

Ensign

A photograph of a woman with a white headscarf and a yellow top, looking down at a baby in a hospital bed. The woman is in profile, and the baby is lying in a bed with white linens. The lighting is soft and warm, creating a tender atmosphere.

**We Follow
Jesus Christ,
pp. 16, 24, 50**

**"Stand by My
Servant Joseph," p. 34**

**Earth: A Gift
from God, p. 40**

**The Refining
Fire of Grief, p. 56**



*“Humility
is a fertile
soil where
spirituality
grows and
produces
the fruit of
inspiration
to know
what to do.”*

Elder Richard G.
Scott of the
Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles,
“How to Obtain
Revelation and
Inspiration for
Your Personal
Life,” *Ensign*,
May 2012, 47.



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Front: Photograph of woman helping after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, by Jeffrey D. Allred and Mike Terry © *Deseret News*. Back: Photo illustration by Howard Collett © IRI. Inside front cover: Photograph by Royce Bair © Getty Images.



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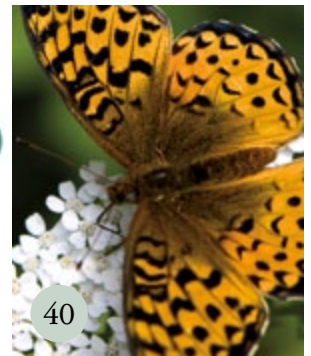
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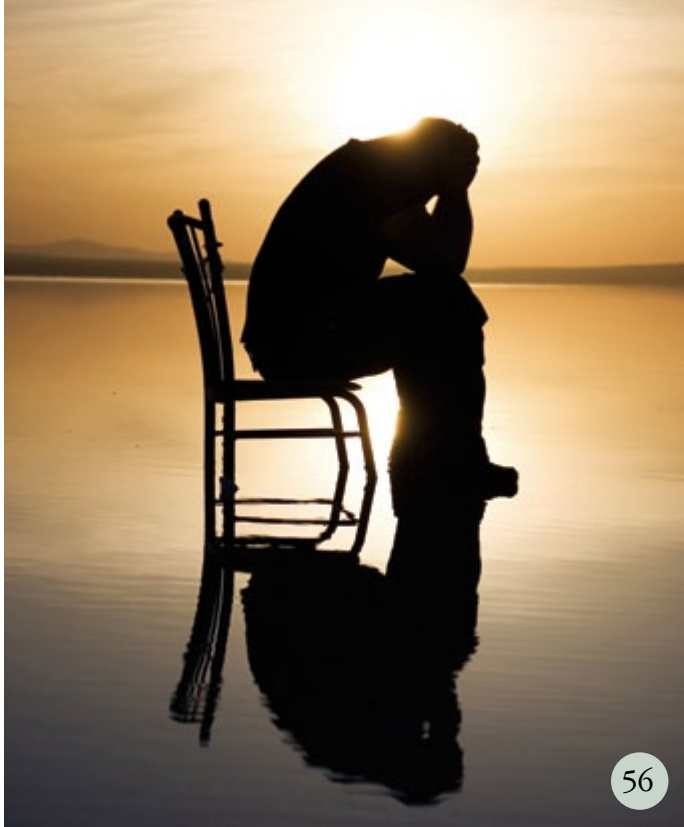
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A MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
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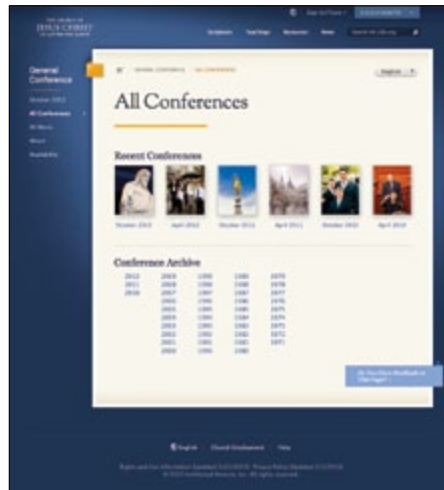
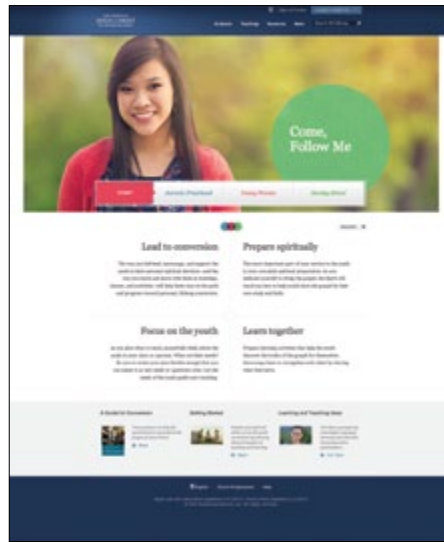
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**By President
Dieter F. Uchtdorf**
Second Counselor
in the First Presidency

A WORD FOR THE Hesitant MISSIONARY

Disciples of Jesus Christ have always been under the obligation to take His gospel to the world (see Mark 16:15–16). Nevertheless, sometimes it is difficult to open our mouths and speak about our faith to those around us. While some members of the Church have a natural gift for talking to others about religion, others are a little hesitant or may feel awkward, embarrassed, or even fearful of doing so.

To that end, may I suggest four things that anyone can do to follow the commission of the Savior to preach the gospel “unto every creature” (D&C 58:64).

Be a Light

A favorite saying of mine often attributed to St. Francis of Assisi reads, “Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary, use words.”¹ Implicit in this saying is the understanding that often the most powerful sermons are unspoken.

When we have integrity and live consistently by our standards, people notice. When we radiate joy and happiness, they notice even more.

Everyone wants to be happy. When we members of the Church radiate the light of the gospel, people can see our happiness and sense the love of God filling and overflowing in our lives. They want to know why. They want to understand our secret.

That leads them to ask questions such as “Why are you so happy?” or “Why do you always have such a positive

attitude?” The answers to these questions, of course, lead perfectly into a conversation about the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Be Conversational

Bringing up the subject of religion—particularly to our friends and loved ones—can seem daunting and challenging. It doesn’t have to be. Mentioning spiritual experiences or talking about Church activities or events in casual conversation can be easy and pleasant if we invest a little courage and common sense.

My wife, Harriet, is a wonderful example of this. When we were living in Germany, she would find a way to work Church-related topics into her conversations with friends and acquaintances. For example, when someone asked about her weekend, she would say, “This Sunday we had an impressive experience in our church! A 16-year-old young man gave a beautiful talk in front of 200 people of our congregation about living a clean life.” Or, “I learned about a 90-year-old woman who knitted more than 500 blankets and gave them to our Church’s humanitarian program to be shipped to people in need all around the world.”

More often than not, the people who heard this wanted to know more. They asked questions. And that led to opportunities to talk about the gospel in a natural, confident, nonpushy way.



TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

One effective way to teach is to “encourage those you teach to set . . . goals that can help them live the principle you have taught” (*Teaching, No Greater Call* [1999], 159). Consider inviting those you teach to prayerfully set a goal to share the gospel with one or more people this month. Parents can discuss ways younger children could help. You could also help family members brainstorm or role-play ways to bring up the gospel in regular conversation and think of upcoming Church activities to which they could invite a friend.

With the advent of the Internet and social media, it is easier today to talk about these things in a conversational way than ever before. What we need is simply the courage to do so.

Be Full of Grace

Unfortunately, it is so easy to be disagreeable. It happens too often that we argue, belittle, and condemn. When we become angry, rude, or hurtful with people, the last thing they want is to learn more about us. It is impossible to know how many people have either left the Church or never joined because someone said something that hurt or offended them.

There is so much incivility in the world today. Because of the anonymity of the Internet, it is easier than ever to say toxic or grating things online. Shouldn't we, the hopeful disciples of our gentle Christ, have a higher, more charitable standard? The scriptures teach, “Let your speech be alway[s] with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Colossians 4:6).

I like the idea of our words being clear as a sunny sky and full of grace. Can you imagine what our families, wards, nations, and even the world would be like if we could adopt this simple principle?

Be Filled with Faith

Sometimes we take upon ourselves too much credit or too much blame when it comes to others accepting the gospel. It's important to remember that the Lord doesn't expect us to do the converting.

Conversion comes not through our words but through the heavenly ministrations of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes all it takes is one single phrase of our testimony or about an

experience to set in motion the softening of a heart or the opening of a door that can lead others to experience sublime truths through the promptings of the Spirit.

President Brigham Young (1801–77) said he knew the gospel was true when he “saw a man without eloquence, or talents for public speaking, who could only say, ‘I know, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that the Book of Mormon is true, that Joseph Smith is a Prophet of the Lord.’” President Young said when he heard that humble testimony, “The Holy Ghost proceeding from that individual illuminate[d] my understanding, and light, glory, and immortality [were] before me.”²

Brothers and sisters, have faith. The Lord can magnify the words you speak and make them mighty. God doesn't ask you to convert but rather to open your mouths. The task of converting is not yours—that belongs to the person hearing and to the Holy Spirit.

Every Member a Missionary

My dear friends, today there are more ways than ever for us to open our mouths and share with others the joyful news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is a way for everyone—even the hesitant missionary—to participate in this great work. We can each find a way to use our own particular talents and interests in support of the great work of filling the world with light and truth. As we do so, we will find the joy that comes to those who are faithful and courageous enough “to stand as witnesses of God at all times” (Mosiah 18:9). ■

NOTES

1. St. Francis of Assisi, in William Fay and Linda Evans Shepherd, *Share Jesus without Fear* (1999), 22.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 67.

Sharing with a Friend

By Adriana Vásquez, Colombia

One day while studying for my seminary class, I had a beautiful and distinct impression. As I was reading over the lesson for the next day, I saw the face of a friend from school and had the strong feeling that I should share my testimony with her.

Despite the clarity of this impression, I was afraid. I was worried that my friend might reject me, particularly because she didn't seem to be the kind of girl who would be interested in joining the Church.

I thought back to a talk by Sister Mary N. Cook of the Young Women general presidency in which she challenged us to work hard and be valiant.¹ I wanted to be like this, so I wrote this girl a letter and testified of the truthfulness of the Church and of my love for the Book of Mormon. The next day I slipped a copy of the



Book of Mormon, together with my letter, into her bag.

To my surprise, my friend was very receptive to the gospel. Starting that day, she would tell me about what she had learned in her study of the Book of Mormon. A few weeks later, I introduced her to the missionaries. Almost immediately, she received a confirmation from the Holy Ghost that what she was learning was true. The missionaries and I cried as she told us of her feelings. My friend was soon baptized, and her parents were amazed to see the changes that had occurred in her.

I am so happy I was able to overcome my fears and help bring the gospel into her life.

NOTE

1. See Mary N. Cook, "Never, Never, Never Give Up!" *Ensign*, May 2010, 117–19.

CHILDREN

I Can Be a Light to Others

President Uchtdorf says that to be a light to others, our words should be "clear as a sunny sky and full of grace." Our words should be happy, honest, and kind. What can you do or say to be a light to others? To find a hidden message in the boxes below, color in black the boxes that say or do things that are mean or hurtful.

You could write in your journal five nice things you plan to say to family members or friends.

"Thank you"	Be happy	Be a peacemaker	"I'll share with you"	Be polite
"I'm sorry"	Argue	"It's good to see you"	Fight	"I'd love to help"
"Please"	Be kind	"Get out of my way"	"I love you"	"You're welcome"
Get angry	"Good job"	Give a compliment	"Let's be friends"	Ignore
Help someone	Insult	Gossip	Bully	Be gentle

Prayerfully study this material and, as appropriate, discuss it with the sisters you visit. Use the questions to help you strengthen your sisters and to make Relief Society an active part of your own life. For more information, go to reliefsociety.lds.org.

Converted unto the Lord

New sisters of the Church—including Young Women entering Relief Society, sisters returning to activity, and new converts—need the support and friendship of visiting teachers. “Member involvement is vital to convert retention and in bringing less-active members back into full activity,” said Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “Capture the vision that the Relief Society . . . can become [one of] the most powerful friendship resource[s] we have in the Church. Reach out early to those being taught and reactivated, and love them into the Church through your organization.”¹

As members of Relief Society, we can help new members learn basic Church practices, such as:

- Giving a talk.
- Bearing testimony.
- Living the law of the fast.
- Paying tithing and other offerings.
- Participating in family history work.
- Performing baptisms and confirmations for their deceased ancestors.

“It takes attentive friends to make new members feel comfortable and welcomed at church,” said Elder



Ballard.² All of us, but especially visiting teachers, have important responsibilities to establish friendships with new members as a way of helping them become firmly “converted unto the Lord” (Alma 23:6).

From the Scriptures

2 Nephi 31:19–20; Moroni 6:4

NOTES

1. M. Russell Ballard, “Members Are the Key,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2000, 13.
2. M. Russell Ballard, “Members Are the Key,” 14.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Converts and Young Men,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 47.
4. Joseph Fielding Smith, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 97.

What Can I Do?

1. Do I pray for my companion and ask that the Spirit will guide us as we minister to our sisters?

2. In what ways do we serve each sister we watch over so that she knows we truly care about her?

Faith, Family, Relief



From Our History

“With the ever-increasing number of converts,” said President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “we must make an increasingly substantial effort to assist them as they find their way. Every one of them needs three things: a friend, a responsibility, and nurturing with ‘the good word of God’ (Moroni 6:4).”³

Visiting teachers are in a position to help those they watch over. Friendship often comes first, as it did for a young Relief Society sister who was the visiting teacher of an older sister. They had been slow in building a friendship until they worked side by side on a cleaning project. They became friends, and as they talked about the Visiting Teaching Message, they were both nurtured by “the good word of God.”

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) said Relief Society “is a vital part of the kingdom of God on earth and . . . helps its faithful members to gain eternal life in our Father’s kingdom.”⁴

ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA

Our society is full of media choices. We must be careful about what images and thoughts we allow in our minds because “whatever [we] read, listen to, or look at has an effect on [us]” (*For the Strength of Youth* [booklet, 2011], 11). Adrián Ochoa, second counselor in the general Young Men presidency, writes about entertainment and media on pages 38–39 of this month’s *New Era*.

“Remember that in reality you are here in this life to develop your faith, to be tested, and to learn and be happy,” he writes. “As a member of Christ’s true Church, you have great power to help you. You have the power of the Holy Ghost to warn you when something in front of you is not right. You also have the power of agency, so you can choose what you will and will not do.”

Suggestions for Teaching Youth

- Discuss with your teens the movies you watch as a family. Listen to the music they have. Reflect together on how that media measures up against the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*.
- Go to youth.lds.org and click on “For the Strength of Youth” under the Youth Menu. There

you will find videos, scriptural references, Mormon Channel radio programs, questions and answers, and articles (see, for example, “Getting Real”), including talks by General Authorities.

- Consider holding a family home evening on the importance of choosing good media (a good resource is David A. Bednar, “Things as They Really Are,” *Ensign*, June 2010, 16–25).

Suggestions for Teaching Children

In the story “The Ratings Rule,” found on pages 4–5 of this month’s *Friend*, Ethan knew what media was safe for him to use because his family had talked about it. You could read this article with your children and start a conversation of your own using these questions:

- *Who* can help us make good media and entertainment decisions?
- *What* media is good for us to watch, read, or listen to?
- *When* is it OK to use media?
- *Where* should we use media?
- *Why* is it important to be careful about entertainment?



“If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things” (Articles of Faith 1:13).

Consider making a family media guide by folding blank papers in half and stapling them together in the crease to form a booklet. On each page, you could write a type of media used in your home, along with family standards and prophetic counsel that apply to that media.

You could also read “Crash and Tell” by Danielle Kennington (*Friend*, June 2011, 8–10) to help you start a conversation about appropriate media use. ■

OCTOBER CONFERENCE NOTEBOOK

“What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken; . . . whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

As you review the October 2012 general conference, you can use these pages (and Conference Notebooks in future issues) to help you study and apply the recent teachings of the living prophets and apostles and other Church leaders.

STORIES FROM CONFERENCE

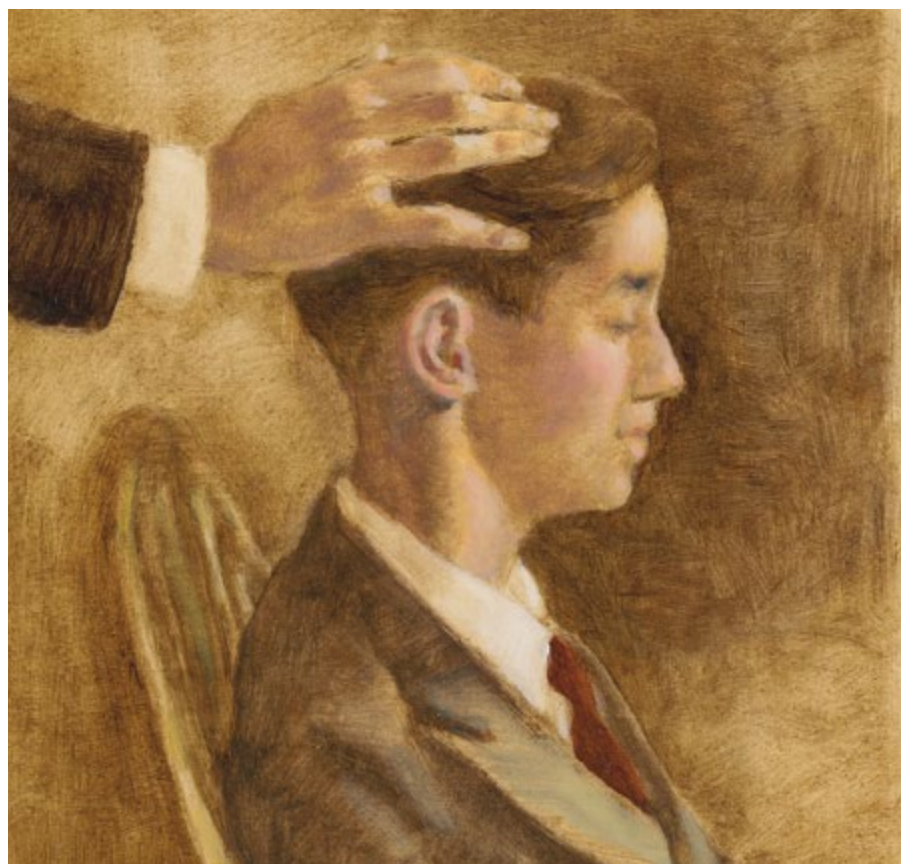
God Knows Our Gifts

When I became a deacon at the age of 12, I lived in New Jersey, 50 miles (80 km) from New York City. I dreamed of being a great baseball player. My father agreed to

take me to see a game played in the old and storied Yankee Stadium, in the Bronx. I can still see the swing of the bat as Joe DiMaggio hit a home run into the center field stands with

my father sitting beside me, the only time we ever went to a major league baseball game together.

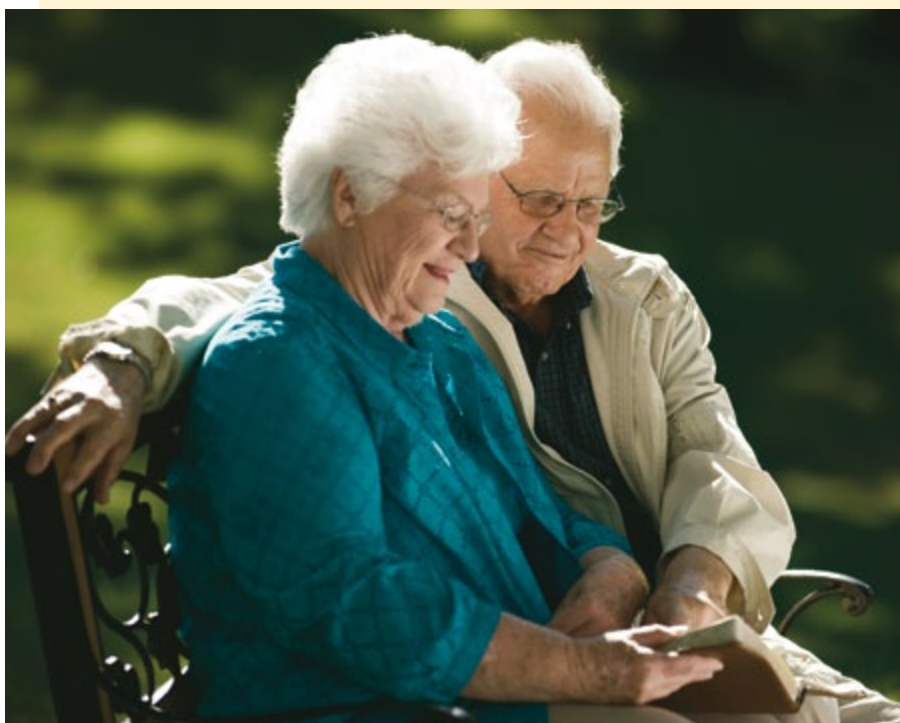
But another day with my father shaped my life forever. He took me from New Jersey to the home of an ordained patriarch in Salt Lake City. I had never seen the man before. My father left me at the doorstep. The patriarch led me to a chair, placed his hands on my head, and pronounced a blessing as a gift from God that



Prophetic Promise

“I can promise you that you will bless [others] to help them recognize the spiritual gifts with which they were born. Every person is different and has a different contribution to make. No one is destined to fail.”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “Help Them Aim High,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 60.



included a declaration of the great desire of my heart.

He said that I was one of those of whom it had been said, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” [Matthew 5:9.] I was so surprised that a perfect stranger could know my heart that I opened my eyes to see the room where such a miracle was happening. That blessing of my possibilities has shaped my life, my marriage, and my priesthood service.

From that experience and what has followed it, I can testify, “For 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” (D&C 46:11).

By the Lord revealing to me a gift, I have been able to recognize and prepare for opportunities to exercise it to the blessing of those I love and serve.

God knows our gifts. My challenge to you and to me is to pray to know the gifts we have been given, to know how to develop them, and to recognize the opportunities to serve others that God provides us. But most of all, I pray that you will be inspired to help others discover their special gifts from God to serve.

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “Help Them Aim High,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 67.

Applying This Message

- As you read and ponder Doctrine and Covenants 46:11–26, pray to know what spiritual gifts you may have.
- How can serving others help you develop your spiritual gifts?
- If you have not received a patriarchal blessing, consider getting one.

Consider writing your thoughts in your journal or discussing them with others.

Additional resources on this topic: *True to the Faith* (2004), “Spiritual Gifts,” 165–67; “Spiritual Gifts” in Gospel Topics on LDS.org.

FINDING STRENGTH DURING TRIALS

“How do you remain ‘steadfast and immovable’ [Alma 1:25] during a trial of faith? You immerse yourself in the very things that helped build your core of faith:

- you exercise faith in Christ,
- you pray,
- you ponder the scriptures,
- you repent,
- you keep the commandments,
- and you serve others.”

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Trial of Your Faith,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 40; bullets added.

FILL IN THE BLANK

1. "The decision to serve a mission will shape the _____ of the missionary, his or her spouse, and their posterity for generations to come" (Russell M. Nelson, "Ask the Missionaries! They Can Help You!" *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 18).
2. "To help us better _____, I would like to suggest four words to remember: 'First observe, then serve'" (Linda K. Burton, "First Observe, Then Serve," *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 78).
3. "Temple and _____ work is one work divided into two parts" (Richard G. Scott, "The Joy of Redeeming the Dead," *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 93).
4. "The crowning characteristic of love is always _____" (Jeffrey R. Holland, "The First Great Commandment," *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 84).

Answers: 1. spiritual destiny; 2. love one another; 3. family history; 4. loyalty



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CODY BELL © IRI

CREATING FAMILY CULTURES

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught five things parents can do to create stronger family cultures. He said: "These suggestions for creating stronger *family cultures* work in tandem with the culture of the Church. Our strengthened family cultures will be a protection for our children."

1. "Parents can pray in earnest, asking our Eternal Father to help them."
2. "They can hold family prayer, scripture study, and family home evenings and eat together as often as possible."
3. "Parents can fully avail themselves of the Church's support network."
4. "Parents can share their testimonies often with their children."
5. "We can organize our families based on clear, simple family rules and expectations, wholesome family traditions and rituals, and 'family economics.'"

From "Becoming Goodly Parents," *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 28.

To read, watch, or listen to general conference addresses, visit conference.lds.org.

MY DAD'S APOLOGY

It was more powerful than a thousand sermons.

By David Hixon

I was 16 and playing my new rock-and-roll album for the first time. Unfortunately, as I listened, I was disappointed to hear a vulgar word in the last song. I was embarrassed. I knew my parents would not approve—the record didn't meet our family's standards. But I liked the rest of the songs, so whenever I played the record, I turned down the volume just before the offensive word was sung.

My well-meaning sister told my father about my album. Later, when he and I were in the dining room, he shared his concern about the inappropriate word. Although his comment was said in a kind manner, I dug in and stubbornly defended my position.

I used every argument I could think of to convince my dad that I should keep the record. "I didn't know that word was on the album when I bought it," I said, "and when that song plays, I turn it down."

When he said I should still get rid of the record, I said, "If you think that, then I should quit school too! I hear that word—and *worse* ones—every day at school!"



He began to get frustrated. He reemphasized that we shouldn't have vulgar music in our home. The argument escalated as I said there were worse sins I could commit and that I never used that word.

I tried to turn the tables: "I try so hard to be good, and then you focus on this one little thing and think I'm an evil sinner!"

Even so, my father wouldn't back down. Neither would I. I marched upstairs to my room, slammed the door, and lay on my bed, seething. I rehearsed my argument over and over in my head, entrenching myself deeper in my flawed logic and convincing myself I was right.

Ten minutes later, there was a soft knock at the door. It was Dad. His countenance had changed. He wasn't there to argue. "I'm sorry I got angry," he said. "Will you forgive me?" He told me how much he loved me and that he thought highly of me. He didn't preach. He didn't give me

counsel. Then he turned and quietly left the room.

A thousand sermons on humility could never have been more powerful to me. I was no longer angry with him, just with myself for being so stubborn and difficult. I fetched the record, snapped it in two, and threw it away. I don't know if I ever told Dad what I did, but it didn't matter. What mattered was that I had learned that my dad valued our relationship more than his own pride, even when he had been in the right. ■

David Hixon lives in Texas, USA.

A SOFT ANSWER

"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."

Proverbs 15:1

WE MUST BE BORN OF WATER AND OF THE SPIRIT

We believe we must be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (through an ordinance called confirmation) to be saved in the kingdom of heaven. The Savior taught, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

The Lord also taught that the ordinance of baptism—like all other gospel ordinances—must be performed by a worthy priesthood holder: “The person who is called of God and has authority from Jesus Christ to baptize, shall go down into the water with the person. . . . Then shall he immerse him or her in the water, and come forth again out of the water” (D&C 20:73–74).

Baptism by immersion symbolizes the burial of the sinner and the

spiritual rebirth of the person to live in “newness of life” (Romans 6:4). By baptism we leave behind our old life and start a new life as disciples of Jesus Christ. When we are confirmed, we become members of His Church.

Baptism also includes a sacred covenant, a promise, between Heavenly Father and the individual who is baptized. We covenant to keep His commandments, serve Him and His children, and take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ. He promises to forgive our sins, “pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon [us]” (Mosiah 18:10), and offer us eternal life.

The Savior Himself kept the commandment to be baptized, even though He was sinless (see Matthew 3:13–17). He was baptized to be

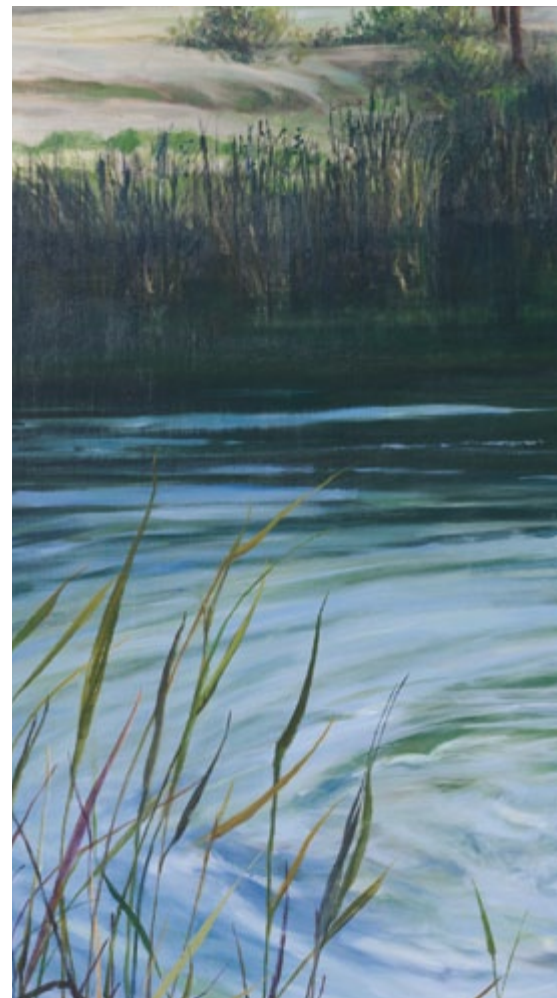
obedient, to set the example for us, and to “fulfil all righteousness” (see 2 Nephi 31:5–9). Thus, those who are baptized are following the Savior’s example. ■

For more information, see chapter 2 in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow* (2012).

A SACRED COVENANT

“Baptism . . . is an ordinance denoting entry into a sacred and binding covenant between God and man. Men promise to forsake the world, love and serve their fellowmen, visit the fatherless and the widows in their afflictions, proclaim peace, preach the gospel, serve the Lord, and keep His commandments. The Lord promises to ‘pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon [us]’ (Mosiah 18:10), redeem His Saints both temporally and spiritually, number them with those of the First Resurrection, and offer life eternal.”

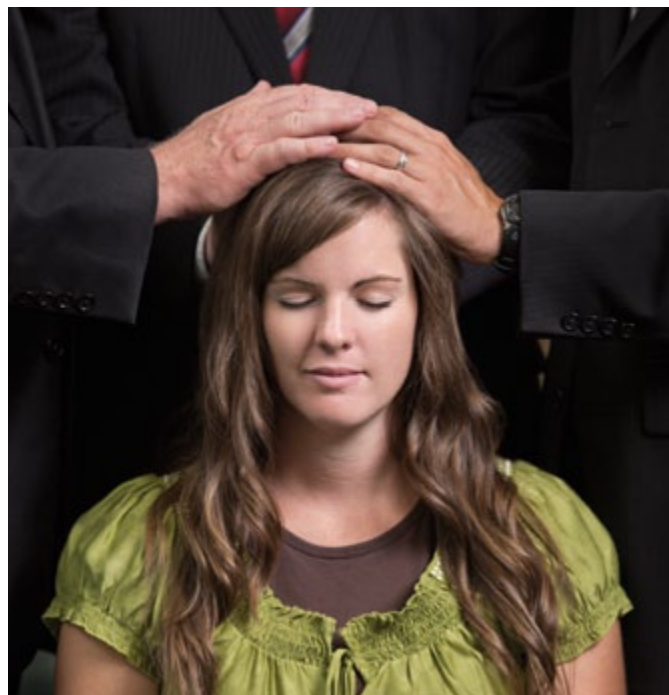
Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Gospel of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 46.



Following baptism, we are confirmed members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Baptism and confirmation allow the Atonement of Jesus Christ to bring about a spiritual cleansing in our lives, including “a remission of . . . sins” (D&C 33:11).

Those who desire to be baptized must “humble themselves before God, . . . witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and [be] willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ” (D&C 20:37).

“We believe [in] . . . baptism by immersion” (Articles of Faith 1:4).

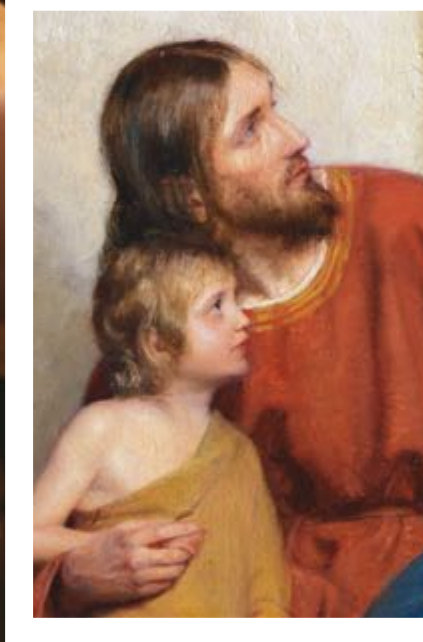


JOHN BAPTIZING JESUS, BY GRANT ROMNEY CLAWSON © IRI,
PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY SCOTT DAVIS



By baptism and confirmation we become “fellowcitizens with the saints” in the “household of God” (Ephesians 2:19).

Seeking to serve others as the Savior did, one busy mother realized that she had many opportunities to serve—not outside the home but inside.



Discipleship

AT ALL TIMES,
IN ALL THINGS,
IN ALL PLACES

By Melissa Merrill

When Alma explained the covenant of baptism at the Waters of Mormon, he taught that it involves standing as a witness of God “at all times and in all things, and in all places” (Mosiah 18:9). It’s a standard the Savior’s disciples still strive to live today and a covenant renewed each week during the sacrament, when Church members promise to “always remember” the Savior (D&C 20:77).

What exactly does such discipleship look like? Church Magazines invited Latter-day Saints around the world to participate in what we called a “discipleship experiment.” In essence, we invited these members to focus on a particular teaching of or story about Jesus Christ, consistently study and ponder that selection of scripture for a week, and report on how a dedicated study of the Savior’s life and teachings affected how they followed Him “at all times” in their lives.

Discipleship at All Times

Kara Laszczyk of Utah, USA, had long seen discipleship as a desire to emulate and become more like Jesus Christ and as a willingness to

sacrifice and serve in sharing His gospel. But she felt somewhat hampered by her introverted personality.

“I have a tendency to think only within my sphere because it is uncomfortable for me to put myself out there for others,” she explains. “I worry too much about what other people think of me rather than what I think of myself and what my Savior thinks of me.”

But Sister Laszczyk says her weeklong experiment of studying Luke 7, which discusses the Savior ministering to several people, caused her to reconsider her motives. She asked herself: “Are my actions driven from a genuine desire to become like the Savior and care for others, or am I just checking items off my list so that I can feel good knowing that I have completed an assignment? Am I more concerned about the well-being of others or about what others will think about my actions?”

She says she came to realize that part of following the Savior—doing what He would do in a given situation—meant loving and serving *when she was needed*, not just when it was convenient.





THE CHALLENGES OF DISCIPLESHIP

“When we promise to follow the Savior, to walk in His footsteps, and be His disciples, we are promising to go where that divine path leads us. And the path of salvation has always led one way or another through Gethsemane. So if the Savior faced such injustices and discouragements, such persecutions, unrighteousness, and suffering, we cannot expect that we are not going to face some of that if we still intend to call ourselves His true disciples and faithful followers.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Lessons from Liberty Jail,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2009, 31.

“Discipleship is not passive,” she says. “It is not always easy. The time, energy, and means that we sacrifice in genuine loving service toward others will help us to come closer to the Savior.” And, she adds, she takes heart in knowing that the Lord asks us neither to run faster than we are able (see Mosiah 4:27) nor to do things we could not do without His help.

Knowing those principles helped Sister Laszczyk participate in a fast for family members, even though fasting has been a weak area for her in the past. That knowledge has also motivated her to change at a more general level.

“I want to be more proactive about giving service instead of just waiting until a sign-up sheet is passed around,” she says. “I want to be a better visiting teacher. I want to look for some way that I can serve outside of the Church in my community. I want my first thought to be ‘What can I do for them?’ or ‘What do they need?’ not ‘Do I have time?’ or ‘How will this affect me?’

“We need our Savior,” she concludes, “but our Savior also needs us. He needs us to help and lift each other.”

Francisco Samuel Cabrera Perez of Chihuahua, Mexico, says he doesn’t consider himself a bad person; he has sought to obey the commandments and fulfill his duties to his family and to his fellowman since he was baptized at 16. But the experiment involving studying the Savior’s life helped him shift his understanding of discipleship from theoretical to practical.

In studying John 6:27–63, the sermon where the Savior calls Himself the Bread of Life, Brother Cabrera came to recognize in himself a tendency that many have: to see to his personal comfort first.

“I always find one or more ‘reasons’—excuses—to postpone my duties,” he explains. Thoughts like “In a while” or “Tomorrow” or “There’s no rush” come into his mind, he says, “hovering like vultures that block my family, economic, social, and, above all, eternal progress.”

Following the Savior only after doing what we like makes us “nearly disciples,” not true ones, he says. Reading about the Savior’s commitment to submitting to the will of the Father increased Brother Cabrera’s own commitment, and he came to better understand how taking the sacrament each week helps him “[put] off the natural man” (Mosiah 3:19).

“I submit to the influence of the Holy Spirit and allow the power of the Atonement to make me a saint,” explains Brother Cabrera. “For this to happen, I need to develop the attributes of Christ: becoming like a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, loving, being willing to submit to the will of the Lord” (see Mosiah 3:19).

As Brother Cabrera made a concerted effort to put off the natural man, he found an increased love for Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, his family, his leaders, and other associates. He found that his work performance increased. And most of all, he found that he enjoyed—not suffered in—doing things to build the kingdom of God.

“While I used to see discipleship of the Savior as a burden, I now see that His yoke is easy and His burden is light” (see Matthew 11:30), Brother Cabrera says. “That’s what the great plan of happiness is: to follow Jesus Christ and to rejoice with Him now and in the eternities.”

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ isn't simply a periodic activity but a way of life.

Discipleship in All Things

Chioma N., age 15, of Nigeria, studied John 7 and 3 Nephi 14 as part of a desire to be more obedient. She admits that it's difficult to “do some things I hate doing—especially tidying up the kitchen when I am tired.” But she also has a desire to “love people around her,” and obedience, she found, was one way to show that love (see John 14:15).

As Chioma studied the Savior's teachings about obedience and read about His submission to Heavenly Father's will, she recognized that because Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ knew that we would sin and go astray, They gave us commandments to help us stay on the strait and narrow path. She also learned that without obedience, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

“I learned that nobody is perfect, but with obedience, we can all strive toward perfection,” she said. “And I have learned that we should be obedient so that Heavenly Father can bless us.”

She found an opportunity to exhibit obedience at school when she was asked to sweep the classroom when it wasn't her turn.

“I humbly obeyed as I listened to the Holy Ghost telling me to obey and sweep the classroom. My fellow students were surprised, and our teacher also. Because of this incident, people now know me as an obedient and humble girl. I felt happy throughout the week because I was obedient.”

Michelle Kielmann Hansen grew up in Greenland and now lives in Denmark, both places that have a culture of “showing kindness and being helpful,” she says. In many aspects, she says, the places where she has




lived have helped make leading a Christlike life easier.

In other ways, though, she says it's difficult to help people understand that being a disciple of Jesus Christ isn't simply a periodic activity but rather a way of life. She said that her peers, including two nonmember roommates, often have difficulty understanding a lifestyle that involves "all those hours at church," temple attendance, scripture study, and monthly fasting. Living a disciple's life becomes even more difficult when she encounters bad media, crude language, or other negative external influences. "With those influences," she says, "it can be very challenging to remember that I'm actually a disciple of Jesus Christ."

Sister Hansen admits that it's hard to be a young adult in a world whose morals seem to be constantly shifting. In some cases, the decision between right and wrong is clear-cut. In other cases, it's not. But, she says, even though the situations she encounters are sometimes complex, the scriptures are simple.

"It's more difficult to be a disciple of Jesus Christ if you don't know Him," Sister Hansen says. "The scriptures are tools for us to get to know Him. Every time I didn't know how to act, I automatically turned to what I had been studying in the mornings and evenings," she says. "Studying [the Savior's] life and teachings helped me to better understand



*One member said,
"We can find some
new way to be like
the Savior every
time we study His
life. And then we
continue to learn
it by following His
example."*

that He did what He did because He loves every one of us.

“As I learned more about Him, I understood that being a disciple of Jesus Christ means knowing who He is. And that helped me act in ways that He taught. Discipleship is to know [and choose] what Jesus Christ would do in any situation—therefore, it’s important to study His teachings frequently.”

Discipleship in All Places

Stacey White, a mother of four in Indiana, USA, was longing for an opportunity to help a neighbor, friend, or even a stranger during the week she studied Matthew 25:35–40, where the Savior teaches that serving “the least of these” is, in fact, serving Him (verse 40).

“Because I am a busy stay-at-home mom of four young children, I sometimes feel frustrated that I’m not able to be of service as often as I would like,” Sister White explained. “I am so busy taking care of my own family’s needs that I have little time for anything extra.”

Sister White noted that as she continued to study, cross-reference, and ponder these scriptures, praying for opportunities to serve, “the week seemed to take on a higher level of stress than what normally comes with motherhood”—certainly not what she had hoped for.

“There were school projects to help with, more than the usual messes to

clean up, sibling fights to referee, and a mountain of laundry that seemed to regenerate itself. The to-do list seemed to never come close to being completed. My prayer seemed to go unanswered as I longed for the free time and energy to serve someone other than my husband and children.”

But then, partway through the week, Sister White came to a realization: just because she didn’t have the opportunity to serve outside her home did not mean that the Lord had let her prayer go unanswered, and it didn’t mean that she hadn’t been serving in meaningful ways.

“The Lord *was* answering my prayer by giving me those opportunities within my own family,” she says. “At times I feel that the service within my own family somehow doesn’t count, that in order to be classified as service, it must be outside the home, rendered to someone other than a family member. But with my new understanding, while I was making beds, doing laundry, chauffeuring kids, and doing all my daily duties as a mother, I did them more joyfully. My tasks didn’t seem quite so mundane, and I realized I was making a difference for my family.”

For Dima Ivanov of Vladivostok, Russia, the invitation to participate in the “discipleship experiment” came at a hectic time. Brother Ivanov had recently left his job to begin his own business, and because he had so many work-related responsibilities to

consider, he wondered if he would have difficulty keeping discipleship at the forefront of his thoughts.

Still, he agreed to participate, and since discipleship meant to him “obeying and following the direction or advice of a teacher,” he delved into the Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew 5 and 3 Nephi 12.

What Brother Ivanov found as he studied the characteristics of that sermon, he said, were his own weaknesses. But knowing that the Savior had promised that those who humble themselves would have weak things made strong (see Ether 12:27), Brother Ivanov turned to Him, seeking opportunities to grow.

“I felt the Savior closer to me,” reported Brother Ivanov. “I learned that He is the greatest Teacher, and I learned ways I could become more like Him. As I studied about the nature of discipleship, I learned that we can find some new way to be like the Savior every time we study His life. And then we continue to learn it by following His example. We have to practice what we learn.”

He said his understanding of discipleship changed over the week. “Following the Savior is not just studying gospel principles or obeying His commandments,” he explained. “Wherever we are or whatever we are doing, we can have the ‘real desire to follow His example and to have the intention to become like Him.’” ■

Melissa Merrill lives in Idaho, USA.



How we deal with the things we experience is up to us. My decision not to become bitter made all the difference in my ability to heal.

I never imagined myself as a divorced person. In facing the prospect, I found it difficult to eat or sleep, and my thoughts raced constantly. My first call was to one of my sisters, who was serving in the temple later that day. I asked her to put my name on the prayer roll of the temple, which she did. Then I notified all my children. Then I prayed. I prayed for peace. I prayed for comfort. I prayed for strength. I prayed for understanding. I prayed for guidance.

In the next few days I met with my bishop and found his counsel comforting and helpful. Because it was clear that my marriage was over, I found an attorney. I spoke with all my sisters, who are active members, and my brother, who is not. Armed with the advice of those close to

me, I went to the Lord again. I spent several days in my room praying and thinking. And I made a decision.

I decided I would not become bitter. My heart was broken. But I would not allow this to damage my spirit.

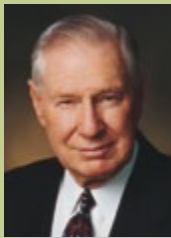
One's happiness or misery can be determined largely in one's own mind. In other words, we can actively

decide whether or not we will be happy—whether to choose the bitter or the sweet. When we are handed a lemon, as the saying goes, we can choose to make lemonade.

Many years before, we had lived next door to a woman who had a dispute with another neighbor about the property line. She felt wronged by this neighbor and had held a grudge for more than 20 years. She became so bitter that it distorted her entire outlook. By the time we lived next door to her, she

I CAN DECIDE

Name withheld



WHAT REALLY COUNTS

“It’s not so much what happens to us but how we deal with what happens to us.”

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Where Do I Make My Stand?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 20.

had lost the ability to accept even the innocent kindnesses extended by our children. I felt sorry for her.

This was a great lesson to me. In times of solitude I remembered this neighbor and determined to never allow myself to indulge in such bitterness. My marriage was over, but I could choose how I dealt with that fact.

Nevertheless, I admit that the next few months were very difficult. Friends, children, siblings, and extended family all offered words of comfort and help.

One of my sisters reminded me that my children and I were still entitled to the blessings of the temple sealing. This reminder was a life-changing moment. I thought seriously of the covenants I had made and kept, and I felt a sweet spirit of comfort. Because I had kept my covenants, I had nothing to fear. I received assurances that the Lord is aware of my life, my responsibilities, and my pain.

The Lord also sent help to me by means of my family, my attorney, my wonderful home teachers, my visiting teachers, my bishop, an excellent therapist, and my friends.

They were angels sent to give me help and strength.

One of my aunts reminded me of all the people who love me. She and my uncle were serving in a faraway temple. She pointed out that my name was on the prayer rolls of temples around the world. I thought of the loved ones I knew who kept my name in the temples near them. This thought flooded me with the most wonderful warmth. There were times I could feel the prayers of thousands in my behalf.

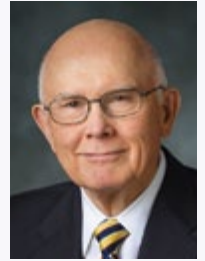
Things do happen to us that we can’t change. What we *can* change is how we deal with the things we experience. Knowing that *I* could decide made all the difference in my ability to heal. I decided to reach out to the Lord. I decided to seek the companionship of the Holy Ghost. I decided to increase my faith in Jesus Christ and increase my understanding of His Atonement.

I still have days of genuine sadness. However, in deciding which path to take, I have found happiness I had never known before. I have learned how strong I am. I have learned a deeper love for my family and friends. I have learned greater appreciation for the Lord’s hand in my life.

Truly, the Savior can not only provide remission for our sins but also heal the wounded heart and take away even the deepest of sorrows. I testify that no matter our disappointments, each of us has the opportunity to choose. Each of us can decide to invite the Lord into our lives and experience His help and His healing. ■



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



Balancing

TRUTH & TOLERANCE

The existence and nature of truth is one of the fundamental questions of mortal life. Jesus told the Roman governor Pilate that He came into the world to “bear witness unto the truth.” That unbeliever responded, “What is truth?” (John 18:37–38). Earlier the Savior had declared, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). In modern revelation, He declared, “Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come” (D&C 93:24).

We believe in *absolute truth*, including the existence of God and the right and wrong established by His commandments. We know that the existence of God and the existence of absolute truth are fundamental to life on this earth, whether they are believed in or not.

Tolerance for behavior is like a two-sided coin. Tolerance or respect is on one side of the coin, but truth is always on the other.

We also know that evil exists and that some things are simply, seriously, and everlastingly wrong.

Shocking reports of large-scale thievery and lying in civilized societies suggest a moral vacuum in which many have little sense of right and wrong. Widespread rioting, pillaging, and cheating have caused many to wonder whether we are losing the

moral foundation Western countries have received from their Judeo-Christian heritage.¹

It is well to worry about our moral foundation. We live in a world where more and more persons of influence are teaching and acting out a belief that there is no absolute right and wrong—that all authority and all rules of behavior are man-made choices that can prevail over the commandments of God. Many even question whether there is a God.

The philosophy of moral relativism, which holds that each person is free to choose for him or herself what is right and wrong, is becoming the unofficial creed for many in the United States and other Western nations. At the extreme level, evil acts that used to be localized and covered up like a boil are now legalized and paraded like a banner.

Persuaded by this philosophy, many of the rising generation are caught up in self-serving pleasures, pornography, dishonesty, foul language, revealing attire, pagan painting and piercing of body parts, and degrading sexual indulgence.

Many religious leaders teach the existence of God as the ultimate lawgiver, by whose command certain behavior is absolutely right and true and other behavior is absolutely wrong and untrue.² Bible and Book of Mormon prophets foresaw this time, when men would be “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:4) and, indeed, when men would deny God (see Jude 1:4; 2 Nephi 28:5; Moroni 7:17; D&C 29:22).



We must stand up for truth, even while we practice tolerance and respect for beliefs and ideas different from our own.

In this troubled circumstance, we who believe in God and the corollary truth of absolute right and wrong have the challenge of living in a godless and increasingly amoral world. In this circumstance, all of us—especially the rising generation—have a duty to stand up and speak out to affirm that God exists and that there are absolute truths that His commandments establish.

Many teachers in schools, colleges, and universities are teaching and practicing relative morality. This is shaping the attitudes of many young people who are taking their places as the teachers of our children and the shapers of

public attitudes through the media and popular entertainment. This philosophy of moral relativism denies what millions of believing Christians, Jews, and Muslims consider fundamental, and this denial creates serious problems for all of us. What believers should do about this introduces the second of my twin subjects, tolerance.

Tolerance is defined as a friendly and fair attitude toward unfamiliar or different opinions and practices or toward the persons who hold or practice them. As modern transportation and communication have brought all of us into closer proximity to different peoples and different ideas, we have greater need for tolerance.

This greater exposure to diversity both enriches our lives and complicates them. We are enriched by associations with different peoples, which remind us of the wonderful diversity of the children of God. But diversity in cultures and values also challenges us to identify what can be embraced as consistent with our gospel culture and values and what cannot be. In this way, diversity increases the potential for conflict and requires us to be more thoughtful about the nature of tolerance. What is tolerance, when does it apply, and when does it not apply?

These are harder questions for those who affirm the existence of God and absolute truth than for those who believe in moral relativism. The weaker one's belief in God and the fewer one's moral absolutes, the fewer the occasions when the ideas or practices of others will confront one with the challenge to be tolerant. For example, an atheist has no need to decide what kinds and occasions of profanity or blasphemy can be tolerated and what kinds should be confronted. Persons who don't believe in God or in absolute truth in moral matters can see themselves as the most tolerant of persons. For them, almost anything goes. This belief system can tolerate almost any behavior and almost any person. Unfortunately, some who believe in moral relativism seem to have difficulty tolerating those who insist that there is a God who should be respected and that there are certain moral absolutes that should be observed.



Because followers of Jesus Christ are to be in the world but not of the world, we must seek tolerance from those who hate us for not being of the world.

Three Absolute Truths

So what does tolerance mean to us and other believers, and what are our special challenges in applying it? I begin with three absolute truths. I express them as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, but I believe that most of these ideas are shared by believers generally.

First, all persons are brothers and sisters under God, taught within their various religions to love and do good to one another. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) expressed this idea for Latter-day Saints: “Each of us [from various religious denominations] believes in the fatherhood of God, although we may differ in our interpretations of Him. Each of us is part of a great family, the human family, sons and daughters of God, and therefore brothers and sisters. We must work harder to build mutual respect, an attitude of forbearance, with tolerance one for another regardless of the doctrines and philosophies which we may espouse.”³

Note that President Hinckley spoke of mutual respect *as well as* tolerance. Living together with mutual respect for one another’s differences is a challenge in today’s world. However—and here I express a *second* absolute truth—this living with differences is what the gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us we must do.

The kingdom of God is like leaven, Jesus taught (see Matthew 13:33). Leaven—yeast—is hidden away in the larger mass until the whole is leavened, which means

raised by its influence. Our Savior also taught that His followers will have tribulation in the world (see John 16:33), that their numbers and dominions will be small (see 1 Nephi 14:12), and that they will be hated because they are not of the world (see John 17:14). But that is our role. We are called to live with other children of God who do not share our faith or our values and who do not have the covenant obligations we have assumed. We are to be *in* the world but not *of* the world.

Because followers of Jesus Christ are commanded to be leaven, we must seek tolerance from those who hate us for not being of the world. As part of this, we will sometimes need to challenge laws that would impair our freedom to practice our faith, doing so in reliance on our constitutional rights to the free exercise of religion. The big concern is “the ability of people of all faiths to work out their relationship with God and one another without the government looking over their shoulder.”⁴ That is why we need understanding and support when we must contend for religious freedom.

We must also practice tolerance and respect toward others. As the Apostle Paul taught, Christians should “follow after the things which make for peace” (Romans 14:19) and, as much as possible, “live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18). Consequently, we should be alert to honor the good we should see in all people and in many opinions and practices that differ from our own. As the Book of Mormon teaches:

“All things which are good cometh of God; . . .
“ . . . wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth
to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired
of God.

“Wherefore, take heed . . . that ye do not judge . . . that
which is good and of God to be of the devil” (Moroni
7:12–14).

That approach to differences will yield tolerance and also
respect toward us.

Our tolerance and respect for others and their beliefs
does not cause us to abandon our commitment to the truths
we understand and the covenants we have made. That is a
third absolute truth. We are cast as combatants in the war
between truth and error. There is no middle ground. We
must stand up for truth, even while we practice tolerance
and respect for beliefs and ideas different from our own and
for the people who hold them.

Tolerance for Behavior

While we must practice tolerance and respect for others
and their beliefs, including their right to explain and advoc-
ate their positions, we are not required to respect and tol-
erate wrong *behavior*. Our duty to truth requires us to seek
relief from behavior that is wrong. This is easy with extreme
behaviors that most believers and nonbelievers recognize as
wrong or unacceptable.

As to less-extreme behaviors, where even believers
disagree on whether they are wrong, the nature and
extent of what we should tolerate is much more difficult
to define. Thus, a thoughtful Latter-day Saint woman
wrote me about her concern that “the world’s definition of
‘tolerance’ seems to be increasingly used in relation to tol-
erating wicked lifestyles.” She asked how the Lord would
define *tolerance*.⁵

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles, has said: “The word *tolerance* does not stand
alone. It requires an object and a response to qualify it as a
virtue. . . . Tolerance is often demanded but seldom returned.
Beware of the word *tolerance*. It is a very unstable virtue.”⁶



As the Apostle Paul taught, Christians should “follow after the things which make for peace” and, as much as possible, “live peaceably with all men.”

This inspired caution reminds us that for persons who
believe in absolute truth, tolerance for behavior is like a two-
sided coin. Tolerance or respect is on one side of the coin, but
truth is always on the other. You cannot possess or use the
coin of tolerance without being conscious of both sides.

Our Savior applied this principle. When He faced the
woman taken in adultery, Jesus spoke the comforting words
of tolerance: “Neither do I condemn thee.” Then, as He sent
her away, He spoke the commanding words of truth: “Go,
and sin no more” (John 8:11). We should all be edified and
strengthened by this example of speaking both tolerance and
truth: kindness in the communication but firmness in the truth.

Another thoughtful Latter-day Saint wrote: “I often hear
the name of the Lord taken in vain, and I also have acquaint-
ances who tell me that they are living with their boyfriends.
I have found that observance of the Sabbath is almost obso-
lete. How can I keep my covenant to stand as a witness and
not offend these people?”⁷

I begin with our personal conduct. In applying the
sometimes-competing demands of truth and tolerance to
these three behaviors—profanity, cohabitation, and Sabbath
breaking—and many others, we should not be tolerant
with ourselves. We should be ruled by the demands of
truth. We should be strong in keeping the commandments

and our covenants, and we should repent and improve when we fall short.

President Thomas S. Monson has taught: “The face of sin today often wears the mask of tolerance. Do not be deceived; behind that facade is heartache, unhappiness, and pain. . . . If your so-called friends urge you to do anything you know to be wrong, *you* be the one to make a stand for right, even if you stand alone.”⁸

Similarly, with our children and others whom we have a duty to teach, our duty to truth is paramount. Of course, teaching efforts bear fruit only through the agency of others, so our teaching must always be done with love, patience, and persuasion.

I turn now to the obligations of truth and tolerance in our personal relations with associates who use profanity in our presence, live with a partner out of wedlock, or do not observe the Sabbath day appropriately.

Our obligation to tolerance means that none of these behaviors—or others we consider deviations from the truth—should ever cause us to react with hateful communications or unkind actions. But our obligation to truth has its own set of requirements and its own set of blessings. When we “speak every man truth with his neighbour” and when we “[speak] the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15, 25), we are acting as servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, doing His work. Angels will stand with us, and He will send His Holy Spirit to guide us.

In this sensitive matter we should first consider whether—or the extent to which—we should communicate to our associates what we know to be true about their behavior. In most cases this decision can depend on how directly we are personally affected by it.

Profanity consistently used in our presence is an appropriate cause for us to communicate the fact that this is offensive to us. Profanity used out of our presence by nonbelievers probably would not be an occasion for us to confront the offenders.

Cohabitation we know to be a serious sin, in which Latter-day Saints must not engage. When practiced by those around us, it can be private behavior or something we are

asked to condone, sponsor, or facilitate. In the balance between truth and tolerance, tolerance can be dominant where the behavior does not involve us personally. But if the cohabitation does involve us personally, we should be governed by our duty to truth. For example, it is one thing to ignore serious sins when they are private; it is quite another thing to be asked to sponsor or implicitly endorse them, such as by housing them in our own homes.

On Sabbath observance, we should perhaps explain our belief that our observance of the Sabbath, including our partaking of the sacrament, restores us spiritually and makes us better people for the rest of the week. Then, to other believers, we might express appreciation for

While we must practice tolerance and respect for others and their beliefs, including their right to explain and advocate their positions, we are not required to respect and tolerate wrong behavior.

the fact that we share common ground on what is most vital: each of us believes in God and in the existence of absolute truth, even though we differ in our definitions of those fundamentals. Beyond that, we should remember the Savior’s teaching that we should avoid contention (see 3 Nephi 11:29–30) and that our example and our preaching should “be the warning voice, every man to his



We should all be edified and strengthened by the Savior's example of speaking both tolerance and truth: kindness in the communication but firmness in the truth.

neighbor, in mildness and in meekness" (D&C 38:41).

In all of this we should not presume to judge our neighbors or associates on the ultimate effect of their behaviors. That judgment is the Lord's, not ours.

Principles in the Public Square

When believers enter the public square to try to influence the making or the administration of laws motivated by their beliefs, they should apply some different principles.

First, they must seek the inspiration of the Lord to be selective and wise in choosing which true principles they seek to promote by law or executive action. Generally, they should refrain from seeking laws or administrative action to facilitate beliefs that are distinctive to believers, such as the

enforcement of acts of worship, even by implication. Believers can be less cautious in seeking government action that would serve principles broader than merely facilitating the practice of their beliefs, such as laws concerning public health, safety, and morals.

Believers can and must seek laws that will preserve religious freedom. Along with the ascendancy of moral relativism, the United States and other nations are experiencing a disturbing reduction in overall public esteem for religion. Once an accepted part of American life, religion is now suspect in the minds of many. Some influential voices even question the extent to which our constitutions should protect the free exercise of religion, including the right to practice and preach religious principles.

This is a vital matter on which we who believe in a Supreme Being who has established absolute right and wrong in human behavior must unite to insist on our time-honored rights to exercise our religion, to vote our consciences on public issues, and to participate in elections and debates in the

public square and the halls of justice. We must stand shoulder to shoulder with other believers to preserve and strengthen the freedom to advocate and practice our religious beliefs, whatever they are. For this purpose we must walk together on the same path in order to secure our freedom to pursue our separate ways when that is necessary according to our separate beliefs.

Second, when believers promote their positions in the public square, they should always be tolerant of the opinions and positions of those who do not share their beliefs. Believers must always speak with love and show patience, understanding, and compassion toward their adversaries. Christian believers are under command to love their neighbors (see Luke 10:27) and to forgive (see Matthew 18:21–35).

They should also remember the Savior's teaching to "bless them that curse [them], do good to them that hate [them], and pray for them which despitefully use [them], and persecute [them]" (Matthew 5:44).

We must stand shoulder to shoulder with other believers to preserve and strengthen the freedom to advocate and practice our religious beliefs.

Third, believers should not be deterred by the familiar charge that they are trying to legislate morality. Many areas of the law are based on Judeo-Christian morality and have been for centuries. Western civilization is based on morality and cannot exist without it. As the second U.S. president, John Adams, declared: "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."⁹

Fourth, believers should not shrink from seeking laws to maintain public conditions or policies that assist them in practicing the requirements of their faith where those conditions or policies are also favorable to the public health, safety, or morals. For example, even though religious beliefs are behind many criminal laws and some family laws, such laws have a long-standing history of appropriateness in democratic societies. But where believers are in the majority, they should always be sensitive to the views of the minority.

Finally, the spirit of our balance of truth and tolerance is

applied in these words of President Hinckley: "Let us reach out to those in our community who are not of our faith. Let us be good neighbors, kind and generous and gracious. Let us be involved in good community causes. There may be situations where, with serious moral issues involved, we cannot bend on matters of principle. But in such instances we can politely disagree without being disagreeable. We can acknowledge the sincerity of those whose positions we cannot accept. We can speak of principles rather than personalities."¹⁰

Watchman on the Tower

The Bible teaches that one of the functions of a prophet is to be a "watchman" to warn Israel (see Ezekiel 3:17; 33:7). In revelation the Lord added this counsel for modern Zion: "Set . . . a watchman upon the tower," who will "[see] the enemy while he [is] yet afar off" and give warning to save the vineyard "from the hands of the destroyer" (D&C 101:45, 54).

I speak as one of those watchmen. I assure you that my message is true. I proclaim my knowledge that God lives! I testify that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, crucified for the sins of the world, and that He reaches out to each of us with the timeless invitation to receive His peace by learning of Him and walking in His way (see D&C 19:23). ■

From a Church Educational System devotional address delivered on September 11, 2011. For the full text in English, go to lds.org/broadcasts/article/ces-devotionals/2011/01/truth-and-tolerance.

NOTES

1. "Is US a Nation of Liars? Casey Anthony Isn't the Only One," *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 19, 2011, 20; "Anarchy in the UK," *The Economist*, Aug. 13, 2011, 144.
2. See, for example, Joseph G. Donders, ed., *John Paul II: The Encyclicals in Everyday Language* (2005), 212–13; see also Rabbi Harold Kushner, *Who Needs God* (2002), 78.
3. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 665.
4. Eric Rassbach, in William McGurn, "Religion and the Cult of Tolerance," *Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 16, 2011, A11.
5. Letter to Dallin H. Oaks, May 14, 1998.
6. Boyd K. Packer, "Be Not Afraid" (address at the Ogden Utah Institute of Religion, Nov. 16, 2008), 5; see also Bruce D. Porter, "Defending the Family in a Troubled World," *Ensign*, June 2011, 12–18.
7. Letter to Dallin H. Oaks, Dec. 22, 1987.
8. Thomas S. Monson, "Examples of Righteousness," *Ensign*, May 2008, 65.
9. In Charles Francis Adams, ed., *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States*, 10 vols. (1850–56), 9:229.
10. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 131.

YOU'RE NOT



By Mike Ellsworth

I joined the United States Army Reserve at age 17, during the Vietnam War. Six days after high school graduation, I shipped out to Fort Polk, Louisiana, USA, for basic training. Although there were six in our group from Utah, the other five were assigned to different barracks than I was. I discovered that my company was full of soldiers who had been convicted criminals. Judges had given them the option of going to prison or serving in the military, and they had chosen the latter. Their language was crude and their behavior was rough, and I felt out of my comfort zone, to say the least.

My discomfort led me to rely on the power of prayer more than I had at any other time in my life. The strength

Life in basic training was tough. I needed spiritual strength more than ever.

it gave me was what sustained me during those difficult times. I prayed particularly for the opportunity to attend church and to be lifted by the Spirit there.

That wasn't possible right away; for the first several weeks of boot camp, training occurred 16 to 18 hours a day, seven days a week. After that, our schedule eased up a bit, and while we were still training every day of the week, it wasn't quite as taxing. I decided to use some of my free time to see if I could find the other young men from Utah. When I did,

HERE TO GO TO CHURCH!



I learned they were all Latter-day Saints. I told them I would really like to go to church and asked them if they would be interested in joining me. They indicated that they would be.

So for the next several days, I sought opportunities to talk to the commander of the company to seek his permission to attend church. But it always seemed that by the time we got back from training, he was gone, and I never could quite catch him. I continued to pray for the opportunity to attend church and specifically to be able to find an opportunity to talk to the captain about it.

Payday was approaching, and I knew he would be there when we were paid, so I decided I would ask him then. Our company stood out in the sun between some barracks,

each man waiting for his turn to be paid his month's salary. Finally my turn came. As I approached the captain, who had an armed guard on either side of him, I said, "Sir, several of us would like to go to church on Sunday."

He looked at me scoffingly and said, "Soldier, you're here to be trained, not to go to church. Now, fall out."

At this dismissal, I left and headed to the post exchange, the store where most of the soldiers went to spend their money on payday. As I walked, I became angrier and angrier. How could he deny us the opportunity to worship?

Despite feeling intimidated by this captain's refusal, I decided to do what I could about it. I called the inspector general's office and talked to a major there. "Sir," I said, "I find it ironic that we are in the service to defend our freedoms, including religious freedom, yet our company commander is denying us the opportunity to go to church." He took my name, the name of my company, and the name of my commander and told me he would look into it.

The following Sunday, all 400 members of my company were standing in formation for roll taking and for receiving instruction. At the end of that, the company commander said in an upset voice, "Private Ellsworth, you are excused to go to church, as is anyone else who wants to go with you."

I was elated. I found the other Latter-day Saint men, and for our remaining weeks at Fort Polk, we attended church on base. In the other areas I was stationed after that, I always found an opportunity to attend church. The environment I found there was usually in stark contrast to life in the barracks, and it gave me strength from week to week.

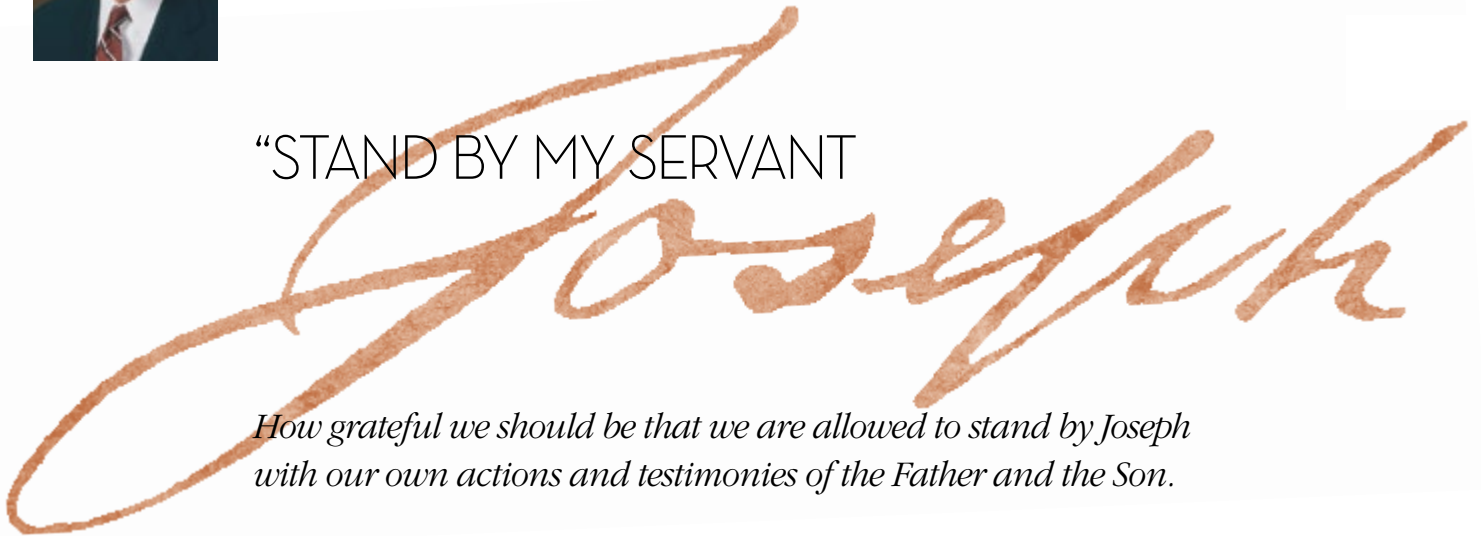
I'm grateful for that opportunity to attend church and to be strengthened in worship and renewing my covenants. I'm thankful for other upstanding young men whose company and support gave me courage to find a way for us to attend church. Most important, I'm grateful to have been able to rely on the power of prayer. It sustained me in an environment that was foreign to me, and although I was young and inexperienced, it gave me strength beyond my own and the courage to keep going. ■

Mike Ellsworth lives in Utah, USA.



By Elder Cecil O. Samuelson Jr.
Served as a member of the Seventy
from 1994 to 2011

“STAND BY MY SERVANT



How grateful we should be that we are allowed to stand by Joseph with our own actions and testimonies of the Father and the Son.



The Lord said to Oliver Cowdery, “Therefore be diligent; stand by my servant Joseph, faithfully, in whatsoever difficult circumstances he may be for the word’s sake” (D&C 6:18).

What did the phrase “stand by my servant Joseph” mean to Oliver, and what should it mean to us?

Even before the Church was organized, it became clear that Joseph Smith was no ordinary young man. Although born into modest means and circumstances, he was quickly identified as someone special. The First Vision was an unexpected occurrence

that not only changed his life forever but also changed the history of the world. His initial interview with the angel Moroni, occurring while he was just 17 years old, taught him that his life and work would not be usual by any measure.

“He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Moroni; that God had a work for me to do; and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people” (Joseph Smith—History 1:33).

That is an amazing prophecy for any 17-year-old. Think of the statistical improbability of the assertion that his “name should be had for good and evil” around the world. Yet the name Joseph Smith *is* becoming widely known among virtually all of the nations of the earth.



For those who have heard of Joseph, their knowledge and understanding are usually incomplete in important ways. The Church and its leaders, missionaries, and other representatives are doing much to improve what the world knows and understands of Joseph Smith. All of us will have parts to play, and our roles will be important.

Understanding Joseph

The understanding people have of Joseph occurs at different levels. As I mention a few, mentally note where you stand and which level best describes you.

Recognition: Increasingly, people recognize the name Joseph Smith and are able to relate him to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Book of Mormon, and other basics of our faith. Some know enough, or believe they know enough, to have developed opinions about him—positive or negative. Most people throughout the world who have heard of Joseph Smith fit into this category and are not exercised about him sufficiently to try to learn more.

Appreciation: Of those who recognize the Prophet Joseph Smith by name, some know that he accomplished things that have made a difference. They know he organized a church and movement that has grown dramatically and has influenced many lives. Although they may not believe in his work or admire his contributions, they acknowledge that the world is different because of his life and efforts.

Admiration: Many who appreciate that Joseph made a difference also admire many of his accomplishments and contributions. Although still not necessarily subscribing to his teachings or his mission, they admire what he did in Kirtland, Ohio; Missouri; and Nauvoo,



Illinois. They admire his ability to enlist a following and to inspire people to sacrifice greatly for the cause he espoused. Again, not all who admire his accomplishments necessarily endorse his positions.

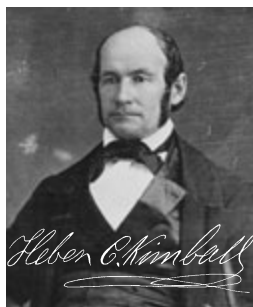
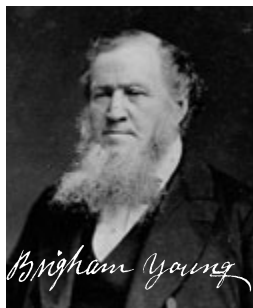
Testimony: A subset of those who recognize, appreciate, and admire Joseph are those who have a testimony of the truthfulness of his mission, teachings, and accounts of encounters with heavenly beings. They have no reservations about him or the doctrines he revealed, but they may not have fully internalized what this should mean to them.

Loyalty: To those who have a testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his unique and special mission, I frame this question: What does it mean to “stand by my servant Joseph”? It means more than just recognition, appreciation, admiration, and testimony. The counsel given to Oliver Cowdery to faithfully stand by Joseph illustrates what I mean. To Oliver’s great credit, he never denied his testimony of the events and experiences he had with the Prophet. Unfortunately, he did not live up to what the Lord required of him, and he lost his place (see D&C 124:95).

Stalwart Associates

The one called to replace Oliver and enjoy the privileges, responsibilities, and destiny with the Prophet Joseph was his brother Hyrum. Even before the Church was organized, Hyrum knew the truthfulness of what Joseph was teaching and reporting. He wanted to do his part and hoped and pled to be called as a missionary. The Lord, in answering Hyrum’s entreaty, said, “Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word” (D&C 11:21).

To Hyrum’s everlasting credit, despite his disappointment at not being called as a



Of the Twelve Apostles chosen in Kirtland, only Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball refused to “[lift] their heel against” the Prophet. Hyrum Smith (in painting at left) stood by Joseph his whole life.

missionary at that time, he stood by Joseph and received the blessings God reserves for those loyal to Him. These blessings included, less than a year later, the exact opportunity Hyrum had sought (see D&C 23:3).

Another who stood by Joseph was Brigham Young. “Of the Twelve Apostles chosen in Kirtland,” the Prophet said, “. . . there have been but two but what have lifted their heel against me—namely Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball.”¹ Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball were the only two members of the Twelve at that time who had never opposed Joseph.

Grateful we are that others besides Hyrum, Brigham, and Heber stood by Joseph even when it might have seemed folly to do so. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, replacements for the Twelve and other key leadership responsibilities were later selected from this group of faithful friends to Joseph.

John Taylor, who would follow Brigham Young as Joseph’s successor, was stalwart from the time of his baptism in 1836. During the dark days in Kirtland, he attended a meeting where Joseph Smith, not in attendance, was severely criticized by apostates who once had been Joseph’s friends and associates. Elder Taylor courageously offered this defense:

“It was Joseph Smith, under the Almighty, who developed the first principles, and to him we must look for further instructions. If the spirit which he manifests does not bring blessings, I am very much afraid that the one manifested by those who have spoken, will not be very likely to secure them. The children of Israel, formerly, after seeing the power of God manifested in their midst, fell into rebellion and idolatry, and there is certainly very great danger of us doing the same thing.”²

John Taylor saw what had happened to his colleagues and recognized the attendant spiritual risks they faced. I submit that the danger to us as well is both great and real should we also fail to stand by Joseph.

Another who stood steadfast in the chilling wind of a contagious apostasy was Wilford Woodruff. He, like John Taylor, was called to replace one who had fallen, and he later succeeded President Taylor as President of the Church. In discussing these matters and the instruction given to him at the time of his call to the Twelve, he said:

“Brother Joseph laid before us the cause of those men turning away from the commandments of God. He hoped we would learn wisdom by what we saw with the eye and heard with the ear, and that we would be able to discern the spirits of other men without being compelled to learn by sad experience.

“He then remarked that any man . . . who pursued a course whereby he would ignore or, in other words, refuse to obey any known law or commandment or duty—whenever a man did this, neglected any duty God required at his hand in attending meetings, filling missions, or obeying counsel, he laid a foundation to lead him to apostasy and this was the reason those men had fallen.”³

On another occasion, President Woodruff bore this testimony of Joseph, which was consistent throughout his life:

“It has been my faith and belief from the time that I was made acquainted with the gospel that no greater prophet than Joseph Smith ever lived on the face of the earth save Jesus Christ. [Joseph Smith] was raised up to stand at the head of this great dispensation—the greatest of all dispensations God has ever given to man.”⁴



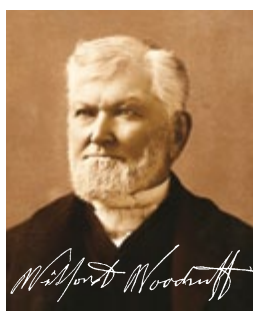
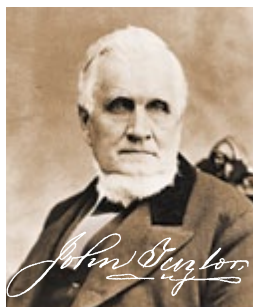
This testimony is beautiful and clear, but what is even more impressive and helpful is the steady and stalwart behavior Wilford Woodruff demonstrated in clearly and consistently standing by Joseph Smith.

A Conviction of the Prophet

What does it mean to us to stand by Joseph? We do not have a doctrine of infallibility. Joseph himself was quick to admit his own shortcomings, but he was a good and stable boy and man. In describing his situation and personal errors, he said: “No one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins. A disposition to commit such was never in my nature” (Joseph Smith—History 1:28). His openness on these matters was lifelong, and shortly before his death he said, “I never told you I was perfect; but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught.”⁵

Our testimonies are vital but not sufficient by themselves. The Bible reminds us that even the devils believe in Jesus Christ (see James 2:19). Our love and respect for Joseph Smith are important, but if they are not incorporated into our lives internally and consistently, we cannot stand by Joseph. We may not have the same experiences Oliver Cowdery and others had with Joseph Smith, but we can expect to have the same convictions—and to demonstrate them in the same way Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and countless others have since the Restoration of the gospel.

Such conviction comes to us by study, by faith, and by always acting appropriately—and it is hard work. Those whom I have named, as well as legions of others, obtained this witness and internalized it through the manifestations of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is eager



John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff remained stalwart in standing by the Prophet following their baptism. “No greater prophet than Joseph Smith [in painting at left] ever lived on the face of the earth save Jesus Christ,” declared Wilford Woodruff.

to confer this sustaining knowledge upon us because the testimony of Joseph’s work and mission is key and central to our testimony of the knowledge that is most important of all: that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, the literal living Son of our living Heavenly Father.

How grateful we are to Joseph for his worthiness to witness what he did for us. How grateful we should be that we are allowed to stand by Joseph with our own actions and testimonies of the Father and the Son.

I return to the counsel of the Lord to Oliver Cowdery: “Therefore be diligent; stand by my servant Joseph, faithfully, in whatsoever difficult circumstances he may be for the word’s sake” (D&C 6:18). In that context, Oliver was given additional counsel that I share to help us incorporate into our lives the necessary characteristics and determination that will allow us to always stand by Joseph: “Be patient; be sober; be temperate; have patience, faith, hope and charity” (D&C 6:19).

To these I add the necessity of the “mighty change” of heart (see Alma 5:12–14) that gives one the perspective and conviction to stand by Joseph always—to be true constantly and consistently to the principles he taught and to the Church of Jesus Christ, which the Lord restored through him. ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University on January 18, 2005, by Elder Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., president of Brigham Young University. For the full text in English, visit speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

1. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 5:412.
2. John Taylor, in B. H. Roberts, *The Life of John Taylor* (1963), 41.
3. Wilford Woodruff, in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 319.
4. Wilford Woodruff, in *Deseret News Weekly*, Dec. 29, 1880, 754.
5. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 522.



Earth

A GIFT FROM GOD

*In nature we can see
the handiwork of
the perfect Artist.*

By Tom Reese

One hot morning a few summers ago, my wife and I decided to hike a short canyon trail in the desert of central Utah, USA.

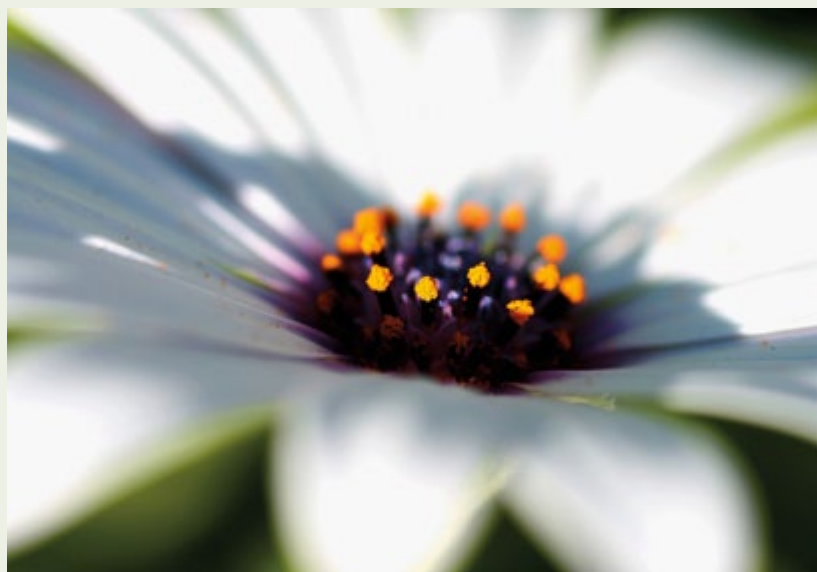
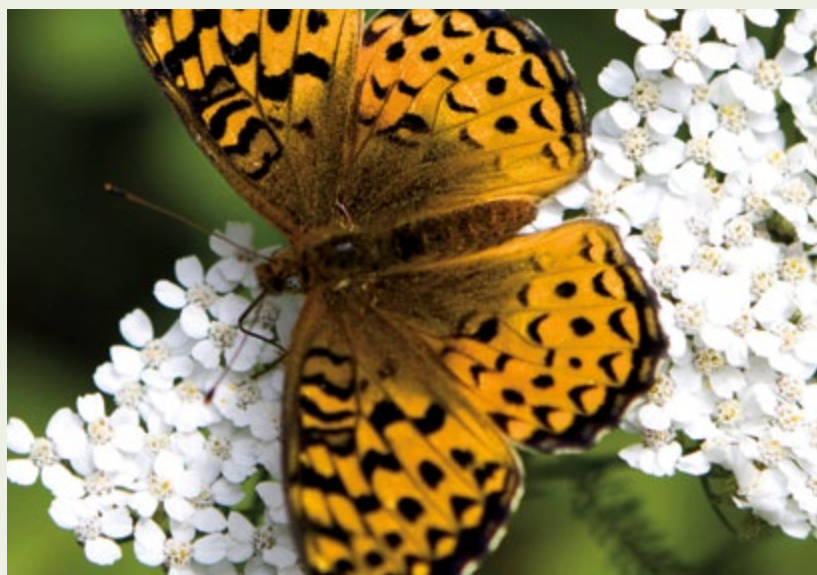
The trail kept us in the shade of the canyon walls, and a placid breeze cooled us and stirred the cottonwood leaves. We paused frequently to drink in the beauty and listen to the gurgle of the stream as it rolled among the boulders.

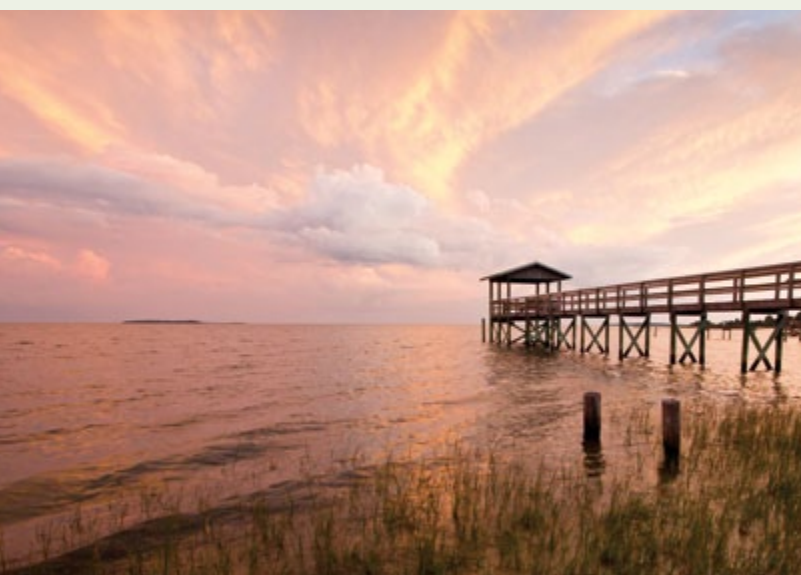
After a few hours, we arrived at an alcove that was buttressed by a giant arch. Underneath the arch was a pond fed by a spring that gushed from a crack. Greenery grew all around and sealed us from the outside world.

We sat down and enjoyed our lunch at the edge of the pond. As we ate, I gazed at the reflections in the water and thought of a Primary song:

*Whenever I hear the song of a bird
Or look at the blue, blue sky,
Whenever I feel the rain on my face
Or the wind as it rushes by,
Whenever I touch a velvet rose
Or walk by our lilac tree,
I'm glad that I live in this beautiful world
Heav'nly Father created for me.¹*

At that moment I felt a confirmation that the Lord Jesus Christ, under the direction of Heavenly Father, had created this earth as a place on which we could dwell during this life. "For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the





earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited” (Isaiah 45:18), and “he hath created his children that they should possess it” (1 Nephi 17:36).

The earth sustains us, providing us with food and other materials that we need to survive and prosper. The Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith:

“Yea, all things which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and the use of man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart;

“Yea, for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul” (D&C 59:18–19).

The supreme beauty of the natural world reminds us of the power and perfection of God. When we are in nature, feelings of hope, peace, and reverence come to us through the Spirit. In nature we can see the handiwork of the perfect Artist. For centuries mankind has tried to emulate the handiwork of God. No human, however, has been able to match the perfect artistry of the Lord. Sometimes I wonder if God created the earth as He did to give us a small taste of what is in store for us in the future. If this earth can be so astoundingly beautiful, what must the renewed and perfected earth look like?

Alma taught, “All things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator” (Alma 30:44). Every tree, every mountain, every bird in the air testifies of our Heavenly Father’s power. By appreciating nature and treating the earth with respect, we show the Lord our gratitude for everything He has given us. ■

Tom Reese lives in Michigan, USA.

NOTE

1. “My Heavenly Father Loves Me,” *Children’s Songbook*, 228–29.

LEFT: PHOTOGRAPHS BY JONATHAN JAY JOHNSON, KYIE QUENTIN LEHER, AND STEVEN DALE DEAM; RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHELLE DELIA CURTIN; BOTTOM RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPHS BY GLADYS JOANNE WIGG, DENISE RENEE BIRD, © COMSTOCK.COM, AND DEBRA LAMB



THE POWER AND MAJESTY

“We sometimes feel great respect and reverence for creative genius as expressed in great art or music. How much more should we revere the power and majesty of our Divine Creator?”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Handiwork of God,” *New Era*, Mar. 2006, 5.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Why did God create the earth?

Under the direction of God the Father, Jesus Christ created the earth so that we, the children of God, could gain a physical body and experience trials in order to become like our Father. In the great Council in Heaven, the premortal Jesus said:

“We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these [the children of God] may dwell;

“And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them” (Abraham 3:24–25; see also Abraham 4–5).

We have our agency and can choose to obey our Heavenly Father’s commandments and make sacred covenants. Choosing to do so prepares us to return to God and gain eternal life.



Standards

FOR ALL SEASONS

By Lori Fuller

Five young adults share how examples of obedience from the Book of Mormon guide them as they make choices between right and wrong.

Early in our gospel education, we are taught to recognize right from wrong. We learn that choices have consequences, that obedience brings blessings, and that righteous choices bring us closer to God. In our teens we receive the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet, which clearly states the standards of gospel living.

But sometimes for young adults who are struggling to live in the world but not of the world (see John 17:14), choices and standards may no longer seem as clear. Perhaps there appears to be a wide middle ground to choose from, a vast gray area between right and wrong.

While choices might appear more difficult as we get older, the same standards still apply as when we were younger. The principle of obedience is constant. Choosing to be obedient now is as important as it ever was. As we face decisions, principles from the Book of Mormon—which was written for our day—can guide us to make the best choices and remind us that the greatest blessings come from

the greatest obedience. In this article, five young adults comment on how they're applying these principles.

Obedience Brings Us Closer to God

“What shall I do that I may be born of God, . . . that I may be filled with joy, that I may not be cast off at the last day? . . . I will give away all my sins to know [God]” (Alma 22:15, 18).

When King Lamoni's father heard the word of God, he determined to give up all his sins to know Him. As he learned God's standards, he was determined to keep them in order to stay close to God. With the other Anti-Nephi-Lehies, he made and kept his covenants with Heavenly Father and “never did fall away” (Alma 23:6).

The principle of obedience holds true in the lives of young adults today as well. As Vijay Patha of India explains, “Obedience brings us closer to God. It brings peace of mind, faith, happiness, love, and optimism. There is no other way to these but through the gospel.

“When difficult decisions arise,” he continues, “the Holy Ghost can



guide us through. When there are no boundaries, we are in increased danger of falling. Keeping my covenants provides me with boundaries. These boundaries protect me from falling away into unknown paths and have helped me many times to represent Christ and abstain from doing things like using profane language. Setting boundaries provides clarity.”

God Will Help Us Obey

“I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them” (1 Nephi 3:7).

Sometimes commandments may seem difficult to follow, but Heavenly Father has promised that He will always provide a way for us to obey. Like Nephi, young adults who are determined to be faithful can turn to Heavenly Father to find the strength and ability to be obedient. Duncan Purser of England tells how this happened for him:

“Tithing is a commandment with set boundaries: we pay 10 percent of what we earn. But with fast offerings we are given a greater degree of flexibility in our obedience.

“While I was saving for university tuition, the idea of paying a fast offering was a challenge for me. I really struggled on fast Sunday, trying to decide whether I should pay and how much constituted a ‘generous’ offering. I would turn to prayer, and not only did I always feel prompted to pay fast offerings but I also felt an increased desire to do so.

“I know that the Lord blesses those who keep this commandment, and as I obey, I am never without the necessities of life. As we live the gospel, keep the commandments, and realize that we are examples to everyone around us, our desire to become better will increase, and the Lord will show us what to do.

“The Lord has given us standards for our benefit. We can choose to what degree we live these standards and whether or not our obedience will change us. In my experience, I have seen blessings come as I follow the promptings of the Spirit.”

The Lord Wants Us to Obey with Exactness

“They did obey and observe to perform every word of command with exactness; yea, and even according to their faith it was done unto them” (Alma 57:21).

Striving for exact obedience, as the stripling warriors did, will help Jesus Christ’s followers become like Him. But our Savior and Heavenly Father understand that no one is perfect. For the times when we fall short, They have provided a way for us to repent and do better.

“I lost the girl of my dreams because we were breaking the law of chastity—just a little,” said Tyler (name has been changed). “But breaking the law of chastity ‘just a little bit’ is still breaking the law of chastity. I kept losing the precious blessings of obedience; I wanted the Spirit in my life.

“I didn’t want to do any of the little things people think are OK ‘as long as we don’t have to see the bishop.’ I wanted to keep the law 100 percent. But my decision to be obedient was too late to save our relationship; breaking the law of chastity had polluted it.

“The law of chastity is there for our protection. It isn’t a limit to our love. Instead, it is the ultimate way of expressing our love. Through keeping it, we say, ‘I love you enough to respect you and keep God’s commandments. I love you enough to keep our lives Christ-centered.’

“As single adults we are also held to the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*. The law of chastity applies to everyone equally, no matter what your age or situation. I’m grateful for this newfound testimony because it will help me draw closer to the Savior



The Book of Mormon teaches principles of obedience that can help us cling to the iron rod as we face decisions.

and to my eternal companion when I find her.”

Strict Obedience Keeps Us from Danger

“And it came to pass that when Lehonti received the message he durst not go down to the foot of the mount. . . . And it came to pass that when Amalickiah found that he could not get Lehonti to come down off from the mount, he went up into the mount” (Alma 47:11–12).

Lehonti was determined to hold his ground. But he decided that to go down just a little bit, to meet his enemy halfway, would be all right. Although Lehonti was sure he was in control, Amalickiah began administering “poison by degrees” (Alma 47:18) until Lehonti died, perhaps not realizing the danger until it was too late.

Claudia R. of Colorado, USA, tells how she held her ground:

“I feel like society is moving toward a gray area. For example, people will say about alcohol, ‘One sip isn’t going to kill you.’ That kind of rationalization is essentially playing mind games with yourself. And it’s in those situations—the ones that seem harmless—where agency is really tested.

“So you have to learn to stop, to put your foot down. Some people take what starts out as a gray area, and that gray area becomes really dark. And then you’re kind of stuck.

“I had gone on several fun dates with someone, but one time we were alone in the car in the dark, and he tried to pull a move on me. I knew that what he wanted to do could lead to other things. I was not going to let that happen, so I jumped out of the car.

“As single adults, when something goes against our standards, we have to take a stand. With dating, of course, you want to hold hands, hug, and kiss. But Satan wants to deceive us into thinking that the law of chastity is a gray area where partial obedience is OK.

“Our standards need to be firmer than ever. We need to decide before the difficult decisions come up. We have to put our foot down when things are wrong. I know our world isn’t easy; we have so many things going on. But the prophets and apostles have given us standards and guidelines. I carry a wallet-sized version of *For the Strength of Youth* with me, and it gets me through hard times.”

We Can Be Obedient When Others around Us Are Not

“If they have not charity it mattereth not unto thee, thou hast been faithful; wherefore, thy garments shall be made clean” (Ether 12:37).

When Moroni prayed for the Gentiles of the future to be blessed, God told him that what was most important was that he had remained faithful. The world doesn’t make it easy for faithful young adults to live

their standards. But even when others are choosing another path, it is possible to choose a higher way.

Like many other young adults, Victor Kim of South Korea has found himself in situations where others didn’t share his standards:

“Sometimes at work, my colleagues and I went out to eat as a team, and they always drank. There was a lot of pressure to join in, and it wasn’t easy to turn everybody down. I always made sure that they knew beforehand that I don’t drink. Even still, I had to be strong and show confidence in my boundaries.

“In my experience, those who don’t set clear boundaries can become complacent, and can eventually convince themselves that a little sin is OK. They can become numb to the Spirit and no longer see what is wrong and why it’s wrong.

“Peer pressure can also be really strong. Those who aren’t strong might eventually join in because what their friends are saying seems to make sense, even though it doesn’t fit our standards. But there is no middle ground. Eventually you have to choose.

“To stay strong, it helps to have a good friend so you can talk to each other and rely on each other. That way you can stay strong together. When I keep my standards, I feel safe. I’m worthy to ask God to protect me. I have faith that if I am obedient, He will help me.” ■

Lori Fuller lives in Utah, USA.

Courage

TO SHARE THE GOSPEL

Time was slipping away. I worried that if I didn't speak up, the opportunity might not arise again.

By Cindy Beck

When I joined the Church in 1979 with my husband, Russ, we longed to share our new-found faith with family and friends, but after rebuffs and ridicule, we quit trying. For many years after, whenever I'd hear talks suggesting that the Saints be member missionaries and that the field was ready for harvest (see D&C 4:4), I'd mentally shake my head. I decided that, unlike us, the speakers never ran into antagonism.

In the summer of 2004, the bishop extended a call to Russ to be the ward mission leader and to me to be Russ's assistant.

I took a long breath and remembered a talk that Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles had given the year before. Elder Ballard said:

"Brothers and sisters, this is the Lord's Church. Let Him guide you through constant prayer. With a prayer in your heart, talk to everyone you can. Don't prejudge. Don't withhold the good news from anyone. Talk to everyone, and trust in the promised power of the Spirit to give you the words you should say. Let them make the decision to accept or reject your invitation. Over time, the Lord will put into your path those who are seeking the truth."¹

Several months into our calling, while I was thinking of Elder Ballard's promise and lamenting how little we'd accomplished, the Spirit reminded me of a past *Ensign* article. The article advised members to include the missionaries in attempts to share the gospel by asking nonmembers

if they'd like to have the missionaries over for a visit. That evening, I mentioned this idea to Russ. I felt reassurance in my heart that the Spirit would—as Elder Ballard stated—guide us in what to say.

Near the end of the year, the bishop gave Russ the name and address of a nonmember family within the ward boundaries and requested we visit them. We went often, but no one was home. One day, however, I felt impressed to leave a small greeting card so they would at least know we had stopped by. I jotted a note and our phone number in the card, and we left it at the door.

A few days later, the phone rang. A young woman identified herself as Susan* and thanked us for the card. She explained that she'd been busy and hadn't been home much, but she would enjoy a visit.

After her phone call, Russ and I beamed at each other. I said, "Remember, this time we're going to bring the elders into it. If she shows a positive attitude, we'll ask her if she'd like to meet the missionaries." Standing in our living room, the method sounded simple. Little did we know how effective simplicity could be.

The first visit went well. Susan, a single mom with young children, seemed personable and interested in knowing us better. She again expressed gratitude for the card and showed us that she kept it in the living room as a reminder that someone cared.

After the next visit or two, I knew I needed to ask if she



wanted to speak with the missionaries. On the day of the next appointment, I fretted all afternoon. What if Susan became upset at the suggestion she meet with the missionaries? My stomach twisted into knots at the thought.

Finally, I resolved to give the Spirit free rein. I knew that if we did what we should, we would receive the spiritual assistance we needed: a gentle touch to Susan's heart and a soft whisper in her ear that would encourage her to accept the missionaries—and possibly the gospel—into her life.

That evening, we visited with Susan and the children. The longer we chatted, the more my nerves jittered. I watched the clock, worrying as time slipped away that if I didn't speak up, the opportunity might not arise again.

Finally, I asked her a simple question: would she like to meet with the missionaries?

Susan said yes.

Tears rose in my eyes. My soul rejoiced at the possibilities that could exist in Susan's life if she listened to the elders' message and accepted the gospel.

Susan received the discussions from the elders and was baptized the next spring—along with her son. A year later, she received her endowment in the temple. Her son was ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood, and her daughter was baptized when she turned eight.

The gospel is true, and we have a duty to share it. As President Henry B. Eyring said, "We have been given the privilege and the obligation to offer the truth and the choices which lead to [eternal life] to our Heavenly Father's children."²

I carried the weight of that obligation for many years but never felt equal to the task because of fear. With this experience, however, I gained the courage needed by including the Spirit and the missionaries in my efforts. ■

Cindy Beck lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. M. Russell Ballard, "The Essential Role of Member Missionary Work," *Ensign*, May 2003, 38.
2. Henry B. Eyring, "A Voice of Warning," *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 35.

**Name has been changed.*



**By Elder
Tad R. Callister**

Of the Presidency
of the Seventy

Robert Bolt's classic play *A Man for All Seasons* is the story of Sir Thomas More. He had distinguished himself as a scholar, lawyer, ambassador, and, finally, as Lord Chancellor of England. He was a man of absolute integrity. The play opens with these words of Sir Richard Rich: "Every man has his price! . . . In money too. . . . Or pleasure. Titles, women, bricks-and-mortar, there's always something."¹

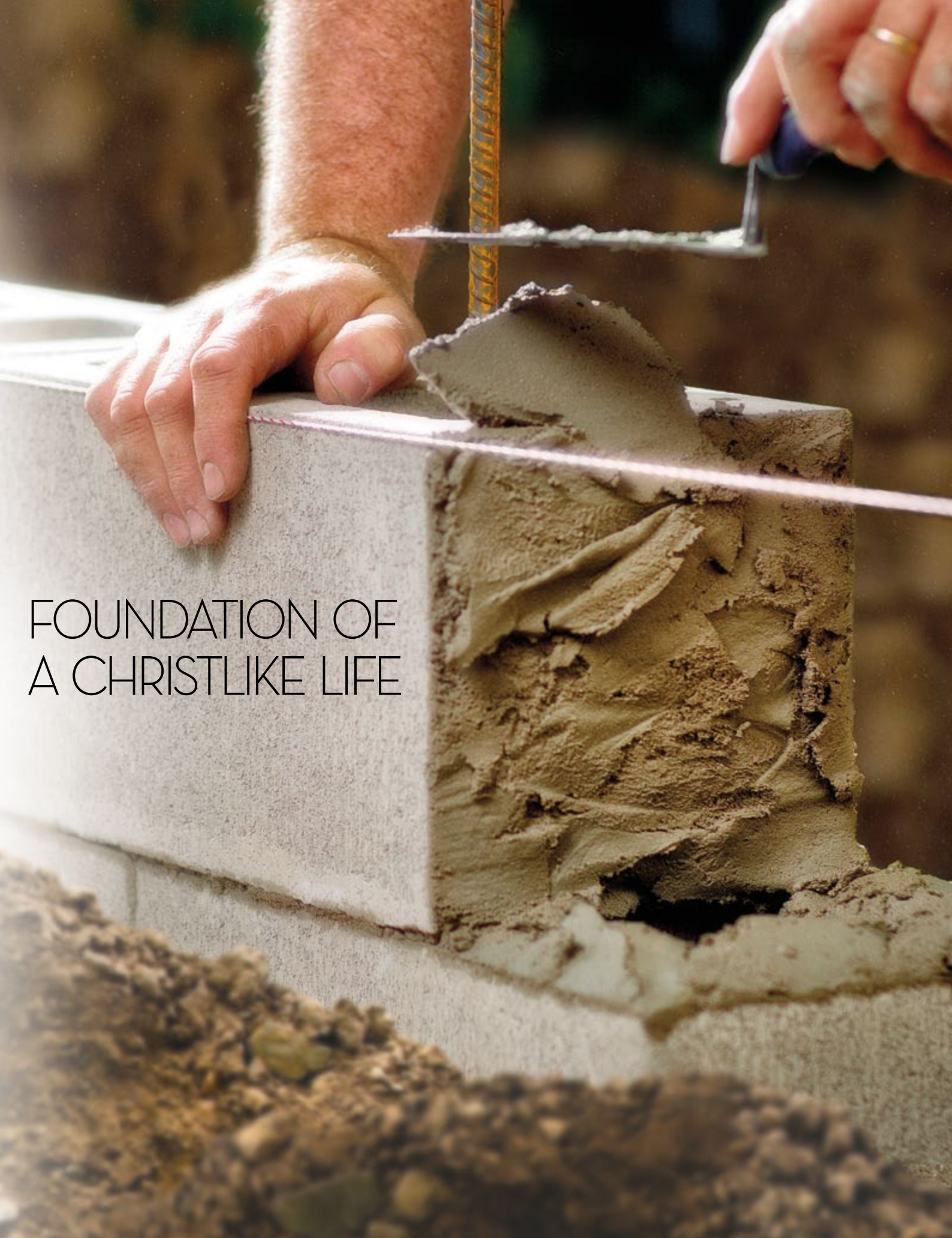
That is the theme of the play. It is also the theme of life. Is there a man or woman in this world who cannot be bought, whose integrity is beyond price?

Integrity

Integrity is the courage to do right regardless of the consequences and the inconvenience.

As the play unfolds, King Henry VIII desires to divorce Queen Catherine and marry Anne Boleyn. But there is a catch: divorce is forbidden by the Catholic Church. And so King Henry VIII, not to be thwarted in his desires, demands of his subjects the taking of an oath that will support him in his divorce. But there is a further problem.

Sir Thomas More, who is loved and admired by the common people, is a holdout—his conscience will not let him sign the oath. He is unwilling to submit, even at the king's personal request. Then come the tests. His friends apply their personal charm and pressure, but he will not yield. He is stripped of his wealth, his position, and his family, but he will not sign. Finally, he is falsely



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tried for his life, but still he will not succumb.

They have taken from him his money, his political power, his friends, and his family—and will yet take his life—but they cannot take from him his integrity. It is not for sale at any price.

At the climax of the play, Sir Thomas More is falsely tried for treason. Sir Richard Rich commits the perjury necessary to convict him. As Sir Richard exits the courtroom, Sir Thomas More asks him, “That’s a chain of office you are wearing. . . . What [is it]?”

Prosecutor Thomas Cromwell replies, “Sir Richard is appointed Attorney-General for Wales.”

More then looks into Rich’s face with great disdain and retorts, “For Wales? Why, Richard, it profits a man nothing to give his soul for the whole world. . . . But for Wales!”²

In the life to come, no doubt many will look back amidst uncontrollable sobs and repeat again and again, “Why did I trade my soul for Wales or temporary physical pleasure or fame or a grade or the approval of my friends? Why did I sell my integrity for a price?”

Principles of Integrity

I would like to address seven principles of integrity that I hope will inspire us to make this Christlike attribute a fundamental character trait in our personal lives.

1. Integrity is the foundation of our character and all other virtues. In 1853 the Saints commenced the construction of the Salt Lake Temple. For the better part of two long, hard years the Saints dug the excavations and laid the foundation: over eight feet (2.4 m) deep, made of sandstone. One day the foreman came to President Brigham Young with this devastating news: there were cracks in the blocks of sandstone. Brigham Young was faced with this dilemma: (1) do the best they could to patch up the cracks and build a temple of much less weight and grandeur than anticipated or (2) rip out two years of work and replace it with a granite foundation that could support the magnificent temple God envisioned



for them. Fortunately, President Young chose the latter course.³

Integrity is the foundation upon which character and a Christlike life are built. If there are cracks in that foundation, then it will not support the weight of other Christlike attributes that must be built upon it. How can we be humble if we lack the integrity to acknowledge our own weaknesses? How can we develop charity for others if we are not totally honest in our dealings with them? How can we repent and be clean if we only partially disclose the truth to our bishop? At the root of every virtue is integrity.

Christian author C. S. Lewis noted that once we make a mistake in a mathematical equation, we cannot just keep on going: “When I have started a sum the wrong way, the sooner I admit this and go back and start over again, the faster I shall get on.”⁴

Likewise, we cannot continue to fully acquire other Christlike virtues until we first make integrity the granite foundation of our lives. In some cases this may require us to go through the painful process of ripping out an existing foundation built upon deceit and replacing it stone by stone with a foundation of integrity. But it can be done.



2. *Integrity is not doing just that which is legal but that which is moral or Christlike.* It may be legal to commit adultery, it may be legal to have premarital physical relations, it may be legal to gossip, but none of those actions is moral or Christlike. Integrity is not just adherence to the legal code; it is also adherence to the higher moral code. It is as U.S. president Abraham Lincoln suggested: living in accord with “the better angels of our nature.”⁵

Every young man has the moral duty to protect and preserve the virtue of his date, and every young woman has the reciprocal moral duty for her date. It is a test of his or her integrity. The man or woman who is striving for integrity will develop a resolve and a discipline that transcend even the powerful passions of physical emotions. It is that integrity to God and to self and to others that sustains them and empowers them even when Satan unleashes his arsenal of moral temptations upon them. To this generation the Lord said, “I will raise up unto myself a pure people” (D&C 100:16). God is counting on us to be that generation.

Some years ago my business partner and I needed to terminate an employee. After some discussions we reached a settlement to compensate him for his services. I felt that the settlement was more than fair, but some strained relationships resulted from the negotiations nonetheless. That night I felt a gloom come over me. I tried to dispel it by reasoning within myself that I had been fair, but the feeling would not leave. Then this impression came: “It’s not enough to be fair; you must also strive to be Christlike.” Adherence to the

highest moral code is a hallmark of a man or a woman of integrity.

3. *Integrity makes decisions based on eternal implications.* One of the young women in our ward was taking a test at the local high school. As she looked up, she saw one of her friends cheating. Their eyes made contact. Embarrassed, the friend shrugged her shoulders and mouthed the words “I need the grade.” Somehow this young lady had lost her eternal vision—it is not grades but godhood that is our destination. What good does it do to be accepted to the most prestigious university but forfeit our exaltation in the process? Every time someone cheats, he trades his spiritual birthright for a mess of pottage (see Genesis 25:29–34). In his shortsightedness he has opted for a dollar today rather than infinite wealth in the life to come.

A disappointed father once told me that his teenage daughter wanted to “live it up” and then, three months before her intended marriage, clean up her act so she could receive a temple recommend. I do not know of any stake president who would give a recommend under such circumstances. But even if it were given, it would be a curse, not a blessing. Integrity is not shortsighted—it is not just a temporary change of behavior; it is a permanent change of nature.

King Benjamin told us how we might change our natures from a natural man to a spiritual man: “For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, *unless* he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and

We cannot continue to fully acquire other Christlike virtues until we first make integrity the granite foundation of our lives. In some cases this may require us to go through the painful process of ripping out an existing foundation built upon deceit and replacing it stone by stone with a foundation of integrity.



Changing our natures, not just our behaviors, is facilitated by an eternal perspective that we are the children of God, that we have His spark of divinity within us, and that through the Atonement we can become like Him—the perfect model of integrity.

becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father” (Mosiah 3:19; emphasis added).

Changing our natures, not just our behaviors, is facilitated by an eternal perspective that we are the children of God, that we have His spark of divinity within us, and that through the Atonement we can become like Him—the perfect model of integrity.

4. Integrity is disclosing the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I believe the Lord can live with our weaknesses and mistakes, provided we demonstrate a desire and effort to repent. That is what the Atonement is all about. But I do not believe He can easily tolerate a deceitful heart or a lying tongue.

A few years ago I conducted a mission tour. Some of the missionaries were struggling with obedience. That evening the mission president and I conducted interviews with some of the missionaries. The next morning the mission president commenced our zone conference by giving a masterful talk on integrity. I felt impressed to speak further on that subject. We observed that in a few moments we would be conducting additional interviews. We requested that the missionaries not play the game in which someone only discloses the truth if he is asked the perfect, pointed question.

The Spirit was there, and four missionaries from the night before privately stepped forward and said, “We have something else to disclose.” One of them said, “I want to be

an honest man.” That day he changed his foundation of sand for a granite foundation of integrity.

5. Integrity knows no alibis or excuses. There is something ennobling about the man or woman who admits his or her weaknesses and takes the blame square on without excuse or alibi. On multiple occasions Joseph Smith recorded his weaknesses in the Doctrine and Covenants for all to read. This tells us he was not perfect, but it also tells us he had nothing to hide—he was a man of integrity. What does this do for his credibility when he tells the story of the First Vision or the account of Moroni’s visitations? It tells us that we can trust him, that we can believe his every word because he is, indeed, a man of integrity.

6. Integrity is keeping our covenants and our commitments, even in times of inconvenience. Integrity is the courage to do right regardless of the consequences and the inconvenience. President N. Eldon Tanner (1898–1982), former First Counselor in the First Presidency, told the following experience:

“A young man came to me not long ago and said, ‘I made an agreement with a man that requires me to make certain payments each year. I am in arrears, and I can’t make those payments, for if I do, it is going to cause me to lose my home. What shall I do?’

“I looked at him and said, ‘Keep your agreement.’

“Even if it costs me my home?”

“I said, ‘I am not talking about your home. I am talking about your agreement; and I think your wife would rather have a husband who



would keep his word, meet his obligations, keep his pledges or his covenants, and have to rent a home than to have a home with a husband who will not keep his covenants and his pledges.”⁶

He had a difficult choice: his home or his integrity. A man or woman of integrity does not yield or succumb merely because it is hard or expensive or inconvenient. In this respect the Lord has a perfect sense of integrity. He has said, “Who am I . . . that have promised and have not fulfilled?” (D&C 58:31).

One of the acid tests of our integrity is whether we keep the commitments and promises we have made or whether there are loopholes in our word.

7. *Integrity is not governed by the presence of others. It is internally, not externally, driven.* Elder Marion D. Hanks (1921–2011) of the Seventy told of the man and his small son who “stopped at an isolated cornfield on a remote country road” and eyed the delicious corn beyond the fence. The father, after looking in front of him, behind him, to the left of him, and to the right of him, “started to climb the fence” to take some ears of corn. His son looked at him and said reproachfully, “Dad, you forgot to look up.”⁷

In Shakespeare’s play *Hamlet*, Polonius says to his son Laertes:

*To thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.*⁸

What wonderful counsel! We have a choice. We can either seize the moment and take control of our lives or become mere puppets to our environment and our peers.

Would you watch pornography in front of your mother, your date, your spouse, or your bishop? If it is wrong in the presence of others, it is just as wrong in their absence. The man of integrity who is true to self and to God will choose the right whether or not anyone is looking because he is self-driven, not externally controlled.

May the integrity of our souls have a sign that reads in bold black letters “NOT FOR SALE AT ANY PRICE” so that it might be said of us, as it was of Hyrum Smith, “Blessed is my servant Hyrum Smith; for I, the Lord, love him because of the integrity of his heart” (D&C 124:15).

May we all become men and women of integrity—not because we have to but because we want to. The Lord announced the reward for those who do so: “Verily I say unto you, all among them who know their hearts are honest . . . and are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice . . . *are accepted of me*” (D&C 97:8; emphasis added).

May we all be accepted of God because we are striving to become men and women of integrity. ■

From a devotional address delivered on December 6, 2011, at Brigham Young University. For the full text in English, go to speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

1. Robert Bolt, *A Man for All Seasons: A Play of Sir Thomas More* (1960), 2.
2. Bolt, *A Man for All Seasons*, 95.
3. See Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, “Every Window, Every Spire ‘Speaks of the Things of God,’” *Ensign*, Mar. 1993, 9.
4. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1960), 22.
5. Abraham Lincoln, first inaugural address, Mar. 4, 1861.
6. N. Eldon Tanner, in Conference Report, Oct. 1966, 99.
7. Marion D. Hanks, in Conference Report, Oct. 1968, 116.
8. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. W. J. Craig (1914), act 1, scene 3, lines 85–87.



*I could keep faith in
God and hope for a
happier future while
allowing myself to
grieve in the present.*

THE REFINING FIRE OF Grief

By Ashley Isaacson Woolley

My first baby was born with severe epilepsy that caused him to suffer frequent, debilitating seizures. During each seizure, he lost consciousness and his tiny body convulsed. The seizures interfered with his development so that by age one, he could not do activities typical for babies his age, such as rolling over, sitting up, or crawling. We tried many treatments, but nothing stopped the seizures. The doctors could not even tell us what was causing them.

I was heartbroken. I grieved over my son's condition and had to come to terms with the fact that he might never enjoy full health. I felt like I was drowning in sorrow—sorrow that felt inescapable because it went hand in hand with my love for my precious child.

At first, I felt that my grief meant I lacked faith. But with time, I understood that grief was a normal, healthy response to my son's illness. In God's plan for me, grief was a refining fire that transformed my love for others, my perspective on life's challenges, and my faith in Heavenly Father.

A Manifestation of Love

Elder Lance B. Wickman, an emeritus member of the Seventy, explained: "Grief is the natural by-product of love. One cannot selflessly love another person and not grieve at his suffering or eventual death. The only way to avoid the grief would be to not experience the love; and it is love that gives life its richness and meaning."¹ My baby's illness dealt a serious blow to my most tender feelings—my love for my child. Accepting my grief as part of love finally allowed me to work through my pain and rise above discouragement.

When I turned to the scriptures for comfort, I learned that grief is a godlike attribute that goes hand in hand with love. Jesus grieved alongside Mary and Martha at Lazarus's death (see John 11:33–36). Isaiah said that the Savior would be "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). God wept as He spoke to Enoch about the wickedness of the world and judgments to come on His beloved children: "Wherefore should not the heavens weep, seeing these shall suffer?" (Moses 7:37). As I studied

the scriptures, I realized that God's grief, like mine, was a manifestation of love.

A Lesson in Compassion

Letting myself grieve taught me how to show Christlike compassion for and sensitivity to others. In my observation, grief can change our nature if we let it turn us to the Savior. I have seen grief transform strangers into loving sisters. Once when my son was hospitalized, I was in the room with him, crying. There was another family with their own sick child on the other side of the room. Eventually I heard the curtain between us drawn aside, and I looked up to see the mother approaching me. She had been a stranger until then—she was from a different country, spoke a different native language, and knew no details of my son's condition. Wrapping her arms tightly around me while I cried, she said in her language, "It's going to be OK. He's going to be OK. He really is." That mother had surely experienced grief in her own life that had transformed her into a Christlike person who could wrap her arms around a grieving stranger.

My own grief changed the way I respond to others' sorrow. I once saw a distraught family with name tags from a children's hospital enter a restaurant as I sat at dinner. In the past I would have felt sympathy but kept my distance. Instead, I approached them with concern and learned that their newborn daughter had died that morning. I embraced the mother and we cried together for some time.

Grief softens our hearts not only toward strangers but also toward the one for whom we are grieving. The depth of my sorrow over my son's condition showed me the depth of my love for him. And grieving over my old expectations for my son's life allowed me to let go of them, freeing me to see my son as a beautiful child of God with an eternal destiny, regardless of the imperfections in his physical body.

A Motivational Power

Grief motivated me to seek positive changes for my family. Just as physical injury causes physical pain, emotional injury causes emotional pain. Because I was in pain,

Prayer and the whisperings of the Spirit helped me to emerge on the other side of grief with faith that is even stronger than before.

I sought a remedy for the situation and relief for my emotional wounds.

The pain my husband and I felt each time our son had a seizure renewed our resolve to keep praying and searching for a treatment. When our son was one year old, we traveled from our home in California, USA, to Ohio, USA, for an evaluation by the nation's leading specialists. These experts discovered something other doctors had missed: a malformation in part of our son's brain. They performed brain surgery to remove the malformed tissue, and our son's last seizure was on the operating table just before they anesthetized him. He is now seizure-free and progressing toward a more normal, healthy life.

During my son's illness and surgery, grief prompted me to seek emotional relief through earnest prayer and fasting. I felt calm throughout the long hours of my son's surgery and knew that I was feeling the deep peace that comes through the Holy Ghost. I also recognized that the previous year of grieving over my son's illness had prepared me to not fear the surgery but look forward to it as the beginning of a better life for him.

Hannah of the Old Testament demonstrated the power of grief to motivate in positive ways. For years Hannah was unable to have children, a condition that caused her deep heartache. As her grief overwhelmed her, she knelt near the temple and prayed fervently for a child. She explained to the priest Eli that she was "of a sorrowful spirit" and that she was praying "out of the abundance of [her] complaint and grief" (1 Samuel 1:15–16). In time, the Lord answered her prayer by giving her a son, Samuel, who became a great prophet and leader.

Hannah's grief over her childlessness led her to pray, which in turn led to an answer to her prayer. If Hannah had not felt grief, she might not have offered that important prayer.





The circumstances that cause grief cannot always be changed the way God healed Hannah's childlessness or my son's illness through medical assistance. Some losses, such as the death of a loved one, cannot be altered. But grief motivates us to act, even if only to seek counsel, to reach out to others, or to pray for strength and understanding.

Faith amid Grief

Even as grief refined me in important ways, it also challenged my faith to the core. But prayer and the whisperings of the Spirit helped me to emerge on the other side of grief with faith that is even stronger than before.

In the darkest moments of my son's illness, I sometimes felt forsaken by God, wondering how He could let my son suffer and leave me to endure such heartache. I came to understand that my feelings were natural because I did not share God's perspective. I reflected on the difference between God's perspective and my own one night after my husband and I had put our son to bed. We sat in another room, listening to him and watching him on a video monitor. As our son fussed, my husband commented, "You know, he probably feels completely abandoned. It's dark

in there, and he probably thinks we have forgotten him. He doesn't know that we can see and hear him, because he can't see or hear us. He doesn't know that we are always nearby." As our son was to us, so we are to our Heavenly Father.

God *is* there, and He did not leave me feeling alone forever. Once when I was feeling particularly upset about my son's health and especially forsaken by God, I prayed. Soon afterward, a phrase came to my mind: "God makes a way where there is no way." I looked up the phrase and discovered a quotation by Martin Luther King Jr.:

"When our days become dreary with low hovering clouds and our nights become darker than a thousand midnights, let us remember that . . . [God] is able to make a way out of no way, and transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows."²

This thought reminded me that I could hope for a bright tomorrow without denying the darkness of today. I could keep my faith in God and hope for a happier future while allowing myself to grieve in the present. In God's own time, He spoke comfort and reassurance to me.

Because God loved me and desired my progress, He would not spare me the refining fire of grief. But God made a way where there was no way. Not every loss can be healed in this life, but lives broken by grief *can* be healed. Because I remained close to God even when I could not see or hear Him, I felt Him when He reached out to me in my darkest night. ■

Ashley Isaacson Woolley lives in California, USA.

NOTES

1. Lance B. Wickman, "But If Not," *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 30.
2. Martin Luther King Jr., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Clayborne Carson (2007), 534.



THE SUREST AND SWEETEST REMEDY

"I wish to speak particularly to you who feel your lives are broken, seemingly beyond repair.

"To all such I offer the surest and sweetest remedy that I know. It is found in the clarion call the Savior of the world Himself gave . . . :

"'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'
[Matthew 11:28.]"

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Broken Things to Mend," *Ensign*, May 2006, 69.



Lifting THE Hands

WHICH HANG DOWN

By Stephen Havertz

When I saw Emmalee take her last breath, I was forever changed. Emm, as we called her, was nine years old when she peacefully passed away while lying on the couch in the front room, her favorite spot in our house. We agonized over the decision to bring her home from the hospital. The doctors told us she would likely die in the ambulance, but

Whether you are experiencing grief or comforting someone who is grieving, keep in mind that people mourn in deeply personal ways.

we knew how much she loved being home and chose to take her there. Gratefully, she seemed to know when she arrived home, even though she appeared unconscious.

Within 20 minutes her breathing slowed. There was no way to prepare for that moment. In my mind, over and over again, I had thought about how I would handle her death, but the emotions just seemed to sneak up and ambush me. I had always been a fairly even person emotionally, but this was one of the times in my life when I felt as if my emotions overpowered all logic. I had experienced this three other times: when Emm was diagnosed with liver cancer, when I had to tell Emm that she was going to die, and when I heard that my first wife had died.

My personal experiences and my professional work—I am a licensed clinical social worker and have provided counseling for more than 21 years—have given me a unique perspective on grief and loss. People often wonder how to appropriately comfort those who are grieving. The Lord has commanded us to “succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees” (D&C 81:5). After passing through my own experiences, I understand more about helpful things to say and do for someone who is dealing with loss.

What Can I Say?

My experiences help me relate with increased compassion to people who have lost a loved one, but I rarely say “I know what you are going through” to someone who is grieving. That’s because everyone experiences grief differently. Family members who deal with a suicide face a very different type of grief from family members who grieve the loss of a grandparent who has lived a long, full life. People likewise grieve broken marriages, childlessness, and unfulfilled expectations. Each type of grief comes with its own set of questions and often a heavy dose of regret and emotional pain.

In all cases, those who wish to help will be most effective when they can be sensitive to the unique situation. It’s probably best to express your love and condolences to the grievers and avoid making statements about what they should do or how they should feel.

Emmalee’s death helped me understand more about helping others deal with death.

Toward the end of Emm’s life, my wife and I learned we were expecting a baby. Our son was born shortly after Emm died.

We needed to clean out Emm’s room to make a place for our newborn, but every time we went into the room, we felt too overcome with grief to be able to begin. Someone came to me during this time and told me that I needed to be strong and clean out Emm’s room. This person had good intentions, but this remark lacked the type of empathy and understanding I needed.

People who want to help should be very careful about placing a time limit on someone’s grief. Some believe that people should be finished grieving after a year and a half. In my personal and professional experience, I have learned that the pangs of grief can recur years later without warning. It has been three years since Emmalee died, and I still feel tremendous pain whenever I visit the hospital where she was sick. This type of grief doesn’t mean that I’m depressed or inconsolable, but rather it suggests that I still miss the people I love.

I have found that the most helpful conversations occur when people share their favorite memories of my wife and daughter with me; it’s also helpful when they are willing to listen to my favorite memories. I often cry during these conversations, but that doesn’t mean my day is ruined. These interactions actually brighten my day. You don’t have to help people who are grieving to stop crying. It may seem counterintuitive to cause more pain, but I have found with my own grief that I’m in pain anyway, and these conversations provide a chance for me to release my feelings.



What Can I Do?

One of my most memorable experiences happened after my first wife died. My neighbor, whom I didn't know very well, rang the doorbell. When I answered the door, he reached out and hugged me. His gesture of compassion touched me so deeply that I began sobbing. He continued to hold me as I cried. He didn't say anything, but he communicated

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

What happens to us after we die?

Death is not the end. It is another step forward in Heavenly Father's plan for His children. When the physical body dies, the spirit continues to live. The spirits of righteous people who die "are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow" (Alma 40:12). Paradise is part of the spirit world, and we will be able to learn and progress in the spirit world with loved ones who have passed on.

Sometime after death, the spirit and the body will reunite—never to be separated again. This is called the resurrection, and the Savior Jesus Christ made it possible when He rose from the dead so that all could "be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

his concern and love for me through his actions.

Another friend in my ward owned a landscaping business. A few weeks after Emm died, he sent some of his workers over to our house to do the autumn cleanup. He didn't know I would be home. I started to cry when I saw his team working in our yard. I went out and shook each one of their hands and thanked them. That same friend also planted a tree at Emmalee's elementary school in her memory.

These experiences have taught me that it's best to be empathetic and proactive about helping those who are grieving. If you take some time to observe, you can often come up with ideas for how to help that are specific to the griever's needs. You can help by providing a meal, giving a hug,

sending a card or email, or delivering flowers. Sometimes it's helpful to suggest specific days and activities, such as taking a walk, going shopping, or visiting the zoo. These actions will let the people who are grieving know that you are there for them and will support them when they are ready to receive your help.

Whether we are experiencing grief or comforting someone who is grieving, it is always good to keep in mind that people mourn in deeply personal ways. As we "are willing to mourn with those that mourn . . . and comfort those that stand in need of comfort" (Mosiah 18:9), we can become more sincere followers of Christ and enjoy a greater abundance of the Spirit. ■

Stephen Havertz lives in Utah, USA.

Love and concern can be shown through actions just as much as through words.





Epiphany

By Jack Newman

*A murmured hush; a voiceless song; a prayer
Disclosed itself upon my inward heart.
Just when it first began I'm not aware:
It came so silently without a start.
Since first I noticed it, I've let it sing;
It seems I ever knew it, all along;
And likely such sweet sound will always ring,
For, since it found me, it has been my song.
I had not skill enough to know its name:
This song was sent to me, as are all gifts.
I knew not how to live until it came,
But now it lights my way and it uplifts.
This song shows me the life I did not see:
It is the voice of God that carries me.*

Jack Newman lives in Utah, USA.



Job Hunting

ACCORDING TO NEPHI

When I was out of work, I realized that if I followed Nephi's example, I would be able to provide for my family again.

By Edgar Tooley

A few years ago, the president of the company I worked for explained that the company was shifting direction and would soon not need my services or the services of anyone in my department. He didn't give a firm date, so I started thinking about looking for work and hoping something would come along. A month later, I was laid off and told I wouldn't be receiving any more paychecks.

Throughout my career, I have had several close calls with unemployment, but all my jobs since student employment in college had found me, so I never had to search. I guess I was expecting the same thing to happen again, but it didn't. Thankfully, my wife and I had been careful with our income and had enough savings to cover a few months of expenses. We also had food storage. We were not going to need outside help—at least not right away.

Nephi's Experience

As I thought about finding new work, my mind was drawn to a scripture and a conference talk I remembered. The first was an account of one of Nephi's experiences that presented a parallel to my unemployment (see 1 Nephi 16:18–32). When Nephi broke his bow and his brothers' bows lost their springs, they were left without a way to provide food for their families. Nephi remained humble before the Lord, prepared the tools he needed to hunt, asked his father where he should go for food, and then followed “the directions which were given” (verse 30).

I wanted to follow the same course. I felt that metaphorically my bow was broken, and if I followed Nephi's example, I felt I would be able to provide for my family again.

The Responsibility Rests with You

I also remembered a talk given by Bishop Richard C. Edgley, recently released as the First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric. He said: “The responsibility for finding employment or improving your employment rests with you. Continued guidance comes from the Lord through regular fasting and prayer. Your quorum leaders, bishops, specialists, and employment resource center staff will help in your efforts. We fear, however, that often priesthood leaders are unaware of your situation. *Speak up!* Let them know you are looking for work.”¹

Follow a Plan

I determined that, like Nephi, I would first prepare my tools. I signed up for the LDS employment center career workshop, updated my résumé, and attended the professional networking meetings hosted by the LDS employment center in my area. I signed up with LDSjobs.org and with a professional networking website. My father gave me a priesthood blessing that offered me guidance on where and how I should perform my search. Pursuing new employment became a full-time effort.

Determined to heed “the directions which were given” (1 Nephi 16:30), I took every opportunity to follow the instructions of the staff at the LDS employment center. I developed and rehearsed my “Me in 30 Seconds” (a summary of my education, career, and work skills). I wrote and memorized “power statements” (positive, brief descriptions of my work achievements). I made a list of people to call and called them. I set up informational interviews with anyone who would let me. I sent out thank-you notes. I spent extra time in the temple. I fasted and prayed.

Speak Up!

I also followed Bishop Edgley’s advice to speak up. With my bishop’s permission, I took a moment in priesthood opening exercises to tell my brethren that I was unemployed and described the employment I was looking for. With permission, I also arranged for a message to be sent through the Relief Society email network in our ward. I spoke to my family and friends by phone, email, and face to face, explaining that I was looking for employment and asking the question, “Who do you know that I should be talking to?”

The value of asking *everyone* that question was brought home to me when I was prompted to query a former co-worker. This man already knew I was looking for employment; on this occasion, I was returning some company equipment I still had in my home. He knew what my skills were; I had worked closely with him for three years. Despite all these good reasons why it would be unnecessary to ask him for help, I asked, “Who do you know that I should talk to?”

His eyes lit up and he said, “Last Sunday, Brother Jones stood up in priesthood meeting and said he was opening 20 new positions in his department next month.” My friend called home while I waited and got Brother Jones’s phone number. Later I called and got an interview. I was surprised to realize that people who knew I was looking for work might not automatically think to contact me if I didn’t first bring it up.

His Promises Are Sure

Six weeks after I was laid off, a company offered me a position. It matched my skills and interests and provided a salary to meet the needs of my family. It turned out that I had several good references in my network who knew some of the owners of this company, in addition to the relative who referred me through an owner’s wife. I was truly led to a way to provide for my family.

About a year later, I was called as our ward employment specialist. In preparing for my new calling, I again read Bishop Edgley’s talk. This time I took particular notice of his mention of a ward that helped create Phil’s Auto for a brother who was unemployed. I then realized that the company I now work for purchased Phil’s Auto from the family after Phil passed away.

My search for a job was real work. It wasn’t easy for me to make those phone calls and talk to people. It wasn’t easy to speak up over and over. But I treated the instructions from the staff at the LDS employment center as seriously as if they were commandments from the Lord, and I did my best to do them. I was blessed with a miracle of a job offer, which was the result promised by the staff at the center.

I know we have a Father in Heaven, who loves us and wants us to be happy. I know if we follow the patterns He has given us, we will be able to provide for our families and serve Him. He said, “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say” (D&C 82:10). His promises are sure. ■

Edgar Tooley lives in Utah, USA.

NOTE

1. Richard C. Edgley, “This Is Your Phone Call,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 55.

KEY POINTS

1. Prepare professional tools such as your résumé.
2. Let friends and priesthood leaders know you are looking for work and ask them whom they know that you could speak with.
3. Sign up at LDSjobs.org, and if possible, visit a local LDS employment center.



A TIME TO ANSWER QUESTIONS

Upon entering high school, our daughter began to struggle spiritually. When my husband and I asked her why she felt troubled, she replied, “I have so many questions that never get answered.” She had a list of topics she didn’t fully understand, such as repentance, forgiveness, and the Atonement. We felt inspired to give her a spiral-bound notebook and asked her to write down all her questions. We told her that each Monday night we would present a lesson addressing one of her questions. She readily agreed and filled several pages of the notebook.

Each week we prayerfully chose a question to address. We searched

the scriptures, referred to conference talks, and found examples to reinforce the theme. These lessons were tailored to our daughter’s needs but benefitted the entire family. My husband and I increased our testimonies as we focused our scripture study on

a single topic and bore witness of gospel truths. Our children learned that it is OK to ask questions. Most important, our teenager received answers that brought her insight, understanding, and peace.

Laura Kimball, Utah, USA



ILLUSTRATION BY BETH M. WHITTAKER

HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

“Balancing Truth and Tolerance,” page 24: Elder Dallin H. Oaks teaches that truth and tolerance are like a two-sided coin. Using



the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*, pass a coin around the family and have each person share how he or she can be true to a

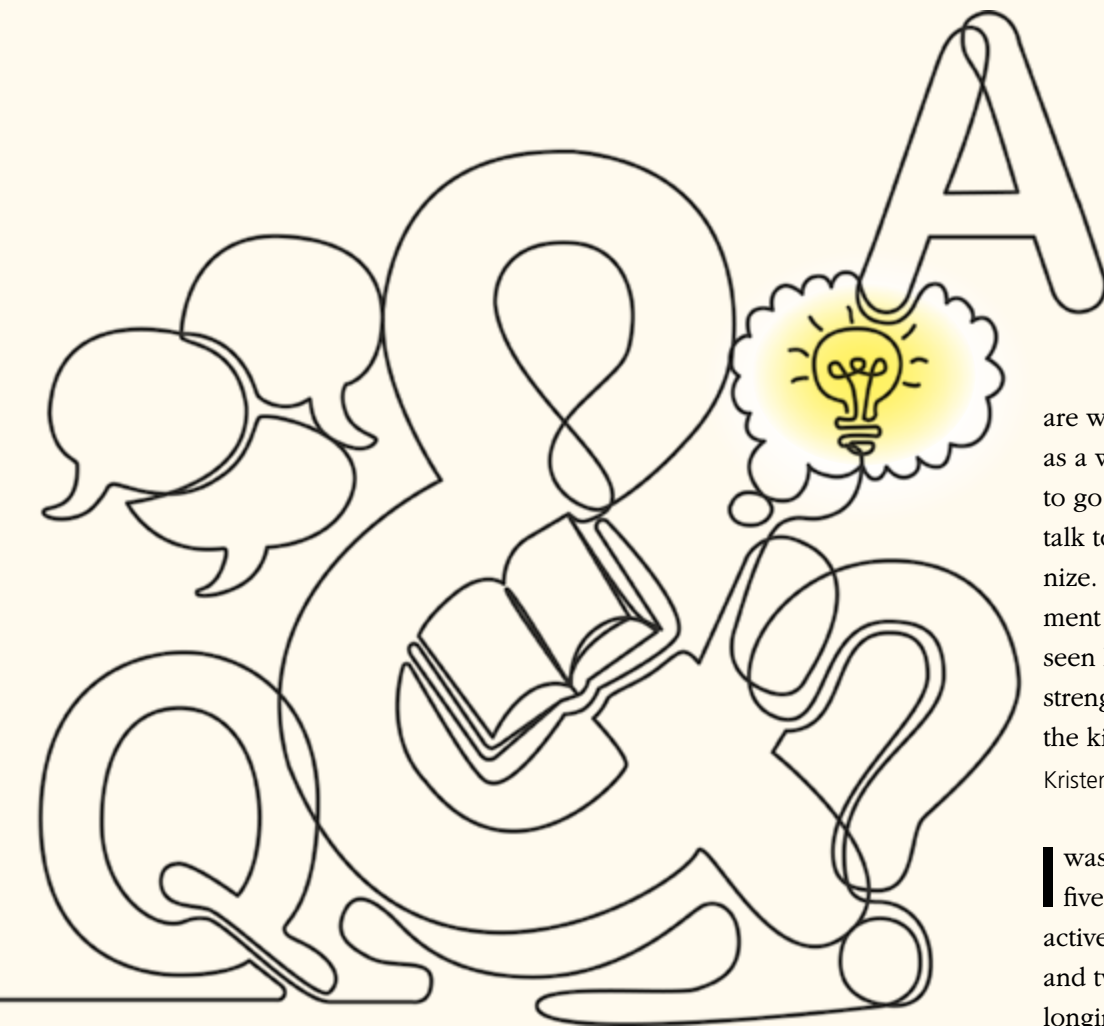
standard while also being tolerant of others’ lifestyles. Consider discussing language, Sabbath day observance, and sexual purity, as does Elder Oaks.

“Integrity: Foundation of a Christlike Life,” page 50: Elder Tad R. Callister shares seven principles of integrity and teaches that we should have integrity that is “not for sale at any price.” Consider discussing these principles and how to apply them personally and as a family. You may want to use the section on integrity in the *Young Women Personal Progress* booklet or

the “Honesty and Integrity” section and related videos on lds.org/youth/for-the-strength-of-youth.

“Lifting the Hands Which Hang Down,” page 60: Read this short article as a family and discuss what it means to “mourn with those that mourn” and how that is connected to the baptismal covenant (see Mosiah 18:8–10). You may want to make a list of people you know who are mourning and pray as a family for inspiration on what you can say or do to help them. Then make a plan to follow through on any inspiration you receive.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



I haven't been active in the Church for years. I have sometimes felt like returning, but I'm afraid. How do I begin the road back?

When I finally decided to come back to the Church, I was 20 years old. I found the idea of going to a singles ward especially intimidating. I was shy and depended on one of my good friends to help me meet people. Since I never went out of my way to meet people on my own, I felt like I did not have friends in the ward. What I have learned since then is that you get out what you put

into any relationship, even in a ward setting. It may feel awkward at first, but try putting yourself out there and introducing yourself to whomever you sit next to in your meetings.

I have also learned that if you prepare yourself spiritually—committing your heart and your mind to coming back to the Church—then the rest will fall into place. Introduce yourself to the bishop and let him know you

are willing to serve. Having a calling as a ward missionary has enabled me to go out of my comfort zone and talk to anyone that I do not recognize. It has deepened my commitment to the Church because I have seen how each of us is important to strengthening our wards and building the kingdom.

Kristen Terry, Texas, USA

I was a member of the Church for five years before becoming less active at the age of 18. One decade and two children later, I found myself longing to be active in the gospel. Below are some steps I took in turning my life toward the Lord again.

Prayer: I prayed as often as I could, explaining to the Lord everything, even though He already knew—my fears, struggles, pains, desires, and hopes. Continually pouring out my heart and soul to Him helped me know that He is there, He understands me, and He loves me. Prayer brought me closer to the Lord and got me through the struggles associated with turning my life around.

Reading the Book of Mormon: It had been over 10 years since I had read the Book of Mormon, so there

was a lot I didn't understand. But I started reading it again and didn't stop. As I did so consistently, my heart was humbled, my spirit awakened, and my desire to turn my life toward the Lord outweighed the fears and reservations I had about returning to the Church. I bear testimony that there is a power in this book that gives your spirit the strength and courage to do what is right.

Visiting with the bishop: It wasn't until I had read the Book of Mormon for a few months that I gained enough courage to see the bishop. I was extremely nervous and scared, but I knew it was a step that I needed to take. He handled my vulnerability with care and understanding. That first meeting enabled my records to be found and my visiting teachers to be assigned.

Having faith: Satan did everything in his power to distract me and tempt me to succumb to his ways. He worked on my weaknesses by making me feel unworthy and unlovable. I had to have faith that with the Lord, I would overcome the weaknesses that were hindering my return.

I nourished my desire to live the gospel by praying, reading the scriptures daily, making myself known to the bishop, and having faith that I could sincerely repent. The Lord was with me every step of the way. By trying to keep my heart honest

and humble, I was able to endure and have the faith to take the steps needed. It was hard but eternally worth it.

Tyson TeRito, Hamilton, New Zealand

If you are returning to the Church, you may think you know less about the gospel than others, but you will find that people are at varying levels of understanding. Remember that missionaries and home teachers are there to help when you have questions. The Gospel Principles Sunday School class for investigators and new members is also a good way to transition back into the gospel. The *Gospel Principles* manual (item no. 06195) that goes along with the class

is an excellent resource for studying on your own.

Keep in mind that your desire to go back to church means you have a testimony now. Don't put off returning to the Church; there will always be something that gets in the way or a reason for not returning. If you do put it off, you may find yourself years from now regretting missed blessings and opportunities that the gospel could have brought you.

The first step back is always the hardest, but after that initial decision, you may wonder if it was really as hard as you had anticipated. Remember that the Savior is waiting with open arms to receive you.

Name withheld, Texas, USA

Share Your Ideas

An upcoming Questions and Answers feature will focus on the following question:

I feel nervous or defensive when I don't know how to answer questions others ask me about the Church. What should I do? How can I find answers to difficult questions?

If you'd like to contribute your ideas and experiences, please label them "Answering Questions" and follow the submission guidelines under "Do You Have a Story to Tell?" in the contents pages at the beginning of the magazine. Please limit responses to 500 words and submit them by March 20, 2013.

TEMPTED TO LIE

The chapel I worship at in Nigeria is close to a school whose principal wants nothing to do with the Church. On one occasion the principal told a teacher never to return to the school after learning that the teacher was a Latter-day Saint. A Church member who volunteered to visit and explain the mission of the Church was rebuffed.

As a salesman for laboratory and

The principal asked me the question I had been praying she would not ask: “Which denomination are you a member of?”

medical equipment, I often visit schools and hospitals to make sales. After one unsuccessful month, I had no choice but to visit this school. My plan was to sell my product and leave, hoping the principal would not find out I was a member of the Church. The Spirit, however, told me that she *would* want to know about my religion.

My business with the head of the school’s science department went

smoothly, and he took me to the principal for payment. After filling out the check, she started asking questions to get to know me better. When her questions became personal, I began to feel uncomfortable. Then she asked the question I had been praying she would not ask: “Which denomination are you a member of?”

I was tempted to lie, collect my check, and go because I badly needed the sale. But I felt I should tell her the truth. After all, the early Saints had experienced worse than this minor test of my faith.

With renewed courage, I looked her straight in the eye and said, “I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” Then I bore my testimony. To my surprise she smiled, said we all worship the same God, and handed me the check.

As I left, a scripture came to my mind: “Now this was a great trial to those that did stand fast in the faith; nevertheless, they were steadfast and immovable in keeping the commandments of God, and they bore with patience the persecution which was heaped upon them” (Alma 1:25).

I was happy not to have disappointed Heavenly Father or myself. Because of this experience, I made a commitment to always be a good sales representative. More important, I committed to always be a good representative of the gospel of Jesus Christ. ■

Aderogba Aderemi, Nigeria



OUR FOOD STORAGE BLESSING

My wife, Brittney, and I began purchasing food storage early in our marriage. In the first months after our wedding, we bought a few storable items each time we went grocery shopping. By adding a little bit at a time, we accumulated a useful store of food. We didn't know when we would need to use it, but we knew it was important.

A year into our marriage, we moved across the country for graduate school, and we brought our food storage with us. Financially, things were difficult. We had used all of our savings to secure housing, and Brittney received no income as a student teacher. We relied on my graduate school assistantship to pay the bills, but it didn't go far.

Our finances took another turn for the worse the second night in our new home. Brittney woke up with severe stomach pain, and when it didn't subside after several hours, we went to the hospital. She had her appendix removed later that day.

After she recovered, we sat down to budget our money. As we calculated the next four months' bills—which included the emergency surgery—we discovered we could still get by without going into debt. In order to do so, however, we could spend no more than \$25 each month on groceries. That was about one-fourth of what we were used to spending.

The food storage we had accumulated over the past year became invaluable. It was enough to cover our basic needs for four months, and we used the budgeted \$25 to buy milk and other perishables. We didn't eat fancy food, but we didn't go hungry.

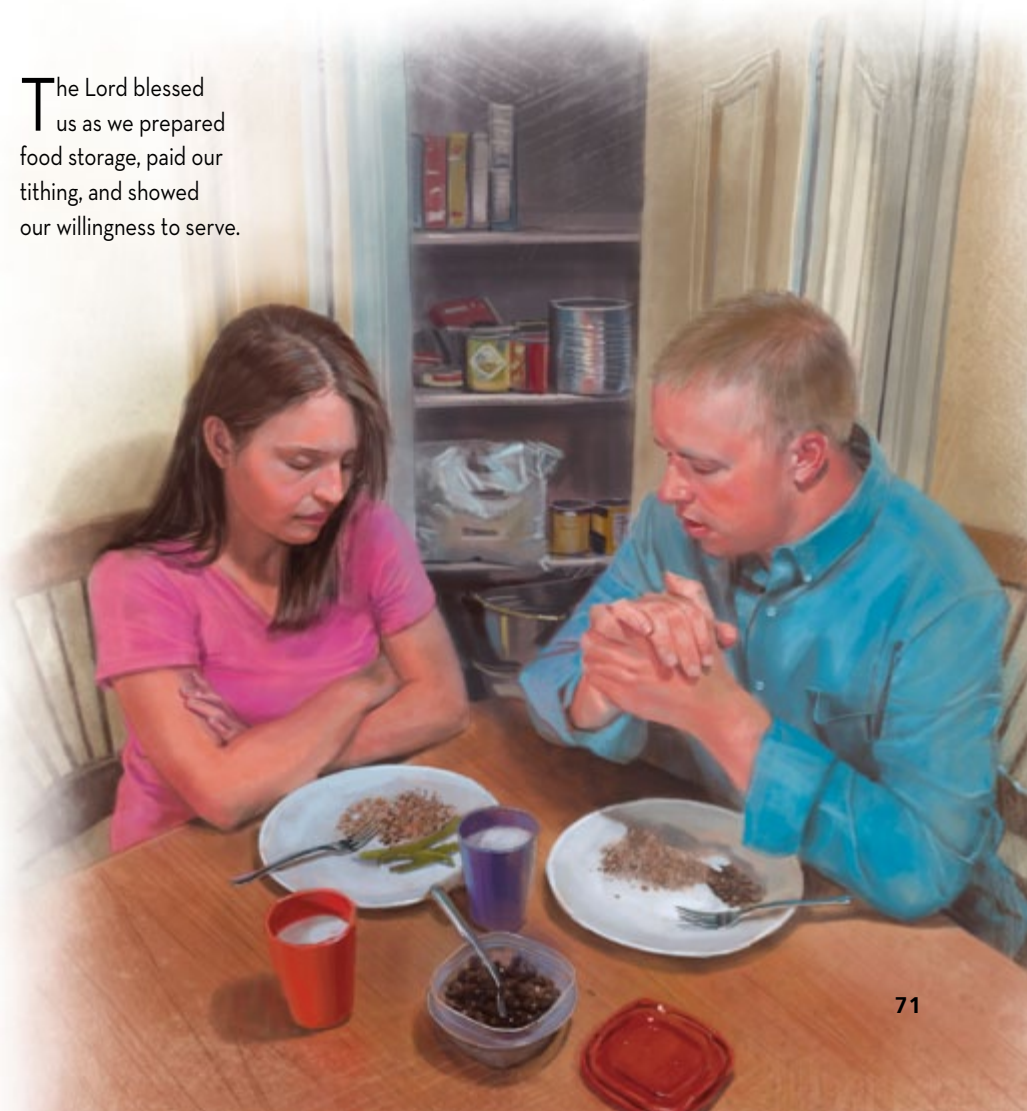
As we lived frugally and served others willingly, we received added blessings. One of my fellow students finished his degree and asked us to help his family move. While we were helping, he asked if we would like to take the food left in their freezer.

The Lord blessed us as we prepared food storage, paid our tithing, and showed our willingness to serve.

Because of his kindness, we now had meat to supplement our food storage.

The Lord blessed us as we prepared food storage, paid our tithing, and showed willingness to serve. We made it through those months without borrowing any money. After that semester, my wife found a full-time job, and we could afford to spend more money on groceries. We built up our food storage again, and we continue to be blessed as we obey the Lord's commandments. ■

Bruce Richards, Illinois, USA



WE JOINED IN

We moved from a large city with a large Latter-day Saint population to a town of 5,000 in the rural Deep South region of the United States, where we lived for more than seven years. As I was leaving the local hardware store our first day there, a teenage clerk said, “Have a good day, Mrs. Grant.”

I asked, “How do you know my name?”

He replied, “Y’all are the only new people in town.”

We found a house across the street from one Protestant church and a block from another, but we lived 45 minutes from the nearest LDS meetinghouse. Every Sunday, as well as a couple of times during the week, we made the trek to our meetinghouse. During those seven years, my husband served in the bishopric, and I served as Primary president and then as Young Women president.

We knew that the social life and heartbeat of small towns exist in the local churches. To be accepted, we knew we had to get involved. Our three young children soon bonded with other ward children, but we also wanted them to feel a sense of belonging to our neighborhood. We encouraged them to become involved during the week in local church activities, including family suppers on Wednesday nights at one church.

We put our son and our girls in local youth programs. Our children

also attended Vacation Bible School at both nearby churches. Our girls sang in a local church youth choir; one daughter even became a soloist in the choir. Our son attended a local church youth group.

Often a visiting revival minister preached against the “Mormons,” but our neighbors knew we were nothing

like the people the preachers warned them about.

Every summer the regional churches of one Protestant sect sponsored a youth camp on St. Simons Island, Georgia. After one such camp, the minister said from the pulpit, “The only youth to go to camp this summer was our good

We knew that the social life and heartbeat of small towns exist in the local churches. To be accepted, we knew we had to get involved.



DID THE GUIDELINES APPLY TO ME?

little Mormon girl, Kelly Grant.”

Our Protestant neighbors embraced us because we had embraced them. We never had to compromise our standards or principles.

As our children grew, so did their testimonies of the restored Church. What they learned from the other churches' Bible stories enabled them to make a better correlation between the Bible and the Book of Mormon. In addition, they saw the priesthood's vital role in our Church, and they could feel the difference.

When our children were approaching dating age, my husband's company transferred him to Atlanta, Georgia. I wept as we signed our house deed over to the new owners. Our lawyer hugged me and tenderly said, “No one can ever say the Mormons haven't been here.”

Our children's small-town Protestant experience taught them tolerance, patience, and understanding. They found common ground with those of other faiths, which helped them serve as ambassadors for the Church. And they came to appreciate the value of the Holy Ghost, the priesthood, and the great love the Savior has for all of us.

We converted no one in those seven years, but we planted seeds. We are blessed today because the people in that small town came into our lives. I hope they are blessed because we came into theirs. ■
Nancy Grant, Georgia, USA

Choosing to be modest has always been easy for me. I grew up in a house where standards were high, and when I married in the temple, my garments reminded me to dress modestly.

Swimsuit shopping, however, turned out to be a struggle for me. Without the guideline of garments, I found myself wanting to wear swimsuits that I would be ashamed for anyone I knew to see me in.

My husband and I were planning a cruise for just the two of us. I thought the cruise would be the perfect time to wear such a swimsuit. I wouldn't see anyone I knew, and therefore I wouldn't feel guilty. No one would know I was a Latter-day Saint, and all the other women on the ship would most likely be dressed like me.

Because I was already married, there was no real reason for me to have a modest swimsuit, or so I thought. Modesty guidelines were just for teenagers, right? But I had a nagging feeling in the back of my mind.

Because I was already married, there was no real reason for me to have a modest swimsuit, or so I thought.

I had been married in the temple. I had accomplished my goal to stay worthy and find a worthy husband. And I wanted to continue choosing the right.

I decided to look up “Dress and Appearance” in *For the Strength of Youth*. It had been a while since I had reviewed the booklet, so the words jumped out at me: “Through your dress and appearance, you can show that you know how precious your body is. You can show that you are a disciple of Jesus Christ and that you love Him” ([2011], 6).

Those words echoed in my head. Was I a disciple of Jesus Christ? Was I willing to be true at *all* times and in *all* places (see Mosiah 18:9)?

Since then I have decided that even in my late 20s, I must maintain the principles I learned in my youth. Those principles definitely still apply to me. I want to be a good example to my children. I want them to know that I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. ■
Julie Letner, Arizona, USA



NEWS OF THE CHURCH

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

Worldwide Leadership Training—a New Approach



Elder L. Tom Perry, Elder Donald L. Hallstrom, and Bishop Dean M. Davies lead a panel discussion on the importance of using priesthood keys.

In the coming months, Church members around the world will participate in an inspiring new approach to Worldwide Leadership Training.

Unlike previous training meetings, this year's Worldwide Leadership Training will not be broadcast as a single event for ward and stake leaders. Instead, it is divided into nine short segments—on a DVD and on LDS.org—that encourage discussion by all leaders, members, and families throughout this coming year and beyond.

The focus of the training is “Strengthening the Family and the Church through the Priesthood.” In the training, members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, along with other General Authorities and general officers, give inspired instruction on:

- How families can find strength and peace through the power of the priesthood.
- How to help every family experience the blessings of the priesthood.
- How those who hold priesthood keys strengthen homes and families.
- How to minister in Christlike ways.
- How to bring up children in light and truth.

All Church units will receive copies of the DVD, and ward and stake councils are requested to view it in its entirety. They should then counsel together about how to help ward and stake members benefit from the instruction.

In meetings and classes, members can view and discuss individual segments of the DVD. Families and individuals can view the segments, along with additional resources to enhance their study, at wwlt.lds.org.

In every setting, the most powerful part of the training will happen after a segment is over and the discussion begins. As leaders, members, and families ponder, share, and testify about what they have heard and felt, the Holy Ghost will inspire them and teach them how to apply the instruction in their own circumstances. Through these experiences, this Worldwide Leadership Training will help strengthen families and the Church throughout the world. ■



Standing outside the Mary Fielding Smith house in This Is the Place Heritage Park, Elder M. Russell Ballard, Linda K. Burton, Elder Ronald A. Rasband, Elaine S. Dalton, Rosemary M. Wixom, and Bishop Gary E. Stevenson discuss the blessings of having the priesthood in every home.

Responding to the Call for More Missionaries: Fostering a Missionary Mindset at Home and in Church

By Heather Whittle Wrigley

Church News and Events

Bishop Victor Nogales of the Parque Chacabuco Ward, Buenos Aires Argentina Congreso Stake, sits in front of a bulletin board covered with pictures of the 37 young men and women in his ward. When one of them leaves for a mission, he puts a note by the picture.

“My young people get very excited when they come into my office and see the pictures and notes,” he said. “It motivates them to prepare for their own missions.”

This ward in Buenos Aires exemplifies the spirit of missionary work. In the first six months of 2012, 19 youth—14 of them converts—left their homes to serve full-time missions in eight countries. More than 80 percent of the eligible youth have committed to serve missions.

In recent years Church leaders have made several requests that more young people serve missions.

During April 2005 general conference, soon after the Church released *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service*, Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled families and leaders to foster a missionary spirit and prepare more young men and young

women to serve honorably by helping them understand who they are and by teaching them doctrine (“One More,” *Ensign*, May 2005, 69).

President Thomas S. Monson’s announcement during the October 2012 general conference that missionary age limits would be lowered served as another reminder that the Lord is hastening His work.

Today many families and Church leaders are taking these messages to

heart and establishing a rich tradition of missionary service in their areas.

Helping Youth Understand Who They Are

In answer to the question, “How have you been able to prepare so many of your youth to be willing to serve?” Bishop Nogales responded, “When I was called as bishop, my first concern was the young people of my ward, and I made it clear to other

Bishop Victor Nogales stands at the bulletin board that shows all the youth of his ward, including those who are currently serving missions.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF PAUL L. GARVIN

ward leaders that we needed to be part of their lives.”

For example, all of the Chacabuco missionaries held callings in the ward prior to their departure. Often new converts and less-active members were invited to serve as teachers, which helped them prepare to teach the gospel.

Bishop Nogales also arranged for youth to prepare spiritually for a mission by working with the local full-time missionaries.

As local Church leaders and members have committed themselves to the youth of the ward, they have been rewarded with seeing the missionary spirit grow immensely.

A Missionary-Minded Family

Garth and Eloise Andrus of Draper, Utah, USA, know what it means to have a missionary-minded family. They have 17 grandsons who have served missions, and they have served six missions themselves.

Fostering a spirit of missionary service in your family is something that begins from the time children are young, Brother Andrus said.

Sister Andrus agreed. “You don’t leave serving a mission as a silent expectation, but you talk to your kids and grandkids about it like it’s not a question—*when* you go on your mission, not *if*,” she said.

Teaching youth who they are by setting an example of missionary service is also important. Brother and

Sister Andrus accepted their first call in 1980, just as their youngest son was leaving on his mission.

One grandson wrote them after receiving a gift they sent to help him prepare for his mission. “He thanked us [for the gift], but said, ‘Far more important is to thank you for the example that you have set,’” Sister Andrus said.

Teaching the Doctrine

“Our youth have a right to expect that their parents and Church leaders and teachers will see that they know and understand the gospel of Jesus Christ,” Elder Ballard said. “The Holy Ghost will confirm the truth to their hearts and will ignite the Light of Christ in their souls. And then you will have *one more* fully prepared missionary” (“One More,” 71).

Some 6,000 miles (9,600 km) away from Buenos Aires, the rural Horseshoe Bend Branch near Boise, Idaho, USA, has also seen a dramatic increase in missionary service as families and leaders have reinforced efforts to teach the gospel to their youth.

From a small branch of 75 members, nine young people are serving missions.

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles emphasized the reasons for and benefits of serving. “All missionaries . . . serve with the sole hope of making life better for other people,” he said. “The decision to serve a mission will shape the spiritual destiny of the missionary,

his or her spouse, and their posterity for generations to come. A desire to serve is the natural outcome of one’s conversion, worthiness, and preparation” (“Ask the Missionaries! They Can Help You!” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 18).

Martin Walker, president of the Emmett Idaho Stake, agreed. “Serving a mission places a young person on a course that will affect generations,” he said. “As a stake, we do everything we can to prepare young people for missionary service.”

Part of that preparation includes teaching the youth the doctrine. Youth in the Horseshoe Bend Branch have access to a weekly missionary preparation class taught by a former mission president—training that supplements missionary training provided by the stake’s monthly youth missionary preparation meeting and its annual Aaronic Priesthood camp.

LaRene Adam—one of Brother and Sister Andrus’s six children—served alongside her husband, Jim, in the Copenhagen Denmark Mission from 2007 to 2009. She testified of the importance of teaching children the gospel in the home.

“One of the greatest things you can do to help your children build a testimony of missionary work is to hold your family home evenings and family scripture study,” she said. “If you give them that strong basis of gospel study and gospel knowledge, they are so much better prepared and know so much more about the gospel.” ■

Church Presence Growing in South America, Elders Oaks and Bednar Report

By Jason Swensen

Church News

The opening section of the Doctrine and Covenants includes the prophecy that the Church will emerge “out of obscurity and out of darkness” (D&C 1:30). That day may have arrived in much of South America.

“We are out of obscurity and darkness,” said Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles following his return from South America in October. “This truth is reflected in the way [South American] government officials know and recognize the Church and how Church representatives are received whenever we come.”

Elder Bednar accompanied Elder Dallin H. Oaks, also of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, on an October 19–28 visit to the South America South Area that included a review of the area, missionary and priesthood leadership meetings, and youth and young single adult devotionals that were broadcast across Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay.

The visiting authorities met with more than 1,800 missionaries serving in the area’s four nations. “We shook hands with all of the missionaries that we met, and they looked good,” said Elder Oaks. “It was an impressive force of missionaries from North and South America.”

Some 15,000 people also viewed two devotionals for area youth and young single adults. Elder Oaks presided over the young single adult



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF SOUTH AMERICA SOUTH AREA AND CHURCH NEWS

devotional, which was broadcast to 326 locations throughout the area. Elder Bednar was the presiding authority at the youth devotional, which was seen by young people ages 12 to 18 and their parents gathered in 439 locations.

At each training meeting and devotional, the visiting Brethren spoke of the importance of achieving a higher level of “real growth” through increases in sacrament meeting attendance, temple endowments and marriages, and young people serving full-time missions.

In the youth devotional, the young men and young women were invited to ask questions. The General Authorities answered a wide range of questions about missionary preparation and remaining righteous in an increasingly wicked world.

The Brethren also counseled local priesthood leaders that real growth can be realized in the area only with increases in missionary service and retention. A prolific core of returned missionaries is needed to ensure future generations of seasoned leaders, said Elder Oaks.

Elder Mervyn B. Arnold of the Seventy, Area President at the time, described the visit of the General Authorities and their wives as “inspiring, uplifting, and very informative.”

“Their love, kindness, and teaching will be forever remembered,” he said. ■

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles meets with the archbishop of Santiago, Chile, Monsignor Ricardo Ezzati Andrello.

Church President Dedicates Calgary Temple

President Thomas S. Monson dedicated the Calgary Alberta Temple on October 28, 2012. He was assisted at the dedicatory events by Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Elder Craig C. Christensen of the Presidency of the Seventy, and Elder William R. Walker of the Seventy, Executive Director of the Church's Temple Department.

The Calgary Alberta Temple is the eighth in Canada and the third in Alberta.

President Monson Rededicates Boise Temple

Following significant upgrades and modernizations, the Boise Idaho Temple was rededicated on November 18, 2012, by President Thomas S. Monson.

The evening before the rededication, President Monson told a group of 9,200 young people gathered for the youth cultural celebration that the temple "shines as a beacon of righteousness to all who will follow its light." Read more at news.lds.org.

Tabernacle Choir Launches YouTube Channel

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir launched an official channel on YouTube in high-definition quality at YouTube.com/MormonTabChoir in October 2012.

In addition to musical performances, the site will feature music videos and episodes of *Music and the Spoken Word*.

Saints in Botswana Rejoice at Creation of First Stake

On November 4, 2012, 881 Saints met in a chapel in Botswana, Africa, to witness the creation of the Gaborone Botswana Stake, the country's first stake. Africa Southeast Area President Elder Dale G. Renlund and Elder Colin H. Bricknell, Area Seventy, presided over the meeting.

"The stake will be a place of refuge, a place of learning, a place of goodness and safety, a place of order, a place of kindness and love, and a place of God," Roodepoort South Africa Stake president Daniel Hall said. "From this stake will spread the gospel of Christ into the

lives and the hearts of the Botswanan people."

Elder Holland Dedicates Central African Republic

In October 2012, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles offered a prayer of dedication and blessing upon the country and people of the Central African Republic.

During his visit to the Africa Southeast Area, Elder Holland also met with members in priesthood leadership trainings, special stake conferences, and other meetings. Read more by searching "Central African Republic" on news.lds.org.

During his visit to the Africa Southeast Area, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland (back right, with Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Presidency of the Seventy and children from the Bangui Branch in the Central African Republic) said he wanted members everywhere in Africa to know of the grandeur and greatness of the Church.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF CHURCH NEWS

IN OTHER CHURCH MAGAZINES

THE NEW ERA

The Foundations of a Testimony

Having a testimony does not mean knowing everything about the gospel. Instead, we can grow our testimonies over time when we base our faith on a firm foundation of fundamental principles. See “Growing Your Testimony” on pages 24–25 for more answers about building your testimony on a sure foundation.

Not Just for Young Women

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles teaches the youth—both young men and young women—about the importance of the Young Women values

Growing YOUR Testimony

You don't need to know everything about the gospel to have a testimony. Start with a few key doctrines and branch out from there.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF YOUR TESTIMONY ARE:

1. Learning Heavenly Father loves and cares for His children.
2. Jesus Christ lives and is the Son of God. He came to do the Father's will.
3. Joseph Smith is the prophet of God who was called to restore the gospel.
4. The Church is led by a living prophet today.
5. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Savior's true Church on the earth.

A testimony of these principles comes through the witness of the Holy Spirit.

THE ROOTS OF TESTIMONY

Under the roots of your testimony are living principles, not just doctrines. These principles are the foundation of your faith. They are the things that help you grow your testimony over time. They are the things that help you grow your testimony over time. They are the things that help you grow your testimony over time.

in “Focus on Values” (pages 2–5). Elder Nelson encourages each of us to develop these eternal values in order to become all the Lord wants us to be.

The Influence of the Media

The media can be a powerful influence in people’s minds, as youth are reminded in “Lights . . . Camera . . . Action!” on pages 38–39. Adrián Ochoa, second counselor in the Young Men general presidency, reminds the youth, “You need to realize that everything you watch, read, or listen to will help write the script to your life.”

THE FRIEND

Following Family Rules

Just as Heavenly Father gives us commandments to help us choose the right, your family may have some other rules to keep you safe and happy!

Your family may want to set rules about:

- Daily routines
- Manners
- Living gospel standards
- Safety
- Media (TV, movies, music, etc.)

“DO” RULES

DO rules help you and your family members choose the right, better do what you should.

- Do go to church.
- Do help family members.
- Do pray and read your scriptures daily.

“DO NOT” RULES

DO NOT rules help you and your family members choose the right, better do what you should.

- Do not lie, humiliate, steal, or cheat.
- Do not watch, or listen to, inappropriate media.
- Do not say bad things.

Family Rules Challenge

How well do you do to help each other follow your family rules?

allowed to play (pages 4–5). The importance of following family rules is further emphasized in “Following Family Rules,” where children are taught about “do” and “do not” rules (page 6).

An Apostle’s Art

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, is an artist and sculptor. See pages

24–25 to look at some of his recent creations and some work from his childhood.

Learning from the Scriptures

We can help the scriptures come alive by likening them to ourselves. Pages 22 and 47 explain ways children can liken the scriptures unto themselves to help them during hard times.

Family Rules

In “The Ratings Rule,” Ethan makes the hard decision to stop playing a video game because the rating is not what he is



How can the scriptures help me?

The scriptures can help you in many ways. They can help you know the will of God. They can help you know the will of God. They can help you know the will of God.

Bringing the Scriptures to Life

How can we bring the scriptures to life? We can bring them to life by reading them. We can bring them to life by reading them. We can bring them to life by reading them.

REMEMBERING HIM ON THE SABBATH

By Michael R. Morris
Church Magazines

Our Sunday School lesson on keeping the Sabbath day holy had gone well—until somebody mentioned television.

As people chimed in with their opinions regarding whether watching television on Sunday was appropriate, some class members became prescriptive. Before long, other class members became offended. The Spirit, which at first had accompanied our discussion, was replaced by a palpable tension.

Observing the growing discord, Kenneth Payne, a member of our stake presidency, asked to speak. He stood and began telling us about his son Brian, who had served in the Japan Tokyo North Mission. When President Payne and his family greeted Brian at the airport upon his return from his mission in March 2003, he complained of a stiff, sore jaw. Within weeks, Brian was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

A month later he began a regimen of chemotherapy and then radiation. President Payne said doctors had planned a bone-marrow transplant for September 22, but just after



If Sunday activities distract us from remembering the Savior and ministering on the Sabbath as He would minister, then perhaps we should reconsider our choice.

the first of that month, “Brian began having difficulty.”

He was hospitalized the second week of September. By then, because of the cancer's aggressive nature, doctors determined that it was too late for a transplant. The family brought Brian home from the hospital on September 21. He passed away the next morning.

“September 22 is a special day for my family and me,” said President Payne. “On that day we slow down and think about Brian, his contributions to our family, and how he gave the last two years of his life to the Lord and to the Japanese people, whom he loved. We miss him, and on that day we reflect upon his life and honor his memory.”

For all of us, President Payne said, Sunday is a day to slow down and remember.

“We take time out to attend our Church meetings, partake of the sacrament, sorrow for our sins, and ponder the Savior's suffering on our behalf,” he said. “We serve, we love, and we try not to be distracted by activities that would prevent us from worshipping Him.”

President Payne said that if Sunday activities are in keeping with that spirit, then we can feel right as we engage in them. But if they distract us from remembering the Savior and ministering on the Sabbath as He would minister, then perhaps we should reconsider our choice.

He then sat down and said no more. He didn't need to. The Spirit had returned to the classroom, and we were all listening. ■

INSIGHTS



Where can I find hope?

“Every one of us has times when we need to know things will get better. . . . My declaration is that this is precisely what the gospel of Jesus Christ offers us, especially in times of need. There *is* help. There *is* happiness. . . . Don’t you quit. You keep walking. You keep trying. . . . It will be all right in the end. Trust God and believe in good things to come. . . . Some blessings come soon, some come late, and some don’t come until heaven; but for those who embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, *they come.*”



The Church magazines invited Latter-day Saints around the world to participate in a “discipleship experiment.” They were asked to study a particular teaching of or story about Jesus Christ for a week and report on how their study affected the way they lived. See page 16 for a report from six members who participated in the experiment. They describe what they learned and how it changed the way they now follow the Savior.