

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • FEBRUARY 2006

Ensign



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Helping Children
Feel Self-Worth, p. 32

In the World but Not
of It, p. 53



Jacob Blessing Joseph, by Harry Anderson

Jacob gathered his 12 sons to bless them and their seed. In blessing Joseph, Jacob said: "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: . . . The blessings of thy father have prevailed . . . : they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren" (Genesis 49:22, 26).

Ensign



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Refined in Our Trials

BY PRESIDENT JAMES E. FAUST

Second Counselor in the First Presidency

This message is to all, but especially to those who feel they have had more trials, sorrows, pricks, and thorns than they can bear and in their adversity are almost drowned in the waters of bitterness. It is intended as one of hope, strength, and deliverance.

Some years ago President David O. McKay (1873–1970) told of the experience of some of those in the Martin handcart company. Many of these early converts had emigrated from Europe and were too poor to buy oxen or horses and a wagon. They were forced by their poverty to pull handcarts containing all of their belongings across the plains by their own brute strength. President McKay related an occurrence which took place some years after the heroic exodus:

“A teacher, conducting a class, said it was unwise ever to attempt, even to permit them [the Martin handcart company] to come across the plains under such conditions.”

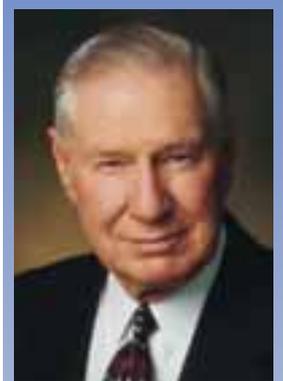
Then President McKay quoted an observer who was present in that class: “Some sharp criticism of the Church and its leaders was being indulged in for permitting any company of converts to venture across the plains

with no more supplies or protection than a handcart caravan afforded.

“An old man in the corner . . . sat silent and listened as long as he could stand it, then he arose and said things that no person who heard him will ever forget. His face was white with emotion, yet he spoke calmly, deliberately, but with great earnestness and sincerity.

“In substance [he] said, ‘I ask you to stop this criticism. You are discussing a matter you know nothing about. Cold historic facts mean nothing here, for they give no proper interpretation of the questions involved. Mistake to send the Handcart Company out so late in the season? Yes. But I was in that company and my wife was in it and Sister Nellie Unthank whom you have cited was there, too. We suffered beyond anything you can imagine and many died of exposure and starvation, but did you ever hear a survivor of that company utter a word of criticism? . . .

“I have pulled my handcart when I was so weak and weary from illness and lack of food that I could hardly put one foot ahead of the other. I have looked ahead and seen a patch of sand or a hill slope and I have said, I can go only that far and there I must give up, for I cannot pull the load through it.’”



*In the agonies of life,
we seem to listen
better to the faint,
godly whisperings of
the Divine Shepherd.*

He continues: “I have gone on to that sand and when I reached it, the cart began pushing me. I have looked back many times to see who was pushing my cart, but my eyes saw no one. I knew then that the angels of God were there.

“Was I sorry that I chose to come by handcart? No. Neither then nor any minute of my life since. *The price we paid to become acquainted with God was a privilege to pay, and I am thankful that I was privileged to come in the Martin Handcart Company.*”¹

The Refining Fire

Here, then, is a great truth. In the pain, the agony, and the heroic endeavors of life, we pass through a refiner’s fire, and the insignificant and the unimportant in our lives can melt away like dross and make our faith bright, intact, and strong. In this way the divine image can be mirrored from the soul. It is part of the purging toll exacted of some to become acquainted with God. In the agonies of life, we seem to listen better to the faint, godly whisperings of the Divine Shepherd.

Into every life there come the painful, despairing days of adversity and buffeting. There seems to be a full measure of anguish, sorrow, and often heartbreak for everyone, including those who earnestly seek to do right and be faithful. The Apostle Paul referred to his own challenge: “And lest I should be exalted above measure . . . , there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me.”²

The thorns that prick, that stick in the flesh, that hurt, often change lives which seem robbed of significance and hope. This change comes about through a refining process which often seems cruel and hard. In this way the soul can become like soft clay in the hands of the Master in building lives of faith, usefulness, beauty, and strength. For some, the refiner’s fire causes a loss of belief and faith in God, but those with eternal perspective understand that such refining is part of the perfection process.

Said Alma, “A shepherd hath called after you and is still calling after you, but ye will not hearken unto his voice!”³ In our extremities, it is possible to become born again, born anew, renewed in heart and spirit. We no longer ride with

the flow of the crowd, but instead we enjoy the promise of Isaiah to be renewed in our strength and “mount up with wings as eagles.”⁴

The proving of one’s faith goes before the witnessing, for Moroni testified, “Ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith.”⁵ This trial of faith can become a priceless experience.

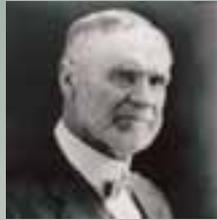
States Peter, “The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”⁶ Trials and adversity can be preparatory to becoming born anew.

Becoming New Creatures

A rebirth out of spiritual adversity causes us to become new creatures. From the book of Mosiah we learn that all mankind must be born again—born of God, changed, redeemed, and uplifted—to become the sons and daughters of God.⁷ President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988), First Counselor in the First Presidency, said of this marvelous power: “The effect upon

each person’s life is likewise similar. No person whose soul is illuminated by the burning Spirit of God can in this world of sin and dense darkness remain passive. He is driven by an irresistible urge to fit himself to be an active agent of God in furthering righteousness and in freeing the lives and minds of men from the bondage of sin.”⁸

The feelings of being reborn were expressed by Elder Parley P. Pratt (1807–57) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “If I had been set to turn the world over,—to dig down a mountain, to go to the ends of the earth, or traverse the deserts of Arabia, it would have been easier than to have undertaken to rest, while the Priesthood was upon me. I have received the holy anointing and I can never



Is not this God’s purpose in causing his children to suffer? He wants them to become more like himself. God has suffered far more than man ever did or ever will, and is therefore the great source of sympathy and consolation.”
—Elder Orson F. Whitney

rest, till the last enemy is conquered, death destroyed, and truth reigns triumphant.”⁹

Unfortunately, some of our greatest tribulations are the result of our own foolishness and weakness and occur because of our own carelessness or transgression. Central to solving these problems is the great need to get back on the right track and, if necessary, engage in each of the steps for full and complete repentance. Through this great principle, many things can be made fully right and all things better.

We can go to others for help. To whom can we go? Elder Orson F. Whitney (1855–1931) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles asked and answered this question:

“To whom do we look, in days of grief and disaster, for help and consolation? . . . They are men and women who have suffered, and

out of their experience in suffering they bring forth the riches of their sympathy and condolences as a blessing to those now in need.

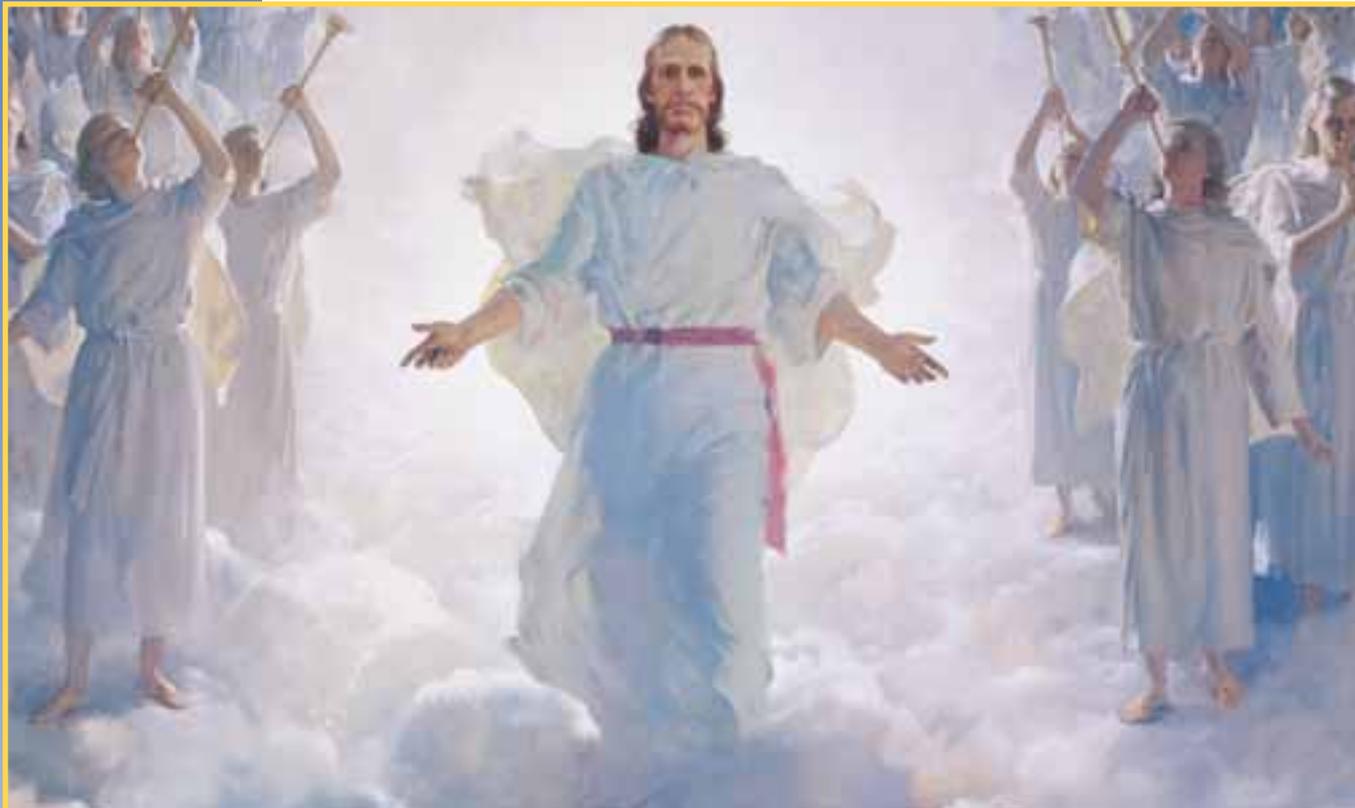
Could they do this had they not suffered themselves?

“. . . Is not this God’s purpose in causing his children to suffer? He wants them to become more like himself. God has suffered far more than man ever did or ever will, and is therefore the great source of sympathy and consolation.”¹⁰

Isaiah, before the Savior’s birth, referred to Him as “a man of sorrows.”¹¹ Speaking in the Doctrine and Covenants of Himself, the Savior said, “Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink.”¹²

The Stillman Pond family arrived at Winter Quarters, and like many other families, they suffered bitterly while living in a tent. The death of five children coming across the plains to Winter Quarters was but a beginning.





THE SECOND COMING, BY HARRY ANDERSON

The trial of your faith, . . . though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ,” Peter taught.

Some are prone to feel that their afflictions are punishment. Roy W. Doxey writes:

“The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that it is a false idea to believe that the saints will escape all the judgments—disease, pestilence, war, etc.—of the last days; consequently, it is an unhallowed principle to say that these adversities are due to transgression. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 162.)

“President Joseph F. Smith taught that it is a feeble thought to believe that the illness and affliction that come to us are attributable either to the mercy or the displeasure of God.”¹³

Paul understood this perfectly. When referring to the Savior, he said,

“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

“And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”¹⁴

A Chronicle of Endurance

For some, the suffering is extraordinary. In the early days of the Church Stillman Pond

was a member of the second quorum of the seventy in Nauvoo. He was an early convert to the Church, having come from Hubbardston, Massachusetts. Like others, he and his wife, Maria, and their children were harassed and driven out of Nauvoo. In September 1846 they became part of the great western migration. The early winter that year brought extreme hardships, including malaria, cholera, and consumption. The family was visited by all three of these diseases.

Maria contracted consumption, and all of the children were stricken with malaria. Three of the children died while moving through the early snows. Stillman buried them on the plains. Maria’s condition worsened because of the grief, pain, and the fever of malaria. She could no longer walk. Weakened and sickly, she gave birth to twins. They were named Joseph and Hyrum, and both died within a few days.

The Stillman Pond family arrived at Winter Quarters, and like many other families, they suffered bitterly while living in a tent. The

death of five children coming across the plains to Winter Quarters was but a beginning.

The journal of Horace K. and Helen Mar Whitney verifies the following regarding four more of the children of Stillman Pond who perished:

“On Wednesday, the 2nd of December 1846, Laura Jane Pond, age 14 years, . . . died of chills and fever.” Two days later on “Friday, the 4th of December 1846, Harriet M. Pond, age 11 years, . . . died with chills.” Three days later, “Monday, the 7th of December, 1846, Abigail A. Pond, age 18 years, . . . died with chills.” Just five weeks later, “Friday, the 15th of January, 1847, Lyman Pond, age 6 years, . . . died with chills and fever.”¹⁵

Four months later, on May 17, 1847, his wife, Maria Davis Pond, also died. Crossing the plains, Stillman Pond lost nine children and a wife. He became an outstanding colonizer in Utah and later became a leader in the quorums of the seventy. Having lost these nine children and his wife in crossing the plains, Stillman Pond did not lose his faith. He did not quit. He went forward. He paid a price, as have many others before and since, to become acquainted with God.

The Divine Shepherd has a message of hope, strength, and deliverance for all. If there were no night, we would not appreciate the day, nor could we see the stars and the vastness of the heavens. We must partake of the bitter with the sweet. There is a divine purpose in the adversities we encounter every day. They prepare, they purge, they purify, and thus they bless.

When we pluck the roses, we find we often cannot avoid the thorns which spring from the same stem.

Out of the refiner’s fire can come a glorious deliverance. It can be a noble and lasting rebirth. The price to become acquainted with God will have been paid. There can come a sacred peace. There will be a reawakening of dormant, inner resources. A comfortable cloak of righteousness will be drawn around us to protect us and to keep us warm spiritually. Self-pity will vanish as our blessings are counted.

The blessings of eternity will surely come to those who endure refining, as the Lord Himself taught: “He only is saved who endureth unto the end.”¹⁶ I testify that Jesus is

the Christ and the Divine Redeemer. He lives! His are the sweet words of eternal life. ■

NOTES

1. “Pioneer Women,” *Relief Society Magazine*, Jan. 1948, 8.
2. 2 Corinthians 12:7.
3. Alma 5:37.
4. Isaiah 40:31.
5. Ether 12:6.
6. 1 Peter 1:7.
7. See Mosiah 27:24–27.
8. In Conference Report, Oct. 1941, 89.
9. *Deseret News*, Apr. 30, 1853, 2.
10. “A Lesson from the Book of Job,” *Improvement Era*, Nov. 1918, 7.
11. Isaiah 53:3.
12. D&C 19:18.
13. *The Doctrine and Covenants Speaks* (1970), 2:373; see also Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 56–57.
14. Hebrews 5:8–9.
15. As quoted in “Stillman Pond, a Biographical Sketch,” comp. Leon Y. and H. Ray Pond, in Sterling Forsyth, *Histories*, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 4.
16. D&C 53:7.

IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS

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

1. Hold up a gold ring or a picture of a ring. Explain how at first gold can have many impurities. Describe how heat separates the impurities from the gold, leaving the gold pure and beautiful. Compare this process to what happens to us when we overcome trials, and bear testimony of what the Apostle Peter taught: “The trial of your faith [is] much more precious than of gold that perisheth.”

2. Ask family members to suggest reasons we experience trials. Read a pioneer story from the message. Discuss how these pioneers were examples of being refined by trials. Ask family members to whom they, like the pioneers, should look in times of trouble. Bear testimony that the Savior is the best counselor.

3. Make a list of blessings that come from trials by reading aloud the section of the message titled “A Chronicle of Endurance.” Invite family members to share blessings they have received through their own trials.

OUR STILLBORN

Baby



BY MELINDA E. JENNINGS

I held our little son. He was so beautiful—perfect features, 10 fingers, 10 toes. He was warm to my touch and warm to my soul, but he was not alive.

In 1989 my husband, Jody, and I were healthy, young, and anxious to start a family. As a labor and delivery nurse, I knew what was ahead and was thrilled when I found out we were expecting. However, with no warning our first baby was born premature. He weighed 2 pounds and 13 ounces. This was a time of terrible struggle as we waited each day to see if our small son would live. He seemed to have every complication that a preemie could have. The doctors did not think he would live. We decided to have a family fast for our baby. He was blessed to survive and is now a 215-pound high school football player. We knew that we wanted more children. Since the doctors found nothing wrong, we went on to have two daughters, though each pregnancy was very difficult.

Another Child for Us?

My husband and I thought and prayed for months about whether to have a fourth child. One day in the temple we both received strong impressions from the Lord that a fourth child was waiting for us.

Problems started early, and I had to spend most of my pregnancy in bed, which was difficult and often depressing. Our ward brought dinners, helped with the children, and made visits. Their service was truly Christlike. Eventually we found that we would be having another boy. My husband beamed as he thought about more years of sports and Scouts that would be coming. My father-in-law came to the ultrasound test and was thrilled as he saw our small baby move around.

A few weeks later, again without warning, the birth process started. I knew instantly that our tiny son could not survive. My world was shattered. The grief and pain became so intense that at times it was unbearable. I could feel our baby moving inside of me. It was incomprehensible to think he would not live. How could the Lord let this happen when He had told us to have another child?



Warm to My Touch

Within 24 hours, I delivered a perfect one-pound, two-ounce baby boy. He was stillborn. Jody cried as he tenderly held our small son close. Then I too wept as I held our little boy and kissed his face. He was warm to my touch, and it warmed my soul to hold him.

Jody gave him a name and a blessing—McKay Spencer Jennings (after the prophets David O. McKay and Spencer W. Kimball). After the nurse took little McKay's body, Jody and I sat alone in the room. Both of us felt a strong feeling of peace descend upon us in that room. We both knew that the Lord was with us.

The graveside service was just for family. As soon as I saw the cemetery, I started to cry. I saw the little casket under the awning and realized that this all was happening to me. I was not the supportive bystander but rather the mother grieving for her lost child. Oh, how I wished that it were just a dream, but it was not!

During the services I felt the Spirit of the Lord rest upon me. I knew that trials test us but that it is up to us whether we choose to turn to Christ and become strengthened or turn

away from Him and become bitter. I am so grateful for the comfort of the gospel I felt that day.

The days after the birth and funeral were a blur to me. At times I couldn't imagine how others could go on when my life seemed to have ended. I struggled with my faith, but I tried not to lose hope. At other times, I felt calm. Jody and I prayed expressly for faith and studied the scriptures fervently to resolve our concerns. We could see that this would be an ongoing process to come to an understanding of things.

Finding Peace in the Temple

We went to the temple a couple of weeks after McKay's funeral. It was hard to go into the celestial room where we had received inspiration from the Lord that we were to have another child. It was hard for me to understand why we had felt inspired that there was another child waiting for us when the Lord knew what was ahead. Jody told me that perhaps the most important thing we could do was to show the Lord that we were willing to be obedient.

As Jody and I sat in the celestial room, my emotions ran over. We hoped McKay would be sealed to us even though

GOOD REASON TO HOPE



“There is no information given by revelation in regard to the status of stillborn children. However, I will

express my personal opinion that we should have hope that these little ones will receive a resurrection and then belong to us. I cannot help feeling that this will be the case.

“When a couple have a stillborn child, we give them all the comfort we can. We have good reasons to hope. Funeral services may be held for such children, if the parents so desire. Stillborn children should not be reported nor recorded as births and deaths on the records of the Church, but it is suggested that parents record in their own family records a name for each such stillborn child.”

**President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972),
Doctrines of Salvation, comp. Bruce R.
McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 2:280.10**

His divine wisdom and love. This gave me the inner peace I needed.

Following Christ

Later I noticed that the handkerchief was embroidered with a picture of the Nashville Tennessee Temple and its dedication date. I realized that this handkerchief was special for this sister, yet she willingly sacrificed it as she followed the example of our Savior and lent comfort to others. I keep this handkerchief in my temple dress as a reminder of the answers to my prayers I found that day.

There are still times when I see a baby or a little boy and dream of what could have been. I feel a pang of sadness and emptiness, but then I remember that my Savior loves me and will not leave me alone in my

sorrow. My older children struggle with sorrow at times also, but this gives us opportunities to talk about gospel principles. We rededicate our lives to serving the Lord and strengthening our testimonies in the miraculous power of the Resurrection and our hope that we may live with McKay Spencer Jennings, our cherished son, once again. ■

Melinda E. Jennings is a member of the Fayetteville Ward, Jonesboro Georgia Stake.

he was stillborn, and that if we were worthy, we would be able to raise him during the Millennium. However, I wanted to know it for certain. I knew that at the present time there is no revealed answer to these concerns, and I also knew that temple ordinances are not currently performed for stillborn children. This bothered me, for my faith at times was weak. McKay had been alive inside of me. I could feel him kicking, yet because of the stress of labor he was born dead. How could the Lord deprive me of raising a child who was alive only hours before he was born?

As I was crying in the celestial room, an older woman gave me her white handkerchief. I then thought of my mother-in-law, Jean. She used to carry an extra white handkerchief with her at all times so she could give it to someone who was grieving. She had started working in the Atlanta Georgia Temple just two months before she died. I felt as if Jean herself had given me that handkerchief to let me know that the Lord was aware of me. I felt that I was not to worry anymore about whether or not we would get to be with McKay again. I knew I should trust in the Lord to resolve each case in the eternities according to

I grew up in Godstone, England, and was 17 years old when the London England Temple was dedicated in 1958. As a member of another church, I went through the temple open house with my parents. Although this left a great impression on me, I went back to my life as it had been before.

A year later, I joined a photographic club and chose the London temple as a suitable subject for a photograph to enter in a competition. As I set up the camera that day, I thought, “This needs something else. I need to put somebody in there looking at the temple.” So I used a timer and took the shot across the reflecting pool with me sitting in the foreground. That photograph took first place.

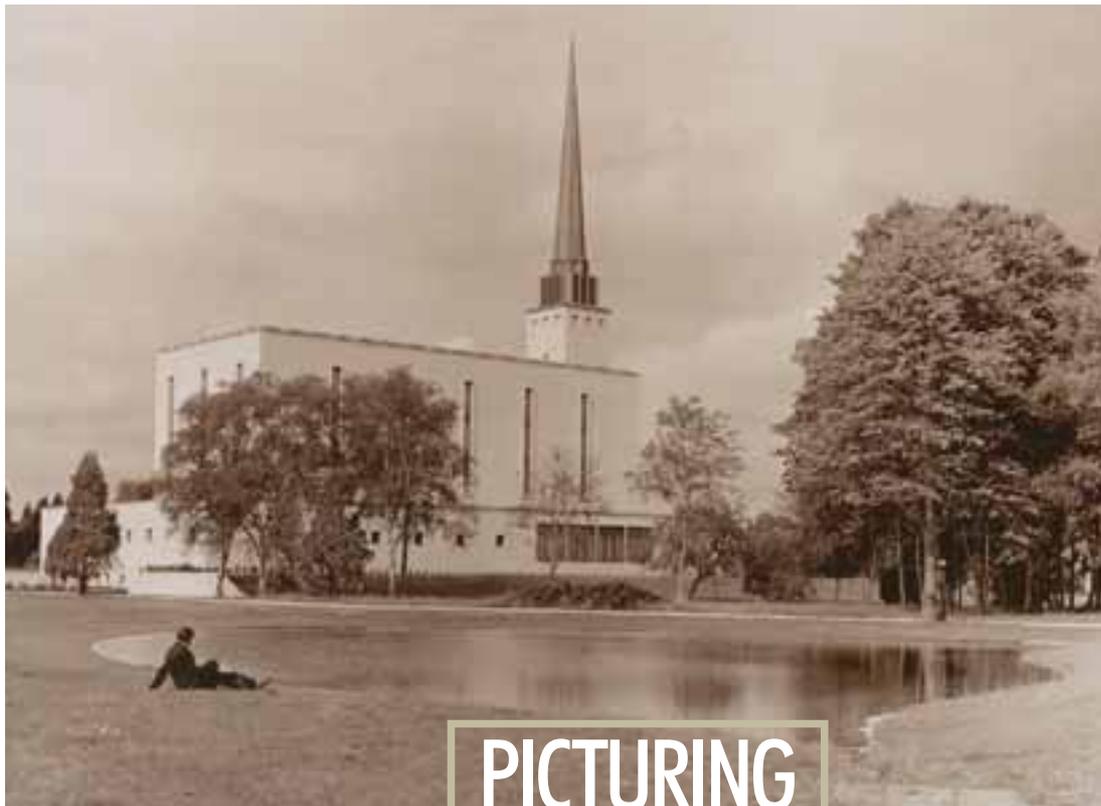
My father informed the temple president, Selvoy J. Boyer, of my award. He wanted to see the picture, so I made a print and presented it to him. He gave me a copy of the Book of Mormon. I read it and obtained a conviction that it was scripture.

On April 1, 1960, President Boyer baptized me. My first calling was to host tours on the temple grounds. Though nearly 19, I was not able to serve a mission because I was serving an apprenticeship and was under contract for a number of years. However, I did receive my endowment in the temple. That first temple visit impressed upon me the desire to do ordinance work for my deceased ancestors.

In time, I met my future wife, Iris. As she gained a testimony of the gospel, she asked me to baptize her. We were married in the temple a year and a day after her baptism. Eventually we had a son and then adopted a two-year-old

girl. We all went to the temple to have our daughter sealed to us. Being together, all dressed in white, was a spiritual and choice experience.

Some time later, when my wife contracted cancer, the first thing we did was go to the temple. In the celestial room



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN COX

PICTURING MYSELF IN THE TEMPLE

Never did I think that by putting myself in a picture of the temple, I would also put myself in the temple.

BY JOHN COX, AS TOLD TO JANINE SIMONS CREAGER

we prayed quietly to know “What does this mean in our lives now?” Throughout those years before she was cleared of the cancer, we went to the temple often, seeking the Lord’s blessings.

Throughout my life, I’ve had a special

feeling about the temple, and it all started with a photograph. The temple was there from the beginning and has been with me ever since. Indeed, it continues to be the central focus of my life. ■

John Cox is a member of the Farmington Fifth Ward, Farmington Utah Stake. Janine Simons Creager is a member of the Davis Creek Second Ward, Farmington Utah South Stake.

Young Adults and the Temple



To each young adult I emphasize that the temple can bless you—even before you enter it.

BY ELDER RUSSELL M. NELSON
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

My topic is the temple. I would like to help you delve deeply into its doctrine, explore the heights of its glory, and grasp its eternal significance.

Temples are not new. “Whenever the Lord has had a people on the earth who will obey his word, they have been commanded to build temples” (Bible Dictionary, “Temple,” 781). The Old Testament is replete with references to ordinances, covenants, and even the clothing of the temple (see, for example, Exodus 28–29; Leviticus 8).

The best-known biblical temple was built in Jerusalem in the days of Solomon. The Lord personally accepted that holy house (see 2 Chronicles 7:12). It was partially destroyed in 600 B.C.

Almost a hundred years later it was restored by Zerubbabel. This structure was damaged by fire in 37 B.C.; subsequently Herod enlarged and leveled the Temple Mount and commenced the rebuilding of the second temple (see Bible Dictionary, “Temple,” “Temple of Herod,” 781).

This was the temple known by Jesus. He

was there as a child when His anxious mother could not find Him (see Luke 2:43–49).

At the first cleansing of the temple, Jesus called it “my Father’s house” (John 2:16; see vv. 13–16). At the second cleansing, Jesus called it “my house” (Matthew 21:13; Mark 11:17). Knowing the temple would be further desecrated, Jesus called it “your house . . . left unto you desolate” (Luke 13:35)—a prophecy fulfilled when it was destroyed in A.D. 70.

Several years ago, Sister Nelson and I were in Jerusalem being guided through recent excavations in a tunnel to the left of the present Western Wall of the old temple. In that tunnel we saw Jewish rabbis praying for the day that the third temple would be built in Jerusalem.

From the Book of Mormon we know that Nephi built a temple “after the manner of the temple of Solomon,” only it was less ornate (2 Nephi 5:16).

“From Adam to the time of Jesus, ordinances were performed in temples for the living only. After Jesus opened the way for the gospel to be preached in the world of spirits, . . . work for the dead, as well as for

the living, has been done in temples” (Bible Dictionary, “Temple,” 781).

Children of the Covenant

As we read of temples, we also learn of covenants that God has made with faithful followers—His “children of the covenant” (3 Nephi 20:26; see v. 25; Acts 3:25).

Some 4,000 years ago, God made a covenant with Abraham that all the nations of the earth will be blessed through his seed (see Genesis 17:7; 22:18; Abraham 2:9–11). It was re-affirmed with Isaac (see Genesis 26:1–4, 24) and again with Jacob (see Genesis 28;

35:9–13; 48:3–4). The thread of that covenant is woven throughout the entire fabric of the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Book of Mormon (see, for example, Book of Mormon title page). That covenant has been divinely renewed in this dispensation as part of the Restoration of all things (see D&C 124:58).

Prophets have long known that the Abrahamic covenant was to be fulfilled *only* “in the latter days” (1 Nephi 15:18). That’s our day! (See D&C 110:12–16.) We are those covenant people! What does that really mean? Let us learn together from selected scriptures.

In Mosiah 5:7 we read: “Because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters.”

By maintaining a standard of moral conduct high enough to qualify for a temple recommend, you will find inner peace and spiritual strength.



THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Ward or branch _____

Stake or mission _____

T/M/F	File number*
1	
2	
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Limited-Use
Issue a Limited-Use recommend only to members who are unendowed men or women who have observed sealings with their parents. This recommend is valid for 30 days of the month in which it is issued.



In 3 Nephi 20:25, Jesus is speaking: “Ye are the children of the prophets; and ye are of the house of Israel; and ye are of the covenant which the Father made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham: And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.”

In our holy temples, we literally receive those blessings promised to the lineage of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Restoration of Temples and Sealing Authority

In the Restoration, temple work received a very high priority. The first revelation from a ministering angel pertained to this doctrine. Recorded in the second section of the Doctrine and Covenants, it is an echo of the fourth chapter of Malachi. Moroni foretold the coming of Elijah, who would turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers (see Malachi 4:5–6; D&C 2:1–2).

Elijah did come, on April 3, 1836, Easter Sunday, at the beginning of Passover. He came to the Kirtland Temple to confer keys of sealing authority, precisely as prophesied by the angel Moroni (see D&C 110:14–16).

In the temple, ordinances are administered through which the power of God is manifest (see D&C 84:20). Without those ordinances and the authority of the priesthood, “the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh” (D&C 84:21).

The inscription on modern temples reads, “Holiness to the Lord” (see Exodus 28:36; 39:30). Those words describe the building, yes. They also describe the ordinances and covenants of the temple and the people who worship within its walls.

Temples of the Restoration

The Kirtland Temple was a preparatory temple. It stands today as a monument to the faith of the people who built it. Later, when the Saints

reached Illinois, the Lord once again asked His people to build a temple. Why?

We read in Doctrine and Covenants 124:29–30:

“For a baptismal font there is not upon the earth, that they, my saints, may be baptized for those who are dead—
“For this ordinance belongeth to my house.”

Verse 32 carries this stern warning: “If you do not these things . . . ye shall be rejected as a church, with your dead, saith the Lord your God.”

Verse 40 states: “Let this house be built unto my name, that I may reveal mine ordinances therein unto my people.”

The heading for section 128 notes that this section was an epistle. Why was the Prophet Joseph Smith writing a letter to the Saints instead of addressing them directly? He was in seclusion. He was being hunted by angry mobs. He

couldn’t even go home. He was sequestered in the home of his friend Edward Hunter. Read these wondrous words, written under the roof of Edward Hunter’s house:

“I now resume the subject of the baptism for the dead, as that

In our holy temples, we literally receive those blessings promised to the lineage of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.



subject seems to occupy my mind, and press itself upon my feelings the strongest, since I have been pursued by my enemies. . . .

“ . . . These are principles in relation to the dead and the living that cannot be lightly passed over, as pertaining to our salvation. For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation, as Paul says concerning the fathers—that they without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect. . . .

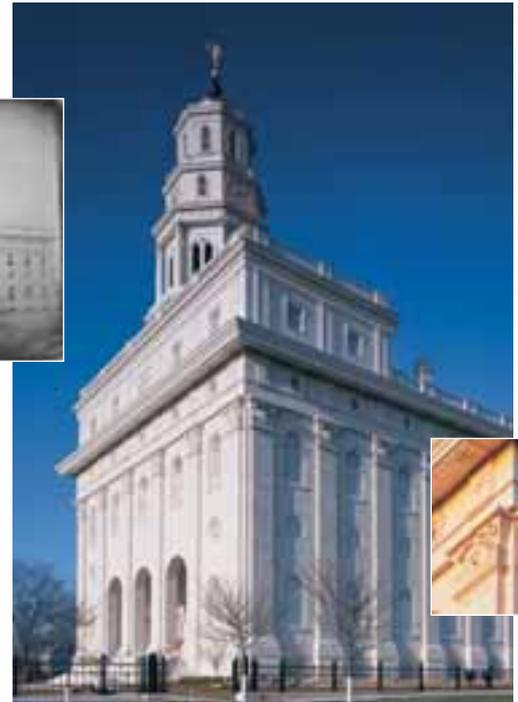
“ . . . The earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children. . . . Baptism for the dead . . . is necessary . . . that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place. . . . Things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be revealed . . . in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times” (vv. 1, 15, 18).

The Saints obeyed. They built the temple in Nauvoo. Some 6,000 Saints received their endowments and sealings before they had to leave and lose their temple. Now it stands again—rebuilt in all its majesty—as a very busy temple.

Some 30 years after the exodus from Nauvoo, the St. George Utah Temple was finished. It was the first temple in which vicarious ordinances for the dead were carried out on an organized scale.

At the dedication of the lower story of the St. George Utah Temple, on January 1, 1877—the very year that President Brigham Young died—he said:

“What do you suppose the fathers would say if they could speak from the dead? Would they not say, ‘We have lain here thousands of years, here in this prison house, waiting for this dispensation to come?’ . . . What would they whisper in our ears? Why, if they had the power the very thunders of heaven would be in our ears, if we could realize the importance of the work we are engaged in. All the angels in heaven are looking at this



Some 6,000 Saints received their endowments and sealings before they had to leave Nauvoo and lose their temple. Now it stands again—rebuilt in all its majesty—as a very busy temple.

little handful of people, and stimulating them to the salvation of the human family. . . . When I think upon this subject, I want the tongues of seven thunders to wake up the people.”¹

Continuing Revelation

In 1894 President Wilford Woodruff (1807–98) instructed members of the Church: “We want the Latter-day Saints from this time to trace their genealogies as far as they can, and to be sealed to their fathers and mothers. Have children sealed to their parents, and run this chain through as far as you can get it. . . . This is the will of the Lord to this people.”²

The purpose of family history work is to obtain the names and data of our ancestors so that temple ordinances can be performed in their behalf.

Doctrine and Covenants section 138 is the crowning jewel of the remarkable ministry of President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918). It was received the month before President Smith passed away. In that unique circumstance, he was still in the world but could see into the next world. It is dated October 1918.

I’ll begin at verse 11: “I saw the hosts of the dead, both small and great.

“And there were gathered together in one place an innumerable company of the spirits of the just, who had

been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality. . . .

“They were assembled awaiting the advent of the Son of God into the spirit world, to declare their redemption from the bands of death. . . .

“While this vast multitude waited and conversed, rejoicing in the hour of their deliverance from the chains of death, the Son of God appeared, declaring liberty to the captives. . . .

“And there he preached to them the everlasting gospel, the doctrine of the resurrection and the redemption of mankind from the fall, and from individual sins on conditions of repentance” (vv. 11–12, 16, 18–19).

And in verse 51: “These the Lord taught, and gave them power to come forth, after his resurrection from the dead, to enter into his Father’s kingdom, there to be crowned with immortality and eternal life.”

Temples catalyze that crown! How grateful we are for this knowledge!

May I digress a moment to relate an amusing experience we had a few years ago. Sister Nelson and I had the privilege of taking President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) and his wife to an activity. Our five-year-old son was with us. I asked him to tell President Kimball about the picture our son had on the wall of his bedroom. He dutifully replied, “It’s the temple.”



President Kimball, with his global perspective, asked, “Which temple?”

That completely stumped our little boy, with his limited perspective. He thought a minute and then replied, “Why, the marriage temple, of course.” President Kimball gave a broad smile.

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) said in 1994, the year before he

passed away: “I . . . invite the members of the Church to establish the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of their membership and the supernal setting for their most sacred covenants. . . . I would hope that every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend, even if proximity to a temple does not allow immediate or frequent use of it.”³

President Gordon B. Hinckley



The Prophet Joseph Smith declared, “The earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link . . . between the fathers and the children.”

has reaffirmed that hope. He has also expanded temple and family history work exponentially. In May 1999 he launched the FamilySearch™ Internet service. It is now averaging more than 50,000 visitors every day. From the Pedigree Resource File, a component of that endeavor, we are receiving an income of more than a million names per month, all lineage-linked. The database has exceeded one billion names.

When President Hinckley was called to serve in the First Presidency in 1981, how many temples did we have in the Church? Nineteen. Now we have 122! More are under construction, and others have been announced.

Personal Preparation for the Temple

To each young adult I emphasize that the temple can bless you—even before you enter it. By maintaining a standard of moral conduct high enough to qualify for a temple recommend, you will find inner peace and spiritual strength. Now is the time to cleanse your lives of anything that is displeasing to the Lord. Now is the time to eliminate feelings of envy or enmity and seek forgiveness for any offense.

Several years ago the First Presidency issued a letter to priesthood leaders regarding the optimum time for members to receive a temple recommend. From it I quote:

“Single members in their late teens or early twenties who have not received a mission call or who are not engaged to be married in the temple should not be recommended to the temple for their own endowment. They can, however, receive a Limited-Use Recommend to perform baptisms for the dead. The desire to witness temple marriages of siblings or friends is not sufficient reason for a young adult to be endowed” (Nov. 12, 2002; see also First Presidency letter, June 21, 2005).

Please note that this instruction applies to singles in their “late teens or early twenties.” We hope that a few years later, these individuals will be married or established in a stable manner and their temple worship will be a high priority throughout their lives.

Before you enter the temple for the first time, participation in a temple preparation seminar will be helpful. So will reading a booklet that your bishop

or branch president will provide, *Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple*.⁴ These will help you understand the magnificence of the ordinances and covenants of the temple.

Plan now to be married in the temple, and conduct your courtship with the temple in mind. When you and your companion kneel at the altar of a holy temple, you do so as equal partners. You become an eternal family unit. Anything that might erode the spirituality, love, and sense of true partnership is contrary to the will of the Lord. Fidelity to these sacred ordinances and covenants will bring eternal blessings to you and to generations yet unborn.

Hour of Urgency and Opportunity

The urgency of vicarious temple work was stressed in a letter from the First Presidency dated March 11, 2003. Addressed to all Church members, it said that “millions of our ancestors have lived upon the earth without receiving the benefit of temple ordinances. . . .

“All of the ordinances which take place in the House of the Lord become expressions of our belief in that fundamental and basic doctrine of the immortality of the human soul.”⁵

My beloved brothers and sisters, our day was foreseen by our Master: “This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; . . . saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33).

As we are His people, we may “inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, . . . exaltation and glory in all things” (D&C 132:19). This is our legacy. This is our opportunity. Of this, I testify. ■

From a Church Educational System satellite broadcast address given on May 4, 2003, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 309, 299; see also D&C 138:47–50.
2. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 157.
3. Quoted in James E. Faust, “President Howard W. Hunter: The Way of an Eagle,” *Tambuli*, Sept. 1994, 4; quoted in Jay M. Todd, “President Howard W. Hunter: Fourteenth President of the Church,” *Ensign*, July 1994, 5.
4. This booklet is also used as the student manual in the temple preparation seminar (item no. 36793).
5. See “Letter from the First Presidency,” *Liabona*, Mar. 2004, 47; *Ensign*, Mar. 2004, 45.

Confidence

Many Church members have happy marriages despite the fears they had when they were single.

BY MELISSA HOWELL

Do I have what it takes to be a good spouse?" "My parents went through a painful divorce, and I'm worried that if I get married I might get divorced too."

"Will I be able to support a family if I get married?"

Sometimes fears like these can deter single Latter-day Saints from pursuing marriage. So how can we work to overcome the spirit of fear and replace it with love?

By relying on the Lord, many Church members have found that while their fears may not be entirely eradicated, Heavenly Father will assist them in creating a happy marriage.

Fear of Divorce

Perhaps you have experienced divorce firsthand. Perhaps your parents or someone else close to you went through a divorce. Or maybe the growing number of divorces today weighs heavily on your mind. Concern about the possibility of divorce has led many single adults to avoid taking the risks that could lead to a happy, fulfilling eternal marriage. But as you seek the Lord's help, you can actually learn valuable, if hard-won, lessons from the negative experiences of those around you and then go forward with faith, discovering that a happy marriage is a real possibility.

Scott Balloch of Bristol, England, was 18 years old when his parents ended their marriage. As a result, he feared the possibility of a divorce of his own someday—

but he also learned important lessons from his parents' experience.

"I was much less blasé about dating because of my parents' divorce," Brother Balloch says. "I took the commitment of marriage very seriously."

Before he and his wife married, they talked about his concerns and they consistently prayed and read the scriptures.

"That had a massive impact," Brother Balloch says. "It lessened contention, and a lot of our fears were taken away."

"Nephi taught us a good principle: 'I will go and do'" (1 Nephi 3:7), he continues. "When we're fearful, it can make us more reliant on Heavenly Father. He's provided a way." The Ballochs explain that they have been blessed for seeking to follow Heavenly Father's commandments in their marriage.

Fear of Being an Inadequate Spouse

Everyone has imperfections, and sometimes these shortcomings become more apparent in marriage. When Ken Nollsch of Highlands Ranch, Colorado, married his wife, Chalyce, he was continuing to overcome his long-held fears of being an inadequate spouse. As he has learned to share his burdens with the Lord, his fears have diminished.

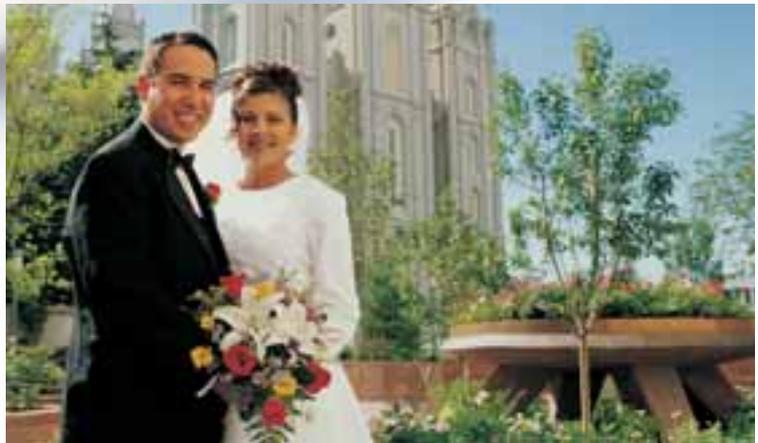
Brother Nollsch wants to be fully committed, he says, "to putting her needs ahead of mine," explaining, "I worry

to Marry



about how I spend my time and about staying away from selfish activities.” When Brother Nollsch gets overwhelmed by his fears, he reminds himself to emulate the example of the Savior, who said humbly to Heavenly Father, “Thy will be done” (Matthew 26:42). “I say that over and over in my mind, and then I move on to what I need to accomplish,” Brother Nollsch says.

Brother Nollsch says his confidence in himself and in his wife has grown over time. He also focuses on the joy he finds in being a husband and father. “God wants us to be happy, and being a husband and father is one



*C*ouples who seek the Lord's guidance will find that He will bless them in their marriages.

of the best ways to find happiness,” he says.

Fear of Financial Needs

While speaking to young men, President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) commented on the commonly held fear of becoming the family breadwinner:

“I realize that some of you brethren may have genuine fears regarding the real responsibilities that will be yours if you do marry. You are concerned about being able to support a wife and family and provide them with the necessities in these uncertain economic times. Those fears must be replaced with faith.

“I assure you, brethren, that if you will be



FACE YOUR DOUBTS

“With any major decision there are cautions and considerations to make, but once there has been illumination, beware the temptation to retreat from a good thing. If it was right when you prayed about it and trusted it and lived for it, it is right now. Don’t give up when the pressure mounts. Certainly don’t give in to that being who is bent on the destruction of your happiness. Face your doubts. Master your fears. ‘Cast not away therefore your confidence’ [Hebrews 10:35]. Stay the course and see the beauty of life unfold for you.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Cast Not Away Therefore Your Confidence,” *Liahona*, June 2000, 38; *Ensign*, Mar. 2000, 9.

industrious, faithfully pay your tithes and offerings, and conscientiously keep the commandments, the Lord will sustain you. Yes, there will be sacrifices required, but you will grow from these and will be a better man for having met them.

“Work hard educationally and in your vocation. Put your trust in the Lord, have faith, and it will work out. The Lord never gives a commandment without providing the means to accomplish it.”¹

When Clyde and Joyce Hlongwane of Johannesburg, South Africa, started dating, Brother Hlongwane had concerns about supporting his future family.

“Before we married I was listening to a conference talk about paying tithing and how the Lord

Tithing and Other Offerings	
Date	Ward or branch
Teach the first, last, middle) List the name spelling on all your slips.	
Full address	
Tithing	\$
Fast offering	\$
Ward missionary	\$
General missionary	\$
Book of Mormon	\$
Humanitarian aid	\$
Temple construction	\$
Perpetual education	\$
Other (specify)	\$
Total	\$
Currency	\$



Putting the Lord first by paying your tithing can help you manage your money more effectively.

would provide,” Brother Hlongwane remembers. “I realized tithing was the key to the financial concerns I had—that no matter what, you pay your tithing.”

Brother Hlongwane was encouraged by scriptures such as 1 Nephi 17:3: “If it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God he doth nourish them, and strengthen them, and provide means whereby they can accomplish the thing which he has commanded them.”

“I knew it was a commandment to get married, and so the Lord would provide a way,” Brother Hlongwane says.

In addition, he recognized the need to do his part. When he and his wife were first married, he was working at a low-paying job and his income was not sufficient to support a family. He decided to pursue more education. Their financial situation has improved, and Brother Hlongwane is now looking forward to having a career in his chosen field.

Fear of Lifestyle Changes

Marriage affects how people live financially, socially, emotionally, and even spiritually.

Amy Byerly of Walpole, Massachusetts, was concerned about the lifestyle changes marriage brings. Talking with Bart, her soon-to-be husband, about her concerns lightened the burden. She also turned to the scriptures, and in Mosiah 2:41, she read: “I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness. O remember, remember that these things are true; for the Lord God hath spoken it.”

“This scripture puts things into perspective for me,” Sister Byerly says. “Even if my lifestyle changed, I could still be happy if I was faithful. Also, it taught me that having an eternal family was much more important than all the fun things I did while I was single.”

Sister Byerly believed that Heavenly Father would help her in her marriage. “Knowing that God approved of our

marriage helped me deal with any fears I had,” she says. “I knew I could be happy despite a lifestyle change.”

Fear of Changing Goals

Some single adults may worry that marriage will prohibit reaching their career or educational goals. “We were both worried about school and careers before we got married,” says Thekla Schenk of Mililani, Hawaii. “When we were first married, I wanted things to go *my* way. We were married on the condition that I would go to school.”

Sister Schenk prayed and asked Heavenly Father to help her finish college. She felt impressed that it would happen when it was supposed to, although she didn’t know how.

Although both are currently in school, the couple has determined that they will focus on Grayson’s education and career first so that Sister Schenk will be able to stay home with their future children. “We turned it into an ‘us’ thing instead of a ‘me’ thing,” Sister Schenk says.

She and her husband have sought happiness in marriage by trying to make each other happy. “It’s difficult to learn to put someone else’s needs first,” she says. “We need to strive to be spiritual enough to listen to promptings about what to do.”

In a message to his granddaughters on becoming great women, President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said: “My dear granddaughters, you cannot do everything well at the same time. You cannot be a 100 percent wife, a 100 percent mother, a 100 percent church worker, a 100 percent career person, and a 100 percent public-service person at the same time.” Doing things sequentially, he said, “gives a woman the opportunity to do each thing well in its time and to fill a variety of roles in her life.”²

When they were engaged, Sonia Lopreiato Piros and Gabriel Piros of São Paulo, Brazil, talked about the decisions they would have to make when their children were born. But after one year of marriage and the birth of their first child, “everything that was once so simple in theory turned out to be complicated to practice,” Sister Piros says. “We faced the moment of decision, and fear invaded our



PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE BUNDERSON, MAY NOT BE COPIED

rather that this gnawing, destructive element comes from the adversary of truth and righteousness. Fear is the antithesis of faith.”³

As you obey the Lord's commandments, you can go forward with faith, knowing that great happiness can be found in marriage and family.

hearts. My husband was afraid he would not earn enough to provide for our needs, and I was afraid to end my promising career.”

Brother and Sister Piros began reviewing the *Eternal Marriage Student Manual* (item no. 35311) and attending institute classes together. They felt certain the right decision was the one they had made before they were married—that Sister Piros would set aside her career for now, even though both knew it would not be easy for Brother Piros to provide for the family's needs.

“We exercised our faith, and as the scripture said, we proved the word of God,” she says (see 2 Nephi 11:3). The couple began to experience many blessings as a result of their sacrifice, including Brother Piros's professional growth.

“We still face some challenges and fears, but we are certain that God will be there at our side and that He will answer our prayers,” Sister Piros says.

“God Hath Not Given Us the Spirit of Fear”

President Gordon B. Hinckley said: “Let us recognize that fear comes not of God, but

Certainly there are legitimate reasons for doubt and uncertainty in some dating relationships. Individuals should always seek the Lord's guidance when making a decision to marry. But as you take the proper steps in your relationships and as you feel the peace the Lord bestows on those who make righteous decisions, you can go forward with faith, knowing that great happiness can be found in marriage and family.

The Apostle Paul taught, “Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:11). He also wrote, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). May we strive to replace our fears about marriage with faith and love. ■

Melissa Howell is a member of the Aurora Highlands Ward, Aurora Colorado Stake.

NOTES

1. “To the Single Adult Brethren of the Church,” *Ensign*, May 1988, 52–53.
2. “A Message to My Granddaughters: Becoming ‘Great Women,’” *Ensign*, Sept. 1986, 19.
3. “God Hath Not Given Us the Spirit of Fear,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1984, 2.

Lesson for a Busy Bishop

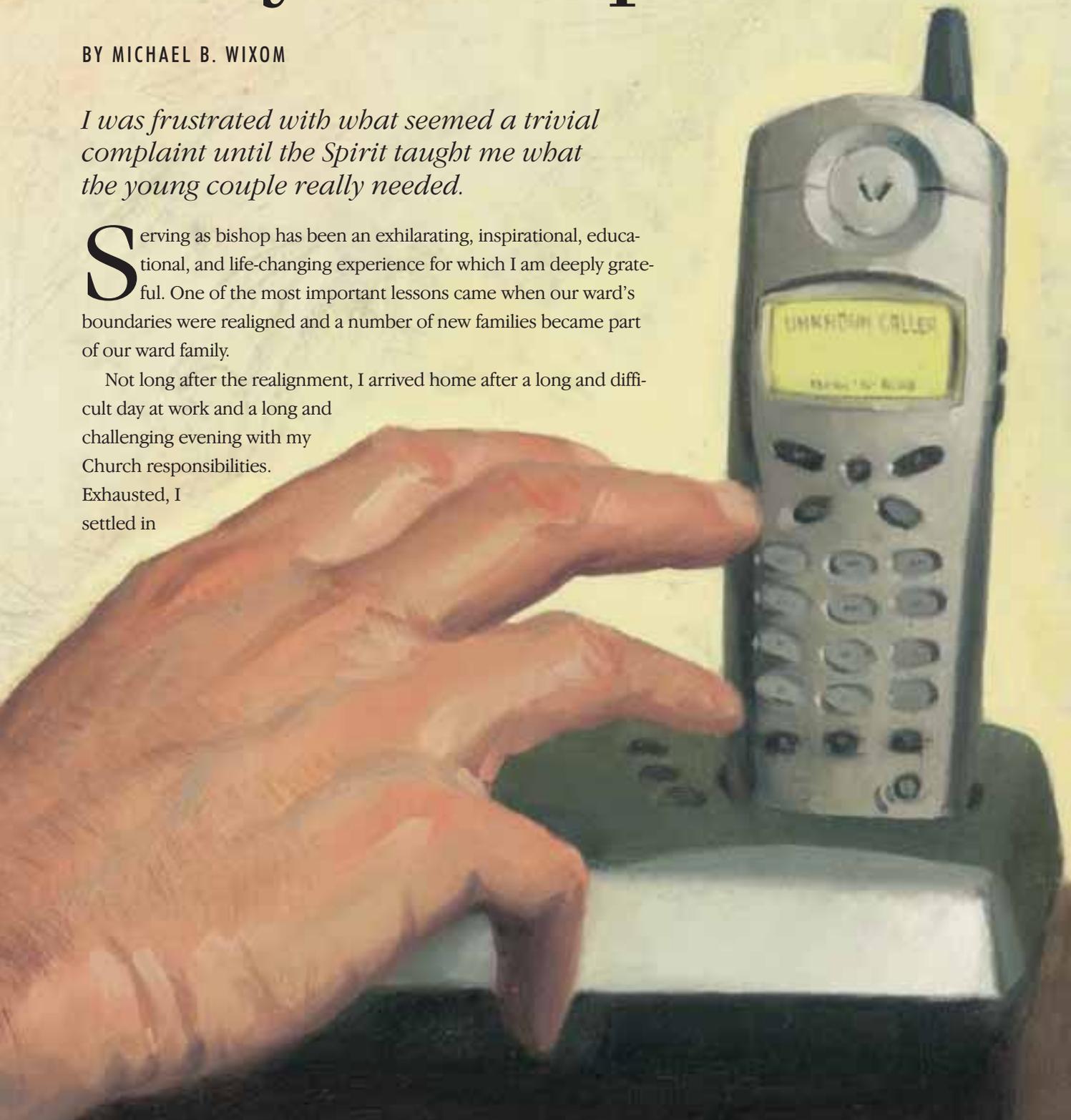
BY MICHAEL B. WIXOM

I was frustrated with what seemed a trivial complaint until the Spirit taught me what the young couple really needed.

Serving as bishop has been an exhilarating, inspirational, educational, and life-changing experience for which I am deeply grateful. One of the most important lessons came when our ward's boundaries were realigned and a number of new families became part of our ward family.

Not long after the realignment, I arrived home after a long and difficult day at work and a long and challenging evening with my Church responsibilities.

Exhausted, I settled in



ILLUSTRATED BY GREGG THORNELSON

with a good book to unwind from the stress of the day's events. Almost on cue, the telephone rang. It was nearly 10:00 p.m. When my wife called out, "It's for the bishop," I reluctantly set my book aside and picked up the telephone.

The caller said with some urgency, "This is Brother Hammond [name has been changed], and I have an emergency. I need you to come over right away."

"Now? Perhaps we could get together tomorrow night, or later in the week?"

"No, this is an emergency, and we need to see you right away. It can't wait!"

"What is the problem?"

"We can explain when you get here."

After a pause I responded, "I will be there as soon as I can."

So off went the robe, the slippers, and the pajamas. On came the white shirt and the tie. With some degree of apprehension I went out the front door and into the night.

The Hammond family lived in a small apartment several miles from my home. I had met Brother Hammond a few times at church, but I didn't know him well. He and his wife had one young daughter, and they were just out of high school themselves. I wondered what the problem could be. Was someone ill? Had there been a death in the family? Had there been an accident? The possibilities were sobering, and I prepared myself for the worst.

I approached their apartment and knocked on the door. After only a few seconds, the door flew open, and Brother Hammond ushered me hastily into the front room of the apartment.

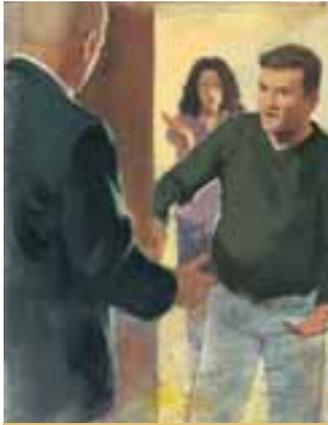
"Bishop, thanks so much for coming."

"What's the problem? How can I help?"

"Don't you hear that?"

"Hear what?"

"The stereo downstairs! It has been blasting that way all day. We have asked and asked them to turn it down, and they just ignore us. We called the apartment manager, and he



I approached their apartment and knocked on the door. After a few seconds, the door flew open, and Brother Hammond ushered me hastily into the front room.

won't help at all. We just can't stand it anymore. Please go down there and tell them to turn it down. They won't listen to anyone else. You must help us!"

I was stunned—so stunned that I stepped backwards and fell, more than sat, on the couch behind me. The room buzzed as both Brother and Sister Hammond took their turns complaining about the stereo, the noise, the rudeness of people who were so thoughtless as to not even consider that other people were tired and wanted some rest. I stared at them in disbelief. They were apparently unaware of the irony of it all.

Then, as I thought about my limited time for myself and my family, I began to fume. Line by line I constructed a lecture that they most assuredly needed and deserved. They had to learn that it was just not right to treat a priesthood leader, or anyone else for that matter, in such a way. What were they thinking? This was not a problem for a priesthood leader. Some problems in life we have to address ourselves.

Fortunately, a thought entered my mind just as I was about to unload my frustrations. "Why would they call me over this late at night? The situation doesn't really seem to make any sense, does it? What are their real concerns? It can't be just the stereo."

I looked around. I could see that the apartment was clean but sparsely furnished, and what furniture there was in the room was threadbare. I ignored their complaints and interrupted them with a single question that came as clearly into my mind as a ray of light into a darkened room: "Do you have any food in the house?"

Brother Hammond looked at me with a stunned expression and lowered his head. "No, Bishop, we don't."

In an instant, everything became clear to me. I understood why they had called and why they needed me there. We all forgot the noise, sat down together, discussed their situation, and made plans to address their immediate and long-term needs. I helped them learn about the roles of home teachers, visiting teachers, and priesthood and Relief

Society leaders in helping handle problems like these. My self-absorbed lecture was set aside and forgotten. I left for home some time later with a humble and contrite heart.

Speaking directly to bishops, President Gordon B. Hinckley has taught: "You are to see that none goes hungry or without clothing or shelter. You must know the circumstances of all over whom you preside. You must be a comforter and a guide to your people. Your door must be ever open to any cries of distress. Your back must be strong in sharing their burdens."¹ President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has also explained

that "inherent in the ordination to be bishop is both the right and the obligation to be directed by inspiration."²

Those lessons bore down upon my soul that night. My selfishness had very nearly overshadowed the Spirit, just as the Spirit was about to help me meet my task. But the promise had been fulfilled. The Spirit had come. And my life and the lives of those to whom I had been able to minister had been blessed. ■

Michael B. Wixom is a member of the Eastridge Ward, Las Vegas Nevada Sunrise Stake.

NOTES

1. "The Shepherds of the Flock," *Ensign*, May 1999, 53.
2. "The Bishop and His Counselors," *Ensign*, May 1999, 58.

I looked around. Their apartment was clean but sparsely furnished. I did not respond to their complaints but interrupted them with a single question.



“I, the Lord God, Make You Free”



BY ELDER SHIRLEY D. CHRISTENSEN
Of the Seventy

What did the Lord mean when He said, “I, the Lord God, make you free?” Freedom has been defined as “the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action.”¹ Are we doing all that we should to preserve freedom wherever we live? Since the dawn of time, the Lord has desired that His children would be free to exercise their agency and choose the path they would follow.

In August 1833, in consequence of the persecution directed at the Saints in Jackson County, Missouri, the Lord stated His will concerning freedom for His children and especially for His Church as it moved forward through those dark and difficult days:

“And now, verily I say unto you concerning the laws of the land, it is my will that my people should observe to do all things whatsoever I command them. . . .

“And as pertaining to law of man, whatsoever is more or less than this, cometh of evil.

“I, the Lord God, make you free, therefore ye are free indeed; and the law also maketh you free” (D&C 98:4, 7–8; emphasis added).

Since the dawn of time, the Lord has desired that His children would be free to exercise their agency and choose the path they would follow.

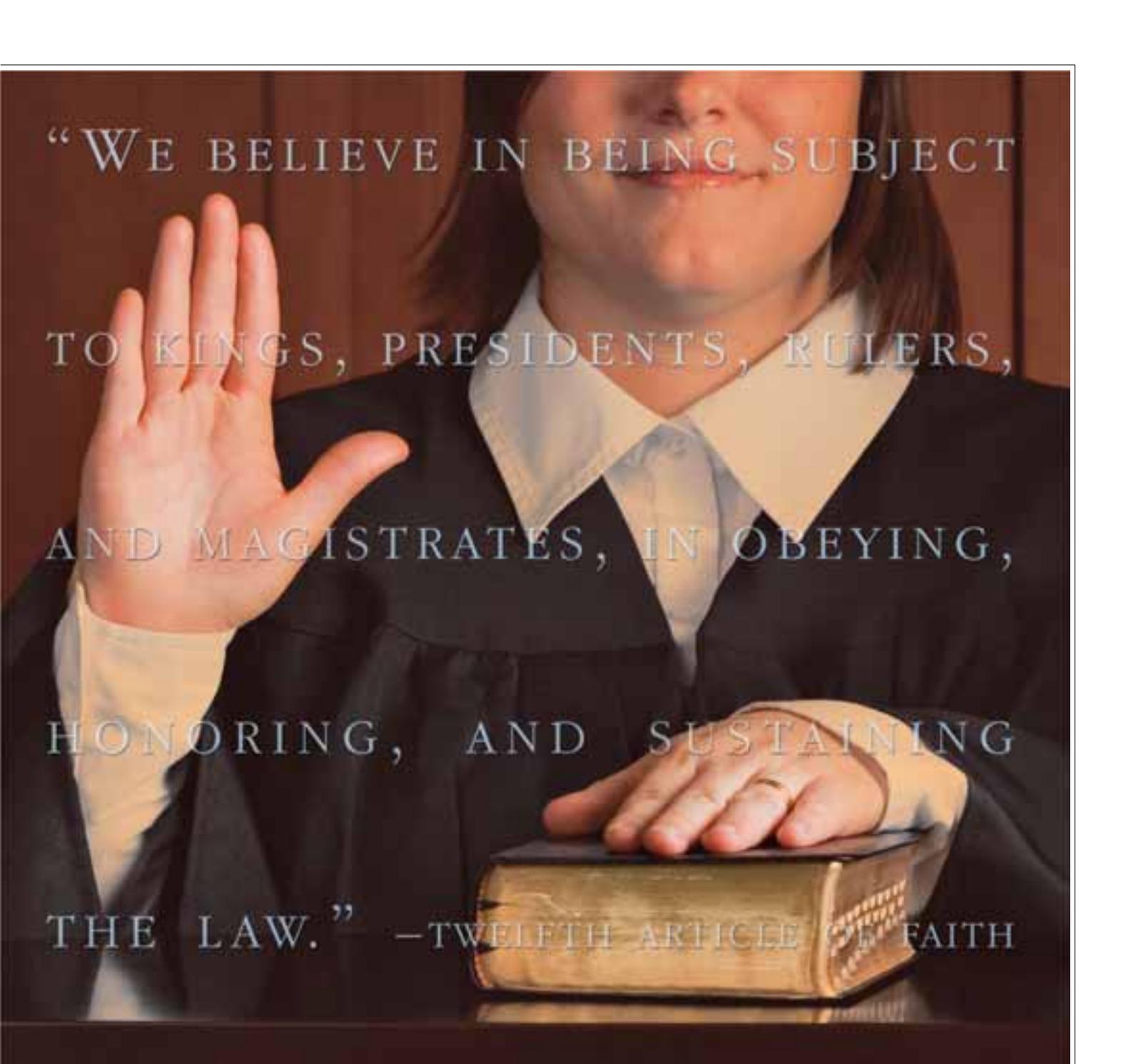
OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PRESERVE FREEDOMS

The Lord has placed upon His children the responsibility of preserving their precious freedoms. Mosiah urged his people to accept responsibility for their government and their future with this counsel: “Now it is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right; but it is common for the lesser part of the people to desire that which is not right; therefore this shall ye observe and make it your law—to do your business by the voice of the people” (Mosiah 29:26).

What are the obligations of Church members today to encourage freedom among all people where they live?

Do not forsake the Lord, and support righteous laws.

In the days of wickedness caused by Amalickiah and his followers, Captain Moroni raised the “title of liberty,” praying to the Lord that He would preserve their land as “a chosen land, and the land of liberty” (Alma 46:17; see also vv. 12–16). Upon seeing the title of



“WE BELIEVE IN BEING SUBJECT
TO KINGS, PRESIDENTS, RULERS,
AND MAGISTRATES, IN OBEYING,
HONORING, AND SUSTAINING
THE LAW.” —TWELFTH ARTICLE OF FAITH

liberty and hearing Captain Moroni’s invitation to covenant with the Lord, the people “came running together with their armor girded about their loins, rending their garments in token, or as a covenant, that they would not forsake the Lord their God” (Alma 46:21; see also vv. 19–20).

What behaviors in our own lives indicate our willingness to never forsake the Lord our God? Are our freedoms sufficiently important

to us that we would figuratively “come running” in support of righteous laws or proposals wherever and whenever they appear in our community or nation?

Be humble and keep covenants.

In the early days of the restored Church, the Saints in Kirtland, Ohio, had sacrificed to construct the first temple in this dispensation and were enjoying the spiritual blessings of that holy edifice. The Lord had earlier

T*he Lord’s prophets have taught members of the Church about freedom, the proper role of government, and the law.*

declared that the Saints would eventually gather to Independence, Missouri—the City of Zion (see D&C 57:1–3). The move would be difficult and costly, but it appeared that an improvement in economic conditions in Kirtland would help the Saints prepare for their departure. However, at the same time, many members of the Church were caught up in land speculation that resulted in increased greed and debt. Greed led to apostasy and then to conflict that greatly weakened the kingdom.

As a consequence of their transgressions and of deep cultural and religious differences, Church members encountered difficulties with the Missouri citizens. Some Saints were at odds with each other because they were unwilling to consecrate their properties to the Lord as He had commanded them and as they had covenanted to do. Their pride and failure to keep their covenants in those matters caused the Lord to withdraw His blessings, thus resulting in the loss of their properties and their civil freedoms. In that time of trial and need, the Saints learned the difficult lesson that the Lord removes His protecting hand when His children do not keep their covenants (see D&C 101:1–2, 6–7).

Uphold the law of the land, and seek leaders who are honest and wise.

To the Saints in Zion the Lord said: “The law . . . maketh you free. . . . And good men and wise men ye should observe to uphold; otherwise whatsoever is less than these cometh of evil” (D&C 98:8, 10).

In modern scripture the Lord’s prophets have clearly stated the proper role of governments:

“We believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man; and that he holds men accountable for their acts in relation to them, both in making laws and administering them, for the good and safety of society.

“We believe that no government can exist in peace, except such laws are framed and held inviolate as will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience, the right and control of property, and the protection of life” (D&C 134:1–2).

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law” (Articles of Faith 1:12).

The Lord has also decreed: “Let no man break the laws of the land, for he that keepeth the laws of God hath no need to break the laws of the land. Wherefore, be subject to the powers that be, until he reigns whose right it is to reign, and subdues all enemies under his feet” (D&C 58:21–22).

Citizens of every land, where permitted, should vigorously cherish their right to vote and should act upon that privilege at every opportunity by supporting wise and honorable candidates. Good and wise leaders elected by and working cooperatively with responsible citizens will seek to protect their freedoms. Failure to actively support such candidates with one’s vote may result in leaders who are elected, as Mosiah said, by “the lesser part of the people” who may “desire that which is not right” (Mosiah 29:26). What a sacred privilege and responsibility is ours to participate with other like-minded people to ensure that basic freedoms are preserved wherever we reside.



Where permitted, citizens should exercise their right to vote at every opportunity. It is a sacred privilege and responsibility to ensure that basic freedoms are preserved.

CITIZENSHIP AND FREEDOM IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY

Children at the Wimbledon Park First School in London, England, have declared that a good citizen is someone who:

- Has empathy for other people.
- Cares and shares.
- Respects people.
- Does not judge others based on their color or appearance.

• Cares about the community and the world.²

These British school-children are wise indeed.

The Lord holds us accountable for establishing governments and freedoms in our society wherever we live (see D&C 134:1, 5), and we live to the extent possible under law. Preserving freedom of religion, speech, and assembly begins in our homes and in our families. As parents show their own love and respect of these liberties, children will also adopt them.

Prophets have taught that the influence of parents and the home is immeasurable in establishing standards that will bless every nation. President Gordon B. Hinckley, while a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, taught, “I know of no better way to inculcate love for country than for parents to pray before their children for the President and the Congress or the [King or] Queen and the Parliament of the land of their citizenship.”³

President N. Eldon Tanner (1898–1982) of the First Presidency referred to the role of parents with this counsel: “Children who are taught obedience, to honor and obey the law, to have faith in God and to keep his commandments, will, as they grow up, honor their parents and be a credit to them; and they will be able to meet and solve their problems, find greater success and joy in life, and contribute greatly to the solution of the problems now causing the world such great concern. It is up to the parents to see to it that their children are prepared through obedience to law for the positions of leadership they may occupy in the future, where their responsibility will be to bring peace and righteousness to the world.”⁴

President David O. McKay (1873–1970), then of the



Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, counseled: “The home is truly the cell-unit of society; and parenthood is next to Godhood. The relationship of the children to the parents should be one which would enable those children to carry out ideal citizenship as they become related to the State and to the larger forms of society. The secret of good citizenship lies in the home.”⁵

Oh, that the people of every land might be free! May we as Latter-day Saints remember the lessons not only from Church history but also from events in those countries wherever we may live. The prophets have consistently taught that righteousness in our lives and in our homes, together with obedience to the laws of our country and the laws of God, will bring His blessings and will be the foundation of civil and political freedom. ■

NOTES

1. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (2003), “freedom,” 499.
2. See United Kingdom and Ireland Primary Schools, http://www.timeforcitizenship.com/teachers/citizenship_main.asp.
3. In Conference Report, Apr. 1963, 127–28.
4. “The Blessings of Obedience,” *Improvement Era*, June 1970, 32.
5. In Conference Report, June 1919, 77.

Children who observe their parents honoring and respecting their liberties will likely adopt similar attitudes.

Life *before* Birth



A continuing series explaining basic beliefs of the restored gospel, doctrines unique to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Of all the major Christian churches, only The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that the human race lived in a premortal existence with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. “One of the strange things to me,” wrote President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972), “is the fact that so many people believe that there is a spirit in man and when he dies that spirit continues to live as an immortal thing, yet that it had no existence until man was born in this mortal life.”¹

Solving Life’s Mystery

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, addressed the significance of this doctrine: “There is no way to make sense out of life without a knowledge of the doctrine of premortal life. . . . When we understand the doctrine of premortal life, then things fit together and make sense.”²

Without an understanding of our premortal life we cannot correctly comprehend our relationship with our Heavenly Father, nor can we completely grasp the purpose of this earth life and our divine destiny. “This doctrine of premortal life,” said President Packer, “was known to ancient Christians. For nearly five hundred years the doctrine was taught, but it was then rejected as a heresy by a clergy that

had slipped into the Dark Ages of apostasy. Once they rejected this doctrine, . . . they could never unravel the mystery of life. They became like a man trying to assemble a strand of pearls on a string that was too short. There is no way they can put them all together.”³

Man Is Eternal

As the Lord restored divine truth through the Prophet Joseph Smith, knowledge of the premortal existence became critically important to our understanding of Heavenly Father’s plan for our salvation. “Man was also in the beginning with God,” the Lord revealed. “Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be” (D&C 93:29). Thus, in the sense that our intelligence has always existed, we had no beginning. But at some distant point in our premortal past, spirit bodies were created for us, and we became, literally, spirit sons and daughters of heavenly parents.⁴

The knowledge that we are spirit children of God, that we lived with Him before our mortal birth, and that we desired to become like Him defines our relationship with our Eternal Father. Joseph Smith taught that “God himself, . . . because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby [His children] could have a privilege to advance like himself.”⁵ A necessary part of our advancement required us to leave our Father’s presence, to have a veil of forgetfulness cast over our minds, and to walk by faith, learning obedience to His commandments.

What We Know

Because we came to earth to be tested and to walk by faith, the Lord has not revealed many details about premortal life. What has been revealed, however, is sufficient for us to accomplish our purpose here on earth. A few of the revealed facts about our premortal existence follow:

- We are God’s literal spirit children, and as such we



In our premortal life we chose to follow Jesus Christ, who was chosen to come to earth as our Savior.

have the potential to become like Him (see Romans 8:16–17; D&C 93:33–34).

- We participated in a Grand Council in Heaven where we heard the Father’s plan for our salvation. We chose to follow Jesus Christ, who was chosen to come to earth as our Savior and Redeemer, and we shouted for joy at this wonderful opportunity (see Job 38:7; Abraham 3:24–28).

- Lucifer, “an angel of God who was in authority in the presence of God” (D&C 76:25), said, “I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost” (Moses 4:1).

But he sought that God should give unto him God’s own power and glory, and he proposed to change the conditions of our mortal experience, destroying our agency. Without agency, we would have been incapable of actually becoming like our Heavenly Father, so this proposal was rejected by God and by two-thirds of His children. Lucifer then rebelled, there was a War in Heaven—a war of words and a spiritual conflict—and he was cast out with “a third part of the hosts of heaven” who had followed him (D&C 29:36). He became known as Satan, and he and his followers now work with devilish determination to destroy our souls (see Revelation 12:7–9; D&C 29:36–39; Moses 4:1–4).

- We came to earth without the memory of our prior existence, but we did come with individual strengths and talents, as well as weaknesses we must strive to overcome (see Ether 12:27; D&C 104:17; 138:55–56; Abraham 3:23).
- Earth life is not the beginning or the end of our existence, but it is both a test and a crucial stage in our ongoing development. Our performance in this test shapes our eternal future (see Abraham 3:25–26). ■

NOTES

1. *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 1:56.
2. “The Mystery of Life,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 18.
3. *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 16–17.
4. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
5. *History of the Church*, 6:312.



HELPING CHILDREN DEVELOP FEELINGS

of SELF-WORTH

Young people who develop a strong relationship with God are better equipped to resist temptation and peer pressure.

BY BRENT L. TOP, Professor of Church History,
AND BRUCE A. CHADWICK, Professor of Sociology,
Brigham Young University

In the popular Broadway musical (and later motion picture) *My Fair Lady*, Henry Higgins reshapes the image of Eliza Doolittle by teaching her to speak proper English, schooling her in the etiquette of high society, and dressing her in stylish gowns. As friends and acquaintances treat this “new” Eliza as a proper lady, she begins to view herself in a new light. The almost miraculous transformation results in a confident young woman emerging from a cocoon of self-disdain. She had previously viewed herself as a coarse, lower-class street peddler. With the acceptance and encouragement of others, she comes to recognize her individual worth and to believe she can contribute to society. Each of us, like Eliza Doolittle, has a sense of individual worth, either positive or negative. We develop this sense of worth to a large degree as we respond to the way others treat us.

It is important for parents (and leaders and teachers) to understand the powerful impact praise, acceptance, and encouragement have on a child’s sense of individual worth and confidence. Likewise, we need to be aware of how ridicule, rejection, and continual criticism can create personal doubt. Equally important, Latter-day Saint parents need to recognize how feeling Heavenly Father’s love, sensing the comfort and spiritual guidance that come with the Holy Ghost’s companionship, and gaining a personal

testimony enhance a child’s sense of worth, personal confidence, and self-respect.

For over a decade we have studied more than 5,000 LDS high school students from three geographical regions within the United States, as well as from Great Britain and Mexico. We examined their levels of religious commitment and practices, the peer influences to which they are exposed, and what their parents do in the home to help them meet the challenges they face. The primary objective of our studies has been to ascertain the effect of faith, friends, and family in helping youth resist temptation and live the standards of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.¹ Several significant findings surfaced from this study—some anticipated and some not.

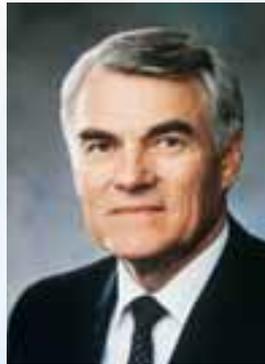
It was not surprising that the more religious Latter-day Saint youth are, the less likely they are to engage in inappropriate behaviors. What was surprising, however, was the powerful relationship between the level of a young person’s religious conviction and his or her sense of individual worth. Greater personal spirituality yields greater confidence. Young people who develop a strong relationship with God feel better about themselves and are better equipped to resist temptation and peer pressure. Our results also identified two specific things parents can do to reinforce their children’s spiritual and emotional confidence and help them meet the challenges of today’s difficult world: (1) strengthen the spiritual environment of the home, and (2) maintain a strong, loving relationship with each child.

STRENGTHENING THE SPIRITUAL ENVIRONMENT

Family Home Evening, Prayer, and Scripture Study

Our study showed that the young people with the strongest feelings of self-worth gained this confidence through gospel learning and spiritual experiences that took place primarily in the home. Regular family prayer, scripture study, and family home evening are cornerstones for establishing a household of faith. All of these activities are closely associated with stronger feelings of confidence in youth.

It appears that a spiritual home environment, coupled with involvement in Church activities and programs, guides young people to know the truthfulness of the gospel for themselves. “We parents need to take seriously our responsibility to provide religious training in the home so that our children will in turn take religion seriously and personally,” taught Elder Joe J. Christensen, then of the Seventy.²



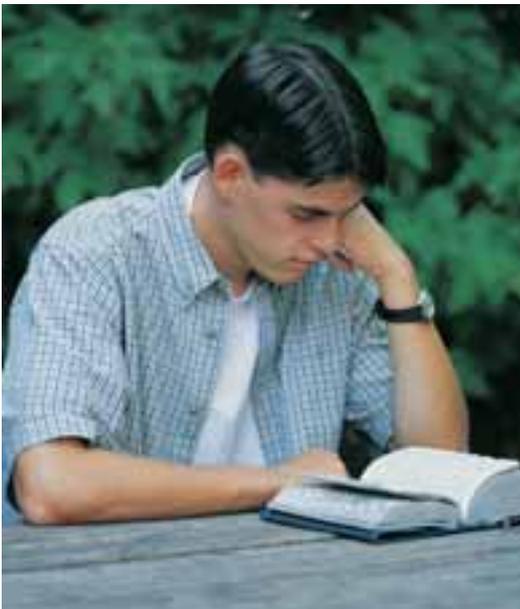
“Praying, holding family home evenings, and studying the scriptures with our children are important foundations. As we strive to create a spiritual environment, our family members can be led to those experiences that will help them build their own personal testimonies” (Elder Joe J. Christensen, One Step at a Time, 92).

Developing Their Own Spirituality

We found that those young people who regularly prayed and studied the scriptures on their own felt the Spirit more often in their lives and reported stronger feelings of individual worth and confidence. Unfortunately, one-fourth of the youth reported that they “rarely” or “never” say personal prayers. Too often they viewed participation in family prayer as “fulfilling the prayer quota” for the day. One of the most important things parents can do is to encourage their children to personally call upon their Heavenly Father to open and close each day. This one religious practice was found to be even more important than participation in family prayer. Family prayer and scripture study can be viewed as “external” religious practices, but individual prayer and scripture study are “internal” and nurture a personal relationship with God.

Likewise, we can teach them about the importance of personal testimony and how to obtain one, but we can’t do it for them. “My parents’ top priority,” one teenager in the study reported, “was that we develop our own personal testimonies.”

We found that those young people who regularly prayed and studied the scriptures on their own felt the Spirit more often in their lives and reported stronger feelings of individual worth and confidence.



Another stated: “I am so blessed to have parents who taught me to pray and read the scriptures on my own. They have taught me that I can have my own spiritual experiences.” A strong sense of individual worth comes naturally to those who have developed their own testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel and have experienced firsthand the fruits of the Spirit. Spiritual strength yields a confidence that cannot be obtained in any other way. As one young woman stated: “In my eyes, a testimony is the best prevention against Satan’s temptations and the most important thing parents can teach their children. My testimony is now what gives me my strength.”

MAINTAINING A STRONG RELATIONSHIP

Our study showed that the quality of the relationship parents have with their children is directly related to their children’s sense of worth and confidence. Three specific parental practices surfaced as significant factors in helping youth acquire their own testimonies and develop spiritual strength.

1. Give Daily Outpourings of Love

Feeling acceptance and affection from parents is vital for a child’s sense of acceptance. Sadly, about one out of every four LDS teens reported that they felt their parents did not adequately demonstrate their love for them. While we cannot know exactly how often and in what manner their parents actually expressed affection, we do know that more than 25 percent felt it did not measure up to what they desired and needed. It is difficult for teenagers to feel a sense of worth if their parents do not express love, appreciation, and respect for them. Those young people who exhibit a healthy confidence not only have come to feel Heavenly Father’s love for them but also have experienced



“If you wish your children to be taught in the principles of the gospel, if you wish them to love the truth and understand it, if you wish them to be obedient to and united with you, love them! and prove . . . that you do love them by your every word and act to[ward] them”
(President Joseph F. Smith, Gospel Doctrine, 5th ed. [1939], 316).

consistent expressions of love and support from their earthly parents. “My parents are very affectionate,” one young man reported. “They always hug me and tell me they love me. That means a lot!” In contrast, many of the teens who expressed self-contempt reported that they did not feel loved by their parents and rarely, if ever, heard the words “I love you.” One high school student stated: “My family isn’t a hugging, touchy-feely sort of family. We have problems expressing our love to each other. I can count on one hand the number of times I have been hugged by my parents. I wish we would show our love more openly.” Each of us needs to feel loved, respected, accepted, and appreciated. We all need to hear verbal expressions of that love. It is especially vital for adolescents who are being bombarded with feelings of self-doubt and insecurity. As one teen declared, “I don’t think the words ‘I love you’ can ever be overused.”

It is difficult for some parents to hug their children and express love, even though such expressions are as vital to the emotional and spiritual development of their children as sunshine, good soil, and adequate water are for the healthy



growth of a plant. A parent's reluctance to express love can be compounded sometimes by the way children react—especially if they aren't accustomed to experiencing such affection. They may roll their eyes, groan, and pull away, but deep inside they feel a special security that comes with the knowledge that they are loved. Expressing love takes little time, costs nothing, and yet yields rich dividends—here and hereafter. A daily outpouring of love is not only vital for emotional well-being but also essential to spiritual development.

2. Praise More Than You Criticize

Parents can and should look for opportunities to praise their children. Children's accomplishments need not be monumental to deserve parental recognition and praise. Children, particularly adolescents, thrive on recognition and acceptance. The youth in our study who reported the most confidence and who felt best about themselves had regularly received praise and positive reinforcement from their parents. On the other hand, those with low levels of both spirituality and confidence overwhelmingly reported that they received far more criticism than praise from



their parents and rarely felt respected and acceptable. “In my teenage years I was kind of emotionally unstable because of my low self-esteem,” one young adult reported. “Sometimes I felt and still feel like I can never do anything good enough for my parents. I feel like I can never meet their expectations.”

Parents need to have realistic expectations and be willing to recognize and appreciate less than “top of the class” or “best of team” performance—especially when their children are trying their best and seeking to improve. Unrealistic expectations can be discouraging for anyone, but especially for teenagers who naturally struggle with feelings of inadequacy. By contrast, expressions of acceptance and acknowledgment of effort strengthen young people emotionally and motivate them behaviorally. Children who are praised and recognized for their efforts as well as their deeds generally try harder to do even better.

3. Counsel, Don't Control

Our study confirmed that Latter-day Saint youth, like other adolescents, will possess lower levels of confidence if their parents refuse them the opportunity to develop their own views of the world. Confidence and a sense of worth are directly linked to parents granting “psychological autonomy” to their children. Granting this kind of freedom is different from allowing children to exercise their agency in making decisions. It isn't freedom to act on their own but rather to think and feel for themselves. It involves encouraging children to have and express their own ideas, feelings, opinions, and perceptions within a context of mutual respect. It is allowing them to be their own persons. Young people who are denied this kind of emotional freedom may become fearful adults who lack confidence in their ability to cope with the world.

Sadly, over one-third of the youth in our study reported that their parents seek to psychologically manipulate or control them by inducing guilt, withdrawing love, or dismissing their thoughts and opinions as unimportant. “One of my parents is very domineering and opinionated,” one teen observed. “If you disagree, get ready to have a debate



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

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

1. Have family members walk around the house and find three things that strengthen them spiritually. Invite them to explain how these objects have brought strength. Using the section titled “Strengthening the Spiritual Environment,” discuss things the family can do to maintain a strong spiritual environment.

2. Ask family members how personal prayer has helped them. Use “Developing Their Own Spirituality” to explain the importance of prayer. Provide an object for each person to decorate as a reminder of the importance of daily personal prayer.

3. Use the section entitled “Give Daily Outpourings of Love” to answer the following questions: How would you prefer to be shown love? What are some ways you show love to others? Write each person’s name on a separate piece of paper. Pass the papers around and have everyone write something they love about that person. Read each paper aloud.



everything their children say or do. What is needed, however, is open communication within the family. When disapproval needs to be spoken and when discipline must be administered, it should be done in the context of love, respect, and understanding, as expressed by the Lord in the scriptures (see D&C 121:41–45).

Finally, we were excited to discover that the relationship between the various measures of religiosity, family life, and feelings of individual worth appeared consistently among Latter-day Saint youth in the various regions of the United States and in Great Britain and Mexico. It is especially reassuring to know that the principles of the gospel operate effectively regardless of geography, language, or culture. *Where* we live doesn’t seem to matter as much as *what* we are doing in our homes.

Faith and family are powerful instruments in bringing about a sense of spiritual worth that positively affects both attitudes and actions. Children who feel good about their relationship with their Heavenly

Father and their earthly family feel good about themselves. This kind of confidence—not the self-esteem of the world that is thought to be obtained by popularity, stylish clothes, a fancy car, or other fleeting factors—inevitably leads to greater love for God and increased righteousness. As parents, we must see that all our actions and expressions lead to that desired end. ■

NOTES

1. See “Helping Teens Stay Strong,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1999, 26–34; a more detailed discussion of the results of the study on spirituality and feelings of self-worth can be obtained by contacting the authors at Brigham Young University.
2. *One Step at a Time: Building a Better Marriage, Family, and You* (1996), 90.

to the death or just give up to avoid trouble. In our family there is only one ‘right’ opinion and you’d better be sure that yours matches it. Any opinion that is different is considered ‘unrighteous.’ I never felt like I could express my feelings.” Another stated: “I hate how one of my parents won’t listen to anything I say. My ideas and expressions are always dismissed just because I am a ‘kid.’ ”

Under these circumstances youth fail to have confidence in their own feelings, ideas, and abilities and often emotionally withdraw inside themselves and develop emotional problems such as depression, eating disorders, and even thoughts of suicide. Young people who feel their ideas, thoughts, and feelings have been minimized, ignored, or outright ridiculed by their parents may seek out a peer group that will give credibility to their opinions and feelings. Unfortunately, all too often these friends lack the emotional maturity and spiritual foundation to properly guide and direct them in principles of righteousness. When

parents suppress a child’s freedom of thought and expression, sometimes the only way that child feels he or she can express a sense of individual identity and value is to rebel.

In contrast, young people who have internalized the gospel, gained their own testimonies, and developed a healthy sense of individual worth are those whose parents have counseled with them but have not sought to control them emotionally and intellectually. “My parents always encourage us to express our feelings and opinions. Even if our ideas are different from theirs, they respect us,” one young man reported. Parents don’t have to express approval of

ABRAHAM

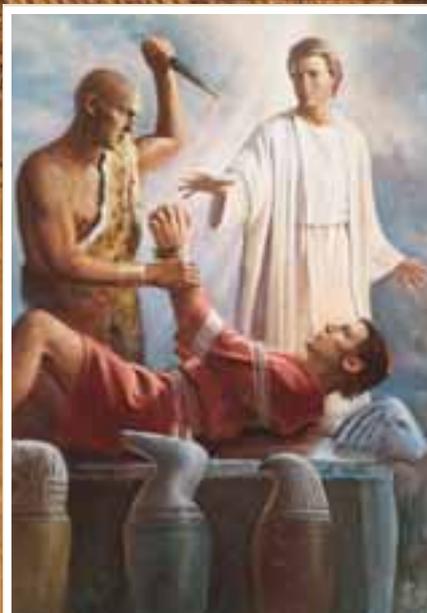
Father of the Faithful



DETAIL FROM ABRAHAM TAKING ISAAC TO BE SACRIFICED, BY DEL PARSON

In the Old Testament, Abraham is regarded as the head of the covenant line, which is personified in the house of Israel. He is often called the “father of the faithful.” Abraham received the gospel through baptism, or the covenant of salvation. The higher priesthood was conferred upon him, and he entered into celestial marriage, the covenant of exaltation, gaining assurance that he would have eternal increase. He received a promise that these same blessings would be offered to his mortal posterity. The divine promises to Abraham assured that Christ would come through his lineage and that Abraham’s posterity would receive certain lands as an eternal inheritance. These promises are called the *Abrahamic covenant*.

Heavenly Father’s children who are of non-Israelite lineage can be adopted into the house of Israel, becoming heirs of the covenant and the seed of Abraham through the ordinances of the gospel. (See Bible Dictionary, “Abraham,” 601; and “Abraham, Covenant of,” 602.)



An Angel Saves Abraham, by Del Parson

“And it came to pass that the priests laid violence upon me, that they might slay me. . . .

“And as they lifted up their hands upon me, that they might offer me up and take away my life, behold, I lifted up my voice unto the Lord my God, and the Lord hearkened and heard, . . . and the angel of his presence stood by me, and immediately unloosed my bands” (Abraham 1:12, 15).



The Lord Appearing unto Abraham, by Keith Larson

In answer to Abraham's prayer, the Lord appeared unto him and said: "Arise, . . . for I have purposed to take thee away out of Haran, and to make of thee a minister to bear my name in a strange land which I will give unto thy seed

after thee for an everlasting possession, when they hearken to my voice. . . .

"My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee" (Abraham 2:6, 8).



Melchizedek Blesses Abram, by Walter Rane (above)

After Abraham rescued his brother's son, he was met by Melchizedek at the valley of Shaveh.

"And [Melchizedek] blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

"And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And [Abraham] gave him tithes of all" (Genesis 14:19–20).



Hagar and Ishmael Expelled, by George Soper (above)

During a feast in Isaac's honor, "Sarah saw the son of Hagar [Ishmael] . . . mocking.

"Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son. . . .

"And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight. . . .

". . . Of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.

"And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away" (Genesis 21:9–10, 12–14).

Isaac and Family, by Griffith Foxley (left)

"And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken.

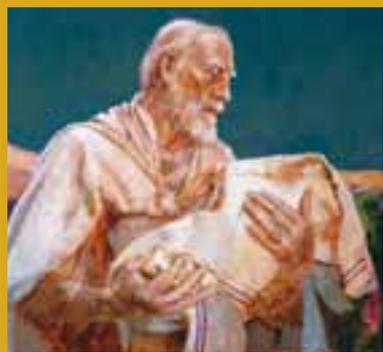
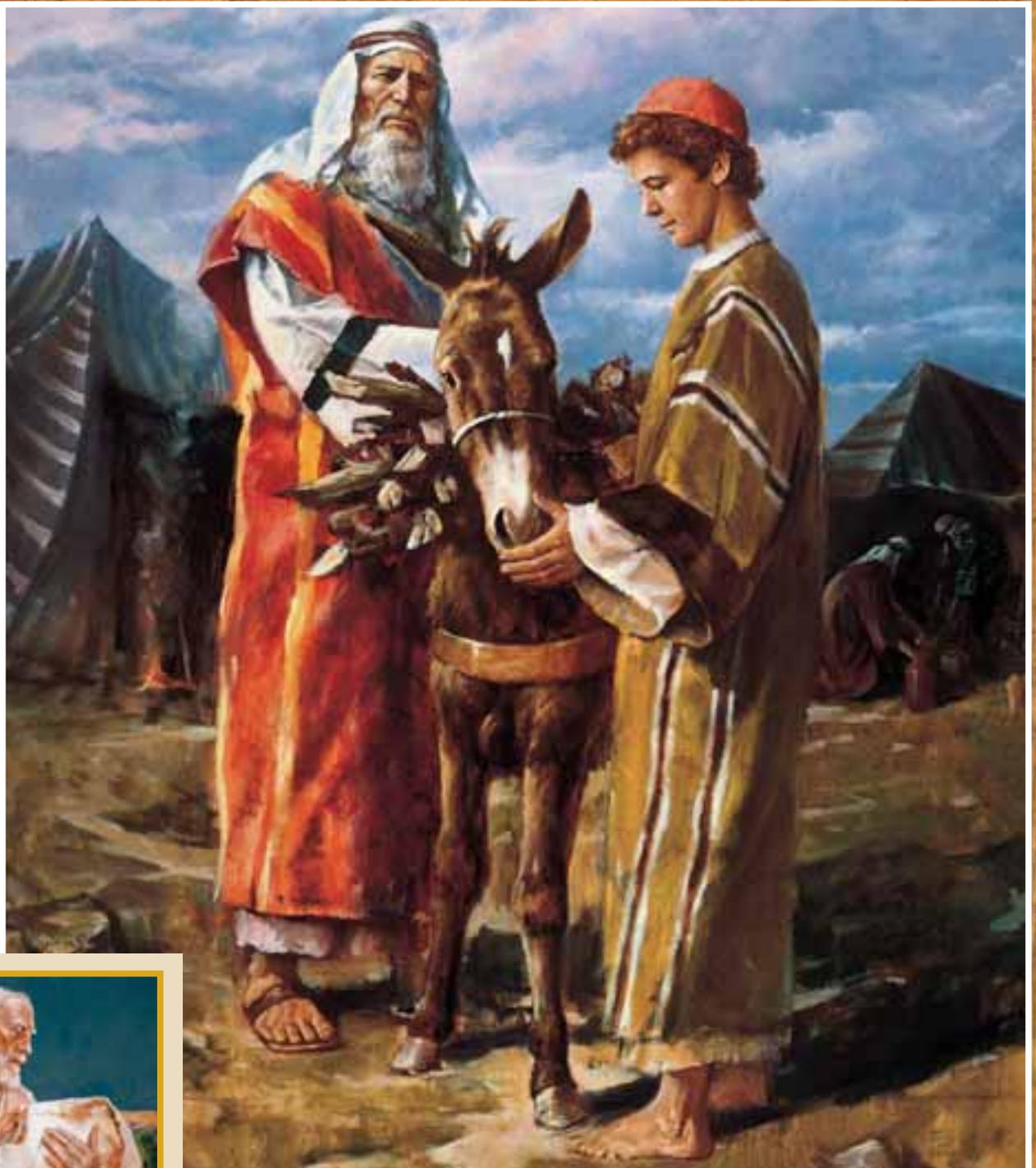
"For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age. . . .

"And Abraham called the name of his son . . . Isaac.

"And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him. . . .

"And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned" (Genesis 21:1–2, 5, 8).

THE PROVIDENCE COLLECTION, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED



Abraham and Isaac, by William Whitaker
 “And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him” (Genesis 17:19).

Abraham Taking Isaac to be Sacrificed, by Del Parson

“And it came to pass after these things, that God . . . said unto . . . Abraham: . . .

“ . . . Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering. . . .

“And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took . . . Isaac his son, . . . and went unto the place of which God had told him. . . .

“And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

“And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

“And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me” (Genesis 22:1–3, 10–12).



Rebekah at the Well, by Michael Deas

Abraham's servant, who was charged with choosing a wife for Isaac, prayed unto the Lord for guidance. "And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, . . .

"And the damsel was very fair to look upon, . . . and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.

"And the servant . . . said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher.

"And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. . . .

"And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the Lord led me" (Genesis 24:15-18, 27).



Isaac Blessing Jacob, by Gustave Doré (above)

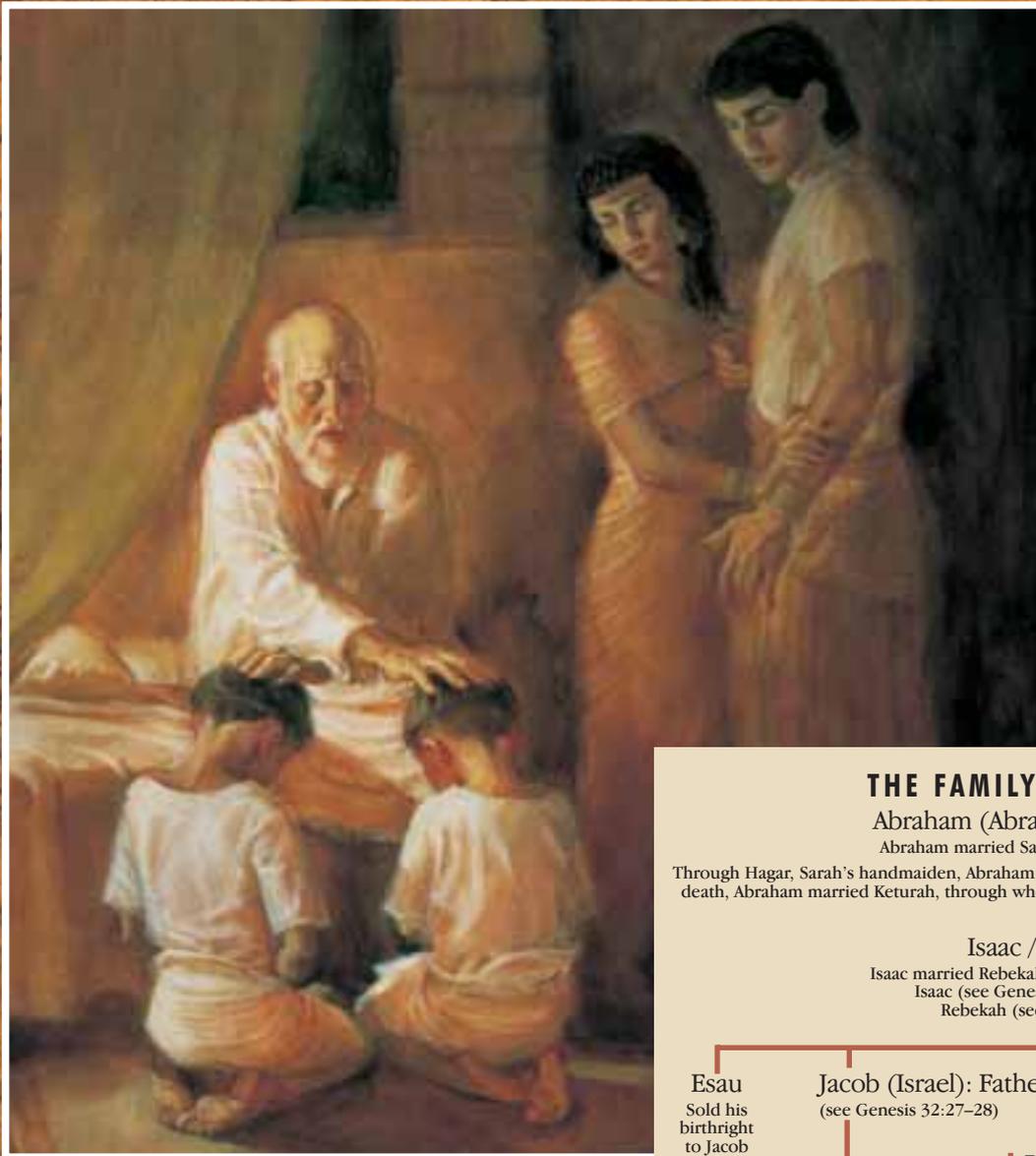
Rebekah, mother of twin sons Esau and Jacob, helped Jacob prepare to receive the birthright blessing that Esau esteemed so lightly (see Genesis 25:29-34). Isaac, in poor health and with failing eyesight, blessed Jacob in Esau's place. "And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out . . . that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. . . . And [Isaac] said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing" (Genesis 27:30, 35).

Jacob Blessing Joseph, by Harry Anderson (below)

In the blessing given to his son Joseph, Jacob said, "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: . . .

" . . . The God of thy father . . . shall help thee; and . . . the Almighty . . . shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above" (Genesis 49:22, 25).





Israel Blesses Ephraim with the Birthright, by Keith Larson

When Jacob blessed Joseph's two sons, Joseph brought Manasseh, his firstborn, to Jacob's right and Ephraim, the second born, to Jacob's left.

"And Israel [Jacob] stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn. . . .

"And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, . . . he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head.

"And Joseph said . . . , Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn. . . .

"And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he" (Genesis 48:14, 17-19).

THE FAMILY OF ABRAHAM

Abraham (Abram) / Sarah (Sarai)

Abraham married Sarah (see Genesis 11:29).

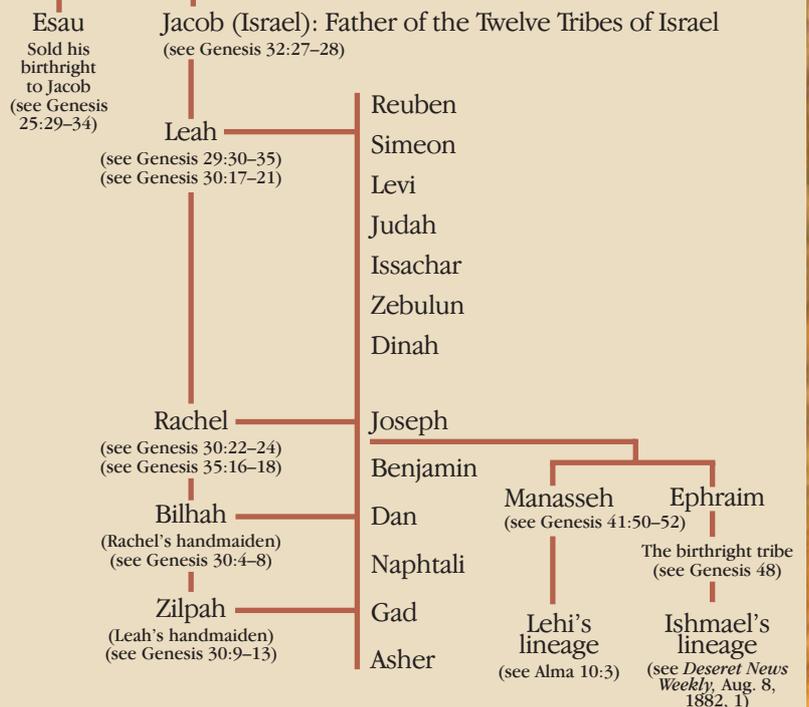
Through Hagar, Sarah's handmaiden, Abraham fathered Ishmael (see Genesis 16:15). After Sarah's death, Abraham married Keturah, through whom he had six children, named in Genesis 25:1-2.

Isaac / Rebekah

Isaac married Rebekah (see Genesis 25:20-26).

Isaac (see Genesis 18:1-14; 21:1-3)

Rebekah (see Genesis 22:23)



THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS



AND LATTER-DAY TRUTH

BY ANDREW C. SKINNER

Dean of Religious Education, Brigham Young University

The Dead Sea Scrolls provide valuable information but also embrace notions contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ.



LEFT: PHOTOGRAPHS OF DEAD SEA AND QUMRAN BY RICHARD CLEAVE, MAY NOT BE COPIED; RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH OF SCROLLS BY YIGAL YADIN, COURTESY OF THE BOOK MUSEUM, JERUSALEM; TOP RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH OF THE DEAD SEA BY RICHARD CLEAVE, MAY NOT BE COPIED

Archaeological and historical discoveries of the past century have recently generated tremendous interest in ancient religious texts and their teachings. Popular fiction has also fueled much speculation about them. Among the best-known and oft-quoted in this regard are the Dead Sea Scrolls, which have been cited in support of ideas ranging from the need to reinterpret Christianity—because of mysterious rituals and secret beliefs kept hidden by an ancient conspiracy—to another false notion that there was an unknown group of pre-Christian “Latter-day Saints” living down by the Dead Sea in the Holy Land.

Because the life of Joseph Smith was inextricably tied to ancient sacred texts, particularly ones buried in the earth, it is not surprising that members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are fascinated by new discoveries of ancient religious writings, including the Dead Sea Scrolls. It seems both natural and prudent to ask what the scrolls are and what they really say in comparison to divinely revealed truths of the latter days.

The much-celebrated Dead Sea Scrolls are a treasure trove of ancient Jewish religious texts discovered between 1947 and 1956 in 11 different desert caves near the northwest shore of the Dead Sea. Many scholars regard the scrolls as the greatest archaeological find of the twentieth century, having been composed or copied between approximately 250 B.C. and A.D. 68. Most of the scrolls were written in Hebrew or Aramaic on parchment, although a few Greek texts have been found as well. They apparently constituted the expansive canon of scripture belonging to the people who resided at the discovery site in antiquity, and who are almost certainly to be identified as members of the ancient sect called the Essenes.¹ The actual name of the site is Qumran (after the name of the nearby wadi or dry streambed).



The Dead Sea Scrolls are an archaeological treasure trove of ancient Jewish religious texts discovered between 1947 and 1956 in 11 different caves near the northwest shore of the Dead Sea. Many scholars regard the scrolls as the greatest archaeological find of the twentieth century.

For several reasons Latter-day Saints have had a keen interest in the Dead Sea Scrolls. First, the scriptures themselves have primed us to anticipate the coming forth of additional ancient records. Second, Joseph Smith’s experience with records buried in the earth has given us a pattern of how ancient sacred texts were often hidden up only to come forth in a future day. Third, the expanded canon of

latter-day scripture has caused us to suspect the existence of at least pockets of Israelites not closed to the possibility of continuing revelation and contemporary prophets. Fourth, the doctrine of restoration has led us to expect that others throughout the ages have witnessed apostate conditions and seen the need for a restoration of original truth.

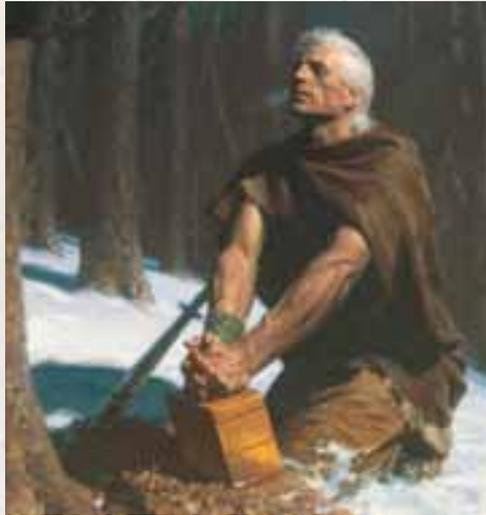
Additional Records

It is crystal clear that the scriptures themselves point to other sacred records that will come forth in the latter days (see, for instance, 1 Nephi 13:38–39; 2 Nephi 29:13; Ezekiel 37:15–17; D&C 93:18; and the ninth article of faith). Given all of this scriptural anticipation of additional ancient records, there was great excitement when, in 1947, Bedouin shepherds discovered the first Dead Sea Scrolls preserved in large clay jars in Cave 1 at Qumran. Ten jars were ultimately found, but only two yielded documents. One contained three scrolls, two wrapped in linen and one unwrapped. These three were later identified as a copy of the biblical book of Isaiah; a copy of the Rule of the Community, sometimes

called the Manual of Discipline (a text outlining the rules by which the Dead Sea community was to be governed); and a commentary on the biblical book of Habakkuk. Four additional scrolls were later found in the cave: a collection of psalms or hymns known as the Thanksgiving Hymns or the Hymn Scroll; a partially preserved copy of Isaiah; the War Scroll—a text describing a final war in the last days between the “sons of light” (the righteous) and the “sons of darkness” (the wicked); and a collection of Genesis-type narratives called the Genesis Apocryphon.²

All seven scrolls were brought to Bethlehem and placed in the custody of an antiquities dealer named Kando, who in turn sold four of them to Athanasius Yeshua Samuel, the metropolitan, or head, of the Syrian Orthodox Church at St. Mark’s Monastery in Jerusalem. For the equivalent of about 100 dollars, Metropolitan Samuel received the more complete Isaiah Scroll, the Rule of the Community, the Habakkuk commentary, and the Genesis Apocryphon.³

Since no one really understood much about the nature or origins of the scrolls, several scholars were consulted. One of them was Professor Eleazar Sukenik of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. After a secret visit to the antiquities dealer on November 29, 1947 (the very date on which the United Nations passed the resolution to establish the State of Israel), Sukenik purchased the remaining three scrolls from Kando. Thus, four scrolls were in the possession of St. Mark’s Monastery, and three were in Sukenik’s possession. Professor Sukenik seems to have been the first to recognize the antiquity and value of the scrolls. Unfortunately, detailed study of the scrolls’ archaeological and historical context, as well as any search for more caves and scrolls, was temporarily hampered by the Arab-Israeli conflict, which was at its height.



The discovery of a copper scroll at Qumran gives significant credibility to Joseph Smith’s claim to have translated the Book of Mormon from metal plates engraved by Moroni.

Eventually, through a process of secret negotiations, all seven original scrolls were purchased by the State of Israel and placed in a special museum, the Shrine of the Book, in West Jerusalem. It is where the original seven scrolls from Cave 1 remain to this day. Much to the credit of the team of scholars first commissioned to work on them, the contents of all seven manuscripts were translated and published by 1956.⁴ They continue to provide insights into the nature of the extinct community at Qumran, as well as valuable information about Second Temple Judaism (the period from 500 B.C. to A.D. 70) and

the religious environment that gave rise to Christianity. However, with the exception of the copies of biblical books, there is no evidence to suggest the scrolls ought to be regarded in the same category as the standard works.

Records from the Earth

Joseph Smith’s experience with ancient buried records is exemplified by the coming forth of the Book of Mormon as well as the Book of Abraham.

In ancient times the scriptures were usually made up of scrolls, sheets of parchment (thin leather) stitched together in linear fashion, rather than books made up of individual pages compiled and bound together. (Metal plates are an important exception.) It was the practice in ancient Judaism to dispose of worn out sacred scrolls by reverently burying them so they would return to the dust of the earth. The Dead Sea Scrolls were not buried in this manner. They were either placed in clay jars and sealed, or simply wrapped in linen and then hidden in caves, not as a burial, but as a protection against the Roman destruction of the Jewish people and their property during the First Jewish Revolt (A.D. 66 to 73). The Romans leveled the site of Qumran in A.D. 68, and

had it not been for the concealment of the scrolls, they would have perished or been easily destroyed, especially since almost all were written on very perishable material.

One notable difference among the scrolls points us to Joseph Smith. The Prophet Joseph Smith's claim to have translated the Book of Mormon from metal plates was given significant credibility by the discovery of a unique document at Qumran. Among the many texts unearthed was the singular find of Cave 3 in 1952—a scroll composed of a long, thin metal sheet called the Copper Scroll. This was one of the first texts to be uncovered by professional archaeologists and contains a description of buried treasure.⁵ Although people have looked carefully, no one has found any of the treasure. But the use of metal as an important scribal material in the Holy Land is now beyond question.

Expanded Canon of Scripture

The Qumran covenantors, as they are sometimes called, believed in an expansive canon of scripture. Their canon included more than just the books of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). The entire collection from Qumran may have been part of their canon. The Qumran library consists of more than 800 distinctive texts or documents⁶ and can be divided into three categories: biblical texts, apocryphal and pseudepigraphical texts, and texts apparently unique to the Qumran community.

In the first category, every book of the Hebrew Bible has been found at Qumran except the book of Esther. The second category, apocryphal texts, are quasi-biblical writings regarded as being of dubious authority or questionable origin; they have titles such as Jubilees, Tobit, Sirach, and interestingly enough, Enoch. The third and perhaps most interesting category of documents found among the Dead Sea Scrolls are those that appear to be unique to Qumran.



Some of the scrolls were used by Qumran inhabitants to define the nature, outlook, and rules of their community.

Sometimes called sectarian documents, these are scripture-like texts used by the Qumran inhabitants to define the nature, outlook, and rules of the community. They also inform us about the community's history.

Cave 11 yielded the longest scroll—the Temple Scroll. Written on very thin parchment, the text turned out to be about 27 feet long, although not intact (by comparison the great Isaiah scroll from Cave 1 is 22 feet long and is intact). Dating to about the second century before Christ but presented as the words of God to Moses, the Temple Scroll text supplies laws dealing with issues important to the Qumran group. Of interest to Latter-day Saints is the scroll's description of an ideal temple to be established by God Himself at the end of days and that temple's association with Jacob at Bethel. The Temple Scroll states, "And I will consecrate my Temple by my glory, . . . and establish it for myself for all times, according to the covenant which I have made

with Jacob at Bethel."⁷ While Latter-day Saints might remember that President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988) drew a parallel between Jacob's experience at Bethel (described in Genesis 28:10–22) and our temple experience,⁸ we have no indication that the Qumran community regarded this ideal future temple as anything more than an Aaronic Priesthood structure, associated with the rites and rituals of the Mosaic law in a pure and uncorrupted form. The Qumran community believed that the Jerusalem temple was full of corruption.

The Idea of Restoration

Another reason for Latter-day Saint interest in the Dead Sea Scrolls community is the theme of apostasy and restoration



The Qumran collection consists of more than 800 distinctive documents in three different categories: biblical texts, apocryphal texts, and texts unique to the Qumran community.



The Qumran community recognized the apostate condition of Judaism, but they also embraced notions contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus contradicts a Qumran belief in His Sermon on the Mount.

found among both groups. The scrolls indicate that the Qumran sectarians regarded themselves as the true Israel surrounded by spiritual traitors and false brethren in a corrupt world. They possessed the true covenant that God had restored or renewed with them. They went off by themselves to establish the “Community of the Renewed Covenant”⁹ and to await the advent of two messiahs (a priestly Anointed One and a Davidic or political Anointed One) in desert country right next to a vast salt lake fed by a freshwater stream called the Jordan River. No wonder Latter-day Saints are interested in the documents of a people whose circumstances and geographical habitation parallel their own history.

The basic ideal for the covenant makers at Qumran was to live as though they were in the midst of the temple itself every minute of every day.¹⁰ They sought to make their isolated community a virtual open-air temple and often wore white linen robes to symbolize the level of purity they sought to attain.¹¹

Varied Beliefs

Some beliefs and practices described in the scrolls could suggest either a pre-Christian era “gospel” community at

Qumran or a long-lost group of ancient Latter-day Saints with their emphasis on consecration, temple-worthy behavior, a strict probationary period before full membership, a hierarchical priesthood organization, an expanded body of scripture, the apostate condition of the world, the term *Saints* applied to all covenant members, new ordinances and religious festivals, and light-darkness dualism. But such was not the case.

The Qumran sectarians were a unified community that recognized the apostate condition of Judaism and inaugurated reforms focusing their own lives on the tenets of true religion under the Mosaic dispensation, but they also embraced notions contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ. For instance, the Qumran community did not believe that anyone had the right to worship in the name of the Lord unless a quorum of 10 individuals gathered in the company of a priest. Contrast this with Jesus’s statement that whenever two or more were gathered together in His name, there His spirit would be also (see Matthew 18:19–20).

Jesus flatly contradicts another Qumran belief in His Sermon on the Mount: “Ye have heard that it hath been

said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:43–44). Hating one’s spiritual enemies, however, is precisely what the Rule of the Community advocates when it declares, “Love all that He [God] has chosen and hate all that He has rejected.”¹² Thus it seems clear that some points of Jesus’s doctrine were an intentional rebuttal of teachings like those of the Essenes.

The Scrolls’ Value for Us

The Dead Sea Scrolls provide valuable information about a complex time period to which Latter-day Saints (and all Christians, for that matter) trace their spiritual roots. As we compare and contrast some of our own ideas and practices with those at Qumran, we can better appreciate the hopes, fears, convictions, expectations, and aims of the ancient people of that covenant community. They witnessed firsthand the apostate conditions among the leadership and priesthood of Judaism in their day. They tried to do something about it. They accomplished much, but without the Melchizedek Priesthood and authorized prophets they erred in many things.

The Dead Sea Scrolls help us better understand the significant rifts in Christian-era Judaism. We are given an extraordinary window of insight into the religious climate that spawned Pharisaic Judaism and fostered early Christianity, which, like the Qumran community, was another group of restorationists.

By examining the Dead Sea Scrolls we also come to appreciate the interconnection of ideas and texts across dispensations. The scrolls have given to the world the oldest biblical manuscripts yet discovered, and they help us



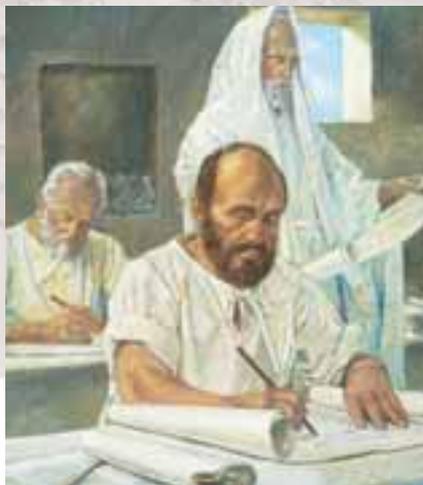
The Qumran sectarians went off by themselves to establish a covenant community and await the advent of two messiahs.

understand the history of our modern version of the Bible. While we must use caution in making more of the parallels between our faith and the Qumran sect than is appropriate, we can certainly see how some of the theological ideas found in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints could have been perfectly at home in an

authentic ancient setting.

It is important to remember, though, that LDS doctrines and practices paralleling some of the ideas found in the Dead Sea Scrolls were in fact brought forth by Joseph Smith long before the discovery of those ancient documents. The witness of the Holy Ghost and the study of latter-day revelation teach us that Joseph Smith was not simply a lucky forecaster. He was the Lord’s prophet of the Restoration in this final dispensation before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the true Messiah. ■

Andrew C. Skinner is a member of the London 13th Ward, London Utah Stake.



The people of Qumran sought to make their community a virtual open-air temple and often wore white linen robes to symbolize the level of purity they sought to attain.

NOTES

1. See Frank Moore Cross, “The Historical Context of the Scrolls,” in *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Hershel Shanks (1992), 25.
2. See James C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (1994), 3.
3. See VanderKam, 4.
4. See VanderKam, 7–8.
5. See VanderKam, 10, 68–69.
6. Joseph Fitzmyer (in *Responses to 101 Questions on the Dead Sea Scrolls* [1992], 13) puts the number at 818. Others say as many as 830.
7. Quoted in Yigael Yadin, *The Temple Scroll: The Hidden Law of the Dead Sea Sect* (1985), 113.
8. See Marion G. Romney, “Temples—The Gates to Heaven,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1971, 16.
9. This phrase is used by Professor Shemaryahu Talmon, in *The ‘Dead Sea Scrolls’ or ‘The Community of the Renewed Covenant’* (1993).
10. See S. Kent Brown, “The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Mormon Perspective,” *BYU Studies*, winter 1983, 57.
11. See Flavius Josephus, *Complete Works*, enlarged type ed., trans. William Whiston (1960), 476.
12. As quoted in Andrew C. Skinner, “The Ancient People of Qumran: An Introduction to the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *LDS Perspectives on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Dana M. Pike (1997), 37.



While I was on a trip to Brazil with two colleagues from Brigham Young University–Idaho, we had the opportunity to spend several days in the Amazon Jungle on the Rio Negro. The river is enormous beyond imagination, and the vegetation in the jungle is thick.

One could easily lose his way if he were to venture into it without a guide. Our guide, Moreno, was a native of Italy. He knew the jungle and the river well. Now in his late 30s, he had realized his childhood dream of living in the Amazon Jungle.

Our small group boarded a canoe docked at our floating hotel and departed for the starting point of our hike. We were fascinated by what we saw and impressed by Moreno’s deep knowledge and his ability to lead us through the thick and imposing jungle.

LIVING WATER IN THE RAIN FOREST

BY BRUCE C. KUSCH

I never thought a tour of the Amazon would strengthen my testimony.

As we walked he would explain the various plants, animals, insects, and vegetation that surrounded us. He taught us about plants and insects that could be harmful if we were not careful. He also pointed out various plants that Amazon Indians had used for medicinal or other useful purposes. Deeper into the jungle we went. We truly had no idea where we were going. We merely followed Moreno and trusted that he would get us safely back to our canoe and eventually our hotel.

At one point, Moreno stopped the group, and we all gathered around him. “This jungle is hot and humid,” he said. “We are at least a mile from the river, and a person cannot live here without water. You would die quickly. There is water right here, right now, where we are. Can any of you see it?”

We could not. All we saw were trees, vines, and shrubs. The mosquitoes seemed to be everywhere. None of us had any idea where there might be water nearby.

With a smile on his face, Moreno said, “Let me show you.” He grabbed his machete and walked to a vine, lightly covered with green velvet moss. After two quick swings, he was holding a piece of the vine in his hand. We still didn’t understand.

“Water is right here,” he said, “right in my hand.” Just then he lifted the vine vertically and clear, cool water came dripping out!



We were all amazed.

As we looked around, we could now see similar vines everywhere.

Some were large, others small. But once we were taught by one who knew, we saw that in this jungle there was an abundance of water. We each took turns drinking from the vine. As we hiked back to our canoe, we continued to see that water was everywhere. Now we knew where to look.

I have since thought about this experience in relationship to the true vine, living water, and following one who knows. In John 15:1, Jesus teaches us that He is the true vine and His Father is the husbandman. In 1 Nephi 15:15, we read Nephi's prophetic teachings to his unbelieving brethren regarding the remnant of Lehi's seed: "Yea, at that day, will they not receive the strength and nourishment from the true vine?" In John 4:14, the Savior teaches a woman of Samaria that He is the one who gives living water: "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him

shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." As we read about what

Nephi saw in vision in 1 Nephi 11:25, we also learn of the "fountain of living waters, . . . which waters are a representation of the love of God."

Just as Moreno guided our group through the jungles of the Amazon, modern-day prophets can lead us through the jungles of life. If we trust them, they will point us to the true vine and living water. ■

Bruce C. Kusch is a member of the Rexburg Sixth Ward, Rexburg Idaho East Stake.

LED BY LIVING PROPHETS



"Living prophets are leading this church today. The greatest security of members of The Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter-day Saints comes from learning to listen to and obey the words and commandments that the Lord has given through living prophets. I would hope that the world would understand the importance of having a living prophet on earth today."

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Hear the Prophet's Voice and Obey," *Ensign*, May 1995, 17.

ILLUSTRATED BY RICHARD HULL

Building Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ



Prayerfully select and read from this message the scriptures and teachings

that meet the needs of the sisters you visit. Share your experiences and testimony. Invite those you teach to do the same.

Blessings of Belonging to Relief Society: Relief Society should strengthen sisters' testimonies of Jesus Christ and His Atonement. It also should increase their resolve to come unto Christ.

How Does Relief Society Build Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?

2 Nephi 25:26: "We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, . . . that [we and] our children may know to what source [we] may look for a remission of [our] sins."

President Gordon B. Hinckley: "Who can gauge the miraculous effects upon the lives of millions of women whose knowledge has been increased, whose vision has been extended, whose lives have been broadened, and whose understanding of the things of God has been enriched by reason of countless

lessons effectively taught and learned in meetings of the Relief Society?" ("Ambitious to Do Good," *Ensign*, Mar. 1992, 4).

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency:

"The Relief Society curriculum is focused on basic doctrine and will give you the opportunity to study the gospel and increase your spirituality. . . . All sisters . . . need to be 'remembered and nourished by the good word of God' [Moroni 6:4]. Doctrine will strengthen you and help you to develop the spirituality necessary to overcome the challenges of life" ("You Are All Heaven Sent," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 111).

Anne C. Pingree, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency:

"Each of us . . . can move forward without fear, finding our way to Him as we personally feel the blessings of His infinite Atonement. I know that one of the supernal blessings of Relief Society is our connection to women who also bear testimony of our Lord. My prayer is that we will ever walk side by side towards the light of His redeeming love" ("Walking towards the Light of His

Love," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 113).

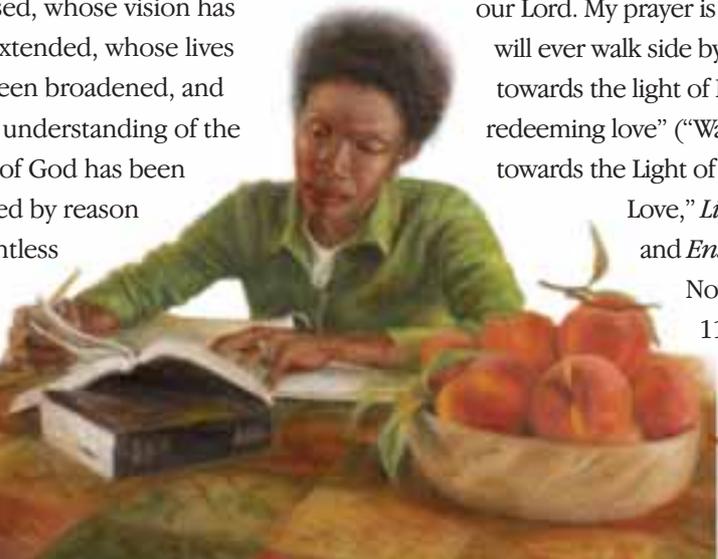
How Can Faith Increase Our Resolve to Come unto Christ?

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

"The scriptures teach us that faith comes by hearing the word of God, [which] teaches us that we are children of God, the Eternal Father. It teaches us about the identity and mission of Jesus Christ, his Only Begotten Son. . . . Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is a conviction and trust that God knows us and loves us and will hear our prayers and answer them. . . . Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ opens the door of salvation and exaltation" ("Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," *Ensign*, May 1994, 99–100).

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

"Remember the pattern: (1) hear the word of God, spoken and written by His servants; (2) let that word sink deep into your heart; (3) hunger in your soul for righteousness; (4) obediently follow gospel laws, ordinances, and covenants; and (5) raise your voice in mighty prayer and supplication, asking in faith to know that Jesus Christ is our Savior. . . . When the challenges of mortality come, and they come for all of us, it may seem hard to have faith and hard to believe. At these times only faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His Atonement can bring us peace, hope, and understanding. Only faith that He suffered for our sakes will give us the strength to endure to the end" ("Finding Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 72–73). ■





In the World but Not of the World

BY ELDER QUENTIN L. COOK

Of the Seventy

Sodom and Gomorrah have actual and symbolic significance representing wickedness in the world. The Lord appeared to Abraham and said, speaking of those who lived in Sodom and Gomorrah, “Their sin is very grievous” (Genesis 18:20). Their sinfulness was so great, and those who were righteous so few, that God destroyed these two cities of the plain. The great prophet of our own day, President Gordon B. Hinckley, has stated: “All of the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah haunt our society. Our young people have never faced a greater challenge.

We have never seen more clearly the lecherous face of evil.”¹

Separating evil from

our lives has become even more essential since our homes are wired to bring much of what the Lord has condemned into our own living rooms if we are not vigilant. One of the most difficult challenges in our lives is to be in the world but not of the world (see John 15:19).² Gospel doctrine makes it clear that we must live in this world to achieve our eternal destination. We must be tried and tested and found worthy of a greater kingdom (see 2 Nephi 2:11; D&C 101:78). We must do as Abraham did when he pitched his tent and built “an altar unto the Lord” (Genesis 13:18) and not do as Lot did when he “pitched his tent toward Sodom” (Genesis 13:12).

Being a Light to the World

In early 1969, at the height of the “flower children” period in San Francisco, California, the Bay Area was a magnet for drug use and all manner of promiscuous and sinful conduct.



How do we balance the need to positively contribute to the world and to not succumb to the sins of the world? We must pitch our tents in the direction Abraham did.



President Brigham Young said, “Every accomplishment, every polished grace, every useful attainment in mathematics, music, and in all science and art belongs to the Saints.”

A concerned stake president asked the leadership of the Church if Latter-day Saints should be encouraged to remain in the Bay Area. Elder Harold B. Lee (1899–1973), then a senior member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, was assigned to address the issue. He met with a group of priesthood leaders and told them the Lord had not inspired the construction of the Oakland California Temple only to have the members leave. His counsel was for members to create Zion in their hearts and homes, to be a light to those among whom they lived, and to focus on the ordinances and principles taught in the temple.³

We cannot avoid the world. A cloistered existence is not the answer.⁴ In a positive sense, our contribution to the world is part of our challenge and is essential if we are to develop our talents. President Brigham Young (1801–77) said, “Every accomplishment, every polished grace, every useful attainment in mathematics, music, and in all science and art belongs to the Saints.”⁵

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) challenged members to accomplish more, stating, “We must recognize that excellence and quality are a reflection of how we feel about ourselves and about life and about God.”⁶

To accomplish the above, members of the Church need to be involved in the world in a positive way. How then do we balance the need to positively contribute to the world and to not succumb to the sins of the world? (See D&C 25:10; 59:9.) Two principles will make a significant difference.

1. Let people know you are a committed Latter-day Saint.

I learned the importance of this early in my career. After finishing my education at Stanford Law School, I sought employment



LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH OF CLASSROOM BY CRAIG DIMOND

at a particular law firm. No members of the Church were associated with the firm, but the firm was made up of lawyers of character and ability. After a morning of interviews, the senior partner and two other partners invited me to lunch. The senior partner inquired if I would like a prelunch alcoholic drink and later if I would like wine. In both cases, I declined. The second time, I informed him that I was an active Latter-day Saint and did not drink alcoholic beverages.

I received an offer of employment from the firm. A few months later, the senior partner told me the offer of the alcoholic beverages was a test. He noted that my résumé made it clear that I had served an LDS mission. He had determined that he would hire me only if I was true to the teachings of my own church. He considered it a significant matter of character and integrity.

In my years in San Francisco, I knew some members who avoided letting

their associates know they were Latter-day Saints. Invariably they were drawn into compromising situations that could have been avoided had they forthrightly declared what they believed. They symbolically pitched their tents toward Sodom (see Genesis 13:12).

2. *Be confident about and live your beliefs.*

In our personal lives, we should avoid the evil “temporal pursuits of mortality”⁷ and the destructive “behavioral and intellectual fashions of the world.”⁸

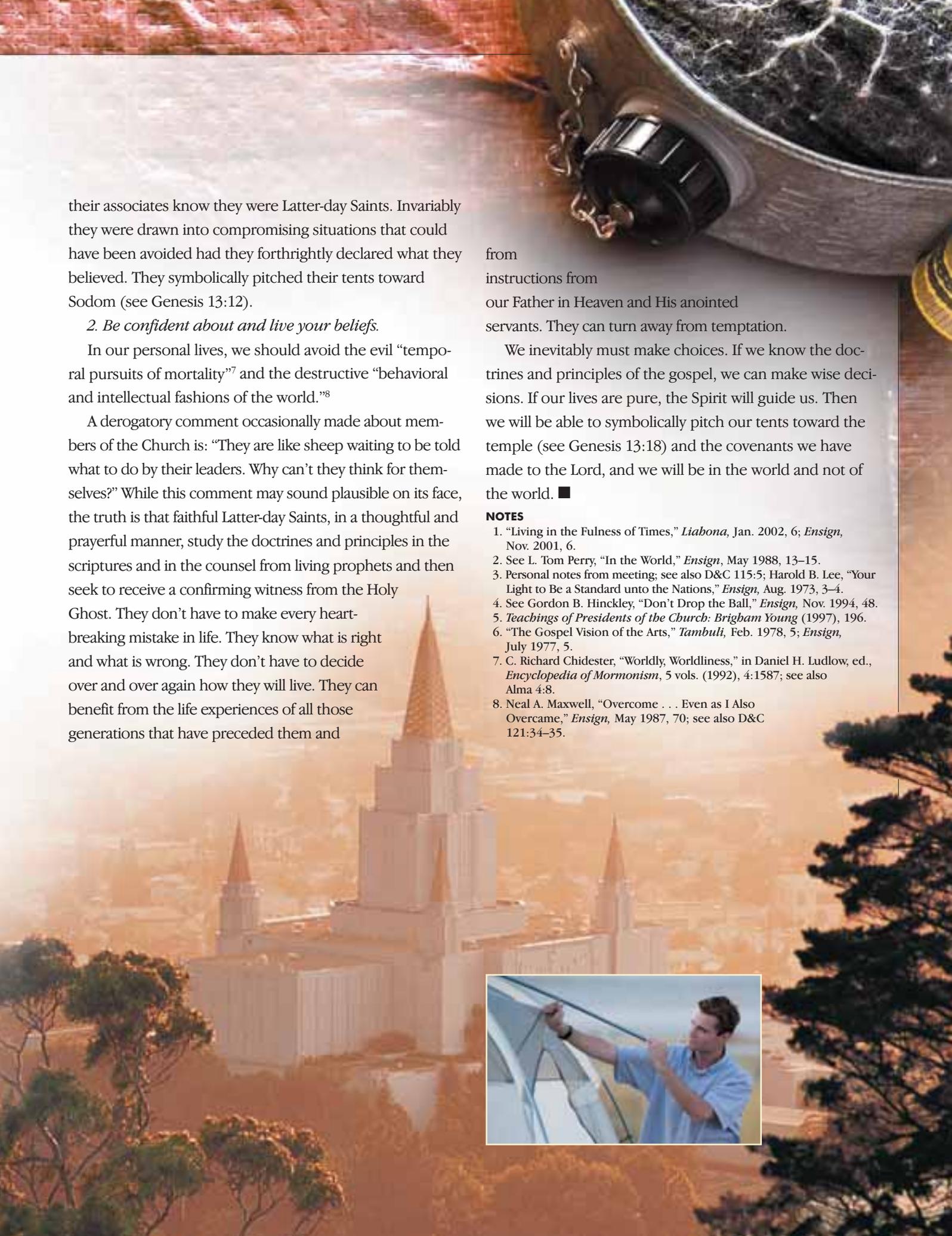
A derogatory comment occasionally made about members of the Church is: “They are like sheep waiting to be told what to do by their leaders. Why can’t they think for themselves?” While this comment may sound plausible on its face, the truth is that faithful Latter-day Saints, in a thoughtful and prayerful manner, study the doctrines and principles in the scriptures and in the counsel from living prophets and then seek to receive a confirming witness from the Holy Ghost. They don’t have to make every heart-breaking mistake in life. They know what is right and what is wrong. They don’t have to decide over and over again how they will live. They can benefit from the life experiences of all those generations that have preceded them and

from instructions from our Father in Heaven and His anointed servants. They can turn away from temptation.

We inevitably must make choices. If we know the doctrines and principles of the gospel, we can make wise decisions. If our lives are pure, the Spirit will guide us. Then we will be able to symbolically pitch our tents toward the temple (see Genesis 13:18) and the covenants we have made to the Lord, and we will be in the world and not of the world. ■

NOTES

1. “Living in the Fulness of Times,” *Liabona*, Jan. 2002, 6; *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 6.
2. See L. Tom Perry, “In the World,” *Ensign*, May 1988, 13–15.
3. Personal notes from meeting; see also D&C 115:5; Harold B. Lee, “Your Light to Be a Standard unto the Nations,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1973, 3–4.
4. See Gordon B. Hinckley, “Don’t Drop the Ball,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 48.
5. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 196.
6. “The Gospel Vision of the Arts,” *Tambuli*, Feb. 1978, 5; *Ensign*, July 1977, 5.
7. C. Richard Chidester, “Worldly, Worldliness,” in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. (1992), 4:1587; see also Alma 4:8.
8. Neal A. Maxwell, “Overcome . . . Even as I Also Overcame,” *Ensign*, May 1987, 70; see also D&C 121:34–35.



TEACHING with Church

Need help with your lesson? One of the best resources is in your hands.

BY DON L. SEARLE

Church Magazines

Your children, or the young men or young women you teach, walk around every day in a world filled with people and media promoting immoral lifestyles in which marriage is incidental, drugs are the solution to problems, and success in life means money, no matter how you get it.

With all the evil that young people brush up against, how can you teach them they don't have to be part of it? How can you teach them to be in the world but not of the world?

You can find appropriate scriptures that teach the principle—for example, Doctrine and Covenants 133:5: “Go ye out from Babylon. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.” But can you “liken all scriptures unto us” (1 Nephi 19:23) so your children or students will see how the principle applies in their own lives?

A scriptural story might help. Joseph fleeing from Potiphar's wife could come to mind (see Genesis 39:1–20). But you can already hear your 15-year-old saying, “How does something that happened thousands of years ago have anything to do with me?”

So where are you going to find stories or other resources to show that principles taught in scripture apply today?

Lessons in Your Hand

You're probably looking at one of your best lesson resources right now. Month after month Church magazines offer a steady supply of gospel-based, Church-approved materials for teaching.

Let's look at a couple of examples from this issue.

In his article “In the World but Not of the World” (page 53), Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Seventy writes of a

prospective employer who, knowing young Quentin Cook was a Latter-day Saint, tested his integrity by offering him liquor and wine. The man wanted to learn whether he would compromise his standards for the sake of personal gain. That is a test many young people could face.

Maybe you have had similar experiences. If you have, sharing them would be a good way to help others see that when we stand up for our moral standards in everyday situations, we are winners in the long run. They can know it is true because they know you.

Elder Cook's article supports lesson eight—“Living Righteously in a Wicked World”—in this year's Gospel Doctrine manual. Each month specific articles in Church magazines support lesson topics in the Sunday School manual or in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church*. But every article, whether paired with a specific lesson or not, supports spiritual principles. When we read the article and discover what those principles are, then the Holy Ghost can teach us how the article could help “liken all scriptures unto us.”

You can see some of the spiritual topics covered in a particular month by looking at the list on page 80 labeled “Gospel Topics.”

A Simple Outline

What if you wanted to use an article in the magazine as a basis for a family home evening lesson? To use Elder Cook's article, you might make a simple outline like this:

- Principle: In a world where wickedness surrounds us, we need to live by the Lord's standards.
- Scriptures: Genesis 39:1–20; Joshua 24:15, 24; John 15:14, 18–19.
- Supporting story: Elder Cook's story teaches, among other things, that we never know when we may meet

BY ROGER TERRY
Church Magazines

On a spring evening in 1977, I learned a marvelous lesson about teaching by the Spirit. I was serving in West Berlin, Germany, and was working that day with Elder Selman, a missionary in my district. We had an appointment to teach the second discussion to the Ortlepps, a couple my companion and I had met while tractating. They had listened politely to the first discussion about Joseph Smith and the Restoration and had accepted our offer to teach them about the plan of salvation, even though we could tell they were not seriously interested.

When we knocked on their door, they invited us in, and the four of us took seats around their kitchen table. After engaging in some small talk, we opened with prayer. Back in the 1970s missionar-

ies still memorized the discussions and presented them pretty much verbatim, and since I had been in the mission field for nearly two years, I knew them very well. In fact, when I would present the various concepts I could see the pages of the discussion book in my mind and would mentally turn the pages as I taught.

But on this particular evening the Lord had something different prepared for Herr and Frau Ortlepp. As I opened my mouth to speak, the Spirit took charge. It was as if the Lord reached out His hand and simply closed the discussion book in my mind. And as the book closed, a conduit opened—a spiritual connection between me and the Ortlepps. I somehow knew what they were thinking. I knew the questions they wanted to ask before they even had a chance to ask them. And using my voice, the Spirit gave them the answers they desired. I felt like a spectator as my voice taught them concepts I had never before understood. I knew without a doubt that the words I spoke specifically answered the questions and doubts they harbored in their hearts. A sweet spirit

filled the room, and the Ortlepps were visibly moved.

Afterward, as Elder Selman and I walked back to the subway station, I felt as if I were descending through clouds until my feet once more touched the earth. And as the experience faded, so did my memory of what had been taught. By the time we reached the station, all I could remember was that the Spirit had taught them something about developing faith and planting seeds and reaping a

harvest. I knew the Lord had pleaded with them to plant a seed in their own hearts, but I could no more have repeated the insights the Spirit shared with the Ortlepps than I could have torn down the Berlin Wall with my bare hands.

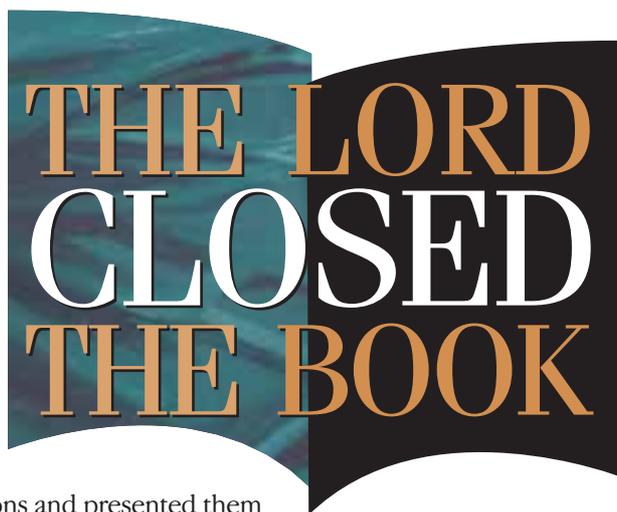
Elder Selman commented on what a wonderful experience it had been. And I pondered the sincere comment Herr Ortlepp had made as we

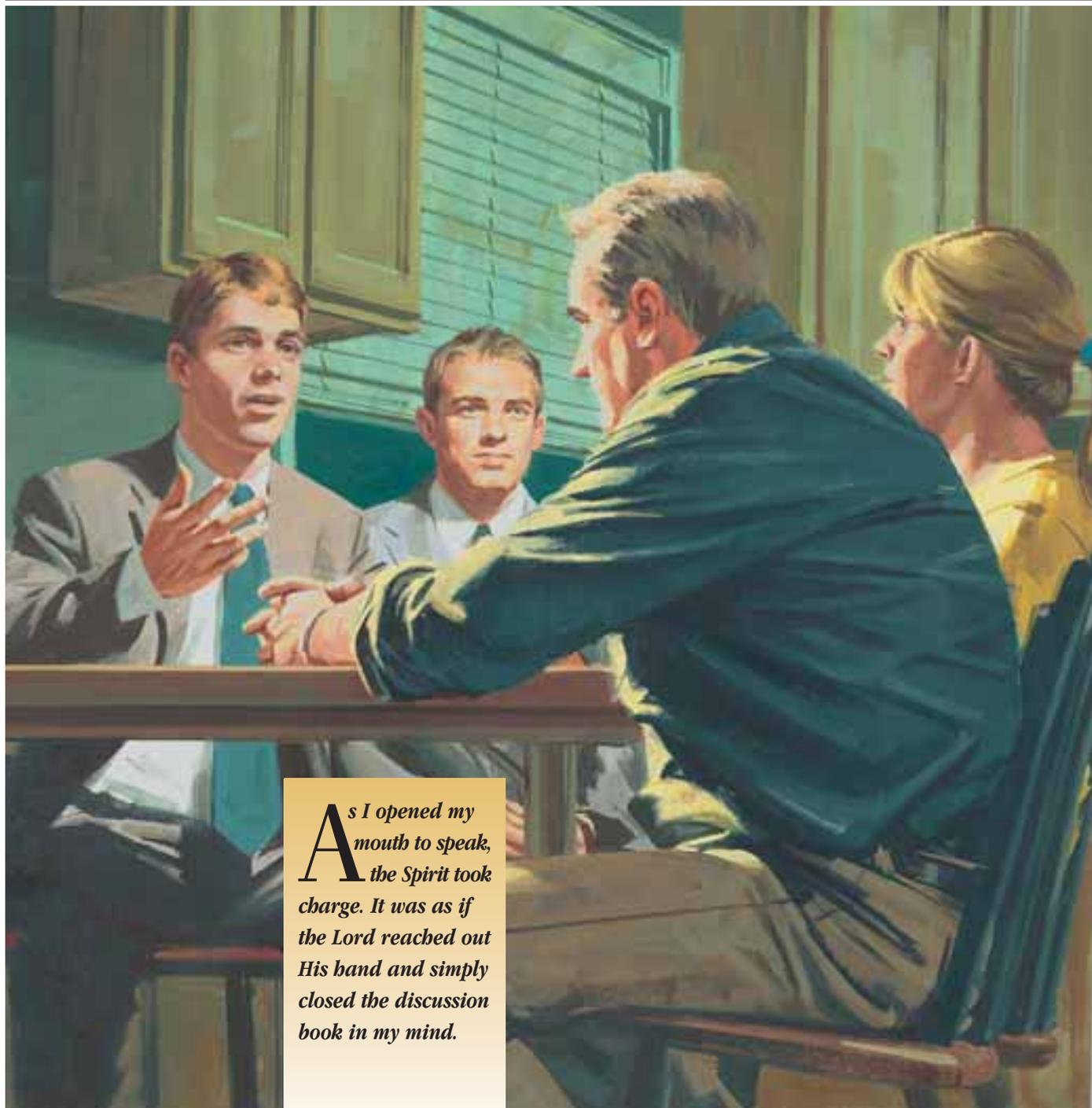
left their house: “Before you came I had decided I wasn’t going to invite you back again, but what was taught this evening touched me deeply.” He did invite us back. And although they didn’t join the Church at that time, I knew that for some reason the Lord had reached out in a special way to this family.

I’ve thought about this incident many times since that day. I’ve heard of missionaries who experience such teaching moments often, but for me it was a singular experience. I came to know that day how personally the Lord knows us, how precisely he can tailor a message to the needs of the hearers—if the teacher is in tune. I learned that evening that there is a difference between teaching true doctrine that the Spirit then confirms and having the Spirit actually use your mouth to teach truths that the listeners specifically need.

The Lord promised Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon such teaching moments:

“Therefore, verily I say unto you, lift up your voices





As I opened my mouth to speak, the Spirit took charge. It was as if the Lord reached out His hand and simply closed the discussion book in my mind.

unto this people; speak the thoughts that I shall put into your hearts, and you shall not be confounded before men;

“For it shall be given you in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what ye shall say” (D&C 100:5–6).

He also gave Joseph and six elders who had just returned from their missions this instruction:

“Neither take ye thought beforehand what ye shall say; but treasure up in your minds continually the words of life, and it shall be given you in the very hour that portion that shall be meted unto every man” (D&C 84:85).

President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988) once said, “I always know when I am speaking under the influence of the Holy Ghost because I always learn something from what I have said.”¹ I know this is true. I know from my experience with the Ortlepps and from other less extraordinary experiences that we can teach by the Spirit. We can draw on the Spirit of God to enlighten our minds, to help us understand our listeners’ needs, and to give them the message the Lord wants them to hear. ■

NOTE

1. Quoted by Boyd K. Packer, “Teach the Children,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2000, 15.

Letting My Bitterness Go

BY PAUL HAVIG



As a junior high English teacher, I have repeatedly witnessed the trauma divorce can cause children. Good students with great attitudes can suddenly become sullen, uncooperative, and difficult to teach and motivate when their parents split up. I had always felt sympathy for my students facing the turmoil of divorce, and I was thankful this burden was one I had not been required to personally carry. I would later experience firsthand, however, the same bitterness so many of my students had experienced—and the sweet peace that is available in the house of the Lord.

I had taught many lessons on forgiveness, but now that I was being tested with my parents' divorce, how could I forgive?

I had grown up the youngest of three children in a family that was very active in the Church. Although my parents had not been married in the temple initially, they seemed to be genuinely committed to their marriage and to our family. When I was nine years old, the five of us traveled to the Idaho Falls Idaho Temple and knelt around a holy altar to be sealed for time and eternity. My parents wept openly as we embraced as an eternal family unit, and I believed we had arrived at some wonderful destination from which we would never depart. This experience became a spiritual hallmark for me.

Our family continued to be rock solid from my point of view. We loved each other, attended church together, invited friends into our home to take missionary discussions, and were very involved in our ward. Later as a missionary in Korea, I would proudly show my family picture as I taught people about eternal relationships.

About 15 years later, when I was a 35-year-old father of five, I was astonished when my parents suddenly separated, and I was even more surprised to discover that their marriage had been strained for some time. The separation

sent the marriage into a tailspin, which after a few turbulent and hostile years, ended with a heartbreaking divorce.

I now found myself in a situation that I never dreamed



would be part of my life's experience. My parents had been married for 43 years. They had been sealed in the temple. This was not supposed to happen! I felt lost and disheartened.

I began to understand why students in my classes whose parents divorced could completely stop caring about grades and the long-term consequences of poor choices. I had always understood that divorce was particularly hard on children, but now as a "grown-up kid," I began to know exactly why children sometimes give up. I found myself wanting to quit trying too.

My grief and disappointment were intense, and I felt helpless in letting go of the hurt. I was never happy. Work became a burden, and I would go through the day numbly performing my duties simply because I had to earn a paycheck for my family. I felt no energy or creativity, both essential ingredients for an English teacher's success. I found myself crying while I was alone in the car and late at night as I lay in bed staring at the ceiling.

On top of the divorce, my father's commitment to the Church waned and then disappeared. Because of this, a lot of my anger surrounding the divorce was directed toward him. Although outwardly I maintained my respect for him, on the inside, my hurt was constant and gnawing. I knew this was wrong; I had taught many lessons and given talks on forgiveness. But now that I was being tested, I was unable to forgive. Over the course of several months, I fasted and prayed, pleading with my Heavenly Father to help me find relief from the pain and resentment.

Finally, one afternoon I attended the temple with my wife. I went into the temple with the same constant prayer in my heart that I would be able to forgive my father. During the two hours I was in the temple, my heart began to soften. I don't know exactly why or how. Certainly there was no specific verbal instruction in the session, but as I contemplated the sacred principles relating to our journey through eternity, anger melted from my heart. I realized that only the Lord can properly judge even the vilest of sinners. The Lord needs ministers, not

THE HEALING POWER OF CHRIST



"Most of us have not reached that stage of compassion and love and forgiveness. It is not easy. It requires

a self-discipline almost greater than we are capable of. But as we try, we come to know that there is a resource of healing, that there is a mighty power of healing in Christ, and that if we are to be His true servants we must not only exercise that healing power in behalf of others, but, perhaps more important, inwardly."

President Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Healing Power of Christ," *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 59.



The above painting, *The Woman Taken in Adultery*, illustrates the healing power of Christ as found in John 8:1-11.

else concerning the divorce. For me this was a miracle, one I attribute to a sweet blessing I received from my Heavenly Father while worshipping in the temple. ■

Paul Havig is a member of the Meadows Ward, Mesa Arizona Boulder Creek Stake.

judges, and I came to understand that my job was to support my family members no matter what spiritual predicament they might find themselves in. Specifically, I needed to respect and forgive my father. The best part was that for the first time since the onset of my parents' divorce, my heart was completely free from resentment and bitterness.

As my wife and I walked out of the temple, I felt as if a great fever or illness had broken and lifted during my brief time in the house of the Lord. I turned to my wife and said simply, "I'm not mad at my dad anymore." A sense of calmness and peace settled over me, and since that day, I have never felt anger or resentment toward my father or anyone

PUT YOUR TRUST IN GOD

BY PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY

It isn't as bad as you sometimes think it is.

It all works out. Don't worry.

I say that to myself every morning.

It will all work out.

Put your trust in God,

and move forward with faith

and confidence in the future.

The Lord will not forsake us.

He will not forsake us.

If we will put our trust in Him,

if we will pray to Him,

if we will live worthy of His blessings,

He will hear our prayers.

From the funeral program for Marjorie Pay Hinckley, April 10, 2004; see also "Latter-day Counsel," *Ensign*, Oct. 2000, 73.





I had stopped taking piano lessons in ninth grade because audiences terrified me. How was I going to handle this calling?

You want me to do what?" I asked my bishop, hoping he had confused me with someone else.

"We really need someone to play the piano for the ward choir," he explained. I hesitated for a moment but remembered my vow to never turn down a calling. "Sure, I'll do it," I said, instantly feeling anxious.

I had stopped taking piano lessons in the ninth grade because playing for an audience terrified me. I would

IN TUNE WITH HIS WILL

BY APRIL MOODY

agonize for weeks before a recital, hardly sleeping as the dreaded day drew near. Thankfully, I had parents who were always proud of me no matter how I played. But the choir and the ward were not my parents. How was I going to handle playing in front of them?

With sweaty palms I showed up to my first choir practice. Sister Lehr, the choir director, smiled and announced that the choir finally had a pianist; now she could lead the choir instead of conducting and playing the piano at the same time. Luckily, the choir sang one part at a time in the beginning. "I can handle this," I thought thankfully

as I played. Later, however, Sister Lehr decided it was time to try the music with the accompaniment. I sheepishly attempted to keep up. Sister Lehr subtly tapped her foot to

help me with the timing. I stumbled over the tricky notes and completely skipped the hardest parts by pretending to lose my place.

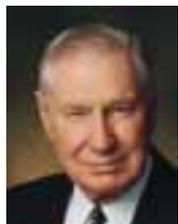
When choir practice ended, I made my escape out the door and avoided looking anyone in the eye. I had never noticed the choir pianist in all of my years of attending sacrament meeting, but now that I was the pianist, I was certain everyone would notice me and my mistakes.

Despite my trepidation, I decided to take advantage of the opportunity to develop my talent. I thought if I tried hard enough, Heavenly Father would make up for my lack of skill. The next few weeks I practiced for hours. I played each note one at a time, gradually putting them together, then slowly speeding up to the appropriate tempo. I still made several mistakes, but I was becoming more confident.

At the next practice, I took a deep breath and wiped my sweaty palms on my dress. As I started playing, my heart raced. Soon my hands slipped onto the wrong keys as I blundered through the song. My eyes blurred with tears as I stopped to replay the same measure numerous times. After practice, choir members graciously thanked me for playing and told me I was “really improving.”

I continued to practice whenever I could. Much to my surprise, I started looking forward to seeing my new choir friends, and I appreciated their subtle encouragement. Unfortunately, their kindness didn’t make my sweaty palms disappear or make the song easier to play.

EVEN A SMALL GIFT CAN BLESS MANY



“It has been said that this church does not necessarily attract great people but more often makes ordinary people great. Many . . . people with gifts equal only to five loaves and two small fishes magnify their callings and serve without attention or recognition, feeding literally thousands.”

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Five Loaves and Two Fishes,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 4.

measures but continued without stopping. I made it to the last line. I proudly played the last chord—then grimaced when I realized I had played the wrong notes.

Instead of feeling upset, I felt my Heavenly Father’s love envelop me. I realized I wasn’t really playing for the people in the ward. I was playing for my Heavenly Father.

I knew that the Lord qualifies those He calls. So why wasn’t Heavenly Father helping me play flawlessly for the choir? I was, after all, practicing and trying my best.

Our Sunday performance came sooner than I was ready for. My childhood fear returned. I hardly slept Saturday night and agonized all Sunday morning. Sister Lehr winked at me encouragingly as I walked up to the stand to play. One of the choir members gave me the “thumbs up” sign. This was it.

The introduction was flawless. I smiled. I continued keeping time and playing the correct notes. I stumbled through a few tough

Even if I wasn’t in perfect harmony with the choir, I was in tune with Him. I knew this was the calling He wanted me to have and that these experiences were teaching me eternal principles. I didn’t have to play perfectly in order for Him to know my willingness to serve.

A few weeks later, the bishop stopped by for a visit. “You seem to enjoy your calling in the choir, so we’d like you to start playing the organ in sacrament meeting too,” he said. My reply: “I would love to!” ■

April Moody is a member of the Sunset Heights 10th Ward, Orem Utah Sunset Heights Stake.



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

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

Write on slips of paper different callings in the Church. Pass them out and ask family members how they would feel to receive that calling. Relate the story of Sister Moody and challenge family members to make the commitment to magnify the callings they may be given.

Led to a Sandwich Shop

By Chris L. Cooper

Several years ago we were returning home to the East Coast of the United States from a summer trip to Utah. Our family van started to “hiccup” somewhere in Missouri, and it got worse as we drove into Tennessee. Finally, climbing the hill leaving Chattanooga late that night, the motor died.

As we sat in the dark, wondering what we could do, it occurred to me that this was a great time for our entire family to unite in a prayer of faith. My wife and I calmed our four children and invited them to exercise their faith as we prayed.

Immediately after the prayer, the van started and

we continued up the hill. But within a mile it started running badly again. We took the first exit, thinking we would find a motel room for the night. But despite checking with four different motels, we couldn’t find a vacancy.

We returned to the freeway and soon came to an exit that didn’t look like it would have any motels, but something whispered to me to take

that exit. I did, but I could see nothing that I thought would help solve our problem. The exit

I walked into the sandwich shop and approached the family. “Are you an auto mechanic?” I asked.

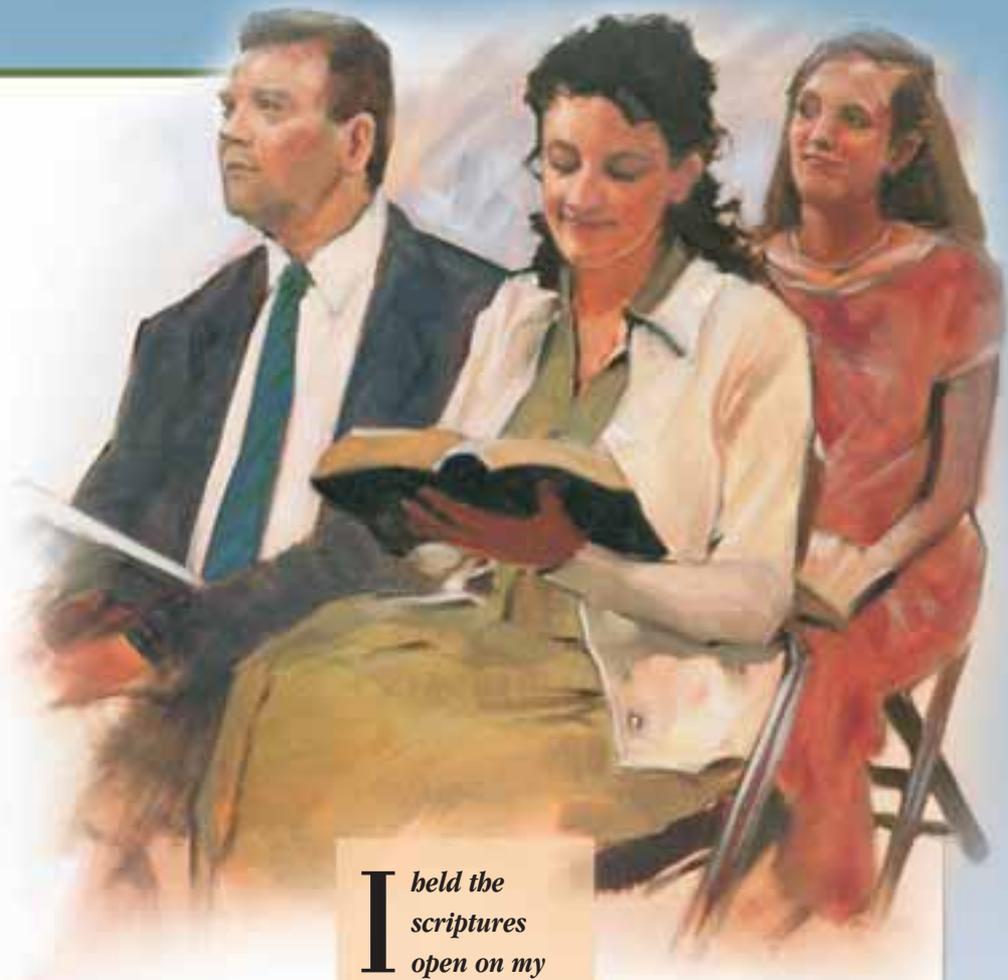
led to a four-lane highway, and we quickly came to a stoplight. I was desperately wondering what I could do for my family in our predicament.

Suddenly my wife pointed out a sandwich shop that was still open on a side road and suggested we stop and get the kids something to eat. I pulled up to the shop, gave our oldest son some money, and sent the other children in with him while my wife and I sat and pondered.

We were tired. We had been traveling since 5:00 that morning, and it was now close to 9:00 p.m. I started asking questions in my heart about why our prayer hadn’t worked and why all our efforts to live the gospel didn’t seem to be having an effect for us in our time of need, when suddenly it came to me that something just wasn’t right.

I looked up and realized that the sandwich shop’s outside light wasn’t turned on. “How did you spot this





shop?” I asked my wife. “Was there a sign out by the highway?” She said no, that she had had a sudden impulse to turn her head to the right, and there it was.

I nodded, my mind racing, and quickly summed up. We were trying to live the gospel, raise our children right, be faithful in our callings; we had prayed in faith, followed a prompting, and here we were. It came to me then that we were exactly where we were supposed to be. We just hadn’t figured out what the Lord had for us here.

And then I knew. Somebody must be here who could help us. I looked into the sandwich shop, and in the first booth was a young family. From my seat in the van I could tell that the father had grease stains on his hands.

I got out of the car, walked into the shop, and approached the family. “Are you an auto mechanic?” I asked.

Surprised, he answered, “Yes.”

I explained my problem, and his wife turned to him and said, “That’s just what my car did last week!” He told me what to do to get my car running well enough to reach Atlanta that night. There we had the car repaired and then made it home no worse for wear.

Our children learned that night—and I did too—that faithful prayer does work, but often you have to trust in the Spirit to help you understand the answer. ■

Chris L. Cooper is a member of the Charleston First Ward, Charleston South Carolina Stake.

I Chose Sunday School

By Helen Walker Jones

I had been going over an extensive reading list for the comprehensive exam I needed to pass to obtain my master’s degree in English. I hoped my preparation was adequate, but I worried that it was not. I had gone back to school at age 35, and remembering concepts often seemed more difficult than it had been when I was younger.

The test was to occur on Monday, and when Sunday morning came, I began to rationalize that my time would be better spent studying

I held the scriptures open on my lap during the lesson and found my eyes drawn to a few particular verses that I read over and over again.

rather than attending Sunday School and Relief Society. I had almost decided to attend just sacrament meeting, but in the end I felt too guilty. I wondered what sort of example I would be setting

for my young children. So I went to Sunday School and Relief Society.

The Gospel Doctrine lesson covered the book of Job, and the instructor, Brother Clayton Smith, was an eloquent and humble teacher who delivered a powerful, spiritual message. I held the scriptures open on my lap during the lesson and found my eyes drawn to a few particular verses that I read over and over again.

The next day I arrived at the room

where the test was to be administered, and the proctor handed out the exam. It consisted of three essay questions, and I had three hours to complete them. Imagine my surprise when I read one of the questions: "Discuss the concept of suffering as illustrated by at least three literary works from the reading list." The book of Job was one of the works on the list.

I was truly amazed at how easily I answered that question, my response highlighted with direct quotes from the verses I had read the previous day in Sunday School. Breezing through that essay allowed me extra time to complete the other two questions.

At the conclusion of the test I felt very grateful for my "extra" preparation. I also felt that, having participated in Brother Smith's lesson, I had gained a spiritual perspective on Job that allowed me to answer the question with greater depth, fervor, and understanding than would otherwise have been possible.

Several weeks later, when the results of the test were posted, I discovered that I was the only student who had been awarded honors.

That was a Sunday School lesson I will never forget, particularly as it reinforced the concept of keeping the Sabbath day holy and never missing my meetings. I am grateful I was inspired to attend Gospel Doctrine that Sunday morning rather than cramming for my exam. ■

Helen Walker Jones is a member of the Ensign First Ward, Salt Lake Ensign Stake.

Your Wife Is in the Hospital!

By Liu Kuan Feng

One pleasant summer morning in 1986 when my wife, Siou Chin, was preparing to leave for a class, I felt an impression clearly telling me to give her a ride to the bus stop. She had been taking classes at a school for teachers, and the bus stop was seven miles (11 km) away. I didn't pay much attention to the feeling. Having joined the Church not even one year earlier, I had little idea what the voice of the Holy Ghost felt like.

When Siou Chin was about to leave for the bus stop on her motorcycle, the same feeling came to me again, now more strongly than before, telling me that something would happen if I didn't give her a ride. I made the terrible mistake of again ignoring the voice.

Ten minutes later, the phone rang. I was so scared I couldn't answer it. It kept on ringing. Finally I picked it up, and the voice on the line said, "Your wife is in the hospital! Please come immediately."

When I arrived at the hospital, I recalled the warning and deeply regretted that I hadn't listened to the Holy Ghost. Siou Chin was in critical condition. She was unconscious. And on top of it all, she was nine months pregnant. A doctor recommended

that I send her to a larger hospital in Kaohsiung that had better equipment. After weighing my options I had the impression that I should send her to that hospital without further delay. On the way to the hospital I pleaded with Heavenly Father not only for forgiveness but also that He would save my wife's life.

An hour and 20 minutes later we arrived at the other hospital. The doctor in the emergency room ordered a CT scan, and after looking at the images, he told me Siou Chin had a skull fracture. I then found out there was no bed available in the hospital. All day long there was nothing I could do but pray for help. At 6:00 that evening I met the sister of a former classmate. She worked at the hospital, and with her help we were finally able to find an empty bed on the ninth floor. Siou Chin was still unconscious and in critical condition.

At 10:00 p.m. it dawned on me that I should ask the missionaries to give my wife a blessing. The missionaries in our branch called the elders in Kaohsiung, and 20 minutes later they arrived. But the doctor refused to allow them into my wife's room because she had gone into labor, even though she was still in a coma. So I asked the elders to give me a blessing instead of my wife, which they did in a conference room where we would be undisturbed.

By 11:00 p.m. my wife still hadn't delivered the baby, so the doctor decided to move her to the eighth

floor for a cesarean section. Then a miracle happened. Ten minutes after they moved her, she delivered the baby. The delivery went smoothly, and when the nurse handed me the baby, I couldn't believe my eyes. His features were exactly like the image I had seen in my prayers every night.

Seven days after our son's birth, Siou Chin finally regained consciousness. But her mind wasn't clear, and

she suffered headaches. Her primary physician recommended that we transfer her to a university hospital for brain surgery. I was overwhelmed and prayed for guidance. After less than three minutes of pondering, I told the doctor I had decided to transfer her to another medical center, even though it meant we would have to pay all

the expenses because that center was not eligible for medical coverage. This time I understood that I was being prompted by the Holy Ghost, and I was sure this decision was right.

We checked my wife into the medical center. A medical team that tours Taiwan to investigate unusual cases happened to be visiting this center. A brain surgeon who had just received special training in the United States was with the team that day. After looking at all the information, this doctor announced that my wife didn't need surgery. He said her situation should improve within one week.

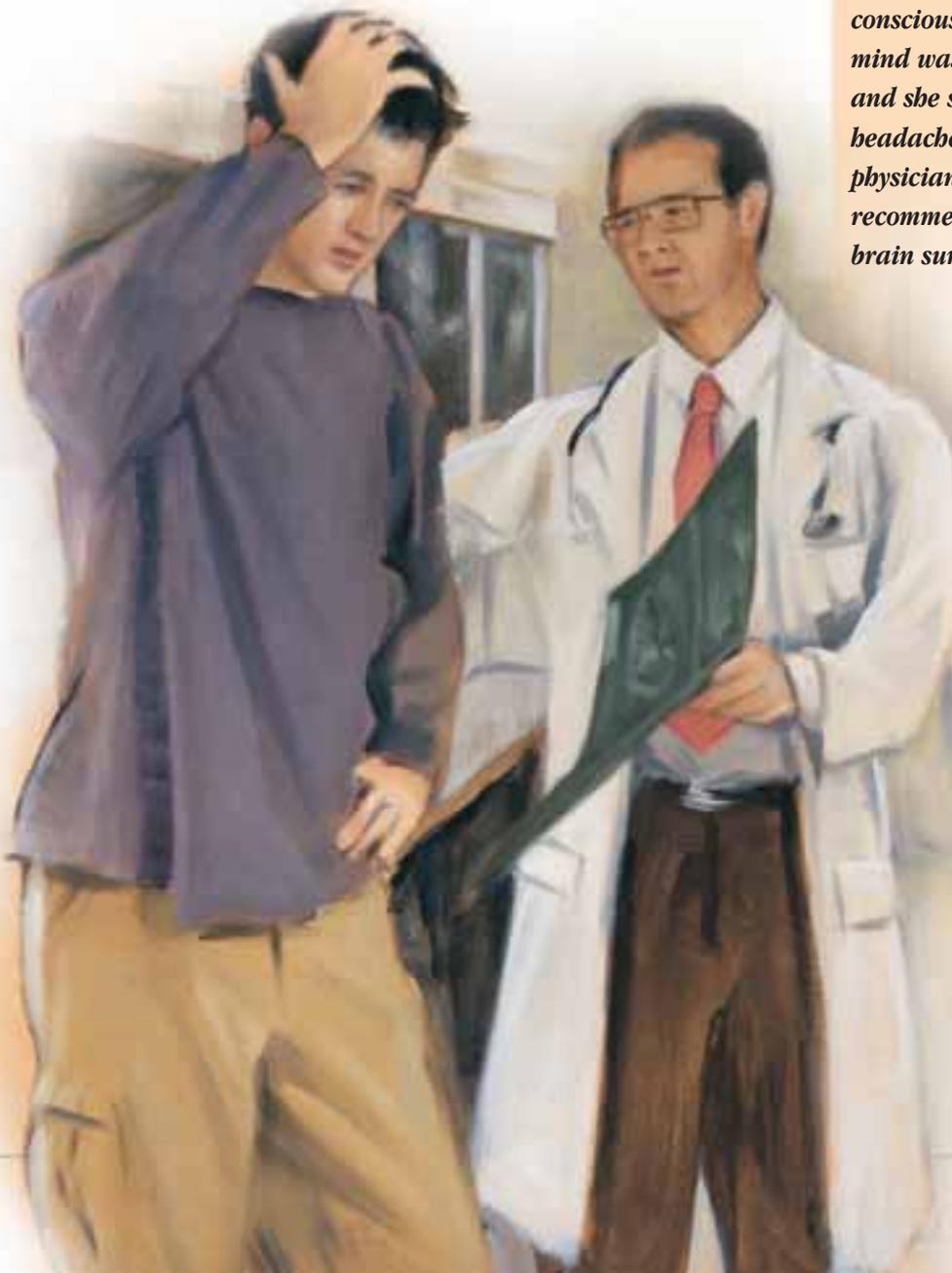
When my wife regained consciousness, her mind wasn't clear and she suffered headaches. Her physician recommended brain surgery.

I was so relieved to hear those words. I am grateful to the doctor, but most of all, I thank my Heavenly Father who directed me to make the right decision.

Just as the doctor predicted, Siou Chin was better in a week. Even the doctor marveled at how quick her recovery was. I know that with the doctors' medical skill and with Heavenly Father's blessings, my wife was able to miraculously survive and is now fully recovered. Our son is now serving full-time in the Taiwan Taichung Mission.

We all have our share of trials and hardships, but we must always keep our faith in Heavenly Father. ■

Liu Kuan Feng is a member of the Cbi Shan Branch, Kaobsiung Taiwan Stake.



Food Storage: How Long?

We all intend to rotate our food storage. But sometimes as we dust off a number 10 can or a bucket of our dry-pack food, we wonder if it's still any good. If we've stored it in dark, dry, cool conditions (below 70 degrees is recommended), the food should be good even beyond the "best if used by" date.

Do we need to toss it after that? Maybe not; it likely has significant nutritional value, but try to use it soon. To help you know how long you might

"BEST IF USED BY"	
Dry-Pack Storage Items	Years of Storage <small>(when stored under recommended conditions)</small>
Sugar	20+
Wheat	20+
Carrots	8-10
Fruit Drink Mix	8-10
Dry Pink, Pinto, and White Beans	6-8
Apple Slices	6-8
Macaroni and Spaghetti	6-8
Chopped Dry Onions	6-8
Hot Cocoa Mix	3-4
Rolled Oats	4-5
Chocolate Pudding Mix	5
Vanilla Pudding Mix	5
White Flour	5
Soup Mix	4-5
Rice	3-4
Nonfat Dry Milk	2-3
Instant Potatoes	1-2

keep your dry-pack items, post the table (left) in your food-storage area, and refer to it as needed.

Rotate your food by using it yourself or by sharing it with others. This chart and additional information are available at providentliving.org.

Keeping a Lid on Our Budget

Because it seemed convenient, my husband and I once used our ATM cards for all our expenses, storing the receipts in our wallets until they bulged. Eventually we tallied these random expenses in our bank book, but not before our budget had been damaged. Since we weren't using credit cards, we rationalized that it was OK to spend more than originally planned, thinking we had enough funds in the bank. When we occasionally bounced a check, we resolved to do better, but we never stayed within our budget until we stopped using ATM cards. For some families,





Memorizing Step-by-Step

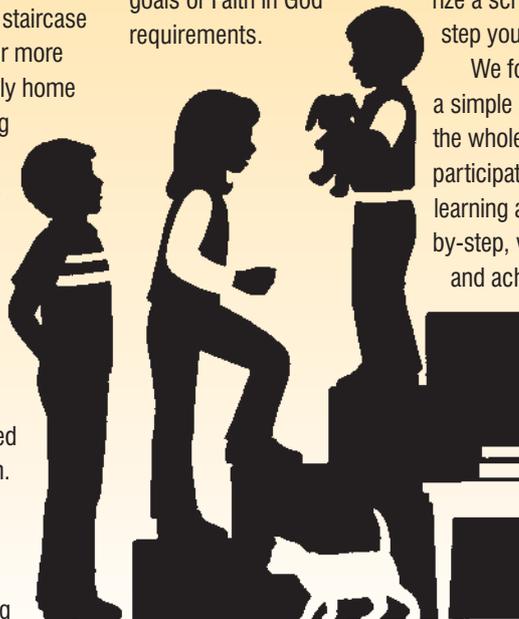
“We believe . . .” Climb a step; recite another article of faith; ascend another stair. Our oldest daughter made clever use of our home’s 13-step staircase during one of our more memorable family home evenings. Inviting everyone to stand at the bottom stair, she encouraged each of us to take a turn ascending each stair as we successfully repeated an article of faith. Some of us received help, encouragement, and a little teasing

from the others. We even paused occasionally to discuss some of the principles taught, instead of just reciting them. As we eventually gathered at the top, it was rewarding to see that each family member had passed off all 13 articles. And in the process, each of our daughters achieved Personal Progress goals or Faith in God requirements.

Don’t have 13 stairs in your home? You could easily modify the activity by ascending and descending any stairs you have or by using pieces of paper on the floor to represent steps. Or you could choose another memorization activity to coincide with the number of stairs you have. For example, you could memorize a scripture for each step you take.

We found that having a simple activity in which the whole family could participate enhanced our learning abilities. Step-by-step, we’re setting and achieving goals to better apply gospel teachings in our home.

*Lori Raymond,
Timpview
First Ward,
Orem Utab
Timpview
Stake*



misusing these cards wouldn’t be tempting; for us, they were too easy, too available. So we reverted to an old-fashioned money-management tool: tracking our budget funds in fruit jars. Based on our past expenses, I selected a few categories, then labeled some empty jars accordingly: “groceries,” “diapers,” “gasoline,” and so forth. With each paycheck, after paying tithing and major bills, we cash enough money to fund our respective jars with predetermined amounts and store them in a secure location. We don’t consider the possibility of losing the money a big risk considering the substantial amount we often lost previously to surprise ATM fees and overdrawn penalties.

Certainly other substitute tracking methods can be used: envelopes, boxes, computer software programs, to name a few. The glass-jar method helps our young children to see how our money is saved and spent. Another bonus—one of the jars holds leftover change, affording us occasional treats and fun family outings.

*Lorraine D. Jones, Powell Valley Ward,
Mount Hood Oregon Stake*

Working for Fun

But, Mom, I don’t want to clean my room!” Sound familiar? The good news is you can teach your children that doing their chores and being responsible don’t have to be drudgery. To help make life’s essential tasks more fun, why not try the following ideas?

Have a contest. How about dividing into teams to see who can finish making their dinner assignment first? If household cleaning jobs are your biggest chore, try assigning or letting each family member choose a specific task. Then have everyone move from room to room doing their jobs. The first one to clean thoroughly in all the rooms wins.

Offer incentives. Reward the team that finishes preparing their food assignment first by serving them dinner first. Maybe the quickest and best cleaner in your family gets to enjoy

free time while waiting for the last person to finish.

Work together. Working with your children, you can show them how tasks are done, helping them to prepare for adult responsibilities someday. Also, use the time together to talk. Ask about your children’s lives, and tell them about yours.

When you help your children experience the satisfaction of doing a job well, you teach them one of life’s greatest skills.

*Rose V. Voigt, Preston Branch, Rochester
Minnesota Stake*



The First Presidency presented their annual Christmas devotional surrounded by holiday decor in the Conference Center.

First Presidency Encourages Members to Emulate Christ and His Teachings

In messages to members worldwide in the annual First Presidency Christmas Devotional, the First Presidency encouraged all to let Christ's teachings and the spirit of Christmas spread through their thoughts and actions. The Mormon Tabernacle Choir and the Orchestra at Temple Square also performed in the December 4, 2005, devotional, which was broadcast from the Conference Center in Salt Lake City.

President Hinckley

In his message, President Gordon B. Hinckley reminded Church members of the promises he made about the spiritual strength that

will come into the lives of those who read the Book of Mormon before the year's end.

"It is probable that more people are presently reading the book than at any other time in the history of the Church," he said. "I thank each of you, and I know you've been blessed."

Reading excerpts from the book, he shared his testimony of the Book of Mormon as a powerful witness of the divinity and reality of the Savior.

"Suffice it to say that this wonderful and remarkable book is truly another witness of the Lord Jesus Christ, come forth to all the world bearing witness of him," he said.

"At the Christmas season let us ponder these things," President Hinckley said. "Let us reflect upon them. Let us pray concerning them. Let us emulate in our own lives the great and profound teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, not only as they are set forth in the Bible, but also as they are set forth in this companion testament of the New World."

President Monson

In words of hope and cheer, President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, reflected on the spirit of Christmas.

"This joyful season brings to each of us a measure of happiness that corresponds to the degree in which we

have turned our minds, our feelings, and our actions to the spirit of Christmas," he said. "This is a time of remembering. It is a time for families. It is a time for gratitude."

President Monson asked that Church members focus more on giving than receiving during the Christmas season. "What did you give for Christmas?" prompts stimulating thought, causes tender feelings to well up and memory's fires to glow ever brighter," he said.

"Is gratitude part of our lives?" he asked. "Giving, not getting, brings to full bloom the Christmas spirit."

"Why does peace come closer to reality at this season than at any other?" President Monson asked. "Why is it that more friends are remembered and more enemies forgiven at the Christmas season than at any other time? Why is it that more acts of kindness and service and generosity take place? It is the Christmas spirit."

President Faust

Charity is the pure love of Christ, President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, declared in his Christmas message.

He recounted the story of an impoverished family in Mexico in 1941. A widowed mother of nine children struggled to provide for them. Neighbors gave of their time and means to provide something special for the children at Christmas.

"The pure love of Christ goes beyond caring for your own," he said. "Those who

recently contributed to the Church Humanitarian Aid fund to help the thousands of people whose lives have been devastated by hurricanes and earthquakes have truly been manifesting the pure love of Christ.”

President Faust recalled a former business partner of another faith who gave of his means generously to help those in need each Christmas

and Thanksgiving. He said that this man searched out the needy and filled those needs, exemplifying pure charity.

“When we see a need, we should fill it promptly,” he said. “We should ever be mindful that it was the Savior who gave the greatest gift of all in offering Himself as the Redeemer through the Atonement.” ■

Church Programs Assist Often-Forgotten Population

By Chad Phares, Church Magazines

In many ways, Maria (name has been changed) isn't much different from other investigators who attend institute classes. She is young, enjoys reading the scriptures, and loves the feeling that attending the classes gives her. She sits with her friends, smiles often, and appreciates her institute teachers.

But unlike most of the institutes of religion around the world, the one Maria attends is surrounded by armed guards and barbed wire. As an inmate at a correctional facility in northern Utah for the past several months, this pregnant mother of two faces a much different reality than most other institute students can imagine.

While poor choices landed Maria in jail, her time in the facility has been truly rehabilitative thanks to the institute classes taught twice a week by a volunteer couple in the building's multidenominational chapel.

“It makes me feel better when I come here,” Maria

said. “It helps me get closer to God, because I pray for forgiveness of my sins and I really want to change. I feel happy when I'm here. I need it.”

Maria is not the only inmate who has felt this way. To show concern for and help out this often-forgotten group of people, the Church started seminary and institute of religion programs in correctional facilities in different parts of the country.

In addition to these gatherings, there are also simple worship services held in more than 150 correctional facility branches across the United States. Sunday meetings usually include worship service and Sunday School. Relief Society may also be held on Sunday or during the week along with opportunities to participate in family home evening, family history, and literacy or addiction groups.

While the worship services do not include the sacrament, inmates give scriptural thoughts, say prayers, and sing hymns.

Steve Sunday, manager of Administration and Special Services at LDS Family Services, which oversees the Church's Correctional Services program, said the Holy Ghost is often felt strongly at the meetings held inside correctional facilities. “It is very touching to hear the songs of Zion radiate even from within prison walls,” he said.

In addition to bishoprics and branch presidencies being called to serve those within prisons, some branches also have called Relief Society presidencies. Although the Relief Society meeting is not part of the Sunday meeting, sisters will often meet at another time during the week.

Elder Ron and Sister Luann Stephens are among those couples that spend their time teaching inmates. The Stephenses, who have for years served those in correctional facilities, say their time spent serving inside the jails is meaningful to them.

“We are really dedicated to this,” Elder Stephens said. “It's something that is very special to us.”

The Stephenses do not ask inmates why they are incarcerated, but they do care about those who are in jail and have a sincere desire to help.

Chris (name has been changed) is currently serving a 24-month sentence just four years after serving 17 months in jail. While his first sentence was very difficult, he said that thanks to the Stephenses, the institute classes, and Sunday

services, he has been much more at peace and wants to be baptized after being released.

“Elder and Sister Stephens are a very positive impact on me,” he said. “Having them give me so much love makes me want to do the same.”

When they are not teaching institute classes or attending Sunday services, the Stephenses, along with four other couples, work in the Correctional Services office at LDS Family Services headquarters. They respond to letters from inmates or others who request religious materials.

Often stake presidents, bishops, and branch presidents will contact the office to receive information on how to start up a branch in a facility.

A prison chaplain may request a library kit that contains more than 20 types of manuals, books of scripture, and videocassettes. Prison branches are able to buy necessary items such as hymnbooks, scriptures, Church magazines, and portable keyboards.

While the curriculum and music are appreciated by inmates, the biggest blessing they receive while attending classes and services is the mighty change of heart the Spirit brings.

“I want to be a better person, a better mom, and a better daughter,” Maria said. “Then I can be closer to God.” ■

To contact Correctional Services, call LDS Family Services at 1-801-240-3646 or e-mail sundaysa@ldschurch.org



The new Church History Library will be built across the street to the east of the Conference Center in Salt Lake City.

Leaders Break Ground for Church History Library

On Friday, October 7, 2005, the First Presidency and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, as well as members of the Quorums of the Seventy, missionaries, and others, gathered for the groundbreaking for the new Church History Library. The building will serve as a mark of the significance of maintaining a connection to past and future generations through record keeping in the Church.

Work was set to begin later in 2005 on the 250,000-square-foot (22,925-square-meter) building, much of which will be underground. It will be built on a plot of land that had been used as a parking lot across the street from the Church Office Building in Salt Lake City. The new building will be similar in design to the Conference Center to the west. The building's architects

and specialists from the Family and Church History Department have consulted with experts in record preservation to ensure that the interior temperature, humidity, and lighting will best favor the preservation of Church records.

President Gordon B. Hinckley expressed gratitude that records had been so dutifully kept. "I wish to say with gratitude and appreciation that the custodians of the records of the Church through all of the years of its existence have been so conscientious and dutiful, helpful and devoted, in every respect to the duties that devolved upon them."

In the prayer President Hinckley offered before the groundbreaking, he said: "As we look to the past and are reminded of the past, to that which has been preserved in history, our hearts are filled

with gratitude and appreciation and love and respect for those that have gone before. Great was their work, tremendous their sacrifice. We thank Thee for them."

In his remarks about the Church History Library, President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, said, "We benefit from what our fathers did for us, and we have the privilege, through sacred records to be maintained here, to provide a legacy for those who follow."

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said, "I believe that the principal benefit for the making and the keeping of records is to strengthen faith in those who make the history and those who record the history and those in the future who read of that history."

Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy, who serves as Church Historian and Recorder, said the current library in the Church Office Building has outgrown its

capacity. He noted that Church membership has increased from about 5 million when the Church Office Building was completed in the 1970s to more than 12 million today. ■

Family History Centers Spreading

By Patricia Selman,
Church Magazines

With the Internet making research easier than ever, family history is becoming an increasingly popular pastime. Those who have looked for family names online to fulfill curiosity can turn to the Family History Centers of the Church as their interest becomes more serious.

The 4,407 centers around the world are branch facilities of the Family History Library located at Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, the largest library of its kind. The satellite Family History Centers provide access to almost all of the microfilms and microfiche in the central library.

Though it is a commandment for Latter-day Saints to research their ancestors, others of different faiths have also caught the family history fever. More than 60 percent of the U.S. population is interested in tracing family history, according to a 2000 poll by Maritz Marketing Research Inc. This is a 15 percent increase from 1995.

“There are today many genealogical and family history societies in the world. I think they all have come into existence subsequent to the visit of Elijah. . . . Since then, and in more recent years particularly, there has been a tremendous surge of interest in family history. With that surge, the Family History Department of the Church has grown to be able to accommodate it,” said President Gordon B. Hinckley (“The Spirit of Elijah,” *Liabona*, Nov. 1996, 19).

“[Latter-day Saints] have been commanded to do [family history],” says Mike Provard, North America Operations Supervisor for Family History Centers. “In addition, many others have a deep hunger to find out

where we come from in this crazy, busy world we live in. . . . When people learn what their ancestors have gone through, they can cope better with their own lives.”

Brother Provard says that in many centers the majority of the patrons are not members of the Church. “In the eastern U.S., 90 to 95 percent of the patrons [in some centers] are not members. They are thrilled to have the centers in the area.”

Efforts are now focused on opening Family History Centers in all areas of the world. Some of the busiest Family History Centers worldwide are in Johannesburg, South Africa; Carlingford, Sydney, Australia; and Ashton, England. The center in Ashton is located near a temple, a placement that helps

the center benefit from increased activity, Brother Provard says.

Even where a Family History Center may not be nearby, the family history efforts of Latter-day Saints can be felt while doing research worldwide. For example, those who search for Scottish ancestors benefit from the efforts of Latter-day Saints who microfiched about 40 million documents held in the New Register House in Scotland. It was a 30-year task that helped contribute to the Scottish government’s family history Web site at www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk.

Information on this and other projects carried out by members is available in the Church’s library, and much of it can also be found on

www.familysearch.com, the Church’s family history Web site. The result of decades of research, the FamilySearch site includes some 957 million names.

With volunteers to help visitors navigate through the Web site and free access to www.ancestry.com, Family History Centers are good places to begin a search.

“Many people who are into family history research are at first concerned about gathering names, dates, and places. But our ancestors are much more than that. . . . I am a product of all my ancestors. I want to find out about them,” Brother Provard says.

A group on the Kenai Peninsula in Alaska, the Totem Tracers Genealogical Society, uses the local Family History Center to hold its monthly meetings, during which members compile family names and stories about their ancestors. Loretta Mattson, the secretary of the group, has added 9,795 individuals to her history, which goes back 49 generations. She has found a blacksmith, Quakers who once owned part of Nantucket Island, and a woman who lost four sons to disease in the American Civil War.

“There are millions across the world who are working on family history records. Why? Why are they doing it? I believe it is because they have been touched by the spirit of this work, a thing which we call the spirit of Elijah. It is a turning of the hearts of the children to their fathers,” said President Hinckley (*Liabona*, Nov. 1996, 20). ■



Each of the more than 4,000 family history centers around the world is an extension of the Family History Library in Salt Lake City.



Members in Samoa can watch a general conference session in their own language thanks to the efforts of a team of interpreters.

Spirit, Training Help Translators Capture Meaning

By Nicole Seymour, Church Magazines

The increasing number of languages in which Church materials are available is an indication that the gospel is rolling forth to “all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people” (D&C 112:1). With the addition of 5 languages, interpreters provided October 2005 general conference in 80 languages. Full translations of the Book of Mormon are available in

77 languages. The *Liabona* is available in 50 languages.

As Church membership expands into many nations, the Translation Division of the Church keeps busy meeting the worldwide demand for Church meetings to be interpreted and materials to be translated into additional languages. The division does both translation, which is the transformation of written

text into another language, and interpretation, which is the delivery of spoken words into another language.

The Role of Interpreters and Translators

The first priority when selecting members of a translation team is to identify individuals who are living lives that allow them to access the Spirit, said Jeffrey C.

Bateson, Translation Division director, in an interview with Church magazines. “We feel, first of all, that translation is a spiritual gift, and anyone involved in that work needs access to the Spirit,” he said, quoting Doctrine and Covenants 9:9: “You cannot write that which is sacred save it be given you from me.” That scripture serves as a guide for the Translation Division, Brother Bateson added.

Next in consideration are translation skills. Potential team members are evaluated to see whether they would better fill the role of translator or reviewer. Individuals working for the Translation Division typically know the target language as their primary language and English as their secondary language.

Like translators, interpreters have to be very familiar with both the target language and English. While most interpreters speak the target language as their native tongue, others learned the target language while serving missions and speak English as their native language.

Processing Language Materials

Direction concerning which languages Church materials will be translated into comes from the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. As of November 2005, the Church had approved 190 languages and is actively working in 104 of them.

The Translation Division operates according to the Worldwide Translation Plan, which consists of phases, or levels, through which Church materials are produced in a given language according to how many members speak that language.

Requests for a language to receive materials under the Worldwide Translation Plan come from Area Presidencies. “They monitor the language needs of the area and make recommendations to the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles,” Brother Bateson said.

The translation of Church materials is an extensive process that calls for multiple reviews using several people who are familiar with the target language. One or more may translate while others ensure that the meaning and language usage are appropriate. When scriptures are translated, the review process is even more extensive. The same process of Area Presidency requests and translation approval exists with scripture translation.

“First and foremost, scripture translation is directed by the Lord through the Brethren in the highest levels of the Church,” Brother



A team of interpreters work together during October 2005 general conference.

Bateson said. "It is not something we do, then present to the Brethren. They are in charge of the work."

Once a scripture translation project is approved, the Translation Division reports regularly to General Authorities for approvals during the process.

For other Church materials in print, the English original is first translated, and then a back-and-forth review by a team of translators and reviewers stationed in Salt Lake City or in other nations continues until the translation is perfected. The target language teams typically work on tight deadlines.

Brother Bateson explains that the process is not merely an exchange of the target language for the English: "Translation is an art, but it is also a very detailed process and requires a lot of skill and ability to make sure that nothing is left behind. There are so many nuances with

language. It's not a matter of just getting all the words transformed—it is making sure you have all the meaning, all the emotions, all the culture, and everything else that affects how we say things."

In addition to printed materials, many of the Church's software and Internet programs are also being translated, said Brother Bateson. Such items include help screens, instructions, and forms. Translating for software and Internet sites adds an additional level of complexity to the work of translation, he said.

Technology Aids Interpretation

For some meetings, translated texts are prepared beforehand. But if a speaker departs from the prepared text or does not have a prepared text, an interpreter must provide simultaneous interpretation. Advances in technology allow interpreters to remain in their homelands

while actively interpreting a meeting that may be broadcast from Salt Lake City.

"For example, we may have an interpreter in Norway," Brother Bateson said. "High-speed communication lines allow him or her to interpret a meeting being held in Salt Lake City and have the interpretation transmitted by satellite to Salt Lake City and back to the same building to a congregation in another room simultaneously with the video portion of the meeting with only a one-second delay."

Typically, teams of several interpreters take turns interpreting talks. Interpreters in Salt Lake City work from booths in the Conference Center, and conference attendees all over the world can listen to the meetings in their native tongue.

The Good News of the Gospel Spreads Forth

Brother Bateson said the Doctrine and Covenants describes the work in which the Translation Division is involved: "For it shall come to pass in that day, that every man shall hear the fulness of the gospel in his own tongue, and in his own language, through those who are ordained unto this power, by the administration of the Comforter, shed forth upon them for the revelation of Jesus Christ" (D&C 90:11).

"We consider it a privilege and a blessing to play a very important part in helping the gospel reach the various nations, kindreds, tongues, and people," Brother Bateson said. "We feel that we are

instruments in the Lord's hands in helping to make that happen."

The effort of preparing the gospel to spread forth in many languages requires much work, along with the companionship of the Spirit.

"The multiplicity of languages and cultures is both an opportunity and a challenge for members of the Church," stated President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. "Having everyone hear the gospel in their own tongue requires great effort and resources. The Spirit, however, is a higher form of communication than language" ("Heirs to the Kingdom of God," *Ensign*, May 1995, 63). ■

Using Mormon.org to Share the Gospel

By Walter Cooley, Church Magazines

Using Church materials online provides another way for members to help friends and acquaintances learn about the Church and at the same time build members' confidence in their ability to share gospel principles with others.

The Church's Web sites can be grouped by purpose into three categories. Lds.org and providentliving.org, which are available in various languages, help teach, strengthen, and perfect members. Family search.org, available in



The Book of Mormon has been translated in full into 77 languages.



Mormon.org is available in 23 languages to answer questions from people around the world.

English, allows visitors to search for their kindred dead. Mormon.org, available in 23 languages, seeks to proclaim the gospel to the world. The principal Web site for members to use when sharing the gospel online is mormon.org.

Mormon.org assists members sharing the gospel with friends who have various levels of understanding about the Church. Members can use this site to introduce friends to the gospel, help them better understand Church doctrine and lifestyle, and invite them to attend Church meetings.

Since its launch in October 2001, more than 8.3 million visitors have visited the Web site. These visitors have requested more than 200,000 media items, such as DVDs or copies of the Book of Mormon. More than 40,000 site visitors wanted to learn

more and were referred to missionaries.

Introducing the Gospel

Mormon.org's 411 doctrinal pages, written in simple terms for those unfamiliar with the Church, explain the Church's basic beliefs, the plan of salvation, the importance of families, and the purpose of life. Each page contains several hyperlinks to topics related to the page being viewed, offering visitors thousands of unique ways to navigate the site. The five most viewed page titles are (1) Welcome (2) Frequently asked questions (3) Find information (4) Is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints a Christian church? and (5) Frequently asked questions—beliefs and doctrines.

"This site is a great way for investigators to learn more about what your church is all

about without talking to anyone one-on-one. Sometimes, people must take this first step [investigating on the Internet] before they are able to ask a member or attend worship. [Mormon.org] has been a continual guide for me as I search for truth," said Tiffany, a site visitor.

Answering Questions

A popular page with investigators and visitors is the Frequently Asked Questions page.

Previous visitors have submitted some of the questions listed on this page. When mormon.org was originally launched, this page included 67 questions; since then 23 more questions have been added. Hyperlinks divide the questions into the following general categories: requesting media items or missionary visits, beliefs and doctrines, social issues, Church practices, and member lifestyles.

Each week Web site administrators compile a list of the top 25 questions submitted to the site. They then check the questions against those currently posted. If a question is frequently asked but not included on the page, the question is posed to the Brethren, who decide whether the question and its answer should be added to the site.

The following questions are from the top 10 most frequently asked questions from 2004: "How can I obtain more

information about the Mormon faith and beliefs?" "What do you believe about heaven, hell, salvation, and eternal life?" "Please explain the Word of Wisdom. What is it that is bad? Is it caffeine or hot drinks? What about decaf, hot chocolate, iced tea, herbal teas, or caffeinated soft drinks?" "How does the Mormon Church currently view polygamy, and how does it explain its previous association with polygamy?" "What are your standards on tattoos, body piercing, dancing, dating, abstinence, etc.?"

Jason, a new member of the Church, said: "This site gave me the information that helped to open my heart to the Spirit and filled me with a desire to be baptized. I just wanted to give my thanks. . . . It was an awesome tool in my conversion."

Inviting Friends to Hear More

One of the most popular ways members are accessing and referring the site to others is with electronic cards. Mormon.org offers 10 different English greeting card categories including electronic pass-along cards. Card categories are inspiration, gratitude, birthday, sympathy, special occasions, families, seasonal, humor, temple, and baptism. Within each category, visitors can match one of several photos to a selection of quotations from a Church leader or historic figure, or insert their own quotation.

E-card senders can attach a link to almost any page on the site, presenting a

personalized introduction for friends to hear more about a gospel subject that interests them most. E-card introductions are private and personal because they are sent from the sender's own e-mail account. Last year visitors sent 196,099 e-cards from mormon.org.

"I was recently baptized, . . . and it was the best thing I have done in my life. I found this Web site to be very helpful. . . . I have family in America and I just sent them a card using the site. Well done on a great Web site!" said Lynn, a new member of the Church.

International Sites

Mormon.org content is available in 23 languages. These languages allow mormon.org to reach over 95 percent of the world's Internet users.

Translating the Web page into additional languages is an ongoing process. Web site administrators regularly track the city and country from which all users connect to the site. When visitor requests or traffic increases from an area that uses a language not available on the site, a translation is considered in that language. After approval is granted, most of mormon.org's pages are translated. E-greeting cards and most of the free-media-request pages are not translated. However, visitors on international sites can still send greeting cards even though the site can be viewed only in English. In 2004, the site was translated into 11 languages,

bringing the total to 22. Pass-along cards referring members to mormon.org have been translated into 28 languages.

Besides pass-along cards and member referrals, Internet search engines such as Google, Yahoo, MSN, and others bring up an advertised link to mormon.org when a Web user searches with key words like "Holy Bible" or "Book of Mormon." In 2004, 750,733 visitors found mormon.org through a search-engine-sponsored link.

"This is a great site. . . . I shared this with a friend at school and now she is investigating the Church and will be baptized in two weeks. . . . Thank you to everyone who helped with this excellent site!" said Jenny, a site visitor.

Helping to Improve Understanding

Mormon.org is an informal yet effective way to share the gospel with friends. For many in the world, the Web site has proven to be what Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Presidency of the Seventy said he hoped mormon.org would become when it was launched in 2001.

"I hope people will see mormon.org as an introductory source of information about the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and a way to gain an improved understanding of our faith," Elder Andersen said. ■

We invite you to send suggestions or success stories about how you have used Church Web sites as a resource for sharing the gospel to cur-news@ldschurch.org.

Call for Articles

How have Church materials helped you teach more effectively at home or in your calling? In 300 words or less, please share the creative ways in which you have used items available through the Church Distribution Center. Your submission will be considered for use in the Random Sampler department.

Send responses by March 15, 2006, to ensign@ldschurch.org or to *Ensign* Editorial, 50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA. Clearly mark your submission "Church Curriculum," and at the top of your submission, write your name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and ward and stake (or branch and district).

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

Comment

December DVD

Thank you to everyone who has any part in the joy we receive each month from the *Ensign* and the *New Era*. But especially we are thankful for the insert DVD that went to every home on your subscription lists. What a wonderful gift!

How blessed is anyone who is a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or who receives the truth each month as we do.
Lowell and IlaMae Dahl,
Utah

Clam Chowder

Thank you for the article about clam chowder and Christmas traditions in the December 2005 *Ensign*. It is always inspiring to read about real-life, personal experiences that are modern-day miracles. The Lundbergs' wonderful Christmas story demonstrates not only that Heavenly Father is present, even for the smallest details, but how family faith fosters love and hope.

Joel Marks, Oregon

Incomplete Understanding of Mental Illness

Thank you so much for your article "Myths about Mental Illness" by Elder Alexander B. Morrison in the October 2005 issue of the *Ensign*. As one who has experienced bouts of depression over the years, I am grateful for this clear explanation of false beliefs about mental illness among members of the Church and the offering of helpful, correct information. Some of my family members have harbored similarly incomplete understandings, which have created complications during my times of distress. I appreciate that this difficult topic was addressed in such a compassionate manner.

Name Withheld



MAKING THE MOST OF THIS ISSUE

F E B R U A R Y 2 0 0 6

experienced this trial? You may find comfort and counsel in Melinda E. Jennings's story on page 8.

Children and Self-Worth

Do your children lack confidence or struggle with feelings of low self-worth? Two Brigham Young University professors share what they have learned about youth and the activities that build them spiritually and emotionally. See "Helping Children Develop Self-Worth" on page 32.

For Bishops Only

But not really. Even if you're not a bishop, if you have ever made a wrong assumption about somebody, you'll want to read about the unexpected lesson a busy bishop learned one night. See page 23.

What Do You Know about the Dead Sea Scrolls?

Because of the Book of Mormon, Latter-day Saints have a keen interest in ancient records that have come to light in the latter days. But what about the Dead Sea Scrolls? Do they have any relevance to Latter-day Saints? Find

sense of this earth life. See page 30.

In the World, but . . .

The world is growing consistently more wicked, but "we cannot avoid the world," says Elder Quentin L. Cook



of the Seventy. "In a positive sense, our contribution to the world is part of our challenge and is essential if we are to develop our talents." See page 53.

Home Teachers, Visiting Teachers

Find the monthly messages on pages 2 and 52.

Picture Yourself in the Temple

• "To each young adult I emphasize that the temple can bless you—even before you enter it." Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles teaches about the importance of temples and how we can find inner peace and spiritual strength by maintaining high standards of conduct to qualify for a temple recommend. See page 12.

• Read how a young man's prize-winning photograph of himself and the London temple led to his conversion. See page 11.

Afraid of Marriage?

Are you afraid to marry? Afraid of being an inadequate wife or husband? Do you have financial concerns? Do you fear changes that marriage may bring to your lifestyle or goals? See "Confidence to Marry" on page 18.

"Our Stillborn Baby"

Have you gone through the pain of having a stillborn baby? Has a friend or family member



Improve Your Teaching

• You are holding in your hand one of the best resources for preparing a fantastic lesson. Church magazines are filled with stories, doctrinal discussions, and quotations to help your lesson hit home. See page 56.

• Do you struggle with the challenge of teaching by the Spirit? Maybe you're relying too much on your own abilities and not enough on the Lord. Read about one missionary's experience on page 58.

the answers to these questions and more in Andrew C. Skinner's article on page 44.

Preserving Freedom

"Are we doing all we should to establish and preserve our political freedom and liberty?" asks Elder Shirley D. Christensen of the Seventy. What can we do wherever we live? What do the scriptures teach? See "I, the Lord God, Make You Free," page 26.

Life before Birth

The second in a series of short articles about basic doctrines of the restored gospel examines the crucial doctrine of the premortal existence, a doctrine that helps us make

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COURTESY OF MUSEUM OF CHURCH HISTORY AND ART

Joseph's Coat Brought to Jacob, by Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–69)

Joseph's brothers "took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; . . . and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no. And he knew it. . . . And Jacob rent his clothes" (Genesis 37:31–34).



In the Restoration, temple work received a very high priority. The first revelation from a ministering angel pertained to this doctrine. Recorded in the second section of the Doctrine and Covenants, it is an echo of the fourth chapter of Malachi. Moroni foretold the coming of Elijah, who would turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers.” See Elder Russell M. Nelson, “Young Adults and the Temple,” p. 12.