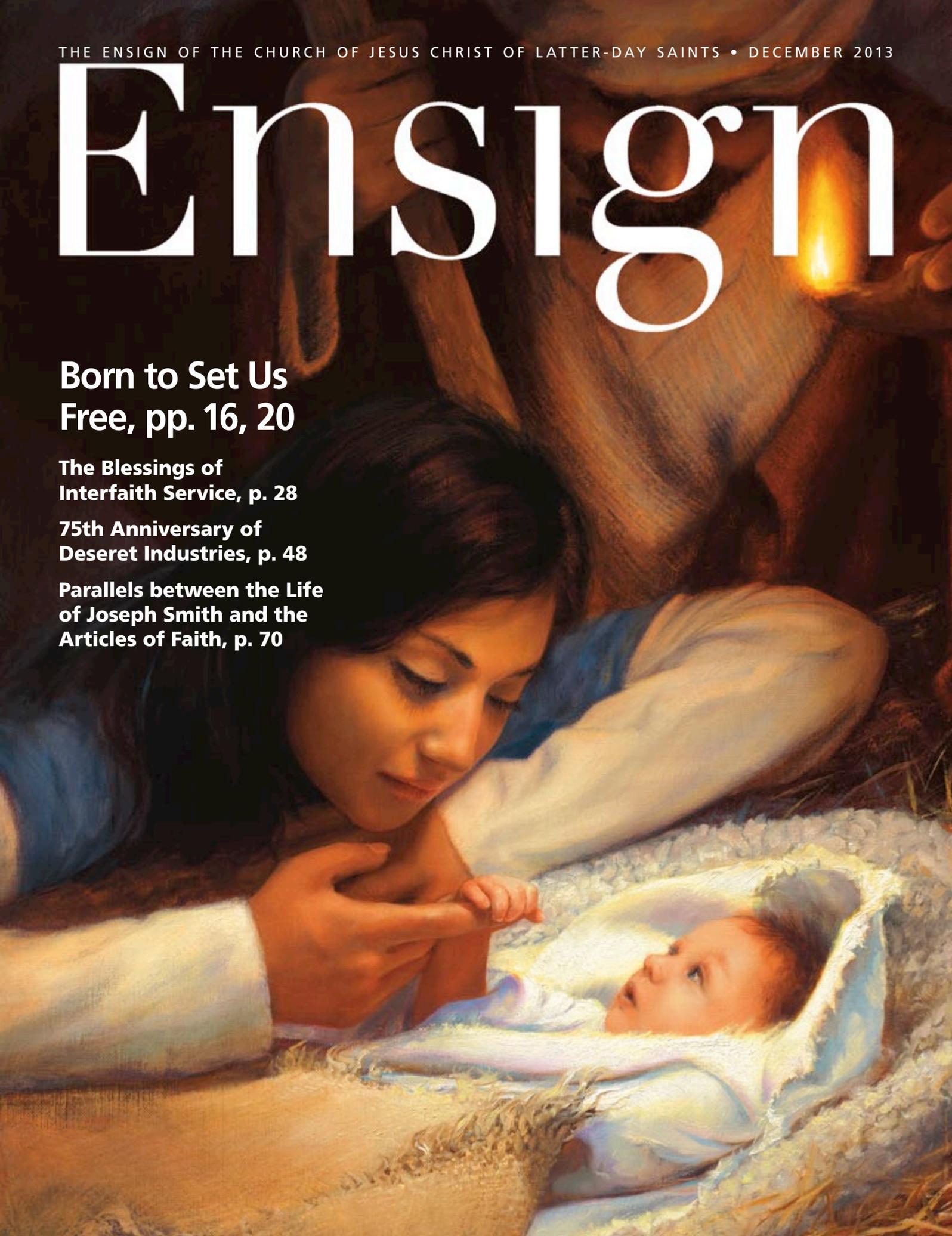


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"When I saw Joseph Smith, he took heaven, figuratively speaking, and brought it down to earth; and he took the earth, brought it up, and opened up, in plainness and simplicity, the things of God; and that is the beauty of his mission."

President Brigham Young (1801–77), *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 458–59.

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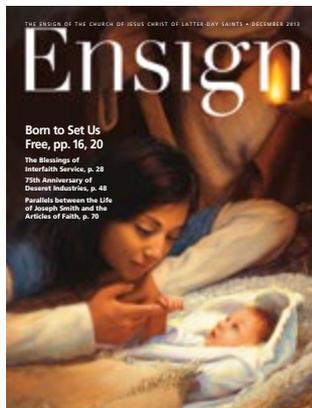
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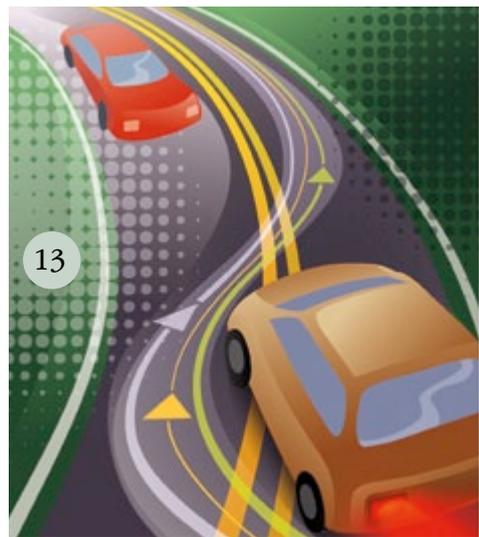
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Make your conference study more interactive with the digital November 2013 conference issue for iPad, available now with the LDS *Ensign* app in the Apple App Store.

A MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
December 2013 Volume 43 • Number 12

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Family Home Evening Ideas

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



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID STOKER

“Helping Children Recognize the Holy Ghost,” page 10:

After reviewing this article, consider planning aural, visual, and kinesthetic activities that will help your children learn how the Holy Ghost speaks to them. You might read and role-play the Christmas story. You could learn hymns and Primary songs about the Savior’s birth and perform them for friends and neighbors. You might look at pictures of the Savior together or place a nativity in a prominent place in your home. You could plan a family service activity. Whatever you

choose to do, help your children recognize when they are feeling the Spirit.

“The Promise of Christmas,” page

16: Consider displaying a nativity set or a picture of one (see page 17) and asking a family member to tell the story of the birth of Jesus as found in Luke 2. You could then turn to the article and read aloud the section called “The Meaning of Christmas.” Discuss what your family can do (such as giving anonymous gifts) to honor the Savior’s birth and to make Christmastime meaningful.

FOCUSING ON THE SAVIOR

For family home evenings during the Christmas season, we make a special effort to focus on the Savior and bear testimony of Him. One evening we identify the symbols of Christmas and discuss how they relate to the story of Jesus’s birth. During another evening we dress as shepherds, eat a simple meal, and discuss the angel’s appearance to the shepherds in Luke 2. Another time we dress as the Wise Men and follow paper stars. On each star we write things we have done during the year that brought our family closer to Christ. For our family home evening just before Christmas, each person writes down a gift to give to the Savior during the coming year (such as service to others).

Julie DuVall Awerkamp, Utah, USA

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DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

We welcome donated submissions showing the gospel of Jesus Christ at work in your life. Please submit articles through ensign.lds.org. Authors whose work is selected for publication will be notified.



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

FAMILY AND FRIENDS FOREVER

Wherever you live, you have friends who are searching for the greater happiness you have found in living the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. They may not be able to describe that happiness in words, but they can recognize it when they see it in your life. They will be eager to learn the source of that happiness, especially when they see that you face trials just as they do.

You have felt happiness as you have kept the commandments of God. That is the promised fruit of living the gospel (see Mosiah 2:41). You don't faithfully obey the Lord's commandments to be seen by other people, but those who observe your happiness are being prepared by the Lord to hear the good news of the Restoration of the gospel.

The blessings you have been given have created obligations and wonderful opportunities for you. As a covenant disciple of Jesus Christ, you are obligated to extend to others an opportunity to find increased happiness, especially to your friends and the members of your family.

The Lord saw your opportunity and described your obligation with this commandment: "It becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor" (D&C 88:81).

The Lord makes that commandment easier to obey through the change that occurs in your heart as you accept and live the gospel of Jesus Christ. As a result, your love for others grows, as does your desire for them to have the same happiness you have experienced.

One example of that change is how you welcome the chance to help in the Lord's missionary work. Full-time missionaries soon learn they can expect from a true convert a warm response to a request for a referral. The convert yearns for friends and family members to share in their happiness.

When your ward mission leader or the missionaries ask for the names of someone to teach, it is a great compliment to you. They know that friends have seen your happiness and, therefore, those friends have been prepared to hear and choose to accept the gospel. And they have confidence that you will be the friend they will need as they come into the kingdom.

You need not fear that you will lose friends by inviting the missionaries to meet them. I have friends who rejected the missionaries but have thanked me over many years for



offering them something they knew was so precious to me. You can make friends forever by offering the gospel, which they see has brought you happiness. Never miss an opportunity to invite a friend and especially a family member to choose to follow the plan of happiness.

There is no greater opportunity for that invitation than in the temples of the Church. There the Lord can offer the ordinances of salvation to our ancestors who could not receive them in life. They look down upon you with love and hope. The Lord has promised that they will have the opportunity to come into His kingdom (see D&C 137:7–8), and He has planted a love for them in your heart.

Many of you have felt joy in offering

the ordinances of the temple to others, just as you do when you give names of people to the missionaries to meet. You have felt even greater joy performing ordinances for your ancestors. It was revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith that our eternal happiness is possible only if we offer the way to that blessing to our ancestors through vicarious temple ordinances (see D&C 128:18).

Christmastime turns our hearts to the Savior and to the joy His gospel has brought us. We show our gratitude to Him best as we offer that happiness to others. Gratitude is turned to joy as we offer names to missionaries and as we take the names of our ancestors to the temple. That evidence of our gratitude can make friends and families that endure forever. ■

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

President Eyring explains that we can show our gratitude for the Savior by sharing the gospel with others. You could discuss with those you teach how the gift of the gospel has blessed their lives. Consider inviting them to prayerfully identify those with whom they wish to share the gift of the gospel and how they might do so.

Share Your Testimony

You could share the gift of the gospel this Christmas by giving a friend or neighbor a copy of the Book of Mormon with your testimony written inside. Follow these steps to get it ready:

1. On a piece of paper, measure a rectangle about 4½ x 6½ inches (11½ x 16½ cm) and have an adult help you cut it out.
2. Add a picture of yourself—either a drawing or a photograph—at the top of the page.
3. Write your testimony under your picture.
4. Have an adult help you attach the paper to the inside cover of the Book of Mormon.



YOUTH

Could I Share a Book of Mormon?

By Josh Arnett

During my first year of high school, my seminary teacher invited my class to give copies of the Book of Mormon to nonmember friends. Even though I was incredibly timid, I accepted the invitation.

It took me a couple of days to build up the courage, but I eventually gave my friend Britny the book during lunch hour and bore a brief testimony. Britny thanked me for the book.

At the end of that school year, Britny moved, but we kept in touch. She told me about her new school and how almost all of her friends

were members of the Church, but she never talked about anything spiritual with me.

That changed before I left for my mission. I got a message from Britny saying she had big news for me: she was going to be baptized, and she wanted to thank me for being her friend and setting a good example.

God took a shy 15-year-old boy with no missionary experience and directed him to share the gospel with someone He knew would accept it. I know that by listening to the Spirit, we can all find people around us who are waiting to learn about the restored

gospel. I know that if we help bring even one person to the Lord, “how great shall be [our] joy with him [or her] in the kingdom of [our] Father!” (D&C 18:15).

The author lives in Washington, USA.



Prayerfully study this material and seek to know what to share. How will understanding the life and mission of the Savior increase your faith in Him and bless those you watch over through visiting teaching? For more information go to reliefsociety.lds.org.

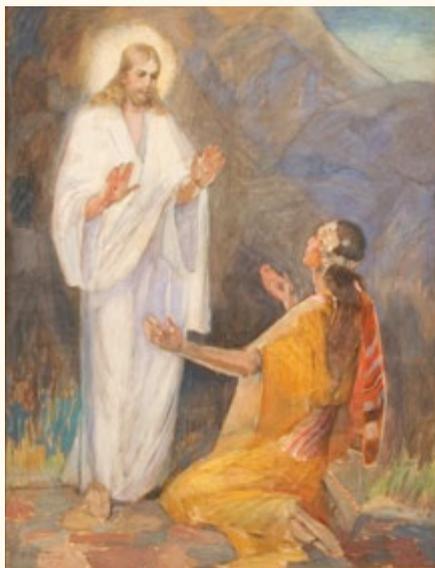
The Divine Mission of Jesus Christ: The Only Begotten Son

This is part of a series of Visiting Teaching Messages featuring aspects of the mission of the Savior.

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, is called the Only Begotten Son because He is the only person on earth to be born of a mortal mother and an immortal Father. He inherited divine powers from God, His Father. From His mother, Mary, He inherited mortality and was subject to hunger, thirst, fatigue, pain, and death.¹

Because Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten of the Father, He was able to lay down His life and take it up again. The scriptures teach that “through the atonement of Christ,” we “obtain a resurrection” (Jacob 4:11). We also learn that all “might be raised in immortality unto eternal life” if we “would believe” (D&C 29:43).

As we come to understand more fully what it means for Jesus to be the Only Begotten Son of the Father, our faith in Christ will increase. Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “Faith



in Jesus Christ is the conviction and assurance of (1) His status as the Only Begotten Son of God, (2) His infinite Atonement, and (3) His literal Resurrection.”² Modern prophets have testified: “[Jesus Christ] was . . . the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, the Redeemer of the world.”³

From the Scriptures

John 3:16; Doctrine and Covenants 20:21–24; Moses 5:6–9

NOTES

1. See *Gospel Principles* (2009), 52–53.
2. D. Todd Christofferson, “Building Faith in Christ,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2012, 53.
3. “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2–3.



Faith, Family, Relief

From Our History

In the New Testament we read of women, named and unnamed, who exercised faith in Jesus Christ, learned and lived His teachings, and testified of His ministry, miracles, and majesty. These women became exemplary disciples and important witnesses in the work of salvation.

For example, Martha bore strong testimony of the Savior’s divinity when she said to Him, “I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world” (John 11:27).

Some of the earliest witnesses of the Savior’s divinity were His mother, Mary, and her cousin Elisabeth. Soon after the angel Gabriel visited Mary, she visited Elisabeth. As soon as Elisabeth heard Mary’s greeting, she “was filled with the Holy Ghost” (Luke 1:41) and bore testimony that Mary would become mother to the Son of God.

What Can I Do?

1. Why is it important for me to understand the roles of Jesus Christ?
2. How can our faith increase as we keep our covenants?

THE LORD WILL RETURN TO EARTH IN GLORY

All that we do in the Church—missionary work, family history and temple work, teaching the gospel, living Christlike lives—prepares us and others for eternal life and for the Lord’s Second Coming.¹

His first coming—His mortal life—was witnessed by relatively few people. When He returns “with power and great glory,” all humankind will witness it (D&C 29:11). The Second Coming will usher in the Millennium, when the Savior will “dwell in righteousness with men on earth a thousand years” (D&C 29:11).

The scriptures describe many events that will occur before the Second Coming. Some of them include:

- The Great Apostasy, a falling away from the truth (see 2 Thessalonians 2:1–3; 2 Timothy 4:3–4).
- The Restoration of the gospel and of the priesthood, as well as the coming forth of the Book of Mormon (see Isaiah 29:4–18; Acts 3:19–21).
- The gospel being preached across the world (see Matthew 24:14).
- A time of war, wickedness, and natural disasters (see Matthew 24:6–7; 2 Timothy 3:1–7).
- “Wonders in the heavens and in the earth” (Joel 2:30; see also Matthew 24:29–30; D&C 29:14–16; 49:23).

Although we can see signs that His Second Coming is near, no one knows exactly when the Lord will return: “The hour and the day no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven, nor shall they know until he comes” (D&C 49:7).

Some will not be prepared for the Savior’s return. It will be a fearful time for the wicked but a time of peace and triumph for the righteous. Thus, the scriptures and latter-day prophets have taught us to live so we will be prepared to meet our Savior whenever He comes again. The Lord taught:

“At that day, when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten virgins.

“For they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day” (D&C 45:56–57; see also Matthew 25:1–13). ■

For more information, see Luke 21; 2 Peter 3; Doctrine and Covenants 45:16–52; 88:87–107; 133:17–56.

NOTE

1. See, for example, David A. Bednar, “The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 24; and Neil L. Andersen, “Preparing the World for the Second Coming,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 49.



“We testify that [Jesus Christ] will someday return to earth. ‘And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together’ (Isaiah 40:5). He will rule as King of Kings and reign as Lord of Lords, and every knee shall bend and every tongue shall speak in worship before Him. Each of us will stand to be judged of Him according to our works and the desires of our hearts.”

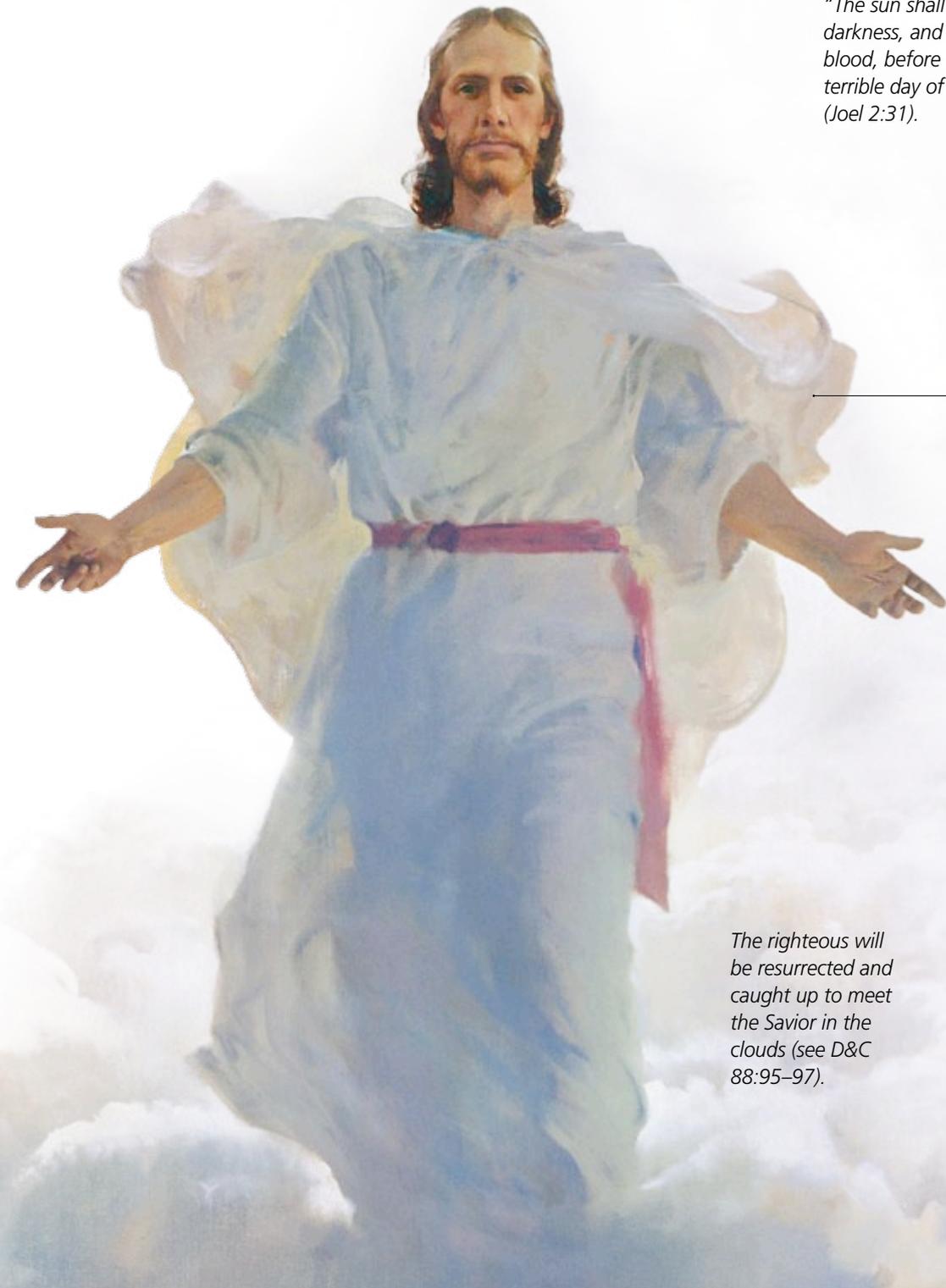
“The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 3.



Before the Second Coming, there will be earthquakes, tempests, and thunder and lightning storms, and the waves of the sea will heave themselves "beyond their bounds" (see D&C 88:89–90).



"The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come" (Joel 2:31).



The Savior will return in glory: "So great shall be the glory of his presence that the sun shall hide his face in shame" (D&C 133:49).

The Savior will stand on the Mount of Olives, and the Jews will ask, "What are these wounds in thine hands and in thy feet?" He will answer, "These wounds are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. . . . I am Jesus that was crucified." (See D&C 45:48–52.)

The righteous will be resurrected and caught up to meet the Savior in the clouds (see D&C 88:95–97).



HELPING CHILDREN RECOGNIZE THE HOLY GHOST

By Merrilee Browne Boyack

We can use the different ways the Holy Ghost communicates to help our children develop testimonies.

As the parents of four sons, my husband and I always seek ways to help our children feel the Spirit and gain a testimony. We had a breakthrough in understanding in an unusual way. I was standing in a store when the prompting came.

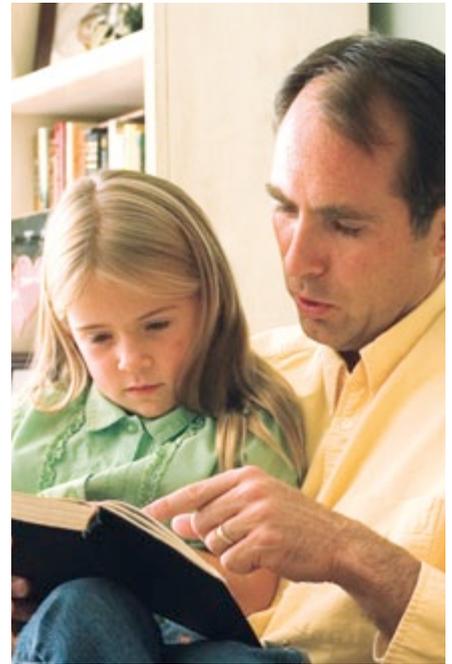
Our oldest son's grades in his social studies class were declining. We had talked with him about it, encouraging him to study harder, but there was still no improvement. We had been praying for ideas to help him. One day in a bookstore, I had a strong impression to buy a book from a pile of books that were on sale.

The book was about how each of us has distinct learning styles. Many people are visual learners, meaning they learn best by what they see. These learners often love art and reading. Some learn best aurally. They process information most effectively when they hear it. These people often love music. Finally, some learners are kinesthetic learners. They learn best when there is motion or activity involved. These learners sometimes struggle in school when teachers insist on them sitting still. They learn best when they're moving around.



There was the answer! Our son was obviously an aural learner—he loved music and talking! We discovered that he was often being pulled out of class for other activities during social studies and was then told by the teacher to go

home and read the material. He was struggling because he wasn't hearing the class discussion. Once we understood this, we encouraged him to read his assigned material aloud and then discuss it with us. His grades shot back up.



Facilitating Spiritual Experiences

But our understanding of learning styles didn't stop there. We realized as we studied this more and observed our children that the Holy Ghost often teaches our children in the ways they learn best. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the Spirit talks to us in our language and in ways we can understand. The Holy Ghost adapts His language to be understood by all, even little children. "Our Heavenly Father is always available to us. He adapts to our level of understanding. 'If He comes to a little child, He will adapt himself to the language and capacity of a little child' (Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 3:392)."¹

Knowing that the Spirit adapts His communication for our understanding can encourage parents to create opportunities for their children to hear teachings from the Holy Ghost in ways they will understand best. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (Isaiah 54:13).

As I mentioned, our oldest son's primary method of learning was aural. Both he and our third son love music, so in our home we often played beautiful music by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir as well as classical music. They felt the Spirit deeply in this environment. We also had many lively discussions regarding the gospel, and this helped them learn truths that were reinforced by the Spirit as they heard them.

Another son was primarily a visual learner. He loved to read and would feel the Spirit best while reading the scriptures or gospel-centered books. We provided many books for him to read that helped him feel the Spirit and gain a testimony. We also placed pictures of gospel scenes and sayings on our walls so that our house became a feast of visual learning.

Our second son was a visual and kinesthetic learner. He was a very active boy and was happiest on a mountain bike or hiking with his dad. We discovered that he felt the Spirit best when he was outdoors and moving. We had many family camping trips where we talked about Jesus Christ, the Creation, and the plan of salvation. These messages reached our second son in a powerful way as he took part in these activities.

My husband and I also discovered that kinesthetic learning can occur when doing service. So we did lots of service activities with our children so they could see, hear, and participate. This created a wonderful environment where all of our sons could internalize lessons of charity and Christlike service, and these projects especially resonated with our second son.

Hearing and Understanding

We also learned that people "hear" the Holy Ghost in a variety of ways. I was teaching a Sunday School lesson to relatively new converts, and I asked the question, "How do you feel

the Spirit?" Their answers were very enlightening. One said, "I feel clarity in my thoughts." Another said, "I have a warm feeling inside," while another shared, "I feel a deep sense of peace." A woman who had been a member for a few months said, "I feel prickles all over!" And several stated that they occasionally would "hear" a voice speaking to them or that new ideas would come to them.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught: "In its more familiar forms, revelation or inspiration comes by means of words or thoughts communicated to the mind (see Enos 1:10; D&C 8:2-3), by sudden enlightenment (see D&C 6:14-15), by positive or negative feelings about proposed courses of action, or even by inspiring performances, as in the performing arts. . . . 'Inspiration comes more as a feeling than as a sound.'"²

It is clear that each of us may hear and feel the communication of the



Holy Ghost in a variety of ways. We should move beyond simply teaching children that they will have a warm feeling because they might not experience that feeling; they may receive inspiration in a different way.

Elder Jay E. Jensen, formerly of the Presidency of the Seventy, related this story about a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles who was touring a mission. In between zone conferences, this Apostle turned to the member of the Seventy who had spoken at the previous conference and said, “I wonder if you might have left an impression in the missionaries’

minds that has created more problems than you can resolve. As I have traveled throughout the Church, I’ve found relatively few people who have experienced a burning of the bosom. In fact, I’ve had many people tell me that they’ve become frustrated because they have never experienced that feeling even though they have prayed or fasted for long periods of time.” Elder Jensen continued: “Over the years, I have tried to learn the different ways in which the Spirit of the Lord works. Surely God does speak from heaven, but he manifests, confirms, or gives direction in a variety

of ways.”³ It’s very important to teach our children that they need to learn to hear the Spirit in the way He speaks to them.

As we teach our children, we share principles of faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to hear and understand the promptings that come to them is critical to their spiritual development. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) counseled us: “[Your children] will need all the strength and all the faith you can give them while they are yet near you. And they will also need a greater strength which comes of a higher power.”⁴

Receiving guidance and direction from our Heavenly Father through the Holy Ghost is a great blessing in our lives. As we teach our children how to receive and pay attention to these promptings, feelings, and instructions, they will be able to gain personal testimonies that will give them strength in the future. The Holy Ghost can be their constant companion, and they will be able to hear Him more fully. As parents we can help with this process and help bless our children. ■

The author lives in California, USA.

NOTES

1. Gérald Caussé, “Even a Child Can Understand,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 32.
2. Dallin H. Oaks, “Eight Ways God Can Speak to You,” *New Era*, Sept. 2004, 4.
3. Jay E. Jensen, “Have I Received an Answer from the Spirit?” *Ensign*, Apr. 1989, 21–22.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, “These, Our Little Ones,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2007, 9.

REPENTANCE

The Atonement of the Savior Jesus Christ makes repentance possible, and every one of us must repent.

Sometimes we become afraid when the serious nature of a sin requires confession to a bishop or branch president, explains Elder Bradley D. Foster of the Seventy in an article on pages 28–29 of this month’s *New Era*. However, “those who have traveled the repentance road will tell you that not only is the journey possible but that when you have been there and look back, this is what you are going to see:

“You can do this. And when you do, everything will be better. . . .

“As soon as you start, you will feel relief. . . .

“Your bishop will help you through this. You will love him and never forget him.”

Suggestions for Teaching Youth

Read with your teens the section about repentance in *For the Strength of Youth*. Discuss the blessings we can receive through the Atonement and how repentance makes these possible.

You could also share your testimony of repentance and the

Atonement and what they mean in your life. You may also want to ask your teens to share their testimony of repentance with you. And as appropriate, you could invite teenage children to help younger brothers and sisters with the activity described below.

Suggestions for Teaching Children

To demonstrate what it means to stay on the path the Lord has commanded us to follow, consider using a toy car (or an airplane, boat, or wagon) in an object lesson. Use a map and ask the child to move the car from one point on the map to another. Ask, “What is necessary if the vehicle starts to stray off course?”

When it is clear that if a vehicle strays, it must be brought back to the right course, ask how this is like repentance. Explain that sometimes as we travel through life, we have to change our direction to make sure we are headed the right way. Sometimes we can do this on our own. But sometimes we need help. Ask the children to tell about times when they have helped themselves, times when others have helped them, and ways in which Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ can help them. As you teach this topic,



SCRIPTURES ABOUT REPENTANCE

Proverbs 28:13

Isaiah 1:16–18

Enos 1:2–8

Mosiah 4:1–3; 26:30–31

Alma 34:32–33

Helaman 12:23

3 Nephi 9:20–22

Doctrine and Covenants

18:10–13; 58:42–43

keep in mind that children under the age of eight are not accountable and do not need to repent, but it is valuable for them to learn about the principle of repentance.

Discuss their answers with them and talk about how repentance is a gift from Heavenly Father and from Jesus Christ that makes it possible for us to return to Them again. ■

NEWS OF THE CHURCH

Visit news.lds.org for more Church news and events.



AN INTRODUCTION TO **MORMONS** THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

A series of videos produced by the Church, "An Introduction to Mormons: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," provides a resource for anyone seeking to share information or to learn more about Latter-day Saints.



"Introduction to Mormons" Videos Available

The Church has created a series of videos to provide an introduction to the Church, its members, and its various programs and organizations. The public and members of the media have often requested this type of introductory information as they have become more familiar with the Church in recent years.

The 4- to 10-minute segments feature members of the Church discussing their experiences,

beliefs, and practices and provide answers to common questions about the Church. They are a resource for anyone seeking to share or learn more about what Mormons believe.

The longest video is an overview segment, "The Church at a Glance." Other pieces focus on such topics as humanitarian efforts, beliefs, missionary work, temples, family, education, and Church history and organization.

The Church has produced similar videos in the past. Long-term plans include translation and customization of these resources for worldwide use.

The full series of videos can be found on the Church's Gospel Library app, as well as on Mormon Newsroom's YouTube channel. Individuals can view the videos, download the files, or share by linking to them from their own social media sites. ■

New Videos for Aaronic Priesthood

New videos produced by the Church can help young men learn how to lead an Aaronic Priesthood quorum and minister to others. The videos model effective Aaronic Priesthood quorums and quorum presidency meetings.

To see the gallery of videos on LDS.org, go to the Aaronic Priesthood page under Resources and select Media Resources. Topics include “Effective Aaronic Priesthood Presidency and Quorum Meetings,” “Ministering in the Aaronic Priesthood,” and others.

Resources for Teaching Children on LDS.org

For decades, teachers, leaders, and parents have supplemented their gospel teaching with the help of the Church magazines. Now some of these same resources are available online at LDS.org and organized so you can easily find the lesson helps you’re looking for.

You can search for resources by topic, by category, and also by Primary lesson number by entering “Resources for Teaching Children” in the search bar on LDS.org. You can also navigate to this page from the Primary manuals page.

The topics portion of Resources for Teaching Children is also available in Spanish and Portuguese and can be accessed both from LDS.org or from the *Liahona* magazine home page in these languages.

Resources include stories, activities, articles, and other Church-approved media for teaching children at home or in church. Additional topics will be added each month.

Primary Celebrates 135 Years

In Farmington, Utah, USA, 135 years ago, Bishop John W. Hess was concerned about the behavior of the children in his ward. He called the mothers of the ward together and talked about the importance of guiding the minds of young children.

Aurelia Spencer Rogers listened, and then discussed it with Eliza R. Snow, who visited Farmington in the spring of 1878. Sister Snow in turn met with Church President John

Taylor, who authorized Bishop Hess to form an organization for children in his ward. The Farmington Ward Primary Association was formally organized on August 11, 1878, with Sister Rogers as president.

Today, approximately one million children all over the world benefit from Primary each week. Primary leaders and teachers strive to support parents in their role to help children gain testimonies of Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the restored gospel. ■



The First Meeting of the Primary Association, by Lynn Fausett and Gordon Cope



Primary leaders and teachers strive to help children gain testimonies of Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the restored gospel.



By Elder Robert D. Hales

Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

The PROMISE of CHRISTMAS

*May we take time this Christmas season to
renew our covenants to follow the Savior and
to do His will, just as He did the will of our
Heavenly Father.*

We can't fully understand the meaning of Christmas unless we understand the meaning of the Savior's life, Atonement, and Resurrection.

I cannot think about the birth of the Savior without thinking of His words to Pilate: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John 18:37).

As we begin the Christmas season, may we consider the scriptural prophecies about the Savior. They are not just odd statements of coincidence; rather, they are profound statements of purpose and promise about His life and mission and what He means for each of us.

Prophecies of His Coming

Christ's coming was foretold for thousands of years. About 2,000 years before the birth of Jesus Christ, Abraham taught about His role in the plan of salvation. About 1,400 years before His birth, Moses taught the same wonderful truths. About 700 years before His birth, Isaiah revealed the circumstances of His birth, life, and death:

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).



“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. . . .

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities . . . and with his stripes we are healed. . . .

“ . . . He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

“He was taken from prison and from judgment. . . .

“And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth” (Isaiah 53:3–5, 7–9).

Not long after Isaiah’s prophecy, the prophet Lehi had a profound dream and taught his family what he had learned. Nephi recorded: “Six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews—even a Messiah, or, in other words, a Savior of the world” (1 Nephi 10:4).

Lehi also spoke about the great number of prophets who had testified concerning the coming of the Redeemer of the world (see 1 Nephi 10:5).

The Promise of Christmas

The Gospel of Luke records that before the Savior’s birth, His mother traveled with haste to visit her cousin Elisabeth.

“And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:

“And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb” (Luke 1:41–42).

As the Holy Ghost bore record to Elisabeth, He bears record to us that the words of the prophets have been fulfilled. The Savior has come and performed the work His Father sent Him to do.

Of the Savior, Nephi recorded:

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

“And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father!” (1 Nephi 11:20–21).

When the Savior was 12, He taught in the temple. He explained to His anxious parents that He was about His Father’s business (see Luke 2:42–49).

That business was accomplished as He went forward fulfilling His earthly mission. The Savior describes the



Each week as we participate in the ordinance of the sacrament, we renew the promise of the Savior’s birth in our own lives.

culmination of that mission in these stirring words:

“I came unto my own, and my own received me not. And the scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled.

“And as many as have received me, to them have I given to become the sons [and daughters] of God; and even so will I to as many as shall believe on my name, for behold, by me redemption cometh, and in me is the law of Moses fulfilled” (3 Nephi 9:16–17).

His promise that we can become His sons and daughters will be realized as we believe in Him and exercise faith in Him unto obedience. Then we will be prepared to receive the gift of eternal life.

He said: “Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. . . . In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters” (Ether 3:14).

The Meaning of Christmas

Christmas is a time to share our gifts, strengthen others, and do our part in the kingdom of God. Christmas is also a time to express our love to others and to bear our testimony of the Savior.

One way we can share our testimony is to have a nativity in our home so we can spark conversations

about the Lord’s birth. Another way is to relate stories like that of John Weightman in *The Mansion*.

John Weightman was a successful man whose charities brought him attention and renown. One evening, after perusing a pile of newspaper clippings praising him for his generosity, he picked up his Bible. Soon he fell asleep after reading the Savior’s words: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal” (Matthew 6:19).

As he slept, John found himself in “the heavenly city,” traveling with others as they received their mansions. When the Keeper of the Gate stopped in front of a tiny hut built of cast-off materials, he said to John, “This is your mansion.”

John protested, listing his many public contributions. “Were not all these carefully recorded on earth where they would add to your credit?” asked the Keeper of the Gate. “You have had your reward for them. Would you be paid twice?”¹

During this Christmas season, I hope each of us has the opportunity to give anonymously.

Obtaining the Promise

Each week as we participate in the ordinance of the sacrament, we renew the promise of the Savior’s birth in our own lives. We take His name upon us, and we renew

our covenant of obedience and our promise that we will always remember Him.

The gospel, as recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants, is this:

“That he came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness;

“That through him all might be saved” (D&C 76:41–42).

May we take time this Christmas season to renew our covenants to follow the Savior and to do His will, just as He did the will of our Heavenly Father. As we do so, the words of King Benjamin’s people, recorded 125 years before the Savior’s birth, will be fulfilled for us today: “O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men” (Mosiah 4:2).

I testify that the Savior came down in the meridian of time and that He will come again. I bear witness that His Church, restored in this last dispensation before His Second Coming, is the “marvelous work and a wonder” (2 Nephi 25:17) in which we as Latter-day Saints are engaged. ■

NOTE

1. Henry Van Dyke, “The Mansion,” in *Inspirational Classics for Latter-day Saints*, comp. Jack M. Lyon (2000), 54–57, 62–63.





NATIVITY SCENE BY BERNARDINUS INDISUR FROM ISTOCKPHOTO/THINKSTOCK

By Elder
Bruce D. Porter
Of the Seventy



COME, LET US ADORE HIM

Whatever binds us—sins, circumstances, or past events—the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Immanuel, has come to set us free.

More than 700 years before the birth of Jesus Christ, Isaiah prophesied of Him in words memorialized by George Frideric Handel in *The Messiah* oratorio: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

Handel’s *Messiah* also brings to glorious musical life the following admonition, based on Isaiah 40:9: “O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, . . . O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!”¹

Behold your God, born as a babe in Bethlehem and wrapped in swaddling clothes. Behold your God, born in poverty and simplicity that He might walk among common people as a common man. Behold your God, even the infinite and eternal Redeemer, veiled in flesh and come to live upon the very earth He had created.

Return with me to that sacred first Christmas in Bethlehem to contemplate the birth of our Lord. He came in the quiet of the night, in the meridian of time, He who is Immanuel (see Isaiah 7:14), the Stem of Jesse (see Isaiah 11:1), the Dayspring (see Luke 1:78), the Lord Almighty



(see 2 Corinthians 6:18). His birth marked the promised visitation of the Creator to the earth, the condescension of God to man (see 1 Nephi 11:16–27). As Isaiah wrote of the event, “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined” (Isaiah 9:2).

We know from modern revelation that the foreordained King of Israel came to earth in the springtime (see D&C 20:1). Micah prophesied that He would be born in Bethlehem—“little among the thousands of Judah” (Micah 5:2). The village of His birth lay in the shadow of mighty Jerusalem, which was five miles (8 km) to the north. Jerusalem was the capital city of Judaea, seat of the temple and bastion of Roman power. Bethlehem, by contrast, was a pastoral town, homespun and agrarian. Its only claim to fame was as the birthplace of David, the ancient king of Israel through whose lineage Christ would be born; hence, the little village was commonly known as the City of David. Its Hebrew name, *Beth Lechem*, meant “house of bread,”² a name that was of no particular significance until He who would be known as the Bread of Life was born.

The fields surrounding Bethlehem were home to numerous flocks of sheep, and early

The Savior knew life from every side and every angle, both above and below. He who was the greatest made Himself the least—the Heavenly Shepherd who became the Lamb.

spring was the traditional birthing season. The shepherds would have stayed up most nights, tending their sheep beneath the crystal night sky; hence, the angels who heralded the Savior’s birth would have had no need to wake them.

The Lamb of God

The boy child who arrived that birthing season is known as “the Lamb of God” (John 1:29; 1 Nephi 11:31; D&C 88:106). It is a title of deep significance, for He arrived with the lambs and would someday be “brought as a lamb to the slaughter” (Isaiah 53:7). Yet paradoxically, He was also the Good Shepherd (see John 10:11), one who cares for the lambs. Thus, these twin symbols of His life represent both those who serve and those who are served. It was only right that Christ should play both roles, for in life He “descended below all things” (D&C 88:6), and in eternity He “ascended up on high” and is in and through and “round about all things” (D&C 88:6, 41). He knew life from every side and every angle, both above and below. He who was the greatest made Himself the least—the Heavenly Shepherd who became the Lamb.

His coming was more than simply the birth of a great prophet, the advent of a

promised heir to the royal throne, or even the arrival of the only perfect person who would ever walk the earth. It was the coming of the God of heaven “to walk upon his footstool and be like man, almost.”³

Jesus Christ is the Creator of the world and the Great Jehovah of the Old Testament. It was His voice that resounded on Mount Sinai, His power that upheld chosen Israel in its wanderings, and His presence that revealed to Enoch, Isaiah, and all the prophets the glory of things to come. And therein lies the greatest miracle of the Nativity: when the God and Creator of heaven and earth first revealed Himself in person to the world, He chose to do so as an infant—helpless and dependent.

An ancient Hebrew tradition held that the Messiah would be born at Passover. We know that April in the meridian of time indeed fell in the week of the Passover feast—that sacred Jewish commemoration of Israel’s salvation from the destroying angel that brought death to the firstborn sons of Egypt. Each Israelite family that sacrificed a lamb and smeared its blood on the wooden doorposts of their dwelling was spared (see Exodus 12:3–30). Thirty-three years after Christ’s Passover birth, His blood was smeared on the wooden posts of a cross to save His people from the destroying angels of death and sin.

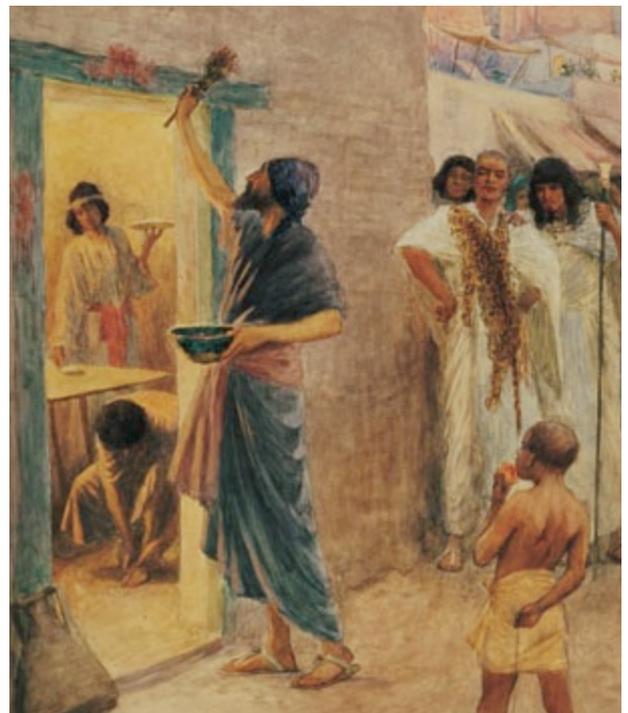
The Passover feast may have been the reason there was no room at the inn for Mary and Joseph. The population of Jerusalem swelled by tens of thousands during Passover, forcing travelers to seek accommodations in outlying towns. Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem, the home of Joseph’s forefathers, to fulfill the requirements of an imperial census ordered by

Caesar Augustus. The requirement of the census allowed them to make their appearance in Bethlehem anytime during the year, but they likely chose the Passover season because the Mosaic law required all males to present themselves in Jerusalem at Passover.⁴ Because Bethlehem was virtually next door to the Holy City, the couple from Nazareth could take care of two obligations at once.

The innkeeper has come down in history as somewhat notorious. Yet given the crowding throughout the region during Passover, we can hardly blame him for having no room to offer the couple from Nazareth. While the majority of Passover pilgrims camped out in thousands of tents pitched on the plains around Jerusalem, thousands of others sought refuge in the local inns, known as caravansaries or khans. The Bethlehem inn was no doubt overflowing, and the innkeeper’s offering of the stable was likely an act of genuine kindness.

Even had the couple found room in the inn, it would have offered only primitive accommodations. A typical

An ancient Hebrew tradition held that the Messiah would be born at Passover. We know that April in the meridian of time indeed fell in the week of the Passover feast.



khan of the period was a stone structure consisting of a series of small rooms, each with only three walls and open to public view on one side. The stable, however, was likely a walled courtyard or even a limestone cave, where animals belonging to the guests were kept.⁵ Whether in courtyard, cave, or other refuge, Christ's birth among the animals did have one conspicuous advantage over the crowded interior of an inn: here at least were peace and privacy. In this sense, the offering of the stable was a blessing, allowing the most sacred birth in human history to take place in reverent solitude.

Liberty to the Captives

Seven hundred years before that first Christmas, the prophet Isaiah penned a messianic prophecy that the Savior later read to His fellow villagers of Nazareth: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound" (Isaiah 61:1; see also Luke 4:18–19).

When we read of Christ's mission to proclaim liberty to the captives and open the prison to those who are bound, we probably think first of His ministry in the spirit world among the dead. *But we are all captive*—captive to the corruption and weakness of mortal bodies and subject to the temptations of the flesh, to infirmity, and, ultimately, to death—*and we all have need to be set free*.

Whatever binds us—sins, circumstances, or past events—the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Immanuel, came to set us free. He proclaims liberty to the captives and freedom from the bonds of death and the prison of sin, ignorance, pride, and error. It was prophesied that He would say to the prisoners, "Go forth" (Isaiah 49:9). The only condition of our freedom is that we come unto Him with broken hearts and contrite spirits, repent, and seek to do His will.

About 30 years ago I met a man whom I will call Thomas. He was 45 years old when I met him. Twenty years earlier his parents had joined the Church. Thomas

had no interest in his parents' new religion. But his parents loved him, and they treasured the hope that someday their son might be brought to know the truth of the restored gospel. As the years passed, they tried many times to persuade him to at least meet with the missionaries and hear their message. He refused again and again, and he mocked his parents for their religious faith.

One day in desperation his mother said, "Thomas, if you will take the missionary discussions one time, then I will never again talk to you about the Church." Thomas decided this was a good bargain and agreed to meet with the missionaries. During the first three discussions, he simply sat there full of pride, occasionally making fun of what the elders were teaching.

During the fourth discussion, about the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the first principles of the gospel, Thomas said nothing but grew unusually silent and listened closely. At the end of the lesson, the elders bore their testimonies of the Savior. One of the missionaries then felt prompted to open his Bible and read these words:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:28–29).

Without warning, Thomas burst into tears. "Are you trying to say that Christ can forgive me of *my* sins?" he asked. "I have lived a terrible life. I am haunted by the memory of my sins. I would do anything to be freed of the guilt I feel."

His pride had been a facade that hid a soul captive to sin and guilt. The elders assured Thomas that Christ would forgive him and free him from the burden of guilt if he would but repent and be baptized and confirmed. Then they bore testimony of the power of the Atonement. From that moment on, everything changed in Thomas's life. He had much to repent of and to overcome, but through the blessings of the Lord, he qualified for baptism.

More than 20 years later, as I sat in the chapel of the Frankfurt Germany Temple, a gray-haired man in front



of me turned around and said, “Aren’t you Elder Porter?” To my great joy, I recognized Thomas—a man freed from bondage by the power of Jesus Christ and still faithful in the Lord’s Church.

Perhaps this Christmas season we might each resolve to approach our Father in Heaven humbly in prayer and petition the power of His Beloved Son to be with us in our daily walk and to free us from our personal forms of captivity, great or small.

O Holy Night

In December 1987, about two weeks before Christmas, I traveled to Israel on business. Unfortunately, it was not a peaceful time in the Holy Land. There were demonstrations in the West Bank, the streets of Old Jerusalem were deserted, and the shops were boarded up. Political tension filled the air, and to make matters worse, a cold rain drizzled most of the week. Fearful of violence, tourists stayed away in droves. Yet as I walked through Jerusalem, peace filled my heart to know that this was the city the Redeemer loved so much.

I returned to the United States late on the Friday before Christmas. When the Sabbath dawned two days later, my alarm woke me to the music of “O Holy Night”:

Perhaps this Christmas season we might each resolve to approach our Father in Heaven humbly in prayer and petition the power of His beloved Son to be with us in our daily walk and to free us from our personal forms of captivity, great or small.

*The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger,
In all our trials born to be our friend.⁶*

The music and message pierced me deeply, and tears flowed as I contemplated the glorious sacrifice and perfect life of the Redeemer of Israel—He who was born to be the friend of the lowly and the hope of the meek. I thought of my experience in Jerusalem, and love flooded through my whole being for Him who had come to earth and taken upon Himself the burdens of us all. I was overwhelmed to think that He might regard me as a friend. I have never forgotten the tender feelings of that early Sunday morning, which were as pure a witness as I have ever received.

I bear my witness of the Savior of the world. I know that He lives. I know that He was foreordained before the Creation of the world to proclaim liberty to the captives. Of His birth and life I say, “Oh, come, let us adore him.”⁷ ■

From a devotional address, “A Child Is Born,” given at Brigham Young University on December 9, 2008. For the full address, go to speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

1. *The Messiah*, ed. T. Tertius Noble (1912), vi.
2. See Guide to the Scriptures, “Bethlehem,” scriptures.lds.org.
3. “O God, the Eternal Father,” *Hymns*, no. 175.
4. See Bible Dictionary, “Feasts.”
5. See Russell M. Nelson, “The Peace and Joy of Knowing the Savior Lives,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2011, 19.
6. “Cantique de Noël” (“O Holy Night”), *Recreational Songs* (1949), 143.
7. “Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful,” *Hymns*, no. 202.



THE ART OF Giving

*Some people have very
little but give everything.*

By Lori Huff Goldade

Whenever I reflect upon this joyous time of year, I remember a Christmas from long ago when I learned the art of giving.

I was in the fourth grade, and my friends and I were filled with holiday excitement. As was customary in our class, we drew names for the Christmas gift exchange. I hoped that the cute boy across the room had drawn my name. Another boy named Paul sat behind me. He often came to school with unclean clothes and dirty hands. My friends and I had made no effort to befriend him.

When the day of the big party arrived, the teacher distributed our gifts. The package I received was large and appeared to be hastily wrapped. Anxiously I tore off the wrapping paper. Inside was the book *Lassie Come-Home*. It wasn't a clean, new copy as I might have hoped but had worn, frayed pages and a stain on the cover. Dismayed, I quickly hid it in my desk. Then I noticed something else hidden in the wrapping paper—a rattlesnake rattler in a pill bottle. On a name card was carefully written "From Paul." In tears, I ran to the girls' restroom.

Embarrassed, I remained in the restroom until the party was over and then hurried home. My mother, seeing

my tear-stained face, asked about the Christmas party. I expressed to her my disappointment about the gifts. My mother lovingly put her arms around me, looked sadly into my eyes, and then taught me a great lesson. She told me that Paul, most likely too poor to buy a gift, had probably searched through everything he had at home for a meaningful present and, after much thought, had probably chosen some of his most prized possessions to give to me.

Again tears came to my eyes, but not because I hadn't received something I wanted. This time they came because I had been so selfish and had not accepted the best gift given that Christmas. I had rejected a gift of love and sacrifice.

Some people have much and give very little. Others have little and give everything. Whenever I am tempted to be critical of another's offering—whether it is of time, resources, or effort—I try to remember that some give all they can, just as in the account of the widow who "did cast in all that she had, even all her living" (Mark 12:44). The art of giving is to give all that you can, even if it is only two mites.

I didn't express it as a fourth grader, but I am grateful for Paul's Christmas gift of sacrifice and love. ■

The author lives in Washington, USA.



At the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, Dr. David R. Parker, associate director of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Center for Community of Caring, signs "Let There Be Peace on Earth" while the audience sings. Held in February 2012, this event was under the direction of the Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable.



BECOMING BETTER SAINTS THROUGH

Interfaith Involvement

*When we serve alongside those of other faiths,
we not only build our communities and improve our
relationships but we also become better disciples ourselves.*

By Betsy VanDenBerghe

Church leaders frequently call on members to participate with the honest in heart—regardless of religious affiliation—in service and in causes on moral issues. And Church leaders often set the example. Recently, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, along with his wife, Harriet, received a Humanitarian of the Year award from Catholic Community Services; he noted the irony of “two Germans, former Lutherans, now committed Mormons being honored by Catholics in the United States of America.”¹

Members around the world have responded commendably to the call to serve shoulder to shoulder with members of other organizations. I have been touched by accounts of LDS wards growing community gardens, holding interfaith conferences on moral values, and doing community cleanups with other congregations.

In serving with those of other faiths, I’ve found the encouragement from Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to be true: Respectful and sincere interfaith service not only builds our communities but also enables us to collectively and individually grow in our love of God and His children.²

Bettering the World

A few years ago, a Presbyterian minister moved into my community wanting to serve all of her neighbors, not just her church congregation. As she reached out in our predominantly LDS neighborhood with friendliness, offers to help, and invitations to neighborhood parties, ward members began participating in her congregation’s service projects; together, she and neighbors of various faiths held



Holladay Matters (in Holladay, Utah, USA) was formed to welcome people of all faiths, or no religious affiliation, into neighborhood projects and activities. Pictured are the founding members, women of various denominations.

a fundraiser that significantly helped an LDS family with dire medical expenses.

Apostle Orson F. Whitney (1855–1931) stated, “God is using more than one people for the accomplishment of his great and marvelous work. . . . It is too vast, too arduous, for any one people.”³ Great things can be accomplished when good people band together. Our neighborhood minister’s efforts led to the formation of a community interfaith committee that, along with our stake Relief Society, put on a women’s conference supplying hygiene kits and books to refugee agencies. These interfaith connections then enabled stake members to help a congregation feed a large refugee gathering and to step in when another church needed additional volunteers at a homeless shelter.

“We have a responsibility . . . to work cooperatively with other churches and organizations,” President Thomas S. Monson has told members,⁴ and this outreach has blessed the world beyond humanitarian service. In an address to Christian leaders in the United States, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described a series of LDS–Evangelical Christian dialogues held at Brigham Young University.⁵ One outcome of these conferences occurred when a prominent theologian apologized for mischaracterizations of the Mormon faith by some in his community.⁶ Of such bridge building Elder Holland said, “I cannot help but believe this to be part of a divine orchestration of events in these troubled times.”⁷



In December 2011, children from the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in New Jersey, USA, perform a Christmas program with children from a congregation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The benefit concert helped collect food for the local food pantry.

Bettering Our Relationships

As we serve with others, certain guidelines can help us make our interactions more meaningful and avoid giving offense. I once lived in a large city and volunteered for a local church’s tutoring program open to the public—only to discover that the person in charge found my membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints unacceptable. That experience convinced me to value anyone’s contribution regardless of his or her religious affiliation (or lack thereof). I gratefully follow up on anyone’s interest in learning about the Church, but I also know that we Latter-day Saints take Jesus’s charge seriously to love our neighbor, clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and visit the imprisoned (see Matthew 25:34–36) without expecting the conversion of the recipient or those who serve with us. Sincere and respectful interfaith engagement never requires any group, including ours, to disavow its beliefs. Rather, it encourages participants to “contend against no church”



(D&C 18:20) and “clothe [themselves] with the bond of charity” (D&C 88:125).

Another helpful guideline came from a wise stake leader in our heavily LDS neighborhood. He advised members serving with other faiths not to “take over” by dominating in decisions or leadership but to work in councils and allow all to “have an equal privilege” (D&C 88:122). This leader, who had extensive experience engaging with other churches, also encouraged members to develop good relationships. He had discovered that some who had partnered with Latter-day Saints found them hardworking and pleasant but more interested in getting the work done than in developing friendships.

My experiences in community and educational causes have convinced me that the Spirit is strong when diverse people unite in a worthy mission. Brotherly love and pure motives propel service forward even more than the hard work involved.⁸

One LDS speaker at an interfaith academic conference observed that making connections with others helps those outside our faith better understand us.⁹ Another scholar, not of our faith, teaches a seminar on Mormonism at a prominent American university. She discovered that her students wanted to learn about our Church “primarily . . . because they were raised to believe that the religion was a cult, but their experience with Mormon friends and colleagues was not consistent with that stereotype.”¹⁰

Bettering Ourselves

Serving alongside others not only helps them to understand us, but it also motivates us to learn from them and become more aware that God is “no respecter of persons” (D&C 1:35). He assists good people in all faiths and cultures in their efforts to improve the lives of His children.

This recognition of the good in others helps us remain humble—as opposed to the Pharisees Jesus condemned for their spiritual pride (see Matthew 23) or the Zoramites,

DOCTRINAL POINTS

- God uses the honest in heart in all denominations and cultures to further His work on earth.
- Working with others not of our faith to advance good causes enables us to do more good than we could do alone.
- Respectful, friendly interfaith engagement decreases misunderstandings, builds feelings of brotherhood and sisterhood, and draws us closer to the Father of us all.

Participants discuss defending religious freedoms in an interfaith conference held in São Paulo, Brazil, in March 2013.



Below, from left: Bharatanatyam dancers perform in the Salt Lake Tabernacle during an Interfaith Music Tribute in February 2010. An audience member enjoys the tribute. In a Mormon Messages video, young adults from various faiths discuss the importance of sexual purity. Participants at the annual Interfaith Charity Quilting Bee held in Houston, Texas, USA, make quilts for needy families.

whom the Book of Alma portrays as exclusive and arrogant (see Alma 31). Openness to the good in others enables us to become better people.

Our love can expand from a close circle of family to encompass not only our friends but ultimately our neighbors—and even enemies. One Church member serving in the American military in post–World War II Japan told of his struggle with bitterness toward the Japanese people. After being welcomed into a shrine of worship by Japanese townspeople, however, he found that “their spirits touched mine, and I felt an amazing change in my feelings toward them. My bitterness melted. . . . I thought about what had happened in that shrine and the amazing transformation I felt toward the people there.”¹¹

Likewise, when we genuinely welcome others into our midst, they can undergo transformation as well. An Evangelical Christian who graduated from Brigham Young University wrote an article about

her experience and described her initial defensiveness toward the LDS students. But after finally forming meaningful friendships, she came to appreciate “the emphasis I felt Latter-day Saints placed on God’s nearness to humanity. I began recognizing that in an effort to retain God’s transcendence, I had sacrificed God’s imminence—and this realization had a profound effect on me.”¹²

In his address to Christian leaders, Elder Holland acknowledged the “risk associated with learning something new about someone else. New insights always affect old perspectives, and thus some rethinking, rearranging, and restructuring of our worldviews is inevitable.”¹³ In befriending people of other faiths, I often find myself analyzing our differences, trying to distinguish the cultural divides from the doctrinal ones, all the while trying to appreciate everything virtuous and lovely they have to offer. Indeed, the effort sometimes feels risky, but it is always worth it. In the process of





Alan Bachman, chairman of the Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable, speaks in the Salt Lake Tabernacle in February 2012.



Three Latter-day Saint women attend Faith Feast, an intercultural progressive dinner in Spokane, Washington, USA. They and other attendees visited a local Muslim mosque, a Sikh gurdwara, and a Presbyterian church.

restructuring my paradigm, I find myself shedding more of my superficial cultural tendencies and coming closer to the essence of the gospel.

Several LDS groups invited my minister friend to speak on the topic of “loving our neighbor despite religious differences,” and she experienced a great deal of acceptance from those who attended. In turn, she invited several Latter-day Saints, including me, to speak to different congregations on the same topic. After the services, I found myself surrounded by congregants wanting to talk to me, hug me, and even shed tears of mutual love and understanding. In experiences like these, I have found Elder Holland’s conclusion to be true:

“When we look beyond people’s color, ethnic group, social circle, church, synagogue, mosque, creed, and statement of belief, and when we try our best to see them for who and what they are—children of the same God—something good and worthwhile happens within us, and we are thereby drawn into a closer union with that God who is the Father of us all.”¹⁴ ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

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2. See Quentin L. Cook, “Partnering with Our Friends from Other Faiths,” Aug. 9, 2010, patheos.com.
3. Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1928, 59.
4. Thomas S. Monson, in “The Mormon Ethic of Civility,” Oct. 16, 2009, mormonnewsroom.org.
5. See Jeffrey R. Holland, “Standing Together for the Cause of Christ,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2012, 44–46.
6. Joseph Walker, “Evangelical Leader Says LDS Church Is Not a Cult,” Oct. 10, 2011, deseretnews.com.
7. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Standing Together,” 44.
8. See Michael A. Neider, “The Voice of the People,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2012, 38–40.
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11. Ferron A. Olson, “Forgiveness at Wakayama,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2011, 57.
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14. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Standing Together,” 49.



**By Elder
Lynn G. Robbins**
Of the Seventy



FALL PLANTING, BY GRANT WOOD, COURTESY OF JOHN DEERE



MAKING A LIVING, Making a Life

May we all use our God-given talents in the service of our fellowmen and in making our communities and world better places to live.

When Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden of Eden, the Lord told Adam, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread” (Genesis 3:19). Adam really had only one choice as to his life’s work—he “began to till the earth” (Moses 5:1). He clearly had some challenges, but his work environment had some advantages as well. Among others, he was able to set his own hours and approve his own sick leave and vacation time, and he could not be fired.

Because pride can exist only in an environment of competition and comparison, it was unknown to Adam. There was no temptation to keep up with neighbors. There was no coveting, jealousy, envy, selfishness, or any other sins that feed on pride.

In fact, Satan had little with which to work. The competition he so anxiously awaited could not take place until Adam and Eve began to multiply and replenish the earth. When competition finally did occur, it happened in the workplace and in the acquiring of material possessions. It was here that Satan claimed Cain as his first victim when Cain fell prey to the Master Mahan principle “that I may murder and get gain” (Moses 5:31).

The acquiring of wealth and material possessions would become fertile ground for Satan as he tempted mankind with the cunning strategy that this world is our destiny and that anything and everything here is available for money.

Making a living was part of the Lord’s plan for His children, not just for our survival but also to see how we would get along with others in making that living—to see if we would be honest in our dealings with our fellowmen. Satan quickly recognized the work environment as a strategic setting to stir up all manner of sin, including covetousness, self-indulgence, living beyond one’s means, anger, infidelity, greed, and even theft and murder.

Motives in the Workplace

What you do to make a living and how much you earn aren’t nearly as important to the Lord as whether you are:

- Building His kingdom, including strong and valiant families.
- Honest in your dealings with your fellowmen and using your God-given talents in their service.



- Filling your life with good works that positively affect your community and world.

In Charles Dickens’s classic story *A Christmas Carol*, Ebenezer Scrooge undergoes an amazing transformation from a ruthless moneylender to a caring and charitable businessman and philanthropist. As his motives evolve, transforming him from a cruel and stingy miser to a compassionate member of his community, we witness a marvelous impact on him and others.

The motives that drive people are the hinges upon which major outcomes swing. The Lord has identified two opposite motivators—God and mammon (see 3 Nephi 13:24). We know that money itself is not evil; in fact, it represents “the sweat of [our] face.” Mammon goes beyond money to “the love of money,” which is referred to as “the root of all evil” (1 Timothy 6:10).

I want to share some illustrations of the interplay between a love of God and our fellowmen on the one hand and the need to make a living on the other. There are several combinations of these two motives that I will give the following grade levels:

A Level

At the A level, the Lord established the correct order of priorities, as we read in Jacob:

“Before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.

“And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good” (Jacob 2:18–19).

At this level, the primary motivation is a love of God and our fellowmen. Of necessity, the secondary motivation is to earn a living.

If a love of God and our fellowmen is the primary motivation, then the workingman and workingwoman at this level will be kingdom builders and full-tithe payers. They will have a “zeal towards God, and also towards men; for

In Charles Dickens’s classic story A Christmas Carol, Ebenezer Scrooge undergoes an amazing transformation from a ruthless moneylender to a caring and charitable businessman and philanthropist. As his motives evolve, we witness a marvelous impact on him and others.

they [will be] perfectly honest and upright in all things” (Alma 27:27). As laborers they will be “worthy of [their] hire” (Luke 10:7). As employers they will give “a just recompense of wages” (D&C 124:121). They will be beloved employers and endeavor to help not only their customers but also their employees and community. They will offer superior customer service. Sometimes they will even render service at no charge to help someone in need, such as those doctors who travel to third-world countries to help the disadvantaged. Their products and services are of the highest quality.

Those at the A level aren’t working for mankind but are living for mankind, trying to lift and help others. In addition to making a living, they are making a life. They have a higher vision than those at lower levels. Because of their love for their fellowmen, they define their business in terms of customers’ *needs*. At levels B through D, business is usually defined in terms of *products* and *services*.

B Level

At the B level, the primary motivation is money, but there is still a love of fellowmen and a genuine desire to provide good products and services to customers. A B-level company or person could even be an A-level company or person sidetracked by the world. If an A-level company goes public, concern for the stockholder and the bottom line will almost always force the company to the B level and sometimes lower.

C Level

At the C level, the love of money is the only motivator. The businessman and businesswoman engineer minimal quality, or the appearance of quality, into their products and services so that they may be competitive and survive,

but they look for the cheapest ways to produce, without any true concern for their customers or employees. Their personal integrity is compromised as they begin to engage in dishonest practices, such as deceptive advertising and meaningless guarantees.

D Level

At the D level, the unwary are more victims than customers. Once again the motivation is the love of money but this time at the peril of the customer, who may be injured or killed by the product. Profits at this level are known as filthy lucre.

“Filthy lucre,” President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985)

said, “is that had through sin or sinful operations and that which comes from the handling of liquor, beer, narcotics and those other many things which are displeasing in the sight of the Lord.”¹

F Level

Many at the F level may be identified at the D level but actually fit better here because of their negative impact on communities and nations. At this level, we find those who don’t contribute but only take—through organized

crime, Internet scams, Ponzi schemes, and so forth (see D&C 89:4). At this level, you have murder and elimination of competition. Secret combinations, which Moroni said would be a real threat in our day (see Ether 8:24), operate at this level.

Satan’s Influence

All professions, businesses, and services can be found at all levels. For example, there are A-level bankers and D-level bankers.

In the movie *It’s a Wonderful Life*, the Bailey Brothers Building and Loan Association is an A-level institution where George Bailey and others have a love for their

GRADE LEVEL	PRIMARY MOTIVATION	SECONDARY MOTIVATION OR RESULT
A	Love of God and fellowmen	Income
B	Money	Love of fellowmen
C	Love of money	Indifference to clients or customers
D	Filthy lucre	Harm to clients and customers
F	Filthy lucre, crime	Harm to customers and society, wickedness



*In the movie **It's a Wonderful Life**, the **Bailey Brothers Building and Loan Association** is an **A-level institution** where **George Bailey** and others have a love for their fellowmen.*

together, and running over” (Luke 6:38), while the D-level store owner uses “a false balance” (Proverbs 11:1) tipped in his favor.

The Golden Rule

Sometimes we hear stories of D-level people who are not playing by the rules and appear to be prospering and outperforming

fellowmen and a genuine desire to help families get out of low-quality housing and into a respectable home of their own. Henry Potter, on the other hand, is a ruthless and uncaring slumlord who thinks nothing of stealing \$8,000 misplaced in a rolled-up newspaper.

At one point, Mr. Potter makes George an offer that would pay him many times his current salary and include some attractive benefits, including George’s dream—to travel. George is momentarily mesmerized by the offer but soon realizes he is being offered a job by a D-level employer. Upset with himself for even considering the offer, he calls Mr. Potter a scurvy little spider and walks out.

One reason we hear jokes about attorneys is that people often consider law a profession that rarely transcends the D level. The Book of Mormon says that those at this level are “learned in all the arts and cunning of the people” (Alma 10:15). Many lawyers, however, are A level—such as Elder Dallin H. Oaks, Elder Quentin L. Cook, and Elder D. Todd Christofferson, who practiced law prior to their callings to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

You can probably think of several D-level politicians, but A-level politicians are men like King Benjamin and Mosiah or George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. These men were true patriots whose primary motivation was a love of God, their fellowmen, and their country.

How about carpenters? What kind of carpenter do you think the carpenter from Nazareth was?

In retail, an A-level storeowner gives, in the Savior’s words, a “good measure, pressed down, and shaken

those who are playing by the rules, almost as if they had an unfair advantage. In such cases we feel a sense of injustice and frustration. (See Jeremiah 12:1; Malachi 3:14–15.)

Appearances can be deceiving. It may seem that the wicked are prosperous and happy, but we know that “wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10). Whom do you think the customers would naturally gravitate to—a George Bailey or a Mr. Potter? Who will be most successful over the long run?

The most basic of all marketing principles is to give the customer what we would want. The Savior taught this principle, which we know as the Golden Rule: “Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets” (3 Nephi 14:12). Many businesses forget that principle. Some cut corners and produce inferior products. Some are guilty of price fixing. Some are guilty of deceptive advertising. Satan uses these and many other strategies to tempt us to serve mammon.

In *Winners Never Cheat*, Jon M. Huntsman refers to a report that ranked attributes recruiters look for in hiring new personnel. The three highest-ranking traits were Christlike attributes—interpersonal skills, an ability to work well within a team, and personal integrity.² As the world becomes increasingly more wicked, it will become more difficult to find people of integrity. I believe the search for people of integrity is already drawing more and more recruiters to Latter-day Saints.

Three Helpful Questions

Some decisions that face members of the Church are not always easy or clear. Here are three questions to help you make A-level work choices:

1. *Can you ask the Lord's blessings with a clear conscience?* From *Handbook 2: Administering the Church*, we read, "Members of the Church should endeavor to be involved in activities and employment upon which they can in good conscience ask the blessings of the Lord and which are consistent with the principles of the gospel and the teachings of the Savior."³

2. *When questionable products or services are involved, is your involvement direct or indirect?* Can an A-level grocer, for example, sell coffee and tea to those customers who know nothing of the Word of Wisdom and for whom it would not be a sin? The grocer might do so at the request of his customers to meet their demands when he clearly would never produce coffee himself. His involvement is indirect.

3. *Does your product or service hurt society?* Some products and services may be detrimental to the individual while others damage the community. Coffee and tea, for example, would be products that have individual consequences. Alcohol and pornography, however, have proven to also have negative community consequences. "Pornography damages individual lives, families, *and society*. . . . Church members should . . . oppose its production, *dissemination, and use*."⁴

Conclusion

In *A Christmas Carol*, Jacob Marley is living a nightmare, bound in the chains he "forged in life . . . link by link." He vocalizes his nightmare in response to a comment by Scrooge that he was always a good man of business.

"Business!" cries Marley. "Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence were, all, my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business! . . .

". . . Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed Star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode? Were there no poor homes to which its light would have conducted me?"⁵

In your pursuit of an income, may you remember, as Marley stated, that mankind is your true business and that the Savior is your light to lead you to becoming an A-level individual.

May each of us be guided by the Spirit in all our employment decisions—in finding A-level employment and in being an A-level employee. And may we all use our God-given talents in the service of our fellowmen and in making our communities and world better places to live.

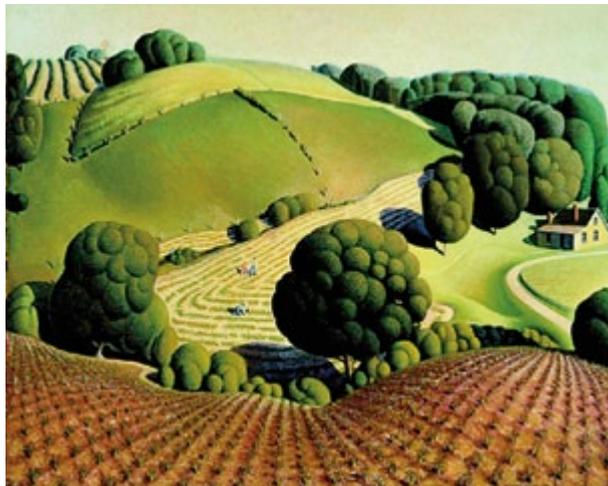
I bear my testimony of the Savior and His perfect exam-

ple. He desires us to be happy and successful—to make both a living and a life. He said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). He cares for us and will bless us as we follow true and correct principles in our dealings with others. ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University–Idaho on October 12, 2010. For the full address, visit web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches.

NOTES

1. Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Oct. 1953, 52; see also *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 356.
2. See Jon M. Huntsman, *Winners Never Cheat* (2005), 91.
3. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 21.1.25.
4. *Handbook 2*, 21.4.9; emphasis added.
5. Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* (1906), 21, 22–23.



What you do to make a living and how much you earn aren't nearly as important to the Lord as whether you fill your life with good works that positively affect your community and world.

THE GOOD NEWS

of Repentance

*There is great joy in heaven
whenever we repent in
sincerity of heart.*



By Brian D. Garner

Church Correlation Department

Throughout all dispensations and in all scripture, we hear the Savior's plea for all people everywhere to repent. The Doctrine and Covenants refers to the “gospel of repentance” (D&C 84:27). And when we remember that “the word *gospel* means ‘good news’” (Bible Dictionary, “Gospels”), the principle of repentance emerges in a very positive light.¹

Some, however, see repentance as a punishment they must endure for their sins. This view is the exact opposite of the truth; repentance is among our greatest blessings. What can compare to the freedom, confidence, peace, and joy that come from complete repentance and forgiveness? And this feeling is not ours alone, for the Lord has said that “great is *his* joy in the soul that repenteth” (D&C 18:13; emphasis added) and that there is great “joy . . . in heaven over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:7).

What has the Savior Himself taught about the importance and requirements of repentance? And what blessings has He promised to those who repent?



The seeds of repentance are sown, grow, and blossom in the hope that a merciful Savior will forgive and heal us.



Our Lord lovingly invites, “Remember, God is merciful; therefore, repent of that which thou hast done” (D&C 3:10).

The Savior Has Said We Must Repent

“The Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent,” the Savior told the Nephites (3 Nephi 11:32). Jesus commanded several early Latter-day Saints to “say nothing but repentance unto this generation” (D&C 6:9; 11:9). And He has explained that “the thing which will be of the most worth unto [us] will be to declare repentance” (D&C 16:6).

The importance of repentance is better understood when we realize that it is a key that unlocks the blessings of the Savior’s atoning sacrifice (see Alma 7:13–14). He told His Nephite disciples, “Nothing entereth into [the Father’s] rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins” (3 Nephi 27:19). And He explained to Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer that Christ “suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent,” and that “he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance” (D&C 18:11–12).

To Adam the Lord declared, “Teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God . . . or dwell in his presence” (Moses 6:57).

This principle with a promise is certain:

“I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance;

“Nevertheless, he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven” (D&C 1:31–32).

So our Lord lovingly invites, “Remember, God is merciful; therefore, repent of that which thou hast done” (D&C 3:10).

The Savior Has Taught Us How to Repent

The Lord has often explained how we may repent by pairing the word *repent* with other requirements of repentance. For example, to the Nephites He said, “Whoso repenteth *and* cometh unto me as a little child” (3 Nephi 9:22; emphasis added), “If ye will repent *and* return unto me with full purpose of heart” (3 Nephi 10:6; emphasis added), and “If they will repent *and* hearken unto my words, *and* harden not their hearts” (3 Nephi 21:22; emphasis added). To Father Adam He said, “Turn unto me, *and* hearken unto my voice, *and* believe, *and* repent of all thy transgressions, *and* be baptized” (Moses 6:52; emphasis added). In modern scripture the Lord has said, “He that repents *and* does the commandments of the Lord” (D&C 1:32; emphasis added), “Repent *and* walk more uprightly before me” (D&C 5:21; emphasis added), and “Unto him that repenteth *and* sanctifieth himself before the Lord shall be given eternal life” (D&C 133:62; emphasis added).

Two of the more challenging elements of repentance are found in

the Lord's teachings to the Saints in Missouri: "By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them" (D&C 58:43). He clarified this when He taught Alma the Elder that the sinner must "confess his sins before thee [a priesthood leader] and me [God]" (Mosiah 26:29). Confession is contrary to our personal pride and requires great humility.

Forsaking or discontinuing a sin is more difficult when that sin is a part of our natural inclination or has become an addictive habit. However, the Savior's repeated instruction is clear: "Go, and sin no more" (John 8:11; see also D&C 6:35). The difficulty of forsaking sin is magnified by the possibility of facing that temptation every day for the rest of our lives.

To those who struggle with confession and forsaking sin, consider the Lord's counsel as you seek added strength: "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21; see also Isaiah 58:6). Fasting can lead to increased spiritual power and self-control, especially when combined with prayer and scripture study. Remember, also, this encouraging promise from the Savior: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

The Savior Will Be Merciful

The seeds of repentance are sown, grow, and blossom in the hope that a

merciful Savior will forgive and heal us. He has promised: "I will have compassion upon you" (D&C 64:2); "[I know] the weakness of man and how to succor them who are tempted" (D&C 62:1); "[I will suit my] mercies according to the conditions of the children of men" (D&C 46:15); "My bowels are filled with compassion towards [you]" (D&C 101:9); "I will be merciful unto your weakness" (D&C 38:14); "As often as my people repent will I forgive them" (Mosiah 26:30); and "I, the Lord, remember [your sins] no more" (D&C 58:42).

In the spirit of His mercy, the Savior has provided some additional joyful ways to petition Him for forgiveness. He has promised forgiveness if we "forgive men their trespasses" (Matthew 6:14), hear the words of His servants (see D&C 50:36), "go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day" (D&C 59:9), share the gospel with others (see D&C 4:2; 31:3–5), and study the scriptures (see D&C 84:57–61).

After doing all they can to repent, some worry whether they have been forgiven. The Lord has said that when we refuse to repent, He "will withdraw [His] Spirit" (Helaman 13:8) and that as we repent, He will "pour out [His] spirit" upon us (Proverbs 1:23). Therefore, when we regularly feel the influence of the Holy Ghost in our lives, we can be assured that the Lord has forgiven us (see Mosiah 4:1–3). We can move forward with

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

What are the consequences of delaying repentance?

The prophet Amulek taught that if we procrastinate "the day of [our] repentance even until death," we "become subjected to the spirit of the devil" and the Spirit of the Lord withdraws from us (see Alma 34:35).

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has stated:

"Any choice to delay repentance gives [Satan] the chance to steal happiness from one of the spirit children of our Heavenly Father. . . .

". . . Today is always a better day to repent than any tomorrow. . . . Sin has its debilitating effects on us. The very faith we need to repent is weakened by delay. The choice to continue in sin diminishes our faith and lessens our right to claim the Holy Ghost as our companion and comforter. . . .

"One of the questions we must ask of our Heavenly Father in private prayer is this: 'What have I done today, or not done, which displeases Thee? If I can only know, I will repent with all my heart without delay.' That humble prayer will be answered. And the answers will surely include the assurance that asking today was better than waiting to ask tomorrow" ("Do Not Delay," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 34).



Jesus testified: “For behold, . . . whosoever is baptized . . . unto repentance . . . him will I freely forgive. For it is I that taketh upon me the sins of the world” (Mosiah 26:22–23).

confidence in our Redeemer and look to a bright future.

As a mission president I had the blessing of conducting many baptismal interviews. A primary purpose of the interview is to determine if the individual has repented. I was impressed by how many individuals wanted to feel God’s forgiveness for their sins. Some had committed very serious sins. I remember one sister who was so weighed down with past sins that she wept throughout the interview, barely able to speak. I could see her tragic past noticeably manifested in her countenance. Yet I felt she had truly repented of her sins. Months after her baptism, I attended her stake conference. I saw her in the congregation but barely recognized her—her countenance was so different. Her eyes were bright with the light of the gospel. I was struck by the immense relief and joy that repentance and forgiveness had brought her and the obvious physical effects this had on her countenance.

When we consider what the Savior Himself has taught about repentance, we better understand the role of repentance in our Father’s plan of happiness. Repentance connects us to a loving, merciful Savior and His Atonement. The more we recognize that our Heavenly Father and His Son have made the blessing of repentance possible, the more our gratitude for Them will deepen. Jesus testified:

“For behold, . . . whosoever is baptized . . . unto repentance . . . him will I freely forgive.

“For it is I that taketh upon me the sins of the world. . . .

“ . . . I am [your] Redeemer. . . .

“Yea, and as often as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me” (Mosiah 26:22–23, 26, 30).

When our Savior walked the earth in mortality, He sat at dinner with a group of social outcasts known as publicans and sinners. A group of Pharisees criticized Him for eating and drinking with them. Jesus taught these critics about repentance and His Atonement:

“They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.

“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:31–32).

For those who have felt the redeeming power and blessing of repentance, the words of this hymn strike a solemn chord:

*Jesus, the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills my breast. . . .
To those who fall, how kind
thou art!
How good to those who seek!² ■*

NOTES

1. Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said, “Repentance is a divine gift, and there should be a smile on our faces when we speak of it” (“The Divine Gift of Repentance,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 38).
2. “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee,” *Hymns*, no. 141.

Willing Sacrifice

By Kerry Bennett

*A quiet knock comes at the door,
A contrite sinner ushered in.
One panged with sorrow and regrets
Yearns to abandon worldly chains
And free himself from Satan's grasp.*

*A chosen man, ordained of God,
Listens to the heartfelt plea for
Deliverance and clemency.
He, like the Savior, longs to help
This wayward lamb rejoin the flock.*

*And while he serves, his helpmate waits
As Heaven heals a wounded soul.
Her offering—a patient heart
Unseen by everyone but Him
Who notices the widow's mite.*



REAL-LIFE CHANGES

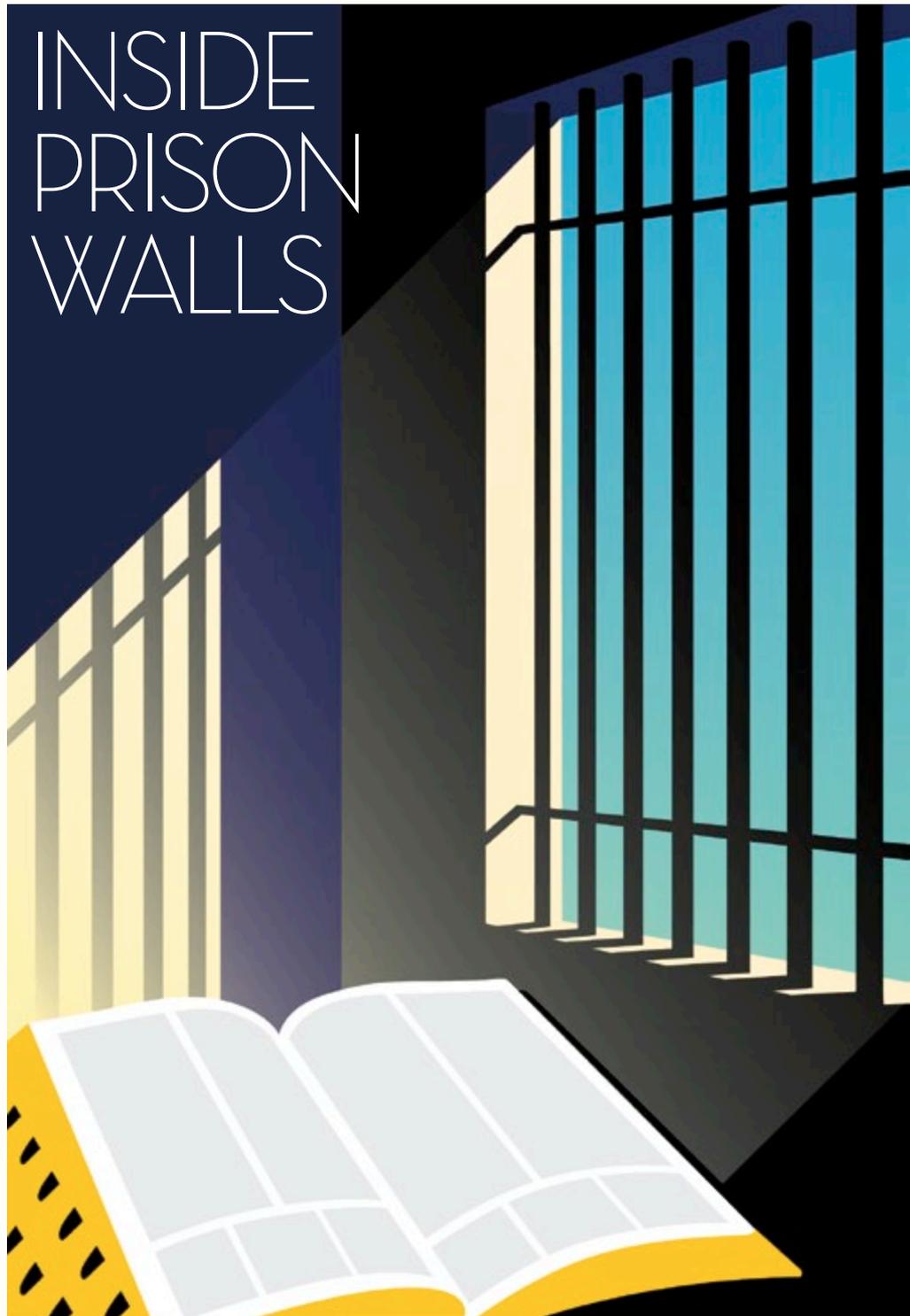
Through the Savior's healing power, many inmates are making progress in becoming what Heavenly Father wants them to become.

By S. Brent Scharman

The image of prison life might conjure up words like accountability, punishment, structure, and discipline. There is truth in all of those associations. But just as relevant are words like repentance, Atonement, Spirit, and conversion.

As a high councilor and later a bishop serving a correctional services unit, I have come to discover that prisons are places of paradox: harshness combines with opportunities for spiritual growth. I've had the chance to observe what happens when inmates choose to participate in the Church where it is available. Some of the benefits are easy to see: inmates make better use of their time, associate with others who are improving their lives, learn correct behavior through the modeling of ecclesiastical leaders, and learn gospel doctrines and principles. Other benefits are less visible but may be more enduring, such as when the inmate's soul is enlarged or expanded (see Alma 5:9; 32:28).

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



referred to the process of internal change that each of us—inmates or not—experience: “The Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts—what we have *done*. It is an acknowledgment of the final effect of our acts and thoughts—what we have *become*.”¹ This is good news: many within prisons, jails, and halfway houses are learning from their bad choices and are becoming what Heavenly Father would have them become.

John (name has been changed) was raised in a home where alcohol and drugs played a significant part in daily family life. As an adolescent, John got into more trouble than his peers, and by his early 20s he’d been in and out of jail several times. At 25, he was in prison, in a section with limited contact, facing a 15-year sentence. But in the time between John’s sentencing and the day I met him, he had been introduced to the gospel of Jesus Christ. On his own, John had borrowed the Bible and latter-day scriptures from the library. His gospel knowledge was obvious, but more important was his spiritual maturity. His remorse for prior behavior, love for the Savior, and confidence in the Atonement were powerful witnesses of the workings of the Spirit in one who was incarcerated.

Many inmates wrestle with addictions. How they cope upon release is critical to their success. Some facilities make treatment or self-help programs available. These words, written by a group of recovering addicts, from *A Guide to Addiction Recovery and Healing* are relevant: “We have known great sorrow, but we have seen the power of the Savior turn our most devastating defeats into glorious spiritual victories. We who once lived with daily depression, anxiety, fear, and debilitating anger now experience joy and peace. We have witnessed miracles in our own lives and in the lives of others who were ensnared in addiction.”² These inspiring words are not idealistic theory. They convey realistic hope to inmates who are accessing the Savior’s healing power.

I’m not sure I’ve ever felt the Spirit more strongly than in a meeting where approximately 100 inmates were celebrating Easter. The choir was surprisingly capable and demonstrated genuine emotion and sincerity. Inmates gave from-the-heart testimonials about their need for the

Savior’s help in bringing about real change. The feelings in the meeting that day were of hope, optimism, and love. Of course, it would be naïve to believe that even with their sincerity, all these inmates would turn their lives around. Nevertheless, it would be unnecessarily cynical and uncharitable to doubt that they could succeed.

Another evidence of the conversion process comes in observing the communication network—both formal and informal—in prison systems. Inmates have ways of finding out how those who have been released are doing. LDS inmates rejoice to hear of the success of one who is “making it on the outside.” What separates those who succeed from those who don’t? The answer is predictable: Those who change find God, new friends, and a job. One inmate incarcerated in Utah said, “From my cell I can see the Jordan River Temple. I’ve made a promise to Heavenly Father, my family, and myself that when I’m released I will work as hard as I can to change my life. Getting a temple recommend will be tangible evidence that my Heavenly Father and the Savior have accepted my repentance. We look forward to the day when we can stand on the temple grounds together and see how far I’ve come.”

It may be easy for those in prison to feel like giving up. The words of President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, provide hope:

“There will surely be some who hear my voice who will have this thought come into their minds: ‘But the temptations are too great for me. I have resisted as long as I can. For me, the commandments are too hard. The standard is too high.’

“That is not so. The Savior is our Advocate with the Father. He knows our weaknesses. He knows how to succor those who are tempted.”³

It is because of the Savior that *all* of us can make real progress—experience true conversion—in becoming what Heavenly Father wants us to become. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Challenge to Become,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32.
2. *Addiction Recovery Program: A Guide to Addiction Recovery and Healing* [2005], v. This booklet (item no. 36764) is available online at ldsfamilyservices.org, through Church distribution centers, or through store.lds.org.
3. Henry B. Eyring, “As a Child,” *Ensign*, May 2006, 17.

DESERET INDUSTRIES

Founded in 1938, Deseret Industries is now in its 75th year of helping individuals become more self-reliant and grow into their best selves.

By Ryan Carr

Church Magazines

Although Deseret Industries opened its first thrift store 75 years ago, many Church members still think of Deseret Industries as simply a place to donate or purchase used clothing, furniture, electronics, and other items. While this is true, all of the work that goes into sorting, cleaning, pricing, and displaying these items is a means to an inspired end: helping Deseret Industries' employees—or associates, as they're called—become more self-reliant and learn skills that will benefit them in future employment.

Leland Hardy, director of Deseret Industries, describes the work this way: “Whereas most businesses use people to move or build things, Deseret Industries uses things to move and build people.”

Associates come to Deseret Industries with various barriers to employment: some are learning to speak English; some have disabilities; some need more education; some have had problems with addictions; some have not learned the work ethic it takes to succeed at a job; and some are just down on their luck. The list of challenges is long, but Deseret Industries' professional development staff welcomes them all.

DOING A CHRISTLIKE WORK



Working with Associates Individually

One key to Deseret Industries' success is that its professional development staff works with associates individually to help them become the person they desire to become. Deseret Industries does this by surrounding associates with a team that is dedicated to helping them set and reach their goals:

- A **development specialist**—an expert in vocational counseling (often a professionally licensed counselor)—helps the associate identify and work toward achieving his or her career goals.
- A **job coach** meets with the associate at least weekly to set and review goals tailored to the associate's needs and aspirations.
- Assigned by the bishop, a **mentor** from the associate's ward gives encouragement and support. The mentor attends a quarterly meeting with the associate and his or her development team to assess progress and set goals. The mentor also reports back to the bishop.
- When associates are ready to leave Deseret Industries, an **employment specialist** from LDS Employment Resource Services gives associates individualized job-placement assistance. If they need additional help, Deseret Industries may provide an advanced-placement course in which associates are paid to plan and carry out their own job-finding program. The specialist provides these associates with materials, knowledge, and individual coaching to help them find a job.

Many others join in this effort as well, including local businesses, community agencies, and education programs. The associate's family members, Church leaders, home teachers, and visiting teachers also provide help and encouragement.

When applicable to the associate's situation, Deseret Industries can provide these services:

- **Schooling assistance:** Deseret Industries helps locate resources that provide scholarships to qualifying associates to help them achieve short-term educational goals.
- **Business partnerships:** When an associate has identified a particular type of job and has worked with the job coach to prepare himself or herself to work in that job, Deseret Industries seeks out a business that employs people in that type of job and

arranges for the associate to work and train at that business for up to three months. Deseret Industries may even pay part or all of the associate's wages during that time. This gives the associate time to learn the job, develop valuable work experience, and become familiar with the industry.

Success Stories

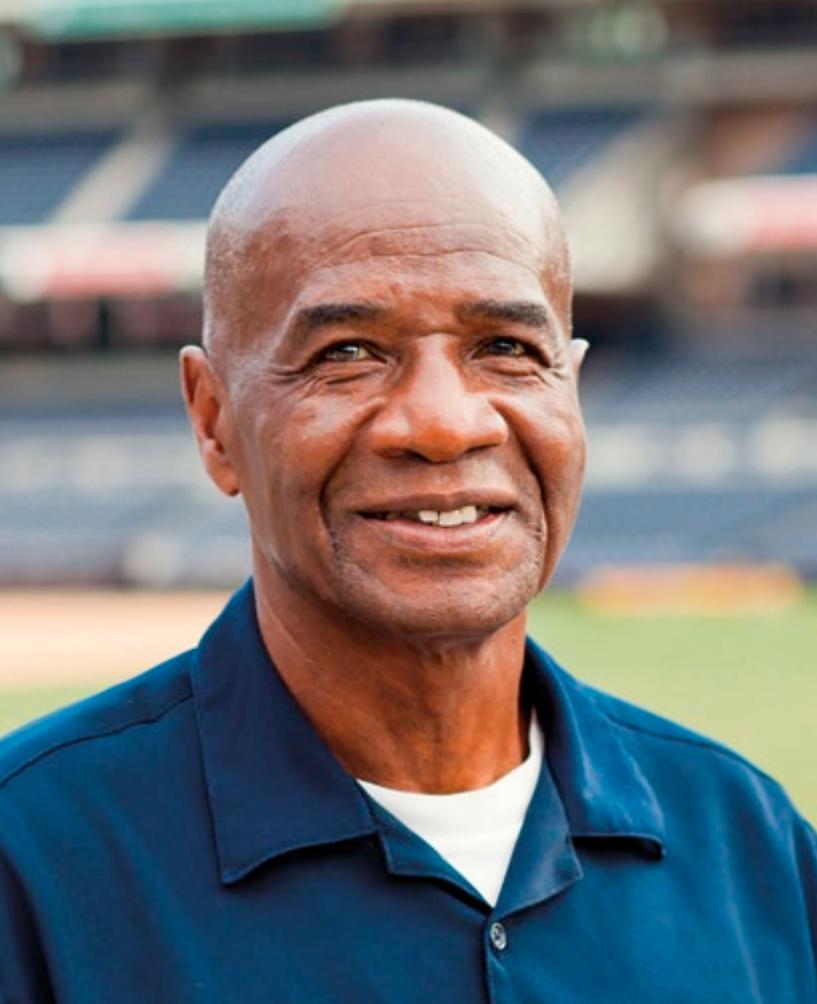
This approach has been remarkably successful in helping people reach their goals and transform their lives. Last year, after being referred by their bishops, more than 8,000 associates worked at Deseret Industries' 42 stores in the western United States and, in Salt Lake City, at a manufacturing facility and the Humanitarian Center. What follows are just three of the many success stories Deseret Industries sees each year.



Lifted to a Better Life

When Penita Fiorelli and her family emigrated from Tonga to Utah to be closer to relatives, she couldn't speak English. But she and her family moved to an area with many Tongan Latter-day Saints, and they met the branch president and some other Church members. Penita tried to find work but was unsuccessful, so the branch president referred her to the training program at Deseret Industries. As part of her training there, she attended English classes and received tutoring. As her English improved, she worked on becoming a certified nurse assistant (CNA). With the help of a flexible work schedule at Deseret Industries, she was able to attend school and pass the state certification test—in English.

During this time, she was attending church with the Tongan branch, and after three months of working at Deseret Industries, she was baptized, along with her husband. Their children were baptized a few months later. She says, "The example of our branch members and the staff and associates at Deseret Industries has brought us true happiness and has lifted us to a better life."



Hitting a Home Run

Al Mosley was enjoying his job managing a restaurant in Southern California until he had a stroke. He was discouraged that he couldn't return to the job he had worked so hard to obtain, but he felt hope when he learned he could return to work again—at Deseret Industries.

“I was excited at having an opportunity to have a second chance but wondering if I was capable,” he recalls. Despite his physical limitations, he worked with a good attitude, having always believed in doing his best. Deseret Industries gave him shift leadership responsibilities. “I discovered that I was able to work up to do things I never thought I would do again,” he says. “I was also able to learn new skills in organization and merchandising.”

Before long, he was offered a position with the San Diego Padres, a major league baseball team, running one of its food departments. He explains the progress he has made: “I may have been presented a curveball in life because of my stroke, but because of my experience at D.I., I have the opportunity to hit home runs.”



IF YOU DON'T HAVE A DESERET INDUSTRIES NEAR YOU

There are other ways to help people overcome barriers to employment. The following suggestions may be helpful to bishops, welfare specialists, ward councils, and stake and ward employment specialists:

- Visit deseretindustries.lds.org and ldsjobs.org for several resources.
- Meet with your ward or stake employment specialist and the ward member who needs help, and identify barriers limiting the member from finding employment.
- Help the member establish a career plan and set goals according to the SMART model: specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, and time-limited.
- Connect the member with a mentor. A mentor can be a home or visiting teacher or anyone in the ward who encourages the member. Ideally, mentors have experience in the member's desired field of work or education.
- Use existing community resources. Local job postings, scholarships, vocational rehabilitation, and educational coursework or technical training are often available.



A PLACE OF SUPPORT

“During the past 75 years, more than a hundred thousand people have entered into Deseret Industries' training program and discovered here a place of nurturing and support—a place where they can develop and discover the persons they were capable of becoming.”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, at the dedication of the Sandy, Utah, Deseret Industries, Aug. 14, 2013.



Letting Go of the Past

Before working at Deseret Industries, Miriah Pace from Idaho had struggled with a drug addiction for many years, which landed her in prison for 18 months. After her release, she began attending college. Five years passed without a relapse. Then her brother, grandmother, and best friend all died within a short period of time. She fell back into her old drug habits but then sought help at an in-patient treatment center.

It was during this difficult time that her bishop referred her to Deseret Industries. "I was in dire need of structure and stability," she says. Finding work there helped, but she was still grieving and started using drugs again. Although this caused her attendance at Deseret Industries to suffer, she persisted in the program because she looked forward to the weekly devotionals, where she heard prayers and gospel messages. "I began to pray for hope," she recalls.

At work her skills improved to the point that a local employer partnered with Deseret Industries to offer Miriah a position as an editor and office assistant. She now helps manage the organization's website and edit its peer-reviewed publication.

Last year she achieved two important goals: she graduated with an associate degree and went to the temple to receive her own endowment. She says her experience at Deseret Industries helped change her life: "I have let go of the past and only look forward. I am excited about life. I now know that I am a child of God because He loved me when I couldn't love myself. I know Heavenly Father has a plan for me."

Deseret Industries helps people develop hope when they are discouraged, confidence when doubting, and self-reliance when struggling. Are these not the things the Savior would do if He were here? Would He not "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees"? (D&C 81:5). This Christlike work is the work of Deseret Industries. ■



THE MANY FACES OF DESERET INDUSTRIES

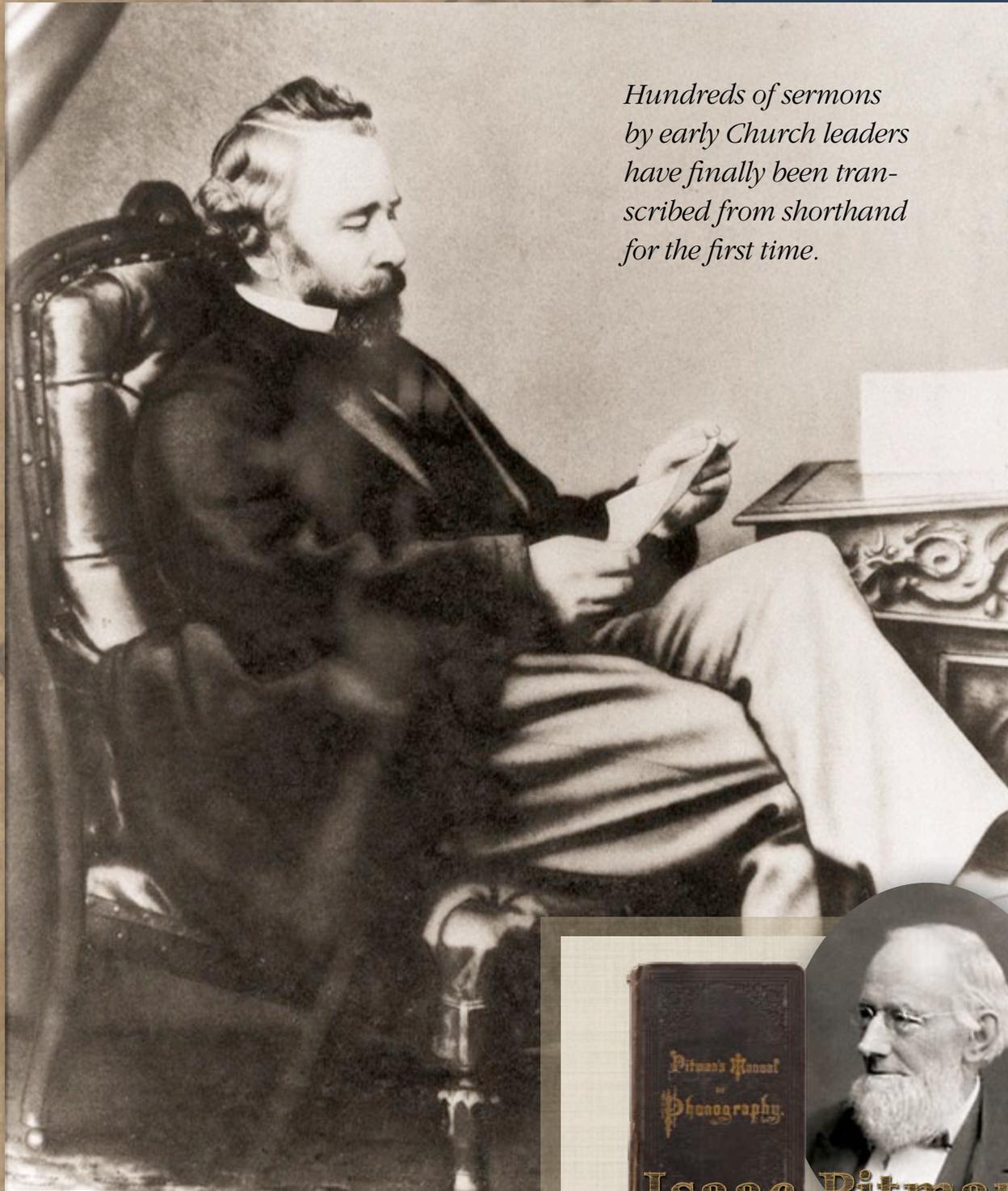
Deseret Industries benefits the community and the people it serves in many ways:

- Offers people opportunities to give and serve. More than 50,000 people volunteered their time at Deseret Industries in 2012.
- Promotes recycling and reuse of items, thus encouraging thrift. Over 7.5 million donations of used goods were made in 2012.
- Provides low-cost items to the community and, through bishops' orders, no-cost items to the needy.
- Strengthens community programs by providing no-cost goods to agencies that help needy individuals, such as orphanages, battered-women's shelters, and homeless shelters. Over 560 community agencies served more than 50,000 people in 2012.
- Participates in humanitarian outreach: donated 8.7 million pounds of clothing and assembled more than 330,000 humanitarian kits in 2012.
- Teaches English as a second language.
- Helps refugees gain education and work experience as they try to assimilate into a new culture.

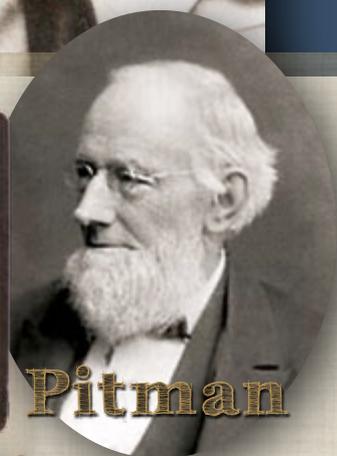
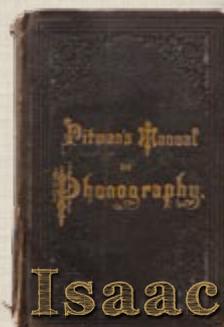


G. D. Watt's

George D. Watt



*Hundreds of sermons
by early Church leaders
have finally been tran-
scribed from shorthand
for the first time.*



Isaac Pitman

(1812) 171

LOST Sermons



By Matthew S. McBride

Church History Department

In 1837, an Englishman named Isaac Pitman published a small book entitled *Stenographic Sound-Hand*. In his book he introduced a new form of shorthand that would allow a skilled reporter to record speakers verbatim. In that same year, another Englishman, George D. Watt, became the first baptized member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Great Britain. Before immigrating to Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1842, Watt learned Pitman's new shorthand system, a skill that would have a tremendous influence on the future of the Church.

Though clerks and diarists such as Wilford Woodruff, William Clayton, and Thomas Bullock frantically took down notes of the Prophet Joseph Smith's words as he spoke, we have no word-for-word accounts of his sermons. The best we can do is combine these varying reports to get a reasonable but incomplete sense of what he said. But beginning in 1852, George D. Watt began taking down the sermons of early Church leaders such as Brigham Young, Parley P. and Orson Pratt, Lorenzo Snow, and many others verbatim. Through his efforts, we have available to us a wealth of wisdom, counsel, and gospel teaching from these powerful speakers.

Many of the sermons taken down by Watt

and others were transcribed and published in the *Deseret News* and later in the *Journal of Discourses*. These published sermons are the source of most of the quotations from leaders such as Brigham Young and John Taylor in the *Teachings of Presidents of the Church* books used in Relief Society and Melchizedek Priesthood lessons.

Hundreds of sermons, however, were never transcribed, so their content remained unknown for nearly 150 years. Assistant Church Historian Richard E. Turley Jr. explains: "We've had the shorthand of George D. Watt and others in our collection for many years, but they haven't been accessible to researchers because very few people could read them. We're fortunate to have with us on our staff a woman named LaJean Carruth, who has taught herself to read the shorthand of George D. Watt and has been able to open up this treasure chest of material."

LaJean Purcell Carruth, shorthand specialist in the Church History Department, has painstakingly transcribed many of these sermons after becoming familiar with Isaac Pitman's system. "I went out to the



George D. Watt, 1849

BYU library stacks and found a book on Pitman shorthand and just studied it,” she says.

Over the course of several years, Carruth has transcribed many significant but previously unknown sermons, including Brigham Young’s words at the funeral of Mary Fielding Smith, an eyewitness account of the events at Carthage Jail by John Taylor, a series of sermons on the importance of the Book of Mormon by Orson Pratt, and many more. The transcriptions provide details of the early missions of Parley P. Pratt to Chile and Lorenzo Snow to Italy and of Brigham Young’s conversion to the gospel.

They also yield insights into the personalities of the speakers. Carruth shares a humorous example: “Heber C. Kimball got up one day and he said, ‘Excuse me if I don’t talk proper. I left

my teeth. Laid them on the window and forgot them.’” She adds, “The shorthand gives us the closest we have to their personalities and how they differ. We get their humanness and what they really were. And I love it.”

Earlier this year, the Church History Department began publishing excerpts from some of these newly transcribed sermons on its website, history.lds.org, in a series titled “Lost Sermons.” Now anyone can enjoy the stirring words of these pioneer preachers.

Brother Turley shared his estimation of the significance of these sermons: “As far as I’m concerned, the unpublished sermons of these early Church leaders represent one of the most important previously untapped sources of Church history from the 19th century that we have.” ■

LaJean Purcell Carruth, shorthand specialist in the Church History Department, has taught herself Pitman shorthand and painstakingly transcribed many 19th-century sermons for the first time.



WHAT IS SHORTHAND?

Shorthand systems consisted of a series of markings corresponding to words or sounds. Clerks and reporters used these systems in the days before sound recordings in order to quickly capture spoken language in writing.

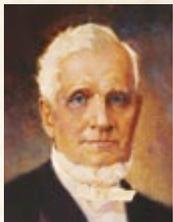


Brigham Young

The Lord watches over you. You need not suppose for a moment [that] the Lord’s eye [is] not upon you. The angels [are] round about you and they will take care of you, and you may be peaceful and contented. . . . Every good man and woman . . . [is] in the hands of [the] Lord. They are before him, his eye upon them, his angels round about them that they might endure afflictions, suffer pain [and] buffeting by Satan, pass through scenes of afflictions enough to wring their natural hearts out of them, comparatively. Yet God [will] take care of them” (Sept. 23, 1852, Mary Fielding Smith’s funeral).

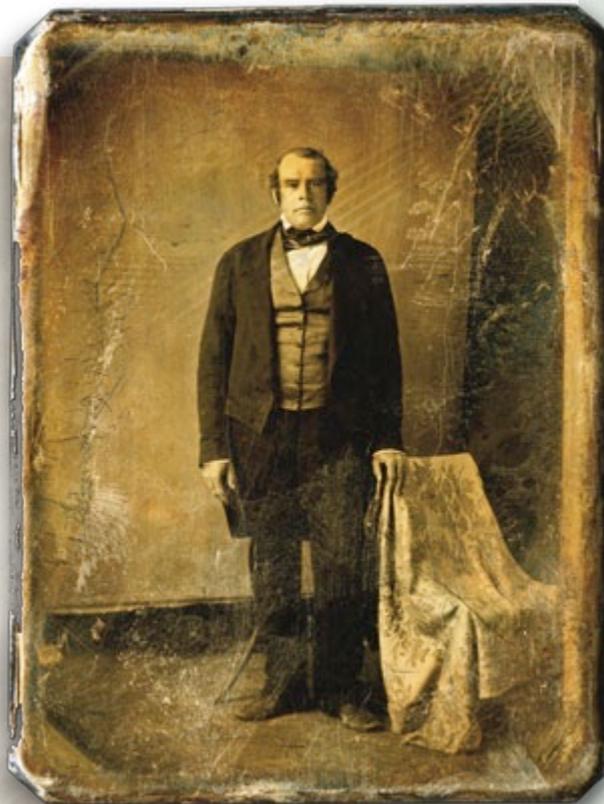
Parley P. Pratt

I will tell [you] my brethren, when I was a lad just out of my teens—about 1830—I read a book that was but little known in the world, although now, probably, it is in half [a] dozen [of the] principal languages of the earth, and it was entitled the Book of Mormon, and had many predictions in it that are plain and easy to be understood, and the spirit and power of God bore witness to my heart of their truth. . . . Well now, these prophecies interested me I assure you. They made an impression upon my mind [that] never has been effaced. . . . I knew in me [in a way] that [would have] been no stronger if I had seen Jesus Christ in his glorified body and heard [the] same words from his own lips” (Oct. 31, 1852).



John Taylor

Wherever the gospel of Jesus Christ exists, there exists revelation; and where there is no revelation there is no gospel” (Oct. 31, 1859).



Heber C. Kimball

When I went into the water [of] baptism I made [a] covenant I would forsake the world with all [that] pertains to it, and cleave unto the Lord God with all my heart all my days. This is the covenant that I made, to turn away from the world. That is the covenant you made, or the one you should have made. Now, will you fulfill it?” (Oct. 7, 1853).

To read excerpts from transcribed sermons, visit history.lds.org/lost-sermons.

Indexing IS VITAL

Indexing makes more records accessible online so members can find and take family names to the temple.

By Jennifer Grace Jones

Church Magazines

A small note on the keyboard read, “This computer is reserved for Samuel at 5:00 a.m.” In response to his stake president’s challenge for the stake to index one million names, 14-year-old Samuel B. of Utah started getting up at 5:00 a.m. so that he could index before school. With one computer in the home and six siblings with homework to do, Samuel had to sacrifice some sleep in order to get time on the computer.

But Samuel’s enthusiasm spread to the rest of his family. Soon his brother Nathan sacrificed basketball time and his sister Ivylyn sacrificed reading time in order to index. “I’ve never been challenged as much by my children,” Samuel’s father says. “Until they got involved, I thought indexing was hard. They taught me that it could be easy and fun.” The following New Year’s Eve, the children were rushing to finish their yearly indexing goals before midnight.

Thousands of miles away, the Lanuza family in Guatemala caught the same enthusiasm. This family of nine—five children, Mom, Dad, Grandma, and Grandpa—share one computer. With the children using the computer for homework, Mom finishing her studies at the university, and Dad working, the computer is always in high demand, and each family member takes turns indexing. Together, the family indexed more than 37,000 records in 2011.

These children and their families have risen to the challenge Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles extended to the youth of the Church in October 2011:

“Many of you may think family history work is to be performed primarily by older people. But I know of no age limit described in the scriptures or guidelines announced by Church leaders restricting this important service to mature adults. . . .

“I invite the young people of the Church to learn about and experience the Spirit of Elijah.”¹

Quick and Easy Family History

Indexing is an easy way for everyone to get started with family history and experience the Spirit of Elijah. Governments and churches have kept records of people and families for centuries, but these records have been tough to access and time-consuming to sort through. Previously, people who were geographically separated from their ancestral lands had to travel to those places and wade through the records, having no assurance that they would find a single family name.

The introduction of FamilySearch indexing in 2006 accelerated family history research. Names once hidden in handwritten paper records and stored in distant repositories have been transcribed (indexed) and are now instantly searchable by computer. To accomplish this, volunteer indexers download to their home computers “batches” of records containing about 10 to 50 names. They type the names, dates, and other information into the Family Search database, thus enabling the creation of searchable electronic indexes.

Before the launch of FamilySearch indexing, it could take years to create a searchable index for even one set of records using previous name-extraction techniques. Michael Judson, an indexing manager for FamilySearch, says it took 11 years to index the Freedman Bank Records (United States records of freed slaves who set up bank accounts). Now he estimates it would take only months.

Volunteers worldwide have indexed more than one billion records since 2006, but there's a lot more work to do. Billions of additional records are waiting in the Granite Mountain Records Vault in Salt Lake City, Utah. And beyond that are the records found in other archives across the globe, which the Family History Department is photographing at the rate of about 35 million digital images per month.

Specific Situations, Specific Blessings

The First Presidency has stated, "Members are encouraged to participate in FamilySearch indexing which is vital to family history and temple work."² Members from around the world are responding to this counsel and receiving remarkable blessings.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY LESLIE NILSSON

The Saints in Ukraine are working hard to create electronic indexes that will expedite family history research in Eastern Europe. The Rudenko family in Kyiv is setting a powerful example. They sacrifice to pay for the Internet so they and their children can index names. Sister Rudenko leaves the family laptop on the kitchen table so she can index when she has spare moments during the day. She types names with one hand while holding a baby with the other. Their 16-year-old son and 12-year-old daughter have also become regular indexers, and the family sometimes visits the government archives to research family names. The Rudenko family regularly submits names to the temple and performs the ordinances for those names, sometimes going to the temple multiple times a week.

Sister Rudenko speaks of the blessings she has received through family history work: “I believe that indexing and family history work protect us. I am promised in my patriarchal blessing that doing this work will protect me and my children. Their minds will be clean, and they will be able to

withstand the bad influences of this world. . . . [My children] have the power of God from this work.”

Many members are discovering that indexing provides a meaningful service opportunity, regardless of skill or situation. Malinda Perry of Utah, USA, was in a car accident when she was 24 years old that left her paralyzed from the neck down. As she adjusted to this new lifestyle, Sister Perry prayed about ways she could serve. She received her answer when Rayleen Anderson from the stake Relief Society presidency visited her and taught her how to index. Sister Perry now spends time at the computer every day with a stick taped to her hand, moving it just enough to type. She indexes a batch of names daily.

“Instead of focusing on myself, like I used to, my focus has changed to serving others,” Sister Perry says. “I love the Lord, and I love extending His blessings to others through indexing.”

While listening to a presentation on family history, stake president David Pickup in Chorley, England, felt an impression that indexing could help the members of his stake increase their desire to worship in the temple. But



he wondered, how would something that looked like common data entry lead people to the temple?

He decided to try indexing and found that it brought an added measure of the Spirit of Elijah into his life. For him, indexing has become a “refining” work. “You cannot index without thinking about not only the names being indexed but also your own family names,” he says.

President Pickup challenged the members of his stake to use indexing as a way to participate in family history work. Within a short time, he and other stake leaders noticed a significant increase in temple recommend worthiness and sacrament meeting attendance. They noticed that the members who participated in indexing were developing a desire to take their own family names to the temple.

Seventeen-year-old Mackenzie H. took President Pickup’s challenge to heart and began indexing, and she helped her siblings, parents, and grandparents become involved as well. In less than two years, Mackenzie indexed more than 44,000 names. More importantly, Mackenzie and her family felt prompted to seek out their own family names, take them to the temple, and participate in the saving ordinances.

Indexing helped the members of the Chorley stake by bringing an added measure of the Spirit into their lives and by giving them the tools they needed to take their family names to the temple. “You don’t need to be temple worthy to index,” President Pickup says, “but when you index, it will refine you, and you will want to be temple worthy, and you will want to go to the temple, and you will want to do work for your ancestors. . . . I know this because it happened to me.”

Indexing Helps Everyone

The Lord has promised, “Behold, I will hasten my work in its time” (D&C 88:73). Indexing is one way the Lord is fulfilling that promise. It’s possible for people to find their own ancestors and leave others to find theirs, but indexing facilitates and accelerates family history research for everyone. “The Lord has given us the technology for massive improvements in finding names,” Brother Judson says. “You’re not just working on your own family history now; indexing is a collective effort to help all Heavenly Father’s children.” ■

MORE THAN JUST DATA ENTRY

At first indexing may appear similar to mundane data entry, but experienced indexers often testify that indexing is a spiritual pursuit that blesses lives on both sides of the veil.

Below are some suggestions that will help indexing become a spiritually fulfilling experience:

1. Begin with prayer. You may want to pray specifically to experience the Spirit of Elijah so that your heart will turn toward your ancestors.
2. Eliminate distractions, including television or music that could detract from the Spirit.
3. Index with family or friends. Not only will this give you help to read difficult handwriting, but it may also open the door for you to discuss your own family history.
4. Remember that every name you index represents another individual who can be found by living descendants and receive ordinances by proxy in the temple.
5. Remember that the Lord will help you. Through the Savior you can overcome any challenge you may experience with indexing (see 2 Corinthians 12:9–10).

Indexing is available in Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Swedish. For more information, visit familysearch.org/indexing.

NOTES

1. David A. Bednar, “The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 26.
2. First Presidency letter, Feb. 29, 2012.



Africa

Continent of Bright Hope



By Richard M. Romney
Church Magazines

The faith and obedience of Latter-day Saints in Africa and Madagascar set an example for Church members everywhere.

It is easy to love the people of Africa,"¹ said Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in Freetown, Sierra Leone, during an assignment that also included visits to Liberia and Ghana.

He said that the faith and obedience of African Latter-day Saints, born of their love for the gospel, set an example for all members of the Church.



The covenant of baptism opens the door to many blessings, and so does faithful study of the gospel.



It is impressive, Elder Holland said, “to see how much the gospel means to them, to see what they have done with it, how they cherish it, to see their faithfulness in tithing and in service, in going to the temple—I think of the temple as the crowning image—and then to see them raising their children in the Church and sending their sons and daughters on missions. It is wonderful evidence of their faithfulness.”²

Before Your Eyes

Elder Holland noted that, with the exception of South Africa (where a stake was organized in 1970), the Church has been in Africa for less than 30 years. Because of that, the Church here has been “born before your eyes, born in a day,” and “Africa is one of those special places where you get to see the glory of the Lord, the wonder and the miracle of the Restoration, quite literally unfold before your eyes.”³

He said he will always remember being in Accra, Ghana, with President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), when he announced that a temple would be built there. “[The people] stood and cheered, wept and danced, held each other,

and cried. And in a way, that spirit still continues. That is my love for the Africans—it is their uncompromised joy in the gospel. Most have had so little in their lives of material goods, but when they got the gospel, they just embraced it. . . . And they still do. They are doing it to this day.”⁴

Prophecies Fulfilled

Other prophets and apostles who have fulfilled assignments in Africa speak of the continent as a place where the prophecies of the Lord are literally being fulfilled.

“The African people are a kind and patient people,” said Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles following a visit with members of the Church in Mozambique and Nigeria. “They don’t have a lot of income or resources that allow them financially to do things, so they just do them out of sheer effort. They will walk miles and miles and miles to accomplish something that they are prompted to do by the Holy Ghost to further the work.”⁵

Elder Scott noted that in 1999, when he dedicated Mozambique for the preaching of the gospel, there were only 40 members there, and the country was part of the South Africa Johannesburg Mission. At the time of his second visit, in January 2011, the Church in Mozambique had grown to more than 5,000 members spread throughout two districts and 19 branches meeting across the

country. Mozambique is also headquarters of the Mozambique Maputo Mission, which includes the country of Angola.⁶

Young but Growing

“We are young here,”⁷ Elder Russell M. Nelson, also of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said while visiting Madagascar, Malawi, and Kenya. “We are watching the Lord move upon this great continent of Africa to bless the people . . . with the truth, the light of the gospel, [including] the ordinances of salvation and exaltation.”⁸ He said he was particularly impressed with the strength of local Church leadership in Africa: “I can’t tell you how grateful we are for these [local] leaders, who give of their time and talent in the service of the Lord to bless the lives of these people.”⁹

Elder Nelson is “very optimistic” about the future of the Church and the people in Africa and Madagascar because their faith is stronger than their challenges. “You truly are children of God, children of the covenant Israel, prepared to meet the Lord Jesus Christ and God, our Eternal Father, and dwell in Their presence with [your] families,”¹⁰ he said at a meeting in Madagascar. Elder Nelson also stated, “These are people of great potential. They have faith. They have a love of the Lord, and they have all that is required to make people really strong.”¹¹





Striving to always remember the Savior, members are strengthened and renewed by partaking of the sacrament.



During an interview in Nairobi, Kenya, Elder Nelson commented, “We’ve got Latter-day Saint chapels. We have a stake here [in] Nairobi. We had a stake conference today. It was a thrill to meet with the people. More than a thousand people gathered, [and they were] so reverent [and had a] beautiful choir, [an] excellent stake presidency, [and a] patriarch on the stand. How can I express my joy when I see such progress?”¹²

Despite Adversity

Elder Holland said the Church in Africa is thriving even in the face of challenges. As an example, he said, “While there was a raging civil war in Côte d’Ivoire [Ivory Coast], the Latter-day Saints . . . just kept coming to the temple. It’s a great tribute to them. I stand in awe.”¹³

Speaking of both Sierra Leone and Liberia, Elder Holland said, “Because they’ve had such a bloody, war-torn, brutal recent past, that’s one of the reasons the gospel is taking hold so dramatically. They’ve seen what life ought *not* to be, and now with the missionaries and the members testifying, they’ve seen what it *can* be. Heaven has been able to turn [their trials] into a blessing, and they’re lifting themselves out

of political disarray and civil strife.”¹⁴

In addition, Elder Holland pointed out that the growth of the Church in Zimbabwe has continued despite difficult times in recent years: “The Church has blossomed. We have growth, we have stakes, we have missions. That’s what’s happening all over Africa.”¹⁵

Preaching the Gospel

One key to the Church’s success in Africa, Elder Holland said, is that “we don’t get involved in conspicuous, sociopolitical issues. We preach the gospel. We are concerned about justice, and we are concerned about social opportunity and equity. But we think [the answers are found in the gospel], so we just preach the gospel. And it has been true elsewhere and it is true in Africa, that people get that insight, blessing, and light in their lives, and suddenly things start to change and their lives are blessed.”¹⁶

The Lord’s Promise

Elder Holland quoted the Savior, who said, “The last shall be first, and the first last” (Matthew 20:16).

“In some ways,” he said, “the gospel is late in coming to Africa, at least as we could do it on the Lord’s timetable—and it was the Lord’s timetable, I’m quick to affirm. It is only comparatively recently that the Africans have begun to get missions and missionaries, the blessings of the priesthood, and so forth. It’s a big continent, and we still have a long way to go. But I

believe the growth we are now seeing in Africa is part of the fulfillment of the Lord’s promise. African Latter-day Saints are emerging with faith. They are on the move. They are meeting the challenge of receiving the gospel and making it obvious in their lives.”¹⁷ ■

NOTES

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, in “Emerging with Faith in Africa,” www.lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/emerging-with-faith-in-africa.
2. Jeffrey R. Holland, in “Emerging with Faith in Africa.”
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, in “Emerging with Faith in Africa.”
4. Jeffrey R. Holland, in “Emerging with Faith in Africa.”
5. Richard G. Scott, in “Mormons in Africa: A Bright Land of Hope,” mormonnewsroom.org/article/mormons-africa-bright-land-hope.
6. See “Jesus Christ Lives’ Elder Scott Testifies in Mozambique,” lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/jesus-christ-lives-elder-scott-testifies-in-mozambique.
7. Russell M. Nelson, in video in “Learn of the Savior, Saints in Madagascar and Malawi Are Told,” lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/learn-of-the-savior-saints-in-madagascar-and-malawi-are-told.
8. Russell M. Nelson, in “Elder Nelson Completes Trip to Africa in Kenya,” lds.org/church/news/elder-nelson-completes-trip-to-africa-in-kenya.
9. Russell M. Nelson, in video in Heather Whittle Wrigley, “Elder Nelson Visits Madagascar, Dedicates Malawi,” Oct. 28, 2011, lds.org/church/news/elder-nelson-visits-madagascar-dedicates-malawi.
10. Russell M. Nelson, in video in “Learn of the Savior, Saints in Madagascar and Malawi Are Told.”
11. Russell M. Nelson, in video in “Elder Nelson Visits Madagascar, Dedicates Malawi.”
12. Russell M. Nelson, in video in “Family Success Comes from Following the Savior,” lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/family-success-comes-from-following-the-savior.
13. Jeffrey R. Holland, in “Emerging with Faith in Africa.”
14. Jeffrey R. Holland, in “Emerging with Faith in Africa.”
15. Jeffrey R. Holland, in “Emerging with Faith in Africa.”
16. Jeffrey R. Holland, in “Emerging with Faith in Africa.”
17. Jeffrey R. Holland, in “Emerging with Faith in Africa.”



AFRICA SOUTHEAST AND WEST AREAS*

Members: 381,417

Stakes: 70

Wards: 508

Missions: 22

Districts: 60

Branches: 646

Headquarters: Johannesburg, South Africa, and Accra, Ghana

*As of April 2013.

TEMPLES

Operating

Aba Nigeria, dedicated August 7, 2005

Accra Ghana, dedicated January 11, 2004

Johannesburg South Africa, dedicated August 24–25, 1985

Announced

Durban South Africa

Kinshasa Democratic Republic of Congo

The top right corner of the page features a detailed illustration of a tree branch with green leaves. Below it, a large, gnarled, brown branch lies horizontally across the middle of the page. To the right of this branch, the tip of a hand saw blade is visible, pointing towards the right edge of the page.

FROM *Mzungu* TO Friend

A simple act of service from a senior missionary left a lasting impression.

By David Dickson
Church Magazines

A *mzungu* in a tree? What was a *mzungu* doing up in a tree? And what was this tool he was using to cut through branches so quickly?

Such questions ran through the minds of Ugandans watching a foreigner (*mzungu*) using a battery-powered reciprocating saw to trim dead limbs from a massive shade tree. The tool itself was a marvel to the locals. Many of them had never seen anything like it before.

But even more amazing to them was the *mzungu* himself. Elder Roland Harris, a senior missionary from Utah, USA, trimmed branch after branch, cutting dead limbs from lofty perches. The people below were amazed that a foreigner would do such a thing for one of their own.

Ultimately, Elder Harris's simple act of service would mark the beginning of a friendship with someone who had wanted nothing to do with the Church or anyone in it.

Getting to Know Godfrey

Elder Roland Harris and Sister Janet Harris were serving a 23-month mission in the Uganda Kampala Mission. Sister Harris, a registered nurse, was called as medical adviser to the missionaries. Elder Harris, a retired construction superintendent who can fix almost anything in the universe, cared for Church facilities and mission vehicles.

Shortly after arriving in Uganda, Elder and Sister Harris hired a local Church member, Mary, to assist in cleaning their home.

Mary had been baptized three years earlier. "We just

grew to love her," says Sister Harris. "She helped teach us the ways of Uganda."

The more they got to know Mary, the more their friendship deepened. They learned quickly about her husband, Godfrey—a good man who nevertheless kept his distance from members of the Church, especially missionaries. "He wouldn't let missionaries in his home," explains Sister Harris. However, Mary still wanted Godfrey to meet them.

She invited the Harrises over for a brief visit. "We had no expectations," Sister Harris explains. "We told Godfrey that Mary is our dear friend now, and we want to know her family." Godfrey chatted with them but didn't really warm up to the idea of getting to know them more than as acquaintances.

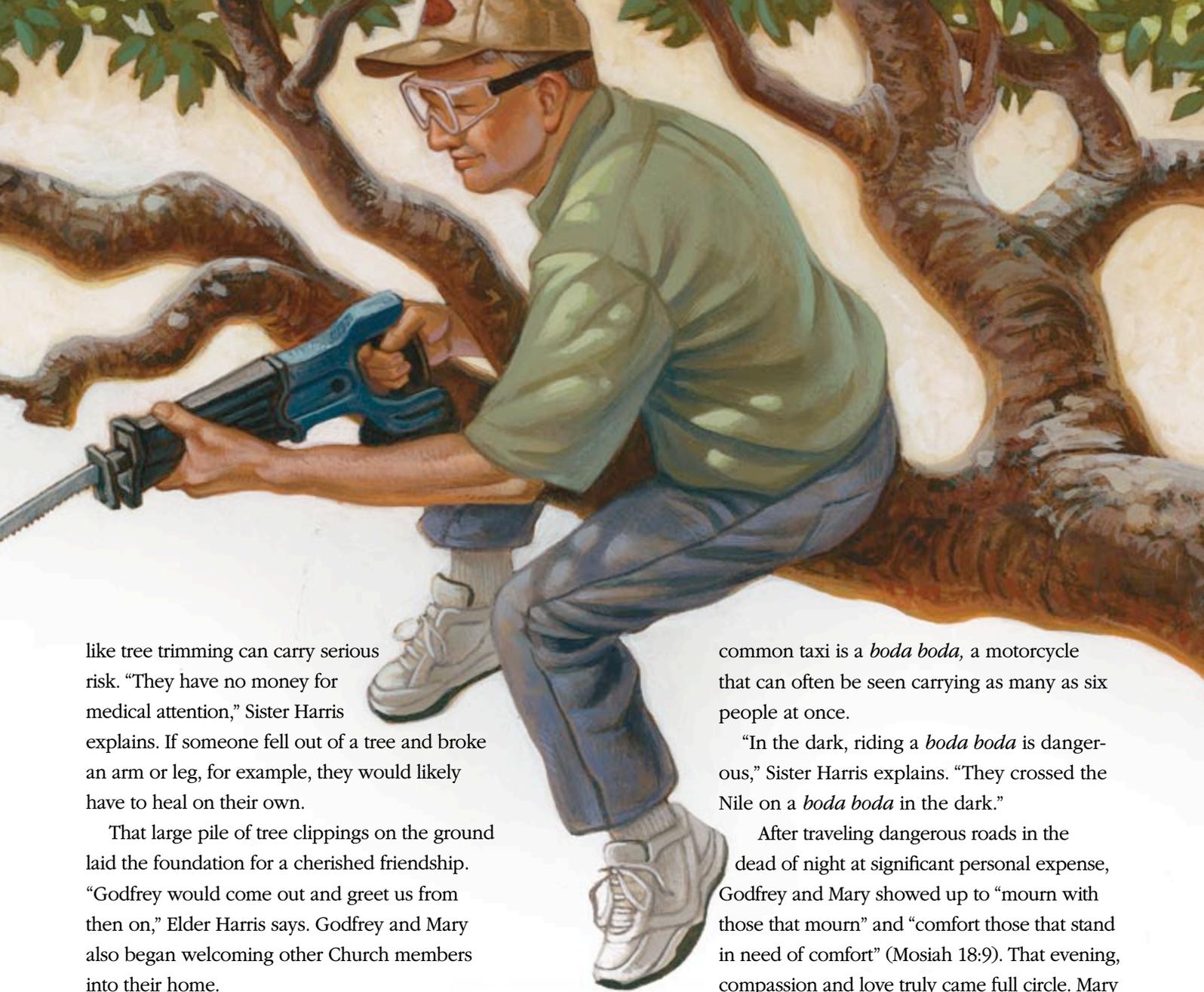
That all changed the day Elder Harris showed up with power tools, a ladder, and an offer to serve.

The Turning Point

Godfrey and Mary's home was surrounded by towering shade trees full of dead branches and overgrown limbs that stretched precariously above their roof.

Elder Harris set to work straightaway. He spent four hours in the treetops lopping off limbs up to 10 inches (25 cm) in diameter. The task was definitely overdue. "I was at least 20 feet (6 m) off the ground," Elder Harris says. As people walked by, they could hardly believe their eyes.

For his part, Godfrey was astounded. "He thanked us profusely," says Sister Harris. Even relatively simple activities



like tree trimming can carry serious risk. “They have no money for medical attention,” Sister Harris explains. If someone fell out of a tree and broke an arm or leg, for example, they would likely have to heal on their own.

That large pile of tree clippings on the ground laid the foundation for a cherished friendship. “Godfrey would come out and greet us from then on,” Elder Harris says. Godfrey and Mary also began welcoming other Church members into their home.

Crossing the Nile

Elder and Sister Harris grew closer to Godfrey and Mary as the months rolled by. Ultimately, this friendship became a strength and support for the Harrises when an unexpected tragedy struck halfway through their mission. They received word that their son Brad had been killed in a freeway accident.

As soon as Mary and Godfrey learned about this, they both put on their best clothes and headed out on a treacherous journey to be at the side of their dear friends.

In Uganda, few people own a vehicle. They either walk or hire a taxi. By far, the most

common taxi is a *boda boda*, a motorcycle that can often be seen carrying as many as six people at once.

“In the dark, riding a *boda boda* is dangerous,” Sister Harris explains. “They crossed the Nile on a *boda boda* in the dark.”

After traveling dangerous roads in the dead of night at significant personal expense, Godfrey and Mary showed up to “mourn with those that mourn” and “comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:9). That evening, compassion and love truly came full circle. Mary and Godfrey were the ones providing service. “It was quite remarkable,” says Sister Harris. Mary suggested that they all kneel together in prayer. Godfrey joined without hesitation.

Elder and Sister Harris went to California, USA, to attend Brad’s funeral. Afterward they returned to Uganda to complete their mission. Now back home in Utah, Roland and Janet Harris still remain close with Mary and Godfrey.

Service is a key that can unlock doors otherwise barred to us. As President Thomas S. Monson teaches, “When selfless service eliminates selfish striving, the power of God brings to pass His purposes” (“Willing and Worthy to Serve,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 68). ■



THE *Articles of Faith* AND THE LIFE OF *Joseph Smith*

The Articles of Faith can help us—and especially our children and grandchildren—see the Prophet Joseph Smith’s life in a meaningful framework.



By John W. Welch

Professor of Law at Brigham Young University and Editor in Chief of *BYU Studies*

IN PONDERING HOW I might make the history of Joseph Smith come to life for my grandchildren, the thirteen Articles of Faith came to mind as a helpful connector. It soon became exciting to see how well the Articles of Faith brought to light the main stages in Joseph Smith’s prophetic mission and inspired life.

Especially for children, who know these crystal clear declarations of belief, the Articles of Faith provide a familiar framework within which to understand Joseph Smith’s labors between 1820 and 1842, the year he wrote the Articles of Faith in his famous Wentworth Letter.¹

In that letter, the Prophet looked back over his remarkable life and summarized the rise and progress of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In the Articles of Faith, which close the letter, he summarized some key doctrines of the restored gospel—doctrines that we can associate with certain events in his history. Consider some ways in which the Articles of Faith and the life of Joseph Smith are aligned.

1. We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.

2. We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.

3. We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.

1820

Joseph's mission as a prophet began in the spring of 1820 in a grove near his family's log home, south of Palmyra, New York, USA. There, filled with the Holy Ghost, he plainly learned that the Father and the Son are separate beings. It is no surprise that the Articles of Faith also begin where Joseph began.



THE FIRST VISION, BY GARY L. KAPP, MAY NOT BE COPIED

With the First Vision, Joseph Smith learned the true nature of the Godhead.

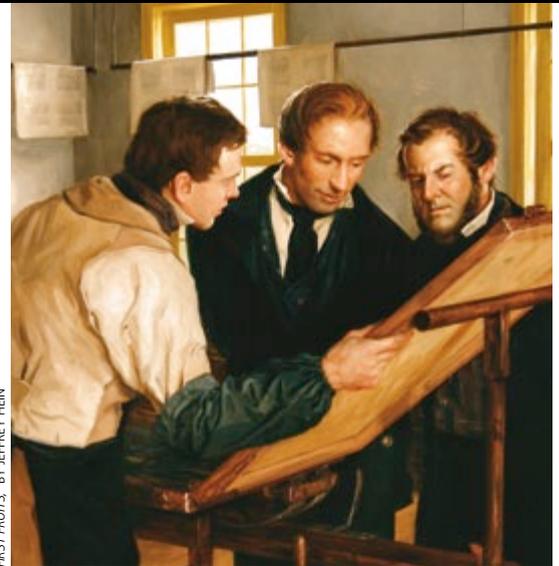
In the next several years, Joseph dealt with some ordinary follies of youth; he also learned some extraordinary lessons about accountability, especially when Martin Harris lost the 116 pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript and, as a result, the power to translate was taken from Joseph for a season. Through these experiences, he learned firsthand the foundational principles of agency, choice, and accountability.



In translating the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith learned more about Christ's Atonement.

Martin Harris mortgaged his farm (right) to print the Book of Mormon. During this time he also learned a lot about repentance.

1829



FIRST FRUITS, BY JEFFREY HIEN

After obtaining the Lord's forgiveness, Joseph was again blessed to translate the Book of Mormon. He learned from its pages the plan of salvation and the true doctrine of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Around the time when the printing of the Book of Mormon was getting under way in the summer of 1829, Joseph received a sublime revelation directed to Martin Harris and containing the words of Jesus Himself regarding His eternal sacrifice, which opens the powers of the Atonement to all: "For behold, I God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent" (D&C 19:16).



THE MARTIN HARRIS FARM, BY AL ROUNDS © 1984

4. We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

5. We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.

6. We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.

1829



DETAIL FROM THE BIBLE AND THE BOOK OF MORMON TESTIFY OF CHRIST, BY GREG K. OLSEN

From the teachings of the Book of Mormon, Joseph also came to know the first principles and ordinances of the gospel. These elements are consistently grouped together in the Book of Mormon. For example, to the people gathered in the land Bountiful the resurrected Lord testified: “I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me. And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved. . . . [And the Father] will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 11:32–33, 35).

As he translated 3 Nephi 11:21–27, Joseph learned how Jesus gave his disciples the authority to baptize and taught them the words that needed to be used in the baptismal prayer. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, who was acting as scribe, immediately realized that they had not been baptized in this manner or by such authority. They went out into the woods near Joseph and Emma’s home in Harmony, Pennsylvania, where they had been working. There, on May 15, 1829, John the Baptist appeared, laid his hands on them, and in the name of Christ conferred upon them the Priesthood of Aaron, giving them the authority to baptize. Soon after, as they translated 3 Nephi 18:36–37, they further learned that the Lord had given His disciples a second power, namely the power to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost. Peter, James, and John soon came to ordain Joseph and Oliver to the higher Melchizedek Priesthood.



THE RESTORATION OF THE MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD, BY LIZ LEMON SWINDLE, MAY NOT BE COPIED

1830

With power and authority, Joseph Smith next organized the Church, following the same pattern that existed in the ancient Church. This process began in Fayette, New York, at the Peter Whitmer home on April 6, 1830, and it continued as the offices and quorums of the priesthood were organized, especially during the first five years of Joseph Smith’s time in Kirtland, Ohio, between 1831 and 1836.



After the priesthood was restored (left), Joseph could organize the Church (above).



7. We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth.

8. We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.

9. We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

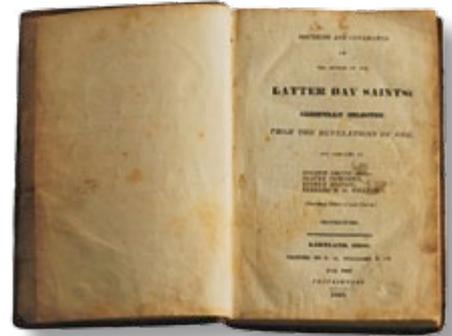
1835

In Kirtland, the Saints were blessed repeatedly with tremendous outpourings of the gifts of the Spirit. All of those gifts that are mentioned in the seventh article of faith were seen in rich abundance in Kirtland, especially as the Saints prepared for and experienced the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in April 1836.

Also in Kirtland and in nearby Hiram, Ohio (mainly from 1831 to July 2, 1833), the Prophet worked on the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible, reinforcing his belief in the Bible as the word of God and deepening his understanding of the importance of having the Bible translated correctly. Going hand in hand with the Bible, the Book of Mormon had also been accepted as the word of God, and in 1832 the Saints were commanded to remember the Book of Mormon, which they were reprimanded for treating lightly (see D&C 84:54–58). Also at this time the administration of the Church continued to put into practice numerous teachings and instructions in the Book of Mormon,² and in 1837 the second edition of the Book of Mormon was published.



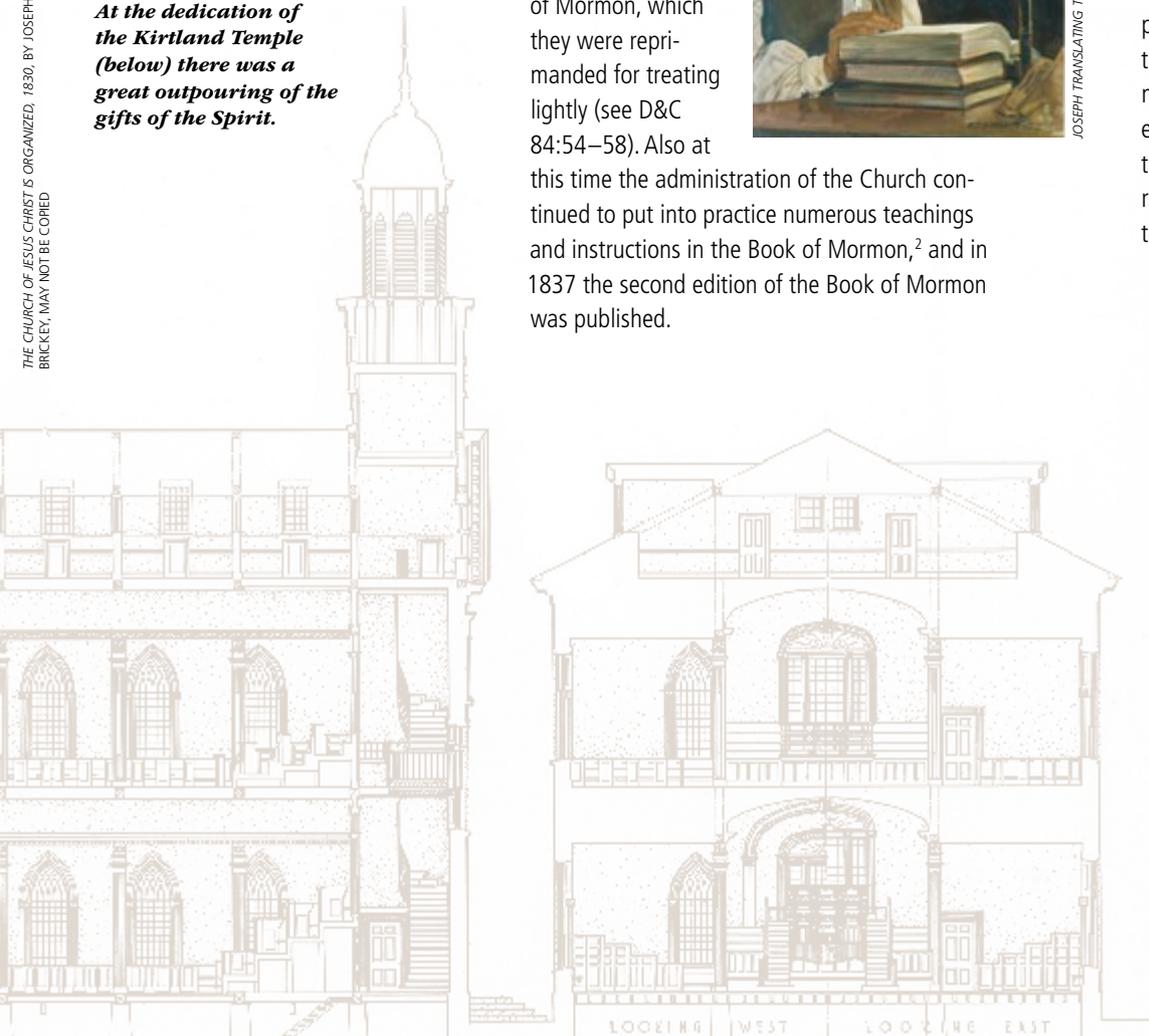
JOSEPH TRANSLATING THE BIBLE, BY ROBERT T. BARRETT © 1982



Throughout the Kirtland experience, the heavens resounded with the outpouring of visions and revelations, many of which were published in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. The ninth article of faith reflects this experience of continuing revelation and looks forward as Joseph received instruction from the Lord to leave Kirtland early in 1838.

At the dedication of the Kirtland Temple (below) there was a great outpouring of the gifts of the Spirit.

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST IS ORGANIZED, 1830, BY JOSEPH BRICKEY, MAY NOT BE COPIED



10. We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.

11. We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.

12. We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.

1838

Next, Joseph Smith and his followers moved west early in 1838 to Missouri. There the Saints hoped to lay a foundation for the establishment of Zion. They expected Christ to reign on the earth, and they sang fervent hymns of hope that the earth would be renewed and would again be a garden place. At Far West, Missouri, on April 11, 1838, the Lord called David W. Patten of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to prepare to go forth “to testify of my name and bear glad tidings unto all the world” (D&C 114:1), expanding missionary work worldwide in gathering and restoring the tribes of Israel.



HURRAH, HURRAH, HURRAH FOR ISRAEL, BY ROBERT T. BARRETT, MAY NOT BE COPIED

Leaving for a mission to England in the fall of 1839, Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, though ill, waved to their families and shouted, “Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah for Israel!” The gathering of Israel greatly expanded during this time.



Joseph and the Saints soon learned that conflicts in Missouri would violently interfere with their exercise of religious freedom. The Saints were driven at gunpoint from Missouri in the bitter cold of winter in 1839, while Joseph was imprisoned in Liberty Jail for more than four unimaginably brutal months. In Illinois, the Saints established Nauvoo as a place of religious liberty and tolerance, with all people in the city being protected by a city ordinance passed on March 1, 1841, guaranteeing that people of all faiths would have “free toleration, and equal privileges, in this city.”³

1840

Even though their Missouri land rights had been trampled upon and their civil liberties flagrantly abridged, Joseph and the Saints did not strike back. They believed in the rule of law and trusted that it would lead to the best result. As they moved to Nauvoo, they petitioned the president of the United States for redress, worked through legal channels to purchase new land, and established the city of Nauvoo with its charter issued by the state legislature. They followed the law in submitting to federal judges and state magistrates, even at great cost and personal risk.

Through their experiences in Missouri (below) the Saints knew the importance of religious freedom for all.



LEAVING MISSOURI, BY C. A. CHRISTENSEN

13. We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

1842

There in Nauvoo, the Prophet rejoiced in the noble values of Christian life. These are the principles upon which the city of Nauvoo was founded. Indeed, he could also say that he and the Saints had followed the admonition of Paul and prophetically looked forward to yet further trials and trails of tears moving westward, hoping to be able to endure all things. In all of this, and in the highest ambitions of the building of the City Beautiful, with the construction of the splendid Nauvoo Temple already under way, Joseph concluded these Articles of Faith with a declaration of the ideals that would bring thousands of converts to the gospel of Jesus Christ.



JOSEPH SMITH AT THE NAUVOO TEMPLE, BY GARY E. SMITH © 1975

Joseph Smith wrote the Articles of Faith while the Nauvoo Temple was under construction. He and the Saints had endured many things to get to that point.

JOSEPH IN NAUVOO, 1840, BY THEODORE S. GORKA



IN FEBRUARY 1842, as Joseph ended his letter to John Wentworth with the list we now call the Articles of Faith, he summarized not only the points in that landmark letter but also in his dedicated life. In the letter, he had just told Wentworth about his First Vision in 1820 and about the Book of Mormon’s coming forth to be “united with the Bible.” He had then spoken of those who were “called and ordained by the Spirit of revelation and prophecy . . . to preach as the Spirit gave them utterance” and about the many who were thus “brought to repentance, were immersed in the water, and were filled with the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands.” He had told of the organization of the Church as taught in ancient times by our Savior and of the many who had seen “visions and prophesied” and who had healed the sick “by the laying on of hands.” Ultimately he had spoken about the many hardships the Saints had “had to endure,” and he had fervently testified that this “persecution has not stopped the progress of truth, but has only added fuel to the flame,” and that it would “go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent.”⁴

Thus, the Articles of Faith are not abstract, theoretical, or theological propositions. They reflect real life. They crystallized out of the daily efforts and yearly struggles of faithful men, women, and children to do the will of God and to build His kingdom here on earth. Gems like these, strung together on the tether of eternal life, can be fully appreciated only in that same way, by being hearers and doers of the word and following the pathways of righteous living. ■

NOTES

1. The Prophet wrote what came to be known as the Wentworth Letter in response to a request from John Wentworth, a newspaper editor, and George Barstow, a lawyer and historian. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 435–47; see also *History of the Church*, 4:535–41.
2. See John W. Welch, “The Book of Mormon as the Keystone of Church Administration,” in *A Firm Foundation: Church Organization and Administration*, ed. David J. Whittaker and Arnold K. Garr (2011), 15–57.
3. *History of the Church*, 4:306.
4. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 441, 442, 444.

THE GREATEST MIRACLE

On a bright September day our youngest daughter, Erica, was in a serious car accident. She was flown to the hospital, and after hours of emergency surgery, we received the terrible news: our beautiful, vivacious, 17-year-old daughter had died.

The next few months were agony for us. We endured her birthday and Thanksgiving and braced ourselves for our first Christmas without her. People warned us that the holidays would be difficult, but no amount of warning could have prepared us.

Besides feeling overwhelming sorrow and despair, I was jealous of other families who were together and happily celebrating. I bitterly wondered, “Why us? Why weren’t we granted a miracle like the ones others speak about?”

Amid my despair, I remembered a time that our ward held an activity called “Christmas in Bethlehem.” Ward members came dressed up as if they were living at the time Jesus was born. Erica, who was four years old at the time, wore a hand-me-down long, white dress and a scarf wrapped around her head. The culmination of the evening was a reenactment of the Nativity in a mock stable decorated with bales of hay and a manger. A young couple with their newborn played the parts of Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus.

As we gathered around the nativity, I noticed

that Erica was missing from my side. I panicked until I caught a flash of her white dress near the nativity. Then my panic shifted from fear for her welfare to fear that she would disrupt the scene. I was about to call out to her, but I paused and watched as she made her way to the manger.

Erica quietly knelt next to Mary and looked up at her as if to get her permission. Then Erica reached out and tenderly caressed the sleeping baby. I was not the only one who noticed. Others soon quieted and watched as she knelt close to the baby. A tender feeling permeated the group as they realized that this baby was the Christ child for Erica.

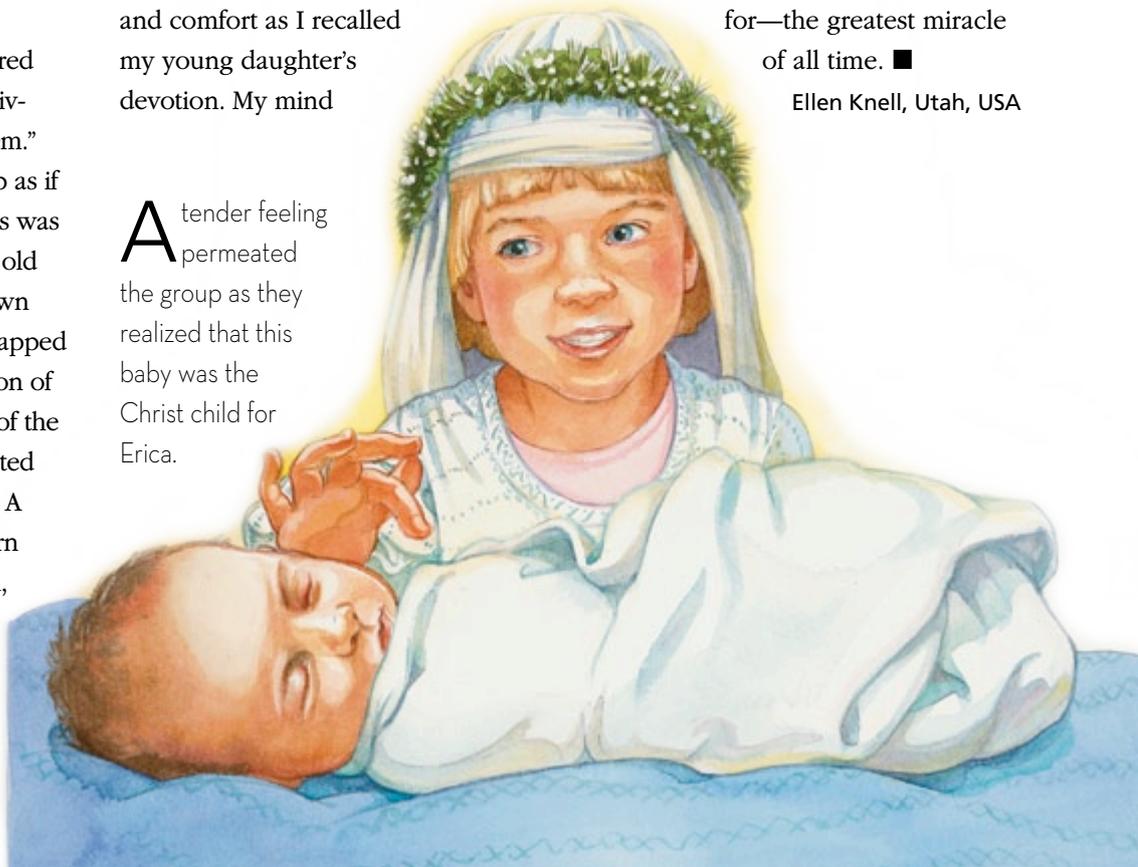
In my grief, this Christmas memory brought feelings of peace and comfort as I recalled my young daughter’s devotion. My mind

had been full of questions about life and death—questions that didn’t seem to matter as much before Erica’s death. As I pondered the Resurrection and the Crucifixion, I identified with Mary. She loved her newborn Son, and she later endured terrible pain and anguish as she witnessed His suffering and death. Christ was not spared the cross, and Mary was not spared her grief.

At Christmas we celebrate the beginning of the Savior’s life on earth, but for me, His birth will now always be wrapped up with His suffering, death, and Resurrection—the Atonement. Because the Savior broke the bands of death, I know that Erica’s death will not be final. That is the miracle to be thankful for—the greatest miracle of all time. ■

Ellen Knell, Utah, USA

A tender feeling permeated the group as they realized that this baby was the Christ child for Erica.



AN ANSWER TO HIS PRAYERS

I was not feeling the Christmas spirit. It was December of my senior year in high school, and college applications and my final Laurel project loomed before me. I hoped to find a volunteer opportunity that would flesh out my college applications and double as my Laurel project. Luckily my student council adviser asked my friend Jessica and me if we would organize a school toy drive for a local charity.

I delegated most of the work to the project committee. I had them create a bulletin board featuring a large thermometer that indicated the number of toys donated. We thought that was enough advertising, and we spent each lunch period collecting donations. Students donated few toys, however, and the thermometer remained low.

Strangely, our adviser began setting aside some toys. When Jessica and I asked what she planned to do with them, she told us that a teacher at the school had recently been diagnosed with cancer. After struggling to teach while going through treatment, he had decided to take a leave from work. With the holidays approaching and medical bills piling up, his family wouldn't have much of a Christmas. Our adviser suggested that we wrap the set-aside presents for them.

My heart was touched. I had been looking at my service project as a means to serve only myself, not others. I decided to triple our goal for donated toys and to start a monetary collection

for the teacher and his family.

Jessica and I visited classrooms and championed our cause. The response was enormous. Teachers, staff, and students gave toys and money to help the family. We soon surpassed our toy goal, which amazed the charity. We also collected more than \$1,000 for the family.

As we carefully wrapped the gifts we had collected and purchased, I realized that the testimony of service I was receiving was just as great as the gifts we were giving. I can't express the thrill I felt as we secretly watched the family discover the gifts we had

As we wrapped the gifts, I realized that the testimony of service I was receiving was just as great as the gifts we were giving.

anonymously left on their porch.

A few months later, Jessica and I were asked to teach a seminar on service projects. We explained what we had done without mentioning the teacher's name. A girl raised her hand and stood. Tears flowed as she spoke. The teacher was her uncle, and she described how much our service had meant to him. She said it was an answer to his prayers.

What a joy it was that holiday season to come together in heartfelt service and know we had made a difference. ■

Lindsey Leavitt, Nevada, USA



I CAN DO THIS!

It was evening during the Christmas season, and a heavy blanket of snow lay on the ground. For months my companion and I had braved the cold German weather, knocked on doors, and handed out copies of the Book of Mormon. Even then, 15 years after World War II had ended, many Germans were wary of Americans.

But that night Ingeborg Bienmuller was to be baptized. On the long bus ride to the United States Air Force base, however, she was quiet. I sensed her growing feeling of distress.

As we approached the bus stop, Ingeborg turned to us and said, “Do

you know how difficult this is for me? The Allied forces killed my husband in the war, and bombing raids killed many other family members.”

She touched her leg. “I was hit with shrapnel from a sulfur bomb. My leg will never heal. I don’t know if I can go in there.”

We sat silent as her words sunk in and the bus came to a stop. Ingeborg sat rigid. My heart pounded. I prayed she wouldn’t turn away in fear.

She then rose from her seat and declared, “Heavenly Father has given me a testimony of the truthfulness of the Restoration. I know the Book of

Mormon is true. I can do this! Elder Atkin, please help me walk.”

We made the long walk to the gate, Ingeborg’s breath coming hard as we passed the guards. We changed into our white clothing and found the pool at the base. The pool became a sacred place, and peace settled over us. The distress on Ingeborg’s face changed to joy as she stepped into the water and was baptized a member of the Church.

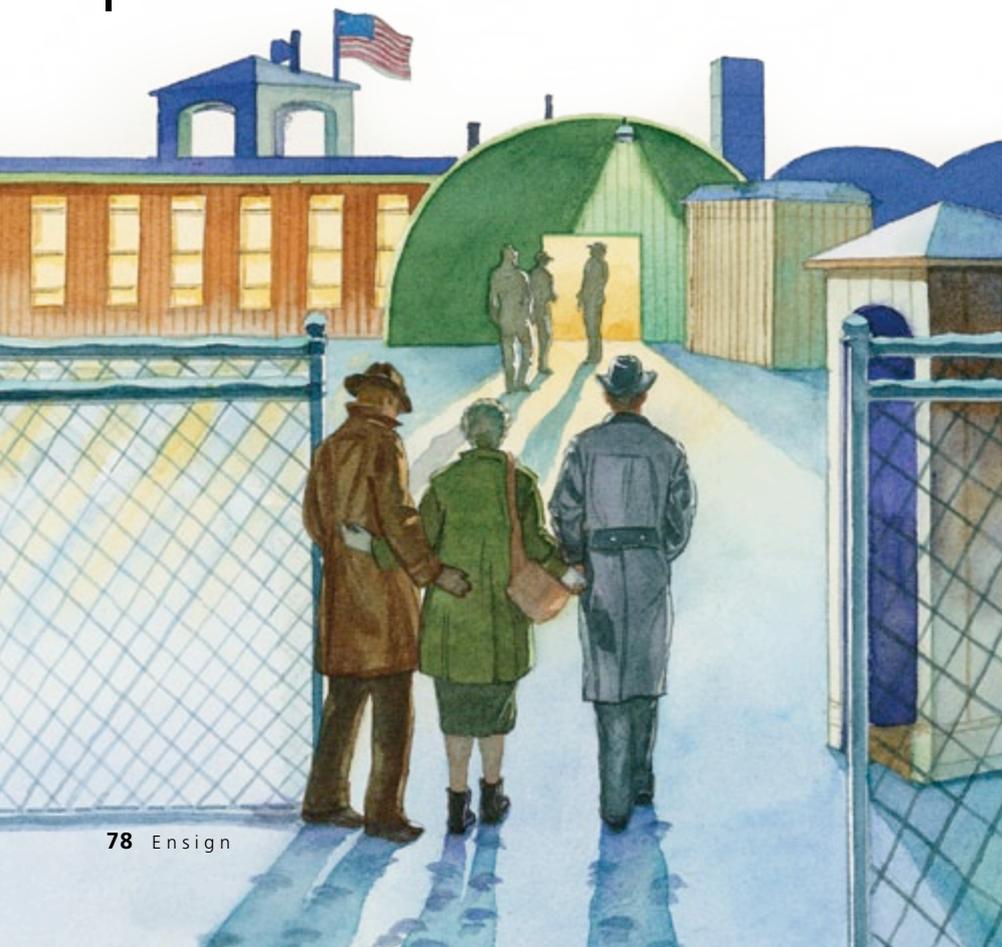
“The night the elders left a Book of Mormon with me, I was thrilled,” she told us as we rode home. “I stayed up reading until I came to Mosiah 18, where Alma invites the people to be baptized: ‘Behold, here are the waters of Mormon . . . and now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, . . . what have you against being baptized?’” (Mosiah 18:8, 10).

She softly continued, “I fell asleep reading those words, and I had a dream. I was standing near a beautiful body of water like the Waters of Mormon. On the other side of the water stood people dressed in white—my family! My husband, who had been killed in the war, was smiling and beckoning me to be baptized.”

That night Sister Bienmuller became a member of the Würzburg Branch and one of the many in Germany who eventually overcame their fears and joined the Church. ■

Roy Atkin, California, USA

Ingeborg turned to us and said, “Do you know how difficult this is for me?”



WE CAME FOR OUR GIFTS

When I was a member of our district presidency, I helped coordinate an activity in which the members of our district donated toys to poor children living in the city of Soacha, Colombia. We had a wonderful response from all the members. Not all the gifts were new, but most were in good condition.

As we finished loading the gifts on the buses that would

take us to the city, a young girl came up to me with a plastic ball that had been heavily used and was scratched. I held the ball in my hand, wondering who would have donated such a beat-up ball. With some disdain I tossed it under the seat.

When we arrived, our youth began singing Christmas hymns. Their music, along with their Christmas hats, attracted a large group of children. When we started handing out the gifts, those children called other children. Soon we had given out all our gifts.

When we were about to leave, I saw a boy about eight years

I silently hoped that I would be as eager to bless others as the older boy was to bless his brother.

old running toward us, holding his little brother by the hand. When they arrived, the older boy said, “We came for our gifts.” His innocence left me without words and touched my heart.

I explained to him that the gifts were gone. He responded, “It doesn’t matter if my gift isn’t here, but my little brother’s must be here.”

Then I thought of the ball I had tossed under my seat. I told the boys I did have one more gift but that it was a humble one.

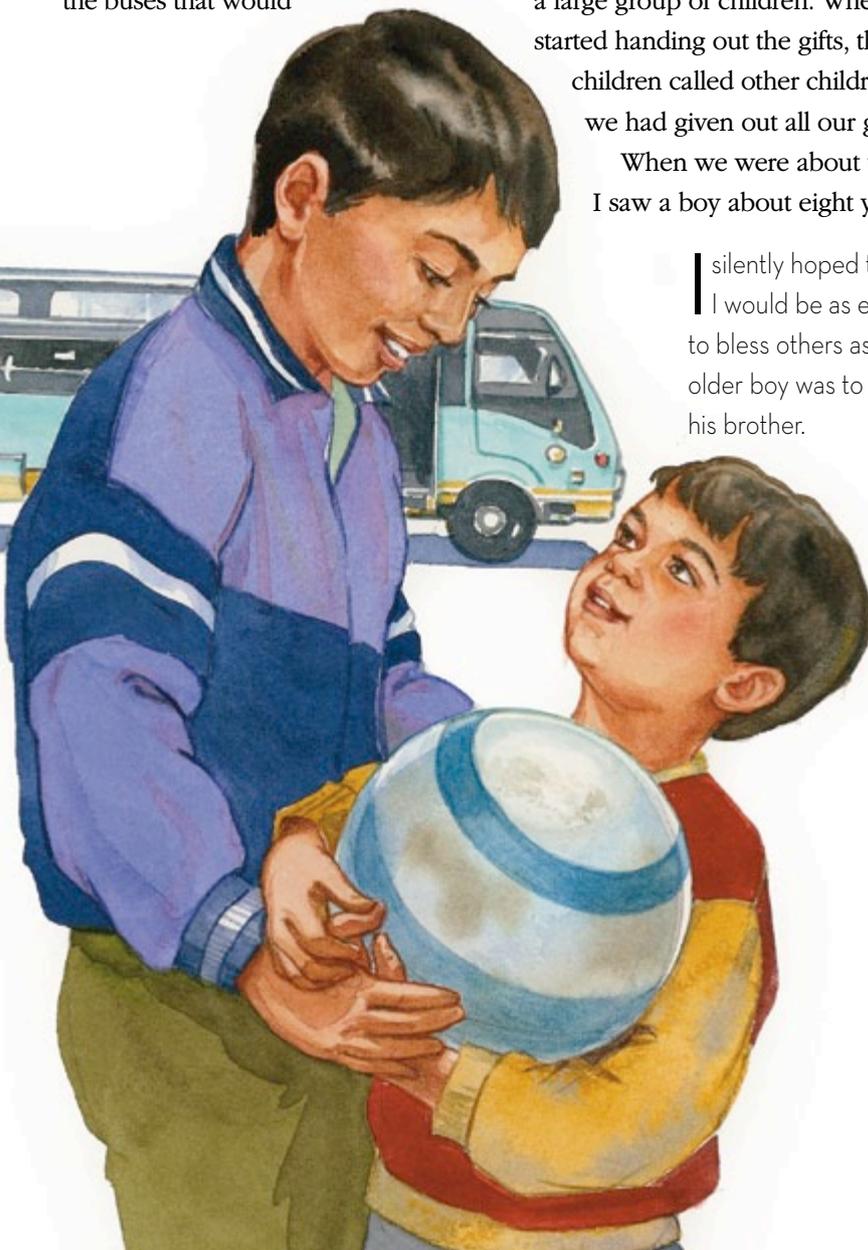
“It doesn’t matter what it is,” he said. “That is the one.”

I got on the bus and found the ball. When I gave it to the little boy, his joy overflowed. Jumping with gratitude, he said, “A ball! That is the present I asked the Christ child to bring me.” He continued to dance around happily as he and his older brother went away with their treasured gift.

I quietly stood there and wept as a warm feeling of peace and gratitude enveloped me. The concern and selfless care the older brother gave to his younger brother touched me, and I silently hoped that I would be as eager to bless others as the older boy was to bless his brother.

As the boys happily walked away, I was reminded of the Savior’s love for us. He did not even forget a little boy on a mountainside who had asked for a simple ball for Christmas. ■

Walter Emilio Posada Rodriguez,
Colombia



THE JOURNEY HOME

By Heather Whittle Wrigley

My bus ride home from work began like any other. Within five minutes, I had leaned my head against the window and soon the halting and starting of the bus was rocking me to sleep. I was still adjusting to all the new responsibilities that had come with my recent marriage while working and taking classes full-time. Some days I couldn't help but sleep during the entire bus ride to work and back.

As I drifted in and out of sleep, I heard voices calling out directions. Soon I realized that the new bus driver had to be directed around every turn, down each street, and to every bus stop along the 50-mile (80 km) route.

Knowing that it would probably take even longer than the usual hour and a half to reach home, I immediately became irritated. Unkind thoughts about the driver's competence crowded my mind. Voices calling out directions continued to cut into my attempts to sleep.

Before long, however, I noticed the yelling had stopped. I looked up to see a woman gently directing the bus driver from her seat two rows ahead of me. I watched as she sweetly



When we don't know which way to turn, Jesus Christ shows us the way.

and kindly gave the man directions and then, before getting off at her stop, told him about the next few stops down the road. Long after I arrived home, I was troubled by my reaction to criticize compared to this woman's loving guidance.

I realized that I was like the bus driver—I don't know my way through life any better than the bus driver knew his new route. Both of us were on an unfamiliar road. I'm sure he was grateful that someone who had been down that road before was willing to offer patient directions about what lay ahead.

Christ does the same for us. When we don't know which way to turn, His example shows us the way. When we have questions, He lovingly supplies the answers. How many times would He, weary after traveling a long distance, seek to fulfill the needs of others?

Since that day, we've had a few new bus drivers. Occasionally they have needed some direction, and thanks to the example shown me by a loving woman and our Savior, I have been willing to give it. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

INSIGHTS



In what ways is Jesus Christ the Light of the World?

"[Jesus Christ] is the Light of Bethlehem, born of Mary, His mortal mother, and His Father, Almighty God. . . . He is the Light of the Atonement fulfilled in the Garden of Gethsemane and on Golgotha, who took upon Himself the sins of the world, that all mankind may obtain eternal salvation. He is the Light of the empty tomb, the resurrected Lord with a glorified body of flesh and bone, who broke the bands of death and gained an everlasting victory over the grave. . . . He is *my* Light, *my* Redeemer, *my* Savior—and yours."



A Gift to the Savior

“We are simply asking all members to pray, knowing that if every member, young and old, will reach out to just ‘one’ between now and Christmas, millions will feel the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. And what a wonderful gift to the Savior.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, October 2013 general conference

THE CHURCH OF
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