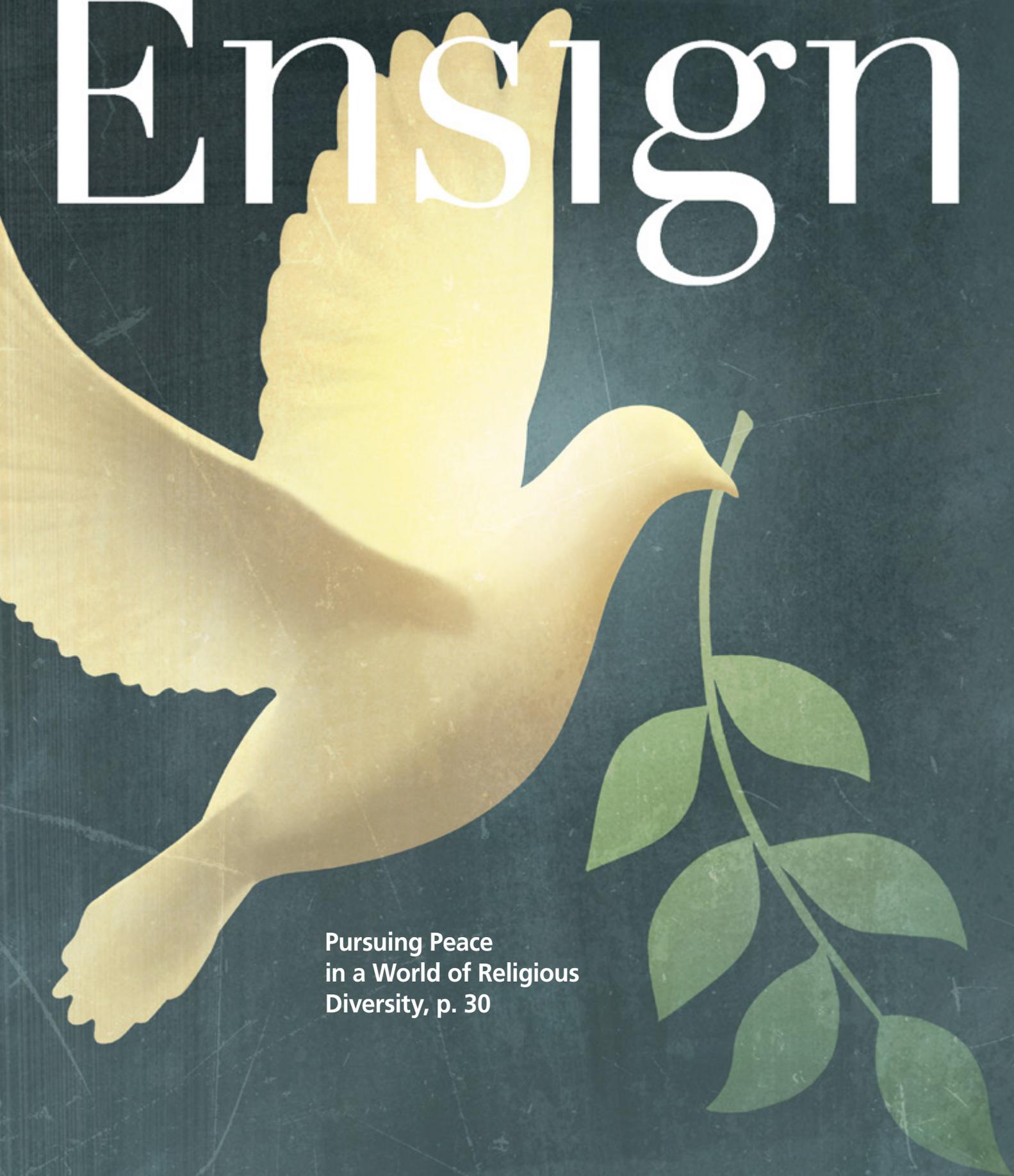


THE ENSIGN OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • FEBRUARY 2018

Ensign



Pursuing Peace
in a World of Religious
Diversity, p. 30



“NO MATTER
HOW WELL YOU KEEP
YOUR PROMISE TO
ALWAYS REMEMBER HIM,
**HE ALWAYS
REMEMBERS YOU.**”

PRESIDENT HENRY B. EYRING

From the First Presidency Message, page 4.



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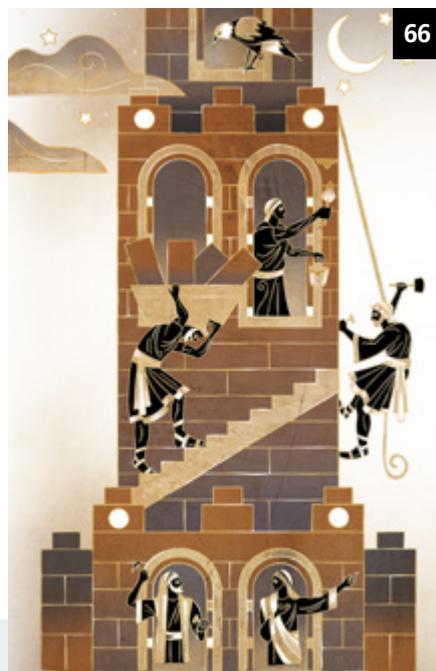
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Ensign

A MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
February 2018 Volume 48 • Number 2

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POSTMASTER: Send all UAA to CFS (see DMM 507.1.5.2).

NONPOSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES: Send address changes to Distribution Services, Church Magazines, P.O. Box 26368, Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368, USA.

Canada Post Information: Publication Agreement #40017431.

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A TEACHER'S INFLUENCE

In this issue, we learn what we can do to teach more like the Savior, including answering some personal evaluation questions (see page 12). Read about one teacher whose Christlike example influenced a young woman's life: lds.org/go/teachingE218.

BEHIND THE PULPIT

Continuing this month is the new series "At the Pulpit," which highlights the lives and words of faithful Latter-day Saint women from the past 185 years (see page 16). Take a behind-the-scenes look at the creation of the book upon which the magazine series is based: lds.org/go/pulpitE218.



TEACHING WITH TECH

How can technology be an ally rather than an enemy in the classroom, especially when you're teaching youth? Brian K. Ashton, Second Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency, explains how technology in gospel classrooms can be used in righteous and productive ways: lds.org/go/techE218.

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By President
Henry B. Eyring

First Counselor in
the First Presidency

ALWAYS REMEMBER HIM

Can you picture with me the prophet Moroni inscribing the final words of the Book of Mormon on the golden plates? He was alone. He had seen his nation, his people, and his family fall. The land was “one continual round” of war (Mormon 8:8). Yet he had hope, for he had seen our day! And of all the things he could have written, he invited us to *remember* (see Moroni 10:3).

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) was fond of teaching that the most important word in the dictionary could be *remember*. Because we have made covenants with God, he said, “our greatest need is to remember” them.¹

You can find the word *remember* throughout the scriptures. When Nephi admonished his brothers, often he invited them to remember the Lord’s words and to remember how God had saved their forefathers (see 1 Nephi 15:11, 25; 17:40).

In his great farewell address, King Benjamin used the word *remember* seven times. He hoped that his people would remember “the greatness of God . . . and his goodness and long-suffering” toward them (Mosiah 4:11; see also 2:41; 4:28, 30; 5:11–12).

When the Savior instituted the sacrament, He invited His disciples to partake of the emblems “in remembrance” of His sacrifice (Luke 22:19). In every sacrament prayer you and I hear, the word *always* precedes the word *remember* (see D&C 20:77, 79).

My message is an invitation, even a plea, to remember. Here are three suggestions about what you could remember each week when you partake of the sacred emblems of the sacrament. I hope they are helpful to you, as they have been to me.

Remember Jesus Christ

First, remember the Savior. Remember who He was while on earth, how He spoke to others, and how He showed kindness in His acts. Remember whom He spent time with and what He taught. The Savior “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). He visited the sick. He was committed to doing His Father’s will.

Most of all, we can remember the great price He paid, out of His love for us, to remove the stain of our sins. As we remember Him, our desire to follow Him will grow. We will want to be a little kinder, more forgiving, and more willing to seek the will of God and do it.

Remember What You Need to Do Better

It’s hard to think of the Savior—His purity and perfection—without also thinking of how flawed and imperfect we are in comparison. We have made covenants to obey His commandments, yet we frequently fall short of this high standard. But the Savior knew this would happen, which is why He gave us the ordinance of the sacrament.

The sacrament has its roots in the Old Testament practice of offering sacrifices, which included a confession of sin (see Leviticus 5:5). We don’t sacrifice animals anymore, but we can still give up our sins. The scriptures call this a sacrifice of “a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3 Nephi 9:20). Come to the sacrament with a repentant heart (see D&C 59:12; Moroni 6:2). As you do so, you will obtain forgiveness of sins and you will not stray from the path leading back to God.



Remember the Progress You Are Making

As you examine your life during the ordinance of the sacrament, I hope your thoughts center not only on things you have done wrong but also on things you have done right—moments when you have felt that Heavenly Father and the Savior were pleased with you. You may even take a moment during the sacrament to ask

God to help you see these things. If you do, I promise you will feel something. You will feel hope.

When I have done this, the Spirit has reassured me that while I'm still far from perfect, I'm better today than I was yesterday. And this gives me confidence that, because of the Savior, I can be even better tomorrow.

Always is a long time, and it implies a lot of focused effort. You know from

experience how hard it is to think consciously of one thing all the time. But no matter how well you keep your promise to always remember Him, He always remembers you.

The Savior knows your challenges. He knows what it is like to have the cares of life press upon you. He knows how urgently you need the blessing that comes from always remembering Him and obeying Him—“that [you] may *always* have his Spirit to be with [you]” (D&C 20:77; emphasis added).

So He welcomes you back to the sacrament table each week, once again offering you the chance to witness before Him that you will always remember Him. ■

NOTE

1. Spencer W. Kimball, “Circles of Exaltation” (address to Church Educational System religious educators, June 28, 1968), 5.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

Life can get hectic and make it difficult for us to always remember our Savior Jesus Christ. The sacrament, however, provides a special time each week when we can reflect on His life and teachings. With those you home teach, consider how you use those quiet moments now, and discuss how you can increase your focus on the Savior. How can you use those moments to reflect on the things you can personally improve? What is the value of remembering the progress you make each week?



“Remember how merciful the Lord hath been”
(Moroni 10:3).

YOUTH

Three Things to Remember

The word *remember* appears many times in the Book of Mormon. Nephi encouraged his brothers to remember how God had saved their forefathers. King Benjamin asked his people to remember the greatness of God. And Moroni instructed his readers to remember how merciful the Lord is.

Remembering the Savior is essential—we even covenant to remember Him each time we partake of the sacrament. President Eyring invites us to remember these three things during the sacrament:

1. **Remember Jesus Christ:** Read scriptures about how the Savior served and showed love toward others. How do you feel His love? How can you serve and show love toward others like the Savior did?
2. **Remember what you need to do better:** Reflect on your past week with a repentant heart. Choose one thing you can change, and write down how you’ll make that improvement. Put your goal somewhere you’ll see it often.
3. **Remember the progress you are making:** Ask God to help you see the good progress you’re making. Record how you feel.

We aren’t perfect, but the Savior knows that. That’s why He asks us to remember Him. Remembering Him gives us hope and helps us want to improve. Even at times when we fail to remember Him, President Eyring says, “He always remembers you.”

CHILDREN

Remembering Jesus

The scriptures teach that we should always remember Jesus Christ. That means we should think about Him a lot and follow His example!

You can trace and color this picture of Jesus to help you always remember Him. Place it somewhere you will see it often.

“And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you”
(3 Nephi 18:7).



Get to Know Her and Her Family

Visiting teaching is about sincerely coming to know and love each sister so that we can help strengthen her faith and give service.

Rita Jeppeson and her visiting teacher have become good friends as they meet and share gospel conversations. But their visits also include playing word games together, which helps Rita's mind stay sharp. Because her visiting teacher has learned what Rita needs and enjoys, they both look forward to each visit. Rita knows that they are friends and that the visit is not just an obligation. There are so many things sisters can do during a visit, such as taking a walk together or helping a sister with her chores.

Lucy Mack Smith, mother of the Prophet Joseph Smith, expressed her feelings in 1842 about how Latter-day Saint sisters in the newly established Relief Society should feel about one another. She said, "We must cherish one another, watch over one another, comfort one

another and gain instruction, that we may all sit down in heaven together."¹ This is still true today.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, "See yourselves as emissaries of the Lord to His children. . . . We would hope . . . that you will establish an era of genuine, gospel-oriented concern for the members, watching over and caring for each other, addressing spiritual and temporal needs in any way that helps."²

The Lord through Moses commanded the children of Israel that "the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love [her] as thyself" (Leviticus 19:34). The sisters we visit may be "strangers" as we begin our service, but as we get

to know them and their families, our desire will increase to "bear one another's burdens, that they may be light" and have our "hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another" (Mosiah 18:8, 21).

NOTES

1. Lucy Mack Smith, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 25.
2. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Emissaries to the Church," *Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 62.



Faith, Family, Relief



Consider This

Within the families of the sisters you visit, what upcoming events should you be aware of and remember?

Ministering

Rather than provide a specific message, this page will feature a different principle each month to help us minister more effectively to each other. As you pray and seek inspiration, you will know the spiritual message and service each sister needs.

OCTOBER 2017 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 2017 general conference, you can use these pages (and Conference Notebooks in past and future issues) to help you study and apply the recent teachings of the living prophets and apostles and other Church leaders.



DOCTRINAL HIGHLIGHT

The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood

A Melchizedek Priesthood holder covenants to fulfill the responsibilities associated with the Aaronic Priesthood and to magnify his calling in the Melchizedek Priesthood. . . .

“In return, God promises that a Melchizedek Priesthood holder will receive keys to understand the mysteries of God. He will become perfect

so that he can stand in the presence of God. He will be able to fulfill his role in the work of salvation. Jesus Christ will prepare the way before the priesthood holder and will be with him. The Holy Ghost will be in the priesthood holder’s heart, and angels will bear him up. His body will be strengthened and renewed. He will become heir to the

blessings of Abraham and, along with his wife, joint-heir with Jesus Christ to Heavenly Father’s kingdom. These are ‘exceeding great and precious promises’ [2 Peter 1:4]. No greater promises can be imagined.”

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Priesthood and the Savior’s Atoning Power,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 65–66.

PROPHETIC PROMISE



FAITH DEFEATS FEAR

"As much as we have already built faith and courage in our hearts, the Lord expects more

from us—and from the generations after us. They will need to be stronger and braver because they will do even greater and harder things than we have done. And they will face increasing opposition from the enemy of our souls. . . .

"I testify that the Lord goes before your face whenever you are on His errand. Sometimes you will be the angel the Lord sends to bear others up. Sometimes you will be the one surrounded by angels who bear you up. But always you will have His Spirit to be in your heart, as you have been promised in every sacrament service. You have only to keep His commandments.

"The best days are ahead for the kingdom of God on the earth. Opposition will strengthen our faith in Jesus Christ, as it has since the days of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Faith always defeats fear. Standing together produces unity. And your prayers for those in need are heard and answered by a loving God. He neither slumbers nor does He sleep."

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, "Fear Not to Do Good," *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 103.

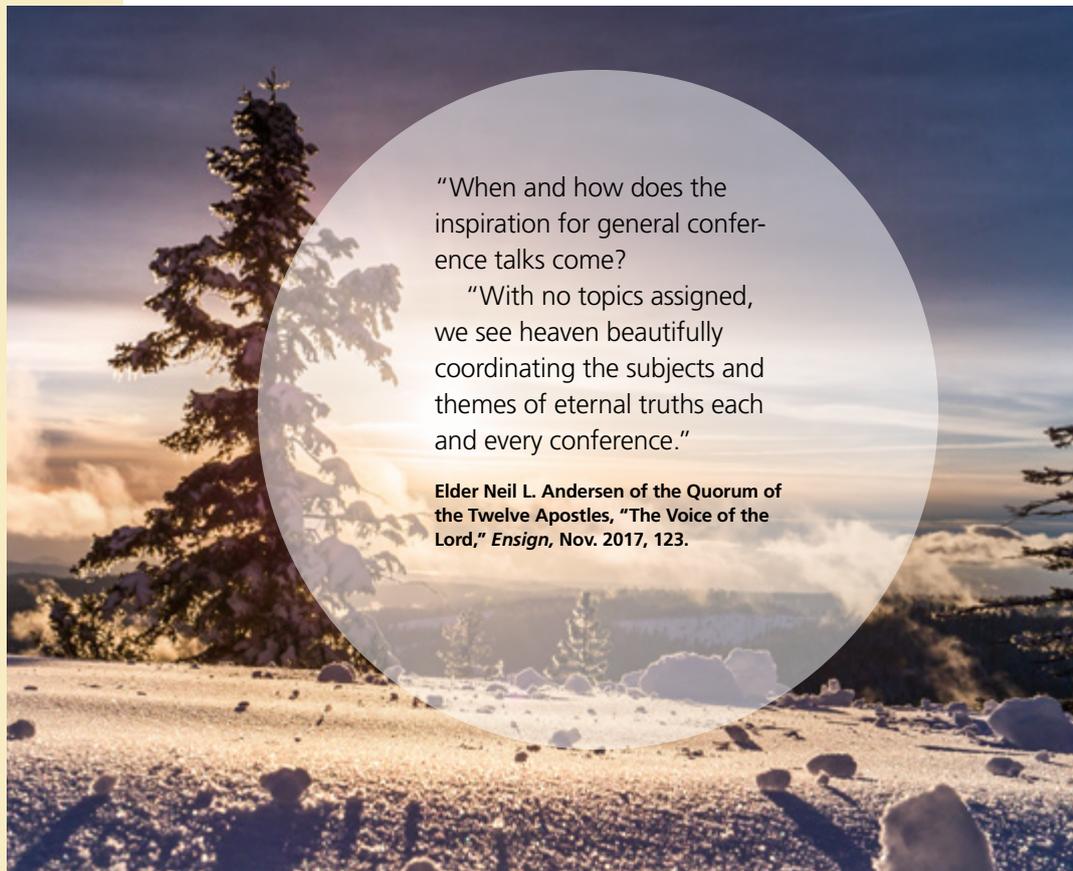


SERVING THOSE AROUND US

"I believe that most members consider service to be at the heart of their covenants and discipleship. But I also think that sometimes it's easy to miss some of the greatest opportunities to serve others because we are distracted or because we are looking for ambitious ways to change the world and we don't see that some of the significant needs we can meet are within our own families, among our friends, in our wards, and in our communities. We are touched when we see the suffering and great needs of those halfway around the world, but we may fail to see there is a person who needs our friendship sitting next to us in class. . . .

". . . Heavenly Father may have placed those who need us closest to us, knowing that we are best suited to meet their needs."

Bonnie L. Oscarson, Young Women General President, "The Needs before Us," *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 25–26.



"When and how does the inspiration for general conference talks come?

"With no topics assigned, we see heaven beautifully coordinating the subjects and themes of eternal truths each and every conference."

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Voice of the Lord," *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 123.



PERFECTION: A GIFT OF GRACE

"I believe in [God's] perfection, and I know we are His spiritual sons and daughters with divine potential to become as He is. I also know that, as children of God, we should not demean or vilify ourselves, as if beating up on ourselves is somehow going to make us the person God wants us to become. No! With a willingness to repent and a desire for increased righteousness always in our hearts, I would hope we could pursue personal improvement in a way that doesn't include getting ulcers or anorexia, feeling depressed or demolishing our self-esteem. . . .

"'Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him . . . ,' Moroni pleads. 'Love God with all your might, mind and strength, then . . . by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ' [Moroni 10:32; emphasis added]. Our only hope for true perfection is in receiving it as a gift from heaven. We can't 'earn' it. Thus, the grace of Christ offers us not only salvation from sorrow and sin and death but also salvation from our own persistent self-criticism."

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Be Ye Therefore Perfect—Eventually," *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 40, 41.



ANSWERS FOR YOU

How Can We Bring the Savior into Our Lives?

"Partaking of the [sacrament] means to put out of our lives anything inconsistent with a Christlike character and to make His attributes our own. This is the larger meaning of repentance: not only a turning away from past sin but also 'a turning of the heart and will to God' [Bible Dictionary, "Repentance"] going forward."

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Living Bread Which Came Down from Heaven," *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 39.



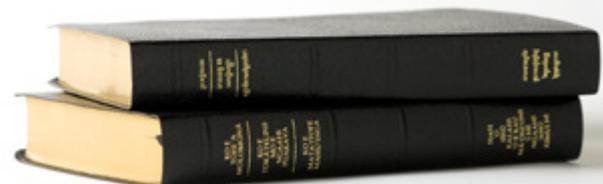
APRIL 2017 BOOK OF MORMON CHALLENGE

"Since President Monson's challenge [to study and ponder the Book of Mormon], I have tried to follow his counsel. Among other things, I've made lists of what the Book of Mormon *is*, what it *affirms*, what it *refutes*, what it *fulfills*, what it *clarifies*, and what it *reveals*. Looking at the Book of Mormon through these lenses has been an insightful and inspiring exercise! I recommend it to each of you. [See the end of President Nelson's talk for the lists he compiled.] . . .

"[Consider these questions:] First, what would your life be like *without* the Book of Mormon? Second, what would you *not know*? And third, what would you *not have*? . . .

"I know that President Thomas S. Monson is the prophet of God on the earth today. I love him and sustain him with all of my heart."

President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?" *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 61, 63.



A RELEASE IS A BEGINNING, NOT AN END

By Richard M. Romney

Church Magazines

We do not step up or down in the Church. We move forward together.

A friend of mine was recently released as the bishop of his ward. A few days later, knowing I had also served as a bishop, he asked to speak to me.

“Is it normal to feel what I’m feeling?” he asked.

“What are you feeling?”

“Disconnected, I guess. I have been involved in so many people’s lives, and now all of a sudden, it’s over. Will I ever feel so involved again?”

His question took me back to the time of my own release. I remembered having similar feelings. I missed being deeply involved in helping people draw nearer to the Savior and to their Father in Heaven. I missed encouraging them to seek and follow the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Serving as a bishop had been a wonderful blessing, and now it was gone.

But was it really? As a little time passed, I realized that the blessing of giving service never disappears. It is an abiding opportunity. As disciples of Jesus Christ, aren’t we *always* to remember Him? (see D&C 20:77, 79). Aren’t we *always* to help others draw

nearer to the Savior and to their Father in Heaven? Aren’t we *always* to help others, especially our spouses and families, seek and follow the inspiration of the Holy Ghost?

These words from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles came to mind: “We do not ‘step down’ when we are released, and we do not ‘step up’ when we are called. There is no ‘up or down’ in the service of the Lord. There is only ‘forward or backward,’ and that difference depends on how we accept and act upon our releases and our callings. I once presided at the release of a young stake president who had

given fine service for nine years and was now rejoicing in his release and in the new calling he and his wife had just received. They were called to be the nursery leaders in their ward. Only in this Church would that be seen as equally honorable!”¹

As my friend and I talked, we both realized that service doesn’t end when we are released from a calling, whatever that calling may be. For the followers of Christ, service never ends. Soon we receive a new calling, and we begin again as we all move forward together. ■

NOTE

1. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 49.





By Tad R. Callister
Sunday School
General President

WHAT CAN I DO TO TEACH MORE LIKE THE SAVIOR?

While I was serving as a mission president in Toronto, Canada, one of my assistants approached me and said, “President, how can I be a better missionary?” My first response was, “You are doing great.” And in truth, he was. But he persisted in his question, so I thought for a moment and then offered a suggestion. With a smile, he responded positively.

I shared this simple experience with our other missionaries. Soon other elders and sisters came to their interviews and asked, “President, how can I be a better missionary?” That simple question from one missionary caused a spirit of improvement throughout our entire mission.

In like manner, teachers will receive constructive counsel if they will sincerely ask this simple question of the Lord and their leaders: “What can I do to teach more like the Savior?” The Lord promised, “Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers” (D&C 112:10).

Caring Like Blazes

J. B. Priestley, an English novelist, was once asked how he became such an accomplished writer since none of his gifted peers had so excelled. He responded, “The difference between us was not in ability, but in the fact that while . . . they . . . merely toyed with the fascinating idea of [writing], I cared like blazes!”¹

As teachers, we might ask, “Are we content with our current teaching abilities, or do we care like blazes about teaching like the Savior?” If so, are we willing to put aside all pride and not only wait for instruction but also actively seek it?

Humility Is the Key

We have many excellent teachers in this Church, but the truth is, no matter how many years of experience we have, or how many degrees we hold, or how well we are loved by class members, we can all improve and become more like the Master Teacher, provided that we are humble. Perhaps the defining quality of a Christlike

teacher is being teachable. Humility is a quality that both invites the Spirit and nurtures our appetite to improve.

On occasion, I meet Sunday School presidents who are disappointed because one or more of the teachers in their ward or branch feel they are so experienced or accomplished that they do not need further instruction or to attend teacher council meetings. This saddens me because I have never yet met a teacher who could not improve in some way.

I know that if even the most experienced teacher will come to teacher council meetings with a humble heart and a blazing desire to learn, such a teacher *will* receive divine insights and impressions as to how he or she can improve. I have been to dozens of teacher council meetings and I always leave with some new insight or a desire to improve upon a skill or attribute that needs refining and perfecting.

The Need to Develop Teaching Skills

Some may occasionally think of teaching skills or techniques as simply

mechanical or secular tools. When developed, however, these skills allow the Spirit to choose from a variety of options that can best meet the needs of individual learners. Who is more productive, the man who attempts to cut down a tree with his pocketknife, or the same man who utilizes a chain saw? In both cases, the same man has the same strength and character, but the latter is so much more productive because he has a more effective tool at his disposal. Teaching skills become divine tools in the hands of the Spirit.

Training and practice, role-playing,

study, and observation can help a teacher of any skill level to develop skills that the Spirit can draw on—helping us teach more like the Master. Many of these skills can be developed in teacher council meetings.

The Lord Can Mold and Shape Us

Some may feel that they just can't teach like the Savior—that such a quest is beyond their capabilities. Peter may have thought he was nothing more than a simple fisherman; Matthew, but a despised tax collector. Yet with the help of the Savior, each

became a powerful leader and teacher of the gospel.

This ability of the Lord to mold and shape us is not unlike the experience Michelangelo had in sculpting what is considered by many the finest work ever fashioned by the hand of man—*David*.

Before Michelangelo took on the project, two other sculptors, Agostino di Duccio and Antonio Rossellino, had been commissioned to complete the statues. Both ran into the same problem: the 2,000-pound (907 kg) column was the right height and width, but the marble was severely



PAINTING BY JUSTIN KLINZ

flawed. Di Duccio and then Rossellino had tried their artistic touch on this column, but to no avail. There were just too many imperfections.² Finally, each gave up. Michelangelo saw these same imperfections, but he also saw beyond them. He saw a living, breathing, majestic form of David that today often causes onlookers to gasp in awe at first sight.

In a similar manner, God declared that the fulness of His gospel will “be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world” (D&C 1:23). God sees our imperfections and shortcomings, but He also sees beyond them. He has the ability not only to help us overcome our weaknesses but also to convert those weaknesses into strengths (see Ether 12:26–27). He can help refine and

perfect our teaching skills and attributes so that we can teach more like the Savior.

Ways We Can Teach More Like the Savior

Following are some of the core elements for which we might all be striving in order to teach more like the Savior:

- **Teach by the Spirit**, knowing that it is the Spirit who gives life and breath and substance to our lessons (see D&C 43:15).
- **Focus on the doctrine**, recognizing that the doctrine as taught in the scriptures and by the living prophets has the inherent power to change lives (see Alma 31:5).
- **Become an avid learner**, knowing that the ideal teacher is

also an ideal learner (see D&C 88:118).

- **Seek revelation**, knowing that with every call to teach comes the right to receive revelation to magnify one’s calling (see D&C 42:61).
- **Demonstrate love** by learning each class member’s name, praying for him or her individually, taking a personal interest in each (particularly those with special needs), and reaching out in a meaningful way to those who don’t attend (see Moroni 7:47–48).

A Personal Evaluation

The Apostle Paul gave this counsel: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith” (2 Corinthians 13:5). This might be paraphrased for teachers to read, “Examine yourselves, whether you are teaching in the Savior’s way or your way.” The beginning of the year is an appropriate time to conduct such an examination. Accordingly, you are invited to answer the personal evaluation questions accompanying this article. As you do so, the Spirit will help you know what your focus should be in order to become a more Christlike teacher, and how you can acquire and develop the necessary attributes and skills to do so. ■

NOTES

1. J. B. Priestley, *Rain upon Godshill* (1939), 176.
2. See “Michelangelo’s David,” accademia.org/explore-museum/artworks/michelangelos-david.



Improving as a Christlike Teacher: A Personal Evaluation

Consider the principles of effective teaching below. In areas where you feel you can grow, use the space provided to write what you feel prompted to do.

1. I attend teacher council meetings with a humble desire to learn and participate (see D&C 112:10).	
2. I regularly record impressions of the Spirit to help me as a learner and teacher (see D&C 76:28).	
3. I commence preparation of my lessons at least a week in advance (see D&C 88:118–19).	
4. I have an appropriate balance of teacher instruction and class discussion (see D&C 88:122).	
5. I fervently plead for the Spirit so I can be an instrument in God’s hands (see D&C 42:14).	
6. I take time to ponder the scripture block before reading the lesson or outside material so I can enhance the revelation I might receive (see D&C 42:61).	
7. I help my class members, especially youth, not only learn the gospel but also become effective teachers so they can become better missionaries, leaders, teachers, and parents (see D&C 88:77).	
8. I pray by name for those in my class (see Luke 22:32).	
9. I reach out to those in my class who don’t attend? (see Luke 15:1–7).	
10. What is my biggest challenge to becoming a Christlike teacher, and how can I overcome that challenge?	

For a more in-depth evaluation, see the personal evaluation on page 37 of *Teaching in the Savior’s Way*.

GOD HAS REVEALED IT UNTO ME

By Rachel H. Leatham

This new series highlights the lives of devoted women and their messages, excerpted from the book *At the Pulpit: 185 Years of Discourses by Latter-day Saint Women* (2017). Selected chapters are available at churchhistorianspress.org/at-the-pulpit.

I think that I am one of the happiest girls in all the world, and it is the gospel that makes me feel this way, for I do know that the gospel is true. I do know that God our Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, came down and brought the gospel and established it and spoke to the Prophet Joseph Smith. . . .

I feel that if I could live forever, I could never thank my Heavenly Father enough for the blessings that have come into my life, for the privilege of going out into the world and bearing this testimony, telling them of the gospel being restored, of the authority Christ has given to His servants, and of the blessings that are in store for those who listen to and obey the words of truth, life, and salvation. . . .

I sometimes think that we young folks at home do not fully realize the responsibilities that rest upon us. We do not always remember that those who stand at our head are aged, and that when our fathers and mothers are gone, it will devolve upon us to

assume their work; that we are the future responsible people of Zion. Are we doing our part, and are we preparing ourselves so that we will be able to do the work that our fathers have done?

. . . Are we able to tell what the promises are that God has made us, if we will keep His commandments? Are we familiar with the ancient record of the inhabitants of this continent, the Book of Mormon? And are we familiar with the great truths that are taught therein and with those books that teach us the beauties of the work in which we are engaged today? I am afraid we are not sufficiently conversant with the principles of the gospel and that we are not as diligent as we should be.¹

Where much is given, much is required; and you know, every one of you, how much has been given to us, and how much will be required at our hands [see Luke 12:48; D&C 82:3]. Are we preparing ourselves so that we will not fall short? Let us live by every word that proceeds out of the



ABOUT SISTER LEATHAM

Rachel Hannah Leatham (1884–1979)

became the second woman to be included in the Church's official conference report when she spoke at an outdoor overflow meeting of general conference on April 5, 1908.

She was among the first generation of unmarried women to serve a proselyting mission for the Church. When she was 22, she was assigned to serve in the Colorado Mission in September 1906.

Upon her return to Salt Lake City in 1908, Sister Leatham volunteered as a guide at the Temple Square Bureau of Information. The bureau had opened in 1902 to provide accurate information and distribute Church literature to those who visited Temple Square.

During this era, general conference was held in the Tabernacle on Temple Square. When the Tabernacle was full, attendees were directed to overflow meetings in the nearby Assembly Hall. When the Assembly Hall was full, people congregated on the lawn near the Bureau of Information Building, where services for the overflow meeting of conference were conducted.

This message is an excerpt of the talk Sister Leatham gave at the general conference overflow meeting on April 5, 1908. Punctuation and capitalization have been standardized.

mouth of God [see Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4; D&C 84:44]. Let us live so that He will ever be willing to own us, and bless us, and love us.

. . . I want to say again that I know the gospel is true. Not because my father knows it, not because my

mother has always taught it to me, but I know that the gospel is true because God has revealed it unto me. His Spirit has borne witness unto my spirit [see Romans 8:16], and that testimony is God's most precious gift to me.

May God bless us all, I ask in the name of Jesus, amen. ■

NOTE

1. Sister Leatham's monthly letters to her mission president reveal her diligence. On February 25, 1907, she wrote, "I have endeavored to do my duty and found great satisfaction in my labors" (Colorado Denver South Mission General Minutes, 166).



PHOTOGRAPH OF RACHEL LEATHAM COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY LIBRARY; FRAME FROM GETTY IMAGES

“He Would Deliver Us”

By Reid Tateoka

The earthquake that struck Japan in March of 2011 measured 9.0 on the Richter scale—it was one of the most powerful earthquakes in recorded history. At the time, I was serving as president of the Japan Sendai Mission, the part of Japan nearest the quake’s epicenter. More than 16,000 people died and hundreds of thousands of homes and buildings collapsed in the quake and the ensuing tsunami.

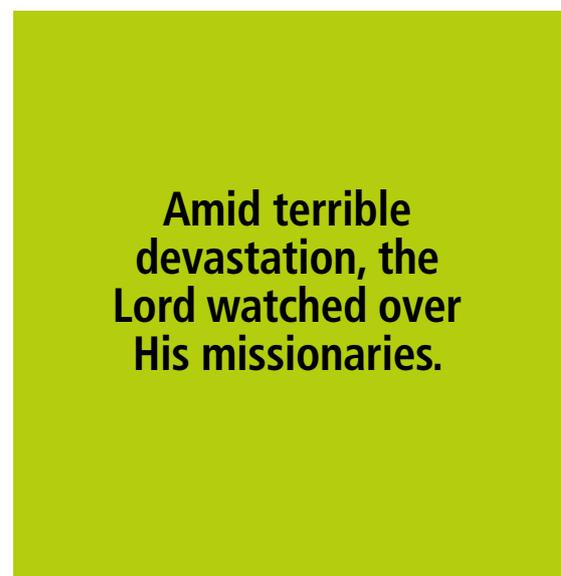
Despite the widespread devastation, we did not lose a single missionary. In the days and weeks that followed, I saw miracles in the lives of the missionaries we served with. Both before and after the quake, a loving Father put into place a series of events that would save His missionaries.

Led to Protected Places

Leadership meetings for the Koriyama Zone of our mission almost always took place on Thursday. This

time, however, the meeting was scheduled for Friday, March 11, 2011—the day of the quake. Leadership meetings typically included only zone and district leaders. In this instance, all the missionaries in the zone were invited to leadership meeting. This meant that on the day of the earthquake, the Japan Sendai missionaries who lived closest to the nuclear reactors damaged by the quake and tsunami were far away from their apartments, safely attending leadership meeting in the Koriyama chapel. The Lord had moved them to safe ground.

The missionaries in our leadership meeting were not the only ones who had been led to safety before the quake hit. Missionaries learn early to rely on the Lord and on the promptings of the Spirit. When the earthquake hit, there was no time to call leaders for directions. The other missionaries survived because they had already followed the Spirit, which led them to



Amid terrible devastation, the Lord watched over His missionaries.

protected places that Heavenly Father had prepared for them.

After the quake, many missionaries made their way to evacuation centers. Some zones instinctively moved to the chapels, which sustained comparatively little damage and where they felt more strongly the peace from the Holy Ghost. A fortunate few could remain in their apartments, without heat, water, electricity, or food. But all were safe.



PHOTOGRAPHS PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR AND MICHAEL REMINGTON



Guided by Roadblocks

Initially, not knowing of the damage to the nuclear power plants, I tried to send the missionaries at our leadership meeting back to their apartments immediately after the quake. But the Lord hedged up the way. There were no buses or trains running. So Heavenly Father continued to keep the missionaries safe in Koriyama.

I thought I would be needed in the mission home near the epicenter of the quake. But after eight hours of driving on damaged and congested roads, we found that our way too was blocked. It turned out that by remaining in Koriyama, we were better able to help with the evacuation of our other missionaries, a process that provided further evidence that the Lord was watching over us.

Following the earthquake there was a run on gasoline. The fuel trucks that could maneuver over broken roads traveled very slowly, resulting in three-hour waits for gasoline, if any was available at all. But the Lord provided for us in miraculous ways. For example, while evacuating sisters and elders to safety in Niigata on the other side of the island, we realized we had driven 18 hours on a single tank, with a gas gauge that always registered “full.” As we neared Niigata, the gas gauge immediately dropped to “empty.”

Perilous Journey

Fortunately, our loving Father continued to direct an orderly evacuation amid severe devastation. Long-distance travel was dangerous. There were continuing aftershocks. Public

transportation was shut down. Water and electrical supplies were interrupted, and it was nearly impossible to buy gas or food. Sister Tateoka and I understood very well that we were the only ones able to reach two elders in a mountainous area and two other elders over the mountain on the other side of the island. Freeways were closed, so this last trip would require a five- or six-hour drive one-way north up the mountain on back roads, another two to three hours over the mountains and down to Tsuruoka, and four more hours back to safety.

We left early on the morning of March 16 and arrived at Elder Ohsugi’s and Elder Yuasa’s apartment around 5:00 p.m. To pick up the last two elders, we needed to travel back

south, over a mountain summit, and down to the city of Tsuruoka. With less than half a tank of gas, we knew that we could not turn back. As we began traveling to pick up the last two elders, snow began to fall. Soon, we found ourselves in a blinding snowstorm, traveling at less than 15 miles (24 km) per hour. I could not see the lines on the highway.

At 7:30 p.m., as we finally reached the summit, we were stopped by the police. An officer informed me that an avalanche had blocked the road and closed the mountain pass. He told me that we could go no farther; we had to turn around and take an alternate route to the other side of the island around the avalanche. Without enough gas to go around the avalanche, it appeared we had no way to reach Elder Lay and Elder Ruefenacht in Tsuruoka.

Miraculous Journey

Dejectedly, we turned back as directed by the police. I asked the elders in the van to call every member of the Yamagata Ward to see if we could find someone who could give us some gasoline. We stopped and prayed earnestly, drawing upon all of the power of heaven we could. We prayed for another miracle and again turned to the Lord.

The missionaries called every active member. But no one had gasoline. Gas stations had run out of supplies and were closed. Then the elders were

impressed to call an less-active friend, Brother Tsuchihashi. Our Heavenly Father had once again directed our path. Brother Tsuchihashi could give us 20 liters (5 gallons) of gas. But to meet this good brother, we had to travel another hour north, the opposite direction of where we wanted to go. The quantity of gas would be helpful but not sufficient to allow us to travel around the avalanche.

Having faith, we traveled north, still not knowing how we would pick up the other two elders. We made it to Shinjo City, where we received the 20 liters of gas. Soon thereafter, I received a call from President Yoshida, my counselor, who by now was very worried that we had not yet returned. He asked where we were, and when I told him Shinjo, he was shocked that we were so far out of our way. It was beyond his ability to reach us and help us return.

Then he looked on his map, and in a broken voice stammered, "There is a little-known mountain pass that will take you from Shinjo to the elders in Tsuruoka." The Lord had prepared a way for us to be precisely where we needed to be to drive around the avalanche. The gasoline we were given was exactly the amount necessary to make the trip safely around the avalanche to pick up the elders.

When I contacted each missionary after the earthquake and learned how they had all been directed to safe ground just prior to the earthquake



THE SPIRIT WILL LEAD US

"As part of God's divine plan, we are blessed with the gift of the Holy Ghost. . . . As we navigate the seas of life, following the impressions of the Holy Ghost is essential. The Spirit will help us avoid temptations and dangers, and comfort and lead us through challenges."

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, 42.

and tsunami, I felt so grateful. Two missionaries, who had been protected from the tsunami by climbing to an evacuation center's fourth floor, expressed their gratitude for being kept safe in a time of great peril.

They felt that the words of Helaman described their situation: "The Lord our God did visit us with assurances that he would deliver us; yea, insomuch that he did speak peace to our souls, and did grant unto us great faith, and did cause us that we should hope for our deliverance in him" (Alma 58:11). ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

Go and Do; Then You Will Know

By Annette Shiley

As a young single adult, I was terrified of marrying the wrong person. Knowing that the Holy Ghost guides our decisions when we are living righteously, I expected a strong answer from the Spirit telling me whom I should marry. I felt that receiving that kind of witness from the Spirit would calm my fears.

After dating a young man for over a year, I fell in love with him. I made my decision to marry him and then asked for a witness from the Holy Ghost. I prayed, fasted, and went to the temple but received no answer. My first inclination was to increase my obedience. So I worked on being more faithful in my Church calling, asked for a priesthood blessing, and increased my temple attendance.

Months passed, and no clear answer came. My fears and anxieties grew. I began studying many talks on

receiving revelation. I finally came across a talk given by Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles that helped me understand why I hadn't received an answer:

“When [Heavenly Father] answers *yes*, it is to give us confidence.

“When He answers *no*, it is to prevent error.

“When He *withholds an answer*, it is to have us grow through faith in Him, obedience to His commandments, and a willingness to act on truth. We are expected to assume accountability by acting on a decision that is consistent with His teachings without prior confirmation. We are not to sit passively waiting or to murmur because the Lord has not spoken. We are to act.

“. . . If, in trust, we begin something which is not right, He will let us know before we have gone too far.”¹

I wanted a clear confirmation that I was marrying the right person, but an answer didn't seem to come.

These words of wisdom from Elder Scott gave me the courage to keep moving forward.

But the closer the wedding day came, the more I panicked. The night before, my prayers went something like this: “Heavenly Father, I am getting married tomorrow and I am scared to death! I still don't know if this is the right thing to do! I have done all that

I can be worthy to receive guidance from the Spirit. Will You do Your part and help me know if I should go through with this?" I still felt no answer as to whether it was right to marry my fiancé, but I felt an assurance that Heavenly Father heard my prayers, loved me, and wouldn't let me go astray without letting me know.

We were married on January 2, 2010, in the Salt Lake Temple. Soon we found out we were expecting

our first child. We were thrilled, but at the time I was a full-time student involved in student government, had a few Church callings, and was battling severe morning sickness. My husband graciously did all the cooking, cleaning, laundry, and errands. He also provided me with encouragement, entertainment, and humor.

One particular morning I was very discouraged and ill. Rather than rest, I had to go to school to take an

important exam. I was depressed physically, mentally, and spiritually. With tears rolling down my cheeks, I prayed and pleaded for help that I might endure the day.

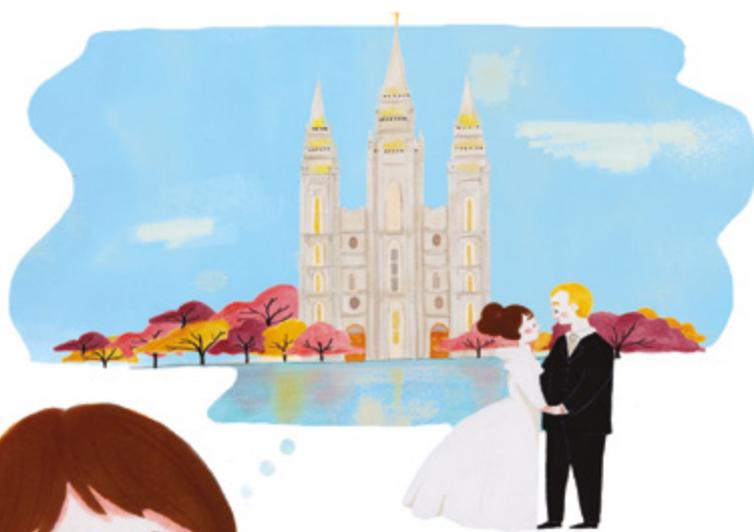
A few minutes after I ended my prayer, a sudden peace flooded my heart and body. Through the power of the Holy Ghost, I was able to see the past few weeks with different eyes. I saw my husband in a way I had never seen him when we were dating. I saw what a tremendous blessing he had been to me and how much I needed him by my side. Deep gratitude and love filled my soul for my husband as well as my Heavenly Father for giving me the confirmation I had been seeking. A voice then came to my mind telling me that I had married the right person.

Since then, I have received similar confirmations from the Spirit, reassuring me again and again that marrying my husband was not only the right thing to do but also the best decision I have made. I know that Heavenly Father hears and answers every prayer in His own time and His own way. I know that as we live righteously and seek His guidance, He will guide our path in selecting an eternal companion. He truly loves us and knows what is best for us. ■

The author lives in Arkansas, USA.

NOTE

1. Richard G. Scott, "Learning to Recognize Answers to Prayer," *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 32.



FINDING ANSWERS FOR MYSELF

By Heather J. Johnson

As I've studied the gospel throughout my life, I've found that I have a lot of questions about many different topics. Through pondering and studying out these questions, I've gained a better understanding of how to receive revelation. One experience is particularly clear in my mind.

I had questions about some of the cultural issues that are found in the Book of Mormon. My faith in the Book of Mormon wasn't shaken. I still knew it was true and that reading it blessed my life. I continued reading and studying, focusing on what I did understand. One day I was reading a chapter where one of these cultural issues comes up. As I read the chapter, I started thinking about this issue in a way I never had before. I grabbed my study journal and started writing furiously.

When I finally had my thoughts recorded, I realized that my new understanding was based around a concept I had been learning about in

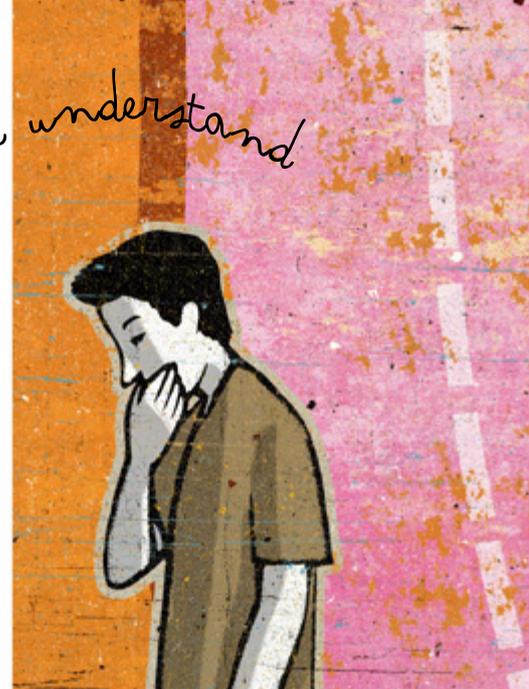
one of my college classes that semester. Heavenly Father wanted to answer my question, but He waited until I had learned a new paradigm to work with.

I continue to seek understanding with this and other issues, but I'm grateful for the ground I have gained. Through this experience and others, I've found several principles that help me effectively ask questions and find answers.

Approach the question with humility and patience

I've found that revelation comes to me more easily as I ask questions with this type of attitude: "This doesn't make sense to me, but I'm confident that as I gather more information, this issue will make more sense." This is different from an attitude of, "This is completely illogical. I need answers now."

I sometimes think of revelation like rain. We can't demand that the rain fall right when we want it to. We can go to a tropical rain forest where it's more likely to rain, and we can prepare to



I have lots of questions, but I've found ways to approach them with faith.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ALBERTO RUGGERI



collect rainwater by setting out rain barrels, but we still don't get to decide when it rains.

We can go to places and do things that invite revelation—things like attending church and the temple, reading the scriptures, and praying. We can be prepared to receive revelation by taking time to ponder and by using a study journal. But we don't get to decide when the revelation comes.

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

"We should recognize that the Lord will speak to us through the Spirit in His own time and in His own way. . . .

"So we do all we can. Then we wait upon the Lord for His revelation. He has his own timetable."¹

Demanding immediate answers to our questions is as misguided as a man standing in the middle of a sand dune waving his fist at the sky and expecting it to rain immediately. Both rain and revelation will eventually come, but on God's schedule, not ours.

Ask God

One day at work, I started feeling frustrated—every way I tried to approach the project felt wrong. After struggling for a while, the impression came: "I care about this project too, you know. Why don't you ask Me about it?" I immediately stopped working to say a prayer and ask for

guidance, which was mercifully given.

As I've reflected on that experience, I've come to realize that the impression could be applied to any aspect of my life. "I care about Church history. Why don't you ask Me?" "I care about what you study in college. Why don't you ask Me?" "I care about Church policies and procedures. Why don't you ask Me?"

Because God is our loving Heavenly Father, He wants to counsel with us about our questions and our lives (see Alma 37:37). He won't always give us complete answers—sometimes He wants us to figure things out through our own experience, or sometimes He chooses not to speak on certain topics—but He will always listen to us and minister to us in the way that is best for us (see Matthew 7:7–11).

Study it out

In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord counsels us to "seek learning, even by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118). We shouldn't expect to receive knowledge that we haven't prepared for—finding answers will take effort on our part. As I've studied, I've found these strategies to be helpful:

- Start the search in the scriptures and recent general conference talks. Starting here helps me stay anchored in true doctrine and invites the Spirit to be with me as I search.

- Don't overlook simple explanations. Often, particularly when I'm reading the Doctrine and Covenants, I've resolved my concerns simply by double-checking a date or looking at a footnote.
- Ponder the question from different perspectives. How do cultural differences impact my question? How does considering the larger historical context inform my question?

Chieko N. Okazaki (1926–2011), former First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency, made this observation about the relationship between study and faith: "What happens if you try to paddle a boat using only one oar? You go around and around in circles. If you paddle hard, you go fast. If you paddle slowly, you turn gently. But you still just go around in circles. It's the same with trying to make study replace faith or trying to exercise faith but without study. We can often find ourselves just going around in circles. I think that the Holy Ghost cannot give us some answers until we are actively seeking knowledge."²

Focus on the most important questions

Recently I found some questions I had written down a few weeks previously while reading the scriptures. I realized that I still hadn't found

answers to these questions. But I also realized that finding the answers wouldn't really change how I lived, other than I would know a few more particulars about the Bible. I debated whether to research the questions, but I decided that my time could be better spent.

We all have lots of demands on our time, and most of us can't spend all day searching for gospel answers. Our gospel study time will be most meaningful when we spend it finding answers to questions that will help us better understand the plan of salvation and live the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is not to say that questions regarding finer points shouldn't be asked and studied. But finding answers to them should not replace studying the "weightier matters" (Matthew 23:23) of how to live and how to treat others. We don't want to be like the Pharisees, who were inclined to "strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel" (Matthew 23:24).

Record answers

Life is busy and full of distractions, and often I'll forget what I've learned. A couple months after my experience with the issue I had with the Book of Mormon, I again started to feel very confused and unsettled. But when I went back to my study journal, I was able to reconnect the dots and remember what I had learned about the issue.



On another occasion I was preparing for a Church speaking assignment. While looking through a study journal from my mission, I was amazed at the number of quotes, scriptures, and insights I had collected and filed under different topic headings—I didn't remember most of it. I learned a lot for my life now from what I had written down in the past.

Focus on what we do know

In our seeking, we will have times when we don't receive answers—even after careful and prayerful searching. In these cases, I like to think of this statement by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “In moments of fear or doubt or troubling times, hold the ground you have already won, even if that ground is limited. . . .

“ . . . *In this Church, what we know will always trump what we do not know. And remember, in this world, everyone is to walk by faith.*”³

We all will have questions. The defining factor for each of us will be how we pursue the answers to those questions. If we demand answers in a spirit of doubt, we will limit our progression and slow our acquisition of knowledge. If we seek answers with patience and faith and keep the commandments, we will eventually know all things (see D&C 93:28). ■

The author lives in Idaho, USA.

NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks, “In His Own Time, in His Own Way,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2013, 22, 24.
2. Chieko N. Okazaki, “Rowing Your Boat,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 92.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Lord, I Believe,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 93–94.



CONTINUE IN PATIENCE

“Brigham Young taught that when something came up which he could

not comprehend fully, he would pray to the Lord, ‘Give me patience to wait until I can understand it for myself’ [*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 75]. And then Brigham would continue to pray until he could comprehend it.

“We must learn that in the Lord’s plan, our understanding comes ‘line upon line, precept upon precept’ [D&C 98:12]. In short, knowledge and understanding come at the price of patience.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Continue in Patience,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 58.

study and faith



My Mission among My Family

By Andrea Gómez Lagunes

When I opened my mission call, I was surprised to see that I had been assigned to the Mexico Veracruz Mission. My family had lived in Veracruz when I was born, and most of my extended family lives there. We are the only members of the Church in our family, so I was excited at the thought of having the opportunity to share the gospel with my relatives.

However, once there, I never served in an area near my relatives. I gave their addresses to my companions so they could visit them.

Fifteen months into my mission, I began having knee problems. My knee hurt a lot and at times the pain was unbearable. When I went to the doctor, his diagnosis was that surgery was the only solution. That meant that I would be returning home early. I couldn't believe that this was happening; I had only three months left on my mission.

I decided to turn to the Lord to ask for comfort and, if possible, a miracle. In answer to my prayer, I felt deep relief in my heart. My mission president's wife encouraged me with sincere motherly love to return home to recover, and I wrote my family to notify them that I would be coming home in two weeks.

After that, I had an interview with my mission president. He told me that my mother had contacted him and given him an option: She could come to Veracruz to care for me in the home of an aunt and uncle of mine during my recovery, since I would have to cease missionary activities for a while. My president told me that it might be a feasible option but that he would have to ask for permission.

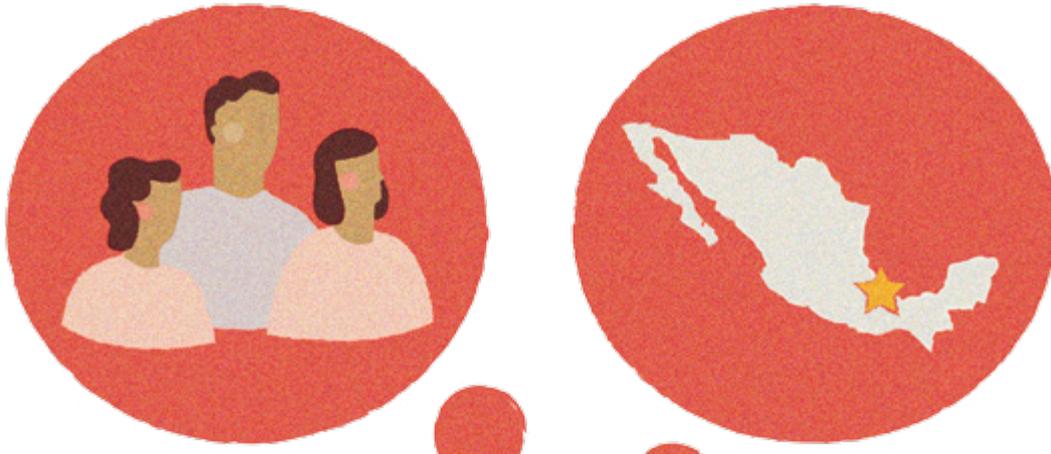
When I found out later that permission had been granted, I felt my heart leap with excitement—I could stay and finish my mission! I said a prayer of thanksgiving.

On the day of the surgery, my

My mission president's question stayed with me—why had the Lord allowed me to stay and finish my mission?

mission president told me, "Sister Gómez, you need to find out why the Lord allowed you to stay in Veracruz." From that moment on, I was set on finding out the reason.

That same day, my mother, who had arrived in Veracruz, told me, "Your Mamá Lita (my paternal grandmother) is coming to the hospital to see you. This would be a good opportunity to ask her about your ancestors."



“What a great idea!” I thought. I couldn’t wait to ask my relatives about my ancestors. Mamá Lita asked me about what it meant to be a missionary. I taught her about the Restoration and then talked to her about the plan of salvation, since my grandfather—her husband—had died a few years back. Then came a question I’d been hoping she would ask: “Will I be able to see my sweetheart again?”

Her question filled me with joy, and I answered, “Of course you will!” Her eyes glistened. It was wonderful to share that eternal truth with her. More questions came, all of them focused on the plan of salvation. In turn, I asked her the questions I had about my family so I could fill out my family tree. I felt how the Spirit enabled her to gain an understanding of the plan of salvation.

Later, as I visited the rest of my relatives, I talked with my maternal grandmother, who helped me find more family names. I was also able to share the gospel with all those we visited.

I realized why God had allowed me to first go to Veracruz on my mission and then to stay there after my surgery. I returned to my mission with a deep love for family history. Thanks to my mother’s tender care, I was able to finish my mission.

My paternal grandmother died a year later, which made me very sad. On the other hand, I felt grateful and excited to be able to do her temple work one year later. When I was baptized for her, I couldn’t hold back my tears of joy. She would finally be able to be with her sweetheart, to whom she had been married for more than 60 years.

I have no doubt that the Lord knows our hearts. He allowed me to stay in Veracruz to teach my family and proclaim the good tidings brought by our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. I know that one day I will be able to see my grandparents again. It is our responsibility to do our ancestors’ work so that someday God will tell us, “Come unto me, ye blessed, there is a place prepared for you in the mansions of my Father” (Enos 1:27). ■

The author lives in Chihuahua, Mexico.





By Elder D. Todd Christofferson

Of the Quorum
of the Twelve
Apostles

Religious Freedom: Cornerstone of Peace

*May we pursue peace by working together to
preserve and protect the freedom of all people to hold and
manifest a religion or belief of their choice.*

Elder Christofferson delivered these remarks during an interfaith conference held in São Paulo, Brazil, on April 29, 2015.

I greatly appreciate the invitation to be with you this evening in this interfaith gathering, where Muslims, Sikhs, Catholics, Adventists, Jews, Evangelicals, Mormons, native spiritualists, people of no faith, and many others all stand shoulder to shoulder with leaders of government and business, joined to discuss and celebrate religious freedom. Indeed, the very act of our meeting together in this unique setting is a powerful symbol in its own right.

I am particularly pleased to be here in Brazil, a nation rich with diverse culture and people. By embracing its diversity, including its religious diversity, Brazil has prospered and will continue to prosper. Brazil was recently recognized as the country with the lowest government restrictions on religion.¹ I congratulate Brazil for this significant distinction. Brazil now has a responsibility to lead the global movement to promote this freedom. As Jesus Christ stated in the New Testament:

“Ye are the light of the world. A city [or in this case, a nation] that is set on an hill cannot be hid. . . .

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14, 16).

Esteemed colleagues, the world needs Brazil's light to shine long and bright. Tonight we celebrate what can become of that vision.

Background and Basic Principles

Religious freedom is the cornerstone of peace in a world with many competing philosophies. It gives us all space to determine for ourselves what we think and believe—to follow the truth that God speaks to our hearts. It allows diverse beliefs to coexist, protects the vulnerable, and helps us negotiate our conflicts. Thus, as the European Court of Human Rights has wisely concluded in multiple cases, religious freedom is vital to people of faith and “is also a precious asset for atheists, agnostics, sceptics and the unconcerned.” This is because “the pluralism indissociable from a democratic society, which has been dearly won over the centuries, depends on it.”²

A robust freedom is not merely what political philosophers have referred to as the “negative” freedom to be left alone, however important that may be. Rather, it is a much richer “positive” freedom—the freedom to live one’s religion or belief in a legal, political, and social environment that is tolerant, respectful, and accommodating of diverse beliefs.

We use our freedom of religion and belief to establish our core convictions, without which all other human rights would be meaningless. How can we claim the freedom of speech without being able to say what we truly believe? How can we claim the freedom of assembly unless we can gather with others who share our ideals? How can we enjoy freedom of the press unless we can publicly print or post who we really are?

The good news is that there has been remarkable progress in the spread of religious freedom. I have seen this progress in my own lifetime. As one example, in 1948, when I was just three years old, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which called for “everyone [to have] the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.”³

When I was 21, a treaty was negotiated to make the

United Nations declaration binding. That treaty—known as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights—reinforced the idea that each person should have “freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.”⁴ The treaty entered into force 10 years later, in 1976.

As of 2017, 169 countries were parties to the treaty—virtually every developed country in the world.⁵ The American Convention on Human Rights (the Pact of San José, Costa Rica), which was adopted in 1969 and has been in force since 1978, protects religious freedom in almost identical language.⁶

Strong reasons undergird the progress made and should motivate us to do even more. Religious freedom strongly correlates with a host of positive economic, public health, and civic benefits.⁷ In general, religious individuals have better family lives, stronger marriages, less substance abuse and crime, higher educational levels, a greater willingness to volunteer and donate to charities, better work habits, longer lives, better health, greater income, and higher levels of well-being and happiness.⁸ Clearly, religious freedom and the practice of religion strengthen society.

The Need for Vigilance and Cooperation

Unfortunately, protections afforded to freedom of religion and belief are often weak, unheeded, and attacked. Powerful pressures attempt to restrain religious freedom even as it grows—including in countries that historically protected it most vigorously. These pressures have the upper hand or are gaining ground in many countries. Vast swaths of the world would find unthinkable the kind of celebration we enjoy here in Brazil.

Remarkably, in 2013, roughly 5.5 billion people—77 percent of the world’s population—lived in countries with high or very high restrictions on religious liberty, up from 68 percent just six years earlier.⁹

Virtually all Western democracies claim to believe in



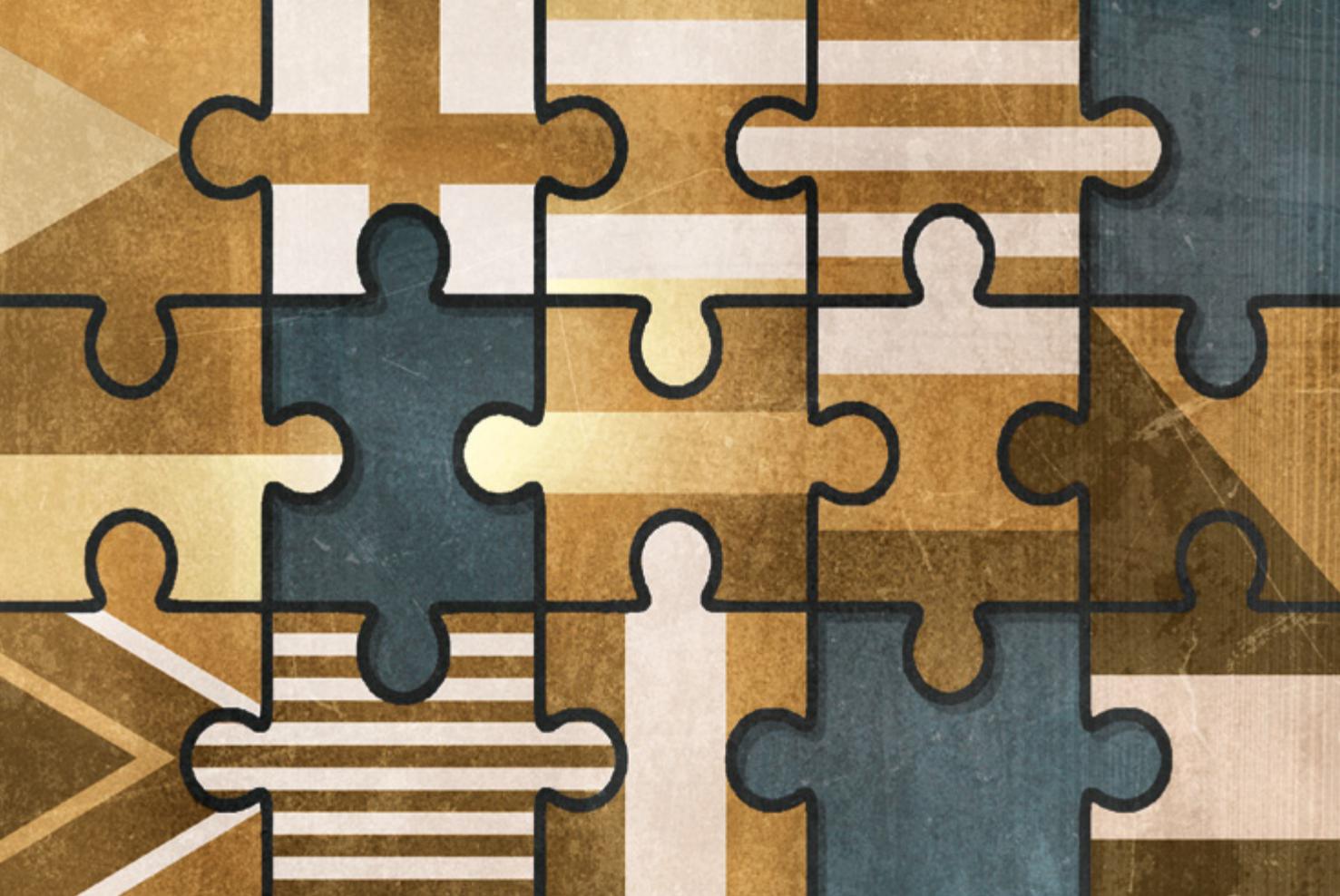
the principle of religious freedom. It is the application of the principle that can create controversy. Threats to religious freedom typically arise when religious people and institutions seek to say or do something (or refuse to say or do something) that runs counter to the philosophy or goals of those in power, including political majorities. Religion is often countercultural and thus unpopular. For this reason, religious freedom, even where it is generally supported in principle, is often vigorously opposed in practice.

In Europe and North America, controversies have arisen over issues such as whether churches can decide whom to hire (or not hire) as their ministers, whether individuals can wear religious clothes or symbols on the job or at school, whether employers must pay for employees' contraceptives and abortions, whether individuals can be compelled

to provide services that offend their beliefs, whether professional or university accreditation can be denied or revoked because of moral standards or beliefs, and whether religious student organizations can be required to accept students with contrary beliefs.

Brazil, with its religious diversity, also grapples with similar issues, such as businesses closing on Sunday, the wearing of religious clothing, and the protections afforded to Afro-Brazilian traditions. We are grateful that many of these matters have been resolved in favor of religious freedom. The prompt and proper resolution of issues involving the free exercise of religious beliefs will be invaluable to Brazil's ongoing respect of its diversity. By allowing religious people and organizations to live their faith publicly and without recrimination, Brazil will continue to be a bright and hopeful example of religious freedom to the world.

In 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which called for "everyone [to have] the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion." When I was 21, a treaty was negotiated to make the United Nations declaration binding. As of 2017, 169 countries were parties to the treaty.



The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is pleased to stand with you and others in this vital effort. Although we are optimistic that our efforts will make a difference, we must make these efforts collectively, since none of us can win this fight alone.

I encourage you to hold fast to the freedoms you have forged at home and to lead courageously in promoting religious freedom on the world stage. The need to protect and preserve religious liberty—in a fair and balanced way that also protects others’ fundamental rights—is acute.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is pleased to stand with you and others in this vital effort. Although we are optimistic that our efforts will make a difference, we must make these efforts collectively, since none of us can win this fight alone. I echo what my colleague Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles recently stated in a forum similar to this one:

“It is imperative that those of us who believe in God and in the reality of right and wrong unite more effectively to protect our religious freedom to preach and practice our faith in God and the principles of right

and wrong He has established. . . . All that is necessary for unity and a broad coalition along the lines I am suggesting is a common belief that there is a right and wrong in human behavior that has been established by a Supreme Being. All who believe in that fundamental [principle] should unite more effectively to preserve and strengthen the freedom to advocate and practice our religious beliefs, whatever they are. We must walk together for a ways on the same path in order to secure our freedom to pursue our separate ways when that is necessary according to our own beliefs.”¹⁰

Our task will be difficult and require constant vigilance, but it is of utmost importance.

I close with a passage from the Doctrine and Covenants. This passage was revealed in 1835, at a time when, despite constitutional protections, my forefathers were being driven

from their homes for embracing what to others seemed like new and different beliefs. So it is a sobering reminder for our time, especially when many of today's restrictions on religious freedom also come in countries that espouse the principle but sometimes fail to apply it in practice.

Our scripture says, "No government can exist in peace, except such laws are framed and held inviolate as will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience." Governments may "restrain crime, but never control conscience; [they] should punish guilt, but never suppress the freedom of the soul" (D&C 134:2, 4).

May we pursue peace by working together to preserve and protect the freedom of all people to hold and manifest a religion or belief of their choice, whether individually or in community with others, at home or abroad, in public or private, and in worship, observance, practice, and teaching. ■

For the full text of this address, go to mormonnewsroom.org.

NOTES

1. See "Brazil Has Lowest Government Restrictions on Religion among 25 Most Populous Countries," July 22, 2013, theweeklynumber.com/weekly-number-blog; "Restrictions and Hostilities in the Most Populous Countries," Feb. 26, 2015, pewforum.org.
2. *Kokkinakis v. Greece*, 3/1992/348/421 (May 25, 1993), para. 31;

- Nolan and K. v. Russia, 2512/04 (Feb. 12, 2009), para. 61; see also *Serif v. Greece*, 38178/97 (Dec. 14, 1999), para. 49; European Convention on Human Rights, Article 9.
3. United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18, Dec. 10, 1948, un.org/en/documents/udhr.
4. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 18, Dec. 16, 1966, ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CCPR.aspx.
5. See International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; see also W. Cole Durham Jr., Matthew K. Richards, and Donlu D. Thayer, "The Status of and Threats to International Law on Freedom of Religion or Belief," in Allen D. Hertzke, ed., *The Future of Religious Freedom: Global Challenges* (2013), 31–66.
6. See American Convention on Human Rights "Pact of San José, Costa Rica," Nov. 22, 1969 (Inter-American Specialized Conference on Human Rights), oas.org; see also Juan G. Navarro Floria and Octavio Lo Prete, "Proselitismo y Libertad Religiosa: Una Visión desde América Latina," in *Anuario de Derecho Eclesiástico del Estado*, no. 27 (2011), 59–96.
7. See Brian J. Grim, Greg Clark, and Robert Edward Snyder, "Is Religious Freedom Good for Business?: A Conceptual and Empirical Analysis," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion*, vol. 10 (2014), 4–6; Paul A. Marshall, "The Range of Religious Freedom," in Paul A. Marshall, ed., *Religious Freedom in the World* (2008), 1–11.
8. See Patrick F. Fagan, "Why Religion Matters Even More: The Impact of Religious Practice on Social Stability," *Backgrounders*, no. 1992 (Dec. 18, 2006), 1–19; Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (2010), 443–92.
9. See "Latest Trends in Religious Restrictions and Hostilities," Feb. 26, 2015, pewforum.org.
10. Dallin H. Oaks, "Preserving Religious Freedom" (lecture at Chapman University School of Law, Feb. 4, 2011), mormonnewsroom.org.

FAMILY HOME EVENING IDEA

Discuss the importance of religious freedom with your family, including how the citizens of your country first obtained the freedom to worship. What events led to religious freedom in your country? This may include legislation, protests, even war. You might create trivia questions to ask your family to help them learn about this topic in a more engaging way. In addition, consider discussing the following questions: How is religious freedom a blessing in our lives? How would our lives be different if we were not free to practice our religion? How can we help promote religious freedom for ourselves and others?





By Bishop
W. Christopher
Waddell

Second Counselor
in the Presiding
Bishopric



THE BOOK OF MORMON: “A Standard unto My People”

Years ago, in northeastern Spain, four elders held an open house in a small rented hall that served as a chapel for their branch.

They posted signs outside to attract anyone interested. A young man saw the signs and entered the chapel but had no interest in staying.

He left and wasn't more than half a block away when two elders ran after him with a copy of the Book of Mormon. The young man accepted the gift, but at home, he placed it on the dining room table, never to touch it again.

A Powerful Impact

However, when the young man's 15-year-old brother, Luis, returned home from school, he noticed the book, picked it up, and began to read.

Luis Rodriguez soon found the missionaries, studied the gospel, gained a witness of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, and became a true convert.

Since then, he has served a full-time mission, married in the Bern Switzerland

Temple, served in a variety of Church callings, and seen his own children serve missions and marry in the Madrid Spain Temple. Recently he began his service as mission president, along with his wife, Consuelo, in the Bolivia Santa Cruz North Mission. There they will share their testimony and the role of the Book of Mormon in President Rodriguez's conversion.

*Studying the Book
of Mormon should
always remain a
priority in our lives.*

“Thanks to the Book of Mormon,” President Rodriguez told me, “not only was I baptized, but so were my two sisters, as well as a friend of my sister, whose son served in the London South Mission. The lives of the people I taught on my mission were changed, as well as the people baptized by my children on their missions. Last year my 91-year-old mother was baptized, and this year I participated in the sealing of my mother to my deceased father. Soon after, I was sealed with two of my siblings to my parents. It is impossible to know the number of lives that have been influenced since those missionaries gave my brother the Book of Mormon.”

The lasting influence of the Book of Mormon on the Rodriguez family is just one example of the powerful impact this sacred work of scripture has on all who will sincerely study its pages.

The Significance of the Book of Mormon

The premortal Savior told Nephi that “the words of your seed [will] proceed forth out of my mouth unto your seed; and my words shall hiss forth unto the ends of the earth, for a standard unto my people” (2 Nephi 29:2). The Lord made it clear that His words, as shared by Nephi and his descendants, would come forth in our day as a standard for the Lord’s people to live by. The ancient prophets who authored the Book of Mormon knew of us and that we would have access to this sacred record. Moroni said: “Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing” (Mormon 8:35).

In September 1823, the ancient prophet Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith. Of all the glorious truths that needed to be revealed as part of the “restitution of all things” (Acts 3:21), Moroni began his message by declaring that “there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent” and “that the fulness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it” (Joseph Smith—History 1:34).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was officially organized on April 6, 1830, before most of the revelations found in the Doctrine and Covenants had been received¹ but not before the publication of the Book of Mormon, which became available less than two weeks before the organization of the Church.²

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, “The Book of Mormon is an incomparable treasure and the instrument of conversion that the Lord has designed and provided for our dispensation.”³ Knowing it is the keystone of our religion, we should give serious thought to how we study the Book of Mormon. Elder Christofferson suggests:

- “Study in a thoughtful, meditative fashion—pondering, praying, and perhaps making notes as we read. This puts us in a condition to receive added light and understanding.”
- “Generally it is best to focus on devoting adequate time each day to studying the book as opposed to reading some fixed number of verses or pages per day.”
- “Study with these questions in mind: ‘Why was this included? How does this apply today and to me?’”⁴

Ultimately, it is not how many times we read the Book of Mormon that is important but how we apply what we’ve studied in our pursuit to become more like our Savior. Since becoming is a lifelong challenge, our study of the Book of Mormon must be a lifelong pursuit.

Principles and Pruning

In my recent study of the Book of Mormon, a few principles have stood out to me.

1. *The principle of opposition*

At one point in the allegory of the tame and wild olive trees, the Lord of the vineyard says to the servant, “And as they begin to grow ye shall clear away the branches which bring forth bitter fruit, according to the strength of the good and the size thereof; and ye shall not clear away the bad thereof all at once, lest the roots thereof should be too



From the allegory of the olive trees, we learn that opposition strengthens us as we grow.

strong for the graft, and the graft thereof shall perish, and I lose the trees of my vineyard” (Jacob 5:65).

I know very little about pruning an olive tree. But I would have assumed that the best thing to do would be to cut off all the branches producing bitter fruit, leaving only the branches that produce good fruit.

As I read, however, I made these notes in my study journal: “I’d never noticed the principle of opposition in this allegory before, but according to Zenos and Jacob, doing it my way would cause the roots to gain too much strength and would ruin the tree! We need opposition to grow, to be able to choose. That is how we will be strengthened.”

Challenges and trials are part of life, allowed by a wise Father in Heaven. No one is immune. Opposition may come because of the choices others make, as a consequence of our own behavior, or simply because challenges are part of our mortal experience.

Trials we face help us develop the qualities and attributes required to return to the presence of our Father in Heaven. We find a clear example of this principle in the challenges faced by the Jaredites.

Once they entered the barges they had built for their journey across the ocean, “the Lord God caused that there should be a furious wind blow upon the face of the waters, towards the promised land; and thus they were tossed upon the waves of the sea before the wind.

“And it came to pass that they were many times buried in the depths of the sea, because of the mountain waves which broke upon them, and also the great and terrible tempests which were caused by the fierceness of the wind.

“And thus they were driven forth, three hundred and forty and four days upon the water.

“And they did land upon the shore of the promised land . . . and did shed tears of joy before the Lord, because of the multitude of his tender mercies over them” (Ether 6:5–6, 11–12).

Like the Jaredites, the key to our success is not found in avoiding opposition but in facing it with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His Atonement. In the New Testament, the Savior said: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

2. The principle of preparation

Chapters 36–42 of Alma are filled with remarkable doctrinal instruction. However, in the first verses of chapter 43, Mormon writes:

“We shall say no more concerning their preaching. . . .

“And now I return to an account of the wars between the Nephites and the Lamanites” (Alma 43:2–3).



“Remember that there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ.”

Some may find the switch away from commentary regarding the preaching of truth, prophecy, and revelation to be a bit odd. After all, these are principles you would want to share with future readers of the record.

However, as I read deeper into these chapters, it became clear to me that today we face many of the same issues the Nephites faced. We are in a war that is just as real and even more potentially devastating—a battle for the souls of men and women. We read the Book of Mormon not to become fearful but to find principles we can apply. Search and you will find your own lessons to apply in your individual battles, which are unique to your circumstances.

I have learned that ongoing preparation is a key to success. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said: “As the adversary increases the intensity and the sophistication of his attacks, we must increase in spiritual strength and power. What has been effective for us in the past will not be effective in the future. Thus, if you and I simply stay the same spiritually, we are destined to fail.”⁵ If we are not constantly strengthening ourselves spiritually, we are at risk. “Wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion!” (2 Nephi 28:24). We

want to be at peace but not at ease, and we are at peace when we are prepared.

In these war chapters we read about Captain Moroni, leader of the Nephite armies, who prepared his people even during a time of peace “to be faithful unto the Lord their God.

“Yea, he had been strengthening the armies of the Nephites. . . .

“And in their weakest fortifications he did place the greater number of men” (Alma 48:7–9).

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we are taught to prepare ourselves both temporally and spiritually—to be baptized, receive the priesthood, serve a mission as appropriate, and attend the temple. We are counseled to prepare with savings and food storage.

We can compare our preparation to Moroni’s preparation. Thanks to his constant effort, “the Nephites [were] prepared to destroy all such as should attempt . . . to enter the fort” (Alma 49:19), and “thus the Nephites had all power over their enemies” (Alma 49:23).

Spiritual and temporal preparation is vital to our survival in the war for our souls.

3. *The principle of remembering*

We celebrate anniversaries, study history, and designate holidays to commemorate significant events. We do these things to help us remember. I believe, of all that the Book of Mormon is meant to accomplish, helping us to remember is high on the list. And of all we are meant to remember, one fact stands alone in its significance, that Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer of the world.

Another Book of Mormon account teaches the power of remembering. After the Anti-Nephi-Lehies were converted to the Lord, they said they would give up their lives “rather than shed the blood of their brethren” (Alma 24:18). We see the source of their faith when we read:

“Yea, and they did keep the law of Moses . . . [but] they did look forward to the coming of Christ, considering that the law of Moses was a type of his coming, and believing that they must keep those outward performances until the time that he should be revealed unto them.

“Now they did not suppose that salvation came by the law of Moses; but the law of Moses did serve to strengthen their faith in Christ” (Alma 25:15–16).

Their obedience included participation in ordinances and rites that served as a continuous reminder of the future sacrifice of Jesus Christ and of what they knew and believed. Their situation and circumstances, though separated from us by more than 2,000 years, are remarkably like our own. We receive similar reminders that keep our hearts and minds focused on Jesus Christ as we:

- Read and study the scriptures, which testify of Jesus Christ.
- Attend the temple, where Jesus Christ is continually manifest.
- Pray and humbly acknowledge the Savior’s majesty and mercy, which brings the influence of the Spirit.
- Keep the Sabbath day holy, which enables us to strengthen our faith in Heavenly Father and in Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice.
- Partake of the sacrament, which renews our commitment to “always remember him” (Moroni 4:3).

Our faith is strengthened as we do these things—our equivalent today of what the Anti-Nephi-Lehies experienced while keeping the law of Moses.

In another Book of Mormon scripture, which reminds us six times to “remember,” Helaman counsels his sons:

“O remember, remember . . . ; yea, remember that there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, who shall come; yea, remember that he cometh to redeem the world. . . .

“ . . . Remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation . . . , which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall” (Helaman 5:9, 12).

A Prophetic Promise

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) shared this promise with those who study the Book of Mormon: “There will come into your lives and into your homes an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God.”⁶

My testimony of the Book of Mormon, gained as a young man before serving as a full-time missionary, has sustained me in times of trial and has been my anchor when I have confronted doubts or concerns.

Whether we are young or old, whether our testimony is strong or just beginning to grow, an ongoing study of the Book of Mormon should remain a priority in our lives. I testify that it is, indeed, a standard for our day. ■

From a regional stake conference broadcast address given at the Conference Center on September 11, 2016.

NOTES

1. See “Chronological Order of Contents” in the Doctrine and Covenants.
2. See “Book of Mormon Historic Publication Site,” history.lds.org.
3. D. Todd Christofferson, “How to Study the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2011, 30.
4. D. Todd Christofferson, “How to Study the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2011, 30, 28.
5. David A. Bednar, General Authority training, Mar. 31, 2005.
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, “A Testimony Vibrant and True,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2005, 6.



“Whom Say Ye That I Am?”

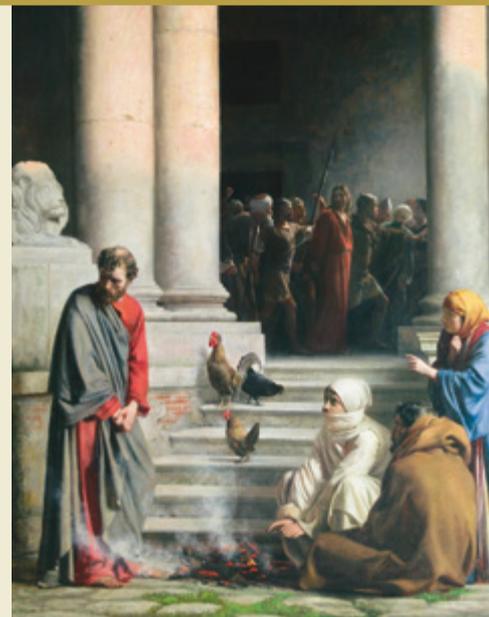
PETER’S WITNESS OF CHRIST

By Terry B. Ball

Professor of Religious Education, Brigham Young University

The Apostle Peter is beloved by believers—perhaps because he seems so authentic and approachable to us. We can empathize with him. We admire his courage as he forsook all, “straightway” leaving his nets as the Master beckoned, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:18–20). We understand his confusion over the meaning and message of parables (see Matthew 15:15–16). We feel the desperation in his cry, “Lord, save me,” as his feet and faith faltered on the turbulent waters that night on the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 14:22–33). We appreciate his awe at the Transfiguration (see Matthew 17:1–13). We weep with him for the shame of his thrice-made denial (see Matthew 26:69–75), grieve with him at Gethsemane (see Matthew 26:36–46), and join in his joy and wonder at the empty tomb (see John 20:1–10).

Perhaps the Gospel writers wanted us to make this personal connection with Peter. In their accounts they appear to purposely preserve more of his experiences and conversations with Jesus than with any of the other original Twelve.¹ Many of us assume that so much attention is given to Peter in the Gospels because he became the spokesman and chief among the Apostles. But perhaps Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John also speak so often and intimately of Peter’s association with Christ because they hoped that as we come to love and understand Peter, we will be more ready and able to accept his special witness of Christ—a testimony that he seems to have been carefully prepared to bear.



As we come to love and understand the Apostle Peter, we will be more ready and able to accept his special witness of Christ.

Peter's Preparation

As Peter accompanied Jesus through His mortal ministry, the Apostle's witness and testimony that the Master was the Messiah seems to have been acquired through the intellectual, practical, and revelatory experiences afforded him. That is to say, his testimony, like ours today, came through his head, his hands, and his heart.

Peter knew that Jesus of Nazareth was more than a mere man, for he saw Him give sight to the blind, cleanse the leper, cause the lame to walk, and raise the dead (see Matthew 11:4–5; see also John 2:11; 10:25; 20:30–31). His logical affirmation that Jesus was the Christ was bolstered by what he learned as he acted upon the Master's directions. He cast his net as the Savior directed and gathered a great multitude of fishes (see Luke 5:1–9; John 21:5–7). When the Savior bid him “come,” he walked on water (see Matthew 14:22–33). And as he passed the meager loaves and fishes to the multitude as the Savior instructed, the miracle of multiplication happened under his very hands (see John 6:1–14).

Those witnesses to his head and his hands would have significantly supplemented the most powerful witness provided Peter—the witness revealed to his heart. As Jesus asked His disciples, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” they rehearsed the common conclusions of their contemporaries. The Savior then personalized

the question, asking, “But whom say ye that I am?” (see Matthew 16:13–15). Without hesitation, Peter said:

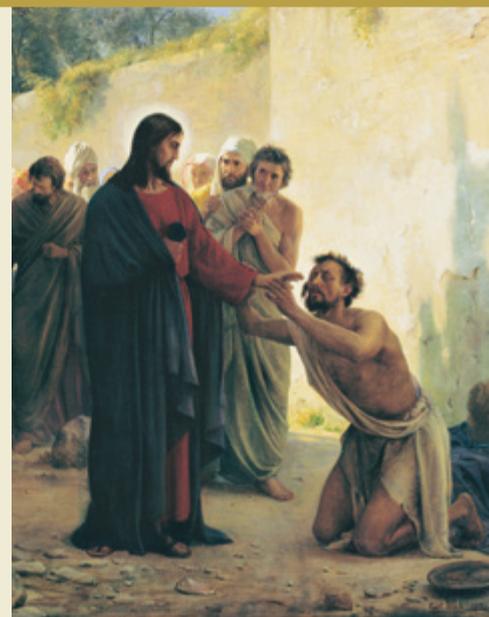
“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

“And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 16:16–17).

Peter's preparation to be a special witness of Christ included several somewhat private experiences with Jesus.² Such personalized counsel and direction often came when he approached the Savior with questions or whenever Christ perceived he needed further training.³

Peter was also perhaps the most reprimanded of all Christ's disciples.⁴ Remarkably, Peter chose not to be offended but rather continued following the Master, daily adding to his witness and learning of Him.⁵

The Galilean fisherman's preparation culminated in what he witnessed following the Crucifixion. Upon hearing of the empty tomb, Peter rushed to see for himself and left “wondering in himself at that which was come to pass” (Luke 24:1–12; see also John 20:1–9). Luke records that sometime that same day, the resurrected Savior appeared privately to Peter, though we know little of that event (see Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:3–7). Later that evening, the risen Lord appeared to the Apostles and some other disciples, inviting them to feel the wounds in His



Peter knew that Jesus of Nazareth was more than a mere man, for he saw Him give sight to the blind, cleanse the leper, cause the lame to walk, and raise the dead.

body. He then opened their understanding of how His Resurrection fulfilled the prophecies written in the law of Moses and the scriptures, declaring, “Ye are witnesses of these things” (see Luke 24:36–48; see also Mark 16:14; John 20:19–23). The 11 disciples later traveled to Galilee, as the Savior had instructed them, and there on “a mountain where Jesus had appointed them,” He assured them,

“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (see Matthew 28:7, 10, 16–20).

Through it all, Peter’s head, hands, and heart were further tutored to be a witness of the resurrected Christ, for he saw the risen Lord with his eyes, heard Him with his ears, felt Him with his hands, and surely felt again the Spirit’s confirmation in his heart.

Peter’s Commission

Just as it took time, teaching, and experience for Peter to fully understand the atoning mission of the Messiah, comprehending his own mission as a special witness of Christ was a gradual process.

“Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?”

It seems the full realization of what was to be required of him came to Peter as the Lord taught him on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Having twice felt the wounds of Crucifixion on the resurrected body of the Master but apparently still wondering what to do with himself, Peter announced, “I go a fishing” (John 21:3). Now that Jesus was no longer with them, Peter seemed resigned to returning to his old life and livelihood. His brethren followed.

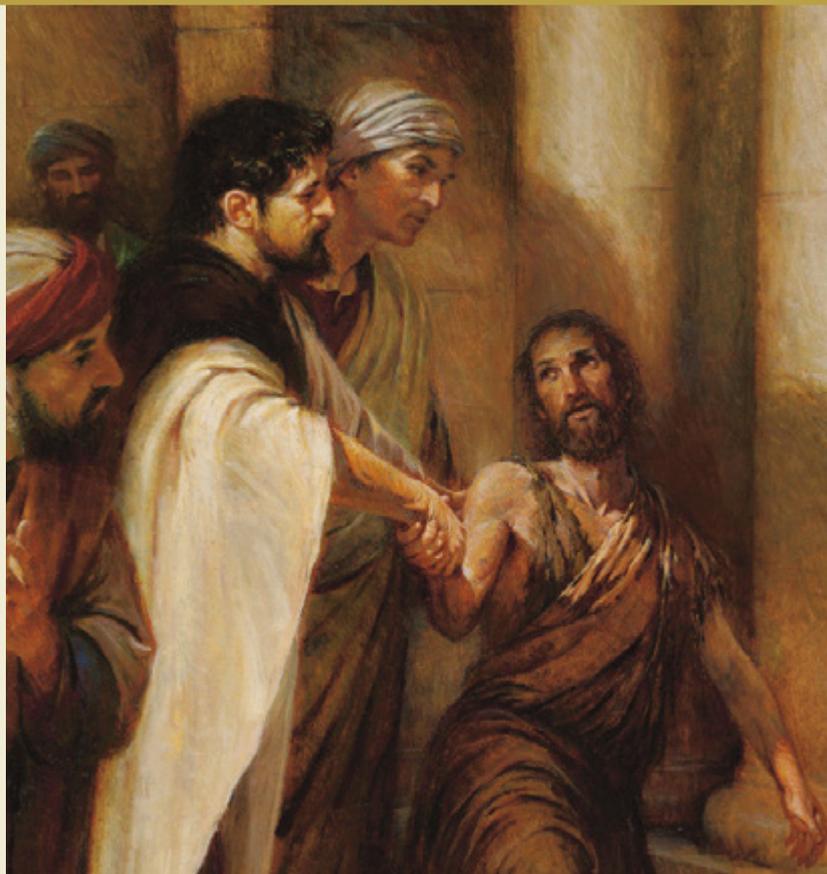
Toiling through the night, they caught nothing. Nearing the shore, likely exhausted and discouraged, they saw someone standing there whom they did not recognize, bidding them to cast their nets again. Perhaps recalling an earlier occasion when obeying similar advice had yielded a great catch, they complied, this time without protest or question (see Luke 5:1–9; John 21:3–6). As they drew in their nets teeming once again with a multitude of fish, John exclaimed to Peter, “It is the Lord” (John 21:7). Too anxious to wait for the boat to reach the shore, Peter “cast himself into the sea” to reach the Master sooner (John 21:7). When the others arrived, they found a meal of fish and bread awaiting them (see John 21:9).

Following the meal, Jesus turned to Peter and, most likely pointing to the very fish Peter had

chosen to pursue, asked of His Apostle, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” (John 21:15). Surely Peter thought this question strange. Of course he loved the Savior more than fish—or fishing. Perhaps there was a touch of incredulity in his answer, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee,” to which Christ responded, “Feed my lambs” (John 21:15). Again the Savior put the question to Peter, and Peter again avowed his love for Christ, and Christ again commanded, “Feed my sheep” (John 21:16). Peter was grieved as Jesus asked a third time for the disciple to affirm his love. We can feel the pathos and passion in Peter’s third witness, “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee” (John 21:17). Once again Jesus commanded, “Feed my sheep” (John 21:17).⁶ If he truly loved the Lord, then Peter was no longer to be a fisherman, but rather a shepherd, caring for the Master’s flock.⁷ Peter’s actions and ministry from that time forward affirm that he at last understood his commission and mission to be a special servant and witness of Christ.

Peter’s Witness

Following that day in Galilee, Peter went forth to fulfill his commission from Christ with remarkable faith, courage, and rigor. As a leading Apostle, he stepped forward in his calling to preside over the Church. While being occupied with the many duties of this office, Peter did not neglect his responsibility to always be a witness of Christ, including to the multitudes gathered at the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:1–41), at the temple on Solomon’s porch following a miraculous healing (see Acts 3:6–7, 19–26), when he was arrested and brought before the Jewish leaders (see Acts 4:1–31; see also Acts 5:18–20), in his preaching to the Saints (see Acts 15:6–11), and in his epistles.



Peter fulfilled his commission from Christ with remarkable faith, including telling a lame man at the temple, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.”

In his epistles he reflects on his personal witness of Christ’s sufferings and expresses his hope to be “a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed” (1 Peter 5:1). Towards the end he resolutely acknowledges that he too must “shortly . . . put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me” (2 Peter 1:14).

In making this solemn observation, perhaps Peter was reflecting on the words Jesus spoke to him so many years earlier on the shores of Galilee. There, after commanding Peter to feed His sheep, the Savior declared, “When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not” (John 21:18). As John explained, “This spake [Jesus], signifying by what death [Peter] should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto [Peter], Follow

me” (John 21:19). Surely in his old age as he contemplated death, Peter could find peace and joy in knowing that he had indeed followed Christ in life and was ready to follow Him in death.

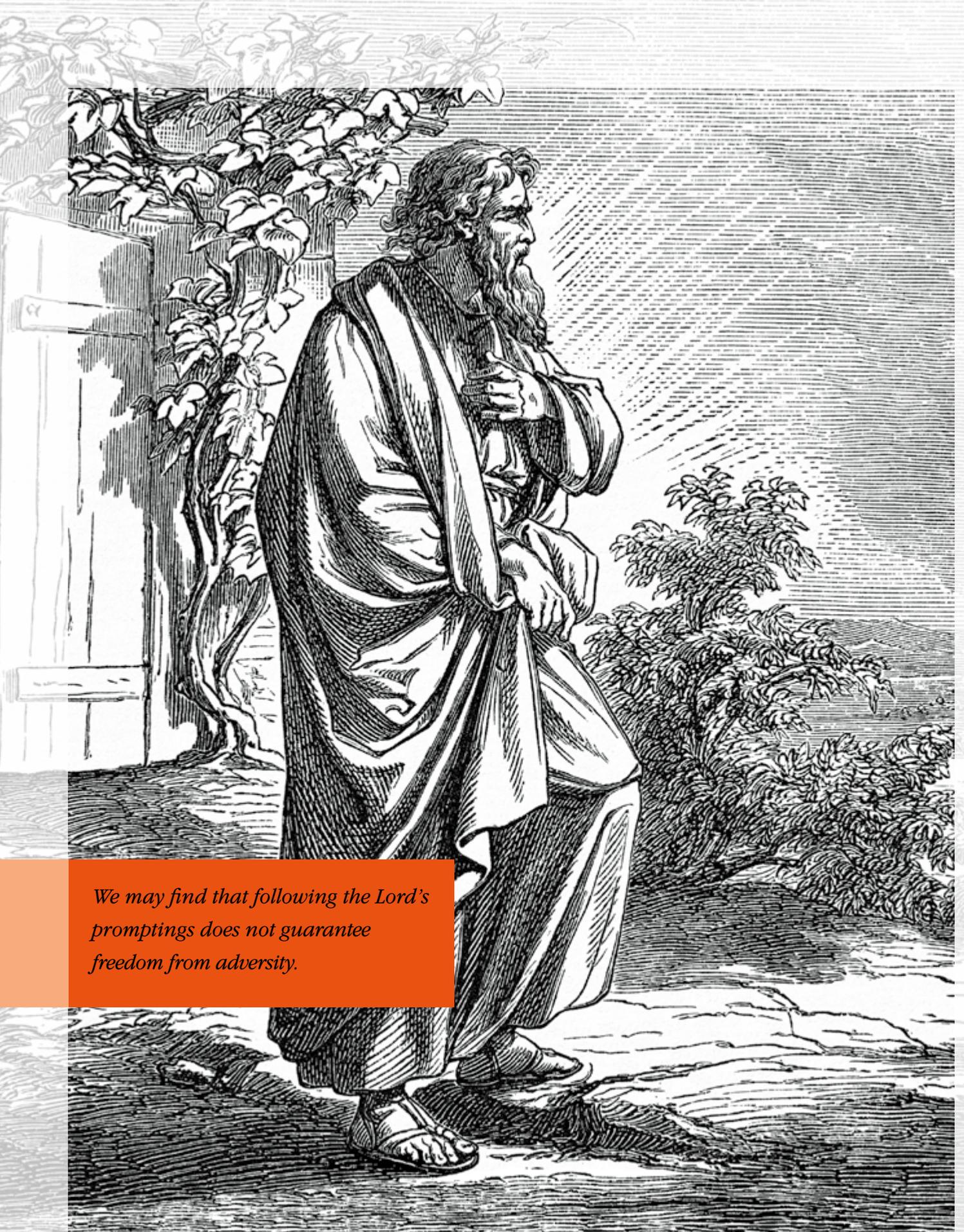
We wish more of Peter’s activities and writings were preserved in the New Testament. What has been preserved is a treasure and endears us to this faithful fisherman. The record, small as it is, shows us how Peter was carefully and personally prepared by Christ to be a special witness of Him. As we read the account, we can discover our faith and understanding of Christ growing along with Peter’s. That growth can give us hope and perspective in our personal journeys to faith. As we watch what Christ expected of Peter become clear to him and then see the courage and dedication with which he labored to fulfill his commission from the Savior, we are led to ponder “What does Christ expect of me?” and “Am I doing enough?” As we study Peter’s witness of Christ, we find ourselves anxious to echo his words, “We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:69). ■

NOTES

1. While the witness, experiences, and teachings of the Apostle Paul are more thoroughly chronicled in the New Testament than those of Peter, Paul was not one of the original Twelve and not mentioned in the four Gospels.
2. See Matthew 17:1–13; 26:36–46, 58; Mark 13:1–37; Luke 8:49–56; 9:28–36.
3. See Matthew 17:24–27; 18:2–35; 19:27–20:28; Luke 12:31–49; John 13:6–19.
4. See Matthew 14:31; 15:15–16; 26:33–34, 40; Mark 8:32–33; John 18:10–11.
5. Of Peter and the frequent reproofs he received from Christ, President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) observed, “He reproofed Peter at times because he loved him, and Peter, being a great man, was able to grow from this reproof. There is a wonderful verse in the book of Proverbs all of us need to remember: ‘The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise. He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding.’ (Proverbs 15:31–32.) It is a wise leader or a wise follower who can cope with the ‘reproof of life.’ Peter could do this because he knew that Jesus loved him, and thus Jesus was able to groom Peter for a very high place or responsibility in the kingdom” (“Jesus: The Perfect Leader,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1979, 5).
6. Some observe that by thrice allowing Peter to affirm his love for Him, Christ was giving Peter a chance to amend for his thrice-made denial that desperate night of the trial. See, for example, James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. (1916), 693; Jeffrey R. Holland, “The First Great Commandment,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 83–84. For a discussion of the denial and lessons to be learned from it, see Gordon B. Hinckley, “And Peter Went Out and Wept Bitterly,” *Ensign*, May 1979, 65–67; Neal A. Maxwell, “A Brother Offended,” *Ensign*, May 1982, 37–38. Other commentators, noting the subtle differences in the Greek of the text, suggest that the three questions were each asked to teach Peter different aspects and duties of his calling. Accordingly, the Savior twice asked Peter, “Lovest thou me?” using the Greek *agapao* for “love,” meaning a social or moral kind of love, often thought of as godly or unconditional love and elsewhere translated as “charity” (e.g., 1 Corinthians 13:1–4; 2 Peter 1:7; Revelation 2:19). The third time Jesus asked Peter, “Lovest thou me?” He used the term *phileo* for “love,” meaning friendship, affection, or brotherly love. Interestingly, in answer to each of the three questions, Peter affirmed his love using *phileo*. To the first affirmation of Peter’s love, Christ commanded him to “feed,” from the Greek *bosko*, meaning to pasture, graze, or nourish, His “lambs,” from the Greek *arnion*, meaning a young or baby sheep. To the second affirmation of Peter’s love, Christ commanded him to “feed,” from the Greek *poimaino*, meaning to tend or shepherd, His “sheep,” from the Greek *probaton*, meaning an adult sheep. In response to Peter’s third affirmation of love for Christ, he was to *bosko* His *probaton*. Thus, by asking the question three times in three ways, the Savior asked the disciple if he had both charity and brotherly love for Him, and in His subsequent commandments the Savior taught Peter that he was to not only nourish but also shepherd both the young and old of His flock.
7. For more discussion on this event and the principles that can be learned from it, see Robert D. Hales, “When Thou Art Converted, Strengthen Thy Brethren,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 80–83.

Peter could find peace and joy in knowing that he had indeed followed Christ in life and was ready to follow Him in death.





We may find that following the Lord's promptings does not guarantee freedom from adversity.

LIVING RIGHTEOUSLY IN A Wicked World



By Elder
Peter F. Meurs
Of the Seventy

Like Abraham, we can choose righteousness in every part of our lives.

As a businessman, I often traveled to China, where celebrating deals typically included drinking alcohol. My colleagues were concerned that not partaking might offend. Explaining that I didn't drink would often lead to strong persuasion from our hosts that toasting each other was an important, one-time ceremony.

I would respond that one of the principles of my religion is to not drink alcohol. I made it clear I wanted to join in the celebration but would ask for water in the toasting glass. I always received not only strong support but also respect. I learned that we can make righteous choices even when the world suggests otherwise.

Consistent Choices

The Old Testament story of Abram and Lot reminds us of the importance of choices. Abram, whose name was later changed to Abraham, consistently chose to live righteously in a wicked world.

After the death of Abraham's father in Haran, the Lord invited Abraham to relocate to Canaan. Abraham took with him his wife, Sarai (her name was later changed to Sarah); his nephew Lot; and Lot's wife, whose name is not given. As they traveled, the Lord appeared to Abraham, who then built an altar to recognize the sacredness of the place. Abraham also chose to go into "a mountain on the East of Beth-el . . . and there he [built] an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord" (Genesis 12:8).



Abraham's obedience in moving to Canaan and living righteously there did not eliminate adversity. A grievous famine forced Abraham and his family to relocate to Egypt, where we can assume he was prompted by the Spirit to protect his family. After Sarah was taken into Pharaoh's house, the Lord sent plagues to afflict Egypt. Eventually Pharaoh responded by granting freedom to Abraham and Sarah. (See Genesis 12:10-20.)

Back in Canaan at "the place of the [first] altar," Abraham again "called on the name of the Lord" (Genesis 13:4). Abraham's and Lot's families prospered. Their flocks and herds grew so substantially, in fact, that it began to cause contention (see Genesis 13:5-7), so "Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy

herdmen; for we be brethren.

"Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left" (Genesis 13:8-9).

Abraham consistently chose righteousness. He followed the Lord's prompting to move to Canaan. He built altars, worshipped, and offered thanks on arrival. He went into the mountains to pray. He followed inspiration that saved his family. Faced with conflict, he sought resolution by suggesting that his family and Lot's family physically distance themselves from each other.



We all face challenges. After seeking the Lord's guidance about employment or other family issues, we may feel prompted to relocate. We may also find that following the Lord's promptings does not guarantee freedom from adversity. But if we pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, He will consecrate our performance for the welfare of our souls (see 2 Nephi 32:9). Often, when we look back on adversity, we recognize its value in helping us become who we need to be.

When faced with conflicts, we can seek resolution rather than escalation.

Abraham consistently gave priority to seeking the Lord's help and guidance through prayer. We can follow his example by also going to the mountains of the Lord—His sacred temples—to worship, serve, and seek revelation.

Like Abraham, when faced with conflicts in our families, Church assignments, or employment, we can seek resolution rather than escalation.

Evaluating Opportunities

After surveying the land, Lot chose to live on the plains near the city of Sodom. The land, well watered and beautiful, appealed to him. Perhaps symbolically, Lot pitched his tents toward Sodom, where the people were "sinners before the Lord exceedingly" (Genesis 13:13). Lot later moved into Sodom and, during a war amongst local kings, was taken captive.

In our lives, we are also presented with new opportunities. They can appear well watered and beautiful. These opportunities may be exactly what we need, providing wonderful blessings. But some options may have a significant downside. We need to carefully evaluate and consider all aspects of the change:

- Will we be able to contribute to the work of salvation?
- Will we be free to worship?
- Will family members be able to build faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?
- Will family members be exposed to increased wickedness and temptation?

Lot's experience reminds us of the need to periodically consider allegiances and priorities. Are our symbolic tents pitched toward the Lord's house or toward the seemingly enticing pleasures of the world?

To the Rescue

When Abraham "heard that his [nephew] was taken captive, he armed his trained servants" and rushed to save him. "He brought back . . . Lot, and his goods, . . . and the people" (Genesis 14:14, 16).

After the rescue, Abraham met with the king of Sodom and later with Melchizedek, king of Salem. The king of Sodom offered Abraham some of the spoils of war, but Abraham refused to accept even a thread. "I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I [the king of Sodom] have made Abram rich" (Genesis 14:23).

In contrast, Melchizedek "brought forth bread and wine." Abraham recognized him as "the priest of the most high God" and willingly "gave him tithes of all" (Genesis 14:18, 20).

Abraham demonstrated his love for the Lord and his brethren. On learning of Lot's capture, Abraham did not say, "[He has] brought upon himself [these trials]" (Mosiah 4:17). Instead, he responded with love.

When family members, friends, or associates in our ward or branch lose their way, we, like Abraham, can rescue. In some cases, they may be in captivity through addictions or poor choices. We can help them to find a way back and let them know that Heavenly Father loves them.

We may also be offered "spoils of war," that is, gain or increase from activities that are inappropriate. In these cases,

we can refuse to accept even a thread. We can also avoid purchasing inappropriate material or attending movies or shows that do not uphold our standards.

The Lord's invitation to "let virtue garnish [our] thoughts unceasingly" brings with it a glorious promise: "Then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God" (D&C 121:45).

Despite Warnings

When the Lord told Abraham of His intention to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah "because their sin is very grievous," Abraham asked if He would spare the city if 50 righteous souls could be found. Abraham continued asking—45, 40, 30, 20—finally asking if God would spare the city for the sake of 10 righteous souls. We see the Lord's love for individuals when He confirms that if 10 can be found, "I will not destroy it." (See Genesis 18:20–33).

Abraham must have known that Lot and his family had returned to Sodom. Perhaps responding to the pleas of a righteous Abraham, the Lord sent two angels to warn Lot about the pending destruction. Lot was told to warn his extended family, but "he seemed [to his sons-in-law] as one that mocked" (Genesis 19:14).

Lot had made his choice to live in Sodom, and the influence of the wicked city was taking its toll on his family. Despite repeated warnings, Lot was slow to respond. "When

the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters . . . ; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city" (Genesis 19:15).

Finally, while Lot still lingered, "the [angels] laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city" (Genesis 19:16).

The angels instructed Lot to "escape for thy life" and to "look not behind thee" (Genesis 19:17). But Lot's wife looked back and "became a pillar of salt" (Genesis 19:26).

What a tragedy! Lot's choices—to live near Sodom, pitch his tents toward Sodom, move into Sodom, and return to Sodom after being rescued by Abraham—had taken their toll. Even after being warned by angels, Lot could not convince his sons-in-law and his daughters of the pending

destruction. Lot's wife seemed so connected with life in Sodom that she could not resist the temptation to look back.

Although the Lord and Abraham clearly wanted to help Lot and his family, Lot's choices, made over a long period, left his family weakened and unable to respond.

We Can Choose

Like Abraham, we can choose to live righteously. The Lord has provided stakes of Zion as places of refuge for Saints to gather. He has provided ordinances and covenants that protect and strengthen us. He has blessed us with temples where we can draw closer to Him and perform sacred work in behalf of our ancestors.

In my experience, a key to survival in a wicked world is letting our friends and work associates know what we believe. I have been protected and defended many times by friends who know I am a Latter-day Saint and know what I stand for.

All of us struggle to cope with negative influences of the world. From Abraham and Lot we can learn the power and protection of choosing to live righteously, of choosing to avoid places where we or our families may be subject to great wickedness or temptation, and of choosing to always keep our tents facing toward the temple. ■

A key to survival in a wicked world is letting friends and associates know what we believe.





PERFECT LOVE CASTETH OUT ALL FEAR

While we can easily become fearful and pessimistic about the world we live in, God doesn't want us to be filled with fear but with faith, hope, and His perfect love.

By Leah Welker

Jesus Christ knew that the last days before His Second Coming would be difficult, and He warned:

“In that day shall be heard of wars and rumors of wars, and the whole earth shall be in commotion, and men’s hearts shall fail them. . . .

“And the love of men shall wax cold, and iniquity shall abound. . . .

“And there shall be earthquakes also in divers places, and many desolations; yet men will harden their hearts against me, and they will take up the sword, one against another, and they will kill one another” (D&C 45:26–27, 33).

And yet, right after describing these calamities, Christ told His disciples, “Be not troubled” (D&C 45:35).

This command seems to fly in the face of every voice of reason, every headline, every expert, and every human instinct. How can we possibly remain untroubled in the face of an ever-darkening world?

The divine attributes of faith, hope, and charity play an important part.

Fear, Despair, and Pride

When we hear about or are directly affected by wars, natural disasters, or crime,

the three most natural reactions are fear, despair, and pride. But “natural” does not mean good or even helpful (see Mosiah 3:19). In fact, the immediate results of these emotions are unhappiness and inaction, leading to long-term consequences that affect not just ourselves but also our world. Unsurprisingly, these emotions do not come from God but from the enemy of us all—Satan. Moreover, these feelings are choices we make; we do not have to feel them. But tragically, the more we give in to these tempting emotions, the more we feed the downward spiral of darkness in the world.

Fear is a familiar feeling to us all, one that needs little explanation. However, it’s important to clarify that fear is not caution. Caution is a healthy feeling that motivates us to prepare ourselves, to be careful, and to listen to the counsel of our inspired leaders. But when we have prepared and taken reasonable precautions, the Lord does not want us to dwell on fear, “for God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7).¹

Despair in this case is an overwhelming feeling that the world is so corrupt it is incapable of help or redemption. This is not

“sorrow for the sins of the world” (4 Nephi 1:44), a feeling that even devoted disciples still have (see 3 Nephi 28:9). Despair is essentially giving up on the world, something that only Satan would have us do.² When we are overcome with that emotion, we struggle to save even ourselves, let alone help others in the world.

Pride is rooted in a feeling of hostility toward our fellowmen³ and fosters a belief that the world is unworthy of help or redemption. This belief is simply not true, and even if it were, it would not be our judgment to make (see D&C 82:23). Unfortunately, this type of pride is dangerously common among God’s chosen people. This is the pride of the scribes and Pharisees who asked Christ why He ate with sinners (see Luke 5:29–32), of the people who wished to stone the woman taken in adultery (see John 8:2–11), and even of Christ’s Apostles James and John when they asked Him if they should command fire to rain down upon a village that had rejected Him (see Luke 9:53–56).

Fear, pride, or despair tempt us to entrench ourselves in metaphorical (or literal) shelters and wait for the storms of evil to blow themselves over—or, at their very worst, these feelings tempt us to cast final judgments and wish the wrath of God to fall upon others.

Though we are counseled to stand in holy places and to make our homes a refuge, that does not mean we are to cower behind our walls and turn a blind eye to the suffering of God’s children—our brothers and sisters. We are not meant to be passive bystanders, merely waiting for the day that our Deliverer will come. We are to be anxiously engaged in alleviating suffering and building His kingdom—here and now.

Faith, Hope, and Charity

There are other choices besides fear, despair, or pride—ones that fill our souls with light and joy and enable us to make a difference in the world.

Instead of reacting in fear, despair, or pride, we can choose to cultivate the feelings *God* would give to us: faith,

hope, and charity. Each of these divine qualities can be answers to the problems of fear, despair, and pride: faith casts out fear, hope dispels despair, and charity—the pure love of Christ—leaves no room for pride.

Faith, as President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, explained, “is a strong conviction about something we believe—a conviction so strong that it moves us to do things that we otherwise might not do.”⁴ Having faith when considering the darkness of the world means choosing not to fear. It means resisting the temptation to trust in ourselves, an institution, a community, or even a country—because those will all fail us at one point or another—and instead having complete trust in the One who will never fail us, Jesus Christ. And finally, it means acting on that belief to do what we can to make a difference.

“Therefore, hold on thy way, . . . for their bounds are set, they cannot pass. Thy days are known, and thy years shall not be numbered less; therefore, fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you forever and ever” (D&C 122:9).

Hope “is the confident expectation of and longing for the promised blessings of righteousness.”⁵ Choosing hope closes the heart to despair and opens it to Christ’s peace and joy. When the dark things of the world tempt you to despair, remember His words: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

There is great darkness in the world, yes, but there is also greater light than ever before. Believe in that light. Believe in *the Light*. Have hope.

Charity, “the pure love of Christ,” is “the greatest of all” (see Moroni 7:46–47). The truth is this: even the most terrible people in this world are children of our Heavenly Father. And He loves them. He weeps over their actions and the misery those actions bring. (See Moses 7:28–29, 32–33.) His love should be our love, and His tears our tears.

Christ never condoned sin, nor should we (see D&C 1:31). But when we are tempted to rail, in unrighteous and unproductive anger,⁶ against the wickedness we see, we should remember that one of the reasons God gave Enoch for why He wept was that the people were “without affection, and they hate[d] their own blood” (Moses 7:33). We must not let ourselves fall into the very cycle of hate that we are condemning.

Charity is key to our overcoming such hate, also referred to as enmity, “the central feature of pride.”⁷ Let us remember that the second of the two great commandments is to “love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:39).

Christ wasn’t saying to just love those who are righteous. Compassion isn’t just for the worthy. Mercy isn’t just for the perfect. (See Luke 6:22–38; see also Mosiah 4:16–19.)

“I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44).

The Examples of Jonah and Mormon

There are two scriptural examples of how these principles applied in the lives of two very different men. Both were called of God and lived in challenging times, but how they reacted to these circumstances made all the difference.

Jonah

The first story is about Jonah, who sadly gave in to both fear and pride. God commanded Jonah to go preach to the people of Nineveh (see Jonah 1:2). It was understandable for Jonah to feel some fear: Nineveh was

There is great darkness
in the world, yes, but
there is also greater light
than ever before.

Believe in that light.

Believe in *the* Light.

Have hope.





“And what is it that
ye shall hope for?
Behold I say unto you
that ye shall have hope
through the atonement
of Christ and the power
of his resurrection,
to be raised unto
life eternal”
(Moroni 7:41).

a major city of Israel’s great enemy Assyria, and the Assyrians were known for their brutality and cruelty toward the people they conquered.⁸ However, Jonah let that fear overcome him, and he tried to run away (see Jonah 1:3). When a storm threatened his ship, Jonah realized the consequences of his mistake, and he told the crew to throw him overboard. A “great fish” swallowed Jonah; later, after Jonah prayed to God, the fish deposited him on dry land. (See Jonah 1:4–17; 2:1–10.)

This time, Jonah did as the Lord commanded: he went to Nineveh and prophesied that the city would be destroyed if they did not repent (see Jonah 3:3–4). However, Jonah didn’t love the people any more than before. In fact, Jonah was furious when the Lord forgave the repentant people of Nineveh (see Jonah 4:1). Jonah even said that the reason he had been reluctant to come to Nineveh in the first place was that he knew that God would be merciful to them if he did (Jonah 4:2).

How often do we feel this pride, a disregard for whole nations, religions, or cultures we think are unworthy or unredeemable? How often, in our fear, are we tempted to do nothing to help other children of God?

Mormon

Mormon, in contrast, stands as one of the greatest examples of righteously enduring in dark and dangerous times.

He lived in a time of war and iniquity. In his own words, “A continual scene of wickedness and abominations has been before mine eyes ever since I have been sufficient to behold the ways of man” (Mormon 2:18).

And yet, despite his full knowledge of his people’s wickedness, he still loved them

and served them with all his might (see Mormon 3:12). When he believed they had begun to repent, he rejoiced (see Mormon 2:12). When the Nephites continued to sin, he sorrowed (see Mormon 2:13–15). We have no record of Mormon ever railing against the Lamanites, the Nephites' enemy and the cause of their destruction. We do know that when the Nephites began to desire to kill the Lamanites for vengeance's sake, Mormon refused to lead them any longer (see Mormon 3:9–11).⁹

Mormon lived to witness almost the entire destruction of his people, causing him to exclaim in agony:

“O ye fair ones, how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord! . . .

“Behold, if ye had not done this, ye would not have fallen. But behold, ye are fallen, and I mourn your loss” (Mormon 6:17–18).

Though he experienced very difficult times, Mormon did not give in to despair. After writing to his son of all the wickedness he had seen, Mormon concluded, “My son, be faithful in Christ; and may not the things which I have written grieve thee, to weigh thee down unto death; but may Christ lift thee up” (Moroni 9:25).

Mormon spoke extensively about faith, hope, and charity. His words to the few faithful Nephites left in his time are treasures of wisdom to help us survive our own days.

Faith: “For no man can be saved, according to the words of Christ, save they shall have faith in his name” (Moroni 7:38).

Hope: “And what is it that ye shall hope for? Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal” (Moroni 7:41).

Charity: “If ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

“But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him” (Moroni 7:46–47).

And finally, Mormon wrote, “I fear not what man can do; for perfect love casteth out all fear” (Moroni 8:16).

Share the Light

No matter what is occurring in the world, we can be assured that faith, hope, and charity will cast out all fear, despair, and pride that threaten to ruin our peace. Those divine qualities will kindle our souls with a light that is unquenchable by any earthly power. And in return for such a gift, we will desire nothing but to share it.¹⁰

The Savior told his disciples:

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

“Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14–16).

We *can* make a difference in the world as we resist the temptations to hide, hate, or despair. Let us reach out to the suffering and be valiant lamps reflecting the Light of the World. ■

The author lives in Maryland, USA.

NOTES

1. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) warned, “Let us recognize that fear comes not of God, but rather that this gnawing, destructive element comes from the adversary of truth and righteousness” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Gordon B. Hinckley* [2016], 338).
2. President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) explained, “As the showdown between good and evil approaches with its accompanying trials and tribulations, Satan is increasingly striving to overcome the Saints with despair, discouragement, despondency, and depression” (“Do Not Despair,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 65).
3. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 232.
4. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Fourth Floor, Last Door,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 16.
5. “Hope,” Gospel Topics, topics.lds.org.
6. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles warned: “We presume to make final judgments whenever we proclaim that any particular person is going to hell (or to heaven) for a particular act or as of a particular time. When we do this—and there is great temptation to do so—we hurt ourselves and the person we pretend to judge” (“Judge Not’ and Judging,” *Ensign*, August 1999, 7).
7. *Teachings: Ezra Taft Benson*, 232.
8. See *Old Testament Study Guide for Home-Study Seminary Students* (2015), 333–34.
9. Nevertheless, when Mormon later saw that the Nephites would soon be destroyed, he agreed to lead them again in their final battles (see Mormon 5:1–2).
10. Joseph Smith said, “A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 330–31).



By Elder
Steven E. Snow
General Authority
Seventy and
Church Historian
and Recorder

Saints:

THE STORY OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE LATTER DAYS

In 1861, President Brigham Young (1801–77) urged Church historians to change their approach. “Write in a narrative style,” he advised, and “write only about one tenth part as much.”¹

The story on the next pages follows that counsel. I am pleased to introduce a new four-volume series called *Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days*. Chapter 1 is included in this issue, and subsequent chapters will be published in this magazine over the next several months. The first book will be available later this year, and the other volumes will follow.

Saints was prepared in response to the Lord’s commandment to “keep the church record and history continually” (D&C 47:3). Unlike past histories of the Church, it is a narrative history written in an engaging style that will be accessible to both youth and adults.

Saints, however, is not historical fiction. It is a true story based on the records of people from the past. Every detail and every line of dialogue is supported by historical sources. Notes at the end of each chapter refer to the records and additional sources. Those who want to read the actual records, better understand related topics, and discover even more stories will find links in the back of the books and online at saints.lds.org.

The Rich Tapestry of the Restoration

These books are not scripture, but like the scriptures, they include both divine truth and stories of imperfect people trying to become Saints through the Atonement of Jesus Christ (see Mosiah 3:19). Taken together, the four volumes tell the story of the Lord’s Church striving

This art of Nauvoo will be featured on the cover of Saints, volume 1.



to fulfill its mandate to perfect the Saints (see Ephesians 4:11–13).

Saints has a very different format, style, and intended audience than the two multivolume histories the Church has published in the past. The first history was begun by Joseph Smith in the 1830s and published beginning in 1842.² The second was published in 1930 by assistant Church historian B. H. Roberts.³ The global reach of the restored gospel since then and the Lord’s command to keep the history continually “for the good of the church, and for the rising generations” (D&C 69:8) signal that it is time to include more Latter-day Saints in the story.

Saints tells the stories of ordinary men and women from the earliest days of the Church until now. It also provides new detail and insight into better-known people and events from Church history. Each story will help you understand and appreciate the Saints who came before you to make the Church what it is today. Like you, they sacrificed to establish Zion, and they had challenges and successes as they sought to understand and implement divine direction. Woven together, their stories—and yours—create the rich tapestry of the Restoration.

Our Sacred Past

The Book of Mormon record keepers kept both large and small plates. In the large plates they recorded political and military history. They used the small plates for “the things of God” that were “most precious,” including “preaching which was sacred, or revelation which was great, or prophesying” (1 Nephi 6:3; Jacob 1:2, 4). The small plates were recorded “for Christ’s sake, and for the sake of our people” (Jacob 1:4). *Saints* aims to be a “small plates” history, one that focuses on our sacred past. It thus includes only a small sample of all the stories that could be told to show how the Lord works in the lives of the Latter-day Saints.

Saints is not just about imperfect people in the past who became better with the help of the Lord. It is also for imperfect people now who want to always remember Him. It will help you remember how merciful the Savior has been to His people, how He has made weak people strong, and how Saints around the globe have joined together to further God’s work. ■

NOTES

1. Brigham Young, in Wilford Woodruff, Journal, Oct. 20, 1861, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
2. See *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts (1902–12 [vols. 1–6], 1932 [vol. 7]).
3. See B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Century I*, 6 vols. (1930).

WHAT FORMATS WILL *SAINTS* BE AVAILABLE IN?

The four volumes will be published in 14 languages in book form (available at store.lds.org), online at saints.lds.org, and in the Gospel Library app. They will also be available in e-book and audiobook formats in select languages.

WHAT WILL BE FOUND IN EACH VOLUME?

- Volume 1—available later this year—tells the story of the Restoration, from Joseph Smith’s childhood to the Saints receiving ordinances in the Nauvoo Temple in 1846.
- Volume 2 will cover the Saints’ challenges in gathering

to the western United States and will finish with the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple in 1893.

- Volume 3 will narrate the global growth of the Church, ending with the dedication of the temple in Bern, Switzerland, in 1955.
- Volume 4 will bring the reader to the recent past, when temples dot the earth.

Additional in-depth material on selected topics will be published online to support each volume.





CHAPTER 1

Ask in Faith

This is chapter 1 of the new four-volume narrative history of the Church titled Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days. The book will be available in 14 languages in print, in the Church History section of the Gospel Library app, and at saints.lds.org. The next several chapters will be published in upcoming issues until volume 1 is released later this year. Those chapters will be available in 47 languages in the Gospel Library app and at saints.lds.org.

In 1815, the Indonesian island of Sumbawa was lush and green with recent rain. Families were preparing for the dry season ahead, as they had every year for generations, cultivating rice paddies in the shadow of a volcano called Tambora.

On April 5, after decades of slumber, the mountain roared awake, coughing up ash and fire. Hundreds of miles away, witnesses heard what sounded like cannon fire. Small eruptions continued for days. Then, on the evening of April 10, the whole mountain exploded. Three fiery plumes shot skyward, merging into one massive blast. Liquid fire flowed down the mountainside, enveloping the village at its base. Whirlwinds raged through the region, pulling up trees and sweeping away homes.¹

The chaos continued all that night and into the next. Ash blanketed miles of land and sea, piling two feet high in places. Midday felt like midnight. Rough seas heaved over shorelines, spoiling crops and drowning villages. For weeks, Tambora rained cinders, stone, and fire.²

Over the next few months, the blast's effects rippled across the globe. Spectacular sunsets awed people around the world. But the vibrant colors masked the deadly effects

of the volcano's ash as it circled the earth. In the coming year, the weather turned unpredictable and devastating.³

The eruption caused temperatures in India to drop, and cholera killed thousands, destroying families. In fertile Chinese valleys, summer snowstorms replaced a normally mild climate and flooding rains destroyed crops. In Europe, food supplies dwindled, leading to starvation and panic.⁴

Everywhere, people sought explanations for the suffering and death the strange weather caused. Prayers and chants from holy men echoed through Hindu temples in India. Chinese poets grappled with questions of pain and loss. In France and Britain, citizens fell to their knees, fearful the terrible calamities foretold in the Bible were upon them. In North America, ministers preached that God was punishing wayward Christians, and they sounded warnings to stoke religious feelings.

Across the land, people flocked to churches and revival meetings, anxious to know how they could be saved from the coming destruction.⁵

The eruption of Tambora affected weather in North America through the following year. Spring gave way to snowfall and killing frosts, and 1816 passed into memory as the year without a summer.⁶ In Vermont, in the northeast corner of the United States, rocky hills had frustrated a farmer named Joseph Smith Sr. for years. But that season, as he and his wife, Lucy Mack Smith, watched their crops shrivel under the relentless frosts, they knew they faced financial ruin and



This visitors' center in Sharon, Vermont, marks the spot where Joseph Smith was born on December 23, 1805. The stone obelisk in the background rises 38 and a half feet (11.7 m) from the base, one foot for each year of his life.

me every means of proceeding on my journey, leaving me with eight little children utterly destitute.”

Mr. Howard said that he had already spent the money she paid him to drive the wagon, and he could go no farther.

“I have no use for you,” Lucy said. “I shall take charge of the team myself.”

She left Mr. Howard in the bar and vowed to reunite her children with their father, come what may.¹²

The road ahead was muddy and cold, but Lucy led her family safely to Palmyra. As she watched the children cling to their father and kiss his face, she felt rewarded for all they had suffered to get there.

The family soon rented a small house in town and discussed how to get their own farm.¹³ The best plan, they decided, was to work until they had enough money for a down payment on land in the nearby woods. Joseph Sr. and the older sons dug wells, split fence rails, and harvested hay for cash, while Lucy and the daughters made and sold pies, root beer, and decorative cloths to provide food for the family.¹⁴

As Joseph Jr. got older, his leg grew stronger and he could easily walk through Palmyra. In town, he came in contact with people from all over the region, and many of them were turning to religion to satisfy spiritual yearnings and explain the hardships of life. Joseph and his family did not belong to a church, but many of their neighbors worshipped in one of

the tall Presbyterian chapels, the Baptists' meetinghouse, the Quaker hall, or the campground where traveling Methodist preachers held revival meetings from time to time.¹⁵

When Joseph was 12, religious debates swept Palmyra. Although he read little, he liked to think deeply about ideas. He listened to preachers, hoping to learn more about his immortal soul, but their sermons often left him unsettled. They told him he was a sinner in a sinful world, helpless without the saving grace of Jesus Christ. And while Joseph believed the message and felt bad about his sins, he was not sure how to find forgiveness.¹⁶

He thought going to church could help him, but he could not settle on a place to worship. The different churches argued endlessly about how people could be free of sin. After listening to these arguments for a while, Joseph was distressed to see people reading the same Bible but coming to different conclusions about its meaning. He believed God's truth was out there—somewhere—but he did not know how to find it.¹⁷

His parents were not sure either. Lucy and Joseph Sr. both came from Christian families and believed in the Bible and Jesus Christ. Lucy attended church meetings and often brought her children with her. She had been seeking the true church of Jesus Christ since the death of her sister many years earlier.

Once, after falling gravely ill sometime before Joseph's

birth, she had feared that she would die before finding the truth. She sensed a dark and lonely chasm between her and the Savior, and she knew she was unprepared for the next life.

Lying awake all night, she prayed to God, promising Him that if He let her live, she would find the Church of Jesus Christ. As she prayed, the voice of the Lord spoke to her, assuring her that if she would seek, she would find. She had visited more churches since then, but she had still not found the right one. Yet even when it felt like the Savior's Church was no longer on the earth, she kept searching, trusting that going to church was better than not.¹⁸

Like his wife, Joseph Sr. hungered for the truth. But he felt that attending no church at all was preferable to the wrong one. Following the counsel of his father, Joseph Sr. searched the scriptures, prayed earnestly, and believed that Jesus Christ had come to save the world.¹⁹ Yet he could not reconcile what he felt to be true with the confusion and discord he saw

in the churches around him. One night he had dreamed that contending preachers were like cattle, bellowing as they dug at the earth with their horns, which deepened his concern that they knew little about God's kingdom.²⁰

Seeing his parents' dissatisfaction with local churches only confused Joseph Jr. more.²¹ His soul was at stake, but no one could give him satisfying answers.

After saving their money for more than a year, the Smiths had enough to make a payment on a hundred acres of forest in Manchester, just south of Palmyra. There, between jobs as hired hands, they tapped maple trees for their sugary sap, planted an orchard, and cleared fields to grow crops.²²

As he worked the land, young Joseph continued to worry about his sins and the welfare of his soul. The religious revival in Palmyra had quieted down, but preachers continued to compete for converts there and throughout the region.²³ Day and night, Joseph watched the sun,

This log home, located in Manchester, New York, is a replica of the home the Smiths built there after moving from Vermont. The grove where Joseph experienced his First Vision is nearby.



moon, and stars roll through the heavens in order and majesty and admired the beauty of the earth teeming with life. He also looked at the people around him and marveled at their strength and intelligence. Everything seemed to testify that God existed and had created humankind in His own image. But how could Joseph reach Him?²⁴

In the summer of 1819, when Joseph was 13, Methodist preachers gathered for a conference a few miles from the Smith farm and spread out across the countryside to spur families like Joseph's toward conversion. The success of these preachers worried other ministers in the area, and soon competition for converts was intense.

Joseph attended meetings, listened to soul-stirring preaching, and witnessed converts shout for joy. He wanted to shout with them, but he often felt like he was in the middle of a war of words and opinions. "Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together?" he asked himself. "If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?" He knew he needed Christ's grace and mercy, but with so many people and churches clashing over religion, he did not know where to find it.²⁵

Hope that he could find answers—and peace for his soul—seemed to slip away from him. He wondered how anyone could find truth amid so much noise.²⁶

While attending a sermon, Joseph heard a minister quote from the first chapter of James in the New Testament. "If any of you lack wisdom," he said, "let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not."²⁷

Joseph went home and read the verse in the Bible. "Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine," he later remembered. "It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did." He had searched the Bible before as if it held all the answers. But now the Bible was telling him he could go directly to God for personal answers to his questions.

Joseph decided to pray. He had never prayed out loud before, but he trusted the Bible's promise. "Ask in faith,

nothing wavering," it taught.²⁸ God would hear his questions—even if they came out awkwardly. ■

A complete list of works cited is available at saints.lds.org.

The word *Topic* in the notes indicates additional information online at saints.lds.org.

NOTES

1. Raffles, "Narrative of the Effects of the Eruption," 4–5, 19, 23–24.
2. Raffles, "Narrative of the Effects of the Eruption," 5, 7–8, 11.
3. Wood, *Tambora*, 97.
4. Wood, *Tambora*, 78–120; Statham, *Indian Recollections*, 214; Klingaman and Klingaman, *Year without Summer*, 116–18.
5. Wood, *Tambora*, 81–109; Klingaman and Klingaman, *Year without Summer*, 76–86, 115–20.
6. Klingaman and Klingaman, *Year without Summer*, 48–50, 194–203.
7. Joseph Smith History, 1838–56, volume A-1, 131; Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–45, book 2, [11]–book 3, [2]. **Topic:** Joseph Smith's Leg Surgery
8. Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–45, book 3, [3]; Stilwell, *Migration from Vermont*, 124–50.
9. Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–45, book 3, [4]; Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 18–19, 25–28. **Topic:** Joseph Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family
10. Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–45, book 3, [5]; Joseph Smith History, 1838–56, volume A-1, 131–32.
11. Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–45, book 3, [2]; Joseph Smith History, 1838–56, volume A-1, 131.
12. Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–45, book 3, [5]–[6]; Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845, 67; Joseph Smith History, 1838–56, volume A-1, 132. **Topic:** Lucy Mack Smith
13. Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–45, book 3, [6]–[7].
14. Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–45, book 3, [7]; Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism*, 12. **Topic:** Joseph Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family
15. Cook, *Palmyra and Vicinity*, 247–61. **Topics:** Palmyra and Manchester; Christian Churches in Joseph Smith's Day
16. Joseph Smith History, circa Summer 1832, 1–2, in *JSP*, H1:11–12.
17. Joseph Smith—History 1:5–6; Joseph Smith History, 1838–56, volume A-1, [1]–2, in *JSP*, H1:208–10 (draft 2). **Topic:** Religious Beliefs in Joseph Smith's Day
18. Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–45, book 2, [1]–[6]; "Records of the Session of the Presbyterian Church in Palmyra," Mar. 10, 1830.
19. Asael Smith to "My Dear Selfs," Apr. 10, 1799, Asael Smith, Letter and Genealogy Record, 1799, circa 1817–46, Church History Library.
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21. Joseph Smith—History 1:8–10; Joseph Smith History, 1838–56, volume A-1, 2, in *JSP*, H1:208–10 (draft 2). **Topic:** Religious Beliefs in Joseph Smith's Day
22. Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–45, book 3, [8]–[10]; Joseph Smith History, circa Summer 1832, 1, in *JSP*, H1:11. **Topic:** Sacred Grove and Smith Family Farm
23. **Topic:** Awakenings and Revivals
24. Acts 10:34–35; Joseph Smith History, circa Summer 1832, 2, in *JSP*, H1:12.
25. Neibaur, Journal, May 24, 1844, available at josephsmithpapers.org; Joseph Smith—History 1:10; Joseph Smith, "Church History," *Times and Seasons*, Mar. 1, 1842, 3:706, in *JSP*, H1:494.
26. Joseph Smith, Journal, Nov. 9–11, 1835, in *JSP*, J1:87; Joseph Smith—History 1:8–9; Joseph Smith History, 1838–56, volume A-1, 2, in *JSP*, H1:210 (draft 2).
27. "Wm. B. Smith's Last Statement," *Zion's Ensign*, Jan. 13, 1894, 6; James 1:5.
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THE TOWER OF BABEL



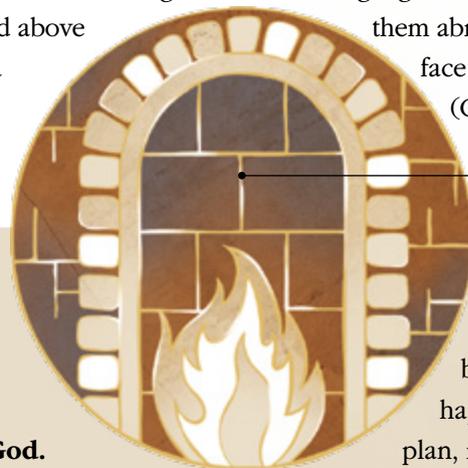
What can this ancient construction project teach us today?

The Tower

- Built of bricks that were baked with fire, as in an oven or a kiln (see Genesis 11:3). Sun-dried bricks had been used for a long time, but baking bricks made them stronger, so larger structures could be built with this new technology.
- Used bitumen (a form of petroleum used today in asphalt or roofing tiles) for mortar.

- Located in Shinar in Mesopotamia and associated with Nimrod (see Genesis 10:10; 11:2).
- Because of its location and materials, usually associated with *ziggurats*, which were stepped temple towers designed to be elevated above a plain, like a man-made mountain.

- Built to “reach unto heaven” and to allow the people to “make [them] a name” and not be scattered (Genesis 11:4).
- Failed to achieve its purpose for the people; instead, “the Lord did . . . confound [their] language . . . and . . . scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth” (Genesis 11:9).



What We Can Learn

The tower of Babel:

Used the latest technology. Our mounting technological triumphs, though they can be used for good, can also cause us to forget God and rely on our own strength. Man’s invention is no substitute for God’s power.

Was completely man-made. The Lord wants us to “trust in [Him] with all [our] heart; and lean not unto [our] own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5). “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth

from the Lord” (Jeremiah 17:5).

Was undertaken without authority from God.

It seems that the people at Babel were attempting to build a counterfeit temple to “reach unto heaven,” bind or seal the people together somehow so they would not be scattered, and “make [them] a name” rather than take the Lord’s name upon them—and all this without authority from God and without regard to His commandments. No

project of our own devising will bring us ultimate happiness; only God’s plan, including temple covenants, can do that.

Failed. A world that rejects God and, with pride and arrogance, tries to obtain happiness while disregarding Him and His righteousness will always fail in its quest. “The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day” (Isaiah 2:17).



ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID S. GREEN

ADDITIONAL FACTS

- The Lord's people were commanded to build their altars out of stones that had not been cut with tools (see Exodus 20:24–25). And they built their temples out of quarried stone rather than man-made brick (see 1 Kings 5:15–18).
- The word *Babel* in Hebrew means “confusion,” but in Babylonian or Akkadian it meant “gate of God,” in reference to the tower’s temple function.
 - Jewish tradition holds that Nimrod rebelled against God and tried to usurp His authority.
 - One reason the people built the tower was so that they would not be scattered (see Genesis 11:4). Doctrine and Covenants 2:3 says the sealing power would be restored so that the earth would not be “wasted” at the Second Coming. In Joseph Smith’s day, one definition of waste was “to destroy by scattering” (Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* [1828], “waste”).

LEARN MORE

For more ideas about possible Latter-day Saint perspectives on the tower of Babel, see “I Have a Question,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1994, 60–61.

ADOPTION

& ANSWERS TO PRAYER

After many heartaches, our family grew in ways we hadn't anticipated.

By **Patrícia Samways Abilhôa**

On a beautiful September afternoon in 1999, my husband and I were sealed in the São Paulo Brazil Temple. A year later, we were hoping to have a child.

I loved the children I worked with in Primary, and I longed to have a child of my own. I had embroidered a layette, and the nursery in our home was ready. After months of attempts and frustrating examinations, I finally became pregnant. I will never forget the joy I felt that day. We told everyone we saw, we dreamed, we cried, and all our thoughts turned toward that baby. We learned that our baby was a boy, and we decided we would name him Eduardo.

Fighting to Save Our Baby

Just before Easter, I started feeling very sick, even more than normal. One morning when I woke up I discovered I was losing a lot of blood. I started praying, desperately, for God to save my son.

At the hospital, the doctor told me the bad news: at five months into my pregnancy, I was miscarrying

the baby. There was no way to have known my condition before the pregnancy, and I learned that there was just a very small chance of saving him. I had to stay in bed until the baby was born, without getting up for anything.

We tried for five days. I vomited and was in pain. When I had contractions, I was given medication to stop them. It made me sleep. My husband gave me a blessing, and I remember him whispering into my ear, over and over, "With God, nothing is impossible." This brought relief to my heart, and I knew God could save my baby. I fought for him and asked the Lord to take me but save my baby.

But all the attempts to save him were in vain. My little baby could not stand so much medication, and he died. Then I had a negative reaction to the anesthetic used in the surgery, and I became very sick. I stayed in the hospital for 15 days, and I remember having my husband praying by my side or giving me a blessing.

It was terrible returning home and seeing everything we had prepared for the baby who would never arrive. Many times I asked, "Why me?" But my heart was calmed as I recalled that one of my Church leaders had counseled me to avoid thinking that way.





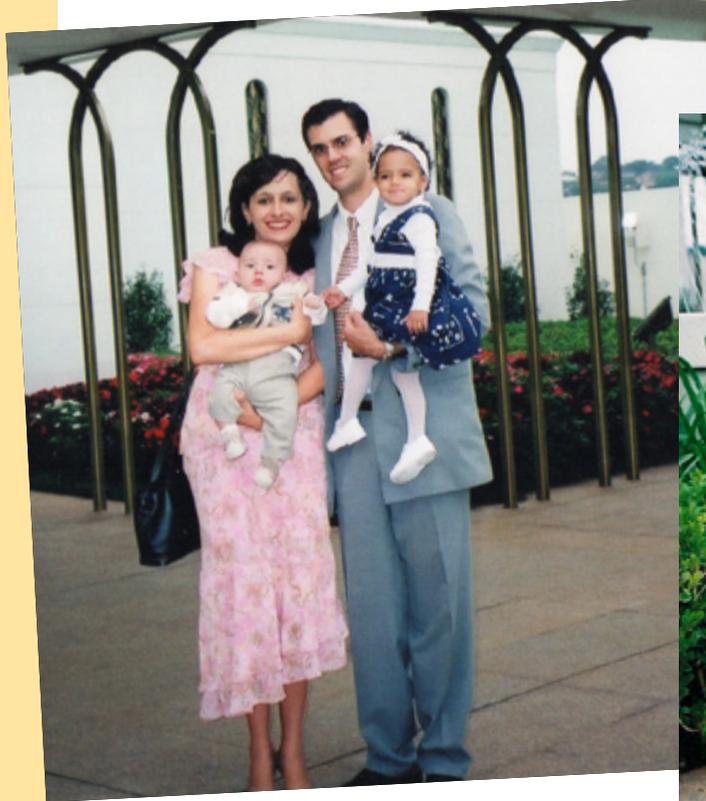
WE BELIEVE IN CHILDREN

"We believe in families, and we believe in children. . . .

"What a wonderful blessing we have to receive sons and daughters of God into our home. . . .

"Families are central to God's eternal plan. I testify of the great blessing of children and of the happiness they will bring us in this life and in the eternities."

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Children," *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 28, 31.



Above: Camilla and her family at the São Paulo Brazil Temple on the day she was sealed to her adoptive parents, March 13, 2004. Right: Camilla dressed in white at the temple. Far right: The Abilhôa family at the Curitiba Brazil Temple in 2015.



Another Setback

A few months later I was pregnant again. We planned a surgery to help with my condition, and I was hopeful that everything would go right. Every day that passed increased my confidence. But before I could have the surgery, when I was three months along, I suffered another miscarriage.

I felt devastated as a woman. I thought that I must be so bad that God didn't want me to have children. When I saw beggars on the street with five or six children asking for alms, I thought, "God will not give a child to me; why does He give so many to them?" We tried innumerable and exhausting treatments, and the stress was immense. Although everyone told us that we were young and that we would have many children, I did not believe them. But we continued serving the Lord. Even when I did not feel like serving, I knew that there was work to be done, and my Church calling brought me joy.

Considering Adoption

I remember about this time saying a fervent prayer to the Lord asking for help and then falling asleep. The ring of the telephone woke me, and it was my aunt. She said she had dreamed about me, and she felt that I should consider

adopting a child. I felt that the call was an answer to my prayer, and the possibility of adoption brought me peace. In my family there are many adopted children. My husband was reluctant at first, but after we talked, we looked into it. I was undergoing treatment again to try for another child, but we got on the list for adoption too. We decided that whatever happened first we would accept as the Lord's will.

We talked with a very beloved Church leader and told him of our difficulty in having children. He kindly reminded us that what we needed for exaltation was a solid marriage, whether or not children came to us. This helped to alleviate our anxiety.

We completed the paperwork for adoption, and about three months later we found out that there was a newborn baby girl who had been abandoned. She was in the hospital, and if she survived, she could be ours. A few days later we found out that she was out of the hospital and in an orphanage about five hours away from us.

We drove to the orphanage to meet her. When we walked in the door we heard a baby crying. When they put her into my arms, she stopped crying immediately and smiled at me in a way I have never seen from a newborn. I immediately



CONSIDERING ADOPTION?

When looking at the possibility of adoption, it's important to be well informed. Consider these suggestions from LDS Family Services.

If you feel inspired to adopt a child, be sure you know and conform with all the laws and requirements of the governing agencies involved. This will almost always require you to seek advice from an attorney specializing in adoption or from a licensed adoption agency. You should also seek to educate yourself on the biological, psychological, and social aspects that are often a part of the adoption experience.

called her my daughter, my sweet Camilla. I was nervous and apprehensive until we were able to bring her home one week later. When we brought her into the nursery, she looked around and went right to sleep, just like she knew she was home. When seeing her, people said that this child fell into a cradle of gold, but we always said, “No, it was she who brought gold into our lives.”

Trusting in God

I do not know why things happen the way they do, but I have learned to trust in God. He heard every word that I said to Him and knew everything that happened to my babies. I felt in my heart that the Lord was giving me what I had asked of Him. I went through so much to have my Camilla with me. She is an angel sent from God. I know that she is my daughter but that for some reason she could not be born from my womb. The Lord provided everything for her to come into my arms.

When Camilla was seven months old, I discovered I was pregnant again. I did everything the doctor told me to and remained in bed for the greater part of the day for eight months. We rejoiced when our son, Murilo, was born.

When Murilo was four months old and Camilla was 18 months old, Camilla was sealed to us in the newly rededicated São Paulo Brazil Temple. Our daughter smiled like an angel and kept repeating “eternal family” over and over again.

I felt strongly in my heart that we should have another baby. My husband was reluctant at first, but he soon received spiritual confirmation as well. After a difficult and complicated pregnancy, we were blessed with another baby boy, Gustavo. Soon after, my husband became seriously ill, and although he eventually got well, a side effect of the treatment was that we could have no more children. We knew that Gustavo had come at just the right time. If we had not heeded our feelings, we would not have had another chance to have our little boy.

Each of our children is a miracle, and now our eternal family is complete. Without a doubt, God is the safe harbor when there are storms in our lives. I have learned that my prayers do not need to be answered when and how I wish. I have to trust in the timing of the Lord. Even when requests are righteous, it is He who decides when and how to bless us. ■

The author lives in Paran, Brazil.



Use the Friend magazine to help your family understand a different sensitive topic each month.

DEALING WITH STRONG EMOTIONS

Anger, anxiety, fear—children often need help understanding and dealing with strong emotions. For example, when children express anger, they may actually be feeling afraid or hungry or have some other unmet need. We can help our children understand that difficult feelings are not wrong or bad. While strong feelings are normal, sometimes they also give clues to help us identify problems that we can help children resolve.

You can use stories from this month's *Friend* and the May 2017 *Friend* to help your children understand and deal with some of their difficult emotions.

"Peter the Pest" (Feb. 2018, page 32)



Matthew is angry when his brother Peter breaks his model dinosaur. But Matthew chooses to calm down and apologize to Peter, and their relationship grows stronger. You could use

this story to help your children learn how to handle conflict and upset feelings.

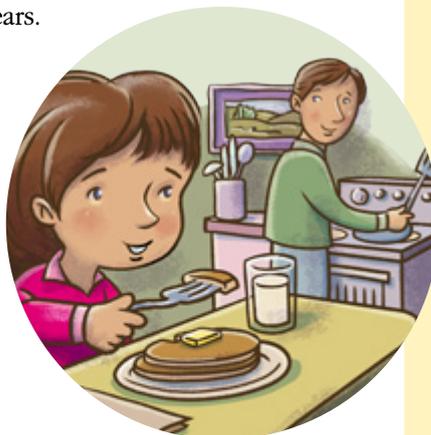
"What's on Your Mind?" (Feb. 2018, page 34)

This page gives specific ideas to help children feel better when they're

feeling angry. The glitter jar (page 35) is also a great way to help your child slow down and relax.

"Ella's Worries" and "Worried or Afraid?" (May 2017, pages 22, 24)

Ella's worries won't go away. She talks to her dad, and they take the first step toward helping Ella cope with her worries. Can your kids relate to Ella's feelings? After reading about Ella, read "Worried or Afraid?" for some tips for handling worries and fears.



TALKING POINTS

- Talk about what helps your child feel calm, and make a "calm-down plan" ahead of time. This could include taking deep breaths, asking for help, or finding a quiet place.
- When children are angry or upset, try to empathize and let your children know they're heard. Try to stay calm, even if they aren't.
- When children are anxious, help them name their feelings. Try, "You look like you might be feeling scared. Can you tell me how you're feeling right now?" Reassure them that you are there, that they are safe, and that their anxious feelings will pass.
- If your child is angry, teach correct behavior without punishing for strong emotions. Try, "You don't have to be happy, but we don't hit."

Find stories, activities, and media about other gospel topics at lessonhelps.lds.org. For past *Friend* Connection articles, visit FriendConnection.lds.org.



The New Era magazine is there for your teens—and for you. See how this month's issue can help you talk with them and teach them.

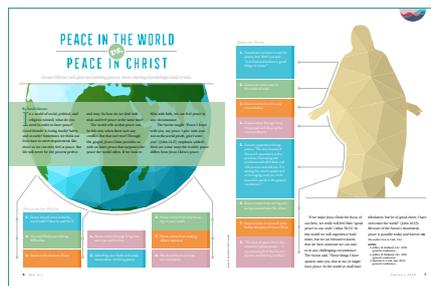


Finding Peace

Two articles in this month's *New Era* aim to help youth know how to find true and lasting peace in a world of turmoil:



A message from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles discussing the kind of inner peace we can find only through the Savior (page 2).



An article contrasting the world's understanding of peace with peace in Jesus Christ (page 6).

TRY THESE ACTIVITIES

Here are some activities in this month's *New Era*:

FHE Object Lesson

With a sponge, grape juice, and water, youth can teach a family home evening lesson about filling our lives with good to avoid soaking in too many worldly influences (page 8).

Form Your Own Positive Statements

Youth can use this activity to see how they can change the way they talk to themselves in order to better reach their potential. This is based on the article on page 31 by a performance psychology consultant for BYU Athletics (page 36).

TALK WITH THEM

Here are some questions you might ask:

- What's the difference between relaxing and finding inner peace?
- When you feel fear and anxiety, what helps you overcome those feelings?

TEACH THEM

In family home evening or other teaching settings, consider using something you saw in the *New Era*. For instance:

- Read Elder Ballard's message (page 2) and share how you have seen the Savior and His gospel bring peace to your life and the lives of others.
- Read the message by Elder Larry H. Wilson of the Seventy about the temple (page 20), and share what helped you prepare for temple ordinances.
- Read the message by President Thomas S. Monson called "A Prophet's Invitation: Study the Book of Mormon" (page 48), and share how you have been blessed by following President Monson's counsel to study the Book of Mormon every day.

SEND US YOUR SUGGESTIONS

How can the *New Era* better meet the needs of your youth? Do you have specific ideas for article topics, questions to be answered, or ways to help youth understand the gospel? Send your suggestions to newera@ldschurch.org.







PORTRAITS OF FAITH

As a wood-carver, Feinga supports his wife, their three children, and three others in their care. It hasn't always been easy, but by putting God first, they have always had enough.

CHRISTINA SMITH, PHOTOGRAPHER

Feinga Fanguna

Tongatapu, Tonga

When my wife, 'Anau, and I were first married, I would carve small items and go to the market to sell them. Some days I would come back with money, other days I would sell nothing.

In my patriarchal blessing, I am promised that God will bless the work I do with my hands and that I will use my talent to help people. These promises are being fulfilled.

We are blessed in many ways. Our relatives think we're rich. We're not, but we have everything we need because we put God first.

DISCOVER MORE

See more about Feinga's journey of faith at lds.org/go/portraitsE218.

Find more stories of faith in the Media Library on LDS.org. Learn how you can become more self-reliant through the Church's self-reliance initiative at srs.lds.org.



I told him that what had just happened was no accident because I had received a prompting.

I FOLLOWED THE FIRST IMPRESSION

One Sunday after returning home from church, I fell asleep for most of the afternoon.

It was dark when I woke up. I started my weekly planning with a prayer to ask how I could best serve the Lord. I felt impressed to go home teaching. It was already 8:00 p.m., so I told myself that I would go the following Tuesday, but the impression to go that night became stronger.

I was reminded of the counsel I heard Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles give at the missionary training center in Lima, Peru, while I was a teacher there: “Follow the first impression.” I immediately called my home teaching

companion, but he did not answer. I decided to go anyway.

I left the house and noticed a young priest in my ward walking down the street. I approached him and asked if he would accompany me. He agreed. At the first home, the brother opened the door. I told him I felt I needed to see him. He smiled and told us he was having an operation the next day and would appreciate a blessing. I gave him a blessing, and we left for our next visit.

It was 8:40 p.m. when we arrived at the next family’s house. They were surprised to see us because it was so late. We entered their home and noticed that the father was sick. I offered to give him a blessing.

As we returned home, I shared Moroni 7:13 with my young companion: “Every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God.”

I told him that what had just happened was no accident because I had received a prompting. He said he believed it because before I approached him, he had prayed to know how to recognize the Spirit.

I don’t know if the impression to go home teaching was more for my families or for this young priest, but I am grateful I listened. I know great blessings come as we follow the first impression of the Spirit. ■

Kenny Quispitupac, Lima, Peru

EVERYONE NEEDS A FRIEND

I approached the doors to the church with one clear thought in my mind: “If I don’t find a friend at church today, I’m never coming back.” I had attended church with a friend a few times before, but this was the first time I attended as an investigator by myself and *for* myself. I felt I needed to join the Church, but I had several fears and concerns.

When I entered the church, I was greeted by a young adult with a big smile and a hearty handshake. He introduced himself as Dane McCartney. I had seen Dane before, when he had tried out for the college football team I played for. My anxiety vanished when he invited me to sit with him during the Church meetings. He also invited me to his parents’ home for dinner afterward. I never had a chance to feel alone that day. Dane and his family reached out to me and helped answer many of my questions. I joined the Church a few weeks later.

Had Dane just been friendly to me that day, I probably would have left church after sacrament meeting and given up, thinking that I had given it a shot but that church just wasn’t for me. While it’s certainly important to be friendly, being a *friend* involves more than just being nice. The McCartneys’ love and support was important to my conversion.

That was 14 years ago. Since then I have served a full-time mission, been married in the temple, and been

blessed with five wonderful children. I have also served as a bishop and a stake president. I have counseled with members who stopped coming to church because they felt alone and didn’t have any friends at church. My heart breaks for them. I wish someone would have reached out to them like

the McCartneys did to me.

I thank my Heavenly Father that Dane befriended me that day. I hope we will all take courage to be friends to those who are investigating the Church, are new to it, or are returning to it. ■

Tim Overton, Arizona, USA

Dane showed me that being a friend involves more than just being nice.



A BLESSING OF CONSOLATION

When it became apparent that my father's cancer was terminal, my mother said in discouragement, "I guess we're not going to get our miracle." In that moment, I felt that our family would receive miracles, even if the preservation of my father's life was not among them.

One miracle came one morning when my friend Beth asked me what my plans were for the day. I told her I had planned to spend the afternoon with my father at the hospital, but my arrangement for child care fell through. Beth generously offered to watch my children so I could spend time with my father. She also offered to take supper to my family. I was very grateful.

When I arrived at the hospital, my father did not have the energy to open his eyes or eat any food. But shortly afterward he experienced a dramatic increase in energy. For over three hours he was wide awake, and we talked and even walked around the

hospital ward a few times. No other visitors came during this time. I was blessed to have this time with him to myself.

We laughed and we cried together that day. My father shared with me his feelings about leaving this earth life and what mattered most to him:

his testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ. That afternoon is one of the most cherished memories of my life. Three days later he passed away.

It was not until a week after his funeral that I realized the last time I spoke with my father was the afternoon that Beth watched my children.

I was touched that God had prompted Beth to be the blessing she prayed I would receive.



ILLUSTRATION BY ALLEN GARRIS

With tears streaming down my face, I sent Beth an email thanking her for her service and explaining how much it meant to me.

Beth replied, “I have a testimony that God wants to extend us blessings of consolation and grace—especially when we are going through something difficult. I have been praying for consolation for you and your family during this time.”

I was touched that God prompted Beth to be the blessing she prayed I would receive. I know that God provides us with blessings of consolation during difficult times in our lives. ■
Sarah Bieber, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

WHERE IS MY TREASURE?

After getting my children off to school, I began thinking about the rest of the day. I had many things to do, but I had to work the night shift at the hospital, so I had limited time. I could work in the yard, work on a quilt for my nephew’s birthday, or exercise. Then I remembered a quote from President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994):

“When we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives” (“The Great Commandment—Love the Lord,” *Ensign*, May 1988, 4).



Next to my scriptures were four names that I had recently taken to the temple.

“Scriptures it is!” I thought. I sat at my desk and continued my scripture study from the day before:

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:19–21).

“Where is my treasure?” I thought. Next to my scriptures were four names from my husband’s family that I had recently taken to the temple. My husband’s parents were the first in their families to join the Church. I had spent the past two years working on my late father-in-law’s line. I decided to go to

FamilySearch to see if the ordinances were recorded as complete.

I looked at the temple icons along his line. To my surprise, several names I had prepared for sealing ordinances had not been recorded as complete. I must have misplaced the cards, and the sealings had not yet been done! As soon as I reprinted the names, a distinct thought came to my mind, “Now you can go about your day.”

I felt peace knowing I had put the Lord first. He helped me prioritize what was most important. Enjoying my family in the eternities is definitely what I treasure most. I know that if I put God first, all other things will work out for my spiritual benefit and for the benefit of others. ■
Ashlee Cornell, Oklahoma, USA



By President
Dieter F. Uchtdorf
Second Counselor
in the First Presidency

THE GOSPEL ENCOMPASSES ALL TRUTH

The leaf we have before us is simply one microscopic snapshot—part of an infinitely vast forest of fascinating knowledge.

History is important. And keeping ourselves anchored to the lessons learned from history will enable us to emulate the best of what it means to be human.

The late novelist Michael Crichton is reported to have said, “If you don’t know history, then you don’t know anything. You are a leaf that doesn’t know it is part of a tree.” History teaches us not only about the leaves of existence; it also teaches about the twigs, branches, trunks, and roots of life. And these lessons are important.

One of the weaknesses we have as mortals is to assume that our “leaf” is all there is—that our truth is complete and universal. An old Yiddish expression [says], “To a worm in horseradish,



the world is horseradish.” I want to emphasize that the truth embraced by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints extends beyond leaves and certainly beyond horseradish. It extends beyond time and space and encompasses all truth.

The gospel of Jesus Christ encompasses not only the truth of what was and what is but also the truth of what can and will be. It is the most practical of all truths. It teaches the way of the disciple—a path that can take ordinary, flawed mortals and transform them into glorious, immortal, and limitless beings whose divine potential is beyond our meager capacity to imagine.

Now, that is practical truth. It is priceless beyond imagination. It is truth of the highest order. The pursuit, discovery, and application of truth are what we are on this earth to discover. The gospel of Jesus Christ encompasses all truth, and it also specializes in the knowledge that will be of greatest worth to us in this life and throughout the eternities to come.

Isn’t it a remarkable feeling to belong to a Church that embraces truth—no matter the source—and teaches that there is much more to come, that God “will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God”? [Articles of Faith 1:9]. As a result, we are humble about the truth we have. We understand our knowledge is a work in progress, that the leaf we have before us is simply one microscopic snapshot—part of an infinitely vast forest of fascinating knowledge. ■

From “Seeing beyond the Leaf” (address given at the Brigham Young University Church History Symposium, Mar. 7, 2014).



**ADAM AND EVE,
TEXTILE ART BY CUNA INDIANS,
SAN BLAS ISLANDS, PANAMA**

Tempted by the devil, Adam and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit and thus became mortal. Eve testified of the resulting blessings: "Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient" (Moses 5:1).



YOUNG ADULTS

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THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

