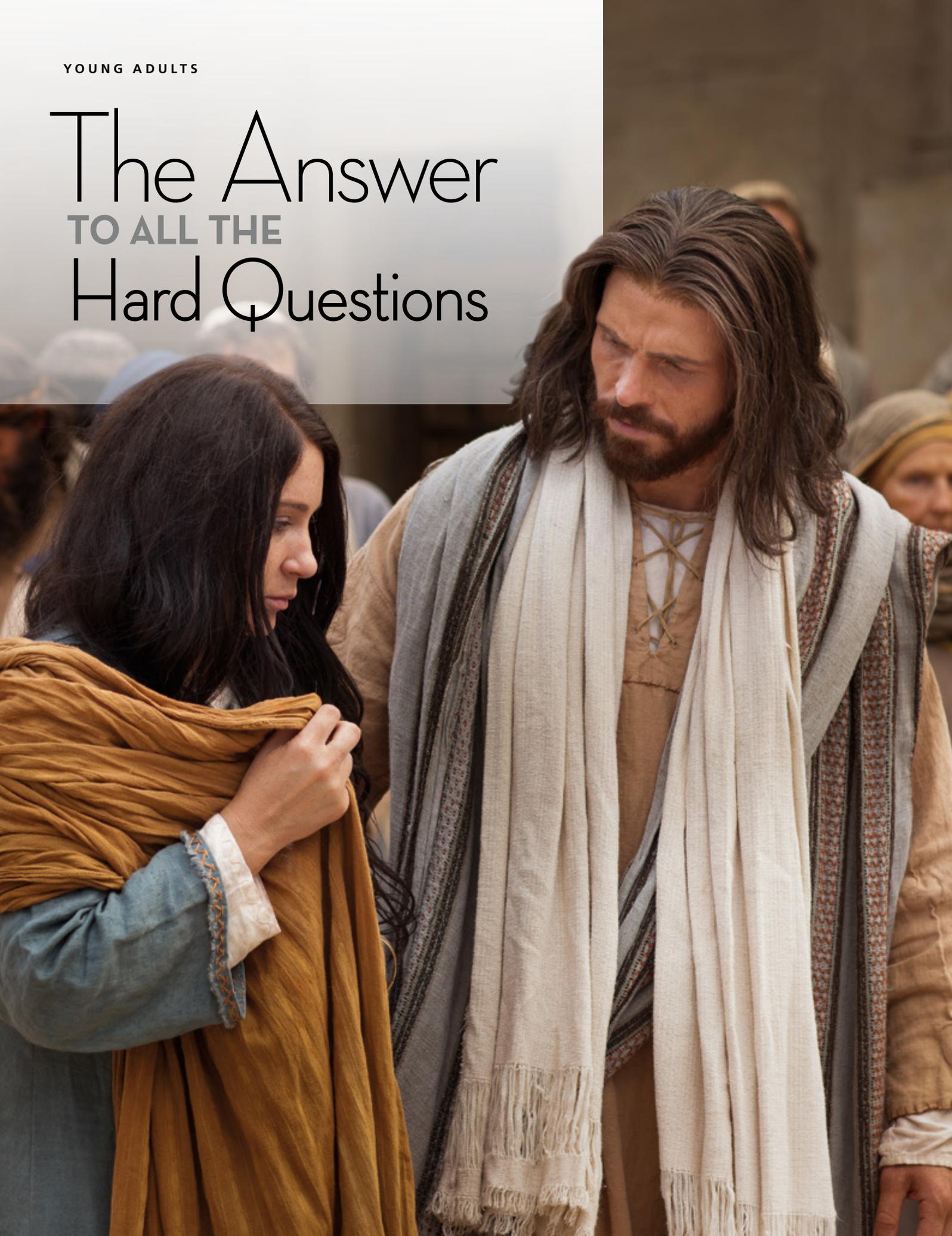


YOUNG ADULTS

The Answer TO ALL THE Hard Questions



When faced with hard questions, only one ultimately matters.

By R. Val Johnson
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The questions life sends our way are not always easy to answer. Some of the personal challenges we have—a child’s death, for example, the betrayal of a friend, or an unfortunate financial reversal—are often not easy to reconcile, and we need the compassionate support of those around us. Sometimes the most difficult struggle in these situations is to recognize that our Heavenly Father loves us and is not punishing us, though the reason for the trial, if there even is a reason, escapes us for now.

Some of the hardest questions come when what we believe is challenged by changing cultural fashions or by new information, sometimes misinformation, that critics of the Church confront us with. At such times, it may seem that our doctrinal or historical

foundations are not as solid as we thought. We may be tempted to question the truths we’ve taken for granted and the spiritual experiences that have formed our faith.

What do we do when doubt seeps into our hearts? Are there really answers to those hard questions?

Yes, there are. In fact, all the answers—all the right answers—depend on the answer to just one question: do I trust God above everyone else?

Simple but Not Easy

Is that approach too simple? too easy?

Perhaps. Truth isn’t always obvious, particularly when it has to compete with alternatives presented in attractive packages. Often we understand the truth only in part, while the whole remains yet to be learned. And in the learning, we face the uncomfortable prospect of abandoning imperfect but heretofore comforting understandings. But trusting that God has all the answers, that He loves us, and that He will answer all our questions—in His way, on His timetable—can simplify our searching. It may not always be easy, but simply trusting in God’s counsel can safely steer us through clouds of confusion.

During the October 2013 general conference of the Church, President

Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, made this insightful observation:

“It’s natural to have questions—the acorn of honest inquiry has often sprouted and matured into a great oak of understanding. There are few members of the Church who, at one time or another, have not wrestled with serious or sensitive questions. One of the purposes of the Church is to nurture and cultivate the seed of faith—even in the sometimes sandy soil of doubt and uncertainty. Faith is to hope for things which are not seen but which are true.

“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters—my dear friends—please, first doubt your doubts before you doubt your faith. We must never allow doubt to hold us prisoner and keep us from the divine love, peace, and gifts that come through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.”¹

Some Helpful Principles

So how do we go about honestly doubting our doubts? How do we anchor our faith on the solid rock of revelation and not on the sandy soil of shifting human understanding? It may help to keep in mind the following principles.

PRINCIPLE 1: God Knows Infinitely More Than We Do. When faced with questions—whether



THE COURAGE TO STAND FOR PRINCIPLE

"It is impossible to stand upright when one plants his roots in the shifting sands of popular opinion and approval. . . . We will all face fear, experience ridicule, and meet opposition. Let us—all of us—have the courage to defy the consensus, the courage to stand for principle."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Be Strong and of a Good Courage," *Ensign*, May 2014, 68–69.

FIND ANSWERS

To expand your study of difficult questions, go to lds.org/topics and history.lds.org, among other supportive online resources.

personal, social, or doctrinal—we can rely on the fact that the Creator of the universe knows far more than we do. If He has addressed a topic (and sometimes He hasn't), we can trust that His views are clearer than ours.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8–9).

PRINCIPLE 2: God Shares Some of His Knowledge. A corollary of principle 1 is that God shares with us as much of what He knows as we are ready to receive and He is ready to deliver. We just need to prepare ourselves to receive it, then seek it. The scriptures answer many questions. One of the great pleasures of this life is being taught by the Holy Ghost as He uses the scriptures to reveal "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little" (2 Nephi 28:30) in response to our diligent study.

Some questions, particularly of a historical nature, have reasonable explanations, and the more information honest scholarship reveals, the clearer our views become.

We are also blessed to have living prophets and apostles to teach us under the inspiration of heaven. We



need not be "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." We can trust that their collective guidance will help us "all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God." (See Ephesians 4:11–15.)

PRINCIPLE 3: We Can Trust in God's Love. God loves us far more than we can imagine. We are His children, and He wants us to return to His presence as mature, glorified beings capable of becoming like Him (see Moses 1:39). All the counsel He gives us is given with the deepest of love to bless us eternally. We can trust in that love completely.

"How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings" (Psalm 36:7).

PRINCIPLE 4: We Need to Seek Spiritual Affirmations. If so much of the world's wisdom seems contrary to God's, we should not be surprised. After all, by divine design, we live in a fallen world where we are cut off from the presence and mind of God. Such a condition can make understanding the things of God difficult, "for what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. . . ."

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:11, 14).

If we are to understand the things of God, we can't depend on human wisdom alone to do the job. We need access to the Spirit of God "that we might know the things that are

freely given to us of God. . . . which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Corinthians 2:12–13).

When we are baptized and confirmed members of Christ's Church, we are given the gift of the Holy Ghost. With that gift, we can learn from the Spirit and receive His comforting confirmations of truth. Receiving such spiritual affirmations dispels doubt more surely than the most convincing logic, and it is available to all who seek truth through sincere prayer, diligent study, and obedience to the Lord's commandments.

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matthew 7:7).

PRINCIPLE 5: We May Need to Wait Upon the Lord. Sometimes we come up blank as we struggle to understand the trials and questions we

have. Despite our best efforts, understanding escapes us. The heavens seem closed. That's when our trust in God enables us to have the patience to wait upon Him. Not all questions will be answered immediately or even in this life. Not all trials will ease before body and spirit separate. But if we love God above all else, if we trust in His love for us, we will be able to endure in faith until that day dawns when the veil lifts and all becomes clear.

"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

"And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.

"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him" (Psalm 37:5–7). ■

NOTE

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Come, Join with Us," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 23.

