

Liahona

Pointing Us All to Jesus Christ

SEEKING THE
LIGHT OF
REVELATION



FROM THE PROPHET

When God Reveals His Will
to Us, page 6

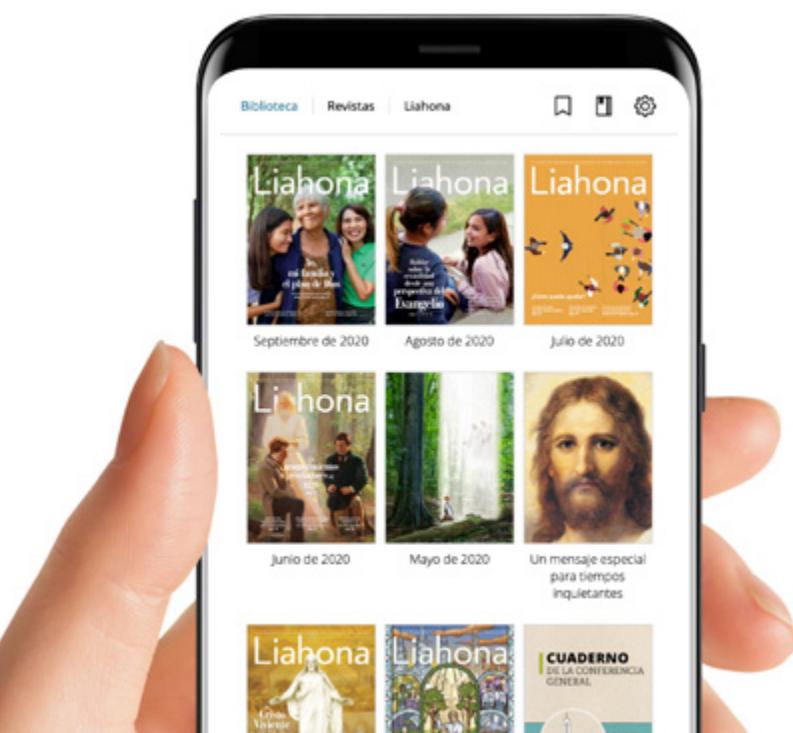
PERSONAL REVELATION

God Wants to Speak to You,
pages 10, 12



MORE SUPPORT FOR ALL MEMBERS

Previously, some members received the magazine only a few times a year, depending on their language. Now the three global Church magazines will print every month or every other month in languages spoken by about 97 percent of members.



WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE NEW LIAHONA

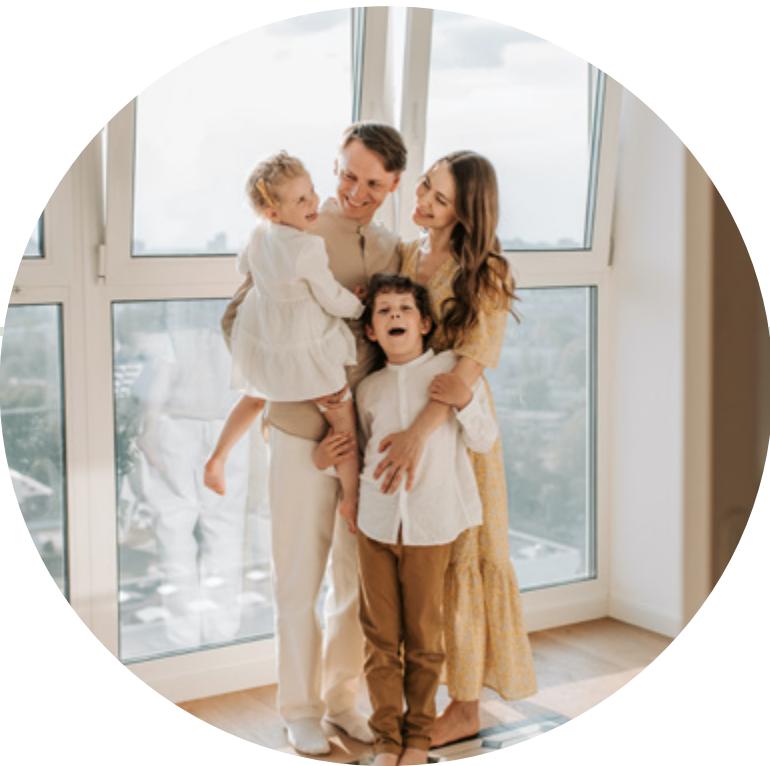
MESSAGES FROM PROPHETS AND APOSTLES

The *Liahona* magazine will feature messages from Church leaders in a more timely way. These messages, in print and online, will point us all to the Savior.



MORE DIGITAL CONTENT

To help you get the inspiring content you want, we will provide it in more of the ways you prefer. Look for improved digital experiences at liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org, in the Gospel Living and Gospel Library apps, through email, and via other options yet to come.



HOME-CENTERED GOSPEL LEARNING

Each month we'll share experiences, activities, and teachings to help Latter-day Saints learn the gospel at home and teach it to their children and loved ones.

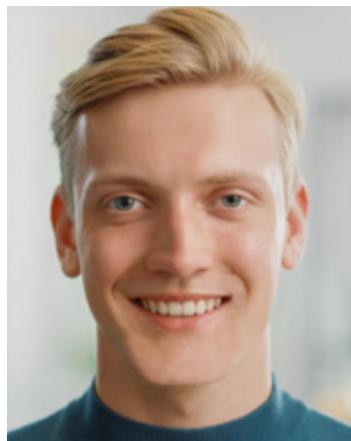
REAL STORIES FROM REAL MEMBERS

As you read faith-promoting experiences from members all over the world, your own faith will be strengthened. And you'll be reminded that we belong to something bigger than our ward or branch. Share your experience at liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org or email us at liahona@ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



STORIES AND MESSAGES CLOSE TO HOME

The *Liahona* publishes more than 60 regional versions that include inserted pages specific to different geographic locations and languages. These local pages will help connect you with Saints, leaders, and issues close to home.



A MAGAZINE FOR EVERY HEART AND HOME

Whether you're from Slovenia or Spain, Madagascar or Massachusetts, this magazine is for you. Whether you speak Korean or Kiribati; whether your home is brick or bamboo; whether you were baptized 80 years ago yesterday or just yesterday. Married, single, old, young—these pages speak to and reflect you. Your testimony, your experience, your household of faith. That is the great blessing of having one global magazine for adults. It unites us and reminds us that we all belong to a worldwide family and a worldwide church.

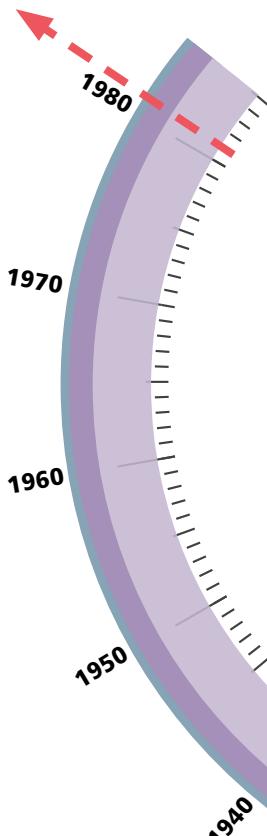
So come join us as we all move closer to Jesus Christ. One issue at a time, one page at a time. With prophets and apostles guiding us, and with a loving Savior helping us. All of us. Together.

The Doctrine and Covenants through the Years

2013 edition incorporated recent historic findings
into the section headings.

1981 edition expanded to include:

- Joseph Smith's vision of the **celestial kingdom** (section 137) and President Joseph F. Smith's "vision of the **redemption of the dead**" (138:60), transferred from the Pearl of Great Price.
- Revelation extending the priesthood to "**all worthy male members of the Church,**" announced on June 8, 1978, added as Official Declaration 2.



Continued revelation from God

is one of the most important aspects of the Church.

1921 edition —

Footnotes reworked; introductory statements at the beginning of the revelations expanded; text divided into double columns; the Manifesto added as a regular part of the text;

"Lectures on Faith" removed.

1831 — At a conference in Ohio, Church leaders voted to publish the Prophet Joseph Smith's "revelations and commandments" under the title the **Book of Commandments**. In 1833 a mob destroyed the press and burned most of the printed pages.

1835 — **Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of the Latter-Day Saints: Carefully Selected from the Revelations of God** was introduced to the Church body in a general conference.

1844 edition — Elder Wilford Woodruff, serving his second mission to England, was assigned to publish the **Doctrine and Covenants**. **1845 and 1846 Nauvoo editions** duplicated the 1844 edition using metal printing plates.

1830

1840

1850

1860

1870

1880

1890

1900

1910

1890 Manifesto
glued in as separate page

1875 —

Elder Orson Pratt of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles began a new edition, dividing sections into verses and arranging sections in chronological order.

1876 edition —

26 sections added: historical events (sections 2 and 13), scripture interpretations (sections 77 and 113), Kirtland Temple dedicatory prayer (section 109), revelations included in Joseph Smith's history but never before published, and others.

1908 — Official Declaration 1 added (President Wilford Woodruff's 1890 **Manifesto** ending the practice of plural marriage)

—first addition since 1876.

POINTING US ALL TO Jesus Christ

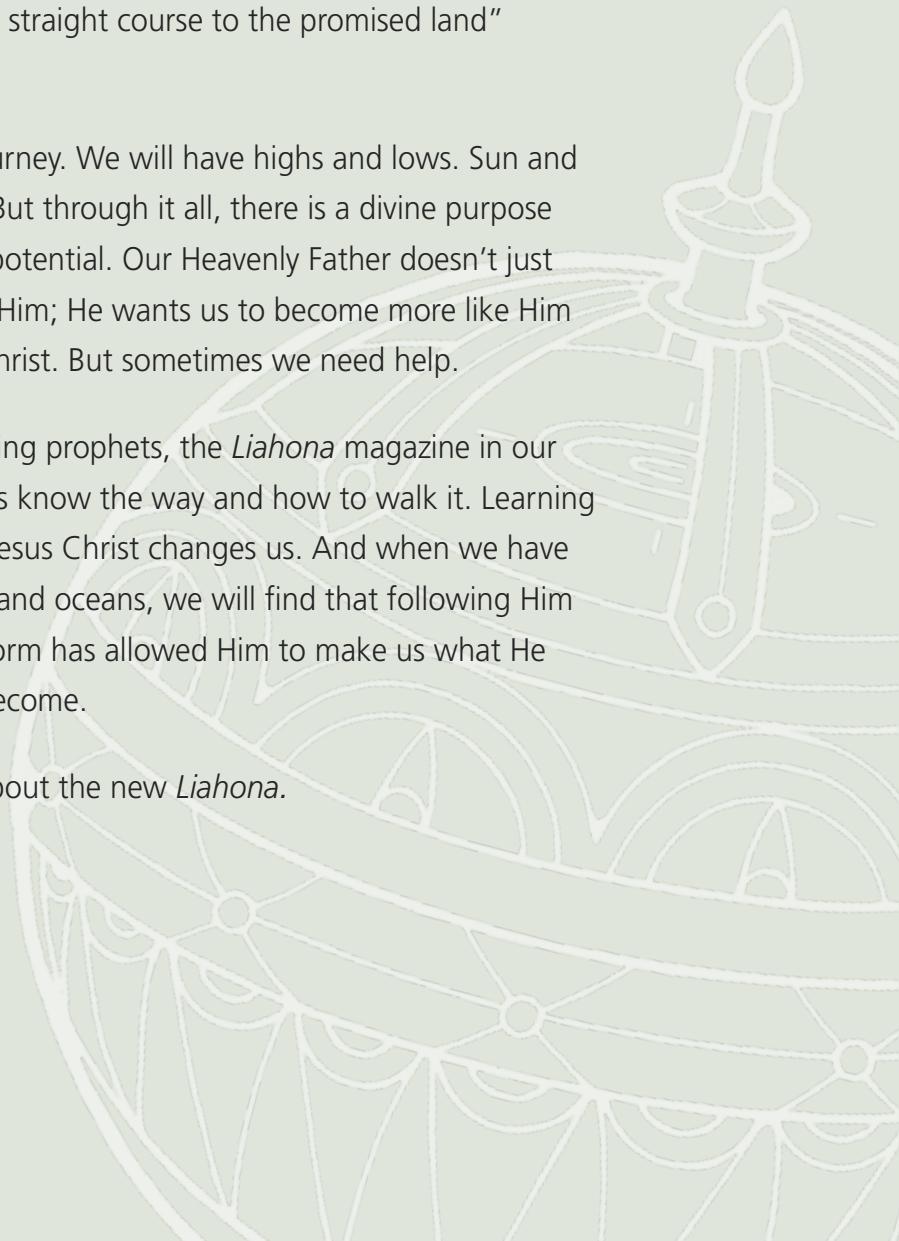
Life is a journey. The Liahona can help.

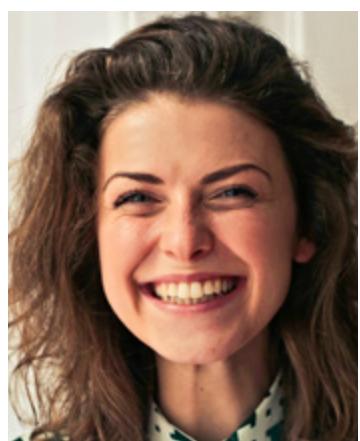
In Book of Mormon times, the Lord prepared the Liahona to help Lehi and his family progress on their journey. It was a “compass, which would point unto them a straight course to the promised land” (Alma 37:44).

Like Lehi, we are on a journey. We will have highs and lows. Sun and storms. Peace and pain. But through it all, there is a divine purpose because we have divine potential. Our Heavenly Father doesn’t just want us to be back with Him; He wants us to become more like Him through His Son, Jesus Christ. But sometimes we need help.

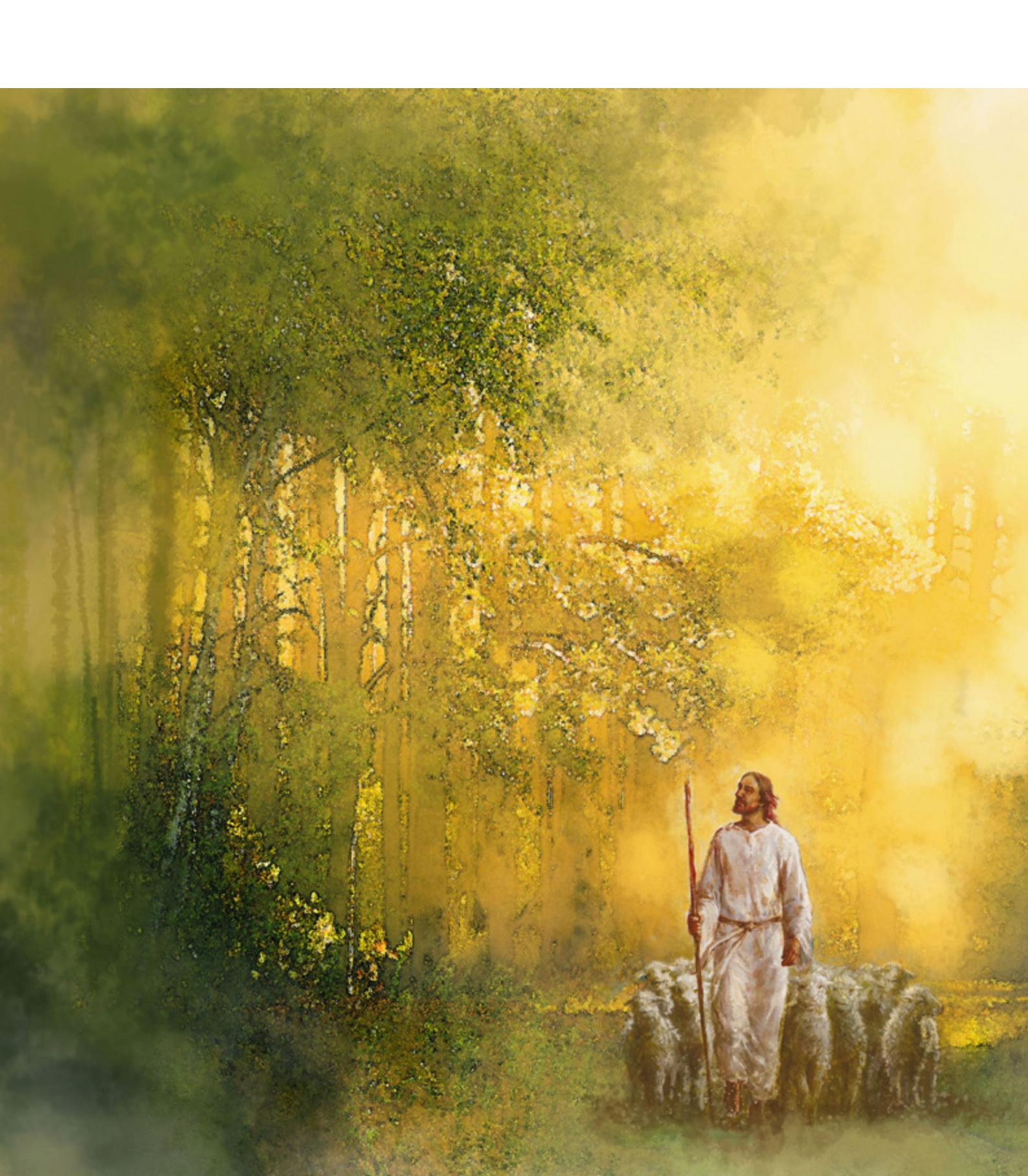
Under the direction of living prophets, the *Liahona* magazine in our day is designed to help us know the way and how to walk it. Learning and living the gospel of Jesus Christ changes us. And when we have crossed our own deserts and oceans, we will find that following Him through both sun and storm has allowed Him to make us what He always knew we could become.

Read on to learn more about the new *Liahona*.









"Fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail."

DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS 6:34



A New Publication for a Worldwide Church

Our dear brothers and sisters,

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can be found in countries around the world. Although we speak many languages, we are united in our efforts to follow the Savior, and we rejoice in knowing that we are all children of God.

From the early days of the restored Church, publications like the Church magazines have supported members in their efforts to learn, live, and share the gospel. Inspiring messages have helped members connect with Church leaders and with each other. With a desire to extend these blessings to more of God's children, we are pleased to share this first issue of the new *Liahona* with you.

Other changes to Church magazines include new publications for children and youth worldwide. Each of the magazines—the *Liahona*, *For the Strength of Youth*, and *Friend*—will work hand in hand with the *Come, Follow Me* scripture study resources that support gospel learning in your home. These magazines will also become more available in digital channels.

The purpose of the Church magazines remains the same: to help God's children become more converted to their Savior, Jesus Christ. We are grateful for your desire to learn and live the gospel, and we know these magazines will assist you in those efforts.

Sincerely,

The First Presidency



"When we receive revelation, we spend time in the presence of God."
—President Russell M. Nelson, page 6

FEATURE

Official magazine of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

January 2021
Vol. 45 No. 1
Liahona 17463

COVER



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By Madison Schrader

Grappling with Unanswered Gospel Questions

By Marissa Widdison



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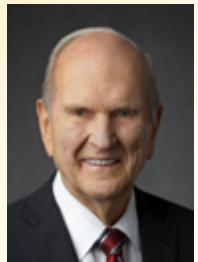
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**By President
Russell M.
Nelson**

President of
The Church of
Jesus Christ of
Latter-day Saints

Grow into the Principle of Revelation

I encourage you to take the necessary steps to hear the Lord better and more often so that you can receive the enlightenment He wants to give you.

On September 30, 2017, following the afternoon session of general conference, I stopped by the hospital to check on my beloved quorum member Elder Robert D. Hales. He had been hospitalized since suffering a heart attack a few days earlier.

We had a wonderful visit, and he seemed to be improving. He was even breathing on his own, which was a good sign.

That evening, however, the Spirit spoke to my heart and mind that I should return to the hospital on Sunday. During the Sunday morning session of general conference, that strong impression returned. I felt that I should skip lunch and hurry to Elder Hales's bedside as soon as the morning session ended, which I did.

When I arrived, I could see that Elder Hales had taken a serious turn for the worse. Sadly, he passed away 10 minutes after I arrived, but I am thankful that I was at his side with his sweet wife, Mary, and their two sons when he departed this life.

How grateful I am that the whisperings of the Holy Ghost prompted me to do something I might not have done otherwise. And how grateful I am for the reality of revelation and that the heavens are once again open.

This year our focus for personal and classroom study will be the Doctrine and Covenants. These “divine revelations and inspired declarations” can bless all who study them and act on their divine directives. They invite “all people everywhere to hear the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ,”¹ for truly “the voice of the Lord is unto all men” (Doctrine and Covenants 1:2).

Danger, Darkness, Deception

Physical and spiritual tempests are a part of life on the earth, as the COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us. Of the time prior to His Second Coming, the Savior predicted days of great tribulation. He said, “There shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places” (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:29).

Compounding such tribulation is the increasing darkness and deception that surround us. As Jesus told His disciples, “Iniquity shall abound” before His return (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:30).

Satan has marshaled his forces and is raging against the work of the Lord and those of us engaged in it. Because of the increasing dangers we face, our need for divine guidance has never been greater, and our efforts to hear the voice of Jesus Christ—our Mediator, Savior, and Redeemer—have never been more urgent.

As I said shortly after I was called as President of the Church, the Lord is ready to reveal His mind to us. That is one of His greatest blessings to us.²

In our day, He has promised, “If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge” (Doctrine and Covenants 42:61).

I know He will respond to our pleadings.

How We Hear Him

Knowing how the Spirit speaks is essential today. To receive personal revelation, to find answers, and to receive protection and direction, we remember the pattern the Prophet Joseph Smith set for us.

First, we immerse ourselves in the scriptures. Doing so opens our minds and hearts to the Savior’s teachings and truths. The words of Christ “tell [us] all things what [we] should do” (2 Nephi 32:3), especially in these days of uncertainty and upheaval.

Because of the increasing dangers we face, our need for divine guidance has never been greater, and our efforts to hear the voice of Jesus Christ have never been more urgent.

Next we pray. Prayer requires initiative, so we humble ourselves before God, find a quiet place where we can regularly go, and pour out our hearts to Him.

The Lord says, “Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:63).

Drawing near to the Lord brings comfort and encouragement, hope and healing. So, we pray in His name about our worries and our weaknesses, our longings and our loved ones, our callings and our questions.

Then we listen.

If we will stay on our knees for a while after we finish our prayer, thoughts, feelings, and direction will come into our mind. Recording those impressions will help us remember what actions the Lord would have us take.

As we repeat this process, we will, in the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith, “grow into the principle of revelation.”³

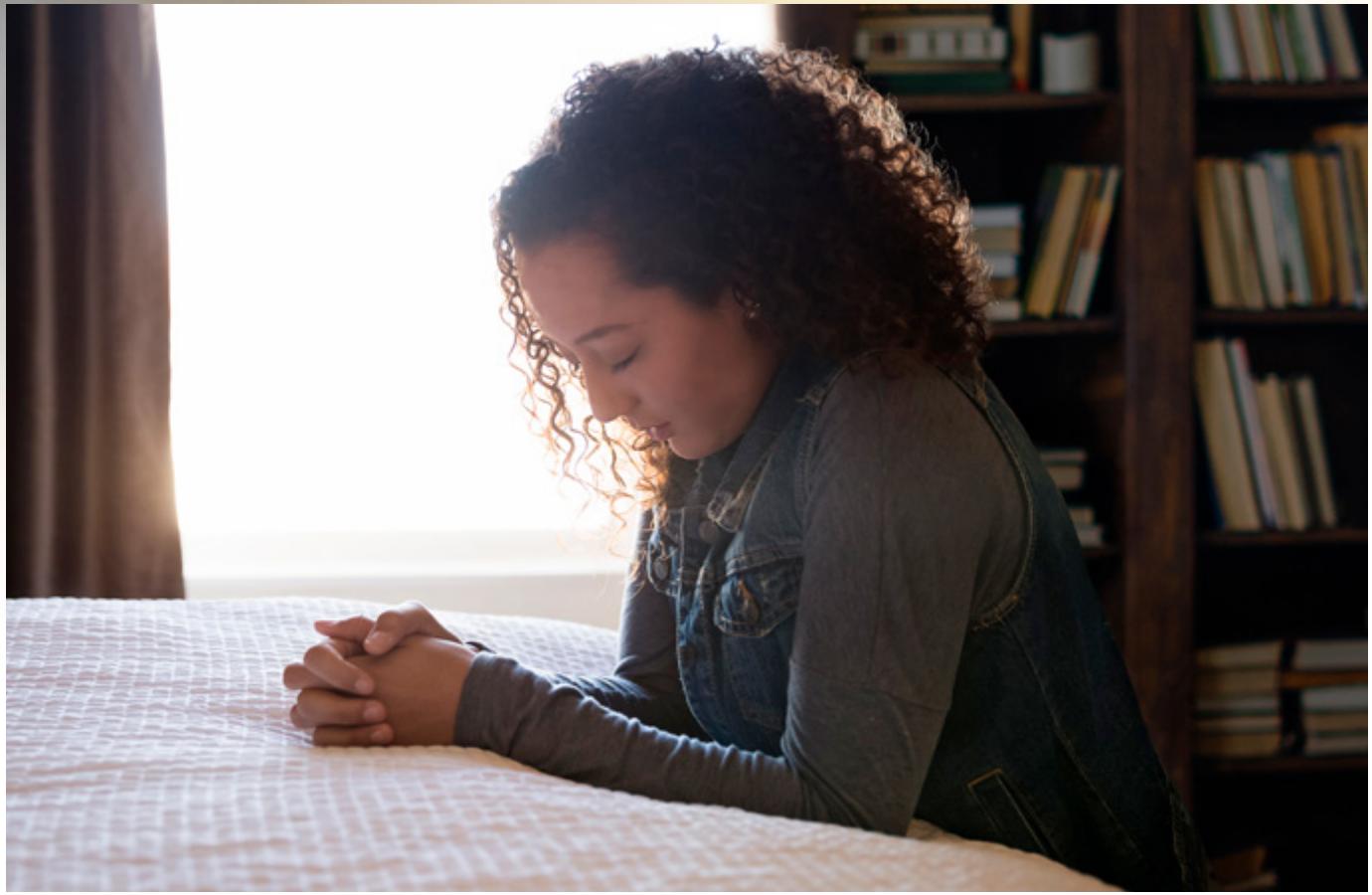
Worthy to Receive Revelation

Refining our ability to recognize the whisperings of the Holy Ghost and increasing our capacity to receive revelation requires worthiness. Worthiness does not require perfection, but it requires that we strive for increased purity.

The Lord expects daily effort, daily improvement, daily repentance. Worthiness brings purity, and purity qualifies us for the Holy Ghost. As we take “the Holy Spirit for [our] guide” (Doctrine and Covenants 45:57), we qualify for personal revelation.

If something is stopping us from opening the door to heavenly direction, we may need to repent. Repentance allows us to open the door so we can hear the voice of the Lord more frequently and clearly.

“The standard is clear,” taught Elder David A. Bednar



of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “If something we think, see, hear, or do distances us from the Holy Ghost, then we should stop thinking, seeing, hearing, or doing that thing. If that which is intended to entertain, for example, alienates us from the Holy Spirit, then certainly that type of entertainment is not for us. Because the Spirit cannot abide that which is vulgar, crude, or immodest, then clearly such things are not for us.”⁴

When we couple increased purity and obedience with fasting, diligent seeking, study of the scriptures and the words of living prophets, and temple and family history work, the heavens will open. The Lord, in turn, will fulfill His promise: “I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 11:13).

We may need to be patient, but God will speak to us in His own way and in His own time.

A Spirit of Understanding

Job declared, “There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding” (*Job* 32:8). In this new year, I encourage you to take the necessary

steps to hear the Lord better and more often so that you can receive the enlightenment He wants to give you.

Before Elder Hales’s passing that October day in 2017, he prepared a short talk for general conference that he was unable to give. In that talk, he wrote, “Our faith prepares us to be in the presence of the Lord.”⁵

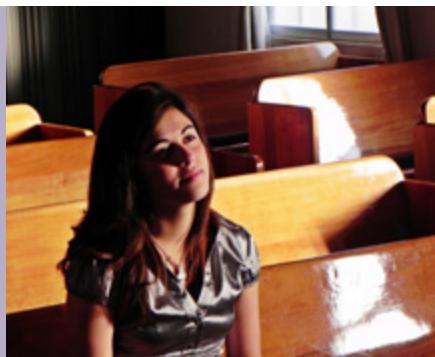
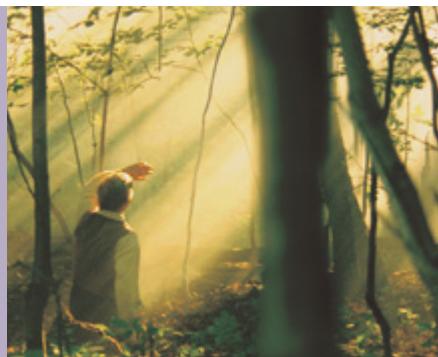
When we receive revelation, we spend time in the presence of God as He reveals His mind, will, and voice unto us (see *Doctrine and Covenants* 68:4). May we put our faith into action, calling upon Him, living worthy of His promised inspiration, and acting on the guidance we receive. ■

NOTES

1. Introduction to the *Doctrine and Covenants*.
2. See Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2018, 94.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 132.
4. David A. Bednar, “That We May Always Have His Spirit to Be with Us,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2006, 30.
5. In Neil L. Andersen, “The Voice of the Lord,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 125.

God Speaks to Us Today

Heavenly Father wants to help us. Are we listening to Him?



Two hundred years ago, Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ appeared to a teenager named Joseph Smith. This First Vision teaches us important truths. Jesus is once again leading a Church on the earth. Prophets exist today as in ancient times. And God knows each of us by name and is listening to our prayers. We are blessed when we try to hear His voice each day.

What Is Revelation?

When God talks to His children, it's called "revelation." There are different kinds of revelation.

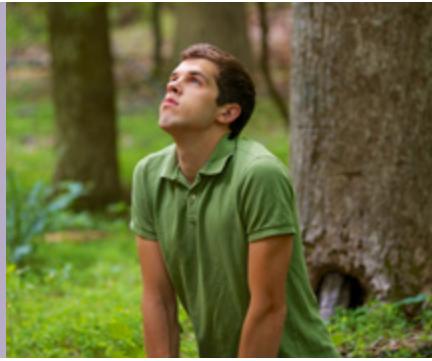
Personal revelation is when God speaks to us individually through the Holy Ghost. He can comfort and guide us.

We can also receive revelation about how to help those we have been called to lead. For example, parents can receive revelation about their families, and a bishop can receive revelation about his ward.

Only the prophet can receive revelation for the whole Church, but each of us can pray to know if what our leaders teach is true.

How Can I Invite Revelation?

We can speak to a loving, all-powerful, all-knowing Heavenly Father at any time through prayer. He wants us to thank Him for blessings, talk to Him about our lives, and ask for what we need. Then we should pay attention to the thoughts and feelings that come from the Holy Ghost, who is like a messenger from our Heavenly Father.



What Does Revelation Sound Like?

There is no single way to describe revelation. God speaks to each of us in a way we will understand (see *Doctrine and Covenants* 1:24). People sometimes experience dreams and visions. But more often, God speaks to us through quiet feelings from the Holy Ghost, like warmth, peace, or joy.

In this month's study of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, we read about Oliver Cowdery, who was taught that revelation would come to both his mind and heart (see *Doctrine and Covenants* 8:2).

What Are Examples of Revelation in the Scriptures?

Many scripture stories describe God speaking to His people:

- God told Noah how to keep his family safe (see *Genesis* 6:17–18).
- Heavenly Father and Jesus comforted a disciple named Stephen (see *Acts* 7:55).
- Revelation helped Nephi keep the commandments (see *1 Nephi* 4:6).
- While other scriptures come from ancient records, the *Doctrine and Covenants* is made up of modern revelations. This year we have the special opportunity of studying a book filled with the direct words of the Lord. ■

Several other articles in this issue teach us about revelation (see pages 6, 12, 22, 25, 38, 42).

Words to Remember

We hope you have enjoyed learning about revelation. Here are some other gospel terms that you can learn about in this issue:

Sealed: When family members are united for eternity in the temple (see page 18).

Covenant: A sacred promise between a person and God, like at baptism (see page 22).

Disciple: Someone who learns about and tries to act like Jesus Christ (see page 32).

The Power of Personal Revelation

How to receive life-sustaining revelation tailored to you.

“**P**ray in the name of Jesus Christ about your concerns, your fears, your weaknesses—yes, the very longings of your heart. And then listen! Write the thoughts that come to your mind. Record your feelings and follow through with actions that you are prompted to take. As you repeat this process day after day, month after month, year after year, you will ‘grow into the principle of revelation.’

“Does God really *want* to speak to you? Yes!”

President Russell M. Nelson, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 95.

“You can receive personal inspiration and revelation, consistent with His commandments, that is tailored to you. You have unique missions and roles to perform in life and will be given unique guidance to fulfill them.



"Nephi, the brother of Jared, and even Moses all had a large body of water to cross—and each did it differently. Nephi worked 'timbers of curious workmanship.' The brother of Jared built barges that were 'tight like unto a dish.' And Moses 'walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea.'

"They each received personalized direction, tailored to them, and each trusted and acted."

Michelle Craig, First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency, "Spiritual Capacity," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 21.

"True feasting is more than enjoying a delicious meal. It is an experience of joy, nourishment, celebration, sharing, expressing love to families and loved ones, communicating our thanksgiving to God, and building relationships while enjoying the abundant, incredibly delicious food. I believe when we feast upon the words of Christ, we ought to be thinking of the same kind of experience. . . .

" . . . Feasting upon the words of Christ will bring life-sustaining revelation, reaffirm our true identity and worth before God as His child, and lead our friends unto Christ and everlasting life."

Elder Takashi Wada of the Seventy, "Feasting upon the Words of Christ," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2019, 38–39, 40.

"The sacrament is also a time for Heavenly Father to teach us about the Atonement of His Beloved Son—our Savior, Jesus Christ—and for us to receive revelation about it. It is a time to 'knock, and it shall be opened unto you,' to request and to receive this knowledge. It is a time for us to reverently ask God for this knowledge. And if we do, I have no doubt that we will receive this knowledge, which will bless our lives beyond measure."

Elder Claudio R. M. Costa of the Seventy, "That They Do Always Remember Him," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 103.

"Be obedient, remember the times when you have felt the Spirit in the past, and ask in faith.



Your answer will come, and you will feel the love and peace of the Savior. It may not come as quickly or in the format you desire, but the answer will come. Do not give up! Never give up!"

Elder James B. Martino of the Seventy, "Turn to Him and Answers Will Come," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 59.

"The Lord has repeatedly told us to 'seek learning even by study and also by faith.' We can receive light and understanding not only through the logical reasoning of our minds but also through the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Ghost. . . .

"When these two perspectives are then combined in our souls, one complete picture shows the reality of things as they truly are."

Elder Mathias Held of the Seventy, "Seeking Knowledge by the Spirit," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2019, 31, 33. ■

EXPLORE MORE

These quotations were taken from general conference addresses. Visit gc.ChurchofJesusChrist.org and click on "Topics" then "Revelation" to find related messages from Church leaders.

A Better Choice

Michelle P. Servín, Querétaro, Mexico

I was surprised to receive such a direct message from the Spirit. I knew what to do and didn't hesitate for a second.

After my husband would leave for work, I used to finish my daily housework and then lie down and spend a few hours on Facebook, Messenger, and Instagram. I spent almost 15 hours a week on social media. I couldn't seem to stop sharing funny videos and images, but I seldom shared messages about the Church. Often at bedtime, my husband had to help me get off social media so I could get to sleep.

At this time, I set a goal to read the Bible all the way through to help me better understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. Each day I dedicated myself to read approximately three chapters.

On days that social media ate up some of my time, I would try to read a little extra.

One night I put my Bible beside me to read a few chapters. But before reading, I grabbed my phone and spent the next hour and a half on social media. When I realized what time it was, I put my phone aside and knelt to pray. My prayer didn't last even 10 seconds. As soon as I stood up, a voice came to my mind, saying, "I would that you invest as much time to prayer as you do to social media."

I was surprised to receive such a direct message from the Spirit. I

knew what to do and didn't hesitate for a second. Immediately, I deleted the social media apps from my phone and began a social media fast.

A week later, I was endowed in the holy temple. Along with the covenants I made with the Lord, I promised Him that in my free time I would read about the Church and about the Prophet Joseph Smith and continue reading the Bible.

Heavenly Father has greatly blessed me for deciding to make a better choice by getting away from social media and spending more time learning about the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. ■



Deneto Forde Saint Catherine, Jamaica

The gospel gives me a reason to go on and look for better days.

DISCOVER MORE

Learn how an understanding of the Restoration and plan of salvation changed Deneto's life. Read this article in this issue in the Gospel Library or online at ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/12115.



The Anchor of My Life and Faith

Shinjiro Hara, Tokyo, Japan

The more I read the Book of Mormon, the more I believed that it is the word of God.

I was not happy at all as a boy, but things changed when two American men knocked on our door.

As a 14-year-old, I was curious about these two Americans who spoke Japanese and introduced themselves as missionaries. After they left, my father handed me a book they had just given him called the Book of Mormon. I started reading it and felt something special, but I didn't know what it was. A month later, I finished it and placed it on my bookshelf.

Three years later, I met two missionaries at a railway station in Tokyo. They invited me to listen to their message. I brought my Book of Mormon to our next meeting.

They began the conversation by saying, "We would like to share an important book with you."

I took the Book of Mormon from my bag and asked, "Is it this book? I've already read it."

They were stunned. Eventually, I was taught the gospel, and the missionaries encouraged me to ask God with a sincere heart if the Book of Mormon is true (see Moroni 10:4–5).

One night I thought about God, the Church, the Book of Mormon, and how I could be happy and felt something warm inside. Then I decided to be baptized.

After joining the Church, I continued reading the Book of Mormon. One day while reading, I received a distinct thought about my father's medication for high blood

pressure. I learned more about it and found out that a side effect could cause severe depression. At my suggestion, my father asked his doctor to change his medicine. His depression has been gone ever since.

The more I read, the more I believed that the Book of Mormon is the word of God. I became happier and wanted to share the truth with others.

My parents opposed my going on a mission and eventually kicked me out of their house, but I was determined. I served in Tennessee, USA. As a Latter-day Saint missionary from a Buddhist country serving in the Bible Belt of the United States, I was often asked how I could believe in the Book of Mormon. I testified that I had prayed about its truthfulness and received an answer that it is true.

After my mission, I finished school and joined a large company in Japan that transferred me to several places around the world, including Myanmar, England, and Ireland. Everywhere I went, I shared my testimony of the Book of Mormon with as many people as possible, from a taxi driver to a state minister.

The Book of Mormon has been—and always will be—the anchor of my life and my faith in Jesus Christ. Whenever I am overwhelmed by adversity, I read the Book of Mormon and overcome my difficulties with spiritual support from Heavenly Father and our Savior. The Book of Mormon blesses me every day of my life. ■

The Book of Mormon that changed Shinjiro Hara's life.



Home-centered Church Away from Home

Christopher Culver, Colorado, USA

How could I help my children build a gospel foundation when I'd be away from home?

When President Russell M. Nelson described a home-centered Church during general conference in 2018, and when the Children and Youth program was announced in 2019, our family was excited.

As 2020 approached, however, we met a significant obstacle. Beginning in January, I had to leave home for a six-month deployment. I knew that my wife and I had a sacred responsibility to center gospel learning in our home for our five children, but I wondered how I could do my part while away from home.

Our children began brainstorming goals that would help them increase "in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52), just as the Savior did. My eight-year-old daughter told me one of her goals was to learn to cook with Daddy. With a broken heart, I had to redirect her goal toward something she could do for a while without my help. My sons wanted to become better at basketball and running—two things we love to do together. I encouraged them in their goal, knowing I would miss opportunities to help them. As a family, we prepared the best we could.

Family separation is always a trial, but the combination of technology and the direction of a living prophet allowed me to take part in our family's gospel learning after all.

We felt united, even when we were 10 time zones apart, as we studied *Come, Follow Me*. When time allowed, I would get on an



early-morning video chat during my family's evening scripture study and talk about the Book of Mormon chapters we had been studying. Over the phone, I would talk to my children about the Book of Mormon videos, and my wife and I would discuss ideas for family home evening.

Wanting to help my children with Children and Youth, I set my own goals and sent the children handwritten notes every week sharing my progress and asking them about their goals. Through regular phone calls, I could even join in family prayer at times.

During my separation from my family, I quickly saw the blessings of following the guidance of the prophet. I also found that creating a home of gospel learning is possible even when I was half a world away! ■



*When we knocked
on the door of the
Bautista family,
little did we know
of the blessings we
would see in the
following years.*

A Bit of Missionary Heaven

By Steven Hunt

One rainy night in late November 1973, my companion and I were tracting in Manila, the Philippines, and we knocked on the door of Romeo and Naty Bautista. They let us in and listened politely to our short message. Naty didn't speak English (and we only taught in English at that time), but Romeo did and was interested in having us come back. He also said that his younger sister, Avelia, who was living with them while going to college in Manila, would probably be interested.

As excited as young missionaries can be about new investigators, we eagerly waited for the return appointment several days later. The lesson went so well that we could hardly believe it. Romeo and Avelia listened attentively and asked questions. Naty listened but didn't understand much of what we said. They were all receptive from the very beginning—a missionary's dream!

After we left each lesson, Romeo would teach the lesson to his wife in Tagalog. They read the Book of Mormon in English together, slowly. They had two young daughters at the time: Ruth, a toddler, and Namie, a new baby.



Naty and Romeo Bautista with their children in 1973.

In December 1973, I was fortunate to baptize and confirm Romeo and his sister Avelia. My companion and I were thrilled at the family's faith and interest in the gospel, but we never could have predicted the eternal impact of their decision and the countless lives that would be blessed both immediately and years down the road.

Romeo and Avelia became faithful and strong members of the Makati Branch from the start. Soon after their baptisms, I returned home to Salt Lake City, Utah. In my excitement to come home, I didn't even get Romeo's mailing address to write a letter. There was no internet or cell phones in those days.

I soon met Susan, my eternal sweetheart. I taught, baptized, and married her in 1975, and we were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple in 1976. We had three children and became involved in various Church callings. I was also very involved in our family business. I often thought about the Bautista family and how they were doing, but I didn't know of any way to contact them.

Then one special day in 1997, I received a letter from a Mrs. Avelia Wijtenberg, postmarked from Mackay,



Queensland, Australia! I didn't know any such person there, but when I read the letter, I learned that Romeo's sister Avelia had met and married a Dutch-Australian man and had been living in Queensland for some years. She had found my old mailing address in her notebook one day while doing some spring cleaning.

Avelia and I began a letter-writing campaign, eager to know about what had happened to each other over the past several decades. She was also able to give me a mailing address for Romeo, who had moved to Tiwi, in the southern part of Luzon Island in the Philippines.

That year, as Romeo and I wrote back and forth, after 24 years of no contact, our old relationship was rekindled. Romeo said that he and Naty now had five children. Naty and the rest of the family had been baptized in the years after I returned home. Their eldest, Ruth, had served a mission in the Philippines Davao Mission, and the second and third daughters, Namie and Joan, were serving missions in northern Luzon and Guam, respectively. They had a fourth daughter, Lyn, who later served in the Philippines Baguio Mission, and finally, a son, John,



The Bautista family on the day of their sealing in the Manila Philippines Temple.

who later served in the Philippines Cagayan de Oro Mission.

My wife and I requested the addresses of Namie and Joan and wrote to them on their missions. We had never met them and didn't know them at all but felt such an instant bond that is difficult to describe in

words. It was almost as though they were our own daughters! Through our letters, we rekindled a love for the Bautista family and especially for Namie and Joan—who were full of the Spirit, working hard as full-time missionaries. In a letter, Namie asked if she could telephone us on Christmas Day, as her parents didn't have a telephone at the time. With the approval of her mission president, she called on Christmas Day in 1997, and we both just cried for several minutes. I then reminded her that an international long-distance collect call was too expensive to waste just crying to each other. We laughed and had a wonderful conversation, even with her limited English skills. She invited us to come to the Philippines the following summer for her homecoming talk.

In the summer of 1998, as Namie returned home from her mission, I made plans with my 16-year-old daughter

to go to the Philippines. We arrived in Manila and met with Ruth. We attended the Manila Philippines Temple together. Then we flew south to her family's home in Tiwi. It's impossible to describe the joy of seeing Romeo and his family again. The deep bond of brotherhood was instantly renewed. We talked and hugged and reminisced; we ate together and read scriptures with his family each night we were there. They were such strong rocks of testimony in their small branch. We attended sacrament meeting in the Tiwi Branch and listened to Namie report on her mission. It was amazing. It was nearly celestial. Truly this was missionary heaven.

At that time, Romeo was serving as the branch president of the Tiwi Branch. He had been instrumental in bringing the gospel to his extended family in northern Luzon. Romeo took his family to the temple, where Naty and their children were sealed. Now all five of the children have been married and sealed in the Manila Temple. Several married returned missionaries. Joan was instrumental in converting her boyfriend. She waited with him for a year after his baptism and then married him in the Manila Temple. Naty died suddenly in 2007, but the family remained strongly rooted in the gospel. They are thankful for the sealing covenant and know they will see their beautiful wife and mother again if they are faithful.

Now there are more than 70 members of the Bautista family who are active in the Church. The family and extended family have accounted for 17 full-time missions and 14 temple marriages. Family members have also served as bishops and branch presidents; stake and district presidents; and Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary presidents and counselors! Romeo's son, John,

was a bishop in the Quezon City area. Ruth's husband was a high councilor in that same stake. Lyn's husband was also a branch president in Tiwi. The Bautista family surely is building a strong legacy of service and strength in the Philippines.

My wife and I served a senior mission in the Philippines San Pablo Mission from 2008 to 2010. One day at the temple in Manila, most of the Bautista family gathered for the marriage of John Bautista (Romeo's son) to Sister Victorino, one of the sister missionaries from our San Pablo Mission who had completed her mission and recently returned home.

Our mission president asked if we would like to attend that joyous event, and we immediately made plans to be there. My wife knew of my relationship with the Bautista family but was completely blown away by how many family members there were and how much they loved her. She had 70 new friends for life.

I often think of Doctrine and Covenants 18:15: "And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!" Like a

ripple in a pond, the influence of one soul, Romeo, has sent out waves of strong testimonies and Church service in the Philippines.

I was fortunate to help toss the pebble into the pond four decades ago with the baptisms of Romeo and Avelia. I have experienced unspeakable joy in my relationship with this great family, now into their third generation of gospel living. This is truly the ongoing legacy and joy of missionary work. This is a little bit of missionary heaven! ■

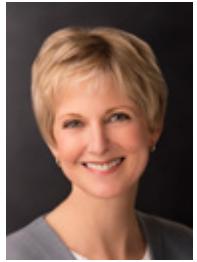
The author lives in Utah, USA.



When I met Romeo again in 1998, our deep bond of brotherhood was instantly renewed.

Women and Covenant Power





**By President
Jean B. Bingham**
Relief Society
General President

We can rejoice in the privileges and power we have through the priesthood.

President Russell M. Nelson taught that “the heavens are just as open to *women* who are endowed with God’s power flowing from their priesthood covenants as they are to men who bear the priesthood.

“I pray that truth will register upon each of your hearts because I believe it will change your life,” he said. “I would like to leave a blessing upon you, that you may understand the priesthood power with which you have been endowed and that you will augment that power by exercising your faith in the Lord and in His power.”

President Nelson invited the women of the Church to “study prayerfully” about priesthood power and “discover what the Holy Ghost will teach” us. I love that our living prophet invited each of us to learn and to receive revelation and to better “gain, understand, and use the power with which [we] have been endowed.”¹

Many times throughout my life, I have experienced the promised blessings that come from following the counsel of the prophets. This instance was no exception. In thinking about President Nelson’s invitation, my mind immediately turned to the temple—the place in which I was endowed with priesthood power—and the gift that power has been in my life. Yet it has taken me years to recognize how that power has been manifest.

Priesthood power, much like the gift of the Holy Ghost, comes from our loving Father in Heaven and from our personal righteousness. In keeping our covenants, we have the opportunity to receive revelation about our lives, about our families, jobs, school—everything for which we seek guidance. There is nothing that is important to us that is unimportant to the Lord. And when we invite the Spirit to teach us, we can come to a greater understanding of priesthood power through the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

The more I’ve learned about priesthood power through personal study and experience, the more I understand how relevant it is to all

facets of our lives. Priesthood power helps us receive revelation for our daily challenges, whatever they may be.

In my callings, because I am serving with priesthood authority given to me by one who has keys, there have been numerous times when I have been prompted to say and do just what a young woman or Relief Society sister or Primary child needed to hear or see. I know that those promptings came because of the priesthood authority I was given when I was set apart for that calling.

In marriage, as in any relationship, people go through stages and phases of learning and growing. I have learned that when I remember who my husband is eternally and who I am and what we are supposed to be doing together as children of God, it has changed my heart. Being sealed together through priesthood authority has empowered and motivated both of us to become more united. When the Savior said, “If ye are not one ye are not mine” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:27), He doesn’t just mean in a Church setting. He means in our family relationships as well.

And as a mother, I remember worrying about a young adult child who was doing things that I knew were not going to make that child happy. We had agreed to discuss the concern and had set a time to talk. Before the appointed time for our phone call, I had



my lecture ready; I knew exactly what I was going to say. I prayed to have the Spirit with me. What came out of my mouth from the beginning of our conversation and throughout the call was completely different than what I had planned to say. But it was exactly what that child needed. The gift of the Holy Ghost made it possible for hearts to be softened and a better solution identified. That is a demonstration of how priesthood power works in our lives.

One of the things I've learned about the priesthood is that women and men do best when we work interdependently with one another. That's how the Lord designed it; that is the divine pattern. We don't need to compete because all those different gifts and talents and abilities are needed—from both men and women. The Lord is leading us gently along that path so all of us can gain a better understanding of how to work together and how to value each other's contributions. It truly is the best way to accomplish His work.

Too often, women compare themselves with others. But none of us feel good in those comparisons. Each woman has a unique blend of abilities and talents, and all have God-given gifts. Just because you and I are not the same—or any number of women aren't the

same—doesn't make us any less or more. We need to discover our individual gifts and develop them, remembering who gave them to us, and then use them for His purposes. As we share our gifts to bless others, we are experiencing the power of the priesthood in our lives.

I have had the privilege of meeting many outstanding women who demonstrate faith and power through their actions. Covenant women give of their talents and abilities in incredible and diverse ways. They make a huge difference in the lives of all those around them—in their families, work, school, church, and wherever else they spend their time.

Women don't need to wait for someone to tell them what to do with their gifts, talents, and power. We have the ability to receive revelation for ourselves. We shouldn't wait to be acted upon; we need to have the courage to act on the revelation that we receive. Seeking inspiration and responding to that spiritual guidance is evidence that we are drawing upon the priesthood power we have been promised when we keep our covenants with God.

As President Nelson taught, "What could possibly be more exciting than to labor with the Spirit to understand God's power—priesthood power?"¹ He promised, "As your understanding increases and as you exercise faith in the Lord and His priesthood power, your ability to draw upon this spiritual treasure that the Lord has made available will increase."² I know these promises from our living prophet are sure. ■

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, "Spiritual Treasures," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 77.
2. Russell M. Nelson, "Spiritual Treasures," 79.

Lucy Used Her Spiritual Gifts

By Sharalyn D. Howcroft

Church History Department

Like Lucy Mack Smith, each of us can receive revelation. We all have unique spiritual gifts that can bless our families and the Church.

It was October 1838, and Lucy Mack Smith grasped the hands of her sons Hyrum and Joseph before her sons were taken away. Government leaders had ordered the Saints to leave the area. Several Church leaders had been arrested by soldiers, and an illegal court martial ordered them to be shot. Lucy wondered if she would ever see her sons alive again.

What could possibly help a mother endure a trial like this? Years later, Lucy would look back on this time and recall that she was strengthened by a message of comfort received “by the gift of prophecy”: “Let your heart be comforted concerning your children; they shall not [be] harmed by their enemies.”¹

This experience gave Lucy and her family feelings of “consolation, that surpassed all earthly comfort.”

The Smiths and many other Latter-day Saint families were driven out of Missouri. After finding refuge in the neighboring state of Illinois, Lucy and



Joseph Smith Sr. tried to find information about their sons but found no answers. The Spirit again spoke peace to Lucy’s soul, telling her that Hyrum and Joseph would arrive the following evening.

Bishop Edward Partridge, who was with Lucy when she received this revelation, expressed doubt: “I have always believed you before; but I cannot see any prospect of this prophecy being fulfilled; but if it is so I will never dispute your word again.”

Asleep that evening, Lucy saw a vision of her weak and hungry sons traveling over the prairie. Lucy got ready for them to come home—and they did indeed arrive the next day. They described a journey that matched exactly what she had seen. After that, Bishop Partridge said that

he would forever acknowledge Lucy “to be a true prophetess.” ■

NOTE

1. Quotations are found in “Lucy Mack Smith, History (1845),” 281, 290–91, josephsmithpapers.org.

As the mother of the Prophet Joseph, Lucy was an eyewitness of the Restoration. Read more about her in the digital edition of this issue in the Gospel Library app and at iahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

SCRIPTURE CONNECTION: GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

Acts 2:17–18

1 Corinthians 14:1

Revelation 19:10

Doctrine and Covenants 46:10–26

Articles of Faith 1:7



Doctrine and
Covenants 1
(DECEMBER 28–JANUARY 3)

In Doctrine and Covenants 1, the Lord declared, “These commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants” (verse 24). He explains how this collection of revelations, commandments, and teachings would bless the Church and its early members. His words still apply today.

How does the restored gospel bless us?





Joseph Smith— History 1:1–26

(JANUARY 4–10)

Young Joseph wanted to know for himself which religion was true. He asked God in prayer and received an answer directly from God and Jesus Christ. He returned home and told his mother, “I have learned for myself” (Joseph Smith—History 1:20).

What can we learn from Joseph’s example? How can we “know for ourselves” what is true?

How can I know for myself?

- Joseph spent a lot of time reading the Bible. He read in James 1:5 that he could ask his question to God in prayer.

- In the First Vision, the Savior told Joseph that none of the current religions were right. He also said that His Church would be restored one day. Joseph had to wait to learn more. Sometimes we’ll have to wait for answers too.



NOTE

1. See Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2018, 93–96.

- Joseph didn’t just sit at home waiting for an answer to come. He attended different churches. As he talked to leaders and members of the different denominations, Joseph felt that something was missing, which led to his decision to ask of God. Learning all we can helps us to be blessed with inspiration from Heavenly Father.¹

What did Moroni teach Joseph Smith?

On September 21, 1823, Joseph Smith prayed for forgiveness of his sins and to know his standing before God. As Joseph prayed, a light filled his room and he saw an angel standing in the air.

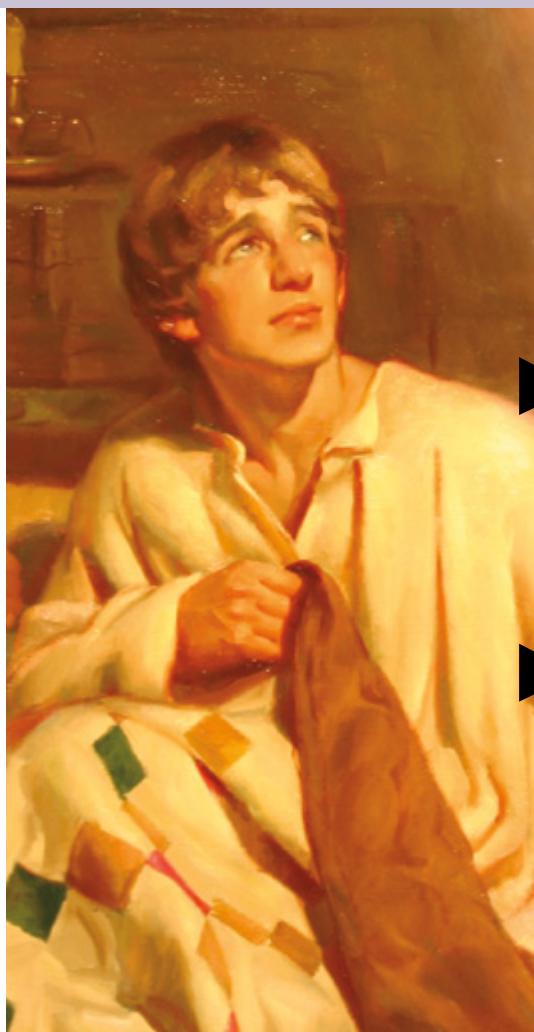
The angel called Joseph by name and introduced himself as Moroni. He told Joseph that he was forgiven and that God had a work for him to do.

DISCUSSION

What can we learn from Moroni's teachings to Joseph?

Joseph learned about gold plates buried in a nearby hill that contained "the fulness of the everlasting Gospel" (Joseph Smith—History 1:34). Moroni also told Joseph about the Urim and Thummim that God had prepared for Joseph to translate the plates (see Joseph Smith—History 1:35).

Moroni told Joseph that his name would "be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues" (Joseph Smith—History 1:33).



Moroni shared with Joseph several prophecies that were about to be fulfilled about the establishment of this last dispensation and the blessings it would bring to the world.

Moroni appeared to Joseph three times that night and once the next morning. He delivered the same message but gave additional information and instruction to Joseph each time (see Joseph Smith—History 1:44–46, 49).



Doctrine and
Covenants 6–9
(JANUARY 25–31)

HOW can these
revelations apply to us
today?

Before Oliver became Joseph's scribe, he prayed to know if Joseph's work was true. When Oliver prayed, he felt peace and reassurance.

Oliver still had questions while helping Joseph translate. He asked God again if this was true.

The Lord reminded Oliver that he had already received an answer to his prayer:

"Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God?" (Doctrine and Covenants 6:23).

Like Oliver, we should hold on to past spiritual experiences and let them strengthen us through hard times.

DISCOVER MORE

Find out what happened to one young woman when she remembered her past spiritual experiences in the digital version of this issue.

"What greater witness can you have than from God?"

WHEN did they happen?

- These revelations were given in

1829

WHERE did they happen?

- These revelations took place in Harmony, Pennsylvania.



WHO was involved
in these revelations from
God?

- Joseph Smith
- Oliver Cowdery. He learned about Joseph Smith and the gold plates and offered to be a scribe while Joseph translated the Book of Mormon.

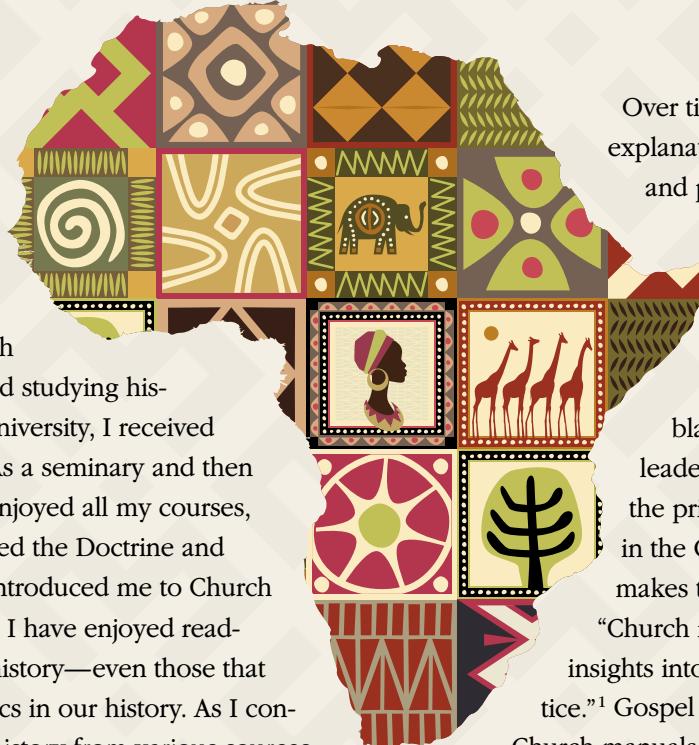


How Studying Church History Strengthens My Faith

By Khumbulani D. Mdletshe
Africa Church history adviser

As a high school student in South Africa, I enjoyed studying history. When I went to university, I received my degree in history. As a seminary and then an institute student, I enjoyed all my courses, but I particularly enjoyed the Doctrine and Covenants because it introduced me to Church history. Over the years, I have enjoyed reading books on Church history—even those that addressed difficult topics in our history. As I continue to learn Church history from various sources, my own faith is strengthened. Here are three ways that happens.

Church history provides PERSPECTIVE for me, especially when it comes to past practices, including restrictions on priesthood and temple blessings. When I first learned there was a time when black men were restricted from holding the priesthood, my faith was shaken. How could the Church I loved have withheld the priesthood from blacks? Some people tried to show me explanations that they claimed were doctrinal or scriptural. These were confusing and very troubling.



Over time, it was the historical explanation that made sense and provided comfort. The historical introduction to Official Declaration 2, for example, explains that Joseph Smith did ordain a few black men but that Church leaders stopped conferring the priesthood on blacks early in the Church's history. It then makes this important statement: "Church records offer no clear insights into the origins of this practice."¹ Gospel Topics essays² and other Church manuals provide more detail and additional historical context.³ These historical explanations resonated with me and strengthened my faith.

Church history helps me APPRECIATE THOSE who have GONE BEFORE. This is especially true when one considers the contributions that seemingly "ordinary" members have made. For example, the first chapels built throughout South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Zambia in the 1950s and 1960s were made possible by the contributions of members. Receiving temple ordinances required even greater sacrifice. Knowing it would take

decades before they could have temples in Africa, many members sold their possessions, including their homes, in order to have money to travel to the temple and participate in those sacred ordinances. The Church on the African continent is built on the faith of these early members who had little but sacrificed so much. When I read their records, my faith is fortified and my willingness to sacrifice is increased.

Church history encourages me to be a BETTER RECORD KEEPER. Church leaders have encouraged journal keeping. Why? Because the history of the Church is a record of the “manner of life, . . . faith, and works” of its members (see Doctrine and Covenants 85:2). Whenever I read

Church history, such as the new history, *Saints*, I am impressed that these volumes are possible only because of the journals, letters, and other records of ordinary members of the Church. Their candid first-person accounts encourage me to be a better journal keeper, thereby helping future historians to document a truthful history of the Church in Africa.

There is also a more personal blessing from reading Church history and striving to keep my own record. As President Henry B. Eyring, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has taught, I am blessed to see and remember the Lord’s hand in my life and the lives of my family members.⁴ This remembrance strengthens my testimony and increases my capacity to face challenges in my life.

When I keep my own record and think about other Church members’ careful records, I begin to see the grand patterns of the Lord as He restores His Church and kingdom in the latter days.

These and many other lessons learned from studying the Church’s history have contributed greatly to my own spiritual development. These lessons have also given me courage to defend my faith because I understand why we do what we do. Being aware of the historical context of many of our practices and beliefs has made me a better teacher and a better disciple. ■

NOTES

1. See introduction to Official Declaration 2.
2. See “Race and the Priesthood,” Gospel Topics, topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
3. See, for example, *Foundations of the Restoration* (Church Educational System manual), 2016, chapter 26.
4. See Henry B. Eyring, “O Remember, Remember,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 66–69.



Including Everyone

By Tracy Browning

Of the Relief Society General Board

How can we help make the journey to the chapel doors feel less anxious and lonely for others?



As disciples of Christ, many of us choose to quite literally “stand in holy places” as we attend our Sunday meetings (*Doctrine and Covenants* 45:32). Coming to share the Spirit and space with one another, many are looking for connection, acceptance, and a feeling of belonging. We each carry the hope that we “are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (*Ephesians* 2:19).

But for some, the journey to the chapel doors includes feeling vulnerable, anxious, or lonely. Their experiences, family realities, or circumstances may not reflect an imagined “ideal.” This often leads to feeling like they stand on the outside looking in, even when that “ideal” doesn’t represent reality for any of us.

Our value to God is not affected by our circumstances, and in many cases, these less-than-ideal circumstances push us to grow and learn. But because of these circumstances, there are many who feel like it is hard to fit in or be fully understood. What can we do to open the doors that keep others from feeling like they belong with us, even when we may struggle with similar feelings ourselves?

The Call to Include Everyone

Creating belonging for everyone is part of our covenant keeping. At baptism, we promise we won’t let anyone suffer alone but that we’ll mourn with them, comfort them, and bear their burdens (see *Mosiah* 18:8–10).

Creating belonging is part of our Church. We are to include everyone in our worship just as the Savior welcomes everyone to partake of His salvation (see 2 *Nephi* 26:24–28, 33; 3 *Nephi* 18:22–23).

Creating belonging is an essential part of our journey to become like the Savior. Loving others and opening our circles to include those who are different from us is part of becoming perfect (see *Matthew* 5:43–47).

Ultimately, to be His, we must be one with each other (see *Doctrine and Covenants* 38:27).

No Struggle Is Forgotten

God’s love for His children is not exclusive, but rather all-inclusive. He invites all to “come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him” (2 *Nephi* 26:33).



He knows and cherishes:

- The sister, recently divorced, who hurts during discussions about marriage.
- The young adult struggling with questions, pleading for answers.
- The sister suffering from anxiety, feeling deep loneliness and fear.
- The young black brother, uncomfortable as his class discusses incorrect understandings about race and priesthood.
- The sister who has not yet married and feels it means she has no value.
- The mother of a child with disabilities, worried that his involuntary movements are distracting to others.
- The brother with same-sex attraction, contemplating leaving the Church as he struggles to understand his future.
- The sister who worries how she'll be judged by others as she takes her first tentative steps back to church.

No circumstance, no situation, no individual is forgotten. “He remembereth . . . and all are alike unto God” (2 Nephi 26:33) because, like His early disciples, we all “belong to Christ” (Mark 9:41; see also Mosiah 5:7).

So What Can We Do?

What can we do to create connections and welcome weaknesses as well as see strengths?

We might start by pondering the following questions:

- How can I make a greater effort to reach out and get to know those I don’t know in my ward or branch?
- What invitation can I extend to someone who might need a friend?
- How can I be an example of one who includes and loves others?
- Whom can I sincerely seek out and ask how he or she is doing?
- What comes to mind when I pray for inspiration to know how to help someone?

There is so much to learn from others as we get to know them.

In the coming months, we will share the stories of sisters and brothers who have struggled to come to know that they belong. We hope these stories will inspire each of us to more closely follow God’s two great commandments: to love Him and to love all His children. ■



By the Relief Society General Presidency

Be With and Strengthen One Another

We are all blessed when we minister or are ministered to.

At its best, ministering isn't a one-way street. When we minister to someone, everyone involved is blessed—ourselves, our companions, and those we minister to. We are blessed by each other's strengths. We are blessed as we support and help one another in our challenges. We are blessed by the relationships that are created.

When explaining what it means to minister to others, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught us to “be with and strengthen them” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 20:53).¹ In this scripture, there are two essential elements that will help us minister to those we care about:

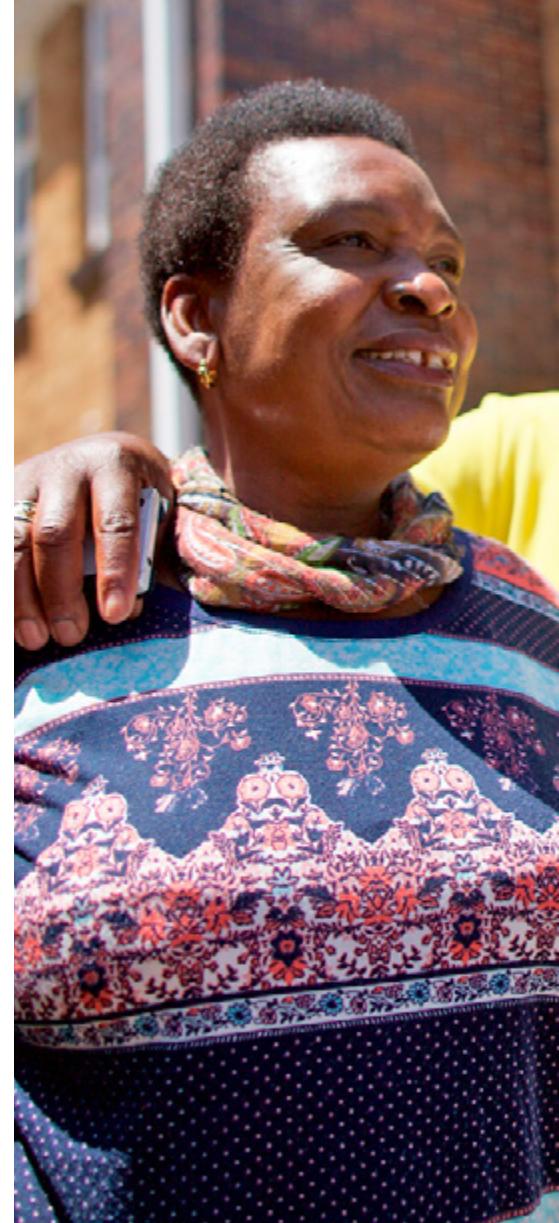
- First, to “be with” them suggests that it is important to get to know those to whom we minister well enough to build a meaningful relationship and create a bond of trust.
- Second, once they know that we

truly love and care about them, we can discuss ways we could support and “strengthen them.” In turn, we will also be strengthened.

People aren’t projects; they’re our brothers and sisters—fellow travelers in the journey of life. We want to be walking through life together, helping each other find the strength to overcome the obstacles and stumbling blocks along the way (see *Hebrews* 12:10–13).

The word “strengthen” expresses what we really desire—that our help provides assistance and tools so that each individual can have the resources and strength to move forward and overcome life’s challenges.

Many of us feel inadequate to help our brothers and sisters with their unique concerns. Elder Holland gave this encouragement: “In spite of what we all feel are our limitations and inadequacies—and we all have challenges—nevertheless, may we



labor side by side with the Lord of the vineyard, giving the God and Father of us all a helping hand with His staggering task of answering prayers, providing comfort, drying tears, and strengthening feeble knees.”²

This year, these Ministering Principles articles will provide ideas and resources that can help you understand how to be with and strengthen others as they face life’s challenges. ■

NOTES

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Be With and Strengthen Them,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 102.
2. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Be With and Strengthen Them,” 103.



PHOTOGRAPH AT RIGHT BY KALEIDOSCOPE PICTURES

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEING WITH AND STRENGTHENING OTHERS

Work together on building a meaningful relationship. Mutual understanding comes from spending time and effort getting to know each other. Discuss how each of you would like to do that. Is there a hobby or interest you share? Would a regular chat be helpful? Can you support each other in Church callings or temple worship?

Counsel together about needs. No one has to do this alone. Counseling with them will help you understand together what their needs are, what they can do, and how you can help.

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

Send your experiences with ministering to liahona@ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

These resources can help you in your efforts to build meaningful relationships.

- Learn more about building meaningful relationships in "Ministering Principles: Building Meaningful Relationships," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Aug. 2018.
- Read about coming to understand those who are different from you in "The Blessings of Diversity," *Ensign*, July 2019.
- Improve your relationships by improving your listening skills. Read "Five Things Good Listeners Do," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, June 2018.
- Becoming more empathetic can make you a better friend. Learn how in "Developing the Empathy to Minister," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Feb. 2019.
- To learn more about counseling together, read "Ministering Principles: Counsel about Their Needs," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Sept. 2018.

Enjoying the Later Years

By Scott Edgar

*Old age can be
a beautiful time of
progression and growth.*

With “old age” coming on, I’ve realized that my life is changing. While I still want to be involved with my family and the Church, I’m not as physically active as I used to be, and everything seems to move along just fine with or without me.

But here’s something else I’m learning: this season of life is not all bad. Sure, there are aches and pains and other challenges, but this aging is part of the natural flow of life, and this chapter brings with it new and rewarding opportunities. I find comfort in knowing that I’m loved by family and friends. I trust that I’m still valued at church. And, most importantly, I know more than ever that the gospel of Jesus Christ is true.

Accepting Change

Clearly, life doesn’t stand still. It’s dynamic. So while we may not want our circumstances or relationships to change, changes *will* happen. As the scriptures so eloquently say:

“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

“A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; . . .

“[God] hath made every thing beautiful in his time” (Ecclesiastes 3:1–2, 11).

We may have become comfortable with the way things were, and it’s OK to miss earlier times. But we can also have faith that there is still more to learn as we continue to walk this path of happiness. How we adjust to and deal with change will determine our growth in these later years. By accepting changes instead of fighting them, we free ourselves to notice new opportunities and understand new things.

I’ve noticed that as I keep trying to follow Jesus Christ, I am drawing closer to Him in ways that I didn’t in younger years. From His own time





on earth, Christ understands what it feels like to approach the end of mortal life (see Matthew 16:21). And in a way we don't fully understand, He knows perfectly what *we* are specifically feeling because of His Atonement. We can ask Him to help us become what He wants us to become with whatever time we have left (see Moroni 7:48).

Continuing to Serve

No matter how old we are, we can still look for service opportunities every day to help us prepare for service after this life. President George Albert Smith (1870–1951) once taught, “We are not here to while away the hours of this life and then pass to a sphere of exaltation; but we are here to qualify ourselves day by day for the positions that our Father expects us to fill hereafter.”¹

As we grow older, these “qualifying” experiences will be different from what they once were. I’ve watched as younger men step into their roles and fulfill many of the

tasks I used to perform. My children have their own busy lives and family challenges, and I’m less involved. But I can trust that if I keep helping others in whatever ways I am able, these experiences will continue to teach and refine me according to God’s plan.

Blessings and Questions

What blessings have you noticed from growing older? Below, I’ve listed some that I’ve noticed. I’ve also listed a few questions for us older folks to think about, although I suppose they really could apply to anybody.

I testify that each of us can choose to focus on what is most important as we follow Jesus Christ throughout our rewarding golden years.

Aging has blessed me with:

- Greater awareness of what is around me.
- More quiet time to read the scriptures, ponder, and pray.
- Sensitivity to the promptings of the Spirit.
- Occasional family visits that are especially sweet.
- Kinder feelings toward other people and animals.
- Interest in family history and temple work.
- Less temptation to disobey the commandments.

Ask yourself, “How can I . . .”

- Serve my church and family in meaningful ways?
- Draw closer to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ?
- Influence others for good?
- Stand spotless before God when I see Him again? ■

NOTE

1. George Albert Smith, in Conference Report, Apr. 1905, 62; see also *The Teachings of George Albert Smith*, ed. Robert and Susan McIntosh (1996), 17.

What Sweeping Taught Me about Parenthood

By Kamri Melaine Webster

My children's chores helped answer my prayer.

I woke up one morning feeling overwhelmed. My duties as a parent felt heavy, and I was very aware of my weaknesses. There seemed to be a large gap between how I imagined I'd be as a parent and how I really am.

I knelt to pray and told Heavenly Father how much I love Him. I told Him how much I love the children He has blessed our family with. And I began telling Him how I was trying to be a good parent, but felt like I wasn't doing a good enough job. As I prayed, I thought about how much better my children would be if God just raised them Himself.

Then an image came to mind. I pictured my children sweeping the kitchen floor. This is one of many jobs they are assigned to do to help our family. Sometimes watching them do it makes me cringe because they are still learning and miss lots of spots. But I let them do it, as well as other daily chores, because I have a greater vision for them. I know that through all of this imperfect practice, they will learn and grow. Eventually, they will be able to do it just as quickly and effectively as I can. That vision of them



becoming responsible and independent is much more rewarding than if I were to do everything myself. I'm not raising children for short-term success—I'm trying to help them be successful in the long run.

And I wondered if perhaps something like this is true for our heavenly parents too. Heavenly Father knows we can't do a perfect job of being parents. Some things we do probably make *Him* cringe, but He allows it because He knows we are learning and growing. He has the ultimate long-term perspective. He envisions us someday becoming a parent like Him, able to love completely, teach effectively, and model perfectly. As we fumble, He knows we are developing qualities like patience and charity. And so, in His wisdom, He lets us work and fail and try again.

How I wish I could be a perfect parent already! Like Joseph Smith wrote, I often find myself falling "into many foolish errors" (Joseph Smith—History 1:28). But I find comfort in knowing that God understands my heart, which means He knows I am trying to be teachable. I feel



joy when my children ask, "How can I do this better?" and seem to want to improve. At least I can be that way for Heavenly Father.

As all of these thoughts played through my mind, I had one more moment of discouragement. "But what if my parenting mistakes hurt my children?" I asked. "I don't want to hold them back, even if I become something wonderful in the process."

Again, the image of my children's cleaning came to mind. After my daughter earnestly tries to mop the floor and then hurries off to play or finish another task, I usually wash the remaining sticky spots. And I thought of the infinite mercy and power of Jesus Christ, whose Atonement covers every one of life's sticky situations. His grace makes up for my shortcomings as a parent, just as His grace makes up for the pains my children suffer because of my shortcomings.

In a way that none of us can comprehend, His Atonement can heal *all* of it.

I take great comfort in the personal revelation I received that day. I felt the Spirit teach me that my best efforts, in partnership with the Lord, are enough. I know that Heavenly Father will continue working in the lives of my children, little by little, to perfectly do what I so imperfectly do. With His help, my children can someday shine in their own right, just as brightly as if Heavenly Father had raised them the first time. Except His plan also manages to change me in the process—sanctifying and molding me to become more like Him. How great the wisdom of our God! ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.



DIVINE HELP

"We can, with Heavenly Father and our Savior's help, become more patient, thoughtful, helpful, forgiving, and understanding as we pray for help. With Their help, we can make our homes a little bit of heaven here on earth."

President M. Russell Ballard,
"Family Councils," *Ensign* or
Liahona, May 2016, 65.

Prophets and Revelation

Dear Parents,

The Doctrine and Covenants is a collection of revelations from the Lord. Studying them gives us a unique opportunity to get to know the Savior's voice as He speaks, not just to His prophets, but through them to everyday members of the Church like us.

This month, the magazines give you a variety of opportunities to talk to your children, including about revelation, how it works, and that God is willing to speak to them.

GOSPEL DISCUSSIONS

Peace in His Promises (Doctrine and Covenants 6)

Show the poster on page 2 and read the Savior's words from section 6. This promise was given to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in April 1829. At that time, Joseph was only 23 but had already faced rejection and persecution. How might these words have helped Joseph and Oliver? How might these words apply to challenges in your lives? What can we do to receive these promised blessings?

Prophets and Personal Revelation (Doctrine and Covenants 1)

The Lord speaks to us individually and through prophets (see section 1). Use "Gospel Basics" on page 10 to help your children learn more about revelation. Consider reading together the message from President Russell M. Nelson on page 6. What do you feel God is telling you through His prophet? Following his counsel could lead to setting goals in the Children and Youth program. (For more information on this topic, you could also watch or read President Nelson's talk, "Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 93–96.)

Come, Follow Me Support

Don't miss the ideas on page 26 that support your weekly *Come, Follow Me* study.





FAMILY STUDY FUN

Finding Christ

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) taught, “Virtually every page of . . . the Doctrine and Covenants . . . teaches about the Master.”¹

1. Set a timer for two minutes.
2. Family members will quickly look through the beginning of the Doctrine and Covenants to count the number of references they can find to Christ. Start in the introduction and end with section 9.
3. After the time is up, give additional time for each person to choose one of these verses that is especially meaningful to them. Take turns sharing.

Discussion: How can we make our study of Doctrine and Covenants this year Christ-centered? What can we do to “hearken” unto the voice of the Lord?

Idea contributed by Mitzi Schoneman

NOTE

1. Ezra Taft Benson, “The Gift of Modern Revelation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 79.



IN THIS MONTH'S FOR THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH MAGAZINE

Introduce the 2021 Youth Theme

Read messages from the Young Men and Young Women General Presidencies about the youth theme from Doctrine and Covenants 64:33–34. You can also find the sheet music for the 2021 theme song and a list of resources to support the theme throughout the year.

Here's the Doctrine and Covenants

Introduce this year's *Come, Follow Me* study with a visual outline of the history and purpose of the Doctrine and Covenants.

“Joseph Smith: My Prophet”

The examples in this article teach why knowing that Joseph Smith is the prophet of this dispensation matters to each of us personally. Read the article as a family, then ask each person to share their own insights.

Fun Stop

These activities are fun to do individually or as a family.



IN THIS MONTH'S FRIEND MAGAZINE

Help with *Come, Follow Me*

Spark your children’s love for the scriptures with a Doctrine and Covenants reading chart to use throughout 2021. You’ll also find a monthly scripture story and coloring page for young readers.

Church History Fun

Cut out collectible Church history cards to help your children learn the story of the Restoration. Also read a story featuring a modern pioneer from a different country each month.

Helping Hands Challenge

Read a special invitation from the Primary General Presidency for children to serve like Jesus did. Read about children around the world who are doing just that, along with a monthly invitation and tip to help your child participate!

Scripture Time Fun

Try these weekly home evening activities with your children. All of these will support your *Come, Follow Me* study, and ideas especially for toddlers are included.

Recovering from Spiritual Numbness

By Tadeo Murillo

We're in spiritual danger when we stop feeling the Spirit, but with Christ's help we can overcome that spiritual numbness.

Leprony is an infectious disease we read about in the Bible. It's caused by a bacterium that creates severe lesions and wounds on the skin. But a main symptom of this disease is that it can cause severe damage to the nervous system, resulting in a loss of sensitivity to touch, heat, pain, or other sensations. People who are infected become literally numb.

Although leprosy isn't as serious or as common as it was long ago, people today are also losing their ability to feel—but rather than a physical impairment, we are at risk for becoming spiritually numb.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that this state of callousness can come from ignoring the promptings of the Holy Spirit and not keeping God's commandments. He taught:

"Our capacity to feel controls our behavior in many ways, and by inaction

when our feelings prompt us to do good, we deaden that capacity to feel. It was Jesus' striking sensitivity to the needs of those about him that made it possible for him to respond in action.

"At the other end of the spiritual spectrum are individuals such as Nephi's erring brothers; Nephi noted their increasing insensitivity to things spiritual: '[God] hath spoken unto you in a still small voice, but ye were past feeling, that ye could not feel his words' [1 Nephi 17:45]."¹

There is great danger when we stop feeling the Spirit or even when we aren't sure how the Spirit speaks to us. The world can easily distract us or derail us each day, causing us to become numb to that still, small yet powerful voice that is always ready to guide us daily (see 1 Kings 19:11–12).

But even if we feel that we might have a case of "spiritual leprosy" at times, healing is possible.

We should always remember that Jesus Christ was the one who healed people with leprosy during His ministry. And He is the one who can heal our spiritual numbness today and help us feel the Spirit again. Here are some keys that can help.



Recognizing the Spirit

A key to feeling again comes from our ability to hear and recognize the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. As Moroni taught, “By the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things” (Moroni 10:5). We can rid ourselves of the numbness, seek personal revelation, and feel for ourselves the truth of all things.

In your journey back to feeling the Spirit, ask yourself these questions to understand your relationship with revelation:

1. When was the last time I received personal revelation?
2. When was the last time I asked for personal revelation?
3. When was the last time I asked Heavenly Father to help me recognize personal revelation in my life?

Overall, are you really seeking revelation from God? It’s hard to feel the joyous fruits of the Spirit when it seems that the heavens are closed (see Galatians 5:22–23). But proactively seeking revelation in your daily life is the key to opening up the heavens and inviting the Spirit back into your life.

Misunderstanding Revelation

But here is where spiritual experiences and personal revelation can get tricky.

When we talk about personal revelation, our minds often jump to visions, angelic visitations, or striking voices. And when we don’t experience these things, we might feel that receiving guidance from the Spirit is hopeless. We might feel like something is wrong with us, which can lead us to giving up on seeking the Spirit altogether.

But we need to realize that feeling the Spirit is not about those big, earth-shattering moments, nor does the Lord only speak to us about our big life decisions. Another pitfall we stumble into is that we often turn to the Lord for help with only big decisions like schooling, careers, marriage, and family, but we neglect to turn to Him in every thought (see Doctrine and Covenants 6:36). But Heavenly Father speaks to us often. He speaks to us in the way we recognize it best individually. He can guide us daily, even in those small details of our lives.

Preparing to Receive Revelation

In order to hear the heavens, we first need to open our ears to heavenly things. Here are some ways that we can open our ears and ready ourselves to hear the Lord:

Believe. In our pursuit of overcoming spiritual leprosy, we might need to change our mindset and truly believe Heavenly Father and have faith that He *will* and *does* give us revelation. In fact, we should expect Him to. We can even ask Him to help us know how He speaks to us. We should expect to have spiritual experiences often when we are striving to follow the Savior and keep His commandments.

Put in daily effort. We can also become more sensitive to the Spirit through praying sincerely, studying the scriptures, partaking of the sacrament, attending the temple,

Heavenly Father gave us the gift of the Holy Ghost and wants us to enjoy that gift in its fulness.

participating in family history work, listening to spiritual music, ministering, or however else you feel close to God. The closer we get to Him, the more we open our hearts to healing spiritual leprosy and feeling the Holy Ghost again.

Obey. Another important aspect of inviting the Spirit back into your life is your willingness to follow what the Spirit tells you. President Henry B. Eyring, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, taught:

"When you demonstrate your willingness to obey, the Spirit will send you more impressions of what God would have you do for Him.

"As you obey, the impressions from the Spirit will come more frequently, becoming closer and closer to constant companionship. Your power to choose the right will increase."²

Being willing to follow the Lord's will over our own can

be difficult sometimes, but we are always blessed with increased spiritual capacity when we do so. Even obeying in small ways, from choosing to pay our tithing, keeping the Sabbath day holy, or even following a prompting to serve someone else, can help us make room for the Spirit in our lives.

Feeling the Spirit Is a Gift

We should also remember the promise contained in our baptismal covenants with the Lord. Those of us who have received the gift of the Holy Ghost have been promised we can have the Spirit with us every day as we strive to keep our covenants (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79).

Heavenly Father gave us the gift of the Holy Ghost and wants us to enjoy that gift in its fulness. The constant companionship of the Holy Ghost allows us to make decisions confidently, feel comfort during challenges, grow spiritually, feel peace and joy, and know how to serve others. It truly is a gift.

Healing from spiritual numbness depends on our own faith and willingness to keep reaching out, even when we feel nothing. As we strive to invite the Spirit in our lives, we will receive impressions little by little as we listen and obey. Living our lives in harmony with God's will helps us develop a sensitivity to the Spirit and will gradually heal us from any numbness that we feel. If we reach out to the Savior even when we feel nothing, He will help us feel that He is there (see Doctrine and Covenants 88:63). ■

NOTES

1. Neal A. Maxwell, *A Time to Choose* (1972), 59.
2. Henry B. Eyring, "The Holy Ghost as Your Companion," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 105.



Tadeo Murillo is from Heredia, Costa Rica. He served a full-time mission in Ecuador from 2013 to 2015 and married his wife, Daniela, in 2018. He is currently serving in the bishopric of his ward and loves to remember Mosiah 2:17, his favorite scripture, when serving others.

Waiting for Answers without Doubting

Reaping the blessings of the Lord requires patience, but as we all know, waiting is never fun.

By Amanda Adomako

When I was young, I hated waiting for morning. I would get so excited and impatient about what the next day had to offer that I spent many nights tossing and turning in my bed, slipping in and out of sleep and taking frequent trips to the window, letting out a disappointed sigh every time I realized it was still dark outside. To me, morning always took forever to come.

Sometimes in the middle of the night, I would go ask my parents what time it was. They would reassure me that morning would come. I always slept better after that.

Waiting for promised blessings can sometimes feel like that. We offer sincere prayers, read our scriptures, and feel those warm feelings of assurance. But then if our circumstances don't change immediately—if answers or blessings don't come right away—we can start to doubt that they ever will.

Doubting That Answers Will Come

From experience, I have learned that doubts often stem from focusing on circumstances rather than on the Savior and His love for us.

The more we magnify our circumstances and our hopelessness about what doesn't seem to be working out for us yet, the less we realize that the Savior loves us and is with us as we take each step forward. Satan knows this, which is why he plants little doubts in our minds to make us question the Savior's love for us, our eternal worth, and how much we matter to Heavenly Father.

Waiting without Doubting

Waiting is part of life. And waiting on the Lord's answers and blessings and promises can sometimes feel unbearable. But there are a few things we can do to wait for blessings without giving in to doubts:

First, we can look back at those moments when we *did* receive answers or impressions. Remember those feelings of warmth or joy that whispered peace to your heart and mind. Those feelings and answers were from God. Passing time doesn't change those truths and promises. We can follow apostolic counsel to "embrace your sacred memories. Believe them."

Write them down. . . . Trust that they come to you from your Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son. Let them bring patience to your doubts and understanding to your difficulties.¹ By focusing on the Spirit and those things we know to be true, our doubts will fall out of focus. And we can have the confidence we need to move forward with hope.

Second, we need to remember that to receive personal revelation, we need to be willing to proceed with an eye of faith despite not having a perfect knowledge. Just like I always had to wait for morning to come, we can realize that even as we wait for promised blessings, there is preparation to do, small steps to take, and knowledge to gain in the meantime. As we wait, we can continue learning and striving to be worthy of the blessings in store for us.

Finally, we can keep an eternal perspective, bearing in mind that “some blessings come soon, some come late, and some don’t come until heaven; but for those who embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, *they come*,” as Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught.² “God expects you to have enough faith and determination and enough trust in Him to keep moving, keep living, keep rejoicing.”³ The Lord’s blessings *always* come, just like the sunrise each morning. Look to eternity instead of tomorrow.

Learning from the Wait

In times of doubt when we feel like we are in a dark room without heaven’s light, let us remember that the Savior’s arms are always outstretched toward us, eagerly waiting for us to reach out to Him. He will reassure us of His love for us, just like my parents did whenever I was worried that morning would never come.

As we make the Savior our primary focus, waiting for promised blessings and answers becomes less tedious. The wait becomes a time of worthwhile learning and preparation. We can learn how to focus on Heavenly Father’s will and not our own. We can come to know with certainty that He loves us and will come through for us every time. And that certainty will defeat all doubt and darkness. Morning will always come, and so will His promises. ■

NOTES

1. Neil L. Andersen, “Spiritually Defining Memories,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2020, 21–22.
2. Jeffrey R. Holland, “An High Priest of Good Things to Come,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 45.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Terror, Triumph, and a Wedding Feast” (Brigham Young University fireside address, Sept. 12, 2004), 3, speeches.byu.edu.



Amanda Adomako is from Accra, Ghana. She is a book enthusiast who also enjoys good music. She is her happiest when she is with her family and enjoys being the oldest of four daughters.



MORE FOR YOU!

You can find more articles specifically for young adult in the digital version of the January *Liahona*, at liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org, or in the Gospel Library.

This month, you'll find more articles about finding answers to gospel questions, how to approach and overcome doubts, and how to help others do the same.

DIGITAL ARTICLES

My Questions and Christ's Love

By Rebecca Isaksen, Vestfold, Norway

Finding Answers to Gospel Questions

By Emren Fogle, Church Magazines

Helping Loved Ones Face Questions and Doubts about Faith

By Denya Palmer, Welfare and Self-Reliance Services

Faith: The Antidote to Uncertainty

By Christian Schmutz, Utah, USA

I Left the Church. So Why Did My Husband Want to Join It?

By Angelina Hui, Indiana, USA

Unclouding My Vision

By Sarah Taylor, Utah, USA

YA WEEKLY

You can also find new articles each week in YA Weekly, located in the Young Adults section of the Gospel Library app.

From the Mission Field: A French-Speaking Mission? In Arizona?

*By Kate Salisbury, California, USA, and
Leïa Gurrera, Nouméa, New Caledonia*

Life Skills: Turning Rejection into Hope

By Molly Holt, Church Magazines



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