

Ensign



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**The Book of Mormon
Challenge, p. 14**
**Are You "Quick
to Observe"? p. 30**
Mighty Prayer, p. 54



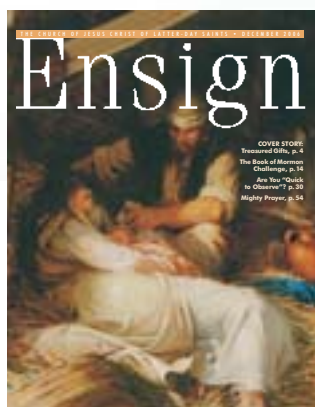
**Determination,
by Julie Rogers**

James Kirkwood, age 11, carried his brother Joseph, 4, up the five-mile (8-km) ascent known as Rocky Ridge in Wyoming on October 23, 1856, during a fierce snowstorm. Fifteen members of the Willie handcart company died that night, including James.



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One hundred fifty years ago the stranded Saints on the frozen plains of Wyoming were rescued.



ON THE COVER

Front: *Behold the Lamb of God*, by Walter Rane, courtesy of the Museum of Church History and Art. Back: Detail from *Brother Joseph*, by David Lindsley; photograph by Welden C. Andersen.



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4 Treasured Gifts

PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON

These gifts from our Father will shape our lives for eternity.

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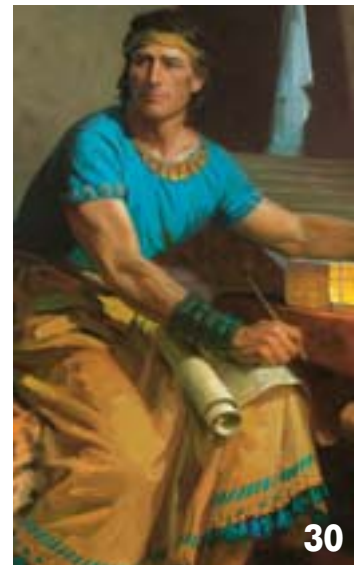
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DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

The *Ensign* welcomes submissions that show the gospel of Jesus Christ at work in the lives of Latter-day Saints, especially articles with personal experiences and gospel insights. This month we invite you to share what you have learned about effective scripture study. What helps you gain new insights? What study techniques do you use that might benefit others? Label your submissions "scripture study," and send by January 15, 2007.

Send to: ensign@ldschurch.org or Ensign Editorial, 50 E. North Temple Street, Room 2420, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA. Include your name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, ward and stake (or branch and district).

Writers' guidelines: Visit the link in the lower-right corner of the Gospel Library page at www.lds.org. Due to the volume of submissions, we cannot acknowledge receipt. Authors whose work is selected for publication will be notified. If you would like your manuscript, photos, art, or other material returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.



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Ensign

AN OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH
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USING THIS ISSUE

Gaining power in prayer.

After reading “What I Have Learned about Mighty Prayer” (p. 54), are you looking for additional help with prayer? Try searching for “prayer” in Church Magazines under Gospel Library at www.lds.org.

Teaching about tithing. You might share Elder Jorge Luis Castillo’s story, “My Father’s Last Words” (p. 52), and then testify of how you have been blessed by obedience to the law of tithing.

Feeling the Holy Ghost.

Members who followed President Gordon B. Hinckley’s challenge to read the Book of Mormon in 2005 (“Taking the Challenge,” p. 14) testify that they felt the guidance of the Spirit more often in their lives as a result. Are you reading the Book of Mormon now?

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Treasured Gifts

BY PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON
First Counselor in the First Presidency

President David O. McKay (1873–1970) would frequently suggest the need for us to turn from the hectic day-to-day schedule filled with letters to answer, calls to be made, people to see, meetings to attend, and take time to meditate, to ponder, and to reflect on the eternal truths and the sources of the joy and happiness which comprise each person's quest.

When we do, the mundane, the mechanical, the repetitious patterns of our lives yield to the spiritual qualities, and we acquire a much-needed dimension which inspires our daily living. When I follow this counsel, thoughts of family, experiences with friends, and treasured memories of special days and quiet nights course through my mind and bring a sweet repose to my being.

The Christmas season, with its special meaning, inevitably prompts a tear and inspires a renewed commitment to God.

I reflect on the contrasts of Christmas. The extravagant gifts, expensively packaged and professionally wrapped, reach their zenith in the famed commercial catalogs carrying the headline "For the person who has everything."

In one such reading I observed a 4,000-square-foot (372-sq-m) home wrapped with a gigantic ribbon and comparable greeting card that said, "Merry Christmas." Other items included diamond-studded clubs for the golfer, a Caribbean cruise for the traveler, and a luxury trip to the Swiss Alps for the adventurer.

Then there is the remembered Christmas tale by O. Henry about a young husband and wife who lived in abject poverty yet who wanted to give one another a special gift. But they had nothing to give. Then the husband had a ray of inspiration: he would provide his dear wife a beautiful ornamental comb to adorn her magnificent long hair. The wife also received an idea: she would obtain a lovely chain for her husband's prized watch, which he valued so highly.

Christmas day came; the treasured gifts were exchanged. Then the surprise ending, so typical of O. Henry's short stories: the wife had shorn her long hair and sold it to obtain funds to purchase the watch chain, only to discover that her husband had sold his watch so that he might purchase the comb to adorn her beautiful long hair, which now she did not have.¹

At home in a hidden-away corner, I have a small black walking stick with an imitation



He died that we might live, and live everlastingly. Resurrection morning was preceded by pain, by suffering, in accordance with the divine plan of God. Before Easter there had to be a cross. The world has witnessed no greater gift.

silver handle. It once belonged to a distant relative. Why do I keep it for a period now spanning more than 70 years? There is a special reason. As a small boy I participated in a Christmas pageant in our ward. I was privileged to be one of the three Wise Men. With a bandanna about my head, Mother's piano bench cover draped over my shoulder, and the black cane in my hand, I spoke my assigned lines: "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."² I vividly remember the feelings of my heart as the three of us "Wise Men" looked upward and saw a star, journeyed across the stage, found Mary with the young child Jesus, then fell down and worshipped Him and opened our treasures and presented gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

I especially liked the fact that we did not return to the evil Herod to betray the baby Jesus but obeyed God and departed another way.

The years have flown by, but the Christmas cane continues to occupy a special place in my home; and in my heart is a commitment to Christ.

For a few moments, may we set aside the catalogs of Christmas, with their gifts of exotic description. Let's even turn from the flowers for Mother, the special tie for Father, the cute doll, the train that whistles, the long-awaited bicycle—even the books and videos—and direct our thoughts to God-given gifts that endure. From a long list I will cite just four:

1. The gift of birth
2. The gift of peace
3. The gift of love
4. The gift of life eternal

First, the gift of birth. It has been universally bestowed on each of us. Ours was the divine privilege to depart our heavenly home to tabernacle in the flesh and to



T*he passport to peace is the practice of prayer. The feelings of the heart, humbly expressed rather than a mere recitation of words, provide the peace we seek.*

demonstrate by our lives our worthiness and qualifications to one day return to Heavenly Father, to precious loved ones, and to a kingdom called *celestial*. Our mothers and our fathers bestowed this marvelous gift on us. Ours is the responsibility to show our gratitude by the actions of our lives.

My own father, a printer, gave me a copy of a piece he had printed. It was titled "A Letter from a Father" and concluded with this thought: "Perhaps my greatest hope as a parent is to have such a relationship with you that when the day comes and you look down into the face of your first child, you will feel deep within you the desire to be to your child the kind of parent your dad has tried to be to you. What greater compliment could any man ask? Love, Dad."

Our gratitude to Mother for the gift of birth is equal or beyond that owed to Father. She who looked upon us as "a sweet new blossom of humanity, fresh fallen from God's own home, to flower on earth"³ and cared for our every need, comforted our every cry, and later rejoiced in any of our accomplishments and wept over our failures and disappointments occupies a singular place of honor in our hearts.

A passage from 3 John sets forth the formula whereby we might express to our parents our gratitude for the gift of birth: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."⁴ Let us so walk. Let us so honor the givers of this priceless gift of birth.

Second, the gift of peace. In the raucous world in which we live, the din of traffic, the blaring commercials of the media, and the sheer demands placed on our time—to say nothing of the problems of the world—cause headache, inflict pain, and sap our strength to cope. The burden of sickness or the grief of mourning a loved one departed brings us to our knees seeking heavenly help. With the

ancients we may wonder, “Is there no balm in Gilead?”⁵ There is a certain sadness, even hopelessness, in the verse:

*There is never a life without sadness,
There is never a heart free from pain;
If one seeks in this world for true solace,
He seeks it forever in vain.*⁶

He who was burdened with sorrow and acquainted with grief speaks to every troubled heart and bestows the gift of peace: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”⁷

He sends forth His word through the missionaries serving far and wide proclaiming His gospel of good tidings and salutation of peace. Vexing questions such as “From whence did I come?” “What is the purpose of my being?” “Whence go I after death?” are answered by His special servants. Frustration flees, doubt disappears, and wonder wanes when truth is taught in boldness, yet in a spirit of humility, by those who have been called to serve the Prince of Peace—even the Lord Jesus Christ. His gift is bestowed individually: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him.”⁸

The passport to peace is the practice of prayer. The feelings of the heart, humbly expressed rather than a mere recitation of words, provide the peace we seek.

In Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, the wicked King Claudius kneels and tries to pray, but he rises and says, “My words fly up, my thoughts remain below: / Words without thoughts never to heaven go.”⁹

One who received and welcomed the gift of peace was Joseph Millett, an early missionary to the Maritime Provinces of Canada, who learned while there and in his later experiences in life of the need to rely on heavenly help. An experience which he recalled in his journal is a beautiful illustration of simple yet profound faith:

“One of my children came in and said that Brother Newton Hall’s folks was out of bread, had none that day.

“I divided our flour in a sack to send up to Brother Hall. Just then Brother Hall came.

“Says I, ‘Brother Hall, are you out of flour?’

“‘Brother Millett, we have none.’

The gift of birth has been universally bestowed on each of us. Ours was the divine privilege to depart our heavenly home to tabernacle in the flesh and to demonstrate by our lives our worthiness and qualifications to one day return to Heavenly Father.



A segment of our society desperately yearning for an expression of true love is found among those growing older and particularly when they suffer from pangs of loneliness.

“Well, Brother Hall, there is some in that sack. I have divided and was going to send it to you. Your children told mine that you was out.’

“Brother Hall began to cry. He said he had tried others, but could not get any. He went to the cedars and prayed to the Lord, and the Lord told him to go to Joseph Millett.

“Well Brother Hall, you needn’t bring this back. If the Lord sent you for it you don’t owe me for it.’

“You can’t tell me how good it made me feel to know that the Lord knew there was such a person as Joseph Millett.”¹⁰

Prayer brought the gift of peace to Newton Hall and to Joseph Millett.

Third, the gift of love. “Master, which is the great commandment in the law?” queried the lawyer who spoke to Jesus. Came the prompt reply:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first and great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”¹¹

On another occasion the Lord taught, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.”¹² The scriptures are filled with the importance of love and its relevance in our lives. The Book of Mormon teaches that charity is the pure love of Christ.¹³ The Master Himself provided an ideal pattern

for us to follow. Of Him it was said that

He “went about doing good . . . ;
for God was with him.”¹⁴

A few lines from the favorite musical *The Sound of Music* suggest a course of action all might well follow:

*A bell is no bell 'til you ring it,
A song is no song 'til you sing it,
And love in your heart wasn't
put there to stay—*

*Love isn't love 'til you
give it away.*¹⁵



A segment of our society desperately yearning for an expression of true love is found among those growing older and particularly when they suffer from pangs of loneliness. The chill wind of dying hopes and vanished dreams whistles through the ranks of the elderly and those who approach the declining side of the summit of life.

“What they need in the loneliness of their older years is, in part at least, what we needed in the uncertain years of our youth: a sense of belonging, an assurance of being wanted, and the kindly ministrations of loving hearts and hands—not merely dutiful formality, not merely a room in a building, but room in someone’s heart and life.

“We cannot bring them back the morning hours of youth. But we can help them live in the warm glow of a sunset made more beautiful by our thoughtfulness, by our provision, and by our active and unfeigned love.”¹⁶ So wrote Elder Richard L. Evans (1906–71) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles some years ago.

At times an awareness of the elderly is brought into focus by a reminder from one ever so young. May I share with you a Pakistani folktale which illustrates this truth:

An ancient grandmother lived with her daughter and grandson. As she grew frail and feeble, instead of being a help around the house, she became a constant trial. She broke plates and cups, lost knives, spilled water. One day, exasperated because the old woman had broken another precious plate, the daughter sent the grandson to buy his grandmother a wooden plate. The boy hesitated because he knew a wooden plate would humiliate his grandmother. But his mother insisted, so off he went. He returned bringing not one, but two wooden plates.

“I asked you to buy only one,” his mother said. “Didn’t you hear me?”

“Yes,” said the boy. “But I bought the second one so there



All that we hold dear, even our families, our friends, our joy, our knowledge, our testimonies would vanish were it not for our Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

would be one for you when you get old.”

Frequently we are inclined to wait a lifetime to express love for the kindness or help given by another even long years before. Perhaps just such an experience prompted George Herbert to say, “Thou that hast given so much to [me], give one thing more . . . a grateful heart.”¹⁷

The story is told of a group of men who were talking about people who had influenced their lives and to whom they were grateful. One man thought of a high-school teacher who had introduced him to the poet Tennyson. He decided to write and thank her.

In time, written in a feeble scrawl, came this letter:

“My dear Willie:

“I can’t tell you how much your note meant to me. I am in my 80s, living alone in a small room, cooking my own meals, lonely and like the last leaf lingering behind. You will be interested to know that I taught school for 50 years, and yours is the first note of appreciation I have ever received. It came on a blue, cold morning, and it cheered me as nothing has for years.”

As I read this account, I thought of the treasured line, “The Lord has two homes: heaven and a grateful heart.”

Much more could be said pertaining to the gift of love. However, a favorite verse sums up rather well this precious gift:

*I have wept in the night
For the shortness of sight
That to somebody’s need made me blind;
But I never have yet
Felt a tinge of regret
For being a little too kind.*¹⁸

Fourth, the gift of life—even immortality. Our Heavenly Father’s plan contains the ultimate expressions of true

love. All that we hold dear, even our families, our friends, our joy, our knowledge, our testimonies would vanish were it not for our Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Among the most cherished thoughts and writings in this world is the divine statement of truth: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”¹⁹

This precious Son, our Lord and Savior, atoned for our sins and the sins of all. That memorable night in Gethsemane His suffering was so great, His anguish so consuming that He pleaded, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”²⁰ Later, on the cruel cross, He died that we might live, and live everlastingly. Resurrection morning was preceded by pain, by suffering, in accordance with the divine plan of God. Before Easter there had to be a cross. The world has witnessed no greater gift, nor has it known more lasting love.

Nephi gives to us our charge:

“Ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. . . . If ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.

“And now, behold, . . . this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God.”²¹

I close with the words of a revered prophet, even President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973): “Life is God’s gift to man. What we do with our life is our gift to God.”

May we give generously to Him, as He has so abundantly given to us, by living and loving as He and His Son have so patiently taught. ■

NOTES

1. See “The Gift of the Magi.”
2. Matthew 2:2.
3. Gerald Massey, in *The New Dictionary of Thoughts* (1959), 39.
4. 3 John 1:4.
5. Jeremiah 8:22.
6. Author unknown.
7. John 14:27.
8. Revelation 3:20.

9. Act 3, scene 3, lines 97–98.
10. In Joseph B. Wirthlin, “Lessons Learned in the Journey of Life,” *Liabona*, May 2001, 41; *Ensign*, Dec. 2000, 12.
11. Matthew 22:36–39.
12. John 14:21.
13. See Moroni 7:47.
14. Acts 10:38.
15. Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, “Sixteen Going on Seventeen” (1959).
16. *Thoughts . . . for One Hundred Days* (1966), 222.
17. In Richard L. Evans, *Richard Evans’ Quote Book* (1971), 238.
18. In Richard L. Evans, “The Quality of Kindness,” *Improvement Era*, May 1960, 340.
19. John 3:16.
20. Matthew 26:39.
21. 2 Nephi 31:20–21.

IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS

After prayerfully studying this message, share it using a method that encourages the participation of those you teach. Following are some examples:

1. Place before the family a few items of worldly value (a treat, a wallet, a toy, for instance). Ask family members to identify which one they think is most valuable. Then show something of sentimental value (a family picture, a journal, scriptures, and so on). Read the first four paragraphs of the article. Compare the material things we give at Christmas to the spiritual things. Challenge the family to value and give gifts of deeper meaning.
2. Prepare beforehand a representation of the four gifts that President Monson cites (for example, wrap gifts or draw pictures). One at a time, present each gift to the family members, and discuss each using the examples and stories in the article. Testify of the generosity of our Savior, and discuss ways we can give our lives back to Him.
3. Ask family members to think of gifts that would last forever. What qualities do these gifts possess? List President Monson’s gifts, and discuss how these gifts shape eternity. Encourage family members to give a gift this Christmas that will have an eternal effect.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

What simple Christmas traditions and activities have helped you and your family focus on Christ during the holiday season?



We can focus on traditions that help us remember the Savior.

In our home there is a box. It is not a terribly large box, and it certainly isn't an expensive box. However, it is nicely presented and is the most priceless box we own. Why? Because of our family's simple tradition centered around that humble box.

On Christmas Eve, just before tucking everyone into bed, we gather around our box with pen and paper. We have spent the past several family home evenings preparing for this

moment. After a prayer, we each write down our intended gift to the Savior. Respectfully, we fold up our papers and place them into the box. No one reads them, and no one tells of their gift. It is a personal and sacred promise. When everyone is through, we close up the box and put it in a special place under the tree.

This simple box with its contents becomes our first gift of the season, and it goes to the One who gave us everything!

Yvette T. Joyner, England

One of the most important things our family has done at Christmas is to change the emphasis from gift getting to gift *giving*. We know that we remember Christ most when we act like Him—when we give and love and serve. As adults we enjoy Christmas because we are giving to others. We haven't wanted our children to miss out on this experience. Instead of asking, "What do you want for Christmas?" we asked, "What are you going to *give* for Christmas?"

We explained that Santa could be anyone who wanted to give a gift to others but didn't want them to know who gave the gift. We had fun as a family when our own little "Santa," complete with a red hat and cotton ball beard, would drop off a goodie at a friend's home and then run!

The weeks before Christmas go quickly. It is a busy time filled with secret plans and present making. My husband and I keep our decorations, food, and present buying simple (just one present each), so we can enjoy helping our children make their presents. Even the baby can give her handprint on a piece of paper.

Keeping our Christmas preparations simple and giving small presents help us remember our Savior at Christmas and bring His Spirit into our home.

Cheryl Merrick, Utah

Not everyone is able to enjoy ideal circumstances during the holidays, surrounded by loving family members.

One Christmas, when my husband and I felt in need of comfort ourselves, we tried to think of others we



FOLLOWING CHRIST AT CHRISTMAS



“There is no better time than now, this very Christmas season, for all of us to rededi-

cate ourselves to the principles taught by Jesus the Christ. It is the time to love the Lord our God with all our heart—and our neighbors as ourselves.”

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “The Gifts of Christmas,” Ensign, Dec. 2003, 5.

could help. We gathered our lonely friends, all of whom happen to share our love of music. We spent Christmas afternoon together, visiting others who might need comfort and companionship on that day. We went to a local charity for families with critically ill children awaiting treatment at nearby hospitals. We went to several nursing homes that were filled with elderly people waiting for children and grandchildren who never came to visit. We were a jolly group, singing carols and shaking bells and taking pictures to leave behind as mementos. We shared special moments of joy together, lifting each other’s burdens and feeling true healing in our souls.

Krista Oakes, Texas

I love advent calendars and watching the anticipation of my children as we count down the days until Christmas. I wanted the focus of our

countdown to be more spiritual, though. I came up with the idea of wrapping inexpensive treats, one for each of the 12 days before Christmas. I labeled each one with a scripture reference describing a gift Heavenly Father has given us.

Every night for family scripture time, we have a child select one of these wrapped presents. We read the scripture references on the package and bear our testimonies of that gift in our lives. The 12 gifts I chose the first year were the Creation, agency, prayer, opposition, charity, scriptures and revelation, prophets, the Holy Ghost, eternal life and exaltation, the Resurrection, families, and Christ’s Atonement. After family prayer, our children open the present and share the treat inside.

The excitement of counting down the days until Christmas is still there, but it is tempered by reverence and appreciation for the great gifts we have already received from a loving Heavenly Father. Each year we select different gifts to focus on, but always we end on Christmas Eve with the gift of our Savior’s life and Atonement.

Aleta Clegg, Utah

As part of our Christmas traditions, we go to a live nativity pageant that members of the Church present every year at a local heritage park. Then we go home and read the Christmas story from the scriptures. During Christmas dinner, we all take turns around the table saying things that we are grateful for and what Christmas means to each of us individually. In the past we have also prepared gifts for neighbors to celebrate the 12 days of Christmas.

Mandy Collins, Alberta, Canada

Every year my mother’s entire extended family gets together for a big Christmas Eve gathering. When I was about eight years old, my mother and aunt began to feel that our Christmas Eve celebration focused too much on gifts and not enough on the Savior. It’s not easy to

I labeled each gift with a scripture reference describing a gift Heavenly Father has given us.



change long-standing family traditions, but Mother and Aunt Pam were able to make our family gathering more Christ centered.

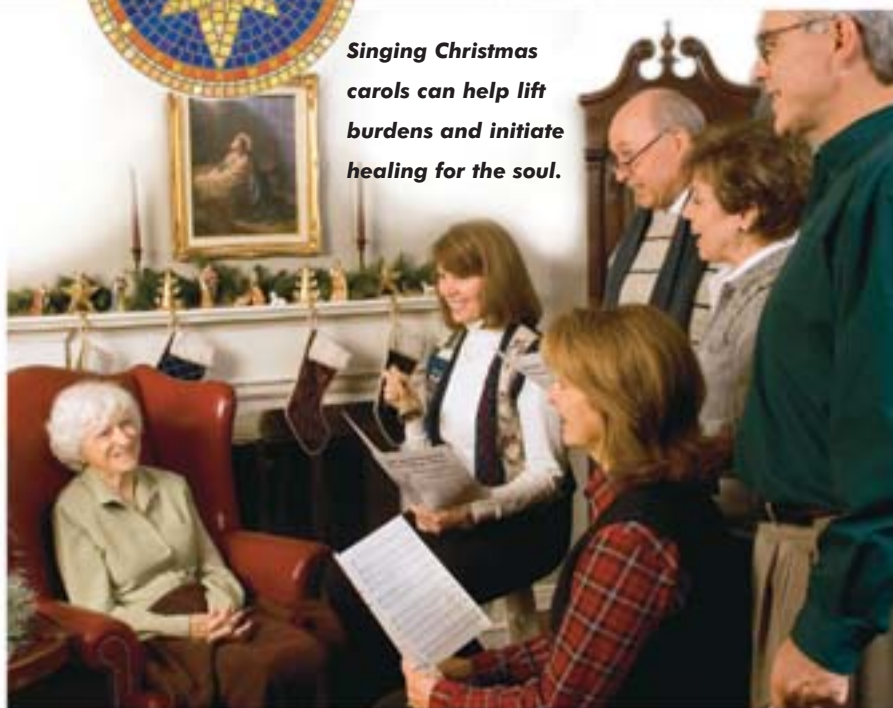
First, she and her siblings began drawing names instead of giving gifts to everyone. The cousins did the same. We began another tradition when we started acting out the Christmas story, complete with simple costumes. With so many child actors, our Christmas play is always plenty of fun.

Although the excessive gift giving has greatly diminished, there is still the fun and excitement of our Christmas Eve, and we all are reminded that Christmas is really about Christ.

Lorraine Jones, Oregon

About five years ago in November, we received a letter from some friends describing people living in poverty in their area. They asked for any help we could give. I e-mailed our adult children and told them about the letter. I explained that instead of sending gifts to family members that year, I wanted to help these people. I encouraged our children to do the same. They all did, and we had such great feedback from our friends that our family has continued this tradition.

Each year since, a different child has chosen our family Christmas project. We have donated cash to doctors who travel to other countries to donate their services, we “adopted” a single mother and her children and purchased their Christmas gifts, and we have donated to charities.



Singing Christmas carols can help lift burdens and initiate healing for the soul.

My children have young families, and they are not wealthy. Three of my children are not members of the Church, but all have chosen to participate each year. It has been a unifying experience for our family, even though we are scattered in several states, and we always look forward to the next year’s project.

Name Withheld, Utah

The year our eldest son was to leave on his mission, he expressed a desire to spend Christmas in Nauvoo instead of exchanging gifts. Christmas Day in Nauvoo was quiet and almost deserted. While there, we noticed how different it was to be away from the materialism and worldliness of Christmas as the world celebrates it. In the words of Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, it was a Christmas “without toys or trees or tinsel.”¹

This was the beginning of a

tradition we have kept for many years: leaving the commercialism of the season behind and celebrating this holy day in a place as far removed from the world as possible, worshipping quietly as a family, thoughtfully setting goals that would bring us closer to Him whose birth we celebrate.

No matter where we are on Christmas Eve, we also include a most beloved tradition that we call our “Joseph and Mary dinner.” We prepare and partake of a few simple foods that Joseph and Mary might have had with them on their journey to Bethlehem: broiled fish, flat bread, olives, figs, cheese, grape juice. We spend this quiet evening reflecting upon the humble circumstances into which the Savior was born and in which He spent His life. ■

Bob Weiler family, Georgia

NOTE

1. “Maybe Christmas Doesn’t Come from a Store,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1977, 65.

Taking the Challenge

One year ago members of the Church around the world finished reading the Book of Mormon in response to President Gordon B. Hinckley's August 2005 challenge. Church magazines received an unusually large outpouring of letters of testimony, experience, and gratitude from those who met the challenge. A few of those responses follow.

How We Did It

"I think something remarkable must have happened to the people of this Church. They were observed reading the Book of Mormon while riding the bus, while eating lunch, while in the doctor's office waiting room, and in scores of other situations. I trust and hope that we have drawn closer to God because of the reading of this book" (Gordon B. Hinckley, "Seek Ye the Kingdom of God," *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2006, 83).

Every night at 7:00. My wife, two daughters, and I read together each night at 7:00. If someone happened to be visiting at that time, we asked him or her to read with us. The reading itself was a great blessing. But our daughters (ages 12 and 13) also increased in reading ability, and we all learned about prioritizing, disciplining ourselves, and managing our time. We understood more about having a house of order. And as a family, we felt an increased love and unity in our home.

B. Akanit Sapprasert, Pakkret, Thailand

Closer to heaven. I am a flight attendant, and it was inspiring to pass through the cabin and see passengers reading the Book of Mormon. After all the passengers had been served, I tried to find enough time to read a chapter or two, and I challenged myself to write down at least one thing I learned that day. I usually work the morning flights, so I was in the air and reading before the sun came up. I found that there was something special about reading while feeling closer to heaven.

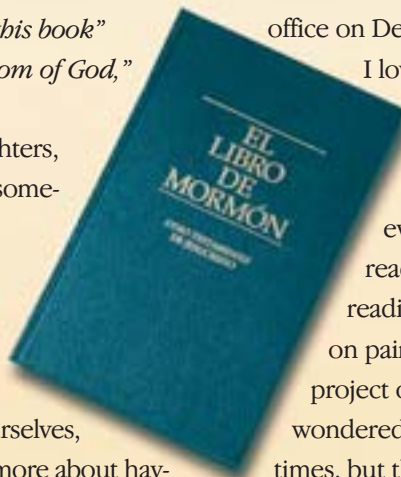
Emily Bryn Arnell, Farmington, Utah

Audio scriptures. When I drive to and from work, I tune my radio to news or commentaries. But for the last four months of 2005, I listened to the Book of Mormon on CD. I finished the last chapters of Moroni in my home office on December 29, 2005. After this great experience, I love the Book of Mormon even more.

Arturo Maldonado, Los Angeles, California

Paint buckets and plundering. Our lives are busy, and it was difficult to read every day. We finally decided that we would read no matter what, and we found ourselves reading in some rather unusual places—sitting on paint buckets as we worked on our remodeling project or around a campfire in our backyard. We wondered if our four-year-old was even listening at times, but then one day when asked why his room was so messy, he replied, "Someone has been plundering in there!"

Buxton family, West Point, Utah



Completing the picture. My husband and I and our three children decided that we would each read the Book of Mormon individually. We cut a print of an ancient prophet holding golden plates into five pieces. Each family member was responsible to complete the picture by completing our reading. Our youngest son does not read yet, so I read an illustrated Book of Mormon with him.

One by one we finished our reading and began to pray for those still working on the challenge. We all finished by the end of the year, and we showed by following the living prophet that we value the words of our ancient prophets.

*Cinara Lilian Leão Machado,
São Carlos, Brazil*

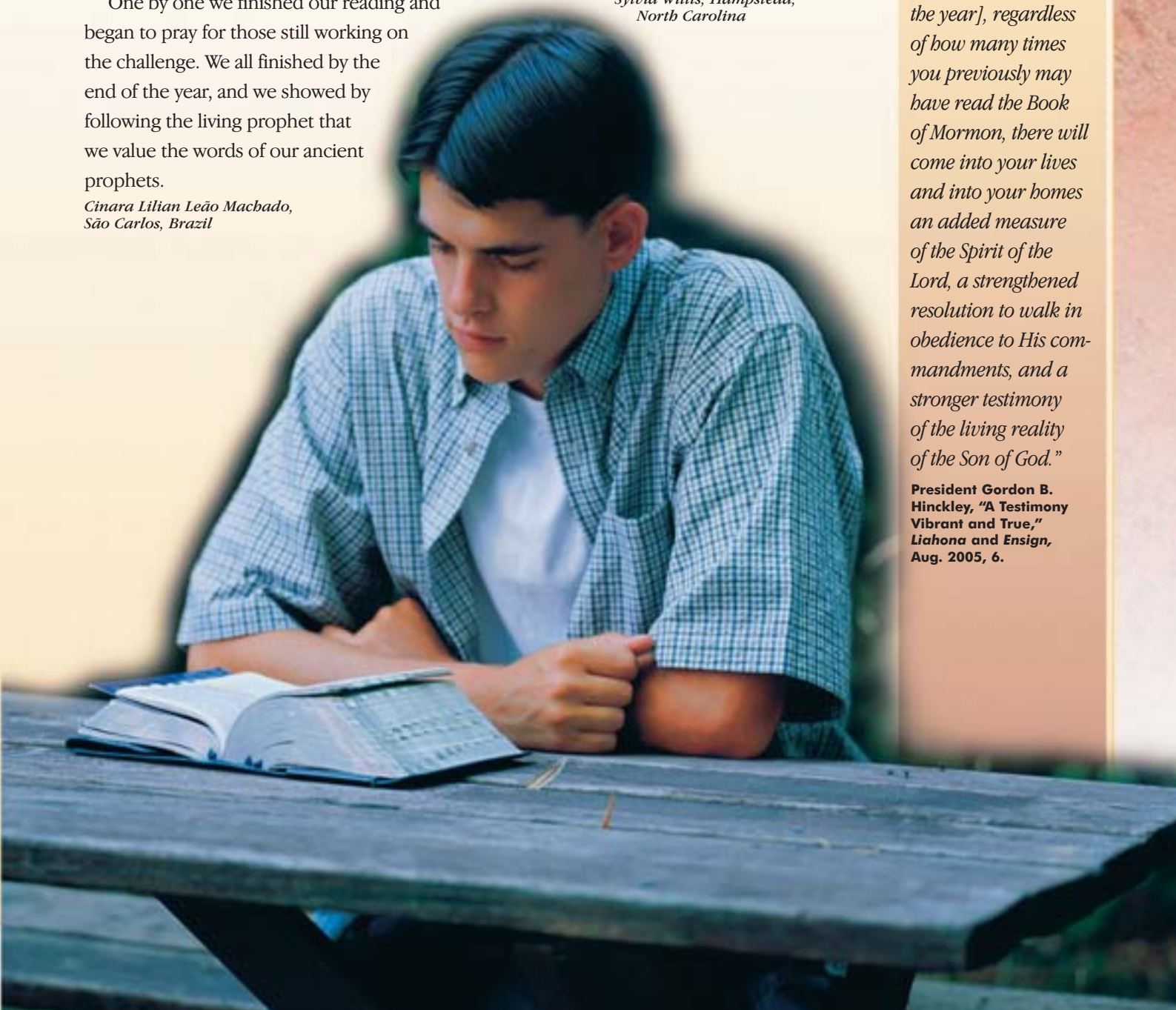
Reading aloud. I read aloud to a dear friend who is 91 and lives in the cottage next door. As we read we would stop and discuss how teachings apply to our lives. I will always consider this one of the richest experiences of my life. Sometimes the Spirit was so intense I was brought to tears. I am thankful for a wise and inspired prophet, who extended this challenge.

*Sylvia Willis, Hampstead,
North Carolina*



"If each of you will observe this simple program [to read or reread the Book of Mormon by the end of the year], regardless of how many times you previously may have read the Book of Mormon, there will come into your lives and into your homes an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God."

**President Gordon B. Hinckley, "A Testimony Vibrant and True,"
Liahona and Ensign,
Aug. 2005, 6.**





Young women from St. George, Utah, responded to the challenge and experienced, as President Hinckley said, “something remarkable.”

Book of Mormon commuting. My fiancé and I were proceeding very slowly in our Book of Mormon study. Then we learned about the challenge, and we began in earnest to meet it. We both take the train to work, and during the commute I was able to let go of the things of the world. When several people on the train were interested in what we were doing, I shared my testimony and gave out pass-along cards. I know the Book of Mormon can transform our lives for the better.

Luciana Martins, São Paulo, Brazil

Making it mine. Having read the Book of Mormon many times, I felt it was time to use a different approach. I had already downloaded the Book of Mormon to my personal computer and color coded the verses, using recurrent themes. I went through it again, highlighting in bold verses that explained important principles to me and in italic verses that were interesting for historical or other reasons. I also inserted notes and references that gave useful background.

As I continued, many impressions came to me. I inserted them as notes. As the months went by, the notes increased—many of them applying to situations in the lives of my family members and myself and in my Church assignments. Many writers have written about the Book of Mormon, but this collection of notes helped me make the Book of Mormon *my* book. The copy I printed out is

personalized for my needs and those of my family.

Jon M. Taylor, Bountiful, Utah

What It Did for Us

*“Last year I asked members of the Church throughout the world to again read the Book of Mormon. Thousands, even hundreds of thousands, responded to that challenge. The Prophet Joseph said in 1841, ‘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’” (Gordon B. Hinckley, *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2006, 83).*

The gift of time. When I read about the challenge, I immediately made the excuse that I was too busy to even attempt it. When I later began reading, I constantly reminded myself that if I didn’t finish, I could always say I was just too busy. But something amazing happened. On the days I read, time seemed to stand still and allow me the chance to get everything accomplished. This blessing was the remedy to my busy life. I was able to spend more time with my family and on my Church calling, while still being able to accomplish all I needed to in my job. I realized that Heavenly Father will provide what is necessary if I put Him first.

Julie Major, Nibley, Utah

Peace and forgiveness. Early in 2005 my husband gave two men a ride. When my husband returned home, he discovered that his *sapelu* (machete) was missing. This really hurt him: he’d done a good deed, and this was how he was repaid. The incident bothered my husband to the point that he was having trouble finding peace.

Several months later, we awoke to find that our house had been broken into. Worse, we realized the intruders had come into the rooms where our children and we had been sleeping. I was angry and thought, “If my husband was so upset about a knife, he will go completely nuts now!” But he had a spirit of peace that spilled over to the rest of us. He expressed gratitude that nobody had been hurt and hope that the people who had taken our things would use them to improve their lives.

SOMETHING REMARKABLE: TESTIMONIES OF THE BLESSINGS

AN ADDED MEASURE OF THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD

When I had need to be guided, the Holy Ghost was there. I was better able to turn to my Heavenly Father to find counsel. When I had opportunities, I shared the gospel with more confidence.

Sarah Bertbier, Dijon, France

Every morning I asked that the Holy Ghost be my companion so He could enlighten my mind. A miracle occurred: the Book of Mormon was opened to me anew. I received answers to questions I had had for years.

Tatyana Vysbimirskaya, Krim, Ukraine

I was able to feel an extra portion of the Spirit throughout the day. I felt an inner peace inside, which was reflected in my relationships with family members.

Libia Zulema Luna de Rubio, León, Mexico

A STRENGTHENED RESOLUTION TO WALK IN OBEDIENCE TO HIS COMMANDMENTS

An unparalleled blessing of spiritual strength helped me make enormous strides in overcoming weaknesses. So great and humbling is this blessing that I know there is no better way to begin or end the day than in the scriptures.

*Michael B. Clark,
Syracuse, Utah*

We have been blessed with the desire to hold regular family home evening, morning and evening prayer, and, of course, scripture study. Studying the scriptures consistently makes me crave the fruits of the Spirit.

Leslie Quinn, Idabo Falls, Idaho

I went from reading the printed words on the page, to hearing the words in my head, to speaking the words each day, to living the words, to writing the words on my heart, and finally to making the words a permanent part of my soul.

C. E. Tapie Robm Jr., San Bernardino, California

A STRONGER TESTIMONY OF THE LIVING REALITY OF THE SON OF GOD

Because I studied longer each day, I made connections I had never made before. The Book of Mormon truly is full of testimonies of Jesus Christ. Because of the Spirit I felt, my own testimony of my Redeemer increased.

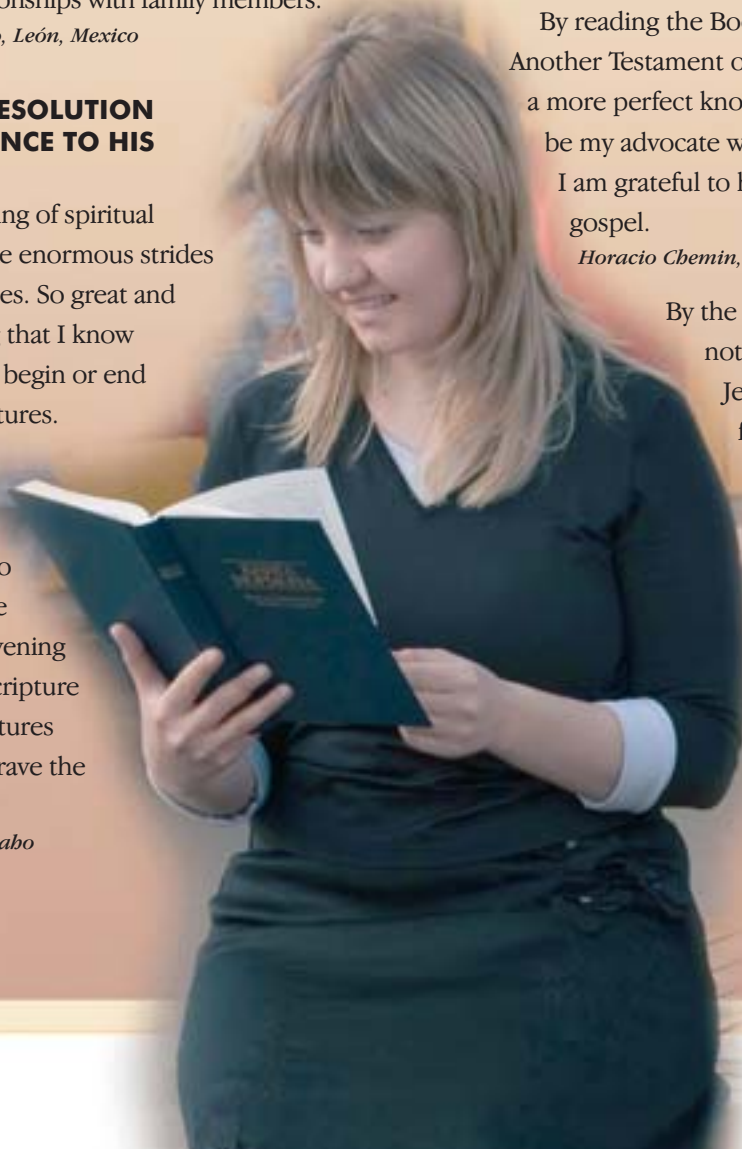
Dagmar Leiß, Hamburg, Germany

By reading the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ, I gained a more perfect knowledge of Him who will be my advocate when I stand before God. I am grateful to have found His restored gospel.

Horacio Chemin, Rawson, Argentina

By the time I got to 3 Nephi, I noticed I was thinking about Jesus Christ more often. I found myself wondering what my Savior would think about what I was reading or doing. Thoughts of Him came as a gift, and I began to understand how I could “always remember Him.”

*Alice M. Jobn, Ogden,
Utah*



I was speechless at the change. Why was I not able to feel the same peace? Then I realized: while I had been “too busy” to start reading, my husband was firmly entrenched in the Book of Mormon.

Kathleen Arp, Pesega, Samoa

An eternal family. My family members and I are converts. My dad was baptized in 2000, and he had attended several temple preparation classes but was reluctant to go through the temple. Then my family accepted President Hinckley’s challenge to read the Book of Mormon, and I truly believe it prepared us spiritually so we would be able to receive the blessings of the temple. In October, a high councilor firmly but happily told my dad he needed to set a date to receive his endowment and to be sealed as a family. My dad agreed, and from then on everything fell into place. My dad went to the temple in late October, and we were sealed on November 19. We had been waiting years to enter the temple, but as we diligently read the Book of Mormon, the Lord prepared a way for us to enter His house and be sealed for eternity.

Danielle Crane, Sandy, Utah

Small and simple. I took the challenge—no major miracles, just small and simple things. In difficult circumstances, I felt the gentle guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Mark Vader, Riverton, Utah

Really for us? I honestly thought that President Hinckley must be talking to those who weren’t reading. After all, we had nightly scripture study, family home evening, and family councils; we prayed together. We thought we would just continue reading a few verses a night.

It was a few days later that it hit me: a prophet of the Lord asked us to read the Book of Mormon by the end of the year, and I’m going to ignore it? That night we met as a family, and I was astonished at the resounding “Yes” I received as a commitment to meeting the goal. I told the

kids that we would have to read on vacations, birthdays, nights when we were tired. “No problem” was the response.

It didn’t take long for the spirit of that great book to take over. We started to understand gospel principles, to communicate more as a family. My wife and I felt our testimonies were strengthened, and I heard the kids explaining scripture stories as if they had served missions and taught the gospel for years! Taking this challenge has changed our lives forever.

Shawn O’Leary, Poulsbo, Washington

Insights for others. While responding to the challenge, I read Mosiah 18 and couldn’t get it out of my mind. About two days later I sat down with a new member (I served as branch president). This brother wanted to know again why he needed to be baptized into the Church when he had previously been baptized in another church. Without hesitation, I opened to Mosiah and asked him to read in chapter 18. When he finished we were both silent for a while. Then the brother told me that he had felt prompted to counsel with me. I silently bowed my head and thanked Heavenly Father for the gift of a prophet and his challenge to reread the Book of Mormon.

Akingbade A. Ojo, Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria

Blessings available. When I started to read my Book of Mormon, things started to change in my life. I found myself waking up so I could pray to my Heavenly Father to tell Him how grateful I was for the blessings of knowing of Him and the plan of salvation and the restored gospel. I know that I got to this place because I rose to the challenge from our prophet, who knew how much we would be blessed if we listened and obeyed.

My experience does leave me with questions: Why did we have to be challenged? How long will it take us to learn that these blessings are constantly there for us if we will read the Book of Mormon daily? ■

*Angela Broderick,
Mertbyr Tydfil, Wales*





Our First Christmas

BY ABRAHAM MENES SAGRERO

Christmas was coming, and it was obvious that my wife and I, who were newlyweds, were not going to have any money to buy a Christmas tree, ornaments, decorations, or a fine dinner.

We had started with no home, no jobs, and very little money. But God helped us. We found a small apartment, and I started looking for a job. I hadn't finished my degree, so I took various sales jobs. My income was modest, just enough to pay for food and rent. I would leave home early; sometimes I would come back successful, sometimes not. If I was not, I would feel defeated, but my wife, who was pregnant, would greet me with a smile. Then the difficulties would seem less challenging.

In Mexico, Christmas Eve is celebrated even more than Christmas Day. When I was single, I celebrated by eating codfish and a salad that included beets, oranges, and peanuts. But this Christmas Eve we didn't know what we would be having for dinner. We had a little money and a small gas stove fueled by a borrowed tank of gas. We didn't have a refrigerator or furniture for the living room or dining room—just a little wooden table my grandmother had given me and a couple of chairs we had received from a friend.

As I thought about our situation, I became depressed. But I remembered that God never forsakes us, and

I humbled myself like a child and went to Him in prayer.

My prayer was answered. I had peace in my heart and felt that all would be well. I opened the trunk of my car, and in one corner I found a small piece of dried fish. I remembered that several months before, I had helped my father move some fish, and this piece must have been left behind. Because of the salt it hadn't gone bad.

I showed it to my wife, and she said she would cook it. We went to buy tomatoes and other ingredients. We washed the fish and soaked it to get the salt out.

That night, by the light of a small bulb, we sat at our little unpainted wooden table and remembered the birth of Jesus Christ and how He was born with even less than we had. We enjoyed the most delicious dinner I had ever eaten and went to bed early. The next morning we stayed in bed and watched Christmas movies. It was a very happy day. In our poverty the spirit of Christmas brightened our little home and gave us hope and courage.

In January our daughter was born, bringing more happiness into our home.

Many Christmases have come and gone since then, and we no longer lack decorations or a Christmas tree or the fragrance of pine. We have had many fine dinners with succulent dishes. But I cherish most the memory of our first Christmas together. It was the poorest in material things but the richest in things spiritual and eternal: just the two of us with our unborn daughter and the spirit of Christmas. ■

HERO AT THE GROCERY STORE

BY STEPHENIE MEYER

Suddenly everyone was quiet. Even my rowdy children paused, feeling the change in the atmosphere.

Christmas stories happen in the most everyday places. I was part of one not long ago at the grocery store. I hope I never forget it, though the memory is bittersweet.

I had been shopping for almost an hour by the time I got to the checkout lines. My two youngest sons were with me, the four-year-old refusing to hold onto the cart, the two-year-old trying to climb out of the basket and jump down to play with his brother. Both got progressively whinier and louder as I tried to keep them under control, so I was looking for the fastest lane possible. I had two choices. In the first line were three customers, and they all had just a few purchases. In the second line was only one man, a harried young father with his own crying baby, but his cart was overflowing with groceries.

I quickly looked over the three-person line again. The woman in the front was very elderly, white haired and rail thin, and her hands were shaking as she tried unsuccessfully to unlatch her big purse. In the other line, the young father was throwing his food onto the conveyor belt with superhuman speed. I got in line behind him.

It was the right choice. I was able to start unloading my groceries before the elderly woman was even finished paying. My four-year-old was pulling candy from the shelf, and my little one was trying to help by lobbing cans of soup at me. I felt I couldn't get out of the store fast enough.

And then, over the sound of the store's cheery holiday music, I heard the checker in the other line talking loudly, too loudly. I glanced over as my hands kept working.

"No, I'm sorry," the checker was almost shouting at the old woman, who didn't seem to understand. "That card won't

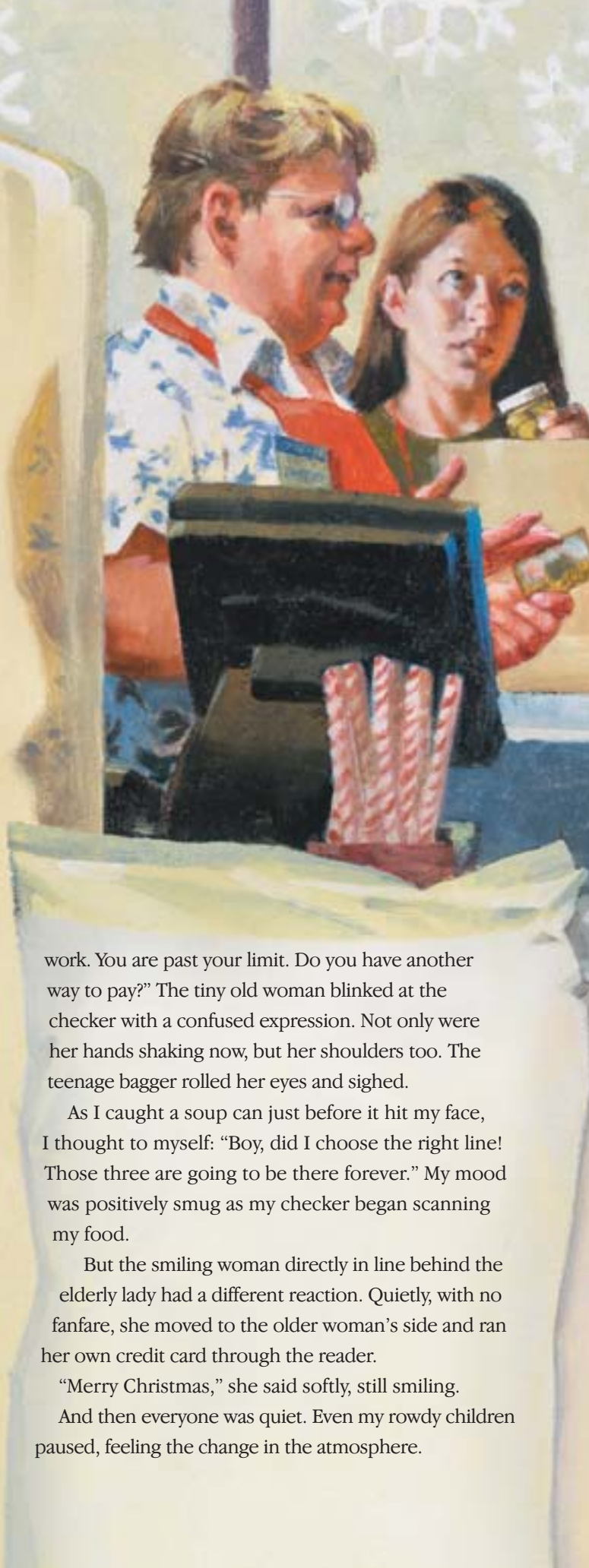
work. You are past your limit. Do you have another way to pay?" The tiny old woman blinked at the checker with a confused expression. Not only were her hands shaking now, but her shoulders too. The teenage bagger rolled her eyes and sighed.

As I caught a soup can just before it hit my face, I thought to myself: "Boy, did I choose the right line! Those three are going to be there forever." My mood was positively smug as my checker began scanning my food.

But the smiling woman directly in line behind the elderly lady had a different reaction. Quietly, with no fanfare, she moved to the older woman's side and ran her own credit card through the reader.

"Merry Christmas," she said softly, still smiling.

And then everyone was quiet. Even my rowdy children paused, feeling the change in the atmosphere.





It took a minute for the older woman to understand what had happened. The checker, her face thoughtful, hesitated with the receipt in her hand, not sure whom to give it to. The smiling woman took it and tucked it into the elderly woman's bag.

"I can't accept . . ." the older woman began to protest, with tears forming in her eyes.

The smiling woman interrupted her. "I can afford to do it. What I *can't* afford is *not* to do it."

"Let me help you out," the suddenly respectful bagger insisted, taking the basket and also taking the old woman's arm, the way she might have helped her own grandmother.

I watched the checker in my line pause before she pressed the total key to dab at the corner of her eyes with a tissue.

Paying for my groceries and gathering my children, I made it out of the store before the smiling woman. I had made the right choice of lanes, it seemed.

But as I walked out into the bright December sunshine, I was not thinking about my luck but about what *I* could not afford.

I could not afford my current, self-absorbed frame of mind.

I could not afford to have my children learn lessons of compassion only from strangers.

I could not afford to be so distant from the spirit of Christ at any time of the year—especially during this great season of giving.

I could not afford to let another stranger, another brother or sister, cross my path in need of help without doing something about it.

And that is why I hope never to forget the Christmas hero in the grocery store. The next time I have a chance to be that kind of a hero, I can't afford to miss it. ■

This Is the Christ

Reverently • = 58-66

1. They heard His voice, a voice so mild. It pierced them
(2. I read His) words, the words He prayed While bear - ing

mp

through and made their souls to quake. They saw Him come, a man in
sor - row in Geth - sem - an - e. I feel His love, the price He

white, — The Sav - ior, who had suf - fered for their sake. They felt the
paid. — How man - y drops of blood were spilled for me? With Saints of

rall. *a tempo*

wounds in hands and side, And each could tes - ti - fy: This is the
old in joy - ful cry I too can tes - ti - fy:

slower

Words: James E. Faust, b. 1920, and Jan Pinborough, b. 1954

Music: Michael Finlinson Moody, b. 1941

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3 Nephi 11:3-17

Luke 22:42, 44



Christ. This is the Christ, the ho - ly Son of God, Our Sav - ior, Lord, Re -

a tempo



deem - er of man - kind. This is the Christ, the Heal - er of our



souls, Who ran - somed us with love di - vine. 2. I read His



ran - somed us with love di - vine.



WHO IS THIS *King of Glory?*

Prophecies of Christ in the Psalms

The psalms in the book of Psalms collectively are called in Hebrew *Tebillim* or “Praises.” Many were set to music. No book of the Old Testament is more Christian than Psalms. Out of a total of 283 direct citations from the Old Testament that are also found in the New Testament, 116 are found in Psalms (see Bible Dictionary, 754–55).

The psalmist asks, “Who is this King of glory?” and answers, “the Lord strong and mighty” (Psalm 24:8). Many prophecies of Christ found in Psalms are fulfilled in the New Testament. For example, Psalm 31:5 speaks messianically of the Crucifixion: “Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.”

The fulfillment of that prophecy is found in Luke 23:46: “And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.”

Following are other prophecies of Christ in Psalms linked to their fulfillment in the New Testament.

Get Thee Hence Satan, by Carl Heinrich Bloch

*“For he shall give his angels
charge over thee, to keep thee
in all thy ways.*

*“They shall bear thee up in
their hands, lest thou dash
thy foot against a stone”
(Psalm 91:11–12).*

Prophecy fulfilled in Matthew 4:5–6.





Left: Christ Stilling the Storm, by Robert T. Barrett

"He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still" (Psalm 107:29).

Prophecy fulfilled in Mark 4:39.



Above: Peace I Leave with You, by Walter Rane

"The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace" (Psalm 29:11).

Prophecy fulfilled in John 14:27.



Left: Judas Betraying Jesus with a Kiss, by James Tissot

"Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (Psalm 41:9).

Prophecy fulfilled in John 13:21-27.



Above: Take Your Rest, by Walter Rane

"Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none" (Psalm 69:20).

Prophecy fulfilled in Mark 14: 34–42.



Above: The Crown of Thorns, by Gustave Doré

"All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

"He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing that he delighted in him" (Psalm 22:7–8).

Prophecy fulfilled in Matthew 27:43.

Right: Detail from The Crucifixion, by Carl Heinrich Bloch

"They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Psalm 69:21).

Prophecy fulfilled in Matthew 27:34.

"He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken" (Psalm 34:20).

Prophecy fulfilled in John 19:36.

"They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture" (Psalm 22:18.)

Prophecy fulfilled in Matthew 27:35.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" (Psalm 22:1).

Prophecy fulfilled in Mark 16:34.



Below: The Burial of Christ, by Carl Heinrich Bloch

Even as Christ was buried, believers knew His Resurrection had been prophesied.

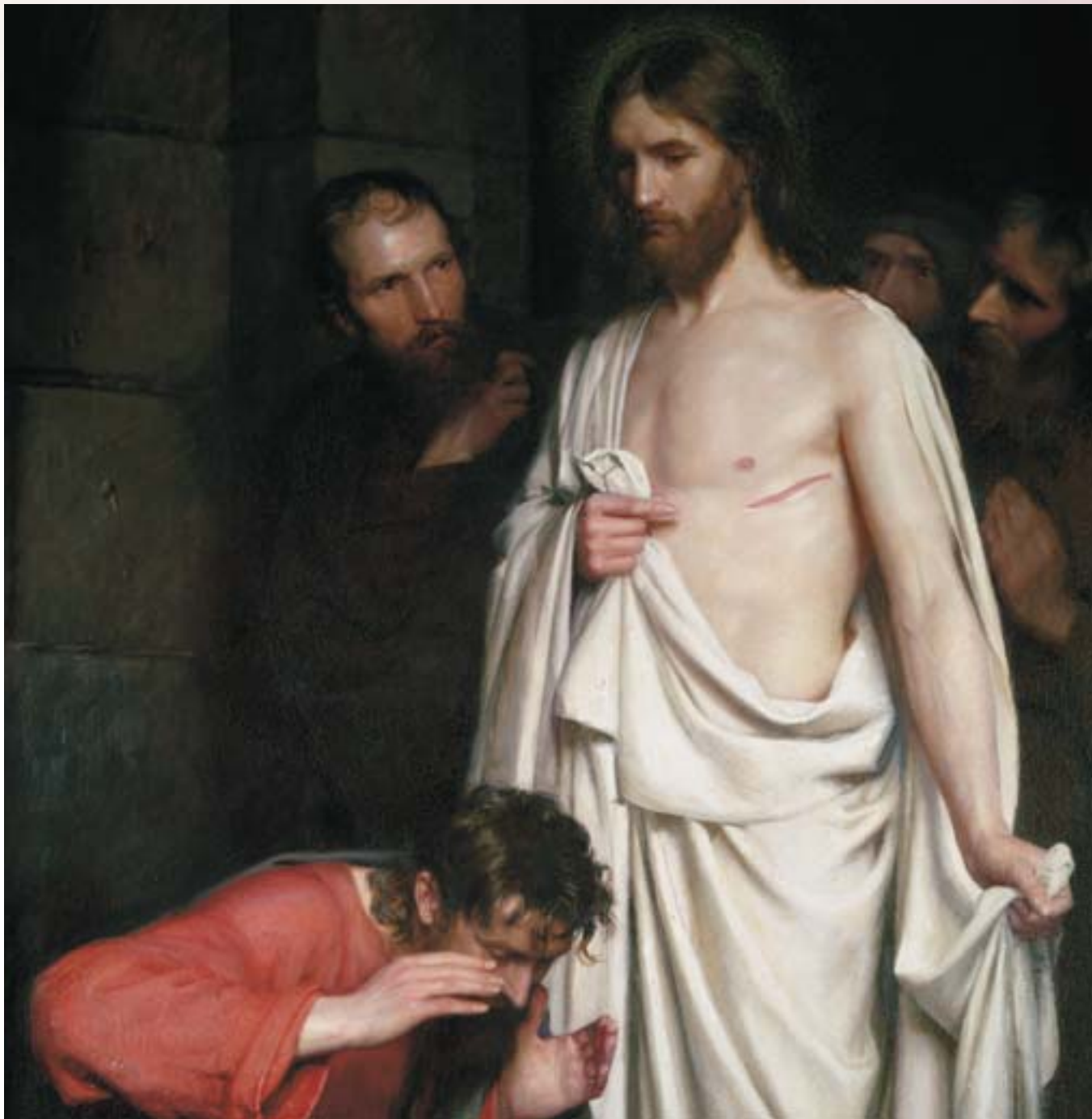
"Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my

flesh also shall rest in hope.

"For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psalm 16:9–10).

Prophecy fulfilled in Acts 13: 34–37; see also Acts 2:31–32.





Above: The Doubtful Thomas, by Carl Heinrich Bloch

"The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet" (Psalm 22:16).

Prophecy fulfilled in Mark 15:25 and John 20:24–27.

Right: The Ascension, by Harry Anderson

"Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them" (Psalm 68:18).

Prophecy fulfilled in Acts 1:9–11; see also Ephesians 4:8–10.

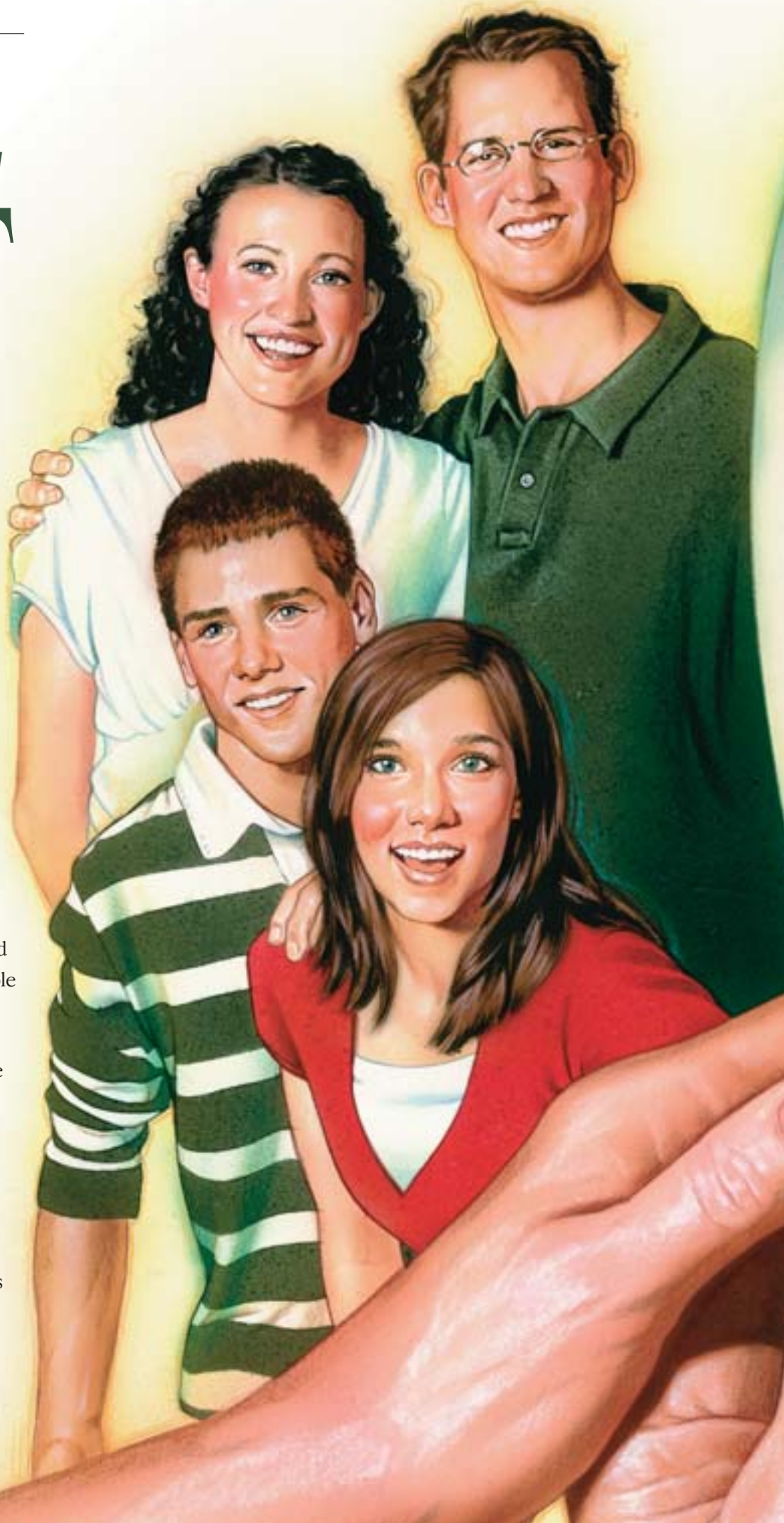


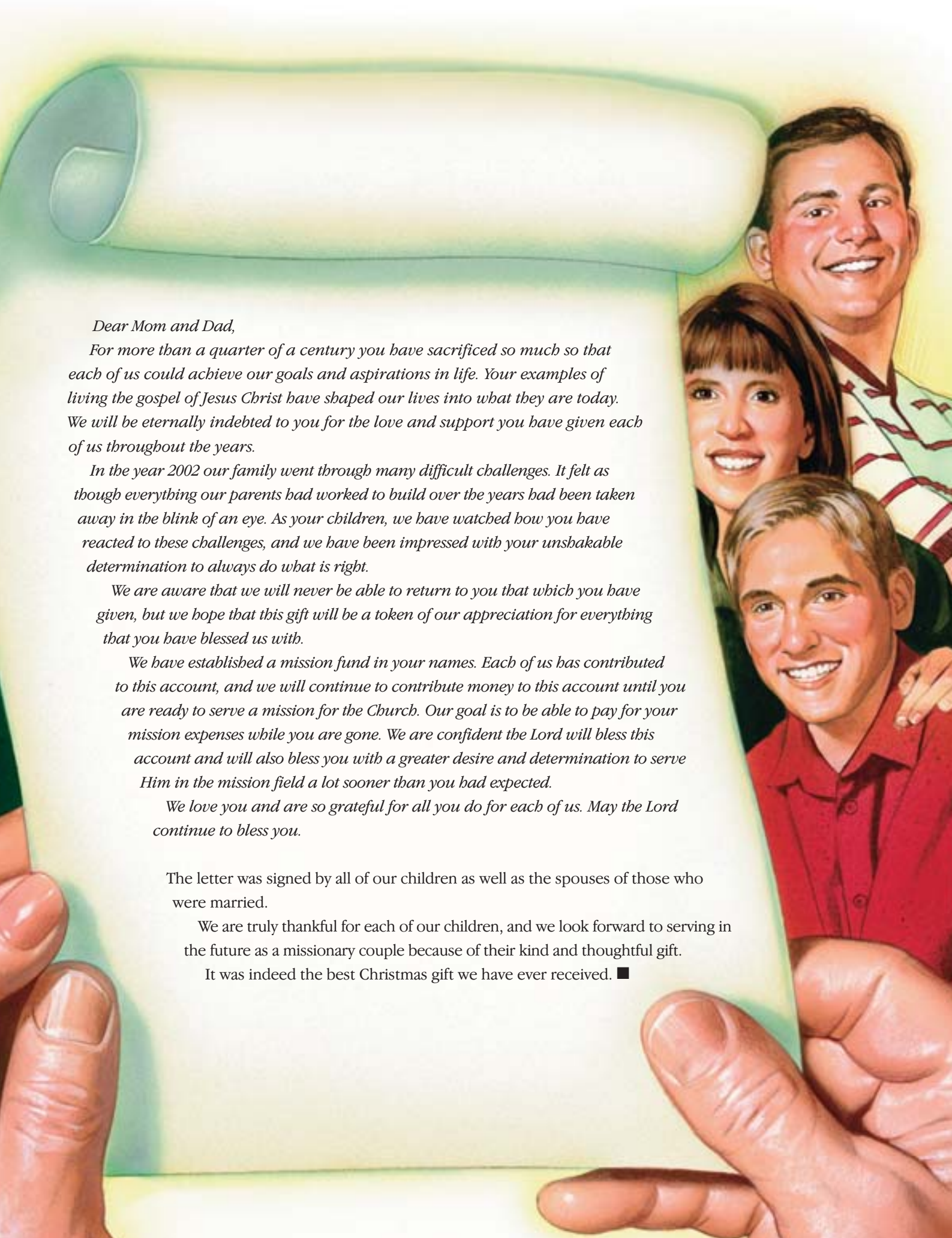
PHOTOGRAPH FROM ORIGINAL MURAL IN UGERLØS, DENMARK, BY CHARLES BAIRD AND STEVE CHAMBERLAIN, USED BY PERMISSION

THE GIFT THAT TOOK OUR BREATH AWAY

BY BRENDA PIERSON

Sometimes we receive Christmas gifts that soon lose their shine. But once in a while we receive a gift that simply takes our breath away. My husband and I received such a Christmas gift a couple of years ago from our seven children. As Christmas drew near we noticed there were no wrapped gifts under the tree for us from any of our children. They informed us that this Christmas we would receive a gift that was better than anything we had ever received before. Even our son who was serving in the Canada Toronto West Mission said, "You will love this gift." Christmas Day finally arrived, and our children presented us our gift. I opened the long white envelope, and through the tears this is what I read.





Dear Mom and Dad,
For more than a quarter of a century you have sacrificed so much so that each of us could achieve our goals and aspirations in life. Your examples of living the gospel of Jesus Christ have shaped our lives into what they are today. We will be eternally indebted to you for the love and support you have given each of us throughout the years.

In the year 2002 our family went through many difficult challenges. It felt as though everything our parents had worked to build over the years had been taken away in the blink of an eye. As your children, we have watched how you have reacted to these challenges, and we have been impressed with your unshakable determination to always do what is right.

We are aware that we will never be able to return to you that which you have given, but we hope that this gift will be a token of our appreciation for everything that you have blessed us with.

We have established a mission fund in your names. Each of us has contributed to this account, and we will continue to contribute money to this account until you are ready to serve a mission for the Church. Our goal is to be able to pay for your mission expenses while you are gone. We are confident the Lord will bless this account and will also bless you with a greater desire and determination to serve Him in the mission field a lot sooner than you had expected.

We love you and are so grateful for all you do for each of us. May the Lord continue to bless you.

The letter was signed by all of our children as well as the spouses of those who were married.

We are truly thankful for each of our children, and we look forward to serving in the future as a missionary couple because of their kind and thoughtful gift.

It was indeed the best Christmas gift we have ever received. ■



Quick to *OBSERVE*

BY ELDER DAVID A. BEDNAR
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

In October 1987 Elder Marvin J. Ashton, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, spoke in general conference about spiritual gifts. I recall with fondness the impact his message had upon me at that time, and the things he taught then continue to influence me today. In his message Elder Ashton detailed and described a number of less conspicuous spiritual gifts—attributes and abilities that many of us might not have considered being spiritual gifts. For example, Elder Ashton highlighted the gifts of asking; of listening; of hearing and using a still, small voice; of being able to weep; of avoiding contention; of being agreeable; of avoiding vain repetition; of seeking that which is righteous; of looking to God for guidance; of being a disciple; of caring for others; of being able to ponder; of bearing mighty testimony; and of receiving the Holy Ghost (see “There Are Many Gifts,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 20).

Another seemingly simple and perhaps underappreciated spiritual gift—the capacity of being “quick to observe” (Mormon 1:2)—is vitally important for you and for me in the world in which we do now and will yet live.

The Spiritual Gift of Being Quick to Observe

All of us have learned important lessons from the central characters in the Book of Mormon. As we read about and study the lives of Nephi, Laman, Alma, King Noah, Moroni, and many others, we discover things we should and should not do, and we realize more completely the kinds of people we should and should not become.

In my study of the Book of Mormon I have been especially impressed with a particular description of Mormon, the principal compiler of the Nephite record. The specific depiction of this noble prophet to which I would direct our attention is contained in the first five verses of the first chapter of Mormon:

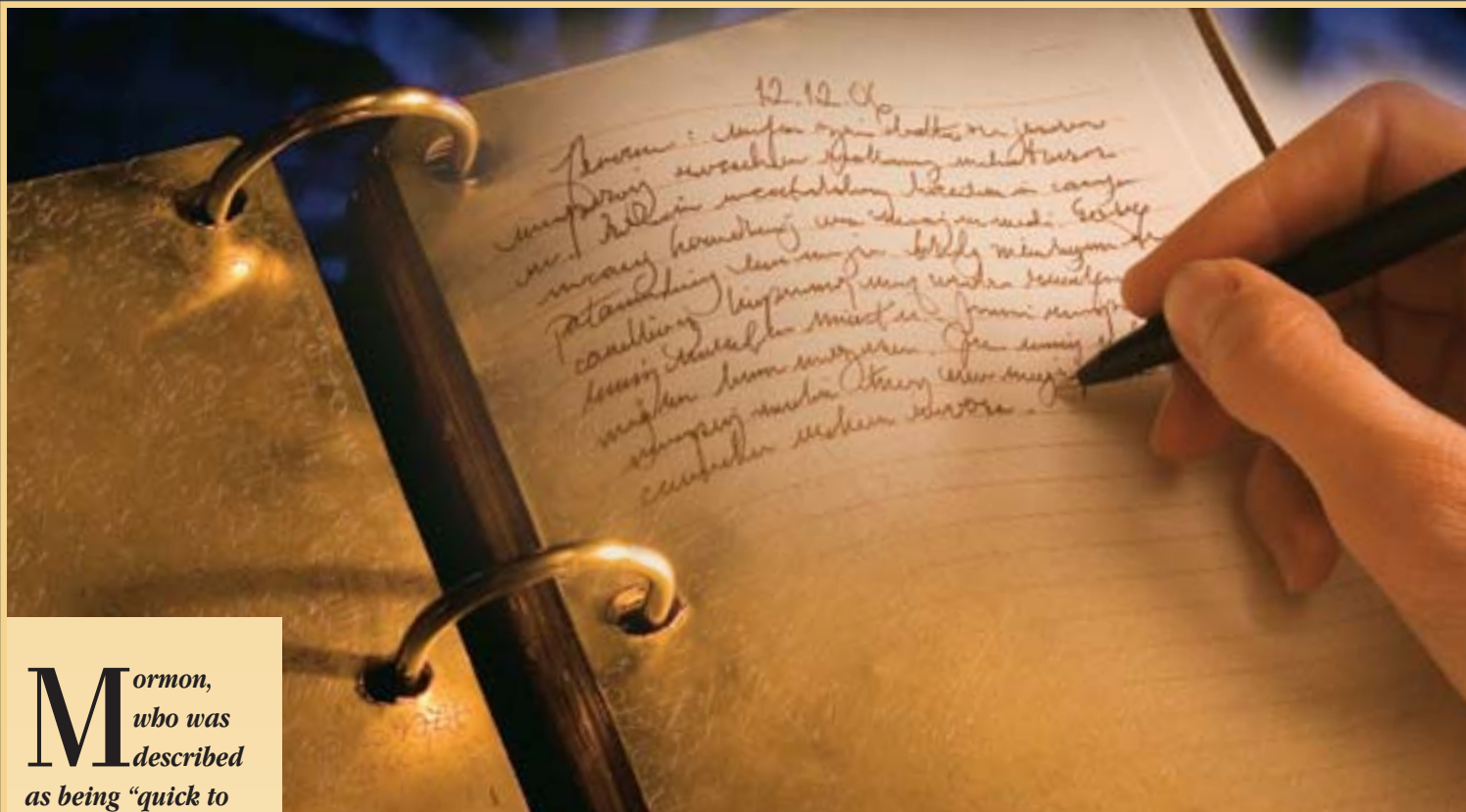
“And now I, Mormon, make a record of the things which I have both seen and heard, and call it the Book of Mormon.

“And about the time that Ammaron hid up the records unto the Lord, he came unto me, (I being about ten years of age . . .) and Ammaron said unto me: I perceive that thou art a sober child, and art *quick to observe*;

“Therefore, when ye are about twenty and four years old I would that ye should remember the things that ye have observed concerning this people; . . .



We can hope to obtain the supernal gift of discernment and its light of protection and direction only if we are quick to observe.



Mormon, who was described as being “quick to observe,” wrote, “I, Mormon, make a record of the things which I have both seen and heard.” As you study and learn and grow, I hope you also are learning about and becoming quick to observe.

“And behold, . . . ye shall engrave on the plates of Nephi all the things that ye have observed concerning this people.

“And I, Mormon, . . . remembered the things which Ammaron commanded me” (Mormon 1:1–5; emphasis added).

Please note that the root word *observe* is used three times in these verses. And Mormon, even in his youth, is described as being “quick to observe.” As you study and learn and grow, I hope you also are learning about and becoming quick to observe. Your future success and happiness will in large measure be determined by this spiritual capacity.

Please consider the significance of this important spiritual gift. As used in the scriptures, the word *observe* has two primary uses. One use denotes “to look” or “to see” or “to notice”—as we learn in Isaiah 42:20: “Seeing many things, but thou *observest* not; opening the ears, but he heareth not” (emphasis added).

The second use of the word *observe* suggests “to obey” or “to keep”—as is evident in

the Doctrine and Covenants: “But blessed are they who have kept the covenant and *observed* the commandment, for they shall obtain mercy” (D&C 54:6; emphasis added).

Thus when we are quick to observe, we promptly look or notice and obey. Both of these fundamental elements—looking and obeying—are essential to being quick to observe. And the prophet Mormon is an impressive example of this gift in action.

I now want to present several examples of the lessons that can be learned when you and I are blessed to be quick to observe.

I have a dear friend who served as a stake president. The patriarch in the stake over which he presided had experienced some health challenges and was unable to perform in his calling. The ailing patriarch had difficulty moving about and dressing and caring for himself, and his strength was limited. One Sabbath afternoon this good stake president visited the home of the patriarch to encourage him and check on his well-being. As the stake president entered the home, he found the patriarch

dressed in his suit and white shirt and tie, sitting in a recliner in the front room. The stake president greeted the dear patriarch and, knowing how hard it must have been to dress himself, graciously suggested to the patriarch that it was not necessary for him to get dressed up on the Sabbath or to meet visitors. In a kind but firm voice, the patriarch reproved the stake president and said, “Don’t you know that this is the only way I have left to show the Lord how much I love Him?”

The stake president was quick to observe. He both heard and felt the lesson, and he applied it. Reverence for the Sabbath day and the importance of respect and appropriate demeanor and dress took on added importance in the ministry of the stake president. The spiritual ability to see, hear, remember, and act upon that lesson was a great blessing in his life—and in the lives of many others.

Before attending her sacrament meetings, Sister Bednar frequently prays for the spiritual eyes to see those who have a need. Often as she observes the brothers and sisters and children in the congregation, she will feel a spiritual nudge to visit with or make a phone call to a particular person. And when Sister Bednar receives such an impression, she promptly responds and obeys. It often is the case that as soon as the “amen” is spoken in the benediction, she will talk with a teenager or hug a sister or, upon returning home, immediately pick up the phone and make a call. As long as I have known Sister Bednar, people have marveled at her capacity to discern and respond to their needs. Often they will ask her, “How did you know?” The spiritual gift of being quick to observe has enabled her to see and to act promptly and has been a great blessing in the lives of many people.

Sister Bednar and I are acquainted with a returned missionary who had dated a special young woman for a period of time. He cared for her very much, and he was desirous

of making his relationship with her more serious. He was considering and hoping for engagement and marriage. This relationship was developing during the time that President Hinckley counseled the Relief Society sisters and young women of the Church to wear only one earring in each ear.

The young man waited patiently over a period of time for the young woman to remove her extra earrings, but she did not take them out. This was a valuable piece of information for this young man, and he felt unsettled about her

nonresponsiveness to a prophet’s pleading. For this and other reasons, he ultimately stopped dating the young woman, because he was looking for an eternal companion who had the courage to promptly and quietly obey the counsel of the prophet in all things and at all times. The young man was quick to observe that the young woman was not quick to observe.

I presume that some of you might have difficulty with my last example. You may believe the young man was too judgmental or that basing an eternally important decision, even in part, upon such a supposedly minor issue is silly or fanatical. Perhaps you are both

erred because the example focuses upon a young woman who failed to respond to prophetic counsel instead of upon a young man. I simply invite you to consider and ponder the power of being quick to observe and what was actually observed in the case I just described. The issue was not earrings!

One final example. I have long been fascinated by the nature of the interaction between the Spirit of the Lord and Nephi found in chapters 11 through 14 of 1 Nephi. Nephi desired to see and hear and know the things his father, Lehi, had seen in the vision of the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 8). In chapters 11 through 14 the Holy Ghost assisted Nephi in learning about the nature and meaning of his father’s vision. Interestingly, 13 times in these



chapters the Spirit of the Lord directed Nephi to “look” as a fundamental feature of the learning process. Nephi repeatedly was counseled to look, and because he was quick to observe, he beheld the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 11:8), the mother of the Savior (see 1 Nephi 11:20), the rod of iron (see 1 Nephi 11:25), and the Lamb of God, the Son of the Eternal Father (see 1 Nephi 11:21).

I have described only a few of the spiritually significant things Nephi saw. You may want to study these chapters in greater depth and learn from and about Nephi’s learning. As you study and ponder, please keep in mind that Nephi would not have seen what he desired to see, would not have known what he needed to know, and could not have done what he ultimately needed to do if he had not been quick to observe. That same truth applies to you and to me!

Quick to observe. Prompt to watch and to obey. A simple gift that blesses us individually and in our families and extends blessings to so many other people. Each of us can and should strive to be worthy of this significant spiritual gift—even the capacity of being quick to observe.

The Importance of Being Quick to Observe

Let me now address the question of why the spiritual gift of being quick to observe is so vital for us in the world in which we do now and will yet live. Simply stated, being quick to observe is an antecedent to and is linked with the spiritual gift of discernment. And for you and for me, discernment is a light of protection and direction in a world that grows increasingly dark.

Much like faith precedes the miracle, much like baptism by water comes before the baptism by fire, much like gospel milk should be digested before gospel meat, much like clean hands can lead to a pure heart, and much like the ordinances of the Aaronic Priesthood are necessary

before a person can receive the higher ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood, so being quick to observe is a prerequisite to and a preparation for the gift of discernment. We can hope to obtain that supernal gift of discernment and its light of protection and direction only if we are quick to observe—if we both look and obey.

President George Q. Cannon (1827–1901), who served as a counselor to four Presidents of the Church, taught powerfully about the gift of discernment:



“One of the gifts of the Gospel which the Lord has promised to those who enter into covenant with Him is the gift of discerning of spirits—a gift which is not much thought of by many and probably seldom prayed for; yet it is a gift that is of exceeding value and one that should be enjoyed by every Latter-day Saint. . . .

“Now, the gift of discerning of spirits not only gives men and women who have it the power to discern the spirit with which others may be possessed or influenced, but it gives them the power to discern the spirit which influences themselves. They are able to detect a false spirit and also to know when the

Spirit of God reigns within them. In private life this gift is of great importance to the Latter-day Saints. Possessing and exercising this gift they will not allow any evil influence to enter into their hearts or to prompt them in their thoughts, their words or their acts. They will repel it; and if perchance such a spirit should get possession of them, as soon as they witness its effects they will expel it or, in other words, refuse to be led or prompted by it.”¹

Can we recognize how crucial this spiritual gift is in our lives today and how being quick to observe is a powerful invitation for the blessings of discernment?

President Stephen L Richards (1879–1959), who served as a counselor to President David O. McKay, has provided additional instruction about the nature and blessings of discernment:



“First, I mention the gift of discernment, embodying the power to discriminate . . . between right and wrong. I believe that this gift when highly developed arises largely out of an acute sensitivity to impressions—spiritual impressions, if you will—to read under the surface as it were, to detect hidden evil, and more importantly to find the good that may be concealed. The highest type of discernment is that which perceives in others and uncovers for them their better natures, the good inherent within them. . . .

“. . . *Every member in the restored Church of Christ could have this gift if he willed to do so.* He could not be deceived with the sophistries of the world. He could not be led astray by pseudo-prophets and subversive cults. Even the inexperienced would recognize false teachings, in a measure at least. . . . We ought to be grateful every day of our lives for this sense which keeps alive a conscience which constantly alerts us to the dangers inherent in wrongdoers and sin.”²

As we integrate the teachings of Presidents Cannon and Richards, we learn that the gift of discernment operates basically in four major ways.

First, as we “read under the surface,” discernment helps us detect hidden error and evil in others.

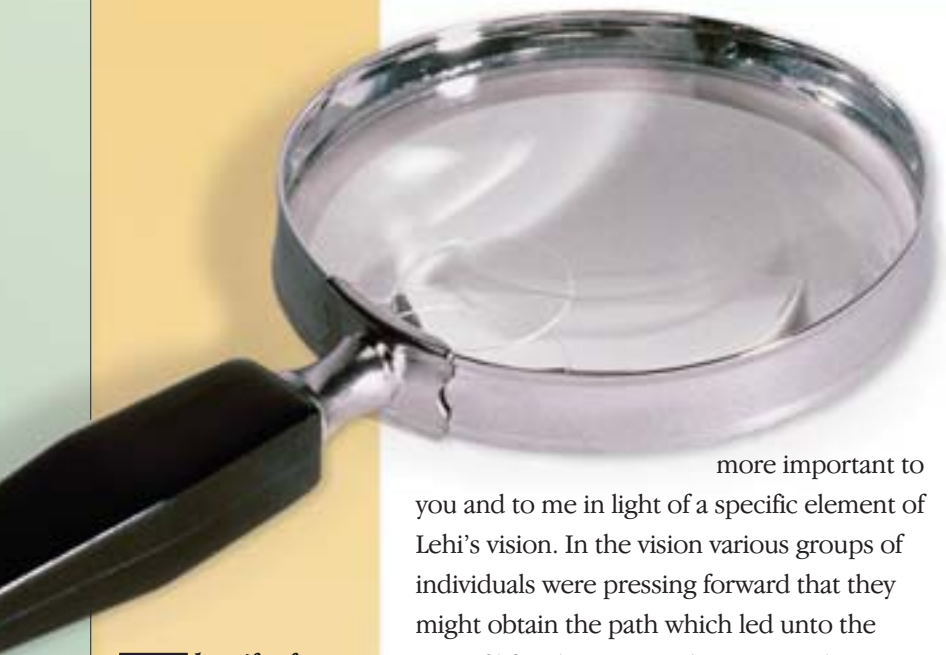
Second, and more important, it helps us detect hidden errors and evil in ourselves. Thus the spiritual gift of discernment is not exclusively about discerning other people and situations, but, as President Cannon taught, it is also about discerning things as they really are within us.

Third, it helps us find and bring forth the good that may be concealed in others.

And fourth, it helps us find and bring forth the good that may be concealed in us. Oh, what a blessing and a source of protection and direction is the spiritual gift of discernment!

The teachings of Presidents Cannon and Richards concerning the power of discernment to detect hidden evil and to identify good that may be concealed become even

Discernment, like the iron rod, is a light of protection and direction in a world that grows increasingly dark. With it, you and I can press forward safely through the mist of darkness.



The gift of discernment opens to us vistas that stretch far beyond what can be seen with natural eyes or heard with natural ears.

more important to you and to me in light of a specific element of Lehi's vision. In the vision various groups of individuals were pressing forward that they might obtain the path which led unto the tree of life. The strait and narrow path came along by the rod of iron, even to the tree. The mist of darkness described in the vision represents the temptations of the devil that blind the eyes of the children of men and lead them into broad roads so that they are lost (see 1 Nephi 12:17).

Now please pay particular attention to verse 23 in 1 Nephi 8, and let us liken this scripture to our day and the challenges we face in an increasingly wicked world:

“And it came to pass that there arose a mist of darkness; yea, even an exceedingly great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost.”

I repeat again for emphasis the truth that discernment is a light of protection and direction in a world that grows increasingly dark. You and I can press forward safely and successfully through the mist of darkness and have a clear sense of spiritual direction. Discernment is so much more than recognizing right from wrong. It helps us distinguish the relevant from the irrelevant, the important from the unimportant, and the necessary from that which is merely nice.

The gift of discernment opens to us vistas that stretch far beyond what can be seen

with natural eyes or heard with natural ears. Discerning is seeing with spiritual eyes and feeling with the heart—seeing and feeling the falsehood of an idea or the goodness in another person. Discerning is hearing with spiritual ears and feeling with the heart—hearing and feeling the unspoken concern in a statement or the truthfulness of a testimony or doctrine.

I frequently have heard President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, counsel members and priesthood leaders, “If all you know is what you see with your natural eyes and hear with your natural ears, then you will not know very much.” His observation should help all of us to appropriately desire and seek these spiritual gifts.

Observing and discerning also enable us to assist others who are seeking to obtain the path and who desire to press forward with steadfastness in Christ. Blessed with these spiritual gifts, we will not lose our way; we will not wander off; we will not be lost. And we can hope to obtain the supernal gift of discernment and its light of protection and direction only if we are quick to observe. As Alma taught his son Helaman, “See that ye take care of these sacred things, yea, see that ye look to God and live” (Alma 37:47).

I declare my special witness that Jesus is the Christ, our Redeemer and our Savior. I know that He lives. I invoke His blessing upon each of you—that you may desire to be and become quick to observe and truly discerning. ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University on May 10, 2005.

NOTES

1. *Gospel Truth: Discourses and Writings of George Q. Cannon*, comp. Jerreld L. Newquist (1987), 156–57.
2. In Conference Report, Apr. 1950, 162–63; emphasis added.




Coming of Age

BY KATHLEEN H. HUGHES

First Counselor in the Relief Society
General Presidency



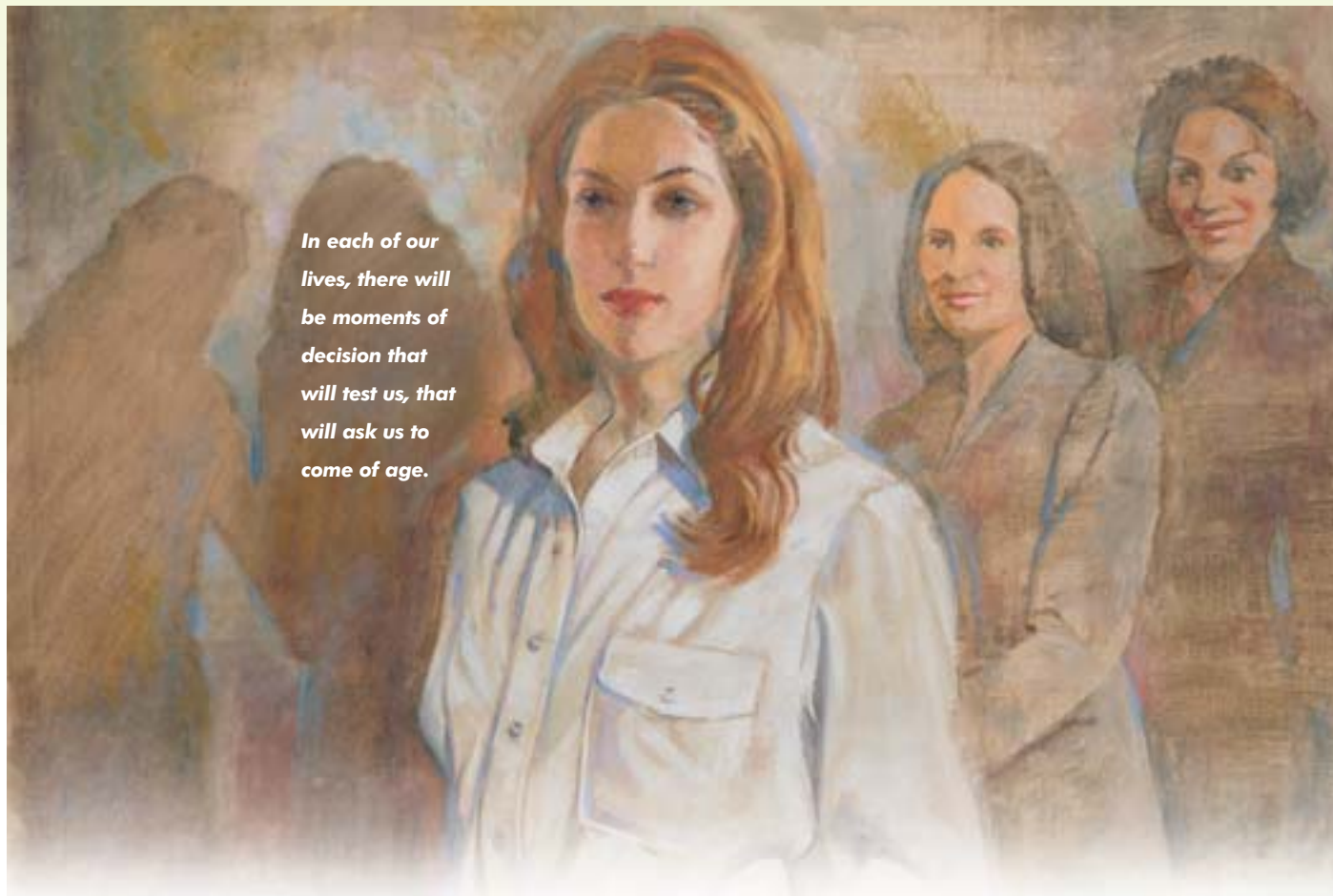
Esther not only makes a choice that will benefit her people but also demonstrates that she knows who she is and what she can do when hard things come.

With its intriguing plot and interesting characters, the book of Esther has all the elements of a good story. A beautiful Jewish girl is chosen by the king to become his queen; fellow Jews are condemned to death by a wicked prince; the Jewish queen saves her people by exposing the wickedness of the prince; the people are saved.

But Esther's story is not quite that simple. She is a beautiful young woman, but she is encouraged by her cousin and guardian, Mordecai, to enter what amounts to a beauty pageant in which the winner gets to be the queen. The reader of the story is left wondering

about the motives of these characters: is Esther merely an obedient, naïve young woman who does what she is told? Or does she, along with Mordecai, understand that her beauty offers her a chance to play an important role for her people? It is interesting that neither she nor Mordecai discloses to anyone at the time that she is Jewish. Would that knowledge have eliminated her from the contest? Readers are left to wonder.

King Ahasuerus, as we know, selects Esther to be his new queen, but when Haman, one of the princes of the kingdom, plots to have the Jews in all 127 provinces killed, we see a new Esther—her choice and courage to defend her people create a stronger, more spiritually minded woman.



*In each of our
lives, there will
be moments of
decision that
will test us, that
will ask us to
come of age.*

When Mordecai, through Esther’s servant, tells her of the decree against the Jews and requests that she go into the king to plead for her people, she is reluctant. She reminds him that she can go into the king’s presence only when called. Mordecai’s response is direct: “Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king’s house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, . . . thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed” (Esther 4:13–14).

A Crucial Decision

Now it is decision time for Esther: does she risk not only her place as queen but her very life by going to the king and pleading for her people? If she chooses to approach the king, she must make known her background and religion—knowledge she has kept from him. How will King Ahasuerus view her deception? But if she does nothing, all her people, and perhaps she too, could die.

After considering the options, she consents to the request. She asks Mordecai and all the Jews in the city of Shushan, as well as her handmaids, to fast “for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day . . . ; and so

will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:16).

At the moment of truth, Esther not only makes a choice that will benefit her people but also demonstrates, through her actions and her request, that she knows who she is and what she can do when hard things come. For readers of Esther’s story, this is the first hint of faith or religious commitment from either her or Mordecai, but when she requests that others fast for her, we know that she had received religious training. She knows God, she knows the power of fasting and prayer, and she uses that understanding when she needs courage and strength.

While there is little in Esther’s story that gives us clues to her previous behavior and life, it is not difficult to imagine that in her role as queen, she didn’t do many dishes, tend children, or clean house—or even make too many important decisions. Her life was largely about her. And then came the edict of death for her people. Esther suddenly had to grow up—she had to face a serious dilemma. When she had to, she responded in a mature, thoughtful way. Her actions speak for her, saying she



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

Most *Ensign* articles can be used for family home evening discussions, personal reflection, or teaching the gospel in a variety of settings.

1. Pass out papers, each with the name of a different family member at the top. Have everyone list a gift, talent, or blessing of that family member. Give everyone a chance to write about everybody else. As you tell Esther's story, invite the family to listen for how she used her gifts to serve. Encourage family members to select a gift from their own paper and set a goal to use it to serve others.

2. Ask family members to share past life-changing events or decisions. As a family, imagine several different endings to the history and the implications of each. Discuss how Esther made life-changing choices and what might have happened if she had chosen differently.

must have realized, "I'm not as important as the people I can save."

Our Own Tests

And what of us? In each of our lives as members of the Church, there will be moments of decision that will test us, that will ask us to come of age, to act in a way that says: "My needs and wants are not as important as the cause of building the kingdom. I will commit my life to Christ."

Let me share some examples: We frequently hear young women say they dread the day when they will have to leave the comfort of the Young Women program and enter

Relief Society. And admittedly, it can be hard. Anytime you walk into a room of people you don't know well and who don't know you, it can be difficult. But saying goodbye to the Young Women program and taking your place as a woman of Relief Society is a sign that you have grown up. It means you have a testimony and understanding of your place as a woman in the Church, that you are willing to move into a new season and depth of service in the kingdom of God.

Young men, along with senior couples and sisters, are often reminded that they should plan to serve missions. My husband and I are approaching senior couple status, and a mission is part of our future. Do most of us doubt or worry about our ability, our families, or where we will be called to go? Of course we do! I would be more surprised if people said they didn't think about those things. But I also know that putting aside our fears and exercising faith by responding to our Heavenly Father's request will bring us great blessings and confidence. It's another kind of "coming of age."

Another example: Recently I listened to a woman describe her first visit to her new ward. She indicated that as she entered the chapel, not one person spoke to her. After

sacrament meeting she asked someone where the Gospel Doctrine class was being held. In that class, as well as in the Relief Society meeting that followed, no one asked for her name or asked her to introduce herself. She felt devastated. But, you say, she should have taken the initiative and done something herself. To some extent, that is true. However, what of the members of the ward? Shouldn't we be looking for the stranger in our midst? Shouldn't we be grown up enough to recognize that because we are comfortable in our environment, we need to welcome and

befriend those for whom the surroundings are unfamiliar?

Showing Our Commitment

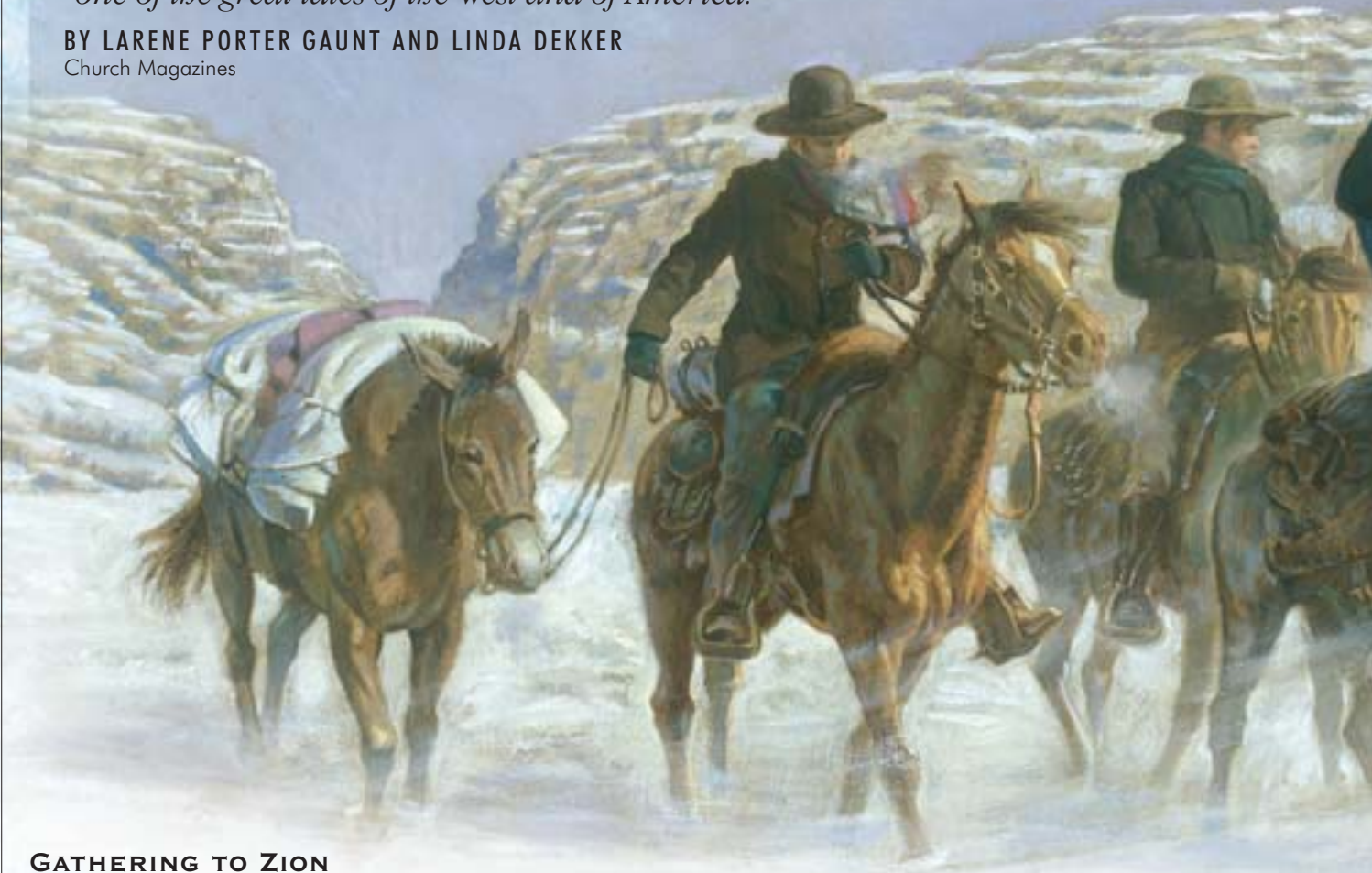
I recently spoke to a woman who said she does only one thing for herself at Church meetings on Sunday: she takes the sacrament to receive the benefits it can personally bring to her. Then, she said, "Everything else I do at those meetings is for the benefit of others." She asks herself, "How or what can I do for someone else during this time?" It requires spiritual sensitivity and maturity to look outside oneself to this degree—it is a conscious and courageous decision she makes each week to serve and bless others' lives.

It's rare for a person to be in as dangerous or dramatic a situation as Esther's, but each of us daily has the privilege of influencing someone, of deciding to show our Heavenly Father that we understand and are grateful for His plan for us and that we accept and are committed to live by the covenants we have made with Him. Like Esther, who was asked by Mordecai, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" we have come to the kingdom for this time, and we need faith, testimony, and courage to live up to the promises made to us by the Father. ■

GO AND BRING

The rescue of the Willie and Martin handcart companies from the snows of Wyoming in 1856 has been called “one of the great tales of the West and of America.”

BY LARENE PORTER GAUNT AND LINDA DEKKER
Church Magazines



GATHERING TO ZION

“We are very anxious to have a company . . . cross the plains with handcarts. . . . Would you like to try it?”¹ wrote President Brigham Young in 1855 to Edmund Ellsworth, his son-in-law in England.

This was not the first time President Young had considered using handcarts, but it was the first time he had acted on it. With 20,000 converts in Europe “clamoring” to come to Zion,² leaders hoped to provide an inexpensive travel option. The Perpetual Emigrating Fund would pay for the travel expenses of the handcart pioneers, and the pioneers would repay the fund once in Utah. President of the European Mission, Elder Franklin D. Richards (1821–99), as well as missionaries and converts, enthusiastically embraced the idea.

“The fire of emigration blazes . . . to such an extent that

the folks are willing to part with all their effects, and toddle off with a few things in a pocket handkerchief,” wrote London missionary William H. Kimball to President Richards.³

A total of ten handcart companies traveled to Salt Lake City between 1856 and 1860. Eight of the ten companies successfully arrived in Salt Lake City. The two largest companies, however, met with tragedy—the fourth handcart company of 500 led by James G. Willie and the fifth company of 665 led by Edward Martin. Also part of this tragedy were two independent wagon companies made up of Saints who had the means to purchase their own wagons—one wagon company of 185 led by William B. Hodgett and the other of 200 led by John A. Hunt. The

THEM IN



Hodgett wagon company traveled near or with the Martin handcart company, and the Hunt company traveled about two days behind Martin and Hodgett.

This is the story of Latter-day Saints who were motivated by their desire to follow a living prophet and gather to Zion. When they found themselves in the midst of extraordinary circumstances due to a late start and early snowstorms, they displayed courage and faith as they relied on God, the gospel, and one another. No one could have predicted the severity of the snowstorms that created such suffering, nor could anyone have predicted the heights to which Brigham Young, the Saints in Utah, the immigrants, and the rescuers would rise in the midst of extreme difficulty.

A Late Start

During the winter and spring of 1855–56, Elder Richards oversaw the migration of the European immigrants as they



An early photo of men who served in the European Mission (above) captured some of those involved with the Saints stranded during the winter of 1856: (1) Joseph A. Young, (2) William H. Kimball, (3) George D. Grant, (4) Elder Franklin D. Richards, (5) Edward Martin.

traveled by ship and train from Liverpool, England, to Iowa City, Iowa. Here the Saints were outfitted with handcarts and supplies. Though those in charge were organized and capable, they were not fully prepared for such a large number of immigrants so late in the season of 1856.

Even so, for the approximately 1,500 handcart immigrants who left Iowa City in 1856,⁴ the first 200 miles “went well as [they] joyously sang, ‘For some must push and some must pull as we go marching up the hill. As merrily on the way we go, until we reach the valley, Oh!’”⁵

But when the Willie company reached Florence, Nebraska (now modern-day Omaha, Nebraska), they had to make a difficult decision. Should they continue the trek and trust a divine hand to temper the weather, or should

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF LDS CHURCH ARCHIVES

they spend the winter in an area “where jobs were scarce and survival depended upon homesteading skills” that the immigrants had not learned in factories?⁶

Leaders and immigrants held a meeting and voted to go on. If “weather patterns had been normal,” the decision “would have been applauded.”⁷ Instead, the decision has often been questioned.

Levi Savage, a subcaptain, was one who opposed the decision. But he said, “Seeing you are to go forward, I will

go with you; . . . will suffer with you, and if necessary, will die with you.”⁸ The Willie company left on August 16.⁹

The Martin company arrived in Florence after the Willie company had left. After several meetings the Martin company decided to move ahead, leaving on August 25.¹⁰ By September 2, 1856, the two independent wagon companies had also left Florence.

Elder Richards and several returning missionaries—including some who had helped outfit the handcart companies—were the last to leave. When they passed the Martin and Willie companies in early September 1856, they were surprised at the condition in which they found the Willie company due to reduced provisions, the condition of some carts, and the loss of 30 cattle in a stampede. They promised they would return with help.

There Are Saints on the Plains

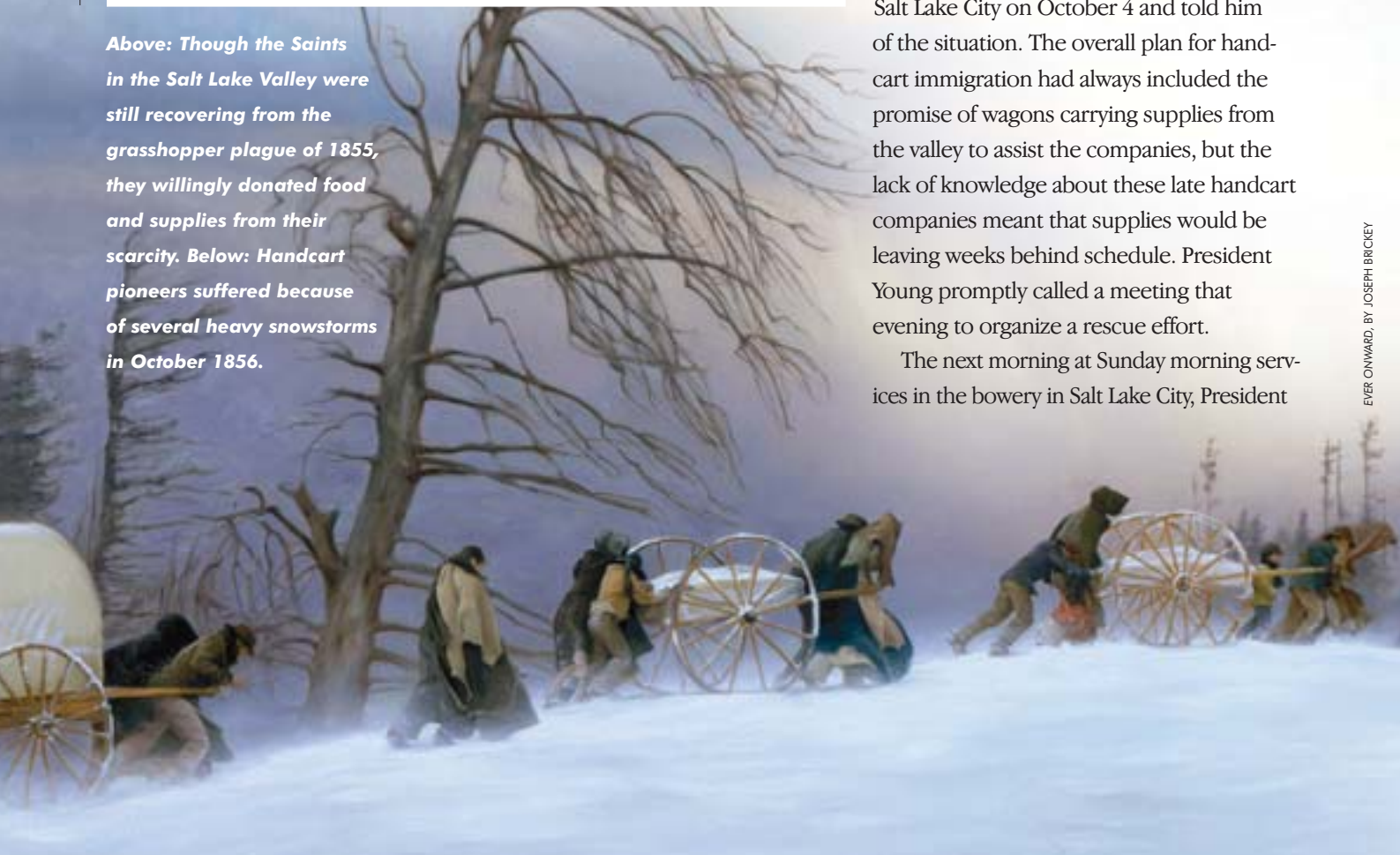
President Brigham Young had no knowledge of any other groups crossing the plains that season until Elder Richards arrived in Salt Lake City on October 4 and told him of the situation. The overall plan for handcart immigration had always included the promise of wagons carrying supplies from the valley to assist the companies, but the lack of knowledge about these late handcart companies meant that supplies would be leaving weeks behind schedule. President Young promptly called a meeting that evening to organize a rescue effort.

The next morning at Sunday morning services in the bowery in Salt Lake City, President

PREPARING THE RESCUE WAGONS, BY LARRY C. WINBORG



Above: Though the Saints in the Salt Lake Valley were still recovering from the grasshopper plague of 1855, they willingly donated food and supplies from their scarcity. Below: Handcart pioneers suffered because of several heavy snowstorms in October 1856.



EVER ONWARD, BY JOSEPH BRICKEY

Young announced, with an urgency he said was dictated by the Holy Ghost: “Many of our brethren and sisters are on the plains with hand-carts, . . . and they must be brought here. . . . Go and bring in those people now on the plains, and attend strictly to those things which we call temporal, . . . otherwise your faith will be in vain.”¹¹

The next day was the first day of general conference, and President Young again called for teams and wagons as he had the day before. He also called for blankets, stockings, shoes, and clothing. In response to the urgency of the situation, many sisters immediately donated “petticoats, stockings, and everything they could spare, right there in the Tabernacle.”¹² That evening many of the rescuers gathered in President Young’s office to receive instructions and priesthood blessings.

On Tuesday, October 7, a rescue party with 16 supply wagons met at Big Mountain. Leader George D. Grant chose Robert T. Burton and William H. Kimball as his assistants. They were experienced leaders of the local militias, of which all men were members. The others who volunteered were experienced frontiersmen or were Minute Men—a group of strong, fearless young men attached to each local militia. Within a few days, the rescue party grew in wagons and men as additional teamsters, eager to help, caught up with the group.

At the same time, however, the immigrants were already suffering and dying from cold weather and lack of food. Amy Loader of the Martin company carried a biscuit made from rationed flour “in her pocket and usually gave portions to her young son, Robert, when he became hungry.” Near Fort Laramie, she “came across a man [from their company] who had fallen on the



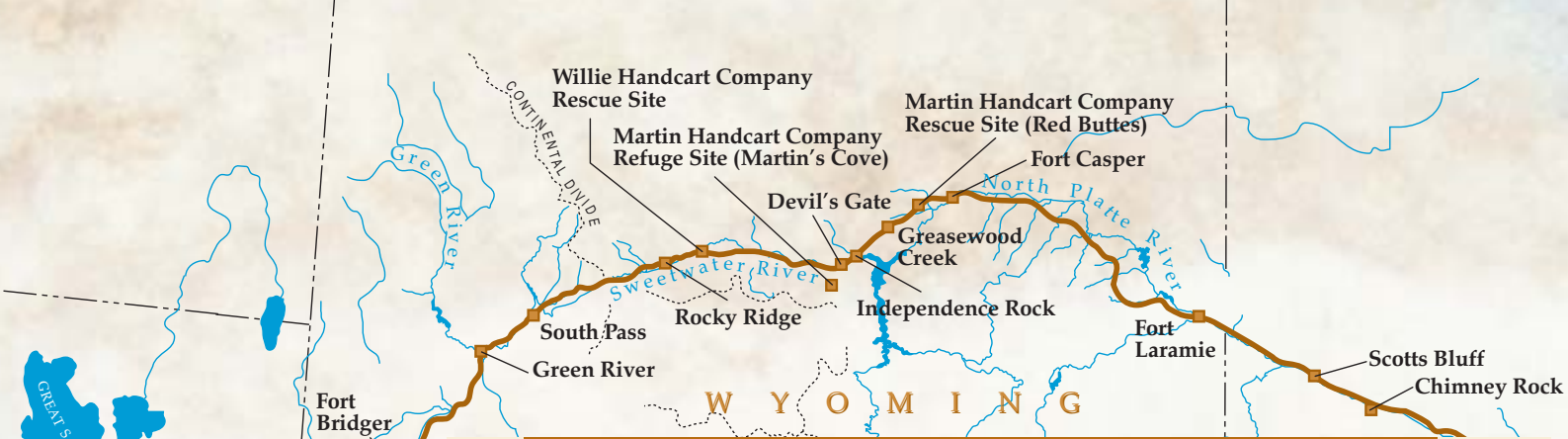
Amy Loader was one who exhibited kindness and brotherly love when she shared her rationed food.

ground and was almost lifeless. She went to him and said, ‘Brother what is the matter, why do you not go on?’ He replied, ‘Sister Loader, I cannot, I am too weak but if I had just one mouthful of bread I believe I could.’ She asked, ‘Do you think so and would you?’ When he replied, ‘Yes,’ she took the bread from her pocket and gave it to him. After eating he arose and was again able to walk.”¹³

By the end of October, at least 250 rescue teams were on the road. Even so, it would be 63 days before all the surviving immigrants would be safely in Salt Lake City. Although exact numbers are elusive and the numbers greatly decreased after the arrival of the rescue party, best estimates put the death toll at 69 in the Willie company, 150–170 in the Martin company, 10 in the Hodgett company, and 19 in the Hunt company.¹⁴ The leading causes of death were starvation, exposure, exhaustion, and dysentery.

Praising God

“Perhaps their suffering seems less dramatic because the handcart pioneers bore it meekly, praising God, instead of fighting for life with the ferocity of animals,” wrote historian Wallace Stegner of the handcart pioneers and their rescue. “But if courage and endurance make a story, if human kindness and helpfulness and brotherly love in the midst of raw horror are worth recording, this half-forgotten episode of Mormon migration is one of the



JUNE		JULY		AUGUST		SEPTEMBER				OCTOBER				NOVEMBER		DECEMBER							
	26		18		27					4	5	7	14	19	21	23	28	31	4	9		30	15
Willie company arrives in Iowa City, Iowa.		Willie company leaves Florence, Nebraska.		Martin company leaves Florence, Nebraska.		Franklin D. Richards arrives in Salt Lake City, notifies Brigham Young of Willie and Martin companies.				Six rescue wagons meet Martin company at Greasewood Creek, Wyoming.				Martin company carried across Sweetwater River by rescuers.		Rescue wagons reach Willie company at Sixth Crossing of the Sweetwater River in Wyoming.						Last of Hodgett and Hunt wagon companies arrive in Salt Lake City.	
						Brigham Young requests relief wagons during Sunday services.				Willie company crosses Rocky Ridge in Wyoming.				Martin company arrives in Salt Lake City.									
						First rescue party rolls out of Salt Lake City.				Major snowstorm hits all parties; Martin company crosses North Platte River in Wyoming.				Martin company moves out of Martin's Cove; Willie company arrives in Salt Lake City.									
						First rescue party reaches South Pass, Wyoming.				Martin company moves out of nine-day camp at Red Buttes, Wyoming.													

great tales of the West and of America.”¹⁵

Why did most of these pioneers bear their suffering “meekly, praising God”? The answer is found in their testimonies of the gospel of Jesus Christ and in a common goal—to

“hear a prophet’s voice and live with the Saints of Zion.”¹⁶ Intrinsic in their willing response to gather to Zion was the belief that they were building the kingdom of God. They believed, as Elizabeth Horrocks Jackson, “that my suffering for the Gospel’s sake will be sanctified unto me for my good.”¹⁷ And if they died, their loved ones found comfort in the fact that they had died “with their faces zion-ward in full faith and fellowship with the saints.”¹⁸

This is why there was courage and endurance, “kindness and helpfulness and brotherly love,” as Wallace Stegner noted. While not all Latter-day Saints rose to the occasion, the fact that so many did stands as a witness of their commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ, to the prophet, and to each other.

RESCUE OF THE WILLIE COMPANY

On October 12, when Captain George Grant and the rescue party arrived at Fort Bridger, Wyoming, they still had not found the handcart companies, although they had fully expected to find them there or nearby. Captain Grant immediately sent express riders east to locate them. The rescue party continued on through South Pass, Wyoming, where Grant asked Reddick N. Allred to stay and establish a supply camp for rescuers as they traveled through the area.

He left Allred with flour, cattle, 11 guards, and 4 wagons.

Captain Grant’s rescue party with supply wagons continued to the Sweetwater River in Wyoming. On October 19 a major snowstorm, the first of several, became a blizzard. For protection, Grant camped off the road in a dense grove of willow trees.

Also stranded in the heavy snow on October 19 were the two handcart companies and the two wagon companies—Willie for three days just east of Rocky Ridge in Wyoming; and Martin, Hodgett, and Hunt for nine days near present-day Casper, Wyoming.

About noon on October 19, the express riders located the Willie company. Their light wagon with its few pounds of flour seemed “like a thunderbolt out of the clear sky,” its drivers like “messengers from the courts of glory” to the starving company.¹⁹ Though they had little food to leave, they did provide hope to the company when they told Captain Willie that a rescue party with supply wagons was just a long day’s travel to the west.

Express rider Joseph A. Young saw Emily Hill (Woodmansee) among those of the Willie company. He had known her in England and burst into tears. She asked, “Why do you cry, Brother Young?” He said, “Oh, because you look so starved, and the provision wagons are [miles] away.” Then, feeling in

his pocket, he produced a small onion. "Eat this," he said.²⁰

That same day the express riders continued eastward in search of the Martin company. Grant had instructed the riders to go no farther than Devil's Gate, Wyoming—where a log stockade with three or four cabins had been built. Everyone felt sure that the Martin company would be west of Devil's Gate, but they were wrong.

A Friendly Guidepost

On October 20 Captain James Willie and Joseph Elder left the Willie company and headed west on mules to search for the promised supply wagons.

Meanwhile at the rescue party camp on October 20, Harvey Cluff volunteered to take a sign and place it in a conspicuous place at the main road. "In facing the northern blast up hill," he later wrote, "I found it quite difficult to keep from freezing. I had only been back to camp a short time when two men [James Willie and Joseph Elder] rode up from the Willie handcart company. The signboard had done the work of salvation."²¹

The next morning the snow was deep as the rescue party, along with Willie and Elder, pushed the 27 miles back to the Willie campsite. John Chislett of the handcart company wrote of meeting the rescue party: "Just as the sun was sinking beautifully behind the distant hills, . . . several covered wagons, each drawn by four horses, were seen coming towards us. . . . Shouts of joy rent the air; strong men wept until tears ran freely down their furrowed and sunburnt cheeks, and little children . . . fairly danced around with gladness. . . . The [rescuers] were so overcome that they could not for some time utter a word. . . .

They felt that they had, in a great measure, contributed to our sad position; but . . . how bravely they worked to bring us safely to the valley—to the Zion of our hopes!"²²

The rescuers handed out flour, potatoes, onions, bedding, and socks. The young rescuers "with axes in hand . . . dragged from the distant hills several cords of wood. . . . Bonfires were soon made, and the cooking began in earnest, . . . until every

member of the Willie company had enough to eat and to spare."²³ Even so, nine deaths occurred that night. The next day Captain Grant assigned William H. Kimball to take charge of helping the Willie Company back to Salt Lake City. He left some supply wagons with Kimball, then took 17 men and nine wagons and headed for Devil's Gate.

Ascending Rocky Ridge

On October 22 the Willie company, with the help of some of the rescuers, moved to the base of Rocky Ridge. The next day, they faced the most terrible ordeal of their journey: the 16-mile trek to Rock Creek Hollow, which included a steep 5-mile ascent over the barren Rocky Ridge during a bitter, howling wind that whipped the

freshly fallen snow from the day before into a furious storm.

Levi Savage wrote of the day: "We buried our dead, got up our teams and about nine o'clock a.m. commenced ascending the Rocky Ridge. This was a severe day. . . . We became weary, set down to rest, and some became chilled and commenced to freeze."²⁴

The next day the company rested at Rock Creek Hollow and buried 15. Leader William Kimball had sent express riders to Reddick Allred's station near South Pass. Allred brought fresh teams and six provision wagons to Rock



THE RESCUE OF THE HANDCART COMPANIES, BY GLEN S. HOPKINSON

On October 21 the rescue wagons brought relief and hope when they reached the Willie company at Sixth Crossing of the Sweetwater River in Wyoming.

Creek Hollow. This was one of Allred's finest moments. He had remained at his station while others encouraged him to turn back with them when they left.

The Willie company moved on to Fort Bridger, where the immigrants left their handcarts behind and rode in wagons. Lightweight ambulance wagons took the most seriously ill and drove from before sunrise to far past sunset each day, arriving in Salt Lake City on November 3.

The Willie company entered Salt Lake City on November 9. William Woodward wrote of their arrival on that sunny day: "The Bishops of the different wards took every person that was not provided for . . . and put them into comfortable quarters. Hundreds of persons were round the wagons on our way thro' the city welcoming the company safely home."²⁵

RESCUE OF THE MARTIN COMPANY

When the October 19 snowstorm hit, the Martin handcart company had just crossed the Platte River near present-day Casper, Wyoming—a devastating turning point for them. Martha Robinson Blackham related that the waist-deep water "put them into shock. . . . Upon reaching the other side a tremendous storm of snow, hail, and fierce winds hit the company. . . . That night 13 pioneers died from exposure. . . . Deaths came frequently [in the next few days] and the dead were found . . . holding hands, or sitting by the fire, or while eating crusts of bread or when singing hymns."²⁶

Some found the courage to cross on their own. Eliza Cusworth Burton Staker was among those. She waded across the river three times. First she took her son, whom she was forced to tie to a tree while she went back to get his sister. Then she made a third trip to get her handcart.²⁷

Grace Slater Wignall continued the story: "Monday morning the camp moved about 9 miles to [Red Butte]. We were there 9 days; the snow was then about two feet deep. . . . I called in the elders to administer to [my sick husband], and he was healed immediately."²⁸

Events such as this were why "the 'songs of Zion' were frequently heard . . . , though the company was in the very depths of its privations."²⁹

The Rescue Party Reaches Devil's Gate

Captain Grant and the rescue party, meanwhile, had traveled 100 miles through deep snow and reached Devil's Gate on Sunday, October 26, with no sign of the ailing Martin, Hodgett, or Hunt companies. The rescue party was totally exhausted and spent the day "in fasting and prayer, and in preparing themselves to receive the mind and will of the Lord."³⁰

The next day Grant sent out another express team and told them not to return until they had located the companies. One of the express riders, Daniel W. Jones (not

the Welsh missionary), later wrote of this moment: "Having seen the sufferings of Brother Willie's company, we more fully realized the danger the others were in. The Elders who had just returned from England having many dear friends with these companies, suffered great anxiety, some of them feeling more or less the responsibility resting upon them for allowing these people to start so late in the season across the plains."³¹

The Express Team Finds the Martin Company

The Martin company was suffering. Their clothing was almost worn out. Most of their bedding had been burned



RED BUTTES CAMP BY JOSEPH BRICKEY

The cove near Devil's Gate where the Martin handcart company camped for protection from the severe winter weather was later named Martin's Cove in their honor.



Above: The steep five-mile ascent over Rocky Ridge was the most terrible ordeal of the journey for the Willie company.
Right: Joseph A. Young, the “blue angel.”

because they were too weak to pull it farther. They were more numerous than the Willie company with more women, children, and aged. They had started later and been stranded longer by the mountain storms than the Willie company.

But like other Saints in the early Church, they felt a close kinship to the ancient house of Israel and drew strength from it. They had been taught: “Ancient Israel travelled to the promised land on foot, with their wives and little ones. The Lord calls upon modern Israel to do the same.”³² This kinship is evident in the writings of Elizabeth Horrocks Jackson when she described the night her husband died as “enveloped in almost Egyptian darkness.” A few days later, on October 27, Elizabeth had a stunning dream. “My husband stood by me, and said, ‘Cheer up, Elizabeth, deliverance is at hand.’”³³

The next day the express riders found the company in several inches of snow. Mary Ferguson Scott of the Hodgett wagon company, which was camped near the Martin company, “sprang to her feet and screamed at the top of her voice, ‘I see them coming! I see them coming! Surely they are angels from heaven.’”³⁴

In fact, as a result of how he looked coming through the snow, express rider Joseph A. (A for *Angell*, his mother’s maiden name) Young became known to the company as the “blue angel.” Albert Jones described the scene: “The white mule [Young was riding] was lost sight of on the white



THE BLUE ANGEL RESCUE, BY JULIE ROGERS

background of snow, and Joseph A. with his big blue soldier’s overcoat, its large cape and capacious skirts rising and falling with the motion of the mule, gave the appearance of a big blue winged angel flying to our rescue. The scene that presented itself on his arrival I shall never forget; women and men surrounded him, weeping and crying aloud; on their knees, holding to the skirts of his coat, as though afraid he would escape from their grasp and fly away.”³⁵

“Many declared we were angels,” mused the down-to-earth Daniel W. Jones. “I told them I thought we were better than angels for *this* occasion, as we were good strong men come to help them into the valley, and that our company, and wagons loaded with provisions, were not far away.”³⁶

Though the express riders brought no supplies with them, they provided life-saving hope by announcing that 10 wagons with food and clothing awaited them at Devil’s Gate. The express riders then hurried on to find John Hunt’s wagon camp.

“On the 29th, I returned from Capt. Hunt’s to Capt. Martin’s company,” wrote Joseph A. Young. “Capt. Martin had started early in the morning, and when I overtook them their cry was, ‘let us go to the Valley; let us go to Zion.’”³⁷

Young and the other express riders left the Martin company and arrived at Devil’s Gate on October 31. The camp sprang to life. Grant led the rescuers east that day, and



LET US NEVER FORGET

Now, I am grateful that today none of our people are stranded on the Wyoming highlands. But I know that all about us there are many who are in need of help and who are deserving of rescue. Our mission in life, as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, must be a mission of saving. . . .

“If we are to build that Zion of which the prophets have spoken and of which the Lord has given mighty promise, we must set aside our consuming selfishness. We must rise above our love for comfort and ease, and in the very process of effort and struggle, even in our extremity, we shall become better acquainted with our God.

“Let us never forget that we have a marvelous heritage received from great and courageous people who endured unimaginable suffering and demonstrated unbelievable courage for the cause they loved. You and I know what we should do. God help us to do it when it needs to be done.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley, “Our Mission of Saving,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 59.

they met the snowbound Martin company at Greasewood Creek. Although a welcome sight, Grant’s supplies provided only about half of the pioneers with a good coat or a pair of stockings without holes.³⁸

Patience Loader was among those who received clothing. “I was thankful to get a nice warm quilted hood, which was very warm and comfortable,” she later wrote. “I also got a pair of slippers as I was nearly barefoot.”³⁹

The companies began to travel to Devil’s Gate. Grant later described the scene to



On October 31 six rescue wagons from Devil’s Gate met the Martin company at Greasewood Creek. Express riders had found the company three days earlier.

President Young in a letter: “You can imagine between five and six hundred men, women and children, . . . fainting by the wayside; . . . children crying, their limbs stiffened by cold, their feet bleeding, . . . The sight is almost too much for the stoutest of us; but we go on doing all we can. . . . I think that not over one-third of br. Martin’s company is able to walk. . . . We have prayed without ceasing, and the blessing of

God has been with us. Br. Charles Decker has now traveled this road the 49th time, and he says he has never before seen so much snow on the Sweet Water at any season of the year.”⁴⁰

Arriving at Devil’s Gate

Everyone struggled on through another snowstorm on November 1 and finally arrived at Devil’s Gate the next day. “In the ensuing days 4,120 pounds of flour and two bushels of onions would be distributed; . . . [Soon] every nook and corner of the fort was taken. Wagons and

tents were filled to their utmost capacity.”

Within a few days the Hodgett and Hunt wagon companies arrived, making some 1,200 persons assembled there. All was in disarray at the small fort. Pioneers, rescuers, wagons, cattle, horses, mules, bedding, and personal baggage all added to the fray. “Provisions would once more have to be rationed. . . . Hope lay in additional supplies which were expected daily from the valley.”⁴¹

Now with a small city of weak, starving people to care for, Captain Grant sent express riders to Salt Lake City to request more supplies. They rode 348 miles in only 10 days, averaging more than 34 miles per day, through snow. All along

Some of the courageous young Minute Men were among those who helped the Martin company cross the ice-filled Sweetwater River between Devil's Gate and Martin's Cove.

the way, they caught up with westbound supply wagons driven by teamsters who had given up hope of finding the stranded companies. Once the teamsters learned that the companies had been found, they turned around with renewed determination to find the immigrants.

On November 3, when the express team delivered Grant's letter to President Young telling of the desperate state of the companies, Brigham Young immediately sent messengers out with instructions to turn around any returning supply wagons. Joseph A. Young also delivered a verbal message to the prophet from the immigrants, who requested the faith and prayers of the Saints in the valley. The immigrants said "that they would endeavor to merit [the faith and prayers of the Saints in the valley] in their journey and after their arrival."⁴²

Arza Hinckley was one teamster who did not turn back from his original errand but continued moving east in search of the stranded immigrants. When he met two companies of supply wagons returning to Salt Lake City, he convinced them to camp nearby until he found the handcart company. When asked why he thought he could find the handcarts when they hadn't been able to, Hinckley replied, "Brigham Young sent me out to find the handcart folks and I will find them or give my life trying."⁴³

Crossing the Sweetwater River

Meanwhile, to relieve overcrowding at Devil's Gate and to provide more protection from the weather for the

Martin company, everyone agreed to move them to a nearby cove on November 4. (The cove was later named Martin's Cove in their honor.)

The Sweetwater River flowed between Devil's Gate and the cove, and it was full of floating ice. Memories of the suffering and deaths caused from crossing the Platte River caused many to cry to the Lord for help.

Rescuer Cyrus H. Wheelock, who had been in the European Mission presidency, "could scarcely refrain from shedding tears, and he declared that he would willingly give his own life if that would save the lives of the emigrants."⁴⁴

Some needed help, and others came to their aid. Among those offering help were the young Minute Men, "brave men there in the water, packing the women and children over on their backs."⁴⁵ Others made similar sacrifices.

Once at the cove, rations were cut to four ounces of flour, for the second time, for each person per day. People continued to die, although not as many as before the rescuers arrived, sometimes half a dozen a day, and on one occasion 16 were buried in one grave.⁴⁶

The officers of the companies decided to empty the Hodgett and Hunt wagons to carry the sickest immigrants to Salt Lake and to store the freight at the stockade. Grant left express rider Daniel W. Jones in charge with 2 assistants and 17 young men from the Hodgett and Hunt wagon companies.

As the immigrants prepared to move from the cove, another blizzard struck. Snow collected 12 to 18 inches deep and by November 6 the temperature dropped to -11 degrees Fahrenheit (-24 C.). On November 9 the weather moderated somewhat, and they left.



Ephraim Hanks Brings Food and Hope

Help came on November 10 with the arrival of Ephraim Hanks, who brought two pack animals loaded with frozen buffalo meat. Hanks wrote of his arrival in the Martin company: "Flocking around me, one would say, 'Oh, please, give me a small piece of meat.' Another would exclaim, 'My poor children are starving, do give me a little.' And

Hanks killed many buffalo for the hungry company. He wrote: "The most remarkable thing about it was that I had traveled that road more than fifty times, and never before saw so many buffaloes in that part of the country. There was not a member of the party but what believed that the Lord had sent them to us in answer to prayer."⁴⁹



Ephraim Hanks brought not only buffalo meat to the Martin company but the news that supply wagons were ahead.

children with tears in their eyes would call out, 'Give me some; give me some.' . . . The next few hours found the people in camp busily engaged in cooking and eating it, with thankful hearts."⁴⁷

Hanks provided another important service: "Many of the Saints [had] frozen limbs which were endangering their lives. Brother Hanks anointed these folks and prayed that [an] amputation could be done without pain. Then when he took out his great hunting knife, held it to the fire to cleanse it, and took off the dying limb with its keen blade; many with tears in their eyes said they hadn't felt a thing."⁴⁸

As the company moved from day to day, Ephraim

On November 18, when the Martin company reached Reddick Allred's supply camp just east of South Pass, Grant saluted him with "Hurrah for the bulldog, good for hanging on."⁵⁰ The welcome supplies were distributed, and Allred joined the company.

Supply Wagons Arrive

On November 18, 30 supply wagons led by William H. Kimball arrived at the Sweetwater. Knowing the immigrants were nearby, Kimball dispatched several rescuers to bring them in. Once

the immigrants were gathered together, the rescuers gave up their wagons to them. Grant put Robert T. Burton in charge of bringing the Martin company into Salt Lake. Then he, Kimball, and others left for Salt Lake to report to President Young.

Rescuer Asa Hawley described the routine that took place daily until the Martin company reached Salt Lake: "We would carry [the immigrants] to our wagons. After seeing them to bed, we would close the wagon covers thus shutting out all the cold possible. . . . Then shoveling away the snow we would lay our scanty blankets down for a little rest, then up in the morning a long time before daylight we would build a big fire and prepare breakfast. When all was about ready we would arouse our passengers . . . [and] pass them their food. . . . [We then] loaded them into our wagons and traveled on."⁵¹

Arrival in the Valley

At noon on November 30, 104 wagons carrying the Martin company and several families from the wagon companies rolled past the old tabernacle and halted before the tithing office (where the Joseph Smith Memorial Building now stands). Officials handed out medicines and food donated by Latter-day Saints from throughout the area.

On December 7, 10, and 15, a total of about 50 more wagons reached the city, carrying 360 members of the Hunt and Hodgett independent wagon companies, who had rested at Fort Bridger for a time.

The comments of Susannah Stone (Lloyd) summed up the feelings of many of the handcart survivors.

Although her frosted feet gave her “considerable trouble for many years,” she said, “this was forgotten in the

President Young omitted the Sunday afternoon worship service so the Saints could help the rescued immigrants.

contemplation of the many blessings the Gospel has brought to me and mine.”⁵²

Thus ended “one of the great tales of the West”—the story of a prophet, rescuers, and Saints in the Salt Lake Valley who provided of their scarcity to care for the immigrants until they could care for themselves. The rescue had come about through the courage of the rescuers and the prophetic leadership of Brigham Young. United by their testimonies of the gospel, the immigrants were, as Alma said of his converts, “desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and . . . willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; [and] . . . willing to mourn with those that mourn; . . . to stand as witnesses of God at all times . . . , even until death, that [they] may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, [and] have eternal life” (Mosiah 18:8–9). ■

NOTES

1. In Rebecca Bartholomew and Leonard J. Arrington, *Rescue of the 1856 Handcart Companies* (1993), 1. Spelling modernized.
2. See Bartholomew and Arrington, *Rescue*, 1.
3. *Millennial Star*, Dec. 1, 1855, 765.
4. When the Saints left Iowa City, Iowa, there were 500 in the Willie handcart company, 665 in the Martin handcart company, 200 in the Hunt wagon company, and 185 in the Hodgett wagon company. (Original research by Melvin Bashore, senior librarian, Church History Library.)
5. Reminiscences of John Jacques, in Howard K. Bangerter and Cory W. Bangerter, *Tragedy and Triumph: Your Guide to the Rescue of the 1856 Willie and Martin Handcart Companies* (2006), 54.
6. Bartholomew and Arrington, *Rescue*, 2.
7. Bartholomew and Arrington, *Rescue*, 3.
8. B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 4:89.
9. Andrew Jenson, “Church Emigration,” *Contributor*, Jan. 1893, 135.
10. Jenson, *Contributor*, Jan. 1893, 138.
11. *Deseret News*, Oct. 15, 1856, 252.
12. Journal of Lucy Meserve Smith, in Leonard J. Arrington, “Persons for All Seasons: Women in Mormon History,” *Brigham Young University Studies*, fall 1979, 46.
13. Journal of John Jacques, in Stewart E. Glazier and Robert S. Clark, eds., *Journal of the Trail* (1997), 50.
14. Original research by Melvin Bashore, senior librarian, Church History Library.
15. Wallace Stegner, “Ordeal by Handcart,” *Collier’s*, July 6, 1956, 85.
16. Journal of Mary Ann Jones Ellsworth, in Kate B. Carter, comp., *Heart Throbs of the West* (1945), 6:359.
17. In LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion* (1960), 111–12.
18. History of Nathan Tanner Porter, in Bangerter and Bangerter, *Tragedy and Triumph*, 79.
19. In Bartholomew and Arrington, *Rescue*, 16.
20. In Jolene Spendlove Allphin, *Tell My Story Too* (2005), 415.
21. In Hafen and Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, 233.
22. In Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 4:93–94.
23. Solomon F. Kimball, “Belated Emigrants of 1856,” part 2, *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1913, 115.
24. In Glazier and Clark, *Journal of the Trail*, 155–56.
25. In Glazier and Clark, *Journal of the Trail*, 179.
26. In Bangerter and Bangerter, *Tragedy and Triumph*, 56.
27. Bangerter and Bangerter, *Tragedy and Triumph*, 61. (Research suggests this took place on the Platte.)
28. In Bangerter and Bangerter, *Tragedy and Triumph*, 55.
29. John Jaques, in Lynne S. Turner, *Emigrating Journals of the Willie and Martin Handcart Companies and the Hunt and Hodgett Wagon Trains* (1996), 120.
30. Solomon F. Kimball, “Belated Emigrants of 1856,” part 3, *Improvement Era*, Jan. 1914, 201.
31. *Forty Years among the Indians* (1890), 65.
32. *Millennial Star*, Mar. 1, 1856, 138.
33. In Bangerter and Bangerter, *Tragedy and Triumph*, 56–57.
34. John Bond, in Hafen and Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, 114.
35. In Allphin, *Tell My Story Too*, 414.
36. *Forty Years among the Indians*, 66.
37. In Hafen and Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, 230.
38. See Bartholomew and Arrington, *Rescue*, 25.
39. In Bangerter and Bangerter, *Tragedy and Triumph*, 59.
40. In Hafen and Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, 228–29.
41. Bartholomew and Arrington, *Rescue*, 25.
42. In Hafen and Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, 231.
43. In Bangerter and Bangerter, *Tragedy and Triumph*, 73.
44. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 4:99.
45. Patience Loader, in Glazier and Clark, *Journal of the Trail*, 100.
46. See John Jacques, “Some Reminiscences,” *Salt Lake Daily Herald*, Dec. 22, 1878, 1.
47. In Glazier and Clark, *Journal of the Trail*, 125. Spelling and punctuation modernized.
48. John Jacques, in Glazier and Clark, *Journal of the Trail*, 131.
49. In Solomon F. Kimball, “Belated Emigrants of 1856,” part 4, *Improvement Era*, Feb. 1914, 294.
50. Reddick Newton Allred, in Glazier and Clark, *Journal of the Trail*, 180.
51. In Bartholomew and Arrington, *Rescue*, 35.
52. In Turner, *Emigrating Journals*, 224.



My Father's Last Words

BY ELDER JORGE LUIS DEL CASTILLO

Area Seventy
South America South Area



The principle of tithing is not primarily about money; it is about faith.

One of the greatest blessings of my life was being able to serve a full-time mission. It was a wonderful event for the whole family, since I was the oldest of three brothers. My parents were converts to the Church and had been baptized when I was four years old, thanks to two fine missionaries who knocked on the door of their home in Bernal, a suburb south of Buenos Aires, Argentina. As a result, my parents always hoped their children would likewise help people find the religion that had made them so happy.

Things were going wonderfully as the first year of my mission went by. Then, when I was serving in Córdoba, Argentina, I received some sad news from home: my father was very ill. He had recently undergone surgery, and the doctors had found that his illness was much advanced, in the terminal stage.

The mission president decided that I should go home, visit my father, and return to the mission field the next day. So I went home and found my father on the verge of death, most of the time unconscious and immobile. I spent most of my time at his bedside. Those were hours of sorrow, of peace,

and of the abundant companionship of the Spirit. All my thoughts were centered on the Lord and His great plan.

At some point my father regained consciousness. He looked at me but did not recognize me. However, as I began to express how much I loved him and how grateful I was to be his son, he realized he was listening to his eldest child, the missionary. Tears started to roll down his cheeks, and making great effort to communicate, he said, “Your mother is a saintly woman; she is our example.” Then I clearly heard these words from his lips: “Even if you don’t have anything to eat, always pay your tithing.”

He did not say much more. I wrote down his words in my journal, left the house, and returned to the mission field. A few hours later my father passed away.

With the passage of time, as I began my own family and watched my children grow up, this experience with my father came to my mind. As I pondered the significance of life and death, I thought, “What last words of counsel would I leave my children if I knew the time had come to leave this world?” I could not think of anything better than the counsel I had received from my father: “Even if you don’t have anything to eat, always pay your tithing.”

The law of tithing is a great blessing to our family. I have learned that the Lord does not need my tithing; rather, I am the one who needs the blessings that come from obeying this law.

I have also learned that it does not matter if our donation envelope is bulging or if it contains just a few coins. We have met our obligation to the Lord if our tithing is 10 percent of our income. As we pay our tithing we become partners with the Lord. We take a stand in favor of building temples, in which all the ordinances of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ are made available to families. We take a stand in favor of building meetinghouses, where we can attend each Sunday with our families and partake of the sacrament if worthy. We take a stand in favor of helping missionary work reach the ends of the earth. And finally, we take a stand in favor of having the Church “stand

independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world” (D&C 78:14).

I consider the law of tithing a law of protection for my home and the most important principle in the sound financial management of our family’s resources.

Church members who understand the principle of tithing know that it is not primarily about money; it is about faith. Let us have faith in the promises of the Lord, who declared, “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10). ■

Elder Jorge Luis del Castillo served as an Area Seventy from 1997 to 2005.



BY MARY JANE WOODGER

I received only one father's blessing before his death. It took place when I was graduating from Brigham Young University and unsure of my future. I was sitting in a student apartment when the thought came, "Go home and get a father's blessing."

During that blessing I received some counsel that has become a lifelong quest: "By praying mightily you will receive guidance." Since then, I have learned some things about prayer that have made a difference in my ability to communicate with my Heavenly Father.

Prepare for Prayer

I have found that the Lord expects me to do my homework before I ask for His help in prayer. President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) instructed: "If you want the blessing, don't just kneel down and pray about it. Prepare yourselves in every conceivable way you can in order to make yourselves worthy to receive the blessing you seek."¹ Often the Lord prompts me through quiet whisperings what I need to do; my task has been to go ahead and act on those promptings.

Another practice I have found helpful in preparing to communicate with my Father in Heaven is to spend time beforehand pondering what I am going to pray for. President Gordon B. Hinckley observed: "The trouble with most of our prayers is that we give them as if we were picking up the telephone and ordering groceries—we place our order and hang up. We need to meditate, contemplate, [and] think of what we are praying about and for."² I have also found it helpful to seek the counsel of those I respect and love before I pray. I have found when I prepare for prayer my Heavenly Father blesses my efforts.

Remember That God Loves You

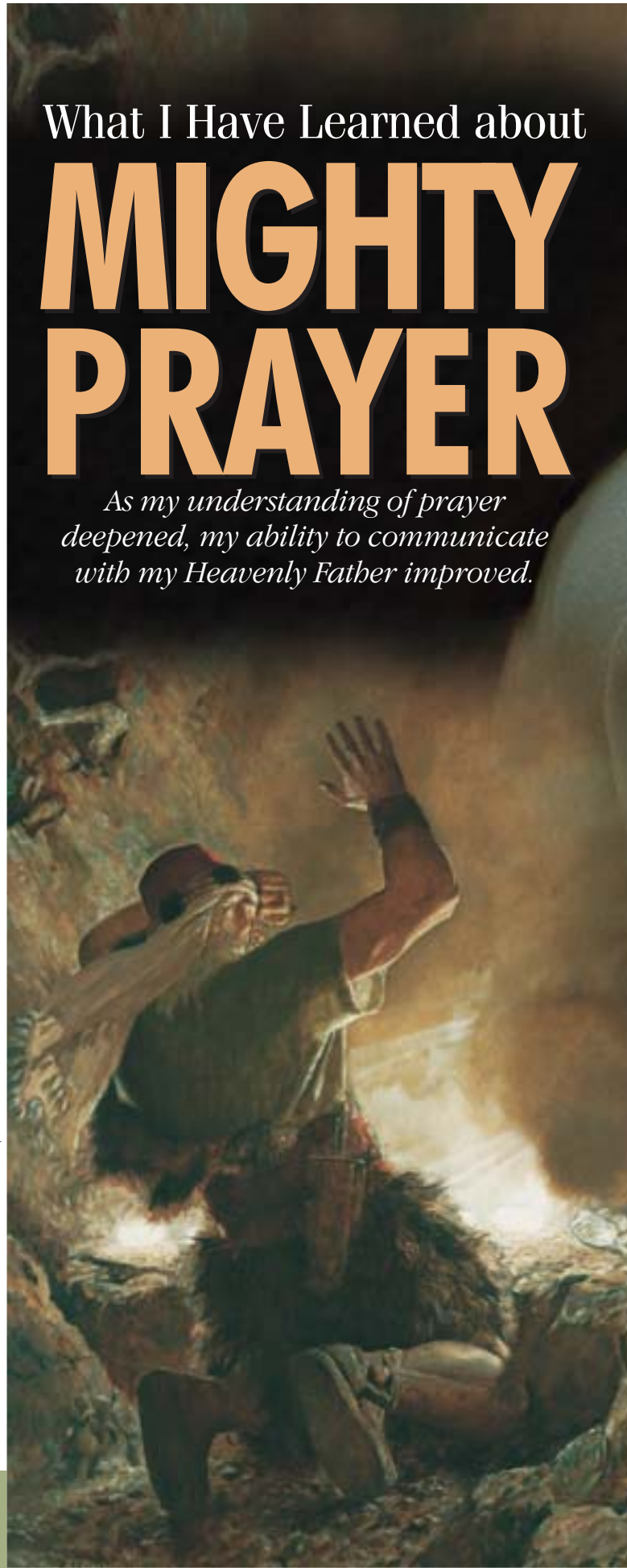
Although the Lord has promised to grant our righteous desires, I recently learned to look at prayer in a new way. "The miracle of prayer does not reside in the ability to manipulate situations and events."³ Rather, the miracle is that we have a relationship with God and have the knowledge that He is there, that He loves us and desires to bless us. My prayers are more meaningful when I concentrate on other than just an intellectual acknowledgement or even

What I Have Learned about

MIGHTY PRAYER

As my understanding of prayer deepened, my ability to communicate with my Heavenly Father improved.

DETAIL OF BROTHER OF JARED SEEING THE FINGER OF THE LORD, BY ARNOLD FRIBERG





President Harold B. Lee instructed: *“If you want the blessing, don’t just kneel down and pray about it. Prepare yourselves in every conceivable way you can in order to make yourselves worthy to receive the blessing you seek.”*

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHEW REIER, POSED BY MODEL

an appreciative admiration of the Being I worship. Instead, I try to remember what I know about His attributes. When I am struggling to receive answers, I try to ask myself, “Do I understand that He knows my past, everything about me, and what I need to do?” He is the only one who knows the end from the beginning. My prayers take on new depth when I trust that perspective.

I also try to remember that the God I pray to wants me to be happy. I have had to learn that simple truth over and over again. For years, not having that knowledge interfered with my ability to pray mightily, because I did not feel that

what He wanted for me would truly bring happiness.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that we should believe not only in His “macro plan of salvation” but also in His micro plan for each of our personal lives.⁴ Without this trust and knowledge, I was unable to pray with power. In addition, because He is a God of truth and cannot lie (see Alma 37:17), when I remember that Heavenly Father keeps promises both globally and personally, I pray with more trust. Ultimately, I must also know that “God is love” (1 John 4:16). I try to keep that love uppermost in my mind as I approach Him in prayer.



ENOS PRAYING, BY ROBERT T. BARRETT

The scriptures give examples of those who, like Enos, have received answers when they have called upon the Lord with great faith, energy, and determination.

have received answers when they have called upon the Lord with great faith, energy, and determination (see Enos 1:4). I believe the Lord knows when I deeply desire something righteous and am willing to put forth the necessary spiritual effort to have His

will revealed. I have found He has honored my persistence and is never weary of my constant petitions. As President Lee observed: “You’ve got to desire it with all your soul! You’ve got to have all the intensity of which you are capable and a desire that this is the most prized thing in all the world for which you seek!”⁷

A teacher once suggested that we express a “reality statement” to our Heavenly Father, such as, “I’m lonely,” “I’m scared,” or “I have no hope.” I have found that my prayers are intensified when I do this. The Savior Himself used a reality statement in Gethsemane when He pleaded, “Let this cup pass.”

I have also found it helpful to admit my weaknesses to the Lord. The brother of Jared exemplified this when he began his prayer that brought the Savior’s appearance: “Now behold, O Lord, and do not be angry with thy servant because of his weakness before thee; for we know that . . . we are unworthy before thee; because of the fall our natures have become evil continually; nevertheless, O Lord, thou hast given us a commandment that we must call upon thee, that from thee we may receive according to our desires” (Ether 3:2). I have found that answers come more readily when I approach the Lord in humility and listen quietly for promptings in response.

Pray in Specifics

After confessing my weaknesses I then feel ready to ask for specific blessings. For me, habitual phrases such as “bless my family” or “help me” do not usually constitute mighty prayer. My prayers are more effective when they include names and circumstances.

Notice how specific President Kimball is in this admonition: “We always have a prayer in our hearts that we may do our best on the football field, that we may appear well

Express Sincere Gratitude

Often I pass over gratitude in my prayers too quickly despite its importance. President David O. McKay (1873–1970), quoting an unknown author, explained how to feel sincere gratitude: “In secret prayer go into the room, close the door, pull down the shades, and kneel in the center of the room. For a period of five minutes or so, say nothing. Just think of what God has done for you.”⁵

I believe the Lord is pleased when I appreciate the blessings He has already given me. For instance, President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) told of giving a woman a priesthood blessing and telling her that she would be healed of a malady. A few weeks later, the woman came back, angry that she hadn’t yet been healed. President Kimball responded: “Now I understand why you have not been blessed. You must be patient, do your part, and express gratitude for the smallest improvement noted.” She repented, did as he counseled, and was eventually healed.⁶ We should express constant gratitude for even the smallest increment of blessing.

Pray Fervently

The scriptures tell us that “fervent prayer . . . availeth much” (James 5:16), and they give examples of those who

in the classroom, that we may remember the things we have learned when the test is on. . . . We pray as we stand to speak, as we walk, as we drive. We remember our friends, our enemies. We pray for wisdom and judgment. We pray for protection in dangerous places and for strength in moments of temptation.”⁸

The Apostle James writes that sometimes we have not because we ask not (see James 4:2). I have found the following definition of prayer in the Bible Dictionary helpful: “The object of prayer is not to change the will of God, but to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that God is already willing to grant, but that are made conditional on our asking for them.”⁹

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, speaking of his mother, remembered that she would “call on the Lord with perfect confidence when special blessings were needed.” In her prayers, she would speak to the Lord of her covenants with Him, “almost reminding the Lord that we had paid our tithes and offerings, that the desired blessing was, as nearly as we could judge, a righteous desire, that we were serving in our various callings to the best of our ability, and that now we were laying hold on the Lord’s promises. I can’t communicate the sincerity and the fervor of those pleas. Or the sincerity of the way she lived. . . . Because my mother had no doubts about the Lord’s reality and his ability to answer her prayers, I haven’t either. . . . This is a very personal thing to talk about and I don’t very often, because it’s hard to do without sounding overconfident. But I would be scared to death to try and undertake something without asking for the Lord’s help, so I *always* pray for that help, and I’ve never failed to get it.”¹⁰

Pray Aloud

I have found there is great power in praying aloud. Fourteen-year-old Joseph Smith had surely prayed before the First Vision, but not vocally. The prayer that brought about the Restoration was verbal (see Joseph Smith—History 1:14). Though the Lord hears and answers all prayers, both silent and spoken, I have found that vocal prayer is especially powerful because it helps me concentrate my thoughts. The scriptures are replete with stories of those who lifted their voices to the heavens. Nephi prayed aloud (see

2 Nephi 4:24), Enos raised his voice till it reached the heavens (Enos 1:4), and Alma and his people prayed so loud their captors threatened to put them to death if they did not stop (see Mosiah 24:10–12). Christ offered His great Intercessory Prayer aloud (see John 17:1) as well as His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (see Matthew 26:39–44). If at all possible, when I am on my knees I try to pray aloud.

Someday I will meet my earthly father, and he might ask me, “Did you learn to pray mightily?” I hope to be able to answer him: “I did! I learned to prepare for prayer and to think of my Heavenly Father as a loving parent who wants to bless me. I learned to express gratitude, to pray with real intent, to pray for specifics, and to pray aloud. In return, my gracious Heavenly Father answered my prayers as He guided and directed my life.” ■

NOTES

1. *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1974), 244.
2. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 469.
3. Virginia H. Pearce, “Prayer” (tri-ward fireside, Jan. 20, 2002); unpublished manuscript in possession of the author.
4. *Lord, Increase Our Faith* (1994), 38.
5. In Conference Report, Apr. 1946, 114.
6. As quoted in Richard G. Scott, “Obtaining Help from the Lord,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 85.
7. *Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 125.
8. “Prayer,” *New Era*, Mar. 1978, 15.
9. Bible Dictionary, “Prayer,” 753.
10. In Lavina Fielding Anderson, “Dallin H. Oaks: The Disciplined Edge,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1981, 37.



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

Most *Ensign* articles can be used for family home evening discussions, personal reflection, or teaching the gospel in a variety of settings.

1. Ask family members to ponder their greatest desires. Ask them to think about who could help them obtain their desires. How would they prepare to present their requests? Compare this to preparing for mighty prayer, and discuss how preparation could improve communication with Heavenly Father.

2. Hand out the six suggestions for mighty prayer to family members. Invite them to illustrate these suggestions using hymns. Discuss the words of the hymns and how they relate to the suggestions. Conclude by singing any or all of the hymns chosen.

Blessings of Belonging to Relief Society



Prayerfully select and read from this message the scriptures and teachings that meet

the needs of the sisters you visit. Share your experiences and testimony.

Invite those you teach to do the same.

How Can Relief Society Strengthen Your Relationship with Jesus Christ?

Sarah Cleveland, former first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency:

“We design to act in the name of the Lord—to relieve the wants of the distressed, and do all the good we can. . . . We have entered into this work in the name of the Lord. Let us boldly go forward” (Relief Society Minutes, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Mar. 17, 1842, 12; Mar. 30, 1842, 24).

Kathleen H. Hughes, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency:

“Whatever our circumstance, we are blessed as women. We have made covenants with Heavenly Father to do His work—and we *are* doing that work! Like Mary and Martha, we have placed ourselves at the Master’s feet and have ‘chosen that good part’ [see Luke 10:42]. We have chosen Christ, and we have chosen Relief Society. . . . It is pleasant to think that [Mary and Martha], and other faithful women who were Christ’s disciples, might have met

together to learn their part in building the kingdom. They were covenant women like us. They had determined to give the Savior all their hearts. So, too, when the Relief Society was organized, it grew out of our divine calling and our desire to serve, to love, and to care for each other” (“In Covenant with Him,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 108).

Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

How Can Relief Society Bless You and Your Family?

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “Relief Society guides mothers in nurturing their daughters and in cultivating in husbands and sons and brothers courtesy and courage. . . . The defenses of the home and family are greatly reinforced when the wife and mother and daughters belong to Relief Society. . . . Strong Relief Societies carry a powerful immunizing and healing influence for the mothers and the daughters, for the single parent, for the single sisters, for the aging, for the infirm. . . . Both [Relief Society and

priesthood quorums] have as their consummate purpose to secure the family eternally” (“The Relief Society,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 72–74).

President Gordon B. Hinckley:

“God bless the Relief Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. May the spirit of love, which has motivated its members for more than a century and a half, continue to grow and be felt over the world. May their works of charity touch for good the lives of uncounted numbers wherever they find expression. And may light and understanding, learning and knowledge, and eternal truth grace the lives of generations of women yet to come, throughout the nations of the earth because of this singular and divinely established institution. May they recognize, one and all, their great responsibility and blessing to be ‘instruments in the hands of God to bring about this great work’ (Alma 26:3)” (“Video: Instruments in the Hands of God,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 106). ■

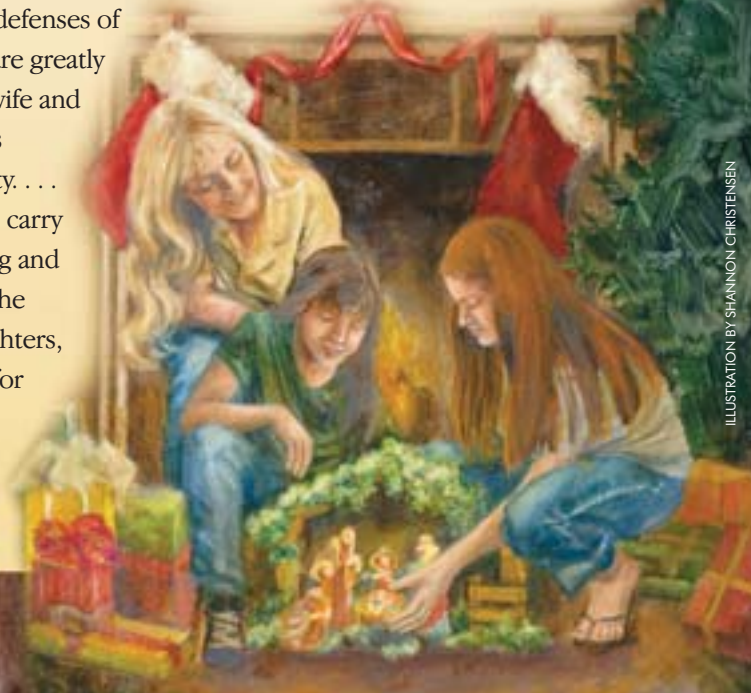


ILLUSTRATION BY SHANNON CHRISTENSEN

How the Hong Kong Temple Came to Be



President Hinckley's selection of the site for the Hong Kong China Temple illustrates how revelation operates to bless God's children on earth.

BY ELDER MONTE J. BROUGH AND
ELDER JOHN K. CARMACK

Of the Seventy

In the spring of 1991 the First Presidency requested the Asia Area Presidency—consisting of Elders Merlin R. Lybbert, W. Eugene Hansen, and Monte J. Brough—to discreetly begin a search for a temple site in Hong Kong. They found several small and, in their view, inadequate sites with extremely high price tags. President Gordon B. Hinckley visited those sites in April of that year and encouraged the Area Presidency to keep looking.

Late in 1991 two more sites were identified. One was part of a government development project near an ocean bay known locally as Junk Bay (a “junk” is a Chinese boat). The other potential site was located in Fanling. Neither the Fanling nor the Junk Bay site was easily accessible or convenient to the people who would use the temple, so the search continued.

Unfortunately, time was running short. If Hong Kong was going to have a temple, it would best be built by July 1, 1997.

A little world history might be important here to understand the urgency of completing





Above: The Hong Kong temple's ground-breaking involved (from left to right) Elder and Sister Kwok Yuen Tai, Elder and Sister John K. Carmack, and Elder and Sister David E. Sorensen. Opposite page: An architectural elevation rendering, an artist's concept of the finished temple, and a view of Hong Kong.

the temple in Hong Kong by July 1997.

In 1898 Hong Kong became a British colony with the signing of a 99-year lease, expiring June 30, 1997. In December

1984, British and Chinese authorities signed a declaration confirming that the British government would hand over Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China on July 1, 1997.

In June 1992 the Area Presidency was reorganized, with Elders Monte J. Brough, John K. Carmack, and Kwok Yuen Tai as members of the presidency.

In July President Hinckley called the Area Presidency twice to discuss the Fanling and Junk Bay sites. President Hinckley also indicated that he and Ted Simmons, managing director of the Church Physical Facilities Department, would come to Hong Kong on July 25 to choose the site for the temple.

When President Hinckley and Brother Simmons arrived, Elders Brough and Carmack took them to half a dozen potential sites, starting at Kom Tong Hall, where the area office was located. (Elder Tai was away from Hong Kong on a trip at the time.) After looking at all the sites, President Hinckley, Brother Simmons, and Elders Brough and Carmack met with four stake presidents in the Hong Kong region. President Hinckley discussed his feelings about the various sites and probed the stake presidents' feelings. He found them supportive of any decision he would make.

The group was exhausted from the rigorous day of prayerfully reviewing the various properties. President Hinckley retired to

his hotel room and requested that Elders Brough and Carmack come back the next morning to further discuss the matter. It was apparent that the Area Presidency had yet to find a solution President Hinckley could accept.

At about 6:45 a.m., President Hinckley called Elder Brough and requested that he and Elder Carmack come to his hotel room at 8:00 a.m. Brother Simmons joined them there at the appointed time, and President Hinckley then shared, on a sheet of white paper, a detailed drawing. During the night, he had envisioned a building of about eight floors above ground, with the temple on the top floors and other functions housed on the lower floors. It included replacement facilities for the Kowloon Tong chapel and the Hong Kong mission home and office, since the new building would require that these existing buildings on side-by-side lots be demolished. This concept of multiple use, President Hinckley explained, would depart from tradition in that all other temples in the Church at that time were stand-alone buildings.

President Hinckley asked Elders Brough and Carmack to express their feelings. They each responded that the concept of a multi-story, multi-use building had not even been considered previously, but they had a strong conviction that President Hinckley had received inspiration—even revelation—about what the Lord intended.

After briefly reviewing the other options, President Hinckley asked the brethren to join in prayer. He asked if it would be all right if he offered the prayer. He then discussed the whole matter with the Lord. He talked of the need for a temple in China to bless the people



in that area of the world. The prayer was powerful and compelling, evidencing his love for all the people of Asia.

Those present then returned to the Kowloon Tong site, walking the area. They crossed the street to check the neighborhood and view the site from all aspects, checking particularly the access to it from the underground railway systems. Then Elders Brough and Carmack returned President Hinckley and Brother Simmons to the Kai Tak International Airport.

After returning to Salt Lake City, President Hinckley presented his sketch to the Temple Department, asking that the architects turn the concept into building plans as soon as possible. Seeing an opportunity to expand the functions of the building, the department’s architects created a plan for a larger building—nearly twice the size of President Hinckley’s initial concept. To build this building, they would need a variance to the height limitations and other restrictions imposed on buildings in the area.

When the plans were completed, permission was



sought to build this expanded facility, but after many months of negotiations with Hong Kong officials, the proposed building was rejected.

At the April 1993 general conference, President Hinckley invited Brother Simmons and Elders Brough, Carmack, and Tai to his office. He asked why the approval process was going so slowly and what might be done to obtain a building permit. After referring to President Hinckley’s earlier experience in Hong Kong and testifying of the feelings the Area

Presidency had on that occasion, the Area Presidency unanimously recommended that the Church return to the original concept described by President Hinckley in Hong Kong.

Once the plans were redone to reflect the original concept in President Hinckley’s sketch, the necessary approvals were quickly obtained. Within days,

various British, Hong Kong, and Chinese officials issued permits for the temple’s construction.

On May 26 and 27, 1996, President Gordon B. Hinckley dedicated the Hong Kong China Temple. In the dedicatory prayer, he prayed:

“Thy Church in this area now comes to full maturity with the dedication of this sacred temple. We pray that this harvest of souls may continue, that in the future as in the present, Thy people may be free and secure in their worship and that none shall hinder the service of missionaries called to this area. We pray that Thy work may grow and prosper in the great Chinese realm, and may those who govern be ever receptive to those called and sent as messengers of revealed truth.” ■

Elder Monte J. Brough was sustained as a member of the Seventy in 1988; Elder John K. Carmack served as a member of the Seventy from 1984 to 2001.

He Gave My Gift Away

By Dellene Grasmick

I ran the soup kitchen at the Food and Care Coalition in Provo, Utah, for 11 years. We encouraged our patrons to help us when they could. One man, Mike (name has been changed), had been living in his car for about four years. He always volunteered to help, and I appreciated everything he did for me.

It was the Christmas season, and I wanted to show my appreciation, so

I gave him a Christmas card with a short message expressing my thanks and a book of tickets to the dollar-movie theater that was close by. Mike was overwhelmed. He thanked me several times and said he couldn't remember the last time he had received a present from anyone.

This happened at about noon on Christmas Eve. After dinner that evening, Mike came to me and apologized for having given away two of the movie tickets. I told him they were his, and he could do whatever he wanted with them. He said, "Well, this lady was sitting across from me at dinner. I'd never seen

her before, but she told me it was her birthday and she hadn't received any presents. So I gave her one of the tickets."

"Then, there was a man sitting by me," Mike continued. "We got to talking. I found out he was leaving on the bus tonight, but it didn't leave until 11:00 p.m., and he had nowhere to wait until it came. I gave him one of the tickets so he could go in where it was warm and watch a movie."

I was so teary eyed and choked up that I could hardly tell him what a generous and Christlike thing he had done. ■

I gave him one of the tickets so he could go in where it was warm and watch a movie until his bus came," Mike explained.





Christmas Tamales

By Hina Burcion

I had about two months left on my mission in Costa Rica, and I was serving with an American companion, Sister Nguyen. We were excited to be celebrating Christmas and were preparing small bags of sweets and cookies to deliver on Christmas Eve to friends and families in the small city where we lived.

I had spent most of my mission in very poor areas, and I was grateful. The Lord had blessed me by allowing me to teach people in humble homes, to live among them and learn of their kindness, their humility, and their spirit of sacrifice.

The last family we visited to drop off some treats was the Carmona family, a large family that was one of the poorest in the ward. They all—parents, children, in-laws, and grandchildren—lived in a small wooden hut covered with sheet metal, lacking electricity and any other modern comfort. They were preparing traditional tamales that they would eat during the holidays. We made our delivery and returned to our house.

Very early on Christmas morning we heard a knock on the door. To my surprise, I found myself face-to-face with Minor, the 13-year-old son of the Carmona family. He was holding a small package in his hand.

“Sisters,” he said, “Mother sent me to give you these tamales. Have a merry Christmas!”

I was so thankful they had thought of us—we who had not yet received anything from our own families, we who had not been expecting anything. And this family that probably had just enough for themselves offered us a part of their Christmas “feast.”

I showed my companion the package, and I could see tears running down her cheeks. “Sister, what’s wrong?” I asked.

She answered me very simply: “Sister Burcion, it’s Christmas!”

Yes, it was Christmas, and they had shared the little they had with us, the missionaries, as they would have shared with Christ. It was the only gift we received that Christmas Day, a gift I will never forget. ■

Our Difficult Neighbor

By Diane Hubbard

My husband and I were living in a second-story apartment with our small son and daughter. We looked forward to Christmas that year with our two children. Our son was growing fast, and as any normal toddler, he liked to move a lot. He often ran around the apartment just for fun. We enjoyed his antics, but our neighbor downstairs was rather impatient. He often turned up his music in retaliation and came upstairs to complain to us.

It was a frustrating situation for us. What is a little boy supposed to do all day if he is not able to move freely? It broke my heart to keep him quiet when he was so full of gleeful energy. We met with our apartment manager and our neighbor to try to resolve the conflict. As we talked I noticed that our neighbor was especially defensive in his words and attitude. During the discussion, the Savior’s words from Matthew 5:44 came to my mind: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” I did not necessarily consider him an enemy, but we certainly didn’t see eye to eye.

He was in the military, and his wife had not been able to join him yet, so he was alone in a strange town. And



W*e ignored
the loud
music
and wished our
neighbor a heartfelt
merry Christmas.*

when he came home from work, he had to deal with this noise above his apartment. I began to see how difficult it might be for him, but I still did not have a fair solution. I started to pray for him, and my heart was touched to be a little more sympathetic.

We welcomed my husband's parents to spend the holidays with us that year. On Christmas Eve we were enjoying each other's company and the special spirit of the season. Soon we heard and felt the vibration of loud music coming from the apartment below. It seemed very loud this time, but I remember feeling sorry for him rather than impatient. Thinking about the verse in Matthew 5, I made

up a plate of homemade Christmas cookies for our neighbor.

My husband and I went down to deliver them. When our neighbor opened the door, he scowled at us and said, "WHAT?" I could tell he was expecting an unpleasant confrontation. Instead, we ignored the loud music and wished him a heartfelt merry Christmas. We smiled, and I could see his face soften as he accepted the cookies. He smiled back and thanked us, wishing us a merry Christmas also. It wasn't long before the music was turned down.

We saw our neighbor outside a few days later, and he thanked us again for the cookies. He was smiling at us

again, and we found it easy to smile back at him. We asked him if he had a church to go to, because he was new in town. He said he hadn't found one yet, so we invited him to our church, and he accepted our invitation. He began visiting with the missionaries and soon wanted to be baptized. He and our son had their picture taken together on the day of his baptism.

I don't remember any more problems with loud music, but I do recall the special blessings of following the scriptures in our lives. It still warms my heart to remember how the simple gift of Christmas cookies quickly changed an unpleasant relationship into a wonderful friendship. ■

My Pocket Was Empty

By Jerry L. Zaugg

Finances were tight for our young family in 1979. I was a student at Colorado State University. Meager funds from loans and my wife's enterprises were deposited directly into a savings account. Then we would withdraw a budgeted amount every week for expenses. As Christmas approached we recognized that this holiday would be a frugal one.

One Friday evening we decided that I would take the two oldest of our four children to explore the excitement of the local shopping mall. En route we made our bank withdrawal, electing to withdraw the full December amount at the beginning of the month to cover the increased expenses of the holidays. I took the full amount in small bills.

Although no snow had fallen, the weather was cold and raw with an icy wind. Arriving at the crowded mall parking lot, I hurriedly extracted the boys from the van, eager to get inside the bright, warm mall.

For well over an hour we wandered from store to store, enjoying the rich sights and smells. At last we agreed to cap our outing with some ice cream. With shock, however, I immediately discovered that my shirt pocket was empty of its recent bulge of money.

I fought down a rising panic as we quickly retraced our steps. But with each negative response to our anxious inquiries about someone finding some money, our sense of loss increased. After making a last, futile stop at a security desk, we sadly returned home.

We related the bad news to my concerned wife. How could we buy food, pay the rent and utilities, and cover other expenses for the month, let alone provide a few extras for Christmas? The children began to softly cry and whisper among themselves. Somberly we gathered in family prayer to ask for guidance. Then, as we were discussing every possible but unlikely avenue to compensate for the loss, the phone rang.

It was the security guard at the mall. "Are you the people who recently reported the loss of some money?" he asked.

"Yes, we are," I answered.

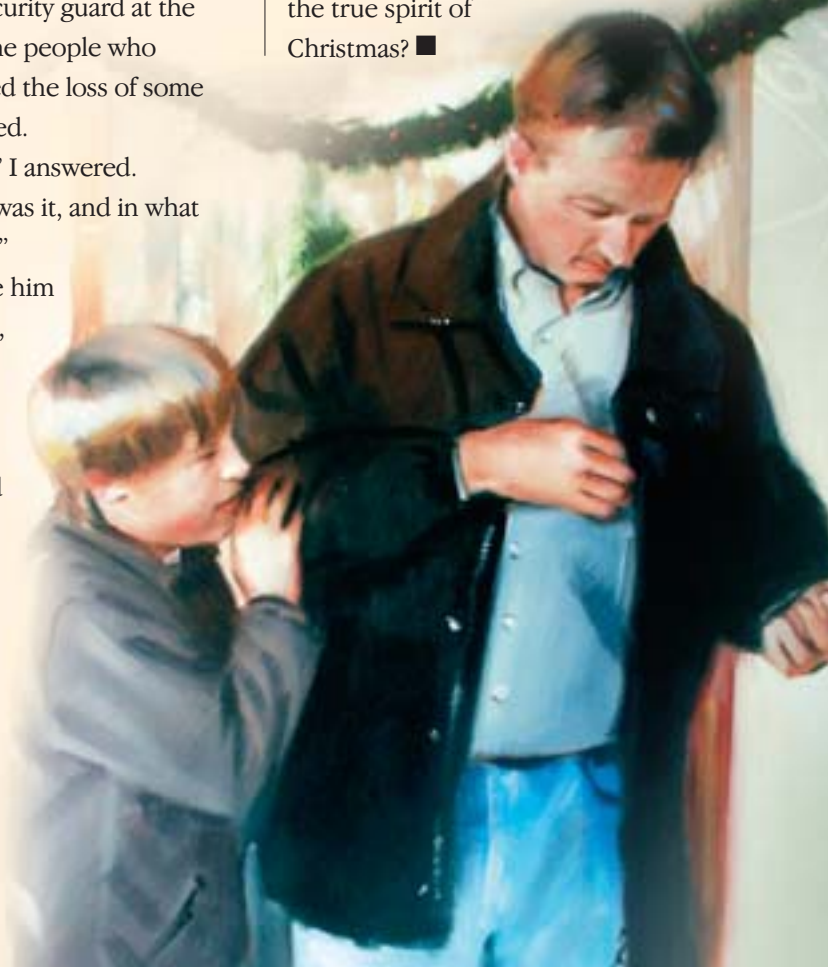
"How much was it, and in what denominations?"

After we gave him the information, he asked if we could return to the mall.

With guarded anticipation we made the short journey back. The security guard told us that several people

had turned in numerous small bills found scattered by the wind in the parking lot. A count revealed the exact amount we had lost. There was no one to thank, for these honest souls left no names. The guard smiled and wished us a merry Christmas as he handed us the small stack of bills. Much relieved and profoundly grateful, we drove home.

We then knelt as a family and offered our thanks for the blessings given. Christmas was saved for our little family, and an eternal lesson was learned. These honest people were wonderful examples to us. What better way to give thanks to our Heavenly Father for the birth of His Son than by living the true spirit of Christmas? ■



Christmas Card Keepsake

A few years ago when we began our family, I wondered what to do with the wonderful Christmas cards, photos, and newsletters we received each holiday season. I mentioned my dilemma to a friend who suggested that I put them in an album. Now, each year after the holidays, I sort through the cards and letters we received. Anything that is handmade, has a photo, or contains

information about a particular family's experiences that year, I save. Then, when I have a spare hour, I simply slide them into archival sheet protectors. Occasionally, I'll write a brief note explaining our family's connection to a particular person. But I don't worry about decorating anything or making it a complex project. I let the beautiful cards and newsletters show themselves. Our Christmas album is a festive green, so it's easy to spot and pull out each December. We leave it out to enjoy throughout the season.

Kerry Griffin Smith, Idaho

A Job Well Done

Vacuum upstairs: \$1. Take out the garbage: 25¢. Whenever our children wanted to earn money, they consulted our family "job board." A wooden cutout of a house, our board had a cup hook at the top for each child. Along the bottom, hooks containing key tags indicated various jobs and payment for each. When our children completed a job, they hung the respective tag on their hook.

"Payday" was usually every Saturday, but sometimes we allowed emergency funds. Or if we noticed that a job hadn't been done well, we decreased the "wage." When paying our children, we always gave them enough change so that they could put 10 percent in their tithing box and 10 percent in our family's missionary fund. As parents, we matched any contributions to the latter fund, enabling our family to eventually pay for one full mission.

If you're not comfortable paying your children an allowance, you could easily establish other rewards for a job well done, such as family outings or special dinners or privileges.

This earning system helped our children learn the value of earning money and doing a job well, a lesson they are passing on to their children.

Douglas B. Pulley, California





Homemade Games

My family has found that personalized, homemade games can be a fun way to teach the gospel, focus on family heritage, and strengthen family bonds.

With a little preparation, your family can enjoy several word and name games. You can use words from gospel vocabulary and titles of hymns and Primary songs. You can also write down words, names, or short references to stories from the standard works. Another idea is to use the names of heroes from world and Church history, as well as names of your extended family and ancestors. With this last game, try to go back several generations, and have fun looking up any ancestors

you aren't familiar with.

For each of these games, write the applicable words or names individually on craft sticks or small pieces of paper and have a timer on hand.

Each round is played for a minute or two, and most of these games can be played four different ways:

- Divide into teams and describe as many words as you can in the time allowed as your teammates try to guess the words.
- Use charades to act out the gospel words or the people in your family.

- Mold in clay an item for others to guess.

- Divide into two teams, and have a player from each team draw the concepts while team members guess for points.

For all of these games, the team with the most correctly guessed words after a few rounds of play wins. Your family can determine any special rules and the reward for winning. But everyone wins when family time is strengthened with simple activities like these that make gospel learning fun.

Melodie M. Webb, Utah



Purifying Water

If you have used all your potable water in an emergency, what can you do? Following are simple water purification methods recommended at ProvidentLiving.org. To help you better remember the information should the need arise, cut out this article and laminate or seal it in a plastic bag, to be stored in your emergency kit.

- **Filtration.** Find the cleanest water available. Let any particles in the water settle first, or strain them through layers of clean cloth or paper towel. There are many good water filters available. The activated charcoal type can also remove bad tastes. Some models add chemicals to kill bacteria.

- **Boiling.** Bring water to a rolling boil for three to five minutes. The higher the elevation, the longer the water should be boiled. To improve the flavor once it's cooled, put oxygen back into the water by pouring it back and forth between containers.

- **Chemical.** Use 8 drops (1/2 teaspoon) of household liquid bleach (5 percent sodium hypochlorite) per gallon of water if the water is clear and not already chlorinated. Add 16 drops (1 teaspoon) of household bleach per gallon if water is cloudy. Before using, let water stand for 30 minutes. If you prefer, you can also purchase effective treatment chemicals from most outdoor supply stores.

- **Distillation.** Unlike the other water purification methods above that remove only microbes, this technique will also remove other contaminants. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), you begin by filling a pot halfway with water. Tie a cup to the pot lid's handle

so that the cup will hang right-side-up over the water when the lid is placed upside down on the pot. Check that the cup is not touching the water. Boil the water for 20 minutes. The water that drips into the cup is distilled. You can also purchase distillation equipment, but it can be expensive.

C

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Christian vocalist Sandi Patty performs with the Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra at Temple Square.

Tabernacle Choir, Orchestra Celebrate Christmas in August

By Abbey Olsen,
Church Magazines

Christmas trees, holly, wreaths, lights, and poinsettias adorned the stage of the Conference Center, complementing holiday and patriotic music that rang throughout the auditorium on August 19, 2006, as the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and the Orchestra at Temple Square joined international relief organization Feed the Children and special guests to provide a tribute Christmas concert that will be rebroadcast to the military in December.

Sandi Patty, the most-awarded female vocalist in contemporary Christian music; guest hosts Lorianne

Crook and Charlie Chase, long-time TV broadcasters on the Nashville Network and hosts of a daily radio show; and the Band of the U.S. Air Force Reserve joined with the choir and orchestra. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, attended the concert.

Lorianne Crook told the audience that although it was unusual to celebrate Christmas in a warm summer month, the warmth they felt would reach out to those who were away from loved ones across the world when it was broadcast during the holiday season.

Many of the selections performed testified of the

Savior Jesus Christ, reiterating that the Christmas spirit reaches across cultures, backgrounds, and traditions to furnish hope and peace in a world of conflict.

At the end of the concert, the performers were given a standing ovation, which continued until the encore, “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” was performed by the choir, orchestra, and band.

The Armed Forces Radio and Television Service (AFRTS) will air a 60-minute radio version of the concert during the upcoming holiday season as its annual Christmas special. The relief organization Feed the Children will air 30-minute and 60-minute television versions of the program

Annual First Presidency Christmas Devotional Set

The annual First Presidency Christmas Devotional, scheduled for Sunday, December 3, again will feature messages from the First Presidency and music by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and the Orchestra at Temple Square.

The devotional takes place early in the month so that the recording of the broadcast is available for use throughout the holiday season.

For information on the broadcast, contact local leaders or visit www.lds.org/broadcast. ■

during the holiday season from Thanksgiving until Christmas. ■

Work on Temples Progresses Worldwide

The year 2006 brought Church members the blessings of two new temples and the announcement of three more to come. There are 124 operating temples throughout the world as of December 2006.

Sacramento California Temple

The Sacramento California Temple, announced in April 2001, was dedicated Sunday, September 3, 2006. Elder Richard H. Winkel, former member of the Seventy, serves as president of the temple along with his wife, Karen. California's 33.2 million inhabitants include nearly 800,000 Latter-day Saints, making up 2.2 percent of the state's population. Members in California will now be served by seven temples—Los Angeles, Oakland, San Diego, Fresno, Redlands, Newport Beach, and Sacramento. The Sacramento temple will serve 73,400 members in nearby areas.

Helsinki Finland Temple

The Helsinki Finland Temple was dedicated Sunday, October 22, 2006, in four sessions. The Helsinki temple is the 10th in Europe and the 3rd in the Nordic countries. Temples in Stockholm and Copenhagen were completed in 1985 and 2004, respectively. Melvin J. Luthy serves as president of the temple along with his wife, Anne. The Helsinki temple will serve



The statue of the Angel Moroni was placed on the Rexburg Idaho Temple on the anniversary of Moroni's first appearance to Joseph Smith.

approximately 26,000 members living in Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, and Russia.

Under Construction

Work continues on the Rexburg Idaho Temple, announced in December 2003. A statue of the angel Moroni was placed atop the temple on September 21, 2006, a significant date in history for the Church. Beginning on this date in 1823, the angel Moroni visited Joseph Smith five times within a 24-hour period. The Rexburg temple will be the third in Idaho. A dedication date has not been set.

Construction for the Twin Falls Idaho Temple began in

April 2006 and is expected to last about two years. The Twin Falls temple, the fourth in Idaho, will serve some 40,000 Church members from 14 stakes in south-central Idaho. A dedication date has not been set.

President Gordon B. Hinckley first announced the Draper Utah Temple at the October 2004 general conference of the Church. A groundbreaking for the Draper Utah Temple took place on August 5, 2006. The Draper temple will be the 12th temple in Utah and the 3rd in the Salt Lake Valley. A dedication date has not been set.

Temple Announcements

Other temples announced in 2006 include Tegucigalpa Honduras, Vancouver British Columbia, and Cebu Philippines.

For more information about temples across the globe, visit the Church's Temples Web site (www.lds.org/temples). ■

New Temple Presidents Now Serving

The majority of 38 new temple presidents and their wives officially began their service on November 1, 2006. The following presidents and matrons have been called to serve:

Accra Ghana

John C. and Naomi M. Riding

Albuquerque New Mexico

Ivan G. and Annette Y. Waddoups

Boston Massachusetts

Kenneth G. and Priscilla G. Hutchins

Bountiful Utah

H. Bryan and LynnAnne T. Richards

Brisbane Australia

Terence L. and Nola Y. Davies

Buenos Aires Argentina

N. Earl and Judith M. Deschamps

Cardston Alberta

Donald S. and Judith Hansen

Denver Colorado

Dennis K. and Kathleen A. Brown

Fukuoka Japan

Ryoushou and Noriko U. Nakamura

Guatemala City Guatemala

Benjamin I. and Meredith A. Martínez

Helsinki Finland

Melvin J. and Anne S. Luthy

Hermosillo Sonora Mexico

Victor M. and Yolanda Cerda

Houston Texas

William R. and Mary Ann B. Bradford

Las Vegas Nevada

H. Bruce and Cheryl C. Stucki

Manila Philippines

Earl M. and Donna M. Monson

Manti Utah

J. Bruce and Marlane S. Harless

Mesa Arizona

Ezra T. and Virginia M. Clark

Montevideo Uruguay

N. Gaylon and Margaret C. Hopkins

Monticello Utah

Donald V. and Shirley G. Jack

Montreal Quebec

Terry L. and Elenor M. Rollins

Oaxaca Mexico

Limhi and Veone S. Ontiveros

Palmyra New York

Ralph E. and Muriel Y. Siebach

Papeete Tahiti

Thomas R. and Diane S. Stone

Porto Alegre Brazil

Pedro and Betty C. Brassanini

Preston England

Arnold and June F. Jones

Recife Brazil

Valdemiro and Maria J. Mendes

Skraba

Redlands California

Wayne H. and Rita C. Bringhurst

Regina Saskatchewan

Dale E. and Phyllis T. Evanson

Sacramento California

Richard H. and Karen H. Winkel

San José Costa Rica

E. Jerald and Joan G. Haws

São Paulo Brazil

Jairo and Elizabeth I. Mazzagardi

Seoul Korea

Jong Chul and Young Sim Jun

St. Louis Missouri

Wendell E. and Glee B. Brown

Stockholm Sweden

Bengt and Inger Höglund

Taipei Taiwan

Gerald H. and Christie C. Walker

Tokyo Japan

Masayuki and Michiko A. Nakano

Veracruz Mexico

J. Larry and Shirley W. Memmott

Villahermosa Mexico

Vicente I. and Rosario Díaz

Mederos ■

Museum Commemorates Handcart Experience

By Kathryn McNeil, Church Magazines

Willie and Martin Remembered: A Tribute to the Mormon Handcart Pioneers, an exhibit honoring the Willie and Martin handcart companies and commemorating the

150th anniversary of their trek across the plains, is nearing the end of its run at the Museum of Church History and Art, closing at the beginning of January 2007 after opening in September.

The exhibit, which features paintings and sculpture depicting the Willie and Martin handcart companies that were caught in snowstorms on the plains of Wyoming while traveling to Utah in 1856, may still be viewed online by visiting the museum's Web site (www.lds.org/churchhistory/museum).

beleaguered handcart pioneers to safety in Salt Lake City.

The year 2006 marked the 150th anniversary of the arrival of these handcart companies in the Salt Lake Valley, and the exhibit commemorates that anniversary. Regarding the trials those pioneers faced, President Gordon B.



Stephen Mark Bartholomew's work depicts an ancestor gathering wood in the snow.

“Nearly every label in the exhibit contains a quotation from one of the pioneers or their rescuers,” said museum curator Robert Davis. “I could not think of a more powerful way to tell this story than through the words of those who experienced it. The quotations and the works of art create a sense of compassion and reverence for these faithful people who endured horrific tragedies and who mustered incredible faith in God.”

The exhibit follows the pioneers' difficult journey to Utah, from boarding ships in England to crossing the snowy plains of Iowa and Nebraska. The end of the exhibit depicts a

renewed sense of hope as valiant rescuers bring the

Hinckley said in the October 2006 general conference: “Their faith is our inheritance. Their faith is a reminder to us of the price they paid for the comforts we enjoy today” (“The Faith to Move Mountains,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 84).

Several of the artists whose works appear in the exhibit are direct descendants of Willie and Martin company pioneers and their rescuers.

Stephen Mark Bartholomew's painting shows his great-great-grandmother and her sister as teenagers gathering wood in the snow. Through his research, he learned that these girls pulled one of two family handcarts all the way across the plains until their rescue near Devil's Gate.

Artist Glen Hawkins painted his ancestor Ann Jewell Rowley, a widow, pulling a handcart through the snow with the help of her seven children, who traveled with her in the Willie company. ■

Church Releases Plans for Downtown Salt Lake

Downtown Salt Lake City is getting a facelift. The blocks just south of Temple Square and the Church Administration Building will undergo five years of demolition and construction to make way for a 20-acre development the Church is tentatively calling City Creek Center.

The plan calls for an indoor-outdoor mix of retailers, residences, and office space, with six acres of open space—gardens, fountains, pedestrian walkways, and a mock City Creek running down the middle, roughly along what was once the actual stream's historic south arm.

Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church, presented a conceptual design plan for the project to the Salt Lake City Council on October 4, 2006. Demolition of part of the site was set to begin in November. A progressive wave of

demolition will move roughly west to east, followed by excavation and site preparation that will take about a year.

The Church first announced three years ago it was planning to redevelop the downtown area to energize the economy of the city that houses its headquarters and to bolster the area near Temple Square. No tithing funds will be used in the redevelopment.

Bishop Burton shared with the city council design concepts of what the redeveloped blocks may look like, but stressed that final architectural plans will not be completed until 2007.

As outlined by Bishop Burton, the project will include:

- Up to three national department stores to anchor a retail component that will include a complement of

nationally recognized in-line retail tenants.

- New, refurbished, and renamed office towers.
- New residential buildings.
- A full-service grocery store to serve a growing downtown population.
- The reopening or extension of historic downtown streets as pedestrian walkways through two of the blocks—Richards Street, Regent Street, and Social Hall Avenue.

- Fountains and man-made streams to represent the historic South Fork of City Creek, supplemented by approximately six acres of gardens and open space.

- Underground parking to accommodate some 5,600 vehicles

A downloadable schematic site plan showing proposed locations of retail, office, and residential space is available on the Internet at www.downtownrising.com. ■

Three New Pamphlets Help Teach about Church

By Brittany Karford, Church Magazines

With the development of three new missionary pamphlets, investigators will now receive literature to read and ponder at the conclusion of each of their first three lessons with the missionaries.

“At the conclusion of every teaching session, the investigator should be left with something to read,” President Gordon B.

Hinckley stated in the first worldwide leadership training meeting. “It may be designated chapters from the Book of Mormon. It may be other literature. But there should always be something for him to read and think about, to ponder and reflect on” (*Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 2003, 20).

The pamphlets

provide a resource investigators can turn to in private or group reflection. Coinciding with the first three lessons in *Preach My Gospel*, the pamphlets offer insight to answer questions that may come to mind after the missionaries have left and to prepare the reader for future lessons.

Each of the three pamphlets—*The Restoration*, *The Plan of Salvation*, and *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*—is a small booklet containing a summary of principles in that lesson, with study questions and a glossary of terms that may be unfamiliar. Questions such as “How can I know?” and “How do I pray?” are answered, an overview of Sunday meetings tells investigators what they can expect, and a list of commitments offers guidance in scripture study and points to additional resources.

Missions across the world received English versions of the pamphlets during 2006.



Missionaries are encouraged to study the pamphlets while preparing for lessons and to refer to them in teaching. Each booklet includes art and photography that can be used in teaching. Through the pamphlets, missionaries can remind investigators of commitments, invite them to church, and point them to Mormon.org. Members are encouraged to share the pamphlets with their families and friends.

The pamphlets, planned from the beginning as part of the Preach My Gospel effort, are currently being translated into the languages in which the *Preach My Gospel* manual is published, more than 50 in all.

The pamphlets are available through distribution centers in the U.S. and Canada or at ldscatalog.com at a cost of U.S. \$2.50 for a package of 25. ■

Comment

Small Miracles Each Day

Your article “Living in the Shadow of Death” (Sept. 2006) could have been written by me. When my *Ensign* arrived, I too had just been diagnosed with a recurrence of breast cancer after eight years. I have read many articles on dealing with the death of a loved one, but never one concerning dealing with one’s own death. It was very well written, uplifting, and encouraging. As a result I look for the small miracles in each day now and am truly grateful for such a wonderful article. I hope we will have

more on this subject, as I know the need is great.
Dian Danner, Texas

Appreciation for Courage and Comfort

As a cancer survivor of just over three years, I appreciate in a unique way the article by Sister Lois McCune Sewell in the September *Ensign*. After my diagnosis, I too prayed for courage to bear what lay ahead with dignity, found comfort in the scriptures, felt an urgent need to be of service to others as a way of giving back, and noticed with awe and reverence the beauty of God’s handiwork. Most important, I developed a closer relationship with my Heavenly Father and treasure more than ever my earthly family and the relationships we have.

Thank you so much, Sister Sewell, for your example of courage and your words of comfort and inspiration.
Charles Hawkins, Missouri

A Plea for Inmates

You recently printed a letter from an LDS correctional officer. Well, I am an inmate, formerly LDS and hoping to be restored someday, and I think I can add something to what he had to say. He is right that the *Ensign* is very important to an inmate. It is a true lifeline, a light in the darkness. Only letters are of equal importance. I ask, I plead, I beg, on behalf of all inmates everywhere, that members who have friends, family, or even acquaintances in a prison or jail take the time to write to them. Do not forget them. Reply to their letters. You might keep someone’s heart

from failing, and you might save them from a storm.
Name Withheld

Another Tender Mercy

I just wanted to say thank you to the editors and contributors of the *Ensign* for publishing “My Husband’s Addiction” (Aug. 2006). That article was just exactly what I needed, as I am going through the same problem with my husband. That article proves once again our Lord’s tender mercies to His children.

Name Withheld

Stopping the Attacks

Having practiced criminal appellate law for eight years, I appreciated “A Hole in Her Soul” in the July 2006 *Ensign*.

The article said the rapist was not prosecuted because “too much time had passed” and “there was no physical evidence.” Although these are common problems in rape cases, they can be overcome by police investigation into the circumstances of the crime, testimony from an expert to explain rape trauma syndrome, and testimony from the victim. A victim who did not tell anyone immediately after the crime and whose physical wounds have healed should still report the crime because there may still be enough evidence.

Many rapists have numerous victims. Stopping these attacks requires at least one victim reporting the rape and assisting in the prosecution. This does not mean the victim hates the rapist or cannot begin the process of forgiveness. Victims who report and

assist in the prosecution are doing their part to put a stop to the evil inflicted by the rapist and are protecting others from the tremendous suffering they and their families have experienced.

Linda Lemke, Missouri

Realizing His Awareness

Thank you for the article “Getting Past the Hurt” (July 2006). This article came in such a timely manner for me. As I flipped through the pages of my *Ensign*, I immediately had tears come to my eyes as I stopped on page 28. Three weeks prior to seeing this article, I cut off all contact with a man whom I still loved very much. We dated for two years before I realized that he truly had no desire to get married. I am a 35-year-old single mother of four children, and the anguish I experienced in breaking off this relationship was almost unbearable at times. I truly feel like this article was Heavenly Father’s way of letting me know that He is always aware of what is going on in my life. This article was a great strength to me, right down to the illustration in the background of the cactus. (I live in Arizona.) What a tremendous testimony builder this was for me.

Name Withheld

Update

The name of the captain of the ninth handcart company as printed on page 39 of the July 2006 *Ensign* was incorrect. The name is Daniel Robison, not Daniel Robinson.



MAY NOT BE COPIED

Blessed Art Thou among Women, by Walter Rane

The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and said, "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest" (Luke 1:30-32).



December 2006 marks the annual celebration of the Savior's birth, the 201st anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and one year since many members of the Church rose to a prophet's challenge and completed reading or rereading the Book of Mormon. These members testify that a prophet's promise was fulfilled, that there did come into their lives and their homes "an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God." See "Taking the Challenge," p. 14.