

Ensign

A man with a shaved head, wearing a light-colored button-down shirt and jeans, is smiling and carrying a young girl on his shoulders. The girl has long dark hair, is wearing a brown t-shirt and bright pink pants, and has her arms outstretched in a joyful pose. They are in a sun-dappled forest with green trees in the background.

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**Unity in the Quorums
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*"Blessed is the man
that trusteth in the
Lord, and whose
hope the Lord is.*

*"For he shall be as
a tree planted by the
waters, and that
spreadeth out her
roots by the river,
and . . . her leaf shall
be green."*

Jeremiah 17:7-8

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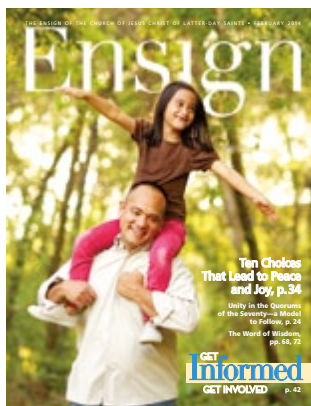
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by Leslie Nilsson.
Inside front cover:
Photograph © Yann
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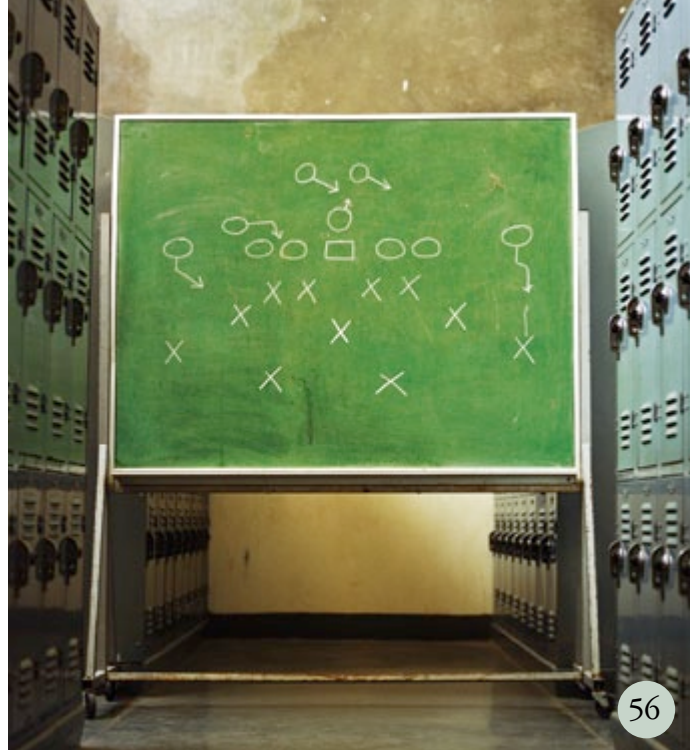
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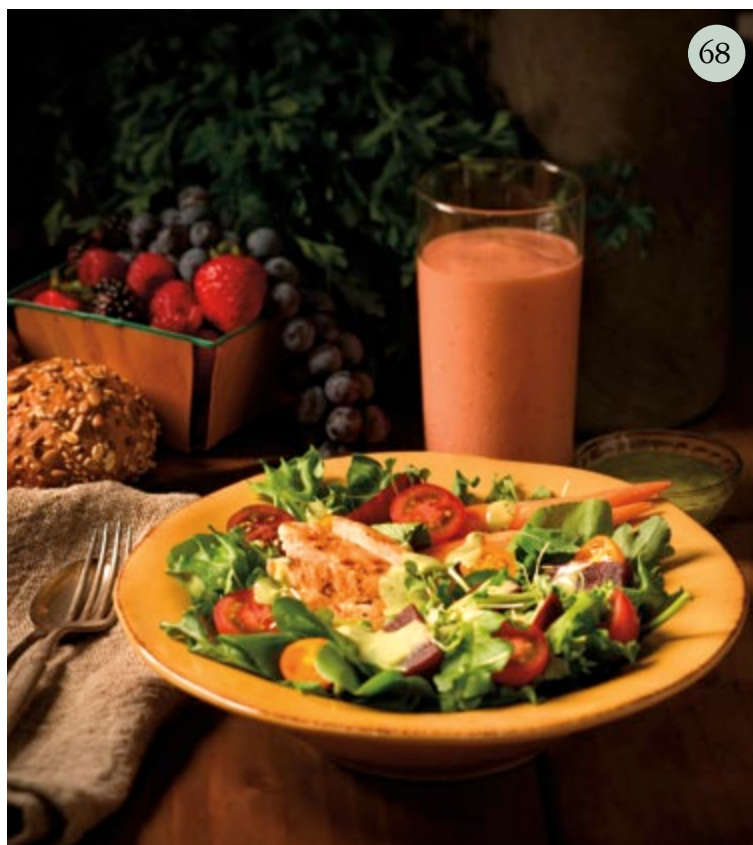
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Ensign

A MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
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Family Home Evening Ideas

This issue contains articles and activities that could be used for family home evening. The following are some examples.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CODY BELL

“Noah,” page 10: Consider telling the story of Noah using shadow puppets. In a dark room, shine a light (such as a flashlight) on the wall. You and your family can use your arms and hands to make shadow shapes on the wall to tell about the ark, animals, rain, dove, and rainbow. Consider finishing the activity by discussing ways we can follow our living prophets today and by singing “Follow the Prophet” (*Children’s Songbook*, 110) or another song about prophets.

“Living a Life of Peace, Joy, and Purpose,” page 34: Elder Richard G. Scott offers 10 suggestions to help us be successful in life. Consider focusing on two or three of these and discussing how they

can be applied in your family’s life. Conclude by reading Elder Scott’s 10th suggestion and watching the Mormon Messages for Youth

video “A Secure Anchor” (lds.org/youth/video/a-secure-anchor).

“Nourishing Our Bodies and Our Spirits,” page 68:

Review the article with your family and discuss how our actions related to food have both physical aspects (health, nutrition) and spiritual aspects (service, gratitude). For younger children, you could prepare paper cut-outs of a ship, a net, and healthy and unhealthy foods. Take turns “fishing,” using the net to scoop up the food. Place the healthy foods on the right side of the ship and the unhealthy foods on the left side.

FAMILY PULPIT

Some years ago, it became usual during our ward’s testimony meeting for the Primary-age children, including our own, to bear testimony. Sometimes I wondered if my children just enjoyed the limelight rather than feeling the spiritual beginnings of a firm testimony. After my husband and I discussed the situation, he decided to build a family pulpit. During our next family home evening, we talked about testimonies and told the children that every week after the lesson, each of us would have the opportunity to bear testimony from our pulpit. Our children were thrilled. This was the beginning of a beautiful family tradition that helped our children develop personal testimonies.

Lonna Heuett, Utah, USA

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DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

We welcome donated submissions showing the gospel of Jesus Christ at work in your life. Please submit articles through ensign.lds.org. Authors whose work is selected for publication will be notified.



By President
Thomas S. Monson

SERVE THE LORD WITH Love

The Lord Jesus Christ taught, “Whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it” (Luke 9:24).

“I believe,” said President Thomas S. Monson, “the Savior is telling us that unless we lose ourselves in service to others, there is little purpose to our own lives. Those who live only for themselves eventually shrivel up and figuratively lose their lives, while those who lose themselves in service to others grow and flourish—and in effect save their lives.”¹

In the following excerpts from President Monson’s ministry, he reminds Latter-day Saints that they are the Lord’s hands and that the blessings of eternity await those who faithfully serve others.

Service in the Temple

“Great service is given when we perform vicarious ordinances for those who have gone beyond the veil. In many cases we do not know those for whom we perform the work. We expect no thanks, nor do we have the assurance that they will accept that which we offer. However, we serve, and in that process we attain that which comes of no other effort: we literally become saviors on Mount Zion. As our Savior gave His life as a vicarious sacrifice for us, so we, in some small measure, do the same when we perform

proxy work in the temple for those who have no means of moving forward unless something is done for them by those of us here on the earth.”²

We Are the Lord’s Hands

“My brothers and sisters, we are surrounded by those in need of our attention, our encouragement, our support, our comfort, our kindness—be they family members, friends, acquaintances, or strangers. We are the Lord’s hands here upon the earth, with the mandate to serve and to lift His children. He is dependent upon each of us. . . .

“That service to which all of us have been called is the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.”³

Serving in the Savior’s Shadow

“In the New World, the resurrected Lord declared, ‘Ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do’ [3 Nephi 27:21].

“We bless others as we serve in the shadow of ‘Jesus of Nazareth . . . who went about doing good’ [Acts 10:38]. God bless us to find joy in serving our Father in Heaven as we serve His children on earth.”⁴



The Need to Serve

“We need to be given a chance to serve. For those members who have slipped from activity or who hold back and remain noncommittal, we can prayerfully seek for some way to reach them. Asking them to serve in some capacity may just be the incentive they need to return to full activity. But those leaders who could help in this regard are sometimes reluctant to do so. We need to bear in mind that people can change. They can put behind them bad habits. They can repent from transgressions. They can bear the priesthood worthily. And they can serve the Lord diligently.”⁵

Are We Doing All We Should?

“The world is in need of our help. Are we doing all we should? Do we remember the words of President John Taylor: ‘If you do not magnify your

callings, God will hold you responsible for those whom you might have saved had you done your duty?’ [*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* (2001), 164]. There are feet to steady, hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save. The blessings of eternity await you. Yours is the privilege to be not spectators but participants on the stage of . . . service.”⁶ ■

NOTES

1. “What Have I Done for Someone Today?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 85.
2. “Until We Meet Again,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 113–14.
3. “What Have I Done for Someone Today?” 86, 87.
4. “The Savior’s Call to Serve,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2012, 5.
5. “See Others as They May Become,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 68.
6. “Willing and Worthy to Serve,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 69.
7. *Teaching, No Greater Call: A Resource Guide for Gospel Teaching* (1999), 12.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

“If you have Christlike love, you will be better prepared to teach the gospel. You will be inspired to help others know the Savior and follow Him.”⁷ Consider praying for increased charity for those you visit. As you develop Christlike love for them, you will be better able to serve in meaningful ways both the Lord and those you teach.

Summer of Service

By Elizabeth Blight

One summer I spent time in a foreign country working with children with special needs. When I first met the children, I was incredibly nervous. I did not speak their language, but I trusted that the Spirit would guide me in my interactions. As I got to know each child, I realized that language is not a barrier to love. I played, laughed, and did crafts with the children and could not help but feel complete love for them. I glimpsed the love that Heavenly Father has for His children, and the joy that filled my heart defied description.

Whenever I serve others, I feel love not only for those that I serve but also for Heavenly Father. I truly have come to know that “when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17). The purpose of my service, whether in big service projects or through small acts of kindness, has been to glorify God (see Matthew 5:16). I hope that as I serve others, people will recognize my love for Heavenly Father and the Light of Christ that burns within me.

The author lives in Virginia, USA.

Links of Love

Have an adult help you cut out 28 thin strips of paper, each about 1 inch (2.5 cm) wide and about 8 inches (20 cm) long. Each day this month, perform an act of service to show your love for someone. You might help your parents clean your home or write a kind note to a neighbor.

Write down how you served each day on one of your paper strips, and then tape or glue the ends of the strip together to make a circle. You can connect your circles by sliding one end of a new paper strip through the circle from the previous day before you tape or glue the ends of the new strip together. Watch your links of love grow! You could even continue adding to your service chain after February is over.



PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTINA SMITH

Prayerfully study this material and seek to know what to share. How will understanding the life and mission of the Savior increase your faith in Him and bless those you watch over through visiting teaching? For more information, go to reliefsociety.lds.org.

The Divine Mission of Jesus Christ: Good Shepherd

This is part of a series of Visiting Teaching Messages featuring aspects of the mission of the Savior.

Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, taught:

“What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? . . .

“I say unto you, that . . . joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:4, 7).

As we come to understand that Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd, our desire increases to follow His example and serve those in need. Jesus said: “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. . . . And I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:14–15). Because of Christ’s Atonement, none of us will ever be so lost that we cannot find our way home (see Luke 15).

President Thomas S. Monson said, “Ours is the responsibility to care for



the flock. . . . May we each step up to serve.”¹

From the Scriptures

Psalm 23; Isaiah 40:11; Mosiah 26:21

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Heavenly Homes, Forever Families,” *Ensign*, June 2006, 102.
2. Elizabeth Ann Whitney, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 128.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “What Have I Done for Someone Today?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 86.
4. James E. Faust, “Dear Are the Sheep That Have Wandered,” *Ensign*, May 2003, 68.



Faith, Family, Relief

From Our History

Elizabeth Ann Whitney, who attended the first Relief Society meeting, said of her conversion in 1830: “As soon as I heard the Gospel as the Elders preached it, I knew it to be the voice of the Good Shepherd.”² Elizabeth followed the voice of the Good Shepherd and was baptized and confirmed.

We too can hear the voice of the Good Shepherd and share His teachings with others. President Monson said, “We are the Lord’s hands here upon the earth, with the mandate to serve and to lift His children.”³

Just as a shepherd seeks out a lost sheep, parents may seek after a child who has wandered. President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said: “To those brokenhearted parents who have been righteous, diligent, and prayerful in the teaching of their disobedient children, we say to you, the Good Shepherd is watching over them. God knows and understands your deep sorrow. There is hope.”⁴

What Can I Do?

1. How does knowing that the Savior is the Good Shepherd bring peace into our lives?
2. How can I support parents whose children have wandered from living the gospel?

OCTOBER 2013 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 2013 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.



Prophetic Words on Mental and Emotional Challenges

How do you best respond when mental or emotional challenges confront you or those you love? Above all, never lose faith in your Father in Heaven, who loves you more than you can comprehend. . . . Never, ever doubt that, and never harden your heart. Faithfully pursue the time-tested devotional practices that bring the Spirit of the Lord into your life. Seek the

counsel of those who hold keys for your spiritual well-being. Ask for and cherish priesthood blessings. Take the sacrament every week, and hold fast to the perfecting promises of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Believe in miracles. I have seen so many of them come when every other indication would say that hope was lost. Hope is *never* lost. If those miracles do not come soon or fully or seemingly at all, remember the Savior's own anguished example: if the bitter cup does not pass, drink it and be strong, trusting in happier days ahead. . . .

" . . . I bear witness of that day when loved ones whom we knew to

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

Answers for You

Each conference, Church leaders give inspired answers to questions Church members may have. Use your November 2013 issue or visit conference.lds.org to find answers to these questions:

- Why does God put so much emphasis on the law of chastity? See Dallin H. Oaks, "No Other Gods."
- How can we draw closer to God? See Terence M. Vinson, "Drawing Closer to God."
- How can we avoid being deceived? See Adrián Ochoa, "Look Up."

have disabilities in mortality will stand before us glorified and grand, breathtakingly perfect in body and mind."

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Like a Broken Vessel," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 40–41, 42.

DRAWING PARALLELS: REPENTANCE

Some of the most important topics are addressed by more than one general conference speaker. Here is what three speakers said about repentance:

- "There is an important difference between the sorrow for sin that leads to repentance and the sorrow that leads to despair. The Apostle Paul taught that *"godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation . . . but the sorrow of the world worketh death* [2 Corinthians 7:10; emphasis added]." ¹ —President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency
- "Remember, repentance is not punishment. It is the hope-filled path to a more glorious future." ² —Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
- "The Savior's atoning sacrifice makes possible our future salvation and exaltation through the principle of repentance. If we honestly and sincerely repent, the Atonement can help us become clean, change our nature, and successfully endure our challenges." ³ —Elder Richard J. Maynes of the Seventy

NOTES

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "You Can Do It Now!" *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 56.
2. Richard G. Scott, "Personal Strength through the Atonement of Jesus Christ," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 84.
3. Richard J. Maynes, "The Strength to Endure," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 79.



Prophetic Promise

"We cannot force God's children to choose the way to happiness. God cannot do that because of the agency He has given us.

"Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son love all of God's children no matter what they choose to do or what they

become. The Savior paid the price of all sins, no matter how heinous. Even though there must be justice, the opportunity for mercy is extended which will not rob justice. . . . We can always take courage from the assurance that we all once felt the joy of being

together as a member of the beloved family of our Heavenly Father. With God's help we can all feel that hope and that joy again."

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, "To My Grandchildren," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 71, 72.



BY THE NUMBERS*

50 years since President Thomas S. Monson became an Apostle

15 million members of the Church

197 countries where conference was available

80,333 full-time missionaries

**As of the October 2013 general conference*



NOAH

*"[Noah] stands next in authority to Adam in the Priesthood; he was called of God to this office, and was the father of all living in his day."*¹—The Prophet Joseph Smith

My father gave me the name Noah, which means “rest,” because he believed I would bring comfort to my family. I lived during a dark time plagued with violence, hate, and other sins.²

God, warning me that a flood would destroy the wicked, instructed me to build a ship and gather food and animals. With the help of my three sons and through the inspiration of God, I worked on the ship for the next 120 years. There wasn’t even evidence of rain.³

I also preached repentance, hoping that some would listen and escape the Flood. From the translation of Enoch until the Flood, many faithful people were taken into heaven without tasting death, but others refused to repent.⁴

When my family finally boarded the ark, we sealed the door and did not open it again until the rains ceased and the ground dried, close to a year later.⁵ When we disembarked, God covenanted never to flood the earth again.

A rainbow arced across the sky as a symbol of His promise. He commanded us to expand our families and to continue living the gospel, and I became the second father of the human race.⁶

Centuries later, as an angel named Gabriel,⁷ I announced to the priest Zacharias that he would be the father of John the Baptist, and I appeared to Mary and told her that she would give birth to the Savior.⁸

My life demonstrates that, even during difficult times, you will never stand alone if you follow God. The floods of life will eventually settle, and you will see the beauty of the gospel in your life, just like the rainbow that crosses the sky. ■

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 104.
2. See Genesis 6:11; Moses 8:9; Bible Dictionary, “Noah.”
3. See Genesis 6:14–22; Moses 8:17; *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 140–41.
4. See Moses 7:21, 27; 8:15–24.
5. See Genesis 7:11; 8:13–14.
6. See Genesis 9:1–17.
7. See Guide to the Scriptures, “Gabriel,” scriptures.lds.org.
8. See Luke 1:11–20, 26–33.
9. See Genesis 5:3–28.
10. See Genesis 9:29.
11. See Daniel 8:15–19; 9:21–23.

FACT BOX: NOAH

Names: Noah, Gabriel

Birth date: about 1,056 years after Adam⁹

Age at time of death: 950 years¹⁰

Genealogy: son of Lamech, grandson of Methuselah, ninth generation after Adam

Mortal roles: preacher of righteousness before the Flood; savior of family and animals from the Flood; second father of the human race

Postmortal role: as Gabriel, he appeared to Daniel to teach him about the Second Coming;¹¹ to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist; and to Mary, the mother of Jesus



SERVICE

On pages 14–15 of this month’s *New Era*, Carol F. McConkie, first counselor in the Young Women general presidency, explains that service is the gospel of Jesus Christ in action: “When we serve others, we are engaged in the work of salvation. As King Benjamin taught, ‘When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God’ (Mosiah 2:17).” The suggestions below will help you teach youth and children about service and its role in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Suggestions for Teaching Youth

- The Mormon Messages for Youth video “Extraordinary Gift” (online at lds.org/go/E24service) shares the story of a blind young man who uses his talents to bless others. You may want to watch the video with your family and talk about the extraordinary gifts each family member has been given. How can these gifts be used to serve others?
- In *For the Strength of Youth*, we read, “Some of the most important service you can give will be within your own home” (32). With your youth, discuss the importance of serving in

the home. What blessings come when family members serve one another? Plan a way that your youth can give more meaningful service at home.

- “Often the most meaningful service is expressed through simple, everyday acts of kindness” (*For the Strength of Youth*, 32). Invite your youth to create a service activity that consists of “everyday acts of kindness.” Discuss how service relates to the covenants we make at baptism (see Mosiah 18:8–10).
- Consider having a general conference scavenger hunt for family home evening in which family members use clues to look for statements on service from the most recent general conference. Share what you find and discuss how you can follow the counsel our leaders have given.

Suggestions for Teaching Children

- Help your children understand that there are opportunities to serve everywhere. Have family members look for ways they can serve during their daily activities, and then meet together and talk about your experiences.



SCRIPTURES ON THIS TOPIC

Matthew 25:35–45

Luke 10:25–37

James 2:14–17

- Share stories about service from your family history, a Church magazine, or a general conference talk. Read Mosiah 2:17 and talk about how we can serve Heavenly Father by serving others.
- Have your children draw pictures that show how they serve others. Ask them what things they can do to serve their siblings, friends, teachers, or parents. ■

PREPARING TO BE AN ETERNAL FAMILY

By Marco Castro Castro

There is no magic recipe for success in marriage, but the ingredients are always the same.

My wife and I observed with sadness and amazement as some of our friends went through the process of divorce. The first thing we felt was the fear that this would happen to us if we found ourselves facing difficult challenges in our marriage. When a serious crisis did arise in our marriage, we decided to give ourselves one last chance—but to do it in the right way. We had already been trying for some time to solve our problems by taking one another's thoughts and feelings into consideration. Our relationship would improve temporarily, but after a time our problems always returned.

Not until we realized that the Lord needed to play a prominent role in our marriage did our marriage begin to change. We realized that we were never going to be able to work through, much less solve, our conflicts by ourselves. Putting aside our pride, we did something we hadn't done before. We forgot our own opinions and asked the Lord what He wanted

of us. Only when we included Him did our marriage start to improve—gradually and in His way and in His own due time.

It has now been several years since we knelt at the altar of the Santiago Chile Temple, and we have faced many challenges and much adversity. Looking back, we can say that everything we have gone through has been for our good. The adversity has taught us to be

humble and has made us stronger. We are still learning how to put our lives in order—both of us learning to work together as equal partners in love and understanding—and the effort has been worth it.

There is no magic recipe for success in marriage. The ingredients are found, as they always have been, in the gospel of Jesus Christ. So, as a family, we have written a declaration that we use alongside the proclamation





BUILT ON THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH

"Successful eternal marriages are built on the foundation of

faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and adherence to His teachings [see "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129]. I have observed that couples who have made their marriages priceless practice the patterns of faith: they attend sacrament and other meetings every week, hold family home evening, pray and study the scriptures together and as individuals, and pay an honest tithing. Their mutual quest is to be obedient and good."

Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Presidency of the Seventy, "Marriage: Watch and Learn," *Ensign*, May 2013, 83.

on the family issued by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.¹ Our declaration, titled "Preparing to Be an Eternal Family," begins with these words: "We, the Castro Martínez family, testify that marriage is ordained of God and that family relationships can be eternal through the Atonement of Jesus Christ if we are obedient to the laws and ordinances of the gospel."

What follows are 17 principles that in our judgment encompass the basic gospel values that will give us the greatest chance for success in our marriage and in our family. Our list is by no means revolutionary; it includes

things such as personal and family prayer, scripture study, weekly family home evenings, attendance at Sunday meetings, regular temple attendance, treating one another with love and respect, and giving service. We also realize that principles by themselves have no effect whatsoever—we have to put them into practice.

Putting aside our pride and incorporating the Lord and His will into our marriage have put us on the path to becoming an eternal family. ■

The author lives in Valparaíso, Chile.

NOTE

1. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.

YOUNG ADULTS

Do you communicate effectively with your spouse? Understanding these three types of conversations can help you fortify your relationship.

SPEAK, LISTEN, & LOVE



By Mark Ogletree

As a marriage and family counselor, I often visit with couples to help them repair or strengthen their relationships. In one instance, I met with a woman who had been married to her husband for only a few months, and she told me that they were having major communication problems. After talking to her husband, I noticed that he was actually a skilled communicator—just not with his wife.

I have learned over the years that healthy communication affects both the heart and the mind. If we can communicate better—meaning more clearly and concisely—then we can forge deeper emotional connections, resolve conflicts, and strengthen the bonds in our marital relationship. Following are some ways that each of us can improve the quality of communication in our relationships.

Engage in Meaningful Conversations

Dr. Douglas E. Brinley, a Church member who is a marriage and parenting specialist, wrote about three levels of communication in relationships: superficial, personal, and validating. In order for a deep bond to form between a husband and a wife, there needs to be a balance between all three.¹

Superficial

Communication that falls in the superficial level is informative and

nonconfrontational, and it involves a low level of risk. Every married couple spends some time at this level as they coordinate schedules, discuss the weather, or comment on gas prices. Although this type of communication is necessary, individuals cannot become deeply connected and bound together if the majority of communication remains here.

Superficial communication can supplant deep and meaningful conversations. If couples tiptoe around deeper issues that should be discussed, they will never learn to resolve conflict or connect with each other. Couples bond as they discuss things that matter—not things that don't. I have seen many couples in my practice who have tried to preserve their relationship by keeping their communication at the superficial level. By avoiding the "weightier matters" (Matthew 23:23), they have actually destroyed their marriage.

Personal

During personal communication, you share your interests, dreams, passions, beliefs, and goals. You also are open to sharing your fears and inadequacies. Communicating all these issues in a Christlike manner is one way couples connect and strengthen the relationship. Elder Marvin J. Ashton (1915–1994) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, taught, "Communication is more than a sharing of words. It is the *wise* sharing of

emotions, feelings, and concerns. It is the sharing of oneself totally."²

You probably engaged in this level of communication as you were dating. This is the level where men and women fall in love with each other. As you continue to share what is important, you and your spouse will feel mutually appreciated, wanted, valued, and needed. As you learn to validate what your spouse shares—showing that what he or she says is important to you—you will progress to the next level of communication.

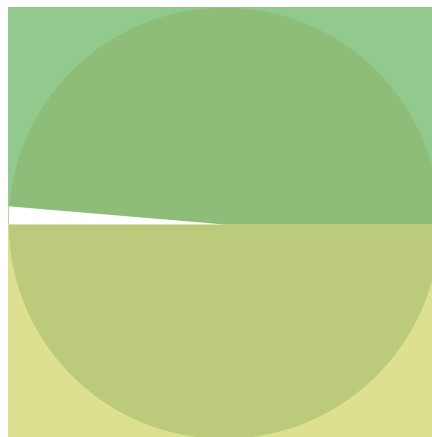
Validating

Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to nurture and provide comfort to each other.³ Marriage experts Sandra Blakeslee and Judith S. Wallerstein have written: "A marriage that does not provide nurturance and restorative comfort can die of emotional malnutrition."⁴ Communication that validates is edifying, healing, nurturing, and complimentary. In this level of communication, we express praise and compliments to those we care about. Almost every relationship will thrive if there is a healthy dose of validation.

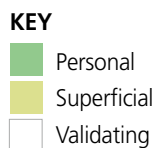
Validation begins with paying attention to what your spouse is saying and includes expressing ideas and thoughts that are edifying and healing. Look for the good in your spouse and tell him or her. If your spouse had a difficult day, you could validate

When I counsel with couples, I draw a circle on a white-board and ask them to make a pie chart based on how much time they spend in superficial, personal, and validating communication. Most couples whose marriages are in trouble spend close to 50 percent of their time in superficial communication and less than 5 percent of their time validating. A healthy balance is to have 25 percent of communication at the superficial level, 50 percent at the personal level, and 25 percent at the validating level.

Unhealthy Communication



Healthy Communication



him or her by listening and offering comfort. You could say, “I’m sorry you had a hard day; tell me more about what happened” or “What can I do to make the rest of your day better?” Perhaps you could say, “I can see why your day was so difficult, but I have confidence in your intelligence and work ethic. I know you will be able to solve that problem.” Statements such as these demonstrate that you have sympathy for your spouse’s distress and care about him or her. By verbally acknowledging your spouse’s emotions, fears, thoughts, or concerns, you are communicating validation and conveying appreciation, love, and respect.⁵

Practice the Art of Listening

The greatest communication skill is being an effective listener. One of the most charitable demonstrations in marriage is to truly focus on your spouse and listen to him or her—really listen—regardless of what we want to say. Being heard is akin to being loved; in fact, being listened to is one of the highest forms of respect and validation. By listening, we are saying to our spouse, “You matter to me, I love you, and what you have to say is important.”

In marriage the goal of listening should not be to acquire information but to gain understanding. To truly understand your spouse is to see an issue the way your spouse

sees it. Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that husbands and wives should “learn to listen, and listen to learn from one another.”⁶ Effective listening helps us to set aside our own will and pride and connect soul-to-soul with our spouse.

Elder Joe J. Christensen, formerly of the Seventy, counseled: “Make the time to listen to your spouse; even schedule it regularly. Visit with each other and assess how you are doing as a marriage partner.”⁷ Setting aside time to talk where there are no distractions will help to solve problems. Make sure to be positive, maintain a Christlike demeanor, and avoid interrupting your spouse when he or she is talking to you.

Nonverbal Cues

Another aspect of communication that is sometimes overlooked is non-verbal communication. What you say and how you say it is important, but so is your body language. Do you look your spouse in the eye when she talks

to you? Do you roll your eyes when he tells you that he had a hard time at work? Does your facial expression show interest and sincerity, or does it display boredom and irritation? Do you express your love with physical affection? Sometimes a hug or a smile can convey your love more than words can. Regardless of the type of conversation—whether it’s about the latest news article or your life ambitions—positive body language can reinforce validation and strengthen your relationship.

Emulate the Savior’s Communication

As you engage in meaningful conversations with your spouse, guide your actions and words by following the example of Jesus Christ. His communication with others radiated love, care, and concern. He spoke gently and loved purely. He showed compassion and granted forgiveness. He listened attentively and demonstrated charity. Likewise, if we want our relationships to improve, we must

learn to speak in positive ways that edify and build those around us.

When I meet with couples, I often ask them to analyze their communication patterns and improve upon them. As they have applied the principles of meaningful conversations in their relationships, I have seen changes toward a healthier marriage. Understanding your spouse, creating an environment that fosters open communication and expression, and demonstrating fondness and admiration are keys to a stronger relationship and a happier marriage. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. See Douglas E. Brinley and Mark D. Ogletree, *First Comes Love* (2002), 123–26.
2. Marvin J. Ashton, “Family Communications,” *Ensign*, May 1976, 52.
3. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
4. Sandra Blakeslee and Judith S. Wallerstein, *The Good Marriage: How and Why Love Lasts* (1995), 240.
5. See Douglas E. Brinley, *Strengthening Your Marriage and Family* (1994), 153–54.
6. Russell M. Nelson, “Listen to Learn,” *Ensign*, May 1991, 23.
7. Joe J. Christensen, “Marriage and the Great Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 64.
8. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 23–24.

IMPROVING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HEAVENLY FATHER

As you incorporate these communication principles in your marriage, you may also want to apply them to your relationship with Heavenly Father. Many people communicate with God at a superficial level. If you pray out of duty or use habitual phrases, you may find it difficult to connect with Heavenly Father and He will feel distant. Communicating with God is different from just talking to Him. President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) taught: “We do not have to cry unto him with many words. We do not have to weary him with long prayers. . . . Let the prayer come from the heart, let it not be in words that are worn into ruts in the beaten tracks of common

use, without thought or feeling in the use of those words.”⁸ Do you share with your Heavenly Father your innermost beliefs, feelings, and desires? Have you shared with Him the secret ambitions that lie in your heart? Can you pour out your heart to Him? And do you practice listening for His responses?

Sincere words spoken in humble prayer will allow you to develop a deeper connection with Heavenly Father. Listening for and implementing His counsel will enrich and strengthen the relationship. As you express gratitude for specific blessings, live the gospel, and become more like Jesus Christ, you will demonstrate your love for Heavenly Father.

Discipleship and Dating

Young adults can find greater happiness and success in dating when principles of discipleship guide their actions.

By Jared Whitley

As Latter-day Saint young adults participate in dating, what guidelines should they follow to help ensure a positive experience? Although there are many books, news articles, and websites that suggest rules for dating etiquette, many also suggest patterns of behavior that can be manipulative and selfish.

As I have dated, I have learned that the pattern to follow was outlined simply by the Savior Jesus Christ when He said, “Love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mark 12:31). As you date, consider the following rules of conduct based on principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Honesty

It may seem obvious that you shouldn’t tell a lie, but omitting information or bending the truth are also forms of bearing false witness. For example, if a young man asks out a young woman, and she tells him,



"I'm busy," when she means, "Thanks, but I'm not interested," she is not being honest. Of course, honesty is certainly no excuse for verbal cruelty, but a sweetly worded rejection will typically not ruin any friendship or cause undue discomfort when you see the individual at church on Sunday. Honesty means that as you get to know the person you are dating and that person gets to know you, you avoid exaggeration, embellishment, and false behavior.

Humility

Often in dating, a person's own ego can be his or her greatest liability. The Lord wisely counsels, "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it" (Luke 17:33). Avoid focusing on yourself. Instead of dominating the conversation, let the other person share his or her thoughts and feelings. By recognizing that relationships are about building and strengthening one another, you will be able to cultivate a successful and meaningful relationship.

Forgiveness

Opening yourself to love can leave you vulnerable to the possibility of heartache, unkindness, or infidelity. If you experience such negative side effects of love, it can be difficult to avoid unkind feelings toward

the other person—especially if the romance goes sour. Learning to forgive in dating may be difficult, but developing this Christlike attribute will help ensure greater happiness now and in marriage. Similarly, the ability to overcome the pain of rejection without becoming bitter toward the individual involved (or the opposite gender entirely) is a great sign of spiritual maturity.

Uplifting Speech

In the scriptures we read: "The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" (James 3:5). This certainly applies to dating.

Verbal abuse is usually easy to recognize, and we rightly condemn such behavior. But what might be termed a milder form of unkind speech, including put-downs or excessive teasing, can also be hurtful and should be avoided in any dating situation.

Remember what one of our hymns teaches: "Let us oft speak kind words to each other."¹ We are to speak kind

words *oft*, not *infrequently*. In this regard, President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988), First Counselor in the First Presidency, counseled, "Let us . . . resolve to control our tongues and by speaking kind words to each other emulate the loving kindness of our Lord."²

Dating the Lord's Way

I have found that the principles discussed above are essential for living a Christ-centered life. I have also learned that conducting myself according to these standards has brought me greater happiness. If we are ever tempted to be less than our best selves with those we date, let us remember that righteous behavior in dating forms the foundation for successful relationships and marriage, both in this world and in the eternities. ■

The author lives in Virginia, USA.

NOTES

1. "Let Us Oft Speak Kind Words," *Hymns*, no. 232.
2. Marion G. Romney, "Speak Kind Words," *Ensign*, August 1977, 3.



BE A TRUE DISCIPLE

"Do you want capability, safety, and security in dating and romance, in married life and eternity? Be a true disciple of Jesus. Be a genuine, committed, word-and-deed Latter-day Saint. Believe that your faith has everything to do with your romance, because it does. You separate dating from discipleship at your peril. Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, is the only lamp by which you can successfully see the path of love and happiness. How should I love thee? As He does, for that way 'never faileth' [1 Corinthians 13:8; Moroni 7:46]."

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "How Do I Love Thee?" *New Era*, Oct. 2003, 8.

The Book of Mormon &

Modern Moral Relativism

Book of Mormon teachings warn us of the dangers of replacing God's commandments with our own relative moral standards.

By Daniel L. Belnap

Associate Professor of Ancient Scripture, Brigham Young University

While describing our day, the Old Testament prophet Isaiah observed that people would “call evil good, and good evil” (Isaiah 5:20). One way we’ve seen this prophecy fulfilled is the growing acceptance of moral relativism—the idea that questions of right and wrong behavior are relative.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said: “The societies in which many of us live have for more than a generation failed to foster moral discipline. They have taught that truth is relative and that everyone decides for himself or herself what is right. Concepts such as sin and wrong have been condemned as ‘value judgments.’ As the Lord describes it, ‘Every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god’ (D&C 1:16).”¹

Similarly, President Thomas S. Monson has cited a study involving youth and their moral and ethical perceptions in given situations. The common answer was that moral and

ethical preferences were up to the individual, that there is no recognized standard.²

While society in general may believe that moral relativism is a sign of progress, the Book of Mormon contains examples and teachings that warn us of the dangers of replacing God’s commandments with our own relative moral standards.

Truth Defined and Evil Identified

The Book of Mormon lays out the basic principles that help us see the difference between God’s truth and Satan’s sophistry, including a working definition of truth and how to know it. The prophet Jacob taught: “The Spirit speaketh the truth and lieth not. Wherefore, it speaketh of things as they really are, and of things as they really will be; wherefore, these things are manifested unto us plainly” (Jacob 4:13; see also D&C 93:24). The emphasis on truth as the way things *really are* suggests that it contrasts with the way things *seem to be*, no matter how convincing that deception may be.



One such truth is the reality of evil. As Isaiah pointed out, at the heart of moral relativism is an inability or unwillingness to recognize evil. Nephi warns us that the adversary “flattereth [people] away, and telleth them there is no hell; and he saith unto them: I am no devil, for there is none” (2 Nephi 28:22). Just as important, the Book of Mormon makes it clear not only that the adversary is real but also that he has plans to deceive and destroy us collectively and individually (see 2 Nephi 9:28; Alma 12:3–6).

Rights versus Responsibilities

Another important lesson is found in the story of the anti-Christ Korihor, whose teachings established a moral relativism that challenged the Nephites for years to come (see Alma 30).

His assertions, many of which may be familiar to a modern audience, contain the following:

- a. There is no God (see Alma 30:28, 37–38).
- b. Belief in Christ is “a foolish and a vain hope” (Alma 30:13).
- c. Those who believe in a remission of sins are under the effects of a frenzied or deranged mind (see Alma 30:16).
- d. Their derangement is caused by following the traditions of their fathers and the whims of corrupt leaders (see Alma 30:14, 23–28, 31).
- e. Man is a creature (see Alma 30:17).
- f. One “[fares] in this life according to the management of the creature; . . . and whatsoever a man [does is] no crime” (Alma 30:17).
- g. There is no sin and no need for a Savior (see Alma 30:17–18).
- h. Those who encourage people to keep God’s commandments are stripping away an individual’s “rights and privileges” (Alma 30:27).

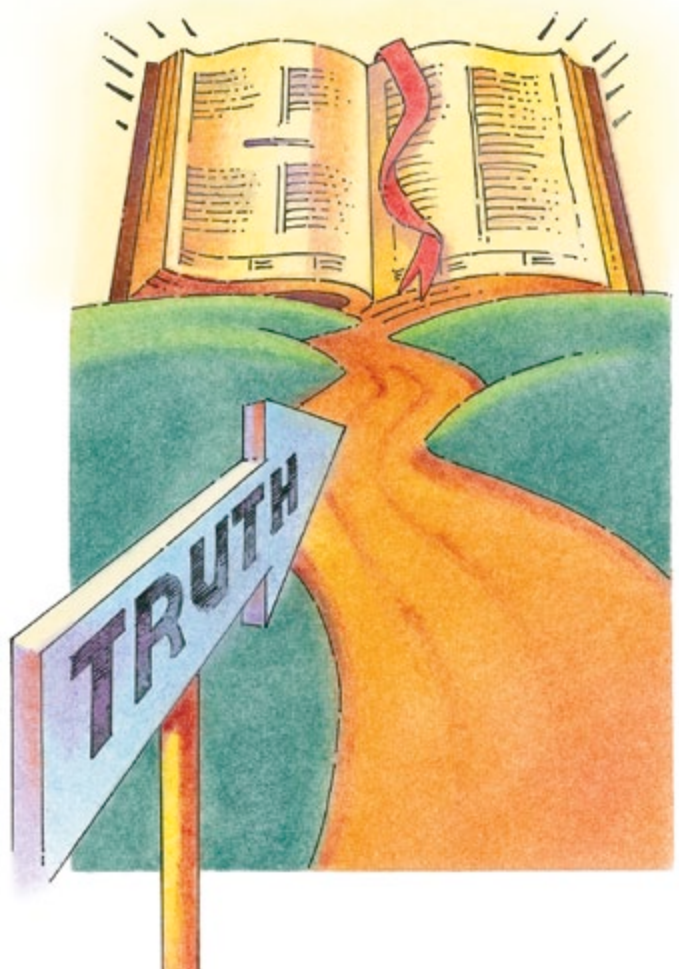
This last point is particularly dangerous, for it elevates one’s rights while avoiding any discussion of one’s responsibilities. In purporting to be in favor of individual liberty, moral relativism actually threatens one’s privilege to exercise agency by ignoring the negative consequences of not being cognizant of one’s responsibilities to others.

From Cain to the Gadianton robbers, there have always been those who believe that their rights are more important than the rights of others. In fact, Korihor’s emphasis on “rights” is nothing more than a revised version of Satan’s premortal gambit to strip us of agency. By focusing on a perceived loss of rights, we do not hold ourselves accountable, particularly in our relationship with one another, and therefore lose agency, exactly as the adversary wishes.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has noted: “One of the consequences of shifting from *moral absolutes* to *moral relativism* . . . is that this produces a corresponding shift of emphasis from *responsibilities* to *rights*. Responsibilities originate in moral absolutes. In contrast, rights find their origin in legal principles, which are easily manipulated by moral relativism.”³

It would be foolish to believe that this consequence was not intended by the adversary. Such a situation, coupled with the belief that man is merely a “creature,” produces an environment in which moral relativism can flourish.

In response to Korihor’s doctrine, Alma declared the overwhelming power of truth and the emptiness of moral relativism:



“And now what evidence have ye that there is no God, or that Christ cometh not? I say unto you that ye have none, save it be your word only.

“But, behold, I have all things as a testimony that these things are true; and ye also have all things as a testimony unto you that they are true” (Alma 30:40–41).

Alma’s response may be the result of his own earlier confrontation with moral relativism. As young men, he and the sons of Mosiah sought to destroy the Church and led many people to sin (see Mosiah 27:8–10). But when the angel confronted Alma, he told Alma that his father had been praying that he would “be brought to the knowledge of the truth” (Mosiah 27:14).

As Alma himself later explained, a knowledge of truth doesn’t necessarily come through angelic visits but through a pattern of behavior that will sound familiar to those who have gained a testimony of truth:

“Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?

“Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself” (Alma 5:45–46).

This pattern of fasting, praying, and pondering is that same pattern by which all may come to know the truth. Not surprisingly, this pattern also emphasizes that a knowledge of truth is acquired by taking personal responsibility for one’s actions, not merely as a right we are entitled to.

God’s Wisdom versus Man’s Wisdom

Finally, the Book of Mormon attests to the process by which moral relativism often leads to trusting in one’s own wisdom instead of the Lord’s. Following the battle with Zerahemnah, Helaman, the son of Alma, felt that it was necessary to declare the word of God again among the Church members and to appoint new priests and teachers (see Alma 45). But there was dissension among some of the Church members because of these changes, and many

were convinced by the words of Amalickiah, believing that a monarchy should be established.

Helaman, representing the Church as high priest, opposed Amalickiah’s arguments for kingship, yet “there were many in the church who believed in the flattering words of Amalickiah, therefore they dissented even from the church” (Alma 46:7).

But when Amalickiah’s true colors were revealed, many of his followers were then “doubtful concerning the justice of the cause in which they had undertaken” (Alma 46:29). In other words, not all followers of Amalickiah did so simply for

greed or power; some actually believed that there was merit to the pro-monarchy position. Yet it is also clear that this was not the position of the Church. Thus, some Church members believed that their wisdom concerning Amalickiah and his arguments was greater than the inspiration of their priesthood leaders. They later had a change of heart, but unfortunately it was a little too late—the resulting rebellion started the conflict that

defines the rest of the book of Alma. Untold lives could have been spared if these Church members had trusted in divine inspiration instead of relying on their own wisdom.

Today, prophets and apostles have declared that although the world’s moral relativism will get worse, for many, the desire for truth and the peace that comes from knowing the way things really are will increase as well. To those who seek earnestly for the truth, the Book of Mormon offers clarity. Though it was written many centuries ago, its warnings concerning moral relativism, as well as its promise that everyone can know the truth, are relevant to us today. Perhaps more than ever, Moroni’s challenge rises to confront the power of evil, assuring all who sincerely seek that “if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things” (Moroni 10:4–5). ■

**To those
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NOTES

1. D. Todd Christofferson, “Moral Discipline,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 106.
2. See Thomas S. Monson, “Dare to Stand Alone,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 60.
3. Dallin H. Oaks, “Religious Values and Public Policy,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1992, 60.



By Elder
Ronald A. Rasband
Senior President of
the Seventy



Building Spiritual Power in Priesthood Quorums

The Lord has blessed us with priesthood quorums to help tutor us in “having [our] hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another.”

Some time ago Elder Paul V. Johnson of the Seventy, with his wife, was serving in an Area Presidency in Chile. One Friday he needed to travel 900 miles (1,450 km) from their home in Santiago to reorganize a stake presidency.

After he arrived at his destination on Friday night, he received a call telling him that his wife was in the hospital. When he spoke with Sister Johnson, she explained that she had fallen down some stairs and shattered her kneecap. Assuring him that she was being well cared for and wouldn't be in surgery until Monday or Tuesday, she encouraged him to finish his assignment to reorganize the stake and preside at the stake conference.

Calmed by her words, Elder Johnson immediately sent an email to his quorum leader in Salt Lake City to report the situation. Then he made plans to continue his assignment. There is a lesson to be learned in his response: first, he reported the situation to his quorum leader, and *then* he went ahead with his assignment.

The Quorums of the Seventy are organized in such a way that each member has specific stewardship over others, including tender watchcare for emeritus members of the quorum. Because of assignments around the world, quorum members normally cannot visit in person; however, they keep in contact through telephone calls, emails, texts, and other electronic means. Each member is asked to advise his quorum leader immediately of any significant changes in personal or family situations, which is exactly what Elder Johnson did.

In Elder Johnson's case, his priesthood leader was Elder Claudio R. M. Costa, who was then serving as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy. Elder Costa called Elder Johnson the next morning while Elder Johnson was in the middle of interviewing local leaders. Elder Costa felt that Elder Johnson should return home but listened carefully as Elder Johnson explained why he felt his wife was all right and he could finish the stake reorganization. Elder Costa told Elder Johnson to continue while he did some checking.



When all members of an Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood quorum are included, a strength and a spirit of brotherhood develop.

About two hours later Elder Costa called Elder Johnson and told him that he had talked with quorum leaders about the situation and that they felt he needed to be with Sister Johnson. Elder Johnson was advised that a ticket was waiting for him at the airport and that Elder Carlos H. Amado was on his way to finish the reorganization of the stake presidency.

When Elder Johnson arrived at the hospital, he found his wife in a great deal of pain. Adding to her distress was the fact that she didn't speak the language of the medical staff that surrounded her. She needed her husband. The inspired, brotherly concern of his quorum leaders had brought Elder Johnson to her side.

"I feel cared for in this quorum," said Elder Johnson, "and there is a lot of faith and energy behind that care. I

truly feel part of a quorum. I think that if I were ever called into the presidency of an elders quorum, I would be a better president because of my experience in this one."

I agree. The unity and love I see among my brethren could serve as a model for all priesthood quorums. If that model were emulated, quorums and members throughout the Church would be greatly blessed.

The Source of a Quorum's Strength

There is great power in Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood quorums—or there can be! This power draws upon the God-given authority to act in His name and embodies the testimony, strength,

and whole-souled devotion of individual members.

The result is magnificent: members of quorums and their families become stronger spiritually, more secure personally, and more effective disciples of Jesus Christ. I have seen this synergy at work shaping a remarkable brotherhood unlike anything that exists outside the Lord's Church.

I am reminded of an insight President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, once shared. He said: "I have learned over the years that the strength in a quorum doesn't come from the number of priesthood holders in it. Nor does it come automatically from the age and maturity of the members. Rather, the strength of a quorum comes in large measure from how completely its members are united in righteousness."¹

When quorum members unite in righteousness, the powers of heaven flow unimpeded into their lives and are magnified in the service they extend to one another, to their families, to the Church, and to the communities in which they live.

Seventy-six years ago, Elder Stephen L Richards, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, defined a quorum as "first, a class; second, a fraternity; and third, a service unit."² That classic definition is powerfully illustrated by the Quorums of the Seventy.

The Quorum as a Class

Each week the members of the Seventy who are living in the Salt Lake City area meet in a quorum meeting at Church headquarters. There they take turns instructing one another in Church doctrine, practices, and policy in accordance with the 88th section of the Doctrine and Covenants: “Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not all be spokesmen at once; but let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken that all may be edified of all” (D&C 88:122).

These meetings are treasured experiences in which inspiration comes and brotherhood is strengthened. A spirit of camaraderie and a feeling of mutual support and love permeate these meetings. Because not all members of the Seventy can attend, the meetings are recorded and made available through the Internet for members serving away from Church headquarters.

My quorum brother Elder Don R. Clarke describes these meetings as “spiritual feasts of doctrine and application.” When he served in an international Area Presidency, he said, “We looked forward to reviewing [the videos] weekly in our Area Presidency meeting. There were times when the subject was exactly what we needed to have addressed.”

Thanks to these recorded quorum meetings and the watchcare the Seventy and their families feel from leaders of the Church and their quorum brothers, “we never feel isolated,” Elder Kevin R. Duncan said. “No matter where we serve in the world, we never feel alone.”

When all members of an Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood quorum are included, a strength and a spirit of

brotherhood develop as quorum members teach one another and share a variety of insights. Many quorums have multiple teachers, which is a good practice.

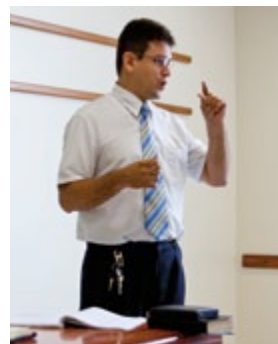
Quorum leaders throughout the Church could follow the example of the Seventy. For those who cannot attend quorum meetings, find ways to include them. Just imagine what impact a phone call could have on a high priest who might be homebound or confined to a care facility. Would he not appreciate a call from his quorum brother sharing what was discussed in their quorum meeting? Technology can easily facilitate that sharing.

The Quorum as a Fraternity

Quorum meetings can also be improved by agendas that focus on truly important matters. Too often quorum business and announcements take up time that could be better spent on giving watchcare and building brotherhood. An effective quorum agenda might well focus on the three aspects Elder Richards mentioned in his definition—class instruction, brotherhood, and service.

In our quorum we share minutes and announcements by email. In our presidency meetings the first thing on our agenda is the welfare of our quorum members. We ask who is in need. We pray by name for quorum members—current and released—their children, and their grandchildren. Often our agenda is adjusted to discuss what we can do to help.

Quorum business and service assignments



For those who cannot attend quorum meetings, find ways to include them.





Wise quorum leaders will spend more time on doctrine, on building brotherhood, and on how the quorum can reach out to others.



need attention, but wise quorum leaders will spend less time on dates and announcements (send those in an email, or list them on a handout) and more time on doctrine, on building brotherhood, and on how the quorum can reach out to others.

As fraternities, priesthood quorums have no equal in the world. Years ago President

Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, explained that “in ancient days when a man was appointed to a select body, his

commission, always written in Latin, outlined the responsibility of the organization, defined who should be members, and then invariably contained the words: *quorum vos unum*, meaning ‘of whom we will that you be one.’”³

Nothing unites human hearts better than the Spirit of God. Under the influence of the Spirit, encouraged by the righteousness of quorum members and a spirit of mutual concern, quorums can be sources of great spiritual power for quorum members and their families, as well as others they serve.

In addition, social interactions are important. A strong quorum will meet together occasionally in social activities that present opportunities for quorum members and their families to interact in a relaxed, enjoyable way. Sociality is an important part of building and maintaining brotherhood.

The Quorum as a Service Unit

In many ways the brotherhood in priesthood quorums powers the service that

quorums provide. Priesthood quorums, working together as one in the spirit of brotherhood and love, can perform miracles.

I again think of Elder Paul and Sister Jill Johnson. They have experienced a number of serious family challenges. They have a daughter and a young grandson who have struggled with cancer. In both cases the prayers and fasting of Elder Johnson’s quorum members have made a miraculous difference.

The Church and the communities in which Church units exist are blessed many times over by the faithful service of priesthood quorums. That service becomes powerful when quorum members unite their strength in righteous, Christlike love.

Often I have observed that strength and love come at the cost of sacrifice, shared in large part by the wives of the Seventy. A number of years ago I visited Elder Claudio and Sister Margareth Costa while they served in Bogotá, Colombia. After dinner one evening the Costas had an online video conversation with some of their grandchildren. As Elder Costa was translating for me, I learned that the grandchildren were referring to Sister Costa as “Computer Grandma.” At the end of the conversation, two grandchildren ages two and four embraced the computer monitor, giving Sister Costa a hug. Sister Costa later informed me that those grandchildren thought she and Elder Costa lived inside the computer.

Not being close to children and grandchildren for important events is particularly hard on mothers and grandmothers. However, they serve because they love the Lord and feel vested in their husbands’ calling.

“Our wives contribute in significant ways,” Elder Duncan observes. “Not only do they

support their husbands with the heavy loads they bear, but they also interact with the members and leaders throughout the world in inspiring ways. Our wives are true examples of cheerful consecration.”

That kind of unity among the Seventy and their wives has great power. I remember being on assignment in Japan and traveling between cities with Elder Yoon Hwan and Sister Bon Choi, then serving in the Asia North Area Presidency. I knew of a problem in their home country of Korea, and I brought it up. After I prodded her a little, Sister Choi told me of the serious nature of the problem. She then made suggestions that proved extremely helpful in finding a solution.

President Thomas S. Monson has reminded us, “Brethren, the world is in need of your help. There are feet to steady, hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save. The blessings of eternity await you. Yours is the privilege to be not spectators but participants on the stage of priesthood service.”⁴

Indeed, true brotherhood is a measure of godliness. The closer we approach that ideal, the closer we approach the divine. So united are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost in love, spiritual power, and knowledge that the

scriptures refer to Them as being one (see John 17:21–23; 2 Nephi 31:21; 3 Nephi 11:27, 36). The Lord has blessed us with priesthood quorums to help tutor us in the kind of unity tenderly described in the book of Mosiah: “having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another” (Mosiah 18:21).

It is my prayer that every quorum leader and member will reach out to each brother and learn of his and his family’s needs. Designating a specific Sunday each month to prayerfully hold discussions in quorum meetings would assist in accomplishing this vital task. With knowledge of needs, quorum members will be able to find ways to bless lives and partake of the powers of heaven in greater abundance, thus increasing spiritual power in priesthood quorums. ■

For more ideas on strengthening your quorum, see Henry B. Eyring, “Bind Up Their Wounds,” Ensign, Nov. 2013, 58.

NOTES

1. Henry B. Eyring, “A Priesthood Quorum,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 43.
2. Stephen L Richards, in Conference Report, Oct. 1938, 118.
3. Boyd K. Packer, “The Quorum,” in *A Royal Priesthood* (Melchizedek Priesthood personal study guide, 1975–76), 131.
4. Thomas S. Monson, “To the Rescue,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 48.

THE SEVENTY: A HERITAGE OF SERVICE

The Seventy is a priesthood calling to be a witness of Jesus Christ and to assist the Lord’s prophets. When the burden of leadership overwhelmed Moses, the Lord told him to gather “seventy men of the elders of Israel, . . . and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee” (Numbers 11:16–17).



Later, during His mortal ministry, the Savior “appointed . . . seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face” (Luke 10:1).

Today, the Lord again calls Seventy “to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Twelve . . . in building up the church and regulating all the affairs . . . in all nations” (D&C 107:34). They are presided over by seven presidents. The Lord indicates that as many Seventy can be called as the needs of the Church require. (See D&C 107:93–96.)

TIMES AT A GLANCE

Part 1 of 2

From Abraham until Jesus Christ
(Part 2 to be published later in 2014)

Abraham—the great patriarch of the Old Testament—is inextricably linked to all who join The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. An understanding of his life and the covenant God made with him and his posterity will help you see your life and the covenants you make with God as a disciple of Jesus Christ in a more complete way (see Guide to the Scriptures, “Abrahamic Covenant,” scriptures.lds.org).

About 4,000 years ago Jehovah, the premortal name for Jesus Christ, promised Abraham that his posterity would be a blessing to all people and that because of this covenant, great things would take place in the latter days (see Abraham 2:9–11). Jesus Christ reaffirmed this covenant with many others through the centuries. In modern times He renewed the Abrahamic covenant with the Prophet Joseph Smith (see D&C 124:58; 132:30–31). By entering into this restored covenant, you are blessed with the everlasting gospel and enabled, as were they of old, to receive all the ordinances of the holy priesthood, including marriage for eternity (see Guide to the Scriptures, “Covenant,” scriptures.lds.org). Your patriarchal blessing includes an inspired declaration of the lineage through which you may claim these blessings by exercising faith, repenting, receiving priesthood ordinances, and enduring to the end in keeping your covenants.

As you study this chart, you will more clearly see your place in God’s plan of happiness.

ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

1 Abraham was born in Ur, in the land of the Chaldeans. His father worshipped false gods.
Abraham 1:1, 5–7, 27

2 Abraham was baptized; he received the priesthood from Melchizedek.
Doctrine and Covenants 84:14; Abraham 1:2–4

3 Jehovah (Jesus Christ) appeared to Abraham, saving him from death as a sacrifice to false gods.
Abraham 1:8–16

4 Jehovah commanded Abraham to leave Ur, promising that through Abraham’s ministry His name would be known in the earth forever.
Abraham 1:16–19

DISPENSATIONS

Eastern Hemisphere

Western Hemisphere

***2025 B.C.**

***2000 B.C.**



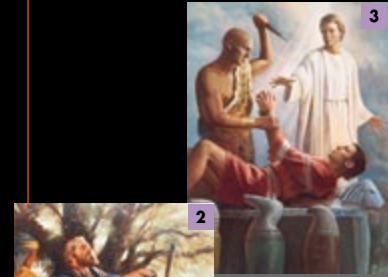
1

2

3

4

5



Sarah

ABRAHAM

GATHERING

12 PROPHECY
Some of Abraham’s posterity would be a “stranger” in Egypt.
Genesis 15:13–14

13 Commanded of God, Sarah gave her handmaid, Hagar, to Abraham in marriage.
Genesis 16:1–4; Doctrine and Covenants 132:28–35

14 An angel of God appeared to Hagar. Her posterity would also be greatly blessed as descendants of Abraham. Ishmael was born.
Genesis 16:7–16

15 Jehovah appeared to Abraham, again confirming His promises. Abraham circumcised all the males in his household as a covenantal sign.
Genesis 17:1–27

*Dates are approximate

Event

Prophecy

5 Abraham, Sarah (his wife), and other family members settled in the land of Haran.

Abraham 2:1-5

6 Jehovah established His covenant with Abraham; Abraham's descendants would be a blessing to all the families of the earth.

Abraham 2:6-11

7 Abraham and his family settled in the land of Canaan. Jehovah promised the land to his descendants when they are righteous. They then traveled to Egypt.

Abraham 2:6, 12-25

8 Through the Urim and Thummim, Abraham saw the throne of God, the premortal world, and the creation of the earth.

Abraham 3-5

9 In Egypt, Abraham became a great preacher of the gospel and prospered.

A Facsimile from the Book of Abraham, No. 3

10 Abraham and his family returned to Canaan. Jehovah confirmed His everlasting covenant with Abraham.

Genesis 13:1-4, 12-18

11 Jehovah spoke with Abraham in a vision, and Abraham expressed a desire to have children. The Lord reaffirmed His covenant.

Genesis 15:1-21

Abraham

Brother of Jared (Jaredites)

***1950 B.C.**

***1900 B.C.**

***1825 B.C.**

6 7 8 9



9

10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18



11



17

19 20 21 22



21



10



14

ISAAC



19

Rebekah (wife of Isaac)

Hagar

ISHMAEL

ISHMAELITES

Keturah

MIDIANITES

SCATTERING

GATHERING

16 PROPHECY
Sarah would have a son named Isaac and in him the Abrahamic covenant would be established.
Genesis 17:15-21

17 Isaac was born. Jehovah told Abraham that He would bless both Ishmael and Isaac. (See prophecy 16.)
Genesis 21:1-5, 12-13

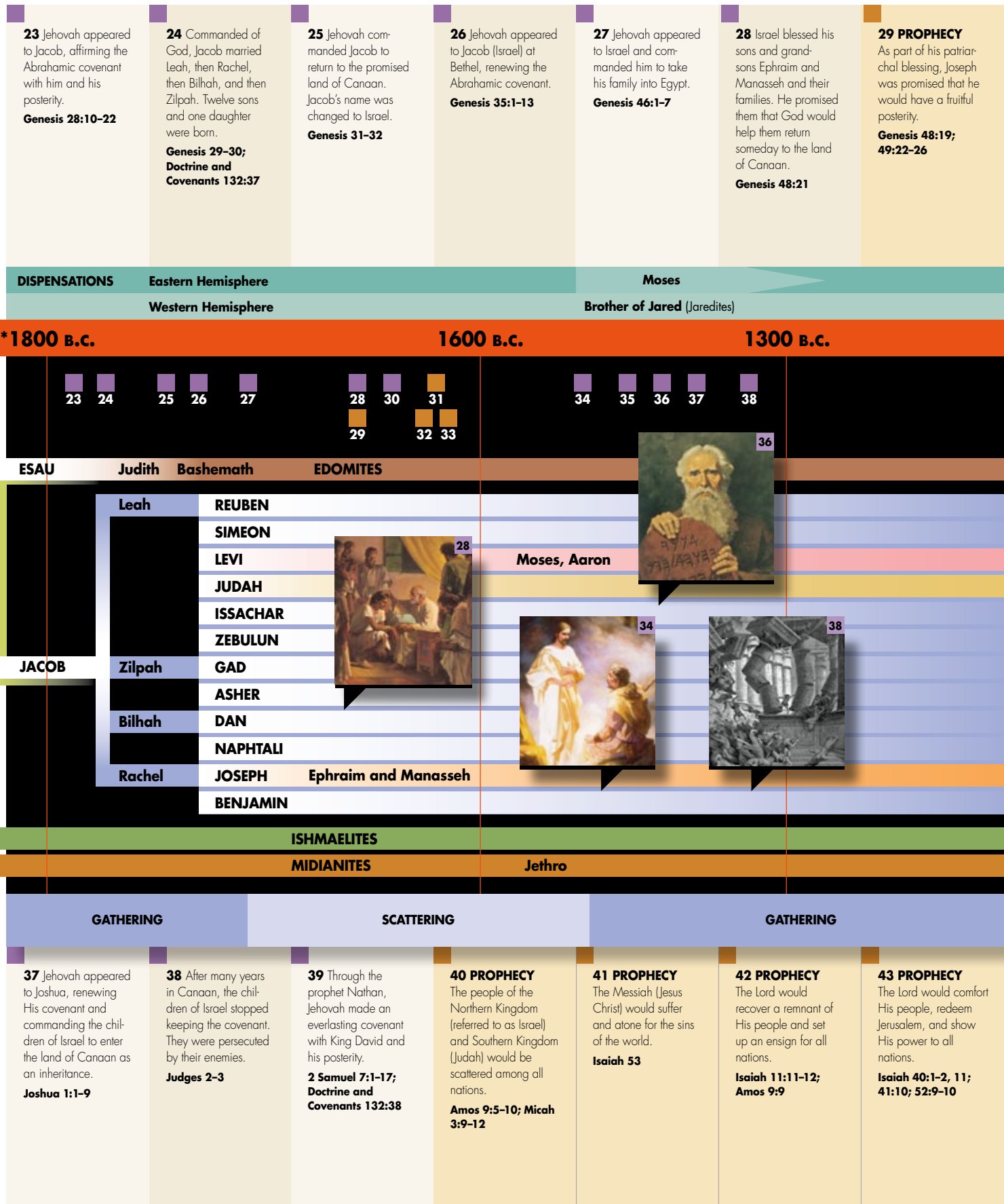
18 PROPHECY
Hagar's son Ishmael would be the father of "a great nation." His descendants became 12 nations or tribes.
Genesis 21:17-20; 25:12-16

19 Jehovah confirmed His covenant with Abraham after he showed his willingness to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice.
Genesis 22:1-19; Jacob 4:5

20 Commanded of God, Abraham married Keturah. Their six sons would also be greatly blessed.
Genesis 25:1-4; Doctrine and Covenants 132:28-35

21 Abraham blessed and gave gifts to all His sons, then died at age 175.
Genesis 25:5-10

22 Jehovah appeared to Isaac, affirming the Abrahamic covenant with him, his wife, Rebekah, and their posterity.
Genesis 26:2-5, 24-25; Doctrine and Covenants 132:37



30 In Egypt the descendants of Israel multiplied and became known as the children of Israel (also called house of Israel). (See prophecy 12.)

Genesis 50

31 PROPHECY
God would "raise up" a prophet (Moses) to deliver Israel from bondage in Egypt.

Joseph Smith Translation (JST), Genesis 50:24, 34-36 (in Bible appendix); 2 Nephi 3:10, 17

32 PROPHECY
The family of Israel would be scattered, with a "branch" living in the Americas.

JST, Genesis 50:25 (in Bible appendix); 2 Nephi 3:3-5, 16

33 PROPHECY
A "choice seer" (Joseph Smith) would restore knowledge of God's covenant with Abraham.

JST, Genesis 50:25-33 (in Bible appendix); 2 Nephi 3:6-15

34 Jehovah appeared to Moses, who had received the priesthood from Jethro. The children of Israel left Egypt. (See prophecy 31.)

Exodus 3:1-10; 13:17-22; Doctrine and Covenants 84:6

35 At Mount Sinai the children of Israel promised they would keep the Abrahamic covenant.

Exodus 19:3-9; 24:3

36 Because the children of Israel broke their promise, they received a lesser law of carnal commandments.

Exodus 32-34; Galatians 3:19-24; Doctrine and Covenants 84:19-26

1000 B.C.

700 B.C.

400 B.C.

100 B.C.

39



King David

40 41 42
43 44

Isaiah**

45



45

46 47 48



47

Nehemiah

49



49

50



50

PROPHECY: ALLEGORY OF ZENOS (ABOUT 1800-400 B.C.)

The house of Israel is like a tame olive tree that began to decay, so the master of the vineyard cared for it until new natural branches began to sprout. He removed these branches and grafted them onto other trees throughout his vineyard. He pruned the bad main branches from the tame tree and burned them, then grafted in wild olive tree branches onto the tree.

Jacob 5:3-14 (to be continued in part 2)



Lehi (Nephites and Lamanites)

Some peoples of Arabia

Northern Kingdom (see 1 Kings 12:2-20)

Northern Kingdom **SCATTERING** (lost tribes of Israel)

Southern Kingdom

Southern Kingdom **SCATTERING**

44 PROPHECY
During a great millennial era the earth would be renewed, and all sickness and sorrow would end.

Isaiah 25:6-9; 33:20-24; 35; 61:2-5

45 The people of the Northern Kingdom were scattered by the Assyrians because of wickedness. (See prophecy 40.)

2 Kings 17:5-18

46 PROPHECY
Some Jews (a remnant) would be gathered back to Jerusalem to serve the Lord.

Jeremiah 24:4-7

47 Jehovah established the Abrahamic covenant with Lehi and his family. They left Jerusalem and became a nation in the Americas. (See prophecies 29, 32.)

1 Nephi 1-2; 18

48 The people of the Southern Kingdom rejected the Abrahamic covenant and were scattered by the Babylonians. (See prophecy 40.)

2 Kings 25:1-10

49 Some of the children of Israel called "Jews" returned to Jerusalem, rebuilding the temple. Ezra exhorted the people to keep their covenant with God. (See prophecy 46.)

Nehemiah 8-10

50 The Hasmoneans (Maccabees) established an independent Jewish state, called Judea, in the land of Canaan.



By Elder
Richard G. Scott
Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles



Living

A LIFE OF PEACE, JOY, AND PURPOSE

*May the Lord strengthen your resolve, your exercise of faith,
and your growing character so that you may be the
instrument of good He wants you to be.*

This world is in serious trouble. The fundamental values of the United States and other Western nations are being undermined. There is a continual crumbling of principle, virtue, integrity, and religious values—the foundation stones of civilization and definitive ingredients of peace and happiness. I will share with you as simply and as clearly as I am able a pattern for success and happiness in life despite these conditions.

God has given you the capacity to exercise faith so that you may find peace, joy, and purpose in life. However, to employ its power, that faith must be rooted in something secure. There is no more solid foundation than faith in the love Heavenly Father has for you, faith in His plan of happiness, and faith in the willingness and power of Jesus Christ to fulfill all His promises.



Some of the principles upon which faith is based include:

- Trust in God and in His desire to provide help when needed, no matter how challenging the circumstance.
- Obedience to His commandments and a life that demonstrates that He can trust you.
- Sensitivity to the quiet promptings of the Spirit and courageous implementation of the resulting impressions.
- Patience and understanding when God lets you struggle to grow and when answers come a piece at a time over an extended period.

It will be helpful to you to understand and use the power of the interaction of faith and character. God uses your faith to mold your character. Character is woven patiently from threads of doctrine, principle, and obedience. Character is the manifestation of what you are becoming. Your character will be the yardstick that God will use to determine how well you have used your mortal life. Strong moral character results from consistent correct choices in the trials and testing of life. Such choices are made with trust in things that are believed and, when acted upon, will be confirmed as true.

Worthy Character

As you walk to the boundary of your understanding into the twilight of uncertainty while exercising faith, you will be led to find solutions to the challenges of life you would not obtain otherwise. Even if you have the strongest faith, God will not always reward you immediately according to your desires. Rather, He will respond a piece at a time

with what in His eternal plan is best for you. Your continuing exercise of faith will forge strength of character available to you in times of critical need. Such character is not developed in moments of great challenge or temptation. That is when it is used.

The bedrock of character is integrity. Worthy character will strengthen your capacity to recognize the direction of the Spirit and be obedient to it. Strong character is more important than what you own, what you have learned, or what goals you have accomplished. Your consistent exercise of faith builds strong character. In turn, fortified character expands your ability to exercise faith, thereby enhancing your capacity and confidence in conquering the trials of life. This strengthening cycle continues, for the more your character is fortified, the more capable you are to exercise the power of faith.

Wherever you live, whatever your occupation or focus in life, you will be drawn into the battle for the souls of men and women. Be valiant in that struggle. It is waged on the basis of character. Satan and his troops have defined their character by resolute opposition to the will of our Father and consistent violation of His commandments. Your character is being solidified by consistent correct choices. Throughout life you will be rewarded from the efforts you expend to choose correctly.

Neither Satan nor any other power can weaken or destroy your growing character. Only you can do that through disobedience. That is why Satan is so intently focused on tempting you to make decisions that will undermine your character. Satan is an accomplished master at making devastating choices

*Keep the gospel light burning brightly
in your home through scripture study,
prayer, and the other things you know
how to do. Drink deeply from the
fountain of the revealed word of God.
Hold fast to His word.*



appear attractive, even reasonable. So be careful. At this critical time of life, you will be faced with many choices. The decisions you will make will profoundly affect life now and for eternity. Make them wisely and prayerfully.

Making Decisions Based on Eternal Truths

There are two patterns for making decisions in life: (1) decisions based upon circumstance and (2) decisions based upon eternal truth. Satan encourages choices to be made according to the circumstances: What are others doing? What seems to be socially or politically acceptable? What will bring the quickest, most satisfying response? That pattern gives Lucifer the broadest opportunity to tempt an individual to make decisions that will be harmful and destructive even though they may appear most appealing when a decision is made.

With this approach there is no underlying set of values or standards to consistently guide decisions. Each decision is made for what appears to be the most attractive choice at the moment. One who chooses this path cannot expect the help of the Lord but is left to his or her own strength and that of others who want to help. Sadly, most of God's children make decisions this way. That is why the world is in such turmoil.

The pattern of the Lord is for His children to make decisions based upon eternal truth. This requires that your life continue to be centered in the commandments of God. Thus, decisions are made in accordance with unchanging truths aided by prayer and the guidance of the Holy Ghost. In addition to your own strength and capacity, you will enjoy divine inspiration and power when needed. Your

actions will be predictable and bless the lives of all in the circle of your influence. You will have a meaningful life of purpose, peace, and happiness.

There is no guarantee that life will be easy for anyone. We grow and learn more rapidly by facing and overcoming challenges. You are here to prove yourself, to develop, and to overcome. There will be constant challenges that cause you to think, to make proper judgments, and to act righteously. You will grow from them. However, there are some challenges you never need to encounter. They are those associated with serious transgression. As you continue to avoid such tragedy, your life will be simpler and happier. You will see others around you who don't make that choice, who do things that are wrong and evil and bring sadness. Thank your Father in Heaven that your pattern of life is different and that you have been helped to make choices guided by the Holy Ghost. That prompting will keep you on the right path.

The gospel teaches us to make decisions based upon eternal truth. Please never allow yourself to make an exception to that pattern of life to gain a temporary, appealing advantage or to participate in an experience you know to be unworthy. I have seen so many young couples and individuals fumble the ball of life because they look to the wrong sources for how to live. They become distracted from true principles by being tempted to compromise just a little bit to gain influence, position, or acceptability. They justify those deviations, rationalizing that later a greater good could be accomplished. In the long run that pattern of life will take you where you definitely do not want to be.

We need mothers and fathers who will preserve the sanctity and safety of the home and the integrity of the family in which faith in God and obedience to His commandments are taught as the foundation of a productive life.



Keeping Your Resolve

How can you keep your resolve to live worthily? How can you be sure that determination in your heart will not be eroded by the pressures around you? If you are blessed to be married, rejoice in that companionship with your spouse and your children. Let there be absolutely no secrets kept from each other. That will provide powerful insurance for continuing righteousness and happiness. Decide issues together.

Keep the gospel light burning brightly in your home through scripture study, prayer, and the other things you know how to do. Honor and live temple covenants as you receive them. Drink deeply from the fountain of the revealed word of God. Hold fast to His word. Keep the Sabbath day holy. In short, continue to do what you know you should do. Wherever you go, stay tightly connected to the Church and consistently serve in it. While single, keep these same objectives as they apply.

As an exceptional son or daughter of God, you are sorely needed. There is an urgent need for more men and women like you who will stand for principles against the growing pressures to compromise those very principles. Men and women are needed who will act nobly and courageously for what the Lord has defined as right—not for what is politically correct or socially acceptable. We need individuals who have the spiritual, righteous influence that will motivate others to live honorably. We need statesmen with integrity,

businessmen who are honest and morally clean, attorneys who defend justice and the legal system, and government officials who preserve principle because it is right. Above all, we need mothers and fathers who will preserve the sanctity and safety of the home and the integrity of the family in which faith in God and obedience to His commandments are taught as the foundation of a productive life.

You can be an essential part of that shining light, that righteous influence to increase the moral fiber of your nation and its homes. Many of your friends live their life for the moment. They do not understand the need for principles, eternal laws, and truth. They have been brought up in an environment in which decisions are made on the basis of today's circumstances or tomorrow's opportunities for gain. Show them a better life—a better way. There are some things that are wrong because God decreed they are wrong. Truth is not determined by what men think, no matter how influential they may be. Truth was determined by an Almighty God before the Creation of this earth. Truth will exist unchanged forever.

Oh, there can be transitory euphoria from power, influence, or material wealth, but true, lasting happiness, the kind that is felt in the early hours of the morning when you are truly honest with yourself, is won only by obedience to the teachings of God. You must have honesty, integrity, chastity, virtue, and a willingness to forgo something

attractive—even apparently desirable for the moment—for a greater good in the future. I speak of our willingness when circumstance demands to lay everything on the altar to follow true principles.

Success in Following the Plan

I would like to suggest 10 specific things to help you be successful in the plan the Lord would have you follow in your life.

First, establish a set of principles by which you will guide every aspect of your life—in your home, in your Church service, in your profession, in your community. Many people try to compartmentalize their life and have a standard for Church and another standard for what they do in business and in other aspects of their life. I very strongly counsel you not to do that. There really is only one set of standards that makes sense. Those are the teachings of Jesus Christ, which signal to us the importance of faith, service, obedience, and integrity.

Second, don't make exceptions to your standards. Never compromise them. One of the ways the Lord protects us is to give us guidance in life. One of the ways Satan tries to destroy us is to subtly lead us away from what we know is centrally important in our life. I lived in Washington, D.C., for much of my life, and I recall on occasion men coming to that city who had been elected as representatives of the government and who were members of the Church. Some of them used the teachings of the Savior throughout their careers and became great servants. Others early in their careers began to reason, “If we were better friends with others and were better understood, we would receive positions

that would put us in a place where we could serve better.” They began to make small exceptions to the standards by which they knew they should guide their lives. Few even remember them. They lost because they made exceptions to standards. Don't make that mistake.

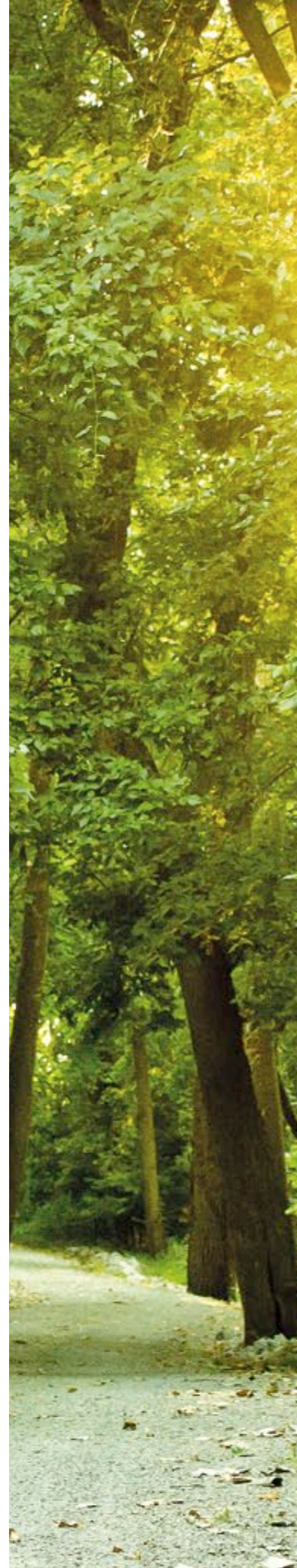
Be loyal to the teachings you have received from your parents and Church leaders. They are the things of greatest worth. If you integrate your formal education with what you know about the teachings of the Lord and the examples of those worthy people who are role models to you, you will have a solid foundation. You will be productive and do things that are worthwhile for others.

Third, be loyal. Be loyal to your parents and your loved ones. Above all, be loyal to Jesus Christ, the Savior. Success comes when your actions are consistent with the teachings of the Lord. When you seek work, find something that challenges you, that raises you to higher levels of performance. It may be harder, but you will grow, develop better, and contribute more good. You really have no idea yet who you are and what you can accomplish in life. You have great potential far beyond what you can imagine today.

Fourth, live so that the Lord can guide you to where He wants you to be and to serve. He can do that if you live His commandments worthily and strive in every way to be obedient to His teachings.

Fifth, serve others. Sharing what you know with others will bring you happiness and bless their lives.

Sixth, smile. I don't mean that you need to be cracking jokes every day, but a good joke now and then is an escape valve. Life is not all that bad. You will soon learn that





*Put aside your problems and smile.
Have a good sense of humor, as the
prophets do.*

everybody has problems and nobody wants to hear about yours. Put those things aside and smile. Have a good sense of humor, as the prophets do. I wish I could tell you some of the things that we talk about. Not flippant things, not things that are inappropriate—just a good sense of humor. I will tell you a secret of how to wake up in the morning with a smile on your face no matter how you feel: go to bed with a coat hanger in your mouth. Remember, a good sense of humor helps you greatly.

Seventh, don't complain. Life isn't always fair. That's a fact. But it's always charged with marvelous opportunities if you know how to find them. I remember once when I was working as hard as I knew how. I happened to be working for a man who took all of the ideas and suggestions and work that I did and passed them on to his superior as though they were his own suggestions. For a while I was really upset about that. As I pondered it, a thought came to me, and I decided from then on I would write reports to him of everything that I was doing or trying to do, and I sent a copy to his boss. He didn't like that, but it worked beautifully.

Eighth, always have a Church assignment. I don't mean that you should ask for a particular calling, but wherever you go in the world, wherever the Lord takes you, always offer your service to the presiding authority. Leave it to that authority to decide where and how. Be connected with the things of God and the ways to serve Him.

The last two are the most important.

Ninth, go to the temple. Carry a current temple recommend. There may be a few young adults who will want to wait to go to the temple for their endowment when they go with their companion to be sealed. But virtually everyone

can obtain and keep a temple recommend. It will keep you spiritually in tune, will allow you to remember the most important things of life, and will encourage you to give great service to others.

Tenth, use the Savior Jesus Christ as your example for life. Use His teachings as your handbook for life. Never make exceptions to them.

Will you prayerfully consider the things we have discussed? There are many willing to be led by your righteous example. Because you have been enlightened, you owe to those who follow you the best example you are capable of giving. Not only will they be blessed, but your life will be enriched as well. Come to know of the great influence for good that flows from individual acts born of conscience and principle rooted in truth. Resolve that each moment of your life will reflect your determination to humbly be an example of righteousness, integrity, and conviction. With such a life you will surely succeed in the purpose for which you came to earth.

Do What Is Right

I began this message indicating that I have validated in my personal life the truth of the principles shared. There have been times when my choice to stand for principle against strong forces implied that there would be significant personal loss by taking that action. But that did not deter me. I was determined to do what was right. The anticipated loss, however, never came. Somehow, doing what was right in time opened far greater and more meaningful opportunities. I testify that you will never go wrong when you trust in the Lord and in His promises, no matter how severe the challenge.

May I share an experience with you? I served in the U.S. Navy with Admiral Hyman G. Rickover, a very demanding individual. When I was called to be a mission president, he tried to dissuade me from going. When I said it was a prophet of God who had called me, he said, "If that's the way Mormons are, I'm not going to have any of them working in my program." I knew there were many families in Idaho, USA, depending on work in that program, and I was concerned about it.

As I prayed, a song came to my mind: “Do what is right; let the consequence follow” (“Do What Is Right,” *Hymns*, no. 237). I did that. I couldn’t see how some of the challenges we faced would be worked out the way I hoped they would be with the individual who would come to replace me, but “do what is right; let the consequence follow.” It all worked out very well.

When Admiral Rickover knew I was going to leave on a mission, he had said he never wanted to see me again and never wanted to talk to me again. On the final day of my working with him, I asked for an appointment. The secretary gasped, expecting that there was going to be an explosion.

I went in, and he said, “Scott, sit down. What do you have? I’ve tried every way I can to change your decision. What is it that you’ve got?”

I handed him a copy of the Book of Mormon and said, “Admiral, I believe in God. And I believe that when we do the best we can, He will help us.”

Then Admiral Rickover said something that I didn’t ever expect to hear. He said, “When you finish your mission, I want you to come back and work with me.”

“Do what is right; let the consequence follow.”

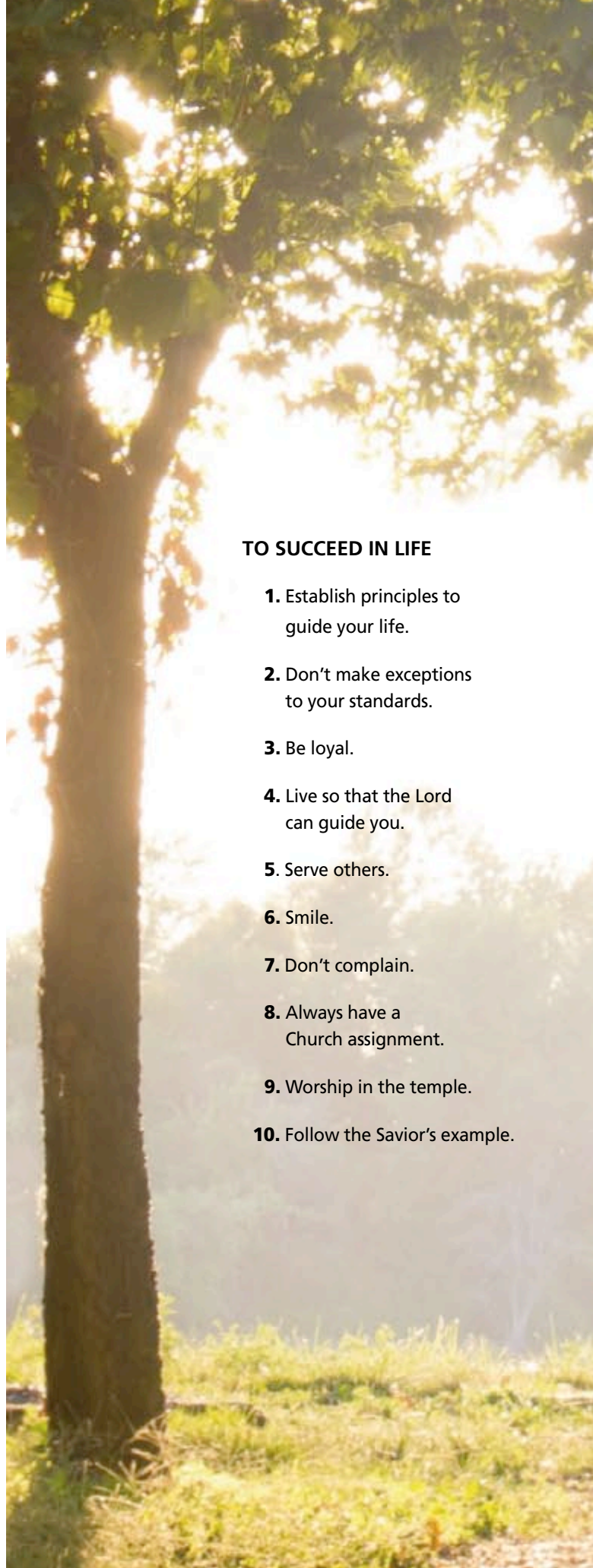
May the Lord strengthen your resolve, your exercise of faith, and your growing character so that you may be the instrument of good He wants you to be. I testify that He lives. As you worthily seek His help, He will guide you in your life. I testify of that with every capacity I possess. Jesus Christ lives. He guides His work on earth.

As Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have experiences that are very sacred that allow us to bear our testimony of His name and of His power. I do that with deep conviction. Jesus Christ loves you. He will guide you in your life. In times of great challenge, when you are perplexed about which turn to take, kneel down and ask your Father in Heaven to bless you and let your faith in the Savior and His Atonement be the rock and foundation of your successful life. ■

From a commencement address given at Brigham Young University on April 21, 2011. For the full address, visit speeches.byu.edu.

TO SUCCEED IN LIFE

1. Establish principles to guide your life.
2. Don’t make exceptions to your standards.
3. Be loyal.
4. Live so that the Lord can guide you.
5. Serve others.
6. Smile.
7. Don’t complain.
8. Always have a Church assignment.
9. Worship in the temple.
10. Follow the Savior’s example.



GET Informed GET INVOLVED

*In today's world, Latter-day Saints
need to become well informed so
they can speak up and engage intelligently
in causes that concern them.*

The news article stuck with you. You couldn't shake thinking about it on the drive to work. During lunch. On the way back home. It wouldn't leave your mind.

It was only a brief article about the good things volunteers do throughout your city. According to the article, volunteers make a huge difference in after-school programs, the city library, the local food bank, hospitals, the homeless shelter. And the benefits of volunteering, the article explained, include feeling valued, becoming more sensitive to others, and gaining a deeper sense of purpose in your daily life.

You've been praying for a way to better engage your children in the work of salvation.

The article stated that one area in need of help was the community center. This was the very same building your kids took dance classes in when they were younger. The thought occurs: this could be the perfect place for you and your family to lend a hand.

After all, your son has an Eagle Scout project he's still looking to plan. And your daughter is working on her Personal Progress. Some online research and a few phone calls later, you and your family have learned enough that you're motivated to step in and help.



It's amazing how attuned we can become to making a difference when we have a little timely information. However, we can't choose to make a difference when we don't know what's going on around us in the first place. With solid, reliable information helping us make wise decisions, the difference we make may be in community service, political involvement, or simply helping others become better informed.

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) encouraged all of us to be well informed: “Let there be good magazines about the house, those which are produced by the Church and by others, which will stimulate [your children’s] thoughts to ennobling concepts. Let them read a good family newspaper that they may know what is going on in the world without being exposed to the debasing advertising and writing so widely found.”¹

How to Be Informed

“The exaltation and happiness of any community,” declared the Prophet Joseph Smith, “goes hand in hand with the knowledge possessed by the people.”²

We all live in several communities. Local communities—our neighborhoods, towns, and cities—often pose a different set of challenges and opportunities than those posed by our national community and the world at large. Getting informed about events in each of these communities can sometimes be a challenge in itself. But it is a challenge even the busiest among us cannot ignore.

Our Church leaders are good examples of staying current on local, national, and world events. In addition to traveling extensively and being constantly in touch with local area leaders, the General Authorities and general officers of the Church stay informed by reading widely. One need only peruse some of the most recent general



conference talks to notice the variety of sources, both printed and online, that the speakers have consulted.

Following the example of our leaders, we can

become informed by seeking out a variety of trustworthy, reputable, and responsible news sources whose stories prove to be consistently reliable. We also need to consider what motivates the organization producing the news. Does the organization have anything to gain by providing false or misleading information?

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said:

“Never in the history of the world have we had easier access to more information—some of it true, some of it false, and much of it partially true.

“Consequently, never in the history of the world has it been more important to learn how to correctly discern between truth and error.”³

As we study reliable sources, we will become familiar with multiple, even opposing, points of view. Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles quoted from a Pennsylvania newspaper: “The man who cannot listen to an argument which opposes his views either has a weak position or is a weak defender of it. No opinion that cannot stand discussion or criticism is worth holding. And it has been wisely said that the man who knows only half of any question is worse off than the man who knows nothing of it. He is not only one sided, but his partisanship soon turns him into an intolerant and a fanatic. In general it is true that nothing which cannot stand up under discussion and criticism is worth defending.”⁴

As we educate ourselves on issues and decide a position to take, it’s important to seek the Lord’s will. Once we have studied an issue thoroughly—including the scriptures and the words of our leaders—we can then pray about our decision with confidence that the Lord will guide us. The Savior told Oliver Cowdery, “But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right” (D&C 9:8).

Why Should I Care?

The prophets have been warning us of troubling trends in our society. President Thomas S. Monson has declared, “Where once the standards of the Church and the standards of society were mostly compatible, now there is a wide chasm between us, and it’s growing ever wider.”⁵ Beyond the immediate concern we have for ourselves and our families, why do we need to be mindful of these trends?

Answers come as we study scriptures related to individual rights, government, and civic involvement. For example, in his last act as king, Mosiah taught his people that

the opportunity to live in a land of liberty comes with the responsibility that each citizen bear the burden of government, “that every man might bear his part” (Mosiah 29:34). In order to responsibly “bear our part,” we must know what’s going on in the world.

Our involvement is both a privilege and an obligation. Let us remember the statement often attributed to Edmund Burke: “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men [or women] do nothing.”

What Can I Do?

One of the most powerful activities in any democratic society is persuading others. Indeed, seeking to influence and shape opinions about civic issues is an essential aspect of the political process. Abraham Lincoln understood the power of shaping public opinion. “He who molds public sentiment,” he said, “goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions.”⁶

The Lord told us through the Prophet Joseph Smith that “men should be anxiously engaged in a

good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness” (D&C 58:27).

This is one reason the First Presidency regularly encourages Church members to get involved in civic and political activities, reminding us that “principles compatible with the gospel may be found in the platforms of the various political parties.”⁷

There are many things we can do to get involved, such as voting, attending caucuses and other political meetings, volunteering at our local precincts on election day, and running for office. In all these activities, we will be most effective when we are well informed and speak up.

In many countries, free speech is a constitutionally protected right. We can say just about anything we want, and many do. However, as disciples of Christ, what we say and how we say it ought to be tempered by Christlike characteristics such as charity, brotherly kindness, and respect.

“Let there be good magazines about the house, those which are produced by the Church and by others, which will stimulate [your children’s] thoughts to ennobling concepts.”

Serving in Our Communities

Two years ago the First Presidency sent a letter encouraging Latter-day Saints in Utah to participate in political party caucuses.⁸ The response was a huge increase in participation in both of the major parties. Auditoriums were filled beyond capacity in precincts that a few years previously could have fit attendees around a conference table.

As the ways of the world become increasingly distant from the Lord's ideals, members of the Church will find themselves needing to speak up on issues of common concern. President Gordon B. Hinckley warned that a small minority may "make their voices heard until those in our legislatures may come to believe that what they say represents the will of the majority." He reminded us that "we are not likely to get that which we do not speak up for.

"Let our voices be heard. I hope they will not be shrill voices, but I hope we shall speak with such conviction that those to whom we speak shall know of the strength of our feeling and the sincerity of our effort. Remarkable consequences often flow from a well-written letter and a postage stamp. Remarkable results come of quiet conversation with those who carry heavy responsibilities."⁹

Such a proposition may be daunting—to voice unpopular views and to stand up for our opinions and beliefs when others may disagree—but when we stand with the Lord, we never stand alone.

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: "My challenge is that we join with people of all faiths who feel accountable to God in defending religious freedom so it can be a beacon for morality. We caution you to be civil and responsible as you defend religious liberty and moral values. We ask that you do this on the Internet and in your personal interactions in the neighborhoods and communities where you live. Be an active participant, not a silent observer."¹⁰

Conclusion

The Church's declaration regarding governments and laws states: "We believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man; and that he holds men accountable for their acts in relation to them, both in making laws and administering them, for the good and safety of society" (D&C 134:1).

We cannot be bystanders in shaping our public environment. We have the duty and the right to get informed about what is happening in our communities and in the

world. Then, with the information we have and as the Spirit directs, we can get involved.

As we do, we can rely on the divine promise spoken of by President Thomas S. Monson: "As the winds of change swirl around us and the moral fiber of society continues to disintegrate before our very eyes, may we remember the Lord's precious promise to those who trust in Him: 'Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness' [Isaiah 41:10]."¹¹

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NOTES

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, "In Opposition to Evil," *Ensign*, Sept. 2004, 4.
2. "Knowledge Is Power," editorial in *Times and Seasons*, Aug. 15, 1842, 889; Joseph Smith was the editor of the periodical.
3. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "What Is Truth?" (Church Educational System devotional, Jan. 13, 2013), 3, speeches.byu.edu.
4. Editorial quoted in James E. Talmage, "Christianity Falsely So-Called," *Improvement Era*, Jan. 1920, 204.
5. Thomas S. Monson, "Priesthood Power," *Ensign*, May 2011, 66.
6. Abraham Lincoln, in Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (2005), 206; spelling standardized.
7. First Presidency letter, Feb. 9, 2012, in "First Presidency Issues Letter on Utah Precinct Caucus Meetings," mormonnewsroom.org/article/first-presidency-issues-letter-utah-precinct-caucus-meetings.
8. See First Presidency letter, Feb. 9, 2012.
9. Gordon B. Hinckley, "In Opposition to Evil," 5.
10. Quentin L. Cook, "Restoring Morality and Religious Freedom," *Ensign*, Sept. 2012, 38.
11. Thomas S. Monson, "Stand in Holy Places," *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 86.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

To find out more about getting informed and getting involved, scan this QR code or go to lds.org/go/citizenshipEN.

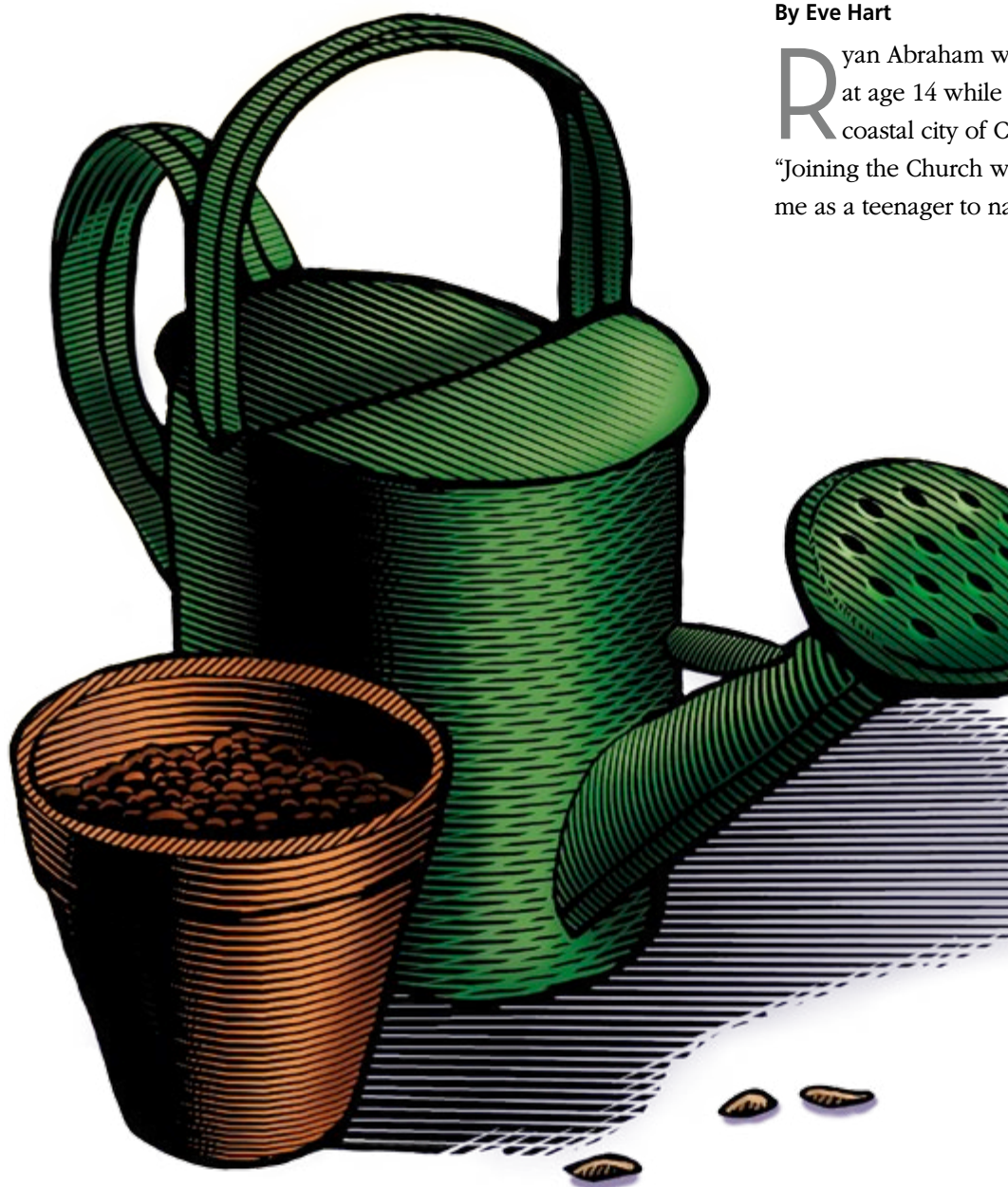


Nurturing

OUR NEW LIVES

By Eve Hart

Ryan Abraham was baptized into the Church at age 14 while living in the mountainous coastal city of Cape Town, South Africa. “Joining the Church was a great blessing—it helped me as a teenager to navigate those years,” he



THE SEED OF FAITH

“One of the purposes of the Church is to nurture and cultivate the seed of faith—even in the sometimes sandy soil of doubt and uncertainty. Faith is to hope for things which are not seen but which are true [see Alma 32:21].

“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters—my dear friends—please, first doubt your doubts before you doubt your faith.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Come, Join with Us,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 21.

explains. “But after I joined the Church, I learned that you don’t just change where you go to church; you change your life.”

Ryan’s journey has been much like other converts’ journeys: he believed in the truthfulness of the gospel but faced the difficult task of transitioning into a new culture with new expectations. “Sometimes I found myself asking, ‘Can I really do this?’” Ryan says. “But when we live what we know, more knowledge and strength will come. The Lord will make of us what we could never make of ourselves.”

This article is a compilation of converts’ testimonies and experiences. We hope you will find among these seven topics the encouragement you need to stay involved in the Church and nurture your new faith until it can “get root, and grow up, and bring forth fruit” (Alma 32:37).

Overcoming Trials

When we live by the light of the restored gospel, we can endure the turbulence of our mortal existence and live with God again. Our Heavenly Father is waiting to say to us, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21). That is His promise, and He will certainly fulfill it if we do our part.

Elson Carlos Ferreira, baptized in Brazil in 1982

Whenever you feel as if you are the only one who has struggles, you can stop and think about what Christ did for you and how He suffered for you. He will always be there to help us find out who we are and what we are meant to be. He knows us better than we know ourselves.

Mikiko O’Bannon, baptized in Japan in 1993

Working on the Basics

I haven’t done anything extraordinary to remain faithful in the Church. I haven’t walked 50 miles (80 km) to get to sacrament meeting or been thrown into a fiery furnace. But consistently doing simple things—attending Church meetings, studying the scriptures, praying, and serving in callings—has helped me nourish my testimony (see Alma 37:6–7).

Alcenir de Souza, baptized in Brazil in 1991

When I first joined the Church at age 19, I was excited about the gospel, and reading my scriptures daily was an amazing adventure.

However, after some years of membership in the Church, I felt tired physically and spiritually. I dragged myself to church each Sunday, getting little out of the meetings and feeling keen to return home for my Sunday nap.

A conversation with a friend shed some light on my situation. I took inventory of my spiritual habits, and I realized that my prayers had become insincere, and reading the scriptures every morning was a chore—not a pleasure. I realized I needed to add some spiritual nourishment and exercise to my day.

I started praying every morning before reading the scriptures, asking specifically that I would be guided and directed in my study. I worked part-time and had a 15-minute break in the morning that I used to read a few pages of the *Ensign*—my spirit’s midday snack. In the evenings I read uplifting books. On Sundays I read the *Teachings of Presidents of the Church* manual.

Each night as I went to bed, I felt peaceful because I had satisfied my spiritual hunger throughout the day. Because I decided to follow a spiritual regimen every day, I’ve become a more positive person and my testimony has grown.

Tess Hocking, baptized in California, USA, in 1976

Going to the Temple

From the first time I learned about the temple, I really wanted to go there. I learned that the temple is a place where we can perform baptisms for the dead, be sealed as families, and make higher covenants with Heavenly Father. I have prepared myself and kept myself worthy so that I can go to the temple.

Yashinta Wulandari, baptized in Indonesia in 2012

After I got baptized, my boyfriend, JP (who was already a member of the Church), and I planned to get married, but we delayed our wedding day because I wanted to have a big celebration.

On Tuesday, January 12, 2010, my fiancé and I went to school to attend our classes. As I sat at my computer waiting for the professor to start class, the building started to shake. I didn't dare run outside because the shaking was so terrible.

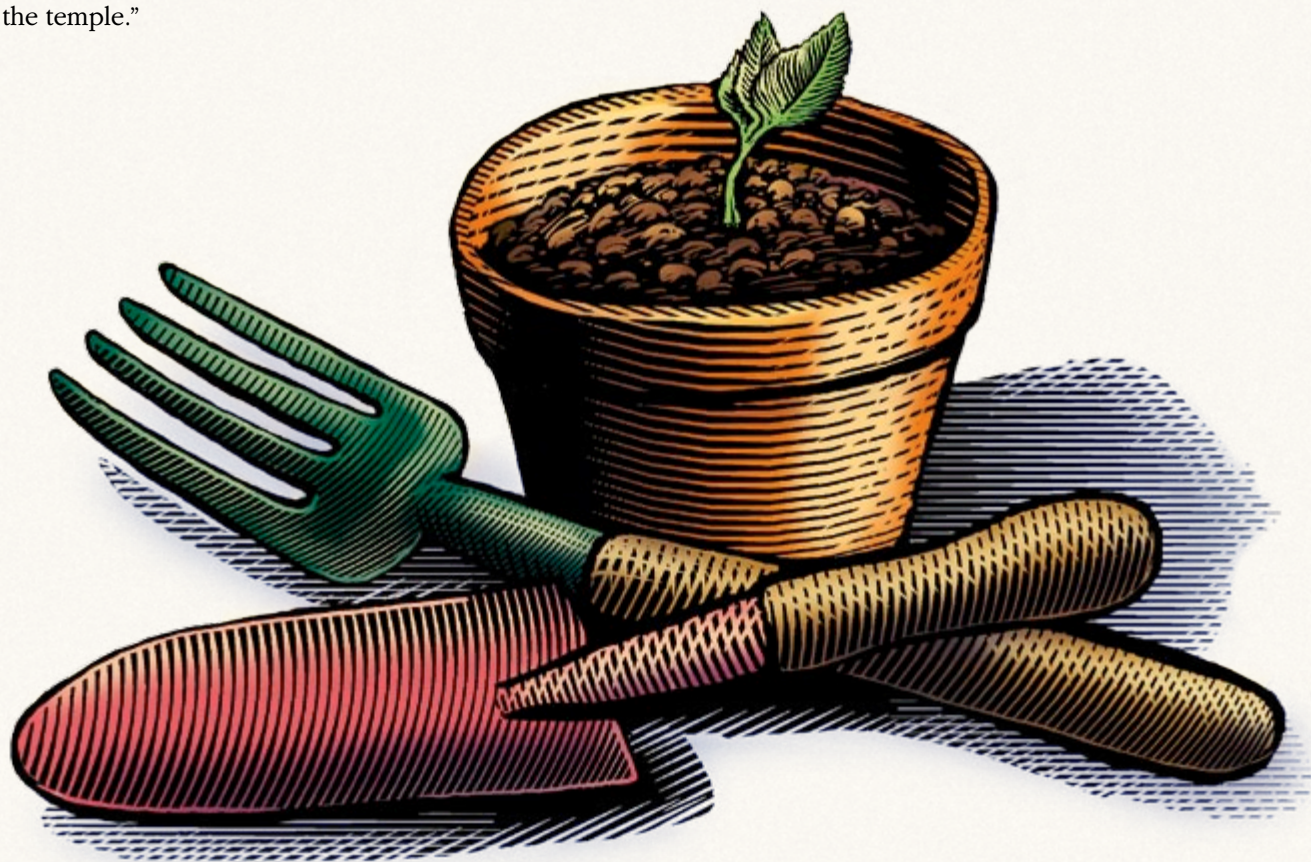
I stood in a corner and closed my eyes, praying to Heavenly Father in my heart: "Please give me a chance to marry JP in the temple."

Moments later, the shaking stopped and I looked around. I couldn't see anything because dust was raining down. I cannot remember how I got out of the room, but I eventually found myself outside. With tears in my eyes, I started screaming JP's name.

I soon found JP's sister. "He is OK!" she shouted. "He's trying to help some students who are stuck under the rubble."

I am not more special than others who were unable to escape, but I know that Heavenly Father answered my prayer. JP and I were married in the temple on April 6, 2010, a little more than a year after my baptism and almost three months after the earthquake. It was a day of peace and joy that I will never forget. We didn't have a big party, but it was the most wonderful thing to me.

Marie Marjorie Labbe, baptized in Haiti in 2009





Sharing the Gospel

As a new member of the Church, I love missionary work. Everyone can be a missionary. Every time you share the gospel with someone, it changes his or her life, but it also helps you strengthen your testimony. People can see the light in your eyes, and they will want to know why you have such an amazing spirit. Doing missionary work not only gives people a chance to learn about the Church but also helps them feel the Spirit and have personal spiritual experiences.

Elena Hunt, baptized in Arizona, USA, in 2008

I love missionary work! Three months after my baptism, I traveled to Martinique to spend time with my family for summer break. I spoke to my brother every day about the Book of Mormon and the gospel.

I invited him to church the first Sunday, but he declined. The second Sunday, he followed me to church. At the end of the meetings, he was mostly indifferent, as if he hadn't experienced anything special during those three hours.

Even though I continued to speak to him about the gospel the following week, I didn't invite him to come to church this time.

A miracle happened Saturday evening: while ironing my Sunday clothes for the next day, I noticed he was doing the same thing.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

He answered, "I'm going to church with you tomorrow."

"I'm not forcing you to come," I said.

But he responded, "I want to come."

He continued coming to church each Sunday after that.

After I returned to southern France, where I was going to school, my brother told me over the telephone that he was going to be baptized. I told him I would like to be present at his baptism but that the most important thing was that he would still be in the Church when I returned to Martinique.

One year later, I visited again. During sacrament meeting, my brother testified with great strength of the truth of the gospel. I shed tears when I think that my brother, with whom I have shared the most beautiful moments of my life, can also share with me the gospel of our Lord (see Alma 26:11–16).

Ludovic Christophe Occolier, baptized in France in 2004

To learn more about how you can share the gospel with your friends and family, consider reading the following: Elder M. Russell Ballard, "Put Your Trust in the Lord," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 43; Elder Neil L. Andersen, "It's A Miracle," *Ensign*, May 2013, 77; Elder Dallin H. Oaks, "Sharing the Gospel," *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 7. See also www.lds.org/training/wwlt/2013/hastening.

FIRST-TIME FAMILY HISTORIAN?

You can extend the joy you felt at your baptism to others by working on your family history and helping your ancestors come unto Christ. FamilySearch.org is a great place to start. You can build your family tree by adding family members with their birth and death dates. Family history consultants in your ward or branch can help you find your ancestors and their information, including censuses and marriage certificates. As you collect information, you and others can perform temple ordinances for your deceased relatives.

Doing Family History Work

After I received the missionary lessons, I prayed to know whether the gospel was true. My beloved grandfather came to me in a dream and testified of its truth. At this point, I began to understand my divine obligation to my ancestors. President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, said it this way: “When you were baptized, your ancestors looked down on you with hope. Perhaps after centuries, they rejoiced to see one of their descendants make a covenant to find them and to offer them freedom. . . . Their hearts are bound to you. Their hope is in your hands.”¹

Steven E. Nabor, baptized in Utah, USA, in 1979

My wife, Laura, and I were heartbroken when our first child, our four-month-old daughter, Cynthia Marie, died because of complications with spina bifida. This tragedy caused us, two grieving young parents, to search for a way to be with our daughter again someday. We were not members of the Church at the time.

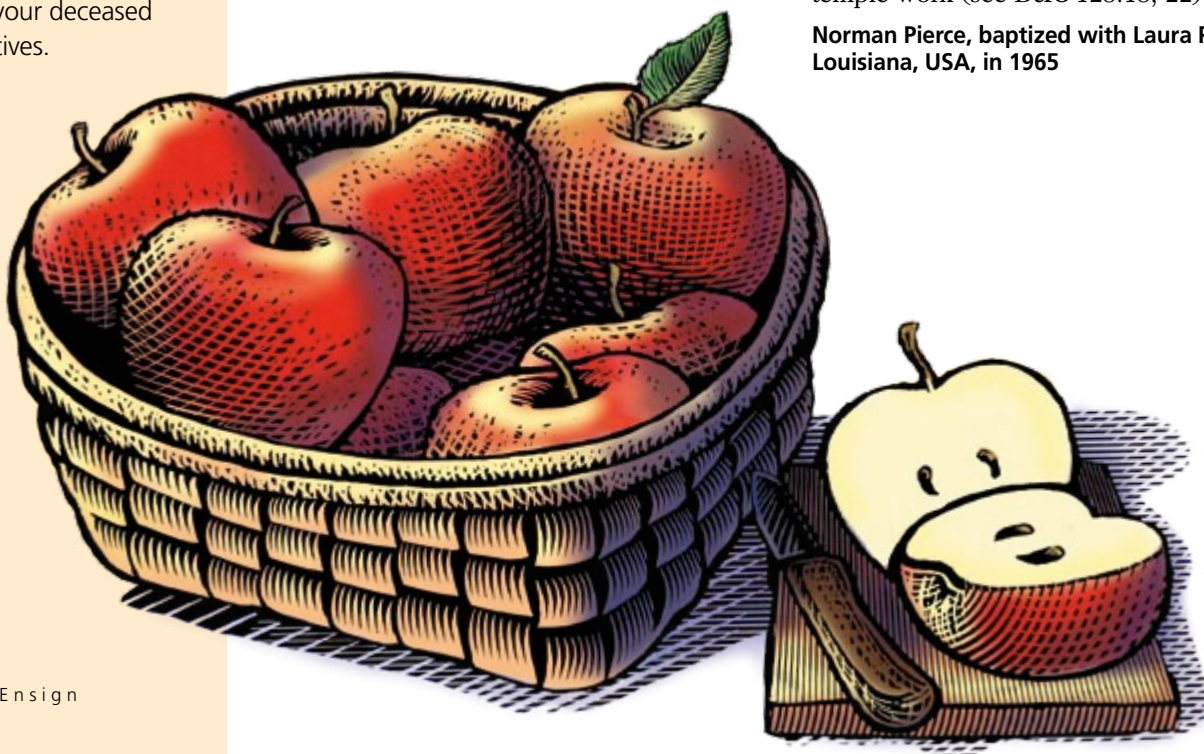
One morning Laura poured out her heart to Heavenly Father, pleading, “Dear Father, I want to be with my daughter again someday, but I don’t know how. Please show me how.”

At that moment there was a knock on our door. Laura went to answer it with tears still streaming down her face. There stood two missionaries. Eventually, Laura and I both gained a testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and were baptized.

Laura wanted to make sure that all our family members had the chance to receive the gospel. For the first 15 years after our baptism, Laura prepared names for the temple, and then we took them to the temple together. After a while Laura’s arthritis got so bad that I took the names to the temple unaccompanied.

Laura passed away three years ago after a long battle with arthritis. Searching for a way to be with our little girl has brought about the temple work of thousands of our beloved ancestors. We have experienced many miracles while doing family history research and temple work (see D&C 128:18, 22).

Norman Pierce, baptized with Laura Pierce in Louisiana, USA, in 1965



Participating during Church Meetings

Praying at church, commenting during lessons, and speaking in sacrament meeting bless both you and those listening. When you speak in the name of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit works through you. Heavenly Father not only speaks through the scriptures and prophets and apostles but also speaks through you in order to answer someone's questions, strengthen someone's weaknesses, or ease someone's doubts.

When the bishop asked me to share my testimony in the sacrament meeting after my baptism, I felt scared and inadequate. I had never spoken in front of a congregation.

"Is this really necessary?" I asked the bishop.

"Yes!" he said.

In sacrament meeting, I testified about how Heavenly Father loves me and how He answered my prayers by helping me find the restored gospel. When I stood at the podium, I felt the Holy Spirit so strongly. I felt blessed to

be a member of Christ's true Church. My heart was full of happiness and peace. Heavenly Father turned my fear of speaking into a beautiful experience.

The next month I had the opportunity to give a talk in sacrament meeting. I felt scared again—who was I to teach those who knew more about the gospel? But I prayed for the Holy Spirit to help me speak. Once again I felt the Spirit touch me, and I received the impression that Heavenly Father was pleased with my baptism and that my sins were forgiven.

I know from my experiences that I am a precious child of God and He loves me. Speaking in sacrament meeting was a valuable opportunity for me to serve God by testifying that Jesus Christ has restored His Church upon the earth.

Pamella Sari, baptized in Indonesia in 2012

Serving in the Church

A Church calling helps you learn the gospel and gives you a responsibility that will get you to church and help you to serve others, even when you are struggling.

Su'e Tervola, baptized in Hawaii, USA, in 2008

Visiting teaching and home teaching provide opportunities to feel and to see true Christlike compassion. They provide experiences in humility and love that can forever change you. As Heavenly Father's children, our services are needed to help spread acts of kindness throughout His vineyard.²

Cheryl Allen, baptized in Michigan, USA, in 1980

Soon after I was baptized, the branch president called me as the Young Men president. It was excellent to be with the youth and to help them learn about the gospel.

At the same time I was teaching, I was learning. This was the first in a series of callings that I received. With each of my responsibilities, I felt joy and pleasure for the new challenges. President Thomas S. Monson has taught: "Remember that whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies."³ I had to trust and believe with humility that I would be capable. And in less than six months as a member, I had the great opportunity to become familiar with the programs in the Church.

Germano Lopes, baptized in Brazil in 2004 ■

NOTES

1. Henry B. Eyring, "Hearts Bound Together," *Ensign*, May 2005, 80.
2. See *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 103–124; Thomas S. Monson, "Home Teaching—a Divine Service," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 46.
3. Thomas S. Monson, "Duty Calls," *Ensign*, May 1996, 44.

Sharing

What Really Mattered



By Marcy Zabriskie

As members of the Church, we talk about missionary work often. But it is exciting when we actually get to go beyond the talking and have a chance to *be* a missionary.

Such an opportunity came to me on a flight from Tokyo to Los Angeles. My friend and I were returning home to the United States from China, and we were seated next to a man named Paul. He was returning home to Los Angeles, California, USA.

With an 11-hour flight ahead of us, we introduced ourselves and started a casual conversation: who we were,

where we had been traveling, where we lived, and so on. It was the “where we lived” part that seemed to pique Paul’s curiosity.

When he discovered that both my friend and I lived in Utah, within minutes of Brigham Young University, he immediately asked if we were Mormon. Our response was an enthusiastic “Yes!” He was surprised to learn that both my friend and I had grown up far away from Utah—she in Oregon and I in Texas and Pennsylvania.

Apparently he didn’t know that members of the Church existed beyond the borders of Utah. We assured him that it was quite common.

He then asked, “Are you Christians?” We quickly said that we were. We told Paul that the name of the Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, should be solid proof that we are, indeed, Christians. After a lengthy discussion about how many of our beliefs were similar to other Christian denominations, my friend and I leaned back in our seats, satisfied that we had enjoyed a successful missionary moment.

Knowing that lunch would be served soon, I got up to stretch my legs. It was then that I thought that what we had shared with Paul, though nice, was not all that we needed to share. We were so worried about making sure he knew the *similarities* between our Church and others that we spent the time convincing him that Latter-day Saints were not so different. I had completely neglected to tell him what makes our Church so extraordinarily different. As I returned to my seat, I resolved to finish our discussion as it should have been finished.

I sat down, leaned over my friend (who was in the middle seat), and said, “Paul, there are a couple of other things you should know. Jesus Christ is most certainly my Lord and Savior, and He is the very center of the church we belong to. However, I neglected to tell you some other important details.” I’m sure at that moment my friend was wondering what on earth I was doing. After all, hadn’t we just successfully cleared up any misconceptions he had about our beliefs? I myself wondered if I would sink or swim in my efforts to tell Paul more about the gospel.

We talked about Joseph Smith and the First Vision. We

discussed the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the priesthood, and other important teachings of the gospel. Paul was aware of many rumors relating to our doctrine. Our conversation served as a means to clear up some of his misconceptions. As we talked, I silently uttered a prayer that we could say the right things. It was a great experience to discuss the fundamental aspects of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—the parts that make

our beliefs so unique. It felt good to share not only my love for the Savior but also my testimony of the Restoration of His gospel. As frightening as it seemed at moments, sharing the gospel with Paul was tremendously rewarding.

A couple of hours later, our discussion started to lose some steam. The three of us were tired, and the lights on the plane had dimmed. Before I reclined my seat in hopes of catching some sleep, I asked, “Could I send you a Book of Mormon?” I silently prayed that Paul’s answer would be yes—and it was. I don’t think I had felt that excited about sharing the gospel with someone since my mission nearly 20 years earlier.

Since that day on the plane, I have sent the Book of Mormon to Paul. What I learned from that missionary experience is that it is the Restoration of the gospel and all that it encompasses that makes The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints so extraordinarily different. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

Gospel sharing can be a natural part of your life. See November 2013 Ensign: S. Gifford Nielsen, p. 33; Arnulfo Valenzuela, p. 35; M. Russell Ballard, p. 43.

*I realized it
wasn't enough to
explain the similarities
between our Church
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narily different.*



By Elder Ian S. Ardern
Of the Seventy

*As we shun temptation
and choose the better
way, we will feel the
loving arm of the Lord
bearing us up, and His
Spirit will fill our hearts
with peace and joy.*

Shunning

A Key to Receiving Revelation

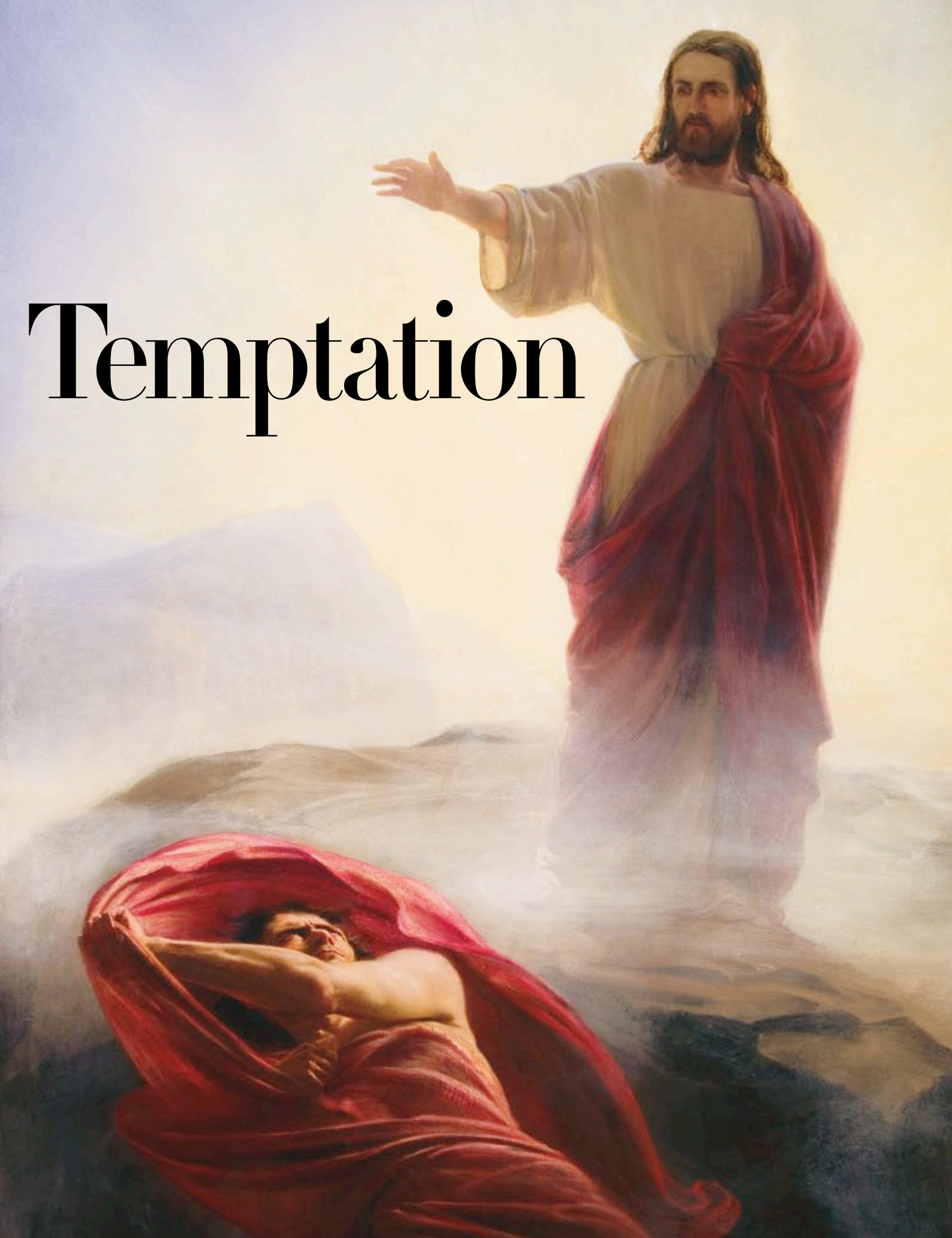
In this world of increasing turmoil, keeping ourselves worthy of receiving revelation is of utmost importance.

For many of us, a barrier to revelation is being unwilling to truly repent of “small things” the Spirit cannot tolerate. The so-called “small things” include watching inappropriate movies, being immodest in dress and action, harboring unworthy thoughts, disregarding the teachings of the prophets, and doing what the Spirit warns us to avoid.

An increase in worthiness and spirituality brings an increase in revelation. Nephi understood this and used the counsel of the Lord to remind his two wayward brothers about the process of revelation: “If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you” (1 Nephi 15:11).

This verse gives us a four-part formula for receiving revelation: softening our hearts, asking with faith in Christ, believing that we will receive, and keeping the commandments. Not all revelation comes immediately or as clearly as we may want, but it does come. The receipt of revelation depends on our faithfulness, but the clarity of revelation depends on our listening skills. Learn to listen for it, learn to feel it, learn to recognize how it comes to you, act upon it, and be grateful for it.

We must decide deep down inside that we want to be better and then act upon that desire so the waters of revelation can run freely. Even with the best desires, we are tempted to stray from the path of righteousness—that is part of mortality, for we are here to be tested and “tried in all things” (D&C 136:31; see also 2 Nephi 2:11).



Temptation

The Savior Himself faced temptation in the wilderness as He prepared for His mission (see Matthew 4:1–11). In His response to that temptation, He taught seven valuable lessons we can apply in our own lives that will enable us to remain worthy of divine communication.

Seven Lessons from the Savior

1. Recognize that Satan is the source of temptation. All that is good comes of God, and we should give thanks for it (see Moroni 7:12; D&C 46:32). All that is wicked comes from Satan, and we should recognize it and shun it.

In many sports there is a shroud of secrecy over the tactics of opposing teams, especially just before a game. In the final practice, cameras are banned, reporters are locked out, and gates are closed in an attempt to keep the team's plans from the opposition.

To know the plans of our opponent is to have an advantage. We have that advantage because we know that Satan's plan is "that all men might be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27). We can, with the Savior, rebuff the devil and dismiss him with the command, "Get thee hence, Satan" (Matthew 4:10).

2. The Savior immediately dismissed temptation. President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) taught: "Our accountability begins with how we handle the evil thought immediately after it is presented. Like Jesus, we should positively and promptly terminate the temptation."¹ Modern scripture reinforces the truth that Christ "suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them" (D&C 20:22).

Some of us do exactly opposite of what the Savior did. We entertain the temptation momentarily for just a glimpse or taste or puff or kiss that is allowed to linger longer than it should, and then the temptation gets stronger and our ability to withstand it gets weaker. Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, "If we entertain temptations, soon they begin entertaining us!"²

Remember that Satan's cunning plan is designed to lead us carefully down to hell (see 2 Nephi 9:28; 28:21). We must not fall into the trap of thinking we can sin just a little and it will not matter, for "the Lord cannot look upon sin with the



In many sports there is a shroud of secrecy over the tactics of opposing teams, especially just before a game. To know the plans of our opponent is to have an advantage. We have that advantage because we know that Satan's plan is "that all men might be miserable like unto himself."

least degree of allowance" (D&C 1:31; Alma 45:16).

3. Jesus took strength from the scriptures as a means of shunning temptation. Clearly the Savior was well versed in the scriptures, which allowed Him to use them to counter Satan's temptations (see Matthew 4:4, 7, 10).

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught: "Great power can come from memorizing scriptures. To memorize a scripture is to forge a new friendship. It is like discovering a new individual who can help in time of need, give inspiration and comfort, and be a source of motivation for needed change."³

Nephi taught that "whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them" (1 Nephi 15:24).

4. From the Joseph Smith Translation, we know that Jesus did not go into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, as portrayed in the King James Version, for the righteous seek no temptation. Rather, "Jesus was led up of the Spirit, into the wilderness, *to be with God*" (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 4:1; emphasis added).

The lesson is simple: when we are trying to lose weight, we stay away from the bakery. We should never put ourselves at risk by courting temptation. The road to temptation is clearly signposted, and we ignore the signs at our peril.

5. Satan tempts us at our weakest point. After the Savior had fasted 40 days and 40 nights and "was afterward an hungred," Satan, seizing the moment, said, "Command that these stones be made bread" (Matthew 4:2–3).

Satan seeks to tempt us when we are feeling weak and at what he perceives to be our weakest points. He will pick away at them in the hope that we will succumb.

We all have weak points, and mortality is our opportunity to make weak things strong. President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) declared: “The most important of all the commandments of God is that one that you’re having the most difficulty keeping today. If it’s one of dishonesty, if it’s one of unchastity, . . . today is the day for you to work on that until you’ve been able to conquer that weakness. Then you start on the next one that’s most difficult for you to keep.”⁴

To make a Book of Mormon analogy, Captain Moroni fortified the Nephite lands at their weakest points (see Alma 48:8–9; 49:13–15). We must do likewise in our lives against the temptations of Satan. Nobody knows our weak points better than the person looking back at us in the mirror.

6. The sixth lesson we learn is that of obedience. Jesus was tempted, but he instantly relied on His earlier decision to obey all the commandments of God and could not be persuaded to drift from that decision. The Savior focused on doing the will of the Father, and so must we.

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, taught, “When obedience becomes our goal, it is no longer an irritation; instead of a stumbling block, it becomes a building block.”⁵

Before temptation comes, decide to always obey the commandments and the teachings of the prophets, and you will find you have an increase of power to withstand temptation.

7. The final insight comes from the observation that Christ was tempted three times in quick succession. The lesson is that Satan will not give up taunting and tempting us; therefore, we must forever be on our guard “against all the fiery darts of the adversary” (D&C 3:8).

Power in the Atonement of Jesus Christ

On those occasions that you think the temptations are too great, remember that Paul taught, “[God] will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Take added strength from knowing that the enabling

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Why is learning to receive revelation important?

“Each of us must stay in condition to respond to inspiration and the promptings of the Holy Ghost. The Lord has a way of pouring pure intelligence into our minds to prompt us, to guide us, to teach us, and to warn us. Each son or daughter of God can know the things they need to know instantly. Learn to receive and act on inspiration and revelation.”

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “These Things I Know,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 8.

power of the Atonement, which comes through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, is a divine means to help us resist temptation. We can take comfort from Paul’s letter to the Hebrews: “For in that [Jesus] himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2:18).

Regretfully, we sometimes succumb to temptation, but be reassured that there is a way back. The journey is not easy, but it is worth the effort, for the Lord promises, “He who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more” (D&C 58:42).

After the Savior had shunned temptation, “angels came and ministered unto him” (Matthew 4:11). I testify that as we shun temptation and choose the better way, we will feel the loving arm of the Lord bearing us up, and His Spirit will fill our hearts with peace and joy. ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University–Hawaii on September 25, 2012. For the full address, visit devotional.byuh.edu/archive.

NOTES

1. Ezra Taft Benson, “Think on Christ,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1984, 11.
2. Neal A. Maxwell, “Overcome . . . Even as I Also Overcame,” *Ensign*, May 1987, 71.
3. Richard G. Scott, “The Power of Scripture,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 6.
4. Harold B. Lee, in Ken Clements, “Californians Hear Pres. Lee,” *Church News*, May 5, 1973, 3.
5. James E. Faust, “Obedience: The Path to Freedom,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 47.



“That Vast Empire”

THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH IN RUSSIA

Russian Latter-day Saints have built on a foundation of prophecy to establish the Church in their country.

By James A. Miller

Church History Department

Latter-day Saints in Russia reached an important milestone in 2011 as their country’s first stake was created in Moscow. More than a thousand Church members, missionaries, and friends excitedly gathered together to sustain their new leaders and express their gratitude that their nation’s capital would take its place among the stakes of Zion spread across the globe. Anticipation grew as Yakov Boyko was called and sustained as stake president with Vladimir Astashov and Viktor Kremenchuk as his counselors.

A wave of emotion swept over the congregation as Vyacheslav Protopopov was presented as the stake patriarch, the first native Russian patriarch in Russia. Hands shot up in the air as his name was read for a sustaining vote, and some almost started clapping for joy. For the first time, Russian priesthood leaders received the keys and authority that Latter-day Saints in stakes elsewhere in the world enjoy. A new chapter in Russian Church history began as the leadership of the Church in Moscow was now firmly in Russian hands.

Prophecy

The path to this significant day in Russian Church history traces back to the early days of the Restoration. In 1843 the Prophet Joseph Smith called Elder Orson Hyde of the

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and George J. Adams on a mission to Russia “to introduce the fullness of the Gospel to the people of that vast empire, and [to this] is attached some of the most important things concerning the advancement and building up of the kingdom of God in the last days, which cannot be explained at this time.”¹ However, the Prophet’s Martyrdom in 1844 interrupted plans to complete the mission, and the Prophet’s plans regarding the gospel destiny of “that vast empire” remained unfulfilled.²

Preparation

Still, in the 168 years between that first mission call and the creation of the first stake in Russia, Latter-day Saints from different backgrounds helped prepare the way to share the gospel with the people of Russia. In 1895, Swedish missionary August Höglund arrived in St. Petersburg to teach Johan Lindlöf, who had corresponded with the Scandinavian Mission and asked for missionaries after learning about the Church in his native Finland. Two days after meeting Elder Höglund and talking with him through the night, Johan and his wife, Alma, asked to be baptized. On June 11, 1895, Elder Höglund accompanied them to the banks of the Neva River. Unable to find a quiet, secluded location for the baptism, the group knelt in prayer to ask for the Lord’s help. Miraculously the boats and people began to leave



Depiction by a Russian artist of Elder Francis M. Lyman's 1903 dedicatory prayer in the Summer Garden in St. Petersburg.

the area. After the baptism, Sister Lindlöf said, “I feel so happy! I know that the Lord has forgiven me.”³ Johan and Alma thus became the first converts to be baptized in Russia.

Several years later, encouraged by the Lindlöfs’ conversion and social reforms planned by the Russian government, Elder Francis M. Lyman (1840–1916) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles initiated plans to send missionaries to the Russian Empire. In 1903, while serving as president of the European Mission, Elder Lyman traveled to the Russian Empire and dedicated the land for the preaching of the gospel. He offered prayers in St. Petersburg and in Moscow on August 6 and 9, asking the Lord to bless the rulers of the land and the many peoples of the empire, “in whose veins the blood of Israel flows generously.”⁴ He also prayed that “the hearts of the sincere and honest might be turned to seek for the truth, and petitioned the Lord to send servants full of wisdom and faith to declare the Gospel to the Russians in their own language.”⁵

Elder Lyman sent missionary Mikhail Markov to Riga, Latvia—then part of the Russian Empire—and wrote to Church headquarters expressing his hope to call missionaries to Russia soon. Church leaders in Salt Lake City, however, felt that more careful consideration was needed before sending missionaries to Russia, where it was illegal

to preach anything that contradicted Russian orthodoxy. Brother Markov soon left Riga at the order of local officials.⁶ Eventually, social and political tensions in Russia, exacerbated by the strain of World War I, led to a series of revolutions and a civil war that engulfed Russia in violence. The formation of the Soviet Union and the eventual Cold War made any further attempt to send missionaries to Russia impossible.

However, even during the Soviet period, Latter-day Saints continued the preparation to introduce the restored gospel in Russia. One such individual was Andre Anastasion, an emigrant from Odessa, Ukraine, who began translating the Book of Mormon into Russian after his baptism in 1918. After visiting Moscow in 1970, Andre wrote, “Twice in the night I stood on Red Square and implored the Lord to open the way for the Gospel to be taken to the Russian people, whom I saw everywhere moving in masses, poorly clad, sombre, with heads down.”⁷ The first edition of the Russian Book of Mormon, based largely on Andre’s work, was published in 1981. In time, many Russians would accept the message of the Book of Mormon, becoming pioneers in their own land to help fulfill the hopes and prayers of others on their behalf.

Pioneers

In 1989, Yuri and Liudmila Terebenin of St. Petersburg (then called Leningrad) and their daughter, Anna, were visiting friends in Budapest, Hungary. A Latter-day Saint friend invited them to church, where they felt the Spirit and decided to meet with the missionaries. They were eventually baptized. Though initially the only members of the Church in St. Petersburg, the Terebenins were not left alone for long. Members of the Church from Finland were already sharing the gospel with Russians, including Anton Skripko, who became the first Russian baptized in Russia.

At the time, Russia was experiencing political change, and Americans living and working in Moscow began to reach out to their Russian friends and acquaintances. Dohn Thornton met Galina Goncharova in 1989, and religion became a topic of discussion between them. Brother Thornton later recalled,

“As I gave [Galina] the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith pamphlet, the most incredible thing happened. It was [as] if all the light in the room at that moment focused on the book. The Spirit came over us and [she] started to cry.”⁸ Galina told him that she felt the book was from God. She began attending church and was baptized in June 1990, becoming the first convert baptized in Moscow.

As Russians from St. Petersburg, Vyborg, Moscow, and other cities joined the Church, a new chapter opened in the history of the Church in Russia. On April 26, 1990, Elder

his Son Jesus Christ, and each of us will be resurrected.”⁹ In June, Vyacheslav, Galina (his wife), and Tamara were baptized. From 1995 to 1998, Brother Efimov served as Russia’s first native mission president.

Growth

Led by leaders of “wisdom and faith,” in fulfillment of Elder Lyman’s 1903 dedicatory prayers, the Church grew steadily after missionaries entered Russia in early 1990. Faithful Russians accepted the responsibility to serve their friends and neighbors. As

1843: Joseph Smith calls missionaries to take the gospel to Russia. His martyrdom in 1844 interrupts these plans.



1903: Elder Francis M. Lyman of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles dedicates the Russian Empire for the preaching of the gospel.

1917: The Bolsheviks topple the Provisional Government that followed the abdication of the tsar, sparking the 1917–22 Russian Civil War.



1922: The Soviet Union is formally organized.

Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve offered a prayer of rededication for Russia in St. Petersburg, reaffirming the dedication that Elder Lyman performed nearly a century earlier and asking the Lord to extend the blessings of the gospel to the people.

Also in the spring of 1990, Tamara Efimova of St. Petersburg brought the missionaries to her home after meeting them at a friend’s home. Her father, Vyacheslav Efimov, was skeptical at first that these young men could teach him anything new about God. However, he became impressed by their gospel message. He wrote: “[It] gave me the opportunity to receive answers to my own questions and, most important, to understand that God loves each of us—we are his children and he has given us a Savior,

districts were established in many cities, leaders such as Fidrus Khasbiulin instructed, inspired, and supported the Saints. Brother Khasbiulin, who joined the Church in 1994, served as the first branch president in Rostov-na-Donu, from 1995 to 1997, when he was called as president of the Rostov Russia District. As district president, he emphasized strengthening families and took a special interest in serving the youth, helping them prepare to serve missions and eventually marry in the temple.¹⁰

Temples

Russian Latter-day Saints did not let the lack of a temple in their own country prevent them from participating in the ordinances of the house of the Lord. For more

PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE CHURCH IN RUSSIA



1930:
“I bear witness that there are

thousands of the blood of Israel in that land [Russia], and God is preparing the way for them.” —Elder Melvin J. Ballard (1873–1939) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles¹⁵



1995:
“You meet where you can now,

but you will live to see chapels and stakes. You will see a temple in the Lord’s time.” —President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles¹⁶



than 15 years, the nearest temples were the Stockholm Sweden and Freiberg Germany Temples, although members in the Russian Far East continue to attend the Seoul Korea Temple. Difficulties with visas, long distances, and cost of travel made temple attendance no frequent experience.

In December 1991, the family of Andrei and Marina Semionov of Vyborg became the first Russian family to be sealed in the temple. Brother Semionov said, “A special joy came into our lives after we were sealed for eternity in the Stockholm Sweden Temple.”¹¹ For several years

she recalled. “They were small testimonies received individually by each person. But as a whole they helped us and gave momentum for further spiritual growth.”¹²

Eventually, a temple came closer to Russia when President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) dedicated the Helsinki Finland Temple in 2006. Then in 2010, Latter-day Saints throughout Russia rejoiced as President Thomas S. Monson dedicated the Kyiv Ukraine Temple, the first in the former Soviet Union, making temple blessings more accessible to faithful Russian Latter-day Saints.



1981: *The Book of Mormon* is published in Russian.



1991: *The Mormon Tabernacle Choir visits the Soviet Union. After their concert, the Russian authorities announce that the Church received national recognition on May 28.*

1991: *In December the Soviet Union officially dissolves, and the Russian Republic becomes the Russian Federation.*



he accompanied every group from Russia that attended the temple in Sweden.

Later, mission leaders began organizing groups to make the trip. The first such group from Moscow traveled to Stockholm in September 1993. These visits to the temple became highlights of devotion for Russian members across the country.

The Vershinin family from Nizhniy Novgorod first visited the Stockholm Sweden Temple in 2000. After traveling to St. Petersburg, Sergey, Vera, and their daughter, Irina, joined a group of Russian Latter-day Saints from various cities and traveled by bus and ferry to reach the temple. At the temple, Irina participated in baptisms for the dead and was sealed to her parents. “The trip gave us testimonies and many blessings,”



Russian Latter-day Saints, organized as “Mormon Helping Hands,” help clean up the grounds of a school and lake near Moscow in 2013.

A Russian Church

The dedication of the temple in Ukraine strengthened the hopes of Russian members for the future of the Church in their country. After the dedication, Vladimir Kabanovy from Moscow said that “the Church will continue to grow—I envision the stakes of Zion here [in Russia].”¹³ Less than a year later, that vision became reality when Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles organized the Moscow Russia Stake. The next year, in September 2012, Elder Nelson organized a second stake, in St. Petersburg.

While these moments represented the culmination of 20 years of pioneering service and progress by the Russian Latter-day Saints, this is only the beginning of a new chapter

GROWTH IN MEMBERSHIP

1989: 20

1998: 9,179

2008: 19,946

2013: 21,888



CHURCH STATISTICS FOR RUSSIA*

Stakes: 2

Districts: 3

Wards and

Branches: 98

Missions: 7

Nearest Temples:

Kyiv Ukraine,

Helsinki

Finland, and

Seoul Korea

*As of June 2013



2002: In September, President Gordon B. Hinckley becomes the first President of the Church to visit Russia.



2008: Anatoly Reshetnikov is called as the first native Russian Area Seventy.

2011: On June 5, the Moscow Russia Stake, the first stake in Russia, is organized.



2012: On September 9, the St. Petersburg Russia Stake is organized.

in the history of the Church in their country. After visiting in June 2012 with the Saints in the Europe East Area (which includes Russia), Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles bore witness that the Lord is guiding His work there: “His Spirit is brooding over this area. We will see things that we would never have supposed.”¹⁴ As Russian Latter-day Saint pioneers continue their service, live and embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, and focus on the temple, additional stakes will form and the Church will continue to progress in their country. Perhaps we are seeing the fulfillment of what the Prophet Joseph Smith envisioned for the Latter-day kingdom of God in this vast empire. ■

NOTES

1. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 6:41. It is unclear what “important things” the Prophet was referring to “which cannot be explained at this time”; he could have been referring to Russia itself, to the mission, or to the missionaries’ message.
2. George J. Adams chose not to accept the leadership of Brigham Young as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles following Joseph Smith’s death and left the Church.
3. August Höglund to Scandinavian Mission President, July 9, 1895,

Scandinavian Mission manuscript history, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, quoted in Kahlile Mehr, “Johan and Alma Lindlöf: Early Saints in Russia,” *Ensign*, July 1981, 23.

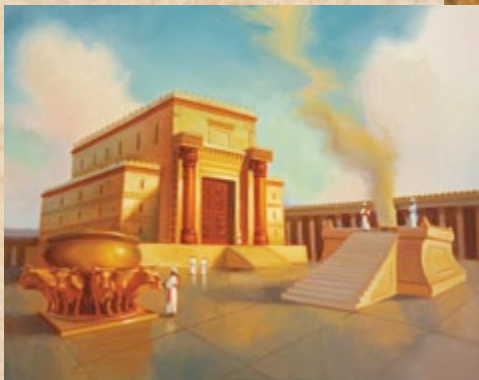
4. Joseph J. Cannon, “President Lyman’s Travels and Ministry: Praying in St. Petersburg for the Land of Russia,” *Millennial Star*, Aug. 20, 1903, 532.
5. Joseph J. Cannon, “President Lyman’s Travels and Ministry: The Visit to Moscow, the City of Churches,” *Millennial Star*, Aug. 27, 1903, 548.
6. See William Hale Kehr, “Mischa Markow: Missionary to the Balkans,” *Ensign*, June 1980, 29.
7. Andre Anastasion letter to the Council of the Twelve Apostles, Nov. 8, 1970, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
8. Dohn Thornton, “The Beginnings of the Moscow Branch,” in *Papers and Photographs Relating to the Beginning of the Church in Moscow, Russia* (1990–92), Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
9. Vyacheslav Efimov, in Gary L. Browning, *Russia and the Restored Gospel* (1997), 73.
10. See Allison Thorpe Pond, oral history of Fidirus Khabrakhmanovich Khasbiulin, Aug. 18, 2010, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
11. Andrei Semionov, in Gary Browning, “Pioneering in Russia,” *Ensign*, June 1997, 27.
12. From an interview with Irina Borodina, Mar. 6, 2013.
13. Vladimir Kabanovy, in Jason Swenson, “Russia’s First Stake a Powerful Symbol of Country’s Growth,” *Church News*, July 9, 2011, ldschurchnews.com.
14. D. Todd Christofferson, in video in “Spirit Attentive to Eastern European Pioneers,” Prophets and Apostles Speak Today, lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/spirit-attentive-to-eastern-europe-pioneers.
15. Melvin J. Ballard, in Conference Report, Apr. 1930, 157.
16. Boyd K. Packer, as recorded by Dennis B. Neuenschwander in a Church meeting in St. Petersburg, Nov. 18, 1995.

Altars in the Ancient Tabernacle and Temple

1. **The large altar of burnt offering.** In the outer courtyard, people who brought live offerings could be present, but only priests could approach this altar, which was encased in wood overlaid with brass and had horns on its raised corners.

2. **The small altar of incense.** In the Holy Place, or sanctuary, between the outer courtyard and the Holy of Holies, incense was burned at this altar, which was encased in wood overlaid with gold and had horns on its raised corners.

A third table, the table of shewbread, was in the Holy Place and could also be considered a kind of altar but is not designated as such.



Where Did Altars Come From?

Worldly scholars have different theories about why various people throughout the ancient world had altars and performed sacrifices, but they have no definitive answers. Through modern revelation, however, we learn that these sacrifices had a common origin with Adam (see Moses 5:5–8). As President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) explained:

“Undoubtedly the knowledge of this law [of sacrifice] and of other rites and ceremonies was carried by the posterity of Adam into all lands, and continued with them, more or less pure, to the flood, and through Noah . . . to those who succeeded him, spreading out into all nations and countries. . . . What wonder, then, that we should find relics of Christianity, so to speak, among the heathens and nations who know not Christ, and whose histories date back beyond the days of Moses, and even beyond the flood, independent of and apart from the records of the Bible?” (“Discourse,” *Deseret News*, Feb. 19, 1873, 36).

Bible Facts

The Hebrew word for altar comes from a verb meaning “to slaughter for sacrifice.” Another word translated as “altar” in Ezekiel 43 literally means “mountain of God.”

Altars had to be made of unhewn stones—meaning stones not cut with human tools—or of earth (see Exodus 20:24–25).

Altars were also places of refuge for fugitives (see Exodus 21:12–14; 1 Kings 1:50; 2:28).

ILLUSTRATION OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE BY SAM LAYLOR; CENTER PHOTO ILLUSTRATION FROM JISTOCK/PHOTOTHINKSTOCK; ADAM AND EVE KNEELING AT AN ALTAR BY DEL PARSON; ROCK WALL BACKGROUND BY DENISE RENEE BIRD; OTHER BACKGROUNDS © ARTBEATS

Then Will I Go unto

Before Moses, altars were sometimes built on mountains (see Genesis 12:8). When the Israelites received the law of Moses, they were told there would be only one place where people could make acceptable offerings, though it appears there were also exceptions (see Judges 6:24; 1 Samuel 7:9).

“O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me. . . .

“Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy.”

Psalms 43:3–4

TODAY'S SACRIFICIAL ALTAR



“How is it we show the Lord that we have symbolically put ourselves upon today’s sacrificial altar? . . . When we overcome

our own selfish desires and put God first in our lives and covenant to serve Him regardless of the cost, we are then living the law of sacrifice.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Law of Sacrifice,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1998, 10.

What We Can Learn

AN ALTAR IS:

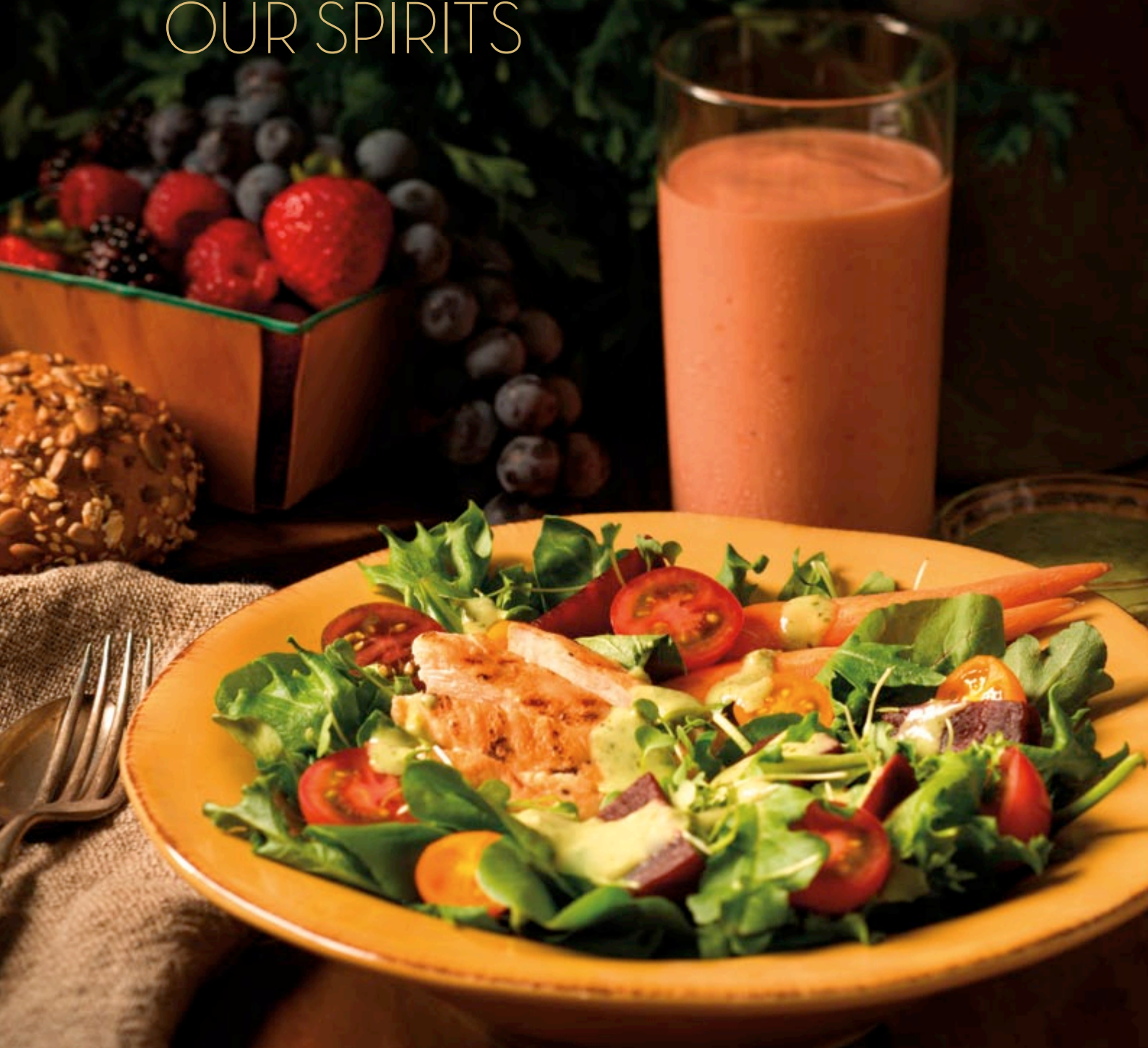
- ***Raised from the earth.*** As we draw near to God and kneel humbly before Him, he elevates us. And ancient sacrifices were “a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father” (Moses 5:7), who was “lifted up upon the cross, that [He] might draw all men unto [Him]” (3 Nephi 27:14).
- ***Built in a high and holy place.*** Today, we go to holy places to make our offerings to the Lord. At the temple we participate in exalting ordinances, and at church we partake of the sacrament.
- ***Built for sacrifice.*** Adam’s sacrifice pointed his mind to Jesus Christ (see Moses 5:5–8). By going to God’s altar, we forsake the world and “offer a sacrifice . . . of a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (D&C 59:8). We thus “observe [our] covenants” and can be “accepted of [the Lord]” (D&C 97:8).
- ***Where offerings or incense were burned.*** The smoke from burnt offerings rose into the heavens, representing our dedication to God. The incense represented people’s prayers rising up to God (see Psalm 141:2; Revelation 5:8; 8:3–4).



the ALTAR of God

Nourishing

OUR BODIES *AND*
OUR SPIRITS



OUR ATTITUDES
AND ACTIONS
RELATED TO FOOD
AFFECT BOTH OUR
PHYSICAL AND
OUR SPIRITUAL
WELL-BEING.

By Beverly Hyatt Neville

Dietitian and Health Educator

Many years ago I served a welfare services mission in rural Colombia, where we taught about health and nutrition. When we saw mothers feed their children just rice and plantains (similar to bananas), we encouraged them to include more protein foods in their diet. One mother told me kindly, “But we don’t eat those foods; it is not our custom.” Over the years, I’ve encountered similar comments while working as a dietitian, managing public health programs, and teaching in several universities. Observing widely varied eating habits has led me to focus on universal principles of nutrition and health that transcend cultural differences—principles reflected in the Word of

Wisdom as found in Doctrine and Covenants 89. Using these basic principles to guide our food choices will surely bring the blessing of physical well-being.

My experience has also taught me that our attitudes and actions related to food have an impact on our spiritual well-being. If we are watchful in our approach to eating, we will see opportunities to apply the principles of service, gratitude, and wise judgment.

Choosing Healthy Foods

When the Savior appeared as a resurrected being to His disciples on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, they were discouraged because they had caught no fish. “And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes” (John 21:6).

Making healthy food choices might be described as casting our nets on the right side of the ship. If we “fish” for healthy foods listed in the Word of Wisdom—fruits, vegetables, legumes, grains, and meats sparingly (see D&C 89:10–17)—we are selecting from those things the Lord “made to be used, with judgment” (D&C 59:20). On the other hand, looking for nourishment in unhealthy snacks, candy, and sugary beverages is like fishing on the wrong side of the ship.

THE SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL ARE LINKED

“The restored gospel teaches that there is an intimate link between body, mind, and spirit. In the Word of Wisdom, for example, the spiritual and physical are intertwined. When we follow the Lord’s law of health for our bodies, we are also promised wisdom to our spirits and knowledge to our minds (see D&C 89:19–21). The spiritual and physical truly are linked.”

Susan W. Tanner, former Young Women general president, “The Sanctity of the Body,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 15.

Providing Healthy Options

One study has shown that although religious people tend to smoke and drink less, to live longer, and to be happier than the general population, they also tend to be more overweight.¹ Those who attended church regularly were more than twice as likely to become obese. One contributing factor may be that food often plays a major role in church-sponsored social gatherings.

As Latter-day Saints, we can adjust our food choices and encourage others to observe good nutritional practices by providing healthy options. Consider the following suggestions:

- Young Men, Young Women, and Primary leaders can provide healthy foods for the refreshments as well as encourage activities that include wholesome exercise. We can have fun without overindulgence.
- Visiting teachers might go for a walk with a sister so that all can enjoy more physical activity.
- When appropriate, we can take healthy foods to those we visit.



At your next social or ward dinner, challenge yourself to remember healthy alternatives. Do a favor for those who are trying to develop healthier eating habits and make the menu both colorful and healthy. Remember that the healthiest desserts are fruits and the healthiest snacks are vegetables.

Offering Service

Each time we share a meal, we are given the opportunity to adjust our lives to be more in line with principles of the gospel.

The account of the disciples casting their nets on the right side of the ship teaches another powerful lesson: that preparing food for others can build bonds of fellowship and love. After catching their fish, the disciples came ashore, where the Savior had built a fire. The Lord provided them with some cooked fish and some bread. (See John 21:8–13.) He took the time to offer His disciples physical nourishment before He implored Peter, and by extension all of the disciples, “Feed my sheep” (John 21:16).

By preparing food for His friends, the Savior demonstrated that He cared deeply for both their spiritual and their temporal welfare. Through a simple meal, He set an example of sincere and loving service that we can follow at our own mealtimes and any time we are called to minister.

Expressing Gratitude

Mealtime also creates a regular opportunity to express gratitude. As a child, when our family said a prayer on the food, I thought we were praying to make sure the food would not make us sick. Now I realize

that asking for a blessing on our meals reminds us to be grateful for all the blessings we receive.

Similarly, fasting provides a unique opportunity to show gratitude. We learn compassion as we gain insight into the experiences of those who may suffer from hunger. We also serve those in need directly through fast offerings. Fasting and fast offerings are both a symbolic and a literal way to serve God and to help those in need.

Exercising Wise Judgment

In societies where excesses are the norm, we need to apply wise judgment and moderation. Moderation means restraint within reasonable limits and refraining from excess

(see D&C 59:20). We can exercise moderation when deciding how much and how often we need to eat and by resisting media messages that encourage unwise eating habits that can bring unwanted health risks.

Another way to show moderation is to avoid trying to fill emotional emptiness with food. Sometimes we turn to food when we are lonely,

grieving, or bored. Unfortunately, the food doesn't meet the emotional need; it is a substitute for a true solution. A better approach is to fill our emotional hunger through service to others.

Moderation doesn't mean *never* enjoying dessert; nor does it mean we must eliminate even occasional treats. It simply means we should use good judgment.

Blessings of Abundance

Since the Lord has provided us with "the good things which come of the earth" (D&C 59:17), let us nourish our bodies with good, nutritious foods. And as we partake, let us find opportunities to nourish our spirits by applying the principles of service, gratitude, and wise



ANSWERING QUESTIONS

What is the relationship between our bodies and our spirits?

We are dual beings. Each soul is comprised of body and spirit [see D&C 88:15], both of which emanate from God. A firm understanding of body and spirit will shape our thoughts and deeds for good. . . .

"Your body, whatever its natural gifts, is a magnificent creation of God. It is a tabernacle of flesh—a temple for your spirit [see 1 Corinthians 6:19]. . . .

"Development of the spirit is of eternal consequence. The attributes by which we shall be judged one day are those of the spirit. These include the virtues of integrity, compassion, love, and more. Your spirit, by being housed in your body, is able to develop and express these attributes in ways that are vital to your eternal progression [see 2 Nephi 2:11–16, 21–26; Moroni 10:33–34].

"Spirit and body, when joined together, become a living soul of supernal worth. Indeed, we are children of God—physically and spiritually."

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "We Are Children of God," *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 85, 86.

judgment. As we offer food with love, receive it with thanksgiving, enjoy it in moderation, and use it with judgment, great blessings of abundance, physical as well as spiritual, will be ours (see D&C 59:15–19). ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTE

1. See Matthew Feinstein, Kiang Liu, Hongyan Ning, George Fitchett, and Donald M. Lloyd-Jones, "Incident Obesity and Cardiovascular Risk Factors between Young Adulthood and Middle Age by Religious Involvement: The Coronary Artery Risk Development in Young Adults (CARDIA) Study," *Preventive Medicine*, vol. 54, no. 2 (February 2012), 117–21.

THE LORD SET
AN EXAMPLE
OF SINCERE
AND LOVING
SERVICE THAT
WE CAN
FOLLOW.

A Principle WITH Promises

*Medical and nutritional science continue to support
the truths found in the Word of Wisdom.*

By G. Craig Kiser

On February 27, 1833, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation setting down principles of good health, now known as the Word of Wisdom. As a physician, I find this revelation to be one of the most amazing the Lord has provided, “showing forth the order and will of God in the temporal salvation of all saints in the last days” (D&C 89:2). Though medical science for the past 50 years has substantiated the health risks associated with the use of tobacco and alcohol, both prohibited by the Word of Wisdom, it has only been in the last decade that both medical and nutritional science have begun to corroborate many of the dietary health benefits contained in this outstanding revelation.

Fruits and Vegetables

Natural fruits and vegetables are among some of the most complex and nutritionally dense foods on earth. They are packed with health-preserving phytochemicals and micronutrients. They can heal injured blood vessels and help reduce the risk of heart attacks, strokes, obesity, and

diabetes.¹ Raw fruits and vegetables—especially beans, legumes, and vegetables in a variety of colors—are nutrient and mineral dense and cholesterol free and thus serve as divinely engineered packets of protection for our health.

Unfortunately, it is estimated that nearly half of Americans eat fewer than two servings of fruits and vegetables daily. This meager intake of fruits and vegetables was listed as one of four bad habits associated with early death, the other three being tobacco use, alcohol use, and lack of regular exercise.²

Grains and Nuts

Natural whole grains have many health benefits. They increase insulin effectiveness, improve intestinal health, and help reduce the risk of diabetes, colon cancer, and pancreatic cancer. They also lower blood pressure, decrease the chance of heart failure, and help prevent strokes.³ Nuts have favorable oils and minerals that support good nutrition and weight loss.⁴

Unfortunately, when whole grains are stripped of the husk and germ (labeled as “refined” or “enriched” grains),



they lose much of their fiber, minerals, and vital nutrients—and thus much of their protective value is also lost. Also, the body digests refined grains as simple sugars, which rapidly increase blood-sugar and insulin levels and are associated with a variety of health risks.⁵

Meat, Fish, and Fowl

The “flesh . . . of beasts and of the fowls” the Lord has “ordained for the use of man,” but He cautions us to use such food “sparingly” (D&C 89:12). Medical science has confirmed the wisdom of these words. Diets high in animal protein offer limited nutrient value and contain unhealthy saturated fats. Excess consumption of meat can also increase certain health risks.⁶

Processed Foods and Energy Drinks

Processed foods and packaged snacks are usually deficient in nutrients and high in sugar or refined grains, hydrogenated oils (trans fats), and sodium. Since food preferences and eating habits are established early in life, young parents would be wise to guide their children to the natural goodness of whole grains and garden-ripened fruits and vegetables.

Soft drinks are low in nutrients and contain significant amounts of sugar, high-fructose corn syrup, or artificial sweeteners. Although caffeine is not listed specifically in the Word of Wisdom, we would be wise to understand that there are risks associated with the consumption of this stimulant, especially in the case of energy pills and high-energy drinks.⁷



IN THE BEST CONDITION

“The Word of Wisdom does not promise you perfect health, but it teaches how to keep the body you were born with in the best condition and your mind alert to delicate spiritual promptings.”

President Boyd K. Packer,
President of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles,
“The Word of Wisdom: The
Principle and the Promises,”
Ensign, May 1996, 18.



Promises

Although the confirming evidence provided by modern science may give us additional reasons to keep the Word of Wisdom, it is ultimately our faith in the Lord’s word and our consistent obedience to this revelation that will qualify us for the promised blessings:

“All saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

“And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

“And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint” (D&C 89:18–20). ■

The author lives in Oregon, USA.

NOTES

1. See Jane V. Higdon, Barbara Delage, David E. Williams, and Roderick H. Dashwood, “Cruciferous Vegetables and Human Cancer Risk: Epidemiologic Evidence and Mechanistic Basis,” *Pharmacological Research*, vol. 55, no. 3 (Mar. 2007), 224–36.
2. See Elisabeth Kvaavik, G. David Batty, Giske Ursin, Rachel Huxley, and Catharine R. Gale, “Influence of Individual and Combined Health Behaviors on Total and Cause-Specific Mortality in Men and Women: The United Kingdom Health and Lifestyle Survey,” *Archives of Internal Medicine*, vol. 170, no. 8 (Apr. 26, 2010), 711–18.
3. See wholegrainscouncil.org/whole-grains-101/what-are-the-health-benefits.
4. See Deirdre K. Banel and Frank B. Hu, “Effects of Walnut Consumption on Blood Lipids and Other Cardiovascular Risk Factors: A Meta-analysis and Systematic Review,” *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, vol. 90, no. 1 (July 2009), 56–63.
5. See David S. Ludwig, “The Glycemic Index: Physiological Mechanisms Relating to Obesity, Diabetes, and Cardiovascular Disease,” *Journal of the American Medical Association*, vol. 287, no. 18 (May 8, 2002), 2414–23.
6. See T. Colin Campbell, Banoo Parpia, and Junshi Chen, “Diet, Lifestyle, and the Etiology of Coronary Artery Disease: The Cornell China Study,” *American Journal of Cardiology*, vol. 82, no. 10, suppl. 2 (Nov. 26, 1998), 18–21.
7. See Amelia M. Arria and Mary Claire O’Brien, “The ‘High’ Risk of Energy Drinks,” *Journal of the American Medical Association*, vol. 305, no. 6 (Feb. 9, 2011), 600–601.

THEY BROUGHT SOMETHING MORE

By Analynne Killingbeck

One Sunday, after my daughter's husband had undergone two surgeries for a brain tumor, her bishop came to visit him and brought two priests and a deacon from the ward to administer the sacrament to my daughter. While the priests prepared the area, I felt a strong spirit emanating from them.

When everyone was ready, the priests knelt and blessed the sacrament. The words of the sacrament prayers—coupled with the young men's love and concern—were carried into my heart with such a strong and abiding love that I couldn't help but weep.

Whenever I participate in the ordinance of the sacrament, I try to tune my heart to feel the Holy Ghost, but on this particular Sunday the feelings I felt were not a result of just *my* personal preparation. The strength of the Spirit I felt also had to do with the young men and *their* personal preparation. They brought something more than the sacrament to us.

I shared my experience with my daughter and found that she had had a similar spiritual experience. We told the young men that we knew that what we felt was a direct result of their faith, preparation, and love. They humbly received our gratitude and prepared to leave.

As they were leaving, I shook the bishop's hand and thanked him for

the sacrament and the spiritual experience that had blessed us. The bishop quietly told me that before they had entered, he reminded the young men that because of our circumstance, the veil would be thin and they needed to prepare themselves before they entered the home. He had suggested they pray together before going in. In the quiet of the car, they prayed for the Spirit to attend them as they carried out their priesthood duty.

The prayer they offered in the car allowed them to enter my daughter's home prepared to do their priesthood duty. Their service blessed our family and strengthened my testimony, for which I will always be grateful. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.



JOY IN PRIESTHOOD SERVICE

"Let us embrace and understand the wonder and privilege of the priesthood. Let us accept and love the responsibilities we are asked to fulfill—responsibilities in our homes and in our Church units, no matter how large or small they may be. Let us constantly increase in righteousness, dedication, and priesthood service. Let us find the joy of serving in the priesthood!"

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "The Joy of the Priesthood," *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 59.



A MINUTE AND A HALF IN THE RAIN

Growing up, I was the kid you didn't have to worry about. I had been active in the Church all my life. I had been the president of my priesthood quorums and seminary classes. I went to every youth conference, temple trip, Scouting event, and Mutual night. I also had a testimony of the gospel. Yet when I became a member of my priests quorum, I struggled, though no one knew it. After all, I was the kid you didn't have to worry about.

Those first few weeks and months in the quorum I did what I always did:

I went to church, Mutual, and Scouting activities. Inwardly, however, I was battling. I didn't feel that I was a part of the group or that the other young men wanted me there. I wanted desperately to belong.

As time went on, I had questions and doubts about whether I wanted to be a part of the quorum. But I remained active, silently suffering and hoping that something or someone would help me feel welcome.

My father and I had just finished fixing up my first car, a beautiful 1967

Ford Mustang. Brother Stay, my Young Men president, asked about it from time to time. I thought his questions showed his interest in a classic car—not in a young man.

All this changed one rainy evening after Mutual. Because of the downpour, Brother Stay drove us all home from the church, dropping me off last. When he saw my blue Mustang in the driveway, he again asked about it. I offered to let him see the engine I had spent hours and hours repairing.

Brother Stay knew little about cars, and he had a wife and young son at home waiting for him. Yet there he stood in the dark, in the rain, looking at a barely visible car engine. At that moment I realized that he wasn't doing what he was doing to see a classic car—he was doing it because he cared about me.

Because of that minute and a half standing in the rain, I found what I needed. I finally felt welcomed. My silent prayers had been answered.

Since then I have been to the temple, served a mission, graduated from college, and tried to keep my covenants. Brother Stay may not remember that moment, but I will never forget it.

We all have struggles, but we all can find an extra minute and a half each day to show love to one of God's children. It just might make all the difference—even to the one we think we don't have to worry about. ■

Jason Bosen, Utah, USA

Brother Stay knew little about cars, yet there he stood in the dark, in the rain, looking at a barely visible car engine.



OUR LIGHT IN DARKNESS

Our family had just experienced a devastating house fire, and all eight of us were living in a temporary three-bedroom mobile home in our front yard. Our family faced challenges and discord.

My husband was not active in the Church at the time. Our two teenage sons were making choices that would lead only to sorrow. Simultaneously, I was serving as Young Women president in our ward, and several of the young women were struggling with serious temptations. Some of their parents also faced struggles and therefore were not assisting their daughters at this critical time.

I knew these young women needed me to help them through their spiritual land mines. I knew my six sons needed me. I knew my good

husband depended on my strength. Yet there seemed to be nothing but darkness around me, and I felt empty, weak, and incapable of leading these loved ones to safety.

Late one night as I rocked our infant son in the stillness of our temporary home, my thoughts turned to those who needed me to be strong. I felt the pervasive darkness that surrounded them. In my anguish I prayed with all my heart that Heavenly Father would show me the way to help them despite my inadequacies. He answered immediately and showed me the way.

I seemed to see myself in our ward's large cultural hall, which had no windows. It was late at night, and there was not even a glimmer of light. Then I lit a tiny birthday candle. It seemed so insignificant, yet the power

of that miniscule light was enough to displace the blackness.

That was my answer! The *quantity* of darkness surrounding us in the world simply does not matter. Light is eternal and is vastly more powerful than darkness (see 2 Corinthians 4:6; Mosiah 16:9; D&C 14:9). If we remain worthy of the constant companionship of the Holy Spirit, our souls can reflect sufficient light to displace any amount of darkness, and others will be drawn to that light within us.

This was all I needed to know. This simple insight has carried me through the past 25 years with the knowledge that with the Lord's help and guidance, we can do—and be—all that He needs us to do and be in this world of darkness. ■

Susan Wyman, Georgia, USA



Late one night as I rocked our infant son in the stillness of our temporary home, my thoughts turned to those who needed me to be strong.

MY MESSAGE FROM HEAVENLY FATHER

As a newlywed and a fairly new member of the Church, I moved to England with my husband. Although I had learned some English in school, my heavy Japanese accent made my English difficult to understand, and the British accent was difficult for me to decipher.

My husband and I were members of the Church, but we were not fully converted when we got married. We always went home after sacrament meeting instead of remaining at church for the other meetings. We did not want to receive any Church callings.

One day, to help me become more involved in Church activities, a Relief Society leader called and asked if I would share some things about myself at the next weeknight

Relief Society meeting. I agreed to participate, but because of my limited English, I did not understand that I was supposed to bring some things to display.

When I arrived at the meeting, I immediately realized what I had been expected to do. Three tables were set up with tablecloths and flowers on them. An overhead sign read, “Getting to Know Sisters.” One of the tables was labeled “Sister Tuckett.” But I had brought nothing to put on my table. I tried to hide the tears forming in my eyes.

I already felt sad whenever I attended sacrament meeting because I did not fully understand what was being spoken. I often thought, “Why am I here?” So when I arrived at that

Relief Society meeting and realized my mistake, I felt that I should not attend church anymore. I wished I could disappear, but I had to tell the Relief Society leader I wasn’t prepared.

“Excuse me,” I said. “I didn’t understand, and I don’t have anything to put on my table.”

She looked at me with the kindest expression and said, “It doesn’t matter—I’m just glad you are here.” Then she gave me a hug.

I felt comforted, and the Spirit told me that what she had said was a message from Heavenly Father—that He loved me and was glad I was there. I didn’t understand English very well, but the Spirit enabled me to understand her message.

Because of this feeling, my resolve immediately changed. I told myself, “If Heavenly Father loves me that much and wants me to come to church, I will, no matter how difficult it is.”

From that point on, my husband and I attended every Church meeting. I also determined to learn English. Gradually, I understood English better and learned to speak it.

I am grateful for the sister who delivered a message from Heavenly Father at that crucial point in my life. Now, 15 years later, I serve in the district Relief Society presidency in an English-speaking district in Japan and have received training by the Church to become an interpreter. ■

Terumi Tuckett (with Jill Campbell), Japan

When the Relief Society leader gave me a hug, I felt comforted.



I DEFENDED MY FAITH

During my freshman year of college, my eyes were opened to the fact that my life as a student would not be as sheltered as before. Nor would what I held dear be accepted.

I found that I stuck out like a sore thumb when I refused to engage in activities that I knew would harm me physically or harm my relationship with Heavenly Father. However, I feared criticism for being a member of the Church and therefore avoided the topic.

One day in an afternoon class, the professor was leading a discussion on how youth develop amid constant discrimination. A girl behind me replied that the discussion made her think of Mormons. I cringed because when the Church was brought up in a class, inappropriate comments usually followed.

As I braced myself for derogatory statements, the teacher asked if any Latter-day Saints were in the class. Stunned at the inquiry, I scanned the room only to find everyone else doing the same. Before I could think twice, my hand was rising from its comfortable position on the desk. I heard an eruption of whispers from across the room.

“One,” the teacher said. The word rang in my ears. After a long silence, I was asked to respond to the debate regarding whether Latter-day Saints are Christians. I was no stranger to the question and was prepared to answer.

“We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, [and] we preach of Christ”

(2 Nephi 25:26), I confidently replied. “We are indeed Christian.”

The whispering ceased, but I felt everyone staring at me. I thought I would feel alone. Instead, I felt as if the Savior had sat down next to me and put His hand in mine. Nothing else mattered, for I was filled with joy that strengthened my testimony of Him. I had defended my faith.

I shared more with the class about why Latter-day Saints are Christians. Then I thought of the time President Thomas S. Monson shared the gospel on a bus ride. From this experience he encouraged members to “be

courageous and prepared to stand for what we believe.”¹ As I thought of his words, I realized I had done the thing I was most afraid to do.

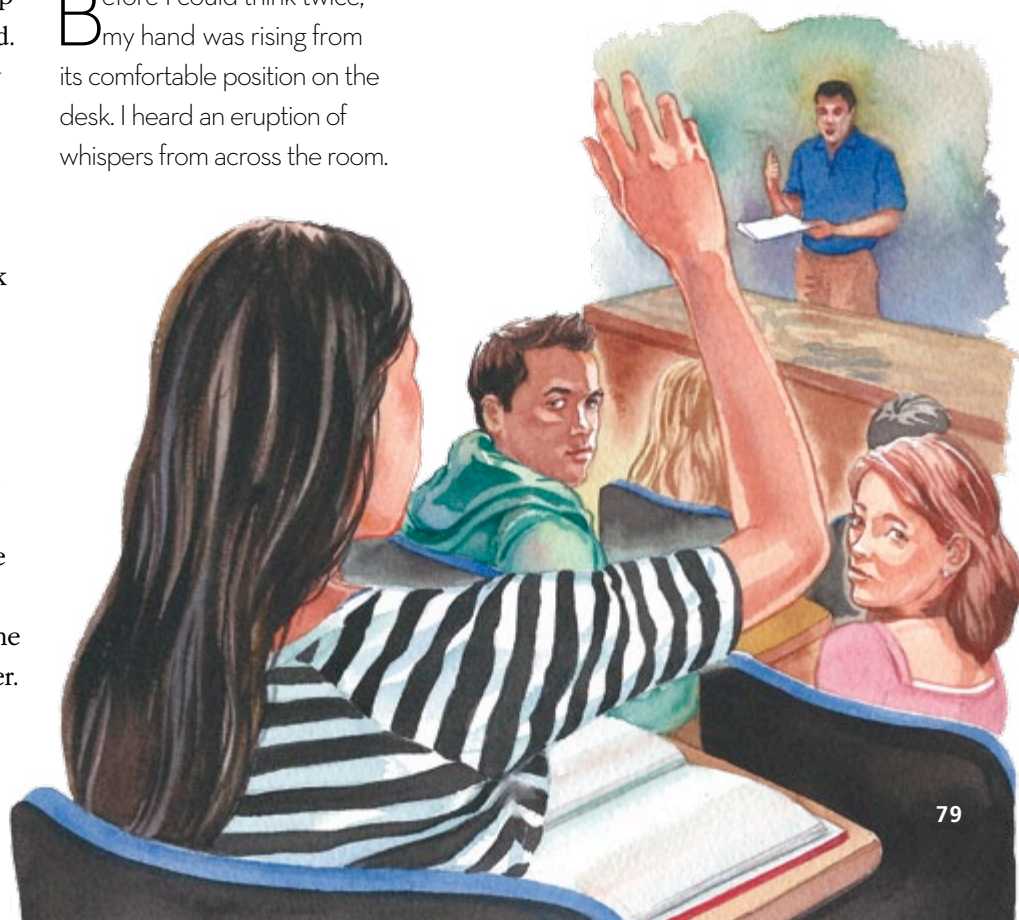
I do not know whether the things I said changed anybody’s opinion of the Church, but we need not fear to stand up and share the gospel—wherever we are. Even if we do not bless anybody else, we will always strengthen our testimony and our relationship with Heavenly Father. ■

Karlina Peterson, Idaho, USA

NOTE

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Dare to Stand Alone,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 67.

Before I could think twice, my hand was rising from its comfortable position on the desk. I heard an eruption of whispers from across the room.



SIGNS

By Jerry Peak

I usually take one of the local freeways to work. It's the quickest and easiest way to get there. I try to leave early enough in the morning to miss the heavy traffic, when things slow down and accidents can happen.

One morning, however, I got out of the house later than usual and ended up in congested traffic. As I merged onto the freeway, I thought about my scripture study that morning. I had had the impression that I focus too much on worldly things and not enough on spiritual things. As I drove to work, I thought about how I could be more attentive to spiritual things throughout the day.

Then I noticed a message on one of the large electronic signs over the freeway that alert drivers of accidents or road conditions. As I got closer, I read, "Crash ahead at Mesa Drive—center lane blocked." I didn't want to be inconvenienced by having to get off the freeway, so I wondered how long I could stay on the freeway before I *had* to exit.

Then another thought came to my mind:



I wondered how many times I had pushed aside my spiritual safety because I was focused on worldly things.

If I ignored the sign, could I be putting myself in a situation that would be dangerous? Was I ignoring a warning just because I didn't want my schedule disrupted? Clearly, I was inclined to ignore warnings of my physical safety; how often I had pushed aside promptings for my spiritual safety?

As I pondered about how to be more attentive to the Spirit, I realized that Heavenly Father probably sends me many messages throughout the day. I wondered how many times I had missed His messages because I wasn't listening for spiritual promptings. I committed to do better.

I checked the traffic, changed lanes, and took the next exit. By using the city roads to get to work, I was able to avoid all the hazards and dangers of staying on the freeway as the accident was cleaned up.

I know that the Lord loves me enough to send me His messages. I simply need to be in tune with the spiritual promptings He sends me. ■

The author lives in Arizona, USA.



What choices lead to happiness in families?

“Heavenly Father has made each of us unique. No two of us have exactly the same experiences. No two families are alike. So it is not surprising that advice about how to choose happiness in family life is hard to give. Yet a loving Heavenly Father has set the same path to happiness for all of His children. Whatever our personal characteristics or whatever will be our experiences, there is but one plan of happiness. That plan is to follow all the commandments of God.”



In Church Magazines

Ensign: Our new young adult section features two articles about developing and improving healthy relationships, and another discusses the dangers of moral relativism. See pages 14, 18, and 20.

New Era: This month, look for articles to help teach youth about the temple (pages 2, 39, 42) and dating (pages 26–38). You'll also find support for *Come, Follow Me* lessons about the plan of salvation (pages 6, 9, 10, 40).

Friend: Attention, grown-ups—the back cover of the *Friend* is now dedicated to you! Find teaching tips, online resources, family home evening ideas, and support for the topics children are learning in Primary each month.



THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS