

Ensign

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*"Thus saith the Lord, I will liken thee, O house of Israel, like unto a tame olive tree, which a man took and nourished in his vineyard. . . .
". . . And blessed art thou; for because ye have been diligent in laboring with me in my vineyard, and have kept my commandments, and have brought unto me again the natural fruit, that my vineyard is no more corrupted, and the bad is cast away, behold ye shall have joy with me because of the fruit of my vineyard."*

Jacob 5:3, 75

Olives, extensively cultivated throughout Mediterranean countries, have a long scriptural history, from the dove bringing an olive leaf to Noah, to the Savior teaching on the Mount of Olives, to Jacob's allegory of the olive trees.

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Ensign

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Family Home Evening Ideas

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



“Recognizing Satan’s Counterfeits,”
page 12: Consider reading together the first
two paragraphs of the article. The author
was able to identify the counterfeit money by
comparing it with the real thing and focusing on
the differences. Show a
real dollar and a piece of
play money, and ask your
family which is genuine.
Ask them how they knew
which money was real
and talk about some of
the differences between
the two bills. Brainstorm
some of the counterfeits
Satan tries to put in our
lives and discuss how to
avoid being fooled by
them (see pages 13–14
for some ideas).

ONLINE LESSON

The Church has prepared an
online family home evening
lesson entitled “What Should
I Do If I See Pornography?”
The lesson offers several
resources (including scriptures
and teachings from Church
leaders) that can help parents
have an informed, direct,
and helpful conversation
about pornography with their
families. Go to [lds.org/go/
lessonE416](http://lds.org/go/lessonE416).

“Watchmen on the Tower,” page 28:
Have your family assemble a simple puzzle
together. Show only one family member the
puzzle’s box with the
picture of the completed
puzzle. Explain that this
person will represent the
prophet. As the family
puts together the puzzle,
allow the “prophet” to
give instructions and
describe what the puzzle
should look like. Point
out that a prophet, like
a watchman on a tower,
can see things the rest
of us cannot see. Read
together page 29 to
discover other ways that
prophets are like watch-
men. Consider making
a list of warnings our
modern prophets have
given us.

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By President
Henry B. Eyring

First Counselor in
the First Presidency

Prophecy AND PERSONAL REVELATION

The true Church of Jesus Christ has been restored and is on the earth today. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has always been led by living prophets and apostles, who receive constant guidance from heaven.

That divine pattern was also true anciently. We learn in the Bible: “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7).

God has again spoken in our time, through the Prophet Joseph Smith. He revealed through the Prophet Joseph the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fulness. He restored His holy priesthood with its keys and all the rights, powers, and functions of the sacred power of the priesthood.

In our day, living prophets and apostles are authorized to speak, teach, and direct with authority from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The Savior said to the Prophet, “What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

In general conference twice a year, we are blessed with the opportunity to hear the word of the Lord for us from His servants. That is a privilege beyond price. But the value

of that opportunity depends on whether we receive the words under the influence of the same Spirit by which they were given to those servants (see D&C 50:19–22). Just as they receive guidance from heaven, so must we. And that requires of us the same spiritual effort.

“Do Your Homework”

Years ago one of the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles asked me to read a conference talk he was preparing for general conference. I was a junior member of the quorum. I was honored by his confidence that I might help him find the words the Lord would have him speak. He said to me with a smile, “Oh, this is the 22nd draft of the talk.”

I remembered the counsel a loving and kind President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) had given me earlier with great emphasis: “Hal, if you want to get revelation, do your homework.”

I read, pondered, and prayed over that 22nd draft. I studied as best I could under the influence of the Holy Ghost. By the time that quorum member gave his talk, I had done my homework. I am not sure I helped, but I know that I was changed when I heard the talk given. Messages came to me far beyond the words that I had



read and that he spoke. The words had greater meaning than the ones I had read in the draft. And the message seemed to be meant for me, fitted to my needs.

The servants of God fast and pray to receive the message He has for them to give to those who need revelation and inspiration. What I learned from that experience, and many others like it, is that to gain the great benefits available from hearing living prophets and apostles,

we must pay the price ourselves of receiving revelation.

The Lord loves every person who might hear His message, and He knows the hearts and circumstances of each one. He knows what correction, what encouragement, and what gospel truth will best help each person to choose his or her way along the path to eternal life.

We who listen to and watch the messages of general conference sometimes think afterward, “What do

I remember best?” The Lord’s hope for each of us is that our answer will be: “I will never forget the moments when I felt the voice of the Spirit in my mind and heart telling me what I could do to please my Heavenly Father and the Savior.”

We can receive that personal revelation when we hear prophets and apostles and as we work in faith to receive it, just as President Lee said we could. I know that is true from experience and by the witness of the Spirit. ■

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

Consider reading aloud President Eyring’s story about studying the draft of his quorum member’s conference talk. You might ask, “What is the price of receiving revelation?” After your discussion, you could

invite those you visit to ponder and implement a plan to receive the upcoming general conference messages “under the influence of the same Spirit by which they were given to [God’s] servants.”

YOUTH

Heavenly Father Spoke to Me through a Conference Talk

By Anne Laleska Alves de Souza

I was having doubts about what I should study at the university. Most people spoke badly about the course that I wanted to take, so I prayed to the Lord to see if He agreed with my decision.

My answer came the following day while I was reading a general conference talk in the *Liahona*. I felt as though Heavenly Father was telling me He couldn't choose for me—this was a decision that I would have to make alone. I knew that no matter what I chose, I would have to work hard to be successful.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION POSED BY MODEL

I know that my prayer was answered. The confirmation of the Holy Ghost helped me make a decision. I've learned to give my best efforts and know that Heavenly Father will help me.

The author lives in Sergipe, Brazil.

CHILDREN

Follow the Prophet

Prophets and apostles speak for Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. They teach us how to follow Jesus. Follow the paths to get to some of the things the prophet and apostles have asked us to do.

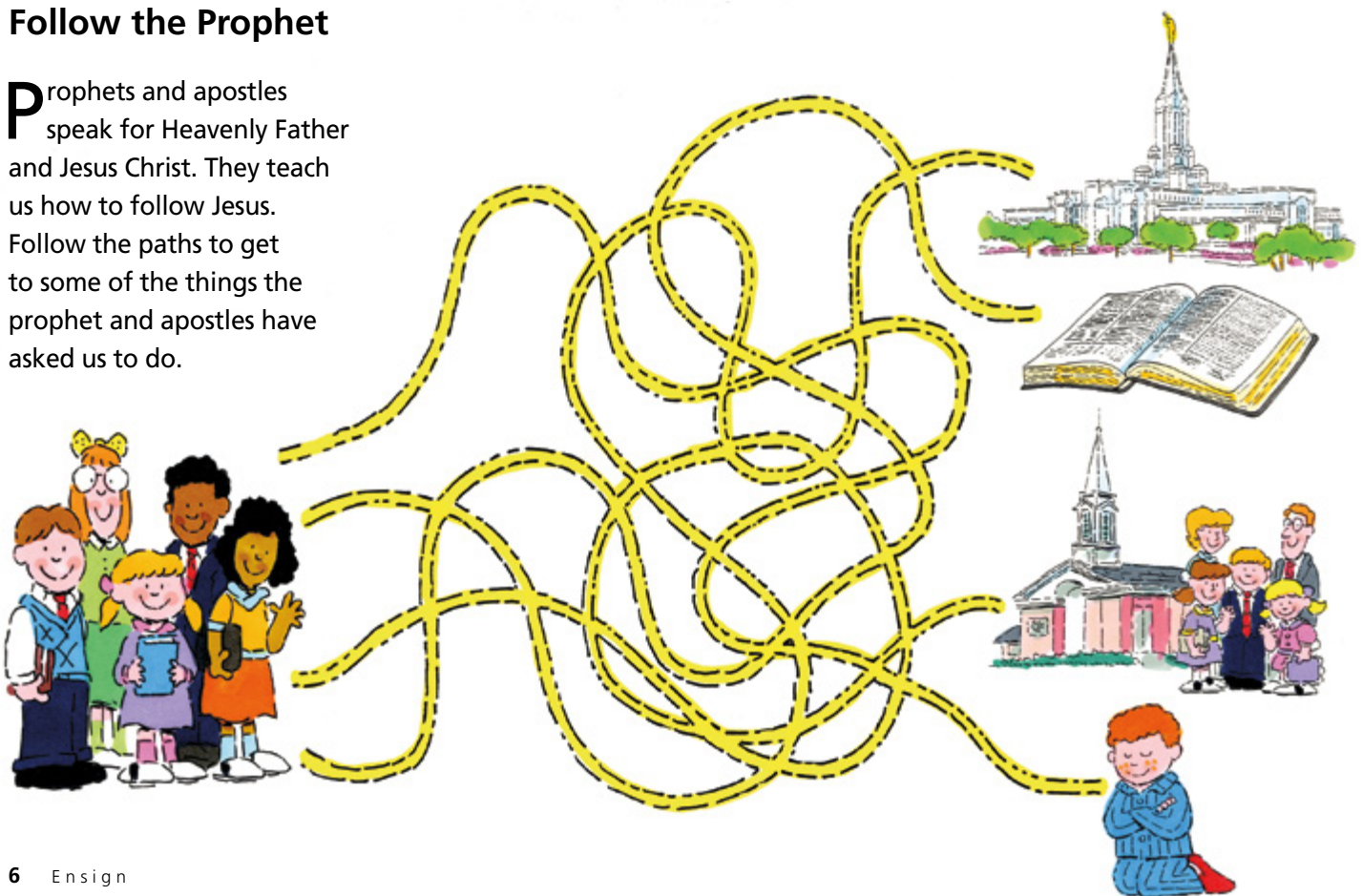


ILLUSTRATION BY VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY

Prayerfully study this material and seek to know what to share. How will understanding “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” increase your faith in God and bless those you watch over through visiting teaching? For more information, go to reliefsociety.lds.org.

Daughters of Our Eternal Father

The scriptures teach us that “we are the offspring of God” (Acts 17:29). God referred to Emma Smith, wife of the Prophet Joseph Smith, as “my daughter” (D&C 25:1). The family proclamation teaches us that we are each “a beloved spirit . . . daughter of heavenly parents.”¹

“In [the premortal] realm, we learned about our eternal female identity,” said Carole M. Stephens, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency.

“Our mortal journey to earth did not change those truths.”²

“Your Father in Heaven knows your name and knows your circumstance,” said Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “He hears your prayers. He knows your hopes and dreams, including your fears and frustrations.”³

“We each belong to and are needed in the family of God,” said Sister Stephens. “Earthly families all look different. And while we do the best



we can to create strong traditional families, membership in the family of God is not contingent upon any kind of status—marital status, parental status, financial status, social status, or even the kind of status we post on social media.”⁴

Additional Scriptures

Jeremiah 1:5; Romans 8:16; Doctrine and Covenants 76:23–24

NOTES

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
2. Carole M. Stephens, “The Family Is of God,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 11.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, “To Young Women,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 28.
4. Carole M. Stephens, “The Family Is of God,” 11.
5. See Gospel Topics, “First Vision Accounts,” topics.lds.org.

Faith, Family, Relief



From Our History

In his account of the First Vision,⁵ the Prophet Joseph Smith verifies many truths—including that our Heavenly Father knows our name.

Young Joseph struggled to know which church to join and found guidance in James 1:5. Joseph concluded he would ask God.

One spring morning in 1820, he went to the woods to pray but was immediately seized upon by some dark power. Of this he wrote:

“Just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

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

Consider This

How does knowing you are a daughter of God affect your decisions?

A WORN, MARKED CONFERENCE *ENSIGN*

By Cynthia Goodwill

When I saw the marked-up pages of my roommate's Ensign, I realized that listening to conference was not enough. I felt the Spirit say, "You can do better."

As a returned missionary from the Philippines Olongapo Mission, I was finishing up my degree at Brigham Young University and really enjoying life. There were six women in our off-campus apartment, and we were all returned missionaries. We all had classes, jobs, and social scenes to manage, but we were all solidly grounded in the gospel, and the spirit in the apartment was sweet to us all.

One of my roommates, Courtney, was especially busy and rarely had time for watching TV or attending any social events, but she always had a kind word for each of us and helped maintain the apartment. We all respected her.

One day, I noticed Courtney carrying something as she headed out the door. It was her general conference edition of the *Ensign*. It was the most tattered and used-looking conference

issue I had ever seen. I asked her if I could look at it later because I was curious as to what she saw in these talks that I hadn't already seen.

When I later browsed through her magazine, it seemed to me that she had underlined every word in every talk. There were comments in the margins. There were lines drawn and pictures here and there. The edges were very worn. She had obviously spent considerable time reading, re-reading, and marking up her *Ensign*. I was impressed. I loved general conference and I loved listening to the talks, but I had never put that much time and effort into studying my general conference *Ensign* issue. When I saw the worn, marked pages of Courtney's magazine, I realized that listening was not enough. I felt the Spirit say, "You can do better." I agreed.

Finding Answers by Study

As time went on, I eventually married and no longer lived near Courtney, but every time general conference came around I would remember her marked-up *Ensign* and the feeling that I could do better. However, every conference something seemed to get in the way of my acting on that prompting. Then the time came that I decided nothing would get in my way. I grabbed the conference *Ensign* when it came in the mail and started reading it cover to cover.

As I underlined passages and wrote comments in the margins, I experienced each talk in a deeper way than I had when I had just listened. The Spirit spoke to me as I read, and I wrote down what the Spirit told me to do and acted on it. It was the most wonderful general conference I have ever

DO THE INSTRUCTIONS MAKE SENSE?

By Ruth Silver

A bicycle trip convinced me of the need to constantly check the Lord's road map of life.

Several years ago I went on a bicycle trip in France with my sister, sister-in-law, and her daughter. Each morning we were given three pages of detailed instructions that, if followed exactly, would guide us to our destination of the day. While we were cycling through vineyards, the directives might instruct us to “go 165 feet (50 m) north, then turn left and go 330 feet (100 m).” More often, the instructions gave signs and street names.

One morning we cycled down an attractive road but soon realized that our instructions no longer fit the territory. Rapidly becoming lost, we decided to return to where we last knew we were on the right track to see if we could sort out where to go.

Sure enough, when we got there, we found a small road sign, noted in our instructions, that we had failed to see. Soon we were on our way again, matching our progress with

the instructions, which again were making perfect sense.

The experience served as a metaphor that answered a puzzling question I'd had: Why, when someone has had a testimony of the gospel, would he or she ever fall away? It became clear to me that when we take a wrong turn (sin) or fail to follow God's commandments, the instructions (the word of God) no longer make sense. The map, as it were, no longer fits the territory we're in. If we haven't strayed too far, we may recognize that the fault is ours and that we need to return (repent), or recommit to live as God has commanded, to where we knew we were following the route correctly.

Too often when the instructions no longer fit where we are, we question the instructions. Instead of turning back, we blame the instructions and then eschew them altogether. Finally, having given up the vision of our

destination, we become lost, wandering in paths that may seem, temporarily, very attractive but will not get us where we need to go.

Every day we have the opportunity to study the scriptures. And every six months, we are treated to a general conference of the Church. Are not these times when we can check our road map and make sure we are where we need to be? Once, as I listened to conference, I felt that, imperfect as we are, we can know we're on the right road if these instructions are making perfect sense to us.

Even as following right directions will get us to destinations in this life, studying the scriptures and heeding the counsel of living prophets allow us to check our course and adjust it if need be so that, ultimately, we arrive at our celestial home. ■

The author, who lived in Colorado, USA, passed away last year.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE

Name withheld

You epitomize those women who, since the days of Nauvoo, have served each other through loving and inspired visiting teaching.

I don't know your name, how old you are, or anything else about you. All I know is that you are Joann's visiting teacher, and I appreciate your conscientious service with all my heart.

I know that visiting a less-active sister like Joann (name has been changed), my daughter-in-law, is not easy, especially when she probably isn't very welcoming. I doubt she even wanted you to come at first. But Joann has told me you have been a real friend to her, stopping by to see how she's doing and accepting her as she is.

In the 19 years since Joann married my son, this is the first time she has ever mentioned having a visiting teacher. Recently she told me how regularly you visit and how thoughtful and kind you always are. She said you have helped her several times when she was sick and have even offered to take my granddaughter to Young Women.

For the past 10 years, she, my son, and their family have lived hundreds of miles from us. I have prayed that



others would love and care for them as I do, and I have pleaded tearfully with Heavenly Father that others would reach out to them as I would if they lived close by. From what Joann says, you are the answer to my prayers.

Even if Joann and my son don't obey the Word of Wisdom and don't attend church, they are still good people and they love their children. Somehow your eyes were not clouded by Joann's cigarette smoke. You did not define her by whether she attended church. You got to know her and learned that she is a loving mother who wants her daughter to attend church and gain a testimony.

And when Joann had surgery, you brought in dinner instead of wondering if she had brought some of her health problems upon herself.

How grateful I am that you are an example for my granddaughter. She can look up to you as someone who cares about everyone and goes out of her way to show loving concern. She told me that one day when you didn't have a car, you walked more

than a mile to her house with your small children to bring cookies.

"I was thinking of you and your mom and wanted to do something nice for you—just because," you told her.

I wish I could tell you how much I appreciate your dedication to your calling as a visiting teacher. You epitomize those women who, since the days of Nauvoo, have served each other through loving and inspired visiting teaching. You have demonstrated that service and love through the way you have affectionately visited my less-active daughter-in-law.

Thank you. ■

Recognizing Satan's Counterfeits

By Dennis C. Gaunt

I was putting a couple of U.S. dollar bills into my wallet at the grocery store when one of the bills caught my eye. I thought the green color was a little lighter than the others, so I examined it closer. Then I noticed the image of President George Washington didn't look quite as sharp. Even the paper felt wrong. It was counterfeit! The clerk exchanged it for a genuine dollar bill and then turned the counterfeit bill over to the store manager.

I have thought a lot about that counterfeit dollar bill since then. I wondered how long it had been in circulation and how many people it had fooled over the years. In fact, had I not been paying attention, I might have been fooled as well. But by comparing it against the real thing and focusing on the differences instead of the similarities, I could tell it was counterfeit.

The Book of Mormon is filled with examples of spiritual counterfeiters, who followed Satan's methods of

lying and deceiving others for their own gain. By studying their tricks and tactics, we begin to notice their mistakes and errors in the same way a trained eye begins to notice the difference between genuine and counterfeit currency. The more we train our eye to identify the differences, the better prepared we will be to expose the counterfeiters of today and resist their lies.

Gathering Intelligence about Satan's Counterfeits

Satan seeks to lead us away through his own brand of spiritual counterfeiting, and if we are not careful, we will be fooled. President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) warned: “Satan is a skilful imitator, and as genuine gospel truth is given the world in ever-increasing abundance, so he spreads the counterfeit coin of false doctrine. Beware of his spurious currency, it will purchase for you nothing but disappointment, misery and spiritual death.”¹

When we are faced with spiritual counterfeits, the Book of Mormon can help us determine what's true and what's not.

The best defense we have against being fooled by Satan's counterfeits is to be as familiar as possible with truths of the gospel. The more deeply we know the truth, the easier it will be to spot the differences when Satan presents us with his counterfeits. So when he does, we need to look for the differences and not the similarities, just like I did with my dollar bills, because that is where the lies will always be revealed.



President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) taught: “The Book of Mormon exposes the enemies of Christ. . . . God, with his infinite foreknowledge, so molded the Book of Mormon that we might see the error and know how to combat false educational, political, religious, and philosophical concepts of our time.”²

Today we are at war with Satan. We, like any army, need to know

what the enemy is up to. Knowing when and where the enemy will attack, for instance, can be invaluable information. That’s why the term for acquiring such information is called “gathering intelligence.” To know our enemy is to become smarter than our enemy. The Book of Mormon can help us “gather intelligence” on Satan’s counterfeit methods.

Flattering Speech Is Counterfeit

Well over half of the counterfeiters in the Book of Mormon use flattering speech and a charismatic personality to achieve their goals. For example, Sherem “had a perfect knowledge of the language of the people; wherefore, he could use much flattery, and much power of speech, according to the power of the devil” (Jacob 7:4). King Noah’s wicked priests spoke

“vain and flattering words” (Mosiah 11:7), thus causing the people to engage in idolatry and other wickedness. Korihor achieved similar results in his day, “leading away the hearts of many” (Alma 30:18). Amalickiah and Gadianton both used their penchant for flattery to raise up armies of wicked followers (see Alma 46:10; Helaman 2:4).

This is not by accident. Flattery is shallow, insincere, hollow, and exaggerated. Nephi warned of those who “shall teach after this manner, false and vain and foolish doctrines, and shall be puffed up in their hearts, and shall seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord; and their works shall be in the dark” (2 Nephi 28:9).

Flattery is often used to deceive; it usually has an ulterior motive or hidden agenda. Flattery is all about style over substance, and it appeals to the vanity and pride of the natural man within. The Lord’s prophets, however, tell us the simple yet important truths we *need* to hear.

Flattery is the language Satan speaks. President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, explained: “[Satan’s] voice often sounds so reasonable and his message so easy to justify. It is an appealing, intriguing voice with dulcet tones. It is neither



“[Satan’s voice] is an appealing, intriguing voice. . . . No one would listen to Satan’s voice if it sounded harsh or mean.”

hard nor discordant. No one would listen to Satan’s voice if it sounded harsh or mean.”³

When the world presents us with an idea, philosophy, or opinion that seems to appeal solely to our vanity or pride or that simply sounds too good to be true, that ought to be a warning to us immediately. Treat those ideas as counterfeit. Compare them against the truths taught by the Lord’s prophets. Look for differences, not similarities, and the counterfeit ideas will become obvious.

Nehor—a Popular Counterfeiter

Nehor freely used Satan’s method of flattery. Let’s examine him as a

case study of a spiritual counterfeiter. Nehor, whose doctrine seemed to embrace the idea of a redeemer, was a popular and charismatic preacher among the Nephites. Nehor raised up many followers by teaching that “all mankind should be saved at the last day” and “have eternal life” (Alma 1:4).

Can we see why Nehor’s message would be so attractive? He was teaching about an easygoing and relaxed God—a God who, because He loves everyone, will save everyone, no matter what. So go ahead and do what you like, because it’s all good. It’s a seductive philosophy that was embraced as much by the people of Nehor’s day (see Alma 1:5) as it is by many people

today. A free ticket to heaven is something people apparently want.

So what was the problem with Nehor's message? Let's look at the main points of his argument again:

- God created all people—true.
- God loves all people—true.
- We shouldn't be afraid of God—true.
- We should rejoice at the idea of salvation—true.

So far, there are a lot of similarities between what Nehor taught and gospel truths. But remember—just as with counterfeit money, we need to look for the differences, not the similarities. So let's look at Nehor's last point:

- God will grant everyone eternal life—false!

Now here is the important difference that tells us Nehor is a spiritual counterfeiter. Salvation from physical death *is* guaranteed to all, but salvation from spiritual death is conditional on our willing repentance. If we repent, then we can receive eternal life (see Jacob 6:11). But there is no free ride.

Gideon and Alma Recognized the Counterfeiter

Nehor's evil was exposed the day he met Gideon, a righteous teacher in the Church of God. Gideon had

stood up to King Noah years earlier and thus had experience with spiritual counterfeiters (see Mosiah 19:4–8). Nehor “began to contend with him sharply, that he might lead away the people of the church; but [Gideon] withstood him, admonishing him with the words of God” (Alma 1:7). Gideon recognized Nehor as a counterfeiter. Once exposed, Nehor resorted to another of Satan's methods—murder. But Gideon's death was not in vain. The people brought the counterfeiter Nehor before Alma to be judged.

Alma recognized not only that Nehor was guilty of priestcraft and murder but also that if priestcraft were enforced among the people, “it would prove their entire destruction” (Alma 1:12). So Nehor was condemned to die, and suffered “an ignominious death” (Alma 1:15).

Gideon and Alma are examples for us. When we have the Spirit with us, we will see and hear “things as they really are” (Jacob 4:13). We will recognize Satan's counterfeit plans and schemes “with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night” (Moroni 7:15).

Our “counterfeit” enemy is smart, but like Gideon and Alma, we can be smarter. Just as I began to gradually recognize the differences between my



SATAN SPREADS LIES

“Satan, our adversary, wants us to fail. He spreads lies as part of his effort to destroy our belief. He slyly suggests that the doubter, the skeptic, the cynic is sophisticated and intelligent, while those who have faith in God and His miracles are naive, blind, or brainwashed. Satan will advocate that it is cool to doubt spiritual gifts and the teachings of true prophets.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Be Not Afraid, Only Believe,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 78.

pair of dollar bills, we can gradually train our eye as well as our mind and spirit to recognize the differences between truth and lies. As we do so, we will recognize the counterfeiters and resist their lies. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 376.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 132.
3. James E. Faust, “The Forces That Will Save Us,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2007, 6.

Measuring Blessings in Madagascar

By Mindy Anne Selu
Church Magazines

After his wife suffered a heartbreaking miscarriage during their first pregnancy, Solofo Ravelojaona felt that their prayers were answered a year later with their second pregnancy. He and his wife, Hary Martine, consider the birth of their daughter to be one of their greatest blessings. Solofo explains, “Because we asked God and He gave her to us, we gave her a name that, in Malagasy, means ‘God’s answer.’”

Solofo, a young adult from Madagascar, holds to the knowledge that God answers prayers and in time blesses the faithful. “Life is hard,” says Solofo, “and when people don’t get what they want, some start asking, ‘Why did this happen to me?’ They might leave the Church or question their belief in God. But when we live the gospel and read the scriptures, it’s easier. When you really live the gospel, you can really see the blessings.”

Living in a country with serious challenges, such as extreme poverty, instability within the government, a weak infrastructure, and natural disasters, it’s clear why Solofo says life is hard. But for him, the blessings that living the gospel brings outweigh any hardships. “I cannot even count the blessings I receive, as long as I live the gospel,” he says.

Because the Church is relatively new in Madagascar (the first branch was organized in 1990), Solofo says the hardest part about being a member is the rumors and misconceptions about the Church. Solofo comments that, just as in Lehi’s vision of the tree of life, “people may not fully embrace the gospel because they feel ashamed in front of their friends and scared that they’ll be rejected by their family.” What makes Solofo different, he suggests, is that “I have never been ashamed. I live the gospel, and I always want to share it with my colleagues, even though some of them aren’t really interested.”

Despite the political upheaval and economic hardships in his country, Solofo relies on the blessings that come from living the gospel.

He often shares his simple testimony, so much so that his co-workers nicknamed him “pastor.”

In the midst of economic and political turmoil, Solofo and Hary Martine rely on the blessings of their temple covenants (they were married in the Johannesburg South Africa Temple one year after their missions—his in Uganda, hers in Madagascar), as well as their trust in the Lord. “I have the gospel, and I just put my life in God’s hands,” Solofo explains. He can rely on his solid testimony because he already has faith in “God’s answers.” ■



MORE ABOUT SOLOFO

What foods do you like to eat?

The food we eat is rice—a lot of rice. One of the things I like is called *ravtoto*. We use a special tool to pound cassava leaves into small pieces and serve it with rice and pork.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I like to play the keyboard, sing, and read. Because the branch president knew that I loved singing and could play the keyboard, when I came into the branch, he said, “Ah, we have someone to lead the choir,” and I offered my time. They didn’t have a choir before, but I started to teach them, and now they enjoy it.

FACTS ABOUT MADAGASCAR

Languages: French, Malagasy
Capital: Antananarivo

BY THE NUMBERS

- 22,005,222 people (estimate as of 2012)
- 80 percent of the animals found in Madagascar do not exist anywhere else on earth
- 4th largest island in the world
- 60 percent of the world’s vanilla is exported from Madagascar

THE CHURCH IN MADAGASCAR

- 9,190 Latter-day Saints
- 37 wards and branches
- 2 stakes
- 1 mission



TAKING the FEAR OUT of Dating

By **Michael A. Goodman**

Associate Professor of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University

Dating and courtship can be both brutal and beautiful. Because life is busy and dating sometimes causes frustration, some young people may choose to simply not date. Add to this a general societal fear of marriage, and young single adults often find themselves in a state of limbo, disengaged from developing significant relationships.

Yet prophets continue to encourage young single adults to become more engaged in trying to become engaged—to realize the ideal of marriage and family.¹ Pursuing this ideal requires that we simply start where we are. But how? By understanding and living important principles, you can make your dating experience much more beautiful and successful. Though no one can fully control the process of progression toward marriage, the following points can help you begin to enjoy and succeed in your dating endeavors:

1. Patiently prepare yourself.
2. Live life relationally.
3. Seek opportunities.
4. Deepen select relationships.
5. Communicate expectations openly.

Patiently Prepare Yourself

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled future missionaries to prepare for their missions by becoming missionaries now.² Similarly, you can prepare for a future relationship by becoming whole as an individual now. Create the kind of life you would like to invite others into. The Savior taught, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). By fully incorporating the gospel into your life, your happiness will increase. You will naturally want to share that joy with those around you (see 1 Nephi 8:12; Enos 1:9).

Ask yourself, “How can I create more wholeness and happiness in my life now so I can eventually share



By understanding and living these principles, you can make your dating experience much more enjoyable and successful.



that happiness with another?” Then act on the inspiration and the ideas that come. A single friend in her 30s once told me, “I don’t think a change in my marital status would make me any happier. I have to decide that my life is worth living now and find pockets of joy no matter what my circumstances are. If I build that habit when I’m single, I suspect I will continue it when I’m married.”

Some young adults pray and long for a temple marriage but feel they have no power to obtain one. Perhaps the counsel in Doctrine and Covenants 58:3–4 applies:

“Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter, and the glory which shall follow after much tribulation.

“For after much tribulation come the blessings.”

Sometimes tribulation simply means that things don’t happen when you think they should. In the words of Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, you must exercise “faith in the Lord’s timing for [you] personally, not just in His overall plans and purposes.”³ This doesn’t mean you simply stand by. As the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote to the Saints, “Let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance,

PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY PAO LAM (PAUL) KWONG

to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed” (D&C 123:17).

Live Life Relationally

You can also prepare for your ideal marriage by learning to live your life relationally (that is, focused on building *all* types of relationships with others) before you find yourself in a dating relationship. Many feel so much pressure to focus on individual achievement and self-fulfillment that they put these things ahead of other people. Remember what President Thomas S. Monson taught: “Never let a problem to be solved become more important than a person to be loved.”⁴

The two great commandments illustrate this reality; they command us to love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind and to love our neighbors as ourselves (see Luke 10:27). The Savior taught us to prioritize our relationships with God and with each other above all else. If it becomes your nature to love God and love your neighbor, you’ll be better prepared to develop the kind of dating relationship that can blossom into eternal love.

Seek Opportunities

Put yourself in places where you can develop relationships with the kind of people you want to date. Though you might find a gem anywhere, you will more likely find one if you go where gems are often found. If you



would like to date kind and service-oriented people, go where kind and service-oriented people go. If you would like to date people who have a strong relationship with God, go where people are striving to develop a strong relationship with God. This is not rocket science. You will meet the kind of people you would like to date by going to places and doing the kinds of things that those people do.

Deepen Select Relationships

As you live life relationally and seek opportunities, you will make many friends and acquaintances. You will likely find that you would like to get to know some of these friends better. Purposefully seek to deepen these relationships. Find opportunities to discuss topics beyond daily activities. Show those you care about that you enjoy spending time with them.

Build them up and help them feel better about themselves. You may even feel inspired to invite someone to an activity that will allow the two of you to get to know each other in a deeper, more personal way. Before you know it, you might find yourself dating.

Communicate Expectations Openly

Once you begin dating, you must see the experience for what it is and recognize what it is not. Unhealthy and inaccurate expectations cause much of the frustration associated with dating. As Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “Dating is pairing off to experience the kind of one-on-one association and temporary commitment that can lead to marriage *in some rare and treasured cases*.”⁵

To ask someone out or to accept a date means to agree to spend a

couple of hours getting to know someone and to treat him or her with kindness and respect. A date is not a commitment to be together exclusively from that point forward; it is not a commitment to become engaged or to get married; it is not a commitment to raise a future family together. If people eliminated false expectations and focused on showing kindness and getting to know one another, dating could become much more enjoyable.

An understanding of expectations will not magically occur—you must communicate. Different expectations almost always guarantee heartache. If one of you thinks the two of you are hanging out while the other

thinks you are on a date, or if one of you commits to a couple of hours together while the other assumes you have begun preparation for your engagement, there is a good chance neither of you will be happy by the end of the evening. Both of you must decide what your time together means. Kind, open communication in the beginning pays rich dividends in the end.

By following these basic principles and practices, you might find that the dating world is not nearly as frightening as it may have seemed before. As you patiently seek to realize in your life the ideals of marriage and family, you will draw nearer to Heavenly Father and our Savior and significantly increase your chances of developing a meaningful relationship. The joyous rewards of dating are more than worth the effort, and even though the ideal of marriage may not be realized, the happiness and fulfillment from living according to these principles will enrich the lives of those who follow them. ■

NOTES

1. For examples, see the following: Thomas S. Monson, “Priesthood Power,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 66–69; Richard G. Scott, “The Eternal Blessings of Marriage,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 94–97; Quentin L. Cook, “Choose Wisely,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 46–49.
2. See David A. Bednar, “Becoming a Missionary,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 44–47.
3. Neal A. Maxwell, in Dallin H. Oaks, “Timing,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2003, 12.
4. Thomas S. Monson, “Finding Joy in the Journey,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 86.
5. Dallin H. Oaks, “Dating versus Hanging Out,” *Ensign*, June 2006, 12; emphasis added.

DATING AND MISSIONARY WORK

As a past mission president who also teaches missionary preparation at BYU, I’ve found that many of the lessons learned by missionaries can apply to the dating scene. The same process missionaries go through to become effective disciples of Christ will help young adults become better at courtship. Examples include the following:

- See dating as a spiritual, not just social, activity.
- Realize that God is interested in your success. Just as He will help you on your mission, He will help you in your dating and courtship.
- Be purposeful. As a missionary, you wouldn’t sit in your apartment waiting for investigators to come to you. Be proactive in either asking others on dates or putting yourself in situations and places where you can be asked.
- See each person you date as a beautiful son or daughter of God and treat them that way.
- Instead of just socializing, seek to serve those you date.
- Honor agency. You should invite, not coerce.
- Do not let rejection or heartbreak keep you down. Missionaries who allow discouragement to stop them from continued effort will experience less success and much less joy.
- Develop charity. The more Christlike love you have for others, the more natural you will be and the more enjoyable your dating experience will be.



Elder Ronald A. Rasband

GIFTED LEADER,
DEVOTED FATHER

By Elder M. Russell Ballard

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Ron Rasband never doubted that he would serve a full-time mission. The only question the 19-year-old had while opening his mission call was *where* he would serve.

“My dad went on a mission to Germany. My older brother went on a mission to Germany. My future brother-in-law went on a mission to Germany,” he recalls. “I thought I was going to Germany.”

But the Lord had other plans. Ron had been called, instead, to the Eastern States Mission, headquartered in New York City, USA. Disappointed, he took his call to his bedroom, knelt by his bed, said a prayer, randomly opened his scriptures, and began reading:

“Behold, and lo, I have much people in this place, in the regions round about; and an effectual door shall be opened in the regions round about in this *eastern land*.”

“Therefore, I, the Lord, have suffered you to come unto this place; for thus it was expedient in me for the salvation of souls” (D&C 100:3–4; emphasis added).

Immediately, the Holy Ghost confirmed to Ron that his call to the Eastern States Mission was no mistake.

“I went from being disappointed to having my first of many scriptural impressions that



this is where the Lord wanted me to go,” he recalls. “That was a pivotal spiritual experience for me.”

His mission to the eastern states was the first of several Church callings that would take him places he never expected to go. And with each calling—as a teacher, bishop, high councilor, mission president, member of the Seventy, Senior President of the Seventy, and Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ—Elder Ronald A. Rasband has accepted the Lord’s will and continued to rely on His Spirit as he has served God’s children.

Above right: Elder Ronald A. Rasband as a mission president in New York City in 1998.

Far right: Elder Rasband with his sister, Nancy Schindler; mother; and brothers, Russell and Neil.

Right: With his parents as a seven-year-old boy.



Ron was generally a good boy, but he admits that he had a mischievous side. “More than a few times, my [Primary] teachers went to my mother, the stake Primary president, and said, “That Ronnie Rasband is a tough little kid,” he says. “But they never gave up on me. They showed me

great love and always invited me back into class.”²

Born of Goodly Parents

In his first address as an Apostle of Jesus Christ, Elder Rasband expressed heartfelt gratitude for his ancestry. “I was born of goodly parents in the gospel,” he said, “and they of goodly parents back six generations.”¹

His mother, Verda Anderson Rasband, was a loving leader who nurtured young Ron’s love of the scriptures. His father, Rulon Hawkins Rasband, was a faithful priesthood holder who exemplified the virtues of hard work.

Born on February 6, 1951, in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, Ronald A. (Anderson) Rasband was the only child of his parents’ union. Both had been married and divorced, and Ron grew up under the added care of two older brothers and an older sister.

“He was a combination of our parents, so we all loved him,” says his sister, Nancy Schindler. “Ron never allowed Mom and Dad to stand by each other or sit together without him being in the middle of them.”



Ron’s childhood centered on the Church—ward meetings, ward parties, ward dinners, and ward sports teams. When he wasn’t busy at the Cottonwood First Ward meetinghouse, he was working odd jobs, doing Scouting activities, and spending time with friends. At home, family time centered on the scriptures, games, and chores.

“My father taught me what work is by his example,” he says. “My mother taught me about work by having me do it.”

Ron’s father drove a bread delivery truck, arising daily by 4:00 a.m. and returning home late each night. His mother stayed home to raise the children, supplementing the family income by making and selling porcelain lace dolls.

Ron’s innate ability to lead, delegate, and get things done—which would serve him well in his professional and ecclesiastical responsibilities—proved useful early on.

“Ron was assigned to mow the



lawn,” his sister recalls. But Ron, like Mark Twain’s Tom Sawyer, had a way of persuading his friends to help.

“I would look outside, and there would be his best friend mowing the lawn for him,” Nancy says. “The next week another of his friends was mowing. He just sat on the front porch and laughed and joked with them as they did his work.”

Ron’s parents struggled financially, but the family had the gospel. “We never had a lot of money,” Ron recalls, “but it never affected my happiness.”

Trusted Friends and Leaders

Growing up, Ron was blessed with good friends and trusted priesthood leaders, including his boyhood stake president of 14 years—James E. Faust (1920–2007), who subsequently served in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and in the First Presidency. Ron’s family enjoyed a close relationship with President Faust and his family. “He always referred to me as one of his Cottonwood boys because he helped raise me,” he says.

Ron had no time for school sports once he reached high school because he always had a job, but he made time for loyal friendships that have lasted a lifetime.

“I’ve always admired Ron for who he is, but he wasn’t perfect,” says childhood friend

Kraig McCleary. With a smile, he adds, “I’ve told him that if he gets to heaven, I’ll get there too because we did the same things growing up.”

Ron left on his mission in early 1970, but Kraig was thinking about postponing missionary service until after that fall’s hunting season. That’s when Ron called him from his mission.

“I don’t know how he got permission to call, but he chastised me for not being more excited about getting right out on my mission,” Brother McCleary says. “Of course, I didn’t postpone it.”

Ron calls his mission a “fantastic” experience. “The Lord blessed me with many miraculous, faith-promoting experiences,” he says. “My mission was huge for my spiritual life.”

Ron spent part of his mission in the Bermuda islands. His mission president, Harold Nephi Wilkinson, sent only “straight-arrow missionaries” there because he could visit them only occasionally.

“We were totally on our own, but the president didn’t have to worry about us,” Ron recalls. “We got the job done.”

From the beginning of their marriage, Elder and Sister Rasband have put the Lord first. Married on September 4, 1973 (below), they were eventually blessed with four daughters and a son (above). Opposite page: Jon Huntsman Sr., Elder Rasband’s former business partner and mentor, calls Elder Rasband a “gifted leader of intense loyalty.”



The “Dream Girl” of Delta Phi

After completing his mission in 1972, Ron found a job, enrolled at the University of Utah that fall, and joined Delta Phi Kappa, a fraternity for returned missionaries. At the fraternity’s social activities, he couldn’t help but notice an attractive young woman named Melanie Twitchell. Melanie was one of Delta Phi’s elected “dream girls,” who helped with the fraternity’s service activities.

Like Ron, Melanie came from an active Latter-day Saint family. Her father, a career military officer, and her mother never let the family’s frequent moves become an excuse for missing church.

Melanie was impressed by Ron’s kindness, courtesy, and gospel knowledge. “I said to myself, ‘He is such an amazing man that it doesn’t matter if I never get to date him. I just want to be his best friend.’”

As their relationship grew, the Spirit confirmed her impressions of Ron and of his commitment to the Lord. Soon their friendship blossomed into what Melanie calls a “storybook, fairy-tale romance.”

Elder Rasband says she was a perfect match. “Melanie was every bit my equal in gospel devotion and heritage. We became best friends, and that’s when I asked her to marry me.”

They married on September 4, 1973, in the Salt Lake Temple. Since then, he says, his “selfless eternal companion . . . has helped mold me like potter’s clay into a more polished disciple of Jesus Christ. Her love and support, and that of our 5 children, their spouses, and our 24 grandchildren, sustain me.”³

“Let’s Go”

While serving as the elders quorum president of his married student ward, Ron became acquainted with Jon Huntsman Sr., the ward’s high council adviser. Jon was immediately impressed with the way Ron ran the quorum.

“He had incredible leadership and organizational skills,” recalls Elder Huntsman, who served as an Area Seventy from 1996 to 2011. “I thought it unusual that a

young man who was still in college could run a quorum in such a way.”

For several months, Jon watched Ron turn ideas into action as he completed priesthood duties. When a senior marketing position opened at Jon’s company—which would become Huntsman Chemical Corporation—he concluded that Ron had the skills he wanted and offered him the job. The position started the following week in Ohio, USA.

“I told Melanie, ‘I’m not going to drop out of school and move,’” Ron recalls. “I’ve worked my whole life to graduate from college, and I’m finally close to my goal.”

Melanie reminded Ron that finding a good job was why he was in school.

“What are you worried about?” she asked. “I know how to pack and move. I’ve been doing it my whole life. I’ll let you call your mother every night. Let’s go.”

Jon’s confidence in Ron proved well placed. Under Jon’s mentorship, Ron advanced quickly in the growing company,

becoming its president and chief operating officer in 1986. He traveled extensively for the company—both domestically and internationally. Despite his busy schedule, Ron tried to be home on weekends. And when he traveled, he would occasionally take family members with him.

“When he was home, he really made the children feel special and loved,” Melanie says. He attended their activities and sporting events whenever possible. Jenessa MacPherson, one of the couple’s four daughters, says her father’s Sunday ecclesiastical duties often kept him from sitting with the family during Church meetings.

“We would fight over who got to sit by him at church because it was such a novel thing to have him there,” she





says. “I remember putting my hand in his hand and thinking to myself, ‘If I could just learn to be like him, I’ll be on the right track and will be becoming more like the Savior.’ He was always my hero.”

The couple’s son, Christian, recalls fond memories of “father-son time.” Friends came and went because of the family’s frequent moves, he says, “but my father was always my best friend”—albeit a competitive one.

Whether shooting a basketball with Christian, playing a board game with his daughters, or fishing with family and friends, Ron loved to win.

“While we were growing up, he would never *let* anyone win,” Christian says. “We had to earn it, but it made us better. And the tradition continues with his loving grandchildren.”

Over the years, Ron’s family could not help but notice how ministering in Church leadership magnified his ability to show love and compassion, to express feelings of the Spirit, and to inspire others to do their best. After the birth of Ron and Melanie’s grandson Paxton, the family relied heavily on Ron’s spiritual strength and support.

Paxton, born with a rare genetic disorder, suffered from myriad health problems that tested the family physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Elder Rasband has called

the journey that followed Paxton’s birth “a crucible for learning special lessons tied to the eternities.”⁴

During Paxton’s short three years on earth—when questions were many and answers were few—Elder Rasband stood as a spiritual pillar, leading his family in drawing upon the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

With the announcement of his new calling, several family members and friends were not surprised. “Those of us who know him best,” Christian says, “raised our hands the highest when he was sustained as an Apostle.”

“I’ll Go Serve”

In 1996, at age 45, Ron was in the middle of a successful career when the call came to serve as mission president of the New York New York North Mission. Like the Apostles of old, he “straightway left [his] nets” (Matthew 4:20).

“Accepting the call took only a micro-second,” Elder Rasband says. He said to the Lord, “You want me to go serve; I’ll go serve.”

Ron took along a great lesson he had learned from his professional experience: “People are more important than anything



Top left: Elder and Sister Rasband with Church members in New Delhi, India, in November 2015. Above: Elder and Sister Rasband during his service as mission president in New York City, 1996–99; with their grandson Paxton, who helped the family learn “special lessons tied to the eternities”; and at the cornerstone ceremony of the Sacramento California Temple.

else.”⁵ With that knowledge and his honed leadership skills, he was ready to begin full-time service in the Lord’s kingdom.

Ron and Melanie found missionary work in New York City both challenging and invigorating. Ron was quick to delegate responsibility to the missionaries—inspiring their loyalty, and teaching, building, and lifting them in the process.

In 2000, a short eight months after Ron and Melanie had completed their mission, Ron was called to the Seventy, where his preparation, experience, and many talents have blessed the Church. As a member of the Seventy, he served as a counselor in the Europe Central Area Presidency, helping to oversee the work in 39 nations. Though he left college more than 40 years ago, he remains a serious student, welcoming ongoing mentoring from his senior Brethren as he supervised the North America West, Northwest, and three Utah Areas; served as Executive Director of the Temple Department; and served in the Presidency of the Seventy, working closely with the Twelve.

Recently, Elder Rasband observed, “What a great honor and privilege it is for me to be the least among the Twelve and to learn from them in every way and in every occasion.”⁶

“What They Knew, I Know”

Two paintings adorn the walls of Elder Rasband’s office. One is of Mormon missionaries teaching a family in Denmark in the 1850s. The second is of early missionary Dan Jones preaching from the perch of a well in the British Isles. The paintings (above right) remind Elder Rasband of his own ancestry.

“These early pioneers gave their all to the gospel of Jesus Christ and leave a legacy for their posterity to follow,” he has testified.⁷ What pushed Elder Rasband’s ancestors forward amidst adversity and persecution is what most qualifies him for his new calling: a knowledge and a sure witness of the Lord and His work.



“I have so very much to learn in my new calling,” he has said. “I feel very humble about that. But there’s one aspect of my calling I can do. I can bear testimony ‘of the name of Christ in all the world’ (D&C 107:23). He lives!”⁸

As a great-grandson of pioneers, he adds: “What they felt, I feel. What they knew, I know.”⁹

And what they hoped for in their posterity is embodied in the life, teachings, and service of Elder Ronald A. Rasband, who is following their example and honoring their legacy as he goes forward as one of the Lord’s special witnesses. ■

NOTES

1. Ronald A. Rasband, “I Stand All Amazed,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 89.
2. Ronald A. Rasband, “Friend to Friend: Golden Nuggets,” *Friend*, Oct. 2002, 8.
3. Ronald A. Rasband, “I Stand All Amazed,” 89.
4. Ronald A. Rasband, “Special Lessons,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 80.
5. Ronald A. Rasband, press conference, Oct. 3, 2015.
6. Ronald A. Rasband, testimony, Priesthood and Family Department devotional, Dec. 1, 2015.
7. Ronald A. Rasband, “I Stand All Amazed,” 89.
8. Ronald A. Rasband, testimony.
9. Ronald A. Rasband, Pioneer Day address, Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, July 24, 2007.

Watchmen ON THE TOWER

“I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence.”

Isaiah 62:6

Watchmen

Watchmen were sentries stationed on a wall or in a tower in order to look out for and warn of dangers approaching from afar. They were employed to protect cities as well as vineyards, fields, or pastures.

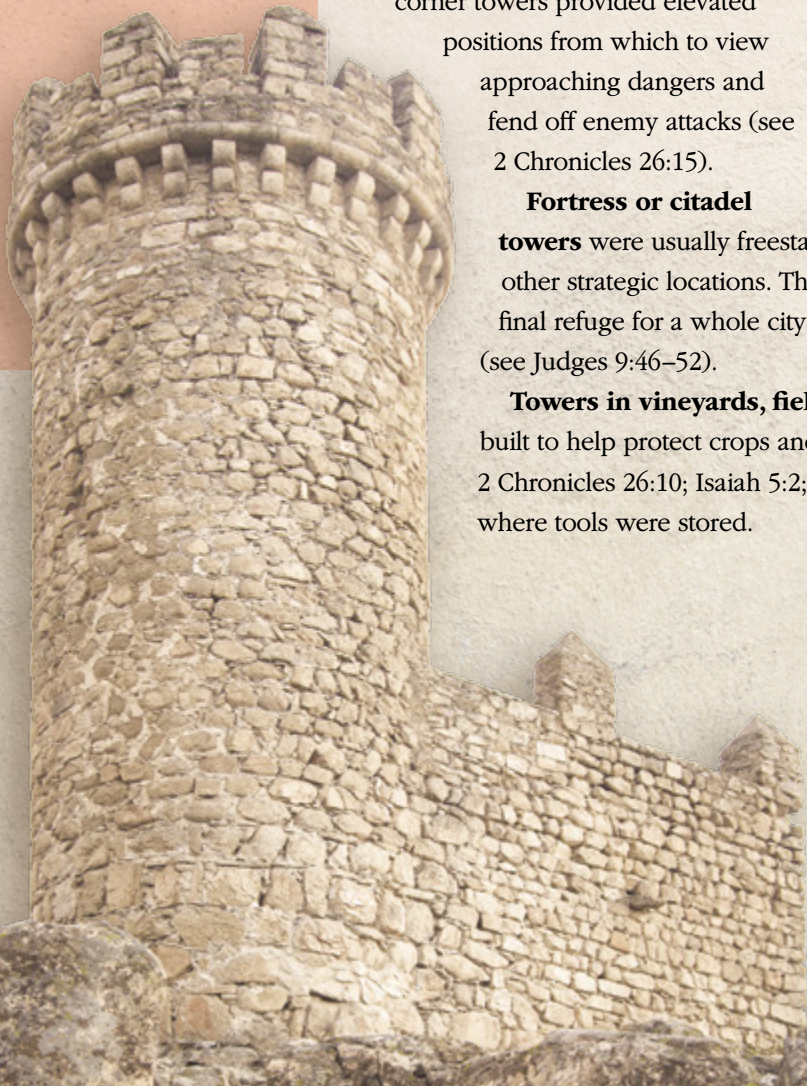
Kinds of Towers

Towers in city walls were usually built at gates or in corners (see 2 Chronicles 26:9). Both gate and corner towers provided elevated positions from which to view approaching dangers and fend off enemy attacks (see 2 Chronicles 26:15).

Fortress or citadel

towers were usually freestanding structures built on high ground or other strategic locations. They were sometimes large enough to be a final refuge for a whole city's population when they were under attack (see Judges 9:46–52).

Towers in vineyards, fields, or pastures were small structures built to help protect crops and herds from thieves and animals (see 2 Chronicles 26:10; Isaiah 5:2; 27:3). Often, the lower level was a room where tools were stored.





THE DUTY TO WATCH

“Through the centuries, prophets have fulfilled their duty when they have warned people of the dangers before them. The Lord’s Apostles are duty bound to watch, warn, and reach out to help those seeking answers to life’s questions.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “God Is at the Helm,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 25.

BIBLE FACTS



In the Old Testament, the Lord is sometimes compared to a fortress or citadel tower of refuge (see Psalm 18:2; 61:3; Proverbs 18:10; 2 Samuel

22:3), and prophets are sometimes compared to watchmen (see Isaiah 62:6; Jeremiah 6:17; Ezekiel 3:17; 33:7; Hosea 9:8; Micah 7:4).

“I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me” (Ezekiel 3:17; see also Ezekiel 33:1–7).

Watchmen on the tower:

Have an elevated view. As God’s called and authorized servants, prophets are separated from the world, draw closer to Him, and are allowed to see things from a more heavenly perspective.

See things the rest cannot see. “A seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known” (Mosiah 8:17).

Are vigilant. Prophets have a solemn responsibility to warn us of coming dangers, and they will continue to do so regardless of public opinion or trends in society.

Warn of things while they are still far off. “A prophet denounces sin and foretells its consequences. He is a preacher of righteousness. On occasion, prophets may be inspired to foretell the future for the benefit of mankind” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Prophet,” lds.org/scriptures/gs).

Offer safety and protection. By heeding prophets’ warnings, we can find safety and avoid the calamities that may befall us, individually or collectively, if we do not obey. ■



SCRIPTURE TRANSLATION:

INTO THE **Language** OF OUR **Heart**

This experience is familiar to those who have been involved in translating the scriptures from English into other languages. It happens over and over:

A young Armenian holding a copy of the Book of Mormon only recently translated into his language approaches a member of the team who assisted with the translating: “Thank you,” he says. “I have read the Book of Mormon in English. I have read the Book of Mormon in Russian. I have read it in Ukrainian. But until I was able to read it in Armenian, I did not truly understand it. When I read it in Armenian, it finally made sense. It was like coming home.”

Coming Home

If the gospel of Jesus Christ is our spiritual home, then it is only right that it feel comfortable and familiar. At home we rest. We nourish ourselves. We talk with those we love in the language taught us at our mother’s knee. This is the language of our heart, and since the heart is what the gospel must reach, reading the scriptures in the language of our heart is vital.

The Doctrine and Covenants suggests as much. There the Lord reveals that through the priesthood keys held by the First Presidency, “the arm of the Lord shall be revealed in power in convincing the nations . . . of the gospel of their salvation.

COUNTLESS EXPERIENCES SHOW THE LORD’S HAND IN THE WORK OF TRANSLATING HIS SCRIPTURES.

By R. Val Johnson
Church Magazines





The scriptures touch the heart more powerfully when read in our native language—the language of our heart.



The complete Book of Mormon has been published in 89 languages, and selections have been translated in another 21 languages.

“For it shall come to pass in that day, that every man shall hear the fulness of the gospel in his own tongue, and in his own language, through those who are ordained unto this power, by the administration of the Comforter, shed forth upon them for the revelation of Jesus Christ” (D&C 90:10–11).

Jim Jewell, who worked on the scriptures translation team at Church headquarters, tells a story of how close to home the scriptures can come when translated into the language of the heart:

“In translating the Book of Mormon into Sesotho, the language spoken in the African nation of Lesotho, we needed to find someone to help us evaluate the work of the translation team. The project supervisor, Larry Foley, identified a member of the Church from Lesotho who was a graduate student at Utah State University. In Lesotho, education is conducted in English, so this lady and her children had studied in English from the first grade on, but they still conversed at home in Sesotho.

“She agreed to work on the translation. Her evaluation of the chapters we sent to her was indeed helpful. We routinely submitted specific questions regarding vocabulary and language structure to which she provided helpful commentary. However, we noted that she had highlighted in yellow many verses unrelated to our

questions. When we asked her about the highlighted verses, she said: ‘Oh, those are verses that touched my heart deeply which I had never fully understood in English. I highlighted them so that I could share them with my children.’”

A Model for Scripture Translation

Translation of the Bible has a long and fascinating history, beginning

with the translation of parts of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek. Later, the Bible was translated from Greek into Latin and from Latin, Hebrew, and Greek into a myriad of other languages.¹ As a result, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not translate the Bible into different languages but adopts versions already accepted as authoritative by Christians speaking those languages.²

“FOR IT SHALL COME TO PASS . . . THAT EVERY MAN SHALL HEAR THE FULNESS OF THE GOSPEL IN HIS OWN TONGUE, AND IN HIS OWN LANGUAGE, THROUGH THOSE WHO ARE ORDAINED UNTO THIS POWER” (D&C 90:11).



THE SCRIPTURE TRANSLATION PROCESS

1

Approval to Translate

- Scripture translation is requested by the Area Presidency when the number of Church members who speak the language is growing and when basic Church materials have been translated in the language.
- The request is reviewed by several Church headquarters committees, including members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the First Presidency.

Translation Phases

Introductory phase:

- An existing Bible translation is selected for Church use.
- Basic materials are translated first: *Gospel Fundamentals* (includes basic doctrines as well as the name of the Church, the sacrament prayers, the baptism prayer, and the Articles of Faith), *The Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* pamphlet, and a web page on [LDS.org](https://www.lds.org).
- General conference talks may also be interpreted in the language.

Phase 1:

- Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price (about 10 years of work).
- Foundational texts such as “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” selected hymns, and *Preach My Gospel*.



Most of the scriptural translation work the Church does, therefore, is of the Book of Mormon (the first to be translated), the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. The language from which these books are translated is English, the language the Prophet Joseph Smith revealed them in, the language of his heart. The process used to translate the scriptures into non-English languages should be familiar to students of Church history. It is much the same process the Prophet used to translate the Book of Mormon into English.

Joseph Smith was a humble, largely uneducated farm boy. But he had the qualities and potential the Lord needed for the work that needed to be done. Indeed, Joseph and his family were prepared and set in place to do this very work.³

Joseph was also given help—both divine and mortal—in translating the Nephite records. The angel Moroni visited Joseph yearly for four years before allowing him to retrieve the record. We don’t know all that Moroni taught the Prophet, but his visits apparently prepared him spiritually and mentally for the task ahead.⁴

The Lord also prepared “interpreters” ahead of time as a means to translate a lost language. Described as two clear stones bound in metal rims, these and a similar instrument called a seer stone helped the Prophet translate the Nephite record into English.

The Prophet didn’t detail the process; he simply testified that he translated the Book of Mormon by “the gift and power of God.”⁵

In addition to the divine assistance he was given, Joseph had mortal help in the form of scribes who produced the written copy that others ultimately typeset, printed, paid for, and distributed to the world.

Not unlike the preparation and help Joseph received in his translation work, those delegated with the task of translating the scriptures today are prepared by the Lord and given help in their work—both divine and mortal.

A Revelatory Work

Infusing the rigorous translation process is a spiritual energy perhaps best described as “revelation by council.” The two or three people who are selected as translators team up with others in doing the work. They have Church headquarters supervisors, local reviewers, a lexicon for reference,⁶ translation guides, computer programs, and ecclesiastical support that extends all the way to the First Presidency. (See the accompanying chart.) When the First Presidency gives final approval of a translation, the work is then typeset, printed, and distributed. Having been prepared in a digital format, it is also posted on [LDS.org](https://www.lds.org) and in the Gospel Library app.

This collaborative effort is both intense and inspired. It involves



dedicated attention to the quality of the content and the quality of the physical format it is delivered in. Translations are reviewed at many levels, particularly at an ecclesiastical level that seeks the Lord's approval. Only when that approval is given does a translation move forward. While not precisely revelatory in the way the Prophet Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon, the process is clearly guided by the Lord—by His gifts and by His power.

This doesn't mean that a translation is perfect when first completed. Often, time and further reviews by those studying the scriptures suggest improvements in grammar and vocabulary or find typesetting or spelling mistakes. Rarely, changes are made in the explication of doctrine. When these are made, they are made under the guidance of the First Presidency.

The Lord Provides

The Lord sustains this translation work in other ways as well. It is commonly reported by the translation team at Church headquarters that when a need arises, the Lord provides.

As one of many examples, a translator was needed for the translation and recording of Church materials in Mam (pronounced "mum," a descendant of the Mayan language, spoken in Guatemala). Among the first missionaries called to Guatemala was an elder whose grandfather

had spoken Mam. The missionary had been raised in a city and spoke only Spanish. But every night his grandfather would come to him in dreams and teach him the Mam language. This young elder became the primary translator of Mam in the Church.

Often, the work of translation is done at great personal sacrifice. Depending on financial situations, some translators donate their service and others are paid so they can have time to devote to translation.

The man who became one of the Urdu translators was converted to the Church in Pakistan while working as a teacher. As a result of his conversion, he lost his job; he lost his house, which was provided by the school where he taught; and he lost the schooling for his children. A Church translation supervisor approached him about serving as a translator and offered him a modest recompense. After working as a translator for a few months, the man visited with the supervisor and timidly asked if the supervisor would buy him a new ballpoint pen. The one he had been using had run out of ink. Only then did the supervisor discover and fix a clerical error that had resulted in the translator receiving much less than what he should have been paid.

But just as the Lord blessed Joseph Smith in ways that enabled him to complete his work, the Lord blesses

Phase 2:

- Numerous other materials can be requested, such as the *Liahona* magazine, seminary and institute manuals, manuals for Sunday instruction, hymns and children's songs, temple and family history materials, and interpretation for stake and regional broadcasts.

Key Workgroups

Translation team:

- Two or three temple-worthy Church members with adequate maturity in the gospel.
- Aided by a verse-by-verse translation guide, a lexicon, and a Church headquarters translation supervisor.

Ecclesiastical review committee:

- Three to five men and women who are Church leaders in the area.
- Called and set apart to help review the translation for readability and doctrinal accuracy.
- Wording changes are not made until the committee unanimously agrees and the changes are in harmony with the translation guide.

Member reviewers:

- Local Church members also review the translation.
- They give feedback on the clarity and appropriateness of the wording.
- Clarity of translation ensures that the Holy Ghost can bear witness of the truth of the teachings.

The scripture translation process involves both the head and the heart, both mental skill and spiritual insight.

His translators. For instance, the translator of the Latvian scriptures was a lawyer who had studied law in Russia, where he had been converted to the restored gospel. Back in Latvia, he was setting up his business. He was also serving as a branch president. He couldn't have been busier, but the Church needed him and his facility with English.

He asked for time to pray about the request because accepting it would, as he told the Church representative, "take food out of the mouth of my children." After praying, he decided to accept but asked the Lord to bless him with the means to do what is a difficult, spiritually demanding, time-consuming work.

He began going to his law office one hour earlier every day and using that hour to translate the Book of Mormon. He finished well under the five years the process usually takes. In fact, this was one of the fastest translations since Joseph translated the Book of Mormon in roughly 60 days.

Many more experiences could be related that illustrate the Lord's hand in the work of translating His scriptures. They all declare clearly that this is His work and that He cares deeply about it. He prepares people to do His work. He prepares the tools they need to hasten the work. And He inspires and blesses them along the way.

The result is a world enriched by the word of God, given to His children in the language of their hearts. ■

IN THE WORK OF TRANSLATING THE LORD'S SCRIPTURES, IT IS CLEAR THAT THIS IS HIS WORK. HE PREPARES PEOPLE WITH THE TOOLS THEY NEED TO HASTEN THE WORK, AND HE INSPIRES AND BLESSES THEM ALONG THE WAY.



NOTES

1. See the eight-part series, "How the Bible Came to Be," by Lenet H. Read printed in the *Ensign* between January and September 1982.
2. See, for example, "Church Edition of Spanish Bible Now Published," mormonnewsroom.org.
3. See Matthew S. Holland, "The Path to Palmyra," *Ensign*, June 2015, 24–29.
4. See Kent P. Jackson, "Moroni's Message to Joseph Smith," *Ensign*, Aug. 1990, 12–16.
5. Joseph Smith, in introduction to the Book of Mormon. For an expanded description of Joseph Smith's translation of the Book of Mormon, see Gospel Topics, "Book of Mormon Translation," topics.lds.org.
6. The lexicon defines every word in the English scriptures so translators can better understand the meaning of the words. Often, words have more than one meaning, so translators must depend on context, inspiration, and teamwork to identify the right solution. Occasionally, questions about meaning are resolved only by the First Presidency.



WHEN Pornography Hits Home—

WIVES AND
HUSBANDS

Both Need to Heal

I have seen firsthand that the Savior's power to heal can come to wives as well as husbands when the husbands struggle with pornography.



Name withheld

Within my first six months as bishop, I had several couples in my ward come to me in confidence to tell me of the husband's struggle with pornography use. In some cases, the wife was reeling from the shock of having just learned the devastating secret; others had been aware for months or years.

I have felt compassion for each of these couples and have felt the Savior's redeeming power as I have counseled

regularly and carefully with each of the brothers to help them "shake off the chains . . . that would bind [them] fast" (2 Nephi 9:45).

Perhaps the greatest outpourings of the Spirit have come, however, as I have met with their wives. I have found that, while some of the wounds are fresh and others are scarred over from years of exposure, all of these sisters cope with a deep spiritual hurt caused by questions such as, "What have I done to cause him to not be attracted to me?" or "Why does he want to imagine himself with someone else rather than with me?"

Because it is the husband who has transgressed, it is easy for the bishop to feel that the husband most needs access to the keys to unlock the Savior's healing power, but I have learned that the wife's need to be healed of pain and trauma is as great as the husband's need to be healed of sin and obsessive urges.

In his discourse to the Nephites, the prophet Jacob condemned the men for their unfaithful conduct toward their wives, "many of whose feelings [were] exceedingly tender and chaste and delicate before God, which thing is pleasing unto God" (Jacob 2:7). He continued: "Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives . . . because of your bad examples before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you" (Jacob 2:35). I have witnessed these sobbings firsthand. They often spring not just from the wife's deep sense of betrayal caused by her husband's pornography use but also from the demeaning words and surly behavior that frequently surface as a result of his inner struggle. It is not uncommon, in fact, for a man whose habit has come to light to cast blame on his wife for his behavior, citing various actions that she has done or failed to do. Tragically, it is also not uncommon for the wife to begin to internalize and even believe these accusations.

One such couple sat in my office just days after the husband's disclosure of a pornography habit that had plagued him since his youth. While listening to a Relief

Society lesson based on Sister Linda S. Reeves's April 2014 general conference address, "Protection from Pornography—a Christ-Focused Home," the wife began to recognize in her husband's critical behavior toward her many of the tendencies the instructor was describing. Following the lesson, she confronted her husband with the question, and he confessed the secret that he had been concealing for so long. Her already-battered self-esteem was now compounded with a burning resentment. During their first meeting with me, they struggled to see how their marriage could continue. I assured them that there was hope, gave some initial counsel, and then invited them to come back and meet with me individually.

Along with the fervent prayers that I offered in preparation for those meetings, I also reviewed the suggestions



HOW PRIESTHOOD LEADERS CAN HELP

As leaders work with the spouses of members who are struggling with pornography, their efforts to ensure that these spouses feel heard and understood may be just as important as any counsel they can offer. Consider the following suggestions from Ministering Resources (ministering.lds.org):

- Meet together regularly and provide support.
- Emphasize the Savior's ability to provide personal healing for the spouse of the pornography user (see Alma 7:11 and Matthew 11:28–30).
- When appropriate, invite the individual to consider attending a support group meeting through the addiction recovery program or a similar support group.
- Help the spouse understand that he or she can receive

his or her own inspiration to know how to set clear boundaries in the relationship and in the home.

- Help the spouse find a trusted friend or family member who can provide meaningful support on an ongoing basis.
- Help the individual using pornography be accountable for his or her actions and support his or her spouse.
- Review the resources for spouses and family members on overcomingpornography.org and addictionrecovery.lds.org (particularly the "Spouse and Family Support Guide").
- Consider referring the spouse of the pornography user to professional help or counseling. Identify local resources that provide services in harmony with gospel principles.



Below: Kerri was devastated when she learned of her husband's challenge with pornography, but she found hope and healing through Jesus Christ and His Atonement. Watch her story at overcomingpornography.org.

provided in Ministering Resources on LDS.org,

particularly in the resource for supporting the spouses of pornography users, where I read the following:

“Express your love and concern for her individually, as well as for her spouse. Clarify that she is not responsible for her spouse’s pornography use or poor behavior and is not expected to endure abusive behavior.”

As I met with this sister, I heeded this counsel and added to it the assurance that her husband’s actions were not about her at all, not about something that she had or had not done, but were instead about his own internal conflict. I watched a wave of relief and consolation come over her as she grasped these words and felt the Spirit’s confirmation that they were indeed true. At the end of the interview, she asked if I would give her a priesthood blessing. I realized that I was the only one to whom she could turn for such a blessing, as she preferred to keep her situation private from family and friends.

To help with the healing process, I invited the husband to attend a local Latter-day Saint addiction-recovery group, and I encouraged his wife to attend the corresponding group for spouses and family members. She told me of the comfort she felt from meeting with other sisters who understood what she was suffering and the hope that it gave her to see couples who had waded through the same trial and

had managed to emerge from it together.

Several months have now passed since my first meeting with this couple, and my love and concern for them have grown as a result of our numerous interactions. While I recognize that their continuing path will not be without setbacks, it is a joy for me to learn of each additional month that the husband has kept himself free from lust and pornography and to see his wife’s increase in self-worth and confidence, which is readily apparent.

In recent interviews with them, the anguish and tears from our early meetings have been replaced with frequent smiles and even laughter. But perhaps the greatest outcome has been hope—hope that not only can their marriage continue but also that it even has the potential to become something beautiful and exalting.

I recognize that, unfortunately, not every couple experiences this same outcome. Some marriages may fail when the pornography user refuses to make progress. Regardless of the path the husband chooses to take, however, I have learned that the counsel to minister to the wives is inspired. I hope that no sister in this situation will ever feel that she is being overlooked, misjudged, or misunderstood by her bishop. The bishop’s ministration is a key channel through which the Savior manifests His power to fully heal each heart—even those that have been “pierced with deep wounds” (Jacob 2:35). ■

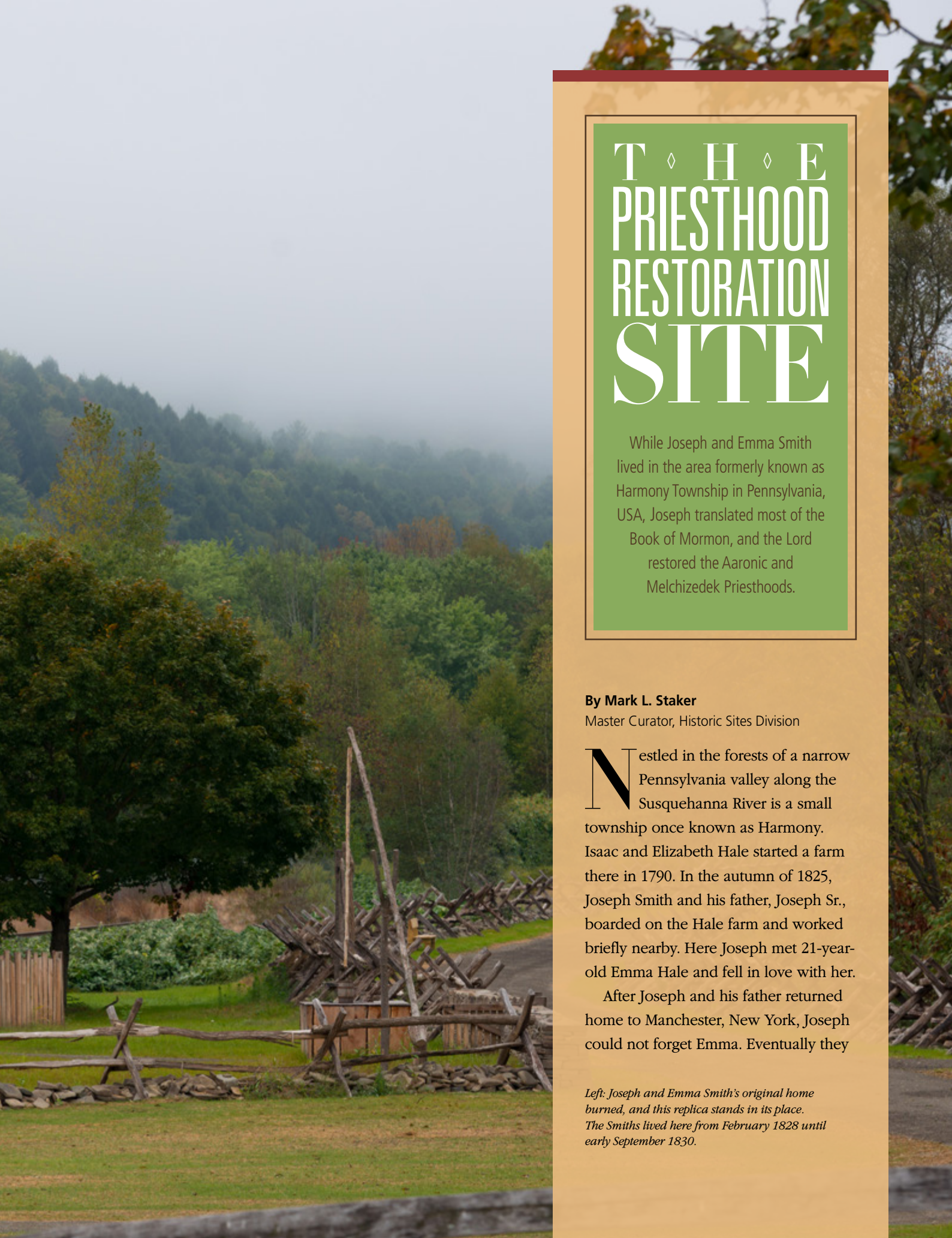


COUNSEL AND COMFORT FOR SPOUSES

“We as leaders are also greatly concerned about the spouses and families of those suffering from pornography addiction. Elder Richard G. Scott has pleaded: ‘If you are free of serious sin yourself, don’t suffer needlessly the consequences of another’s sins. . . . You can feel compassion. . . . Yet you should not take upon yourself a feeling of responsibility for those acts.’ Know that you are not alone. There is help. Addiction recovery meetings for spouses are available, including phone-in meetings, which allow spouses to call in to a meeting and participate from their own homes.”

Linda S. Reeves, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, “Protection from Pornography—a Christ-Focused Home,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 16.





T ◊ H ◊ E PRIESTHOOD RESTORATION SITE

While Joseph and Emma Smith lived in the area formerly known as Harmony Township in Pennsylvania, USA, Joseph translated most of the Book of Mormon, and the Lord restored the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods.

By Mark L. Staker

Master Curator, Historic Sites Division

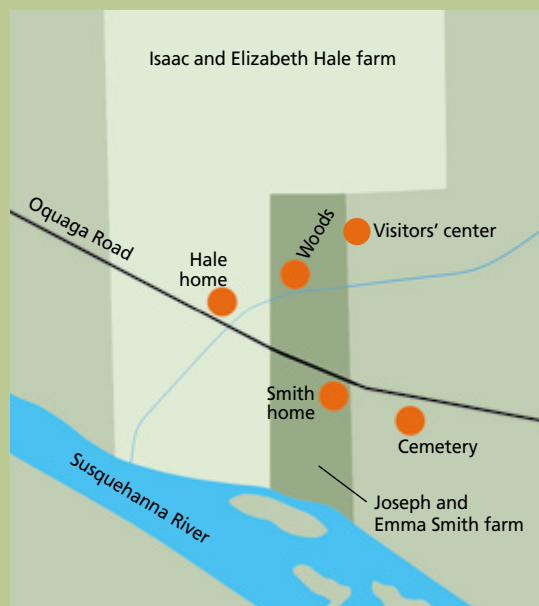
Nestled in the forests of a narrow Pennsylvania valley along the Susquehanna River is a small township once known as Harmony. Isaac and Elizabeth Hale started a farm there in 1790. In the autumn of 1825, Joseph Smith and his father, Joseph Sr., boarded on the Hale farm and worked briefly nearby. Here Joseph met 21-year-old Emma Hale and fell in love with her.

After Joseph and his father returned home to Manchester, New York, Joseph could not forget Emma. Eventually they

Left: Joseph and Emma Smith's original home burned, and this replica stands in its place. The Smiths lived here from February 1828 until early September 1830.

married on January 18, 1827, not far from Harmony in South Bainbridge, New York, against Isaac's wishes. They moved in with Joseph's family in Manchester. When Joseph received the golden plates on September 22, 1827, from the angel Moroni on the Hill Cumorah, Emma waited at the foot of the hill with the wagon. From the beginning, Joseph and Emma worked together to protect the golden plates from those who tried to steal them. Nevertheless, it soon became clear that they needed to move to find the peace that would allow Joseph to translate the Book of Mormon. In December 1827 they found that peace in Harmony, Pennsylvania.

Right: Morning mist rising from the Susquehanna River. In this river on May 15, 1829, Joseph and Oliver baptized each other after receiving the Aaronic Priesthood from John the Baptist.





Top: Joseph Smith translated most of the Book of Mormon in his home, while others, mainly Oliver Cowdery, acted as scribes. Right: Isaac Hale, a prosperous commercial hunter, provided a fine home for his family, as the room below shows.





Above: The visitors' center has many exhibits, such as this "What Is the Priesthood?" display (note the video of the Susquehanna River). Right: The entrance to the meetinghouse, which is located in the same building as the visitors' center. Below: This exhibit is one of many interactive presentations in the visitors' center. It features a cutaway of a barrel of beans showing how Joseph hid the golden plates when he and Emma moved from Manchester back to Harmony. The screen shows a video of the story.





Today the area has been restored to look as it did during the time of the restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods and the translation of the Book of Mormon. Nearby is a new building housing both a modern-day visitors' center and a Latter-day Saint meetinghouse. ■



Above: These two statues commemorate the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood and the Melchizedek Priesthood. Left: Near this peaceful grove of maple trees north of the Smith home, John the Baptist ordained Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to the Aaronic Priesthood on May 15, 1829 (see Joseph Smith—History 1:68–69). Within the following two weeks in “the wilderness” between Harmony, Pennsylvania, and nearby Colesville, New York, New Testament Apostles Peter, James, and John restored the Melchizedek Priesthood to Joseph and Oliver, including “the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the fulness of times” (D&C 128:20; see also 27:12).

What I Will (and Will Not) Tell My Children When We Visit the Priesthood Restoration Site

By Aaron L. West

In July 2015 I was blessed to play a small part in preparing the Priesthood Restoration Site for the public. When I visit the site with my family—whether we go in person or experience it in this magazine and online¹—I will be tempted to say things like this:

“I helped build that fence and hang that chandelier.”

“I scrubbed 200 years of mold off of that stone sink.”

“I helped put that stove together.”

Although it would be fun to talk about what I did there, I won’t do it. I’d rather talk about what Joseph and Emma Smith did.

Before we enter the reconstructed home of Emma’s parents, I’ll say, “One day when Emma was about seven years old, her father found her in the trees nearby. She was praying out loud—for him. He was so touched by her prayer that he began to believe more completely in Jesus Christ.”²

When we go inside that home, we will see that Emma’s family had a lot of nice things. I’ll say, “Emma left things like this behind when she married Joseph and served with him in the Church.”

When we visit the reconstruction of Joseph and Emma’s small home down the road, I’ll say, “Joseph translated most of the Book of Mormon in this spot. Emma worked for a time as his scribe.”

North of Joseph and Emma’s home, we will walk into a peaceful grove of maple trees. I’ll say, “One day Joseph and his scribe Oliver Cowdery walked into this grove to pray. They had questions about the authority to baptize. In answer to their prayer, the Lord sent John the Baptist to confer on

TWO TESTIMONIES *of the* PRIESTHOOD RESTORATION SITE

Two employees of the Church History Department share their spiritual experiences as they worked on the Priesthood Restoration Site in Pennsylvania, USA.

them the Aaronic Priesthood. They baptized each other that same day.”³

Before we leave the site, I’ll say, “Not long after the Lord sent a message to Joseph and Oliver through John the Baptist, He sent a message to Emma through Joseph. He told Emma that she would play important roles in her family and in His Church.”⁴

Of course, when we discuss what Joseph and Emma did at this place, we will really be testifying of what the Lord has done to restore His gospel to the earth. So we will pause and read some of the truths the Lord revealed there:

“Now behold, a marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men.

“Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day” (D&C 4:1–2).

“All those who receive my gospel are sons and daughters in my kingdom” (D&C 25:1).

“Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.

“Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet; be faithful, keep my commandments, and ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven” (D&C 6:36–37).⁵

After my children have experienced the Priesthood Restoration Site, I hope they won’t say, “Cool chandelier” or “Nice sink, Dad.” I hope they will, in their own teenage way, join President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) in exclaiming, “What hath God wrought through the instrumentality of His servant Joseph!”⁶ ■

NOTES

1. See history.lds.org/subsection/priesthood-restoration-site.

2. See Mark L. Staker, “Isaac and Elizabeth Hale in Their Endless Mountain Home,” *Mormon Historical Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2 (Fall 2014), 68–69.



3. See Joseph Smith—History 1:68–73.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 25.
5. In this sacred place, the Lord revealed the truths found in Doctrine and Covenants 3–13 and 24–27.
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, “What Hath God Wrought through His Servant Joseph!” *Ensign*, Jan. 1997, 4.

Blessed by the Priesthood in a Holy Place

By Gary L. Boatright Jr.

“Do you want a blessing?” I have heard that question many times throughout my life, as have most members of the Church. We often hear it when we are ill or struggling—when we need divine help. I grew up in the Church, served a mission, and am now active in the gospel as an adult, but I did not truly understand the significance of this simple question until I heard it while sitting outside a small home in northern Pennsylvania.

During June 2015, I joined a number of my colleagues at the Priesthood Restoration Site. When I arrived on a summer morning, I marveled at how the site had changed since my last visit a number of years

TWO
TESTIMONIES
of the
PRIESTHOOD
RESTORATION
SITE

earlier. A chapel and visitors' center now overlooked the site. Newly created paths led from the soon-to-be-completed visitors' center to the reconstructed Smith home. Where once a major highway stood, all that remained was a dirt road lined with a stringer fence leading to the reconstructed Hale home. After marveling at the impressive changes to the site, our group went to work.

I don't remember specifically what I was tasked to do that morning, but I remember being hot and dripping in sweat. Living in the western United States, I'm used to hot summer days—but not humid ones. As I worked, sweat poured from my head, my clothes were sticking to me, and I felt myself become weaker by the minute. Knowing I had five days of work ahead of me, I took my hat off, wiped my brow, and pushed on.

As the noon hour approached, I was physically exhausted, but I knew something else was happening to me. I was



Interior of the room attached to the Smith home. Above right: John the Baptist confers the Aaronic Priesthood on Joseph Smith.



nauseated and perhaps dehydrated. I had been working all morning, sweating like I had never sweated before, and I hadn't had anything to drink since breakfast. I walked to a cooler, pulled out a couple of bottles of cold water, and drank. I could feel

my body thanking me for the long-overdue water, but the refreshing feeling was short-lived. "Maybe I need more," I thought, so I pulled a third bottle out and drank more water. Big mistake! As I finished off the last bottle, I immediately felt worse. I went into the Smith home and found a bench where I could lie down. Closing my eyes, I prayed that I would feel better, but to no avail.

Fortunately, the lunch hour gave me a brief reprieve, even though I didn't want anything to eat. We returned to the site with everyone rested, fed, and ready for more work—except for me. I began to question myself: "Why did you come? Why are you wasting the Church's money by being here?" It was during this time that I heard one of my colleagues ask, "Do you want a blessing?"

Realizing that I wasn't going to get better on my own, I replied, "I do." We walked into the reconstructed Smith home. I sat on a chair, and my co-workers gathered around me. After my head was anointed with consecrated oil, my colleagues—no, my friends—placed their hands on my head to seal the anointing and give me a blessing. As I felt the weight of their hands on my head, an overwhelming sense of gratitude filled my heart. The Spirit whispered to me, "You are in a holy place."

My thoughts went to the building I was in. In this space, the Prophet Joseph Smith translated a significant portion of the Book of Mormon. In this space, the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery discussed the need for baptism for the remission

of sins. In this space, these two young men, seeking inspiration from God, determined to go to the nearby woods to pray for guidance and revelation.

I wonder if the Prophet Joseph and Oliver had any idea what would happen that day. Heavenly Father not only heard their prayer but immediately answered it.

Joseph Smith recalled:

"While we were thus employed, praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us, saying:

"Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness" (Joseph Smith—History 1:68–69).

In answer to their prayer, God sent John the Baptist, who conferred priesthood authority and commanded the two to baptize each other. This event was the first of many in which priesthood authority and keys would be restored to the earth by heavenly messengers.

As my friends pronounced, "Amen," I realized that what I had just experienced had happened because of a conversation between Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in that very same space in May 1829. I don't remember what was said in the blessing. I wasn't immediately healed of my illness. But I do know that I was blessed. God blessed me with a reassurance that the holy priesthood is once again upon the earth. With this reassurance came a strengthened testimony that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, translated by His prophet Joseph Smith Jr.

I know that this site is more than the two reconstructed homes. It's more than the exhibits in the visitors' center. It's more than the Church's investment of time and money to make it an official historic site. It is the place where the priesthood of God began to be restored—the priesthood that blesses the lives of millions of people around the world. ■





By Elder
Kim B. Clark
Of the Seventy

The Redeeming and Strengthening Power of the Savior's Atonement

On his second day in the Provo Missionary Training Center, a young missionary knew he could not go another hour without talking to the president of the MTC. There were things in his life he should have cleared up with his bishop at home but had not. And so he turned and headed to the president's office.

In that moment the young missionary began a journey of repentance, humility, and hope. The path was not easy.

He went back to his home ward and faced the same people who had sent him off on his mission the week before. He got a job, began meeting with his bishop, and lived at home. He suffered. He felt guilt, sorrow, and pain. And there were times, especially at night, when he felt lonely and discouraged. But he never gave up. He spent a lot of time in the scriptures and on his knees.

Day after day, night after night, over many days and weeks, the redeeming and strengthening power of the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ became a living reality in his life. The Savior reached out and took hold of that young man and changed him from the inside out. When he went back into the mission field, he was on fire. He became a mighty elder in Israel.

*There is no sin, no guilt, no shame,
no fear, no loneliness, no heartache,
no loss, no depression, no sadness,
no terror, no pain, no challenge,
no weakness that Jesus Christ has
not experienced and overcome.*

I know that marvelous blessings flow into our lives through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I bear that witness because I want the Atonement of Christ to work more powerfully in your lives. I want you to be converted more deeply unto the Lord so that in your trials you too will experience the redeeming and strengthening power of His Atonement.

Jesus Suffered for Us

In Gethsemane and on Calvary, Jesus Christ took upon Himself our sins and suffered the “whole law of the demands of justice” (Alma 34:16) for us. He felt in His pure and sinless soul the searing torment of “a perfect knowledge of all our guilt, and our uncleanness” (2 Nephi 9:14). He suffered the agony of spiritual death “as to things pertaining unto righteousness” (Alma 5:42) and the “awful chains” (2 Nephi 28:22) of Satan’s power and captivity.¹

In that magnificent act of love and sacrifice, Jesus suffered “pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind” (Alma 7:11)²—indeed, “the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam” (2 Nephi 9:21). In the words of Isaiah:

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . .

“ . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:4–5).

There is no sin, no guilt, no shame, no fear, no loneliness, no heartache, no loss, no depression, no sadness, no terror, no pain, no challenge, no weakness that Jesus has not experienced and overcome. He has all power over all things.

If you turn to Christ and repent of your sins, He will forgive you and cleanse you and change your heart. This is the redeeming power of the Atonement. If you turn to Christ when you face challenges and need capacity beyond your own, He can strengthen you and magnify your capacity. This is the strengthening power of the Atonement.

If we come unto Christ and are faithful to our covenants, Jesus will sanctify all of our mortal experience to our

blessing both now and forever. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we may become more and more like Him—we may walk in the newness of life, His sons and daughters, clean, pure in heart, filled with the pure love of Christ, blessed with joy and happiness and peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come.

Act with Faith in Christ

In 1982 my father and mother submitted their papers to serve a mission. When the call came, it shocked my mother. They had been called to serve in the Philippines Davao Mission.

“No!” my mother exclaimed to my father. “You’ve got to call them and tell them we can’t go to the Philippines. Don’t they know you have asthma? And I don’t want to deal with all those lizards and bugs.”

My father reminded my mother that she had always encouraged him never to turn down a call from the Lord. She knew that was true, but that didn’t make her

feel any better. One night a few days later she woke my dad up at about 2:30 a.m.

“Did you hear that voice?” she asked.

“No, I didn’t hear any voice,” he replied.

“Well, I have heard the same voice three times tonight. It said,

*When we see the future
with faith and hope
in Christ, and when
we act on that faith,
divine light and power
flow into our lives.*

‘Why are you worrying? Don’t you know that I know he has asthma? I will take care of him and you. Get yourself ready to serve in the Philippines.’”

My mother and father went forward with faith in the Lord and had a marvelous experience in the Philippines. My father served as the first counselor in the mission presidency, and he and my mother trained hundreds of missionaries and thousands of faithful Latter-day Saints in preparation for the coming of wards and stakes on the island of Mindanao.



Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the first principle of the gospel (see Articles of Faith 1:4). The scriptures teach that “faith is the [assurance] of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). When we have faith in Christ, we look forward with the eye of faith (see Ether 12:19) and see with sharpness and clarity the remarkable promises of the redeeming and strengthening powers of the Atonement coming to pass. These promises come alive in our minds through the power of the Spirit. Our hope in the power of Christ then becomes what the scriptures call “lively” (1 Peter 1:3), bright (see 2 Nephi 31:20), and “more excellent” (Ether 12:32). This is the hope that is an anchor to the soul.

In times of trial and at other times, these marvelous blessings can be ours when we look forward with the eye of faith and take righteous action. Looking forward with the eye of faith in times of trial, however, is not easy. The natural man in us looks forward with the eye of fear and sees only darkness, failure, and pain.

Fear does not go away easily. It resists our efforts to overcome it and returns easily. With faith in Christ and

personal determination, however, we can declare, “I am going to look forward with the eye of faith and take righteous action.”

When we see the future with faith and hope in Christ, and when we act on that faith, divine light and power flow into our lives. That light and power activate the bright, shining shield of faith in the armor of God that “quench[es] all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Ephesians 6:16).

In the strength of the Lord we can move forward to do what He wants done, paying no heed to ridicule and scorn, taking no counsel from our fears, setting doubt aside, overcoming discouragement with hope, and resisting temptation with our faith in Christ.

Obedience of the Heart and Soul

When we obey the commandments of the Lord with our heart and soul, especially through small and simple acts of goodness, kindness, and righteousness, the Holy Ghost ministers to us and the Lord strengthens us to accomplish His great work.

Obedience of the heart and soul embraces all of who we are: our behavior and our attitudes, our actions and our desires, our diligence and our love. That kind of willing obedience connects us to Christ in a powerful way and brings His Spirit, love, power, and joy into our lives. A casual, reluctant, surface kind of obedience will not do. The Lord requires of us obedience that is exact, willing, and deep. He wants obedience of the whole heart and soul.

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) beautifully described the difference between reluctant and heart-and-soul obedience this way: “When obedience ceases to be an irritant and becomes our quest, in that moment God will endow us with power.”³

The great key to developing heart-and-soul obedience is to be obedient in small and simple things, like keeping the Sabbath day holy, saying our prayers, telling the truth, paying our tithing, following the Word of Wisdom, being kind to others, avoiding profanity, and honoring our promises.

Remember, obedience in small things creates a spirit of obedience in all things. Moreover, obedience in small things brings the Spirit into our lives and strengthens our faith in Christ and our resolve to do His will. It opens our hearts to Him and blesses us with the strength and discipline to withstand temptations to violate the law of chastity, succumb to greed and materialism, or fall into apostasy. Obedience in small things prepares us to give our hearts to the Lord so that we will accept and fulfill the increasingly



STRENGTH TO BEAR BURDENS

“Our Savior’s Atonement does more than assure us of immortality . . . and give us the opportunity to be cleansed from sin by repentance and baptism. His Atonement also provides the opportunity to call upon

Him who has experienced all of our mortal infirmities to give us the strength to bear the burdens of mortality.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Strengthened by the Atonement of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 64.

demanding personal assignments and commandments that come to us from the Lord throughout our lives.

If you strive to be obedient in small things, the Holy Ghost will be with you. You will act with faith in Christ never to do anything or go anywhere or say anything or watch anything that would drive away the Spirit. You will be a blessing to others. And you will be ready to obey with all your heart and soul, whatever the Lord commands.

The Eternal Family

In “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” living prophets teach us true doctrine about our eternal identity as husbands and wives, mothers and fathers of an eternal family.⁴ Through the Atonement of Christ, you and a beloved

The Lord requires of us obedience that is exact, willing, and deep. He wants obedience of the whole heart and soul.

eternal companion can create an eternal family, experience the joy of heaven on earth, and return to the presence of Heavenly Father, “crowned with celestial glory” (D&C 101:65) and “raised to endless

happiness to inherit the kingdom of God” (Alma 41:4), “in [whose] presence is fulness of joy” (Psalm 16:11).

The prophetic window of the proclamation gives each of us a beautiful picture of what our future holds. These blessings come at different times to different people. In mortal life we often encounter unexpected delays and disappointments. But it is good to have in front of us a vivid picture of our divine destiny as sons and daughters of God. That picture is real. If you are faithful, you will realize that destiny.

I saw these principles come together one day as I sat in a temple sealing room. There, I watched as a young man and a young woman were sealed for time and all eternity. I knew the young man, and I knew of the path he had traveled. His life had been full of the pain and heartache of sin. Some of that pain he had brought upon himself; some had come by the actions of others. However, he had humbled himself



before the Lord, repented of his sins, and sought the redeeming and strengthening power of the Savior's Atonement.

I knew that the Lord Jesus Christ had blessed that young man with His forgiveness and His grace. As a result, he was about to be sealed in the temple of the Lord to a marvelous young woman. I also knew the path she had walked. I knew of her goodness and the great faith that had sustained her in difficult hours. I looked across the room at the young man's mother. I could see on her face pure joy as tears flowed down her cheeks.

As I watched this beautiful scene, there came into my mind words I knew were from the Holy Ghost. Through those words, I came to understand that this is why Jesus suffered the crushing agony of the Atonement—so that this young man and this young woman could be clean and worthy, healed and whole, sealed forever by His power as husband and wife in the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.

I came to understand that this is why the Father sent His Son to suffer and die for us. This is why the Father and the Son appeared to Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove and called him to be the great prophet of the Restoration. This is why Joseph received the power to translate the Book of Mormon; why he received the keys of this dispensation, including the sealing power; why he received the ordinances

and covenants of the temple and revelation upon revelation establishing the Lord's true and living Church on the earth.

And I came to understand that this is why, from the days of Joseph Smith until this very hour, the Lord has called living prophets to stand where Joseph stood, to hold the keys Joseph holds—so that you and I could be blessed with prophetic counsel and guidance, spiritual gifts, sacred ordinances in holy temples, courage and faith to walk in the light, repentance and forgiveness, and the power and authority of the keys of the priesthood of God. It is so that we might qualify for all the blessings of the temple of the Lord, be sealed to a beloved eternal companion, and have our children sealed to us forever in eternal life with our Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son.

This is why. ■

From a devotional address, "All Things Which Are Good Cometh of Christ," delivered at Brigham Young University–Idaho on March 31, 2015. For the full address, go to web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches.

NOTES

1. See Richard G. Scott, "He Lives! All Glory to His Name," *Ensign*, May 2010, 76–77.
2. Coupled with the Savior's sinless life and His submission to His Father's will, His parentage gave Him ultimate spiritual purity, holiness, sensitivity, and discernment housed in a physical body subject to all the experiences of mortal life. Jesus experienced what mortal beings experience, but He felt those experiences more acutely and more intensely than mortals do.
3. Ezra Taft Benson, in Donald L. Staheli, "Obedience—Life's Great Challenge," *Ensign*, May 1998, 82.
4. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.

My Mother's Testimony

OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

My mother decided to study the Book of Mormon in a dramatic way—and it taught me to value the scriptures in my life.





By Heather Simkins

Several years ago my mom decided to read the entire Book of Mormon each month for a year. When she told me her goal, I thought it was impressive, but I dismissed the idea pretty quickly. I remembered the multiple times I committed to memorize a scripture a day—it never lasted long. I thought her goal would meet the same fate. It didn't. What I saw unfold over the next year taught me a number of valuable lessons about scripture study. Most important, the experience reaffirmed to me that my mother knew the Book of Mormon to be true.

Heavenly Father Helps Us Manage Our Time



From the moment my mother committed herself to her goal, she began praying that she would find the time to read 18 pages a day—every day for a year.

Soon she was unable to sleep past 5:30 a.m. To some, that may not sound like a blessing, but it was exactly what she needed. She spent every dawn with the Book of Mormon and was finished before the busy day began.

We all know that time constraints often make scripture study seem impossible, but I learned from my mom's experience that God will help make it possible.

Consistency Brings Continued Blessings

Even with the blessing of time to read the scriptures, it was a real

challenge for my mom to read the necessary number of pages each day. Mom had to resist the temptation to use her early morning to get a jump start on other responsibilities. I think that because of her diligence, God continued to bless her with the ability to wake up early.



Gratitude for Scripture Will Inspire Our Study

The year 2005 marked the 200th anniversary of the

birth of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and many stakes invited members to do a special project to memorialize the life of the Prophet. My mom decided to copy the Book of Mormon by hand. She spent months doing it.

Halfway through her project, her stake held an event in which everyone displayed what they had done. The night before, my mom carefully wrapped the pages she had copied and took them to the stake center. She couldn't bear to leave the pages there without her protection; only she knew the work and care that had gone into them.

She later told me that on that night she gained a greater appreciation for how the Prophet Joseph Smith must have felt about the priceless words that were under his protection.

Sharing Our Testimony of the Scriptures Will Improve Our Study

My mom's experience with the Book of Mormon has given her the opportunity to share her testimony of the scriptures many times. People have been inspired by her example, including Primary children and young women—many of whom had never read the Book of Mormon before. She taught me that as she shared her testimony, her scripture study became more refreshed and profound.

I Know My Mother Knew It

The example of my mother has improved my personal study of the Book of Mormon. I'm profoundly grateful for her testimony. She said, "I love this book. . . . The teachings found within its pages can change hearts, build character, and can help you become what Heavenly Father desires you to become—like Him."

I have seen those blessings in her life and felt them in mine. Each of her children now has a photocopy of her handwritten copy of the Book of Mormon. I cherish the opportunity to read those words in the writing of my mother. They will always be a reminder of the time she has spent with the scriptures and what I have learned through her diligence. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

This article recounts one mother's unique methods of studying the Book of Mormon. Its inclusion here does not suggest that everyone needs to follow this same process. Study approaches vary, but each person can gain a testimony of the Book of Mormon through the power of the Holy Ghost.



By Elder
Donald L.
Hallstrom

Of the Presidency
of the Seventy

JESUS CHRIST: OUR FIRM FOUNDATION

With the design and construction of every temple, significant work is expended on what cannot easily be seen when the project is finished—the foundation. For example, the Philadelphia Pennsylvania Temple, when completed, will be 82 feet (25 m) tall at its roofline and rise 195 feet (59 m) to the top of the angel Moroni.

As imposing and stately as this structure will be, however, it will still be subject to destructive winds and invasive groundwater. These harsh conditions, if left unchecked, could significantly damage and even destroy this noble edifice.

Knowing that these forces would relentlessly attack the temple, the engineers designed, and the contractor excavated, a hole 32 feet (10 m) deep under the entire footprint of the structure. The hole was dug into native Pennsylvania granite to provide an immovable foundation upon which to build. The concrete footings and foundations were then tied to the granite bedrock with rock anchors to resist even torrential wind and powerful groundwater. The anchors were drilled 50 to 175 feet (15 to 53 m) into the granite and tensioned at 250,000 pounds per square inch (17,577 kg per square cm). The anchors are spaced 15 feet (4.5 m) apart in both directions.

I give such detailed information to teach this point: unlike building a structure (which is temporary), in building our everlasting (and, we hope, eternal) lives, we sometimes pay woefully little attention to the engineering and construction of our foundations. Consequently, we are left highly exposed to, and are easily buffeted by, dangerous forces.

Our connection with God the Father and His eternal plan, and with Jesus Christ, His Son and our Rock, needs to be so firmly established that it truly becomes the cornerstone of our foundation.

B1
SB501

B3
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PHOTOGRAPHS AT RIGHT: ERIC P. JOHNSON; JARED DOXEY; KATRIN TIMOFF/ISTOCK/THINKSTOCK; MATSILVAMISTOCK/THINKSTOCK; INGRAM PUBLISHING/THINKSTOCK; ZOOVAR RIZZOONAR/THINKSTOCK



CONCRETE FOUNDATION WALL

WATERSTOP SEE ARCH

5" CONC SLAB (BP-3) ON GRADE

1'-0"
UNO ON PLANS

CONCRETE MICRO PILE BY CONTRACTOR

Building and maintaining a spiritual foundation is not easy. The construction process is a significant undertaking, and maintenance is a lifetime effort.

The Importance of a Foundation

We live in a world that can be confusing—if we allow it, it can cause us to forget who we really are. President Thomas S. Monson has stated: “Mortality is a period of testing, a time to prove ourselves worthy to return to the presence of our Heavenly Father. In order for us to be tested, we must face challenges and difficulties. These can break us, and the surface of our souls may crack and crumble—that is, if our foundations of faith, our testimonies of truth are not deeply embedded within us.

“We can rely on the faith and testimony of others only so long. Eventually we must have our own strong and deeply placed foundation, or we will be unable to withstand the storms of life, which *will* come.”¹

Jesus Christ, speaking of a person who hears and follows Him, described it this way:

“He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.

“But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great” (Luke 6:48–49).

Jesus Christ is the rock upon which we must build our foundation. The Lord referred to Himself as “the stone of Israel” and emphatically stated, “He that buildeth upon this rock shall never fall” (D&C 50:44).

Moses said: “Ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect” (Deuteronomy 32:3–4).

David stated, “The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, . . . my shield, . . . my high tower” (2 Samuel 22:2–3).

The Lord said to Enoch, “I am Messiah, the King of Zion, the Rock of Heaven” (Moses 7:53).

Nephi praised the Lord as “the rock of my salvation” and “the rock of my righteousness” (2 Nephi 4:30, 35).

In Isaiah, He is called “a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation” (Isaiah 28:16).

Paul spoke of apostles and prophets as the foundation of the Church, with “Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20).²

This is not new doctrine. In one form or another, all of us understand it. Why, then, is it so difficult for many of us to live it?

Well, simply stated, it needs to get from our minds to our hearts and to our souls. It needs to be more than what we sometimes *think* or even what we sometimes *feel*—it must become who we *are*. Our connection with God the Father and His eternal plan, and with Jesus Christ, His Son and our Rock, needs to be so firmly established that it truly becomes the cornerstone of our foundation. Our identity then becomes first that of an eternal being—a son or a daughter of God—and of a grateful receiver of the blessings of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

We can then securely build other righteous identities upon that foundation because we will know which are eternal and which are temporary and how to prioritize them. We will even choose to discard other identities and their accompanying practices—some highly valued by the world.

Building a Spiritual Foundation

I love the cherished anthem “How Firm a Foundation.” Some time ago I was in a meeting in the Salt Lake Temple with the members of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and all other General Authorities assigned to Church headquarters. We sang the standard three verses of this beautiful hymn, concluding after verse three as we often do in sacrament services or other meetings. But on this occasion President Monson said, “Let’s sing the seventh verse.” With all the General Authorities we sang:

*The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose
I will not, I cannot, desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I’ll never, no never, . . . no never forsake!*³



Does this describe who you are? Does it at least describe who you are working to become? The effort of building and maintaining a spiritual foundation is not easy. The construction process is a significant undertaking, and maintenance is a lifetime effort.

For you who are really trying, we sincerely commend you. If you have never had the foundation we speak of, or through neglect have let it crack or crumble, it is not too late to put on a hard hat and go to work. All the tools you need to build, repair, or strengthen your foundation are available to you. These are the same tools used to maintain an established foundation. You know what they are. They include consistent, quality prayer; daily gospel study through the scriptures; actively participating in the

meetings of the Church, especially by partaking of the sacrament with real intent; continual selfless service; and diligent covenant keeping.

Another essential tool is the counsel of living prophets. There are 15 men on earth who are sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators. They hold the keys of the priesthood of God. We are taught by them often. We raise our hands to sustain them several times a year. We pray for them every day. However, today's extraordinary blessing of accessibility to their message can lead to a lack of appreciation for its importance.

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, warned: "Looking for the path to safety in the counsel of prophets makes sense to those with strong faith.

Jesus Christ is the rock upon which we must build our foundation. The Lord referred to Himself as “the stone of Israel,” stating, “He that buildeth upon this rock shall never fall.”

When a prophet speaks, those with little faith may think that they hear only a wise man giving good advice. Then if his counsel seems comfortable and reasonable, squaring with what they want to do, they take it. If it does not, they consider it either faulty advice or they see their circumstances as justifying their being an exception to the counsel.”

President Eyring added: “Another fallacy is to believe that the choice to accept or not accept the counsel of prophets is no more than deciding whether to accept good advice and gain its benefits or to stay where we are. But the choice not to take prophetic counsel changes the very ground upon which we stand. It becomes more dangerous.”⁴

Principles of Building a Foundation

To build and maintain a foundation, remember three principles: vision, commitment, and self-discipline.

Vision is the ability to see. In a gospel context, we sometimes call this “eternal perspective.” Jacob described it as seeing “things as they really are, and . . . things as they really will be” (Jacob 4:13).

Commitment is the willingness to make a promise. We often call these promises *covenants*. Formally, we make covenants with God through priesthood ordinances. Remember, “in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest” (D&C 84:20). In addition to making covenants with God, we should be willing to make commitments to ourselves, to spouses (or to become a spouse), to friends, and to those with whom we serve.

Self-discipline can be defined as the ability to live consistently with our vision and commitments. Developing self-discipline is essential to progress because it seamlessly connects learning and doing. Ultimately, the strength of our spiritual foundation is shown by how we live our lives, especially in times of disappointment and challenge.

Possessing a firm foundation is the ultimate protection from the buffeting of the world. We should earnestly seek to build the foundation obtained by the Lamanites who believed the preaching of Ammon and his brethren: they “were converted unto the Lord, [and] never did fall away” (Alma 23:6).

Mary Ann Pratt married Parley P. Pratt in 1837. Upon moving to Missouri, USA, along with other Saints, they endured horrific persecution. When Elder Pratt was taken, along with the Prophet Joseph Smith, by a mob in Far West, Missouri, and imprisoned, Mary Ann was confined to bed, gravely ill, while caring for two small children.

Later, Mary Ann visited her husband in jail and stayed with him for a time. She wrote, “I shared his dungeon, which was a damp, dark, filthy place, without ventilation, merely having a small grating on one side. In this we were obliged to sleep.”

After Parley’s release from jail, Mary Ann and her husband served missions to New York, USA, and to England and were among those who made “the final weary gathering to Utah,” as she described it. Elder Pratt ultimately died a martyr’s death while serving another mission.

Despite this tumultuous life, Mary Ann Pratt stayed true. She powerfully stated, “I was baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . . , being convinced of the truthfulness of its doctrines by the first sermon I heard; and I said in my heart, if there are only three who hold firm to the faith, I will be one of that number; and through all the persecution I have had to endure I have ever felt the same; my heart has never swerved from that resolve.”⁵

Building on the Rock

We can be taught by others. We can observe others. We can learn from the mistakes and the successes of others. But no one can build our spiritual foundation. In this matter we are our own contractor.

As Helaman powerfully taught, “And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation



whereon if men build they cannot fall” (Helaman 5:12).

You likely have experienced much joy and much pain. You may deeply feel the weight of life’s heavy burdens. Perhaps matters in your family are not as you would wish. Maybe you are struggling with your faith. Possibly you are dealing with something in your past—either something you have done or something that was unfairly done to you. Some of you may have physical or mental or emotional challenges that seem too much to endure.

Whatever your circumstance, having a firm foundation will lessen your load. With the message of the oft-sung hymn “I Am a Child of God”⁶ in your heart and soul and not simply on your lips, and with a continual reliance on the Atonement of the Savior Jesus Christ, you can find peace and comfort even in the most difficult of times.

Today can be a pivotal, even historic, day in our life. It can be the day we decide to take disciplined efforts to build or to reinforce our foundation. For some of us, it may mean giving up some addictive habit or repugnant practice


that offends God. For others, it may mean reprioritizing their life and making their love for God supreme. It is worth any price. Indeed, it is the essence of our life’s work.

I proclaim my witness of Jesus Christ, the cornerstone of the Church and the Rock of our lives. I testify of His holy name. I witness of His authority and of His mission and, most important, of His Atonement, which makes it possible for each of us, no matter our past or our present circumstance, to come unto Him (see Moroni 10:32). ■

From a Church Educational System devotional address, “How Firm a Foundation,” delivered at the Ogden Tabernacle in Ogden, Utah, on November 2, 2014. For the full address, visit broadcast.lds.org.

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “How Firm a Foundation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 62.
2. This scripture list is adapted from Robert J. Matthews, “I Have a Question: What Is the Symbolic Meaning of the Term *Rock* in the Scriptures?” *Ensign*, Jan. 1984, 52.
3. “How Firm a Foundation,” *Hymns*, no. 85.
4. Henry B. Eyring, “Finding Safety in Counsel,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 25.
5. Mary Ann Pratt, in Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormonism* (1877), 406–7; see also Sheri Dew, *Women and the Priesthood: What One Mormon Woman Believes* (2013), 94–95.
6. “I Am a Child of God,” *Hymns*, no. 301.



Because I had been less active years ago, a member who knew me then couldn't believe I was called to be a bishop.

By Patrick J. Cronin III

During a priesthood executive committee meeting, our full-time missionaries reported meeting a member whose records were not in the ward. I recognized the name immediately and mentioned that she and I had been in the same ward many years ago.

One of the missionaries said, "Yes, bishop, she mentioned that and seemed quite surprised that you were the bishop."

I asked them, "What did she say?"

They said she looked very surprised and said, "*He's* the bishop?"

I had to laugh and explain that this sister knew me as a very different person 30 years ago.

As I contemplated this incident later, I thought about how much my life had changed during the 30-plus years that my family and I have been members. I have known many members of our ward for 20 years and have served as branch president and as bishop, but none of these members knew me 30 years ago. Although I occasionally share incidents from my past to teach about repentance and the Atonement of Jesus Christ, most of the ward doesn't know what an incredible journey my life in the Church has been.

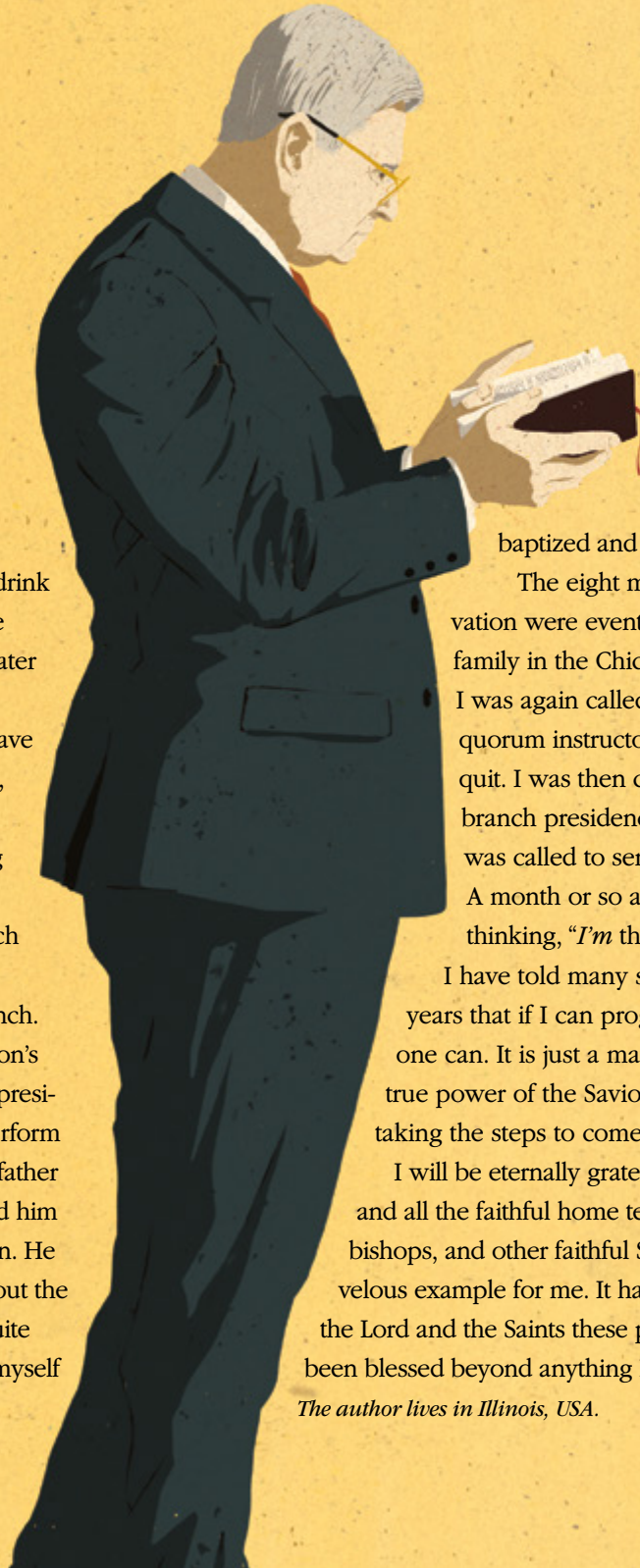
My family and I were introduced to the Church in May 1979, and I knew immediately that this was where we belonged. We were baptized in June, and at first we were all active, but it wasn't long before I stopped attending and returned to old habits. I never really had any doubt about the truthfulness of the gospel and the Restoration, but I did not think I had what it took to be a good member of the Church.

In 1982, because of my continued alcohol abuse, my wife, who had never failed in her faith, filed for divorce. At the time my family was living in Oklahoma, USA, but I had returned to Illinois, USA, where I had been raised. I had reached the point where I was about to lose the only thing that truly mattered to me: my family.

I began praying on my knees morning and evening to a God who I was no longer sure existed, or if He did, I figured He had long ago forgotten me. Yet for three months I prayed faithfully. Early one morning, while I was deep in prayer, a feeling of great relief came upon me and I knew that God lived, that He knew me, and that He loved me. I also knew I would never touch another drop of alcohol.

That very evening I received a call from my wife to let me know she was going to mail me the divorce papers to sign. During that conversation she suddenly said, "There is

He's THE BISHOP?



something very different about you. I don't believe you are ever going to drink again, and I am going to tear up these papers." We reunited, and two years later she gave birth to our third son.

One would assume that I would have returned to full activity in the Church, but I am a stubborn man. I returned for a time and even received a calling as an elders quorum instructor. But I soon began to feel inadequate to teach and again became inactive.

In 1991 we moved into a small branch. Several months before our youngest son's eighth birthday, my wife, the Primary president, asked him who he wanted to perform his baptism. Of course he wanted his father to perform the ordinance. My wife told him that probably was not going to happen. He did not accept that answer and set about the task of activating his father. He was quite relentless, and in short order I found myself serving as the Scoutmaster, and I later

baptized and confirmed my son.

The eight months following my activation were eventful. We were sealed as a family in the Chicago Illinois Temple, and I was again called to serve as an elders quorum instructor, only this time I didn't quit. I was then called as a counselor in the branch presidency, and five months later I was called to serve as the branch president. A month or so after my call, I remember thinking, "I'm the branch president?"

I have told many struggling Saints over the years that if I can progress in the gospel, anyone can. It is just a matter of understanding the true power of the Savior and His Atonement and taking the steps to come unto Him.

I will be eternally grateful to my wife and children and all the faithful home teachers, quorum leaders, bishops, and other faithful Saints who set such a marvelous example for me. It has been a privilege to serve the Lord and the Saints these past 20 years. My life has been blessed beyond anything I could have imagined. ■

The author lives in Illinois, USA.



**By President
Russell M. Nelson**

President of the
Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

Senior Missionary

MOMENTS

*One of the best ways for
senior couples to make
magnificent memories is
to serve a mission together.*

When our friends who are 60 or 70 years old forget something, we often jokingly refer to the lapse in memory as a “senior moment.” But I would like to discuss a different kind of senior moment—a moment so magnificent that the memory of it will be everlasting. It is the moment when a senior missionary couple realizes that they are doing exactly what the Lord would have them do. At such memorable moments they recognize that:

- They have a lifetime of experience to share, and talents, skills, and gospel understanding they can use to bless others.
- Their example is a blessing to their children and their children’s children.
- As they serve, they are making enduring friendships.
- Their marriage is growing stronger every day.
- Service in His name is sweet.

Moments in the Making

My senior couple friends, such moments should be in the making for many of you. Consider the story told by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles about what a senior couple serving in Chile was able to do. The parent of one of the young elders died. The mission president was far enough away that he couldn’t get to the missionary quickly.

“But there was a sweet [mature] missionary couple serving in the area,” Elder Holland says. “They came and sat with that missionary and tenderly cared for and comforted him until the mission president could make personal contact. We had great young missionaries in our missions, but no young single missionary could have done for that elder what that couple was able to do.”¹

Their skill at that moment was simply to convey compassion in a time of need. They weren’t concerned about speaking any language other than the language of Christlike love. They weren’t worried about missing a grandchild’s birthday or a baby blessing, as important as those events may be. They were concerned about being where the Lord could use them to bless the life of one of His children. And because they were willing, He was able to let them represent Him.

Service Is Seldom Convenient

The truth is, no senior missionary finds it convenient to leave home. Neither did Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, or Wilford Woodruff. They had children and grandchildren too, and they loved their families just as we do. But they also loved the Lord and wanted to serve Him. Someday we may meet these stalwarts who helped to establish this dispensation. When we do, we will rejoice that we

did not seek the shadows when we should have served.

Some may prefer to serve while still living at home. After a stroke left Aase Schumacher Nelson (no relation) confined to a wheelchair, she feared her lifelong desire to go on a mission with her husband, Don, would not be fulfilled. Then a neighbor talked to them about his Church-service mission at a bishops' storehouse. Encouraged, they talked with a supervisor at the facility, completed their recommendation forms, and were called to serve for two days a week at a storehouse near their home.

"It's easy to just lay back and think, 'Oh, I'm not needed anymore,'" Aase Nelson says. "But now I feel that I *am* needed. And that's been a testimony to me."

You Are Definitely Needed

If you are tempted to think you're not needed, let me reassure you that you are. There is not a mission president in the Church who would not love to have additional couples serving in his mission. Seniors strengthen the younger elders and sisters. They provide support that helps others to serve better in their own responsibilities. And can you imagine what it means to a leader who has only been a member for a few years to have ready access to seasoned Church members? Senior couples are often a literal answer to the prayers of bishops and branch presidents.

We encourage mission presidents to seek out couples to meet needs in their missions. Bishops should seek out couples who could serve. [LDS.org](https://www.lds.org) lists pages and pages of opportunities for senior couples. But most of all, couples might get on their knees and ask Heavenly Father if the



A couple in Seoul, South Korea, savors the sweetness of serving together.

time is right for them to serve a mission together. Of all the qualifications, a *desire* to serve may be the most important (see D&C 4:3).

As I extol the work of senior missionaries, I realize that there are many who would like to serve but are not able to do so. Limitations imposed by age or poor health deserve realistic appraisal, as do the important needs of family members. When desire burns within yet such limitations exist, others can be your arms and legs, and you can provide needed funds.

Senior couples, no matter who you are or where you are, please pray about this opportunity to create great senior missionary moments together. Heavenly Father will help you know what you can do. ■

NOTE

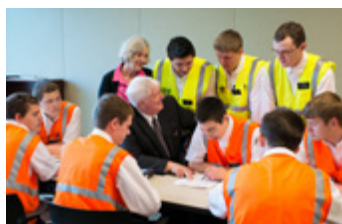
1. Jeffrey R. Holland in Joseph Walker, "Elder Jeffrey Holland: LDS Church Desperately Needs More Senior Missionaries," *Deseret News*, Sept. 14, 2011, 3.



Top: The Malmroses meet regularly with President Robison to discuss how to use their talents as they serve others. Above: Young missionaries at the training center in Accra, Ghana, say that having support from Elder and Sister Malmrose is like having a second mother and father serving at their side.



FROM HOME OR AWAY FROM HOME
Serving from home or away from home, senior missionary couples "come and help" in wards and branches, mission offices, visitors' centers, temples, inner-city missions, medical assignments, employment resource centers, self-reliance programs, addiction recovery programs, family history, records preservation, the Church Educational System, public affairs, humanitarian services, and more. And more and more couples are needed.



Senior Missionaries:

NEEDED,
BLESSED,
AND
LOVED

*Serving as
a missionary
couple may be
more flexible,
less expensive, and
more joyful than
you think.*

By Richard M. Romney
Church Magazines

“CAN YOU COME AND HELP?”

It's a question Gerald and Lorna Malmrose of Washington, USA, had answered before. They said yes when their former bishop, then a mission president, asked if they could serve with him in the West Indies. They said yes again when their stake president called them to fulfill a service mission at Church headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, working with computers and human resources.

When their former bishop and mission president, Reid Robison, called again, this time as president of the missionary training center in Accra, Ghana, he asked if the Malmroses would help once again.

“We knew we could trust the Lord,” Elder Malmrose says. “So we decided to trust Him again.” They said yes, completed their recommendation forms, received their call, and soon were in Ghana.

Serving as a Couple

The Malmroses' experiences demonstrate some principles about senior couples serving missions that may not be widely understood:

- *There are two types of missions.* (1) The President of the Church calls senior couples to serve either from

their own home or away from home. (2) A stake president calls Church-service missionary couples to fill local or regional needs part-time, from 8 to 32 hours per week. They usually live and serve locally but sometimes may serve away from home.

- *Mission presidents are encouraged to find couples who can meet needs in their mission, and couples may indicate their preferences.* “We’re not saying that couples can pick and choose their own missionary assignments,” explained Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “A call is still a call. . . . [But] we talk to our senior couples about their service preferences, and every consideration is given to letting them serve where and how they want to serve.”¹
- *Mission presidents counsel with couples about how to best use their skills and abilities.* “To have the most meaningful experience as a senior couple,” President Robison says, “you need to have the opportunity to work both in areas you’re passionate about and where you have a skill level that makes you feel you have something to offer.”

For example, President Robison knew that Elder Malmrose speaks French, helpful because many Africans



MAKE YOURSELVES AVAILABLE

"We need many, many more senior couples. . . . Make yourselves available. . . . There are few times in your lives when you will enjoy [so much] the sweet spirit and satisfaction that come from [serving] together in the work of the Master."

President Thomas S. Monson, "As We Meet Together Again," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 6.



speak French. "I had envisioned him being involved in travel and working on visas," President Robison says. "But when he got here, I sensed that wasn't his true interest. So I invited him to use his computer skills. He has saved us hours and hours." Elder Malmrose also helps missionaries, especially French-speaking missionaries, prepare names and do temple work for their families. Sister Malmrose, a certified medical assistant, was assigned to work with the mission doctor and nurse.

He Prepares the Way

Like the Malmroses, other couples find that when they trust the Lord, He prepares the way. That's what happened for Alvin and Corazon Rieta of Kawit, Cavite, in the Philippines.

"Two years prior to our decision to serve, we began putting into place firm plans for our family business," Elder Rieta explains. "Our son and daughter had graduated from college and could take over for us, but we wondered who would solve business problems and how our clients would react to our plans."

Sister Rieta was also concerned about leaving her aging mother. "I was afraid we might lose her while we were away," she says. "I also felt unequal to the challenge of teaching the gospel."

They counseled with their bishop and with a couple who had recently served in Davao. "All of them bore strong testimonies that the Lord would guide each couple to know how to deal with their affairs at home, their family, and the funds for their mission," Sister Rieta says.

"As we sought guidance," Elder Rieta says, "our fears were addressed—our business went well in spite of challenges, our clients

expressed joy and support, and our family drew closer together in taking care of our sick mother. We began to understand that the Lord truly would help us."

The Rietas now serve in member and leadership support in the Philippines Cagayan de Oro Mission.

A Lot You Can Do

Some couples wonder about physical limitations, but not Keith and Jennilyn Mauerman of Utah, USA. Years ago, four months after they were married in the Los Angeles California Temple, Keith was drafted and sent into combat. An airborne squad leader, he was walking ahead of the other soldiers when a land mine exploded. He lost both legs. When he arrived back home, Jennilyn rushed to his side.

"I knew I didn't have to worry," Keith says, "because we have an eternal marriage. My wife has supported me all along. She still sustains me every day."

When Sister Mauerman retired, they decided to serve a mission. But would Elder Mauerman's being a double amputee cause a problem? "There are always things I *can't* do," he says, "but there are so many things I *can* do, we knew there would be a place for us."

While completing their recommendation forms, he checked a box indicating he had served in the military. Soon they received a call from Church Military Relations. "I had an ID card that would allow us to enter military bases, so they asked our permission to recommend us for a military relations mission."

The Mauermans were called to serve at a military base in North Carolina, USA. Elder Mauerman recalls: "The sign at the gate said 'Fort Bragg, Home of the Airborne.' When

the guard greeted us with the airborne motto ‘All the Way!’ it was the first time I had heard it in years. It felt like home, even though I had never been to Fort Bragg. I knew our mission call was a perfect fit and that the Lord is mindful of me.”

“We taught lessons about becoming self-reliant and resilient and about strengthening marriage,” Sister Mauerman says. “Initially we didn’t want to share our story, but we found that sharing it made all the difference. Soldiers and their spouses looked at us and said, ‘If you can do it, we can too.’”

Portuguese. Study and effort, however, helped Elder Romrell’s Portuguese skills to return and Sister Romrell’s to grow. So did a ukulele.

“I wasn’t really planning to bring it,” Sister Romrell says, “but Elder Romrell was inspired to, and it’s amazing to see what it’s done. As we teach investigators and work on reactivation and fellowship, it’s fun to use it to get people to sing hymns. We learn the language, and the hymns bring a strong spirit with them.”



Having overcome financial concerns, Elder and Sister Rieta serve in their own country, the Philippines.



For the Mauermans, serving in military relations is a perfect fit. “It feels like coming home,” they say.



Inspired to bring along a ukulele, the Romrells use it to share the universal language of music as they visit homes and sing hymns.

The Mauermans had such a positive experience in North Carolina that they asked to serve again. Today they travel about 40 miles (64 km) from their home in Orem to Salt Lake City two times a week to serve in the Church Military Relations office. They also teach senior couples at the missionary training center in Provo, where they find that just about every group includes somebody who has overcome obstacles in order to serve.

Universal Languages

Called to the Brazil Cuiabá Mission, Randy and Lou Ellen Romrell of Utah were concerned. Although Elder Romrell had served in Brazil as a young missionary, he’d let his Portuguese slip. And Sister Romrell didn’t know

Even though her Portuguese skills are still developing, she is already fluent in music. “Music brings people together,” she says. “Even if I can’t understand everything they say during a visit, when we sing, we connect.” Invited to speak in schools about the American holiday of Thanksgiving, the Romrells sang hymns of gratitude—accompanied by ukulele. And Sister Romrell also uses a more conventional instrument, the piano, to accompany hymns at church.

And Portuguese? “Even if you’re not fluent, learning just a few words helps,” she says. “Simply saying hello and greeting people goes a long way. Let them know you’re learning. Make it simple and rely on the Spirit.” And the Spirit, of course, is another language everyone can share.



“WHAT YOU WANT ME TO BE”

“When I think of the great need for senior missionaries, I always think of that beloved hymn ‘I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go’ (*Hymns*, no. 270) and its message, ‘I’ll be what you want me to be.’”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.



COUPLES NEEDED

“Our message to all of our mature couples is simple: we dearly need you. We are doing everything we can to make it as convenient as possible for you to go. . . . The times cry out for it. There are people who need you. Please—go.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, *Deseret News*, Sept. 14, 2011.

Serving at Home

Paul and Mar Jean Lewis from Utah had already served three missions together (Palmyra New York Temple; Hong Kong China Temple; and Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia with seminaries and institutes). They were preparing to serve another when their stake president asked, “Would you be willing to serve right here in our own stake,

“Many couples, when they think about serving a mission, are worried about what they’ll do with their home and their car or what they’ll miss out on with their family,” Elder Lewis says. “We’ve been able to live in our own house and drive our own car. We are encouraged to go to family activities, as long as they don’t interfere with missionary responsibilities. And we were even here for the birth of a grandchild.”



Serving from home, the Lewises enjoy getting to know full-time missionaries and members of their own stake.



The Sorensens give schoolchildren in the Cook Islands small stones to remind them to remain “rock solid in Christ.”

supporting the mission we live in?”

“We’re new here, so it was a wonderful opportunity,” Sister Lewis says. “We serve with the young elders and sisters, have a close association with the mission president, go to district and zone meetings, and work with ward mission leaders.” They also visit investigators and those who are less active.

“We have met wonderful people we would never have known otherwise,” Sister Lewis says, “including some who have drifted off the path. To see them come back, receive ordinances, and go to the temple is a wonderful blessing.”

Family Blessings

On the other hand, Jill and Kent Sorensen, who are from the same stake, say one of the best ways to strengthen their family has been to serve away from home. Sister Sorensen says, “One of the main excuses couples give for not going is grandkids, married children with struggles, daughters expecting babies, aging parents—you name it. Family is a priority, and you miss them every day. But going on a mission sends a powerful message that missionary work is important too.”

Besides, Elder Sorensen notes, “there are so many ways to keep in touch now that

you can check in all the time.”

The Sorensens’ missionary journey began three years ago, when their bishop asked them to host monthly firesides for couples contemplating missionary service. “After talking about it constantly,” Sister Sorensen says, “we had to go ourselves!” They received a call to serve in the Cook Islands, where Jill’s grandparents served 50 years ago.

Today, among other duties, they are asked to teach Bible classes in schools.



Throughout the world, couples say that in addition to helping others, serving together strengthens their marriage and brings them closer to Heavenly Father.

“We talk about Christ being the rock,” Elder Sorensen says. “We give the students a small rock and encourage them to remain rock solid in Christ. Now everywhere we go, people say, ‘Rock solid!’ when they see us.”

Come and Help

If you are contemplating a full-time mission or a Church-service mission, all of these couples would ask you the same question President Robison asked Gerald and Lorna Malmrose: “Can you come and help?” And they will tell you that, no matter how you participate, this promise is sure: You are needed, you can contribute, and you will be blessed and loved. ■

NOTE

1. In Joseph Walker, “Elder Jeffrey Holland: LDS Church Desperately Needs More Senior Missionaries,” *Deseret News*, Sept. 14, 2011, deseretnews.com.

MANY WAYS TO SERVE

View current opportunities, hear from those currently serving, and find answers to questions at lds.org/callings/missionary.

EASIER THAN EVER

Flexible policies make it simpler for couples to serve.

- Church-service couples may live at home and serve locally.
- Couples may serve for 6, 12, 18, or 23 months. They can serve internationally for less than 18 months if they pay for travel.
- Couples may, at their own expense, take a short leave of absence, normally 7 to 10 days, to return home for a critical family event.
- Housing costs are capped. Couples pay no more than a set amount for housing, including rent, utilities, and furnishings.
- Housing will be safe and comfortable. Missions or area offices secure housing that is clean, modestly furnished, and economical.
- Schedules are less strenuous. Couples are not expected to follow the same schedule of work hours and activities as the young single missionaries.
- Family communication occurs more often. Couples may communicate with their families more frequently than is outlined for young single missionaries.



By Elder
L. Tom Perry
(1922–2015)

Of the Quorum
of the Twelve
Apostles

THE PRIESTHOOD: A SURE ANCHOR

This article was prepared by Elder L. Tom Perry on May 28, 2015, two days before his passing, to be shared with young priesthood holders.

The greatest strength in my life has been the priesthood of God. I believe it will also be a sure anchor for you young men. But for it to have power in your life, you need to understand and use it.

Early Experiences with the Priesthood

I grew up in a comfortable environment in Logan, Utah. I had no childhood worries about food or shelter or education. But perhaps because life was easy, I needed something to hold on to that would anchor me.

For me that anchor was the priesthood of God. I was in an unusual situation when I was growing up. My dad was called to be the bishop when I was a year old, and he was my bishop for 19 years. His fatherly and spiritual guidance was a tremendous help to me.

I think that is mostly why I looked forward to receiving the Aaronic Priesthood on my 12th birthday. I remember the special day I felt my father’s hands on my head as he

ordained me. After that, I advanced through the offices of the Aaronic Priesthood and received callings I enjoyed very much.

Passing the sacrament was very special to me. You could see people commit themselves to obey the Lord and keep His commandments as they partook of the emblems of His body and blood.

Growing in Priesthood Understanding

As time progressed, I graduated from high school, and then after a year in college, I was called on a mission. I enjoyed every minute of it and loved my companions. One in particular was a strength to me. I learned much from him as we fulfilled our responsibilities.

Because the country was at war, when I returned from my mission I joined the United States Marine Corps. When the war was over, I returned to college, married, and started a family. Successive professional moves took me to many places across the United States, where I learned much as I served in many priesthood callings. I finally landed in Boston, Massachusetts, where I served as a

stake president. It was from there that I was called to be an assistant to the Twelve and then, after 17 months, to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Lessons Learned as an Apostle

What have I learned as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve?

I’ve learned that there is a guide, an anchor, and a protection in the priesthood.

The priesthood has always existed. Before Adam came to earth, he had the priesthood. As Adam’s posterity scattered with the priesthood, it became necessary to organize how the priesthood was administered. The





Lord did that by calling Abraham to preside over his family of priesthood holders. This organization continued under Isaac and Jacob, whose name was later changed to Israel.

Centuries later, the children of Israel found themselves in captivity. The Lord sent Moses to deliver them, but when he did, they proved themselves not ready as a people for the Melchizedek Priesthood. So they were left with the Aaronic Priesthood until the time of the Savior.

I find it very interesting what the Savior did first as He began His ministry. He organized the Melchizedek Priesthood. He called twelve Apostles and taught them the laws and order of the priesthood. He called Peter to be

the chief Apostle, establishing a line of authority in His Church. In that day and this, it is Jesus Christ who selects His chief Apostle to preside over the Church, and it is the Savior who directs him in his priesthood duties.

So the priesthood has a direct line from our Lord and Savior through the chief Apostle to the other Apostles and on to the other priesthood holders in the Church. Keys of authority are given to the Apostles, and as long as those keys are on the earth, we will be guided by the Lord Himself. This divine direction protects us and assures us that the Church will not vary from the truth. It will remain consistent because it is not directed by any earthly being. It is directed by the Lord.

Learn the Doctrines of the Priesthood

The greatest advice I have for you young men is to study the doctrines of the priesthood, understand the power you have in exercising your priesthood, and learn how it can bless your lives and the lives of others.

I promise if you'll learn the doctrines of the priesthood and fulfill your priesthood duties, the priesthood will be a sure anchor that will keep you spiritually safe and bring you great joy. Be a true priesthood quorum. Reach out to your friends and bring them into your quorum. Create a brotherhood in your quorum that will be a permanent foundation for your lives. ■

A SECOND CHANCE

The first time I met him, I was holding my violin.

He shuffled close to me while I was walking into the lunchroom, my violin case slapping against my leg.

“Violin,” he said as he approached.

“Yes,” I said.

I had never really talked with anyone who had a disability and didn’t know what else to say. He followed me to my table and sat beside me, pointing at my violin case.

“Violin,” he said again.

I opened my case and his eyes lit up. Too roughly, he plucked at the strings. My heart thudded when I imagined a string snapping from my violin, and I eased the case shut. He encircled me in a hug before he left.

I saw him frequently after this.

Whenever he saw me, he would

“Violin,” William said as he approached.

wrap his arms around my shoulders as he kissed the top of my head.

For the rest of high school, I always tried to avoid him when I saw him coming. When he would find me and smother me with his hugs and wet kisses, I’d tolerate them for a few seconds with a forced smile and then walk away quickly without uttering a word.

“Oh, no,” I muttered when I saw him at my last orchestra concert of high school. Following the concert, he meandered toward where I stood with my friends outside the auditorium.

My friends stood back as he came up to me with a grin, his arms open for a hug.

“William!”

I turned and saw a woman jogging toward us.

“Sorry,” she said, linking her arm with his. “William loves the violin. He begged me to bring him to this concert tonight. Let’s go, honey.”

Until that moment, I hadn’t realized that I never even knew his name. I’d

met William two years before but spent so much time avoiding him that I’d never made the effort to really know him. As I watched William and his mom leave, waves of shame rolled over me.

Years later, after I had gotten married, I gave birth to a beautiful

little boy with Down syndrome whom we named Spencer. I often found my thoughts lingering on William as I looked at my son, and I wondered if Spencer would have similar experiences. Would people avoid him because he kissed too much or hugged too tight? Would his peers be uncomfortable with his limitations?

When Spencer was four months old, I took him to our local hospital for an appointment. As I unloaded him from the car, I saw two people exiting the hospital. In disbelief, I realized it was William and his mother.

“William!” I called out when we got closer, my heart pounding.

“Hi!” He ambled across the parking lot, a wide grin lighting up his face. He thrust out his hand and grasped mine in an enthusiastic handshake.

“How are you?” I asked him.

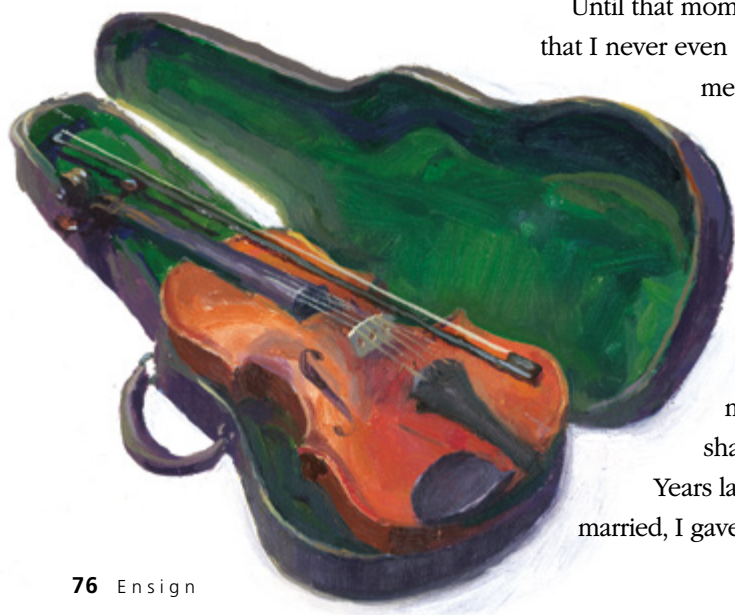
“Violin,” he said, the excitement shining in his eyes.

Violin. He remembered me too.

“Yes,” I choked out through a teary laugh, “I played the violin.”

As we spoke, my heart rose in prayer for the tender mercies of a loving Father in Heaven who knew how much I had wished to meet William again. I am grateful that God saw me—a struggling young mother overwhelmed with my son’s health problems and worried for his future—and gave me an experience that reminded me that He is aware of us. ■

Kaylee Baldwin, Arizona, USA





I heard the woman place what seemed to be an infinite number of coins on the counter to pay her bill.

GO HELP HER

I stood in line at a gas station. In front of me, a mother with two small children asked for \$3 worth of gas and two vanilla ice-cream cones.

At first glance I could see that they had very little. The children were barefoot and wearing tattered clothing.

I heard the woman place what seemed to be an infinite number of coins on the counter to pay her bill.

After paying for my gas, I walked out and glanced at the mother's car. It was an older model that likely got very poor gas mileage.

I felt a twinge of sympathy for this mother of two, but I started my motorcycle and went on with my day.

Less than a minute into my ride on

the highway, a voice came to me: "Go help her." The prompting came twice.

I shook my head, thinking that she had probably already left. What would I say to her anyway?

The voice came clearly a third time: "Go help her!"

I turned back toward the service station, trying to figure out what I was going to say if she was still there.

Upon arriving, I saw that her car doors were open. She was in the driver's seat, and her two small children were enjoying their ice cream in the backseat.

I offered a small prayer, asking Heavenly Father what I should say.

The same voice said to me, "Introduce

yourself and ask if she needs help." I approached her car and introduced myself. I shared with her that I felt impressed to ask her if she needed help.

She began to cry and said, "I just finished praying to Jesus, asking Him to send someone to help me."

Heavenly Father had answered her prayer. I paid to fill up her tank with gas and gave her the phone number of someone in our elders quorum who was hiring at the time. I do not know what happened with this young mother afterward, but I am grateful I followed the prompting to help her. ■

Thomas Robbins, California, USA

DON'T SHOOT!

Bob and I sat in our police car, waiting for a sign of movement down the street. We had begun our stakeout two hours earlier after spotting the car mentioned in a police radio alert.

“Stickup in progress,” the alert had said. “Two males, both armed. They were just seen in an orange car.

Witnesses say the men are brutal and willing to shoot.”

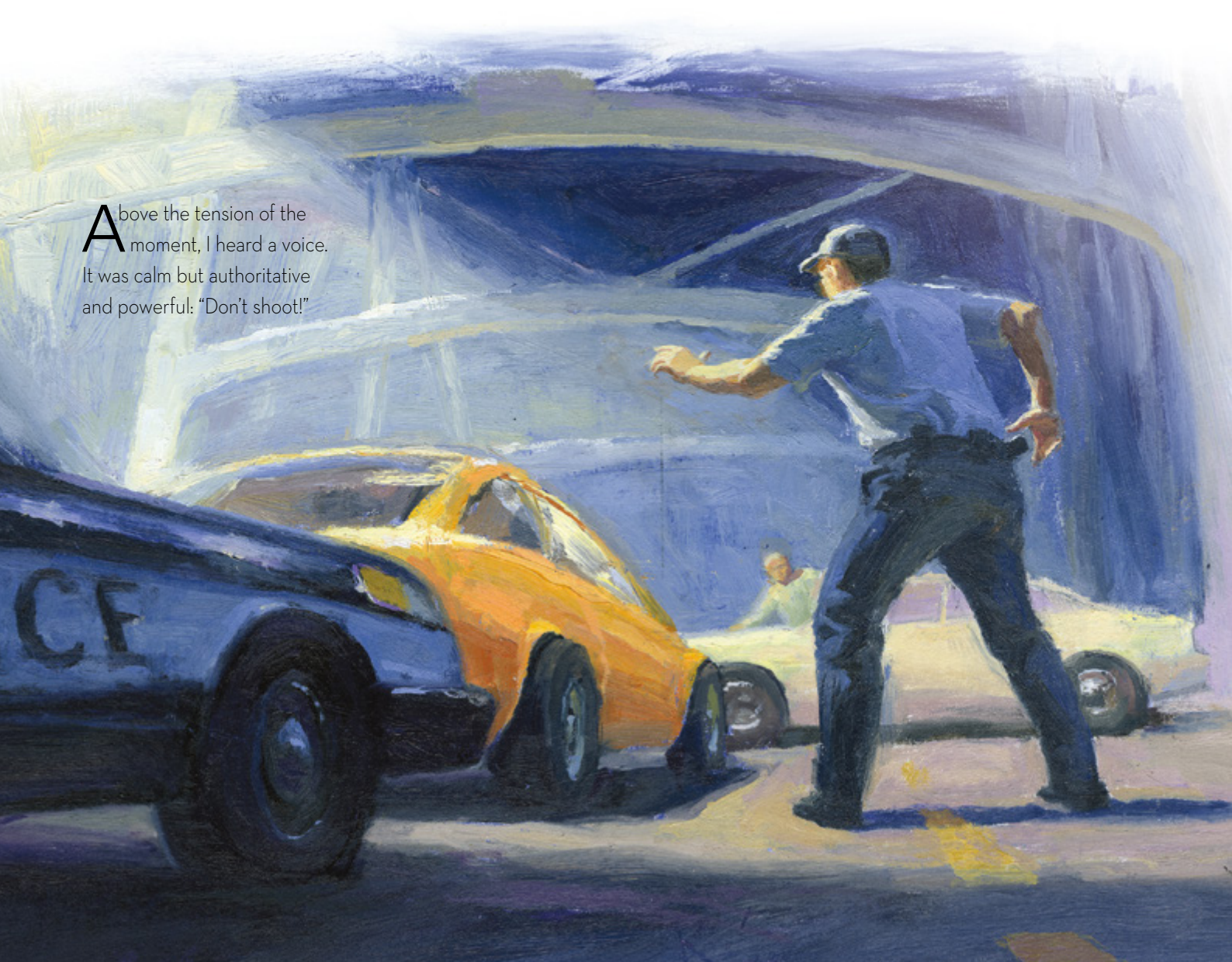
A rash of recent armed robberies had occurred in the area, yet despite our best efforts, the robbers had repeatedly escaped. These thoughts fled my mind as soon as I saw two figures come out of a home on the darkened street and hop into the

orange car. They were now heading our way.

“Requesting a backup unit,” I said. “Suspects rolling northbound from our location.”

Our backup, two plainclothes detectives in an unmarked car, pulled ahead of the car while Bob and I followed. After our three vehicles

Above the tension of the moment, I heard a voice. It was calm but authoritative and powerful: “Don't shoot!”



had entered a bridge, our backup suddenly stopped crossways on the bridge in front of the orange car and we parked behind it, boxing in our suspects. Almost immediately, the car stopped and both figures ducked out of sight.

“Step out of the car with your hands on your head!” I ordered after getting out of my car. No one responded.

Braced and ready to fire, I again commanded, “Step out of the car with your hands on your head. Do it now!”

Suddenly the driver rose up and turned toward me. I could see a nickel-plated object flash in his hands.

My police training and common sense dictated that I pull the trigger to save my life. But above the tension of the moment, I heard a voice. It was calm but authoritative and powerful: “Don’t shoot!”

I expected to be shot any moment, but I waited for someone in the car to open fire first. Instead, the driver raised his hands, lifted over his head what looked like a gun, and dropped his hands into his lap.

“Freeze!” I said as I rushed to the car. “Don’t move!”

The moment felt like a TV show—until I realized that the hardened criminals in the car were actually two frightened young girls. What I had thought was a gun was only a seat-belt buckle.

The girls, we soon learned, had loaned the car to their boyfriends.

They had no idea what kind of men they were.

“I thought you were dead, Cal!” Bob told me later. “I almost opened fire. I don’t know why I didn’t.”

The two detectives in the unmarked car said the same thing, though no one but me heard the voice. I know that only the power of heaven could have saved those two girls from death and four police officers from making a tragic mistake. This experience gave me a sure knowledge that our Heavenly Father can and will intervene for our benefit. ■

Name withheld

TEACH THEM TO READ THE BOOK OF MORMON

During our service in the Geneva Switzerland Mission, I was called and set apart to be the branch president, and my wife was called as the Relief Society president. Together we worked with all our strength to revitalize the struggling branch. Although organized in the 1960s, the branch had not seen any baptisms for many years and had not sent any missionaries to the mission field for 15 years.

It was evident that we needed the Lord’s help in order to find solutions for the numerous difficulties the branch faced. After I had prayed about the branch’s challenges, the Spirit of the Lord said to me, “Teach the members to read the Book of Mormon, and you will be successful.”

Immediately, we made plans to commit all the members to start reading the Book of Mormon.

Extraordinary results followed. Peace and the Spirit returned to the branch. New families joined the Church. Motivated by his desire to serve, a young man left on a mission. Several struggling marriages were strengthened, and families became closer. This branch continues to progress today.

We and the branch members witness for ourselves the miraculous power of the Book of Mormon. It truly is the keystone of our religion and of our testimonies of the gospel and of Jesus Christ. We love it with all of our heart. It is a source of unending and unalterable knowledge.

This experience taught us that the Book of Mormon is the surest means of helping our brothers and sisters move out of the shadows of spiritual darkness that cover the earth. This book brings peace, joy, happiness, and a strong desire to follow the Savior Jesus Christ. ■

Emilien Rioux, Quebec, Canada



By President
George Q. Cannon
(1827–1901)

First Counselor in the
First Presidency

SEEKING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

How many of you are seeking for these gifts that God has promised to bestow?

Every man and woman in the Church of Christ can have the gifts of the Spirit of God divided to them according to their faith and as God wills. . . .

How many of you . . . are seeking for these gifts that God has promised to bestow? How many of you, when you bow before your Heavenly Father in your family circle or in your secret places, contend for these gifts to be bestowed upon you? How many of you ask the Father, in the name of Jesus, to manifest Himself to you through these powers and these gifts? Or do you go along day by day, like a door turning on its hinges, without having any feeling upon the subject, without exercising any faith whatever, content to be baptized and be members of the Church and to rest there, thinking that your salvation is secure because you have done this? . . .



. . . I know that God is willing to heal the sick, that He is willing to bestow the gift of discerning of spirits, the gift of wisdom, of knowledge and of prophecy, and other gifts that may be needed. If any of us are imperfect, it is our duty to pray for the gift that will make us perfect. Have I imperfections? I am full of them. What is my duty? To pray to God to give me the gifts that will correct these imperfections. If I am an angry man, it is my duty to pray for charity, which suffereth long and is kind. Am I an envious man? It is my duty to seek for charity, which envieth

not. So with all the gifts of the gospel. They are intended for this purpose. No man ought to say, “Oh, I cannot help this; it is my nature.” He is not justified in it, for the reason that God has promised to give strength to correct these things, and to give gifts that will eradicate them. If a man lack wisdom, it is his duty to ask God for wisdom. The same with everything else. That is the design of God concerning His Church. He wants His Saints to be perfected in the truth. For this purpose He gives these gifts and bestows them upon those who seek after them, in order that they may be a perfect people upon the face of the earth, notwithstanding their many weaknesses, because God has promised to give the gifts that are necessary for their perfection. ■

From the Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star, Apr. 23, 1894, 258–61; punctuation and capitalization standardized.

INSIGHTS



How does early belief grow into a knowledge and a witness?

“I can’t remember not believing in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. I have loved Them since I learned of Them at the knees of my angel mother, reading scripture and gospel stories. That early belief has now grown into a knowledge and a witness of a loving Heavenly Father, who hears and answers our prayers.”

Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “I Stand All Amazed,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 90.



In **Church** Magazines

Ensign: Learn a key way to tell the difference between Satan's lies and the Lord's truths. See "Recognizing Satan's Counterfeits" (page 12). Also, find out how the Atonement of Jesus Christ can work more powerfully in your life (page 50).

New Era: This month, Elder Dale G. Renlund teaches youth how to build an unsinkable ship of spiritual stability (page 2). Also in this issue is the message Elder L. Tom Perry prepared for young priesthood holders just two days before he died (page 32; also in the *Ensign*, page 74).

Friend: Do you know how new prophets are called? Learn as a family on page 31. Then use "Following Prophets and Apostles" (page 24) and Elder Bednar's message (page 12) to continue the discussion!

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

