

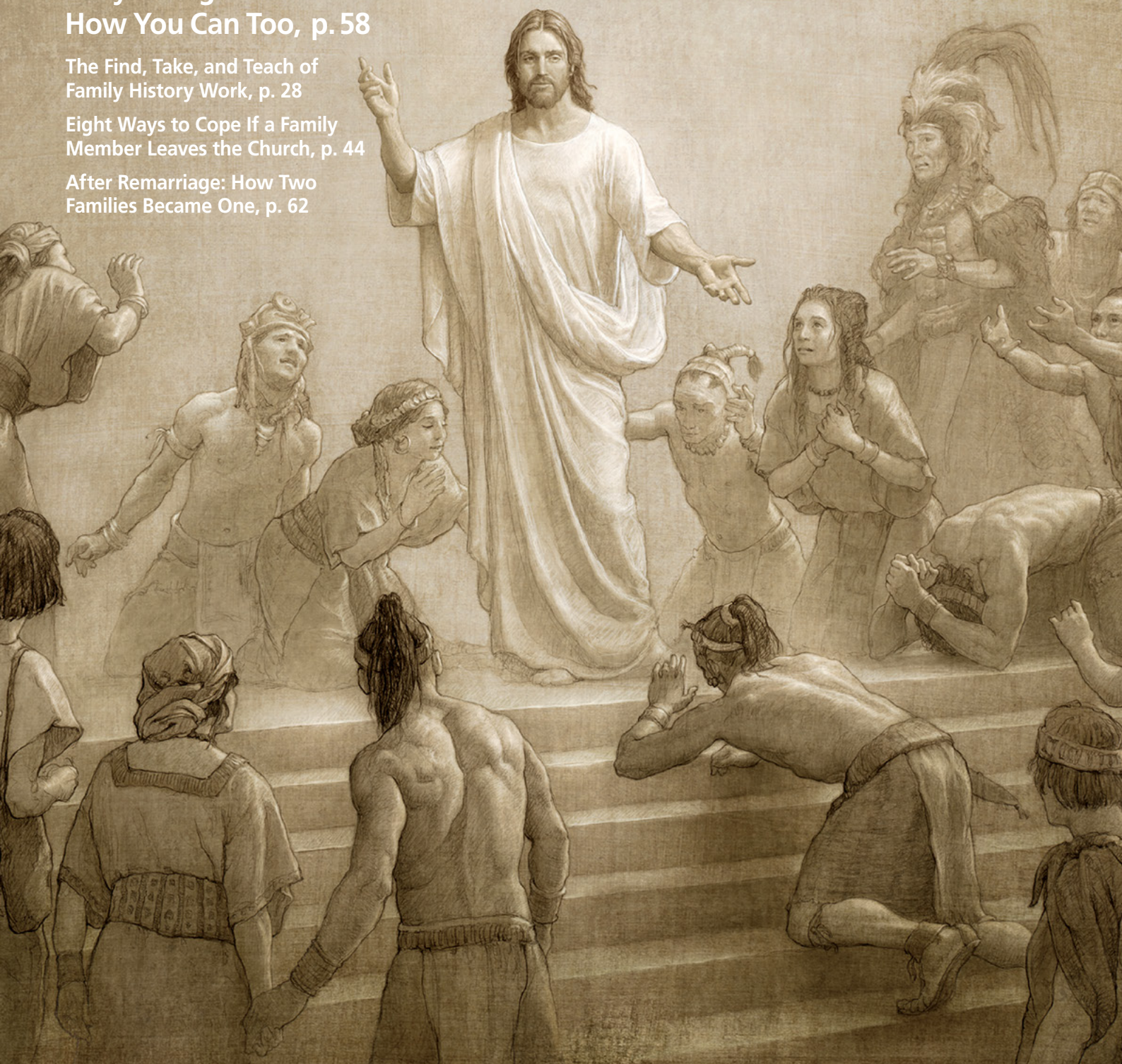
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*"Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?"*

*"And I answered him, saying: Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things."*

**1 Nephi 11:21–22**

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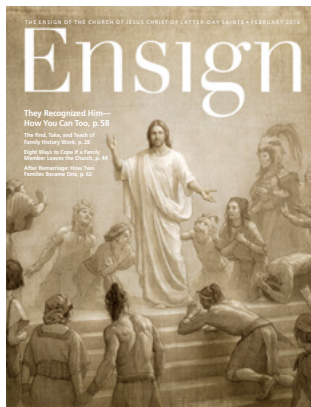
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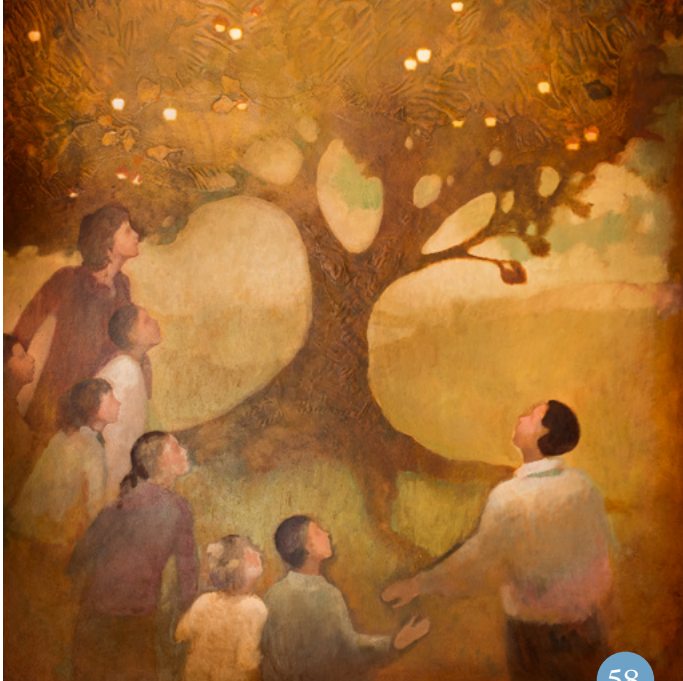
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JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS  
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## Family Home Evening Ideas

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



**“What Can the Book of Mormon Teach Us about Happiness?”** page 16: Consider discussing with your family members what

makes each of them happy and create a list. Then introduce the seven principles of happiness from the article and highlight any similarities between these principles and the items on your list. You could select two or three principles from the article and ask family members to share ideas for living those principles individually and as a family. You might also challenge family members to search in the Book of Mormon for additional guidelines to happiness, as the author suggests. Ask them to come to your

next family home evening prepared to share what they found.

**“The Joy of Family History Work,”**

page 28: Elder Cook invites us to get started on family history work by holding a “Family Tree Gathering.” For your family home evening, consider using FamilySearch.org to record information, stories, and photos of your family. Elder Cook promises that “if you look beyond the bonds of time and mortality and help those who cannot help themselves, you will be blessed with more closeness and joy in your family and with the divine protection afforded those who are faithful in His service.”

### FORGIVENESS BALLOONS

When an article about forgiveness appeared in the *Friend* (see Mara Sundwall, “Let It Go,” June 2009, 4–6), I felt impressed to base a family home evening on the article. We began by discussing how important it is to forgive those who have hurt our feelings, especially other family members. Next, each of us wrote on a helium balloon an offense we wanted to forgive. Then we went outside and released our balloons, symbolizing how our negative feelings can be released when we forgive. As we watched the balloons float into the sky, my husband quietly said, “I think you were inspired to do that.”

Beatriz Ishee, Louisiana, USA

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**President  
Dieter F. Uchtdorf**

Second Counselor in  
the First Presidency

# LANDING SAFELY IN TURBULENCE

**N**ot long ago my wife, Harriet, and I were at an airport watching magnificent airplanes land. It was a windy day, and fierce gusts of wind whipped against the approaching aircraft, causing each one to swerve and shudder during the approach.

As we observed this struggle between nature and machine, my mind went back to my own flight training and the principles I learned there—and later taught to other pilots in training.

“Don’t fight the controls during turbulence,” I used to tell them. “Stay cool; don’t overreact. Keep your eyes focused on the centerline of the runway. If you deviate from your desired approach path, make prompt but measured corrections. Trust the potential of your airplane. Ride the turbulence out.”

Experienced pilots understand that they can’t always control the things that happen around them. They can’t just turn off the turbulence. They can’t make the rain or snow vanish. They can’t cause the wind to stop blowing or change its direction.

But they also understand that it’s a mistake to fear turbulence or strong winds—and especially to be paralyzed by them. The way to land safely when conditions are less

than ideal is to stay on the correct track and glide path as perfectly as possible.

As I watched one airplane after another make its final approach and recalled the principles learned from my years as a pilot, I wondered if there wasn’t a lesson in this for our daily lives.

We can’t always control the storms that life puts in our path. Sometimes things simply don’t go our way. We may feel shaken and blown about by the turbulence of disappointment, doubt, fear, sadness, or stress.

During those times, it is easy to get caught up in everything that is going wrong and to make our troubles the center of our thoughts. The temptation is to focus on the trials we are facing instead of on the Savior and our testimony of truth.

But that is not the best way to navigate through our challenges in life.

Just as an experienced pilot keeps his focus not on the storm but on the center of the runway and the correct touchdown point, so too should we keep our focus on the center of our faith—our Savior, His gospel, and the plan of our Heavenly Father—and on our ultimate goal—to return safely to our heavenly destination. We should trust God





and make staying on the track of discipleship the focus of our efforts. We should keep our eyes, heart, and mind focused on living the way we know we should.

Showing our faith and trust in Heavenly Father by joyfully keeping His commandments will bring us happiness and glory. And if we stay

on the path, we will get through any turbulence—no matter how strong it may appear—and return safely to our heavenly home.

Whether the skies around us are clear or filled with threatening clouds, as disciples of Jesus Christ, we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, knowing that

if we do so, everything else we need will eventually be provided (see Matthew 6:33).

What an important life lesson!

The more we obsess about our difficulties, our struggles, our doubts, and our fears, the more difficult things can become. But the more we focus on our final heavenly destination and on the joys of following the disciple's path—loving God, serving our neighbor—the more likely we are to successfully navigate through times of trouble and turbulence.

Dear friends, no matter how violently the winds of our mortal existence howl around us, the gospel of Jesus Christ will always offer the best path to a safe landing in our Heavenly Father's kingdom. ■

### TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

**P**resident Uchtdorf counsels us to “trust God and make staying on the track of discipleship the focus of our efforts.” Consider asking those you teach how they have stayed focused “on our final heavenly destination and on the joys of following the disciple’s path” at times when they have faced trials. You might invite them to think of ways that they can focus on their testimony and on Christ in difficult moments and to prayerfully decide how to implement one or more of those ideas in their lives.





## A Foundation for My Testimony

By Jennifer Weaver

**W**hen I was 16, a friend showed up at our home with the missionaries. Within a month of the first discussion, all my questions were answered in clarity. I felt the Holy Ghost testify of the truthfulness of the messages about the Restoration. It was unlike anything I had ever felt, and I knew all of it was true.

However, I experienced more rejection and opposition than ever before. I felt alone, tired, and confused. If I was doing the right thing, why was I encountering so much adversity? I couldn't understand how my trials were for my good. The missionaries taught me to fast and pray, even in the middle of a school day. When things became unbearable

I'd pour out my heart and immediately feel the comfort of the Spirit.

The week of my baptism was full of trials. My boss threatened to fire me if I didn't skip my baptism to fill in for someone, I ended up in the hospital with kidney stones, and my parents asked me to leave our home. With so many things out of my control, the only thing I could do was turn to the Lord.

Every one of those trials *did* turn out to be for my benefit. They helped me learn about the doctrines of the gospel, which provided me a foundation for my testimony.

*The author lives in Idaho, USA.*

## CHILDREN

### He Will Guide Us Home

**W**hen we follow the example of Jesus Christ, it's like following a straight path that leads to Him! We can be safe and happy, just like the plane that lands safely on the runway. Guide the airplane through the maze back to the runway!



DETAIL FROM DISCOVERING GOD, BY JULIE ROGERS; ILLUSTRATION BY STEVE KROPP

Prayerfully study this material and seek to know what to share. How will understanding “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” increase your faith in God and bless those you watch over through visiting teaching? For more information, go to [reliefsociety.lds.org](http://reliefsociety.lds.org).

## Marriage Is Ordained of God

Prophets, apostles, and leaders continue to “solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan.”<sup>1</sup>

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “A family built on the marriage of a man and woman supplies the best setting for God’s plan to thrive. . . .

“ . . . Neither we nor any other mortal can alter this divine order of matrimony.”<sup>2</sup>

Bonnie L. Oscarson, Young Women general president, said: “Everyone, no matter what their marital circumstance or number of children, can be defenders of the Lord’s plan described in the family proclamation. If it is the Lord’s plan, it should also be our plan!”<sup>3</sup>

Elder Christofferson continued: “Some of you are denied the blessing of marriage for reasons including a lack of viable prospects, same-sex attraction, physical or mental impairments, or simply a fear of failure. . . . Or you may have married, but that marriage ended. . . . Some of you who are married cannot bear children. . . .



“Even so, . . . everyone can contribute to the unfolding of the divine plan in each generation.”<sup>4</sup>

### Additional Scriptures

Genesis 2:18–24; 1 Corinthians 11:11; Doctrine and Covenants 49:15–17

### NOTES

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
2. D. Todd Christofferson, “Why Marriage, Why Family,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 52.
3. Bonnie L. Oscarson, “Defenders of the Family Proclamation,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 15.
4. D. Todd Christofferson, “Why Marriage, Why Family,” 52.
5. Larry M. Gibson, “Fulfilling Our Eternal Destiny,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2015, 21–22.
6. David A. Bednar, “Marriage Is Essential to His Eternal Plan,” *Ensign*, June 2006, 86.

### Consider This

How am I individually and steadily striving to “come unto Christ”?

Faith, Family, Relief



### Living Stories

Brother Larry M. Gibson, former first counselor in the Young Men general presidency, remembered when Shirley, now his wife, said: “I love you because I know you love the Lord more than you love me.” . . .

“That answer struck my heart. . . .

“ . . . [And] I wanted her to always feel that I loved the Lord above all else.”<sup>5</sup>

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “The Lord Jesus Christ is the focal point in a covenant marriage relationship. . . . [Imagine that] the Savior is positioned at the apex of [a] triangle, with a woman at the base of one corner and a man at the base of the other corner. Now consider what happens in the relationship between the man and the woman as they individually and steadily ‘come unto Christ’ and strive to be ‘perfected in Him’ (Moroni 10:32). Because of and through the Redeemer, the man and the woman come closer together.”<sup>6</sup>



# OCTOBER 2015 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 2015 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.

## DOCTRINAL HIGHLIGHT



## Honoring the Sabbath

“Honoring the Sabbath is a form of righteousness that will bless and strengthen families, connect us with our Creator, and increase happiness. The Sabbath can help separate us from that which is frivolous, inappropriate, or immoral. It allows us to be in the world, but not of the world.

. . . Truly keeping the Sabbath day holy is a refuge from the storms of this life. It is also a sign of our devotion to our Father in Heaven.”

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Shipshape and Bristol Fashion: Be Temple Worthy—in Good Times and Bad Times,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 41–42.

## PROPHETIC PROMISE



## He Appreciates Your Service

“Whatever your calling . . . , you may have at times felt Heavenly Father was unaware of you. You can pray to know His will, and with the honest desire to do *whatever* He asks you to do, you will receive an answer.

“Heavenly Father will allow you to feel that He knows you, that He appreciates your service, and that you are becoming worthy of the greeting from the Lord you want so much to hear: ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord’ [Matthew 25:23].”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “You Are Not Alone in the Work,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 82.

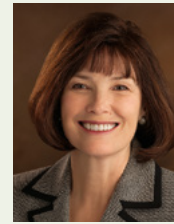
## For Single Adult Members

Here is what three speakers said about being single:

- “Now is *part* of eternity. It doesn’t only begin after we die! Faith and hope will open your eyes to the happiness that is placed before you.” —President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “A Summer with Great-Aunt Rose,” 19.
- “Another painful affliction is the circumstance of singleness. Those who suffer this circumstance should remember that our Savior experienced this kind of pain also and that, through His Atonement, He

offers the strength to bear it.” —Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “Strengthened by the Atonement of Jesus Christ,” 63.

- “Be patient. Wait upon the Lord. I testify that the Lord knows your desires and loves you for your faithful devotion to Him. He has a plan for you, whether it be in this life or the next. Listen to His Spirit. . . . In this life or the next, His promises will be fulfilled.” —Elder Robert D. Hales, “Meeting the Challenges of Today’s World,” 46.



### MEETING THE LORD’S STANDARDS

“Sisters, Satan has raised a Korihor-like banner in our day. . . . What are some of his tools? Seductive romance novels, TV soap operas, married women and old boyfriends connecting on social media, and pornography. . . . We cannot play with Satan’s fiery darts and not get burned. . . .

“When we are involved in watching, reading, or experiencing anything that is below our Heavenly Father’s standards, it weakens us. Regardless of our age, if what we look at, read, listen to, or choose to do does not meet the Lord’s standards in *For the Strength of Youth*, turn it off, rip it up, throw it out, and slam the door.”

Linda S. Reeves, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, “Worthy of Our Promised Blessings,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 10.

### GREAT STORIES FROM CONFERENCE

What catches our attention better than a great story? The following are two of many stories shared during conference:

- What can Chloe and her car seat teach us about love and keeping the commandments? —See Carole M. Stephens, “If Ye Love Me, Keep My Commandments,” 118.
- In what ways can we, like Pablo’s father, help our children understand the gospel? —See Bradley D. Foster, “It’s Never Too Early and It’s Never Too Late,” 50.

To read, watch, or listen to general conference addresses, visit [conference.lds.org](http://conference.lds.org).



# FORGIVING MY EX-HUSBAND

Name withheld

*Studying Christ's example of love and forgiveness helped me overcome the hurt I felt following my divorce.*

When I found myself in unfamiliar territory, facing a divorce that I didn't want, I experienced pain and rejection that I have never felt before. I was in my mid-40s, alone to finish raising my teenagers, hold down a full-time job, and pay the mortgage. I was overwhelmed, tired, and worried, but mostly filled with the most incredible pain I have ever felt.

Because of my gospel foundation and my desire to live righteously, I knew I had to forgive my ex-husband. I knew it was important to not be critical of him in front of the children, but how was I going to get past those feelings of rejection that made me want to cry out in agony?

Day after day in my anguish, I turned to the scriptures, seeking direction from the Spirit. I searched

diligently day and night. I needed to know what I could personally do at this unfamiliar crossroads of my life to follow the Savior's example, to heed His call to follow Him.

As I studied the scriptures, I wrote down each attribute of Jesus Christ that I desired to develop in my own life. I recorded teachings from the stories and parables that He shared during His mortal ministry. I noted the things that spoke to my heart about forgiveness. I diligently penned

in my notebook the hardships and trials that the Lord faced and how He overcame them.

Over time I recognized that His pain was much worse than mine, yet He forgave those who hurt Him. He was a perfect example. That notebook, filled with lessons from the Lord's life, became a source of great strength to me. It was my lifeline. Following His example, I was determined to endure my trial as well as I could. I was willing to move forward through my pain.



## FORGIVENESS: THE ESSENCE OF THE GOSPEL

"A spirit of forgiveness and an attitude of love and compassion toward those who may have wronged us is of the very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Each of us has need of this spirit. The whole world has need of it. The Lord taught it. He exemplified it as none other has exemplified it."

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), "Of You It Is Required to Forgive," *Ensign*, June 1991, 2.



It worked! Now a few years later, I am blessed to have a good relationship with my ex-husband. Even though he has remarried, our relationship as the parents of our children is sweet and pain free. By following Christ's example of not criticizing him, I overcame the negative feelings of pain and rejection. I can love!

What a valuable lesson I learned during this intense trial. I am grateful for my Savior's perfect example. He is my rock and my foundation. And I never feel alone. I have His love, His Atonement, His perfect example, and the love and blessings of a beloved Heavenly Father. ■

#### **HOW CAN SCRIPTURE STUDY HELP US DURING TRIALS?**

"Scriptures can calm an agitated soul, giving peace, hope, and a restoration of confidence in one's ability to overcome the challenges of life. They have potent power to heal emotional challenges when there is faith in the Savior" (Richard G. Scott, "The Power of Scripture," *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 6).

Consider doing what this sister did to get through her trial: study the scriptures to look for attributes of the Savior and other faithful people. Their examples can help you with your challenges or questions. If you know the topic you would like to study—for example, "Endure," "Forgive," or "Patience"—the Topical Guide can suggest several scriptures to start with.



# THE LESSON OF THE SANTOL TREE

By Irene Taniegra

*We are much like santol fruit in a storm.*

On June 23, 2009, the Philippines experienced a typhoon. That afternoon, our area was placed under a severe storm warning. The rest of that day and into the night, we heard something banging on our rooftop. When my son asked what it was, I told him it was our santol tree being whipped by the wind.

I regretted not picking the santol's sweet fruit a day earlier, as I had planned. But my mother had told me the fruit wasn't ripe yet and to leave it alone.

At 5:00 a.m. I went outside to look at the tree, fearing to see all the fruit on the ground. I couldn't see into the tree—it was still dark outside—but I did see four small fruits scattered around our backyard.

An hour later I again inspected the tree. To my delight I saw many big, yellow-green fruit still clinging to the branches. Collecting those that had fallen, I noted that two of them had brownish lesions at the bottom. Black speckles discolored the other one, and the last was misshapen and warty in appearance.

I had expected the bigger, heavier fruit to have fallen; they were twice as big as the ones I collected. But there they were: still securely hanging on to the tree.

As I thought about the experience, I concluded that we are much like the two kinds of santol fruits—the ones that fell and the ones that held on. We too could fall when buffeted by the windy trials of life if we aren't holding firm to the tree of life, our Savior Jesus Christ (see 1 Nephi 8:10; 11:8–9, 20–23).

The fruits that fell from our santol tree were weak with disease, not able to withstand the wind. The ones that remained on the tree survived because they were healthy and strong.



If we don't keep ourselves spiritually strong and healthy—learning from the scriptures and the living prophets, keeping the commandments, serving others—we too might fall when the adversary brings his forces against us.

The moment the tender fruits stopped drawing on the strength of the santol tree, their maturation stopped. So too the moment we separate ourselves from Christ, the true vine, our spiritual progress stops (see John 15:1; 1 Nephi 15:15).

Sometimes too we need to bend with the wind. Trials are part of mortality, and a humble spirit helps us accept the will of God in hard times. Humility helps us repent of our sins, forgive others, and forget offenses.

Allied with humility is patience. If we are patient in our trials, if we hold on to our faith a little longer, the answers we seek may come.

Sooner or later the Savior will calm the storm. Peace and deliverance will come. If we remain obedient and faithful, nothing can separate us from the love of God (see Romans 8:38–39). ■

*The author lives in San Jose, Philippines.*

## WE CHOSE TO SERVE

By Irmgard Meissner

*My husband was battling cancer, but we accepted without hesitation the call to serve in the Frankfurt Germany Temple.*

On December 12, 1994, we received a telephone call from Salt Lake City. A friendly voice told us that President Thomas S. Monson, then serving as the Second Counselor in the First Presidency, wanted to speak with us.

“The president of the Frankfurt Germany Temple would like to call you to be his counselor and your wife to be an assistant to the temple matron,” President Monson told my husband, Gerhard. Then President Monson expressed concerns about my husband’s health.

Gerhard had battled chronic lymphocytic leukemia for 11 years. Despite that challenge, the Lord had called us, and we said yes without hesitation.

When I resigned from my job in preparation to serve, my boss asked, “Can I keep you if I raise your wages?”

“No, we have to go,” I answered, telling him that we had promised the Lord we would serve a mission. “We had intended to serve in a couple of years, but I don’t know if my husband will still be alive then.”

When Gerhard received a routine examination less than two weeks later, the doctor told him, “Stay here; you have a high risk of dying.”

His condition had worsened. We were shattered and could not imagine how we could fulfill our calling, but we were full of faith, hope, and assurance. We put everything in the Lord’s hands. If He had an assignment for us, He would make a way for us to fulfill it.

On January 2, 1995, we left on our mission. Suddenly I realized what I was giving up: my mother, my children, my grandchildren, my career, my house, and my garden. But the next day we took our place in the Frankfurt Temple, where a dark night became a bright new day for us. All of the stress of everyday life left us.

In this holy place we found love, light, hope, joy, trust, warmth, security, protection, and the peace that radiates from our Savior. As we served, we met wonderful people from many countries. Though they spoke different languages, the language of love bound us. Our service in the temple made us very happy.

The spirit of the temple and the strength of God carried my dear husband for 26 months. One day not long after we had been released from our temple calling, Gerhard went to the hospital for his standard treatment. This time doctors kept him there. A few months later he returned to his heavenly home.

When I look back, I see those years of temple service as a gift from heaven—serving side by side with my husband in the house of our loving Father as we fulfilled our promise to serve a mission together. I am grateful with all my heart for that experience. ■

*The author lives in Bavaria, Germany.*





# Why Institute Graduation Matters

By Matthew Porter Wilcox

Seminaries and Institutes

“What we need now is the greatest generation of young adults in the history of the Church,” said Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to young adults in the April 2015 general conference. “Young adults should enroll in an institute of religion. Institute . . . classes will provide balance to your life and add to your secular education by giving you another opportunity to spend time studying the scriptures and the teachings of the prophets and apostles.”<sup>1</sup>

In order to deepen young adults’ understanding of the gospel, strengthen their testimony and commitment to Jesus Christ, and help them find personal guidance for their lives, the institute program has emphasized the need to elevate learning for every young adult. This elevation is reflected in three major ways: by offering four new cornerstone courses, by placing

greater importance on graduating from institute, and by inviting all students to take a more active role in their spiritual learning by completing assigned readings and learning assessments.

## What are the four new cornerstone classes?

While classes such as Old Testament, New Testament, Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants will continue to be offered, four new cornerstone classes now serve as the center of institute coursework. They include (1) Jesus Christ and the Everlasting Gospel,

(2) Foundations of the Restoration, (3) The Eternal Family, and (4) Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon. As the name implies, these cornerstone classes deal with foundational doctrine, history, and teachings of the gospel, as found in the scriptures and the words of the living prophets.

You can elevate your gospel learning as you take the four new cornerstone institute classes.





*The cornerstone classes will be available in about 30 languages.*

“[These new cornerstone classes] may lead to more in-depth scripture study than in the broad survey-type courses of the past,” stated Brent L. Top, dean of religious education at Brigham Young University. Chad Webb, administrator for Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, added, “The scriptures are woven together, and as they grow together, there are insights and understanding and strength that come from a study across all the standard works.”<sup>2</sup>

This young woman agrees: “I wondered how much I could really learn about the Restoration that I didn’t already know, but I found myself making connections I had never previously made. The course included topics such as plural marriage, priesthood to all worthy males, and the Mountain Meadows massacre. These class discussions gave me information rooted in faith rather than doubt. The course also tied the Restoration into current-day events, so I recognized that I am actually part of the Restoration. It’s not just the Prophet Joseph Smith, President Brigham Young, and other pioneers. It’s me too!”

### Why should I make institute graduation a goal?

Here’s what some other students are saying about graduating from institute:

“I made a goal to graduate from institute, and though I made many sacrifices, I was rewarded with understanding, knowledge, and a stronger testimony.”

“After graduation I felt stronger and ready for new experiences. I’m going to encourage others to graduate too.”

“Graduation was a spiritual achievement that keeps me moving toward my goal of eternal salvation.”

As you also elevate your learning by working toward graduation, you will learn to prioritize study time and enhance your gospel scholarship. You will see these truths woven together into a grand tapestry of testimony. After all, institute graduation is really about you becoming spiritually stronger. ■

#### NOTES

1. M. Russell Ballard, “The Greatest Generation of Young Adults,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 68.
2. In Marianne Holman Prescott, “Four New Classes Added to Curriculum for Church Schools,” *Church News*, Nov. 11, 2014.

### WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO GRADUATE?

You are being asked to step up and make institute graduation a priority and part of your gospel foundation. As a result, you will increase your knowledge and deepen your conversion as you earn the needed 14 credits.\* To obtain these credits, you need to:

- Take each of the two-credit cornerstone classes listed below.
  1. Jesus Christ and the Everlasting Gospel
  2. Foundations of the Restoration
  3. The Eternal Family
  4. Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon
- Earn six more credits by taking other classes of your choice.
- In addition, you’ll need to receive an ecclesiastical endorsement from your bishop or branch president.

\* To receive credit for a class, you need to attend at least 75 percent of class sessions, complete the assigned readings, and complete the course learning assessment.



# What Can the Book of Mormon Teach Us about Happiness?

By **Hank R. Smith**

Instructor of Religious Education,  
Brigham Young University

Lehi taught his son Jacob, “Men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25).

We all want to be happy. We often long for the cheerfulness, peace, and satisfaction we see in our family members and friends whose lives seem to be filled with happiness. Everyone has felt a void of happiness in their life at one time or another. Some might even have wondered, “Will I ever be happy?”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, said: “The Lord has embedded in [the Book of Mormon] His message to you. Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni knew that, and those who put it together put in messages for you.”<sup>1</sup> Because

God desires all of His children to be happy in this life, He has embedded eternal principles of happiness in the Book of Mormon. Though you can find these principles throughout, two chapters in particular—2 Nephi 5 and 4 Nephi 1—contain clear guidelines that will lead us to increased happiness if we are willing to live by them.

## 2 Nephi 5

Soon after Lehi’s death, the Lord warned Nephi that Laman and Lemuel would attempt to take his life. The Lord told Nephi to take those who would go with him and flee into the wilderness. Although there must surely have been difficulties with this exodus and establishing a new community, in 2 Nephi 5:27, Nephi explained, “It came to pass that we

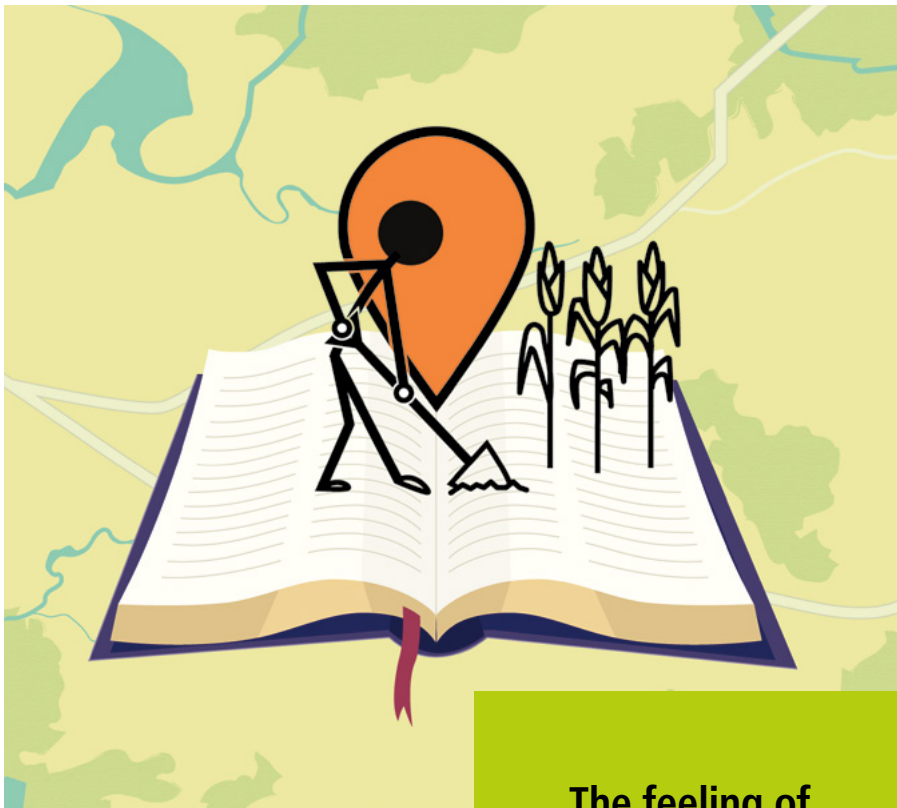
**Seven principles we can extract from two chapters in the Book of Mormon teach us what it takes to be truly happy.**

lived after the manner of happiness.” This chapter sets a pattern of happiness we can follow in our own lives. ***Maintaining Uplifting Associations***

Nephi tells us that those who fled into the wilderness with him were







those who “believed in the warnings and the revelations of God” (verse 6). A significant source of happiness is our social circle. It is important for us to spend time with others who believe as we do and whose presence is uplifting. In addition to spending time with family members, we can have uplifting associations with friends who strengthen our faith. Those interactions and associations have a significant impact on our happiness. Christine Carter, a sociologist at the University of California, Berkeley, wrote, “The quantity and quality of a person’s social connections—friendships, relationships

**The feeling of accomplishment that often accompanies hard work brings happiness.**

with family members, closeness to neighbors, etc.—is so closely related to well-being and personal happiness the two can practically be equated.”<sup>2</sup>

***Aligning Actions with Beliefs***

In verse 10, Nephi writes that his people kept “the commandments of the Lord.” Obedience to the

commandments is an important part of living a happy life. King Benjamin encouraged his people to “consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God” (Mosiah 2:41). It is difficult for us to be happy when we believe in God’s commandments but do not live them. Obedience brings peace of mind and peace of conscience. The Indian spiritual and political leader Mahatma Gandhi is said to have written, “Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.” When our beliefs and actions are misaligned, repentance is the key to reestablishing harmony in our lives.

***Accomplishing Hard Work***

In verses 11 and 15 of 2 Nephi 5, Nephi writes that his people planted and harvested crops, raised animals, built buildings, and worked with various ores. He said, “I, Nephi, did cause my people to be industrious, and to labor with their hands” (verse 17). From these verses we plainly see that work is a critical factor in obtaining happiness. Every day brings opportunities to work in our homes, around our homes, in our community, or in our employment. President Thomas S. Monson has said: “God left the world unfinished for man to work his skill upon. He left the electricity in the cloud, the oil in the earth. He left the rivers unbridged and the

forests unfelled and the cities unbuilt. God gives to man the challenge of raw materials, not the ease of finished things. He leaves the pictures unpainted and the music unsung and the problems unsolved, that man might know the joys and glories of creation.”<sup>3</sup> Put simply, the exhilaration of being creative and the feeling of accomplishment that often accompany hard work bring happiness.

### ***Focusing on the Temple***

Nephi also tells us that he and his people took the time to build a temple (verse 16) as they established their new community. Temple blessings and happiness are inseparable. The temple teaches us of the plan of salvation and reminds us why we are here on earth. We learn that we are children of a loving Heavenly Father and our lives have great purpose in

His plan. In the temple we feel closer to Him; we feel His presence, His power, and His approval. Even if we cannot attend the temple on a regular basis, having a current temple recommend and having a picture of the temple in our homes can remind us of the temple experiences we have had and the truths we have learned there.

### **4 Nephi 1**

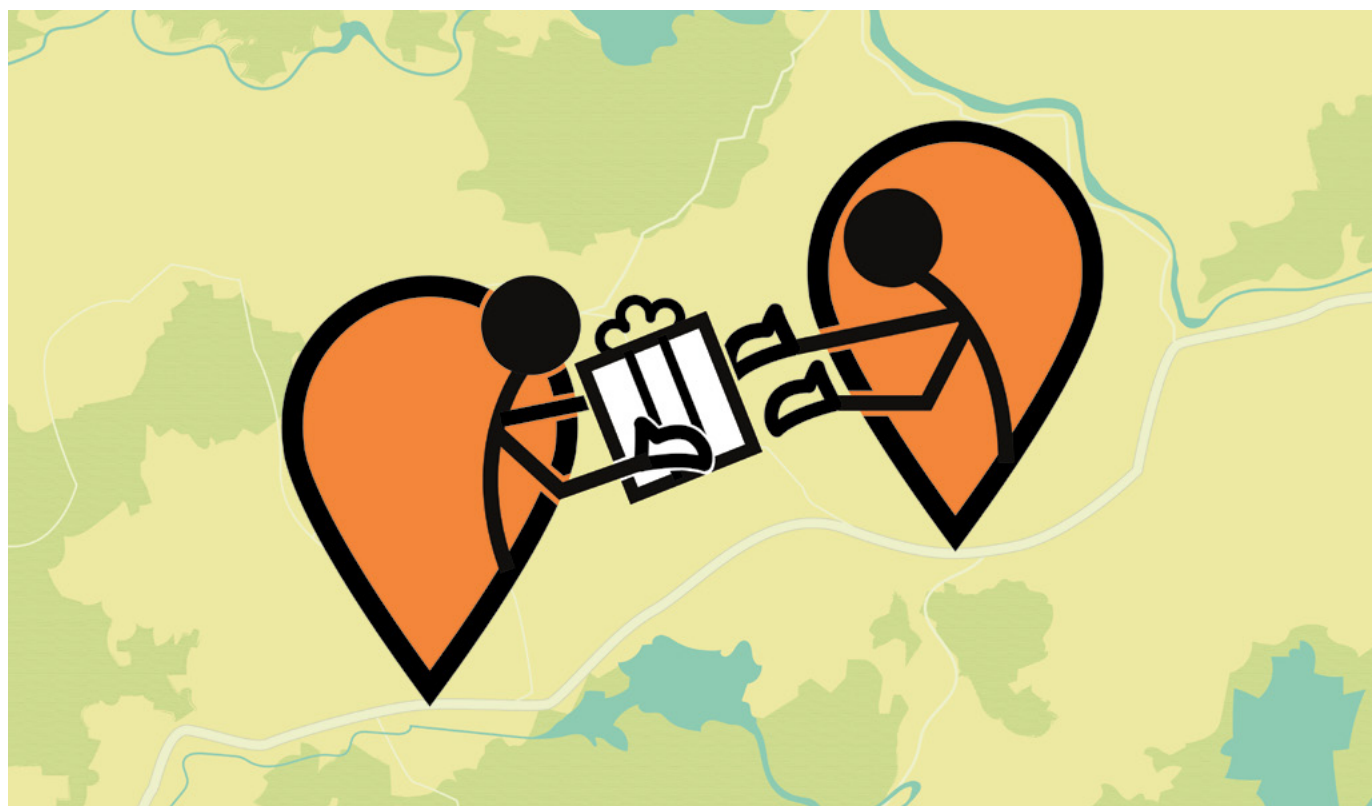
In 4 Nephi, the prophet-historian Mormon tells us what happened to the people after the Savior visited the people of Nephi. As he described these people, he noted, “There could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God” (4 Nephi 1:16).

### ***Sharing What We Have***

In verse 3, Mormon writes that these people had “all things common

among them” and “there were not rich and poor.” As we seek happiness in our own lives today, it is important for us to learn to share what we have with others.

Multiple studies have shown that time spent serving and money spent on others have a direct impact on our happiness.<sup>4</sup> It is no wonder, then, that King Benjamin told his people, “I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants” (Mosiah 4:26). We have many opportunities to help those in need through service, fast offerings, and other various funds the Church manages.





Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “Down through history, poverty has been one of humankind’s greatest and most widespread challenges. Its obvious toll is usually physical, but the spiritual and emotional damage it can bring may be even more debilitating. In any case, the great Redeemer has issued no more persistent call than for us to join Him in lifting this burden from the people.”<sup>5</sup> As we give more effort, time, and means to helping others, we will find an increase in our own happiness.

### ***Belonging to a Family***

Mormon tells us that these people “were married, and given in marriage” (4 Nephi 1:11). Being married and raising children (see verse 10) can be a great source of happiness for those who have these opportunities.

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said, “Happiness in marriage and parenthood can exceed a thousand times any other happiness.”<sup>6</sup>

But we do not have to be married or have children of our own to have relationships with family members that bring happiness. Single adults, youth, and children can take part in these blessings as well. To have happiness in family life, we must try to offer each member of the family our friendship, understanding, and love. Families can provide emotional and physical safety and a sense of belonging, which are essential to experiencing happiness.

### ***Being a Peacemaker***

Four times throughout 4 Nephi, Mormon tells us these people had “no contention” among them (see verses 2, 13, 15, and 18) “because of the love

of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people” (verse 15). Contention and happiness are polar opposites—one leads away from the other. The Savior warned the Nephites of the dangers of contention when He said, “He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention” (3 Nephi 11:29). We must be sure we make a great effort to not do or say anything that brings a spirit of contention into our workplaces, schools, and homes. Instead we must do all we can to foster a love of God in our own hearts.

Often contention arises from impatience. With the help of the Spirit, we can change our nature and become more patient. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said: “Impatience . . . is a symptom of selfishness. It is a trait



of the self-absorbed. It arises from the all-too-prevalent condition called ‘center of the universe’ syndrome, which leads people to believe that the world revolves around them and that all others are just supporting cast in the grand theater of mortality in which only they have the starring role.”<sup>7</sup>

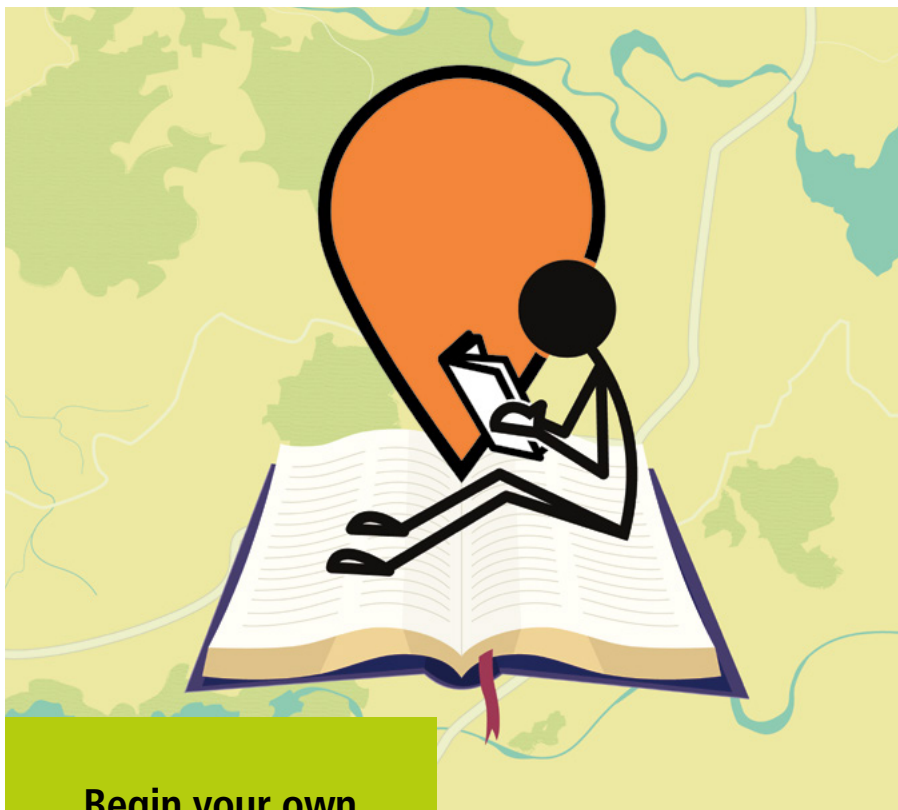
There is a better way. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) invited us to “cultivate the art of the soft answer. It will bless your homes, it will bless your lives.”<sup>8</sup>

### An Invitation to Seek Happiness

The Book of Mormon contains principles of happiness. We have covered only part of what is found in these two chapters. What could we find in the rest of the book? It would be wise to begin our own personal search of the Book of Mormon for even more guidelines to a happier life. President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) promised the Saints, “The moment you begin a serious study of the Book of Mormon . . . you will find life in greater and greater abundance.”<sup>9</sup> The Lord has given us this incredible tool. We can learn to use it to bless our own lives and the lives of those we love. ■

#### NOTES

1. Henry B. Eyring, “The Book of Mormon Will Change Your Life,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2004, 11.



**Begin your own search of the Book of Mormon for more guidelines to happiness.**

2. Christine Carter, “Happiness Is Being Socially Connected,” Oct. 31, 2008, [greatergood.berkeley.edu](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu).  
 3. Thomas S. Monson, “In Quest of the Abundant Life,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1988, 2.  
 4. See, for example, Dunn et al., “Spending Money on Others Promotes Happiness,” *Science*, vol. 319 (2008), 1687–88; Netta Weinstein and Richard M. Ryan, “When Helping Helps: Autonomous Motivation

for Prosocial Behavior and Its Influence on Well-Being for the Helper and Recipient,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 98 (2010), 222–24; and Aknin et al., “Prosocial Spending and Well-Being: Cross-Cultural Evidence for a Psychological Universal,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 104 (2013), 635–52.  
 5. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Are We Not All Beggars?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 40.  
 6. James E. Faust, “The Enriching of Marriage,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 11.  
 7. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Continue in Patience,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 57.  
 8. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Cornerstones of a Happy Home” (address given at a satellite broadcast for husbands and wives, Jan. 29, 1984), 8.  
 9. Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 7.

# Why Adversity?

By Brad Sears

I've started reading the Book of Mormon many more times than I've finished it. Each time, I begin with a renewed vigor, only to find myself stalling by the end of 1 Nephi. Thankfully, one of the book's most important and precious truths is contained in its first chapter. Nephi writes, "The tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance" (1 Nephi 1:20). So after every additional reading of 1 Nephi, I start to look for the small and simple ways in which the Lord is shaping my life and delivering me through His "tender mercies," despite whatever hard things may be going on in my life.

## A Bruised Eye and a Bruised Heart

In the past, however, I've looked for deliverance to come in the form of a stretch of life where everything runs smoothly and I don't have to deal with trials of any sort. An experience

I endured during my second semester at Brigham Young University changed my perspective.

At that time, a friend of mine took offense at something I did, although offending him had not been my intention. Things escalated to the point where we both began to lose our cool, and the argument ended with him throwing two punches at my left eye and walking away.

For the next several days, my emotions alternated between anger and shame as I walked around campus with a grotesque-looking black eye. I felt confused and wondered why the sufferer had to be me. I looked for healing, but it seemed slow in coming.

A week later, my bruises began to fade. I marveled at how expertly my body went about replacing the damaged skin with a new, unblemished layer. Something about the outward physical regeneration I was witnessing alerted me to the change that should

**In retrospect, dealing with the repercussions of a black eye and my prideful resistance to forgive has been a tender mercy in the best of ways.**

have been occurring internally as well. I began to see how silly it was for me to be consumed by such a relatively insignificant event. I prayed for forgiveness and also that I could fully forgive the friend who had wronged me. Our interactions quickly went back to normal, and I could tell that he was relieved I was not intent on holding a grudge.

I found my previous insecurities giving way to a self-image rooted in



character and integrity, not appearance. I had seen, momentarily, how things could have been if I had continued to feel angry. I was reminded that although healing most often takes time, our hearts can *always* heal if we involve God in the process.

### Reaching Higher Ground

Miraculously, the stumbling blocks that we overcome often place us on higher ground than where we started. If we think of each successive stumbling block as part of the staircase of our eternal progression, every time we fall over a block and then pick ourselves up we climb higher toward our Savior. His Atonement buoys us up as we truly repent and seek to overcome our sins. His succoring will help us endure sorrow, sickness, and painful experiences in life.

Sometimes we wonder about the purpose for trials and suffering. Adversity is necessary in our Heavenly Father's plan to help us grow spiritually and become more like the Savior. His Atonement makes it possible for us to be purified as we keep His commandments and our sacred covenants. By exercising faith in Jesus Christ, we receive strength to rise through every trial. I feel privileged to know I can find evidences of God's love for me in the good and the bad, the joy and the suffering.

In retrospect, dealing with the repercussions of a black eye and my prideful resistance to forgive has been a tender mercy in the best of ways. I am happier, and I have been taught essential lessons about the power of spiritual healing through the Atonement of my Savior, Jesus Christ. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*



### THE SAVIOR CAN HEAL US IF WE SEEK HIS HELP

"Because of His atoning experience in mortality, our Savior is able to comfort, heal, and strengthen all men and women everywhere, but I believe He does so only for those who seek Him and ask for His help. The Apostle James taught, 'Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up' (James 4:10). We qualify for that blessing when we believe in Him and pray for His help."

**Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Strengthened by the Atonement of Jesus Christ," *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 64.**





**By Elder Dallin H. Oaks**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles  
**And Kristen M. Oaks**

# TRUST IN HEAVEN'S TIMING

*Elder Oaks and his wife, Kristen, share encouraging counsel with single members of the Church.*

**ELDER OAKS:** I am very concerned about the singles in the Church. I love them. I address some of their needs by quoting from a valuable article published in the *Ensign* some years ago. Leaders and members in residential stakes, this is about singles, but the message is for you:

“The situation of a Church member who is single can be illustrated by a simple analogy. Imagine that your favorite hobby is stargazing and you’ve just joined a stargazing club. You come to your first club activity eager to participate. It’s a cold night, but you’re not concerned: most of the club members are wearing club jackets, and you’ve been told you should be able to get one as well. But there is no jacket for you. You ask about it, and you are told to keep looking and that if you do your best, you will find a jacket when the time is right.

“Meanwhile, you are getting pretty cold and a little worried. And you notice that most of the other club members are talking about how nice and warm their jackets are. In fact, throughout the evening the topic surfaces continually in various forms: how to wash and dry your jacket, how to add extra pockets, how to mend it, and so forth. Some of the club members notice you don’t have a jacket. ‘You really need a jacket for these activities,’ they tell you. ‘Why don’t you have one yet?’

“. . . This analogy . . . serve[s] to show how awkward it can sometimes feel to be a single member of a conventional ward.”<sup>1</sup>





Fortunately, there are family wards in which single members feel included and know that their contributions are valued. I hope this is true in all of our residential stakes.

My favorite former single is my wife, Kristen. I have asked her to share some remarks.

### Unrealized Blessings

**SISTER OAKS:** I married Elder Oaks at age 53, two years after the death of his beloved wife, June. We have much empathy and love for those of you who may be single or alone. We speak to you from our hearts and experience.

When I was single, I remember wondering how I could have such a beautiful patriarchal blessing full of promises—many of which did not seem realized. I thought, “Am I doing something wrong to delay my blessings?” This was much like the young man who asked the Savior, “What lack I yet?” (Matthew 19:20).

A close friend shared with me her experience with these same feelings. She said, “I found myself just repeating the same prayer over and over again. I prayed about finding my husband. It seemed fruitless, and I wondered if my prayer was getting through.”

Then she added, “It was then that I decided to pray a different type of prayer. I told the Lord that I had covenanted with Him, and however He wanted to use me to build the kingdom, I would accept. This



I began to involve myself in ward activities that brought me together in a very personal and loving way with members of my ward.

perspective made me stronger and more patient. I began to feel Heavenly Father’s direction much more in my life. Of course, I still wanted my blessings, but I wanted to [receive them] on the Lord’s timetable.”

### Making Adjustments

I thought about my friend’s comments. I made some adjustments. I changed my behavior. I began to spend less time alone with the computer and began to involve myself in ward activities, like cooking and cleaning up—activities I had previously shunned like the plague but that brought me together in a very personal and loving

way with members of my ward.

I changed my study of the scriptures. Through the scriptures our ability to receive revelation is increased. We can’t recognize the Lord’s voice unless we are familiar with the scriptures. By studying the scriptures, we see how He operates and talks to us. We can’t differentiate the counterfeit voices around us unless we are familiar with His word. The Lord can speak personally to us, provide protection, and direct us to build His kingdom.

I changed my prayers. I focused more on an eternal perspective. I asked for opportunities to serve and to help others. As a direct result, I began to better understand the needs of those around me. At church I began to notice others who sat alone, and I noticed

weary young mothers who needed a hand with their many young children. I began to feel impressed to make calls to people who seemed to need my help at that exact moment. Some calls seemed routine; yet others were life changing. One call was to a family who had a flood in their basement and another to a sister so despondent from a broken heart that she no longer desired to live. Those calls were important, and only under the guidance of the Spirit did I make them.

### What More Can I Do That Is Right?

My original question had been, “Am I doing something wrong?” I learned that this is the wrong question. My prayers, scripture study, and behavior began to reflect a different question: “What more can I do that is right?”

I wasn’t doing anything wrong—I had simply forgotten to maintain an eternal perspective. I had overlooked the many ways I could be an instrument for doing good, for doing the Lord’s will. Heavenly Father’s timing is not our timing, and we have to trust in Him.

Never be discouraged. I realized that the next thing we need to be working on should not discourage us or turn us away from the gospel. By praying and reading the scriptures and continuing to have faith in the promises of Heavenly Father, we can change our focus and we can learn His will for us.



In my prayers  
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around me.

During my wait on the Lord and through life experiences—both trying and joyous—I learned how much our Heavenly Father loves us and how much He delights to bless and protect us. I came to know that this Church is not simply a church; it is the Lord’s kingdom on earth. I came to realize more fully the power of our Savior’s Atonement and the wisdom of King Benjamin’s words: “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17).

Faith is a real and vital force, and we can magnify it through our actions. Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85)

of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “Faith is a gift of God bestowed as a reward for personal righteousness. It is always given when righteousness is present, and the greater the measure of obedience to God’s laws the greater will be the endowment of faith.”<sup>2</sup>

What a promise. We can do it!

We live in perilous times—times that will try men’s souls. It is a time for us to step up and be the best we can be. My hope is that each of us will turn to our Heavenly Father and ask, “What more can I do that is right?” If we do, I know that He will help us and bless us. ■

*From a broadcast to 146 stakes in Utah County, Utah, originating from the Marriott Center at Brigham Young University on September 16, 2012.*

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1. Kathy Grant, “Singles in the Ward Family,” *Ensign*, June 2002, 45.
2. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 264.









By Elder  
Quentin L. Cook  
Of the Quorum  
of the Twelve  
Apostles

# THE JOY OF Family History Work

*Elijah's promise makes it clear that each of us has an obligation to the generations that precede us and to the generations that follow us.*

**N**ever forget that family history—and the temple ordinances enabled by it—is an essential part of the work of salvation and that participation in this sacred work for the dead blesses the lives of the living. It strengthens our faith in and commitment to the gospel, helps us resist temptation, draws our families closer together, and strengthens our wards and stakes.

I want to emphasize the “find, take, and teach” of family history work. By *find*, we mean use the FamilySearch website or the *My Family: Stories That Bring Us Together* booklet<sup>1</sup> to find the name of one or more of your ancestors or their descendants. Then *take* these names to the temple, or share them with others so they can take them. (When possible, go to the temple as a family.) Finally, *teach* your family and then teach others to do the same.

Our Father's plan is about families, symbolized by a great tree. For a tree to live and grow, it needs both roots and branches. We likewise need to be connected to our roots—our parents, grandparents, and other ancestors—as well as to our branches—our children, grandchildren, and other descendants. Several poignant scriptures use the analogy of a tree with roots and branches representing the family (see Isaiah 11:1; Jacob 5).



*With Moses, Elijah appeared to the Savior and Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration in the meridian of time.*

### **The Mission of Elijah**

The prophet Malachi, in the last book of the Old Testament, prophesied of a time when Elijah the prophet would return to the earth “before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord . . . [to] turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest [He] come and smite the earth with a curse” (Malachi 4:5–6).

When the angel Moroni appeared to 17-year-old Joseph Smith in 1823, he quoted these same verses from Malachi but rendered them differently. Moroni said on that September night:

“Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

“. . . And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole

earth would be utterly wasted at his coming” (Joseph Smith—History 1:38–39).

Four times the angel Moroni repeated Malachi’s words to the boy Joseph.

Imagine if all we knew about this great prophet Elijah was what Joseph Smith knew from the Bible. From that book of scripture we know that Elijah lived during a troubled time, almost 900 years before Christ’s birth. The evil duo Ahab and Jezebel reigned in wickedness over Israel as king and queen, inducing subjects to worship the false god Baal and murdering the Lord’s prophets, among others.

Elijah was a remarkable prophet. Christians and Jews the world over accept the Old Testament account of Elijah.

The scriptures record how Elijah’s life was miraculously preserved and how he saved a widow from famine and raised her son from the dead (see 1 Kings 17). Elijah describes how “a still small voice” reassured him that he was not alone in his devotion to Jehovah

(see 1 Kings 19:4–14). Finally, Elijah was translated and carried into heaven without tasting death (see 2 Kings 2:7–12).

Only through modern revelation is Elijah’s complete role revealed. He was the last prophet to hold the sealing power of the Melchizedek Priesthood before the time of Jesus Christ. With Moses, he appeared to the Savior and Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration in the meridian of time (see Matthew 17:1–4; Mark 9:2–5). As a seminal element of the Restoration, Elijah appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in 1836 in the Kirtland Temple. There, he again restored the keys of the sealing power, this time for sealing families in this dispensation in fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy (see D&C 110:13–16). Because Elijah was sent in this dispensation, the fulness of salvation is available to both the living and the dead.

Elijah’s mission is facilitated by what is sometimes called the spirit of Elijah, which, as President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught, is “a manifestation of the Holy Ghost bearing witness of the divine nature of the family.”<sup>2</sup> That is why we often call the manifestations of the Holy Ghost associated with family history and temple work the spirit of Elijah.

Of those who have passed on before us, we read in the Doctrine and Covenants that “we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect” (D&C 128:18). What does this mean? We find the answer in scripture:

“And now, my dearly beloved brethren and sisters, let me assure you that these are principles in relation to the dead and the living that cannot be lightly passed over, as pertaining to our salvation. *For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation*, as Paul says concerning the fathers—that they without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect” (D&C 128:15; emphasis added).

“Their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation” means that the salvation of the whole human family is interdependent and interconnected—like the roots and branches of a great tree.

## Hold a Family Tree Gathering

Family commitments and expectations should be at the top of our list of priorities. They will protect our divine destiny. For families to get started on their family history work, I challenge them to hold what I call a “Family Tree Gathering.” This should be a recurring effort. Everyone could bring to these gatherings existing family histories, stories, and photos, including cherished possessions of grandparents and parents. The *My Family* booklet could be utilized to help record family information, stories, and photos that could then be uploaded to Family Tree on [FamilySearch.org](http://FamilySearch.org).

However, this cannot be only a one-time effort. It requires a lifetime of diligence. For those who are looking for more fruitful ways to observe the Sabbath day as a family, the hastening of this sacred work is fertile ground.

The center of family history is the home. We need to help our young people develop a love for this work. Many of our youth have already had their hearts turned to their





fathers. Our young people are excited to learn about the lives of family members—where they came from and how they lived. Some become so excited about the work that they lose track of time and are disappointed when they have to stop.

Young people love stories and photos, and now they have easy access to the technological expertise to preserve those memories in Family Tree on [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org). They can find family members who need temple ordinances through a newly released “record-hinting” experience on [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org).<sup>3</sup>

These record hints about family members are powered by the indexing efforts of Church members worldwide. These records—and there are millions of them—will help you find more ancestors who may not yet be connected to your family and who need ordinances performed for them in temples. Other websites that use hinting technology with records from around the world include Ancestry.com,



Findmypast.com, and MyHeritage.com, which all Church members can access for free.

Although the center of family history is the home, the Church will continue to provide family history centers where families can discover their ancestors together and access the Internet if it isn't readily available at home.

All worthy members of the Church ages 12 and up can obtain a limited-use temple recommend to perform baptisms for the dead after an interview with one or two ecclesiastical leaders. This includes all new converts.

Having a signed recommend that you can present at any temple is a joy. A recommend also carries with it sacred protection. As President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015) said:

“No work is more of a protection to this Church than temple work and the family history research that supports it. No work is more spiritually refining. No work we do gives us more power. No work requires a higher standard of righteousness.

“Our labors in the temple cover us with a shield and a protection, both individually and as a people.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Our Obligation to Our Ancestors**

Family history is a family affair, but not all family members face the same situation. Many of our ancestors have died without being married or having children. Some divorced, and some married several times. Many had children who were disabled or who died young. Everyone has a story.

Every soul, living or dead, who is accountable for his or her actions needs the blessing of sacred temple ordinances, and we can help our family members receive them. It doesn't matter if you are single, whether your husband or wife is less active, or whether you yourself are less active or even a member of the Church, you too can assist in the salvation of souls. There can be no more important, fulfilling, or glorious work.

The head of this work is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. After His death, He opened the door to the prison that held the dead captive:



“He organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness, even to all the spirits of men. . . .

“And the chosen messengers went forth to declare the acceptable day of the Lord and proclaim liberty to the captives who were bound, even unto all who would repent of their sins and receive the gospel” (D&C 138:30–31).

Our message is simple, but it is profound. It does not require soaring rhetoric or complex doctrine. It is about having a broken heart and a contrite spirit and a commitment to follow our Savior.

As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I promise that if you look beyond the bonds of time and mortality and help those who cannot help themselves, you will be blessed

with more closeness and joy in your family and with the divine protection afforded those who are faithful in His service.

Elijah’s promise makes it clear that each of us has an obligation to the generations that precede us and to the generations that follow us. May you parents, youth, and children find joy and be blessed in every other aspect of your life as you fulfill the obligation that has been sent from heaven to participate in the sacred work for the dead. ■

*From an address, “Our Father’s Plan Is about Families,” delivered at the RootsTech 2015 Family History Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, on February 14, 2015. Visit [RootsTech.org](http://RootsTech.org) to learn more about the 2016 RootsTech conference.*

#### NOTES

1. For information on the *My Family* booklet, go to [familysearch.org/myfamily](http://familysearch.org/myfamily).
2. Russell M. Nelson, “A New Harvest Time,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 34.
3. The Record Hints feature shows “the results of an extensive search of [FamilySearch’s] collection looking for your ancestors” ([familysearch.org/blog/en/give-research-boost-record-hints/](http://familysearch.org/blog/en/give-research-boost-record-hints/)).
4. Boyd K. Packer, “The Holy Temple,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2010, 35.

*The head of this work is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. After His death, He opened the door to the prison that held the dead captive.*



# CHANGED BY THE Book OF Mormon

*Four Latter-day Saints share how their lives were changed dramatically by the words of the Book of Mormon.*

In the Book of Mormon, we read that “the word . . . had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword” (Alma 31:5). Similarly, Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that the “divinely placed” messages recorded in the Book of Mormon have the power to help us “resolve difficulties in our . . . lives.”<sup>1</sup>

The following stories show how members facing serious challenges turned to the Book of Mormon and found divinely placed messages of peace, strength, and comfort that helped them change their lives and find happiness.

## **Four Verses Struck Me**

Following my freshman year at military school, I returned home intending to serve a mission but realized I wasn’t ready. I hadn’t been completely active in the Church and had never read the entire Book of Mormon. I didn’t even know it contained a promise about how to gain a testimony of it. I only knew a simple principle my mother had taught me: if I prayed, Heavenly Father would answer.

I decided I needed a knowledge of the truth of the Book of Mormon. I began to read, always starting and ending with a prayer.

One night I came across four verses that struck me:

“For he is the same yesterday, today, and forever; and the way is prepared for all men

from the foundation of the world, if it so be that they repent and come unto him.

“For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round.

“Therefore remember, O man, for all thy doings thou shalt be brought into judgment.

“Wherefore, if ye have sought to do wickedly in the days of your probation, then ye are found unclean before the judgment-seat of God; and no unclean thing can dwell with God; wherefore, ye must be cast off forever” (1 Nephi 10:18–21).



As I read I felt the Spirit like never before. I knew that Heavenly Father loved me. I knew that He answers the prayers of those who diligently seek. And I knew that I wanted to live with my family forever and did not want to be “cast off.”

Prepared to make the necessary changes in my life to make these desires possible, I did so and served an honorable mission. I am now a military officer with a wonderful wife and two children to whom I am sealed. I am happier than I have ever been. I know it is all possible because of a book that keeps its promise and can change the life of any who read it.

Michael Casper, Colorado, USA

### Words That Brought Peace

I had struggled with several addictions. Finally, when the state temporarily took my children, my life fell apart and I knew I needed to change. I turned to my Heavenly Father and the Savior for help. As I knelt to pray, I felt the door to the Savior’s Atonement begin to open for me. I was living in the slum of addiction, and in one of the happiest moments of my life, I felt the Lord take my hand and pull me out.

After a long, heartfelt prayer, I found my Book of Mormon and began reading. My soul hungered—I couldn’t read fast enough. Through the Holy Ghost, the words of the Book of Mormon filled me.

I began a treatment program. It wasn’t easy, but my daily prayers and Book of



*Michael and Kara Casper  
on their wedding day*

Mormon study kept me going. A scripture passage that particularly brought me peace and strength offered the following promise:

“And because of your diligence . . . with the word in nourishing it, . . . behold, by and by ye shall pluck the fruit thereof, which is most precious . . . ; and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst.

“Then, my brethren, ye shall reap the rewards of your faith, and your diligence, and patience, and long-suffering, waiting for the tree to bring forth fruit unto you” (Alma 32:42–43).

### GIVEN FOR OUR INSTRUCTION

“And the Book of Mormon and the holy scriptures are given of me for your instruction; and the power of my Spirit quickeneth all things.”

**Doctrine and Covenants  
33:16**





## IN OUR MINDS AND HEARTS

“It is not sufficient that the Book of Mormon be found in our homes; its principles must be captured in our minds and hearts. Through consistent reading, prayerful pondering, and conscientious application, its teachings will become an essential part of the fabric of our lives.”

**Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Power of the Book of Mormon in My Life,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1984, 11.**

I attended my Church meetings and met with my bishop regularly. I wanted to be worthy to take the sacrament.

I attended Addiction Recovery Program meetings, offered through LDS Family Services. Eventually, I became a program facilitator. I could now reach out to others who were struggling and share how the Book of Mormon played an essential role in my recovery.

The day I received my temple endowment was beautiful. I loved who I was becoming. My children could now trust me and look up to me. I am so grateful for the Book of Mormon.

Kim Christensen Patience, Utah, USA

## Faith to Find New Jobs

One Sunday, our Relief Society lesson included a discussion about Nephi’s broken bow in the Book of Mormon and how his family murmured (see 1 Nephi 16:18–32). The lesson was about increasing our faith by decreasing our murmuring, but it struck a different chord in my heart. I had come to Church fasting that day with much concern about the loss of my job and of the much-needed income for our family. To my mind, the account of the broken bow seemed to be a parable for our current situation. My ability to help provide for my family was gone just like Nephi’s bow.

Nephi was inspired to make a new bow and then went to his father, whom he loved and respected, for advice and direction about where to hunt for food for their families. I came away from this lesson with increased faith in my Heavenly Father and His deep concern for us in our daily responsibilities. I knew with surety that I could seek His help for a new job and turn to those whom I loved and respected and receive wise counsel. Three weeks later my husband lost his job. The account of Nephi’s broken bow gave us the strength we needed to face both situations with peace and renewed commitment to do as Nephi had done.

Seeking wise counsel, I consulted with LDS Employment Services and obtained a new position that has provided me promotional opportunities. My husband, our



Michael and Kim Patience

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF PATIENCE FAMILY AND STORES FAMILY



ward's Scoutmaster, prayed for a job that would allow him weekends off so that he could attend to his Scouts. It took him a bit longer to find his job, but find it he did.

Ardith Russell, Nevada, USA

### Strength and Deliverance

Some years ago, I was paying the price for some poor choices I had made. During this time of deep personal struggle, I turned to the Book of Mormon and found great strength and comfort within its pages.

As I read, I was reminded that "God is mindful of every people" (Alma 26:37), no matter their circumstances. "He inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female" (2 Nephi 26:33). He remembers all of His children, including me, and He loves me in spite of my mistakes.

Most important, as I read I came to know the Lord and His Atonement more personally than I ever had. Nephi wrote, "And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (2 Nephi 25:26). I came to truly understand that as I relied on Christ and followed His example, I could be cleansed.

Just as the Liahona guided Lehi's family, the Book of Mormon gives me direction and counsel "according to the faith and



Benjamin Stores family

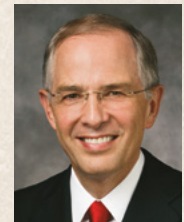
diligence and heed" I exercise in my life (1 Nephi 16:28). I can say with Alma, "I have been supported under trials and troubles of every kind, yea, and in all manner of afflictions; yea, God has delivered me from prison, and from bonds, and from death; yea, and I do put my trust in him, and he will still deliver me" (Alma 36:27).

My in-depth study of the Book of Mormon reminded me that through the gospel of Jesus Christ, we can experience joy in this life and eternal life hereafter with our families. My fiancée supported me through my struggles. After she returned from serving her mission, we were married and now have a young son and have been sealed in the Portland Oregon Temple. We will forever give thanks for the comfort the Book of Mormon brought us during our time of tribulation. It truly is the greatest book. ■

Benjamin D. Stores, Oregon, USA

#### NOTE

1. Richard G. Scott, "The Power of the Book of Mormon in My Life," *Ensign*, Oct. 1984, 9.



#### READ IT AGAIN

"[The Book of Mormon] provides a spiritual and tangible witness of the truthfulness of the Restoration. When was the last time that you read the Book of Mormon from cover to cover? Read it again. It will increase your faith."

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Faith Is Not by Chance, but by Choice," *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 67.



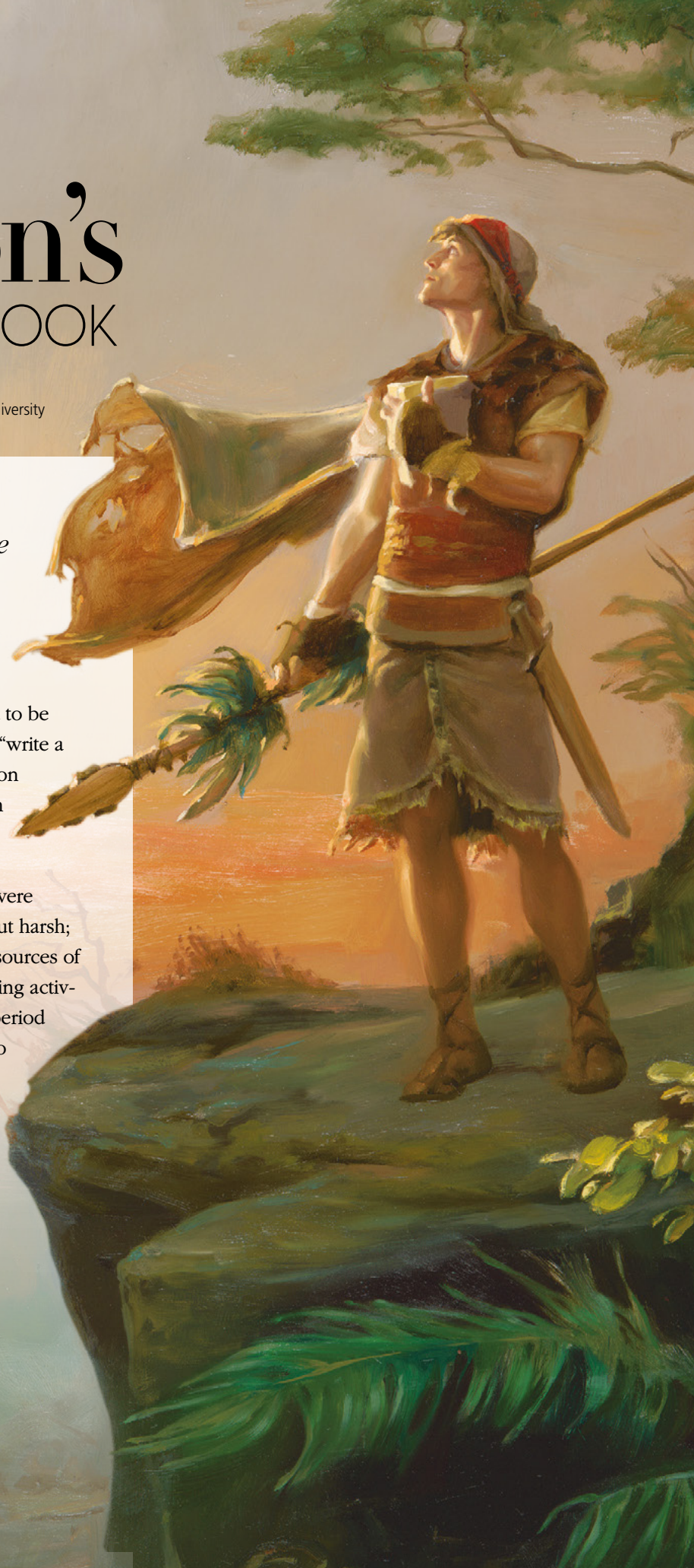
# Mormon's MIRACULOUS BOOK

By John L. Sorenson

Professor Emeritus of Anthropology, Brigham Young University

*Mormon carried out the daunting task of abridging the Nephite records in an effective and miraculous manner.*

**W**hen Mormon saw that his Nephite people were about to be exterminated, he set out to “write a small abridgment” of their records (Mormon 5:9). This project began at the last location where the Nephites camped before they finally gathered to the land of Cumorah. The subsistence conditions the Nephites were enduring could not have been anything but harsh; the people were refugees with uncertain sources of food, clothing, and shelter. Mormon’s writing activity probably extended into the four-year period of preparation for the final battle agreed to by the Lamanite commander, but in any case the abridged history was completed and the archive was buried in the Hill Cumorah well before the final conflict (see Mormon 6:6).







PAINTING BY JOSEPH BRICKEY

It is clear that the creation of the Book of Mormon was a daunting feat, especially given the “field” conditions in which Mormon had to work and his competing duties in commanding his forces as they prepared for the final battle. And understandably, the final product isn’t without imperfections.<sup>1</sup>

### **Limitations on Mormon’s Work**

Consider some of the limitations Mormon faced in realizing his aim:

1. The size of his new record would have to be severely restricted. The book had to be portable enough that Moroni could carry it to a safe location.
2. The physical product must be prepared to endure for centuries.
3. Of the possible writing systems Mormon could use, only one was concise enough to fit in the book.
4. The narrative had to be of practical length, faithful to the facts of history in the records he was summarizing, and phrased in a manner he considered appropriate.
5. The work schedule was short. Mormon had little more than three years to do all of the compiling and writing of over 600 years of history. He may not have had time even to read through all the archival records in his hands, and there surely would be no time for stylistic fine-tuning or reediting.

Given all these constraints, how did Mormon choose what information to include and what to omit?

In some ways his inspired accomplishment in producing the Book of Mormon was just as surprising and admirable as Joseph Smith’s later achievement in translating the record in such short order.



## Choosing a Writing System

The Book of Mormon text reports at several points the difficulty the scribes had in making their statements clear (see Jacob 4:1; Mormon 9:33; Ether 12:23–25, 40). Mormon said, “There are many things which, according to our language, we are not able to write” (3 Nephi 5:18). “Our language” in this sense obviously refers to their writing system, not to their spoken tongue. Moroni further tells us that there would have been “no imperfection” (Mormon 9:33) had they used Hebrew script, an alphabetic system.

The “characters” used for writing were called by Nephite historians “reformed Egyptian” (Mormon 9:32). This system consisted of “the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians” (1 Nephi 1:2). Egyptian glyphs were occasionally used in ancient Palestine to write the sounds of Hebrew words.<sup>2</sup> From the sample of characters in “the Anthon Transcript,”<sup>3</sup> which purports to be a copy of characters from the plates Joseph Smith translated, it is apparent that they were not modeled directly on the Egyptian writing in everyday use in Lehi’s time. They look more like signs of hieratic Egyptian, an older, parallel sign system still used by the Egyptians when they employed brush and ink instead of engraving on stone.

The hieratic system was more concise than the alphabetic Hebrew script but also more ambiguous, because a large majority of the characters represented whole, complex morphemes or words (today called logograms) rather than sounds spelled out to form words as in an alphabet. The meaning of each logogram had to be memorized. This ambiguity may have been part of the problem of “the placing of our words” (Ether 12:25) spoken of by Moroni.

An additional cause of “imperfections” could have been that since hieratic Egyptian was mainly used to write cursively, its use to engrave a record on metal plates could mean that minor slips of an engraver’s hand without an effective “eraser” at hand to make corrections could result in misreading the characters.

## Many Sets of Records

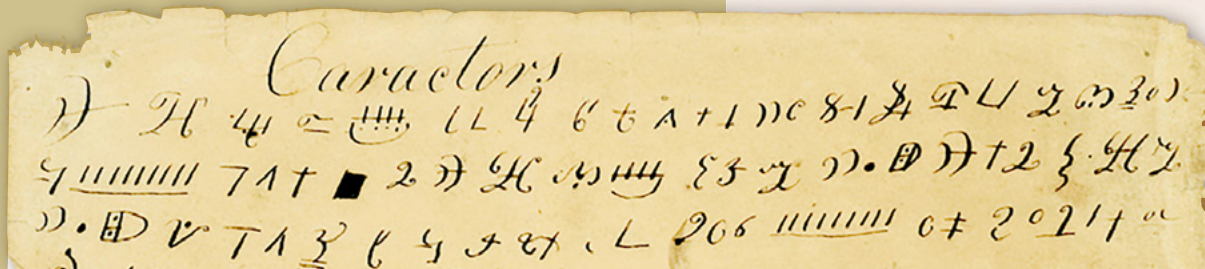
In addition to the large plates of Nephi, supplementary documents were used at certain points in creating Mormon’s narrative. He noted several times his dependence upon “[Alma’s] own record” (Alma 5:2; chapter 7, heading; 35:16). He also utilized “the records of Helaman” and “of his sons” (introduction to the book of Helaman), and we also read of the “record of Nephi” (3 Nephi 5:10).

Sometimes Mormon also depended on other original writings, some of which he did not distinctly identify. Some possible supplementary records include:

- The text of King Benjamin’s great discourse (Mosiah 2:9–Mosiah 5).
- The record on the plates of Zeniff (Mosiah 9–22).
- Alma’s first-person preaching at Zarahemla, Gideon, and Melek (Alma 5, 7, and 8).
- The story of Alma’s and Amulek’s experiences at Ammonihah (Alma 9–14).
- The detailed account of the ministry of the sons of Mosiah and their companions among the Lamanites (Alma 17–27).
- Alma’s discourses to his sons Helaman, Shiblon, and Corianton (Alma 36–42).

Moroni also included his translation and abstract of Ether’s history of the Jaredites, prepared and appended by Moroni as the book of Ether, as well as excerpts of teachings and letters from his father, Mormon (Moroni 7–9).<sup>4</sup>

The key sacred records were kept on metal to ensure their permanence; accounts kept on any more perishable substance would, they assumed, become unreadable over time (see Jacob 4:2). The use of copies of the scriptures on paper for everyday use is implied by the burning of those in the possession of Alma’s converts at Ammonihah (see Alma 14:8; compare Mosiah 2:8; 29:4; and Alma 63:12). Metal plates were not easy to manufacture (see Mormon 8:5) and engrave, so they were in limited supply.







Drawing on the varied materials available to him, Mormon composed his history “according to the knowledge and the understanding which God” had given him (Words of Mormon 1:9). Divine assistance was sometimes direct and specific, as when the Lord instructed him not to include a lengthier treatment of Jesus’s teachings to the Nephites (see 3 Nephi 26:6–12), but no indication is given that additional historical information was revealed to him.

### “And Thus We See”

Mormon said several times that his abridgment could not treat more than a fraction of the historical material found on the large plates of Nephi (see Words of Mormon 1:5; 3 Nephi 5:8; 26:6; see also Jacob 3:13–14; 4:1). How, then, did he make his selection of materials?

His primary criterion comes through repeatedly in his book. The aim was to ensure that his readers, especially the future inhabitants of the American promised land and particularly Lehi’s descendants, grasp the significance for them of the promise and prophecy given to father Lehi: “Inasmuch as ye will keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land” (Jarom 1:9). Actually, it is Amaron’s *negative* version of Lehi’s dictum to which Mormon gives prime attention: “Inasmuch as ye will *not* keep my commandments ye shall *not* prosper in the land” (Omni 1:6; emphasis added).

Mormon’s lessons draw the contrast between good and evil dramatically. The people in his record emphasize obedience and virtue on the one hand versus stubborn villainy on the other. He describes scoundrels as thoroughly evil and deserving of their fates; he describes heroes as praiseworthy in almost all respects. Characters in the gray zone are barely noted. Mormon wanted to leave no question in the

minds of his readers that good and bad are polar opposites (note Mormon’s own words on that contrast in Moroni 7:5–19).

Mormon certainly colored some of his reporting with inspired personal interpretation. This stance is often signaled by use of a phrase like “and thus we see” (for instance, in Alma 42:4, 7, 14; Helaman 3:23–31; 6:34–40).

Mormon and Moroni present their “brief” record to their future readers as a unique kind of interpretative history. They conferred it on the ages to come not as a historian’s history but as a powerful moral message intended to school readers in the lessons the two men had learned in long, arduous service to their people and to God. They used the best sources available in the most efficacious way they knew how. The labor and dedication their work displays have been for the gain of all people in our day.

They have my profound thanks. ■

### NOTES

1. For instance, minor errors (the equivalent of modern “typos”) may be among the “faults” alluded to by Moroni on the title page of the Book of Mormon that are “the mistakes of men.” They include the erroneous report of the capture of the city of Nephihah (Alma 51:26; contrast Alma 59:5) and a mistake where the same event is said in one passage to have taken place in the 26th year of the judges (Alma 56:9) and in another in the 28th year (Alma 53:22–23). Such flaws show the human side of the historian’s task, although they need not cause us any serious problem in reading the account.
2. See John A. Tvedtnes and Stephen D. Ricks, “Jewish and Other Semitic Texts Written in Egyptian Characters,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1996), 156–63; and John A. Tvedtnes, “Linguistic Implications of the Tel-Arad Ostraca,” *Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology*, no. 127 (1971).
3. See B. H. Roberts, *New Witnesses for God*, 3 vols. (1909), 2:93–104.
4. For more on the different sources of the record, see “A Brief Explanation about the Book of Mormon” in the Book of Mormon.

# When Others Prayed for Me

By David R. Whiting

It's a common scenario: The bishop begins a meeting, announces the hymn and prayer—but before sitting down, he explains that someone in the ward is struggling and requests the ward members' prayers in his or her behalf.

I have heard requests like these many times, and as a leader, I have been the one to make that request. Sometimes a bishop or Relief Society president asks that we pray for an individual or family in the ward. Sometimes we are asked to pray for the prophet and his counselors, that the Lord may strengthen them. Sometimes we are counseled to pray for our government leaders, that they may be guided to make righteous decisions.

Although I usually complied by remembering these people in my prayers, I never gave much thought as to how the prayers were being received by the person for whom we prayed.

That changed when my ward was asked to pray for *me*. One evening, I became violently ill. My wife called the paramedics and I was transported to the hospital. I passed in and out of consciousness and eventually awoke in the intensive care unit with a team of doctors and nurses working around the clock to monitor and treat me. During that time, many prayers were offered up in my behalf, thanks to loving friends, relatives, and ward members.

On my first day in the hospital, I was very disoriented

because of my illness and the side effects of the medicine I was taking. By the end of my second day in the hospital, however, my mind was much more functional, and I offered a heartfelt prayer.

I regretted that I had not been able to pray sooner. Then I realized that during the time I could not pray myself, others had been praying for me. Praying for me—the idea took on a whole new meaning. I realized that these wonderful people were doing something that, at the time, I could not do for myself. They knelt before the Lord and spoke for me; they used their strength when mine had failed. I felt a great sense of gratitude.

Certainly our prayers for others cannot supplant their own faith or undermine their agency, nor can our requests supersede the will of God. But as we unite in prayer for those in need, we can bring about much good. In Mosiah 27, for example, we learn that Alma the Younger was led to repentance in part because of the fervent prayers of his father and the members of the Church (see Mosiah 27:14). I know that there are many who can benefit from our prayers.

I am so grateful for the strength I received from the prayers of others; I will never again take lightly the request to pray for someone. It is a sweet blessing and a great responsibility to kneel in someone's behalf. ■

*The author lives in Arizona, USA.*





*I realized that during the time I could not pray for myself, others had been praying for me.*



**PRAYING FOR OTHERS**

“Petitioning Heavenly Father for the blessings we desire in our personal lives is good and proper. However, praying earnestly for others . . . is also an important element of meaningful prayer. Just as expressing gratitude more often in our prayers enlarges the conduit for revelation, so praying for others with all of the energy of our souls increases our capacity to hear and to heed the voice of the Lord.”

**Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Pray Always,” Ensign, Nov. 2008, 43.**



# When a Child Leaves the Church

*We can embrace the principle that our children are blessed with agency, even when they use it to head in directions we don't agree with.*

**By Robin Zenger Baker**

**W**eeks had passed since my adult daughter had moved to a new city, and each Sunday that she missed church brought me the same concerns. Would she ever return to church? I tried everything I could think of to get her there: encouragement, logic, pleading, acting as her personal alarm clock, prayer, fasting, even calling her bishop. Since we lived 2,000 miles (3,220 km) apart, it was difficult for me to attend with her, but I even tried that!

I continually imagined that if I could just tweak the situation a little, my daughter would reestablish her spiritual trajectory. I felt I just needed the right person—her visiting teacher, her bishop, a friend or family member—to be placed in her path to say or do just the thing that would steer her back. But nothing was working. My head spun with worry, and my heart filled with guilt and anguish that I had failed her as a parent.

Many others share my experience. When children leave the gospel path, it can be very difficult for parents who remain faithful to cope. One mother was so upset by her daughter's choices that she said it felt painful to breathe. A father shared that he felt his children were rejecting him and his way of life. A young mother worried that her own

young children might someday question themselves out of the Church.

How do we cope with these painful feelings when family members choose to leave the Church? There are several things we can do.

## **Learn from Others Who Have Struggled**

Some of the most righteous families in the scriptures struggled with rebellious children. Sariah and Lehi had children who abandoned their parents' teachings (see 1 Nephi 2:8–12). So did Adam and Eve (see Genesis 4:8). Even our heavenly parents sorrowed when a third of their spirit children chose another path (see D&C 29:36). The plan of happiness includes agency. And that means that even members of righteous families may choose to reject gospel principles. We can gain comfort from the stories of struggling families in the scriptures. We gain a better understanding of agency and empathy, and that understanding can help us heal and move ahead.

## **Recognize Our Children Are Also God's**

When her teenage son started questioning his beliefs, one mother became overwhelmed with feelings of guilt and failure. While thinking of how she could have parented





differently, she received a merciful impression: “He is *not* only your child. I love him even more than you, and I’m not feeling guilty about him or any of my other wandering children.” From that moment on, this mother was able to let go of the guilt and focus instead on what a lovely child of God her son was.

### **Focus on Success**

Sometimes parents struggle because they do not completely understand the teaching that “no other success can compensate for failure in the home.”<sup>1</sup> Success and failure are not easily defined. As Elder John K. Carmack, a former member of the Seventy, explains, “Because this statement was intended to inspire parents to become or stay involved with their children, it should not be taken to mean that parents who have indeed put great time, effort, and sacrifice into parenting, and yet who have still not reaped the desired rewards, have failed.”<sup>2</sup> We need to celebrate the good qualities of our children and the happy moments we shared. We should embrace the principle that our family members are blessed with agency, however they may use it.

### **Adjust Our Expectations**

While we hope family members will follow paths we have chosen, they must choose for themselves to receive the blessings of the gospel. Elder Carmack suggests that instead of fighting this reality, parents may need to “adjust their present expectations and approach, accepting things as they are rather than continuing in turmoil.”<sup>3</sup>

A mother felt frustrated and sad as she realized her son would not go on a mission. Eventually she recognized that she needed to let go of the thought that her son had to go on a mission in order for her to be happy. “I was finally able to realize, this is not about me,” she said. “Each child’s life is *their* life. I’m just their mother. I don’t own them.”

### **Gain Insight**

Many parents find solace and maintain perspective in prayer, scripture study, and temple attendance. One

parent shared that her experience with prayer taught her to remember how precious her child is to Heavenly Father, which helped lift her pain. Prayer brings helpful insights into what to do and say. It also helps us find consolation.

Scriptures tell stories of people who have made poor choices and how family members have coped. “It’s a good thing the scriptures aren’t full of stories about perfect families or we might be too discouraged to even try!” one parent shared. The story of Alma the Younger reassures us that the righteous prayers of parents are heard (see Mosiah 27:14). The parable of the prodigal son teaches us the joy we feel when someone who was lost returns (Luke 15:20–24).

Temple attendance can also help us gain useful insights to deal with family issues. “I believe that the busy person . . . can solve . . . problems better and more quickly in the house of the Lord than anywhere else,” said Elder John A. Widtsoe (1872–1952) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “At the most unexpected moments, in or out of the temple will come . . . as a revelation, the solution [to] the problems that vex [our lives].”<sup>4</sup> As parents attend the temple, their hearts and minds can become more attuned to the peace they seek.

### **Continue to Show Love**

Lehi and Sariah undoubtedly loved Laman and Lemuel just as much as they loved Sam, Nephi, Jacob, and Joseph. While it can be easier to get along with family members who share our beliefs and lifestyle, it is still crucial for us to learn to show our love for others who don’t.

One woman who stopped attending church at a young age shared the following experience of how her family continued loving her. In her large LDS family, missions were celebrated in a visible way. Photographs of all the missionaries in the family adorned her grandmother’s living room wall. It was “the epicenter of our family’s universe,” she said. She knew she would never serve a mission, and she felt that no matter what good she did in the world, she would never earn a place on her grandmother’s wall.



***As we keep loving our loved ones as they currently are, we can still hold on to the hope that they will return to a gospel-centered life.***

At age 30 she decided to serve in the United States Peace Corps. She journeyed to Madagascar and devoted all her energy to serving there. Partway through her experience, she learned that her grandmother had included her photo on the wall. When the Peace Corps term ended, grandmother and granddaughter embraced and shed tears. “Service is service,” her grandmother explained. Whether or not we have a missionary wall in our homes, there are still plenty of ways we can show *all* our family members they are loved and valued.

### **Hold On to Hope**

As we keep loving our loved ones as they currently are, we can still hold on to the hope that they will return to a gospel-centered life. Often family members do return after a period of wandering. Like the prodigal son, they realize that their former lives brought them good messages and principles, and they embrace those values once again. In fact, prophets have promised that family members who are sealed to parents will feel the tug of their righteous upbringing and will someday return.<sup>5</sup> Such promises give us great hope for our own loved ones.

### **Maintain an Eternal View**

We must remember that we simply do not know what will happen to our loved ones. One father of rebellious teens shared that he has learned that even though his sons are not living righteously right now, he should not assume

that disaster is imminent. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, suggests that sometimes we believe that the end of the story has already been written, when in reality, we are only in the middle chapters.<sup>6</sup> God’s reckoning of time is vastly different from ours, and we do not know how each person’s story will end.

If we knew that our family members would eventually return, would that change how we act in our stories today? I believe we might live with a much greater degree of peace, love, and acceptance. As we work to make our story turn out well, it helps to remember that we can choose to approach loved ones from a place of peace and love rather than anger and fear. As Paul wrote, “God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). As Elder Carmack urges: “Never give up. If you cannot seem to reach your daughter or son now, you can at least keep trying and keep loving them. . . . Do not give in to paralyzing feelings of guilt and hopelessness. Seek spiritual help and peace. Be strong and courageous. You will see it through.”<sup>7</sup>

My daughter has not yet returned to church. But our goals are clear; we are both working to stay close. We talk frequently, and I know her LDS upbringing has helped her to become kind, disciplined, and thoughtful. While I would never have chosen for her to take the path she is currently traveling, I am grateful for the lessons we are learning along the way. And I have found peace as I embrace our unique positions in our journeys back home. ■

*The author lives in Massachusetts, USA.*

#### **NOTES**

1. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, 5; quoted from J. E. McCulloch, *Home: The Savior of Civilization* (1924), 42.
2. John K. Carmack, “When Our Children Go Astray,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1997, 9.
3. John K. Carmack, “When Our Children Go Astray,” 9.
4. John A. Widtsoe, “Temple Worship,” *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Apr. 1921, 63–64, quoted in David B. Haight, “Temples and Work Therein,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 61.
5. See “Hope for Parents of Wayward Children,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2002, 11.
6. See Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “See the End from the Beginning,” *Ensign*, May 2006, 42–45.
7. John K. Carmack, “When Our Children Go Astray,” 10, 13.





By Elder  
Larry Y. Wilson  
Of the Seventy

# THE NEW TESTAMENT'S MESSAGE OF Repentance

Some people believe that “people don’t change.” That implies that people *can’t* change even if they want to. Without doubt, change is difficult.

Yet the heart of the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ affirms that change is not only possible but also a command from God. John the Baptist prepared the way for the Savior with the message that all must repent (see Matthew 3:1–6). His scathing critique of the Pharisees and Sadducees—“O generation of vipers . . . bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (Matthew 3:7–8)—emphasized their need to change. No one was exempt.

It is easy for us to minimize the need for change in our lives. We live in a world where many people want to live and let live. Yet the New Testament makes clear how great the change is that God expects of all: that we become a new man or a new woman in Christ (see Galatians 6:15).

The Gospel of Luke concludes with the resurrected Lord’s unexpected appearance to His disciples, who were gathered together after His Crucifixion. The Lord told them they were to be His witnesses and that “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations” (Luke 24:47). Likewise in our own day, the Lord has directed His leaders to “say nothing but repentance unto this generation” (D&C 6:9; 11:9).

*Rather than focusing on outward observances alone, the Savior calls men and women to first make real, fundamental changes inside themselves.*

## Outward Performances

Jesus was born into a world where the law of Moses guided the religious life of the nation of Israel. It focused on outward performances, on specific actions that were required or forbidden.

The Pharisees, the primary teachers and interpreters of the Mosaic law in the synagogues, searched the books of the Old Testament and found, according to their reckoning, 613 different commandments.<sup>1</sup> They believed that if the people kept every one of these, they would be righteous. In the Doctrine and Covenants, we learn that this “law of carnal commandments” continued “until John” (D&C 84:27).

With the Savior’s earthly ministry came a different focus. He fulfilled the law of Moses and taught the higher law, which emphasized the inner attitudes: the condition of one’s heart and the motivations and desires that lead to all outward actions (see 2 Nephi 26:1; D&C 88:78). For example, the religious leaders of Jesus’s day put much store in ceremonial cleanliness and dietary rules, but Christ said:



“Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

“These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man” (Matthew 15:18–20).

The law of the gospel raised the bar profoundly. “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13) was ratcheted up to condemn the anger that is the first step toward murder. “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14) became an injunction not to even look “on a woman to lust after her” (Matthew 5:28). Instead of demanding an “eye for [an] eye” (Leviticus 24:20) when wronged, we must return good for

evil, even to the point of loving our enemies (see Matthew 5:44). These are not *natural* responses or ways of living. But the Savior seemed to be calling men and women to make real, fundamental changes inside themselves rather than focusing on outward observances alone.

In our day we may fall into a self-satisfied routine of gospel living. We tell ourselves, “I go to church, I pay my tithing, I live the Word of Wisdom—I’m doing just fine.”

### **A Parable of Repentance**

Without realizing it, we may fall into the same trap as the Pharisees and Sadducees, ignoring those sins that don’t show to the outside world.





Luke recounts a parable from the Savior that should cause us to think carefully about our own lives. In the parable, a Pharisee praying at the temple thought he had no need to change. Like those to whom the Savior spoke the parable, the Pharisee “trusted in [himself] that [he was] righteous” (Luke 18:9). He recited all his goodness: he fasted twice a week and paid tithing. In his pride he felt he had nothing left to work on.

“God, I thank thee,” he said, “that I am not as other men are” (Luke 18:11).

“Standing afar off” was a publican—a tax collector who was much despised in that day. Unlike the self-congratulatory Pharisee, the publican “smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13). Which one received Jesus’s approval?

Contrasting the two attitudes, Jesus said, “I tell you, this man [the publican] went down to his house justified rather than the other.” Then the Savior added, “For every one that exalteth himself [like the Pharisee] shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself [like the publican] shall be exalted” (Luke 18:14).

The publican recognized his need for change, for repentance. Unfortunately, the Pharisee was blind to his need for improvement. Where are we in our willingness to repent and become what the Savior wants us to be?

This parable warns us against becoming comfortable with our commandment keeping. We must continually strive for the inner change that comes from recognizing that we too—all of us—are sinners. As we do so, humility enters our hearts and minds sufficient to enable further repentance. In our prayers, we will always be better served by an attitude of “God be merciful to me a sinner” than thinking we are better than others.

### **Godly Sorrow**

Following the injunction of the Savior (see Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15), His Apostles and their companions went out into the world with a message of repentance. Paul taught that “godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation” (2 Corinthians 7:10). Godly sorrow can come as we face obvious sins. It can also come as we finally face deep-seated patterns and habits that are part of our makeup, realizing that because of them, we fall short of our God-given potential and cause others pain. Paul stressed that in the life of a disciple of Christ, “all things [must] become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

For this to happen, we must “be strengthened . . . in the inner man” until we rise to “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 3:16; 4:13). That puts into perspective just how much work we must do.

*Without realizing it, we may fall into the same trap as the Pharisees and Sadducees, ignoring those sins that don't show to the outside world.*

In evaluating our need for repentance, we might ask, “Am I impatient, negative, fearful, critical, self-centered, controlling, light-minded, lustful, cynical, or lazy?” This is far from an exhaustive list, but it’s easy to see that no one escapes entirely the weaknesses of the natural man or woman.

### Healing through the Atonement

The Atonement of Jesus Christ can not only cleanse us of sin but also help us overcome the inner weakness that comes from being born as natural men and women in a fallen world.

Christ’s promise is that “if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them” (Ether 12:27).

No worldly self-help program or makeover can do this. We cannot make the necessary changes to sanctify ourselves without Christ. Only He can reach deep enough to change us in ways we need to change.

The Holy Ghost becomes the means for transmitting the Lord’s character and light into our own being. Eventually we reach the point where “we have the mind of Christ,”

as Paul told the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 2:16).

Of course, we must be willing to change. We choose whether our weakness will make us humble or send us hiding behind all sorts of rationalizations, as Satan would have us do. Too many excuse themselves by saying, “That’s just the way I am.” This should not be an excuse for a disciple of Christ. To “take up [our] cross” and follow the Savior (see Luke 9:23) requires a willingness to be “dead to sins” and to “live unto righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24), changed in the inner man or woman.

### Victory over Frailty

Because His “grace is sufficient,” through the process of repentance, we may win a victory over any frailty we have inherited or developed. It is this kind of change that President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) was referring to when he said, “True repentance involves a change of heart and not just a change of behavior.”<sup>2</sup>

Clearly it is a mistake to think of repentance as an action that applies only to serious sins. The New Testament makes a great contribution to our understanding of repentance by showing that all of us need repentance daily if we are to make changes in the inner self. The great mistake of the Jewish leaders was that they did not know they needed to change or were unwilling to change.

Repentance is the greatest tool for change we have. In the words of Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Since we have been told clearly by Jesus what manner of men and women we ought to become—even as He is (see 3 Nephi 27:27)—how can we do so, except each of us employs repentance as the regular means of personal progression?”<sup>3</sup>

And as the New Testament makes clear, progression through repentance helps us become like the Savior. ■

#### NOTES

1. See *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. (1992), “Law of Moses,” 2:811.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 90.
3. Neal A. Maxwell, “Repentance,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 30.



### REPENTANCE WORKS

“Repentance is real and it works. . . . It has the power to lift burdens and replace them with hope. It can lead to a mighty change of heart that results in our having ‘no more disposition to do

evil, but to do good continually’ [Mosiah 5:2].”

Elder Allen D. Haynie of the Seventy, “Remembering in Whom We Have Trusted,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 123.



# Was That Really My Answer?

*Selecting a counselor to serve with me in the Primary presidency helped me understand that the Lord's ways are not our ways.*

By Kandee Baldwin

It was Sunday evening, and once again I needed to choose a new second counselor for our Primary presidency. Because of rapid population growth, our small neighborhood had experienced many ward boundary changes in a short amount of time; in two and a half years I had already worked with several counselors.

Because the Lord had guided my thoughts in the past when someone was needed to fill a calling, I did not doubt His loving hand would be there to guide me again. As I prayed and then reviewed the names on the ward list, I paused at one sister's name but then quickly dismissed the idea. Because we had such a large Primary, I wanted to find a sister who had experience serving in the organization. This sister, however, had joined the Church as an adult and had never attended Primary, and she had never had a Primary calling. I simply didn't think she was the one I was looking for.

I pondered and prayed the rest of the week. By Saturday, I still had no name to give the bishop. I decided to go on a walk, and while I was out I stopped by the home of the second counselor in the bishopric. He asked if I had made a decision about the calling yet. I said I hadn't received any inspiration, aside from the one name that I knew wasn't *really* it. He asked me why I thought this way, and I listed all the reasons I believed that particular sister wouldn't work out.

After I presented my case, this wise leader told me, "Maybe you should go home and try praying again,

because it sounds to me like you've already received your answer."

I did as he advised and prayed again, acknowledging that Heavenly Father knew who should fill the calling and asking Him to help me feel at peace.

The next morning, as I walked into the bishop's office for a meeting, the bishop asked if I would share a spiritual thought. I sat down and opened my scriptures to one of my favorite passages. I had read it many times, but this time I felt the Spirit of the Lord confirming the truthfulness of its words, and I was filled with the peace I had been seeking. I read:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8–9).

In my mind and my heart, I knew that the sister whose name I had been given was who the Lord wanted—for His purposes, not mine.

Once called, this wonderful, qualified sister brought energy and enthusiasm to our Primary. She was eager to learn and willing to serve, and she loved the Primary children. She was a great asset to the Primary presidency for the six months we served together.



Soon after my release as Primary president, the military relocated this sister's husband, and her family moved from our ward.

We lost track of each other for the next seven or eight years. But one day at church I saw her. She and her family had come for a visit, and after happily greeting me, she asked if I was still in the Primary. I told her I was, now as music leader. She then explained that her husband was stationed in Japan, where their family had been living for about three years. They attended a small branch, and she had made many friends.

The words that followed overtook me with a wave of emotion. "I am serving in the Primary presidency in

my branch in Japan," she told me.

"The leaders were very excited when they heard that I had served in a Primary presidency, as they were not really sure how a Primary was supposed to run."

How humbled and grateful I felt at that moment. The words from Isaiah came flooding back to my mind. It was then that I better understood the meaning of the scripture, and of His ways. With my limited vision and selfish desires, I had seen only my ways, but the Lord had a divine purpose for calling this sister. I am grateful that He answers our prayers, though sometimes in unexpected ways, and that He has a plan for each of us. ■

*The author lives in Arizona, USA.*



#### **CALLED OF GOD**

"It's a marvelous thing to be able to go before the Lord, to present a simple question, and to get a direct, positive, unmistakable answer. I'm ever humbled by that. This is a miracle, this process of the call and release of members in the Church."

**President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Called of God by Prophecy," *New Era*, Sept. 1978, 34.**



CONDUCTING A WELL-TUNED

# Group Discussion



By Dustin West

Seminaries and Institutes


**W**hen you lead a gospel discussion, it might be helpful to think of yourself as a conductor of an orchestra. Those you are teaching are not the audience listening to the concert. They are in the orchestra, playing their parts to create music. The conductor coordinates the musicians, brings out the best in each, and helps their music become an inspiring work of art.

Meaningful gospel discussions can be like beautiful music. A good discussion results in a deeper understanding of the doctrines of the gospel being discussed as well as a genuine desire to apply gospel truths.

Here are several principles that will improve the discussions you lead:

**Teach people, not lessons.** Those you teach will be more willing to participate in discussions when they feel that you care more about them than getting through the lesson. Learners want to feel that you have prepared yourself to fortify and increase their faith in the Lord, rather than just present facts. Learners who feel loved by their teacher and by other class members will be more willing to share insights and experiences.

**Invite inspiration.** Time together is an opportunity for you and those you teach to receive revelation, not just a chance for you to share what you know. One of the teacher's key roles is to direct the discussion so learners have the opportunity to feel the Spirit and discover truths for themselves. When revelation flows, all are edified—both teacher and learners—and rejoice together (see D&C 50:22). You can know that your discussions are edifying when you are learning from the Spirit as well as teaching by the Spirit.



*Meaningful gospel discussions can be like conducting beautiful music. One of the teacher's key roles is to direct the discussion so learners have the opportunity to feel the Spirit and discover truths for themselves.*

#### TO THE TEACHER: "CAN I FIT IT ALL IN?"

**T**he lesson materials, the chapters of scripture, the insights you gained as you studied—it's all so good, but your hours of study often can't be replicated in a designated period of time. Your task is not to share all you learned but to direct the class time in such a way that learners discover truths for themselves—much as you did in your own preparation. Pray for help, and the Holy Ghost will teach you what to focus on. As you focus on a few truths, you can allow for a more meaningful discussion that penetrates deeper into the hearts of those you teach.



**Invite all to participate.** Participating does not necessarily mean that everyone has to answer a question out loud. Some prefer to participate simply by listening or by taking notes. Others are willing to share their thoughts as long as they have time to ponder and prepare. You might consider contacting a few of those you teach ahead of time and asking them to come prepared to share their thoughts on a particular topic.

There are several other ways to help learners participate in the discussion. For example, you could:

- Ask them to ponder how they would answer a question before you ask for responses.
- Ask them to write their answers on a piece of paper. Then you could ask a few of them to share their responses with others.
- Invite them to respond to questions with someone sitting next to them or in small groups.

Sometimes you may have a member of the group who dominates the discussion. If this happens, you could say something like, “Let’s hear from someone who hasn’t

shared yet.” In some cases it may be necessary to speak to this person privately to thank him or her for sharing and to explain the importance of encouraging other participants to share.

**Don’t be afraid of silence.** Silence may feel like a lull in your discussion, but for learners it can be valuable pondering time.

**Ask meaningful questions.** Ask questions that encourage learners to think deeply about the meaning of scripture passages and gospel principles. As you prepare your lesson, think of questions that will help those you teach understand and apply the truths they learn. A few well-phrased questions can make a great difference.

**Listen carefully.** Often teachers are so worried about what they are going to say next that they don’t listen carefully to comments. If you sincerely listen to those you teach, they will feel valued and be more likely to participate. President Thomas S. Monson stated: “[Everyone] has a story waiting to be told. Listening is an essential element as we teach and as we learn” (“Examples of Great Teachers,” *Ensign*, June 2007, 108).



**Learners who feel loved by their teacher and by other class members will be more willing to share insights and experiences.**

**Ask follow-up questions.** When learners share insights and experiences, you might sense that they have more to share. Consider asking follow-up questions such as these: What about that is important to you? When have you seen this in your life? What does this mean for us today? Who else has something to say about this? Who has a related thought that they would like to share? What other scripture passages teach this truth?

**Acknowledge responses.** When someone gives a response, it needs to be acknowledged in some way. This can be done by making an appreciative comment about the response or by asking a follow-up question.

**Keep the doctrine pure.** Remember that the primary goal of teaching the gospel is not just to have a good discussion.

Rather, it is to learn the doctrine so that our hearts can be changed and we can be converted. During the discussion, part of your responsibility is to ensure that true doctrine is being taught.

If someone shares something that is doctrinally incorrect, you have the responsibility to state the doctrine correctly. You could build on a correct portion of the answer, share a scripture or teaching from general conference, or bear your testimony.

Using these ideas, you can have some great gospel discussions. You won't be using discussions just to pass the time. You can lead effective discussions so that learners will receive personal revelation, develop unity with each other, and deepen their understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ. ■

## TO THE LEARNER: YOUR VOICE MATTERS

Having a good discussion about the gospel is a responsibility you share with the teacher. Here are some situations you may have wondered about:

*I have something to say, but my teacher hasn't asked for comments. Should I interrupt?*

You might wait for an appropriate moment to catch the teacher's eye and signal your willingness to contribute. If you feel inspired to share, do your best to act on that prompting.

*I'm not sure my comments are valuable, so should I really raise my hand?*

You have a perspective and experiences that others may not have. As you prepare for class, you gain personal insights that could be a blessing to other learners.

Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that when we raise our hands during a gospel discussion, we “signify to the Holy Ghost [our] willingness to learn.” So if your comments are appropriate to

the topic and the time allows, you can share them. Elder Scott explained, “Participation allows individuals to *experience* being led by the Spirit” (“To Learn and to Teach More Effectively” [Brigham Young University Education Week devotional, Aug. 21, 2007], 5, [speeches.byu.edu](http://speeches.byu.edu)).

*I'm scared to talk in front of so many people. What do I do?*

As you work to overcome this fear, you might start small. Try volunteering to read a scripture or a quote. Then look for opportunities to answer questions or to share insights. As you demonstrate your willingness to participate, you will be blessed with the courage to speak and the words to say. When we “open [our] mouths,” we find that “they shall be filled” (D&C 33:10).

If you find it easy to comment, you may want to ask yourself if, rather than sharing your own thoughts again, there's a way for you to encourage one of your fellow learners to comment.





By Elder  
Daniel L. Johnson  
Of the Seventy

# HOLD FAST TO THE ROD

*Continually studying the scriptures helps us keep our eyes, minds, and hearts focused on the Savior, and as we apply and live the teachings found in the scriptures, we become more like Him.*

During their journey in the wilderness, Lehi and his family awoke one morning to find “a round ball of curious workmanship” on the ground. It had two spindles, one pointing “the way whither [they] should go” (1 Nephi 16:10).

The Liahona, or ball, also provided “a new writing” that gave them “understanding concerning the ways of the Lord.” This writing was “changed from time to time, according to the faith and diligence which [they] gave unto it” (see 1 Nephi 16:28–29).

Lehi and his family already had the brass plates, which contained the writings and prophecies of several Old Testament prophets. The brass plates and the Liahona constituted their scriptures, and Lehi’s people were expected to study and give heed to them continually. If they did so, they progressed in their journey; if they did not, they tarried in the wilderness and were afflicted with hunger and thirst.

What was the Lord trying to teach them—and us—through the workings of the Liahona?

One of the primary purposes of the scriptures is to help us know, understand, and become like the Savior (see 3 Nephi 27:27). Continually studying the scriptures helps us keep our eyes, minds, and hearts focused on Him. As we apply and live the teachings found in the scriptures, we become more like Him. As we become more like Him, we become candidates for eternal life (see John 5:39).

## Lehi’s Dream

In Lehi’s dream, or vision, four groups of people were represented. The first three groups entered the path that led to the tree of life. The gate to the path is baptism (see 2 Nephi 31:17–18), so we are talking about members of the Church in these first three groups.

I will not discuss the fourth group—those heading directly toward the great and spacious building. As we consider the other three groups, however, you might want to do an internal evaluation to determine the group to which you belong and ask yourself to which group you would prefer to belong.

### Group 1

“And I saw numberless concourses of people, many of whom were pressing forward, that they might obtain the path which led unto the tree by which I stood.

“And it came to pass that they did come forth, and commenced in the path which led to the tree.

“And it came to pass that there arose a mist of darkness; yea, even an exceedingly great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost” (1 Nephi 8:21–23).

Members of this group apparently did not read or study the scriptures, listen to or watch general conference, read the *Ensign*, or attend Sunday meetings, all of which offer the word of God. Consequently, they lost their way.









### TO GAIN FAITH

“In order to gain and to keep the faith we need, it is essential that we read and study and ponder the scriptures.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Be an Example and a Light,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 87.

### Group 2

“And it came to pass that I beheld others pressing forward, and they came forth and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree. . . .

“And after they had tasted of the fruit they were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost” (1 Nephi 8:24, 28).

Note that this group caught hold of and clung to the rod of iron. They held on until they reached the tree of life and partook of its fruit. But they became ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, stopped focusing on the Savior, and were distracted by the attractions, temptations, and riches of the world. Then they too became lost.

The key to understanding these verses is the phrase “clinging to the rod of iron.” I compare the word *clinging* to a “white knuckle” experience. If you have been

white-water rafting, you recall that you clung so hard to the raft that your knuckles turned white. Then, when you came to calm waters, what did you do? *You let go!*

In the gospel context, this can occur when you are asked to prepare a talk or when you face a crisis, such as a death in the family or the breakup of a relationship. You look up general conference talks you seldom listen to or consult scriptures you generally neglect. You seek spiritual guidance and support because of your spiritual weakness. Then, when the crisis is over, *you let go!* You put the scriptures back on the shelf, regress to old habits of infrequent Church attendance, and abandon daily prayer—at least until the next crisis, or white-water experience, arrives. In other words, you turn to the Savior for help only when a desperate need arises instead of continually.

Members of this group had been baptized, and many had probably been ordained to the priesthood, received temple ordinances, served full-time missions, and married in the

temple. But *they let go!* They stopped reading the scriptures *continually*, fell into forbidden paths, and were lost.

Thankfully, most young adults and returned missionaries remain faithful to gospel truths they have learned and shared. They also focus their lives on the Savior through daily scripture study and prayer. We are grateful for them and their faithfulness. They are the future of the Church and the future parents of those who will carry the Church forward.

### Group 3

“Behold, [Lehi] saw other multitudes pressing forward; and they came and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press their way forward, continually holding fast to the rod of iron, until they came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree” (1 Nephi 8:30).

Note the phrase “continually holding fast to the rod of iron.” This group read the scriptures *continually*. They kept their focus on the Savior *continually*.

The scriptures are the most important thing we can study. They should take precedence over chemistry, physics, accounting, dance, music, sports, or any other secular study or activity.

Start every day with the scriptures. Prayer and scripture study go hand in hand. They are inseparable companions. Constant prayer will lead you to the scriptures, and continual scripture study will lead you to prayer. Both keep you focused on the Savior and give you access to revelation and to the peace that can come only by “continually holding fast to the rod of iron.” Prayer and scripture study will lead you to the temple. They will make you want to keep the Sabbath day holy. They will help you avoid and overcome the temptations of the adversary.

Now I draw your attention to the phrase “they came forth and *fell down* and partook of the fruit of the tree.” A key to understanding this phrase is found in 1 Nephi chapter 11:

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

“And he said unto me: What desirest thou?

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

The angel responded, “Look!” Then Nephi saw in vision

the Virgin Mary, whom the angel identified as “the mother of the Son of God.” Next, Nephi saw Mary bearing a child—“the Lamb of God”—in her arms.

Now note verse 24: “And I looked, and I beheld the Son of God going forth among the children of men; and I saw many *fall down* at his feet and worship him” (see 1 Nephi 11:9–24; emphasis added).

The tree represents the love of God, as manifested through His Son, Jesus Christ (see 1 Nephi 11:21–22). Those in Group 2 who arrived at the tree did not fall down, as did those in Group 3. Is it possible to be in the presence of the Son of God and not know it? You have only to read the New Testament to find the answer. The Savior ministered for three years, teaching and performing miracles, but few recognized Him for who He was.

### Search the Scriptures

Ask yourself these questions:

- What can I do to ensure that I continually hold fast to the rod of iron so that when I arrive at the tree of life, I will recognize the Savior and fall down and worship him?
- What can I do to keep my eyes, mind, and heart focused on the Savior?
- What can I do to become more like the Savior?

The answer to all three questions is found in the scriptures. “Search the scriptures,” the Savior said, “for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). If you immerse yourself in the scriptures each day of your life, you will have strength to resist serious transgression; more important, you will come to know the Savior. You will be able to keep your eyes, mind, and heart focused on Him.

As you come to know Jesus Christ, apply His teachings, and follow His example, you will become like Him. As you become like Him, you will be a candidate to live forever in His presence. ■

*From a devotional address, “Continually Holding Fast to the Rod of Iron,” given at Brigham Young University–Idaho on May 12, 2015. For the full address, visit [web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches](http://web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches).*



# Remarriage

An Adventure in Patience and Love



*Blending families requires twice as much patience. But it can also create twice as much love.*

By Heidi Eljarbø Morrell Andersen

**D**ivorce was never a part of my vocabulary until it actually happened to me. For a long time I felt the embarrassing downside of the word every time I was asked about my marital status. “I’m divorced.” It was as

if I could hardly say the words out loud—as if I were saying bad words.

Nevertheless, it was where I was in life, and I had a hard time fitting in. “You’ll find someone,” my friends would say. But I was not interested and had no desire to remarry. My four children kept me busy enough.

Until one day, without expectations or plans for the future, I met Arnfinn, and to my surprise we communicated so well that I enjoyed his company more and more. He was smart, good-looking, and playful. When he proposed,

I did not know what the future would hold, but I knew I wanted that future with him. We took our time to “iron out the wrinkles,” as Arnfinn called it, and were married in the Stockholm Sweden Temple in the fall of 1997.

Being newlyweds at almost 40 was not the same as the first time. Falling in love was the same wonderful thrill,



and the excitement of a new relationship was similar, but now we had two ex-spouses, a disobedient dog, a loud bird, and nine children, ages 3 to 17. Luckily, the newness of our romance was enough to get us through challenging days ahead.

### The Key to Understanding

“It seems like we don’t always have the same opinions about things,” Arnfinn said one day. Forty years of habits and doing things your own way will do that. I was 19

the first time I married, and routines and traditions were formed along the way. Arnfinn and I found out that it was all right and even healthy to have more than one opinion. It did not necessarily mean that one was right and the other was wrong. Opinions are shaped by many things in life, and respect and listening became the key words to understanding the other person.

We also tried to come to an understanding of how to blend our lives together—where to live, how to deal with the family economy, and which holiday traditions to uphold. There were a few more wrinkles to iron out along the way, but looking back, some seem trivial today. Harmony and love at home were the targets we were aiming for.

Having another mother involved in our family was especially hard for me. Arnfinn’s ex-wife is a wonderful mother and concerned with her children’s welfare. Vacations and weekends were planned with her, and at times I felt I did not have a say in my own life.

But the transition was probably more of a challenge for Arnfinn, who moved into a home with four children, two of them in their teens—

children whose personalities were more boisterous than what he was used to and who had been brought up slightly different from what he would prefer.

### Different Paths, Same Answers

Then one evening, so late that my thinker had stopped working for the day, Arnfinn challenged me to an IQ test. He sat down on one side of the dining room table and started making up equations and mathematical formulas in order to answer the questions. I was on the opposite side



of the table drawing pictures to solve the problems presented. We finished and compared our test answers, only to find that we had achieved the same answers. That's when I realized that the test was similar to our lives together.

Let me explain: He does things one way, and I do them another. But we have the same goal, even though the way there may vary. Reaching that goal is like the IQ test: while he makes equations and I draw pictures, we still get to the same answers.

I know I could never do his job as a lawyer, and I am pretty sure he would find my line of work as a writer and water-color artist difficult. The trick has been to find him cute when he does things differently from me instead of being annoyed. Difference can be an exciting learning experience if we let it. I told Arnfinn one day, "If you can teach me some things and maybe I can teach you some, we will turn out OK one day." We both have to be teachable, and it's an ongoing process. Admiration has become a key word.

If Mom and Dad are two diverse species, you can be sure that two sets of children will be poles apart as well. We rolled up our sleeves and faced the everyday problems

of varying eating habits, clothing styles, bedtime, and chores, to mention a few. For a long time the children were titled "mine" and "yours" and did not always think that being thrown together was all that wonderful.

The oldest one let me know that she would soon be out of the house anyway and that she wanted me to be happy; the next two girls did not even seem to like each other; and one of the boys gave up his bedroom every other weekend and slept on the couch whenever his step-brothers came. He has never complained about that, bless his heart.

### **Making Room for Those We Love**

There's always room for those you love. We rearranged the parlor next to the living room as a parent refuge and had the children in the upstairs bedrooms. Two television sets and two bathrooms became a necessity instead of a luxury. A few days alone once a year for the newlywed parents was also an essential investment for our future as a family.

Weekends and other events were planned ahead; meals, games, and activities had to suit most of the children.

Arnfinn's five children lived with their mother on weekdays, and I wanted to respect her wishes as well as make sure the children enjoyed their visit with their dad. That meant I sometimes had to keep quiet about minor annoyances and instead focus on what was more important in order for them to have an enjoyable stay. I applied patience and love—then

***Blowing bubbles with three of our grandchildren. Our children have grown up and moved out, but they know they are always welcome to visit.***



***One of our traditions is to attend the Stockholm Sweden Temple each summer with as many of our children as possible. Last year we drove 10 hours so that Arnfinn's 90-year-old mother could come with us and be sealed to her parents.***

more patience, in addition to a bucket of humor.

Chaotic Sunday mornings were a major trial. We tried to set the atmosphere with beautiful classical music while guiding one child after another in and out of the two bathrooms before the cowbell rang for a scrumptious breakfast. Still, getting everyone out the door and into the minivan to get to church on time was a trial of keeping the spirit of the Sabbath every Sunday. By the time we came home and enjoyed a nice dinner, we had calmed down enough to enjoy playing games together.

There is much wisdom in the programs and lessons we are taught in church. Family prayer, family home evening, and discussing gospel principles are worth the time and effort. The gospel has brought us joy and helped us understand even more how important and valuable families are.

We have made many new traditions but also kept some from our previous lives. Every summer we bring as many children as possible to the Stockholm Sweden Temple. We stay at a campground south of the temple. It has become a tradition that we enjoy and one that even the kids who are married have adopted for their families.

When our children now come to ask for advice about dating and marriage, I tell them that it does not matter if one likes jogging and the other is partial to ballet. The most important thing is to have the same enthusiasm for serving our Savior and the determination to strive toward the goal to be an eternal family.

### **Twice the Patience, Twice the Blessings**

When I meet couples who find each other for a second opportunity for marriage, I am delighted for them, glad that



they have a partner and best friend to spend time with. But I also remember that the first few years of putting together two families were not all bliss and glee. It comes at a cost, and some days we wonder why it needs to be so challenging.

Today, our daughters who did not really like each other as teenagers are both mothers and enjoy comparing notes at family dinners and even spending vacation time together at the family cabin. Encouraging letters have been mailed to the boys serving missions, and some of our children have visited each other as they have lived abroad. They always have fun getting together for large holiday dinners and rejoice when the arrival of a new niece or nephew is announced.

There's only Arnfinn and myself at the house now. We have a fun-loving dog and a new little bird. The kids have frequented their bedrooms in between studies and establishing new homes. They know they are always welcome and will be fed and loved when they come by.

Putting two families together requires twice as much love and twice the patience. There has been a lot of cooking and many loads of laundry to wash, but it's worth it. We love our large family. The blessings of having twice as many people to love are twice as great.

And our family is still growing. There's a new generation of beautiful babies, and they are all our grandchildren! ■

*The author lives in Norway.*





# A BOUQUET OF BLESSINGS

By Debbie H. Seare

Years ago, as a Mia Maid adviser, I had the opportunity to attend girls' camp. I enjoyed my time outdoors with the young women but felt envious of the girls' carefree nature and zest for life. Though I had been an energetic Mia Maid 14 years before, my life had changed drastically since then. I had been hospitalized five times since the birth of our first child. Later, while attending to the needs of two young toddlers, I had suffered from multiple health problems, including clinical depression. Unlike the young women, who seemed far removed from such challenges, I felt weighed down by my trials.

Toward the end of camp, the young women gathered for an early-morning devotional. The speaker, Sister Hansen, had recently returned from serving a full-time mission. She spoke fondly of her experience and then told this story.

Following a zone conference, her mission president had presented each of the missionaries with a fresh red rose. He gave no explanation for his gift, and this young sister took the rose home to her modest apartment. It had been a long train ride home for her and her companion, and in her exhaustion and eagerness to get some sleep, Sister Hansen had laid the rose on the table, where it lay withering for a week. By the time she noticed it again, there was nothing to do but throw it away.

As she looked at the stiff and blackened rose, she felt a little guilty for neglecting it. Several months flew by, and she didn't give the rose another thought until it was time for another zone conference. Just as before, the mission president gave each missionary a red rose. This time, however, Sister Hansen carefully wrapped the stem in damp paper



and held it gently on her lap during the long train ride. When she arrived at her apartment, she recut the stem and placed the rose in a glass of water. To her surprise and delight, the rose bloomed the following day. Under her care, it thrived and perfumed the small apartment for several weeks.

Sister Hansen told the campers that blessings from Heavenly Father are like roses. We can ignore them, thereby receiving no joy or pleasure from them, or we can recognize and enjoy the blessings the Lord has lovingly given us.

I pondered Sister Hansen's words and decided that when I returned home, I would try to recognize and give thanks for blessings every day. I began by purchasing a notebook and labeling it "My Blessing Book." I found it refreshing to take a breather from my health problems and other challenges to write about the blessings I enjoyed. Some days I expressed gratitude for family members and loved ones, while other times I wrote about a beautiful piece of music or about a rainfall on a hot day. As I made daily entries in this book, I noticed I was beginning to focus less on my poor health and

more on the abundant blessings the Lord has graciously poured into my life.

Sister Hansen's message changed my experience at girls' camp and, more important, my emotional well-being. Being happy is not the result of a carefree life but of a careful effort to recognize the Lord's hand in our lives. When we do so, we cannot help but feel the love He has for us. Expressing my gratitude daily has allowed me to enjoy my own bouquet of heavenly blessings. ■

*The author lives in Idaho, USA.*

I FELT WEIGHED  
DOWN BY CHALLENGES,  
BUT A RETURNED  
MISSIONARY'S  
MESSAGE CHANGED  
MY PERSPECTIVE.





By Rebecca J. Clayson

Several weeks after my second child was born, a brief conversation with a stranger about life and relationships made me feel completely inadequate and left me despondent. I expected the melancholy to pass within a day or two, but it didn't. Instead it grew worse, and despair almost overwhelmed me. I prayed for the sorrow to go away and read the scriptures and listened to good music in hopes of regaining peace. Nothing helped. It seemed as if my soul, all that was uniquely me, had come under attack. I felt as if I had no worth and that I was unworthy of my wonderful family and good life. I

wasn't suicidal, but I felt sure that if I died someone more deserving could take my place. Each day I sank a little deeper until I lost all hope.

Because my feelings were so deeply personal and painful, I was ashamed and didn't share them with anyone. No one questioned my erratic behavior—most people probably assumed it had to do with my being a tired mother of small children. Some days I would resolve to fight the sadness by being the best wife and mother in the world. I aimed to be perfect at everything. I kept the house extra clean, played with my daughters, and made healthy meals. Other days

I felt as though nothing I did mattered; I would never be good enough. During those times, I became angry easily and found it difficult to manage the basic care of my home and family. Because I felt so flawed, I isolated myself as much as possible.

I prayed constantly for heaven's help to relieve the heaviness in my heart. When the sorrow remained, it seemed as if the Lord had abandoned me and for some reason I didn't qualify for His love. This further fed my belief that I was unworthy of my blessings. Reading the scriptures also fueled my anxieties because each time I came across a verse that described what I



depress

*Understanding that there are spiritual side effects from depression is important when Latter-day Saints or their loved ones face this challenge.*

felt, the passage had something to do with sin. I could not figure out what great transgression I had committed to deserve such torment, but the scriptural association of despair with iniquity seemed proof of my fallen state.

Attending church and the temple became really difficult. I felt as if I were mocking God with my unworthiness. I continued to attend because logically I knew it was the right thing to do. One of the few things that held me together during this time was the knowledge that my despair contradicted all I had been taught through the gospel. I clung to the hope that I might still be a beloved daughter of God.



sion

"I am speaking of something . . . serious, of an affliction so severe that it significantly restricts a person's ability to function fully, a crater in the mind so deep that no one can responsibly suggest it would surely go away if those victims would just square their shoulders and think more positively."

**Elder Jeffrey R. Holland**



## Recognizing the Correct Problem

After five or six months, my husband finally got me to open up about why I'd been acting so strangely. It wasn't easy to tell him, for fear that he would either laugh or confirm my doubts about my worth. Instead, he was understanding and felt bad that I'd struggled so much. He gave me a priesthood blessing, and I felt better than I had in a long time. But the relief didn't last. The despair returned. It wasn't as intense,

### RESOURCES

- Lynn Clark Callister, "Managing Postpartum Depression: A Gospel Perspective," *Ensign*, Aug. 2009, 62–67.
- "Mental Illness" in Disability Resources on LDS.org ([lds.org/go/illnessE216](https://www.lds.org/go/illnessE216)).
- LDS Family Services provides a 24/7 consultation service. This service makes telephone consultations and assessments available to Church leaders as they help others with social and emotional issues, including crisis and emergency situations. Church leaders may also receive help to locate and use qualified community resources.



but it hung over me every day. A few months later I finally felt brave enough to tell a friend what I'd been experiencing.

"I think you have depression," she told me.

At first I objected. What I felt was spiritual in nature, not mental. But the more we discussed the symptoms of depression, the more I realized they perfectly described my condition. I knew I'd felt sad, but I hadn't recognized my sadness as actual *depression*. The more we talked, the lighter I felt. My mind cleared. A great weight lifted and the first real peace I'd known in almost a year washed over me. I was not worthless; I was depressed.

I learned all I could about depression—symptoms, causes, and treatment. I found that the causes varied but typically involved a chemical imbalance brought on by an inciting incident such as hormone changes after childbirth or some form of trauma or loss. In many cases it was due to prolonged stress, and often there was a family history of depression or anxiety. In my case, as I learned through a professional diagnosis, it was a combination of hormone changes, stress, an inciting incident, and genetics. Up until then, I didn't know I had immediate and extended family members with depression. However, as I shared my experience with the ones closest to me, others opened up too.

Even with all I learned, it was still hard to accept the doctor's diagnosis and decide on treatment. Because of the stigma associated with depression, my husband and I felt we had to keep quiet about my illness. Both of us were programmed to believe I could just talk it out or choose to snap out of it. This was not the case. While talking and a positive attitude did help, I had a medical condition that needed to be treated.

I soon discovered that medication and cognitive therapy were effective at bringing relief. But the one thing I didn't find in any of my research was mention of the spiritual repercussions of mental illness. This surprised me, since so many of the symptoms I'd experienced seemed spiritual in nature. I came to realize that while the medical texts rarely acknowledged the spiritual effects of depression, I had initially gone too far the other way—I had misconstrued my



depressed feelings as spiritual unworthiness. Indeed, I had been so sure my feelings were manifestations of spiritual weakness that it had never occurred to me I might have a chemical imbalance. I had read pamphlets about postpartum depression and viewed television commercials for anti-depressants that described my symptoms, but I hadn't seen myself as depressed because I had thought my spirit was primarily under attack, not my brain.

As time went on, I became acquainted with other people dealing with mental illness. This gave me strength to cope as I interacted with individuals who understood how deeply rooted this disorder was. As we discussed our experiences, I learned that they had also felt little distinction between the spiritual side effects of depression and actual unworthiness. Most cognitive therapy dealt with "thinking mistakes" and recognizing triggers. Such concepts can be helpful, but I also

wanted a spiritually focused solution because for me, peace and healing came when I was able to truly feel my divine worth and spiritual potential.

### **Understanding Depression's Effects on the Spirit**

Understanding that there are spiritual side effects from depression is important for Latter-day Saints dealing with their own depression or that of loved ones. Depression, in all forms, alters perception, making it difficult to feel peace, love, joy, or any of the fruits of the Spirit. It becomes easy to misinterpret sorrow as condemnation by God, thus causing spiritual struggles and sometimes inactivity in the Church. This may cause further distress for individuals and families facing this challenge.

It is essential to understand that such a spiritual crisis is not a result of spiritual weakness

When I learned that my sadness was not the result of spiritual weakness but was instead caused by a chemical imbalance, I began to break free. I reached out for medical help and started to regain my feelings of divine worth and spiritual potential.



or lack of faith. Rather, depressive feelings and the resulting depressed view of one's spirituality are usually caused by a chemical imbalance. Because our physical bodies and our spirits are necessarily connected (see D&C 88:15), it can be common to feel the effects of a physical disorder in a spiritual way, especially in the case of depression, which alters our very perception of ourselves. Therefore, it is important to seek out the actual source of such feelings, especially when experiencing the often-distorting effects of depression.

### FEELING DOWN VERSUS HAVING DEPRESSION

**W**hile everyone experiences trials that can lead to feelings of sadness, loneliness, and anxiety, major depressive disorder (MDD) is different. Major depression is a mental illness that requires professional treatment and medication. Feeling down in the face of challenging life events (as opposed to having MDD) may be treated best through family and social supports, finding ways to serve others, and observing proper sleep, diet, and exercise habits. In both circumstances, though, we can seek aid through the healing, enabling, and redemptive powers of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.



Even with proper diagnosis and treatment, however, it can be difficult to reverse dark and discouraged feelings. Medications have side effects; environmental triggers can't always be altered; therapy is not a perfect science. In the light of such challenges, the message given by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the October 2013 general conference offers perspective and hope:

"I wish to speak to those who suffer from some form of mental illness or emotional disorder, whether those afflictions be slight or severe, of brief duration or persistent over a lifetime. . . . These afflictions are some of the realities of mortal life, and there should be no more shame in acknowledging them than in acknowledging a battle with high blood pressure or the sudden appearance of a malignant tumor. . . .

"Let me . . . concentrate on MDD—'major depressive disorder'—or, more commonly, 'depression.' When I speak of this, I am not speaking of bad hair days, tax deadlines, or other discouraging moments we all have. Everyone is going to be anxious or downhearted on occasion. . . . Today I am speaking of something more serious, of an affliction so severe that it significantly restricts a person's ability to function fully, a crater in the mind so deep that no one can responsibly suggest it would surely go away if those victims would just square their shoulders and think more positively—though I am a vigorous advocate of square shoulders and positive thinking! . . .

"So 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. . . . 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 [see Matthew 26:39]. . . .

"If things continue to be debilitating, seek the advice of reputable people with certified training, professional skills, and good values. . . . If you had appendicitis, God would expect you to seek a priesthood blessing and get the best medical care available. So too with emotional disorders. Our Father in Heaven expects us to use *all* of the marvelous gifts He has provided in this glorious dispensation."<sup>1</sup>

### **Treating Mental Illness and Nurturing Our Spirits**

Recognizing that I had depression didn't automatically cure me, but it gave me hope. It was reassuring to know that I was not a bad person, that I had worth, and that God

had not condemned me. I've treated my illness with medication, some therapy, and a lot of research. The most significant healing, though, came through the peace of the Spirit, which was only restored after medication helped the chemical imbalance.

It has been more than 20 years since that first major episode with depression. I continue to battle mental illness. It is a daily struggle, helped by medication, good nutrition, exercise, recognizing and avoiding triggers, and seeking therapy when needed. But nurturing my spirit as well as my mind through consistent prayer, scripture study, and church and temple attendance has been a key source of strength, because depression, though a mental illness, can still affect our spiritual well-being. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

#### **NOTE**

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Like a Broken Vessel," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 40–41.

After medication, diet, and exercise helped my chemical imbalance, then the peace of the Spirit could help me heal from the spiritual side effects of depression. Consistent prayer, scripture study, and church and temple attendance have been key sources of strength.



# UNIQUELY BLESSED BY INDEXING

By Diane Sagers

Shortly after Karrie Palmer was diagnosed with an autoimmune disorder that makes her joints ache, her stake leaders called her to be the stake assistant indexing director. She looked at her stiffened hands, considered her health, and wondered if she could do it. Nevertheless, she had a testimony that her stake leaders were inspired men, so she accepted the calling.

As the high councilor set her apart and gave her a blessing, one sentence stood out to her: “As you participate in this work, your maladies will be tempered.”

She held on to that promise, but as the work became a reality, Karrie quickly became frustrated. “I just couldn’t seem to do it,” she says. “I felt impatient to get a lot of names done quickly, but I was embarrassed to ask for help.”

One day as she worked, Karrie came to a name from an obscure town in Prussia (now Germany), a town whose name she struggled to decipher. The task seemed impossible. The following day she went to the

temple seeking answers. As she prepared for the session, she was given a name card and discovered that it had the same last name and the same town in Prussia that she had been struggling to index the day before. She now had the right spelling of the town;

it was the miracle Karrie needed.

Now serving as stake indexing director, Karrie has learned to accept her limitations and to work slowly and methodically. “Indexing has become interesting,” she says. “I found that as I did the work, I was able to forget about my pain. And as time went on I got better and better at indexing.” Each time as she finishes working, she feels better both physically and spiritually.

“I am not cured, and my hands are still bent and sore. But I am doing better,” she says. “And when I sit down to do indexing, I feel like it is a little temple experience for that time.” As she works, she finds calm and also clarity about life, her children, and her grandchildren. Turning on her computer to do indexing brings instant peace to her home and her heart. She says it’s as though someone on the other side of the veil is cheering, “Go, Karrie, go!”

For Karrie Palmer, indexing has become a source of strength. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*



## THE LORD BLESSES OUR EFFORTS

“Any calling we receive in the Lord’s

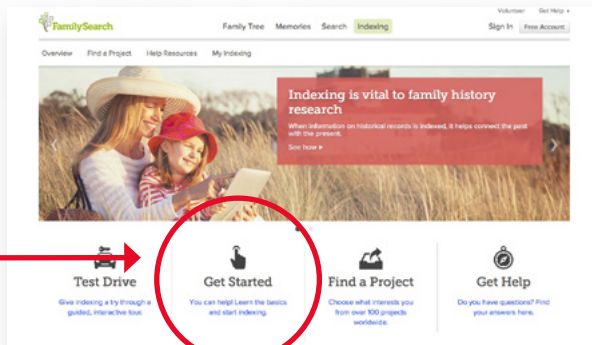
kingdom requires more than our human judgment and our personal powers. Those calls require help from the Lord, which will come. . . .

“. . . I testify that He has called you and me into His service knowing our capacities and the help we will need. He will bless our efforts beyond our fondest expectations as we give our all in His service.”

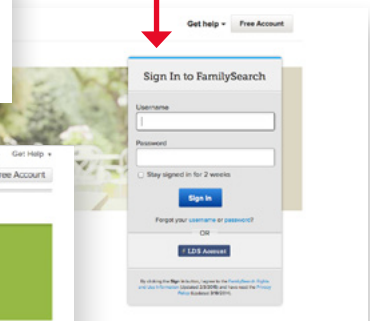
**President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “You Are Not Alone in the Work,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 80, 83.**



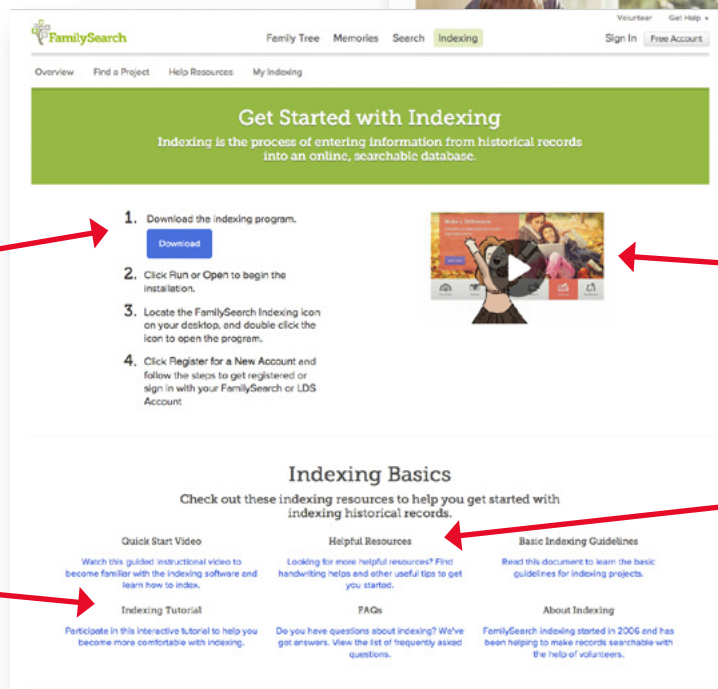
- Select “Get Started” on the FamilySearch indexing home page ([familysearch.org/indexing](http://familysearch.org/indexing)).



- Sign in with your LDS Account and find a project to work on.



- Download and install the indexing program on your computer.



- Watch the “Quick Start” video.

- Select “Indexing Tutorial” for a lesson that will guide you through the process.

- Use “Helpful Resources” to find handwriting helps and frequently asked questions.



## SHE READ MY TESTIMONY

Answering my phone, I heard the excited voice of one of the local full-time missionaries telling me about a baptism to be held in a few days. Baptisms, of course, are always a reason for excitement among missionaries, but the name of the sister being baptized was unfamiliar to me. Yet the elder insisted that I attend the baptism because a surprise awaited me. He would not tell me more.

On the day of the baptism, I arrived at the church early to find out what the surprise was. But I did not know the young sister—Alice—who was getting baptized, and she gave no indication that she recognized me.

When the business was leaving the kiosk, the boss told Alice to throw the book away. But Alice was curious and asked if she could have it.

After the sweet, Spirit-filled baptism, Alice held a Book of Mormon as she bore testimony of its truthfulness and expressed gratitude for its teachings, especially its witness of the Savior. In her testimony, she told how the book had come to her. She had been working at a kiosk in a local shopping mall. One day a woman came by and gave the book to her boss. The boss was not interested and put it on a shelf.

A short time later, when the business was leaving the kiosk, the boss told Alice to throw the book away. But Alice was curious, briefly looked at the book, and asked if she could have it.

Alice took the Book of Mormon home, read it within a few weeks, and was convinced of its truth. But she didn't know what to do. Some months later she found another job, where she worked with a Latter-day Saint. She asked him about the Book of Mormon and the Church, and he and his wife invited her to meet with the missionaries.

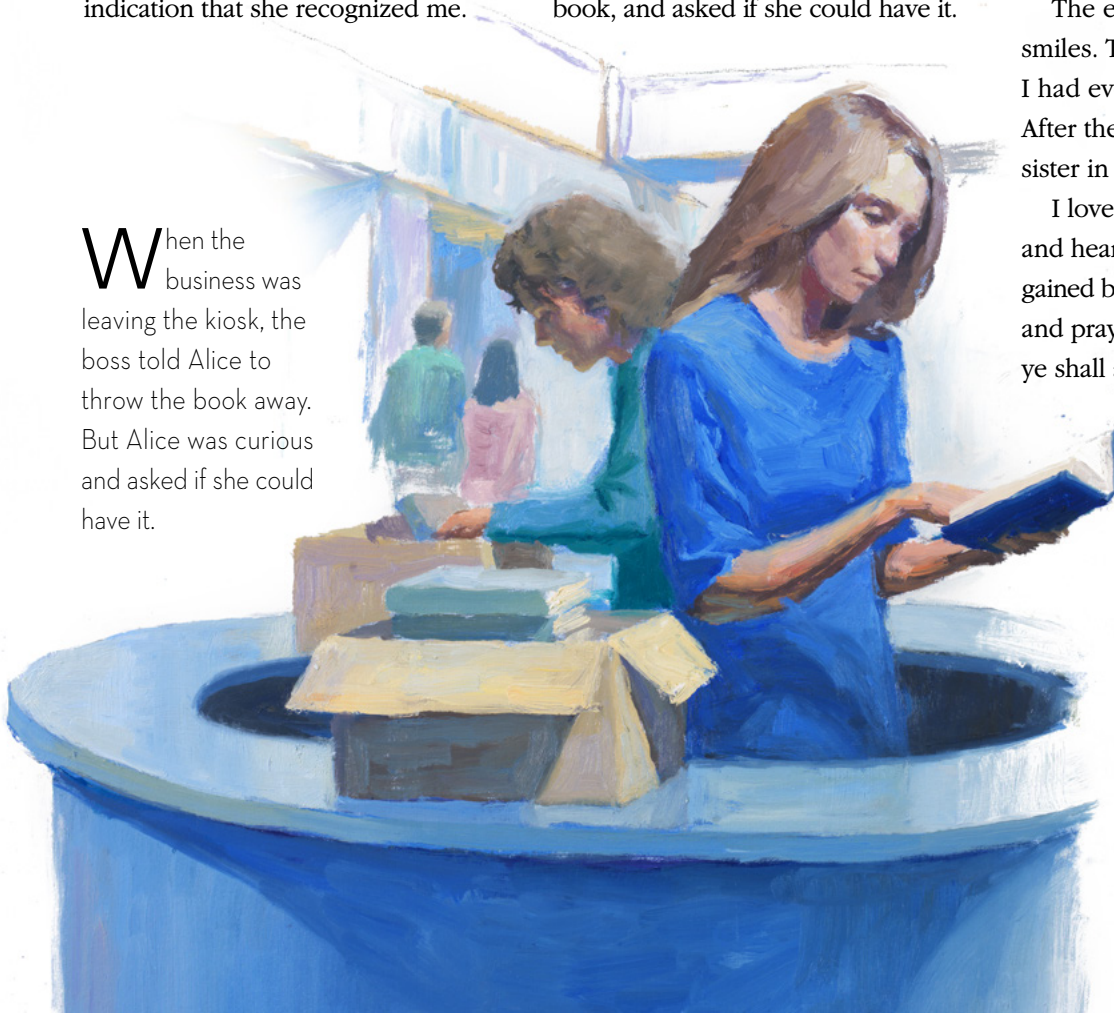
Then this sister said she would like to read the testimony written in the front of her Book of Mormon. The testimony was mine. I had placed it there before giving it to Alice's boss at the kiosk.

The elders broke into delighted smiles. This was the sweetest surprise I had ever experienced in my life! After the baptismal service, my new sister in the gospel rushed to hug me.

I loved witnessing Alice's baptism and hearing her humble testimony, gained by reading the Book of Mormon and praying as Moroni counsels: "If ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you" (Moroni 10:4).

A deep gratitude still fills me that I had been allowed to play a small part in helping one of God's children receive the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ. ■

Faith Watson, Utah, USA





I agonized over how I would ever be able to help my children pay for their missions.

## RAISE WORTHY SONS

Years ago, when I was a single mother, overwhelmed with the care and support of my four children, a generous gift from my mother and brother allowed me to return to college. During my drive to school, I would think about my hopes and dreams for my children. I was a convert to the Church. My fondest desire was that they would have the opportunity to teach the gospel to others and bring them the happiness I felt.

One morning, as I was driving down to school, I thought about my two oldest sons, who were 22 months apart. If they served, the oldest would finish his mission just as his brother started his. I agonized over this and wondered how I would ever be able to help them pay for their missions. I wasn't sure I could find funds to send the first, let alone the second.

This turmoil continued for four days, while I prayed for an answer. On the fifth day the answer came:

“Raise worthy sons. Money is easy to find; worthy sons are not.”

Peace flooded my heart. The answer was so far from my monetary concerns that I was startled. My job was to raise worthy children. I could hold family home evening, attend church, get my children to seminary, and help my sons with Young Men activities. I could make prayer, fasting, and scripture reading part of our family life. I knew that if I did my part, my children might have an opportunity to serve missions.

In addition to our routine, we had an incredible home teacher who loved our family. He and his wife came faithfully each month. He taught my children lessons, gave them blessings, and attended their sports events. Friends took my sons to stake priesthood meetings and overnight campouts. There were stake members who gave them opportunities to work and earn money, neighbors who were

like an extra set of parents, and school teachers who taught them discipline and consistency through academics, music, and sports.

When my oldest son turned 19, the funds were there for his mission. As it turned out, the funds were there for all four children to serve. They served in Mexico and Brazil and in South Carolina and Virginia, USA. The youngest two even served at the same time!

That experience has often made me think of the Lord's words in Isaiah: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways” (Isaiah 55:8).

Prayers are answered when we follow the counsel we receive, and blessings often follow. I know the service my children gave to the Lord changed their lives and the lives of those they taught. Their service has blessed our home and will continue to do so for generations. ■

Janness Johnson, California, USA



## ONLY TWO BAPTISMS?

While I was serving as president of the Guatemala Guatemala City North Mission, we received several new full-time missionaries. As I introduced myself to these missionaries, I told them the story of my conversion and baptism.

I related that Elders David Tree and Wayne Matthews had taught me the gospel when I was nine years old and living in Glendive, Montana, USA. The two missionaries and a member of the Glendive Branch drove me to Williston, North Dakota, USA, on a cold winter day in 1957 so I could

be baptized in the font of a meetinghouse there.

After I had related my story and was interviewing the new missionaries, one of them, Elder Benjamin Pixton, told me that David Tree was his grandfather. What a wonderful surprise! Elder Tree had baptized a nine-year-old boy in Glendive, Montana, and nearly 50 years later that boy was called as his grandson's mission president.

When Elder Pixton's parents and grandparents came to pick him up at the end of his mission, I had the

pleasure of meeting David Tree again. During our visit, I showed him the Book of Mormon—with a message and promise he had written—that he had given to me the day I was baptized.

Elder Pixton's mother told him that her father hadn't talked much about his mission. He felt that he hadn't been very successful because he baptized only two people: a single woman and a nine-year-old boy.

In gratitude I told him that because of his efforts, the rest of my family had eventually joined the Church and that my brother and I, along with our nine

Two missionaries and a member of the branch drove me to North Dakota, USA, on a cold winter day so I could be baptized in the font of a meetinghouse there.

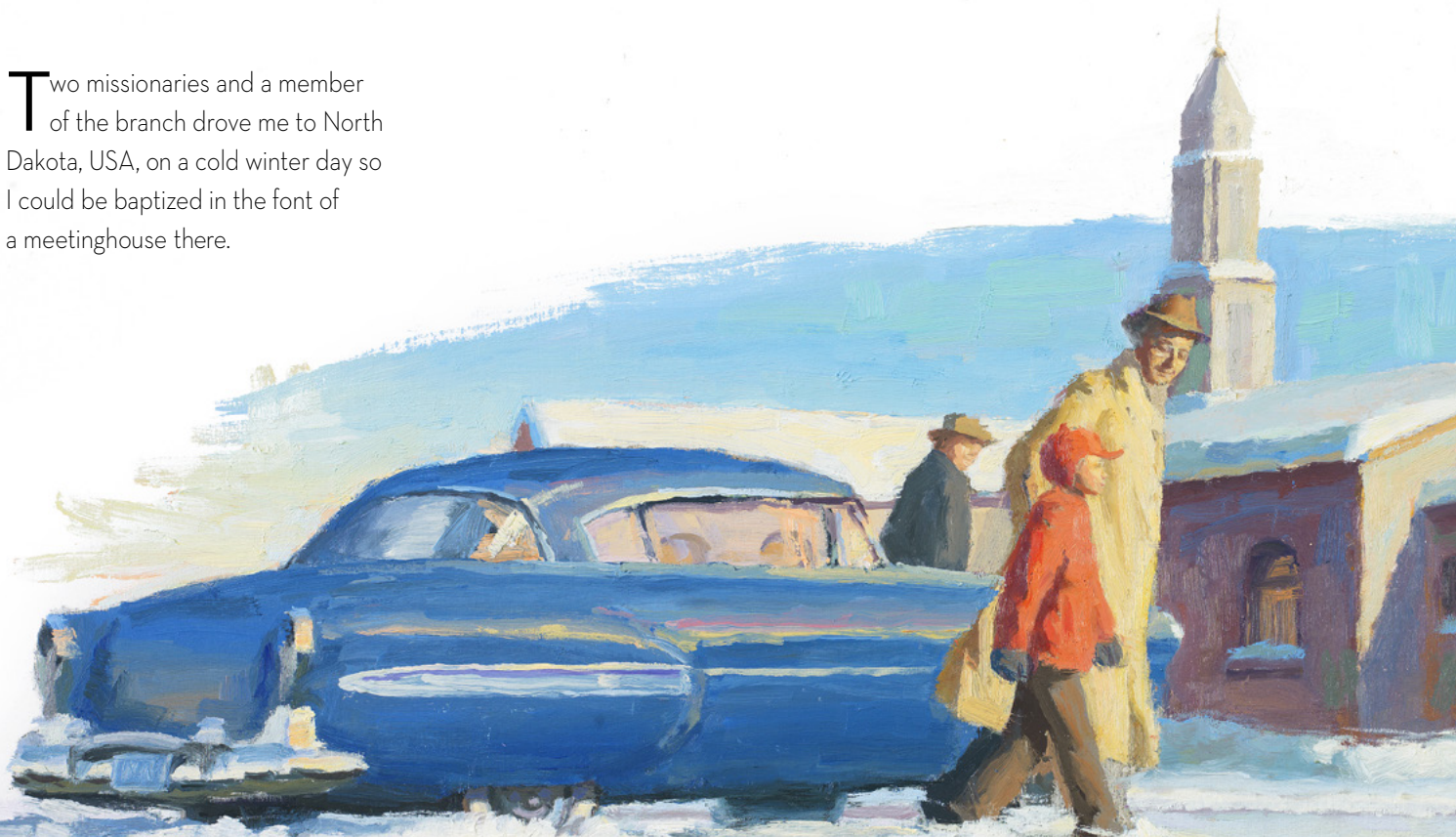


ILLUSTRATION BY ALLEN GARRISS

## PRAYING WITH REAL INTENT

sons, had served full-time missions. Because of his missionary service, I said, countless people had been taught the gospel and had joined the Church.

Many good, worthy, dedicated priesthood holders looked after me during the years of my childhood and adolescence, starting with Elder Tree and his companion, Elder Matthews. I will always be grateful that they taught me the gospel of Jesus Christ and brought me into the Lord's kingdom, where He has blessed me beyond measure. ■

Thomas R. Coleman, Kansas, USA



In 1960 I met a young man at a party who told me that Jesus Christ had visited the Americas after His Resurrection. I found the idea fascinating and wanted to know more, so I began searching in libraries and inquiring at the various religious denominations in my hometown of San Miguel, El Salvador.

I searched for almost three years but found nothing. When I mentioned to religious leaders that I had heard of Christ coming to the Americas, they told me I had been deceived. Because my search turned up no information, I eventually came to believe they were right.

One day, two missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints came to my home and said they had an important message for my family. I immediately asked them, "Do you know if Jesus Christ came to the Americas?"

One of them said, "We bear witness of that."

At that moment I felt a great excitement in my mind and heart and asked, "How do you know that?"

He took a book out of his bag and said, "We know Christ came here because of this book, the Book of Mormon."

What the missionaries taught me during the first discussion troubled me, and I doubted the account of the Prophet Joseph's vision of the Father and the Son.

However, the Book of Mormon intrigued me, and the missionaries kept teaching me. One afternoon they asked me, "Have you prayed to find out if what we are teaching you is true?"

I told them I had but had not obtained any answer.

"You must pray with real intent," they said.

I had been reading the Book of Mormon for several nights. I had read about and believed in Christ's appearance to the Nephites. But I still could not accept Joseph Smith's vision. My internal struggle was terrible.

One night I knelt alone and opened my heart to God. I told Him I needed to know if He had really manifested Himself to Joseph Smith. If He had, I promised Him I would be baptized into the Church and serve Him all my life.

When I got up early the next morning, the answer came to me through the Holy Ghost. My mind cleared and my heart filled with peace. From that moment to this, I have had no doubts whatsoever that Joseph Smith truly was a prophet of God, that the Book of Mormon is another testament of Jesus Christ, and that Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. I know Christ came to the Americas after His Resurrection. My soul delights in this marvelous knowledge that was taught to me by the power of the Holy Ghost. ■

Carlos Rene Romero, El Salvador





By President  
Howard W. Hunter  
(1907–95)

Fourteenth President  
of the Church

## TRUE GREATNESS

*We need not look far to see the unnoticed  
and forgotten heroes of daily life.*

**B**ecause we are being constantly exposed to the world's definition of success and greatness, it is understandable that we might frequently find ourselves making comparisons between what we are and what others are, or seem to be, and also between what we have and what others have. . . . We often allow unfair and improper comparisons to destroy our happiness when they cause us to feel unfulfilled or inadequate or unsuccessful. Sometimes, because of these feelings, we are led into error, and we dwell on our failures while ignoring aspects of our lives that may contain elements of true greatness. . . .

. . . Surely they include the things that must be done in order to be a good father or a good mother, but, to generalize, they are also the thousands of little deeds and tasks of service and sacrifice that constitute the giving or losing of one's life for others and for the Lord. They include gaining a knowledge of our Father in Heaven and His gospel. They include bringing others into the faith and fellowship



of His kingdom. These things do not usually receive the attention or the adulation of the world. . . .

Surely we need not look far to see the unnoticed and forgotten heroes of daily life. I am speaking of those you know and those I know who quietly and consistently do the things they ought to do. I am talking about those who are always there and always willing. I am referring to the uncommon valor of the mother who—hour after hour, day and night—will stay with and care for a sick child, or the invalid who struggles and suffers without complaint. I'm including those who always volunteer to give blood. . . . I am thinking of those who may not be mothers but who nevertheless “mother” the children of the world. I am speaking

of those who are always there to love and nurture.

I am also talking about teachers and nurses and farmers and others who do the good work of the world, who teach and feed and clothe, but who also, in addition, do the work of the Lord—those who lift and love. I am referring to those who are honest and kind and hardworking in their daily work, but who are also servants of the Master and shepherds of His sheep. . . .

To those who are doing the commonplace work of the world but are wondering about the value of their accomplishments; to those who are the workhorses of this Church, who are furthering the work of the Lord in so many quiet but significant ways; to those who are the salt of the earth and the strength of the world and the backbone of each nation—to you we would simply express our admiration. If you endure to the end, and if you are valiant in the testimony of Jesus, you will achieve true greatness and will live in the presence of our Father in Heaven. ■

*From “True Greatness,” Ensign, May 1982, 19–20.*

# INSIGHTS



## How do we view our spouse?

"None of us marry *perfection*; we marry *potential*. The right marriage is not only about what I want; it's also about what she—who's going to be my companion—wants and needs me to be."

**Elder Robert D. Hales** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Meeting the Challenges of Today's World," *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 46.





# In Church Magazines

**Ensign:** We all want to be happy. Learn about seven principles from the Book of Mormon that show us how we can (page 16). See also “Changed by the Book of Mormon” (page 34).

**New Era:** Elder Robert D. Hales teaches us how we can hear God’s voice through the scriptures (page 2). Also, youth get advice on making good use of time (page 12) and five ways to feel good in five minutes (page 24).

**Friend:** We can strengthen our families by talking with our children. Each Bulletin Board page in the *Friend* this year will include an “Ask Your Family” prompt. Also, this month’s issue has a story about a wonderful miracle that occurred—all because a mom and daughter took the time to talk (page 18).



THE CHURCH OF  
JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS