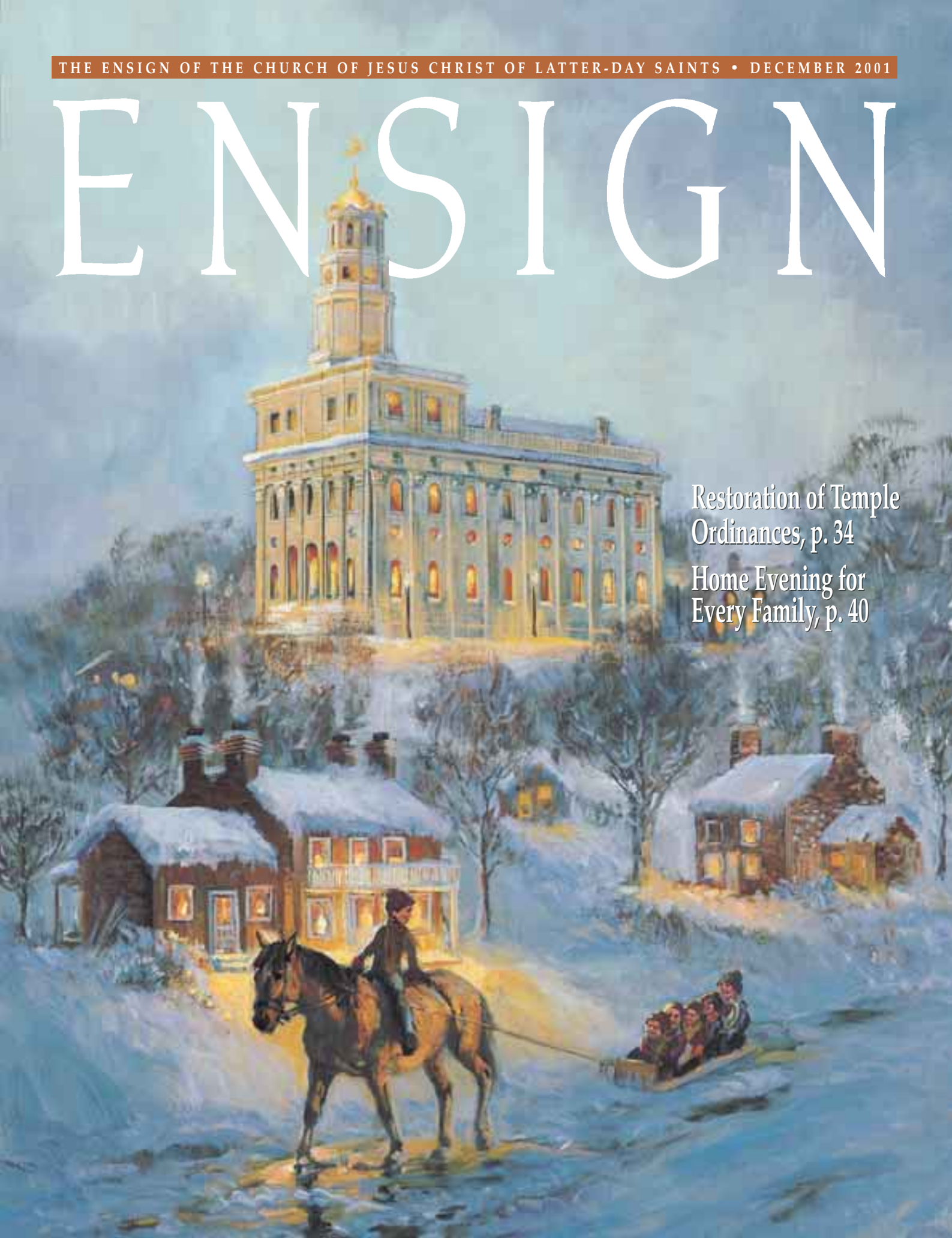


ENSIGN

*Restoration of Temple
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Every Family, p. 40*



A Savior Is Born, by Joseph Brickey



"And the angel said unto [the shepherds in the field], Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).

ENSIGN

VOLUME 31 NUMBER 12

ON THE COVERS: Front and back: Winter Fun in Nauvoo, 1845–46, by Glen S. Hopkinson, oil on canvas, 30" x 24", 1998. Courtesy of Phil and Nona Clegg. **Inside front:** A Savior Is Born, by Joseph Brickey, oil on board, 24" x 30", 2000. **Inside back:** Winter in Zion, by Al Rounds, watercolor, 2000.

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The Ensign (preferred pronunciation: N' sign, not N' sun) will consider unsolicited manuscripts and art, but submissions must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope if return delivery is desired. Unsolicited manuscripts and comments may also be submitted via e-mail at cur-editorial-ensign@ldschurch.org. We encourage interested authors to see "Call for Articles," printed from time to time in "Comment."

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TO SUBSCRIBE: Send \$10.00 U.S. check or money order to Church Magazines (see address below). Subscription help line: 1-800-537-5971. Credit card orders (American Express, MasterCard, Visa) may be taken by phone.

Audiocassettes: Individuals with visual impairment or physical disability may obtain half-speed, four-track audiocassettes of the magazine. These are available monthly free of charge or through donations. Write to: Ensign Talking Book (see address below) or call 1-800-537-5971.

Regular issues are to reach U.S. and Canadian subscribers by the first of the month, May and November general conference issues about two weeks later.

NOTICE OF ADDRESS CHANGES: Sixty days' notice required. Include address label from a recent issue; old address, as well as new address, is needed.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Salt Lake Distribution Center, Church Magazines, P.O. Box 26368, Salt Lake City, Utah 84126-0368, United States of America.

CANADA POST INFORMATION: Publication Agreement #40017431

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ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL MANN

Among the true gifts of Christmas are peace, love, service, self, and faith—gifts our family shared that boyhood Christmas.



FIRST PRESIDENCY MESSAGE



A Christmas with No Presents



BY PRESIDENT JAMES E. FAUST
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

I have been thinking about what makes Christmas such a great time in our lives. I am old enough to remember many Christmases. They have all been glorious. But I have learned that it isn't just the presents that make them great.

THE HAPPIEST CHRISTMAS OF MY CHILDHOOD

When I was a young boy, our family was terribly poor. Father had no job because he was going through law school at the University of Utah. He had a wife and three young sons. Grandfather and Grandmother knew that we would have no Christmas if we did not come down to the farm in Millard County. So all of our family took the train from Salt Lake to Leamington, Utah. Where the money came for the tickets, I will never know.

Grandfather and Uncle Esdras met us at the railroad crossing in Leamington with a team of big horses to pull the open sleigh through the deep snow to Oak City. It was so cold that the huge horses had icy chin whiskers, and you could see their breath. I remember how old Jack Frost nipped my nose, and the extreme cold made it hard to breathe. Grandmother had heated some rocks and put them in the bottom of the sleigh to help keep us warm. We were wrapped and tucked into some heavy camp

quilts with just our noses sticking out. Accompanied by the tinkle of bells on leather straps on the harnesses of the horses, we musically traveled from Leamington over the 10 miles to Oak City, where our beloved grandfather and grandmother lived. So many dear ones were there that we could hardly wait to arrive. When we got there it was warm and wonderful and exciting.

In the corner of the living room was the Christmas tree, a cedar cut from the hillside pasture. It was already partially decorated by Mother Nature with little berries that helped give it a strong smell. Our decorations were popcorn strings made by pushing a needle and thread through popcorn. The strings had to be handled carefully or they would break and strew popcorn all over the floor.

We also had paper chains to put on the tree, made by cutting up old Sears and Montgomery Ward catalogs with the paper links pasted together with flour paste. The sticky flour paste got all over our hands, faces, and clothes. I wonder why they didn't put sugar in it! With cream it could also have been served for mush.

I do not remember any presents under the tree. Under the tree were popcorn balls made with strong, homemade molasses. When we bit into the popcorn balls, it felt like they were biting back.

On Christmas Eve we all gathered around the woodstove, enjoying the warm comfort of the fire and the pleasant aroma of the burning cedar wood. One of the uncles gave the opening prayer. We sang carols and hymns. One of our aunts read of the birth of Jesus and of the "good tidings of great joy." (Luke 2:10) "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). Grandfather and Grandmother then told us how much they loved us.

The next day was Christmas, and we had a glorious dinner. But before we ate, we all got down on our knees for family prayer. I was so hungry. Grandfather prayed for the longest time. You see, he had much to pray for. He prayed for moisture because there was a drought in the land, and the crops had been meager. The fall grain had been planted in the dusty ground. What harvest there was could not be sold for much because of the low prices caused by the Great Depression. The taxes on the farm were delinquent because there was no money to pay them. He also prayed for our large family, his cattle and horses, pigs and chickens, turkeys—he prayed over everything.

During Grandfather's long prayer, my youngest uncle became restless and gave me an irreverent pinch, hoping that I would shout to make things more exciting.

For dinner we had a huge tom turkey stuffed with delicious dressing. There was no celery in the dressing

because we had only the ingredients that could be produced on the farm. But the dressing had plenty of bread, sage, sausage, and onions. There was an abundance of potatoes and gravy and pickles, beets, beans, and corn. Because Grandfather could trade wheat to the miller for flour, there was always fresh baked bread. To stretch the food, we were encouraged to take one bite of bread for every bite of other kinds of food. We had chokecherry jelly and ground-cherry jam. For dessert we had pumpkin and gooseberry pie. It was all delicious.

GIVING AND RECEIVING PRESENTS

As I look back on that special Christmas over a lifetime, the most memorable part was that we did not think about presents. There may have been some handmade mittens or a scarf given, but I do not recall any presents. Presents are wonderful, but I found that they are not essential to our happiness. I could not have been happier. There were no presents that could be held and fondled and played with, but there were many wonderful gifts that could not be seen but could be felt.

There was the gift of boundless love. We knew God loved us. We all loved each other. We did not miss the presents because we had all these glorious gifts. It made me feel so wonderful and secure to belong and to be part of all that went on. We wanted nothing else. We did not miss the presents at all. I never remember a happier Christmas in my childhood.

We all enjoy giving and receiving presents. But there is a difference between presents and gifts. The true gifts may be part of ourselves—giving of the riches of the heart and mind—and therefore more enduring and of far greater worth than presents bought at the store.

Of course, among the greatest of gifts is the gift of love. When I was called to the holy apostleship, President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) gave me a kiss on the cheek. I felt his whiskers. It caused a flood of wonderful little boyhood memories of being held by strong arms and feeling Grandfather's whiskers as he kissed me on the cheek.

Some, like Ebenezer Scrooge in Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, have a hard time loving anyone, even themselves, because of their selfishness. Love seeks to give rather than to get. Charity towards and compassion for others is a way to overcome too much self-love.

He whose birth we celebrate has told us that all of the law and the prophets is contained in loving God and our fellowmen. James called this "the royal law" (James 2:8). The Apostle Paul said, "To know the love of Christ . . . passeth knowledge" (Eph. 3:19). In the

First Epistle of John we are told, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (1 John 4:7).

Anciently the three Wise Men came from afar to bring gifts to the baby Jesus. Would it not be marvelous this Christmas if we could personally give gifts to the Savior? I believe this is possible to do. Said Jesus:

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. . . .

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

"For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

"Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

"When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

"Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:31, 34-40).

TRUE GIFTS

So as we help the sick and clothe the naked and attend to the stranger, we personally give gifts to our Savior.

Among these true gifts are some our family shared on that boyhood Christmas I told you about: the gift of

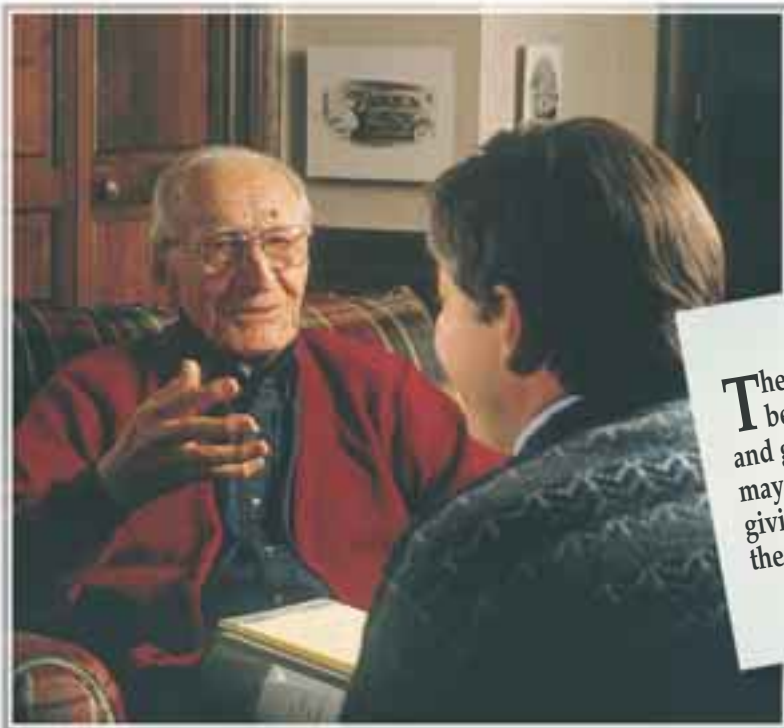
peace, the gift of love, the gift of service, the gift of self, and the gift of faith.

All of us enjoy wonderful gifts from God which, if developed, can be enjoyed by others. At this Christmas season, so many of us have enjoyed the musical and literary gifts of Handel, Dickens, and many others. The sharing of these natural gifts blesses both the giver and the receiver.

This Christmas and every Christmas will be richer by sharing and enjoying gifts that cannot be held but only felt.

Many years ago I went to the hospital to give a blessing to a young man named Nick and his sister Michelle. Nick

PHOTO BY STEVE BUNDERSON



There is a difference between presents and gifts. The true gifts may be part of ourselves—giving of the riches of the heart and mind.

is a friend of mine and former home teaching companion, and his

young life was threatened by a kidney disease. Nick had not been well for a long time. Nick's older sister Michelle had offered to give him a precious gift to preserve his life: she offered one of her own kidneys.

The operation was successfully performed, but still in question was whether or not Nick's body would accept this priceless gift from Michelle. You see, Michelle had given the gift not knowing if it would be accepted; fortunately it was. In like manner, our Heavenly Father has given us so many wonderful gifts not knowing if they would be accepted. He has offered us His peace, His comfort, His love. All we have to do to accept His gifts is to be obedient and follow Him.

There are so many problems facing us individually and collectively. Yet I have the simple faith that many, if not all, of them can be put into proper perspective by Paul's sublime message to the Galatians: "Christ



The Atonement of Jesus Christ is a gift we cannot handle or touch, but we can feel the immeasurable love of the Giver.

liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

The message of this season that is applicable throughout the year lies not in the receiving of earthly presents and treasures but in the forsaking of selfishness and greed and in going forward, seeking and enjoying the gifts of the Spirit, which Paul said are "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22–23).

With gifts such as these, I am sure everyone could feel as I did that wonderful Christmas so long ago when we had no presents to hold and play with. I would not have wanted to trade places with any prince of the world with his room full of toys. The gifts of love, peace, service, self, and faith so generously given made me feel so fulfilled. It made me feel that I must be somebody special to be part of so much love. I wanted nothing besides more of these wonderful gifts that couldn't be handled nor touched but only felt.

Two days before Christmas we also honor the birthday of the Prophet Joseph Smith, who is singular in importance in our faith (see D&C 135:3). To Joseph we owe the knowledge of the appearance of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, the priesthood, and the keys of the Restoration in its fulness.

As one of the special witnesses of Jesus and of the gospel restored to earth by God working through the Prophet Joseph Smith, I testify that the greatest gift of

this or any other Christmas is the Atonement of Jesus as the Redeemer, the Son of God. Paul said this was a "free gift" (Rom. 5:15). It is a gift we cannot handle or touch, but we can feel the immeasurable love of the Giver.

Through this gift we can all find the pathway to eternal life. My testimony of this is sure, real, and absolute, as is my sacred testimony of Him. I invoke the blessings of God upon us all at this special Christmastime. □

Gospel topics: Christmas, service, love

IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS

Some Points of Emphasis

You may wish to make these points in your home teaching discussions:

- 1. There is a difference between presents and gifts. True gifts may be part of ourselves, coming from the riches of the heart and mind.*
- 2. Our Heavenly Father can give us so many wonderful gifts—the gift of peace, the gift of love, the gift of service, the gift of self, the gift of faith.*
- 3. Above all, He has given us the gift of His Son.*
- 4. The message of the Christmas season that is applicable throughout the year lies not in the receiving of earthly presents and treasures but in forsaking of selfishness and greed and in going forward, seeking and enjoying the gifts of the Spirit in our lives.*

Discussion Helps

- 1. Relate your feelings about a happy Christmas you have experienced and why it was so wonderful.*
- 2. Are there some scriptures, quotations, or stories in this article that the family might read aloud and discuss?*
- 3. Would this discussion be better after a previsit chat with the head of the house? Is there a message from the bishop or quorum leader?*



One Last Carol

I mourned for my musically gifted cousin when he lost his hearing. Little did I know how the Lord would bless him.

BY GUY O. WOODWARD

Dallin Woodward, a cousin and dear friend of mine from Franklin, Idaho, loved music and lent his beautiful tenor voice as a youth to many Church and school functions. His trumpet playing could be heard the half-mile distance to our home on warm summer evenings. He enjoyed Christmas music most of all, especially “Silent Night.” Little did he know that the title to this carol would describe his own nights as well as his days for three-fourths of his life.

One day in early summer of 1928, Dallin experienced a severe headache that quickly worsened. Doctors came to his home and later confirmed he had the dread disease spinal meningitis. No miracle medicine in those days for Dallin, who was just 15 years old.

The local hospitals did not have adequate facilities for isolating patients with contagious diseases, so Dallin was confined to his bedroom at home, with only his father, mother, and doctor permitted to enter. It was several weeks before the fever finally broke, but even during the following month, visitors had to stay outside and visit through a window. Gradually his health improved, but the disease left him totally deaf.

During his recovery time, Dallin’s mother spent many hours each day helping him learn to adjust to his condition. Her patience and faith paid off, as Dallin was soon able to communicate with his many friends and family.

I will never forget Christmas Eve of 1928—the first Christmas after Dallin’s illness. My brother Ivan and I walked up the snow-covered lane to see him. As we visited with him and his parents, we heard the jangling of sleigh bells and the voices of carolers in the distance.

Soon the carolers stopped outside the home and began to sing. We continued talking with Dallin, thinking it would make him sad if he knew they were singing the Christmas carols he loved but couldn’t hear.

The last song they sang that night was “Silent Night,” Dallin’s favorite carol. As they began to sing the words, he rose from his chair, walked to the window, and stood motionless until they finished the last verse. He then returned to his chair, and with tears running down his cheeks, he quietly said, “The Lord has been good to me. He let me hear my favorite song one more time.”

Dallin had 45 more soundless Christmases, eventually surrounded by his much-loved wife, Myrtle, and their four children. The simple words of “Silent Night,” which testify so powerfully of the birth of our Savior, became like scripture to Dallin and continually reaffirmed his faith in Him who said, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matt. 11:15). The memory of Dallin’s not-so-silent night lingers long in the hearts of those of us who witnessed it. □

Guy O. Woodward, a member of the Valley View Ninth Ward, Salt Lake Holladay North Stake, recently passed away.

Gospel topics: Christmas, blessings, music

ILLUSTRATED BY RICHARD RUSSELL

FIVE MARKS OF THE

Divinity of Jesus Christ

The Savior's birth, ministry, atoning sacrifice, Resurrection, and promised coming all bear witness to His divinity.



BY PRESIDENT EZRA TAFT
BENSON (1899–1994)

There are fundamental truths about our Lord which we must believe if we are to consider ourselves truly His disciples. I also warn you about some of the heresies that are sponsored by those who would undermine His holy mission. If I have one desire for you, . . . it would be that you will be valiant in your testimony of Jesus Christ.

THE FIRST MARK OF HIS DIVINITY IS HIS DIVINE BIRTH

The most fundamental doctrine of true Christianity is the divine birth of the child Jesus. It is a doctrine not comprehended by the world, misinterpreted by [many] Christian churches, and even misunderstood by some members of the true Church.

The paternity of Jesus Christ is one of the mysteries of godliness. It may only be comprehended by the spiritually minded. The Apostle Matthew recorded, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When

as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 1:18). Luke renders a more plain meaning to the divine conception. He quotes the angel Gabriel saying to Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and *the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee*: therefore also that holy thing [being] which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35; emphasis added). Alma's testimony, given fourscore years before the Savior's birth, beautifully reconciles the testimonies of Matthew and Luke: "He shall be born of Mary, . . . 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*" (Alma 7:10; emphasis added).

Some 600 years before Jesus was born, Nephi had a vision. He saw Mary and described her as "a virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins." He then saw her "carried away in the Spirit for the space of a time." When she returned, she was "bearing a child in her arms, . . . even the Son of the Eternal Father" (1 Ne. 11:15, 19–21).

To shepherds on Bethlehem's fields came the heaven-heralded announcement: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).





Thus the testimonies of appointed witnesses leave no question as to the paternity of Jesus Christ. God was the Father of His fleshly tabernacle, and Mary, a mortal woman, was His mother. He is therefore the only person born who rightfully deserves the title “the *Only Begotten Son of God*.”

We must keep in mind who Jesus was before He was born. He was the Creator of all things, the great Jehovah, the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was and is the Holy One of Israel.

An angel of the Lord who appeared to Nephi used a word to describe the willingness of the Holy One of Israel to step down from His throne divine and make flesh His tabernacle. That word is *condescension*. It means to descend or come down from an exalted position to a place of inferior station. This our Savior did. In fact, He Himself has testified, “The Son of Man hath *descended below* [all things]” (D&C 122:8; see also D&C 88:6; emphasis added). [Here is] the testimony of King Benjamin concerning our Lord’s condescension: “The Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, *shall come down from heaven* among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay” (Mosiah 3:5; emphasis added).

When the Great God of the Universe condescended to be born of mortal woman, He submitted Himself to

The hallmark of the Savior’s ministry was many mighty miracles—“healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear” (Mosiah 3:5).

the infirmities of mortality, to “suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death” (Mosiah 3:7). These infirmities He inherited from His mortal mother. But because His father was God, Jesus Christ had powers which no human had before or since. He was God in the flesh—even the Son of God. These powers enabled Him to accomplish miracles, signs, wonders, the great Atonement, and the Resurrection—all of which are additional marks of His divinity.

From the time of His heaven-heralded birth there have crept into the Church heresies which are intended to dilute or undermine the pure doctrines of the gospel. These heresies are, by and large, sponsored by the philosophies of man and in many instances are advocated by so-called Christian scholars. The attempt is to make Christianity more palatable, more reasonable, and so they attempt to humanize Jesus and give natural explanations to those things which are divine. An example is Jesus’ birth. There are those who would seek to convince us that the divine

birth of Christ as proclaimed in the New Testament was not a divine birth at all—nor was Mary, the virgin girl, a virgin at the time of Jesus' conception. They would have you believe that Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, was His physical father, and that Jesus was therefore human in all His attributes and characteristics. They appear generous in their praise of Him when they say that He was a great moral philosopher, perhaps even the greatest. But the intent of their effort is to repudiate the divine sonship of Jesus, for on that doctrine rest all other claims of Christianity.

I am bold to say to you, . . . Jesus Christ is the Son of God in the most literal sense. The body in which He performed His mission in the flesh was sired by that same Holy Being we worship as God, our Eternal Father. He was not the son of Joseph, nor was He begotten by the Holy Ghost. He is the Son of the Eternal Father!

THE SECOND MARK OF THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST IS HIS MINISTRY

The entire ministry of the Master was characterized by His voluntary subordination to His Heavenly Father's will. "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38). As the Messiah, He fully understood His atoning mission and the will of His Father. He testified:

"My Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross . . . , that I might draw all men unto me. . . .

". . . Therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works.

"And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world" (3 Ne. 27:14–16).

He came to restore the fulness of a gospel which had been lost by apostasy. He came not to repeal Moses but to subordinate Mosaic law to the higher law of Christ. In order that His own people would know that He had authority to do so, He proclaimed His messiahship with words and metaphors which they could not mistake: "I am that bread of life" (John 6:48). "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:14). "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). "I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25). "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

The hallmark of His ministry, as prophets before Him testified that it would be, was many mighty miracles—"healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases" (Mosiah 3:5). One of the greatest of these miracles

was the raising of His friend Lazarus from the dead. When Jesus received word that His friend Lazarus was sick, He deliberately delayed coming to Bethany to minister to His friend. It was a custom among the Jews to bury their deceased on the same day they died. It was also a superstition among them that the spirit lingered around the body for three days, but on the fourth day it departed. Jesus was very familiar with their beliefs. He therefore delayed His arrival in Bethany until Lazarus had been in the grave for four days. In that way there would be no question about the miracle He was to perform.

On arrival outside of Bethany He was met by Martha, sister to Lazarus. She said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother Lazarus had not died." Jesus said, "Thy brother shall rise again." Not understanding, Martha replied, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Then Jesus proclaimed, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (see John 11:21–26). Jesus was then taken to the place of burial, a cave with a stone in front of it. He commanded them to remove the stone, after which He offered up a prayer to His Father. He then cried in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43). Here is the Apostle John's record of what took place: "And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin" (John 11:44).

That miracle was such irrefutable proof of the messiahship of Jesus that the Sanhedrin determined Jesus must die because, they said, He "doeth many miracles" which will cause the people to believe (see John 11:47). Sadly, however, John also recorded, "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet [the people] believed not on him" (John 12:37).

Today there are unbelievers among us who would spread seeds of heresy that Jesus could not cast out evil spirits, did not walk on the water or heal the sick or miraculously feed 5,000 or calm storms or raise the dead. They would have you believe that such claims are fantastic or that there is a natural explanation for each alleged miracle. Some have gone so far as to publish psychological explanations for His reported miracles. . . . But I say, Jesus' entire ministry was a mark of His divinity. He spoke as God, He acted as God, and performed works which only God Himself can do. His works bear testimony of His divinity.

A THIRD MARK OF HIS DIVINITY IS HIS GREAT ATONING SACRIFICE

Were it not for the power that Jesus inherited from His Father, His great Atonement would not have been

possible. You are all familiar with the facts. On the night Jesus was betrayed, He took three of the Twelve and went into the place called Gethsemane. It was there He suffered the pains of all men, which suffering, He said, “caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink” (D&C 19:18).

In spite of that excruciating ordeal, He took the cup and drank! He suffered as only God could suffer, bearing our griefs, carrying our sorrows, being wounded for our transgressions, voluntarily submitting Himself to the iniquity of us all, just as Isaiah prophesied (see Isa. 53:4–6). It was in Gethsemane where Jesus took on Himself the sins of the world, in Gethsemane where His pain was equivalent to the cumulative burden of all men, in Gethsemane where He descended below all things so that all could repent and come to Him. The mortal mind fails to fathom, the tongue cannot express, the pen of man cannot describe the breadth, the depth, or height of the suffering of our Lord—nor His infinite love for us.

Yet there are those who arrogantly declare the most pernicious heresy, that the blood which exuded from the physical body of our Lord on that night had no efficacy for the redemption of man. They would have you believe the only significance to Gethsemane was that Jesus made His decision there to go to the cross. They say that any suffering Jesus endured was only personal, not redemptive for the whole human race. I know of no heresy more destructive to faith than this, for the individual who so accepts this delusion is beguiled to believe that he can achieve exaltation on the basis of his own merit, intelligence, and personal effort. Never forget . . . that “it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Ne. 25:23).

As I contemplate the glorious Atonement of our Lord which extended from Gethsemane to Golgotha, I am led to exclaim with reverence and gratitude:

*I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me,
Confused at the grace that so fully he proffers me.
I tremble to know that for me he was crucified,
That for me a sinner, he suffered, he bled and died. . . .
I marvel that he would descend from his throne divine
To rescue a soul so rebellious and proud as mine,
That he should extend his great love unto such as I,
Sufficient to own, to redeem, and to justify.
Oh, it is wonderful that he should care for me
Enough to die for me!
Oh, it is wonderful, wonderful to me!
 (“I Stand All Amazed,” Hymns, no. 193)*

A FOURTH MARK OF HIS DIVINITY IS HIS LITERAL RESURRECTION

I have stood in reverent awe at the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem. It is history’s most significant tomb—because it is empty!

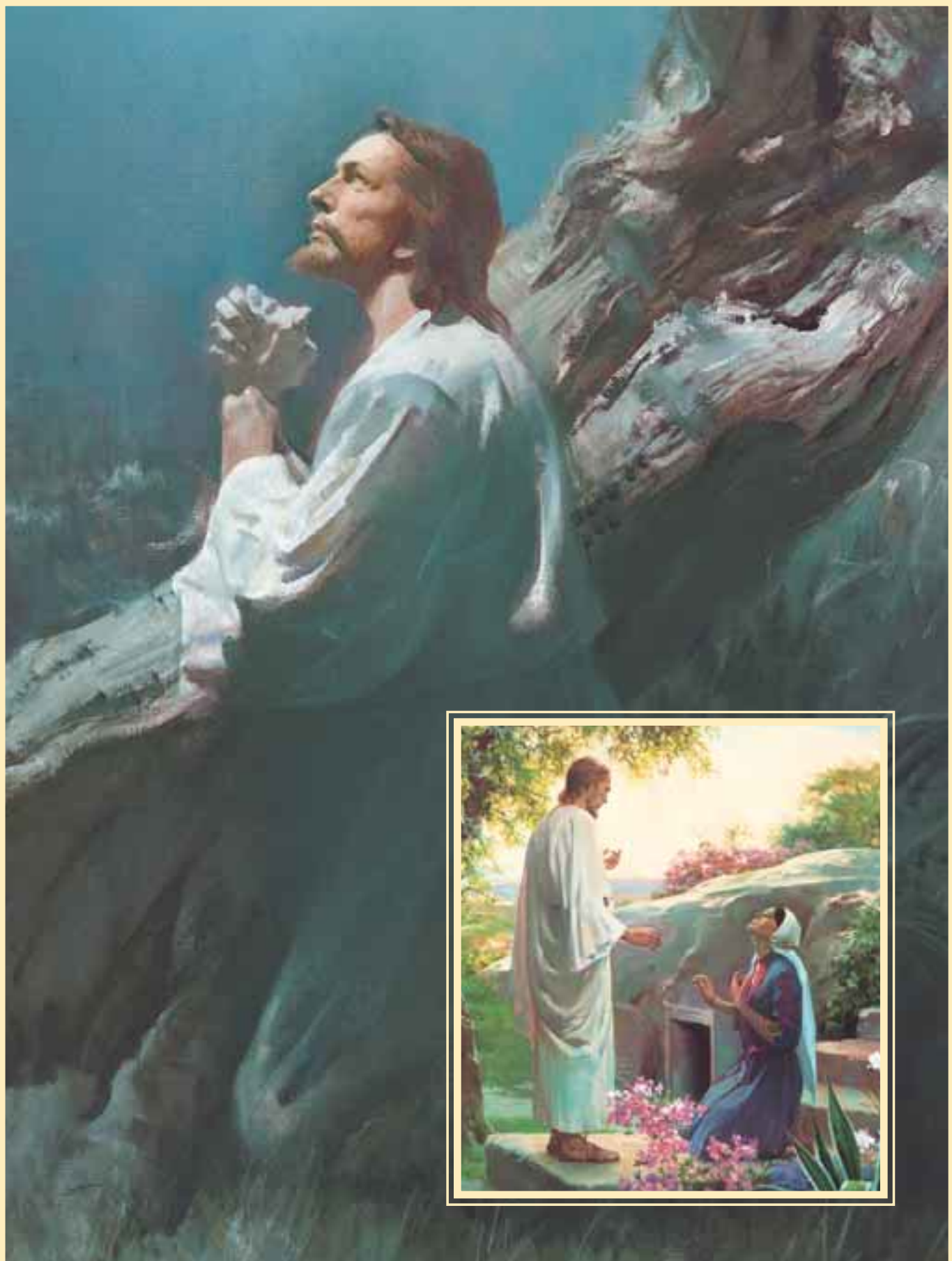
In the third day following His burial, Jesus came forth. The empty tomb was a cause of consternation to His disciples and others in Jerusalem. He appeared first to Mary Magdalene. He approached her as she was weeping in the garden. “Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?” Mary, who supposed it was the gardener speaking, said, “Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.” Jesus then said, “Mary.” She now recognized His voice and exclaimed, “Rabboni,” or in other words, “Master” (John 20:15–17).

Of all the marks of Jesus’ divinity, none has greater support by the testimony of eyewitnesses than His literal, bodily Resurrection. Several women testified that they saw Him alive. Two disciples on the road to Emmaus dined with Him. Peter proclaimed himself an eyewitness to the Resurrection. There were many special appearances to the Twelve. In addition to these testimonies, over 500 saw Him at one time. And Paul certified that he saw the resurrected Lord. Since the day of Resurrection when Jesus became “the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Cor. 15:20), there have been those who disbelieve and scoff. They maintain there is no life beyond mortal existence. Some have even written books which contain their fanciful heresies to suggest how Jesus’ disciples perpetrated the hoax of His Resurrection. But I say, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the greatest historical event in the world to date. In this dispensation, commencing with the Prophet Joseph Smith, the witnesses are legion. As one of those called as a special witness, I add my testimony to those of my fellow Apostles: He lives! He lives with a resurrected body. There is no truth or fact of which I am more assured, or know better by personal experience, than the truth of the literal Resurrection of our Lord.

THE FIFTH MARK OF HIS DIVINITY IS HIS PROMISED COMING

He told the Twelve, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again*” (John 14:2–3; emphasis added). As the time of His departure drew nigh, He took them to a place

The glorious Atonement of our Lord extends from Gethsemane to Golgotha. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the greatest historical event in the world to date.



outside of Bethany. There He imparted His last instructions and blessing to the Twelve. He then arose “while they beheld” and ascended to heaven, “and a cloud received him out of their sight.” As the Apostles stood looking up, two heavenly messengers appeared and spoke: “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:9–11; emphasis added).

Since that day, 19 centuries have come and gone. Because He has not yet come, some scoffingly say, as Peter prophesied, “Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” (2 Pet. 3:4).

Before He comes, the testimony of the servants of God will be rejected, by and large. Because of this rejection great calamities will befall the nations of the world, for the Lord Himself has declared:

“For after your testimony cometh the testimony of earthquakes, that shall cause groanings in the midst of her, and men shall fall upon the ground and shall not be able to stand.

“And also cometh the testimony of the voice of thunderings, and the voice of lightnings, and the voice of tempests, and the voice of the waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds.

“And all things shall be in commotion; and surely, men’s hearts shall fail them; for fear shall come upon all people” (D&C 88:89–91).

“And there shall be men standing in that generation, that shall not pass until they shall see an overflowing scourge; for a desolating sickness shall cover the land.

“But my disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved; but among the wicked, men shall lift up their voices and curse God and die.

“And there shall be earthquakes also in divers places, and many desolations; yet men will harden their hearts against me, and they will take up the sword, one against another, and they will kill one another” (D&C 45:31–33).

The world will present a scene of conflict such as has never been experienced before. Still, men’s hearts will be hardened to the revelations from heaven. Even greater signs shall then be given to manifest the approaching great day of the Lord. “And they shall see signs and wonders, for they shall be shown forth in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath.

“And they shall behold blood, and fire, and vapors of smoke.

“And before the day of the Lord shall come, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon be turned into blood, and the stars fall from heaven” (D&C 45:40–42).

I realize this is not a pleasant picture. I take no delight in its portrayal, nor do I look forward to the day

when calamities shall come upon mankind. But these words are not my own; the Lord has spoken them. Knowing what we know as His servants, can we hesitate to raise a warning voice to all who will listen that they may be prepared for the days ahead? Silence in the face of such calamity is sin! But there is a bright side to an otherwise gloomy picture—the coming of our Lord in all His glory. His coming will be both glorious and terrible, depending on the spiritual condition of those who remain.

His first appearance will be to the righteous Saints who have gathered to the New Jerusalem. In this place of refuge they will be safe from the wrath of the Lord, which will be poured out without measure on all nations. Modern revelation provides this description:

“And the glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord also shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it, and it shall be called Zion.

“And it shall come to pass among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety.

“And there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under heaven; and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another” (D&C 45:67–69).

The second appearance of the Lord will be to the Jews. To these beleaguered sons of Judah, surrounded by hostile Gentile armies, who again threaten to overrun Jerusalem, the Savior—their Messiah—will appear and set His feet on the Mount of Olives, “and it shall cleave in twain, and the earth shall tremble, and reel to and fro, and the heavens also shall shake” (D&C 45:48). The Lord Himself will then rout the Gentile armies, decimating their forces (see Ezek. 38–39). Judah will be spared, no longer to be the persecuted and scattered. The Jews will then approach their Deliverer and ask:

“What are these wounds in thine hands and in thy feet? . . .

“ . . . I will say unto them: These wounds are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. I am he who was lifted up. I am Jesus that was crucified. I am the Son of God.

“And then shall they weep because of their iniquities; then shall they lament because they persecuted their king” (D&C 45:51–53).

What a touching drama this will be! Jesus—Prophet, Messiah, King—will be welcomed in His own country! Jerusalem will become an eternal city of peace! The sons of Judah will then realize this promise: “The tribe of Judah, after their pain, shall be sanctified in holiness before the Lord, to dwell in his presence day and night, forever and ever” (D&C 133:35).

The third appearance of Christ will be to the rest of the world. Here is His description of His coming:



“And the Lord shall be red in his apparel, and his garments like him that treadeth in the wine-vat.

“And so great shall be the glory of his presence that the sun shall hide his face in shame, and the moon shall withhold its light, and the stars shall be hurled from their places” (D&C 133:48–49).

All nations will see Him “in the clouds of heaven, clothed with power and great glory; with all the holy angels. . . .

“And the Lord shall utter his voice, and all the ends of the earth shall hear it; and the nations of the earth shall mourn, and they that have laughed shall see their folly.

“And calamity shall cover the mocker, and the scorner shall be consumed; and they that have watched for iniquity shall be hewn down and cast into the fire” (D&C 45:44, 49–50).

Yes, come He will! He will come in a day of wickedness, a time when men and women will be “eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage” (Matt. 24:38). He will come at a time of great upheaval and tribulation when “the whole earth shall be in commotion” (D&C 45:26). He will come at a time when the Jewish nation is faced with extermination. He will come as a thief in the night—when the

The coming of our Lord in all His glory will be both glorious and terrible, depending on the spiritual condition of those who remain.

world least expects Him to come. “But of that day, and hour, no one knoweth; no, not the angels of God in heaven, but my Father only” (JS—M 1:40).

I gratefully bear testimony of the marks which bear witness to His divinity: His divine birth, His ministry, His atoning sacrifice, His Resurrection, His promised coming. I testify of His great love and condescension for all our Father’s children and His willingness to receive all who will come to partake of this goodness and mercy. Yes, as the Book of Mormon testifies, “He denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto [Him]” (2 Ne. 26:33). God bless you . . . to believe and to be valiant in your testimony of Him whom we declare to the world to be our Lord, our Master, our Savior, our Redeemer, our God. □

Gospel topics: Jesus Christ, Atonement, Resurrection, Second Coming
From a fireside address given at the University of Utah Special Events Center on 9 December 1979.

“THE CONDESCENSION OF GOD”

From His magnificent throne, Jesus Christ descended to face the most extreme humiliation and suffering that mortality could inflict.



BY BISHOP RICHARD C. EDGLEY
First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

There is much to ponder about the greatness of God, His condescension, and what it might mean to us as recipients of His great gift.

We read of the great condescension of God in a few select verses of Nephi’s vision that explain Lehi’s dream of the tree of life.

“And it came to pass that I saw the heavens open; and an angel came down and stood before me. . . .

“And he said unto me: Knowest thou the condescension of God?

“And I said unto him: I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things” (1 Ne. 11:14, 16–17).

With Nephi’s somewhat vague response, the angel began to teach him about the condescension of God.

“And he said unto me: Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh. . . .

“And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms. . . .

“And after he had said these words, he said unto me: Look! And I looked, and I beheld the Son of God going forth among the children of men; and I saw many fall down at his feet and worship him. . . .

“And the angel said unto me again: Look and behold the condescension of God!

“And I looked and beheld the Redeemer of the world, of whom my father had spoken; and I also beheld the prophet who should prepare the way before him. And the Lamb of God went forth and was baptized of him. . . .

“And I beheld that he went forth ministering unto the people, in power and great glory; and the multitudes were gathered together to hear him; and I beheld that they cast him out from among them. . . .

“And it came to pass that the angel spake unto me again, saying: Look! And I looked and beheld the Lamb of God, that he was taken by the people; yea, the Son of the everlasting God was judged of the world; and I saw and bear record.

“And I, Nephi, saw that he was lifted up upon the cross and slain for the sins of the world” (1 Ne. 11:18, 20, 24, 26–28, 32–33).

To understand the meaning of *condescension*,

From His magnificent throne, Jesus Christ, the God of this world, all-knowledgeable and all-powerful, descended to be born of a mortal woman.



reference can be made to the *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*: "voluntary descent from one's rank or dignity in relations with an inferior." President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) taught, "It means to descend or come down from an exalted position to a place of inferior station."¹

THE CONDESCENSION OF GOD

As the angel taught Nephi, he may have been speaking of two condescensions—one of God the Father and one of the Son, Jesus Christ. Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles elaborates, "'The condescension of God,' of which the scriptures speak, means that the Immortal Father—the glorified, exalted, enthroned ruler of the universe—came down from his station of dominion and power to become the Father of a Son who would be born of Mary, 'after the manner of the flesh.'"² God the Father also condescended by sending His Only Begotten Son to suffer the sins of the world. The Savior is God's gift to us.

While God the Father's condescension reflects His great love for all mankind by permitting His Only Begotten to be sacrificed for even the humblest and lowliest of His children, Christ's condescension was more personal and visible—for He was the sacrifice. His condescension was manifest by who He was and the way He lived. His condescension can be seen in almost every recorded act of His

33 years of mortality. In this article we will focus on the condescension of the Savior of the world as the Creator/Redeemer and Exemplar.

GOD THE CREATOR/REDEEMER

We know of Jesus Christ's work in the creation of the world under the direction of the Father. In preparation for Moses' great work, our Father in Heaven, through the voice of Jesus, revealed to Moses the wondrous creation, "yea, even all of it, and there was not a particle of it which he did not behold" (Moses 1:27). Then a few verses later the Lord stated, "And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten" (Moses 1:33). Our understanding and testimony of this is further enlightened and reinforced through our temple worship.

The magnitude of God's work is incomprehensible. It is infinite. From His magnificent throne, Jesus Christ, the God of this world, all-knowledgeable and all-powerful, descended. Indeed, it is sobering to ponder that He alone would come down from this glorified throne to face the most extreme humiliation and suffering that mortality could inflict.

President Benson stated, "When the great God of the universe condescended to be born of mortal woman, He submitted Himself to the infirmities of mortality to 'suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can



Jesus showed us how to obey and serve by being baptized and by offering living water to the woman at the well.

suffer, except it be unto death' (Mosiah 3:7)."³

The *Lectures on Faith* teach that one reason Jesus Christ is called the *Son of God* is because He "descended in suffering below that which man can suffer; or, in other words, suffered greater sufferings, and was exposed to more powerful contradictions than any man can be."⁴

The Book of Mormon helps us understand the magnitude of this descent. When brought before the wicked King Noah, Abinadi testified of this magnificent, unthinkable condescension that evidences the Lord's mercy and love:

"And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people.

"And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God. . . .

"And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God, suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation, but suffereth himself to be mocked, and scourged, and cast out, and disowned by his people" (Mosiah 15:1–2, 5).

But, hardened by years of evil, self-indulgence, and selfishness, King Noah had not the slightest comprehension or feeling toward the truths being unfolded before him.

When I contemplate the magnitude of this gift, the magnitude of His descent, and the extremity of His suffering, the words of a song thunder through my mind: "O Lord my God. . . . How great thou art! How great thou art!" (*Hymns*, no. 86).

In the 34th chapter of Alma, Amulek testifies of the need for the Son of God to personally come down to perform the Atonement according to the great plan of the Eternal God. He explains that the Atonement must be "a great and last sacrifice," not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast or fowl as was customary (see Alma 34:9–10). It had to be infinite, covering all transgression, all suffering, and it had to be eternal—applying to all mankind from the infinite beginning to the endless end. No, it could not be a sacrifice of man, beast, or fowl. It had to be a sacrifice of a God, even God the Creator, God the Redeemer. He had to condescend from godhood to mortality, and in mortality to sacrificial lamb. His gift of redemption, through His condescension, necessitated His suffering, exquisite pain, and humiliation.

"For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for



Abinadi taught that Jesus would descend to dwell in flesh and that He would not yield to Satan's temptations.

all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

"But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;

"Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not

drink the bitter cup, and shrink" (D&C 19:16–18).

Like the vastness of God's creations, incomprehensible to the finite mind, His suffering is equally incomprehensible, as His Atonement is also infinite. His condescension is an integral, necessary, and inseparable part of the Atonement. The Atonement itself was predicated upon His willingness to descend and suffer. His condescension, as part of the Atonement, is probably as essential to the redemption of mankind as was His suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane or on the cross. His Atonement was a free gift to all mankind—a gift that could be obtained no other way. It resulted from His willingness to descend. He descended not because of obligation, nor for glory, but only for love. His condescension to redeem us through the Atonement was the price He paid to provide salvation and exaltation. As the song rolls on, "I scarce can take it in" (*Hymns*, no. 86).

It is at the extremity of His suffering, His greatest condescension, that we witness the majesty of His mission. It was at this time of His greatest humiliation and lowest state that He gave greatest glory to His Father in Heaven and then signaled the completion of His mission by simply uttering the words "Father, it is finished, thy will is done" (JST, Matt. 27:50, footnote a). Indeed, He had descended to fulfill His Father's will.

When the Prophet Joseph Smith suffered in Liberty Jail all the indignities that a mortal being could withstand, he cried out, "O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?" (D&C 121:1). At this time the Savior gave encouragement and deep consoling words to His prophet of the Restoration, reminding him, "Thou art not yet as Job; thy friends do not contend against thee," and then, "The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?" (D&C 121:10; D&C 122:8).

There is an interesting parallel between the Prophet Joseph's and the Savior's darkest hours. During the Prophet's hours of deep despair, he descended from revered prophet to humiliated, tormented, and despised prisoner—the lowest of humanity in the eyes of his persecutors. From this experience came one of the most inspiring, comforting revelations of all times, a portion of which is now in Doctrine and Covenants

121 and 122. Perhaps this then is the great irony, that the finest moments, the most significant developments in furthering the kingdom, are often purchased with the greatest trials, sufferings, and condescension. The great contradiction—by descending, they soared to heavenly achievements.



The Savior descended to minister to others, healing the sick and raising the daughter of Jairus from the dead.

GOD THE EXEMPLAR

The Savior taught: “But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Matt. 23:11–12). The Savior lived His teachings. He showed us the way. The God of this earth, the Redeemer of the world, condescended to minister to the humble, despised, despairing, hopeless, and helpless. His condescension was evidenced in His everyday living and by these examples:

- God, the Redeemer, the lamb without blemish, submitted to baptism “to fulfil all righteousness” (2 Ne. 31:5).
- He explained, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3).
- When the woman at Jacob’s well said, “The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans,” He taught her, “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst” (John 4:9, 14).
- When the scribes and Pharisees tried to trap Him with His own words in the presence of the adulteress, He responded, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (John 8:7).
- When asked by a cunning lawyer who his neighbor was, Jesus used an illustration of a wounded man shunned by a priest and a Levite and then cared for by a lowly Samaritan (see Luke 10:29–35).
- In His final hours, after washing the feet of His disciples, He admonished, “If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet” (John 13:14).

When the God of this earth, the greatest of all, knelt at the feet of His disciples, He was teaching more than the fundamentals of foot washing. Some of the words associated with Christ’s condescension are *descend, love, mercy, grace, suffering, submission, obedience, service, sacrifice, redeem, humility, minister, judged, and slain*.

And so the angel said to Nephi, “Knowest thou the condescension of God?” (1 Ne. 11:16). I believe we know

something of His condescension—as God the Creator, Redeemer, Exemplar. For instance, we know:

- He descended to be born of mortal woman, even though He was glorified and exalted.
- He descended to be baptized of man, even though He was perfect and sinless.
- He descended to minister to the humblest of the

humble, even though He was exalted.

- He descended to subject Himself to the will of the Father, suffering Himself to be tempted, mocked, scourged, cast out, and disowned, even though He was all-powerful.
- He descended to be judged of the world, even though He was the Judge of the world.
- He descended to be lifted on the cross and slain for the sins of the world, even though no man could take away His life.

So what does this mean for us? Our understanding of Christ’s condescension should take us beyond our feelings of awe and deep gratitude. As members of His Church, being called to represent Him and testify of Him, our great opportunity is to try to emulate Him.

We will not emulate Christ as the Creator. The earth has already been created. We will not emulate Him as the Redeemer. All mankind has already been redeemed from death, and from sin if they would repent. But we can testify of Him and declare His gospel. Thus, many of the words associated with Christ’s condescension can also be associated with our ministry—words like *descend, love, mercy, submission, obedience, service, sacrifice, and minister*.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “The condescension of the Father of our spirits, in providing a sacrifice for His creatures, a plan of redemption, . . . ought to inspire everyone who is called to be a minister of these glad tidings, to so improve his talent that he may gain other talents, that when the Master sits down to take an account of the conduct of His servants, it may be said, Well done, good and faithful servant.”⁵ As the Father and Son both condescended from lofty and glorious stations to fulfill Their missions, we also can become the true servants in doing Their work, following Their example.

Some time ago, Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone of the Seventy told of an experience regarding Elder J. Ballard Washburn, also of the Seventy. Brother Washburn, with a companion, was visiting a home in an impoverished area. They arrived to find three small children who had been abandoned for several days and left to fend for themselves. They discovered a baby who had

not had a diaper change for some three or four days. His bottom was sore from dried excrement. The stench was so bad his companion had to leave the home and go outside for fresh air. Brother Washburn went out and fetched some water, then carefully soaked and gently washed the baby. After washing the baby's entire body, he asked for a clean towel and then tenderly diapered him. His condescension was of service to "one of the least of these my brethren" (Matt. 25:40).

Like the Savior, our greatest good may be brought about through administering to even "the least of these my brethren." We must remember that in any station of life or particular calling, every person is a beloved child of God; and ours is to minister even to the most humble and to serve them as the Master would serve them.

For us to follow the Savior's example in our callings, we can be kind to all with whom we come in contact. We can build others, inspire them, lift them, and teach rather than criticize. We can show love, respect, and caring to all those we meet. We can "descend" to be the servant of even the humblest.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles conveys the following thought: "When at times we encounter a situation in church service in which a pigeon seems to be supervising an eagle, we need to be accepting even if our evaluation seems accurate. Besides, humility keeps us from spending our time and talent wastefully in counting the plumage of our peers. Remember, this is a kingdom wherein the First is the servant of all!"⁶

I vividly remember my first visit with President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985). When I was a new employee of the Church, he took my hand, gently pulled me down to his level, kissed me on the cheek, and whispered, "Thank you for coming; I love you." The prophet of God had in effect condescended to my level, and I felt as though my feet had just been washed. President Kimball had much to teach in this regard.

Perhaps Nephi most appropriately summarized what our response to the Lord's condescension might be: "O then, if I have seen so great things, if the Lord in his condescension unto the children of men hath visited men in so much mercy, why should my heart weep and my soul linger in the valley of sorrow, and my flesh waste away, and my strength slacken, because of mine afflictions? And why should I yield to sin, because of my flesh? Yea, why should I give way to temptations, that the evil one have place in my heart to destroy my peace and afflict my soul? Why am I angry because of mine enemy?" (2 Ne. 4:26–27). And, I might add, why should I not serve in the manner that He taught me to serve? □

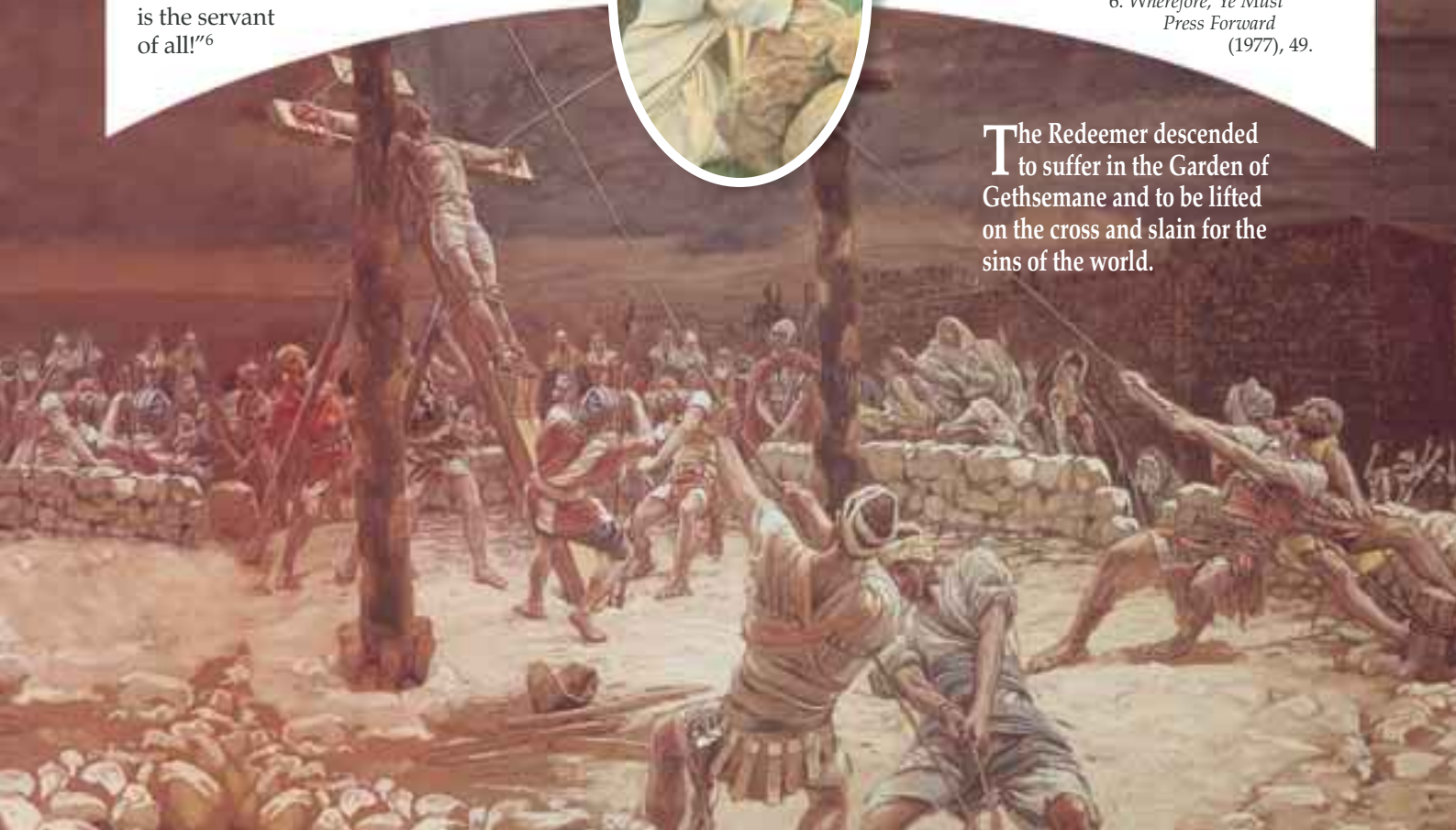
Gospel topics: love of God, mercy, Atonement, service

NOTES

1. "Five Marks of the Divinity of Jesus Christ," *New Era*, Dec. 1980, 45; see also article beginning on page 8 of this *Ensign* issue.
2. *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (1985), 111.
3. *New Era*, Dec. 1980, 45.
4. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 59.
5. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 48.
6. *Wherefore, Ye Must Press Forward* (1977), 49.



The Redeemer descended to suffer in the Garden of Gethsemane and to be lifted on the cross and slain for the sins of the world.



“DON’T LET MY BABY DIE!”

The doctor said our baby had no chance for survival. All I hoped for was one hour to meet our special child.

BY SHARON BELKNAP

I was six and one-half months along in an uneventful pregnancy and anxious to know if our baby was a girl or a boy. As the technician started the ultrasound, I saw a change come over her face. She stopped talking, began taking many pictures, and soon brought in several doctors. I could hear them discussing our baby, a boy, but I couldn’t make out much of what they were saying. Obviously there was something wrong. In my mind I began to play out scenarios: my baby with no arm or with Down syndrome. I satisfied myself that I could accept any manner of deformity, but I kept praying, “Please, don’t let my baby die!”

I telephoned my husband, who rushed over, and the doctor called us into his office. He told us that our baby’s skull had not fully developed. He sent us to a specialist to confirm the diagnosis. She explained that our son had an encephalocele, meaning his brain was not fully contained in his skull. He also had a hole in his heart. She said he had no chance of survival and encouraged us to end the pregnancy immediately. I had confidence in this specialist, but I also knew there were such things as miracles. There wasn’t any question in my mind that I would try to carry our baby to term. If there was a miracle to be dispensed, I wanted to be ready. I prayed in my heart for Heavenly Father to spare our child.

My husband and I returned home with broken hearts. I just kept thinking, *I can’t believe this is happening!*



We had to start planning a funeral for our unborn child! After prayerfully considering the matter, we resolved, “This is our son. If he is to die, we will hold him in our arms as long as he lives, and we will love him.” That night I couldn’t sleep. I finally poured out my heart to Heavenly Father. I sincerely needed His help to accept this challenge. I felt compelled to read from the teachings of Joseph Smith, knowing of the trials he and his

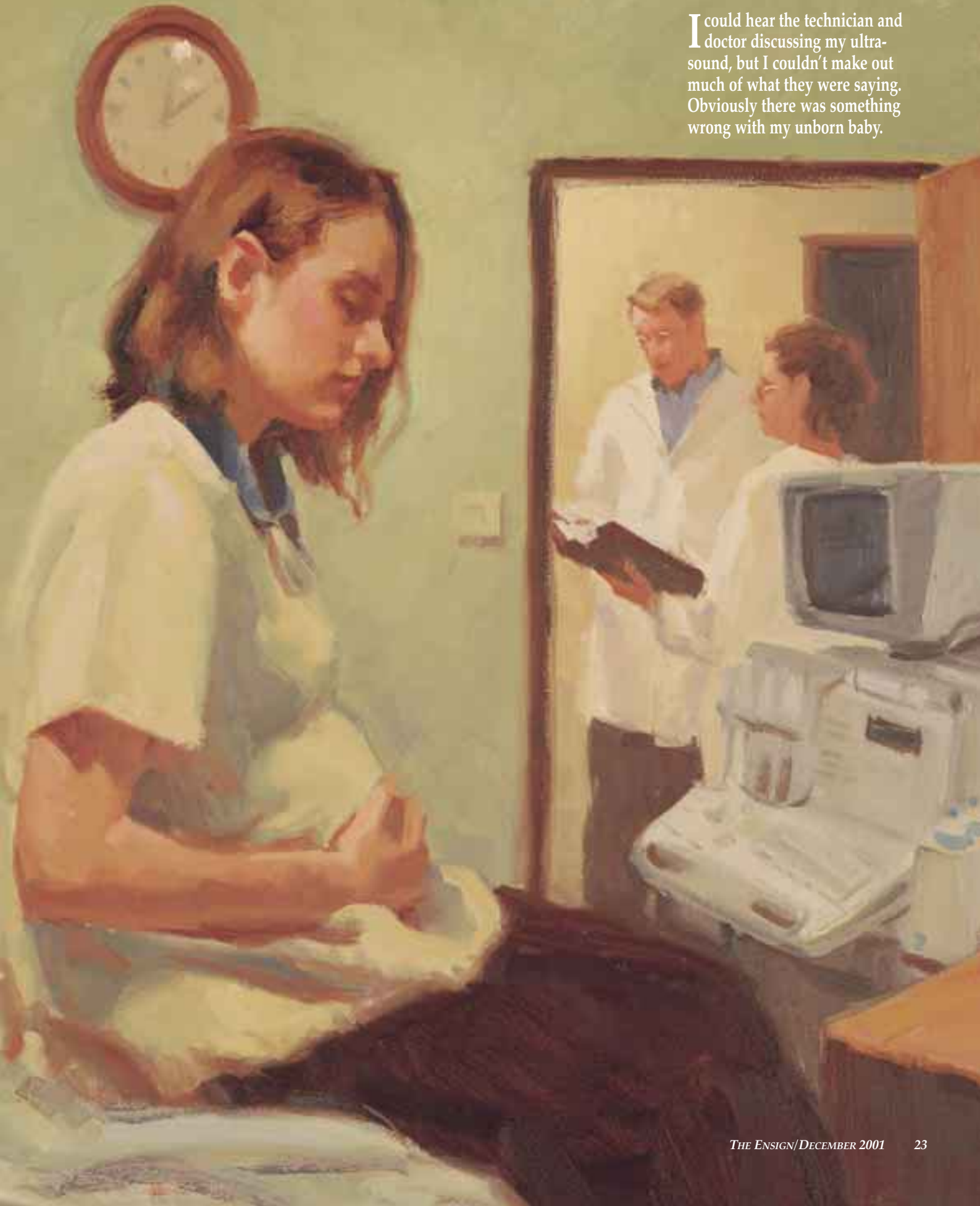
wife Emma faced with the loss of six infant children. I felt a peace come over me, and I knew this could be an important spiritual experience in our lives.

CHRISTOPHER’S BIRTH

We spent the next two months physically and emotionally preparing for the cesarean birth of our son. We decided to name him Christopher Austin—Christopher after his father, and Austin meaning “exalted.” I felt so close to him. If he didn’t move for a while and then I felt a little kick, I imagined he was saying, “I’m still here, Mom.”

Finally the day for the C-section came. All I hoped for was one hour to meet our special child, but the doctor really thought that was too high an expectation. I knew what was about to happen would be a life-altering experience. I also knew that I would be given the strength to handle everything that was about to unfold. As my obstetrician, Dr. David Wolf, and a family friend and Church member, Dr. Rod

I could hear the technician and doctor discussing my ultrasound, but I couldn't make out much of what they were saying. Obviously there was something wrong with my unborn baby.



Poling, entered the room, I felt a calmness. With my husband by my side, the surgery began. I still hoped that everything would be fine with our baby. I watched my husband's face as he watched the surgery. I waited to hear the baby's cry, but there was no cry—only a tiny squeak as they handed the baby to the nurse.

Immediately several nurses started working on him, taking footprints and suctioning out his mouth. After a couple of minutes, Dr. Poling urged the nurses to hand the baby to us so we could say good-bye. They laid him next to my head. His receding forehead and prominent nose made him look like a wise little elf. I kissed my baby, held him close, and told him I loved him. Then my husband and Dr. Poling gave him a blessing in which they named him.

Our little son was fading fast. His body was a purplish-black color, and his heartbeat was slowing. In an effort to give us a few more minutes, Dr. Poling brought over some oxygen and blew a little under our baby's nose. Within minutes, Christopher turned a pinkish color and his heart rate climbed. We knew this would be temporary but were excited about the possibility that the family members and friends in the waiting room could meet our son.

As the doctor finished the surgery, my husband and I held Christopher. He did not make a noise. He

could not move his body. He only opened one eye at a time, yet his presence said so much to us. After about 40 minutes, Christopher and I were wheeled to the recovery room. Our friends and relatives crowded around to see our baby. There were oohs and aahs and some tears. The precious few minutes turned into hours, and it seemed like a dream. A nurse came and said she needed to weigh and clean the baby. I reluctantly let him go. I was transferred to a room, and the nurse brought Christopher back to us. Our 19.25-inch, 4-pound 14-ounce baby was back in my arms.

SO MUCH LOVE

As the day passed, many friends came. I really felt like Christopher had a mission here and would touch the lives of many. That night with Christopher near me, I could not sleep. I wanted to savor every moment. Several times that night, he choked until my husband and I figured out that he could not swallow. So periodically we suctioned out his mouth. Gradually we realized the bigger problem—if he could not swallow, he could not eat. We had already decided that we did not want to take extraordinary measures to prolong the inevitable, but I could not bear the thought of our baby starving to death. So we decided to let the

We brought Christopher home from the hospital knowing that he would not live much longer, but we could see the fighting spirit he possessed.



TOO PURE TO LIVE ON EARTH



"The Lord takes many away, even in infancy, that they may escape the envy of man, and the sorrows and evils of this present world; they were too pure, too lovely, to live on earth; therefore, if rightly considered, instead of mourning we have reason to rejoice as they are delivered from evil, and we shall soon have them again."

Joseph Smith Jr., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 196–97.

doctor feed Christopher with a tube. However, when our attempts failed, we decided the best we could do was to keep his mouth moist with a wet cotton swab.

Not only was Christopher's swallow reflex missing, but tickling the bottom of his foot often caused his toes to flex upward instead of downward. His body temperature fluctuated from 90 to 107 degrees, and his heart rate and breathing ranged just as widely. It was apparent that he was both blind and deaf since he had no response to either light or loud noises. He could, however, open his eyes and move them around. If he got both eyes open at the same time, he'd give a little cross-eyed look. I did not let Christopher out of my arms unless absolutely necessary. On several occasions when I did, he became agitated and didn't breathe. He needed mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to get him breathing again.

Every person who entered that room could feel his special spirit. One nurse commented to a coworker, "It gives me goosebumps to go in that room. There is so much love in there." We were busy answering questions about our faith and beliefs. One friend even made a little missionary name tag for Christopher in recognition of the power of his influence.

On the third day, I noticed as I swabbed Christopher's parched lips with water that his mouth moved in response. His swallow reflex had appeared! The sucking reflex followed, and I was able to feed him. His strength increased. We had grown to accept his death, but now we faced an even more frightening prospect—what if he lived? Would he be trapped in a body requiring 24-hour-a-day care? Could our baby be a miracle who would struggle his way to some kind of normalcy? Whatever the case, I felt that all would go according to the will of the Lord and that we would do our best to rise to the occasion.

On day four I was released from the hospital with our son and a flat admission by the doctors that his care was totally beyond the scope of their art. By then we knew we were bringing him home to die; it was only a question of when. Once home, we constantly monitored his heart rate, breathing rate, and body temperature. When he turned blue, we wrapped him in a heating pad and he would immediately turn pink again. When his temperature skyrocketed, we would cool him down again. Often, swallowing a mouthful of milk would make him stop breathing for

an alarming amount of time. But as I watched him, I could see the fighting spirit he possessed.

On the seventh day, Christopher uttered his first sounds that through the course of the day ranged from soft cooing to little cries. At one point, our 20-month-old son, Brett, stopped what he was doing and started cooing back. For several minutes it seemed that they were carrying on some kind of musical dialogue.

GOOD-BYES

That evening, as I held Christopher in my arms, with the family all together, he took his final breath. I started to resuscitate him and suddenly felt a calm, peaceful reassurance and knew it was over. Christopher Austin Belknap had served his brief mission on this earth, and we tearfully

said our good-byes. As we drove to the hospital, I held him tightly against my cheek. I didn't want to let him go. At the hospital, we had a chance to hold him one last time. Then they took him and brought back his empty clothes and blanket. I think that was the hardest part.

On Sunday we held a simple funeral service. Many of our family and friends attended, including several of the hospital staff. As Christopher's uncles carefully shoveled dirt onto his small casket, I felt sorrow as I knew my hand would never again in mortality caress his cheek or tuck him in at night. But I also knew with assurance that I would see him again.

An autopsy revealed that the brain stem had not fully developed. The circulatory defects were so severe that the blood actually circulated backwards. The pathologist was surprised to find out the baby had lived at all.

But Christopher had lived! He never uttered a word or hardly made a sound, but what lessons he left for us! It had been a wonderful blessing to have those seven days with him. I would not trade the experience for anything. I agree with the Apostle Paul, who said in Philippians: "For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. . . . I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philip. 4:11–13). □

Sharon Belknap is a member of the Southfield Ward, Bloomfield Hills Michigan Stake.

JOSEPH SMITH

The Prophet

Young, unlearned, but humble, Joseph Smith was the instrument the Almighty used to reestablish His work in these, the latter days.



BY ELDER DAVID B. HAIGHT
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The principles, doctrines, and ordinances of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ have been revealed anew, including a knowledge of the true nature of God—a personal, loving, Eternal Father—and of Jesus Christ, the literal Son of God, of whose divinity there has come another witness in the Book of Mormon. The words of Ezekiel that the stick of Judah (the Bible) shall be joined with the stick of Joseph (the Book of Mormon) as a testimony of two nations have found their fulfillment (see Ezek. 37:15–22). This I solemnly declare.

The authority to act in the name of God, the holy priesthood, has been conferred upon men in our time by those same individuals who held it anciently—Peter, James, and John—Apostles of our Lord who were ordained by the Savior Himself when He was upon the earth.

The Church of Jesus Christ has been reestablished. The priesthood of God is again among men. God has revealed Himself anew for the blessing of His children.

These divine events—with all the characteristics of the Church of the early Apostles, including the personal direction of Jesus Christ, divinely revealed doctrine, divinely chosen leaders, continuous revelation, and the witness of the Holy Ghost to all who obey—are wonderful and joyous to contemplate. I testify that

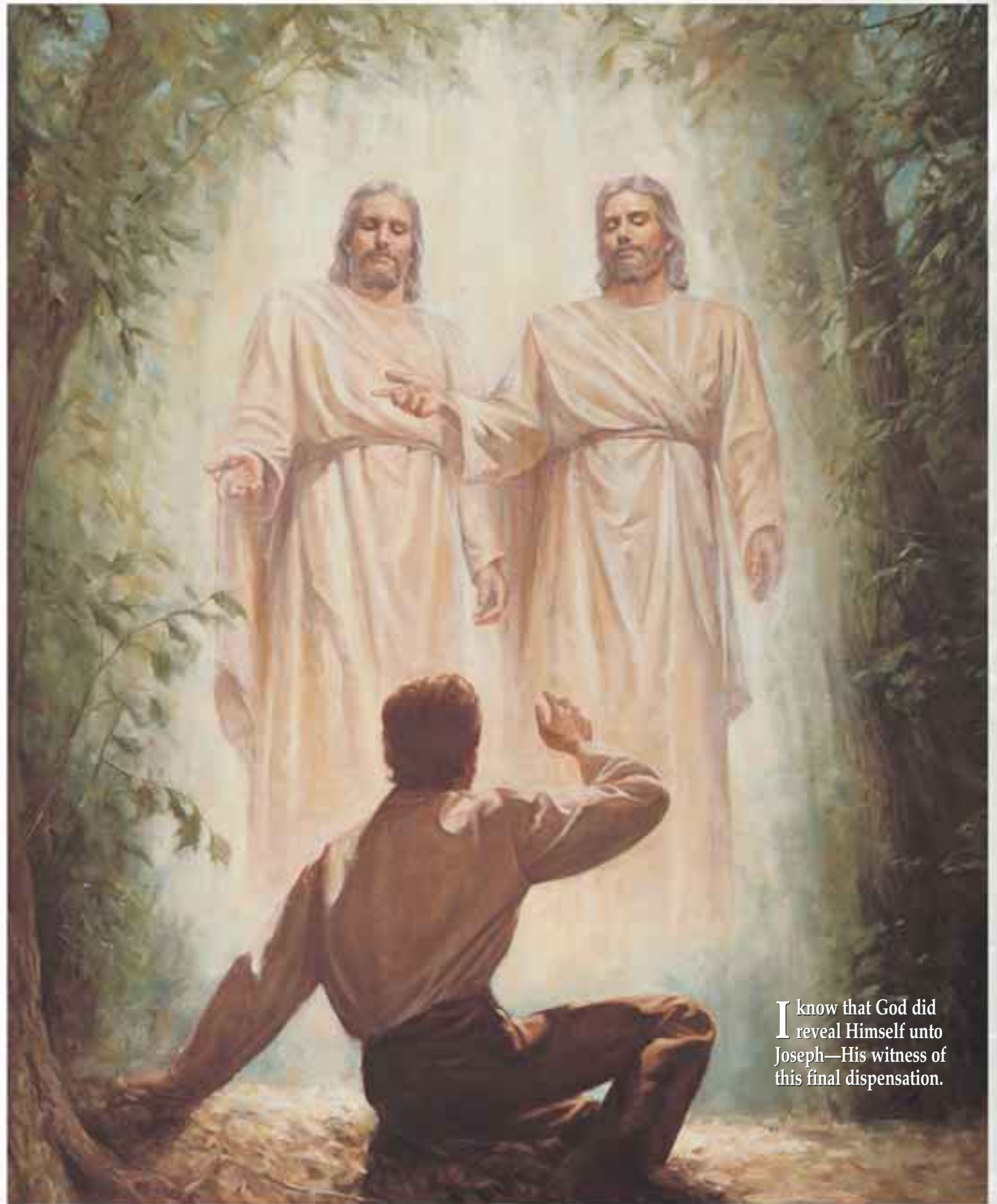
the instrument through whom this divine revelation came was one foreordained—the youthful Joseph Smith—whose faith and desire brought about “one of the most significant religious events in the history of mankind” (Milton V. Backman Jr., “Joseph Smith’s Recitals of the First Vision,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1985, 8).

Since my early youth I have believed and carried in my mind a vivid picture of the teenage Joseph finding a secluded spot, kneeling in the quiet grove, and in childlike faith asking the desire of his heart. He must have felt assured the Lord would hear and somehow answer him. There appeared to him two glorious personages, a description of whom, he said, was beyond his ability to express.

I have been blessed, as the years have passed, with unusual experiences with people, places, and personal events of an intimate, spiritual nature, and, through the power of the Holy Ghost, I have received an ever-deepening witness and knowledge of this heaven-directed restoration of the Lord’s plan of salvation. The events related by Joseph Smith of the Restoration are true.

THE VISION

Each of us can develop in our bosom an uplifting, sanctifying, and glorifying feeling of its truth. The Holy Ghost will reveal and seal upon each of our hearts this knowledge, if we truly desire. Our understanding, belief, and faith in “the vision” (as we refer



I know that God did reveal Himself unto Joseph—His witness of this final dispensation.

to it) of God the Father and His Only Begotten Son appearing to Joseph, thereby ushering in this final dispensation with its great and precious truths, is essential to our eternal salvation. Salvation comes only through Christ. Joseph Smith is the instrument or revealer of that knowledge, divinely called to teach of the terms and conditions of the Father's plan and given the keys of salvation for all mankind.

I know that God did reveal Himself unto Joseph—His witness of this final dispensation. We know something of the form, features, and even character of that mighty intelligence whose wisdom, creation, and power control the affairs of the universe. God made it known that Jesus Christ is in the express image of the Father.

In Joseph's own words, the brightness was above anything he had ever known. He looked up. Before him stood two glorious personages.

One of them, pointing to the other, said, "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!" (JS—H 1:17; emphasis in original).

It might have seemed inconceivable to young Joseph that he was looking upon God our Heavenly Father and His Son—that the Lord had come to visit and instruct him.

The Son, bidden by the Father, spoke to the kneeling boy. Joseph was told that all the churches were wrong. They had corrupted the doctrine; they had broken the ordinances and had lost the authority of the priesthood of God. He was told that the leaders of the man-made churches were displeasing to the Lord and that the time for the restoration of all truth and authority had come, including the organization of the Church. Then, to his infinite astonishment, he was told that *he*, Joseph Smith—young, unlearned, but humble—was to be the instrument through whom the Almighty would reestablish His work in these, the latter days—the gospel never to be taken away again. Such was the glorious beginning of the restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Some three years later, as he was beginning to mature, Joseph Smith had another heavenly visitation. This time an angel sent from the presence of God stated that he was Moroni and revealed to the young man the resting place of a set of gold plates upon which certain ancient inhabitants of America had recorded the history of their peoples. In the course of time, these records were translated by the gift and power of God and published early in 1830.

A DEFINITE PURPOSE

The Book of Mormon is the most remarkable book in the world from a doctrinal, historical, or philosophical point of view. Its integrity has been assailed with senseless fury for over 170 years, yet its position and influence today are more impregnable than ever.

The Book of Mormon did not come forth as a curiosity. It was written with a definite purpose—a purpose to be felt by every reader. From the title page we read that it was written "to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations." The message it contains is a witness for Christ and teaches the love of God for all mankind. Its purpose is to bring people to accept Jesus as the Christ. The book tells of the actual

visit of Christ to ancient America and records the teachings and instructions He gave in clarity and great power to the people. The Book of Mormon substantiates the Bible in its teachings of the Savior, speaks of Christ more than any other subject, and teaches that our Savior is the Redeemer and Atoner of mankind, constantly emphasizing that He is the central figure in God's plan of salvation. This divine record makes converts to its message and to His Church, which teaches it.

I have marveled at God's wisdom in bringing forth this ancient record in the manner in which it was accomplished, for it has also become the powerful witness of the divine mission of Joseph Smith. Of Sunday, 28 November 1841, the *History of the Church* states:

"I spent the day in the council with the Twelve Apostles at the house of President [Brigham] Young, conversing with them upon a variety of subjects. Brother Joseph Fielding was present, having been absent four

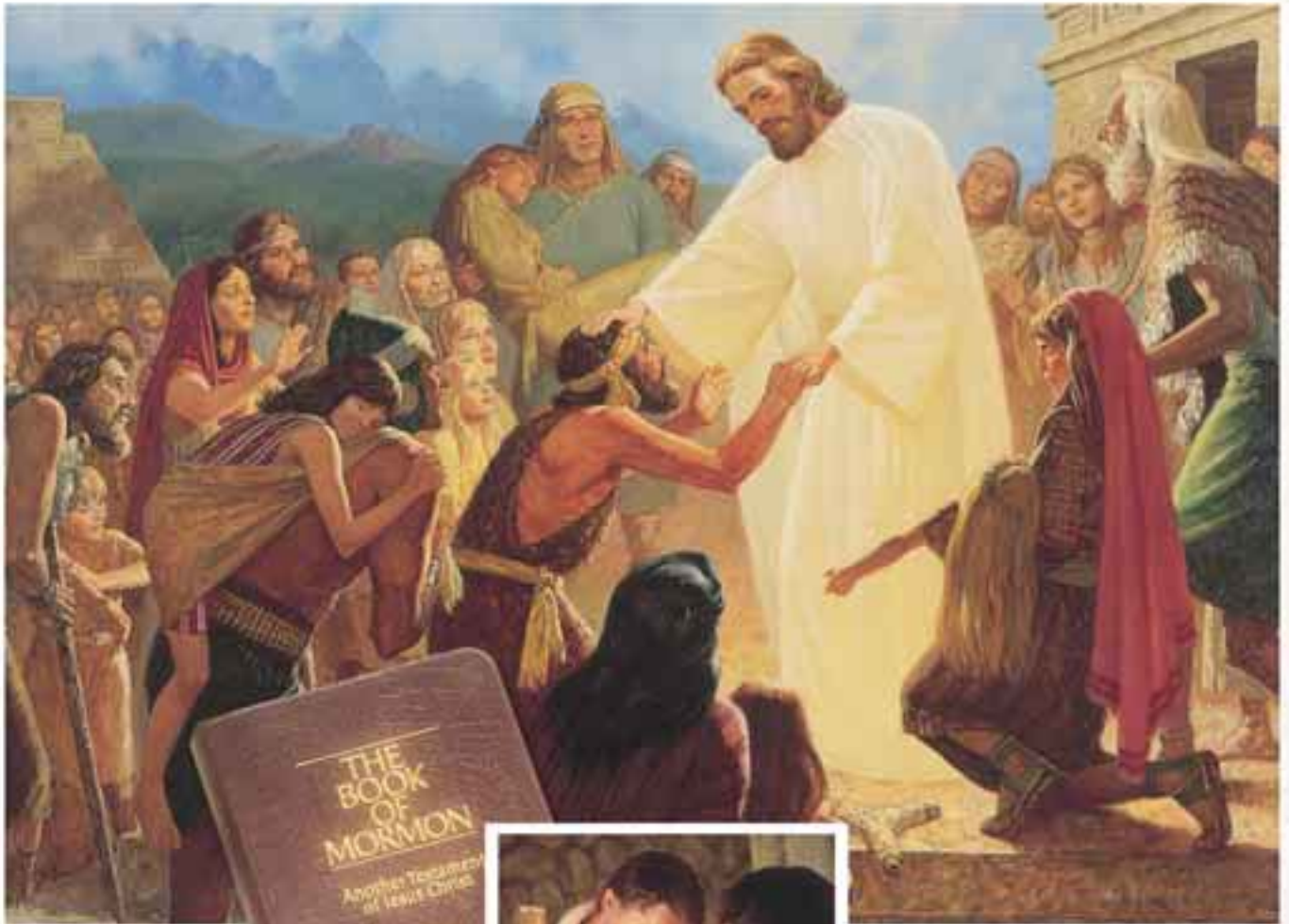
years on a mission to England. I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book" (4:461).

Joseph Smith was foreordained to be the duly appointed leader of this, the greatest and final of all dispensations. After the angel Moroni's visit, other heavenly messengers conferred upon Joseph holy priesthood authority, divine keys, power, and revelations from God.



Moroni revealed to the young man the resting place of a set of gold plates upon which certain ancient inhabitants of America had recorded the history of their peoples.

LEFT: PAINTING BY GARY L. KAPP; INSET: RIGHT: PAINTING BY DEL PARSONS; RIGHT: AND HE HEALED THEM ALL, EVERY ONE, BY GARY L. KAPP



Not only was the Church organized under inspiration and divine direction, but the necessary body of doctrine for guidance of the Church was revealed. Faith and light were again available to distill the darkness that was upon the earth. Joseph Smith, after seeking and being taught by the Author of Truth, learned that:

1. God is in the form of a man whose glory defies description.
2. He has a voice; He speaks.
3. He is considerate and kind.
4. He answers prayers.
5. His Son is obedient to the Father and is the

The Book of Mormon tells of the actual visit of Christ to ancient America and records the teachings and instructions He gave in clarity and great power to the people.

Mediator between God and man.

6. "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit" (D&C 130:22).

Though ancient scriptures make references to temples and baptism for the deceased, Joseph Smith was the first to have revealed the purpose of temples and salvation for all—including those who have passed on without having received a knowledge of the gospel—along with the eternal marriage covenant and sealing of man and woman as the foundation for exaltation.

Joseph Smith, writing about the first conference of the Church in June 1830, spoke of great happiness “to find ourselves engaged in the very same order of things as observed by the holy Apostles of old” (*History of the Church*, 1:85).

A PROPHET OF THE LORD

Under the inspiration of Almighty God, the Church began to flourish. The Lord’s promise that a “marvelous work is about to come forth” was being fulfilled in a miraculous way (see D&C 4:1). The gospel message spread rapidly. The missionary spirit was touching hearts. The Book of Mormon was being read. Tens, then hundreds, then thousands joined the Church. The Lord, speaking through Joseph, proclaimed:

“For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated. . . .

“The weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones, that man should not counsel his fellow man, neither trust in the arm of flesh—

“But that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world; . . .

“That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed . . . unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers” (D&C 1:2, 19–20, 23).

Politicians began worrying over this new phenomenon. Enemies were organizing, and the Prophet’s life was becoming endangered.

After months of imprisonment in the dark, damp dungeon known as Liberty Jail, a discouraged Joseph cried out to the Lord:

“O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?”

“How long shall thy hand be stayed, and thine eye . . . behold from the eternal heavens the wrongs of thy people and of thy servants . . . ?

“Yea, O Lord, how long shall they suffer these wrongs and unlawful oppressions, before thine heart shall be softened toward them?” (D&C 121:1–3).

Then a loving, answering Savior promised Joseph:

“The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name, and fools shall have thee in derision, and hell shall rage against thee;

“While the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under thy hand.

“And thy people shall never be turned against thee by the testimony of traitors.

“ . . . Thou shalt be had in honor; . . . and thy voice shall be more terrible in the midst of thine enemies than the fierce lion, because of thy righteousness; and thy God shall stand by thee forever and ever” (D&C 122:1–4).

In his last public address to a large congregation in Nauvoo, Joseph said:

“I do not regard my own life. I am ready to be offered a sacrifice for this people; for what can our enemies do? Only kill the body, and their power is then at an end. Stand firm, my friends; never flinch. Do not seek to save

your lives, for he that is afraid to die for the truth, will lose eternal life. . . .

“God has tried you. You are a good people; therefore I love you with all my heart. Greater love hath no man than that he should lay down his life for his friends. You have stood by me in the hour of trouble, and I am willing to sacrifice my life for your preservation” (*History of the Church*, 6:500).

This statement is all the more remarkable as the Prophet was still in the morning of life—only 38 years old—and great as he had already become, the zenith of his mental and spiritual powers had not yet been reached. Life was precious to him with all its possibilities of future achievements. Yet he was willing to give it up.

“A Prophet,” wrote Truman Madsen, “is one who, in fulfillment of his mission, undergoes great suffering,

yet through it all, is radiant. A Prophet, in short, is a saint” (*Joseph Smith Among the Prophets* [1965], 21).

“Had he [Joseph Smith] been spared a martyr’s fate till mature manhood . . . ,” said Parley P. Pratt, “he was certainly endued with powers and ability to have [influenced] the world in many respects” (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* [1985], 32).

One may pick up the thread of Joseph Smith’s life and find suffering, both his own and that of the disciples around him.

“BE PATIENT IN AFFLICTIONS”

The Church was appearing to become, as the scripture says, as a stone cut out of a mountain without



After months of imprisonment, a discouraged Joseph cried out to the Lord: “O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?”

hands and rolling forth to fill the whole earth (see Dan. 2:44–45; D&C 65:2). Political officials worried about it moving outward and abroad from the immediate locale. Illegal charges were leveled, court documents and summonses were issued, and vigilantes were formed at Carthage, the county seat. Joseph and Hyrum were to appear to answer charges against them.

As Joseph Smith left Nauvoo for Carthage that 24th day of June, he would have looked for the last time on the city and the magnificent temple that was nearly completed. He knew he would never look upon it again.

“Be patient in afflictions,” he was told, “for thou shalt have many” (D&C 24:8). Later, he said adversity had become “second nature” (see D&C 127:2) but had only “wafted me that much nearer to Deity” (quoted in B. H. Roberts, *The Gospel and Man’s Relationship to Deity* [1965], 279). Brigham Young (1801–77) said of him that he lived 1,000 years in 38.

To his companions who were accompanying him to Carthage, he gave these prophetic words:

“I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer’s morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men. . . . AND IT SHALL YET BE SAID OF ME—HE WAS MURDERED IN COLD BLOOD” (D&C 135:4).

Why did he not turn back?

There was time to escape. He was not yet in the hands of his enemies. Friends were at his side who would die for him if necessary. Some suggested he flee across the Mississippi where he would be safe. But he continued to Carthage.

Joseph must have recalled some of the dangers through which he had passed—like the winter night when a mob broke into his home and with curses and profanity tore him from the bedside of his wife and sick children and carried him outside, strangling him until he was unconscious. When he regained consciousness, they stripped him of his clothing and covered his naked body from head to foot with a coat of tar and feathers, forcing open his mouth to fill it with the same substance, then left him on the frozen ground to die of cold and exposure.

Riding to Carthage, he might have recalled the time in Missouri when he and some of his brethren had been betrayed into the hands of their enemies. The leader of the mob convened a court; Joseph and his associates were placed on trial for their lives. They were convicted and all sentenced to be shot the next

morning at eight o’clock in the public square in Far West. A dispute among the mob saved them.

They were taken from place to place and exhibited to jeering crowds, while the Saints were told they would never see their leaders again. But Joseph cheered his fellow prisoners by announcing that none of them would suffer death.

“Be of good cheer, brethren,” he said; “the word of the Lord came to me last night that our lives should be given us, . . . not one of our lives should be taken” (quoted in *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 164).

As Joseph contemplated those dreary months of imprisonment in Missouri, he must have recalled the night, when confined in a dungeon, he rebuked the guards. He and his brethren were trying to get a little

sleep but were kept awake by the awful blasphemies and obscene jests of their jailers, who were recounting the dreadful deeds of robbery and murder they had committed among the Mormons. These were no idle boasts, for these awful atrocities had actually been committed. Suddenly, Joseph rose to his feet and, in a voice that seemed to shake the very building, cried out:

“SILENCE, ye fiends of the infernal pit! In the name of Jesus Christ I rebuke you, and command you to be still; I will not live another minute and hear such language. Cease such talk, or you or I die THIS INSTANT!” (quoted in *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 180; emphasis in original).

The effect must have been electric in its suddenness. Some begged his pardon, while others

slunk into the dark corners of the jail to hide their shame.

The power of Jesus Christ, whose name he had invoked in his rebuke, was upon him. His hands and feet were in chains, but these the guards did not see. They saw only the righteous anger in his shining face, and felt the divine power in his voice as he rebuked them.

But if Joseph’s voice was terrible as the roaring lion in his rebuke of the wicked, it was soothing as a mother’s voice in comfort to the righteous. In that same name and by the same authority with which he silenced the blasphemies of the guards, he had blessed little children, baptized repentant sinners, conferred the Holy Ghost, healed the sick, and spoken words of comfort and consolation to thousands.



In his last public address to a large congregation in Nauvoo, Joseph said: “I do not regard my own life. I am ready to be offered a sacrifice for this people.”

The Prophet requested Elder John Taylor to sing the words of “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief.” Only a person who loved his Savior and his fellowmen would have requested to hear these words at such a time.



LEFT: PAINTING BY GARY L. KAPP; RIGHT: MARTY ROOM OF JOSEPH AND HYRUM, BY GARY E. SMITH

“ARE YOU AFRAID TO DIE?”

It was midnight when the journey from Nauvoo ended. Joseph and his brethren entered Carthage, and his fate was sealed. His enemies had awaited their coming with great anxiety. The governor, who was present, persuaded the mob to disperse that night by promising them that they should have full satisfaction.

The next day, after a hearing, Joseph was released on bail but rearrested on a trumped-up charge of treason. Bail was refused, and Joseph and Hyrum were placed in Carthage Jail.

The last night of Joseph’s life on earth he bore a powerful testimony to the guards and others who assembled at the door of the jail of the divinity of the Book of Mormon, also declaring that the gospel had been restored and the kingdom of God established on the earth. It was for this reason that he was incarcerated in prison, not for violating any law of God or man.

It was late at night when the prisoners tried to get some rest. At first Joseph and Hyrum occupied the only bed in the jail room, but a gunshot during the night and a disturbance led Joseph’s friends to insist that he take a place between the two of them on the floor. They would protect him with their own bodies. Joseph asked Elder John S. Fullmer to use his arm for a pillow while they conversed; then he turned to Elder

Dan Jones, on the other side, and whispered, “Are you afraid to die?” And this staunch friend answered, “Has that time come, think you? Engaged in such a cause I do not think that death would have many terrors.”

Joseph replied, “You will yet see Wales, and fulfill the mission appointed you before you die” (*History of the Church*, 6:601).

The next day, the fateful 27th of June 1844, all but two of Joseph’s friends were made to leave the prison, so that now only four brethren remained—Joseph and Hyrum and two of the Apostles, both of whom during the day offered to die for him. The day was spent in writing letters to their wives, conversing on principles of the gospel, and singing. Between three and four o’clock in the afternoon the Prophet requested Elder John Taylor to sing the words of “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief.”

This comforting song breathes in every line the very spirit and message of Christ. Only a person who loved his Savior and his fellowmen would have requested to hear these words at such a time.

When Elder Taylor had finished the song, the Prophet’s eyes were wet with tears, and he said, “Sing that song again, will you, John?” (quoted in Claire Noall, *Intimate Disciple: A Portrait of Willard Richards, Apostle to Joseph Smith—Cousin of Brigham Young* [1957], 440).

John “replied that he did not feel like singing. He was oppressed with a sense of coming

disaster" (Cannon, *Life of Joseph Smith*, 524).

"You'll feel better once you begin, and so will I," replied Joseph (quoted in Noall, *Intimate Disciple*, 440).

Hyrum also pleaded with him to repeat the song. And Elder Taylor did.

This time his voice was even sadder and more tender than at first, and when he concluded, all were hushed, but four hearts beat faster, for they had carefully listened to the fateful words:

*My friendship's utmost zeal to try,
He asked if I for him would die.
The flesh was weak; my blood ran chill,
But my free spirit cried, "I will!"*
(Hymns, no. 29)

The other three heard Joseph murmur as an echo to the song, "I will!"

The love of Christ was in the song; the love of man was there in that room in the Carthage Jail.

While this spirit of love and service for men expressed in song and prayer filled the hearts of all within the jail, the mob was gathering. The final details you know.

ONLY LOVE BEGETS LOVE

When the news of the awful crime reached Nauvoo, the citizens were overcome with grief and horror. Such sorrow had not been known in Nauvoo before. The warm summer sun left them cold and chill. Their prophet and their patriarch were dead. What else mattered?

When the wagons carrying the bodies were still a long way off, the entire population of Nauvoo went out to meet them. No greater tribute could be paid than was paid that day to Joseph and Hyrum Smith. Such universal love from those who knew them best could never have been won by selfish and designing men. Only love begets love. Once when Joseph had been asked how he had acquired so many followers and retained them, he replied, "It is because I possess the principle of love. All I can offer the world is a good heart and a good hand" (*History of the Church*, 5:498).

Sariah Workman, an early immigrant, wrote: "I always felt a divine influence whenever I was in his presence" (in "Joseph Smith, the Prophet," *Young Woman's Journal*, Dec. 1906, 542).

John Taylor, who was wounded at Carthage and later became prophet, said of him:

"Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. In the short space of twenty years, he has brought forth the Book of Mormon, which he translated by the gift and power of God, and has been the means of publishing it on two continents; has sent the fulness of the everlasting gospel, which it contained, to the four quarters of the earth; has brought forth the revelations and commandments which compose this book of Doctrine and Covenants, and many other wise documents and instructions for the benefit of the children of men; gathered many thousands of the Latter-day Saints, founded a great city, and left a fame and name that cannot be slain. He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord's anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission and his works with his own blood" (D&C 135:3).

I give my love and testament that God our Father lives, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, crucified for the sins of the world "to cleanse it from all unrighteousness; that through him all might be saved" (D&C 76:41-42). He is our Redeemer, our Lord, our King. His kingdom is again established on the earth. In the year 1820 God our Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph Smith, who was foreordained to be the instrument of the Restoration, which is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This Church, by divine direction, is preparing the world for His second coming—for He will come

again. This I humbly declare in His holy name. □

Gospel topics: Joseph Smith, the Restoration

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

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

1. Why is it essential to have a testimony of the divine calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith?
2. In what ways does the Book of Mormon serve as a witness that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the Lord Jesus Christ?
3. What do the events surrounding the Prophet's martyrdom teach us about his character?



Elder John Taylor said of the Prophet, "Like most of the Lord's anointed in ancient times, [he] has sealed his mission and his works with his own blood."

THE UNFOLDING RESTORATION OF TEMPLE WORK

BY RICHARD O. COWAN

*The Doctrine and Covenants is a handbook
for learning about and deepening
our appreciation of the covenants and
ordinances of the temple.*

Thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept. . . . For unto him that receiveth I will give more" (2 Ne. 28:30). Through the Prophet Joseph Smith has come the restoration of all necessary priesthood keys and gospel principles taught in our temples today.

This came in an unfolding, "line upon line" process that is reflected in the revelations of the Doctrine and Covenants. Likewise, when we attend the temple the spiritual meanings of the symbols in these ordinances will be unfolded to our minds "line upon line." Just as the Prophet gained greater understanding of the temple ordinances by his faithfulness and prayers, so may we deepen our appreciation of the richness of the temple ordinances through our own diligence.

THE PURPOSE OF TEMPLES ANCIENTLY

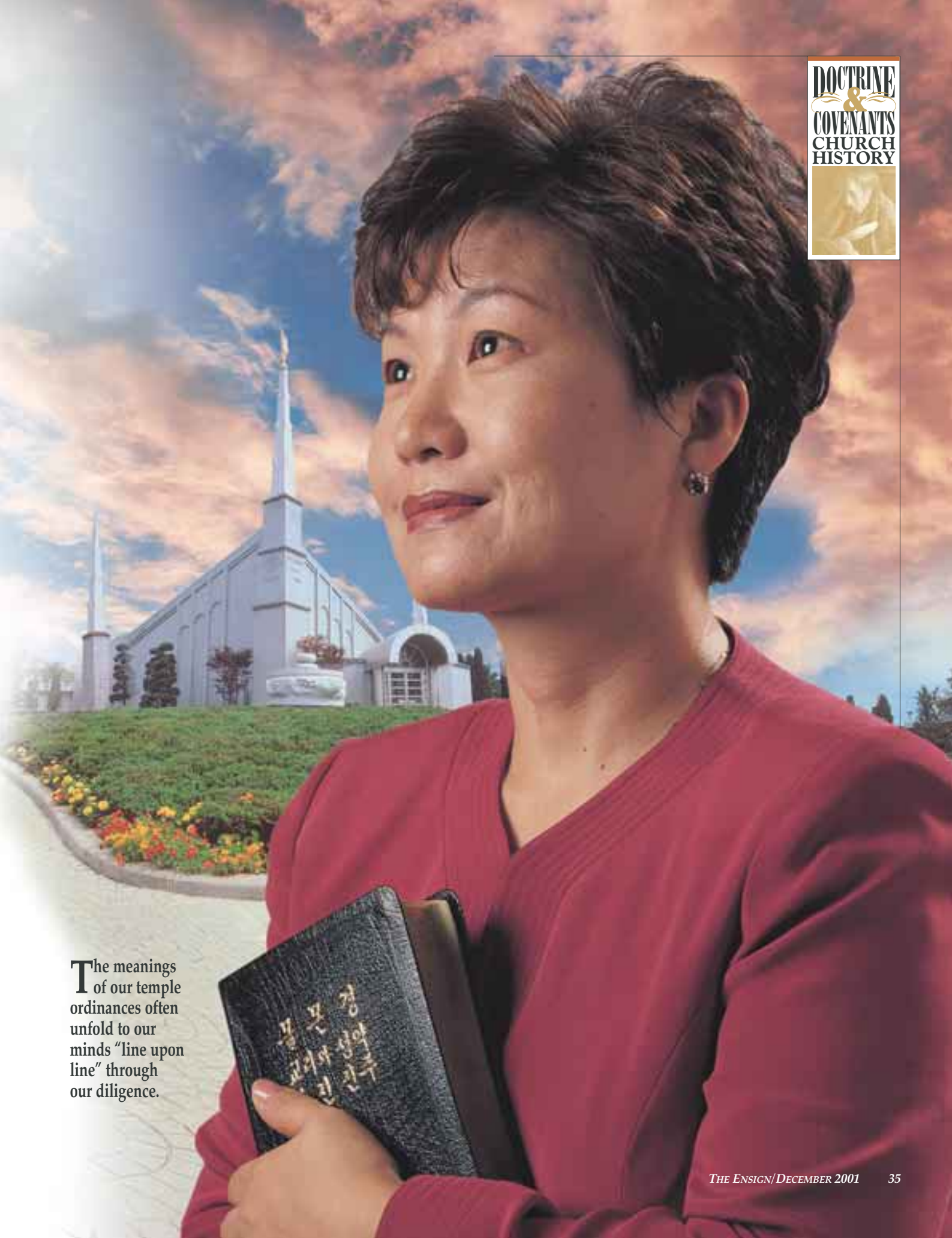
In Old Testament times, temples served two distinct functions. First, they were places of revelation. God promised, for example, to manifest himself to His people in the temple-tabernacle made in the wilderness by Moses and the children of Israel (see Ex. 25:8, 22). Secondly, they were places where sacred ordinances were performed. God revealed these ordinances to Moses in the tabernacle (see D&C 124:38), to the prophet Nathan in the temporary temple-tabernacle at Jerusalem (see 2 Sam. 7:2; D&C 132:39), and to Solomon in his temple (see 1 Kgs. 6:12). Both of these

temple functions would necessarily have to be part of the latter-day "restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21).

THE PROMISE OF PRIESTHOOD POWER

The first latter-day revelation on temples contains words from the angel Moroni received 21 September 1823 (see D&C 2). Moroni paraphrased Malachi's Old Testament prophecy emphasizing that the ancient prophet Elijah would bring priesthood powers (compare Mal. 4:5–6). This prophecy meant that Elijah would restore the priesthood authority to perform temple ordinances that seal families together beyond the grave. Thus from the very beginning of this dispensation, the restoration of the crowning ordinances of the temple was foretold.

The first recorded latter-day revelation referring specifically to a temple came in December 1830, when the Lord reaffirmed that He would "suddenly come" to His temple (D&C 36:8). Shortly thereafter, on 2 January 1831, in Fayette, New York, the Lord gave encouragement and instruction for the Church to move from New York to Ohio. In it the Lord further explained, "For this cause I gave unto you the commandment that ye should go to the Ohio; and there I will give unto you my law; and there you shall be endowed with power from on high" (D&C 38:32). Just a few days later the Lord reiterated these promises: "And inasmuch as my people shall assemble themselves at the Ohio, I have kept in store a blessing such



The meanings
of our temple
ordinances often
unfold to our
minds "line upon
line" through
our diligence.

as is not known among the children of men, and it shall be poured forth upon their heads" (D&C 39:15).

Once the members arrived in Ohio the Lord gave them His promised law as recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 42, which includes instructions relating to chastity (see D&C 42:22–26) and consecration (see D&C 42:30–39).

The Lord then continued to give instructions in the revelations regarding His promise to endow His people with power: "And ye are to be taught from on high. Sanctify yourselves and ye shall be endowed with power" (D&C 43:16). This promise was fulfilled when priesthood keys necessary to perform temple ordinances were restored in April 1836 (see D&C 110:13–16).



THE INTENT OF TEMPLE WORK FOR THE DEAD

"This doctrine [of temple work for the dead] and its ordinances are laden with love and are intended to perpetuate the sweetest of all relationships—in families forever."

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Spirit of Elijah," *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 86.



The first latter-day temple was in Kirtland, Ohio.

THE BUILDING OF A TEMPLE

The first recorded latter-day instruction that a temple be built came in the summer of 1831 as the Prophet Joseph Smith and other elders arrived for a visit in western Missouri. The Lord revealed that the center place of Zion and its temple was at Independence, Missouri (see D&C 57:1–3). Before the Prophet's return to Ohio, the Lord instructed: "Let my servant Sidney Rigdon consecrate and dedicate this land [Independence, Missouri], and the spot for the temple, unto the Lord" (D&C 58:57). The Lord expected the Saints to begin to build a temple in western Missouri as soon as possible (see D&C 84:1–4). On 2 August 1831 Elder Rigdon dedicated the land as assigned, and in a solemn ceremony the following day, the Prophet laid a cornerstone for the temple.

OTHER TEMPLE-RELATED PRINCIPLES

Near the end of 1832 the Lord directed the convening of a "school of the prophets" (D&C 88:127) in Kirtland, Ohio. In His instructions to this school the Lord taught many temple-related concepts: We must live the celestial law in order to inherit the celestial kingdom (see D&C 88:21–22). Members were told to "cast away your idle thoughts and your excess of laughter" (D&C 88:69). The Lord also promised to testify to the Father that if they would sanctify themselves

they would be declared "clean from the blood of this wicked generation" (see D&C 88:74–75). Sessions of the school were called solemn assemblies (see D&C 88:70, 117), and only the worthy were to attend (see D&C 88:134). Participants in the school also accepted a commitment not to wilfully divulge sacred matters discussed in the school.¹ Clearly the Lord was preparing His people for the restoration of His temple ordinances.

The Lord wanted the school, like His temple, to be "a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God" (D&C 88:119; compare D&C 109:6–9). Furthermore, by this time the Lord had already revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith the eternity of the marriage covenant (see D&C 132, section head-

ing). The Lord was preparing to endow His Saints.

While Church members in Ohio were establishing the School of the Prophets in Kirtland, members in Missouri were struggling to establish Zion and preparing to build the temple at Independence. As persecutions mounted, members were admonished to build the Lord's house "for the salvation of Zion" (see D&C 97:10–12). It was to be "a place of thanksgiving" and of "instruction for all those who are called to the work of the ministry" (D&C 97:13). The Lord promised: "My glory shall rest upon it," and "my presence shall be there, for I will come into it" (D&C 97:15–16).

Unfortunately, members did not carry out the Lord's direction to build a temple in Missouri. In time, persecutions forced them to flee their homes in Jackson County. Meanwhile, the Lord had given further instruction concerning building the temple in Kirtland, Ohio.

THE LORD'S HOUSE IN KIRTLAND

In May 1833 the Lord directed the Kirtland members to move forward with building His temple (see D&C 94:1–2). Apparently they did not heed this direction, because in a revelation given the following month they were chastised for their failure to build the Lord's house (see D&C 95:1–3). The Lord repeated His promise "to endow those whom I have chosen with power

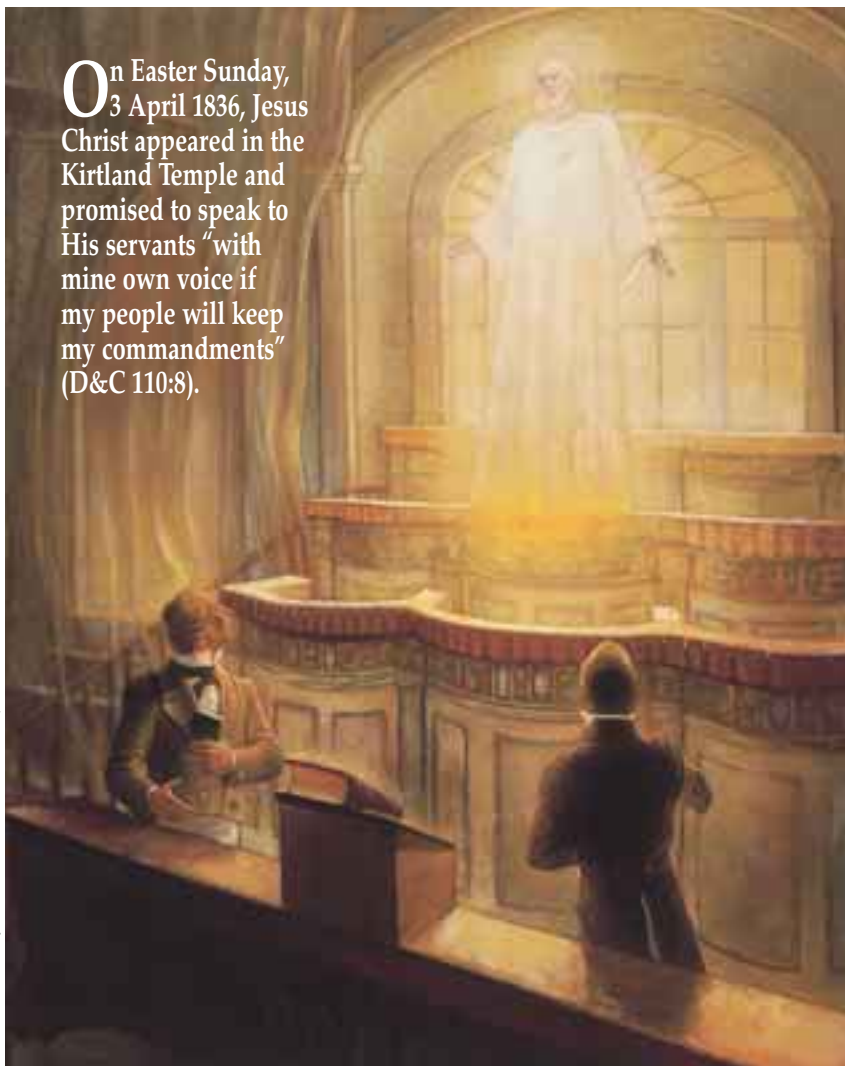
from on high” and urged the Saints not to delay (see D&C 95:8–9). He specified that the temple was not to be built “after the manner of the world” but according to a plan He promised to reveal (see D&C 95:13–14). His plan called for a chapel on the main floor, to be used for praying, preaching, and administering the sacrament. A similar hall on the second floor was “for the school of mine apostles” (see D&C 95:15–17). Hence this temple’s design was different from all subsequent temples. As President Brigham Young pointed out, the Kirtland Temple “had no basement in it, nor a font nor preparations to give endowments for the living or the dead.”²

POWER AND BLESSINGS FROM ON HIGH

Following a period of sacrifice to build the Kirtland Temple, the Lord poured out marvelous blessings upon His people. On Thursday evening, 21 January 1836, the First Presidency met with the Patriarch, Joseph Smith Sr., on the upper floor of the nearly completed temple.

On Easter Sunday, 3 April 1836, Jesus Christ appeared in the Kirtland Temple and promised to speak to His servants “with mine own voice if my people will keep my commandments” (D&C 110:8).

CHRIST APPEARING TO JOSEPH SMITH AND OLIVER COWDERY, BY GARY E. SMITH



They anointed one another with consecrated oil and pronounced blessings and prophecies.³ The heavens were opened, and the Prophet Joseph “beheld the celestial kingdom of God, and the glory thereof” (D&C 137:1). When he saw his brother Alvin in that kingdom, he “marveled” because Alvin had died without being baptized by proper authority. The Lord declared, “All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God” (D&C 137:7). This assurance to the Prophet has become the foundation of our doctrine of salvation for the dead and the great vicarious service in the temples today.

Hundreds of Church members crowded into the Kirtland Temple on its day of dedication, Sunday, 27 March 1836. The highlight of the service was the dedicatory prayer given by revelation to the Prophet (see D&C 109). After expressing gratitude for God’s blessings, the Prophet, with hands raised to heaven and tears flowing freely, prayed that the Lord would accept this temple, which had been built “that the Son of Man might have a place to manifest himself to his people” (D&C 109:5). The Prophet Joseph then petitioned that the promised blessing in prior revelations of “power from on high” be realized (see D&C 109:6–9, 13, 22, 35). This prayer has become the pattern for all other temple dedicatory prayers. The Prophet Joseph Smith and many others testified that they beheld numerous divine messengers and heard heavenly choirs during the services.

A transcendent spiritual manifestation occurred on Easter Sunday, 3 April 1836, just one week following the temple dedication. After the close of the afternoon worship service, the Prophet Joseph and Oliver Cowdery retired to the Melchizedek Priesthood pulpits in the west end of the temple’s lower main room. A canvas partition, or “veil,” was lowered so that they might pray in private. The Prophet testified that “the veil was taken from our minds” (D&C 110:1) and that he and Oliver beheld a series of visions. The Lord Jesus Christ appeared, accepted the temple, and promised to manifest Himself therein

“if my people will keep my commandments, and do not pollute this holy house” (D&C 110:8). Moses, Elias, and Elijah then appeared and bestowed priesthood keys (see D&C 110:11–16). Through the sealing keys restored by Elijah, the priesthood ordinances of temples can be performed today. Latter-day Saints may participate in saving ordinances in behalf of loved ones who have died without the opportunity of accepting the gospel in mortality. In this way the hearts of the children are turning to their fathers and mothers (see Mal. 4:5–6).

The appearance of these messengers confirms that the Kirtland Temple truly was a place of revelation—the first major purpose of temples. Although a partial temple endowment, primarily the ordinances of washing and anointing, was conducted there, the full restoration of sacred ordinances—the second function of temples—would not come until later.

Not long after these glorious occurrences, persecution increased and forced the faithful Saints from Ohio. They fled to Far West in Missouri, where members previously expelled from Jackson County were also gathered. Once again the Lord instructed them to build a temple where they might gather and worship (see D&C 115:8), but within a year persecution forced members to abandon their homes in Missouri. It was not until they found safe haven in Nauvoo, Illinois, that they could turn their attention again to building a temple and receiving therein sacred ordinances for the living and the dead.

THE NAUVOO TEMPLE

The Prophet Joseph Smith first preached the doctrine of vicarious baptisms for the dead at a funeral on 15 August 1840. Under priesthood direction, Church members almost immediately began performing this ordinance in the Mississippi River on behalf of deceased loved ones. The Prophet taught Church members that those who neglect this work “do it at the peril of their own salvation.”⁴ With such encouragement, members eagerly took advantage of this



TEMPLE DOCTRINES AND ORDINANCES RESTORED

“The opportunity to receive

[the] supernal blessings [of the temple] was given by God in His infinite goodness to the people of this earth through the great prophet of the Restoration, Joseph Smith. He was commissioned to restore the fulness of all things in our time.”

President James E. Faust of the First Presidency, “Eternity Lies before Us,” Ensign, May 1997, 20.



The second latter-day temple was in Nauvoo, Illinois.

opportunity to make gospel ordinances and blessings available to their departed ancestors, performing nearly 16,000 vicarious baptisms by 1844.

On 19 January 1841 the Lord specifically instructed that the temple be built: “Build a house to my name, for the Most High to dwell therein. For there is not a place found on earth that he may come to and restore again that which was lost unto you” (D&C 124:27–28). This time the Lord wanted a baptismal font included in the temple, and He declared, “For this ordinance belongeth to my house, and cannot be acceptable to me [in such places as the river], only in the days of

your poverty, wherein ye are not able to build a house unto me” (D&C 124:30).

Thus, the Nauvoo Temple, like holy sanctuaries in ancient times, served both functions—as a place of contact between God and mankind and as a place where sacred ordinances were performed.

In the Nauvoo Temple came the full endowment. The Lord said, “Let this house be built unto my name, that I

may reveal mine ordinances therein unto my people; for I deign to reveal unto my church things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world” (D&C 124:40–41).

In two letters written during the first week of September 1842, the Prophet gave further instructions concerning the work for the dead. He emphasized that a recorder be present, not only to keep an accurate record but also to assure that each ordinance was done properly (see D&C 127:6; 128:3). He taught members that keeping proper records on earth was linked to the efficacy of the ordinances in heaven (see D&C 128:8–9). He also explained that because temple baptismal fonts symbolize the grave, they should be located “underneath where the living are wont to assemble” (see D&C 128:12–13). Expanding on the writing of the Apostle Paul (see Heb. 11:40), the Prophet declared that without the ordinances for the dead “the fathers . . . cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect” (D&C 128:15). He further wrote that there must be “a welding link of some kind or other



PROPHETIC DECLARATIONS SINCE NAUVOO

The “line upon line” process of unfolding the meaning of temples and temple service through modern prophets has continued. Endowments for the dead were inaugurated with the completion of the St. George Temple in 1877. For the first time members had the opportunity of returning to the temple and, while officiating in behalf of their ancestors, renew their own understanding and appreciation of the teachings in the endowment. In 1894 a revelation through President Wilford Woodruff (1807–98) directed Church members to trace their own genealogies and be sealed to their progenitors as far back as possible.⁵ Then, in 1918, President Joseph F. Smith received a remarkable vision, expanding our understanding of how the Savior organized the righteous to carry on the work of preaching the gospel in the spirit world (see D&C 138). And in 1978 the Lord opened the blessings of the temple to every worthy member without regard for race or color (see Official Declaration 2).

between the fathers and the children” (D&C 128:18). Vicarious ordinances for the dead, he concluded, are the means of establishing this link.

In Nauvoo the Prophet Joseph also preached the doctrine of eternal marriage. In May 1843 he instructed Church members that in order to attain the highest degree of the celestial kingdom, one must enter “the new and everlasting covenant of marriage” (see D&C 131:1–4). Two months later he put in writing section 132, a revelation he had received much earlier. It emphasized that for a marriage to be binding in the hereafter it must be a covenant “for time and for all eternity”; it must also be performed by proper priesthood authority and be “sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise” (D&C 132:18).

The Prophet Joseph Smith performed the first full endowments in the upper room of the red brick store. Before his death, many leaders of the Church and their families had received the temple blessings we may receive in the temple today. After the Prophet’s death, many Church members were eager to receive these ordinances and blessings. During the eight weeks prior to their exodus from Nauvoo, about 5,600 people were endowed, including 107 on Christmas Day, 1845.

The dedication of more than 50 new temples under the direction of President Gordon B. Hinckley has brought temple blessings within half a day’s travel for many members.

LINE UPON LINE, PRECEPT UPON PRECEPT

What a privilege it is for us to study the Lord’s revelations on temples in the Doctrine and Covenants and participate in all the ordinances and blessings of the temple that have been revealed gradually to the Saints. As members of the Church today, we may receive the same promises that were given to the early members: that if we will sanctify ourselves we may receive the law of the Lord and be endowed with power from on high.

For “the endowment which was given by revelation can best be understood by revelation; and to those who seek most vigorously, with pure hearts, will the revelation be the greatest.”⁶ □

Richard O. Cowan is a member of the Provo 13th Ward, Provo Utah East Stake.

Gospel topics: temples, revelation, Doctrine and Covenants, Church history

NOTES

1. See *History of the Church*, 2:309.
2. *Deseret News Weekly*, 17 Jan. 1877, 809.
3. *History of the Church*, 2:379–80.
4. *History of the Church*, 4:426.
5. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 157.
6. John A. Widtsoe, “Temple Worship,” *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Apr. 1921, 63.

More on this topic: See Jay M. Todd, “In His Holy House,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1993, 32–41; Ronald K. Esplin, “God Will Protect Me Until My Work Is Done,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1989, 16–21; Adney Y. Komatsu, “House of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 27–28; James B. Allen, “Line Upon Line,” *Ensign*, July 1979, 32–39.

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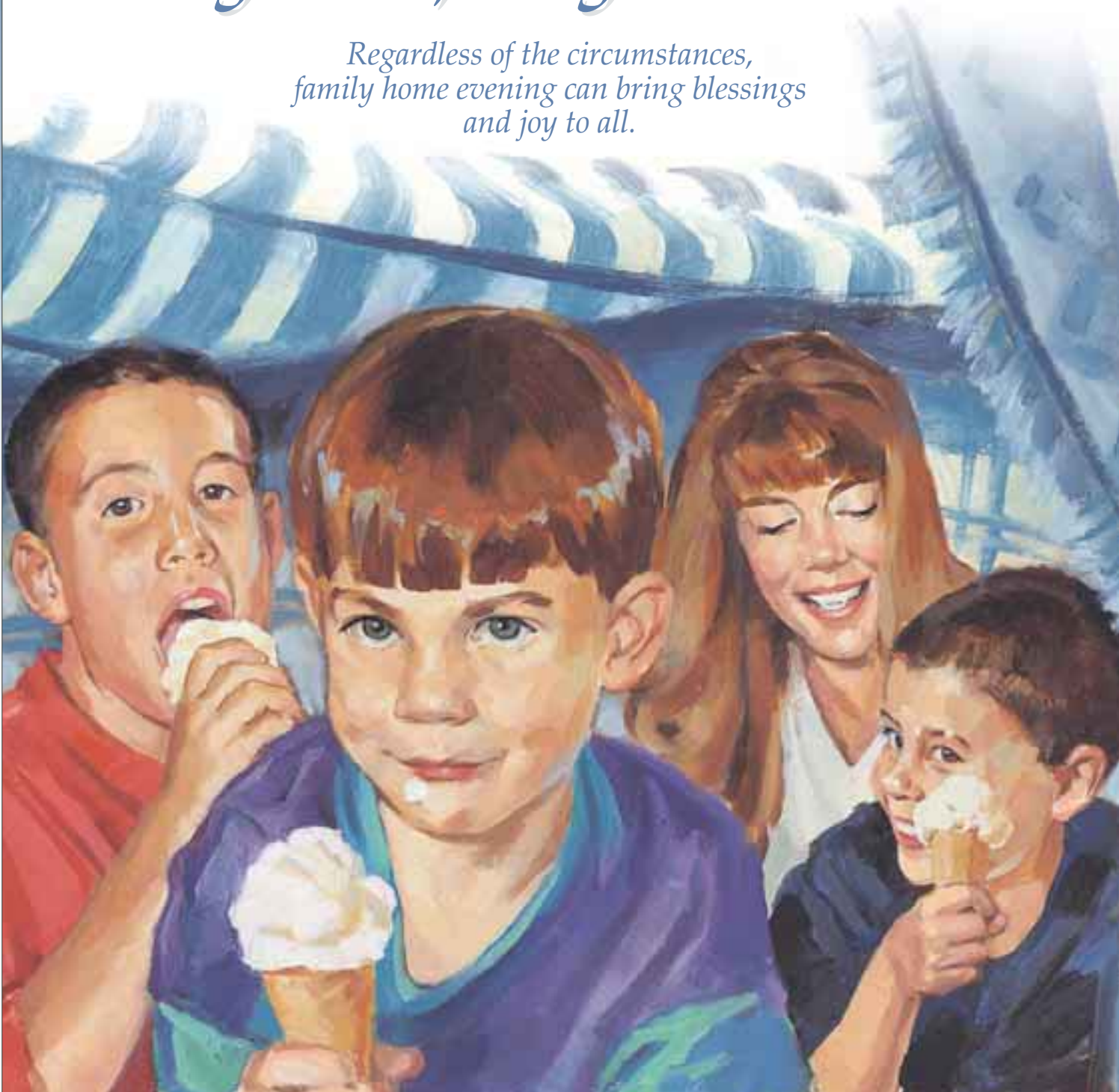


PHOTO BY TAMARA HAMLIN RATHETA

Family Home Evening

Any Size, Any Situation

*Regardless of the circumstances,
family home evening can bring blessings
and joy to all.*



Single? Married with young children? A family of teenagers? Widowed or divorced with children? “Empty-nesters”? Home alone? No matter your situation or the size of your family, family home evening can work for you. The *Ensign* asked its readers to write about their family home evening experiences. Following are some of their testimonies and memories.

LAMANITE TENTS

As a single parent with three sons, I have learned that the Lord will bless us when we make an effort to have family home evening. One Monday evening I had not prepared a lesson but went ahead anyway. We sang “I Am a Child of God” and then knelt down on the living room floor and had an opening prayer. I began by reading out of a Book of Mormon picture book about the Lamanites in the forest. We took special interest in an illustrated picture of the Lamanites by their tents. Before long, we were discussing how it would be to live in a tent all the time with wild animals around. We decided to build our own tent and pretend that we were like the Lamanites in the wilderness.

Our tent used up every blanket, chair, stool, and pillow in the house and consumed the entire living room. When it was finished, we rolled up one side so we could see the television. We ate ice cream cones while we watched a Church video. The boys and I grew closer together that night as we sat snuggled together in that tent. The Spirit was so strong as I felt their love for me and each other.—**Lauri Meacham Saunders, Nampa Second Ward, Nampa Idaho South Stake**

COME UNTO CHRIST

One family home evening, we all gathered around the dining room table in a room at the back of our house. It had a sliding glass door facing a fenced field with our sheep. We sang some songs and had an opening prayer. For the lesson, Dad asked us to call the sheep. We each took our turn and called the sheep, but they didn’t come.

Dad then walked to the door. As he called out, all the sheep ran quickly to the fence, bleating loudly at him. They called to him until he returned to the table.

Then Dad read to us from the New Testament: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27).

I learned that night the importance of building a strong relationship with the Savior so that I would

A single mom with three sons (left) and a widow (right) are among those who found blessings through a weekly family home evening.

always know the Shepherd’s voice when I heard it.—**Becky Shaw, Sandy Second Ward, Sandy Utah West Stake**

FIRST TESTIMONY

In our family, the first family home evening of the month is reserved for testimony bearing. On one such occasion, when I was 14 years old, I was determined not to bear my testimony. However, as our testimony meeting began, I literally felt a burning within that urged me to stand. Unwillingly I stood before my family, not knowing what I was going to say. Incredible feelings of the Spirit enveloped me as I bore witness of the things I knew were true. I was astonished at my feelings, and by the end of my testimony I sat down, sobbing.

Later that evening, my father talked with me. As I tried to explain what had happened, I was again overwhelmed with those same feelings. My dad explained that what I was feeling was the Holy Ghost witnessing to me that what I had said was true and of God. Dad gave me a big hug. I told him that this was the first time I had ever felt such strong feelings pertaining to the gospel. He then said something I will never forget, “Isn’t it wonderful that you could feel these first-time feelings with your family?”

I’m grateful that family home evening provided the opportunity for this important spiritual experience in my life.—**Darla F. Jones, Maple Hills Ward, Tooele Utah East Stake**



FAMILY HOME EVENING FOR ONE

After my children left home, I stopped holding family home evening. One day I realized that I could hold it by myself, so I decided to give it a try. I sang a hymn and read the scriptures and an article in the *Ensign*. I finished up with another hymn and prayer. I felt very good about it all and shed a few tears of joy. I felt the Spirit of the Lord strongly, letting me know I was doing what the Lord wanted me to do. That was a few years ago, but I still hold family home evening on my own every week.—**Elena Neale, Swansea Ward, Merthyr Tydfil Wales Stake**

ILLUSTRATED BY JEWEL HODSON

FAMILY HOME EVENINGS ARE FOR EVERYONE



"Family home evenings are for everyone, whether it be in a two-parent home, a single-parent home, or in a single-member family unit."

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Therefore I Was Taught," Ensign, May 1994, 38.

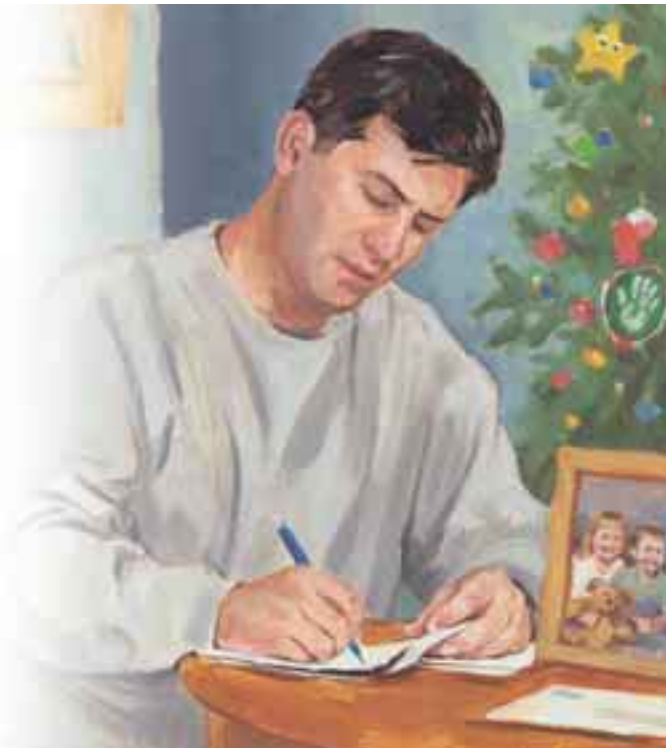
"DEAR DAVID AND SARAH"

As a divorced dad, I worried about my two young children—David and Sarah—who lived more than 500 miles away in Hanover, Pennsylvania, from me in Indianapolis, Indiana, and without the gospel. I talked with my bishop, and he suggested that I use my family home evening time each week to write a personal letter to each of my children. He promised me that my faithfulness in this task would provide the key to answering my prayers for my children's well-being and lead my children to baptism. I was skeptical that letters could make the difference, but I followed his counsel.

Years passed, and I continued to write each week and visit whenever I could. Unfortunately, my children seemed to be moving further and further away from interest in the gospel. It was discouraging, and I worried about their spiritual welfare.

Nonetheless, as David and Sarah became young adults, both of them chose to be baptized—one in Fort Knox, Kentucky, and the other a few years later in Martinsburg, West Virginia. Tears of gratitude came to my

One divorced dad used his family home evenings to write to his two children who were far away.



eyes as they gave me the great honor of participating in their baptisms. Exercising faith in the promises of the Lord helped bring forth this blessing on behalf of my children.—**Larry D. Kump, Martinsburg Ward, Winchester Virginia Stake**

SAUSAGE ROLLS AND BISCUITS

Our family home evenings were a bit different as all of us who gathered together were single—the only Latter-day Saints in each

of our families. Our group included a kind and intelligent bachelor in his 60s, a loving woman in her 30s, a 17-year-old student, and me, a young single woman. The missionaries and numerous others who passed through our ward were always welcome too.

We took turns giving the lessons and planning the activities. It was a joy to teach the gospel to each other, and we always finished off with sausage rolls, biscuits, and a lot of laughter. One time we hired a minibus and went to see the Christmas lights in a little village some distance away. Meeting every Monday evening, we became close friends. The Spirit of the Lord was always there.

I'm married now with two little girls, but I'll always be grateful for my treasured memories of this family home evening group.—**Lorraine Wallis-Plant, Barnsley Branch, Sheffield England Stake**

A TURN TO TEACH

We were having difficulty teaching our 14-year-old daughter a certain principle, so we decided to use family home evening as a tool. When it came her turn to give the lesson, we assigned her a topic that would address her problem. She was very diligent in preparing and presenting the lesson. Right in the middle of the lesson she stopped talking, took a quick deep breath, covered her mouth with her hand, and burst into tears. Very humbly she turned to us and said, "I'm sorry." For the first time she realized what she had been doing was wrong and understood why we were so concerned. Family home evening opened the door to repentance for her.

—**Liana R. Richins, Valencia Branch, Tucson Arizona West Stake**

OUR PUMPKIN PATCH

Gardening can be a great unifying activity, as President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) and other

Church leaders have taught. One of our favorite family home evenings came from working in our garden together. When we started, we never guessed it would bring us so much laughter and become such a treasured memory. We just knew something had to be done, since most of the weeds in our once-lovely garden spot were taller than some of our children! Pulling those huge weeds was too hard, so Mom, Dad, and all five children stomped them down. Then we covered the garden spot with layers of newspaper held in place with a thick dousing of fresh grass clippings. By the time we finished, the garden spot looked great. Because everyone worked well together, the task was accomplished quickly and we weren't even very tired.

Though it was late in the season, the next day we scraped aside a small section of newspaper and grass from the center of the garden and poked some pumpkin seeds into the ground. Everyone was curious to know if we would have pumpkins before it became too cold.

We watched as little pumpkins began to grow. By the last week in October, we had several good-sized pumpkins. The only problem was that they were still green. Undaunted, we decided to pick them anyway and carve jack-o-lanterns. What a surprise when we turned them over and discovered that they were bright orange on the other side! When we carved them, they looked like little orange pumpkin faces with lots of green hair! They were the funniest looking jack-o-lanterns we had ever seen. This activity brought us not only a few gardening skills, but family

unity and joyous memories as well.—**Kathey Ahlstrom, Fairborn Ward, Dayton Ohio East Stake**

Gospel topics: family home evening, parenthood

More on this topic: See "A Tale of Two Families," Ensign, Dec. 2000, 58–61; "Looking for a Family Home Evening Lesson?" Ensign, July 1999, 22–27; Robert D. Hales, "Strengthening Families: Our Sacred Duty," Ensign, May 1999, 32–34.

Visit www.lds.org or see Church magazines on CD.



Growing pumpkins created lasting memories for one family.

STORIES IN *Stitchery*



The Book of Mormon is a rich resource of stories of faithful people who believed in the Savior, Jesus Christ. Featured here are works of three Latter-day Saint artists who have drawn upon some of these stories as the subject for their artwork. Their artwork was part of the Fifth International Art Competition sponsored by the Museum of Church History and Art.



The Guardians of the Hearth (Merit Award), Eileen N. Whitaker, Sunset Heights Sixth Ward, Orem Utah Sunset Heights Stake, Victorian stitchery, 44" x 29 1/2".

Sister Whitaker has captured a message of inspiration and hope for today's mothers, the "Guardians of the Hearth," in this Victorian stitchery. She used two powerful scriptures wherein the sons of Helaman expressed faith in their mother's teachings (see Alma 56:47-48; 57:21), then added the words of a blessing from President Gordon B. Hinckley speaking at the general Relief Society meeting on 23 September 1995. At this meeting, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" was presented.



They Did Carry with Them Swarms of Honeybees and Seeds of Every Kind, Emma Allebes, Fair Oaks Fourth Ward, Sacramento California Fair Oaks Stake, appliqué quilt, 56" x 81".

As Sister Allebes was reading of the Jaredite migration in Ether 2:3, she came upon the idea to do a quilt with a honeybee, fruit, and flower theme. She started with the honeycomb background and hand appliquéed 231 4-inch hexagons to a gold 100-percent cotton fabric. Then she added the blossoms, honeybees, and fruits by hand appliqué. Beadwork and folk-style quilting completed the quilt.



Our Liahona in Our Lives, Lourdes D. Samson, Pilar Branch, Orion Philippines District, embroidery, 22 1/2" x 27 1/2".

Heavenly Father provided a "compass" for Lehi and his family to journey through the wilderness and to the promised land when He gave them a "round ball of curious workmanship" (1 Ne. 16:10) called the Liahona. "Pointers which were in the ball . . . did work according to the faith and diligence and heed" (1 Ne. 16:28) of the family.

Sister Samson wanted to remind us that we have a similar "compass" today—the Book of Mormon—

that can help us find our way back to our Heavenly Father. If we will live by its precepts and teachings, it will surely guide our lives. □

THE MARVELOUS GIFT OF

Choice

*We have the power to choose our course in life—
to choose good or evil.*





BY ELDER HAROLD C. BROWN
Area Authority Seventy

Many years ago, two of my teenage friends and I decided to take a drive into the mountains to a place where several small lakes collected melted snow in the spring to water thirsty summer crops in the valley below. We decided to drive in an old car that had been parked for some time and had long ago exhausted its usefulness. We put gasoline in it, checked the radiator and oil, and, by pulling it with a tractor, finally got it started and were on our way.

We soon realized why the car had been abandoned. The steep hills were more than it could easily negotiate, and frequently it stalled before reaching the top. When this occurred, we backed down the

hill and up the one behind us. Then, with a roar of the engine and all the encouragement three teenagers

could muster, the old car pushed up the hill, over the top, and down the other side.

We soon reached the crest of a tall hill—the last obstacle that stood between us and our destination. We opened the gate and looked down—way down. The road was steep, much steeper than we had anticipated. Still, we felt invincible, and although we were miles from home, no one wanted to think about whether or not the car had the power to return up the hill.

We had set our minds upon enjoying ourselves at the lakes. The possibility of not being able to get back was far from our minds, so we drove through the gate and down the steep hill. The car engine revved up as it held back the car's descent, and we felt the quick drop in the pit of our stomachs.

We enjoyed the beautiful place, the scenery, skipping rocks on the lake, and the simple joy of life and living. As the sun began to lower in the sky, we knew it was time to go home. We looked up the hill, which seemed even steeper now. There was only a short distance from the edge of the lake to the point where the road began a steep angle upward.

We piled in the car and started up the hill. We made it only partway—not nearly far enough. We tried again and again. It was only then that the consequence of our earlier decision began to rest squarely on us. Yet we were not really concerned about our safety. We could sleep in the car that evening, and even if our T-shirts didn't keep us very warm, we would survive and walk out the next day.

With the gas pedal to the floor, the old car fishtailed up the road, and as it slowed down, two teenage boys pushed with all their might.

ILLUSTRATED BY AMY DAVIS



We tried practically everything. Each new effort seemed to propel us a little farther up the hill. *Perhaps, we thought, if we could muster one more major effort and have everything work right for us, we could make it out.*

We cleared away brush near the lake to provide more distance to make our run. We removed rocks and debris from the road, and two of us stationed ourselves partway up the hill to push when the car reached its limits. One last chance! With the gas pedal to the floor, the old car fishtailed up the road, and as it slowed down, two teenage boys with arms under the rear bumper and faces squashed against the trunk pushed with all their might as rocks spun from the wheels and stung their hands, arms, and legs.

Finally we reached the top and were on our way home, a little wiser and armed with a lifelong reminder that while we are free at any given time to make choices, we do not choose the consequences of the decisions we make.

WE CHOOSE OUR COURSE

Choices we make now will affect who and what we are in the future. Agency is as basic as life itself and cannot be taken from us. Even in the most difficult circumstances, we may still choose our course. Viktor

Frankl, a Jewish psychiatrist, was a prisoner during World War II. He suffered greatly and experienced the loss of most of his freedoms. However, he came to believe that even though freedom may be greatly restricted, agency—or the power to choose at any moment in time—remains with us (see *Man's Search for Meaning* [1959]).

Sometimes there are restrictions on the choices we can make. For example, an individual who is short, not very coordinated, and slow has the agency to try out for a basketball team. However, his particular physical characteristics may restrict his opportunity to make the team. Agency, or the power to choose, is a constant, while the range of choices or opportunity to make choices may vary.

Sometimes we take the gift of agency for granted because making choices is so much a part of all we do. However, we should never forget the heartrending and terrible price paid in our premortal existence to preserve our agency. In the scriptures we read:

“Because . . . Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God,

had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down" (Moses 4:3).

"A third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from me because of their agency;

"And they were thrust down, and thus came the devil and his angels" (D&C 29:36–37).

We can better understand the importance Heavenly Father placed on agency if we consider how we would feel if one-third of our family members rejected our beliefs and were lost to us forever.

Agency is an essential element of our eternal existence. The Lord said of us, "All [intelligence] is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself . . . ; otherwise there is no existence" (D&C 93:30).

It wasn't just that Satan's twisted version of our Heavenly Father's plan was second best; more important, it simply could never work. There is no existence without agency.

Nephi clearly teaches that men are "free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon" (2 Ne. 2:26). The Lord states that "the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves" (D&C 58:28).

The power to choose is within each of us, and nothing can take it from us. We have the power to choose our course in life—to choose good or evil when the choice is placed before us.

DO NOT BE DECEIVED

Satan will do everything he possibly can to deceive you. He wants you to make choices that diminish your desire to choose righteousness, in hopes that you will eventually become his servant.

Several years ago I visited with a man whose story was tragic. When he was a young boy, he was sexually abused by someone he trusted. This experience spawned in him a desire for additional experiences. He had followed the temptation of an escalating desire for sexual sin. Now more than 30 years later, he described himself as being in the "bonds of iniquity" (Mosiah 27:29) and "bound down by the chains of hell" (Alma 13:30), as stated by Alma.

In total self-disgust, he declared that he must either stop his sinful behavior or end his life. I knew he meant what he said; I could see it in his eyes and hear it in his voice.

His days were consumed with bad thoughts and immoral experiences. He claimed he had lost his willpower and he was addicted to sin and could not change. He had tried many times but felt

powerless against the forces he had chosen earlier in his life.

I sensed that along with the professional advice I might offer him as a counselor, more than anything else he needed the knowledge and hope that comes from understanding the Savior and His power to help even the most discouraged person.

We talked of the power of the Atonement. From the Book of Mormon we read that "the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance" and "that he has all power to save every man that believeth on his name and bringeth forth fruit meet for repentance" (Alma 7:13; 12:15).

We reviewed the experience of Alma and his followers, who were taken into bondage by the Lamanites and were delivered miraculously from their power (see Mosiah 23). We discussed how others can be delivered from their bondage, including spiritual bondage—the bondage of sin, if you will.

We read the words of Mosiah: "But behold, [the Lord] did deliver them because they did humble themselves before him; and because they cried mightily unto him he did deliver them out of

bondage; and thus doth the Lord work with his power in all cases among the children of men, extending the arm of mercy towards them that put their trust in him" (Mosiah 29:20).

I challenged his beliefs that he no longer had the willpower to choose the right and that he must now succumb to temptation. To illustrate, I asked him what he would do if someone he respected entered the room during one of his immoral episodes. After only a brief moment as he thought about my question, he indicated that he indeed would stop immediately if this were to occur.

As we talked about this, he realized that he did have the agency to make the right choices, but his desire to do so was diminished because of his continual sin.

Every act of disobedience takes away light and truth and gives Satan more power over us. "And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience" (D&C 93:39).

In a vision of the world and its future inhabitants, Enoch saw "generation upon generation; and Enoch was high and lifted up, even in the bosom of the Father, and of the Son of Man; and behold, the power of Satan was upon all the face of the earth. . . .

"And he beheld Satan; and he had a great chain in his hand, and it veiled the whole face of the earth

Learn to trust your feelings and to act accordingly. For example, practice turning off the TV if you feel that what you are viewing is not right.

with darkness; and he looked up and laughed, and his angels rejoiced" (Moses 7:24, 26).

This great chain was what Alma describes as "the chains of hell" that bind those who choose evil rather than good. As they make wrong choices, their power and desire to choose righteousness are diminished, and the time may come when "they are taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell" (Alma 12:11).

One way men and women gain more desire and power to make correct choices is through obedience to God's commandments. "He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light. . . . Light and truth forsake that evil one" (D&C 93:28, 37).

While this man had much more to do to repent and straighten out his life, he at least gained a better understanding of God's power to help him and his own ability to begin to make the right choices. Understanding this truth empowered him with the hope of change, even though the road ahead was still very difficult.

Learn to trust your feelings and to choose accordingly. If you feel uncomfortable in a situation, it is probably the Holy Ghost prompting you to remedy the situation or choose to leave. Do not let your fear of what others think overcome your faith in the promptings of the Spirit. The Lord will warn His children about danger as they are willing to listen and act. Practice by turning off the television or responding appropriately when you feel that what you are doing or viewing is not right.

Each time you exercise your agency to make correct choices, even in small things, you gain more light and truth and are better able to make the right choice when faced with even greater temptations and challenges.

While each problem must receive careful attention, we should remember that every time we pray, study the word of God, fast, contribute tithing and fast offerings, or perform any act of service, our power to make other more difficult choices increases.

EXERCISING SELF-CONTROL

Those who learn to exercise self-control learn to make choices that keep them as far away from the temptation as possible. It is easier to choose not to enter a bar or pub than it is to avoid drinking a bottle of alcohol already held to our lips. It is easier to avoid pornography if we never knowingly enter a Web site that might display questionable material.

Some feel they don't have the power to choose—that their particular temptation is beyond their ability

to resist. The Prophet Joseph Smith "observed that Satan was generally blamed for the evils which we did, but if he was the cause of all our wickedness, men could not be condemned. The devil could not compel mankind to do evil; all was voluntary. . . . God would not exert any compulsory means, and the devil could not" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 187).

To underscore that committing sin is an active process, he said that "those who resisted the Spirit of God, would be liable to be led into temptation, and then the association of heaven would be withdrawn from those who refused to be made partakers of such great glory" (*Teachings*, 187).

It is helpful to remember that when we are faced with a wrong choice, the Holy Ghost will prompt us to do right. To partake of sin, we must first resist the Spirit.

Sometimes individuals are unwilling to use their agency and power to make decisions for themselves.

They want someone else to choose for them. Some seek answers from the Lord, hoping He will tell them every small thing they should do. They are unwilling to think and act for themselves. While every person should seek guidance from the Holy Ghost, the

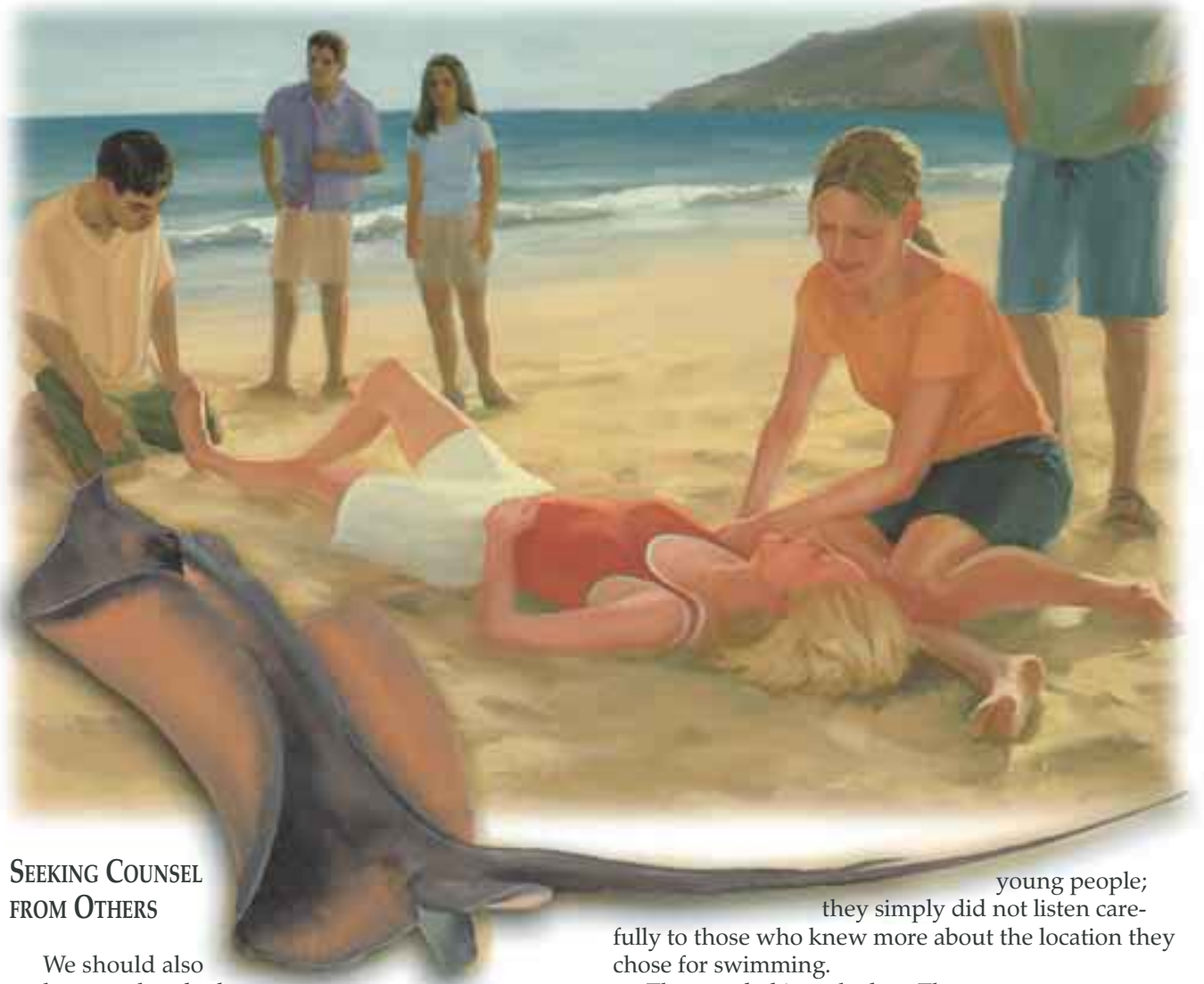
Lord also expects us to use our minds and to think for ourselves.

Your mind is a gift from God and a source of revelation. The Lord gives you power to reason. Have you wondered how Moses knew what to do to help the Israelites escape from the Egyptians who were coming to destroy them? The scriptures say, "I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost. . . . This is the spirit of revelation; behold this is the spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground" (D&C 8:2–3).

The process of thinking, reasoning, using our minds, and communicating is a significant source of revelation. The Holy Ghost often provides a second witness, or burning within, to confirm our initial thinking and reasoning.

In 1856 President Brigham Young told Church members: "If I ask [God] to give me wisdom concerning any requirement in life, or in regard to my own course, or that of my friends, my family, my children, or those that I preside over, and get no answer from him, and then do the very best that my judgment will teach me, he is bound to own and honor that transaction and he will do so to all intents and purposes" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1941], 43).

Had the young couples listened to the warnings of the local people, they would have prevented a painful injury that took some time to heal.



SEEKING COUNSEL FROM OTHERS

We should also seek counsel and advice from those whom we trust, love, and respect. Listening to those who are in a position of authority or who have had experience beyond ours or who know the dangers we may face will help us choose wisely.

Two young married couples discovered this important principle as they traveled to Mexico on a vacation. Searching for a beach which was not too crowded, they stopped at one resort but could hardly find even a place to sit on the teeming beach. They decided to drive farther south to look for a better place. As they drove into a small village, they were delighted to see the warm Pacific waters in a beautiful, quiet bay near the edge of the town. Only a few local residents were near the water's edge. These young couples would have this serene vacation spot mostly to themselves.

As they dressed in their swimming suits and approached the water, several citizens tried to caution them, but these young people were thinking of the beautiful Pacific waters. These were not disobedient

young people; they simply did not listen carefully to those who knew more about the location they chose for swimming.

They waded into the bay. The water was warm, gentle, and quiet. They felt fortunate that for some strange reason, no one else in the world seemed to have discovered this paradise.

After a short time in the water, one of the young women took a step out into the bay. As she placed her foot forward into the sand, she felt a distinct movement. Frightened, she tried to jump back, but before she could, she felt the painful penetration of the tail of a stingray deep into her foot.

Several of the natives came over to see if they could help. They explained what they well knew and what these young people could have learned from them, had they taken the time to listen.

This particular bay was free from ocean waves. The stingrays would come into this calm water, settle on the sandy bottom, wiggle until a light layer of sand settled over them, and stay there to sun themselves.

Had these young couples listened to the warnings the local, more experienced people tried to provide, they would have prevented a painful injury that took some time to heal.

AVOIDING BLAME

We live in a litigious society. Often we hear of lawsuits against organizations and institutions because of the misdeeds of people affiliated with them. Such activity suggests that groups somehow govern the decisions of these individuals, and they are not free to make choices for themselves.

Many individuals blame their problems on others. Terms such as “road rage” suggest that those who manifest it have contracted some illness over which they have no control. Whatever happened to old-fashioned self-discipline?

Moroni offered these soul-searching, sobering words: “Deny yourselves of all ungodliness; . . . then is his grace sufficient for you” (Moro. 10:32). These words suggest no shift of responsibility to someone else, no excuses, no magical way out, no blaming some biological, genetic, or addictive reason for wrong behavior. There is only the straightforward admonition to “deny [ourselves] of all ungodliness.”

We should also be careful about labeling people as homosexuals, abusers, alcoholics, or other such labels, because labels often subtly imply an identity or condition over which there is no longer personal control or responsibility and which may cause someone to lose hope that they can make choices to stop inappropriate behavior and change their lives.

Recently progress has been made to better understand some of the emotional problems with which individuals struggle. Continued research will undoubtedly help us better understand the relationship between biology and genetics and our mental and behavioral well-being. However, as we learn more about these important matters, we should be careful to assume responsibility for the decisions we make and their consequences. We should make certain that we do not attempt to transfer the responsibility for decisions we make to a biological cause when doing so



I have witnessed chains of sin being shattered by humble souls who open their hearts and minds to the healing influence of the Savior.

is not justified and tends to erode our power to be in control of our lives.

I bear witness that people can change their sinful behavior—even those who may believe they are helpless to stop. I have seen the faithful and prayerful break the bonds of passion, habit, and addiction. I have witnessed chains of sin, dependency, and vice shattered by humble souls who open their hearts and minds to the healing influence of the Savior. Even the most sinful person can cease wrong behavior and choose the right course.

Long will I remember that warm, sunny afternoon driving into the mountains with my friends. The lesson we learned was important to remember. Yes, we have the power to choose our course in life. We must accept the consequences of what we choose.

When your challenges are difficult and your burdens hard to bear, remember this: God will never forsake you nor forget you.

Alma the Younger, who knew something about overcoming serious challenges, including sin, taught us something about God’s desire and willingness to help. After describing the pains he felt for his sins, he said, “Never, until I did cry out . . . for mercy, . . . [did I] find peace to my soul” (Alma 38:8).

He also taught, “I do know that whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day” (Alma 36:3), and, “As much as ye shall put your trust in God even so much ye shall be delivered out of your trials, and your troubles, and your afflictions” (Alma 38:5).

I bear witness that these promises are sure and that the Savior has power to deliver us if we will trust in Him. □

Elder Harold C. Brown is an Area Authority Seventy in the Utah North Area.

From a devotional address given at Ricks College on 30 January 2001.

Gospel topics: agency, choices, accountability, Atonement

Lessons Learned

at the Bishops' Storehouse

BY JACKIE WITZEL

It was hard to receive Church welfare assistance when I had always taken care of myself, but I received much more than food.



A variety of emotions filled my soul as I drove to the bishops' storehouse with my ward Relief Society president. I had always believed in working hard and being self-reliant, yet now I found myself receiving Church welfare. I was grateful for a church that would help me and for a bishop who wanted to make sure my family



As I helped people who came into the storehouse, I learned the importance of looking on the heart rather than the outward appearance.

was taken care of, but I felt I had somehow failed.

My husband of 29 years had made a good living, and I had been able to stay home with our 10 children. Then he filed for divorce, and for the first time in my life, I no longer had sufficient means to provide for my family. When my bishop told me the Church could help temporarily until my financial situation improved, I resisted at first. He asked me to pray about it and to review my budget with my home teacher. After following my bishop's counsel, I realized it would indeed be in the best interest of my family to accept the help.

As I walked into the bishops' storehouse that first time, I ducked my head out of embarrassment. The Relief Society president—whom I was serving with as Relief Society secretary—helped me select some food, trying to make me feel all right about getting plenty for my family. When it came time to leave, I felt awkward, wanting to explain to the sister at the checkout

counter that I was not being lazy or trying to take advantage of the Church.

At home, relieved that the first experience was over, I showed the children all the food we were given. We decided to send thank-you letters, and we knelt in prayer to express our gratitude to Heavenly Father. We also talked about how grateful we were for the good Saints who were so generous with their tithes and offerings.

Despite my gratitude, I struggled with conflicting feelings. I searched my heart to try to understand what was so upsetting to me about receiving Church food. I realized that I harbored prideful beliefs and that I had previously taken credit for blessings the Lord had given me, including my food, clothing, and nice home. I thought about how the Lord actually gives us everything we have, even our very lives. As King Benjamin states, "Do we not all depend upon the same Being, even God, for *all* the substance which

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE WELFARE PLAN



"The real long term objective of the Welfare Plan is the building of character in the members of the Church, givers and receivers, rescuing all that is finest down deep inside of them, and bringing to flower and fruitage the latent richness of the spirit, which after all is the mission and purpose and reason for being of this Church."

President J. Reuben Clark Jr. (1871–1961) of the First Presidency, as quoted in Glen L. Rudd, *Pure Religion: The Story of Church Welfare since 1930* (1995), 44–45.

we have, for both food and raiment, and for gold, and for silver, and for all the riches which we have of every kind?" (Mosiah 4:19; emphasis added).

During the months I received Church assistance, I worked part-time as a psychiatric nurse while trying to juggle the responsibilities of caring for my seven children who were still at home. I knew that bishops are instructed to help members work for the assistance they receive, yet my bishop seemed to feel I already had my hands full. However, I still felt the need to pay something back to the Church.

One day I noticed a sign at the bishops' storehouse stating that they needed volunteers. I knew this was what I needed to do. I felt that if I worked at the storehouse, I might feel greater peace about my situation and might learn additional lessons that Heavenly Father wanted to teach me.

I worked at the bishops' storehouse just a few hours here and there. The first day I smashed empty boxes for several hours. Other days I stocked shelves, vacuumed, washed windows, or arranged produce. I especially enjoyed assisting people who came to the storehouse. My work helped me feel better about my situation.

On one occasion I helped a man with a mental disability. He wanted to put things into his basket that had not been ordered, and he had a difficult time understanding that everything had to be preordered by his bishop. He was somewhat belligerent at first, but as I spoke with him he softened and told me that he was lonely and that he lived alone. I hoped that somehow I had made his day a little brighter, as he had made mine.

Another day I was able to assist a Hispanic sister who spoke limited English. She didn't understand how the process worked and what food items she was supposed to get. I helped her find the items on her request form and helped her mark them off. Her husband, who waited for her while she gathered the food, was excited when he found out there was surplus ice cream available and that he could take all he thought his family could use. They both thanked me and even tried to teach me a little Spanish. Did I feel good inside? Yes indeed!

Receiving Church assistance was not an easy experience, but it was a growing one. I learned much

about gratitude, service, vulnerability, and love. In particular, I learned more about pride and the importance of being humble.

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) stated:

"The proud depend upon the world to tell them whether they have value or not. Their self-esteem is determined by where they are judged to be on the ladders of worldly success. . . .

" . . . [Pride] separates and divides us by 'ranks,' according to our 'riches' and our 'chances for learning' (3 Ne. 6:12)" ("Beware of Pride," *Ensign*, May 1989, 6).

We often judge each other by our possessions, education, appearance, or position, yet we know Heavenly Father does not judge us by these measuring sticks. My experience taught me the value of looking on the heart rather than the outward appearance (see 1 Sam. 16:7).

I am now in a position where I can provide for the needs of my family without additional assistance. Yet I will forever be grateful for all I learned while receiving Church welfare food and working at the bishops' storehouse. It is a special place—a place where I received not only food but, more important, a heightened appreciation for the many gifts Heavenly Father gives me and for those things that are truly of great worth. □

Jackie Witzel is a member of the Little Cottonwood Ward, Sandy Utah Granite View Stake.

Gospel topics: welfare, pride, humility, gratitude

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

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

- 1. How can we develop more gratitude and a greater awareness of our blessings?*
- 2. How can we avoid basing self-worth on our possessions or outward appearance? How can we help ourselves and our families not to be judgmental of those in need?*
- 3. What attitudes will best help us learn and grow during our challenges?*

Warmed and Fed

By Sydna Bohnet

Some years ago our family was living in Banff, a resort town that lies within Banff National Park in Alberta, Canada. The Christmas season brought to our area many tourists, mostly skiers. Because of our location and because my husband was the branch president, we realized we might have unscheduled guests drop in at any time. With that in mind, we made a trip to the nearby store to pick up a few extra groceries. I just had a feeling that something was going to happen.

While we were in the store, a sudden and terrible blizzard swept into our mountains. Although we lived only a block from the store, we had great difficulty getting our car back to the house.

Strangers greeted us at the door. In the short time the storm had been raging, all exits from the park had been closed. Hotels and motels were instantly filled, and the overflow of people trying to find what accommodations they could was large. We invited the strangers, all Church members, into our home, and I carved a freshly cooked, seven-pound turkey that a neighbor had given our family. I also prepared a few other dishes to help feed our hungry guests.

During the next few hours, strangers continued to stream into our home looking for shelter and a place to spend the night. We fed them all. As the evening wore on, all the available bed and floor space was occupied, and finally even the bathtub was pressed into use as a bed. With Christmas lights glowing and Christmas music softly playing in the background, a beautiful spirit of security seemed to fill our home.

With so many people in the area left with nowhere to go, the space in our branch building was also made available. My son Toby and I drove up and down the streets late into the night looking for those who were still stranded in their cars, inviting them to our home or to the branch for warm shelter and something to eat. Everyone ate as much as they wanted, and we soon lost track of the number of people we tried to assist.

The next morning I fixed a hot breakfast for everyone who wished to eat, and with the roads open again we said our good-byes to all our newfound brothers and sisters.

Later in the day, as I was preparing lunch for my family, I opened the refrigerator and





We helped many people in need of shelter during the blizzard. But we wouldn't learn until a year later that we had also helped a young man who needed more than just shelter.

to my surprise found the turkey plate still piled high with meat. I fell to my knees and wept. I had been able to feed a multitude on a small seven-pound turkey, the only meat in the house. Truly we had been blessed in our hour of need.

Yet another blessing was to come from that stormy night. About a year later, a young man visiting our branch spoke and related the following:

"Something happened to me one night that has changed my life forever. At the time of this event I was inactive and had hard feelings toward the Church. On a cold, blizzard night here in Banff, with the roads in and out of the park closed, I was stranded. I was also penniless. In desperation I searched for the local branch president's home—President Bohnet's. Arriving in the yard, I met Sister Bohnet and her son Toby, who were leaving for somewhere. They told me to go into their home where it was warm and have something to eat, then to stay and sleep. When I got to the door there were snow boots everywhere, and as I looked in the window, all I could see were people everywhere.

"I did eat and sleep there, but I was so impressed by their willingness to take in a total stranger and by the Christlike love they showed me on that cold winter's night, that all feelings I had against the Church melted away. I stand here today active in the Church because of their willingness to put gospel principles into action."

I did not remember this young man, but again I wept as the Spirit reaffirmed that simple but profound scriptural message: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:40). □

Sydna Bohnet is a member of the Hauula Fourth Ward, Laie Hawaii Stake.

Gospel topics: service, kindness, activation

"He Would Have Bought It for You"

By Cheryl Boyle

When my husband, Mick, died suddenly, I was devastated. He had been a constant source of inspiration, goodness, and patience. I wondered how I could raise our five children without him.

Shauna was one of my visiting teachers at the time. Occasionally she and her husband, Jim, who was also my home teacher, would take me out to a movie or to the temple.

Fall came, and as the weather turned cold I pulled my coat out of the closet. It was about 15 years old and looked very worn. I was embarrassed to wear it on my outings with Shauna and Jim; the lining was torn, and each time Jim helped me on with the coat, my hand got caught in the lining.

As Christmas drew near, I began to feel lonely. This would be my first Christmas without Mick, and I missed him very much. I tried to act happy for the children's sake, but it was difficult.

Just a few days before Christmas, Jim and Shauna and their oldest daughter came to visit me. They handed me a beautifully wrapped package with a card attached. The card read: "To Cheryl. Love, Mick." Tears began to stream down my face. Inside the box was the most beautiful coat I had ever seen. It fit perfectly. "We knew that if Mick were here, he would have bought it for you," they said.

Whenever I wear my coat, someone always compliments me on how beautiful I look. I know it is because I am glowing—remembering the love of my home teacher, my visiting teacher,

and my husband each time I put it on. □

Cheryl Boyle is a member of the Glacial Park Ward, Sandy Utah Granite View Stake.

Gospel topics; Christmas, home teaching, visiting teaching, love, service

A Heart to Fill

By Ellen Dibble Cox

It was turning out to be another rushed and harried holiday season.

When I was younger, I had envisioned peaceful Christmases filled with twinkling lights and glistening snow, with me seated before a fireplace and surrounded by my dream family.

To my disappointment, however, as a young adult I still had not seen the fulfillment of that dream. Instead, my time and energy during Christmas were being spent on my work as a school-teacher and on various holiday-related activities. As my involvement in these activities increased and my to-do list grew longer, I felt more and more overwhelmed.

In the middle of the chaos came a request from a friend for our young single adult group to sing at a local nursing home. It was to be a family home evening presentation for the elderly patients there. I must admit that I didn't really want to go, but I half-heartedly consented anyway.

Monday evening came, and when I got to the nursing home I was relieved that the hour had arrived—the service project would soon be erased from my to-do list.

A group of patients in wheelchairs had been gathered together in a cold, sterile room. A woman with silver hair and a tremulous voice opened our family home evening with prayer. She petitioned

our Heavenly Father and sincerely and humbly said, “We thank Thee for all of our many blessings.” Blessings? I was puzzled by the thought. How could she see her world of wheelchairs, bedpans, hospital food, lonely days and nights, dependency, crippled limbs, and faded youth as blessings? The woman finished the prayer, and my thoughts were filled with wonder at her expression of gratitude.

Our group stood and began to sing.

Slipped feet tapped on foot rests, gnarled fingers kept time, and smiles appeared at the sound of the familiar melodies. Their expressions mirrored ours as we sang of Christmas delights and heavenly gifts. Something warm and magical gradually seemed to fill the room.

I gazed into the ageless eyes of the onlookers and found myself floating in their warmth and wisdom. They too had been teachers or carolers in a choir—married, single, parents, or childless.

The final notes of the closing song drifted softly around the room: “Sleep in heavenly peace.” A benediction was offered. My spirit was subdued and quieted.

My view of Christmas and of life began to change that night. For one moment I could see that I didn't need to worry so much about what I felt was lacking in my own life. I sensed that within the withered physical bodies of those to whom we had sung were spirits filled with happiness, gratitude, and God's love. No matter the person's age or station in life, a portion of that love and happiness was there, if only I had eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to fill—with gratitude. □

Ellen Dibble Cox is a member of the West Layton Ward, Layton Utah South Stake.

Gospel topics; Christmas, singles, elderly, service, gratitude, music

Christmas Bells through the Fog

By Beth Dayley

Christmas morning dawned on a day as murky as my mood. A dense fog had crept into the Italian city where we were living because of my husband's military assignment. My two daughters were not very excited about the few gifts they had received. Their thoughts, like mine, were with their father, who was in a military hospital in Germany.

“It doesn't seem like Christmas without Daddy here,” eight-year-old Diana commented. I nodded, thinking about all the seasonal cheer we were missing—decorations, family parties, holiday feasts.

“Well, at least some of us are together,” said 17-year-old Athena quietly.

When my husband called from the hospital in Germany, I talked to him briefly and then handed the phone to Diana. To my surprise, she refused to speak to him, even though she hadn't seen or talked to him in weeks. Confused by her reaction, I ran the events of the past month through my mind.

Some weeks earlier my husband, Ed, had begun complaining of pain in his left forearm. In no time it swelled and became stiff. The doctors hospitalized him and gave him antibiotics intravenously. But his hand became useless.

Concerned, I hadn't wanted to make any holiday plans; I was afraid what the next few weeks would hold. I finally made arrangements for our oldest son to stay with his grandmother instead of coming home from college. Our three other children tried to help me get ready for Christmas, but the spirit of the season

could not penetrate my anxiety.

One night had been especially bad. I couldn't sleep, so at 3:30 A.M. I called the hospital and asked about my husband. The nurse said he was in such pain he was pacing the floor. Suddenly I knew Ed needed a priesthood blessing. Since the hour was so early, I hesitated to call our home teacher, Bob DeWitt. But Bob arrived on his own before dawn.

"Mom, our home teacher is here," Athena called out at about 5:00 A.M. Soon Bob called another priesthood holder and hurried to the hospital. He felt prompted to promise Ed he would eventually regain the full use of his hand.

Moments after Bob had left the hospital, a group of doctors conferred around Ed's bed. They couldn't explain what was causing the damage to his arm. Although in pain, Ed commented that it was too bad the X ray couldn't show more than just the bone in his arm; it would help if they could see the tissue as well. Ed's words startled the doctors, and they decided to use an ultrasound machine to look at his arm in a manner not commonly

used. The procedure was later written up in medical journals.

Using the ultrasound in this new way, they located a large pocket of infection deep within Ed's forearm. They operated immediately.

"It's lucky we located the abscess when we did," the surgeon had explained to me later. "Even a few more hours could have cost Ed the use of his arm completely. As it is, I doubt he will ever be able to use his fingers again."

The doctors then transferred Ed to a large hospital in Germany, and I accompanied him while friends took care of our children. Ed's condition became worse; the bone became infected, and antibiotics were unexplainably ineffective. Days went by in a blur as Ed underwent multiple surgeries. Suddenly I realized it was almost Christmas. Ed insisted I fly home to be with the children.

So here it was Christmas morning. I held my youngest daughter close, still not sure why she had refused to speak with her father on the phone. Finally she hesitantly took the phone, and within seconds, her face was wreathed in a smile.

"I thought Daddy was dying," she explained later. "He was so sick when he left."

As I sat quietly with my daughters, I smiled through my tears. Faintly, through the fog, the tolling of Christmas bells reached us. I reflected on the gift we commemorate each Christmas—our Savior who redeemed us from eternal death and made eternal families possible. I realized that through the Lord's Atonement and the ordinances of the temple, we could be together forever.

Ed spent nine months in hospitals—and three long, difficult years passed before he recovered completely. But we never questioned that his priesthood blessing would be fulfilled or that our greatest blessings came through the Lord Jesus Christ.

As I listened to the bells that Christmas morning in Italy, I finally welcomed Christmas into my heart. □

Beth Dayley is a member of the Parrish Canyon Ward, Centerville Utah Stake.

Gospel topics: priesthood blessings, Christmas, adversity, healing



As I sat quietly with my daughters, I smiled through my tears. I realized that through the Atonement and the ordinances of the temple, we could be together forever.

"Do I Really Need to Buy This?"

My husband and I have found that living within our means is possible, but it requires self-control and a practical attitude toward money. We have discovered three helpful questions to ask ourselves before spending money.

1. "Do I really need to buy this?" Before any purchase, no matter how large or small, consider the motive for buying it. Do I really need this new computer game? Does our infant son really need a Sunday suit? Ask yourself whether the item is a need or simply a want.

2. "Is this purchase a spur-of-the-moment decision?" Avoid sudden purchases—especially larger, more expensive items. Often we allow a skilled salesperson or others to talk us into something we don't need or even want. When we went shopping for a computer printer, the salesperson encouraged us to buy a high-resolution color printer. But for our purposes, a black-and-white jet printer seemed more practical and cost effective. We also remembered that the cost of replacing color ink cartridges is much higher than the cost of black ink cartridges.

3. "Are there hidden or future costs that might result from a purchase?" For instance, owning a vehicle leads to future costs. We live in Zurich, Switzerland,

where the cost of gasoline, licenses, insurance, repairs, and parking is high. Sometimes owning a car is more burdensome than not having one. The Swiss public transport system of buses, trams, and trains is enough for our needs.

By questioning our daily purchases and pondering our financial decisions, we have been able to afford what we need and even some of the things we want.

Though to a large degree consistent employment and good health have allowed us to live within our means, I feel confident that our careful spending habits will help us to avoid financial catastrophe should things change in the future.—**Margaret Pattison, Altstetten Ward, Zurich Switzerland Stake**

Fun with Family Traditions

When I was young, my parents started a number of family traditions that my brothers and sisters and I now carry over into our own families. Some of our favorites include the following fun activities:

New Year's Eve. Our New Year's Eve celebrations were family affairs.

Each child invited a few friends to join our family party. To accommodate the crowd, we set up card tables in the living room, dining room, and family room. The evening began with a get-acquainted





Finding Common Ground for Family Home Evening

game; then everyone found a place at a card table and played games. At midnight we served a buffet dinner, sang "Auld Lang Syne," and threw confetti.

Birthdays. Birthdays were always special days. We were treated to breakfast in bed and then allowed to open our presents before getting up. We were not required to do any chores for the day, and Mother always asked us what we wanted for a special birthday dinner.

My parents went to great lengths to be home for those special dinners. One night my father even excused himself from a meeting with a business client, saying he could not be late for a special dinner. Later that evening the client came to the house and was surprised to see linen, crystal, china, and fresh flowers on the table—and hamburgers on the plates!

Dinnertime. Our family tended to be very vocal, and dinnertimes were usually fun occasions. Sometimes we discussed current events, talked about Church doctrine, or just laughed at funny things that had happened during the day. Just being together each evening brought us closer together.

Spring cleanup day. Each year our family gathered at nine o'clock sharp on a Saturday morning to prepare the yard and garden for summer. By five that evening Mother had meat cooking on the grill for an outdoor picnic, and the yard was ready for summertime activities.

Fourth of July. We usually began this summer holiday with a game of baseball in the park, then games with the children. Later we went swimming and had a barbecue. Mother's

Active members of the Church know that family home evening is important, but what if you have a less-active or nonmember spouse? My less-active husband is a strong advocate of family together time. However, he doesn't feel that we need to include prayers, hymns, or religious instruction.

So we have found common ground. Sometimes we spend time together; other times my husband accepts that I will have gospel discussions with just our daughter. At least once a week, often while we're doing the dishes, we discuss *New Era* and *Ensign* articles, along with topics shared in Sunday meetings.

When all three of us are together, we cover a variety of subjects. Often we visit the public library to obtain materials. Together we have discussed

topics such as proper etiquette and safety measures. For the latter discussion, we used books containing "what would you do if . . ." scenarios.

We have also delved into history and read a lot of literature together. After reading a biography of Abraham Lincoln, we watched a Civil War documentary. We have

also read books on character traits and discussed traits such as honesty, compassion, and friendship.

Sometimes newspaper articles or survey results have prompted our discussions.

We enjoy our family activities. They have drawn us closer together and have provided a strong,

common founda-

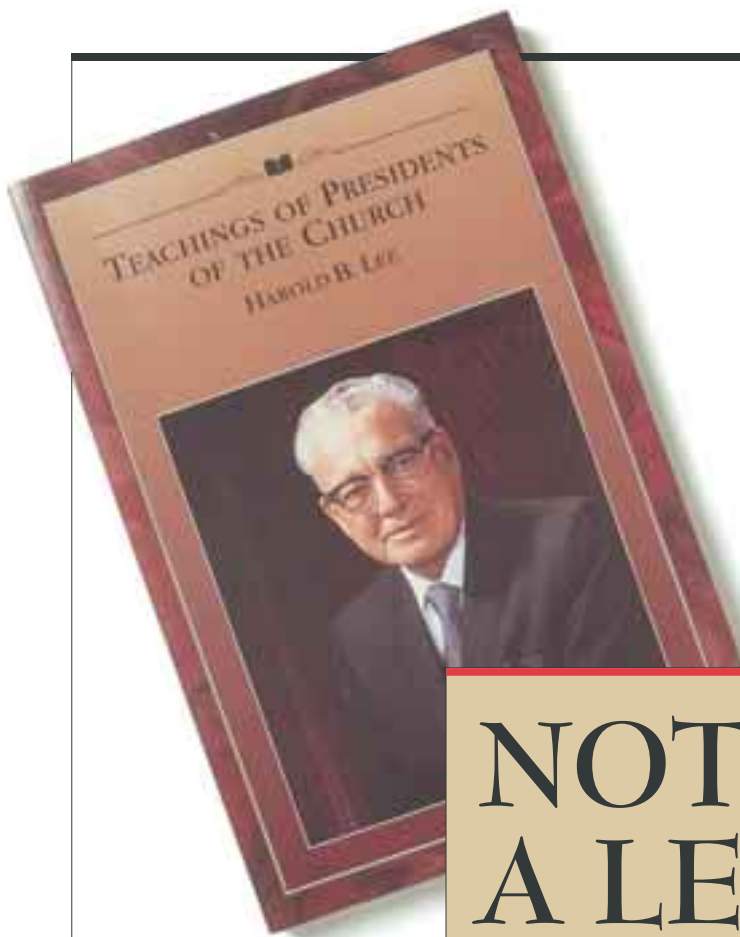
tion that upholds the standards and beliefs we already share.—**Ann Woodbury Moore, Glenville Ward, Albany New York Stake**



homemade ice cream bars were always a special treat. The evening ended with a patriotic program and fireworks.

Family fun times have now

moved to a new generation, and many of these traditions continue to enrich our lives.—**Marsha Sparhawk, Rexburg 15th Ward, Rexburg Idaho East Stake**



In January 2002 we will begin studying the life and teachings of President Harold B. Lee. The book we will receive is one more in a series that will cover every President of the Church. They comprise a library that will enable us to become as familiar with the gospel teachings of our latter-day prophets as we can be with the writings of ancient prophets such as Moses, Nephi, or Moroni. This is why Church leaders want each member to receive a copy of the new volume of *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church*.

Because these books are different from previous lesson materials, some priesthood and Relief Society members and teachers struggle with using them in class. Following are some suggestions to help.

FOR PERSONAL USE

1. Ask your priesthood or Relief Society leader for a copy of the ward study schedule for the book and place it inside your book.
2. Place the book near your scriptures. This may help you remember to study its pages.

3. Take time before going to church to review the chapter you will be discussing in class.
4. Review the questions in the "Suggestions for Study" section of each chapter and ponder ways to apply the doctrines you are studying.
5. Discuss with family members on the way home from church or at home what you discussed in class.¹
6. Use the index in the back of your book to help you find teachings on topics that interest you or that answer personal questions.
7. If you are not able to attend class, follow the schedule by studying at home.

NOT JUST A LESSON MANUAL

BY PAMELA D. JOHNSON AND
CONNIE L. ROSE

*Take another look at the study guides
used in Melchizedek Priesthood and
Relief Society classes.*

FOR CLASS USE

1. Priesthood and Relief Society members should bring their book to class, ready to participate in the lesson.

2. Teachers should choose methods that encourage class members to use their books.

3. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said these books were developed to stress "the application of gospel principles."² Teachers and members can help in class by asking questions, participating in discussions, and sharing

experiences that show how to apply doctrine. The questions in the "Suggestions for Study" section of each chapter may also help teachers and members as they discuss how to apply gospel principles.

FOR TEACHERS

1. Consider the needs of those you teach as you prepare and present the lesson. You may want to counsel with your priesthood and Relief Society leaders for additional insight into the needs of class members.

2. Studies show that teachers have about two minutes to capture the attention of students, so you need to think of interesting and appropriate ways to begin your lessons.

3. Reserve a significant part of your lesson time for discussing real-life examples.

Some teachers like to plan class time so that about half goes toward reviewing the main points of the doctrinal quotes and about half goes toward discussing how the doctrine can be applied.

4. Remember that it is not necessary to present all of the quotes or questions in a chapter in your lesson.

5. Be careful not to talk too much. "Think of yourself as a guide on a journey of learning who inserts appropriate comments to keep those you teach on the correct path."³

6. Use a variety of teaching methods. For example:

- Divide the class into small groups, asking each group to discuss the meaning of a doctrine or how it could be applied and to report their conclusions.

- Ask how a doctrine could be applied to people in different circumstances, such as a father, mother, single parent, teenager, college student, and so on.

- Assign several class members to read different parts of a chapter before class and summarize what they learned or share appropriate insights or experiences.

7. Practice waiting for responses to your questions, since some class members take longer to formulate answers. Be patient and try not to call on the same people.

Some Frequently Asked Questions

1. How am I to know when each chapter of the book will be taught?

Ward leaders are asked to coordinate a schedule for teaching each chapter. This can be done by (1) having a schedule for the year approved at a ward council meeting; (2) printing the schedule in the ward sacrament programs or newsletters; (3) announcing the schedule regularly in priesthood and Relief Society meetings.

2. Why aren't the instruction books more helpful to teachers, like a lesson manual?

The books have been developed primarily for personal use and therefore need adapting for class use. Teachers should receive their assignments well in advance, because the assignments require more preparation time and more reliance on the Spirit of the Lord.

3. Some teachers tend mostly to read quotes directly from the book with little class discussion. How can these lessons be made interesting?

Teachers can use the scriptures, personal experiences, thought-provoking questions, object lessons, short stories, testimony, and other appropriate teaching methods. Whatever a teacher uses should relate to the lesson and help invite the Spirit (see D&C 88:122; Jonn D. Claybaugh and Amber Barlow Dahl, "Increasing Participation in Lessons," *Ensign*, Mar. 2001, 32–36). □

8. Finish the lesson with a concise summary that reviews the doctrines discussed. The spirit of testimony bearing may also help draw your discussion to an uplifting conclusion. □

Pamela D. Johnson is a member of the Ensign Fourth Ward, Salt Lake Ensign Stake. Connie L. Rose is a member of the Mueller Park Fifth Ward, Bountiful Utah Mueller Park Stake.

Gospel topics: teaching, Melchizedek Priesthood, Relief Society

NOTES

1. See "Making Priesthood and Relief Society Lessons Part of Our Lives," *Ensign*, Mar. 2000, 36–40.

2. "Major Curriculum Changes in Priesthood and Relief Society," *Ensign*, Dec. 1997, 8.

3. *Teaching, No Greater Call* (1999), 64.



Blessings of Temple Worship

As we strive to draw closer to the Lord and receive answers to our prayers, we can seek His guidance through temple worship. In addition to rendering vital service to those in the spirit world, we also receive important personal blessings from attending the temple. The Lord promised, “I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house” (D&C 110:7).

John A. Widtsoe (1872–1952), who later became a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, testified that “the temple is a place where revelations may be expected.” If we attend the temple, he said, “at the most unexpected moments, in or out of the temple will come to [us], as a revelation, the solution of the problems that vex [our lives]” (“Temple Worship,” *The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Apr. 1921, 63–64).

ANSWERS TO PRAYER

As the sun rose one June morning, a couple started their day with a prayer of thanksgiving. This day they were witnessing the answer to 13 years of earnest prayer. Their 27-year-old son and his wife had worked with loving bishops to put their lives in order so they might be worthy to enter the temple. That morning they would be sealed for all eternity.

Then came that sacred day when our prayers were answered.

This grateful mother reflects: “The joy we felt was unspeakable. As we sat in the temple with our son and his sweet companion, my mind was taken back to the time when this boy was 14 and began making choices that drew him away from the guidance of the Spirit. The time came when we needed extra help from a loving Heavenly Father.

“Attending the temple had always been important to us, and we felt prompted to pray for our son in this holy place. Each time we attended the temple, we placed our son’s name on the prayer roll.

“We wanted our prayers to be answered today—or tomorrow at the latest. But years passed, and our son remained less active. We were not left without hope, however. We often felt the comforting influence of the Holy Ghost. One evening

while my husband and I were praying in the temple, the Spirit let us know unmistakably that our son was being watched over and that he would eventually repent and return to Church activity. We were also taught that we must never give up and never stop loving him. Our faith was strengthened, and a great peace settled into our hearts.

“And then came that sacred day when our prayers were answered.”

PROMISED BLESSINGS

This couple’s experience was the joyous fulfillment of a prophetic statement by President Gordon B. Hinckley: “I make you a promise that if you will go to the house of the Lord, you will be blessed, life will be better for you. . . . Avail yourselves of the great opportunity to go to the Lord’s house and thereby partake of all of the marvelous blessings that are yours to be received there” (“Excerpts from Recent Addresses of President Gordon B. Hinckley,” *Ensign*, July 1997, 73).

Some Church members live far from a temple. But all of us can live worthy of and receive a temple recommend.

And we can help our ancestors receive temple blessings by researching and submitting their names for temple ordinances. Whatever temple service our circumstances will allow will bless us with increased peace, faith, hope, and spiritual guidance. □

Gospel topics: temples, inspiration, family history





PHOTO COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

Members of the Toowoomba University Branch gather for an institute class on the campus of the University of Southern Queensland.

Saints in Australia's Toowoomba University Branch

Early in 1998 Elder Bruce C. Hafen of the Seventy, then a member of the Australia/New Zealand Area Presidency, visited Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia. Toowoomba, nestled in the mountains 75 miles (120 km) west of Brisbane, is the home of the University of Southern Queensland (USQ).

TOOWOOMBA UNIVERSITY BRANCH

Organized	1998
Members	65
Population of city	100,000
Stake	Ipswich Australia Stake

Elder Hafen asked his host, President Grant A. Pitman of the Ipswich Australia Stake, "How many wards do you have here at the university?"

"None," replied President Pitman. At that time, the very concept of a university ward in Australia was a novelty. While there are many

universities in Australia with Church institute programs, nowhere in the nation was there a Church unit affiliated with a university.

When President Pitman explained there were only a few Latter-day Saint students at USQ, Elder Hafen encouraged President Pitman to consider forming a university branch as an ideal opportunity for growth.

In February 1998 the Toowoomba University Branch was organized, the first university-based Church unit in Australia. The growth promised by Elder Hafen began to occur as branch members shared the gospel with their friends and classmates, many of whom joined the Church. Attracted by the university branch, more Latter-day Saint students came to study at USQ. By the time the university opened for its 2001 year last February, the little branch had

grown to some 60 members.

Located near the eastern coast of Australia, USQ draws many students from other Pacific areas as well as Australia. The international makeup of students is reflected in the Toowoomba University Branch. The branch provides a spiritual haven for its diverse group of



members, no matter where they are from or whether they are new converts, recently activated members, or lifelong Latter-day Saints.

Ashley Auld is a student who began attending the branch at the invitation of two sister missionaries. Touched by the warm

welcome he received and the sincerity of the testimonies he heard there, Ashley was soon baptized. He was ordained an elder and now serves as a stake missionary.

Branch member John Hartzenberg of South Africa was less active when he arrived at the university. But after missionaries taught and baptized his wife, Nadja, John became an active member. Their young son, Kyle, now enjoys the benefits of Primary.

Linette McNab, a Latter-day Saint from nearby Ipswich, had planned to be at the university for only a month but enjoyed the university branch so much that she decided to stay. "Now my younger sister wants to come here next year as well," says Linette.

Branch president Shane Kendrick says branch members are now working to be ready to attend the nearby Brisbane temple, which is currently under construction.—**Owen B. Mützelburg, Toowoomba University Branch, Ipswich Australia Stake** □



Toowoomba, a 90-minute drive from Brisbane on the coast, is the principal inland city of Queensland.

Angel Moroni Statues Placed atop Three Temples

Statues of the angel Moroni were set atop the spires of three temples on 21 September 2001, the 178th anniversary of Moroni's first appearance to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Small crowds gathered at temples in Nauvoo, Illinois; Boston, Massachusetts; and The Hague, Netherlands, to watch construction workers place the gold-plated, 6-foot 10-inch statues.

More than 500 spectators cheered as the angel statue was set on the dome of the Nauvoo temple. Although the Nauvoo temple is being constructed to closely resemble the original structure, the new temple has a standing angel as do other modern temples rather than a flying angel like the one on the original building.

The Nauvoo temple will be dedicated on 27 June 2002, the 158th anniversary of the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. A five-week open house will be held beginning 18 May 2002, excluding Sundays and Mondays.

The placement of the statue on the Boston temple marked the long-awaited completion of the temple's steeple. It followed the resolution of a lawsuit filed last year by some local residents who objected to the proposed steeple. The Boston temple

was dedicated without its steeple on 1 October 2000.

Local Church leaders and the director of the construction company spoke to a crowd of more than 300 at The Hague temple, who then watched Dutch construction workers wearing traditional wooden shoes climb the scaffolding in order to guide the statue into place.

The Hague temple is scheduled to be completed next summer. □

Right: The angel Moroni statue is hoisted to the top of the Nauvoo temple. Below: The steeple and statue are placed on the Boston temple. Below right: Five European stake presidents pose with the statue before it is lifted atop The Hague temple.



ABOVE: PHOTO BY CORY KARL; FAR LEFT: PHOTO BY DON HEINER; LEFT: PHOTO BY ROSS EZRA KENDALL



A large interactive model of Jerusalem and murals depicting the life of Jesus Christ are just some of the new displays people can enjoy at the remodeled Visitors' Centers on Temple Square.

Remodeled Temple Square Visitors' Centers Offer Interactive Look at Gospel

The North and South Visitors' Centers on Temple Square in Salt Lake City reopened on 5 October with new exhibits offering visitors opportunities to learn about the Church according to their own interests and at their own pace.

The exhibits focus on basic beliefs of the Church, including the divinity of Jesus Christ, the importance of following His teachings, and the eternal nature of the family. But the means of learning include new interactive exhibits that let visitors explore their own questions. Missionaries continue to be available to give guided tours of Temple Square.

The heroic-size *Christus*

statue is still a focal point of the North Visitors' Center, as in the past. The themes of all the new exhibits in the building unite to testify of Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world and the head of His Church on the earth. On the center's ground level, for example, visitors encounter a 14-by-14-foot model of Jerusalem at the time of Christ. Touching a bar above one of the pictures around the model spotlights the site in Jerusalem where the event in the picture may have taken place, and the visitor hears a recorded message about the event. Restored and new murals on nearby walls depict events from the Savior's life. Other displays in the building focus

on the place of prophets in His Church and in the lives of His followers and on how His followers may live His teachings.

In the South Visitors' Center, two themes are explored, coming together in the middle of the building as visitors look out at the panorama of the Salt Lake Temple. Those coming into the west entrance of the center will find displays teaching of the importance of the family. Those coming in through the new east entrance of the building will find displays teaching about the temple. Progressing toward the middle, they will find displays that teach about how temples can bind families together forever.

Touch-screen displays and interactive video kiosks are important contributors to learning from the new exhibits. In the "Scriptures and Revelation" exhibit in the North Visitors' Center, for example, visitors will be able to see and hear video messages from President Gordon B. Hinckley.

The new technologies freely used in the exhibits are meant to ease the way of learning, but the emphasis of the exhibits is still on gospel principles, said Elder Charles Didier of the Seventy, executive director of the Missionary Department. "We hope all people who visit the centers leave uplifted and take away an increased understanding of the Church and of the Savior," he said.

Each year, some five million people come to Temple Square, one of the most visited spots in the western United States. It is expected that many visitors to the Salt Lake 2002 Olympic Winter Games will be drawn to Temple Square. □



Touch-screen displays and interactive video kiosks allow users to customize their visit.

Church Materials Available for Those with Disabilities

A childhood bout with meningitis left Brenda Jorgenson, now 22, with the inability to communicate verbally and the mental development of a seven-year-old.

But Brenda, a member of the Basin City First Ward, Pasco Washington Stake, learned to communicate using American Sign Language (ASL), and she also learned to love the Book of Mormon. So Brenda was delighted when she saw an article in the July 2001 *Ensign* about the release of the Book of Mormon in ASL on videocassette.

"Brenda carried the article around with her for weeks, begging us to order the videos," said her mother, Anne Jorgenson. "But I kept putting it off because I was sure it was something we couldn't afford for a while."

When Sister Jorgenson called the distribution center to ask how much the videos cost, "the phone clerk said they were 'two-fifty,' then put me on hold," said Sister Jorgenson. "While I was waiting I knew that even though \$250 was a lot of money, we would buy this for Brenda because she needed it, though we might have to wait until we could afford it."

When the clerk returned and clarified that the entire sequence of videos cost a



The Book of Mormon in Braille is one of hundreds of items available for those with disabilities.

total of *two dollars 50 cents*, Sister Jorgenson told him he must have made a mistake. "Then he explained that the Church had decided that the price of any version of the Book of Mormon—whether it was in Spanish or ASL or any other language—wouldn't exceed the price of the standard English version," said Sister Jorgenson. "I got all choked up I was so grateful."

The ASL Book of Mormon is just one of hundreds of Church items available for free or for a nominal cost to accommodate people with hearing, visual, physical, learning, mental, and other disabilities. Examples include simplified scripture readers, the annual children's sacrament meeting presentation in Braille and ASL, manuals on teaching those with disabilities, and a wide range of curriculum items in large type, on audiocassette or CD, or in Braille.

For a complete list of these items, see the

"Materials for Those with Disabilities" section of a Church materials catalog, available at your local distribution center, local meeting-house, or on the Internet at www.ldscatalog.com. □

General Conference Now on DVD

Members who want to watch conference again—or watch it in a different language—can now purchase a digital video disc (DVD) set on which conference is recorded in 16 languages.

Production of the DVD set marks the first time that members can purchase an audio or visual recording of conference in any language other than English. All five sessions of conference are now produced on the DVDs in Cantonese, Cebuano, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean,

Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Samoan, Spanish, Tagalog, Tahitian, and Tongan on a single DVD video.

Because this DVD set is compatible with NTSC, PAL, and SECAM formats, it can be watched on any television set in the world.

The DVD set of October's general conference (item no. 21058; U.S. \$14.25) is scheduled to be available from Church distribution centers in December. Recordings of conference are also available in English on videocassette, audiocassette, and compact disc. □



Find Temple Square Event

A new location on the Church Web site, at www.events.lds.org, allows users to get information and tickets for all Temple Square-related events, including those in the Conference Center, Conference Center Theater, Tabernacle, and Assembly

Hall. General conference tickets, however, will continue to be distributed through local Church leaders.

For those without Internet access, information about events and tickets is available by calling 1-801-240-0080. □



A record 9,200 students enrolled at BYU—Idaho this fall semester as the school began offering bachelor's degrees. To accommodate greater numbers of students, the school will now fully utilize facilities year-round.

Ricks Becomes Brigham Young University—Idaho

By DON SPARHAWK

As Brigham Young University—Idaho (formerly Ricks College) winds up its first semester, many changes are under way.

The decision to change the school from a two-year college to a four-year university was announced by President Gordon B. Hinckley in June 2000. The name change was designed to help give the school immediate national and international recognition.

This fall's homecoming week, held 18–22 September, included special events celebrating the change: the lighting of a "Legacy Torch" symbolizing the legacy and spirit of Ricks College; a torchlight parade by night; fireworks; a concert with Gladys Knight and alumni performers; and the final homecoming football game.

Commencing homecoming week was a devotional address given by

Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who is the Church Commissioner of Education and a former president of Ricks College. Speaking of the school's transition, Elder Eyring told students and faculty that "change will not end. The phrase 'rethinking education' is not to be only a slogan for the transformation from a two- to four-year status. The school is to be a place of educational innovation permanently," he said.

"The people who serve here have found a way to make changes . . . great and rapid changes . . . that will enhance, not replace, the best of what the school has always been. Because of that, I can with confidence make you a promise. When you return in some distant future, you will find great innovation has become commonplace, and yet, amidst all the



Elder Henry B. Eyring speaks before helping to light the school's "Legacy Torch."

change, the school will have retained and enriched the basic characteristics which blessed your life."

Milestones during the past year have included the hiring of 25 new faculty members, groundbreaking for the new Jacob Spori and multiuse buildings, announcement of the Thomas E. Ricks Building, and candidacy status for accreditation of the

proposed bachelor's degree programs.

A record 9,200 students enrolled at BYU—Idaho this fall semester as the school began offering 17 bachelor's degrees along with traditional associate degrees. About 50 baccalaureate programs are planned to be implemented by 2004. The university expects to continue to experience a modest increase in the size of the student body during the next few years, reaching an expected high of 11,600 students in 2005.

To accommodate a greater number of students, BYU—Idaho will fully utilize facilities year-round, offering a wide variety of courses during the summer as well as the traditional fall and winter semesters. Students will be admitted on one of four academic tracks. Besides the traditional fall-winter track, the school will offer a winter-summer track, a summer-fall track, and a year-round fast track program.

Intercollegiate athletics will be phased out at the end of the 2001–2 academic year. A new student activities program is designed to meet the extracurricular needs of the diverse student body. The program will have an array of year-round activities in three areas: service and social, visual and performing arts, and physical activities. Each area is structured to give students numerous opportunities for involvement at leisure, instructional, recreational, and competitive levels of interest. □

Don Sparhawk is the media relations coordinator for BYU—Idaho.

In the Spotlight

JAPANESE MEMBERS CELEBRATE 100 YEARS

Throughout 2001, Church members in Japan have been celebrating the 100th anniversary of missionary work in their country. Elder Heber J. Grant (1856–1945), then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, dedicated the islands of Japan for the preaching of the gospel on 1 September 1901 in Yokohama.

On 1 September 2001, Elders Donald L. Hallstrom, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, and Gary S. Matsuda of the Asia North Area Presidency presided at a commemorative ceremony held on the grounds of what will be a new Yokohama meetinghouse located near the place where Japan was dedicated.

Two large bronze commemorative plaques were unveiled, placed on the base of a steeple that will be part of the new meetinghouse. Among those attending the ceremony were Kenji Tanaka and Kenichi Sagara, who with Elder Kikuchi were called in 1970 as the presidency of the first stake in Japan, when there were about 12,500 members in the country. Presidents Tanaka and Sagara were later called as regional representatives. Elder Kikuchi became the first native Japanese to be called as a General Authority.

Today Japan has 2 temples, 31 stakes, 8 missions, and more than 110,000 Latter-day Saints.

FIRST KENYAN STAKE ORGANIZED

The first stake in Kenya was organized on 9 September by Elder Robert C. Oaks and Elder Steven E. Snow of the Africa Southeast Area Presidency.

The Nairobi Kenya Stake was organized from the Kenya Nairobi District. Joseph W. Sitati, Daniel Muthiani, and Hesborn O. Usi, who had been serving as the district presidency, were called to the stake presidency. The Church was officially recognized in this east African nation on 25 February 1991.

BYU—HAWAII RANKED FOURTH BY *U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT*

Brigham Young University—Hawaii was recently ranked fourth in the western region category for comprehensive, non-graduate-degree-granting universities in the *U.S. News & World Report's* annual survey of America's best schools. The university also received the highest ranking in the region for academic reputation.

AREA PRESIDENCY MEETS AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER

Elders Kenneth Johnson and Val R. Christensen of the Australia/New Zealand Area Presidency met with the prime minister of Australia on 28 August. They discussed with the Honorable John Howard and other parliamentary leaders and senators how the Church supports families and communities. □

Church Seeking Joseph Smith Manuscripts

The Church Archives of the Family and Church History Department are searching for original manuscripts relating to the Prophet Joseph Smith, including documents written by or to Joseph Smith, documents containing contemporary references to him,

and documents bearing his signature. Anyone with information concerning the location of such manuscripts, whether in private or institutional possession, is requested to contact Sharalyn Duffin at duffinsh@ldschurch.org or at 1-801-240-2258. □

Comment

Call for Articles

If you have had personal experience pertaining to the following, we invite you to share your suggestions. *"We are taught to use careful judgment and maturity in the choosing of the music we listen to. Yet there are so many different personal views and tastes in music that it is difficult to agree on what to play at a Church dance without offending someone. As a parent and leader of youth, how can I ensure that the music played in my home and at Church is appropriate?"*

Send responses by 10 January to *Ensign* Editorial, 24th Floor, 50 East North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84150-3224. At the top of your submission, write "Questions and Answers," along with your name, address, telephone number, ward, and stake. You may also reply by e-mail to cur-editorial-ensign@ldschurch.org. Put "Questions and Answers" in the subject line.

While we cannot acknowledge receipt of individual responses, authors whose submissions are selected for publication will be notified. If you want your manuscript returned, enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope and allow up to a year.

Update

Goff Dowding painted the inside front cover artwork of the October 2001 *Ensign*. His name was incorrectly listed as Geoff.

Easing Burdens

Thank you for the informative and helpful article, "Easing the Burdens of Mental Illness" (Oct. 2001). As national president of the Canadian Mental Health Association and as one involved in this

area for almost 20 years, I can attest to the support that we, as members of the Lord's Church, can bring to those who suffer with mental illness. Such service is a demonstration of the concern and love that we, as Latter-day Saints, have for those around us.

The world has need of willing volunteers who will ease the burdens of others and heed the call to serve. **Bill Gaudette**
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Just As Much Meaning

Thank you for publishing the article, "Loving My Wayward Child" (Sept. 2001). It addressed a sensitive topic in a way that touched me deeply.

Two things stood out to make the story especially meaningful. First, the mother realized that her attempts to force her daughter to change destructive behaviors were actually infringing on her daughter's agency. Second, the account ended with the daughter still not active in the Church, but with the mother continuing to have hope.

This kind of experience has as much meaning and validity for members as stories that end with everything being set right. I think that the *Ensign* publishing a story with a "less-than-perfect" outcome was courageous and beneficial.

Tony Markham
Delhi, New York

Iowa, not Missouri

I enjoyed the article "From New York to Utah: Seven Church Headquarters" (Aug. 2001). However, the caption on p. 57 describing a painting of Nauvoo should have said the viewpoint was from the Iowa side of the Mississippi River, not the "Missouri side." **Phyllis Senske**
Rapid City, Michigan

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Making the Most of This Issue

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work in families of any size and in any situation.

- How can home evenings include family members who are less active or not members? Find common ground. See p. 61.

Family Times and Holidays

- What would you do if your home were suddenly filled with unexpected guests who needed a warm meal and a place to sleep? See "Warmed and Fed," p. 56.

- Most stories in Latter-day Saint Voices can be used for family home evening. To read about inspirational holiday experiences, go to p. 56.

- What do New Year's Eve, birthdays, and the Fourth of July have in common? For one family, they mean fun traditions. Turn to p. 60 to learn more.

- Single? Empty-nester? Traditional family? Look on page 40 to see how family home evening can

Jesus Christ's Surpassing Gift

Bishop Richard C. Edgley testifies of the Savior's offering in our behalf: "When I contemplate the magnitude of this gift, the magnitude of His descent, and the extremity of His suffering, the words of a song thunder through my mind: 'O Lord my God. . . How great thou art!'" (*Hymns*, no. 86). See p. 16.

The Heartbreak and the Joy

There was heartbreak in the baby's insurmountable physical challenges. Could he bring joy too? See p. 22 for one mother's answer.

"Do I Really Need This?"

"Do I really need to buy this?" If you ask yourself this and a few other questions before making holiday purchases (or any other purchases), you can learn to enjoy debt-free living all year-round. See p. 60.



The Power of Our Choices

"Choices we make now will affect who and what we are in the future," writes Elder Harold C. Brown, Area Authority Seventy. Find suggestions for making righteous choices on p. 46.

Home Teachers and Visiting Teachers

Find the monthly messages on pp. 2 and 64.

Did You Know?

Each December issue offers articles about the life and mission of the Savior in a month when the world commemorates His birth.

For example, see, "Five Marks of the Divinity of Jesus Christ," by President Ezra Taft Benson, p. 8.

Joseph Smith: Instrument of the Restoration

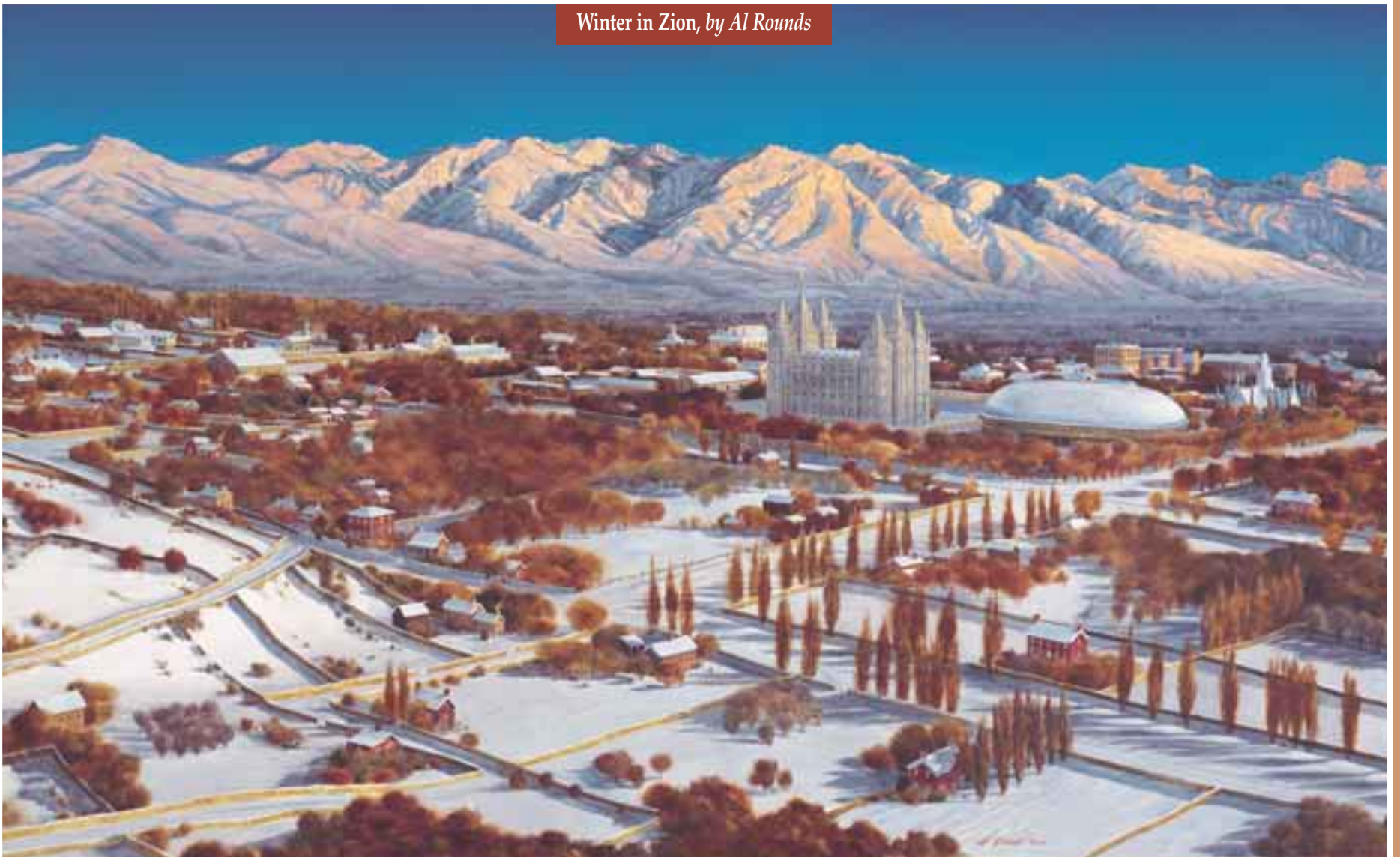
"I testify that the instrument through whom this divine revelation [the Restoration] came was one foreordained—the youthful Joseph Smith," declares Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. To learn his insights into the life and mission of the Prophet, turn to p. 26.

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Winter in Zion, by Al Rounds



Snow blankets Salt Lake City of an earlier era, after the completion of the temple in 1893, in this view across Salt Lake Valley toward the mountains on the southeast.



In the winter of 1845–46, with the need to leave Nauvoo hanging ominously over them, members of the Church still found time for healthy recreation. In the meantime, administration of sacred temple ordinances went on with some urgency. On 3 February 1846, as Church leaders were preparing to leave Nauvoo, President Brigham Young recorded: “The House of the Lord was thronged all day. . . . Looking upon the multitude and knowing their anxiety, as they were thirsting and hungering for the word, we continued at work diligently” (History of the Church, 7:579).