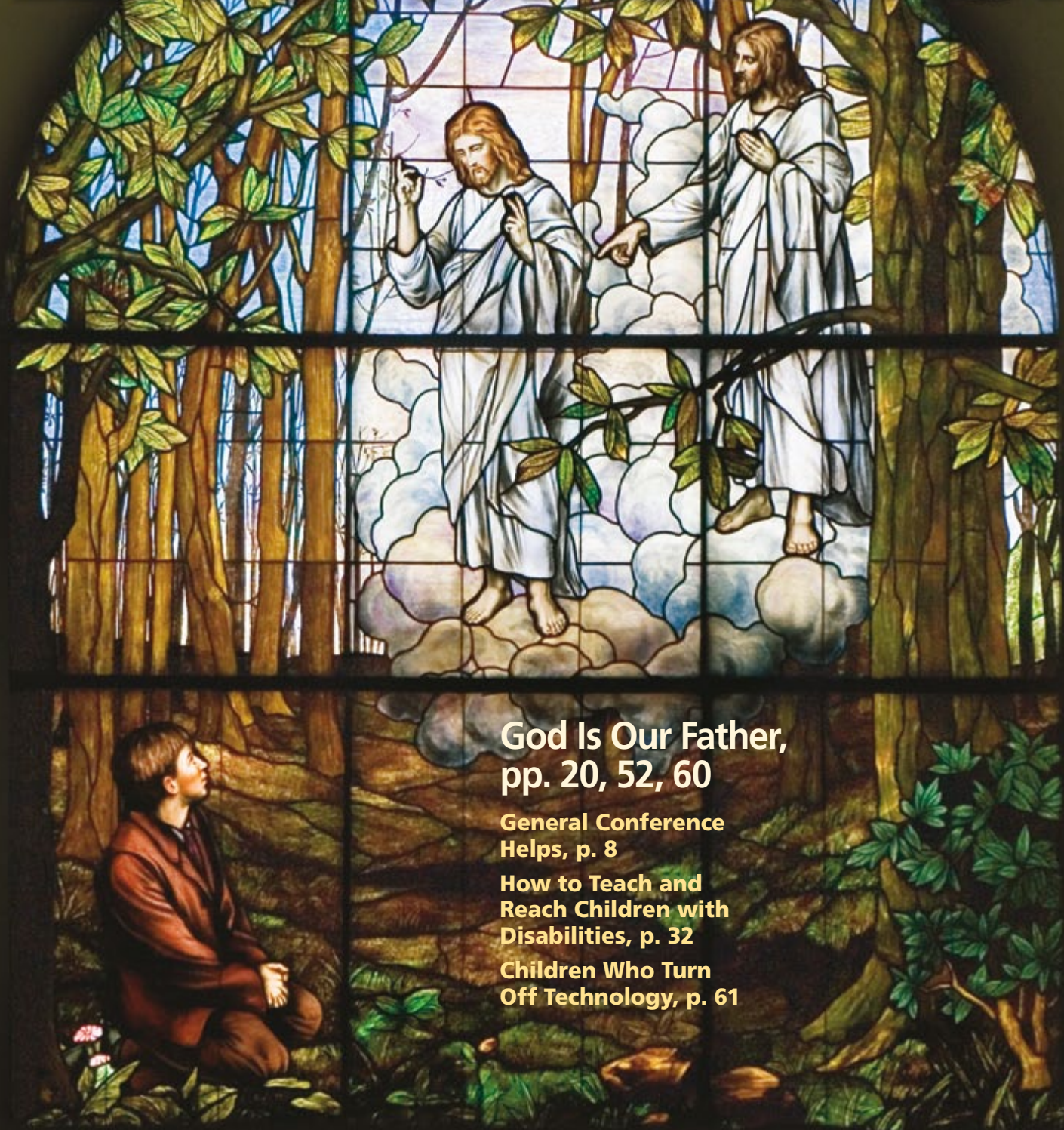


Liahona



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pp. 20, 52, 60**

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Helps, p. 8**

**How to Teach and
Reach Children with
Disabilities, p. 32**

**Children Who Turn
Off Technology, p. 61**



COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM

Teach Me to Walk in the Light, by Godofredo Orig

Here we see the path of a family as they move into the light of the temple. On the bottom row, the family is in darkness but soon meets the missionaries. On the top row, the family prays, learns that the gospel is true, and is ready for baptism and confirmation. They face the temple, where they will eventually make the covenants they need for eternal life.

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; . . . upon them hath the light shined" (2 Nephi 19:2).



Liahona, February 2012

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Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Richard G. Scott,
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FOR ADULTS

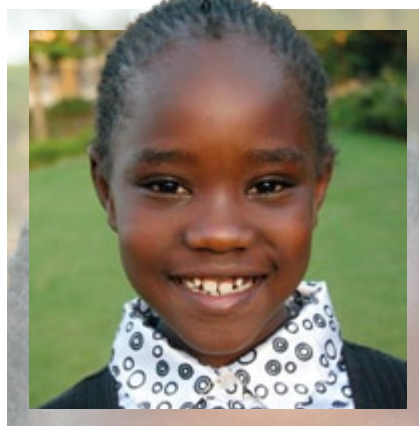
See page 32 for an article that provides
several suggestions for teaching children
with cognitive disabilities. The Church
website lds.org/disability explains differ-
ent types of disabilities and how to help
those of all ages with disabilities.

Read about the faithful members of
Ecuador's Orellana Branch (see page 26)
and see more photos of them at liahona.lds.org.



FOR YOUTH

Like the guardrails that keep people from
being hit by waves, standards keep us
safe, says Saane, a young woman from
Tonga (see page 56). See more photos
of her and the beautiful but dangerous
blowholes at Mapu 'a Vaea at liahona.lds.org.



FOR CHILDREN

Meet Tine from Kenya on page 68. See
more photos of her and the wildlife in her
country at liahona.lds.org.

IN YOUR LANGUAGE

The *Liahona* and other Church materials
are available in many languages at
languages.lds.org.

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



Exhort Them to Pray

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

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

Powerful Prayer

By Austin C.

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

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

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

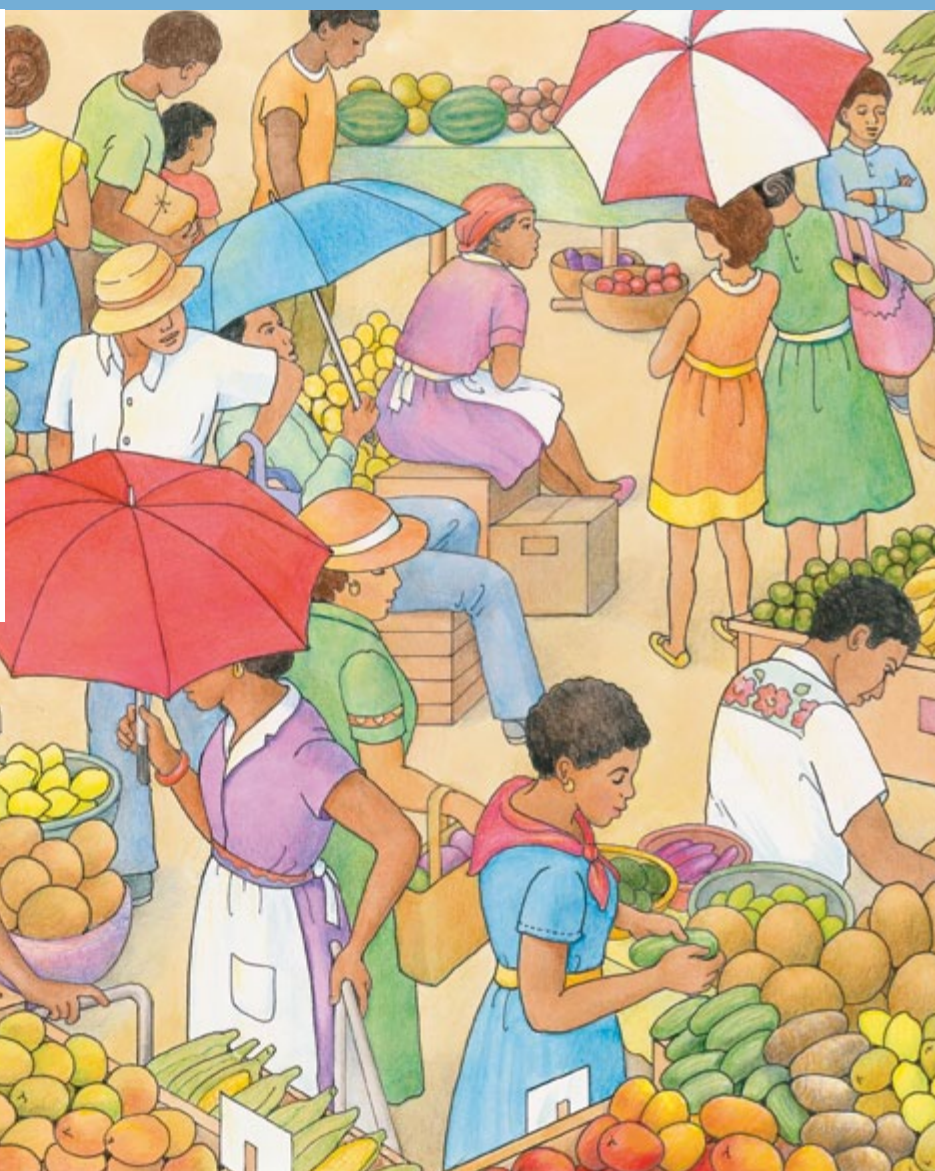
But during my prayers, I feel that if I pray sincerely and humbly, my burdens are lightened, my sins are

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

CHILDREN

Heavenly Father Hears Me When I Pray

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



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

Guardians of the Hearth

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

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



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

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

From the Scriptures

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

What Can I Do?

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

Faith, Family, Relief



From Our History

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

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

NOTES

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

October Conference Notebook

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

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

STORIES FROM CONFERENCE

A Life-Changing Book

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

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

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

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

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

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

Questions to ponder:

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

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



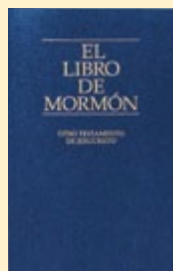
To read, watch, or listen to general conference addresses, visit conference.lds.org.



TO THE WOMEN OF THE CHURCH

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

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



Prophetic Promise

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

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

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

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



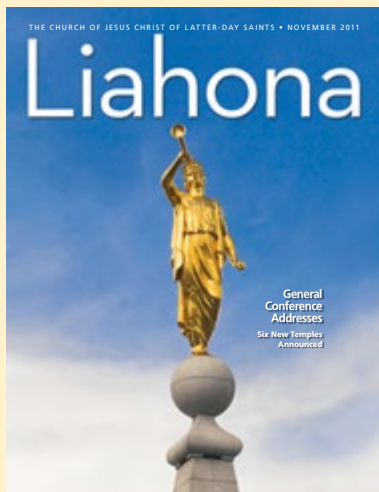
The General Temple Patron Assistance Fund

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

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

NOTE

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



Answers for You

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

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

KNOWING FOR YOURSELF

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

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



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

STUDY CORNER

More Than Once

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

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

Mosiah 2:17¹

Moroni 7:47²

1 Timothy 4:12³

NOTES

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

HANDLING CRITICISM IN OUR CALLINGS

Name withheld

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



GIVING EACH OTHER THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

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

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

THE LORD HAS GIVEN US A LAW OF Health

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

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

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

The Lord also counsels us against

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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



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



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



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



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

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

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

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

By Donna Hollenbeck

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

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

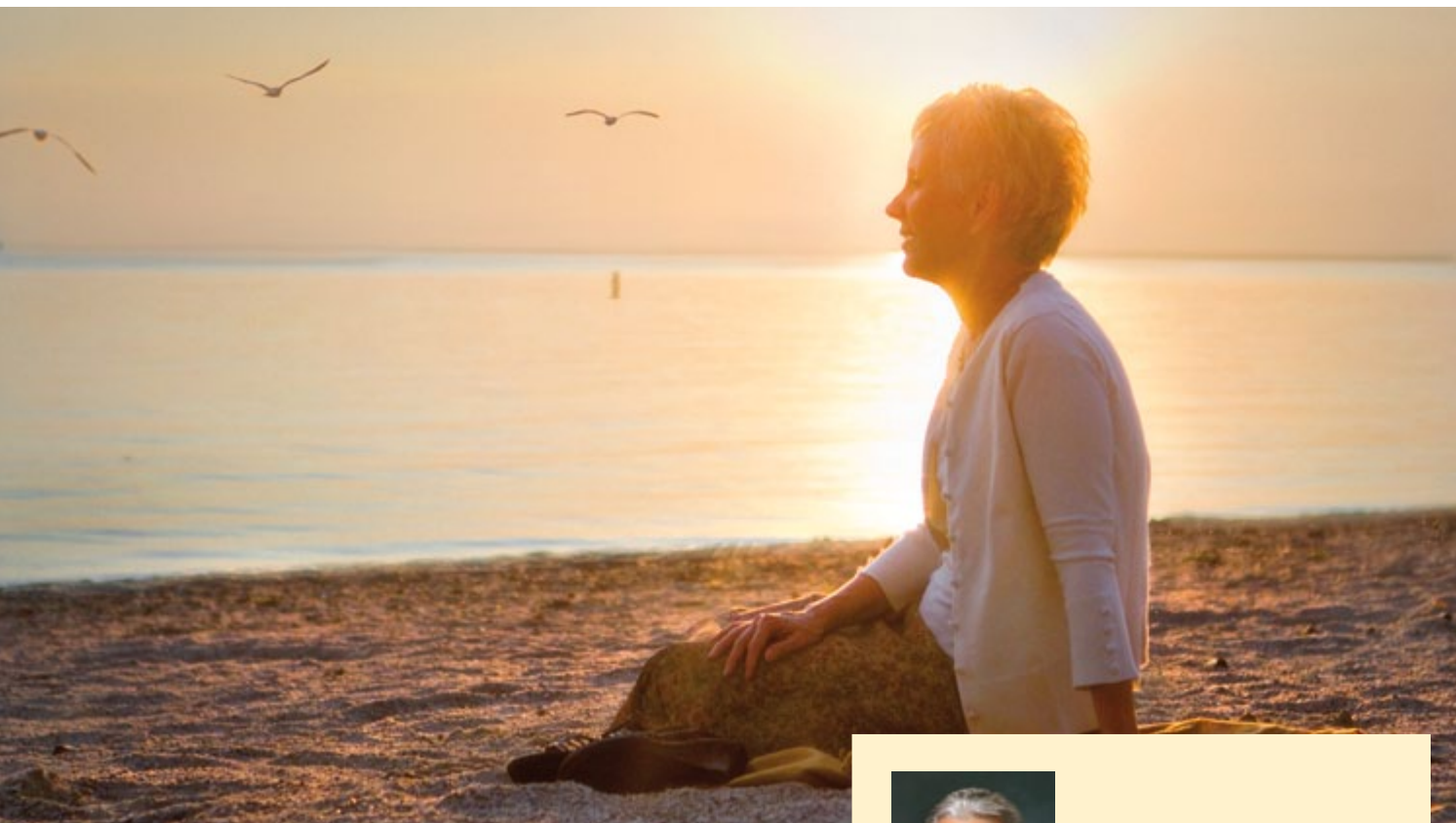
Every person eventually faces the inevitable fact that one day he or she may be alone. For me, due to a divorce, children moving out, and early retirement, this day came sooner than I had anticipated. The most excruciating obstacle I had to overcome was living with this sudden quiet and emptiness after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

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

After I cried to Heavenly Father for what

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

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



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

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

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



WHY DOES HEAVENLY FATHER LOVE US?

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

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

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



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

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

By Alexandria Schulte

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“For my husband,” she responded.

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

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

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

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

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

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

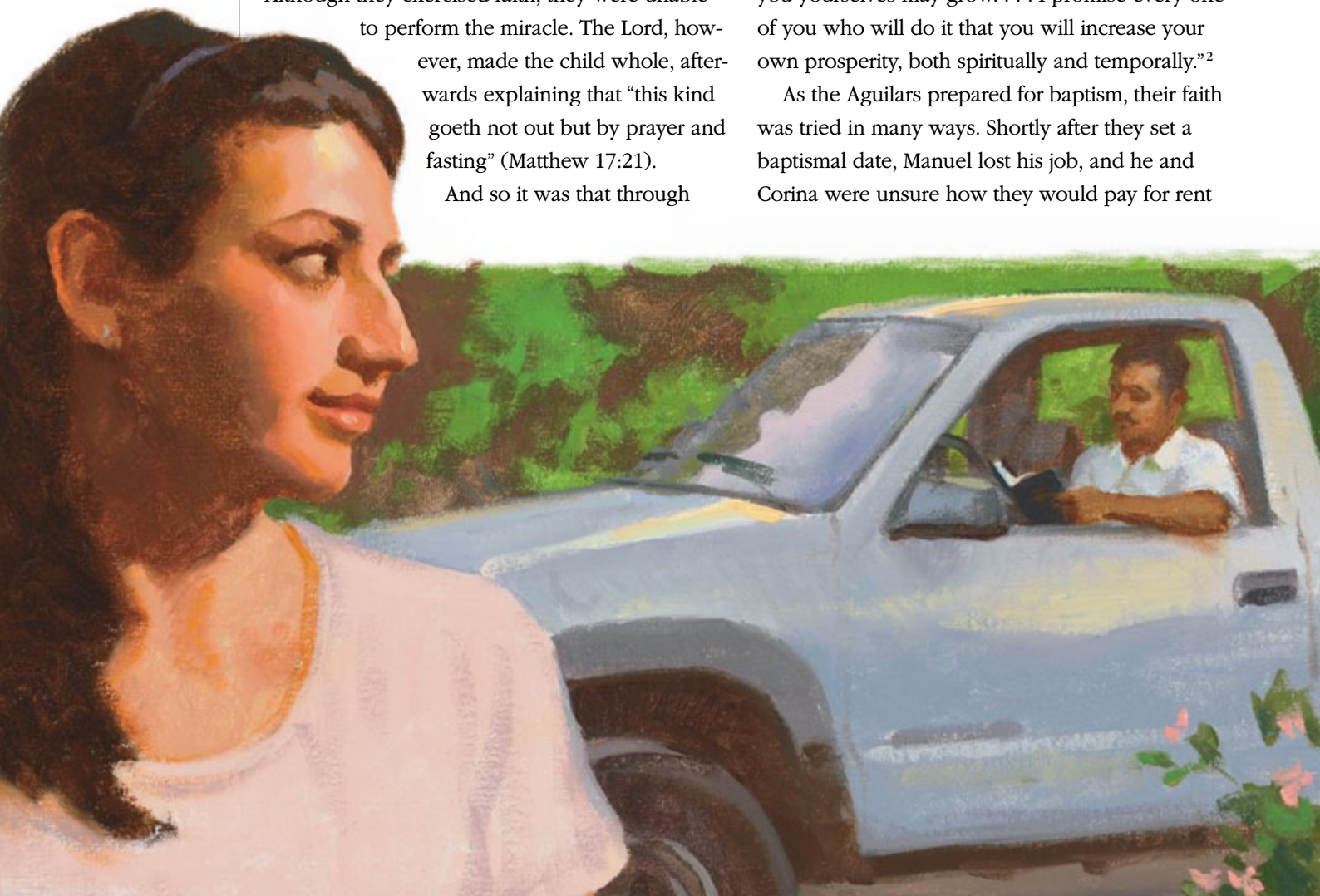
And so it was that through

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

NOTES

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

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



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



THE DOCTRINE OF THE FATHER

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

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

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

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

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

The Eternal Pattern of Family

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

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

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

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

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

Loving Choice and Deliberate Act

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

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

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

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

One by One

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

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

Known by Name

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

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



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

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

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

In His Image and with His Attributes

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

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

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

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

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

The Father's Love

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NOTES

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

Encircled in the Arms of His Love

Name withheld

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

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

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

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

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

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

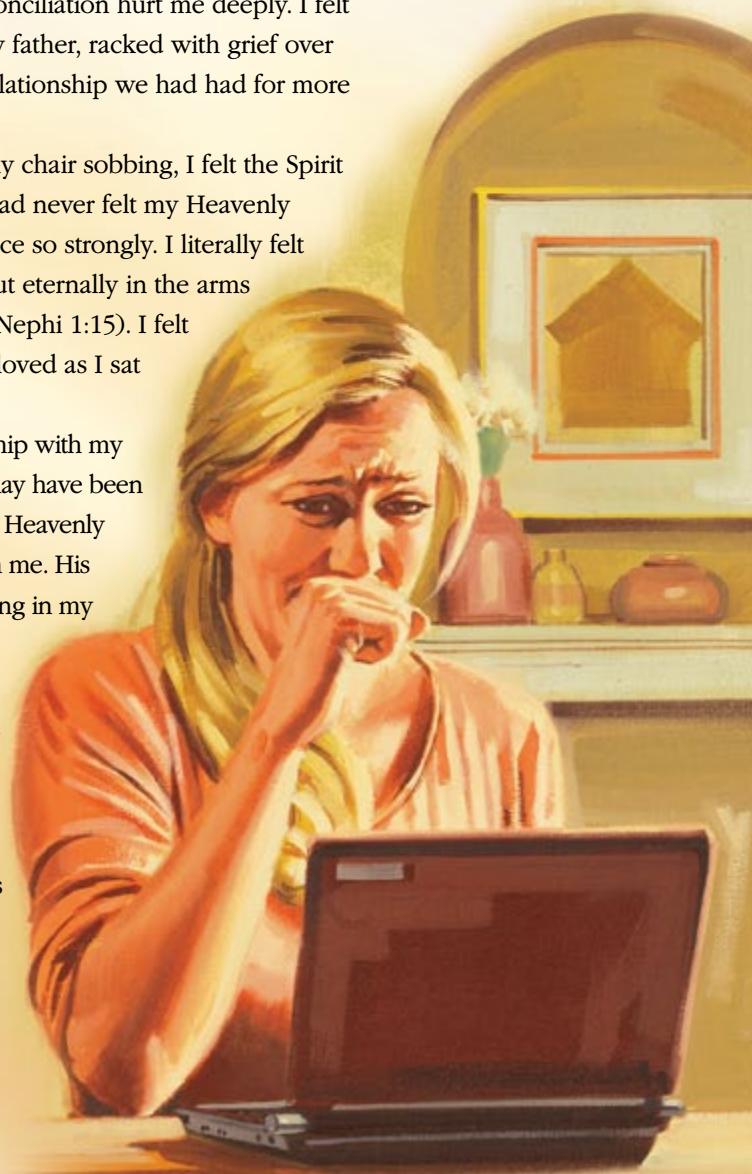
My dad replied with a very short e-mail in which he denied any memory of what I was saying and said that it was a really bad time for him to discuss our past.

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

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

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

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





Hungry for the Word

IN ECUADOR

By Joshua J. Perkey
Church Magazines

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

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

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

only one of her children joined with her.

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

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

Joy Begins with Desire

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

But something happened. The Spirit



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

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

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

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

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

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



EMBRACING THE SAVIOR AND HIS GOSPEL

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

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

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

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

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

The Joy of Service

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

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

the new sisters who have been baptized.”

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

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

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

President Marco Villavicencio

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

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



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

The Joy of Fellowship

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Clara Luz Farfán

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

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

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

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

as the first counselor in the teachers quorum.

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

The Joy of Being Changed

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



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

Joy in Living the Gospel

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

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

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

NOTE

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



PUERTO FRANCISCO DE ORELLANA, ECUADOR

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

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





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

How Do I Help This Child?

By Danyelle Ferguson

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

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

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

Serve as Jesus Did

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



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

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

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

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

Become Educated and Work Together

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

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



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

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

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

Build Friendship and Trust

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

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

Here are two ways to improve communication:

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

Integrate

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

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

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

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



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

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

Provide Support in the Classroom

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

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

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

Adapt Lesson Plans

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

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



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

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

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

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

Participate in Sharing Time and Other Activities

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

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

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

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

Reap the Blessings

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

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

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

NOTES

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



GUIDELINES FROM CHURCH HANDBOOKS

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

IS THIS BOOK FROM YOU?

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

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

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

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

Three months later, having finished



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

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

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

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

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

Cynthia Ann Lee, Nevada, USA

THE GOSPEL GAVE ME PEACE

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

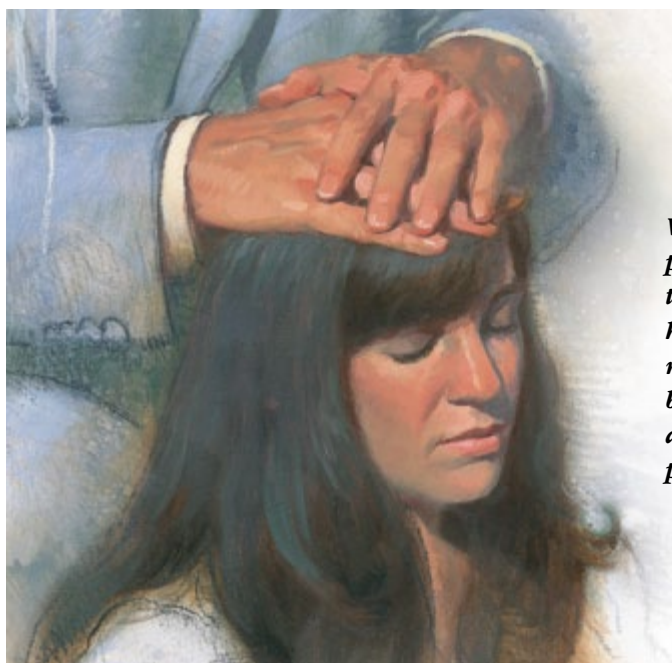
It wasn’t until my mission, however, that I truly came to appreciate the plan of salvation. While I was serving in Australia, my father passed away. When my mission president came to tell me what had happened, he gave me a priesthood blessing that focused a great deal on the plan of salvation. That blessing,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

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

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

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

Sina Rogers, New Zealand



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

YOUR CROP WILL FREEZE!

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

It was late April when we started

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

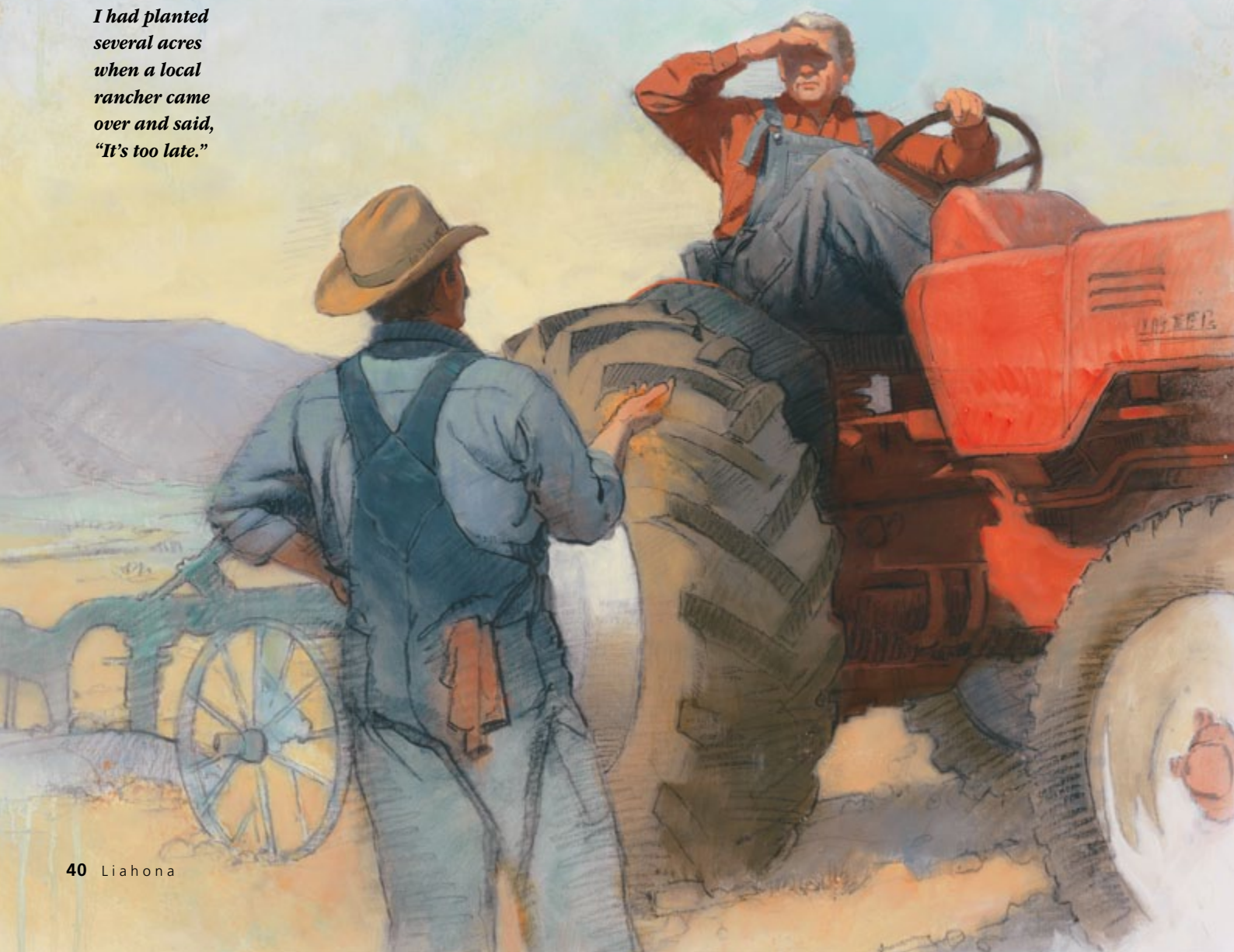
I had planted several acres when a local rancher came over and said, “You are wasting your time, energy, and money in this endeavor. It’s too late.

Your crop will freeze by August 21!”

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ben E. Fowler, Utah, USA

YOU ARE WELCOME IN MY HOUSE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Carina Daniela Paz, Salta, Argentina

By Julie B. Beck

Relief Society General President



THIS IS Your Work

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NOTE

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

WHAT CAN I DO?

Here are some ideas to consider.

ATTEND THE TEMPLE

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

COLLECT RECORDS

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

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

CREATE RECORDS

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



MY FAMILY HISTORY CHALLENGE

By Cristina Alvear

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

WHAT IS FAMILYSEARCH INDEXING?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NOTE

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

Questions & Answers

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

This is a tough situation. Divorce is hard enough on a family. Now you have the challenge of honoring but not pleasing both of your parents.

If possible, talk to them about your concerns. They might decide to be unified for your sake. If they don't want to change their minds, you could follow the advice of the parent who feels strongest about it—as long as he or she isn't asking you to break the commandments.

If the advice they give you is good but different—like trying out for the school choir or the volleyball team—then make a prayerful decision after hearing them out. Heavenly Father will guide you through the Holy Ghost. If one parent questions you, you can kindly explain that you prayed and have decided what you feel is best.

If one parent advises you to do something wrong, then you need to figure out a way to choose the right. For example, if your father asks you to stay home from church to spend time with him, you could try to work out a situation in which you can attend church and then spend time with him. Remember that choosing the right is one way to bring honor to your parents.

Ask Your Bishop



You can ask your bishop or branch president for advice. He will help you a lot, since our Heavenly Father has granted him the power to help us. I know that it is very difficult to choose in these decisions, but you ought to carefully analyze each bit of advice from your parents and choose what is best so that you can press forward and progress.

Joseph S., age 17, La Libertad, Peru

Learn New Coping Skills

It may seem hard, but it is possible to cope with divorce—and have a good family life. A life-changing event like a divorce can put people through some tough times, but it can also help

them learn about their strengths and put in place some new coping skills. If you need help figuring out how to cope, ask a favorite relative or your school counselor or your bishop. And if you find it hard to talk to your parents, try writing them a letter.

James P., age 17, Cebu, Philippines

Pray for Guidance



I have experienced the same problem. Whenever I got conflicting advice, I went down on my knees and prayed to my Heavenly Father to know which pieces of advice to take into consideration, just as the Prophet Joseph Smith did to know which of all the sects was true. Each time the answers came loud and clear, and I knew perfectly the right advice to follow.

Anita O., age 17, Western, Ghana

It's Your Decision



It's difficult when the two people you turn to the most for advice contradict each other. People are going to have different opinions. But in situations like this, you just need to listen to both, have an open mind, and in the end decide for yourself what is the best way and what way the Lord would agree with. It's hard to reject one parent or the other, but you must remember that it's not a competition. You will still love them, and they will probably be happy that you made the right decision,

even if the decision is not what they suggested exactly.

Janiece H., age 18, North Carolina, USA

Prayer Helps



Pray that you will be able to know all things concerning what you asked your parents advice for. Parents

sometimes have different views about situations. Heavenly Father can help you make the right decision. Parental advice is valuable, but when your parents contradict each other, go to your Heavenly Father for guidance and advice. Praying will always help you handle these situations.

Leah H., age 17, California, USA

Follow Nephi's Example



As a missionary I have encountered similar cases, and I always refer to Nephi's example of obedience.

Each time he received counsel from his parents, he put it into practice because it was good and came from God. But when he broke his bow, his father and others murmured. Nephi, by his example, led his father to pray for guidance. (See 1 Nephi 16:18–25.) This is our example. Accept counsel from your parents, but if one gives advice that is different from what the Lord would have you do, have the courage to respectfully tell him or her the reason you won't follow that counsel. And the

best reason is that we want to choose the right.

Elder Kapila, age 21, Democratic Republic of the Congo Kinshasa Mission

Knowing What Is Right



My parents often gave me different advice, but I always knew what was right. I was born in the gospel. I know the truth,

and this enables me to determine which counsel I should follow. In some cases, we need to pray to Heavenly Father and simply listen to the still voice of the Holy Ghost or to go to the bishop and hear what he has to say.

Erica C., age 18, Bahia, Brazil

Turn to Your Leaders

You can always turn to your leaders. Through the Young Women and Young Men organizations, the Lord has sent great leaders to inspire the youth. They have been called to help

you and teach you, so they are a wonderful source of inspiration and answers. You can also turn to your bishop for the same reason. These leaders have been set apart to help youth especially.

Rebecca S., age 15, Washington, USA



HEALING AND HOPE

"All who have been through divorce know the pain and need the healing power and hope that come from the Atonement. That healing power and that hope are there for them and also for their children."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Divorce," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2007, 71.

NEXT QUESTION

"One of my friends really offended me. I know I'm supposed to be forgiving, but how do I get over the hurt?"

Submit your answer by March 15, 2012, at liahona.lds.org, by e-mail to liahona@ldschurch.org, or by mail to:

Liahona, Questions & Answers 3/12
50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.

The following information and permission must be included: (1) full name, (2) birth date, (3) ward or branch, (4) stake or district, (5) your written permission, and, if you are under age 18, your parent's written permission (e-mail is acceptable) to publish your response and photograph.

The Tender Mercies of the Lord



**By Elder
David A. Bednar**

Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

Faithfulness and obedience enable us to receive these important gifts and, frequently, the Lord's timing helps us to recognize them.

I have reflected frequently upon this verse from the Book of Mormon: “But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance” (1 Nephi 1:20).

I testify that the tender mercies of the Lord are real and that they do not occur randomly or merely by coincidence. Often, the Lord's timing of His tender mercies helps us to both discern and acknowledge them.

What Are the Tender Mercies of the Lord?

The Lord's tender mercies are the very personal and individualized blessings, strength, protection, assurances, guidance, loving-kindnesses, consolation, support, and spiritual gifts which we receive from and because of and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Truly, the Lord suits “his mercies according to the conditions of the children of men” (D&C 46:15).

Recall how the Savior instructed His Apostles that He would not leave them comfortless. Not only would He send “another

Comforter” (John 14:16), even the Holy Ghost, but the Savior said that He would come to them (see John 14:18). Let me suggest that one of the ways whereby the Savior comes to each of us is through His abundant and tender mercies. For instance, as you and I face challenges and tests in our lives, the gift of faith and an appropriate sense of personal confidence that reaches beyond our own capacity are two examples of the tender mercies of the Lord. Repentance and forgiveness of sins and peace of conscience are examples of the tender mercies of the Lord. And the persistence and the fortitude that enable us to press forward with cheerfulness through physical limitations and spiritual difficulties are examples of the tender mercies of the Lord.

In a recent stake conference, the Lord's tender mercies were evident in the touching testimony of a young wife and mother of four whose husband was slain in Iraq in December of 2003. This stalwart sister recounted how, after being notified of her husband's death, she received his Christmas card and message. In the midst of the abrupt reality of a dramatically altered life came to this good sister a timely and tender reminder that indeed families can be together forever. With permission I quote from that Christmas card:

“To the best family in the world! Have a great time together and remember the true



To this sister came a most needed spiritual reassurance and witness. It is often the Lord's timing that enables us to recognize and treasure His tender mercies.

meaning of Christmas! The Lord has made it possible for us to be together forever. So even when we are apart, we will still be together as a family.

"God bless and keep y'all safe and grant this Christmas to be our gift of love from us to Him above!!!

"All my love, Daddy and your loving husband!"

Clearly, the husband's reference to being apart in his Christmas greeting referred to the separation caused by his military assignment. But to this sister, as a voice from the dust from a departed eternal companion and father, came a most needed spiritual reassurance and witness. As I indicated earlier, the Lord's tender mercies do not occur randomly or merely by coincidence. Faithfulness, obedience, and humility invite tender mercies into our lives, and it is often the Lord's timing that enables us to recognize and treasure these important blessings.

Some time ago I spoke with a priesthood leader who was prompted to memorize the names of all of the youth ages 13 to 21 in his stake. Using snapshots of the young men and women, he created flash cards that he reviewed while traveling on business and at other times. This priesthood leader quickly learned all of the names of the youth.

One night the priesthood leader had a dream about one of the young men whom he knew only from a picture. In the dream he saw the young man dressed in a white shirt and wearing a missionary name tag. With a companion seated at his side, the young man was teaching a family. The young man held the Book of Mormon in his hand, and he looked as if he were testifying of the truthfulness of the book. The priesthood leader then awoke from his dream.

At an ensuing priesthood gathering, the



The Lord's tender mercies do not occur randomly or merely by coincidence. Faithfulness and obedience enable us to receive these important gifts.

leader approached the young man he had seen in his dream and asked to talk with him for a few minutes. After a brief introduction, the leader called the young man by name and said: "I am not a dreamer. I have never had a dream about a single member of this stake, except for you. I am going to tell you about my dream, and then I would like you to help me understand what it means."

The priesthood leader recounted the dream and asked the young man about its meaning. Choking with emotion, the young man simply replied, "It means God knows who I am." The remainder of the conversation between this young man and his priesthood leader was most meaningful, and they agreed to meet and counsel together from

time to time during the following months.

That young man received the Lord's tender mercies through an inspired priesthood leader. I repeat again, the Lord's tender mercies do not occur randomly or merely by coincidence. Faithfulness and obedience enable us to receive these important gifts and, frequently, the Lord's timing helps us to recognize them.

We should not underestimate or overlook the power of the Lord's tender mercies. The simpleness, the sweetness, and the constancy of the tender mercies of the Lord will do much to fortify and protect us in the troubled times in which we do now and will yet live. When words cannot provide the solace we need or express the joy we feel, when it is simply futile to attempt to explain that which is unexplainable, when logic and reason cannot yield adequate understanding about the injustices and inequities of life, when mortal experience and evaluation are insufficient to produce a desired outcome, and when it seems that perhaps we are so totally alone, truly we are blessed by the tender mercies of the Lord and made mighty even unto the power of deliverance (see 1 Nephi 1:20).

Whom Has the Lord Chosen to Receive His Tender Mercies?

The word *chosen* in 1 Nephi 1:20 is central to understanding the concept of the Lord's tender mercies. The dictionary indicates that *chosen* suggests one who is selected, taken by preference, or picked out. It also can be used to refer to the elect or chosen of God.¹

Some individuals who hear or read this message erroneously may discount or dismiss in their personal lives the availability of the tender mercies of the Lord, believing that "I

certainly am not one who has been or ever will be chosen.” We may falsely think that such blessings and gifts are reserved for other people who appear to be more righteous or who serve in visible Church callings. I testify that the tender mercies of the Lord are available to all of us and that the Redeemer of Israel is eager to bestow such gifts upon us.

To be or to become chosen is not an exclusive status conferred upon us. Rather, you and I ultimately determine if we are chosen. Please note the use of the word *chosen* in the following verses:

“Behold, there are many called, but few are *chosen*. And why are they not *chosen*?

“Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men” (D&C 121:34–35; emphasis added).

I believe the implication of these verses is quite straightforward. God does not have a list of favorites to which we must hope our names will someday be added. He does not limit “the chosen” to a restricted few. Rather, it is *our* hearts and *our* aspirations and *our* obedience which definitively determine whether we are counted as one of God’s chosen.

Enoch was instructed by the Lord on this very point of doctrine. Please note the use of the word *choose* in these verses:

“Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, in the day I created them; and in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency;

“And unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should *choose* me, their Father” (Moses 7:32–33; emphasis added).

As we learn in these scriptures, the fundamental purposes for the gift of agency were to love one another and to choose God. Thus we become God’s chosen and invite His tender mercies as we use our agency to choose God.

One of the most well-known and frequently cited passages of scripture is found in Moses 1:39. This verse clearly and concisely describes the work of the Eternal

Father: “For behold, this is *my work* and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (emphasis added).

A companion scripture found in the Doctrine and Covenants describes with equal clarity and conciseness our primary work as the sons and daughters of the Eternal Father. Interestingly, this verse does not seem to be as well known and is not quoted with great frequency. “Behold, this is *your work*, to keep my commandments, yea, with all your might, mind and strength” (D&C 11:20; emphasis added).

Thus, the Father’s work is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of His children. Our work is to keep His commandments with all of our might, mind, and strength—and we thereby become chosen and, through the Holy Ghost, receive and recognize the tender mercies of the Lord in our daily lives.

We are blessed to receive inspired counsel from the leaders of the Savior’s Church—timely counsel for our day and for our circumstances and for our challenges. We are instructed, lifted, edified, called to repentance, and strengthened. Like you, I am eager to act upon the reminders, counsel, and personal inspiration with which we are blessed. Truly, “the Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works” (Psalm 145:9).

I am thankful for the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ through the Prophet Joseph Smith and for the knowledge we have today about the Lord’s tender mercies. Our desires, faithfulness, and obedience invite and help us to discern His mercies in our lives. As one of His servants, I declare my witness that Jesus is the Christ, our Redeemer and our Savior. I know that He lives and that His tender mercies are available to all of us. Each of us can have eyes to see clearly and ears to hear distinctly the tender mercies of the Lord as they strengthen and assist us in these latter days. May our hearts always be filled with gratitude for His abundant and tender mercies. ■

From an April 2005 general conference talk.

NOTE

1. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, second ed. (1989), “Chosen.”

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

We learn of Heavenly Father from the beginning of our Church experience—from our first prayer to our first time singing “I Am a Child of God” (Hymns, no. 301). What Latter-day Saints know about God the Father is unique, and it makes all the difference to us.

SEEING THE FATHER

Here are three scriptural accounts of people who have beheld the Father:

- Stephen (see Acts 7:56)
- Joseph Smith (see Joseph Smith—History 1:17)
- Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon (see D&C 76:20)

But, as Jesus said, “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).

REAL AND INDIVIDUAL

“One of the great over-arching doctrines of this Church is our belief in God the Eternal Father. He is a being, real and individual. He is the great Governor of the universe, yet He is our Father, and we are His children.

“We pray to Him, and those prayers are a conversation between God and man. I am confident that **He hears our prayers and answers them.**”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “The Things of Which I Know,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2007, 83.

THE ONE TRUE GOD

“The Father *is* the one true God. *This* thing is certain: **no one will ever ascend above Him;** no one will ever replace Him. . . . He is Eloheim, the Father. He is God. Of Him there *is* only one.”

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Pattern of Our Parentage,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 69.



HEARING THE FATHER

When God the Father speaks, He bears witness of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. For example:

- At Jesus's baptism (see Matthew 3:17)
- At the Mount of Transfiguration to Peter, James, and John (see Matthew 17:5)
- In a revelation to Nephi (see 2 Nephi 31:11, 15)
- At Jesus's appearance in the Americas (see 3 Nephi 11:7)
- At the First Vision (see Joseph Smith—History 1:17)

THE SAVIOR'S MISSION TO REVEAL THE FATHER

“In all that Jesus came to say and do, . . . He was showing us who and what God our Eternal Father is like, how completely devoted He is to His children in every age and nation. In word and in deed **Jesus was trying to reveal** and make personal to us **the true nature of His Father**, our Father in Heaven.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Grandeur of God,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 70.

JOSEPH SMITH TEACHES ABOUT GOD THE FATHER

Joseph Smith taught us much about the true nature of God because he saw Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and received many revelations.

What kind of being is He? “God Himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens!”¹

What does He look like? “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s.”² “If you were to see Him today, you would see Him like a man in form—like yourselves.”³

What is our relationship to God? “If men do not comprehend the character of God, they do not comprehend themselves.”⁴ “The Great Parent of the universe looks upon the whole of the human family . . . as His offspring.”⁵

Why did He establish the plan of salvation for us? “God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory, . . . [instituted] laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself.”⁶

What is a key to drawing closer to God? “When we understand the character of God, and know how to come to Him, He begins to unfold the heavens to us.”⁷ ■

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 40.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.
3. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 40.
4. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 40.
5. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 39.
6. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 210.
7. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 40–41.

HEAVENLY PARENTS: A POWERFUL TRUTH

“Consider the power of the idea taught in our beloved song ‘I Am a Child of God’ (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 301). . . . Here is the answer to one of life’s great questions, ‘Who am I?’ I am a child of God with a spirit lineage to heavenly parents. **That parentage defines our eternal potential.** That powerful idea is a potent antidepressant. It can strengthen each of us to make righteous choices and to seek the best that is within us.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Powerful Ideas,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 25.

A Voice for High Standards

As told to Hilary Watkins Lemon

Bright lights. Screaming crowds. Thousands of fans on Facebook. When 17-year-old Gerson Santos became a top-10 finalist in the Portuguese televised musical talent competition *Ídolos*, he had to adjust to the fame and attention that came with his success. Gerson decided to embrace this unique opportunity to preach the gospel and quickly became known across the Portuguese media as the “Mormon competitor” willing to answer questions about his faith.

How did you decide to enter *Ídolos*? How did you prepare?

Ídolos was a television show I really enjoyed watching. I have always liked performing and hoped to someday enter a music competition. This year I didn’t hesitate; I simply signed myself up for the show and went to the audition with my dad. I guess you could say I’ve been preparing for *Ídolos* my entire life. Every experience I had with *Ídolos* was amazing, without exception. I tried to take advantage of every opportunity that came my way.

What missionary opportunities did you have during the competition?

Once during a dinner with the other contestants, we talked a little bit about religion, and I spoke about my faith and the standards of the Church. Later I gave each of the finalists a copy of the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet so they could better understand what I believe. Some said the Church’s standards seemed really conservative, but others praised me for having such high standards in these days.

Ídolos must have taken up a lot of your time. How did you still have time for Church responsibilities?

I continued to say my prayers, read my scriptures, participate in seminary,

Name: Gerson Santos

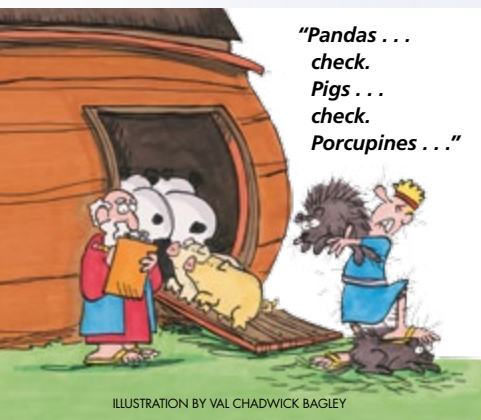
Age: 17

Location: Setúbal, Portugal

Hobbies: Singing, acting, playing guitar, watching movies, dancing with his sisters, composing and playing music with his brother, and studying at the music conservatory

and take the sacrament every Sunday. I am currently preparing to serve a mission, which is something I’ve wanted to do since I was little. I serve in my ward as ward pianist, ward missionary, and assistant to the bishop in the priests quorum. I had to dedicate almost all my time to the competition, but I made sure to first dedicate time to the Lord. ■

Our Space



DON'T LOSE HOPE

One of the trials that our family endured was when my oldest brother got sick and, after a while, died. It was really hard for us at first, but our family was able to overcome that trial. Because our family was sealed in the temple, we know that we will be with my brother again and with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ when the right time comes.

I know that this trial was one of the ways the Lord prepared us for other trials—to help us become stronger. Everyone has trials to endure, and our Heavenly Father knows we can overcome them. So we shouldn't lose hope.

Carmila R., age 18,
Southern Tagalog,
Philippines

HOW TO KEEP CLEAN THOUGHTS

Those who can control their thoughts are masters over themselves, said President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.¹ One of the ways to control your thoughts is to select your favorite hymn and have a picture of a temple. Display the picture in your bedroom. Every time you see a person dressed immodestly, review the hymn carefully in your mind or think of the temple. If unworthy thoughts do not depart from your mind, pray and fast in order to forget them.

Joseph D., age 20, Haiti

NOTE

1. See Boyd K. Packer, "Worthy Music, Worthy Thoughts," *Liahona*, Apr. 2008, 31.

TOO MANY RULES?

For the past year I thought there were too many rules in the Church, and I thought, "How can it be fun in heaven?" I felt like I was tied to the Church and it was impossible to break free.

I then watched my friends' lives. Why didn't I go through some of the trials they did? One night it hit me—I didn't get into that stuff because I followed the rules that Heavenly Father set out for me. I also figured out that if you follow the rules, you can be happy and can raise a family and live with Heavenly Father and Jesus for eternity.

Stephanie H., age 13, Utah, USA

Submit your story, photo, or feedback at liahona.lds.org or via e-mail to liahona@ldschurch.org. If e-mailing, include your full name, ward or branch, stake or district, and parent's permission (e-mail is acceptable). Submissions may be edited for length or clarity.



Saane (right) and Amelia (center) celebrate with their sister Manatu on the day of her temple marriage.

The beauty and power of the Mapu ‘a Vaea blowholes in Tonga is amazing. As the surf crashes into this three-mile (4.8 km) stretch of coastline on the island of Tongatapu, it enters hundreds of openings in the volcanic rock that shoot the water up as high as 60 feet (18 m) into the air.

Saane F., age 16, loves the beauty of the place—the way the sun and the spray dance together with every wave.

But nature’s power can be dangerous as well as beautiful. Visitors who wander too close, whether out of curiosity or because of the thrill, have been caught off guard by the power

of the waves and, unable to escape the current, pulled out to sea.

The dangerous side of Mapu ‘a Vaea offers a spiritual warning about the power of temptation—particularly with regard to sexual purity. The power to create life is beautiful when the proper boundaries are observed, but if we allow temptation to lure us from safe ground, we can be swept away.

Understanding Why Chastity Matters

On the day her sister was married in the Nuku‘alofa Tonga Temple, Saane could see her happiness. “It

DON'T BE **SWEPT AWAY**

A Tongan teenager talks about good reasons for guardrails.

To view a video and additional photos of Mapu ‘a Vaea, visit liahona.lds.org.

To watch a video about chastity (in English), visit lds.org/youth/video/chastity-what-are-the-limits?



made me want to be worthy to be married there someday,” Saane says.

However, Satan will try to keep that from happening for any of us. He has already convinced many that sexual intimacy outside of marriage is acceptable and without consequences. But misusing the power God has provided to create life is a serious sin that can cause spiritual, emotional, and physical harm.¹

“Satan is trying so hard to stop us from returning home to our Heavenly Father,” Saane says. “If I’m not careful to keep the law of chastity, I may lose the opportunity to be married in the temple.”

Honoring God’s Guardrails

To help visitors enjoy the beauty of Mapu ‘a Vaea safely, the Tongan government has placed guardrails in certain areas.

Saane believes Heavenly Father has provided guardrails—or standards—to keep us from falling to temptation. Church leaders, the scriptures, and *For the Strength of Youth* all set clear boundaries that, if observed, will help keep us safe. Above all, following the



promptings of the Holy Ghost will keep us on safe ground.

“Some people ignore the Lord’s guardrails,” she says. “They don’t understand the consequences, or they think they can avoid them. Leaping from the cliff may feel like flying, but the ground is always there.”

Setting Our Own Guardrails

In matters of sexual purity, seeing how far we can lean over the guardrail is a sure way to fall. The closer we allow ourselves to get to inappropriate sexual intimacy, the more difficult it becomes to resist its enticement.

Because the Church can’t spell out how to act in every situation, Saane has created her own guardrails by deciding ahead of time how to apply gospel standards to the circumstances she is likely to face.

She has created a poster that lists nine promises to herself and to her Heavenly Father that act as her personal guardrails, including the kind of people she will date, clothing she will wear, and language she will use. Other personal guardrails could include deciding how to avoid viewing,

reading, or listening to anything that can arouse sexual feelings.²

“Setting my standards high will help keep me safe,” Saane says.

Returning to Safe Ground

Like those who get caught in the rushing waters at Mapu ‘a Vaea, those who give in to temptation are in a dangerous place. The powerful grasp of sexual sin can be difficult to escape—but it is possible with the help of the Savior and His servants.

In the end, whether one has never left safe ground or has made the difficult way back to it, staying there is the goal. Honoring the Lord’s guardrails and understanding how to apply them to our personal circumstances will prepare us to enjoy the beautiful power God has granted us—at the appropriate time and in the appropriate way.

“Above all else, I am looking forward to being married in the temple,” Saane says. “I know that if I keep the commandments, including the law of chastity, I will be worthy to receive the blessings I’m dreaming of.” ■

NOTES

1. See *True to the Faith* (2004), 29.
2. See *True to the Faith*, 32.



A GLIMPSE OF CELESTIAL JOY

“Let there be a temple marriage in your future. There is no scene so sweet, no time so sacred. . . . Then and there you glimpse celestial joy. Be alert; do not permit temptation to rob you of this blessing.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Be Thou an Example,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2005, 113.

AN EMPTY FONT

How could we hold a baptism with no water for the font?

By Siosaia Naeata Jr.

It was 7:45 a.m. on a rainy August morning here in Freetown, Sierra Leone, West Africa. We (the full-time missionaries in the Freetown District) had planned a baptismal service and were determined to hold it, rain or shine. It was then I received a call from Brother Allieu, a member from our branch, but I could not totally understand what he was saying, as he was speaking rapidly in Krio, the local language. I told him to take a deep breath and speak slowly. He did so and said, “Elder Naeata, there is no water for the baptismal font. I am sorry. There is no water.”

I thanked him for the call and then announced the bad news to the other elders. Immediately we began to think of how we could still perform this sacred ordinance. It was then that Elder Agamah reminded us of the waterfall and pond up the mountain nearby in a place called Mellow. The elders all agreed we should try and hold the baptism there, so we obtained permission to do so.

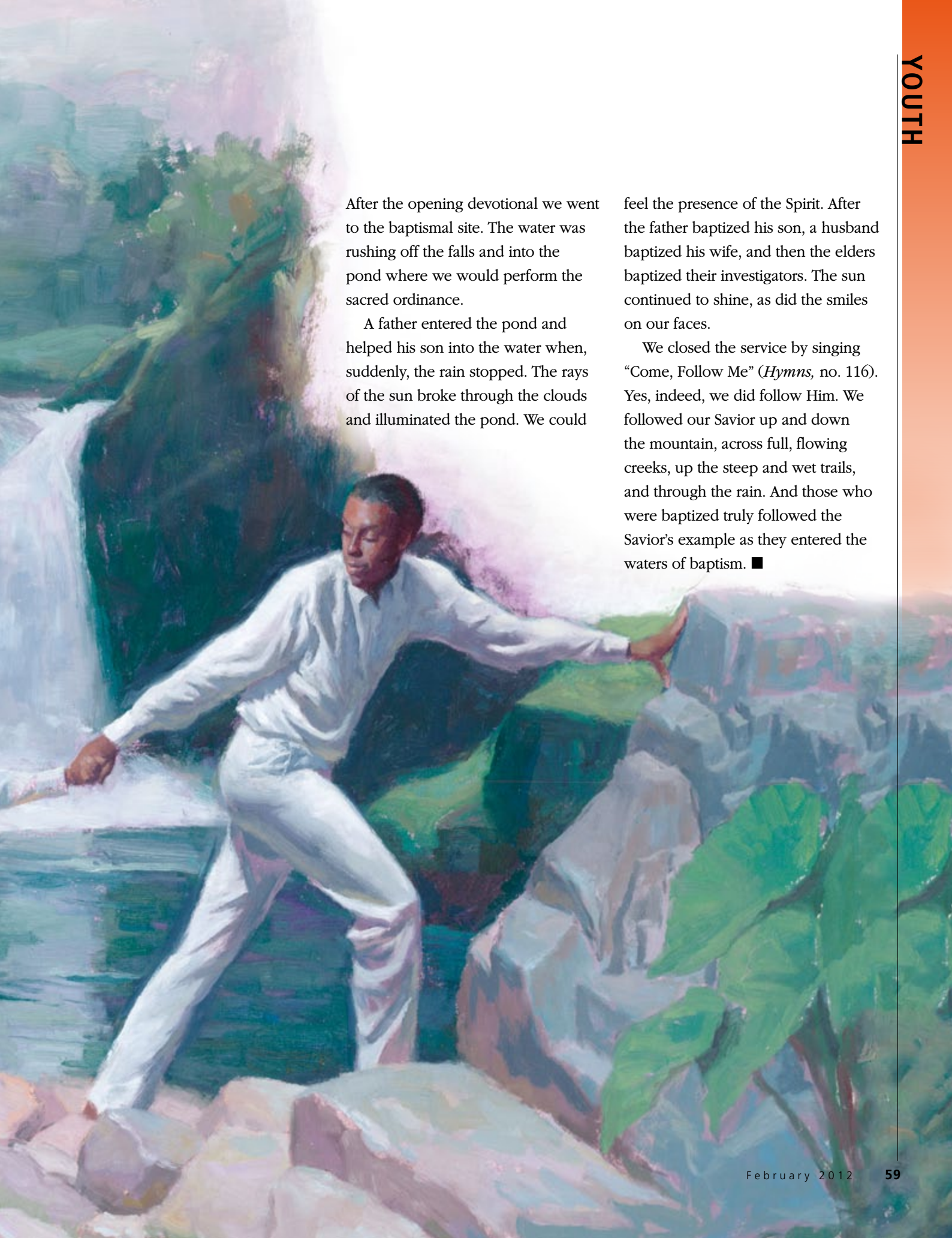
As everyone gathered later that morning at the bottom of the mountain, the group came to a stark realization of the formidable task looming ahead. However, the determined company had no sign of hesitation to press forward. Men and women and even children walked and talked happily up the wet and slippery trail. Gradually ascending, we took a short detour to cross the river.

As we hiked, the zeal of some in the party began to fade when the rain picked up, but we pressed forward with hope. Still, the rugged path seemed to have no end. Finally we arrived at our destination. Our hearts were happy, but the rain persisted to beat down upon us. As we prepared for the baptismal service, we took refuge from the rain under a large mango tree.

We opened by singing the hymn “The Spirit of God” (*Hymns*, no. 2).

ILLUSTRATION BY ALLAN GARNIS





After the opening devotional we went to the baptismal site. The water was rushing off the falls and into the pond where we would perform the sacred ordinance.

A father entered the pond and helped his son into the water when, suddenly, the rain stopped. The rays of the sun broke through the clouds and illuminated the pond. We could

feel the presence of the Spirit. After the father baptized his son, a husband baptized his wife, and then the elders baptized their investigators. The sun continued to shine, as did the smiles on our faces.

We closed the service by singing "Come, Follow Me" (*Hymns*, no. 116). Yes, indeed, we did follow Him. We followed our Savior up and down the mountain, across full, flowing creeks, up the steep and wet trails, and through the rain. And those who were baptized truly followed the Savior's example as they entered the waters of baptism. ■



By President Boyd K. Packer

President of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles

Who Is Heavenly Father?

The Father is the one true God.
Nothing will ever change
the relationship that we have
with Him.

Spiritually you are of noble
birth, the offspring of the King
of heaven. Fix that truth in
your mind and hold to it.

You are a child of God. He is
the father of your spirit.

He is the Father. He is God. We
revere our Father and our God;
we worship Him.

Just as all life follows the
pattern of its parents, so can
we grow toward the image
of our Heavenly Father
if we will live righteously
and be obedient to His
commandments.

Unplugged

By Annie Beer



With so many fun technologies at our fingertips, it's easy to spend too much time with them and not enough time doing important activities like reading, playing outside, or spending time with family and friends. Some of our readers and their families have figured out ways to keep their lives balanced—remembering that the Spirit dwells in happy, healthy homes.

In our family we get six “TV Tickets” at the beginning of the week. One ticket equals an hour of screen time. On the back of each ticket is a list of things we need to do before we can turn a ticket in, like cleaning our room, finishing our homework,

and doing our chores. Instead of using technology all the time, we like to read, play games with each other, and play outside with our friends.

Trevor and Nicolette C., ages 10 and 13, Utah, USA



Rather than watch TV all the time, we like to read! And after all of our chores are done and the house is clean, we can use the Internet. We use a timer to keep track of the time we get to spend on the computer.

Ellie, Jared, Ethan, and Abby H.; ages 8, 11, 2, and 6; California, USA



We have downloaded scripture stories and appropriate music onto our MP3 players. Our computer is kept where everyone can see it. We don't watch TV before school or until all of our homework and chores are done in the afternoon. Certain channels on our TV are blocked so they can't be viewed at all. Instead of watching TV, we play outside, help garden, or play board games together. When we have balance in our lives, our home is more quiet and peaceful.

Sarah, Steven, Christie, and Jason L.; ages 7, 15, 20, and 18; Queensland, Australia



Our Page

SERVE ONE ANOTHER



I know that President Thomas S. Monson has asked us to serve other people. One Sunday afternoon I

wanted to visit my grandmother, who lives alone, and spend the night with her to keep her company. My mother gave her permission, and my grandmother was very surprised and happy to see me. We talked, made a little snack, and looked at the *Liahona* together. After having prayer, we went to sleep.

During the night, there was a bad storm—wind, lightning, thunder, rain, and hail! It woke us up, and my grandmother told me she would have been very afraid if I had not been there with her. I was glad to be able to serve her this way.

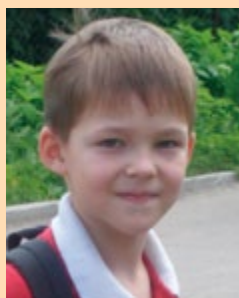
Vinício R., age 10, Brazil



The Salt Lake Temple,
by Eve D., age 4,
Ukraine



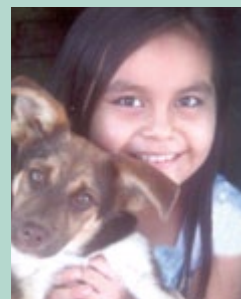
A Sister Missionary in Red Square,
by Emile D., age 9, Ukraine



Mia Lynn L., age 5, from Germany, is already learning to be a missionary. While having lunch with a friend one day, Mia said a blessing on the food, prompting the friend's mother to ask Mia's mother about Church beliefs. Now Mia might invite her friend to Primary.



HEAVENLY FATHER HEARS OUR PRAYERS



I have great faith in Jesus Christ and in His commandments and, above all, in prayer. One Sunday my paternal grandfather and I went to

visit my great-grandmother. I decided to take my small puppy. On our way home my puppy was hit by a boy on a bicycle. It scared him, and he ran after the boy. My grandfather and I chased after him, but we couldn't find him. We had to go home without him. We were all very sad. My great-grandmother called and told me to find a private place and to pray for my puppy.

Early the next morning we heard a dog barking—my puppy was home! I know that Heavenly Father heard my prayer.

Stephanie P., age 8, Honduras

You can submit your drawing, photo, or experience online at liahona.lds.org; by e-mail to liahona@ldschurch.org with "Our Page" in the subject line; or by mail to:

Liahona, Our Page

50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024,
USA

Each submission must include the child's full name, gender, and age (must be 3 to 11 years old) plus the parent's name, ward or branch, stake or district, and the parent's written permission (e-mail is acceptable) to use the child's photo and submission. Submissions may be edited for clarity or length.

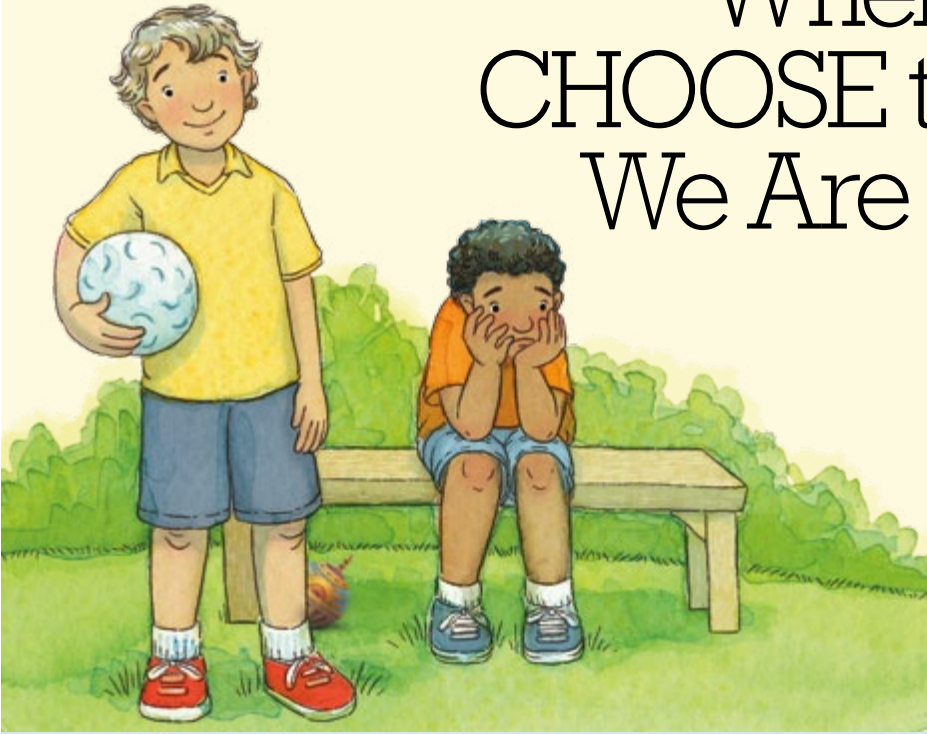
“You are not
invisible to your
Heavenly Father.
He loves you.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency
From the October 2011 general conference



You can use this lesson and activity to learn more about this month's Primary theme.

When We CHOOSE the RIGHT, We Are Blessed



Daniel was playing football with his friends when he saw Joseph sitting alone, watching. Joseph wasn't very good at football. But

Daniel decided that he wanted Joseph to be included more than he wanted to win the game. He jogged over to Joseph and asked, "Do you want to play with us?"

Daniel chose the right.

Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have promised us that when we choose the right, we will be blessed. We have righteous examples to follow in the scriptures. Here are two:

- When Noah followed the Lord's command to build the ark, he saved several members of his family from the Flood. (See Genesis 6–8.)

- When Nephi broke his hunting bow, he made a new bow instead of giving up. His father, Lehi, prayed for help, and the Lord led Nephi to food. (See 1 Nephi 16:18–32.)

Sometimes it's hard to choose the right, but Heavenly Father blesses us when we do. As we make good decisions, we can feel peace and happiness. ■

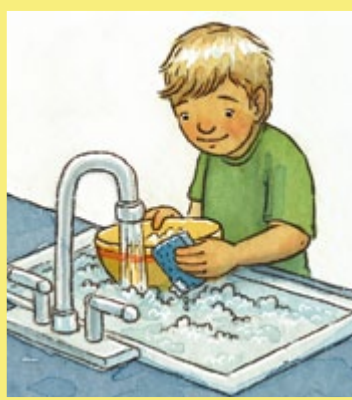
CTR Game

Glue page 65 onto heavy paper. When it is dry, cut out the cards. Players will take turns finding two cards that match: one card shows a situation in which a choice needs to be made, and the matching card shows someone choosing the right. For example, the card that shows a boy earning money matches the card that shows him paying tithing.

How to Play: Mix up the cards and lay them facedown. A player turns over two cards. If the cards match, the player keeps the cards and turns over two more cards. If the cards don't match, the player turns them back over and it is the next player's turn. Younger children can play with fewer cards or with the cards facing up.

Song & Scripture

- Mosiah 2:22
- "Choose the Right,"
Hymns, no. 239



A Prayer for Safety

By Sueli de Aquino

Based on a true story

"I speak to Heav'nly Father. He hears and answers me when I pray in faith" ("I Pray in Faith," Children's Songbook, 14).

I love nature! I like to hear the singing of the birds, the rustling of the leaves in the wind, and the sound of the sea.

Sometimes my family goes to the beach with other families. The dads play volleyball, and the moms sit under umbrellas and play with the younger children.

One afternoon I was so excited when we got to the ocean! The waves were calm, and there were small pools scattered around the shoreline. I ran to the water. I wanted to swim like a fish and collect seashells.

"Stay close, Sueli!" my mother called as she gathered the young children into the shade of the big umbrella.

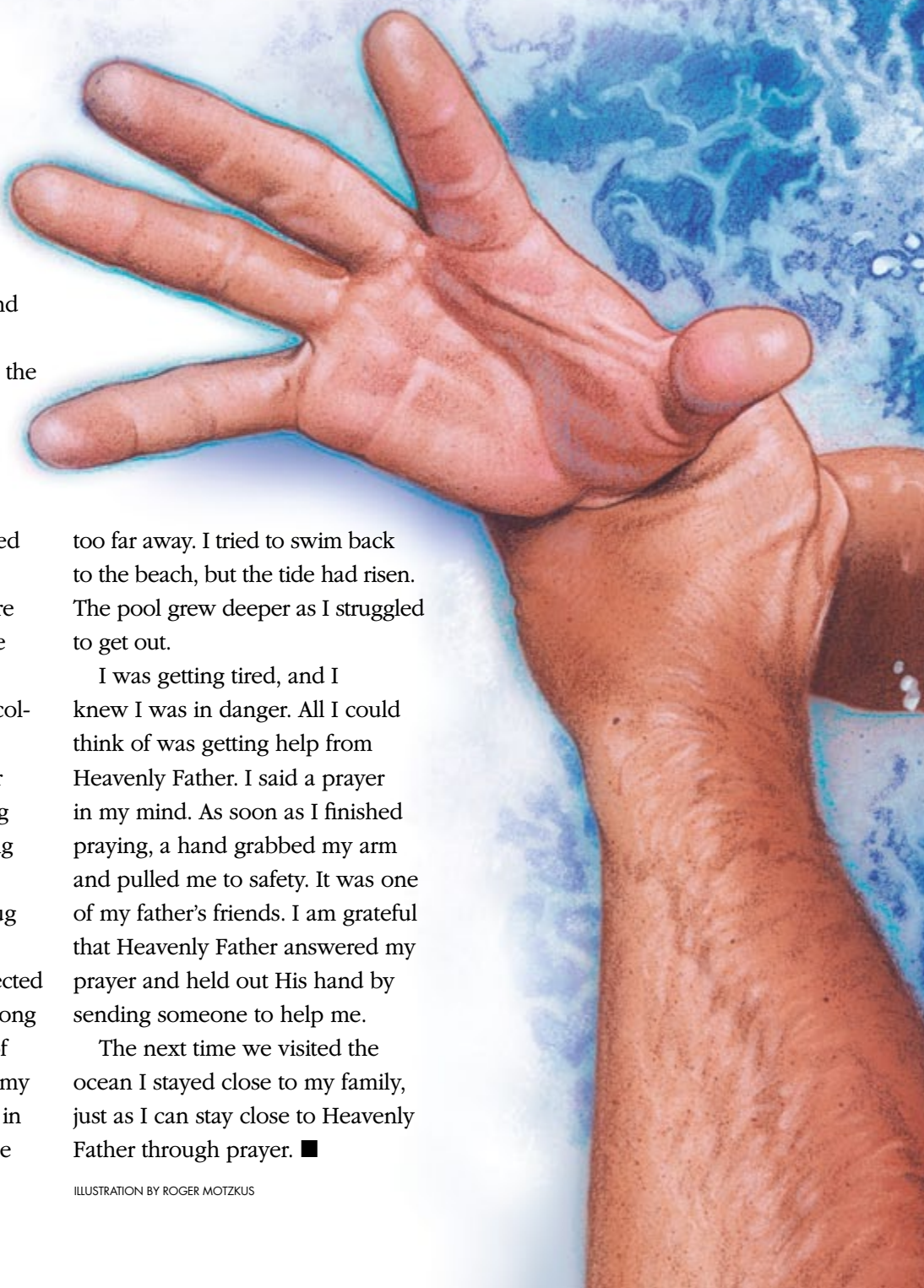
"All right, Mom," I said as I dug my toes into the wet sand.

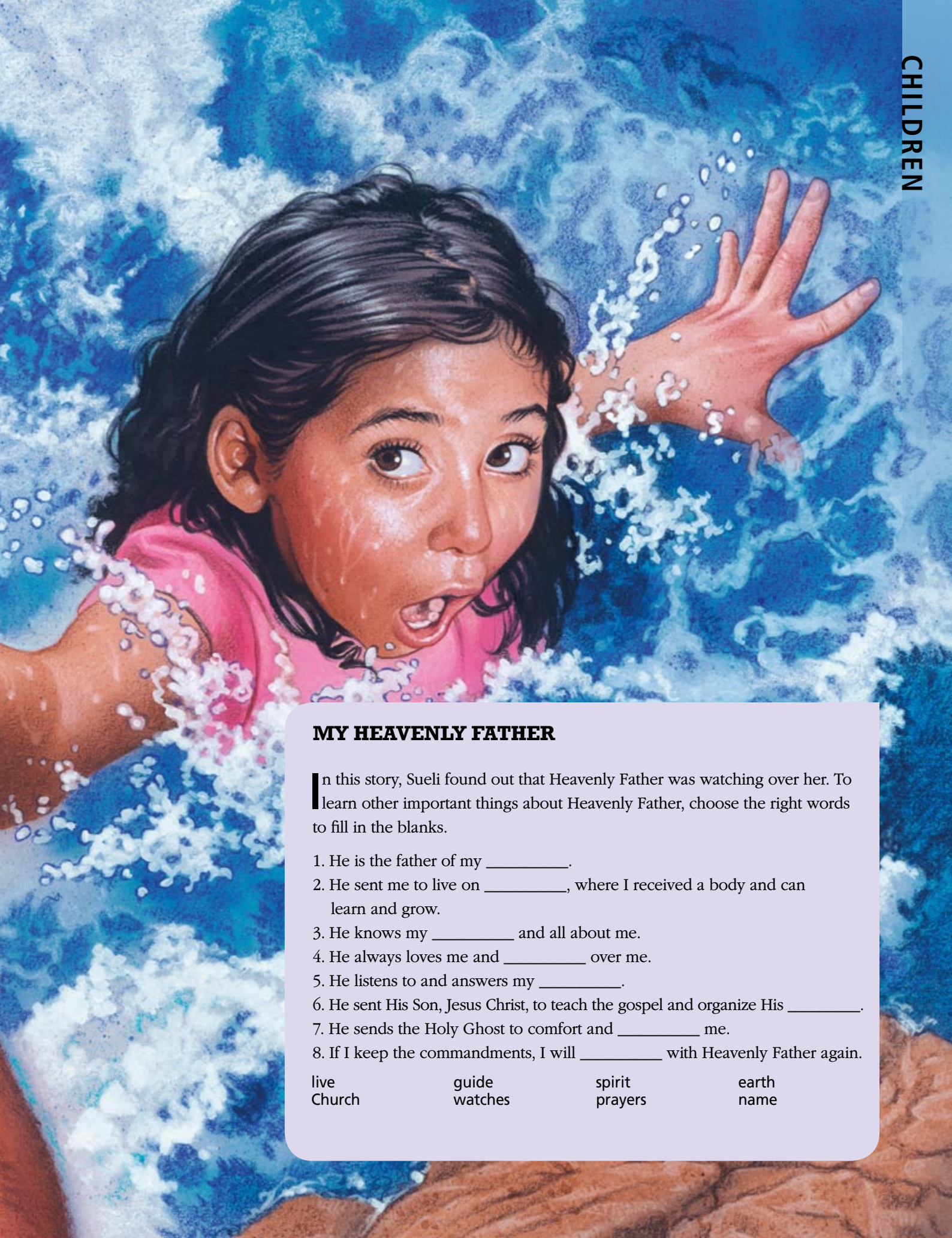
I searched for shells and inspected the little creatures in the pools along the shore. As I splashed in one of the pools, I looked back toward my family. I could see the umbrellas in the distance. I realized I had gone

too far away. I tried to swim back to the beach, but the tide had risen. The pool grew deeper as I struggled to get out.

I was getting tired, and I knew I was in danger. All I could think of was getting help from Heavenly Father. I said a prayer in my mind. As soon as I finished praying, a hand grabbed my arm and pulled me to safety. It was one of my father's friends. I am grateful that Heavenly Father answered my prayer and held out His hand by sending someone to help me.

The next time we visited the ocean I stayed close to my family, just as I can stay close to Heavenly Father through prayer. ■





MY HEAVENLY FATHER

In this story, Sueli found out that Heavenly Father was watching over her. To learn other important things about Heavenly Father, choose the right words to fill in the blanks.

1. He is the father of my _____.
2. He sent me to live on _____, where I received a body and can learn and grow.
3. He knows my _____ and all about me.
4. He always loves me and _____ over me.
5. He listens to and answers my _____.
6. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to teach the gospel and organize His _____.
7. He sends the Holy Ghost to comfort and _____ me.
8. If I keep the commandments, I will _____ with Heavenly Father again.

live
Church

guide
watches

spirit
prayers

earth
name

Happy Valentine!



Tine O. of Nairobi, Kenya

By Richard M. Romney
Church Magazines

In many places in the world, Valentine's Day—February 14—is remembered as a day of love. But what if your name is Valentine? Does every day become a day of love?

That's the way nine-year-old Tine O. of Nairobi, Kenya, feels about it. Everyone calls her "Tiny," but her full name is Valentine.

"I was named Valentine because I was born on February 14," she explains. And true to her name, she

Valentine loves her family. She also loves learning about Jesus Christ.



tries to love everybody. "When I was baptized, I took upon me the name of Jesus Christ," she says. "That means I should care about everyone, just as He would."

How does Tine make every day a day of love? There are lots of ways.

"The first thing I do is say my prayers," she says. "I thank Heavenly Father for His Son because I love Jesus Christ. I thank Heavenly Father for my family and for the way temples unite families because I love my family. Then I ask Heavenly Father to bless the sick because I know that He loves the sick people too."

Tine's Family

Tine is the youngest child in her family and has three older brothers and two older sisters. "She helps me when I need something," says Tine's

brother, George. "Like at school, when my pen was lost, she gave me one of hers." Her sister, Brenda, says Tine doesn't get mad when someone else corrects her.

At home Tine's family speaks both Swahili and English. They love to hold family home evening. "We study the scriptures together," Tine says. "We learn about the Savior, and we take turns leading the family in prayer."

"I try to be like Jesus by being kind, going to church, and obeying my parents," Tine says. ■

Fun Facts about Tine

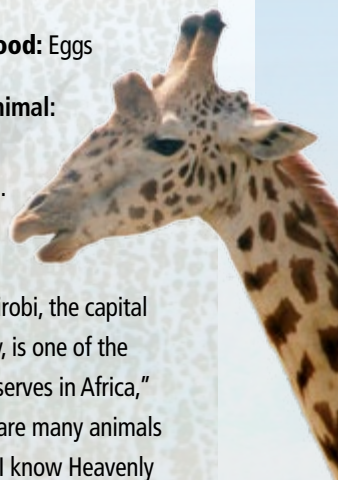
Favorite song: "We'll Bring the World His Truth" (*Children's Songbook*, 172–73)

Favorite activity: Skipping rope and learning to cook

Favorite food: Eggs

Favorite animal: Her puppy named Sandra.

Tine also appreciates wild animals. "Next door to Nairobi, the capital city of our country, is one of the largest wildlife reserves in Africa," Tine says. "There are many animals there, of all sorts. I know Heavenly Father loves the animals. Animals were an important part of the Creation of the earth. Jesus Christ was the Creator, so I am sure He loves the animals too."

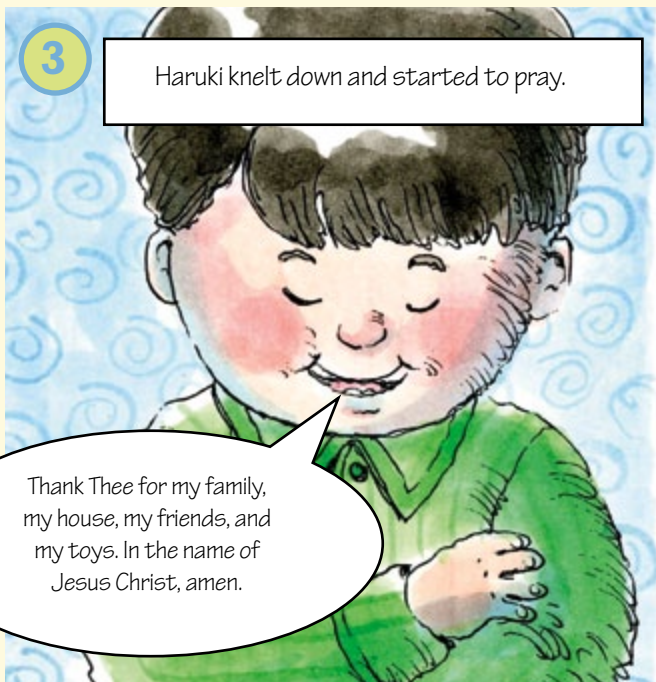


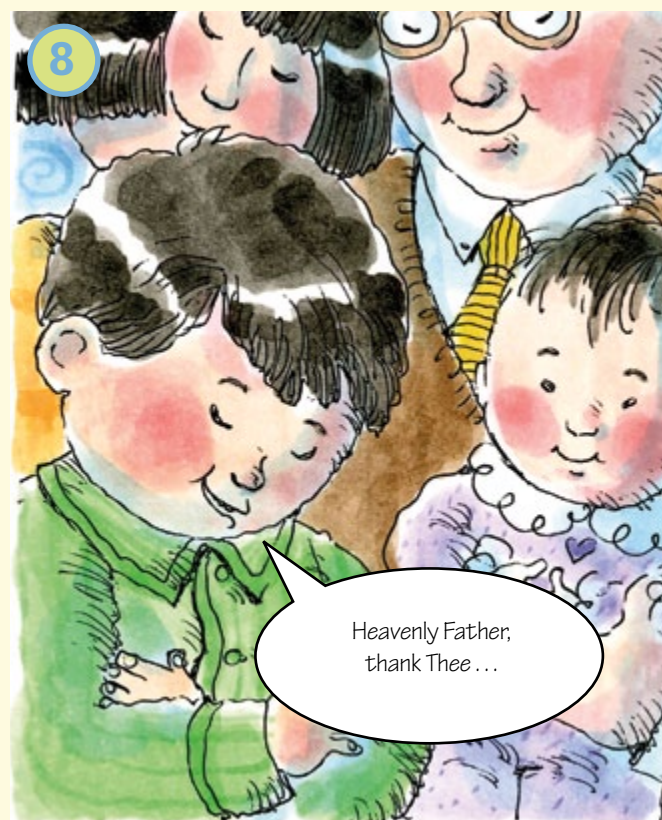
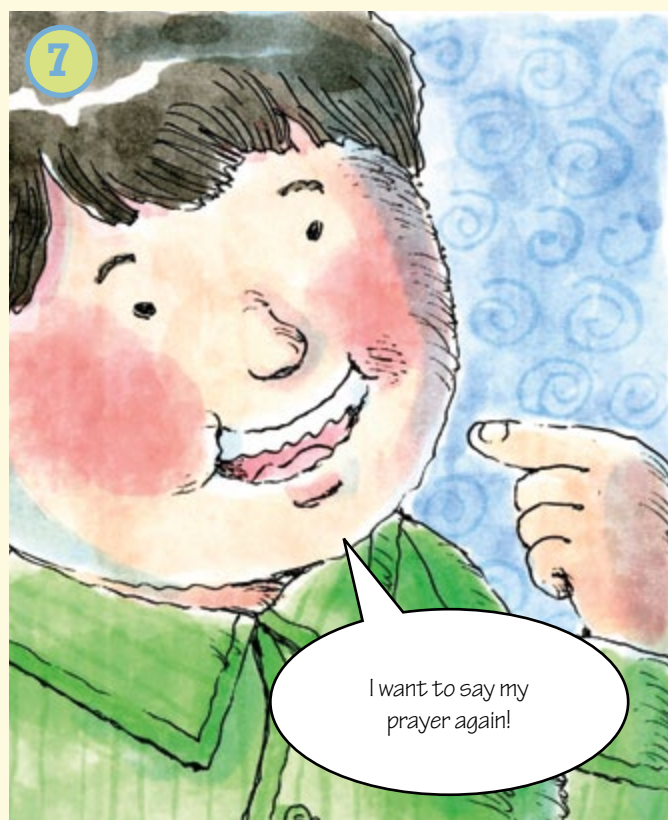
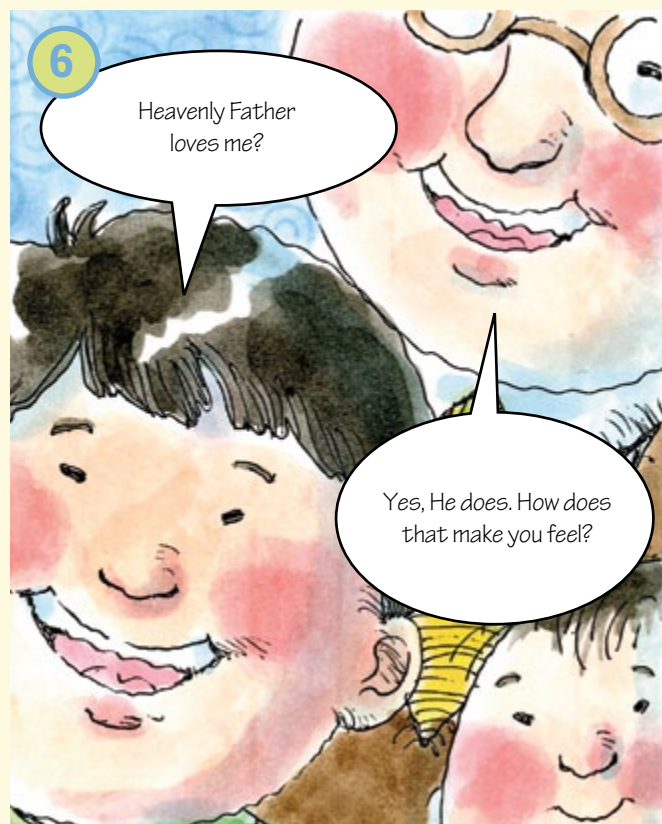
A Prayer to Heavenly Father

By Chad E. Phares

Based on a true story

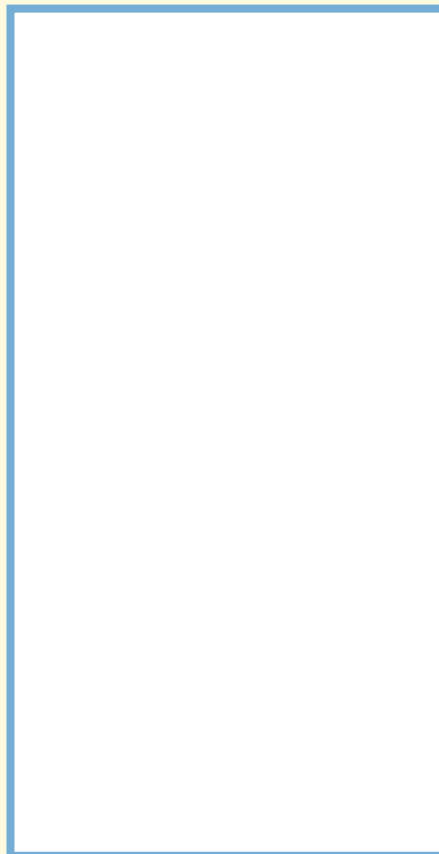
"Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name" (3 Nephi 18:21).





HEAVENLY FATHER'S MANY BLESSINGS

Heavenly Father gives Haruki many blessings. Does Heavenly Father bless you with some of the same things? Draw a happy face next to the pictures below that show something Heavenly Father has blessed you with. In the blank space, draw another blessing you enjoy.



HELPS FOR PARENTS

Take turns with your child naming blessings Heavenly Father has given you and your child. Talk to your child about why prayer is important to you.



Nephi was blessed for choosing the right.

“If ye do keep his commandments he doth bless you and prosper you” (Mosiah 2:22).

Members Follow Prophetic Counsel in Holding Day of Service

By Melissa Merrill

Church Magazines

In April 2011, President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, announced that units of the Church everywhere would be invited to participate in a day of service to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Church welfare program. The invitation officially came in a First Presidency letter sent to all units. President Eyring then shared four principles that he said have guided him when he “wanted to help in the Lord’s way” and when he has been helped by others (see “Opportunities to Do Good,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2011, 22).

In the remaining months of 2011, members across the world responded to that prophetic call, in the process embodying the principles President Eyring outlined.

Principle 1: “All people are happier and feel more self-respect when they can provide for themselves and their family and then reach out to take care of others.”

Among the first stakes to respond to the First Presidency’s invitation to participate in a day of service was the David stake in Panama, which organized a preparedness fair for the broader community. The event, which took place in April, was supported by several public entities, featured workshops and demonstrations on topics related to home storage, family finances, emergency preparedness, and health.

It isn’t enough just to know these principles for ourselves, said Itzel Valdez Gonzalez, who participated in the day of service. It’s also important to serve others by sharing them.

“Service to others is an important characteristic

of the followers of Jesus Christ,” she said. “This event provided opportunities for members of the Church to give of their time and talents to bless those in need.”

Principle 2: “When we join hands to serve people in need, the Lord unites our hearts.”

Members of the Arusha Branch in Tanzania decided to volunteer at Shanga House, a facility that gives vocational training to people with disabilities and teaches them to provide a living for themselves and their families.

On August 20, 2011, 35 participants—adults, youth, and children; Church members, investigators, and missionaries—worked alongside people with disabilities in making craft items and jewelry that would later be sold. The volunteers also helped with household chores like cleaning and sweeping.

Just before the group departed, Shanga House coordinators asked them to come to a central area so that the people they had served could shake their hands and thank them. “It was quite an emotional experience,” said Sister Sandra Rydalch, who is serving a mission in the area with her husband, Elder Rich Rydalch. Since that time, when people from Shanga House see members of the branch downtown, “they readily recognize us, wave, and stop to visit,” Sister Rydalch said.

Patience Rwiza, who organized the branch’s project under the direction of priesthood leadership, points out that the activity was beneficial not just for those at Shanga House but also for those who offered the service. “People developed

a sense of love by helping others, and along the process, people learned things from the community that they didn't know before," he said. "My testimony has been strengthened with what I did and saw—from the members' participation and the community as a whole."

Principle 3: "Draw your family into the work with you so that they can learn to care for each other as they care for others."

Members of the Coimbra Portugal Stake realize that service is not a one-time event. In fact, the stake participates in several activities each year under the Mormon Helping Hands umbrella. Last year's activities included cleaning a public park and taking Primary children to visit other children who were living in an orphanage. In these and other activities, it is important to involve whole families, said Anabela Jordão Ferreira, who serves as the public affairs director for the Coimbra Stake.

"In our projects, we sometimes say that we accept people from 8 months old to 88 years old," said Sister Jordão. "That is completely true. We see mothers with babies and grandfathers who have mobility difficulties, but they also have a strong testimony and the will to serve the Lord."

Principle 4: "The Lord sends the Holy Ghost to make it possible to 'seek, and ye shall find' in caring for the poor as He does in finding truth."

When Michael Hatch, who serves on the high council in the Farmington New Mexico Stake, was given the assignment to organize a stake day of service in response to President Eyring's invitation, he wondered where they would find ideas for ministering to the poor in their community. He met in council with his committee, and they and other stake leaders encouraged stake

members to share their ideas relating to needs in the community.

Roberta Rogers knew of a particular need among several organizations in the area—including the hospital where she works in community relations. While clothing drives usually generated helpful donations of used pants, shirts, shoes, and coats, what many charities still needed were things like socks, underwear, and pajamas—donations that needed to come new. Sister Rogers suggested that the stake organize a collection of such items.

On October 15, stake members distributed in their neighborhoods 1,000 cardstock door hangers that explained the project, invited the community to participate, and listed items needed. A week later stake members returned to collect the items and then brought them to the stake center for sorting and distribution among 10 local charitable organizations.

That combined effort met an urgent need in their community, Sister Rogers said. "It was something different, and it helped people. And because it was not really expensive, one family could spend a few dollars and really be able to help somebody." ■



Members around the world planned and participated in service to their communities in response to the First Presidency's invitation.

International Art Competition Invites Youth to Let Talents Shine

In Doctrine and Covenants 115:4–6, the Lord calls to action all the people of His Church, inviting them to “arise and shine forth” so that their “light may be a standard for the nations.” He asks them to join together to support one another and become “a refuge from the storm.”

Echoing this call, the Church History Museum invites the youth of the Church ages 13 to 18 to participate in the museum’s first International Art Competition for Youth. For several years the museum has held an international art competition for adult Church members, but a similar experience is now opening to youth in this new competition.

Youth are challenged to create works of art that express

what the Lord’s request—“arise and shine forth”—means to them. The museum began accepting entries on Monday, January 2, 2012.

“No matter how imperfect our youth may perceive their artistic talents to be, it is remarkable how something as simple as a drawing, a photograph, or a sculpture can touch another person’s spirit and become a great source of spiritual strength to them,” said Angela Ames, assistant curator of education at the museum. “And as the youth use their creative talents to spiritually edify and inspire others, they too will be inspired.”

Any artwork submitted to the competition must have been created after January 1, 2009. Entrants can submit their work online until Friday, June 1,

2012. Each artist may submit one piece to the competition. Submission information and guidelines can be found at lds.org/youthartcomp.

All artistic media and styles are welcome in the competition—paintings, drawings, photographs, sculptures, metalwork, textiles, jewelry, pottery, and so forth. According to contest rules and requirements, “a worldwide range of cultural and aesthetic traditions may be expressed in the artwork. Both symbolic and literal artistic interpretations are welcome.”

Soon the contest site will launch an interactive video, under the section “Your Creative Process,” that young artists can reference if they need help brainstorming an idea or deciding how to convey their idea.

Following two rounds of judging by a multimember jury, winners will be chosen and asked to send their original art to the museum. Their entries will be shown in an exhibit that will run from November 16, 2012, through June 17, 2013.

Of those pieces of art shown in the exhibit, up to 20 will receive Merit Awards, given to recognize outstanding work, and three will receive Visitors’ Choice Awards, which will be given shortly before the exhibit closes. ■

Youth of the Church ages 13 to 18 are invited to submit art to the first art competition for youth.



Book of Mormon Stories Come Alive in Updated Videos

Book of Mormon stories are coming alive with the updated *Book of Mormon Stories* videos, available now in Cantonese, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish at the scripture stories section of LDS.org.

Originally available online as slide shows, images were given an animated, three-dimensional look



using a technique called parallax animation. Figures are cut out and moved around the canvas, and panning, blurring, and zooming provide additional visual interest.

The videos also feature sound effects and an original soundtrack.

“These scriptural stories help to plant the seed of testimony in the hearts of children and others who view these videos by teaching gospel truths,” said Brent Meisinger, project manager in the Scriptures Coordination Division of the Church Curriculum Department. “The videos provide a learning experience that

will encourage regular interaction with the scriptures and teach skills that will prepare viewers for further scripture study.”

The video makeover contains more than three hours of content spread over 54 separate episodes, ranging from “How We Got the Book of Mormon” (Chapter 1) to “The Promise of the Book of Mormon” (Chapter 54).

The images in the videos are illustrations created by Jerry Thompson and Robert T. Barrett. Their hand-painted artwork was published serially in the *Friend* and *Liahona* for almost a decade, beginning in 1989, and then was printed together in 1997 as *Book of Mormon Stories*.

Viewers can also watch the videos as podcasts in iTunes and as clips on YouTube and Roku. Families may also enjoy the Mormon Channel’s “Scripture Stories” program, in which children and a moderator read from the stories, discuss them, sing songs, and share testimonies about the lessons in the scriptures.

The *New Testament Stories* videos were also recently animated in 11 languages. They too are available on the LDS scriptures page, iTunes, and the Mormon Channel on YouTube. ■

I Feel the Spirit When I Read

I appreciate all the effort made to produce the *Liahona*, and I feel the Spirit when I read it. Lately I have been studying and pondering President Dieter F. Uchtdorf’s message, “Waiting on the Road to Damascus” (*Liahona*, May 2011, 70). This and the other articles in the magazine have helped me to improve and to find solutions to my weaknesses.

**Elder Emined Edward Ashaba, South Africa
Durban Mission**

Messages from God

In the *Liahona* I find messages from God—sent through His servants, the living prophets and apostles. Those who seek spiritual guidance will readily find it if they study the magazine with a sincere heart.

Manuel de Araujo Fernandes, Mozambique

I Always Find Answers

The *Liahona* strengthens my testimony that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ love and care for each of us. I’m excited to read the magazine each month because I always find answers to my prayers. I’m grateful for the opportunity to receive the Lord’s words in this way.

Carlota A. Bosotros, Philippines

Please send your feedback or suggestions to liahona@ldschurch.org. Submissions may be edited for length or clarity. ■

Saints Hear Conference in Georgian for the First Time

On October 9, 2011, a congregation of 35 Saints gathered to watch general conference—and to hear it in their native Georgian for the first time. Prior to October, the approximately 50 active members in the country had the option of listening to conference in either Russian, Armenian, or English. However, there were many who spoke only Georgian, so interpretation being offered in that language was a significant event.

“I was so happy to be able to hear President Thomas S. Monson’s address to us in Georgian,” said Lela Tsobiladze. “It makes such a difference when you hear conference in your native tongue.”

Church Responding to Typhoon Damage in the Philippines

Following Typhoons Nesat and Nalgae in the Philippines in late September, which affected nearly 200,000 people, the Church

Area Welfare Department initially responded with 600 sacks of rice, which were delivered in Pampanga. The Social Action Center of Pampanga of the Archdiocese of San Fernando Pampanga, a partner nongovernmental organization, handled the distribution of the donated rice.

Catholic and LDS volunteers worked hand in hand to repack and distribute the rice donation to the 352 affected villages in Pampanga.

African Members Participate in Fifth Day of Service

For the fifth consecutive year, members in Africa participated in All-Africa Mormon Helping Hands Day, a cooperative effort between the Africa Southeast and Africa West Areas. On one day each year, the members in these areas perform service of various kinds in their local communities. This year’s event was held on August 20, 2011; reports of some of the projects are available at news.lds.org. ■

Saints in Lagos, Nigeria, participate in the All-Africa Helping Hands Day on August 20, 2011.



PHOTOGRAPH BY EBBERE EVANS



PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG T. OLSON

Elder Ballard, Elder Jensen Visit Members in Mexico

During the weekend of September 10–11, 2011, Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Elder Jay E. Jensen of the Presidency of the Seventy met with members and missionaries in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Elder Ballard asked members to embed the gospel in the hearts of the people of Mexico through spiritual experiences. “There is too much mental acceptance of the gospel without experiencing a spiritual acceptance,” he said. “Deep conversion of the spirit is necessary for our members to introduce to their hearts what they agreed to in their minds.”

Elder Oaks, Elder Andersen Visit Peru, Bolivia

In August 2011 Elder Dallin H. Oaks and Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles traveled to Bolivia and Peru in South America. Elder Andersen’s messages included



his teaching that throughout the world, all people struggle to choose between good and evil. “The difficulty in making decisions regarding mortality is exactly the same for you as it is for me,” he said. “We are here to learn how to live with faith.”

Elder Bednar Fulfills Assignment in Europe

During the first part of September, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles met with Saints in England, Germany (where he served as a full-time missionary nearly 40 years ago), and Denmark. In each setting, Elder Bednar taught the doctrine of Christ and emphasized the power of the Atonement. He also continued to teach the principle of moral agency and our individual responsibility to act. “Moral agency is the power and capacity of independent action,” he said. “And as we act appropriately and in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ, our very natures are changed through His Atonement and by the power of the Holy Ghost.”

For more on these stories, search news.lds.org using the General Authority’s name and the location of his visit as keywords. ■

This issue contains articles and activities that could be used for family home evening. The following are a few examples.

“The Doctrine of the Father,” page 20: Start by asking family members to share what they know about the nature of Heavenly Father. Discuss the article, summarizing the points made in each section that give insight into who God the Father is. Consider concluding with your testimony of the love of Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

“This Is Your Work,” page 42: First, read the sidebar titled “What Can I Do?” and choose one of the ideas that will help your family get involved in family history and temple work (see also lds.org/familyhistory youth). During family home evening, read the article with your family and then ask what blessings Sister Beck promised to those who engage in this important work. Carry out the idea you planned and consider continuing this project in weeks to come.

“The Tender Mercies of the Lord,” page 48: Read the story of the young family who received a special Christmas card and the story of the priesthood leader

who learned the names of the youth in his stake. Ask family members to think of tender mercies they have received from the Lord. Consider asking, “What are tender mercies? Who receives tender mercies? How can you show gratitude for the tender mercies you receive?” You may want to follow up with Elder Bednar’s answers to these questions from the article.

“Unplugged,” page 61: Read what these children and their families are doing to consume a healthy amount of media. You may want to discuss how your family keeps a healthy balance of TV, computer, and other “screen time.” In the October 2011 general conference, Elder Ian S. Arden of the Seventy spoke about using various technologies wisely: “As good as these things are, we cannot allow them to push to one side those things of greatest importance” (“A Time to Prepare” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 32). Consider making goals similar to those in this article to make your home a place where the Spirit can dwell. ■

Sunday Lessons on Monday Night

I really wanted to have an effective family home evening lesson each week, but figuring out a topic and preparing a lesson were always challenges for me.

One Monday I realized that I had forgotten to prepare a lesson. But then I realized a hidden blessing of being a Primary teacher. I had recently been called to teach the five-year-olds and had just taught a lesson the day before. I decided to use an abbreviated (and age-appropriate) version of what I taught on Sunday for FHE. That Monday night we talked about obedience, and I retold three stories I had shared the previous day in Primary.

Adapting my Primary lesson to my family has been a great way for me to accomplish my goal of having a well-prepared and effective family home evening lesson each week. ■

Christina Sherwood, Arizona, USA

EMULATING AND HONORING OUR HEAVENLY PARENTAGE

By Scott Van Kampen

Church Magazines

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

NOTES

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

This year many issues of the *Liahona* will contain Book of Mormon scripture figures. To use, cut them out and glue or tape them to cardboard, heavy paper, small paper sacks, or craft sticks. Store each set in an envelope or bag, along with the label that tells where to find the story in the scriptures.

**Heavenly Father Commands
Nephi to Build a Ship**

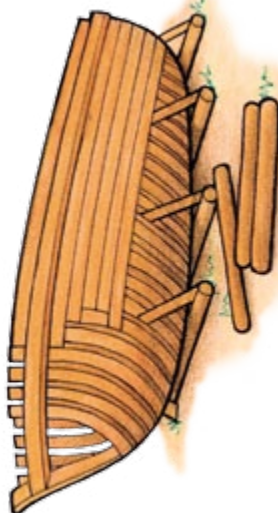
1 Nephi 17



Nephi



Laman and Lemuel





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

Articles of Faith 1:1

