THE ENSIGN OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • APRIL 2018

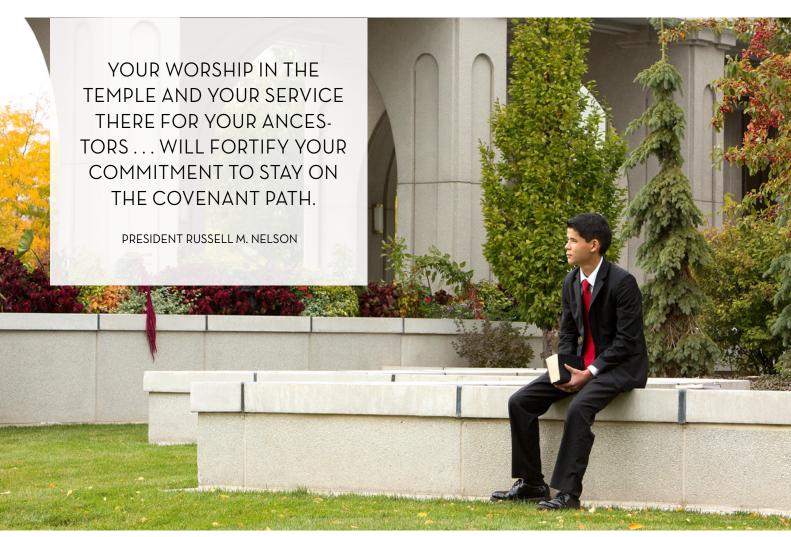






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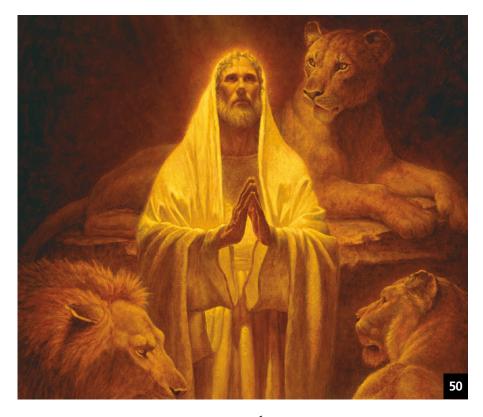
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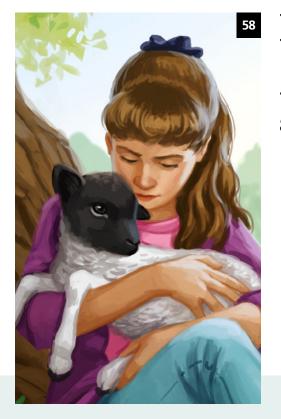
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Ensign

A MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS April 2018 Volume 48 • Number 4

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LEARN THE STORY OF THE CHURCH

In this issue, you'll find the next chapter of the new narrative history of the Church, *Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days* (see page 62). For supplemental videos and essays on the people, places, and events featured in this series, visit **saints.lds.org.**

EASTER SYMBOLS

Long before Jesus Christ lived on the earth and performed His Atonement (see page 36), people celebrated Passover, a day foreshadowing His sacrifice. Read about how six symbols of Passover can help us better understand Easter today: **Ids.org/go/E41841.**





FINDING REAL HAPPINESS

Elder Ulisses Soares of the Presidency of the Seventy teaches us that happiness is not determined by our external circumstances—we must choose to be happy (see page 14). Find more ways we can choose to be joyful as we live the gospel: **Ids.org/go/E41817.**

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By President Russell M. Nelson



As We Go Forward Together

Editors' note: President Russell M. Nelson, set apart as the 17th President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on January 14, 2018, delivered these remarks on January 16, 2018, during a live broadcast from the annex of the Salt Lake Temple. He requested that his words be published in this issue.

ear brothers and sisters, I'm humbled to be with you this morning. Four days ago we laid to rest a giant of a man, a prophet of God—President Thomas S. Monson. No words can do justice to the magnitude and magnificence of his life. I will forever cherish our friendship with gratitude for what he taught me. Now we must look forward to the future with complete faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, whose Church this is.

Two days ago all of the living Apostles met in the upper room of the Salt Lake Temple. There they made a unanimous decision, first, to reorganize the First Presidency now and, second, that I serve as President of the Church. Words are inadequate to tell you what it felt like to have my Brethren—Brethren who hold all the priesthood keys restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith in this dispensation—place their hands upon my head to ordain and set me apart as President of the Church. It was a sacred and humbling experience.

It then became my responsibility to discern whom the Lord had prepared to be my counselors. How could I choose only two of the twelve other Apostles, each of whom I love so dearly? I'm deeply grateful to the Lord for answering my fervent prayers. I am very thankful that President Dallin Harris Oaks and President Henry Bennion Eyring are willing to serve with me as First and Second Counselors, respectively. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf has resumed his place in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He has already received major assignments for which he is uniquely qualified.

I pay tribute to him and to President Eyring for their magnificent service as counselors to President Monson. They've been totally capable, devoted, and inspired. We

Monthly First Presidency Message to Be Discontinued

This message will be the last First Presidency Message published in the *Ensign* on a monthly basis. In the future, the First Presidency will share important messages as needed through the Church's various channels, including Church magazines and LDS.org.



Each day of an Apostle's service is a day of learning and preparing for more responsibility in the future.

are very grateful for them. Each is willing to serve now where he is needed most.

As the Apostle second in seniority, President Oaks also becomes President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. However, given his call to the First Presidency and consistent with the order of the Church, President M. Russell Ballard, next in seniority, will serve as the Acting President of that quorum. The First Presidency will work hand in hand with the Twelve to discern the will of the Lord and move His sacred work forward.

We are thankful for your prayers. They have been offered throughout the world for us. On the morning following President Monson's passing, one such prayer was offered by a four-year-old boy named Benson. I quote excerpts from his mother's letter written to my wife, Wendy. Benson prayed, "Heavenly Father, thank you that President Thomas S. Monson could see his wife again. Thank you for our new prophet. Help him to be brave and not scared that he's new. Help him to grow up to be healthy and strong. Help him to have power because he has the priesthood. And help us always to be nice."

I thank God for children like this and for parents who are serious about their commitment to righteous, intentional parenting—for every parent, teacher, and member who carries heavy burdens and yet serves so willingly. In other words, for each one of you, I am most humbly grateful.



Keep on the covenant path. Your commitment to follow the Savior by making covenants with Him and then keeping those covenants will open the door to every spiritual blessing and privilege available.



The Lord Is at the Helm

As we go forward together, I invite you to think about the majestic manner by which the Lord governs His Church. When a President of the Church passes away, there is no mystery about who is next called to serve in that capacity. There is no electioneering, no campaigning, but only the quiet workings of a divine plan of succession put in place by the Lord Himself.

Each day of an Apostle's service is a day of learning and preparing for more responsibility in the future. It takes decades of service for an Apostle to move from the junior chair to the senior chair in the circle. During that time, he gains firsthand experience in each facet of the work of the Church. He also becomes well acquainted with the peoples of the earth, including their histories, cultures, and languages as assignments take him repeatedly across the globe. This process of succession in the leadership of the Church is unique. I know of nothing else like it. That should not surprise us, because this is the Lord's Church. He does not work after the manner of men.

I've served in the Quorum of the Twelve under five previous Presidents of the Church. I have watched each President receive revelation and respond to that revelation. The Lord always has and always will instruct and inspire His prophets. The Lord is at the helm. We who have been ordained to bear witness of His holy name throughout the world will continue to seek to know His will and follow it.



Stay on the Covenant Path

Now, to each member of the Church I say, keep on the covenant path. Your commitment to follow the Savior by making covenants with Him and then keeping those covenants will open the door to every spiritual blessing and privilege available to men, women, and children everywhere.

As a new Presidency, we want to begin with the end in mind. For this reason, we're speaking to you today from a temple. The end for which each of us strives is to be endowed with power in a house of the Lord, sealed as families, faithful to covenants made in a temple that qualify us for the greatest gift of God—that of eternal life. The ordinances of the temple and the covenants you make there are key to strengthening your life, your marriage and family, and your ability to resist the attacks of the adversary. Your worship in the temple and your service there for your ancestors will bless you with increased personal revelation and peace and will fortify your commitment to stay on the covenant path.

Now, if you have stepped off the path, may I invite you with all the hope in my heart to please come back. Whatever your concerns, whatever your challenges, there is a place for you in this, the Lord's Church. You and generations yet unborn will be blessed by your actions now to return to the covenant path. Our Father in Heaven cherishes His children, and He wants each of us to return home to Him. This is a grand goal of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—to help each of us to come back home.

I express my deep love for you—love that has grown over decades of meeting you, worshipping with you, and serving you. Our divine mandate is to go to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, helping to prepare the world for the Second Coming of the Lord. This we will do with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that He is in charge. This is His work and His Church. We are His servants.

I declare my devotion to God our Eternal Father and to His Son, Jesus Christ. I know Them, love Them, and pledge to serve Them—and you—with every remaining breath of my life. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

BASKETS AND BOTTLES

By Chieko N. Okazaki

This new series highlights the lives of devoted women and their messages, excerpted from the book *At the Pulpit: 185 Years of Discourses by Latter-day Saint Women* (2017). Selected chapters are available at churchhistorianspress.org/at-the-pulpit.

God has given us many gifts, much diversity, and many differences, but the essential thing is what we know about each other—that we are all His children.

Our challenge as members of the Church is for all of us to learn from each other, that we may all love each other and grow together.

The doctrines of the gospel are indispensable. They are essential, but the packaging is optional. Let me share a simple example to show the difference between the doctrines of the Church and the cultural packaging. Here is a bottle of Utah peaches, prepared by a Utah homemaker to feed her family during a snowy season. Hawaiian homemakers don't bottle fruit. They pick enough fruit for a few days and store it in baskets like this for their families. This basket contains a mango, bananas, a pineapple, and a papaya . . . picked by a Polynesian homemaker to feed her family in a climate where fruit ripens all year round.

The basket and the bottle are different containers, but the content

is the same: fruit for a family. Is the bottle right and the basket wrong? No, they are both right. They are containers appropriate to the culture and the needs of the people. And they are both appropriate for the content they carry, which is the fruit.

Now, what is the fruit? Paul tells us: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance" [Galatians 5:22-23]. In the sisterhood of Relief Society, in the brotherhood of priesthood quorums, in the reverent coming together to partake of the sacrament, the fruit of the Spirit unites us in love, joy, and peace whether the Relief Society is in Taipei or Tonga, whether the priesthood quorum is in Montana or Mexico, and whether the sacrament meeting is in Fiji or the Philippines.

... When I was called to the Relief Society General Presidency, President [Gordon B.] Hinckley counseled me: "You bring a peculiar quality to this presidency. You will be recognized as one who represents those beyond

ABOUT SISTER OKAZAKI

Chieko Nishimura Okazaki (1926–2011) grew up in Hawaii, USA, in a Buddhist family of Japanese ancestry. She joined the Church when she was 15.

By then, Sister Okazaki had come to acknowledge the complexity of her ethnic and cultural status. Worried about how others would perceive them after the Japanese military bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, Sister Okazaki and her mother gathered and burned every Japanese memento they owned. But then she looked in the mirror and thought, "I have never set foot in Japan. I am not Japanese in my heart. But I cannot run away from myself. My eyes, my skin, and my hair are Japanese." ¹

Sister Okazaki confronted racism throughout her life. She began teaching soon after World War II when anti-Japanese sentiment still ran high in the United States. Three mothers refused to allow their children to be in her class. But Sister Okazaki soon won them over.²

Sister Okazaki was the first woman to serve on all three of the women's auxiliary boards: first Young Women, then Primary, then Relief Society.³

This message is an excerpt of her April 1996 general conference talk on unity and diversity (punctuation and capitalization standardized). the borders of the United States and Canada.... They will see in you a representation of their oneness with the Church." He gave me a blessing that my tongue might be loosed as I spoke to the people.⁴

... [When I spoke in other lands,] I could feel the Spirit carrying my words to their hearts, and I could feel "the fruit of the Spirit" bringing back to me

their love, their joy, and their faith. I could feel the Spirit making us one.

Brothers and sisters, whether your fruits are peaches or papaya, and whether you bring them in bottles or in baskets, we thank you for offering them in love. Father in Heaven, may we be one and may we be Thine,⁵ I pray in the sacred name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

- 1. Chieko N. Okazaki, Lighten Up! (1993), 7.
- See Okazaki, *Lighten Up!*, 48–50; Gregory A. Prince, "There Is Always a Struggle': An Interview with Chieko N. Okazaki," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 45, no. 1 (Spring 2012), 114–15.
- 3. "Obituary: Okazaki, Chieko," *Deseret News*, Aug. 7, 2011.
- See Prince, "There Is Always a Struggle," 121. Gordon B. Hinckley was First Counselor in the First Presidency when Sister Okazaki was called in 1990.
 Sao Doctring and Counsents 38:27
- 5. See Doctrine and Covenants 38:27.



GOSPEL CLASSICS



THAT BRIGHT SUNDAY MORNING

By Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

On that day, the resurrected Lord burst the bonds of death. He ascended from the grave and appeared gloriously triumphant as the Savior of all mankind.

We know what the Resurrection is—the reuniting of the spirit and body in its perfect form....

Can you imagine that? Life at our prime? Never sick, never in pain, never burdened by the ills that so often beset us in mortality?

The Resurrection is at the core of our beliefs as Christians. . . .

... When the Savior rose from the tomb, ... He did something no one else could do. He broke the bonds of death, not only for Himself but for all who have ever lived—the just and the unjust. ...

... He made that gift available to all. And with that sublime act, He softened the devastating, consuming sorrow that gnaws at the souls of those who have lost precious loved ones. I think of how dark that Friday was when Christ was lifted up on the cross....

. . . The earth shook and grew dark. . . .

Those evil men who sought His life rejoiced. . . .

On that day the veil of the temple was rent in twain.

Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Jesus, were both overcome with grief. . . . The superb man they had loved and honored hung lifeless upon the cross. . . .

... The Apostles were devastated. Jesus, their Savior—the man who had walked on water and raised the dead—was Himself at the mercy of wicked men....

It was a Friday filled with devastating, consuming sorrow. . . . I think that of all the days since the beginning of this world's history, that Friday was the darkest.

[But] the despair did not linger because on Sunday, the resurrected Lord burst the bonds of death. He ascended from the grave and appeared gloriously triumphant as the Savior of all mankind.

And in an instant the eyes that had been filled with ever-flowing tears dried. The lips that had whispered prayers of distress and grief now filled the air with wondrous praise, for Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God, stood before them as . . . proof that death is merely the beginning of a new and wondrous existence.

Each of us will have our own Fridays—those days when the universe itself seems shattered and the



shards of our world lie littered about us in pieces. . . .

But I testify to you in the name of the One who conquered death— Sunday will come. In the darkness of our sorrow, Sunday will come.

. . . No matter our grief, Sunday will come. In this life or the next, Sunday will come.

I testify to you that the Resurrection is not a fable. We have the personal

testimonies of those who saw Him. Thousands in the Old and New Worlds witnessed the risen Savior. They felt the wounds in His hands, feet, and side. . . .

After the Resurrection, the disciples became renewed. They traveled throughout the world . . . boldly proclaiming Jesus the Christ, the resurrected Son of the living God. Many of them . . . died as martyrs, the testimony of the risen Christ on their lips as they perished.

The Resurrection transformed the lives of those who witnessed it. Should it not transform ours?

We will all rise from the grave. . . .

Because of the life and eternal sacrifice of the Savior of the world, we will be reunited with those we have cherished.

... On that day we will rejoice that the Messiah overcame all that we could live forever.

Because of the sacred ordinances we receive in holy temples, our departure from this brief mortality cannot long separate relationships that have been fastened together with cords made of eternal ties.

It is my solemn testimony that death is not the end of existence. . . .

May we understand and live in thanksgiving for the priceless gifts that come to us as sons and daughters of a loving Heavenly Father and for the promise of that bright day when we shall all rise triumphant from the grave.

. . . No matter how dark our Friday, Sunday will come. ■

From an October 2006 general conference address.

A WHITE HAND-TATTED TABLECLOTH By Barbara Lavick Van Cott

An unexpected need at church made me realize that our treasured tablecloth had a higher purpose than I originally thought.

As a Jewish convert to the Church, my knowledge of Jesus Christ was very limited. After embracing the gospel, I grew to love my Savior.

While attending Brigham Young University, I met my sweetheart and we were married in the Salt Lake Temple. Shortly after, we opened our wedding gifts. A Relief Society sister in my husband's home ward had given us a beautiful white hand-tatted tablecloth. The pattern was elegant. It represented hours of labor.

I lifted it up and placed it over my heart. "Oh, Bobby," I said. "This is a treasure. I can feel the love from this sister in every stitch. Someday, when we can afford a dining room table, we'll display it in our home." I carefully wrapped and stored it.

Two years later, when Bobby graduated as a schoolteacher, he received a job offer in Vermont, USA. Without hesitation, we decided he should accept the position. It felt like the Lord was sending us.

Soon after arriving in Barre, Vermont, we learned that the Latter-day Saints met in a dusty old event hall for men. Prior to Church meetings, members had to clear away beer cans and cigarette butts from festivities held the night before.

Ten months later, my husband was called to be the branch president. While conducting his first meeting, he glanced over at the sacrament table. He looked troubled. The sacrament trays were covered with a dingy, yellowing white sheet.

The following Sunday morning, Bobby pulled out our beautiful white hand-tatted tablecloth, still wrapped in its protective covering. "Barbie, what do you think?" he asked, with tender pleading in his eyes.

I knew what he was thinking. He wanted our tablecloth for the sacrament table—the very cloth I had envisioned on our dining room table someday. I bit my lip. "It's perfect," I said. "The perfect covering for the emblems of the sacrament."

As a branch president, Bobby could have ordered a cloth, and it would

have been perfectly acceptable. But at that moment, we both knew we wanted to make this offering. It still wasn't an easy sacrifice, but my Savior had sacrificed for me with the gift of His Atonement. The cloth now had a higher purpose.

A few years later, the members began to meet in a beautiful new chapel on a hillside. And just as we had felt sent to Barre, we felt it was time for us to leave. Our hearts were full and ached with love for the members we had served with.

As we packed our things, now with three children, to go west, we left behind the white hand-tatted tablecloth covering the sacrament. It was no longer ours. It was the Lord's. It was our gift to the Savior. ■ *The author lives in Arizona, USA*.



By Elder Ulisses Soares Of the Presidency of the Seventy

May each of us choose to love the Lord and follow His paths to happiness.

Paths to True Happiness

happiness.

"Our happiness is the design of all the blessings He gives us—gospel teachings, commandments, priesthood ordinances, family relationships, prophets, temples, the beauties of creation, and even the opportunity to experience adversity.... He sent His Beloved Son to carry out the Atonement so we can be happy in this life and receive a fulness of joy in the eternities."¹

People everywhere are looking for something. In their own way, what they are really looking for is happiness. As with truth itself, however, many are kept from happiness "because they know not where to find it" (D&C 123:12).

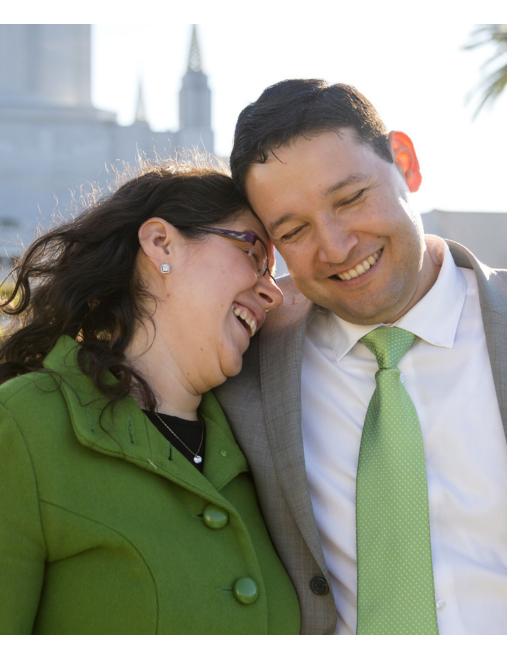
Because they do not know where to find true and lasting happiness, they look for it in things that actually bring temporary pleasure only buying things, seeking honor and praise from the world through inappropriate behavior, or focusing on physical beauty and attractiveness.

Pleasure is often confused with happiness. It seems that the more people seek temporary pleasure, the less happy they become. Usually, pleasure endures for only a short time.

As President David O. McKay (1873– 1970) said: "You may get that transitory pleasure, yes, but you cannot find joy, you cannot find happiness. Happiness is found only along that well beaten track, narrow as it is, though straight, which leads to life eternal."²

Unfortunately for many, happiness is elusive. Scientists know that "more than simply positive mood, happiness is a state of well-being that encompasses living a good life—that is, with a sense of meaning and deep satisfaction."³

Research shows that happiness is not the result of bouncing from one experience to the next. Instead, achieving happiness typically involves a long-sustained effort for something more important in life. Happiness is determined by habits, behaviors, and thought patterns that we can directly address with intentional action. Much of our happiness is actually "under personal control."⁴ Let us consider the importance of some of the paths of happiness found in the scriptures and taught by modern prophets and apostles. Faithfully and firmly planting our footsteps on those paths will allow us to enjoy happiness in the journey ahead.



Virtue

The first of these paths is virtue, which is a pattern of thought and behavior based on high moral standards. It encompasses chastity and moral purity, which qualify you to enter the Lord's holy temples. Virtuous people possess a quiet dignity and inner strength. They are confident because they are worthy to receive and be guided by the Holy Ghost. Virtue begins in the heart and mind, and it is the accumulation of thousands of small decisions and actions each day.

"Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

"The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever" (D&C 121:45–46).

President Thomas S. Monson (1927– 2018) taught that "there is no friendship more valuable than your own clear conscience, your own moral cleanliness —and what a glorious feeling it is to know that you stand in your appointed place clean and with the confidence that you are worthy to do so."⁵

Uprightness

A second path of happiness is uprightness. Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

"Recognize that enduring happiness comes from what you are, not from what you have.

"Real joy comes from righteous character, and that is built from a pattern of consistent righteous decisions.... Your righteous decisions determine who you are and what is important to you. They make doing the right things easier. For happiness now and throughout your life, steadfastly obey the Lord."⁶

As we study the scriptures, we learn that the promises made by the Lord to us encourage righteous living. Those promises nourish our souls, bringing us hope by encouraging us not to give up even in the face of our daily challenges of living in a world of waning ethical and moral values. Therefore, we need to make sure that our thoughts, words, and actions are leading us along the path back to our Heavenly Father.

Faithfulness

A third path to happiness is faithfulness. It is fundamental to understand that God blesses us according to our faith, which is the source of living with divine purpose and eternal perspective. Faith is a practical principle that inspires diligence. It is manifest in our positive attitude and desire to willingly do everything that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ ask of us. It is what takes us to our knees to implore the Lord for guidance and encourages us to arise and act with confidence to achieve things consistent with His will.

As you go forward in your journey, you will be tested to see if you will do all things that the Lord your God commands you (see Abraham 3:25). This is part of the mortal experience. It will require that you press forward with steadfast faith in Christ, being led by the Spirit and trusting that God will provide for your needs.

Remember that you must not waver in your faith—even in times of great difficulty. As you are steadfast, the Lord will increase your capacity to rise above the challenges of life. You will be enabled to subdue negative impulses, and you will develop the capacity to overcome even what appear to be overwhelming obstacles.

Holiness

Holiness, another path to happiness, is related to spiritual and moral perfection. Holiness indicates purity of heart and intent. How can we labor each day to feed ourselves spiritually so that we can develop such godly character?

President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) answered: "We develop our spiritual selves by practice.... We must have daily exercise by our spirits by prayer, by doing daily good deeds, by sharing with others. We must feed our spirits daily by studying the scriptures every day, by [family home evening], by attendance at meetings, by the partaking of the sacrament....

"The righteous man strives for selfimprovement knowing that he has daily need of repentance."⁷

Another important element of holiness is related to making and keeping covenants in the temple. If we are faithful, these covenants can elevate us beyond the limits of our own power and perspective. All the promised blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ can be ours through our faithfulness to the ordinances and covenants we make before Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in the temple. Part of the pattern of living "after the manner of happiness" includes building a temple in which to worship and make covenants with the Lord (see 2 Nephi 5:16, 27).

The key point of this path is that we should be very careful to develop spirituality and be morally pure.

Obedience

Keeping all the commandments of God is related to the other paths to happiness. After the Nephites had separated from the Lamanites, they prospered exceedingly as they kept the judgments, statutes, and commandments "of the Lord in all things, according to the law of Moses" (2 Nephi 5:10). This pattern is another important element of living "after the manner of happiness."

President Monson taught: "When we keep the commandments, our lives will be happier, more fulfilling, and less complicated. Our challenges and problems will be easier to bear, and we will receive [God's] promised blessings."⁸ He also said, "The knowledge which we seek, the answers for which we yearn, and the strength which we desire today to meet the challenges of a complex and changing world can be ours when we willingly obey the Lord's commandments."⁹

The Savior entreats us:

"If ye love me, keep my commandments....

"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:15, 21).

Selflessness and Love

The golden pathway to happiness is one of selflessness and love—love that has concern, interest, and some measure of charity for every living soul. Love is the direct route to the happiness that will enrich and bless our lives and the lives of others. It



means, as the Savior said, that you show love even to your enemies (see Matthew 5:44).

In doing so, you will be fulfilling the greater commandment to love God. You will soar above the ill winds that blow—above the sordid, the selfdefeating, and the bitter. True and lasting happiness comes only when we choose to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37; see also Deuteronomy 6:5; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27).

May each of us choose to love the Lord and follow His paths to happiness, which is "the object and design of our existence."¹⁰ ■

From a commencement address, "Paths for Happiness," given at Brigham Young University–Hawaii on June 8, 2017. For the full address, go to devotional.byuh.edu/archive.

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Learn what true happiness is at **lds.org/go/ E41817.**

Forgiving Others Misconceptions and Tips

By Elizabeth Lloyd Lund

ach of us has expe- rienced the anxious, frustrated feeling of being offended or hurt. In my work as a counselor for LDS Family Services, I have found that the issue of not forgiving others arises repeatedly. Not forgiving prevents true healing. We know that we must forgive (see D&C 64:10) and that forgiveness is healthy for us, yet when it comes down to the work and effort it takes to forgive, many continue to hold on to the pain. As I've worked with families and individuals. I've found several common misconceptions about forgiveness and several ideas we can apply to help us as we seek to forgive.



Our brains are programmed to remember in order for us to learn. There is a difference between occasionally remembering an event and ruminating on it. Once we forgive, we won't need to continually think about and analyze the event.

"The past is to be learned from but not lived in. We look back to claim the embers from glowing experiences but not the ashes....

"... To be tied to earlier mistakes is the worst kind of wallowing in the past from which we are called to cease and desist." ¹ —Elder Jeffrey R. Holland olding on to pain and hurt sometimes helps victims feel more secure. By withholding forgiveness, we protect the wound, but it also won't heal because we are constantly thinking about the hurt and reopening the wound.

"Let us bind up the wounds . . . that have been caused by cutting words, by stubbornly cultivated grievances, by scheming plans to 'get even' with those who may have wronged us. . . . Fortunately, we all have the power to rise above it, if we will 'clothe [ourselves] with the bond of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace.' (D&C 88:125.)"² —President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) We can find healing and peace as we better understand and apply the principle of forgiveness.



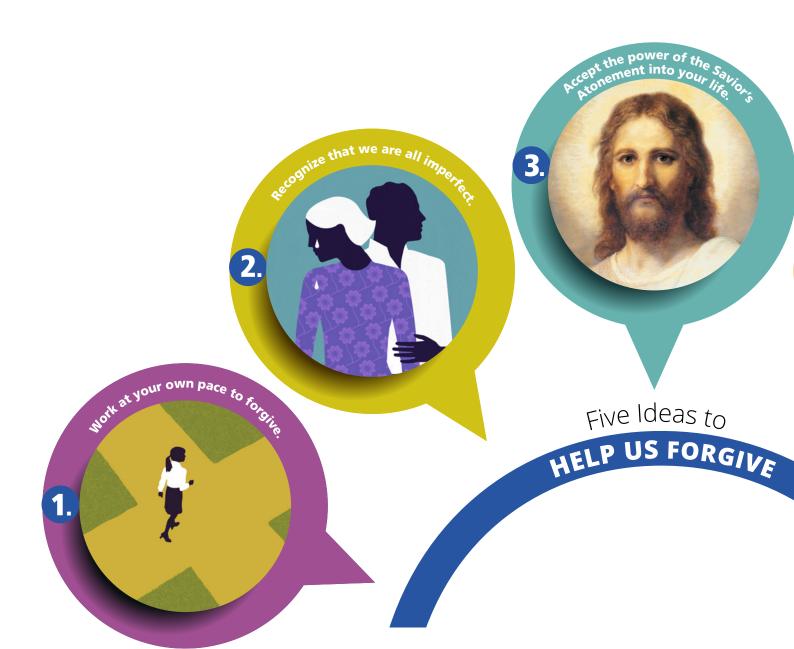
Forgiveness means pardoning an offense. To forgive, we must first acknowledge that what happened was wrong and caused pain. We pardon the fault because we too are imperfect. We turn the judgment over to God and allow Him to relieve the burden.

"To forgive is not to condone. We do not rationalize bad behavior or allow others to mistreat us *because* of their struggles, pains, or weaknesses."³ —Elder Kevin R. Duncan Forgiveness and trust are two different things. We can forgive without developing a trusting relationship. If someone continually hurts us, God commands us to forgive, but we are also responsible to set boundaries to keep ourselves safe.

"The Savior asks us to forsake and combat evil in all its forms, and although we must forgive a neighbor who injures us, we should still work constructively to prevent that injury from being repeated." ⁴ —Elder David E. Sorensen Forgiveness is not earned. It is given. God—not us—will judge whether a person has repented. Regardless of how unrepentant a person is, we can move forward and seek peace.

"I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.

"And ye ought to say in your hearts—let God judge between me and thee, and reward thee according to thy deeds." —Doctrine and Covenants 64:10–11



O ften we know we need to forgive but we feel overwhelmed by the task and aren't ready to let go of the hurt. We must work at our own pace and recognize that healing may come slowly.

"As impossible as it may seem to you now, in time the healing you can receive from the Savior will allow you to truly forgive." ⁵ —Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) Without the gift of the Savior's Atonement, we would all be fallen and unable to return to our Heavenly Father. We all need the forgiveness that the Lord willingly gives to those who repent.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." —Romans 3:23

The atoning power of the Savior is available to each of us. As we access that power, we become more empathetic toward others and understanding of each other's faults.

"Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ all will be made right according to God's timing."⁶ —Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015)



Once you have forgiven and you have accepted peace into your life, thoughts of the hurt may occasionally return. When this happens, don't let Satan convince you that you haven't forgiven. Recognize that you have forgiven, say it aloud to yourself, and let the memory go.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." —Matthew 11:28 When we truly forgive, we find greater peace and comfort. We admit our reliance on God and allow Him to take our heaviest burdens.

"The Savior's Atonement is not just for those who need to repent; it is also for those who need to forgive. If you are having trouble forgiving another person or even yourself, ask God to help you. Forgiveness is a glorious, healing principle." ⁷ —Elder Kevin R. Duncan When we forgive, we invite the Savior's hope and peace into our life, which allows us greater capacity to develop our strengths and virtues. As we learn to forgive, we have greater freedom, greater ability to share the gospel, and greater strength to manage trials.

The author lives in Utah, USA.

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CULTIVATING MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

By Faith Sutherlin Blackhurst

ne Sunday, I found myself alone in my apartment, wrapped up in a blanket and sobbing pathetically into a pillow. I had broken up with my boyfriend the night before, all my roommates were off with their fiancés, and my family was thousands of miles away. I was emotionally exhausted and terribly lonely. I felt disconnected from others, from my purpose in life, and from God. It was difficult to feel happy.

With a prayer in my heart, I turned to my patriarchal blessing for a renewed sense of guidance. As I read it, I received revelation that my circumstances would improve—I just needed to show my trust in my Heavenly Father.

My seemingly bottomless well of tears dried up; I had finally made a connection with God, and it was my first step toward feeling a renewed sense of happiness and meaning in my life. I ultimately learned that the key to maintaining purpose and happiness is simple connections: (1) connection to self, (2) connection to others, and (3) connection to God. Everyone makes these connections differently, so seek guidance from the Spirit to know what *you* need to feel grounded and connected.

1. Connect with Yourself

As you connect with yourself, you learn to love and understand yourself as an imperfect (yet wonderful!) child of God. You contemplate your strengths and weaknesses, your thoughts and emotions, your dreams and goals. You learn to identify and fulfill your physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual needs, which helps you be happier. You also learn to better serve God as you become a better you, thereby increasing the sense of purpose in your life. Just as "the Savior Himself would sometimes withdraw temporarily from the pressing needs of the multitudes"¹ to pray (see Luke 5:16), we too can use time alone to establish methods of connecting with ourselves.

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles suggested that you "reduce the rush and take a little extra time to get to know yourself better. Walk in nature, watch a sunrise, enjoy God's creations, ponder the truths of the restored gospel, and find out what they mean for you personally. Learn to see yourself as Heavenly Father sees you—as His precious daughter or son with divine potential."²

Find out what it is that helps you feel most like yourself, and it will become easier to find happiness.

One note of caution: connecting to oneself is not self-indulgence, or excessive gratification of one's desires. For example, if we bury ourselves for hours, even days, in binge-watching a television show, looking at social media, or surfing the internet, it will likely reduce our ability to make meaningful connections.

2. Connect with Others

Connecting with others gives us purpose as we help them through trials and allow them to help us through our own. We become happier as we experience belonging, acceptance, and love with our families, friends, and neighbors and as we give them the same in return.

To find connections with others,



- Read a book.
- Spend time in nature.
- Make a list of your strengths.

When my loneliness seemed overwhelming, I realized that I had the power to find happiness and meaning in my life.

BOTTOM L BOTTOM F

we don't have to be popular, but we may have to be patient. Finding true friendships and confidences often takes time and effort.

When we do find trusted individuals that we feel comfortable being vulnerable with, we should strive to make lasting connections with them through personal communication, "the *wise* sharing of emotions, feelings, and concerns."³ This can sometimes take courage as we open up to others about our hopes, fears, beliefs, and inadequacies. But through diligent practice, we can learn to be appropriately vulnerable with others.

To develop strong connections, we should also let others be vulnerable with us. "Be[ing] swift to hear, [and] slow to speak" (James 1:19) when others express themselves shows attentiveness and respect for their feelings and thoughts.

Jesus Christ gives us a perfect example of how to connect with others. "His communication with others radiated love, care, and concern. He spoke gently and loved purely.... He listened attentively and demonstrated charity. Likewise, if we want our relationships to improve, we must learn to speak in positive ways that edify and build those around us."⁴

Following the Savior's example also means reaching out to serve others in Christlike ways, helping us form new connections and strengthen existing ones.

3. Connect with God

Connection with God is vital to our sense of meaning in this life. When we build a relationship with God, we better understand the plan He has for us. As we seek to do His will and follow that plan, we find greater direction and purpose. We find happiness as we obey God's commandments and feel that He is pleased with our choices.

The most direct way to connect with God is to converse with Him through prayer. If we pray in faith and listen to the Spirit carry His answers to our hearts, we will find ourselves fully involved in a two-way conversation. As we study and ponder the scriptures, we better understand the true nature of God and our relationship with Him as His children (see, for example, Romans 8:16; Joseph Smith—History 1:11–17). We know that He is cheering us on and helping us succeed in our righteous endeavors.

We also connect with God through our covenants. which bind us to Him by eternal promises secured by priesthood power. As we receive the ordinances of the gospel, renew covenants through the sacrament weekly, perform temple work, and remember promised blessings, we grow closer to our Father in Heaven. Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Presidency of the Seventy, calling our connection to God "the most valuable blessing we have and the most important one we can secure,"⁵ explained, "These covenantal connections to Him become the guideposts for our lives."6 Using these guideposts helps us see that we are being led by a kind and loving Father. It lends a sense of purpose to our daily



Connect with Others

- Pray and eat as a family.
- Participate in family home evening.
- Call an old friend.
- Do wholesome recreational activities with others.
- Listen to others attentively.
- Attend a support group.
- Open up to a trusted friend.
- Make a new friend.
- Serve others.
- Do temple and family history work.
- Speak positively to others.



Connect with God

- Participate in your Sunday meetings.
- Worthily partake of the sacrament.
- Obey the commandments.
- Pray regularly and participate in fasting.
- Read and ponder the scriptures.
- Study your patriarchal blessing.
- Attend the temple.
- Listen to spiritual music.
- Self-reflect and repent of your mistakes.
- Strive to have the Spirit as your companion.
- Attend seminary or institute.



choices as we strive to follow Jesus Christ and seek more spiritual guidance (see Alma 37:38–40, 45).

Connections Are the Key

Here's the amazing thing about learning to make connections with ourselves, with others, and with God: each connection reinforces the others. Through all of these interrelated connections, we gain a richer understanding of God's plan, which helps us find greater happiness and purpose in our daily activities. So as we search for happiness and meaning in our everyday lives, let us remember that good, healthy, righteous connections are the key!

The author lives in Utah, USA.

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My fiancée and I had little time before our wedding, and even less money, but we had something even more important: faith.

Marriage, Money, and Faith

By Sunday Chibuike Obasi

attended the young single adult summit in Kumasi, Ghana, not because I needed a girlfriend—I was already engaged—but because I felt that I needed more motivation and that the summit would be the right place to find it. Indeed, my prayers were answered at the summit after Sister Call, a senior missionary assigned to work with young single adults, spoke about the importance of temple marriage.

Toward the end of the discussion, her countenance suddenly changed and she said, "You do not need money to get married—all you need is faith." I felt like she was talking to me directly, but I didn't think it could really apply to me because we had to purchase several items in preparation for the wedding. I said to myself, "How can I not need money but only faith?"

I thought about this over and over again throughout the week. In the process I asked myself, "Is God limited in what He can do?" At first, I thought no, but on second thought I thought yes. But then came a follow-up question: "How can He be limited if He is all-powerful?" The Spirit taught me the answer: God's blessings are dependent upon our obedience to Him. He is not limited in His ability to bless us, but we must invite those blessings by exercising faith to do what He would have us do.

Later, I called my fiancée, Priscilla, to discuss our proposed marriage plans. Despite our lack of money, we decided to choose a date for our wedding, but we could not decide on a particular date. We agreed that she should ask her bishop which dates were open on the ward and stake calendars. Out of the two dates he offered, we chose September 27, 2014—which meant that we had barely seven weeks till the day of the wedding!

Priscilla asked, "*Obim* [meaning "my heart" in the Igbo language], do you have some money? The time is short."

I replied, "No, but I do have some faith."

She laughed and said, "It's OK. Let's

fast and pray." Paraphrasing l Nephi 3:7, she continued, "The Lord will open a way for us because He has commanded us to get married."

Within that week I was paid for a job I had done months previously.

Then Priscilla told me that she wanted to start a business to raise more funds. With the money I had made, she bought used women's handbags and resold them. After buying some of the items on her list



of things required, she still had more than double the money I gave her.

During this time, there were no jobs coming my way. Every promised job fell through. We had two weeks remaining and there were still things we needed to buy. My fiancée suggested that the date be moved back. All I said was, "A miracle is on the way."

Just two days before our wedding day, the miracle happened: I was paid for a job I had done over two weeks before. I was also learning that with faith and hard work, the Lord would bless us to accomplish our righteous goals.

We went to the bank to cash the check and from there to the market to purchase the remainder of what was required amidst heavy rain, which we saw as heaven's approval of our act of faith.

Less than 24 hours later, we were married. When we were asked to exchange vows, the feeling was unlike anything I had ever felt in my life. I felt so accomplished that I believed I could do all things through faith from that point on. We were later sealed in the Accra Ghana Temple.

Though you may need *some* money to prepare for marriage, the most important thing you need is faith. ■

The author lives in Ashanti Region, Ghana.





By Elder Gary E. Stevenson Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Ours is the message of peace, and you are the messengers who preach it. You can do this through new and exciting channels of technology.

Te are the Church of Jesus Christ, established in the latter days. In the same way that the Lord instructed His ancient disciples, we have been charged in the latter days to "go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

Share

OUR

KNOWLEDGF

OF A SAVIOR

The ancient prophet Nephi succinctly summarized this mission and message and the object behind it: "And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (2 Nephi 25:26).

In the book of Mosiah, we read how ancient Book of Mormon prophet King Benjamin gathered his people throughout the land at the site of the temple, caused a tower to be erected, and taught them. As he taught them, he also prophesied to

PHOTOGRAPH FROM GETTY IMAGES; CHRIST'S IMAGE, BY HEINRICH HOFMANN

5,000 850 copies of the Book of Mormon 870 printed

1890



1929 now approaching 550 **5,000**th broadcast.

1974



2030

175 MILLION copies of the Book of Mormon printed

Today:

them of our day: "And moreover, I say unto you, that the time shall come when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people" (Mosiah 3:20).

"The Knowledge of a Savior"

One of the most precious gifts to treasure within our families and to give to others is "the knowledge of a Savior," or of Jesus Christ.

With the opening of the dispensation of the fulness of times came an enlightenment upon all mankind and a waterfall of technological advancements. It brought with it the industrial age and communication tools, allowing the prophecy of King Benjamin to be fulfilled.

As a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, called as a special witness "of the name of Christ in all the world" (D&C 107:23) with specific assignments in both the Public Affairs and Communication Services Committee, I am able to focus on the fulfillment of this prophecy—that "the knowledge of a

Savior" is spread

throughout the

world—using

the latest tech-

nologies avail-

able to us.

"Satellites are only the genesis of what is in store for the future of worldwide broadcasting.... I believe that the Lord is anxious to put into our hands inventions of which we laymen have hardly had a glimpse." —**President**

Spencer W. Kimball

"Throughout Every Nation, Kindred, Tongue, and People"

Historically, advancements in print and the invention of radio and TV enabled the message of the Restoration to go throughout the world. We find numerous examples of this, some of which are within our memory.

Within 10 years of the First Vision, and the month before the Church was organized, 5,000 copies of the Book of Mormon were published. Since then, over 175 million copies have been printed.

Any Sunday morning, you can listen to or watch the broadcast of *Music and the Spoken Word*, which is approaching its 5,000th broadcast. The first broadcast occurred on live radio in 1929. The first broadcast of general conference on TV took place in 1949.

Interestingly, in 1966, President David O. McKay (1873–1970) began speaking of things to come: "Discoveries latent with such potent power, either for the blessing or the destruction of human beings, as to make man's responsibility in controlling them the most gigantic ever placed in human hands. . . . This age is fraught with limitless perils, as well as untold possibilities."¹

In 1974, President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) described his vision of a day to come: "The Lord has blessed the world with many . . . satellites. They are stationed high in the heavens, relaying broadcast signals back to almost every corner of the earth's surface. . . . Certainly these satellites are only the genesis of what is in store for the future of worldwide broadcasting. . . . I believe that the Lord is anxious to put into our hands inventions of which we laymen have hardly had a glimpse."²

With technological advances in communication and media now coming largely on the

30 Ensign

heels of the internet, it seems that we have witnessed in our lifetimes the literal fulfillment of the prophecies of King Benjamin, President McKay, and President Kimball.

There is also a clear pattern of the adoption of these technologies to build the Lord's kingdom on earth. I would like to share examples of this with you.

LDS.org and Mormon.org

In 1996, the Church officially began use of the web as a messaging and communication vehicle. Since then, an estimated 260 Church-sponsored websites have been introduced, including sites available in nearly every country where members of the Church live, in their local language.

I share two familiar examples of these websites. First is LDS.org, established in 1996, which today receives over 24 million new visitors a year and over 1 million average visitors each week. Many members find curriculum for teaching and past general conference talks here. Second is Mormon.org, a website designed to introduce the gospel to our neighbors and friends who are not members of the Church. This site receives over 16 million unique visitors a year.

Mobile Apps

Of course, technologies evolve at a breakneck pace, requiring considerable effort and resources to keep up. With the invention of smartphones came the power to harness and access massive amounts of data in a handheld modality. Much of this data is organized in the form of mobile applications, or "apps." The first Church-sponsored app was released in 2007.

Examples abound of our beneficial use of mobile apps to spread our "knowledge of a Savior." I won't describe the content of the many apps that are available at your fingertips, but here are some examples of apps that are likely familiar to you:



Gospel Library

• LDS Tools

Mormon Channel

- LDS Music
- Family Tree
- These are being used millions of times a week by millions of users.

Social Media

By definition, social media are computer-mediated technologies that allow individuals and organizations to view, create, and share information, ideas, and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks.

Beginning in about 2010, the Church began an earnest adoption of the use of social media to accomplish spreading "the knowledge of a Savior." This is a fast-moving and dynamic digital modality. It's almost incomparable in speed of change.

One observable characteristic of social media is that as soon as one feels acquainted or comfortable with one platform, a newer, bigger, or perceivably cooler or better one emerges.

I will briefly describe five social media platforms that the Church is using as communication channels:

1. Facebook has more than 2 billion users worldwide. Here, users build their own social network of online friends.

2. Instagram is a social site that centers on pictures and videos. With the invention of smartphones came the power to harness and access massive amounts of data in a handheld modality.



In August 2016, Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf posted a video on Instagram, teaching gospel principles to his grandson Erik in—can you guess the cockpit of an airplane! 3. Pinterest is like a virtual bulletin board. Here visual images called "pins" are tacked onto the board. These can be inspirational phrases or aspirational photo images.

4. Twitter is a social network that enables users to send and read short 280-character messages called "tweets."

5. Snapchat features photos and short videos that disappear either immediately or within 24 hours.

Institutionally, we are using these social media sites in a powerful way.

FACEBOOK

You may recall the tender conference message on depression that Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave a few years ago.³ From his talk, a video segment was produced that received over two million views on Facebook alone, with many thousands of likes, shares, and positive comments.⁴

INSTAGRAM

In August 2016, Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf posted a video on Instagram, teaching gospel principles to his grandson Erik in—can you guess—the cockpit of an airplane!⁵ Elder Uchtdorf's Instagram post was enjoyed by thousands, and numerous positive comments accompanied it.

The Church also published to its Instagram account in November 2017 a video of President Dallin H. Oaks and President M. Russell Ballard answering a young adult woman's question about sisters serving missions. This post was viewed over 112,000 times.

PINTEREST

On Pinterest, one can find hundreds of pins from LDS.org and even more from individual members, inspiring others.

For example, many share words of the prophets—past and present. A pin of one of the teachings of President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) reads, "So much in life depends on our attitude."⁶

TWITTER

A tweet that Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles shared last year on Easter morning was viewed 210,000 times. Elder Bednar demonstrated that a short, simple message, "He is not here: for He is risen" (Matthew 28:6), can have a profound and lasting impact.

SNAPCHAT

Finally, pictures and words sharing one of President Monson's First Presidency Messages recently appeared on Snapchat.

Associated Risks

Now, having just espoused all the virtues of these new technologies and demonstrated their appropriate use, I think it is also useful to discuss some of the risks associated with them.

We should all be aware of the *time that can be consumed* on social media or in the use of mobile apps. The use of social media also carries a risk of *reducing face-to-face interaction*, which may be stifling the development of the social skills of many of our young people.

The hazards associated with *inappropriate content* cannot be understated. There is an increasing epidemic of pornography addiction in society, which is negatively affecting and victimizing even Church members and families.

Finally, I offer two additional merging risks, whose nets are cast over virtually everyone, including young women and millennial mothers and wives. I label these two risks as *"idealized reality"* and *"debilitating comparisons."* I think the best way to describe these two risks is to offer some examples.

Generally speaking, pictures that get posted on social media tend to portray life in the very best and often in even an unrealistic way. They are often filled with beautiful images of home decor, wonderful vacation spots, and elaborate food preparation. The danger, of course, is that many people become discouraged that they seemingly don't measure up to this idealized virtual reality.

Inspired by a pin of a "pancake" birthday cake, my niece recently posted her attempt at the same. Rather than allowing this to create undue pressure, she decided to inspire others by posting her "Pinterest fail" (see pancake photo).

Hopefully, we can learn to find more humor and less discouragement when confronted with images that may portray idealized reality and that too often could lead to debilitating comparisons.

This apparently is not just a sign of our times but, measuring the words from Paul, was in times past as well: "But they measuring themselves . . . and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (2 Corinthians 10:12).

Elder J. Devn Cornish of the Seventy recently provided timely counsel as well:

"We torture ourselves needlessly by competing and comparing. We falsely judge our self-worth by the *things* we do or don't have and by the *opinions of others*. If we must compare, let us compare how we were in the past to how we are today and even to how we want to be in the future."⁷

Let me share one of our family secrets, found in this family photo (see next page) taken some years ago, before the advent of social media. Were this taken today, it likely would be posted, presenting a family of four lovely, color-coordinated, well-behaved boys enjoying a harmonious family photo opportunity together. Would you like the real story?

I still remember the phone call from my wife. "Gary, where are you? We're here at the photographer's outdoor studio. We're all ready to shoot. It hasn't been easy getting the boys all dressed, coordinated, and ready. Are you nearly here?"

Well, I had forgotten and hadn't left the office yet! I was half an hour late, and things

Many people become discouraged that they seemingly don't measure up to idealized virtual reality.



Idealized reality

Debilitating comparisons

As for our third son, we had to wait for 20 minutes so his eyes were no longer red from crying. And, of course, the bloodstains are now on the back of our youngest son's shirt.

Now, our second son has his hands placed strategically over the top of his

had not gone so well in my absence, bordering on chaos.

What had happened? Well, my oldest son had been running through the yard and had found an apple tree, picked some apples, and begun throwing them at the other boys. He hit our third son in the back with an apple and made him fall down, and so he started to cry.

Meanwhile, as that was happening, my second son sat down and his pants went up a little bit. The other kids saw that his socks were white athletic socks, not the church socks his mother had laid out for him to wear. She asked him, "Why didn't you wear your church socks?"

He said, "Well, I don't like them. They're scratchy." And while she's talking to him, our two-year-old son was running through the yard, tripped on something, fell down, and bloodied his nose. Now there is blood dripping onto his white turtleneck shirt, and it's stained. This is when I showed up. The only way to salvage the picture was to reverse the turtleneck and put it on backward, hiding the blood stains from the camera.

As it turns out, while our oldest son was running around and throwing apples, he fell down and got a large grass stain on his knee. So, in the picture, his arm is strategically placed, covering up the grass stains. As for me, I am now in the "doghouse" because

it was *my* late arrival that was the trigger for all of this.

white athletic socks so that everything matches.

So, when you see this beautiful picture of our family and lament, "Why can't we get things together and be a picture-perfect family like theirs?" you all know better!

Social Media and Missionary Work

As you can see, we need to be mindful of the hazards and risks, including idealized reality and debilitating comparisons. The world usually is just not as bright as it appears on social media. Nevertheless, there is much good that has and will come through these communication platforms.

The Missionary Department provided some new instruction in 2017 on practical ways social media can be used in missionary work. The many digital resources available to us can be used in powerful, easy, simple, and extremely effective ways.

There are so many applications for the use of technology in appropriate and inspired ways. We should do all we can to teach the righteous use of technology to the rising generation and to warn of and prevent the unrighteous use and associated hazards as well. This should help assure us that the benefits of technology will outweigh the associated risks.

"How Lovely Are the Messengers"

During the time I was pondering and praying deeply about this message, I woke up early one morning with a song and its simple lyrics on my mind: "How lovely are the messengers that preach us the gospel of peace."⁸

Ours is the message of peace, and *you* are the lovely messengers who preach it. You can do this through these new and exciting channels of technology. We live in a unique world in the fulness of times with the ability to preach the gospel of peace literally at our fingertips.

We have the prophetic words of ancient prophets, which perfectly characterize our time and give direction for our day: "And moreover, I say unto you, that the time shall come when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people" (Mosiah 3:20).

We also have words that come to us through modern-day revelation, speaking to and giving guidance for our time and circumstances. I quote Elder Bednar: "I believe the time has come for us as disciples of Christ to use these inspired tools appropriately and more effectively to testify of God the Eternal Father, His plan of happiness for His children, and His Son, Jesus Christ, as the Savior of the world; to proclaim the reality of the Restoration of the gospel in the latter days; and to accomplish the Lord's work."⁹

I invite each of you to fully consider your role to preach the gospel of peace as lovely messengers. Let each of us do our part to share our "knowledge of a Savior" with every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. The best way to do this is one step at a time and in a unique way that works best for you and your family. May each of you have the courage to blog, pin, like, share, post, friend, tweet, snap, and swipe up in a way that will glorify, honor, and respect the will of our loving Heavenly Father and bring a knowledge of the Savior to your family, loved ones, and friends—including your friends on social media. From a Brigham Young University Women's Conference address, "The Knowledge of a Savior," delivered on May 5, 2017. For the full text, go to lds.org/prophets-and-apostles. NOTES

- 1. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Oct. 1966, 4. 2. Spencer W. Kimball, "When the World Will Be
- Converted," *Ensign*, Oct. 1974, 11, 10. 3. See Jeffrey R. Holland, "Like a Broken Vessel," *Ensign*,
- See Jeffrey R. Holland, "Mormon Message: Like a Broken
- See Jeffrey R. Holland, Mormon Message: Like a Broken Vessel," June 20, 2016, mormonnewsroom.org.
- 5. See "President Uchtdorf Relates Flying to Gospel in Post and Video with Grandson," Sept. 30, 2016, LDS.org.
- 6. Thomas S. Monson, "Living the Abundant Life," *Ensign*, Jan. 2012, 4.
- 7. J. Devn Cornish, "Am I Good Enough? Will I Make It?" Ensign, Nov. 2016, 33.
- 8. "How Lovely Are the Messengers," hymnary.org.
- 9. David A. Bednar, "Flood the Earth through Social Media," *New Era*, Aug. 2015, 32; see also David A. Bednar, "Sweep the Earth as with a Flood" (video), LDS.org.

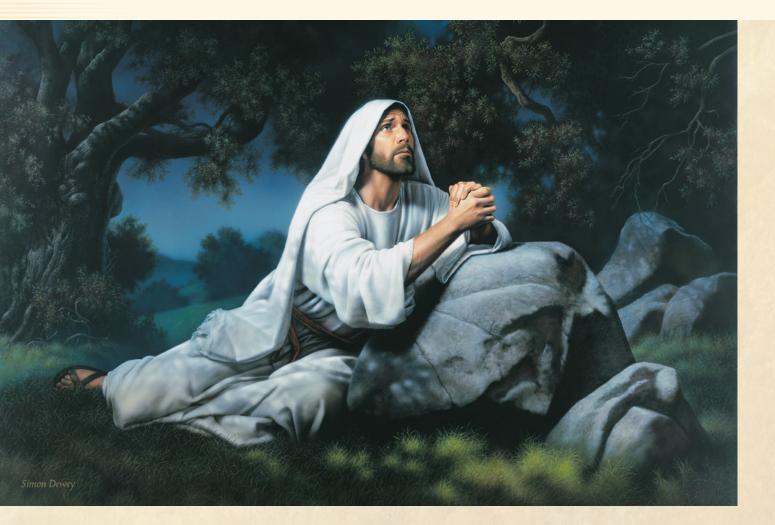
Let each of us do our part to share our "knowledge of a Savior" with every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

We live in a unique world in the fulness of times with the ability to preach the gospel of peace literally at our fingertips.

The Savior's Final, Lonely Journey

By Chakell Wardleigh Church Magazines

hroughout His mortal life, the Savior underwent many journeys—His journey out of Bethlehem and into Egypt as an infant, His 40-day journey in the wilderness, His many journeys into cities, villages, and homes to teach, heal, and bless during His ministry, and many others. But there is one journey that the Savior had to face alone, and it was a journey only He could endure.



"On Easter Sunday we celebrate the most long-awaited and glorious event in the history of the world.

"It is the day that changed everything.

"On that day, my life changed.

"Your life changed.

"The destiny of all God's children changed."

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Gift of Grace," *Ensign*, May 2015, 107.



Suffering beyond Compare

"No mortal mind can conceive the full import of what Christ did in Gethsemane.

"We know he sweat great gouts of blood from every pore as he drained the dregs of that bitter cup his Father had given him.

"We know he suffered, both body and spirit, more than it is possible for man to suffer, except it be unto death.

"We know that in some way, incomprehensible to us, his suffering satisfied the demands of justice, ransomed penitent souls from the pains and penalties of sin, and made mercy available to those who believe in his holy name.

"We know that he lay prostrate upon the ground as the pains and agonies of an infinite burden caused him to tremble and would that he might not drink the bitter cup."

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Purifying Power of Gethsemane," *Ensign*, May 1985, 9.

Personal Application: Though we may not always realize it, the Savior suffered all forms of pain during the Atonement. He understands every physical pain, from a broken bone to the most severe chronic illness. He felt the darkness and despair of mental ailments such as depression, anxiety, addiction, loneliness, and grief. And He felt every spiritual wound because He took upon Himself all the sins of mankind.

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: "In a moment of weakness we may cry out, 'No one knows what it is like. No one understands.' But the Son of God perfectly knows and understands, for He has felt and borne our individual burdens" ("Bear Up Their Burdens with Ease," *Ensign*, May 2014, 90).



He Was the Only One Capable

"What He did could only be done by Deity. As the Only Begotten Son of the Father in the flesh, Jesus inherited divine attributes. He was the only person ever born into mortality who could perform this most significant and supernal act. As the only sinless Man who ever lived on this earth, He was not subject to spiritual death. Because of His godhood, He also possessed power over physical death. Thus He did for us what we cannot do for ourselves. He broke the cold grasp of death. He also made it possible for us to have the supreme and serene comfort of the gift of the Holy Ghost."

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "The Atonement: Our Greatest Hope," *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 19.

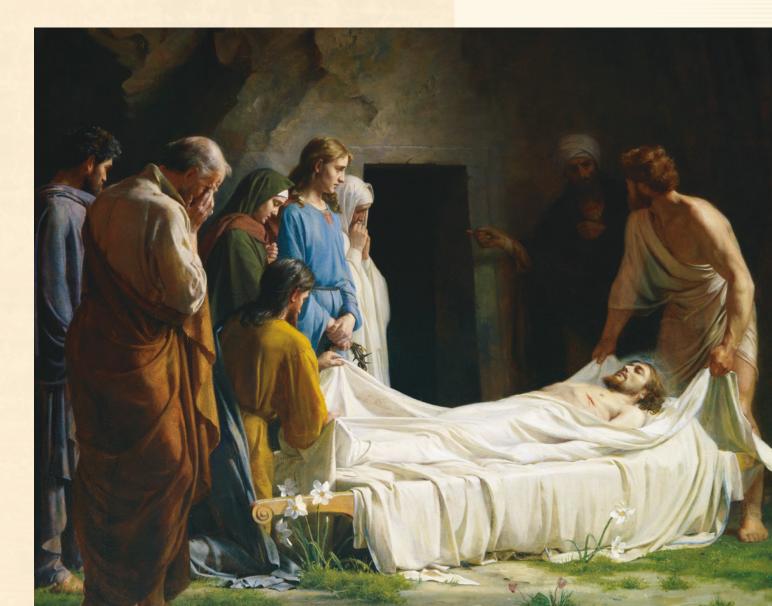
Personal Application: Through His Atonement, the Savior loosed the bands of death and redeemed all of us from our sins so that every single person could have eternal life. He was the only one capable of accomplishing such a daunting and impossible task. When we are faced with serious challenges, we can take comfort in knowing that the Savior can truly make the impossible possible.

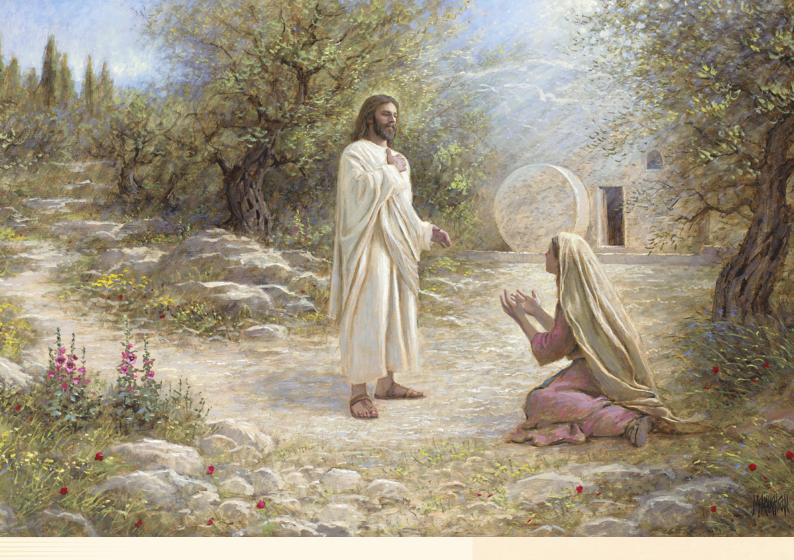
He Did Not Turn Back

"On a hill called Calvary, while helpless followers looked on, His wounded body was nailed to a cross. Mercilessly He was mocked and cursed and derided....

"The agonizing hours passed as His life ebbed. From His parched lips came the words, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.' . . .

"At the last moment, the Master could have turned back. But He did not. He passed beneath all things that He might save all things. His lifeless body was hurriedly but gently placed in a borrowed tomb." President Thomas S. Monson (1927-2018), "He Is Risen!" *Ensign*, May 2010, 89. **Personal Application:** He suffered from agonizing pain, loneliness, and despair, but still the Savior endured and finished His mortal journey with grace—even asking His Father to forgive those who crucified Him. Because of His perfect example, we can face our own trials and hardships with grace, and with His help we can endure to the end as well.





The Many Witnesses of His Resurrection

" believe the many witnesses of the Savior's Resurrection whose experiences and testimonies are found in the New Testament—Peter and his companions of the Twelve and dear, pure Mary of Magdala, among others. I believe the testimonies found in the Book of Mormon—of Nephi the Apostle with the unnamed multitude in the land Bountiful, among others. And I believe the testimony of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon who, after many other testimonies, proclaimed the great witness of this last dispensation 'that he lives! For we saw him.' Under the glance of His all-seeing eye, I stand myself as a witness that Jesus of Nazareth is the resurrected Redeemer, and I testify of all that follows from the *fact* of His Resurrection. May you receive the conviction and comfort of that same witness."

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ," Ensign, May 2014, 114. Personal Application: Though we were not among those who saw the resurrected and perfected body of the Redeemer, we can still stand as witnesses of Him today. He can always be the focus of our lives, no matter the time or place we find ourselves in. Each time we offer our hearts and hands to serve others; show gentleness, kindness, and respect to all; defend the truth; and share our testimonies of the gospel, we stand as true witnesses of Jesus Christ.

We Do Not Have to Walk Alone

"One of the great consolations of this Easter season is that because Jesus walked such a long, lonely path utterly alone, *we* do not have to do so. His solitary journey brought great company for our little version of that path the merciful care of our Father in Heaven, the unfailing companionship of this Beloved Son, the consummate gift of the Holy Ghost, angels in heaven, family members on both sides of the veil, prophets and apostles, teachers, leaders, friends. All of these and more have been given as companions for our mortal journey because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the Restoration of His gospel. Trumpeted from the summit of Calvary is the truth that we will never be left alone nor unaided, even if sometimes we may feel that we are. . . .

"... May we stand by Jesus Christ 'at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in, even until death,' for surely that is how He stood by us when it *was* unto death and when He had to stand entirely and utterly alone."

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "None Were with Him," *Ensign*, May 2009, 88.

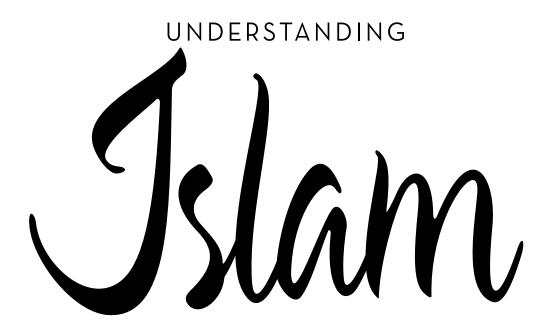
Personal Application: This Easter, remember the Savior's final, lonely journey. He sacrificed everything He had so that you and every person on the earth can become clean and have eternal life. Learn from His perfect example. Keep Him in your thoughts and in your heart. And always remember that you are never alone. Because He endured His final journey in complete and utter solitude, He will not abandon you. His love for you is infinite and unchanging, and He stands ready to offer you peace, comfort, and hope as you continue on your own journey. His gift of the Atonement is everlasting, and it was given to you. ■



GARDEN TOMB, BY JON MCNAUGHTON

See how Passover helps us understand Easter at Ids.org/go/E41841.





By Daniel C. Peterson Professor of Islamic Studies and Arabic, Brigham Young University

Note: Because it is important to understand those of other faiths, Church leaders felt that it would be helpful to provide an overview of the history and teachings of Islam, the world's second-largest religion.

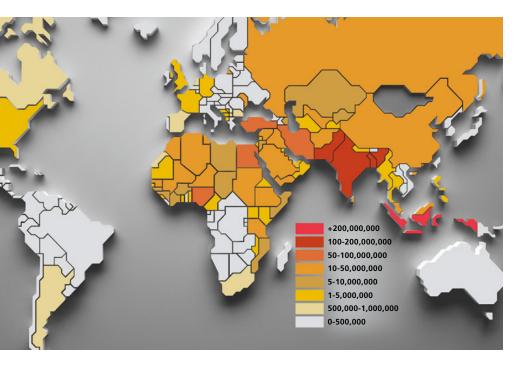
or good or ill, virtually no day passes when Islam and Muslims aren't in the news headlines. Understandably, many non-Muslims—including Latter-day Saints—are curious, even concerned. Do we share anything in common with our Muslim neighbors? Can we live and work together?

First, some historical background may be helpful:

In AD 610, a middle-aged Arabian merchant named Muhammad climbed the hills above his native town of Mecca to reflect and pray about the religious confusion surrounding him. Afterward, he reported that he had received a vision calling him as a prophet to his people. This event marks the beginning of the religion known as Islam (iss-LAAM), a word that means "submission" (to God). A believer in Islam is called a Muslim (MUSS-lim), meaning "submitter."

Thereafter, Muhammad said he received many revelations until his death nearly 25 years later. He shared them first with the residents of his hometown, warning

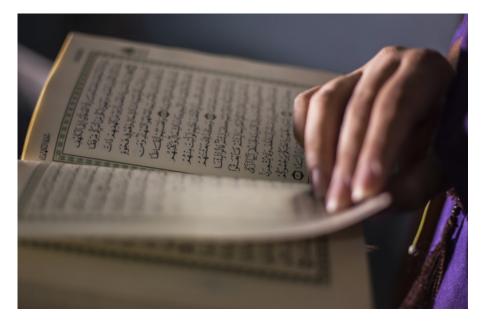
A 19th-century mosaic illustrating the Kaaba in Mecca, the city where Muhammad was born and the holiest city in the Islamic world.



of divine judgments to come; summoning his audience to repentance and to proper treatment of widows, orphans, and the poor; and preaching the universal resurrection of the dead and the ultimate judgment of God.

However, the ridicule and persecution to which he and his followers were subjected became so intense that they were obliged to flee to the town of Medina, roughly four days' camel ride to the north.

There, Muhammad's role changed dramatically.¹ From being solely a preacher and a warner, he became the lawgiver, judge, and political leader of an important Arabian town and, over time, of the Arabian Peninsula. This early establishment of a community of believers gave Islam a religious identity rooted in law and justice that



Global distribution of Muslims by country (Pew Research Center, 2009).

remains among its most striking and consequential characteristics.

Two principal factions emerged among Muhammad's followers after his death in AD 632, dividing initially over the question of who should succeed him as the leader of the Islamic community.² The largest of these has come to be called Sunni (it claims to follow the sunna, or customary practice of Muhammad, and is relatively flexible on the matter of succession). The other, which grew up around Muhammad's son-in-law, 'Ali, was called the shi'at 'Ali (the faction of 'Ali) and is now widely known simply as the Shi'a. Unlike Sunnis, the Shi'a (known as Shi'ite or Shi'i Muslims) believe that the right to succeed Muhammad as leaders of the community properly belongs to the Prophet Muhammad's nearest male relative, 'Ali, and his heirs.

Despite such disagreements, the Islamic world has been more unified, religiously speaking, than Christendom. Furthermore, for several centuries after about AD 800, Islamic civilization was arguably the most advanced in the world in terms of science, medicine, mathematics, and philosophy.

Sources of Muslim Doctrine and Practice

The revelations claimed by Muhammad were gathered into a book

Muslims consider the Qur'an to be the word of Allah given directly to Muhammad. called the Qur'an (from the Arabic verb *qara'a*, "to read" or "to recite") within a decade or two of his death. Composed of 114 chapters, the Qur'an isn't a story about Muhammad. Much like the Doctrine and Covenants, it's not a narrative at all; Muslims regard it as the word (and words) of God given directly to Muhammad.³

Christians reading it will find familiar themes. It speaks, for example, of God's creation of the universe in seven days, His placement of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, their temptation by the devil, their fall, and the call of a line of subsequent prophets (most of whom also appear in the

About two million Muslims undertake a pilgrimage to Mecca each year.

Bible). These prophets are described in the Qur'an as *muslims*, having submitted their wills to God.

Abraham, described as the friend of God, figures prominently in the text.⁴ (Among other things, he is believed to have received revelations that he wrote down but that have since been lost.⁵) Moses, Pharaoh, and the Exodus of the children of Israel also play a role.

Strikingly, Mary, the mother of Jesus, is mentioned 34 times in the Qur'an, as compared with 19 times in the New Testament. (She is, in fact, the only woman named in the Qur'an.)

One constant Qur'anic refrain is the doctrine of *tawhid* (taw-HEED), a word that might be translated as "monotheism" or, more literally, as "making one." It represents one of the central principles of Islam: that there is only one entirely unique divine being. "He does not beget, nor is he begotten," declares the Qur'an, "and there is none like him."⁶ What follows from this is surely the most important distinction between Islam and Christianity: Muslims don't believe in the deity of Jesus Christ or the Holy Ghost. It also indicates that, while all people are equally creations of God, according to Islamic doctrine we are not His children.

Yet Muslims believe Jesus to have been a sinless prophet of God, born of a virgin and destined to play a central role in the events of the last days. He is mentioned frequently and reverently in the Qur'an.



Muslims kneel in prayer five times a day.

Basic Muslim Teachings and Practices

The so-called "Five Pillars of Islam"—most concisely summarized not in the Qur'an but in a statement traditionally ascribed to Muhammad set forth some basic Islamic doctrine:

1. Testimony

If Islam has a universal creed, it's the *shahada* (sha-HAD-ah), "profession of faith," or "testimony." The term refers to an Arabic formula that, translated, runs as follows: "I testify that there is no god but God [Allah] and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God." The shahada is the entryway into Islam. To recite it with sincere belief is to become a Muslim.

The Arabic equivalent of the word *God* is *Allah*. A contraction of the words *al*- ("the") and *ilah* ("god"), it's not a proper name but a title, and it's closely related to the Hebrew word *Elohim*.

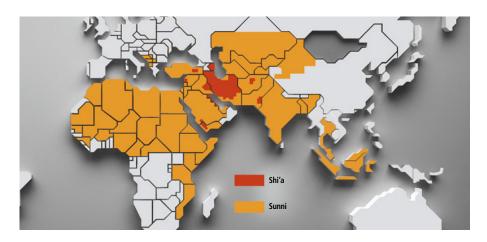
Since there is no Islamic priesthood, there are no priesthood ordinances. Nor is there a single Islamic



"church." Thus, professing the shahada is, in a sense, the Islamic equivalent of baptism. The current lack of a formal, unified, worldwide leadership structure has other implications. For example, there is no overall leader of the world's Muslims, nobody who speaks for the entire community. (Muhammad is almost universally regarded as the final prophet.) This also means that there is no church from which terrorists or "heretics" can be excommunicated.

2. Prayer

Many non-Muslims are aware of the Muslim ritual prayer called *salat* (sa-LAAT), which involves a specific



number of physical prostrations, five times daily. Reciting prescribed verses from the Qur'an and touching the forehead to the ground demonstrates humble submission to God. More spontaneous prayer, called *du'a*, can be offered at any time and does not require prostration.

For midday prayers on Friday, Muslim men are required and Muslim women encouraged to pray in a mosque (from Arabic *masjid*, or "place of prostration"). There, in gender-separated groups, they form lines, praying as led by the mosque's imam (ee-MAAM, from Arabic amama, meaning "in front of"), and listen to a short sermon. Fridays, however, aren't quite equivalent to the Sabbath; although the "weekend" in most Muslim countries centers on yawm al-jum'a ("the day of gathering") or Friday, working on that day isn't considered sinful.

More than 85 percent of the world's Muslims are Sunni (see Pew Research Center). Shi'ites are a minority virtually everywhere except in Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Iran, and Iraq.

3. Almsgiving

Zakat (za-KAAT, meaning "that which purifies") denotes making charitable donations to support the poor, as well as to mosques and other Islamic undertakings. It is generally reckoned at 2.5 percent of a Muslim's total wealth above a certain minimum amount. In some Muslim countries, it's gathered by government institutions. In others, it's voluntary.

4. Fasting

Every year devout Muslims abstain from food, drink, and sexual relations from sunrise until sunset during the entire lunar month of Ramadan. They also commonly devote themselves to special charity toward the poor and to reading the Qur'an during the month.⁷

5. Pilgrimage

Muslims possessing the health and resources to do so should undertake a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lifetimes. (A visit to Medina, the second holiest city in Islam, is typically included but isn't required.) For faithful Muslims, doing so is a deeply spiritual and moving event, something like attending general conference in person or entering the temple for the first time.

Some Current Issues

Three focal points of contemporary non-Muslim concern about Islam are religious violence; Islamic, or *shari'a*, law; and Islam's treatment of women.

Some extremists have used the term *jihad* to refer exclusively to "holy

war," but the word actually means "practical work," as opposed to "mere" prayer and scripture study.

Muslim jurists and thinkers have varied in their understanding of jihad. Standard legal sources argue, for instance, that acceptable military jihad must be defensive and that opponents must be forewarned and allowed opportunity to cease provocative actions. Some jurists and other Muslim thinkers today argue that jihad can designate any practical action intended to benefit the Islamic community or to improve the world more

A group of Muslim women join together for *iftar*, the evening meal when Muslims end their daily Ramadan fast at sunset.

LATTER-DAY SAINT AUTHORS ON ISLAM

- Arnold H. Green, "Mormonism and Islam: From Polemics to Mutual Respect and Cooperation," *BYU Studies,* vol. 40, no. 4 (2001), 199–220.
- James A. Toronto, "A Latterday Saint Perspective on Muhammad," *Ensign*, Aug. 2000, 50–58.
- Daniel C. Peterson, Abraham Divided (1995).
- James B. Mayfield, "Ishmael, Our Brother," *Ensign*, June 1979, 24–32.
- Hugh Nibley, "Islam and Mormonism—A Comparison," Ensign, Mar. 1972, 55–64.



Some Muslim women wear the *hijab* head covering as a sign of modesty or devotion to Allah or to visibly express their Muslim identity.

generally. Muhammad is said to have distinguished between the "greater jihad" and the "lesser jihad." The latter, he said, is warfare. But the greater jihad is to combat injustice as well as one's personal resistance to living righteously.

Today's Islamist terrorism claims religious roots, but it arguably reflects social, political, and economic grievances that have little or no connection to religion as such.⁸ Moreover, it's important to note that the vast majority of the world's Muslims have not joined the terrorists in their violence.⁹

Shari'a is another point of concern for some non-Muslims. Drawn from the Qur'an and the *hadith*—brief reports of what Muhammad and his closest associates said and did that provide models of Muslim behavior as well as supplement and explain Qur'anic passages-it is a code of Muslim conduct.¹⁰ Rules governing both male and female dress (such as the hijab, or veil) are found in shari'a; while they're enforced by some Muslim countries, they're left to individual choice in others. Shari'a also covers such matters as personal hygiene; the time and content of prayer; and rules governing marriage, divorce, and inheritance. Thus, when Muslims indicate in surveys that they wish to be governed by shari'a, they may or may not be making a political statement. They may simply be saying that they aspire to live genuinely Muslim lives.



Many non-Muslims, when they think of Islam's treatment of women. immediately think of polygamy and veils. But the cultural reality is far more complex. Many passages in the Qur'an declare women to be equal to men, while others seem to assign them subordinate roles. Certainly there are practices in many Islamic countries-often with roots in pre-Islamic tribal culture or other preexisting customs-that render women subservient. However, the way Muslims see women's roles varies considerably from country to country and even within countries.

Latter-day Saint Views of Islam

Despite our different beliefs, how can Latter-day Saints approach building relationships with Muslims?

First of all, we should recognize Muslims' right to "worship how, where, or what they may" (Articles of Faith 1:11). In 1841, Latter-day Saints on the city council of Nauvoo passed an ordinance on religious freedom guaranteeing "free toleration, and equal privileges" to "the Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Latter-day Saints, Quakers, Episcopals, Universalists, Unitarians, Mohammedans [Muslims], and all other religious sects and denominations whatever."¹¹

We should also recall that our Church leaders have generally been strikingly positive in their appreciation of the founder of Islam. In 1855, for example, in a time when many Christians condemned Muhammad as an antichrist, Elders George A. Smith (1817–75) and Parley P. Pratt (1807–57) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles delivered lengthy sermons not only manifesting an impressively informed and fair understanding of Islamic history but also praising Muhammad himself. Elder Smith remarked that Muhammad "was no doubt raised up by God on purpose" to preach against idolatry, and he expressed sympathy for Muslims, who, like the Latter-day Saints, find it hard "to get an honest history" written about them. Speaking immediately afterward, Elder Pratt expressed admiration for Muhammad's teachings and for the morality and institutions of Muslim society.12

A more recent official statement came in 1978 from the First Presidency. It specifically mentions Muhammad among "the great religious leaders of the world," saying that, like them, he "received a portion of God's light. Moral truths were given to [these leaders] by God," wrote Presidents Spencer W. Kimball, N. Eldon Tanner, and Marion G. Romney, "to enlighten whole nations and to bring a higher level of understanding to individuals."¹³

Building on Common Ground

While Latter-day Saints and Muslims obviously differ on important matters—notably the divinity of Jesus Christ, His role as Savior, and the calling of modern prophets—we have many things in common. We both believe, for example, that we are morally accountable before God, that we should pursue both personal righteousness and a good and just society, and that we will be resurrected and brought before God for judgment.

Both Muslims and Latter-day Saints believe in the vital importance of strong families and in the divine command to help the poor and needy and that we demonstrate our faith through acts of discipleship. There seems no reason why Latter-day Saints and Muslims cannot do so alongside one another and even, when opportunities present themselves, by cooperating together in communities where, more and more, we find ourselves neighbors in an increasingly secular world. Together, we can demonstrate that religious faith can be a powerful force for good and not merely a source of strife and even violence, as some critics argue.

The Qur'an itself suggests a way of living peacefully together despite



our differences: "If God had willed, he could have made you a single community. But he desired to test you in what he has given you. So, compete with one another in good deeds. You will all return to God, and he will inform you regarding the things wherein you used to disagree."¹⁴ ■

NOTES

- 1. In fact, AD 622—the year of Muhammad's *Hijra*, or immigration, to Medina—is the base year of the Muslim (*Hijri*) calendar, and the revelations gathered in the Qur'an are classified as either Meccan or Medinan.
- 2. Over the centuries, the two factions have grown apart over other secondary issues as well.
- Significantly, though, while translation of the Qur'an into other languages is allowed, only the original Arabic is regarded as truly the Qur'an and truly scriptural.
- 4. See Qur'an 4:125.
- See Qur'an 53:36-62; 87:9-19; see also Daniel C. Peterson, "News from Antiquity," *Ensign*, Jan. 1994, 16–21.
- 6. Qur'an 112:3-4. Translations from the Qur'an are from Daniel C. Peterson.
- 7. Standard editions of the Qur'an are divided into 30 equal portions for precisely that purpose.
- See, for example, Robert A. Pape, Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism (2005); Graham E. Fuller, A World without Islam (2010); Robert A. Pape and James K. Feldman, Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism and How to Stop It (2010).
- 9. See Charles Kurzman, *The Missing Martyrs: Why There Are So Few Muslim Terrorists* (2011); see also John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think* (2008); James Zogby, *Arab Voices: What They Are Saying to Us, and Why It Matters* (2010).
- 10. It's rather similar, in fact, to rabbinic law in Judaism.
- Ordinance in Relation to Religious Societies, City of Nauvoo, [Illinois] headquarters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, March 1, 1841.
- 12. See Journal of Discourses, 3:28-42.
- 13. First Presidency statement, Feb. 15, 1978. In his revision of *Introduction to the Qur'an* (1970) by Richard Bell, W. Montgomery Watt, an eminent scholar of Islam and an Anglican priest, offered one possible way in which a believing Christian might view the Qur'an as inspired.
- 14. Qur'an 5:48; compare 2:48.

INTEGRITY

If we listen to the inner voice of the Holy Ghost, we can develop true integrity.

By Barbara A. Lewis

he cuttlefish is the champion of disguise in the deep sea. It can change its "coat of many colors" almost instantly by combining red, yellow, brown, and black pigments in its skin. The males sometimes employ this skill in ways meant to impress the females. The cuttlefish is also a tricky shape shifter that can adjust its skin to look like kelp or even rock. It uses its camouflage skills to hide from hungry dolphins.¹

People can behave like cuttlefish, changing their clothing, language, behavior, and thoughts, depending on their surroundings. They might do this in order to impress or be accepted by others. However, this behavior does people more harm than good. In their eagerness to blend in, they can sacrifice their integrity.

What Is Integrity?

Integrity is defined as moral soundness, genuineness, wholeness, and incorruptibility. It includes our beliefs, the way we think and speak, and the way we act, especially when no one is watching. It is being honest with ourselves, others, and God. When we have integrity, we "live by our beliefs and standards."² President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) instructed us that keeping our covenants with honor is a part of integrity. It is thinking and doing what is right, no matter where we are or what the consequences might be.³ Unlike the cuttlefish, we should not change colors —or standards—to impress or be accepted by others.

Suppose you know someone who believes that it is acceptable to lie, backstab, and cheat to get ahead. She consistently acts according to those beliefs. Does she have integrity? Acting according to one's views does not necessarily mean that a person has integrity. Our beliefs need to match up with God's commandments. We are given the ability to discern right from wrong: "The Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil" (Moroni 7:16).

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) taught that "integrity (the willingness and ability to live by our beliefs and commitments) is one of the foundation stones of good character, and without good character one cannot hope to enjoy the presence of God here or in the eternities."⁴

Integrity in Beliefs

Daniel was willing to die for his beliefs. He went from slave to ruler in the king's court, interpreting the dreams of the king. When he was given the choice to stop praying to God or be cast into a den of lions, he chose the lions (see Daniel 6). Daniel stood firm when his integrity was tested.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were commanded by the king's decree to kneel down and worship a golden



idol, but they refused. Enraged, the king threatened to throw them into a fiery furnace if they did not comply. The young men expressed their faith that God would deliver them and then added, "But if not, . . . we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Daniel 3:18). They demonstrated integrity because they would not compromise their beliefs and were even willing to sacrifice their lives if the Lord did not deliver them.

Although it is unlikely that we will be thrown into a den of lions or a fiery furnace, our integrity is challenged every day. We can choose to stand up for our beliefs no matter what.

Integrity in Thoughts

Our thoughts are the birthplace of our actions. If we maintain integrity in our thoughts, we will be better able to act with integrity. Consider the experience of a young woman named Jordan.

Jordan was working late at a clothing store for a major sales event that would end at midnight. Dozens of customers clamored around her. She checked her watch and saw that it was ten minutes before midnight. Jordan had promised the Lord two years before to read the Book of Mormon every day, and she hadn't read it yet that day.

"I haven't taken my break yet," Jordan thought. "I could take it now . . . but I'd lose a lot of sales."

Jordan earned commission for each sale. She could make a lot of money in the next few minutes. But if she took her break, her coworkers would get all the money for the sales she had been working on.

A soothing voice came into her head. "It won't matter if you skip one day. Think of all the money you could earn."

Jordan hesitated. But she knew that wasn't a good way to think. Instead, she redirected her thoughts: "Keeping my promise to God is more important to me than money."

Jordan quickly slipped into the storage room. Sitting on a stool amid boxes and racks of clothing, she read from her small copy of the Book of Mormon. Peace flowed from the words on the pages.

After the sale, one of Jordan's coworkers came into the back room. "What on earth are you doing?" she asked. "You lost some big sales out there."

Jordan was tempted to quickly hide the book, but she did not change her colors to avoid ridicule. Instead she spoke up boldly. "I made a promise that I would read the Book of Mormon every day. I know it's true, and I've kept that promise for two years."

Her coworker's brows squeezed together. "I've heard of that book. I might get a copy someday."

Jordan smiled. "Here, you can have mine." She gave her friend the book. Warmth filled her heart. By controlling her thoughts, she had kept the integrity of her promise to the Lord and possibly changed the life of her friend.



LOOKING INSIDE TO DEVELOP PERSONAL INTEGRITY

- Attend Church meetings, read scriptures, and seek out good literature.
- Accept responsibility for mistakes instead of trying to justify them.
- Pray to understand how to better live the commandments.
- Remember that concealing or avoiding the truth can be the same as lying.
- Pay an honest tithing, thereby not cheating the Lord.
- Avoid music, movies, games, or websites that do not align with God's standards.

Integrity in Words and Actions

Abraham Lincoln once rode in a stagecoach with an army colonel. The colonel pulled out a bottle of alcohol and asked Lincoln if he would have a drink with him. Lincoln politely said no. The colonel next pulled out a cigar and offered it. Lincoln again refused the offer.

He explained that when he was nine years old, his mother was gravely ill. She called him to her bedside before she passed away. She asked him to promise that he would never drink or smoke.

Lincoln said to the colonel, "I have kept that promise.



LOOKING OUTSIDE MYSELF TO ENCOURAGE INTEGRITY IN OTHERS

- Help others maintain their integrity by supporting their moral courage and standing with them.
- Recognize and applaud other people's acts of integrity.
- "Stand as [a witness] of God at all times and in all things, and in all places" (Mosiah 18:9).
- Do not try to please others around you by changing good behavior for inappropriate language, clothing, or behaviors.
- Refuse to participate in dishonest actions, such as sneaking into an event without paying, even when others pressure you to do so.
- Teach others about integrity so that they can understand it and live with integrity.

Now would you advise me to break that promise to my dear mother?"⁵

Lincoln demonstrated integrity in both his words and his actions. He remained true to his inner convictions, even under social pressure. Likewise, we can maintain our integrity by keeping our promises and standing up for our beliefs.

The Integrity of Jesus Christ

Jesus exemplified the wholeness of integrity throughout His ministry. After 40 days of fasting, Jesus was weak from hunger. Satan tempted Him to abuse His power and turn stones to bread to instantly satisfy His hunger. When Jesus withstood that temptation, Satan tempted Jesus with instant fame and acceptance, suggesting that angels would catch Jesus if He threw Himself from a pinnacle of the temple. Jesus again refused. Finally, Satan promised Jesus kingdoms of power if Jesus would only bow down to him. Jesus rejected Satan and commanded him to depart. (See Matthew 4:1–11.)

Even in His most vulnerable moments, Jesus kept His integrity before His Father. From the Savior's example, we learn that the strength of our integrity is often tested when we are at our weakest. But, following His example, we can gain the courage to be strong in difficult times.

Changing colors benefits a cuttlefish. But changing behaviors to please others—for wealth, fame, or any other reason—does not benefit people. Following Christ's example of integrity will lead us back to our Father in Heaven. If we listen to the inner voice of the Holy Ghost, we can develop true integrity. Our beliefs, thoughts, and actions will be in harmony with our Savior, who will be able to say to us, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matthew 25:21). ■

NOTES

- 1. See Dave Hansford, "Cuttlefish Change Color, Shape-Shift to Elude Predators," *National Geographic News*, Aug. 6, 2008, news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2008/08/080608-cuttlefish -camouflage-missions.html.
- 2. Young Women Personal Progress (booklet, 2009), 62.
- 3. See Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley (1997), 270.
- 4. Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball (2006), 126.
- 5. See Preparing for Exaltation (Sunday School teacher's manual, 1998), 249.

FREEDOM OR CAPTIVITY

By Matthew Flitton

Church Magazines

hen I was a priest, our quorum went on a hike to Donut Falls near Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. The trail is short and leads to an impressive waterfall. We rushed ahead of our leaders until we came to a fork in the trail. To the right was a service road that went uphill. To the left was a small trail that continued across a meadow. We didn't know which one was the right way, but we decided to take the service road. It looked more rugged and exciting.

A dozen yards past the junction, we heard our bishop call to us, telling us we were heading the wrong way. He urged us to come back and take the other trail. We argued that both trails probably went to the same place. We wanted to take the more interesting route. The bishop shrugged his shoulders and we walked up the service road.

And we walked. And walked. We continued about two miles before we decided this was definitely the wrong road and turned around.

When we returned to the fork in the trail, the bishop's wife was waiting for us in the early twilight. We said we hadn't found the falls. She pointed to the trail we'd ignored earlier. "You still have time to get there before it gets dark."

Half a mile up the trail, we came to the falls. We scrambled up the rock face and into a cave where a torrent of water flowed through the roof and out the mouth of the grotto.

Choices

In life, we have many choices to make. These choices are like the trails I hiked in the wilderness. Each one leads

Choosing an action means choosing a consequence.

someplace. I choose my destination the moment I choose which trail to take. If I want to go someplace specific, like that waterfall, I need to carefully choose the trail that will lead me there and follow the directions of those who know the way.

As we exercise agency, the choices we make have consequences that can result in freedom or captivity. Making righteous choices brings the Spirit. Having the clarity of divine direction in our lives is a form of freedom. Making unrighteous choices diminishes the influence of the Spirit and leaves us more vulnerable to the influences and captivity of Satan.

Lehi taught this eternal principle to his son Jacob: "Men are free . . . to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil" (2 Nephi 2:27).

Agency

Agency, or the ability to choose, is a gift that helps us become more like Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Our wise use of it in the premortal life gave us the opportunity to come to earth. "Without agency, we would not be able to learn or progress or follow the Savior."¹

But along with the ability to choose come the consequences of those choices. These consequences can be placed widely in two categories: freedom or captivity.



Freedom

Freedom is the state of being free from the control or domination of another.²

Each time we make righteous choices we gain more freedom and strength to follow God's plan. The *Gospel Principles* manual explains:

"When we choose to live according to God's plan for us, our agency is strengthened. Right choices increase our power to make more right choices.

"As we obey each of our Father's commandments, . . . we find it easier to make right choices."³

Making righteous choices brings us freedom partly by giving us more opportunities. For example, in our home our children must complete and turn in homework if they want the freedom to watch movies, play games, or interact with friends online. Each day our children must decide if they want to do their homework and turn it in and thus gain more freedom.

As a freshman in college, Elder Craig A. Cardon of the Seventy was invited to a Saturday-night party. He asked if there would be alcohol. When his teammate said no, he agreed to attend. His friend drove him to the party and Elder Cardon found that everybody was drinking. He chose to sit by himself rather than participate. Later, police raided the party. They allowed Elder Cardon to drive his teammate's car home, returning at 3:00 a.m. His alarm went off a

few hours later. After a small debate with himself, Elder Cardon got up and went to priesthood meeting, arriving a few minutes late. When he got there, Elder Cardon saw his father in the congregation. His father greeted him with the words, "I knew I would find you here, Son."

Elder Cardon's choices, both to turn away from unwholesome activities as well as to be where he was supposed to be, blessed him.

"When my teammate misrepresented the party's activities, I felt a spiritual unrest that I did not heed. When confronted with that reality, I was more disappointed with myself than with my teammate. But keeping myself apart from the crowd brought spiritual comfort and later temporal benefit when the police allowed me to return home. "However, the greatest blessing of liberty came when, in the privacy of my dormitory room early Sunday morning, I chose to be where I should be, not knowing beforehand the treasure that awaited me there. Such experiences, accompanied by the ministration of the Spirit, foreshadow the liberty associated with the blessing of eternal life."⁴

Captivity

The opposite of freedom is captivity. We choose captivity when we make unrighteous choices. In the example of my children and their homework, if they choose to ignore homework, then they choose to not use electronic devices. They are captive because their choices have been limited; they can no longer choose to participate in certain activities.

Consider the temple. If we live our lives in the right way, we are free to enter the temple and partake of its blessings, but when we live contrary to the standards of the temple, we lose the freedom to attend.

The problem is that sometimes, like that service road, the wrong path looks more interesting. We have to remember our ultimate goal, or we'll lose the destination we're seeking.

Elder Robert D. Hales (1932–2017) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

"When we don't keep the commandments or follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost, our opportunities are

reduced; our abilities to act and progress are diminished. . . .

"... Obedience to the commandments ultimately protects our agency.

"For example, when we hearken to the Word of Wisdom, we escape the captivity of poor health and addiction to substances

that literally rob us of our ability to act for ourselves.

"As we obey the counsel to avoid and get out of debt now, we use our agency and obtain the liberty to use our disposable income for helping and blessing others.

"When we follow the prophets' counsel to hold family home evening, family prayer, and family scripture study, our homes become an incubator for our children's spiritual growth. . . . By our righteous choices and actions, we liberate them from darkness by increasing their ability to walk in the light."⁵

Sometimes the wrong path looks more interesting. We have to remember our ultimate goal, or we'll lose the destination we're seeking.



An experience during my missionary service in France taught how addictions can rob us of the ability to choose our actions. One day my companion and I were walking through a park in Pau, when a homeless man walked up to us.

This man laughed at us. He told us we were slaves to our religion. He bragged about how he could commit immoral acts and we couldn't.

"If I want to drink wine, I drink wine. If I want to do drugs, I do drugs. But you can't," he said dismissively. "Your church has taken away your ability to choose."

He continued telling us all the ways the commandments were holding us back. As he did so, he became increasingly agitated. Finally, he asked, "Do either of you have a cigarette? I need one now."

When we told him we didn't, he ran off to find a cigarette.

That moment showed the reality of captivity and freedom. My companion and I could have done any of those things he talked about. We still had the agency to make those choices and to suffer the consequences. But this man didn't have the same freedom. Through repeated bad choices he'd lost the ability to not smoke. His choice to participate in behaviors that could lead to addiction had led to captivity. He could still regain that freedom, but the road back from addiction is often long and difficult.

Conclusion

That day on the trail with my priests quorum, I learned the importance of trusting those who have more experience and of listening to my leaders. I also learned that no matter how attractive the other choice looks, taking the wrong road will never lead me to the right destination.

We're here to become more like our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. We can do this by following the example of our Savior and making righteous choices that will free us to better follow Them. Doing so will help us as surely as taking the correct trail led my priests quorum to that waterfall.

- 1. "Agency and Accountability," Gospel Topics, topics.lds.org.
- 2. See Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. (2003), "freedom."
- 3. Gospel Principles (2009), 19.
- 4. See Craig A. Cardon, "Choosing Liberty and Eternal Life," *Ensign*, Feb. 2008, 21–22.
- Robert D. Hales, "Agency: Essential to the Plan of Life," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 25, 26.

By Elder K. Brett Nattress Of the Seventy



Saving Laura's Lamb

Our daughter's example of faith and effort taught me about opening the heavens through prayer.

y wife, Shawna, and I had the great blessing of raising our children in a farming community that provided our family with a variety of opportunities. One such opportunity came when our three daughters, Michelle, Laura, and Lindsay, acquired newborn lambs from a neighbor.

We named one of the lambs Dianna Louise. That's a big name for a little lamb. Dianna was smaller and gentler than the other lambs. She required special hand-feeding because her mother had rejected her. The experience of providing such care endeared this little lamb to our entire family and especially to Laura. With Laura's extra attention, Dianna was soon just as active and rambunctious as the other lambs.

Shawna and I sometimes worried that we knew too little about raising livestock, but we comforted ourselves with the thought that we were raising children, not sheep. And, for a while, it seemed that our attempt at raising lambs would have a happy outcome.

A Lost Lamb

Then one fateful morning everything changed. About 7:00 a.m., Laura came running into the house, crying, "Dad,

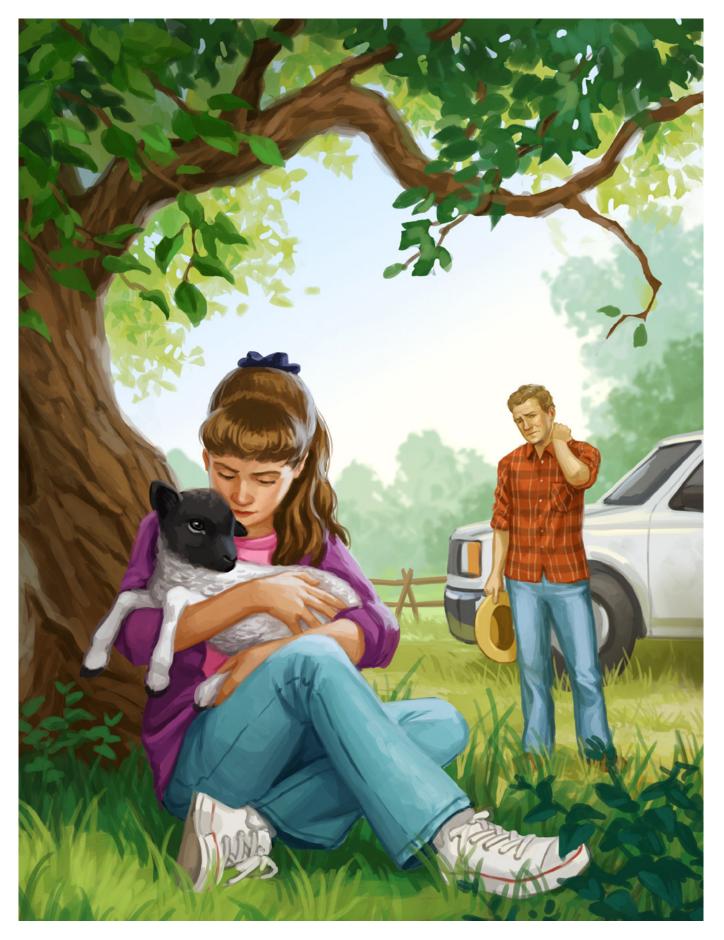
Dianna is lost!" Tears streamed down her face as she frantically led me outside to the feeding area.

Just as Laura had said, Dianna was missing. I immediately jumped the fence and started searching. It took only a few minutes to find Dianna in some thick grass. She started bleating when she saw me. It was then that I noticed she was unable to stand. As I inspected further, I saw that she had broken her right foreleg. I carefully picked her up, carried her back to the house, and placed her under a shade tree where Laura was anxiously waiting.

I sat next to Laura and shared the sad news. I explained that this type of injury usually proves fatal. She, of course, began to cry. We discussed how all of God's creatures will be resurrected. I reassured her that lambs go to heaven, and she quietly nodded. She then asked if she could go with me to take Dianna to the veterinarian.

How Could I Explain?

I carefully loaded Dianna in the pickup, and we made our way to the clinic. The drive was silent, with the exception of Laura's audible sobs. She loved that lamb! As we arrived, Laura looked into my eyes and said, "Dad, I prayed on the way over, and I know Dianna's leg is going to be



OK." I was at a loss for words. How could I explain the inevitable outcome without shaking the pure, childlike faith of our daughter?

When it was our turn to see the vet, he took a quick glance at Dianna and confirmed what I had feared. She had fractured her leg. He then recommended that he provide our lamb with a peaceful end. I looked at Laura, and she looked back at me with her perfect faith. She had prayed and had received an answer that Dianna would be OK!

Another Option

Laura's perfect faith and pure intent inspired me to quietly ask if there was an option to set and cast the leg. The vet was more than a little surprised by my question. He explained that there were no guarantees that it would work, and even if it did work, our lamb would most likely walk with a limp for the rest of her life. We discussed payment—\$50 to euthanize the lamb or \$100 to cast the leg. We decided to give Dianna a chance. With a cast on the lamb's leg, we headed home—Laura, Dianna Louise, and me.

When we arrived, Shawna was ready to provide loving support for Laura, thinking her lamb was no longer with us. However, she quickly saw that Dianna was back, sporting a cast on her leg! Shawna looked at me in amazement, saving her questions for later.

Loving Care and Duct Tape

What happened next was nothing short of a miracle. Each morning at dawn, we found Laura in the middle of the pen, holding and hand-feeding her little lamb. Soon Dianna gained strength and started to walk, bearing partial weight on her broken leg.

About three weeks following her injury, I noticed that the swelling had gone down substantially and that Dianna's cast was much too big for her leg. I was afraid that she might rebreak her leg by stepping awkwardly in the cast. Immediate intervention was needed. Therefore, I did what I thought any reasonable father would do: I found a pair of heavy pruning shears and a roll of silver duct tape and went to work. I cut the cast off Dianna's leg, reformed it to fit, then wrapped it with tape. To hold the cast in place, I created a sling using several strips of duct tape and placed it over Dianna's front shoulders to lend support. Our little lamb was now literally covered in duct tape.

Notwithstanding Dianna's unusual appearance, to our amazement this intervention worked! Before long, Dianna's limp was hardly noticeable.

Faith, Prayer, and Effort

At the end of the summer, our daughters showed their lambs at the county fair. Prior to the judging, I assured Laura that her mother and I were proud of her no matter the outcome. She had prayed as if everything depended on the Lord and then had worked as if everything depended on her. A miracle had occurred because of her faith.

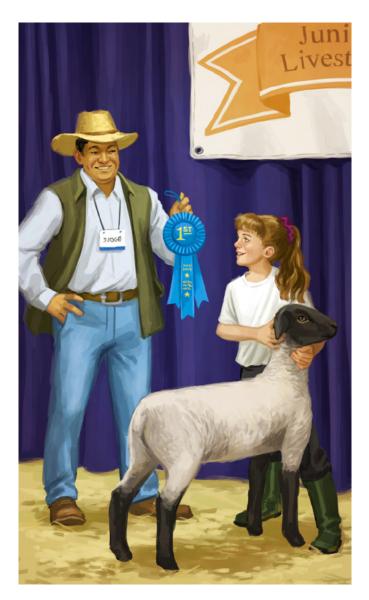
A moment of truth ensued. The judge lined up the lambs according to grade. My heart sank as I noticed that Laura and Dianna were in what I thought was the last-place slot. Then the impossible happened; the judge approached Laura with a smile and pinned a blue ribbon on her lamb. She had won first place in her group! It was yet another miracle—and another lesson for me. Our young daughter had taught me what pure faith, sincere prayer, and consistent effort can do.

The Savior said, "Suffer little children . . . to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14). A sincere child's prayer truly can and will open the heavens.

We are taught that "prayer is the act by which the will of the Father and the will of the child are brought into correspondence with each other. The object of prayer is not to change the will of God but to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that God is already willing to grant but that are made conditional on our asking for them."¹

No Problem Too Small or Too Large

President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) said, "No problem is too small for His attention nor so large that He cannot answer the prayer of faith."² Similarly, President Russell M. Nelson has taught: "If we pray with an eternal



perspective, we need not wonder if our most tearful and heartfelt pleadings are heard. . . . God will heed your sincere and heartfelt prayers, and your faith will be strengthened."³ President Nelson has also taught that prayer leads to spiritual strength: "Just as physical strength requires exercise, so spiritual strength requires effort. Among the most important of spiritual exercises is prayer. It engenders harmony with God and a desire to keep His commandments."⁴

During the Savior's visit to the Americas, He taught the power of prayer by word and deed. In 3 Nephi 18, He referenced prayer 10 times! Then in 3 Nephi 19, He referenced prayer (to my count) another 34 times! Is it any wonder that when He returned, as recorded in 3 Nephi 27, He found His disciples "gathered together and . . . united in mighty prayer and fasting"? (verse 1). "And Jesus again showed himself unto them, for they were praying unto the Father in his name; and Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, and said unto them: What will ye that I shall give unto you? . . .

"Verily I say unto you, that ye are built upon my gospel; therefore ye shall call whatsoever things ye do call, in my name; *therefore if ye call upon the Father*, for the church, *if it be in my name the Father will hear you*" (verses 2, 9; emphasis added).

His Promises Are Sure

We have the same promise in our lives. The Savior said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you" (3 Nephi 18:20).

As a 14-year-old boy, the Prophet Joseph Smith found the same promise expressed this way: "If any of you lack wisdom, *let him ask of God*, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; *and it shall be given him*" (James 1:5, emphasis added).

Through Joseph's simple and sincere prayer, the heavens were opened. He learned that we have a loving Heavenly Father, who knows us by name, and that His Son, Jesus Christ, lives! He learned that our Heavenly Father and His Son are two separate and distinct individuals who are one in purpose and that They are glorified, resurrected beings! He learned how to access the powers of heaven.

In this complex world with so many distractions, the gospel is simple, pure, and true. Let us pray with great energy of heart as individuals and families. As we do, Heavenly Father will bless us with an increased portion of His Spirit, and we will feel His loving influence and a reassurance that He is always there. Let us have faith that His answers come and His promises are sure.⁵ ■

NOTES

- 1. Bible Dictionary, "Prayer."
- 2. Thomas S. Monson, "Your Celestial Journey," Ensign, May 1999, 96.
- 3. Russell M. Nelson, "Face the Future with Faith," Ensign, May 2011, 35.
- 4. Russell M. Nelson, "We Are Children of God," Ensign, Nov. 1998, 87.
- 5. "Prayer is the passport to spiritual power" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* [2006], 49).

The account then reads:





CHAPTER 3

Plates of Gold

This is chapter 3 of the new four-volume narrative history of the Church titled Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days. The book will be available in 14 languages in print, in the Church History section of the Gospel Library app, and online at saints.lds.org. The next several chapters will be published in upcoming issues until volume 1 is released later this year. Those chapters will be available in 47 languages in the Gospel Library app and at saints.lds.org. Chapter 2 describes Joseph's First Vision—seeing the Father and the Son in the spring of 1820.

hree years passed, and three harvests. Joseph spent most days clearing land, turning soil, and working as a hired hand to raise money for the yearly cash payment on the family's property. The work made it impossible for him to attend school very often, and he spent most of his free time with family or other laborers.

Joseph and his friends were young and lighthearted. Sometimes they made foolish mistakes, and Joseph found that being forgiven once did not mean he would never need to repent again. Nor did his glorious vision answer every question or forever end his confusion.¹ So he tried to stay close to God. He read his Bible, trusted in Jesus Christ's power to save him, and obeyed the Lord's command not to join any church.

Like many people in the area, including his father, Joseph believed that God could reveal knowledge through objects like rods and stones, as He had done with Moses, Aaron, and others in the Bible.² One day, while Joseph was helping a neighbor dig a well, he came across a small stone buried deep in the earth. Aware that people sometimes used special stones to search for lost objects or hidden treasure, Joseph wondered if he had found such a stone. Looking into it, he saw things invisible to the natural eye.³

Joseph's gift for using the stone impressed family members, who saw it as a sign of divine favor.⁴ But even though he had the gift of a seer, Joseph was still unsure if God was pleased with him. He could no longer feel the forgiveness and peace he had felt after his vision of the Father and Son. Instead, he often felt condemned for his weakness and imperfections.⁵

On September 21, 1823, 17-year-old Joseph lay awake in the loft bedroom he shared with his brothers. He had stayed up late that evening, listening to his family talk about different churches and the doctrines they taught. Now everyone was asleep, and the house was quiet.⁶

In the darkness of his room, Joseph began to pray, pleading fervently that God would forgive his sins. He longed to commune with a heavenly messenger who could assure him of his standing before the Lord and give him the knowledge of the gospel he had been promised in the grove. Joseph knew God had answered his prayers before, and he had full confidence that He would answer again.

As Joseph prayed, a light appeared beside his bed and grew brighter until it filled the entire loft. Joseph looked up and saw an angel standing in the air. The angel wore a seamless white robe that came down to his wrists and ankles. Light radiated from him, and his face shone like lightning.

At first Joseph was afraid, but peace soon filled him. The angel called him by name and introduced himself as Moroni.

He said God had forgiven Joseph of his sins and now had work for him to do. He declared that Joseph's name would be spoken of for good and evil among all people.⁷

Moroni spoke of gold plates buried in a nearby hill. On the plates was etched the record of an ancient people who once lived in the Americas. The record told of their origins and gave an account of Jesus Christ visiting them and teaching the fullness of His gospel.⁸ Buried with the plates, Moroni said, were two seer stones, which Joseph later called the Urim and Thummim, or interpreters. The Lord had prepared these stones to help Joseph translate the record. The clear stones were fastened together and attached to a breastplate.⁹

For the rest of the visit, Moroni quoted prophecies from the biblical books of Isaiah, Joel, Malachi,

and Acts. The Lord was coming soon, he explained, and the human family would not fulfill the purpose of their creation unless God's ancient covenant was renewed first.¹⁰ Moroni said that God had chosen Joseph to renew the covenant and that if he chose to be faithful to God's commands, he would be the one to reveal the record on the plates.¹¹

Before departing, the angel com-

manded Joseph to take care of the plates and show them to no one unless otherwise instructed, warning him that he would be destroyed if he disobeyed this counsel. Light then gathered around Moroni and he ascended to heaven.¹²

As Joseph lay thinking about the vision, light flooded the room again and Moroni reappeared, giving the same message as before. He then departed, only to appear once more and deliver his message a third time.

"Now, Joseph, beware," he said. "When you go to get the plates, your mind will be filled with darkness, and all manner of evil will rush into your mind to prevent you from keeping the commandments of God." Directing Joseph to someone who would support him, Moroni urged him to tell his father about his visions.

"He will believe every word you say," the angel promised.¹³

The next morning, Joseph said nothing about Moroni, even though he knew his father also believed in visions and angels. Instead, they spent the morning harvesting a nearby field with Alvin.

The work was difficult. Joseph tried to keep pace with his brother as they swung their scythes back and forth through the tall grain. But Moroni's visits had kept him awake all night, and his thoughts kept returning to the ancient record and the hill where they were buried.

Soon he stopped working, and Alvin noticed. "We must keep to work," he called out to Joseph, "or we shall not get our task done."¹⁴

Joseph tried to work harder and faster, but no matter what he did, he could not keep up with Alvin. After a

> while, Joseph Sr. noticed that Joseph looked pale and had stopped working again. "Go home," he said, believing his son was sick.

Joseph obeyed his father and stumbled back toward the house. But as he tried to cross a fence, he collapsed to the ground, exhausted.

While he lay there, gathering strength, he saw Moroni standing above him once more, surrounded by light. "Why did

you not tell your father what I told you?" he asked.

Joseph said he was afraid his father would not believe him.

"He will," Moroni assured him, then repeated his message from the night before.¹⁵

Joseph Sr. wept when his son told him about the angel and his message. "It was a vision from God," he said. "Attend to it."¹⁶

Joseph set out immediately for the hill. During the night, Moroni had shown him a vision of where the plates were hidden, so he knew where to go. The hill, one of the biggest in the area, was about three miles (4.8 km) from his house. The plates were buried beneath a large, round rock on the west side of the hill, not far from its summit.

Joseph thought about the plates as he walked. Even though he knew they were sacred, it was hard for him

Moroni told Joseph that God had chosen Joseph to renew the covenant and that if he chose to be faithful to God's commands, he would be the one to reveal the record on the plates.

......

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Near Palmyra, New York, the Hill Cumorah is about three miles (4.8 km) southeast of the Smith family farm. Joseph knew where to go to find the Book of Mormon plates buried there because Moroni had shown him the hill in vision.

to resist wondering how much they were worth. He had heard tales of hidden treasures protected by guardian spirits, but Moroni and the plates he described were different from these stories. Moroni was a heavenly messenger appointed by God to deliver the record safely to His chosen seer. And the plates were valuable not because they were gold, but because they witnessed of Jesus Christ.

Still, Joseph could not help thinking that he now knew exactly where to find enough treasure to free his family from poverty.¹⁷

Arriving at the hill, Joseph located the place he had seen in the vision and began digging at the base of the rock until its edges were clear. He then found a large tree branch and used it as a lever to raise the stone and heave it aside.¹⁸

Beneath the boulder was a box, its walls and base made of stone. Looking inside, Joseph saw the gold plates, seer stones, and breastplate.¹⁹ The plates were covered with ancient writing and bound together on one side by three rings. Each plate was about six inches (15 cm) wide, eight inches (20 cm) long, and thin. A portion of the plates also appeared to be sealed so no one could read it.²⁰

Astonished, Joseph wondered again how much the plates were worth. He reached for them—and felt a shock pulse through him. He jerked his hand back but then reached for the plates twice more and was shocked each time.

"Why can I not obtain this book?" he cried out.

"Because you have not kept the commandments of the Lord," said a voice nearby.²¹

Joseph turned and saw Moroni. At once the message from the night before flooded his mind, and he understood that he had forgotten the record's true purpose. He started to pray, and his mind and soul awoke to the Holy Spirit.

"Look," Moroni commanded. Another vision unfolded before Joseph, and he saw Satan surrounded by his numberless host. "All this is shown, the good and the evil, the holy and impure, the glory of God and the power of darkness," the angel declared, "that you may know hereafter the two powers and never be influenced or overcome by that wicked one."

He instructed Joseph to purify his heart and strengthen his mind to receive the record. "If ever these sacred things are obtained they must be by prayer and faithfulness in obeying the Lord," Moroni explained. "They are not deposited here for the sake of accumulating gain and wealth for the glory of this world. They were sealed by the prayer of faith."²²

Joseph asked when he could have the plates.

"The twenty-second day of September next," Moroni said, "if you bring the right person with you."

"Who is the right person?" Joseph asked.

"Your oldest brother."²³

Ever since he was a child, Joseph knew he could rely on his oldest brother. Alvin was twenty-five years old now and could have acquired his own farm if he wanted. But he had chosen to stay on the family farm to help his parents get settled and secure on their land as they got older. He was serious and hardworking, and Joseph loved and admired him immensely.²⁴

Maybe Moroni felt that Joseph needed his brother's wisdom and strength to become the kind of person the Lord could trust with the plates.

Returning home that evening, Joseph was tired. But his family crowded around him as soon as he came through the door, eager to know what he had found at the hill. Joseph started to tell them about the plates, but Alvin interrupted when he noticed how weary Joseph looked.

"Let us go to bed," he said, "and we will get up early in the morning and go to work." They would have plenty of time tomorrow to hear the rest of Joseph's story. "If Mother will get our suppers early," he said, "we will then have a fine long evening and all sit down and hear you talk."²⁵

The next evening, Joseph shared what had happened at the hill, and Alvin believed him. As the oldest son in the family, Alvin had always felt responsible for his aging parents' physical welfare. He and his brothers had even started building a larger house for the family so they could be more comfortable.

Now it seemed Joseph was looking after their spiritual welfare. Night after night he captivated the family with talk of the gold plates and the people who wrote them. The family grew closer together, and their home was peaceful and happy. Everyone felt that something wonderful was about to happen.²⁶

Then one autumn morning, less than two months after Moroni's visit, Alvin came home with an intense pain in his stomach. Bent over in agony, he begged his father to call for help. When a doctor finally arrived, he gave Alvin a large dose of a chalky medicine, but it only made things worse.

Alvin lay in bed for days, writhing in pain. Knowing he would probably die, he called for Joseph. "Do everything that lies in your power to obtain the records," Alvin said. "Be faithful in receiving instruction and keeping every commandment that is given you."²⁷

He died a short time later, and sorrow settled over the house. At the funeral, a preacher all but said Alvin had gone to hell, using his death to warn others of what would happen unless God intervened to save them. Joseph Sr. was furious. His son had been a good young man, and he could not believe that God would damn him.²⁸

With Alvin gone, talk of the plates ended. He had been such a staunch supporter of Joseph's divine call that any mention of them brought his death to mind. The family could not bear it.

Joseph missed Alvin terribly and took his death especially hard. He had hoped to rely on his oldest brother to help him get the record. Now he felt forsaken.²⁹

When the day finally came to return to the hill, Joseph went alone. Without Alvin, he was unsure if the Lord would trust him with the plates. But he thought he could keep every commandment the Lord had given him, as his

A statue of Moroni stands atop the Hill Cumorah to commemorate the place where Joseph Smith first saw the Book of Mormon plates on September 22, 1823, and obtained them exactly four years later.



brother had counseled. Moroni's instructions for retrieving the plates were clear. "You must take them into your hands and go straight to the house without delay," the angel had said, "and lock them up."³⁰

At the hill, Joseph pried up the rock, reached into the stone box, and lifted out the plates. A thought then crossed his mind: the other items in the box were valuable and ought to be hidden before he went home. He set the plates down and turned to cover the box. But when he returned to the plates, they were gone. Alarmed, he fell to his knees and pleaded to know where they were.

Moroni appeared and told Joseph that he had failed to follow directions again. Not only had he set the plates down before safely securing them, he had also let them out of his sight. As willing as the young seer was to do the Lord's work, he was not yet able to protect the ancient record.

Joseph was disappointed in himself, but Moroni instructed him to return for the plates the following year. He also taught him more about the Lord's plan for the kingdom of God and the great work beginning to roll forth.

Still, after the angel left, Joseph slunk down the hill, worried what his family would think when he came home empty handed.³¹ When he stepped inside the house, they were waiting for him. His father asked at once if he had the plates.

"No," he said. "I could not get them."

"Did you see them?"

"I saw them but could not take them."

"I would have taken them," Joseph Sr. said, "if I had been in your place."

"You do not know what you say," Joseph said. "I could not get them, for the angel of the Lord would not let me." 32

A complete list of works cited is available at saints.lds.org.

The word *Topic* in the notes indicates additional information online at saints.lds.org.

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- 3. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 48–49; Bushman, "Joseph Smith as Translator," 242. **Topic:** Seer Stones
- 4. Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845, 95; see also Alma 37:23.
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- 6. Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844-45, book 3, [10].
- 7. Joseph Smith History, circa Summer 1832, 4, in *JSP*, H1:13–14; Joseph Smith—History 1:29–33; Joseph Smith History, 1838–56, volume A-1, 5, in *JSP*, H1:218–22 (draft 2); Pratt, *Interesting Account*, 6, in *JSP*, H1:524; Hyde, *Ein Ruf aus der Wüste*, 17–20. **Topic:** Angel Moroni
- 8. Joseph Smith, Journal, Nov. 9–11, 1835, in JSP, J1:88.
- Joseph Smith—History 1:35; Joseph Smith History, 1838–56, volume A-1, 5, in JSP, H1:222 (draft 2); Joseph Smith History, circa Summer 1832, 4, in JSP, H1:14; Oliver Cowdery, "Letter IV," LDS Messenger and Advocate, Feb. 1835, 1:65–67; Turley, Jensen, and Ashurst-McGee, "Joseph the Seer," 49–54; "Mormonism—No. II," Tiffany's Monthly, July 1859, 164. Topic: Seer Stones
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- 24. Joseph Smith, Journal, Aug. 23, 1842, in JSP, J1:116–17.
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- 27. Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844-45, book 4, [3]-[5].
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- 30. Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844-45, book 4, [2]-[3].
- 31. Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–45, book 4, [2]–[3]; Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, 85–86; Knight, Reminiscences, 1; Joseph Smith—History 1:54; Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845, 88; see also Jessee, "Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History," 31.
- 32. Smith, Biographical Sketches, 86.

The Myth of Invisible Motherhood

Though we may sometimes feel unseen as mothers, our faith and efforts are known to our Heavenly Father.

By Tiffanie Browne

Te were at church. My husband was sitting on the stand. I was wrestling with our kids, when the three-year-old escaped to the aisle. I knew the second I stood up she would try to outrace me.

Priesthood holders were gathering to bless a newborn baby. I rushed to the front of the chapel, picked up our three-year-old just in time, and headed to the foyer.

After the blessing, I trekked back in, only to find that the rest of the bench was now full. So, in addition to carrying my three-year-old, I was climbing over five people. I lost my footing and fell into their laps! Then the three-year-old took off the one-year-old's shoes and threw them over my head!

I was mortified. I left that day praying that, somehow, I might get everything under control.

It's Not about You

As I pleaded with the Lord, He brought to my mind a gentle rebuke: "It's not about you." I realized I was looking at the wrong things. I was worried about what others thought of me, not focusing on my relationship with the Savior. Since that day, "It's not about you" has become a phrase I often repeat.

We live in a world that tells us our worth is found in external achievements. It's in our grade point average, our college degree, how much money we make, or how many likes we got on our last post. It's natural to try to find a measuring stick for success as a mother. But no one hands out medals for juggling carpools, getting laundry done, and making sure kids finish their homework. Yet I continue to do these things. I know that my daily efforts to magnify my calling as a mother bring me closer to Jesus Christ.

When No One Sees

One day, while I was feeling lost in the daily routine of motherhood, I heard a commercial advertising a medication for a skin condition. The slogan was "See me," an appeal to look beyond, to see the person rather than the affliction.

I thought, "That's all I really want—for someone to *see* me." I realized that it is a talent to see the sacrifices others make on our behalf. Most of the people we serve, especially small children, don't understand the sacrifices we make day by day.

I came across an online video called "The Invisible Woman" by Nicole Johnson. Johnson describes how, as a mother, she felt that she was slowly growing invisible. Then a friend gave her a book of photos of great cathedrals. Captions in the book said most of those who helped build the cathedrals are today unknown. Inside the book,



her friend wrote, "With admiration for the greatness of what you are building when no one sees."¹ Even when we think no one sees or appreciates what we do, God sees.

Family Temple Building

So, what are we building that only God sees? In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord talks about "building houses of worship" (D&C 42:35). I believe parents have the great responsibility to make their homes "houses of worship," places where the Holy Spirit may abide. "Only the home can compare with the temple in sacredness" (Bible Dictionary, "Temple").

We may not wake up each morning and think, "Today I am building a temple of God." But sometimes we try. For example, we might envision an elaborate family home evening where everyone listens and the Spirit is present. Then we hold the *actual* family home evening, complete with cries of "She touched me!" and "Don't sit by me!" After interruptions and quarrels, everyone ends up in time-out including Mom!

Here's the lesson I have learned: We can't schedule the laying of the cornerstone for our personal temples. It is our daily acts that, over time, lay the bricks that build a temple.

Do You Think I Can Forget?

Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) was seven years old when the Saints were driven from Nauvoo. He watched his mother carry what belongings she could and head for Winter Quarters. "We started to come to Utah in this crude and helpless condition, and my mother said—'The Lord will open the way;' but how He would open the way no one knew."²

One morning on their journey, they realized some of their oxen were missing. Joseph and his uncle searched without success. Joseph returned disheartened, soaking wet, and tired. He found his mother praying, pleading with Heavenly Father to help them find their oxen. She finished, then rose and smiled at young Joseph, giving him new hope. Then she went and found the oxen.³ "Do you think I can forget the example of my mother? No; her faith and example will ever be bright in my memory. What do I think! Every breath I breathe, every feeling of my soul rises to God in thankfulness to Him that my mother was a Saint, that she was a woman of God, pure and faithful."⁴

As you press forward in faith, you testify to your children that Heavenly Father is a God of miracles. Those are the bricks that you lay daily in their temples.

Loaves and Fishes

In Galilee, 5,000 people were following the Savior. He asked His disciples where they might obtain bread to feed them. One of the disciples said a lad had brought five loaves and two fishes. The Lord blessed that food, and it fed 5,000. (See John 6:5–14.)

What does this have to do with motherhood? Think of the boy's mother, who took time to pack his lunch before she sent him out the door. That's such a motherly principle! We send them out the door with five loaves and two fishes, hoping it will be enough. Then the Lord blesses those loaves and fishes and produces miracles.

My mother demonstrated this loaves-and-fishes principle when I was in kindergarten. The school was going to hold me back because I couldn't count unless I used my fingers. Mom made me sit on my fingers so I wouldn't count on them, but I used them anyway.

Mom hired a math tutor to help me. I learned how to add, but it took a lot of sacrifice, effort, and instruction. I remember Mom telling me over and over again, "You are so good at math."

In seventh grade, I was placed in a slower math class while others my age were in pre-algebra. That lit a fire in me! I worked hard to get better, and in eighth grade I was allowed to join the others in regular algebra. I was still not the best, but I worked hard, and my mother kept encouraging me.

I eventually graduated with a degree in mathematics, and now I am a math tutor! Initially, all my mother wanted was for me to pass kindergarten. But over time, the Lord multiplied her efforts to bless my life and now the lives of those I tutor.

The Power of One

Single sisters and women without children can also serve as powerful ambassadors of motherhood. This story was shared by Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

"Some days after World War II, my grandmother was standing in line for food when an elderly single sister with no family of her own invited her to sacrament meeting in Zwickau, East Germany. My grandmother and my parents accepted the invitation. They went to church, felt the Spirit, were uplifted by the kindness of the members, and were edified by the hymns of the Restoration. My grandmother, my parents, and my three siblings were all baptized. I had to wait two years because I was only six. How grateful I am for a spiritually sensitive grandmother, teachable parents, and a wise, white-haired, elderly single sister who



had the sweet boldness to reach out and follow the Savior's example by inviting us to 'come and see' (see John 1:39). Her name was Sister Ewig, which translates in English to 'Sister Eternal.' I will be eternally grateful for her love and example."⁵

We never know what impact our everyday acts of kindness may have for others. This sister gave a simple invitation that has blessed the Uchtdorf family for generations.

The Sisterhood of Motherhood

Sisters, I see you walk in faith as you take your young children to church and keep trying to help them learn reverence. I see your faith that one day it will all be worth it. I see faith in single, divorced, or widowed women who do so much on their own.

I see faith in mothers who attend Primary with their special-needs children so their children can participate. I see faith in mothers who pray for inspiration to help a wayward child. And I see faith in weary mothers who nevertheless visit their children's bedsides to discuss the good and bad of the day, reassuring them that they are seen, heard, and loved.

I see faith in each of you. I see you building places of worship, for yourselves and for others, brick by brick and day by day.

Bravely Building

Sisters, you are brave for what you are building. As you send others out with loaves and fishes, remember to trust the Lord. The most important acts of motherhood may at times go unseen. But the invisibility of motherhood is a myth. We may be doing things that only God can see, but they are the very things that make the greatest difference in our own lives and in the lives of those we love. ■ *The author lives in Utah, USA.*

NOTES

- 1. See Nicole Johnson, "The Invisible Woman," YouTube video, youtu.be/9YU0aNAHXP0.
- 2. Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith (1998), 31.
- 3. Teachings: Joseph F. Smith, 21–22.
- 4. Teachings: Joseph F. Smith, 31.
- 5. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "The Opportunity to Testify," Ensign, Nov. 2004, 75.

Friend



Use the Friend *magazine to help your family understand a different sensitive topic each month.*

UNDERSTANDING THE PRIESTHOOD

Our loving Heavenly Father has organized His Church so that every woman, man, girl, and boy can have access to His blessings through the priesthood. It is also helpful to understand that although boys and men who hold the priesthood pass the sacrament and perform other priesthood duties, they are not the only ones who use priesthood authority. Whenever an individual—woman or man—is set apart to perform a calling in the Church by one who holds priesthood keys, that individual is given authority to fulfill the calling. President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, explained, "We are not accustomed to speaking of women having the authority of the priesthood in their Church callings, but what other authority can it be?" ("The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood," *Ensign*, May 2014, 51).

Use this month's *Friend* to help teach your children about the priesthood.



When Jordan wonders why only boys get the priesthood, her parents help her understand that there's more to the priesthood than she realized.

"With Priesthood Power" (page 11)

A beautiful new song teaches that the same power that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ used to create the earth can also bless each of us today.

"What's on Your Mind?" (page 34)

This activity helps children of both genders understand how they can help in the work of the priesthood.



TALK ABOUT IT

- Discuss ways the priesthood blesses each of us, regardless of gender.
- President Oaks taught, "Whoever functions in an office or calling received from one who holds priesthood keys exercises priesthood authority in performing her or his assigned duties" ("The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood," 51). List women and men you know who serve in callings using priesthood authority.
- To avoid confusion, be sure to use the word *priesthood* to refer to priesthood power, not to those who hold it.

RELATED RESOURCES

- Bonnie L. Oscarson, "Rise Up in Strength, Sisters in Zion," *Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 12–15.
- Gary E. Stevenson, "Where Are the Keys and Authority of the Priesthood?" *Ensign*, May 2016, 29–32.

PHOTOGRAPH OF PAYSON UTAH TEMPLE BY JAMES WHITNEY YOUNG

gospel topics at **lessonhelps.lds.org.** For past *Friend* Connection articles, visit **FriendConnection.lds.org.**

Find stories, activities, and media about other

New Era CONNECTION

The Savior and Modern Revelation

This month, the *New Era* contains articles about the following topics:



Jesus Christ and Easter. "Thankful This Easter Season," by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland (page 32); "The Savior of You" (page 6); "12 Images from Easter Week" (page 18); "Getting to Know the Savior" (page 12).



General conference. General Conference Notebook, a special booklet to help you take notes and gain insights from general conference.



The Restoration. "Prayer: The Key to Testimony and the Restoration," by Elder Robert D. Hales (page 2).



The New Era magazine is there for your teens and for you. See how this month's issue can help you talk with them and teach them.



Here are some questions answered in this month's New Era:

If I feel like I'm losing my faith, what can I do to regain it?

Why does God allow war?

"Q&A," pages 28-29

TALK WITH THEM

Here are some questions you might ask:

- What does Easter mean to you? What comes to your mind when you think of Easter? How do you try to remember the Savior at that time?
- What questions are on your mind right now? What kinds of answers or guidance would you like to get about them in general conference?
- How would you respond if someone asked you about Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, or something else related to the Restoration?

TEACH THEM

In family home evening or other teaching settings, consider using something you saw in the New Era. For instance:

- Point out some of the articles about Jesus Christ and share something you learned about Jesus Christ recently and how it strengthened your testimony.
- Show General Conference Notebook, and share how you try to get the most out of general conference.



SEND US YOUR SUGGESTIONS

ow can the *New Era* better meet the needs of your youth? Do you have specific ideas for article topics, questions to be answered, or ways to help youth understand the gospel? Send your suggestions to **newera@ldschurch.org**.

PORTRAITS OF FAITH

When Rakotomalala became interested in the gospel, the nearest church was in Antsirabe, a city 30 miles (50 km) from his village in Sarodroa. Rakotomalala and a friend found a way to make the journey each Sunday.

Today, Sarodroa has a small meetinghouse where over 100 members attend every Sunday. Rakotomalala has seen his village embrace the gospel. Four missionaries have served from Sarodroa and the Church continues to grow. CODY BELL, PHOTOGRAPHER

Rakotomalala Alphonse

I wanted to attend church, but I had no money for the bus. I talked to my friend, Razafindravaonasolo, and she said we could ride my bike. We rode two hours one way from Sarodroa to Antsirabe every Sunday. When I would get tired of pedaling, I would ride on the back and she would start pedaling. Then when she got tired, we would switch places again.

Eventually, Razafindravaonasolo's family and I joined the Church. We attended church in Antsirabe until a branch opened in Sarodroa. We were so happy when we could attend church in our own village!

See more photos of Rakotomalala and Razafindravaonasolo at **lds.org/go/E41874.**

Learn more about the growth of the Church in Sarodroa at **Ids.org/go/41844.**





THIS IS THE PLACE

My father, a devout Christian, taught me to have faith in Jesus Christ. That faith helped me survive Nigeria's three-year civil war in the late 1960s when I was in the army. Later, however, I became confused and quit attending church.

When I came to the United States in 1981 to get an education, I felt that I needed God in my life. For two years I attended different churches in Boston, Massachusetts, but none of them appealed to me. I didn't feel the Spirit, so I stopped looking.

Not long after my wife, Mabel, joined me from Nigeria in 1984, I started having a burning desire to again draw closer to God and belong to a church. A friend visiting from Nigeria didn't know I was looking for a church, but he told me about a church he had heard of that had a book called the Book of Mormon.

After that, I continued looking for churches. I found a church called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

n the temple, the words I heard my first day at church have been confirmed to me many times. Saints. The word *saint* caught my attention. I didn't know there was a church with members called saints. That Sunday I decided to check it out.

At the sacrament meeting I attended, the congregation sang hymns in a reverent manner, priests blessed bread and water, and the service was conducted in order and humility. Afterward, as I walked to the foyer and contemplated the service, I heard my name.

"Simeon," the voice of the Spirit said, "this is the place."

At that point, two missionaries approached. They introduced themselves and the Book of Mormon. I looked at them and said, "I don't know anything about the Book of Mormon, but I know the Bible. I am ready."

They began teaching me the plan of salvation. Less than a month later, I was baptized. My wife joined the Church a short while later. A few years after that, we were sealed in the Washington D.C. Temple and our five children were sealed to us.

In the temple, many things have been revealed to me, but the words I heard my first day at church have been confirmed to me many times through revelation in the temple: "This is the place." The impact of that statement from the Holy Ghost has forever changed my life and the lives of my wife and children. ■ Simeon Nnah, Aba, Nigeria



HOW COULD I REJUVENATE MY SCRIPTURE STUDY?

had been home from my mission for only three months when I began to struggle with reading the scriptures.

I had read the scriptures every day on my mission and promised to continue when I returned home. But as time passed, things just seemed to get in the way. I either had too much homework, was too busy working, or was just too tired. With each excuse, my scripture reading dwindled until I was hardly reading at all.

I opened the Book of Mormon one night and planned on reading just a verse. The verse I read reminded me that the scriptures contain "the pleasing word of God, yea, the word which healeth the wounded soul" (Jacob 2:8).

I pondered this verse and realized the negative effect neglecting scripture study was having on me. I felt more stressed at school, more apathetic at church, and more distanced from God. My soul needed the healing word of God found in the scriptures. I knew I needed to reorganize my priorities.

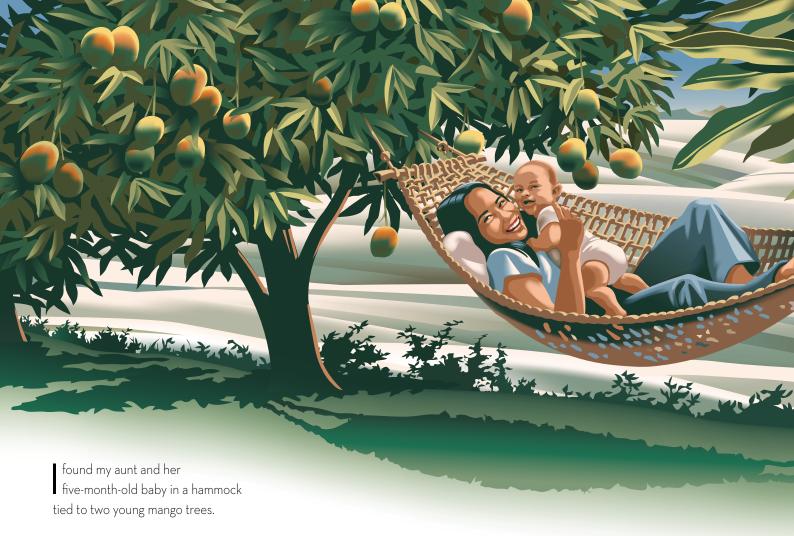
I turned to my friends, family, and Church leaders to ask for suggestions to rejuvenate my scripture study. I found three things to be helpful.

First, I realized that studying the scriptures at night was not effective for me. Studying in the morning allowed me to ponder throughout the day the doctrine and principles I had read that morning.

Second, we are taught to read scriptures with our families, but since I was at college and away from my family, I started reading scriptures with roommates and friends. This helped me stay accountable, and it sparked great gospel discussions.

Third, I started writing down promptings and thoughts I received during scripture study. This helped me focus on what I was reading and helped me better recognize the voice of the Spirit.

Once scripture study became a priority in my life again, I found that I had more time and energy to accomplish everything I needed to get done. Most important, I felt a closeness to God again as I read and pondered the scriptures. Now when I spend time in the scriptures, I feel peace and find healing for my soul. ■ Sarah Keenan, Utah, USA



"JUMP IN THE RIVER!"

One day my grandmother asked me to take some food she had prepared to my aunt. It was a hot Saturday afternoon, and there were a lot of other things I wanted to do instead of go on an errand for my grandmother. I told her to ask one of my cousins to go instead, but she insisted that it should be me.

An hour passed, and I began to feel that I should do what my grandmother had asked. I picked up the food and made my way to my aunt's house. It was far away, and when I arrived, I didn't plan on staying long.

I found my aunt and her fivemonth-old baby in a hammock tied to two young mango trees. The trees were beside a river that ran behind the house. I walked toward them to deliver the food. Suddenly, the ropes to the hammock broke. My aunt and her baby rolled into the river. Fear gripped me. I didn't know how to swim, and no one was around to help. I didn't know what to do.

Immediately, I heard the voice of the Spirit: "Jump in!"

Without a second thought, I jumped. Fortunately, I found the baby in just a couple of seconds, and my aunt was able to get out of the water. As I came out of the water with the baby, I couldn't believe what had just happened. I jumped in a river when I didn't know how to swim, but because I listened to the Spirit, my baby cousin and I were saved from drowning.

I realized how important it is to recognize and listen to the direction and inspiration that God gives to us through the Holy Ghost. I am grateful that I eventually did what my grandmother asked and took the food to my aunt's house. I know we must make efforts to be sensitive to spiritual promptings so we can be the hands of God to help His children. ■ Elvin Jerome Laceda, Pampanga, Philippines



FEELING AT HOME AGAIN

was not prepared for my brother's phone call. "Mom just passed away," he said. "She fell and hit her head."

I was shocked. My mom was gone at age 60, and I had just talked with her the night before. I kept asking myself why this had happened. I couldn't understand why she had to leave me. I was angry! I dwelled on my anger for several weeks.

Eventually, I decided who was to blame. It was God's fault. He took her away from me too soon. My mom missed many milestones in my life, and I thought it was because of Him. I was not a member of the Church at the time, but I was a devout Christian. Instead of relying on God for strength, I turned away from Him and shut Him out of my life.

I missed my mom so much. As I was growing up, my home with my parents was a safe place. No matter where I was or what I was doing, every time I talked with my mom or spent time with her, I felt at home. Now that "at home" feeling I loved was gone.

Years went by, and I lost my faith almost entirely. I tried to understand why my mom had to die, but nothing brought me peace. Then, for about one week, the following thought repeatedly came to my mind: I needed to look heavenward for understanding. I told this to my dear friend who was a member of the Church. She asked if I would like to learn more about her faith.

I didn't realize it right away, but the Spirit woke up my soul from a sound sleep. The more I learned about the gospel, the more I felt I had found a safe place again. The feeling of being "at home" returned.

I was baptized in May 2013. I am grateful that my faith returned. I no longer turn my back on God. Instead, I embrace Him. I am still saddened by my mom's sudden passing, but because of my faith in God, I know that I will one day be "at home" with my mom and my family forever. ■ Judy Rascher, Colorado, USA



By Elder D. Todd Christofferson Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

THE REALITY OF THE RESURRECTION

Jesus Christ is in fact the only name or way by which salvation can come to mankind.

onsider for a moment the significance of the Resurrection in resolving once and for all the true identity of Jesus of Nazareth and the great philosophical contests and questions of life. If Jesus was in fact literally resurrected, it necessarily follows that He is a divine being. No mere mortal has the power in himself to come to life again after dying. Because He was resurrected. Jesus cannot have been only a carpenter, a teacher, a rabbi, or a prophet. Because He was resurrected, Jesus had to have been a God, even the Only Begotten Son of the Father.

Therefore, what He taught is true; God cannot lie.

Therefore, He was the Creator of the earth, as He said.

Therefore, heaven and hell are real, as He taught.



Therefore, there is a world of spirits, which He visited after His death.

Therefore, He will come again, as the angels said, and "reign personally upon the earth" [Articles of Faith 1:10].

Therefore, there is a resurrection and a final judgment for all.

Given the reality of the Resurrection of Christ, doubts about the omnipotence, omniscience, and benevolence of God the Father—who gave His Only Begotten Son for the redemption of the world—are groundless. Doubts about the meaning and purpose of life are unfounded. Jesus Christ is in fact the only name or way by which salvation can come to mankind. The grace of Christ is real, affording both forgiveness and cleansing to the repentant sinner. Faith truly is more than imagination or psychological invention. There is ultimate and universal truth, and there are objective and unchanging moral standards, as taught by Him.

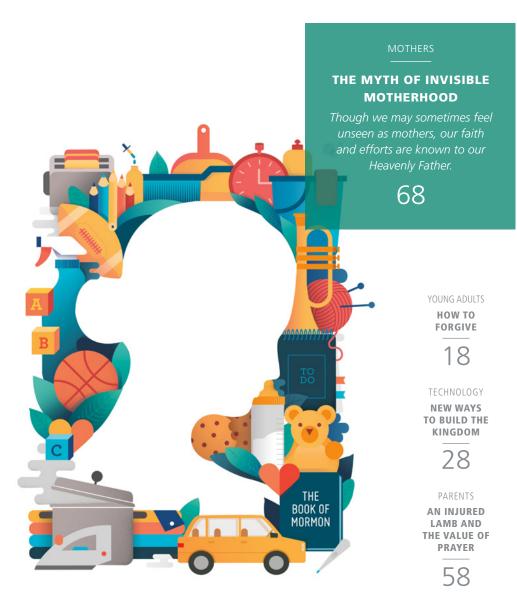
Given the reality of the Resurrection of Christ, repentance of any violation of His law and commandments is both possible and urgent. The Savior's miracles were real, as is His promise to His disciples that they might do the same and even greater works. His priesthood is necessarily a real power that "administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest" [D&C 84:19-20]. Given the reality of the Resurrection of Christ, death is not our end, and though "skin worms destroy [our bodies], yet in [our] flesh shall [we] see God" [Job 19:26]. ■

From an address given at the April 2014 general conference.



"And it came to pass that when he had thus spoken, all the multitude . . . did go forth with their sick and their afflicted, and their lame, and with their blind, and with their dumb, and with all them that were afflicted in any manner; and he did heal them" (3 Nephi 17:7, 9). "Have ye any that are sick among you? . . . Bring them hither and I will heal them. . . .

CHRIST VISITS THE NEPHITES, BY MINERVA TEICHERT





THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS