

THE ENSIGN OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • APRIL 2002

# ENSIGN

A man with short, light brown hair is shown from the waist up, kneeling in a prayerful pose. He is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and brown trousers. His hands are raised, with fingers spread, reaching towards the top right corner of the frame. The background is a vibrant, abstract composition with bold black outlines, reminiscent of stained glass. It features warm tones of yellow, orange, and red, interspersed with cooler greens and blues. The overall effect is one of spiritual light and hope.

Sacred Grove,  
Sacred Light, p. 8

The Father and the Son, p. 12

Christ and Mary at the Resurrection, by William Whitaker



*"Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:16–17).*



# ENSIGN

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All of us ought to pause once in a while and just stop and think what contribution we are making and where we could do a little better than we are now doing.



# Inspirational Thoughts



BY PRESIDENT  
GORDON B. HINCKLEY

## THE SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

"We belong to this great and marvelous organization which is established on principles which the Lord Himself laid down when He walked the dusty roads of Palestine—the Son of God, who condescended to come to earth, born in a lowly manger in Bethlehem. . . . The miracle of His life is beyond description. He gave that life for each of us on Calvary's hill in an act of Atonement greater than we can ever really understand. He alone shed His blood for the sins of which we are guilty, that we might have the opportunity of repenting and expecting forgiveness" (meeting, Jerusalem Center, 21 Mar. 1999).

## FAITH IN THE LORD

"Faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ—I hope there is no one here today who isn't constantly cultivating that faith through reading the scriptures, the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and building the faith which he or she carries in his heart or her heart concerning the Son of God, our Redeemer and our Lord" (meeting, Columbus, Ohio, 25 Apr. 1998).

## LIFE AFTER DEATH

"I know as surely as anything in this world that someday I shall die as to the life of this world. But I have an absolute certainty in my heart that I shall go on living and doing good and having the association of my beloved companion and my children" (meeting, Guayaquil, Ecuador, 31 July 1999).

## IMMORTALITY

"This life is a part of eternity. This is one stage of our eternal lives. When we die, we will go on to purposeful, active, challenging living. The life on the other side of the veil will be somewhat like the life here. If we have been clean and decent and good here, we will go on in that same spirit. If we have been rascals, we will go in that same spirit. I believe that. I believe in the eternity of life. It is as much a part of my belief as anything that I know of, that this is not the end, that there will be another life, that we will be accountable to God our Father and to our Lord Jesus

Christ, that we will have work to do, and that sometime we will all participate in the resurrection. That is my hope, my faith, my testimony" (interview with Ignacio Carrión, *El País* newspaper, 7 Nov. 1997).

### **BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD**

"When you are 12 years of age, you may go to the Lord's house and there stand as a living proxy in behalf of someone who is dead. What a marvelous thing that is that you, an ordinary boy or girl, can stand in the place of some great man or woman who at one time lived upon the earth but who is now powerless to move forward without the blessing that you can give to him or her. . . . There is no greater blessing that you can have than to stand as a proxy in a great service to those who have gone beyond. And it will be your privilege and your opportunity and your responsibility to live worthy to go to the temple of the Lord and there be baptized in behalf of someone else" (meeting, Guayaquil, Ecuador, 31 July 1999).

### **IMPORTANCE OF TEMPLES**

"Every temple that this Church has built has in effect stood as a monument to our belief in the immortality of the human soul, that this phase of mortal life through which we pass is part of a continuous upward climb, so to speak, and that as certain as there is life here, there will be life there. That is our firm belief. It comes about through the Atonement of the Savior, and the temple becomes, as I have indicated, the bridge from this life to the next. The temple is concerned with things of immortality. We wouldn't have to build a temple for marriages if we didn't believe in the eternity of the family. We build it so the family may be eternal. All of the ordinances which take place in the house of the Lord become expressions of our belief in that fundamental and basic doctrine. The temple therefore becomes the ultimate in our system of worship and therefore is of great and significant importance to us" (interview with Vern Anderson of the Associated Press, 20 Apr. 1999).

### **LIVE WORTHY OF A TEMPLE RECOMMEND**

"Live worthy to hold a temple recommend. There is nothing more precious than a temple recommend. . . . Whether you can go there frequently or not, qualify for a temple recommend and keep a recommend in your pocket. It will be a reminder to you of what is expected of you as a Latter-day Saint" (meeting, Guam, 31 Jan. 2000).

### **TRUE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST**

"The true gospel of Jesus Christ never led to bigotry. It never led to self-righteousness. It never led

to arrogance. The true gospel of Jesus Christ leads to brotherhood, to friendship, to appreciation of others, to respect and kindness and love" (devotional, BYU alumni, 12 Sept. 2000).

### **STAND A LITTLE TALLER**

"Stand a little taller and work a little harder and value a little greater the marvelous blessing which you have as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That membership will bring with it a strong and moving testimony of the divinity of the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ.

"You and I are sons and daughters of God, with something of divinity within us. Let us stand tall, my brothers and sisters. Let us live the gospel. Let us be busy in the Church. Let us learn of its doctrine. Let us feed upon its teachings. Let us grow in faith and faithfulness before the world" (meeting, Cairns, Australia, 26 Jan. 2000).

### **MOMENTS OF INTROSPECTION**

"All of us ought to pause once in a while and just stop and think. . . . We are prone to talk too much and do too little. I think it is a wonderful thing to just indulge once in a while in moments of introspection and see what we are doing with our lives and what contribution we are making and where we could do a little better than we are now doing. I feel we would all benefit from that" (remarks to National Press Club, 8 Mar. 2000).

### **PROMISE OF ETERNAL LIFE**

"The Lord in His great mercy, the Lord in His love for us, has made it possible for us to be brought together under the authority of the holy priesthood in a relationship which will last beyond death, and over which death will have no control. No great man or woman of government, no military leader, no great businessman, no great educator, no great professional man can make that kind of promise. He may attain to the highest honors of men, but he will have no control over the destiny of men and women when they pass the threshold of death" (meeting, Guayaquil, Ecuador, 31 July 1999).

### **INDIVIDUALS IN THE CHURCH**

"It is the individual with whom we work and must deal, and we must never lose sight of the fact that the Church is made up of individuals, people. The Savior always dealt with individuals. He spoke to the multitude on the mount. He fed the multitude loaves and fishes. But you read His parables. He was

always concerned with the individual" (Houston, Texas, regional conference, priesthood leadership meeting, 19 Sept. 1998).

### FAMILY PRAYER

"Family prayer—that is a practice, once very common, that is largely disappearing. I believe that the very act of people supplicating the Lord in prayer, night and morning, would have a most salutary effect upon our civilization and our lives" (Houston, Texas, regional conference, 20 Sept. 1998).

### LIVE THE GOSPEL IN THE HOME

"We must do better than we are doing. All of these things of which we have spoken this day—of courses of study and curriculum and all these other things—become as nothing if we are not living the gospel of Jesus Christ in our homes. That is where things really count. That is where the anchor drops that will hold our families to us and make us worthy of them through time and all eternity" (Woods Cross, Utah, regional conference, priesthood leadership meeting, 10 Jan. 1998).

### BE TRUE TO THE LORD

"Be true to the Lord. He is your strength. He is your salvation. It is He who can bless you. It is He who desires to bless you. Look to Him for every gift and grace and blessing. Get on your knees and pray and stand on your feet and do His will and put your trust and faith in Him and God will bless you. I make that promise as His servant" (regional conference, Santiago, Chile, 26 Apr. 1999).

**The true gospel of Jesus Christ leads to brotherhood, to friendship, to appreciation of others, to respect and kindness and love.**

## CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST

"We are a church, a church in whose name is the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We bear witness of Him, and it is His example and His teachings we try to follow. We give love. We bring peace. We do not seek to tear down any other church. We recognize the good they do. We have worked with them on many undertakings. We will continue to do so. We stand as the servants of the Lord. We acknowledge that we could not accomplish what we do without the help of the Almighty. We look to Him as our Father and our God and our ever-present helper as we seek to improve the world by changing the hearts of individuals" (remarks to National Press Club, 8 Mar. 2000).

### SACRAMENT MEETING

"Sacrament meeting, partaking of the sacrament each week—what a glorious blessing that is. What a wonderful privilege to go to sacrament meeting and

partake of the sacrament, the emblems of the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the great Atonement which was wrought by Him, that makes possible our moving beyond the grave into a glorious future. I hope that all of us attend our sacrament meetings. I hope we recognize it as an opportunity and as a wonderful blessing" (regional conference, Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, 15 Mar. 1998).

## GOD BLESS YOU

"May the sunlight of faith ever warm your hearts. May you grow in strength and capacity as the years pass. May your outreach to others be as that of the good Samaritan. May the service which you render be fruitful for good in the lives of others. May prayer be a part of your daily activity. May reading enhance your knowledge and increase your understanding. May you be true and faithful one to another, and may the years bring to you that peace which passeth all understanding, the peace which comes of following the precepts of the Master" (devotional, BYU alumni, 12 Sept. 2000). □

**W**hat a wonderful privilege to go to sacrament meeting and partake of the sacrament, the emblems of the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the great Atonement.

## IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS

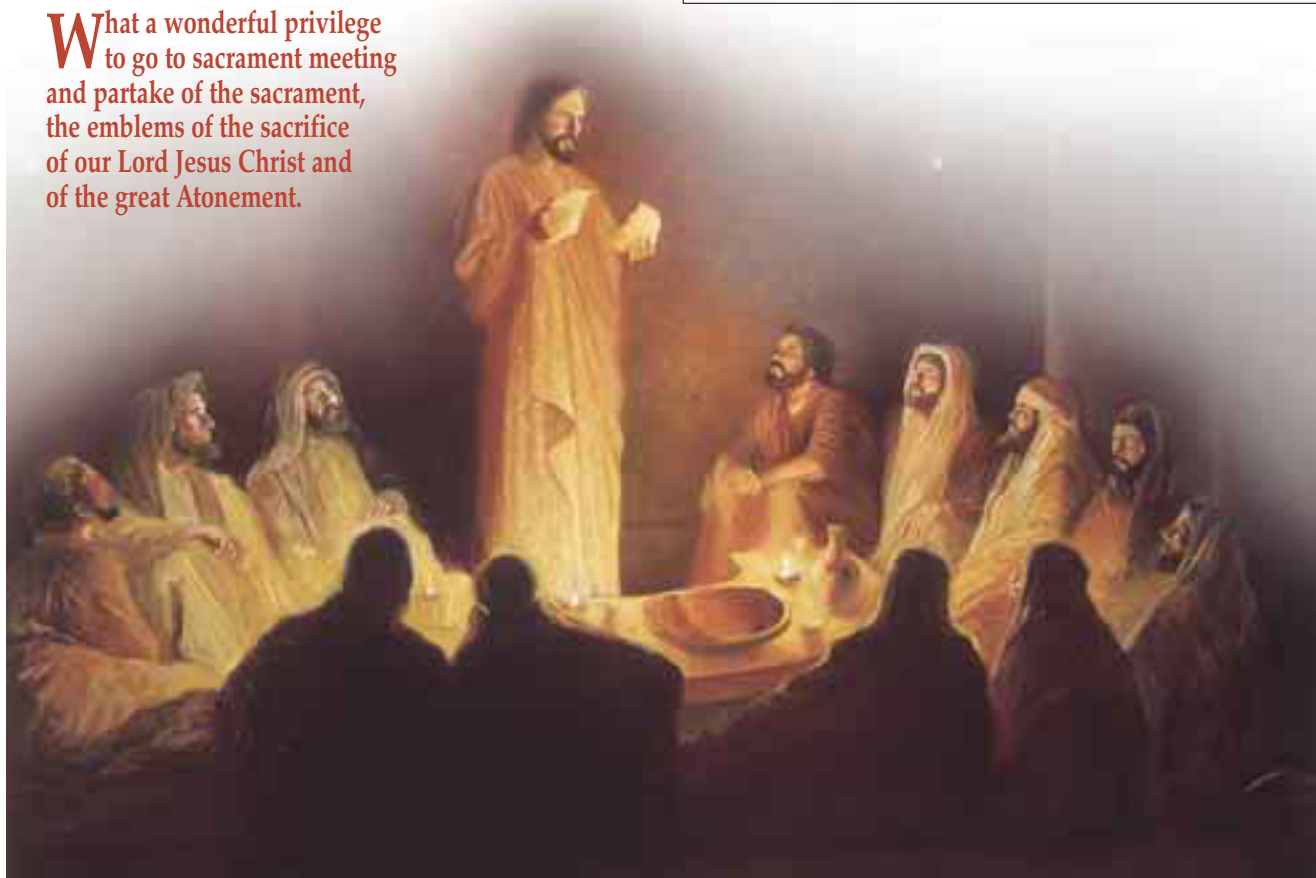
### Preparation

*After studying this message, think about ways your testimony of the Savior Jesus Christ influences what you do. Prayerfully choose several statements from President Hinckley you feel will most benefit those you teach. Then select a teaching method or activity that is appropriate for the ages and circumstances of the family members. A few examples of how this may be done are listed below.*

### Suggestions for Teaching

1. Ask family members to look for ideas about Jesus Christ as they take turns reading the thoughts from President Hinckley you have pre-selected for their study. Make a list of the ideas they find. Share your testimony of the Savior and invite them to share their thoughts and feelings of Him.

2. Read the first sentence of 3 Nephi 5:13, substituting family member names and "is" for "I am." Discuss what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ today. Then read the second sentence of 3 Nephi 5:13, substituting family member names and "has" for "I have"; end the reading at "to." Ask family members to complete the second sentence using ideas from President Hinckley.



FIRST SACRAMENT, BY GARY SMITH



# 'Mid the Stillness of the Night

Quietly ♩ = 63-72

Text and music by Sally DeFord

1. 'Mid the still - ness of the night, Kneel - ing in Geth -  
 2. His the an - guish of our grief, His the pain of  
 3. 'Neath the bur - den of a cross, 'Neath the weight of  
 4. Je - sus, Lord, un - fail - ing friend, Thou who lov - est

sem - a - ne, Love un - mea - sured fought our fight And  
 count - less years, Ours the con - trite heart's re - lief Thus  
 all our debt, Cal - v'ry's way He walked for us, And  
 cease - less - ly, Thou who giv - est life to men, We

claimed our vic - to - ry. Love un - mea - sured  
 born of blood and tears. Ours the con - trite  
 ne'er shall we for - get. Cal - v'ry's way He  
 do re - mem - ber Thee. Thou who giv - est  
 (claimed our vic - to - ry)

fought our fight And claimed our vic - to - ry.  
 heart's re - lief Thus born of blood and tears.  
 walked for us, And ne'er shall we for - get.  
 life to men, We do re - mem - ber Thee.

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Luke 22:41-45  
 D&C 20:77, 79





# SACRED GROVE

# *Sacred Light*

*The stained glass windows of the Palmyra New York Temple remind us of the glorious light of the First Vision.*



**F**ew ever forget the reverence they feel when visiting the Sacred Grove. Here, young Joseph Smith knelt in prayer on “the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty” and “saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above [him] in the air. One of them . . .

*Left: A detail of young Joseph Smith from a 1,400-piece stained glass mural of the First Vision. Above: Palmyra New York Temple.*

said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*” (JS—H 1:14, 17).

Now a temple stands near the sacred site of the First Vision. Inside the temple, the stained glass windows help create a feeling of being in the Sacred Grove surrounded by beauty and light, as was the Prophet Joseph Smith.

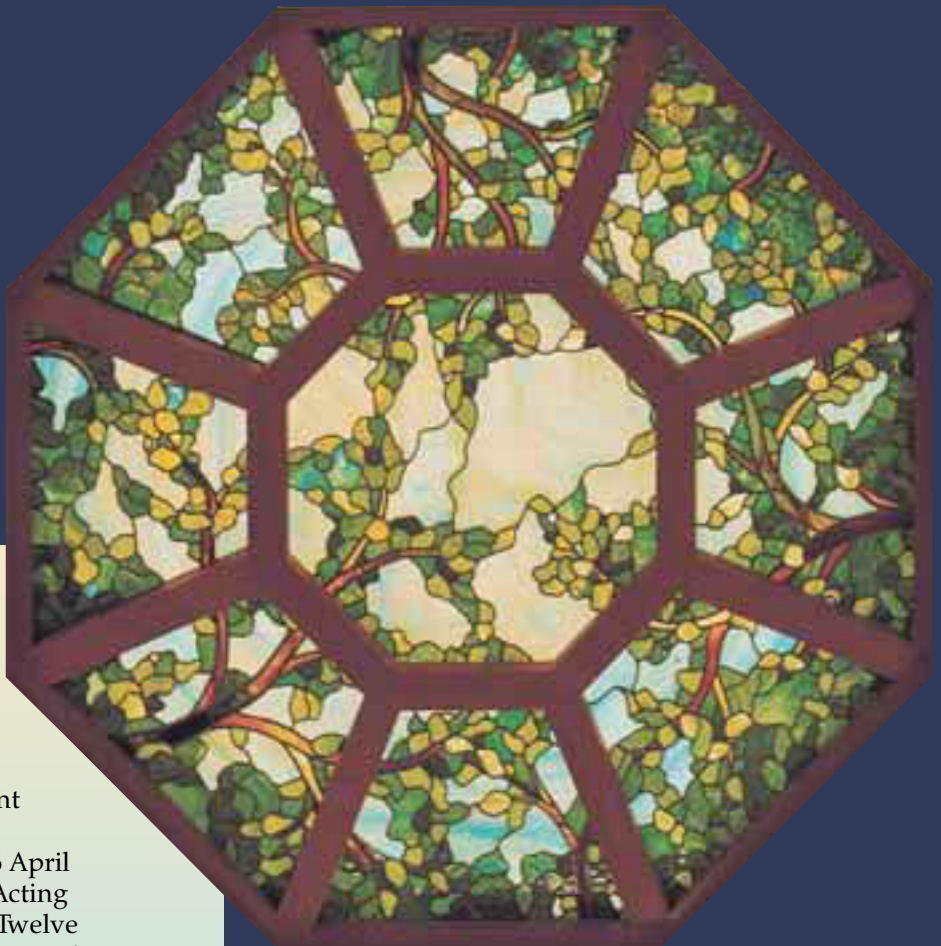
Tom Holdman, creator of the windows, remembers when he sought the Lord’s help and inspiration. “My mind was flooded with an image of all

108 windows of the temple filled with stained glass trees." In all, 12 employees worked full time on the 17,000-piece project. In four months, they were finished. "Toward the end," remembers Brother Holdman, "I did not want to and could not stop working."

At the temple dedication on 6 April 2000, President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said of the stained glass windows: "The stained glass windows representing the Sacred Grove brought to my mind the statement in the Doctrine and Covenants [124:26] where the Lord said, 'Send ye swift messengers, . . . and say unto them: Come ye, with all your gold, and your silver, and your precious stones, and with all your antiquities; and with all who have knowledge of antiquities, that will come, may come, and bring the box-tree, and the fir-tree, and the pine-tree, together with all the precious trees of the earth.'"

Brother Holdman and his wife, Gayle, remember walking quietly into the celestial room of the Palmyra temple for the dedication. "Everyone was telling me how beautiful the windows were," says Tom, "but the Spirit whispering acceptance of the work was one of the most thrilling experiences of my life." □

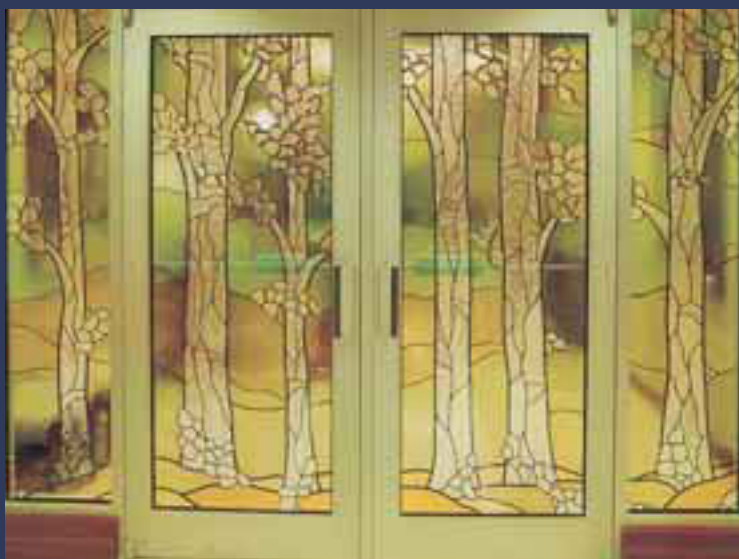
*Gospel topics: temples, First Vision, talents*



*Above, top: A person being baptized can look up into the skylight with its artistry of overhanging branches and be reminded of the view seen by the Prophet Joseph as he looked upward during the First Vision.*



*Right: The front doors of the temple.  
Below: These stained glass windows in  
the celestial room feature the tree of life  
in the center panel.*







# The Father & the Son

*A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency  
and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*

*In the early 1900s, some discussion arose among Church members about the roles of God the Father and Jesus Christ. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued the following in 1916 to clarify the meaning of certain scriptures where Jesus Christ, or Jehovah, is designated as the Father.*

*It is thought that a printing of this statement will be helpful to members as they study the Old Testament this year.*



**T**he scriptures plainly and repeatedly affirm that God is the Creator of the earth and the heavens and all things that in them are. In the sense so expressed, the Creator is an Organizer. God created the earth as an organized sphere; but He certainly did not create, in the sense of bringing into primal existence, the ultimate elements of the materials of which the earth consists, for "the elements are eternal" (D&C 93:33).

So also life is eternal, and not created; but life, or the vital force, may be infused into organized matter, though the details of the process have not been revealed unto man. (For illustrative instances see Gen. 2:7; Moses 3:7; Abr. 5:7.) Each of these scriptures states that God breathed into the

body of man the breath of life. See further Moses 3:19 for the statement that God breathed the breath of life into the bodies of the beasts and birds. God showed unto Abraham "the intelligences that were organized before the world was"; and by "intelligences" we are to understand personal "spirits" (see Abr. 3:22–23); nevertheless, we are expressly told that "Intelligence," that is, "the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be" (D&C 93:29).

The term "Father" as applied to Deity occurs in sacred writ with plainly different meanings. Each of the four significations specified in the following treatment should be carefully segregated.

## 1. "FATHER" AS LITERAL PARENT

Scriptures embodying the ordinary signification—literally that of Parent—are too numerous and specific to require citation. The purport of these scriptures is to the effect that God the Eternal Father, whom we designate by the exalted name-title "Elohim," is the literal Parent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and of the spirits of the human race. Elohim is the Father in every sense in which Jesus Christ is so designated, and distinctively He is the Father of spirits. Thus we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" (Heb. 12:9). In view of this fact we are taught by Jesus Christ to pray: "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name" (Matt. 6:9).

Jesus Christ applies to Himself both titles, "Son" and "Father." Indeed, He specifically said to the brother of Jared: "Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son" (Ether 3:14). Jesus Christ is the Son of Elohim both as spiritual and bodily offspring; that is to say, Elohim is literally the Father of the spirit of Jesus Christ and also the body in which Jesus Christ performed His mission in the flesh, and which body died on the cross and was afterward taken up by the process of resurrection, and is now the immortalized tabernacle of the eternal spirit of our Lord and Savior. No extended explanation of the title "Son of God" as applied to Jesus Christ appears necessary.

## 2. "FATHER" AS CREATOR

A second scriptural meaning of "Father" is that of Creator; e.g., in passages referring to any one of the Godhead as "the Father of the heavens and of the earth, and all things that in them are" (Ether 4:7; see also Alma 11:38–39; Mosiah 15:4).

God is not the Father of the earth as one of the worlds in space, nor of the heavenly bodies in whole or in part, not of the inanimate objects and the plants and the animals upon the earth, in the literal sense in which He is the Father of the spirits of mankind. Therefore, scriptures that refer to God in any way as the Father of the heavens and the earth are to be understood as signifying that God is the Maker, the Organizer, the Creator of the heavens and the earth.



**J**esus Christ, whom we also know as Jehovah, was the executive of the Father, Elohim, in the work of creation.

With this meaning, as the context shows in every case, Jehovah, who is Jesus Christ the Son of Elohim, is called "the Father," and even "the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth" (see passages before cited and also Mosiah 16:15). With analogous meaning Jesus Christ is called "The Everlasting Father" (Isa. 9:6; compare 2 Ne. 19:6). The descriptive titles "Everlasting" and "Eternal" in the foregoing texts are synonymous.

That Jesus Christ, whom we also know as Jehovah, was the executive of the Father, Elohim, in the work of creation is set forth in the book *Jesus the Christ*, chapter 4 [by James E. Talmage]. Jesus Christ, being the Creator, is consistently called the Father of heaven and earth in the sense explained above; and since His creations are of eternal quality He is very properly called the Eternal Father of heaven and earth.

## 3. JESUS CHRIST THE "FATHER" OF THOSE WHO ABIDE IN HIS GOSPEL

A third sense in which Jesus Christ is regarded as the "Father" has reference to the relationship between Him and those who accept His gospel and thereby become heirs of eternal life. Following are a few of the scriptures illustrating this meaning.

In fervent prayer offered just prior to His entrance into Gethsemane, Jesus Christ supplicated His Father in behalf of those whom the Father had given unto Him, specifically the Apostles, and, more generally, all who would accept and abide in the gospel through the ministry of the Apostles. Read in our Lord's own words the solemn affirmation that those for whom



He particularly prayed were His own, and that His Father had given them unto Him:

"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

"Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

"For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

"And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

"And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

"While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:6–12).

And further:

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in

us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:20–24).

To His faithful servants in the present dispensation the Lord has said, "Fear not, little children, for you are mine, and I have overcome the world, and you are of them that my Father hath given me" (D&C 50:41).

Salvation is attainable only through compliance with the laws and ordinances of the gospel; and all who are thus saved become sons and daughters unto God in a distinctive sense. In a revelation given through Joseph the Prophet to Emma Smith, the Lord

Jesus addressed the woman as "my daughter" and said, "For verily I say unto you, all those who receive my gospel are sons and daughters in my kingdom" (D&C 25:1). In many instances the Lord had addressed men as His sons (e.g., D&C 9:1; 34:3; 121:7).

That by obedience to the gospel men may become sons of God, both as sons of Jesus Christ, and, through Him, as sons of His Father, is set forth in many revelations given in the current dispensation. Thus we read in an utterance of the Lord Jesus Christ to Hyrum Smith in 1829:

"Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I am the life and the light of the world.

"I am the same who came unto mine own and mine own received me not;

"But verily, verily, I say unto you, that as many as receive me, to them will I give power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on my name. Amen" (D&C 11:28–30).

To Orson Pratt the Lord spoke through Joseph the seer, in 1830:

"My son Orson, hearken and hear and behold what I, the Lord God, shall say unto you, even Jesus Christ your Redeemer;

"The light and the life of the world, a light which shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not;

"Who so loved the world that he gave his own life, that as many as would believe might become the sons of God. Wherefore you are my

son" (D&C 34:1–3).

In 1830 the Lord thus addressed Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon:

"Listen to the voice of the Lord your God, even Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, whose course is one eternal round, the same today as yesterday, and forever.

"I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified for the sins of the world, even as many as will believe on my name, that they may become the sons of God, even one in me as I am one in the Father, as the Father is one in me, that we may be one" (D&C 35:1–2).

Consider also the following given in 1831:

"Hearken and listen to the voice of him who is from all eternity to all eternity, the Great I Am, even Jesus Christ—

"The light and the life of the world; a light which shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not;

"The same which came in the meridian of time unto mine own, and mine own received me not;



**By the new birth—that of water  
and the Spirit—mankind may  
become children of Jesus Christ.**

"But to as many as received me, gave I power to become my sons; and even so will I give unto as many as will receive me, power to become my sons" (D&C 39:1-4).

In a revelation given through Joseph Smith in March 1831 we read:

"For verily I say unto you that I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the light and the life of the world—a light that shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not.

"I came unto mine own, and mine own received me not; but unto as many as received me gave I power to do many miracles, and to become the sons of God; and even unto them that believed on my name gave I power to obtain eternal life" (D&C 45:7-8).

A forceful exposition of this relationship between Jesus Christ as the Father and those who comply with the requirements of the gospel as His children was given by Abinadi, centuries before our Lord's birth in the flesh:

"And now I say unto you, who shall declare his generation? Behold, I say unto you, that when his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed. And now what say ye? And who shall be his seed?

"Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord—I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God.

"For these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions. And now, are they not his seed?

"Yea, and are not the prophets, every one that has opened his mouth to prophesy, that has not fallen into transgression, I mean all the holy prophets ever since the world began? I say unto you that they are his seed" (Mosiah 15:10-13).

In tragic contrast with the blessed state of those who become children of God through obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ is that of the unregenerate, who are specifically called the children of the devil. Note the words of Christ, while in the flesh, to certain wicked Jews who boasted of their Abrahamic lineage: "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. . . . Ye do the deeds of your father. . . . If God were your Father, ye would love

me. . . . Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:39, 41-42, 44).

Thus Satan is designated as the father of the wicked, though we cannot assume any personal relationship of parent and children as existing between him and them. A combined illustration showing that the righteous are the children of God and the wicked the children of the devil appears in the parable of the tares: "The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one" (Matt. 13:38).

Men may become children of Jesus Christ by being born anew—born of God, as the inspired word states:

"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" (1 Jn. 3:8-10).

Those who have been born unto God through obedience to the gospel may by valiant devotion to righteousness obtain exaltation and even reach the status of godhood.

Of such we read: "Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God" (D&C 76:58; compare 132:20, and contrast v. 17 in same section; see also v. 37). Yet though they be gods, they are still subject to Jesus Christ as their Father in this exalted relationship; and so we read in the paragraph following the above quotation: "And they are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (D&C 76:59).

By the new birth—that of water and the Spirit—mankind may become children of Jesus Christ, being through the means by Him provided "begotten sons and daughters unto God" (D&C 76:24). This solemn truth is further emphasized in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ given through Joseph Smith in 1833:

"And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn;

"And all those who are begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are the church of the Firstborn" (D&C 93:21-22).

For such figurative use of the term "begotten" in application to those who are born unto God, see Paul's explanation: "For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15). An analogous



**J**esus Christ is the Son of Elohim, both as spiritual and bodily offspring.



instance of sonship attained by righteous service is found in the revelation relating to the order and functions of priesthood, given in 1832:

"For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priest-hoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies:

"They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God" (D&C 84:33–34).

If it be proper to speak of those who accept and abide in the gospel as Christ's sons and daughters—and upon this matter the scriptures are explicit and cannot be gainsaid nor denied—it is consistently proper to speak of Jesus Christ as the Father of the righteous, they having become His children and He having been made their Father through the second birth—the baptismal regeneration.

#### 4. JESUS CHRIST THE "FATHER" BY DIVINE INVESTITURE OF AUTHORITY

A fourth reason for applying the title "Father" to Jesus Christ is found in the fact that in all His dealings with the human family Jesus the Son has represented and yet represents Elohim His Father in power and authority. This is true of Christ in His preexistent, antemortal, or unembodied state, in the which He was known as Jehovah; also during His embodiment in the flesh; and during His labors as a disembodied spirit in the realm of the dead; and since that period in His resurrected state. To the Jews He said, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30; see also 17:11, 22); yet He declared, "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28), and further, "I am come in my Father's name" (John 5:43; see also 10:25). The same truth was declared by Christ Himself to the Nephites (see 3 Ne. 20:35; 28:10), and has been reaffirmed by revelation in the present dispensation (D&C 50:43). Thus the Father placed His name upon the Son; and Jesus Christ spoke and ministered in and through the Father's name; and so far as power, authority, and godship are concerned His words and acts were and are those of the Father.

We read, by way of analogy, that God placed His name upon or in the angel who was assigned to special ministry unto the people of Israel during the



**I**n all His dealings with the human family, Jesus the Son represents Elohim His Father in power and authority. This principle is known as "Divine Investiture of Authority."

exodus. Of that angel the Lord said, "Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him" (Ex. 23:21).

The ancient Apostle John was visited by an angel who ministered and spoke in the name of Jesus Christ. As we read, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John" (Rev. 1:1). John was about to worship the angelic being who spoke in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, but was forbidden:

"And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.

"Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God" (Rev. 22:8–9).

And then the angel continued to speak as though he were the Lord Himself:

"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (vv. 12–13).

The resurrected Lord, Jesus Christ, who had been exalted to the right hand of God His Father, had placed His name upon the angel sent to John, and the angel spoke in the first person, saying, "I come quickly," "I am Alpha and Omega," though he meant

that Jesus Christ would come and that Jesus Christ was Alpha and Omega.

None of these considerations, however, can change in the least degree the solemn fact of the literal relationship of Father and Son between Elohim and Jesus Christ. Among the spirit children of Elohim the first-born was and is Jehovah or Jesus Christ to whom all others are juniors. Following are affirmative scriptures bearing upon this great truth. Paul, writing to the Colossians, says of Jesus Christ:

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature:

"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

"And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell" (Col. 1:15–19).

From this scripture we learn that Jesus Christ was "the firstborn of every creature," and it is evident that the seniority here expressed must be with respect to antemortal existence, for Christ was not the senior of all mortals in the flesh. He is further designated as "the firstborn from the dead," this having reference to Him as the first to be resurrected from the dead, or as elsewhere written "the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20; see also v. 23); and "the first begotten of the dead" (Rev. 1:5; compare Acts 26:23). The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews affirms the status of Jesus Christ as the firstborn of the spirit children of His Father and extols the preeminence of the Christ when tabernacled in flesh: "And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him" (Heb. 1:6; read the preceding verses). That the spirits who were juniors to Christ were predestined to be born in the image of their Elder Brother is thus attested by Paul:

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:28–29).

John the Revelator was commanded to write to the head of the Laodicean church, as the words of the Lord Jesus Christ: "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. 3:14). In the course of a revelation given through Joseph Smith in May 1833, the Lord Jesus Christ said, as before cited, "And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn" (D&C 93:21). A later verse makes plain the fact that human beings generally were similarly existent in spirit state prior to their embodiment in the flesh: "Ye were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit, even the Spirit of truth" (D&C 93:23).

There is no impropriety, therefore, in speaking of Jesus Christ as the Elder Brother of the rest of humankind. That He is by spiritual birth Brother to the rest of us is indicated in Hebrews: "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:17). Let it not be forgotten, however, that He is essentially greater than any or all others, by reason (1) of His seniority as the oldest or firstborn; (2) of His unique status in the flesh as the offspring of a mortal mother and of an immortal, or resurrected and glorified, Father; (3) of His selection and fore-

ordination as the one and only Redeemer and Savior of the race; and (4) of His transcendent sinlessness.

Jesus Christ is not the Father of the spirits who have taken or yet shall take bodies upon this earth, for He is one of them. He is The Son, as they are sons or daughters of Elohim. So far as the stages of eternal progression and attainment have been made known through divine revelation, we are to understand that only resurrected and glorified beings can become parents of spirit offspring. Only such exalted souls have reached maturity in the appointed course of eternal life; and the spirits born to them in the eternal worlds will pass in due sequence through the several stages or estates by which the glorified parents have attained exaltation. □

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND THE COUNCIL OF THE  
TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Salt Lake City, Utah, 30 June 1916

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*Gospel topics: Jesus Christ, Godhead, premortal life, exaltation*



**A**mong the spirit children of Elohim, the firstborn was Jesus Christ.



**A**lthough it was a cold night, I found myself sweating and my heart aching. As the bishop of a singles ward, I had just finished giving counsel and encouragement to a beautiful, sweet young sister who was starting down the road of repentance. I could feel the struggle she was having as her spiritual side was battling with her mortal side.

I had seen nearly 20 people that evening, and about half of them had one painful problem or another that needed a bishop's guidance and help. I wanted to end the long, exhausting night and retreat to my home, but my executive secretary told me three more people needed to see me.

I momentarily prayed that the next three interviews would be easier, for I felt I could not handle another weighty problem at the time. I had grown to love each of these brothers and sisters, and it hurt me deeply to see even one make a foolish decision that caused pain and the need for repentance.

As I pondered for a moment before my next appointment, a thought occurred to me: How would I have felt if everyone I had interviewed that night had needed to see me for repentance? Could I have endured that pain? A more meaningful question came to mind: What if the entire ward of 200 members had come to me in need of repentance? The inner pain I was experiencing would have been multiplied 200 times. I knew I could not have endured that situation.

I wondered how any bishop could spiritually and emotionally endure such a burden.

I reflected on our Savior Jesus Christ and His Atonement. I knew His love for each of us is so much greater than the love I could have. If I feel pain when someone I love commits sin, I cannot imagine the pain the Savior must have experienced.

As I left for home that night, I realized I had received just a tiny glimpse of the Lord's Atonement.

As terrible as Christ's suffering on the cross was, perhaps it was not as great as His suffering in Gethsemane. When He sweat drops of blood as He bore the weight of all the sins of mankind, the great agony of the Atonement took place. His infinite love resulted in infinite pain.

After that night I was better able to understand that Christ endured the pain of Gethsemane because of His love for me and for everyone who has or will come to earth. From that night forth, I have had a new appreciation for the priceless gift of the Atonement. □

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*Gospel topics: Atonement, love of Jesus Christ, compassion*

# Because of His Love

BY JOSEPH C. WINTHER



**A**s a bishop, I gained insight one difficult night into the depth of the Savior's love for us.

# Learning How the Atonement Can Change You

*Don't let these three common misunderstandings lessen your hope and joy in the Lord's promises.*



BY ELDER J. DEVN CORNISH  
*Area Authority Seventy*

**I**t is crucial that every individual know our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and gain an understanding of the Atonement wrought on our behalf. Our eternal happiness depends upon it. The Savior taught,

“This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). Concerning the centrality of the mission and Atonement of Christ, President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said: “Through Him [Jesus Christ] mercy can be fully extended to each of us without offending the eternal law of justice. This truth is the very root of Christian doctrine. You may know much about the gospel as it branches from there, but if you only know the branches and those branches do not touch the root, if they have been cut free from that truth, there will be no life nor substance nor redemption in them.”<sup>1</sup>

## THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION

The basic concept of why we need an atonement may be summarized fairly simply: You and I lived before this life in a celestial home with our heavenly parents. We came to this earth to obtain a physical body

and to learn and grow by our own experiences. We also came to be proven to see whether we would obey all of God's commandments (see Abr. 3:25). However, we are unclean, for we disobey to some extent the commandments of God. Therefore, that which we desire most in life, to return to our heavenly home, is denied us, for no unclean thing can dwell in His presence. There is, however, a remedy. In His love and mercy, God our Father has accepted the offer of His perfect Son to suffer for our sins, that we might not suffer if we would repent (see D&C 19:16). We may thus be rendered clean, without guilt before God, and be welcomed back into His presence.

Sadly, many do not believe in a Redeemer or understand the need for an atonement, even though they acknowledge human failings. They are left to believe, therefore, that we can never be truly happy, that this life is all there is, and that we must find pleasure here and there as best we can. Without a Savior to redeem and reform us, there is little hope of lasting improvement in humanity. Such a dismal view of life can be corrected by a study of the Book of Mormon. Father Lehi taught that “redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth.

“Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit. . . .





"Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth" (2 Ne. 2:6–8).

## COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Many Church members have been taught the concepts of why we need an atonement, but there are elements of this doctrine that are often misunderstood. Errors in thinking can lessen the hope and joy they ought to feel or cause them to wander into byways of sin or despair. I would like to address a few common misunderstandings about the Atonement.

**1. Some have a difficult time accepting in their hearts that when the Lord says "all" He means them too.** They seem to say to themselves, "I believe that Jesus Christ died for the sins of mankind, but what I have done is so terrible or so repeated that I don't think the Atonement will work for me." Some who are faithful members of the Church actually seem to believe that they will never make it back to Heavenly Father's presence. It is the idea that Christ can save all mankind, but He may not be able to save me. This kind of feeling is terribly discouraging, and it can become an excuse to dabble in sin. "After all," some rationalize, "I'm not going to make it anyway."

Others can sense that this idea is false and that Christ can save them, but they are not sure He will. The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob taught, "He cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken to his voice; for behold, he suffereth . . . the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children" (2 Ne. 9:21). The question is not whether we are perfect or whether we are worth forgiving, but whether we are willing to admit when we do wrong, feel sorry, confess as appropriate, do all we can to set things right, and ask the Lord to forgive us. This is what the Savior meant when He said we must have "a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Ne. 9:20). I know that the Lord is ready, even anxious, to forgive each of us personally if we will but come to Him (see Mosiah 26:30).

**2. Another mistake is to believe that the Atonement really only comes into effect at the very end, that is, at the time of Final Judgment.** This line of thinking is "I know I should live the gospel, but I often fall short. I am just hoping that I will do well enough overall that at the end the Lord will apply His generous mercy to me and I will get in to heaven." While this thinking is not completely false, it is incomplete. It does include the fact that we

must sincerely strive to do what is right, and it includes the idea that the Lord can in His mercy take away our sins. Yet who among us can afford to wait until the Final Judgment to receive the Lord's help and healing? As a favorite hymn teaches:

*I need thy presence ev'ry passing hour.  
What but thy grace can foil the tempter's pow'r?  
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,  
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me!*<sup>2</sup>

I testify that the Lord hears our prayers and that He will make us clean and bless us with His Spirit here and now, if we will trust in Him and repent. We partake of the sacrament each week to renew our covenants and feel that cleansing power anew. We are exhorted to retain a remission of our sins from day to day (see Mosiah 4:26). When we end each prayer "in the name of Jesus Christ, amen," we are petitioning the Father that we might enter His presence through the mediation of Jesus Christ, who is pleading our cause before Him (see D&C 45:3–5). Surely our Lord desires to succor us at any time, for in Him "we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15).

**3. A third misunderstanding is a pernicious lie that goes like this: "It doesn't really matter what I do. The Lord is going to forgive and save everybody.** Why not sample in the meantime a bit of what the world has to offer? After all, everyone else is doing it." The prophet Nephi accurately predicted this way of thinking long ago (see 2 Ne. 28:8).

The Lord, of course, can and wants to forgive everyone, but a full measure of His mercy will only come with complete and deep repentance. If we have not suffered, we have not repented. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said, "Repentance of necessity involves suffering and sorrow. Anyone who thinks otherwise has not read the life of the young Alma, nor tried to personally repent. In the process of repentance we are granted just a taste of the suffering we would endure if we failed to turn away from evil. That pain, though only momentary for the repentant, is the most bitter of cups."<sup>3</sup>

What a terrible thing to believe mistakenly that sin will be happiness and that repentance will be easy, for one of the terrible consequences of sin is the loss of the Spirit. "Wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10), and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).

It is also folly to assume that we can premeditatedly sin, repent, and then have the Lord immediately remove all the natural consequences of our sins.



When we choose to sin, we also choose the results of those sins. Suppose two people conceive a baby outside of marriage, then repent and are forgiven by the Lord. Will the baby suddenly go away? Obviously not; someone must care for that baby. Though the baby will doubtless bring joy to many lives, some of the consequences of our sins may be difficult to bear. Also, these consequences may not be quickly or easily resolved. We may have to wrestle with some of them for much of our mortal lives. This principle does not detract in any way from the complete and infinite cleansing power of the Atonement. When we truly repent, the Lord fully forgives us and our guilt is swept away (see Enos 1:6). But it is important to understand that the Lord has placed us in a physical world where there are real consequences for our choices.

### ENLARGING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE ATONEMENT

There is great saving power in deepening our understanding of the Atonement. There are many scriptural accounts that can enlarge our understanding and comfort our hearts when viewed in the light of that singular event. These accounts can teach us symbolically of the power and abundance of the Savior's atoning grace. A beautiful example is the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000.

When Jesus and His disciples attempted to privately get away for some rest into a solitary place, the people caught sight of them and "ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outran them, and came together unto him" (see JST, Mark 6:32–34). Jesus "was moved with compassion toward them" and "began to teach them many things" (Mark 6:34). As evening came, the disciples became concerned for the hunger of the people and urged the Savior to send them away to find food. Jesus asked that the disciples go and buy food for them, but they could not possibly muster the resources required (see Mark 6:37, footnote *a*). The Lord then asked how much food the people had with them. After a search, Andrew reported, "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?" (John 6:9).

Jesus then organized the people at the hands of His disciples and blessed and divided the loaves and fish. His disciples distributed it to the people. "And they did all eat, and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments" (Mark 6:42–43).

Now consider this story for what it can teach us about the Atonement: (1) The people ran to be with Jesus. Similarly, we need to come to Him without delay. (2) Jesus has great compassion for us, as He did for them. (3) Jesus was miraculously able to take away the hunger of so many just as He is able to take away our sins. (4) The Savior often administers His blessings through His appointed priesthood leaders. (5) When

we partake of the food Jesus offers, namely the sacrament, in remembrance of the Savior's atoning sacrifice, we can also be filled, but with the Holy Spirit. (6) His grace is truly abundant and more than sufficient to meet all our needs (see D&C 17:8).

It is significant to observe from this account the implication that the Master not only spoke symbolically often in parables, but often *acted* symbolically as well. This realization may profitably lead us to look for other acts of Jesus that are symbolic of the Atonement.

It is comforting and inspiring to note the many ways in which the Lord

teaches us about His Atonement. An accurate understanding of this doctrine is the one of the most important things a person can acquire. In fact, our eternal lives depend on it, for "this is life eternal, that [we] might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). □

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**Gospel topics:** Atonement, Jesus Christ, repentance, forgiveness, eternal life

**More on this topic:** See Spencer J. Condie, "The Fall and Infinite Atonement," *Ensign*, Jan. 1996, 22–27; Richard G. Scott, "Finding Forgiveness," *Ensign*, May 1995, 75–77; Hugh W. Nibley, "The Atonement of Jesus Christ, Parts 1–3," *Ensign*, July 1990, 18–23, Aug. 1990, 30–34, Sept. 1990, 22–26; James E. Faust, "The Supernal Gift of the Atonement," *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 12–14.

#### NOTES

1. "The Mediator," *Ensign*, May 1977, 56.
2. "Abide with Me!" *Hymns*, no. 166.
3. "Alma, Son of Alma," *Ensign*, Mar. 1977, 81.



**T**he story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 can teach us symbolically of the Atonement.

# I Cried Out to My Father

*My problems seemed overwhelming—until I tasted the delicious fruit of Christ's Atonement.*

NAME WITHHELD

**O**f all the things I had imagined I would be doing in my life, what I was experiencing was not one of them. There I sat contemplating my situation—lonely and discouraged. Life with my husband and children had become extremely uncomfortable. Even after acquiring some new communication skills from several months of counseling, it seemed we were at a standstill. For some reason I could not seem to feel any love for my husband.

The thought of leaving my family and marriage behind left me cold and empty. Then a thought even came into my mind that I had married the wrong person. Immediately my mind flashed back to the time when I had knelt and asked my Heavenly Father for a confirmation of the strong desire I had to marry my sweetheart. The memory of that moment when the Spirit of the Lord filled my soul with peace and comfort was enough to eliminate that idea from my mind. But even though I knew it had been right to marry my husband, I still felt that if only he would change a few things, life would be much better for us.

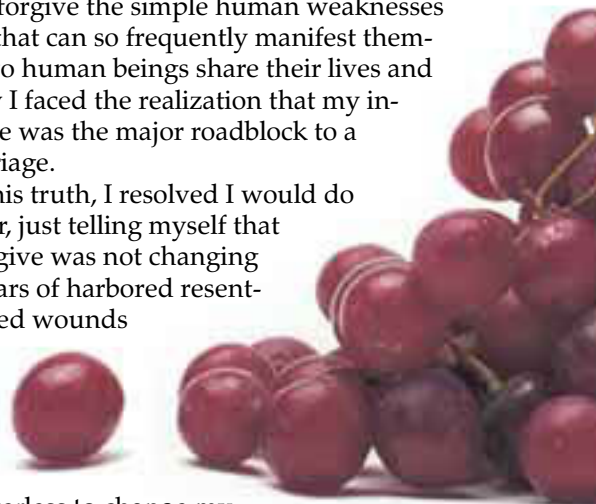


Though I sat still, my spirit fought, like a wild horse, the Master's efforts to tame me. When my heart was finally broken, I conceded to Him that I was incapable of resolving this problem on my own.

When I became willing to accept whatever the Lord would tell me, I became painfully aware that I was part of the problem and that for our marriage to continue, I needed to forgive. Yet my husband had committed no major sins! For years I had refused to forgive the simple human weaknesses and irritations that can so frequently manifest themselves when two human beings share their lives and their love. Now I faced the realization that my inability to forgive was the major roadblock to a successful marriage.

Accepting this truth, I resolved I would do better. However, just telling myself that I wanted to forgive was not changing my feelings. Years of harbored resentment had created wounds that would not easily heal, so I struggled to let go of all my hurt and pain.

Feeling powerless to change my feelings, I cried out in prayer, "Father, please help me forgive—through the power of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of this world." A feeling of peace swept through my body, and I felt renewed in every part of



my being. In amazement, I thanked Heavenly Father for the gift He had given me. My hurt was swept away, my pains were erased, and love beyond description filled my heart. I was experiencing the power of the Atonement. I recalled Alma's language, "There could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains," but on the other hand, "there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy" (see Alma 36:21).

Having now tasted the delicious fruit of the Atonement, I could not bear the thought of ever carrying my burdens alone again. I realized that the command for daily repentance meant that I needed a time for daily renewal, a time to have my spirit cleansed, a time to forgive and let go of even the little hurts so they would not find a place in my heart in which to fester.

Our challenges did not disappear, but a spirit of peace filled me with love and helped us work through them. Perhaps I will never find adequate words to describe the difference the Atonement

of Jesus Christ has made in our family. With past hurts resolved and forgiven, dealing with the problems of daily living is not the overwhelming challenge it once had been. With consistent reliance on the power of the Atonement, my emotions have become more stable, trust has been restored, and I have a strong desire to maintain the spirit of charity. My resolve is much like Alma's—"from that time even until now, I have labored without ceasing, . . . that I might bring [my family] to taste of the exceeding joy which I did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost, . . . [and] the Lord doth give me exceedingly great joy in the fruit of my labors" (Alma 36:24–25). □

*Gospel topics: Atonement, forgiveness, joy, spiritual rebirth*

**M**y hurt was swept away, my pains were erased, and love beyond description filled my heart.





# RESPOND *to the Lord's*

BY JOHN S. TANNER

*Pondering questions the Lord has asked in the scriptures deepens our relationship with Him.*

As the Easter season approaches, we may find ourselves contemplating the Savior's divine mission. Easter is a time to reflect on the Atonement and on the depth of our discipleship. It is a season to repent as we remember the loving sacrifice of our Savior, who suffered exquisite agony so that we might not suffer if we would repent (D&C 19:15–20). It is a time to ponder our responses to Jesus Christ.

Over the years, as I have pondered my own response to the Savior, youthful questioning has given way to more mature questing after righteousness. I've learned that the Lord's questions of me are more important than my questions of Him.

In my late teens and early 20s, I was full of gospel questions. I used to worry a lot, for example, about theological problems, like the so-called problem of evil. (I once told my sister that hardly a week went by that I didn't think about the Holocaust.) Like many young people, I remember questioning if I had a testimony—even though I'd been blessed all my life with a deeply religious nature.

My questions became more intense as I approached my 19th birthday and the decision to go on a mission. I remember taking long Sunday walks on the south side of campus at BYU—fasting, praying, and wondering if I really knew the gospel was true. Was I ready to make eternal covenants? To stand in holy places and promise to stake my life on the conviction that God restored His Church through Joseph Smith? (The prospect of making an eternal commitment loomed much larger in my mind than did the

commitment to spend two years as a missionary.) Did I really know the Church was true, know it deeply enough to persuade others to join?

I suppose these are pretty typical questions for an adolescent—even for one who had had, as I had, many wonderful spiritual experiences. Still, I yearned to know for myself with complete certainty. And I was of a disposition and lived at a time period when young people were encouraged to question everything. Even after I decided to serve a mission and made temple covenants, it took a while for me not to let the habit of questioning color my religious commitments.

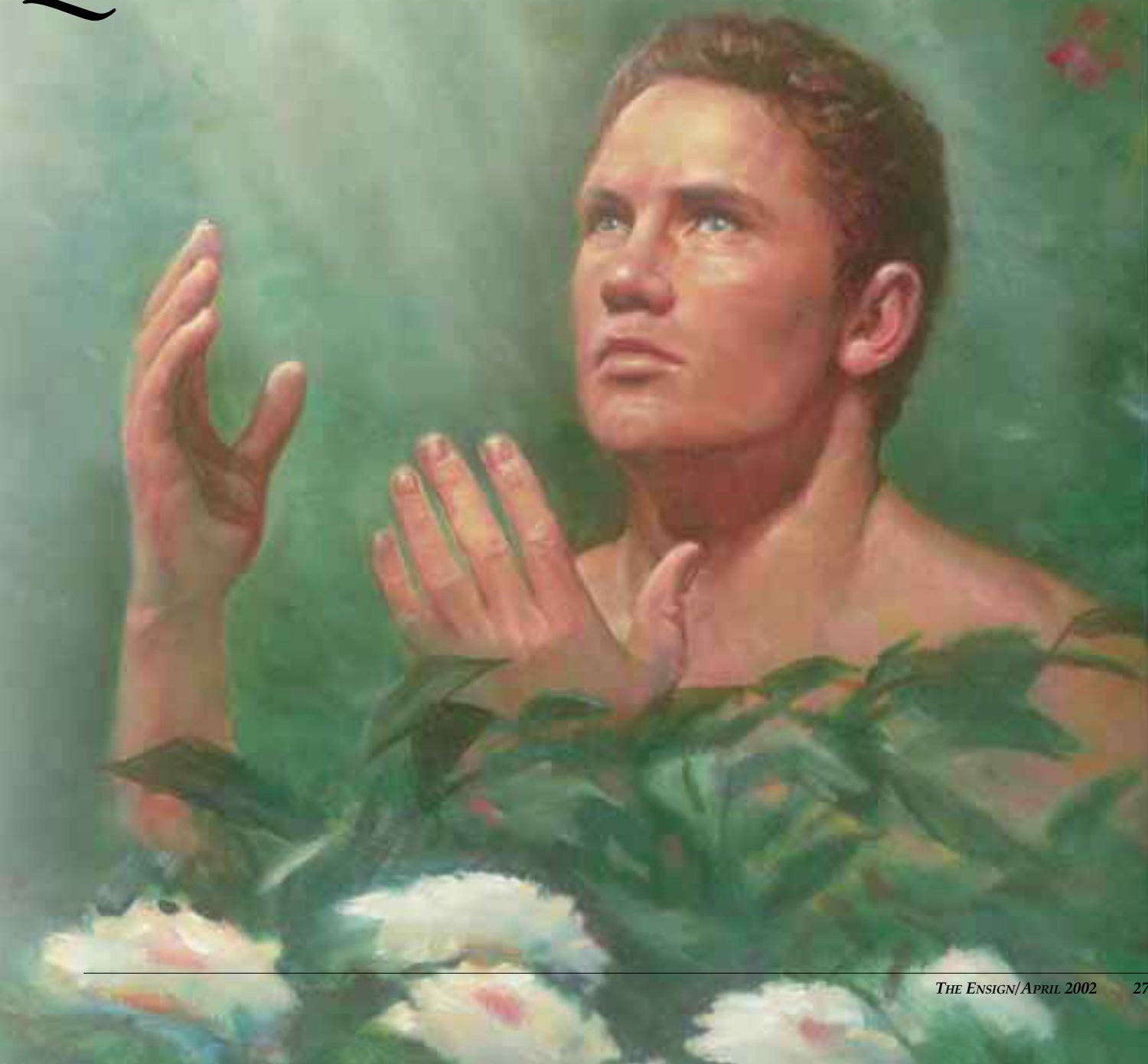
Not long ago I pulled out an old Book of Mormon, which dates from my college years. The margins are full of scribbling. Most notes record “aha” insights, but some ask questions of the text. As I re-read my notes, I recognized in my former self one who simultaneously believed and questioned. It is no wonder that a verse in the Gospel of Mark has long meant so much to me: “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:24).

I still have questions. However, in the past 30 years, my questions have come to feel far less important than they once did. I feel more patient with my questions as my testimony has grown more sure and as the confirmations of the Spirit have accumulated. At the same time, different kinds of questions have become much more central and urgent in my life. These are the Lord's questions. Almost every hour of every day, I seem to hear the Lord's persistent questions of me. My life still feels surrounded by questions, but now they are divine interrogatives.

When God asks Adam, “Where art thou?” He dignifies Adam with accountability. Likewise, He also expects us to be accountable.

# ING

## *Questions*



## WHERE ART THOU?

When God asks Adam, “Where art thou?” He knows full well where Adam is hiding. Yet by this question, God honors Adam’s agency. The question invites Adam to account for himself and dignifies him with accountability. God not only knows the answer to His question, but only He fully knows where either Adam or we are, physically and spiritually. And He knows this at every moment of our lives. We cannot escape from His sight. As the scripture says, “He can pierce you, and with one glance of his eye he can smite you to the dust!” (Jacob 2:15). His “all-seeing eye” pierces our every self-deception and all the excuses with which we cover our sins like fig leaves. It searches the deepest recesses of our hearts. Yet, though at every moment He knows where we are, still at every moment He calls, “Where art thou?” His inquiry demands unblinking accountability from us. Yet His call is not harsh. It is born of tender concern for His errant children.

I confess that this question “Where art thou?” looms large in my life. It echoes in my days. Sometimes it keeps me awake at night. Always beneath the questions and cares I hurl at heaven, I seem to hear the Lord’s voice whispering, “John, where art thou? You, the questioner, the seeker? What prompts your questions? Are you living up to the witnesses you have already received?” I know that the only fitting response to the Lord’s questions is to reply, “Lord, here am I”—in full readiness to do His bidding.

I also know that the Lord expects not merely words but a life answerable to His interrogatives. As one LDS author notes: “To most questions man wants to have an answer. But to the Lord’s question man must *be* an answer. From man God does not need information. Man’s response must be man’s own self” (Dennis Rasmussen, *The Lord’s Question* [1985], 7).

Further, the Lord wants to know not only where we stand but where we are heading. Thus, according to the Pearl of Great Price, “the Lord God, called unto Adam, and said unto him: Where *goest* thou?” (Moses 4:15; emphasis added). In this pilgrimage called mortality, there are only two directions: away from or toward God. To every soul, God calls, “Where goest thou?” Are we fleeing God or feeling after Him? He is “not far from every one of us” (Acts 17:27).

## BUT WHOM SAY YE THAT I AM?

Another divine question compels my attention as it calls me into account: “But whom say ye that I am?” (Matt. 16:15). Jesus put this question to His disciples when they were in Caesarea Philippi, just north of the Galilee. On that day, Peter answered boldly, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”



**In Caesarea Philippi, the Lord asked His disciples a question we must answer: “Whom say ye that I am?”**

(Matt. 16:16). Well answered Simon Peter, and well was he awarded the name Peter, or “rock,” for it.

All believers must build on the testimony of Jesus Christ. However, knowing the right answer and living the right answer are two different things. The Lord measures us not alone by what we profess but by what we perform. Thus the Lord asks His disciples to answer His question “Whom say ye that I am?” with their lives.

Peter later discovered it was easier to confess the Lord among friends than to live true to this testimony among foes when one’s life is at stake. On that terrible night when our Lord was betrayed, Peter denied knowing the Christ thrice before the cock crowed. I wonder if at that dark hour in Jerusalem Peter recalled the Savior’s question to him in Caesarea Philippi: “But whom say ye that I am?”

Nevertheless, I do not condemn Peter, and he certainly proved his faithfulness later. How many times have I lauded the Lord with my lips on Sunday and subsequently dishonored Him with my deeds on a weekday? My transgressions often make me wonder how well I am responding to the question “Whom say ye that I am?” For I know that the Lord’s questions insist that my conduct must be fully congruent with my confession of Him.

## WILL YE ALSO GO AWAY?

My inadequacies remind me of a similar question Jesus Christ put to the Twelve to sound the depth of their commitment: “Will ye also go away?” (John 6:67). Peter, to his great credit, answered, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John



6:68). By contrast, I am forced to admit that sometimes I have deserted the Master; sometimes I have wandered. In the words of the hymn "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," I know that I can be "prone to wander . . . prone to leave the God I love" (*Hymns* [1948], no. 70).

And yet I also know that in a deeper sense, I am bound to Christ, who has bought me with His blood and won me with His love. I am bound to Him by ties that reach to the very depths of my soul. Even when I wander, I feel the tug of His loving question "Will you also go away?" And with Peter I feel constrained to exclaim, "Lord, to whom shall I go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

The Lord's questions call me home. They draw me back to my true self, to my eternal nature. While sin leads me ever farther away from myself, into a realm of masks and error, the Lord's interrogatives invite me to claim my true name—son of God—and beckon me to my true home.

## LOVEST THOU ME?

Another question that reverberates in my heart and echoes ever more loudly in my ears as the years go by is "Lovest thou me?" (John 21:15). The Lord addressed this question again to Peter, only this time after the Resurrection. "Lovest thou me?" He asks His chief

Apostle—and implicitly all who would call themselves His disciples. It may seem easy to say, as did Peter, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee" (John 21:15). But the Lord is insistent that this question be taken seriously. As if to signal how serious the question is, the Lord repeated it three times. Thrice Peter denied his Lord; thrice he was required to reaffirm his love for the Lord, as if to atone for each denial. The repetition also made clear that the Lord will not settle for any perfunctory, easy answers. This question must be answered honestly, in the light of searching self-reflection about whether our commitment to the first commandment has made any discernible difference in how we keep the second great commandment. "Lovest thou me?" He asks. Then "feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep. . . . Feed my sheep" (John 21:15–17).

I, too, cannot answer this question easily. No pat answer will do. For this is surely a question that will be asked me in heaven by the "keeper of the gate," "the Holy One of Israel," who "employeth no servant there" (2 Ne. 9:41). This question calls me to a deep accounting of my life. How well have I loved others? I remember that Jesus laid down His life for such "sheep." Have I lost my life in service to others? What about

those for whom I have been given special care—my wife, my children, my parents and extended family? How have I cared for my home teaching families, the 14-year-olds I teach in Sunday School, my friends and neighbors? "Lovest thou me?" Then "feed my sheep." Once again, the Lord's question cuts to the core of my being, brooks no evasions, and demands to be answered with my life.

## ENCOMPASSED BY DIVINE QUESTIONS

In my youth, I was full of gospel questions. Now, in middle age, I feel encompassed by such questions as these—the Lord's questions. They punctuate my prayers. They qualify my own questioning. "Adam [or John], where art thou?" "Whom say ye that I am?"

"Will ye also go away?" "Lovest thou me?" Such divine questions now seem much more important than the questions I once wrote in the margins of my scriptures. Now when I read the scriptures, I feel the weight and tug of questions posed to me by the scriptures, such as: "Knowest thou the condescension of God?" (1 Ne. 11:16). "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" (Matt. 8:26). "Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?" (Job 40:8). "Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What

greater witness can you have than from God?" (D&C 6:23). "Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts? . . . and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, . . . can ye feel so now?" (Alma 5:14, 26).

At this Easter season, it is appropriate to remember the Lord's questions, which challenge us to repent and give our lives more fully to God. By opening my heart to the Lord's questions of me, I have discovered that I am in a better position to ask and receive answers to my questions of Him. I have come to learn that the promise He gave His disciples in John 7:17 is true and faithful: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." When I faithfully live in accordance with the will of God, doubt fades, testimony grows, and I seem to know more certainly and hold more steadfastly to truths that really matter—such as that Jesus Christ lives, that this is His Church, that Joseph Smith was a true prophet, that the Lord guides His Church today through a living prophet, even President Gordon B. Hinckley. □

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*Gospel topics: discipleship, faith, scriptures*



**O**ur service to others reveals our love for the Lord.

# SEARCH THE

*The prophets are watchmen on the tower. They are seers. They have a mantle whereby they see what lies ahead, and they give warning to those wise enough to listen.*



BY ELDER L. ALDIN PORTER  
*Of the Seventy*

**I**n November 2000 I had the opportunity to travel with President Gordon B. Hinckley, President Boyd K. Packer, Elder David B. Haight, and others to Nauvoo to the dedication of the cornerstones of the temple, which was nearly identical to the original cornerstone dedication under the direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith. And yet it was not just a reenactment; it was, in fact, a dedication of those stones. We arose at a normal hour at home, had time for breakfast, flew to Nauvoo, completed that marvelous experience of the dedication, and were home in ample time for dinner with the family. I could not help but think of my ancestors and others who paid such a price to travel that same distance over many months with enormous cost in sacrifice of comfort and safety.

We have made similar advances in the opportunities for communication, education, and learning, yet I am sure we have barely scratched the surface. Just stop and realize that there is, even now, an explosion of resources that makes it possible for a person living in the most remote areas of the world to have access to the finest libraries.

Yet in all this, we would do well to remember that some things do not change. I would like to discuss principles that do not change and the role that our present prophets have in holding us firm to those principles. These values and principles are as new and fresh as the latest Internet communication. Yet living by them has blessed mankind since the very dawn of this earth's existence.

In September 1995 in the general Relief Society meeting, President Hinckley introduced a remarkable

document. It was the work of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve and most certainly the inspiration of heaven. President Hinckley said in introducing that document:

"With so much of sophistry that is passed off as truth, with so much of deception concerning standards and values, with so much of allurement and enticement to take on the slow stain of the world, we have felt to warn and forewarn. In furtherance of this we of the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles now issue a proclamation to the Church and to the world as a declaration and reaffirmation of standards, doctrines, and practices relative to the family which the prophets, seers, and revelators of this church have repeatedly stated throughout its history."<sup>1</sup>

He then read the entire proclamation. Would you note some words he used—*deception, allurement, enticement, warn, and forewarn*.

## STUDY THE PROCLAMATION ON THE FAMILY

May I suggest in all seriousness and solemnity that a very careful study of that proclamation will assist you in a major way as you build a home and a family. Now, a voice of warning to those who are not yet married. If your proposed marriage partner is not in agreement with the doctrines taught therein, know there is danger in your committing your life to him or to her.

When I was first presented with a copy of the proclamation and noted that it carried the stamp of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, I was reminded of a day many years ago when I was sitting in general conference; it was long before the call to the Seventy came to me. President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) was talking. It was priesthood meeting. It was the last general priesthood meeting prior to his death, and he made a statement

# PROPHETS

A woman with dark hair, wearing a white robe, stands in the foreground, looking up at a tall, ornate, metallic structure. On top of the structure, three men in suits are visible. The background is a dramatic, stormy sky with lightning bolts. The ground is cracked and dry.

**A**s we look to the prophets for guidance, we can be confident that they will not lead us astray.



that settled on my soul as pure truth. Let me quote it to you:

"Now, brethren, I think there is one thing which we should have exceedingly clear in our minds. Neither the President of the Church, nor the First Presidency, nor the united voice of the First Presidency and the Twelve will ever lead the Saints astray or send forth counsel to the world that is contrary to the mind and will of the Lord."<sup>2</sup>

I stand as a witness of the truthfulness of that statement. It has been made clear to me more times than I can count that the senior Brethren—those whom we sustain as apostles, prophets, and revelators—speak the mind and will of the Lord as President Smith bore witness they do. With that in mind, let me read portions of the proclamation:

"We, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children."

If the number-one objective of your life is not to establish an eternal family, then you are going to forgo an essential element for happiness here and hereafter. I might say that you would be wise not to put off that day for trivial reasons or maybe for reasons that aren't so trivial. To continue:

"All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents." Will you note that: "Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose."

As you read the proclamation, consider every single sentence. For instance, there is a great deal of confusion today in the world about gender. Here the prophets have spoken clearly. Note this:

"In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize his or her divine destiny as an heir of eternal life."

I continue with the proclamation:

"The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood

as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force."<sup>3</sup>

You are challenged to live in a world that has largely abandoned the doctrine just read. Current thinking suggests that families impede one's career or certainly interfere with personal fulfillment. I promise you that you can be certain that sorrow and regret will eventually come to those who ignore or rebel against this commandment from our Father in Heaven. I read again:

"We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife."

Please forgive me for speaking very frankly. Far too many think it is all right to dabble in sexual sin mentally and physically and that they will be free from any serious consequences. Listen carefully to the following warning and instruction that was given to the young men of the Church some months ago.

President Hinckley said:

"You live in a world of terrible temptations. Pornography, with its sleazy filth, sweeps over the earth like a horrible, engulfing tide. It is poison. Do not watch it or read it. It will destroy you if you do. It will take from you your self-respect. It will rob you of a sense of the beauties of life. It will tear you down and pull you into a slough of evil thoughts and possibly of evil actions. Stay away from it. Shun it as you would a foul disease, for it is just as deadly. Be virtuous in thought and in deed. God has planted in you, for a purpose, a divine urge which may be easily subverted to evil and destructive ends. When you are young, do not get involved in steady

dating. When you reach an age where you think of marriage, then is the time to become so involved."<sup>4</sup>

Can you not feel the spiritual power of that man whom the Lord has raised up to lead us giving a warning to you individually? Will you contemplate his words in your own life? Measure your activities against what the prophet has asked us to do. Do you realize that the message through the ages from the prophets has been to stay clean, to stay pure, and that they promise you will reap unlimited happiness? Now let us return to the proclamation:

"We declare the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God's eternal plan."



PHOTO BY JED CLARK

*President Gordon B. Hinckley has counseled us to be virtuous in thought and deed.*

A PROCLAMATION  
TO THE WORLD

THE FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS  
OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



**W**e can find happiness here and hereafter as we implement the principles taught in the proclamation on the family.

Much of what is seen today on network television, videos, movies, the Internet, and other means of communication is degrading to women and desecrates the sacredness of the power of procreation. I would that I had sufficient words or capacity in language to impress upon you the necessity of cleanliness of thought and action in order to build a strong foundation of righteousness in anticipation of a happy and fulfilling life. I testify to you from the depth of my soul that what President Hinckley said is true. Think about it. I quote again from the proclamation:

"Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. 'Children are an heritage of the Lord' (Psalms 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs."

Did you note "to provide for their physical . . . needs"? I continue: "to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations." Do not take lightly that last statement.

## DISCIPLINE BRINGS FREEDOM

Note the comment from the Brethren about the necessity to provide for their physical needs. When we are small children, we want what we want when we want it, and some of us never get over that impediment; we remain self-centered and demanding of others as we reach adulthood.

We simply cannot have all that we may want at any age. Discipline and freedom walk hand in hand. License is not freedom, though Lucifer would have you think so. License is eventually slavery. Discipline will bring freedom. I realize that may sound strange; it is the truth. Discipline in every facet of your lives will bring you freedom. One without the other will not deliver the rewards we seek. Much unhappiness develops in a home where there is no financial discipline. Even prior to your marriage, practice financial discipline.

Permit me to share the words of the President of the Church as he gave them to us in priesthood meeting in October of 1998. He said, "I wish to speak to you about temporal matters." He then reviewed the experiences of Joseph of Egypt and the seven years of plenty followed by the seven years of famine. Now,

note carefully. Then he said: "I am suggesting that the time has come to get our houses in order.

"So many of our people are living on the very edge of their incomes. In fact, some are living on borrowings."

President Hinckley continued:

"We have witnessed in recent weeks wide and fear-some swings in the markets of the world. The economy is a fragile thing. A stumble in the economy in Jakarta or Moscow can immediately affect the entire world. It can eventually reach down to each of us as individuals. [Note the next sentence.] There is a portent of stormy weather ahead to which we had better give heed."

Might I say that those words are filled with warning from one who is a seer, one who can see afar off and through his prophetic insight raise a warning voice. He continued:

"I am troubled by the huge consumer installment debt which hangs over the people of the nation, including our own people. . . .

"I recognize that it may be necessary to borrow to get a home, of course. But let us buy a home that we can afford and thus ease the payments which will constantly hang over our heads without mercy or respite for as long as 30 years. . . .

He concluded: "I urge you, brethren." Keep in mind, sisters, that this was a priesthood meeting. I'm sure the counsel is good for each of us. "I urge you, brethren, to look to the condition of your finances. I urge you to be modest in your expenditures; discipline yourselves in your purchases to avoid debt to the extent possible. Pay off debt as quickly as you can, and free yourselves from bondage.

"This is a part of the temporal gospel in which we believe. May the Lord bless you, my beloved brethren, to set your houses in order."<sup>5</sup>

When I returned from my full-time mission years ago, I gave my mission report to Elder LeGrand Richards of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. As part of that report he gave me some marvelous advice, which you may think is very difficult to follow. He told me to always pay my tithing, which would not be a surprise from a member of the Twelve. But then he said to save an equal amount. He suggested the best place to invest the savings was in education both for me and for my future wife. The second-best place was to invest in a home. The third was anywhere else as long as it was an investment that

protected my hard-earned savings.

I would heartily recommend that you carefully consider Elder Richard's counsel.

In my young days Will Rogers was a famous cowboy philosopher. He said, "I am more concerned about the return of my money than the return on my money." That is good counsel.

A recent newspaper editorial indicates that "a record 15,138 Utahns filed for bankruptcy last year, an increase of 8 percent over 1999." Think about that. Consider this: Utah is the number-two state in the nation "for per-capita bankruptcy filings," according to this editorial.<sup>6</sup>

What an indictment of those of us who live in Utah! I appreciate that many are not natives of Utah. We, of all the people in the entire world, should have learned by sad experience to listen to the prophets. Hear me carefully so you don't misunderstand. Our bankruptcy law is on the books for the rare occasion when true disaster strikes a family, and none of us

would take away that protection. But I'll also tell you it cannot function as it ought in a society with overextended and, frankly, somewhat dishonest people.

The editorial goes on to suggest that the majority of these 15,000 people are not using chapter 13. Chapter 13 of the Bankruptcy Act permits the applicant to repay his debts over a longer period of time and to pay them himself or herself. Instead, more than 9,000 of those 15,000 people applied for chapter 7, which permits one to break his promises to his creditors and walk away from his

debts, leaving his obligations forever unpaid.

During the past few years, we have enjoyed a period of economic health in Utah and most other areas in the United States rarely matched in our history. Yet in the midst of all this, a record number of Utahns wanted someone else to pay their debts. Now, I have only the statistics for Utah, but I am quite certain this is not a Utah problem only.

There is a question asked of those who seek a temple recommend that deals with honesty. I sincerely hope that those who have taken unfair advantage of this just and proper law don't carry a temple recommend and feel that they're absolved from responsibilities.


There has been in the last decade, in my judgment, a serious decline in honesty, truthfulness, fidelity, honor, and veracity. In their place, many have substituted duplicity and falsehood.

PHOTO BY JED CLARK



*President Gordon B. Hinckley and his counselors, President Thomas S. Monson, left, and President James E. Faust, right, help provide us with light and direction.*





**M**uch unhappiness develops in a home where there is no financial discipline.

Surely President Hinckley's counsel to set your houses in order is important to remember as you look forward to establishing permanent homes.

In the early days of the Restoration, the Lord called upon the Saints to settle in Jackson County, Missouri. They had been there just a few years when they were driven out by armed mobs. The Prophet Joseph Smith, who was in Kirtland at the time, received the mind and will of the Lord as to why this had happened. Now, keep in mind they were sent to Jackson County at the instruction of the Prophet. They were then driven out. Obviously the President of the Church was concerned about what had happened. The Lord answered him in the revelation we know as section 101 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Will you note carefully the Lord's words:

"Verily I say unto you, concerning your brethren who have been afflicted, and persecuted, and cast out from the land of their inheritance—

"I, the Lord, have suffered the affliction to come upon them, wherewith they have been afflicted, in consequence of their transgressions" (D&C 101:1–2).

The Lord enumerates some of those transgressions, and, by the way, among them was not murder, not

adultery, not thievery, those which we might consider to be of enormous consequences. The last one the Lord mentioned was this one:

"They were slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; therefore, the Lord their God is slow to hearken unto their prayers, to answer them in the day of their trouble.

"In the day of their peace they esteemed lightly my counsel; but, in the day of their trouble, of necessity they feel after me" (D&C 101:7–8).<sup>7</sup>

The Lord also made clear in verse 3 of that revelation that "they shall be mine in that day when I shall come to make up my jewels," but I would add they did learn by their suffering to hear the word of the Lord through His prophets.

Now a fundamental truth: a great deal of contention originates in the home over a lack of discipline in financial matters. Remember again, discipline is a prerequisite to personal and family freedom. Let us return to the proclamation:

"The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother

who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on the principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners."

Now let us come to a conclusion of the proclamation:

"We warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God."

Do you note how many times the First Presidency and the Twelve have indicated to us that if we refuse to hear them and we refuse to obey, we will account not to them but before God? That is a very fundamental principle. We continue:

"Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets."

## HEED THE VOICE OF THE LORD THROUGH HIS PROPHETS

I stated earlier that I have a sincere conviction that we will in fact one day stand before God. Despite war in the world, many of us live in times of peace and plenty. I must admit that I have a fear that in another day, another time, our descendants may one day describe us as "slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; therefore, the Lord their God is slow to hearken unto their prayers, to answer them in the day of their trouble."

"In the day of their peace they esteemed lightly my counsel; but, in the day of their trouble, of necessity they feel after me" (D&C 101:7-8).

Whether it be in matters of obedience to spiritual

laws or to temporal laws, we would be very wise to listen to His counsel as revealed through His servants the prophets in the days of our peace.

Sisters, in President Hinckley's talk to you the day he introduced the proclamation on the family, he said these words:

"I believe this is the best season for women in all the history of the world. In opportunities for education, for the training of your hands and minds, there has never before been a time when doors were so widely opened to you as they are today.

"But neither has there been a time, at least in recent history, when you have been confronted with more challenging problems. I need not remind you that the world we are in is a world of turmoil, of shifting values. Shrill voices call out for one thing or another in betrayal of time-tested standards of behavior. The moral moorings of our society have been badly shaken. So many of the youth of the world, and like-

wise so many of their elders, listen only to the seductive voice of self-gratification. You single young women face tremendous challenges, and we know it is not easy for you. I cannot say enough of appreciation for your determination to live by the standards of the Church, to walk with the strength of virtue, to keep your minds above the slough of filth which seems to be moving like a flood across the world."<sup>8</sup>

"The seductive voice of self-gratification"—the lure of

Satan's way—sounds so logical and really so innocent. It is not!

The prophets are watchmen on the tower (see 2 Kgs. 9:17; D&C 101:45). They are seers. They have a mantle whereby they see what lies ahead, and they give warning to those wise enough to listen. In section 1 of the Doctrine and Covenants, in speaking of His prophets, the Lord said this:

"What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38).

PHOTO BY ACEY HARPER, FROM THE MISSION



*The President of the Church, the First Presidency, and the Apostles speak the mind and will of the Lord.*





**W**e need more people who are willing to keep sacred covenants and to build upon the sacrifices made by our forefathers.

I would also say to you that when President Gordon B. Hinckley speaks, the other 14 men that we have sustained as prophets will be in harmony with him. You will not do well if you seek to find disagreement or contention among them. I promise you that you will be disappointed if you seek to shop among them for justification for your opposition to the word of the Lord, and I hasten to warn you that you will stand alone when that day comes, should you rebel against the prophets.

What we need today is not more prophets. What we need today is people with listening ears, people who can internalize, who can feel the words of the living prophets. We need more who are willing to keep the sacred covenants that we have made.

Now, you need to understand that this is your day. This is your time. We honor, as we should, our forefathers for their enormous sacrifices not just in the Church but in the cause of freedom, but I ask you, "Are we only the descendants of great men and women? Do we not have a part to play in the ongoing work of the Lord Jesus Christ?" The answer is, "Of course we do." And as our forefathers did not fail in their challenges, we must not fail in ours. They

found the light and direction they needed in the living prophets of their day. We will find the light and direction we need in our day from the same source, even the living prophets of today.

I testify to you in all solemnity as a witness that the Lord Jesus Christ lives and is directing His Church today. I stand further as a witness that there are living prophets among us. That we will have ears to hear is my prayer. □

*From a Church Educational System fireside address given at Brigham Young University on 4 February 2001.*

*Elder L. Aldin Porter served as a member of the Seventy from 1987 to 2001.*

*Gospel topics: family, parenting, morality, prophets*

#### NOTES

1. "Stand Strong against the Wiles of the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 100.
2. "Eternal Keys and the Right to Preside," *Ensign*, July 1972, 88.
3. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
4. "Some Thoughts on Temples, Retention of Converts, and Missionary Service," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 51.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 52–54.
6. "Broken Promises," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 15 Jan. 2001, A8.
7. See also *History of the Church*, 1:453–64.
8. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 99.



BY MELANIE L. SILVESTER

*Amid the trees of an isolated area in the American Northwest, a family of Swedish Latter-day Saints remained faithful because of a home Sunday School.*

# A BRANCH OF FAITH



**O**n the morning of Sunday, 3 June 1913, sunlight filtered through the window of a small farmhouse nestled in the tall trees of a forest in the Pacific Northwest. It shone on a spotless white linen cloth covering the sacrament table at the front of the room. Five families, consisting of nine adults and 20 well-scrubbed children, sat on homemade wooden benches. Dressed in their Sunday best, these Swedish converts intently watched the missionaries standing before them. The elders spoke in English, and every few seconds a child would whisper the Swedish translation into his or her parent's ear.

This was a historic occasion for these families, all of whom were part of the extended family of Erik and Sigrid Oslin: a home Sunday School was being organized. This was an answer to their prayers. For more than five years they had lived in Pleasant Valley, Washington—a sparsely populated wilderness area in the northwest corner of the state, far away from the nearest Latter-day Saint branch. They could have abandoned their religion, but they did not. It is a testimony to their complete conversion in Sweden that they remained faithful during those years.

## A FAMILY OF LOGGERS

In Sweden, Erik Oslin had been the financially comfortable owner of a logging operation and a modest estate on the Indals River in Liden, 30 miles inland from the city of Sundsvall on the east central coast of Sweden. He and his wife, Sigrid, were the parents of eight children, five of whom lived to adulthood: Brita, who married Lars Larson; Alida, who married Theodore Linde; Emil, who married Ida Wiklund; Erick; and Cemoria. All lived on the Oslin estate. Farther up the Indals River from the Oslin home lived Martha Selander; her husband, John; and his niece, Beda. This “community” of family and in-laws numbered nearly 20 in 1898.

## FINDING THE GOSPEL

In the winter of 1898, Lars Larson traveled to Sundsvall on business and saw two elders from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints conducting a street meeting. As he listened, a strong feeling came over him that what they were teaching was

# IN THE FOREST



*Far left: A reminder of how things may have looked on the morning of 3 June 1913, when the Pleasant Valley Sunday School was organized. Above left: Lars Larson, the first to find the gospel, with his wife, Brita (Oslin), and their six children in 1906. Below: The Pleasant Valley Sunday School in 1917, including the Oslin, Linde, Larson, Munson, and Selander families.*



true, and he hurried home to tell his wife, Brita. As soon as he could, he invited Elders Carl O. Johnson and John H. Anderson to Liden. They were warmly welcomed by the family and soon made the Oslin estate a regular stop on their mission route. Elder Johnson wrote in his journal that he could feel happiness and peace in the Oslin home.

Eighteen-year-old daughter Alida Oslin, however, had heard disturbing rumors about the missionaries and wanted nothing to do with them. She said emphatically to a friend, who wanted her to go to a public meeting conducted by the missionaries,



*Above: Erik and Sigrid Oslin with their two youngest children, Erick and Cemoria, in front of the Oslin home. This is the only home still standing that belonged to those who attended the Pleasant Valley Sunday School. Center: Sigrid Oslin. Right: Theodore and Alida (Oslin) Linde family in 1910 in front of their home, which had previously belonged to Beda (Selander) Pehrson.*

"Nothing doing! I wouldn't go near people like that for anything." But Alida's friend begged her, and finally Alida consented to go just to show the missionaries how wrong they were. Arming herself with her well-worn Bible and a few choice scriptures, she marched into the hall ready to argue. However, as the elders started preaching, Alida felt a sweet spirit fill her heart and whisper to her that what they were saying was true. She no longer wanted to argue, but instead desired to hear more and invited them to teach her and her beau, Theodore Linde.

"It seems as though here are good people," wrote Elder Johnson of this young couple. "I have hopes for a harvest."<sup>1</sup> When Theodore heard the message of the restored gospel, he too received a witness of its truthfulness.

## BAPTISMS

On the morning of 17 March 1899, six weeks after their first contact with the missionaries, six family members were scheduled to be baptized. According to Elder Johnson's journal, they "sought for a place for the baptism, and it was shown in a dream to Brita Larson, and when we found the place, it took only ten minutes work to get it ready, and it called forth our surprise to find it so appropriate in every way. Three of those . . . baptized, who were previously ill, afterwards felt healthier."<sup>2</sup> Among those baptized that cold March day were Brita and Lars Larson; her

brother, Emil Oslin; her mother, Sigrid; and Johanna and Erik Oslin.

Nine days later, on 26 March 1899, the missionaries opened the ice on the Indals River with an axe so more of the family could be baptized. One elder entered the water and kept the ice chunks away while his companion performed the baptisms. Among those baptized were Alida Oslin; her soon-to-be husband, Theodore Linde; and her aunt and uncle, John and Martha Selander, among others. Their clothing immediately froze to them, and although they had to walk to a cabin up a long hillside, none became ill. Elder Johnson wrote, "At eight o'clock in the evening we had the sacrament together, and the power of the Lord was so richly enjoyed that all could remember it. There were about 50 to 60 persons who witnessed the ceremony, but the greatest calm and quiet prevailed, and many eyes were wet with tears. All was under the Spirit's guidance, and it seemed as though this was a powerful testimony for many and probably will never leave them."<sup>3</sup>



## IMMIGRATING TO WASHINGTON

After their baptisms, the new converts were ostracized by many old friends in the village. Even the children's friends would not play with them, and old timers, who customarily bowed to the prominent Erik Oslin when they met him on the street, ignored him—even though he had not been baptized. But instead of being discouraged, the new Latter-day Saints felt a longing to immigrate to America.

The immigration began in 1902 when Theodore Linde's brother, John, moved his family to northwest Washington and wrote glowing letters about the beauty of the country, its similarity to Sweden, and the job opportunities in the logging business. Shortly

threadbare that skunks came in during the night. Our first Christmas was quite different than what we were used to in Sweden, but the Spirit was there, and I can remember how joyful I felt. I also remember the tears in our mother's eyes. But no matter what the hardships were, my parents never wanted to go back."<sup>4</sup>

The families were remarkable in their ability to remain self-reliant and unified. The men worked at a nearby shingle mill and, during off hours, took turns helping each other clear the land, build homes and barns, and plant and harvest crops. Mother Sigrid and her daughters and daughters-in-law helped one another with chores and children, shared their food, nursed their sick, and sewed for each other.

Theodore, who had natural leadership abilities, was asked to serve in the community. He was put in charge of building up the roads and served on the new cemetery board. He was nicknamed "Preacher Linde" because he told everyone he met about the gospel.



*John and Martha Selander with their only child, Olaf, and his wife and children.*

### THOSE WHO IMMIGRATED

Erik Oslin's sister, Martha, married John Selander, and they immigrated in 1905.

**ERIK AND SIGRID OSLIN**  
Immigrated 1908

**BRITA**

Married  
Lars Larson  
Immigrated  
1906

**ALIDA**

Married  
Theodore Linde  
Immigrated  
1908

**EMIL**

Married  
Ida Wiklund  
Immigrated  
1908

**ERICK**

Immigrated  
1908

**CEMORIA**

Immigrated  
1908

thereafter, part of the family immigrated: John and Martha Selander in 1905, and Lars and Brita Larson with their six children in 1906.

Theodore and Alida had discussed immigration, but they did not seriously consider it as they were building a new house. One night in 1908, Alida had a dream after which she knew they should move their family to America. She told Theodore, and he had implicit faith that his wife's dream was from the Lord. He immediately put the unfinished house and property up for sale.

Erik, who supported his family's decision to become Latter-day Saints, decided he and his family should immigrate to America with Theodore and Alida. Both families had to sell their properties for much less than they were worth, but they obtained enough money for the group of 10 to book passage on the ship *Cedric* to New York. Once in America, they traveled by train to the rich farming and logging area of Washington. They continued on to Pleasant Valley by horse and wagon over pock-marked dirt roads to join the rest of the family.

The first winter was hard. Alida's oldest daughter, Ranghilde, wrote of their new home: "It was just a shack; it had holes in the corners, and the walls were so

## KEEPING THE GOSPEL ALIVE

Missionaries visited the group of Swedish Latter-day Saint loggers and farmers sporadically. With the nearest branch in Bellingham, 25 miles away over rough roads by horse and wagon, it was nearly impossible for the large, extended family to attend church. And, without authority from Church headquarters, they could not organize themselves in Pleasant Valley, even though Lars Larson was an elder and Theodore Linde was a teacher.

Nevertheless, the group flourished. "[Our parents] had such strong testimonies," wrote one of the children who grew up there. "I am sure it was the Holy Ghost that told them it was true without missionaries or activity, and they held on to that. Nothing could rob them of their faith in the gospel. We believed the Church was true because they told us it was. They talked a lot about it. We learned to keep the Sabbath day holy, although we didn't have our church around. Dad [Theodore Linde] was straight as an arrow; things were either black or white with him; there was no rationalizing."<sup>5</sup> But they still missed going to Church and enjoying the blessings of a formal organization.

In 1910 President Melvin J. Ballard (later a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles), who was serving as president of the Northwestern States Mission, visited the group in Pleasant Valley. In 1913

the decision was made to form a home Sunday School there. Theodore Linde was called as Sunday School superintendent and ordained a priest by Hyrum Bell on 4 June 1913, the day after it was officially organized. Lars Larson was called as his assistant. The family was overjoyed.

The Sunday School was conducted simply. "We met in [three] different homes, using various rooms for classes," wrote one family member. "Maybe we were not all in the right age-group, but we did learn. Our teachers were family members who were teenagers or whoever was available. These meetings gave us a good Church education which influenced our whole family."<sup>6</sup>

Meetings were held every other week, or even

*Beda (Selander) Pehrson Munson, shown here with her two oldest children, had six children from two marriages. Baptized in 1912, she has a faithful Latter-day Saint posterity.*



once a month, because the roads were not yet developed and the farming chores were time consuming. They sang hymns from the Deseret Sunday School songbook, and sometimes the three oldest Oslin sisters accompanied the singing on their guitars.

"Our house was spotless for Sunday School," wrote one of the grandchildren. "I remember my mother taking out beautiful white tablecloths, ironed to perfection to use on the sacrament table. The sacrament was a very sacred thing to her."<sup>7</sup>

The sacrament bread was homemade brown bread, passed around on a dinner plate, and the water was passed in a communally shared glass. Talks and announcements were given in Swedish.

"When we became restless, we would lie back on the bed in our classroom and get giggly," remembers another grandchild. "My cousin, who was our teacher, kept reminding us to sit up and be quiet, but the only time we stopped talking was when Grandpa Theodore walked in. He was gentle with us, but when he gave us the eye we knew we had to straighten up."<sup>8</sup>

After church the families enjoyed dinner together, and whoever held the Sunday School at their house fed everyone. The wives and daughters cooked and cleaned all day Saturday.

One granddaughter wrote: "I remember it with joy. If I hadn't gone to the Pleasant Valley Sunday School I wouldn't be here now."<sup>9</sup> This was true for the whole group.

## LEGACY OF THE HOME SUNDAY SCHOOL

Oslin, Linde, and Larson descendants now number in the 800s. Many have served as missionaries, teachers, and leaders throughout the Puget Sound area of Washington and elsewhere in the world. The ripples of Lars Larson's invitation in 1898 to the missionaries on a street in Sundsvall, Sweden, continue to roll forward.

In 1932, when his Alida died, Theodore Linde drove his family members to Salt Lake City, Utah, to be sealed together in the temple. He drove others to be sealed in 1936. In 1938, when the first stake was organized in Seattle, Theodore was called to the high council; his eldest son, Ragnar, was called as first counselor to the stake president; and another son, Henry, was called as the first bishop of the new ward in Bellingham. They were all set apart by Elder Ballard, who was then an Apostle.

Just two years later, on 17 September 1940, Theodore died. The entire family and community mourned. Shortly afterward, the home Sunday School, which had sustained this group of Swedish Latter-day Saints for 27 years, was disbanded, and the members attended the Bellingham Ward.

Today the home of Erik and Sigrid Oslin, the only one left standing of the original homes, serves as a reminder of these great and humble 20th-century Latter-day Saint pioneers. The Bellingham stake was organized in 1994, and now there is a stake center in Ferndale, less than a mile away from this old home. If the Pleasant Valley Sunday School members had been asked at that first meeting to look ahead to the end of the century and envision a beautiful stake center just down the road, they might have replied in Swedish, "With God, all things are possible." And if you had looked closely, you would have seen it shining brightly in their eyes. □

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*Gospel topics: pioneering, conversion, enduring to the end*

### NOTES

1. Carl O. Johnson. All citations come from journals or letters, copies of which are in the author's possession.
2. Carl O. Johnson.
3. Carl O. Johnson.
4. Ranghilde Linde Safsten.
5. Ranghilde Linde Safsten.
6. Minnie Linde, wife of John.
7. Katherine Lantrip.
8. Evelyn Oslin Norman.
9. Audrey Safsten Hansen.



# THE *Sin of Achan*

BY CHRISTOPHER J. MORGAN

*The tragic life of Achan teaches us that we cannot hide our sins from the Lord.*

As the Israelites made their final preparations to take possession of the land of Canaan, which the Lord had promised them, their main threat was not an outside enemy but corruption from within. Like a cancerous tumor, the effects of sin may at first be difficult to detect, but if left untreated they can be deadly and affect many lives. This is a lesson the Lord taught forcefully to Joshua and his people as they entered their promised land.

While the Israelites were camped on the eastern edge of the Jordan River, the Lord solemnly and publicly invested Joshua with the authority to lead the people (see Num. 27:18–23). Joshua then bound his people by covenant to obey all of the Lord's commands. The people assented and declared, "All that thou commandest us we will do. . . . Whosoever he be that doth rebel . . . , he shall be put to death" (Josh. 1:16–18).

ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL MANN





## VICTORY AT JERICHO

Once across the Jordan River, the Israelites faced a most difficult obstacle—Jericho. If they could conquer this heavily fortified city, passage into the interior of the land would be easily achieved. To prepare the people for battle, Joshua said, “Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you” (Josh. 3:5).

The Lord gave them the battle plan: Israelite soldiers, accompanied by seven priests with trumpets and the ark of the covenant, were to march around Jericho once a day for six days. Before going up to Jericho to march on the seventh day, Joshua specifically forbade the people from taking anything from the city for personal gain, saying, “Keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it” (Josh. 6:18; see footnote 18a). As they concluded their march this day, according to the Lord’s instructions, the people shouted, the trumpets blew, and “the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city” (Josh. 6:20).

During the destruction and occupation of Jericho, however, one Israelite man named Achan disobeyed and took of the spoils for himself, and “the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel” (Josh. 7:1). Joshua was not aware of what Achan had done or that his presence in the camp had caused the Lord to withdraw His support from the people.

## DEFEAT AT AI

When Joshua sent about 3,000 men to capture the city of Ai, a town much smaller than Jericho about 15 miles (24 km) to the northwest, the army returned in defeat, having lost 36 men. “The hearts of the people melted, and became as water.” And Joshua “rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord until the eventide” (Josh. 7:5–6).

“Why had the Lord not supported Israel’s troops in the battle at Ai?” Joshua wondered. “Israel hath sinned,” came the Lord’s reply, “for they have taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled [been false]” (Josh. 7:11; see footnote 11b). Along with this news the Lord again commanded Joshua to sanctify the people by removing those who had sinned. The Lord said that until this was done “thou canst not stand before thine enemies” (Josh. 7:13). Thus the Lord made it clear that the principles of obedience and repentance were paramount to Israel’s success.

## WE CANNOT HIDE SINS FROM THE LORD

In an attempt to encourage Achan to confess, the Lord told Joshua to have each tribe present themselves before Him and He would point out to which tribe the offender belonged. When the Lord chose the tribe of

Judah, He asked Joshua to have everyone in that tribe come before Him by family. He said He would identify which family had the guilty one. Achan was certainly present as the number of possible offenders was being narrowed. Then each man in the guilty family was brought one at a time before the Lord until it was Achan’s turn. When confronted, Achan finally confessed (see Josh. 7:20). At each step in the identification process, the Lord had given Achan an opportunity to come forward and admit his sin, but he had refused until he was directly exposed.

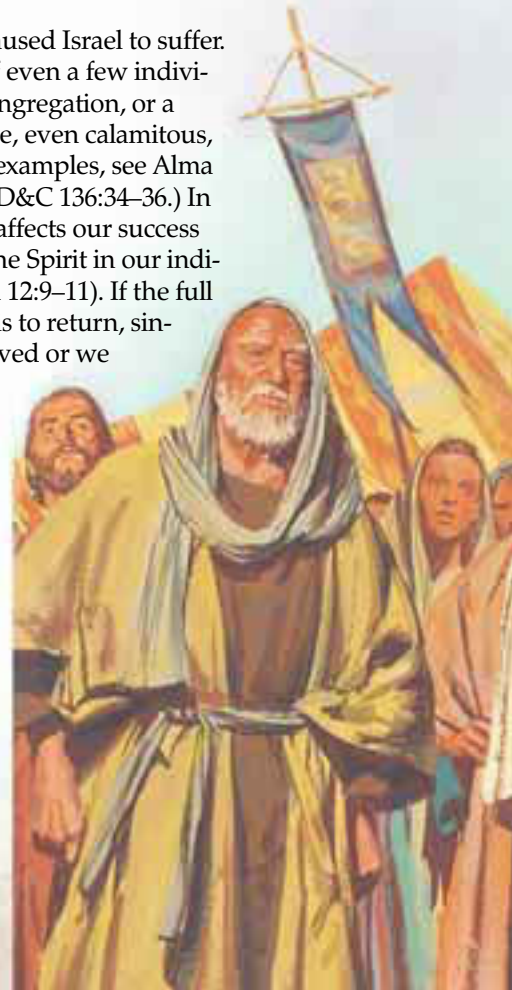
Before executing judgment, Joshua had the camp cleansed of all the “accursed things” and said to Achan, “Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble you this day” (Josh. 7:25). Achan and his household were then stoned and burned, “so the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger” (Josh. 7:26).

## SIN AFFECTS US AND OTHERS

After Achan was removed, the Lord said to Joshua, “Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: . . . arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land” (Josh. 8:1).

Israel’s success in destroying its enemies and obtaining the land depended upon the people’s collective obedience to the will of God. “The inward vessel shall be cleansed first,” the Lord has said (Alma 60:23).

Achan’s sin had caused Israel to suffer. So also can the sins of even a few individuals in a family, a congregation, or a nation have a negative, even calamitous, effect on others. (For examples, see Alma 39:11; 46:9; Hel. 2:13; D&C 136:34–36.) In a similar manner, sin affects our success and the presence of the Spirit in our individual lives (see Alma 12:9–11). If the full strength of the Spirit is to return, sinfulness must be removed or we will forfeit the Lord’s promised blessings. Elder Ray H. Wood, a former member of the Seventy, has said: “When a person violates any of God’s commandments, if there is no repentance the Lord withdraws His protective and sustaining influence. When we lose power with God, we know of a certainty





that the problem lies within us and not with God. . . . Without God's help, we are left to ourselves."<sup>1</sup>

After we have participated in the process of repentance and forgiveness, we may have power to succeed where we first have failed. This blessing is made possible through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

## SECURING OUR INHERITANCE

Symbolically, the land promised to Israel could represent the divine inheritance promised to all the faithful who keep their covenants with God. In keeping with this idea, Joshua's<sup>2</sup> bringing Israel through the Jordan River and into the land of Canaan serves as a powerful image for our own return to the presence of the Father and the Son (see Acts 7:45). We must become free of impurities so that we do not risk forfeiting our divine birthright (see 1 Ne. 15:34; D&C 1:31–33). Let us move forward to eternal life by securing the blessings

of the Atonement through faith in Him by willing, humble, and forthright repentance.

Apostles and prophets are still pleading with modern Israel today. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles declared: "My call to you . . . is something of the call Joshua gave to an earlier generation . . . who needed to perform a miracle in their time. To [those] who would need to complete ancient Israel's most formidable task—recapturing and repossessing their promised land of old—Joshua said, 'Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the Lord will do wonders among you' (Josh. 3:5)."<sup>3</sup> □

*Christopher J. Morgan is a member of the Farmington Oakridge 10th Ward, Farmington Utah Oakridge Stake.*

*Gospel topics: sin, repentance, obedience*

### NOTES

1. "'Made Like unto the Son of God,'" *Ensign*, May 1999, 40–41.
2. The name *Joshua* means "God is help" and is translated into Greek as *Jesus*.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, "'Sanctify Yourselves,'" *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 38.

**J**oshua gave Achan several opportunities to come forward and admit his sin, but Achan refused until he was directly exposed.



T H E

# Sword of the Lord and of Gideon

*The story of this Old Testament judge can help us move forward with faith in our many seemingly overwhelming responsibilities.*



BY ELDER MANFRED H.  
SCHÜTZE  
*Area Authority Seventy*

Many of us feel afraid or insecure when asked to serve in the Lord's kingdom. But the Lord has said: "I call upon the weak things of the world, those that are unlearned and despised. . . . And their arm shall be my arm, and I will be their shield and their buckler" (D&C 35:13–14). The story of Gideon can help those of us who feel discouraged or intimidated by a sacred call to lead, whether in the home or in church.

## THE LORD RAISED UP JUDGES

Under the inspired leadership of Joshua, the children of Israel conquered their enemies, took possession of their promised land, and set up the tabernacle of Jehovah at Shiloh (see Josh. 18:1). "And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord" (Josh. 24:31).

Tribal loyalties, however, soon replaced the spirit of national unity, leaving Israel vulnerable to its enemies. More damaging than disunity was their failure to consistently keep their covenants with the Lord. They fell into a repeating cycle of apostasy and repentance. From time to time the Lord called judges to deliver

His people from earthly oppression and spiritual bondage (see Judg. 2:11–23; Bible Dictionary, "Judges, The," 719). Gideon was one such judge.

## THE MIDIANITES

Every year for seven years a powerful confederation of nomadic tribes from southeastern Palestine had overrun the land of Israel. This was done each year at harvesttime, not by armies arrayed for battle, but with people "as grasshoppers for multitude." They invaded, pitching their tents and grazing their animals as they wandered through the land. So devastating were these migrations that they stripped the land of everything that could sustain life (see Judg. 6:1–5). The Midianites were like unwelcome distant relatives who came each year and stayed too long, eating the Israelites out of house and home.

So impoverished and desperate were the Israelites that they cried out to the Lord for help. The first thing the Lord did was send a prophet, whose name is unknown, to rebuke Israel for its disobedience (see Judg. 6:7–10). Next He sent an angel to a young man named Gideon as he secretly threshed wheat under an oak tree, hoping to keep the grain from the





**A**s the Midianites lay sound asleep, Gideon and his 300 men blew their trumpets and smashed their jars. Holding high their lamps, they shouted, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon"!

ILLUSTRATED BY DANIEL LEWIS

Midianites. The angel said: "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior. . . . Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand."<sup>1</sup>

## I AM THE LEAST

Gideon did not think he was a mighty warrior and replied, "Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." The angel replied, "Surely I will be with thee and thou shalt smite the Midianites *as one man*" (Judg. 6:15–16; emphasis added). To smite *as one man* means that the vast masses of Midianites would be conquered as if they were but a lone man. This seemed unbelievable to Gideon, so he asked the angel for a sign, to prove that he was truly sent from God. Evidence was duly provided, and Gideon bowed in humble submission to the Lord's call (see Judg. 6:17–24).

The first task the Lord gave Gideon was not to save all Israel from the Midianites but to cleanse the sin of idolatry from his father's household. This he did bravely, going forth by night with 10 friends and destroying the altar and worship area of the false god Baal used by his father and his community leaders. This made the leaders angry.

When they learned that it was Gideon who had done this act, they demanded that Joash, Gideon's father, surrender him for punishment by death. To his credit, Joash defended his son before the hostile crowd, saying, "If Baal really is a God, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar."<sup>2</sup> Thus Gideon's service in his new calling as a "mighty warrior" not only confronted idolatry, it awakened spirituality in his own father. This exploit earned Gideon a new name, Jerubbaal, which means "he that striveth with Baal" (see Bible Dictionary, "Jerubbaal," 712).

## THE MIDIANITES GATHER AGAIN

Having established himself in the eyes of the people as a servant of God, Gideon became more confident in doing what the Lord commanded. As harvesttime neared, the Midianites again gathered, this time in the valley of Jezreel (see Bible Dictionary, "Jezreel," 713). "The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet," mustering an army of 32,000 men from throughout Israel (see Judg. 6:34). Gideon then asked for and received a spiritual confirmation that the Lord would save Israel (see Judg. 6:36–40). So off to battle they went, camping at the well of Harod.

"The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands," the Lord told Gideon (Judg. 7:2). The Lord was concerned that when the battle was won, the Israelites would think that they, not the Lord, had gained the victory. The Lord told

Gideon to send home anyone who was "fearful and afraid." Some 22,000, almost 70 percent, left for home. There were still too many, so the Lord commanded Gideon to have his troops quench their thirst at the nearby spring. Whoever drank water by scooping it into his mouth with his hands was separated from those who knelt at the water's edge and gulped it directly from the spring. The 300 who drank with their hands were chosen for the battle, and the rest were dismissed (see Judg. 7:1–7).

Gideon was uneasy, worried, and unable to sleep that night. He had only 300 men to drive away the innumerable Midianites. The Lord went to Gideon and told him to immediately go down and eavesdrop on the Midianites. Gideon secreted himself on the edge of camp and overheard two men express fear that the God of Israel would deliver them into the hands of Gideon (see Judg. 7:9–14).

With renewed courage, Gideon awoke his men and organized them into three groups. He equipped each man with a trumpet (ram's horn) and a clay pottery jar with a burning lamp inside. He told them to take positions on the hillside above the Midianites and at his signal blow their horns and break their jars. Normally only a comparatively small number of men in an army carry trumpets. As the Midianites lay sound asleep, the sound of 300 trumpets blaring and jars breaking jolted them to their feet to see the blazing lamps nearby. The battle cry "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon" reverberated through the valley (see Judg. 7:20).

Believing they were under attack from thousands of Israelites, the Midianites, in their confusion and terror, began killing each other. They fled southward in disarray. Gideon called out men from the tribe of Ephraim to cut them off in their retreat and force them east across the Jordan River and out of Israelite territory. Thus the Lord had vanquished Israel's enemies without a single Israelite casualty (see Judg. 7:21–25). Truly the Lord had kept His promise to Gideon: "Thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."

## THE LORD'S WAY

So often the Lord calls inexperienced people to His service and gives them important and decisive assignments. At first, like Gideon, they may be fearful of the task. "If any brother or sister feels unprepared—even incapable—of responding to a call to serve, to sacrifice, to bless the lives of others, remember this truth: 'Whom God calls, God qualifies.' He who notes the sparrow's fall will not abandon the servant's need."<sup>3</sup> As we read the stories of those whom the Lord has called out of their weakness, we can have the assurance that we will receive the strength to fulfill callings. "God does not begin by asking us about our ability, but only about our



availability, and if we then prove our dependability, he will increase our capability."<sup>4</sup>

The Lord calls missionaries, Primary teachers, quorum leaders, fathers and mothers out of their weakness to become His powerful servants. He does not ask that they become strong first, then serve; He does not wait until they become fully trained and skillful. Like Gideon, He often calls them from obscurity and weakness. He tells them to "go in the strength you have" and then make them mighty warriors. The first assignments are often smaller yet truly significant and assist those called in strengthening their own families.

The companionship of the Holy Ghost strengthens our faith as we serve. Our assignments enable us to prove our faithfulness in small things. We will then be ready for greater things.

"The Lord has a great work for each of us to do. You may wonder how this can be. You may feel that there is nothing special or superior about you or your ability. . . . The Lord can do remarkable miracles with a person of ordinary ability who is humble, faithful, and diligent in serving the Lord and seeks to improve himself. This is because God is the ultimate source of power."<sup>5</sup>

The Lord showed great patience and understanding

with Gideon as he sought to realize his place in the work of the Lord. So will the Lord do with each of us if we will follow His counsel: "Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me" (D&C 19:23). □

*Elder Manfred H. Schütze is an Area Authority Seventy serving in the Europe East Area.*

**Gospel topics:** Church callings, service, Old Testament, humility

**More on this topic:** Bruce D. Porter, "Building the Kingdom," *Ensign*, May 2001, 80–81; Jan U. Pinborough, "The Value of Every Calling," *Ensign*, Mar. 2001, 41–47; Boyd K. Packer, "Called to Serve," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 6–8; Monte J. Brough, "A Holy Calling," *Ensign*, May 1997, 27–28.

#### NOTES

1. New International Version, Judg. 6:12, 14.
2. NIV, Judg. 6:31.
3. Thomas S. Monson, "Tears, Trials, Trust, Testimony," *Ensign*, Sept. 1997, 5.
4. Neal A. Maxwell, "It's Service, Not Status, That Counts," *Ensign*, July 1975, 7.
5. James E. Faust, "Acting for Ourselves and Not Being Acted Upon," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 47.

**The Lord calls missionaries, Primary teachers, quorum leaders, fathers and mothers out of their weakness to become His powerful servants.**

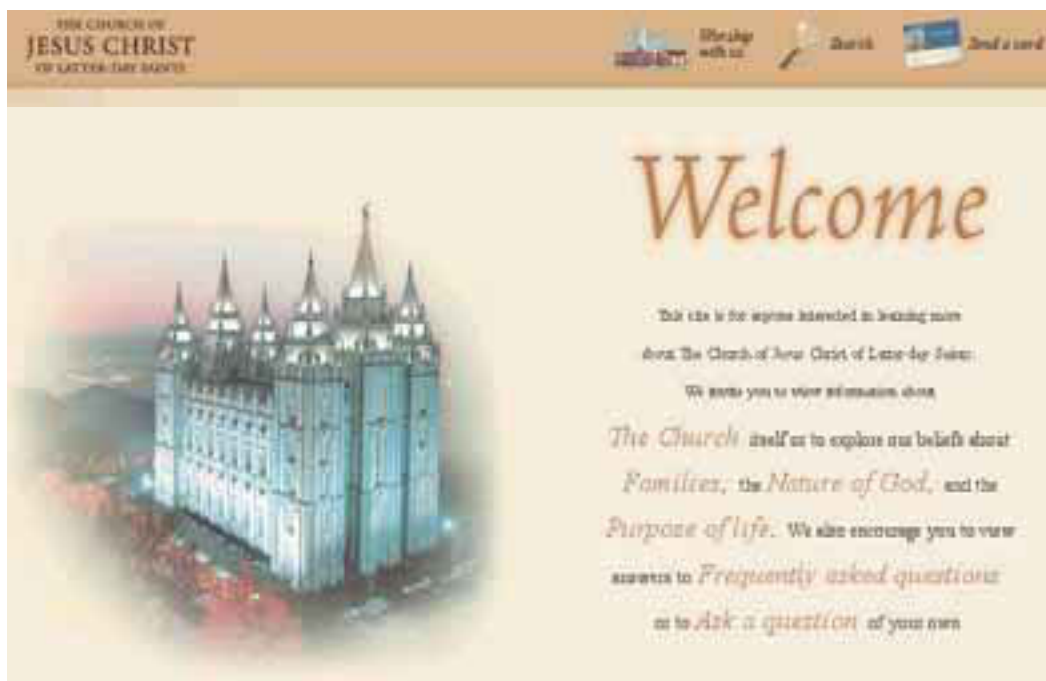




# mormon.org

BY PAUL VANDENBERGHE

*The Church now offers a new way to share the gospel using the Internet.*



I was at my computer. Just two days earlier, I had been sitting in the hospital with my friend, his wife, and their young son, Paul. I remembered how Paul had grimaced with pain as he waited in his hospital bed for his emergency appendectomy. The operation had gone well, and now Paul was recovering. I wanted to let my friend know I was thinking of him and his family, so I decided to send an electronic greeting card from the Church's newest official Web site, [www.mormon.org](http://www.mormon.org).

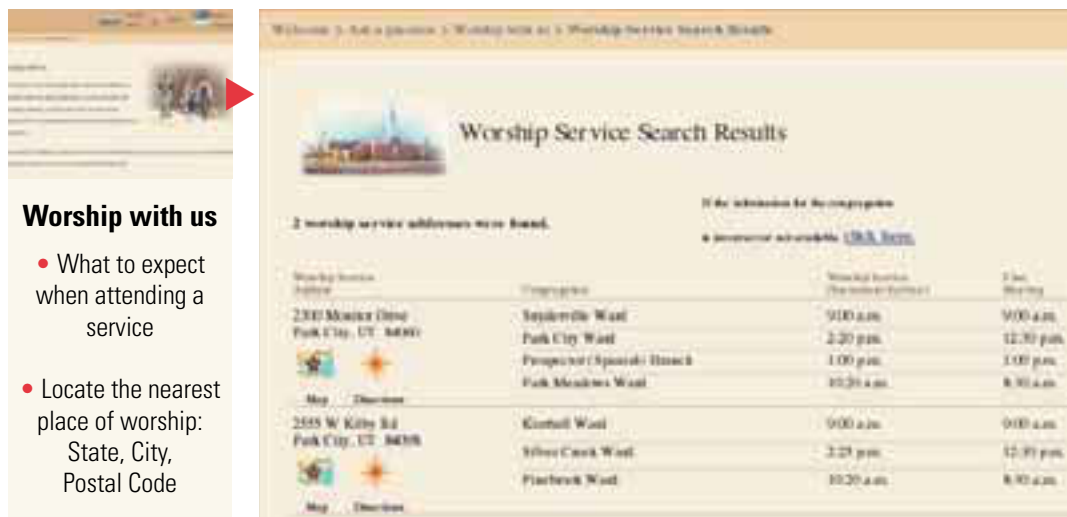
From the welcome page, I clicked on the "Send a card" icon and selected the category of "Inspiration/Hope." I chose a picture of the *Christus* statue from the six or seven images provided. Then I chose a quotation from John 14:27: "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." There were other scriptures to choose from and quotations from President Gordon B. Hinckley and other General Authorities, even one from Abraham Lincoln. I added

a personal message to my friend's greeting card. It was a quick and easy way to let him know I was concerned.

## A WEB SITE FOR EVERYONE

Sending such greeting cards is also a good way to introduce people—especially those who are not members of the Church—to the Church's new Web site. Once there, users can explore at their own pace and interest, without any pressure, a wealth of information about the Church. The site is specifically designed to explain the basic principles of the gospel, to answer questions, and to clarify misunderstandings about the Church.

In the Church's continuing efforts to utilize the vast power of the Internet for good, this site adds a simple alternative to the other Church sites: [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org) and [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org). Each page of [www.mormon.org](http://www.mormon.org) has an easy-to-use design but



Above: Web pages for [www.mormon.org](http://www.mormon.org)'s six major categories, with their subtopics listed below. Far left: Web page for "Worship with us," followed by its subtopics. Left: The worship service locator helps users learn the address and time of the services closest to them.

still contains sufficient information to give clear and basic explanations of the doctrines.

The welcome page introduces guests to the site's six major content categories: "The Church," "Families," the "Nature of God," the "Purpose of life," answers to "Frequently asked questions," and "Ask a question" of your own. Elder Dennis E. Simmons of the Seventy, Assistant Executive Director of the Missionary Department, explains, "We've tried to do everything we can to make this site as simple, as understandable, and as attractive as it can be."

## WEB SITE SUCCESSES

Numerous comments from site visitors suggest that the site has been effective.

"I just wanted to say how great this site is!" one writes. "What a perfect opportunity for investigators and new members to find out more! I have been a

member for 14 months, and this site helps me share the gospel and learn more myself."

"I am not a Mormon," writes another site visitor, "but I recently learned I descend from many, many generations of Mormons. . . I am fascinated by the history of the LDS Church, and your Web site has answered many of my questions. . . Your Web site has certainly helped to broaden my perspective."

Members can share any of the 300-plus pages of the site with friends and family via e-mail. "This site makes it easy for members to provide answers to gospel questions through the Internet," says Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. "Missionaries can also benefit from the site by referring their investigators to it as an additional teaching resource."

"The site has been a wonderful blessing to those who are not members of our faith," adds Elder Simmons. One reason the site appeals to people of other faiths is that a great deal of feedback from



## Send a greeting card

### STEP ONE

Bring up the "Send a card" page by clicking on the greeting card icon located near the top, right corner of the home page. Then select which type of card you'd like to send.

### STEP TWO

Select a picture and quotation for your card. Or type in your own quotation.

scientifically selected focus groups went into its design and refinement. Furthermore, responses and questions received at the site have been used to further improve its effectiveness in explaining the basic teachings and doctrines of the Church.

## WEB SITE USAGE

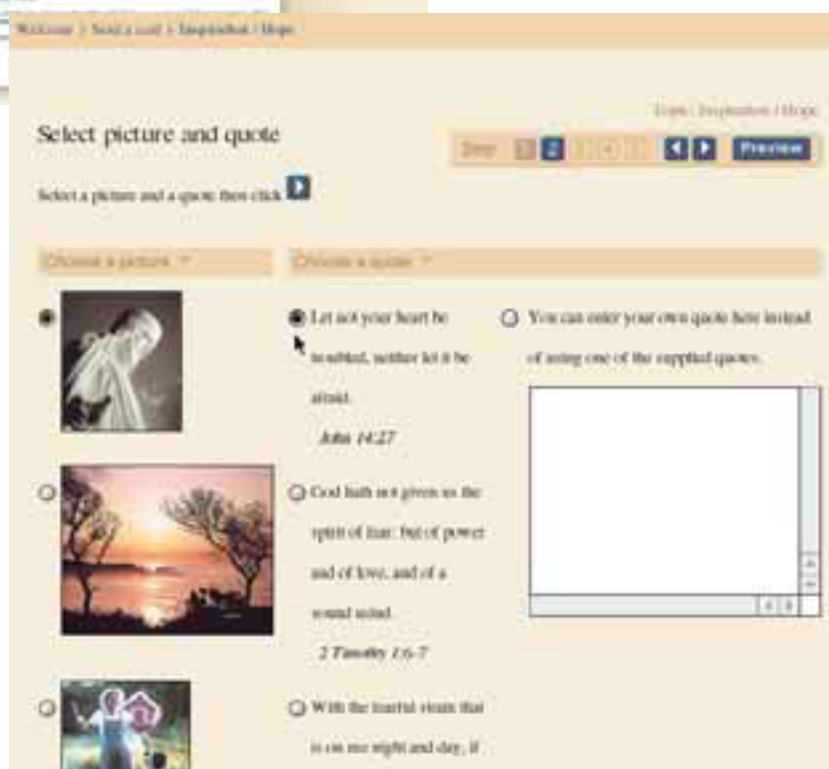
Since the site's announcement in October 2001, more than two million people from all over the world have visited it. They have sent nearly 150,000 electronic greeting cards and requested almost 8,000 copies of the Book of Mormon. Elder Simmons points out that visitors spend on average more than a minute viewing each page. "You don't see many sites that keep people on a page for over a minute. That's really substantial."

In addition to finding information and requesting literature, almost 360,000 visitors have used the meetinghouse locator page. They simply enter their home address or postal code to find the nearest meetinghouse and worship times. A detailed map, complete with travel directions, can also be printed.

This new Web site has the potential to inform many people about the Church. Because the Internet is able to reach people's homes directly, it is proving to be a potent way to teach gospel principles in a less threatening manner. Says Elder Oaks, "We believe that using the Internet will open a whole new world of opportunity to share the gospel for members and missionaries."

## MEMBER PARTICIPATION

The ultimate goal is to put interested site guests in contact with local members. In this way they can



discuss what they have learned with someone in their own community. Elder Oaks points out that the Web site needs member participation to be truly effective: "No electronic site will replace the testimony or personal interest of a member who can offer friendship and support." During the first six months of operation, almost 2,100 people requested member or missionary visits through the Web site.

One such visitor recently wrote: "Just a few weeks ago I became closer to a friend who is Mormon. He started to tell me about the Church and its beliefs, and I became interested in learning more. He gave me a Book of Mormon, and I started to read it. When something didn't make sense, he cleared it up for me, and





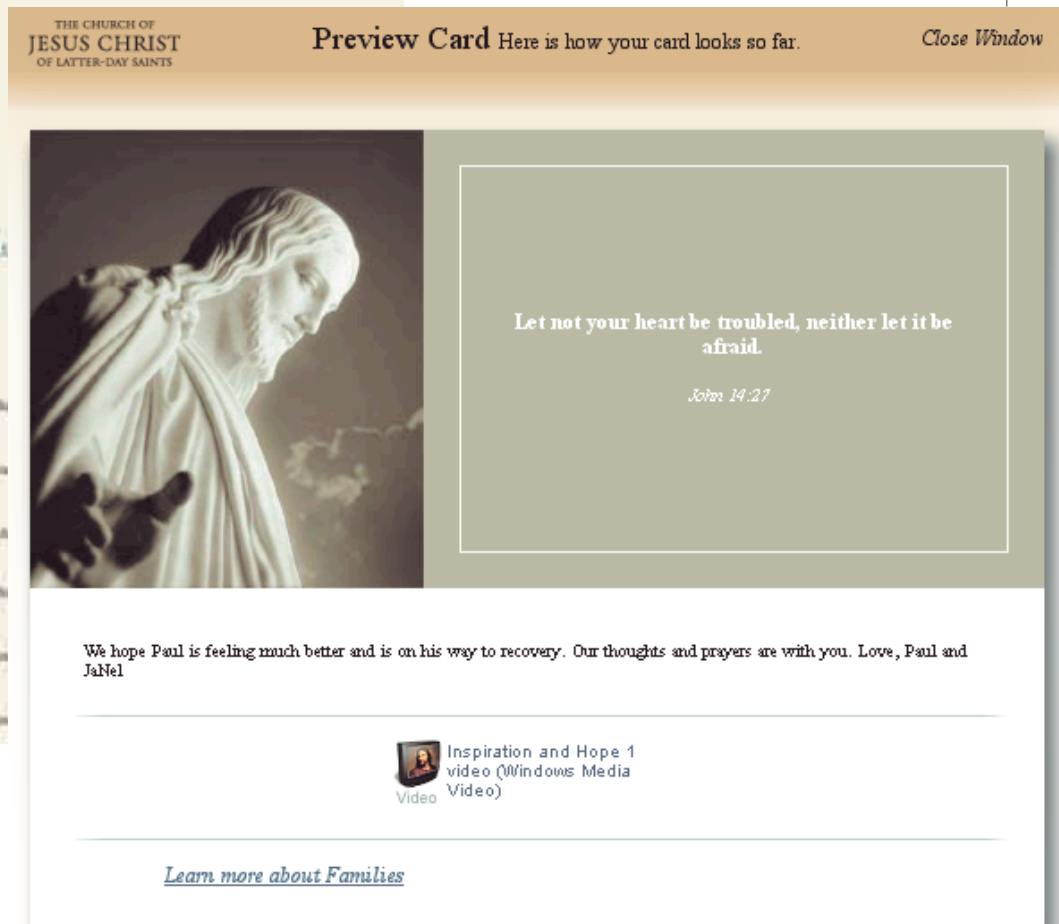
### STEP THREE

Type in the name and e-mail address of yourself and the person to whom you are sending the card. You may also add your own personal message.



### STEP FOUR

Add any "extras" to the card, including links to Web pages on [www.mormon.org](http://www.mormon.org), inspirational audio clips from Church leaders, or video clips from Church videos. Preview your card by clicking on the "Preview" icon near the top, right corner of the page.



when I couldn't talk to him about something I turned to this Web site. I have learned a lot in this last week from the site and from my dear friend. Now I'm going to meet with the missionaries.

... Thank you so much for having this Web site!"

Whether you are sending a card, clearing up a question, finding where to worship, or inviting a friend to learn more, [www.mormon.org](http://www.mormon.org) can help. With its warm and accessible approach, it is like a friendly, unintimidating knock on the door. It is another way we can help our neighbors find the joy and happiness the restored gospel of Jesus Christ has brought into our lives. □

*Paul VanDenBerghe is a member of the East Millcreek Fourth Ward, Salt Lake East Millcreek Stake.*

*Gospel topics: missionary work, Internet*

### STEP FIVE

In a few moments you will receive an e-mail message asking you to confirm that you want to send the card. Your e-mail card will then be sent (see a sample above).

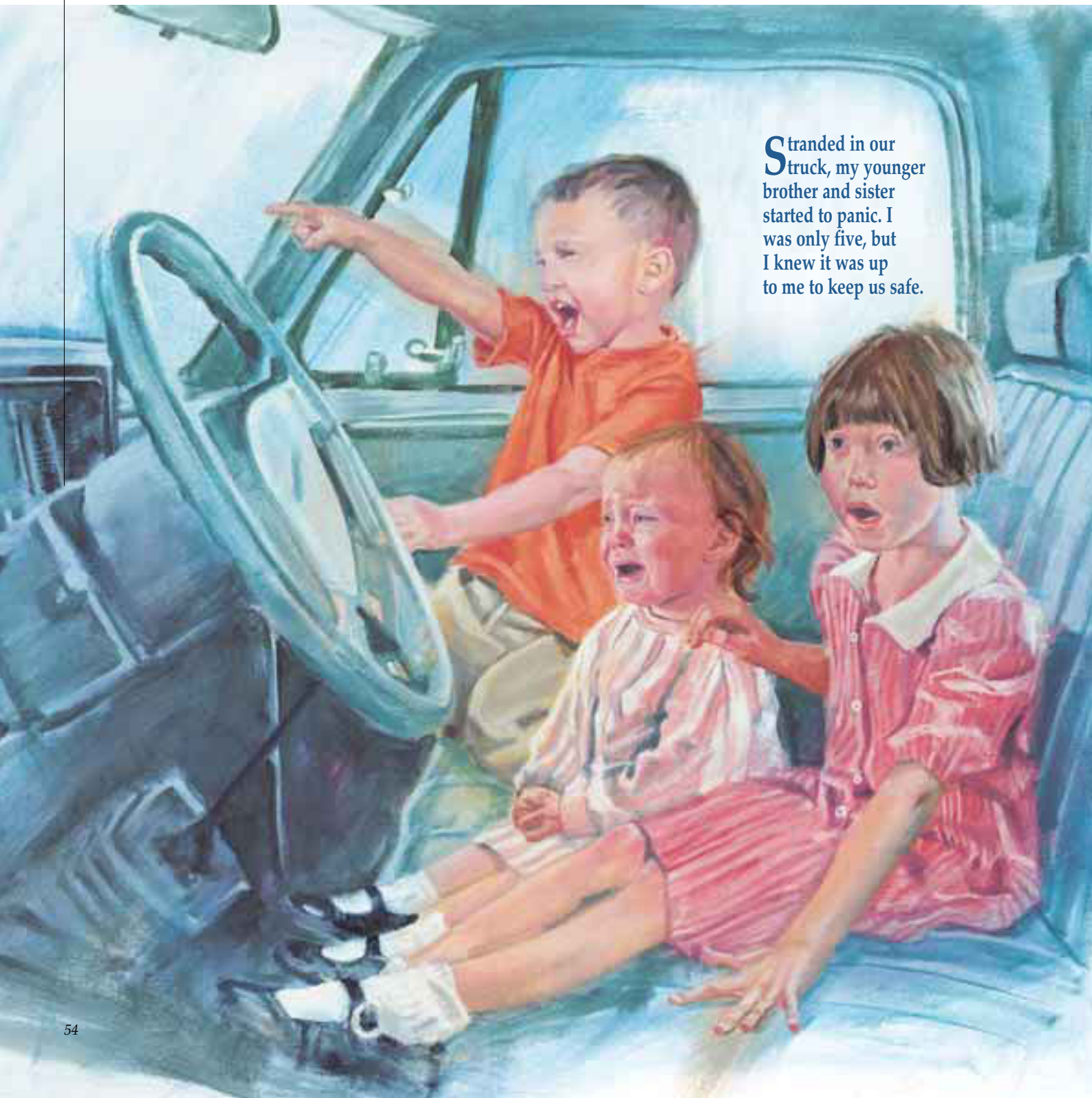
## *A Prayer in the Storm*

*By Jessie E Turner*

**"G**o faster, Mama," I pleaded. I had never wanted anything so much as I wanted to be safely home with my family. That summer evening in

Amarillo, Texas, in 1955, I was five years old. My mother was driving me and my little brother and sister, Henry and Abby, home from church as a terrible rainstorm flooded the streets. Our father

**S**tranded in our truck, my younger brother and sister started to panic. I was only five, but I knew it was up to me to keep us safe.



wasn't with us because he had to be on duty at the fire station.

"I can't go any faster," my mother patiently answered me. "If water splashes up on the motor, it'll quit. Then we won't be able to go anywhere."

I held my breath as Mama coaxed our old, temperamental pickup through deeper and deeper water.

Then it happened. The truck sputtered and died. Now the only sound was the roar of the storm, which, it turned out, was no ordinary rainstorm at all but actually part of a tornado.

Mama tried to start the truck, but it refused to come back to life. She looked out into the storm. "I'll be right back," she told us. "I'm going to call someone for help." As the door opened, the wind whipped cold rain at us for an instant. Then there was a slam and we were alone.

Time seemed to stall, and I feared we would never get home. As I sat there with my four-year-old brother and two-year-old sister, anxiously watching water pour down the windows, I noticed a flashing red light approaching. It wasn't until the vehicle was beside us that we could tell for sure what it was.

"Daddy's fire truck!" Henry cried.

"Daddy come! Daddy come!" said Abby. She reached out her little hand, opening and closing her fingers.

But the fire engine rushed on, taking our father away from us. My sister began to cry. Henry reached for the door handle. "I get Daddy!"

I grabbed him. "No, Henry! Mama told us to stay here!" I held on as tight as I could, but I wasn't strong enough to stop him. He pulled away and went for the door again. Abby's crying got louder.

Henry began to pull on the door handle. Panic stabbed me. I had to keep Henry in the truck. It was up to me to keep us safe. I had to do it, but I couldn't. I felt helpless, afraid, and alone.

No, I wasn't alone, I realized. A calm assurance replaced fear. I knew what to do. "Fold your arms," I told my brother and sister. "We need to have a prayer."

Henry's resistance melted. He let go of the door handle, and he and Abby sat down on the seat beside me. We folded our arms and bowed our heads. I told Heavenly Father that we were stuck in this awful rain and asked Him to please make our truck start so we could go home.

We sat calmly and waited for Mama to come back. Before long, the truck door opened again. Mama reached out for me, explaining, "The lines are down, and I can't reach anyone. The people in the house across the street said we could stay with them tonight."

I knew there was no reason to leave. "Mama, you can start the truck now."

"Jessie, I have tried. It won't start."

"But, Mama, it will this time. I know it will. We prayed."

Mama climbed in and shut the door. She turned the key. The engine groaned and groaned, then sputtered and rumbled to life. Mama quickly left us to go tell the family across the street that the truck had started, then returned and drove on.

Rain, hail, wind, thunder, and lightning continued around us, but I felt delighted and grateful. Heavenly Father had answered our prayer, and we were going home. □

*Jessie E Turner is a member of the Cherry Park Ward, Portland Oregon Stake.*

*Gospel topics: prayer, faith, children*

## In My Grandmother's Name

*By Meg Vogl*

**E**ver since I was 16, I have had a great love for family history work. Being the only member of the Church in my family, I have submitted many ancestors' names for temple ordinances to be performed in their behalf. So after my maternal grandmother died in February 1993, I eagerly awaited the end of the required year before submitting her name for ordinance work at the Chicago Illinois Temple. (At the time, family names were held for a limited time in a family file at the temple until family members could perform the ordinance work.)

Many months passed, and I still had not been able to get to the temple because it was a seven-hour drive to Chicago. I reluctantly called the temple and asked that my grandmother's name be moved to the temple file, where it would be given at random to members performing ordinance work.

I had been close to my grandmother while she was alive—I was her namesake—so I felt disappointed that I couldn't do this essential work for her. But I knew these ordinances were important to her progression, and I was glad that at least the work would get done.

Some time later, in October 1996, my husband had a week-long seminar in Chicago. I accompanied him and was able to spend a whole week in the temple—what a treat! My husband was to pick me up on our last day at 5:15 P.M., so at 3:00 I felt I had enough time to do one more session.



When I was given the name of the person I would be doing the work for, my mouth dropped open in astonishment. A year and a half after submitting it, I had been given my grandmother's name! I would have the blessing of being her proxy after all.

Some might claim that this experience was simply a remarkable coincidence. It is my feeling, however, that in His love and mercy, the Lord managed things so that I might realize the desire of my heart—to do something of eternal worth for my beloved grandmother that she could not do for herself. □

*Meg Vogl is a member of the Oakdale Ward, Oakdale Minnesota Stake.*

*Gospel topics: Heavenly Father's love, family history, temple work*

## Fixing Everything

By Catherine Matthews Pavia

**I**t had been four years since I had come home for Easter, so I had looked forward to the break from school and the Easter activities with my family. We were in the kitchen fixing supper Friday night when I asked Mom about the family reunion she was organizing.

"Everyone wants to go back to the lake," she told me as she chopped vegetables. "But during the six-hour car trip last year . . ." I looked up as the chopping ceased and her voice broke. Tears crept from the corners of her eyes, and her face crumpled. "I thought I was going to die. I really thought I was going to die."

I didn't know how to respond to my gentle, patient mother when she talked about the possibility of her death. I wanted to hug her until her shoulders stopped shaking. I wanted to tell her everything would be all right—the doctors

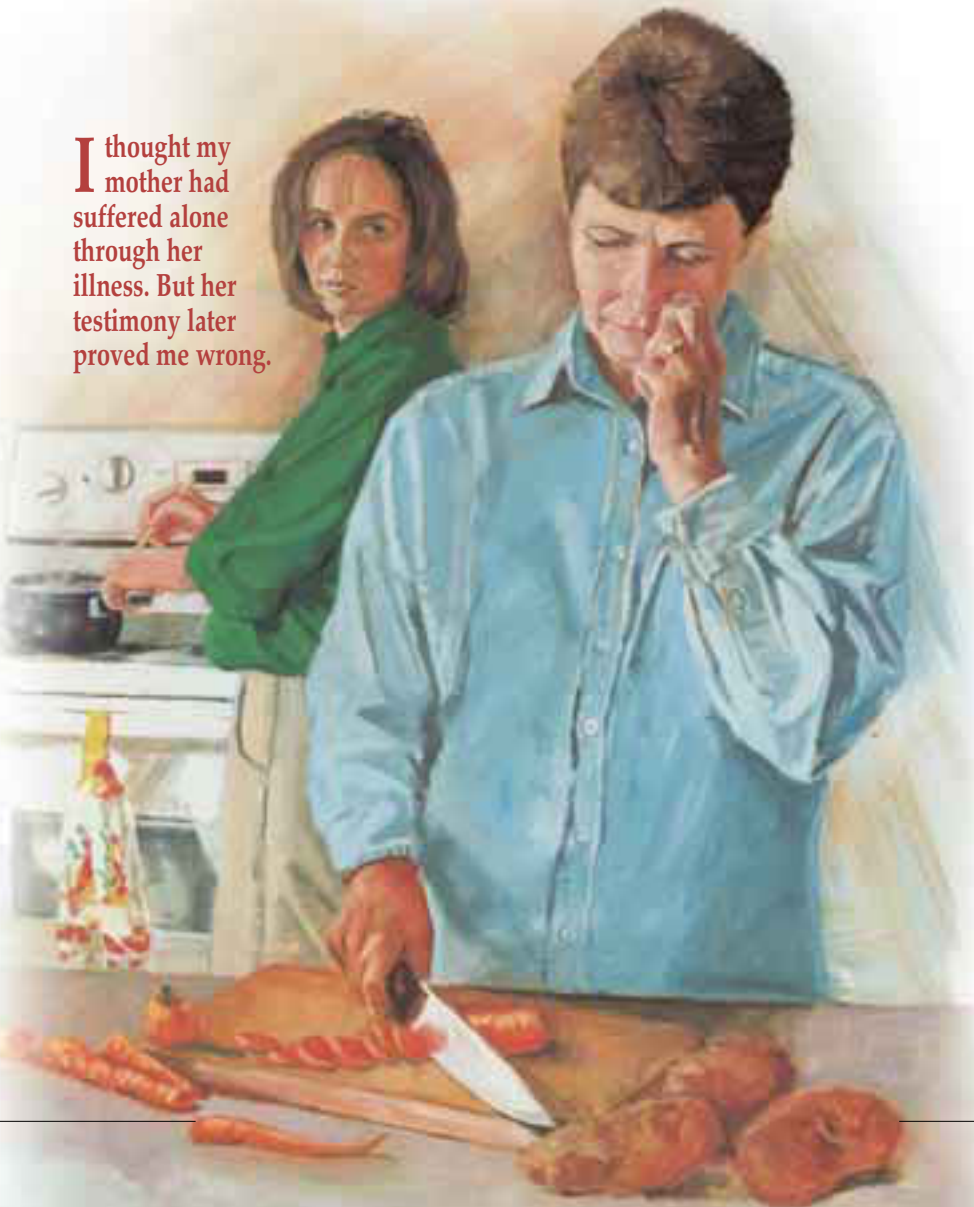
would find out what this disease was and give her medicine and fix everything. But I couldn't.

I had refused to think of death throughout the year of her sickness, even as I fasted and prayed and hoped. Still I watched her weaken and suffer. She wasn't vocal in her suffering. She just worked harder because she was unable to sleep at night or even sit down. The pain clutched at her heart and made her shake whenever she tried to relax. But soon her suffering became visible in the dark circles around her eyes and the fatigue deep in her eyes themselves.

Discouragement soon accompanied the pain. After a full year of visiting doctors and undergoing tests, she was distressed when the specialists were unable to discover what was causing the intense pain around her heart. The test results all came back normal. Nothing was wrong, the doctors said.

But we knew the situation wasn't normal. My mother did not normally pace the floor at night or stop in the middle of vacuuming to sob. And my mother, who had faced many types of pain in her life without ever complaining, did not normally talk about dying.

**I** thought my mother had suffered alone through her illness. But her testimony later proved me wrong.



During the two days before Easter, I tried again to think of something I could do to help her. But her disease had left us all feeling powerless. Even my father, a doctor, could not fix the situation, in spite of his years of training, experience, and knowledge. I could not alleviate her burdens—she even wanted to do most housework herself, because resting made the pain worse. So she was always working, working to the point of exhaustion. And because there was so little we could do to relieve her suffering, she seemed to suffer alone.

We went to church on Easter morning. As I glanced at my mother sitting beside me, my thoughts wandered back to her high, cracked voice and the chilling sentence that had consumed me since Friday night—"I thought I was going to die."

Suddenly my mother rose from the bench and made her way to the pulpit.

"On this Easter Sunday," she began, "I want to bear my testimony of Jesus Christ's Atonement. King Benjamin said that Christ 'shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer' (Mosiah 3:7; emphasis added). Many of you may not know that I have been sick lately. The nights have been long"—her voice softened as she continued—"but not lonely. During the worst of it, the Savior has been my friend, my support. I testify that Jesus Christ knows our suffering because He experienced it—and more. He will lift us from our sorrows just as He lifted us from an eternal death."

As my mom bore her testimony, a new picture of suffering replaced my former preoccupation with my mother and myself. It was a picture of the Savior in the Garden of Gethsemane, full of such anguish that He bled from every pore as He

suffered for all, including my mother's physical agony and my own emotional pain.

I realized then that I did not need to tell my mother that it would be OK. We couldn't fix

everything, but she was comforted by her knowledge that the Savior already had. □

*Catherine Matthews Pavia is a member of the Oxford Ward, Springfield Massachusetts Stake.*

*Gospel topics: illness, suffering, faith, Atonement*

## But How Could I Mention Tithing?

*By Ross F Hopkin*

Several years ago when I was a missionary serving in the Villa Mercedes area in Argentina, my companion and I attended a branch activity that promised to be enjoyable.

As we exchanged greetings with the brothers and sisters of the branch, however, I noticed a recently baptized sister who, though usually smiling and talkative, seemed sad. She was keeping herself from the main body of the group, so I approached her and asked if something was bothering her.

As tears came to her eyes, she explained the difficulty of raising her small children by herself. She lived in the neighboring rural community of Justo Daract and could not afford the train fare for her boy to attend school in Villa Mercedes. She said she was considering taking him out of school for a time until she could find a better job.

My heart ached to hear of her difficulties, when suddenly the thought of tithing came to my mind. Initially I fought the prompting. How could I mention tithing to this sister who worried about how to come up with enough money every day to send her boy to school?

Might the Lord make an exception in her case? But the prompting persisted, and I felt the sweet confidence that the Holy Spirit grants to us as we testify of eternal truths.

I asked the sister if she had paid her tithing. She said she had paid it

a couple of times after she was baptized, but with her recent challenges she could not see how she could pay it now. I told her the Lord knew her circumstances, and if she would pay her tithing He would bless her. The Spirit was warm and reassuring, and she managed a smile as she joined the rest of the group.

A couple of weeks later, my companion and I boarded the train and made the 30-minute journey to Justo Daract to visit this good sister. As she invited us into her humble home, I kept thinking about what I had said to her earlier about tithing and wondered whether she had decided to put the commandment to the test.

We had scarcely sat down when she began to tell us she had been offered a job in Villa Mercedes as a housekeeper. This job would provide room and board for her and her children, and because she would be living in Villa Mercedes, her son would be close to the public school.

I then found the nerve to ask her if she had paid her tithing. Her eyes twinkled with a look that said "I was about to tell you," and she responded, "Yes, I have paid my tithing."

Once again I felt the confirming reassurance of the Spirit that God will "pour [us] out a blessing" (Mal. 3:10) if we will exercise faith through obedience to the law of tithing. □

*Ross F Hopkin is a member of the Heatheridge Fourth Ward, Orem Utah Heatheridge Stake.*

*Gospel topics: tithing, faith, commandments*

A man with short brown hair, wearing a dark grey button-down shirt and white pleated pants with a dark belt, stands against a textured red background. The background is torn at the top edge, revealing a white surface.

# When You Don't

BY S. BRENT SCHARMAN

*Living gospel principles helps you be an effective parent even when divorce has separated you from your children.*

**D**espite their efforts to work things out according to Latter-day Saint values, Jason and Tammy\* were getting divorced after 11 years of marriage. Finances, housing, in-law relationships, and friendship patterns would all require adjustments. More important than any of these, however, were adaptations regarding their children. Both Jason and Tammy were devoted parents, but a court decree awarded custody of the children to Tammy. Practically overnight, Jason became a noncustodial parent whose contact with his children would come during visits rather than from daily interaction of traditional family life.

A scripture whose admonition Jason had always taken for granted now became more difficult to implement: "I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth" (D&C 93:40). That responsibility would entail some changes in the manner in which he would do his part.

These and other challenges that the non-custodial parent faces can be daunting, but the chances for meeting them successfully increase when there is a commitment to living gospel principles and to establishing healthy patterns of interaction with children and with ex-spouses.

With some exceptions, custody of children is generally granted to the mother following divorce, so the majority of noncustodial parents are fathers. Therefore, most of what follows has reference to non-custodial fathers, although many of the principles discussed can be applied to noncustodial mothers.

*\* Names have been changed.*

**The majority of noncustodial parents are fathers who must make the change from seeing their children in a traditional family setting to seeing them only during visits.**



# Have Custody

## LIVING THE GOSPEL

Divorce is a life-changing event—especially when children are involved—and Latter-day Saint noncustodial parents who remain active in the Church and true to gospel principles can find needed strength and stability. The principles upon which good relationships are built and character is developed have been revealed in the scriptures and in the words of latter-day prophets, and there should be renewed efforts to live those principles following divorce.

It may seem that the scriptures don't say anything about how to be a good noncustodial parent. But upon close reading one discovers that the scriptures have much to say about it. The stories, teachings, and commandments found in the scriptures set forth principles and practices that apply equally to all. As a modern revelation succinctly puts it, "The holy scriptures are given of me for your instruction" (D&C 33:16). Let us review some of that counsel.

Noncustodial parents have an opportunity to demonstrate to their children that they can be counted on. They can show faith in the Lord, repentance, kindness, predictability, forgiveness, and love unfeigned (see D&C 121:41), and they can commit anew to become the model that children deserve to see in a parent. The father who is active in the Church shows how important the gospel is as he continues to live by righteous standards and encourages his children to do the same.

For noncustodial parents adjusting to separation and divorce, the admonition to remain faithful and true—to be "steadfast and immovable" (Mosiah 5:15; see also D&C 49:23)—will never be more critical. Divorce and noncustodial parenting are always a challenge, but learning and growth can be part of the process, and recommitment to eternal priorities can be a result. Adversity does not have to shatter us but can strengthen us and our testimonies if we will, as Alma counseled his son, "turn to the Lord with all [our] mind, might, and strength" (Alma 39:13).



## ESTABLISHING HEALTHY NEW PATTERNS

Following a divorce, children do best when they have ongoing contact with both parents (unless, of course, there are destructive behaviors present, such as abuse). In establishing a pattern of interaction for divorced parents and their children, it is helpful for parents to agree to let go of the past and to resist the temptation to say negative things to or about one another. This is a gospel requirement (see D&C 64:9–10) that can be reinforced by the parents' genuine desire to remain connected to their children and to minimize the negative effect of divorce on them. Working out this new pattern of interaction can also be seen as a chance to "start over again" in spite of poor choices that may have been made in the past.

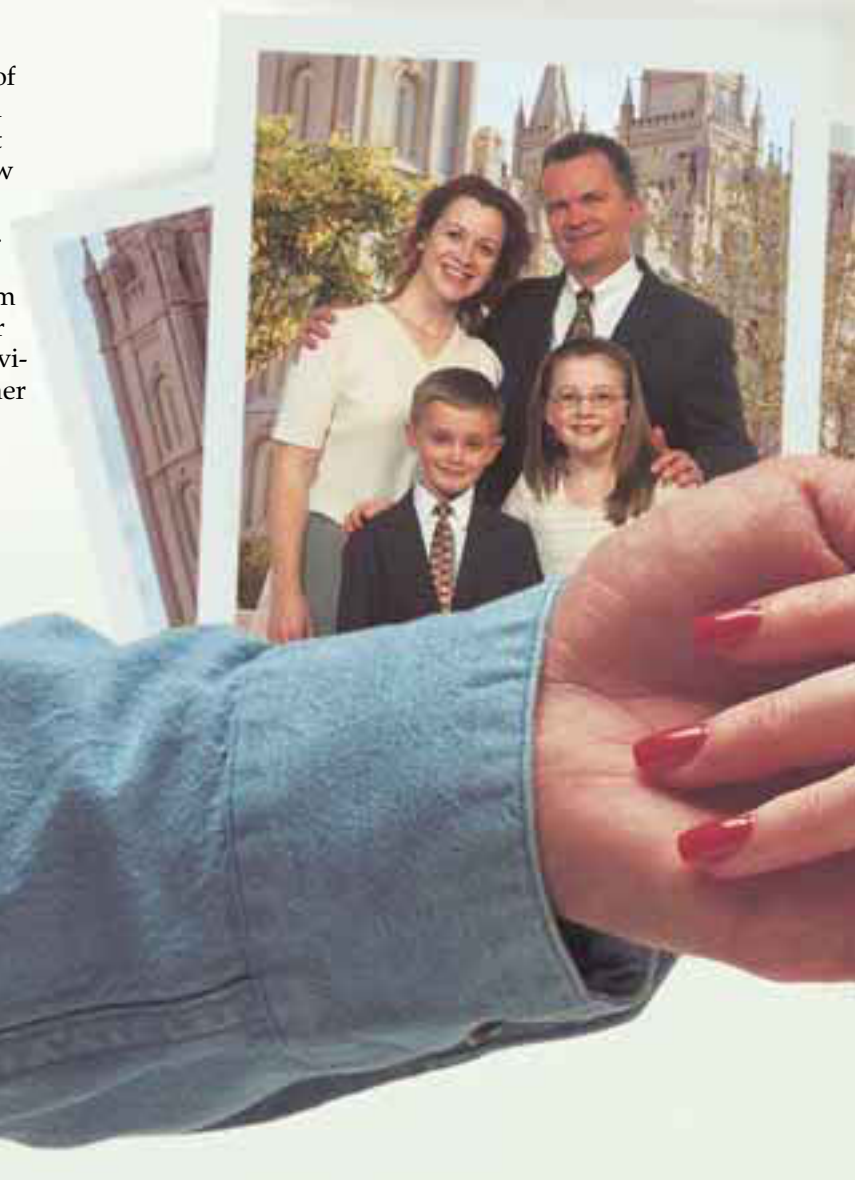
When a spirit of cooperation is established through commitment to the best interests of the children, it will be easier to negotiate visitation schedules and the handling of such matters as holidays, back-to-school nights, wedding receptions, missionary farewells, piano and dance recitals, Primary programs, and funerals. Generally speaking, patterns of family-member involvement have been established before divorce, so it is difficult to give up one's part in those patterns. Compromise and developing new patterns are the keys to success, and this is particularly true after one or both of the partners remarries.

When Philip remarried, he and his new wife established a pattern of having Philip's children from his previous marriage visit on Christmas Eve rather than on Christmas morning as had been done previously. This successful negotiation with his former

wife kept his children from feeling pulled in two directions.

While each noncustodial parent must establish his own pattern of relating to his children, there are general practices that many have found helpful. These include the following:

- Do not miss your planned visits without calling in advance to explain.
- During visits, allow your children to maintain normal everyday life patterns in such things as chores, homework, eating routines, and bedtime hours.
- Avoid extravagant spending on visits.
- Use good judgment in recreational activities. Avoid going overboard in entertaining your child as a way of showing love or winning his or her approval.
- Introduce your children to others in your neighborhood who may become friends.



## WAYS THAT OTHERS CAN BE SUPPORTIVE OF THE NONCUSTODIAL PARENT

- Talk openly with your children about the visit so that they have a clear expectation for the experience. Depending on their age, they will usually understand that you may have personal things you need to do during the visit time.
  - Do not use visits as opportunities to fish for information or to say negative things about your former spouse.
  - Avoid the temptation to use your children to manipulate your former spouse, such as by bringing them home late from a visit to prove that you are "in control."
  - Be a positive spiritual influence. Have family prayer and home evening, attend Church meetings together, and talk about gospel topics during visits.
  - Allow your children to maintain desired relationships with extended family, including grandparents, nieces, nephews, aunts, and uncles. Both parents should do the best they can to foster this. Generally speaking, the adjustment of children will be optimized by their maintaining as much of the old routine and the former relationships as possible.
- One of the most common complaints of divorced parents is that the other parent exposes the children to inappropriate behaviors or people. When parents put their children first, such problems can usually be avoided. Latter-day Saint children deserve to have their values respected, and their gospel activity ought to be permitted and encouraged by both parents.
- Understand that the parent may be adjusting to his or her newly divorced status. For some this is devastating and requires their developing a new identity. Be warm and accepting.
  - Visit the home. Invite the person to be part of social occasions. An invitation to attend a family home evening or a backyard barbecue will likely receive a warm response.
  - Ask about children and provide information about other children who live nearby.
  - Avoid the temptation to assume that the noncustodial parent has problems and that his or her children will have problems. Expect the best, and offer healthy interaction.

## THE DISTANCE CHALLENGE

When Bob and Carol divorced, they felt they had a fairly clear picture of what difficulties they would face. They did a good job of working through the first few months of sensitive negotiations. What neither one of them anticipated was the transfer Bob's company would ask him to make to the other side of the country. Although Bob was diligent at maintaining telephone contact with his children, he was not prepared for the degree of loss he felt at moving away.

There is not a simple solution to the painful feeling of moving away from children. Spiritual resources can provide strength and perspective, for, as Alma testified to his son Helaman, "I do know that whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions" (Alma 36:3). In addition, there are practical and creative things noncustodial parents can do to maintain relationships with their children who are separated from them by long distance.

A significant way to keep in touch is for the children to have an extended visit with the noncustodial parent. Or the parent could arrange to go

**M**any children hope their parents will get back together. When a divorced parent remarries, those hopes are dashed for the child.



to the area where his or her children live.

While children are young, noncustodial parents might also read stories to them over the phone. One father sent his children a book of which he also had a copy, and they read the story together and asked each other to find things in the pictures.

Communicating by e-mail is a fast and easy way to stay in touch, but children still enjoy getting a handwritten letter or a postcard with interesting pictures.

It is also important for the out-of-town parent to keep track of the dates of important events, such as back-to-school nights, recitals, and basketball games. Calling after such events to show interest and awareness goes a long way toward letting children know that the love and concern of a parent are genuine.

As noncustodial parents make these efforts to reach out, they need to be patient and realize that the availability of children will vary considerably as the children get older, get jobs, develop new habits and friendships, and begin to date.

## WHAT ABOUT DATING AND REMARRIAGE?

In spite of the disappointment and loss experienced when a marriage ends in divorce, healing for most people eventually takes place. In time the noncustodial parent may become interested in dating again and may have the opportunity to remarry. As these situations unfold, it is critical that the feelings of children be considered and that they be protected from further painful experiences. Children can feel rejected all over again if their single parent and a familiar dating partner suddenly break up. However, if done sensitively, helping children get acquainted with your date can be enjoyable.

Noncustodial parents should make it a point to introduce their children to dating partners they are considering marrying. This should be done long enough in advance that there is plenty of time to adjust to the style, interests, children, and extended family of one another. Some of the most frustrated remarried couples are those who married because of an intense infatuation and just assumed their children would get along well because the adults did.

While divorced parents who remarry may excitedly view a new relationship as the beginning of a new life, children may view it as the beginning of the end. They may have hoped their parents would get back together or remain single so they could have unlimited time together. Nevertheless, most children will adjust well to the remarriage of a parent if (1) they have had the opportunity to express their own feelings; (2) they have had time to adjust to the relationship; (3) the other parent is not negative about the former spouse's new marriage; (4) the new step-parent is kind and doesn't overstep his or her role;



**H**ealthy new relationships can emerge when the best interests of the children are a priority with divorced parents.

and (5) the children's needs for space and time are responded to sensitively.

Remarriage always brings challenges, but the odds that the new marriage will succeed are greatly magnified when the realities of visiting children are given a high priority.

## THAT YOUR CHILDREN MAY BE BLESSED

Sadly, statistics show that many noncustodial parents tend to become less and less involved in their children's lives. In fact, one report indicated that 50 percent of noncustodial parents, usually men who had remarried, had lost all contact with their children five years following divorce (see Patricia L. Papernow, *Becoming a Stepfamily: Patterns of Development in Remarried Families* [1993], 106).

But this need not be the case among Church members. Though faced with difficult adjustments and challenges, Latter-day Saint noncustodial parents still have the opportunity to help reinforce gospel values and practices in the lives of their children. Whether in the home of the custodial or the noncustodial parent, children will be strengthened as their parents respond to the Savior's plea, "Pray in your



## A FATHER'S EFFORTS SEND MESSAGES TO HIS CHILDREN

*"A father who truly loves his children, and who is truly striving, for instance, to become a better man, sends off to his children all kinds of messages, in a variety of ways, that let them know he loves them and that he is a serious disciple of Jesus Christ. Then his children can more easily forgive him the tactical errors, because his basic message is intact: he believes in God and he cares for his family. On the other hand, for the father who is not truly serious in his discipleship, no number of compensatory techniques or humanistic sentiments can ever compensate for the failure of that father to teach the truth by precept and by example."*

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, *The Neal A. Maxwell Quote Book*, ed. Cory H. Maxwell (1997), 122.

families unto the Father . . . that . . . your children may be blessed" (3 Ne. 18:21).

A divorce may have left children wounded, but with the Lord's help, custodial and noncustodial parents can bring about healing so that children can thrive—and no effort is too great in achieving such a goal. □

S. Brent Scharman is a member of the Holladay 26th Ward, Salt Lake Holladay Stake.

**Gospel topics:** parenthood, children, commitment

**More on this topic:** Deborah Eldredge-Milne, "When Parents Divorce," *New Era*, Aug. 2000, 40–44; Barbara Vance, "I Have a Question," *Ensign*, Oct. 1992, 54–55; Sandra Bouley, "Reaching Out to Divorced Members," *Ensign*, June 1983, 58–61; Geraldine P. Anderson, "Explaining Divorce to Children," *Ensign*, Nov. 1972, 56–58.

Visit [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org) or see Church magazines on CD.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Most *Ensign* articles can be used for family home evening discussion or for personal reflection. The following questions are for that purpose.

1. What am I doing to stay close to my children who do not live with me?
2. Are there ways I have not thought of—ways to use letters, phone calls, or e-mail—to help strengthen my children's testimonies?
3. Do I focus on strengthening my children when I am with them?
4. If I have custody of the children, am I fulfilling my moral, and not just legal, obligations to their other parent? Do I allow them to have a relationship with their other parent without feeling threatened?



## Business Travelers: Return with Honor

**W**e often hear the phrase “Return with Honor” in reference to missionaries serving full-time missions. This phrase can have additional meaning as we consider the many Church members who are required to travel for their occupations. As a business consultant who has traveled for several years, I have seen some of my peers succumb to temptation, while others have made righteous choices. Whether work travel is brief or extended, there are ways to keep our family ties strong. Following are some ideas to help business travelers maintain their standards when working away from home:

1. *Know your weaknesses.* The maxim “Know thyself” offers helpful advice for everyone. Pay attention to your potential weaknesses, and avoid situations where you might be tempted. For instance, if you have a propensity to view inappropriate movies when staying at hotels, ask the front-desk clerk to turn off the access to pay-per-view movies to your room. Be safe. Don’t test your resolve in matters of temptation. If you frequently watch movies, though they may be appropriate, consider limiting your time in front of the television to pursue more meaningful activities.

2. *Carry a picture of your family.* During a recent temple recommend interview, my stake president reiterated the advice of Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who said to always have a picture of your

spouse or family when you are away from home (see “The Sanctity of Womanhood,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 37). A small, framed picture placed on a hotel room table serves as a loving reminder of your family. Screensavers with pictures of your family can also be loaded on your laptop computer and viewed throughout the day. If you are single, keep a favorite family photo with you.

3. *Read scriptures and pray with your family.* Our family realizes the power that comes from reading the scriptures and praying together. When I am traveling, our family has an established time

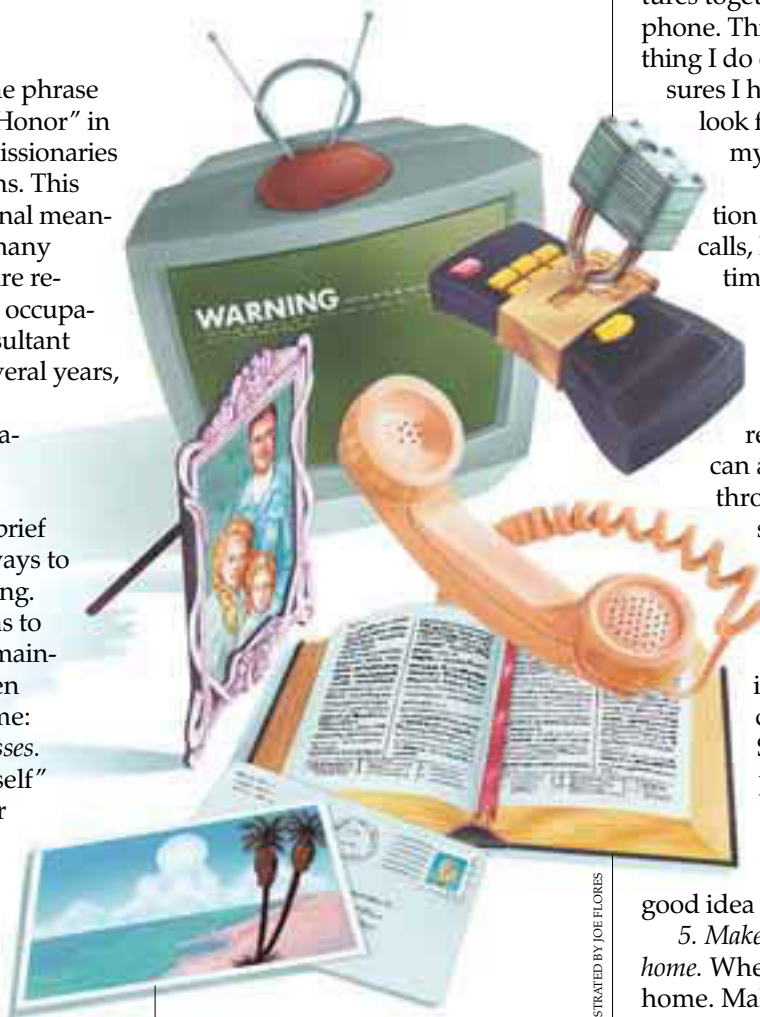
each morning for me to call home so we can pray and read the scriptures together using a speaker phone. This is the most important thing I do each day because it ensures I have a good start, and I look forward to this time with my family each morning.

4. *Keep in touch.* In addition to our morning phone calls, I call my family at other times to share my experiences, hear about their day, and take care of family matters. I carry a cell phone so I can be reached at any time. You can also keep in touch through e-mail, such as sending digitized pictures of places you have visited, and your family can send pictures of family activities that have occurred during your absence. Sending postcards or packages with souvenirs and birthday and anniversary cards to family and friends is also a good idea when you are traveling.

5. *Make the most of your time at home.* When you are at home, be home. Make your family high priority. For family ties to remain strong when you are away, you need to develop them when you are at home. Focus on both quality and quantity time with your wife and children, collectively and individually.

I have realized it is important to “be anxiously engaged in a good cause” so we do not succumb to temptation (see D&C 58:27). By doing something every day to keep our family ties strong, we can return with honor to our loved ones, knowing we have done our best to maintain gospel standards during our travels.

—Steve Thevenin, Papermill Ward, Roswell Georgia Stake



ILLUSTRATED BY JOE FLORES



# Our Conference Family Home Evenings

**W**e have family home evening on a regular basis, but sometimes we struggle in selecting lesson material best suited to our family. Our dilemma is not too little material but too much. Sometimes my husband and I have looked through the *Family Home Evening Resource Book* and have wondered which topics to select and how to present them in an interesting way for both our teenagers and Primary-age children.

To make family home evening a more meaningful experience, we prayed and searched for a solution. One Sunday during a Sunday School lesson, the idea came to me that we should teach our children



more about the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and the General Authorities. What better way to do this than by sharing their conference talks in family home evening?

We have the *Ensign* conference



issues from 1997 to present, and they are also available on the Church's official Web site at [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org) or on CD (item no. 50000, U.S. \$3). We take turns giving the lessons—even the younger children. Since the talks can be adapted for different age levels, everyone in our family is involved and excited to participate.

The conference talks provide teachings for our day, and the much-needed topics they address have greatly benefited our family. As we have shared the Church leaders' messages, our family has more keenly felt the Spirit and the Savior's love in our home.

—Lori Wood, Hyrum Second Ward, Hyrum Utah Stake

## Showing Primary Children You Care

**T**eaching Primary can be challenging at times, especially if your class has discipline problems. You can help the children behave better by helping them feel the love you have for them. Here are eight ways to show you care.

1. *Pray for them—at home and also in class.* Children feel good when they know you are concerned about them. During opening or closing prayer, mention them by name, and pray for their specific concerns as needed.

2. *Learn more about the children.* Find out their likes and dislikes. After the opening prayer, let them raise their hands and take turns talking about their week.

3. *Give children a hug or a squeeze on the shoulder.* Though we must be

careful about showing affection appropriately, children need to know we love them.

4. *Talk to them when you see them outside the classroom.* Say hello when you see them at an activity or in the neighborhood. This shows the children you care about them always, not just when they are in Primary.

5. *Write them a note occasionally.* Drop off or send a card or letter telling them the good things they did in class the previous Sunday. This will positively reinforce the good behavior you like to see in your classroom.

6. *Remember them on a holiday.* I will never forget the looks of surprise and delight on my Primary children's faces when I showed up at their homes Valentine's Day morning with a special treat.

7. *Remember their birthdays.* All children love to be remembered on their birthdays. Send them a card, sing a song to them in class, let them be the class leader, or give

them an inexpensive present. Above all, make them feel loved on their special day.

8. *Prepare good lessons and bear your testimony.* Children will know you love them when you have a well-prepared lesson, which could include visuals from the ward library. Study the lesson material and pray for help in conveying the lesson and reaching the hearts of the children as you testify of gospel truths. Children learn from your example as they feel the Spirit testify that what you say is true.

Using these ideas to show your Primary children you love them will greatly reduce problems you may be having in your classroom. As you show them your love, they will develop love, loyalty, and respect for you and your classroom. Your heart will be filled with joy as you love and teach Heavenly Father's little ones.—Kersten Campbell, Pullman First Ward, Pullman Washington Stake

# WOMEN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

*More than ever we need women of faith, virtue, vision, and charity  
who can hear and who will respond to the voice of the Lord.*



BY ELDER M. RUSSELL BALLARD  
*Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*

**M**y topic is something that is very close to my heart. I have been married to Sister Ballard for 50 years. The greatest day in my life was the day I met Barbara Bowen. My greatest accomplishment

was convincing her that I was the only true and living returned missionary among all of those she was dating. It was a most important day when we were married in the Salt Lake Temple. We are the parents of two sons and five daughters. Perhaps being the father of our five daughters and now the grandfather of 22 granddaughters makes me an expert on the subject of women.

As I have considered the days that lie ahead, I believe this message is vital to both men and women. So I invite the men to prayerfully consider these words: Your lives are significantly influenced by the women who are your wives, your daughters, and your associates with whom you are privileged to work and serve in the Church.

Let me set the stage by quoting from a letter sent to Church headquarters. This woman wrote:

"I have a wonderful husband and children, whom I love deeply. I love the Lord and His Church more than I can say. I know the Church is true! I realize I shouldn't feel discouraged about who I am. Yet I have been going through an identity crisis most of my life. I have never dared utter these feelings out loud but have hidden them behind the huge, confident smile I wear to church every week. For years I have doubted if I had any value beyond my roles as a wife and mother. I have feared that men are that they might have joy, but that women are that they might be overlooked. I long to feel that I, as a woman, matter to the Lord."

I would like to respond to the issue that underlies the concern of this faithful woman. Does the Lord respect women? Do women matter to the Lord? The answer is yes—a resounding yes!


## THE VALUE OF WOMEN

Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated that "the world's greatest champion of woman and womanhood is Jesus the Christ" (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 475). I believe that. The first time the Lord acknowledged Himself to be the Christ, it was to a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. He taught her about living water and proclaimed, simply, "I . . . am he" (John 4:26). And it was Martha to whom He proclaimed: "I am the resurrection, and the life. . . . And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25–26).

Then, during His greatest agony as He hung on the cross, the Savior reached out to one person—His mother—when in that terrible but glorious moment He asked John the Beloved to care for her as though she were his own (see John 19:26–27).

Of this you may be certain: The Lord especially loves righteous women—women who are not only faithful but filled with faith, women who are optimistic and cheerful because they know who they are and where they are going, women who are striving to live and serve as women of God.

There are those who suggest that males are favored of the Lord because they are ordained to hold the priesthood. Anyone who believes this does not understand the great plan of happiness. The premortal and mortal natures of men and women were specified by God Himself, and it is simply not within His character to diminish the roles and responsibilities of any of His children.

A painting of three women in a garden. One woman is seated on the left, holding an open book. Another woman sits in the center, leaning over the book. A third woman stands behind them, also looking at the book. They are all wearing light-colored dresses. The garden is filled with various flowers, including tulips and daisies. In the background, a large building with a dome is visible through a hazy landscape.

The Lord especially  
loves righteous  
women—women  
who are striving  
to live and serve as  
women of God.

PAINTING BY ANNE MARIE OBORN



As President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) explained, “The Lord offers to his daughters every spiritual gift and blessing that can be obtained by his sons” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1970, 59; or “Magnifying Our Callings in the Priesthood,” *Improvement Era*, June 1970, 66). All of us, men and women alike, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost and are entitled to personal revelation. We may all take upon us the Lord’s name, become sons and daughters of Christ, partake of the ordinances of the temple from which we emerge endowed with power, receive the fulness of the gospel, and achieve exaltation in the celestial kingdom. These spiritual blessings are available to men and women alike, according to their faithfulness and their effort to receive them.

The basic doctrinal purpose for the Creation of the earth is to provide for God’s spirit children the continuation of the process of exaltation and eternal life. God said to Moses:

“And I, God, created man in mine own image, in the image of mine Only Begotten created I him; male and female created I them.

“And I, God, blessed them, and said unto them: Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Moses 2:27–28).

The Church’s proclamation on the family confirms that God has not revoked or changed this commandment. The First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles “solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

This doctrine sometimes causes women to ask: “Is a woman’s value dependent exclusively upon her role as a wife and mother?” The answer is simple and obvious: No. Although there is nothing a woman can do that has more far-reaching, eternal impact than to rear her children to walk in righteousness, motherhood and marital status are not the only measures of a woman’s worth.

Some women do not have the privilege of marrying or rearing children in this life. Yet if they are worthy, these blessings will come later. Men and women

who do have the privilege of rearing children will of course be held accountable for that priceless, eternal stewardship. Although there is simply not a more significant contribution you can make to society, to the Church, or to the eternal destiny of our Father’s children than what you will do as a mother or father, motherhood and fatherhood are not the only measures of goodness or of one’s acceptance before the Lord. Every righteous man and woman has a significant role to play in the onward march of the kingdom of God.

**O**ur sisters have always been vital and integral to the work of the Lord. Think about Mary, the “precious and chosen vessel” (Alma 7:10) who bore the Christ child.

## CONCERN ABOUT SATAN'S DISTORTIONS

I have a deep and abiding feeling about women and about the crucial difference they make in every important setting—particularly in the family and in the Church. I have spoken boldly about the role women must play in the council system of the Church (see “Strength in Counsel,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 76). We cannot fulfill our mission as a Church without the inspired insight and support of women.

For that reason I am concerned about what I see happening with some of our young women. Satan would have you dress, talk, and behave in unnatural and destructive ways in your relationships with young men. The adversary is having a heyday distorting attitudes about gender and roles and about families and individual worth. He is the author of mass confusion about the value, the role, the contribution, and the unique nature of women. Today's popular culture, which is preached by every form of media from the silver screen to the Internet, celebrates the sexy, saucy, socially aggressive woman. These distortions are seeping into the thinking of some of our own women.

My deep desire is to clarify how we in the presiding councils of the Church feel about the sisters of this Church, how our Heavenly Father feels about His daughters, and what He expects of them. My dear sisters, we believe in you. We believe in and are counting on your goodness and your strength, your propensity for virtue and valor, your kindness and courage, your strength and resilience. We believe in your mission as women of God. We realize that you are the emotional (and sometimes spiritual) glue that holds families and often ward families together. We believe that the Church simply will not accomplish what it must without your faith and faithfulness, your innate tendency to put the well-being of others ahead of your own, and your spiritual strength and tenacity. And we believe that God's plan is for you to become queens and to receive the highest blessings any woman can receive in time or eternity. On the other hand, Satan's plan is to get you so preoccupied with the world's glitzy lie about women that you completely miss what you have come here to do and to become. Remember, he wants us to “be miserable like unto himself” (2 Ne. 2:27). Never lose your precious identity by doing anything that would jeopardize the promised eternal future your Heavenly Father has provided for you.



**L**ucy Mack Smith's resilience and righteousness surely influenced her prophet sons.

Young men, lest you get too comfortable while I focus on the women, you have a significant role in all of this. You are sometimes the reason our young women get distracted from their eternal mission here. Let the women in your life know that you want them to be women of God and not women of the world. Of you the Lord expects protection and safety for His daughters. Great will be your remorse if you should steal from anyone her virtue and purity.

## WOMEN ARE VITAL TO THE LORD'S WORK

My earnest plea and prayer is that young men and women will understand that our sisters have always been vital and integral to the work of the Lord. Faithful women have labored valiantly in the cause of truth and righteousness from before the foundations of this world. In his vision of the redemption of the dead, President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) saw not only Father Adam and other prophets but “our glorious Mother Eve, with many of her faithful daughters who had lived through the ages and worshiped the true and living God” (D&C 138:39).

Think about the incomparable role of Eve, whose actions set in motion the great plan of our Father. And what about Mary, the “precious and chosen vessel” (Alma 7:10) who bore the Christ child? Surely no one would question the contributions made by these majestic women.

Our dispensation is not without its heroines. Countless women from every continent and walk of life have made dramatic contributions to the cause of Christ. Consider Lucy Mack Smith, the mother of the martyred prophets Joseph and Hyrum and the grandmother of President Joseph F. Smith. Her resilience and righteousness under the most emotionally and spiritually taxing conditions surely influenced her prophet sons and set them firmly on the path toward fulfilling their foreordained destiny.

At this point you may be thinking, “But what about me and my contribution? I'm not Eve or Mary or even Lucy Mack Smith. I'm just regular, plain old me. Is there something about my contribution that is significant to the Lord? Does He really need me?” Remember, the righteous who are not highly visible are valued too and, in the words of a Book of Mormon prophet, are “no less serviceable unto the people” (Alma 48:19).

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) responded to that question this way: “Both a righteous man and a righteous woman are a blessing to all those whom their lives touch.

“... In the world before we came here, faithful women were given certain assignments while faithful men were foreordained to certain priesthood tasks. While we do not now remember the particulars, ... we are accountable for those things which long ago were expected of us” (*My Beloved Sisters* [1979], 37).

Every sister in this Church who has made covenants with the Lord has a divine mandate to help save souls, to lead the women of the world, to strengthen the homes of Zion, and to build the kingdom of God. Sister Eliza R. Snow (1804–87), the second general president of the Relief Society, said that “every sister in this church should be a preacher of righteousness ... because we have greater and higher privileges than any other females upon the face of the earth” (“Great Indignation Meeting,” *Deseret Evening News*, 15 Jan. 1870, 2).

Every sister who stands for truth and righteousness diminishes the influence of evil. Every sister who strengthens and protects her family is doing the work of God. Every sister who lives as a woman of God becomes a beacon for others to follow and plants seeds of righteous influence that will be harvested for decades to come. Every sister who makes and keeps sacred covenants becomes an instrument in the hands of God.

## THE SAVIOR’S EXAMPLE

I have been drawn to an interchange between God the Father and His eldest and Only Begotten Son, who is the ultimate example of living up to one’s pre-mortal promises. When God asked who would come to earth to prepare a way for all mankind to be saved and strengthened and blessed, it was Jesus Christ who said, simply, “Here am I, send me” (Abr. 3:27).

Just as the Savior stepped forward to fulfill His divine responsibilities, we have the challenge and responsibility to do likewise. If you are wondering if you make a difference to the Lord, imagine the impact when you make commitments such as the following:

“Father, if You need a woman to rear children in righteousness, here am I, send me.”

“If You need a woman who will shun vulgarity and dress modestly and speak with dignity and show the world how joyous it is to keep the commandments, here am I, send me.”

“If You need a woman who can resist the alluring temptations of the world by keeping her eyes fixed on eternity, here am I, send me.”

“If You need a woman of faithful steadiness, here am I, send me.”

Between now and the day the Lord comes again, He needs women in every family, in every ward, in every community, in every nation who will step forward in righteousness and say by their words and their actions, “Here am I, send me.”

My question is, “Will you be one of those women? And will you men who hold the priesthood answer the same call?”

Now, I know most of you want to. But how will you do it? How, in a world filled with deceptive messages about women and the family—and the significance of both to the Lord—will you perpetually respond to the Lord, “Here am I, send me”?

For those who really want to live up to who you are, for those who at all costs want to repent if necessary and who want to see through Satan’s deceptions, I have two suggestions: First, listen to and follow those whom we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators. Second, learn to hear the voice of the Spirit, or the voice of the Lord as communicated by the power of the Holy Ghost.

## FOLLOW THE PROPHET AND THE APOSTLES

I cannot stress enough the importance of listening to and following the prophet and the apostles. In today’s world, where 24 hours a day the me-

dia’s talking heads spew forth conflicting opinions, where men and women jockey for everything from your money to your vote, there is one clear, unpoluted, unbiased voice that you can always count on. And that is the voice of the living prophet and the apostles. Their only motive is “the everlasting welfare of your souls” (2 Ne. 2:30).

Think of it! Think about the value of having a source of information that you can always count on, that will always have your eternal interests at heart, and that will always provide inspired truth. That is a phenomenal gift and guide.

In November 2000, President Hinckley spoke to youth in a Churchwide fireside (see “A Prophet’s Counsel and Prayer for Youth,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 2–11). Have you young adults studied his message and identified things you need to avoid or do differently? I know a 17-year-old who just prior to the prophet’s talk had pierced her ears a second time. She came home from the fireside, took off the second set of earrings, and said to her parents, “If President



**E**very sister who makes and keeps sacred covenants becomes an instrument in the hands of God.



Hinckley says we should only wear one set of earrings, that's good enough for me."

Wearing two pairs of earrings may or may not have eternal consequences for this young woman, but her willingness to obey the prophet will. And if she will obey him now, on something relatively simple, how much easier it will be to follow him when greater issues are at stake.

I make you a promise. It is a simple one, but it is true. If you will listen to the living prophet and the apostles and heed our counsel, you will not go astray.

**E**liza R. Snow said that "every sister in this church should be a preacher of righteousness."



## LEARN TO HEAR THE VOICE OF THE SPIRIT

If you want to avoid the snares of Satan, if you need direction when the choices in front of you are puzzling and perplexing, learn to hear the voice of the Lord as communicated through the Holy Ghost. And then, of course, do what it tells you to do.

Nephi taught clearly that the Holy Ghost "is the gift of God unto all those who diligently seek him" and that "he that diligently seeketh shall find" (1 Ne. 10:17, 19). The stunning reality, my dear brothers and sisters, is that you control how close you are to the Lord. You determine just how clear and readily available promptings from the Holy Ghost will be. You determine this by your actions, by your attitude, by the choices you make, by the things you watch and wear and listen to and read, and by how consistently and sincerely you invite the Spirit into your life.

Contemplate for a moment the extent and the impact of this blessing! You have been given a gift that when exercised and respected will give you the answers to all of the confusing, thorny questions and problems you face in your lives.

I can only imagine some of the questions you young women are facing right now. Should you marry the young man you are now dating, or not? Should you finish your degree, or not? Should you serve a mission, or not? What career should you pursue? Why pursue a career with vigor when all you've ever really wanted is to be a mother?

As life progresses, how will you respond to challenges that will inevitably come? Will you know where to turn for peace and consolation if you are called upon to bury a child—as two of our own children have done—or if a child

threatens to stray from the gospel path?

How will you know what to do when you face financial reverses? Where will you turn for insight and inspiration when you are called upon to lead in your ward or stake? You young men are facing similar kinds of questions.

To all of you there is only one way to safely and confidently meet the obstacles and opportunities that are part of life's path. First, listen to the prophet and the apostles. Study the principles we teach. Then take those principles to the Lord and ask Him how you should apply them in your life. Ask Him to influence your thoughts, temper your actions, and guide your steps. "Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good" (Alma 37:37). He will communicate with you through the power and presence of the Holy Ghost.

## HEED SPIRITUAL PROMPTINGS

There are several things that greatly enhance our ability to understand the promptings of the Holy Ghost and thereby hear the voice of God.

**First is fasting and prayer.** When the sons of Mosiah were united with Alma the Younger, they rejoiced in their reunion and acknowledged that because “they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting,” they had been gifted with the spirit of prophecy and revelation, “and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God” (Alma 17:3).

**Second is immersing yourself in the scriptures.**

The word of God “will tell you all things what ye should do” (2 Ne. 32:3). The scriptures are a conduit for personal revelation. Young adults, your generation is much more versed in holy writ than was mine at your age. You have been taught to read and study the scriptures. I urge you to intensify your study of them. I promise that your ability to hear the voice of the Lord as communicated through the Holy Ghost will increase and improve.

**Third is preparing to spend time in the house of the Lord.** When the time appropriately comes for us to go to the temple, we leave the temple “armed with . . . power” (D&C 109:22) and with the promise that as we “grow up” in our knowledge of the Lord, we will “receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost” (D&C 109:15). The temple is a place of personal revelation. If you are endowed, visit the temple regularly. If you are not, prepare yourself to enter, for inside the doors of the temple rests the power that will fortify you against the vicissitudes of life.

**Fourth is listening to the counsel of your father and mother and your spouse.** They are wise and experienced. Share with them your fears and concerns. Seek blessings from your father. If for some reason he is not worthy or able, go to your bishop or your stake president. They love you and will count it a privilege to bless your life. If you have not already done so, you should also receive your patriarchal blessing.

**Fifth is obedience and repentance.** There are certain things you simply cannot do if you want to have the Holy Ghost with you. It is not possible to listen to vulgar lyrics, watch movies filled with sexual innuendo, tamper with pornography on the Internet (or anywhere else, for that matter), take the name of the Lord in vain, wear revealing clothing, compromise in any way the law of chastity, or disregard the values of true manhood and womanhood and expect the Holy

Ghost to remain with you. Whenever anyone participates in those kinds of activities, it should not be a surprise if feelings of loneliness, discouragement, and unworthiness follow. Do not make the choice to go it alone rather than have the Spirit of the Lord to guide, to protect, to prompt, to warn, and to fill you with peace. Repent if you need to so you can enjoy the companionship of the Spirit.

Women and men who can hear the voice of the Lord, and who respond to those promptings, become invaluable instruments in His hands. I will never forget an experience I had following a stake conference. I was asked to participate in a blessing for a young woman who was suffering with cancer. The family were converts, and they had found peace through the promptings of the Spirit. Prior to our giving the blessing, this dear sister said to me: “Elder Ballard, I am not afraid to die, but I would like to live here with my family. I am prepared to accept the will of my Father in Heaven. Please bless me to find peace and to know that He will be with me.” What faith, insight, and courage the Spirit had blessed her with! A few months later the family advised me that Heavenly Father had called her home. She died in peace, and the family lived in peace because they were familiar with the Spirit. One of the sweetest messages the Spirit will relay is how the Lord feels about you. And that reassurance will strengthen you in a way that almost nothing else can.

Now, finally, I turn again to you dear sisters, you who have such a profound, innate spiritual ability to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. You need never wonder again if you have worth in the sight of the Lord and to the Brethren in the presiding councils of the Church. We love you. We cherish you. We respect you. Never doubt that your influence is absolutely vital to preserving the family and to assisting with the growth and spiritual vitality of the Church. This Church will not reach its foreordained destiny without you. We men simply cannot nurture as you nurture. Most of us don’t have the sensitivity—spiritual and otherwise—that by your eternal nature you inherently have. Your influence on families and with children, with youth, and with men is singular. You are natural-born nurturers. Because of these unusual gifts and talents, you are vital to taking the gospel to all the world, to demonstrating that there is joy in living the way the prophets have counseled us to live.

More than ever before we need women of faith, virtue, vision, and charity, as the Relief Society



**I**nside the doors of the temple  
rests the power that will fortify  
you against the vicissitudes of life.



declaration proclaims. We need women who can hear and who will respond to the voice of the Lord, women who at all costs will defend and protect the family. We don't need women who want to be like men, sound like men, dress like men, drive like some men drive, or act like men. We do need women who rejoice in their womanhood and have a spiritual confirmation of their identity, their value, and their eternal destiny. Above all, we need women who will stand up for truth and righteousness and decry evil at every turn and simply say, "Lord, here am I, send me."

I bear my witness and testimony to you that you are precious, that this is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The kingdom of God will roll forward until it fills the entire earth. It is for you to be beacons and banners to the entire world, to show the women and the men of the world there is such a natural disposition in women to do

good, and to seek after things of the Spirit.

I simply say to you, God bless the women of the Church. □

*From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University on 13 March 2001.*

*Gospel topics: women, commitment, prophets, Holy Ghost*

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

*Most Ensign articles can be used for family home evening discussions. The following questions are for that purpose or for personal reflection:*

- 1. What strengths do women contribute to the work of the Lord?*
- 2. What do the Savior's words "Here am I, send me" teach us about fulfilling our responsibilities?*
- 3. How can we avoid adopting Satan's distortions concerning gender roles and families?*

**Y**our influence on families and with children, with youth, and with men is singular. You are natural-born nurturers.





## Following the Promptings of the Holy Ghost

**R**ead the following with the sisters you visit, and discuss the questions, scriptures, and teachings from our Church leaders. Share your experiences and testimony, and invite those you teach to do the same.

*Why is it important for us to have the gift of the Holy Ghost?*

**John 14:26:** “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

**2 Nephi 32:5:** “If ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do.”

**President James E. Faust**, *Second Counselor in the First Presidency*: “Latter-day Saints, having received the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, are entitled to personal inspiration in the small events of life as well as when they are confronted with the giant Goliaths of life” (“Communion with the Holy Spirit,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2002, 4).

*How does the Holy Ghost speak to us?*

**1 Nephi 17:45:** “[The Lord] hath spoken unto you in a still small voice, but ye were past feeling, that ye could not feel his words.”

**D&C 8:2–3:** “I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come

upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.

“Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation; behold, this is the spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground.”

**President Boyd K. Packer**, *Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*: “We can be too busy to pay attention to the promptings of the Spirit. . . . It is a spiritual voice that comes into the mind as a thought put into your heart” (“The Cloven Tongues of Fire,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 8).

*How can we improve our ability to feel the promptings of the Spirit?*

**Moroni 8:26:** “The remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth

**“It is a spiritual voice that comes into the mind as a thought put into your heart.”**

by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God.”

**President Marion G. Romney** (1897–1988), *Second Counselor in the First Presidency*: “If you want to obtain and keep the guidance of the Spirit, you can do so by following this simple four-point program. One, pray. Pray diligently. . . . Second, study and learn the gospel. Third, live righteously; repent of your sins. . . . Fourth, give service in the Church” (“Guidance of the Holy Spirit,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1980, 5).

**President Gordon B. Hinckley**: “There is no greater blessing that can come into our lives than the gift of the Holy Ghost—the companionship of the Holy Spirit to guide us, protect us, and bless us, to go, as it were, as a pillar before us and a flame to lead us in paths of righteousness and truth. That guiding power of the third member of the Godhead can be ours if we live worthy of it” (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 259).

*What changes can I make to receive this remarkable gift and enjoy it more fully in my life?* ☐

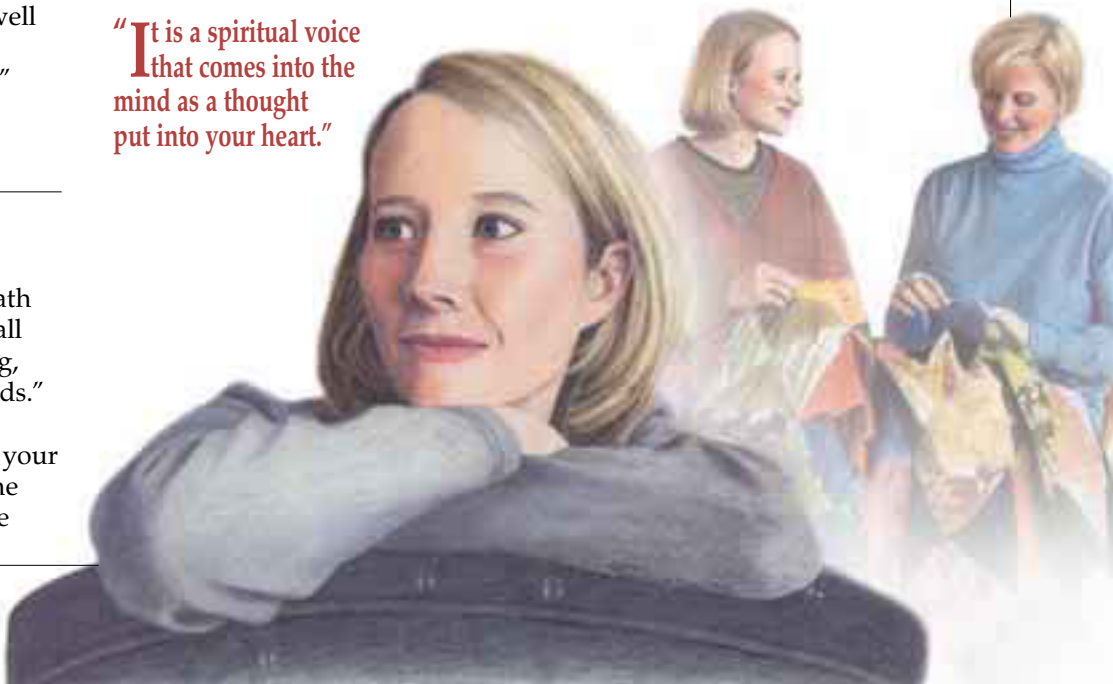


PHOTO BY TOM SMART, DESERET NEWS



*The Church helped welcome Olympic visitors by displaying giant banners of athletes on two of its buildings (far left) and by donating the use of a parking lot for the Olympic Medals Plaza (foreground).*

## Church Joins Salt Lake City in Welcoming the World

BY BARBARA JEAN JONES  
Assistant Editor

The eyes of the world were on Utah in February as Salt Lake City hosted the 2002 Olympic Winter Games. Much attention was focused on the Church as its leaders and members joined with the Salt Lake community in welcoming the world. "It goes clear back to the book of Isaiah, which says that Zion would be established at the tops of the mountains and that the nations of the world would come there," said Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in a *Los Angeles Times* article. "In a sense we expected it. Only, the prophecies didn't say anything about downhill skiing."

### MEETING GLOBAL LEADERS

On 8 February, the First Presidency greeted United States President George W.

Bush and first lady Laura Bush in the Church Administration Building, where they gave the president and his wife each a personal copy of their family history. Following the meeting, President and Mrs. Bush attended a private reception at the Utah State Capitol. The Mormon Tabernacle Choir opened the reception by singing "Battle Hymn of the Republic."

The following morning, the First Presidency also met briefly with United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Secretary-General Annan and the First Presidency discussed peace initiatives, humanitarian aid efforts, and how such efforts are working to relieve human suffering.

Following the meeting, Primary general president Coleen K. Menlove joined Secretary-General Annan

and other global leaders such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu and International Olympic Committee President Jacques Rogge in a panel discussion on helping disadvantaged children. The discussion, held in the Church's Conference Center, was sponsored by Olympic Aid, the official charity of the Olympic Games, which seeks to use sports to rehabilitate children in war-torn countries.

### DRESSING UP THE CITY

Downtown Salt Lake City provided a breathtaking backdrop for the games, and the Church played a big part in helping the area

shine. Hundreds of thousands of lights on Temple Square, normally displayed only during the Christmas season, were lit up again for Olympic visitors.

Two of the 12 giant banners of winter athletes that graced the west sides of some of Salt Lake's buildings were hung at Church Headquarters—a 289-by-133-foot banner of a figure skater on the Church Office Building and a 46-by-108-foot banner of a skeleton racer on the Church Museum of History and Art. A huge image of the Olympic rings was projected onto the west side of the Joseph Smith Memorial Building each night of the Olympics. At the request of the Salt Lake Organizing Committee for the Olympic Winter Games (SLOC), the Church donated the



*The First Presidency met with President and Mrs. Bush (top) and with U.N. Secretary-General Annan (bottom).*

PHOTOS BY CRAIG DIMOND

use of one of its downtown parking lots, where SLOC built the Olympic Medals Plaza. "The Church was so wonderful, so helpful in making all this happen," said Kathy Hunter, cityscape manager for SLOC.

OPENING CEREMONIES

When Emmy Award-winning producer Don Mischer and his colleagues were hired to stage the opening and closing ceremonies for the Olympics in Salt Lake City, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir was the first performance group they thought of including. Indeed, from the first moments to the grand finale of the opening ceremonies, the music of the choir was a prominent feature in the two-and-a-half-hour

spectacular, seen by a TV audience of an estimated three billion. "What a tremendous honor it was for the choir to be asked to represent the Church, the state of Utah, the United States, and even the power of humanity and what it can do," said choir director Craig Jessop.

As the U.S. flag found in the rubble of the World Trade Center was carried into the Olympic Stadium, the choir sang "The Star Spangled Banner." Many of the 52,000 spectators present were visibly moved. Accompanied by the Utah Symphony Orchestra, the choir also sang "Call of the

Champions," this year's Olympic theme composed especially for the choir by five-time Oscar-winning composer John Williams; Spiro Samara's "Olympic Hymn," traditionally performed during Olympic ceremonies; Mikis Theodorakis's "Ode to Zeus," performed as the torch came into the stadium and the Olympic caldron was lit; and Beethoven's "Ode to Joy,"

CULTURAL OLYMPIAD

At the request of SLOC, the Tabernacle Choir offered four free Saturday-night concerts in the Salt Lake Tabernacle as part of the Cultural Olympiad that runs concurrent with the games.

Accompanied by the Orchestra at Temple Square, the choir kicked off the Olympiad concert series on 9 February with a

ensemble king'singers, and percussionist Evelyn Glennie were featured guest artists at the other Cultural Olympiad concerts with the choir. On the Sunday morning following each of the concerts, guest artists joined the choir for its weekly broadcast *Music and the Spoken Word*.

LIGHT OF THE WORLD

The Church put on its own cultural offering for visitors to Salt Lake City during the games. *Light of the World: A Celebration of Life*, the first theatrical spectacular held in the Conference Center, ran for 14 performances from 5 February to 2 March, before a total audience of more than 290,000. The Tabernacle Choir and a cast of 1,500 volunteer musicians, dancers, and actors, accompanied

by the Orchestra at Temple Square, performed on a domed stage designed to represent the earth.

Written by Latter-day Saint composers and writers, the production told the story of the Creation and the purpose of life. Interwoven throughout the spectacular were inspirational stories of Olympic athletes and a brief history of the Church, including the stories of the Prophet Joseph Smith, President Brigham Young, and the Mormon pioneers. The production ended with a video clip of President Hinckley bearing testimony of Jesus Christ as the Light of the World. □



PHOTO BY JED CLARK

On stage at the Conference Center, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and volunteer cast members performed in *Light of the World*.

performed during the fireworks of the grand finale. The choir provided backup to other numbers performed during the ceremonies.

The story of the Mormon pioneers was presented as the ceremonies turned to telling the history of Utah. Horses, wagons, and handcarts rolled into the stadium while performers dressed like pioneers danced to Western music.

Thousands of the volunteer performers in the ceremonies were members of the Church.

musical tribute to the Olympic Games. Musical guests included mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade, John Williams, the U.S. Army Herald Trumpets, and Salt Lake's International Children's Choir. A highlight of the program occurred when Mr. Williams conducted a set of his own compositions, including this year's Olympic theme, "Call of the Champions."

"This is by far the best thing I've seen since I got here," remarked an Olympic visitor from Maine.

Clarinetist Richard Stoltzman, a cappella





*Members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles cheered as President Hinckley passed the flame to Elder Maxwell.*

## Many Latter-day Saints Pass Torch

BY HEATHER SIMONSEN

On 22 December 2001, Elizabeth Howell ran with the Olympic flame down the White House south lawn track and handed the torch to United States President George W. Bush. She opened the locket that hung around her neck and showed the president a photo of her husband, Brady, who was killed in the 11 September terrorist attack on the Pentagon.

"My husband was all-American," she told the president. "I know," he answered, tears visible in his eyes.

Sister Howell, a member of the Crystal City Ward, Mount Vernon Virginia Stake, was chosen by White House officials and the Salt Lake Organizing Committee of the Olympic Winter Games (SLOC) to pass the torch to the president. She represented her late husband, who was a returned missionary, a Primary teacher and Cubmaster, and an

intelligence watch officer of the Pentagon's Navy Command Center. The U.S. Department of Defense posthumously awarded Brady the Defense of Freedom Medal, the civilian equivalent of the military's Purple Heart.

Passing the torch to the president "was healing in so many ways," said Sister Howell. "[He] was warm and genuine. He looked me in the eyes and said, 'I'm sorry for your loss. You've done a terrific job carrying on.'"

Sister Howell, who was also invited by SLOC president Mitt Romney to carry the nation's placard in front of the U.S. athletes during the Olympic opening ceremonies, was one of 11,500 inspirational torchbearers chosen to carry the Olympic flame. The torch carriers relayed the flame 13,500 miles across the United States to its final destination in Salt Lake City. Torchbearers—nominated by a person whom they inspired—were selected to carry the flame

within their own communities. Like Sister Howell, hundreds of these flame bearers were Latter-day Saints. Featured here are a few who represent the kinds of people who carried the torch.

Jason and Jenny Pyle, members of the Joshua Ward, East Lancaster California Stake, together carried the torch on 18 January in San Francisco as hundreds of people cheered them on. Brother Pyle was chosen to be a torchbearer for risking his life to donate part of his liver to save his infant son, David, who suffered from a potentially fatal liver disease. David is now a healthy and active three-year-old.

Gary Rowels of the Arvada Third Ward, Arvada Colorado Stake, carried the flame on 27 January in Bozeman, Montana, the city where his five daughters were born. His daughters nominated him because of his

commitment to children—as a teacher, coach, and father. "As a dad you do your best all through your life and try to be a good example to your children," Brother Rowels said. "For my daughters to think enough of me to nominate me to carry the flame is beyond words." A 30-year convert to the Church, Brother Rowels says he uses the gospel as a blueprint for being a good father.

Mike Taylor and Pat West of the Orem First Ward, Orem Utah Stake, carried the flame consecutively on 5 February in Provo, Utah. Sister West nominated Brother Taylor because of his dramatic recovery from a serious head injury that put him in a coma, at age 20, while serving a mission. Within a year of his injury, Brother Taylor relearned how to talk, walk, and even run. He joined the BYU track team and wrote a book about his recovery.



*In Washington, D.C., Elizabeth Howell was chosen to carry the torch to the White House, where it was received by President Bush.*



Mike Taylor

Pat West was among those torchbearers asked to pass the torch to the person they had nominated.

In Salt Lake City, Dale Hull of the Highland Third Ward, South Jordan Utah Highland Park Stake, walked with the torch on 8 February without the help of his cane. After Brother Hull suffered a spinal cord injury that left him paralyzed in 1999, he learned to walk again with the help of his physical therapist, who nominated him to carry the flame. Brother Hull trained with his therapist for months to prepare for his portion of the torch relay. Supported by a harness, he practiced walking on a treadmill, carrying a weighted baseball bat as a makeshift torch.

The torch had made its entrance into Salt Lake City the day before Brother Hull carried it. Following the same route that Mormon pioneers traveled, the torch passed through Emigration Canyon, entering This Is the Place Heritage Park to the cheers of a crowd of some 25,000. A few hours later, Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles carried the torch up the steps of the Church Administration

Building, where the First Presidency and other members of the Quorum of the Twelve welcomed it.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, while holding the torch up to the thousands of spectators and media who had gathered, said, "We salute the state of Utah, whose party this is. We salute the United States of America, the host country of these games. We salute the whole world as it joins in celebrations of excellence. We salute the officials who have worked so hard and who have gathered from over the world to make of

this a great success. And most of all, we salute the athletes who will join in a great contest of excellence.

"To every one we extend our gratitude and best wishes. Let this be a great and historic and wonderful occasion for everyone who joins with us here in this beautiful city and in this great mountain place of beauty."

President Hinckley then passed the torch to Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve, who carried the flame a short distance through the cheering crowd toward its



Dale Hull

eventual destination in the Olympic stadium. □

*Heather Simonsen is a member of the Stratford Ward, Salt Lake Highland Stake.*

## Elder Scott Teaches Young Adults to Face Challenges

**I**n a recent CES satellite broadcast, Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke to young people about facing and overcoming personal challenges.

"You are making better progress than you realize," said Elder Scott. "Your struggles are defining character, discipline, and confidence in the promises of your Father in Heaven and the Savior as you consistently obey Their counsel."

Elder Scott spoke on 13 January from Brigham Young University's Marriott Center, where more than 20,000 college-age adults were assembled. The fireside, translated into 22 languages, was broadcast throughout North, Central, and South America and Europe. It was made available on videotape for institute students in other parts of the world.

Elder Scott told the young people that God

knows how to resolve any challenge they face, no matter how difficult. "As you exercise faith, doing what you can, He will help you handle those things within your capacity. He will bring into your path priesthood leaders who can counsel and advise, friends who can give you support, and parents who can provide answers. Through the avenue of prayer and the path of inspiration, He will help you know what to do."

Rarely, said Elder Scott, will a person receive a complete answer to prayer all at once. Rather, answers often come a little at a time. "When you seek inspiration to help make decisions, the Lord will give gentle promptings that require you to think, to exercise faith, to work, to struggle at times, then to act." He continued, "If you have a feeling that an impression has come through inspiration, try

your faith by diligently living it. When it is truly a prompting of the Lord, there will be a confirmation that what you have done is right. You will learn what it feels like to have that witness."

In conclusion, Elder Scott spoke of the growth that comes from overcoming challenges through the help of the Lord. "As you discipline yourself through careful obedience to the commandments of the Lord, you will qualify to receive inspiration and direction in your life. You will grow in discipline, capacity, devotion, understanding, compassion, and joyful service. Your worthy life will allow you to interpret and apply the inspiration that will come through the Holy Ghost. Your love of Heavenly Father and His Son will increase. It will be a love of reverence, awe, and gratitude of a child to the greatest of all." □

## Referrals from Visitors' Centers and Historic Sites Are Increasing

**R**eferrals from North American visitors' centers and historic sites have increased significantly in recent years, Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said at a recent seminar for new visitors' center directors and Missionary Training Center presidents.

"The efforts at our visitors' centers and historic sites have begun to make a positive difference," said Elder Oaks, citing a more than three-fold increase in the number of annual referrals received from these locations in North America over the past six years. "These impressive increases in teaching opportunities are especially significant when you know that the total number of visitors at our visitors' centers and historical sites has not [significantly] increased and, in fact, was almost the same in the year 2001 (6.6 million) as it was in 1996 (6.3 million)."

Elder Oaks urged new visitors' center directors to

"double and quadruple the number of teaching opportunities we receive from our visitors' centers and historical sites," especially those received from Church members.

Elders Joseph B. Wirthlin and Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and several members of the Seventy also participated in training during the four-day seminar held 15–18 January at the Provo MTC.

"The best thing you have is your testimony," Elder Wirthlin told the new leaders and their wives. Elder Wirthlin shared experiences that led to gaining his own testimony, as well as experiences from the lives of Elder Parley P. Pratt and President Heber J. Grant. Elder Holland shared his witness of the Atonement and of the importance of missionary work in a testimony meeting with the newly called couples. □



PHOTO BY R. COLE GOODWIN

*Frederick Douglass IV (right) joined Washington D.C. Visitors' Center Director K. Gary Garff and his wife, Linda, at the exhibit's opening.*

## Washington D.C. Visitors' Center Hosts African American Exhibit

**I**n honor of Black History Month, held each February in the United States, the Washington D.C. Temple Visitors' Center hosted during February and March an extensive display of rare African American artifacts spanning 400 years of history. The exhibit comprised one-of-a-kind photographs, books, letters, newspapers, and documents. These included a note written by Martin Luther King Jr. from jail in Alabama, an 1840 print depicting the Spanish slave

ship *L'Amistad*, and a letter from Frederick Douglass on the death of abolitionist Sojourner Truth.

Part of the Mark E. Mitchell Collection of African American History, the exhibit was sponsored by the Friends of the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC). The display also featured artifacts from the Museum of Church History and Art, including photographs, audio and video recordings, journals, and letters of early and more recent black members of the Church.

The exhibit received a great deal of positive public and media attention, said K. Gary Garff, director of the Washington D.C. Temple Visitors' Center. Individuals attending the exhibit's debut included members of the U.S. Congress, international ambassadors, collection owner Mark Mitchell, and Frederick Douglass IV, president of the Friends of the NMAAHC. □

## BYU Women's Conference Will Be Broadcast in May

**B**righam Young University will hold its 2002 Women's Conference on 2–3 May. Selected talks will be broadcast to meeting-houses throughout the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, and Latin America from 6:00 to 10:00 P.M. mountain daylight time on the days of the conference. The broadcasts can also

be seen at the same time on the Internet at <http://broadcasting.byu.edu>.

Television broadcasts can be found on KBYU-TV (channel 11) and on BYUTV (DISH Network channel 9403, DirecTV Plus channel 374) where these signals or systems are available. Please check individual schedules for broadcast times.

Church units in Europe, the British Isles, and South Africa can capture the broadcast on 18 May. Local units are authorized to record and retain a set of the broadcasts for Church use.

For more information, call 1-801-378-7692, or access the Web site at <http://womensconference.byu.edu>. □



# Making the Most of This Issue

A P R I L 2 0 0 2

insight into the Atonement. See p. 19.

- Throughout the scriptures, the Lord asks probing questions of His disciples—and of us. See p. 26.

- Find Him in a hymn. Try playing the music or reading the words of this new Easter hymn, p. 7.

## The Father and the Son

Ever been confused when reading the scriptures whether the person speaking is Heavenly Father or Jesus Christ? Their relationship is clarified in a classic statement by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, p. 12.

## Strengthening Your Family

- Teach children how prayer can protect them by reading "A Prayer in the Storm," p. 54.

- Get your loved ones excited about family history and temple work by sharing the story "In My Grandmother's Name," p. 55.

- How can you read scriptures and pray daily with your family when you travel extensively for business? One solution and some other helpful tips for maintaining gospel standards during your travels are found on p. 64.

- Feel the spirit of general conference in your home year-round. See the idea on p. 65 for using the conference messages in your family home evening lessons.

- You never expected to be a noncustodial parent. What can you do to influence your children for good now that you no longer live with them in a traditional family setting? See p. 58 for ideas.

## Remembering the Savior

- A living prophet offers inspirational thoughts about the Savior, p. 2.

- A profound experience helps a bishop gain

## Reaching Primary Children

How can you resolve discipline problems in your Primary class? Show your students that your love goes beyond the classroom. See p. 65.

## A Branch in the Forest

Read about the faith of a group of early Swedish Latter-day Saints who put down roots in the forests of upper Washington state, p. 38.

## The Power of Scripture Stories

Old Testament stories can teach powerful principles for today's living. From the story of Achan, learn how your personal sins can affect others, or gain inspiration

to face your challenges from the story of Gideon, pp. 43–49.

## Have You Checked Out [www.mormon.org](http://www.mormon.org)?

Sharing the gospel just got easier with this exciting new Church Web site. Learn more about it on p. 50.

## Reverence in Stained Glass

See some of the stained glass art created by artist Tom Holdman for the Palmyra New York Temple, p. 8.

## Did You Know?

Each April issue of the *Ensign* has additional articles focused on our Savior Jesus Christ and how His life affects us. In this issue, for example, see the article by



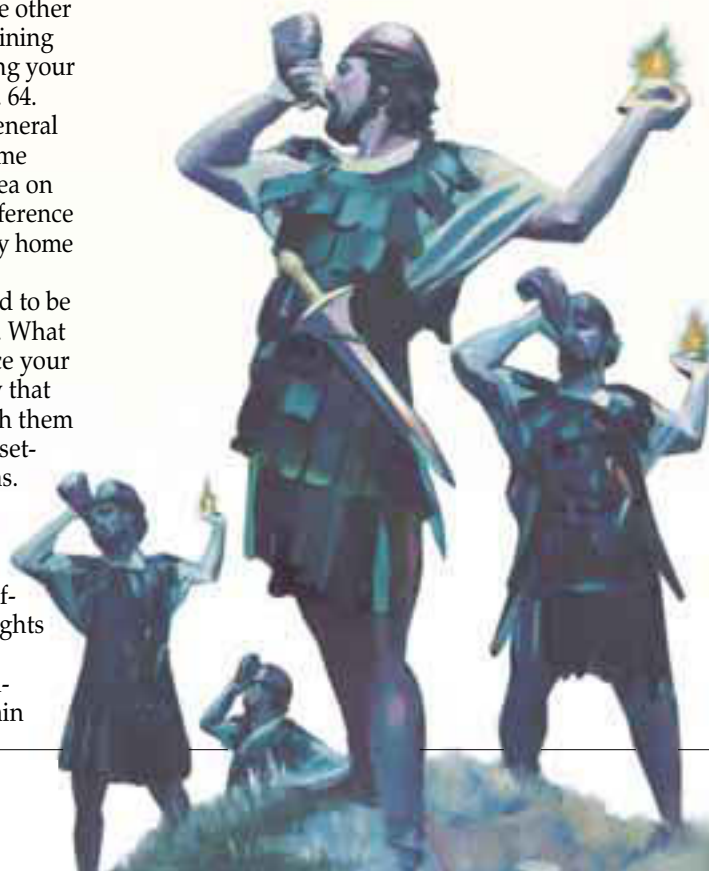
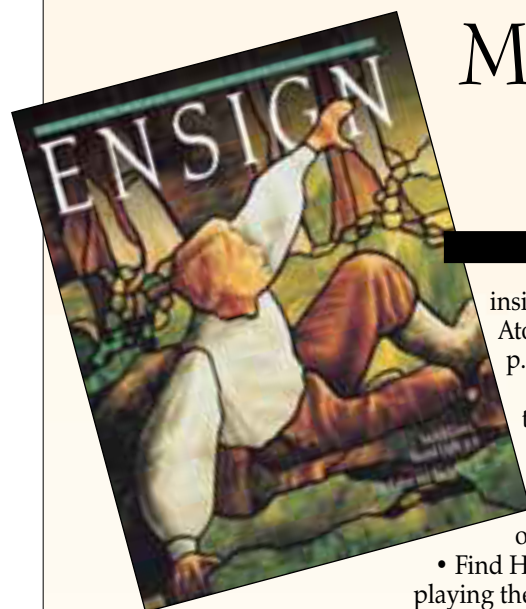
Elder J. Devn Cornish, an Area Authority Seventy, clarifying three common misunderstandings about the Atonement and telling how a member discovered its power to change and heal, p. 20.

## Home Teachers and Visiting Teachers

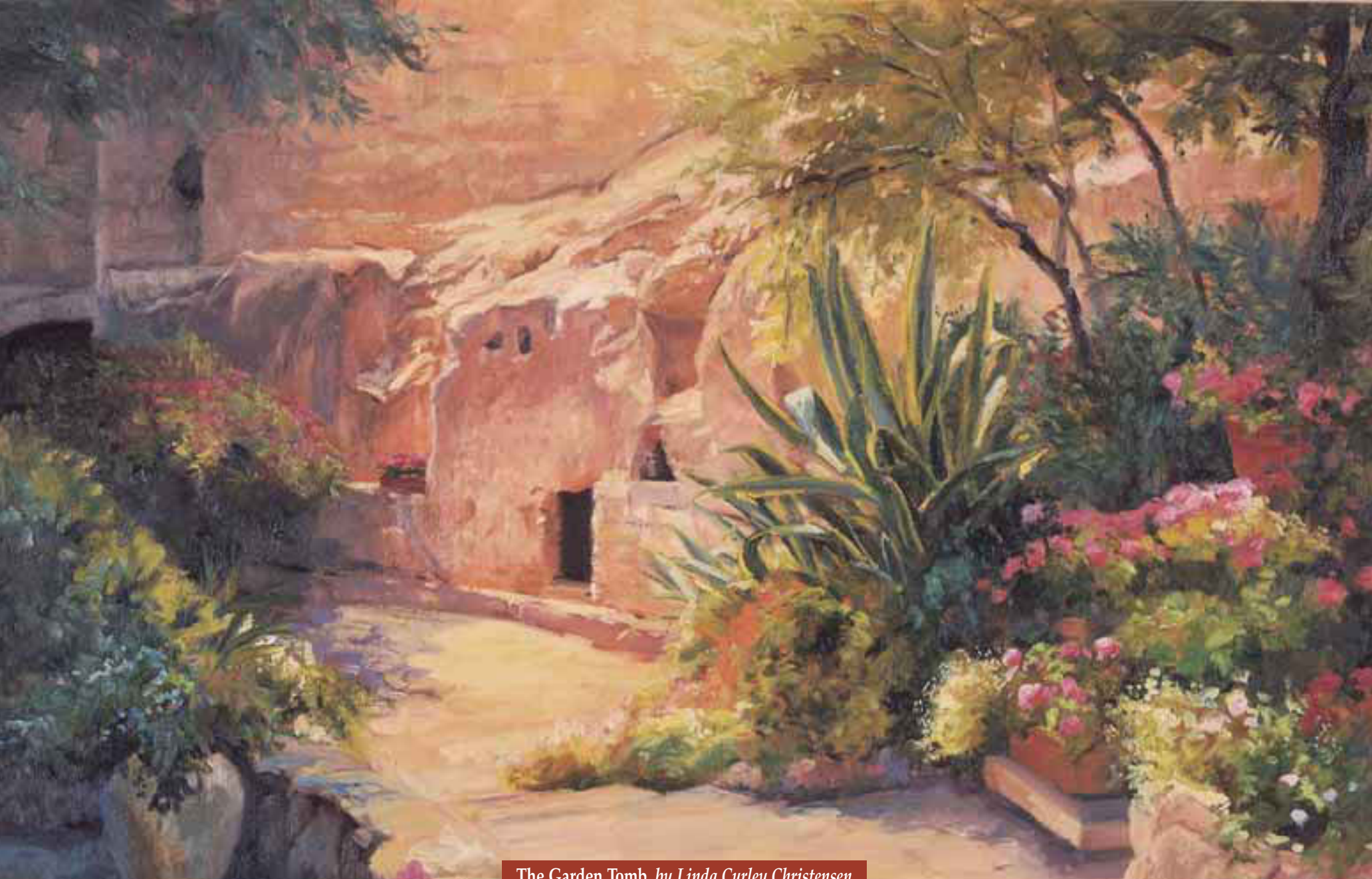
Find the monthly messages on pp. 2 and 74.

## GOSPEL TOPICS

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*The Garden Tomb, by Linda Curley Christensen*

*"And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen" (Luke 24:2-6).*

*Curley*



*This stained glass skylight of overhanging branches is located over the baptismal font in the Palmyra New York Temple. It is a reminder of the glorious light-filled woods in which young Joseph Smith had the First Vision.*

*"I at length came to the determination to 'ask of God.' . . . I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God"*

*(JS—H 1:13, 15).*