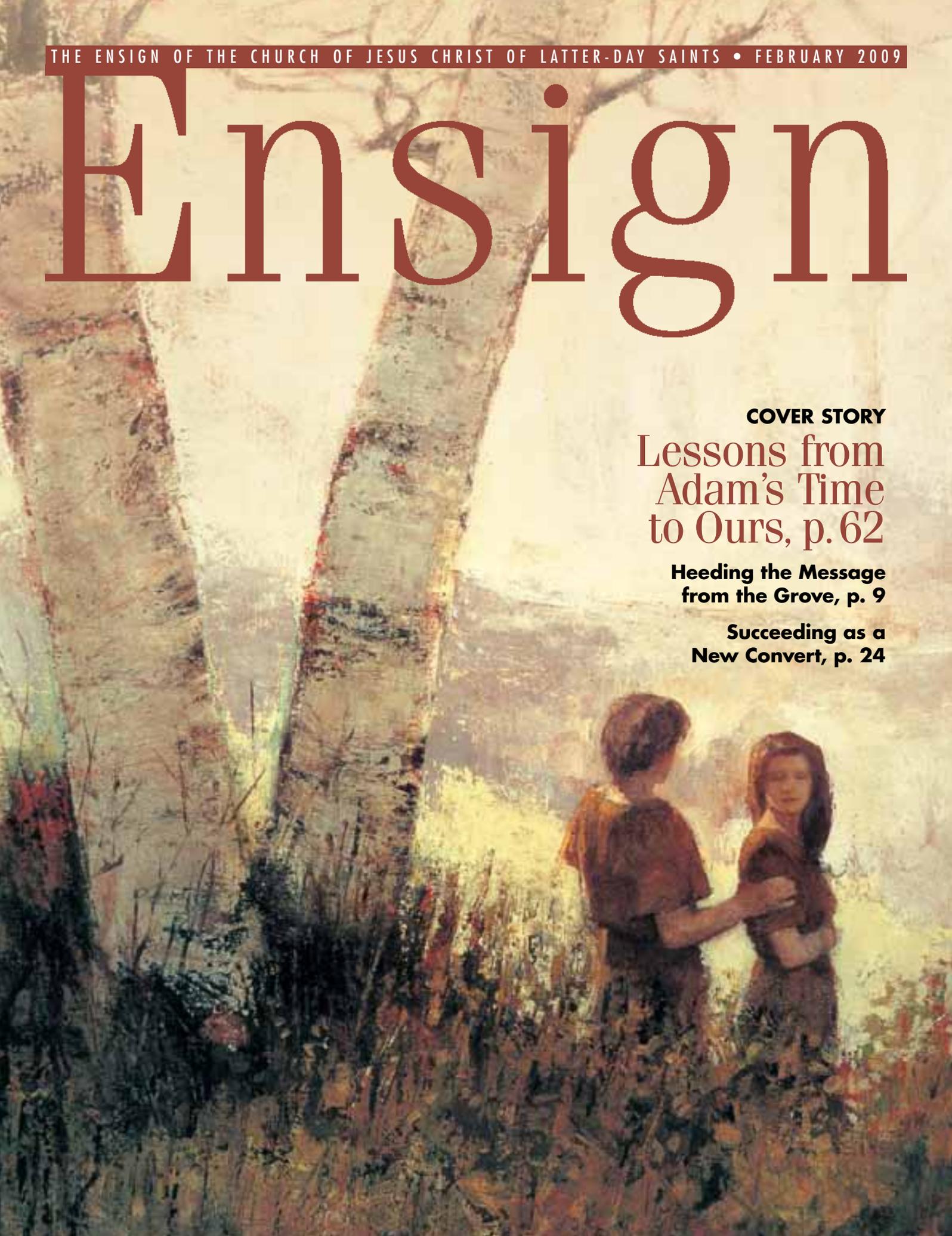


THE ENSIGN OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • FEBRUARY 2009

# Ensign



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Adam's Time  
to Ours, p. 62**

**Heeding the Message  
from the Grove, p. 9**

**Succeeding as a  
New Convert, p. 24**

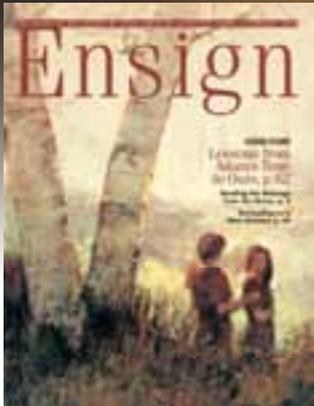


**Spring Hill, Daviess County, Missouri, by Al Rounds**

*“Spring Hill is named by the Lord Adam-ondi-Ahman, because, said he, it is the place where Adam shall come to visit his people, or the Ancient of Days shall sit, as spoken of by Daniel the prophet” (D&C 116).*



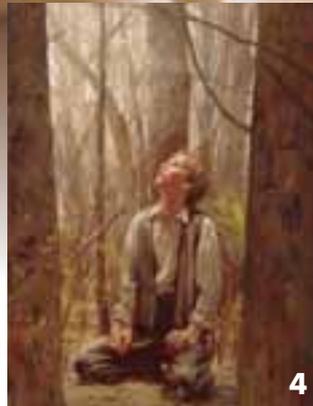
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### DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

In what ways have you been blessed by a Church leader, or, if you have served as a leader, how have you been blessed in your calling? We're looking for specific, personal experiences related to any of the following in the context of leadership:

- Recognizing and responding to the Holy Ghost
- Priesthood keys
- The relationship between teaching and leading
- The roles of—and difference between—administering and ministering
- Fostering faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ
- Strengthening families

Please label your manuscript "leadership" and submit it by March 14.

We also welcome other submissions that show the gospel of Jesus Christ at work in your life. You can find this and other calls for articles online at <http://ensign.lds.org>. *Ensign* Magazine Writers' Guidelines are posted on the same page under "Resources."

Send submissions to [ensign@ldschurch.org](mailto:ensign@ldschurch.org) or *Ensign* Editorial, 50 E. North Temple Street, Room 2420, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA. Include your name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, ward (or branch), and stake (or district). Because of the volume of submissions we receive, we cannot acknowledge receipt. Authors whose work is selected for publication will be notified. If you would like your manuscript, photos, art, or other material returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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# Ensign

AN OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH  
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## USING THIS ISSUE

### Reach out to new converts.

During family home evening, discuss ways to help the new converts you know feel that you love them and care about their success in the gospel. See “Helping New Converts Stay Strong” (p. 20) and “Succeeding as a New Convert” (p. 24).

### Strengthen your family.

Interested in learning more about developing a “functional family”? (See p. 14.) Find resources, counsel, and ideas on a variety of family topics at LDS.org under “Home and Family” and then “Building a Strong Family.”

### Know your place in the plan.

Joseph Smith was an instrument in the hands of the Lord throughout his life. (See pp. 4, 9, 56, and 62.) Reflect on your own testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ and of Joseph Smith as the Prophet of the Restoration. Consider ways that you too are a contributor to the Lord’s plan and the missions He has for you to accomplish.



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- *Preparing children for general conference*
- *The Church’s new guidelines on home storage*
- *Online disability resources*

# Precious Fruits of the First Vision



**BY PRESIDENT DIETER F. UCHTDORF**  
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

**I**n my growing-up years in Germany, I attended church in many different locations and circumstances—in humble back rooms, in impressive villas, and in very functional modern chapels. All of these buildings had one important factor in common: the Spirit of God was present. The love of the Savior could be felt as we assembled as a branch or ward family.

The Zwickau chapel had an old air-driven organ. Every Sunday a young man was assigned to push up and down the sturdy lever operating the bellows to make the organ work. Even before I was an Aaronic Priesthood bearer, I sometimes had the great privilege to assist in this important task.

While the congregation sang our beloved hymns of the Restoration, I pumped with all my strength so the organ would not run out of wind. The eyes of the organist unmistakably indicated whether I was doing fine or needed to increase my efforts quickly. I always felt honored by the importance of this duty and the trust that the organist had placed in me. It was a wonderful feeling of accomplishment to have a responsibility and to be part of this great work.

There was an additional benefit that came from this assignment: the bellows operator sat in a seat that offered a view of a stained-glass window that beautified the front part of the chapel. The stained glass portrayed the First Vision, with Joseph Smith kneeling in the Sacred Grove, looking up toward heaven and into a pillar of light.

During the hymns of the congregation and even during talks and testimonies given by our members, I often looked at this depiction of a most sacred moment in world history. In my mind's eye I saw Joseph receiving knowledge, witness, and divine instructions as he became a blessed instrument in the hand of our Heavenly Father.

I felt a special spirit while looking at the beautiful scene in this window picture of a believing young boy in a sacred grove who made a courageous decision to earnestly pray to our Heavenly Father—a Father who listened and responded lovingly to him.

## **The Spirit's Witness**

Here I was, a young boy in post-World War II Germany, living in a city in ruins, thousands of miles away from Palmyra, New

*By the universal power of the Holy Ghost, I felt in my heart and in my mind that Joseph Smith saw God and Jesus Christ and heard Their voices. I believed Joseph Smith's testimony of that experience in the Sacred Grove then, and I know it now.*





***This is how Joseph Smith's First Vision blesses our own personal lives, the lives of families, and eventually the whole human family—we come to believe in Jesus Christ through the testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith.***

York, in North America and more than a hundred years after the event actually took place. By the universal power of the Holy Ghost, I felt in my heart and in my mind that it was true, that Joseph Smith saw God and Jesus Christ and heard Their voices. The Spirit of God comforted my soul at this young age with an assurance of the reality of this sacred moment which resulted in the beginning of a worldwide movement destined to “roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth” (D&C 65:2). I believed Joseph Smith’s testimony of that glorious experience in the Sacred Grove then, and I know it now. God has spoken to mankind again!

Looking back I am grateful for so many friends who helped me in my youth to gain a testimony of the restored Church of Jesus Christ. First I exercised simple faith in their testimonies, and then I received the divine witness of the Spirit to my mind and to my heart. I count Joseph Smith among those whose testimony of Christ helped me to develop my own testimony of the Savior. Before I recognized the tutoring of the Spirit testifying to me that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, my youthful heart felt that

he was a friend of God and would therefore, quite naturally, also be a friend of mine. I knew I could trust Joseph Smith.

The scriptures teach us that spiritual gifts are given to those who ask of God, who love Him, and who keep His commandments (see D&C 46:9).

“All have not every gift given unto them; for there are many gifts, and to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God.

“To some is given one, and to some is given another, that all may be profited thereby” (D&C 46:11–12).

Today I know that my young testimony benefited greatly from the testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith and many friends in the Church who knew “by the Holy Ghost . . . that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world” (D&C 46:13). Their good examples, caring love, and helping hands blessed me to receive another special gift of the Spirit described in the scriptures as I was yearning for more light and truth: “To others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful” (D&C 46:14). What a wonderful and precious gift this is!

## The Gift of Faith

As we truly humble ourselves, we will be blessed with this gift to have faith and to hope for things which are not seen but are true (see Alma 32:21). As we experiment upon the words given to us by the scriptures and the living prophets—even if we have only a desire to believe—and do not resist the Spirit of the Lord, our souls will be enlarged and our understanding will be enlightened (see Alma 32:26–28).

The Savior Himself explained this merciful principle clearly to all the world in His great intercessory prayer, given not only for His Apostles but for all the Saints, even for us today, wherever we might be living. He said:

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may *believe* that thou hast sent me” (John 17:20–21; emphasis added).

This is how Joseph Smith’s First Vision blesses our own personal lives, the lives of families, and eventually the whole human family—we come to believe in Jesus Christ through the testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Prophets and apostles throughout the history of mankind have had divine manifestations similar to Joseph’s. Moses saw God face-to-face and learned that he was a son of God “in the similitude of [His] Only Begotten” (Moses 1:6). The Apostle Paul testified that the resurrected Jesus Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus (see Acts 26:9–23). This experience led Paul to become one of the Lord’s great missionaries. Hearing Paul’s witness of his heavenly vision during the trial at Caesarea, the powerful King Agrippa admitted, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28).

And there were many other ancient prophets who also bore powerful testimony of Christ. All of these

manifestations, ancient and modern, lead those who believe to the divine source of all righteousness and hope—to God, our Heavenly Father, and to His Son, Jesus Christ.

God has spoken to Joseph Smith for the purpose of blessing all of God’s children with His mercy and love, even in times of uncertainties and insecurities, of wars and rumors of wars, of natural and personal disasters. The Savior said, “Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive” (3 Nephi 9:14). And

all who accept this invitation will be “encircled about with the matchless bounty of his love” (Alma 26:15).

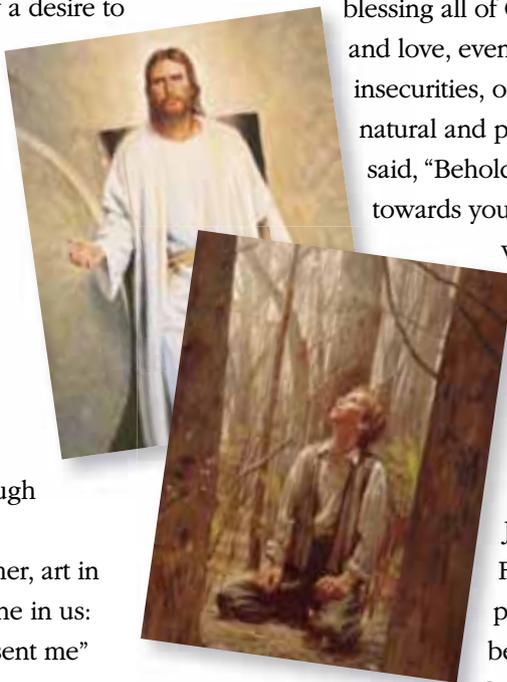
Through our faith in the personal witness of the Prophet Joseph and the reality of the First Vision, through study and prayer, deep and sincere, we will be blessed with a firm faith in the Savior of the world, who spoke

to Joseph “on the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty” (Joseph Smith—History 1:14).

Faith in Jesus Christ and a testimony of Him and His universal Atonement is not just a doctrine with great theological value. Such faith is a universal gift, glorious for all cultural regions of this earth, irrespective of race, color, language, nationality, or socioeconomic circumstance. The powers of reason may be used to try to understand this gift, but those who feel its effects most deeply are those who are willing to accept its blessings, which come from a pure and clean life of following the path of true repentance and living the commandments of God.

## Gratitude for a Prophet

As we remember and honor the Prophet Joseph Smith, my heart reaches out to him in gratitude. He was a good,





**F***faith in Jesus Christ and a testimony of Him and His universal Atonement is not just a doctrine with great theological value. Such faith is a universal gift, glorious for all cultural regions of this earth, irrespective of race, color, language, nationality, or socioeconomic circumstance.*

honest, humble, intelligent, and courageous young man with a heart of gold and an unshaken faith in God. He had integrity. In response to his humble prayer, the heavens opened again. Joseph Smith had actually seen a vision. He knew it, and he knew that God knew it, and he could not deny it (see Joseph Smith—History 1:25).

Through his work and sacrifice, I now have a true understanding of our Heavenly

## IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS

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

1. Sing the hymn “Joseph Smith’s First Prayer” (*Hymns*, no. 26) with the family. Show a picture of the First Vision. Ask the family what they see in the picture. Read the first section of the article, and discuss what President Uchtdorf felt as he looked at the stained-glass window of the First Vision.

2. Have the family look for the truths of the First Vision that President Uchtdorf identifies as you

Father and His Son, our Redeemer and Savior, Jesus Christ, and I can feel the power of the Holy Ghost and know of Heavenly Father’s plan for us, His children. For me, these are truly the fruits of the First Vision.

I am grateful that early in my life I was blessed with a simple faith that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, that he saw God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, in a vision. Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of God. That testimony has been confirmed to me over and over again.

I testify that Jesus Christ truly lives, that He is the Messiah. I do have a personal witness that He is the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind. I received this knowledge by the unspeakable peace and power of the Spirit of God, and the desire of my heart and of my mind is to be pure and faithful in serving Him now and forever. ■

read the last section of the article with the family. Ask the family what they feel are the fruits of the First Vision. Invite family members to share their feelings about Joseph Smith.

3. In preparation for the visit, read Joseph Smith’s account of the First Vision (see Joseph Smith—History 1:11–20). As you tell the story of the First Vision, have younger children draw a picture of the vision. Discuss President Uchtdorf’s statement that “God has spoken to Joseph Smith for the purpose of blessing all of God’s children with His mercy and love.” Have the children explain their drawings.

# Hearing and Heeding the Message from the Grove

MESSAGES FROM THE



DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

BY ELDER F. BURTON HOWARD

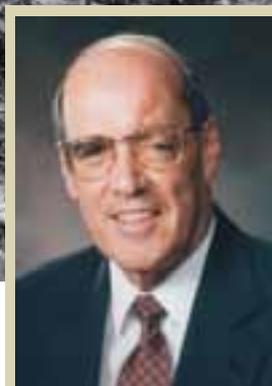
Served as a member of the Seventy from 1978 to 2005

A few years ago as Sister Howard and I were touring the Rochester New York Mission, the mission president asked if we would like to get up early and go to the Sacred Grove before the crowds came. We accepted his invitation.

As we approached the Sacred Grove, we drove a mile or so past the Smith farmhouse. Then, after the mission president had stopped the car, he said, "If you don't mind walking, I

will show you my favorite way into the grove." We walked down a little grass-covered lane on the far side of the grove, and in the distance we could see tall trees. After a while we came to a small sign made of brass with gold letters and a black background. Mounted on two wooden posts, the sign read, "The Sacred Grove." It also contained these incredible words: "God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph Smith in this grove." Period!

I had intended on going into the grove and contemplating what occurred there in 1820, but I found that I could not bring



*Our personal salvation depends upon whether we accept and have a testimony of what Joseph saw and heard in the spring of 1820.*



**T**he small brass sign made one simple statement: “God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph Smith in this grove.”

myself to leave the sign. Its simple message arrested my progress. It did not say “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” or “On the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring.” It didn’t purport to be a historical site. It didn’t even say, “Visitors Welcome.” Rather, it made one simple statement: “God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph Smith in this grove.”

I read it again and again. My wife said, “Don’t you want to go into the grove?” I replied, “I need to think about the message on this sign for a moment longer. Either it is true, or it isn’t. If it is, it is the greatest message in all the world. Even someone who didn’t believe it could not pass by it without being profoundly affected.”

President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988) once said that the Father’s statement—“This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17)—“together with the Prophet’s declaration that ‘the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; [and] the Son also’ . . . (D&C 130:22) clarifies and confirms, for us of this last dispensation, all that has before been revealed and preserved for us about God. . . .

“Upon our acceptance and testimony to the truth of this vision and statement hangs our individual salvation.”<sup>1</sup>

Those are strong words—to think that our personal salvation depends upon whether we accept and have a testimony of what Joseph saw and heard in the spring of 1820. Ultimately, his vision is a test for all of us. That test begins and ends in a grove of trees in upstate New York. Did things really happen as Joseph said they happened? Will we *hear* and *heed* the message from the grove?

### **A Missionary’s Testimony**

As a young missionary, I was appointed to be president of our district of six elders. One day the mission president called and told me he wanted to expand the work. There was a fairly large city in our district that had never had missionaries in it before. He suggested that we go there and hold a street meeting. Having never done that, I asked him what he wanted us to do.

In Uruguay, in those pretelevision days, all cities had a public square with a large park in it. There was a cathedral on one end of the square and municipal buildings on the other end. In the evening people would dress up and go for a stroll in the park.

“I want you to take your district to the park on Friday night,” the mission president

said. “Sing some hymns. When a crowd gathers, I



want one of you to get up on one of the benches and tell the Joseph Smith story. Take the names of any interested persons, and then we will decide whether there is sufficient potential to assign a pair of missionaries to work there permanently.”

Friday came. We boarded the train and went to the city, arriving in the early evening. We went to the park and sang a few hymns we had practiced as a district. Just as the president had promised, a small crowd gathered. Nothing like that had ever happened on their evening walk before.

We sang as long as we could. Finally

one of the elders got up on a bench and began to tell of Joseph's experience in the grove. He told of Joseph's desire to know which church to join, quoted James 1:5, and spoke of how Joseph had decided to ask of God. People actually listened, so the young elder confidently pressed on.

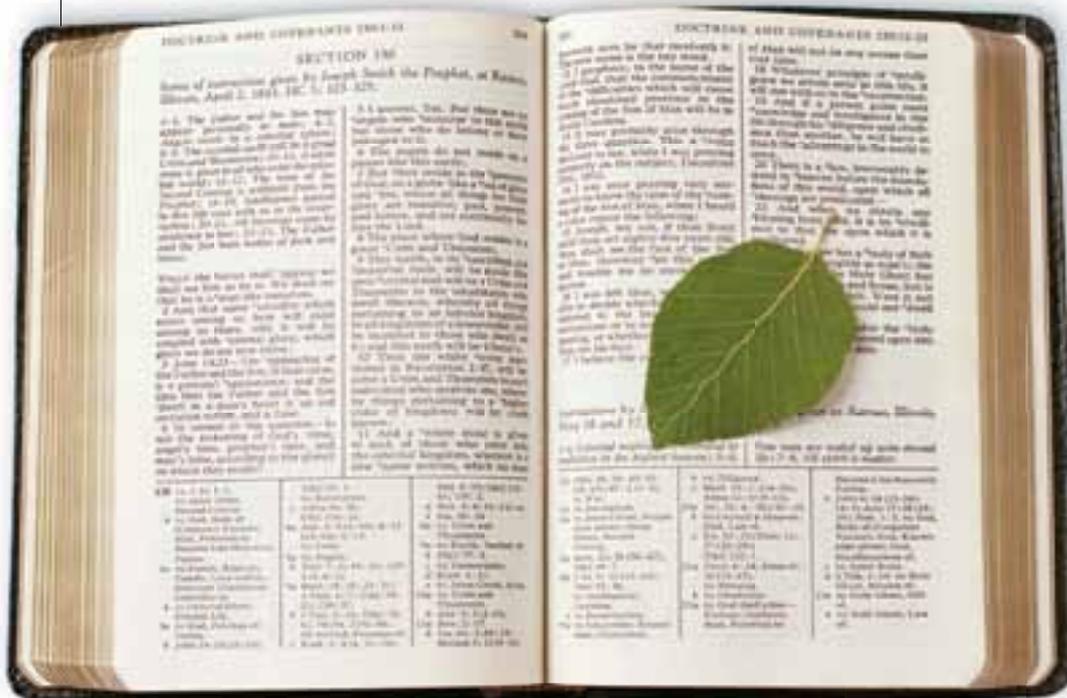
He told how Joseph knelt and began to pray, how a pillar of light descended until it fell upon him, and how he saw two personages, whose brightness and glory defied

***Just as the mission president had promised, a small crowd gathered. Suddenly, however, the script that he had carefully worked out for us abruptly changed.***



ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL MANN

**T**o ensure that I do not forget the things that my eyes have seen and my heart has felt, I keep a leaf from the Sacred Grove in my scriptures.



description. The elder had just gotten to the part where one of Them spoke to Joseph, calling him by name and saying, pointing to the other, “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” Suddenly, however, the script that the mission president had carefully worked out for us abruptly changed.

At the edge of the crowd, in the shadows, a group of teenage boys had gathered and began throwing rocks at us. I was the leader, and I seemed to be the main target, although I’m sure we all felt that way. I had to decide in an instant whether to continue or conclude the meeting. That decision seemed to depend on whether Joseph really went into that grove, whether he really did see a pillar of light, and whether the Father really did say, “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!”

But there was more to consider. Had I really been called by a prophet? Had the mission president really been inspired to ask us to open that town? Were we really on the Lord’s errand? And was knowing all of that worth more than a rock in the eye?

After the Spirit had answered those questions, there didn’t seem to be any honorable alternative. We finished the story. A few small stones found their mark but did no permanent damage. We sang a hymn and closed the meeting. We didn’t convert a soul that night, but we did open the city. Some time later a small branch was organized. A ward prospers there today. None of the members there know of that street meeting held in their city nearly 50 years ago, but I have never been the same. On that night the absolute reality

of what happened in the Sacred Grove was indelibly impressed upon my mind.

### **The First Vision in Our Lives**

If Joseph saw what he claimed to have seen, and I testify that he did, then in sharing his vision he did more than any man who has ever lived to reveal the nature, character, and mission of the Lord Jesus Christ to the world. As a consequence, we Latter-day Saints have some duties and responsibilities.

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) eloquently expressed himself in this regard:

“I read this morning a part of Joseph Smith’s testimony of the First Vision. You are all familiar with it. His going into a grove, pleading with the Lord, a light shining above

him, and then the appearance of the Father and the Son. I read that testimony and thought of it. I said to myself, 'If every one of us knew in our hearts that that statement is true, then we would know that all else which follows it, which came through the restoration of the gospel, is true also.' And we would walk and live with greater faithfulness.

"Tithing would not be a problem with us. Temple service would not be a problem with us. Keeping the Sabbath day holy would not be a problem with us. . . . Missionary service would be no problem with us.

"All else that follows would be true. We would know it in our hearts if we had a solid, firm, immovable conviction of the truth and validity of that great vision wherein God the Eternal Father and the risen Lord Jesus Christ appeared to the boy Joseph Smith and the Father said, 'This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!' "<sup>2</sup>

Because of the First Vision, we do things we would not do otherwise. We teach our children, repent, pray, try to walk uprightly, and keep everlastingly at it—all because of what happened in that grove.

Because of the First Vision, we know that prayer works, that the heavens are not sealed, and that the Father and the Son are separate and distinct beings.

Because of the First Vision, we enjoy the Restoration in all its magnificence and variety.

Because of the First Vision, eight of my great-grandparents crossed the plains in response to President Brigham Young's invitation to gather to Zion, and a great-great-grandfather walked away from a 600-acre farm near what today is Kansas City, Missouri.

Every Latter-day Saint knows the story of the First Vision and, to some degree or

another, has faith in it. But we must take care to connect the events of the Sacred Grove with real life and with present circumstances, or the result will be that the great truths of the Restoration will become something we just talk about and not live.

The challenge for most of us is that, while we believe these things, the events of that day in 1820 are far away and sometimes forgotten. The wear and tear of daily living often overshadow the things we know, and we fail to heed. Without meaning to, we sometimes find ourselves doing or saying things that are inconsistent with the voices from the grove, and Joseph's experience there ceases, for a time, to have what Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) called "operative relevancy" for our lives.<sup>3</sup>

To ensure that I do not forget the things that my eyes have seen and my heart has felt, I carry with me a reminder of the reality of the First Vision. It is a leaf from a 200-year-old beech tree. I found it in the Sacred Grove a few years ago. The tree, as nearly as I can tell, was in the grove on that spring morning in 1820. Perhaps some of the light Joseph saw shone on it and caused it to sink its roots deeper into the rocky soil. I keep the leaf in my scriptures, and every time I open them, the leaf helps remind me of what I know.

May we always remember what we know and most surely believe, and may our lives reverently reflect the reality of these things. ■

*Adapted from a BYU Women's Conference address given April 28, 2005. For the full text, please visit <http://womensconference.byu.edu>.*

#### NOTES

1. *Learning for the Eternities* (1977), 8.
2. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 225–26.
3. *Lord, Increase Our Faith* (1994), 9.



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# The Functional Family

BY JAMES D. MacARTHUR, PhD

Director, Counseling and Career Center, Brigham Young University

I remember being a young parent and reading Doctrine and Covenants 93:40, where the Lord says, “I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth.” I wondered, “Exactly how do I do that?” I had heard a lot of people talk about *dysfunctional* families, but I wanted to raise a functional family. So what exactly is a *functional* family?

People seem to think that family members in functional families get along perfectly and solve problems together perfectly. Of course, the reality is that calling a family “functional” does not mean the family is perfect. All families face challenges in dealing with the unique

personalities of family members. However, in a family that functions well, family members recognize that they have weaknesses, and they work to improve their relationships despite their weaknesses. Indeed, family members will be happier when they strive to apply gospel principles in their lives to improve individual and family relationships.

Through many years of working with couples and families as a professional counselor, I have learned some principles that I believe help families function well. This article discusses just a few of them; you may think of some on your own. As you read through these principles, take a moment to consider how they might apply to your family.

**In the functional family, parents focus their energy on teaching their children correct principles and allowing them to exercise their agency.** As a parent

and grandparent, I put thought and effort into offering as much love, instruction, time, concern, help, guidance, and attention as I can to teach my children and grandchildren correct principles. This includes teaching them that choices have consequences—both good and bad.

Sometimes as parents we slip into the role of a manager seeking to control our children because we expect a desired result. The problem with this approach is that children resist coercion or compulsion, especially as they get older. We will be more effective the less we act as managers and the more we act as coaches, consultants, and guides. That means that we teach our children correct principles and, as their maturity and experience allow, continue to grant them greater latitude to make choices and reap the consequences.

**In the functional family, parents *intentionally* strengthen their families.** This means that you regularly and privately ponder each child's needs and assess them

*What is a functional family? One in which family members work together to improve relationships as they face challenges.*

against the overall needs of the family. Many of us find ourselves constantly reacting to the challenges of life. Busy schedules and the demands of life can make it difficult to actively decide how you want to live and respond to the needs and demands of your family. This means that circumstance, other people, or old habits can end up dictating how you respond to a given situation rather than you deciding how you will act. Needless to say, such reactions often lead to unhappy situations where we don't live up to our best capabilities.

One of the best ways parents can strengthen their families is to establish a specific time each week to discuss how the family is doing. I call it "family discussion time." By establishing family discussion time, you and your spouse commit to regularly reflect on your family's needs.

You also create time to consider the changes you and your family may need to make. If you are a single parent, you can schedule time each week to ponder and pray about your family.

Intentionally focusing on your family also means you think about the impact of what you say or do not say to your children. As parents, you begin sending messages about how you feel about your children from the minute they are born. These messages include your words, actions, and attitudes, whether you mean to or not. All of these messages shape how children come to view themselves.



Examples of unintentional though often harmful messages include ignoring or being impatient with a child. If you are too busy to spend time with your son or daughter, you might be sending the message "You are not very important to me." Now, remember, sometimes you can't help being busy, so don't get too paranoid about this. Just remember it is important to intentionally send positive messages to edify your children and to evaluate now and again what messages you are sending so you can adjust as necessary.

What messages would you like to intentionally send your children? Do you want them to know that you love them and are thinking about them? If you plan ahead, you can often send positive messages even when it seems difficult. For example, suppose you have to leave for

work each day before your children awake. Think how surprised and happy a child would be if you made a little sign on colored paper and taped it to the foot of his or her bed so it was the first thing your child saw upon waking up. The sign could read something like this: “Hi! Daddy loves you! See you at dinner. We’ll play together when I get home!” That kind of positive message can have a lasting and powerful impact for good.

**In the functional family, relationships are of supreme importance.** It is a good idea to regularly examine the condition of *each* relationship in the family. You never know when there might be a specific unmet need that for some reason your children have not shared with you. By listening carefully and being sensitive to the Spirit, you will be more likely to discern how your children are doing and what their needs are.

Of course, that raises a question: when you realize that someone in your family needs some help either in a relationship with you or with someone else, how do you help things improve? One thing I’ve learned is that relationships usually don’t get better accidentally; rather, they improve when we make that result a priority.

Try to invest time in the relationship in obvious ways. Here are some things I’ve tried that may work for you: talk together; play together; spend one-on-one time together; send letters, cards, or notes sharing your affection; give compliments; do something fun and unexpected; say, “I love you”; listen to the other person; ask him or her to help you on a project; share personal feelings. All of these require that you personally get engaged in things the other person is doing. Afterward, talk about your efforts with your spouse during your family discussion time. You might be surprised at how far-reaching your positive influence can be.

**In the functional family, parents are active teachers.** Adam and Eve were excellent examples of parents being good teachers. For example, “Adam and Eve . . . made all things known unto their sons and their daughters” (Moses 5:12). They taught their children gospel principles, such as the plan of salvation and the importance

and blessings of keeping the commandments. We have the same responsibility to teach our children not only life skills but also the gospel. If we leave the spiritual education of our children to chance or to someone else, we take a big risk that they won’t learn the things that will bring them true happiness.

That means we need to consider what we teach and how we teach. For example, when holding family discussion time, you might ask, “What do we want to teach in our family in the next few months? How, when, and where do we want to teach it?” Consider writing the answers down as family goals and posting them prominently so



you remember them. Then follow through with your goals.

What else might you teach? Anything you think your family needs to learn. Some topics include courtesy, honesty, prayer, scripture study, finances and getting out of debt, mutual respect in the family, how to use time effectively, how to manage angry feelings, the importance of education, and the need for all family members to do their share within the home.

Effective teaching also happens outside of a formal or direct teaching setting. Indirect teaching occurs when you teach without using words. In fact, you might not even be present when the “teaching” occurs! For example, I hang pictures that represent characteristics I would like my children to think about, such as a picture of pioneers traveling in a snowstorm to represent not giving up when

things get tough. We also have 29 individual photographs of our grandchildren along the mantle in our living room at home. Although there are no written words with these pictures, this visual presentation gets a lot of comments. People just can't miss them. The pictures send the message that our grandchildren are an important part of our family.

**In the functional family, parents lead by example.** Children are always watching and observing our behavior, whether we know it or not. In my role as a father, I regularly take stock of my behavior by asking myself, "Can I recommend to my children that they follow my example both publicly and privately?" If the answer is no, I make corrections where needed.

Here are some questions I've asked myself:

- Do I want my children to be patient? Yes, so I try to be as patient with them as I can.
- Do I want my children to relax, have fun, and learn to enjoy life? Yes, because I believe these qualities are vital

**T***each your children correct principles by word, by example, and by the Spirit as you bear testimony to them.*

to developing healthy, happy relationships. I try to have fun with my children as often as I can.

- Do I want my children to read the scriptures and wholesome books? Yes, so I make sure they see me reading, and I read to them.
- Do I want my children to care about family relationships? Yes, so I kiss and hug them, smile at them, listen to them, play with them, and share personal experiences with them.

Remember, our children want their parents to set an example of a person who has a clear sense of direction on personal as well as spiritual matters. We as parents need to live worthy of the guidance of the Holy Ghost at all times, especially when things get tough.

**Finally, in the functional family, parents teach**

**their children faith in our Heavenly Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.** This faith will establish a sure and solid foundation for family living that is unequaled in any other way. It is also a commandment from our Heavenly Father. Regarding our duty to our children, King Benjamin taught that "ye will teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to love one another, and to serve one another" (Mosiah 4:15).

Perhaps the most important thing we will do in life will be to teach our family members to have faith in Jesus Christ and His teachings and to keep the commandments. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" states, "Happiness in



family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup> Teach your children correct principles by word, by example, and by the Spirit as you bear your testimony to them.

Remember to be patient with yourself and your family members. Relationships usually improve in stages, not overnight. Strengthening them requires time and effort. However, as you strive to have a functional family based on the teachings of our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and His restored gospel, you will provide your family the best opportunity you can to grow closer together and to face challenges with a greater sense of harmony and happiness. ■

**NOTE**

1. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Liahona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.

*I worried I would never be satisfied with my marriage, until a reflection in the mirror changed my perspective.*

**W**hen I prayed about getting married, I felt a strong assurance that the Lord supported my decision. The day I was married in the temple, I felt peace. However, soon after the wedding, I was overwhelmed with regret. I felt that I had made a mistake and wondered why I had been so confused as to misunderstand the promptings of the Spirit.

Both my doubts and my tendency to criticize my husband increased with time. His background and preferences were different from mine, and I judged him self-righteously. Different expectations led to discord, and my resentment created a large void between us. My husband knew I was unhappy, but he couldn't understand why or what he should do about it. My attempts to explain my feelings were critical and judgmental. In time, my husband grew increasingly silent, which only further frustrated me.

I watched other couples jealously. Newlyweds at church all seemed to be so in love that they could hardly stop gazing at each other. I watched more mature couples complete each other's sentences and share private jokes in just a glance. I wondered why the Lord had allowed me to make eternal covenants in a relationship that would always be void of such intimacies. I felt I would never know the love that other couples shared.

For several years I struggled to understand why I had felt so confident that the Lord had confirmed my decision to marry when obviously it had been a mistake. I felt abandoned by the Lord. I prayed for help in understanding and improving the quality of my marriage, but I felt no improvement. I thought about divorce but could not find any comfort as I considered the option. After our first child was born, I felt that I would be forever trapped.

One morning I was doing laundry when I caught a

glance of myself in a mirror. The reflection surprised me. I had not showered or groomed for the day, and as I looked at myself, I thought I was lucky that anyone would *want* to wake up next to me every day. For the first time, I found myself feeling grateful to my husband for loving me. I examined myself with new eyes and thought about our marriage from his perspective. The revelation that followed had little to do with bad hair and no makeup but much to do with my behavior. I considered all the contention I had introduced into our home. For the first time, I felt real gratitude for my husband—he had continued to love me even though I had been critical and ungrateful.

# A Reflection ON GRATITUDE

BY MICHELLE VAN TASSELL

That simple moment changed my perspective as well as my relationship with my husband. Now, years later, we share the intimacies I once coveted in other marriages. My husband and I still retain our different backgrounds and our own preferences and mannerisms, but I stopped dwelling on issues I couldn't change. The peace of the Spirit has returned to our home, and I am grateful for the witness I received to marry my husband.

When I look back at those early years of our marriage, I am sickened by the damage I did and the divorce I contemplated. A reflection in the mirror opened my heart to the promptings of the Spirit and helped me to develop a perspective of gratitude that has completely transformed my marriage and my relationship with my children.

Recently I had dinner with a group of friends whose lives are more glamorous than mine.

Hearing about their travels, shopping, and salon treatments left me wondering if I was truly satisfied. But upon returning home, I stood in the doorway and listened to laughter from the basement, where my husband and children were playing happily. The quiet voice of the Spirit touched me again, and I was overwhelmed with gratitude for my family. All I could think was how lucky I was to have each one of them.

I am grateful for the lesson of gratitude I learned years ago in front of a mirror and continue to learn as I yield to the Spirit. I love my husband and our children and cherish our time together. And I am grateful for my decision to marry my husband and for the blessings of the temple that seal us for eternity. ■

ILLUSTRATION BY DILEEN MARSH



# Helping New Converts

BY SUSAN W. TANNER

Served as Young Women general president from 2002 to 2008



*We are all engaged in the process of retaining new members. It is the ongoing process of conversion—of turning and constantly returning to the Lord.*

When I visited southern Brazil some time ago, my husband accompanied me. This was the area where he served his mission. One evening when we arrived at a meeting, we were greeted at the door by a young mother who introduced herself as my interpreter for the meeting. She excitedly turned to my husband and said, “Elder Tanner, you are the one who brought the gospel to my family many years ago. I was just a toddler at the time, but I grew up hearing your name associated with the first baptisms in our family.” Then she told us about each family member’s faithfulness in the Church through the years. What a touching reunion this was!

During the meeting, as my husband looked out at the audience, he saw others dotting the congregation to whom he had taught the gospel and who had remained faithful. When he bore his testimony, my husband expressed his joy to know of their continued faithfulness. He

said he was reminded of the Book of Mormon story in which Alma met his dear friends, the sons of Mosiah, as he was journeying:

“Now these sons of Mosiah were with Alma at the time the angel first appeared unto him; therefore Alma did rejoice exceedingly to see his brethren; and what added more to his joy, *they were still his brethren in the Lord*” (Alma 17:2; emphasis added).

That night in Brazil, my husband likewise met dear friends from the past who “were still his brethren [and sisters] in the Lord.”

This is the desire of every faithful missionary: that new converts stay in the Church and “[wax] strong in the knowledge of the truth” (Alma 17:2). This is the desire of every faithful parent: that their children stay true to the faith. This is also the desire of Church leaders for the members under their care, and it is the heartfelt desire of our Father in Heaven for His children (see Moses 1:39).

## Seeking Those Who Stray

I am touched by how frequently the Lord expresses His love for His people, even if they stray—maybe especially when they stray. Think of the parables the Savior gives about lost things: sheep, coins, a prodigal son (see Luke 15). The shepherd goes out after the lost sheep; the woman diligently searches her house for the lost silver; the father runs out to his wayward son while he is “yet a great way off . . . and [falls] on his neck,



# STAY STRONG



**N***ew members and straying members need our help. They need a friend, a responsibility, and spiritual nourishing.*

and [kisses] him” (Luke 15:20). Likewise, in the parable of the olive tree we glimpse the Lord’s longsuffering love for those who stray (see Jacob 5). Again and again, the Lord of the vineyard laments, “It grieveth me that I should lose this tree” (Jacob 5:7, 11, 13, 32). Throughout the book of Isaiah, the Lord reassures Israel that He cannot forget them: “Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands” (Isaiah 49:16). In the book of Ezekiel the Lord says, “I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken” (Ezekiel 34:16).

When we engage in the work of retention and reactivation, we become agents with the Lord in the loving work of seeking our brothers and sisters who might be as the lost sheep, the lost coin, or the prodigal son.

### **Entering a New World**

The way can also be perilous for those who are new to the Church as they try to adjust to this mighty change in their lives. One new member described this difficult change. She said: “When we as investigators become members of the Church, we are surprised to discover that we have entered into a completely foreign world, a world that has its own traditions, culture, and language. We discover that there is no one person or no one place of reference that we can turn to for guidance in our trip into this new world.”<sup>1</sup>

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) repeatedly taught that both our new members and our straying members need our help. They need a friend, a responsibility, and spiritual nourishing, as taught in the book of Moroni: “After they had been received unto baptism, . . . they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way” (Moroni 6:4).

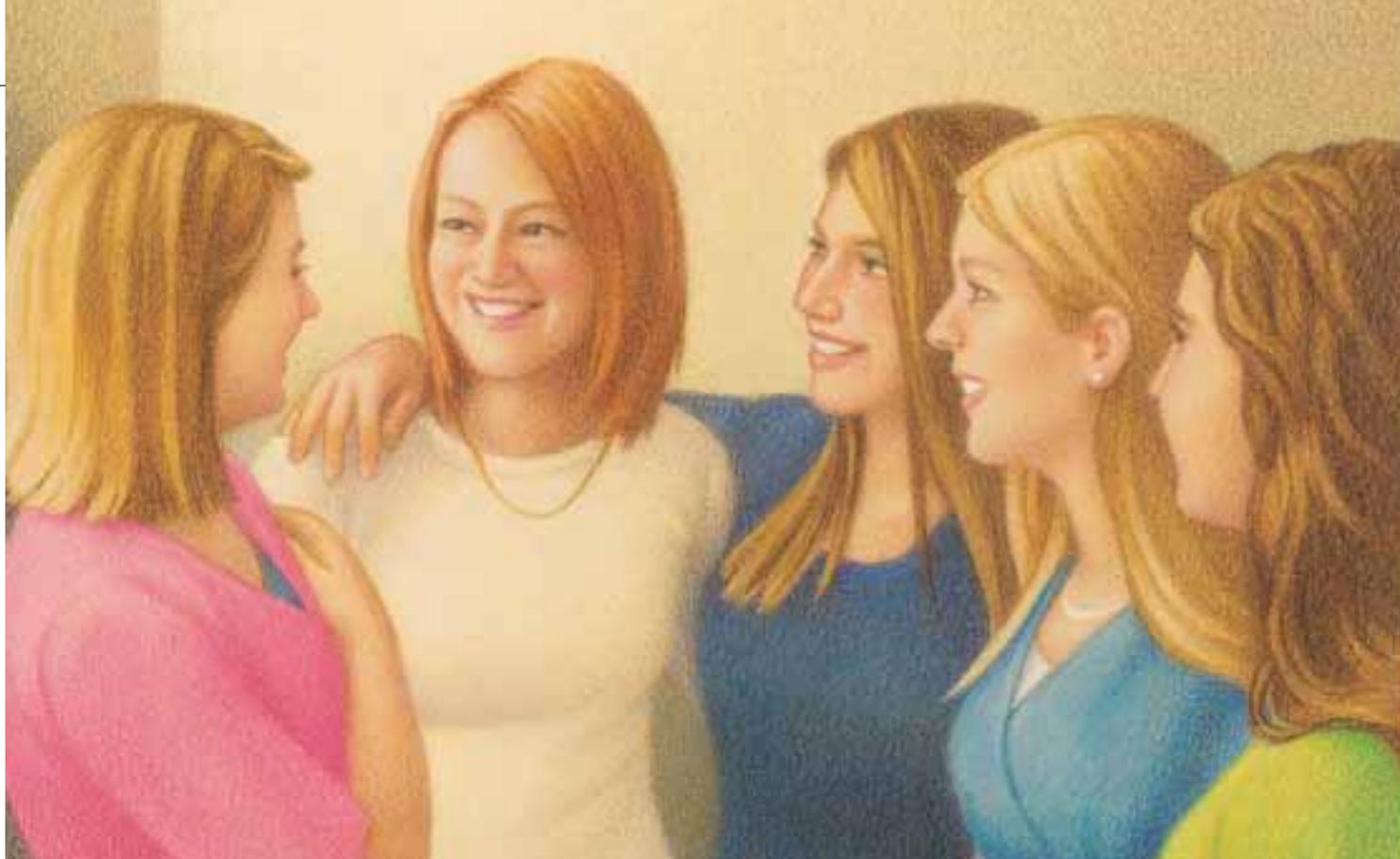
During that same trip to Brazil I visited many young women in their homes, desiring to “remember and nourish” them. Some were completely valiant in their testimonies, while others were no longer active in the Church. In each case I asked them if they could recite the Young Women theme. Each one could! Then I asked each one which Young Women value meant the most to her and why. As each girl answered me I felt the Spirit and found at least a spark of faith still alive in those who were no longer attending church. I knew that if someone would remember each of them and love them and nourish that little spark of faith, their light could burn bright again.

### **Personal Responsibility**

To nourish by the good word of God implies that we are attentive to others’ spiritual growth and well-being, just as we nourish our physical bodies. While parents, leaders, and friends should help in this process, new converts, inquiring youths, and struggling members have a personal responsibility to help themselves also. This happens best through personal gospel study.

I remember well the summer I graduated from high school. It was a tumultuous time for me spiritually, a time when I was finding





my way in the gospel, as are many new converts. My antidote for these problems was diligent reading and studying of the Book of Mormon every day, often for extended periods of time. I still remember some of those Spirit-filled times. This was a foundational period for the nourishing and growth of my testimony.

In addition to remembering and nourishing those who are lost or straying, we need to allow them the opportunity to serve. The Savior admonished the Apostle Peter, “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32). Church callings give members the opportunity to strengthen others and in that very service grow within themselves as well.

When my children were teenagers and they sometimes did not want to attend Mutual or other meetings, I talked to them about their responsibility. I said that we don’t always go to a meeting for what we can get out of it, but for what we can give. I said often, “You need the Church, and the Church needs you.” New converts and less-active members need to feel needed because they *are* needed.

### **A Work for All**

We are all engaged in the process of retention. It is the ongoing process of conversion—of turning and constantly

returning to the Lord. Alma refers to it as a mighty change (see Alma 5:14). Conversion is the work we are about, whether we labor with investigators, youth, less-active members, or even active members. We should all be engaged in helping in the Lord’s work, to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of His children (see Moses 1:39).

My husband wrote in his missionary journal: “Conversion is the greatest miracle. It is even more wonderful than healing the sick or raising the dead. For while a person who is healed will eventually fall sick again and ultimately die, the miracle of conversion can last forever and affect the eternities for the convert as well as for his or her posterity. Whole generations are healed and redeemed from death through the miracle of conversion.”

Let us join the Lord in seeking that which was lost, bringing again that which was driven away, and binding up that which was broken. Then, in that great day of the Lord, we may rejoice as my husband did, finding that those we have loved in the gospel are still our brothers and sisters in the Lord. ■

### **NOTE**

1. Quoted in Gordon B. Hinckley, “Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep,” *Liahona*, July 1999, 122; *Ensign*, May 1999, 108.

# Succeeding as a New Convert

BY GAYLE S. ILIFF

*As we reach out to others in friendship, engage in service, and feast upon the scriptures, our confidence will wax strong.*

The winter morning that I first attended The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was unusually bright and crisp. As I approached the meetinghouse, I had no idea how joining the Church would change my life. Fortunately, there are things converts like me can do to become strong in the gospel. We need to cultivate friendships, serve in the Church, and “feast upon the words of Christ” (2 Nephi 32:3).

## **Cultivating Friendships**

All members of the Church, especially new converts, need friends to help them along. Here are some ways that developing friendships can make a difference.

Members can reach out to converts. Prior to my baptism, a kind sister walked from the farthest end of the meetinghouse simply because she wanted to meet me. I was touched that she went out of her way to help me feel so valued. Many others acted similarly. As converts realize how much the members of the Church love them, their own hearts will be filled with love.

Teachers in Church classes care about us too. My Gospel Essentials teacher was a great source of inspiration to me. Often I felt as though the Savior were speaking directly to me through these lessons, uplifting me and encouraging me to press forward.

Likewise, home and visiting teachers watch over and bless the members of the Church. Welcome them into your



## CARING FOR CONVERTS

*“Every [convert] needs three things: a friend, a responsibility, and nurturing with ‘the good word of God’” (Moroni 6:4).*

**President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “Converts and Young Men,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 47.**



home, and express gratitude to them and to the Lord for their service. As Elder David B. Haight (1906–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, “Gratitude . . . can bless our hearts and our minds and our souls to where we’d like to continue to carry on and do those things that we are asked to do.”<sup>1</sup>

Converts will be blessed when they, too, reach out to others. One day I bought a greeting card with a picture of a giant eyeball on its cover. Inside it said, “Thanks for keeping an eye on me!” I sent the card to a sister in the ward who had been friendly to me. As I did so, I felt a warm feeling of Christian love for her.

Finally, we need to strengthen our relationships with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. This will happen as we serve others, express gratitude, and pray. The Spirit will confirm that we are worthy of the great sacrifice the Savior made for us.

### Serving in the Church

Usually at some point soon after baptism, new members will be asked to take on a greater role in serving in their ward or branch. The bishop or branch president will issue a calling. This can be a difficult time for some.

When I accepted the first calling I received—Relief Society secretary—I wondered, “How could I be given such an important responsibility?” President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, explained how: “There will be times when you will feel overwhelmed. One of the ways you will be attacked is with the feeling that you are inadequate. . . . But you have access to more than your natural capacities, and you do not work alone.”<sup>2</sup>

Sometime later, the Relief Society president commented that the suggestions I had made at a presidency meeting showed that I was inspired. Confused, I replied, “I am?”

She kindly reassured me that I was responding to the Spirit. Recognizing the hand of God guiding the work we do is not

easy at first, but as we keep the commandments and work diligently, we will recognize that He magnifies those whom He calls.

### Feasting upon the Words of Christ

Perhaps the best way to discover that the Lord loves us and will sustain us is through studying the scriptures. The scriptures teach that the Lord invites “all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him” (2 Nephi 26:33).

Some new members might marvel at the knowledge and testimony of others. But remember, the Lord’s way of teaching is “line upon line, precept upon precept” (2 Nephi 28:30). Each of us has to learn as we go. Even Jesus “received not of the fulness at the first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness; and thus he was called the Son of God, because he received not of the fulness at the first” (D&C 93:13–14).

That knowledge has deepened my reverence and respect for Him. He truly knows the pain, temptation, adversity, and loneliness I have experienced (see Alma 7:11). I can turn to Him with complete confidence. The scriptures teach that the Savior’s love, understanding, and compassion for us, wherever we may be, are perfect and boundless.

As we reach out to others in friendship, engage in service, and feast upon the scriptures, our confidence will wax strong and we will become the faithful Latter-day Saints that we desire to be. ■

### NOTES

1. David B. Haight, “Were There Not 10 Cleansed?” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 26.
2. Henry B. Eyring, “Rise to Your Call,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 76.

A woman with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a light-colored shirt, is shown in profile from the chest up, looking towards a large, arched stained-glass window. The window is filled with colorful, abstract patterns and is set within a high, vaulted Gothic-style ceiling. The lighting is warm and golden, suggesting sunlight streaming through the window. The overall mood is contemplative and spiritual.

# A Penetrating Light

BY MICHELLE BOWDEN

**B**rought up in an atheist home, I was taught about God only in assemblies and religious education classes at school. Yet even at a young age, I was affected by the Bible stories I learned and the hymns I sang. I wanted to know if the things I'd learned about God were true, but I had no one to ask.

The answer came on a wet, dark day in 1970 when I was nine years old. My mum, aunt, uncle, and I were visiting the city of Norwich in eastern England. The highlight of this trip was the magnificent old cathedral. I was impressed with its sheer size and splendor, but what really caught my attention was a tall stained-glass window. Sadly, on such an overcast day, the lack of light meant the colors were rather dull.

My thoughts turned to God: Did He live? Was He real? There were so many questions to which I was eager to know the answers. Gradually, the colors of the stained-glass window became more vivid. A shaft of sunlight had broken through the clouds and was shining through the window. The light also seemed to penetrate my heart, filling every part of me with a warm and comfortable feeling. I had never felt anything so intensely wonderful and joyful. In the midst of this I had the assurance that God did indeed live and that He loved me.

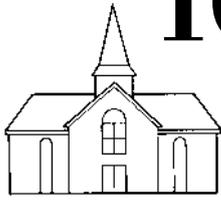
Four years later I read a magazine article in which a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints explained some of his religious beliefs. I felt the same warm, comforting feeling I had felt at Norwich Cathedral. It encompassed me and seemed to fill me with light. I was again assured of God's reality and of His love for me, and—this was the crucial part—I was assured that the things I was reading were true.

In learning about the gospel, I came to understand that what I had experienced was the influence of the Holy Ghost. My mother granted permission for me to receive the missionary discussions and be baptized. My baptism took place June 27, 1975, at the Hyde Park Chapel in London, and I became a member of the Hayes Ward, London England North Stake.

Now, more than 30 years later, I can still recall my experience in the Norwich Cathedral with the same intensity as when it happened. As a result, the Savior's words "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12) have a deep and personal meaning for me.

Above all, I still feel the gratitude to my Heavenly Father and Savior because I know from my own experiences that everyone—regardless of age, circumstance, or location—is known and loved. The light of which the Savior spoke has the power to penetrate our minds, our hearts, and ultimately our lives (see D&C 88:7–13). ■

# Teaching in the Nursery, Teaching at Home



*Many things make the new Primary nursery manual special, including activities to help nursery-age children learn gospel truths through seeing, hearing, and doing.*

**BY MARGARET S. LIFFERTH**  
First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency

**C**harlie, at 20 months of age, eagerly responds to gospel learning at home. He can point to a picture of the Savior and say, “Jesus.” However, when he attends the Primary nursery class, where he also learns about Jesus, he is still a little shy.

Sam is almost three and is comfortable in the nursery. He has learned a variety of Primary songs in class and likes to sing them during family home evening. In fact, when his grandmother sang with him, she was surprised that Sam could sing at least a dozen songs from memory.

Both Charlie and Sam are participating in their first organized Church experience—the nursery class. Here children age 18 months to three years expand their gospel learning. The new Primary nursery manual, *Behold Your Little Ones*, is a wonderful resource for both teachers in the nursery and parents in the home to teach children basic gospel truths.

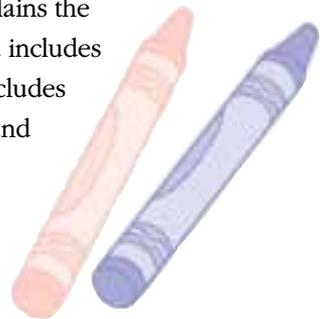
## **A Flexible Teaching Tool**

Children of this age can begin to understand simple, yet profound, gospel principles such as the reality and love of Heavenly Father and Jesus, the love of family, the strength of prayer, the truth of the First

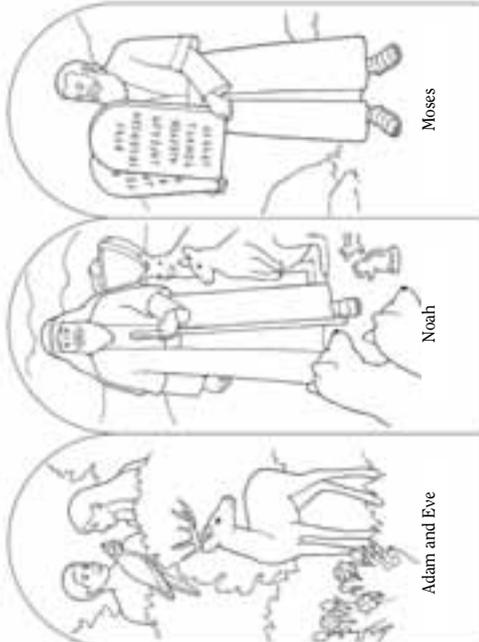
Vision, and the beauty of God’s creations.

They are active, need love and affection, have short attention spans, are acquiring language skills, and enjoy a variety of activities. They are always learning. President Thomas S. Monson has quoted a prominent medical authority who said “that the most receptive age in human life is that of two or three years.”<sup>1</sup>

During the class time, the children enjoy music activities, play time, snack time, and a lesson in which they are taught the basic doctrines of the gospel. The lessons in the new nursery manual are designed to be flexible and meet the needs of this age group. Each lesson begins with an introduction for the teacher. It briefly explains the doctrine to be taught and includes scripture references. It includes teaching tips so parents and teachers will know what to expect from nursery-age children and how to adapt the teaching experience to meet the children’s needs. The lessons also include a variety of learning activities that help children hear the doctrine, see something related to







**Teachers in the nursery and parents at home can use Behold Your Little Ones to teach children basic gospel truths.**

**Each lesson includes two pages of visuals to reinforce the doctrine taught in the lesson.**



# 2

## HEAVENLY FATHER HAS A PLAN FOR ME

### INTRODUCTION FOR THE TEACHER

To prepare yourself spiritually to teach this lesson, please read and ponder the following:  
 We lived with Heavenly Father as spirits before we were born. Heavenly Father prepared a plan that allows us to come to earth and receive physical bodies in order to become like Him and return to His presence. This is made possible through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and our obedience. Jesus Christ was chosen to be our Savior. (See Abraham 3:24–27; Articles of Faith 1:3.)

### PREPARATION

Mark page 98 in this manual so that you can turn to it easily.

### LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Begin with a gathering activity. For ideas, see page 3.

**Prayer** Invite a child to give the opening prayer.

**Sing a Story** Use “I Am a Child of God” (*Children’s Songbook*, 2–3) to teach the children some basic details about the plan of salvation. The following outline is a suggestion:

Tell the children that we all lived with Heavenly Father before we were born.

Sing or say (invite children to join you):

I am a child of God,  
 And he has sent me here.

Tell the children that Heavenly Father has a plan for us. He told us we would come to earth to live. We were so happy that we shouted for joy. Invite the children to say, “Hooray!”

Show the picture of a family on page 14. Tell the children that we came to earth to live with a family who loves us. Invite the children to cross their arms and hug themselves.

Sing or say:

Has given me an earthly home  
 With parents kind and dear.

Tell the children that while we are on earth, Heavenly Father wants us to be happy and follow His commandments.

Sing or say:

Lead me, guide me, walk beside me,  
 Help me find the way.

Show the picture of Jesus Christ on page 98. Tell the children that Heavenly Father chose Jesus Christ to help us return to Him. Explain that because of Jesus, we can live with Heavenly Father and with our families forever if we keep the commandments.

Sing or say:

Teach me all that I must do  
 To live with him someday.



### TEACHING TIPS

**Preparation:** Prepare pictures, illustrations, and other materials before nursery begins. This will allow you to focus your attention on the children.

**Learning activities:** To engage the children and help them focus on the lesson, gather them close around you. If possible, kneel or sit so that you can look into their eyes. Hold the pictures close to them.

the doctrine, sing a song, do a physical activity, and say something related to the doctrine.

The nursery leader or parent, as guided by inspiration, can teach the lessons in any order. To reinforce learning, lessons and activities can be repeated in consecutive weeks or repeated twice during one nursery class depending on the needs and interests of the children.

The optional activities listed can be used any time and any number of times during the nursery class. All visual aids and activities are included in the manual.

### Testimonies of Success

As the nursery manual was being developed, nursery leaders in Primaries all over the world tested the lessons. They offered many good suggestions that were incorporated into the manual.

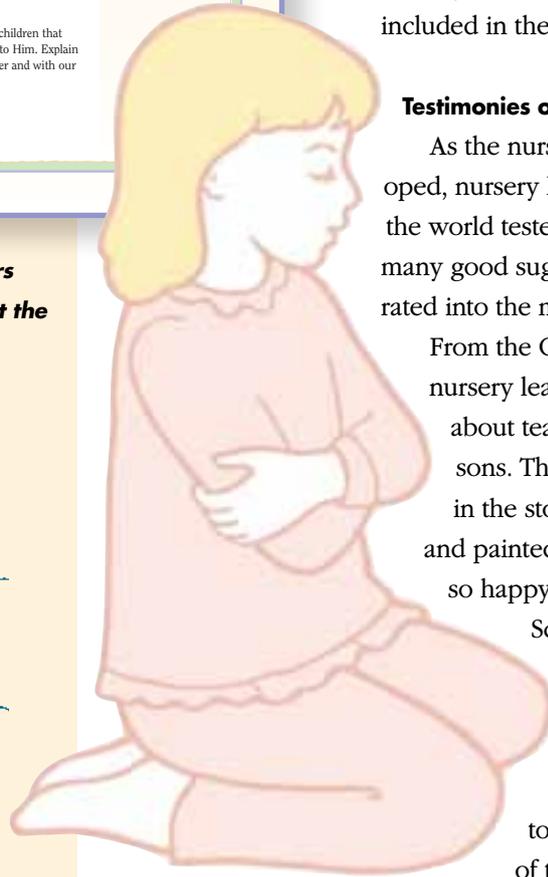
From the Cape Coast Ghana Stake, one nursery leader wrote, “I learned a lot about teaching while testing the lessons. The children were interested in the stories, answered questions, and painted the pictures. They were so happy.” A Primary leader from

Scranton, Pennsylvania, USA, wrote: “We have a small branch, and we don’t always have a teacher.

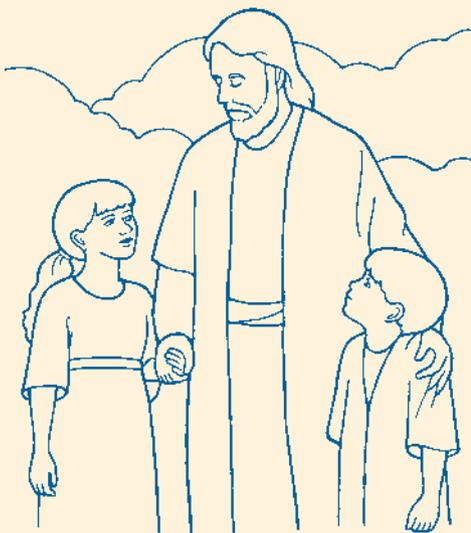
These lessons can be put together in a very short amount of time and still be effective for the children.”

In the Caracas Venezuela Los Teques Stake, one leader appreciated the fact that the lessons leave room for the teacher to use them as guided by the Spirit.

“The children loved the finger puppets,”



**Teaching tips help parents and teachers know how to adapt the lesson to meet the children’s needs.**



wrote a leader from West Jordan, Utah. “I gave the children a chance to tell me a story using their own puppets. They did so well that I believe they could do it on their own for family home evening.” She added, “The teaching tips were also a great help to me.”

### For Parents and Nursery Leaders

It is a privilege for parents or Primary leaders to be entrusted with the care and teaching of nursery-age children. These children are capable and full of faith. They are quick to believe, eager to learn, and happy to participate in activities. They thrive in an atmosphere of love and the light of the gospel.

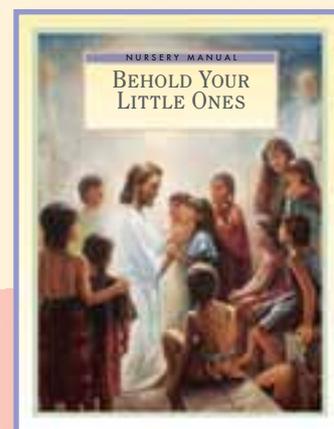
The new Primary nursery manual, when used with inspiration and testimony, will help parents and Primary leaders worldwide teach young children, such as Charlie and Sam, the gospel of Jesus Christ. ■

#### NOTE

1. Glenn J. Doman, quoted in Thomas S. Monson, “Constant Truths for Changing Times,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2005, 19.



**Nursery-age children thrive in an atmosphere of love and the light of the gospel.**

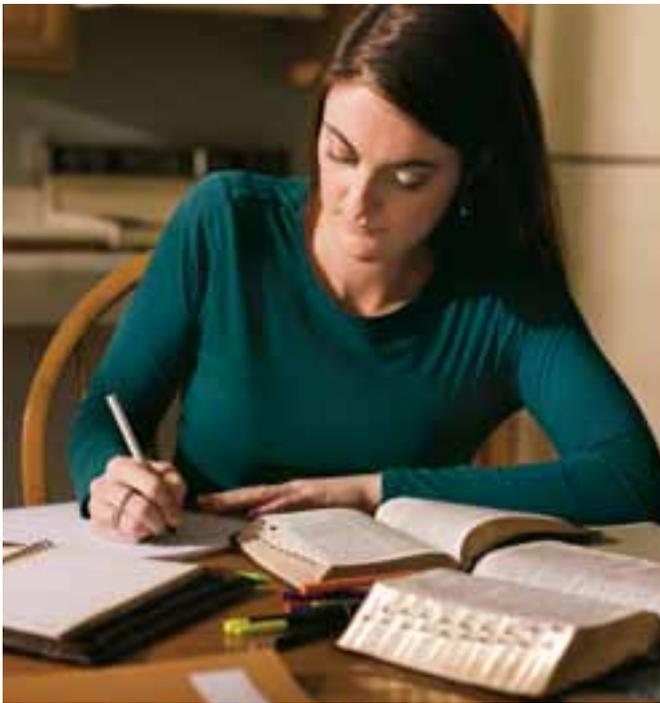


### BEHOLD YOUR LITTLE ONES

Parents can purchase the manual (item no. 37108) to use in family home evening and to learn more about how best to teach young children.



# Getting the Most out of Your Scripture Study



BY DAVID B. MARSH  
Church Curriculum Department

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) once encouraged us to read the scriptures by saying, “If I were a bishop or stake president today, what would I do? . . . I would encourage my people to read the scriptures, to read the Book of Mormon, to read the New Testament. I would urge them with all the capacity I have to read quietly and thoughtfully and introspectively.”<sup>1</sup> Hoping that we would gain a love of the scriptures, he also said, “I hope that for you this will become something far more enjoyable than a duty; that, rather, it will become a love affair with the word of God.”<sup>2</sup>

## Practice and Patience

When I first heard of the importance of studying the scriptures, I didn’t really know how to study. I remember watching others find uplifting insights in the scriptures while I struggled to understand what I was reading. I labored just to get used to the language of the scriptures. I felt inadequate and found myself dependent on others for scriptural insights. During those initial efforts I could not always count on my daily study session to be a spiritual success. However, I received great comfort and the courage to persevere in my personal scripture study when I came across this insight from President Henry B. Eyring, given when he served as Church Commissioner of Education: “That first exposure to the scriptures is going to be hard. . . . It may



**W**hen we learn to use a few simple scripture study skills we improve our ability to discover uplifting insights, receive personal revelation, and draw closer to the Lord.

36 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

37 And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.

38 And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.

39 ¶ Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

36a To God, Justice of  
b 2 No. 31:7 (7-10)  
c To Agency  
d To Holy Ghost, Source  
e of Testimony.  
f To Witnesses.  
36d D&C 39: 41-44; 27:42-  
49.  
36e John 3: 13:17-15, 19.  
36f 1st John 5: 31 And he

h To Light.  
36a 1st John 5: 37 But I  
have a greater witness  
than the testimony of  
John.  
h OR the greater witness  
that  
i To Light of  
d To Light of John 10:

logi Scrip  
Study,  
b TG Scrip  
Testimon  
400 D&C 6  
41a John  
42a To G  
43a To J  
ity

41 And Jesus went up into  
Tiberias.

2 And a great multitude of  
him, because they saw his  
works which he did on them  
diseased.

3 And Jesus went up into

CHLA  
Jews feedeth  
walketh on the  
morn and  
gained by eating bread  
men put the flesh and drink  
Jesus—Peter testifies that Jesus  
Messiah.

47 But if ye be  
ings, how shall ye



## HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

1. Read the article. Prepare 12 pieces of paper with the seven suggestions and the five scriptures listed in the first sentence of the section “Many Ways to Study.” Place these pieces of paper face-side down. Have each family member select a piece of paper and discuss the suggestion or the scripture.

2. Begin by reading the section “Practice and Patience” with the family. Select a short chapter of scripture to study together using the suggestions from the section “Many Ways to Study.” If young children are involved, suggest they draw a picture of the scripture. Discuss how different study methods can give different insights and inspiration.

closer to the Lord.

### Many Ways to Study

The Savior and His servants have encouraged us to read, seek, search, ponder, study, feast upon, and treasure up His words (see Isaiah 34:16; John 5:39; 2 Nephi 31:20; 3 Nephi 17:3; and D&C 11:22). The number and variety of invitations suggest that there are different ways to study the scriptures. My own experience confirms this. Sometimes I like to read from cover to cover. At other times I search for answers to per-

sonal questions or challenges. Often I study topics listed in the Topical Guide or Guide to the Scriptures. I also enjoy researching how the Lord uses a specific word throughout the scriptures. When I am really serious, I mark phrases, underline words, or write notes in the margins of my scriptures. Occasionally, I relish in learning the Greek, Hebrew, or dictionary definitions of scriptural words. There are even times when I rush home on Sundays after church to open the scriptures, anxious to verify something taught in a lesson. One thing is certain: there is no one right way to study the scriptures.

While there is no one right way to study the scriptures, there are certain skills that can help us get the most out of our scripture study. Like a cook who uses specific skills to prepare delicious meals, so an able student of the scriptures uses specific study skills to prepare delicious scriptural feasts to feed the soul. The more we master these skills, the more satisfying our scripture study will become. ■

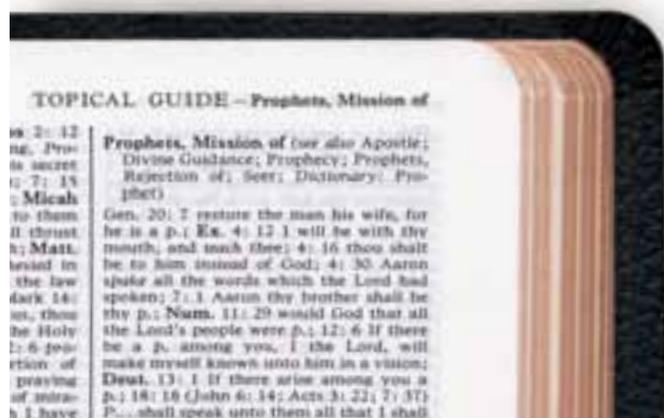
### NOTES

1. “Messages of Inspiration from President Hinckley,” *Church News*, Apr. 5, 1997.
2. More recently, President Hinckley encouraged the young women of the Church to read specific books in the scriptures (see “Let Virtue Garnish Thy Thoughts Unceasingly,” *Ensign*, May 2007, 116).
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Light within You,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 99.
4. Henry B. Eyring, address to Church Educational System area directors, Apr. 6, 1981.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, May 1995, 99.

be tough . . . because [you] won’t get great insights right away.”<sup>3</sup>

While my first experiences were not as successful as I had hoped, over time and with more practice, the number of uplifting discoveries and the moments of personal revelation occurred more frequently, even daily. I experienced what President Hinckley described when he said, “As you read, your minds will be enlightened and your spirits will be lifted. At first it may seem tedious, but that will change into a wondrous experience with thoughts and words of things divine.”<sup>4</sup>

It is my conviction that one of the most powerful influences in the world is the word of God and when the Lord’s words are learned and taught in the right spirit our lives are changed forever. I am equally certain that when we learn to use a few simple scripture study skills we improve our ability to discover uplifting insights, receive personal revelation, and draw



**Often I study topics listed in the Topical Guide or Guide to the Scriptures. I also enjoy researching how the Lord uses a specific word throughout the scriptures.**



# RUNNING

*to Him*

BY MARCY ZABRISKIE

**Y**ears ago my son Derek competed in a much-anticipated track meet. For three years of his young life, he had prepared for and hoped to win the two-mile race. Now as we watched with the crowd gathered near the finish line, it seemed the race would last forever. When Derek crossed the line first, the crowd burst into cheers. He was surrounded by coaches, teammates, and friends offering congratulations. Derek seemed relieved and thrilled to have finally accomplished his goal.

I noticed, however, that in the tangle of the crowd, he was frantically scanning the field as though he wanted to be somewhere else. I watched, with tears in my eyes, as Derek bolted across the field, arms outstretched, into the open arms of his father—the place he wanted to be. I recorded that moment in my mind—a moment when I saw just how much our son loves and needs his dad.

Derek's preparation for this event had not been easy. There were times of discouragement, disappointment, and sometimes despair. But Derek had the constant support of his greatest fan—his father! In rain, wind, sleet, or snow my husband was at every race offering Derek encouragement.

At those races my husband stood apart from the other spectators at what I considered an odd place. He wasn't at the finish line or even along the final

stretch, but at a distant corner on the far side of the field. Once I asked him why he stood there. I will never forget his answer. He said, "I stand at the place my son needs me the most. He needs to know I'm there at the most challenging moment—when his legs burn and he feels like he cannot go on. He needs to hear at that far corner a voice telling him to keep moving because he has worked hard and deserves to do his very best. There will be cheers at the beginning and loving support at the end, but I will be at the corner where I know he feels like giving up."

As I watched Derek leave his team at the finish line and run a great distance into his father's arms, I realized that spiritual whispers of encouragement from my Father in Heaven have not come at moments in my life when I felt most sure of myself. Instead, those reminders of His love have come when I thought I could go no farther, when I felt as if my spiritual legs would collapse in exhaustion. I have felt His love and I have known then, as I know now, that I am His child. As I remember my husband's arms encircling our son, I imagine what it will be like to cross the finish line of this life and run into the waiting arms of our Father in Heaven. I am grateful for His support and that of our Savior, Jesus Christ, which has helped ease every difficult turn in my life. ■



*Many families know what joy adoption can bring as they welcome a new son or daughter. But what about those on the other side of adoption—the giving side? Here, four people (none of them connected) share their stories.*

# The Gift of ADOPTION

## BIRTH MOTHER NAME WITHHELD

When I was 16, I spent a lot of time seeking the attention and affection of boys, and of one in particular. By my 17th birthday, I was pregnant.

I had been raised by righteous parents who were steadfast in the gospel. They taught my siblings and me to make correct choices, but I wanted to try something new and different. I consciously made several decisions I knew weren't right because I wanted to do things my own way.

When my parents learned that I was pregnant, they were shocked and disappointed by my behavior and broken-hearted at the result. I was scared and confused, but I wasn't as worried as my parents seemed to be. After all, I loved babies and had always wanted children. I decided I would just marry my boyfriend and have a little family.

My parents wanted me to talk to counselors at LDS Family Services. I didn't want to go—I was certain that they would just tell me to place my baby for adoption, which was the last thing I wanted to do. But my parents insisted I attend a counseling session, and there was no room for argument.

When I first met my caseworker, Sherri, I laid out my plan to her. I told her up front that I wouldn't give up my baby and that she couldn't make me. She won my affection quickly when she said she just wanted to talk to me and help me make a good life for my baby and myself. Sherri

offered education about teen parenting and more. I learned I could trust her.

I started attending weekly classes with other girls in my situation and their parents. We met to talk about our fears, expectations, and hopes. Some of the girls were going to raise their babies, some were placing them for adoption, and some were still undecided.

When I first met my caseworker, Sherri, I laid out my plan to her. I told her up front that I wouldn't give up my baby and that she couldn't make me.

Part of the class was spent with our parents present, but part of the session included just us girls. We needed each other more than we realized. Those times of confiding in each other were invaluable—even our best friends didn't know what it was like to be unmarried and pregnant. These group meetings helped me to not feel so alone.

I continued to meet privately with Sherri, as did my boyfriend. She encouraged both of us to pray about *all* of our options. Had she asked me to do this earlier, I might have refused, but by this point, I had learned that I could trust her. I was also realizing how inadequately prepared I was for parenthood. My boyfriend and I agreed to pray about what to do.

At that point, my life changed. I received such a direct answer to my prayer that there was no doubt in my mind about what we were supposed to do. When I talked with my boyfriend, I found out that his heart had also been touched. We knew that this baby was supposed to go to another family. That confirmation helped us stick to our decision when we felt caught between seemingly endless advice from family and friends and our own feelings and desires.

To say that I cried would be to put it mildly. My heart was full and broken at the same time. How could I feel such peace in a decision that brought so much pain? I later realized that I had brought much heartache and pain into my life and the lives of those intertwined with mine because I had let selfish desires override my long-term goals. But here, I had been given an opportunity to put aside what I wanted most—to keep this child—and to give her something better.

My boyfriend and I shared with our parents our decision about adoption. His parents struggled with the idea of not knowing their flesh and blood and accused us of being heartless. My parents, who had just started to adjust to the idea that they would be grandparents, urged us not to rush into any kind of a decision. In the end, although they felt disappointment at not being able to watch their grandchild grow up, they were supportive.

Giving birth to a beautiful little girl was miraculous. I loved holding her and rocking her. She was so beautiful, and I cried many times her first night on earth. I knew that the next day would bring heartache when it was time to say good-bye.

What made that pain bearable was knowing that placing her for adoption was right. It was the hardest—but most right—thing I have ever done. I signed the papers through sheets of tears and then leaned on family and friends for support. My tears weren't the only ones shed that day or in the days to come.

I thought and worried about my baby constantly at first. How was she doing? What was she doing? Was she healthy? Was she happy? I wrote many letters that first year, and when I received a letter or photos in return, I carried them with me. My pain was eased in seeing a beautiful, happy baby in the pictures. Reading of the love this family felt for her and for me lifted my heart and was essential in my healing. Over

time, I began to realize I wasn't thinking about her every minute of every day—and that was OK. She had a good life, and I needed to move forward with mine too.

I finished high school and enrolled in college, opportunities I might not have had if I had chosen to raise my baby. I stayed busy with working, attending counseling sessions, going to church, and meeting with Church leaders as I sought repentance. Slowly, I began to feel a real sense of healing and of direction in my life. I met and married a wonderful man, and we were sealed in the temple a year after our wedding. Today, my husband and I are happily raising our children. I am grateful that they have been born in the covenant and that we can be together for eternity. Each of them is a blessing.

Someone once asked me if I would change anything if I could go back. I wanted to respond that I would do better, that I wouldn't have brought a child into the world outside of marriage. But I was afraid to answer that way because I had tender feelings for a family who had been blessed by the adoption. Years of soul-searching eventually helped me realize that I still *would* want to go back and do better, to not make the mistake in the first place. Admitting this does not mean that I would take away the delight of this family with their daughter. I am confident that this family would have been blessed another way had I chosen to make righteous decisions initially.

I marvel at a loving Heavenly Father who gave His Son that we might have a way back to Him. I testify that the Atonement is real. I know that through it, our Savior redeems us from our sins and that He also succors us in our pain. I came to more fully appreciate the gifts of both the Father and Son as I felt Their love throughout this experience. ■

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## BIRTH FATHER

NAME WITHHELD

Nobody ever expects to be in the midst of an unplanned, out-of-wedlock pregnancy, but that's exactly where Andrea (names have been changed) and I found ourselves. I was in my last year of my undergraduate studies, and she was in her first. We had dated for only a short time but had allowed our physical relationship to go too far.

We began counseling with our bishop in seeking repentance and in the process decided it was best that we not see each other anymore, so we broke up. Several weeks later, Andrea came to my home and told me that she was pregnant.

Coupled with fear were feelings of denial, disbelief, confusion, and loneliness. I can't imagine what she must have felt. Andrea had a difficult burden to bear, physically and emotionally, and I felt a sense of responsibility and loyalty to her. I also felt that responsibility—perhaps even more so—to the baby. I wanted to make sure that everything turned out all right for his or her future.

Neither of us knew where to start, so we decided to go back to our bishop. He recommended that we make an appointment at LDS Family Services, which, he explained,

was a lot more than an adoption agency. He told us that we would be able to get counseling and to explore *all* of our options as parents. That turned out to be the best advice he could have given us.

Andrea and I were nervous that first visit, but our caseworker put us at ease immediately. Over the next several weeks, she was helpful and supportive as we looked into several options. Andrea and I considered marriage and keeping our baby. We considered not getting married and sharing custody of the baby. And we considered adoption, although it certainly wasn't our first choice.

In addition to meeting with our caseworker, we also met in group sessions, where we could talk with other people in our situation. Our families were supportive too. Andrea and I counseled with both sets of parents, and they offered suggestions about what we ought to do. In the end, though, Andrea and I felt that this was a decision *we* needed to make ourselves. We were grateful that our families respected that and weren't overly pushy.

We prayed about the decision over the course of several weeks. For me as the father, and perhaps even a little bit for Andrea as the mother, the pregnancy was still somewhat abstract. We knew that there was life growing inside her,

but somehow, it didn't quite seem real. That changed when we went for the first ultrasound. As we saw the baby (and later learned that the baby was a girl) this child's life became more of an actuality for us. We started talking about names. And we realized we loved this baby very, very much.

The more real to us the baby became, the less our decision was about us and the more it was about our daughter. Andrea and I both acknowledged that many adoptive parents could provide our daughter with things that we couldn't: a stable marriage, a permanent home, and a temple sealing. We wanted these things for our child, and before long, through LDS Family Services, we found a family we thought might be a good fit.

We felt strongly that our child was to go to these parents, a decision we felt confirmed in prayer and again later when Andrea and I met the family.

The day Jenna was born was more incredible and miraculous than we could ever have imagined. We kept her with us the first few days, and when the day came to take Jenna to her new family, we felt we couldn't do it. Three hours after we were supposed to have been at the LDS Family Services office, we still hadn't left my parents' house. I asked my father to give each of us a priesthood blessing. Among the things he blessed us with was the ability to do the right thing.

We finally left for LDS Family Services. Again, we felt a strong Spirit confirming that this was the right thing, yet when Andrea and I stepped out of the office to return home, I felt the saddest I have ever felt. Neither of us said a word as we drove away. We just cried. That was the most difficult day of my life.

The next week—and the next month—were also hard. But Andrea and I kept moving forward as much as we could. Attending group sessions was helpful because parents who had been through what we were going through

were there to talk about their experience, to encourage us, and to remind us not to give up hope in the future—for Jenna or for ourselves.

One of the other great blessings for us during this time was the adoptive family. They maintained close contact with us in the first weeks after the placement, allowing us to see Jenna often and sending letters and pictures. It was therapeutic for Andrea and me to see how well they took care of Jenna, how happy she was, and what a great life she had. As time went by, our hard days became less frequent.

Andrea soon transferred to a university across the country. I stayed and finished my last year of school. We kept in touch. Eventually Andrea married, and it relieved me to see that she was going to be OK. It was at that point that I finally felt that things were resolved and that I was now capable of moving forward in my own life. That realization—and the passage of time—were both tremendously healing.

I later met Julie, the woman who would become my wife. When I saw long-term potential with our relationship, I told her about Andrea and Jenna. She has been very supportive and has even met Jenna and her family a couple of times. Her understanding has been a tremendous blessing to me.

Julie and I later married, and today we have a one-year-old daughter. Despite the busyness of our lives, we decided early on to make family a priority. We are blessed to be able to spend time with our daughter and with each other. It is exciting to watch our child grow and develop and change. I am grateful and glad to be her father.

I am also grateful for the hope that the gospel provided throughout my experience. My testimony of a loving Heavenly Father increased. It is miraculous to me that He could take a mistake that Andrea and I had made and turn it into something positive for another family. It is equally miraculous to have been given a new start. ■

It is miraculous to me  
that He could take a  
mistake that  
Andrea and I had  
made and turn it into  
something positive  
for another family.  
It is equally miraculous  
to have been given  
a new start.



## GRANDPARENT

### NAME WITHHELD

Our family was a fairly average Latter-day Saint family. We had family home evening, family prayer, family scripture study. We went to church together, took vacations together, had fun together. Of course we weren't perfect, but overall we loved each other and centered our lives on the gospel.

So when our oldest daughter, Katie (names have been changed), then 19 years old and not married, told my wife and me that she was pregnant, it broke our hearts. I blamed myself, wondering where I had gone wrong as a father. Katie had been so stalwart during her early teenage years, but as she got a bit older, she began to give way to negative peer pressure.

Of course, it was natural for my wife and me as grandparents to want to watch this grandchild grow up. But we knew that neither we as grandparents nor Katie as a single mother could give this child the love, time, and direction that he needed. This was not about us or our feelings. It was about what was best for the baby.

Although Katie hoped that her relationship with her boyfriend would work out and lead to marriage, it became evident that it wasn't going to happen. My wife and I suggested adoption, but Katie refused to even consider it. She had always loved children and wanted to raise this one. She insisted on keeping her child.

We encouraged her to at least *talk to* the representative from LDS Family Services. We pointed out that she did not have to make a decision right away and that she could probably make a better decision if she were educated about all

her options. We also told her that whatever she decided, we would support her. Katie later told us that our assurance and support—without pressure—gave her great comfort as she made important choices.

Our daughter remained uninterested in adoption for several weeks, so when one day she suddenly admitted that it wouldn't hurt "just to talk" to the caseworker, we were quite surprised. We later learned that my sister, Katie's aunt, had also encouraged her to consider adoption. It was her influence that made the difference.

It took just one visit to LDS Family Services. Katie told us that when she walked into the office, a warm feeling came over her. She said she felt a sense of love for her son and of adoption being the right choice for her and her baby.

As she reviewed profiles of potential parents, Katie felt the Spirit confirm to her which couple should be the parents of her child. As the adoption process moved forward, the time came for Katie, my wife, and me to meet the adoptive parents. I remember the anxiety, anticipation, and excitement we felt as we waited. When they entered the room, all of us stood with tears in our eyes. We hugged them and cried for a long time. The Spirit was strong, and we all felt a heightened awareness of the importance of what would take place between our families. We talked for more than three hours.

The husband shared with us that he and his wife had been waiting for some time for the opportunity to adopt. He told us that one night as he was praying and acknowledging to the Lord that he and his wife had done everything they could and were turning their wills over to Him, he had a calm, peaceful feeling. As we shared our own story, we all realized that the day this man had said that prayer was the same day Katie had chosen him and his wife to be the parents of her child.

The day our grandson was born was a bittersweet one.

What a beautiful baby! It would have been easy to change our minds—after all, children are raised by single mothers and grandparents all of the time. Surely we could do it too. But we knew the Lord's will, and we knew that it was in this child's best interest for the adoption to proceed. After spending two days with our daughter and grandson in the hospital, my wife and I watched with tears streaming down our faces as Katie handed her son to the caseworker. She

exclaimed, "I can't believe I just did that!" and ran back to her hospital room to cry. My wife later commented that she had never seen greater love than she did as she watched Katie that day. Adoption, she said, truly is about love.

Shortly after the baby was born, Katie enrolled in nursing school. She also came back to Church activity with a renewed and deepened testimony of the Savior and of His Atonement.

Although Katie didn't realize it at the time, this experience was also difficult for my wife and me. (We still get emotional talking about it.) We think of this child often and love him very much. But by relying on each other and moving forward, we have

been able to find peace. We are confident that the Lord had a hand in this adoption.

We know of grandparents who are angry about their grandchild being placed for adoption or who go to great lengths to stop an adoption because they want to know their grandchildren and watch them grow up. We understand those feelings. But we also attest to the peace that comes from doing what is best for the baby.

This period became one of the most sacred and spiritual of our lives. Even now, more than a decade later, we continue to learn from our experience. Our love and appreciation for each other and for the family unit has grown. We can also testify of the love of our Heavenly Father. We know that He will guide us in our earthly experience, however difficult, as we willingly follow Him in trust and faith. ■

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## CHILD

BY STACIE LLOYD DUCE

One of my earliest memories is looking up at my mother after she had tucked me in and asking her if she would tell me a different bedtime story. After all, she had been telling me the same story every night for as long I could remember.

It always started with these words: “Once upon a time, there was a mommy and daddy who wanted very much to have a baby of their own.” It wasn’t a fable or a fairy tale but the story of our family and how I came to be a part of it. Because I had heard the story repeated so often, adoption was never a mysterious or uncomfortable

topic. I learned from the beginning that I was meant to be with my family—I had just come a different way.

The bedtime story included details of my parents’ life as newlyweds. Doctors had advised them that adoption would be the only way they would have a family. The tale also included their progress through adoption paperwork and interviews and a surprise phone call that came much earlier than they expected. The woman on the line told Mom, “We have a baby girl waiting for you to take home for Christmas.”

At that point, the story always got exciting and included the pandemonium of Dad leaving work and racing to the store to buy diapers, pink clothes, and a 1970s movie camera that would blind our family with its bright light for years to come.

Mom's story always ended—never without a few tears—with the day she and Dad arrived at the adoption office. A woman brought the “most beautiful baby” they had ever seen, and my parents knew immediately that they would love me forever. All of their once-distant dreams were coming true.

I slept soundly through that first night in my new home. Mom told me she kept checking on me and kissing me throughout the night, just as she continued to do as I grew. Because of this story, I never doubted my beauty inside or out, and I never doubted my parents' love for me.

Our family moved from that home before my first birthday. Then, some 35 years later, I had the chance to return to that city with my parents. They drove me to the hospital where I was born, to the church on the hill where I was blessed, and to the little brick apartment building where they brought me home to be a part of their family. The details of my bedtime story swirled around me during this visit with all-new realism.

I watched my parents kiss on the sidewalk outside that apartment—just as they had done as newlyweds—with a different kind of appreciation. I imagined them bringing me home with humility and gratitude and a strengthened resolve to be an eternal family. Suddenly their emotion wasn't something to roll my eyes at, as I had sometimes done growing up. It was something to be cherished and emulated.

My appreciation for lessons taught at bedtime increased as I realized they made the plan of salvation a part of my everyday thoughts. I knew I lived in heaven before I was born.

I knew Heavenly Father gave agency to all. I knew redemption was possible for the people whose choices not only affected them but created a child as well. I knew Heavenly Father had a plan for me, and that His plan mercifully provides second chances for everyone involved in an adoption.

I feel gratitude to the woman who carried me and made a decision that may have been unpopular with some. I imagine my birth mother as a pillar of strength, and I pray she has been blessed for her sacrifice and hope for the future for all of us.

The story of miracles for our family continued when Mom discovered that she was pregnant with my brother, who came to be my best friend. More siblings arrived, defying the logic of doctors and specialists.

My parents are all I—or birth parents—could have hoped for. They provided the necessities of life as well as family fun. They taught me to work, to learn, and to discover my talents. They taught the gospel through their words and example. I learned to overcome disappointments and obstacles, just as they have done. And most important, they gave me a glimpse of how Heavenly Father loves me as His daughter.

My bedtime story has a happy ending that isn't really an ending. New chapters have given our extended family more opportunities for adoption and an appreciation of God's guiding hand during this short tale of mortality. ■

Mom's story always ended—never without a few tears—with the day she and Dad arrived at the adoption office. A woman brought the “most beautiful baby” they had ever seen, and my parents knew immediately that they would love me forever. All of their once-distant dreams were coming true.

For more information about adoption, including resources for expectant and adoptive parents, please visit [www.itsaboutlove.org](http://www.itsaboutlove.org), or call the LDS Family Services hotline at 800-537-2229.

BY TERRY O'BRIEN

*How was I going to kneel and pray in a noisy, crowded barracks?*

I had just returned from serving a Guatemalan mission and was still weak from a long bout with amoebas when I was drafted into the United States Army. One concern caused me to seek counsel from my bishop. In the mission field I had become accustomed to kneeling each night in prayer with my missionary companion. My question to the bishop was: "How am I going to kneel and pray in a noisy, crowded barracks?"

"You'll find a way," the bishop assured me.

A few weeks later, I was on a train with other men headed for an uncertain life at Fort Ord, California. The bishop's reassurance that I would "find a way" still left me uncertain.

### Taunted in the Barracks

The first few days were overwhelming and unsettling—sheared hair, oversized clothes, and leaders shouting demeaning words at me. Worse yet, my fellow soldiers were loud, foul-mouthed, and worldly—very different from my companions in the mission field. I kept wondering, "Why me? Why now?"

The bishop had given me a small serviceman's edition of the Book of Mormon, and in my free time, I retreated to my corner bunk and immersed myself in the scriptures. Somehow it helped smooth the transition from missionary to military.

Then came Bill (name changed), a recruit who noticed my isolation and who began to taunt me.

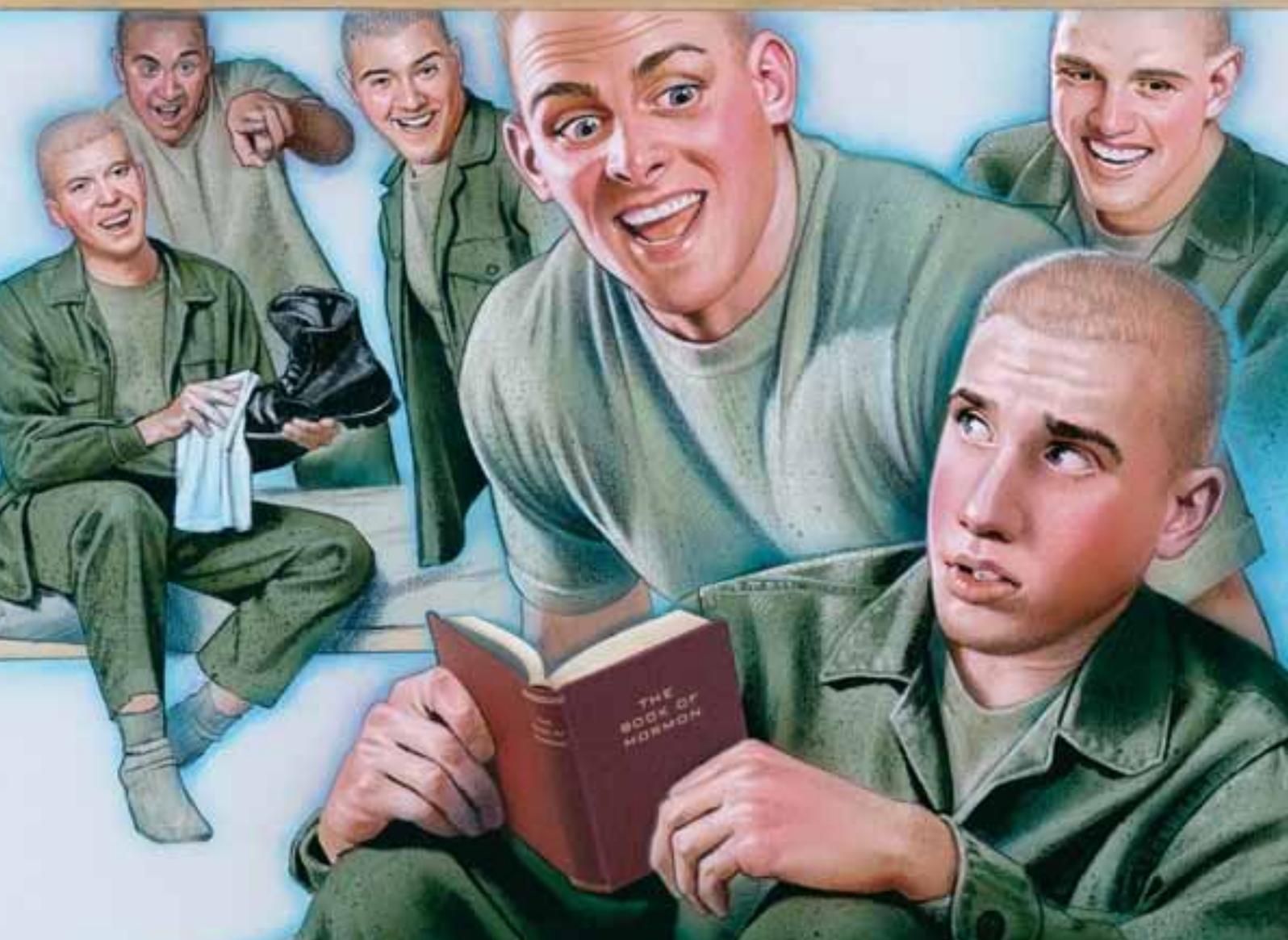
"Hey, O'Brien," he said, "what's that you're reading?"

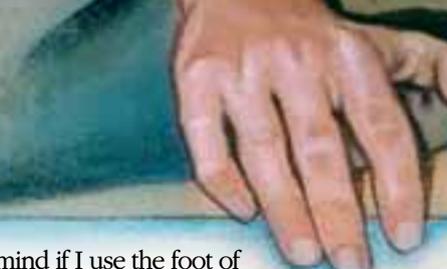
"A book you probably wouldn't know anything about."

"Oh, the Book of Mormon. I've heard of it. Have you seen old Moroni lately?"

ILLUSTRATED BY ROGER MOTZKUS

# YOU'LL FIND A WAY





“No,” I grimaced, “as a matter of fact, I haven’t.”

“Well, I’d sure like to meet the guy. Maybe he could show me the gold plates.”

I edged farther back into my bunk while the other men gathered around and laughed boisterously.

For days, Bill continued to harass me. Like the rest of us, he had been jerked out of his familiar and safe surroundings, and he tried to establish himself using tough language, jokes, and roughhousing. He had a muscular build from wrestling in college, and the men looked up to him. Apparently, it bothered him that I was so weak and thin.

My only solace would come at night when lights were out, the men were asleep, and all was quiet. I would slip out of my lower bunk, kneel, and talk to Heavenly Father. I asked for strength to endure. Then I would slip back into my bunk with a strong feeling that Heavenly Father would help me. After all, it would be only a short time until everyone would be reassigned to different companies.

Bill’s harassment increased. I met his remarks with calm reserve and an attempt at friendliness. At last the anticipated day for reassignment came. Bill and I were assigned not only to the same battalion, company, and platoon but also to the same barracks.

My heart sank. I picked up my gear and hurried over to the barracks. The room was long, and I pictured Bill’s bunk at one end and mine at the other. He would have new men to harass. There was still some hope. Soon the other men arrived, and I heard a familiar voice, “Hey, buddy. Why don’t we share the same bunk?”

I couldn’t believe it—it was Bill. Unable to come up with an excuse, I grudgingly consented. Then he said, “Let’s flip for the bottom bunk.” With self-assurance that I would get the lower bunk so I could kneel and pray at night, I flipped the coin. It spun in the air, seemed to pause for a moment, and then landed—in favor of Bill.

### **Finding a Way**

I was downcast. The next day one thought dominated my mind—hadn’t the bishop promised I would find a way? How was I going to kneel to pray on a top bunk?

That night, just before lights out, I hesitatingly approached Bill with a request: “I’m used to kneeling at night to pray

before I go to bed. Would you mind if I use the foot of your bunk?” I braced myself for the laughter I was sure would follow. Instead, he casually agreed, “No problem,” and went on shining his boots.

I waited until lights were out and the men had settled down. Then I slipped out of my top bunk to the foot of Bill’s bunk. Feeling somewhat nervous, I said a short prayer. I thanked Heavenly Father for helping me thus far and requested further help to deal with Bill and whatever was coming.

I climbed back up onto my bed and lay there wondering how the next eight weeks would go. Then I felt the bunk shake heavily. I thought Bill must be getting up for a drink of water. I looked down, and there at the side of the bed was Bill, kneeling. Confused, I could scarcely believe it and lay back saying nothing.

The next day was a rigorous one of long marches in a hot sun. During the lunch break as I sat alone under a tree, Bill came over and sat down next to me. We chatted for a few minutes, and then he suddenly turned serious, something I had never seen in him before. He admitted that the previous night when he saw me kneeling at the foot of his bunk, he had thought about how difficult he had made life for me.

“Guess I’ve really been a problem,” he grinned.

“You got that right,” I smiled back.

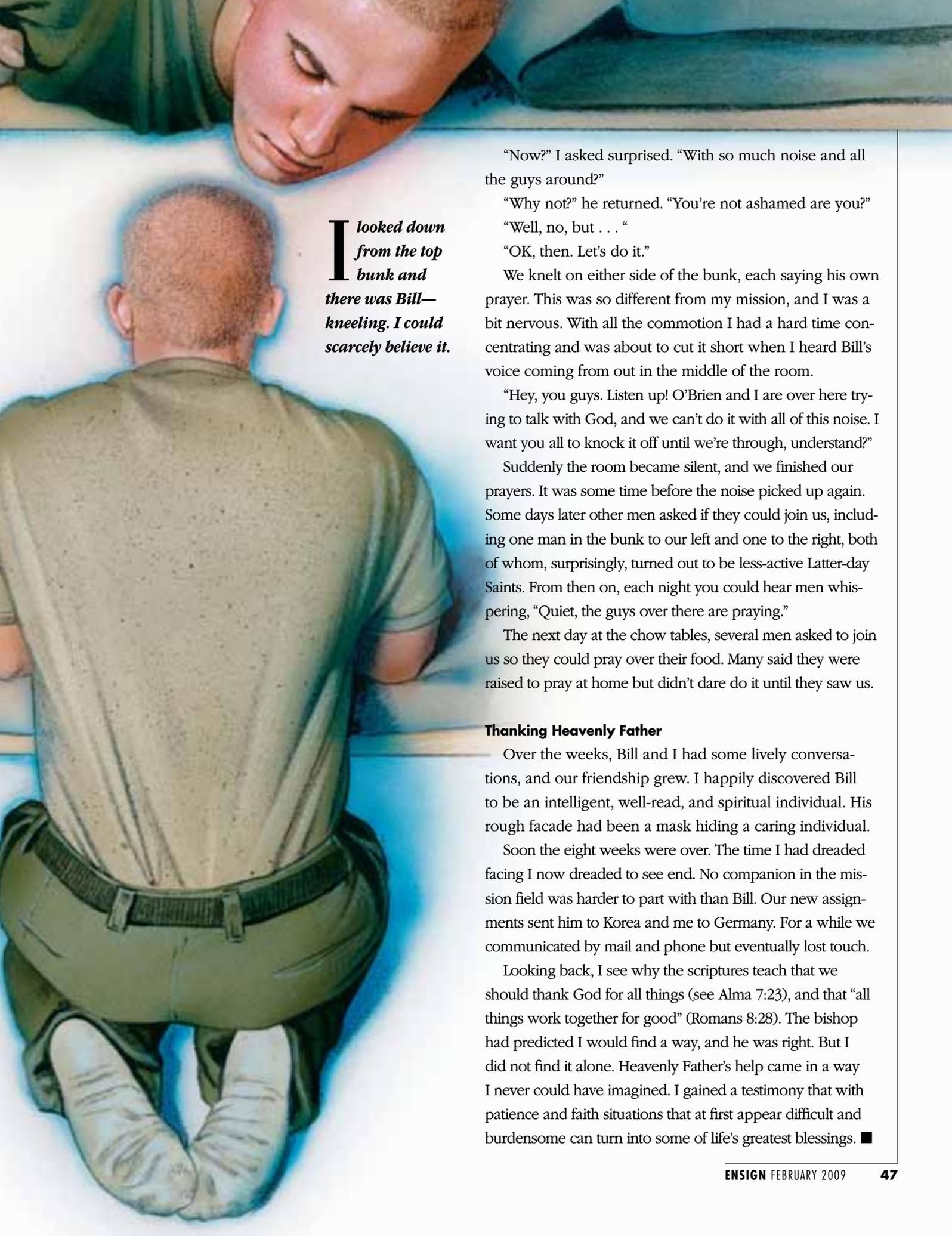
He further said he realized he could spend the next eight weeks acting tough like the guys around us, or he could change his direction and be more refined. He said he had decided to be more like me and would like to learn to pray. “I tried it last night,” he admitted, “but didn’t quite know how. Maybe you could teach me.”

I was completely stunned but gladly consented. Then, while we were running back into formation, he said, “Hey, how about we pray together?” How ironic! I had seen myself as the “righteous” returned missionary, and here was my tormentor asking me to pray with him.

### **Kneeling for Prayer**

That night as the men were running around laughing and joking, Bill told me that he was tired and wanted to go to bed early. I said goodnight and went on shining my boots.

“Well,” he remarked, “have you forgotten that we were going to pray?”



**I** looked down from the top bunk and there was Bill—kneeling. I could scarcely believe it.

“Now?” I asked surprised. “With so much noise and all the guys around?”

“Why not?” he returned. “You’re not ashamed are you?”

“Well, no, but . . .”

“OK, then. Let’s do it.”

We knelt on either side of the bunk, each saying his own prayer. This was so different from my mission, and I was a bit nervous. With all the commotion I had a hard time concentrating and was about to cut it short when I heard Bill’s voice coming from out in the middle of the room.

“Hey, you guys. Listen up! O’Brien and I are over here trying to talk with God, and we can’t do it with all of this noise. I want you all to knock it off until we’re through, understand?”

Suddenly the room became silent, and we finished our prayers. It was some time before the noise picked up again. Some days later other men asked if they could join us, including one man in the bunk to our left and one to the right, both of whom, surprisingly, turned out to be less-active Latter-day Saints. From then on, each night you could hear men whispering, “Quiet, the guys over there are praying.”

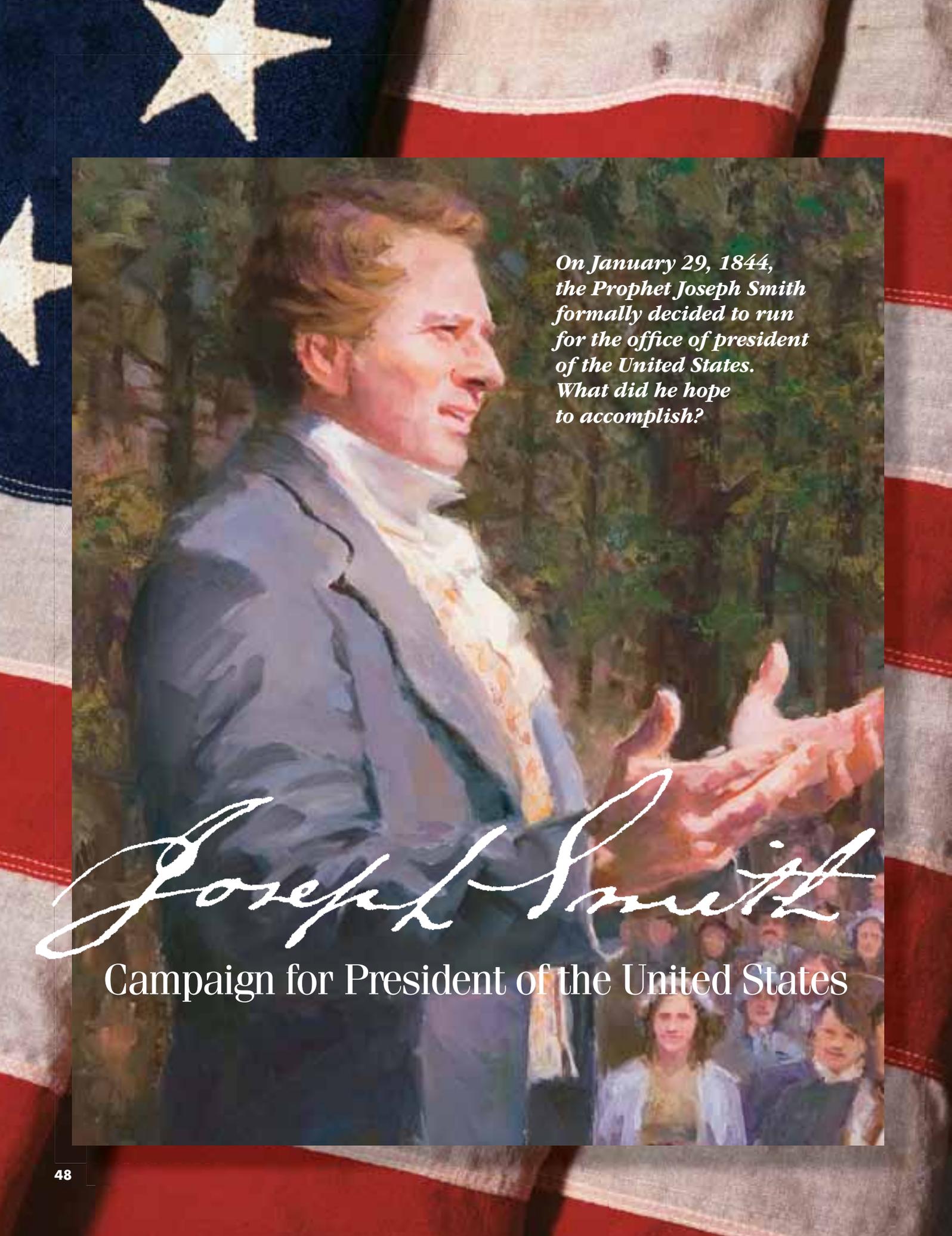
The next day at the chow tables, several men asked to join us so they could pray over their food. Many said they were raised to pray at home but didn’t dare do it until they saw us.

### **Thanking Heavenly Father**

Over the weeks, Bill and I had some lively conversations, and our friendship grew. I happily discovered Bill to be an intelligent, well-read, and spiritual individual. His rough facade had been a mask hiding a caring individual.

Soon the eight weeks were over. The time I had dreaded facing I now dreaded to see end. No companion in the mission field was harder to part with than Bill. Our new assignments sent him to Korea and me to Germany. For a while we communicated by mail and phone but eventually lost touch.

Looking back, I see why the scriptures teach that we should thank God for all things (see Alma 7:23), and that “all things work together for good” (Romans 8:28). The bishop had predicted I would find a way, and he was right. But I did not find it alone. Heavenly Father’s help came in a way I never could have imagined. I gained a testimony that with patience and faith situations that at first appear difficult and burdensome can turn into some of life’s greatest blessings. ■

A painting of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, speaking to a crowd. He is shown in profile, facing right, wearing a blue coat and a white cravat. His hands are raised in a gesture of emphasis. The background is a dense crowd of people, and an American flag is visible in the upper left corner. The overall style is that of a historical painting.

*On January 29, 1844,  
the Prophet Joseph Smith  
formally decided to run  
for the office of president  
of the United States.  
What did he hope  
to accomplish?*

*Joseph Smith*

Campaign for President of the United States

## BY ARNOLD K. GARR

Department Chair, Church History and Doctrine  
Brigham Young University

**I**t began in 1839. The Prophet Joseph Smith, finally free after more than four months of imprisonment in Liberty, Missouri, had settled in Illinois, and the Saints had begun building what would become the city of Nauvoo. With the Missouri persecutions fresh in their minds, the Saints sought redress for the grievances they had suffered, but they were not successful.<sup>1</sup>

Frustrated, Joseph determined to seek help from the federal government. After all, weren't all Americans guaranteed the protections found in the Bill of Rights, the first 10 amendments to the United States Constitution? The very first of these is generally taken as a guarantee of the right to practice religion freely.

### The Prophet Visits the President

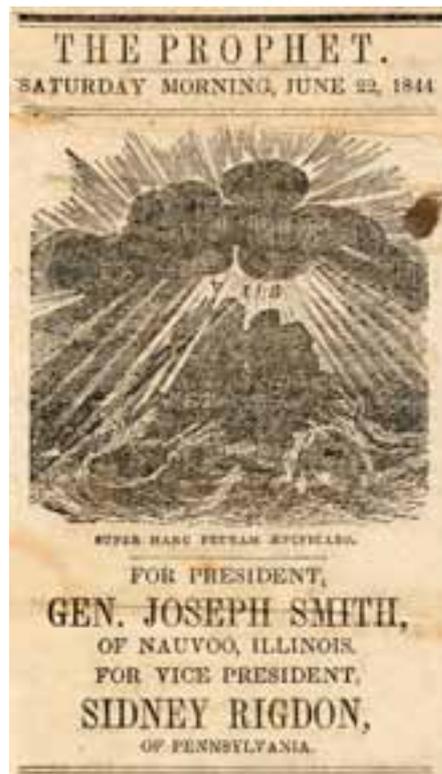
Joseph Smith left Nauvoo for Washington, D.C., with Sidney Rigdon, Elias Higbee, and Orrin Porter Rockwell in a two-horse carriage “to lay before the Congress of the United States, the grievances of the Saints while in Missouri.”<sup>2</sup> Joseph and Judge Higbee met with President Martin Van Buren on November 29, 1839. At first Van Buren was inconsiderate of the Prophet's plea. However, as the discussion progressed, the president promised to reconsider his position and “felt to sympathize with [the Mormons], on account of [their] sufferings.”<sup>3</sup>

After their visit with President Van Buren, the Prophet and Elias Higbee stayed two months in the East, trying to gain support from senators and representatives who might be willing to espouse their cause.<sup>4</sup> They met with President Van Buren again in February 1840.<sup>5</sup> By this time, Van Buren had lost any sympathetic feelings he might have had for the Church. According to the Prophet, the president treated them rudely and declared: “Gentlemen, your cause is just, but I can do nothing for you. . . . If I take up for you I shall lose the vote of Missouri.”<sup>6</sup>

Joseph Smith's disappointing visit to Washington, D.C., became a turning point for him. His people had been abused and unjustly treated in Missouri, and the president



**After failing to acquire reassurances from leading candidates, Joseph Smith decided to run for president.**



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of the United States had refused to help. The Church leaders would remember this neglect when the time came for another presidential election.

### The 1844 Election Cycle Begins

In Nauvoo the *Times and Seasons* published an editorial on October 1, 1843, titled “Who Shall Be Our Next President?” It did not suggest any specific names but concluded that the candidate must be “the man who will be the most likely to render us assistance in obtaining redress for our grievances.”<sup>7</sup> On November 4, 1843, Joseph Smith wrote letters to John C. Calhoun, Lewis Cass, Richard M. Johnson, Henry Clay, and Martin Van Buren, the five leading candidates for the presidency of the United States. Each letter described the persecutions the Mormons had suffered at the hands of the state of Missouri and then asked the pointed question, “‘*What will be your rule of action relative to us as a people,*’ should fortune favor your ascension to the chief magistracy?”<sup>8</sup> Only Calhoun, Cass, and Clay responded to Joseph Smith's letters, and they expressed little sympathy for the cause of the Saints.

When the Prophet realized that none of the leading candidates for the presidency would pledge to support redress for the Saints, he held a historic meeting in the mayor's office at Nauvoo on January 29, 1844, with the



**The political campaign organized electioneers to preach the gospel and spread Joseph's political position. Electioneering officials, assigned to all 26 states in the Union, included members of the Quorum of the Twelve.**



COURTESY CHURCH HISTORY LIBRARY

The platform also proposed changes to Congress. Joseph wanted to reduce congressional pay from eight dollars to two dollars per day. He wanted to have only two members of the House of Representatives for every one million people.<sup>14</sup>

In addition, Joseph favored extensive prison reform, forming a national bank, and annexing Oregon and Texas.<sup>15</sup> He favored extending the United States “from the east to the west sea,” but only if Native Americans gave their consent.<sup>16</sup>

On February 24, the Prophet had 1,500 copies of the pamphlet printed. Copies were mailed to the president of the United States and his cabinet, the justices of the Supreme Court, senators, representatives, editors of principal newspapers, postmasters, and other prominent citizens.<sup>17</sup>

*General Smith's Views* is an intriguing document. Many of Joseph Smith's proposals came to pass, although not necessarily in the way he had envisioned: the power of the presidency was increased by Abraham Lincoln during the U.S. Civil War; the Civil War led to emancipation of the slaves; the penal system improved, although not to the extent that Joseph prescribed; and Oregon and Texas did become part of the United States. The Union's borders soon stretched from sea to sea, but without the consent of Native Americans. Elder John A. Widtsoe evaluated *General Smith's Views* as “an intelligent, comprehensive, forward-looking statement of policies, worthy of a trained statesman.”<sup>18</sup>

### The Campaign

On April 9, 1844, during general conference, the campaign began to take on a unique nature. Brigham Young announced that elders would be called to both “preach the Gospel and electioneer.”<sup>19</sup> During the latter part of the meeting, when President Young called for volunteers to serve these missions, 244 men stepped forward.<sup>20</sup>

Additional electioneer missionaries were called,

bringing the total to at least 337. On April 15 they were assigned to all 26 states in the Union and to the Wisconsin Territory.<sup>21</sup> Not only the number but also the quality of missionaries called was striking. Ten members of the Quorum of the Twelve—Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, Parley P. Pratt, William Smith, Orson Pratt, John E. Page, Wilford Woodruff, George A. Smith, and Lyman Wight—served as electioneer missionaries.<sup>22</sup>

The Quorum of the Twelve scheduled a series of conferences to be held all over the United States. The Illinois state convention, held at Nauvoo on May 17, 1844, formally nominated Joseph Smith for president of the United States and Sidney Rigdon for vice president. The delegates organized a national convention to be held in Baltimore, Maryland, on July 13.<sup>23</sup>

The journal of Wilford Woodruff describes the activities of an electioneer missionary. Elder Woodruff left Nauvoo on May 9 in company with George A. Smith, Jedediah M. Grant, and Ezra Thayer for an electioneer mission that would last just nine weeks. During that time he recorded that he spoke in at least six “political meetings.” He spoke at many more religious meetings than political gatherings, and he always kept his religious sermons and political speeches separate. The political gatherings were usually held the night before or very soon after the traditional Church conferences.<sup>24</sup>

Elder Woodruff and at least four other members of the Quorum of the Twelve attended the Massachusetts state convention in Boston on July 1, 1844.<sup>25</sup> Elder Woodruff recorded in his journal: “The Melodeon was crowded in the evening, and it was soon evident that a large number of rowdies were in the galleries and felt disposed to make [a] disturbance.” One young man rose and made a series of disruptive remarks, and fighting broke out. The police were called in to restore order. Elder Woodruff recorded,



## WHY JOSEPH SMITH RAN FOR PRESIDENT

*“I would not have suffered my name to have been used by my friends on anywise as President of the United States, or candidate for that office, if I and my friends could have had the privilege of enjoying our religious and civil rights as American citizens, even those rights which the Constitution guarantees unto all her citizens alike. But this as a people we have been denied from the beginning. Persecution has rolled upon our heads from time to time, from portions of the United States, like peals of thunder, because of our religion; and no portion of the Government as yet has stepped forward for our relief. And in view of these things, I feel it to be my right and privilege to obtain what influence and power I can, lawfully, in the United States, for the protection of injured innocence.”*

**Joseph Smith, History of the Church, 6:210–11.**

“One person got badly cut in the face but not dangerous. The meeting was soon broken up.”<sup>26</sup> Despite the disturbance, Brigham Young wrote in a letter to Willard Richards, “All this did us good in Boston.”<sup>27</sup>

### Assassination Ends the Campaign

In the meantime, William Law and others in Illinois were plotting to take the life of Joseph Smith. Dr. Wall Southwick recounted a meeting he had attended in Carthage, Illinois, wherein the enemies of the Prophet had gathered together from every state in the Union but three. They were concerned that Joseph’s “views on government were widely circulated and took like wildfire.” According to Southwick, they believed that if the Prophet “did not get into the Presidential chair this election, he would be sure to the next time; and if Illinois and Missouri would join together and kill him, they would not be brought to justice for it.”<sup>28</sup> Dr. Southwick’s statement suggests that the Prophet’s presidential campaign was at least a contributing cause for his assassination.

Joseph Smith was martyred on June 27, 1844, at the Carthage Jail, ending his brief presidential campaign. Although he did not gain redress for the wrongs suffered by the Saints in Missouri, his campaign had brought much favorable public attention to the Church. Many years later, President Ezra Taft Benson said, “We should be ‘anxiously engaged’ in good causes and leave the world a better place for having lived in it (D&C 58:27).”<sup>29</sup> Joseph Smith’s presidential campaign had sought to make the United States a better place, not only for the Latter-day Saints, but for all Americans. ■

### NOTES

1. For a history of the afflictions suffered by the Latter-day Saints in Missouri, see *Church History in the Fulness of Times: Student Manual*, 2nd ed. (Church Educational System manual, 2003), 193–210. It is available online at [www.ldsces.org](http://www.ldsces.org).
2. *History of the Church*, 4:19.
3. *History of the Church*, 4:40.
4. See *History of the Church*, 4:40, 43–44.
5. Some histories maintain that Joseph Smith met with Martin Van Buren only once, on November 29, 1839. See *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, 221 and B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 2:30. However, the *History of the Church* also has an entry on February 6, 1840, that describes the Prophet visiting Van Buren. Historians disagree over whether this entry is simply a retelling of the visit on November 29, 1839, or the recording of a second, distinct visit on February 6, 1840.
6. *History of the Church*, 4:80.
7. *Times and Seasons*, Oct. 1, 1843, 344.
8. *History of the Church*, 6:65; emphasis in original.
9. See *History of the Church*, 6:188.
10. See *History of the Church*, 6:189, 197. *History of the Church* refers to the pamphlet as *Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States*. However, when it was published, it was titled *General Smith’s Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States*.
11. *History of the Church*, 6:206.
12. *History of the Church*, 6:197.
13. *History of the Church*, 6:205.
14. See *History of the Church*, 6:205.
15. See *History of the Church*, 6:205, 208.
16. *History of the Church*, 6:206.
17. See *History of the Church*, 6:224–26.
18. John A. Widtsoe, *Joseph Smith: Seeker after Truth, Prophet of God* (1991), 219.
19. *History of the Church*, 6:322.
20. See *History of the Church*, 6:325.
21. See *Times and Seasons*, Apr. 15, 1844, 504–6.
22. See Arnold K. Garr, *Joseph Smith: Presidential Candidate* (2008), 55–62.
23. See *History of the Church*, 6: 386, 390–91.
24. *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 1833–1898*, ed. Scott G. Kenny, typescript, 9 vols. (1983–84), 2:394–419; spelling and punctuation modernized.
25. The Apostles electioneering in the East did not hear of the death of Joseph Smith until July 9, 1844.
26. *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, 2:415; spelling modernized.
27. *History of the Church*, 7:210.
28. *History of the Church*, 6: 605–6.
29. *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (1988), 676–77.

### POLITICAL NEUTRALITY

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## The Blessing of the

# Blackberry Bush

BY DONNELL ALLAN

One day when our son Jesse was a toddler, I was watching our children play in the yard.

Suddenly I realized that he was no longer with the others. One moment he was there, and the next he was gone. My heart pounded in panic. I called out for him as I frantically searched the yard.

Soon I heard his frightened cries, which I followed. I found Jesse in the yard next door, entangled in the middle of some blackberry vines. He struggled to escape, but each time he moved, thorns from the vines buried themselves deeper into his clothing and skin. He was frightened and in pain. It took me quite some time to remove each thorn and pull Jesse free.

It hurt me to see my little child suffer. But then I remembered the large pond located in the neighbor's yard. If the blackberries had not detained Jesse, he might have wandered into the pond and risked drowning.

I've since learned that God sometimes allows us to stumble into thorny places to protect us from more harmful situations. He

loves us and does what is best for us, even when it hurts terribly, because sometimes the pain is necessary for our physical safety or spiritual growth. When we turn to Him in our trials, He carefully pulls out the thorns and comforts our hearts.

Years after that incident with Jesse, I was touched when I came across this passage from Elder George Q. Cannon (1827–1901): “The Saints should always remember that God sees not as man sees; that he does not willingly afflict his children, and that if he requires them to endure present privation and trial, it is that they may escape greater tribulations which would otherwise inevitably overtake them. If He deprives them of any present blessing, it is that he may bestow upon them greater and more glorious ones by-and-by.”<sup>1</sup>

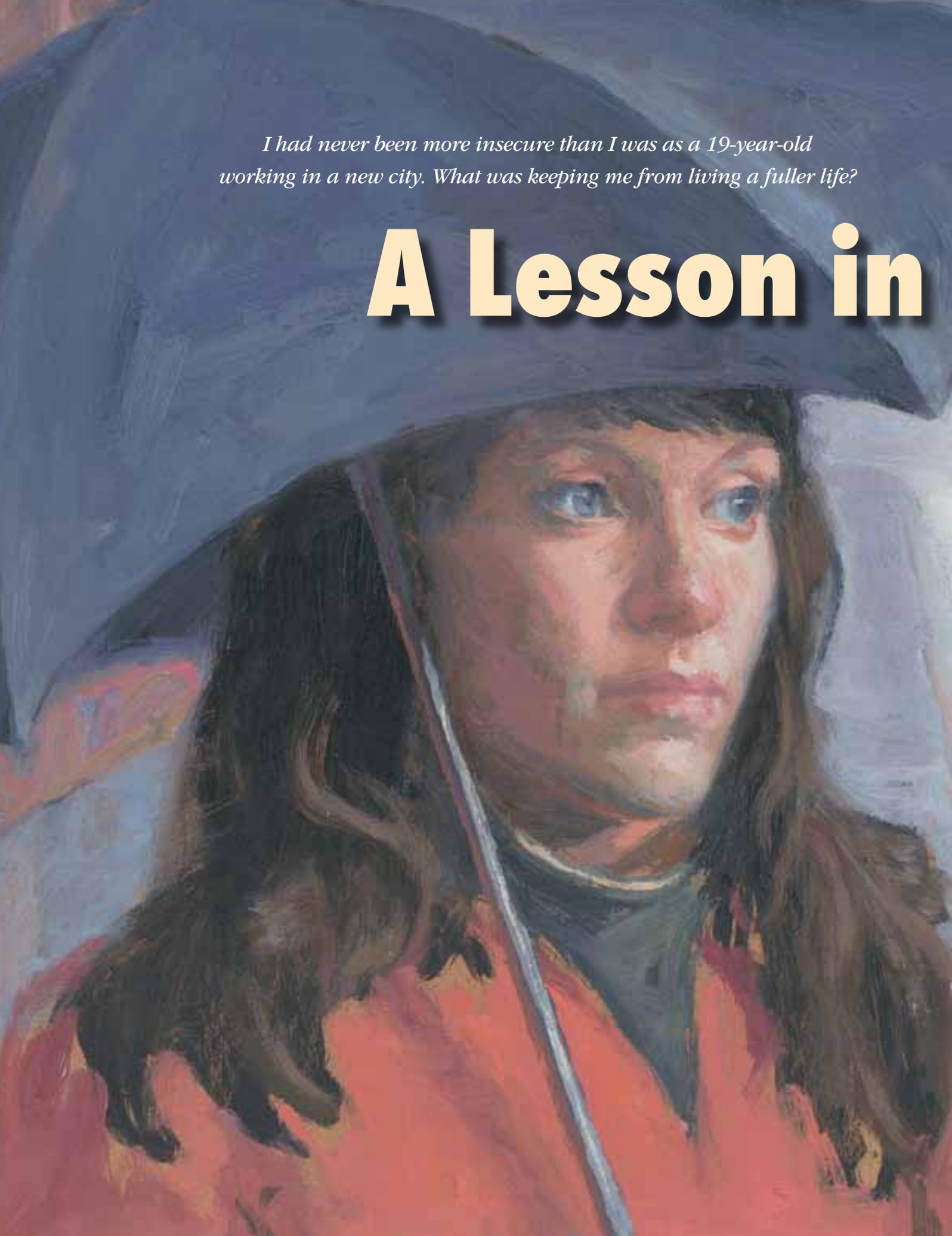
My experience with my son—what I now call “the parable of the blackberries”—has brought comfort to me as I have watched my children endure trials and challenges. I am reminded that our trials and suffering have purpose and that the Lord always has our best interest in mind, even when allowing us to suffer temporarily among life's blackberry thorns. ■

#### NOTE

1. “Beneficial Results of Continued Obedience to the Teachings of God's Servants,” *Millennial Star*, Oct. 3, 1863, 634.

*I had never been more insecure than I was as a 19-year-old  
working in a new city. What was keeping me from living a fuller life?*

# A Lesson in



# Atlanta

BY SAMANTHA D. HANSEN

When I graduated from high school, I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do with my life. College didn't particularly appeal to me, but I wasn't sure what kind of work I wanted to do either. I *did* know that I felt ready to be out on my own, and I ended up attending school far from my hometown in Texas but in a place near many members of my extended family.

The two semesters I spent there were OK, but I wasn't sure I would return the next fall. That summer, I returned home to Dallas, where I worked in a temporary position to earn money for school. At the end of the summer, I was offered a full-time, year long position with the company, but it would require a transfer to Atlanta, Georgia.

I considered the offer. I liked the fact that I would have a chance to earn more money for school, and maybe a year in a completely new place would help me to determine what career path I wanted to take. After fasting and praying about the decision, I accepted the job. At age 19 I set out for this new adventure.

My initial living arrangements turned out to be much different than I had expected. I had rented a room in the home of a woman who was several decades older than I was. Our age difference didn't bother me, but our differences in personality and standards did. I started to look for a new home, but in the meantime I tried just to be grateful to have a place to live and tried to make the most of my situation.

My job was fine, but friends were hard to come by at work. I knew that church could offer an opportunity to meet people who shared my standards—and possibly new roommates—but the thought of introducing myself to others

terrified me. I found a young adult ward to attend, but when Sundays came around, I arrived late and left early so that I wouldn't have to talk to anyone. I wanted so much to meet people and make friends, but the effort required was simply too overwhelming.

This church-attendance routine continued for about three months. Then one Sunday, I said to myself, "Sam, this has got to stop." I tried to get to the bottom of whatever was keeping me from fully participating in my ward, and I realized it was fear. I was afraid to be alone, afraid to meet new people, afraid to extend myself—just simply afraid.

One Sunday when I particularly needed confidence, I looked up *fear* in the Topical Guide in the back of my scriptures and turned to one of the verses that was listed, Doctrine and Covenants 68:6: "Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come."

It was a simple but powerful—and very personal—message. I felt the Spirit confirm that not only did the Lord want me *to not be afraid*, but He also wanted me to *be happy*. Those were two distinct, separate things—things He wanted *me* to do. And I could do them because He would be with me.

That verse changed my outlook. The next week, I went to church on time. I still felt a little bit nervous, but not enough to keep me from attending the full duration of my meetings. After all, the Lord wanted me to be happy. Even if I didn't yet feel confident in myself, I did feel confidence in Him and in His promises.



I got to know my bishop, who was instrumental in helping me better understand the gospel and gain a stronger sense of self-worth and direction in my life. I will always be grateful for the time, love, and direction he gave me as a member of the ward.

I started attending institute too. It was there that I got to know young adults from my area. Over the next several weeks, people began to look familiar to me, and several recognized me as well. One week I was invited to a party. I thought about declining, but I decided to be brave and go. I had a good time, and I also met several people who later became good friends.

In the weeks that followed, I continued to meet other people and to gain confidence. I even found another LDS young woman who was looking for a roommate, and we rented an apartment together—a huge improvement over my previous living arrangements. During that period and with encouragement from my bishop, I received my patriarchal blessing; it infused my life with direction and passion I had not previously experienced. I started a part-time position in a floral shop, which I loved. That led to a decision to study horticulture at Brigham Young University–Idaho, and today I continue to work in—and love—this field.

In the end, my time in Atlanta was a time of happiness and not of fear, thanks to specific, loving direction from my Heavenly Father.

That experience was many years ago. It taught me that I can be happy and unafraid *now*, that I need not wait until some magical event or circumstance happens to

me. I have known people who are unhappy and claim that once they finish school or change jobs or get married or move into a new ward, they'll find peace, and their lives will officially begin. But my experience in Georgia—and Doctrine and Covenants 68:6—showed me that this isn't the case. Rather, we can choose *now* to be of good cheer and not fear.

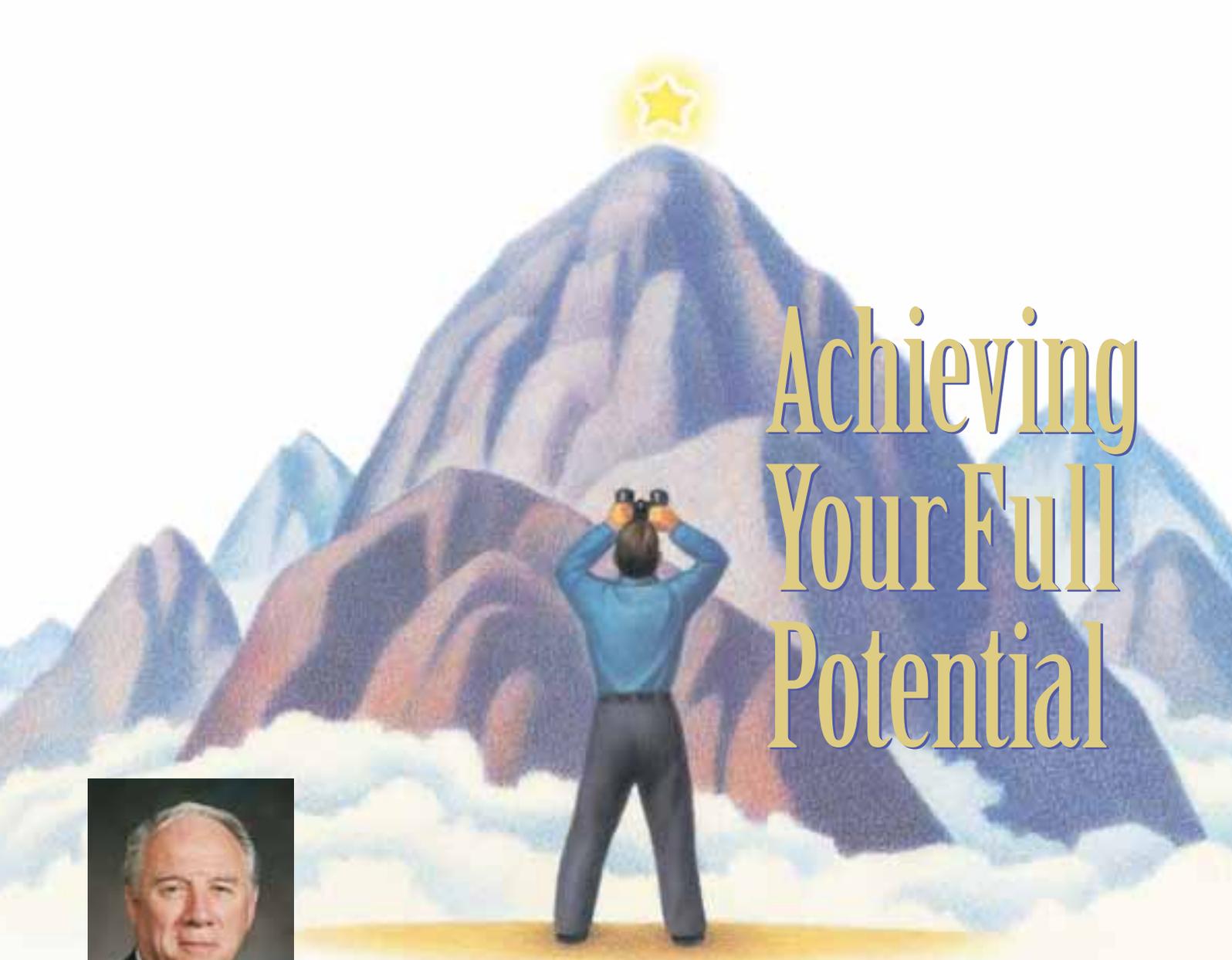
That lesson has been a vital one as I have faced personal challenges that are common in mortality. No matter my circumstances, I can choose to be of good cheer, to be unafraid. After all, the Lord has promised that He will be with us. ■



#### **BE OF GOOD CHEER**

*“Good cheer is a state of mind or mood that promotes happiness or joy. . . . With God’s help, good cheer permits us to rise above the depressing present or difficult circumstances. It is a process of positive reassurance and reinforcement. It is sunshine when clouds block the light.”*

**Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (1915–94), “Be of Good Cheer,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 66.**



# Achieving Your Full Potential



**BY ELDER DONALD L. STAHELI**

Served as a member of the Seventy from 1997 to 2006

*Your future happiness, personal righteousness, and relationship with the Lord will depend in large part on the habits you embrace and the choices and commitments you make.*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY STEVE KROPP

It has been said that one of the greatest tragedies of our time is that so many people live far below their potential. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917-2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles had a favorite two-word statement that he used frequently to motivate us: “Always improving.” President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) continually encouraged us to “lengthen our stride” and to “enlarge our vision.”<sup>1</sup> Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) said it another way: “The Lord loves each of us too much to merely let us go on being what we now are, for he knows what we have the possibility to become!”<sup>2</sup>

Implicit in these quotations is the message that each of us can and should do more to

meet the Lord’s expectations of us. During your years as a young adult, you’ll make choices and form patterns that will have a major impact on who you will become. Your future happiness, personal righteousness, and relationship with the Lord will depend in large part on the habits you embrace and the choices and commitments you make over the next few years.

With these statements in mind, I’d like to share a few ways you can take and keep control of your life and achieve your full potential.

## **Take Responsibility for What You Want to Become**

Is the road you are now traveling and the present conduct of your life leading you to achieve your full God-given potential?



**S**taying focused, disciplined, and committed to meaningful goals, both spiritual and temporal, is an important—in fact, an essential—key to your success here in this life and in the eternities to come.

If you were to make no changes in the present course of your life, would you be happy with who you are and what you have become five years from now? (I use the five-year time frame because the patterns, habits, and actions you take over the next five years will have tremendous impact on what you will become in the years that follow.)

Some of you have just left parents and family to be on your own for the first time. Many of you have had more years of experience in being independent and accountable for your personal actions. Others have returned from the discipline of a full-time mission to the less-structured life that follows. Regardless of your circumstances, these are the years when you must take responsibility for who you now are and what you want to become.

Many of you are well on your way with your education and the early stages of your careers. We commend you. If you are still pursuing your formal education, complete your degree or vocational training no matter the intellectual or financial struggles you encounter along the way. If you have not had the opportunity for advanced education or have dropped out of school for various reasons, think carefully about where you are. Remember, education is a vital key to the door of opportunity.

The Savior's parable of the talents is so applicable to you at this stage in your life. He knows there are differences between each of you intellectually, emotionally, and physically. The Lord only expects you to magnify and develop the talents and abilities you have been given. But He also expects you to be accountable for your actions

in so doing. Take control of your actions and prepare to succeed at whatever you are capable of doing. As President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) frequently counseled, “Just do the best you can, but be sure it is your very best.”<sup>3</sup>

This is also a time in your life when counsel from others can help you decide what you should be doing that will move you toward achieving your full potential. If you do not have a clear view of where you are going or what you want to do with your life, ask for help. There are numerous Church leaders, institute teachers, and friends who would be pleased to help mentor you through some of the challenges of life.

#### **Stay Focused and Use Your Time Wisely**

One of the most difficult challenges is to stay focused and stay on course—to finish what we have started. I am convinced that distractions and discouragement are some of Satan's most effective tools. He finds ways to help us make excuses about why we can't do this or that. He gets us involved in wasting our time and resources in things that lead us away from improving our lives and developing our talents. He blurs our focus by diverting our attention. This can happen to the very best of you.

A beautiful and vivacious young sister had just returned home from a very successful mission in South America.



***A*** *As you dare to be different,  
your exemplary conduct  
will not go unnoticed.*

As her stake president, I completed an interview and released her from her mission. I asked her, “What are your plans for the future and how are you going to keep vibrant the beautiful spirit and testimony that you have expressed this evening?”

“Oh, that’s simple, President Staheli. I have my goals very clearly outlined.”

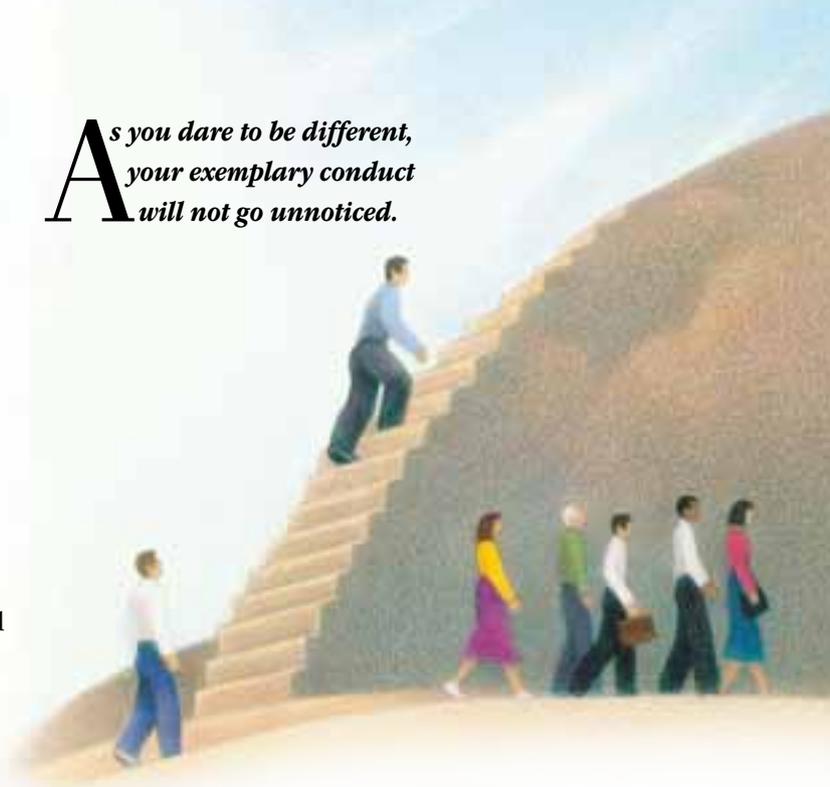
And then she enthusiastically recited several of them. They included daily prayer and scripture study, educational pursuits, and dreams of the kind of man she would marry. She really had her life together.

Several months later this young sister called for another interview—this time in preparation to be married and sealed in the temple to the young man of her dreams. As we finished, I casually asked, “How are you doing on your other goals?”

“What goals?” she replied.

As I reminded her of our earlier conversation, I recited back to her a few of the goals she had articulated to me. She teared up and her face flushed with embarrassment as she said, “President Staheli, I can’t believe I have forgotten so soon what was so important to me when I returned home from my mission.”

She still was a worthy young sister, but she had been caught up in the things of the world and had lost focus on some of the things of greatest worth to her. Staying focused, disciplined, and committed to meaningful goals, both spiritual and temporal, is an important—in fact, an essential—key to your success here in this life and in the eternities to come.



#### **Have the Courage to Be Different**

One of the greatest challenges for all of us is to learn how to live in the world without participating in all that it offers. Worldly standards will always be in a state of flux. The only true and unchanging standards are those set by the Savior and His teachings of the restored gospel.

Unfortunately, frequent exposure to what at first is unacceptable will over time legitimize in our minds that which we have seen and heard. Be careful that you do not become the victim of this seduction.

As you dare to be different, your exemplary conduct will not go unnoticed. Although you will be tried and tested, your faithful adherence to the Lord’s standards will be seen as a beacon in the night to those around you.

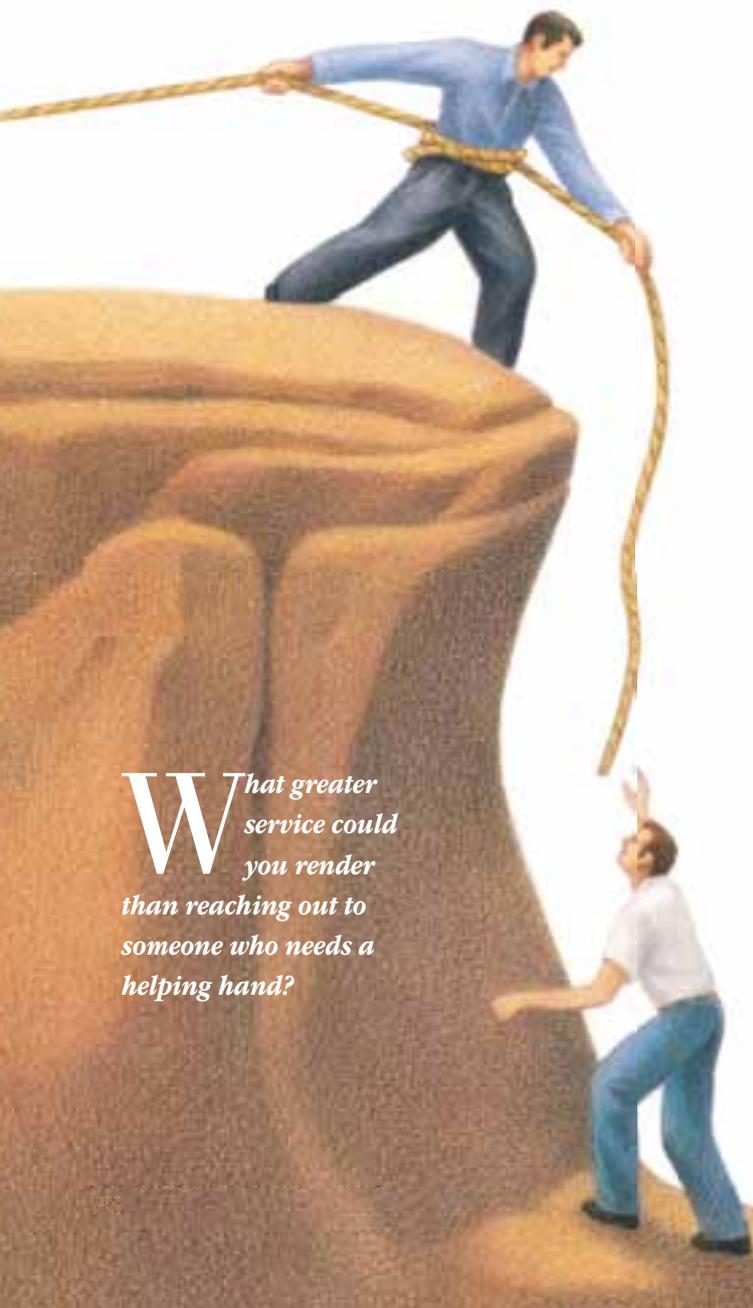
***O*** *ne of the most difficult  
challenges is to avoid  
wasting time, to stay  
focused and stay on course.*



Have the courage to be different when it is required of you to be true to the standards of the Church. You will be respected for it. And if occasionally you are not respected, you need not worry, because that is not the kind of association you will want or need in your future.

For those of you who are struggling because you may have crossed a line of the Lord's standards, please know there is a way back. The Lord loves you. His great atoning sacrifice was wrought so that the principles of repentance and forgiveness could be applied in each of our lives. Make an appointment this very week to see your bishop or branch president

**W**hat greater service could you render than reaching out to someone who needs a helping hand?



so that he can open the door to helping you to repent and to become clean and comfortable in your relationship with Heavenly Father and the Savior.

### **Lose Yourself in Service**

King Benjamin taught the standard for service when he said: "Behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17).

The Savior's life, as the ultimate example of service, made clear His feelings of the importance of our service. He said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

There is one particular way to find joy and happiness as you lose yourself in service to another. Each of you must know of at least one of your friends or acquaintances who is struggling with certain gospel principles. Some are discouraged, and some have even lost hope. Others have been disappointed or have faced daunting challenges that they were unable to understand or handle emotionally. The end result, for whatever reason, is the loss of faith in and a testimony of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. You may have friends who have become less active. In many cases personal habits or transgressions have overshadowed them with guilt—to the point where it has become difficult for them to come back.

What greater service could you render than reaching out to someone you know who needs a helping hand to return to full fellowship in the gospel of Jesus Christ?

The counsel the Lord gave to the Prophet Joseph Smith in June 1829 is applicable to each of you as you accept this challenge: "And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!" (D&C 18:15).

### **Keep Your Testimony Burning Brightly**

Because you are, according to President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), "the finest generation in the history of the Church,"<sup>4</sup> much is expected of you. Keep the fire of your testimony burning brightly through faith, prayer, scripture

study, and the spiritual blessings that come from obedience to the Lord's commandments. Reach your full potential spiritually and temporally by:

- Taking responsibility for who you are and what you want to become.
- Staying focused and using your time wisely.
- Having the courage to be different from those in the world around you.
- Losing yourself in service.

As you do these things, the Lord will bless you and strengthen you so that you may move forward in magnifying the talents and opportunities He has given you. I bear testimony of Heavenly Father's plan for each of you.

**K** *Keep the fire of your testimony burning brightly through faith, prayer, scripture study, and the spiritual blessings that come from obedience to the Lord's commandments.*



Jesus Christ is truly our Savior, and He very much loves and cares for each of you. As you keep His commandments and follow the counsel of the prophet and your leaders, He will be there to guide you through the challenges that lie ahead. ■

**NOTES**

1. Spencer W. Kimball, "When the World Will Be Converted," *Ensign*, Oct. 1974, 5.
2. Neal A. Maxwell, "In Him All Things Hold Together," in *Brigham Young University 1990–91 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* (1991), 107.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, "A Challenging Time—a Wonderful Time" (An Evening with President Gordon B. Hinckley, Feb. 7, 2003), 5.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, "A Chosen Generation," *Ensign*, May 1992, 69.

*Excerpted from a Church Educational System fireside address for young adults given March 2, 2003. For the full text, please visit [www.ldsces.org](http://www.ldsces.org).*

# The Great Plan of Our God



*Each dispensation has a special lesson that we can include in our personal plans as we prepare for our eternal destiny.*

**BY ELDER L. TOM PERRY**

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

In the fast pace of today's world, too many people are leaving much of life's experience to chance, without adequate planning and preparation. I find that when I ask some students what their major is, I often receive the answer, "I haven't decided yet. I will make that decision later." I have seen families and individuals fall into traps of debt because they have failed to make a sound financial plan and have lived beyond their means. Others overcommit themselves in activities, lessons, clubs, and athletics. While participation in such organizations can certainly be good, involvement in them can quickly turn frenzied when we fail to plan. In failing to plan, we lose sight of our eternal destiny.

We can find the ultimate example of planning by turning to the scriptures. In Moses 1:39, the Lord declares, "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." His great plan, which includes the atoning sacrifice, is to give immortality to all mankind. Through the gift and power of the priesthood, those who will adhere to and follow His plan will receive life eternal, the greatest gift God can give to His children (see D&C 14:7). The scriptures contain abundant references to this plan.

A history of the process of following that

design certainly testifies of its completeness and consistency. The Lord has carefully instructed His children about the gospel plan during periods of time called dispensations, periods when "the Lord has at least one authorized servant on the earth who bears the keys of the holy priesthood. . . .

" . . . When the Lord organizes a dispensation, the gospel is revealed anew so that the people of that dispensation do not have to depend on past dispensations for knowledge of the plan of salvation."<sup>1</sup>

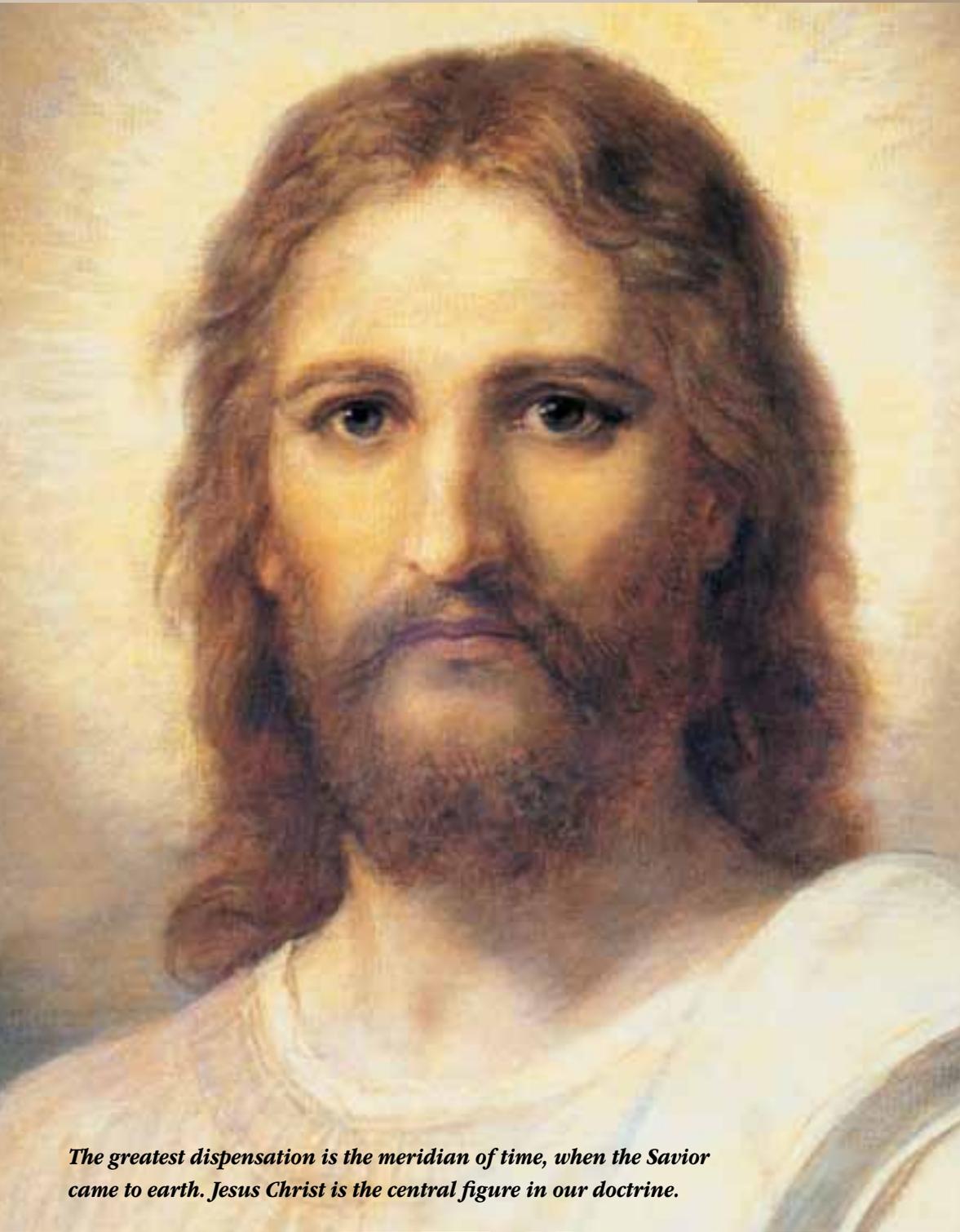
Each dispensation has a special lesson that we can include in our personal plans as we prepare for our eternal destiny.

## **The Dispensation of Adam: Become Like Our Father in Heaven**

In the first dispensation, the Lord created Adam and Eve, placed them on earth, and gave them opportunities to choose (see Moses 3:17). They were commanded not to



RIGHT: CHRIST'S IMAGE, BY HEINRICH HOFMANN; COURTESY OF C. HARRISON CONROY CO.; BELOW, FROM LEFT: ADAM AND EVE IN THE GARDEN, BY LOWELL BRUCE BENNETT; CITY OF ZION TRANSLATED, BY DEL PARSON; NOAH'S REACHING SCORNED, BY HARRY ANDERSON



*The greatest dispensation is the meridian of time, when the Savior came to earth. Jesus Christ is the central figure in our doctrine.*

## LESSONS FROM GOSPEL DISPENSATIONS

**The Dispensation of Adam: Become Like Our Father in Heaven**

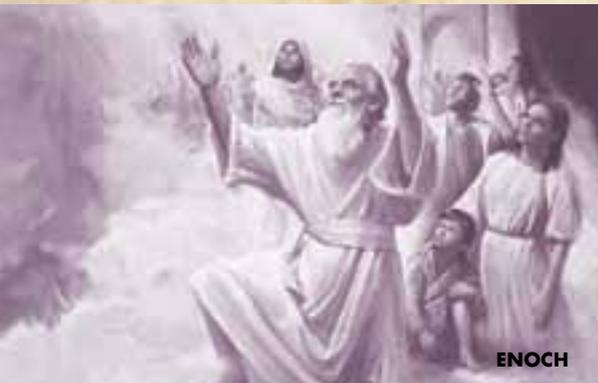
**The Dispensations of Enoch and Noah: Choose Righteousness over Wickedness**

**The Dispensation of Abraham: Make and Keep Covenants**

**The Dispensation of Moses: Follow the Lord's Prophets**

**The Meridian of Time: Let Your Light Shine**

**The Dispensation of the Fulness of Times: Rejoice in the Fulness of the Gospel**



ENOCH



NOAH

partake of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for they were told they would be cast out of the garden if they did. But partaking of the fruit would give them mortality. They partook of the fruit.

The Fall was not a disaster. It wasn't a mistake or an accident. It was a deliberate part of the Lord's plan of salvation. As a result of the Fall, we are subject to temptation and misery as a price to comprehend authentic joy. Without tasting the bitter, we would never be able to understand the sweet (see 2 Nephi 2:15). We required mortality's discipline and refinement for the next step of our development to become more like our Father.

What does this first dispensation teach us? We are the literal spiritual offspring of our Heavenly Father. When we are born into mortality, we receive physical bodies created in His image (see Genesis 1:27). We are promised that if we receive the necessary ordinances, keep the covenants, and obey God's commandments, we will enter into exaltation and become like Him.

We also learn that as sons and daughters of an Eternal Father, we can communicate with Him through prayer and receive answers through inspiration and revelation. Included in our life's plan should be constant and regular communication with our Father.

### **The Dispensations of Enoch and Noah: Choose Righteousness over Wickedness**

The second dispensation is known as that of Enoch, who "walked with God" (Genesis 5:24). He established the city of Zion, which became a powerful symbol of the righteousness that can be obtained on earth as well as in heaven (see Moses 7:18–21).

Next in line is the dispensation of Noah. Noah lived in times of great wickedness, and although he cried to the people to repent, they did not heed his words. When the flood came, only Noah and his family were saved (see Genesis 7:23).

The second and third dispensations teach us great

lessons about what comes from choosing good over evil. Enoch and all who were with him were blessed mightily as a result of their righteousness. The people who would not follow Noah found that destruction follows the sinner.

These two dispensations teach us to seek after that which is good and wholesome. In our plan for life, certainly our objective will be to absorb as much of the good as we can find on this earth. We can find much of this good by searching the scriptures daily. They will lead us to life eternal.

### **The Dispensation of Abraham: Make and Keep Covenants**

The next dispensation was that of Abraham. Like Adam, Enoch, and Noah, Abraham received a divine commission from the Lord. The Lord also made covenants—or binding, firm agreements—with Abraham:

"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee. . . .



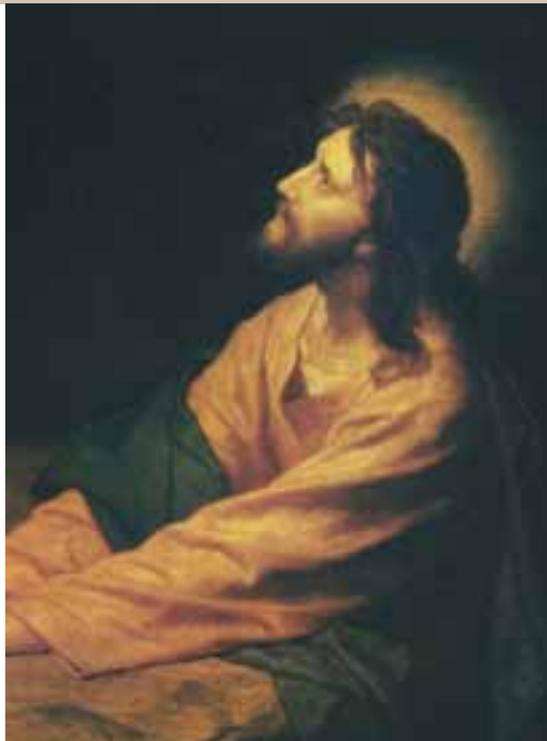
"And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations;

"And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father;

FROM LEFT: ABRAHAM ON THE PLAINS OF MAMRE, BY GRANT ROMNEY; CLAWSON; MOSES PARTING THE RED SEA, BY ROBERT BARRETT; LIGHT AND TRUTH, BY SIMON DEWEY; BROTHER JOSEPH, BY DAVID LINDSEY; CHRIST IN GETSEMANE, BY HEINRICH HOFMANN; COURTESY OF C. HARRISON CONROY CO.

“And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal” (Abraham 2:3, 9–11).

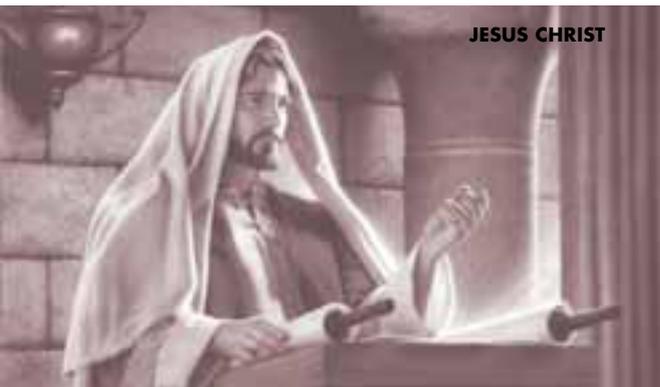
Latter-day Saints are a covenant people. We have agreements with the Lord in which He promises us many blessings on condition that we commit ourselves to obey His laws and commandments. Our plan for life should include making and keeping covenants. We can do this in part by always living worthy of holding a current temple recommend.



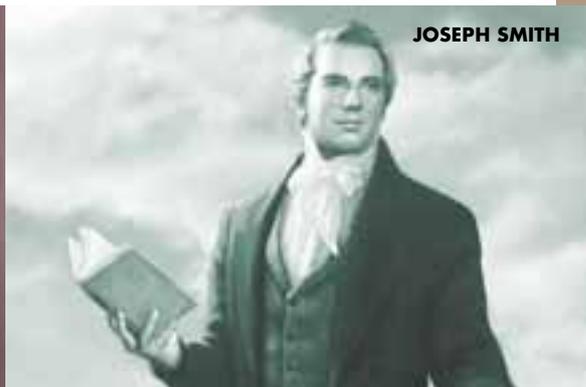
**T**he Savior died, was buried, and rose on the third day to make the atoning sacrifice for all mankind so that death would not hold permanent power. Because of that act, all would rejoice and enjoy immortality.

Through these and other lessons from the Lord, Moses became an effective leader.

We too can become effective leaders. Leadership requires balance in our lives. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008)



JESUS CHRIST



JOSEPH SMITH

**The Dispensation of Moses: Follow the Lord’s Prophets**

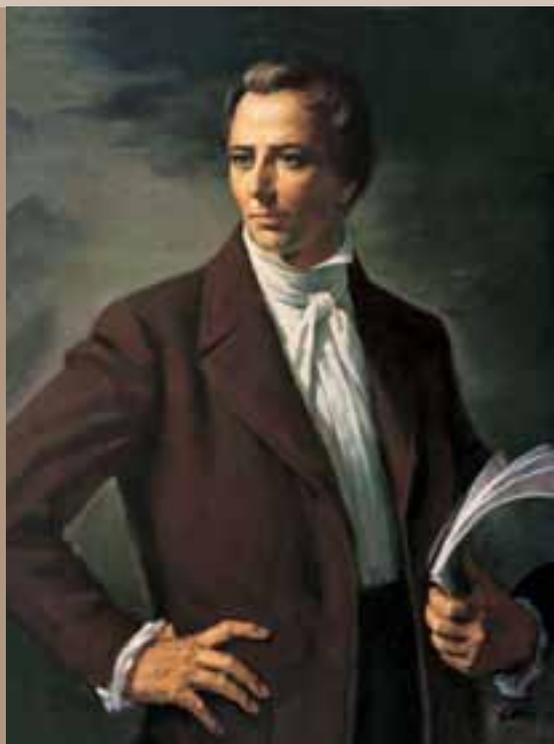
Moses was one of the mightiest men who ever lived. He walked and talked with God. He was chosen by God to deliver Israel from the bondage of Egypt (see Exodus 6:13). He was privileged to receive for mankind the great law contained in the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 19; 20).

outlined the responsibilities we should consider when allocating and balancing our time to achieve success:

- A responsibility to our families.
- A responsibility to our employers.
- A responsibility to the Lord’s work.
- A responsibility to ourselves. This was particularly interesting to me.

President Hinckley noted that we must allot time for

**W**e are living in the remarkable age of the dispensation of the fulness of times, when the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in its fulness.



rest, exercise, recreation, study, meditation, and temple worship in order to be balanced in our lives.<sup>2</sup>

The dispensation of Moses teaches us and prepares us to follow prophetic leadership and to develop ourselves into more effective tools in building our Father in Heaven's kingdom on earth.

#### **The Meridian of Time: Let Your Light Shine**

Of course the greatest dispensation is the meridian of time, when the Savior came to earth. Jesus Christ is the central figure in our doctrine. He was more than just sinless, good, and loving. He was more than just a teacher. He ministered on earth as a man, though He was the Son of God. He died, was buried, and rose on the third day to make the atoning sacrifice for all mankind so that death would not hold permanent power. Because of that act, all would rejoice and enjoy immortality.

Among the many things the Savior taught us was that we are the light of the world and that we should let our light shine before others (see Matthew 5:14–16). We have been

blessed to receive His gospel. Let your light shine that others may see your good works and want to learn more of God's eternal plan.

#### **The Dispensation of the Fulness of Times: Rejoice in the Fulness of the Gospel**

We are living in the remarkable age of the dispensation of the fulness of times, when the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in its fulness (see D&C 27:13). Our generation also has the benefit of all previous dispensations on which we can build our lives as we understand God's dealings with His children.

The words of the Lord, as they have been given to us through the ages from His holy prophets, have guided us in a plan the Lord has established for us. That plan is complete from the beginning of time until we have an opportunity, if we live worthily, to live with Him in the eternities to come.

You are children of promise. I hope that you do not plan to be just common but that you plan to excel. There is no place in this world for mediocrity; we need to strive for perfection. You can obtain perfection in so many areas as you seek and work toward the goals you have established.

You have a rich heritage; do not be afraid to think and act according to the principles of the gospel and to enjoy its blessings as you fulfill the measure of your creation as a child of God. God bless you that you may have the desire to go forward and seek salvation under this great plan He has given us. ■

*From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University on October 30, 2007.*

#### **NOTES**

1. Guide to the Scriptures, "Dispensation"; available at [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org) in the Gospel Library under "Scriptures."
2. See Gordon B. Hinckley, "Rejoicing in the Privilege to Serve," *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, June 21, 2003, 22–23.

## UNDERSTAND THE DIVINE ROLES OF WOMEN



*Teach the scriptures and quotations that meet the needs of the sisters you visit. Bear testimony of the doctrine. Invite those you teach to share what they have felt and learned.*

**Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president:** “I have a testimony gained from pondering and studying the scriptures of a plan of happiness given to us by our Father in Heaven. That plan has a part for His daughters. We have the female half to take care of, and if we don’t do our part, no one else is going to do it for us. The half of our Father’s plan that creates life, that nurtures souls, that promotes growth, that influences everything else was given to us. We can’t delegate it. We can’t pass it off to anyone. It’s ours. We can refuse it, we can deny it, but it’s still our part, and we’re accountable for it. There will come a day when we will all remember what we knew before we were born. We will remember that we fought in a great conflict for this privilege. How do we meet this responsibility? We daily put our energies into the work that is uniquely ours to do.”

**Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:** “The basic doctrinal purpose for the Creation of the earth is to provide for God’s spirit children the continuation of the process of exaltation and eternal life. . . .

“ . . . Although there is simply not a more significant contribution you can make to society, to the Church, or to the eternal destiny of our Father’s children than what you will do as a mother or father, motherhood and fatherhood are not the only measures of goodness or of one’s acceptance before the Lord. . . .

“Every sister in this Church who has made covenants with the Lord has a divine mandate to help save souls, to lead the women of the world, to strengthen the homes of Zion, and to build the kingdom of God” (“Women of Righteousness,” *Liahona*, Dec. 2002, 36, 39; *Ensign*, Apr. 2002, 68, 70).

**Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:** “By divine design, men and women are intended to progress together toward perfection and a fulness of glory. Because of their distinctive temperaments and capacities, males and females each bring to a marriage relationship unique perspectives and experiences. The man and the woman contribute differently but equally to

a oneness and a unity that can be achieved in no other way” (“Marriage Is Essential to His Eternal Plan,” *Liahona*, June 2006, 51–52; *Ensign*, June 2006, 83–84).



**Silvia H. Allred, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency:** “The Lord has blessed women with divine attributes of love, compassion, kindness, and charity. Through our monthly visits as visiting teachers, we have the power to bless each sister as we extend our arms of love and kindness and give the gifts of compassion and charity. No matter what our individual circumstances are, we all have the opportunity to edify and nurture others” (“Feed My Sheep,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 113).

**President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985):** “To be a righteous woman during the winding up scenes on this earth, before the second coming of our Savior, is an especially noble calling. The righteous woman’s strength and influence today can be tenfold what it might be in more tranquil times” (“Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 103). ■

## SERVING SINGLE MOTHERS

I was a widow for three and a half years with five small children before I served as stake Relief Society president. I have had many opportunities to help others become more aware of single mothers and the challenges their families face. I know from experience how important it is for those who attend bishop's council to pay close attention to "the cries of the widow and the fatherless" (D&C 136:8). Home teachers, visiting teachers, and other fellow ward members can do much to help.

**"Let us know if you need anything."** This common home teaching and visiting teaching offer may be helpful to some members, but others are too shy to ask for help. Instead, what if we were to observe what needs to be done and offer specific help? "We just mowed our yard. Would you like help with yours?" Offers to help with yard maintenance, as well as home and mechanical repairs, can lighten a family's load tremendously.

If you are a Melchizedek Priesthood holder, you might also offer priesthood blessings at the beginning of the school year, when

there is illness, or when comfort is needed. Establish a good friendship so the family will feel welcome to ask for or accept an offer to receive a priesthood blessing.

**Seek opportunities to be a mentor.**

Particularly if the children in your family and those of a single mother are of similar ages, offer to help with hobbies or school and Church projects. You might attend some of their activities if it's feasible. When you and your son attend a father-son activity, include a boy who has no father at home. Pair a priesthood-age son with a home teacher who is a good example. Teach basic skills such as mowing the lawn, changing the oil in the car, fixing a flat tire—things a dad might teach a child.

**Support the mother.** Single mothers may seek insights about child rearing or

overcoming feelings of loneliness and other frustrations. They need to feel comfortable turning to a bishop, home teachers and visiting teachers, or ward friends who are truly willing to assist them as they provide for their families and try to maintain a gospel-centered home.

**Diane D. Woolf, Arizona**

## REAL PICTURES, REAL PRINCIPLES

**W**hen you teach real doctrines and principles," our stake Primary music leader said, "you need real pictures." I knew she was right and that her message also came from the Primary





**Things I Love about You**

**L**ittle did we know that one family home evening activity would have such a lasting impact on us.

Inspired by lessons at seminary, my brother Dennis decided to help us share positive comments about one another. He gave each of us enough pieces of paper to write something about each of our eight family members. At the top of these pages it said, "Things I love about \_\_\_\_\_," followed by 10 numbered spaces for our comments. We soon got busy filling in the blanks. When we finished, we exchanged the pages written about us so that

each person received 80 compliments. Of course, we all enjoyed reading others' positive impressions of us, but the full impact of this activity was yet to come. Throughout the years, I sometimes struggled to make righteous choices or to feel good about myself. During these low points, I would turn to these special pages that I kept in my journal and re-read them to feel hopeful and loved. I thought I was the only

one who had kept them, but after my sister Taunya died from leukemia in September 2001, I found her journal. Tucked inside was her set of well-worn pages with our family's praises. When I shared this with my siblings, they all said that they, too, had kept their copies close by in times of trial. Our family has been blessed to know that we love and support one another—forever. **Wendy Allred, Colorado**



general board. Though I had often used commercially prepared materials to illustrate the Primary songs I was teaching, I resolved to find "real pictures."

I soon found a variety of good sources—some right in my home—that I could use as is, cut out, or copied. Church magazines, the Gospel Art Picture Kit, old lesson manual picture packets, illustrated scripture readers, the family home evening manual, and the *Children's Songbook* have been some of my best and most readily available resources. Sometimes I have had to search a little to find just the right visual, but the effect is worth it. A cartoon sketch does not convey the same feelings as a beautiful piece of art or other carefully prepared illustrations or pictures. I have a testimony that using Church-approved visuals invites the Spirit to enlighten the children's minds as they learn and sing gospel truths.

**NOTE**

Items listed above are available through LDS Church distribution centers. If you do not live near a distribution center, you can place orders online at [www.ldscatalog.com](http://www.ldscatalog.com). U.S. and Canadian residents may also telephone the Salt Lake Distribution Center at 1-800-537-5971.

**Jeanne Koniuszy, Arizona**

**CARDS THAT KEEP**

**I** gave my wife what I thought was a one-time gift for Christmas, but when Valentine's Day drew close, I saw my gift as one that could truly "keep on giving." I enjoy giving cards to my wife, but I realized that

they were usually read once or twice and then tossed into a box or binder or discarded in the trash. I wanted something that would be long lasting for my wife to read again and again. So I substituted an inexpensive notebook for my Christmas card and wrote down my memories and feelings about our courtship and marriage. There was no specific order or theme to my entries. I just wrote down what came to mind.

When Valentine's Day approached, I decided to pull out the notebook, write down my feelings once again, and wrap it up as my "card." After

this, the notebook entries weren't just for holiday gifts. Now anytime she does something kind for me or I feel a rush of love and appreciation for her, I pull out the notebook and record those feelings. I never tell her when I have added an entry. I let her be surprised when she checks the notebook periodically.

And I was pleasantly surprised for my birthday when my wife gave me my own "notebook card," sharing her feelings for me. We look forward to filling these notebooks and many more for years to come.

**Kimball Benson, Utah**

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## MY TRUE PURPOSE AS A MISSIONARY

By Denise Barfuss

I had been serving as a full-time missionary in Argentina for only two months when word arrived that my younger, and only, sister was engaged. Rebecca and I were close growing up and had dreamed of each other's weddings, but now I would miss hers.

My parents sent me plans, pictures, menus, and schedules, but I still felt left out, alone, and far away. Missionary work was hard and slow. I found myself wondering what I was doing so far from home, and I became confused about what I was supposed to accomplish.

Nevertheless, I knew that the Lord had called me to serve, and I had a strong testimony of prayer and the power of the priesthood. I received a blessing of comfort that promised me I was where I needed to be.

As missionaries we often shared the exhortation found in Moroni 10:4–5. I believed firmly in the promise of those verses—that if I asked God, my Eternal Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, I could know the truth of all things by the power of the Holy Ghost. I prayed diligently to know whether I had done the right thing by coming to Argentina instead of remaining at home, where I would



**A** young man called to us. We ignored him, but when he called again, I felt a prompting to answer him.

have been helping my sister prepare for her wedding. As her wedding drew closer, my prayers became increasingly heartfelt. I felt the reassuring influence of the Spirit, but I still hoped for an answer.

Two weeks before the wedding, my companion and I were walking home from a lunch appointment with members of the branch in which we served. The branch was in a little town in central Argentina, where people observed the midday custom of siesta. At that time of day there was usually no one about.

As we walked along, however, a young man called to us. Because many young men teased us, we ignored him and continued walking.

When he called again, I felt a prompting to answer him.

His name was Horacio, and he wanted to know if we were friends with two young women who had been reading the Book of Mormon with his cousin. He told us he had felt something special while the sisters, who also served in our branch, were reading. He wanted to know if he could come to our church.

As we taught Horacio with the help of local members, he quickly grew to love the gospel. He changed his life as he grew in the gospel, but his family raised objections and his friends rejected him. Nevertheless, Horacio felt the love of the Lord and desired to follow Him. I had some of the most special experiences of my mission teaching Horacio.

As my family sat in the Oakland

California Temple watching my sister complete one of the ordinances that would help prepare her for the celestial kingdom, I sat in a little chapel in General Pico, Argentina, waiting for Horacio to complete an interview in preparation for receiving his first saving ordinance—baptism. My sister had been able to prepare for her ordinances without my help, but Horacio might not have been able to do the same. He needed my companion and me to teach him the gospel, and I needed him to remind me of my true purpose as a missionary—helping bring souls to Christ.

As I prepared to leave Argentina at the end of my mission, Horacio was preparing to serve his own mission. Through him, Heavenly Father had answered my prayers and then sent Horacio to answer the prayers of others. ■

**W**<sup>hy</sup> would I feel such a strong impression to seek Stuart's help, only to find out he was unavailable?

## HE MUST BE HERE!

By Paul Culbert

**O**ne Saturday morning I received a phone call from a friend, another young single adult in our ward in Wiltshire, England. Her stepmother, who lived in the same village as I, was ill at home in bed. She could hardly move and, though not a member of the

Church, had asked if I could give her a blessing.

I had been a member of the Church for just a few months, but because of training in priesthood meeting, I felt reasonably prepared to give a blessing, though a little apprehensive. I said I would find a companion and come as soon as possible.

I immediately thought of the nearest elder in the ward and drove to his abode. His wife answered and reminded me that the endowed brethren in the Swindon Ward had gone to the temple that day. As I drove away, somewhat despondently, I stopped the car and asked Heavenly Father for direction.

As I prayed, I asked if there was a Melchizedek Priesthood holder available to go with me. The name of Stuart Ramsey immediately came to my mind. I didn't have his phone number, but he and his wife, Gill, lived on an air force base about six miles away.

Arriving at their home, I knocked on the door with full confidence that Stuart would be able to accompany me. "He's not here," Gill said to my surprise. "He had to go to the base."

Undeterred, I asked if I could contact him. She explained that Stuart, a



mechanic, was helping a friend with his car in a secured area of the base. He couldn't be contacted by phone, and I wouldn't be allowed past the security gates.

Why would I feel such a strong impression to seek Stuart's help, only to find out he was unavailable? Had I misunderstood the answer to my prayer? "No," I thought to myself, "he *must* be here."

At that very moment I heard a cheery voice call out from behind me. "Paul, what are you doing here?" It was Stuart! He had been struggling to repair his friend's car and had felt impressed that he should return home. I explained my predicament, and he readily agreed to assist me in administering a blessing.

I was grateful to have Stuart's experience. He anointed, and as I sealed the anointing, I felt prompted to pronounce a blessing of healing. As I drove Stuart home, he rejoiced in being led by the Spirit to leave his work in time to meet me at his house.

I was overjoyed the next morning to learn that my friend's step-mother was feeling much better. I have administered blessings on many occasions since, but I am grateful that I learned early on that no matter how inexperienced we are in our priesthood duties, when we rely on the Lord, keep His commandments, and do our best to magnify our callings, He will guide us in the path we should take. ■

## ELDERS, NEED A LIFT?

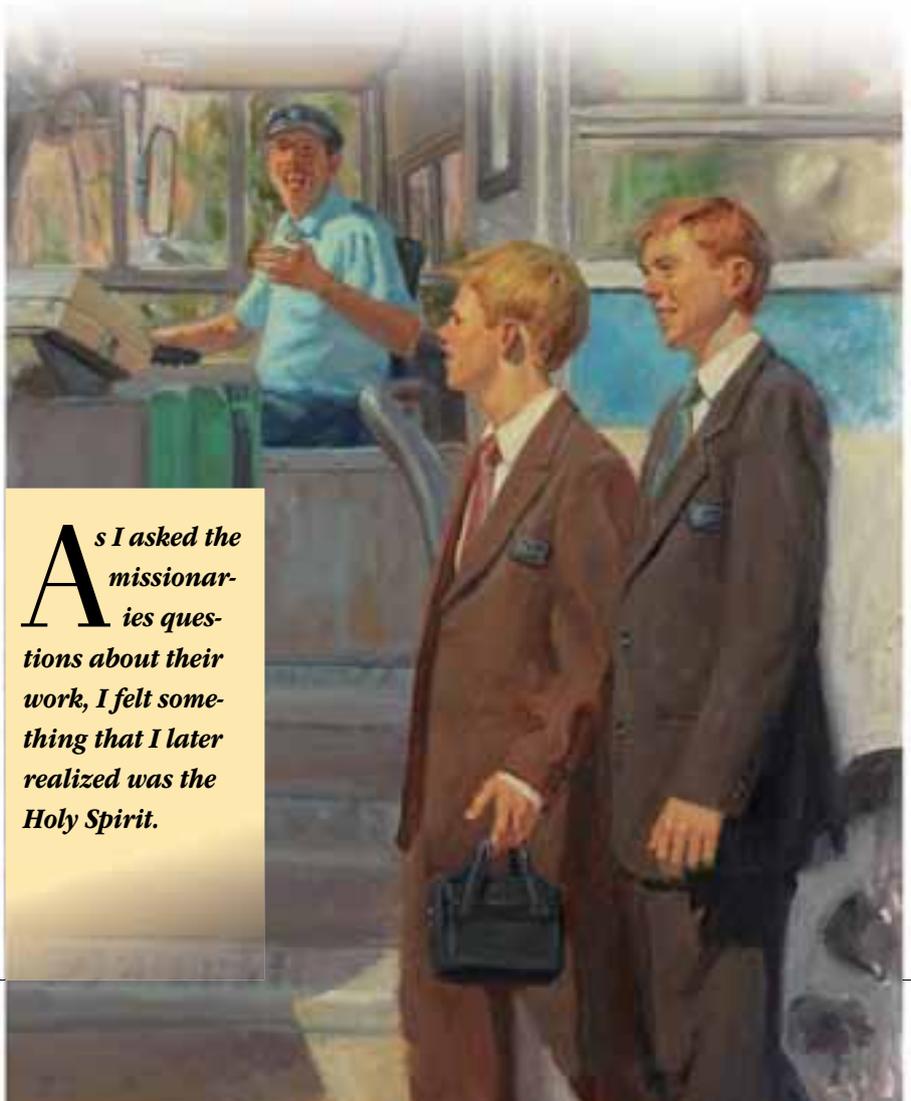
By Errol Fernando

**A**fter a long day of driving my bus in Victoria, Australia, I was making my last trip of the evening, heading home. On the way I saw two well-dressed young men walking. I decided to stop the bus and ask them if they needed a lift.

I asked them why they wore name tags, white shirts, and ties.

One of them explained that they were missionaries for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As I asked questions about their work, I felt something fill the bus that I later realized was the Holy Spirit. When I asked them to tell me more about Jesus Christ, I couldn't help but become excited by their answers.

Unfortunately it was getting late, so I dropped off the missionaries in Dandenong. Afterward, I was sad when I realized that I did not get their phone number. For weeks I prayed



**A**s I asked the missionaries questions about their work, I felt something that I later realized was the Holy Spirit.

that I could meet them again. As I drove my bus route, I even looked for them. Months went by, and then an unbelievable thing happened on my birthday, August 19, 2002.

As I was eating lunch with my wife, Camelia, a knock came at the door. When she answered it, I heard familiar voices. It was the missionaries I had met on the bus! They were just as surprised to see me as I was to see them. They had been tracting on our street and were led to our house. My prayers had been answered.

Elders Jason Frandsen and James Thieler immediately began teaching us. The Book of Mormon and the Prophet Joseph Smith were new to us, but we easily understood the gospel because we had a Christian background. The missionaries asked us to pray about and ponder what we were learning. As we did so, we felt the Spirit, a desire to attend church, and a prompting to be baptized. We have been blessed ever since.

Today, several years later, I still drive a bus, and I still give rides to missionaries. But now I help them carry out missionary work by introducing people to them and by sharing the Book of Mormon and other Church materials with my passengers.

People on my bus can't help but notice how happy I am. When they ask why, I simply say, "The Lord has done this for me. He can change your life too." ■

## HAVE A CUP

By Eleanor F. Williamson

**N**ot long after we joined the Church, my husband and I were vacationing in Bermuda. While there I took advantage one day of a midafternoon social held in our hotel. As I was eyeing the delicious pastries, I caught a whiff of the smell of tea. I found it so inviting that in my mind I seemed to hear a voice say, "Have a cup."

I had faithfully lived the Word of Wisdom since my baptism. In my mind I said, "No, I will not."

"Oh, come on," a soothing voice seemed to say in reply. "You don't know anybody here, and you are far from home."

With even more conviction, I once again responded in my mind, "No, I will not!"

Again that enticing, reasoning voice came: "No one will *ever* know."

Firmly I responded, "I will know!"

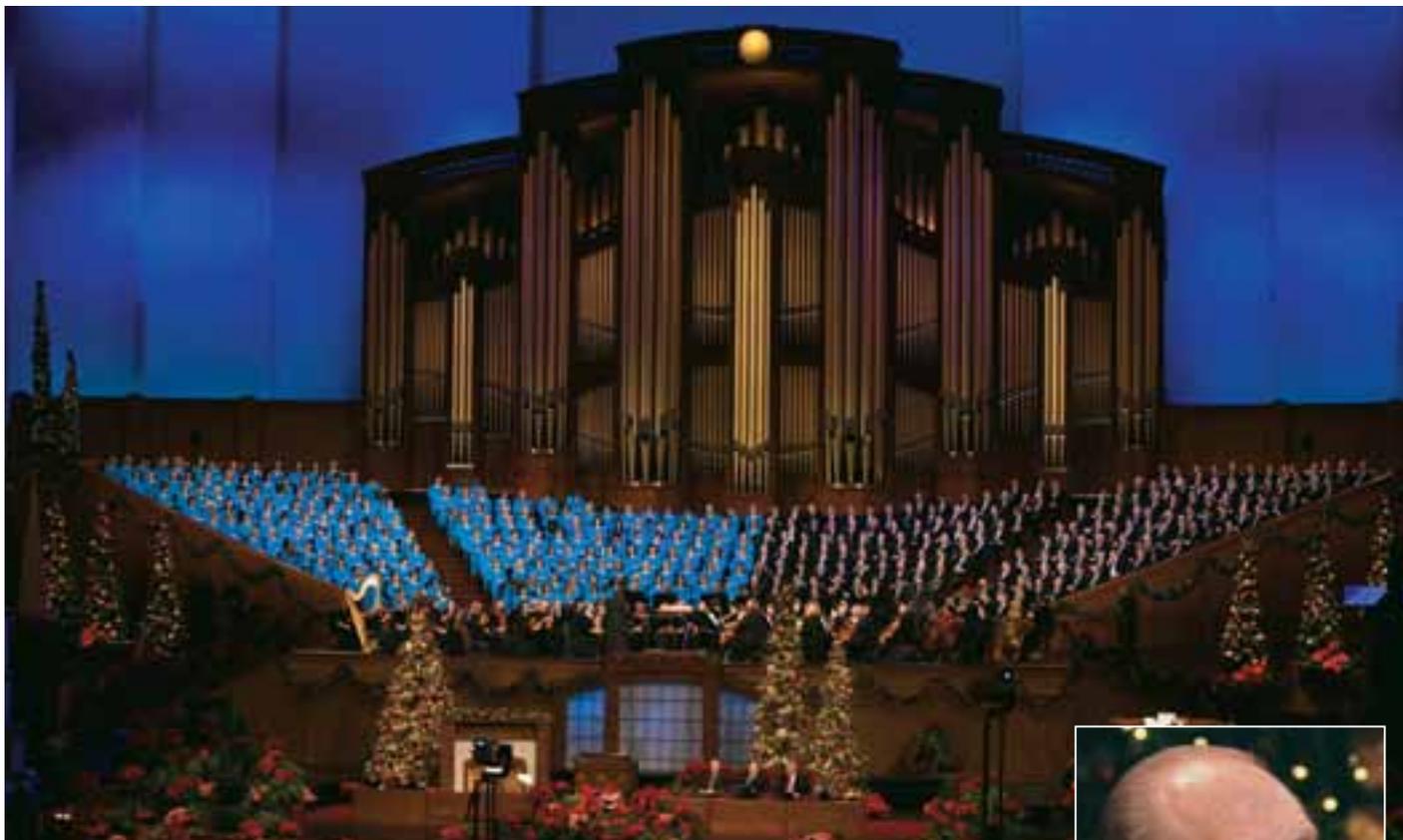
At that point I was standing by a waiter who was pouring tea. Resolutely I passed by. As I looked for a table, I was surprised to hear someone call out my name. To my amazement I saw the smiling face of a former boss whom I had not seen for many years. He came up to me, and as we walked toward a table he said, "I heard that you joined the Mormon Church. Tell me all about it."



**A**gain that enticing, reasoning voice came: "No one will ever know."

I was happy to oblige, sharing with him some principles of the gospel, my happiness as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and my testimony. My former boss told me that he had been researching his family name and that he had documented many generations of family history. He was sincerely interested in what I had to share about the Church, and I felt a great outpouring of the Spirit as we conversed.

During our visit a thought came into my mind: "Could you have had this conversation had you put a cup of tea on your tray?" I knew the answer. Had I given in to temptation, I would have missed out on a memorable spiritual experience and a chance to share my testimony. ■



*The First Presidency, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, and the Orchestra at Temple Square await the beginning of the annual First Presidency Christmas Devotional.*

## First Presidency Focuses on Serving Christ

Members of the First Presidency used the December 2008 First Presidency Christmas Devotional to teach members to serve the Savior and His children by making room for Him, establishing traditions that honor Him, and learning to give as He gave by loving as He loves.

President Thomas S. Monson and his counselors, President Henry B. Eyring and President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, spoke from the Conference Center. Music was provided by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra at Temple Square.

### **President Monson: Make Room for the Savior**

Retelling the story of the innkeeper in Bethlehem, President Monson warned members not to let the opportunity pass by to make room for Christ in their lives.

“The innkeeper missed the greatest opportunity that an innkeeper could ever have had,” President Monson said. Years later it would not do him any good to say, “If only I had known who they were.”

Some homes today have rooms for eating, rooms for sleeping, play rooms, sewing rooms, television rooms, but no room for Christ, he said.

“Do we experience a pang of conscience as we recall His own words: ‘Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head’ (Luke 9:58)?” he asked.

“In our busy lives, with ever so many others competing for our attention, it is essential that we make a conscious, committed effort to bring Christ into our lives and into our homes.”

President Monson outlined the Savior’s ministry of service. “During His earthly ministry, He taught men the higher law. His glorious gospel reshaped the thinking of the world. He blessed the



**President Thomas S. Monson**

sick. He caused the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear. Why, He even raised the dead to life.”

However, there were only “a precious few who appreciated Him. They bathed His feet. They learned His word. They followed His example.”

President Monson explained, “As we follow in His steps today, as we emulate His example, we will have opportunities to bless the lives of others.”

But while the opportunities

to give of ourselves are limitless, President Monson said those opportunities are also perishable. “Is there someone for whom you should provide service?” he asked.

“There is yet time this year to extend the helping hand, the loving heart, and the willing spirit—in other words, to follow the example set by our Savior and to serve as He would have us serve,” President Monson said. “As we do serve Him, we will not forfeit our opportunity, as did the innkeeper of old, to make time for Him in our lives and room for Him in our hearts. . . . May we follow Him, serve Him, honor Him, and receive in our lives His gifts to us.”

#### **President Eyring: Disciples of the Lamb Honor Him**

Disciples of Jesus Christ establish family traditions that honor the Savior’s life and teach who He is and what He has done for us, said President Eyring.

Each Christmas Eve, the Eyring family performed a family Christmas pageant based on the scriptural accounts of the Savior’s birth. Through the years, the children filled the parts of Mary and Joseph, the baby Jesus, shepherds, angels, wise men, and even sheep. The annual experience helped teach them about the Savior, why they should love Him, and how they should honor Him.

But looking back, President Eyring said, he wished he had taught them more about what an important part they were playing as lambs. “They were following the shepherds to honor the baby Jesus,

born to be the infinite sacrifice, the priceless gift of Heavenly Father to all His children,” he said.

As John the Baptist said, the Savior was “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

“The Savior, the Lamb of God, was the greatest gift ever given,” President Eyring said. “His perfect life and His unimaginable suffering made possible our forgiveness from all sin and the possibility to choose eternal life; to be lifted up to live forever with God, in families, and in glory.”

President Eyring explained that for us to receive that gift, “we must try with all our hearts and strength to



**President Henry B. Eyring**

do what He did. We cannot give the great gift to others that He gave, the gift of the Atonement . . . but we can try to do His works and help Him serve others as He would serve them.”

For many disciples of Christ, that service is part of their family traditions, President Eyring said. Though each family’s traditions may differ according to circumstances, he encouraged every family to create traditions with some things in common:

“They will draw hearts to the Savior,” he said. And “they will include acts of kindness, which in the world to come will merit the approbation of the Savior as He welcomes those He honors with the title of being His sheep.”

#### **President Uchtdorf: Give as He Gave by Loving as He Loves**

President Uchtdorf encouraged members not to be distracted from the real meaning of Christmas by the getting and giving of gifts but rather to learn how to give from the example of the Savior.

“In our modern world, we often think of giving and receiving gifts when we think of Christmas,” he said. “Although this can be part of a cherished tradition, it can also detract from the simple dignity of the season and distract us from celebrating the birth of our Savior in a meaningful way. . . . It doesn’t take expensive gifts to make Christmas meaningful.”

In considering simplicity, President Uchtdorf encouraged members to “think of the simple yet dignified way our Heavenly Father chose to honor the birth of His Son. On that holy night, angels appeared not to the rich, but to the shepherds. The Christ child was born not in a mansion, but in a manger. The child was wrapped not in silk, but in swaddling clothes.”

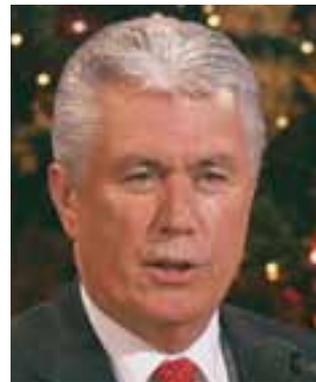
President Uchtdorf taught that the simplicity of that first Christmas foreshadowed the modest, humble life of the Savior.

“He had no place to lay His head, and He walked

ever among the poor, the sick, the downcast, and the heavy laden. Though He was a King, He cared neither for the honors nor for the riches of men. His life, His words, His daily activities were monuments of simple yet profound dignity.”

President Uchtdorf explained that “Jesus the Christ, who knew perfectly how to give, set for us the pattern of giving.

“To those whose hearts are heavy with loneliness and sorrow, He brings compassion and comfort. To those whose bodies and minds are afflicted with illness and suffering, He brings love and healing. To those whose souls



**President Dieter F. Uchtdorf**

are burdened with sin, He offers hope, forgiveness, and redemption.”

With the Savior’s example in mind, President Uchtdorf invited members: “As He gave to us, let us give to Him by loving as He loves. . . .

“May we remember the humble dignity of His birth, His gifts, and His life. May we, through our simple acts of kindness, charity, and compassion, fill the world with the light of His love and His healing power.” ■

# Wheelchairs Enable Recipients Worldwide

By Eric Eames, Church Magazines

The Kabin Buri district in Thailand is considered “up country,” which means it takes a lot of gasoline and traveling along rough roads to get there. It is in this obscure area where Pipop Leytaison begins every day with anticipation, hoping to inspire the disabled through his ability.

Having no use of his arms or legs since birth, Mr. Leytaison, who is now 50 years old, spent most of his life being carried from place to place in someone else’s arms. Yet he always yearned for the chance to be more self-reliant.

Ever since Mr. Leytaison received a wheelchair as part of one of the Church’s ongoing humanitarian service initiatives, he has not only become more independent, but he has also become a champion for the disabled. He has helped provide a training center that teaches others with disabilities how they can support themselves. He has organized a support network to help find and deliver information to the disabled. Through this network two businesses have been created, providing jobs where those with disabilities and those without work side

by side. He has also developed a small farm to raise chickens, wild boars, fish, and frogs.

“Wheelchairs improve [recipients’] sense of well-being and self-worth as they become more able to assist and care for themselves,” said Sister Theone Snow of Sydney, Australia, who is serving a humanitarian mission in Thailand with her husband, Robert.

## First Major Humanitarian Initiative

From 2001 to 2008 the Church delivered nearly 300,000 wheelchairs in 95 countries.

With help from the Wheelchair Foundation, a nonprofit organization focused on bringing the gift of mobility to the disabled,

the Church’s wheelchair program began in 2001 as the first of four major humanitarian initiatives along with clean water (2002), neonatal resuscitation training (2003), and vision care (2003).

There have also been two special initiatives: measles eradication (2003); and family food production (2007), which is supported by the Benson Institute (an agricultural research institute established in honor of Church President Ezra Taft Benson [1899–1994] through Brigham Young University in 1975).

“With the wheelchairs, we saw a worldwide, ongoing need for this product,” said Patrick Reese, humanitarian services planning and administration manager.

## Different Wheelchairs

Over the years the Church has improved the program by offering four different models of wheelchairs, each designed for a variety of terrains and needs. The four different types include a standard hospital wheelchair that comes in five sizes; an outdoor wheelchair with thick inflatable tires; the “rough rider” wheelchair, which allows travel over curbs, steps, and rougher terrain; and a specialized tricycle-style wheelchair that allows people to push themselves forward and steer with a hand crank.

Most of the wheelchairs are produced in China. However, the Church is beginning to emphasize local production of the wheelchairs in order to provide jobs for disabled individuals



**Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Seventy, Asia Area President, presents His Excellency Kamthon Sindhvananda, president of the king of Thailand’s Sai Jai Thai Foundation, and Araya Arunanondchai with wheelchairs.**

and to stimulate a country's economy. Local production also provides better repair options, since the parts are made locally.

The Church uses factories in Kenya, Vietnam, and South Africa, where wheelchair recipients are employed to produce the specialized, rough terrain wheelchairs. Brother Reese said more such factories are forthcoming, as is a training program to help people who receive a wheelchair learn how to use it and repair it. The training will also teach participants jobs they can perform in a wheelchair.

#### The Blessings of Mobility

Improper health care, accidents, and birth defects have immobilized an estimated 50 to 100 million children and adults worldwide. Wheelchairs can enable these individuals to become a part of the community, socialize, and assist with household duties.

In northern Thailand, 40-year-old Sutham Yamao was born with crippled hands and feet. Since his parents died in 1998, Mr. Yamao has lived on his own and has managed to bathe, clothe, and feed himself without assistance, while nearby relatives provide him with any additional care.

Just down the road, Assadavoot Pingti, age 30, has been paralyzed on his right side since a motorcycle accident in 2003. Mr. Pingti's mother has taken care of him, and his only brother comes to help move him from place to place.

Both men were thrilled when they recently received

wheelchairs from Latter-day Saint Charities. Mr. Yamao had a friend push him around the community in his new wheelchair. Mr. Pingti smiled in a sign of appreciation, while his mother was grateful that her son would be able to move around on his own for the first time in five years.

"Many have waited years to have the mobility the chair provides," Elder Snow said. "In many other cases it is the other members of the family who come with tears in their eyes to thank us for the help we have provided, as it lessens the burden on them and allows them to pursue other activities that will strengthen the family."

#### Church Partners with Local Charities

Latter-day Saint Charities teams with many local non-profit organizations to identify people in need and deliver wheelchairs to them. In 2007 the Church recognized the King of Thailand on his 80th birthday by donating 1,000 wheelchairs to His Majesty the King's charities.

In August 2008 LDS Charities made a similar donation to the Sai Jai Thai Foundation. Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Seventy, Asia Area President, officially presented the wheelchairs to the foundation's president.

Elder Hallstrom spoke at the ceremony about the Church's role in helping millions of people in more than 160 countries. Sister Snow said partnering charities are particularly touched when they find out that the wheelchairs come from fast-offering donations

made by members worldwide. These funds are specifically set aside to assist the poor and needy.

In the last two years more than 3,000 wheelchairs were distributed in Thailand. In 2008 about 8,000 wheelchairs were sent to Turkey and China.

"To see a mother struggling to carry her 25-year-old son

on her back because that is the only way he can be transported and then to see him tenderly being placed in his wheelchair is a memory that will be difficult for me to erase," Sister Snow said. "I know the Lord is smiling His approval as we assist each person, who is His beloved child." ■

### It Wasn't an Ordinary Day

By Sister Cathern Roberts

The morning was like any other on the streets of downtown Solo, Indonesia—people came and went, motorcycles dodged between cars, and vendors were setting out their wares. But then I noticed her. A little old woman sitting on a mat with her legs folded under a ragged dress stretched her hands toward me. Her palms showed only stubs where her fingers should have been. Her mouth was open, but no sound came out. Her plea was in her tired eyes.

I was deeply moved by the scene. I placed some coins in her tiny palms then started on my way, but something drew me back. I bent down, and putting my hand on her cheek, said, "Allah, Berkat Ibu" (God bless you, mother).

We saw her from time to time during the next few weeks, and we would always exchange the same greetings. Then one day, Latter-day Saint Charities (LDSC) provided us wheelchairs to

place wherever we saw the need. I immediately thought of her.

We went to the place where she usually sat, and for the first time I noticed the set of handmade wooden crutches lying on the ground behind her. They were worn with age, and the paint chips that still clung to them indicated they had once been red.

A man who turned out to be her husband approached us and put his right hand straight out in front of him for me to shake; he was blind. He said he had longed to buy a wheelchair for her but could not afford such a luxury. Smiling, he said, "I can push!" even though he was blind.

The following week we scanned the crowd and could make out the bright white LDSC emblem on the back of her chair. She sat in it proudly, comfortably, and perhaps a little taller.

These words came to mind: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

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## Training Meetings Available Online

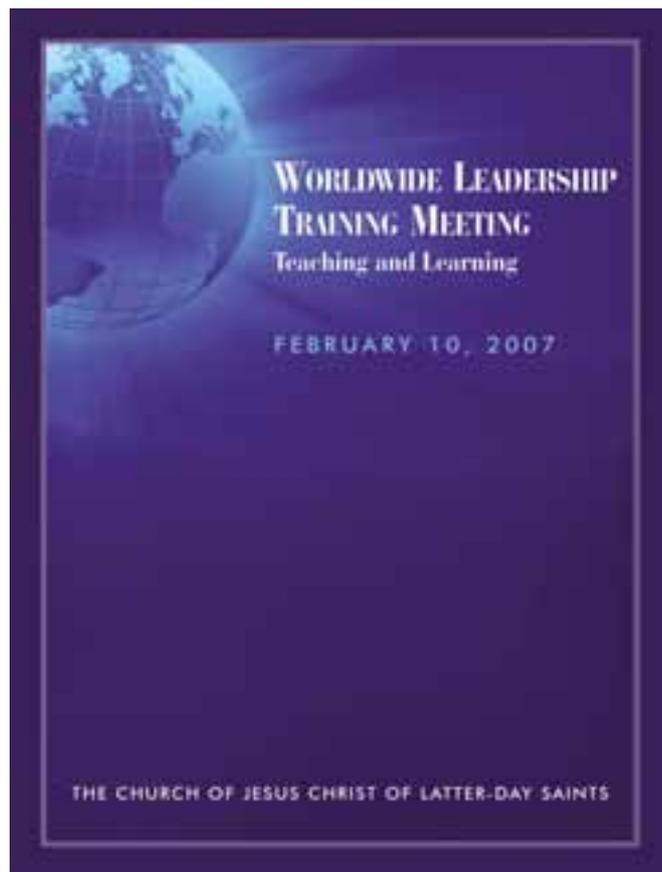
The First Presidency has announced that no Worldwide Leadership Training broadcast will be held in 2009. A letter to priesthood leaders suggests that leaders review previous broadcasts and use them for continuing instruction according to unit needs.

Proceedings of broadcasts from 2006, 2007, and 2008 are available online in many languages. The meetings were broadcast over the Church satellite system and are available in a variety of formats. Meetings prior to 2006 were distributed in booklet form.

The 2008 training session, titled *Building Up a Righteous Posterity*, is available in text, audio, or video format in 12 languages and in audio formats in 61 languages. The broadcast included messages from President Thomas S. Monson; President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of

the Twelve Apostles; Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and a roundtable discussion with Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Elder Holland; Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president; Susan W. Tanner, then Young Women general president; and Cheryl C. Lant, Primary general president. The broadcast originally aired on February 9, 2008.

The 2007 training session, titled *Teaching and Learning*, is available in text in 22 languages, in audio in 10 of those languages, and as video in American Sign Language, English, and Spanish. Included in the training were messages from President Thomas S. Monson, President Boyd K. Packer, Elder L. Tom Perry, and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The meeting was held on February 10, 2007.



The 2006 training session, titled *Supporting the Family*, is available in text in 38 languages, in audio in 10 of those languages, and as video in American Sign Language, English, and Spanish. The broadcast featured President Thomas S. Monson, Elder L. Tom Perry

and Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and Bonnie D. Parkin, then general president of the Relief Society.

To access the online material at LDS.org, go to **Gospel Library** and click on **Worldwide Leadership Training**. ■

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## Virtue Added as Young Women Value

The First Presidency has announced the addition of the attribute of “virtue” to the Young Women theme and values.

“This addition will assist young women in developing high moral standards,” stated the November 28, 2008, letter from the First Presidency. “We invite parents and leaders to teach the doctrine of chastity and moral purity to help each

young woman to be virtuous and worthy to make and keep sacred covenants and receive the ordinances of the temple.”

The text of the Young Women theme now states: “We are daughters of our Heavenly Father, who loves us, and we love Him. We will ‘stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places’ (Mosiah 18:9) as we strive

to live the Young Women values, which are: Faith, Divine Nature, Individual Worth, Knowledge, Choice and Accountability, Good Works, Integrity, and Virtue. We believe as we come to accept and act upon these values, we will be prepared to strengthen home and family, make and keep sacred covenants, receive the ordinances of the temple, and enjoy the

blessings of exaltation.”

Young Women leaders were invited to include immediately the addition of “virtue” as they repeat the theme with their young women.

“Virtue” is also being added to the Personal Progress value experiences and projects. Instructions on how to implement the change will be sent to leaders. ■

## WORLD BRIEFS

**DVD Available  
about President Monson**

*On the Lord's Errand*, a new DVD about the life and service of President Thomas S. Monson, is now available in 14 languages through distribution centers and [ldscatalog.com](http://ldscatalog.com). The 60-minute video was broadcast between sessions of the October 2008 general conference. The available languages include: American Sign Language, Cantonese, Cebuano, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Tagalog.

**LDS Maps Available  
in 16 Languages**

The meetinghouse locator service, LDS Maps, provided through [LDS.org](http://LDS.org), [Mormon.org](http://Mormon.org), and [maps.lds.org](http://maps.lds.org), is now available in 16 languages. Users can search for the nearest place and times of worship by entering an address or by identifying a location on a map. Phone numbers, driving directions, and other unit information are also available.

The service was first available online to residents in the United States and Canada in May 2001. Worldwide coverage was made available in August 2008.

**FamilySearch Collaborates  
on Canadian, U.S. Records**

FamilySearch International is teaming up with Ancestry.ca and the Houston Public Library in Houston, Texas, USA, to improve access to records from the U.S. Gulf Coast area and Canadian censuses.

The collaboration with Ancestry.ca, Canada's leading online family history site, will provide more thorough and comprehensive Canadian census data. The collaboration with the Houston Public Library will digitally preserve and provide free access to city and county histories in the area.

**LDS Business College  
Appoints New President**

John L. (Larry) Richards was appointed as the new president of LDS Business College on December 9, 2008.

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles made the announcement on behalf of the LDS Business College Board of Trustees. President Richards succeeds Stephen K. Woodhouse, who is retiring from LDS Business College after serving as a member of the faculty since 1989 and as president since 1992.

## AROUND THE CHURCH

## Elder David A. Bednar Visits Filipino Saints

Latter-day Saints in the Philippines were delighted in August 2008 when Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and his wife, Susan, visited the Philippines for the first time.

Elder Bednar presided over the Cebu Philippines Central Stake conference and held several devotionals and meetings with the Saints, full-time missionaries, temple workers, and Church employees from August 15 to 20, 2008.

In a devotional for single adults, Elder Bednar said, "Revelation is real and available to every member of the Church. . . . Taking the Holy

Spirit for our guide is essential for our spiritual growth and survival in an increasingly wicked world."

During stake conference, he taught that homes should be an avenue for learning—a place where inspired questions are answered with the assistance of the Spirit, where the gospel of Jesus Christ is learned and obeyed.

He told youth in a special devotional that full-time missionary service is challenging and sometimes hard, but with the help of the Lord, it can be done. "Study the scriptures daily and be obedient to all of God's commandments. When you live the gospel, you can help encourage others to do the same," he said.

In a Manila devotional with members, Elder Bednar taught that the Atonement provides two overarching blessings in our lives. First and foremost, through the Atonement of Jesus Christ we can be cleansed and redeemed from sin. Second, the Atonement strengthens us to do good and to be good. Grace is the strengthening, empowering, and enabling element of the Atonement. ■



**Elder David A. Bednar greets members in Cebu, Philippines.**

PHOTOGRAPH BY RANDY TAN

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## Church Helps Tanzania with Measles Vaccinations

Thousands of children in Tanzania were vaccinated against measles in 2008. The immunization effort was a collaboration between the Tanzania Red Cross and Ministry of Health, the United Nations, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Measles is a highly contagious disease that continues to claim lives around the world, but is easily prevented. For this reason, an international partnership for the eradication of measles has received significant Church support.

Elder Kirk and Sister Carol

Waldron, missionaries serving in the Kenya Nairobi Mission, went to Tanzania to help local leaders. Under the direction of Dar es Salaam District president Laurian Ponsiano Balilemwa the immunization effort was organized in the district's four branches. Some 150 Church members walked considerable distances to volunteer their time in the campaign.

There were more than 100

posts situated throughout the Dar es Salaam District where people could be vaccinated. Church members distributed brochures and notices and registered the children who would be vaccinated. Thousands of children received the measles vaccination as well as oral polio drops, deworming medication, and vitamin A. Volunteers contributed a total of 4,176 hours, saving thousands of dollars in operating costs. ■

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## Members Serve across Africa

Members in more than 30 African countries collaborated in a historic Africa-wide community service initiative on September 20, 2008. The event, known as Mormon Helping Hands Day, involved almost 1,000 communities across the continent and generated 100,000 hours

of community service.

Projects included cleaning and painting homes for the elderly and disabled, improving care facilities for abused women and children, revitalizing children's parks, supplying wheelchairs, and planting gardens.

"There are so many people on the African continent

who live without hope," said Leon Holmes, who coordinated the service in South Africa as national director of public affairs for the Church there. "Many are struggling with personal challenges such as disability, terminal illness, substance addiction, prolonged unemployment, physical and

emotional abuse, broken homes. . . . Opportunities to provide relief are boundless."

The continent-wide service day was first held in 2007. The success of that event resulted in almost doubling the number of countries involved in the 2008 venture. ■

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## Church Responds to Flooding

Flooding in Brazil and Panama killed dozens and left thousands without shelter in late November 2008.

### Brazil

Days of heavy rain in the Santa Catarina state of Brazil in late November 2008 caused landslides, collapsed roads, and devastated the area, leaving at least 112 dead and more than 80,000 people without shelter.

More than one million people were affected by the storms. The greatest damage occurred in the southeastern

part of Brazil, along the eastern coast. Landslides stopped transportation throughout the state, and at least eight towns were cut off by the floodwaters.

All of the missionaries serving in the Brazil Florianópolis Mission were reported safe and accounted for. At least 80 percent of the members in the Vale do Itajaí Brazil Stake were moved from their homes. Three meetinghouses in the area were partially flooded.

Members and other affected residents found shelter at the stake center as

regional welfare specialists and civil defense specialists discussed how to best provide assistance. Part of that assistance was met by purchasing basic items with fast-offering funds to help local members in need.

### Panama

Flooding in the western part of Panama caused damage to more than 5,700 homes and killed at least five people. The storms hit in late November 2008, causing five rivers in the Chiriqui and Bocas del Toro provinces to flood.

The rains caused a reported

60 landslides throughout the area, destroying at least 16 homes and damaging 85 more. In addition, more than 3,000 people fled their homes in neighboring Costa Rica.

At least 185 Church members in the area evacuated to the homes of friends and family. Two of three rented meetinghouses were flooded. Despite the weather, the missionaries serving in the Panama Panama City Mission were reported safe and were not evacuated. Supplies needed for the flood victims' immediate relief were purchased with humanitarian funds. ■



**Child of Mine, by Jon McNaughton**

*“And [Jesus] grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom:  
and the grace of God was upon him” (Luke 2:40).*



**T**he words of the Lord, as they have been given to us through the ages from His holy prophets, have guided us in a plan the Lord has established for us. That plan is complete from the beginning of time until we have an opportunity, if we live worthily, to live with Him in the eternities to come.” See Elder L. Tom Perry, “The Great Plan of Our God,” page 62.

# Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

## *Committed to the Kingdom*

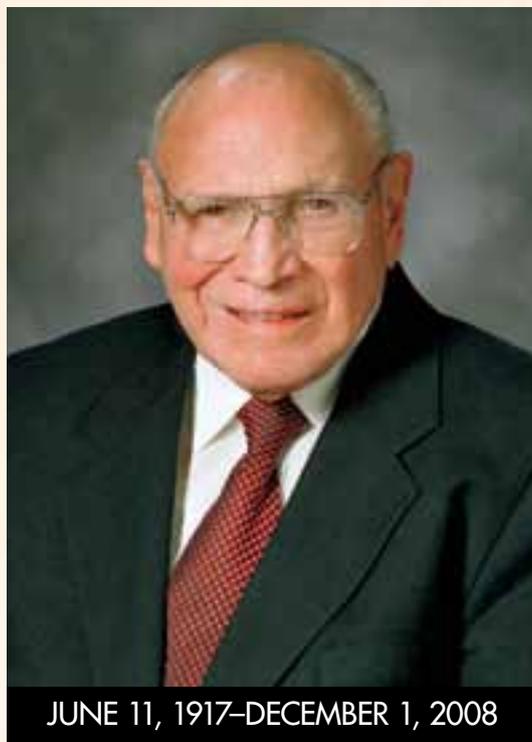
**O**n a memorable Christmas Eve in 1937, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, then a full-time missionary, and his companion walked from Salzburg, Austria, to the village of Oberndorf, nestled in the Bavarian Alps. While visiting the village known as the inspiration for the hymn “Silent Night,”<sup>1</sup> they paused in a small church to listen to Christmas music sung by a choir.

“A crisp, clear winter night enveloped us as we began our return trip,” Elder Wirthlin recalled. “We walked under a canopy of stars and across the smooth stillness of new-fallen snow.”<sup>2</sup>

As they walked, the young missionaries shared their hopes, dreams, and goals for the future. In that heavenly setting, Elder Wirthlin renewed his commitment to serve the Lord: “I made up my mind that I would magnify any callings I received in the Lord’s kingdom.”<sup>3</sup>

Elder Wirthlin kept that commitment for the rest of his mortal life, which ended on December 1, 2008, when he died peacefully at age 91 of causes incident to age.

Of his service as a bishop, counselor in a stake presidency, counselor in the Sunday School general presidency, Assistant to the Twelve, and member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, he declared, “I’ve loved every assignment I’ve ever had in the kingdom.” Upon being sustained as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on October 4, 1986, he explained, “And in that service, every day seemed like Sunday, because it was in the service of the Lord.”<sup>4</sup>



JUNE 11, 1917–DECEMBER 1, 2008

### **Faith and Football**

Joseph Bitner Wirthlin was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, on June 11, 1917, the first of five children born to Joseph L. Wirthlin, who served as Presiding Bishop, and Madeline Bitner Wirthlin. Joseph’s father supported the family as head of Wirthlin’s Inc., a wholesale and retail food business, while his mother encouraged their children in a variety of pursuits, including music and sports. Joseph and Madeline taught their children humility, honesty, diligence, service, compassion, and faith.

Young Joseph had many talents but eventually gravitated to sports, lettering in high school football, basketball, and track. After playing quarterback at East High School, he went on to play running back for three years at the University of Utah.<sup>5</sup>

From the pulpit, Elder Wirthlin enjoyed sharing lessons he had learned as a football player. One important lesson came at the bottom of a pile of 10 players during a conference championship game. After attempting to score what would have been the winning touchdown, Joseph was tackled just short of the goal line.

“At that moment I was tempted to push the ball forward. . . . I would have been a hero,” he recalled. But then he remembered the words of his mother: “Joseph,” she had often said to him, “do what is right, no matter the consequence.”



**Above:** For three years Joseph B. Wirthlin (number 4) played running back for the University of Utah football team before giving up football and postponing his schooling to become a missionary (below) in 1937. **Right:** Joseph B. and Elisa Young Rogers Wirthlin on their wedding day, May 26, 1941.



Joseph wanted to be a hero in the eyes of his mother more than in the eyes of his teammates. So, he said, “I left the ball where it was—two inches from the goal line.”<sup>6</sup>

After the end of the 1936 football season, Joseph’s father approached him about serving a mission. War was brewing in Europe, and if Joseph didn’t leave soon, he could lose the chance to serve.

“I wanted to pursue my dream of continuing to play football and to graduate from the university,” Elder Wirthlin said. “If I were to accept a mission call, I would have to give up everything. In those days a mission call was 30 months long, and I knew if I accepted, there was a good chance I would never play football again—perhaps I would not even be able to graduate.”<sup>7</sup>

But Joseph had also dreamed of being a missionary, and he knew what he must do. A few months later he was on his way to Europe, where he would serve in the German-Austrian and the Swiss-Austrian Missions from 1937 to 1939.

He never played football again, but he did graduate from the university, majoring in business administration. “Even so, I’ve never regretted serving a mission and committing myself to serving the Lord,” he said. “By doing so, my life has been filled with adventure, spiritual experiences, and joy that surpasses understanding.”<sup>8</sup>

### “A Perfect Marriage”

Among the resolutions Elder Wirthlin made that Christmas night in Oberndorf was that he would marry a spiritually strong woman who lived the gospel. He described her physical traits to his mission companion: five-foot-five (1.6 m), blonde hair, and blue eyes. Two and a half years after his mission, he met Elisa Young Rogers. She fit his description perfectly.

“I remember the first time I met her,” Elder Wirthlin said during a conference address in 2006, two months after she died. “As a favor to a friend, I had gone to her home to pick up her sister, Frances. Elisa opened the door, and at least for me, it was love at first sight.



“I think she must have felt something too, for the first words I ever remember her saying were, ‘I knew who you was.’”

Elder Wirthlin joked about that grammatical error because she was majoring in English. But, he said, “I still cherish those five words as some of the most beautiful in human language.”<sup>9</sup>

They married in the Salt Lake Temple on May 26, 1941, and for 65 years shared what Elder Wirthlin called “a perfect marriage.”<sup>10</sup> They strengthened, encouraged, and sustained each other, and they counseled together when making decisions. Elder Wirthlin never left the house without kissing Elisa good-bye, and he



would call often each day to check on her.<sup>11</sup>

Elder Wirthlin's father was called to the Presiding Bishopric in 1938, so Elder Wirthlin took over the family's food business when he returned from his mission. Later, while he and Elisa were raising their children, he put in long hours meeting the demands of work and Church responsibilities. Elisa and their seven daughters and one son, however, remained Elder Wirthlin's pride and joy. At his passing, he had 59 grandchildren and nearly 100 great-grandchildren.

### Loving Others

Elder Wirthlin, whom President Thomas S. Monson called "a man of great innate goodness,"<sup>12</sup> was loved by all who knew him. For 33 years while he served as a General Authority, including 22 years as an Apostle, that goodness manifested itself as he shared his testimony—in both word and deed—of the Savior and His restored gospel.

With humility and often with humor, Elder Wirthlin encouraged Latter-day Saints to make the most of mortality by emulating the example of the Savior. To do that, he taught, focus on the one, cultivate kindness, and love others.

"The most cherished and sacred moments of our lives are those filled with the spirit of love," he taught. "The greater the measure of our love, the greater is our joy. In the end, the development of such love is the true



measure of success in life." To truly learn how to love, he added, we need merely reflect on the life of the Savior.<sup>13</sup>

"We are all busy," Elder Wirthlin said on another occasion. "It's easy to find excuses for not reaching out to others, but I imagine they will sound as hollow to our Heavenly Father as the elementary school boy who gave his teacher a note asking that he be excused from school March 30th through the 34th."<sup>14</sup>

Elder Wirthlin also encouraged members of the Church to "live in thanksgiving daily," regardless of adversity.<sup>15</sup> "If we will consider the blessings we have, we will forget some of our worries," he taught.<sup>16</sup>

### A Parting Testimony

"There may be some who think that General Authorities rarely experience pain, suffering, or distress. If only that were true," Elder Wirthlin said during his last general conference address. "The Lord in His wisdom does not shield anyone from grief or sadness."<sup>17</sup>

**Above: The extended Wirthlin family in June 1999. Left: Elder and Sister Wirthlin greet Church members following an Education Week devotional at Ricks College (now Brigham Young University-Idaho) in 1998. Below: A 1999 painting of Elder and Sister Wirthlin.**



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE WIRTHLIN FAMILY. EXCEPT AS NOTED: LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH OF FOOTBALL BY CHRISTINA SMITH; RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH OF SISTER AND ELDER WIRTHLIN BY MICHAEL LEWIS; BYUL-IDAHO, MAY NOT BE COPIED; PAINTING BY CLOY KENT

Elder Wirthlin's "greatest sorrow" came with the death of his beloved Elisa. During the lonely hours that ensued, he drew strength from "the comforting doctrines of eternal life" and from his testimony that the dark Friday of the Savior's Crucifixion was followed by the bright Sunday of His Resurrection.<sup>18</sup>

Because Elder Wirthlin had a firm testimony of the Savior's atoning sacrifice, he knew that death is not the end of existence and that a reunion awaits the faithful who have made promises in holy temples.

"We will all rise from the grave," he testified in October 2006. "On that day my father will embrace my mother. On that day I will once again hold in my arms my beloved Elisa."<sup>19</sup>

And on that day, a commitment made on a cold winter night long ago will have made all the difference. ■

#### NOTES

1. "Silent Night," *Hymns*, no. 204.
2. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Lessons Learned in the Journey of Life," *Liahona*, May 2001, 36; *Ensign*, Dec. 2000, 7.
3. *Liahona*, May 2001, 37; *Ensign*, Dec. 2000, 8.
4. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Pulling in the Gospel Net," *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 59.
5. See Don L. Searle, "Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin: Finding Happiness Serving the Lord," *Ensign*, Dec. 1986, 10.
6. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Life's Lessons Learned," *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2007, 46.
7. *Liahona*, May 2001, 36; *Ensign*, Dec. 2000, 7.
8. *Liahona*, May 2001, 37; *Ensign*, Dec. 2000, 8.
9. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Sunday Will Come," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 28.
10. *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 28.
11. See *Ensign*, Dec. 1986, 10.
12. Quoted in *Ensign*, Dec. 1986, 13.
13. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "The Great Commandment," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 30.
14. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "The Abundant Life," *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2006, 101.
15. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Live in Thanksgiving Daily," *Ensign*, Sept. 2001, 13.
16. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "One Step after Another," *Liahona*, Jan. 2002, 27; *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 25.
17. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Come What May, and Love It," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 26.
18. See *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 29.
19. *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 30.



## FUNERAL TRIBUTES

"I loved him as a brother. I miss him. Over the years, Joseph and I served together in many assignments. We were more than colleagues, however; we were close personal friends. . . . There was no chink in his armor. There was no guile in his soul. There was no flaw in his character. Elder Wirthlin loved the Lord with all his heart and soul and served Him with all his might to the very end of his mortal life. . . . Joseph knew the Lord, and the Lord knew Joseph."

**President Thomas S. Monson**

After reading an article and testimony by Elder Wirthlin (see "Silent Night, Holy Night," *Church News*, Nov. 29, 2008, 8–9), President Packer suggested that the family have it "printed in such a way that members of the Wirthlin family yet unborn will come to know the great man who was their grandfather and was an Apostle."

**President Boyd K. Packer,  
President of the Quorum  
of the Twelve Apostles**



"He and I sat side by side on the [stake] high council. . . . For a total of 11 years, Joseph served as my counselor [in the stake presidency and the general superintendency of the Sunday School]. Every assignment he completed well. . . . Little did we know then that we would later sit together in the Quorum of the Twelve. . . . He never sought the limelight. He personified the statement of the Master, who said, 'He that is greatest among you shall be your servant.' Now Joseph will experience another promise of the Lord: 'He that shall humble himself shall be exalted'" (Matthew 23:11–12).

**Elder Russell M. Nelson of the  
Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**

"When I contemplate the legacy that Dad left his family and the Church, his humility stands out. Dad just never saw himself as anyone special. When President Monson ordained him an Apostle, he prophetically declared to Dad, 'Your humility will endear you to the people.' And so it has."

**Joseph B. Wirthlin Jr.**