

# Ensign



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Example**

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THE  
CHURCH  
IS HERE

# Palmyra New York,



# USA



PHOTOGRAPH BY ANNE MICHELLE BAILEY

Many significant events in the early days of the Restoration took place in and around Palmyra, beginning with the First Vision in a grove by the Smith family home (replica shown at left).

Acres of wooded land that the Smith family purchased in 1817



People visit the Sacred Grove each year

100,000

From the Smith home to the Hill Cumorah



5,000

First-edition copies of the Book of Mormon printed at the Grandin Print Shop in Palmyra

Members when the Church was officially organized in Fayette, New York, 30 miles (48 km) from Palmyra



1820 The First Vision

1823 Angel Moroni visits Joseph Smith

1830 Book of Mormon published; Church officially organized on April 6

2000 Palmyra New York Temple dedicated on April 6

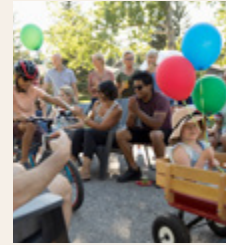


Learn more about other Church history sites at [history.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://history.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).



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## On Sacred Ground

This year we celebrate the 200th anniversary of Joseph Smith's First Vision. It began the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the beautiful Sacred Grove. That miraculous event changed the course of history, including all of our lives. But most importantly to me, it has become personal and life changing.

Serving with my husband in the New York/Pennsylvania Historic Sites Mission, I spent a lot of time walking that sacred ground. At the Smith family farm in Palmyra, New York, I had the privilege of giving tours to visitors from around the world and all walks of life.

We can all learn from the examples of the Smith family and other early Church members. Joseph Smith's First Vision teaches us how to receive revelation, as President Eyring explains on page 12. Other General Authorities testify of the truthfulness of that vision on page 18.

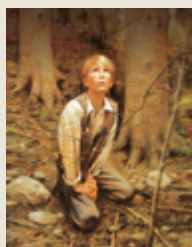
It is my simple prayer that as we commemorate 200 years since the First Vision, we may reflect on all the blessings that we have received as part of this ongoing Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sister Karen Russon Neff


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

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#### 4 Truths I've Learned from Studying Joseph Smith

By Jessica Nelson

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#### Helping Children and Youth Develop a Growth Mind-Set

By Devin Durrant

How can we help children and youth see life as a series of opportunities to become more like the Savior?



#### Fight or Flight or Love?

By Lee N. Johnson and AnnaLisa Carr

In moments when our emotions are high, how can we respond calmly and with love, especially in our families.

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# WHAT HAPPENS AFTER WE DIE?



## 1. Spirit world:

“The spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace” (Alma 40:12).



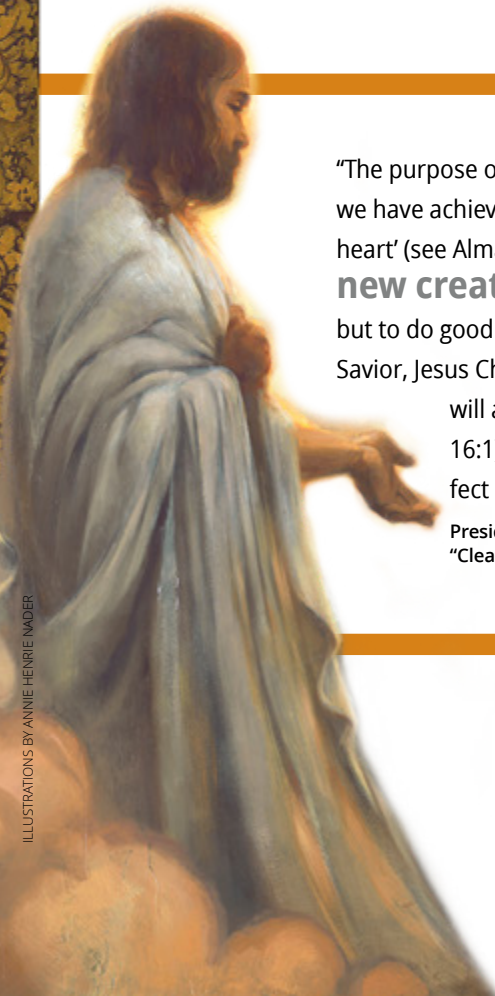
## 2. Resurrection:

“The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame” (Alma 40:23).



## 3. Judgment:

“When all men [and women] shall have passed from this first death unto life, inasmuch as they have become immortal, they must appear before the judgment-seat of the Holy One of Israel” (2 Nephi 9:15).



“The purpose of this Final Judgment is to determine whether we have achieved what Alma described as a ‘mighty change of heart’ (see Alma 5:14, 26), where **we have become new creatures**, with ‘no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually’ (Mosiah 5:2). The judge of this is our Savior, Jesus Christ (see 2 Nephi 9:41). After His judgment we will all confess ‘that his judgments are just’ (Mosiah 16:1), because His omniscience has given Him a perfect knowledge of all of our acts and desires.”

President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “Cleansed by Repentance,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 93.



## 4. Degree of glory:

“All things shall be restored to their proper order, every thing to its natural frame—mortality raised to immortality, corruption to incorruption—raised to endless happiness to inherit the kingdom of God, or to endless misery to inherit the kingdom of the devil” (Alma 41:4).





## Esther Cox

Louisiana, USA



*It was just another day of flooding after heavy rains hit southern Louisiana. But when Esther Cox's two-year-old son, Matthew, fell into the deep, swift current of a nearby ditch, it became the worst day of her life. By the time Esther's husband, George, found Matthew, he had been in the water for 15 minutes.*

**LESLIE NILSSON, PHOTOGRAPHER**

They call Matthew's condition "near drowning with hypoxia," which means brain damage from lack of oxygen. It was the worst day of my life, but Heavenly Father gave him back to me. He's still my baby. I've been taking care of him for 20 years. We have our ups and downs, but he's a blessing. He's great. And Heavenly Father has helped me through it all.

There's no love like the love from a person with special needs. We love each other very much. We have a very special bond. God blesses me. He really does.

### DISCOVER MORE

See more about Esther's journey of faith, including additional photos, in the digital version of this article in the Gospel Library app or at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/E2206](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/E2206).

Learn about resources for families of those with special needs at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/E2207](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/E2207).

# Ministering Principles

## MINISTERING THROUGH FAMILY HISTORY

**H**elping someone with their family history is a powerful way to minister. As you connect others with their ancestors through family stories and details, you end up filling gaps in their hearts that they sometimes never knew they had (see Malachi 4:5–6).

Whether it's a lifetime Church member or someone who has never heard of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, all of God's children have a yearning to know about where they came from.

It often doesn't take long to leave a deep and lasting impression, as demonstrated in the following stories.





ILLUSTRATION BY JOSHUA DENNIS; BACKGROUND IMAGE AND CELL PHONE FROM GETTY IMAGES

## Finding Family at 30,000 Feet

Recently on a flight home, I found myself next to Steve, who shared with me parts of his personal story. He had graduated from high school, entered the U.S. Army as a communications specialist at 18 years old, and soon began working at the White House, providing communications support to the President of the United States. From age 18 to 26, he served two U.S. Presidents. His stories were fascinating!

“Steve,” I said, “you have to write these stories down for your posterity! They need to have these stories firsthand from your perspective.” He agreed.

Then the Spirit prompted me to ask him what he knew about his ancestors. Steve knew plenty about his mother’s side, including a story of how his family had once eaten dinner with Abraham Lincoln while he had been campaigning through the countryside during the 1860 U.S. presidential election.

He knew very little about his father’s side, however. He really wanted to know more. I pulled out my phone and opened the FamilySearch app. “Steve, we can find your family right now!”

I connected to the in-flight Wi-Fi. I rested my phone on the tray table in front of me so we could both see. We searched FamilyTree. Within minutes we were both staring at his great-grandfather’s marriage certificate to his great-grandmother.

“That’s them!” he said. “I remember her last name now!”

The spirit of excitement poured over both of us. We worked on building profiles for his lesser-known ancestors for the next 45 minutes. He asked me to promise him that we



would continue searching together in Colorado. We exchanged contact information as the plane was landing.

Here we were, flying 30,000 feet (9,144 m) in the air, with a device as small as my hand, searching for a man and a woman married 100 years ago who had been lost to him and his family. Incredible! But we found them. Families were linked. Stories were remembered. Feelings of gratitude were felt for the technology and the tools. It was nothing short of a miracle.

**Jonathan Petty, Colorado, USA**

## Recipe for Ministering

Ashley, a sister I minister to, and I both have cookbooks from our grandmothers. Hers is from her great-grandmother, and mine is a book I put together when I inherited my Grandma Greenwood's recipe box after she passed away.

Ashley and I both chose a recipe from our cookbooks, and we got together after work one night to try them out. She chose a blondie dessert recipe, so we made it first and put it in the oven. I chose "pink chip dip"—a staple at every Greenwood family party. Ashley's daughter Alice helped us taste test the food. Then, because Ashley didn't want her kids to eat all the blondies, she cut them up and delivered them to the sisters to whom she ministers.

The thing I loved most about our recipe night is that as we cooked and baked, we talked about all the regular ministering topics—her struggles and mine. But we also talked about our grandmothers and moms, which was tender for both of us.

**Jenifer Greenwood, Utah, USA**

## Surrounded by New Family

Maria had been less active for more than 20 years. A few months ago, we spent a couple of hours with her in our home, exploring her family through census and other records. At one point she burst into tears exclaiming, "I've learned more about my family in two hours than I've known in my whole life!"

At the end of our time together, we introduced to her the Relatives Around Me feature of the FamilyTree app. It turned out that my husband and I both are distantly related to Maria. She burst into tears again, saying she had thought she was alone. She never knew she had family in the area. A few weeks later Maria met with our bishop. She is now working on preparing for the temple, and she has met many "new" cousins in our ward!

**Carol Riner Everett, North Carolina, USA**



## Specific Ways to Help

Family history can open doors for ministering opportunities when it seems like nothing else will. Here are a few ideas you might try.

- Help them upload family photos to FamilySearch.
- Help them record and upload audio recordings of family history stories, especially ones that match photos.
- Create a fan chart or other printable family history document that you can give as a gift.
- Teach ways to capture their own history through keeping a journal in a way they enjoy. Audio journal? Photo journal? Video logs? There are many options for those who don't prefer standard journal formats.
- Go to the temple together to do ordinances for ancestors. Or offer to do ordinances for their family names if they have more than they can handle.
- Get together to share family traditions.
- Take a family history class together.
- Find other ideas at [ministering.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/ministering) > Family History Activities > In-Home Activities. ■



### INVITATION TO ACT

Consider those you minister to. How could you use family history to bless their lives?

### SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES

Send us your experiences as you have ministered to others or have been ministered to. Go to [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) and click "Submit an Article or Feedback."





**By President  
Henry B. Eyring**  
Second Counselor  
in the First  
Presidency

# The First Vision

## A Pattern for Personal Revelation

---

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught from his experience in the Sacred Grove how we can receive personal revelation as a part of our daily lives.


**T**he 200th anniversary of what we call “Joseph Smith’s First Vision” is a great opportunity for us to increase our faith in his prophetic mission and to learn from his example how to increase our own capacity to receive personal revelation from God.

When 14-year-old Joseph Smith walked out of a grove of trees in Palmyra, New York, USA, he knew for himself that God communicates with His children in mortality. He believed the words he had read in his Bible:

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

“But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed” (James 1:5–6).

Joseph Smith acted fearlessly on that promise, as can we all. President Russell M. Nelson has said this about our opportunity: “If Joseph Smith’s transcendent experience in the Sacred Grove teaches us anything, it is that the heavens are open and that God speaks to His children.”<sup>1</sup>



God keeps His promise to communicate with His children in mortality if they ask and qualify to receive that communication. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught from his experience in the First Vision, and from the great flood of revelation that came to him through the Restoration, how we can receive personal revelation as a part of our daily lives.

“When we are ready to come to Him,” Joseph taught, “He is ready to come to us.”<sup>2</sup>

### **The Heavens Are Open**

Our challenge is to act so that we can receive the messages of truth Heavenly Father is ready to send to us as revelation and to recognize what He has already sent. Joseph Smith’s experience provides an example of that. He had likely read the book of James and other biblical books several times, as we have. But one day, by the influence of the Holy Ghost, he recognized the message that led him to the Sacred Grove. Here is his account of discovering a message from God sent long before:

“While I was laboring under the extreme difficulties caused by the contests of these parties of religionists, I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads: *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

“Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did; for how to act I did not know, and unless I could get more wisdom than I then had, I would never know; for the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible” (Joseph Smith—History 1:11–12).

Joseph Smith’s experience is a pattern we can follow to recognize personal messages from God. Why did a scriptural passage come with great power and enter with great force into every feeling of his heart? And why did he reflect on it again and again?

There may be many reasons God could speak so powerfully to young Joseph, but a primary reason was that his heart was ready.

### **A Broken Heart Is a Prepared Heart**

Joseph had a broken heart for at least two reasons. He wanted forgiveness of his sins and weaknesses, which he knew could come only through Jesus Christ. And he was desperate to know which of the contending churches was right and which he should join.

Joseph had been prepared with faith that Jesus is the Christ, his Savior. With that faith and with a humble heart, he was ready. He said of his feelings at that time, “I cried unto the Lord for mercy, for there was none else to whom I could go and obtain mercy.”<sup>3</sup>

He was prepared, as we can be, to claim the promise of James. The flow of revelation that came allowed the Lord to change Joseph’s life and bless the lives of all of Heavenly Father’s children, and their families, who have come or will ever come into mortality.

A transcendent blessing for you and me is that we can learn from Joseph’s example how to receive light and knowledge from God. By following Joseph’s example, we can bring lasting joy to those we love and serve for the Lord. And then their example can pass the blessing of personal revelation along in a chain whose end we cannot see but that Heavenly Father can see.

### **Preparing Ourselves for Revelation**

Joseph’s pattern of preparation to receive personal revelation was simple and is easy to emulate, but it is not necessarily a single set of steps, one leading to another. You are a unique child of God, so you have different capacities for learning and different ways of learning truth.





Yet from Joseph's example, you can see how a few revelations of light and truth are essential to preparing to receive continuing personal revelation. The Lord knew that fact when He gave the sacrament prayers to each of us as a template for preparing to receive personal revelation through the Holy Ghost.

It may be different for you, but when I hear the words "O God, the Eternal Father" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79), a warm feeling of love comes to me. The words of the sacrament prayers bring to my mind the memory of what I felt coming out of a baptismal font in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, when I was eight years old. I knew then that Jesus was my Savior, and I felt the joy of being clean. Sometimes I remember a painting of Him on the cross and coming out of His tomb. Mostly what comes to me is a feeling of gratitude and love for Him.

When I hear the words that I am to witness my willingness to "always remember him and keep his commandments," I feel a humbling need for repentance and forgiveness. Then, when I hear the promise that I may have His Spirit to be with me (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:77), I feel that it is true. And every time, I feel light, peace, and confidence that I can hear revealed messages from God.

Fourteen-year-old Joseph Smith did not have the sacrament prayers

when he was being prepared for the personal revelations that came in the Sacred Grove and during the rest of his life. But he followed a pattern we can all follow to qualify for continuing personal revelation:

- He studied the words God had already revealed in the scriptures.
- He pondered what he had read and felt.
- He returned to the scriptures often and carefully.
- Out of the faith he gained by studying and pondering, he resolved to pray.
- When revelation came, he received truth and light, lived the truth he had been given, and sought more truth.
- He returned to the scriptures again and received further revelation from God, which he wrote down.
- He continued to pray and obey, thus receiving even further light and instructions.



President Nelson has described the wonderful opportunity that comes as we follow the example of Joseph Smith: “In like manner, what will your seeking open for you? What wisdom do you lack? What do you feel an urgent need to know or understand? Follow the example of the Prophet Joseph. Find a quiet place where you can regularly go. Humble yourself before God. Pour out your heart to your Heavenly Father. Turn to Him for answers and for comfort.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Satan Opposes Revelation**

As you follow the example of Joseph Smith, you will study carefully his example of courage and persistence. You may not encounter the resistance he faced in the Sacred Grove as you pray, but you would be wise to remember it. Joseph described that resistance this way:

“After I had retired to the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me, and finding myself alone, I knelt down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction.

“But, exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment

when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction—not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world, who had such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being—just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me” (Joseph Smith—History 1:15–16).

That terrible opposition, which continued throughout Joseph’s life, came because Lucifer wanted to stop the revelation that would lead to the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Your prayers for revelation from God will face lesser opposition, but you need to follow Joseph’s example of courage and persistence.

Satan will likely use more subtle means to oppose your efforts to receive and retain personal revelation. One way will be his intent to send you lies, his method of false revelation. He will try to reach you with messages intended to make you believe that there is no God, no

resurrected Jesus Christ, no living prophets or revelation, that Joseph Smith was deluded, and that your feelings and the whisperings from the Holy Ghost are the delusion of “a frenzied mind” (Alma 30:16).

He will launch those lies at you, just as he assailed Joseph Smith, at the very moment you are about to pray and again after you have received revelation. I have found two ways to escape those attacks.

First, never delay an impression to pray. Leave no opening for doubts to arise. President Brigham Young (1801–77) said that the person who waits to feel like praying is less likely to pray.<sup>5</sup>

Second, quickly write down the messages you receive from God. I have found that the spiritual impression that was clear one minute can be blurred or gone a few minutes later. Even in the middle of the night, I have learned to get up and write down impressions. Otherwise they may be lost.

In this, Joseph provides another lesson for us. He wrote down the experience of his First Vision several times, and he described it to several people over the years. Like other prophets, even the Prophet Joseph learned the importance, and difficulty, of capturing revealed truth in words.

### Revelation Blesses Our Posterity

Like Joseph Smith, we can bless our children and our children’s children with words of revelation we receive from God. Because we are individuals with unique needs, perhaps only some of the revelation we

receive for ourselves will apply to those for whom we are responsible to God. But the written evidence that God has spoken to us can be to them the same blessing the Prophet Joseph gave to us.

The First Vision shows us that the heavens are open. God listens to our prayers. He reveals Himself and His Son to us. The Holy Ghost speaks to the hearts of those who are prepared to hear and feel the still, small voice. We can pass those lessons and that message on to those we love and who will follow us.

Thanks be to our benevolent Father in Heaven, who loves us, hears our prayers, and said of the Savior in our day, “*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). Thanks be to the Lord Jesus Christ, who restored His Church through the Prophet Joseph Smith. And thanks be to the Holy Ghost, who is eager to be our constant companion.

I testify that the answer is “Yes” to the child’s prayer:

*Heavenly Father, are you really there?  
And do you hear and answer ev’ry child’s prayer?*<sup>6</sup>

I pray that we will, as did the Prophet Joseph Smith and as does our living prophet today, accept the invitation from our loving Heavenly Father, from our Savior, and from the Holy Ghost to receive the light and truth of personal revelation every day of our lives. ■

#### NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 95.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 41.
3. Joseph Smith, in “First Vision Accounts,” 1832 Account, Gospel Topics Essays, [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/topics/essays; punctuation modernized](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org/topics/essays; punctuation modernized).
4. Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” 95.
5. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 45.
6. “A Child’s Prayer,” *Children’s Songbook*, 12–13.







# Eight Truths from the First Vision

On a clear spring morning two hundred years ago in rural, upstate New York, in a quiet grove of trees, God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to young Joseph Smith. This miraculous event ended centuries of uncertainty and speculation about the nature of God, the need for continuing revelation, and other eternal truths long forgotten or clouded by spiritual darkness.

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, who referred to the First Vision as “possibly the most singular event to occur on the earth since the Resurrection,” outlined eight truths restored to the earth by this remarkable event.<sup>1</sup> As we commemorate the 200th anniversary of the First Vision, consider these truths and the many testimonies of modern prophets who give witness not only to the reality of the First Vision but also to the truths it reveals.



### **1. God our Father is a personal being, and men and women were made in His image.**

“Joseph Smith learned in those minutes [of the First Vision], however long or brief, more about the nature of God than all of the learned divines of all time had ever learned.”

—President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008)<sup>2</sup>

“God our Father has ears with which to hear our prayers. He has eyes with which to see our actions. He has a mouth with which to speak to us. He has a heart with which to feel compassion and love. He is real. He is living. We are his children made in his image.” —President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018)<sup>3</sup>

### **2. Jesus is a personage, separate and distinct from the Father.**

“In his First Vision, Joseph Smith saw two distinct personages, two beings, thus clarifying that the then-prevailing beliefs concerning God and the Godhead were not true.

“In contrast to the belief that God is an incomprehensible and unknowable mystery is the truth that the nature of God and our relationship to Him is knowable and is the key to everything else in our doctrine.” —President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency<sup>4</sup>

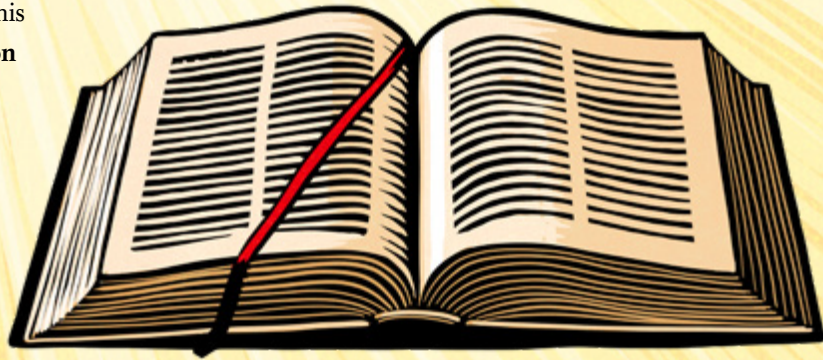
### **3. Jesus Christ was declared by the Father to be His Son.**

“We bear testimony, as His duly ordained Apostles—that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. He is the great King Immanuel, who stands today on the right hand of His Father. He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come.” —

“The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles”<sup>5</sup>

### **4. Jesus was the conveyer of revelation, as taught in the Bible.**

“All revelation since the fall has come through Jesus Christ, who is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. . . . The Father [Elohim] has never dealt with man directly and personally since the fall, and he has never appeared except to introduce and bear record of the Son.” —President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972)<sup>6</sup>

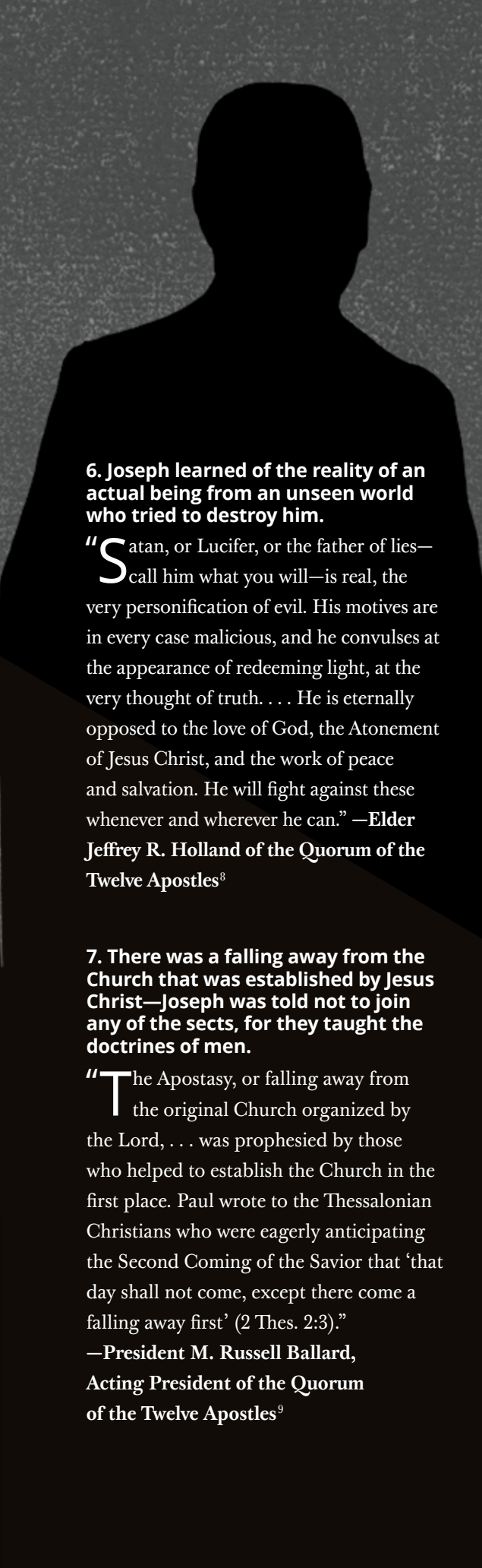


### **5. The promise of James to ask of God for wisdom was fulfilled.**

“The Prophet Joseph Smith set a pattern for us to follow in resolving our questions. Drawn to the promise of James that if we lack wisdom we may ask of God, the boy Joseph took his question directly to Heavenly Father. . . .

“In like manner, what will your seeking open for you? What wisdom do you lack? What do you feel an urgent need to know or understand? Follow the example of the Prophet Joseph. Find a quiet place where you can regularly go. Humble yourself before God. Pour out your heart to your Heavenly Father. Turn to Him for answers and for comfort.”

—President Russell M. Nelson<sup>7</sup>



**6. Joseph learned of the reality of an actual being from an unseen world who tried to destroy him.**

“Satan, or Lucifer, or the father of lies—call him what you will—is real, the very personification of evil. His motives are in every case malicious, and he convulses at the appearance of redeeming light, at the very thought of truth. . . . He is eternally opposed to the love of God, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and the work of peace and salvation. He will fight against these whenever and wherever he can.” —Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles<sup>8</sup>

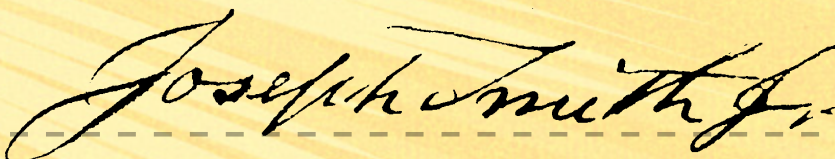
**7. There was a falling away from the Church that was established by Jesus Christ—Joseph was told not to join any of the sects, for they taught the doctrines of men.**

“The Apostasy, or falling away from the original Church organized by the Lord, . . . was prophesied by those who helped to establish the Church in the first place. Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Christians who were eagerly anticipating the Second Coming of the Savior that ‘that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first’ (2 Thes. 2:3).”

—President M. Russell Ballard,  
Acting President of the Quorum  
of the Twelve Apostles<sup>9</sup>

**8. Joseph Smith became a witness for God and His Son, Jesus Christ.**

“Joseph Smith’s testimony of Jesus is that He lives, ‘for [he] saw him, even on the right hand of God; and [he] heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father’ (D&C 76:23; see also verse 22). I appeal to all who hear or read this message to seek through prayer and study of the scriptures that same witness of the divine character, the Atonement, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.” —Elder D. Todd Christofferson<sup>10</sup> ■



**NOTES**

1. James E. Faust, “The Magnificent Vision Near Palmyra,” *Ensign*, May 1984, 67.
2. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Inspirational Thoughts,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1997, 3.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “I Know That My Redeemer Lives,” in Conference Report, Apr. 1966, 63.
4. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Godhead and the Plan of Salvation,” *Ensign*, May 2017, 100.
5. “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign*, May 2017, inside front cover.
6. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (1954), 1:27.
7. Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 95.
8. Jeffrey R. Holland, “We Are All Enlisted,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 44.
9. M. Russell Ballard, “How Is It with Us?” *Ensign*, May 2000, 33.
10. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Doctrine of Christ,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 89.

**FAMILY DISCUSSION**

- Why is it important for each of us to have our own testimony of the First Vision?
- Share a time when you felt that your prayers were answered or you felt confident that God was listening.
- Share your testimony of Joseph Smith and invite other family members to do the same.



# Celebrating the **RESTORATION**

Easy activity ideas for families and other groups

**T**wo hundred years ago, a 14-year-old boy went to the woods with questions. The answers he received opened the doors for the Restoration of the Lord's Church. In commemoration, the following ideas could be adapted for use in families, youth groups, wards, or branches.

## **Musical Presentation with Narration**

Identify songs and scriptures that you could organize to tell the story of the Restoration. These could come from Joseph Smith—History, other scriptures, and hymns about the Restoration from the hymnbook and the *Children's Songbook*. Invite people to help read the parts and perform the music. If possible, consider having a 14-year-old boy read Joseph Smith's words.

## **Art Display**

Invite people to create artwork about the early events of the Restoration. It could include paintings, illustrations,

sculptures, photographs, and so on. Ask them to choose an event or theme from the Restoration for their art. Schedule a time and place to display them all together and invite others to come and see them.

## **Sacred Grove Activity**

Find a peaceful place away from distractions, like Joseph did. Consider a setting in nature if there's a place near enough to your home. Read Joseph Smith's account of his going to the Sacred Grove to pray. Invite participants to share how they received a testimony of the Restoration of the gospel or experiences when Heavenly Father answered their prayers.

## **Special Devotional**

Ask someone to prepare a presentation about the Restoration. The speaker could be a Church leader, a gifted teacher, or someone with a good background in Church history. Invite friends or neighbors to learn about the Restoration and what it means for us today.





### Scripture Power

Gather everyone together with their personal copies of the scriptures. Joseph Smith studied the scriptures, believing he would find answers. Read James 1:5 together. Joseph said these words entered “with great force into every feeling of [his] heart” (Joseph Smith—History 1:12). Invite participants to share verses of scripture that have had a powerful effect on them or that have provided answers to their questions.

### Parade

Organize a simple parade with different individuals or groups representing different events, revealed truths, or blessings of the Restoration. If circumstances allow, invite each individual or group to share the significance of the event, truth, or blessing they represented. Perhaps you could have a parade just for children.

### Movie Time

Get together to watch the short video “Ask of God: Joseph Smith’s First Vision,” found on Church of JesusChrist.org. Discuss what you can learn about prayer from Joseph’s example. Share how communicating with Heavenly Father makes you feel.

### STORYTELLING

Can you tell the account of Joseph Smith’s First Vision? Cut out the 10 statements below, mix them up, and then try to arrange them in the right order. Make it a game by making multiple copies and seeing who can finish first or with the fewest mistakes. Check your answers by reading Joseph Smith—History 1:7–20. Then pair up and tell the account or share your testimony about it to a friend. (Correct order: 3, 9, 8, 5, 7, 1, 10, 6, 2, 4.)

1. Joseph prays aloud for the first time in his life.
2. Jesus Christ tells Joseph not to join any of the existing churches.
3. Members of Joseph’s family join one of the Christian churches.
4. Joseph tells his mother that he knows that the churches his family members have joined are not true.
5. Joseph decides to pray and ask God for wisdom.
6. Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ appear.
7. Joseph goes into the woods.
8. Joseph reads James 1:5 in the Bible.
9. Joseph wonders which church is true.
10. Satan attacks Joseph so he cannot speak. ■



“AS WE FOLLOW  
GOD’S VOICE AND  
**HIS COVENANT PATH,**  
HE WILL STRENGTHEN  
US IN OUR TRIALS.”

Elder Jorge M. Alvarado  
of the Seventy, “After the  
Trial of Our Faith,” 50.



## ABIDE WITH ME

“Surely the most thrilling sight and sound in life is that of Jesus not only passing by but His coming to us, stopping *beside* us, and making His abode *with* us.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Message, the Meaning, and the Multitude,” 8.

### DIVING DEEPER

## What Does It Mean to Be a Disciple?

“Discipleship is not about doing things perfectly,” said Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “it’s about doing things intentionally” (“Your Great Adventure,” 87). It’s our choices, he and other general conference speakers said, rather than our abilities that show who we truly are.

- “Are we true followers of Him who gave His all for us? . . . I plead with all who hear and read these words: Please, please don’t put your total commitment off until you get around to it at some nonexistent, future time” (Elder Terence M. Vinson, “True Disciples of the Savior,” 11).
- “Saints are those who have entered into the gospel covenant through baptism and are striving to follow Christ as His disciples. Thus, ‘the joy of the saints’ denotes the joy of becoming Christlike” (Elder D. Todd Christofferson, “The Joy of the Saints,” 15).
- “I invite you to commit to a lifelong process of discipleship. Make and keep covenants. Throw your old ways into deep, churning waterfalls. Completely bury your weapons of rebellion with no handles sticking out” (Elder Dale G. Renlund, “Unwavering Commitment to Jesus Christ,” 25).
- “Our promise to always remember the Savior gives us strength to stand for truth and righteousness—whether we are in a large crowd or in our solitary places, where no one knows our actions except for God” (Lisa L. Harkness, “Honoring His Name,” 61).
- “True disciples of Jesus Christ love God and His children without expectation of something in return. We love those who disappoint us, who don’t like us. Even those who ridicule, abuse, and seek to hurt us” (Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, 88).

*All page numbers come from the  
November 2019 Ensign.*

## MAKING CHURCH “SIX DAYS LONGER!”

“Studying the scriptures with *Come, Follow Me* as a guide is strengthening our conversion to Jesus Christ and His gospel. We are not simply trading one hour less in church on Sunday for one hour more of scripture study at home. Learning the gospel is a consistent effort throughout the week.

As one sister insightfully shared, “The goal is not to make church one hour shorter; it is to make church six days longer!”

**Mark L. Pace, Sunday School General President, “Come, Follow Me—the Lord’s Counterstrategy and Proactive Plan,” 46.**



## HOW TO . . .

### Receive Revelation

“The Church’s new program for children and youth is built on the foundation of learning to seek revelation, discovering what the Lord would have us do, and then acting on that direction,” said Sister Michelle Craig, First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency. She shared four ways we can increase our spiritual capacity to receive needed revelation:

1. Create a time and space to hear God’s voice.
2. Act without delay.
3. Ask Heavenly Father for an errand.
4. Believe and trust God to lead you.

See Michelle Craig, “Spiritual Capacity,” 19–21.

# The Beginning of **BETTER DAYS**

How the  
RELIEF  
SOCIETY  
WORKS  
to **BLESS**  
the  
**WORLD**



*Organization, and Proceedings of  
The Female Relief Society of Nauvoo.*



With over seven million members in nearly 200 nations, the Relief Society continues to build and bless others around the world.



Sarah Melissa Granger Kimball



**By Tiffany Taylor Bowles**

Church History Museum

**O**n March 17, 1842, the Prophet Joseph Smith formed the Church's first organization for women known as the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo. He said at the time, "I now turn the key to you in the name of God and this Society shall rejoice and knowledge and intelligence shall flow down from this time—this is the beginning of better days."<sup>1</sup>

That promise of better days indeed proved prophetic. Since its inception, the Relief Society has been a force for good not only for its members but also for their homes, for their communities, and for whatever nation where Relief Society sisters have lived. Whether by voting or volunteering, campaigning or curing, Relief Society sisters carry on a legacy of service and compassion.

That legacy—and the principles of Christlike charity that uphold it—lies at the heart of the strength and influence of Relief Society, which has grown to be one of the largest women's organizations in the world.

### **Gaining the Right to Vote**

The United States suffrage (right to vote) movement was an example of how the Relief Society opened a new era of opportunity for women, their communities, and their nations.

Sarah Melissa Granger Kimball, an early Relief Society leader and active participant in the national suffrage movement, stated that "the sure foundations of the suffrage cause were deeply and permanently laid" when the Relief Society was organized in 1842.<sup>2</sup> Relief Society representatives attended national suffrage meetings in Washington, D.C., and elsewhere, enthusiastically pressing for all women to enjoy the right to vote.

One hundred and fifty years ago, women didn't have full voting rights anywhere in the world. But on February 12, 1870, Utah became the second United States territory (after Wyoming) to grant women the right to vote. Two days later, Utah women voted in a United States election for the first time. Eliza R. Snow, the second Relief Society General President, declared, "It is our duty to vote, sisters; let no trifling thing keep you at home."<sup>3</sup>

It would be 50 more years before female suffrage was granted on a national level. During those years Relief Society women continued to advocate for women's rights. Susa Young Gates, editor of the *Relief Society Magazine*, wrote in 1914, "My conviction is that woman should have the ballot in every land and clime."<sup>4</sup> When women in the United States finally received national suffrage in 1920, momentum for female suffrage was building around the world.

ILLUSTRATION OF PIONEER WOMAN BY KAI CARPENTER FOR ANDERSON DESIGN GROUP, INC. USED BY PERMISSION. ADGSTORE.COM; PHOTOGRAPH OF SUFFRAGETTES BY TOPICAL PRESS AGENCY/STRINGER/GETTY IMAGES; WHEAT BACKGROUND FROM GETTY IMAGES; TITLE ARTWORK BY LONI HARRIS



“It is our duty to vote, sisters; let no trifling thing keep you at home.”

—Eliza R. Snow

### Caring for the Sick

Another area that Relief Society sisters influenced was health care. Nineteenth-century medicine was primitive by modern standards. At one time during the pioneer era, when the Saints had been in their new home for only about three years, Utah had the second-worst death rate in the United States.<sup>5</sup> In the 1870s and 1880s, several women traveled east to obtain medical training. When they returned to Utah, they shared their new knowledge with their Relief Society sisters.

On July 17, 1882, Deseret Hospital—staffed primarily by women and funded by the Relief Society—opened in Salt Lake City. The Relief

Society also sponsored nursing classes so that women could provide medical care in their own communities.

Even though medical knowledge was advancing, many people, especially in rural areas, didn’t have access to good medical care. Therefore, in 1921, when the mortality rate among expectant mothers and young children was alarmingly high, Clarissa Smith Williams, the sixth Relief Society General President, announced a new focus on maternal and child health.

Women enthusiastically gathered supplies, raised funds, distributed pamphlets, and sponsored health clinics. They didn’t only help Latter-day Saints, and their efforts stretched beyond Utah. For example, the Hawaiian Mission Relief Society, working with the Honolulu Board of Health, set up baby clinics in villages and towns.<sup>6</sup>



**“SISTERS FOR SUFFRAGE: HOW UTAH WOMEN WON THE VOTE,”** an exhibit at the Church History Museum (open through January 2021), celebrates the Relief Society’s pioneering role in the suffrage movement. It can also be viewed online at [history.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/landing/museum/sisters-for-suffrage](https://history.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/landing/museum/sisters-for-suffrage).



By 1924, the Presiding Bishopric reported that the lives of 500 children had been saved by Relief Society efforts.<sup>7</sup> Utah became one of the five lowest states in the nation for maternal and infant death rates.<sup>8</sup>

### **Sending Aid around the World**

Another Relief Society effort—with a surprising side benefit—began in 1876. President Brigham Young appointed Emmeline Wells to organize a wheat storage program for the women of the Church. The subsequent efforts benefitted not only Latter-day Saints but also others across the world.

After the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, the Relief Society sent wheat to survivors. In 1907, wheat was sent to China during a famine. In 1918, the Relief Society sold over 200,000 bushels of wheat to the United States government to help the military and those starving in Europe after World War I. The interest earned on money received for this wheat funded the Relief Society health initiatives of the 1920s.

During World War II, Relief Society sisters again organized to provide aid. The *Relief Society Magazine* reported that during 1944, they contributed 139,338 hours of sewing for the Red Cross.<sup>9</sup> Relief Society sisters assembled first aid kits, donated blood, and purchased war bonds. They also sent clothing, soap, safety pins, and other items to war-torn Europe.<sup>10</sup>

### **Global Service Projects**

In 1992, the Relief Society celebrated its 150th anniversary with a global service-project initiative. Women responded eagerly. Sisters in the Upolu Samoa West Stake cleaned hospitals damaged by a cyclone. In Paris, France, Relief Society members made quilts for retirement homes and collected clothes for the needy. In

Germany, women made dolls for children at a hospital. In England, Relief Society sisters picked up litter, sewed clothes for premature babies, and made Christmas dinner for retirement home residents. The Marikina Philippines Stake Relief Society sponsored community health clinics to promote healthy living.

One Relief Society president observed, “Service projects have a great tendency to not only strengthen relationships within each ward or branch of the Relief Society, but also give us a great feeling of unity and togetherness with our Relief Society sisters all over the world.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Working Together to Improve the World**

In 2017, Jean B. Bingham, 17th General Relief Society President, spoke at a United Nations panel, echoing sentiments from her Relief Society predecessors: “While individually we can do great good, collectively we can accomplish so much more.”<sup>12</sup>

President Russell M. Nelson has observed, “In Relief Society, women in various ages and stages of life . . . [are] making a real difference in the world.”<sup>13</sup>

Since the founding of the Relief Society with its divinely appointed pattern of organization, Latter-day Saint women have engaged in countless united efforts to effect positive change throughout the world. Now with over seven million members in nearly 200 nations, the Relief Society continues to be a force for good. ■

#### **NOTES**

1. Joseph Smith, discourse given on April 28, 1842, Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book (March 1842–March 1844), 40, josephsmithpapers.org.
2. Sarah Granger Kimball, *Woman’s Suffrage Leaflet* (1892), 3.
3. Eliza R. Snow, in “R.S., Y.L.M.I.A. and Primary Reports,” *Woman’s Exponent*, Sept. 1, 1881, 54.
4. Susa Young Gates, *Utah Women in Politics* (1914), 7–8.
5. See J. Cecil Alter, “Addendas,” *Utah Historical Quarterly*, vol. 10 (1942), 37.
6. See Lisa Olsen Tait, “Relief Society Women Know the Importance of This Work: The Maternal and Child Health Movement, 1921–1929,” presentation for Brigham Young University Women’s Studies Conference, Nov. 2018.
7. See Relief Society General Board Minutes, April 1924, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
8. See Loretta L. Hefner, “The National Women’s Relief Society and the U.S. Sheppard-Towner Act,” *Utah Historical Quarterly*, vol. 50, no. 3 (Summer 1982), 264; “Infant Mortality Decreasing,” *Relief Society Magazine*, Sept. 1928, 477.
9. See “Relief Society Sewing Service,” *Relief Society Magazine*, August 1945, 479.
10. See “Continued War Services,” *Relief Society Magazine*, August 1945, 484.
11. In Sheridan R. Sheffield, “Relief Society: Women Ready to Enter New Realm of Dedication, Service,” *Church News*, Jan. 9, 1993, 10.
12. “Sister Bingham United Nations Transcript,” Newsroom, April 13, 2017, newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
13. Russell M. Nelson, “Sisters’ Participation in the Gathering of Israel,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 69.

How to Manage Digital Devices and

# Get Your Family Back

By Geoff Steurer

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist

**Picture the following scenarios:**

- A family sits at a restaurant, waiting for their food, but rather than talk to each other, everyone stares at their smartphones.
- A teenager feels inadequate and alone as she scrolls through the carefully curated performances of her peers on social media.
- A little girl at the park tries to get her father to look up from his phone and pay attention to her.
- A husband keeps checking sports alerts on his smartwatch while his wife is talking to him.
- A young man is constantly texting throughout the home evening lesson.

Each of these examples—and dozens of others you have no doubt experienced—are little tragedies. Smartphones and other digital devices are both a blessing and a curse. They connect us to an amazing world of information. They help us to do family history, study scriptures, and speak with family across vast distances. But when not managed properly, digital devices can also disrupt family relationships and impact our mental, spiritual, and physical health.





*Here are seven tips to ensure that digital devices are our servants and not our masters.*



PHOTOGRAPH FROM GETTY IMAGES

### **The Irony of Technology**

In my practice as a marriage and family therapist, I witness the ever-growing challenge of earnest people competing with screens for the attention of their loved ones. It's a great irony. The very devices that were supposed to help connect us to each other and improve our relationships have, in some cases, made relationships shallower and left people feeling insecure. In fact, many researchers are discovering that rising reports of depression, anxiety, bullying, and suicide have a connection with the epidemic of loneliness, brought on, in large part, by the widespread use of personal electronic devices.<sup>1</sup>

In our homes, even though everyone may be physically together, when devices are out, they can instantly create feelings of loneliness and disconnection. If we are to create oneness and connection in our family relationships, we must recognize the splitting of attention that happens when devices infiltrate our family gatherings.

We don't need to overreact and completely eliminate technology from our lives. Instead, we need to put technology in its proper place so that it serves our relationships instead of eroding them.

### **The Trappings of a Virtual World**

Immersing ourselves in our devices minimizes the physical world around us—with all of its sounds, textures, visuals, and countless other sensations—and trades these for a virtual world that doesn't connect us as deeply to our bodies and our environment. As a result, we may miss important physical signals that tell us what we need in order to be healthy. For example, excessive screen time can prevent us from noticing that we're tired, hungry, or stressed.

Such disconnection from the physical world can also undermine our sense of joy. There is a significant difference, for example, between receiving a laughing emoji on a screen and personally experiencing the joyful laugh of a loved one.

## The Need for Digital Stewards

Digital devices are engineered to be irresistible and hard to put down. In fact, many software and phone developers intentionally target our human vulnerabilities to keep us checking and scrolling through endless feeds of information.<sup>2</sup>

This dependency on devices is so common that it's easy to ignore how it's affecting us. Young people, therefore, need

adults who can model the appropriate use of these devices and can educate children about their effects.

As President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, taught, digital devices “need to be our servants, not our masters.”<sup>3</sup>

With that in mind, here are seven tips for how to manage our digital devices:

### ***Be like the Savior: give undivided attention.***

The Savior showed us what it looks like to truly be with others without distraction. Throughout His ministry, He always focused on the individual: the woman with an issue of blood, the blind, the leper—Christ gave his full attention to them all. When He showed the Nephites His wounds, He didn't rush the process. Rather, the people went “forth *one by one* until they had all gone forth” (3 Nephi 11:15; emphasis added).

As we model this practice, we **teach our children how to truly be in one place at a time instead of splitting their attention between devices and those around them.** When you're talking with someone, especially a child or spouse, give them your full attention by putting your phone away.

Sadly, it's become the norm to turn away from those we love to answer a text and attend to someone else's need. This can have a negative effect on our relationships and may send an unintentional message that the person in front of us is less important.

Make a commitment to those in front of you that they have priority over interruptions from your smartphone or device. Look them in the eye. Listen as the Savior would. Focus.



### ***Don't default to texting.***

When sharing heartfelt feelings or important thoughts with others, **get as close to an in-person experience as your situation allows.** If face-to-face communication isn't possible, then try a video call so you can see and hear the person. If that's not an option, then place a phone call so you can hear the person's voice.



**Delay giving children smartphones and social media accounts.**

Delay ownership of smartphones and participation in social media **until children and teens have developed adequate in-person social skills, such as listening, making eye contact, showing empathy, and being aware of others.** Before children enter the world of digital citizenship, it's important for them to practice good citizenship by respecting and relating to others.

One of the reasons why the average age of pornography exposure is 11 years old<sup>4</sup> (and in many cases younger) is that many children are given smartphones at a young age. Keep this in mind also: even if your children are mature enough for social media accounts, many other people online who will have access to your child's social accounts are not.<sup>5</sup>

# 3



**Establish family rules and set limits.**

Create clear boundaries in your home for when smartphones and devices will be used and then put away.

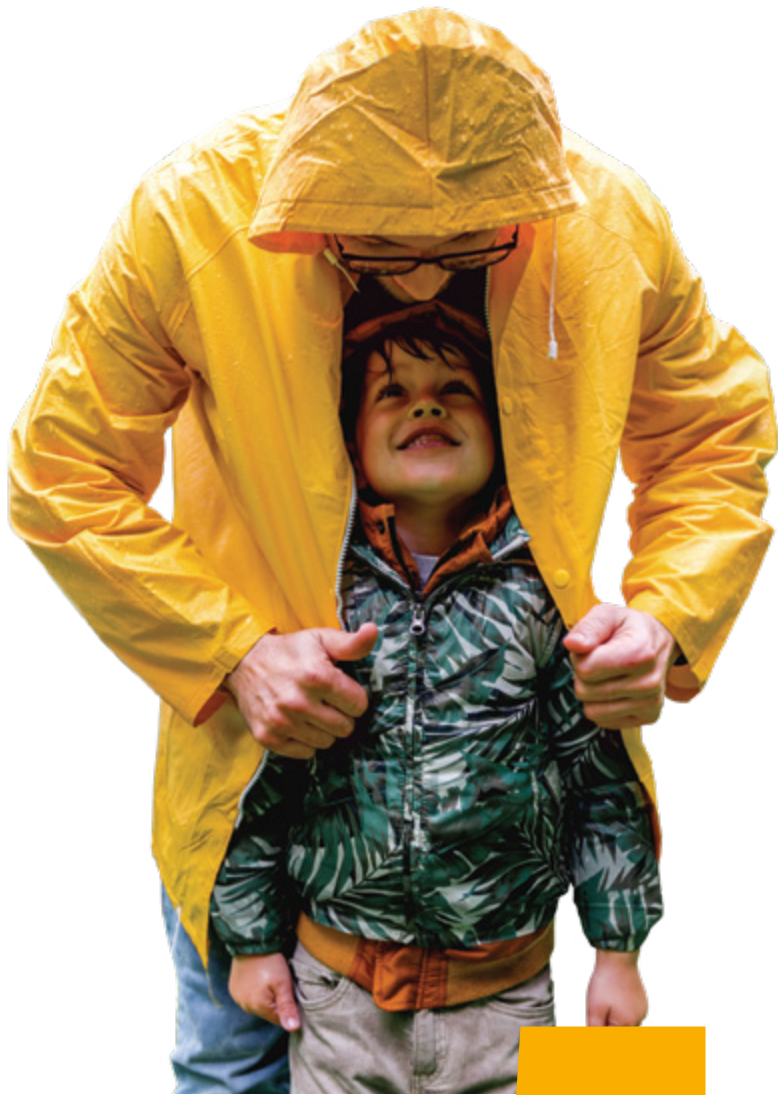
# 4

One strong recommendation: **invite everyone in the family to be deliberate about taking breaks from their devices on a regular basis.**

Perhaps you can designate a place to put them, somewhere out of reach where they can't be accessed easily—a basket in the kitchen, for example.

One family decided that devices needed to be plugged in and set aside during and after the evening meal so that family members could focus on spending uninterrupted time together.

When we intentionally set limits on our devices, our family members will begin to feel more connected.



### ***Avoid mindless gaming and scrolling.***

It's easy to mindlessly turn to our devices for relaxation, distraction, and fun. Resist the urge. Instead, **put down your device, go outside, and engage your senses.**

In June 2018, President Russell M. Nelson said to the youth of the Church, "My first invitation to you today is to disengage from a constant reliance on social media by holding a seven-day fast from social media."<sup>6</sup>

As parents, you can make the same invitation in your home, holding occasional fasts from games, social media, or other digital distractions.

# 5



### ***Train yourself not to respond immediately.***

Consider whether you need to respond immediately to every message and alert. Our devices are training us to believe that every interruption is urgent and critical, thus possibly diverting our attention from what matters most. **Try slowing down and delaying your response to messages** so you can be more present and aware of those around you. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles observed that some in the Church "neglect eternal relationships for digital distractions, diversions, and detours that have no lasting value."<sup>7</sup>

# 6

### ***Establish digital-free zones.***

Designate sacred spaces where devices are never allowed. For example, one family decided that when they're driving around town, phones and devices aren't allowed in the vehicle so that family members can visit with each other. These kinds of limits allow for sustained attention and connection, which can prevent loneliness in families.

# 7

## FREE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS FROM DISTRACTION

The modern world is increasingly filled with distractions. Mobile technology such as smartphones can make distraction a nearly constant state. Studies suggest that a distracted mind can create problems at work, at school, and in our relationships and can increase our stress and frustration. Some studies have even suggested that the mere presence of a person's

smartphone can be a drain on their available thinking capacity.

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles once emphasized “the importance of four key relationships: with our God, with our families, with our fellowman, and with ourselves” (“Of Things That Matter Most,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 21). Here are some suggestions for strengthening these relationships by reducing distractions.

### Relationship with God

- **Scripture study.** Try doing at least some of your personal study without your device. The printed page doesn't give you notifications, and it has no other apps to entice you.
- **Prayer.** Make it regular. Make it quiet and alone. And occasionally make it long.
- **Pondering.** Add pondering time to scripture study and prayer. Add it to solo activities occasionally by making them truly solo—for instance, no device when you're exercising or doing housework or yard work, no music when you're alone in the car.
- **Repentance.** Give proper attention to this vital aspect of the relationship. For instance, during the sacrament, either don't have your device with you or turn it off.

### Relationship with family and fellowman

- **Talking and listening.** Never underestimate family dinner. Try making it a sacred space (see #4 and #7 on pages 33 and 34). Show interest in others. Seek both informal exchanges and deeper conversations. Make most in-person conversations hands-free (no devices). And make eye contact a priority (see #1 on page 32).
- **Serving.** If an opportunity to serve someone comes up and your first thought is “But I still have to watch my show,” you may need to work on your priorities. Try going without that entertainment for a week.
- **Playing.** If you're building relationships by having fun together, give it your attention (see #1 on page 32). Remove devices from sight or hearing.

### Relationship with yourself

- **Physical and emotional health.** Don't be distracted from self-care (sleep, exercise, stress management). For instance, don't bring your device into your bedroom at night. And don't fill time with mindless activities so that the rest of your time feels pressed (see #5 on page 34).
- **Protecting feelings of self-worth.** Avoid self-criticism and comparisons with others. For instance, reduce time with social media and be more selective in what you consume (see #4 on page 33).
- **Getting to know yourself.** Don't let an image of yourself from social media distract you from the true self you desire to become. Spend time with that true self doing things that true self wants to do.

## Sanctifying Our Homes

Making our homes a haven from the world requires effort and vigilance, especially with so many digital distractions all around us. For the sake of our family relationships and health, every effort is worth it. ■

### NOTES

1. See Jeremy Nobel, “Forging Connection against Loneliness,” American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Sept. 25, 2018, [afsp.org/forging-connection-against-loneliness](https://afsp.org/forging-connection-against-loneliness).
2. See Avery Hartmans, “These Are the Sneaky Ways Apps like Instagram, Facebook, Tinder Lure You In and Get You ‘Addicted,’” *Business Insider*, Feb. 17, 2018, [businessinsider.com](https://www.businessinsider.com).
3. M. Russell Ballard, “Be Still, and Know That I Am God” (Church Educational System devotional for young adults, May 4, 2014), [broadcasts.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://broadcasts.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
4. See Jane Randel and Amy Sánchez, “Parenting in the Digital Age of Pornography,” *HuffPost* blog, Feb 26, 2017, [huffpost.com](https://www.huffpost.com).
5. See “Cyberbullying,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2013, 39.
6. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), [HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
7. David A. Bednar, “Things as They Really Are,” *Ensign*, June 2010, 19.

# DEAR MOM, AND DAD,

## Parenting Tips from Teens



# 4

By Chad Conrad  
Seminaries and Institutes

**Q** ver the past 20 years as a seminary teacher, I've asked hundreds of my students, "What advice would you give your parents on parenting?" Their responses fascinated and inspired me—so much so that I started asking their parents the same question, only in reverse: "What advice would you give your teenaged children?"

The most frequent responses over the years are listed on the following pages. For suggestions on how to use these lists with your teens, see the "What Now.?" activity on page 39.





Dear Kids,



# 40

## Tips for Teens from Parents

For parenting tips from  
teens, see previous pages.

### Communication and Building Trust

- 1 Be trustworthy and we will trust you.
- 2 Believe us. Your well-being is of utmost importance to us.
- 3 Be patient with us. Parents are people too, and we make lots of mistakes.

### Learning and Living the Gospel

- 18 Get to know Heavenly Father through prayer and scripture study every day. He's the real parent. He knows you even better than we do, and He won't let you down.
- 19 Believe that with the Lord's help you can do hard things.
- 20 Meditate and listen to good music.
- 21 The more you serve, the happier you are.
- 22 Sit by people who are lonely and be friendly, and you will always have friends.
- 23 Go to the temple with your friends and siblings. Go with us too.
- 24 Don't care about what people in the world think about you; only care about what the Lord thinks of you.
- 25 You're going to make lots of mistakes, but remember that Christ paid the price for you, so you're going to make it if you turn to Him.

### Family Unity

- 26 Laugh at yourself sometimes. We all do stupid stuff.
- 27 Go on lots of dates with lots of different people, but don't let yourself get hooked on one person. Teen romance complicates and confuses everything.
- 28 Treat your siblings like friends, even if you think they don't always deserve it.
- 29 Enjoy your friends but make time for family.
- 30 Don't compare our family with your friends' families. We do things differently and try our best. If you have ideas for how our family can improve, share them.



- 4 Remember that although being a teenager can be stressful, you won't be one forever.
- 5 Talk to us about your life. We really do care about what's going on.
- 6 Sometimes the kindest thing we can tell you is no.
- 7 Being an adult really is a lot harder than you think.
- 8 Tell us "Thank you" and "I love you." We need your approval just as you need ours.
- 9 Please hug us and let us hug you.
- 10 We ask you to put away your phone because we like you and want to interact with you. Learn to unplug and be present.
- 11 Own up to your mistakes; it shows maturity. Don't blame others.
- 12 Swearing shows weakness, not strength.
- 13 When we call for you, please say, "I'm coming," and then actually come. Don't make us call multiple times.
- 14 Tell us when you mess up before we have to "catch" you. We won't feel as much need to punish you if we know you're trying to make things right.
- 15 Choose friends who help you want to be a better person. Let us get to know them.
- 16 Check in with us. Let us know where you are and who you are with. Then we'll trust you more.
- 17 Try asking us questions instead of the internet once in a while. We know and love you better than Google does.

## Life Skills, School, and Work

- 31 Learn to work really hard, and then take time to relax now and then.
- 32 Dream big. God gave you great talents, so have great expectations of yourself. Write down your goals; then get to work!
- 33 Do your chores without being asked. We'll see that you're responsible and give you more privileges. And we won't have to nag you!
- 34 Phones and other devices are a privilege, not a right.
- 35 Clean up after yourself. You're almost an adult, and it's time to take responsibility for yourself.
- 36 Remember that the internet is forever.
- 37 Do your best in school. Bad grades don't bother us so much if we know you are really trying.
- 38 Don't text and drive—or let us do it either!

## Health and Lifestyle

- 39 What you eat and how physically active you are now will affect your health for the rest of your life.
- 40 Get the right amount of sleep every night. Sleeping for 15 hours on the weekend is as bad as 5 hours on a weeknight.

### WHAT NOW?

As an activity, parents might consider sitting down with their children and reviewing these lists, taking time to lovingly discuss those suggestions that need the most attention. Afterwards, parents and children could come up with their own lists of tips for strengthening relationships and building a Christ-centered home.

# Ten Ideas for Mastering Strong Emotions at Home

To fill our hearts and homes with love, we must bridle all our passions and help our children do the same.

**By David Schramm, PhD**

Assistant Professor of Human Development and Family Studies, Utah State University

Several years ago I came home from work to find my wife frazzled. Our four young children had drawn with markers on the walls and spilled fingernail polish in the carpet. At dinner, one of our children defiantly refused to try the food. My wife and I were so impatient and overwhelmed when it was time to put the kids to bed that we rushed through songs and family prayer, which only riled our kids even further.

One big happy family, right?

I'm guessing you've had days like that, too, when frustrations (both yours and your children's) are rising to a boiling point. Maybe voices are raised. Maybe a tantrum is thrown. Maybe your teens get into such a shouting match that you worry what the neighbors will think.

Strong emotions confront every family, but if left unchecked they can do serious harm.

The solution is found in the scriptures when Alma counsels his son Shiblon to “see that ye bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love” (Alma 38:12).

To fill ourselves, our children, and our homes with love, therefore, we must learn to bridle—or master—strong emotions.

Achieving that isn't easy, but these ideas may help.



## 1. Beware the natural parent.

Our bodies were designed to experience all kinds of emotions, including anger, confusion, frustration, and exasperation. A “natural” parent gives in to these impulses and lashes out. This natural parent—much like the natural man—is an enemy to his or her children and spouse, “unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural [impulses] and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love” (Mosiah 3:19).

In short, when we replace our unbridled, natural emotions with compassion and Christlike love, we become more like the Savior and thus better equipped to help our children manage their own emotions.





## 2. Avoid frustration triggers.

Identify triggers and circumstances when you or your children get easily frustrated. For example:

- When adults and children are hungry or tired.
- When there are underlying feelings of fear, jealousy, loneliness, rejection, guilt, or pain.
- When a parent’s expectation is greater than the child’s abilities (example: giving more tasks than a three-year-old can remember).

You may have other triggers in your home that aren’t mentioned here. Recognizing these triggers helps you avoid them and the frustrations they ignite.



## 3. Take preventive measures.

A little prevention goes a long way. For example, place fingernail polish where young hands won’t find it. Or, if strong emotions

arise while you’re outside the home, bring some snacks or a favorite toy to prevent any whining. Or, if technology use is often a source of friction, confront the problem head on:

- Have an open discussion or “tech talk” about technology use in your home. Listen closely, express empathy, and seek understanding rather than express anger and make demands.
- Hold a family council to come up with a family media plan or agreement (see examples at [healthychildren.org/mediauseplan](http://healthychildren.org/mediauseplan) or [commonsensemedia.org/family-media-agreement](http://commonsensemedia.org/family-media-agreement)).



## 4. Be aware of your child’s emotions.

Pay close attention to what your children are feeling and when. When you notice strong emotions, calmly and compassionately label their emotions with words. “I can see that you’re angry.” “You seem frustrated.”

This will validate their feelings and communicate that you care.



## 5. Show empathy.

The covenant to “mourn with those that mourn” and “comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:9) applies to our own children. When they are sad, lonely, or frustrated, we shouldn’t lecture them about character and patience. That only makes them sadder, lonelier, and more frustrated. Instead, we should show compassion, understanding, and empathy. Doing so will strengthen the relationship, soften hearts, and create an opportunity to connect.

Years ago, as I picked up my daughter from dance class, I heard her start to cry in the back seat. “I hate dance,” she said. “I want to quit.”

I could have dismissed or disapproved of her emotions with words such as, “You don’t hate dance. Why would you say that?” or “You are not quitting dance, because we just paid a lot of money for your costume.” This would not have been helpful.

Instead, I remembered that we humans have a difficult time learning anything when our brains are “flooded” with chemicals. I turned and said, “Wow! Sounds like you had a rough day at dance. What happened?”

As she sobbed through her story of girls teasing her, I validated her emotions again, saying, “That must have been embarrassing. No wonder you want to quit dance.” On the ride home I continued to listen and validate her emotions, never arguing with her about them. Later that night on her bed, when she had calmed down, we had a conversation and brainstormed together some possible solutions. Feelings must be validated before behavior can be improved.



## 6. Set limits.

Wise parents set limits on choices. Established limits help us communicate which behaviors are acceptable and which are not. President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, counseled parents to “set limits in accordance with the importance of the matter involved and the child’s disposition and maturity.”<sup>1</sup>

For example, we allow young children to choose what shirt to wear to school, but we set limits on bedtimes. Or we may allow teenagers to go out

with friends, but we ask that they be home by a certain time. Allowing children to participate in some decisions gives them opportunities to demonstrate responsibility and develop toward adulthood.

These rules must be known by everyone in the family, however. Shared expectations avoid frustrating situations in which we correct children for rules they didn't know existed.



### 7. See things from your child's perspective.

When we honestly try to see things from our children's perspective, we will be reminded that we were children once—we made messes and were disrespectful. We can remind ourselves that all humans, including children, do things for reasons that make sense to them. And when we slip and say or do things we regret, we can be quick to apologize to others, including to our spouse and children.



### 8. Model good coping skills.

Children often learn how to handle their emotions by watching how we handle our feelings and frustrations. During difficult times, therefore, we can conscientiously model the behavior we want to see in our children. This could include making time for self-care and self-soothing, such as taking a few deep breaths in the midst of strong emotions or reaching out and talking with others. If our own hearts are not right, then what we say or do will rarely be helpful.

Modeling good behavior is enormously effective. It's one of the ways Jesus Christ teaches us. "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15).



### 9. Don't take the hook.

When we recognize strong emotions in ourselves or our children, we can also remember not to "take the hook."

A hook is anything a child says or does that immediately brings anger or frustration.

One evening after we quickly finished a family dinner, my wife and I were rushing to get to a meeting and we asked our teenage children to please help us out by putting away food and cleaning up the kitchen. I looked at my oldest daughter and said, "Will you please load the dishwasher? It won't take too long and it isn't that hard."

I remember her eyes rolling as she sarcastically replied, "If it's not that hard, then why don't you do it?" Yep, that is a classic hook.

I was tempted to launch into a lecture about not talking to parents that way, but I recognized the hook and instead put my arm around her, gave her a hug, and said, "You all can have a bowl of ice cream as soon as the kitchen is clean."



### 10. Turn to the Savior.

In those moments when our anger and frustration are high, when our own "tempest is raging," we need the Master Himself to calm us and help us bridle our passions.

Alma teaches us how:

"And now I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long-suffering; being temperate in all things; being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times; asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal; always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive.

"And see that ye have faith, hope, and charity, and then ye will always abound in good works." (Alma 7:23–24).

Learning to manage our emotions as parents requires both faith in Jesus Christ and good works. It requires us to ask for help in sincere prayer and to learn and apply gospel and research-based principles and practices.

No parent is perfect, of course. If there's room for improvement in our lives, Christ invites us to repent and strive to be more loving, more compassionate, and more understanding beginning today. The result will be greater peace in our homes and love in our hearts.

And that's worth every effort. ■

#### NOTE

1. M. Russell Ballard, "The Sacred Responsibilities of Parenthood," *Ensign*, Mar. 2006, 32.



# Family Study fun



Consider these activities during family scripture study or home evening.



## Happiness Declaration

**February 3–9 (2 Nephi 5:27)**

All of us want to live “after the manner of happiness” (2 Nephi 5:27). But happiness requires effort. Create a family plan to help your family experience more joy.

- 1 Read 2 Nephi 5:10–12, 15–17, 26–27. Discuss what Nephi’s people did to live “after the manner of happiness.”
- 2 Make a list together of commandments that, if kept, will bring your family happiness.
- 3 Add to the list other things that bring you joy (good friends, game night, etc.).
- 4 Turn your list into a family declaration. (“We, the Jones family, hereby commit to pursue happiness by . . .”)
- 5 Place your declaration in a prominent place where you can see it often.

## Cupboard Counter

**February 10–16 (2 Nephi 9:1–26)**

Christ’s Atonement is “an infinite atonement” (2 Nephi 9:7), but what does infinity mean?

- 1 Open your cupboards and find various containers of cooking foods, such as:
  - Sugar
  - Salt
  - Rice
- 2 Take turns guessing how many grains of each item would go into one cup. For example:
  - Sugar = 960,000
  - Salt = 2,000,000
  - Rice = 8,000

**Discussion:** Name other things of which there is a numberless amount (sand at the beach, stars in the sky, cells in the body). How is the reach of Christ’s Atonement greater than all of these? Why is it called infinite?

## FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Find more home evening ideas in this month's *Friend*.



## Testimony Time Capsule

**February 17–23 (2 Nephi 25:26)**

Nephi reminds us that we “talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ” so that our children know who to turn to (see 2 Nephi 25:26).

- 1 Select several stories of Christ that the children are familiar with.
- 2 Digitally record each person summarizing one of these stories and sharing their feelings about the Savior.
- 3 If prompting is needed, ask family members to describe Christ and why we love Him.
- 4 Store the recordings for safekeeping and send them to grandparents or other family members.

**Discussion:** How can sharing our testimonies of Christ strengthen us and our future generations?



## Mission (No Longer) Impossible

**February 24–March 1 (2 Nephi 27:26)**

In 2 Nephi 27:26, the Restoration of the gospel is referred to as “a marvelous work and a wonder.” That Restoration and work continue today as nations of the world receive missionaries.

- 1 Locate a world map. Choose a family member to close their eyes and point to any location on the map.
- 2 Using your smartphone or computer, discover the name of the mission closest to the chosen location and learn about it: language, culture, diet, the closest temple, etc.

**Discussion:** What is the name of the mission you live in? What can you do to help the local missionaries? What areas of the world still need missionaries?

*Selected activity ideas contributed by Mitzi Schoneman, Brenda Slade, and Lisa Thomas*



January 27–February 2

1 NEPHI 16–22

# What Did It Take to Build the Ship?

For Nephi, building a ship was no small feat. He had no blueprints, no catalog for ordering materials, and no tools. But he had faith, a strong work ethic, and instructions from the Lord (see 1 Nephi 17:8).

## Discussion

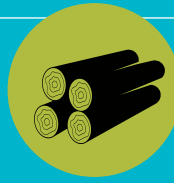
How are faith in the Lord and hard work related?

Like Lehi and Sariah's family journeying to the promised land, what journey are you on as a family?

What work is required to reach your destination?

## Timber

Since timber is not typically found on the coast of the Arabian Peninsula, Nephi probably had to “go forth” (see 1 Nephi 18:1) to the hills to cut timber and painstakingly drag it to the beach. It likely took many trips to get enough wood.



## Tools

To make woodworking tools, Nephi had to find and extract ore—a backbreaking process that includes mining rock for minerals, crushing the rock, and smelting the concentrated minerals together under enormous heat using fire and bellows to forge metal (see 1 Nephi 17:9–11).



## Faith

Nephi had faith that God could dry up the sea if that was His will. But he also had faith that the Lord could help him achieve what seemed impossible (see 1 Nephi 17:50–51).



WEEK

1





February 3–9  
2 NEPHI 1–5

# What Blessings Did the Fall Make Possible?

Adam and Eve’s decision to partake of the forbidden fruit was an essential part of Heavenly Father’s plan. Without the Fall, we wouldn’t have access to some of Heavenly Father’s choicest blessings. Consider these:

**1.** Our existence on the earth (see 2 Nephi 2:20, 25)

**2.** Families (see 2 Nephi 2:19–20, 22–23)

**3.** Knowledge of good and evil (see 2 Nephi 2:26)

**4.** Growth and progress (see 2 Nephi 2:11, 22)

**8.** Resurrection (see 2 Nephi 2:8)

**9.** Eternal life (see 2 Nephi 2:27)

**7.** Redemption through the Atonement of Jesus Christ (see 2 Nephi 2:5–10, 26)

**6.** Freedom to choose between right and wrong (see 2 Nephi 2:16, 26–27)

**5.** The ability to feel joy and happiness (see 2 Nephi 2:23–25; 5:27)



In what ways could you express gratitude to Heavenly Father for these blessings? ■



February 10–16

2 NEPHI 6–10

# How Do We Overcome Death?

**T**he Fall of Adam and Eve introduced physical and spiritual death to the world (see 2 Nephi 9:6).

## Discussion

How does the Savior's Atonement bring you hope? (See 2 Nephi 9:7, 19–23 for some ideas.)

## Spiritual Death

Sin, the "death of the spirit," separates us from God (see 2 Nephi 9:8–10).



## Physical Death

At the end of our mortal life, we experience the "death of the body," or the separation of the spirit from the body (see 2 Nephi 9:4–7, 10).

## The Solution

Christ's Atonement overcomes physical and spiritual death so we can reenter God's presence (see 2 Nephi 9:11–12, 21–23). After the Resurrection, our spirits and bodies will be reunited. To be worthy of eternal life, we must have faith in God, repent of our sins, and faithfully live the gospel.



CHRIST RESURRECTED BY J. KIRK RICHARDS

THE TRUMPET SHALL SOUND, BY J. KIRK RICHARDS



February 17–23

2 NEPHI 11–25

# Who Was Isaiah?

The Savior taught, “Great are the words of Isaiah,” and He has commanded us to study them (see 3 Nephi 23:1). Many of Isaiah’s teachings are symbolic of the mortal ministry and Second Coming of Jesus Christ. His words are so valuable that, in 2 Nephi 12–24, Nephi wrote them down so that the people who read them may “lift up their hearts and rejoice” (2 Nephi 11:8).

**ISAIAH** served as prophet from **740–701 BC**, almost 40 years! At the time of his calling, Isaiah might not have been the white-haired old man we often imagine. You can read about his calling in 2 Nephi 16.

### HE HAD A FAMILY.

You can read about his wife, “the prophetess,” and the naming of his newborn son by the Lord in 2 Nephi 18:3.

He was **CHIEF ADVISER TO KING HEZEKIAH**. Isaiah had a lot of influence in Jerusalem. How might that have helped him in his role as prophet?

Isaiah is the most **FREQUENTLY quoted prophet** in scripture. Thirty-two percent of the book of Isaiah is quoted in the Book of Mormon; another three percent is paraphrased.

(See *Old Testament Student Manual*, 3rd ed. [Church Educational System manual, 2003], 131.)

What is your favorite verse from Isaiah?

The name *Isaiah* means **“THE LORD IS SALVATION.”** Isaiah certainly taught that! How does taking upon you the name of Jesus Christ guide your decisions?

WEEK  
**4**

ILLUSTRATION BY ALLEN GARNIS





**By Elder  
Randall K.  
Bennett**  
Of the Seventy

# He Can Turn *Weakness* to **Strength**

When it seems all hope is lost,  
faith in the Lord can save us.

**O**ver the years, I have known people who felt they were too weak to endure. Some feared they had sinned so often or so seriously that they were beyond forgiveness. Others, suffering from prolonged physical distress or illness, had lost hope that God loved them or was even aware of them. Some were distraught because of loved ones who refused to accept the gospel. And still others had given up after years of trying to rescue a family member who had wandered far from the covenant path.

I am grateful that for those who find themselves in similar circumstances, the Book of Mormon provides hope. Here are just three examples.

## NEPHI'S HOPE

In what has been called “Nephi’s Psalm,” the prophet laments:

“O wretched man that I am! Yea, my heart sorroweth because of my flesh; my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities.

“I am encompassed about, because of the temptations and the sins which do so easily beset me.

“And when I desire to rejoice, my heart groaneth because of my sin” (2 Nephi 4:17–19).

But then Nephi shows how to overcome such feelings.

First, he reminds himself: “Nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted. My God hath been my support” (verses 19–20).

Then he counts his blessings, listing all that God has done for him—providing support, relief from afflictions, and preservation; providing love, protection from enemies, answers to prayer, revelation, and mercy (see verses 19–25).

Finally, Nephi reminds himself to once again find strength by calling on the Lord. By doing so, he can overcome his weakness, find help from God, and feel himself encircled in the arms of righteousness. (See verses 30–33.)

“I have trusted in thee,” Nephi says, “and I will trust in thee forever” (verse 34).



*Nephi turned to the Lord, trusting that he would receive help. We can do the same.*

### **ALMA'S REDEMPTION**

The story of Alma the Younger provides another example of growing from weakness to strength. In response to the faithful prayers of the people and his father, Alma the Younger and the sons of Mosiah are confronted by an angel and warned to stop persecuting the Church. Alma is so overcome that for three days his soul is “racked with eternal torment” and “the pains of hell,” remembering all of his sins and iniquities, wishing that he could become extinct rather than have to face God. (See Alma 36:6–16; see also Mosiah 27:11–30.)

Then, as he later recalls:

“I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.

“Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me. . . .

“And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

“And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!” (verses 17–20).

When Alma the Younger turns to the Savior, his life is changed. He and the sons of Mosiah become valiant missionaries who bring many souls to Christ. And later it is Alma who, counseling his own son Helaman, reminds him to “look to God and live” (Alma 37:47).

## MORONI'S MEEKNESS

The third example is found in the book of Ether. Moroni, after recounting story after story of people who used faith in Christ to overcome challenges, laments his own inability to write well. He says, “When we write we behold our weakness, and stumble because of the placing of our words; and I fear lest the Gentiles shall mock at our words” (Ether 12:25).

The Lord replies:

“Fools mock, but they shall mourn; and my grace is sufficient for the meek, that they shall take no advantage of your weakness;

“And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them. . . .

“And I, Moroni, having heard these words, was comforted” (verses 26–27, 29).



“IF THEY . . .  
HAVE FAITH IN  
ME, THEN WILL  
I MAKE WEAK  
THINGS BECOME  
STRONG UNTO  
THEM.”

ETHER 12:27

## PRESIDENT NELSON'S COUNSEL

As I ponder these examples from the Book of Mormon, I am reminded of counsel our beloved prophet President Russell M. Nelson gave about drawing the power of Jesus Christ into our lives. He suggests three ways to do this:

- 1 *“Begin by learning about Him. . . . The more we know about the Savior’s ministry and mission—the more we understand His doctrine and what He did for us—the more we know that He can provide the power that we need for our lives.”*
- 2 *“Choose to have faith in Him and follow Him. . . . Faith that motivates us to action gives us more access to His power.”*
- 3 *“Reach up to Him in faith. . . . When the Savior knows you truly want to reach up to Him—when He can feel that the greatest desire of your heart is to draw His power into your life—you will be led by the Holy Ghost to know exactly what you should do.”*

President Nelson added: “The gospel of Jesus Christ is filled with His power, which is available to every earnestly seeking daughter or son of God. It is my testimony that when we draw His power into our lives, both He and we will rejoice.”<sup>1</sup>

# “THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST IS FILLED WITH HIS POWER, WHICH IS AVAILABLE TO EVERY EARNESTLY SEEKING DAUGHTER OR SON OF GOD.”

PRESIDENT RUSSELL M. NELSON

## MY FRIENDS' FAITH

I have seen the Savior's power miraculously help and heal some of my dearest friends. With their hearts turned to God, trusting His will and timing, they were gifted with hope and strength that allowed them to faithfully endure, even though they were in extremely difficult circumstances.

### *Positive despite Pain*

When I was 17, a young missionary was transferred into our ward. He became one of my dearest friends. In fact, I decided to serve a mission because of his influence and example. After his mission, he married a remarkable woman and served faithfully in a bishopric and then on a high council.

However, for many years he also suffered the excruciating pain of frequently recurring kidney stones. He could easily have become bitter or questioned why Heavenly Father had afflicted him. Instead, he humbly endured (see Doctrine and Covenants 121:8). Our young families spent a lot of time together. He was positive about life, eager to serve others, and grateful for the blessings he had received, despite almost constant debilitating pain.

He blessed my own eternal family immeasurably before passing away at age 43, leaving behind his incredible wife and four wonderful daughters who continue to be amazing examples to our family.

Despite afflictions and sorrow, he and his family, like Nephi, are still “highly favored of the Lord” (1 Nephi 1:1).

### *A Family Healed*

Another couple I love dearly was facing seemingly insurmountable family problems. They could not see any way that healing could ever occur.

“What more can we do to save our family?” the sister asked one evening during her personal prayer. She received an

immediate, clear answer: “Your family will be blessed if you serve a mission.” This would be their third mission, one they were not planning.

Two years later, near the end of that third mission that blessed numerous lives, their family situation remained unchanged. They decided to fast and pray. “Please rescue our family,” they pleaded. Just minutes after closing their fast, the phone rang. It was a family member they had expected to never hear from again. Miraculous events began to occur, healing their family in ways they never expected. Their remarkable examples of faith, trust, hope, and courage are inspiring! Like the sons of Mosiah, in spite of afflictions, sorrow, and suffering, they too are now experiencing “incomprehensible joy” (Alma 28:8).

## THE SAVIOR'S ATONEMENT

Through faith in their Heavenly Father and His plan and faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement—coupled with individual action as they courageously followed the promptings of the Spirit—each of these friends has overcome challenges. And each of them has come to better understand that the universal and infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ is also personal and intimate.

When we are feeling weak, may we in humility turn to God and realize that He has promised, “Because thou hast seen thy weakness thou shalt be made strong” (Ether 12:37). In our weakness, we can turn to Him. As President Nelson counseled, we can learn about the Savior, choose to have faith in Him and to follow Him, and reach up to Him in faith. As we do so, we will draw His power into our lives, and just as the scriptures say of Joseph Smith, “out of weakness [we] shall be made strong” (2 Nephi 3:13). ■

### NOTE

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives,” *Ensign*, May 2017, 39–42; emphasis added.

# MY Willing Heart, MY BISHOP, AND MY Schizophrenia

By Sarah P. Hancock

After graduating with my master's degree and starting full-time employment, my husband and I moved into a new ward to be closer to work. I relished the opportunity to start fresh with ward members unaware of my mental health diagnoses—schizoaffective disorder bipolar type with catatonia due to toxic encephalopathy.

I experience symptoms of schizophrenia (the brain plays tricks on all five of my senses), bipolar disorder (dynamic shifts in mood), and catatonia (a shutdown of my ability to interact with the world around me) when the toxic encephalopathy (toxins agitating the brain) is flared by my dietary choices or by infections.

Despite having worked hard to learn how to live with my symptoms, I'd grown tired of my

inability to shake the label of “schizophrenic.” Grateful to have a clean slate, I wanted people to get to know me before they learned of a diagnosis, because most people are too scared of the label to see through it. Some even naïvely and hurtfully talk about mental illness as though it denoted a lack of personal worthiness rather than a biological malady. I wanted members in my new ward to meet me as a compassionate, competent, testimony-filled, fun-loving sister.

## A New Calling

Soon my husband and I were called to be leaders over the 11-year-old Scouts. I readily accepted the calling. Every talk and lesson I'd ever heard about being entitled to the Lord's help while serving on His errand reverberated





The bishop assured me that my willingness to serve, despite my illness, was like the widow's sacred mite, for I "cast in all that [I] had."

in my heart. I knew that “whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies.”<sup>1</sup> I reveled in having been considered able and worthy to serve. I’d lived for several years in remission and felt ready to move forward with life.

Arriving at church for our first night of Scouts fully prepared, I felt cautiously optimistic about enjoying an evening with just three boys. But within the first 10 minutes, my acquired sensory processing disorder (a high sensitivity to input from the senses) was so overstimulated that

it rendered me speechless. I was more focused on the rule requiring two leaders in the room than on the reality that if I didn’t get out of the room, I would become progressively worse. Consequently, surrounded by excited Scout chatter, I quickly deteriorated. By the end of 60 minutes, I found myself rocking in the corner with my fingers in my ears, humming to calm my brain.

Our bishop saw my husband helping me out of the room and came over to ask how our first night of Scouting went. I must have had a look of absolute terror in my tear-filled eyes. Scout noise echoed loudly in my head, even though they’d long since departed. I was nearly speechless, responding with only, “Dit. Dit. Dit.” I stared at the ground, embarrassed at my incessant rocking and finger snapping. I felt ashamed of the stigma attached to my diagnosis.

My husband briefly explained my sensory processing disorder and schizophrenia to our bishop while I silently questioned whether I’d done enough to allow the Lord to magnify my

ability. I forced myself to look up into my bishop’s eyes. To my surprise, they reflected compassion instead of pity or fear. He released me on the spot, apologizing for the calling and saying that the Lord called me to be a leader of 11-year-old Scouts expecting only a heart willing to serve. The bishop then let me go home, requesting to speak with me the following Sunday after I recovered. At home, while I sequestered myself in a completely dark room with earplugs, my brain calmed enough to weaken the aura-like sensory intensity associated with overstimulation. Two hours after Scouts, I regained my ability to communicate.

**I forced myself to look up into my bishop’s eyes. To my surprise, they reflected compassion instead of pity or fear.**



## A Learning Experience for Me and My Bishop

In our meeting the following Sunday, my bishop explained the revelatory experience of extending callings. He said he would think of all the well-qualified people in the ward, weighing everything he knew about them, and would pray about it. He then explained that he could only receive inspiration based on what he knew about an individual. When he didn't have all the information, he could call a person who was completely worthy of having that calling but physically incapable of fulfilling it.

He said part of his training process as a bishop was to learn how to better ask the right questions to gather more information before taking the matter to the Lord. My bishop humbly explained that the Lord was working on training him to better meet the individual needs of the ward members.

He went on to explain that because I knew of my illness and accepted the calling anyway, my sacrifice was akin to the sacred widow's mite, for "of [my] want [I] did cast in all that [I] had" (Mark 12:44). He said that my acceptance of the calling was more important than my actual ability to fulfill it, because the Lord understood my illness. He lovingly explained that part of the reason he'd been inspired to call me as a Scout leader was that the Lord wanted the bishop to understand how willing I was to serve.

He added that the Lord also wanted him to help me understand that I should never, ever put a calling before my health. He said that in the future, when any bishop extended a calling to me, I should tell him that my heart is ready and willing to serve but that my body's limitations are such that I may not be able to do as my heart desires.

It was a great learning experience for both of us.

## Serving in a Different Way

Later I was called as an adviser for the Young Women—a calling to provide compassion and to support the leaders striving to better understand unique needs of several girls living with severe mental illnesses and behavioral disorders. I thrived in that calling. I'd like to think my sweet young women and those called to learn from us thrived as a result as well.

My health cycles through seasons of ability and incapacity. When I am well, I am entirely capable of serving in the unique capacities to which I am called. I recognize that the Lord gives me valuable lived experience that can be used (in appropriate situations) to help my leaders better understand not only me but also many others who have yet to find their voice to talk about difficult circumstances. When I share my experiences, I try to touch only briefly on how my symptoms impact my life, without going into the traumatic details, to avoid overwhelming or scaring those I attempt to teach.

The Lord has something each of us can learn from and teach our bishoprics and organization leaders so that together we can all become stronger instruments in His hands as we recognize one another not by our earthly labels but as divine children of loving heavenly parents. ■

*The author lives in California, USA.*

### NOTE

1. Thomas S. Monson, "Duty Calls," *Ensign*, May 1996, 44.





What Church Leaders  
Are Saying

about

THE  
MAY

### **An Increase in Diagnoses of Mental Illness**

“Scholars tell us that in 2014 one in five of the U.S. population between the ages of 18 to 25 had a mental illness.<sup>1</sup> This reaches down to younger ages and causes overall anxieties and significant overload among mental health counselors. We are told that between 2008 and 2016, there was a 40 percent increase in college students being diagnosed or treated for depression, and a 70 percent increase in diagnosis of or treatment for anxiety.<sup>2</sup> Truly these are different times for your generation, and it is not surprising that you young marrieds look to Church leaders for help in doing what you need to do and teaching your children what you need to teach.”<sup>3</sup>

—President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency

### **Mourning with Those That Mourn**

“The best thing is: if you genuinely love the person, then you’re willing to sit there with them, and you’re willing to cry with them, and you’re willing to hold them. And you do that in concert with health care professionals and with ecclesiastical leaders, with friends and family support. In most cases people continue to have a burden, but the burden can be made lighter. And as that happens, joy can fill their soul again.”<sup>4</sup>

—Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

### **We Should Never Be Ashamed of a Mental Illness**

“I wish to speak to those who suffer from some form of mental illness or emotional disorder, whether those afflictions be slight or severe, of brief duration or persistent over a lifetime. . . . These afflictions are some of the realities of mortal life, and there should be no more shame in acknowledging them than in acknowledging a battle with high blood pressure or the sudden appearance of a malignant tumor.”<sup>5</sup>

—Elder Jeffrey R. Holland  
of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

### **The Savior Knows Our Pains**

“Some are born with physical or mental disabilities that cause personal suffering for them and struggles for those who love and care for them. For many, the infirmity of depression is painful or permanently disabling. . . .

“ . . . [The Savior] knows of our anguish, and He is there for us. . . . The healing and strengthening power of Jesus Christ and His Atonement is for all of us who will ask.”<sup>6</sup>

—President Dallin H. Oaks,  
First Counselor in the First Presidency

### Reaching Out with Love

“As disciples of Jesus Christ, we have made a covenant with God that we ‘are willing to bear one another’s burdens’ and ‘to mourn with those that mourn’ [Mosiah 18:8–9]. This may include becoming informed about emotional illnesses, finding resources that can help address these struggles, and ultimately bringing ourselves and others to Christ, who is the Master Healer. Even if we do not know how to relate to what others are going through, validating that their pain is real can be an important first step in finding understanding and healing. . . .

“Sadly, many who suffer from severe depression distance themselves from their fellow Saints because they feel they do not fit some imaginary mold. We can help them know and feel that they do indeed belong with us. It is important to recognize that depression is not the result of weakness, nor is it usually the result of sin [see John 9:1–7]. It “thrives in secrecy but shrinks in empathy” [Jane Clayson Johnson, *Silent Souls Weeping* (2018), 197]. Together, we can break through the clouds of isolation and stigma so the burden of shame is lifted and miracles of healing can occur.”<sup>7</sup>

—Reyna I. Aburto, Second Counselor  
in the Relief Society General Presidency

### Seek Professional Help When Needed

“If things continue to be debilitating, seek the advice of reputable people with certified training, professional skills, and good values. Be honest with them about your history and your struggles. Prayerfully and responsibly consider the counsel they give and the solutions they prescribe. If you had appendicitis, God would expect you to seek a priesthood blessing *and* get the best medical care available. So too with emotional disorders. Our Father in Heaven expects us to use *all* of the marvelous gifts He has provided in this glorious dispensation.”<sup>8</sup>

—Elder Jeffrey R. Holland  
of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

### Hope Is Found in the Savior

“From time to time our lives may seem to be touched by, or even wrapped in, darkness. Sometimes the night that surrounds us will appear oppressive, disheartening, and frightening.

“My heart grieves for the many sorrows some of you face, for the painful loneliness and wearisome fears you may be experiencing.

“Nevertheless, I bear witness that our living hope is in Christ Jesus! He is the true, pure, and powerful entrance to divine enlightenment.

“I testify that with Christ, darkness cannot succeed. Darkness will not gain victory over the light of Christ.”<sup>9</sup>

—Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf  
of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

### The Master Healer

“When tragedies overtake us, when life hurts so much we can’t breathe, when we’ve taken a beating like the man on the road to Jericho and been left for dead, Jesus comes along and pours oil into our wounds, lifts us tenderly up, takes us to an inn, looks after us [see Luke 10:30–35]. To those of us in grief, He says, ‘I will . . . ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs, . . . that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions’ [Mosiah 24:14]. Christ heals wounds.”<sup>10</sup>

—Sharon Eubank, First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

### We as Saints Can Lift and Bless Each Other

“Months ago, we tragically lost a member of our ward to suicide. Our hearts have been heavy with the loss of our dear friend.

“The Sunday following this heartbreaking event, I attended my church meetings. It was so comforting to be with my ward family! During our Relief Society meeting, our inspired and insightful Relief Society president wisely used that hour as time for the sisters to share their thoughts and feelings about this loss. She decided that what the sisters of our ward needed that Sunday was to minister to each other in a beautifully personal way, instead of following the lesson plan. She turned our Relief Society meeting into a council that provided us an opportunity for comfort and healing.”<sup>11</sup>

—Reyna I. Aburto, Second Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

### We Can Be Made Perfect through Christ

“I bear witness of that day when loved ones whom we knew to have disabilities in mortality will stand before us glorified and grand, breathtakingly perfect in body and mind. What a thrilling moment that will be! I do not know whether we will be happier for ourselves that we have witnessed such a miracle or happier for them that they are fully perfect and finally ‘free at last.’ Until that hour when Christ’s consummate gift is evident to us all, may we live by faith, hold fast to hope, and show ‘compassion one of another’ [1 Peter 3:8].”<sup>12</sup>

—Elder Jeffrey R. Holland  
of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

#### NOTES

1. See Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, *Behavioral Health Trends in the United States: Results from the 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health* (2015), 28, [samhsa.gov/data](http://samhsa.gov/data).
2. See Lisa Ann Jackson Thomson and Peter B. Gardner, “When the Light Goes Out,” *BYU Magazine*, Spring 2017, 24.
3. Dallin H. Oaks, “Young Marrieds Devotional” (address given at Los Angeles California Santa Monica Stake Center, Aug. 24, 2018).
4. Dale G. Renlund, “Suicide Prevention: Reaching Out to Help” (video), [youtube.com/watch?v=VmYG4Zm8tS8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmYG4Zm8tS8).
5. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Like a Broken Vessel,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 40.
6. Dallin H. Oaks, “Strengthened by the Atonement of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 63, 64.
7. Reyna I. Aburto, “Thru Cloud and Sunshine, Lord, Abide with Me!” *Ensign*, Nov. 2019, 58.
8. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Like a Broken Vessel,” 41.
9. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Hope of God’s Light,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 76–77.
10. Sharon Eubank, “Christ: The Light That Shines in Darkness,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 74.
11. Reyna I. Aburto, Facebook post, Feb. 16, 2019.
12. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Like a Broken Vessel,” 42.

# How Do I Talk to My Kids about Mental Health?

*Article produced in consultation with  
counselors from Family Services*

## 5 Ways to Start a Conversation

- Uncomfortable feelings are part of life. It's OK to feel angry, sad, or worried sometimes. These feelings don't always mean you did something wrong.
- You know how doctors help if you break a leg? There are also people who can help with upset thoughts and feelings. We should ask for help when we need it.
- Mistakes are part of how we learn and grow here on earth. No one is perfect! Heavenly Father loves us, even when we make mistakes. He wants us to keep trying.
- Some activities—like deep breathing, talking to someone, playing sports, or drawing—can help you feel better when you're upset. We shouldn't do things that hurt ourselves, other people, or animals.
- Sometimes people have upset feelings or troubling thoughts that don't go away. Some people have other problems with the way their mind works. That's not their fault. We should be kind and helpful to everyone and treat them as Jesus Christ would.



### Talking Tips

- It's important to ask your children questions about their thoughts and feelings, and then really listen. Questions could include: What's been on your mind lately? What changes are going on in your life? Have you noticed any new feelings lately? Do you have any questions you've been wanting to ask someone?
- Your children's questions are important. They can help you know what your children are ready to learn about. Instead of dumping everything you know about a topic on a child at once, answer the question with basic information. Then invite them to respond. If they don't have any follow-up questions, maybe the basics were enough for now. If they have more questions, they might be ready for additional details.
- Avoid arguing with your child about the feelings they share, even if those feelings don't match your perception of the situation.
- Sometimes writing is easier than speaking. If conversations aren't going well, try inviting your child to write or draw about how they feel.

### Activity Ideas



- For young children, draw faces to represent different feelings and help your children name the feelings.



- Brainstorm with your children a list of activities to try when they're upset.



- Think of someone sad or struggling in some way. What could your family do to show them love?



- Read and talk about articles in this month's *Friend* about mental health (listed under "Additional Resources").

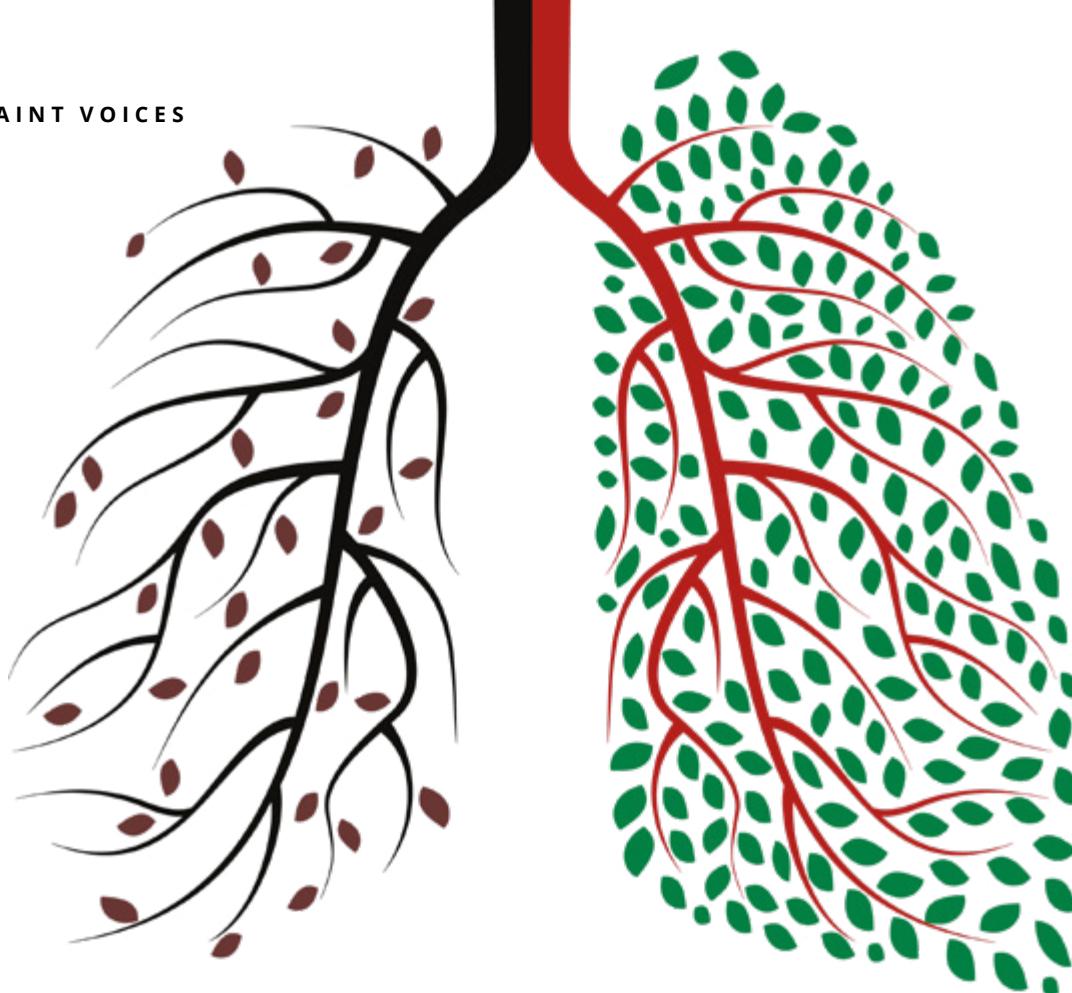
### I Need Help!

If you feel like your child's emotions and behavior are out of control, or their mental health is at risk, reach out to a mental health professional. (There's an article below with tips about that process.) Your bishop could help you connect with Family Services or other counseling resources in your area. Also, [mentalhealth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://mentalhealth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) has a list of free crisis lines and other resources. You are loved, and you are not alone! ■

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- "Anxious but All Right," *Friend*, Feb. 2020, 20.
- "Six Ways to Feel Better," *Friend*, Feb. 2020, 22.
- "What's on Your Mind? Sometimes I'm afraid to try new things. What if I fail?" *Friend*, Feb. 2020, 38.
- For other child-friendly stories, activities, and media, visit [lessonhelps.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://lessonhelps.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) and click on topics like "Feelings."
- "Finding a Mental Health Professional Who's Right for You" (digital-only article), *Ensign*, Jan. 2019.
- [Mentalhealth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://Mentalhealth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)

**W**ith only one functioning lung and a curved spine, I felt my future was not going to be as bright as I imagined.



## He Wants Me to Be Happy

**W**hen I was rushed to the emergency room with both of my lungs collapsed, I thought I was at the end of my life. I was not yet ready emotionally or spiritually for the end, but my body was giving up on me. It was hard for my family to see me in that condition, but they remained strong, and I was blessed to have survived.

My struggles did not end there. Since then, I've had to live my life with only one functioning lung and a curved spine. Every day is painful and difficult. I once thought that I would be better off dead rather than to continue suffering. I felt weak, not just

physically, but mentally and spiritually as well. I lost hope and confidence. I began to push away the people in my life who encouraged me. But my family never gave up on me. They loved and cared for me, and my friends continued to support me. Even so, I still felt that my future was not going to be as bright as I had imagined.

One night I found myself feeling so down. I decided I needed to read my patriarchal blessing. Tears came to my eyes the moment I read the first few lines, "Our Father in Heaven cares for you and loves you. He wants you to be happy in this life."

In that moment, I realized that Heavenly Father really has a very bright future in store for me and wonderful blessings for me to anticipate as long as I follow the path He wants me to take.

Our Father in Heaven knew that we would all struggle, so He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer for us and to comfort us. That's how vast Their love for us is. I may still struggle every day of my life here on earth, but I know that Their love will always be there for me and Their promises will be all fulfilled if I hold on and follow Them. ■

**Precious Guiuo, Rizal, Philippines**

# The Book of Mormon Was Our Missionary

After our nephew got into a serious accident, my wife, Ana María, and I talked about our desire to know the truth among so many different religions and beliefs. One afternoon I sat down on my bed and prayed, “Lord, please help me find a way to know which church is true.”

Five minutes later, the phone rang. A friend called to invite my wife and me to his home to learn about some nutritional products. We went, and while we were there, our friend gave us a Book of Mormon. On the title page was a personal note: “I hope this book helps you get closer to our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The next day, I looked at the book and prayed again, “Lord, tell me if this book is true. I don’t want to offend you by reading something bad.”

I began reading. As I read, I felt as if I knew the people in the Book of Mormon. When I reached the end, I was so pained by the destruction of the Nephites that I wept. I had read hundreds of books, but no book had touched me the way the Book of Mormon did. I knew it was true.

One Sunday I invited Ana María to accompany me to a nearby chapel of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I thought she wouldn’t want to come, but she agreed. We liked what we heard. Afterward, ward members asked if they could send the missionaries over. “Of course,” we replied.

The missionaries soon arrived with the Book of Mormon in hand and said

they had a message to share with us. “That’s a beautiful book,” I said. “I’ve already read it.” This surprised them. Then Ana María surprised me. “And I’m reading it now,” she said. “I’m in Mosiah.”

She had found the book on the table where I left it every day before work and began reading herself. Later she surprised me again when she said that when I was praying for direction from

Heavenly Father a few weeks earlier, she had been uttering the same prayer in another part of our home.

I told the missionaries I was ready to be baptized. They taught us the lessons, and two weeks later, my wife and I were baptized and confirmed. We are so thankful that the Lord sent us the Book of Mormon to help us know which church is true. ■

**Raúl Hernandez, Texas, USA**



*When I was praying for direction from Heavenly Father, my wife had been uttering the same prayer in another part of the house.*

# “I Want to Go Home”

While my husband and I were eating lunch at a local sandwich shop, a man walked in looking disheveled, lost, and confused. When he walked toward our table, I was surprised he didn't ask for money. He only asked for directions to Flagstaff, Arizona. My husband and I gave him directions. He thanked us and left.

After lunch we started for home. Soon I saw the man walking toward a gas station. I had a strong impression to help him and asked my husband to pull into the gas station. I found the man and introduced myself. He had sad and tired eyes. His face seemed etched with deep lines from a hard life.

I asked how he planned to get to Flagstaff. He said he was going to walk. I knew that would be impossible since Flagstaff was more than 120 miles (193 km) away. I gave him some money

and told him he could go to a nearby fast food restaurant to get some food and that I would return to take him to the bus depot and buy him a ticket to Flagstaff.

I returned to the truck and told my husband what had happened. Because of his health issues, I called a friend and asked her to go back with me. She agreed. We gathered some supplies, food, and water. Then we drove to the restaurant and picked the man up.

As we headed to the bus depot, this poor man began repeating, “I want to go home.” I asked if Flagstaff was his home. It wasn't, but his daughter, whom he hadn't spoken to for several years, lived there. He explained that he had been released from prison two weeks earlier. He and another released prisoner had been dropped off at the bus depot and each given a ticket. The

other prisoner had stolen his ticket and what little money he had. He had been wandering the streets since. Nobody would help him.

“I want to go home,” he said again.

We arrived at the bus depot. I purchased his ticket and gave him some money and the supplies we had gathered. He thanked us and sat down. As we drove away, this man's words repeated in my mind: “I want to go home.”

Isn't that what we all want? We are all absent from the loving home we left when we came to earth. We can all lose our way, so Jesus Christ showed us the path to follow and, through His atoning sacrifice, paid the ultimate price for our sins. Just as this man couldn't return home on his own, neither can we return to our heavenly home without our Savior. ■

**Audrey Simonson, Arizona, USA**

## BONUS ARTICLE

Read an additional “Latter-day Saint Voices” article in the digital version of this issue in the Gospel Library app or at [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

*I saw him walking toward a gas station and had a strong impression to help him.*



# The Lord Had Other Plans for Us

I used to leave the house at 8:00 a.m. and return at midnight after working all day and going to class at night. During the little time my husband, Daniel, and I had together, we argued. Things were bad. We were on the verge of separating.

One Sunday evening after an argument, Daniel said, “Maybe we should get closer to God.” The next day, while Daniel was home watching our son, missionaries knocked on our door.

When the missionaries started visiting us, I disagreed with everything they taught. But after a few discussions, we began to feel something. We didn’t know what it was, but we described it as “magical,” a feeling of peace and harmony. It would linger even after the missionaries left. We realized that we needed that feeling more often in our home.

Inspired by the missionaries’ message about the importance of family, Daniel and I came closer together in our marriage. I had hoped that going to school would lead to a better position at my work. But we decided to focus on our family, spend more time together, and have more children. I quit school, quit my job, and went to work as Daniel’s secretary at his pest control business.

Less than three months after the missionaries’ first visit, we were baptized and confirmed. Our life changed dramatically. We began living the law of tithing. We began praying at home and at work with Daniel’s employees. We began serving in the Church. Daniel’s business grew, and he needed to hire more workers.

A year after our baptism, we went to the temple to be sealed. A few days after our sealing, I found out I was expecting.



Sundays aren’t easy for us. Daniel leaves early for high council meetings. I have to prepare our three children for church by myself. But we are able to share a lot of time together throughout the week. So even if we are apart at times on Sunday as we serve the Lord, we know that we are blessed.

We have gained a testimony that when we do our part, the Lord can help us, and blessings come. We have received a lot more than we had ever hoped for from our own plans. The Lord had better things in mind for us. ■  
**Claudia Zepeda, Coquimbo Region, Chile**



# Young Adults

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- Dealing with Trials as a Quadriplegic**  
By Stephen Merrill

## Perspective on Those Dark and Gloomy Times

**W**e've all had dark and gloomy days where we feel like nothing's going right. During those moments **we may ask ourselves, "Why me? Why now? How am I going to endure this?"** Fortunately, **we haven't been left alone.** We can count on the loving guidance of our Heavenly Father.

When I was younger, I used to complain about and question the adversity I faced—until something happened that impacted my life forever: I had an accident in which I completely lost the fingers on my left hand. As hard as that was to endure, **that trial taught me to trust in Heavenly Father.** And, in spite of everything, I learned to be optimistic and grateful. Something in me changed completely, and I felt how Heavenly Father extends His love to us and leads us through all of the difficult things we go through in life. You can read my story in the digital version of this issue.

You'll also find stories from young adults who will show you how to be happy in the midst of purifying fire, how to look forward with faith, how to **find purpose in your trials**, how it's OK to ask for help, and how to have more faith in the healing power of Jesus Christ.

I know with all my heart that **every difficulty—every dark and gloomy time in our lives—can lead to a sacred purpose** and that that purpose is to refine us and change us so that one day we can ultimately become perfect like our Heavenly Father.

Love,



Jennifer

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PHOTOGRAPH FROM GETTY IMAGES

YOUNG ADULTS

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# Paralyzed but Not Pessimistic

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After I was shot and paralyzed, my faith in Jesus Christ made the impossible possible.



**By Julieta Olmedo**

**E**ver since I was a little girl, I loved sports, especially football. I played whenever I could, and I dreamed of competing someday for Argentina in the Olympics or the World Games.

My dreams were shattered one day when I was 15 years old. I had just visited my sick seminary teacher and was riding my bicycle home when two gangs in my neighborhood started shooting at each other. A stray bullet hit me in the back.

When I woke up in the hospital the next day, I learned that I was paralyzed from the waist down.

## **The Question to Ask When Bad Things Happen**

While I was healing, family and friends would ask me how I was doing. I could see that they all felt bad for me, so I would console them by saying I was OK. Comforting others helped me, but I knew I wouldn't walk again and had to learn how to live with being paralyzed.

At the time, I had started going to seminary and was becoming active again in the Church. Seminary was the pillar that supported me in coming back and in not getting mad at Heavenly Father over what had happened to me.

In seminary our teacher taught us that when bad things happen, we shouldn't ask, "Why did this happen to me?" She said the question we should ask is, "What can I learn from this?"

It was hard to keep going and to always be positive, but my seminary teacher's question gave me a lot of strength. When I lost hope and when doubts filled my mind, I always returned to that question: "What can I learn?" That helped me get up every day, and it carried me when I felt like giving up.

As for the man who shot me, Heavenly Father blessed me not to feel resentment toward him. He eventually went to trial and was sentenced to prison. While there, he wrote me a letter, asking my forgiveness and telling me he had changed his ways. I told him I didn't feel any bitterness toward him and that I was happy he had changed.

## Finding a New Passion

For a few years after I was shot, I didn't feel like doing much. I missed playing sports, and I didn't know then that many sports have been adapted for people with disabilities. When

I found that out, my enthusiasm for sports returned. If a sport was new to me, I tried to learn it. And I gave it the same passion I did with football before I was paralyzed.

Soon I found a sport I loved as much as football—wheelchair basketball. Eventually, after a lot of play and practice, I was selected to represent Argentina internationally. I love the high level of competition between rival international teams.

I played on our women's national wheelchair basketball team in the Para-South American Games in Chile in 2014, during which we won a gold medal. Then we competed in the South America Championships in Colombia, winning a silver medal in 2015. I also competed in the Parapan American Games in Canada in 2015, where we qualified for the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Later, after qualifying for the World Cup, we played in Hamburg, Germany, in 2018. And in August 2019, we played at the Parapan American Games in Lima, Peru.

## The Blessings That Help Me Endure

Sometimes I still get discouraged, and every day has its challenges that I have to overcome. But I thank my Heavenly Father for the wonderful family and friends He has given me. He has brought many important people into my life who have helped me face this difficult trial. Family support is vital in overcoming challenges—not just our physical challenges but our mental, emotional, and spiritual ones too.

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When I lost hope and when doubts filled my mind, I always returned to that question: "What can I learn?"





Because of the gospel in my life, I appreciate the many blessings my Father has given me and continues to give me. I know He loves me. Without faith in Him and Jesus Christ, I wouldn't have been able to endure this challenge.

Yes, I have to travel life in a wheelchair, but even with my wheelchair, I've still achieved many of my childhood dreams after all. I tell people, "Believe in our Father. He is with us. With His help, we can overcome our challenges. Don't lose your faith. Stay firm in the gospel. Set goals, and you'll achieve them. Our Heavenly Father will help you."

Along with supporting me in my challenges and goals, my faith also helps me live the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Participating in tournaments can bring temptations, but keeping gospel principles and my standards in mind helps me make good choices.

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With His help, we can overcome our challenges. Don't lose your faith. Stay firm in the gospel. Set goals, and you'll achieve them. Our Heavenly Father will help you.



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I try to help others through my example. I don't drink. I don't smoke. I don't do other things some athletes do. It can be difficult to share my testimony or the scriptures, but I try to teach others by the things I do and don't do.

## Heavenly Father Has All the Answers

Sometimes we get angry with Heavenly Father because of hard things that happen to us or to people we love, but even if we don't always have all the answers to our trials, He does.

Heavenly Father doesn't give us challenges we can't overcome. As my seminary teacher said, sometimes bad things happen for a reason. And sometimes those difficult things can end up blessing us and others. If we hold on to our faith in the midst of our trials, our examples of faith may strengthen others who need help facing their trials and moving forward. ■

*The author lives in Córdoba, Argentina.*

# Reaching Out for Help after My Friend's Suicide

I thought I could overcome my depression on my own, but finally asking for help changed everything.

**By Brixton Gardner**

**W**hile working one day a few summers ago, I got the news that a good friend of mine passed away from suicide. I was shocked—I honestly didn't know how to react. I remember sitting at my desk in silence, unable to think or do anything.

All sorts of thoughts and emotions came flooding in, leaving me confused. But I kept telling myself that I was OK and that I would get over it. The following months, however, brought an overwhelming wave of depression and sadness over me. There were many tears and sleepless nights. Some mornings, I couldn't even get out of bed. I didn't think my prayers were being answered or heard. Reading the scriptures felt flat and uninspiring. I felt hopeless and didn't think things would get better.

For the longest time, I was afraid to talk to anyone about what I was feeling. People knew about my loss and would offer to talk or give support, but I always turned them down. "I don't want to bother them," I would think. "Besides, they have their own problems to worry about. Why would they care about mine?"

There was one Sunday where my grief seemed too much to bear. I couldn't sit still during sacrament meeting. When the meeting finally finished, I bolted into the hallway to get out of the building. Just before I made it to the door, I ran into a woman in my ward who had lost a son to suicide years earlier. When we made eye contact, the Spirit told me it was time to say something about what I was feeling.

It was scary, but with a shaky voice I stopped her and asked, “Can I talk to you for a bit? I need help.”

She listened to me explain what had happened and how I was feeling. Then, without hesitation, she held my arm and looked at me with tears in her eyes. “I just want you to know that this is not your fault and that you are so loved,” she said.

We both couldn’t help but cry as we kept talking. For me, it felt like the clouds were parting. There was finally some sort of a light shining through on my life. Everything she said to me in the hallway that day was an answer to my prayers.

What I learned most from that moment was that sharing my feelings had finally allowed

me to start healing. For some reason, I had convinced myself that I could face everything alone and that I didn’t need any help. Though I couldn’t see it, I was surrounded by people who loved me and wanted to help me.

I’ve learned that when we say that we are to be “of one heart and one mind” (Moses 7:18), it means that your heartaches are my heartaches and my pains are also your pains. It means not only giving help when needed but also being willing to receive help when we need it as well. Simply letting others help me is what made the difference and ultimately what led me to make a full mental recovery.

Now, a few years after this experience, I can honestly say that I am the happiest I have ever been in my life. With a lot of hard work, and ultimately by the grace of God, I have become someone stronger than I was before all this happened. Prayer, service, vulnerability, humility, therapy, countless blessings, and so much more have helped me get to where I am today. I owe a lot to Heavenly Father, my family, and my close friends for helping me through all this. How grateful I am that I reached out for help—it was a key to healing. ■



**Brixton Gardner** was raised in California, USA, and is currently studying at Brigham Young University. He served a mission in British Columbia, Canada, and he loves fitness, cooking (and eating) new recipes, and finding new music to enjoy.





# 5 LESSONS

Learned from Watching  
My Sister Battle Cancer

There's a light awaiting us at the end, but there is also **LIGHT** *throughout* the tunnel

**By Paige Aiono Call**

**H**eavenly Father blessed me with a younger sister who doubled as my best friend. We were only 15 months apart and were inseparable. Hailey could light up the room with her beautiful smile and contagious laugh. She was so strong, and once she put her mind to something, she never gave up.

At the age of 18, Haley was diagnosed with a cancerous brain tumor. Through her journey, I have learned five essential principles that can help us overcome hardships.

## 1 Trust in Heavenly Father's Plan for You

It may seem overwhelming to think of all the things we could face in this life, but our Heavenly Father is aware of us. We must trust that He has a plan for us, even when life is hard.

Sister Jean B. Bingham, Relief Society General President, said: "Sometimes we are afraid to trust because we don't understand God's absolute love and desire to help us. But when we study Heavenly Father's plan and Jesus Christ's mission, we understand that Their only objective is our eternal happiness and progress."<sup>1</sup>

We can develop our trust in Heavenly Father by increasing our study of His plan and seeing, in the scriptures, His dealings with His children. During the hectic time when Hailey was undergoing surgery and treatments, I found comfort in knowing that God has our best interests in mind. And I trusted that He had a plan for Hailey. I know He has a plan for all of us, even though it may not be what we imagined for ourselves.

## 2 Look for the Light

We often hear the expression "There's a light at the end of the tunnel," but in my experience, there is also light *throughout* the tunnel as you walk through the hardships of life. Sometimes we must *choose* to see the light around us, no matter how small or dim it may be.

The light can be a sweet tender mercy from our Father in Heaven, the Holy Ghost reassuring us, or a family member or friend comforting us. Our faith in Jesus Christ can also become a light and a driving force that keep us moving through the dark.

Hailey was in the hospital for a month after initially finding her brain tumor, and I thought she wouldn't make it to my wedding, but just three days before my wedding day, Hailey was discharged from the hospital and



## Choose to be engulfed in LIGHT

was able to attend my wedding reception. That was a beacon of light among dark trials. I knew that Heavenly Father was watching over us.

Look for the light. Choose to be engulfed in the light rather than the darkness. Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles profoundly stated, “When we are in the light, we have ‘a perfect brightness of hope’ [2 Nephi 31:20] because we can see our mortal trials from an eternal perspective.”<sup>2</sup>

Although the trial of Hailey’s cancer was not taken away and we still felt that heartache, we knew that we were not left alone. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, was walking with us every step of the way. As you walk through the tunnels of your trials, look for those beacons of light and you will find them. They will help carry you through your hardships.

### 3 Be Courageous

Sometimes we doubt ourselves. We don’t see how we can overcome life’s adversities. But we are often stronger than we know. I witnessed Hailey display an immense amount of courage during her five-and-a-half-year

battle with brain cancer. She endured numerous surgeries, treatments, medications, and therapy. I never once heard her ask, “Why me?” or become angry at her circumstances. She endured it all and remained both faithful and courageous.

Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “True enduring happiness with the accompanying strength, courage, and capacity to overcome the most challenging difficulties comes from a life centered in Jesus Christ. . . . There is no guarantee of overnight results, but there is absolute assurance that, in the Lord’s time, solutions will come, peace will prevail, and emptiness will be filled.”<sup>3</sup>

Our Heavenly Father knows our limits, and most importantly, He knows our potential. So when challenges come and thoughts of inadequacy fill our minds, or when we feel we cannot carry our load any longer, we can dig deep within ourselves to find that courage and know that we are not alone. Our Savior has already carried our load, and we can rely on Him to lift us up.



## 4 Remember Why You're Here

Success, failures, ups, downs, highs, and lows—we came to earth for all of it, not just for the good. We came to learn and grow, which we cannot do without hardships and challenges.

Doctrine and Covenants 29:39 states, “And it must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves; for if they never should have bitter they could not know the sweet.” Tribulation is a part of the Lord’s plan for us. It helps us to stay humble, and sometimes we can learn only by experiencing adversity.

Our experience in mortality brings a lot of growing pains, but as we come to understand and accept that this stage in our existence is a necessary step to eternal happiness and as we exercise our faith during the hard times, we will prepare ourselves to be reunited with our Heavenly Parents.

## 5 Use Trials to Become Your Best

As difficult as it was to watch Hailey endure her battle with brain cancer, it made us stronger as a family and brought us closer together. This life-changing experience has taught me to love more and hate less; to be happier more often than sad; to see the good instead of the bad; to be in the moment and not distracted; to be more sympathetic and less judgmental; and to enjoy my loved ones and not take them for granted.

The most important thing I have learned is how to rely on my Savior and Heavenly Father. While life’s challenges can knock us down, they can also teach us to get back up, turn to the Lord, and keep on going. And without the hardships, we would not know all the blessings that also come throughout our time in mortality. Our trials aid in molding us into who we are meant to be and help us reach our divine potential. While our Heavenly Father may not take away a trial, He does give us the tools to help us overcome them.

## Tools to Navigate Trials

Navigating through our hardships is not easy, but I know that our faith in our Savior and our Heavenly Father can act as a lighthouse and guide us on the right course. We will all have trials throughout our lives, and the principles above are tools that can help us as we face our challenges. I’ve had to put these tools to the test ever since my beloved Hailey peacefully passed away. I know that she is now free of pain and suffering. Her mission here on earth was completed, and it was time for her to return home to our Heavenly Father.

Hailey inspired so many throughout her battle with cancer, and she did it all with such great faith. It is my hope that, whatever our challenges may be, we can all press forward with unwavering faith and with the knowledge that Heavenly Father loves us and will be with us. ■

### NOTES

1. Jean B. Bingham, “That Your Joy Might Be Full,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 86.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Bearers of Heavenly Light,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 79.
3. Richard G. Scott, “Trust in the Lord,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 17.



**Paige Aiono Call** is a wife and the mother of two boys. She grew up in California and Arizona, USA, graduated from Utah State University, and currently lives in Utah with her family.

# INSIGHTS

from YOUNG ADULTS

*on overcoming adversity*



“I have to **trust that Christ knows exactly how I feel.** And trust turning to Him each time I feel like I’m alone. He knows exactly how to succor me.”

—Zariah Inniss, Saint Michael, Barbados

“I try to remember that there’s always some way **I can grow and improve thanks to the trial.**”

—Wendi Gratzl, Missouri, USA

“I remember ‘unto whom much is given much is required’ (Doctrine and Covenants 82:3) and try to **practice gratitude.**”

—Kieren Cranfield, New South Wales, Australia

“I **let positivity sink in** on me and keep in mind that thinking negative things won’t even help.”

—Charmaine Ortiza, Cavite, Philippines

from CHURCH LEADERS

“Adversity teaches us things we cannot learn otherwise. Adversity helps to develop a depth of character that comes in no other way. Our loving Heavenly Father has set us in a world filled with challenges and trials so that we, through opposition, can learn wisdom, become stronger, and experience joy.”

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Your Happily Ever After,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 125.

“Pray, pray, pray, pray. **Then trust God with the answer.**”

—Shane Dunlop, Western Australia, Australia

## SHARE YOUR INSIGHTS

What insights do you have about **making big decisions** as a young adult?

Send us your response at [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) by February 29, 2020.

# Come, Follow Me Shareable Scriptures

Download these picture quotes from February's *Come, Follow Me* readings and share them on social media—or send them to those you minister to, your Sunday School class, or your family: [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/22081](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/22081).

FEBRUARY 3–9



FEBRUARY 10–16



FEBRUARY 17–23



FEBRUARY 24–MARCH 1



COMMEMORATING  
200 YEARS SINCE THE  
FIRST VISION

*Joseph Smith's First Vision is as important to us today as it was 200 years ago. Several articles this month help explain why.*



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