

# Ensign



Why We  
Need Jesus  
Christ,  
page 18

Ministering to All  
More Naturally,  
page 24

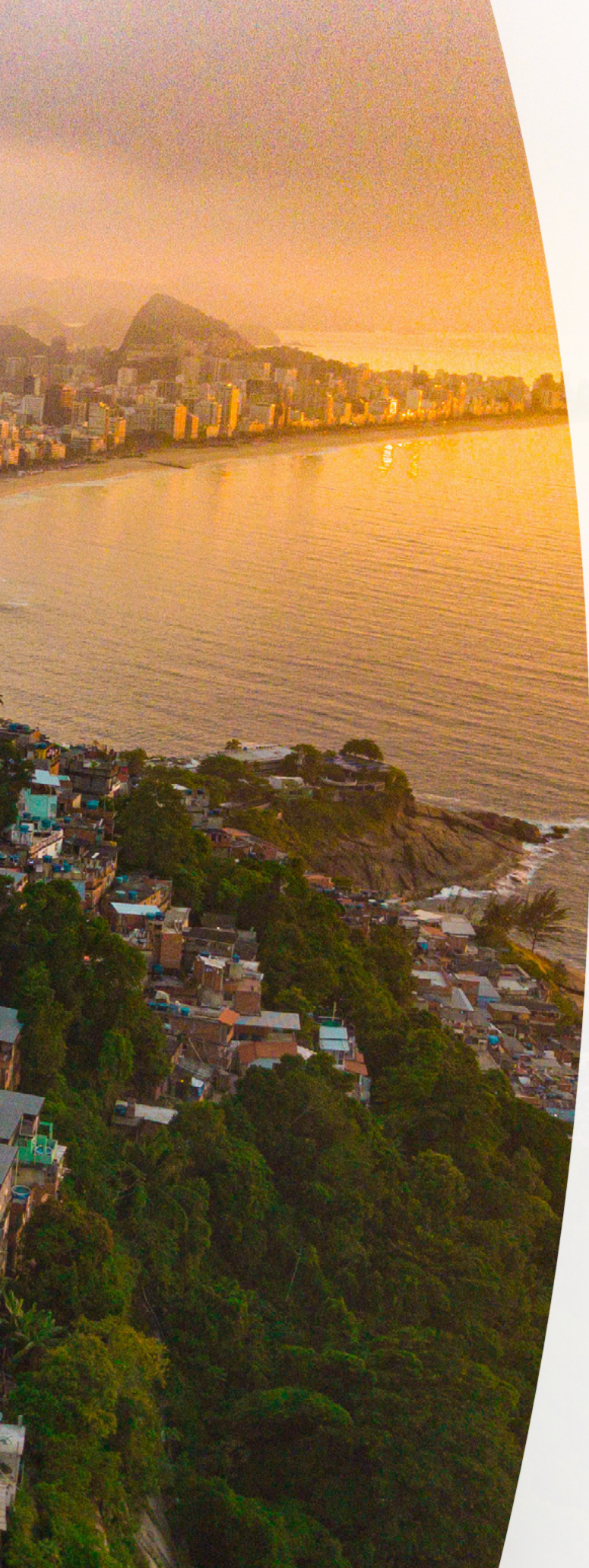
Bidding Farewell to  
the *Ensign*,  
page 6

President Bingham: Looking to  
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page 64


THE  
CHURCH  
IS HERE

# Rio de Janeiro **Brazil**






Rio de Janeiro is just one of many centers of strength for the Church in Brazil. A temple will soon be dedicated in Rio. Here are some facts about the Church in Brazil.

1.4  million members (1 in 151 Brazilians is a Latter-day Saint, or 0.67 percent of the national population)

stakes  273

2,111  congregations

family history centers  355

6  temples

missions  35

1929 First converts within Brazil

1966 First stake created, in São Paulo

1978 São Paulo Brazil Temple, first temple built in South America, is dedicated

2001 Relief Society honored by national government



## COVID-19 and This Issue

Due to the continually changing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the material in this issue may not reflect current conditions or be applicable in your local circumstances. Please follow the most recent Church and government guidelines.

### Sharing the Savior's Light at Christmas 14



### Ministering to All Elder Richard Neitzel Holzapfel 24



### Why We Need Jesus Christ Elder D. Todd Christofferson 18



### Receive the Gift Jakob R. Jones 30

## The Gospel: An Anchor in a Time of Change

In 2020 we have endured natural disasters and a worldwide pandemic. We have studied the Book of Mormon through *Come, Follow Me* with our brothers and sisters near and far. We have united across the globe in fasting and in faith.

In a changing world, we can anchor our souls to our Savior, Jesus Christ, and His restored gospel. We hope these and other articles in this issue will help you feel the Christmas spirit, the Lord's Spirit:

- Elder D. Todd Christofferson teaches why we need a Savior (see page 18).
- In "Sharing the Savior's Light at Christmas," we suggest some ideas for ministering at Christmastime (see page 14).
- Jakob Jones writes about four gifts we can give the Lord in order to invite the gift of the Holy Ghost into our lives (see page 30).
- Earlier this year, the First Presidency approved the publication of three new Church magazines, starting next month: one for adults, one for youth, and one for children. These magazines will be available in dozens of languages, bringing the gospel to Latter-day Saints around the world. As part of the changes, the *Ensign* will merge with the *Liahona*. Through the new magazines, we will continue to hear the Lord's voice through His servants and connect with each other as members of a global Church. (Learn more on page 6.)

Merry Christmas from the *Ensign* staff

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## December Digital-Only Articles

Available in the Gospel Library app or at [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)



### *Come, Follow Me* Resources

For a list of articles and activities (organized by week) that can enrich your family's study of the Book of Mormon, see "Come, Follow Me: Book of Mormon—Support Articles and Activities" in the digital version of this issue (available in the Gospel Library app or at [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)).



#### The Subtle Blessings of Tithing

By Kimberly Jensen

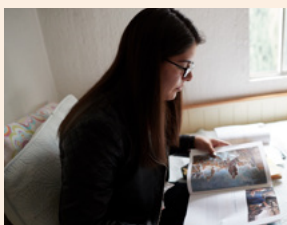
Many times the blessings of tithing are small yet powerful.



#### Combat Loneliness with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ

By Kylie Parrish

A young adult shares insight on opening our hearts to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ during this sometimes lonely season.



#### Struggling to Study *Come, Follow Me* on Your Own? Here Are Some Tips for the New Year

By Annelise Gardiner

A young adult shares ideas on how to get more out of *Come, Follow Me* when you're studying on your own.

### FIND MORE

In the Gospel Library app or at [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org), you can:

- Find the current issue.
- Discover digital-only articles.
- Explore past issues.
- Enhance your study with digital tools.
- Share favorite articles and videos.

### SUBMISSIONS

To submit a manuscript or to offer your comments, go to [liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) and click "Submit an Article or Feedback."

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

Those with a current subscription to the *Ensign* will begin receiving the *Liahona* in January 2021. For readers in the USA and Canada: USA subscription price for the *Liahona* is \$10.00 per year; Canada, \$12.00 plus applicable taxes. Periodicals Postage Paid at Salt Lake City, Utah. Sixty days' notice required for change of address. Include address label from a recent issue; old and new address must be included. Send USA and Canadian subscriptions to Salt Lake Distribution Center at address below. Subscription help line: 1-800-537-5971. Credit card orders (American Express, Discover, MasterCard, Visa) may be taken by phone or at store. [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

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## YOU CAN LIGHT THE WORLD

**A**s you celebrate the birth and life of Jesus Christ this month, here are a few ideas to help you reach out to others and share the light that He brings into your life.



### SHARE *THE CHRIST CHILD* VIDEO

- Share the video on social media.
- Show it in your home with friends of other faiths.
- Share it with a stranger on the bus.
- Use it in a home evening lesson.

### VISIT THE SICK AND SUFFERING

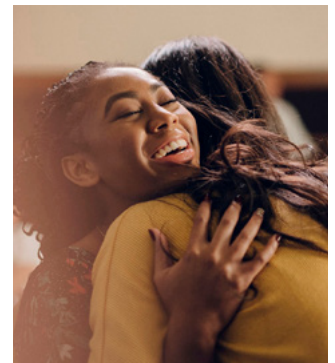
- Put together hygiene kits.
- Spend time with those who are sick.
- Ask how you can help.
- Donate to a charity.

### FEED THE HUNGRY

- Volunteer at a soup kitchen.
- Participate in a food drive.
- Bring a meal to someone.
- Invite someone to Christmas dinner.

### COMFORT THE LONELY

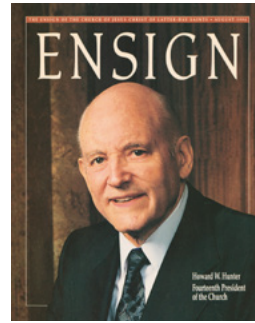
- Sit by someone who is alone.
- Visit someone who lives alone.
- Invite those who are lonely to your home.
- Make a new friend.



### INVITE PEOPLE TO CHURCH

- Pray to know whom to invite.
- Invite others to the special Christmas service on December 20th.
- Invite in person and through social media.
- Invite friends to Christmas activities. For more ideas on how to invite others, check out “5 Do’s (and 2 Don’ts) When Inviting Friends to Church” (digital-only article), *Ensign*, Dec. 2018 (found online or in the Gospel Library app).







# A Fond Farewell to the *Ensign*

*The Ensign will be united with the Liahona next month, giving our Church family the chance to gather around global gospel messages and draw closer to Christ together.*

**By Marissa Widdison**

*Ensign* Assistant Managing Editor

Out of all the messages we've received at the Church Office Building, one by a young girl in Mexico especially tugged at my heart. It came a couple of years ago, when I worked with the *Friend* magazine. In the letter, the girl explained that she had seen the robust *Friend* her English-speaking friends got each month. She, a Spanish speaker, received many fewer pages as part of the *Liahona* magazine. In a gesture of unselfishness and goodness, she offered to help us translate pages. She reasoned that, with her help, we would be able to send Spanish speakers the same wonderful content that English speakers received.

The letter was heartwarming but heartbreaking too. It highlighted an imbalance in the print and digital resources available to Saints around the world. The reason this imbalance exists is complex and has to do with the evolution of Church magazines, the growth of membership in different areas, and the cost and process of translation and distribution. By the time that girl in Mexico wrote to us, many people at the magazines were already involved in research and cross-departmental proposals to answer

the question, *What is the right balance of print and digital resources for different parts of the world?*

In August of this year, the First Presidency announced a new magazine publishing plan, which will begin with the January 2021 magazines. I hope this young girl will be excited about these upcoming changes. For the first time ever, there will be international publications for adults, youth, and children. With the help of local Church leaders and readers like you, magazines will be given to many newly baptized and young members at no cost to them. All of this will allow our Church family to become more united, drawing closer to Jesus Christ together.

## Points of the New Publishing Plan

Here are the guiding ideas that the First Presidency approved. We look forward to hearing your feedback so that we can continue to improve and iron out the details of what the magazines should be.

### 1. *Three Global Magazines*

Since 1971, there have been three English magazines: the *Friend*, *New Era*, and *Ensign*. There has also been



an international magazine, the *Liahona*, which was translated into as many as 48 languages at certain times. The *Liahona* evolved from various international Church magazines that were consolidated over the years and included content for all age groups.

Beginning in January, this model will be simplified into three worldwide magazines, translated to serve the entire Church: the *Friend* for children, *For the Strength of Youth* for youth, and the *Liahona* for adults. The *Ensign* and *New Era* titles will be retired. As a current *Ensign* reader, here are other changes you may notice:

- Many readers will find a “local pages” insert stitched into the middle of the magazine. These pages will include messages and stories specifically for readers in that geographical area.
- Including these local pages, the *Liahona* will be 64 printed pages, which is shorter than the current *Ensign* page count. By “giving away” a few print pages in English, we are allowing Saints in other areas to receive more of the print magazines more frequently. For example, some Church members were receiving only one magazine per year, and now they will receive magazine content every month or every other month. This will especially be a blessing to families who can’t access things digitally the way many *Ensign* readers can.

## 2. Improved Digital Offerings

Many readers still enjoy the print magazine, and we will continue

to make the best print magazine we can for years to come. We also realize how important it is to make content available digitally. We are working to:

- Improve the magazine experience online and on your phone.
- Allow you to receive new content through email, texts, and Gospel Library app notifications.
- Offer personalization options, like signing up to receive articles about specific topics you care about.
- Use additional publication channels, like popular news feeds and apps.

## 3. Important Support for Converts, Children, and Youth

The magazines can be a great resource for learning and living the gospel, as well as a way for people to feel more connected to their global Church family. The First Presidency has encouraged local leaders to provide Church magazines, using unit funds, to three specific groups who might especially benefit from these blessings. First of all, newly baptized members should be shown how to access the magazines digitally. If they prefer a print magazine, they should be provided with a one-year subscription. Additionally, ongoing magazines should be given to children and youth who attend church without a parent or guardian.

Exactly how this is done is up to the unit. Some wards or branches may find that gift subscriptions work well, while others may prefer to order several subscriptions sent to a meetinghouse or other household and distribute the magazines from there. However it is accomplished, the end goal is to make sure

these groups have access to the nourishing messages of inspiration that the magazines offer.

### Saying Goodbye to the *Ensign*

When you think about how many people will receive more of God’s light through these adjustments, it’s hard not to feel excited about the future! But it’s also OK to feel a sense of sadness as we acknowledge the end of a magazine that has blessed our lives for many years.

So, here we are, honoring the last issue of the *Ensign* while simultaneously celebrating its 50th anniversary. I can think of past issues and articles that changed my life, and I’m sure many of you can as well. The time line on the next few pages includes fun glimpses into the past. It’s not an overstatement to say that the *Ensign* has blessed countless people over multiple generations. It traveled with us to home and visiting teaching assignments, enriched our lives with gospel messages and images, and filled the moments before Church meetings with prophetic counsel. It helped us connect with our leaders and with each other.

But none of that goodness is ending. If anything, these changes will help us become *more* connected as a worldwide Church than ever before. Next month, look for articles describing the rich legacy of

the *Liahona*. It’s an honor to become more aligned and unified with our brothers and sisters around the world.

### Moving Forward Together

On my desk at work sits a book signed by Elder Orson F. Whitney (1855–1931), a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles who described in 1888 what we are watching unfold today: “A world awaits you; rich and poor, high and low, learned and unlearned. All must be preached to; all must be sought after. . . . And whither we cannot go, we must send; where we cannot speak we must write.”

Elder Whitney testified that the gospel will “climb to places hitherto deemed inaccessible,” saying that “our literature will help to take it there.” He weaves encouragement throughout his remarks that gives me hope about what the magazines are trying to accomplish. “Let us onward, then, and upward, keeping the goal in view; living not in the dead past, nor for the dying present. The future is our field. Eternity is before us.”<sup>1</sup>

We have loved serving you as editors of the *Ensign* and look forward to continuing this connection as we step into the *Liahona* together. It seems fitting to end with Doctrine and Covenants 64:41–42, which describes the work and the family that we are all a part of:

“For, behold, I say unto you that Zion shall flourish, and the glory of the Lord shall be upon her;

“And she shall be an ensign unto the people, and there shall come unto her out of every nation under heaven.” ■

#### NOTE

1. Orson F. Whitney, “Home Literature,” *Contributor*, June 1888, 299, 300 (delivered as a speech at the Y.M.M.I.A. Conference, June 3, 1888).



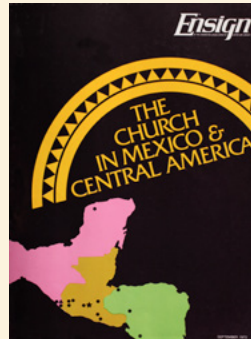
# Celebrating 50 Years of the ENSIGN

*The merging of the Ensign and Liahona is an example of how Church publications will always grow and adapt to better meet the needs of the Saints.*

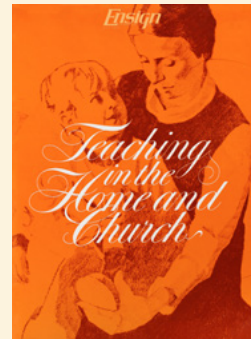
**1971:** The *Ensign*, *New Era*, and *Friend* replace former Church publications. An estimated 350,000 families receive the January 1971 *Ensign*, which includes a vinyl record with a message from President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972). (Listen to the recording at [bit.ly/3kKcaM0](http://bit.ly/3kKcaM0).)



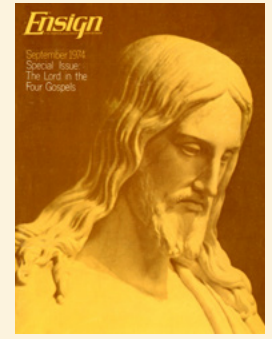
**1971:** Articles in braille are made available through the *New Messenger*, a compilation of material from the *Ensign*, *New Era*, *Friend*, and *Church News*.



**1972**



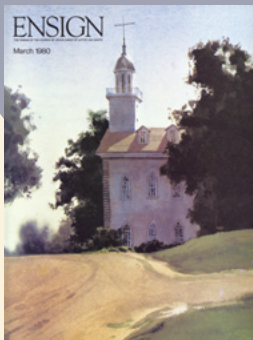
**1973**



**1974:** Recordings of *Ensign* articles are made available on cassette tapes through the Utah State Library for the Blind.

**1974:** General conference messages are published in the May and November issues.

1970s

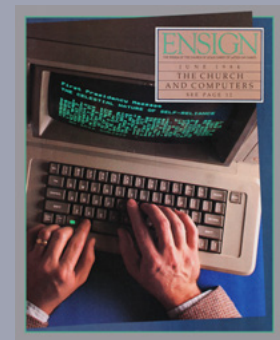


**1980**



**1981**

**“W**hen I started working at the *Ensign*, **we all used electric typewriters.** The designers had to send typescript out to be printed on photo-quality paper, then cut and paste it onto art boards by hand. The art boards were then sent to the press to be photographed and prepared for hot-type printing. I remember the first computers we got sometime in the ‘80s had green screens. Although no one who has worked for the magazines is perfect, you could never fault how hard we tried.” —*R. Val Johnson, former managing editor*



**1984**

1980s

## Early English Publications

Today's *Ensign* evolved from a rich heritage of Church publications like these (the year and location of creation are included with the title):

**1832:** *The Evening and the Morning Star* (Missouri, USA)

**1839:** *Times and Seasons* (Illinois, USA)

**1853:** *Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool, England)

**1889:** *Young Woman's Journal* (Utah, USA)

**1897:** *Improvement Era* (Utah, USA)

**1915:** *Relief Society Magazine* (Utah, USA)

**1929:** *Instructor* (Utah, USA)



"The word *ensign* appears in ancient and modern-day scriptural texts, often about the last days when the Lord would raise up an **ensign**—which is **a banner, a symbol, a sign for others to see**. That great **ensign** is the Restoration of the gospel itself, the great prophesied marvelous work and a wonder of the Lord in the last days."—**Jay Todd, former managing editor**



1975



**1976:** The first *Ensign Talking Book*, produced on 8 rpm flexible records, replaces the *New Messenger* for members with visual impairments.



1977

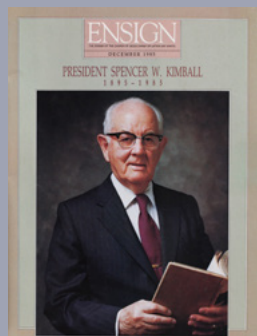


1978

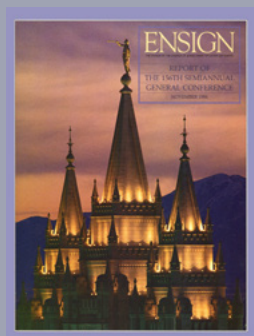


1979

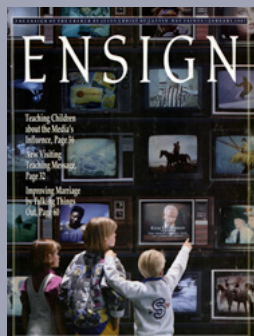
"One of the lasting habits I acquired at the *Ensign* was a love of general conference. Because we listened to every talk with pencils in hand, correcting the manuscript to reflect what was actually said, **I learned to listen to conference with my attention fully engaged**. I still do that today, and our children, and my wife's many seminary students, have learned to do the same."—**Orson Scott Card, former assistant editor**



1985



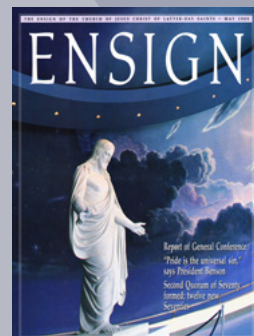
1986



1987



1988

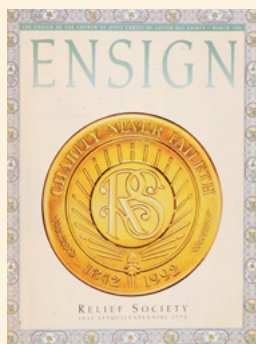


1989

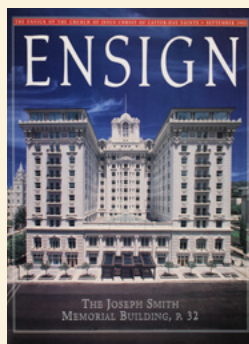
Visit [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/122010](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/122010) for more stories from those who worked at the *Ensign*.

"It took several years for us to have the internet at our desks. First **there was one computer with internet capability, which we all shared.** Then an intern was assigned to that computer, and because she could look things up, she seemed brilliant. We finally had to tell our boss that we could all find the same information if we had internet access."—**Kerry Griffin Smith, former editor**

# 1990s



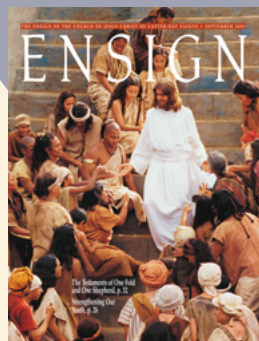
**1992:** The *Ensign* highlights the 150th anniversary of the Relief Society.



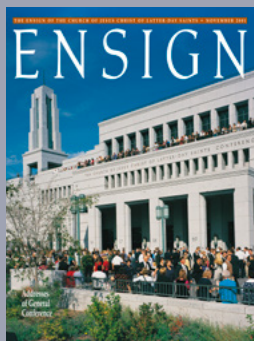
**1993**



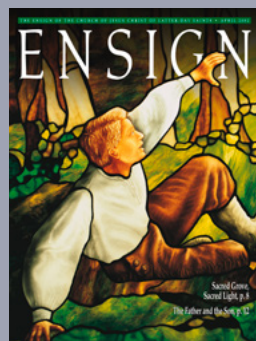
**1994**



**2000:** Church magazine articles from 1971 to the present are published online.



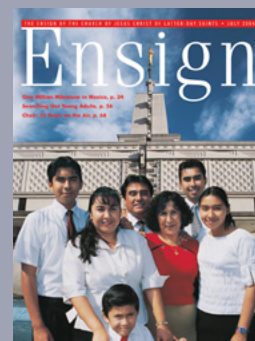
**2001:** The *Ensign* becomes a full-color publication.



**2002:** The *Ensign* and *Liahona* begin publishing material simultaneously, including general conference issues.



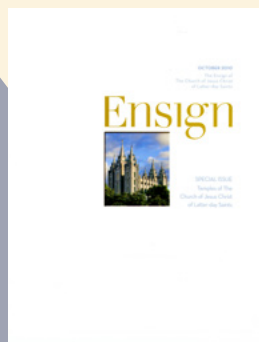
**2003**



**2004**

# 2000s

"I was always touched by the feedback we received from readers who described finding an answer to prayer, a message of comfort, or the inspiration they needed in the latest issue. We planned magazine issues months in advance of publication, yet **each issue seemed perfectly timed for whatever was happening.**"—**Linda Cooper, former copyeditor**



**2010:** For October, a special issue about temples is created. This same year, the *Ensign* and *Liahona* staffs are combined.



**2011:** The *Ensign* celebrates its 40th anniversary with a poll asking readers about their favorite articles.



**2012:** The Church's Gospel Library app begins featuring magazine content digitally.

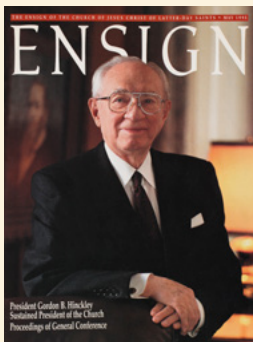


**2013**

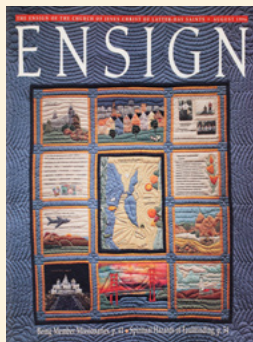


**2014**

# 2010s



**1995:** A call for articles states that the *Ensign* is no longer including fiction stories.



**1996**



**1997:** The *Ensign* begins publishing general conference addresses on the Church website just days after conference.

“Through the pages of the Church magazines, **the words of the living prophets and Apostles can come into our homes** on a regular basis to guide and inspire us and our families. We urge all members throughout the world to subscribe to and read the Church magazines.” —*First Presidency letter, April 1, 1998*



**2005**



**2006**



**2007**



**2008:** For March, a special issue completely about Christ is published (includes a translucent vellum cover).



**2009**

“The magazines allowed me to **meet and interview some of the best people in this world**—strong, active Church members. Many were pioneer members in their countries, like Joseph William Billy Johnson and Emmanuel Kissi of Ghana. Their stories touched my life and inspired me to try to be as good as they are.” —*Don L. Searle, former managing editor*



**2018:** The *Ensign* includes a YA Weekly section on the Gospel Library app and Church website. First Presidency messages are discontinued.

“The *Ensign* has blessed generations of Church members, including me. But like each of the magazines before it, the *Ensign* is stepping aside, having done its part to propel us toward the future. **The *Liahona* brings together readers all over the world**, representing both the Church’s rich legacy of international publishing and its prophesied future that the gospel would go forth to every people in their own language. We hope it becomes a trusted guide that offers hope even when the journey is hardest.”

—*Adam Olson, current managing editor*



**2020:** The May conference issue highlights the bicentennial of the First Vision.



**2021:** The *Ensign* will merge with the Church’s international magazine and adopt the name *Liahona*.

# Ministering Principles



## SHARING THE SAVIOR'S LIGHT AT CHRISTMAS

*Consider those you minister to. How can you help them become closer to Christ this Christmas?*

**W**hile we remember the Savior Jesus Christ all year, Christmas is the season when we celebrate the greatest gift ever given: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). As we minister at Christmas, we too can give gifts that help others draw closer to the Savior. It’s wonderful to think of ourselves as mirroring the gift given by Heavenly Father.

### **I Still Cherish the Gift**

Susan Hardy, California, USA

**W**hen I was 11 years old, my Sunday School teacher, Brother Deets, told

our class that if we would memorize the Articles of Faith and explain to him what they meant, he would buy us our own set of scriptures.

Brother and Sister Deets were a young couple, just starting out. I wasn’t sure Brother Deets could afford to buy a gift for anyone. But I decided that if he thought the Articles of Faith were important enough to memorize, I would take the challenge.

After I finished all 13, time went by and I forgot about his promise.

Then, on Christmas Day, I received a package with my name on it. I opened it to find a set of scriptures just for me, with a card encouraging me to read them regularly. That





was in 1972, and to this day I still have those scriptures. They are precious to me.

It wasn't the cost of the gift but the kindness he showed to me and the sacrifice he was willing to make for me that left me with a deep desire to study the word of God. I try to follow Brother Deets's example of ministering by giving meaningful gifts to those around me, hoping that I can bless others' lives as he has blessed mine.

### **An Invitation to Play a Part**

Richard M. Romney, Utah, USA

**W**hen those planning our ward Christmas social asked me to visit a certain less-active member and invite him to participate in the program, I have to admit I was nervous. I had met Darren only once before, when he had participated in an earlier ward activity. He had worn a motorcycle

headband across his forehead. His long white hair was tied in a ponytail, he had a full white beard, and his arms were covered with tattoos.

Now, accompanied by a committee member, I was standing on Darren's doorstep, wondering what he might say. He asked us to step inside, and we told him why we were there. He said, "Oh, I'd love to do that!"

He did an amazing job, helping to make the activity meaningful for so many. A short time later, my ministering companion and I were asked to visit Darren regularly. He always seems glad to see us, and we've had some delightful conversations. I'm grateful the inspiration to invite him to participate in the program of a ward activity led to a cherished relationship.

### **SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES**

Send us your experiences of ministering or being ministered to. Go to [liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) and click "Submit an Article or Feedback."



## Ministering to Others at Christmas

Here are some things you can do to make sure those to whom you minister will know you're thinking of them, particularly at this time of year.

1. **Sometimes a phone call or a text message works wonders.** Striking up a conversation with a simple “Hi, how are you doing?” can make a difference.
2. **Join in their celebrations when appropriate.** Christmas can be a great time to learn about the beliefs we have in common. When you share beliefs and listen to others, you open the door to greater understanding.
3. **Pray for them by name.** Ask Heavenly Father to help you think of ways to bring them closer to His Son.
4. **Simple gifts are often best remembered.** Gifts don't have to be elaborate to be loved. The gift of time, the gift of listening, the sharing of a photo or a memory—these can all be gifts of the heart.
5. **Give the gift of testimony.** Ask them to share their love of the Savior with you, and offer to share your love for Him with them.

## Using Light the World to Minister

You can use the Light the World campaign to help you as you minister. Here are some ideas to get you started. (Find more at [ComeuntoChrist.org](http://ComeuntoChrist.org).)

1. **Share the video *The Christ Child*.** You can post it, share a link, or invite others to watch it with you.
2. **Invite others to attend a Christmas service.** Some people want to worship but don't know where to go. Invite them to come worship with you.
3. **Encourage them to give to others.** They can donate to the Church's Humanitarian Services or to local charities.
4. **Sign up for daily service prompts.** You can help others to sign up too. The prompts may provide opportunities for you to serve together.
5. **Fill their home with peace.** Let them know that missionaries have a special Christmas message they can share, one that will bring hope and love to their hearts.
6. **Introduce them to Light the World.** Show them how to learn more at [ComeuntoChrist.org](http://ComeuntoChrist.org).



## Ministering to All as a Congregation

Every congregation's needs are unique. Some benefit from organizing a larger activity. Other congregations may benefit from something small and simple. Those involved in planning and organizing activities prayerfully consider how to meet the needs that exist.

- Members from the three stakes in Paris, France, helped support a Light the World soirée that included a talent show and a fashion show. They prepared items that were given to refugees and people experiencing homelessness. (See "Lighting the World in Paris," page 52.)
- The Charlotte North Carolina Central Stake held a "Christmas around the World" event for the community, with a social to celebrate Christ through food, international Christmas tradition displays, music, service projects, and a children's Nativity.

- Members of the Vero Beach Florida Stake joined in a community reminder of why we celebrate Christmas. Toys were donated to community charities. A Primary children's choir performed, and many churches had booths displaying information.
- The Jacksonville Florida South Stake presented the *Savior of the World* production for the community. Resources, such as the script and music, are available at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/callings/music/savior-of-the-world](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org/callings/music/savior-of-the-world). ■

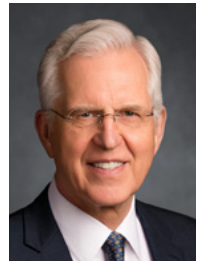


### CLOSER TO THE SAVIOR

"When we figuratively transport ourselves to the Bethlehem stable, 'where God in the nighttime hours already rests upon the straw,' we can recognize better the Savior as a gift from a kind, loving Heavenly Father."

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "That I Might Draw All Men unto Me," *Ensign*, May 2016, 40.





**By Elder D. Todd Christofferson**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# WHY WE NEED Jesus Christ

*Dial down the noise this Christmas season and reflect on the wonder and the majesty of the Son of God.*

I am grateful that, in addition to Christmas, December brings an occasion to contemplate the life and contributions of the Prophet Joseph Smith, his birthday being on December 23. It is hard to appreciate fully what he achieved as an instrument in the Lord's hands in an environment of constant opposition, persecution, and challenge. In a time to come, we will see the Prophet Joseph honored as the worthy head of this great and last dispensation—the one dispensation destined to succeed even though all previous dispensations have ended in apostasy.

The translation and publication of the Book of Mormon was a signal achievement and one that is foundational to the success of the Lord's cause in this last dispensation. Through the Book of Mormon and by his visions and revelations, Joseph has revealed Jesus Christ for the modern era in His true character as the Only Begotten Son of God and Redeemer of mankind.

Especially at this season we remember the Prophet's personal relationship with the Savior and the "testimony, last of all, which [he gave] of [Christ]: That he lives!" (Doctrine and Covenants 76:22). Joseph's witness of the living Christ brings to my mind the statement of President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008): "There would be no Christmas if there had not been Easter. The babe Jesus of Bethlehem would be but another baby without the redeeming Christ of Gethsemane and Calvary, and the triumphant fact of the Resurrection."<sup>1</sup>

## **Why Do We Need Jesus Christ?**

A while ago, a person who has been a member of the Church for many years asked me, "Why do I need Jesus Christ? I keep the commandments; I'm a good

*Motivated by love, our Heavenly Father created mercy by offering His Only Begotten Son as propitiation for our sin.*

person. Why do I need a Savior?" I must say that this member's failure to understand this most fundamental part of our doctrine, this foundational element of the plan of salvation, took my breath away.

"Well, to start with," I replied, "there is this small matter of death. I assume you don't want your death to be your final status, and without Jesus Christ there would be no resurrection."

I talked about other things, such as the need that even the best people have for the forgiveness and cleansing that is possible only through the Savior's atoning grace.

At another level, however, the question might be, "Can't God do whatever He wants and save us just because He loves us, without the need for a Savior?" Phrased this way, quite a few people in today's world would share that question. They believe

in God and a postmortal existence but assume that because God loves us, it doesn't matter so much what we do or don't do; He just takes care of things.

This philosophy has ancient roots. Nehor, for example, "testified unto the people that all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice; for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life" (Alma 1:4).

You recognize in Nehor's doctrine echoes of an approach to salvation put forth by

Lucifer, a "son of the morning," surely the most tragic of tragic figures ever (Isaiah 14:12; see also Doctrine and Covenants 76:25–27). As God once explained, Lucifer "is the same which was from the beginning, and he came before me, saying—Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that [not] one soul shall . . . be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor.

"But, behold, my Beloved Son, which was my Beloved and Chosen from the beginning, said unto me—Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever" (Moses 4:1–2).

This was not simply a case of Jesus supporting the Father's plan and Lucifer proposing a slight modification. Lucifer's proposal would have destroyed the plan by eliminating our opportunity to act independently. Lucifer's plan was founded on coercion, making all the other sons and daughters of God—all of us—essentially his puppets. As the Father sums it up:

"Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down;

"And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto *my* voice" (Moses 4:3–4; emphasis added).

By contrast, doing it the Father's way offers us an essential mortal experience. By "mortal experience," I mean choosing our course, "[tasting] the bitter, that [we might] know to prize the good" (Moses 6:55); learning,

repenting, and growing, becoming beings capable of acting for ourselves rather than simply being “acted upon” (2 Nephi 2:13); and ultimately overcoming evil and demonstrating our desire and ability to live a celestial law.

This requires a knowledge of good and evil on our part, with the capacity and opportunity to choose between the two. And it requires accountability for choices made—otherwise they aren’t really choices. Choice, in turn, requires law, or predictable outcomes. We must be able by a particular action or choice to cause a particular outcome or result—and by the opposite choice create the opposite outcome. If actions don’t have fixed consequences, then one has no control over outcomes, and choice is meaningless.

### Law and Justice

Using *justice* as a synonym for *law*, Alma states, “Now the work of justice [that is, the operation of law] [cannot] be destroyed; if so, God would cease to be God” (Alma 42:13). It is His perfect understanding and use of law—or in other words, His justice—that gives God His power. We need the justice of God, a system of fixed and immutable laws that He Himself abides by and employs, so that we can have and exercise agency.<sup>2</sup> This justice is the foundation of our freedom to act and is our only path to ultimate happiness.

The Lord tells us, “That which is governed by law is also preserved by law and perfected and sanctified by the same” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:34). But we have to admit that none of us has always and unfailingly been “governed by law.” And we really cannot look to the law or justice to preserve and perfect us when we have broken the law (see 2 Nephi



2:5). So, being just but also being motivated by love, our Heavenly Father created mercy. He did this by offering His Only Begotten Son as propitiation for our sin, a sinless Being who could, with His Atonement, satisfy justice for us, putting us right with the law so that it is once again supporting and preserving us, not condemning us. Alma explains:

“And now, the plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also. . . .

“But there is a law given, and a punishment [or consequence] affixed, and a repentance granted; which repentance, mercy claimeth; otherwise, justice claimeth the creature and executeth the law, and the law inflicteth the punishment; if not so, the works of justice would be destroyed, and God would cease to be God.

“But God ceaseth not to be God, and mercy claimeth the penitent, and mercy cometh because of the atonement” (Alma 42:15, 22–23).

The penitent, of course, are those who take responsibility and accept His mercy by repenting.<sup>3</sup> Or, in other words, repenting is what we do to claim the gracious gift of forgiveness that a just Father in Heaven can offer us because His Beloved Son atoned for our sins.

*The Firstborn Son in the spirit was willing to become the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, to suffer and die to redeem us.*

### The Atonement of Jesus Christ

Because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can recover from bad choices. Because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the impact upon us of others' sins and mistakes, and every other injustice, is redressed. To be made whole, and to be made holy, we need a Savior. So, the answer to our question is, "No, God cannot act any way He pleases to save a person. He cannot be arbitrary and also be just. And if He is not just, He is not God." Therefore, salvation and exaltation must be accomplished in a way that upholds and conforms to immutable law, to justice. And

thanks be to God, He has upheld justice by providing a Savior.

Let it be noted that in the great premortal council, Lucifer was not volunteering to be our savior. He was not interested in suffering or dying or shedding any of his blood on

our behalf. He was not seeking to become the embodiment of justice but to become a law unto himself.<sup>4</sup> It is my opinion that in saying to the Father, "Give me thine honor" (Moses 4:1), Lucifer was saying, "Give me the right to rule," intending to exercise that power capriciously. The law would be whatever he said it was at any given moment. In that way, no one could be an independent actor. Lucifer would be supreme, and no one else could advance.

Jesus, on the other hand, understood that both inalterable justice and mercy would be required for His brothers and sisters to

progress. With the Father, He was seeking not to coerce and dominate us but to free and lift us so that we might "be above all" and "have all power" with the Father (Doctrine and Covenants 132:20).

How we ought to rejoice that this Firstborn Son in the spirit was willing to become the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, to suffer incomprehensibly and die ignominiously to redeem us. He perfectly unites justice and mercy. He saves us from—not in, but from—our



sins (see Helaman 5:10–11; see also Matthew 1:21).

And He also redeems us from the Fall, from spiritual and physical death. He opens the door to immortality and eternal life. It would be impossible to plumb the depths of His love. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: . . .

". . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4–5).



## Glory to God

As Christmas approaches, I realize that some may have concerns and anxiety about the future. There may be a lot of “noise” in your life, more or less constant engagement online without downtime, without time to be quiet and reflect and think, without time to look inside and discern where you are and where you should be going. You may be influenced by unrealistic expectations, such as “perfection should be immediate” or “uninterrupted happiness and success should be the norm in life.”

I hope you will lay aside these misconceptions, dial down the “noise,” and take some time this Christmas season, at least an hour, if not more—to reflect on “the wonder and the majesty of . . . the Son of God.”<sup>5</sup> Let it be an hour of reassurance and renewal for you.

On a prior Christmastime, I wrote this message:

“When we talk about the birth of Jesus Christ, we appropriately reflect on what was to follow. His birth was infinitely significant because of the things He would experience and suffer so that He might better succor us—all culminating in His Crucifixion and Resurrection (see Alma 7:11–12). . . .

“[But I also] think it’s appropriate this time of year just to think about that baby in the manger. Don’t be too overwhelmed or occupied with what is to come. . . . Take a quiet, peaceful moment to ponder the beginning of His life—the culmination of heavenly prophecy but the earthly beginning for Him.

“Take time to relax, be at peace, and see this little child in your mind. Do not be too concerned . . . with what [may be] coming in His life or in yours. Instead, take a peaceful



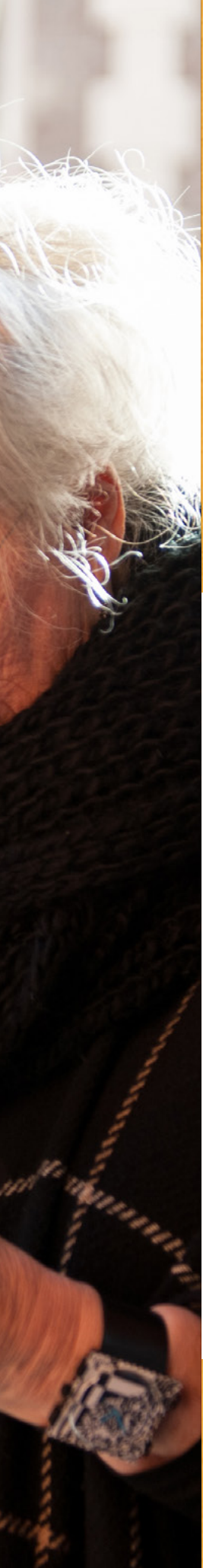
moment to contemplate perhaps the most serene moment in the history of the world—when all of heaven rejoiced with the message ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men’ (Luke 2:14).<sup>6</sup> ■

*From a devotional address, “A Message at Christmas,” given at Brigham Young University on December 12, 2017.*

### NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Gordon B. Hinckley* (2016), 330.
2. “Unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also and conditions. All beings who abide not in those conditions are not justified” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:38–39). God abides and acts by the law of the highest kingdom. Therefore, “He comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things; and all things are by him, and of him, even God, forever and ever” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:41).
3. “Yea, and as often as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me” (Mosiah 26:30).
4. Those who follow Satan are pursuing that same goal, but as the Lord declares, “that which breaketh a law, and abideth not by law, but seeketh to become a law unto itself, and willet to abide in sin, and altogether abideth in sin [that is, in a state of disobedience to law], cannot be sanctified by law, neither by mercy, justice, nor judgment. Therefore, they must remain filthy still” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:35).
5. *Teachings: Gordon B. Hinckley*, 331.
6. D. Todd Christofferson, “Be at Peace,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2015, 30.





By Elder Richard Neitzel Holzapfel  
Area Seventy,  
Utah Area

# Ministering TO ALL

As part of our efforts to minister in a holier and higher way, Church leaders have begun to talk about member missionary work as ministering to all, “regardless of whether their names appear on your ministering sister or brother list.”<sup>1</sup> This more excellent way is a mindset change—an enhanced approach that can change everything about how and why we minister to others.

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles observed: “In whatever ways seem natural and normal to you, share with people why Jesus Christ and His Church are important to you. Invite them to *‘come and see.’* Then encourage them to *come and help.* There are numerous opportunities for people to help in our Church.

“Pray not only for the missionaries to find the elect. Pray daily with all your heart that you will find those who will *come and see, come and help, and come and stay.*”<sup>2</sup>

Ministering is about becoming more dedicated and converted disciples of Jesus Christ who have the same heart and

How can Elder Uchtdorf’s call to minister in natural and normal ways change sharing the gospel for you?



IMAGES FROM GETTY IMAGES

compassion as the Savior. The Lord has invited us to progress to ministering to others in natural and normal ways out of love. It is not about *doing* ministering. It is about *becoming* a minister like Jesus Christ.

### Learning to Minister to the (Assigned) One

We are still learning to become ministering brothers and sisters. A change like this can take time, and we will most likely make mistakes. In my mind, one of those mistakes is to dismiss ministering assignments as merely “fake” or “forced” friendship—in a way not normal or natural. But the Lord gives us specific assignments as ministering brothers and sisters. In this way, He ensures that no one is left out.

When natural disasters strike in the United States, the Red Cross and National Guard organizations mobilize their volunteers and assign them to specific areas to get maximum coverage. Receiving an assignment makes the volunteers’ gift of time and love no less voluntary. No one who has experienced a disaster in his or her life seems to question these assignments. The beneficiaries are grateful that someone has come to help!

Like volunteers with the National Guard or Red Cross, when we become disciples of Jesus Christ through making sacred covenants, we volunteer to be mobilized in performing specific assignments to help others.



Ministering to all requires a willing heart and eyes to see those around us—the people the Lord has put in our paths.





These assignments provide us opportunities to learn and grow in our abilities to minister, often through our failures. But soon, ministering will become “second nature” to us—just as we have learned to walk, talk, ride a bike, play a musical instrument, or learn a sport.

### **What Is Ministering to All in “Natural and Normal Ways”?**

Our individual ministering assignments prepare us to “minister to all” in normal and natural ways. Ministering to all requires a willing heart and eyes to see

those around us—the people the Lord has put in our paths. “Ministering” at that point can be as simple as inviting them—in natural and normal ways—to “come and see” or to “come and help.”

The Savior provided the example. When Jesus appeared to the people at the temple in Bountiful, He told them, “But now I go unto the Father, and also to show myself unto the lost tribes of Israel” (3 Nephi 17:4).

Like us, the Savior had somewhere to go. The story continued:

“And it came to pass that when Jesus had thus spoken, he cast his eyes round about again on the multitude, and beheld they were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer with them.

“And he said unto them: Behold, *my bowels are filled with compassion towards you*”

(3 Nephi 17:5–6; emphasis added).<sup>3</sup>

Even though He had planned to go somewhere, the Savior had eyes to see and a heart that feels, so He stopped to minister to the people:

“Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you; my bowels are filled with mercy” (3 Nephi 17:7).

Knowing the Savior as we do, for Him to take time to heal the sick before His next appointment was a natural thing. For us, ministering to all in normal and natural ways might include simply inviting someone to do something you’re already planning to do or go with you to an event that you were already planning to attend.

If you’re taking a self-reliance course, invite your neighbor to come along. If you’re going to a ward activity, invite your co-worker to go with you. If you’re already having family scripture study or home evening, invite your friend to join you. That’s what “come and see” means. It doesn’t require us to add a single activity to our busy schedules. And in times when visiting in person isn’t possible, ministering can be done through a text message, email, or phone call.

### **Trusted to Minister**

When President M. Russell Ballard set me apart as the new president of the Provo Utah YSA First Stake, he provided a simple and specific assignment: “Go visit your leaders

and members in their homes and apartments!” That was it; he gave no other training or assignments.

Coordinating our efforts with our bishops, we started on Tuesday, two days after our stake conference. As we ministered in our stake, we made mistakes, missed opportunities, and often thought, “I could have said that better” or “I wish we had asked a better question.”

Brigham Young University President Kevin J Worthen observed that “failing is a critical component of our eternal progress—our quest for perfection. And because of the Atonement we can—if we respond to failures in the right way—be blessed with a new kind of learning that allows our failures to become part of the perfecting process.”<sup>4</sup>

This was our experience as we learned to minister to the leaders and members of the stake and to others we met. As we continued ministering, the Lord began to put more and more people in our path.

On one occasion, one of my counselors, J. B. Haws, and I were walking between apartment complexes when we met a young man in the parking lot. We stopped to say hello and found out that he was moving out of our stake. We talked for a moment and discovered that he was a returned missionary facing questions about his faith. My counselor is a master teacher who connects with people easily. Answering questions like these was natural and normal for J. B. I could see in this young man’s eye a light that may have been missing for some time reappear as they talked.

It was obvious that J. B. was interested in him and in his questions and concerns. The young man opened himself up because J. B. showed compassion. My counselor’s “bowels were filled” with love, and he had a desire to understand this young man without judging him. J. B. asked if we could visit him once he settled into his new apartment. The young man nodded, mobile numbers were exchanged, and a promise to follow up with him was made.

Before we left, we asked if there was anything we could do to help. He said, “Stopping to say hello was one of the most important things you could have done for me today.” Later that evening, I thought to myself, “If J. B. and I had not been out ministering, we may never have met this young man.”

It seems the Lord knew that we would be ministering that evening, so He placed this young man in our path—trusting we would see him and minister to him.

When we desire to minister to all as we go about our daily lives, the Lord will place people in our paths because He trusts us that we will look up from our mobile phones, take a moment to smile at a stranger, or ask a question from someone we have met in the market or wherever we find ourselves at school, work, or church.





When we desire to minister to all as we go about our daily lives, the Lord will place people in our paths because He trusts us.



### The Amazing Results of Ministering

Looking back on the Savior's example in 3 Nephi, I discovered an important principle about ministering. As you will remember:

"It came to pass that when he had thus spoken, all the multitude, with one accord, did go forth with their sick and their afflicted, and their lame, and with their blind, and with their dumb, and with all them that were afflicted in any manner; and he did heal them every one as they were brought forth unto him.

*"And they did all, both they who had been healed and they who were whole, bow down at his feet, and did worship him; and as many as could come for the multitude did kiss his feet, insomuch that they did bathe his feet with their tears"* (3 Nephi 17:9–10; emphasis added).

Notice that those ministering brothers and sisters who helped bring those they knew and loved closer to Jesus Christ also found themselves at the Savior's feet, bowing, worshipping, and kissing and bathing His feet with their tears.

As we minister to all, we will see Christ healing emotional, spiritual, and physical wounds. And as we invite others to "come and see" and "come and help" in natural and normal ways, we will find our own wounds being healed too. ■

#### NOTES

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Missionary Work: Sharing What Is in Your Heart," *Ensign*, May 2019, 16.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Missionary Work: Sharing What Is in Your Heart," 17.
3. See also how Jesus Christ ministered to the widow of Nain in the same manner in Luke 7:11–16.
4. Kevin J. Worthen, "Successfully Failing: Pursuing Our Quest for Perfection" (Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 6, 2015), 3, [speeches.byu.edu](https://speeches.byu.edu).





# Receive the Gift

*Studying the word of God, serving,  
repenting, and going to the temple will help  
us feel God's love this Christmas.*

By Jakob R. Jones

One November evening I arrived home to discover my children had transformed their bedroom into a Christmas wonderland. Christmas trees, sparkling garland, strings of lights, and paper snowflakes adorned the corners, bed frames, walls, and ceiling. A homemade fireplace complete with logs, lights, and stockings completed the display. That magnificent Christmas scene warmed our home and hearts.

Another of my favorite Christmas scenes was described by the prophet Nephi. Nephi's father, Lehi, shared a dream wherein he saw a beautiful tree whose fruit filled his soul with joy (see 1 Nephi 8:12). Nephi desired that he too might see the tree that his father described. In answer to prayer, Nephi was shown a vision. Nephi's account of that experience is, for me, a beautiful Christmas story. He wrote:

"And it came to pass after I had seen the tree, I said unto the Spirit: I behold thou hast shown unto me the tree which is precious above all.

"And he said unto me: What desirest thou?

"And I said unto him: To know the interpretation thereof . . .

". . . And I beheld the city of Nazareth; and in the city of Nazareth I beheld a virgin. . . .

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

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

"And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father!" (1 Nephi 11:9–11, 13, 18, 20–21).

I think it is significant that when Nephi asked to know the meaning of the tree, he was shown the first Christmas. The Spirit then asked if Nephi understood the meaning of the tree. Nephi gave this inspired response:

"Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things."

The Spirit added, "Yea, and the most joyous to the soul" (1 Nephi 11:22–23).

Through this experience, Nephi learned that the thing most desirable and joyous to our souls is to feel the love of God through His Son, Jesus Christ. That is the real gift of Christmas. However, many of us struggle to feel God's love in our lives—even during this holiday season. Following are four suggestions of things we can do to receive the gift of God's love this Christmas season.



### 1. Study the Word of God

Begin or renew a regular study of the scriptures and words of living prophets. In Lehi's vision, he saw "a rod of iron" (1 Nephi 8:19) leading to the tree. Those who experienced God's love caught hold of the rod, held fast to it, and pressed forward until they partook of the fruit of the tree (see 1 Nephi 8:30). Nephi learned that this rod represents the word of God (see 1 Nephi 11:25).

We can invite the Lord into our lives by studying His words. Our commitment need not be overwhelming. When friends ask how long they should study the scriptures, I often answer, "Read until you feel the Spirit; then you may feel to keep going." It's not the number of minutes, verses, or chapters we read that matter. More important is the experience we seek to have with the Spirit as we study. The Lord will bless us for every small effort we make.

The *Come, Follow Me* study for December includes the book of Moroni and a special chapter titled "Christmas." What better

opportunity to immerse ourselves in the scriptures than to study the sacrament prayers and words of prophets like Moroni as they bear powerful, personal witness of Jesus Christ?

We can also study the words of living prophets by reading the general conference issues of the *Ensign* or *Liahona* or by listening to their talks in the Gospel Library. Like the iron rod in Lehi's dream, our renewed study of the words of Christ can lead us to experience God's love this Christmas.

### 2. Serve

Perhaps the most cherished Christmas of my youth was the year our family joined with aunts, uncles, and cousins to donate clothing, food, toys, eyeglasses, and appliances to a local family in need. I'll never forget being part of the large caravan that brought Christmas to their home. That feeling continued long after Christmas passed and the grateful expressions of the mother and her four children remain in my memory. Serving that family allowed God's love to "[shed] itself abroad" (1 Nephi 11:22) in my heart.

Our service to others need not be grand or complicated. While serving as a bishop, I learned that there are many in our wards and communities who, on any given day, feel lonely, anxious, or overwhelmed. A phone call, thoughtful text message, kind note, homemade treat, shared neighborhood walk, or an offer to help with someone's children can be a heaven-sent miracle and answer to prayer.

If we will ask our Heavenly Father, "Is there someone I can help today?" a name or face may come to our mind, and promptings from the Holy Ghost will help us understand

how we can bless that person. As we act on those promptings, we will experience some of God's love for them and for us.

The Church's "Light the World" initiative suggests simple acts of service to help others feel God's love. If the Spirit prompts you to receive the gift of God's love in your life through service this Christmas, Light the World can help you start (visit [ComeuntoChrist.org](http://ComeuntoChrist.org)).

### 3. Repent

The third invitation is to receive the Savior's gift of repentance. Elder Lynn G. Robbins of the Seventy taught: "Repentance is God's ever-accessible gift that allows and enables us to go from failure to failure without any loss of enthusiasm. Repentance isn't His backup plan in the event we might fail. Repentance *is* His plan, knowing that we will."<sup>1</sup>

This life is difficult. As we strive toward our goal of eternal life, we all fall short and need the redeeming power of Christ's Atonement. One of the reasons the Savior willingly chose to experience the penalty of our sins was so He could offer us the gift of repentance. He has already paid the price. What remains is for us to choose whether we will accept His invitation:

"Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. Behold, for such I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again; therefore repent, and come unto me ye ends of the earth, and be saved" (3 Nephi 9:22).

I suppose we all carry some burden of sin, great or small, that the Spirit has been prompting us to unload. Our bishops and stake presidents can help. The Savior has a

kind and forgiving disposition, and He imparts similar feelings to His servants. They love us and can help us be healed through the Savior's Atonement. We can each accept the Savior's offer to come unto Him and be made whole this Christmas.

### 4. Visit the House of the Lord

Some of the moments where I've felt God's love the most have been in His holy temples. There, my sweet wife and I were sealed together for time and eternity. I've gone there seeking guidance for decisions and to find peace during times of stress. In the temple, heaven seems more accessible, and revelation seems to flow more readily.

Regarding the ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood, which include temple ordinances, the Lord has said, "In the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest" (Doctrine and Covenants 84:20).

As we participate in temple ordinances, we come to know God, and the peace and power of a godlike life is made manifest in our lives.

President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) promised, "As we attend the temple, there can come to us a dimension of spirituality and a feeling of peace which will transcend any other feeling which could come into the human heart."<sup>2</sup>

If it has been some time since you felt peace, why not let this Christmas season mark the beginning of a renewed commitment to attend the temple when it reopens? If you haven't received your own endowment yet, your bishop can help you prepare. We can also feel God's love as we find and submit names for our ancestors to receive the blessings of the temple.

### The Real Gift

The word of God, heartfelt service, repentance, and participation in temple ordinances are all opportunities to receive the real gift of Christmas. The Apostle John wrote, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). This Christmas, I pray each of us will be guided by the Spirit to choose those things that will help us experience God's magnificent gift of love through His Son, Jesus Christ. ■

#### NOTES

1. Lynn G. Robbins, "Until Seventy Times Seven," *Ensign*, May 2018, 22.
2. Thomas S. Monson, "Blessings of the Temple," *Ensign*, May 2015, 91–92.

## What Church Leaders Are Saying

# about Forgiveness

### The Ability to Forgive

“The Savior offers you . . . the ability to *forgive*. Through His infinite Atonement, you can forgive those who have hurt you and who may never accept responsibility for their cruelty to you.

“It is usually easy to forgive one who sincerely and humbly seeks your forgiveness. But *the Savior will grant you the ability to forgive anyone who has mistreated you in any way*. Then their hurtful acts can no longer canker your soul.”<sup>1</sup>

President Russell M. Nelson, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

### What the Lord Did Not Say

“‘I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men’ [Doctrine and Covenants 64:10]. It is, however, important for some of you living in real anguish to note what He did *not* say. *He did not say, ‘You are not allowed to feel true pain or real sorrow from the shattering experiences you have had at the hand of another.’* Nor did He say, ‘In order to forgive fully, you have to reenter a toxic relationship or return to an abusive, destructive circumstance.’”<sup>2</sup>

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

*We can feel our Savior’s love for us as we extend His love and forgiveness to others.*



## Finding Joy and Peace

“Satan can mimic many different emotions, but he cannot mimic true joy, and he cannot mimic peace. . . . The beauty of repentance and forgiveness is that because of Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice, *we can progress and find joy and peace in our imperfect but best efforts*. We can experience our Father’s plan of happiness in this life, not just in the next!”<sup>3</sup>

Michelle D. Craig, First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

## What Is Most Important

“In each of our lives things happen that make us stop and consider what is most important. . . . At these tender moments, *the four things that matter most find expression as ‘thank you,’ ‘I love you,’ ‘please forgive me,’ and ‘I forgive you’* (see Ira Byock, *The Four Things That Matter Most* [2004], 3).

“Each of these phrases is an echo of the Atonement. In each we feel our Savior’s love for us as we extend His love and forgiveness to others. Each eases pain, offers hope and comfort, and reconciles injustices.”<sup>4</sup>

Elder Gerrit W. Gong of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

## Quiet Strength and Courage

“On a December night in 1982, . . . a 20-year-old drunk driver, speeding at more than 85 miles (135 km) per hour, recklessly ran a stoplight [and] crashed violently into the car driven by my youngest brother, Tommy, instantly killing him and his wife, Joan. . . .

“ . . . A court sentencing hearing was held for the young man found responsible for vehicular manslaughter. In their ongoing grief and sorrow, my parents and oldest sister, Katy, attended the hearing. . . . My parents and sister . . . walked to the driver’s parents and offered them words of comfort and forgiveness. The men shook hands; the women held hands; there was deep sorrow and tears for all and a recognition that both families had suffered immensely. Mom, Dad, and Katy led the way with their quiet strength and courage and showed our family what forgiveness looks like. . . .

“I plead for all of us this day to *remember and follow the example of Jesus Christ. On the cross at Golgotha, in His anguish, He uttered these words: ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do’* [Luke 23:34].”<sup>5</sup>

Elder Larry J. Echo Hawk, emeritus member of the Seventy



## The Savior Will Mend What We Cannot

“Sometimes our efforts to heal and restore may be as simple as an apology, but other times restitution may require years of humble effort. Yet, for many of our sins and mistakes, we simply are not able to fully heal those we have hurt. *The magnificent, peace-giving promise of the Book of Mormon and the restored gospel is that the Savior will mend all that we have broken.*”<sup>6</sup>

Elder James R. Rasband of the Seventy

### NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “The Savior’s Four Gifts of Joy,” *New Era*, Dec. 2019, 4.
2. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Ministry of Reconciliation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 79.
3. Michelle D. Craig, Facebook post, Sept. 24, 2019.
4. Gerrit W. Gong, Facebook post, Aug. 24, 2018.
5. Larry J. Echo Hawk, “Even as Christ Forgives You, So Also Do Ye,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 15–16.
6. James R. Rasband, “Ensuring a Righteous Judgment,” *Ensign*, May 2020, 14.



# A Witness of One's Own

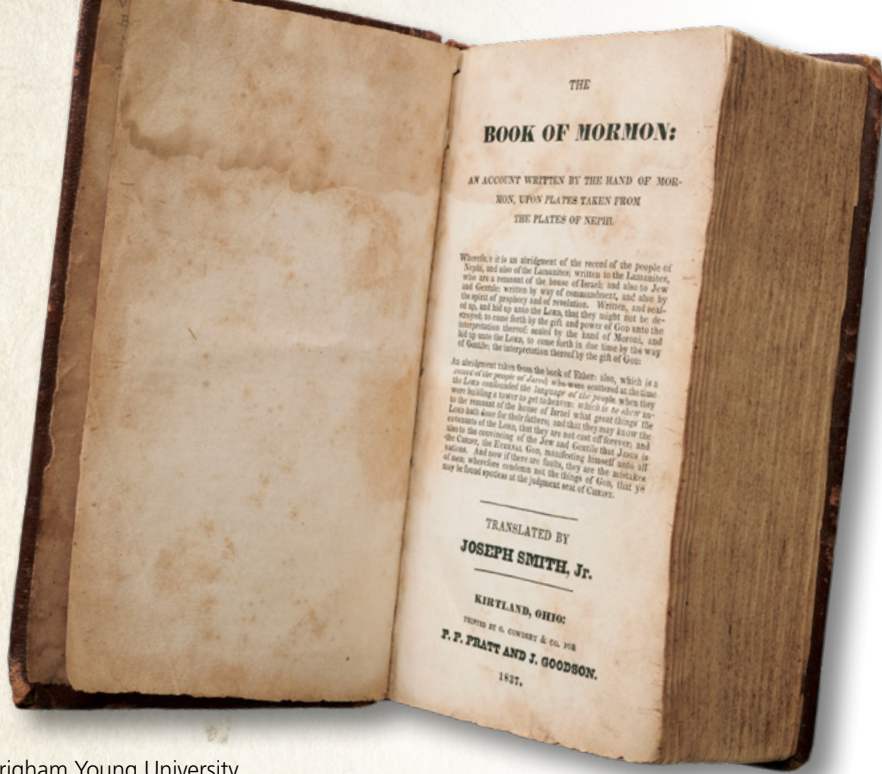
*Stories of the early Saints remind us that a testimony of the Book of Mormon can come in many different ways.*



Zina D. H. Young



Eliza R. Snow



**By Janiece Johnson**

Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University

Not long ago, President Russell M. Nelson asked us to think about what our lives would be like without the Book of Mormon.<sup>1</sup> The earliest Church members certainly knew life without it—they each had to gain a testimony of this unknown book. As we end this year’s curriculum study of the Book of Mormon and transition to studying Church history together next year, the stories of these early Saints remind us that the path of conversion is personal and individual.

### All Are Needed

Consider the two women in the accompanying photographs, Zina D. H. Young and Eliza R. Snow. Dressed in similar dark dresses and with lace gloves and vintage hairstyles, they seem to look alike. Quick biographical summaries also look almost identical: both joined the Church early on, crossed the plains to the Salt Lake Valley, were married to prophets, and served as Relief Society General Presidents. If our comparison ended there, however, we would miss the power of their individual journeys.

Zina said she first “saw the Book of Mormon, that strange, new book, lying on the window sill of our sitting-room” when she was 14 years old. As she picked up the book, a “sweet influence of the Holy Spirit accompanied it to such an extent that I pressed it to my bosom in a rapture of delight, murmuring as I did so, “This is the truth, truth, truth!”<sup>2</sup>

While Zina’s testimony of the Book of Mormon came quickly, before she had even read a word, conviction did not come as easily for Eliza. Her mother and sister joined the Church first. Eliza met Joseph Smith and thought he had “an honest face.”<sup>3</sup> She heard two

of the Three Witnesses—men who saw and handled the golden plates—talk about the book, and “such impressive testimonies” she had never heard before. Even so, she didn’t want to move too quickly and be deceived. Thinking that it all might be just a “flash in the pan,” it took her four years of studying scripture before her “heart was . . . fixed” and she decided to be baptized.<sup>4</sup>

The Church needed the unique experiences and voices of both of these sisters. In the 19th century, Eliza was known as the “head” of the Relief Society and Zina as the “heart.” Eliza was a poet and an intellectual—she taught and testified with power. Zina consistently demonstrated love for others—compassion poured out of her.<sup>5</sup> Neither of these was the one-and-only right way to be a Relief Society president or Latter-day Saint. There was a place for both of them. More than that, the Church needed both of them.

As Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught: “We need your unique talents and perspectives. The diversity of persons and peoples all around the globe is a strength of this Church.”<sup>6</sup> The Church needs all of us. There is a place for all of us.



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*For most people, reading the Book of Mormon is essential to gaining a testimony of its truth.*

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LEFT PHOTOGRAPH BY JANNAE BINGHAM

### **Everyone's Path Is Different**

For some converts—both in the early Church and today—their first opinion of the Book of Mormon is not a positive one. For example, a neighbor of the Smith family named Ezra Thayre first heard about the “Golden Bible” in 1830. He didn’t believe that Joseph, a familiar farm boy, could help produce a divine book. The thought, he said, “filled [me] with wrath.” But his anger melted away when he touched a copy of the Book of Mormon. Ezra said that in that moment, he “received a shock with such exquisite joy that no pen can write and no tongue can express.” He bought a copy of the book, and when he began to read, he “felt a double portion of the Spirit.” He was “truly in heaven.”<sup>7</sup>

For most people, reading the Book of Mormon is essential to gaining a testimony of its truth. An early member of the Church named Sarah D. Pea wrote about the day missionaries first shared the book with her family. “I felt anxious to see the Book of Mormon,” she said, and asked to be excused so she could read. She spent most of the night reading and was “greatly astonished” at what the book taught. “It left an impression upon my mind not to be forgotten,” she wrote. “For in fact the book appeared to be open before my eyes for weeks.”<sup>8</sup>

For many early converts, reading the Bible helped them develop a relationship with the Book of Mormon. After learning about the new book of scripture, an early Saint named Caroline B. Crosby said that she “was soon convinced of the truth.” However, she “considered it

best to read the Book of Mormon, and search the scriptures until I was thoroughly convinced that it was the work of the Lord.” After months of studying, she chose baptism.<sup>9</sup> Her sister, Louisa B. Pratt, attempted to read the Book of Mormon more than once but never progressed. It was reading the Bible that eventually confirmed to her the truth of the Book of Mormon and allowed her to develop a relationship with that book too.<sup>10</sup>

### **We All Have Our Own Timeline**

In 1830, an early missionary named Samuel Smith introduced the Book of Mormon to a preacher named Phineas Young. Using the now-familiar pattern that Moroni gave, Samuel promised, “If you will read this book with a prayerful heart and ask God to give you a witness, you will know of the truth of this work.”

Phineas agreed to the invitation—although later he admitted that he opened the book only to “make [himself] acquainted with the errors.” To his surprise, as he read and studied he was



persuaded of its truth. He preached from it for more than a year, until he decided he could no longer reconcile his current religion and the Book of Mormon. He determined that he must “leave one and cleave to the other”<sup>11</sup> and was baptized as a Latter-day Saint.

Although several siblings quickly shared his new beliefs, his brother Brigham did not. Brigham decided to wait a little while and—as he described it—“apply my heart” to the teachings. After studying for two years, Brigham “made up [his] mind to receive” the Book of Mormon and decided to be baptized. He later testified, “I knew it was true, as well as I knew I could see with my eyes, or feel by the touch of my fingers.”<sup>12</sup>

Each of the Youngs received a witness of the Book of Mormon in their own time and in their own way, just as we may. Brigham later became the second prophet and President of the Church, and his words have been called to mind by our living prophet today, who said, “I might paraphrase President Brigham Young in saying, ‘I wish I had the voice of seven thunders to wake up the people’ to the truth and power of the Book of Mormon.”<sup>13</sup>

## A Promise for Everyone

God speaks to each of His children “after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding” (Doctrine and

Covenants 1:24). For us, that promise could mean that we will have the chance to read the Book of Mormon in our native language—something increasingly possible as the Church spreads across the globe. But this promise also refers to the individual way God speaks to each one of us. President Nelson has invited us on multiple occasions to make an effort to become familiar with that voice. “God gives us the pattern for success, happiness, and joy in this life,” he testified. “We are to *hear* the words of the Lord, *hearken* to them, and *heed* what He has told us!”<sup>14</sup>

As we follow this prophetic advice, we—like the early Saints—can receive a witness all our own. ■

### NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 60–63.
2. Zina D. H. Young, “How I Gained My Testimony of the Truth,” *Young Woman's Journal*, April 1893, 318.
3. See Jill Mulvay Derr and Karen Lynn Davidson, “A Wary Heart Becomes ‘Fixed Unalterably’: Eliza R. Snow’s Conversion to Mormonism,” *Journal of Mormon History*, vol. 30, no. 2 (Fall 2004), 116.
4. See Edward Tullidge, *Women of Mormondom* (1877), 63–64.
5. See Susa Young Gates, *History of the Young Ladies’ Mutual Improvement Association* (1911), 21.
6. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Come, Join with Us,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 23.
7. “Testimony of Brother E. Thayre,” *True Latter Day Saints’ Herald*, Oct. 1862, 79–80.
8. Sarah De Armon Pea Rich, *Autobiography*, typescript, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University (hereafter LTPSC BYU).
9. See *No Place to Call Home: The 1807–1857 Life Writings of Caroline Barnes Crosby, Chronicler of Outlying Mormon Communities*, ed. Edward Leo Lyman and others (2005), 32–33; spelling and capitalization standardized.
10. See *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt: Being the Autobiography of a Mormon Missionary Widow and Pioneer*, ed. S. George Ellsworth (1998), 55–56.
11. See Phineas Howe Young, “Life of Phineas Young—Written by Himself,” 1838, LTPSC BYU.
12. Brigham Young, “A Discourse,” Aug. 8, 1852, *Deseret News—Extra*, Sept. 14, 1852, 36.
13. Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?” 63.
14. Russell M. Nelson, “Hear Him,” *Ensign*, May 2020, 89.





## Moroni 1–6

NOVEMBER 30–DECEMBER 6

# What can we learn from the book of Moroni?

**M**oroni lived in turbulent times. He witnessed the final destruction of the Nephites, his father died in battle (see Mormon 8:3), and Nephites who refused to deny Jesus Christ were killed (see Moroni 1:2). Moroni also refused to “deny the Christ” (Moroni 1:3). He fled for safety and lived in hiding for many years.

### “I write a few more things” (Moroni 1:4)

During this time, Moroni thought his writing on the plates was finished, but it was the will of the Lord that he “write a few more things, that perhaps they may be of worth unto my brethren . . . in some future day” (Moroni 1:4).



### Why did he write it?

Knowing the divine purposes of the Book of Mormon, Moroni had to carefully choose what he wrote. After reading the book of Moroni, consider asking why Moroni chose to record what he did. What did he feel was essential? How does Moroni’s final testimony influence your feelings about the Book of Mormon?

### What did he write?

Moroni added chapters 8 and 9 to the book of Mormon, included his abridgement of the book of Ether, and added his own book (the book of Moroni) to the plates of Mormon.

Moroni’s writing contains many things of worth for us. He wrote about the work of the Church (see Moroni 1–6), included teachings from his father, Mormon (see Moroni 7–9), and recorded his final testimony (see Moroni 10).





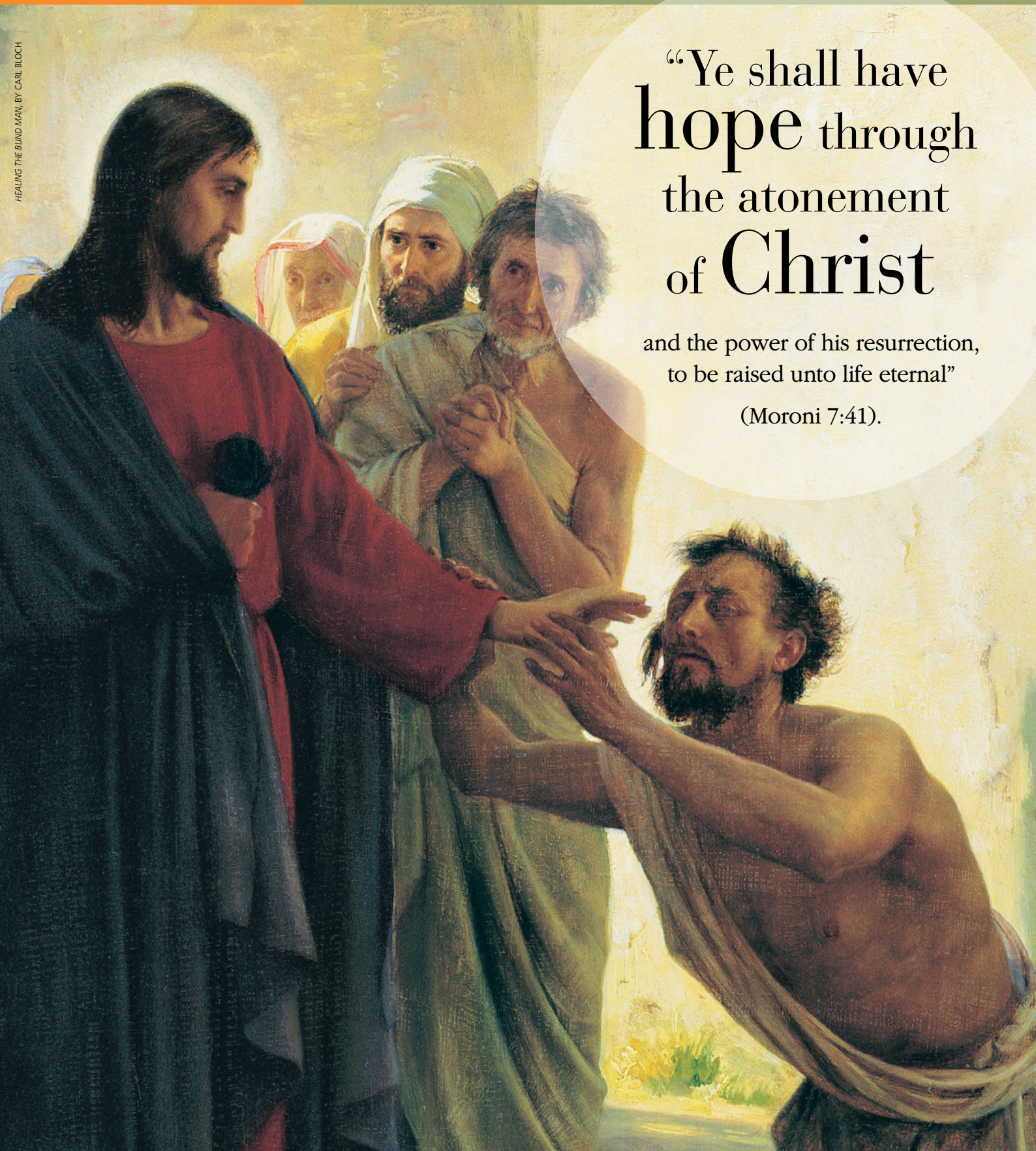
Moroni 7–9  
DECEMBER 7–13

“What is it that ye shall hope for?”  
(Moroni 7:41)

“Ye shall have  
**hope** through  
the atonement  
of **Christ**

and the power of his resurrection,  
to be raised unto life eternal”

(Moroni 7:41).





## Moroni 10

DECEMBER 14–20

# How can I seek spiritual gifts?

**S**piritual gifts are given by God through the Holy Ghost for our benefit (see Moroni 10:8). Each of us has been blessed with spiritual gifts from God, and there are many gifts we can receive.

Some spiritual gifts are identified in the scriptures (see Moroni 10:9–16; Doctrine and Covenants 46:13–25); many are not. How can you identify and develop the spiritual gifts God has given you? How can you develop other gifts? Here are a few ideas to help you:



### Ask

Pray and ask God what spiritual gifts He has blessed you with or which ones you should strive for. He will help you. Your patriarchal blessing might also reveal your spiritual gifts. If you have not received your patriarchal blessing, consider visiting with your bishop or branch president about receiving one.

### Study

Spiritual gifts require effort to receive them. While striving for a specific gift, consider learning more about it from the scriptures, your patriarchal blessing, or general conference talks. You can also ask others about their experiences.



### Act

Learning about spiritual gifts is helpful, but you need to put that knowledge to use. When you exercise faith in Jesus Christ, repent, and keep your covenants, you are eligible to receive spiritual gifts. Also, find situations where you can use your spiritual gifts. Remember that these gifts not only benefit you, but they can also benefit others (see Doctrine and Covenants 46:26). How can you use your spiritual gifts to help others?



# What do Book of Mormon prophets teach us about Christmas?

As you read the following scriptures, what does each prophet teach us about the birth of the Savior? Consider recording your thoughts or sharing them with your family.



## Nephi, the son of Helaman (about AD 1)

“The voice of the Lord came unto him, saying: . . . on the morrow come I into the world” (see 3 Nephi 1:4–22).



## Nephi (about 600 BC)

“I beheld a virgin . . . 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!” (see 1 Nephi 11:13–33).

## Abinadi (about 148 BC)

“All the prophets . . . since the world began— . . . have they not said that God himself should come down among the children of men . . . ?” (see Mosiah 13:33–35).

## King Benjamin (about 124 BC)

“The Lord . . . shall come . . . among the children of men, . . . and he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, . . . and his mother shall be called Mary” (see Mosiah 3:5–11).

## Alma the Younger (about 83 BC)

“He shall be born of Mary, . . . even the Son of God” (see Alma 7:7–13).

## Samuel the Lamanite (about 6 BC)

“Five years more cometh, and behold, then cometh the Son of God” (see Helaman 14:1–13).

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAN BURR



# How Do I Talk to My Kids about the Gospel in Everyday Ways?

## ADDITIONAL HELPFUL RESOURCES

- “Dear Parents” (the back cover of the *Friend*)
- “Geckos, Crickets, and Time with Children” (June 2019 *Ensign*)
- “Protecting Children” (Apr. 2019 *Ensign*)
- “Talking about Tough Topics” (Mar. 2015 *Ensign*)

While eating together or at bedtime

When your child is going through a tough time

## 7 Informal Talking Times


What did you think about those general conference talks we watched?

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOSIE PORTILLO

## 7 Ways to Start a Conversation


Have any of your friends asked about religious things?

As parents, it’s our job to teach our children about the gospel. But a gospel discussion doesn’t have to be formal! Here are some ideas for weaving gospel discussions into daily life.



Anytime—if you approach the conversation with openness, love in your heart, and a desire to listen and understand


Whenever you notice something that relates to a spiritual message



While telling family stories or talking about ancestors


During a service project or when helping others

Before and after Church meetings or activities



Is there anything we've read in *Come, Follow Me* lately that you're still thinking about?

Was there anything at church today that you had a question about?



I've been thinking about this scripture lately. What are your thoughts about it?

What have you read in the scriptures lately? Do you have any questions?

How are things going with your calling (or other Church assignment)? What would help you?

## Thoughts and Tips

- **Teach your child that having questions about the gospel is OK.** After all, it was a question that prompted Joseph Smith to pray for help, which led to the First Vision! Help them realize they can still nurture a testimony without all the answers.
- **Point out when you feel the Spirit,** whether it's during home evening, church, or a beautiful sunset. This can help them start to recognize how the Spirit speaks to us. Explain that the Spirit can communicate to us through many different ways, such as warm or light feelings, clear thoughts, a sense of peace, etc.
- **Make gospel messages easily accessible.** Your teen might not look up Church magazine articles on their phone, but they might flip through a *Liahona* that's sitting on the table. They might not listen to general conference talks in their spare time, but they might catch a few words from a talk you are listening to as you make dinner.
- **Most importantly, keep trying, even if it doesn't seem to be working!** The scriptures are full of stories about children who didn't listen at first, like Alma the Younger. Trust that one day spiritual truths will sink into their hearts. ■

# fun FAMILY STUDY



Consider these activities during family scripture study or home evening.



## Moving with Moroni

### Moroni 1–6 (November 30–December 6)

Moroni wrote about several ordinances (or sacred acts performed by someone with priesthood authority). Use this activity to review the scriptures below.

- 1 Write the following on four sheets of paper and scatter them around the room:
  - Baptism (Moroni 6:1–3)
  - Confirmation (Moroni 6:4)
  - Sacrament (Moroni 6:6)
  - Priesthood ordination (Moroni 3)
- 2 Ask someone to start and stop a Church song while people walk from paper to paper.
- 3 When the music stops, everyone goes to the nearest paper. Whoever touches a paper last should read the scripture and say one reason that ordinance is important. Then start and stop the music for the next round.
- 4 Keep playing until all four ordinances have been discussed.

**Discussion:** What can we do to treat these ordinances as sacred? How do these ordinances bless our family?

## Faces of Charity

### Moroni 7 (December 7–13)

Mormon taught that we “must needs have charity” (Moroni 7:44). Use this activity to talk about what charity means.

- 1 Show the picture of Jesus from page 193 of the *Come, Follow Me* manual for individuals and families.
- 2 Read Moroni 7:45–47 together. As you read, write down on slips of paper phrases that describe charity (for example, “is kind”).
- 3 Put the slips of paper around the picture of Christ. Talk about times He acted in those ways.
- 4 Now show a picture of your family. Talk about what your family can do to follow Christ’s examples of charity. As each idea is shared, move the corresponding paper from Christ’s picture to your family’s picture.

**Discussion:** Read and talk about Moroni 7:48. What can your family do to get ready to see the Savior again?



## FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Find more home evening ideas in this month's *Friend*.



### Guess the Good Gift

#### Moroni 10 (December 14–20)

Use this activity to talk more about Moroni 10:18 (“every good gift cometh of Christ”).

- 1 Ahead of time, wrap a Book of Mormon with many layers of wrapping paper or colored cellophane. Tell your family you'll share clues about what's inside this gift.
- 2 As you share each clue (for example, “This teaches us about Jesus Christ”), invite a family member to take off a layer of paper and guess what's inside.
- 3 If someone guesses correctly, continue unwrapping and take turns sharing truths about the Book of Mormon.

**Discussion:** Once the book is unwrapped, end by reading Moroni 10:18 together. What can your family do to share the gift of the gospel with others?



### Testimony Time Capsule

#### Christmas (December 21–27)

As a family, talk about the past year. What was hard? What was good? What helped you draw closer to Jesus Christ? Then make a time capsule together.

- 1 Decorate a jar, box, or folder. Invite everyone in the family to add small objects, pictures, or journal entries about the past year.
- 2 Invite everyone to share at least one thing that represents their testimony of Jesus Christ or a blessing from God they noticed this year.
- 3 Close your capsule and put it somewhere it will be safe, and decide how long you should wait until you open it again.

**Discussion:** What can we do as a family in the upcoming year to continue learning about and following the Savior?

*From ideas contributed by Mitzi Schoneman, Brenda Slade, and Lisa Thomas*

# BRINGING THE MTC **HOME**

*Six skills that will bless our children's lives—whether or not they serve full-time missions.*



**By Merrilee Browne Boyack**

The author lives in Utah, USA.

**D**uring this year's pandemic, many houses unexpectedly became missionary training centers as those recently called to serve were asked to study at home instead of at a Church facility. But even before the pandemic hit, the lowering of the missionary age placed more responsibility on parents to help prepare their children for service. As Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, "The ultimate missionary training center is in our homes."<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps during this upcoming new year we could try to transform our homes into mini-MTCs—not just for a season but in a way that becomes part of everyday life. Here are six skills you could work on together as a family, maybe as part of the Children and Youth goal-setting program. Even if your children don't end up serving full-time missions, these lessons will help them more easily transition to adult life when the time comes.

## **1** TEACH THEM TO LOVE THE SCRIPTURES

Do our children understand that scriptures can help them make good choices, provide spiritual protection, and bring comfort during difficult times? President Russell M. Nelson has taught, through words and example, that power comes from reading and learning about Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> We can help our family develop a habit of reading together each day. Here are other ideas to help young ones get excited about scripture study:

- Buy them a copy of the Book of Mormon when they start learning to read so they can practice marking and using it, encouraging them to take note of what they learn about Jesus Christ. (Visit [store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) and click on "Gospel Study.")
- Memorize a scripture together each week, celebrating each new verse! Invite children to share

what they've learned with grandparents or Primary teachers.

- Have family home evening lessons about using the scriptures. It can be fun for children to create a system for marking or to explore different ways of adding notes. Teach them how to use footnotes and find things with the index, such as the roles and mission of Jesus Christ. This might also be an opportunity to clarify what the Topical Guide is—and that it's not a *tropical* guide!

The best thing you can do, with this and every aspect of teaching, is to set an example for your children to follow. I still remember watching my mother studying a big Bible in her lap. You never know what influence your quiet example will have on your children.

## **2** TEACH THEM TO BE INDEPENDENT

As parents, one of our jobs is to help our children eventually take command of their own lives. Ideally, they will have developed many areas of independence by the time they walk out of our door with a missionary name tag on. This means that they need to have practiced making choices and experiencing consequences before reaching the end of their teenage years.

"Generally, a young person who has been allowed to take responsibility and develop appropriate independence will have an easier time adjusting to missionary service," said Robert K. Wagstaff, a former mission and MTC president. "This means that it is important for parents to nurture their children in such a way that encourages independent, responsible decision-making skills founded on gospel principles."<sup>3</sup>

One mother encouraged her children to get up by themselves so they were used to taking responsibility for their morning routine. Another family invited children to keep their own calendar of activities. Our children were



TEACH YOUR CHILDREN TO  
WORK HARD, PHYSICALLY  
AND INTELLECTUALLY.  
WORK ALONGSIDE THEM.

taught to handle their own money from a young age. All of these skills—including others like basic cooking, cleaning, clothing care, riding a bicycle, and driving a car—help equip our children to live successfully without us when the time comes.

3

### TEACH THEM TO WORK HARD

I sometimes hear returned missionaries proclaim happily in sacrament meeting talks that missions were “the best time” of their lives, only to follow that statement with, “And it was also the hardest two years. I have never worked harder in my entire life.”

Teach your children to work hard, physically and intellectually. Work alongside them. Show them that hard work can be rewarding and even enjoyable. Completing simple projects together, like weeding the garden or folding laundry, also provides opportunities to talk.

4

### TEACH THEM TO SPEAK UP

In this increasingly digital world, it’s important to help our children learn to talk to other people face-to-face, including how to interact politely and confidently with strangers. This requires courage, but courage can be developed by practice. Here are ideas you could weave into daily routines:

- Children can safely practice talking to strangers by ordering food, buying movie tickets, confirming a doctor’s appointment, and so on.
- Set an example of welcoming new families at church

and encourage your kids to do the same when they notice new peers in class.

- Role-play, perhaps during family home evening, how to calmly agree to disagree.
- Host the missionaries for dinner and encourage your children to talk with them about something they’ve learned from the scriptures lately.

5

### TEACH THEM TO DRESS APPROPRIATELY

Why are young men encouraged to wear a white shirt and tie when they pass the sacrament? Why do we dress in our “Sunday best” for Church meetings? Dressing appropriately can show respect for our own bodies, for others, and for Heavenly Father. The way we dress can also influence the way we think and act.

As Elder L. Tom Perry (1922–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, once taught: “Our dress will reflect the way we intend to live, founded on principles of the gospel of our Lord and Savior. It is impossible to expect children who have been taught to love to dress in the immodest style trends of the day, to then change overnight to an entirely different wardrobe when they enter a Church university or a missionary training center, or when they are married in the temple, or even when they dress for the Sabbath day. Modest, proper styles must be taught almost from birth.”<sup>4</sup>

We can start to help our children dress appropriately for different situations when they are at a young age, including dressing nicely for Church meetings and other times when we are making an extra effort to invite the Spirit. We can also teach our kids how to care for their clothing—helping them practice doing laundry, ironing, fixing

simple tears, and replacing missing buttons. These simple skills can increase their self-reliance and help them transition into adult life with more comfort and confidence.

## 6 TEACH THEM TO LOVE AND SERVE OTHERS

A mission experience involves new cultures and companions. We can help our children practice appreciating those who seem different and helping those in need. We can begin today to follow the invitation given by Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“Try to truly see everyone around you as a child of God. Minister to them—regardless of whether their names appear on your ministering sister or brother list.

“Laugh with them. Rejoice with them. Weep with them. Respect them. Heal, lift, and strengthen them.”<sup>5</sup>

Nurturing a loving heart in our children takes regular effort. As a family, set goals to develop Christlike attributes

such as kindness, patience, empathy, courtesy, and charity. Point out the loving behavior you see in others. Be quick to praise your children for the kindness they show, especially when circumstances are difficult.

Helping our children learn to love is perhaps the most valuable mission-preparation lesson we can share. As President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) said: “There is no substitute for love. Successful missionaries love their companions, their mission leaders, and the precious persons whom they teach.”<sup>6</sup>

Let’s fill our homes with love and prepare our children to share that love with the rest of the world! ■

### NOTES

1. David A. Bednar, “Prepared to Obtain Every Needful Thing,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 103.
2. See, for example, Russell M. Nelson, “Study the Savior’s Words,” *New Era*, Jan. 2018, 2–5.
3. Robert K. Wagstaff, “Preparing Emotionally for Missionary Service,” *Ensign*, March 2011, 23–24.
4. L. Tom Perry, “Train Up a Child,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 75.
5. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Missionary Work: Sharing What Is in Your Heart,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 16.
6. Thomas S. Monson, “Come, All Ye Sons of God,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 68.



# Lighting the World in Paris

By Georgette Lalaus, Île-de-France, France

*I've found that serving brings indescribable joy and that small actions can build individuals in remarkable ways.*



With the homeless in the streets and refugees sleeping in the parks of Paris, France, the need for help is present daily before our eyes, even during the Christmas season. Two friends and I decided to form a community group called Solidarity to Act Together to help where we can.

With the support of many volunteers throughout the community as well as Latter-day Saints from the three stakes in Paris, we organized Light the World activities to help our brothers and sisters in need.

For three years in a row, we've held a year-end Light the World event where artists, volunteers, and guests from a variety of churches and organizations in Paris come to perform and donate supplies to those in need. It takes months of preparation, but volunteers and performers have experienced such immense joy participating in the event. None of them want to miss it. For our third Light the World event, 82 participants came despite a transportation strike!

Before the event, we prepared

and gathered backpacks filled with hygiene products to distribute to refugees and homeless people in Paris. We also gathered blankets, sheets, pillows, sporting goods, shower sandals, and even a bicycle, which were given to refugees.

Last year we also put on a fashion show during the event. A 22-year-old stylist who participated said the support he received gave him strength to believe in his abilities. As he spoke with me, I was reminded that everyone needs to feel needed and that all of us are in need in some way.

We look forward to next year. We expect even more participants and activities. Some have even offered warehouses and refrigerated vans to help us as we work with community agencies and partner with a large international catering company to provide balanced meals for those in need. We are also organizing a way to provide free French lessons for those learning French as a second language.

I find that serving in a noble cause brings indescribable joy. Small actions can build individuals in remarkable ways. The smiles and gratitude we have received motivate us to do even more. ■

# The Power of Prayer in Prison

By Portia Louder, Utah, USA

*I will always remember this Christmas Eve.*

I served four and a half years in federal prison for real estate fraud. Most of the women there were quiet and respectful. Then 10 women moved into the cell across from mine.

They would stay up late at night laughing and listening to loud music. They didn't seem to care how their behavior affected others. My roommates asked me to talk to them, but conversations like this usually don't go well in prison. I prayed instead for these women to change their behavior and for peace to be restored, but things only got worse.

While praying one night, I realized I hadn't made any effort to get to know my neighbors. I went to their cell the next day and talked with them. They showed me pictures of their families and loved ones. They apologized for being too loud. From then on, they waved and seemed happy when they saw me.

A few weeks before Christmas, they invited me to have Christmas Eve dinner with them. We also

planned to share with one another spiritual experiences we've had. On Christmas Eve, we gathered together and hung a few paper decorations. We didn't have a Christmas tree, but we all felt a peaceful spirit. After our simple dinner of tuna fish and potato chips, we shared our experiences. We all had different religious backgrounds and each of our stories were unique, but our hearts were connected and the Spirit was there.

April told us her mother had died of a drug overdose when April was 14. April lived on the streets and had a baby she placed for adoption when she was 15. She struggled with her own drug addiction, started dealing drugs, and was eventually sent to prison.

"One day I wondered why I was even alive," April said. "It wouldn't

have made a difference if I died. No one knew I was in prison. No one would even know I was gone." She then prayed and asked God if He knew who she was.

The following week, a counselor in the prison handed her a letter from the girl she had placed for adoption.

"God must be looking out for you," the counselor said.

"I write to my daughter now, and she visited me once," April said. "I don't know much about religion, but I know that God cares about me because He answered my prayer."

After April shared her story, we all sat quietly with tears in our eyes.

During my time in prison, I poured out my heart in prayer asking our Father in Heaven to watch over and protect my family. But when I prayed for my neighbors in prison, I began to recognize their divine potential and felt more fully the love and mercy of our Savior.

That Christmas Eve in prison was beautiful. ■



# Christmas Presents or Tithing?

By Anna Williams, Alabama, USA

*I believed that the gospel was true, but could I afford to pay tithing?*



I searched for a church until sister missionaries introduced me to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I was baptized and confirmed a month and a half later. One of the things the missionaries taught me was the principle of tithing.

“You will receive blessings if you pay tithing,” they told me.

I was a single parent. I barely had enough money to buy food and pay my bills. Often it was a matter of paying tithing or buying food, paying my utility bills, or making a car payment.

For years, I went through stages of trying to pay tithing. Finally, I said, “If you believe the gospel is true, then you need to step out there. Once you step out there, God can bless you.”

I owed \$500 in tithing, but I also needed \$503 to pay some bills. I didn’t see how it would work, but I said, “I’m just going to try.” I paid my tithing. Nobody knew I was \$503 short, but somebody anonymously sent me five \$100 bills in the mail.

That was a turning point for me. It changed me spiritually. I realized that God loves me, that He cares for me, and that He wants me to succeed. From that point forward, I have paid my tithing. But it hasn’t always been easy.

One Christmas years ago, my eldest daughter remembers hearing me say that I could not afford to pay tithing *and* buy Christmas gifts for her and her siblings.

“We knew we weren’t going to get anything, but that was fine,” my daughter told me later. “We decided that we wanted you to pay your tithing.”

As always, the Lord provided, and they didn’t have to go without Christmas gifts.

For a single mother to be able to support her children and pay tithing is something major. Since I made the decision to pay tithing, I’ve been blessed. I’m not rich, but the Lord always makes a way for me.

I’ve been blessed in other ways too. The good examples of Church members and family have helped my children and me stay active in the Church. I’ve told them that’s all part of the blessing the Lord has promised—that the windows of heaven would open for us. ■



# Someone Will Be Missing Next Year

By Rebecca Clarkson, California, USA

*On Christmas Eve, I thought about how much I loved our family. Then I felt a distinct impression.*

It was Christmas Eve. We had just gotten our new pajamas, a tradition in our family. The kids played Christmas music and everyone danced around. No one was grumpy; everyone was happy, smiling, and having fun. Knowing that I was expecting another child, I was thinking about how much I loved our family, about how excited I was to have one more child on the way.

Then I felt a distinct impression. The Spirit whispered to me that one of our family members wouldn't be with us next year.

Later that night, as my husband, Tim, and I were putting gifts under the tree, he told me that he had

felt an impression earlier that evening that one of our family members wouldn't be with us for our next Christmas Eve. I told Tim I had received the same impression.

Before we left on a post-Christmas trip to visit family out of state, Tim talked to our children about being safe while we traveled. We were troubled by the thought of losing a family member on our trip, but we felt reassured that all would be well. We traveled, had a great visit with family members, and returned home safely.

Soon it was time for my regular prenatal checkup.

The doctor delivered sad

news. An ultrasound confirmed that the baby had died two weeks before the visit.

As Tim and I drove home, devastated, we realized that two weeks before had been Christmas Eve. We don't know exactly when the spirit enters the body, but Tim and I feel that our baby got to be with our family, if only for a moment, on that Christmas Eve with everyone dancing around and being happy. We felt so much joy, and we feel the baby was a part of it. When he left us, we believe he became the member of our family who wouldn't be with us the next Christmas Eve. I believe that someday we'll get to see our baby again. I'm grateful for the peace that brings to me. ■

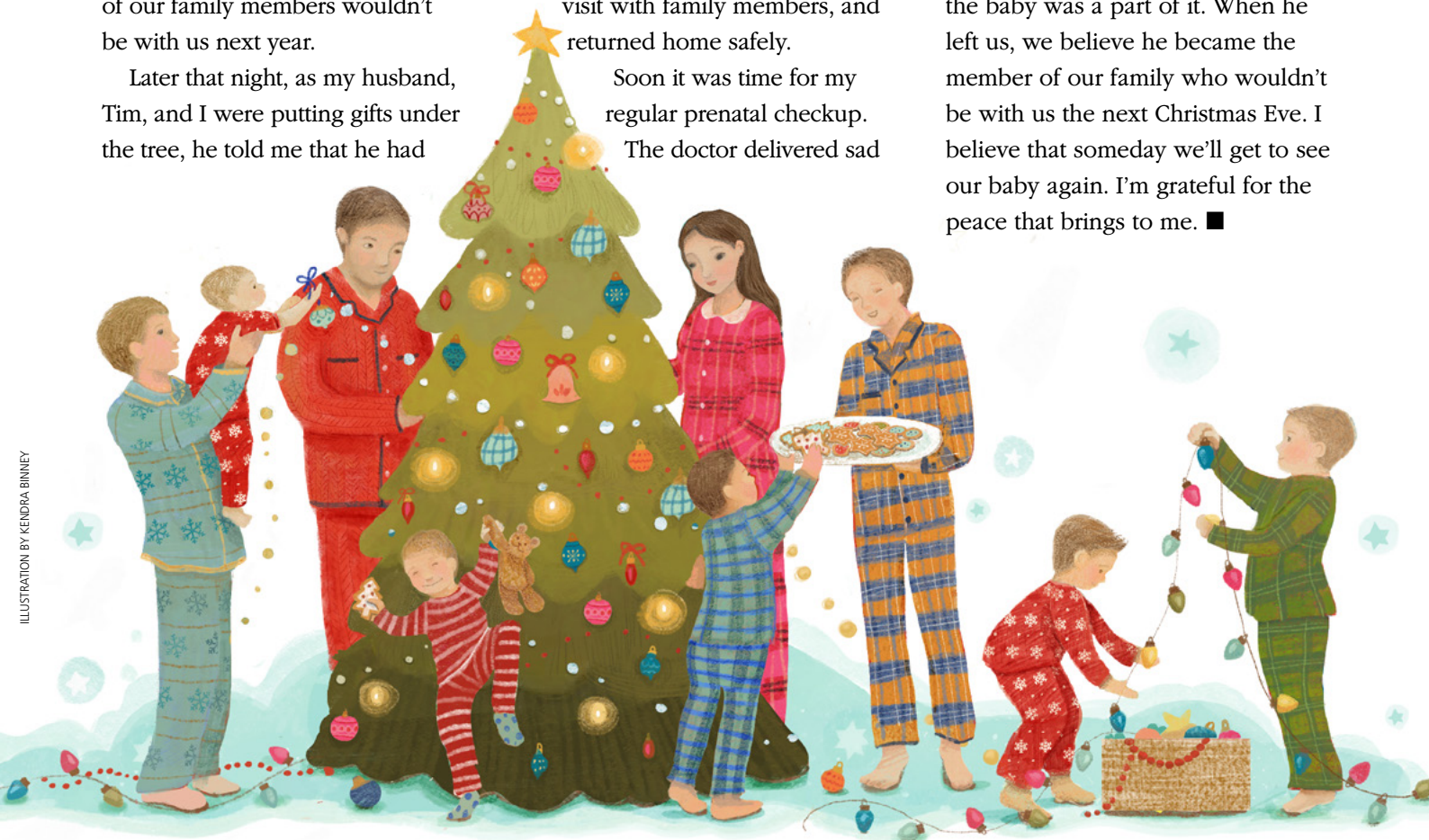


ILLUSTRATION BY KENDRA BINNEY

## Finding Healing in the Book of Mormon

By Faith S. Watson

*After my stroke, the scriptures brought me peace that little else could.*

When I first read the Book of Mormon at age 19, I knew I had found the truth for which I had been searching. I embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ with great joy. My testimony became a treasure that sustained me through the clouds and sunshine of my life. Still, it took me years to develop the habit of regularly feasting from the Book of Mormon's precious pages. After President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) chastised us for neglecting it,<sup>1</sup> I chose to read from the book every day.

Four years ago, after returning home from work, I was suddenly gripped by a ferocious pain that left me lying unconscious and paralyzed on the floor. There, I later learned, I remained for three days before I was discovered, near death, the victim of a stroke.

It was a couple of months before I regained consciousness, and even then I drifted in and out of awareness. My mind was gone. I was asked

questions I could not understand, let alone answer. I could not speak or cry. I didn't know where I was or even who I was.

I could not pray. All I could manage was to think "Dear Father." An awful void settled into my badly broken heart. Where was my Heavenly Father and my beloved Savior? Where was the comfort of the Holy Spirit? I felt empty, adrift from time and a sense of self. Even now, the experience is still difficult to describe.

I had been taken to the hospital with nothing, so I did not have my Book of Mormon with me. As days passed, I became increasingly desperate to get it, though I knew I could not read it. I could not see except for blurry images. And I was unable to ask for it. But oh, how I wanted it! At least I could hold it.

One day some friends visited and asked what they could do for me. I managed to ask for a Book of Mormon, and they managed to understand me. It came the next

morning. I hugged it to me and immediately felt comforted. I still couldn't see the words, but I kept trying and trying and trying. Hope was growing in my heart.

One evening, as the hospital quieted, my vision suddenly cleared and I could see the words! I could not read, for I could not determine left to right or up and down, but a miracle had happened, and I determined to do my part. I would just keep trying.

As I did, another miracle happened! It seemed to me as if I were with those I was trying to read about. I seemed to see the faith of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon and the majesty of the Prophet Joseph Smith. I was filled with such joy. Heavenly Father was with me! He had not deserted me. I knew then that no matter how broken we may be—by illness, sin, or actions of others—we are never alone. He is always there! His Son, our Savior, is always there!

Healing has come slowly, but it





has come. I've watched my mind regain all its functionality. This has been utterly fascinating. My body still has a ways to go, but I know it, too, will experience the healing it still needs. I do my part through exercise, maintaining a healthy weight, and eating only foods that are good for me. Added to this is lots of faith and the help of angels on this side of the veil—friends, hospital employees, physical therapists, and others.

President Russell M. Nelson has reflected: “When I think of the Book of Mormon, I think of the word *power*. The truths of the Book of

Mormon have the *power* to heal, comfort, restore, succor, strengthen, console, and cheer our souls.”<sup>2</sup>

Oh, yes, our dear prophet.  
Oh, yes! ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

#### NOTES

1. See Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 4–7.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 62.

# Faith to Face the Fires

*Sometimes we are spared from disaster.  
Other times we are given strength to endure. Either way,  
there are spiritual lessons to be learned.*

**By Richard M. Romney and Eric B. Murdock**  
Church Magazines

**I**t's a question as old as humanity: why do bad things happen to good people? Millions have suffered this year from the pandemic, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, locust infestations, and other disasters. Why are some people spared, while others must endure and overcome?

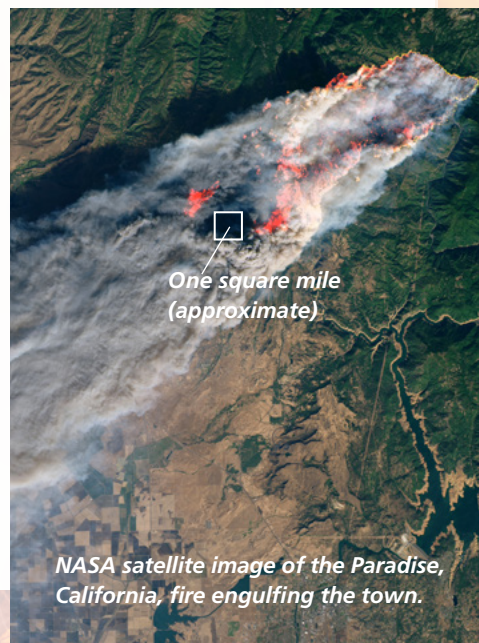
Scriptures and Church leaders can provide perspective. We can also gain understanding from the survivors themselves. This article features interviews with several people who endured fires in the United States and Australia during the past two years. What they have learned may help each of us faithfully face the fires of life.

## **Paradise, California, USA**

### ***"I Still Know What I Know"***

In November 2018, fire raced through the town of Paradise so rapidly that there wasn't time for most people to do anything but get out. When it was all over, 95 percent of the town was destroyed. More than 11,000 homes had burned to the ground.

"But it's really just *stuff* that went away," Doug Danz said months later as he walked through the ruins of what was once his home. "I'm still me. I still know what I know. I still have all my wonderful growing-up experiences



NASA satellite image of the Paradise, California, fire engulfing the town.



*Above: Doug and Carol Danz show some of the “baked goods” they found in the ruins of their kitchen after the fire in Paradise. Left: Their daughter Baylee walks through the nearby burned-out forest. Right: Harvey and Karen Parrot hold the remains of their melted aluminum truck wheel. Below: Bryn Davis and her daughter Ellie look at what’s left of a storage room in what was their home.*

and experiences in the Church that strengthened my testimony. None of that is gone. It’s all still inside of me. I just hope this experience is refining me and making me better.”

“Sometimes faith isn’t faith unless it’s all you’re holding on to,” said his wife, Carol. “When our home burned down, we could have shaken our fist at God in anger, but faith was the route we took instead.”

Their daughter Baylee, a Relief Society president of a young single adult ward, said that the kindness and service of others reassured her of God’s love. “Since the fire, I have seen Heavenly Father’s hand many times.”

### **“Don’t Be a Pillar of Salt”**

Harvey and Karen Parrot lived in Paradise for 50 years.

“The only way I’ve been able to get through it is to think about Lot’s wife,” Karen said. “When the scriptures say she turned into a

pillar of salt, I think it’s because she was so taken with the past that she couldn’t move forward. You have to take one step and then another, even if they’re tiny steps. So move forward with faith in Christ. And don’t look back. Don’t be a pillar of salt!”

Harvey said that one thing that’s been challenging for many fellow Latter-day Saints has been learning to graciously receive service.

“We’re used to helping others,” he said, “but we’re not so used to having others help us, especially people we don’t even know. So many have stepped up. How do you thank them all?”





**Left: Sarah and Bruce Yerman lost everything materially but gained spiritual understanding. Below: The chapel on Bille Road was spared, despite destruction surrounding it.**

### ***“A Little Bit More Christlike”***

Bruce Yerman may best sum up the feelings of those who lost everything in Paradise, materially speaking, but gained a lot spiritually. “We don’t feel punished,” he said. “We feel blessed. But we also feel a huge sense of loss.”

Bruce finds comfort in the story of Nephi from the Book of Mormon. “I feel that he had a sense of loss too. I can relate to that better now—loss of home, loss of community, loss of family members, people being scattered. That sense of loss is very real. It makes you take a step back, go to the foundations, and realize ‘Who am I? I’m a child of my Heavenly Father.’ And that hasn’t changed.”

Through it all, he said the acts of service he has seen have changed him. “When I say my prayers every night now, I do a mental recap of the day and how I may have helped somebody else. I didn’t use to do that. Every single day I’m looking for something to do to help someone, and that makes me feel good. I suppose it’s being a little bit more Christlike than I was before.”

And what does he think will happen to his community going forward? “People are definitely going to be the most important thing to us, starting with our family and those around us. We’re going to be a little nicer, a little friendlier, a little more patient. We’re going to be just a little bit better.”



### **SHAPED BY FAITH**

Two months after the fire in Paradise, President Russell M. Nelson visited Saints in the area.

“There are challenges,” he said, “but with faith—keeping the commandments and knowing that God’s in charge—all will be well in the long run. . . .

“Your hope, your joy, and your future will all be shaped by your faith in God and by your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ” (in Sarah Jane Weaver, “President Nelson Visits and Comforts California Fire Victims,” Jan. 14, 2019, ChurchofJesusChrist.org).



LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF NEWSROOM.CHURCHOFJESUSCHRIST.ORG



RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH FROM GETTY IMAGES

**Victoria and New South Wales, Australia**  
**“Blessed and Watched Over”**

The Australian bushfire season between June 2019–March 2020 is now sometimes referred to as “Black Summer.” At times it seemed the entire continent was ablaze. Braden Murrin and his family live on bush property completely surrounded by trees. When the fires came through, they were in danger of losing everything.

“Getting my family out to safety was my top priority,” Braden said. “We packed up as much as we could and evacuated.”

During one month, flames approached the Murrins’ property three times. The first time, the wind changed and blew the fire in another direction. The second time, the wind changed and firefighters stopped the fire.

The third time, Braden said, “I saw two big flashes of lighting and heard the loudest thunder I had ever heard.” It started to rain, which dampened the ground and once again stopped the fire from coming onto the property.

“I know we have been blessed and watched over,” Braden said. “I can only

*Above: Fire rages in Australia’s Blue Mountains. Right: Flowers grow through ashes in Paradise, California. Below: Family safety was top priority for the Murrin family.*



**BEAUTY FOR ASHES**

“Give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

“And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations.”

—Isaiah 61:3–4

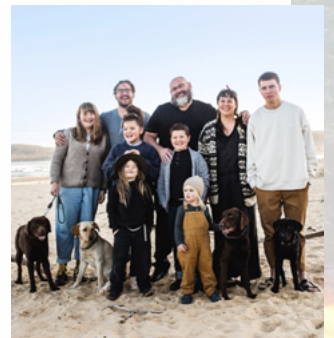
put this down to the prayers of family and friends, the temple prayer roll, and the fasting of faithful members.”

**“It Rained Nonstop”**

As the bushfires raged in Australia, the Area Presidency invited members of the Church to fast and petition Heavenly Father for relief from the fires and drought throughout the country.

“Before the area-wide fast, there was no rain in the forecast for months,” Ian Carroll said. “But after the fast, it rained non-stop. Our gutters overflowed and dams rose enough for stock to drink.”

Members of the Church in Australia can see the blessings that have come from the fast. President Graham Smith of the Melbourne Australia Gippsland Stake said, “As we follow the instructions of the prophet, apostles, and other Church leaders, we will not only be protected, but we will be able to assist others in need.”



FAR RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MURRIN FAMILY



## SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE

What spiritual lessons have you learned from facing the fires of life? Visit [liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) and click "Submit an Article or Feedback."

### Salem, Utah, USA

#### *"The Lord Will Take Care of You"*

Richard Jenni and his family have lost two homes to fire and been in several serious floods. He had recently moved from New Jersey, USA, to Utah, when he learned fires were threatening his home once again in September 2018.

"The Spirit whispered to me that everything would be OK," he said. With that reassurance, he made sure his family was safe, secured his house, and then went to help others. He worked in an evacuation warehouse, helping displaced people find food and clothing. Meanwhile, he kept repeating his personal testimony: "No matter what happens, the Lord will take care of you."

*Clockwise from above: Fires in Salem, Utah, were just a ridge away from the town. Stake president David Clare called on members to pray, fire officials mapped out plans, and Richard Jenni worked as a volunteer.*







## LEARN MORE

Find additional photos and stories from fire survivors at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/122063](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/122063).

*Clockwise from left: Jan Gordon, a stake Relief Society presidency counselor (center), worked with community members who came to the storehouse seeking food; as part of a stake-wide appeal to heaven, a girl knelt near a corral to pray; children in a Church-sponsored daytime activity center made rainbows.*

### ***"We Got Better and Better"***

Church and community leaders quickly found that communication, cooperation, and coordination were the best way to avoid panic and confusion.

"By getting the cities, schools, and churches working together, we got better and better at doing what was needed," said Becky Poulter, a stake Relief Society president. The spirit of mutual support still lingers in the local communities.



### ***"We Need Your Prayers, Right Now!"***

When the threat of the fires became apparent, stake president David Clare felt prompted to ask members to pray—often. They did, over and over again.

One critical morning, he received a call from a fire coordinator. "We need your prayers, right now!" Winds were pushing flames over the last hill, putting them within a quarter mile (0.4 km) of populated areas. As embers landed around homes, President Clare sent a message to stake members, then found a quiet room and prayed himself.

When President Clare called back and asked for an update, he received good news. "The wind shifted," the fire coordinator said. "It seems the fire has just stopped!"

After a Sunday community fast and prayer, with no rain in the forecast, the community witnessed unexpected rain and a rainbow filled the sky. ■





# Finding Sunshine in the Rain



By President  
Jean B. Bingham  
Relief Society  
General President

*When hard times weigh us down, how can we invite Christ to lift us up?*

**H**ave you ever watched the weather change? As a child, I remember watching the clear, bright blue sky begin to dim as gray clouds rolled in and obscured the sun. The wind increased until it was furiously whipping the leaves on the trees and heavy raindrops started to pelt the ground. My mother would run out to gather the clean clothes hanging on the line, calling for us children to put our bicycles into the garage. Gathering what we could of things that might be ruined by the rain, we would all run to the house, but by then we were often soaking wet.

Situations in life can be similar to those storms. Without much warning, difficulties can arise that abruptly alter our lives and challenge our feelings of security. What do we do when the storms of life create difficulty, even havoc, in our lives?

1

## Understand the purpose of mortality

We know our purpose on earth is to become more like our heavenly parents. Often that growth occurs through experiences that stretch us. Many of these learning experiences include sorrow and pain. In these moments, reflecting on what we can learn rather than dwelling on the difficulties will help us progress.

Trials are part of earth life. Some of our difficulties come because of our poor choices, some come from how other's poor choices affect us, and some things just happen. Jesus Christ taught, "Your Father which is in heaven . . . maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45).

Aaron, one of the sons of Mosiah who went on a mission to the Lamanites, had difficulties that his brother Ammon did not have, but it wasn't because he was less righteous. "As it happened, it was [Aaron's] lot to have fallen into the hands of a more hardened and a more stiffnecked people" (Alma 20:30).

Aaron's response to his challenges was to rejoice that they created an opportunity to share the gospel with the king and many of his people, who "never did fall away" (Alma 23:6).

## 2

### Choose faith



It takes faith to start anew after traumatic events, but when we choose to be faithful, there are promises to which we can look forward. In a favorite Primary song, we are reassured of this truth:

*I am a child of God.  
His promises are sure;  
Celestial glory shall be mine  
If I can but endure.<sup>1</sup>*

The Savior expressed it simply: “Nevertheless, he that endureth in faith and doeth my will, the same shall overcome” (Doctrine and Covenants 63:20).

When hard experiences wrench our hearts, when fire destroys all our belongings, when a loved one dies, when our world is turned upside down by events over which we have no control, we can choose to continue in faith, walking one step into the darkness even when we don’t know exactly what will come in the future. We can say:

*Be still, my soul: The Lord is on thy side;  
With patience bear thy cross of grief or pain.  
Leave to thy God to order and provide;  
In ev’ry change he faithful will remain.<sup>2</sup>*

## 3

### Increase in charity

What can we learn from bad things when they happen? We learn how to understand, support, and comfort one another. We can increase in compassion and empathy.

Sister Amy Jaggi remembers when the Relief Society president took her to the hospital. Amy was in preterm labor, and her husband was out of town. Her visiting teachers also provided comfort

and support; one of them had lost two babies who were stillborn and understood what Amy was experiencing. Not long after the Jaggis’ baby died, a woman Amy visit taught also lost a child. Amy could say to her, “I’m here. I can hold you. I’m broken with you.”<sup>3</sup>

As covenant members of the Church, we recognize every individual as a brother or sister in the family of God and strive to express charity in all our interactions.

Act on the charitable thoughts that come to you. Mormon encourages us to recognize them as inspiration:

“I would speak unto you that are of the church, that are the peaceable followers of Christ. . . .

“Every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to *serve him*, is inspired of God” (Moroni 7:3, 13; emphasis added).

## 4

### Look to the future



We learn from difficult experiences when we look to God for answers rather than man. God’s ways are not man’s ways (see Isaiah 55:8–9), and even though things may be difficult in the present, we will be grateful when we look back and see the growth that has occurred during those difficult times. We can be still and know that “[our] God doth undertake to guide the future as he has the past.”<sup>4</sup> Our hope and confidence in Him can be unshaken, and what we did not understand at the time will be made clear at the last.

Looking to the future with hope gives us strength for the present. Mormon wrote a letter to his son Moroni encouraging him to continue in his labors even when there seemed no reason



looked around and said with a cheerful grin, “Look at the fun we’re having!” Of course the children groaned, but ever after that, when a hard time came, they were the first to chime, “Look at the fun we’re having!”



## There is sunshine ahead

During times of stormy weather, our family gathered inside for protection.

Soon we became absorbed in other activities while the storm raged outside. After a time, I would look out the window and realize that the sun was out again, the rain had stopped, the clouds were rapidly disappearing, and the sky was a brilliant blue again. Yes, there were leaves on the ground that had been blown off the trees, some items had been tossed by the wind or flattened by the rain, and there were still puddles of water in low spots, but there was a feeling of hope and optimism in the freshly washed air.

God will never forsake His people. Wherever we are and whatever our situation, if we lean on Him, He will support us. So “lift up your heads and be comforted; for behold, the time is at hand, or is not far distant, when we shall no longer be in subjection to our enemies, notwithstanding our many strugglings . . . ; yet I trust there remaineth an effectual struggle to be made.

“Therefore, lift up your heads, and *rejoice*, and put your trust in God” (Mosiah 7:18–19; emphasis added).

Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, are ever mindful of us. As we choose faith, increase in charity, and look to the future with hope, we can feel joy even in challenging times. ■

### NOTES

1. “I Am a Child of God,” *Children’s Songbook*, 2–3.
2. “Be Still, My Soul,” *Hymns*, no. 124.
3. See Sydney Walker, “Finding Peace, Joy Even in Trials,” *Church News*, May 10, 2020, 21.
4. “Be Still, My Soul,” *Hymns*, no. 124.

for hope. This loving father wrote, “Be faithful in Christ; and may not the things which [you read or hear] grieve thee, to weigh thee down . . . ; but may Christ lift thee up, and may . . . the hope of his glory and of eternal life, rest in your mind forever” (Moroni 9:25).

## 5 Find joy even in challenging times

And finally, finding joy in the midst of our trials lightens burdens and provides assurance of God’s constant care and love. “Therefore, . . . let us *cheerfully* do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed” (Doctrine and Covenants 123:17; emphasis added).

When the challenges seem overwhelming, looking for the “silver lining” can soften the edges of tragedy and concern. Focusing on ways to support and lift others, noticing the natural beauty in the environment, expressing appreciation to others, and finding the fun and funny in our situation can help us remember that there is joy even in challenging times. My grandfather, when faced with a broken-down car full of children at the end of a long road out in the middle of nowhere,

# Young Adults

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See also "Coping with the Age of Outrage on Social Media" in the digital version of the October 2020 *Ensign*.

## Making Social Media a Positive Place

**F**ive years ago, my husband and I decided to start a YouTube channel, where we began to genuinely share the way we live as members of the Church of Jesus Christ. Our idea was to talk about our beliefs through our lifestyle.

We have had the great blessing of receiving inspiring messages from several of our followers telling us about going to church for the first time or even getting baptized! These messages have filled us with so much joy.

We are very grateful for the enriching experiences that social networks have offered us in spreading the message of the restored gospel just by sharing our lives. But while social media can generate incredible experiences, help us develop meaningful relationships, and allow us to share our testimony of the gospel, it can also give us experiences that weaken us spiritually, lead us to judge others in unrighteous ways, and cause us to lose sight of who we truly are.

This month's young adult section will address those topics and more. It's easy to compare ourselves or our lives to what we see on social media, but we can learn to use social media to create a positive space where we resist judging ourselves or others, gain confidence in our divine nature, and most importantly, convey to others, through our example, the happiness that the gospel of Jesus Christ brings.



Bárbara Rodríguez

Find these articles and more:

- At [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
- In *YA Weekly* (under the Young Adults section in the Gospel Library).



# Judging

## Righteous Judgment (Even on Social Media)

With the Savior's help, we can learn to judge in ways He would want us to.

By Young Women general board members and  
*Ensign* staff

### “Don't judge.”

We hear this a lot in the world today, along with messages telling us it's not our right to judge others. Just the word *judgment* has a lot of negativity attached to it. But as members of the Savior's Church, we know that judging is something He has counseled us to do—as long as we do it in His way.

When Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath, He was harshly judged because the law of Moses set restrictions on what you could do on the Sabbath—and people didn't think He was acting within those guidelines. But the Savior rebuked them for being quick to find fault in others. Then He counseled them to “judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24; see also Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 7:1–2).

How often do we, like those who judged the Savior, judge others in unrighteous ways? Perhaps more than we might think! Because judging others is so easy, especially in the realm of social media, we may need to

learn how to apply the Savior's counsel to judge righteous judgment to the world today.

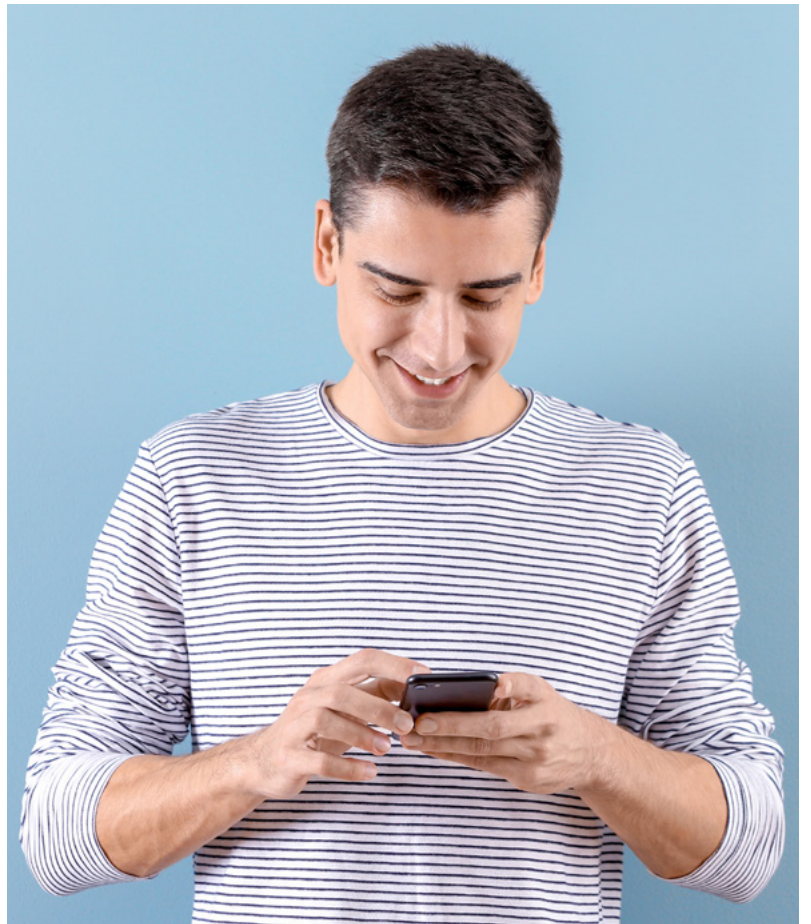
### Distinguishing Righteous vs. Unrighteous Judgments

Judging is part of our agency. There are many things over which we have to exercise judgment in life: things like choosing a career, deciding who to spend time with and *how* to spend our time, choosing what media to consume, and so on. But how can we make these judgments—and ultimately *all* judgments—righteously?

President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, gave six guidelines for how to judge correctly. We can know our judgments are righteous if:

1. They “refrain from declaring that a person [is] assured of exaltation or . . . irrevocably bound for hellfire.”
2. They are “guided by the Spirit . . . , not by anger, revenge, jealousy, or self-interest.”





3. They are “within our stewardship.”
4. They include “an adequate knowledge of the facts.”
5. They are not about people but rather about situations.
6. They “apply righteous standards.”<sup>1</sup>

The prophet Moroni also gave a guideline for judging righteously: “All things which are good cometh of God; and that which is evil cometh of the devil; for the devil . . . inviteth and enticeth to sin, and to do that which is evil continually” (Moroni 7:12).

When scrolling social media, considering friendships, or deciding how to spend our time, before making a judgment, we can ask ourselves, Does this post/person/activity:

- make me feel peaceful and good?
- invite me to do good?
- help me to love God and serve Him?

When we realize that all good things come from God, we can use our agency to make wise and righteous judgments about others, about ourselves, and about what we fill our life with.

## Getting Out of the Cycle of Unrighteous Judging

Now that we have determined what righteous judgment is, what can we do when we find ourselves stuck in a negative spiral of judging? Here are a few ideas:

- Take a social media fast. This can give you an opportunity to slow down, regroup, and reconnect with others in real ways. When you see people more outside of social media, you realize that they are real people with real struggles, and you are less inclined to judge them.
- Instead of posting about yourself, post about someone you love who has inspired you. Tell others why you admire this person. This gives you a chance to look outside of yourself and to bless instead of impress.
- Choose to give one genuine, heartfelt response each day on social media, whether it’s a birthday wish, a congratulations, or even just a kind message.

- There are always going to be people on social media who share too much, only share their incredible vacations, have seemingly perfect families, or are often contentious. Before we judge, we can ask ourselves, “What does the Lord know about this person, and what can I learn about them?” Pray for help to see them as He does. And if their posts are constantly giving you negative feelings, you can always unfollow them.

Seeing everyone as they truly are—children of heavenly parents—changes our shallow impressions of them into an eternal perspective. There is power in realizing everyone’s true identity and purpose. As Sister Michelle Craig, First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency, reminded us:

“You have a divine nature and purpose uniquely suited to *you*. . . .

“It’s easy to compare ourselves with others. There will always be someone who looks like they have everything together or are more important than we are. But we often forget that their purpose is different from our purpose. When we try to live true to who we really are—when we understand and appreciate God’s gifts and talents that are unique to us as individuals—then we can truly experience joy.”<sup>2</sup>



Ultimately, escaping from the cycle of judgment on social media takes action on our part. It takes looking outside ourselves to touch somebody else's life. It takes lifting others and sharing the Light of Christ. In doing so, not only do we serve others, but we are able to feel better about ourselves too.

## Overcoming Self-Judgment and Toxic Comparisons

One of Satan's powerful tools is trying to prevent us from having a real understanding of our true identity. When we lose sight of our true identity, judgmental thoughts and self-criticism can replace feelings of self-compassion and love. We disconnect with others, ourselves, and even the Holy Ghost.

In truth, comparison isn't always about those we are comparing ourselves to; it's often about ourselves and our own insecurities. Comparison can actually be an unrighteous judgment of ourselves.

And while comparison may be the *thief of joy*,<sup>3</sup> knowing our worth, our strengths and talents, and Heavenly Father's purpose for us and who we can become is a *key* to joy.

The Savior spent His life doing good (see Acts 10:38). He lived His life for others, without a single flaw. And yet He was

still rebuked and judged. But because He knew who He truly was and what His purpose was, He was able to handle judgment with grace, without letting it get in the way of what He was meant to do.

As we follow His example, we can do the same! The world makes it easy for us to lose ourselves in comparison and judgment and forget who we are, but we can learn from Sister Joy D. Jones, Primary General President, who taught: "If the love we feel for the Savior and what He did for us is greater than the energy we give to weaknesses, self-doubts, or bad habits, then He will help us overcome the things which cause suffering in our lives. He saves us from ourselves."<sup>4</sup>

As we know, "the worth of souls is great in the sight of God" (Doctrine and Covenants 18:10). Now replace the word *souls* with your own name. Let that sink in for a moment. Heavenly Father knows your name, He knows your worth, and His Only Begotten Son died for you because you are worth *that* much to Him.

So when the world feels heavy and the comparison is setting in, draw near unto Them and you will feel self-doubt and self-judgment melt away and feel the true confidence that comes from knowing your priceless value.

## Looking to the Savior

We can always look to the Savior for guidance in all we do. Part of what He offers us through His Atonement is the enabling power to change and figure out how to do everything He has asked us to do. And when we choose to follow and draw near unto Him, He helps us learn to let go of unrighteous judgments and see others—and ourselves—through His eyes. ■

### NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks, "Judge Not' and Judging," *Ensign*, Aug. 1999, 9–12.
2. Michelle Craig, "How Do You Feel Joy in the Lord?" Nov. 22, 2019, [blog.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://blog.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
3. "Comparison is the thief of joy" is attributed to Theodore Roosevelt.
4. Joy D. Jones, "Value beyond Measure," *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 15.



# The Reality behind Those Picture-Perfect Profiles

When we compare ourselves on social media, we're missing the bigger picture.

By **Bárbara Rodríguez**

A little while ago, one of my followers on Instagram commented on a photo, saying, “How do you look so radiant with two kids, when I can barely handle one?” I immediately laughed and wanted to answer her with a picture of how I looked at that moment.

I responded, “I’ve always thought that I’m pretty careless in my appearance compared to other moms. That’s the effect of social media—we tend to compare ourselves with someone else, while that person is comparing herself with another. But the reality is that I don’t look radiant right now, and I don’t dare upload a photo of how I look. I usually only dress up and look ‘decent’ on Fridays and Sundays.”

I have been sharing about our lives on social media for a few years now. Mostly, I try to show what “real life” is like for members of the Church of Jesus Christ. And in doing

so, I’ve had some experiences that have prompted me to think about the virtues and the risks of social media.

## **Social Media Doesn’t Show Everything**

This wasn’t the first time somebody had asked me a question like that. The thing is, social media shows only a very small part of people’s lives. In my case, even when I try to be authentic, it’s impossible for me to show everything. And we shouldn’t be comparing ourselves or basing our worth on one beautiful photograph. Making comparisons, especially on social media, can make it harder for us to recognize our God-given strengths.

As Latter-day Saints, we do the best we can to be like Jesus Christ. But the truth is that none of us are perfect. And on social media, we should strive not to make wrong judgments not only about ourselves but also about others. We need to remember that even when we think someone’s life is perfect, we don’t see the personal challenges they might be facing. We never really know what’s going on in people’s lives beyond what they choose to share on carefully filtered feeds.

## **The Reality of a Family Photo**

There’s often so much happening behind the scenes of every family photo you see on social media. Some people might look at those photos and ask themselves,

“Why don’t my family pictures ever turn out so well?” But we don’t know what it takes to get those “perfect” pictures.

For example, we once tried to take a family picture after church. This can be complicated with two little children, but I really love to capture these moments and then look back at how much my kids have grown.

While we were trying to get the kids settled down for the photo, I had to take a moment to talk to my two-year-old son, Alvin, who was crying because he wanted me to carry him. I bent down, wiped away his tears, and then begged him to stand up so I could show off our outfits (which I had strategically matched that morning). My three-year-old daughter, Avril, was also asking my husband to hold her because she didn’t want to stand either. They really didn’t want to be taking pictures.

The photography session was unsuccessful—so we gave up. But when I got home, I found something better. My brother (who was taking the photos) captured the moment when all the chaos was happening. Both my husband and I were comforting our children in the photo. It didn’t really show off our outfits, but it was such a tender—and real—moment. I loved it.

When I shared the photo on social media, I captioned it “The reality of a family photo.” I never imagined that so many people would relate to it, but it made me realize that things don’t always need to look perfect. It’s OK to just go with the flow and be real. But it also taught me a larger lesson—that when we believe someone is perfect, we just haven’t seen all the details.

## Don’t Let Social Media Cover Your True Identity

Social media networks are a powerful tool that we can use for so much good. But we have to be careful not to get discouraged or compare ourselves to what we see on social media. As Elder Gary E. Stevenson of the

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “Hopefully, we can learn to be more real, find more humor, and experience less discouragement when confronted with images that may portray idealized reality and that too often lead to debilitating comparisons.”<sup>1</sup>

I know that as we remember our divine nature as children of God, we won’t leave room for painful comparisons or personal judgments. And if we stop listening to those comparisons that try to discredit our potential, we will be able to live fuller lives without worrying about all those seemingly picture-perfect posts out there. ■



*Bárbara Rodríguez is 25 years old and was born in Anzoátegui, Venezuela, where she met her husband. They currently live in Lima, Peru. Bárbara is dedicated to creating uplifting content on their social networks.*

### NOTE

1. Gary E. Stevenson, “Spiritual Eclipse,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 46.



# Your Life Belongs to

# YOU

# — Not Your Followers

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Social media doesn't have to be a source of regret. We just need to have boundaries.

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**By Chakell Wardleigh Herbert**

Church Magazines

"How embarrassing . . ."

"Why did anybody even need to know that?!"

"Thank heavens nobody remembers this . . ."

I don't know about you, but when I'm scrolling through my past social media posts, I often cringe at the amount of sharing I once did. And the thoughts above usually follow. (Thanks, Facebook Memories, for the uncalled-for reminders.)

Thankfully, I've learned a little something about boundaries since I was a social media guinea pig.

Boundaries are limits we set for ourselves, and they are necessary to keep us mentally, physically, and emotionally healthy. Unfortunately, they are crossed frequently on social media. And often, we are the ones crossing our *own* lines and suffering from

the repercussions (sometimes without even realizing right away).

Regardless, we can protect our present and future selves and learn to share appropriately on social media by first identifying our potentially unhealthy social media habits.

## **Know the Difference between Vulnerability and Oversharing**

Vulnerability can be a way for us "to bear one another's burdens" (Mosiah 18:8).

But here's the thing: there's a difference between vulnerability and oversharing. Social science researcher Brené Brown explains that "vulnerability is based on mutuality and requires boundaries and trust. It's not oversharing, it's not purging, it's not indiscriminate disclosure, and it's not celebrity-style social media information dumps. Vulnerability



is about sharing our feelings and our experiences with people who have earned the right to hear them. . . .

“Vulnerability without boundaries leads to disconnection, distrust, and disengagement.”<sup>1</sup>

So, before you post on social media, try asking yourself these questions to determine your motives:

- Why am I sharing this? Am I wanting to help others with my insight and experiences? Or am I actually looking for pity, attention, or somewhere to vent?
- Do *all* of my followers need to know about this intimate detail of my life?
- What am I feeling right now? Am I feeling peaceful? Or frustrated and angry?
- How does posting things like this usually make me feel afterward? Have I ever regretted sharing something like this before?
- What unmet needs could I be trying to meet by sharing this? Can I meet those needs by reaching out to a friend in person?

When you’re honest with yourself, you are less at risk of sharing something you might regret later. And choosing to connect face-to-face with someone you love usually invites greater connection than sharing with followers you hardly talk to.

## **Beware of Victim Mentality**

It’s becoming easier to be sucked into the victim tornado that thrives on the toxicity of social media.

Knowing your worth brings confidence in yourself that can’t be gained anywhere else, especially on social media.

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explains this victim mentality well in his general conference address about three sisters, saying, “The first sister saw herself as a victim—as someone who was acted upon. It seemed like one thing after another kept happening to her that made her miserable. With this approach to life, she was giving others control over how she felt and behaved. When we do this, we are driven about by every wind of opinion—and in this day of ever-present social media, those winds blow at hurricane intensity.”<sup>2</sup>

The victim mindset is one of Satan’s greatest weapons. It can be so easy to get caught up in this way of thinking, especially when we’ve gone through difficult challenges or have been hurt by others. Believe me, I know.

A few years ago, I was diagnosed with a chronic illness. And I was devastated. I followed many social media accounts that only talked about this illness and the unfairness of it all. For months, I scoured the internet for more info, and this disease consumed my life. Although it’s normal and healthy to mourn difficult circumstances, it becomes detrimental when we’re unable to look outside ourselves and move forward.

And that’s what happened to me.

I was trapped until one day it hit me: this disease wasn’t going to go away. I could either choose to live in resistance or I could choose to accept this challenge and find fulfillment in my life anyway (see 2 Nephi 2:27). So I chose the route that would bring me the most peace—I finally let it be.

I’ve noticed similar scenarios on social media. It’s fine to share our opinions or circumstances, but if we aren’t careful, we can lose ourselves in our constant posting about our particular labels, struggles, views, or comparisons (see Proverbs 23:7). And when those become the sole focus of our lives, we can trap ourselves within a box full of limitations.



But when we let go and move forward with faith, hope, and a broader perspective of our circumstances, we can shift our focus to drawing closer to the Savior and becoming more like Him. We can escape the box and find our limitless potential. And when the Savior is our focus, everything else is less daunting.<sup>3</sup>

## Seek Validation That Really Matters

Have you ever been in a venting session and the person you are talking to says those sweet words “I totally get it”? I have. This kind of validation gives me as much happiness as a box of gourmet cookies. The need for validation is at the heart of most social media posts. But that kind of validation, just like the box of cookies, is fleeting.

There have been times when I have posted something on social media, only to become glued to my smartphone, constantly checking to see how many people have liked my clever thoughts. And seeing the number of those itty-bitty thumbs-up and heart icons climb makes me happier than I care to admit. But after the algorithms have let my post come and go, I usually feel something different.

Emptiness.

We post selfies, opinions, relationships, and vacation pics often to seek others’ validation. But no matter how many likes or followers we get, they won’t be enough to fill that need.

But I know something that *does* permanently fill that longing we have for acceptance.

We can learn from Nephi’s words: “O Lord, I have trusted in thee, and I will trust in thee forever. I will not put my trust in the arm of flesh; for I know that cursed is he that putteth his trust in the arm of flesh” (2 Nephi 4:34). In other words, instead of seeking acceptance from others, we should seek the only validation that really matters—Heavenly Father’s. And what is His



opinion of you? Well, He loves you. He knows you. He believes you were worth creating and that the world has need of you.

When you truly realize your identity as a child of heavenly parents, what more validation do you need? Knowing your worth brings confidence in yourself that can’t be gained anywhere else, especially on social media. There is everlasting happiness that comes from trusting God’s view above anyone else’s.

## Remember That Your Life Belongs to You

Ultimately, your life belongs to you. But when you share every piece of it, who then does it belong to?

Instead of “shouting out” to a friend on social media, try telling them how you feel in person. Instead of taking staged photographs for your followers, take photos for yourself to cherish. Your life is a gift from Heavenly Father for *you*, and many parts of it lose meaning when shared with the world.

Just like everything else in life, we can use social media wisely when we give ourselves boundaries. Let’s be honest with ourselves and mindful about what we share. And if feelings of emptiness sneak up on us, we can make changes. The more we prioritize what really matters, share appropriately, and treasure the intimate parts of our lives, the less we will have to worry about others’ opinions, potential regrets, and what our Facebook Memories will remind us of in the future. And that will bring us more joy than any number of likes or followers ever will. ■

### NOTES

1. Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* (2012), 45, 46.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Three Sisters,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 17.
3. See Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 82.

# INSIGHTS

from YOUNG ADULTS

*on not judging others on social media*



from CHURCH LEADERS

“I keep in mind that we all have sides of ourselves that we do and don’t share with others.

**Instagram doesn’t equal real life.”**

—Gabrielle Shiozawa, Washington, USA

“I remember that they weren’t brought up the same as me. **I haven’t walked a mile in their shoes.**”

—Tiffany Sowards, Florida, USA

“I have to remind myself to take a step back and remember **not everything is always as it looks.**”

—Kylie Parrish, Utah, USA

“When we see our own imperfections more clearly, we are less inclined to view others ‘through a glass, darkly’ [1 Corinthians 13:12]. We want to use the light of the gospel to see others as the Savior does—with compassion, hope, and charity. The day will come when we will have a complete understanding of others’ hearts and will be grateful to have mercy extended to us—just as we extend charitable thoughts and words to others during this life. . . .

“Words have surprising power, both to build up and to tear down. . . . Choosing to say only that which is positive about—and to—others lifts and strengthens those around us and helps others follow in the Savior’s way.”

**President Jean B. Bingham, Relief Society General President, “I Will Bring the Light of the Gospel into My Home,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 6, 7.**

## Share Your Story

Do you have an experience to share? Or do you want to see articles about certain topics?

If so, we want to hear from you! You can submit your articles or your feedback at [liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

# Come, Follow Me Shareable Scriptures

Download these picture quotes from December's *Come, Follow Me* readings and share them on social media—or send them to those you minister to, your Sunday School class, or your family: [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/122081](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/122081).

NOVEMBER 30–DECEMBER 6



DECEMBER 7–13



DECEMBER 14–20



DECEMBER 21–27





# #GiveThanks

We need the healing that comes into our lives, our homes, and the world when we *#GiveThanks*. Watch President Nelson's invitation at [GiveThanks.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://GiveThanks.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

