

# Ensign

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Addiction and Its  
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How Covenants Bind Us to God and  
to Each Other, page 26



THE  
CHURCH  
IS HERE

# Sydney Australia





Along the shores of Sydney's beautiful natural harbor stands a chapel where 4 of Australia's 309 Latter-day Saint congregations meet for church: one each in English, Tongan, Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese. Such diversity is typical of Sydney, an area vibrant with cultural influences from around the world.

The Church was introduced to Australia in 1840 by a 17-year-old from Great Britain, William James Barratt. He baptized the first Australian convert, Robert Beauchamp, who later became a mission president.

Early members in Australia faced harsh attacks from newspapers, and many members emigrated to Utah, USA. However, Australian Latter-day Saints persisted, and over the years the Church began to thrive. Today, Australia is home to more than 151,000 members, and Latter-day Saints have received praise from news services for providing emergency humanitarian relief following natural disasters such as brush fires and cyclones.

- The first mission in Australia opened in 1851, and there are now six missions.
- The first LDS meetinghouse in Australia was constructed in Brisbane in 1904.
- The Sydney Australia Temple was dedicated in 1984, followed by temples in Adelaide (2000), Melbourne (2000), Perth (2001), and Brisbane (2003).



# We Need Each Other



## Finding Peace in the Storm of Addiction

Chakell Wardleigh

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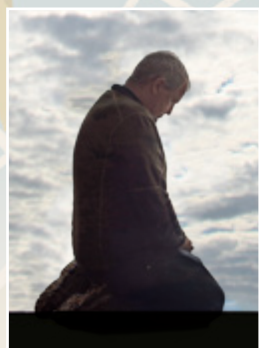
Have you ever faced a challenge in your life that you were desperate to keep hidden because you feared what others might think? My family and I have. We struggled with this for years as we've watched my brother battle drug addiction.

On page 16, you will find a professional counselor's explanation of addiction, how to understand it, how to recognize it, how it affects families, and how you can help.

Following that is my own story of how my brother's addiction has affected and shaped me throughout the past decade.

As much as we want to be able to overcome challenges on our own and to lead perfect lives, the truth of the matter is that we need each other because none of us are exempt from facing challenges. We are meant to "bear one another's burdens" (Mosiah 18:8), and the Savior can show us how to sincerely do so if we allow Him to. It's my hope that we will strive to understand, to empathize, and to love, rather than be quick to judge. By doing so, we will have greater peace and joy in whatever circumstances we find ourselves.

Chakell Wardleigh  
Church Magazines



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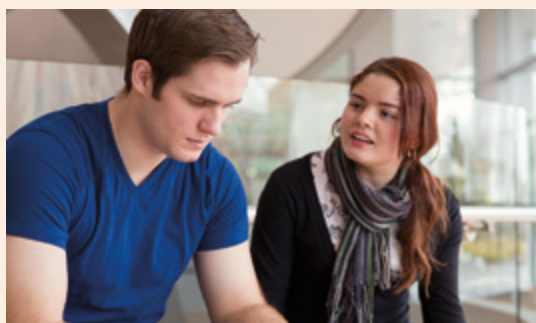
Goal setting can chart a proper course for our lives.



### Ministering in Mini Ways

By Katie Sue Embley

Sometimes just a small thing can make a big difference.



### You Don't Know What You Don't Know

By Lori Fuller Sosa

If we could just listen without trying to change someone's mind, I think we'd be surprised what we might learn.

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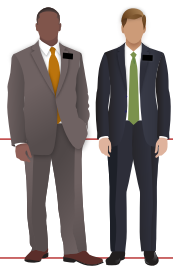
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## MISSIONARY TRAINING CENTERS AROUND THE WORLD

**12**  
missionary training  
centers (MTCs)

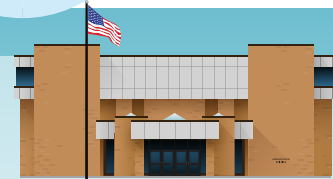
**67,007**  
full-time missionaries  
currently serving

**399**  
missions

**58**  
languages

**20,515**

Number of missionaries trained last year at  
the **largest MTC**—in Provo, Utah, USA.

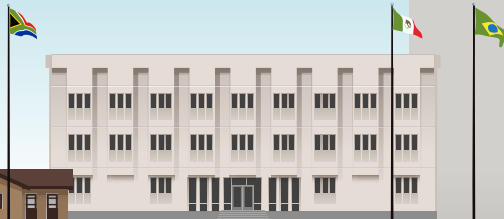


**376**

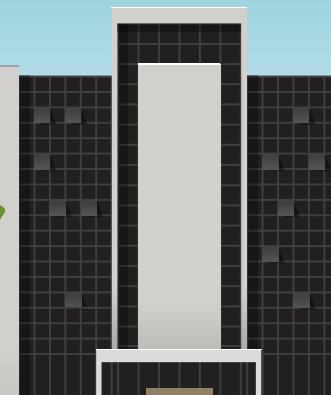
Number of missionaries  
trained last year at the  
**smallest MTC**—  
in Johannesburg,  
South Africa.



The **largest MTC campus**  
—in Mexico City, Mexico—  
has **88** buildings on  
90 acres.



The  
**tallest MTC**  
building—  
in São Paulo,  
Brazil—is  
**7** stories.



**3 weeks'** time in the MTC if the missionary is not learning a foreign language.

**6–9 weeks'** time in the MTC if the missionary is learning a foreign language.





## Shelly Ellegood

Kentucky, USA



*Life choices kept Shelly away from the Church for years. With the help of friends at church, Shelly eventually found the strength and faith to move forward and be a good example to her children.*

**CODY BELL, PHOTOGRAPHER**

I know I can't go back and change anything, but my goal now is to do everything I can to give my kids a good example because they didn't have one for many years. I hope they can see I've overcome many challenges.

I want them to know that if they have bad spells, they can move past them as they turn to the Savior for help. It's a matter of having faith and never giving up. The Lord has helped me as I've gone along, and I know He can help them too. The progress has been painful, but the Lord has built me up and made me stronger.

### LEARN MORE

See more about Shelly's journey of faith, including additional photographs, at [lds.org/go/E02197](https://lds.org/go/E02197).

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf offers hope and encouragement for those coming back to Church activity at [lds.org/go/021902](https://lds.org/go/021902).

Learn how you can minister to those who are not attending or just returning to Church activity at [lds.org/go/021903](https://lds.org/go/021903).

Find more Portraits of Faith at [lds.org/go/18](https://lds.org/go/18).

# Ministering Principles

## DEVELOPING THE EMPATHY TO MINISTER

*Ministering is lifting. We can lift others as we try to understand what they are experiencing and show that we are willing to walk with them.*

Because our Heavenly Father wants us to become like Him, the challenges we face in this life can become learning opportunities if we will trust Him and stay on the path. Unfortunately, staying on the path can be particularly hard when we feel like we're facing those trials on our own.

But we were never meant to walk the path alone. The Savior achieved perfect empathy, descending below all things so that He would know how to succor us in our afflictions and infirmities (see Alma 7:11–12; Doctrine and Covenants 122:8). He expects each of us to follow His example and show empathy as well. Every member of the Church has covenanted to “mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:9). In spite of our own challenges, we are taught throughout the scriptures to turn outward and “lift up the hands which hang down, and [strengthen] the feeble knees” and to “make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way” (Hebrews 12:12–13; see also Isaiah 35:3–4; Doctrine and Covenants 81:5–6).

As we take others by the hand, let them lean on us, and walk with them, we help them stay on the path long enough for the Savior not only to convert them—one of the



key purposes of ministering—but also to heal them (see Doctrine and Covenants 112:13).

### What Is Empathy?

Empathy is understanding another person's feelings, thoughts, and condition from their perspective, rather than our own.<sup>1</sup> Being empathetic is important in our efforts to minister to others.

### Walking in Someone Else's Shoes

The story is told of a shy Latter-day Saint man who often sat on the back row of the chapel alone. When a member of the elder's quorum suddenly passed away, the bishop gave

priesthood blessings to comfort the elder's family members. Relief Society sisters brought in food. Well-meaning friends and neighbors visited with the family and said, "Let us know if there is anything we can do to help."

But when this shy man visited the family later in the day, he rang the doorbell and when the widow answered, he simply said, "I have come to clean your shoes." In a couple of hours, all the family's shoes were cleaned and shined in preparation for the funeral. The following Sunday the family of the deceased elder sat by the shy man on the back row.

Here was a man who was able to fill an unmet need. Both they and he were blessed by his empathy-guided ministering.

### JESUS CHRIST MINISTERED WITH EMPATHY

When the Savior appeared to the Nephites, He taught them until He perceived that they could not understand everything He had to teach them. But as He considered them, He knew that they didn't want Him to leave, and He felt compassion for them. (See 3 Nephi 17:5–6.)

He responded by shifting from expounding on the gospel to ministering to their temporal needs, inviting them to bring forward those who were sick, lame, blind, or maimed. He healed them. Then He prayed for them and ministered to their children, spending time with them individually to bless them.

What can we learn from the Savior's example of empathy in ministering to the Nephites?



## Can I Develop Empathy?

Some seem to be blessed with the gift to be able to empathize. But for those who struggle, there is good news. Over the past 30 years, a growing number of researchers have studied empathy. While many of them come at the topic with different approaches, most of them agree that empathy is something that can be learned.<sup>2</sup>

We can pray for the gift of empathy. In order to improve, it is also helpful to have a better understanding of how empathy works. The following suggestions are generally accepted as basic elements of empathy.<sup>3</sup> While these often take place without us even being conscious that they are happening, being aware of them gives us a chance to see opportunities to improve.

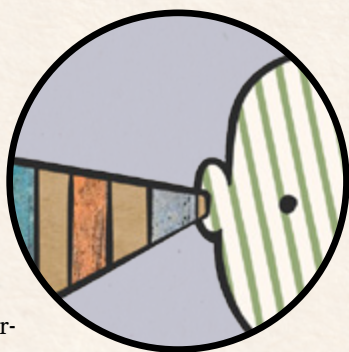
### 1. Understand

Empathy requires some understanding of another's situation. The better we understand their circumstances, the easier it becomes to understand how they feel about it and what we can do to help.

Actively listening, asking questions, and counseling with them and others are important actions for understanding their situation. Learn more about these concepts in previous Ministering Principles articles:

- “Five Things Good Listeners Do,” *Ensign*, June 2018, 6.
- “Counsel about Their Needs,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2018, 6.
- “Getting Help to Help Others,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2018, 6.

As we seek to understand, we must take time to understand their specific situation rather than making assumptions based on another who had a similar experience. Otherwise, we may miss the mark and leave them feeling misunderstood.



### 2. Imagine

In our efforts to keep our covenant to mourn with those who mourn and comfort those who stand in need of comfort, we can pray for the Holy Ghost to help us understand what someone might be feeling and how we can help.<sup>4</sup>

Once we understand someone's circumstances, each of us—whether it happens naturally or not—can go through the exercise of imagining what we would think or feel in that situation. Understanding those thoughts and emotions, along with the guidance of the Holy Ghost, can help guide our response to their situation.

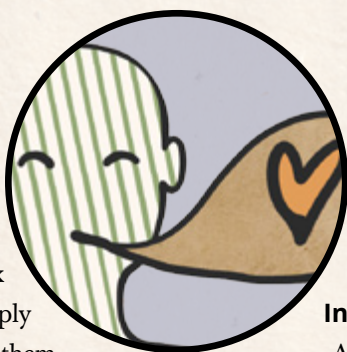
As we come to understand another's circumstances and imagine how they might feel, it is important that we are careful that we don't judge them inappropriately (see Matthew 7:1). Being critical of how someone got into their situation can lead you to discount the pain the situation is causing.



### 3. Respond

How we respond is important because that is how our empathy shows. There are countless ways to communicate our understanding both verbally and nonverbally. It's important to remember that our goal isn't necessarily to fix the problem. Often the goal is simply to lift and to strengthen by letting them know they're not alone. This might mean saying, "I'm so glad you told me" or "I'm so sorry. That must hurt."

In every case our response must be genuine. And when appropriate, being vulnerable enough to let others see your own weaknesses and insecurities can create a valuable sense of connection.



### Invitation to Act

As you consider the circumstances of those you minister to, imagine being in their situation and what you would find most helpful if you were in their shoes. Pray to understand how they feel and follow through. Your response may be simple, but it may be more meaningful. ■

Ministering Principles articles are intended to help us learn to care for one another—not to be shared as messages during visits. As we come to know those we serve, the Holy Ghost will prompt us to know what message they might need in addition to our care and compassion.



### NOTES

1. See William Ickes, ed., *Empathic Accuracy* (1997); and Martin L. Hoffman, *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice* (2000).
2. See, for example, Emily Teding van Berkhout and John M. Malouff, "The Efficacy of Empathy Training: A Meta-analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials," *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, vol. 63, no. 1 (Jan. 2016), 32–41.
3. See, for example, Brené Brown, *I Thought It Was Just Me (But It Isn't)* (2008); Theresa Wiseman, "A Concept Analysis of Empathy," *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, vol. 23, no. 6 (June 1996), 1162–67; and Ed Neukrug and others, "Creative and Novel Approaches to Empathy: A Neo-Rogerian Perspective," *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, vol. 35, no. 1 (Jan. 2013), 29–42.
4. See Henry B. Eyring, "The Comforter," *Ensign*, May 2015, 17–21.



By Elder  
Juan A. Uceda  
Of the Seventy

A Personal  
Relationship with  
Our Heavenly  
Father through  
**Prayer**



When was the  
last time you  
felt something  
as you were  
praying?



**W**hen I use a mobile phone to call my mother and father in New Jersey, USA, I can hear their voices clearly. I do not know how it is possible, without any cable or visible connection, that I can talk to them so far away. But I know it works!

Now, please do not ask me how it is possible that millions of people can pray at the same time, and in different languages, and our Father in Heaven is ready to listen and to answer at the same time. I cannot understand how that happens. But I know it works!

Just like a mobile phone, prayer works, even though we may not understand exactly how. But there are some things about prayer that we do understand.

### **Pray from the Heart**

We read in the scriptures, “Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened” (Luke 3:21). Jesus teaches us that a prayer from the heart can open heaven. He said, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matthew 7:7).

Today, we usually use the word *ask* to request something. But in the original Greek, the word is *aiteo*, which means not only to ask but also to beg, crave, or implore. The heavens will not be opened if we just *say* prayers. They will be opened if we *beg*, if we *crave*, if we *implore*, if we pray from the heart.

When you pray, do you feel like the heavens are opened? When was the last time, as you were praying, that you felt something?

### Prepare to Pray

To avoid falling into routine prayers using vain repetitions (see Matthew 6:7; 3 Nephi 13:7), we should prepare ourselves to pray. I suggest reading a scripture or briefly pondering our blessings. Each one of us can find ways to prepare for personal prayer.

### Pray Even When It's Hard

Every now and then, we rush through prayers or pray out of routine. Sometimes we do not pray with faith in Jesus

Christ, and sometimes we do not pray at all. But it's at those moments when we lack faith or don't feel like praying that we most need to pray.

President Brigham Young (1801–77) said: “When it is dark as midnight darkness, when there is not one particle of feeling in my heart to pray, shall I then say, I will not pray? No, but [I say] . . . knees, bend

yourselves upon the floor, and mouth, open; tongue, speak; and we will see what will come forth, and you shall worship the Lord God of Israel, even when you feel as though you could not say a word in his favor. That is the victory we have to gain. . . . It is between the spirit and the body; they are inseparably connected” (“Discourse,” *Deseret News*, Feb. 27, 1856, 402; punctuation standardized).

Satan does not want you to pray because he knows that the moment you start praying from the heart, you obtain spiritual power and he loses influence over you. A mighty prayer enables you to face challenges such as anxiety, depression, and doubts about your own faith.

If you do not remember the last time you felt something as you were praying, then do something about it. Through

prayer, you can establish and maintain a personal relationship with your Father in Heaven.

### Spend a Moment in Heaven

When you desperately need help from heaven, prayer can give you power to make the right decisions. A prayer from the heart is indeed a moment in heaven, and even though answers may not always be immediate, a moment in heaven can help you to chart your course in mortal life.

In a world where people “call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter” (Isaiah 5:20), you need to know that the heavens are open to you.

Prayers offered from the heart, mighty prayers, can give you spiritual power to face such things. When the heavens are opened, we can feel peace, comfort, joy, and love, even though we may not immediately gain complete understanding.

### Follow the Savior's Example

We can learn a lot by studying how the Savior prayed.

“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed” (Mark 1:35).

Jesus prayed first thing in the morning and sought a solitary place to pray. Do you pray first thing in the morning? Do you avoid distractions? Do you unplug yourself from the world and strive to establish a connection with the heavens?

Luke also records that Jesus “withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed” (Luke 5:16). Do you have a place of prayer where you go when you wish to petition your Father in Heaven?

### Remain Humble

Matthew tells us that the Redeemer, as He prayed, demonstrated humility. “And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39).

What does it mean that he “fell on his face”? The word for “fell” in the original Greek is *pipto*, a verb that means “to descend from an erect to a prostrate position.” When the





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Believe that  
you can receive  
spiritual power  
to overcome. . . .  
Spend a moment  
in the heavens.

moment comes for personal prayer, remember that you are going to address the most intelligent and powerful being in the universe, “the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:3). Before such a being, I cannot be casual. I feel compelled to kneel.

Jesus Christ also set an example when He said to His Father: “Not as I will, but as thou wilt.” When you say, “Not as I will, but as thou wilt,” do you truly mean it? What changes do you need to make in your mind, heart, and actions to truly be sincere?

### Seek Earnestly

As you strive to be humble, honest, and sincere in your prayers, you will find it easier to accept Heavenly Father’s will, even when it may not match what you had in mind. Again, we turn to the example of Jesus Christ: “And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly” (Luke 22:44).

When facing a difficulty, do you spend time asking yourself, why me? Or do you pray more earnestly? The expression “more earnestly” comes from Greek words meaning “without ceasing, fervent.” So Jesus teaches us that in moments of trial, we have to pray fervently, without ceasing. I invite all those who are going through times of distress to turn to the living God.

Times of distress can provide a great opportunity for our Heavenly Father to teach us. Our hearts soften and our minds wrestle for answers. If we seek Him, He is there.

### Believe That He Will Listen

The Savior said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Be not afraid, only believe” (Mark 5:36). Believe that God the Father will listen to you. Believe that He “will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart” (Doctrine and Covenants 8:2). Believe that you—yes, you—can feel peace and comfort. Believe that you can receive spiritual power to overcome.

Mighty prayers *do* reach the heavens. In the book of Psalms, King David says, “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice” (Psalm 55:17). One of the meanings of the word *pray* in Hebrew is “to speak.” And that is what we do when we pray to our Heavenly Father: we speak to Him.

When we offer a mighty prayer, we have the attention of the most powerful, merciful, and loving being in the universe. We spend a moment in the heavens. And we all need a moment in the heavens, especially when we are going through difficult times.

I know beyond any doubt that there is a God in heaven. He is your Father and my Father. He lives. His name is Love. His name is Mercy. In spite of being nothing before Him, I can kneel down before my Maker, and I can speak to Him. And He, in His infinite mercy, answers back, again and again and again. ■

*From a devotional address, “A Personal Relationship with Our Heavenly Father as Taught by the Lord Jesus Christ,” given at Brigham Young University–Idaho on November 28, 2017.*

# Overcoming the Plague of ADDICTION

Understanding addiction is a key step in overcoming it. But we must also rely on the Lord and believe that He can heal us.

By Kevin Theriot, PhD  
LDS Family Services

When someone struggles with an addiction, it's important to know that there is hope. There are people every single day all around the world who are able to find freedom from the substance or behavior holding them hostage. It will take a concerted personal effort, an understanding of the factors that are unique to them that are holding them in the addictive cycle, along with a belief that God can inspire them in their personal path to freedom.

In my 38 years of helping people overcome addictions, I have seen our understanding and treatment of addiction improve over the years. I strongly suspect that this evolution will continue for years to come. While those in the field of addiction sciences face challenging questions, we continue to make positive strides. So the information being presented here is based on what we know today, with the belief that additional light and knowledge will continue to come forth in the future.

## Understanding Addiction

I know what a heart-wrenching struggle it is to wrestle with an addiction, but the first step is understanding addiction yourself. Here are several key ideas to shed some light on the subject:

- Addictions begin with initial exposure and end with dependency. Wherever someone is on this continuum, they can still exercise some degree of agency and find their way out of the addictive behavior.

- Labeling someone as an addict can undermine their long-term progress. This is especially true in the early stages of the behavior. The label “in recovery” appears to be more helpful. It’s like saying, “I am choosing to rely on the Savior and His Atonement in order to become more like Him” rather than, “I am stuck in sin forever.”
- All addictions have several components to them: *biological* (genetics, brain chemistry, etc.), *psychological* (self-worth, personality characteristics, post-traumatic stress, etc.), *social* (parents, friends, culture, etc.), and *spiritual* (personal and family religious practices, etc.). The combination of each of these components, and their relative strengths, are often as unique as the individual. Each component may require specific, individualized attention for the person as a whole to free him or herself from the negative behavior.



Biological



Psychological



Social



Spiritual

## Signs on the Path to Addiction

The following are indicators that an individual may be on the path to developing a habit, then a compulsion, then an addiction:



**Obsessiveness:** They become less interested in healthy activities as the harmful substance or behavior gradually dominates.



**Increased craving:** They progressively want more.



**Secrecy:** They are increasingly reluctant to allow others to know of their decisions and behaviors.



**Denial:** They lie to themselves about their growing dependency and believe their own lies.



**Withdrawal:** When they are denied access to the harmful substance or behavior, their sense of well-being fades.



**Reverting back:** In spite of their realization of the negative impact on their life, they return back to the substance or behavior.

Additionally, the individual is typically the worst person to accurately assess where he or she is on the addiction continuum once the habit starts. If you are wondering if a loved one is on the path to addiction, there are many resources available to help, in your community as well as online.



### Finding Treatment

- The responsibility for change falls to each individual. While family and friends can be supportive, they cannot interfere with someone else's agency. If the individual has no desire to change, no form of treatment will be successful.
- The path to recovery can be different for each individual. Due to the relative strengths and weaknesses of the four unique factors mentioned previously (biological, psychological, social, and spiritual), there is no single treatment approach that works for everyone. Personal study, consultation with experts, and a commitment to persevere until the solution is found will ultimately lead to success.
- While unresolved addiction can leave the individual's life in ruins, all of their loved ones are also negatively impacted. These loving, supportive people also need support and care.

While it is within God's power to remove this challenge from affected individuals if they allow Him to, He in His infinite wisdom has things for those individuals to learn as they work with Him toward a solution. Virtually everyone who has broken free from their addiction can testify of the learning that came through their personal victory over their vice. ■

## FOR FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

Addiction should not be viewed only as a moral weakness but as a multifaceted challenge that virtually anyone could face. If you know someone struggling with an addiction, there are any number of things you should consider doing and some you should consider not doing. While the following suggestions are not an exhaustive list and will vary depending on the specific situation, you could prayerfully consider each:

- A little prevention is worth a lot of cure. Forewarned is forearmed! Regardless of the receptiveness of your loved one, speak up. People often ask me what they should say or how they should say it. My response is always, "Anything is preferable to nothing!" Silence is one of worst things you can employ. Pray for courage and insight; then open your mouth and speak up, even if they don't want to listen.
- A good family member or friend encourages and helps those they love to make good choices. They also discourage and do not enable bad choices.
- This scripture gives needed direction to those whose loved one is headed down the path of addiction:

"Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love" (Doctrine and Covenants 121:43).

- Be a good cheerleader. Cheerleaders do not take a win or a loss personally. They understand that their role is to cheer, to encourage, and to be positive. While they do have an emotional investment in the competition, wanting their participant to win, they don't take offense when things aren't going well.
- "Study[ing] it out in your mind" (Doctrine and Covenants 9:8) is an important part of helping yourself and the person you're concerned about. Learn about addiction so you can have a better idea of what it is, how it can be treated, and what you can do to help.



## ONLINE RESOURCES

The Church provides the following websites to help you learn about addiction:

- [addictionrecovery.lds.org](http://addictionrecovery.lds.org)
- [addressingpornography.lds.org](http://addressingpornography.lds.org)

Your country may also have national organizations and websites about overcoming addiction, such as [ncadd.org](http://ncadd.org) (addressing drug and alcohol addiction) and [fightthenewdrug.org](http://fightthenewdrug.org) (addressing pornography) in the United States.

Church leaders can refer to [counselingresources.lds.org](http://counselingresources.lds.org) for guidance in helping those in recovery and their families.

# Finding Peace in the Storm of Addiction

By Chakell Wardleigh

Church Magazines

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Addiction is a relentless hurricane that tosses both the addict and his or her loved ones to and fro.

The night my brother overdosed on heroin is one I'll never forget. I can still recall every detail: the thud of his body hitting the floor, my parents' yells, the terror, the confusion, and the hopelessness that sank in when I realized we were back to square one with his seemingly never-ending battle with addiction.

When my brother didn't respond, I actually surprised myself. Despite the chaos around me, an unnatural inner strength came over me that enabled me to help my parents get my brother stable. I held his stiff gray hands and spoke slowly to him as he stared back with dull eyes. Though I couldn't believe what I was seeing, I was surprisingly calm as we waited for him to come to. I realized later that this timely calmness was the Lord's sustaining power.

After he was stabilized and taken to be treated at a hospital, the reality of the situation struck me. My momentary heaven-sent strength ran out, and I collapsed with grief. My heart broke. My chest ached as I lay curled on my bed, and I couldn't catch my breath. I couldn't sob hard enough to keep up with my emotions.



“How is this my life?” I thought. “He’s never going to beat this! I can’t do this anymore!”

In that moment when I collapsed with grief, I felt like I had been lifted into the air by an unseen force—a gale-force wind that slammed me to the cold, dark ground of rock bottom—a place reserved not just for addicts but for those who love them, a place I’m becoming all too familiar with.

### **A Relentless Hurricane**

Watching someone you love struggle with addiction is almost unbearable. Addiction feeds lies, secrecy, deceit, and betrayal, which breeds defensiveness, shame, and distrust—all of which damage relationships with others and cause each of us to question our grasp on reality. I can’t tell you how many times my parents, siblings, and I have each been faced with the crushing weight of “what ifs?” and “if onlys.”

Not every family that is affected by addiction has the same experience, but in my family’s case, my brother’s addiction has caused disagreements about how to handle his situation. There have been passive-aggressive comments about “enabling” and hurt feelings among me and my sisters when my parents’ attention is constantly focused on our brother. Sometimes, we are all forced to walk on eggshells around each other.

Addiction is like a looming thunderstorm—an ever-present cloud of uncertainty and worry hanging above our heads. Though we’re always on edge, waiting for lightning to strike, whenever it does, it still catches us off guard, sending us into absolute panic. Every time. It’s a vicious, never-ending cycle.

When my brother overdosed, he had been clean for two years. We were finally seeing the light after watching him battle the brutal

consequences of addiction for more than a decade. But the moment he was again exposed to his vice, everything he had worked to build in the past two years came crashing down.

After briefly seeing freedom on the horizon, we had been sucked by my brother’s relapse back into the raging, messy, and seemingly inescapable hurricane of addiction, a storm that buffets the addict while also tossing their loved ones to and fro.

President Russell M. Nelson explained addiction as follows: “From an initial experiment thought to be trivial, a vicious cycle may follow. From trial comes a habit. From habit comes dependence. From dependence comes addiction. Its grasp is so gradual. Enslaving shackles of habit are too small to be sensed until they are too strong to be broken.”<sup>1</sup>

Feelings of complete and utter betrayal crushed me and my family.

But the thing we often forget about addiction is that when my brother relapses, he’s not choosing his addiction over his family; he is faced daily with an almost unbearable temptation that we can’t fully understand.

### **The Savior Can Be Found at Rock Bottom**

Lying on my bed, I could already feel the familiar turmoil creeping back into my mind. I was hopeless. Defeated. Aching. Although I begged God to take the pain in my heart away and to give my brother the strength to overcome this trial once again, I was certain that I would never be able to pull myself out of the dark pit of despair after seeing my brother so broken.

Yet somehow I did.

Each time I find myself lying in the depths of rock bottom, whether it stems from my brother’s addiction or because of other trials I’m facing, I manage to stand up, steady my ship, and set sail once again. It might seem impossible, but that’s the wonderful thing about the grace and mercy of the Savior: when I put my life in His hands, He makes the impossible possible. As the Apostle Paul taught, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

My moments of despair, my “rock bottom” moments, usually come when life is going well, when I’m feeling on top of the world, and then, out of nowhere, I’m falling—and *smack!* I’m facedown on the merciless ground of rock bottom. The fall is sudden, unexpected, and painful. But surprisingly, after spending a fair amount of time in my life there while I’m in the midst of different trials, I’ve learned that rock bottom can also be a beautiful place. Because when you’re surrounded by complete darkness, the light of the Savior still shines brightly. When you find yourself at rock bottom,

remember the words of Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “It is not possible for you to sink lower than the infinite light of Christ’s Atonement shines.”<sup>2</sup>

My moments at rock bottom have helped me better realize the power of Jesus Christ’s Atonement. When I’m grieving for my brother and I think no one understands what I’m going through, I know that the Savior does. I know that He also understands my brother’s addiction in a way no one else can. As much as I hate that sudden, dreadful fall to rock bottom, I am grateful for the moments the Savior has helped me stand when I don’t have the strength to stand on my own. Regarding my brother’s addiction, He strengthens me to have compassion for my brother instead of judging or blaming him, to empathize with him even though he struggles with something I can’t fully grasp, and to forgive him and to love him despite how many times I’ve been hurt by his choices.

### Supporting Those Who Are Facing Addiction

My brother is truly a good person. He’s kind and respectful. He’s humble and gentle. He’s intelligent and downright hilarious. He’s a beloved uncle, a great friend, and a cherished member of my family. He’s not a bad person at all. He’s a child of God with infinite worth who has become trapped by Satan and his own addictions because he made some poor decisions. As President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, taught, “Small acts of disobedience or minor failures to follow righteous practices can draw us down toward an outcome we have been warned to avoid.”<sup>3</sup> Despite my brother’s poor choices, he and anyone else who struggles with addiction, as well as their families, need support and strength.

My family suffered in silence regarding my brother’s struggles for a long time. We endured self-imposed shame for years. Addiction was taboo, so we didn’t talk about it. We thought drug addiction wasn’t supposed to affect families who were doing their best to live the gospel and follow Jesus Christ. We were so afraid of what people would think if they found out. My parents constantly blamed themselves for my brother’s decisions, I would hide what was happening from my friends, and we would dodge all questions about my brother. Little did we know that not talking about it made our circumstances more painful than they already were.

Now I face my brother’s addiction differently. And that’s the key word: *face*. For so many years, I turned away from it and hid it from everyone else, but now I face it head-on with my family. We seek support and we try

to support others. As the years have gone by, we’ve discovered that addiction affects many families in many different forms—and there’s no need to feel ashamed or to hide. It needs to be talked about, and those who have been hurt by it, whether they be loved ones or those who struggle themselves, need less judgment and more support, compassion, understanding, and love. No one should have to suffer alone.



## Finding Peace in the Tempest

Although I prayed for years for my brother's addiction to be taken away from him, I've learned that his agency can't be tampered with. He still retains some agency and makes his own choices, even in the bonds of addiction. My family and I can be there for him and love him, but we cannot force him to change. He is the deciding factor. So when we find ourselves trapped in the furious hurricane that surrounds my brother, sometimes it feels as if there is no way out. Like many others who face addiction, it feels like we'll never escape. But without fail, the Savior is there to offer us small moments of freedom through feelings of peace, relief, and the knowledge that one day all will be well.

The Savior's way of bringing me peace is not always instantaneous or a jaw-dropping miracle. When I'm facing the hurricane-force winds of addiction, I often think of when the Savior slept through the tempest while sailing on the Sea of Galilee. In that moment, His Apostles were terrified. They chose to focus on the storm instead of focusing on the Savior, yet He was right next to them the whole time. He never left their side and He came to their rescue—even when they doubted Him. (See Mark 4:36–41.)

I've come to learn that the Savior will never leave me to drown either. In my life, it has always been small instances of the Lord's mercy that allow me to keep paddling against the stormy waves life throws at me. He enabled me to remain calm and hold myself together when my brother needed me, He has helped me muster up enough strength to get out of bed on days when I believe I have no strength left, and He continues to offer me peace despite my constant numbing fear of the unknown.

## There Is Always Hope

Because we often hear about the tragedies associated with drug overdoses, alcohol poisoning, or the many divorces due to pornography, addiction can seem like a daunting lost cause, but that doesn't always have to be the case. Because of the Savior, there truly is hope to hold onto in any situation.

Although I don't know how my brother's struggles are going to come to a close, I still hold onto hope, even when it seems futile. I fast. I now pray for understanding, empathy, and guidance rather than for his addiction to be instantly taken away. I recognize the personal and spiritual growth in myself that has stemmed from this decade-long trial. I use as many resources as I can to understand the unfathomable. And I reach out to receive wonderful support from friends and Church leaders.

But most of all, I rely on the Savior and His healing and saving power. His Atonement is real. There is no greater comfort than knowing that He understands perfectly what both I and my brother are facing. Psalm 34:18 teaches, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

I know He is close to me in the moments when my heart is broken, and I know He will always be there to help me piece it back together again. He is not only watching the hurricane from the shore, but most often He is on the boat, facing the raging winds and waves with me. He continues to calm the tempestuous seas in my life and allows me to grow and feel true peace. ■

### NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, "Addiction or Freedom," *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 6.
2. Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Laborers in the Vineyard," *Ensign*, May 2012, 33.
3. Dallin H. Oaks, "Small and Simple Things," *Ensign*, May 2018, 91.





# The Miracle of Covenant Belonging

By Elder  
Gerrit W. Gong  
Of the Quorum of  
the Twelve Apostles

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The harmony of our covenants and the Atonement of Jesus Christ is heard in melodies and descants as drawing on our Savior's Atonement helps us fulfill our covenants in a new and holier way.

**I**n the school of mortal life, the Lord invites us to learn and grow in lifelong and eternal ways by loving Him first and by strengthening one another in His love.

Strengthening one another in the Lord and in His love is embodied in the first and second great commandments. As a First Presidency letter recently taught, “The Savior’s ministry exemplifies the two great commandments: ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind’ and ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself’ (Matthew 22:37, 39).” The First Presidency letter continued: “In that spirit, Jesus also taught, ‘Ye are they whom I have chosen to minister unto this people’ (3 Nephi 13:25).”<sup>1</sup>

The song of our risen Savior’s redeeming love celebrates the harmony of covenants, which connect us to God and to each other, and of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, which helps us put off the natural man and woman and yield to the sanctifying “enticings of the Holy Spirit” (Mosiah 3:19).

That harmony is expressed in the plan of happiness, where we learn and grow by daily exercise of individual moral agency and where we are not left to wander on our own but are given a covenant path and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Alpha and Omega (see Doctrine and Covenants 61:1), the Lord Jesus Christ, is with us from the beginning. And He is with us to the end, when “God shall wipe away all tears from [our] eyes” (Revelation 7:17), except our tears of joy.



Our covenants connect us to God and to each other. Meant to be eternal, our covenants include God our Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Eternal covenants can bring the power of God's love—to give hope and increase love; to lift and transform; to edify and sanctify; to redeem and exalt.

In the revelation of our true, divine selves through our covenants with God, we learn to recognize and love our brothers and sisters as He does. This deepening love and knowledge invites, empowers, and sanctifies us to know and, in our own way, to become more like Him.

### **Covenants and the Lord's Atonement**

The harmony of our covenants and the Atonement of Jesus Christ is heard in melodies and descants as drawing on our Savior's Atonement helps us fulfill our covenants in a new and holier way.<sup>2</sup> Together, our covenants and our Savior's Atonement can shape what we desire, perceive, and experience in daily mortality and prepare us for the sociality of heaven (see Doctrine and Covenants 130:2).

Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we find faith, strength, and trust to come unto Christ, knowing that perfection is in Him. Such knowledge offers an escape from the always-anxious treadmill of perfectionism. There may be some truth in the song "Let It Go"<sup>3</sup> if "let it go" means "let go" of self-imposed worldly expectations that can never satisfy and if it also means "hold on" to the God-given heavenly hopes and promises the Lord offers.

Have you noticed that each ordinance calls us by our name and connects us by our name to the name of Jesus Christ?

Ordinances are universal and particular (individual) at the same time. Years ago, as the high

councilor responsible for stake baptisms, I noticed that the baptismal ordinance was outwardly the same for each person but individually distinct in that each person baptized was called, one by one, by their name, and their name was connected by covenant to "the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (3 Nephi 11:25).

Amazing grace is as universal and unique as our Savior Himself. A Lamb without blemish, He set the pattern by being baptized to fulfill all righteousness (see 2 Nephi 31:6). The scriptures call it, and our missionaries teach it as, "the doctrine of Christ" (2 Nephi 31:21; see also 3 Nephi 11:38–40). The doctrine of Christ includes "follow[ing] the example of Jesus Christ by being baptized by someone holding the priesthood authority of God."<sup>4</sup>

We enter through the gate of repentance and baptism by water, "and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost" (2 Nephi 31:17). The strait and narrow path—the covenant path—leads to eternal life (see 2 Nephi 31:18). It is part of how we are each strengthened in His love.

Our covenants and the Atonement of Jesus Christ connect us in other ways as well.

### **Covenant Belonging**

By divine covenant, we belong to God and to each other. Covenant belonging is a miracle. It is not possessive. Like charity, it "suffereth long, and is kind," and it "envieth not; . . . vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up" (1 Corinthians 13:4; see also Moroni 7:45). Covenant belonging gives roots and wings. It liberates through commitment. It enlarges through love.

In covenant belonging, we strengthen each other in the Savior's love, thereby coming more to love God and each other. This happens in part because covenant belonging "seeketh not



To belong to God and to each other in covenant belonging is to smile in unexpected places as we see with eyes to see and hear with ears to hear. He changes us and our relationships—including our covenant marriage—to become more sanctified and divine.

In one marriage relations class, a married student raised her hand and said to the teacher, “Pardon me, you keep saying marriage is hard. It is not marriage that is hard but *life* that is hard, and marriage, with its ups and

*Covenant belonging gives roots and wings.*

*It liberates through commitment.*

*It enlarges through love.*

her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil” (1 Corinthians 13:5). Covenant belonging “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth” (1 Corinthians 13:6). Covenant belonging is to come and see face to face, knowing even as we are known (see 1 Corinthians 13:12). Our covenant faithfulness is steadfast and immovable (see Mosiah 5:15; Alma 1:25).

Covenant belonging is to hope all things, endure many things, and “hope to be able to endure all things” (see Articles of Faith 1:13; see also 1 Corinthians 13:7; Moroni 7:45). Covenant belonging is to keep the faith. It is not to give up on ourselves, on each other, or on God.

Covenant belonging is to delight with those who delight and to rejoice with those who have cause to rejoice, and to stand as witnesses of God’s tender mercies and daily miracles “at all times and in all things, and in all places” (see Mosiah 18:8–9).

downs, can be a blessing where we get to face the joys and challenges of life together.”

While eternal marriage is our ideal, infidelities, abuse of any kind, and unsurmountable incompatibilities may necessitate immediate protective action or separation and possibly divorce. We know that covenants are binding and eternal only by mutual consent of the parties affected and when confirmed by a merciful heaven’s manifestation of the Holy Ghost, which the scriptures describe as “the Holy Spirit of promise” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:3).

There is comfort, peace, and hope in the Lord’s assurance that worthy individuals will receive all promised blessings.<sup>5</sup> It is part of His promise to strengthen each of us in His love, in His way, and in His time (see Doctrine and Covenants 88:68).

### **“The Way Service Works”**

When I was a young bishop, an experience in our ward taught me about covenant belonging as manifested in the strengthening of one another in the Savior’s love. Ward families Hans and Fay Ritter and Larry and Tina O’Connor, along with other wonderful families, were constantly ministering to others and were beloved by all.



One day our stake president asked if I would check on the Ritters. When I arrived at their home, I noticed some sagging in the floor and a well-used kettle.

“Bishop, it’s like this,” Brother Ritter said. “Our water heater leaked, and warm water seeped through the floor. Termites came. That’s why the floor sags a little. We had to shut off the water heater, and that’s why we heat water in a kettle.”

The Ritters agreed to let me discuss their situation with our ward council. Our ward council was amazing. Members knew someone who could help with floors or walls or carpets or appliances or paint. Volunteers came and helped in countless generous ways. Among them was Larry O’Connor, a skilled builder who was frequently at the Ritters’ house.

Larry’s wife, Tina, recalled that Larry and other quorum members would sometimes go to the Ritters on Friday and stay all night. “One Saturday morning, I took them breakfast,” she said. “There was Larry coming out of a bathroom holding plumbing tools.”

Tina added that it was from men like Hans Ritter and others “that my husband learned to become a man—kind, thoughtful, tender. As my Larry served together with such good men, including in the nursery, he became an even more wonderful husband and father.”

When the house was finished, we all rejoiced.

Hans and Fay Ritter have been gone for some time, but I spoke recently with two of their sons, Ben and Stephen. They remember that the quiet service of others maintained the dignity of their father, who worked tirelessly to take care of his family.

While at a ward activity not long after the Ritters’ home was completed, Larry and Tina O’Connor received emergency word that their

home was on fire. They rushed to their home and everywhere saw broken windows (to vent smoke) and punctured walls (to check for hidden flames).

“We were devastated,” Tina said. But then the ward came.

“Everyone helped,” Tina and Larry said. “The whole ward came together in love. We were there as a family.”

And who were among the first to come and the last to leave as the O’Connor home was being rebuilt? Yes, the Hans and Fay Ritter family.

Ben and Stephen are modest but remember their family coming to help the O’Connors. “We were all there together,” they said. “That’s the way service works. We all take care of each other, sometimes by helping others and sometimes by allowing others to help us.”

To me, there can be a wondrous, virtuous, harmonious circle as we strengthen each other in the Savior’s love. The O’Connors help the Ritters, the Ritters help the O’Connors, and all the while a community of Latter-day Saints is being established. Each day in myriad ways, we each need, and can offer, ministering love and support in small, simple, powerful, life-changing ways.

And thus, we experience a double loaves-and-fishes miracle: first, a community of Saints can rally in magnificent selfless unity to address a dramatic need; and second, simultaneously, a fellowship of Saints can be knit together in love through daily, loving ministering in many quiet circumstances—as in a family, branch, ward, or community over many years—independent of any dramatic need.

### **Strengthened in the Savior’s Love**

All of this brings us back to where we began—the first and second great commandments and the invitation to be strengthened and to

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strengthen each other in the Lord's love.

President Russell M. Nelson has powerfully said, "Our message to the world is simple and sincere: we invite all of God's children on both sides of the veil to come unto their Savior, receive the blessings of the holy temple, have enduring joy, and qualify for eternal life."<sup>6</sup>

As we feast upon the words of Christ (see 2 Nephi 32:3) and put God first (see Matthew 6:33), the Lord strengthens and blesses every aspect of our lives. There is divine harmony and resonance in covenant belonging as we are strengthened in the Lord's love and as we strengthen each other in Him.

The words of the Apostle Paul echo the harmony of our covenants and the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ:

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . .

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers,

nor things present, nor things to come,

"Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35, 38–39).

Such is also my solemn testimony.

I testify of God our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. They know us better and love us more than we know or love ourselves. We can trust in the Lord with all our heart and need not lean unto our own understanding (see Proverbs 3:5).

In 159 houses of the Lord in 43 countries, we can be strengthened in the Lord through our covenants and the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

We are blessed by priesthood authority and continuing prophetic revelation from the Prophet Joseph Smith to our dear President Nelson today. Events of recent days have made me even more certain of, and humbled by, the reality of restored doctrine, keys, ordinances, and covenants in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as "the Lord's kingdom once again established on the earth, preparatory to the Second Coming of the Messiah."<sup>7</sup>

The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ and all of the holy scriptures are the word of God.

May we each come to know our Savior better and become more like Him as we are strengthened in the Lord and as we strengthen each other in Him and His love. ■

*From a Brigham Young University Women's Conference address, "Strengthen One Another in the Lord," delivered on May 4, 2018.*

#### NOTES

1. First Presidency letter, Apr. 2, 2018, [ministering.lds.org](http://ministering.lds.org).
2. See Russell M. Nelson, "Ministering," *Ensign*, May 2018, 100.
3. "Let It Go," *Frozen* (2013).
4. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2018), 40.
5. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 1.3.3.
6. Russell M. Nelson, "Let Us All Press On," *Ensign*, May 2018, 118–19.
7. Introduction to the Book of Mormon.



# Joseph Smith's Quest to Secure Religious Freedom for All

Through his own experiences and his empathy for others, Joseph Smith became a strong advocate for religious freedom.

**By Spencer W. McBride**  
Church History Department

**I**n August 1836, while traveling on Church business, Joseph Smith stood amid the charred ruins of the Catholic Ursuline convent in Charlestown, Massachusetts. Two years earlier, a mob, angry about the recent influx of Irish Catholic immigrants to the United States, had destroyed the convent that had housed dozens of Catholic nuns. While government authorities condemned the violence, only one of the 13 accused rioters was convicted, and the Catholics received no financial compensation.<sup>1</sup>

Joseph undoubtedly recognized parallels between the persecution against the Catholics in Massachusetts and the plight of the Latter-day Saints in Missouri. Nearly three years earlier, in 1833, mob violence had driven more than 1,000 Church members from their homes in Jackson County, and the state and federal governments had refused to adequately address the violation of the Saints' citizenship rights.<sup>2</sup> Even more recently, Joseph had learned that at the end of July 1836, the Saints who had moved to Clay County after the 1833 expulsion were once again being forced to move.<sup>3</sup>

Questions about the state of American religious freedom almost certainly swirled in Joseph's head as he stood amid the rubble, which was located just a few city blocks from historic sites commemorating some of the pivotal battles of the American Revolution. In a country whose constitution enshrined the idea of religious freedom, how could Americans tolerate violence against religious minorities? Furthermore, how could Church members effectively advocate a legal and political culture in which the rights of religious minorities were as protected as the rights of the Protestant Christian majority?





*In 1836, Joseph Smith visited the ruins of the Catholic Ursuline convent in Charlestown, Massachusetts, which had been burned by an angry mob two years earlier.*

### A Shift to Public Advocacy

Before the Latter-day Saints were expelled from Jackson County, Joseph had shown virtually no inclination to engage with the American political system, but the violent opposition from the Church's enemies in Missouri left him with little choice. An 1833 revelation directed him and other Church leaders to be as persistent in appealing to government officials as the widow in the biblical parable of the unjust judge:

“Let them importune at the feet of the judge;

“And if he heed them not, let them importune at the feet of the governor;

“And if the governor heed them not, let them importune at the feet of the president;

“And if the president heed them not, then will the Lord arise and come forth out of his hiding place, and in his fury vex the nation.”<sup>4</sup>

Joseph must have wondered: In a country whose constitution enshrined the idea of religious freedom, how could Americans tolerate violence against religious minorities?

And so Joseph began to publicly advocate that the government and his fellow Americans actively foster a society dedicated to allowing all men and women the freedom to worship—or not worship—God according to the dictates of their own consciences.

### Seeking Freedom for All

Joseph's visit to the site of the destroyed convent signaled a related development in his approach to religious freedom. He recognized that he and his followers were not the only religious minorities who had been victimized by mobs. Fighting for his own religious freedom and that of his fellow Church members was not enough. If he was to truly champion religious freedom, he would have to do more than insist on the protection of the citizenship rights

for those who believed as he did. He needed to take a stand for the rights of all men and women, especially those whose religious beliefs differed from his.

This quest for religious freedom took on a greater urgency in 1838 and 1839 when Joseph was arrested and jailed for six months while nearly 10,000 Church members were expelled from Missouri under the threat of state-sanctioned extermination. Their appeals to judges and the state's governor proved futile, and millions of dollars' worth of property was lost as the Saints fled their homes. Once Joseph rejoined the main body of Saints living in Illinois as religious refugees, a general conference of the Church was held in October 1839, from which Joseph, Sidney Rigdon, and Elias Higbee were dispatched to meet with President Martin Van Buren in Washington, D.C., and to petition Congress for redress and reparations for the Saints' lost property.<sup>5</sup> The president denied their request for help, stating that providing such help would harm his reelection bid.<sup>6</sup>

Yet the president's refusal further fueled Joseph's commitment to seek redress from the federal government, and he made it clear to Congress that the way it responded to the violent persecution of the Latter-day Saints would send a clear signal to all Americans of the state of religious freedom in the country. In the Church's petition submitted to the Senate, Joseph, Sidney, and Elias declared

In 1841, the  
First Presidency  
explained that the  
Latter-day Saints  
would "claim  
no privilege but  
what we feel  
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to share with our  
fellow citizens  
of every  
denomination."

repeatedly that all Americans, regardless of their religious beliefs, should enjoy full citizenship rights.<sup>7</sup> While they had come to the nation's capital because of the persecution of Church members in Missouri, they were advocating the religious freedom of all people.

After three days of hearings in February 1840, the Senate declined to help Church members reclaim their lost property or receive any compensation for it. Instead, Congress directed the Saints to take their case back to the state government of Missouri.<sup>8</sup> Joseph was disheartened and frustrated at the response.<sup>9</sup>

Over the years that followed, the Church continued to send petitions to Congress, each one ending with disappointment. At one point, Joseph wrote

to John C. Calhoun, a prominent senator, to explain how the government's unwillingness to protect religious minorities not only denied the Saints their religious freedom but also threatened the citizenship rights of other Americans simply because of their religious beliefs. The sustained inaction of Congress, Joseph insisted, would declare that an individual state "can exile you at pleasure, mob you with impunity, confiscate your lands and property, [and] have the legislature sanction it—yea, even murder you as an edict of an emperor, and it does no wrong."<sup>10</sup> Once again, Joseph demonstrated that his fight for his own rights and those of his fellow Church members was part of a deeper struggle for peace and equality in human society.

### Taking Action on Behalf of Others

Amid these petitioning efforts, Joseph made strides toward establishing real religious freedom in his own community. As a member of the city council of Nauvoo, Illinois, he introduced an ordinance that "the Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Latter-Day Saints, Quakers, Episcopalians, Universalists, Unitarians, Mohammedans [Muslims], and all other religious sects, and denominations, whatever, shall have free toleration, and equal privileges, in this city."<sup>11</sup> This declaration was passed and entailed more than a tolerance for those affiliated with other churches to reside in the city; it proposed religious freedom in its truest form by



*The U.S. Senate in session, circa 1850*



*This painting shows Nauvoo City and the remains of the Nauvoo Temple, circa 1859, after the Saints had been driven out and the temple practically destroyed by arson and tornado.*

extending a guarantee of all citizenship rights regardless of one's religious convictions. As the First Presidency explained, the Latter-day Saints were signaling that they would "claim no privilege but what we feel cheerfully disposed to share with our fellow citizens of every denomination."<sup>12</sup>

Joseph demonstrated by his actions that this was more than lofty rhetoric. For example, in the early 1840s, Father John Alleman, a Catholic priest in Fort Madison, Iowa, was desperate to cross the Mississippi River so he could minister to one of his parishioners who was on his deathbed. When Joseph learned that Father Alleman lacked the means to make the trip, he paid Alleman's fare for a ferry across the river and then loaned him a horse to make the rest of his trip.<sup>13</sup> Aiding the religious practices of his Catholic neighbors in no way compromised his own religious convictions. Instead, it

demonstrated Joseph's commitment to allowing all men and women their rights of conscience.

Joseph Smith demonstrated that he could advocate—and even facilitate—the religious worship of others and that doing so neither detracted from his own rights nor signaled a weakness in his own faith. Merely advocating his own religious liberty would not result in universal religious freedom. That would come only if men and women were as ardent in defending the rights of other religious minorities as they were in protecting their own. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Nancy Lusignan Schultz, *Fire and Roses: The Burning of the Charlestown Convent, 1834* (2000); *The Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 5: October 1835–January 1838*, ed. Brent M. Rogers and others (2017), 278, footnote 248.
2. See John Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 1839, in *The Joseph Smith Papers, Histories, Volume 2: Assigned Histories, 1831–1847*, ed. Karen Lynn Davidson and others (2012), 145–49.
3. See *Histories, Volume 2: Assigned Histories, 1831–1847*, 158–59.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 101:86–89.
5. See Minutes and Discourses, 5–7 October 1839, in *The Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 7: September 1839–January 1841*, ed. Matthew C. Godfrey and others (2018), 23.
6. See Letter to Hyrum Smith and Nauvoo High Council, 5 December 1839, in *Documents, Volume 7: September 1839–January 1841*, 66–69.
7. See Memorial to the United States Senate and House of Representatives, circa 30 October 1839–27 January 1840, in *Documents, Volume 7: September 1839–January 1841*, 138–74.
8. See Report of the United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary, 4 March 1840, in *Documents, Volume 7: September 1839–January 1841*, 542–43.
9. See Minutes and Discourse, 6–8 April 1840, in *Documents, Volume 7: September 1839–January 1841*, 246–50.
10. Joseph Smith to John C. Calhoun, Jan. 2, 1844, Joseph Smith Collection, Church History Library, Salt Lake City; capitalization and punctuation standardized.
11. "An Ordinance in Relation to Religious Societies," *Times and Seasons*, Mar. 1, 1841, 337.
12. Proclamation, 15 January 1841, in *Documents, Volume 7: September 1839–January 1841*, 508.
13. See *History of McDonough County, Illinois* (1885), 492.

# Forgiving Others

With the Savior's help, we can learn to forgive.

By Barbara A. Lewis

**H**ave you ever stood barefoot on a beach and felt cool seawater wash over your feet, eroding the shifting sand beneath you? No sand castles or carved words will remain after the waves wash over them. The act of forgiving another can cleanse the soul like the sea, leaving peace in its wake.

Forgiveness is a Christlike quality. It includes receiving forgiveness, forgiving ourselves, and forgiving others. Of the three, forgiving others is sometimes the most difficult for us. However, with the Savior's help, we can learn to forgive even those who have deeply hurt us.

## Why Should We Forgive?

Forgiveness is a commandment. The Lord said, "I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men" (Doctrine and Covenants 64:10). The Lord has promised that if we forgive others, He will forgive us (see Luke 6:37; Doctrine and Covenants 82:1). We also learn that if we do not forgive someone who has offended us, the greater sin lies with us (see Doctrine and Covenants 64:9).

In the parable of the ungrateful servant, the king forgave

his servant a massive debt of 10 thousand talents. However, the ungrateful servant refused to forgive a fellow servant who owed him a small debt of 100 pence. The ungrateful servant expected the other servant to repay. When the king heard of this, he delivered the first servant to the tormentors to pay his debt in full (see Matthew 18:23–35).

In teaching why we should forgive, Elder Marion D. Hanks (1921–2011) of the Presidency of the Seventy shared this memorable analogy: "There are two courses of action to follow when one is bitten by a rattlesnake. One may, in anger, . . . pursue the creature and kill it. Or he may make full haste to get the venom out of his system. . . . If we attempt to follow the former, we may not be around long enough to finish it."<sup>1</sup>

## The Opportunities around Us

"In the everyday circumstances of life, [we] will surely be wronged by other people—sometimes innocently and sometimes intentionally. It is easy to become bitter or angry or vengeful in such situations, but this is not the Lord's way."<sup>2</sup> We cannot control what others do, but we can control our own behavior and reactions. The offenses we encounter provide us with ample opportunities to learn how to forgive.



One such opportunity was given to a man named David in the parking lot of a grocery store. A pickup truck crashed into a grocery cart, which slammed into David's truck and gouged a stripe down the entire side. Many thoughts raced through David's mind: "What a jerk! Why my truck? I should call the police."

The driver of the pickup jumped out and apologized. Then he surveyed the damage. "This is really going to hurt me," he said. "I don't know what to say."

David looked at the man's oversized coat and scuffed shoes. Inside the man's rusted pickup, David could see several children with dirt-stained hands pressed against the windows. There was no other adult with them.

David surprised himself by saying, "You know . . . don't worry about it. I'll take care of it." The grateful driver thanked him repeatedly.

On his way home, David felt a warm confirmation that he had acted well. But he also wondered how he could afford to fix his truck. He spotted a car repair shop ahead. He stopped in and told the owner what had happened. The owner listened patiently to his story. When David asked what the repairs would cost, the owner removed his baseball cap and said, "No charge. I'll take care of it for you."

### Freely Forgiving

We are not always rewarded for our forgiveness the way David was. And we should not expect it. Nor should we expect the offending person to repent first. President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) explained, "To be in the right we must forgive, and we must do so *without regard to whether or not our antagonist repents*, or how sincere is his transformation, or whether or not he asks our forgiveness."<sup>3</sup> Even for repeat offenses, we are commanded to forgive "until seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:22).

This instruction could have felt unfair to Myriam, a 10-year-old Christian refugee. She had experienced the horrors of fleeing her home in Qarakosh, Iraq, ahead of terrorist threats. In addition to her home, she lost her church, her friends, and her belongings. But Myriam's faith in God remained strong. When asked if she could ever forgive those who had driven her family out, she answered, "Yes, I forgive them. . . . God's blessing will be greater for those who forgave. Because Jesus said, 'Forgive each other; love each other the way I love you.'"<sup>4</sup>

Another example of sincere forgiveness involved Joseph Smith and William W. Phelps. Brother Phelps joined the Church in Kirtland. However, he became involved in questionable financial dealings and misappropriated Church funds, leading to his excommunication in 1838. The Prophet Joseph reached out to recover his friend, but Phelps resisted. Instead, Phelps and others signed a harmful affidavit against the Prophet.



As a result, Joseph and others spent four months in the despicable Liberty Jail.

Two years later, Brother Phelps begged for forgiveness. Despite the suffering Joseph had endured, caused in part by Brother Phelps's actions, he genuinely forgave his prodigal friend. In his reply, Joseph wrote:

"Come on, dear brother, since the war is past,

"For friends at first, are friends again at last."

Four years later, in a humble reversal, Brother Phelps gave the sermon at Joseph's funeral and soon after honored his forgiving friend with the hymn "Praise to the Man."<sup>5</sup>

### LOOKING INSIDE: LEARNING TO FORGIVE FROM WITHIN

- Turn your pain over to the Lord. Let it go.
- Pray to the Lord for the strength to forgive.
- Avoid dwelling on and retelling the offense unless necessary.
- Exercise, try a new hobby, or get involved in other activities to release stress.
- Pray to the Lord to lighten your burden (see Mosiah 24:14–16).

### LOOKING OUTSIDE: TAKING OUTWARD ACTION TO FORGIVE OTHERS

- When someone offends you, where appropriate “go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone” (Matthew 18:15). Discuss and forgive.
- Seek ecclesiastical or professional help when needed.
- Take responsibility for your own response to the actions of your offender.
- If appropriate, listen to your offender’s side without telling him or her what to do.
- Show kindness to others and serve those who need your help.

### The Savior’s Healing Power

The act of forgiving others is immensely healing. It can even bring health benefits such as decreased stress, lower blood pressure, fewer symptoms of depression, and a stronger immune system.<sup>6</sup> But when someone has hurt us deeply, it is often difficult to see past our wounds. President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, explained, “Some injuries are so hurtful and deep that they cannot be healed without help from a higher power and hope for perfect justice and restitution in the next life.”<sup>7</sup>

In 2007, Chris Williams lost his wife, his daughter, one of his sons, and his unborn child when a drunk teenage driver hit their car. As he watched his wife gasp her last breath, he felt an overwhelming shock that crushed him both emotionally and physically. The weight was too heavy to bear. So he made a decision: he had to turn this burden over to the Lord. With the Lord’s help, Chris was able to forgive the teenage driver, and he helped provide a way for the grieving young man to begin to rebuild his shattered life as well.<sup>8</sup>

Chris’s story shows us that the Savior’s Atonement covers not just sinners but victims. Forgiveness provides release—a doorway out for the injured. It doesn’t mean excusing or condoning the act; it means leaving judgment to the Lord. When we forgive, the Savior relieves us of our burden through His Atonement. He can replace despair with peace and heal us completely.

If we can forgive others, no matter what injustices we’ve endured, we can turn to Christ for healing. Elder Kevin R. Duncan of the Seventy taught, “Forgiveness is the very reason God sent His Son, so let us rejoice in His offering to heal us all. . . . If you are having trouble forgiving another person or even yourself, ask God to help you. Forgiveness is a glorious, healing principle. We do not need to be a victim twice. We can forgive.”<sup>9</sup>

### Learn the Master’s Way

As we strive to develop the attribute of forgiveness, there’s no better example to look to than Jesus Christ. Jesus suffered great pain at the hands of His tormentors—and yet He forgave. Even as He hung on the cross, He said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

How we treat those who injure us might provide some of the most defining experiences in our lives. In our darkest hours, we receive the opportunity to turn to the Lord and with His help shape our character to be more like His. By forgiving our offenders and handing our pain to the Lord, we can allow the peace of forgiveness to wash over us like rolling waves on the seashore. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

### NOTES

1. Marion D. Hanks, “Forgiveness: The Ultimate Form of Love,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 21, reporting a possible teaching of Brigham Young.
2. *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 71.
3. Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (1969), 283.
4. See Muriel Pearson, Lauren Effron, and Nadine Shubailat, “Young Iraqi Christian Refugee Forgives ISIS for Displacing Family, Hopes for a Future without Wars” (video), ABC News, Dec. 15, 2015, abcnews.go.com.
5. See Jeffrey R. Holland, “A Robe, a Ring, and a Fatted Calf,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1985, 71–72; see also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 396–98.
6. See “Forgiveness: Letting Go of Grudges and Bitterness,” Mayo Clinic, Nov. 4, 2017, mayoclinic.org.
7. James E. Faust, “The Atonement: Our Greatest Hope,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 20.
8. See “Forgiveness: My Burden Was Made Light” (*Mormon Messages* video), lds.org/media-library.
9. Kevin R. Duncan, “The Healing Ointment of Forgiveness,” *Ensign*, May 2016, 35.

## The Most Influential People

**H**ave you ever read articles with titles like “30 Influential People Who Are under 30” and thought, “How do I get on that list?” I’ve certainly wondered **how I can be more involved**, more helpful, and yes, more important (which probably means I also need to be more humble). While our contributions might be something the world recognizes, sometimes they’re a more private fulfillment of our covenants with God.

Our influence does not require traveling abroad to help someone far away. **It begins right in our own homes**, with our family or roommates, and with our neighbors. It begins in our communities. As we start to change and become, “Time to Serve” (page 42) offers some practical steps to serving in our community.

**Setting aside time to help others** might mean we need to make changes—possibly a change of heart or a change in where our time and energy are spent.

In “A Mighty Force for Good” (page 44), several young adults share their experience of developing Christlike love for others. These stories show how **inspiration and faith can lead young adults to be an influence for good**.

Elder Gavarret reminds us that we are already heroes and heroines (see page 47). In the premortal life, we chose to come to earth, and now **we get to choose what kind of difference we want to make**. Finding our personal mission will guide us in serving our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

In this issue, “*In(fluence) the World*” (page 48) helps us see that understanding our world can inform us in how we make a difference. The example of prophets, apostles, and other Church leaders shows that we need to be aware of world issues, care about them, and **find ways to influence change around us**.

In my experience, there are far more than “30 influential people under 30” among the young adults of the Church. The most influential people I find are those who are “doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22). They are those who are covenant keepers. They can be all of you.

Looking forward to seeing the difference you’ll make.

*Elizabeth Stitt*

### SHARE YOUR STORY

Do you have an amazing story to share? Or do you want to see articles about certain topics? If so, we want to hear from you! You can submit your articles or your feedback at [ensign.lds.org](https://ensign.lds.org).



# YOUNG ADULTS

## BEST ADVICE . . .

*Young adults share the best advice they've ever received about making a difference:*

"Be yourself! We each have a light to share that only we can. When we are willing to lift, encourage, and brighten the lives of others in our own unique way, our light shines and leads others to glorify God. Don't be afraid to shine!"

—Whitney Henderson, Colorado, USA

"Live the gospel of Jesus Christ so people ask you why you are different."

—Pamela Castillo, San Marcos, Guatemala

"If we could love ourselves and our neighbors even just a sliver of how much God loves us, then we would have the confidence and faith to actually do whatever is needed of us."

—Samuel Ward, Idaho, USA

"Instead of focusing on changing the entire world, focus on changing your little corner of it."

—Quincy Haisley, Utah, USA

*What's the best advice you've ever received about dating someone who once struggled with pornography? Submit your response at [ensign.lds.org](https://ensign.lds.org) by February 28, 2019.*

## ABOUT THE YOUNG ADULT AUTHORS

**Liz Stitt** graduated from Brigham Young University with a bachelor's degree in communications and from the University of Utah with an MBA. She works in product management, but her favorite job is being a professional aunt.



**Mindy Selu** is an editor for the *Liahona* magazine. She's also a wife, a cat lover, and the mother of twin girls. Her hobbies include taking pictures, watching movies, and making endless to-do lists.



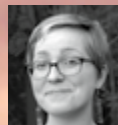
**Heather J. Johnson** is a writer and editor. She loves waterskiing and going on winter adventures in the mountains. Her reading list favors British literature, and she recommends the use of "y'all" in everyday conversation.



**Katie Sue Embley** thinks the world is full of beautiful people whose stories should be shared. She studies journalism and Spanish, with the goal to #sharegoodness.



**Lori Fuller Sosa** is an editor for the *Friend* magazine. She loves finding new bands, listening to news on the radio, and cooking food from around the world. Sometimes she writes stuff.



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## DIGITAL ONLY

**Not Enough Hours in the Day? Here's How to Make the Most of Your Time**

By Heather J. Johnson

**Ministering in Mini Ways**

By Katie Sue Embley

**You Don't Know What You Don't Know**

By Lori Fuller Sosa



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ILLUSTRATION FROM GETTY IMAGES

As young adults, we probably have more “extra” time than we care to admit. Here are six suggestions for how you can extend your circle of influence through service.



# Time to Serve

By Liz Stitt

A few years ago, I was working full-time and finishing an evening program to earn my Master of Business Administration degree. When I finished my MBA, I wanted to use that “extra” time for something meaningful.

The advice from a trusted professor was simple and clear—I needed to find opportunities to serve. While he knew of my Church responsibilities, he suggested I look beyond my regular circle of influence.

I started a prayerful search to know where my skills and talents were needed and where I could do the most good. I was soon led to a community center that needed mentors for their teen program.

I began mentoring a teenage girl whose family had left Somalia as refugees. Each week we practiced reading, writing, and

math skills. But beyond that, we developed a friendship and learned about each other’s cultures and dreams for the future. When she moved, I was assigned another girl. Her family had fled Myanmar, and she had been raised in a refugee camp in Thailand. Along with studying, we also discussed the challenges of life and how to respond to them.

I’ve found many other opportunities to use my skills in different ways and serve in the community.

Many of us single adults find ourselves with shifting demands on our time due to a move, graduation, or job change, among other things. Often, we get a nudge from the Spirit that our single years are not just a “waiting game.” We feel a need to develop more purpose and meaning.

We probably have more “extra” time than we care to admit, so taking a minute to see how we can use that time to lift others will be a blessing to others as well as ourselves. After all, serving others is how we can show our love for God and keep our covenants to give our all to Him. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

BELOW ARE A FEW TIPS TO EXTEND YOUR

# CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE:

## Evaluate your time.



Use a notebook or planner to track how you spend your time. Do you have a few extra hours

of unplanned or wasted time? Or are you overburdening yourself? It's just as essential to understand where you have extra time as it is to understand where you may need to cut back. Prioritize what is most important and plan time to serve.

## Evaluate your skills.



Think about what you like to do or what you feel you do well. Consider ways you can use your talents and

skills to bless the lives of others.

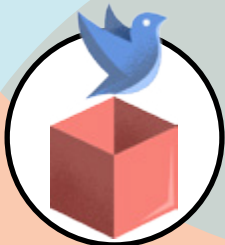
## Pray.



Ask for heavenly guidance to be led where you're needed. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum

of the Twelve Apostles said, "I know that God . . . will help you and guide you in compassionate acts of discipleship if you are conscientiously wanting and praying and looking for ways to keep a commandment He has given us again and again" ("Are We Not All Beggars?" *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 41).

## Get out of your comfort zone.



With mentoring, at first I wasn't comfortable working with teenagers or with tutoring in all

subjects. But sometimes my main job was to provide motivation and encouragement. We don't have to be the perfect fit to make a difference. Most of the time, our main impact could be just being there, listening, and building a long-term relationship of trust and stability.

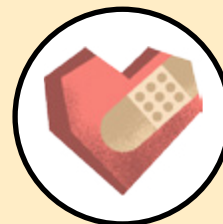
## Make a consistent effort.



Many organizations or people need consistent and regular volunteer efforts—something that is

more than a project or a drop-in.

## Be patient.



Sometimes I think, "I don't know if I can keep doing this. It's so tiring. Am I doing any good?" But once

I start helping, my heart changes. I have rarely left a service opportunity without feeling better and motivated to come back. However, if the opportunity is too taxing, consider other opportunities or ask for some time "off" of volunteering so you can give what is needed.

We can all be a force for good in the world, however big or small our sphere of influence.

**By Mindy Selu**

Church Magazines

**I**t was a mid-April snowstorm that started it all. Not necessarily an unusual occurrence for Utah, but still, I thought the snow-drenched tulips on Temple Square needed to be documented. So I created an Instagram account—one that featured not photos of my cats (as adorable as they are) but rather photos of the temple.

Thus began a year of daily posting (and a few more years of not-so-daily posting). Taking photos of the temple and posting them with temple-related quotes from Church leaders became a fun way to develop talents and deepen my appreciation for the temple.

But the more people I reached, the more I recognized my opportunity to be an influence for good. I'm no social media "influencer," but I like to think that my efforts make a difference for someone somewhere.

Despite our busy, fast-paced lives, we can all use our talents to bless others

and be a force for good. After all, "we believe . . . in doing good" (Articles of Faith 1:13).

I tracked down some other young adults who are striving to be a force for good. Here's how they are making a difference.

# A Mighty Force for Good





### Pray for Charity

*Kaveria ei jätetä.* In Finnish, it means “no one gets left behind,” an expression with roots in wartime but something that Finns still take to heart today. For Rolle Rantaniemi, 23, of Uusimaa, Finland, it inspires him to do good.

“I have a rule for myself: if I ever see someone alone, I always go to them, no matter the situation. No one should ever be alone. When I was young, I was really alone in school and at church—I didn’t have any friends, and I know how bad it feels to be lonely. That’s something I’ve taken from the Finnish mentality that no one gets left behind.”

One of his driving forces is knowing that relationships can continue beyond this life. “That’s why I think the most important thing for us to focus on is to improve ourselves. Be a good example, be a good person, become diligent and all of those Christlike attributes. The other thing is to build relationships, to become friends with people, have charity and love and serve other people.”

Rolle believes that developing Christlike charity is our biggest tool in doing good. “It says in Moroni 7:48 that we should pray for charity. And I’ve seen as I do that every day, and I ask Heavenly Father to give me situations where I can serve, I’m more aware of them. If we really open our eyes, there are opportunities to serve that we never thought of.”

“Even small things matter,” says Rolle. “If you just look for those small things and do them, you can still make a big difference.”

### Inspire Others to Aim High

Daniel Godoy, 23, radiates light and goodness, and his choices have a lot to do with that. He’s an influence for good just by his example.

As an only child from a small town outside of Santiago, Chile, he grew up seeing his parents’ dedication to service and to the gospel. Daniel was the first in his home stake to serve a mission at 18 after the mission age was lowered, inspiring many young men to prepare to serve earlier too. After his mission in Colombia, he was also the first in his hometown to leave the country to pursue higher education. His drive inspired others to get an education. “In some way I inspired them to aim high,” he says. “It was awesome to know that little step that I did helped to inspire other people.”

Getting an education in the United States is also the key for Daniel’s plans to help others and do good in the future. “My long-term goal is to go back to Chile and help people there—serve them. I came here because I know that I can have opportunities that will lead me to help people in Chile as well.”

Still, Daniel admits: “I’m not perfect. But I’m trying to do my best, and I feel like that will be inspiring for others and give them the motivation to keep going as well.”





## Share God's Love

After earning a degree in social work, Katelyn Rae, 27, from California, USA, couldn't settle on a career path but felt drawn to humanitarian aid. She has seen God's hand guiding her "every step of the way," leading her to now be the program director for a non-profit organization dedicated to fighting global poverty.

Katelyn has worked with refugees in Greece and victims of abuse in Nepal, who, she explains, are "going through the worst moments of their life. Just being there with them, there's not a lot I can do. I can't change the governments or the policies, but the one thing I can do is to love them." And no matter who she's with, she sees how important it is for others to feel God's love. "If I can be a vehicle for that, I'll feel like I've done a pretty good job, that God's happy with me."

Her experiences help her see other people's problems with a broader perspective. "As young adults, it's easy to get caught up in our own issues," she says. "We're so focused on, 'What's my career?' and 'What am I doing for school?' and 'How am I going to find my eternal companion?' Those are all good things, but if we could somehow look outside of ourselves, I think we'll find what we really are searching for."

"If we just remain close to the Spirit, God is going to guide and direct us, and then we'll be able to do all the good we want to do," Katelyn says. "I think everyone wants to do good, even if that's just in your community or within your family. Every little thing, whether it's uplifting a friend or being there for a family member, just having those small moments of knowing you did what God wanted you to do in that moment will make a powerful impact on your life and others."

## Your Influence

You don't need to go out and start building orphanages to do good in the world. You don't need to start an Instagram account of temple photos or become the director of a non-profit. But you can think of some way to use *your* unique talents to be an influence for good.

I really believe that these words from President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018), addressed to women of the Church, also apply perfectly to young adults: "You are a mighty force for good, one of the most powerful in the entire world. Your influence ranges far beyond yourself and your home and touches others all around the globe" ("Three Goals to Guide You," *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 120). So keep doing good—all the good you can. Your influence will spread farther than you know. And together we will be that mighty force for good. ■

Read about three more inspiring young adults who are a force for good in the full version of this article in the Gospel Library app or at [ensign.lds.org](https://ensign.lds.org).





**By Elder Eduardo Gavarret**  
Of the Seventy

## YOU REALLY CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

I would like to tell you that the heroes and heroines of the present are here. And they are you. I am sure that the fiber, the drive needed to make a difference and generate what is called the power of one, the power to act, the power to speak up, based on the knowledge of the gospel, and thus generate a change, is here; it is within you.

Are not we all heroes of our premortal life? We all opposed Lucifer and his plan. We were born winners, and we are on the team that will win the battle. Now, with the knowledge we have, we must make the decision to rise above our own weaknesses and move forward with our eyes on the One who saves us.

Do not choose the path of mediocrity, which comes with complacency and apathy. Be determined to be different; exercise the power that is in you, and make a difference.

There are many noble causes to fight for. Be one of those who paves the road and makes a difference. Remember, you are a winner, born a winner. You really can make a big difference.

Choose a noble cause for the Lord for which to fight, and apply your energy. There are people to help, hands to lift, weakened knees to strengthen, prisoners to visit and rescue, hungry to feed, naked to clothe, and sick to heal. Raise your voice. Be true to yourselves and loyal to your mission.



“Ye are the ‘hope of Israel.’ The heavens are watching you, and the earth is waiting for you.”<sup>1</sup>

Establish your personal covenant with Him, our Savior, and say, “For me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15). And doing so, others also will be blessed. ■

*From a devotional address, “. . . But As for Me and My House, We Will Serve the Lord,” given at Brigham Young University–Idaho on May 16, 2017.*

#### NOTE

1. Orson F. Whitney, *Contributor*, July 1888, 301.

While the Savior warned us not to be of the world, we still live *in* it. Here are some ideas that might help us see what it means to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world.



# *In(fluence)* THE WORLD

**By David A. Edwards**  
Church Magazines

**T**here's a lot of bad stuff going on out there. So it's a good thing we Latter-day Saints can just watch it all from afar within the safety of Zion, right? I mean, it's nice not to have to sully ourselves with the world's petty feuds, isn't it?

What's that? Oh, yeah. Of course, the reality is far more complicated.

## **Disciples in the World**

Before the end of His mortal life, Jesus Christ prayed to the Father for His Apostles, saying, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15). He knew that He would be leaving the world, but His disciples needed to remain in the world to carry on His work.

As the Savior's prayer for His early Apostles shows, He knows better than anyone what kind of evil we will face in the world. But face it we must, though the evil in the world is relentless and ever searching for new ways to spread its influence in our families, communities, culture, and government.

While the Savior said that His disciples are not of the world, He also said that He was not asking for them to be taken out of the world (see John 17:14–16). He knew that the wheat and the tares would grow together and wouldn't be completely separated until the very end (see Matthew 13:24–30). These teachings contain principles vital to our understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.



We rightly focus a great deal of our attention on how to remain untainted by the world's ways and set our sights on the eternities. But do we fully understand the active role disciples of Jesus Christ should play in the world? As Elder L. Tom Perry (1922–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, "It is 'in the world' where we have opportunity to serve and make our contribution to mankind."<sup>1</sup>

Our mission in the world is not just to be there but to try to make it better, to be a light to the world (see Matthew 5:14–16). We're not meant to disengage, to withdraw, to cloister ourselves and say to the rest of the world, "A pox on all of you! And if you want to know more, go to our website."

The scriptures and modern prophets and apostles have taught us correct principles for engaging in our communities and nations so that we can have the kind of influence that disciples of Jesus Christ ought to have—in all areas of life. We do this by *knowing* and *doing*.

**Know:** For disciples of Christ to make a difference in the world, it's essential that they know something about it. We're encouraged to get a good education and to continue on a path of lifelong learning. For a disciple, one purpose of this education is to be of greater service to others around us. As President Russell M. Nelson has said, "Education is the difference between *wishing* you could help other people and *being able* to help them."<sup>2</sup>

We should also keep current and informed about what's going on in our communities and in the world. So, will the Church ever provide us with a list of the best news feeds, websites, blogs, newspapers, magazines, cable news networks, and other news sources for us to follow? Of course not. But when it comes to being informed, we might take our cue from the General Authorities. Have you ever noticed how many different sources they cite in their general conference talks? Well, that's the kind of variety we should seek out in our efforts to stay informed.

The news media in our day have become more numerous and ubiquitous, but many of them have also become more narrow, appealing to a specific niche audience with certain biases. So as we look for trustworthy sources of information, we should seek a variety of viewpoints and perspectives. That doesn't mean that individually we won't still find certain ones more persuasive and appealing, but at least we'll have a better chance of knowing what's really going on.

And as disciples of Jesus Christ, we probably ought to pay special attention to issues related to family, morality, education, poverty, religious freedom, and other such topics. The more we know about these things, particularly as they affect our local communities, the better able we'll be to engage in the conversation, teach our families, and make a difference.



## A Warning

While we're encouraged to be politically engaged, we need to remember that "the Church does not endorse any political party or candidate."<sup>3</sup> Being politically overzealous can lead us to wrongly condemn others as evil simply because they think differently from us on political matters. We ought to be striving to find common ground with others in order to focus on the common good.

In addition, we should never "spend most of [our] time giving first-class devotion to lesser causes" or "allow intense cultural or political views to weaken [our] allegiance to the gospel of Jesus Christ."<sup>4</sup>



**Do:** Beyond knowing about what's going on in the world, disciples of Christ can also make a difference by going out and doing some good in it. Now, we've probably all heard the message "Be involved in your community" so often that it has about the same effect as someone's saying, "Eat a nutritious diet." Eyes glaze over. So, just how ought we to "get involved in the community"? Here's just a sampling of what Church leaders have had to say about it:

**President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018):**

"We have a responsibility to be active in the communities where we live, all Latter-day Saints, and to work cooperatively with other churches and organizations. . . . I think it's important that we eliminate the weakness of one standing alone and substitute for it the strength of people working together" (in "Who Are the Mormons?" Topics, [mormonnewsroom.org.uk](http://mormonnewsroom.org.uk)).



**Elder L. Tom Perry (1922–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:**

"How can we ever expect the world to embrace the righteous principles the Lord has declared to govern His children here if we do not extend our influence outward?

"... Rather than spend time complaining about the direction in which [government and community] institutions are going, we need to exert our influence in shaping the right direction. A small effort by a few can result in so much good for all of mankind" ("In the World," *Ensign*, May 1988, 15).



**Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:**

"It is time to get involved and take a stand for religious freedom. . . .

"Begin by becoming informed. . . . Next, speak up. . . . Next, get involved. . . . Finally and above all, as the Apostle Paul wrote, 'be . . . an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity' [1 Timothy 4:12]" ("Religious Freedom—A Cherished Heritage to Defend" [address given at Freedom Festival Patriotic Service, June 26, 2016], [mormonnewsroom.org](http://mormonnewsroom.org)).



Of course, Church leaders don't necessarily tell us exactly how to get involved. That's up to us, and it's part of the agency we're expected to exercise in order to "be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of [our] own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness" (Doctrine and Covenants 58:27).

So, just as the Savior prayed for His Apostles, we should also pray that we can be kept from the evil in the world. But we shouldn't try to remove ourselves entirely from the world. We're in it. And it needs us—because we follow Jesus Christ. ■

#### NOTES

1. L. Tom Perry, "In the World," *Ensign*, May 1988, 13.
2. Russell M. Nelson, "What Will You Choose?" *Ensign*, Jan. 2015, 32.
3. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 21.1.29.
4. Quentin L. Cook, "Can Ye Feel So Now?" *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 7.

# Anna

By Heather Farrell

*Like Anna, we need to keep searching and keep moving forward as we seek to know Jesus Christ.*

**A**nd there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;

*“And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.*

*“And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.”*

Luke 2:36–38

## A Woman of Faith

Forty days after the birth of Jesus and at the end of Mary’s time of purification under the Mosaic law, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem and presented Him to God (see Luke 2:22). While they were in the temple, a man named Simeon, who had been promised by God that he would live to see Christ, prophesied that Jesus was the promised Messiah (see Luke

2:25–35). “In that instant,” a woman named Anna came up and recognized the Christ child as the Savior of the world (see Luke 2:38).

Anna faithfully stood in holy places. She had lived a long life of service to God, and as she searched for the face of the promised Messiah, she beheld the infant Jesus in the temple. Faith carried Anna through her hardships in life, just as it can carry us and inspire us to seek the Lord.

## A Temple Worker

Anna is described to us by Luke as “a widow of about fourscore and four years.” He also tells us that she “departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day” (Luke 2:37). Anna had dedicated herself to serving God in the temple. In that respect, she reminds us of many of the women who serve in our temples today. Many of them spend much of their time working, learning, and worshipping

in God’s house, just as Anna did.

Anna went to the temple every day, but it is remarkable that she was there at that exact moment to see Simeon speaking with Mary and Joseph, just in time to see the promised Messiah. Surely that was no coincidence. She had dedicated her life and the majority of her time to serving the Lord. She must have desired, more than anything else, to see and know God. And she did.

## A Prophetess

Having devoted herself to searching, fasting, and praying, Anna finally gained the deepest desire of her heart. She saw God’s promised Messiah; she saw the face of Jesus Christ. Luke calls Anna a “prophetess,” a title reserved for only a few women in the scriptures. A prophetess is a woman who possesses the spiritual gift of prophecy and bears testimony of Jesus Christ. Anna exemplifies this title because after seeing the baby Jesus in the temple, she “spoke of him to all them that looked



for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38). She could not keep the joy of her discovery or her knowledge of Jesus Christ to herself; she prophesied of Him to anyone who would listen.

Her story is a powerful reminder to us that there is no knowledge or experience beyond our reach. Many of us have questions and desires burning in our hearts. There are things that we want to understand, mysteries of the universe we want unfolded, and deep personal questions we seek answers to. Such knowledge is obtainable. Yet like Anna, we need to keep searching and

keep moving forward day after day and year after year as we develop our faith in Jesus Christ.

Some knowledge and experience does not come easily. Anna’s example of faith, shown by her commitment to serving the Lord, is a reminder to all of us about how to receive additional light and understanding. God has promised that if we knock, we will receive. He doesn’t say how many times we will have to knock or how long it will take before He answers the door. He only promises that if we diligently seek Him, as Anna did, we will find Him. ■

### THE COURT OF THE WOMEN

Anna probably met the Christ child in the temple’s Court of the Women, a place where women could “observe . . . the sacrifices going on at the altar and could participate in temple worship through fasting, prayer, and hymns” (Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and David Rolph Seely, *My Father’s House: Temple Worship and Symbolism in the New Testament* [1994], 46). They could also “receive the priestly benediction” (Holzapfel and Seely, *My Father’s House*, 57).

It appears that in this same area, the Savior taught during the Feast of Tabernacles (see John 7:2, 14), forgave the woman taken in adultery (see John 8:3–11), proclaimed Himself “the light of the world” (John 8:12) and the God of Abraham (see John 8:58), and observed the widow casting in her mites (see Mark 12:41–44).

# How Do We “Judge Righteous Judgment”?

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As we learn to judge righteously, we model the Lord’s perfect judgment, mercy, and grace.

**By Tyler J. Griffin**

Associate Professor of Ancient Scripture, Brigham Young University

**H**ave you ever been in a situation where somebody tried to correct another person by saying, “Judge not, that ye be not judged”? (Matthew 7:1). Few of Jesus’s teachings are more widely known than this one. Unfortunately, this phrase is not always correctly understood or applied. Our ability to benefit from this command will increase as we examine how Jesus Christ used it in His teachings and how His prophets have reiterated it through time.

Let’s begin by looking at how the Savior used this “judge not” phrase. Preceding this command are the first two chapters of His Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5–6). This sermon is filled with commands that set the bar of discipleship very high—so high, in fact, that nobody can succeed without the merciful help of the Lord. As we learn in those chapters, it is no longer enough for His followers to refrain from killing or committing adultery or to love only those who love us; it is now required to not get angry, not allow immoral thoughts to linger, and to love our enemies (see Matthew 5:13–47). Ultimately, true followers of Christ are to be “perfect, even as [their] Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).<sup>1</sup> This includes praying, fasting secretly rather than publicly, and giving charitable gifts.

Immediately following these higher-law teachings, Jesus commanded, “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” Jesus understood that as disciples strive to live the principles and commandments taught in Matthew 5 and 6, it is easy to fall into the trap of noticing where others may be falling short of those ideals. Jesus continued, “For with what judgment



ye judge, ye shall be judged” (Matthew 7:2). To drive this point further, Jesus clarified, “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?” (Matthew 7:3). He was clearly teaching that our ability to judge imperfections in others is nearly impossible because of the large construction-sized beams of imperfection blinding our own vision. Additionally, we do not understand all the surrounding issues, struggles, and circumstances that result in moles and beams in others’ eyes.

The Lord, however, knows everything and is therefore the only one who can see clearly and judge perfectly. In His wisdom and mercy, the Lord withholds His judgment and does not immediately condemn us for our failings. He continues to work with us through the process of time to “cast out the beam out of [our] own eye” so we can “see clearly” (Matthew 7:5).

### Other Scriptures on Judging

In the Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew 7, we read, “Judge not *unrighteously*, that ye be not judged; but *judge righteous judgment*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 7:2 [in Matthew 7:1, footnote *a*]). Joseph Smith made some of his changes to the biblical text not to reflect what was originally said or written but to give prophetic interpretation and help clarify the meaning of certain passages. That seems to be the case with the changes here, based on what other scriptures (3 Nephi 14:1, for example) and modern prophets have said about judging. According to Joseph Smith’s addition to this passage in Matthew, Jesus is not telling us never to judge. He is commanding us to make sure the judgments we make are righteous.

This point is further clarified in the Book of Mormon. In Moroni 7 we find a speech given

by Mormon, including specific directions on how to judge: “Wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God” (Moroni 7:16). Mormon then revealed how to judge the opposite influence: “But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil” (Moroni 7:17). Mormon made it clear that we have a responsibility to make appropriate judgment. As we place this passage side by side with the original statement, “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matthew 7:1; 3 Nephi 14:1), we see that the word *judge* must have various meanings in different scriptures.

Before being called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1984, President Dallin H. Oaks, now First Counselor in the First Presidency, was a supreme court judge in the state of Utah. In 1998 he delivered a clarifying talk on the subject of judging. He said, “I have been puzzled that some scriptures command us not to judge and others instruct us that we should judge and even tell us how to do it.” He suggested that there is no contradiction between these scriptures if we “understand that there are two kinds of judging: final judgments, which we are forbidden to make, and intermediate judgments, which we are directed to make, but upon righteous principles.”<sup>2</sup> This life is not the time for final judgments; those are reserved for the next. Additionally, we are not the ones who will make those final judgments; they are reserved for the Lord. Instructively, Jesus Christ Himself withheld such final judgments from many whom He could have condemned (for example, see Matthew 27:11–35; Luke 23:8–11; John 4; 8:1–11; 13:18–30).

### Our Judgments of God

The intermediate judgments we make determine to a large degree how we live our life and, consequently, how we will also be judged, both immediately and finally. This is true of judgments we make of our leaders, family members, and other people and even the verdicts we sometimes make about ourselves.

Of all the judgments we make in life, however, the most important and influential is how we judge God. To illustrate, consider the parable of the three servants who received talents, or sums of money (see Matthew 25:14–30). The master of the servants judged their individual capacities and gave them what they could each handle. One servant received five talents, another was granted two, and the final servant was given one. The first two

*Our ability to judge imperfections in others is clouded by our own imperfections. The Lord, however, knows everything and is therefore the only one who can see clearly and judge perfectly.*

servants invested their talents, thus doubling their amounts. The third servant hid his talent in the earth. The motivation for this stark contrast in behaviors is not revealed until later in the parable.

When the master returned, the first two servants were glad to see him and presented him with doubled amounts of money. After congratulating them for their goodness and faithfulness, he graciously gave them the talents they had multiplied for him. If we were to ask either of these first two servants to describe their judgment of the master, we would likely hear words such as *kind, loving, merciful, and gracious* in their responses. It is also safe to assume that these two would be willing to do anything that the master asked of them because of their righteous judgment of his character and motives.

Contrast that with how the third servant judged the master. One can visualize him approaching the master in fear and trembling as he dropped the recently unburied talent at the master's feet and said, "Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed" (Matthew 25:24). What might the first two servants have said if they had overheard this harsh judgment of their master's character? Notice how the third servant's unrighteous judgment of the master negatively affected his behavior and character: "I was afraid,



and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine" (Matthew 25:25). The master's response fulfilled all of this trembling man's worst fears: "Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not. . . . Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers" (Matthew 25:26–27). The talent was taken from this man and given to the servant with 10.

All three servants experienced a fulfillment of Jesus's statement, "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matthew 7:2). The first two servants judged the lord to be merciful and gracious. They judged that he

had their best interests in mind. Based on that foundation, they made life decisions that resulted in his passing a merciful and gracious final judgment upon them. The third servant, on the other hand, falsely judged the lord's motives and character. Ironically, his evil judgments of the lord led to the servant's lack of righteous judgment of his *own* abilities, which resulted in unwise actions. Motivated by fear of punishment, this man ended up stifling his own character development and missed out on opportunities to experience the lord's mercy and grace.

### Our Judgments of People

It is easy to see how our judgment of God can naturally influence our judgments of those around us as well. If we assume that the Lord is angry, over-controlling, vengeful, self-interested, or a being to be feared and not trusted, how much easier it becomes for us to superimpose those same negative motives and character traits upon people around us.

In a memorable general conference talk, Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated:

"This topic of judging others could actually be taught in a two-word sermon. When it comes to hating, gossiping, ignoring, ridiculing, holding grudges, or wanting to cause harm, please apply the following:

"Stop it!

"It's that simple. We simply have to stop judging others and replace judgmental thoughts and feelings with a heart full of love for God and His children. God is our Father. We are His children. We are all brothers and sisters. I don't know exactly how to articulate this point of *not judging others* with sufficient eloquence, passion, and persuasion to make it stick."<sup>3</sup>

The Prophet Joseph Smith gave great insight into what happens when we replace inappropriate judgment and condemnation with mercy and kindness. He said: "Be ready to forgive our brother on the first intimations of repentance, and asking forgiveness; and should we even forgive our brother, or even our enemy, before he repent or ask forgiveness, our heavenly Father would be equally merciful unto us."<sup>4</sup> This teaching serves as one more powerful reminder that "with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged" (Matthew 7:2).

The person many people feel the most qualified to judge, and consequently judge most frequently and harshly, is oneself. After all, we know better than anyone where we have fallen short. If we are not vigilant, we are all capable of falling into the temptations of deep discouragement, self-doubt, self-pity, self-loathing, and giving up. The Lord would not have us define ourselves by

*The greatest form of charity may be to withhold judgment.*

our past struggles but rather by *His* past triumphs. Only when we refuse to be held hostage to our past will we seek forgiveness and be able to accept Jesus Christ's willingness to not condemn us.

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, "God cares a lot more about who we are and who we are becoming than about who we once were."<sup>5</sup> Elder Renlund also shared an insightful statement frequently made by Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa: "I'm no saint—that is, unless you think a saint is a sinner who keeps on trying."<sup>6</sup>

### Our Incomplete Understanding

Sister Jean B. Bingham, Relief Society General President, provided us with an instructive example of these principles:

"As three-year-old Alyssa watched a movie with her siblings, she remarked with a puzzled expression, 'Mom, that chicken is weird!'

"Her mother looked at the screen and responded with a smile, 'Honey, that is a peacock.'

"Like that unknowing three-year-old, we sometimes look at others [and ourselves] with an incomplete or inaccurate understanding. We may focus on the differences and perceived flaws . . . whereas our Heavenly Father sees His children, created in His eternal image, with magnificent and glorious potential."<sup>7</sup>

As Sister Bingham learned from a dear friend, "The greatest form of charity may be to withhold judgment."<sup>8</sup>

Our own sins and lack of perfect understanding disqualify us from being able to pass final judgments on anyone, including ourselves. We



must, however, make constant intermediate judgments. We are to righteously judge *actions*, not condemn people. When those judgments are based on principles of righteousness, our focus will more fully turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. We will increasingly rely on *His* perfect judgment, mercy, and grace rather than on mortal accomplishments or imperfections as a basis for judging God, ourselves, and those around us. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Jeffrey R. Holland, “Be Ye Therefore Perfect—Eventually,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 40–42; see also Russell M. Nelson, “Perfection Pending,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 86–88.
2. Dallin H. Oaks, “‘Judge Not’ and Judging,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1999, 7.
3. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Merciful Obtain Mercy,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 75.
4. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 392–93.
5. Dale G. Renlund, “Latter-day Saints Keep on Trying,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 56.
6. Nelson Mandela, in Dale G. Renlund, “Latter-day Saints Keep on Trying,” 56.
7. Jean B. Bingham, “I Will Bring the Light of the Gospel into My Home,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 6.
8. Sandra Rogers, in Jean B. Bingham, “I Will Bring the Light of the Gospel into My Home,” 6.

# Three Things Teens Want Parents to Know

Here's what Latter-day Saint youth wish their parents knew about what it's like being a teenager today.

**By Aspen Stander**  
Church Magazines

*"You just don't understand."*

If you're the parent of a teenager, you've probably heard this phrase more than a few times. You've probably felt frustrated when your attempts to connect with your children have seemed only to drive them away. But teenagers can also experience frustration when they try to communicate with their parents. They may feel as though they are alone in their struggles or that they have failed to measure up.

What do Latter-day Saint youth really wish their parents knew about what it's like to be a teenager today? Based on teens' responses to this question, three major themes capture their most common concerns:

- Fearing that they will be misunderstood
- Feeling confused about standards (especially when it comes to dating)
- Dealing with pressure to meet overwhelmingly high expectations

As President Russell M. Nelson said in a worldwide devotional, the rising generation is the hope of Israel: "Heavenly Father has reserved many of His most noble spirits—perhaps, I might say, His finest team—for this final phase. Those noble spirits—those finest players, those heroes—are *you!*"<sup>1</sup> Young men and young women truly have the capacity to change the world in incredible ways, both small and great.



*So, how can parents help youth attain their full potential as they navigate the frustrations and fears of adolescence?*



### **1. Fear of Being Misunderstood**

Think back to when you were a teenager. Chances are, you thought your parents' generation was completely unfamiliar with the challenges yours had to face. The same is true of teens today. For example, John S., a young man from Michigan, USA, said, "I think it's important that parents understand how much technology has changed social life. Honestly, there's not all that much face-to-face conversation unless you're actually at school. Once you go home, it's almost expected of you that you're talking with people all the time [using technology]." Technology has changed the social landscape of the world. Youth today navigate various social media platforms, entertainment channels, and sources of information available at their fingertips in an instant. They feel that parents do not understand either the challenges or the blessings of communication in the digital age.

But are parents and teenagers really all that different? Though it seems to each new generation that their challenges are unique, common threads run through the experiences of teens in every age: the desire for belonging, the desire to be understood, and the desire to figure out their place in the world. Technology influences the way these desires are expressed, but so do relationships at school, home, and church. Grandparents, parents, and children have all experienced the confusion and heartache that accompany these desires. Parents and teenagers are more alike than they may think, but the fear of being misunderstood prevents many teenagers from being open with their parents.

Brayden F., a young man from Texas, USA, observed, “I’ve had certain conversations with my parents where I found out that they are just like me. They’ve gone through the same things that I’m going through, but they hadn’t shared those insights with me before, so I didn’t feel like I had anyone to talk to about my experiences.” As appropriate, parents can share trials they faced and overcame as teenagers. How did you deal with your desire to belong? to be understood? to figure out your place in the world?

Kenna A., a young woman from Wyoming, USA, wants parents to understand that sharing their experiences can help teens: “We don’t just want to hear what you were good at. We also want to hear what was hard for you so that we can feel like we’re not a failure all the time.” Understanding that they are not alone when they make mistakes and that there is hope to overcome trials can be immensely comforting for teens. These types of conversations can strengthen relationships between parents and children.

## 2. Confusion about Standards

Many teenagers also wish to do their best to follow the standards they have been taught as members of the Church, but they’re sometimes confused about different interpretations they’ve heard.

For example, how should youth follow the counsel to avoid going on frequent dates with the same person? Some worry about learning how to build healthy dating relationships if they are not allowed to have a boyfriend or girlfriend. And they worry about maintaining their standards while developing the qualities that will be needed for successful dating and marriage relationships later in life.

Take the time to talk with your children about the standards you expect them to follow in your

family. Teach them about what is appropriate in dating at this stage of their lives. Help them understand that it is important to follow prophetic counsel because it keeps us spiritually, physically, and mentally safe.

There are many reasons why prophets have given us the standards in the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet. For one, teens who begin to date someone exclusively at a younger age have higher rates of alcohol and drug use, lower levels of academic achievement,<sup>2</sup> greater susceptibility to peer pressure, and a greater risk of breaking the law of chastity.<sup>3</sup> Casual dating and group dating instead allow teenagers to develop the emotional, physical, and spiritual maturity to prepare to date seriously in young adulthood. Making friends with members of the opposite sex and discovering traits they admire will help teens make wise decisions in dating and marriage later on.

Following the counsel in *For the Strength of Youth* is more than just following a list of dos and don’ts. It’s about being a light to the world as true disciples of Jesus Christ. Maybe it’s not popular to wear modest clothing or to avoid exclusive dating in high school, but President Nelson has counseled youth: “Set a standard for the rest of the world! Embrace being different! The booklet entitled *For the Strength of Youth* should be *your* standard.”<sup>4</sup>

*“We don’t just want to hear what you were good at. We also want to hear what was hard for you so that we can feel like we’re not a failure all the time.”*

## 3. The Weight of High Expectations

At times, teenagers feel that overwhelming expectations have been thrust upon them in every aspect of their lives. From their appearance and personality to their athletic and academic abilities to their testimonies and Church activity, they feel the pressure to live up to increasingly high expectations.

Many teenagers feel this burden weighing heavily on them. They fear that they can’t measure up. They may think that they are complete failures when they make mistakes instead of seeing mistakes as learning experiences. These thought patterns can contribute to depression and anxiety or even just resentment toward the sources of those expectations.

To admit that they failed to live up to an expectation puts teens in a vulnerable position. They know they are subject to criticism or punishment,



so many choose instead to conceal their mistakes or act out in other ways. They fear the shame of disapproval at a time when they could really use some extra love and understanding.

Teens could greatly benefit from being able to talk about their problems more openly. Keep the lines of communication open so your teenagers know they can come to you in good times and bad. Here are a few things teenagers mentioned their parents could do to help:<sup>5</sup>

- Instead of reacting, immediately offering advice, or growing impatient, seek first to listen and understand the situation.
- Talk to your teenagers about both your expectations for them and their own goals.
- Help them set realistic expectations for themselves that are in line with the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Communicate love and acceptance. Children need to hear words of comfort from their parents.
- Take their concerns seriously—things that may seem insignificant to you may be incredibly important to them.

Above all, remember to keep things in perspective. Zak M. from California, USA, said, “We’re not always going to be perfect. Sometimes in school we’re going to end up getting B’s. But we have to realize that our spirit can’t be represented with a grade. And while we need to have high expectations and set goals for ourselves, we need to realize that what’s more important than getting a good grade is doing well spiritually and doing well mentally instead of stressing ourselves out with unrealistic expectations.”

### The Savior Walks with Us

Although parents and teenagers may struggle to understand each other, each of us is perfectly known and understood and loved by Jesus Christ. We can follow His example by truly seeking to love and communicate with one another. The most important thing to share with teenagers is that the Atonement of Jesus Christ covers everything. If they have broken a commandment, they can repent. If they have made a mistake, they can try again. If they feel misunderstood, hurt, rejected, or broken, they can find peace in knowing that they never walk alone in their trials. The Savior walked through it all before, and He is walking alongside them now. ■

#### NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson and Wendy W. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), [HopeofIsrael.lds.org](http://HopeofIsrael.lds.org).
2. See Pamela Orpinas, Arthur M. Horne, Xiao Song, Patricia M. Reeves, and Hsien-Lin Hsieh, “Dating Trajectories from Middle to High School: Association with Academic Performance and Drug Use,” *Journal of Research on Adolescence*,

- vol. 23, no. 4 (Dec. 1, 2013), 772–84.
3. See “Teenage Dating and Romantic Relationships Risks,” U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, May 31, 2018, [hhs.gov](http://hhs.gov).
4. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel.”
5. Some of these tips are also taken from Sara Villanueva, “Teenage Stress,” Dec. 8, 2015, [psychologytoday.com](http://psychologytoday.com).



**By Elder  
Paul V. Johnson**  
Of the Seventy

# Free to Choose

Part of our earthly experience consists of being enticed by both good and evil and then learning how to choose good over evil. By using our agency to choose the right, we begin to put on the divine nature—to pattern our lives after the Savior’s life. We find peace, happiness, and freedom as we make right choices.

In the pre-earth life, “Satan rebelled . . . and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him” (Moses 4:3). Our Heavenly Father did not allow him to destroy the precious gift of agency. In fact, Satan’s attempt to destroy it is one of the reasons he was cast out of heaven. We also learn from the scriptures that “he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice” (Moses 4:4).

This sounds like a contradiction. Satan tried to destroy agency. Our Heavenly Father wouldn’t allow it and cast him out. Satan now deceives and blinds men, and he leads them captive at his will. If he is leading people captive, doesn’t that sound like he is destroying agency?

The fact is, he couldn’t destroy agency in the pre-earth life, and he can’t do it now either. But he leads us captive by enticing us to sin. When we sin, we subject ourselves to him. We, in effect, give part of our agency to him. He can’t take it from us, but we can relinquish it.

This concept is explained in the context of events in the Garden of Eden: “Wherefore, it came to pass that the devil tempted Adam, and he partook of the forbidden fruit and transgressed the commandment, wherein he became subject to the will of the devil, because he yielded unto temptation” (Doctrine & Covenants 29:40).

*As we use our agency  
to choose the right,  
reject evil, and love God,  
His grace is sufficient for us,  
and by that grace we will  
become perfected  
in Christ.*



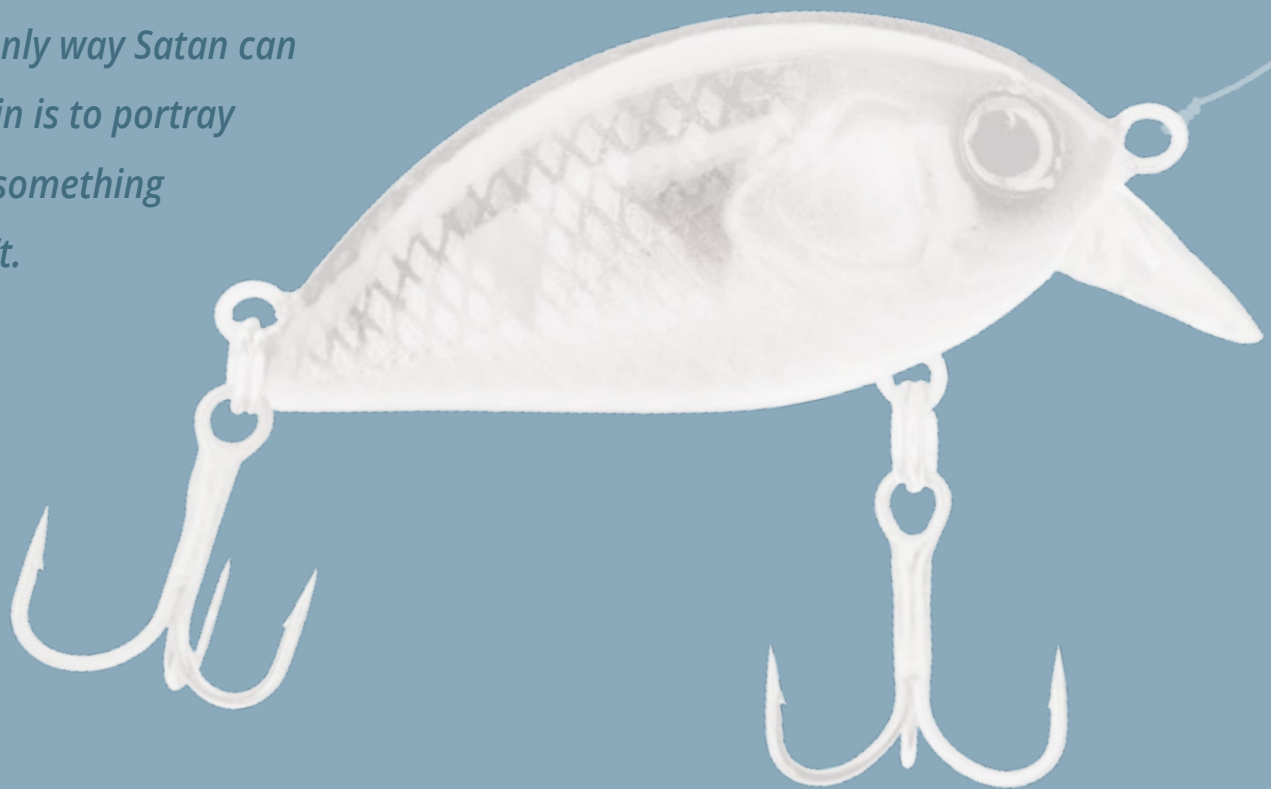
Phrases from other scriptures illustrate this important principle:

- “Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (John 8:34).
- “To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey” (Romans 6:16).
- “They chose evil works rather than good; therefore the spirit of the devil did enter into them, and take possession of their house . . . , and this because of their own iniquity, being led captive by the will of the devil” (Alma 40:13).

Lehi taught his sons plainly: “Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27).

Lehi pleaded with his sons not to “choose eternal death, according to the will of the flesh and the evil which is therein, which giveth the spirit of the devil power to captivate” (2 Nephi 2:29).

*The only way Satan can  
sell sin is to portray  
it as something  
it isn't.*



The Prophet Joseph Smith observed: “Satan was generally blamed for the evils which we did, but if he was the cause of all our wickedness, men could not be condemned. The devil could not compel mankind to do evil; all was voluntary. Those who resisted the Spirit of God, would be liable to be led into temptation. . . . God would not exert any compulsory means, and the devil could not; and such ideas as were entertained [on these subjects] by many were absurd.”<sup>1</sup>

Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933) wrote: “Satan exerts a mastery over the spirits that have been corrupted by his practises; . . . he seeks to molest and hinder mankind in good efforts. . . . Yet in all these malignant doings, he can go no

farther than the transgressions of the victim may enable him, or the wisdom of God may permit; and at any time he may be checked by the superior power.”<sup>2</sup>

#### **Satan: Master Marketer**

Satan’s ultimate goal is to make each of us miserable, as he is (see 2 Nephi 2:18, 27). Because he can’t impose this misery, he has to find a way to convince us to choose it. Does this even sound like a feasible business plan? “Convince people to choose to be miserable.” It sounds more like *Mission Impossible*: “Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to convince people to choose misery over joy, bondage over freedom.”

And yet, by all observations, Satan has been fairly successful in the world at large. And to the degree we commit sin, he is even successful with each of us.

How is he able to convince so many to choose a path through life that leads to misery? How is he able to convince even good people to commit sin?

We have to remember that to exercise our agency in a way to help us become more like the Savior, we must be enticed by good and evil. The evil has to be enticing, or it would be no test—and thus we would not experience real growth. But as we choose good in the face of an alternative that is truly enticing, our characters are shaped and we reap the rewards of freedom and peace. We learn more deeply that we trust in a God who cannot lie (see Enos 1:6), and our faith increases.

So what makes it possible for the adversary to make evil and sin enticing? How do you sell misery, bondage, and disappointment? Well, you have to lie. Satan is a liar. In fact, he is “the father of all lies” (Moses 4:4).

The only way he can sell sin is to portray it as something it isn’t. He has to convince people that evil is good—that momentary pleasure equates with long-term joy and that sin leads to freedom and happiness instead of to bondage and misery. He also throws in the idea that good is evil and that righteousness is bondage. Satan is a master at marketing. He has been at it a long time, and the foundation of his marketing scheme is always lies.

Let’s look at a few examples from the scriptures.

Cain bought into Satan’s lies and chose to sin and kill Abel. “And Cain gloried in that which he had done, saying: I am free; surely the flocks of my brother falleth into my hands” (Moses 5:33). His exclamation “I am free” has to be in the top-10 list of the most deluded statements in all of scripture. He soon found out that he was anything but free and anything but happy because of his actions.

After the Nephites had become wicked, Samuel the Lamanite preached repentance to them: “Ye have procrastinated the day of your salvation until it is everlastingly too late, and your destruction is made sure; yea, for ye have sought all the days of your lives for that which ye could not

obtain; and ye have sought for happiness in doing iniquity, which thing is contrary to the nature of that righteousness which is in our great and Eternal Head” (Helaman 13:38).

The Nephites had not learned the lesson Alma taught his son Corianton—that “wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10). Corianton, for a time, had fallen for the lie that breaking the commandments leads to happiness.

The adversary doesn’t stop after we have decided to commit one sin. He wants us in his power. The Book of Mormon teaches us about his tactics to bring people into bondage by degrees: “He leadeth them by the neck with a flaxen cord, until he bindeth them with his strong cords forever” (2 Nephi 26:22).

We also read, “Others he flattereth away, and telleth them there is no hell; and he saith unto them: I am no devil, for there is none—and thus he whispereth in their ears, until he grasps them with his awful chains” (2 Nephi 28:22).

## Freedom vs. Bondage


Satan carefully leads people into bondage. Just as we progress line upon line in righteousness, we move to bondage sin upon sin.

This is one reason parents and leaders are so concerned when a young person starts to make wrong choices. Once we get entangled in the adversary’s cords, getting out is much more difficult than getting in.

As Nephite civilization declined in Mormon’s time, he lamented that his people were “led about by Satan, even as chaff is driven before the wind, or as a vessel is tossed about upon the waves, without sail or anchor, or without anything wherewith to steer her” (Mormon 5:18).

That imagery doesn’t convey much freedom, does it? When we yield ourselves to the adversary, we become “things to be acted upon” (2 Nephi 2:14) instead of free to act for ourselves.

One of Satan’s most effective tools is to clothe bondage in the costume of liberty. Peter warned the early Saints about individuals among them who would try to pull them away from the path of righteousness. He described these wicked individuals as “having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot



*When we obey Satan, we give  
him power. When we obey God,  
He gives us power.*

cease from sin. . . . They speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh. . . . While they promise . . . liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage” (2 Peter 2:14, 18–19).

These people tried to lure others to sin by promising them liberty even though they themselves were in the bondage of sin. In the Book of Mormon, Korihor tried the same stunt,

with a twist. He taught doctrines that brought people to the conclusion that sinning would bring them freedom and happiness, but he also focused on convincing people that the commandments and ordinances bound them down—that belief in God, Jesus Christ, and the prophets kept them in bondage (see Alma 30).

That is a lie. The truth is that living the commandments makes us free. In fact, the irony is that Korihor was the one in

bondage. We don't know all of his sins, but one that bound him down was his lying. He always knew there was a God, but he repeatedly denied this fact and lied to others about it (see Alma 30:42, 52).

Today many individuals promote or condone sin, and parts of modern culture carry dangerous messages. For example, we see in the media a lot of modeling of sins with seemingly no negative consequences. We see meanness, lawbreaking, disrespect, immorality, immodesty, and profanity in an almost constant stream. Goodness and righteousness are often portrayed as naïve and silly at best or evil at worst.

### The Savior Delivers Us

Because we have sinned and thus have subjected ourselves to the will of the devil to some degree, we need to somehow be freed from the bondage of sin. Through His Atonement, Jesus Christ has power to break these bonds, these chains, this captivity.

When the Savior began His public ministry, He referenced a prophecy about Himself and His mission: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 4:18). Deliverance and liberty come through Him and His Atonement.

No matter our sins and weaknesses—dishonesty, pride, hypocrisy, laziness, greed, immorality, addictions, anger, Word of Wisdom problems—we can be freed from any degree of bondage. Each of us has experienced this as we have repented. We have felt true freedom as we have been forgiven and have jettisoned the behavior that tormented us.

Sometimes these bonds seem to burst, and we are immediately freed. At other times the cords are loosed rather than burst (see Alma 5:9–10). But whether this happens all at once or gradually, the long-term effect is the same: we are free! Either way, it is miraculous.

When we obey Satan, we give him power. When we obey God, He gives us power. This is not the message we get from

the world, but it is the truth. Real power, the power to become like the Savior, is found only in obedience. Real freedom is found only in obedience—in subjecting ourselves to God's will rather than to the will of the flesh or the will of the devil. Obedience brings freedom, power, joy, peace, and hope.

While obedience protects us from spiritual bondage and the misery associated with sin, it doesn't bring us a life without challenges. Things in this fallen world can bring misery and suffering, such as sickness, death, physical pain, and the actions of others. But the Savior's atoning power covers misery from these sources, and if we endure our challenges faithfully, they will have no eternal negative consequences for us. The misery resulting from sin, however, can be completely removed only if we repent.

A prophecy about the Millennium teaches that “because of the righteousness of [the Savior's] people, Satan has no power; wherefore, he cannot be loosed for the space of many years; for he hath no power over the hearts of the people, for they dwell in righteousness” (1 Nephi 22:26). This scripture speaks about the condition that will exist in the world when the people as a whole live in righteousness, but the principle can be true today for us individually.

By living righteously, we can be free from any power the adversary would like to exercise over us. He gains power only as we allow it by our choices. If something in our life bothers us and binds us down, let us repent. Let's get rid of it and increase the freedom in our lives.

Agency—the ability to make choices—is a crucial and wonderful gift, and we rejoice that we are here on earth, able to choose good over evil and to progress toward exaltation. As we use our agency to choose the right, reject evil, and love God, His grace is sufficient for us, and by that grace we will become perfected in Christ (see Moroni 10:32). ■

*From a devotional address, “Free to Choose Liberty or Captivity,” delivered at Brigham Young University on November 6, 2012. For the full address, go to [speeches.byu.edu](http://speeches.byu.edu).*

### NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 214.
2. James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. (1924), 63.



## 12 New Temples Announced

President Russell M. Nelson announced plans to build 12 new temples, the largest number of temples ever announced on the same day. The new temples will be built in:

**Auckland, New Zealand**  
**Davao, Philippines**  
**Lagos, Nigeria**  
**Mendoza, Argentina**  
**Phnom Penh, Cambodia**  
**Praia, Cape Verde**  
**Puebla, Mexico**  
**Salvador, Brazil**  
**San Juan, Puerto Rico**  
**Washington County, Utah, USA**  
**Yigo, Guam**  
**Yuba City, California, USA**

"THE BEST THINGS  
 IN THIS LIFE ARE  
**CENTERED ON  
 JESUS CHRIST**  
 AND  
 UNDERSTANDING  
 THE ETERNAL TRUTHS  
 OF WHO HE IS AND  
 WHO WE ARE IN  
 OUR RELATIONSHIP  
 WITH HIM."

Elder Jack N. Gerard of the Seventy, "Now Is The Time," *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 109.



### PONDER THIS . . .

#### "Are we giving our all to the Lord without reservation?"

Cristina B. Franco, Second Counselor in the Primary General Presidency, "The Joy of Unselfish Service," *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 56.

Share your thoughts on the *Ensign* Facebook page or record them in your journal!

### DIVING DEEPER

#### Taking His Name

**P**resident Russell M. Nelson reminded us of the importance of taking the Savior's name upon ourselves—both as disciples of Christ and as members of His Church. "When we omit His name from His Church, we are inadvertently removing *Him* as the central focus of our lives," he said.

"Taking the Savior's name upon us includes

declaring and witnessing to others—through our actions and our words—that Jesus is the Christ" ("The Correct Name of the Church," *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 88). Many other leaders also invited us to ponder how we might better take His name upon ourselves.

- President Henry B. Eyring invited us to ask ourselves two questions: "What must I be doing to take His name upon me?" and "How will I know when I am making progress?" ("Try, Try, Try," *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 91).
- Elder Robert C. Gay offered three ways we can take the Savior's name upon ourselves (see "Taking upon Ourselves the Name of Jesus Christ," *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 97–99).
- Elder Paul B. Pieper taught what it means to truly take the name of Jesus Christ (see "All Must Take upon Them the Name Given of the Father," *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 43–45).

Consider recording in your journal your thoughts and feelings while studying what it means to take the Lord's name upon you.

## TRY IT!

Here are a few invitations we heard from general conference. Consider reviewing the talks to add to this list of invitations.

- “Consider what we can do to be more embracing, accepting, and helpful to [new friends], starting this very next Sunday” (Ulisses Soares, “One in Christ,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 39).
- “Thoroughly and thoughtfully read this revelation [of the vision of the redemption of the dead, found in Doctrine and Covenants 138]” (M. Russell Ballard, “The Vision of the Redemption of the Dead,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 73).
- “Return to the Lord’s house with your wounded heart and your family names as frequently as possible” (Neil L. Andersen, “Wounded,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 85).

What are you doing differently because of what you learned at general conference? Submit your story at [ensign.lds.org](https://ensign.lds.org) or share it on [facebook.com/ensign.magazine](https://facebook.com/ensign.magazine).

## My Conference To-Dos

“A friend told me that while reading the general conference messages, he makes a list of what our Church leaders have asked us to do. Then he uses the list to set goals that will help him follow their counsel. I decided to start my own list. It has made a difference for me as I ponder the messages and consider what action I need to take. It really helps me focus on what’s most important.”

—Edna Washburn, Utah, USA



## ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**I used to have a testimony, but lately it has been harder to believe God is there. Can my faith ever be as strong as it once was?**

“For some, the act of believing is difficult. Sometimes our pride gets in the way. Perhaps we think that because we are intelligent, educated, or experienced, we simply cannot believe in God. And we begin to look at religion as foolish tradition.

“In my experience, belief is not so much like a painting we look at and admire and about which we discuss and theorize. It is more like a plow that we take into the fields and, by the sweat of our brow, create furrows in the earth that accept seeds and bear fruit that shall remain.

“Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. This is the promise to all who seek to believe.”

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Believe, Love, Do,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 47.

What questions did you have that were answered at conference? Share your experience on [facebook.com/ensign.magazine](https://facebook.com/ensign.magazine).

# From a Testimony of Tithing to Temple Covenants

By Michael R. Morris  
Church Magazines

For Ted and Carol Hyatt, the spiritual aspects of the Church's self-reliance initiative have made an eternal difference in their lives.

Carol Hyatt will never forget the day her bishop asked her to facilitate a self-reliance class on personal finances. She and her husband, Ted, had only recently returned to activity in the Church after a 42-year absence, and she was naturally shy.

Carol had known her bishop, Todd A. Josi, since he was a boy. Decades earlier, he had attended her Sunday School class.

"Now, Bishop," she frankly told him after she and Ted had begun attending church again, "I don't want to give a talk. I don't want to do a calling. I just want to come to church."

But two years later, Bishop Josi was sitting in the Hyatt home talking about the Church's Self-Reliance Services initiative—something Sister Hyatt had never heard of. After introducing it, the bishop asked her to facilitate a 12-week class on principles of successful financial stewardship. Then he gave her a copy of the *Personal Finances for Self-Reliance* manual.



"I don't know why I said yes," Sister Hyatt recalls. "It's frightening for me to be around people I don't know—and to think I had to be there one night a week

for 12 weeks with Church members who were certainly more ingrained in the gospel than I was. I didn't know if I'd even be able to help them."

## **“It Hit Me So Hard”**

Bishop Josi wasn’t surprised that Sister Hyatt accepted the assignment despite her hesitation. He says that during a stake self-reliance committee meeting in Forest Grove, Oregon, USA, a short time before, “It came to my mind that Sister Hyatt needed the blessing of facilitating the personal finances group. It just hit me so hard.”

Bishop Josi hoped that by facilitating the class, Sister Hyatt would overcome a major stumbling block to her spiritual progress: paying tithing. “As I drove home that evening,” he says, “I had a strong spiritual impression that as Sister Hyatt went through this class, she would come to understand the importance of paying tithing.”

Feeling nervous and ill-prepared, Sister Hyatt began facilitating her class in October 2017. As she led class discussions on managing finances, creating and sticking to a budget, preparing for hardship, getting out of debt, managing financial crises, and investing in the future, Sister Hyatt became comfortable as a facilitator but uncomfortable with her personal example.

When she read the manual in preparation for her third class, she learned that the “self-reliant approach to financial stewardship” includes paying tithes

and offerings.<sup>1</sup> She also learned that the foundation principle of that approach is repentance and obedience.<sup>2</sup>

“During one of the later lessons, I admitted to everybody that I was probably the only one in the whole group who wasn’t paying tithing,” she recalls. That admission prompted support from her 13 class members and discussions and testimonies about the blessings of the law of tithing.

“I don’t know why I was so troubled before about tithing, but I realized that I needed to get serious about getting a testimony of it,” says Sister Hyatt. “As I listened to encouragement from my group and from my husband, the Spirit said, ‘You can do this!’ I gained that little extra faith I needed, and I realized that I would be a better facilitator if I was doing what I was asking my class to do.”

## **The Windows of Heaven**

A few days after her 11th class, Sister Hyatt approached Bishop Josi at church, took his hand, and told him she was ready to live the law of tithing. “He was so excited,” she says.

Brother Hyatt, who was attending his wife’s class, was also excited. As he paid his own tithing during the previous year, he often encouraged Sister

Hyatt by reminding her of a blessing she longed for. “We won’t get to the temple unless you pay your tithing,” he would say.

On May 26, 2018, the windows of heaven opened and poured out a blessing on Ted and Carol Hyatt that they had not imagined possible months before when Sister Hyatt began facilitating her class. On that day, the day before their 58th anniversary, they made covenants and were sealed in the Portland Oregon Temple.

The Hyatts describe that experience as “a beautiful day and a marvelous blessing” for which they will always be grateful. Sister Hyatt adds that she will also always be grateful for an encouraging husband, an inspired bishop, and a class of students who, she feels, helped her more than she helped them. To show their love and support, nearly every member of her class attended the Hyatts’ sealing.

“People can gain so much from the Church’s self-reliance initiative, especially the spiritual part of it,” says Sister Hyatt. “It’s the spiritual part that makes it so valuable. For my husband and me, it has made an eternal difference.” ■

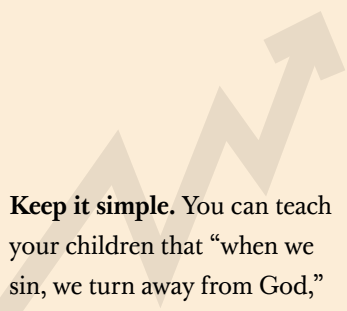
### **NOTES**

1. *Personal Finances for Self-Reliance* (2016), 42.

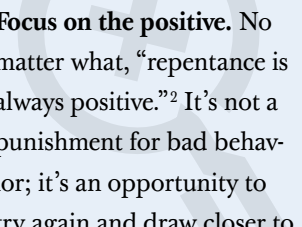
2. See *Personal Finances for Self-Reliance*, 36–37.

# 10 Tips for Teaching Repentance

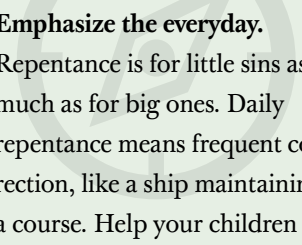
Repentance sometimes sounds scary or confusing to children and teens. Here are some tips for teaching repentance in a loving, empowering way.



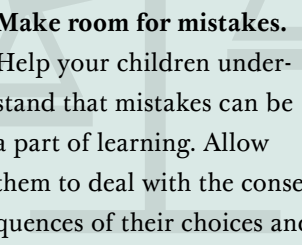
**Keep it simple.** You can teach your children that “when we sin, we turn away from God,” but “when we repent, we turn back toward God.”<sup>1</sup> We can turn back toward God by recognizing our wrongs, making things right, and trying hard to do better.



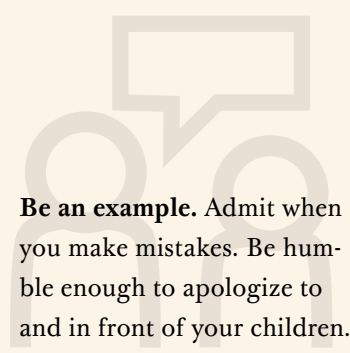
**Focus on the positive.** No matter what, “repentance is always positive.”<sup>2</sup> It’s not a punishment for bad behavior; it’s an opportunity to try again and draw closer to God. Encourage your children to think about what they’re doing right and how they can do more of that.



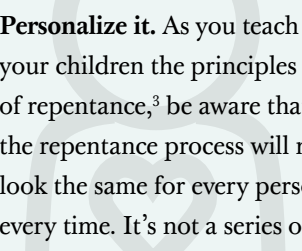
**Emphasize the everyday.** Repentance is for little sins as much as for big ones. Daily repentance means frequent correction, like a ship maintaining a course. Help your children recognize the small ways they can improve each day.



**Make room for mistakes.** Help your children understand that mistakes can be a part of learning. Allow them to deal with the consequences of their choices and help them figure out how to make things right again. Teach them to turn to God for help.



**Be an example.** Admit when you make mistakes. Be humble enough to apologize to and in front of your children. Let them see how you are striving to make things better, and share your testimony of how the Savior has helped you change.



**Personalize it.** As you teach your children the principles of repentance,<sup>3</sup> be aware that the repentance process will not look the same for every person every time. It’s not a series of boxes to be checked off; it’s an ongoing process of growth. It’s about the desires of our hearts and how we strive to align ourselves with the Savior. We can know we have fully repented when we feel peace, joy, and forgiveness.

**Take the long view.** It's easy to get discouraged when you make the same poor choices multiple times. Teach your children that as long as they keep repenting, God will keep forgiving them (see Moroni 6:8). Explain that trying is what really matters. It's through our striving and putting off the natural man (see Mosiah 3:19) that we become more like God.

**Distinguish between guilt and shame.** "Godly sorrow" is a requirement for repentance (see 2 Corinthians 7:9–10). But if your child feels unworthy or hopeless even after repenting, shame may be the culprit.<sup>4</sup> Remind them that Heavenly Father always loves them and that "if we sin, we are less worthy, but we are never worthless!"<sup>5</sup> If necessary, consider meeting with your bishop or a professional counselor.

#### NOTES

1. Neil L. Andersen, "Repent . . . That I May Heal You," *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 40.
2. Stephen W. Owen, "Repentance Is Always Positive," *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 48.

#### Understand the Savior's

**Atonement.** Teach your children that Jesus Christ atoned not only for our sins but for all of our suffering (see Alma 7:11–12). Assure your children that they "are not to blame for the harmful behavior of others."<sup>6</sup> Victims of abuse are completely innocent; help them turn to the Savior for peace and healing.

#### Continually point to the Savior.

Teach your children that the Savior understands what they are struggling with and can help them overcome it. Testify of Him frequently in your home. Encourage your children to pray, serve, study the scriptures, and do other things that will help them know Him better so they will naturally seek His help in overcoming their weaknesses. ■

3. See "Chapter 19: Repentance," *Gospel Principles* (2009), 107–13.
4. See Wendy Ulrich, "It Isn't a Sin to Be Weak," *Ensign*, Apr. 2015, 30–35.
5. Joy D. Jones, "Value beyond Measure," *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 14.
6. *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 7.

#### FOR CHILDREN

In this month's *Friend*:

- "A Promise to Try" (page 4)
- "A Little Better Every Day" (page 8)
- "Bright Idea" (page 9)
- "The Yo-Yo Decision" (page 22)

For other resources, visit [lessonhelps.lds.org](http://lessonhelps.lds.org) and click "Lesson Helps by Topic."

#### FOR TEENS

Questions and answers in this month's *New Era*:

- "I keep giving in to the same temptations. How can I move past those sins?" (page 42)
- "I still remember sins I've repented of, and I feel guilty. Why can I not forget my sins?" (page 43)

For other resources, visit [youth.lds.org](http://youth.lds.org).

# A Prayer to Get Us to the Temple

Several days before our ward was scheduled to travel to the Aba Nigeria Temple, the bishop called and asked me to lead our group. I agreed, and on the morning of our trip, we offered a prayer and boarded a bus to begin our journey.

On our way, we sang hymns. Joy beyond measure filled the air. We were making good time on our 10-hour journey, but just before noon, our bus developed a problem none of us could fix.

I ran to a nearby petrol station and found an attendant. I asked if she could direct me to a mechanic.

Without delay, she called two mechanics. They soon arrived and got to work. They discovered that the fan belt was defective. They worked for hours until they had exhausted all their knowledge. Then they called another mechanic.

He appeared confident when he arrived and said sarcastically, “What’s wrong with the fan belt that you could not fix?”

He worked for a while and then said, “What has happened here is beyond ordinary.” He picked up his tools and left. The other mechanics continued to search for a solution, but our situation seemed hopeless.

I turned to my fellow Saints and saw sadness on almost every face. As I thought about what to do next, a thought came to me: “Have you prayed over the problem?”

Immediately, I called the group together. We stood in a circle and prayed to our Heavenly Father to give the mechanics the knowledge they lacked. In less than five minutes, one of the mechanics came to see me.

“We have done it!” he said, beaming.

We rejoiced and thanked the Lord. I soon noticed that the other mechanic looked discouraged. I tried to congratulate him, but he said, “Are you congratulating me for taking six hours to fix one fan belt? I fixed two fan belts

before I came here. What happened here is beyond explanation.”

I told him God had intervened following our prayer.

“You prayed over it?” he asked.

“Yes, about five minutes ago.”

“Oh, that is wonderful of you!” he said. I paid the mechanics and they left. We all entered the bus and continued our journey. We finally reached the temple several hours later, grateful that Heavenly Father hears and answers our prayers. ■  
Isaac Ututu, Lagos, Nigeria



**O**n our 10-hour journey to the temple, our bus developed a problem none of us could fix.

**I** felt I could not partake of the sacrament with such resentful feelings in my heart. I prayed for the darkness to be removed.



## Heavenly Father Sent a Memo

**A**fter an 11-year struggle with dementia, my husband passed away. For me, his passing was bittersweet. I had been his caregiver, friend, and sweetheart, and though I was happy he no longer had to suffer, I missed him terribly. I thought I knew about grief, but the sadness and feelings of loss set me on a path I did not anticipate going down.

Much to my dismay and astonishment, negativity crept into my life. I felt ignored, useless, and invisible to family, friends, and ward members. I indulged in self-pity and felt resentful toward others.

One Sunday, I sat in the back of the chapel. I watched a friendly and outgoing sister meet with other ward members. She was kind and generous to everyone.

“But,” I thought, “she has *never* asked how I am doing, she has *never* offered her condolences, she has *never* validated how hard my husband’s passing has been for me!”

These negative thoughts continued as the sacrament hymn began. I felt I could not partake of the sacrament with such resentful feelings in my heart.

“You must ask for help to get rid of these feelings *now*!” I thought.

I prayed for the darkness to be removed. This sister did not deserve my resentment in the slightest. I prayed for forgiveness and for help to let go of my resentment. By the time a deacon stood in front of me with the sacrament tray, I felt I could partake of the sacrament. Throughout the next week, I continued to pray for guidance.

The next Sunday, I walked into the foyer and saw the woman I had focused on the week before.

“Oh, Carol!” she said. “I have been thinking so much about you! I can only imagine how difficult things have been for you. You were your husband’s caregiver for *so* long. This must be a difficult adjustment for you. How are you doing?”

We talked for a few minutes, and she gave me a wonderful hug. I was speechless! I sat down on my usual bench in the chapel with a big smile. Immediately I thanked my Father in Heaven. He had sent this good sister a memo to say the words I needed to hear. From that point on, I have felt that Heavenly Father is mindful of me. He has given me the strength to face the “new normal” that has begun in my life. ■

Carol Whitaker, Oregon, USA



# I'm Glad I Listened

During the middle of a busy day in my neurology clinic, I was running behind schedule. Fortunately, one visit went quickly. I felt a sense of relief as I stood up to leave, but my patient began to tell me something unrelated to our visit. Despite my impatience, I felt that I should sit back down and listen.

He told me that recently his wife had started feeling ill. “She knew what was happening,” he said, “but she didn’t tell me because she was scared to go to the hospital.”

Within several days, she was spending all of her time in bed. She became

confused and didn’t make sense when she talked. My patient had serious health problems himself, and soon their conditions both deteriorated. They could no longer care for each other. When my patient’s sister-in-law visited them, she was alarmed. She called for two ambulances to take them to the hospital. Doctors soon discovered that his wife had advanced breast cancer.

“I never spoke with my wife again,” the man said.

His wife suffered a heart attack and was put on life support. My patient described being wheeled from his own

hospital room to the intensive care unit to see his wife one last time. Then he told the doctors to withdraw life support.

The man stopped speaking. Apparently he had said all that he wanted to say. I told him how sorry I felt. He shook my hand and left. I’m glad I sat back down to listen. I’m glad I didn’t leave when I intended to! How would he have felt if I had rushed out of the room right when he was about to share his burden?

I don’t know why my patient shared his story with me that day, but I know why I listened. Alma taught that those who desire to be baptized and to follow Jesus Christ should be “willing to bear one another’s burdens, . . . mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:8–9).

My patient was bearing a burden, and in a small way, I could help him bear it. He was mourning, and I mourned with him. He stood in need of comfort, so I comforted him. In this simple way, I tried to honor my promise to be more like my Savior. ■

Alan B. Sanderson, Utah, USA

*My patient began to tell me something unrelated to our visit. Despite my impatience, I felt that I should sit back down and listen.*



# A Letter from the Prophet

I was hesitant about joining the Church when my husband introduced it to me. He gave me a Book of Mormon, and after many lessons and nearly two years working with the missionaries, I was baptized in 2007. I struggled for a while after I became a member of the Church. I did not understand the importance of modern-day prophets. In my mind, a prophet had to be someone like Moses with his staff.

“Does the prophet speak to God?” I asked my husband.

“Yes,” he said.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, the prophet speaks to God.”

“Then I am going to ask the Lord to tell the prophet to send me a letter saying this is Jesus Christ’s Church.”

“Oh no!” my husband said. “It doesn’t happen like that!”

I was determined.

“If the prophet speaks to the Lord, then the Lord will speak with the prophet, and he will send me a letter.”

At church one Sunday, a missionary handed me a DVD and asked me to watch it with my family. It contained the testimonies of the prophet and apostles. The first person to speak was President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008). I was impressed. He seemed sincere, and I felt he was telling the truth.

“See, this is your testimony of the prophet,” my husband said.

“No, I still want a letter from him,” I replied.

One night, the missionaries arrived at our home and handed me a magazine.

“We don’t know why, but we felt we should bring this to you,” they said. It was a copy of the October 2006 *Liahona*, still wrapped in plastic.

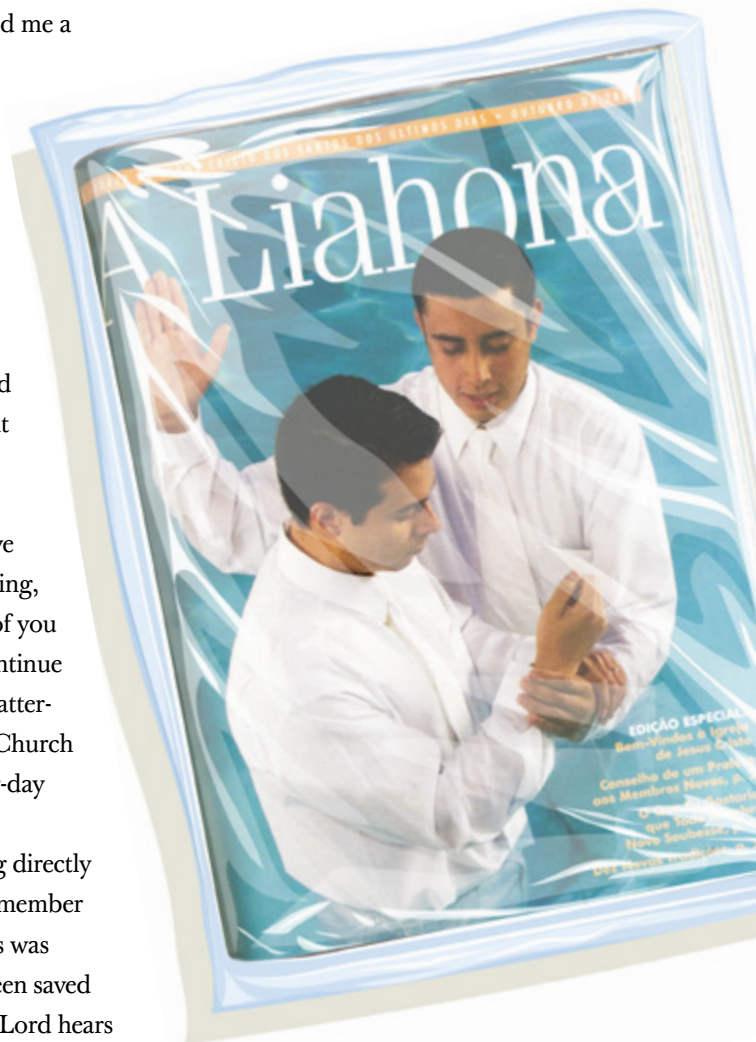
I opened it and found an article from President Hinckley addressed to new members of the Church. He said, “I leave this testimony, my blessing, and my love with each of you and my invitation to continue to be part of this great latter-day miracle that is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”<sup>1</sup>

I felt he was speaking directly to me. I was not even a member of the Church when this was published, but it had been saved for me. I know that the Lord hears our prayers and that He speaks to a living prophet today. ■

**Kelly Santos Figueiredo Ribeiro,**  
Goiás, Brazil

#### NOTE

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “A Perfect Brightness of Hope—to New Members of the Church,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Oct. 2006, 5.



**T**he missionaries handed me a copy of the October 2006 *Liahona*. “We don’t know why, but we felt we should bring this to you,” they said.



By Elder  
Craig C. Christensen  
Of the Seventy

# Humble, Meek, and Ready to Hear

*Our six-year-old son helped me appreciate the importance of being ready to hear the still, small voice of the Spirit.*

In 1994, construction on the Bountiful Utah Temple was completed. Like many, we were anxious to take our young family to the open house prior to the dedication. We labored diligently to prepare our children to enter the temple, praying earnestly that they would have a spiritual experience so that the temple would become a focal point in their lives.

As we reverently walked through the temple, I found myself admiring the magnificent architecture, the elegant finishes, the light shining through towering windows, and many of the inspiring paintings. Every aspect of this sacred building was truly exquisite.

Stepping into the celestial room, I suddenly realized that our youngest son, six-year-old Ben, was clinging to my leg. He appeared anxious—perhaps even a little troubled.

“What’s wrong, Son?” I whispered.

“Daddy,” he replied, “what’s happening here? I’ve never felt this way before.”

Recognizing that this was likely the first time our young son had felt the influence of the Holy Ghost in such a powerful way, I knelt down on the floor next to him. While other visitors stepped around us, Ben and I spent several minutes, side by side, learning about the Holy Ghost together. I was amazed at the ease with which we were able to discuss his sacred feelings. As we talked, it became clear that what was most inspiring to Ben was not what he *saw* but what he *felt*—not the

physical beauty around us but the still, small voice of the Spirit of God within his heart.

I thought it was important to differentiate between what he was feeling, which was the influence of the Holy Ghost, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, which he would receive after baptism. I shared with him what I had learned from my own experiences, even as his childlike wonder reawakened in me a deep sense of gratitude for this unspeakable gift from God—the gift of the Holy Ghost (see Doctrine and Covenants 121:26).

As I reflect back on my experience with Ben in the Bountiful Utah Temple, I have many sweet feelings and impressions. One clear recollection is that while I was absorbed in the grandeur of what I could see, a small child near my side was recognizing the powerful feelings in his heart. With a gentle reminder, I was invited not only to pause and kneel down but also to heed the Savior’s call to become as a little child—humble, meek, and ready to hear the still, small voice of His Spirit. ■

*Adapted from “An Unspeakable Gift from God,” Ensign, Nov. 2012, 12–15.*



ERNST ZIMMERMAN (1852–1901), *THE TWELVE YEAR OLD JESUS IN THE TEMPLE*, 1879, OIL ON CANVAS, 63 X 94.1/2 INCHES.  
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF ART, PURCHASED WITH FUNDS PROVIDED BY ROY AND CAROL CHRISTENSEN, 2016.



**The Twelve Year Old Jesus in the Temple**  
Ernst Zimmerman

*"And when [Jesus] was twelve years old . . . they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, and they were hearing him, and asking him questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers" (Luke 2:42, 46–47; verse 46 from Joseph Smith Translation).*



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