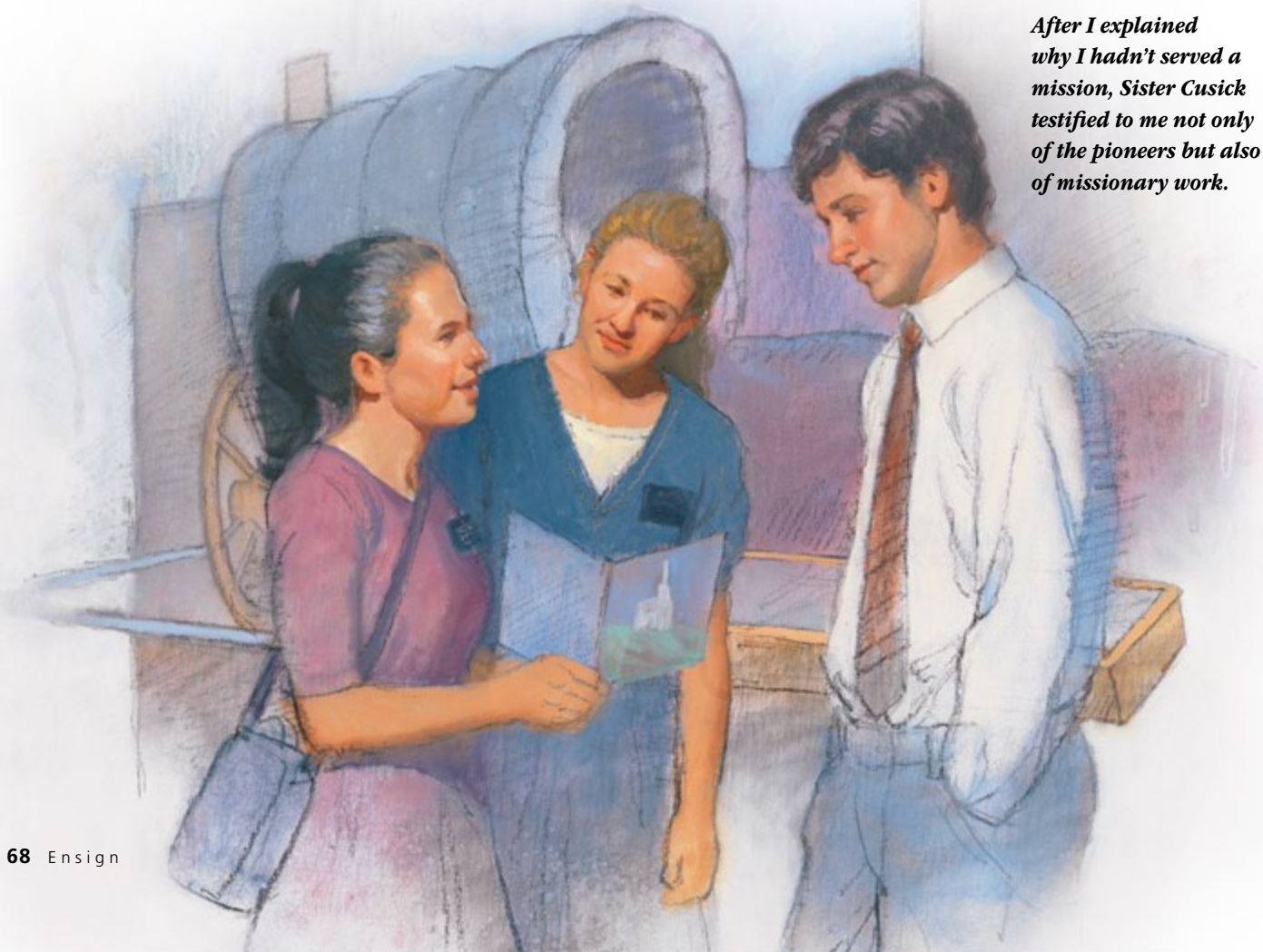
Upon arriving at the temple, I discovered there was no baptismal

session scheduled for the afternoon. I thought, “Great, what am I going to do for the next two and a half hours?”

I decided to go to the Mormon Trail Visitors’ Center across the street. After watching a 15-minute movie about the pioneers, I was greeted by two sister missionaries who were going to take me on my own personal tour. After learning a little bit about me, Sister Cusick asked why I hadn’t served a mission. The usual excuses came flying out. Sister Cusick then testified to me not only of the pioneers but also of missionary work.

After the tour I sat in the temple waiting room, thinking. Suddenly,

After I explained why I hadn’t served a mission, Sister Cusick testified to me not only of the pioneers but also of missionary work.



my excuses for not serving a mission became a stupor of thought. The Spirit testified strongly that I should serve a mission. From the time I started talking to the sister missionaries, everything had changed inside me. The Spirit testified to my heart what I needed to do.

Months later I found out that the still, small voice had told Sister Cusick that I needed to have my own tour. She didn't know why, but the Lord had plans for me.

I served in the California Ventura Mission—the greatest mission in the world—and built some wonderful friendships that I hope will last through the eternities. I didn't believe President Hunter for 10 years, but he knew exactly what he was talking about.

My life changed completely, all because a sister missionary acted on the promptings of the Holy Ghost. ■
Neville Smeda, California, USA

THE LORD IS MY SONG

Since I lived in a small Arizona town with a predominantly Latter-day Saint population, missionaries and Church members often approached me about the Church. They frequently invited my children and me to attend church, read the scriptures, or both. I had no interest in accepting their invitations but politely thanked them for their interest in my family.

As I got to know the woman I would later marry, she told me she

was a Latter-day Saint. I admired her spirituality and agreed to attend church with her after we married. True to my word, I started attending regularly and even enjoyed the atmosphere and camaraderie. But even though I studied the scriptures, attended church, and prayed alone and with my family, I still doubted God's existence. No matter how hard I tried, I felt as though I couldn't shake my agnostic roots. Because I felt no closer to God than when I had started, I declined all invitations to be baptized.

After I had attended church for six years, my father, who had been in the U.S. Army, passed away suddenly. My family and I wanted to have taps played at the grave site, and since I am a professional musician, I was asked to perform the song. I had performed at hundreds of grave site ceremonies, but because this was my father's service, I knew it would be different for me. I also knew from my mother's funeral that my heightened sense of emotion would affect my ability to play. I was determined not to let my emotions interfere with the music as they had during her service.

Minutes before the ceremony started, I nervously tried to warm up. Just a few practice notes had escaped my lips when I realized I was repeating my previous failure. Tears formed and I started to cry. My sobs impeded my breathing. How would I be able to perform?

I wasn't concerned with accolades for myself, but I did want to honor my father. As I started to play, I found I couldn't take a complete breath. It was uncharacteristic of me to ask for help, but at this point, I didn't know what else to do. The first note that came out was weak. Inwardly I pleaded with my Heavenly Father: "Please." As I played the second note, my lungs filled with air, and the sound rang out of my horn with a startling, beautiful tone. Throughout the rest of the piece, I played well beyond my ability. When I finished the last note, I was suddenly out of breath and choking for air through my tears.

As a musician, I am aware of my strengths and weaknesses. Simply put, I couldn't have played that well even under the best of circumstances. It was obvious to me that Heavenly Father had answered my plea and blessed me with the strength and ability to honor my earthly father. I was given a special witness that Heavenly Father answers us in a manner that we can understand. His answer in my time of need helped me realize that He had always been eager to communicate with me.

After several months I cleared my agnostic hurdle and joined the Church. Although it was a leap of faith to be baptized, I knew that Heavenly Father would bless me. My experience while playing taps taught me that He will answer my prayers according to my needs and understanding. ■

Tom Sullivan, Arizona, USA

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.



your
DREAM
come true

STORIES FROM CONFERENCE

The Golden Ticket

One woman wanted more than anything else to marry a righteous priesthood holder in the temple and be a mother and a wife. She had dreamed about this all her life, and oh, what a wonderful mother and loving wife she would be. Her home would be filled with loving-kindness. Never a bitter word would be spoken. The food would never burn. And her children, instead of hanging out with their friends, would prefer to spend their evenings and weekends with Mom and Dad.

"This was her golden ticket. It was the one thing upon which she felt her whole existence depended. It was the one thing in all the world for which she most desperately yearned.

"But it never happened. And, as the years went on, she became more and more withdrawn, bitter, and even angry. She could not understand why God would not grant her this righteous desire.

"She worked as an elementary school teacher, and being around children all day long simply reminded her that her golden ticket had never appeared. As the years passed she became more disappointed and withdrawn. People didn't like being around her and avoided her whenever they could. She even took her frustration out on the children at school. . . .

"The tragedy of this story is that this dear woman, in all her disappointment about her golden ticket, failed to notice the blessings she *did* have. She did not have children in her home, but she was surrounded by them in her classroom. She was not blessed with a family, but the Lord had given her an opportunity few people have—the chance to influence for good the lives of hundreds of children and families as a teacher.

"The lesson here is that if we spend our days waiting for fabulous roses, we could miss the beauty and wonder of the tiny forget-me-nots that are all around us."

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "Forget Me Not," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 121–22.

Questions to ponder:

- What might be your "golden ticket," and how is it hindering your ability to see the blessings you already have?
- What are the "tiny forget-me-nots" you might be overlooking in your life?

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

Additional resources on this topic: Study by Topic on LDS.org, "Gratitude"; Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Happiness, Your Heritage," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 117–20.

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

Beloved

Every one of us is more beloved to the Lord than we can possibly understand or imagine. Let us therefore be kinder to one another and kinder toward ourselves."

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Waiting upon the Lord: Thy Will Be Done," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 73.

Prophetic Promise

Once you have studied the doctrines and principles of the Churchwide welfare plan, seek to apply what you have learned to the needs of those within your stewardship. What this means is that, in large measure, you're going to have to figure it out for yourself. . . .

" . . . You must do in your area what disciples of Christ have done in every dispensation: counsel together, use all resources available, seek the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, ask the Lord for His confirmation, and then roll up your sleeves and go to work.

"I give you a promise: if you will follow this pattern, you will receive specific guidance as to the *who*, *what*, *when*, and *where* of providing in the Lord's way."

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "Providing in the Lord's Way," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 55.

You're Invited

"I invite

Who: "the young people of the Church

What: "to learn about and experience the Spirit of Elijah.

How: "I encourage you to study, to search out your ancestors, and to prepare yourselves to perform proxy baptisms in the house of the Lord for *your* kindred dead."

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 26.

STUDY CORNER

Drawing Parallels: Repentance

Speakers in conference often teach some of the same principles. Here is what four speakers said about repentance. Try looking for other parallels as you study conference talks.

- "If any of you has stumbled in your journey, I want you to understand without any question whatsoever that there is a way back. The process is called repentance."¹—President Thomas S. Monson
- "You may in time of trouble think that you are not worth saving because you have made mistakes, big or little, and you think you are now lost. That is *never* true! Only repentance can heal what hurts."²—President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
- "Whoever you are and whatever you have done, you can be forgiven. . . . It is the miracle of forgiveness; it is the miracle of the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ."³—Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
- "Only through repentance do we gain access to the atoning grace of Jesus Christ and salvation. Repentance is a divine gift, and there should be a smile on our faces when we speak of it."⁴—Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Notes

1. Thomas S. Monson, "Dare to Stand Alone," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 62.
2. Boyd K. Packer, "Counsel to Youth," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 18.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, "We Are All Enlisted," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 45.
4. D. Todd Christofferson, "The Divine Gift of Repentance," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 38.



Home Teaching MADE ME A BETTER Missionary

By Chris Deaver

I planned to serve a mission, and I knew that accepting every calling that came my way would help me prepare. When I arrived at Brigham Young University as a freshman at the age of 17, I was assigned a home teaching companion my age, Matt, and a list of individuals to home teach.

For the first time in my life, it was up to me to actually do the teaching. And despite years of attending seminary and Sunday School, I was nervous. I set up an appointment with Chantelle, a girl on our list of people to home teach. At first she was hesitant to meet with us, but she finally agreed. As we sat down with Chantelle, we weren't sure what to talk about, so we started by introducing ourselves. Matt and I each talked about our backgrounds—where we were from and why we had come to college at Church-owned BYU. Then Chantelle looked us in the eyes and with a serious tone said, “I honestly don't know why you're visiting me.”

I explained that we had been assigned to visit her as part of our home teaching route. It was important for us to talk to her and do everything we could to serve her. Then Chantelle told us something that shocked us. She said, “I'm not a member of your Church. I came to BYU because my best friend came here. She drove here in a separate car, got in a car accident, and was killed. And now I'm here

without her. Can you explain *that* to me?”

I sat in silence. Matt and I had no idea what to say. Remembering that the scriptures have answers to life's problems, I quickly thumbed through them looking for something helpful to share. Nothing seemed to provide the right answer. I thought about all the past experiences I had, and none seemed to even come close to what Chantelle was going through. Suddenly, I felt the Spirit prompt me to testify.

So I testified to her about Heavenly Father's love for her, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and the reality of the plan of happiness for her and her friend. Then Matt shared his testimony of the restored gospel. The Spirit bore witness that what we shared was true, and Chantelle's eyes filled with tears.

We continued to visit Chantelle for the next several months. She attended church and ultimately decided to be baptized. Since then, she has been sealed in the temple to a righteous priesthood holder. Matt and I both later served full-time missions. While on my mission in Peru, I often testified to others in the same way that I had testified to Chantelle. And the Spirit confirmed my words again and again. I do not know how much influence Matt and I had on Chantelle's conversion, but I know that home teaching changed my life. It made me a missionary. ■

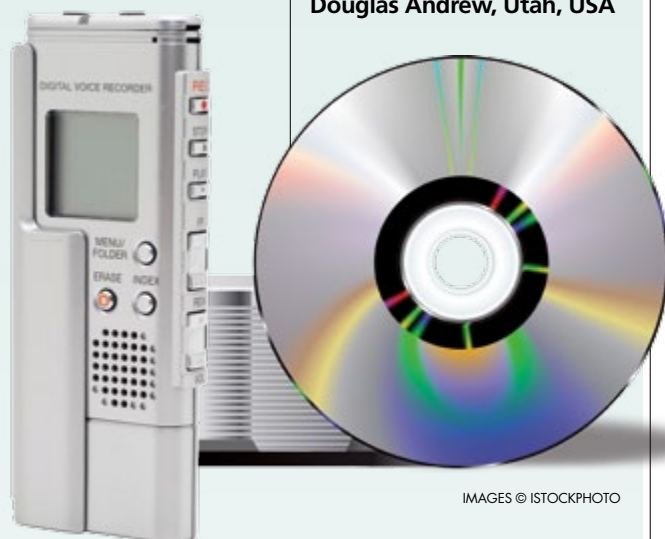
Our ward holds a monthly empty-nesters' family home evening for elderly couples, widows, and widowers in the ward. Every other month, we ask someone from the group to talk about their life for 45 minutes. We give them a list of questions beforehand to help them prepare. Here are some examples of questions we ask:

- Was there anything unusual about the time, place, or conditions in which you grew up?

- What are fond memories you have of your childhood?
- What did you study for professional training and employment?
- What are your favorite hobbies and pastimes?
- What are some fond memories of your courtship, marriage, and child-rearing years?
- Share your feelings about your Father in Heaven, Jesus Christ, and the gospel.

family and for the ward. This practice has become a wonderful family home evening activity and has helped those who attend feel more a part of the ward.

Douglas Andrew, Utah, USA



IMAGES © ISTOCKPHOTO

“Follow the Prophet,” on page 18: Summarize the article for your family. You may want to read the last section of the article, “Learning to Listen to the Prophetic Word.” Review the phrases that Elder Bennett says can help us discern the direction prophets give us. Invite family members to be attentive to the prophets’ counsel in general conference next month and to listen for these phrases. Consider closing with your testimony of the blessings we receive by following the prophet.

“Have I Done Any Good in the World Today?” on page 34: Consider opening with the song “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet” (*Hymns*, no. 19). Read the article as a family or select your favorite sections beforehand to read. Ask family members what they learned about President Thomas S. Monson that they didn’t know before. Hand out

sheets of paper and ask everyone to write down how they know that President Monson is the living prophet today. Invite family members who haven't gained this testimony to seek after it through sincere prayer. Close by singing "Have I Done Any Good?" (*Hymns*, no. 223).



Have I Done Any Good in the World Today?

LIFE EXPERIENCES OF
PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON

By Heidi S. Godwin

I was serving with my husband, then the president of the England London South Division, when the phone rang on June 1, 2008. It was President Thomas S. Monson. He began in his usual friendly fashion, one of the trademarks of his ministry: "How is the mission? How is your family? How is Jilly old England?" and then he paused and said, "I have been talking with Frances, I have prayed about it, and I would like you to write my biography."

Needless to say, I was honored and immensely overwhelmed. He then suggested that if I got started the next morning, I could be halfway done by the time we came home. "We had one year left of our three-year call."

President Monson teaches, "Whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies." I have come to appreciate that promise.

How do you write about the life of a prophet? You begin not at the keyboard but on your knees.

typical biography outlining dates, times, places, and events. It was the account of a man prepared before the world was and called of God "to guide us in these latter days." "A world in the best description. Dazzling, challenging, and commanding follow close behind.

The Lord has said, "Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:30). Hearing the Lord speak through his prophet since Thomas S. Monson's call to the holy apostleship in 1965 is where I began. I spent months reading the hundreds of messages President Monson has given in myrads of settings. I read biographies of all the Presidents of the Church and of many noted religious leaders. I studied the early Church in Scotland, Sweden, and England, where President Monson's ancestors hail from, the Depression that so influenced his youth, and World War II and its aftermath with a divided Germany (President Monson



Left: President Mannersten Elder Mannersten—on the steps of the Church Administration Building in 1967. Above, from top to bottom: Elder M. Russell Ballard at the groundbreaking of the Joseph F. Smith Building at Brigham Young University in 2001; at the Lale Mawall Temp rededication in 2010; with his wife, Frances, following the April 2009

News of the Church

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



Worldwide Leadership Training Highlights Path to Real Growth

By Heather Whittle Wrigley

Church News and Events

Church leaders explained the significance of “real growth” and how to achieve it during the February 11, 2012, Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, and members of the Quorum of the Twelve

Apostles, the Presidency of the Seventy, and Church auxiliary presidencies participated in the instruction to Church leaders around the world.

“In Church terms, *growth* could be defined as ‘new members.’ . . . *Real growth*, however, is defined as ‘growth

in the number of active members,’” President Uchtdorf explained.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles added, “Growth occurs when personal, lifelong conversion to the gospel results in increased faithfulness of each individual and family.”

That increased faithfulness includes things that can’t be easily measured, such as daily prayer, scripture study, family home evening, love at home, and personal experiences

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles speaks during a panel discussion held as part of the Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting in February 2012.

with the Atonement, President Uchtdorf said.

“Too often, we complicate the beauty and simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ with endless lists of meticulous expectations,” he said. “However, when we focus on the ‘why’ of the gospel, much of the confusion fades away.”

Much of the broadcast focused on key doctrines and principles, which provide answers to “why” questions.

“The proper ‘why’ questions will lead us to the proper ‘who,’ ‘what,’ ‘when,’ ‘where,’ ‘why,’ and ‘how,’ decisions,” President Uchtdorf said.

Marriage and Family in the Plan

“The Church is made up of families,” President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said. “Wards and stakes are incidental. When we talk of families, then we see the real growth in the Church.”

He stated that every husband and father should be an officer in the priesthood in his home, presiding over his family in righteousness. Similarly, he said, priesthood leaders should lead

worthily—though the offices within the priesthood vary, every worthy priesthood holder has just as much priesthood as the next (see D&C 1:20).

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stressed that husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, must build a relationship of love, repentance, and prayer to successfully strengthen and protect the family, which “is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129).

“Three times in sacred scripture the warning is made that the whole earth would be utterly wasted at the Lord’s return if certain conditions were not in place,” he said. “In each instance that warning relates to the condition of the human family without the sealing ordinances of the temple. Without these ordinances of exaltation, the glory of God would not be realized.”

Achieving that end goal—eternal life and exaltation for all of God’s children—requires that real growth occur in our

From Understanding to Action

During February’s Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said, “The first thing we must do is understand. The second is to put our understanding into action. . . . There is little good in hearing the word of God if we do not translate what we hear into our lives.”

He invited Church leaders to do three things following the leadership broadcast and throughout their service in their callings to get the most out of instruction by Church leaders:

1. Individually and as councils, prayerfully consider the instruction you have received and find the “why” of your service and ministry.
2. Following pondering and discussion, determine a few specific actions you will commit to implement. Actions should be tailored to the circumstances and needs of each organization, ward, stake, family, or individual.
3. Once you have made these commitments, follow up on them within the scope of your responsibilities and callings at each of your council meetings. ■

homes, in wards and branches, and throughout the Church.

Application of the Gospel

Real growth and conversion come from applying the gospel to daily life. In a question-and-answer discussion, Elder L. Tom Perry and Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that the ultimate application of the gospel is making and keeping temple covenants. Obedience to covenants, Elder Christofferson said, can change the natural man to a Saint over time.

Reaching out to others is another important aspect of gospel application. Members are responsible individually and as a Church to reach out to rescue those in temporal and spiritual need, leaders said.

We should not hesitate to join hands with other faiths and service-oriented organizations to care for the poor and the needy, Elder Christofferson said. Priesthood leaders should lead out in these efforts, but members and missionaries should support that role as well.

A panel discussion emphasized focusing on ministering to families, strengthening Melchizedek Priesthood holders, and helping to build the faith and testimonies of the

youth. Elder Ballard and Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles participated, along with Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Presidency of the Seventy; Elaine S. Dalton, Young Women general president; and Rosemary M. Wixom, Primary general president.

Elder Rasband said that every leader needs to be involved in bringing members back to full activity, and Elder Andersen emphasized that the youth need to be more involved in reactivating and strengthening other youth.

Achieving Real Growth

Real growth comes as we apply gospel principles in our daily lives, President Uchtdorf emphasized.

“As you consider these topics, ask yourself about the ‘why’ of your service and ministry and the resulting ‘therefore, what’ in your responsibilities as individuals and as councils,” he said.

Learn More

Individuals can watch, listen to, print, and download material from the broadcast in dozens of languages by going to lds.org/study/other-addresses and clicking on **Worldwide Leadership Training**. ■

Church Introduces New Leader’s Guide to Temple and Family History Work

By Philip M. Volmar

Church News and Events

In November 2010 the Springfield First Ward council in the Springfield Illinois (USA) Stake decided to invite a newly reactivated family, the Michael and Jessica Dauphinee family, to meet with ward family history consultants. With encouragement from priesthood leaders and the consultants, the Dauphinees, who hadn’t yet been to the temple, intently began searching out their ancestors to submit their names for sacred temple ordinances.

As the family prepared to do the work of their ancestors at the temple, they were also preparing themselves for the temple, demonstrating that family history and proxy temple work aren’t just about redeeming the dead. Work for the living and the dead are both part of the work of salvation.

This and three other stories from the Springfield Illinois Stake are highlighted in a new training guide titled *To Turn the Hearts*, a resource created for priesthood leaders and Church family history consultants. The training aims to assist leaders in identifying and helping families and individuals research their family history while concurrently preparing them to make and keep temple covenants.

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who speaks in an interview included in the guide’s accompanying DVD, said, “This is not a function of simply the leaders in Springfield. Although they are excellent and

To Turn the Hearts DVD

Demonstrating Principles in the
Leader's Guide to Temple and Family History Work



FAMILYSEARCH

The new To Turn the Hearts training materials include a guidebook and accompanying DVD that teach leaders and family history consultants how to use family history initiatives to assist in achieving local priesthood objectives such as missionary work and member retention.

inspired, . . . these promises, these spiritual outcomes, are available to all who seek the appropriate inspiration. These results are replicable all over the world."

The resources for *To Turn the Hearts* include a 25-page guidebook, a training DVD, and a website housing the two. ■

Read more at news.lds.org using the keywords "To Turn the Hearts."

FamilySearch to Launch Census Indexing Project

By Heather Whittle Wrigley

Church News and Events

FamilySearch, in collaboration with other leading genealogy organizations, will begin publishing the 1940 U.S. Federal Census free online on April 2, 2012—and tens of thousands of indexers are needed to help make the digital images searchable online.

Unlike previous census years, the 1940 census of the United States will be released by the National Archives and Records Administration in the form of free digital images. By law, census records cannot be released until 72 years have passed.

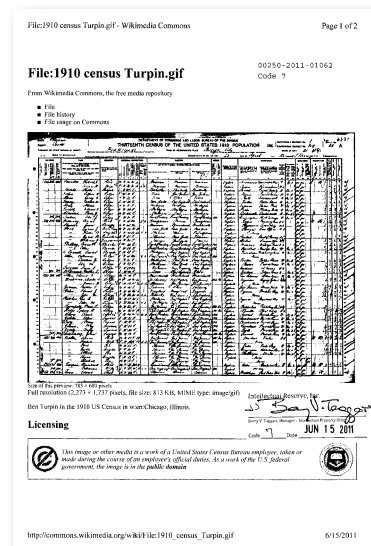
April 2, 2012, marks 72 years to the day since the 1940 census was taken. Census records from 1790 through 1930 are currently available on FamilySearch.org.

FamilySearch will provide those images online to tens of thousands of volunteers to start transcribing the records so they become searchable. Indexers type information from the digital images into electronic forms that make the information searchable online.

FamilySearch expects the 132 million records to be indexed by the end of 2012, but meeting that deadline will depend on how many volunteers work on them.

"We're looking for 100,000 additional indexers for this project," said Michael Judson, FamilySearch's indexing work-force development manager. "It's the genealogy story of the year, and there is a lot of interest both in and out of the Church."

The 1940 U.S. Federal Census is the largest, most comprehensive, and most recent record set available that records the names



AROUND THE CHURCH

of those who were living in the United States at the time the census was taken.

Many of these individuals are part of what has been called “the greatest generation”—people who lived through the Great Depression, fought in World War II, and lived in the 48 states that existed at the time.

Tens of millions of people living in the United States in 1940 are still living today, making the 1940 census a record set that connects people with recent family records. It was the first to record such interesting facts as where people lived five years before, individuals’ highest educational level achieved, and detailed income and occupation information.

“The 1940 census is attractive to both new and experienced researchers because most people in the United States can remember a relative who was living in 1940,” said David Rencher, chief genealogy officer for FamilySearch. “It will do more to connect living memory with historical records and families than any other collection previously made available.”

Volunteers can help with the 1940 U.S. Census project online at FamilySearch.org/1940Census. ■



PHOTOGRAPH BY GUILTÉRIA PATELLI

Youth of the Campo Grande Brazil and Campo Grande Brazil Monte Líbano Stakes, in conjunction with an organization that promotes unity and service, gathered on Saturday, December 10, 2011, to deliver toys to some 500 children in Campo Grande, Brazil.

Brazilian Youth Spread Christmas Spirit

Youth in the Campo Grande Brazil and Campo Grande Brazil Monte Líbano Stakes, in conjunction with the Facebook group *Face Solidário*, an organization promoting unity and service, gathered on the morning of Saturday, December 10, 2011, to deliver toys to some 500 children in Campo Grande in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul (MS).

The activity, called *Natal Solidário*, or “Unified Christmas,” has been held for many years. This year, for the first time, the event took place in the Tagarela Association, which attends to children and others with special needs. The youth also delivered toys to families in Vila Nhanha, a neighborhood of Campo Grande.

Portuguese Members and Friends Participate in Day of Service

About 600 members and friends of the Church across Portugal participated in a blood

drive on Saturday, December 17, 2011, making it the Church’s largest service activity ever held in the nation.

Blood drives have been organized by several Church units in Portugal in the past, but this was the first time for nearly all Church congregations in Portugal to participate simultaneously. The blood drive was made possible with the help of the Portuguese Institute of Blood, a governmental institution that manages blood donations in the country.

Multistake Concert in Puerto Rico Draws Thousands

On December 18, 2011, members of the five stakes of Puerto Rico—Caguas, Mayagüez, Ponce, San Juan, and Toa Baja—participated in a Christmas concert held in the Paseo de las Artes Abelardo Díaz-Alfaro in the city of Caguas. Approximately 85 members of the Church performed, and some 2,500 members of the community attended.

Saints in Solomon Islands Celebrate First District

Latter-day Saints in Honiara, Solomon Islands, celebrated the organization of the nation’s first district in December 2011 by participating in humanitarian service in their communities.

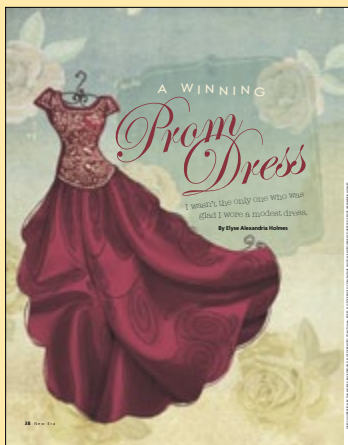
Using humanitarian funds provided by the Church, members teamed up with a local Anglican congregation to renovate and repair a 40-year-old health clinic. Sixty people worked for two weeks on the project.

Some 300 members of the Church attended the organization of the district, where Elder James J. Hamula, President of the Pacific Area, presided. ■

THE NEW ERA

Can a teenager understand Isaiah? The answer is yes. This month's *New Era* has tips to help young people get the most out of reading the book of Isaiah.

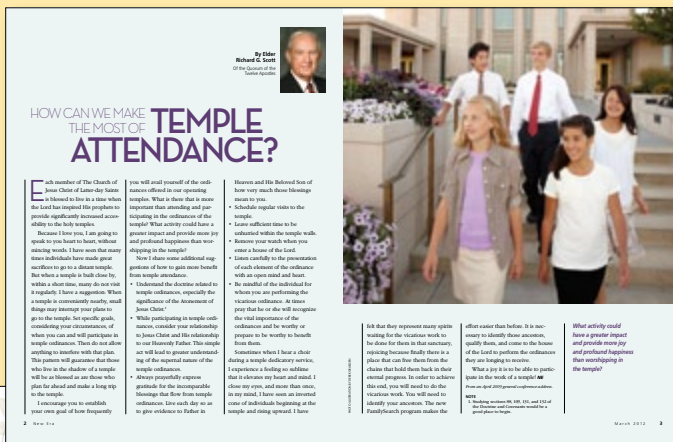
For many teens preparing to attend their school proms, finding a modest dress is sometimes a challenge. One author's experience shows how making the effort to be modest causes others to take notice. Read about it on pages 38–39.



THE FRIEND

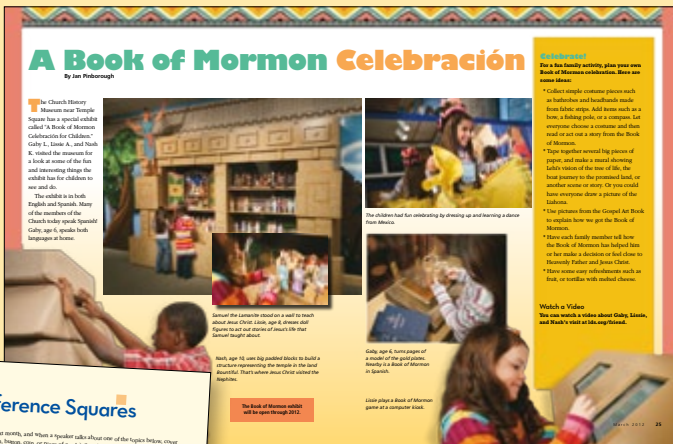
The Church History Museum near Temple Square has a special exhibit called “A Book of Mormon Celebración for Children.” Read pages 24–25 in the March *Friend* to find out about some of the interesting activities and displays featured in the exhibit. You’ll also find ideas about how you can have a Book of Mormon celebration in your home.

Page 26 in the *Friend* features a “Conference Squares” game that children can use during next month’s general conference. Visit lds.org/general-conference/children for more conference ideas and activities.

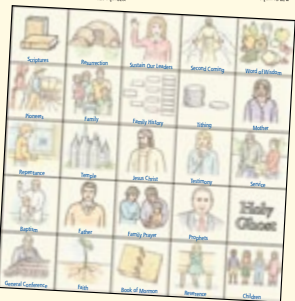


On pages 2–3, Elder Richard G. Scott talks about the importance of temple worship. In addition, the issue includes ideas for youth to prepare mentally and spiritually before going to the temple.

A Book of Mormon Celebración



Conference Squares



MOVING ON AND MOVING FORWARD

By Michelle Guerra

I had just gone through some dating heartache and was spending a lot of time at my sister's. Inevitably we ended up eating junk food, watching TV, and taking naps. Waking from one of these naps, I remarked, "I don't think we're very good for each other." We laughed, but that night I thanked Heavenly Father for the realization that I was using my sister as a security blanket and prayed for greater understanding of what I might do to move forward with my life. Over the next few months, that prayer was answered as I gained understanding one concept at a time.

The next day, while attending a Relief Society meeting, I noticed a particular scripture: "Others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well. . . . Therefore, wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion!" (2 Nephi 28:21, 24). I had always read these verses as describing the proud who went through the motions of worship. I had not considered myself as being at ease in Zion by spending so much time with my sister. But I began to realize that instead of seeking healing, I'd sought comfort. I resolved then to try harder to get out of my comfort zone.

The resolution helped, but stepping out of my comfort zone made me more aware of my inadequacies, which led me to feel more critical of myself. When I mentioned these



I prayed for understanding of how to heal a broken heart. Little by little, I came to see that another kind of broken heart was the answer.

feelings to a friend, he commented, "Isn't forgiving ourselves great?" His comment helped me desire to better forgive myself of my shortcomings—without becoming complacent like those who are "at ease in Zion."

One day I was struck by Mormon 2:13–14: "Their sorrowing was not unto repentance, because of the goodness of God; but it was rather the sorrowing of the damned, because the Lord would not always suffer them to take happiness in sin. And they did not come unto Jesus with broken hearts and contrite spirits." I came to understand that my feelings of failure were stunting my personal growth, and I began to ponder what appropriate sorrow would entail. It was in Sunday School that I found my answer.

Our teacher drew a line on the chalkboard, labeling one end, "Being too hard on ourselves" and the other end, "Eat, drink, and be merry." We talked about avoiding either extreme. I wondered what words would be in the center of the line, and the Spirit guided my thoughts to the phrase "a broken heart and a contrite spirit." It seemed to me that the solution to a tendency to be too hard on oneself might be described as a contrite spirit—one that is repentant, accepting of the Lord's help, and grateful for His mercy. The remedy for being at ease in Zion might be called a broken heart—one that is justly motivated to change and to heal.

The Savior taught, "Ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:20). I am grateful to know that as I seek the Lord's help to avoid being at ease in Zion and to avoid harshly judging myself, I am offering an acceptable sacrifice to Him—a sacrifice that helps me move forward with my life. ■



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Listening, by Michael Jarvis Nelson

Christ said, "I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one—the Father because he gave me of his fulness, and the Son because I was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle, and dwelt among the sons of men" (D&C 93:3–4).



If, as President Thomas S. Monson says, an organization is the lengthened shadow of its leader, then the desire to lift, encourage, engage, involve, and rescue others one by one is the mandate of every Latter-day Saint. This way of living mirrors the example of the Savior, who “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). To learn more about our prophet and his ability to reach out to rescue, see Heidi S. Swinton, “Have I Done Any Good in the World Today? Life Experiences of President Thomas S. Monson,” page 34.