

FOR YOUTH OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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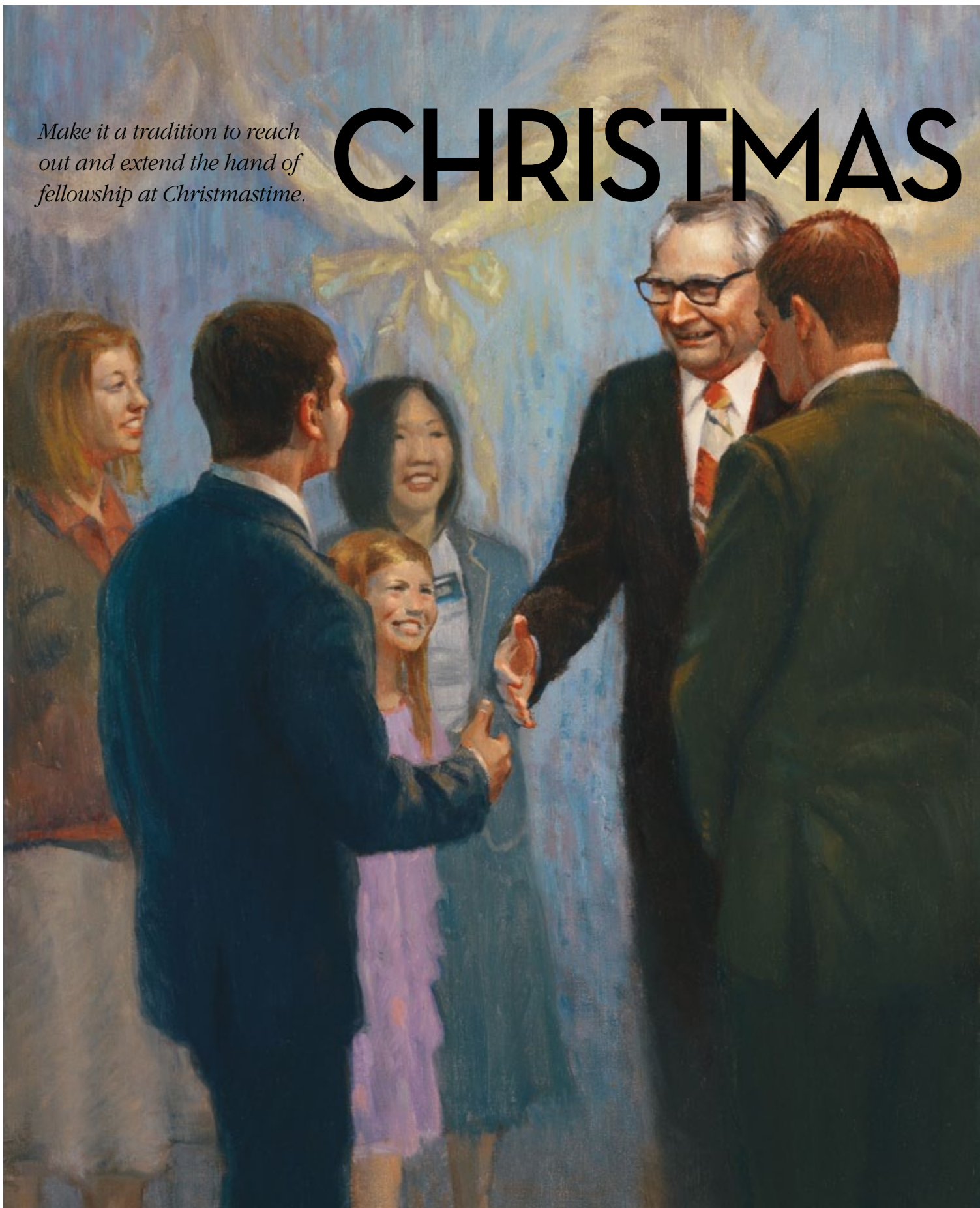
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*Make it a tradition to reach
out and extend the hand of
fellowship at Christmastime.*

CHRISTMAS



at the MTC

It was about 25 years ago that I received the assignment to be chairman of the Missionary Executive Council. Christmas was approaching. It had been the practice to have a devotional at the Provo Missionary Training Center on Christmas morning with all the missionaries who were away from home; perhaps for most of them it was their first Christmas not being with family and friends.

We decided to take our turn and be the speakers at the devotional. Because it was Christmastime and Christmastime is a time of remembering families, we decided to take our children and grandchildren to the MTC with us. In those days, they didn't have the fine facilities they have today for the devotional settings. They set up chairs in the cafeteria with a small, raised platform for those that were speaking. We were very close to the missionaries, and there were certainly not the numbers that we have today.

The theme we tried to carry into the setting with the missionaries was family traditions you can carry with you in the field. We tried to emphasize those basic values they would be able to teach their investigators from their own personal experience of living in a Latter-day Saint home—the values of family prayer, family scripture study, family home evenings, counsel with fathers and mothers, and so on.

The messages seemed to be appropriate and well-received by the missionaries as family members participated. The musical

numbers were furnished by the grandchildren. We had two at that time who were without their two front teeth. They sang “All I Want for Christmas Is My Two Front Teeth.” That was all we needed to gain the warm, loving appreciation of the missionaries that particular morning.

We decided to stay and have Christmas dinner with all of the missionaries. We wanted to scatter ourselves around them, so each of us, including the grandchildren, sat at a different table with these great young men and women and the couples. Conversations, of course, centered around being away from home and remembering Christmas traditions. We learned of the lessons their parents had taught to prepare them for being full-time missionaries and declaring the message of the restored gospel to the peoples of the world. It was a wonderful experience, one we'll never forget.

Now, fast forward many years. We found ourselves a year ago with the same assignment, that of being chairman of the Missionary Executive Council. Christmas was approaching. Because of the pleasant experience we'd had at the MTC those many years ago, we decided to repeat the performance.

This time, there were about twice the number of missionaries. The setting was very different, for now a beautiful auditorium had been constructed for holding devotionals. There before us were more than 2,000 wonderful full-time missionaries anxious to hear the messages we would bring to them



By Elder L. Tom Perry

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

at Christmastime. Because the setting was different and required a more formal approach, we selected the message from Matthew and Luke of the birth of the Savior.

The book of Matthew tells the remarkable account of how he wanted to be certain that everyone understood the fact that the Savior came to earth through the lineage of David the King just as the Old Testament prophets had predicted. Matthew goes on to tell the wonderful story of the wise men coming from the East to pay homage to the Christ child. They brought gifts that would greatly relieve the burden of having to flee for their safety into Egypt, as Herod the King was troubled about the fact that this King of the Jews was being born.

Each of the stories was preceded by having the scripture read by our two youngest grandchildren, J.P., who was 8 years old, and Megan, who was 10 years old.

J.P. read the verses from the book of Matthew. As the story unfolds, you wonder where Matthew went for his source of material. It is obvious that this is the story of Joseph the father, of his concern for the safety of his family, and also for supplying the family with the needs that they would require as they were to make this long journey to a distant land. Our message was on the blessed role of fathers.

Megan read the beautiful account of the shepherds coming and finding the Savior's birth taking place in a manger and the travail of Mary in bearing a child under such trying conditions. Again, it is very evident that Luke must have listened to the wondrous story told by the mother of the Savior. We elaborated on the contribution mothers have made in our lives, of nourishing, of loving, of confidence, and of giving peace and security, as only a mother can do.

Again, we decided to follow the practice of the previous experience and have dinner with the full-time missionaries. We scattered ourselves among the tables and

had a glorious time listening to their stories of home and what they were going to accomplish. We felt of the spirit they had now as full-time missionaries ready to go out in the world to declare the great message of the Restoration to the peoples of the world.

Looking at the size of the cafeteria, we decided to shake hands with the missionaries as the dinner concluded. Little did we realize that they came in waves, only about a third

of them could eat dinner at any one time. After shaking hands with the first wave, the second wave descended on us. We had to shake hands with them, and then the third wave descended on us. We spent most of the afternoon shaking hands and wishing the missionaries well as they went about their training in the Missionary Training Center.

It was interesting to see the reaction of our grandchildren. Megan, in naming her 12 favorite events a short time later, had the Christmas MTC experience listed second only to her last special birthday. To me that was a lesson taught by our grandchildren to their grandparents.

The greatest joy we have is seeking out someone in need and sharing the joy of Christmas

with them. I know you will not have the opportunity of being in the MTC, but all around you in the cities and villages, towns and townships where you have opportunity to dwell, there are those who are separated from the warmth and love of their families at Christmastime. We want to encourage you to reach out and extend the hand of fellowship to them and bring the warmth of Christmas into every soul you possibly are able to touch. You will find, just as Megan found, these are experiences you will never forget, and you will have them on the top of your list of Christmases to remember because you visited others and brought joy to them in this glorious season of the year. **NE**

From the Church News, Dec. 13, 2008.



Bring the warmth of Christmas into every soul you possibly are able to touch. You will find, just as our grandchildren found, these are experiences you will never forget.

By Rebekah Atkin

Thoughtful Gifts

Why did the Wise Men give Joseph and Mary gold, frankincense, and myrrh?

Many people believe that it's the thought that counts when it comes to gift giving. Maybe that's because the thought behind the gift makes it more than just a useful or interesting object—it makes the gift a symbol of the gift-giver's love or consideration for the recipient. Some gifts also mean more than the thought behind the gift; these kinds of gifts have a widely accepted symbolism that adds even more significance. When a gift has all three—practical utility, personal value, and symbolic meaning—it may be the most thoughtful and appreciated gift of all.

Consider the thought behind the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh that the Wise Men gave to the Christ child (see Matthew 2:11). The Bible doesn't say why the Wise Men brought these particular gifts, but all three gifts had practical value and perhaps symbolic meaning for the Son of God and His earthly parents.

Gold

Practical use: For a young couple who would soon have the expense of traveling to Egypt to avoid the wrath of Herod, the gold would be an invaluable gift.

Symbolic meaning: Gold is the typical gift for kings (see 1 Kings 9:14, 28) because it symbolizes kingship and royalty—a fitting gift for the “King of kings” (1 Timothy 6:15).

Frankincense

Practical use: Aside from its considerable monetary value, frankincense was used as a sweet-smelling incense and perfume.

Symbolic meaning: Frankincense comes from a sweet tree resin and was used in priesthood ordinances, in burnt offerings (see Leviticus 2:1), and in oil for anointing priests. Thus, it can represent the Lord's priesthood and His role as the Lamb of God to be sacrificed on our behalf (see John 1:29).

Myrrh

Practical use: Myrrh, a bitter oil from a tree resin, was also economically valuable but probably more beneficial to Mary and Joseph for its medicinal uses.

Symbolic meaning: In the New Testament, myrrh is usually associated with embalming and burial because of its preservative qualities (see John 19:39–40). Myrrh's medicinal uses can symbolize Christ's role as the Master Healer, and its use in burials can symbolize “the bitter cup” He would drink when He suffered for our sins (see D&C 19:18–19). **NE**





What Is Mighty PRAYER?

By Kersten Campbell

Although I prayed every day, I'd never felt like my prayers could be described as anything but ordinary. I wondered if the heroes in the scriptures were the only ones whose prayers could be described as "mighty."

One day, a friend called and described a beautiful prayer experience she had had. "It was like real two-way communication with my Father in Heaven," she said. "Heaven felt so close around me."

Her experience caused me to wonder, "Is that what the scriptures meant

by mighty prayer?" That was what happened with Enos when he knelt in prayer. Since I couldn't remember ever having this experience when I prayed, I decided to find out what makes prayer *mighty* and how I could make my prayers more meaningful.

I started by making a list of the things I thought would work. My main problem was falling asleep during my prayers. It may seem silly, but the first thing on my list was to try praying in more uncomfortable places. This really worked to keep me awake, but my prayers still felt the same as they always did.

I thought I might try longer prayers, like Enos. Surely that would let Heavenly Father

know that I really wanted to communicate with Him. Nothing changed. And although I was sure Heavenly Father was blessing me and listening to my prayers, I wanted to feel closer to Him than I was feeling.

Over a period of time I tried many other techniques, such as concentrating harder, writing down everything I needed to pray for so I wouldn't forget anything, and pray-

ing out loud. Nothing seemed to make my prayers feel mighty.

Then one day that all changed. It happened to be near Christmastime

and I was listening to "O Holy Night" in my bedroom. As I pondered the Savior and His mission, the music penetrated my heart. A feeling of joy and gratitude washed over me as I thought of the Savior's love and His great Atonement. I got on my knees and uttered a simple prayer of thanksgiving, with the hope that I could become more like Him. As a gentle warmth and happiness enveloped my heart, heaven felt very near, and the Spirit helped me to understand that this is what it meant to have mighty prayer.

What made that prayer different than all the other prayers that came before? My prayer wasn't any longer than usual, and I

I always wondered what the scriptures meant by "mighty prayer."



PRAYER, PRAY (see also Answer; A Call; Communication; Cry; Fast; Fasting; Name of the Lord; Supplication; Prayer; RD Prayer)

1 Ne. 18: 3 Nephi¹ p. oft unto Lord; 2 Ne. 4: 24 Lehi¹ has waxed b in **mighty p.** unto God; 26: 15 p. of faithful shall be heard; 32: 8 if ye wo hearken unto Spirit which teaches man p., ye would know ye must p.; 32: 8 spirit teaches man that he must no 32: 9 p. always; 33: 12 Nephi¹ p. th many may be saved in God's kingdo **Jacob** 7: 22 Father has answered p. **Jacob**²; **Enos** 1: 4 Enos² cries unto Maker in **mighty p.**; **Omni** 1: 26 contin in fasting and p.; **Mosiah** 27: 14 Alma has p. much concerning Alma²; 27: 22 Alma³ has priests p. that the Lord v open mouth of Alma²; **Alma** 5: 46 Alma has fasted and p. many days to kn these things; 8: 10 Alma² wrestles w God in **mighty p.** that he might po out his Spirit; 10: 22-23 people of A monihah are spared because of p. of righteous; 17: 3 sons of Mosiah² tea with power because they have given the selves to much fasting and p.; 26: to know mysteries of God, men must without ceasing; 28: 6 following t tremendous slaughter is time of much fa ing and p.; 31: 12, 22 every Zoram offers selfsame p.; 34: 19 continue in unto God; 34: 27 when ye do not cry un the Lord, let your hearts be drawn out



I felt a desire to be like those great young men at the Sweetwater River who rescued the pioneers needing help.

hadn't even remembered everything I was supposed to pray for.

It wasn't until months later, when I stood exhausted, hungry, and cold, on the banks of a muddy pond that I began to understand.

I was participating in a pioneer trek, and it was the last day. We hadn't eaten much for breakfast, and the day before we had hiked for many miles. That morning we had pulled our handcarts to the banks of a very large pond, and we were going to ferry them across in order to experience in a small way what it must have been like to cross a river with handcarts. It had rained that morning, and we all stood in the sun, trying to dry ourselves as we waited for our turn to cross. While we waited, our stake president told us the story of the Sweetwater rescue—how several young men had put their own lives in peril in order to carry the desperate Saints of the Martin Handcart Company across an icy river in the middle of winter. As I stood listening to the story, I felt the love and sacrifice of those boys, and the Spirit swelled in

my heart. I felt a desire to be like those great young men and help rescue all those needing spiritual help in our day, including my own family.

In my mind, I uttered one of the shortest prayers I've ever said, but it was one of the most powerful: "Heavenly Father, help me to be a rescuer."

At that moment, I again felt that soft, warm, peaceful feeling of heaven close around me, and I knew through the Spirit that my will and my Heavenly Father's will were one.

It was then that I understood the difference between those two "mighty" prayers and all the others. It was the Spirit. In those two prayers, the Holy Ghost was present and taught my heart and mind what to say so that my will was in line with the will of my Heavenly Father. The Spirit had helped to make my prayers mighty.

Since then I have tried hard to invite the Spirit into my heart before, during, and after prayer. Sometimes it comes through reading the scriptures, sometimes through listening to good music, pondering my blessings, or thinking about the Savior. Sometimes just a humble heart with a strong intent to follow through will bring the Spirit. Other ways I have prepared for prayer are by serving others, praying for others, or even just asking for the Spirit to be present. Though not every prayer is like the two I have described above, I have felt much closer to my Heavenly Father and, over time, have received more personal revelation than ever before.

Inviting the Spirit into my prayers helps me to feel like I regularly have real two-way communication with my Father in Heaven. I am able to better understand His will for me when the Holy Ghost is there teaching it to me. **NE**

MIGHTY PRAYERS IN THE SCRIPTURES

Here are some of the people in the scriptures who have engaged in mighty prayer:

- Nephi (1 Nephi 10:17; 2 Nephi 4:24)
- Enos (Enos 1:4)
- The Nephites in Zarahemla (Alma 6:6)
- The 12 Nephite disciples (3 Nephi 27:1)

What do these prayers all have in common? Write a list in your journal, and decide what you can do to pray in this way.



The Lord Poured Out Blessings

I wondered, “Who is God? Is it Buddha, Jesus Christ, or some other god?”

By Kim Koung

I was born in Cambodia, where most people are Buddhists. After the Khmer Rouge regime killed so many people, many of the survivors didn't understand why, if there was a God, He would let this happen to our people. At 14 years old, I wondered the same thing.

After the regime ended, several religions began taking hold in Cambodia. I was confused because the churches taught so many different things. My family remained Buddhists, but I wanted answers to the questions of my soul: where did we come from, why are we here, and where are we going after this life?

One day as I returned from school, my aunt told me that two young men wearing white shirts and ties had come to her home talking about Jesus Christ. She was surprised because they spoke good Cambodian. I wanted to learn about Christ. I wanted to know who created us. I wondered,

“Who is God? Is it Buddha, Jesus Christ, or some other god?”

My aunt and I accepted the missionaries. During the first discussion, we felt the Spirit telling us that what they said was true. They gave us a Book of Mormon and promised that if we read it, pondered it, and asked God with a sincere heart, having faith in Him, He would manifest the truth

unto us. It made a lot of sense to me. I accepted the gospel, along with my aunt and her children. About a month later, we were all baptized and confirmed.

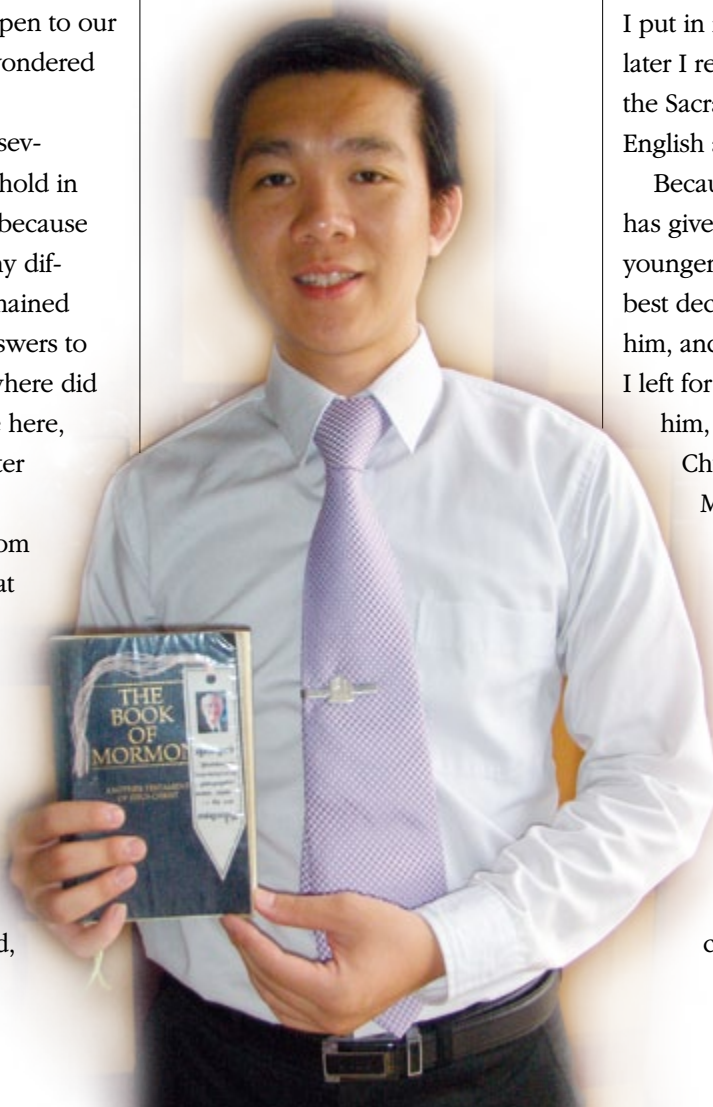
I attended seminary for four years and institute for one year and served as a seminary teacher. When I was 19, I felt I should go on a mission. I talked to my parents, and they said perhaps it was a good idea, so I put in my application. A month later I received my call to serve in the Sacramento California Mission, English and Cambodian speaking.

Because I accepted my call, God has given me many blessings. My younger brother wasn't making the best decisions. I fasted and prayed for him, and a miracle happened before I left for my mission. I baptized

him, and he is now active in the Church and attending seminary.

My family received many other blessings, and the Lord also poured out blessings upon me during my mission.

Jesus is the Christ. He lives. He loves each of us and knows us by name. He knows our challenges and obstacles, and I know He'll bless us as we strive to keep His commandments. **NE**



THE POWER OF A FRIEND

By **Melissa Merrill**
Church Magazines



Jerell and Ashley, both of Kansas, had their lives changed—each because a friend wasn't afraid to speak up about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“It’s Been a Great Ride”

Jerell C., 17, of Kansas didn’t have any major interest in religion. But when David M., a Latter-day Saint Jerell knew from both work and school, persisted in inviting him to church, Jerell decided he shouldn’t keep turning his friend down. He agreed to attend one Sunday.

People in David’s ward were kind and welcoming, and Jerell felt at home. Before long, he was attending church with David’s family *every* Sunday. One thing led to another, and after meeting with the missionaries and gaining a testimony of the Book of Mormon, Jerell received permission from his family to join the Church. David baptized him July 5, 2009.

But that’s just the beginning of Jerell’s story. He learned about early-morning seminary. He knew a little bit about it from David—David had talked to him about memorizing scriptures, for example—but Jerell had never been there before. And going would present more than a few challenges. For one thing, it began at 5:30 a.m. For another, David, who had been with Jerell at every step of learning about the gospel, had already graduated from high school and would no longer be attending seminary. And—perhaps the most daunting obstacle—Jerell didn’t have a way to get there.

That didn’t stop him, however. “I wanted to learn more about the scriptures,” he says. Although he had studied the Book of Mormon reading assignments the missionaries had given him, even taking notes and sharing his thoughts with the elders, he knew there was still a lot to learn, and seminary, it seemed, was the most obvious way to do it.

So Jerell began waking up at 4:30 a.m. and biking an hour to the building where the class was held. He continued doing so—even through bad weather—for four months. At that point, a member began giving him rides.

It didn’t always come easily, he admits. “There were mornings I just didn’t want to get on that bike,” he says. “It was dark outside, so I worried about drivers seeing me.”

But he persisted anyhow, praying for strength as he rode or singing hymns to focus his mind elsewhere. “I knew I couldn’t quit,” he says.

Jerell attributes his consistency to help from Heavenly Father, a great class of students, a dedicated teacher, and opportunities to socialize with them.

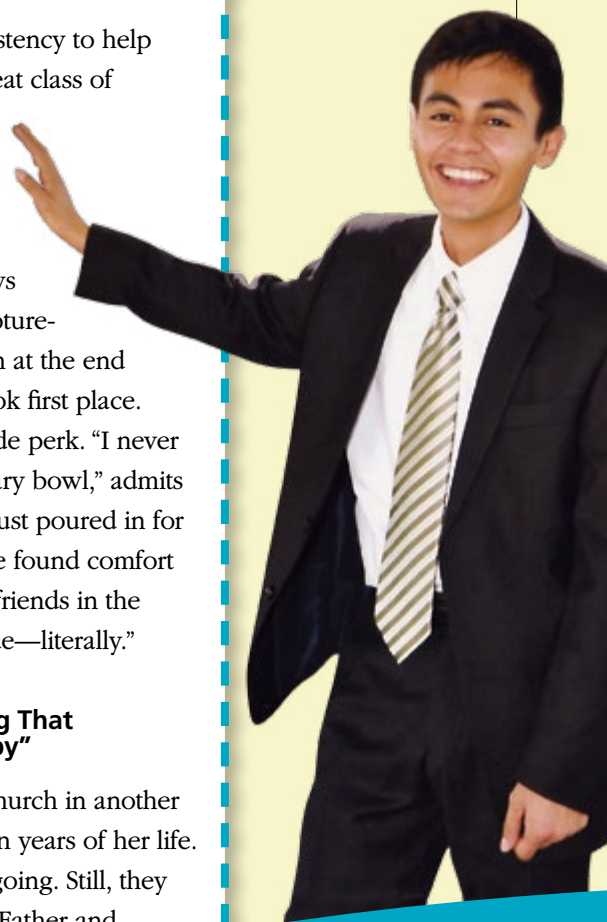
“We were good friends outside of class as well,” says Jerell. The payoff? At a scripture-mastery-related competition at the end of the school year, Jerell took first place.

Of course, that’s just a side perk. “I never expected to win the seminary bowl,” admits Jerell. “The blessings have just poured in for me as a new convert. I have found comfort in the scriptures and good friends in the Church. It’s been a great ride—literally.”

“Help Me Find Something That Will Make Me Truly Happy”

Ashley P., 16, attended church in another faith for the first six or seven years of her life. Then her parents stopped going. Still, they taught her about Heavenly Father and the power of prayer, so she grew up

After David M. (below) invited Jerell C. (left) to church numerous times, Jerell finally decided to go.



believing in God. Throughout her early teen years, she attended various worship services with friends.

Just before her sophomore year of high school, Ashley was struggling, so she looked for answers through prayer. “I prayed that I would be able to be happy in high school. I asked Heavenly Father, ‘Please help me find something that will make me truly happy.’”

Within a few weeks, she started to get to know a classmate, Katie J., in orchestra class. Because they shared a music stand, talking happened easily.

“One day after school in the orchestra room, several of us started talking about our faith,” recalls Katie. “Religion is a big

thing for a lot of kids in orchestra—most of the kids have strong beliefs and high standards, so those kinds of discussions happen a lot. Talking about the Church wasn’t scary for that reason—people are open to other people’s opinions and are generally accepting.”

“Katie started telling us about her church,” Ashley recalls. “I asked her a lot of questions after that discussion, and she suggested I go with her to church. And I found that I *really* wanted to.”

A few days later, Katie told Ashley about the Book of Mormon and showed her a copy. She had written her testimony in it and told Ashley she wanted to give it to someone, but she wasn’t sure whom. “I *wanted* that book,” says Ashley, smiling. “But I didn’t want to

just come out and say, ‘Can I have that?’ As it turned out, she gave it to me a few days later.”

Shortly after that, Katie repeated her invitation to Ashley to attend church with her and her family, and Ashley accepted. That pattern continued for the next two months. “I loved church!” says Ashley. “I loved that families worshipped together—sacrament meeting was for both parents *and* children. That is what church should be about—being there with your family.

“But I also loved that there were lessons specifically for different groups. Young Women strengthened me so much—I felt so accepted by the young women there. I have made lifelong friends.”

In time, Ashley began meeting with the missionaries. “I had questions about things I had wondered about since I was a kid,” Ashley says. “The missionaries answered my questions perfectly, especially when it came to the plan of salvation. It all made sense. And as I prayed about it, I got answers.”

Although Ashley’s parents initially asked her to wait until she was 18 to be baptized, they later told her that if she really felt that she needed to be baptized, she could. Shortly after that, her family began praying together at dinnertime. And a month after Ashley’s baptism in June 2010, her brother, Josh, was baptized. The whole family even joined in one of his meetings with the missionaries. “My family situation regarding the Church totally flipped,” Ashley says.

“I have learned that Heavenly Father will bless us and help us if what we want is righteous,” Ashley says. In addition to helping her find good friends and true happiness, she says, “He helps me with other things too. I



MISSIONARY WORK: A BETTER WAY

“Whenever there is a member who introduces an investigator, there is an immediate support system. The member bears testimony of the truth of the work. He is anxious for the happiness of his investigator friend. He becomes excited as that friend makes progress in learning the gospel.

“The full-time missionaries may do the actual teaching, but the member, wherever possible, will back up that teaching with the offering of his home to carry on this missionary service. He will bear sincere testimony of the divinity of the work. He will be there to answer questions when the missionaries are not around. He will be a friend to the convert who is making a big and often difficult change. . . .

“Opportunities for sharing the gospel are everywhere.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 105–6.

pray every day, and He always finds ways to comfort and bless each of us.”

Ashley points out that sometimes that comfort and those blessings come through other people, as they came to her through Katie. “You never know who you are going to touch spiritually,” she says. “Don’t be afraid to try. You never know if they are struggling with something hard in their life. They might really need to hear your testimony or learn about the Church. Don’t hold it in.”

Katie agrees. “If you feel a prompting to say something, don’t doubt it—go for it! If you doubt your testimony, people will see that. But if you are an example of what you believe in, they’ll see that too.

“Take the opportunities you find,” she continues. “If there is a religious discussion at school, you don’t want to miss that kind of chance. Be open and honest about what you believe in. Explain it to the best of your ability. It can change your life—and the life of a friend.” **NE**

Because Katie J. (left) was willing to talk about the Church with friends at school, it led Ashley P. (right) to the gospel.

Softly Falls the Evening Light

Dreamily ♩ = 56-68

Words by Orrin G. Hatch
Music by Janice Kapp Perry

mp

The piano introduction consists of two staves. The right hand plays a series of chords and single notes in a 3/4 time signature, while the left hand provides a simple bass line with sustained notes.

mp

1. Softly falls the ev-'ning light, Drift-ing in - to can-dle-light. The wear-y sheep lay
2. An-gel choirs in si-lence wait To her-ald Christ with songs of praise, Re-veal-ing to the

The vocal line features a melody with a mix of quarter and eighth notes. The piano accompaniment continues with a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and sustained notes in the left hand.

low to-night As shep-herds rest with watch-ful eyes. Ev-'ning shad - ows now grow dim Up -
ea - ger earth The won - der of His sa - cred birth. Men thru a - ges long have prayed That

The vocal line continues with a similar melodic structure. The piano accompaniment remains consistent with the previous section.

on the town of Beth - le - hem, As un - a - ware they close their eyes Up - on this hal - lowed si - lent
peace would come to earth some-day, But who could know that God's own Son Up - on this ver - y night would

The vocal line concludes with a final melodic phrase. The piano accompaniment ends with a few final chords and notes.

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a little faster

mf

night. come. A sin - gle star now marks the place, A hum - ble man - ger now a - waits The

ho - ly babe whose heal - ing light Will pierce the dark - ness of this won - drous night.

f

a tempo

mp

Soft - ly falls the ev - ning light, Drift - ing in - to can - dle - light. The u - ni - verse in rev - 'rence

a tempo

mp

rit. *a tempo*

hums; To - night the Sav - ior comes.

a tempo

rit. *pp*

“How can I keep a positive attitude about the future?”

We all experience times when it seems that there is a constant downpour of discouragement and bad news at a personal and sometimes even a global level. But we must remember that we have reason for hope because of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

At the April 2009 general conference, President Thomas S. Monson reminded us of the Lord’s commandment to “be of good cheer” (D&C 68:6) and gave us these words of encouragement: “Though the storm clouds may gather, though the rains may pour down upon us, our knowledge of the gospel and our love of our Heavenly Father and of our Savior will comfort and sustain us and bring joy to our hearts as we walk uprightly and keep the commandments. There will be nothing in this world that can defeat us.”

Even when things appear most grim, without even a glimmer of a break in the storm on the horizon, our understanding of the gospel can help us keep a positive attitude about the future. As President Monson said in that same talk: “The future is as bright as your faith” (“Be of Good Cheer,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 92). **NE**

Read, Pray, Smile



A few years ago, the Young Women general presidency gave us the 100 percent challenge: read the Book of Mormon every day, pray every day, and smile. I figured I would try it and keep at it for as long as I could. To my surprise, the challenge brought about a magnificent change in my life. I was happier, I had the Spirit with me, and I had a positive attitude. Even though I still had to face adversity, the strength of the Spirit helped me to endure happily.

Ariana G., 16, Virginia, USA

Have Hope

I think that the greatest thing we can do to keep a positive attitude is to smile and have hope! Hope has helped me throughout my life in countless ways. We must also think of how greatly blessed we are and know how much our Heavenly Father loves us. We can turn to Him for peace in any situation. His Son suffered for us, so He knows our pains. Through Him we can gain hope, be healed, and, of course, be happy.

Corey D., 18, Utah, USA

Think about Your Blessings



One of the things that gives me joy and hope in these troubling times is taking a moment to stop and think about my blessings and about my knowledge of the gospel.

Something as simple as having a best friend or something as grand as the plan of salvation fills me with joy and makes me want to share the joy. This is what keeps my attitude positive.

Annette M., 15, Michigan, USA

Think of the Atonement

Pondering our Savior’s Atonement will always give hope and will help us be optimistic. We are all experiencing trials in this life. But through the Atonement, all trials and problems, both temporal

and spiritual, have solutions. The Atonement enables us to see these solutions. The Atonement is a great demonstration of God's love for His children. It is infinite, and so is His love for us. This will give us courage and strength to face the future without fear.

Daryl A., 18, Laguna, Philippines

Remain Faithful



These troubling times are a part of the Lord's plan and have been foretold since Old Testament times. All throughout the scriptures, the Lord promises that the righteous will be blessed and preserved. As you remain faithful, the Holy Ghost will be there to guide you throughout these tumultuous times, to comfort you, and to remind you that the Lord has a plan for you. If you have your patriarchal blessing, study it to see what the Lord has in store for you.

Rae B., 17, Washington, D.C., USA

Remember the Temple



When I am discouraged, I meditate on the words found at the end of the Young Women theme: "We believe as we come

to accept and act upon these values, we will be prepared to strengthen home and family, make and keep sacred covenants, receive the ordinances of the temple, and enjoy the blessings of exaltation." I can find comfort in these words, and I know they will be fulfilled in my life and in the lives of all virtuous young women. Without a doubt, I have hope in the

sacred temple ordinances. The blessings of a righteous life are endless, and as I remember these things, my heart fills with joy, hope, love, and courage.

Nathalia M., 18, Mérida, Venezuela

Be on the Winning Team



To keep a positive attitude, you need to know this simple truth: the Lord's team is the winner in the end.

It's that easy. Satan has no power over God. Because we already know the winner, we need to focus on staying on the Lord's team. When we live worthy to enter the temple, we are wearing our uniform that shows the Lord we are on His team. By reading our scriptures, saying our prayers, and serving our brothers and sisters, we find true happiness that makes it easier to have a positive attitude.

Brayden F., 17, Utah, USA

Develop a Grateful Attitude

Don't focus on the troubling times. I keep a "Thankful Journal." Every day I write at least one thing I was thankful for that day. No matter how terrible

the day seemed, I can always find something to appreciate. Count your blessings. Developing a grateful attitude can help you focus on the positive things in your life.

Ashlee H., 18, Oklahoma, USA

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



YOUR WONDERFUL FUTURE

"The Lord wants you, my young friends, to desire with all your heart to keep these

standards and live by the gospel truths found in the scriptures. As you do this, you will see beyond the moment, and you will see your bright and wonderful future with great opportunities and responsibilities. You will be willing to work hard and endure long, and you will have an optimistic outlook on life."

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "See the End from the Beginning," *Ensign*, May 2006, 44.

NEXT QUESTION

"How do I answer my friends' questions about the temple when I don't know much about it myself?"

Send your answer by January 15, 2012.

Go to newera.lds.org, click "Submit Material," and then select "Questions and Answers."

You can also write to us at newera@ldschurch.org

or
New Era, Q&A, Temple
50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.

THREE **GREAT** REASONS TO GIVE THANKS

By John Hilton III and Anthony Sweat

Doctrine and Covenants 59:21 says, “And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments.”

The two things that “offend God” the most are ingratitude (confessing not His hand) and disobedience. Let’s learn why we should be grateful so that we don’t offend God.

Reason #1: Being Grateful Makes You Happier and Healthier

You’ve heard the hymn “Count Your Blessings” (*Hymns*, no. 241). But did you know that literally counting your blessings increases your emotional health? Researchers had one group of students write for 20 minutes each day about things they were grateful for, a second about things they were angry about, and a third about random topics like the color of their shoes. Guess which group was happiest at the end of the



experiment? The ones who wrote about things they were grateful for of course!

Even more interesting is that those who wrote about the things they were grateful for were less likely to be sick throughout the semester.¹

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (1917–2008) said gratitude “is a quality I have found in every happy person I know” (“Live in Thanksgiving Daily,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2001, 8). Do you know any happy person who is not grateful?

Reason #2: Being Grateful Helps You See More Blessings

There are many blessings that come from being grateful for the good things we enjoy. *For the Strength of Youth* says, “Live with a spirit of thanksgiving and you will have greater happiness and satisfaction in life” ([2001], 6). For example, what do you see in the picture at the right?

Chances are you probably noticed the black flowers. As

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin said, “The more often we see the things around us—even the beautiful and wonderful things—the more they become invisible to us. That is why we often take for granted the beauty of this world: the flowers, the trees, the birds, the



I'D BE HAPPY IF . . .

Some people have a hard time being grateful for what they have. They say, “I’d be happy if only I had [fill in the blank—a new car, an iPod, good hair, etc.]”



Like the girl who says, “If I were 16 then I’d be happy.” Then she turns 16 and says, “If guys start asking me out, then I’ll be happy.” And then guys start asking her out, and when she’s older she says, “If I get a boyfriend then I’ll be happy.” Then she gets a boyfriend and says, “If I can break up with my boyfriend, then I’ll be happy.” And so it goes. If we say, “I’ll be happy if . . .,” the happiness may never come. But when we are grateful, we invite happiness to come immediately.



TAKE A GRATITUDE CHALLENGE

We always talk about counting our blessings—let’s do it! Write a list of 100 things you are thankful for. Some might think that is too many. If that is the case, try this:

- Write 10 living people you are grateful for.
- Write 10 people who have died you are grateful for.
- Write 10 physical abilities you are grateful for.
- Write 10 material possessions you are grateful for.
- Write 10 things about nature you are grateful for.
- Write 10 things about today you are grateful for.
- Write 10 places on earth you are grateful for.
- Write 10 modern-day inventions you are grateful for.
- Write 10 foods you are grateful for.
- Write 10 things about the gospel you are grateful for.

When we make a list like this, we discover that a list of 100 doesn’t even begin to scratch the surface of all the things God has given us.

clouds—even those we love. Because we see things so often, we see them less and less” (“Live in Thanksgiving Daily,” 11).

Did you notice the blue sky? The beautiful clouds? The mountains in the background? The many flowers that weren’t discolored? There are so many beautiful things to be grateful for, and as we practice being grateful we will notice them more and more.

Reason #3: There Are Sad Consequences of Ingratitude

When people are not grateful they tend to complain, and that isn’t good for anyone. For example, even though the Lord had delivered the Israelites from slavery and given them manna to eat, they were not grateful. Notice what happens: “And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it” (Numbers 11:1). So the Lord hears when we complain, and He does not like it.

Something amazing about being grateful is that it’s in our control. We

might not be able to make the varsity team or be elected student body president. We might not get asked out on dates or have the biggest muscles (we speak from personal experience). But we can control whether we have a grateful attitude.

Great blessings are promised to those who are grateful. The Lord said, “He who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold, yea, more” (D&C 78:19). Let us follow the counsel of Paul who said, “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). **NE**


Adapted, with permission, from Why?: Powerful Answers and Practical Reasons for Living LDS Standards, published by Deseret Book.

NOTE

1. See Chad M. Burton and Laura A. King, “The health benefits of writing about intensely positive experiences,” *Journal of Research in Personality* 38, no. 2 (2004): 150–63.



What Did You Get for Christmas?



As I waited in the long December checkout line, my ears drifted to the conversation ahead of me. The woman in line must have been in her mid-30s, but her disheveled and stressed countenance added at least five years.

As she vented to the cashier, I learned the cause of this lady's anxiety. She explained how she despised the holiday months, the time of year she associated with long lines, family drama, and the pressure to decorate and be jovial.

"Pressure?" I thought in disbelief. My heart ached for this woman, who clearly had a skewed view of the holidays. I tried to put myself in this woman's shoes, and I could see what she meant by pressure. There is food to buy and there are goodies to prepare. There is pressure to buy gifts for the kids. Not only that, but we sometimes think the gifts have to be impressive. However, we each have the choice to rise above the commercial pressure of the holidays.

I can think back to one Christmas in which our family budget was extremely tight. We were supporting one of my brothers on his mission to Chicago, and that required us to skimp on nonessential items. The only gift-wrapped item I got that year was a fleece blanket. Nothing extravagant, just a plain blanket. I tried to talk it up to my friends at school and make it seem like it was a really great gift, but there was no use. It couldn't compare to a video game console.

Since then, that blanket has come to symbolize much more to me. That gift was one of warmth. Yes, it warmed me on those few cold Arizona nights, but it also warmed me with love. My parents gave me more: they gave me fun family traditions, a firm sense of belonging, and a knowledge that true gifts are ones of service, love, and sacrifice. My parents sacrificed their money for my brother's mission, but they never sacrificed their love for me, our family, and everyone around them as they served that year.

I wish I could go back to the school cafeteria table when my friends asked, "What did you get for Christmas?" I wish I could have answered them proudly: "I got a blanket, a blanket that warms me with the true love of the most wonderful time of year." **NE**

What gift could be better than a gaming console?

Watch a Video
Go to lds.org/go/210 to see the video "The Greatest Gift" on youth.lds.org.



By Elder
Carl B. Pratt
Of the Seventy

A SURE WITNESS

Having been raised in an active Latter-day Saint family, I think I grew up having a testimony. I never seriously doubted the truthfulness of the gospel. Like many teenagers, I occasionally questioned things in my mind, but I never felt that the Church wasn't true.

It was this faith that inspired me to serve a mission. I knew I needed to serve. But even though I had no serious doubts about the Church, I realized I had to gain a testimony of my own.

I began my mission in February 1961, leaving Salt Lake City's winter for the heat of an Argentine summer. There was no language training for missionaries at the time, but my mission president promised us we would speak fluent Spanish after reading the entire Book of Mormon out loud. I had learned Spanish as a child and was speaking fluently within the first

few weeks, but still I followed my mission president's instructions.

In the first town I was assigned to, my companion and I stayed in the living quarters behind an old store. We couldn't proselytize in the afternoon during the Argentine siesta, so I used that time to pray and read the Book of Mormon in the front entrance of the old store.

One day, thousands of miles from home in the front of that store, I stopped to think about what I was reading. When you pray and ponder about the Book of Mormon, the Spirit can influence you. I pondered what the Book of Mormon was teaching, I thought about Joseph Smith translating the plates, and I had a sudden feeling come over me. At that moment I knew that everything I had been taught all my life was true. It suddenly became very clear to me that Joseph Smith was a

prophet and that I was reading the word of God. It was all true.

That sudden feeling was electrifying. It went through my whole body from my head to my toes. It wasn't a chill, and it wasn't a burning. But it was a sure witness.

I've never forgotten that day, and I've felt the Holy Ghost many times since. Because of that experience, I recognize the Holy Ghost when He is testifying to me. That feeling isn't always exactly the same, but it's always warm and secure.

Even though the Spirit speaks to us personally, Moroni's promise is to everyone (see Moroni 10:3–5). Moroni's promise in the Book of Mormon is that the Spirit will testify to you of the truth of the Book of Mormon if you will read, study, ponder, and then pray with real intent. That promise applies to me, to you, and to everyone in the world. A sure witness will come to those who seek it. **NE**

DRAW NEARER TO GOD

"I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book."

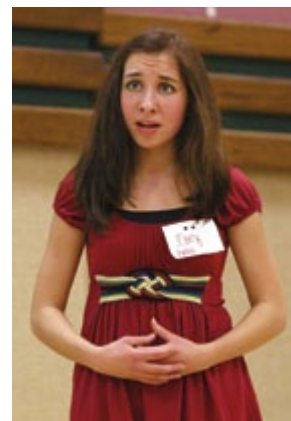
Joseph Smith, in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 64.





Performing in Savior of the World helped these California teens focus on the true meaning of Christmas.

FINDING A *Message* IN THE *Music*



By Elyse Alexandria Holmes

Most people don't start thinking about Christmas until jolly songs play on the radio and festive decor fills the malls. But Rachel H. was thinking about it back in May of 2010. She wasn't waiting for any physical present; instead, she was preparing to audition for and perform in *Savior of the World: His Birth*, a musical production depicting the birth of Jesus. When she auditioned for the stake production, she didn't realize how much of a gift the experience would be.

When the cast list was posted a few weeks later, Rachel was excited to see that she had been given the part of Mary in one of the two casts. "I was so happy to have been chosen to play the part of Mary. I was excited but very nervous," she recalls. Rachel was just one of nearly 300 youth who participated in the production.

Getting Ready

Preparing for *Savior of the World* was a daunting task, especially with so many youth participating. The teens

were grouped into two casts—the red cast and the blue cast—to allow more youth to participate. Each cast had over 40 assigned parts, a dance ensemble, and an angel choir with about 50 performers.

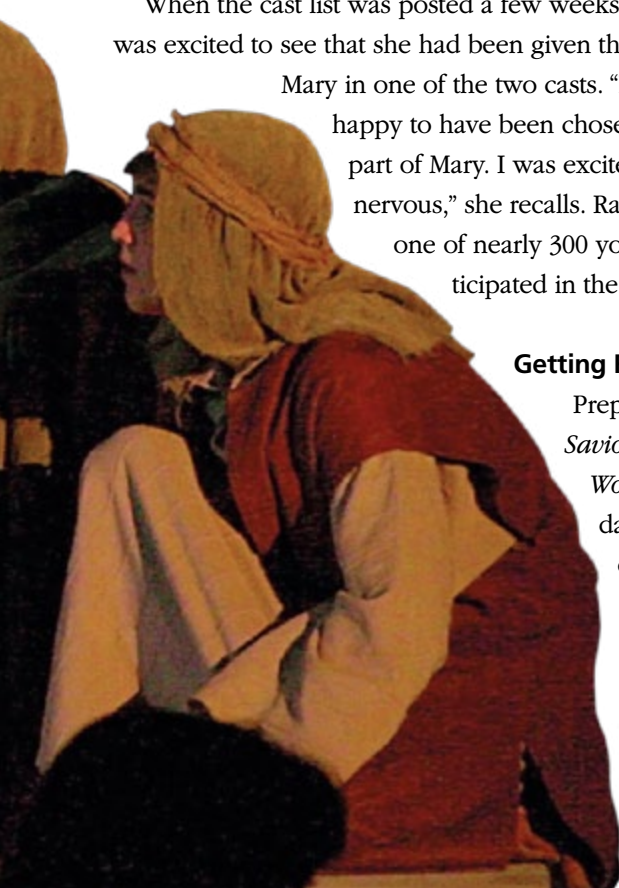
Rehearsals began in mid-August and continued until the show's performances started in mid-November. Brie S. (Mary's Mother, red cast) recalls her initial feelings on the amount of time they had to put into the production. "The four-hour practices every Saturday afternoon were not very appealing," Brie says. "But whenever I chose to fulfill my promise of attending rehearsal, I was always blessed with a happy feeling. I'm so grateful for the opportunity I had to be in *Savior of the World*. I gained a stronger testimony of the divine truths our Savior has given us."

Relying on Divine Help

Throughout the months of practice and especially on the days leading up to and during the six performances, the cast members relied heavily on prayer. "Before every performance, my counterpart and I would pray to perform with the Spirit and that we could help those in the audience feel the same Spirit we felt throughout all our rehearsals," says Taylor H. (Zacharias, blue cast).

When problems arose, the cast members and production staff noticed many blessings that allowed them to perform the musical.

Shawn G. (Joseph, red cast) remembers how one of his props would malfunction whenever he prepared to go on





MUSIC AND YOUR PERSONAL PROGRESS

Working on your Personal Progress? The Individual Worth value experience 5 and value project bullet 4 both involve participating in or directing a performance. *Savior of the World* can be a great resource to use.

stage. “Every time I would attempt to turn on my battery-powered candle, it would quickly turn off. No matter how many times I pushed the button and fidgeted with the batteries, the candle would not light backstage,” he says.

“However, every single time I went out on stage, it always lit perfectly without fail.”

On the final night of the performance, one of the microphones wasn’t working.

“With minutes to go until the start of the show, the directors still couldn’t get this person’s microphone to work. One of the backstage managers began to walk through the halls and ask everyone in sight to say a prayer, asking for help with the technical difficulty,” Brie recalls.

“Before bowing my head, I looked around me to see every single cast member humbly bowing his or her head to pray in faith to our Father in Heaven. Sure enough, as we sang the opening number and started the show, all of the microphones were working perfectly.”

Finding Strength in Song

In addition to witnessing miracles, the cast members felt spiritually uplifted by the music of the show.

Jamie V. (Elizabeth, blue cast) shares her experience, saying, “I remember the music



in particular and what a huge role it played in delivering the message of the Savior. When I performed my scene with music, I was so overcome with the Spirit and I knew that it was the Lord's work we were doing."

Catherine H. (Angel Choir, red cast) had similar feelings about the impact of the music: "*Savior of the World* brought on such a constant powerful and spiritual feeling every time we worked on it," she says. "When we sang 'Come Deliver Us,' you could just feel the power of the music and the emotions of the song. I was so grateful to bear my testimony through song."

Even after the production had finished, the cast members found strength and comfort in the music from the show. Lauren A. (Shepherd Jeshua, blue cast) talks about the testimony meeting that followed the final performance: "After we bore our testimonies, our leaders decided to close by singing one of the songs—'Come, Lord Jesus.' The second we stood up and began singing, the Spirit in the room was strengthened even more."

Testifying of Christ

For many of the youth, performing in *Savior of the World* had a profound effect on their testimonies of the gospel and of Jesus Christ.

Taylor recalls his experience as one of growth. "*Savior of the World* has forever changed how I will think about Christmas," he says. "As I knelt as at the scene of Mary,

Joseph, and the infant Savior, the Spirit testified to me that my Savior lives. The experience I had brought me more joy and happiness than I ever imagined. I now have a much deeper understanding for why Christ's birth was heralded by angels and mortals alike."

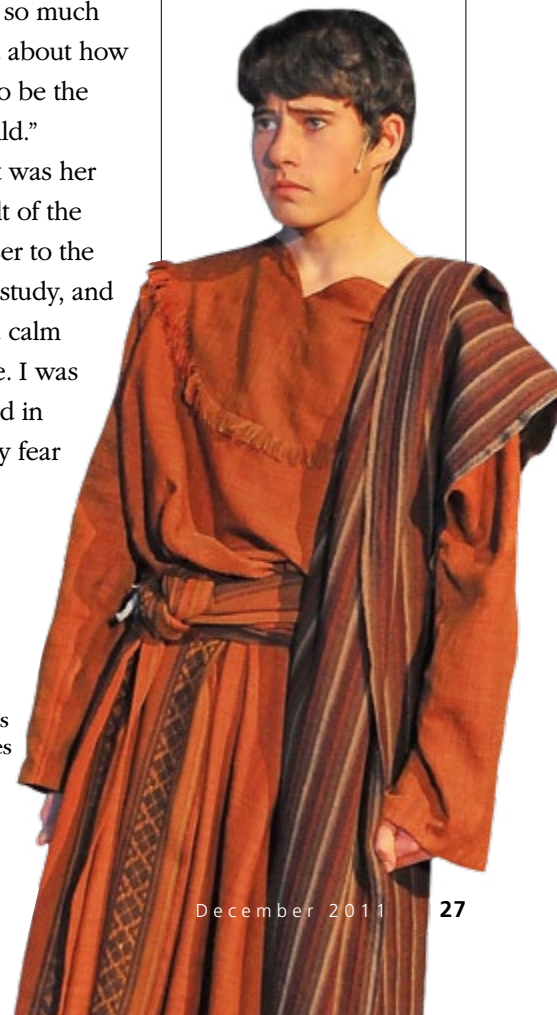
Daniel M. (Joseph, blue cast) says, "I felt so grateful to be a witness of this special moment that testifies to me that the Savior of this world did come to us in a humble stable to loving parents who knew of the sacredness of their calling. I now know so much more about my Savior's birth and about how Mary and Joseph must have felt to be the ones chosen to raise this holy child."

Rachel's greatest Christmas gift was her strengthened testimony as a result of the production. "I grew so much closer to the Savior through prayers, scripture study, and pondering. He blessed me with a calm assurance that He cares about me. I was so worried, but when I just trusted in Him, He helped me to replace my fear with faith." **NE**

Download the Scripts and Sheet Music

Savior of the World is a two-act musical depicting Christ's birth (act one) and Resurrection (act two). Each act can be performed separately. The script follows the timeline of Jesus's birth and includes excerpts from both the New Testament and the Book of Mormon. You can find the full script online at lds.org/go.211.

These youth in California saw the results of their efforts and hard practice, but more important, they strengthened their faith in Christ as they performed the musical Savior of the World.



DANCING

BY THE LIGHT OF A CHRISTMAS TREE

By Amy Jones

Suddenly I felt like dancing—a moment that became sacred to me.

Sacred experiences don't always occur in the temple or at church. One night, I had a sacred moment in the dark, quiet living room of my college dorm.

I'd gotten home late. Everyone was either gone or asleep. I relaxed on the couch, enjoying the glow of the Christmas tree lights. In an electrifying instant, I realized that the house was all mine. In that moment, I wanted to dance.

It was an irrational desire; I was definitely not a dancer. However, this night I was alone and no one would see if I made a fool of myself.

I couldn't sit still any longer. I had to dance. I ran up the stairs to grab a CD and flew back to the living room on tiptoe. I pressed play and listened as the first song began. Slow steps and careful twirls began my secret recital. Then I gave myself to the music and simply danced. Soon I was running, leaping, flying with my heart, and reaching for the sky.

The music soared, and so did I. If I was clumsy, I didn't notice. I no longer

cared. No one was there to judge me. I danced free in a place where the world could never judge me.

For a moment, I saw myself through God's eyes, and it was glorious. I was completely myself. Not the self that others expected me to be. Not even the self that I was "supposed" to be. The self that God knew was in me—the truest part of my soul.

What freedom I felt then. I was of worth! I was worth something because I was myself. Me. God loved *me*, not my skills or my looks. I was beautiful and precious just because I was His daughter.

My dance changed. Instead of expressing the beauty of the music, I was literally dancing for the joy of the beauty of my soul. I spun in the rainbow glow of Christmas lights, knowing that God was watching over me and that He was smiling.

That night the dirty carpet of a college dorm became holy ground as I danced by the light of a Christmas tree and saw the eternal worth of my soul. **NE**

LEARNING from NATURE



PHOTOGRAPHS BY SUZETTE BRUGGEMAN

Not many people can say they've had a falcon eating out of their hand, but Chase B. has it happen to him all the time. Chase participates in the sport of falconry, in which a wild raptor is trained to hunt and to trust its owner.



Name: Chase B.
Age: 13
Location: Montana
Interests: Falconry, basketball, football, electric guitar, Scouting

How does falconry work? After a captive falcon becomes hungry enough to overcome its fear of its new owner, the bird will begin to feed from your hand. The falcon is required to fly increasingly greater distances back to the glove to receive its food reward.

How did you get started in this activity? My dad is a licensed falconer, and one day he took me with him to trap a wild red-tailed hawk. It was so incredible. I've been hooked on falconry ever since.

What is it about falconry you enjoy? I love the anticipation of how my bird will perform and the action of the hunt. It is amazing to watch a hawk or falcon swoop from hundreds of feet in the sky to capture a pheasant and share its meal with us. I also love the father-and-son bonding time.

How can you relate falconry to other aspects of your life? It teaches me to deal with the highs and lows of life, because I have little control over my falcon. It also teaches me patience, because I can only train a falcon with positive reinforcement, and I must work on the falcon's terms, not mine. It teaches me to appreciate and respect nature.



What has helped your testimony grow stronger? Recently I had an experience that made my testimony grow and helped me realize that my Heavenly Father really does know me and love me. I was in a scary situation with my younger brother, and we prayed that the Holy Ghost would tell my mom to come and get us. She received a strong impression to come right away. When she showed up a few minutes later, we were so relieved and grateful that Heavenly Father answers prayers.

What is your favorite scripture? 1 Nephi 3:7. Nephi is my Book of Mormon hero. He had faith and was courageous and obedient through many trials. He was always a leader. I love it when he said that he would go and do the things that the Lord commanded, with faith and without questioning. **NE**

—As told to Mindy Raye Friedman, *Church Magazines*

THIS SHALL BE A

Sign unto You

“All the prophets who have prophesied ever since the world began—have they not spoken more or less concerning these things?” (Mosiah 13:33).

By Whitney Hinckley

Christmas is a time filled with anticipation—anticipation of presents, good food, and celebrations. Sometimes it seems that the first 24 days in December are just too long to wait. Imagine if you had to wait for 1,000 years!

The first Christmas—the Savior’s birth—had been prophesied for hundreds of years, from Isaiah in the Old Testament to Samuel the Lamanite in the Book of Mormon. The prophets of old knew and anticipated the signs of the coming of Jesus Christ, and they waited patiently for those signs. They prophesied of His coming so others would be able to recognize the signs and share in the joy of knowing He had come! The fulfillment of those prophecies was a testimony of His divine calling as Savior and Redeemer.

Read the following prophecies of the birth of Jesus Christ and the miraculous circumstances surrounding it and learn how these prophecies were fulfilled.

Born of Mary, a Virgin

Prophecies: Seven hundred years before she was born, Mary was prophesied to be the mother of Christ. Isaiah wrote, “The Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14).

Alma the Younger also identified Mary as the Savior’s mother about 80 years before Jesus’s birth and halfway across the world from Isaiah: “He shall be born of Mary,

. . . she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God” (Alma 7:10).

Fulfillment: Eight decades later, the angel Gabriel appeared “to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, . . . and the virgin’s name was Mary” (Luke 1:27). Mary was the mother of Jesus, who was the Son of God.

Unto Us a Child Is Born

Prophecy: Isaiah prophesied the birth of the Messiah: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

Fulfillment: The Savior’s ministry fulfilled all that Isaiah prophesied, yet Christ was born in humble circumstances: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. . . . Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger” (Luke 2:11–12).

Born in Bethlehem

Prophecy: The prophet Micah lived about the same time as Isaiah. He prophesied of the Lord being born in the village of Bethlehem: “But thou, Beth-lehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet



out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be a ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2).

Fulfillment: Seven hundred years later, Herod commanded that his scribes tell him where the new ruler could be found: “He demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea” (Matthew 2:4–5).

Of the Seed of David

Prophecy: The Lord told Jeremiah six centuries before the birth of Christ that He would come from the lineage of David: “In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land” (Jeremiah 33:15).

Fulfillment: Matthew gives us Christ’s genealogy, showing how the Lord is descended from that king of long ago: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. . . . So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen

generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations” (Matthew 1:1, 17).

Visited by Kings

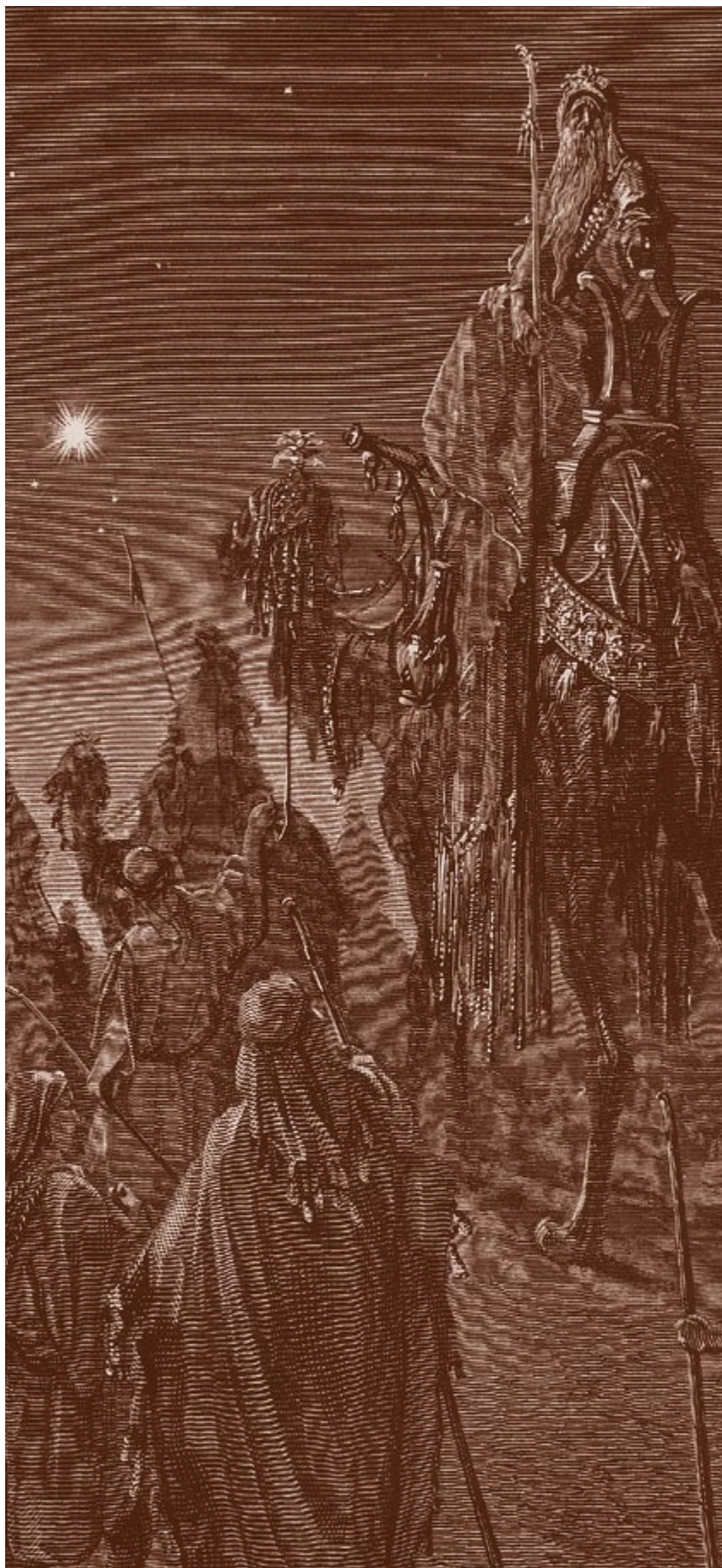
Prophecies: Despite the humble circumstances of His birth, prophets declared that kings would come to see Christ: “And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising” (Isaiah 60:3).

Samuel the Lamanite told the Nephites five years before Christ’s birth of the signs that would herald His coming. One of these signs was the star the Wise Men followed: “There shall a new star arise, such an one as ye never have beheld; and this also shall be a sign unto you” (Helaman 14:5).

Fulfillment: The Wise Men knew what sign to look for because they must have looked for the fulfillment of prophecies. They said, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him” (Matthew 2:2).

In the New World, the Nephites also recognized the signs and knew the prophecies were fulfilled: “And it had come to pass, yea, all things, every whit, according to the words of the prophets. And it came to pass also that a new star did appear, according to the word” (3 Nephi 1:20–21).

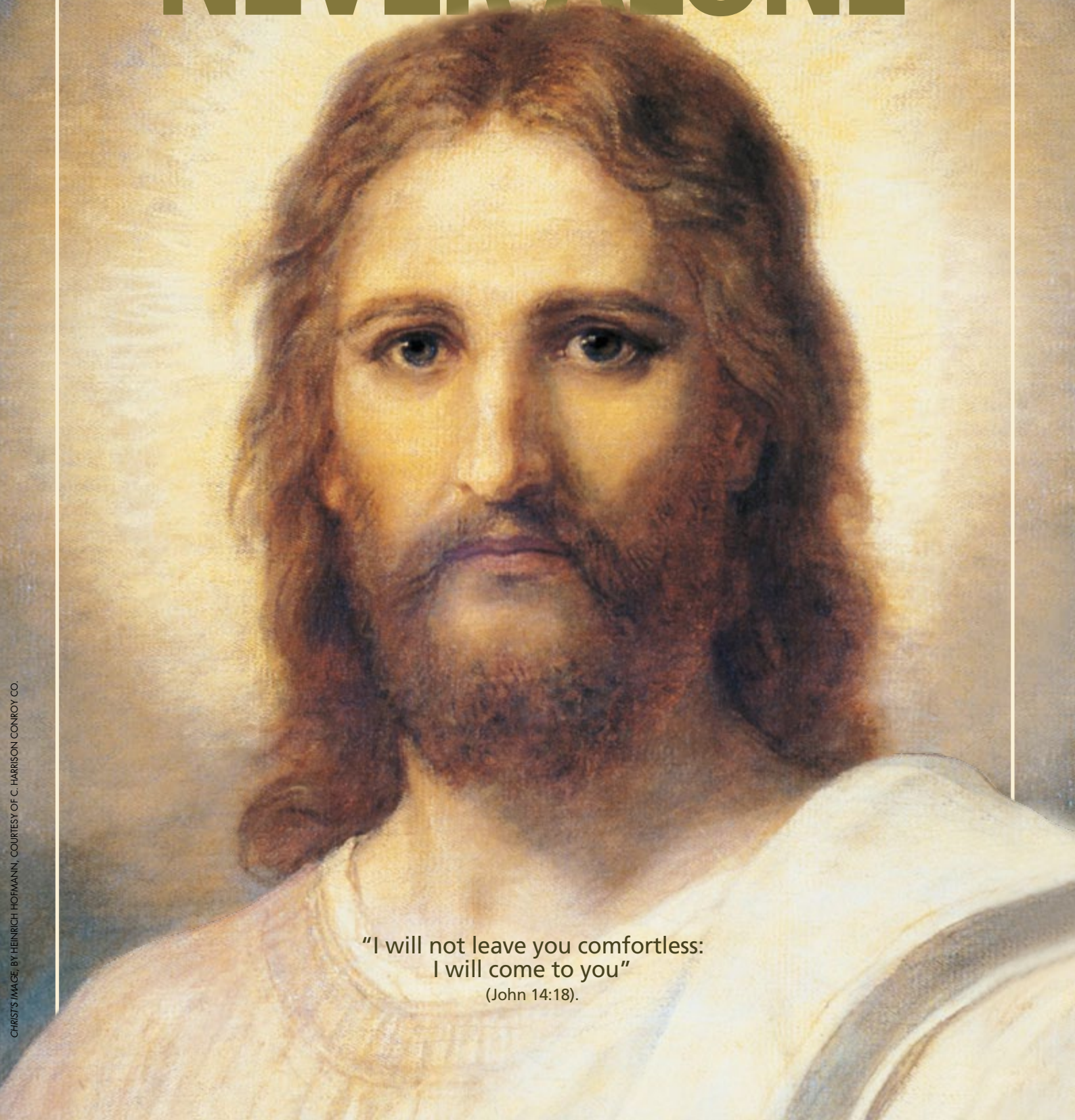
Think of how you rejoice when you finally get to open a Christmas present. How would that compare if you had been waiting for the signs of Christ’s birth and finally saw them fulfilled? Our Heavenly Father prepared these signs in advance not only to let the faithful around the world rejoice together at His Son’s birth but to testify of Christ’s divine calling. **NE**



THE WISE MEN GUIDED BY THE STAR, BY GUSTAVE DORÉ

MORMONAD

YOU ARE NEVER ALONE



"I will not leave you comfortless:
I will come to you"
(John 14:18).

LESSONS FROM THE Master



By Elder Marvin J. Ashton (1915–94)

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Marvin J. Ashton was ordained an Apostle on December 2, 1971. The following article is an excerpt of a Brigham Young University devotional address he gave on June 5, 1988.

For as long as I can remember I've had a special love for Jesus Christ. I was taught He was the Son of the living God. I was taught He was my friend, my teacher, and my strength. In years past, when the calling and responsibility and honor of bearing special witness of Him have come into my life, I have endeavored to be taught by His life and His ways. Truly, He is the Master Teacher. To assist me in my labors and commitment, I have found myself turning frequently to the eighth chapter of John in the New Testament for strength, for guidance, and for example. If you please, let us walk through some of the verses to strengthen our lives and our relationships with Jesus. These lines and words help me to better understand Him and give me the desire to do and be more like Him. . . .

[The scribes and Pharisees] brought unto Him the woman taken in adultery. These enemies . . . tried to trick Him. They sat her in the midst as an exhibit, as a sinner, as someone unclean. He didn't flee from her presence.

. . . She was taken in adultery—in the very act. There was no doubt about her guilt. They were setting Him up in what appeared to be an impossible situation. Moses's law says to stone her. "What sayest thou?" [John 8:5] they asked, tempting Him, trapping Him—putting Him in a no-win position.

Whatever He said, He would be accused of wrongdoing, wrong judgment. They were tempting Him to see if they could get Him to lose His patience and forget who He was. Stoning her would be cruel. Ignoring her would be wrong. . . . He stooped down and wrote on the ground as though He heard them not (getting their attention and preparing everyone within earshot to be taught). . . . And while it was silent, they continued asking. I can hear the questions of mischief: "C'mon, say something. We've got you. Are you afraid to answer?" But Jesus was in charge. . . .

Jesus lifted up Himself, in humble and meek majesty, and said these most powerful words: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" [John 8:7]. A perfect answer from a perfect person.

Today in our responsibilities, situations, and callings, we need to be reminded of this over and over again. In our dealings with all

people, let him who is without sin be the first to criticize or find fault or belittle. . . . He stooped down and wrote on the ground. They heard what He said. They felt the impact of His silence of spirit while He said nothing. Convicted by their own conscience, they left on their own, not driven away. They went out one by one—not to find stones but to nurse their spiritual wounds.

He was left alone with the woman. I'm glad that's recorded. Some of us are inclined to avoid being with those who have fallen. . . . He said, "Where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" [John 8:10]. . . . Jesus Christ took time to ask and to listen. Oh, if we could do more of that! Our answers would be so easy, so much improved. . . .

The woman taken in adultery answered the Lord's question regarding her accusers by saying, "No man, Lord." And then this powerful declaration came: "Go, and sin no more" [John 8:11]. The Master was teaching in that day and also teaching in this very hour. His great message: despise the sin, but love the sinner. I hope that can give us strength and confidence and a closer relationship to our Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus did not condone adultery. He gave the woman love instead of an authoritative lecture. She and the accusers needed a lesson in love. The situation called for mercy and compassion. How rewarding it is to know that Jesus believed that man is greater than all of his sins. Is it any wonder He was referred to as the "Good Shepherd"? He loved all of His sheep whether they were strays, hungry, helpless, cold, or lost.

At the conclusion of this great teaching experience, this lesson of love and compassion, is an important verse.



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


Let us follow His light. Let us refer often to these few words. I bear witness to you that they were preserved for the good of everyone. **NE**

Spelling, punctuation, and capitalization have been standardized. For the full text of the address in English, visit speeches.byu.edu.

TO BE FORGIVEN IS A GIFT

THAT CRUNCHING SOUND MADE MY HEART STAND STILL.





By David Alexander

I had an experience when I was 13 that I will never forget. I was hanging out with some friends in my room when one friend asked me about my brothers. So I took them over to my 17-year-old brother Matt's room, right next to mine. He was not home at the time.

Matt was so cool. I showed them all of his things: his cool shoe collection, the things he had made by hand, and all of the pictures on his mirror of his high school friends. My friends were impressed.

Then, something horrible happened. I heard a crunching sound under my foot, so I lifted it up and saw a small pouch. Immediately, my heart sank. Right away I knew that inside this pouch was one of my brother's most prized possessions, an expensive pair of sunglasses.

I panicked. I put the pouch under a pair of jeans on the floor, and we quickly left the room. The rest of the day was a nightmare. I tried to forget about it, but I knew he would find out. All I could do was wait.

The next morning I stayed in bed, still haunted with anxiety. I knew I could not outwit fate. Then it happened. He had found the broken sunglasses, and he was furious. I could hear him downstairs in the family room talking to my other brothers, demanding that the perpetrator confess his crime.

I couldn't take it anymore. I knew he wouldn't stop until someone confessed. So I grabbed all the money I had earned from my newspaper route and slowly walked down the stairs. This was one of the longest walks I have ever taken.

Finally, I came up to my brother. Matt slowly turned to me, and I handed him the wad of cash. "I did it," I said. No one said a word. I just turned around, walked up the stairs, and got back in bed.

I felt awful for what I had done. I did not know what my brother was going to do. I felt helpless. I didn't expect Matt to forgive me, but I hoped he would. Then, I heard his voice say my name.

"David, I know you didn't mean it," Matt said. He placed the money I gave him on my nightstand. "You earned this money, and I can't accept it."

Filled with emotion, I said, "I'm sorry, Matt!" He replied with the most sincere words I have ever heard: "I forgive you."

We both wept. This was the first time in my young life that I understood how it felt to be truly forgiven. It may be the most powerful human experience one can have, and I praise those who have the courage to give forgiveness. **NE**

BE KIND AND FORGIVING

“Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

Ephesians 4:32



WHAT WE REALLY THINK OF YOUTH

“The First Presidency of the Church loves you and has confidence in you and in your leaders. You are an example of righteousness in a world which desperately needs your influence and your strength.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Be Thou an Example,” *Ensign*, May 2005, 112.

PLANTING TREES IN WASHINGTON

Youth in Washington State provided a service project at a local park last year. Working in cooperation with the Earth Corp Group, 112 Latter-day Saint youth and adults participated. During the restoration project over 500 trees were planted and noxious plants and weeds were pulled. Over 350 service hours were volunteered to beautify the park. Many members of the community voiced their appreciation to the volunteers and were excited about the improvements. Even the city’s mayor made an appearance and publicly thanked the volunteers. Youth leaders commented that it was great to be out in the community doing service and showing that the youth of the Church can step outside of themselves.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF EMILY SHAW



IN A WORD

Covenant: A covenant is a sacred agreement between God and a person or group of people. God sets specific conditions, and He promises to bless us as we obey those conditions. When we choose not to keep our side of a covenant, we cannot receive the blessings.

All the saving ordinances of the priesthood are accompanied by covenants. For example, you made a covenant when you were baptized, and you renew that covenant each time you partake of the sacrament. The temple endowment and the sealing ordinance also include sacred covenants.

PRACTICALLY PREPARED

Of course you’re working on your spiritual preparation for serving a mission soon, but have you considered that there are a lot of practical things you’ll need to handle on your own once you leave home and enter the mission field? Here are some skills you should consider developing to make you practically prepared:

- Learn how to cook some simple meals.
- Learn how to do your own laundry.
- Learn how to do basic repairs around the house.
- Learn how to fix a flat tire on a bike.
- Learn how to manage your money.
- Learn how to clean—the kitchen, the bathroom, your bedroom.
- Study a second language if you have the opportunity.



PHOTOGRAPHS © GETTY IMAGES AND CHARLES R. SAVAGE



BYU RE:WRITING CONTEST 2012

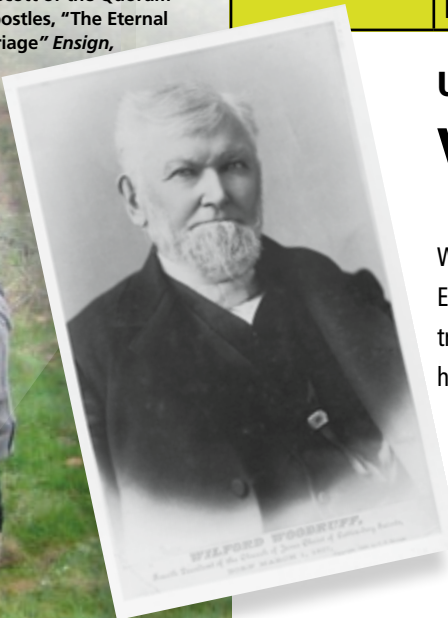
Get your pencils (or word processors) sharpened. It's time to prepare your entry for the Brigham Young University English Department writing contest for high school students 9th–12th grades (ages 14–18). Cash prizes will be awarded in the categories of short fiction, poetry, personal essay, and critical essay. You can submit one entry per category.

Submit your entries between January 1, 2012, and January 31, 2012, to the Re:Writing Contest, BYU English Department, 4198 JFSB, Provo, Utah 84602. Rules and entry forms are available at english.byu.edu/contests.

QUOTES FROM CONFERENCE

“Two of the vital pillars that sustain Father in Heaven’s plan of happiness are marriage and the family.”

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Eternal Blessings of Marriage” *Ensign*, May 2011, 94.



5 SIMPLE THINGS

YOU CAN DO TO MAKE YOUR PARENTS HAPPY

- Finish your homework early.
- Be especially nice to your brothers and sisters.
- Offer to do the dishes.
- Smile.
- Tell them you love them.

WAS THAT ALMA OR ALMA?

Quite a few names in the Book of Mormon are repeated. For instance, can you tell all the men named Nephi apart? Test your knowledge of double names in the Book of Mormon by matching the names below with the two correct descriptions of the men who shared that name.

1. Zoram	a. A priest of King Noah, converted when he heard Abinadi teach
2. Alma	b. Good Nephite king and the father of King Benjamin
3. Lehi	c. Laban's servant who accompanied Lehi's family into the wilderness
4. Aaron	d. A wicked son who changed after receiving a message from an angelic visitor
5. Mosiah	e. Prophet who led his family into the wilderness, away from Jerusalem
6. Moroni	f. Wicked leader in the land of Antionum who broke away from the Nephites
	g. Man who preached successfully to the Lamanites with his brother Nephi
	h. Nephite captain who penned the title of liberty
	i. Father of four sons who all gave up their right to the Nephite throne so they could preach to the Lamanites
	j. Ammon's brother who taught the gospel to the Lamanite king after being released from prison
	k. Lamanite king whose armies attacked the armies of Mormon
	l. Son of Mormon who helped abridge the gold plates

Answers: 1cf, 2ad, 3eg, 4jk, 5bi, 6hi.

USA—TENNESSEE

When missionaries for the Church arrived in Tennessee in 1834, they preached at a Campbellite church meeting and baptized 7 converts; another 24 were baptized later. These missionaries were joined by future Church President Wilford Woodruff in 1835, who preached to 500 people at a tavern. During the next three months, Elder Woodruff and his companion baptized 20 converts. By year's end, Elder Woodruff had traveled 3,248 miles, baptized 43 people (three of whom were Campbellite preachers), and had three mobs rise against him.

Two temples, one in Nashville and the other in Memphis, were dedicated in 2000.

Here are a few facts about the Church today in Tennessee:

Membership	45,574
Missions	2
Temples	2
Wards and Branches	98

FIVE FREE GROUP DATE IDEAS

1. Borrow a video camera and make a movie with props you find around the house, and then watch your movie together.
2. Go to a local park or playground and play some of your favorite childhood games like hide-and-seek or capture the flag.
3. Gather ingredients you have in the house to make a simple meal or some treats together. There can never be too many cooks in the kitchen!
4. Teach the group how to play your favorite sport, and then take a turn learning about someone else's favorite.
5. Offer to babysit for several families in your ward so the parents can go on a date. Make assignments within your groups for games, snacks, and entertainment for the kids.

MY FAVORITE SCRIPTURE

Alma 37:35

This scripture says to "learn wisdom in thy youth."

It reminds me to learn to choose the right now, to learn to keep the Lord's commandments now, and to learn to hold fast to the iron rod now. This scripture is one of

my favorites because I know that if I learn to make good choices while still in my youth, I will be able to avoid much temptation in my later years.

Thomas F., 14, Utah, USA

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THOMAS F.

DEAR ABBY

Most of the youth in Abby's ward in Oklahoma have known her since Primary, and one of her fellow Laurels in the ward, Shelby, is especially close to her because she has been working with Abby in her special education class at school. You see, Abby is autistic, and she has been changing the lives of the youth in her ward for the better in a big way.



The young women of the ward had a great time as they banded together to help Abby earn her Young Womanhood Recognition. And the spirit of helping became contagious as many of the young men joined with the young women to help with Abby's Special Olympics basketball team. From practicing to cheering the team on, the experience was a blessing and a missionary experience for the youth of the ward. Several nonmember parents of these special-needs youth expressed their appreciation and admiration for the help given to the basketball team.

Abby's friend Shelby says, "By helping Abby and her team, I learned more about myself than anything. Abby's teammates are all very unselfish and kind to one another, and that makes me want to be more like them."

"I have grown up with Abby, and she is so sweet," adds Jourdon, a priest in the ward. "She is always happy and brings a smile to my face every time I see her. As I was working with Abby and her team, I learned that while we are all different, in Heavenly Father's eyes we are the same. We're all His children."

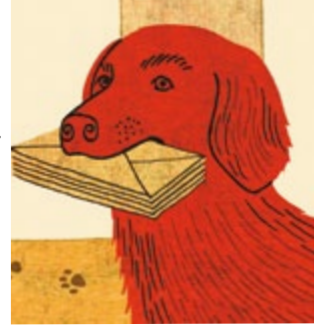
PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF SHAUNA BEAN

BY THE NUMBERS

2,192,475

Number of times people have viewed an item posted on the *New Era* Facebook page since it launched in 2009.

Check out our Facebook page at [facebook.com/NewEra.magazine](https://www.facebook.com/NewEra.magazine).



WE'VE GOT MAIL

Helping Each Other

When I read the article "Helping Each Other in India" (July 2011), I thought about the humanitarian room at Deseret Industries. Every month for the past two years, I go there to help out. The work I do at the humanitarian room makes me happy, just like those who serve in India.

Justin B., California, USA

Put Your Helmet On

I really enjoyed the "Put Your Helmet On" article in the June 2011 *New Era*. It shows how very important it is to listen to the Holy Ghost. It could mean the difference between life and death in a very real way, both spiritually and physically. The Holy Ghost is a great guide for our lives when we will listen and heed the promptings.

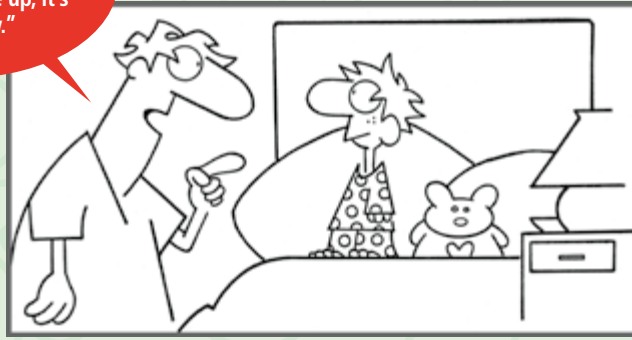
Elijah D., Colorado, USA

I Like Cake

I was intrigued by the article entitled "The Worst Cake Ever" in the May 2011 *New Era*. It looked interesting because it had cake in it, and I like cake. I also wanted to learn what the lesson of the story was. I liked it because it taught me a valuable lesson: if we do dangerous things in our lives like drugs, alcohol, or immorality, it will change our lives until we repent.

Dalton S., Arizona, USA

"It's a time machine!
You get in it tonight, and
when you wake up, it's
tomorrow."



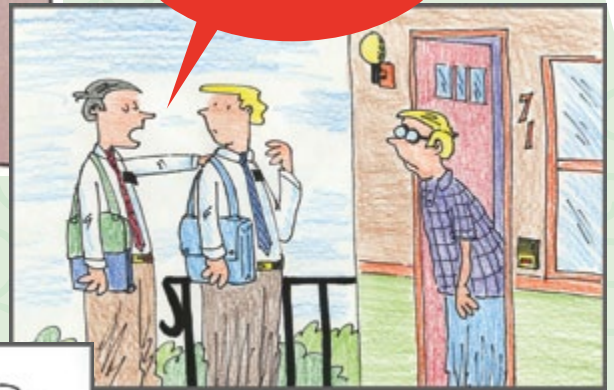
RANDY GLASBERGEN

"Sure, I'd like to hear
more, but now's really
not a good time."



ARIE VAN DE GRAAFF

"That was an
impressive door approach,
Elder. I'm glad all of your high
school German is coming
back to you, but we're in
Portugal!"



RYAN STOKER

Gingerbread
houses again?!!



After so many years, Sister Claus was beginning
to run out of ideas for craft night.

VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY

They SHOULD CHANGE

When I was baptized, my family rejected the Church. Now I had to figure out how to respond when their lifestyle conflicted with gospel principles.

By Francisco Javier Lara Hernández

When I was baptized, I was the only member of my family who accepted the gospel. I was 19 years old, and I was happy about my baptism. I was welcomed by the brothers and sisters of my branch in Veracruz, Mexico. In addition, I began preparing to serve a full-time mission as soon as I had been a member of the Church for one year. It was wonderful to know the true Church, and I wanted to share the gospel with others.

My father, my stepmother (my mom died when I was 12 years old), and my three brothers rejected the Church when I was baptized. Unfortunately, I didn't respond well. I was disrespectful to them. I didn't consider my father or his opinions. When I told him I would serve a mission soon, he was not happy since I would stop working and especially since I might go far away. It bothered me every time my family's lifestyle conflicted with my principles, such as when they watched TV or listened to music

programs that I felt were inappropriate for Sundays or when my father would invite me to have lunch on fast Sunday.

I justified my negative attitude toward my family by telling myself that I wasn't doing anything wrong—as a member of the Church, I should live gospel principles even when my family members bothered me. I told myself *they* were the ones who should change. Due to this reasoning, my relationship with my father was not good. It got worse because of my attitude and pride. I continued this way—not concerning myself with his spiritual welfare.

One day while I was studying for my institute class, I came to 1 Nephi 16, where Nephi breaks his steel bow, making it difficult to get food. Everybody began to murmur—Laman and Lemuel, as was their custom, together with their father, the prophet Lehi. Nephi responded by making a bow and arrow out of wood and asking his father where he should go to obtain food. His father prayed for guidance and was reprimanded by the Lord for having murmured. Lehi reacted favorably and retook his role as leader of his family and as a prophet of the Lord. Nephi did not judge his father in his weakened state, nor did he think that he shouldn't be prophet anymore, even when Nephi had spoken with the Lord and had received visions.

When I read and understood this account, immediately I thought of how badly I had behaved toward my family. I was embarrassed by my attitude—feeling that I was better than they were—and felt especially bad for not treating my father with respect. I was sad for not making it a priority to share the gospel with them.

I had not seen my family as they could become. I had



My attitude and behavior changed gradually. Although I did not often agree with my father, I strived to always respect his opinions.

focused only on their weaknesses. From that day on, my attitude and behavior changed gradually. I strived to always respect my father's opinions, despite the many times I did not agree with him. If he invited me to lunch when I was fasting, I said I was sorry for not being able to share the meal with him. I no longer felt bothered by the programs or music they watched or listened to on Sundays, remembering that they still hadn't made covenants with our Heavenly Father, as I had.

One morning while I was helping my father with a meal, I told him how much I loved him and how sorry I was for my rude behavior. I told him I was proud that he was my father and that I wanted to have a peaceful relationship with him.

Everything began to change. The arguments lessened and disappeared. Although I thought it would be a long time before my family joined the Church, their attitude toward the Church improved. None of these changes would have happened had I not changed first.

After I had been a member of the Church for one year, I served as a full-time missionary in the Mexico Tijuana Mission. Three months before returning, I received a letter saying that my family had accepted the gospel and would be baptized. When I returned, they already belonged to the Church.

In my 15 years as a member of the Church, one of my greatest lessons came from my study of the Book of Mormon and with the children of God I had closest to me: my family. **NE**



WAITING AT THE WINDOW

When I was a child, the very best part of Christmas was the arrival of my mother's brother, who would drive once a year from his home in Tennessee to visit our home in Georgia, usually arriving the night before Christmas Eve.

As I counted down the months, weeks, and days before my uncle's visit, the time seemed to pass so slowly that I could hardly bear the anticipation. Each year on the night he was scheduled to arrive at our house, I would press my face against the living room window, waiting to catch the first glimpse of his car. I never had to wait long before he arrived.

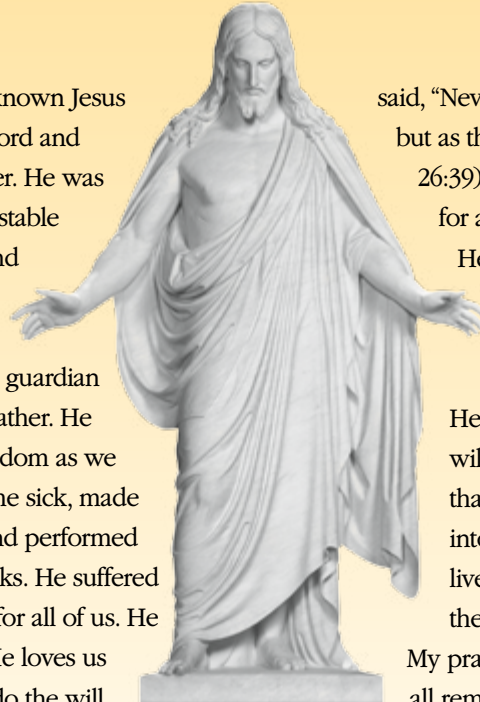
I never realized until I was older how much waiting for my uncle's arrival increased the happiness I felt when his car finally pulled into our driveway laden with Christmas gifts. In a small way, I was reminded of how faithful, righteous people in the Book of Mormon and the Bible must have felt when the Savior finally arrived on earth. Not only had His birth been anticipated for centuries rather than months or weeks, but He brought to the world the most precious gifts imaginable—eternal life and the opportunity to be exalted with our families forever. I imagined the joy and excitement these people would have experienced when they recognized the signs of Christ's birth and knew that the prophecies they had read about were finally being fulfilled.

Though I wasn't on the earth when the Savior was born, I am so grateful for His gifts of the Atonement and Resurrection, which make it possible for me to be forgiven of my sins and live with my family forever. Just as I looked forward to the arrival of my uncle, and as people looked forward to the birth of Christ, today we can look forward to the Second Coming, when Christ will bring even greater blessings and opportunities to the righteous. I know that as we plan and prepare for Christ's coming, our joy will be full.

Ruth M., Georgia, USA

MY SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST

I have always known Jesus Christ is my Lord and eternal Brother. He was born in a lowly stable in Bethlehem and was taught in the ways of both His earthly guardian and Heavenly Father. He increased in wisdom as we do. He healed the sick, made the blind see, and performed many other works. He suffered at Gethsemane for all of us. He did it because He loves us and needed to do the will of the Father. He was desirous that the cup might be removed but



said, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). He died on Calvary for all mankind because

He loves us.

I love my Savior and know He lives. I know He is always ready and willing to help us so that we can come back into His presence and live with Him again in the kingdom of God.

My prayer is that we will all remember what He has done for us all.

Jeffrey W., Utah, USA

TOGETHER AT HOME

A few years ago, my older sister Tamara was admitted to the hospital for jaw surgery about a week before Christmas. Since Christmas has always been the time when all my family can come together, it was hard to see my sister away from us in the hospital during this season. My whole family was scared for her, so we all prayed that the operation would go according to plan and that the surgeon and the nurses could give her proper care and restore her to good health soon.

The surgery was successful, and she stayed in the hospital a few nights while she recuperated. She couldn't eat solid food, couldn't speak very easily, and had to take pain

medication. It was hard to see her suffer, but we all knew that Heavenly Father was with Tamara and that she would be home for Christmas Eve. And she was! She came home the night of the 23rd, and my whole family was able to sit together around the fire on Christmas Eve like we do every year.

We all learned to be more grateful that we can have not only each other but also the Holy Ghost and the Lord with us whenever we need Them. That Christmas I learned that love and family are more important than presents and that being with each other and remembering the birth of Christ are what matter most.

Trish W., Utah, USA

MAKING CHRISTMAS LAST

When I was little, I felt that Christmas just didn't last long enough. You wake up early, empty your stocking, open presents, and by 10 in the morning it's all over! The rest of the day seems just like any other, except you have a new movie to watch or a new game to play.

Of course, I knew what Christmas was really about; I'd heard the Christmas story with the star, the angels, the shepherds, and the Wise Men many times. But it wasn't until recently that I started to think past the morning of presents to the rest of Christmas.

Last Christmas was the turning point. My brother was on his mission, and we were all anxiously waiting for the opportunity to talk to him. My parents and I still opened presents, but the best part of the day was later when I got to hear my brother's voice and talk to him. That's when I learned that for me, Christmas is about family, the people I get to spend eternity with. By spending a day doing things together, beyond the opening of presents, we celebrate one of the reasons Christ was born.

I was mistaken when I was younger. Christmas doesn't end when the last present is unwrapped. For me, that's now when it starts,

because that's when we get to start spending the day talking to, being with, and learning about each other.

Whitney H., Utah, USA





Meet Brother Joseph

You know that Joseph Smith was the first prophet in these latter days, but did you know that he loved to laugh and make people laugh? or that he and his wife, Emma, adopted twins? Here are a few other things you might not know about the Prophet Joseph:

- Joseph Smith Jr. was born on December 23, 1805, in Sharon, Vermont, USA, and was named after his father. Joseph's siblings, in order of age, were Alvin, Hyrum, Sophronia, Samuel Harrison, Ephraim, William,

Katherine, Don Carlos, and Lucy.

- When Joseph was seven, he had typhoid fever. He recovered from the fever but was left with an infection in his left leg. Nine pieces of the bone were removed without any anesthesia (pain-killer). He walked with a slight limp the rest of his life.¹
- Joseph was 14 when he first prayed aloud and saw Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ (see Joseph Smith—History 1:14, 17).
- Joseph's oldest brother, Alvin, died when Joseph was 17. Almost 13 years later Joseph saw Alvin in a vision of the celestial kingdom (see D&C 137:5–7).
- Isaac Hale, Emma's father, didn't approve of Joseph and didn't want them to get married. Joseph and Emma decided to elope and were married on January 18, 1827.²
- Emma and Joseph were married for 17 years and had 11 children, 6 of whom died as children.
- After his tooth was chipped when he was attacked by a mob in 1832, Joseph spoke with a lisp.³
- Joseph enjoyed playing games. Such games included playing ball, wrestling, throwing snowballs, fishing, and pulling sticks.⁴
- An early Latter-day Saint described Joseph's voice as being like “the thunders of Heaven.”⁵
- Joseph was strong and tall, around 6'2" (1.9 m), and weighed about 200 pounds (91 kg).⁶
- Joseph wasn't only the President

of the Church, but he also ran for president of the United States.⁷

- After Joseph was martyred, Elder John Taylor (1808–87), then of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, wrote of him, “Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it” (D&C 135:3). **NE**

NOTES

1. See *Presidents of the Church* (Church Educational System student manual, 2003), 3–4.
2. See “Life of the Prophet: Joseph and Emma,” JosephSmith.net.
3. See “Life of the Prophet: Friend of Man,” JosephSmith.net.
4. See Alexander L. Baugh, “Joseph Smith's Athletic Nature,” in *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, the Man*, ed. Susan Easton Black and Charles D. Tate Jr. (1993), 137.
5. Joseph L. Robinson, in “Life of the Prophet: Teacher of God's Truth,” JosephSmith.net.
6. See Baugh, “Joseph Smith's Athletic Nature,” 138–39.
7. See “Life of the Prophet: Leading with Love,” JosephSmith.net.



HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE SACRAMENT



By Elder Dallin H. Oaks

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

HOW HAVE YOU APPLIED THIS?

"Throughout the week, I try to keep in mind the moment that I'll take the sacrament tray in my hand."

Cristian T.

"I sometimes look up the scriptures that are listed in the hymns sung that day. When I understand the words as I sing them, I can sense the Spirit much stronger."

Elizabeth C.

"I dress according to the *For the Strength of Youth* guidelines."

Veronica H.

The ordinance of the sacrament makes the sacrament meeting the most sacred and important meeting in the Church. It should focus our attention on the Atonement and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I sense that some in the rising generation and even some adults have not yet come to **understand the significance** of this meeting and the importance of individual reverence and worship in it.

I begin with how members of the Church should prepare themselves to participate in the ordinance of the sacrament. Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: "We commemorate His Atonement in a very personal way. We **bring a broken heart and a contrite spirit** to our sacrament meeting" ("Worshiping at Sacrament Meeting," *Ensign*, Aug. 2004, 26).

We are **seated well before the meeting begins**. "This is not a time for conversation or transmission of messages but a period of **prayerful meditation** as . . . members prepare spiritually for the sacrament" (*Ensign*, Aug. 2004, 27).

How we dress is an important indicator of our attitude and preparation for any activity in which we will

engage. If we are going swimming or hiking or playing on the beach, our clothing, including our footwear, will indicate this. The same should be

true of how we dress when we are to participate in the ordinance of the sacrament. It is like going to the temple.

During sacrament meeting—and especially during the sacrament service—we should **concentrate on worship** and refrain from all other activities, especially from behavior that could interfere with the worship of others. Sacrament meeting is not a time for reading books or magazines. Young people, it is **not a time for whispered conversations on cell phones or for texting**.

The music of sacrament meeting is a vital part of our worship. How wonderful when every person in attendance **joins in the worship of singing**.

President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: "This is an occasion when *the gospel should be presented, when we should be called upon to exercise faith, and to reflect on the mission of our Redeemer, and to spend time in the consideration of the saving principles of the gospel, and not for other purposes*" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:342).

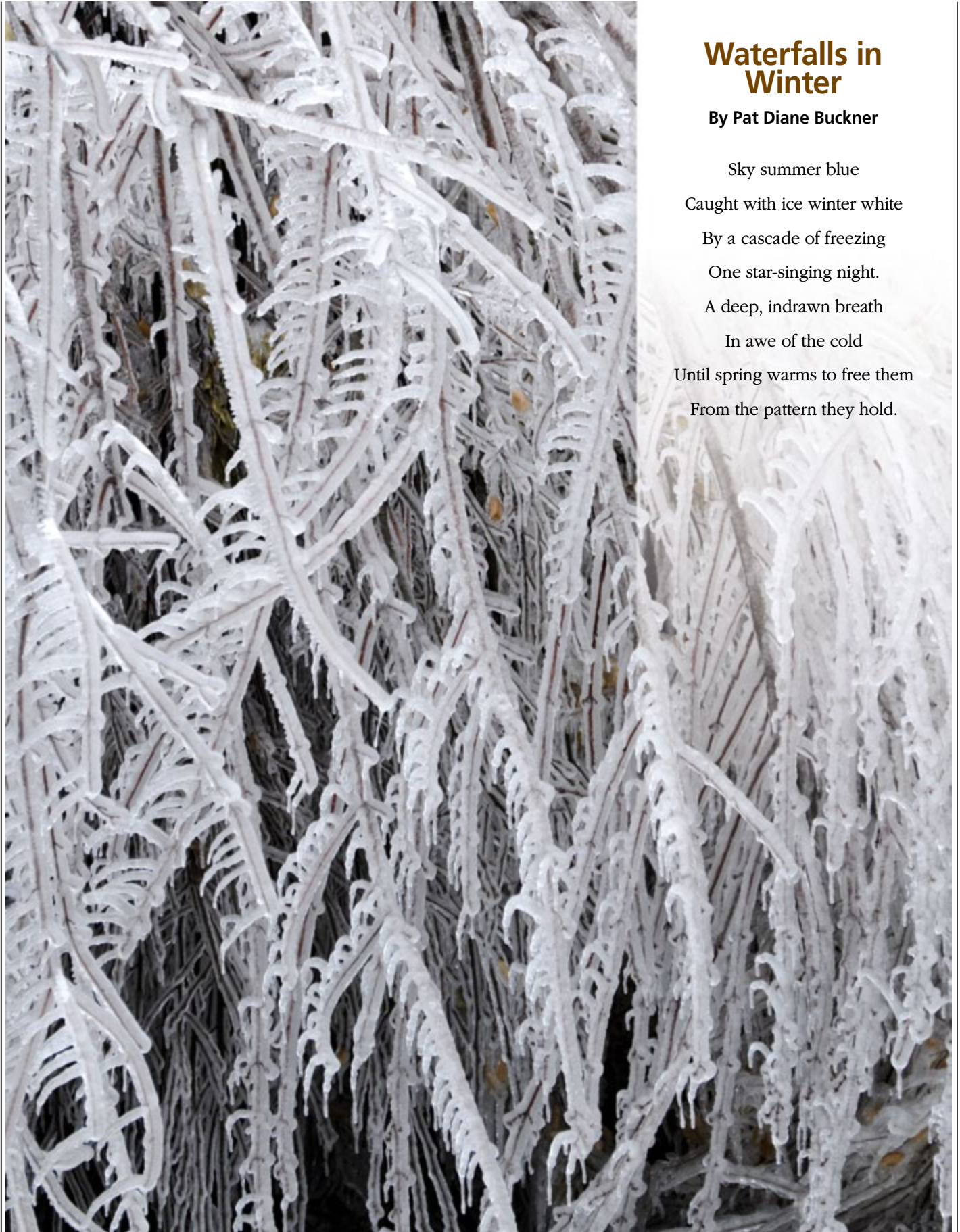
When we do this, we are qualified for the companionship and revelation of the Spirit. This is the way we get direction for our lives and peace along the way. **NE**

From the October 2008 general conference address "Sacrament Meeting and the Sacrament" (Ensign, Nov. 2008, 17–20).

Share Your Experiences

Share *your* experiences in applying these principles and read the experiences of other youth by visiting lds.org/go/212.



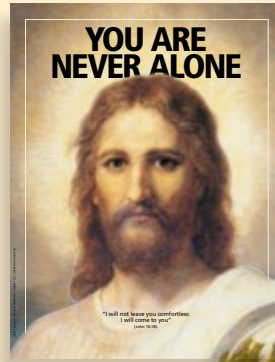


Waterfalls in Winter

By Pat Diane Buckner

Sky summer blue
Caught with ice winter white
By a cascade of freezing
One star-singing night.
A deep, indrawn breath
In awe of the cold
Until spring warms to free them
From the pattern they hold.

WHAT'S ONLINE



More Mormonads

Do you love Mormonads like the one on page 33? If so, check out our gallery of Mormonads from previous issues of the *New Era* at lds.org/go/213. You'll also find other great items from past issues of the *New Era* at newera.lds.org.



Christmas Stories

Get in the Christmas spirit this month by reading stories online at LDS.org. Just search "Christmas stories" in the "Search" field, and then you can use the links on the left side of the page to find experiences shared by Church leaders (click on "General Conference"), stories from Church members (click on "Magazines"), and even videos (click on "Media Library").

Games for Learning Scripture Mastery Verses

Whether you're already in seminary or are looking forward to going when you turn 14, you can enjoy a fun way to help you learn the scripture mastery verses. Just head to seminary.lds.org and click on "Scripture Mastery." The games provide great ways to memorize the scriptures and learn how they apply to your life.

