

THE ENSIGN OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • APRIL 2019

Ensign

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THE
CHURCH
IS HERE

Reykjavík Iceland





With snow-covered Mount Esja in the background, Reykjavik, Iceland's colorful capital, bids welcome to an island nation more than 1,000 miles (1,609 km) from the European mainland. First settled by the Vikings in AD 874, Reykjavik is the heart of Iceland's cultural, economic, and governmental activity, as well as one of the cleanest, greenest, and safest cities in the world.

The first two Icelanders to join the Church were baptized in Denmark in 1851. They soon returned to Iceland, and in 1853 the first branch was organized. Today there are nearly 300 members in Iceland in three branches, in Reykjavik, Akureyri, and Selfoss. The nearest temple is in London, England, 1,177 miles (1,894 km) from Reykjavik.

Though the number of members is small, the Church continues to grow. Despite challenges of isolation, translation of Church materials, unfavorable weather, and cultural barriers, Church leaders have promised that one day Iceland will be a beacon to other countries. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) visited Iceland and reminded members that they are “people of ‘strength and power and capacity’ to do great things” (“Wonderful to Have Sweet, Good Land,” *Church News*, Sept. 21, 2002, 10).

- The Icelandic Mission was organized in 1894, but proselyting was discontinued in 1914. Iceland became part of the Denmark Copenhagen Mission in 1975.
- In 1977, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008), then a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, officially dedicated Iceland for the preaching of the gospel.
- In 1981 the Book of Mormon was published in Icelandic—a language spoken nowhere else in the world.



In Times of Discouragement,
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When You Are Discouraged

Life has its ups and downs. Sometimes when we're down, we wonder what God is doing—why is a loving Father allowing this to happen? This quandary can bottom out with us asking, “Does God even really care about me personally?”

In situations like this, I've found these scriptures to be helpful:

- **Psalm 8:4-5:** “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? . . . For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.”
- **John 10:14:** During His life here upon the earth, Jesus described Himself as “the good shepherd” and added, “[I] know my sheep.”
- **Moses 1:39:** This is one of my favorite verses, where the Lord revealed His purpose to the Prophet Joseph Smith: “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man”—thus highlighting His interest in us as individuals.
- **Luke 7:11-16:** Of all of Jesus's miracles, few are as tender and compassionate as His ministering to the widow of Nain. For me, it represents the best example of His acute awareness of us individually. As I share in my article (see page 12), this account demonstrates the Savior's interest in and love for each of us.

Keith J. Wilson

Associate Professor, Brigham Young University



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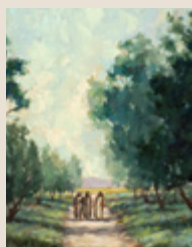
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Are You Living the Gospel Half-Heartedly?

By Chakell Wardleigh

What truly is the difference between being busy in the Church and being active in the gospel?



Something Great to Imitate

By Shelby Foster

The power of setting a good example for our children can't be overstated.

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He is risen!
He is risen!
Tell it out with
joyful voice.

*He has burst his three days' prison;
Let the whole wide earth rejoice.
Death is conquered; man is free.
Christ has won the victory.*

("He Is Risen!" Hymns, no. 199.)

As you remember the Savior this Easter, you can visit **ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/4195** to see beautiful art and testimonies from Apostles about the Savior's qualities that made His Atonement and Resurrection possible.



Bob and Lori Thurston

Served in the Cambodia Phnom Penh Mission



On their first mission together, Bob and Lori Thurston learned that meaningful ministering can happen despite language barriers and cultural differences because we are all children of God.

LESLIE NILSSON, PHOTOGRAPHER

Bob:

One day we could hear music blaring, and we noticed a tent was being set up. In Cambodia, that either means somebody is getting married or somebody has died.

Lori:

We found out that a mother of five or six kids had just died. There was no husband to speak of. The children just woke up and realized their mom was dead.

One daughter was just sobbing. Through a translator, she said, "I'm the oldest. I've got all these siblings. I don't know what I'm going to do."

I just scooped her up in my arms. How could I not? This girl just lost her mother. I spoke to her in English and said, "I know you don't understand me, but I promise you will see your mother again. You are going to be OK. You are not going to be left alone."

So many experiences like this have given us a special connection with the people of Cambodia.

DISCOVER MORE

See more about Bob and Lori's journey of faith, including additional photos, in the digital version of this article in the Gospel Library app or at ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

Those considering serving as senior missionaries can find service opportunities at seniormissionary.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



Ministering Principles

MAKING MINISTERING Joyful

Serving with love brings joy to both the giver and the receiver.

Sometimes our search for happiness in this life can seem like running on a treadmill. We run and run and still feel like we haven't gotten anywhere. For some, the thought of ministering to others simply feels like adding more to do.

But our Heavenly Father wants us to experience joy and has told us “men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25). And the Savior taught that ministering to others is an essential part of how we bring joy into our lives and the lives of others.

What Is Joy?

Joy can be described as “a feeling of great pleasure and happiness.”¹ Latter-day prophets have provided important clarification on where joy comes from and how it is found. “The joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives,” said President Russell M. Nelson. “. . . Joy comes from and because of Him. He is the source of all joy.”²



Ministering Brings Joy

When Lehi partook of the fruit of the tree of life, his soul was filled “with exceedingly great joy” (1 Nephi 8:12). His first desire was to share this fruit with those he loved.

Our willingness to minister to others can bring this kind of joy to us and to them. The Savior taught His disciples that the fruit we bring forth when we are connected to Him helps bring us a fulness of joy (see John 15:1–11). Doing His work by serving and seeking to bring others to Him can be a joyful experience (see Luke 15:7; Alma 29:9; Doctrine and Covenants 18:16; 50:22). We can experience this joy even in the face of opposition

and suffering (see 2 Corinthians 7:4; Colossians 1:11).

The Savior showed us the perfect example that one of the greatest sources of true joy in mortal life is found through service. When we minister to our brothers and sisters like the Savior, with charity and love in our hearts, we can experience joy that goes beyond simple happiness.

“As we embrace [ministering] with willing hearts, we will . . . be closer to becoming a Zion people and will feel surpassing joy with those whom we have helped along the path of discipleship,” taught Sister Jean B. Bingham, Relief Society General President.³

A SOURCE OF TRUE JOY

The Savior showed us the perfect example that true joy in mortal life can be found through service.



How Can We Make Ministering More Joyful?

There are many ways to bring greater joy into our ministering. Here are a few ideas:

1. **Understand your purpose in ministering.** There are many reasons to minister. Ultimately, our efforts should align with God's purposes "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). As we accept President Russell M. Nelson's invitation to help others along the covenant path, we can find joy in participating in God's work.⁴ (For more on the purpose of ministering, see "Ministering Principles: The Purpose That Will Change Our Ministering" in the January 2019 *Ensign*.)
2. **Make ministering about people, not tasks.** President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) often reminded us, "Never let a problem to be solved become more important than a person to be loved."⁵ Ministering is about loving people, not about things to do. As we grow to love as the Savior did, we will be more open to the joy that comes from serving others.
3. **Make ministering simple.** President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles,

tells us: "Great things are wrought through simple and small things. . . . Our small and simple acts of kindness and service will accumulate into a life filled with love for Heavenly Father, devotion to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and a sense of peace and joy each time we reach out to one another."⁶

4. **Take the stress out of ministering.** It's not your responsibility to work out someone's salvation. That's between the individual and the Lord. Our responsibility is to love them and help them turn to Jesus Christ, who is their Savior.

Don't Put Off the Joy of Service

Sometimes people are reluctant to ask for needed help, so offering our service could be just what they need. But serving without asking isn't always the answer, either. When you notice a need, asking permission before ministering is a good idea.

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles told about a single mother who got chicken pox—and then her children got sick too. The normally spotless house became cluttered and messy. Dishes and laundry piled up.

In a moment when she felt completely overwhelmed, Relief Society sisters knocked on her door. They didn't say, "Let us know if we can help." When they saw the situation, they sprang into action.

"They cleared up the chaos, brought light and clarity into the home, and called a friend to bring over some much-needed groceries. When they at last finished their work and said their good-byes, they left that young mother in tears—tears of gratitude and love."⁷

Both the givers and the receiver felt the warmth of joy.

Cultivate Joy in Your Life

The more joy, peace, and contentment we can cultivate in our lives, the more we will be able to share with others as we minister. Joy comes through the Holy Ghost (see Galatians 5:22 and Doctrine and Covenants 11:13). It is something we can pray for (see Doctrine and Covenants 136:29) and invite into our lives. Here are a few ideas for cultivating joy in our own lives:

1. **Count your blessings.** As you examine your life, write in your journal the things that God has blessed you with.⁸ Take notice of the good all around you.⁹ Pay attention to what things might be keeping you from feeling joy and write down ways to resolve or better understand them. During this Easter season, take time to search for a greater connection with the Savior (see Doctrine and Covenants 101:36).
2. **Practice mindfulness.** Joy can find you more easily in moments of quiet meditation.¹⁰ Listen closely to what brings you joy (see 1 Chronicles 16:15). Time away from media can sometimes be necessary to practice mindfulness.¹¹
3. **Avoid comparing yourself.** It has been said that comparison is the thief of joy. Paul warned that those “measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise” (2 Corinthians 10:12).
4. **Seek personal revelation.** The Savior taught, “If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal” (Doctrine and Covenants 42:61).

Invitation to Act

How can you increase the joy you find in your life through ministering? ■


The principles in this article can be applied in our everyday interactions but are intended to help ministering brothers and sisters in their efforts to bless the individuals and families assigned to them.

NOTES

1. “Joy,” en.oxforddictionaries.com.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 82.
3. Jean B. Bingham, “Ministering as the Savior Does,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 107.
4. See Russell M. Nelson, “As We Go Forward Together,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2018, 4–7.
5. Thomas S. Monson, “Finding Joy in the Journey,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 86.
6. M. Russell Ballard, “Finding Joy through Loving Service,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 49.
7. See Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Living the Gospel Joyful,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 120–23.
8. See Henry B. Eyring, “O Remember, Remember,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 67.
9. See Jean B. Bingham, “That Your Joy Might Be Full,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 87.
10. See Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Of Things That Matter Most,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 21.
11. See Gary E. Stevenson, “Spiritual Eclipse,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 46.







In Times of Discouragement, Remember *the Widow of Nain*

Especially when we feel forgotten or overlooked, we must remember: Jesus came to the widow's aid precisely in her time of need, and He will come to us as well.

By Keith J. Wilson

Associate Professor of Ancient Scripture, Brigham Young University

Sometimes in the ups and downs of life, we can feel like God is not very active in our day-to-day lives. Our patterns seem rather tedious and monotonous. Not much changes, and it is sometimes hard to point to one area where God has directly intervened in our circumstances. Whenever I am hit with these feelings of insignificance in my own life, I often think of a woman in the New Testament who may have felt this way. She is not named in the scriptures but is simply known by the name of her village and by her marital status.

The woman is the widow of Nain, and only the evangelist Luke records her amazing story. For me she represents the essence of the Savior's personalized ministry and how He reached out to the discouraged, common people of His society. This account soundly settles the issue about whether God knows us and cares about us.

A brief synopsis of the miracle from Luke chapter 7 depicts Jesus intercepting a burial procession and miraculously bringing a dead young man back to life. But there is much more to understand about the setting. As with all miracles, but especially so with this one, the context is vital to understanding this incident. Having taught at the Brigham Young University Jerusalem Center, I will share with you some personal insights about this miracle.

Nain was a small farming village at Jesus's time, nestled up against Mount Moreh, which defined the east side of the Jezreel Valley. The town itself was off the beaten path. Access to it was limited to a single road. During Jesus's time, this settlement would have been small and relatively poor, and it has remained that way ever since. At times in its history, this town has encircled as few as 34 homes and just 189 people.¹ Today it is home to about 1,500 inhabitants.

Luke begins his account by noting that Jesus was in Capernaum the day before and had healed the centurion's servant (see Luke 7:1–10). Then we learn that “*the day after*” (verse 11; emphasis added), the Savior went into a city called Nain, accompanied by a large group of disciples. This sequence is very important. Capernaum is situated on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, 600 feet (183 m) below sea level. Nain is about 30 miles (48 km) southwest of Capernaum at 700 feet (213 m) above sea level, thus requiring an arduous, uphill climb to Nain. In order to walk from Capernaum to Nain, it would have taken at least one or two days. Recently, it took a group of youthful BYU Jerusalem Center students 10 hours to walk this route on paved roads. This means that Jesus probably had to arise very early or possibly even walk during the night in order to intercept the burial procession “the day after.”²

As Christ approached the city after a very taxing journey, a young man probably in his 20s³ was being carried out on a burial slab. Luke tells us that this young man was a widow's only son, and some scholars interpret the Greek text to imply that she had no other offspring.⁴ A large group of villagers accompanied her in this most unfortunate family tragedy.

Obviously, having a son die would be a tragedy for anyone, but consider the implications

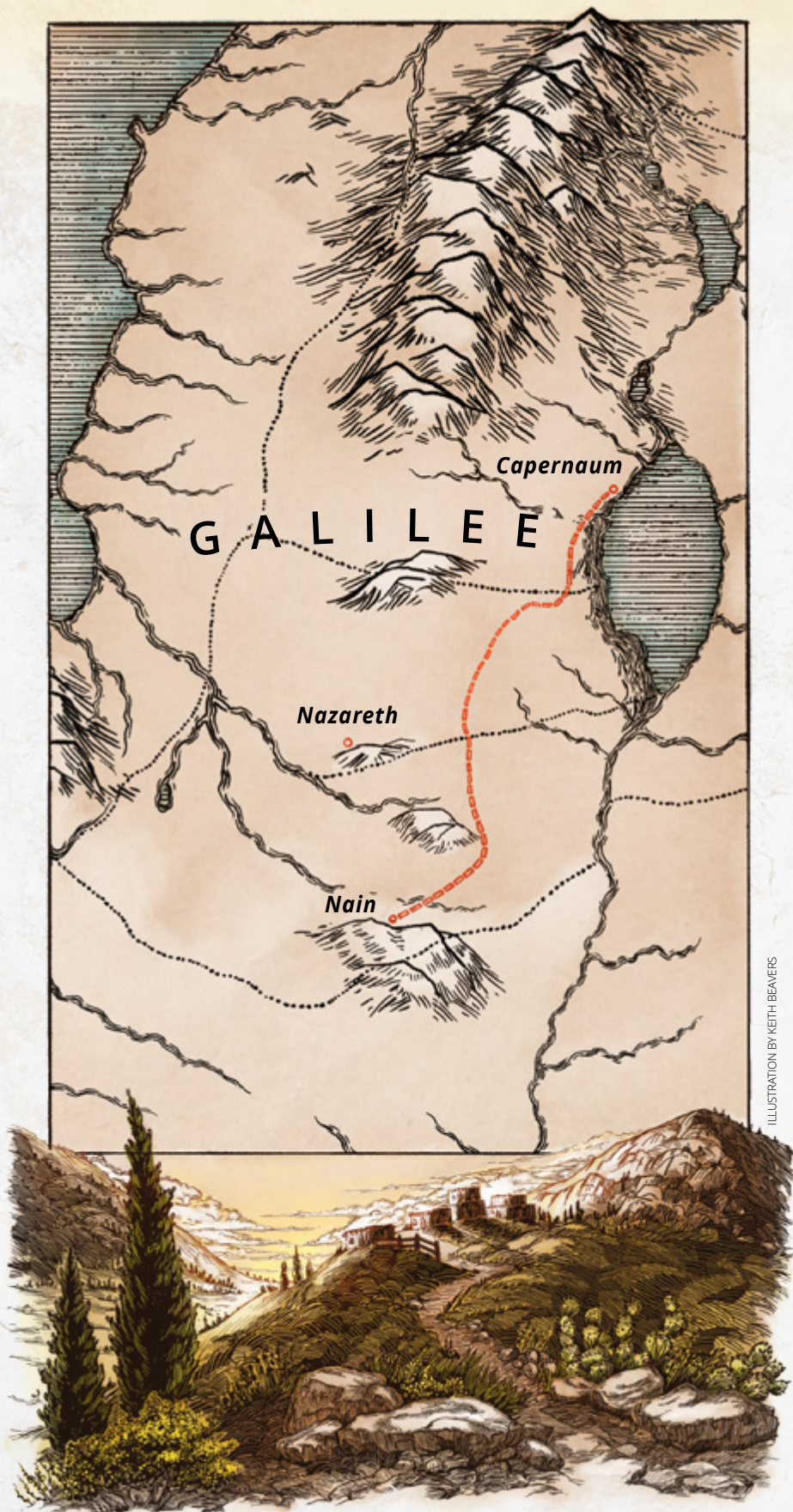


ILLUSTRATION BY KEITH BEAVERS



for this widow. Just what would it have meant socially, spiritually, and financially to be a widow without an inheritor in ancient Israel? In Old Testament culture, it was believed that when a husband died before old age, it was a sign of God's judgment for sin. Thus, some believed that God was meting out punishment upon this surviving widow. In the book of Ruth, when Naomi was widowed at an early age, she bemoaned, "After all, the Lord is against me, and the Almighty has broken me" (Ruth 1:21, International Standard Version).⁵

Not only was there spiritual and emotional pain, but this widow of Nain was also facing financial ruin—even staring starvation in the face.⁶ Upon marriage, a woman was assigned to her husband's family for financial protection. If he died, then her care was delegated to her birthright son. Now that this widow's birthright and only son was dead, she was at the end of her rope financially. If her son was in his 20s, she was probably a middle-aged woman, living in a small, secluded farm town, and now found herself spiritually, socially, and financially destitute.

Precisely at the narrow window of time when the villagers were carrying this woman's son out to be buried, Jesus met the procession and "had compassion on her" (Luke 7:13). Actually, this





might be Luke’s greatest understatement. Jesus somehow sensed the utterly desperate situation of this widow. Perhaps she had spent the night sprawled on her dirt floor, begging Heavenly Father to know why. Perhaps she had even openly questioned why He was requiring her to live any longer on this earth. Or perhaps she was terrified of the pending loneliness that she would face. We do not know. But we do know that the Savior chose to leave Capernaum, which could have required Him to walk through the night in order to intercept the burial procession right before they put the body in the ground.

Yes, when He saw her tear-stained face as she walked behind the procession, Jesus felt great compassion for this woman—but it appears that His compassion came from feelings He experienced long before He just “happened” to intercept that burial entourage. He arrived there precisely in her moment of need.

Jesus then told the widow to “weep not” (verse 13). Unafraid of ritual uncleanness, He “touched the bier,” and the

procession “stood still.” He then commanded, “Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

“And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And [Jesus] delivered him to his mother” (verses 14–15). Naturally, the crowd of villagers and Jesus’s followers were awestruck as their shared grief turned to pure joy. They all “glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us” (verse 16). But this miracle was also about rescuing one desperate soul. Jesus was aware that something was very wrong for this woman—someone who was looked down on in their culture. Her situation cried out for His immediate attention, even if He had to travel far to be there precisely at the right moment. He knew her desperate situation, and He came quickly. President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) spoke undeniable truth when he said, “One day, when we look back at the seeming coincidences of our lives, we will realize that perhaps they weren’t so coincidental after all.”⁷

Now, as uplifting as this incident is, it must become much more than a cool Bible story to us. It verifies unmistakably that

Jesus knew about this poor, forgotten, and destitute widow. Especially when we feel forgotten or overlooked or insignificant, we must remember: Jesus came to the widow in her time of desperate need, and He will come to us as well. Additionally, a second lesson we could gain from our Savior's example is the importance of reaching out to bless others around you. Many within your circle will be discouraged from time to time. If you can tell them about "Sister Nain" and how the Lord knew precisely her discouragement and great personal crisis, it could change night to day. Remember President Spencer W. Kimball's (1895–1985) poignant observation: "God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another person that he meets our needs."⁸

Of all Jesus's miracles during His time on earth, for me, few are as tender and compassionate as His ministering to the widow of Nain. It reminds us that we matter to Him and that He will never forget us. We cannot forget that. ■

NOTES

1. See E. Mills, *Census of Palestine 1931: Population of Villages, Towns, and Administrative Areas* (1932), 75.
2. See S. Kent Brown, *The Testimony of Luke* (2015), 364.
3. See Brown, *The Testimony of Luke*, 365.
4. See Brown, *The Testimony of Luke*, 365.
5. In Isaiah 54:4, the Lord tells the widow Israel that she will "no longer remember the disgrace of [her] abandonment" (New English Translation).
6. See Brown, *The Testimony of Luke*, 365.
7. Thomas S. Monson, in Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Lessons Learned in the Journey of Life," *Ensign*, Dec. 2000, 7.
8. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 82.



To watch the Bible video "Widow of Nain," visit [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/041917](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/041917).





**By President
Henry B. Eyring**
Second Counselor
in the First
Presidency

TRUST IN THE SAVIOR'S Deliverance

The Savior's Atonement and Resurrection
give Him the power to strengthen us in our trials
or deliver us from them.

For those of us who have lost loved ones, the road ahead can be sad and lonely—even more so for those without a knowledge and testimony of the Atonement and Resurrection of the Savior Jesus Christ. You recall His two doubtful disciples on the road to Emmaus. The resurrected Lord drew near to them and asked why they were sad. Luke gives us the answer:

“And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

“And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

“But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel” (Luke 24:19–21).

We draw comfort from our knowledge and testimony that it *was* He who redeemed Israel. It *was* He who “[broke] the bands of death” (Mosiah 15:23). It *was* He who became “the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Corinthians 15:20). It *was* He who made possible temple covenants that bind us forever to those we “have loved long since, and lost awhile!”¹

At this Easter season, I would like to share part of a devotional message I delivered a few years ago about the Savior's power of deliverance. It strengthened me as I prepared it and delivered it. I pray that it will strengthen you as you read it.

The Savior Knows Our Grievs

Life ends early for some and eventually for us all. Each of us will be tested by facing the death of someone we love.

The other day I met a man I had not seen since his wife died. It was a chance meeting in a pleasant social holiday situation. He was smiling as he

approached me. Remembering his wife's death, I phrased the common greeting very carefully: "How are you doing?"

The smile vanished, his eyes became moist, and he said quietly, with great earnestness, "I'm doing fine. But it's very hard."

It is very hard, as most of you have learned and all of us will sometime know. The hardest part of that test is to know what to do with the sorrow, the loneliness, and the loss that we can feel as if a part of us has been lost. Grief can persist like a chronic ache. And for some, there may be feelings of anger or injustice.



DETAIL FROM LORD OF PRAYER BY YONGSUNG KIM, COURTESY OF HAVEN LIGHT

*The Savior could have
known our griefs by the inspiration
of the Spirit, but He chose instead
to know by experiencing them
for Himself.*

The Savior's Atonement and Resurrection give Him the power to deliver us in such a trial. Through His experience, He came to know all our griefs. He could have known them by the inspiration of the Spirit, but He chose instead to know by experiencing them for Himself. This is the account:

"And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God.

"And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

"And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:10–12).

Good people around you will try to understand your grief at the passing of a loved one. They may feel grief themselves. The Savior not only understands and feels grief but also feels *your* personal grief that only you feel. And He knows you perfectly. He knows your heart.

Invite the Holy Ghost

The Savior knows which of the many things you can do that will be best for you as you invite the Holy Ghost to comfort and bless you. He will know where it is best for you to start. Sometimes it will be to pray. Sometimes it will be to go comfort someone else. I know of a widow with a debilitating illness who was

inspired to visit another widow. I wasn't there, but I am certain that the Lord inspired a faithful disciple to reach out to another and thus was able to succor them both.

There are many ways the Savior can succor those who grieve, each fitted to them. But you can be sure that He can and will do it in the way that is best for those who grieve and for those around them. One constant when God delivers people from grief is that they feel childlike humility before Him. A great example of the power of faithful humility comes from the life of Job (see Job 1:20–22). Another constant, which Job also had, is abiding faith in the power of the Savior's Resurrection (see Job 19:26).

We all will be resurrected, including your loved ones who die. The reunion we will have with them will not be ethereal but with bodies that will never die nor age nor become infirm.

When the Savior appeared to His Apostles after the Resurrection, He not only reassured them in their grief but also all of us who might ever grieve. He reassured them and us this way:

"Peace be unto you. . . .

"Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:36, 39).

The Lord can inspire us to reach out for the power of deliverance from our grief in the way best suited to us. We can choose to serve others for the Lord. We can testify of the Savior, of His gospel, of the restoration of His Church, and of His Resurrection. We can keep His commandments.

All of those choices invite the Holy Ghost. It is the Holy Ghost who can comfort us in the way suited to our need. And by the inspiration of the Spirit, we can have a testimony of the Resurrection and a clear view of the glorious reunion ahead. I felt that comfort as I looked down at the gravestone of someone I knew—someone I know that I can at some future time hold in my arms. Knowing that, I was not only delivered from grief but also filled with happy anticipation.

Had that little person lived to maturity, she would have needed deliverance in another set of trials. She would have been tested to stay faithful to God through the physical and spiritual challenges that come to everyone. Even though the body is a magnificent creation, keeping it functioning is a challenge that tests us all. Everyone must struggle through illness and the effects of aging.

“Be Thou Humble”

The power of deliverance from our trials is in place. It works in the same way as the deliverance from the trial that comes in facing the death of a loved one. Just as that deliverance is not always to have the life of a loved one spared, the deliverance from other trials may not be to remove them. The Lord may not give relief until we develop faith to make choices that will bring the

power of the Atonement to work in our lives. He does not require that out of indifference but out of love for us.

A guide for receiving the Lord’s power of deliverance from opposition in life was given to Thomas B. Marsh, then the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He was in difficult trials, and the Lord knew he would face more. Here was the counsel to him that I take for myself and offer you: “Be thou humble; and the

*You can be sure that the
Savior can and will succor
in the way that is best for
those who grieve and
for those around them.*



Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers” (Doctrine and Covenants 112:10).

The Lord always wants to lead us to deliverance through our becoming more righteous. That requires repentance. And that takes humility. So the way to deliverance always requires humility in order for the Lord to be able to lead us by the hand where He wants to take us through our troubles and on to sanctification.

Trials can produce resentment or discouragement. The humility you and I need for the Lord to lead us by the hand comes from faith. It comes from faith that God really lives, that He loves us, and that what He wants—hard as it may be—will always be best for us.

The Savior showed us that humility. You have read of how He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane while He was suffering a trial on our behalf beyond our ability to comprehend or to endure or even for me to describe. You remember His prayer: “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42).

He knew and trusted His Heavenly Father, the great Elohim. He knew that His Father was all-powerful and infinitely kind. The Beloved Son asked in humble words—like those of a little child—for the power of deliverance to help Him.

Take Courage and Comfort

The Father did not deliver the Son by removing the trial. For our sakes He did not do that, but He allowed the Savior to finish the mission He came to perform. Yet we can forever take courage and comfort from knowing of the help that the Father did provide:

“And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

“And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

“And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow,

“And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation” (Luke 22:43–46).

The Savior prayed for deliverance. What He was given was not an escape from the trial but comfort enough to pass through it gloriously.

Jesus Christ paid the ransom for all of our sins and those of all of Heavenly Father's children so that we could be delivered from death and sin.

His command to His disciples, who were themselves being tested, is a guide for us. We can determine to follow it. We can determine to rise up and pray in great faith and humility. And we can follow the command added in the book of Mark: “Rise up, let us go” (Mark 14:42).

From this, you have counsel for passing the physical and spiritual tests of life. You will need God's help after you have done all you can for yourself. So rise up and go, but get His help as early as you can, not waiting for the crisis to ask for deliverance.

I bear you my solemn witness that God the Father lives and loves us. I know that. His plan of happiness is perfect, and it is a plan of happiness. Jesus Christ was resurrected, as we will be. He suffered so that He could succor us in all of our trials. He paid the ransom for all of our sins and those of all of Heavenly Father's children so that we could be delivered from death and sin.

I know that in the Church of Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost can come to comfort and to cleanse us as we follow the Master. May you receive His comfort and succor in your times of need, through all the tests and trials of your life. ■

From a devotional address, “The Power of Deliverance,” delivered at Brigham Young University on January 15, 2008.

NOTE

1. “Lead, Kindly Light,” *Hymns*, no. 97.



DETAIL FROM GETSEMANE, BY J. KIRK RICHARDS; OLIVE BRANCHES FROM GETTY IMAGES

In a Sacred Garden Place

Thoughtfully ♩ = 60-68

Words and music by Tammy Simister Robinson

1. In a sac - red gar - den place, I was ran - somed by Thy grace.
 2. I have seen Thy wound - ed flesh, Sym - bols of Thy will - ing gift.
 3. With this cup pressed to my lips, I will rev - 'rence, as I sip,

Plead - ing in Geth - se - ma - ne, Sav - ior, Thou didst pray for me.
 Though for all, Thy suff - 'rings be, Sav - ior, Thou didst die for me.
 Bo - dy, bro - ken, off - ered me. I will wit - ness now for Thee.

Sav - ior, Thou didst pray for me. Take this bro - ken heart of mine;
 Sav - ior, Thou didst die for me. Take this bro - ken heart of mine;
 I will wit - ness now for Thee. Take this bro - ken heart of mine;

Let my will be one with Thine. Plead - ing in Geth - se - ma - ne,
 Let my will be one with Thine. Though for all, Thy suff - 'rings be,
 Let my will be one with Thine. May no more Thy suff - 'rings be:

Sav - ior, Thou didst pray for me. Sav - ior, Thou didst pray for me.
 Sav - ior, Thou didst die for me. Sav - ior, Thou didst die for me.
 Sav - ior, I will live for Thee. Sav - ior, I will live for Thee.

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By Brian K. Ashton

Second Counselor
in the Sunday School
General Presidency

Three Lessons on Love, Joy, and Peace

Following these three steps can make a big difference in your life and help you feel the fruits of the Spirit.

When I was a college student, I thought a lot about my future. Once I got to the future—meaning life after college—I learned three critical lessons that made a big difference in my life. I want to share these lessons with you with the hope that you don't take as long as I did to learn them. They can help you find greater joy in life—and ultimately obtain exaltation with your Heavenly Father.

1. Seek Happiness, Peace, and the Holy Ghost

I met my wife, Melinda, during my sophomore year of college, about six months after I had returned from my mission. I knew immediately that I wanted to marry her. Melinda, however, did not have the same experience. It wasn't until five years later that she finally received an answer that it would be “OK” if she married me.



*As you do the
small things
and trust in the
sacrifice of
Jesus Christ,
you can find love,
joy, and peace
regardless of your
circumstances.*

During those five years, I had one of the more difficult trials of my life. I knew whom I was supposed to marry, and the Spirit urged me on, but I couldn't seem to reach that goal.

Shortly after I graduated, Melinda decided to go on a mission—in part, I am convinced, to get away from me. There were times while she was on her mission when I was miserable because I focused on what I didn't have. However, I was studying the scriptures and praying daily, serving in the Church, and striving to do the things that brought the Holy Ghost into my life.

One early, very cold Sunday morning in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA, while I was driving to a Church meeting, I thought, "I should be really miserable right now. Nothing seems to be going the way I want. But I'm not miserable. I feel unbelievably happy!"

Now, how could I be happy if I was going through what, for me, was a difficult trial?

The answer is found in Galatians 5:22–23: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

Because I was doing the things that brought the Spirit into my life, I felt God's love. I felt joy and peace. I could suffer long and still be happy.

Having love, joy, and peace in our lives, our families, and our marriages does not come from having a big house, nice cars, the latest clothing, career success, or any of the other things the world says bring happiness. In fact, because feelings of

love, joy, and peace come from the Spirit, feeling them doesn't have to be connected to our temporal circumstances at all.

Please understand that I am not saying that we will always be happy or that our temporal circumstances never affect our happiness. In fact, if we do not taste the bitter, we cannot know the sweet (see Doctrine and Covenants 29:39; see also Moses 6:55).

We need to struggle at times. Furthermore, some physical and emotional conditions can cause us great suffering and make it very difficult for us to feel the Spirit. But if we are striving to have the Spirit in our lives and are trusting God, we can, in general, be happy.

I testify from personal experience that this is true. Since my experience while Melinda was on her mission, I have noticed that if I am doing the things that bring the Spirit into my life, including choosing to believe and accepting that things will work out as God intends, I am usually happy (see Jacob 3:2).¹

2. Don't Fall for the Counterfeits

Satan offers counterfeit alternatives to all that God does in an attempt to confuse and deceive us. Despite Satan's attempts to convince us otherwise, the Savior teaches us that "a corrupt tree [cannot] bring forth good fruit" (3 Nephi 14:18). Because Satan is a corrupt tree, he cannot cause us to feel "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance" (Galatians 5:22–23). Rather, Satan wants to make us miserable (see 2 Nephi 2:27).

So what does Satan do? He tries to deceive us.

A friend of mine, one of the elect, was deceived. My friend served a mission and was an outstanding missionary. When she came home from her mission, she intended to do all the little things that had brought the Spirit into her life and had strengthened her on her mission. And for a time, she did.

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(3 Nephi 14:18).

However, she saw friends, many of whom were returned missionaries, come to church each Sunday but outside of church live as the world lives. They seemed happy. They were doing “fun” things. And their lifestyle didn’t seem to require as much work as hers did.

Slowly she stopped doing the little things that had brought her spiritual strength on her mission. She still had a testimony, but she told me that she had concluded, “If I was just attending my Church meetings, I was OK—I was on track.” Nevertheless, she said, “Spiritually, I was inactive.”² As she lived as the world lives, one bad choice led to another, and soon she became pregnant.

Her unrighteous choices eventually caught up with her. She wasn’t happy, and she knew it. Fortunately, my friend recognized that she had been deceived, and she repented.

Her story highlights that even the best of us can be deceived. Furthermore, her story points out that we must constantly guard against deception. We accomplish this by doing the little things that bring the Spirit into our lives.

I am happy to report that today my friend is happy, is striving to keep the commandments, and is physically and spiritually active in the gospel.

Satan’s deceptions come in many ways. I will only mention a few.

Satan tries to convince us to prioritize temporal things over spiritual things. We can tell if our priorities are out of place by noticing how often we say, “I’m just too busy or too tired right

now to _____.” Fill in the blank: attend the temple, minister, study and ponder the scriptures, fulfill my calling, or even say my prayers.

One reason we feel so busy is that Satan works hard to distract us. He uses the smartphone in our hand, the radio in our car, the televisions in our home, and myriad other things to keep us distracted almost all the time. As a result, we feel busier than we actually are.

Another result of this distraction is that we are pondering less and less. Satan works to distract us because he knows that pondering, especially the scriptures, leads to greater conversion and revelation.

Another of Satan’s deceptions comes through the idea that our outward actions matter more than our inward motivations. When we lack the proper motivation for doing spiritual things, we fail to experience the joy of the gospel. As a result, keeping the commandments starts to feel like drudgery, and Satan knows that if he can get us to feel this way, we are likely to stop doing what we know we should be doing.

Satan also deceives us into believing that joy and happiness come from having an easy life or from simply having fun all the time. They do not. The truth is that there is no joy or happiness without something to overcome (see 2 Nephi 2:11, 23).

The last of Satan’s deceptions I will mention is that he tries to convince us that wickedness, with its temporary pleasures, really is happiness. Satan knows that, at least in the moment, certain feelings or emotions may (1) make us think we are feeling the fruits of the Spirit, (2) mask our desire for those fruits, or (3) feel like acceptable substitutes.



For example, Satan can tempt us to seek for lust in place of love. He can allure us with excitement instead of enduring joy. He attempts to distract us rather than grant us peace. He would have us be self-righteous, zealous, and politically correct in lieu of selfless, consistently obedient, and appropriately spiritually focused. His temptations can cause us to be confused, which in turn may lead us to think that breaking the commandments will bring happiness.

3. Do the Small Things

It is usually little things that bring the Spirit into our lives, keep us from being deceived, and ultimately help us obtain the strength to keep the commandments and gain eternal life. The Savior taught this principle to the elders of the Church in Kirtland, Ohio: “Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great” (Doctrine and Covenants 64:33).

Why are the small things so important? In the next verse, the Savior explained that “the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind” (Doctrine and Covenants 64:34). Why did the Savior link doing small things with the heart and a willing mind? Because in consistently doing the small things, we yield our hearts and minds to God, which purifies and sanctifies us (see Helaman 3:35).

This purification and sanctification changes our very nature, little by little, so that we

become more and more like the Savior. This also causes us to be more receptive to the promptings of the Holy Ghost, which makes us less likely to be deceived.

In my senior year of high school, my dad taught me seminary in our home. Because the topic that year was the Book of Mormon, my dad decided that we would read it together, verse by verse, and discuss what we learned. As we read, my dad would ask questions that got me thinking about what we were reading, and he would explain things I didn't understand. I still remember learning about the Savior and sensing that He really did visit the Nephites and that I really could be forgiven of my sins because of His Atonement.

I trace my foundation in the scriptures to those sessions my dad and I had together. I felt something as we read. And maybe more important, my desires, motivations, and actions changed. I wanted to be better. I began to see where I was being deceived. I repented more often. By the end of my freshman year of college, I was reading the scriptures every day.

Around this time, President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) asked Church members to read the Book of Mormon daily and apply what they learned.³ So, in addition to whatever else I was reading, I read at least something from the Book of Mormon.

On my mission I learned how to really study and feast upon the scriptures. Not only did I feel the Holy Ghost as I read, but I also started to feel



*I promise
that if you
will feast
upon the
scriptures daily,
especially
the Book of
Mormon,
you will invite
the Spirit into
your life.*

joy as I searched the scriptures to find answers to my problems and those of my investigators.

After my mission, I continued to feast upon the scriptures daily. Because this practice invited the Holy Ghost into my life, I received His direction to help me use my time more efficiently. As a result, I did better in school and, later, at work. It became easier to make good decisions. I prayed more and was more diligent in fulfilling my callings. Feasting upon the scriptures daily didn't solve all my problems, but life was easier.

In August 2005, President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) issued a challenge to read or reread the Book of Mormon before the end of the year.⁴ Because I was reading from the Book of Mormon daily anyway, I was already in Ether or Moroni. Consequently, upon finishing a week or two later, I concluded that I had completed President Hinckley's challenge.

But then a faithful home teacher came to visit our family. He asked how I was doing with President Hinckley's invitation.

I told him that I had the good fortune of having started the Book of Mormon before President Hinckley's challenge. Then, with some self-righteousness, I announced that I had completed the task.

Fortunately, my home teacher saw things differently. As he gently corrected me, the Spirit whispered to me that my home teacher was right.

Now I had to read two chapters a day to finish again by the end of the year. As I increased how

much I read in the Book of Mormon, I noticed that even more power came into my life. I had more joy. I saw things more clearly. I repented even more frequently. I wanted to minister to and rescue others. I was less susceptible to Satan's deceptions and temptations. I loved the Savior more.

That November I was called to be the bishop of our ward. Completing President Hinckley's challenge prepared me for that calling. Since then, I have noticed that the busier I become either at work or at church, the more I need to study the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon.

You can have the same blessings and power in your life if you too will feast upon the scriptures daily. I promise that if you will feast upon the scriptures daily, especially the Book of Mormon, you will invite the Spirit into your life and you will naturally pray daily, repent more often, and find it easier to attend church and partake of the sacrament weekly.

I testify that as you do the small things and trust the Lord, you can find love, joy, peace, and happiness regardless of your circumstances. I also testify that this is made possible because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. All good things come because of Him (see Moroni 7:22, 24). ■

From a devotional address, "Happiness, Deceit, and Small Things," delivered at Brigham Young University on December 5, 2017.

NOTES

1. When we are firm in the faith of Christ, we can feast upon God's love no matter our circumstances.
2. Interview notes and transcript in the author's possession.
3. See Ezra Taft Benson, "A Sacred Responsibility," *Ensign*, May 1986,

77–78; see also "The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion," *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 4–7.

4. See Gordon B. Hinckley, "First Presidency Message: A Testimony Vibrant and True," *Ensign*, Aug. 2005, 2–6.

Business Is Booming

By Joshua J. Perkey
Church Magazines

Thanks to what he learned in self-reliance classes, when one door closed on Teddy Reyes, another soon opened.

It's 4:00 a.m. in Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic, and Teddy Reyes is already up and working. He has a lot to do today to maintain his booming business. He begins slicing tomatoes and bread. Then he makes his special sauce.

By 6:00 a.m., two employees arrive to help him, and preparations speed up. By 8:00 a.m., they have made 300 sandwiches, wrapped individually in plastic wrap and loaded in bags. Six more employees show up, and the whole crew goes out to sell.

By 9:00 a.m., all but a few sandwiches—three or four that Teddy saved to feed his team—have been sold.

Business is good for Teddy. But things haven't always been easy. In fact, for the past five years, he hasn't been able to find steady work in his chosen profession as a lawyer.

So how did Teddy make the switch from counseling clients to selling sandwiches? It took a lot of hard work, of course, but it also took a careful application of principles he learned in classes offered through the Church's Self-Reliance Services initiative.



Losing His Job

Five years ago, life for Teddy looked amazing. He had a good job as a lawyer, he had recently gotten married, and he had baptized his wife. “But we had some challenges,” he says, “and I lost my job.”

For the next four years Teddy struggled to find work. “There was a lot of work I could do, but no one wanted to pay me. I tried starting different jobs on my own, but that didn’t work.”

His wife, Stephany, had a good job, but her salary alone couldn’t cover the bills. Soon the couple had a child. They were elated, but their finances grew tighter. They lost their house, had to sell their car, and used up all their savings. Eventually they had to move into a small house owned by Stephany’s mother.

But Teddy didn’t give up. Soon an unexpected opportunity presented itself.

The Power of Self-Reliance

After years of struggling, Teddy knew it was time for a change.

“I decided to take the Church’s self-reliance courses,” he says. “I had heard about them but always thought they weren’t for me. I thought they were just about doing things on your own. The classes were marvelous.”

First, Teddy joined a Personal Finances group. Then he joined a Starting and Growing My Business

group. Group classes helped Teddy with his business knowledge but also helped him develop spiritually.

“I decided to do everything they taught,” he says, “and my finances changed immediately. I started paying a full tithe, praying daily, studying the scriptures, and exercising faith. And things changed—I started to save money and to keep the Sabbath day holy. Every principle blessed me.”

In his Starting and Growing My Business group, Teddy learned how to identify a potential product that might benefit customers where he lives. As he evaluated what people were looking for, the inspiration started to flow. In his area, people liked fresh sandwiches, but they also liked to have them made to order—and delivered.

“Many restaurants have a special sauce that makes their food stand out,” Teddy says. “So I developed my own sandwich special sauce!”

Growing His Business

On the day he launched his business, Teddy made 30 sandwiches.

“Thirty minutes later, I was back home,” he says. “My wife became concerned when she found me on the couch. She asked me what I was doing home already—wasn’t I supposed to be selling sandwiches? I had already sold all of them!”

Over the next few weeks, Teddy contacted local businesses and schools. Many were eager to buy his sandwiches, and his business began growing. He learned quickly how to take care of fresh vegetables so that they last. He also knows exactly how long his special sauce will keep. He orders and picks up bread each evening. He buys discounted vegetables on Saturdays, which cost less but will still be good on Monday.

Soon he was receiving orders for specific types of sandwiches, and even large numbers for special occasions. He needed help, so he began hiring employees.

By creating positive relationships with local schools and businesses, Teddy created an active, consistent clientele. Within four months, he had eight employees and was selling 300 sandwiches a day, five days a week. His sales team was so efficient that they sold every sandwich even during the summer when the schools were closed. Now Teddy is ready to expand again.

Because he took the self-reliance classes, he was inspired to come up with the idea of the sandwich business. “Because of this guidance from the Church and the blessings I have received,” he says, “I have a very strong testimony of the Church and Jesus Christ.” ■

Instruments or Agents?

Does Heavenly Father want us to humbly submit
to His will or actively exercise our own will?

By Lloyd D. Newell

Consider these two apparently contradictory scripture passages:
Speaking to the sons of Mosiah as they were about to embark on their daring mission to the Lamanites, the Lord said, “I will make an instrument of thee in my hands unto the salvation of many souls” (Alma 17:11).

Speaking to the Saints attempting to build Zion in Jackson County, Missouri, the Lord said, “Men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; for the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves” (Doctrine and Covenants 58:27–28).

On the one hand, the invitation is to be instruments in the Lord’s hands. On the other, it is to be agents unto ourselves.

An instrument does not act for itself; it cannot accomplish any work of its own volition. A musical instrument makes music only in the hands of a musician; a surgical instrument can do nothing unless it is controlled by a surgeon. As the Lord said through Isaiah, “Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it?” (Isaiah 10:15). An instrument submits to the will of its master.



*When we choose to
submit our will to the
Father's by obeying
His commandments,
we are not surrender-
ing our agency
but expressing it—
in the highest,
noblest way possible.*

On the other hand, when the Lord refers to us as “agents unto [ourselves],” He seems to be encouraging boldness, assertiveness, initiative, and resourcefulness. He is inviting us “to act for [ourselves] and not to be acted upon” (2 Nephi 2:26). An agent is one who is trusted to make decisions for and act in the best interests of another party or individual—in this case, ourselves.

Some might ask, “How are we to be both a submissive instrument and a proactive agent?”

Whenever two gospel truths seem to contradict each other, that’s usually a sign that we lack complete understanding. The adversary, of course, would like us to get this wrong and err on one side or the other. This is one of his more effective tactics—if he can’t convince us to accept false doctrine, he might just persuade us to take a true doctrine to an extreme. Expecting God to run our lives completely and make all our decisions for us can be just as misguided as relying solely on our own understanding. Our responsibility is to find the right balance between these two extremes.

One key to solving this paradox is overcoming two tendencies: the tendency to resist and the tendency to resign. People who see themselves primarily as agents unto themselves may be tempted to resist commandments, which seem to limit their agency to act as they think best. By contrast, those who see themselves chiefly as instruments can feel resigned to a predetermined fate that they think they cannot control.

Is Obedience to Commandments a Surrender of Agency?

When President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, was president of Brigham Young University, he sometimes heard students complain about the honor code or dress and grooming standards, asserting that these rules took away their agency. “If that silly reasoning were valid,” President Oaks said, “then the Lord, who gave us our agency, took it away when he gave the Ten Commandments. We are responsible to use our agency in a world of choices. It will not do to pretend that our agency has been taken away when we are not free to exercise it without unwelcome consequences.”¹

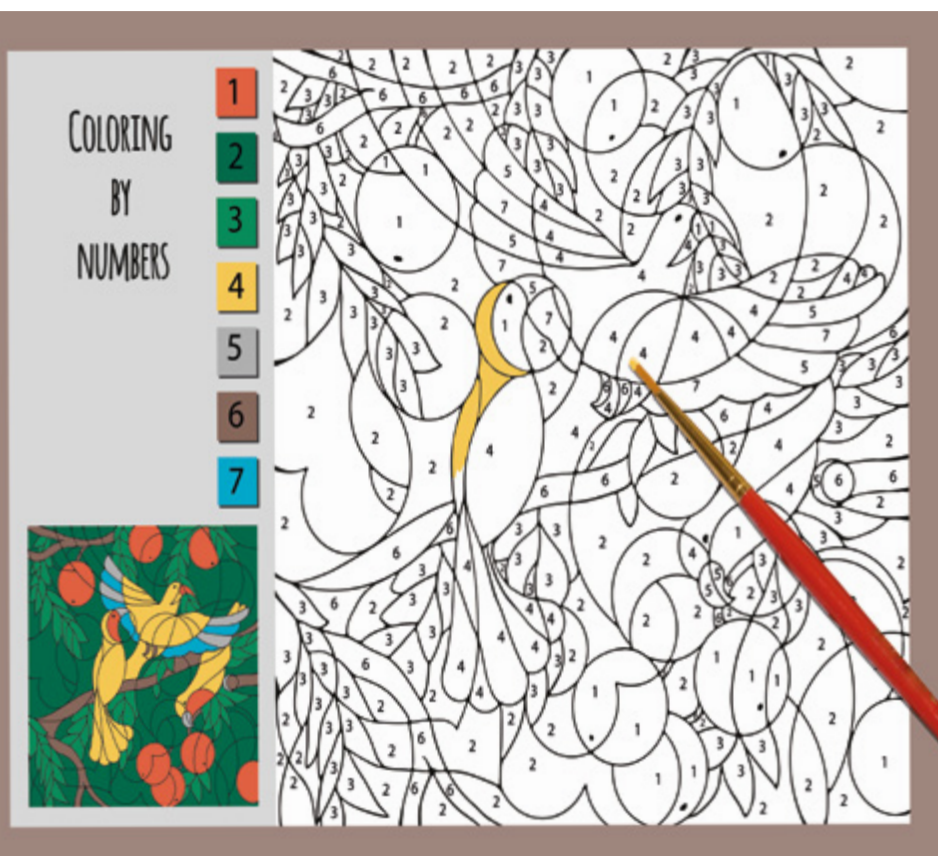
The fact is that when God gives us a commandment, He is not taking away our agency but giving us an opportunity to exercise it, by either obeying or disobeying. Those options are not available if we do not have commandments (see 2 Nephi 2:16; Doctrine and Covenants 29:39).

Far from limiting our choices, commandments make our choices clear. President Eyring taught: “God makes it attractive to choose the right by letting us feel the effects of our choices. If we choose the right, we will find happiness—in time. If we choose evil, there comes sorrow and regret—in time. Those effects are sure.”²

The Lord revealed how He views commandments when He told the early Saints:

“I give unto you a . . . commandment, that you may understand my will concerning you;

“Or, in other words, I give unto you directions how you may act before me, that it may turn to you for your salvation” (Doctrine and Covenants 82:8–9).



Expecting God to run our lives completely and make all our decisions for us can be just as misguided as relying solely on our own understanding.

ignorance of God's laws, which makes our range of choices narrower. That is ultimate captivity. The Savior taught:

"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31–32).

When we choose to submit our will to the Father's by obeying His commandments, we are not surrendering our agency but expressing it—in the highest, noblest way possible. So when the Savior said, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42), He was not giving up; He was

rising up! He was not abandoning His own will but aligning it—as He had done since premortality and throughout His life—to the will of His Father.

This is what God wants from us as well: not to throw our own will away and passively accept His but to change our will until we actively, passionately, eagerly desire what He desires. The scriptures appropriately describe this as a "wrestle"—not with God but with ourselves, to bring our will in line with His (see Genesis 32:24; Enos 1:2; Alma 8:10). We need the strength and power that comes from this wrestle. Only then will we be strong enough to cling to and defend His will in the face of intense opposition—God's will must become our will too.

Alluding to this same eternal truth, C. S. Lewis wrote: "A world of automata—of creatures that worked like machines—would hardly be worth creating. The happiness which God designs for His higher creatures is the happiness

A commandment, then, is a revelation concerning God's will. Without commandments, we would know less about God's will, and in a sense, that ignorance is what limits our freedom. Alma explained that those who "know nothing concerning [God's] mysteries . . . are taken captive by the devil. . . . This is what is meant by the chains of hell" (Alma 12:11). Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles put it this way: "The beauty of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that it pours knowledge into our souls and shows things in their true light. With that enhanced perspective, we can discern more clearly the choices before us and their consequences. We can, therefore, make more intelligent use of our agency."³

Much of Jesus Christ's power rests in His perfect obedience to God's laws. We, likewise, gain power as we choose to obey God's laws. For example, a physician who understands and follows the laws of physiology has the power to heal a person from physical illness. Likewise, a musician who understands the laws that govern a musical instrument has the power to make beautiful music. Someone who does not understand the laws that govern medicine and music—or doesn't adhere to them—has limited freedom to operate in those spheres.

Similarly, a follower of Christ who understands the laws of God and obeys them has the potential to become like Him. That is ultimate freedom. It is the essence of the Father's plan for our eternal growth and happiness. Satan has the opposite goal. He wants us to receive less light and truth, keeping us in

of being freely, voluntarily united to Him and to each other in an ecstasy of love and delight compared with which the most rapturous love between a man and a woman on this earth is mere milk and water. And for that they must be free.”⁴

How Much Does God Micromanage Our Lives?

While sometimes we resist commandments because we mistakenly think our agency is being limited, at other times we seem to have the opposite problem: we too readily resign our agency to some predetermined fate. This

attitude manifests itself, for example, in a self-defeating attitude in which we seek to blame our circumstances or character traits on other things and other people.

A favorite target for this blame is the adversary himself. And ironically, he probably gladly accepts that blame, because if we believe that the devil can cause us to sin, then convincing us that we are powerless to improve ourselves becomes easier. This direct contradiction to God’s declaration that “the power is in them” (Doctrine and Covenants 58:28) is one way Satan attempts to “destroy the agency of man” (Moses 4:3).

The truth is that the devil cannot compel us to choose evil, just as God will force no one to heaven. The Prophet Joseph Smith observed, “God would not exert any compulsory means, and the devil could not.”⁵ In all the commands

and expectations of God, as well as in the enticements of the adversary, we are free to choose and act for ourselves (see Helaman 14:30–31).

While some may give the devil too much blame for their sins, others place too much responsibility for the course of their lives on fate, believing that their future is locked into some kind of pre-programmed destiny, regardless of the choices they might make. Such a view is inconsistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ, which includes the precious principle of agency. In Heavenly Father’s plan, we make choices that can forever alter our course and determine our future. And the most important of these choices is the choice to follow Jesus Christ and walk the covenant path.

There is danger in saying, “Everything happens for a reason” or “It was all part of the plan,” because that could imply that everything that happens is according to God’s will. The truth is that some of what happens in life is contrary to God’s will—because after all, we are all free to accept or reject His will.

Of course God can intervene in world and personal events. But often He leaves us to make choices and deal with the natural consequences of mortality, of our own actions, and of the actions of others. Much of the time He forbears out of respect for our agency, for if He were to manipulate every detail of our lives, He would interfere with our agency and our eternal growth.⁶

This does not mean, however, that God is distant, distracted, or uncaring. In fact, it is truly amazing how much our Father chooses to become involved in the small and simple moments of the lives of His children. Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the

In Heavenly Father’s plan, we make choices that can forever alter our course and determine our future. And the most important of these choices is the choice to follow Jesus Christ and walk the covenant path.



God wants proactive, initiative-taking agents as much as he wants submissive, obedient instruments.

Twelve Apostles taught: “God’s personal shaping influence is felt in the details of our lives—not only in the details of the galaxies and molecules but, much more importantly, in the details of our own lives. Somehow God is providing these individual tutorials for us while at the same time He is overseeing cosmic funerals and births, for as one earth passes away so another is born (see Moses 1:38). It is marvelous that He would attend to us so personally in the midst of those cosmic duties.”⁷

Those who are observant can see God’s hand in their lives in very personal, customized ways. When He does intervene, He does so within the framework of our agency, and His purpose is to teach, reprove, inspire, warn, comfort, and encourage us—not to control us. He is not the Great Micromanager, controlling and determining each moment and every event of our lives. He is so dedicated to our personal growth and happiness that He leaves much of the decision-making and work up to us. Righteousness must be freely chosen.⁸

This truth has important implications when we are faced with difficult decisions. Often we wish Heavenly Father would just tell us what to do and we would gladly do it. But perhaps this desire is inspired not only by a willingness to obey but also by an unwillingness to choose for ourselves and accept responsibility for our choices. God wants proactive, initiative-taking agents as much as he wants submissive, obedient instruments.

When making decisions about serving a mission, marriage, parenting, careers, or a host of other choices large and small, we are to study and

research, ponder and pray, seek the guidance and peace of the Lord, and go forward. Some choices are made quickly and easily, while others take much time and serious deliberation. Sometimes we seem to get an answer that is clear and immediate, and other times no answer seems to come at all. President Russell M. Nelson has assured us that God wants to speak to us,⁹ so perhaps in those instances where we receive no apparent answer, He is trusting us to exercise our own judgment and agency, based on the true principles He has already taught us.¹⁰

And therein lies the answer to the paradox, “Does God want his children to be submissive instruments or proactive agents?” It should not surprise us that the answer is, “Both.” He wants His children to become as He is, and that requires that we acquire the attributes of both a trusting instrument and a trusted agent. He wants us to humbly and willingly learn from our experiences in the hands of the Master so that we may one day be masters ourselves. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks, “Weightier Matters” (Brigham Young University devotional), Feb. 9, 1999, 2, speeches.byu.edu.
2. Henry B. Eyring, “A Priceless Heritage of Hope,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 24–25.
3. D. Todd Christofferson, “Moral Agency,” *Ensign*, June 2009, 48.
4. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (2001), 48.
5. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 214.
6. See D. Todd Christofferson, “Free Forever, to Act for Themselves,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 16–19.
7. Neal A. Maxwell, “Becoming a Disciple,” *Ensign*, June 1996, 17.
8. See Richard H. Cracroft, “‘We’ll Sing and We’ll Shout’: A Mantic Celebration of the Holy Spirit” (Brigham Young University devotional, June 29, 1993), speeches.byu.edu.
9. See Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 95.
10. See Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Your Adventure through Mortality,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2019, 16–25.

Is God Guiding Me?

Our lives are full of big choices: what career path to take, whom to marry, where to go to school, etc. Our lives are also filled with daily concerns: choosing the best use of time, trying to understand doctrine, and finding peace amidst trials. All in all, **we need personal revelation**. But sometimes it can be hard to know how to receive it and how to recognize it when we do. When we aren't getting or recognizing answers, we may wonder, "Was that the Spirit or just my idea?" "Why did I feel inspired to do that and then failed?" "Why do I feel like God doesn't answer my prayers?"

Fortunately, in "Making Decisions: Agency vs. Revelation" (page 42), Erin shares her story about personal revelation when she had to make a life-changing decision. While **God wants to guide us**, He also wants to help us learn to rely on our agency to make good choices.

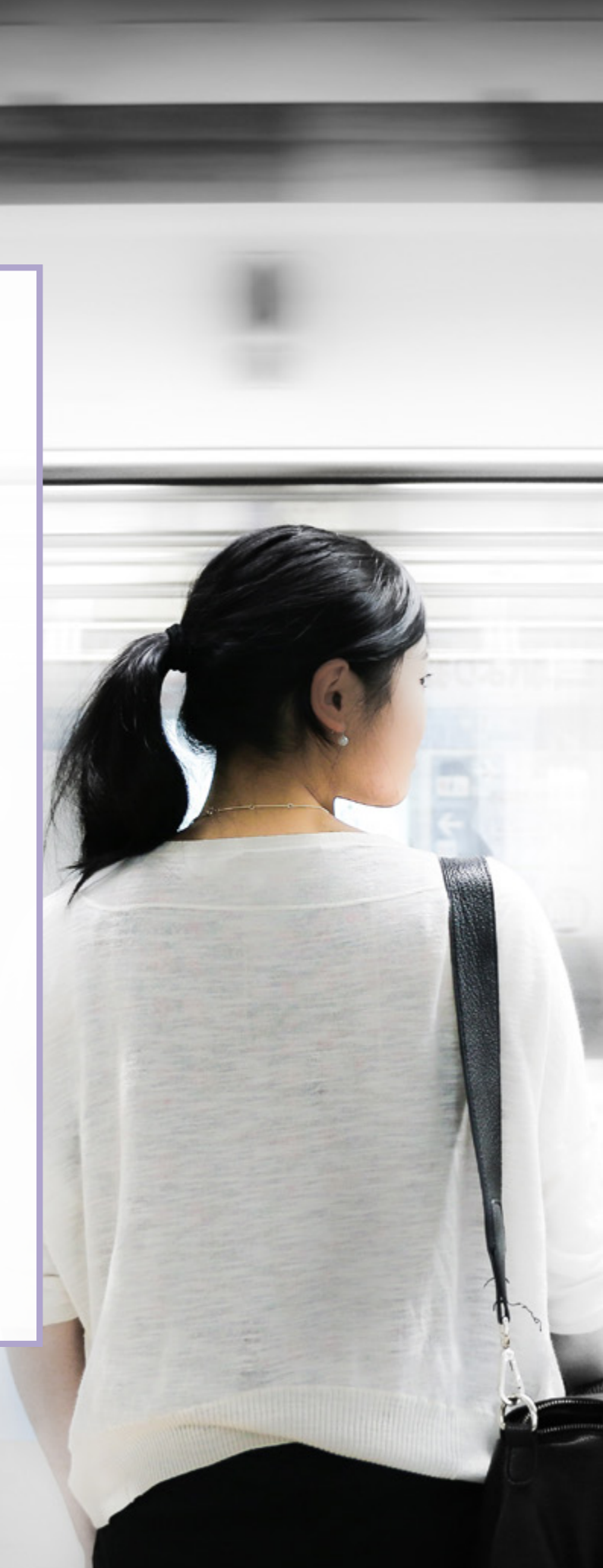
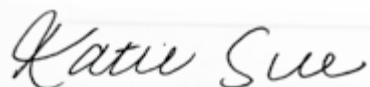
Learning how the Holy Ghost speaks to you personally is another vital part of receiving and recognizing revelation. It can be different for each of us. In articles that begin on pages 46 and 48, **young adults share how they receive revelation**.

In a digital-only article, Aspen explains that personal revelation requires "Exercising Your Spiritual Muscles." You can read advice from a psychologist on "Discerning Your Feelings: Anxiety or the Spirit?" And you can also read more about my personal experience with revelation, when "The Prophet Taught Me How to Make Hard Choices."

Thinking of the future can be overwhelming, even frightening. Especially as a young adult. But when I remember how **God has led my life** in the past, it gives me courage to move forward and act, trusting that **He will continue to give me the guidance I need** along the way.

Sincerely,

Katie Sue Embley



YOUNG ADULTS

BEST ADVICE . . .

Young adults share the best advice they've ever received about receiving personal revelation:

"My EFY counselor once told me, 'Develop your relationship with God as your literal spirit Father. The stronger your relationship with Him, the more you will understand and be guided.' That has made a huge difference in my prayers."

—**Grant Goolsby, California, USA**

"Our stake patriarch has everyone memorize one single phrase: 'to receive revelation, read revelation.' It has helped me so much as I have read the scriptures."

—**Shellby Tippetts, Missouri, USA**

"Take time to ponder. Joseph Smith pondered James 1:5 before he resolved to act. Sometimes Heavenly Father wants us to invest in prayer and study before He gives us answers. We learn the most that way."

—**Natasha Herbst, Utah, USA**

"Listen with your heart, not your ears."

—**Sai Tua, American Samoa**

What's the best advice you've ever received about repentance? Send us your response at [ensign.Church of Jesus Christ.org](https://www.ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) by April 30, 2019.

ABOUT THE YOUNG ADULT AUTHORS

Erin Rider is an attorney and co-hosts a podcast. She just ran her first half marathon. In her free time she enjoys reading, hiking, wakeboarding, and spending time with family and friends.



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Katie Sue Embley thinks the world is full of beautiful people whose stories should be shared. She studies journalism and Spanish, with the goal to #sharegoodness.



SHARE YOUR STORY

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DIGITAL ONLY

Exercising Your Spiritual Muscles

By Aspen Stander

The Prophet Taught Me How to Make Hard Choices

By Katie Sue Embley

Discerning Your Feelings: Anxiety or the Spirit?

By Debra Theobald McClendon



When it comes to big decisions, how much do we need to rely on God to tell us what to do?

Making Decisions: Agency ^{VS.} Revelation

By Erin Rider

Every day each of us faces many decisions. Some are more mundane, like, “What should I wear?” “What should I eat for lunch?” “Is it time to buy a new car, or can I hold on to my old one a little longer?” But every so often we come across a big decision—“Should I go back to school?” “Should I accept this job?” “Should I move to a new city?” “Should I buy a house?” “Should I date this person?” “Should I marry this person?” and so on.

When confronted with big decisions, we tend to—appropriately—take a little longer to make a choice. We follow the advice given to Oliver Cowdery in Doctrine and Covenants 9:8–9, where the Lord says:

“But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.

“But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you

to forget the thing which is wrong.”

Although this is certainly good counsel, when it comes to big decisions, sometimes we rely a little too much on the part where God tells us what is right and not enough on the part where He tells us to study it out in our minds. We become so bogged down waiting for God to confirm our decisions that we let incredible opportunities pass us by. We may even recognize the role of agency, but we’re terrified of making a decision that could take us off course from our predetermined “plan” and end up assuming that anything other than a burning in the bosom or a voice from heaven means that our decision is wrong. For many of us, this unspoken tension between agency and personal revelation leads to one significant question: What is God’s role in helping us make decisions?

God’s Role in Our Decision-Making

Perhaps this question is best addressed through the story of the



brother of Jared. There's an interesting pattern of growth in this story that teaches us about the way God expects us to make decisions. After the languages were confounded at the Tower of Babel, Jared asks his brother to inquire of the Lord whether they should leave the land, and if so, where they should go (see Ether 1:36–43). The brother of Jared asks, and the Lord leads them to the seashore. As they travel, the Lord speaks to them in a cloud and directs every step of their journey. Eventually they reach the seashore, where they stay for four years.

At the end of the four years, God tells the brother of Jared to build barges and to get ready to cross the ocean. When the brother of Jared realizes the ships will have no air, he follows the same familiar pattern of going to God to ask what he should do. As expected, the Lord responds by giving him detailed instructions to make holes in the tops and bottoms of the ships. Notice the pattern of revelation so far: God gives them a plan, they ask questions about how to fulfill the plan, and God responds with detailed and definitive answers.

But after he makes holes in the ships, the brother of Jared realizes that the ships will have no light. He once again asks God what he should do. Instead of answering, however, God asks, “What will ye that I should do that ye may have light in your vessels?” (Ether 2:23). Rather than giving detailed instructions as He had

before, this time the Lord waits for the brother of Jared to decide what to do.

This kind of answer from the Lord is perhaps the hardest to understand when trying to make a decision. We are taught to pray and wait for an answer, so naturally we worry when we hear nothing in response. Often we wonder if the lack of a clear answer qualifies as a “stupor of thought” indicating our choice is wrong. Other times we wonder if it means we are not righteous enough to hear the answer or if we are not asking with “real intent” (see Moroni 10:4). But there is a third option that sometimes we don’t consider—maybe, like with the brother of Jared, God is waiting for *us* to make our *own* decision.

Making a Decision

I recently encountered a situation that challenged the way I thought about agency and personal revelation. As I was

nearing the end of graduate school, I had a few different job offers in different cities and could not decide which one to take. Like the brother of Jared, I had experienced many moments where I had prayed about a major decision and God answered with a pretty definitive response. Relying on those prior experiences, I began to pray and ask God to help me decide which job I should take. I was also doing my part by learning about each job opportunity and counseling with many people. But no matter how much I prayed or fasted, the heavens stayed silent, and I received no answer.

The deadline to make a decision was approaching, and I began to panic. Surely this was the kind of decision the Lord must care about, so why wasn’t He answering? Maybe He didn’t care about which job I chose, but He must care about which city I moved to since it would

undoubtedly have an impact on my life. The Lord had always cared about my decisions in the past, so why would He not care about this one too?

Yet no matter how hard I tried, no answer came. I started to wonder if I had drifted far enough away from God that I could not hear His answer. I also wondered if I could not hear because I subconsciously did not *want* to hear the answer. Finally, the day before the deadline, I knew I had to make a choice, so I used my judgment and made a decision. That night I simply prayed, asking if He would tell me if my answer was wrong. Still no response came, so I went ahead and took the job.

Several months later, I was still questioning my decision, so I asked for a priesthood blessing to receive reassurance. In the blessing I was told that I didn’t get an answer to my prayer because the Lord was happy with any decision I made.



This blessing reinforced advice previously given to me by my mission president, who told me that oftentimes it doesn't really matter what decision we make. God wants us to learn how to stand on our own two feet and decide how to live our lives. My mission president also reminded me that God, as our Heavenly Father, won't punish us and take away promised opportunities if we are sincerely trying to figure out what to do.

The brother of Jared likely could have suggested almost any solution to lighting the barges, and the Lord would have been fine with it. The point of the experience was not only for the brother of Jared to strengthen his faith but also to learn how to make a decision.

Exercising Agency

From an eternal perspective, exercising agency is a necessary component to

personal growth. Without it, we cannot make the kinds of decisions that will help us achieve our full potential. Growth, like everything else in the gospel, comes "line upon line, precept upon precept" (2 Nephi 28:30). God wants us to be a prepared people, not a paralyzed people, and He expects us to use our agency to live our lives as best we can.

Once we learn to find the balance between agency and revelation, we can experience true spiritual growth. This is what happened to the brother of Jared. After thinking it through, he worked to molten 16 stones out of a rock and asked God to touch them and make them glow (see Ether 3:1–5). This time, when God responded, everything changed. Rather than hearing the voice of God in a cloud, the brother of Jared actually *saw* the Lord, who not only appeared in person but also showed the brother of Jared

incredible visions of the world and everything that was to come (see Ether 3:6–26). It is possible that the brother of Jared would not have been spiritually prepared to receive that vision if he had not first experienced the personal growth that came from making his own decision.

As we make decisions, we should certainly follow Alma's advice to "counsel with the Lord in all [our] doings" (Alma 37:37). When the Lord needs us to make a specific decision, He will let us know and help prevent us from going astray. But we must also be prepared to stand up and move forward in faith, whether or not an answer comes. As long as we are keeping our covenants and staying true to the gospel of Jesus Christ, we can feel confidence in our righteous decisions and peace that the Lord is pleased with our efforts. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.



How do you tell
the difference
between reve-
lation and your
own thoughts?



PERSONALIZED

Personal Revelation

We live in a world of many opportunities. We have the freedom to choose our own career, school, spouse, where we want to live, and so much more. It's truly a blessing of our generation. But on the other hand, it makes all these choices more difficult because it's hard to make decisions when there are so many paths and opportunities that will lead to good things. How do we choose the right when there are so many opportunities that are good? When you feel lost and confused in this storm of decisions, know that Heavenly Father wants to guide you. You can choose the right path and get the answers you're seeking if you follow His voice. Recognize how He speaks to you, trust Him, follow the prophet, be patient, be more optimistic, and have faith, and ultimately you will be led in the right direction.

—*Vira Vashchenko, Kyiv, Ukraine*

Throughout my life I have seen how the Lord has guided me, and I recognize that all I have achieved is thanks to Him and His guidance. Even in the moments when I think I walk alone, at the end, He lets me know and feel that He has always been there with me. That is why I have made the decision to always continue forward with faith, even when I feel that I am on my own. For me, my path is not always clear at times, and I can't always see what awaits me in the future, but I always take steps of faith, and then I begin to see the light and recognize God's hand in my life. I know that our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, love us and that They are willing to guide us, but They also expect us to put our faith in Them and act when we receive promptings from the Spirit.

—*Indhira Mejia, Dominican Republic*

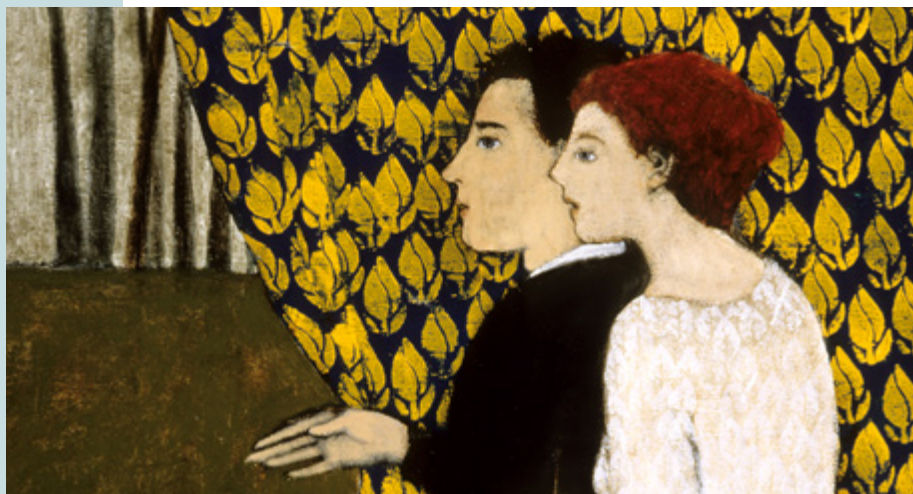


I think that one of the most amazing techniques we must master is the ability to recognize the soft whisperings of the Holy Ghost. Diligent scripture study has pushed me further to master it. I have always believed that he who seeks diligently will find; and the mysteries of God will be unfolded before him by the power of the Holy Ghost (see 1 Nephi 10:19). In other words, if I want to recognize the Spirit, I can't let myself be led into useless thoughts or the everyday concerns of life, but instead I must dive into the work and forget myself. That is when I will be better able to recognize the Spirit because I'm ready for it! In the same way a ship cannot easily travel through a storm, we cannot hear the Spirit if we are carried away by the cares of life that are outside of our control.
—*Emmanuel Borngreat Dogbey, Accra, Ghana*

As I've gotten older, I've had to learn the language of the Spirit. The Spirit talks to me through simple thoughts. It has taken some practice to get used to, but usually the Spirit comes to me in quiet places, like driving to work in my car. I know it's not my thoughts because the Spirit will often jump in when I wasn't even thinking of the subject.
—*Clarissa Mae Taylor, Utah, USA*


In our little family, we recognize the Spirit because of the peace we feel, especially my husband and I together as a couple. When it's our own thoughts, we never feel that it's definitely the right thing—there's always an underlying doubt or fear. But when it's revelation, we always feel peace, even if we try to rationalize and things don't seem to make very much sense at first. When we follow it and make it through, we always see things falling into place and everything works out. That's when we look at each other and say, "Oh, now it makes sense!"

—*Maryana Wright, Utah, USA*



Although we may all receive personal revelation in different ways, one thing is undoubtedly true: God speaks to us often. We just need to be willing to put in the effort to increase our ability to recognize and hear His voice. As President Russell M. Nelson counseled: "Pray in the name of Jesus Christ about your concerns, your fears, your weaknesses—yes, the very longings of your heart. And then listen! Write the thoughts that come to your mind. Record your feelings and follow through with actions that you are prompted to take. As you repeat this process day after day, month after month, year after year, you will 'grow into the principle of revelation'" ("Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," *Ensign*, May 2018, 95). ■

What Can I Do to Receive Answers from God?



We know we can
receive revelation,
so how do we learn
to recognize it?

By Liz Stitt

Receiving revelation—personal direction for our lives—is a humbling experience. It is a privilege for us as God’s children to speak directly to Him and receive answers by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Yet even with guidance from our leaders and our own past experience with revelation, we may still wonder why we sometimes feel a lack of revelation—a lack that can lead to confusion, doubt, heartache, or discouragement. “Why won’t God answer my prayers?” we sometimes ask. “What am I doing wrong that God chooses not to speak to me as He does to others?”

But God is always willing to speak to us. Sometimes we just need to learn how to speak to Him and to listen more closely for His guidance.

Evaluate Your Questions

Sometimes I assume that God will simply give me revelation because it’s obvious that I need His help and guidance in my life. But I sometimes forget to ask for it specifically.

I pray about my housing, my career, my family, and my calling. I am single, so I try to pray about dating and to know if marriage is God’s will for me. Unfortunately, though, my focus on what really matters often comes and goes. For example, a friend once asked, “Are you even still praying about the opportunity to get married?” Although my heart was filled with “That’s none of your business” and “Of course I am” and “Who do you think you are?” the answer, as I thought about it, was no. Of course marriage is one of the desires of my heart. But for a time I had stopped praying specifically about it. Maybe it was because it hurt to keep asking for something that I never received. Maybe it felt like it wasn’t God’s plan for me and so I should stop asking.

But by kneeling and asking God whether marriage is part of His plan for me, I am often given sweet and sustaining answers. The ultimate “answer” is still inconclusive,

but asking the question opens my heart to hearing other answers along the way. The most common impression I feel is that I have a work to do and a personal ministry to fulfill and I can keep moving forward, no matter what my circumstances are.

Some time ago, I transitioned out of a young single adult ward into a conventional “family” ward. I wondered if I was “giving up” my chance to be married as I chose not to attend the older singles ward. As I prayed and asked if the opportunity for marriage would pass me by with this decision, I felt an impression from the Spirit: “I know where you are.” Heavenly Father was aware of the decisions I had made, and He knew exactly where I was and what I was doing. He knows where to find me when He needs me. But what if I hadn’t asked? What assurance would I have missed?

Practice Serious Reflection

In a Brigham Young University Women’s Conference address, Maurine Jensen Proctor said, “*Serious reflection precedes revelation.*” She continued:

“Prayer and spirituality demand mental discipline and focus. Is it any wonder that this kind of prayer does not lead to revelation: ‘Dear Heavenly Father, Thank thee for . . . did I thaw the meat for dinner? Bless us to . . . I hope this won’t take long. I have so much to do. And please bless . . . Is the party Friday or Saturday night?’

“Distractions are the enemy of pondering and serious reflection.”¹

My eight-year-old niece has also taught me about more serious reflection in my prayers. While I was caring for her one evening, we knelt as she said her bedtime prayer. Her prayer was





thoughtful and sincere. Afterward she said, “Mom has been teaching me how to say better prayers. I used to just say the same five things. Now I’m doing better.”

As I have evaluated my prayers, I’ve wondered, “Do I just say the ‘same five things?’” I now try to spend more time being grateful and reflecting seriously on what I need to talk to my Father about.

Write It Down

I like to keep a notebook of impressions I receive from general conference and other Church meetings or just in my everyday life. Most often, the impressions I receive either confirm what I already know or provide me with opportunities to serve. Many times, I’ve had people’s names come to mind and specific ways that I can help them. During talks or lessons, I sometimes learn something that was not said but that I needed to change, improve, or believe in. Writing these thoughts down provides clarity to my thoughts and accountability in following up.

I also take time in my Church meetings to write themes I hear and use them to guide my efforts that week. This is revelation.²

Ask: Is There More?

I’m a family history fan. A few years ago, I felt prompted to ask my grandparents more about my great-uncle Paul McEwan Cutler, who went missing in an air flight training mission during World War II. My grandma shared stories I’d never known and then pulled out five books—two photo albums and three family group sheet books—that I had never seen before. The albums had pictures from the early childhood of my grandpa and of his twin, Paul—but the pictures were unlabeled and had been hidden for years. The group sheets connected me to many cousins and an abundance of temple work.

That simple question about my great-uncle brought many hidden things to light. Was there more? Yes. An index box of pictures taken in the mid-to-late 1800s. Was there more? Yes. Recently we discovered some early film from the 1920s with footage of my great-great-grandfather. Was there more? Yes! My mom then found an audio recording she’d done of my great-grandmother’s life history. Is there still more? Likely.

Sometimes we get an answer and then move on with our lives. But how much are we missing when we don’t stop to ask if there is more to know?³ What are we doing with what we’ve already received, and are we ready or willing to find more?



Invite Revelation

One of my mottoes in life is something once said by Camilla E. Kimball, wife of President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985): “Never suppress a generous thought.”⁴ Sometimes I get worked up about whether some impression or thought in my mind is something from God or merely my own thinking. I feel comforted knowing that every good thing comes from God and that if I act upon those good promptings, I will be blessed for my efforts.

Even more, acting on small promptings teaches me how the Spirit speaks to me. When we get those small promptings to call someone or drop in unexpectedly and then realize we were needed in that exact moment, it gives us courage and strength to respond to more promptings. And as we respond more, we learn how the Spirit prompts and teaches. This helps us learn how the Spirit may respond when we are seeking other divine guidance.

Move Forward in Faith

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “Sometimes the spirit of revelation will operate immediately and intensely, other times subtly and gradually, and often so delicately you may not even consciously recognize it. But regardless of the pattern whereby this

blessing is received, the light it provides will illuminate and enlarge your soul, enlighten your understanding (see Alma 5:7; 32:28), and direct and protect you and your family.”⁵

Moving forward despite our uncertainties is a demonstration of our faith and invites revelation. I’ve learned to see faith as what it really is. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). It sometimes means not knowing the answer. It often means there is no evidence. It means we need to have hope. As long as we keep going amid the uncertainties, we are showing faith. And faith and trust in our Heavenly Father will lead us to revelation. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. Maurine Jensen Proctor, “Serious Reflection Precedes Revelation” (Brigham Young University Women’s Conference address, May 5, 2006), churchhistorianspress.org/at-the-pulpit.
2. See Richard G. Scott, “To Acquire Spiritual Guidance,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 7–8.
3. See Richard G. Scott, “To Acquire Spiritual Guidance,” 8.
4. Camilla E. Kimball, in Bonnie D. Parkin, “Personal Ministry: Sacred and Precious” (Brigham Young University devotional, Feb. 13, 2007), 1, speeches.byu.edu.
5. David A. Bednar, “The Spirit of Revelation,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 90.



GROWING INTO THE PRINCIPLE OF REVELATION

“Pray in the name of Jesus Christ about your concerns, your fears, your weaknesses—yes, the very longings of your heart. And

then listen! Write the thoughts that come to your mind. Record your feelings and follow through with actions that you are prompted to take. As you repeat this process day after day, month after month, year after year, you will ‘grow into the principle of revelation’ [*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 132].”

President Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 95.

Martha and Mary

By Camille Fronk Olson

Emeritus Professor of Ancient Scripture,
Brigham Young University

Regardless of the way we choose to serve, it is essential to accept and follow Christ with all our heart and mind.

At a time when many in Jerusalem expressed confusion over the Savior's identity, Jesus taught, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine" (John 7:17). If we want to go beyond simply learning doctrine and learn who Jesus Christ is and become His disciple, we must put our faith into action. The story of Martha and Mary shows there is more than one way to serve the Savior in our own lives.

Shortly after this sermon, Jesus and some of His disciples went to Martha's home in Bethany to teach the gospel. Martha took the primary responsibility for responding as a gracious host, perhaps providing food and shelter for her guests, while her sister, Mary, sat at Jesus's feet and listened to Him speak. (See Luke 10:38–42.) The sisters' different approaches to serving the Master teach us to respect and honor those who manifest discipleship in different ways. Jesus's teachings in this story also show His perspective that women were free to

choose how to serve and how to show discipleship, just as men could choose.

Service through Giving

Immediately before Luke introduces Martha and Mary, he records the parable of the good Samaritan. In this story, the Savior taught us to show mercy to others, such as feeding, sheltering, and caring for anyone who stands in need (see Luke 10:30–37). Martha's attempts in "much serving" (Luke 10:40) indicate her acceptance and interpretation of this principle as she put faith into action.

Illustrating His teaching that he who is greatest ministers to others (see Matthew 20:26–28; Luke 22:26–27), Jesus spent His life in service. Martha responded with her desire to serve Him. The account of Martha and Mary shows two women who exemplify true belief and discipleship through serving and learning. Just as Martha showed her love for Christ through service, we can

provide service to those around us that is centered in our love for our Savior and our willingness to learn and follow His gospel.

As we serve, we need to remember that there are other ways to serve and that we are not to judge those participating in them. When Martha became "cumbered about" (Luke 10:40), her reaction introduced contention and threatened the goodwill of the Savior's visit.

Although hospitable and responsible, Martha was also harried and absorbed with her busyness. She complained to Jesus, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me" (Luke 10:40). Her protest implies her perception that she alone was serving. She was blind to differing modes of service rendered by others at the time, including Mary and the Savior Himself. Martha depicted the principle of giving but with an attitude that



We can take Martha's and Mary's examples into our lives and ask for the Spirit's guidance to serve in the best way.

wasn't conducive to the Spirit. In our lives today, we can also demonstrate our love for others by our actions *and* our attitude.

Service through Receiving

With a voice of caution, Jesus acknowledged Martha's efforts to serve and her resultant frustration: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things" (Luke 10:41). The Savior's words were meant not to devalue Martha's chosen way to show hospitality but to acknowledge the right that Mary had to serve through listening and learning. Mary's actions show us what is essential for all those who

desire to follow Him, independent of their chosen manner of service.

Mary allowed the Savior to serve her by receiving His word. Her example demonstrates that we can show love for the Savior through sitting at His feet to learn and grow in the Spirit.

One Thing Is Needful

The answer to Martha's conflict was recognizing that "one thing is needful" (Luke 10:42). The profound power of simplicity is implied, but *simple* can mean something different to each of us. The standard of "needful" is found in our motives. Regardless of the way we choose to serve, what is important is

accepting and following Christ with all our heart and mind.

It may be that serving in a "Martha manner" may be the best in some moments, while other situations will seem to suggest a "Mary response"—or even one that doesn't fit those two categories. We can take Martha's and Mary's examples into our lives and ask for the Spirit's guidance to serve in the best way.

Let us look at our attitudes while serving in our own chosen way, remembering that our conviction to follow Him is what matters most. May we always find ourselves at the feet of the Savior. ■



Our Son Is Heavenly Father's Son

By Jerlyn Murphy

Our sweet little son, Hayden, came into this world blue, not breathing, and struggling for life. No crying. No movement.

As doctors and nurses rushed around the hospital room, I knew something was terribly wrong. My husband and my father quickly gave Hayden a priesthood blessing, and Hayden was rushed off to intensive care. He was soon diagnosed with a rare heart malfunction. Within days he underwent several heart surgeries.

Through the miraculous power of priesthood blessings, fasting, and prayers, Hayden beat all odds and survived. We were overjoyed to bring our son home and begin our new lives together.

Hayden brought immeasurable joy into our lives. We cherished and adored him. But as time passed, I began to worry that he was not progressing as expected. Although specialists reassured us that he would eventually catch up, the nagging anxieties continued as I struggled to help my son.

My husband and I studied to learn all we could about Hayden's illness. We did everything the doctors told us to do. Yet progress didn't come.

I grew tired and frustrated. I pleaded with my Father in Heaven to help me find someone who could help Hayden, but help didn't come. Hayden's condition worsened. He started having seizures. We were scared. We thought we were losing him.

One night, I was up late searching for answers. I wrote Hayden a letter. I told him how much I loved him and how hard I was trying to make his life easier. I promised I would spend the rest of my life trying to get him the help he needed.

Frustration and uncertainty momentarily overwhelmed me. I knelt and asked my Father in Heaven, “Why?” I thought He had sent Hayden to me because He knew I would never give up trying to help my son. So why couldn’t I find any answers? Why did each new doctor and each new treatment lead to another roadblock? Didn’t Heavenly Father love Hayden?

I will never forget that moment. An overwhelming feeling of love suddenly embraced me. Words that were not my own entered my mind: “Jerlyn, do you think you love him more than I do?”

I froze. Time stood still. Tears flooded down my face—not out of frustration like before, but out of hope, understanding, and love.

In that one moment, everything changed. My heart softened. My questions changed. I understand now that my Father in Heaven loves Hayden with a perfect love. Hayden was sent

here in a body that is suited for his needs and his opportunities for growth and learning. He has his own unique set of abilities and challenges, just like each of us. I have come to know that children with disabilities are precious and beloved children of Heavenly Father who have a special mission here on this earth.

My husband and I constantly receive answers and blessings, but they come in the Lord’s tim-

ing, not our own. We have been led to the right books, therapies, schools, and teachers to help Hayden succeed in his mortal life. We strive to search for the path that our Father in Heaven has put in place for Hayden instead of the path we wanted him to walk. We are doing all we can to help Hayden reach his divine potential and live the life his Heavenly Father has designed for him. Our understanding of Heavenly Father’s plan has been so much clearer now that we understand that Hayden was His before Hayden was ours. ■

The author lives in Arizona, USA.

Words that were not my own entered my mind: “Do you think you love him more than I do?”



THE BODY: A PRICELESS GIFT

“For reasons usually unknown, some people are born with physical limitations. Specific parts of the body may be abnormal. Regulatory systems may be out of balance. And all of our bodies are subject to disease and death. Nevertheless, the gift of a physical body is priceless. Without it, we cannot attain a fulness of joy.

“A perfect body is not required to achieve a divine destiny. In fact, some of the sweetest spirits are housed in frail frames. Great spiritual strength is often developed by those with physical challenges precisely because they are challenged. Such individuals are entitled to all the blessings that God has in store for His faithful and obedient children.”

President Russell M. Nelson, “We Are Children of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 86–87.

Remembering Him

Selections from the 11th International Art Competition point to Jesus Christ's central role in our salvation.

As we celebrate the life and mission of the Savior this Easter, these works of art (on exhibit at the Church History Museum in Salt Lake City until October 7) remind us that He is the “author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Hebrews 5:9). To view these and other selections online, visit ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/artE319.





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1. *Abide with Us*, by James Kenneth Spencer
(see Luke 24:27–29).
2. *At-One-Ment*, by Jennifer Paget
(see 1 Corinthians 15:22; Mormon 9:12).
3. *The Lord's Supper*, by Hi Fai Wong
(see Matthew 26:26–28).
4. *An Issue of Blood*, by
(see Mark 5:25–34).
5. *Finisher of Faith*, by J. Alan Barrett
(see Matthew 14:25–33; Hebrews 12:1–2).
6. *Living Waters*, by Rose Datoc Dall
(see John 4:10–14; 5:2–9).



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7. *He Healed Them All*, by Michael Tom Malm (see Luke 6:19).
8. *In Remembrance of Me*, by Brooke Malia Mann (see Psalm 77:11–12; Luke 22:19).
9. *Fulcrum*, by (see Helaman 5:9).
10. *Consecration*, by Howard Van Lyon (see Mark 12:41–44).
11. *Christ with a Crown of Thorns*, by Adam Lee Sherwood (see Matthew 27:29).
12. *The Plan of Salvation*, by So Mi Julie Yuen (see 2 Nephi 2:6, 9; Moses 1:39).
13. *Three Women at the Tomb*, by Robert Theodore Barrett (see Mark 16:1–6).
14. *Love One Another*, by Emma Donaldson Taylor (see John 13:34–35).
15. *Articles of Faith Doorway*, by Jacob Elton Dobson (see 2 Corinthians 13:1; the Articles of Faith).



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LIVING IN Grace AND Gratitude

Because of the Savior's love, I have come to understand eternal principles that bless my life and give me strength to bear my burdens.

By Cecily Smith

My life has been filled with joy and happiness. I came to a wonderful family and was raised by faithful parents. I have devoted children, and my husband is a most faithful and loving companion.

But one of the most difficult recurring challenges I have had to face is depression. With clinical depression, one never knows when or if those dark, lonely, hopeless feelings will go away. Though my depression is not fully gone or healed, the effects of it are much less significant. I believe, along with Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “that through any illness or difficult challenge, there is still much in life to be hopeful about and grateful for.”¹ I know our Savior can heal us and offer peace, and I strive to live each day through Him in grace and gratitude. Because of the healing power of the Savior's love and Atonement, I have come to understand eternal principles that bless my life and give me strength to bear my burdens.

Recognizing My Depression

In my latter years of high school, I could tell something was wrong, but I didn't know what. The sleepless nights and increased anxiety became overwhelming. I did what most do—held my feelings in and did my best in my responsibilities.

Years went by and I had moments of feeling normal, but mostly my feelings of hopelessness persisted. During the time I felt well, I met my husband, and later we were married. We were blessed with our firstborn son and things were wonderful. But deep down, I knew I was struggling.



Soon after our son was born, we moved across the country away from family and friends so that my husband could start medical school. I became pregnant with our second son. With all the change and isolation, the feelings of gloom deepened. I sought help but didn't get answers. Soon after the baby was born, my depression intensified dramatically. The hormonal change, along with the move, created a very dark place inside me. I collapsed mentally and physically.

"What Did I Do Wrong?"

At my worst time of darkness and discouragement, my feelings came to the forefront. Throughout my life I had tried to be good in every way. I prayed and read my scriptures. I attended the temple and fulfilled my callings. But apparently it wasn't enough. Why did I feel so bad when I had tried so hard to be good?

I dropped to my knees on the hard, cold floor of my room, looking for some ray of light through the window. I asked my Father in Heaven five simple words, "What did I do wrong?" As I knelt there in silence, I felt something. It was as if someone came into the room with me, knelt by my side, and wrapped their arms around me. Then this very quiet, comforting, gentle thought flooded into my mind: "You did nothing wrong. Just take care of yourself."

After that quiet and comforting thought, I began to try and seek answers to help me "take care of myself." With that, I found answers and principles that have helped guide me through these last 15 years.



Guiding Principles

1 Live gratefully. I began a gratitude journal inspired by President Henry B. Eyring, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. He asked himself: "Have I seen the hand of God reaching out to touch us or our children or our family today?"² Upon reflection, he could perceive ways that Heavenly Father had blessed someone in his family.

In journaling, my testimony was strengthened as I remembered the Lord's mercy. When I do have trials—even depression—those are often the times I am most grateful because I recognize the Lord's gifts of strength to me.

2 Live gracefully. In allowing the Savior's healing grace to be part of my life, I have come to rely on Him more fully. I need His influence each day to help me not only overcome my weaknesses but also increase my strengths. This brings me greater purpose and joy. I know I cannot make it back to the presence of the Father without the Savior's infinite Atonement. I have come to more fully utilize the enabling power of the Savior Jesus Christ.³

3 Live in love. As the Savior taught, the two greatest commandments have to do with love: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:37–39).

The more I have prayed to understand these commandments, the greater my love has grown for my Father in Heaven, for my neighbor—and for myself. This means I seek to care for my physical as well as spiritual well-being. I also take time to improve the talents Heavenly Father has given me. I know that as I care properly for myself, I am better able to serve and love others.

4 Live simply. Elder Holland has counseled, “In preventing illness whenever possible, watch for the stress indicators in yourself.”⁴ High levels of stress can contribute to depression, and because of that, I have learned to balance my life. This has blessed me to be able to do many things in life, including holding Church callings, being a wife to a busy physician, and meeting the needs of four active boys.

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught:

“When stress levels rise, when distress appears, when tragedy strikes, too often we attempt to keep up the same frantic pace. . . .

“There is a beauty and clarity that comes from simplicity.”⁵

I have learned to slow down my pace and recognize depression for what it really is—an illness—and care for myself so I can take care of my family. I’ve sometimes had to miss important events, but the more I take care of myself, the quicker I recover.

I’ve learned to leave margins in my days. Those open spaces have allowed for a greater influence of the Spirit, room to serve someone in need, and the ability to be present with my family.

I calendar differently. Instead of putting the doctor and dentist appointments in first, I put in the things I desire to do that will help me build my relationship with God, others, and myself. I schedule temple time, play time and learning time with my boys, dates with my husband, and service for those who have been on my mind. Second and less important are the things that typically go on a calendar: doctor and dentist appointments and so on.

5 Live faithfully. The basics of the gospel have enabled me to cope with depression again and again and to return to the light on the other side. I try to follow Elder Holland’s advice: “Faithfully pursue the time-tested devotional practices that bring the Spirit of the Lord into your life.”⁶ Daily scripture study, prayer, and temple and church attendance have been vital. In my darkest days, it was extremely difficult to go to church, but not because I didn’t love the gospel. Sundays were always a favorite day of mine. But when I felt depressed and anxious, I sometimes ended up crying in the car or restroom, praying for some solace. I wanted to obey the commandment to go to church but my social anxiety seemed too great. I went anyway. And though each week for years and years it was the same painful experience, I look back and realize how blessed I was for being consistent and not giving up. In fact, by going I was blessed to overcome my social anxiety.

Most of all, it has been faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that has enabled me to bear this burden with greater ease. In short, because of the Savior Jesus Christ, I have learned from my depression and know that there is a better way to pass through the trials we have been given. All that He desires us to experience—even in especially difficult circumstances—can be received in grace and gratitude. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Like a Broken Vessel,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 42.
2. Henry B. Eyring, “O Remember, Remember,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 67.
3. See David A. Bednar, “In the Strength of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 76–78.
4. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Like a Broken Vessel,” 41.
5. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Of Things That Matter Most,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 19–20.
6. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Like a Broken Vessel,” 41.





Protecting Children

What can we do to better protect and empower the children in our lives?

By Marissa Widdison

Church Magazines

Of all the groups of people Jesus taught, we know He particularly loved children. He gave attention to children even when it was not convenient. He invited children to receive an individual blessing from Him. He condemned those who hurt children. And He taught that we need to become more like children to enter the kingdom of heaven.¹

“Behold your little ones,” He told those on the American continent after His Resurrection. The heavens opened, and loving, protective angels came down and formed a circle around the children, surrounding them with fire. (See 3 Nephi 17:23–24.)

With all the dangers in the world today, we might wish that our children could be constantly surrounded by heavenly fire. It is estimated that one in four people worldwide has been abused as a child, and that average number rises when you look at specific vulnerable groups, such as those with disabilities.² The good news is that there is much we can do to be proactive about protecting children.

“Picture in your mind a child you love,” said Sister Joy D. Jones, Primary General President. “When you tell this child, ‘I love you,’ what does it mean? . . . The first application of love is that I love you and will do all I can to protect and prepare you for life’s challenges.”³

Perhaps looking more closely at the Savior’s example will prompt ideas about how we can better protect the children in our lives.



*When Jesus visited the Nephites,
He blessed each child individually.
Likewise, we should get to know
each child.*

Jesus Made Time for Them

Jesus set aside time to pay attention to the young and vulnerable (see Matthew 19:14). We also can set aside time to listen to our children and try to understand their challenges.

“The more love the child feels, the easier it is for him or her to open up,” Sister Jones said. “. . . *We* must start the conversation and not wait for children to come to us.”⁴

One mother found it helpful to ask her children each evening, “Did you hear any words today that you didn’t understand?”

Our children’s first instinct may be to look online for answers because the internet provides immediate help and doesn’t judge, but we need to convince them that *we* are a more trustworthy source of information. And that includes not overreacting when our children tell us something uncomfortable. For example, if we have an emotional outburst when our child confesses that they sought out pornography, they might not come to us for help again. But if we respond with love, we have an opportunity to send a clear message—that we want them to talk to us about *anything*.

Sister Jones observed, “Minor troubles talked about in a loving way create a foundation of a healthy response so that when big troubles come, communication is still open.”⁵

Some of the most important, protective conversations that parents can have with children are about their bodies. These conversations should include accurate words for body parts, information about hygiene, and what changes to expect in upcoming years. We should talk about sexuality and how physical and emotional intimacy are a wonderful part of Heavenly Father’s plan for us. We could also talk about topics such as abuse and pornography. These conversations need to be age-appropriate and guided by the questions our children have. Ideally, we would have multiple conversations over time, layering additional information as our children grow up and their understanding increases. (See the end of this article for helpful resources.)

Jesus Set an Example for Them

Jesus set a perfect example for everyone (see John 8:12). As adults, we also have the opportunity and responsibility to be examples. One of the best ways we can help our children be safe is by modeling safe choices ourselves. Children notice how their parents treat others and allow others to treat them. Please, if you are in a relationship or struggling with an addiction that puts you or your family in danger, get help. Reach out to civil authorities and counseling professionals, as well as your bishop or Relief Society president, who can help you connect

with appropriate Church and community resources. You deserve safety and respect.

We should also set an example of caring for our spiritual strength. Do our children see us pray? Do they know we read the scriptures? Have they heard our testimonies? Do we put on “the whole armour of God” as a family in the morning before heading out into the world? (see Ephesians 6:11–18; Doctrine and Covenants 27:15–18).

Jesus Spoke Up for Them

The Savior spoke out against those who hurt children (see Matthew 18:6). We too can be advocates for the children in our lives.

“Children need others to speak for them,” taught President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “and they need decision-makers who put their well-being ahead of selfish adult interests.”⁶

While we do not need to be overly fearful or suspicious of others, we should be aware of potential threats and make wise safety decisions. Primary leaders should follow Church abuse-prevention guidelines⁷—there is protection in having two teachers in each classroom and someone from the presidency checking on the classes.

Parents and leaders should counsel together and decide if there are additional precautions they can take to minimize specific threats. For example, many Church buildings have windows in classroom doors. If your building does not, you may consider leaving the doors slightly open during classes and talking to your local facilities-management representative to see if installing windows is an option. Regardless of their callings, all adults can pay attention in church and help when needed, such as welcoming visitors who are roaming the halls, or encouraging a wandering child to return to class.

Sadly, sometimes children are hurt by other children. If we notice any kind of bullying or inappropriate physical contact at church or anywhere, we need to intervene immediately. If we are a leader, we need to be willing to talk with the families involved—even if the conversations are uncomfortable—to make sure that all children are safe. Speak up

with compassion and clarity to help establish a culture of kindness.

If we believe a child is being abused, we should report those concerns to civil authorities right away. In many countries, hotlines exist that offer crisis intervention, information, and support services. We should also tell the bishop of suspected abuse, especially involving anyone who might have access to children through the Church. In addition to taking measures to prevent a perpetrator’s future access to children, the bishop can provide comfort and support to victims and help them connect with additional resources from LDS Family Services.

Jesus Blessed Them One by One

Jesus knew and blessed children one by one (see 3 Nephi 17:21). Likewise, we should get to know each child and try to help him or her specifically.

How can we make church safer for children with medical conditions? Do we have a plan for helping Primary children with disabilities? Are the Primary lessons we teach sensitive to different home situations? What else can we do to be more inclusive?



Racist comments, condescending remarks about other cultures, and condemning attitudes toward members of other faiths should have no place in the messages we share. In one Primary class, a boy did not speak the same language as the other children very well. To help him feel welcome, teachers made sure to print handouts in both languages. Simple acts of thoughtfulness show children that we know and care about them individually, and these acts can set an example for them to follow.

We may discover that some children need help in an urgent way. For example, although some mood swings are a normal part of growing up, if a child is angry, withdrawn, or sad for several weeks, there might be a more serious problem that needs professional help. While righteous habits like prayer and scripture study are important, often more support is needed for those who are dealing with an emerging mental illness or coping with a secret trauma. Ignoring the situation will not make things better. In many areas, bishops can provide financial assistance to individuals and families for counseling through LDS Family Services or other providers.



Jesus Empowered Them

While protecting children, Jesus also empowered them. He pointed to children as examples (see Matthew 18:3). After His visit to the Americas, young children were able to teach adults “marvelous things” (3 Nephi 26:16).

We can empower the children we know by teaching them to recognize how the Spirit speaks to them and then to follow the Spirit when making decisions—helping them develop an internal filter to guide their actions. As Sister Jones taught, “Helping children create their own internal reasoning for wanting to [make safe decisions] is essential.”⁸ Here are some ideas that empowered other families:

- One mother taught her children to pay attention to their “uh-oh feelings” and be careful around people who seemed “tricky.” This paid off when some people tried to convince her son to follow them into a bathroom, and he heeded his warning feelings and refused.
- Some families create a getaway plan ahead of time to use when they encounter something harmful. For example, one family’s getaway plan was called “crash and tell” and consisted of turning off the computer monitor and telling a parent right away if a bad image popped up. Their children never had to wonder about how to deal with bad media—they knew what to do!
- Another family created a code word their children could text to their parents or say over the phone if they needed to be picked up right away.
- You could help your children practice saying, “No!” when someone tries to convince them to do something that makes them



uncomfortable. Every child should know that they can ask for help, and they should keep asking until they are safe.

Our Role as Adults

Let's recall again the scene in 3 Nephi 17, when Jesus "took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them. . . . And they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them" (verses 21, 24). Perhaps a key point of this story is not only to teach us how important children are but also to illustrate what *our* role should be, as adults. We are the caretakers of the next generation. *We* should be the angels that encircle and minister to children. Let's continue to look to Jesus as our perfect example and then do the best we can to surround our little ones with love and protection. ■

NOTES

1. See the scripture references under each section heading in this article to find these stories in the scriptures.
2. See "Child Maltreatment (Child Abuse)," World Health Organization, who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/child/en.
3. Joy D. Jones, "It Starts with Us" (address given at Utah Coalition Against Pornography conference, Mar. 10, 2018), newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
4. Joy D. Jones, "It Starts with Us," newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
5. Joy D. Jones, "It Starts with Us," newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
6. Dallin H. Oaks, "Protect the Children," *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 43.
7. See "Preventing and Responding to Abuse," newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
8. Joy D. Jones, "It Starts with Us," newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

A NEW CHURCH RESOURCE

The Church has a new site about preventing and addressing abuse.

Go to abuse.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- Abuse.ChurchofJesusChrist.org
- AddressingPornography.ChurchofJesusChrist.org
- *A Parent's Guide on Church of Jesus Christ.org*
- "Abuse," Gospel Topics, topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org
- "Abuse," Lesson Helps by Topic, lessonhelps.ChurchofJesusChrist.org
- Marissa Widdison, "Growing a Healthy Technology Garden," *Ensign*, Apr. 2017, 64–67
- U.S. and Canada child abuse hotline: 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)

TIPS FOR PROTECTING CHILDREN

At Home

- Create a family plan for staying away from bad media or escaping harmful situations.
- Talk in age-appropriate ways about bodies, sexuality, and intimacy.

At Church

- Follow Church guidelines for teaching, including having two adults in every classroom.
- Encourage a culture of kindness and do not allow bullying.



**By Elder
Kent F. Richards**

Served as a
General Authority
Seventy from 2009
to 2016

Pay Attention

TO THE LITTLE THINGS

It is in the seemingly small things of our lives that our deep desires and personal character are formed.

My great-grandfather George F. Richards was a humble farmer who raised his family of 15 children on hard work and a willingness to follow the Lord. When he was a young man of 23, he struggled to make a life for his family.

As sometimes happened in those days, he received a letter of inquiry from the secretary of the First Presidency about whether he was available to serve a mission. He didn't then know his future. Like you, he arose early and faced the challenges of each day, working hard and rejoicing in each small success. Note the expressions of his young heart as he responded to the First Presidency:

"I am 23 years of age. . . . I have a wife and one child, have never been on a foreign mission. Financially, I am in poor circumstances at present, being in debt more than \$400.00. . . .

"While I feel that I am poor, I do not wish to let that stand between me and my duties as a latter-day Saint. That which I have is upon the altar and subject to the direction of those in authority, as is also my time and life if necessary."¹

Later, at age 45, he was called to serve as an Apostle. Soon after his call, George wrote a letter to his brother about being prepared for callings in the Church:

"I should feel badly indeed, if when the occasion presents itself . . . , some little thing such as a non-observance of the word of wisdom, a neglect of your prayers, or anything of the kind should block your way. It is by the observance of these little things that men show whether theirs is an obedient and willful spirit. . . . A straw thrown up indicates the direction of the wind, even so the small things of our lives indicate largely our future destiny."²

Elsewhere he taught, "Let us keep our covenants by keeping the commandments as fast as made known unto us, attending to the little things and prove our spirits to be willing." And again: "Obedience to the gospel, to simple things, shows our spirits."³

*Check the direction of
the wind and determine
which direction you are going.*



“SEEMINGLY SMALL THINGS”

When my wife and I were a young couple a few years out of medical training, President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) said:

“The basic decisions needed for us to move forward, as a people, must be made by the individual members of the Church. . . .

“ . . . We have been diverted, at times, from fundamentals on which we must now focus in order to move forward as a person or as a people.

“Seemingly small efforts in the life of each member could do so much to move the Church forward as never before. . . .

“Are we ready, brothers and sisters, to do these seemingly small things out of which great blessings will proceed? . . .

“Let us trust the Lord and take the next steps in our individual lives. He has promised us that he will be our tender tutor.”⁴

It is in the “seemingly small things” of our lives that our deep desires and personal character are formed. The Lord needs you. He wants to lift you, teach you, and help you. The Lord wants your heart first. He knows you and knows your path. He calls you and prepares you to succeed. It is critical to pay attention to the little things as a measure and a guide to you personally in your progress along your own path.

THE CHALLENGE OF DISTRACTION

It is so easy to get caught up in the distractions of life. Perhaps your generation’s greatest challenge is to manage the draw and attraction—and distraction—of electronic media and gaming. But whatever is pulling you, your life and your future are at stake. Why do you think President Russell M. Nelson invited the youth last year to participate in a seven-day social media fast?⁵

When I was serving in the Europe Area Presidency, I was assigned to a stake conference

*Reading, praying,
and obeying are
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great things
come to pass.*

in Lisbon, Portugal. As part of the agenda for Saturday morning, I invited the stake president to identify some families we could briefly visit together.

As we drove to one particular home by appointment, the president told me that the father had served a full-time mission, had married a wonderful woman, and was raising four precious children. But he had slipped away from activity. He had been distracted.

When we arrived for our visit, we found a beautiful family, all dressed in Sunday best on a Saturday morning, waiting for us. We gathered in a circle in their living room. Their oldest son, age 15, was the teachers quorum president in the ward. I turned to him and asked, “What are you planning to do

three years from now?” He responded immediately without any hesitation, “I will be serving a mission.”

Then I asked a key question that came through inspiration: “Who will help you to prepare?” Without any hesitation, he looked directly at his father, pointed his extended arm and finger right at him, and said, “He will.”

The Spirit came into that room with such power. The father began to weep and, after a moment’s quiet contemplation, asked me if he could bear his testimony to his children and to his wife. He did so with tears streaming down his cheeks. In that moment, his son had prompted his heart to change. The father knew instantly what he needed to do.

As we were closing our visit, I taught the parents through the children three words in English as a reminder of the little things they needed to do as a family each day: *read, pray, and obey*. Then we chanted together, “Read, pray, and obey.” Today the son is on a mission, and the father is a counselor in the bishopric.

Reading, praying, and obeying are little things. Add whatever else the Spirit whispers to you personally, and you have a formula in which little things help great things come to pass.

I learned a critical lesson as a young man. Life became very busy very quickly. I married my dear wife 14 months after I returned home from my mission. The next month, I started four years of medical school, which were followed by five years of surgical residency training.

I had to make each day succeed on its own and not put off my spiritual needs for even one day. I came to love my private time early in the morning for my personal scripture study and prayers.

I remember the day I read from Wilford Woodruff's journal about an experience he had while crossing the plains with the first Latter-day Saint pioneer company. On May 30, 1847, he wrote: "In the morning I shaved, cleansed my body, put on clean clothing, . . . read a chapter in the Book of Mormon, humbled myself before the Lord, and poured out my soul in prayer before Him, and His spirit descended upon me and I was blessed and prepared for the service of the day."⁶

My young brothers and sisters, we become who we will be by taking daily steps and by doing the small, important things.

THE LORD WILL LEAD YOU

Pray, be humble and meek, obey the Lord's ordinances, and keep your covenants. We simply must have faith to do the simple things for our own peace and growth. Our actions are a clear and definitive way for us to measure

our own faith (see Doctrine and Covenants 52:20).

"And thus we see that by small means the Lord can bring about great things" (1 Nephi 16:29). It has always been so.

The Lord will lead us through the wilderness of life's journey—if we are willing. He provided for Lehi and his family the Liahona. It was a miracle. It gave them a new revelation every day that showed them the way to go. But it worked only "according to the heed and diligence which they gave unto" the Lord and the instructions of the Liahona (see Mosiah 1:16).

The Lord promised Nephi, and He promises us, that whoever "would hold fast unto [the word of God], they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction" (1 Nephi 15:24). The Holy Ghost is our personal Liahona.

Remember, "a straw thrown up indicates the direction of the wind." Check the direction of the wind and determine which direction you are going. Notice particularly the seemingly small things of your life.

Be humble and stand strong against the distracting influences around you. Remember the Lord's words: "Be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great" (Doctrine and Covenants 64:33). ■

From a devotional address, "A Straw Thrown Up Indicates the Direction of the Wind," delivered at Brigham Young University–Idaho on June 5, 2018.

NOTES

1. George F. Richards journal excerpts, 1883–1950, transcript, 16, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.
2. George F. Richards journal excerpts, 105, 106.
3. George F. Richards journal excerpts, 104, 122; capitalization standardized.
4. Spencer W. Kimball, "Let Us Move Forward and Upward," *Ensign*, May 1979, 82.
5. See Russell M. Nelson and Wendy W. Nelson, "Hope of Israel" (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
6. In Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff: History of His Life and Labors* (1909), 292.



Coping with Tragedy

Sooner or later, children will encounter tragedy, whether it's close to home or far away. But “even when the world is in turmoil all around us, we can receive the blessing of inner peace.”¹ Here are some things you can do to help children feel that peace.



Stability

When something tragic happens, children may feel like their world is out of balance. Be an example of steadfastness for them. Speak calmly and confidently about the issue. Maintain a routine as much as you can. Do all you can to keep holding family home evening, scripture study, prayer, and other family habits. With time, children can learn that even when their world is shaken, the gospel brings perspective and life goes on.

Respect

Show respect for children's emotions. Listen to children and acknowledge how they feel. Show them that you are taking their concerns seriously. Give them space if they need it but let them know you're available when they're ready to talk. Honestly answer questions as they arise in an age-appropriate way. Let your children know they can always talk to you about their fears and worries.



Guidance

Your children may ask, “Why does God let bad things happen?” Explain that both good times and bad times are part of life and part of God's eternal plan. He allows each person to make their own choices, and sometimes people make bad choices that cause suffering. Other times, tragedies are no one's fault but are just a part of nature. No matter what, Heavenly Father is there for us. With His help, we can learn and grow, even from painful experiences. We can turn to Him to find peace.

Empowerment

Show children that they have the power to make a difference by giving them a way to help. For example, they could help gather donations for disaster victims, visit an ill or injured friend in the hospital, cheer up someone who is dealing with a family loss, or pray for those who are struggling. We can't fix everything, but we have the capacity to do much good, and "we work for peace whenever we help relieve the suffering of another."²



Comfort

Remind your children that God loves them and that you love them. Don't give false promises that nothing bad will ever happen to them, but assure them that they're safe right now and that you will do all you can to protect them. Reassure them that Heavenly Father will help them get through any trial that comes their way.

When you find yourself disheartened by adversity, remember that in the end, good will triumph over evil. "We are waging a war with sin, . . . but we need not despair," taught President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018). "It is a war we can and will win. Our Father in Heaven has given us the tools we need in order to do so. He is at the helm. We have nothing to fear."³ ■

NOTES

1. "Peace," Gospel Topics, topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
2. "Peace," Gospel Topics.
3. Thomas S. Monson, "Looking Back and Moving Forward," *Ensign*, May 2008, 90.

FOR CHILDREN

In this month's *Friend*:

- "I Will See Him Again" (page 26)
- "Comfort Cards" (page 27)

For other resources, visit lessonhelps.ChurchofJesusChrist.org and click "Lesson Helps by Topic."



FOR TEENS

From the *New Era*:

- "Be at Peace When Your Life Is in Pieces" (Mar. 2019, 6)
- "I Will See Her Again" (Apr. 2019, 14)

For other resources, visit youth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



We Put Our Trust in the Lord

Shortly after I returned from my mission, I received an invitation to go to a dance. At the dance, I misplaced my phone and a young man offered to help me find it. As we talked, we discovered we were both returned missionaries and shared many ideas and goals.

Our relationship continued to develop, and we became engaged. It was our dream to be sealed in the Washington D.C. Temple before it closed for remodeling in March 2018. But after making that decision, we were tested. First, I lost my job and had no way to save money for our trip to the temple. Next, a hurricane was on track to hit Puerto Rico just before our wedding date.

When Hurricane Maria struck, it devastated our beautiful island. Stores closed. We lost electricity; water, food,

and other basic items became hard to find. We lost everything we had planned to use for our reception. We had to cancel the reception, and it looked like we would also have to cancel our wedding. Travel in and out of Puerto Rico was limited, and no one knew for how long. I began to feel discouraged, and I was filled with doubt and confusion.

One night, my fiancé and I talked about our situation. Travel was uncertain, and we would have no reception or wedding clothes, but the Spirit confirmed that we needed to trust the Lord. The most important thing was to be sealed in the temple. We prayed to Heavenly Father for help.

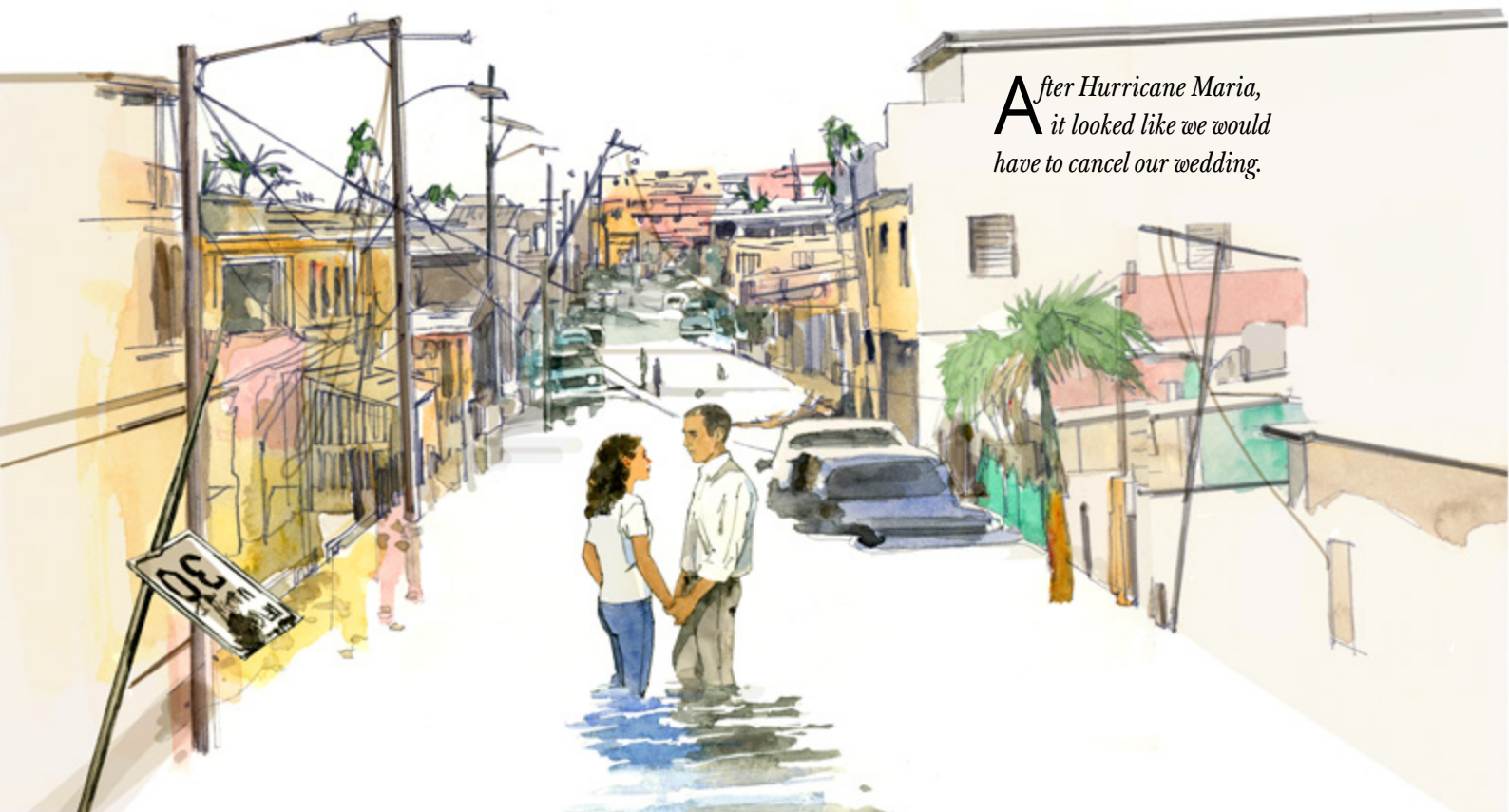
Once flights out of Puerto Rico resumed, we had to make new flight plans and reschedule our sealing date.

We were without communication for weeks after the hurricane, but a friend's cell phone worked. She let us use it to contact the temple. We were able to rearrange everything so we could still be sealed! A few weeks before our trip, family members and friends donated shoes and clothing and helped us obtain many things for our wedding.

When we finally entered the temple, we left all our worries behind. We held each other's hand to enter our future together. I can truly say I felt the Lord's hand guiding and reassuring us that as long as we trusted Him, everything would be OK. Today, we are blessed with a beautiful son and we are a family sealed for all eternity. ■

**Koraima Santiago de Jesus,
San Juan, Puerto Rico**

*After Hurricane Maria,
it looked like we would
have to cancel our wedding.*





“This Is It!”

I arrived home late one winter night after conducting many interviews as bishop. I was exhausted. Work had been stressful for weeks, and family and Church responsibilities made me feel stretched beyond my limits.

That evening, I had to fix my car so I could get to work the next morning. As I put on my coveralls, I changed roles from bishop to mechanic. I lay on the cold garage floor underneath the car and began working. Why did I have to be freezing, exhausted, and busting my knuckles after I had already worked so hard that day? I was losing my patience and began a whining, pleading prayer to Heavenly Father.

“Is it possible You could help me a little?” I said. “I’m trying my best to be a good father, husband, and bishop and to live the commandments. Wouldn’t I serve better if I could get some rest? Please help me get this done so I can go to bed.”

Suddenly, three clear, distinct words came boldly to my mind: “This is it!”

“What?” I responded.

The words came again: “This is it!”

Understanding began to fill my mind and heart when the words came a third time: “This is it!” These words carried a message to my spirit. “It” was mortal life, and I was experiencing a moment of growth designed to help me become what Heavenly Father wants me to become. It was as if the Spirit said to me, “Did you expect this earthly journey not to have struggles?” When I arose from that freezing concrete floor, I was not the same.

Depending on how we respond to them, trials can be seen as gifts from a loving Father in Heaven. He provides us the opportunity to face trials so we can learn to turn to Him. When we do, we are blessed with learning and spiritual growth.

The three words that came to my mind during that cold night on the concrete floor of my garage have blessed me for more than 35 years. I try hard to see that no trial is wasted. I see trials as opportunities to learn things I may never learn in any other way. ■

Richard J. Anderson, Utah, USA

I was working on my car when a clear message came boldly to my mind.

BONUS ARTICLE

Read an additional “Latter-day Saint Voices” article in the digital version of this issue in the Gospel Library app or at ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

Seeing Dad Sing

I had been on my mission in Honolulu, Hawaii, USA, for only four and a half months when I had a major seizure and was subsequently diagnosed with epilepsy. The ensuing months brought hospital visits, countless tests, and a new medication with frustrating side effects.

Until then, I had been so focused on missionary work that I hadn't experienced much homesickness, but from the moment of my seizure, my heart ached. I missed my parents and felt alone even while surrounded by wonderful, caring people. I didn't want to go home, but I wanted to feel peace.

With my mission president's permission, I spoke with my parents on the phone about my medication. My father, who had just fulfilled his lifelong

dream of joining the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square, assured me that he would be singing his heart out for me in general conference, which began the next day.

The next morning, I prayed fervently for the peace I so desperately needed. I had received answers to specific questions during general conference before, and I trusted that I could receive guidance again. As conference opened, the choir sang "Dearest Children, God Is Near You" (*Hymns*, no. 96). Within the first minute, I saw my dad on the TV screen. The camera zoomed in on his face for quite some time.

Tears came to my eyes as a tremendous feeling of peace enveloped me. I knew that God loved me. He knew

exactly what I needed that day—a simple assurance that He was near and was aware of me. I felt God's love, and by extension, the love of my family, my companions, and my mission president. Instead of feeling burdened, I now saw an opportunity to grow closer to the Lord.

My health challenges didn't disappear. I had to leave my mission early after all, but I knew that God was there and that He loved me. That assurance has followed me through many more heartaches and has given me hope in my darkest hours. Others may call it a coincidence, but I know that seeing my dad sing about God's love was a small miracle in my time of need. ■

Maria Oka, California, USA



Tears came to my eyes as I saw my dad on the TV screen.

An Invitation for Ricardo

When I hear about a Church activity, I always invite 10 people who are not members of the Church to attend. I have done this for years. I make invitations and place each in a white envelope and pray for the Spirit to guide me. Then I hand out the invitations. Rarely do all 10 attend, but even if only one attends, I feel I have been successful.

Several years ago, I prepared ten invitations to a fireside for married couples. I handed out nine to people at work and had one left. I didn't know whom to give it to. Minutes later, Ricardo, a sales representative, passed by my desk. I felt prompted to invite him, even though he had declined an invitation from a co-worker to attend an event at his church. I didn't think Ricardo would be interested.

But when Ricardo passed by my desk again on his way out, I felt the prompting again. However, he exited so quickly that I didn't have a chance to talk to him. I prayed that Ricardo would return if I was supposed to give him the invitation.

After I had finished praying, Ricardo came back to ask me a question. Afterward, I said, "Ricardo, my church is having an activity for married couples. We are going to share experiences about how to live happily each day. Afterwards, there will be dancing. If I invite you, will you come?"

I handed out nine invitations to people at work and had one left. I didn't know whom to give it to.

"Of course!" Ricardo said, but his answer didn't convince me.

"At least I did my part," I thought.

My wife and I arrived at the activity early to greet people as they arrived. Suddenly, I saw Ricardo with his wife, Regina. I introduced them to my wife and the others attending. All evening long, Ricardo and Regina looked like they were enjoying themselves. I was surprised when they said they would come to church on Sunday to learn more.

Ricardo, Regina, and their two children did learn more. Eventually, they joined the Church. Later, they were sealed in the temple. Ricardo once told me that he and his wife had been talking about a divorce, but then the Lord led Ricardo to my office.

I have since asked God to forgive me for thinking that Ricardo would not accept my invitation. I have learned that it is important to invite everyone. You never know who will accept. ■
Martin Apolo Cordova, Paraná, Brazil





By Elder
Allen D. Haynie
Of the Seventy

WE HAVE TO BE CLEAN

The Savior invites us to be worthy to return to our Father.

When I was nine years old, my white-haired, four-foot-eleven-inch (1.5 m) maternal grandmother came to spend a few weeks at our home. One afternoon while she was there, my brothers and I decided to dig a hole in a field across the street.

We got a little dirty but nothing that would get us into too much trouble. Then other boys started to help, and we all got dirtier together. The ground was hard, so we dragged a garden hose over and put a little water into the hole. We got some mud on us as we dug, but the hole did get deeper. Then someone decided we should turn our hole into a swimming pool, so we filled it with water. I was persuaded to jump in and try it out. Now I was really dirty!

When it started to get cold, I crossed the street, intending to walk into my house. My grandmother met me at the



door and refused to let me in. I was wet, muddy, and cold. Finally, I asked her what I had to do to come into the house. I stood in the backyard while she sprayed me off with a hose. After what seemed like an eternity, she pronounced me clean and let me come into the house, where I was able to warm up and put on dry, clean clothes.

With that real-life parable of sorts in mind, please consider the following words of Jesus Christ: “No unclean thing can enter into his kingdom” (3 Nephi 27:19).

Standing outside while being sprayed off by my grandmother was unpleasant and uncomfortable. But being denied the opportunity to return and be with our Father in Heaven because we chose to remain dirtied by a mud hole of sin would be eternally tragic. We should not deceive ourselves about what it takes to return and remain in the presence of our Father in Heaven. We have to be clean.

Because our Father in Heaven loves us, His plan included the role of a Savior—someone who could help us become clean no matter how dirty we have become. Jesus Christ suffered both body and spirit, trembled because of pain, and bled at every pore to pay for our sins. What does He ask in return? He simply pleads with us to confess our sins and repent. He invites us to become clean so that we can once again enter the presence of our Father in Heaven. ■

Adapted from “Remembering in Whom We Have Trusted,” Ensign, Nov. 2015, 121–23.



Mercy's Embrace
Annie Henrie Nader

"God did call on men, in the name of his Son, (this being the plan of redemption which was laid) saying: If ye will repent, and harden not your hearts, then will I have mercy upon you, through mine Only Begotten Son" (Alma 12:33).

PARENTS AND LEADERS

PROTECTING CHILDREN

Read about how the Savior's example and a new Church resource can help us safeguard our precious little ones.

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THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

