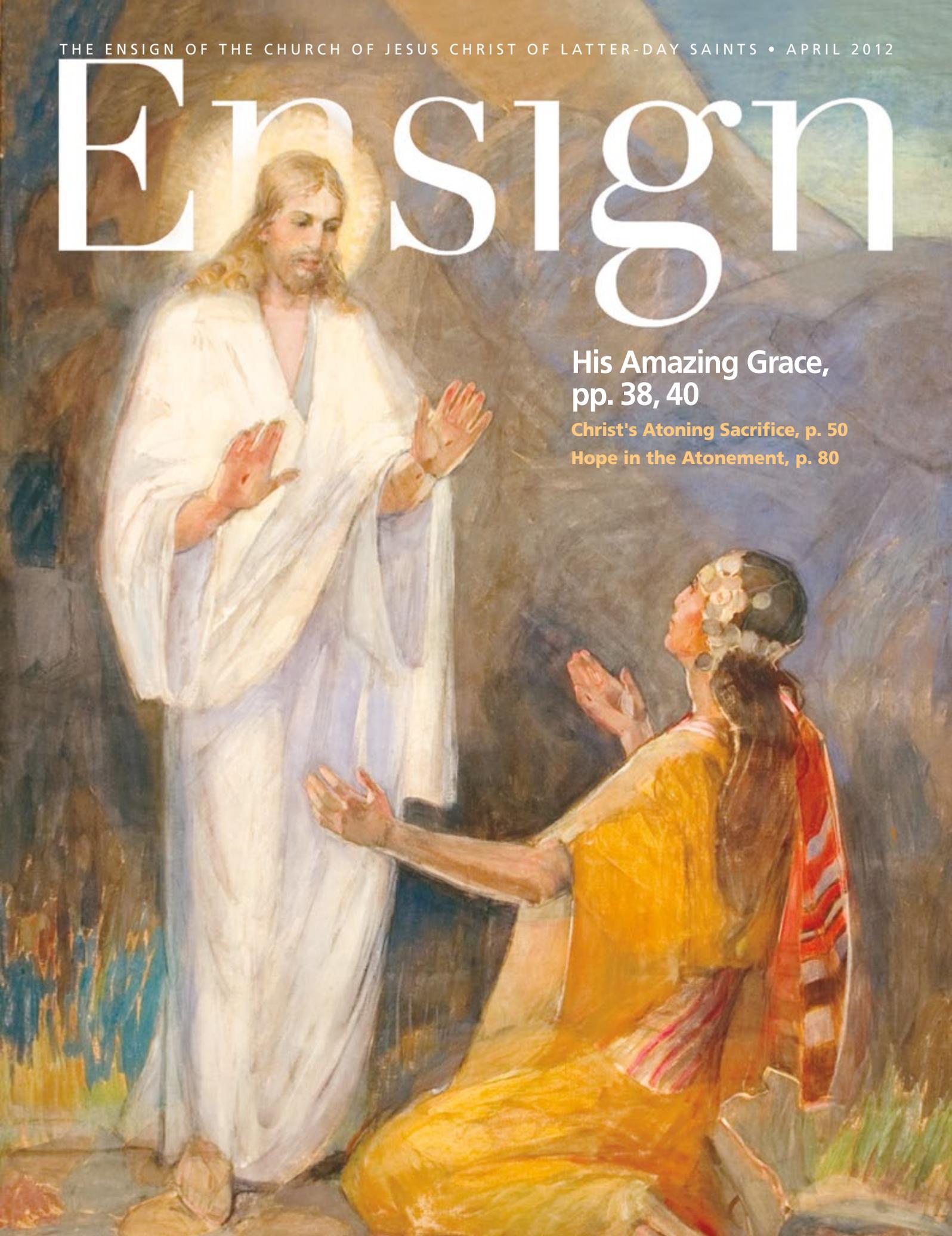


Ensign



His Amazing Grace,
pp. 38, 40

Christ's Atoning Sacrifice, p. 50

Hope in the Atonement, p. 80



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The Denial of Saint Peter, by Gerrit van Honthorst

“A certain maid beheld [Peter] as he sat by the fire, . . . and said, This man was also with [Jesus].

“And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.

“And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them.

And Peter said, Man, I am not.

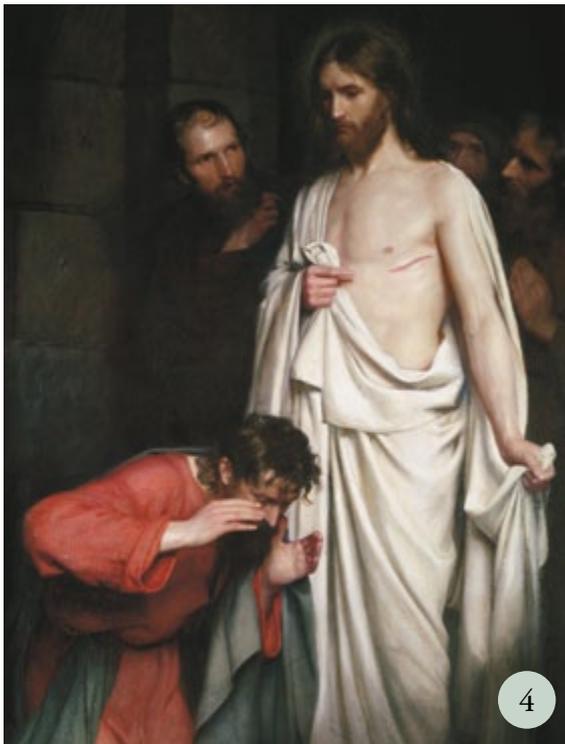
“And . . . another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him. . . .

“And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately . . . the cock crew. . . .

“And Peter went out, and wept bitterly” (Luke 22:56–60, 62).

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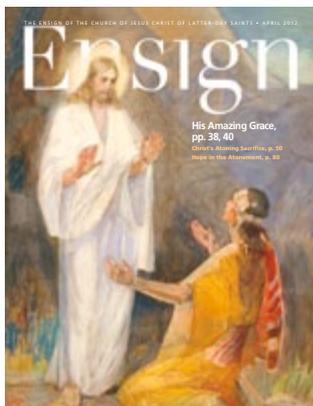
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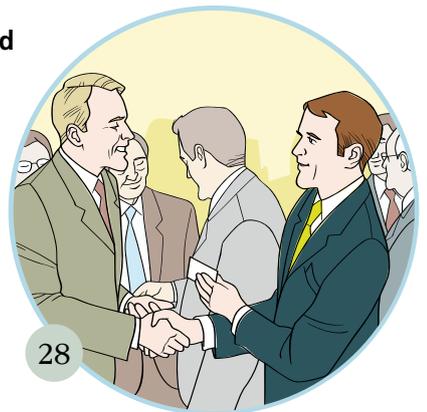
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A MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
April 2012 Volume 42 • Number 4

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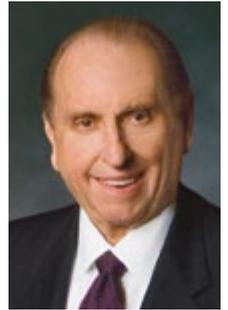
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By President
Thomas S. Monson



“He Is Risen”

A PROPHET’S TESTIMONY

The clarion call of Christendom,” President Thomas S. Monson has declared, is that Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead. “The reality of the Resurrection provides to one and all the peace that surpasses understanding” (see Philippians 4:7).¹

In the following excerpts, President Monson shares his testimony of and gratitude for the Savior’s Resurrection and declares that because the Son conquered death, all of the Father’s children who come to earth will live again.

Life beyond Mortality

“I believe that none of us can conceive the full import of what Christ did for us in Gethsemane, but I am grateful every day of my life for His atoning sacrifice in our behalf.

“At the last moment, He could have turned back. But He did not. He passed beneath all things that He might save all things. In doing so, He gave us life beyond this mortal existence. He reclaimed us from the Fall of Adam.

“To the depths of my very soul, I am grateful to Him. He taught us how to live. He taught us how to die. He secured our salvation.”²

Dispelling the Darkness of Death

“In certain situations, as in great suffering and illness, death comes as an angel of mercy. But for the most part, we think of it as the enemy of human happiness.

“The darkness of death can ever be dispelled by the light of revealed truth. ‘I am the resurrection, and the life,’ spoke the Master. ‘He that believeth in me, though he were

dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.’

“This reassurance—yes, even holy confirmation—of life beyond the grave could well provide the peace promised by the Savior when He assured His disciples: ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.’”³

He Is Not Here

“Our Savior lived again. The most glorious, comforting, and reassuring of all events of human history had taken place—the victory over death. The pain and agony of Gethsemane and Calvary had been wiped away. The salvation of mankind had been secured. The Fall of Adam had been reclaimed.

“The empty tomb that first Easter morning was the answer to Job’s question, ‘If a man die, shall he live again?’ To all within the sound of my voice, I declare, If a man die, he shall live again. We know, for we have the light of revealed truth. . . .

“My beloved brothers and sisters, in our hour of deepest sorrow, we can receive profound peace from the words of the angel that first Easter morning: ‘He is not here: for he is risen.’”⁴

All Will Live Again

“We laugh, we cry, we work, we play, we love, we live. And then we die. . . .



“And dead we would remain but for one Man and His mission, even Jesus of Nazareth. . . .

“With all my heart and the fervency of my soul, I lift up my voice in testimony as a special witness and declare that God does live. Jesus is His Son, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. He is our Redeemer; He is our Mediator with the Father. He it was who died on the cross to atone for our sins. He became the firstfruits of the Resurrection. Because He died, all shall live again.”⁵

A Personal Witness

“I declare my personal witness that death has been conquered, victory over the tomb has been won. May the words made sacred by Him who fulfilled them become actual knowledge to all. Remember them. Cherish them. Honor them. *He is risen.*”⁶ ■

NOTES

1. “He Is Risen,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Apr. 2003, 7.
2. “At Parting,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2011, 114.
3. “Now Is the Time,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2002, 68; *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 59; see also John 11:25–26; 14:27.
4. “He Is Risen,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2010, 89, 90; see also Job 14:14; Matthew 28:6.
5. “I Know That My Redeemer Lives!” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2007, 24, 25.
6. *Liahona and Ensign*, Apr. 2003, 7

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

After sharing quotes from President Monson’s message, note the testimony that he bears of the true meaning of Easter. You could ask family members the following questions: “What does it mean to you that a living prophet has testified of these truths today? How can you apply them in your life?” Consider adding your testimony.

YOUTH

I Will See Him Again

By Morgan Webecke

Dad made each of us kids feel special. He loved us and would forgive easily. He did his best to make sure that each of us was happy, and he made it clear that he wanted the best for us. I loved him so much.

When I was in sixth grade, my dad died in a car accident. My family and I were totally devastated. There was a big hole in our family. Dad was the one I leaned on, the one I went to if I was having problems. Instead of seeking help, I let the anger and hurt stay. I finally decided it was God's fault. I stopped reading my scriptures and saying prayers. I went to church only because Mom wanted me to. I tried to stay far away from my Heavenly Father.

Then I went to Young Women camp for the first time. I

liked meeting new friends, but I still didn't read my scriptures. On the last night, we had a testimony meeting. I felt something I hadn't in a long time: the Spirit. I admired the girls who got up and bore their testimonies, but I stayed seated because I thought I didn't have one. All of a sudden I felt like I had to get up. I opened my mouth, wondering what to say. So I said I was glad for Young Women camp. Then I found myself saying that I knew Jesus Christ died for me and that my Heavenly Father loved me and that the Church was true.

I was filled with a remarkable peace. Thanks to this experience I can say that I know I will see my dad again because of the Savior's Atonement and Resurrection.

CHILDREN

He Lives!

President Monson teaches that because Jesus Christ died and was resurrected, we all will live again. Look at the pictures below. Write a number in each box to show the order in which these events happened.

Because Jesus Christ lives, families can be together forever. Draw a picture of your family in the box below.

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



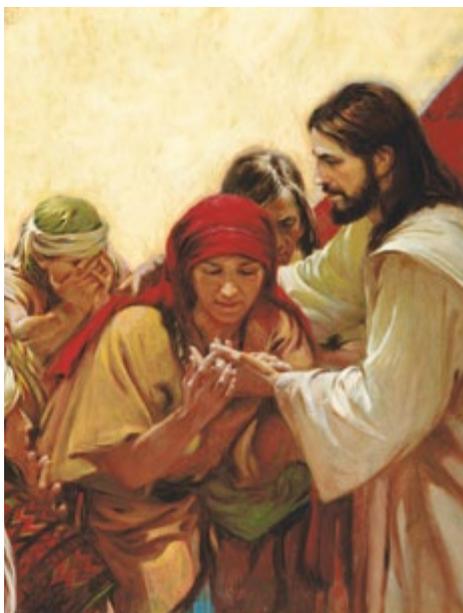
Faith, Family, Relief

Love, Watch Over, and Strengthen

Like the Savior, visiting teachers minister one by one (see 3 Nephi 11:15). We know we are successful in our ministering as visiting teachers when our sisters can say: (1) my visiting teacher helps me grow spiritually; (2) I know my visiting teacher cares deeply about me and my family; and (3) if I have problems, I know my visiting teacher will take action without waiting to be asked.¹

How can we as visiting teachers love, watch over, and strengthen a sister? Following are nine suggestions found in chapter 7 of *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* to help visiting teachers minister to their sisters:

- Pray daily for her and her family.
- Seek inspiration to know her and her family.
- Visit her regularly to learn how she is doing and to comfort and strengthen her.
- Stay in frequent contact through visits, phone calls, letters, e-mail, text messages, and simple acts of kindness.
- Greet her at Church meetings.
- Help her when she has an emergency, illness, or other urgent need.
- Teach her the gospel from the scriptures and the Visiting Teaching Messages.



- Inspire her by setting a good example.
- Report to a Relief Society leader about their service and the sister's spiritual and temporal well-being.

From the Scriptures

Luke 10:38–39; 3 Nephi 11:23–26; 27:21

NOTES

1. See Julie B. Beck, “What I Hope My Granddaughters (and Grandsons) Will Understand about Relief Society,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 113.
2. *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 112.
3. *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 119–20.
4. Brigham Young, “Remarks,” *Deseret News*, Oct. 15, 1856, 252.
5. See *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 36–37.

What Can I Do?

1. How can I know what my sisters need?
2. How will my sisters know that I care deeply about them?

From Our History

“Visiting teaching has become a vehicle for Latter-day Saint women worldwide to love, nurture, and serve—to ‘act according to those sympathies which God has planted in [our] bosoms,’ as Joseph Smith taught.”²

A sister who had recently been widowed said of her visiting teachers: “They listened. They comforted me. They wept with me. And they hugged me. . . . [They] helped me out of the deep despair and depression of those first few months of loneliness.”³

Help with temporal tasks is also a form of ministering. At the October 1856 general conference, President Brigham Young announced that handcart pioneers were stranded in deep snow 270–370 miles (435–595 km) away. He called for the Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City to rescue them and to “attend strictly to those things which we call temporal.”⁴

Lucy Meserve Smith recorded that the women took off their warm underskirts and stockings right there in the tabernacle and piled them into wagons to send to the freezing pioneers. Then they gathered bedding and clothing for those who would eventually come with few belongings. When the handcart companies arrived, a building in the town was “loaded with provisions for them.”⁵

April Conference Notebook

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

Getting More Out of General Conference

By Michael Barber and David Marsh
Curriculum Department

Even though we say "amen" at the end of the last session of general conference, the spiritual feast doesn't have to end there. It can continue as we study and apply the teachings from that conference. Over the years, prophets have encouraged us to do just that. For example, in 1946, President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) urged members to let the conference talks "be the guide to their walk and talk during the next six months." He explained, "These are the important matters the Lord sees fit to reveal to this people in this day."¹

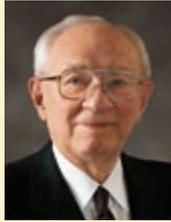
In 1988, President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) echoed that counsel when he taught, "For the next six months, your

conference edition of the *Ensign* should stand next to your standard works and be referred to frequently."²

In closing the October 2008 general conference, President Thomas S. Monson reaffirmed the importance of studying conference talks. He said: "May we long remember what we have heard during this general conference. The messages which have been given will be printed in next month's *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines. I urge you to study them and to ponder their teachings."³

As you study and ponder the conference messages, what can you do to make them more meaningful in





WRITE IT AND REFLECT ON IT

“Out of all we have heard,

there may be a phrase or a paragraph that will stand out and possess our attention. If this occurs, I hope we will write it down and reflect on it until we savor the depth of its meaning and have made it a part of our own lives.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “An Humble and a Contrite Heart,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 103; *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 88.

your life? Here are some suggestions to help you prepare for, receive, and act upon the inspired words:

Prepare to receive inspiration. Whether you watch, listen to, or read the conference talks, you must open your heart and mind to divine inspiration. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that no matter how effectively a speaker may teach, “the content of a message and the witness of the Holy Ghost penetrate into the heart only if a receiver allows them to enter.” He explained that receiving inspiration “requires spiritual, mental, and physical exertion and not just passive reception.”⁴

The following ideas can help you prepare to be taught by the Spirit:

1. Set aside time and create a distraction-free environment in which you can receive spiritual promptings.
2. Seek divine guidance through prayer.
3. List personal questions or concerns for which you are seeking answers.

Understand the messages. Living prophets and apostles teach, expound, exhort, warn, and testify.

Taking a close look at their talks will help you understand their messages more fully. Here are some effective study methods:

- **Ask questions.** For example: What does the Lord want me to learn from this message? How does this talk enhance my understanding of a gospel principle or a verse of scripture? What stories are used to illustrate gospel principles, and what do I learn from them?
 - **Write an outline.** Pay attention to what the speaker’s

outline seems to be. Divide the talk into sections and write a summary that explains the main idea presented in each section.

- **Identify various elements within the talk.** Take note of such things as doctrines, scriptures, stories, warnings, lists, testimonies, invitations to action, and blessings promised for obeying counsel.
- **Study the talk more than once.**

It is necessary to study gospel

truths more than once to grasp their full meaning and significance. Each time you study, make note of new insights you receive.

Act upon what you learn. If you prayerfully study the talks, you will see how the messages apply in your life. You can know how to make meaningful changes by asking questions like, What does the Lord want me to do with what I learn? and What have I learned that will help me in my family, work, or Church calling? Write down impressions so you do not forget them. As you do so, you will be inspired to live the teachings and you will receive the promised blessings.

General conference is the time when the Lord reveals His will through His servants to you. President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) taught of conference talks, “No text or volume outside the standard works of the Church should have such a prominent place on your personal library shelves—not for their rhetorical excellence or eloquence of delivery, but for the concepts which point the way to eternal life.”⁵ ■

NOTES

1. Harold B. Lee, in Conference Report, Apr. 1946, 68.
2. Ezra Taft Benson, “Come unto Christ, and Be Perfected in Him,” *Ensign*, May 1988, 84.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “Until We Meet Again,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 106.
4. David A. Bednar, “Seek Learning by Faith,” *Liahona*, Sept. 2007, 17, 20; *Ensign*, Sept. 2007, 61, 64.
5. Spencer W. Kimball, *In the World but Not of It*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (May 14, 1968), 3.



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





By Rosemary M. Wixom
Primary General President

Taking Time to Talk and Listen

Our intentional effort to communicate better today will bless our families eternally.

In a perfect world every child would return home from school to be greeted with a plate of freshly baked chocolate chip cookies, a tall glass of cold milk, and a mother ready to take the time to talk and listen about her child's day. We do not live in a perfect world, so you can skip the cookies and the milk, if you like, but don't skip the "take the time to talk and listen."

Twenty-nine years ago, President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, lamented that families have so little time together. Think about that—29 years ago—he said in general conference: "One of the main problems in families today is that we spend less and less time together. . . . Time together is precious time—time needed to talk, to listen, to encourage, and to show how to do things."¹

As we spend time together and talk with our children, we come to know them and they come to know us. Our priorities, the real feelings of our heart, will become a part of our conversation with each child.

What is the number-one message from your heart you would choose to share with your child?

The prophet Moses teaches us in Deuteronomy:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

"And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt *talk* of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deuteronomy 6:5–7; emphasis added).

And may I add one more: "And when thou eatest at the dinner table together."

If we desire our families to be together forever, we begin the process today. Spending time talking with our children is an investment in our eternal family as we walk the path toward eternal life together.

One mother from Illinois, USA, shared how she made time to talk with her children:

"When our children were small, I got into the habit of watching a few favorite television programs. . . . Unfortunately, the programs came on at the same time the children went to bed.

". . . At one point I realized I had put my



PHOTOGRAPH OF SISTER WIXOM © BUSATH PHOTOGRAPHY; PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRADLEY SJADE

programs at the top of my list and my children farther down. For a while I tried reading bedtime stories with the TV set on, but I knew in my heart it wasn't the best way. As I pondered about the days and weeks I had lost to my TV habit, I began to feel guilty and decided to change. It took a while to convince myself that I could really turn off the TV.

"After about two weeks of leaving the television off, I felt a burden somehow lifted. I realized I felt better, even cleaner somehow, and I knew I had made the right choice."²

Bedtime is a perfect time to talk.

Helaman said of the stripling warriors, "They rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it" (Alma 56:48).

It was "the words of their mothers" that taught them. While talking to their children, those mothers taught the word of God.

Preserving Personal Communication

Much good comes from talking, and the adversary is aware of the power of the spoken word. He would love to diminish the spirit that comes into our homes as we talk, listen, encourage each other, and do things together.

Satan futilely attempted to prevent the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in this dispensation when he tried to halt a critical conversation between Joseph Smith and God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

In Joseph's words, "Immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame



me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak” (Joseph Smith—History 1:15).

The adversary would love to bind our tongues—anything to prevent us from expressing verbally the feelings of our hearts face to face. He delights in distance and distraction; he delights in noise; he delights in impersonal communication—anything that would prevent us from the warmth of a voice and the personal feelings that come from conversing eye to eye.

Listening to the Hearts of Our Children

Listening is just as important as speaking. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “If we listen with love, we won’t need to wonder what to say. It will be given to us . . . by the Spirit.”³

When we listen, we see into the hearts of those around us. Heavenly Father has a plan for each of His children. Imagine if we could get a glimpse of the individual plan for each of our children. What if we could know how

to enhance their spiritual gifts? What if we could know how to motivate a child to reach his or her potential? What if we could know how to help each child transition from child-like faith to testimony?

How can we know?

We can begin to know by listening.

One Latter-day Saint father said: “I do a greater amount of good when I listen to my children than when I talk to them. . . . I have gradually learned that my children don’t want my ready-made, time-proven, and wise answers. . . . To them, being able to ask their questions and to talk about their problems is more important than receiving my answers. Usually when they get through talking, if I have listened long and well enough, they really don’t need my answer. They have already found their answer.”⁴

It takes time to focus on the things that matter most. Talking, listening, and encouraging do not happen quickly. They cannot be rushed or scheduled—they happen best along the way. They happen when we *do* things together: work together, create together, and play together. They happen when we turn off media, put down worldly distractions, and focus on each other.

Now, that is a difficult thing to do. When we stop and turn everything off, we must be prepared for what will happen next. At first the silence may be stifling; an awkward sense of loss may ensue. Be patient, wait just a few seconds, and then enjoy. Give your full attention to those around you by asking a question about them and then begin to listen. Parents, talk about an interest of your child. Laugh about the past—and dream about the future. Silly conversation can even unfold into a meaningful discussion.

Prioritizing Our Eternal Purpose

Last spring, while I was visiting a class of young women, the teacher asked the class to write our 10 priorities. I quickly began to write. I have to admit, my first thought began with “Number 1: clean the pencil drawer in the kitchen.” When our lists were complete, the Young Women leader asked us to share what we had written. Abby, who had recently turned 12, was sitting next to me. This was Abby’s list:

1. Go to college.
2. Become an interior designer.
3. Go on a mission to India.
4. Get married in the temple to a returned missionary.
5. Have five kids and a home.
6. Send my kids on missions and to college.
7. Become a “cookie-giving” grandma.
8. Spoil the grandchildren.
9. Learn more about the gospel and enjoy life.
10. Return to live with Father in Heaven.

I say, “Thank you, Abby. You have taught me about having a vision of the plan Heavenly Father has for all of us. When you know you are walking a path, in spite of whatever detours may occur, you will be OK. When your path is focused on the ultimate goal—that of exaltation and returning to Heavenly Father, you will get there.”

Where did Abby get this sense of eternal purpose? It begins in our homes. It begins in our families. I asked her, “What do you do in your family to create such priorities?”

This was her answer: “Besides reading the scriptures, we are studying *Preach My Gospel*.” Then she added, “We talk a lot—at family home evening, at dinner together, and in the car while we drive.”

Nephi wrote: “We talk of Christ, we rejoice

in Christ, we preach of Christ.” Why? “That our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26).

Talking, listening, encouraging each other, and doing things together as a family will bring us closer to our Savior, who loves us. Our intentional effort to communicate better today—this very day—will bless our families eternally. I testify that when we talk of Christ, we also rejoice in Christ and in the gift of the Atonement. Our children will come to know “to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.” ■

From a Salt Lake City stake conference satellite broadcast address given on October 24, 2010.

NOTES

1. James E. Faust, “Enriching Family Life,” *Ensign*, May 1983, 41.
2. Susan Heaton, “Talk Time Instead of TV Time,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1998, 73.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Witnesses unto Me,” *Liahona*, July 2001, 16; *Ensign*, May 2001, 15.
4. George D. Durrant, “Pointers for Parents: Take Time to Talk,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1973, 24.

For a story and activity ideas on this topic, see pages 8–10 of this month’s *Friend*.





MY SEARCH FOR Motherhood

*I may never have children of my own in this lifetime,
but Heavenly Father has not left me childless.*

During sacrament meeting on any given Sunday, I sit in the middle spot on a middle bench in the middle of our chapel.

Except on Mother's Day.

On Mother's Day, I choose an aisle seat in the back near the door.

Mother's Day can be an emotionally trying day for any woman; feelings of inadequacy, disappointment, loss, or a variety of other circumstances may contribute to this. As an unmarried woman in my 40s with a medical condition that often causes infertility, I probably will never be a mother to children of my own in this lifetime. This heartbreak can sometimes make sacrament meeting on Mother's Day more than I can bear. In my ward all the women are invited to stand and receive a Mother's Day gift, maybe a flower or a chocolate bar. Despite the good intentions behind this ward tradition, I usually feel undeserving of and disheartened by a gift that I have little hope of earning in the typical way.

For weeks before Mother's Day I begin preparing myself emotionally: reminding myself that "we are all mothers"¹; thinking of women I should remember rather than dwelling on my own disappointments; acknowledging that even women who do have children may find Mother's Day uncomfortable; telling myself that I am a good aunt, teacher, and friend to other people's children; and trying to think of Mother's Day as just another Sunday. I am never quite sure how well these tactics will work, so I sit near the door of the chapel, poised to exit if my heartbreak becomes too apparent.

Blessed by the Scott Family

One year I found Mother's Day to be particularly difficult. I was just coming to accept that I might not have children in this life and was grieving that loss as well as battling challenges with my medical condition. But not wanting to be defeated, I forced myself out of bed, got dressed, and drove to church, determined to obediently attend my meetings. Despite my best efforts, though, I was in tears before pulling out of the driveway and for most of the 25-minute drive. In the parking lot of the meetinghouse, I somehow suppressed the lump in my throat, forced back the tears, went in, and took my position on the aisle seat of an empty pew toward the back of the chapel.

And then a blessing named the Scott family arrived. Having gone through a period of infertility themselves, they must have realized that Mother's Day might be difficult for me. Sister Scott brought her three children and sat by me on the pew. With a family next to me, I didn't feel quite so single and childless.

Brother Scott, a counselor in our bishopric, was the first speaker. He commented that speaking on Mother's Day was a challenge because of the feelings that it can evoke for many, if not all, members of the congregation. His thoughtful words spoke to my heart as well as to my situation. My emotions got the best of me, and I knew that to avoid embarrassment, I had better leave before the Primary children sang their musical number.

I went to my car where I sat reading my scriptures, crying over my heartbreak, and feeling ashamed of myself for not



MOTHERHOOD IS ETERNAL

“Female roles did not begin on earth, and they do not end here.

A woman who treasures motherhood on earth will treasure motherhood in the world to come, and ‘where [her] treasure is, there will [her] heart be also’ (Matthew 6:21). By developing a mother heart, each girl and woman prepares for her divine, eternal mission of motherhood.”

Julie B. Beck, “A Mother Heart,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2004, 76.

having the spiritual strength to stay in the meeting. I waited until I was sure that sacrament meeting was over and that the Mother’s Day gift—it was a rose that year—had been handed out, and then I returned for Sunday School and Relief Society. I had convinced myself that no one had noticed my exit and that my face showed no evidence of crying, so I didn’t think much of Brother Scott’s request when he asked to see me in the bishop’s office after church.

I was completely caught off guard when I walked in to discover that he had not only noticed my exit from sacrament meeting but had also saved a rose for me. I could not hold back the tears as he told me that I deserved it as much as anyone and gave specific examples of my positive influence as a woman and member of our ward. Although I was embarrassed by my tears and unsure that I wanted the gift, I was touched and grateful that someone was aware of my pain and conscious of my influence as a woman. Later that day I knelt in prayer to thank my Heavenly Father for sending this sweet family to comfort me.

Seeking Opportunities for Motherhood

After that Mother’s Day, I became more diligent in my search for what I call “alternative opportunities for motherhood.” The more I sought for and opened myself to these opportunities, the more I found them. I discovered that I could be an example of righteous womanhood for children and youth in my family, ward, and community. I served as a trusted adult in teenagers’ lives, confirming the truths their parents were teaching them. I volunteered to babysit so couples in the ward could attend the temple or take care of pressing family issues. I held a baby or followed a curious toddler in the hallway at church so the mother could listen to the lesson or attend to her calling. In sacrament meeting, I sat with families whose fathers were unable to sit with them and helped manage the children. I supported young people by making an effort to attend special events such as courts

of honor, school plays and concerts, seminary graduations, and Primary talks. I took more interest in the lives of the children I worked with in my career as a speech-language pathologist and offered more encouragement to their parents as they coped with the many challenges of having a child with a disability. I invited children from the ward or neighborhood to

my home to decorate Christmas cookies, watch a movie, or play in my yard. I helped a busy mother by giving her children rides to youth activities or running errands. I tried to fill a few of the voids created by the absence of deployed military parents in our community.

On one occasion, Jonah, whose father was deployed, suffered a severely broken arm. I was able to drive Jonah and his mother to the hospital and then care for his three siblings overnight so their mother could stay with Jonah.

When I talked to Jonah’s mother later, she expressed concern about having “imposed” on me. I could only thank her for giving me an alternative opportunity for motherhood.

While some women live in homes where opportunities for motherhood abound and even overwhelm, I live a life where opportunities for motherhood must be sought. My motherhood is found in serving others. Of course I still am disappointed that I haven’t had the opportunity to raise children of my own, but Heavenly Father has not left me childless. My children are all around me, providing me with precious, though less typical, opportunities for motherhood. ■

For more on this topic, please see the following:

Henry B. Eyring, “Help Them on Their Way Home,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2010, 22–25.

Robert D. Hales, “Our Duty to God: The Mission of Parents and Leaders to the Rising Generation,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2010, 95–98.

Julie B. Beck, “A ‘Mother Heart,’” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2004, 75–77.

Sheri L. Dew, “Are We Not All Mothers?” *Liahona*, Jan. 2002, 112–114; *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 96–98.

NOTE

1. Sheri L. Dew, “Are We Not All Mothers?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 97.

Toddlers AND TANTRUMS



Ever since my husband and I became parents, we have felt the need to teach our young daughter gospel principles and help her learn to feel the Spirit. We have learned, however, that putting that desire into action can be challenging.

I was especially discouraged after one particularly difficult day of whining and tantrums. My husband and I decided to pray for an added measure of patience and for specific ideas of how to lovingly teach our daughter the gospel.

The next morning, I woke up feeling peace in my heart and patience that I knew came as an answer to our prayers. I had a renewed desire to create a positive, loving environment for learning in our home. When the first tantrum of the day began, I decided to not let myself get frustrated. I sat down and began to read the *Ensign*.

After a few seconds, my daughter asked me to hold her. I took her in my arms, and we sat quietly for a minute. Then her eyes rested on the *Ensign*, and she said in her limited vocabulary, “Read this.”

I opened the magazine and turned to a beautiful painting of the Savior kneeling in prayer and looking up to heaven. My daughter identified the picture as “Jesus.” I said, “Yes, Jesus is praying to Heavenly Father.”

Then I started singing “A Child’s Prayer.”¹ As I sang

she sat quietly and reverently while studying the picture of the Savior. When I finished, she asked me to sing “Heavenly Father” (her name for “A Child’s Prayer”) again. I felt the Spirit as I sang the song three more times at her request.

After the fourth time through the song, we looked at other pictures and paintings in the magazine. We came to a photograph of a family in front of the temple. I sang “I Love to See the Temple.”² She again asked me to sing it several times. This pattern continued, though after every few songs, she wanted to turn back to the picture of Jesus and listen to me sing “Heavenly Father” again.

As we shared this special time, I was filled with gratitude for a loving Heavenly Father’s answer to my prayer. I had been blessed with patience and inspired to know how to teach my toddler the gospel. I knew she was feeling the Spirit testify of a loving Heavenly Father and His son, Jesus Christ. She was learning about the feelings of the Spirit, the power of prayer, and her relationship to Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father. I know that our Heavenly Father hears and answers prayers from all His children—the mother’s prayer as well as the child’s. ■

NOTES

1. “A Child’s Prayer,” *Children’s Songbook*, 12–13.
2. “I Love to See the Temple,” *Children’s Songbook*, 95.

A CALLING FOR A CONVERT

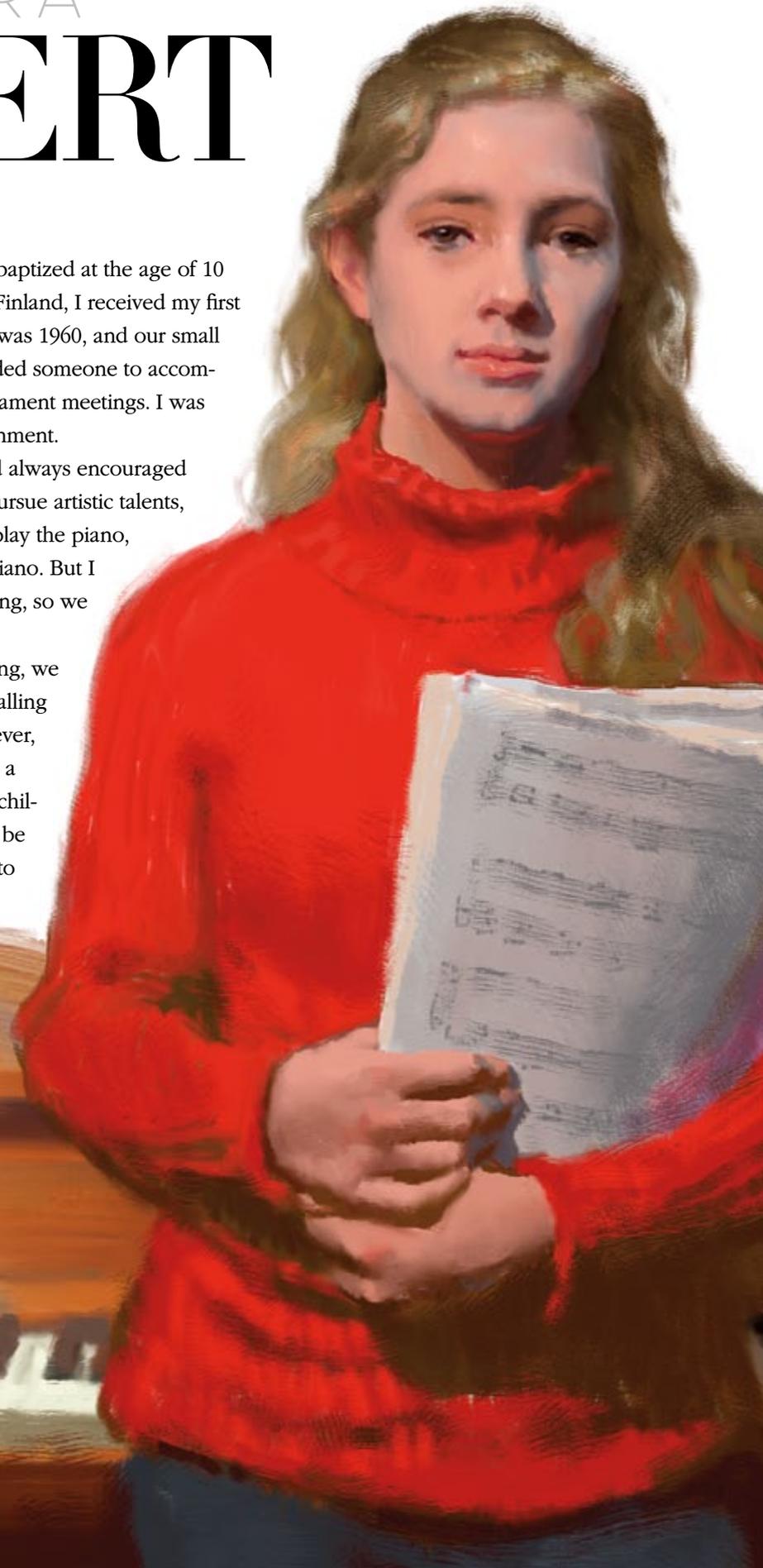
By Helena Hannonen



Shortly after I was baptized at the age of 10 in Lappeenranta, Finland, I received my first Church calling. It was 1960, and our small branch desperately needed someone to accompany the hymns for sacrament meetings. I was asked to fulfill this assignment.

While my mother had always encouraged my brother and me to pursue artistic talents, I did not know how to play the piano, and we did not own a piano. But I wanted to fulfill my calling, so we made a plan.

In family home evening, we talked about what this calling meant to all of us. However, because my mother was a widow with two young children, we knew it would be a great challenge for us to





I was a new convert and had no piano-playing skills. But how grateful I am for my life-changing call as branch accompanist.

purchase a piano and pay for lessons. We decided that we were all willing to make the needed sacrifices.

The first sacrifice my family made was financial. We decided that from spring to autumn we would ride our bicycles rather than the bus. My brother, Martti, was courageous and became especially good at biking—even on snow and ice. I gave up most of my clothing purchases and learned to sew. We also learned to live providently. We started a garden in the countryside near my grandparents' house and preserved food for the winter. Our "vacations" became our mother's trips to the temple in Switzerland or picnics and camps close to home.

The second sacrifice my family made was with time. We divided the chores and rescheduled our other activities and homework so I had enough time to practice the piano. Because of our sacrifices and hard work, Mother often remarked that we had no free time to get into trouble like others our age. In reality, my calling became a family calling long before I ever played a note.

I began taking lessons with a music teacher at the local school. I practiced using a paper keyboard and on a piano at the church. When my piano teacher moved away, we purchased his piano, and I was accepted to study with a renowned piano teacher in the area.

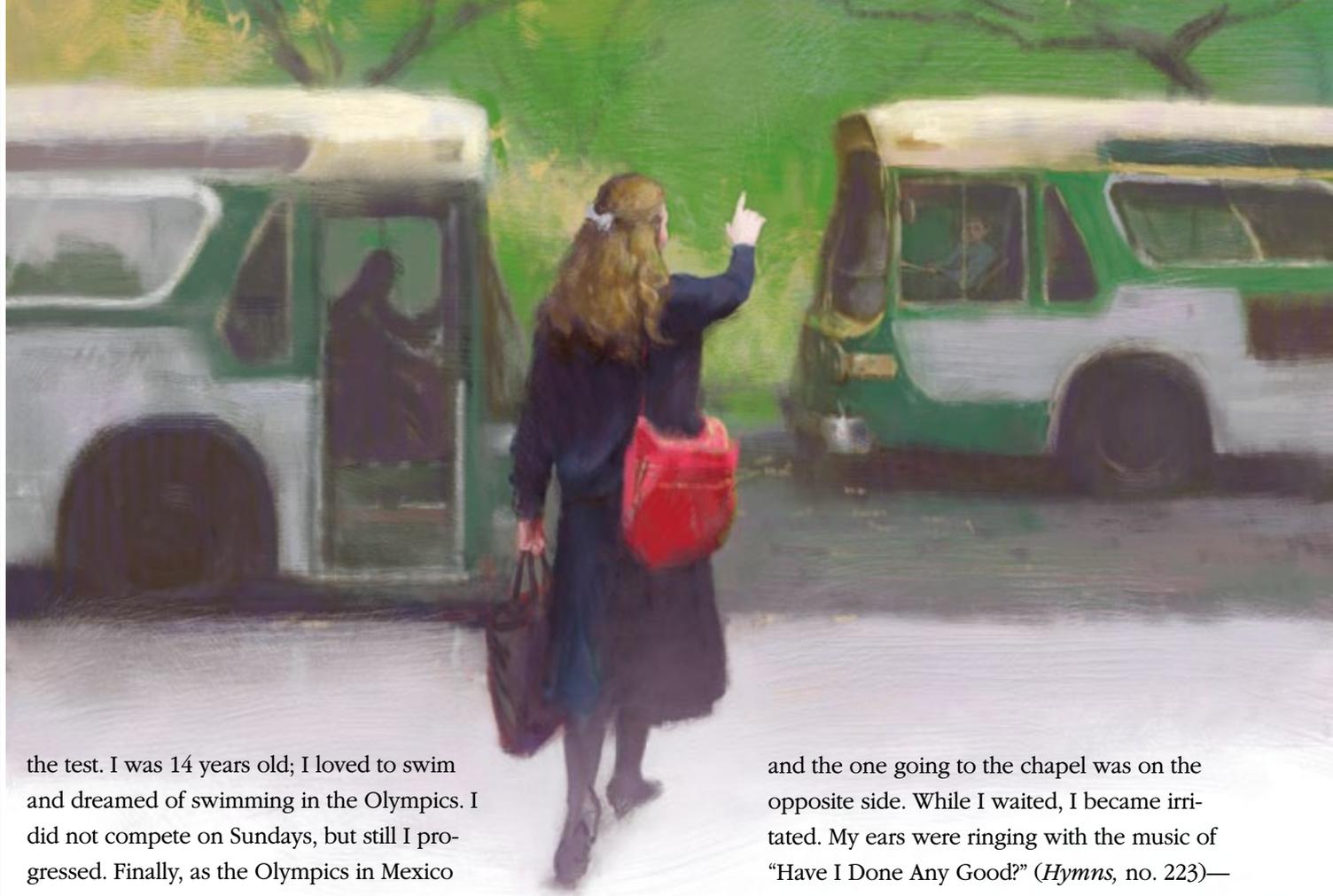
I learned the hymns on my own and practiced a lot with the branch music director. Everyone encouraged me—even if a "sour" note slipped in. My teacher was horrified after she found out that I played in front of people

before I had thoroughly learned and memorized the pieces. But playing with one hand was better than having no music at all.

I rode my bike to my lessons, and when winter came, I tried to walk or ski if possible. On Sundays I walked alone to Church meetings so I could arrive an hour early and have time to practice. I resolved to ride the bus only when temperatures reached below -15°C (5°F). Rain and snow didn't really bother me; time went by quickly as I walked because I had so many beautiful hymns to keep me company. As I walked, I was crossing the plains with the pioneers (see "Come, Come, Ye Saints," *Hymns*, no. 30), walking high on the mountain top in Zion (see "High on the Mountain Top," *Hymns*, no. 5), and standing with youth who would never falter (see "True to the Faith," *Hymns*, no. 254). I could never falter with that support—even though my family and I were the only Latter-day Saints in our community in eastern Finland, in the shadows of the Russian border.

Over the years I became better at playing and could make music rather than just play the right notes. I learned to be prayerful in selecting the music so the Spirit would be in the meeting. And most important, my testimony of the gospel came to me through music. I could easily recall the feelings, words, and messages of the hymns if I ever questioned something. I knew that the gospel principles and ordinances were true, having learned them line upon line and note after note.

I remember one particular day when my commitment to those principles was put to



the test. I was 14 years old; I loved to swim and dreamed of swimming in the Olympics. I did not compete on Sundays, but still I progressed. Finally, as the Olympics in Mexico City were approaching, a coach invited me to participate in special training.

The training, however, was every Sunday morning during Sunday School. I rationalized that I could go to practice and miss Sunday School because I would be back at church in time for the evening sacrament meeting. I saved for the bus fare and planned everything. The Saturday before the first training, I told my mother of my plan.

I saw the sadness and disappointment in her eyes, but her only reply was that the decision was mine and I had been taught what was right. That night I could not get the words to “Choose the Right” (*Hymns*, no. 239) out of my mind. The words sounded in my head like a broken record.

On Sunday morning, I had my swim bag in one hand and my music bag in the other, hoping to lead my mother to believe I was going to church. I went outside to the bus stop. It so happened that the bus stop going to the swimming hall was on my side of the street

One bus would take me to my Church calling, the other to my childhood dream of world-class swimming. The phrases of hymns I had played so many times provided my answer.

and the one going to the chapel was on the opposite side. While I waited, I became irritated. My ears were ringing with the music of “Have I Done Any Good?” (*Hymns*, no. 223)—the hymn planned for Sunday School that day. I knew from experience that, with the difficult rhythm, complicated lyrics, and high notes, this hymn would become a disaster without strong accompaniment.

As I was deliberating, both buses approached. The bus to the swimming hall stopped for me, and the driver of the bus to the church stopped and looked at me, puzzled because he knew I always took his bus. We all stared at each other for a few seconds. What was I waiting for? I had chosen the Lord (see “Who’s on the Lord’s Side?” *Hymns*, no. 260). I had promised to go where He wanted me to go (see “I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go,” *Hymns*, no. 270). My decision to keep the commandments had been made long before (see “Keep the Commandments,” *Hymns*, no. 303).

Before my brain caught up with my heart, my body took over. I made a mad dash across the street and waved the other bus driver on. I paid the fare and went to the back of the bus

headed to the church, watching my swimming dreams drive in the opposite direction.

Everyone thought I cried that day because I felt the Spirit. But really I cried because my childhood dream had just come crashing down and because I was ashamed that I had even entertained the idea of swimming on the Sabbath. But that Sunday, like those before and after, I fulfilled my calling.

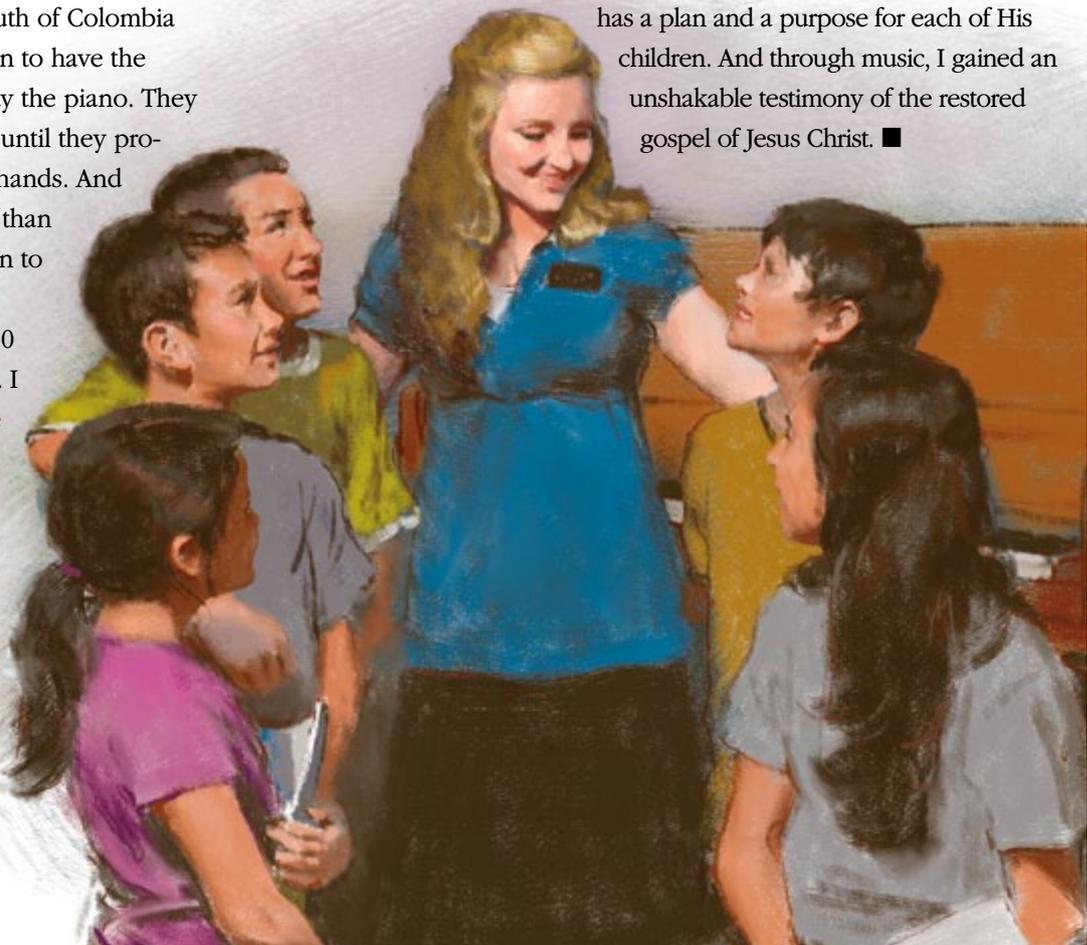
By the time I was ready to go to college, I had trained several branch members to lead the music and play the piano. In college I continued to play the piano and took organ lessons. I thought my chance of going to Latin America was gone forever when I gave up competitive swimming, but after I completed my master's degree at Brigham Young University, I served a mission to Colombia. While on my mission, I taught piano lessons. I wanted to leave those Saints with the gift of music. Children and youth of Colombia walked miles in the hot sun to have the opportunity to learn to play the piano. They too started with one hand until they progressed to play with both hands. And they made more sacrifices than I did in their efforts to learn to play the piano.

It has been more than 50 years since I was baptized. I have traveled far and wide from my home in Finland, but no matter where I've gone, there has always been a need for someone to play the hymns. The universal language of music has built bridges of understanding and love in many places.

On my mission to Colombia, I taught piano lessons. Children and youth walked miles in the hot sun to learn, making great sacrifices to obtain the gift of music.

Today my hands are slow and arthritic. Many more capable musicians have taken my place. My mother often feels sad as she looks back at my early years in the Church and the sacrifices I made, the miles I walked, and the things I went without. She fears that the cold contributed to my arthritis. However, I wear my "battle scars" with joy. I poured my joys and sorrows into music. I learned to laugh and cry through my fingers.

My heart sings with gratitude when I think that Heavenly Father and my leaders cared enough to ask a young girl to fulfill such a challenging assignment. That calling helped me gain a firm understanding of the gospel and allowed me to help others feel the Spirit through music. I am living proof that new converts need a calling—even little girls with no skill at the piano. Through my first calling, I discovered that with God nothing is impossible and that He has a plan and a purpose for each of His children. And through music, I gained an unshakable testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. ■





MY MISSION WAS

I returned home early because of health problems, a fact that weighed me down until I realized that the Lord is in charge.

I served as a welfare sister missionary in Peru in 1983. My companion and I loved teaching in the picturesque village of Huancayo, nestled high in the Andes Mountains. There was plenty of work, and the people were delightful to work with.

During this time, I felt several impressions that I would be going home early. They came at the oddest times and places, and each time I felt them I confided in my companion that I had felt the impression again.

Many months after I started receiving these impressions, my companion and I traveled to Lima to attend a welfare sisters' conference in the mission office. Our mission president spoke with us about the things we needed to accomplish in our welfare assignments. He then said something I have never forgotten: "They are sending us another welfare sister." Looking around the room, he continued, "Which one of you is going home early?" These words hit me like a punch in the stomach. I felt certain that I was the one who would be going home early.

Some weeks after the conference, I became seriously ill and had to return home.

It is difficult not to be able to finish the full length of your mission. You wonder about the things that could have been, the things you missed. For many years I could not shake the feelings of sorrow and yearning for the experiences I might have had otherwise.

In 2004, 21 years after my return from Peru, my mother's cousin encouraged me to read the history of my great-aunt Adella Haynie written by her mother. Although I had read much of it before, as I read it this time I discovered an amazing detail that became a source of comfort to me.

Adella Haynie had died suddenly 16 months into her service in the Central States Mission. Her mission president, Samuel O. Bennion, accompanied her body home. In my great-grandmother's account of her daughter's funeral, she wrote, "On her white casket was a gold-colored plaque with the inscription, 'Adella Haynie, Princess of the Central States Mission,' this plaque having been placed there by



CUT SH HOOR T

her mission president. President Bennion spoke at her funeral and said that he 'didn't know that the Lord had any apologies to make. She was His, and if He felt like calling her away like that, it was His affair.' He also said, 'For some cause they had sent a new missionary girl out not a week before Adella died and I wondered why. They wouldn't send a lone girl out when they ought to know I didn't have a place for just one alone. But as it happened, she was needed.'"

As I read my great-grandmother's account of her daughter's funeral, tears came to my eyes, not only because of the touching love for Adella shown by her

mission president, but also because of the amazing similarity to my story. I realized that in both cases, the Lord knew well beforehand what would happen and had prepared additional sisters to take our places. I couldn't deny the comfort I felt in what I was reading. The

words of Adella's mission president seemed to apply to me as well.

I no longer wished that I could have stayed the last six months of my mission. I had finished my mission well.

I love that the Lord can comfort us in such amazing ways.

I am sure that my great-grandmother, in writing the account of her daughter's funeral, had no idea that words she wrote in sorrow would mend the broken heart of her great-granddaughter some 89 years later. Perhaps the experiences we record today will emerge in the life of a future loved one, carrying comfort from the past. ■



By Sara D. Smith

Karen Lillywhite slipped into the back of the room and quietly found a seat among her fellow temple workers, who shifted to make room for her. They greeted each other happily and softly, enjoying the atmosphere before the meeting that would begin their Saturday morning shift at the Provo Utah Temple. The meeting's hymn, prayer, and messages brought a spirit of peace that Karen and the other workers could take with them while participating in sacred ordinances during the next five hours.

Karen, a student at Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah, USA, volunteered to serve in the temple because she wanted to do the Lord's work. Even though Karen has had to miss some activities and a little study time while she works in the temple on Saturdays, she does not regret dedicating her time to service.

"I love being able to spend so much time in the house of the Lord serving others," Karen says. "There are things that you can learn from the perspective of a temple worker that are different from what you learn as a patron. Getting

An illustration of a mountain valley with an American flag and people walking. The scene is set in a lush green valley with mountains in the background. An American flag stands on the left. A group of people, including men in suits and women in professional attire, are walking across a paved path in the foreground. The sky is blue with light clouds.

Temple Service and Unexpected Blessings

Workers in the Provo Utah Temple have learned that giving their time to serve the Lord and His children brings abundant blessings.

both perspectives opens up a lot of revelation and understanding for me.”

Karen says that every part of her life has been blessed by the temple. Serving as a temple worker motivates her to live the gospel more fully and has brought her closer to the Lord and to those with whom she serves.

One of the things Karen appreciates most about her service in the temple is her association with others. “I’ve gotten to know the other temple workers and the patrons that come regularly to my shift,” she explains. “One sister

comes to the temple each week and stays for hours, bringing a beautiful spirit with her. I have met some incredible individuals who inspire me and bless my life.”

Karen is one of thousands of Church members who serve in temples around the world. No matter where they serve, these temple workers learn what Karen and those who serve with her in the Provo Temple on Saturday mornings have realized: temple work brings abundant blessings not only to their own lives, but also to their families and to those for whom the temple work is vicariously done.

Renewal of Strength

The Provo Utah Temple is one of the busiest temples in the world. It serves a highly concentrated population of Latter-day Saints, including the missionaries at the Provo Missionary Training Center and the students of two universities. Many of the workers in this temple are young couples, students, and recently returned missionaries.

One of these younger workers is Jenny Perkins, who started working in the temple soon after returning from her mission in Russia. Jenny works alongside her parents, Jack and Toni, and enjoys learning from them as they serve together. When Jenny considered discontinuing her shift because she was overwhelmed with school, Toni taught her about the blessings that come from temple service.

“My mother reminded me that if I was willing to sacrifice for the Lord and exercise a little faith, He would make up the difference. Now I can testify that this is true,” explains Jenny. “Working in the temple helped clear my mind so I could finish my other work more accurately and efficiently.”

Her father, Jack, has noticed similar blessings. Over the past few years, he has worked extra hours each week in his employment and has held Church callings that required much of his time. But as he has immersed himself in temple service, he has felt his strength renewed.

“I am renewed by the time I spend working on behalf of other people,” Jack says. “Everything else I do in the other six days would be more of a burden if I didn’t spend that time in the temple doing service.”

Happiness in Serving

As a young girl growing up in Brazil, Natalina Durelli would look at pictures of



Serving in the temple draws us closer to the Savior by helping us reflect on His love.

the Salt Lake Temple and dream of visiting a temple herself. She had joined the Church with her family, and at the time there were no temples in South America.

Her dream became a reality when the São Paulo Brazil Temple was built near her home. She was present when the temple was dedicated in 1978.

“I had the privilege of singing in the choir that provided music for the dedication,” she remembers. “It was a wonderful season of my life and helped strengthen my desire to be closer to the temple.”

Natalina wanted to serve a full-time mission but was unable to do so because of family obligations. After she received her endowment, she volunteered as a temple worker, and this service became her mission. She served every Saturday from 6:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. while working full time and taking classes.

“I was grateful that I was blessed with the energy to be on my feet in the temple for so many hours,” she says. “I remember coming home exhausted physically and emotionally, but with a testimony of the temple and the work we do inside those walls.”

Thirty years later, Natalina, now living in Utah, became a temple worker once again. She has faced many trials in her life, but serving others in the temple brings her peace.

“I have found that working in the temple helps me overcome discouragement,” she says. “While serving others, I don’t have time to feel unhappy.”

An Extra Measure of Blessings

When they first were called to work in the Provo Utah Temple, Joel and Elaine White hoped to serve in the baptistry on a week-day evening. But the temple president, then

Merrill J. Bateman, had something else in mind for them.

President Bateman asked them to serve as ordinance workers on the shift that needed the most help—the Saturday shift from 10:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. They were hesitant, both to take on the responsibilities of an ordinance worker and to give so much time on their only free day. But they chose to serve where they were needed and have been blessed abundantly.

With their new temple shift, the Whites initially struggled to fit in tasks they usually completed on Saturdays, so they soon dedicated weeknights to chores like laundry and shopping.

“We have been blessed to be more efficient with our time,” says Joel. “Giving our Saturdays may look like a sacrifice, but it has not been anything of the sort. The Lord has given us an extra measure of blessings.”

Now there isn’t any other day they would rather work in the temple. Saturdays are busy, so the Whites look forward to helping hundreds of temple patrons participate in sacred ordinances. One of the greatest blessings the Whites have seen from their service is in their family.

“It has brought us closer together,” says Joel. “We have experienced a bit of what it will be like to be together for eternity. Serving with my wife has helped me see her more clearly, more as the Savior does. That helps me be more empathetic and focused on her instead of on myself. We encourage our adult children to make temple attendance central in their lives because that makes the Savior central in their lives.”

At one point, one of their sons struggled to stay strong in the gospel. The Whites wanted to help him but weren’t sure how. They continued to serve as best they could and turned their situation over to the Lord.

One morning while Elaine was working in the temple, another worker told her that a patron wanted to talk to her. She turned in the direction the worker pointed and was filled with joy as she realized she was looking at her son.

“Surprise, Mom!” she heard him say. He had worked with his bishop to build up his testimony and be worthy to enter the temple.

“He was so happy,” Elaine remembers. “He made a complete change and has developed a love for the temple.”

The Whites have learned that serving faithfully brings blessings.

“Heavenly Father cares about what is important to us,” Elaine says. “That doesn’t mean all of our problems will be solved, but we will receive help. I have learned that when we are serving the Lord, He will hear us and bless us.”

An Act of Love

For ordinance workers in the Provo Utah Temple and throughout the world, serving is an act of love.

“My ability to love has increased,” says Toni. “As a temple worker, wherever I am or whatever I am doing in the temple, I have the ability and responsibility to reflect the love of the Savior. As I practice doing that in the temple, I am better able to reflect on His love outside of the temple.”

All who participate in temple work reflect the love of the Savior by helping extend the blessings of the gospel to all of Heavenly Father’s children.

“The prophets have told us to do temple work,” says Toni. “If you can’t work in the temple right now, you can serve as a patron or do family history work. The sacrifices we make for temple work allow the Savior’s sacrifice to reach more people.” ■



STEP WITHIN THE SACRED HOUSE OF GOD

“I am satisfied that every man or woman who goes to the temple in a spirit of sincerity and faith leaves the house of the Lord a better man or woman. There is need for

constant improvement in all of our lives. There is need occasionally to leave the noise and the tumult of the world and step within the walls of a sacred house of God, there to feel His spirit in an environment of holiness and peace.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “Of Missions, Temples, and Stewardship,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 53.



RECEIVING PERSONAL GUIDANCE AT **STAKE** CONFERENCE

By John J. Naylor

In 2009 the company I worked for merged with another and moved its headquarters out of Kansas, where I lived. No one in my department was retained at the new company, so I found myself unemployed.

I had been out of work for a year once before, in the 1990s, and I learned then how important networking is, so I began networking even before my job formally expired. The importance of networking was reaffirmed when I went to a two-day career workshop offered through the LDS Employment Resource Center in my area.

I let as many people as I could know that I was looking for work. There were some good days and some bad, but many of my contacts led to applications and even promising interviews. One opportunity seemed particularly promising but vanished when the hiring manager learned I didn't have a particular set of software skills. My self-confidence dissolved as the phone interview ended. I worried about my ability to find another job.

For the next three days, I didn't do much except worry. That weekend, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was visiting for stake conference, and even though I knew what a rare privilege it was to hear an Apostle of the Lord, I went to the priesthood leadership meeting feeling anxious and discouraged.



Elder Bednar introduced the format of the meeting as a question-and-answer session and promised that it could be a revelatory experience for each of us. He instructed the congregation to take notes not on what he said but on what the Spirit told us.

As I sat in the meeting and listened to his counsel, I decided that I should ask his advice about dealing with unemployment because there were many others in my situation. I thought about the question I wanted to ask: "What advice would you offer to those of us who are looking for work?"

I imagined how Elder Bednar might respond. As I did so I had an overwhelming impression that the Lord knew me, that He loved me, that He understood my predicament, and that so long as I stayed faithful and kept doing the things I was doing in searching for work, everything would turn



After months of searching for a job, I wondered what else I could do. The answer came during stake conference.



out OK. That message came so clearly and powerfully into my heart and mind that I didn't stand to ask my question. I no longer needed to. I no longer felt the anxiety and worry that had plagued me.

When Elder Bednar asked for one more question I raised my hand. He called on me and I said, "Elder Bednar, I wish this meeting could last all night. It *has* been a revelatory experience. I had a question I was going to ask, but I don't need to ask it now because I have received an answer."

Elder Bednar then asked how many others had had that experience. Dozens raised their hands. It was a beautiful shared experience for the men of our stake that night. My heart had been changed during that meeting; I knew the Lord was going to look out for my family and me, and the sadness I had previously felt left me.

It was another month and a half before things started to come together—at least from my standpoint. In reality, the Lord had started working in my life long before I saw His hand. Two weeks before the meeting with Elder Bednar, I had received an e-mail from a friend. At the end of the note he asked if he would see me that night at the meeting of a professional club we both belonged to. I had no idea about the meeting, as the original invitation had been sent to my former work e-mail address instead of to my personal account. But now that I knew about it, I rearranged my plans to attend the meeting and to network. I worked hard that evening to strike up conversations with a number of people and to hand out my card, but when I left after the meeting, I felt as though I had made no progress.

It turned out that I had, indeed, made a contact that night that eventually led to my current employment. Much like I had received late notice of the meeting on the morning of the day it was to be held, the man I met that night was a last-minute stand-in for one of his colleagues whose plans had changed earlier that day. I feel strongly that the Lord arranged these circumstances for both of us so that we were able to connect that night.

I am grateful to have work now and for the subtle miracles that the Lord worked in my behalf to make it possible. And I am grateful that He speaks through His servants to give us peace and hope in times of distress. ■

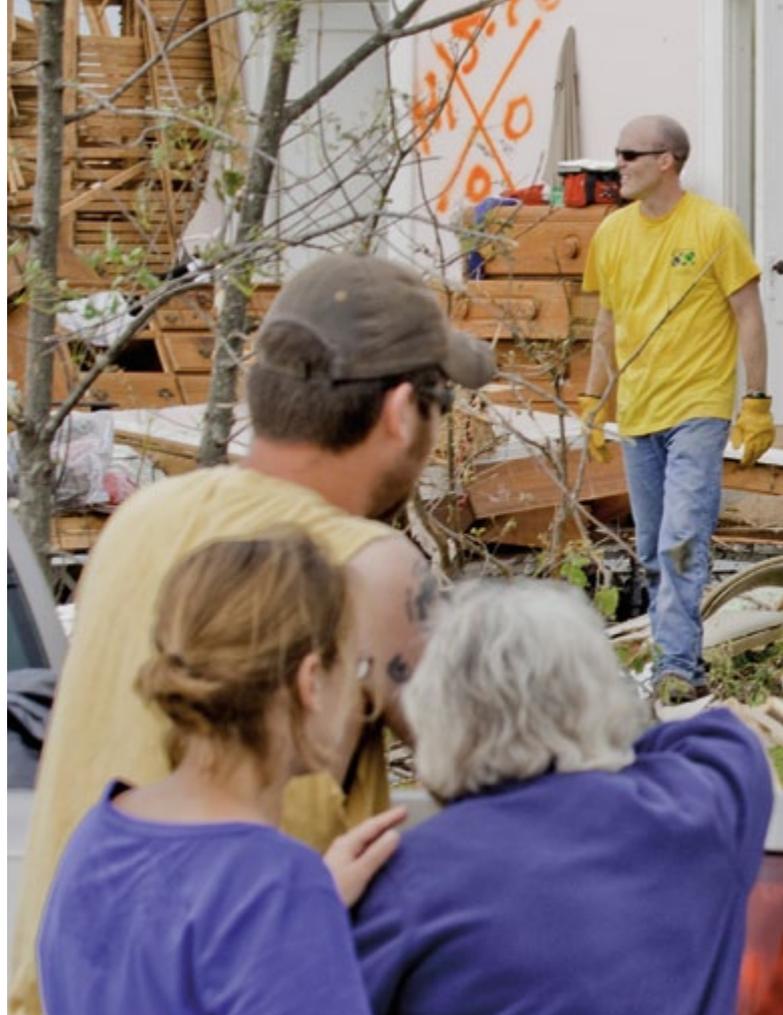
Ward Councils

AT WORK

By LaRene Porter Gaunt

Church Magazines

Latter-day Saints are using ward and branch councils to bless the lives of those in need.



On the night of May 22, 2011, amid the sound of blaring sirens, a massive tornado touched down in the heart of Joplin, Missouri, USA, destroying homes and lives. The Joplin First Ward was hit hard by the twister, but right away Bishop Chris Hoffman and the ward council started accounting for ward members.

“We had a response plan in place because we had talked about these preparations in ward council before they happened,” he said. “We also relied on the Spirit to know what to do. Power lines were down. Cell phones didn’t work. We prayed and listened for answers, and they came—they always came. It was gratifying for me as a bishop to hear members say, ‘This is what I’ve done,’ instead of, ‘What do you want me to do?’”

The response in Joplin shows the power of a united ward council. “The ward council meeting is one of the most important meetings in the Church,” wrote Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “because priesthood quorum and auxiliary leaders can discuss and plan with the bishopric. . . . Of all the councils and committees in the Church, I believe the ward council can have the greatest impact in helping our Father’s children.”¹

LEFT: PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CRAIG DIMOND



United by Love and Faith

In Puerto Francisco de Orellana, an isolated village in the jungles of Ecuador, members have a strong bond of love and faith. The monthly branch council reflects their caring. They focus on individuals and families first, then how programs can help. Inspiration follows.

Many members need help finding work. The branch council finds that the members' challenges can often be solved at the local level. As the council discussed the needs of a single mother with a young daughter who has health problems, the Relief Society president knew of a job where the mother could work and still be near her daughter.

The branch council also draws on Church resources, such as the LDS Employment Services career workshop materials.² They established a class taught by a branch member, which helped another branch member find a better job.

Ricardo Reyes, first counselor in the branch presidency, says of the branch council: "We are instruments in the hand of the Lord. He will achieve His goals through our works."



ESSENTIALS FOR EFFECTIVE COUNCILS

In his book *Counseling with Our Councils*, Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gives the following three suggestions:

"First, focus on fundamentals." Follow the guidelines in *Handbook 2: Administering the Church*, chapter 4, which can be found online in the Serving in the Church section of LDS.org.

"Second, focus on people, not programs." Pursue "the integration of new members, activation of the less active, concerns of the youth, the economic plight of individual members, and the needs of single mothers and widows."

"Third, councils are for counsel and the exchange of ideas, not just reports and lectures." Establish a climate conducive to openness, where every person and group is important and every opinion is valuable." Individuals have different viewpoints and backgrounds, so each can add a helpful perspective to understanding members' needs.

See Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, *Counseling with Our Councils* (1997), 106, 109, 112.



A Path to the Temple

In Liverpool, New York, USA, as Primary president Melissa Fisk attended ward council meeting, she gained insight into its power. When she reached inside her bag for a notebook, she came across a picture of 28 Primary children on the steps of the Palmyra New York Temple. All were covered with wasp stings. For a moment, the picture pulled her attention away from the meeting, and she focused briefly on the day the ward Primary had gone to Palmyra to enjoy the sacred feeling of the temple grounds. Unfortunately, when the children spread out

their blankets, they had accidentally upset a wasps' nest. After everyone had been cared for, the leaders invited the children to touch the temple. The children refused because they were afraid that there might be more wasps. So parents and leaders stood in a line and created a path to the temple. This gave the children courage to move forward. As Melissa turned her attention back to the ward council meeting, she thought, "If only everyone could be surrounded by such loving friends and leaders as they progress toward the temple." Her thoughts were interrupted as she heard the Relief

WHO IS INVOLVED IN THE WARD OR BRANCH COUNCIL?

The following priesthood and auxiliary leaders attend the council in two capacities: (1) as ward council members who help the bishop find solutions to the needs and concerns of the ward and (2) as representatives of their

Bishopric

The bishopric is responsible for all ward members, organizations, and activities. The bishop presides over the ward council, but he can make better decisions after discussions with his counselors and with the ward council, when appropriate.

(See Handbook 2: Administering the Church, 4.1; 4.2.)

Ward Clerk

"The ward clerk keeps a record of assignments and decisions made during ward council meetings. . . . He also provides relevant statistical information from Church record-keeping software."

(Handbook 2, 4.6.4.)

Executive Secretary

"The executive secretary prepares agendas for ward council meetings. . . . The bishop may also ask him to help follow up with ward council members on their assignments. . . . [He] can also provide continuity between the ward council and the priesthood executive committee."

(Handbook 2, 4.6.5.)

Melchizedek Priesthood Leaders

The high priests group leader and the elders quorum president are responsible for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the men over whom they preside. The bishop can delegate to quorum and group leaders some of the work he does with families.

(See Handbook 2, 7.)

Ward Mission Leader

The ward mission leader coordinates the ward's efforts to do missionary work. He works with the full-time and ward missionaries. The bishop may ask him to lead discussions on missionary work in ward council meetings.

(See Handbook 2, 5.1.3.)

Society president comment on a sister in need: “She wasn’t at church last Sunday. I’ll make sure her visiting teachers let her know about the upcoming temple trip.”

“They’ve got some hard things going on right now,” added the elders quorum president. “I’ll follow up with their home teachers and see if there’s anything we can do.”

“The young women could help with babysitting,” said the Young Women president.

As Melissa looked at the faces of the members of the ward council, she saw genuine affection and concern. A smile spread across her face. “The Lord *has* prepared ways

for His children to be protected and loved,” she thought. “The ward council!”

Just as in Joplin, Puerto Francisco de Orellana, and Liverpool, Church leaders worldwide continue to discover the blessings of ward and branch councils. As they do, they will harness the extraordinary power of these councils to help the Lord bless His children and accomplish His work. ■

NOTES

1. M. Russell Ballard, *Counseling with Our Councils: Learning to Minister Together in the Church and in the Family* (1997), 102.
2. *The Career Workshop Participant’s Workbook* (item no. 35163) is available through store.lds.org, Distribution Services, or Church employment resource centers.

organizations. They work together in love to serve and strengthen individuals and families in the ward or branch. (References to wards and bishoprics also apply to branches and branch presidencies.)

Relief Society President

The Relief Society president represents the women in the ward over the age of 18. She does all she can to help the women increase their faith and personal righteousness, strengthen families and homes, and help those in need.

(See *Handbook 2*, 9.)

Young Men President

The Young Men president seeks to strengthen the ward’s young men ages 12 through 18. Assisted by his counselors, he helps the presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood (bishopric) and oversees the Scouting program where it’s available.

(See *Handbook 2*, 8.3.4.)

Young Women President

The Young Women president seeks to strengthen the young women ages 12 through 18. She is responsible to “help each young woman be worthy to make and keep sacred covenants and receive the ordinances of the temple.”

(*Handbook 2*, 10.1.1.)

Primary President

The Primary president represents the children of the ward ages 18 months through 11 years. Her perspective will be beneficial when the ward council is considering an issue that affects the children of the ward.

(See *Handbook 2*, 11.)

Sunday School President

The Sunday School president is responsible for all gospel instruction during Sunday School. “He comes to ward council meeting prepared to suggest ways members can improve learning and teaching at church and in their homes.”

(*Handbook 2*, 12.2.2.)

To learn more about succeeding in your calling, visit the Leadership Training Library, available in several languages at leadershiplibrary.lds.org.



By Elder
Wilford W. Andersen
Of the Seventy



Receiving AND Retaining a Mighty Change

Those who exercise faith in Christ by obeying His commandments, repenting of their sins, earnestly entering into the covenant of baptism, and then renewing that covenant weekly will experience the purifying power of the Holy Ghost unto the remission of their sins. They will receive and retain a mighty change of heart.

We all desire that our sins be forgiven, but as we strive for righteousness, we also long for something more. We, like Nephi, long for a heart that “shake[s] at the appearance of sin” (2 Nephi 4:31) and that not only submits to God’s will but also desires His will. We long for a cleansing and sanctification of our hearts, which changes our desires.

Alma taught that God grants unto men according to their desires, whether they be good or evil (see Alma 29:4). Our hope, then, is not just to refrain from sinning but also to turn to the Lord, who has the power to grant a remission of our sins, to purify our desires, and to change our very natures (see Mosiah 5:2).

The Doctrine of Christ

The remission of our sins results from a process that is carefully defined in the scriptures and that is referred to as “the doctrine of Christ” (2 Nephi 31:21). This process begins when we develop *faith in Jesus Christ* (see Alma 34:16). Yielding our hearts to Christ leads us to *repentance* and a desire to enter into a covenant with Him to always remember Him, keep His commandments, and take His

name upon us (see Mosiah 4:1–3). As we make these promises at *baptism*, the Savior promises the baptism of fire—the gift of the *Holy Ghost*, which purifies and sanctifies us (see 2 Nephi 31:17; D&C 19:31).¹

When we yield our hearts to Christ—by conforming to the principles and ordinances of His gospel—He changes us. He also heals us and sanctifies us (see Helaman 3:35). As a result, “we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2). This is the mighty change of heart experienced by the people of King Benjamin (see Mosiah 5:2) and by Alma the Younger (see Alma 5:12–14). This is the rebirth of which the Savior spoke to the Pharisee Nicodemus (see John 3:1–5). It occurs when we apply the doctrine of Christ. We are reborn into the family of Christ and thereby become His sons and His daughters (see Mosiah 5:7). This rebirth is the essence of His gospel, for it prepares us to return to the presence of the Father.

Missionaries are witnesses to this miraculous process. They watch it unfold in the lives of those they teach. Effective missionaries learn to carefully and patiently guide their investigators through each of the vital first principles and ordinances of the gospel, which constitute the doctrine of Christ.² The results are stunning, as “natural” and “fallen” men and women (see Mosiah 3:19; Alma 12:22) are transformed into faithful and noble sons and daughters of God filled with the joy of the gospel. In answer to Mormon’s question about whether miracles have ceased (see Moroni 7:27, 29), our missionaries can respond with a resounding “no!” They personally witness this greatest of miracles in the lives of their investigators.

There is an additional step, however, in the miraculous process of the remission of sins. Nephi taught that after we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, we must *endure to the end*. When we exercise our faith unto repentance, are baptized, and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, the miracle begins. But the cleansing power and reassuring influence of the Holy Ghost will remain with us only if we “press forward with a steadfastness in Christ” (see 2 Nephi 31:19–20).

Alma understood this principle, asking his people, “And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?” (Alma 5:26).

If after baptism we commit sin and lose the Spirit’s influence, what are we to do? The Savior has provided the answer. He has given us the sacred ordinance of the sacrament.

Renewing Our Covenants

A mighty change of heart is not something we experience only once. Rather, it is a process we repeat over and over throughout our mortal lives, and thus our light grows “brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (D&C 50:24). We repeat the steps as taught in the doctrine of Christ by exercising our faith unto repentance. When we participate in the renewing ordinance of the sacrament, the power and influence of the Holy Ghost are renewed in our lives. Through the power of the Spirit, we are once again spiritually reborn and become the sons and daughters of Christ (see Mosiah 5:7). That is what is meant by our taking upon us the name of Christ (see Mosiah 5:8), which we must be willing to do each time we partake of the sacrament.

While serving as a mission president in Guadalajara, Mexico, I interviewed a missionary who expressed concern that he was not feeling the influence of the Spirit as he had earlier in his mission. I asked if he was getting along well with his companion, if he was obeying mission rules, and if he was keeping his thoughts and actions clean and pure. He responded that he was. I was then impressed to ask him if he was partaking of the sacrament each week. Surprisingly, he answered no. He and his companion were trying so hard to bring their investigators to church that they usually arrived late and missed the ordinance of the sacrament. That was our answer. Without renewing his baptismal covenant, he was losing the promised blessing of having the Spirit with him.

In order to receive a remission of sins, it is necessary to take each step as taught in the doctrine of Christ.



When we participate in the renewing ordinance of the sacrament, the power and influence of the Holy Ghost are renewed in our lives.

Receiving the ordinance of baptism, therefore, requires that we first develop faith in the Savior and repent of our sins. Then we enter into the required baptismal covenant to keep the commandments and qualify for the promised blessing of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. Likewise, to renew the blessing of the constant companionship of the Spirit promised in the sacrament prayers, we continue the ongoing process of developing and exercising faith in Christ, repenting of our sins, and partaking of the sacrament with a determination to keep the commandments.

Receiving sacred ordinances without accepting and keeping associated covenants is living a religion of appearances—“having a form of godliness; but denying the power thereof” (2 Timothy 3:5; see also Joseph Smith—History 1:19). The power and the promised blessings are received only by keeping the covenants. Paul writes about the consequences of receiving the ordinance of the sacrament while ignoring the associated covenants:

“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

“For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body” (1 Corinthians 11:27–29).

If we thoughtlessly partake of the sacrament, we can lose the blessings of the Spirit, which we need in order to experience again a mighty change of heart and receive and retain a remission of sins.

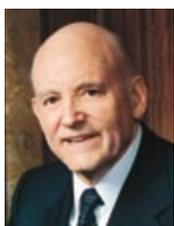
These cautions give added meaning to the third commandment: “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” Neither should we take the name of the Lord *upon us* in vain, “for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh [upon him] his name in vain” (Exodus 20:7).

I am a witness of the miraculous process of spiritual rebirth. Those who exercise faith in Christ by obeying His commandments, repenting of their sins, earnestly entering into the covenant of baptism, and then renewing that covenant weekly will receive the purifying power of the Holy Ghost unto the remission of their sins. They will experience and retain a mighty change of heart and will “have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.”

May each of us strive to receive this great blessing. ■

NOTES

1. See Bible Dictionary, “Holy Ghost.”
2. See *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 1–11, 60–66.



IN THE STRENGTH OF THE LORD

“With faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and obedience to his gospel, a step at a time improving as we go, pleading for strength, improving our attitudes and our ambitions, we will find ourselves successfully in the fold of the Good Shepherd. That will require discipline and training and exertion and strength. But as the Apostle Paul said, ‘I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.’ (Philippians 4:13).”

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95), “Developing Spirituality,” *Ensign*, May 1979, 26.

G AMAZING Grace

By Kristen Nicole Cardon

I depend on the grace of Jesus Christ every day.

In our Church meetings, we don’t often talk about grace,” said my Brigham Young University religion teacher, “but we, as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *do* believe in grace.”

Indeed, I couldn’t recall any Young Women or Sunday School lessons on grace, but my thoughts drifted back to my high school choir and singing “Amazing Grace.”

Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound!)

That sav’d a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found;

Was blind, but now I see.¹

“Grace is the power of God from the Atonement of Jesus Christ,” my teacher explained. “I divide grace into four powers: resurrection, redemption, healing, and strengthening.” He proceeded to explain each power, but my mind had again returned to my memories.

That same high school choir once traveled to California, USA, to compete in a music festival. I became ill just before departure, and my sore throat meant that I wouldn’t be able to sing with my choir in the festival—or if I did, I would sing poorly, accompanied by pain. I asked my father for a priesthood blessing and spent the next day praying for recovery.

Perhaps I didn’t fully understand then, as I sang “Amazing Grace” with a fully mended throat at the festival, that I was singing about the very power that had healed me just the day before. The Savior’s Atonement had blessed me that day; His grace was the source of my healing.

“And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people” (Alma 7:11).

After high school, like many freshmen, I was overwhelmed by my college courses



and the challenges of simultaneously living away from home but also with five roommates.

This was when I learned to understand the strengthening and enabling power of Christ's grace. I spent my days working and studying, but I depended on daily prayers in which I pled to Heavenly Father for the ability to complete the necessary tasks. As the school year continued, I discovered to my joy that with the strengthening and enabling power of Christ's Atonement, I could function not only well but without difficulty.

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

Though I have yet to experience the other two aspects of His grace—resurrection and the fulness of redemption—I still depend on the Atonement of Jesus Christ each day. Grace, the power of God from the Atonement of Jesus Christ, has healed me and strengthened me. As I strive to obey God's commandments and adhere to His will, I receive heavenly help far surpassing my own ability.

"It is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23). ■

NOTE

1. John Newton, "Amazing Grace," *Olney Hymns* (1779), no. 41.

HOW DOES THE LORD'S GRACE AFFECT OUR LIVES?

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles helps answer this question in "The Atonement and the Journey of Mortality" in this issue on page 40:

- "The Lord desires, through His Atonement and by the power of the Holy Ghost, to *live* in us—not only to direct us but also to empower us."
- "Individual willpower, personal determination and motivation, effective planning and goal setting are necessary but ultimately insufficient for us to triumphantly complete this mortal journey. Truly, we must come to rely upon 'the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah' (2 Nephi 2:8)."
- "The enabling power of the Atonement strengthens us to do and be good and to serve beyond our own individual desire and natural capacity."

Consider writing in your journal and sharing with your family about times when you have felt the Lord's grace healing, helping, or strengthening you.



**By Elder
David A. Bednar**
Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

The grand objective of the Savior's gospel was summarized succinctly by President David O. McKay (1873–1970): “The purpose of the gospel is . . . to make bad men good and good men better, and to change human nature.”¹ Thus, the journey of mortality is to progress from bad to good to better and to experience the mighty change of heart—to have our fallen natures changed (see Mosiah 5:2).

The Atonement

AND THE JOURNEY OF MORTALITY

*The enabling power
of the Atonement
strengthens us to do
and be good and to
serve beyond our own
individual desire and
natural capacity.*

The Book of Mormon is our handbook of instructions as we travel the pathway from bad to good to better and strive to have our hearts changed. King Benjamin teaches about the journey of mortality and the role of the Atonement in navigating successfully that journey: “For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and *putteth off the natural man* and *becometh a saint* through the atonement of Christ the Lord” (Mosiah 3:19; emphasis added).

I draw your attention to two specific phrases. First—“putteth off the natural man.” The journey from bad to good is the process of putting off the natural man or the natural woman in each of us. In mortality we all are tempted by the flesh. The very elements out of which our bodies were created are by nature fallen and ever subject to the pull of sin, corruption, and death. But we can increase our capacity to overcome the desires of the flesh and temptations “through the atonement of Christ.” When we make mistakes, as we transgress and sin, we can repent and become clean through the redeeming power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.



Second—“becometh a saint.” This phrase describes the continuation and second phase of life’s journey to make “good men better” or, in other words, to become more like a saint. This second part of the journey, this process of going from good to better, is a topic about which we do not study or teach frequently enough nor understand adequately.

I suspect that many Church members are much more familiar with the nature of the redeeming and cleansing power of the Atonement than they are with the strengthening and enabling power. It is one thing to know that Jesus Christ came to earth to *die* for us—that is fundamental and foundational to the doctrine of Christ. But we also need to appreciate that the Lord desires, through His Atonement and by the power of the Holy Ghost, to *live* in us—not only to direct us but also to empower us.

Most of us know that when we do wrong things, we need help to overcome the effects of sin in our lives. The Savior has paid the price and made it possible for us to become clean through His redeeming power. Most of us clearly understand that the Atonement is for sinners. I am not so sure, however, that we know and understand that the Atonement is also for saints—for good men and women who are obedient, worthy, and conscientious and who are striving to become better and serve more faithfully. We may mistakenly believe we must make the journey from good to better and become a saint all by ourselves, through sheer grit, willpower, and discipline, and with our obviously limited capacities.

The gospel of the Savior is not simply about avoiding bad in our lives; it also is essentially about doing and becoming good. And the Atonement provides help for us to overcome and avoid bad and to do and become good. Help from the Savior is available for the entire journey of mortality—from bad to good to better and to change our very nature.

I am not suggesting that the redeeming and enabling powers of the Atonement are separate and discrete. Rather, these two dimensions of the

Atonement are connected and complementary; they both need to be operational during all phases of the journey of life. And it is eternally important for all of us to recognize that *both* of these essential elements of the journey of mortality—both putting off the natural man and becoming a saint, both overcoming bad and becoming good—are accomplished through the power of the Atonement. Individual willpower, personal determination and motivation, effective planning and goal setting are necessary but ultimately insufficient for us to triumphantly complete this mortal journey. Truly, we must come to rely upon “the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah” (2 Nephi 2:8).

Grace and the Enabling Power of the Atonement

In the Bible Dictionary we learn that the word *grace* frequently is used in the scriptures to connote enabling power:

“[*Grace* is] a word that occurs frequently in the New Testament, especially in the writings of Paul. The main idea of the word is *divine means of help or strength*, given through the bounteous mercy and love of Jesus Christ.

“It is through the grace of the Lord Jesus, made possible by his atoning sacrifice, that mankind will be raised in immortality, every person receiving his body from the grave in a condition of everlasting life. *It is likewise through the grace of the Lord that individuals*, through faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ and repentance of their sins, *receive strength and assistance to do good works that they otherwise would not be able to maintain if left to their own means. This grace is an enabling power* that allows men and women to lay hold on eternal life and exaltation after they have expended their own best efforts.”²

Grace is the divine assistance or heavenly help each of us desperately needs to qualify for the celestial kingdom. Thus, the enabling power of

the Atonement strengthens us to do and be good and to serve beyond our own individual desire and natural capacity.

In my personal scripture study, I often insert the term “enabling power” whenever I encounter the word *grace*. Consider, for example, this verse with which we are all familiar: “We know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we

that journey. As we come to better understand this sacred power, our gospel perspective will be greatly enlarged and enriched. Such a perspective will change us in remarkable ways.

Nephi is an example of one who knew, understood, and relied upon the enabling power of the Savior. Recall that the sons of Lehi had returned to Jerusalem to enlist

Ishmael and his household in their cause. Laman and others in the party traveling with Nephi from Jerusalem back to the wilderness rebelled, and Nephi exhorted his brethren to have faith in the Lord. It was at this point in their journey that Nephi’s brothers bound him with cords and planned his destruction. Please note Nephi’s prayer: “O Lord, according to my faith which is in thee, wilt thou deliver me from the hands of my brethren; yea, even *give me strength that I may burst these bands* with which I am bound” (1 Nephi 7:17; emphasis added).

Do you know what I likely would have prayed for if I had been tied up by my brothers?

“Please get me out of this mess NOW!” It is especially interesting to me that Nephi did not pray to have his circumstances changed. Rather, he prayed for the strength to change his circumstances. And I believe he prayed in this manner precisely because he knew, understood, and had experienced the enabling power of the Atonement.

I do not think the bands with which Nephi was bound just magically fell from his hands and wrists. Rather, I suspect he was blessed with both persistence and personal strength beyond his natural capacity, that he then



Nephi did not pray to have his circumstances changed. Rather, he prayed for the strength to change his circumstances.

can do” (2 Nephi 25:23). I believe we can learn much about this vital aspect of the Atonement if we will insert “enabling and strengthening power” each time we find the word *grace* in the scriptures.

Illustrations and Implications

The journey of mortality is to go from bad to good to better and to have our very natures changed. The Book of Mormon is replete with examples of disciples and prophets who knew, understood, and were transformed by the enabling power of the Atonement in making

“in the strength of the Lord” (Mosiah 9:17) worked and twisted and tugged on the cords, and ultimately and literally was enabled to break the bands.

The implication of this episode for each of us is straightforward. As you and I come to understand and employ the enabling power of the Atonement in our personal lives, we will pray and seek for strength to change our circumstances rather than praying for our circumstances to be changed. We will become agents who act rather than objects that are acted upon (see 2 Nephi 2:14).

Consider the example in the Book of Mormon as Alma and his people are persecuted by Amulon. The voice of the Lord came to these good people in their affliction and indicated:

“I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs. . . .

“And now it came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, *the Lord did strengthen them* that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord” (Mosiah 24:14–15; emphasis added).

What was changed in this episode? It was not the burden that changed; the challenges and difficulties of persecution were not immediately removed from the people. But Alma and his followers were strengthened, and their increased capacity and strength made the burdens they bore lighter. These good people were empowered through

the Atonement to *act* as agents and impact their circumstances. And “in the strength of the Lord” Alma and his people were then directed to safety in the land of Zarahemla.

You legitimately may be wondering, “What makes the episode with Alma and his people an example of the enabling power of the Atonement?” The answer is found in a



comparison of Mosiah 3:19 and Mosiah 24:15.

“And putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and *becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father*” (Mosiah 3:19; emphasis added).

As we progress in the journey of mortality from bad to good to better, as we put off the natural man or woman in each of us, and as we strive to become saints and have our very

The voice of the Lord came to Alma and his people in their affliction and indicated: “I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs.”

natures changed, then the attributes detailed in this verse increasingly should describe the type of person you and I are becoming. We will become more childlike, more submissive, more patient, and more willing to submit.

Now compare these characteristics in Mosiah 3:19 with those used to describe Alma and his people: “And they did *submit* cheerfully and *with patience to all the will of the Lord*” (Mosiah 24:15; emphasis added).

I find the parallels between the attributes described in these verses striking and an indication that Alma’s good people were becoming a better people through the enabling power of the Atonement of Christ the Lord.

Recall the story of Alma and Amulek contained in Alma 14. In this incident many faithful Saints had been put to death by fire, and these two servants of the Lord had been imprisoned and beaten. Consider this petition offered by Alma as he prayed in prison: “O Lord, *give us strength* according to our faith which is in Christ, even unto deliverance” (Alma 14:26; emphasis added).

Here again we see Alma’s understanding of and confidence in the enabling power of the Atonement reflected in his request. And note the result of this prayer:

“And they [Alma and Amulek] broke the cords with which they were bound; and when the people saw this, they began to flee, for the fear of destruction had come upon them. . . .

“And Alma and Amulek came forth out of the prison, and they were not hurt; for *the Lord had granted unto them power*, according to their faith which was in Christ” (Alma 14:26, 28; emphasis added).

Once again the enabling power is evident as good people struggle against evil and strive to become even better and serve more effectively “in the strength of the Lord.”

Another example from the Book of Mormon is

instructive. In Alma 31, Alma is directing a mission to reclaim the apostate Zoramites, who, after building their Rameumptom, offer a prescribed and prideful prayer.

Notice the plea for strength in Alma’s personal prayer: “O Lord, wilt thou grant unto me *that I may have strength*, that I may suffer with patience these afflictions which shall come upon me, because of the iniquity of this people” (Alma 31:31; emphasis added).

Alma also prays that his missionary companions will receive a similar blessing: “Wilt thou grant unto them *that they may have strength*, that they may bear their afflictions which shall come upon them because of the iniquities of this people” (Alma 31:33; emphasis added).

Alma did not pray to have his afflictions removed. He knew he was an agent of the Lord, and he prayed for the power to act and affect his situation.

The key point of this example is contained in the final verse of Alma 31: “[The Lord] gave them strength, that they should suffer no manner of afflictions, *save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ*. Now this was according to the prayer of Alma; and this because he prayed in faith” (verse 38; emphasis added).

The afflictions were not removed. But Alma and his companions were strengthened and blessed through the enabling power of the Atonement to “suffer no manner of afflictions, save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ.” What a marvelous blessing. And what a lesson each of us should learn.

Examples of the enabling power are not found only in the scriptures. Daniel W. Jones was born in 1830 in Missouri, and he joined the Church in California in 1851. In 1856 he participated in the rescue of handcart companies that were stranded in Wyoming by severe snowstorms. After the rescue party had found the suffering Saints, provided what immediate comfort they could, and made

arrangements for the sick and the feeble to be transported to Salt Lake City, Daniel and several other young men volunteered to remain with and safeguard the company's possessions. The food and supplies left with Daniel and his colleagues were meager and rapidly expended. The following quote from Daniel Jones's personal journal describes the events that followed.

"Game soon became so scarce that we could kill nothing. We ate all the poor meat; one would get hungry eating it. Finally that was all gone, nothing now but hides were left. We made a trial of them. A lot was cooked and eaten without any seasoning and it made the whole company sick. . . .

"Things looked dark, for nothing remained but the poor raw hides taken from starved cattle. We asked the Lord to direct us what to do. The brethren did not murmur, but felt to trust in God. . . . Finally I was impressed how to fix the stuff and gave the company advice, telling them how to cook it; for them to scorch and scrape the hair off; this had a tendency to kill and purify the bad taste that scalding gave it. After scraping, boil one hour in plenty of water, throwing the water away which had extracted all the glue, then wash and scrape the hide thoroughly, washing in cold water, then boil to a jelly and let it get cold, and then eat with a little sugar sprinkled on it. This was considerable trouble, but we had little else to do and it was better than starving.

"We asked the Lord to bless our stomachs and *adapt them to this food*. . . . On eating now all seemed to relish the feast. We were three days without eating before this second attempt was made. We enjoyed this sumptuous fare for about six weeks."³

In those circumstances I probably would have prayed for something else to eat: "Heavenly Father, please send me a quail or a buffalo." It likely would not have occurred to me to pray that my stomach would be strengthened and adapted

to the food we had. What did Daniel W. Jones know? He knew about the enabling power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. He did not pray that his circumstances would be changed. He prayed that he would be strengthened to deal with his circumstances. Just as Alma and his people, Amulek, and Nephi were strengthened, Daniel W. Jones had the spiritual insight to know what to ask for in that prayer.

The enabling power of the Atonement of Christ strengthens us to do things we could never do on our own. Sometimes I wonder if in our latter-day world of ease—in our world of microwave ovens and cell phones and air-conditioned cars and comfortable homes—we ever learn to acknowledge our daily dependence upon the enabling power of the Atonement.

Sister Bednar is a remarkably faithful and competent woman, and I have learned important lessons about the strengthening power from her quiet example. I watched her persevere through intense and continuous morning sickness—literally sick all day every day for eight months—during each of her three pregnancies. Together we prayed that she would be blessed, but that challenge was never removed. Instead, she was enabled to do physically what she could not do in her own power. Over the years I have also watched how she has been magnified to handle the mocking and scorn that come from a secular society when a Latter-day Saint woman heeds prophetic counsel and makes the family and the nurturing of children her highest priorities. I thank and pay tribute to Susan for helping me to learn such invaluable lessons.

The Savior Knows and Understands

In Alma chapter 7 we learn how and why the Savior is able to provide the enabling power:

"He shall go forth, suffering *pains* and *afflictions* and *temptations* of every kind; and this that

the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the *pains* and the *sicknesses* of his people.

“And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their *infirmities*, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may

No one knows.” No human being, perhaps, knows. But the Son of God perfectly knows and understands, for He felt and bore our burdens before we ever did. And because He paid the ultimate price and bore that burden, He has perfect empathy and can extend to us His arm of mercy in so many phases of our life. He can reach out, touch, succor—literally

run to us—and strengthen us to be more than we could ever be and help us to do that which we could never do through relying only upon our own power.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).

I declare my witness of and appreciation for the infinite and eternal sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. I know the Savior lives. I have experienced both

His redeeming and enabling power, and I testify that these powers are real and available to each of us. Indeed, “in the strength of the Lord” we can do and overcome all things as we press forward on our journey of mortality. ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University on October 23, 2001. For the full text visit speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

1. See Franklin D. Richards, in Conference Report, Oct. 1965, 136–37; see also David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1954, 26.
2. Bible Dictionary, “Grace”; emphasis added.
3. Daniel W. Jones, *Forty Years among the Indians* (n.d.), 57–58.



There is no physical pain, no anguish of soul, no suffering of spirit, no infirmity or weakness that you or I ever experience during our mortal journey that the Savior did not experience first.

know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:11–12; emphasis added).

The Savior has suffered not just for our iniquities but also for the inequality, the unfairness, the pain, the anguish, and the emotional distresses that so frequently beset us. There is no physical pain, no anguish of soul, no suffering of spirit, no infirmity or weakness that you or I ever experience during our mortal journey that the Savior did not experience first. You and I in a moment of weakness may cry out, “No one understands.



Thy Will Be Done

By Kevin Jeffs

In September of 2002, I was diagnosed with severe cancer. I had four surgeries and two grueling months of chemotherapy. One evening during my second week of chemotherapy, I was resting in an overstuffed chair in my parents' living room. I was exhausted, without the strength or will to do anything more than think. The question that I had repeatedly pushed aside came back with greater force: why me? Sorrow overwhelmed me, and I could do nothing but cry out as Joseph Smith did from the darkness of Liberty Jail, "O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?" (D&C 121:1).

As sorrow threatened to swallow me, the gentle and loving rebuke came to my mind: "The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?" (D&C 122:8). Instantly my thoughts were drawn to the suffering the Savior willingly took upon Himself for me—suffering that caused Him, "even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit" (D&C 19:18). Lying there in my own pain and sorrow, I gained some sense of the eternal vastness of Christ's agony and pain. How small my suffering seemed when compared to that of the Infinite and Eternal.

Gratitude filled my heart as I thought about how He loved me so much that He willingly took upon Himself my suffering and more! Peace entered my soul as I felt His love comfort me. How true Alma's words are: "And he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:12). I understood and felt that He truly did know what I was feeling and shared in my sorrow, as His gentle words testify: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

"Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands;

thy walls are continually before me" (Isaiah 49:15–16).

As this light and understanding lifted my heart from the depths of sorrow, I felt as Alma the Younger did when he expressed, "Oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!" (Alma 36:20).

That day I learned firsthand that just as the Atonement can make our scarlet sins as white as snow (see Isaiah 1:18), it can also ease our pain and change our sorrow to hope. As we answer the Lord's call to come unto Him, He will truly "ease the burdens which are put upon [our] shoulders, that even [we] cannot feel them upon [our] backs" (Mosiah 24:14).

Life will never be easy. When those difficult times come, it is up to us whether we curse God, as Job's wife would have had him do (see Job 2:9), or trust in the Lord and seek to learn what He would have us learn. Elder Richard G. Scott said: "Just when all seems to be going right, challenges often come in multiple doses applied simultaneously. When those trials are not consequences of your disobedience, they are evidence that the Lord feels you are prepared to grow more (see Proverbs 3:11–12). He therefore gives you experiences that stimulate growth, understanding, and compassion which polish you for your everlasting benefit. To get you from where you are to where He wants you to be requires a lot of stretching, and that generally entails discomfort and pain. . . . This life is an experience in profound trust—trust in Jesus Christ."¹

Through my experience I have come to understand many things about myself and about my relationship with my Heavenly Father that I would not have gained otherwise. I only hope that I can continue to say "not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39) and seek to be what my Heavenly Father would have me be. ■

Kevin Jeffs passed away August 6, 2008, at age 29. He asked that his testimony be read at his funeral.

NOTE
1. Richard G. Scott, "Trust in the Lord," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 16–17.

In the depths of pain, I learned the reality of the Atonement and the Savior's power to bring peace and comfort.



By Brent L. Top

Our grandson Gavin was born without the lower part of his left arm. Instead of a hand, he has what we lovingly refer to as his “nub.”

Although his birth defect hasn’t slowed him down much and he certainly doesn’t consider himself handicapped, he does notice that he is different from others. He is at an age now when he is conscious of the

doesn’t really have a nub but that He understands exactly what it is like for Gavin to have one. In that tender teaching moment, our daughter taught him about the Resurrection, the perfect love of the Savior, and how Christ’s Atonement ensures that someday Gavin will have a hand and arm like everyone else. I have thought a lot about that, and I want to share some of my thoughts about

THE LOVING ARMS OF CHRIST

No matter how strong, diligent, or productive they are, our mortal arms can never save us in the celestial kingdom of God. It is only through the arms of Christ that we can be saved.

stares and unkind comments about his nub.

In decorating her home for Christmas a few years ago, our daughter put out an olive wood nativity set she had received from us as a Christmas gift when we lived in Israel several years ago. Part of one of the carved wooden arms of the baby Jesus in the nativity set had been broken off. It was so small that none of us had even noticed it before. Yet three-year-old Gavin noticed.

“Mommy, look!” he excitedly exclaimed one day. “Jesus has a nub just like me!” He was thrilled that Jesus had a nub too.

His mother explained to him that Jesus

arms—our arms and Christ’s arms.

Spiritually speaking, each of us, whether born whole or not, has a defect. That defect is that we are mortal. We are all, as King Benjamin described us, “natural,” fallen men and women, “enem[ies] to God” (Mosiah 3:19). Our mortal arms—no matter how strong, how diligent, or how productive—can never save us in the celestial kingdom of God. It is only through the Atonement of Christ that we can be saved. His arms not only save us but also strengthen us. That is what we call grace.



One of the reasons the scriptures are so full of examples and teachings of God's majestic power is to show us that nothing is too hard for the Lord.

The LDS Bible Dictionary defines grace as the “enabling power”¹ of Christ. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught, “The enabling power of the Atonement of Christ strengthens us to do things we could never do on our own.”²

Our Father in Heaven wants us to recognize that, spiritually speaking, we are like children born without arms—totally dependent upon the loving and caring arms of another—Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob taught, “The Lord God showeth us our weakness that we may know that it is by his grace, and his great condescensions unto the children of men, that we have power to do these things” (Jacob 4:7).

One of my favorite scriptural accounts that illustrates this important principle is found in Matthew chapter 14. As the disciples watched the Savior walk on the Sea of Galilee toward their boat, they thought they were seeing a ghost. Jesus assured them that it was He and that they need not be afraid. Peter declared, “Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water” (verse 28). Jesus said, “Come.” Matthew then records, “And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus” (see Matthew 14:24–29).

The rest of the story is what I find most significant. I can’t relate to walking on water, but I can relate to what Peter experienced next:

“But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

“And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

“And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

“Then they that were in the ship came and

worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God” (Matthew 14:30–33).

All of us have had, are having, or will yet have a Peter-like “sinking” experience in some way and will at some time (probably many times) cry out, “Lord, save me.” Even Peter’s strong fisherman arms were not strong enough to save him. He needed the rescuing arms of Christ, and so do we. Can you imagine Peter—choking, his head bobbing beneath the surface of the water—saying as the Savior extends His arms: “No, thank you. I will swim to shore. I sank myself, so I must save myself”? Of course not. How ridiculous! Yet we sometimes do just that.

We may know in our heads that our mortal arms and hands are deficient—in fact, utterly incapable of rescuing or redeeming us—but we sometimes resist, even recoil from, the outstretched arms of the Savior. Sometimes we spiritually drown ourselves because we won’t allow His arms to cradle us. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve eloquently stated:

“May I be bold enough to suggest that it is impossible for anyone who really knows God to doubt his willingness to receive us with open arms in a divine embrace if we will but ‘come unto Him.’ . . .

“I am convinced that none of us can appreciate how deeply it wounds the loving heart of the Savior of the world when he finds that his people do not feel confident in his care or secure in his hands.”³

The scriptures contain many references to the arms of the Lord. They describe different ways whereby His arms bless our lives and strengthen our arms. I wish to focus on three: His arms of power, His arms of love, and His arms of mercy. These three, though certainly related to each other, are unique in what they do *for* us and *to* us.

Even Peter's strong fisherman arms were not strong enough to save him. He needed the rescuing arms of Christ, and so do we.

Arms of Power

I am convinced that one of the reasons the scriptures are so full of examples and teachings of God's majestic power is to show us that nothing is too hard for the Lord (see Genesis 18:14).

Moses declared: "The Lord is my strength . . . , and he is become my salvation: he is my God. . . ."

"Thy right hand [or arm], O Lord, is become glorious in power" (Exodus 15:2, 6).

David knew that God was more powerful than Goliath (see 1 Samuel 17). Elijah knew and demonstrated with consuming fire that Jehovah's power was greater than the power of Baal and all his priests (see 1 Kings 18). Likewise, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego could testify that fiery furnaces can't hold a candle, literally and symbolically, to the glory and power of the Son of Man (see Daniel 3).

His arms of power created "worlds without number" (Moses 1:33), parted the Red Sea, stilled the storms, fed the multitude, healed the sick, and raised the dead. His arms of power are seen in nature, in His compassion for the downtrodden, in His forgiveness of the repentant, and in His vengeance upon the wicked. All around us—both temporally and spiritually—we see the fulfillment of the Lord's words in Doctrine and Covenants section 1: "And the arm of the Lord shall be revealed" (verse 14).

When we understand and more fully accept, as Nephi declared, that "he is mightier than all the earth" (1 Nephi 4:1), we can





When we recognize the Lord's arms of power and learn to lean on His ample arms, we will trust more fully in His promises to us.

trust more deeply in His arms of power, more fully allow ourselves to be upheld by those arms, and rely less on the arm of flesh—even our own puny arms. When we recognize the Lord's arms of power and learn to lean on His ample arms, we will trust more fully in His promises to us. His promises of power, protection, succor, and strength are too numerous to cite. The scriptures are full of them:

- Isaiah 41:10: “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand [or arm] of my righteousness.”
- John 14:18, 27: “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. . . . Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled.”
- Alma 36:3: “Whosoever shall put their trust in God [His arms of power] shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions.”
- D&C 84:88: “I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up.”

In addition to scriptural promises and promises given by modern-day prophets and apostles, each of us is a beneficiary of *personal* promises of God's power in our lives. Those promises come to us in the form of priesthood blessings from patriarchs, from fathers and bishops, and from home

teachers and trusted friends. Because of the Lord's arms of power, we can trust in those promises and know that we are held tightly in what Amulek described as the "arms of safety" (Alma 34:16). God's promises of power and protection are sure. President George Q. Cannon (1827–1901) declared:

"No matter how serious the trial, how deep the distress, how great the affliction, He will never desert us. He never has, and He never will. He cannot do it. It is not His character [to do so]. He is an unchangeable being; the same yesterday, the same today, and He will be the same throughout the eternal ages to come. We have found that God. We have made Him our friend, by obeying His Gospel; and He will stand by us. We may pass through the fiery furnace; we may pass through deep waters; but we shall not be consumed nor overwhelmed. We shall emerge from all these trials and difficulties the better and purer for them, if we only trust in our God and keep His commandments."⁴

Arms of Love

Father Lehi, in his final discourse to his family, testified, "The Lord hath redeemed my soul from hell; I have beheld his glory, and *I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love*" (2 Nephi 1:15; emphasis added). That phrase—"encircled about eternally in the arms of his love"—is perhaps the most profound and deeply personal phrase in all of holy writ. I came to understand this passage more deeply from personal experience.

Several years ago I was a struggling new mission president trying to keep it together even as I felt that I was falling apart at the seams. I was overcome with the problems and pressures of presiding over a mission—tormented by my feelings of inadequacy and

overcome by how unprepared and unworthy I felt. I was in desperate need of strength and spirituality beyond my own. As we concluded an area mission presidents' seminar, I was at emotional and spiritual low points. For a few days we had been instructed by visiting General Authorities in all the things we needed to be doing to better train missionaries and to more effectively push the work of the kingdom forward. It was both inspiring and intimidating—intimidating because I felt that, compared to other mission presidents, I was not measuring up.

At the conclusion of the seminar, we attended a temple session in the Winter Quarters Nebraska Temple. In the celestial room, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, then a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, greeted each mission president with a warm embrace and the words, "I love you."

I'm not sure whether he remembers doing this, but I will never forget it. It may not have been a big deal to him or the others, but it was a monumentally transforming moment for me. I felt the love of the Savior emanating from this special witness into my soul. It was as if I were being embraced by the Lord Himself—I was truly encircled in the arms of the Master's love. That hug and the words "I love you" and "You are doing a great job" strengthened and inspired and motivated me more than all the teaching and training presented in the meetings.

The Savior's perfect and infinite arms of love give us the strength to endure heartache and hardship, the power to resist temptation, and the courage to keep the commandments even as we are being mocked and scorned by those in the "great and spacious building" (1 Nephi 11:36). From his own personal experiences, Paul clearly understood the strengthening power of the Lord's arms of love. He testified:



The Savior's perfect and infinite arms of love give us the strength to endure heartache and hardship, the power to resist temptation, and the courage to keep the commandments.



Alma reminded his people that Christ “sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them.”

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . .

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

“Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:35, 38–39).

Arms of Mercy

Alma reminded his people that Christ “sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them” (Alma 5:33; emphasis added). Think of what that invitation really means. Think of what His arms of mercy can do for you. When you are embraced in His arms of mercy, you will come to know the peace and joy of being clean—forgiven of your sins through His atoning mercy. You will see the world and all eternity with new eyes through the companionship of the Holy Ghost. You will feel more profoundly and love more deeply because He will, as the prophet Ezekiel declared, “take away the stony heart out of your flesh” and give you “a new heart” and “a new spirit” that will “cause you to walk in [His] statutes . . . and do them” (Ezekiel 36:26–27).

I had an experience that helped me glimpse what it means to be embraced in the arms of His mercy. I was so moved and motivated by my experience with President Uchtdorf that I determined to follow his example with my missionaries. We took every group of departing missionaries, on their last day in the mission, to the Nauvoo Illinois Temple for an endowment session. I

greeted the missionaries as they entered the celestial room with a big hug and the words “I love you.” I expressed my deep appreciation for their service and that they were now able to return home with honor. I meant every word of it, but I must admit that it was easier to express those sentiments to some missionaries than to others.

One elder in particular had given me more than his share of grief. On more than one occasion, I told him I was going to send him home. He would always promise me that he would try harder, which he did for a while. But then the cycle would start over again—disobedience, admonishment, repentance, renewed determination, and then slacking off. I badly wanted him to complete his mission honorably, which he finally did.

As he entered the celestial room, I greeted him with the customary hug and the almost obligatory “I love you.” Tears streamed down his face. His whole body shook with weeping. When he could speak, he whispered to me over and over again, “Thank you for extending me mercy.” It was a tender moment and I too shed many tears. My love for him at that moment was unbounded.

Then it happened. I understood. Almost as if the veil had parted, I sensed a coming day when I would embrace the Savior, and with tears of gratitude and love I would likewise declare, “Thank you for extending me mercy.”

How grateful I am for the Lord’s arms of mercy. I am grateful that He has rescued me, not only from physical death and sin but also from myself—my fears, my discouragement, my doubts, and my feelings of inadequacy. Truly, His arms of mercy are arms of safety and security. Mormon reminds us that had his people repented and faithfully followed the

May we exercise greater faith in the arms of the Lord—His arms of power, His arms of love, and His arms of mercy.

Savior, “they might have been clasped in the arms of Jesus” (Mormon 5:11).

Despite our accomplishments, talents, and desires for righteousness, we are weak—spiritually without arms. At times we feel what Ammon declared: “Yea, I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God” (Alma 26:12). Ammon knew whose arms gave him the strength to perform mighty miracles and proclaim the gospel. To paraphrase his words, “Clasped in the arms of Jesus, I can do all things” (see Alma 26:12).

May we exercise greater faith in the arms of the Lord—His arms of power, His arms of love, and His arms of mercy. May we allow Him to cradle and carry and comfort us in those arms. In turn, our arms—our determination and our devotion—will be strengthened. I bear testimony of the living reality of Jesus Christ and the truthfulness of His gospel. I have witnessed the enabling power of the Lord’s grace that empowers us to do and to be better. I have experienced that power. I have felt His arms around me. May we all be “clasped in the arms of Jesus.” ■

From a devotional address delivered at BYU–Idaho on September 29, 2009. For the full text, visit web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches/speeches.aspx.

NOTES

1. Bible Dictionary, “Grace.”
2. David A. Bednar, “In the Strength of the Lord,” in *Brigham Young University 2001–2002 Speeches*, Oct. 23, 2001, 7.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Come Unto Me,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1998, 19.
4. George Q. Cannon, in *Collected Discourses Delivered by President Wilford Woodruff, His Two Counselors, the Twelve Apostles, and Others* (1988), 2:185.



A crown of thorns, made of dry, sharp, brown branches, is laid out on a light-colored, textured surface. A single, bright yellow flower bud with a green stem is attached to the right side of the crown. The text "Of You It Is Required to Forgive" is overlaid on the crown. "Of You" and "to Forgive" are in white serif font, while "It Is Required" is in a gold serif font.

Of You
It Is Required
to Forgive



When we forgive someone, we are relieved of a heavy burden. Moreover, forgiving is a commandment from the Lord. The Savior taught: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44).

In the following examples we see how the blessing of being able to forgive came to three people—one who forgave a friend who had cheated her, one who forgave an ex-spouse, and one who forgave a murderer.

SEEKING STRENGTH TO FORGIVE

I could scarcely believe what had happened. A member of the Church, a trusted and valued friend, had cheated and stolen from my father’s family. My emotions ran the gamut from denial to rage. Could I move past this way of thinking?

My answer was no! So I ignored the scriptures and the prophets’ counsel to forgive, believing my situation was different. Surely God would not ask me to let go of my feelings. I hoarded them in my heart, justifying my anger and need for vengeance.

I visited with priesthood authorities concerning the matter. They reminded me that the deed was in the past and that it could not be undone, and they counseled me to move on. Disappointed that they failed to see the seriousness of what had happened, I turned away from them.

Soon my angry feelings were directed at them as well as the offender. I found reason to criticize Church leaders in various instances, voicing my discontent to others and complaining about those who had failed, in my opinion, to take action.

Ultimately, my actions did not bring me happiness or even satisfaction. Instead, my sense of discontent grew. I found myself pulling away from the Church, from the teachings I had always believed, and, to my shame, from the Lord. My calling in Primary no longer brought me the joy it once had.

Each day I withdrew further from my family and friends, preferring the solitude of my own perspective. I realized that this path was bringing me no comfort and that my spiritual life was spiraling downward, taking my sense of self-worth with it. At last

I recognized the cause of my despair, but I still felt powerless to pull myself out of it. The sense of betrayal I felt had begun to define my entire life.

Finally, the counsel I had received from others to forgive began to take root. I received priesthood blessings. I spent hours poring over the scriptures, searching for situations dealing with forgiveness. I studied not only the literal words but also the spirit of the words.

Among the verses I examined was Moroni 6:8: “But as oft as they repented and sought forgiveness, with real intent, they were forgiven.”

Did this apply to my situation? The individual who had offended me had not confessed or apologized and, in fact, maintained there was no wrongdoing involved.

I pondered the Savior’s counsel to the Nephites:

“For, if ye forgive men their trespasses your heavenly Father will also forgive you;

“But if ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (3 Nephi 13:14–15).

I also read and reread the passage that says, “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men” (D&C 64:10).

I could not overlook the stark command of these words. How could I call myself a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints if I failed to forgive this person?

The scriptures gave me a measure of peace, as did constant and humble prayer. I recognized I could not control the actions of others—I could control only myself. I pleaded with Heavenly Father to remove the hardness from my heart. In humility and repentance, I confessed my own sins and begged Him to treat me with the mercy I had failed to extend to another.

I have learned that the process of forgiveness is continual. In this, as in other things, I remain a work in progress. I hold fast to the knowledge that the Lord will offer His love and grace to all who diligently seek it.

Name withheld, Colorado, USA

LETTING GO OF THE HURT

General conference weekend in April 2007 started out normally enough. I looked forward to being spiritually fed by the talks from leaders of the Church and by the music of the choirs.

Following breakfast on Sunday morning, my son and I sat in our living room and turned on the television. I was ready to listen and to learn. What I was *not* ready for was just how quickly I would hear something that impressed me deeply. President James E. Faust (1920–2007) spoke first and began his talk with a story of an Amish community in Pennsylvania.

He recounted how a man had stormed into a school and without any provocation shot 10 girls, killing five and wounding five. He then took his own life. President Faust said that although the violence shocked and hurt members of the community, they chose to immediately forgive.¹

As I continued to listen to President Faust describe “the healing power of forgiveness,” my thoughts turned to my own life. Twenty years before, in October 1986, my husband had left me and our seven young children. The decisions he made in his life changed *our* lives forever. The children were devastated. I was overwhelmed with all sorts of emotions and had no idea how we were going to make it.

We faced serious financial struggles, and I became responsible to handle them. I was angry, hurt, and unsure of myself and my abilities. Although I went on to raise our children, I felt a weight upon my shoulders that never went away. Even many years later, my spirit still felt heavy with hurt and anger toward my ex-husband. As I continued to listen to President Faust’s message, however, I felt prompted to send my ex-husband an e-mail. He and I had not communicated for many years, but I got his e-mail address from one of our sons and began writing.

I asked my ex-husband to please forgive me for the years that I had not been able to let go of my hurt. I told him that I wanted him to be

able to have a relationship with our children—especially our son who still lived at home. To my surprise, the words came easily, and the faster I typed, the lighter I felt. I finished the letter and clicked “Send.” In the days that followed, I felt lighter and happier than I had in years.

About a week after I sent that e-mail, I received a kind response from my ex-husband. Although the response itself didn’t change anything, receiving it added to the positive feelings I already felt. In addition, our children were blessed through this experience.

I am grateful for the Atonement in our lives, for the potential for change, and for the power of forgiveness. I am also grateful for prophets and apostles who teach and remind us of these sacred truths.

Name withheld, Utah, USA

NOTE

1. James E. Faust, “The Healing Power of Forgiveness,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2007, 67–69.



PEACE IN FORGIVENESS

“You may be carrying a heavy burden of feeling injured by another who has seriously offended you. Your response to that offense may have distorted your understanding so that you feel justified in waiting for that individual to ask forgiveness so that the pain can leave.

The Savior dispelled any such thought when He commanded:

“Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

“I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men’ (D&C 64:9–10).

“Don’t carry the burden of offense any longer. Genuinely ask forgiveness of one that has offended you, even when you consider you have done no wrong. That effort will assuredly bring you peace and will likely begin the healing of serious misunderstandings.”

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “To Be Free of Heavy Burdens,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 88.



SOWING SEEDS OF PEACE

For a long time, my younger brother has been one of my heroes. I will always remember him as a great example of humility, honesty, kindness, faith, diligence, and overall righteousness. He was well educated in both secular and religious matters. He had a good career and was engaged to be married in the temple. It came as a shock to me when I found out he had been murdered.

When I heard the news, I began the horrible emotional roller coaster ride of trying to cope with the loss. It didn't take long to realize that the pain wouldn't go away until I learned *how* to let it go. During times of prayer and quiet contemplation, I learned some lessons that made the healing possible.

Alma teaches us that faith is like a seed that can be planted in our hearts (see Alma 32:28–43). If we nurture the seed and let it grow, it will produce good fruit. The fruit is what shows us that the seed was good. This analogy suggests to me that if there are good seeds, there are also bad ones. We have to identify these bad seeds and seek guidance in knowing how to keep them from taking root and growing in our heart.

When I found out about my brother's death and the violent, selfish act that caused it, my heart was littered with bad seeds. I tried to keep them under control, to "cast them out" as the scriptures say, but I just couldn't pull

them out fast enough. Little sprouts of anger and frustration kept popping up at an amazing rate. A few of them grew to be quite large; these brought hostility into my heart and destructive thoughts into my mind. I knew that if these hateful weeds were to grow out of control, they could smother the good plants in my heart, such as peace, gratitude, love, and kindness—feelings I cherish and need in my life.

I found that the solution for a weed-ridden heart is to employ the Master Gardener, the Savior Jesus Christ. He has the power to heal any heart. He requires only one thing: we must offer our hearts fully to Him and let Him work in His own way.

His way, it turns out, requires us to forgive those who have hurt us. They don't need our forgiveness to be redeemed—they need the Lord's forgiveness; but still we are required to forgive them. I've learned that the reason we forgive people is not for their sakes—it's for ours. When we forgive, we are liberated from bondage and relieved of a heavy burden.

It has helped me in my struggle for peace to remember that when the Lord paid the price for our sins, He didn't suffer just for the sinners. He also suffered for those who are harmed by the sins of others. Those who are in pain can find relief. Those who are sad can find joy. Those who are upset can find peace. And those

who die can find eternal life.

I know that this life has periods of suffering, but I also know that suffering need not consume us. With time and effort, we can let go of our pain and once again see the goodness that life has to offer. I know that no matter how difficult forgiveness may seem (and it indeed can feel like an almost impossible task), doors will open, and strength and guidance will be given to us as we seek to follow God's will and allow Him into our hearts.

We don't have to travel the road of forgiveness alone. The Lord is ready to help us. By submitting to His will, we can feel the heavenly peace that comes from forgiving. ■

Name withheld, Idaho, USA

Additional Resources

For more on this topic, please see the following articles:

- Thomas S. Monson, "The Peril of Hidden Wedges," *Ensign* and *Liahona*, July 2007, 4–9.
- Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Point of Safe Return," *Ensign* and *Liahona*, May 2007, 99–101.
- Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Best Is Yet to Be," *Ensign*, Jan. 2010, 22–27; *Liahona*, Jan. 2010, 16–21.
- David A. Bednar, "And Nothing Shall Offend Them," *Ensign* and *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 89–92.
- Gordon B. Hinckley, "Forgiveness," *Ensign* and *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 81–84.
- Gordon B. Hinckley, "Of You It Is Required to Forgive," *Ensign*, Jun. 1991, 2–5; *Tambuli*, Nov. 1991, 2–7.
- "Forgiveness," *True to the Faith* (2004), 70–72.



Everybody Knows Bleck

By Adam C. Olson

Church Magazines

For Honoura “Bleck” Bonnet, basketball was everything. By age 15, Bleck was a rising star in French Polynesia—one of the best players playing for one of the best teams in the top adult division in the country. Though his nickname was a misspelling of the English word *black*, there was no mistaking his talent.

But he wanted more. He wanted to play professionally in Europe. And more than anything, he wanted to win a gold medal at the South Pacific Games.

Honoura “Bleck” and Myranda Bonnet have long been involved in basketball in Tahiti.

The only obstacle that seemed to stand in his way was the Church.

A Man on a Mission

Though the team Bleck played for at the time was Church sponsored, Bleck had little interest in the Church or the prophet’s call for every worthy and able young man to serve a mission.

He had already told his bishop he wouldn’t be going on a mission. He didn’t see how he could play professionally if he gave up two years.

What’s more, the South Pacific Games—held every four years—would take place during his mission, and the Tahiti Basketball Federation was interested in having him play for the national team. He would finally have an opportunity to put an end to those words his father said every time Bleck started thinking too highly of himself: “Everybody knows Bleck, but he doesn’t have a gold.”

Bleck’s father, Jean-Baptiste, meant those words good-naturedly. But they drove Bleck crazy. They were a reminder that even though basketball fans throughout Tahiti knew of him, he didn’t have a medal from the games. His father had won a gold medal with the men’s team during the first South Pacific Games.





Bleck's love for basketball has been both a test and a blessing.



“Happiness comes from living the way the Lord wants you to live.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Preparation Brings Blessings,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2010, 67.

It was Bleck’s mission to put those words to rest. He didn’t have time for any other mission.

A Change of Mind, a Change of Heart

Regardless of his feelings about a mission, Bleck still participated in Church activities. At a Church dance when he was 16, Bleck mustered up the courage to ask Myranda Mariteragi to dance. Myranda was a good basketball player too—with dreams of winning her own gold medal. Her father was also on that original medal-winning team.

Seconds after he asked her, the song ended. So they danced during the next song, which turned out to be the last of the evening. By then Bleck didn’t want the dance to end.

Bleck hadn’t planned on marrying in the temple or even marrying a member for that matter. But that began to change as he got to know Myranda better over the next two years. At her home one day, something she had made in Young Women caught his attention. It read, “I will marry in the temple.”

Bleck’s interest in Myranda and her firm commitment to temple marriage were enough to make him reconsider his plans. He decided to start taking the Church seriously. His decisions led to actions that allowed the Holy Ghost to work in his life.

The Decision

One of those decisions was to prepare to receive a patriarchal blessing at age 18. When the patriarch stated in the blessing that Bleck would serve a mission and marry in the temple, he felt the Spirit. “I knew that’s what God wanted me to do,” he says.

Though the national team looked like it had a chance to medal, Bleck decided with his family’s support that he would put what God wanted ahead of what he wanted. The decision wasn’t easy. The pressure to play was great. And he quickly learned that his resolve to submit to God’s will would be tested more than once.

After he had served as a missionary in Tahiti for a year, the basketball federation asked if he could return to the team for just one month to participate in the games.

Bleck’s mission president, concerned about the effect the experience would have on Bleck’s ability to return and serve, felt inspired to tell him, “You can leave if you want, but you can’t come back.”

Bleck wanted that medal, but he no longer wanted it more than anything else. His mission had been amazing. He wasn’t willing to give up his last year, even for basketball.

Bleck stayed.

The team won gold.

Different Circumstances, Same Decision

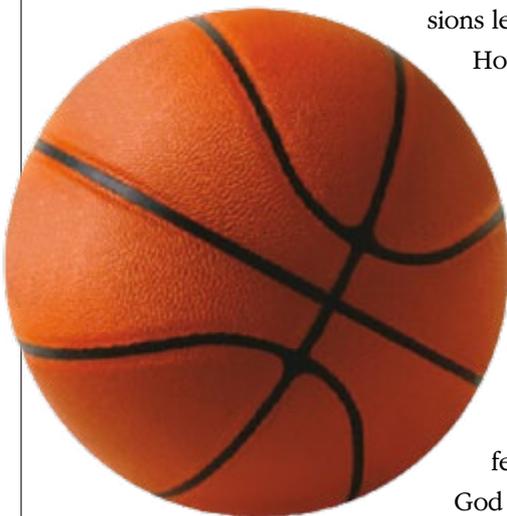
After Bleck honorably completed his mission, he married Myranda in the Papeete Tahiti Temple, and they began a family. He also resumed playing for the national team.

Myranda was playing point guard on the women’s national team and preparing for the South Pacific Games herself.

However, as the games approached, the couple began to feel strongly that they should have a second child.

With the upcoming games less than a year away, it would have been easy to put off another baby long enough for Myranda to play. The women’s team had a good chance of medaling.

But the couple had learned from experience that submitting their wills to God





brought greater blessings than anything they could hope for from following their own desires. After careful study and prayer, they decided to put their family first.

In 1999, while Myranda was eight months pregnant, the women's team won gold.

Everybody Knows Bleck

Bleck and Myranda have been able to play basketball at the highest levels in French Polynesia over the past decade—winning national league championships and tournament cups and playing for the national team during the 2003 and 2007 games.

At the 2011 games, both participated, only this time Bleck was there as coach of the men's team. While Myranda and the women's team won the gold medal, the men's team earned bronze, again falling short of Bleck's dream of gold.

Bleck sometimes wonders what his life might have been like if he had done what

he wanted instead of what God wanted.

"I'd probably have a gold medal," he says. "Maybe I would have played professionally, maybe not."

But the couple doesn't regret the decisions they've made. They're not sure how they could be happier.

"I married in the temple," Bleck says. "I have a great wife, four beautiful children, and I'm still in the Church. Basketball alone couldn't give me any of that. Those are blessings that have come as a result of putting the Lord first."

Putting the Lord first hasn't put his father's teasing to rest, but it has given those words new meaning. A few years ago when the federation considered scheduling league games on Sundays, the club presidents met to discuss it. Someone asked, "Did you ask Bleck?"

The proposal was dropped.

Because Bleck has put the Lord first, not only does everybody know Bleck—they know what he believes. ■

For Bleck and Myranda, success in their sport has taken a backseat to success in their family.

Rise Up, Ye Saints, Rejoice!

Joyfully ♩ = 108-120

Words by Larry Hiller
Music by George J. Elvey

1. Rise up, ye Saints, re - joice! And let your hearts take wing! Add
2. Rise up and praise the Son Who light and hope does give. Our
3. Ye who have suf - fered loss, Shake off de - spair and gloom. Look
4. Rise up, all ye who mourn And lay a - side your pain. For

to the heav'n - ly choir your voice As all cre - a - tion sings. The
Sav - ior, the A - ton - ing One, Has died that we might live. Yea,
up and see the va - cant cross, Be - hold the emp - ty tomb. Yea,
Christ has all our sor - rows borne That we may smile a - gain. Our

long - a - wait - ed day Has dawned o'er all the earth. And
Christ did come to save, To break the chains of sin, To
Christ has con - quered death, And all shall be re - stored. Our
tears He'll gent - ly dry, As we be - hold His face. We'll

death and sor - row now give way To glo - ri - ous re - birth.
con - quer sor - row and the grave, And new life ush - er in.
loved ones shall a - gain draw breath, Through Je - sus Christ, our Lord.
bid all mor - tal cares good - bye And glo - ry in His grace.

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BLUEBERRIES AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

A few years ago our family moved from a fast-paced, congested metropolitan area to a small, rural property outside a quiet little village. Nearby was an abandoned blueberry farm, and through friends of the owner, we obtained permission to pick all the blueberries we wanted.

Several mornings each week that summer we piled into the car with buckets and bags and spent a delightful, delicious hour gathering

blueberries. One morning our youngest son, Hyrum, seemed reluctant to accompany us. He was sure we had picked every blueberry and that it would be a waste of time to go again. How surprised he was to find as many blueberries as ever. There were clusters in places he had overlooked, and some of the juiciest berries were growing on branches he was sure he had explored earlier.

At this same time, ward youth

leaders challenged our teenagers to read the entire Book of Mormon before school started that August. Our children brought the challenge home, and our family committed to join them in their efforts.

No sooner had we finished the Book of Mormon when our August 2005 *Ensign* arrived, with the challenge of President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) to read the entire Book of Mormon by the end

Hyrum was sure we had picked every blueberry and that it would be a waste of time to go again to the blueberry farm.



of the year. Hyrum and his brother Joseph were thrilled—to think that we had already obeyed the prophet! Then their older siblings, Seth and Bethany, reminded them that President Hinckley had asked us to read it again, regardless of how many times we had already done so.

“But why?” the boys asked. “We have read every word, and what else is there to learn besides what we have already read?”

After a few moments of silence, somebody mentioned the blueberries. “Remember when we thought we had picked every blueberry? But when we went back, there were always more blueberries—always! No matter how many times we went, no matter how recently, there were always blueberries by the bunches.”

We quickly recognized the connection. Like the nearby farm and its abundant supply of delicious blueberries, the Book of Mormon is a constant source of spiritual nourishment with new truths to be discovered. So we began once again to read the Book of Mormon.

As I accepted the prophet’s challenge, I read things in the Book of Mormon that I had read many times before, but I saw them in a different way or understood them as they applied to new circumstances or challenges. I know that each time we sincerely read the Book of Mormon, we can receive new insights and come closer to the Savior. ■

Suellen S. Weiler, Georgia, USA

I FELT I SHOULD COME

Two and a half years after my baptism in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the words of one of the elders who had taught me still resounded in my ears: “I know you’re a missionary.” I also remembered the powerful answer I had when I prayed to know if the feeling that had pierced my heart was really true. At age 20, I knew I should be preparing for a mission.

But how could I be a missionary? I was nothing like the angelic young men who had taught me the gospel. And how could I leave my job? Where would I live after I came home? It had been very difficult to find the place I had, even though it was just a little room at the back of someone’s house.

On my way home one evening, these feelings and doubts again came to mind. When I got home, I tried to make a decision. I decided to kneel down and offer a prayer for help. As I did so, I had a strong impression that I should go see Leandro, a friend who had been a great strength to me in sad times.

But the thought of waking him up at midnight caused me to resist the idea. I knew he got up early to go to work, and I didn’t dare knock on his door at that hour. I struggled against the thought but continued to feel the impression to go see him. Still, I chose to ignore it.

Instead, I decided to walk around the block for some fresh air. When I



As I entered, I saw Leandro sitting in my room. The Spirit fell upon me, and I felt breathless.

remembered that I had left my door open, however, I started back home. As I entered, I saw Leandro sitting in my room. The Spirit fell upon me, and I felt breathless. With a voice somewhat choking with emotion, I asked him, “What are you doing here?”

“I don’t know,” he said. “I just felt I should come to see you.”

I told him about the doubts I’d been having about a mission. He bore his testimony to me and encouraged me. Then he helped me fill out my mission papers, which I took to my bishop the next morning. Two months later I received my call to the Argentina Salta Mission.

I know my friend was an instrument in the hands of the Lord that night, and with all my heart I know that Heavenly Father listens to and answers prayers that are uttered with a sincere heart and with real intent. ■

Aldo Fabio Moracca, Nevada, USA

I'M GOING TO DIE!

As a nurse of a busy post-surgical recovery unit, I received a call one day regarding a patient named Bill who had just undergone surgery. He should have gone to a critical care unit but was diverted to me because that unit was full.

The patient soon arrived with his family. I was relieved to see that he was alert, oriented, and in no apparent distress.

After taking his vital signs and familiarizing him and his family with his room, I stepped into the hall to make a note on his chart. Just as my pen hit the paper, I heard a voice say, "Go back into his room." I stopped

writing and looked behind me. There was no one there. I thought I had imagined the voice, when suddenly I heard it a second time—only louder.

I ran back into Bill's room to discover that his neck had doubled in size, and he was having trouble breathing. Thinking that his carotid artery had been perforated, I applied direct pressure to his neck with my right hand while using my left hand to call the neuroradiologist who had performed his procedure. The surgeon said he would send a team up to get Bill as soon as possible. "And do not remove your hand!" he said.

As I continued applying pressure, I noticed a familiar Church book near Bill's bed. "You're a member of the Church?" I asked.

The surgeon said he would send a team up to get Bill as soon as possible. "And do not remove your hand!" he said.

He tried to nod and then told me he was an ordinance worker in the Atlanta Georgia Temple. He then blinked back tears and said, "I'm going to die!"

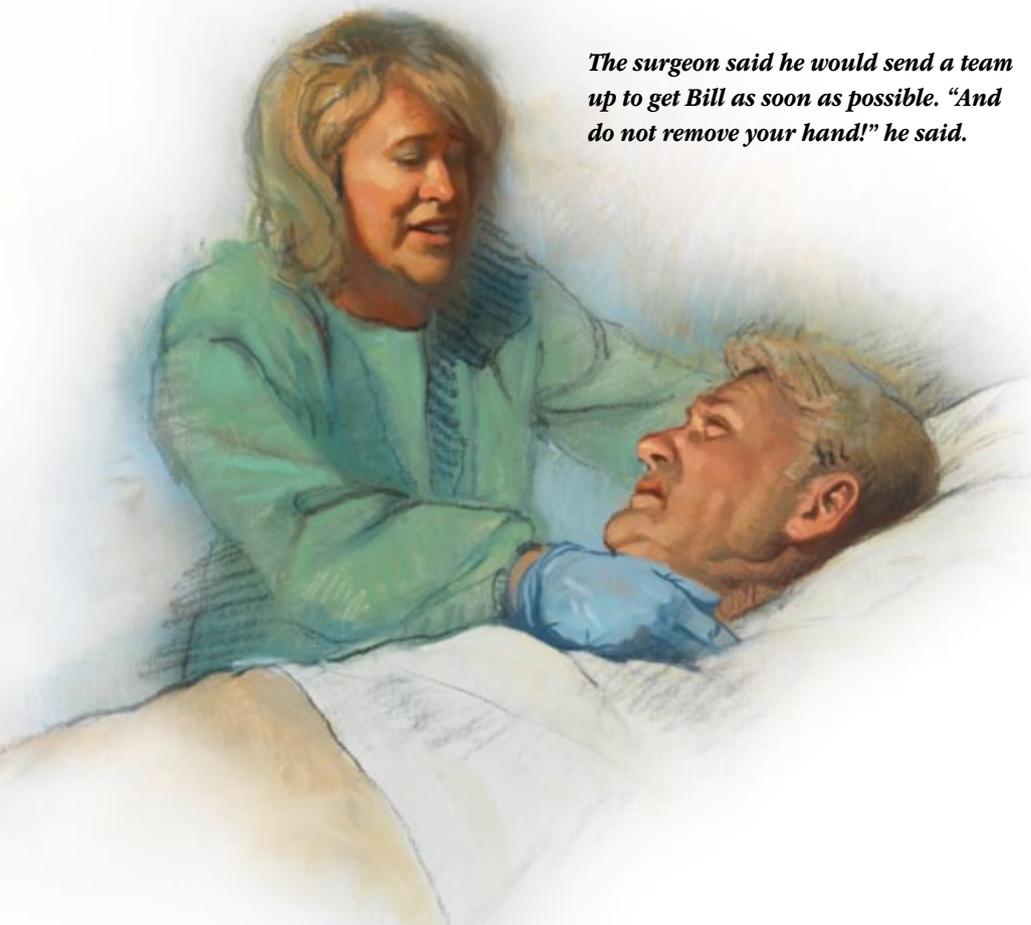
I told him he was not going to die, stating adamantly, "I'm getting married in the Atlanta Temple next month, and you are going to be there." The surgical team then arrived and whisked Bill away.

In the excitement of my wedding plans over the next month, I nearly forgot about Bill, who it turns out had had a reaction to medication. But as the matron led me to the sealing room on my wedding day, I saw a familiar face: Bill's wife, Georgia. When I told her I was about to be married, she went to find Bill. Moments before the ceremony began, the door opened and he entered. After weeks of headaches, nausea, and fatigue, Bill had felt well enough that day to travel to the temple, not realizing it was my wedding day.

Two years later my husband and I were called to be ordinance workers in the Nashville Tennessee Temple. When we arrived at the temple to be set apart, a gentleman held the door open for me and said, "Welcome to the Nashville Temple!" It was Brother Bill.

We served together for three years. Bill told everyone I had saved his life, but I knew that the Lord had saved him. In the process, He had taught me the importance of heeding promptings from the Spirit. ■

Ramona Ross, Tennessee, USA



MAYBE WE SHOULD PRAY

In the spring of 1975 my family and I were living among beautiful green farmland in the Rheinland-Pfalz area of West Germany. Driving home from church one rainy Sunday, we stopped to have a look at an automobile that had rolled onto its side in the wet roadbed at the edge of a forest. Inside the forest it was already dark because of the thick canopy created by the trees and the oncoming night.

After looking at the wrecked vehicle, we returned to our car and discovered it was stuck in the mud. I couldn't back up, but I could drive forward—into the forest. We had previously driven through the forest and found that many forest roads were interconnected and would eventually lead back out, so I decided to move forward into the blackness.

I quickly realized that I had made the wrong decision. The narrow, wet road was filled with deep ruts of mud and kept leading farther and farther into the dark forest. I tried to keep up speed, fearing that if we stopped, we would become mired. I saw a high spot just ahead that looked firm enough to sustain the weight of the car. My plan was to get the car out of the mud to give myself time to think. The car lunged up and out of the mud.

I turned off the car and climbed out. With the headlights off, I couldn't see a thing. I turned the headlights back on, grabbed our



I turned the headlights back on, grabbed our flashlight, and after looking the car over, decided that my best bet was to back into the forest.

flashlight, and after looking the car over, decided that my best bet was to back into the forest and then make a mad dash out the way we came.

I backed as far into the forest as possible, revved the engine a little, lunged back onto the road, and sank deep into the mud. Now we were really in trouble. Outside the car it was total darkness and silence. Inside the car my wife and I sat with three terrified children.

I asked my wife for any ideas. After a moment she said, "Maybe we should pray." The children calmed down almost immediately. I offered a humble but desperate prayer for help. As I prayed, a thought came clearly

into my mind: "Put on the tire chains."

Standing in 10 inches (25 cm) of mud in her Sunday dress, my sweet wife held the flashlight while I cleaned the rear tires with my bare hands and put the chains on. With faith and confidence, we prayed again and started the engine. Slowly we drove through the mud and eventually back onto the pavement.

In the excitement of being freed from the mud and the darkness, I almost forgot who had helped us out of the forest. Our five-year-old daughter reminded me when she said, "Daddy, Heavenly Father really does answer prayers, doesn't He?" ■

Scott Edgar, Utah, USA

News of the Church

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

Church Releases New Products for Youth, Children

By Heather Whittle Wrigley and Philip M. Volmar

Church News and Events

In recent months the Church has released several new products to help strengthen youth and children.

For the Strength of Youth

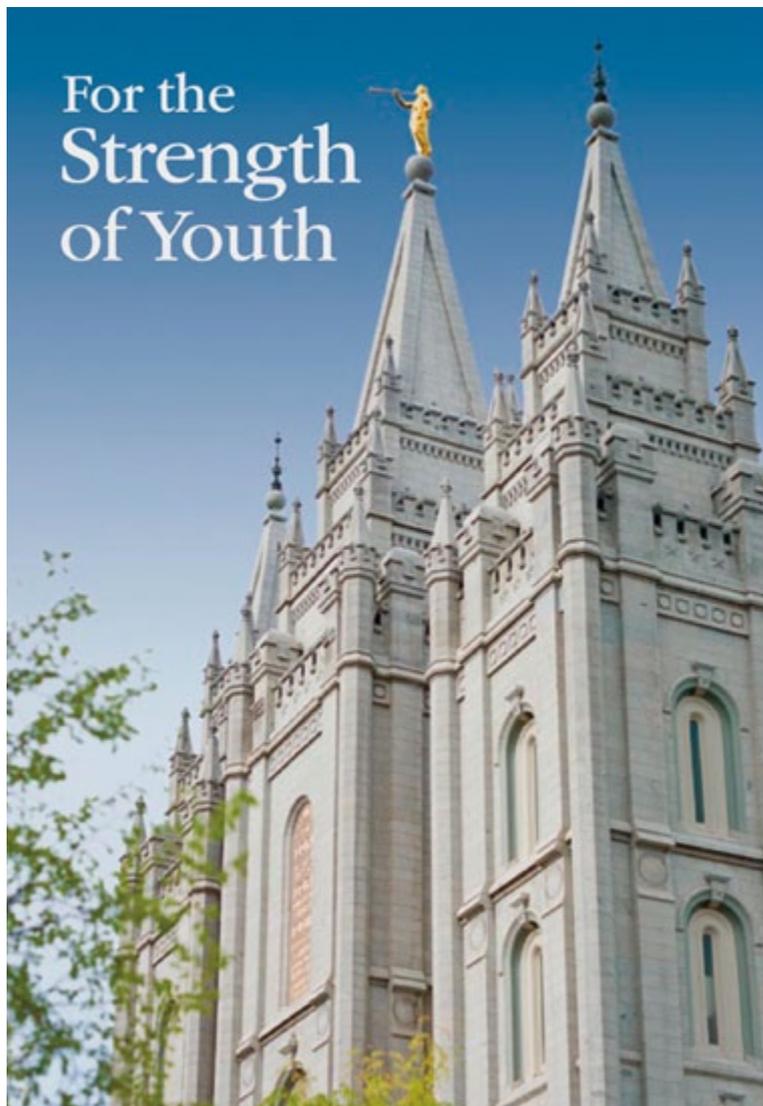
In December 2011 youth.lds.org launched a newly updated version of the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet that addresses issues and challenges youth face today that were not specifically addressed in the previous version of the booklet.

“The standards have not changed, but times have changed,” said Young Women general president Elaine S. Dalton, explaining the update. “*For the Strength of Youth* has been revised to address the issues youth face today—to teach them the doctrine behind the standards and the promised blessings of obedience.”

For the Strength of Youth was last updated in 2001. The revised pamphlet will contain the addition of current prophetic counsel in areas such as the wise use of technology, virtuous thoughts, dating, the importance of gender roles, and preparation for the future.

Other changes of note include:

- Additional emphasis on following the guidance of the Spirit, keeping covenants, and being worthy to attend the temple.
- A new standard entitled “Work and Self-Reliance” offering counsel on smart money management, frugality, industry, and becoming a contributor.
- The addition of emotional health to the section previously titled “Physical Health”—now called “Physical and Emotional Health”—encouraging youth to seek healthy solutions to problems.



A newly updated version of For the Strength of Youth is one of several new products released for the youth of the Church.

- Increased clarity and emphasis on doctrine in each section.
- The inclusion of questions to invite further pondering and discussion.

Hard copies of the revised pamphlet in English were mailed to Church units earlier this year. Priesthood leaders received a copy for each youth ages 12 to 18 and all priesthood and auxiliary leaders who work with youth.

Young Men general president David L. Beck emphasized the value of this resource for youth, parents, and leaders as they strive to live faithfully.

“It is our hope that these standards will be thoroughly studied in our homes and in Church classes, and that the principles taught in them will go down into the hearts of the youth of the Church,” he said.

Language versions of the revised pamphlet will follow both online and in print as they are completed.

Music Offerings on Youth.LDS.org Site

The music section of youth.lds.org is expanding its offerings of free, downloadable music with songs by more contemporary artists from past Especially for Youth (EFY) media.

Beginning in February and continuing over a period of several months, 30 newer songs are being released at the rate of one per week.

On average, youth spend more than 11 minutes per visit on the site, using the music player—which has the capability to skip, pause, and shuffle songs—as a radio to listen to clean, uplifting music.

Music can be organized by artist, song title, or collection. Current collections include general conference, seminary videos, and selections from the *Strength of Youth Media 2012*, a collection of video and music resources centered on the 2012 Mutual theme.

The music site is available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, and plans are in the works to provide more songs in Spanish and Portuguese. Currently, one song on the site—Jenny Phillips’s “Strong and Courageous”—is available in Spanish and Portuguese.

Children’s Lesson Helps Website

Parents and teachers now have an additional resource for helping them find material for teaching children: the new Children’s Lesson Helps website, available at <http://lds.org/children/resources>. It

contains links to *Friend* and *Liahona* content as well as other Church-approved media that can complement family home evening or Primary lessons. The website is available now in English and will eventually be offered in Spanish and Portuguese as well.

The site is organized into three sections:

- Resources for Primary lessons
- Resources by gospel topic
- Weekly thoughts and tips

Marissa Widdison, an assistant editor for the *Friend* who helped create the website, said that the new resource can help parents and teachers more easily locate stories and visual aids as well as tailor lessons to the needs of the children they are teaching.

Sister Widdison emphasized that the site is a “work in progress” and that more content will be added on a weekly and monthly basis. From the beginning, however, the website will be a help for those who nurture and teach children.

“The purpose of this site is to help children feel the Spirit,” Sister Widdison said. “We want to help parents and teachers find Church-approved, supplemental resources to help them reach out to the children in their lives.” ■



Added Focus on Ministering Strengthens Visiting Teaching

By **Melissa Merrill**

Church News and Events

While Visiting Teaching Messages have always focused on the teachings of the Savior Jesus Christ, beginning this month they will begin to teach about ministering as He would. This month's message, "Love, Watch Over, and Strengthen," (p. 7) is the first such message to teach these principles.

Visiting teaching can help all sisters follow a higher path of discipleship, said the Relief Society general presidency. They hope that visiting teachers will discuss these responsibilities with sisters they watch over or teach principles that will help sisters increase their faith, strengthen families, and give service.

Several resources have been

provided to help familiarize Relief Society leaders and sisters with the current guidelines for visiting teaching.

Church Magazines Article

The March 2012 *Liahona* and *Ensign* magazines included an article about visiting teaching as a vehicle for ministering to each other. "Through Relief Society [and visiting teaching], we practice being disciples of Christ," said Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president. "We learn what He would have us learn, we do what He would have us do, and we become what He would have us become" ("What Latter-day Saint Women Do Best: Stand Strong and Immovable," *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 109; quoted in "Visiting

Teaching—Understanding the Power of Ministering," *Ensign*, Mar. 2012, 29).

The article—which teaches about the power of ministering, the focus on ministering, and the goal of ministering as the Savior did—is followed by a chart outlining how recent changes have strengthened visiting teaching, with corresponding references from *Handbook 2: Administering the Church*.

Beginning this month, Visiting Teaching Messages will focus on teaching sisters about ministering as Jesus Christ would.

Daughters in My Kingdom, Chapter 7

Titled "Pure Religion": Watchcare and Ministering through Visiting Teaching," this chapter follows visiting teaching from its origins to its influence on families around the world today. It also includes helpful ideas for visiting teachers, including questions a sister might consider asking in order to give comfort, share gospel teaching, and provide meaningful service.

Handbook 2 and LDS.org

Section 9 of *Handbook 2* is all about Relief Society, with section 9.5 elaborating on the responsibilities of visiting teachers and giving instruction on organizing, adapting, and reporting visiting teaching.



IMAGE FROM LEADERSHIP TRAINING LIBRARY VIDEO

These points and others are outlined in detail on the updated **Visiting Teaching Training** page, found under “**Relief Society**” in the **Serving in the Church** section of **LDS.org**.

Leadership Training Library

This interactive online supplement to *Handbook 2* features short videos that teach core leadership principles. Viewers can find helpful content both on the right navigation (“Minister to Others,”) and the top navigation (“Relief Society”). The latter includes a content outline that directly corresponds with the content of *Handbook 2*.

Mormon Channel

Each month Mormon Channel programming expands the Visiting Teaching Message through quotes and insights from General Authorities. Even though January 2012’s Visiting Teaching Message, “Watchcare and Ministering through Visiting Teaching,” preceded the official change to the Visiting Teaching Messages, it teaches principles that are central to ministering. To listen to this episode, find **Visiting Teaching Message, Episode 14**, at **mormonchannel.org**, and watch for forthcoming episodes at the same location.

Read more of these stories—and many others—at news.lds.org. ■

New biographies of the current prophets and apostles on prophets.lds.org show the hand of the Lord in preparing them to serve.



Prophets.LDS.org Features New Biographies of Living Apostles

By Heather Whittle Wrigley

Church News and Events

New biographies of members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have been published on prophets.lds.org, under the section titled “Meet today’s prophets and apostles.”

The first biography to be featured on Prophets and Apostles Speak Today was that of President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. One biography has been added each week since, in order of the Apostles’ seniority, and will continue to be added until the full quorum is represented.

Biographies of the members of the First Presidency—President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor Henry B. Eyring, and Second Counselor Dieter F. Uchtdorf—have been available on the site since October 2011.

“Learning about their childhood, student years, family life, and careers prior to their calls to the apostleship will help us see the hand of the Lord in their lives and will serve as another witness of how He calls

and magnifies ordinary men and women to serve in the kingdom,” said Elder Paul B. Pieper of the Seventy, who serves as the Executive Director of the Curriculum Department.

The biographies will include information and stories of each leader’s life, but most of all, they will show how the Lord prepared them to serve. Accompanying photographs—some of which have not been widely published—will highlight their individual ministries, families, and childhood.

Elder Pieper emphasized that these biographies will provide a more personal resource for studying and appreciating the lives of the Brethren and their lifetimes of consecration and service.

“It will be valuable to all who want to know more about living prophets,” he said. “These biographies will help us to feel that prophets and apostles live and speak today and that God continues to raise up chosen servants to lead His Church.”

The biography section will remain a permanent part of prophets.lds.org. As new apostles and prophets are called, new biographies will replace the old ones. The site will be a wonderful resource to use in family home evenings, classes, and personal study, Elder Pieper said. ■

President Packer Teaches at Seminary Centennial

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints celebrated a century of seminary on Sunday, January 22, 2012, with a special program broadcast featuring remarks from President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Watch for text from President Packer’s talk to be published in Church magazines later this year, or view or read the talk online at seminary.lds.org. You can also find a report on the program at news.lds.org. ■

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM SCHONEMAN



ASL seminary instructor Emmalee Christensen teaches multiple students through videophone technology.

ASL Seminary Classes Blossom at Site of Original Seminary

Today in Salt Lake City, at the same site where seminary was first offered in 1912, Nathan Van De Graaff teaches seminary in American Sign Language (ASL) to students who are participating from their homes across the United States.

The class is possible because of videophone technology, similar to Web cameras, which allows the Deaf to see and talk with each other using ASL. It allows a teacher to teach several students at once and makes it possible for students to see and sign to their classmates.

For more information about ASL seminary, visit news.lds.org and search using the keywords “ASL seminary” or visit seminary.lds.org/asl.

Relief Society Sisters Invited to Serve to Mark Anniversary

To honor the 170th anniversary of the organization of the Relief Society on March 17, 2012, members of the organization are invited to participate in activities throughout the year that engage them in the work of Relief Society.

This anniversary, said the Relief Society general presidency, presents a natural opportunity for sisters to reinforce in their lives the purposes taught in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society*.

Suggestions for activity ideas and additional information are available in the “Relief Society” section of **Serving in the Church** on **LDS.org**.

New Features Available on Gospel Library App

In an effort to provide additional Church content to more people around the world, the free Gospel Library app is now available in more than a dozen languages across five platforms.

At mobile.LDS.org, members can download the app for Android, Apple, BlackBerry, webOS, and Windows Mobile, gaining instant access to the scriptures, general conference addresses, Sunday manuals, and other Church materials on their mobile devices.

Read more of these stories—and many others—at news.lds.org. ■

**By Bishop
Richard C. Edgley**
First Counselor in the
Presiding Bishopric



HOPE IN THE ATONEMENT

I have met people who have lost all hope. Repentance, they feel, is beyond their reach and forgiveness outside their grasp. Such do not understand the cleansing power of the Atonement. Or, if they do understand, they have not internalized the meaning of Jesus Christ's suffering in Gethsemane and on the cross. For any of us to give up hope for the purifying of our lives is to disavow the depth, power, and extent of His suffering in our behalf.

A few years ago I had the assignment while at a stake conference to interview a 21-year-old man to determine his worthiness to serve a mission. Now, General Authorities do not usually interview potential missionaries. So this was unusual. As I read some background regarding the reasons for my interview, my heart ached. This boy had committed serious transgressions. I wondered why I would be asked to visit one with such a background, concluding it would be most unusual for me to recommend him for approval as a missionary.

After the Saturday evening session of conference, I retired to the stake president's office for the interview. As I was waiting, a handsome young man with a wonderful countenance approached. I wondered how I could excuse myself because it was apparent he wanted to talk and I had an appointment with a very troubled young man. Then he introduced himself. He was the young man I was there for.

Hope must be based not only upon knowledge and testimony but also upon a personalization of the Atonement.

In the privacy of the office, I asked just one question: "Why am I interviewing you?"

He recounted his past. When he was through, he began to explain the steps and the personal suffering he had gone through. He talked about the Atonement—the infinite power of the Atonement. He bore his testimony and expressed his love for the Savior. And then he said, "I believe the Savior's personal suffering in Gethsemane and His sacrifice upon the cross were powerful enough to rescue even a man like me."

Moved by his humility and by the Spirit, I said, "I am going to recommend you to serve as a representative of Jesus Christ." And then I said, "I am going to ask only one thing of you. I want you to be the best missionary in the entire Church. That is all."

Three or four months later, Sister Edgley and I were speaking at a missionary training center. At the conclusion of the devotional, I was visiting with missionaries when I saw a young man with a familiar face.

He asked, "Do you remember me?"

Somewhat embarrassed, I said, "I'm sorry. I know I should, but I just don't remember."

Then he said, "Let me tell you who I am. I am the best missionary in the missionary training center." And I believed him.

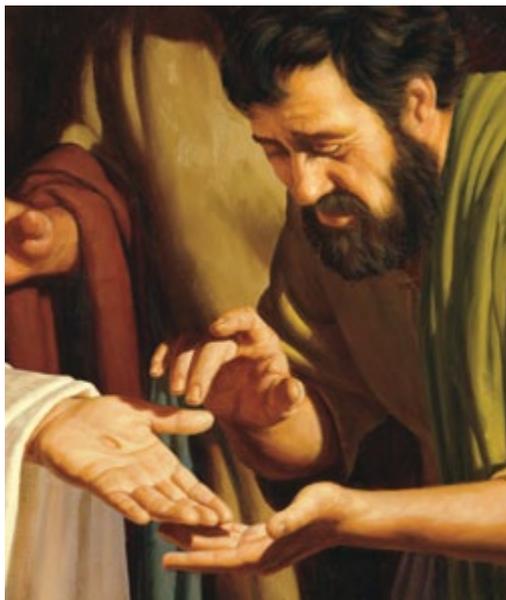
This young man's hope was based not only upon a knowledge and testimony of the Atonement but also upon a personalization of this gift. He understood that it was for him personally! He knew the power of the Atonement and the hope it gives when all might seem lost or hopeless. ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University on November 4, 2008. For the full text visit speeches.byu.edu.



The Resurrected Christ at the Sea of Tiberias, by David Lindsay

Simon Peter and some of the other disciples went fishing, but “that night they caught nothing. “But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.” After inquiring whether they had any meat, “he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes” (John 21:3–6).



“You and I in a moment of weakness may cry out, ‘No one understands. No one knows,’” writes Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “No human being, perhaps, knows. But the Son of God perfectly knows and understands, for He felt and bore our burdens before we ever did. And because He paid the ultimate price and bore that burden, He has perfect empathy and can extend to us His arm of mercy in so many phases of our life. He can reach out, touch, succor—literally run to us—and strengthen us.” See “The Atonement and the Journey of Mortality,” page 40.