

Ensign



Cover Story:
Artists Depict
the First Vision, p. 14

Doctrine and Covenants
Times at a Glance, p. 20

Singles Happiness, p. 36

President David O.
McKay, p. 40

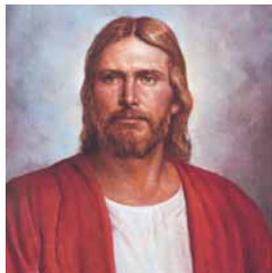


AWAY NOT BE COPIED

The Good Samaritan, by Meridene Grant

*"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves . . . [who left] him half dead. . . .
But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him" (Luke 10:30, 33).*

Ensign



8 *Allegiance to God*



20 *Doctrine and Covenants Times at a Glance*

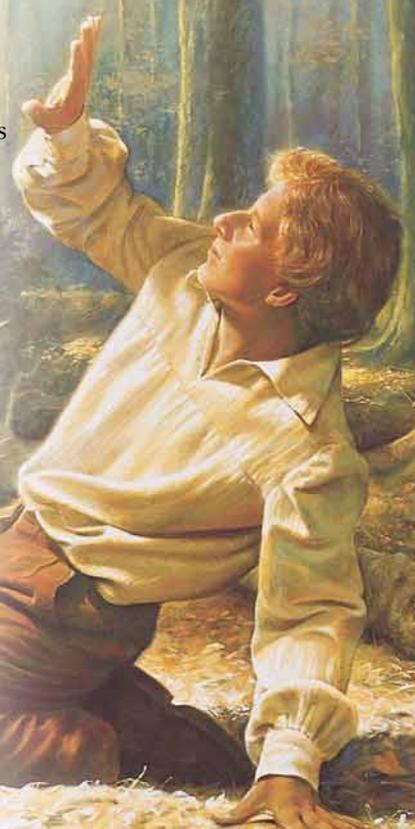


50 *Falling Out of Love . . . and Climbing Back In*



62 *When a Loved One Struggles with Addiction*

- 2 **FIRST PRESIDENCY MESSAGE**
Pursue the Steady Course
President Gordon B. Hinckley
- 8 Allegiance to God
Elder D. Todd Christofferson
- 14 The First Vision: Searching for the Truth
Ronald O. Barney
- 20 Doctrine and Covenants Times at a Glance,
Chart 1: Sections 1–64
- 24 **GOSPEL CLASSICS**
The Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants
President Ezra Taft Benson
- 29 **MESSAGES FROM THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS**
Broken Car, Broken Dreams? *Elder Clate W. Mask Jr.*
- 32 Confidence and Self-Worth *Elder Glenn L. Pace*
- 36 Singular Happiness
My Classroom *Kimberly D. Nelson*
A Different Path *Rebecca M. Taylor*
- 40 David O. McKay: Ambassador of the Faith
Wade Murdock
- 47 Gratitude *S. Michael Wilcox*
- 48 **STRENGTHENING THE FAMILY**
Created in the Image of God, Male and Female
- 50 Falling Out of Love . . .
and Climbing Back In
Name Withheld
- 54 The Deacons Quorum
- 56 Becoming a Deacon
Laury Livsey
- 57 The Lesson I Remember Best
- 62 When a Loved One Struggles with Addiction
Corrie Lynne Player
- 67 **VISITING TEACHING MESSAGE**
Rejoice in the Restoration
of the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- 68 **LATTER-DAY SAINT VOICES**
- 72 **RANDOM SAMPLER**
- 74 **NEWS OF THE CHURCH**



14 *The First Vision:
Searching for the Truth*

COVER: *If Any of You Lack Wisdom*, by Walter Rane

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Pursue the Steady Course

BY PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY

The days of which our forebears spoke are upon those of us who live in this, the beginning of the 21st century. These are days of prophecy fulfilled; and I, with you, am grateful to be a part of this vibrant, marvelous work which is affecting for good so many people in so many parts of the world.

This growth is not a victory of men; it is a manifestation of the power of God. I hope we shall never be proud or boastful concerning it. I pray that we shall ever be humble and grateful.

Fruits of the First Vision

This work began with a most remarkable manifestation when the Father and the Son appeared to the boy Joseph Smith on a spring morning in the year 1820. All of the good we see in the Church today is the fruit of that remarkable visitation, a testimony of which has touched the hearts of millions in many lands. I add my own witness, given me by the Spirit, that the Prophet's description of

that marvelous event is true, that God the Eternal Father and the risen Lord Jesus Christ spoke with him on that occasion in a conversation as real and personal and intimate as he described. I raise my voice in testimony that Joseph was a prophet and that the work brought forth through his instrumentality is the work of God.

I have grown to appreciate a summary by one of the Prophet's associates of Joseph Smith's work and a statement of our obligation to advance it. These words, poetic in their beauty, were written by Elder Parley P. Pratt of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1845, less than a year following Joseph's death:

"He has organized the kingdom of God.—We will extend its dominion.

"He has restored the fulness of the Gospel.—We will spread it abroad. . . .

"He has kindled up the dawn of a day of glory.—We will bring it to its meridian splendour.

"He was a 'little one,' and became a



Should we be surprised if we are called upon to endure a little criticism, to make some small sacrifice for our faith when our forebears paid so great a price for theirs?



thousand. We are a small one, and will become a strong nation.

“In short, he quarried the stone . . . ; we will cause it to become a great mountain and fill the whole earth.”¹

We are seeing the unfolding of that dream. I hope we shall be true and faithful to the sacred trust given us to build this kingdom. Our effort will not be without sorrow and setbacks. We may expect opposition, both determined and sophisticated.

Our Best Defense

As the work grows, we may expect a strengthening of the efforts of the adversary against it. Our best defense is the quiet offense of allegiance to the teachings which have come to us from those whom we have sustained as prophets of God.

The Prophet Joseph Smith gave us instruction pertinent to the situation in which we find ourselves. Said he: “Go in all meekness, in sobriety, and preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified; not to contend with others on account of their faith, or systems of religion, but pursue a steady course. This I delivered by way of commandment; and all who observe it not, will pull down persecution upon their heads, while those who do, shall always be filled with the Holy Ghost; this I pronounced as a prophecy.”²

I should like to take a few of the words of that statement as a theme for us as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today.

I pray that the Lord will inspire us to understand the wisdom of this counsel from the Prophet: Contend not with others, but pursue a steady course.

Pursuing a Steady Course

We live in a day of shifting values, of changing standards, of will-o'-the-wisp programs that blossom in the morning and die in the evening. We see this in government, we see it in public and private morality, we see it in the homes of the people, we see it in the churches, and we

Writing of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Elder Parley P. Pratt penned: “He has organized the kingdom of God.— We will extend its dominion. He has restored the fulness of the Gospel.— We will spread it abroad.”

even see it among some of our own members who are led away by the sophistry of men.

Men everywhere seem to be groping in darkness, casting aside the traditions that were the strength of our society yet unable to find a new star to guide them.

I recall the moral strength espoused by a Japanese government official who spoke during the dedication of the Church pavilion at the Expo '70 world's fair in Japan. He warmly complimented the Church on its participation in that exposition and deplored the waning influence of religion in the lives of the people of his own nation, with a consequent deterioration of standards and ideals.

It appears to be so everywhere. Some time ago I read a provocative article by Barbara W. Tuchman, a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian. Said she: “When it comes to leaders we have, if anything, a superabundance—hundreds of Pied Pipers . . . —ready and anxious to lead the population. They are scurrying around, collecting consensus, gathering as wide an acceptance as possible. But what they are *not* doing, very notably, is standing still and saying, ‘*This* is what I believe. This I will do and that I will not do. This is my code of behavior and that is outside it. This is excellent and that is trash.’ There is an abdication of moral leadership in the sense of a general unwillingness to state standards.”

She continued: “Of all the ills that our poor . . . society is heir to, the focal one, it seems to me, from which so much of our uneasiness and confusion derive, is the absence of standards. We are too unsure of ourselves to assert them, to stick by them, if necessary in the case of persons who occupy positions of authority, to impose them. We seem to be afflicted by a widespread and eroding reluctance to take any stand on any values, moral, behavioral or esthetic.”³

While standards generally may totter, we of the Church are without excuse if we drift in the same manner. We have standards—sure, tested, and effective. To the extent that

we observe them, we shall go forward. To the extent that we neglect them, we shall hinder our own progress and bring embarrassment to the work of the Lord. These standards have come from Him. Some of them may appear a little out-of-date in our society, but this does not detract from their validity nor diminish the virtue of their application. The subtle reasoning of men, no matter how clever, no matter how plausible it may sound, cannot abridge the declared wisdom of God.

I once heard Hans Kindt, the wise stake patriarch of the Milwaukee Wisconsin North Stake, say: "God is not a celestial politician seeking our vote. Rather, God is to be found, and God is to be obeyed."

The satisfying thing is that obedience brings happiness. It brings peace; it brings growth—all of these to the individual—and his or her good example brings respect for the institution of which he or she is a part.

No Need to Contend

Our adherence to these divinely given standards need never be an offensive thing to those about us. We need not contend with them. But if we will pursue a steady course, our very example will become the most effective argument we could ever advance for the virtues of the cause with which we are associated.

The Lord has given us counsel and commandment on so many things that no member of this Church need ever equivocate. He has established our guidelines concerning personal virtue, neighborliness, obedience to law, loyalty to government, observance of the Sabbath day, sobriety and abstinence from liquor and tobacco, the payment of tithes and offerings, the care of the poor, the cultivation of home and family, the sharing of the gospel—to mention only a few.

There need be nothing of argument or contention in any of them. If we will pursue a steady course in the implementation of our religion in our own lives, we shall advance the cause more effectively than by any other means.

There may be those who will seek to tempt us away. There may be those who will try to bait us. We may be disparaged. We may be belittled. We may be inveighed against. We may be caricatured before the world.

There are those, both in the Church and out, who would compel us to change our position on some matters, as if it were our prerogative to usurp authority which belongs alone to God.

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We have no desire to quarrel with others. We teach the gospel of peace. But we cannot forsake the word of the Lord as it has come to us through men whom we have sustained as prophets. We must stand and say, to quote again the words of affirmation recommended by Barbara Tuchman: "*This is what I believe. This I will do and that*

I will not do. This is my code of behavior and that is outside it."



There may be times of discouragement and deep concern. There certainly will be days of decision in the lives of each of us. It was ever thus.

Pioneer Examples

Every man and woman in this Church knows something of the price paid by our forebears for their faith. I have been reminded of this whenever I read the narrative of Mary Goble Pay, my wife's grandmother. I think I would like to share a few words from that story of a 13-year-old girl. She tells of her childhood in Brighton, that delightful city on the south coast of England, where the soft, green hills of Sussex roll down to the sea.

It was there that her family was baptized. Their conversion came naturally because the Spirit whispered in their hearts that it was true. But there were critical relatives and neighbors and even mobs to deride and inflame others against them. It took courage, that rare quality described as moral courage, to stand up and be counted, to be baptized and recognized as a Mormon.

The family traveled to Liverpool, where with some 900 others they boarded the sailing vessel *Horizon*.

As the wind caught the sails, they sang, "Farewell, My Native Land, Farewell." After six weeks at sea—to cover the distance covered today by a jet plane in six hours—they landed at Boston and then traveled by steam train to Iowa City for fitting out.

There they purchased two yoke of oxen, one yoke of cows, a wagon, and a tent.

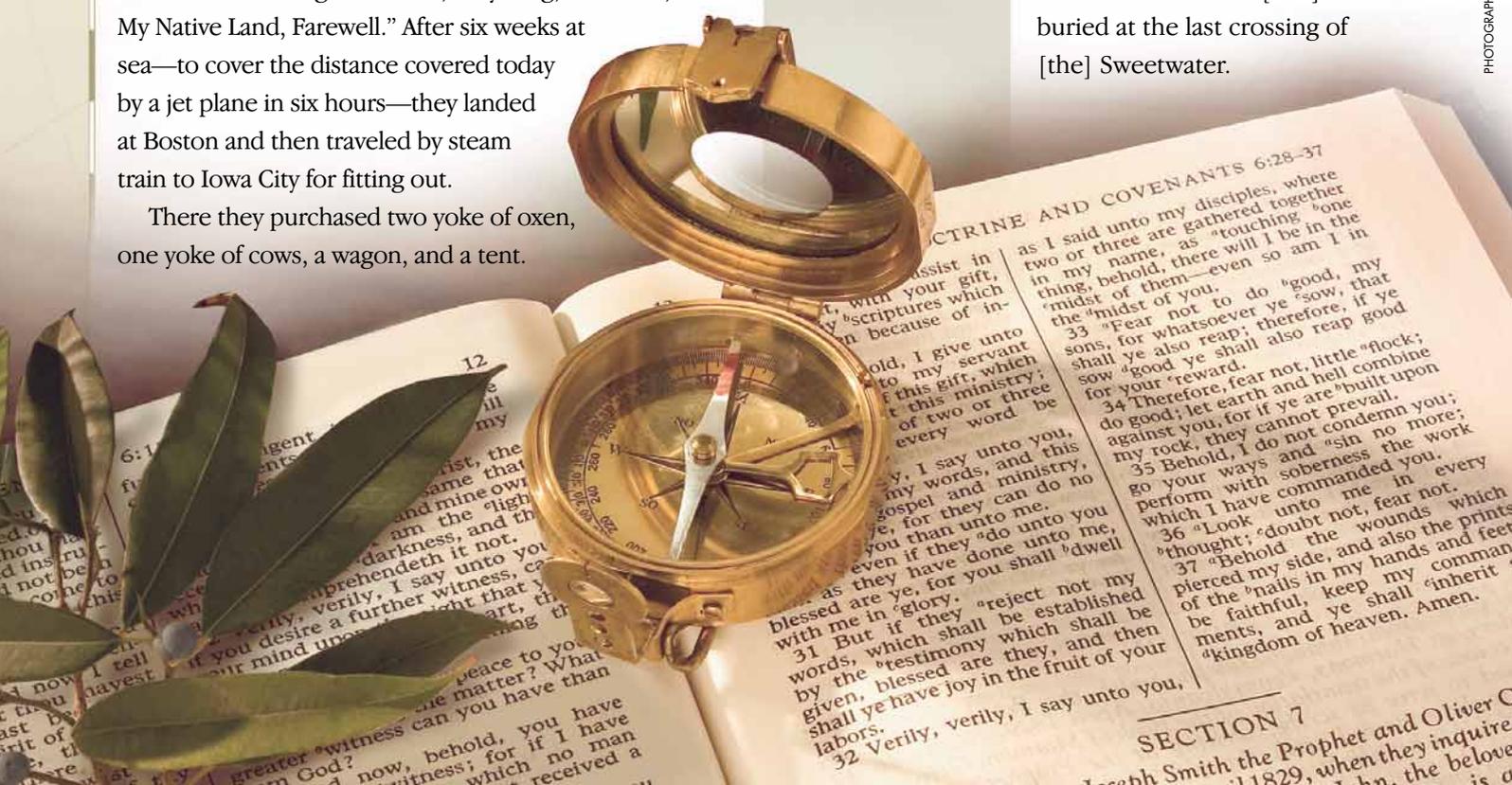
They were assigned to travel with and assist one of the handcart companies.

Here in Iowa City also occurred their first tragedy. Their youngest child, less than two years of age, suffering from exposure, died and was buried in a grave never again visited by a member of the family.

Now let me give you the very words of this 13-year-old girl as I share a few lines from her story:

"We traveled from 15 to 25 miles [25 to 40 km] a day . . . until we got to the Platte River. . . . We caught up with the hand cart companies that day. We watched them cross the river. There were great lumps of ice floating down the river. It was bitter cold. . . . We went back to the camp and went to prayers, [and] . . . sang 'Come, Come, Ye Saints No Toil Nor Labor Fear.' I wondered what made my mother cry [that night]. . . . The next morning my little sister was born. It was the 23rd of September. We named her Edith. She lived six weeks and died. . . . [She] was buried at the last crossing of [the] Sweetwater.

**If we will pursue
a steady course,
our very example
will become the
most effective
argument we could
ever advance.**



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN LUKE

SECTION 7

Joseph Smith the Prophet and Oliver C
1829, when they inquire
the below

“[We ran into heavy snow. I became lost in the snow.] My feet and legs were frozen. [The men] rubbed me with snow. They put my feet in a bucket of water. The pain was terrible. . . .

“When we arrived at Devils Gate it was bitter cold. We left lots of our things there. . . . My brother James . . . was as well as he ever was when he went to bed [that night]. In the morning he was dead. . . .

“My feet were frozen[;] also my brother Edwin and my sister Caroline had their feet frozen. It was nothing but snow [snow everywhere and the bitter Wyoming wind]. We could not drive the pegs in our tents. . . . We did not know what would become of us. [Then] one night a man came to our camp and told us . . . Brigham Young had sent men and teams to help us. . . . We sang songs, some danced and some cried. . . .

“My mother had never got well. . . . She died between the little and big mountains. . . . She was 43 years old. . . .

“We arrived in Salt Lake City nine o’clock at night the 11th of December 1856. Three out of four that were living were frozen. My mother was dead in the wagon. . . .

“Early next morning . . . Brigham Young . . . came. . . . When he saw our condition, our feet frozen and our mother dead, tears rolled down his cheeks. . . .

“The doctor amputated my toes . . . [while] the sisters were dressing my mother for her grave. . . . When my feet were fixed they [carried] . . . us in to see our mother for the last time. Oh how did we stand it. That afternoon she was buried. . . .

“[I have thought often of my mother’s words before we left England.] ‘Polly, I want to go to Zion while my children are small, so they can be raised in the Gospel of Christ for I know this is the true church.’”⁴

I conclude with this question: Should we be surprised if we are called upon to endure a little criticism, to make some small sacrifice for our faith when our forebears paid so great a price for theirs?

Without contention, without argument, without offense, let us pursue a steady

course, moving forward to build the kingdom of God. If there is trouble, let us face it calmly. Let us overcome evil with good. This is God’s work. It will continue to strengthen over the earth, touching for good the lives of countless thousands whose hearts will respond to the message of truth. No power under heaven can stop it.

This is my faith and this is my testimony. ■

NOTES

1. “Proclamation,” *Millennial Star*, Mar. 1845, 151–52.
2. *History of the Church*, 2:431.
3. “The Missing Element—Moral Courage,” *McCall’s*, June 1967, 28.
4. *A Pioneer Story: Mary Goble Pay, 1856*, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2–4, 10.

IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS

After prayerfully studying this message, share it using a teaching method that will encourage participation by family members. Following are some examples.

1. Help family members memorize the first sentence of the Prophet Joseph Smith’s prophecy (see the second paragraph under the heading “Our Best Defense”). You could praise them or offer some small reward when they can say it from memory. List and discuss ideas mentioned by President Hinckley about what it means to pursue a steady course.

2. What does President Hinckley say about moral strength when quoting Barbara W. Tuchman (see the fourth paragraph under the heading “Pursuing a Steady Course”)? Invite family members to act out a situation that would require having moral strength. You may need to explain to younger children that this means not being afraid to do what we know is right. Discuss ways family members can be meek yet display moral courage.

3. How do you think the promise made to the righteous in the Prophet Joseph’s prophecy was fulfilled in the life of Mary Goble Pay? Discuss President Hinckley’s concluding question. How can we live more faithfully according to the Prophet Joseph’s counsel?

Allegiance to God



As we yield our will to His, God will tutor us in the successful use of our moral agency. We will find freedom to be, to feel, and to do.

BY ELDER D. TODD CHRISTOFFERSON
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

My years as a college student were during the 1960s, a turbulent decade in the United States. There was much of dissension and protest and rebellion. Many began to question the legitimacy of authority—any authority. The words “the establishment” became a disparaging label for government and college officials and the institutions they represented. We were advised by some younger sages, quite full of their own wisdom, not to trust anyone over 30, including parents. By the way, these “wise men” are now over 30 themselves, so I suppose we can safely ignore their advice.

This opposition to authority did not fade away with the end of that decade. If anything, the tendency has intensified. Some claim that any exercise of authority is abusive and repressive, that it infringes on their rights. I am sure you have noted the persistent focus on rights and the scant attention paid to responsibilities. There are those today who challenge even the authority of God. Because it is now so pervasive, if you are not careful, something of that attitude could seep into and infect your own feelings. I want to reinforce in your mind and in your heart the love you feel for your Heavenly Father. I want to reinforce your allegiance to God and your

desire to be a fit and loyal subject in His kingdom. Given His great goodness and mercy toward us, why should we not desire that He would rule and reign over us?

God’s Right to Rule in Our Lives

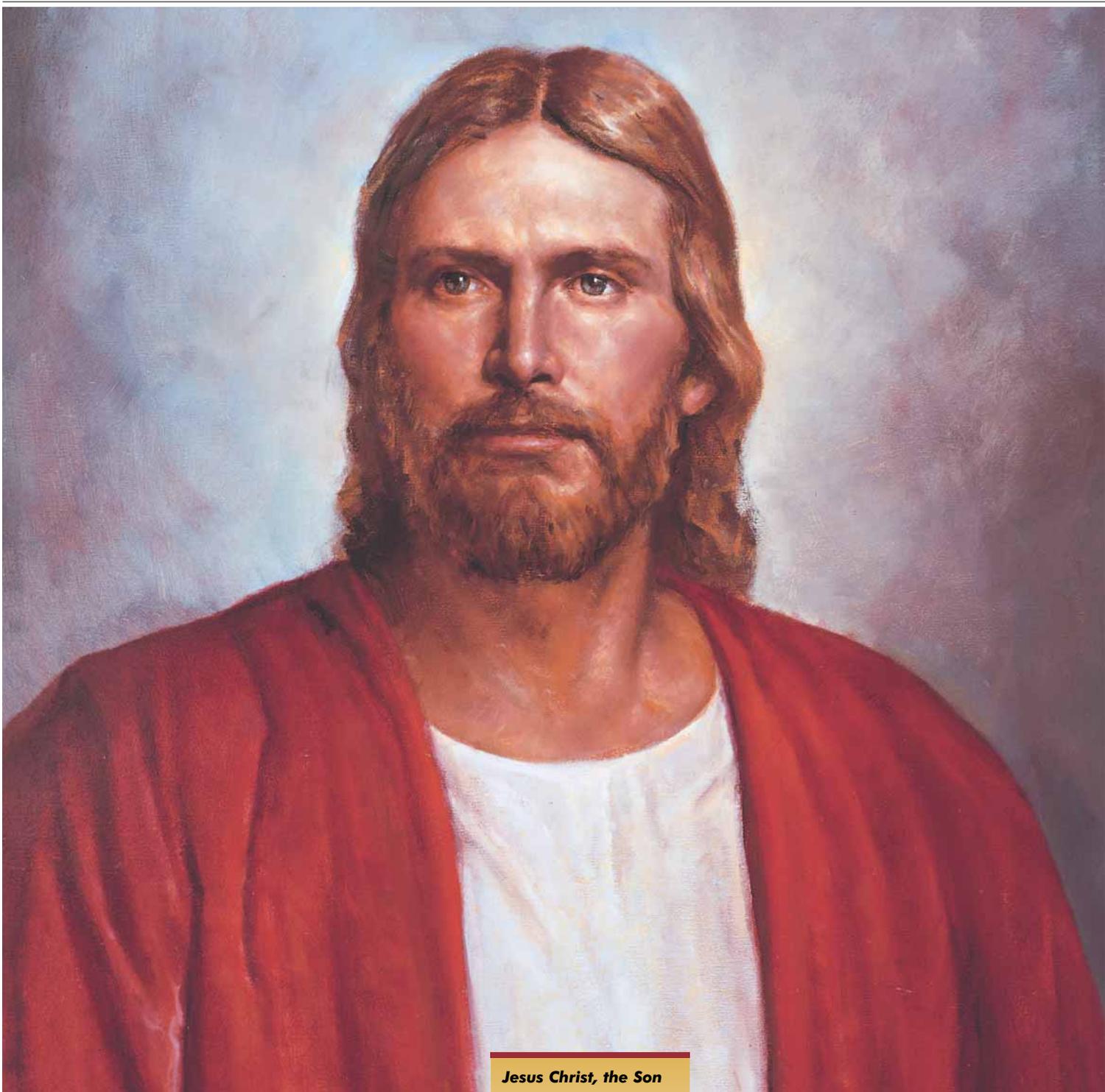
If we are honest, we must first acknowledge that God has every right to direct us. After all, we are His creation. King Benjamin makes this point with impeccable logic:

“And now, in the first place, he hath created you, and granted unto you your lives, for which ye are indebted unto him.

“And secondly, he doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you; for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you; and therefore he hath paid you. And ye are still indebted unto him, and are, and will be, forever and ever; therefore, of what have ye to boast?

“... Ye cannot say that ye are even as much as the dust of the earth; ... ye were created of the dust of the earth; but behold, it belongeth to him who created you” (Mosiah 2:23–25).

Beyond our being His creation, made up of materials that He owns, there is the even more important fact that through His Son, He is the author of our salvation. Thus we are eternally indebted to both the Father and the Son not only for our mortal lives but also for our eternal lives. Jesus Christ, the Son of



Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has paid our ransom and satisfied justice. In a very real sense, the Father and the Son can claim ownership of us.

God, has paid our ransom and satisfied justice. “He hath purchased [us] with his own blood” (Acts 20:28; see also 1 Corinthians 6:19–20). In a very real sense, the Father and the Son can claim ownership of us.

Knowing these things, it is only with the most colossal arrogance that one could claim he or she owes no allegiance to God. There can be no argument,

really. On what basis could we justify any resistance to His commandments? The case for disobedience simply does not exist.

A Blessing of Submission to God: Freedom

Even so, our submission to God is not simply a question of duty or obligation. The blessings that flow from welcoming God’s rule in our lives are so

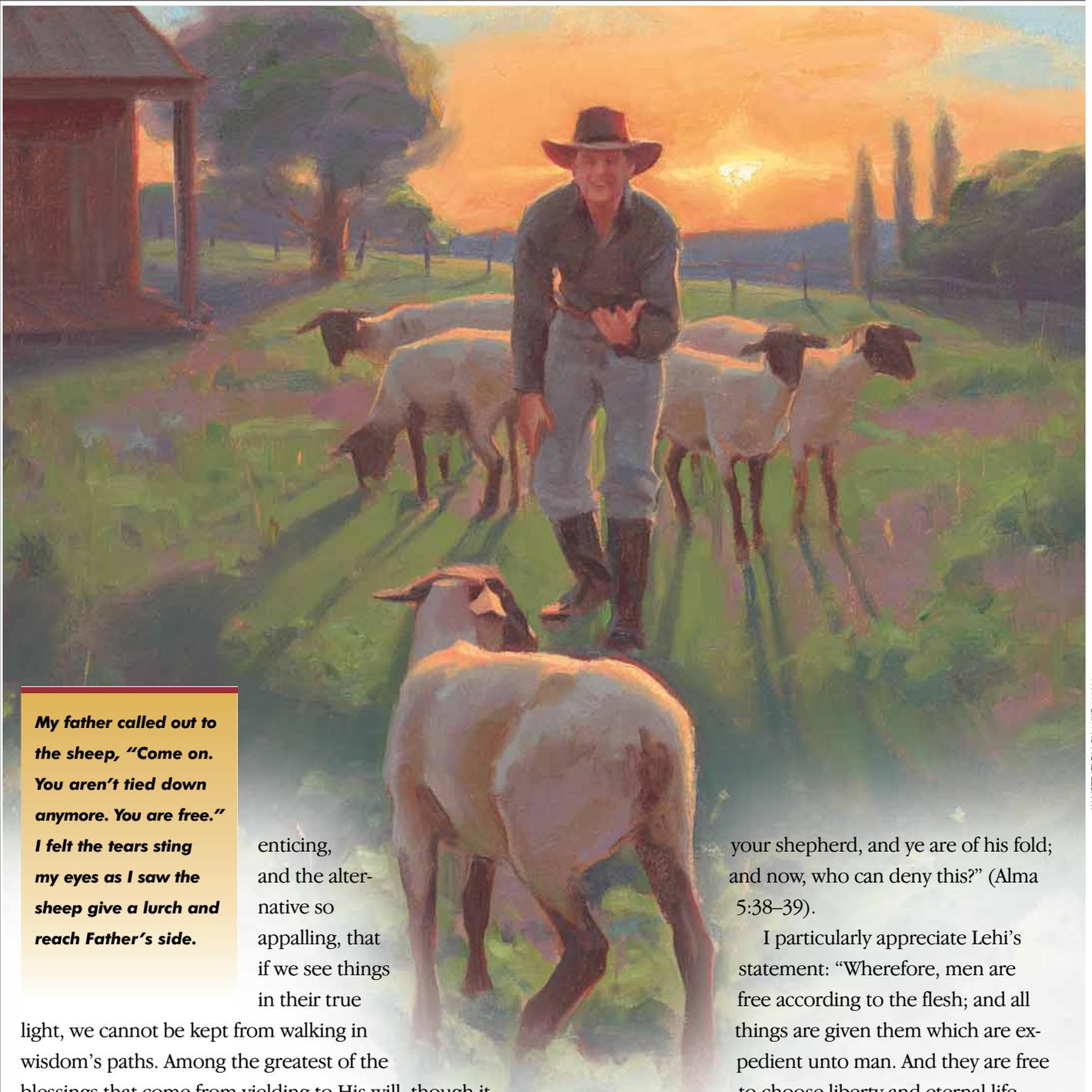


ILLUSTRATION BY MIKE MAJMA

My father called out to the sheep, “Come on. You aren’t tied down anymore. You are free.” I felt the tears sting my eyes as I saw the sheep give a lurch and reach Father’s side.

enticing, and the alternative so appalling, that if we see things in their true

light, we cannot be kept from walking in wisdom’s paths. Among the greatest of the blessings that come from yielding to His will, though it seems ironic to some, is freedom. Let me explain.

First, we must recognize that there are only two options or paths available to us. Alma put it this way:

“Behold, I say unto you, that the good shepherd doth call you; yea, and in his own name he doth call you, which is the name of Christ; and if ye will not hearken unto the voice of the good shepherd, to the name by which ye are called, behold, ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd.

“And now if ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd, of what fold are ye? Behold, I say unto you, that the devil is

your shepherd, and ye are of his fold; and now, who can deny this?” (Alma 5:38–39).

I particularly appreciate Lehi’s statement: “Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life,

through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27).

There is no third or neutral way. Our choice in this life is not whether we will or will not be subject to any power. We will be. Our choice is, to which authority will we yield obedience, God’s or Satan’s? As Lehi stated, it is a choice between liberty and captivity. If it is not one, it is necessarily the other.

License is not liberty. Self-absorption and self-indulgence

are not freedom. It is yielding to the discipline of God's will and His love that brings true freedom—the freedom to excel, to create, to bless. The gospel, said President Gordon B. Hinckley, “is a plan of freedom that gives discipline to appetite and direction to behavior.”¹ This path is one of increasing knowledge and capacity, increasing grace and light. But for your freedom to be complete, you must be willing to give away all your sins (see Alma 22:18), your willfulness, your cherished but unsound habits, perhaps even some good things that interfere with what God sees is essential for you.

My aunt Adena Nell Gourley told of an experience she had many years ago with her father—my grandfather Helge V. Swenson, now deceased—that illustrates what I mean. She related:

“Last week my daughter and I were visiting in my parents' home. Along about sundown my mother asked if we would like to step out on the back porch and watch Father call his sheep to come into the shelter for the night. Father . . . is a stake patriarch, and you'll understand and forgive me when I say he is the personification of all that is good and gentle and true in a man of God.

“About a block and a half away from the edge of the back lawn, five . . . sheep were quietly grazing on the stubble of last summer's wheat field. Father walked to the edge of the field and called, ‘Come on.’ Immediately, without even stopping to bite off the mouthful of food they were reaching for, all five heads turned in his direction, and then they broke into a run until they had reached his side and received his pat on each head.

“My little daughter said, ‘Oh, Grandmother, how did Grandfather get them to do that?’

“My mother answered, ‘The sheep know his voice, and they love him.’ Now I must confess that there were five sheep in the field, and five heads went up when he called, but only four ran to Father. Farthest away, clear over on the edge of the field, looking straight toward Father, stood [a] large [ewe]. Father called to her, ‘Come on.’ She made a motion as if to start but didn't come. Then Father started across the field calling to her, ‘Come on. You're untied.’ The other four sheep trailed behind him at his heels. Then Mother explained to us that some few weeks before this, an acquaintance of theirs had brought the [ewe] and had given it to Father with the explanation that he no longer wanted it in his own herd. The man had said it was wild and wayward and was always leading his other sheep through the fences and causing so much trouble that he wanted to get rid of it. Father gladly accepted the sheep, and for the next few days he staked it in the field so it wouldn't go away. Then he patiently taught it to love him and the other sheep. Then, as it felt more secure in its new home, Father left a short rope around its neck but didn't stake it down.

“As Mother explained this to us, Father and his sheep had almost reached the [straggler] at the edge of the field, and through the stillness we heard him call again, ‘Come on. You aren't tied down anymore. You are free.’

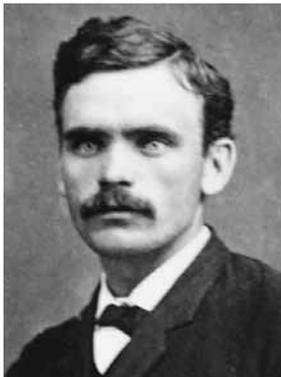
“I felt the tears sting my eyes as I saw [the sheep] give a lurch and reach Father's side. Then, with his loving hand on her head, he and all the members of his little flock turned and walked back toward us again.

“I thought how some of us, who are all God's sheep, are bound and unfree because of our sins in the world. Standing there on the



PAINTING BY ALVIN GITTINS

The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote, “Let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed.”



Elder B. H. Roberts said, “The man who so walks in the light and wisdom and power of God, will at the last, by the very force of association, make the light and wisdom and power of God his own—weaving those bright rays into a chain divine, linking himself forever to God and God to him.”

back porch, I silently thanked my Heavenly Father that there are true under-shepherds and teachers who are patient and kind and willingly teach us of love and obedience and offer us security and freedom within the flock so that, though we may be far from the shelter, we’ll recognize the Master’s voice when He calls, ‘Come on. Now you’re free.’ ”²

Another Blessing of Submission to God: Peace

Our yielding to God and His right to rule and reign over us brings other blessings. Among the foremost are the faith and confidence that permit us to live with peace.

If we “observe to do according to all the law,” we shall have the confidence of God being with us (see Joshua 1:5, 7). With the Psalmist we will be able to say, “In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me” (Psalm 56:11). Has not the Lord promised, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”? (John 16:33).

Years ago I presided in a Church disciplinary council. The man whose sins were the subject of the council sat before us and related something of his history. His sins were indeed serious, but he had also been terribly sinned against. As we considered the matter, my soul was troubled, and I asked to be excused to think and pray about it alone before rejoining the council.

I was standing in front of a chair in my office pleading with the Lord to help me understand how such evil could have been perpetrated. I did not see but rather sensed an immense pit with a covering over it. It seemed one corner of the covering was lifted slightly for just an instant, and I perceived within it the depth and vastness of the evil that exists in this

world. It was greater than I could really comprehend. I was overcome. I collapsed into the chair behind me. It seemed to take my breath away. I cried silently, “How can we ever hope to overcome such evil? How can we survive something so dark and overwhelming?”

In that moment there came to my mind this phrase: “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Seldom have I felt such peace juxtaposed to the reality of evil. I felt a deeper appreciation for the intensity of the Savior’s suffering, having a better, even frightening appreciation for the depth of what He had to overcome. I felt peace for the man who was before us for judgment, knowing he had a Redeemer whose grace was sufficient to cleanse him and also repair the injustices he had suffered. I understood better that good will triumph because of Jesus Christ, whereas without Him we would have no chance. I felt peace, and it was very sweet.

The Prophet Joseph Smith understood this when he said, “Let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed” (D&C 123:17). The promise to those who submit to God is that His arm, His power, will be revealed in their lives. Jesus said:

“Fear not, little children, for you are mine, and I have overcome the world, and you are of them that my Father hath given me;

“And none of them that my Father hath given me shall be lost” (D&C 50:41–42).

Submission to God Must Be Voluntary and Wholehearted

Although it is God’s right to rule and reign over us, it is a right that generally He does not enforce. He accepts only voluntary

obedience, only that which is unforced. Mormon observed:

“For behold, God hath said a man being evil cannot do that which is good; for if he offereth a gift, or prayeth unto God, except he shall do it with real intent it profiteth him nothing. . . .

“For behold, if a man being evil giveth a gift, he doeth it grudgingly; wherefore it is counted unto him the same as if he had retained the gift. . . .

“And likewise also is it counted evil unto a man, if he shall pray and not with real intent of heart; yea, and it profiteth him nothing, for God receiveth none such” (Moroni 7:6, 8–9).

We should not expect freedom, faith, peace, or any other such gift from our divine head if our acceptance of His leadership is lukewarm or grudging. A detached, aloof allegiance is, for Him, no allegiance at all. Our submission must be full, wholehearted, and unstinting. “See that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day” (D&C 4:2).

For God truly to reign, the great commandment—to love Him with all our heart, might, mind, and strength (see Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30)—must be first in our lives. President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) said:

“When we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives. Our love of the Lord will govern the claims for our affection, the demands on our time, the interests we pursue, and the order of our priorities.”³

This is not for the fainthearted or unstable. Our submission to His will can require some wrenching sacrifices. We do not know what may come. We must be able to say with the Prophet Joseph Smith, “Whatever God requires is right,”⁴ and with the Savior, “I do always those things that please him” (John 8:29).

As we yield our will to His, God will tutor us in the successful use of moral agency. We will find freedom to be, to feel, and to do. We will be supported in all our trials. Over time our prayers will become powerful, and we will come into God’s presence, through prayer, with confidence. Our

lives, our personalities will take on the characteristics and qualities of Christ. As Elder B. H. Roberts of the Seventy (1857–1933) observed:

“The man who so walks in the light and wisdom and power of God, will at the last, by the very force of association, make the light and wisdom and power of God his own—weaving those bright rays into a chain divine, linking himself forever to God and God to him. This [is] the sum of Messiah’s mystic words, ‘Thou, Father, in me, and I in thee’—beyond this human greatness cannot achieve.”⁵

I leave you my witness that through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, we may become one with God, just as Jesus prayed we might be (see John 17:20–23). May your reverence for these holy beings and your allegiance to Them be the shining guide of your life forever. ■

NOTES

1. “A Principle with Promise,” *Improvement Era*, June 1965, 521.
2. “I Walked a Flowered Path,” unpublished manuscript (1995), 199–200.
3. “The Great Commandment—Love the Lord,” *Ensign*, May 1988, 4.
4. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 256.
5. “Brigham Young: A Character Sketch,” *Improvement Era*, June 1903, 574.

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University on October 19, 1999.



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

1. Read Mosiah 2:23–25. What did King Benjamin teach about allegiance to God? What does Elder Christofferson say are the two paths we may choose to follow? How can we make the better choice? Invite family members to share experiences when they have made the better choice and how they felt in so doing.

2. Share or act out the story of the shepherd and the sheep. Discuss ways we can be like the shepherd or some of the sheep. Invite family members to share experiences of when they have submitted to God’s will. Ask them to tell about the impact submitting to God’s will has had in their lives.

The First Vision

SEARCHING FOR THE TRUTH

By Ronald O. Barney

Senior Archivist, LDS Church Archives

Joseph Smith's concerns about his standing before God led him to the Sacred Grove, where the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ began.

Even as a youth, Joseph Smith possessed an introspective disposition. His mother, Lucy Mack Smith, wrote that during Joseph's early life he was "given to meditation and deep study."¹

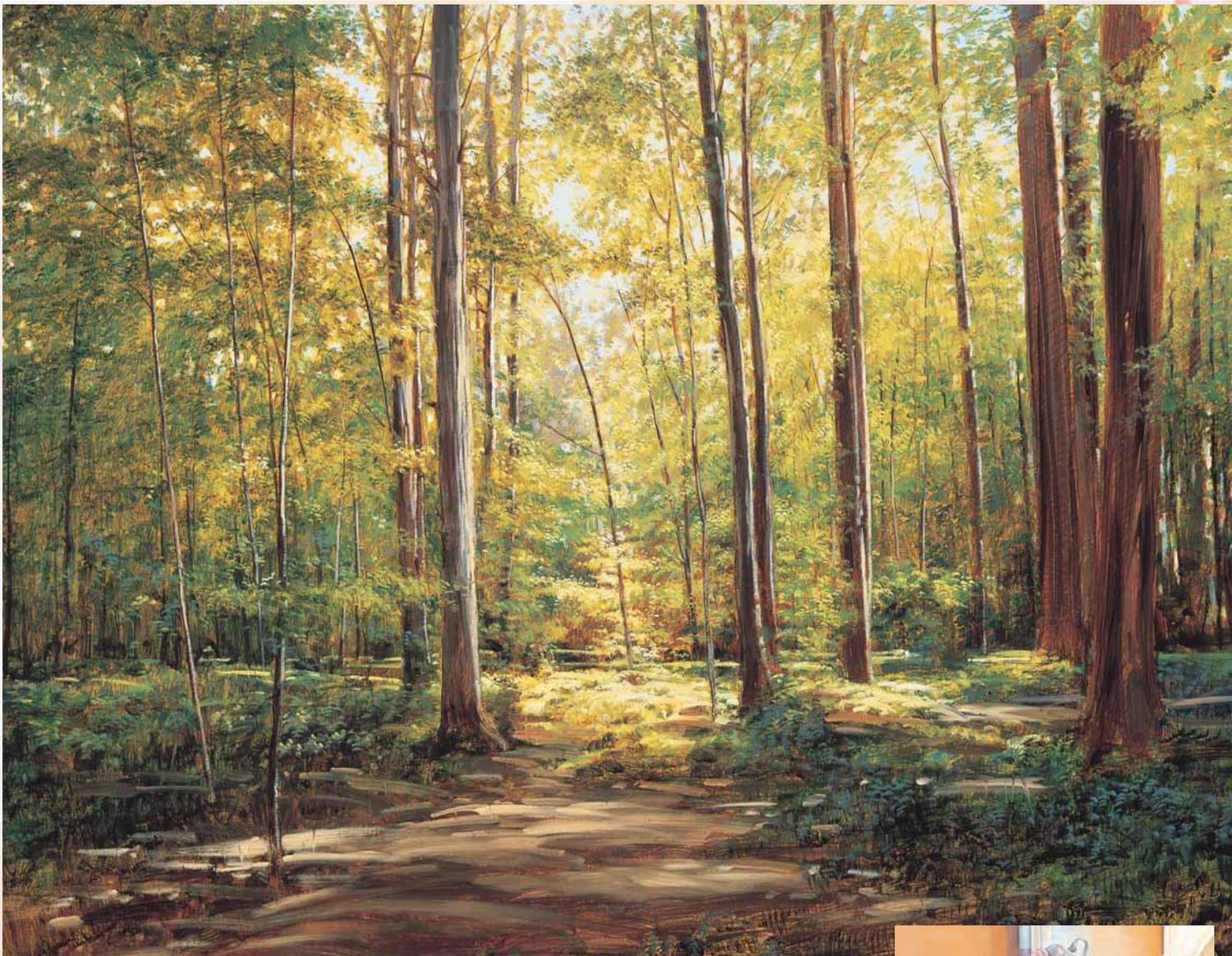
Of his youthful searching, the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote in 1832:

"At about the age of twelve years, my mind became seriously impressed with regard to all the important concerns for the welfare of my immortal soul. . . . [For three years] I pondered many things in my heart concerning the situation of the world of mankind." Then he added, "I felt to mourn for my own sins."²



As he searched for the truth, he concluded that the religious world in which he lived "had apostatized from the true and living faith and there was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the New Testament," something the Lord later confirmed to him.

While Joseph's youthful apprehension about his standing before God may seem insignificant as a motive to inaugurate the work destined to fill the whole earth, it was part of the motivation that inspired his searching prayer that spring morning in 1820.

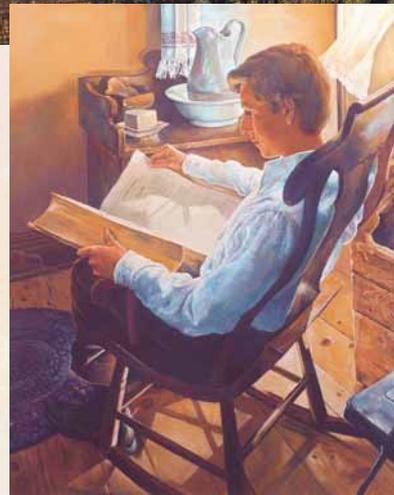


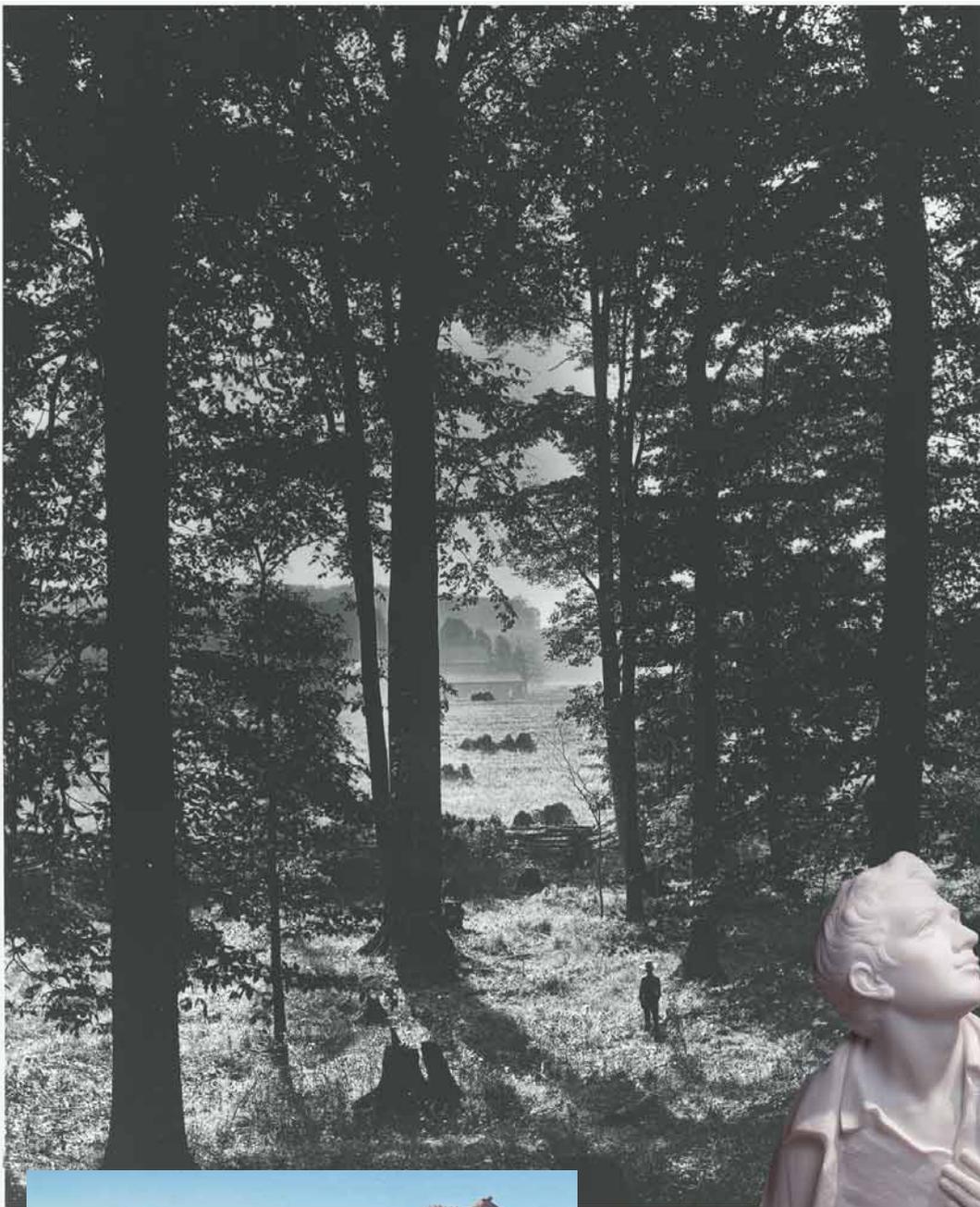
Far left: *An Obscure Boy*, by Joseph Brickey, oil, 1998.

Above: *Sacred Grove*, by Frank Magleby, oil, 1995.

Left: *New York, Ontario County, Manchester, Sacred Grove*, by George Edward Anderson, photograph, 1907.

Right: *Joseph Smith Seeks Wisdom from the Bible*, by Harold T. (Dale) Kilbourn, oil, 1986.





The Prophet Joseph wrote: “I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must . . . ask of God. I at length came to the determination to ‘ask of God,’ . . . [and] I retired to the woods to make the attempt. It was on the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty” (Joseph Smith—History 1:13–14).

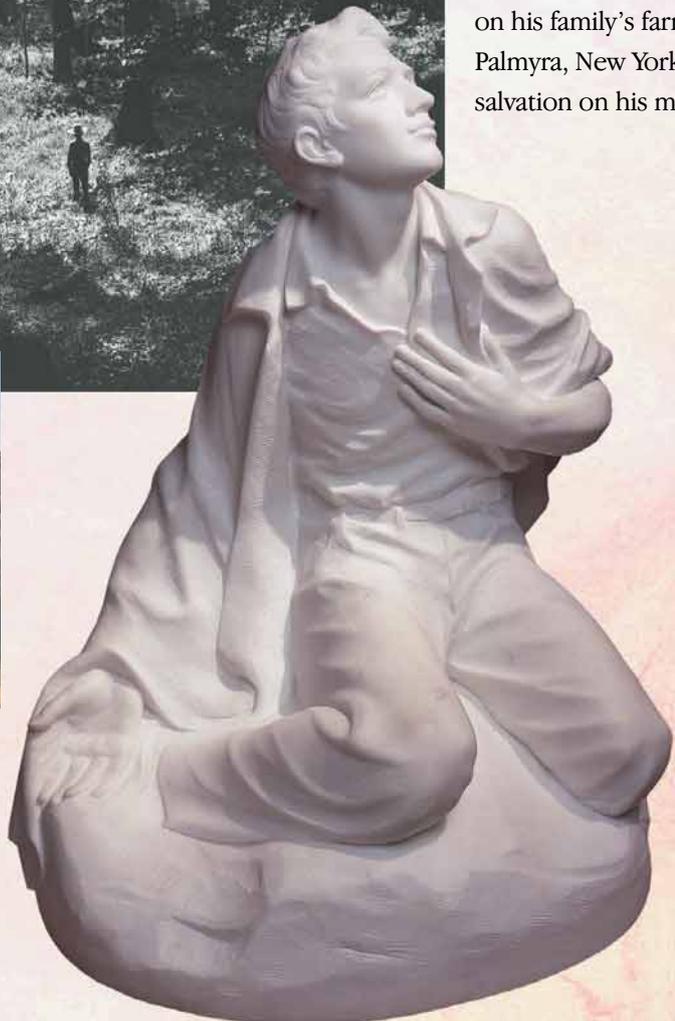
Indeed, when 14-year-old Joseph entered the secluded stand of timber on his family’s farm near Palmyra, New York, he had salvation on his mind.



Top: *The Sacred Grove*, near Palmyra, New York, by George Edward Anderson, photograph, 1907.

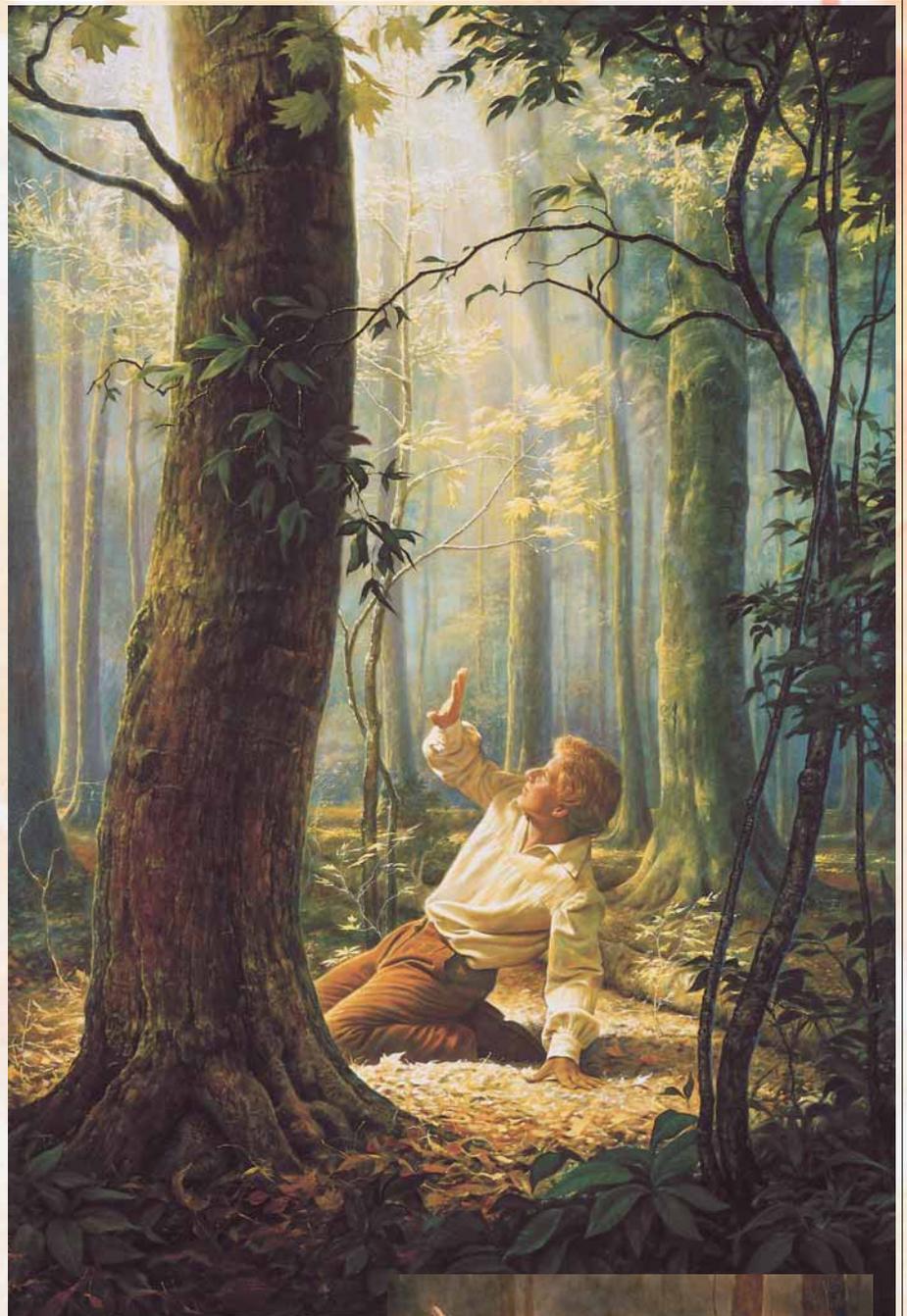
Above: *After Much Contemplation*, by Al Rounds, oil, 1989.

Right: *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, by Avard T. Fairbanks, marble, 1958.



Young Joseph's desire to please God and to be found acceptable by Him was a characteristic of his personality. He finally resolved to call upon "the Lord for mercy, for there was none else to whom I could go [to] obtain mercy."

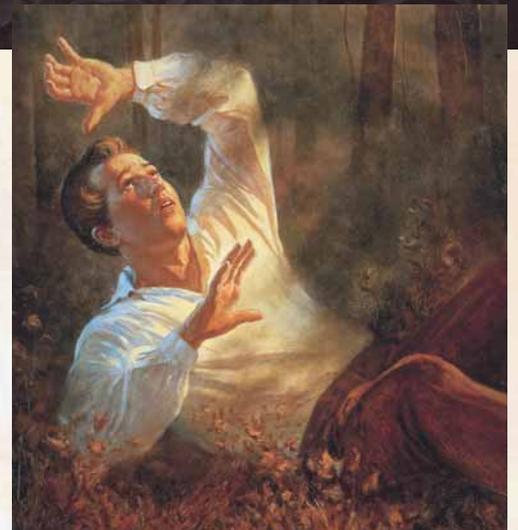
Hence, he "kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of [his] heart to God" (Joseph Smith—History 1:15).



Above: *Joseph Smith's First Vision*, by Greg K. Olsen, oil, 1988.

Left: *The First Vision*, by Warren Luch, hand-rubbed linocut print, 1990.

Right: *Joseph Smith's Desperate Plea for Deliverance*, by Gary L. Kapp, oil, 2000.



Below: *Joseph Smith's First Vision*, by Cuna Indians of the San Blas Islands, Panama, mola (reverse appliqué), year unknown.



Above: *Joseph, This Is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!* by Leon Parson, oil, 1999.

Right: *First Vision*, by Kraig Varner, cast bronze, 2001.



Of his experience in the Sacred Grove, the Prophet Joseph wrote, “A pillar of light above the brightness of the sun at noon day came down from above and rested upon me.” Within that light, he said, “I saw the Lord and he spake unto me.” The first words that Joseph heard from the Savior filled him with unspeakable joy—“Joseph, my son, thy sins are forgiven thee.”

This heavenly declaration informing young Joseph that he was acceptable to God proved to be life altering. Never again could Joseph wonder about the interest of God our Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, in him or about Their love for the human family. ■

NOTES

1. Lucy [Mack] Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations* (1853), 84.
2. During the lifetime of the Prophet Joseph Smith, the story of his First Vision was told in print several times, by him (in 1832, 1835, 1838–39, and 1842), or by others who had heard his account and retold it (in 1840, 1842, 1843, and 1844). All originals

of the Prophet's accounts are located in the Joseph Smith Papers, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Photocopies or transcripts of the Prophet's originals appear in *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee (2002).

All quotations in this text, unless otherwise noted, are from the Prophet Joseph Smith's 1832 account of the First Vision found in *Personal Writings*, pages 9–20; spelling and punctuation have been updated.

Descriptions and explanations of all of the First Vision accounts noted above are found in Richard L. Anderson, "Joseph Smith's Testimony of the First Vision," *Ensign*, Apr. 1996, 10–21; Milton V. Backman Jr., "Joseph Smith's Recitals of the First Vision," *Ensign*, Jan. 1985, 8–17; Milton V. Backman Jr., *Joseph Smith's First Vision: Confirming Evidences and Contemporary Accounts*, 2nd ed. (1980); and James B. Allen, "Eight Contemporary Accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision: What Do We Learn from Them?" *Improvement Era*, Apr. 1970, 4–13.



Left: Joseph Smith's First Vision, by D. Carl Danielson, leaded stained glass, 1989.



Above: Joseph Smith's First Vision, artist unknown, leaded stained glass, 1913.

DATE (A.D.)

1

200

600

1000

1400

1500

1600

1700

34 A.D. After the death of Jesus Christ, the Apostles led the New Testament Church.

100–200 The Great Apostasy. Priesthood authority was taken from the earth (see 1 Nephi 13:1–11).

1620–1750 God led many European Protestants to North America in search of religious freedom (see 1 Nephi 13:13–16).

1450 Gutenberg refined movable type, allowing books to be widely available.

1500–1600 New translations of the Bible in English and other languages became available to large numbers of people (see 1 Nephi 13:20–23).

1492 The Spirit of God led Columbus to America (see 1 Nephi 13:12).

1517 Martin Luther and other reformers in Europe began to rebel against Catholicism.

1775–83 The Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution established a new nation dedicated to freedom and democracy (see 1 Nephi 13:17–19).

1787–91 The Constitution of the United States established religious liberty as a fundamental right.

300–1300 Christianity spread to many parts of the world.

SOME DATES ARE APPROXIMATE.



Doctrine and Covenants

TIMES AT A GLANCE
CHART 1: SECTIONS 1–64

See *Doctrine and Covenants* section headings for *historical background* and *History of the Church* references.



PEOPLE IN CHURCH HISTORY

DEC. 1805 Joseph Smith Jr. was born in Sharon, Vermont, to Joseph Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith (see Joseph Smith—History 1:3).



2

1816 The Smith family moved from Vermont to the Palmyra, New York, area.

SPRING 1820 The First Vision. God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, conversed with 14-year-old Joseph Smith in a grove near his father's farm (see Joseph Smith—History 1:5–20).



SEPT. 1823 The angel Moroni first appeared to Joseph Smith and told him of gold plates buried in a nearby hill. Moroni made additional visits (see Joseph Smith—History 1:29–54; see also D&C 2).

PALMYRA/ MANCHESTER New York

OCT. 1825 Joseph Smith began working for Josiah Stowell (or Stool). During his employment, he met Emma Hale (see Joseph Smith—History 1:55–57).

JAN. 1827 Joseph Smith and Emma Hale married in South Bainbridge, New York (see Joseph Smith—History 1:57).



SEPT. 1827 Moroni entrusted the sacred plates and the Urim and Thummim to Joseph Smith (see Joseph Smith—History 1:59).

DEC. 1827 Joseph and Emma Smith moved to Harmony, Pennsylvania, to escape persecution (see Joseph Smith—History 1:60–62).

FEB. 1828 Martin Harris took copies of characters from the gold plates and their translation to scholars in New York City (see Joseph Smith—History 1:62–65; see also Isaiah 29:11–12).



APR.–JUNE 1828 Joseph Smith, with Martin Harris as scribe, finished translating the first 116 manuscript pages of the Book of Mormon. After Martin lost the pages, Moroni took the plates from Joseph.

3

10

SUMMER 1828 Joseph Smith repented and regained the plates and the gift to translate (see D&C 3; 10).

HARMONY Pennsylvania

Section number (see also circled numbers above), date the section was given, and situation that brought forth the revelation:

1. Nov. 1, 1831 A committee was appointed to draft a preface for a collection of revelations to be published as the Book of Commandments. When they made their report to the elders who had gathered for a conference, they requested the Prophet Joseph Smith to inquire of the Lord about their work. The Prophet dictated the words of this revelation by the Spirit, and Sidney Rigdon recorded it. (This entry appears on chart 2.)

2. Sept. 21, 1823 Confident of obtaining a divine manifestation, young Joseph Smith prayed for forgiveness of his sins and a knowledge of his standing before God.

3. July 1828 Following the loss by Martin Harris of 116 pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript, Joseph Smith inquired through the Urim and Thummim to know his own standing with the Lord.

4. Feb. 1829 Joseph Smith Sr. asked his son

to inquire of the Lord concerning how Joseph Sr. could help in the Lord's work.

5. Mar. 1829 A repentant Martin Harris asked Joseph Smith if he was still in possession of the plates and wanted him to inquire of the Lord if Martin would be privileged to see them.

6. Apr. 1829 Joseph Smith's new scribe, Oliver Cowdery, desired an additional witness that the translation work was true. The Prophet inquired through the Urim and Thummim.

7. Apr. 1829 While Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were translating the plates, a difference of opinion arose concerning what had happened to John the Beloved. They inquired through the Urim and Thummim.

8. Apr. 1829 Having been promised the gift to translate (see D&C 6:25), Oliver Cowdery desired to assist in translating.

9. Apr. 1829 When Oliver Cowdery failed in his attempt to translate, Joseph Smith inquired of the Lord on Oliver's behalf to understand why.

10. Summer 1828 After Joseph Smith received section 3, Moroni took the plates and the Urim and Thummim. A short time later they were

returned. The Prophet Joseph inquired of the Lord how to proceed with translation.

11. May 1829 Hyrum Smith asked Joseph, his brother, to ask the Lord's will for him. Joseph inquired through the Urim and Thummim.

12. May 1829 Joseph Knight Sr. was anxious to know his duty as to the work of the Restoration.

13. May 15, 1829 While translating the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery desired to know more about baptism for the remission of sins. They walked to a nearby river and prayed. John the Baptist appeared.

14, 15, 16. June 1829 David Whitmer, John Whitmer, and Peter Whitmer Jr. were anxious to know their duties concerning the work of the Lord. Joseph Smith inquired through the Urim and Thummim on their behalf.

17. June 1829 Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris wanted to know if they were to be the Three Witnesses spoken of in the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith inquired through the Urim and Thummim.

18. June 1829 Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were anxious to know more about



JOSEPH SMITH SR.
1771–1840



LUCY MACK SMITH
1775–1856



JOSEPH SMITH JR.
1805–44



EMMA HALE SMITH
1804–79



MARTIN HARRIS
1783–1875

CHURCH HEADQUARTERS

Fayette, New York: June 1829–Jan. 1831

4

5

6–9



13

MAY 1829 John the Baptist restored the Aaronic Priesthood. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery ordained and baptized each other (see Joseph Smith—History 1:68–73; see also D&C 13).

MAY–JUNE 1829 Peter, James, and John restored the Melchizedek Priesthood and the keys of the apostleship.



the priesthood and made it a matter of humble prayer.

19. Mar. 1830 Martin Harris had mortgaged his farm for the printing of the Book of Mormon. He asked Joseph Smith for re-assurance and direction from the Lord.

20. Apr. 1830 The Lord revealed to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery instructions on Church government and organization, including the precise day upon which they should organize His Church once more upon the earth.

21. Apr. 6, 1830 The Prophet Joseph Smith dictated this revelation by the Spirit during the meeting to organize the Church.

22. Apr. 1830 People who had previously been baptized wanted to know if they needed to be rebaptized in order to join the Church.

23. Apr. 1830 Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, Samuel H. Smith, Joseph Smith Sr., and Joseph Knight Sr. were anxious to know their duties in the Lord's newly organized Church.

24. July 1830 After ministering to the members in New York during a time of intense persecution, the Prophet Joseph and Oliver Cowdery arrived in Pennsylvania in need of encouragement and instruction.

25. July 1830 Emma Hale Smith—along with her husband, the Prophet Joseph—had suffered much persecution. The Prophet received this revelation for her.

11–12

JUNE 1829 Joseph Smith completed the translation of the Book of Mormon.

14–16, 18

17

JUNE 1829 The angel Moroni showed the plates to the Three Witnesses and commanded them to testify of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon (see D&C 17).



JUNE 1829 Joseph Smith showed the plates to the Eight Witnesses. They wrote their testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.

FAYETTE
New York

APR. 1830 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized in Fayette, New York (see D&C 21).



APR.–JULY 1830 Samuel H. Smith and others labored as missionaries—using the Book of Mormon—and baptized many people.

MAR. 1830 Five thousand copies of the Book of Mormon were published in English in Palmyra, New York.

20–21

19

22–23

26. July 1830 These instructions from the Lord encouraged and instructed the Prophet Joseph, Oliver Cowdery, and the Whitmers, teaching them the importance of doing all things in the Church by common consent.

27. Aug. 1830 The Prophet Joseph and Emma Smith and Newel and Lydia Knight desired to partake of the sacrament. The Prophet went to procure wine for the service, and a heavenly messenger appeared to him.

28. Sept. 1830 The Prophet Joseph was concerned over Hiram Page's use of a seer stone.

29. Sept. 1830 Given in the presence of six elders, this revelation came at a time when many were interested in the doctrine of Zion, or the New Jerusalem.

30. Sept. 1830 The Prophet Joseph received revelations for David Whitmer, Peter Whitmer Jr., and John Whitmer based on their actions during the Hiram Page incident.

31. Sept. 1830 Thomas B. Marsh desired to know the will of the Lord concerning himself.

32. Oct. 1830 Several elders, including Oliver Cowdery and Peter Whitmer Jr., wondered if the number of missionaries assigned to teach the gospel to the Lamanites could be increased.

33. Oct. 1830 Ezra Thayre and Northrop Sweet, newly ordained elders, desired to know the will of the Lord concerning them.

34. Nov. 4, 1830 Orson Pratt traveled 200 miles (320 km) to see the Prophet Joseph Smith and to learn the Lord's will for himself.

35. Dec. 1830 Sidney Rigdon, who had recently been baptized, asked the Prophet Joseph to reveal the Lord's will concerning him.

36. Dec. 1830 Edward Partridge asked the

Prophet Joseph to inquire of the Lord on his behalf.

37. Dec. 1830 The Church in New York had been under constant harassment, and the lives of Church leaders were in danger. As the Prophet Joseph and Sidney Rigdon worked on an inspired translation of the Bible, the Lord gave this commandment to move to Ohio.

38. Jan. 2, 1831 Many Saints were poor and desired to know more about the move to Ohio.

39. Jan. 5, 1831 James Covill, a Baptist minister for about 40 years, promised to obey any command the Lord gave him through the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Prophet inquired of the Lord on his behalf.

40. Jan. 1831 When James Covill rejected the command of the Lord, the Lord gave this revelation to the Prophet Joseph and Sidney Rigdon.

41. Feb. 4, 1831 The Prophet Joseph found numerous problems among the Saints in Ohio. He inquired of the Lord to know how best to govern the Church.

42. Feb. 9, 1831 Elders united in prayer with the desire to receive the law of the Lord, as promised in D&C 38:32; 41:2–3.

43. Feb. 1831 A self-proclaimed prophetess named Mrs. Hubble deceived some Saints with her revelations. The Prophet Joseph inquired of the Lord concerning the matter.

44. Feb. 1831 The Prophet Joseph and Sidney Rigdon received instructions from the Lord for the next conference of the Church.

45. Mar. 7, 1831 The Prophet Joseph received this revelation regarding the signs of the times



OLIVER COWDERY
1806–50



HYRUM SMITH
1800–44



JOSEPH KNIGHT SR.
1772–1847



DAVID WHITMER
1805–88



JOHN WHITMER
1802–78

JUNE 1830 The Prophet Joseph Smith began to translate (make inspired changes to) the Bible (see Moses 1–5).

SEPT.–OCT. 1830 Oliver Cowdery and others were called to teach the Lamanites (see D&C 28:8; 32).

OCT.–NOV. 1830 Missionaries visited the northeastern part of Ohio and baptized 127 people.

NOV.–DEC. 1830 The Prophet Joseph Smith received by revelation part of the ancient book of Enoch (see Moses 6–7).

FEB. 1831 The Prophet Joseph Smith and his family arrived in Kirtland, Ohio. Edward Partridge was called as the first bishop of the Church, and the Lord began to reveal the law of consecration (see D&C 41–42).

41–44

45–49

50–51

52–56

63

64

KIRTLAND/THOMPSON Ohio



FEB.–MAY 1831 Saints from the various branches in New York made the journey to the Kirtland, Ohio, area. People from towns around Kirtland joined the Church.



JULY–AUG. 1831 The Prophet Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon visited Missouri and dedicated the land as a place of gathering and a site for a temple (see D&C 57–59).

AUG. 1831 The Prophet Joseph Smith returned to Kirtland from Missouri. Opposition and apostasy continued.

SEPT. 1831 The Prophet Joseph and Emma Smith moved to Hiram, Ohio.

24–26

27

28–31

32–33

34

35–37

38–40



during a period when many false reports were published.

46. Mar. 8, 1831 Following discussions of whether only Church members should be admitted to sacrament and confirmation meetings, the Prophet inquired of the Lord.

47. Mar. 8, 1831 John Whitmer

was reluctant to accept the responsibility for a history of the Church but would do it if it was the will of the Lord. The Prophet Joseph inquired of the Lord.

48. Mar. 1831 Church leaders were concerned about how to accommodate the New York Saints who were arriving in Ohio. The Prophet Joseph inquired of the Lord.

49. Mar. 1831 Because Lemam Copley, a former Shaker, had recently joined the Church, the Prophet Joseph inquired of the Lord concerning some of the teachings of this religion.

50. May 1831 Several elders asked the Prophet Joseph to inquire of the Lord concerning strange spiritual manifestations among the Saints. After joining these elders in prayer, the Prophet dictated the Lord's answer.

51. May 1831 Bishop Edward Partridge sought direction on implementing the law of consecration on behalf of Saints arriving in Ohio.

52. June 7, 1831 Following a general conference when the first high priests were ordained, the Prophet Joseph inquired of the Lord what the brethren should do until the next conference.

53. June 1831 Sidney Gilbert asked the Prophet Joseph to inquire of the Lord concerning Sidney's calling in the Church.

54. June 1831 When Lemam Copley broke his agreement to consecrate his land in Thompson, Ohio, the Prophet Joseph inquired what to do.

55. June 1831 William W. Phelps, a newspaper editor, asked the Prophet Joseph to inquire of the Lord concerning him.

56. June 1831 When Ezra Thayre was not ready to go to Missouri, Thomas B. Marsh, his traveling companion, asked the Prophet what to do.

57. July 20, 1831 Upon his arrival in Independence, Missouri, the Prophet Joseph sought the Lord for answers concerning the establishment of Zion in the last days and the temple to be built there.

58. Aug. 1, 1831 Many of the Saints arriving in Jackson County, Missouri, were anxious to know the will of the Lord concerning them.

59. Aug. 7, 1831 Following the funeral of Polly Knight, the Prophet Joseph sought assurance from the Lord concerning the Saints in Missouri.

60. Aug. 8, 1831 As missionaries prepared to return home to Ohio, the Prophet Joseph inquired of the Lord about the trip.

61. Aug. 12, 1831 A canoe accident on the Missouri River caused the Prophet Joseph and 10 elders to make camp. William W. Phelps saw the destroyer riding in power upon the waters. The Prophet sought the Lord in prayer.

62. Aug. 13, 1831 The Prophet Joseph met four missionaries who were belatedly headed to Missouri and reaffirmed that they should continue their journey.

63. Aug. 1831 The Saints in Ohio desired to know more about the land of Zion. The Prophet Joseph inquired of the Lord concerning the purchasing of land and other matters.

64. Sept. 11, 1831 After the Prophet Joseph was criticized by some associates and the press, the Lord warned against faultfinding.



PETER WHITMER JR.
1809–36



SAMUEL H. SMITH
1808–44



NEWEL KNIGHT
1800–47



SIDNEY RIGDON
1793–1876



EDWARD PARTRIDGE
1793–1840

TOP (FROM LEFT): THE RESTORATION OF THE MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD, BY KENNETH RILEY; JOHN THE BAPTIST APPEARING TO JOSEPH SMITH AND OLIVER COWDERY, © DEL PARSON, MAY NOT BE COPIED; EIGHT WITNESSES SEE THE GOLD PLATES, BY PAUL MANN, MAY NOT BE COPIED; ILLUSTRATION OF SAMUEL H. SMITH BY ROBERT J. BARRETT; ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH—APRIL 6, 1830, BY DALE KILBOURN; SAINTS MOVE TO KIRTLAND, BY SAM LAWLOR, MAY NOT BE COPIED; DEDICATING THE TEMPLE LOT IN INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI, BY DALE KILBOURN; BOTTOM (FROM LEFT): HYRUM SMITH, BY LEWIS A. RAMSEY; DETAIL FROM JOSEPH SMITH AND JOSEPH KNIGHT AND SONS, BY PAUL MANN, MAY NOT BE COPIED; DAVID WHITMER, BY LEWIS A. RAMSEY; PETER WHITMER, BY WILLIAM WHITAKER; SAMUEL H. SMITH, BY BRAD TEARE; DETAIL FROM JOSEPH SMITH AND JOSEPH KNIGHT AND SONS, BY PAUL MANN, MAY NOT BE COPIED

The Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants

BY PRESIDENT EZRA TAFT BENSON (1899–1994)

Thirteenth President of the Church

Ezra Taft Benson was born on August 4, 1899, in Whitney, Idaho, to Sarah Dunkley and George Taft Benson Jr. He married Flora Smith Amussen on September 10, 1926. At the age of 44, on October 7, 1943, he was ordained an Apostle by President Heber J. Grant. Elder Benson served as United States secretary of agriculture from 1953 to 1961. On December 30, 1973, he was ordained and set apart as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He became thirteenth President of the Church at age 86 on November 10, 1985, and served in that capacity for more than eight years. President Benson died in Salt Lake City on May 30, 1994. A great proponent of studying the scriptures, he testified of the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants.



The Doctrine and Covenants is the binding link between the Book of Mormon and the continuing work of the Restoration through the Prophet Joseph Smith and his successors.

I would like to speak about two sacred volumes of modern scripture—the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants.

The Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants are bound together as revelations from Israel’s God to gather and prepare His people for the Second Coming of the Lord.

The bringing forth of these sacred volumes of scripture “for the salvation of a ruined world” cost “the best blood of the nineteenth century”—that of Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum (D&C 135:6).

Each divine witness contains a great proclamation to all the world—the title page of the Book of Mormon, and section 1, the

Lord’s preface to the Doctrine and Covenants.

“This generation,” said the Lord to Joseph Smith, “shall have my word through you” (D&C 5:10). And so it has through the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and other modern revelations.

The Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants testify of each other. You cannot believe one and not the other.

The Book of Mormon testifies of modern books of scripture. It refers to them as “other books” and “last records” which “establish the truth” of the Bible and make known the “plain and precious things which have been taken away” from the Bible (1 Nephi 13:39–40).

Excluding the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants is by far the greatest external witness and evidence which we have from the Lord that the Book of Mormon is true. At least 13 sections in the Doctrine and Covenants give us confirming knowledge and divine witness that the Book of Mormon is the word of God (see D&C 1; 3; 5; 8; 10–11; 17–18; 20; 27; 42; 84; 135).

The Doctrine and Covenants is the binding link between the Book of Mormon and the continuing work of the Restoration through the Prophet Joseph Smith and his successors.

In the Doctrine and Covenants we learn of temple work, eternal families, the degrees of glory, Church organization, and many other great truths of the Restoration.

“Search these commandments,” said the Lord of the Doctrine and Covenants, “for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled.

“What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be



PHOTOGRAPHY BY CRAIG DIMOND, POSED BY MODELS

fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:37–38).

The Book of Mormon brings men to Christ. The Doctrine and Covenants brings men to Christ’s kingdom, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” (v. 30). I know that.

The Book of Mormon is the “keystone” of our religion, and the Doctrine and Covenants is the capstone, with continuing latter-day revelation. The Lord has placed His stamp of approval on both the keystone and the capstone.

The ancient preparation of the Book of Mormon, its preservation, and its publication verify Nephi’s words that “the Lord knoweth all things from the beginning; wherefore, he prepareth a way to accomplish all his works among the children of men; for behold, he hath all power unto the fulfilling of all his words” (1 Nephi 9:6).

We are not required to prove that the Book of Mormon is true or is an authentic record through external evidences—though there are many. It never has been the case, nor is it so now, that the studies of the learned will prove the Book of Mormon true or false. The origin, preparation, translation, and verification of the truth of the Book of Mormon have all been retained in the hands of the Lord, and the Lord makes no mistakes. You can be assured of that.

God has built in His own proof system of the Book of Mormon as found in Moroni, chapter 10, and in the testimonies of the Three and the Eight Witnesses and in various sections of the Doctrine and Covenants.

We each need to get our own testimony of the Book of Mormon through the Holy Ghost. Then our testimony, coupled with the Book of Mormon, should be shared with others so that they, too, can know through the Holy Ghost of its truthfulness.

Nephi testifies that the Book of Mormon contains the “words of Christ” and that if people “believe in Christ,”

they will believe in the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 33:10).

It is important that in our teaching we make use of the language of holy writ. Alma said, “I . . . do command you in the language of him who hath commanded me” (Alma 5:61).

The words and the way they are used in the Book of Mormon by the Lord should become our source of understanding and should be used by us in teaching gospel principles.

God uses the power of the word of the Book of Mormon as an instrument to change people’s lives: “As the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God” (Alma 31:5).

Alma reminded his brethren of the Church how God delivered their fathers’ souls from hell: “Behold, he changed their hearts; yea, he awakened them out of a deep sleep, and they awoke unto God. Behold, they were in the midst of darkness; nevertheless, their souls were illuminated by the light of the everlasting word” (Alma 5:7).

We need to use the everlasting word to awaken those in deep sleep so they will awake “unto God.”

I am deeply concerned about what we are doing to teach the Saints at all levels the gospel of Jesus Christ as completely and authoritatively as do the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants. By this I mean teaching the “great plan of the Eternal God,” to use the words of Amulek (Alma 34:9).

Are we using the messages and the method of teaching found in the Book of Mormon and other scriptures of the Restoration to teach this great plan of the Eternal God?

There are many examples of teaching this great plan, but I will quote just one. It is Mormon’s summary statement of Aaron’s work as a missionary:

“And it came to pass that when Aaron saw that the king would believe his words, he began from the creation of



Adam, reading the scriptures unto the king—how God created man after his own image, and that God gave him commandments, and that because of transgression, man had fallen.

“And Aaron did expound unto him the scriptures from the creation of Adam, laying the fall of man before him, and their carnal state and also the plan of redemption, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, through Christ, for all whosoever would believe on his name.

“And since man had fallen he could not merit anything of himself; but the sufferings and death of Christ atone for their sins, through faith and repentance” (Alma 22:12–14).

The Book of Mormon Saints knew that the plan of redemption must start with the account of the Fall of Adam. In the words of Moroni: “By Adam came the fall of man. And because of the fall of man came Jesus Christ, . . . and because of Jesus Christ came the redemption of man” (Mormon 9:12).

Just as a man does not really desire food until he is hungry, so he does not desire the salvation of Christ until he knows why he needs Christ.

No one adequately and properly knows why he needs Christ until he understands and accepts the doctrine of the Fall and its effect upon all mankind. And no other book in the world explains this vital doctrine nearly as well as the Book of Mormon.

Brethren and sisters, we all need to take a careful inventory of our performance and also the performance of those over whom we preside to be sure that we are teaching the “great plan of the Eternal God” to the Saints.

Are we accepting and teaching what the revelations tell us about the Creation, Adam



and the Fall of man, and redemption from that fall through the Atonement of Christ? Do we frequently review the crucial questions which Alma asks the members of the Church in the fifth chapter of Alma in the Book of Mormon?

Do we understand and are we effective in teaching and preaching the Atonement? What personal meaning does the Lord’s suffering in Gethsemane and on Calvary have for each of us?

What does redemption from the Fall mean to us? In the words of Alma, do we “sing the song of redeeming love”? (Alma 5:26).

Now, what should be the source for teaching the great plan of the Eternal God? The scriptures, of course—particularly the Book of Mormon. This should also include the other modern-day revelations. These should be coupled with the words of the apostles and prophets and the promptings of the Spirit.

Alma “commanded them that they should teach nothing save it were the things which he had taught, and which had been spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets” (Mosiah 18:19).

The Doctrine and Covenants states, “Let them journey from thence preaching the word by the way, saying none other things than that which the prophets and apostles

I am deeply concerned about what we are doing to teach the Saints at all levels the gospel of Jesus Christ as completely and authoritatively as do the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants.

have written, and that which is taught them by the Comforter through the prayer of faith” (D&C 52:9).

Now, after we teach the great plan of the Eternal God, we must personally bear our testimonies of its truthfulness.

Alma, after giving a great message to the Saints about being born again and the need for them to experience a “mighty change” in their hearts, sealed his teaching with his testimony in these words:

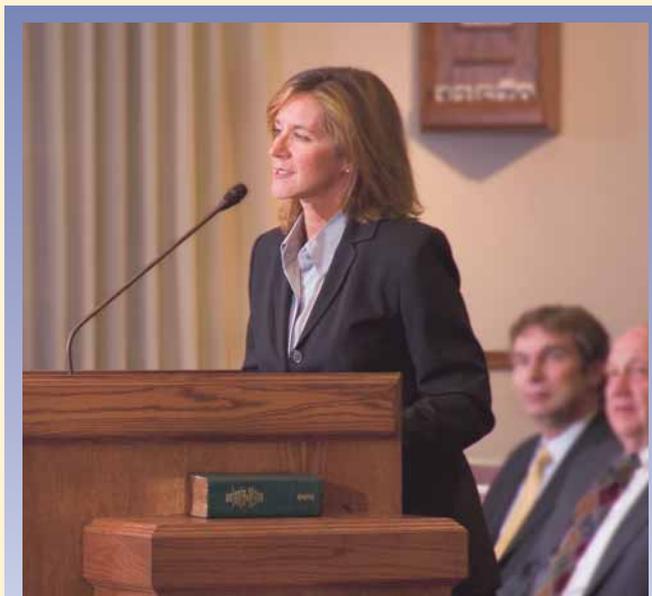
“And this is not all. Do ye not suppose that I know of these things myself? Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?”

“Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me” (Alma 5:45–46).

Later Amulek joined Alma as his missionary companion. After Alma had delivered to the Zoramites his message concerning faith in Christ, Amulek sealed with his testimony the message of his companion in these words:

“And now, behold, I will testify unto you of myself that these things are true. Behold, I say unto you, that I do know that Christ shall come among the children of men, to take upon him the transgressions of his people, and that he shall atone for the sins of the world; for the Lord God hath spoken it” (Alma 34:8).

In His preface to the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord said that the “voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in



After we teach the great plan of the Eternal God, we must personally bear our testimonies of its truthfulness.

these last days” (D&C 1:4).

The responsibility of the seed of Abraham, which we are, is to be missionaries to “bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations” (Abraham 2:9). Moses bestowed upon Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple the keys to gather Israel (see D&C 110:11).

Now, what is the instrument that God has designed for this gathering? It is the same instrument that is

designed to convince the world that Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph Smith is His prophet, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true. It is that scripture which is the keystone of our religion.

It is that most correct book which, if men will abide by its precepts, will get them closer to God than any other book. It is the Book of Mormon (see Introduction to the Book of Mormon).

God bless us all to use all the scriptures, but in particular the instrument He designed to bring us to Christ—the Book of Mormon, the keystone of our religion—along with its companion volume, the capstone, the Doctrine and Covenants, the instrument to bring us to Christ’s kingdom, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. . . .

I promise you that as you more diligently study modern revelation on gospel subjects, your power to teach and preach will be magnified and you will so move the cause of Zion that added numbers will enter into the house of the Lord as well as the mission field.

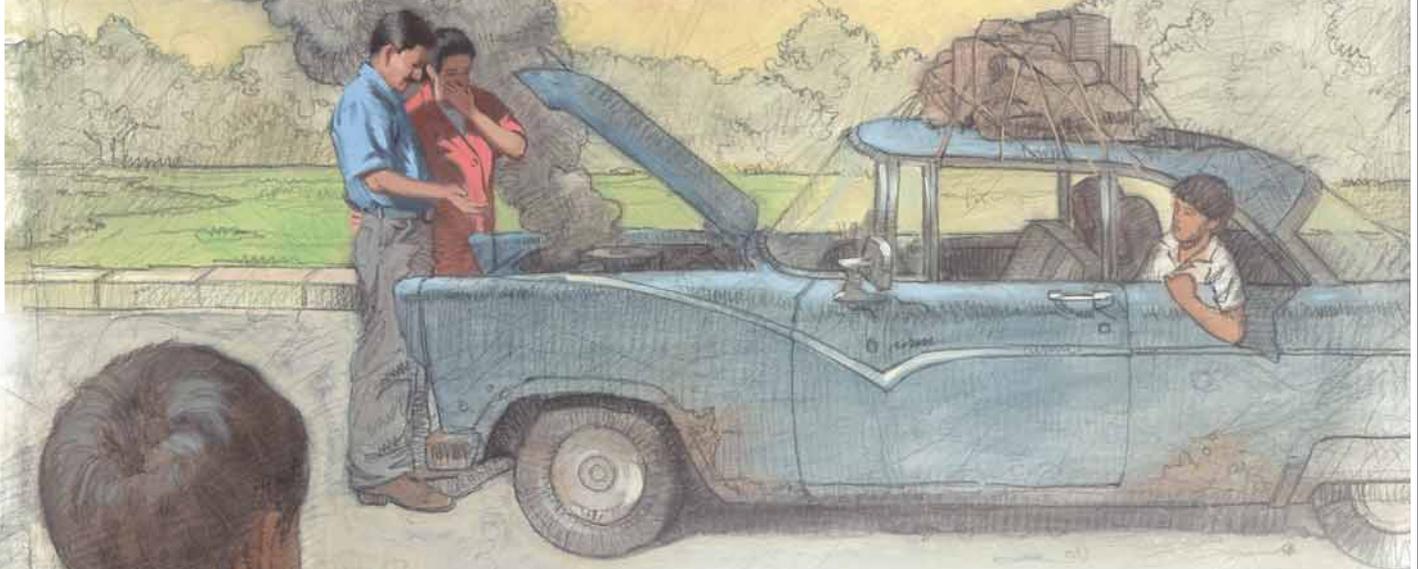
I bless you with increased desire to flood the earth with the Book of Mormon, to gather out from the world the elect of God who are yearning for the truth but know not where to find it. ■

From an April 1987 general conference address; spelling and capitalization modernized.



BROKEN Car, Broken Dreams?

ILLUSTRATED BY GREGG THORNELSON



BY ELDER CLATE W. MASK JR.
Of the Seventy

When I was a young boy, Grandpa Gonzalez was one of my best friends.

I used to love waiting for him to drive past our house on his way home from work. He would honk and wave, and I would cross the street, run up the alley, dart through his back gate, and race him to his house around the corner. As he slowly turned into his driveway, I would be awaiting him breathlessly and would proudly announce that I had won our race again. Often during those wonderful evenings with Grandpa, I would ask him to tell me missionary stories.



The Doctrine and Covenants amplifies our understanding of many of the doctrines and commandments that will help us gain eternal life.

Grandpa had served in Mexico City from 1910 to 1912, during the Mexican Revolution, and he planted a powerful desire in my heart to become a great missionary just like him. He explained that missionaries help Heavenly Father with his great work in “[bringing] to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

The Doctrine and Covenants, which we will be studying in Sunday School this year, amplifies our understanding of many of the doctrines and commandments that will help us gain this eternal life of which our missionaries preach. In this great book of scripture the Savior tells us, “If you

keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7).

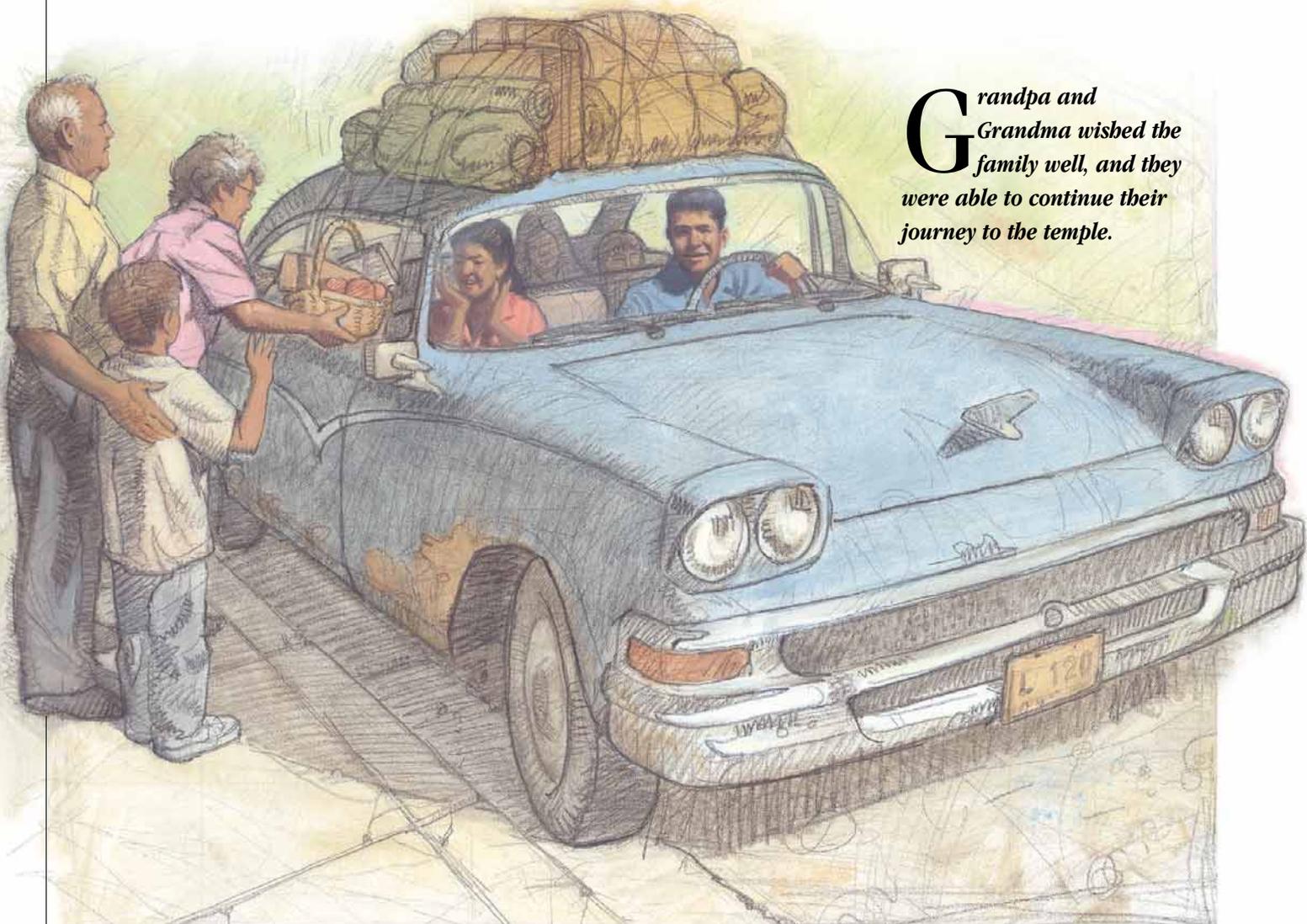
To receive this blessing of exaltation, a temple sealing is essential:

“In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees; “And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];

“And if he does not, he cannot obtain it” (D&C 131:1–3).

Grandpa told me that he loved to explain to the people

Grandpa and Grandma wished the family well, and they were able to continue their journey to the temple.



of Mexico how the promises of salvation could now be fulfilled and how families could be together forever because of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ through the Book of Mormon. The Doctrine and Covenants states:

“For this very purpose are these plates preserved, which contain these records—that the promises of the Lord might be fulfilled, which he made to his people;

“And that the Lamanites might come to the knowledge of their fathers, and that they might know the promises of the Lord, and that they may believe the gospel and rely upon the merits of Jesus Christ, and be glorified through faith in his name, and that through their repentance they might be saved” (D&C 3:19–20).

Sacrificing for the Temple

The faithful Saints in Mexico yearned to go to the temple so they could be with their families forever. But because there were no temples in their country for many years, some of these Saints sacrificed greatly to travel hundreds of miles to the Mesa Arizona Temple. My grandparents were thrilled every time a family would visit them in El Paso, Texas, on their way to Mesa to be married or sealed to loved ones. Grandpa had taught and baptized some of these people in and around Mexico City. He and Grandma often provided a soft bed and a hot meal to help them along their journey.

One day while I was sitting on the curb waiting for Grandpa to pass by, a sputtering, coughing, smoking bucket of bolts broke down right in front of our house. A frantic father lifted the hood, and billows of smoke

poured from the engine. The mother and children got out of the car and began sobbing. I couldn’t understand Spanish, but I caught the word *templo*. Just then Grandpa arrived and began reassuring them in their native tongue not to worry. I later learned that they had no money for an engine replacement, but Grandpa reassured them that the Lord was mindful of their predicament.

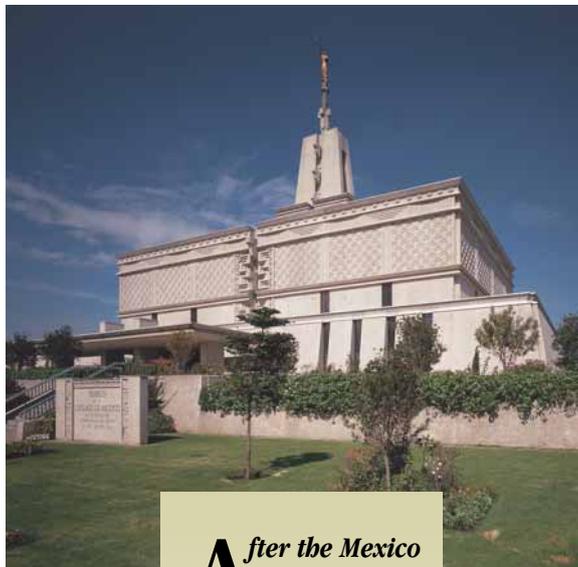
We all piled into his car and drove around the corner to

Grandma and Grandpa’s house, where our guests stayed for nearly a week while Grandpa had a rebuilt engine installed. Then, after many *abrazos y besos* (hugs and kisses), my grandmother gave them a basket of food and they climbed into their vehicle, waved goodbye, and continued their trek toward the temple.

In 1983 the Mexico City Mexico Temple was dedicated, eliminating the long, expensive excursions to Arizona. Today there are 12 temples located all

over Mexico, making it easier for families to feel the joy of being sealed in the house of the Lord.

Every time I see a happy family walking up the temple steps in Mexico City, I think of a broken-down car, a heartbroken family, and almost broke grandparents who did their part long ago to help a determined family become an eternal family. I am so grateful for temples, for missionary work, and for latter-day scriptures, including the Doctrine and Covenants, which help us understand what we must do to gain eternal life and dwell with our families forever with our Father in Heaven. ■



After the Mexico City Mexico Temple was dedicated in 1983, many Saints no longer had to make the long, expensive trip to Arizona.

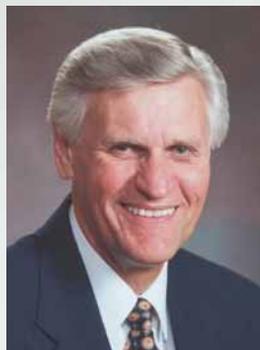


Confidence AND SELF-WORTH

BY ELDER GLENN L. PACE
Of the Seventy

Many Latter-day Saints know the Church is true but have unhealthy feelings about their own inadequacies, real or imagined. The scriptures inform us that we all have weaknesses and that there is a place for them in our spiritual progress: “If men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them” (Ether 12:27).

Too often we wallow in our weaknesses so much that we do not allow “weak things” to “become strong.” Our condition is frequently



We are conscious of our weaknesses, but we know the Lord can use those very weaknesses to bless our lives.

misdiagnosed as humility, when in reality it is a lack of confidence.

What is the difference between the two?

To be *humble* is to recognize our utter dependence upon the Lord. We are conscious of our strengths, but we do not exalt ourselves and become prideful, for we know that all good things ultimately come from God. We are conscious of our weaknesses, but we know the Lord can use those very weaknesses to bless our lives and that through Him, as we learn from the book of Ether, our weaknesses can become strengths.

To *lack confidence* is to have feelings of low self-worth. We are preoccupied with our weaknesses, and we lack faith in the Lord’s ability to use those weaknesses for our good. We do not understand our



As we seek to know God, we can come to an awareness of our place in the universe and of our true nature and destiny.

inestimable worth in the eyes of God, nor do we appreciate our divine potential. Ironically, both pride and a lack of self-confidence cause us to focus excessively on ourselves and to deny the power of God in our lives.

Dr. Thomas Harris made the following wise observation on insecurity and confidence: “Most people never fulfill their human promise and potential because they remain perpetually helpless children overwhelmed by a sense of inferiority. The feeling of being okay does not imply that the person has risen above all his faults and emotional problems. It merely implies that he refuses to be paralyzed by them.”¹

I am impressed by President Gordon B. Hinckley’s personal philosophy, which we all would do well to adopt: “I believe in myself. I do not mean to say this with egotism. But I believe in my capacity and in your capacity to do good, to make some contribution to the society of which we are a part, [and] to grow and develop. . . . I believe in the principle that I can

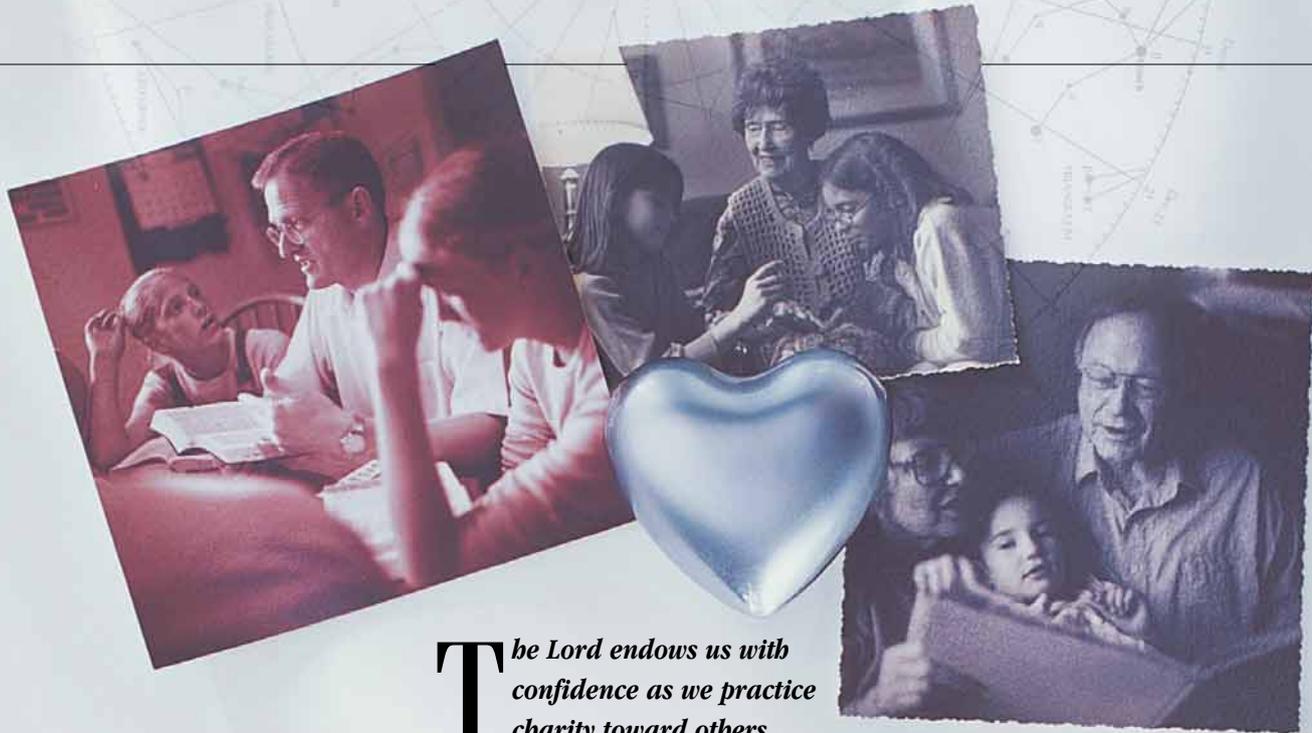
make a difference in this world, be it ever so small.”²

I would like to present some doctrine with which most are familiar but few internalize. If we really believe it, our confidence will wax stronger.

Our Eternal Nature and Destiny

Occasionally we need to step back from the details of our lives and reacquaint ourselves with the big picture. One summer night while I was vacationing with my family in Wyoming’s Grand Teton National Park, I happened to look up at the sky and was overwhelmed by the clarity of the stars and the magnitude of the universe. I wondered how long it had been since I had lain on my back, stared at the sky, and let the concept of eternity and the glory of God’s creations wash over me.

Some time later, I read the words of Elder John A. Widtsoe (1872–1952), which brought back some feelings of that night:



The Lord endows us with confidence as we practice charity toward others.

“Earth, stars and the vastness of space; yesterday, today and tomorrow; and the endlessly increasing knowledge of the relations of forces, present an illimitable universe of numberless phenomena. Only in general outline can the universe be understood. In its infinite variety of expression, it wholly transcends the human mind.

“ . . . In the midst of this complexity, man finds himself. As he progresses from childhood to manhood, and as his slumbering faculties are awakened, he becomes more fully aware of the vastness of his universe and of the futility of hoping to understand it in detail.

“Nevertheless, conscious man can not endure confusion. Out of the universal mystery he must draw at least the general, controlling laws that proclaim order in the apparent chaos; and especially is he driven, by his inborn and unalterable nature, to know if possible his own place in the system of existing things.”³

What is our place in this vastness of “existing things”?

We know that each of us has always existed in some form. The scriptures teach us: “Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be” (D&C 93:29). We know that we became the spirit children of heavenly parents, thereby

inheriting the genes of godhood, and we were nurtured by these parents in the heavens. As President George Q. Cannon (1827–1901) so beautifully put it: “There was a period when we, with Jesus and others, basked in the light of

the presence of God and enjoyed His smiles. We are the children of God, and as His children there is no attribute we ascribe to Him that we do not possess, though they may be dormant or in embryo. The mission of the Gospel is to develop these powers and make us like our Heavenly Parent.”⁴

We know that the manner in which we lived in the premortal existence qualified us to be foreordained to the offices and responsibilities we have received

here on earth. The Prophet Joseph Smith said: “Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was. I suppose I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council.”⁵

We have had a veil of forgetfulness drawn over our minds about these matters. President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) said, “All those salient truths which come home so forcibly to the head and heart seem but the awakening of the memories of the spirit.”⁶



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

Ask family members to share experiences when they were asked to do something they felt unprepared or inadequate to do.

What does Elder Pace say about the difference between lacking confidence and being humble?

Talk about the doctrines Elder Pace said could help us gain greater confidence.

With the help of the scriptures, words of the prophets, and personal revelation, we gradually come to an awareness of our true nature and destiny. Once we grasp this reality, we can obtain the faith to move forward and overcome any obstacle standing in our way of fulfilling our foreordained destiny—including the obstacle of feelings of low self-worth.

“Charity towards All Men”

We learn further from the scriptures how to gain confidence: “Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven” (D&C 121:45).

In other words, the Lord endows us with confidence as we practice “charity towards all men” and have righteous thoughts. One way we can practice charity is to be generous in our praise of others, thus helping them gain confidence as well. I have always loved the feeling Alma had for Ammon and his brethren when they met after a separation. “I do not joy in my own success alone, but my joy is more full because of the success of my brethren, who have been up to the land of Nephi,” Alma said.

“Behold, they have labored exceedingly, and have brought forth much fruit; and how great shall be their reward!

“Now, when I think of the success of these my brethren

my soul is carried away, even to the separation of it from the body, as it were, so great is my joy” (Alma 29:14–16).

I believe that Alma’s healthy sense of accomplishment and his knowledge that the Lord approved of his efforts helped him to have sincere joy for his brethren. While he gave the credit for his success to the Lord, he did not feel guilty for knowing he had done well.

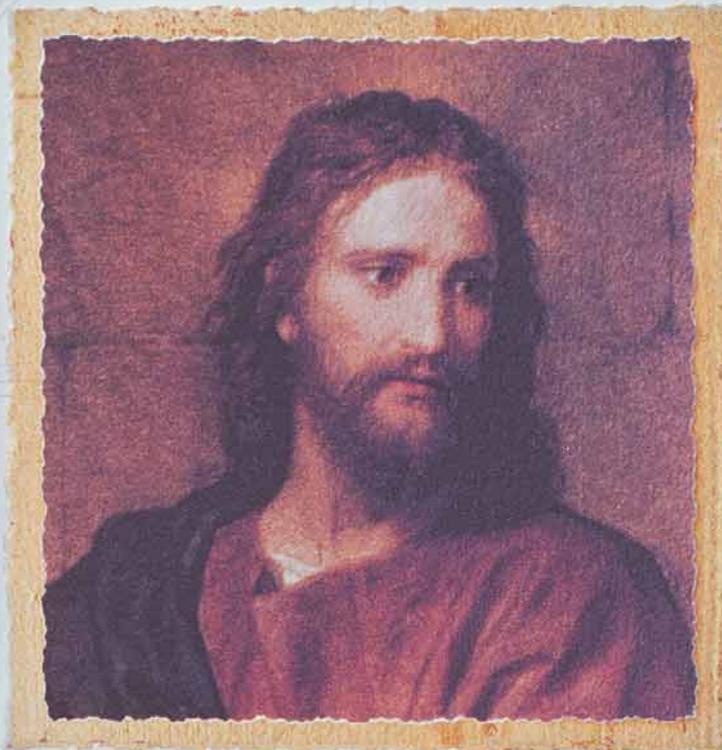
I am convinced that when we obtain a witness of who we really are and possess healthy feelings of self-worth because of it, our joy in the accomplishments of others is magnified. When that joy is felt, we should share it.

How blessed we are to know where we came from and what we have the potential to become. Let each of us work harder to recognize the accomplishments of others as well as being aware of our own talents and successes. And let us be confident in the knowledge that “the worth of souls is great in the sight of God” (D&C 18:10) and that

with the Lord’s help, we can accomplish far more than we could ever do on our own. ■

NOTES

1. Quoted by Marvin J. Ashton, “Proper Self-Management,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 84.
2. “President Hinckley Shares Ten Beliefs with Chamber,” *Church News*, Jan. 31, 1998, 4.
3. *A Rational Theology*, 7th ed. (1937), 1.
4. *Gospel Truth: Discourses and Writings of George Q. Cannon*, sel. Jerreld L. Newquist (1974), 3.
5. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 365.
6. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 13.



With the Lord’s help, we can accomplish far more than we could ever do on our own.



Singular

**TWO CHURCH MEMBERS
SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS
ON SINGLENES.**

MY CLASSROOM

BY KIMBERLY D. NELSON

At some point in my life I was assigned to a classroom labeled “single.” Despite my efforts, I realized I had little control over when I could leave, so I spent most of my adult life seeing my classroom as a prison.

Although my attitude may have seemed positive on the outside, my relationship with Heavenly Father suffered through many long nights of desperate pleading, angry demands, and general despair. I struggled despite Heavenly Father’s many reassurances that all was well, that my deepest and most dearly held dreams would come to pass, and that He would never leave me truly alone. To my mind, that just wasn’t enough. All I could focus on was the door of this prison, and all I wanted was *out*.

I finally reached a point several years ago

The mural of my life includes wonderful people and experiences the Lord has brought into it. I have been immeasurably blessed.

when my hope, faith, and energy hit an all-time low. Walking past affectionate couples depressed me. I watched my married friends deal with the joys and trials of marriage and family life with envy, even when toddlers threw tantrums and dishes were left undone.

As far as I was concerned, I just couldn’t handle being single anymore.

I went to church one particular Sunday having already decided to ask a friend for a priesthood blessing. When I arrived, one kind sister complimented me by saying I looked “so put together.” I smiled and thanked her, while the irony of her words weighed on me: I actually felt close to falling apart.

The words of the blessing I received later that day shook my soul. The Lord’s reassurances had never been so clear or so directly



Happiness

linked to my particular thoughts at the time, and I had never felt the Spirit more strongly. And while the blessing did not answer all my questions, it started me on a road that took me closer to the peace I had been seeking.

Feeling stronger than I had in a long time, I started looking around my “prison.” I began to see, dimly at first, the positive aspects of the room. I began to take inventory of the ways in which I had been of use in the lives of my friends and family. I realized that being single allowed me more flexibility and freedom of movement, something I had always taken for granted. It allowed me to serve in ways I might not have been able to otherwise.

However, I continued to struggle at times with doubt, loneliness, and confusion. The tears did not come as frequently as they had in the past, but I still did a fair amount of complaining. It was as if I had started to explore my situation in a limited way, tiptoeing around the room and catching glimpses of beauty through half-closed eyes but still never truly seeing what I had been given.

I began to wonder if I had somehow failed Heavenly Father. I thought maybe it was taking longer for the door to open because there was something I was supposed to *be* that I wasn't being, and that it was all my fault. Lasting

peace continued to elude me. Again, I requested a priesthood blessing. Again, the reassurances and counsel of a loving Heavenly Father quieted my fears and unfounded guilt. But I also received some counsel that puzzled me: I was told I needed to humble myself—despite the fact that I had just spent the last several months beating myself up for imagined offenses. Obviously I needed a different kind of humility.

The answer finally came. It didn't come in words; it came as a feeling. During a ward activity, as I looked at my surroundings, several thoughts ran through my mind. I remembered many such activities in the past as well as the people who had been a part of them. I realized just how much the people in that room and in my life meant to me. I thought of the many small miracles that had guided and comforted me throughout my life. Reflecting on Heavenly Father's infinite patience with me, I remembered the Savior, who had been through the greatest torment of all so that He could succor us through life's challenges. I felt overcome with gratitude.

It was as if a veil had been lifted from my eyes. I realized that what I had considered a prison was filled with more wonderful things than I had ever noticed. In my obsession

with getting out, I had either missed or had only partly seen the Lord's hand in filling that room with people and experiences that had taught me, comforted me, and filled my life's cup to overflowing. I had only needed to humble myself enough to be deeply grateful for those gifts to finally feel years of pain fall away.

The exit to my classroom still has not opened. I don't know when it will. I still listen for the handle to turn—after all, I will never lose the desire to leave my single status behind and become a wife and mother. As I have been counseled many times, that is a righteous desire. But I am finding myself more occupied with painting murals on the walls these days, contributing to the beauty of my surroundings rather than pounding on the door. I believe that when someone finally comes into the room, holds out his hand, and says, "Honey, you're finished here; let's go," I will have to stop long enough to take one final look around at what the Lord has done for me as a single person before finally stepping through the door—and into another classroom. ■

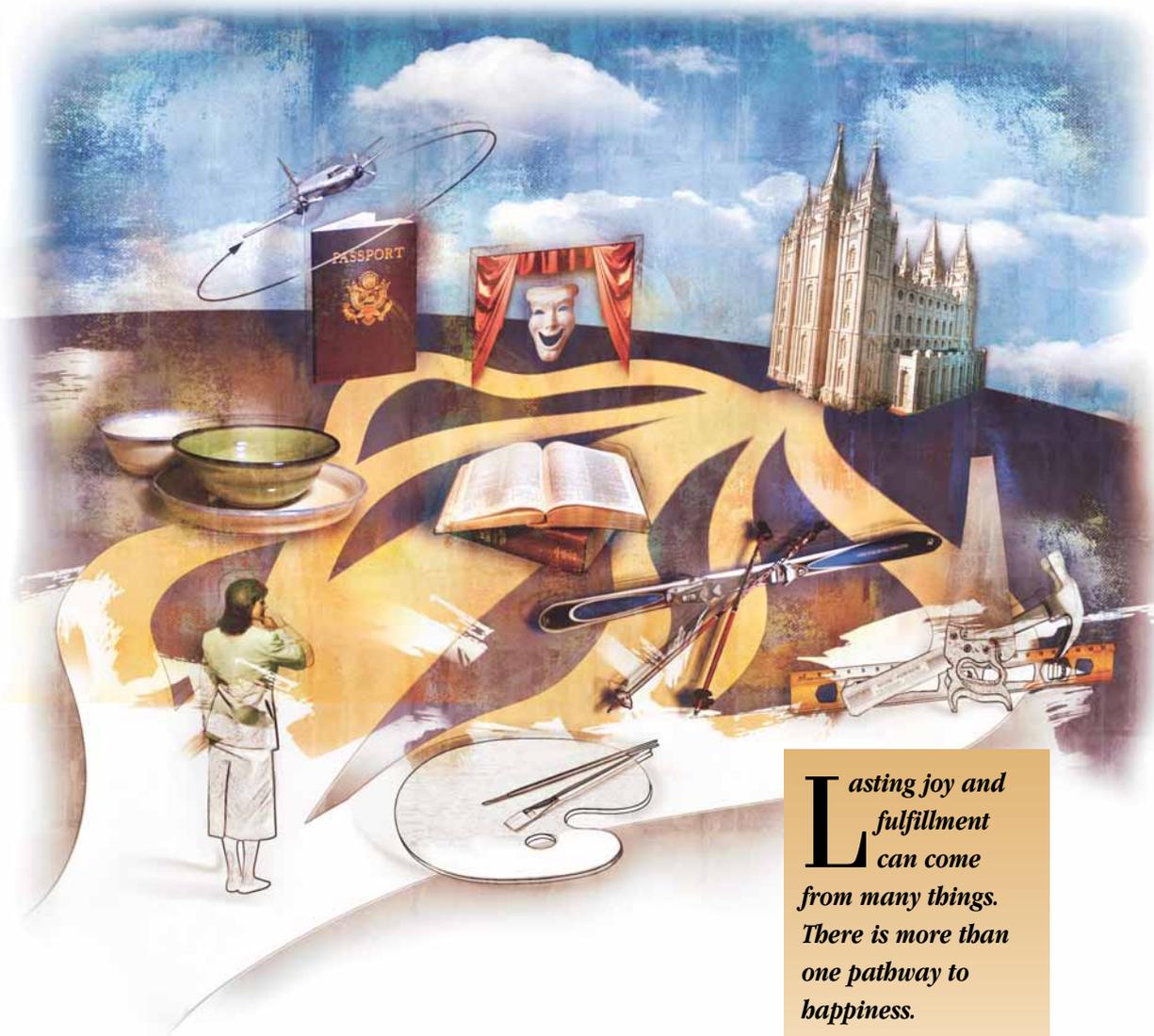
Kimberly D. Nelson is a member of the American Fork Fourth Ward, American Fork Utah Central Stake.

A DIFFERENT PATH

BY REBECCA M. TAYLOR
Church Magazines

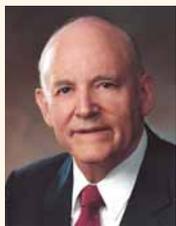
Being single can be challenging at times, but it can also bring unique blessings. Here are a few suggestions, based on my own experience and that of my friends, for making life meaningful as a single Church member.

Focus on what is good in your life. While it is true that nothing can bring greater happiness than marriage and children, it is also true that lasting joy and fulfillment can



Lasting joy and fulfillment can come from many things. There is more than one pathway to happiness.

MOVE FORWARD



“While waiting for promised blessings, one should not mark time, for to fail to move forward is to

some degree a retrogression. Be anxiously engaged in good causes, including your own development. The personal pursuit of hobbies or crafts, the seeking of knowledge and wisdom, particularly of the things of God, and the development and honing of skills are all things that could productively occupy one’s time.”

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95), “The Church Is for All People,” *Ensign*, June 1989, 77.

come from other things: nurturing relationships with family and friends, developing a skill, cultivating our testimony, enjoying the beauties of nature. There is more than one pathway to happiness.

It has been said, “There is no such thing as a problem without a gift for you in its hands.”¹ Being single helps us develop traits we may not have had otherwise. It may help us develop more compassion for those whose lives are not “ideal.” It may encourage us to rely more on the Lord for strength and guidance. It can refine us and help ensure that our testimonies are based on what truly matters, not just on what those around us are doing.

Take advantage of your discretionary time. Being single doesn’t necessarily mean having more free time, but it may mean we have more control over how we use our time. My friend Suzette stays involved in community service. Cinda makes pottery and goes mountain biking. Brad works on home improvement projects. Other friends attend school, participate in community theater, read good books, and travel. They make meaningful contributions to society and improve the lives of those around them. They know that real life isn’t only for those who are married.

Don’t give up. I have heard people say, “If I’m ever going to get married, he’s just going to have to drop out of the sky and land on my doorstep.” Trust me, that isn’t going to happen. I believe that if we extend ourselves and venture outside of our comfort zone at times, God will make up the difference if and when the right person comes along. In the meantime, we shouldn’t dwell excessively on what we lack. As President Gordon B. Hinckley once counseled single adults: “Do not give up hope. And do not give up trying. But do give up being obsessed with it.”²

Give others the benefit of the doubt. Some time ago my roommate and I were taking a married friend on a tour of our home. She paused when she saw a framed copy of the family proclamation hanging on our wall. “That’s so great that you’re displaying that, even though you don’t have families!” our friend exclaimed. My roommate and I just laughed. Of course we had families—we had parents, siblings, and extended family members, just not husbands and children yet.

There have been other times when, unfortunately, I may not have felt quite so magnanimous. But I know that most of the time people mean well. It’s true that those who married young don’t understand what it’s like to be an “older” single. But we single people don’t understand every trial that others experience either. We hope that others will give us the benefit of the doubt and look on the intent of our hearts, so we need to extend that same courtesy to them.

Know that God is mindful of you. I have found that my relationship with Him is my best antidote to loneliness. He has declared, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isaiah 41:10). He loves me not because of what I do or what label I wear—single, married, or anything else—but simply because I am His child. He wants every experience I have to work for my good (see D&C 122:7), including the experience of being single. Because of Him, I am never ultimately alone, and my life has purpose and meaning. ■

NOTES

1. Richard Bach, *Illusions* (1977), 57.
2. “A Conversation with Single Adults,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1997, 60.



David O. McKay

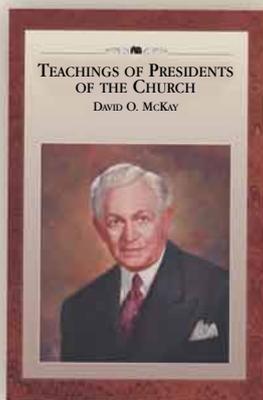
AMBASSADOR OF THE FAITH

President McKay reached out to the world during his 19 years as Church President. During those years Church membership nearly tripled.

BY WADE MURDOCK

On a rainy morning in 1953, 79-year-old President David O. McKay visited Thurso, Scotland, to see the home where his forebears had embraced the restored gospel more than 100 years earlier. President McKay's son Llewelyn, who accompanied him on this visit, recalled: "[As we approached the home], the sun broke through the clouds and smiled at us as though he were reflecting the joy and happiness in father's heart. As we all gathered in front of the home, tears came to father's eyes as he looked through the door. 'If it had not been for two missionaries knocking on this door about 1850, I shouldn't be here today!'" he declared.¹

Even though the home had fallen into disrepair and was by that time used only to store potatoes, President McKay lingered for some time in the doorway, speaking fondly of what had happened there. The gratitude and joy President McKay expressed that day were characteristic of his life and ministry. As a General Authority for almost 64 years, including 19 years as the ninth President of the Church, he served with the energy of one who cared deeply for people and for the gospel and found joy in bringing the two together.



Righteous Parents

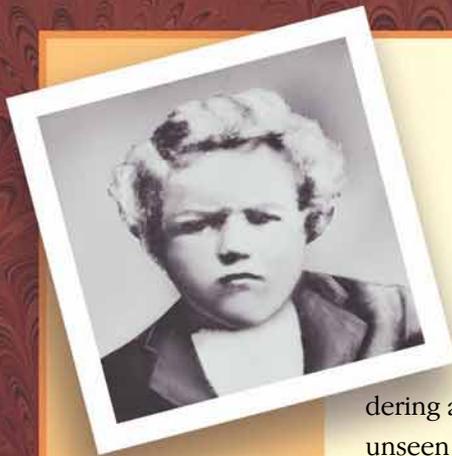
Born on September 8, 1873, in Huntsville, Utah, David Oman McKay was the first son of David McKay and Jennette Evans McKay. When the younger David was just seven years old, his father accepted a mission call to serve in Scotland—even though at the time Sister McKay was expecting a baby and had only her young son to help on the farm. Her encouragement was undoubtedly a key factor. As soon as she read the

missionary call letter, she said: "Of course you must accept; you need not worry about me. David O. and I will manage things nicely."²

Under Jennette's direction the farm did well. Strong spiritual growth paralleled the temporal prosperity the family experienced during David Sr.'s mission. "Family prayer was an established procedure in the McKay home, and when Jennette was left alone with her small family it seemed an ever more important part of the day's events. David [O.] was taught to take his turn at morning and evening prayers and learned the importance of the blessings of heaven in the home."³

In a general conference address many years later, President McKay related the following childhood experience with prayer:

"I remember lying [in bed] one night, trembling with



Above: Young David O. McKay in 1877.

Below: The David Sr. and Jennette McKay family, 1897. David O. is standing, second from left. Right: Elder McKay during his mission to the British Isles, 1898.

fear. As a child I was naturally, or unnaturally afraid of the darkness, and would frequently lie wondering about burglars, ‘bug-a-boos,’ and unseen influences. So I lay this night completely unnerved; but I had been taught that God would answer prayer. Summoning strength I arose from the bed, knelt down in the darkness, and prayed to God to remove that feeling of fear; and I heard as plainly as you hear my voice this afternoon, ‘Don’t be afraid; nothing will hurt you.’ Oh, yes, some may say—‘simply the imagination.’ Say what you will, I know that to my soul came the sweet peace of a child’s prayer answered.”⁴

His father’s teachings and example were as powerful as his mother’s. On one occasion David O. McKay, his brothers, and his father were harvesting hay. When the time arrived to gather the tenth load, which was to be given to the Church as tithing, David McKay Sr. told the boys to move to a better spot than where they had gathered the previous nine

loads. When young David O. questioned this instruction, his father said, “That is the *tenth* load, and the best is none too good for God.” Years later David O. McKay referred to this experience as the “most effective sermon on tithing I have ever heard in my life.”⁵

President McKay’s understanding of his parents’ influence deepened as he grew older. When he taught Church members about the importance of family and home, personal experience framed his teachings:

“[The] realization of mother’s love, with a loyalty to the precepts of an exemplary father, . . . more than once during youth, turned my steps from the precipice of temptation.

“If I were asked to name the world’s greatest need, I should say unhesitatingly *wise mothers*; and the second, *exemplary fathers*.”⁶

Developing a Love for Teaching and Learning

As a youth and young adult, David O. McKay demonstrated tremendous ability in



many areas, including scholarship, athletics, music, public speaking, and leadership. While choosing his greatest talent is arguably an impossible task, teaching ranks near the top.

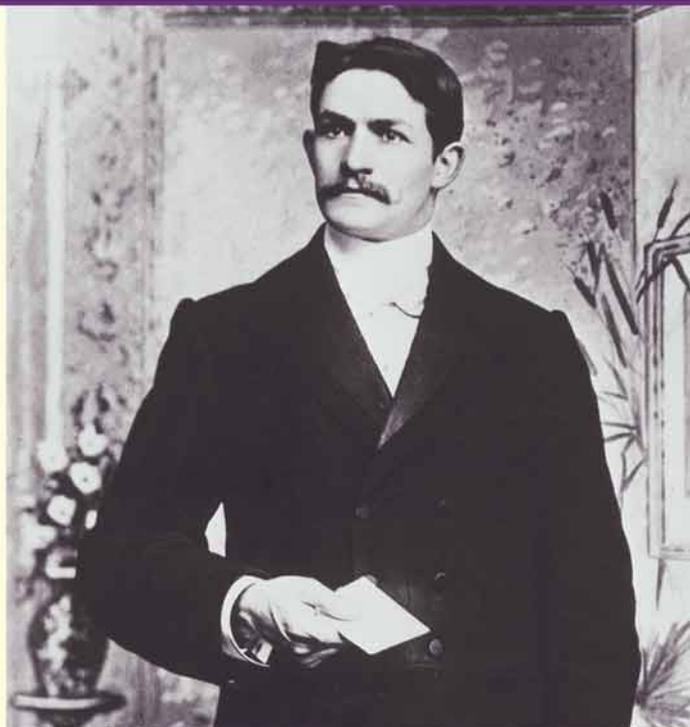
In 1889, at the age of 15, he was called as the Sunday School secretary in his ward, a position he held for four years until he was called as a Sunday School teacher. Concurrent with his work as a Sunday School teacher, he served as a teacher and principal at the Huntsville grade school—before receiving a university education.

Already having a great deal of practical experience, he attended the University of Utah from 1894 to 1897, graduating as valedictorian with an offer to teach in Salt Lake County. Following graduation, however, he received another opportunity to teach; he was called to serve a mission to the British Isles, a calling he fulfilled from 1897 to 1899.

His proselyting experiences included numerous open-air meetings in which he and other missionaries preached the gospel on street corners or other public places and distributed tracts, or pamphlets, to those who would accept them. As his missionary journal attests, each meeting proved a unique experience. Following one particularly difficult open-air gathering, Elder McKay recorded, “I have heaved a *thousand* sighs!” After a more promising meeting, he wrote: “Had several interesting conversations. Nearly everyone who took a tract last week seemed pleased to accept this one. Several asked when we would hold another meeting.”⁷

In 1898, while supervising missionary work in Scotland, he prepared an article for a local Glasgow newspaper to refute slanderous information the newspaper had published about the Church. In this instance and in similar circumstances he would encounter as a mission president 20 years later, his letters to the editor succeeded because of their mild tone and well-reasoned teachings.⁸

Shortly after he was released from his mission, he began serving as a member of the Weber Stake Sunday School board. He was assigned to reorganize and revitalize



classwork by working with teachers and revising teaching materials. After six years of service in the Weber Stake, he became second assistant to the general superintendent of Sunday Schools, who at that time was President Joseph F. Smith. He became first assistant in 1909 and in 1918 was made superintendent.

During his early efforts with the Sunday School, he worked in the public schools as well. He taught at the Weber Stake Academy in Ogden, Utah, a school now known as Weber State University, and he was later appointed principal of the academy. One of his students, Joseph Anderson—later a member of the Seventy—recalled: “We all fell in love with him. And he became so absorbed in his subject that he wouldn’t even hear the bell ring sometimes.”⁹

He strongly believed that all education should foster Christian character. “True education,” he said, “seeks to make men and women not only good mathematicians, proficient linguists, profound scientists, or brilliant literary lights, but also, honest men, with virtue, temperance, and brotherly love. It seeks to make men and women who prize truth, justice, wisdom, benevolence, and self-control as the choicest acquisitions of a successful life.”¹⁰

His gospel teaching continued throughout his life, but his formal, full-time work with the public schools ended in 1906, when he was called to be an Apostle at age 32.



Above: The McKays while serving in the European Mission, 1922–24. Below: The First Presidency, 1951—President McKay (center); Stephen L. Richards, First Counselor (left); and J. Reuben Clark Jr., Second Counselor (right). Right: The McKays in Holland in 1952 with mission president Donovan H. VanDam (right) and his wife, Ada (left).

ful marriages, President McKay declared:

“I should like to urge *continued courtship*, and apply this to grown people. Too many couples have come to the altar of marriage looking upon the marriage ceremony as the end of courtship instead of the beginning of an eternal courtship. Let us not forget that during the burdens of home life—and they come—that tender words of appreciation, courteous acts are even more appreciated than during those sweet days and months of courtship.”¹¹

President McKay lived this counsel—composing love poems for his wife on her birthday, holding the car door open for her, and greeting and bidding her farewell with an affectionate kiss. Once when President and Sister McKay were traveling through California, a young boy who had been watching them approached her and said, pointing to President McKay, “I guess that man over there loves you.”¹²

The seven McKay children benefited from their parents’ righteousness and love for one another. One of their sons, David Lawrence McKay, recalled: “Our parents’ expectations provided the path for us to follow, and our love for them provided an

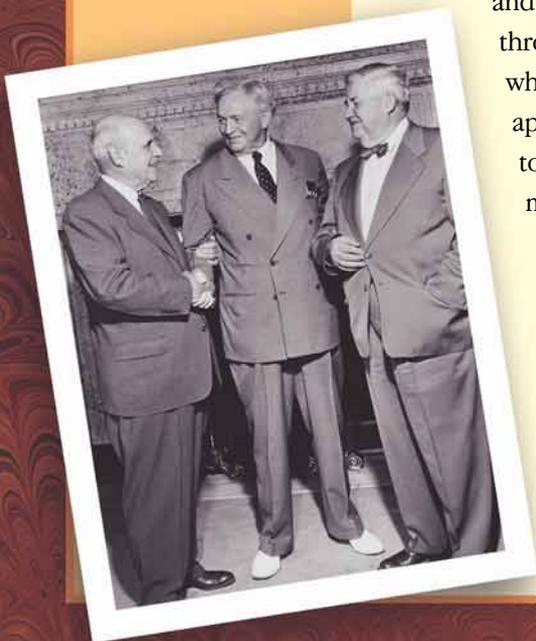
irresistible motivation for us to walk that path. We learned to love them because they first dearly loved each other and us.”¹³

Service in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the First Presidency

Called as an Apostle in April 1906, Elder McKay gave his first general conference address in the concluding session of October conference that year. In words that reflected his desire to serve, he said, “As members of the Church . . . , I believe that we ought to go home determined to carry out the responsibility that is upon us, not merely because these brethren have urged us to do so, but because we have it in our souls to do it.”¹⁴

In 1920, at the age of 47, Elder McKay was called by the First Presidency to spend one year visiting and strengthening branches and missions of the Church around the world. This journey in many ways foreshadowed the global emphasis of his presidency. He and his companion, Hugh J. Cannon, president of the Liberty Stake in Salt Lake City, traveled approximately 60,000 miles (95,000 km) and gained knowledge that helped prepare the Church for further worldwide growth.

Shortly after returning from his yearlong mission, he was called to take his family to England to preside over the European Mission. In fulfilling this calling, “every member a missionary” became his refrain. He taught: “[Every member] has the responsibility of bringing somebody: a mother, a father, a neighbor, a fellow worker, an associate, somebody in touch with the messengers of the gospel. . . . And personal contact is what will influence those investigators. . . . It’s what you are, not what you pretend to be that will bring people to investigate.”¹⁵



In 1934 he was called to serve in the First Presidency as a counselor to President Heber J. Grant. In 1945 he was called as a counselor to President George Albert Smith. During these years he gained valuable experience and carried a substantial administrative and ecclesiastical load.

In the spring of 1951 President and Sister McKay left Salt Lake City for a much needed vacation. However, on their first night away, President McKay awoke with a distinct impression that they should return to Church headquarters, which they did the next morning. Within a few weeks President Smith suffered a stroke and passed away.¹⁶

Prophet and President of a Worldwide Church

In April 1951, having already served in the First Presidency for 17 years, David O. McKay became the ninth President of the Church. At that time the Church had just over one million members and eight operating temples (all in the United States, Hawaii, and Canada).

President McKay was determined to see the Church continue to grow around the world. Missionary work was key to this effort. In 1952 the First Presidency introduced the first official proselyting outline for full-time missionaries. In 1961

President McKay convened the first worldwide seminar for all mission presidents, who were taught the importance of example and fellowshiping in missionary work. He emphasized the concept of “every member a missionary.”

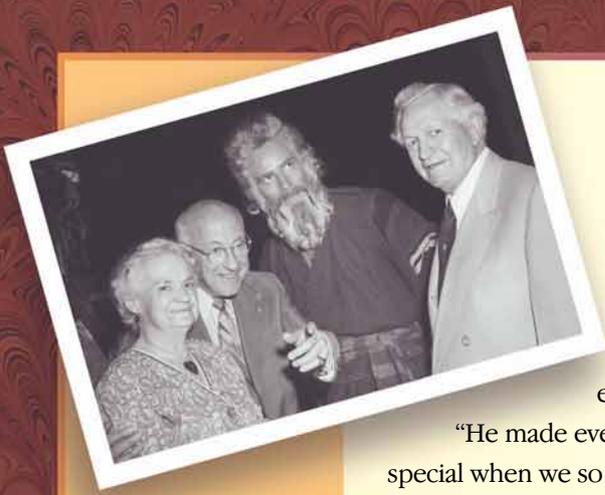
President McKay felt that personally strengthening the Saints around the world was another key to Church growth. In a conference address as President of the Church, he declared: “God bless the Church. It is worldwide. Its influence should be felt by all nations. May his spirit influence men everywhere and incline their hearts toward good will and peace.”¹⁷ Between 1952 and 1963, he visited the Saints in Europe several times and made trips to South Africa, South America, and the South Pacific.

He also desired to make the blessings of the temple available to more members of the Church. During his service as President, he dedicated temples in Bern, Switzerland; Los Angeles, California; Hamilton, New Zealand; London, England; and Oakland, California. He wrote, “I want to bring the temple to the people,” firmly believing that “one of the distinguishing features of the restored Church of Jesus Christ is the eternal nature of its ordinances and ceremonies.”¹⁸

Around the world President McKay was regarded as an important spiritual leader. During a visit with the Queen of the Netherlands in 1952, President and Sister McKay were invited to have tea. When the McKays declined for religious reasons, the queen asked, “Do you mean to tell me you won’t have a little drink of tea, even with the Queen of the Netherlands?” President McKay responded, “Would [you] ask the leader of a million, three hundred thousand people to do something that he teaches his people not to do?” She replied, “You are a great man, President McKay. I wouldn’t ask you to do that.”¹⁹

Church members loved to hear President McKay speak and simply to be in his presence. Despite his many duties, he often remained after meetings until he had shaken each person’s hand. One member who attended the dedication of the London England Temple recalled “standing





Above: President and Sister McKay on the set of the motion picture *The Ten Commandments* with filmmaker Cecil B. DeMille and actor Charlton Heston (in costume as Moses), 1955. Below right: President McKay in his later years. Hugh B. Brown said of him, "President McKay has lived as nearly as it is humanly possible for a man to live a Christ-like life."

in endless lines" to greet the prophet but eventually having her turn.

"He made every single one of us feel special when we so easily could have been just one of hundreds," she said.²⁰

President McKay's health began to decline in the 1960s, and additional counselors were called to the First Presidency to help carry forth the work. However, he continued to strengthen members with his conference talks, sometimes delivered in person and sometimes read by one of his sons.

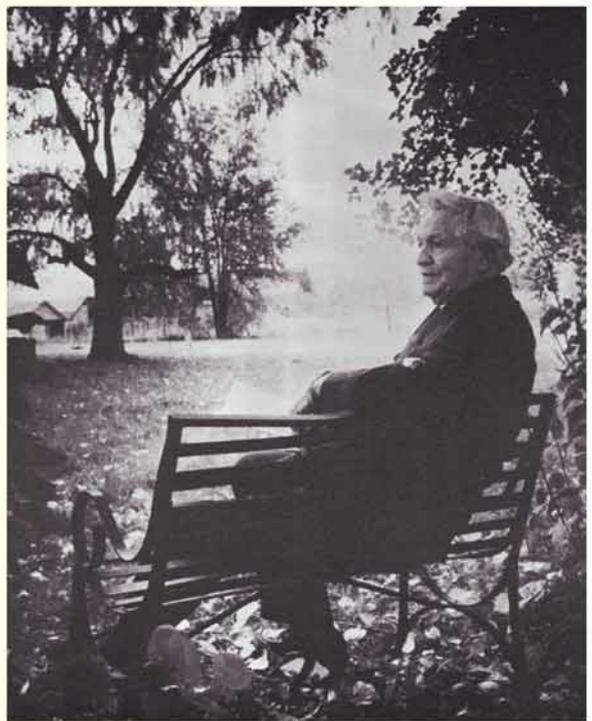
At the time of his death in January 1970, Church membership had reached almost three million. Of this man who had taught so tirelessly of family, self-mastery, character, missionary work, and faith in Jesus Christ, President Joseph Fielding Smith, who succeeded President McKay as Church President, said: "He was a man of great spiritual strength, a natural-born leader of men, and a man beloved by his people and honored by the world. For all time to come men shall rise up and call his name blessed."²¹

President Hugh B. Brown, who served as First Counselor to President McKay, summed up his life: "President McKay has lived as nearly as it is humanly possible for a man to live a Christ-like life. He found that the answer to the yearning of the human heart for fullness lies in living outside oneself by love. He proved the truth of Christ's paradoxical saying, 'He that will lose his life for My sake shall find it.' He was a true servant of the Lord. He lived as he taught."²² ■

Wade Murdock is a member of the South Jordan Third Ward, South Jordan Utah Stake.

NOTES

1. Quoted in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* (2003), 49.
2. Quoted in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church*, xiv.
3. Jeanette McKay Morrell, quoted in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church*, xiv.
4. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church*, 29.
5. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church*, xv.
6. Llewelyn R. McKay, *Home Memories of President David O. McKay* (1956), 4.
7. David Lawrence McKay, *My Father, David O. McKay* (1989), 18, 24.
8. See *My Father, David O. McKay*, 29.
9. See *My Father, David O. McKay*, 36.
10. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church*, xix–xx.
11. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church*, 149.
12. Quoted in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church*, 143.
13. Quoted in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church*, 153.
14. In Conference Report, Oct. 1906, 112.
15. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church*, 53.
16. See Francis M. Gibbons, *David O. McKay: Apostle to the World, Prophet of God* (1986), 272–73.
17. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church*, xxxi.
18. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church*, 126.
19. Quoted in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church*, 103.
20. See *My Father, David O. McKay*, 259–60.
21. Quoted in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church*, xxviii.
22. "God Makes a Giant among Men," *Church News*, Jan. 24, 1970, 13.





Gratitude

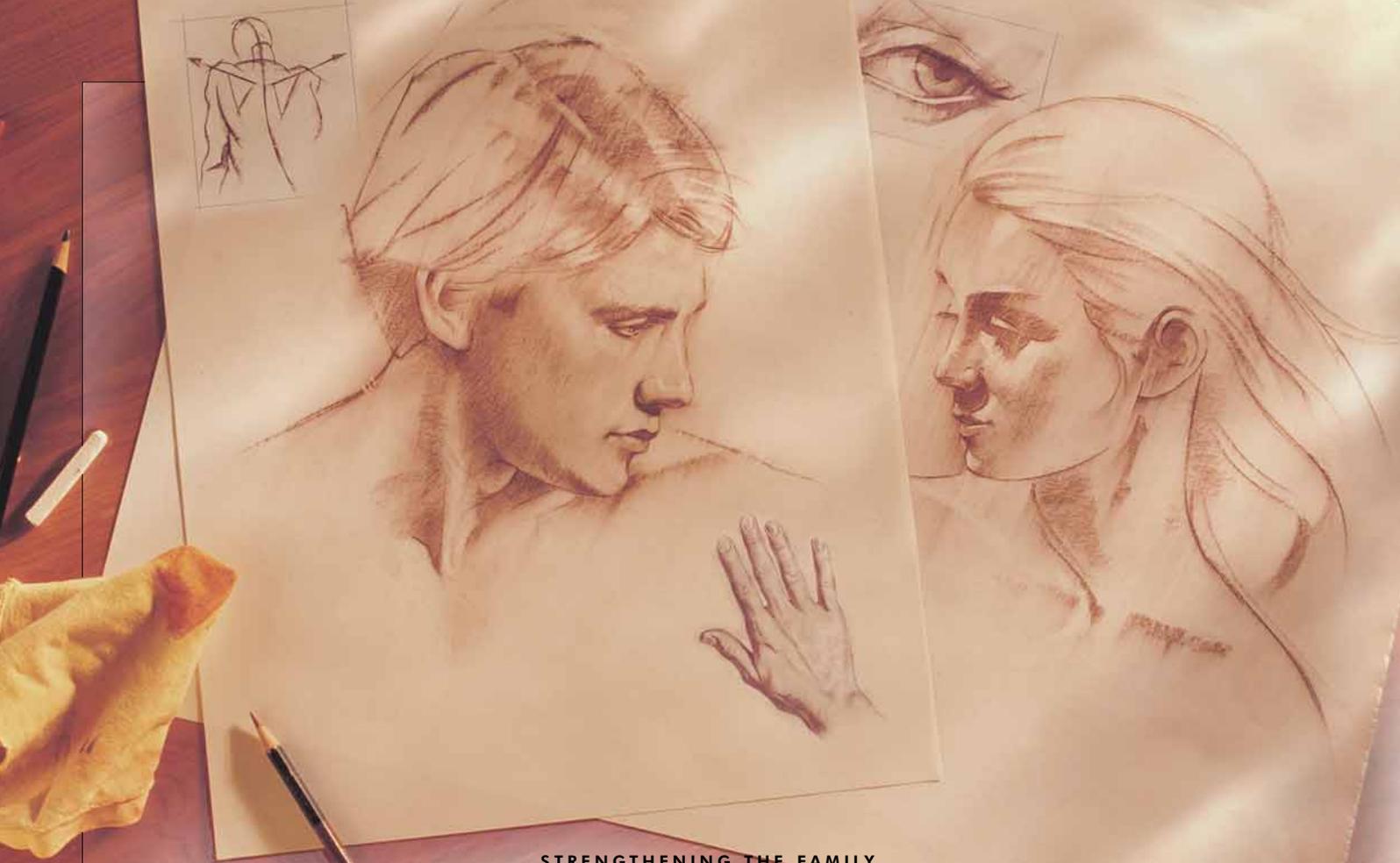
BY S. MICHAEL WILCOX

Expressing gratitude brings us humility. In a world where we have been given so much and might be severely tempted to pride, gratitude stands as a barrier, for one cannot feel pride and gratitude at the same time. I cannot think of a time when I feel closer to our Father in Heaven or more loved by Him than in those precious moments when, overcome with the abundance of His mercy, I enumerate His blessings and thank Him specifically for all I have received.

I recall once standing on the edge of Bryce Canyon in southern Utah, taking in the grandeur and unique beauty of its many pink, white, and orange sentinels of stone, and being overcome with gratitude for the beauties of the Creation. A verse from the Doctrine and Covenants came to

mind: “It pleaseth God that he hath given all these things unto man” (D&C 59:20). So much of His creation was designed to “please the eye and to gladden the heart . . . and to enliven the soul” (D&C 59:18–19). As I looked over that spectacular canyon, the thought struck me, “How great must be our Father in Heaven to provide such wonders for us to enjoy.” I felt my heart turn from gratitude for things created to adoration of the Creator. The sweetness of that moment returns each time we sing “How Great Thou Art” (*Hymns*, no. 86). This intensification of gratitude—from consideration of things given to adoration of the Giver—comes more frequently as I grow older and experience the wonders of the gospel in the life of my family; these times represent the most peaceful moments of my private devotions. ■

S. Michael Wilcox is a member of the Draper 16th Ward, Draper Utah Stake.



STRENGTHENING THE FAMILY

CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD, MALE AND FEMALE

*A continuing series giving insights for your study and use of
“The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”*

“All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.”¹

In the Beginning

“Man was also in the beginning with God,” the Lord declared. “Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be” (D&C 93:29).

Little has been revealed about the process by which we became spirit children of God,



but we understand that heavenly parents organized spirit bodies for us and that these spirit bodies housed intelligence, or light and truth, which “is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself” (D&C 93:30). Thus, agency, the ability and liberty of intelligent beings to choose between one course and another—with the attendant accountability—is an eternal principle.

Offspring of God

Many religions teach that human beings are children of God, but often their conception of Him precludes any kind of bond resembling a parent-child relationship. The

Prophet Joseph Smith taught of a much simpler and more sensible relationship: “God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit . . . was to make himself visible . . . , you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image and likeness of God, and received instruction from, and walked, talked and conversed with Him, as one man talks and communes with another.”²

We are of God’s family. We are His sons and daughters, created in the image of heavenly parents. “No greater ideal has been revealed,” taught President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “than the supernal truth that we are the children of God, and we differ, by virtue of our creation, from all other living things. (See Moses 6:8–10, 22, 59.) No idea has been more *destructive* of happiness, no philosophy has produced more sorrow, more heartbreak and mischief; no idea has done more to destroy the family than the idea that we are not the offspring of God, only advanced animals, compelled to yield to every carnal urge.”³

Gender Is Eternal and Essential

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught that our creation as male and female children of God “was done spiritually in your premortal existence when you lived in the presence of your Father in Heaven. Your gender existed before you came to earth.”⁴

Gender is part of our eternal identity and is necessary for our eternal progression. President Packer explained: “The plan of happiness requires the righteous union of male and female, man and woman, husband and wife. . . . A body patterned after the image of God was created for Adam, and he was introduced into the Garden. At first, Adam was alone. . . . But alone, he could not fulfill the purposes of his creation.



We are of God’s family. We are His sons and daughters, created in the image of heavenly parents.

No other man would do. Neither alone nor with other men could Adam progress. Nor could Eve with another woman. It was so then. It is so today. Eve, an help meet, was created. Marriage was instituted.”⁵

Agency and Same-Gender Attraction

Confusion about gender issues is rampant today. Some men and women experience same-sex attraction—a great trial for those who desire to be obedient to God’s commandments. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has addressed this issue: “[Satan] seeks to undermine the principle of individual accountability, to persuade us to misuse our sacred powers of procreation, to discourage marriage and childbearing by worthy men and women, and to confuse what it means to be male or female. . . . Some kinds of feelings seem to be inborn. Others are traceable to mortal experiences. Still other feelings seem to be acquired from a complex interaction of ‘nature and nurture.’ All of us have some feelings we did not choose, but the gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us that we still have the power to resist and reform our feelings (as needed) and to assure that they do not lead us to entertain inappropriate thoughts or to engage in sinful behavior.”⁶

The trials of mortality are not easy, nor are they intended to be. But whatever our struggles, we can call upon divine doctrine, the power of the Atonement, and the Holy Spirit for help and comfort.

We can remember that we are God’s sons and daughters, that He created us in His image, and that His plan prepares us for life eternal. If we obey His commandments, He will not withhold from us any of the blessings He has promised. ■

NOTES

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. *History of the Church*, 6:305.
3. “Our Moral Environment,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 67.
4. “The Joy of Living the Great Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 73.
5. “For Time and All Eternity,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 21.
6. “Same-Gender Attraction,” *Liabona*, Mar. 1996, 15, 17; *Ensign*, Oct. 1995, 8–9.

Falling Out of *Love*... and Climbing Back In

The key to fixing my marriage was to learn to see my husband as the Savior saw him.

NAME WITHHELD

By worldly standards falling in love is an easy thing to do. Unfortunately, falling out of love can be easy as well. But falling back into love after falling out is extremely difficult. People don't *fall* back into love; they *climb* back in. This can be a long, difficult journey, but it is extremely rewarding. I know from experience.

"Heavenly Father, I don't know what to do!" I had stormed out of the house after a particularly nasty argument with my husband. It was November and very cold. I left without shoes or a coat, but I was so upset I hardly noticed. Our marriage wasn't physically abusive, but it seemed we fought all the time—or at least whenever he was home, which wasn't very often. He stayed late at work almost every day and seemed to spend the rest of his time at the golf course. I couldn't blame him. Home was just as miserable for him as it was for me. So there I was in the cold, wearing just a thin T-shirt and jeans, pouring out my misery to Heavenly Father. As I prayed I realized I no longer loved my husband. I didn't particularly like him either.

It seemed I had two options. I could leave and get a divorce, or I could stay and be miserable. Neither option

seemed very inviting. If I left, my marriage would fail and I would have to give up my hope for an eternal family. I would force my children to suffer because of my decision, and they would spend their childhood in a home with only one parent.

On the other hand, if I stayed, I would be ignoring the fact that we were failing anyway. I would not have an eternal family, because we certainly weren't heading toward the celestial kingdom. I would be forcing my children to live in a very unhappy home because Mom and Dad didn't like each other and could barely look at one another without taking offense.

"Heavenly Father," I prayed, "neither choice is good. Please tell me what to do."

That's when a new thought entered my mind. The right choice was one I had ignored. I could stay, love Mark (name has been changed), and be happy. That seemed a much better choice. Although I had no idea how I was to accomplish such a thing, the thought of having my happy family back made me feel I could turn around and go home.

During the next few weeks I tried to *fall* back in love with Mark but found only frustration. My best efforts seemed to fail. I tried to be nicer to him. But when I cooked him a fancy dinner I knew he liked, he showed up late. When I did small things for him that I thought showed love, he didn't notice, which upset me even



ILLUSTRATED BY DAVID W. MEIKLE

more. Despite all my efforts, he didn't experience the miraculous transformation I was hoping for. After three weeks I was closer to giving up than ever before.

I returned to Heavenly Father in prayer. I'm ashamed to say it wasn't the most humble of prayers. "It won't work," I informed Him. "Mark's too much of a jerk. I can't love him if he's not willing to help me out a little. I tried and it didn't work.

"Can't You help me?" I asked. "Can't You make him a little nicer? Could You please just fix him?"

Almost at once came the strong impression: "Fix *yourself*."

"I'm not the problem," I thought. I was

sure of that. I started listing all Mark's terrible traits that just couldn't be overlooked and that were, most definitely, the problem.

Again inside my troubled mind I felt, "Fix yourself."

"OK," I prayed more humbly now, "I will but I don't know how. Please guide me. Please tell me what to do."

Each day I prayed, pleading with the Lord to guide me. I knelt in many lengthy prayers, informing Him how important this was, trying to convince Him to help me, but it seemed nothing came.

Insight finally arrived through our Gospel Doctrine teacher. During class we read Moroni 7:47-48: "But charity is the pure love of Christ.

It seemed I had two options. I could leave and get a divorce, or I could stay and be miserable. Neither option seemed very inviting. Then the Lord provided a third choice.

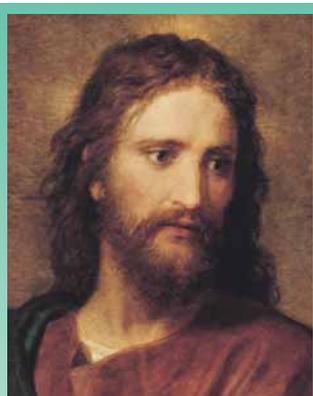
... Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ."

We discussed what charity is. It is love that Jesus Christ has for each of us. I learned that the Savior knows what is good in each of us. He can find something worthy of loving in every person.

The teacher referred us back to the scriptures. "It says in verse 48 that charity is a gift from the Father that is bestowed on you. Charity is not something you can develop on your own. It must be given to you. So there's a neighbor who makes you angry or someone you don't like. What's the problem? The problem is you don't have charity, the pure love of Christ, toward him or her. How do you get it? You need to 'pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart' and ask Him to give you charity toward that person. You need to ask to see that person through the Savior's eyes so you will be able to see him or her as good and lovable."

This was my answer. If I could see Mark from the Savior's perspective, I couldn't help but love him. It seemed such an easy thing to do, much easier than anything I had tried so far. I would just ask for charity, God would give it to me, and that would solve my problem. But I should have known Heavenly Father would require at least a little work from me.

I knelt in prayer that night and asked for charity toward my husband. I asked to feel a portion of the love that Jesus Christ felt for Mark, to see the good things about him that He could see. Then the thought came to me very strongly that I should already know good things about Mark and I should name them. I thought for a long time. I hadn't focused on good things in quite a while. Finally I said, "He looked nice today." I was prompted to say another thing. "He takes out the garbage when I ask." Another. "He works



If I could see Mark from the Savior's perspective, I couldn't help but love him. It seemed such an easy thing to do. But I should have known Heavenly Father would require at least a little work from me. People don't fall back into love; they climb back in.

hard." Another. "He's good with the kids." Another. I couldn't think of anything else.

The next night before bed I asked for charity and was again prompted to say good things about Mark. This was hard work. I wasn't used to focusing on the positive. I was used to cataloging all his faults so I could correct them.

I soon realized I would be saying good things about him each night for a while and decided it would be infinitely easier if I paid attention throughout the day. The next day I watched closely and came up with 10 good things about him—a new record! This became my goal: 10 good things before I went to bed. On good days it was easy. On bad days the last three were along the lines of "His hair looked good" or "I liked the jeans he wore." But I did it every night.

After a while I started making myself name 10 positive things each time I had a negative thought. With those odds, I didn't

let myself dwell on Mark's faults very often.

Slowly something wonderful was happening. First, I began to realize that Mark wasn't the big jerk I thought he was. He had many wonderful traits that I had overlooked or forgotten. Second, in the absence of my nagging, Mark started fixing a lot of the bad habits I had hounded him about for so long. As soon as I stopped feeling I had to be responsible for his actions, he started taking the responsibility upon himself. I was enjoying my time with Mark, and there was more of it because he stopped working so many hours.

We had come so far, but there was still one problem: I felt no love for Mark. It just wasn't there. I longed for that feeling of connection, the feeling that we belonged together. I had been praying every day for five months now, asking to feel the love that Christ felt for him. I pleaded with God even harder to give me love for Mark. "I am happy with our progress," I told Him. "Our family is much stronger than

ever before. If this is the best I can have, I will be satisfied. But if I could just love Mark, even a little, that would be the most cherished blessing I could receive.”

I remember vividly the moment that blessing was bestowed. We were playing games at my parents’ house one evening. I looked across the table at Mark, and suddenly, out of the blue, the strongest, most vibrant, most intense love I had ever felt hit me almost like a physical force. My eyes welled up with tears, and I was awed by the strength of my feelings. There, sitting across from me, was my eternal companion, whom I loved more than words could express. His

infinite worth was so brilliant I couldn’t believe I had ever been able to overlook it. I felt to some degree what the Savior felt for *my* Mark, and it was beautiful.

It has been several years since that special evening, and the memory still brings tears to my eyes. It’s frightening to think I almost gave up, almost missed this experience.

My marriage is very good now—not perfect, but very, very good. I refuse to let my love slip away again. I make a conscious effort each day to nourish the love I have for Mark. And I feel the deepest gratitude to a patient, loving Heavenly Father for helping me fix myself. ■



THE DEACONS QUORUM

The first in a series of articles about priesthood quorums and their purposes. Here members of the Presiding Bishopric share some thoughts about deacons quorums.

Why does the Church organize 12- and 13-year-old young men into deacons quorums?

Bishop H. David Burton,

Presiding Bishop (above center): One

very important reason is the effective use of priesthood keys. Priesthood keys grant authority to those who preside to give direction and bless lives. The president of a quorum uses those keys to bless the lives of quorum members and those who are recipients of the quorum members' service.

Bishop Richard C. Edgley, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric (above left): Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said in the June 2003 worldwide leadership training meeting that a quorum is three things. It's a class, it's a brotherhood, and it's a service organization



(see "Stake Administration," 6; see also Stephen L Richards, in Conference Report, Oct. 1938, 118). Quorums bring young men

together to fulfill those three purposes. I

think much of our leadership emphasis in quorums is on the classroom and not as much on the brotherhood and service aspects. Those other aspects are important.

Bishop Burton: The classroom, while extremely important, is where the "theory" is learned. The "laboratory" where we apply that theory is service to others outside of the classroom. The main emphasis should be on how the young men carry out their duties (see D&C 20:57, 59, 60).

What should be the role of the deacons quorum adviser?

Bishop Keith B. McMullin, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric (above right): One way we could broaden the brotherhood and service aspects of the quorum is to put the quorum president in his proper role. We tend to empower the adviser in a deacons quorum with more authority than we do the quorum president.

Bishop Burton: The adviser needs to develop the ability to be the "shadow leader" and somehow prompt the young men to perform their duties without the adviser becoming the effectual president of the quorum. Too often the quorum is a direct reflection of the current adviser.

Bishop McMullin: In my judgment, our deacons quorums are often simply doing what is



expected of them by their advisers. When advisers understand what it means to lift and bless the young men in their priesthood office, we will see greater power. But as long as we view the deacons as youngsters who need to be entertained through some kind of activity incidental to their priesthood, then that is where our young men will tend to remain.

Bishop Edgley: Think of what would happen in a deacons quorum if there were enough chairs in the classroom for every member of the quorum, not just those who regularly attend, and if on the back of each chair was the name of one quorum member. The empty chairs would be very apparent to the quorum presidency. That's one example of what could be done to enliven the quorum presidency and the quorum's sense of the need to reach out to others.

How can adult leaders and advisers help deacons have spiritual experiences when many of a deacon's duties may seem rather routine?

Bishop Edgley: Young people have to be led to spiritual experiences at that age. The experiences are not just going to happen on their own. I remember my father taking me to witness a priesthood blessing of a less-active member. I couldn't participate other than being there and feeling the Spirit, but my dad explained the ordinance and led me to that spiritual experience.

Bishop McMullin: There is nothing routine about passing the sacrament—when one is spiritually enlightened. If a deacon is taught in an inspiring way about the emblems of the bread and water and what they mean to him personally and to every person who presses those emblems to his or her lips, then the sacrament becomes a sacred experience every Sabbath day (see 3 Nephi 18:5–6; D&C 20:77, 79). But typically what I see with our Aaronic Priesthood holders is that they are more worried about which rows they are passing the sacrament to or whom

A quorum is a class, a brotherhood, and a service organization. Quorums bring young men together to fulfill those three purposes.



they should pass to first on the stand. In this way, it can become routine to the point that it has lost its special character. If advisers will teach the administrative details well ahead of time, the details won't become distractions.

What are the biggest challenges deacons face today, and what can a quorum do to help?

Bishop Edgley: The biggest challenge for a deacon is feeling that he belongs, finding himself, feeling that he is important. We start losing young men at deacon age. They go where they feel accepted, and when you look at the drug culture, for example, it always accepts them. We've got to have them feel accepted in the right environment, with the right friends—and that's in the quorum. They need to feel that they belong, that they're safe, that they're important. That is the brotherhood side of the quorum.

Bishop Burton: We've got to keep in mind that the Aaronic Priesthood is a preparatory priesthood in very real terms. Too often it becomes an end in itself. If our advisers and bishops will remember that this is the preparation for life and for the Melchizedek Priesthood, perhaps we could focus on preparing young men for the saving ordinances of the higher priesthood. ■



BECOMING A DEACON



BY LAURY LIVSEY

George Bond was so excited to receive the Aaronic Priesthood that he counted down the days until he turned 12. “I was really excited to become a deacon so I could pass the sacrament,” George says.

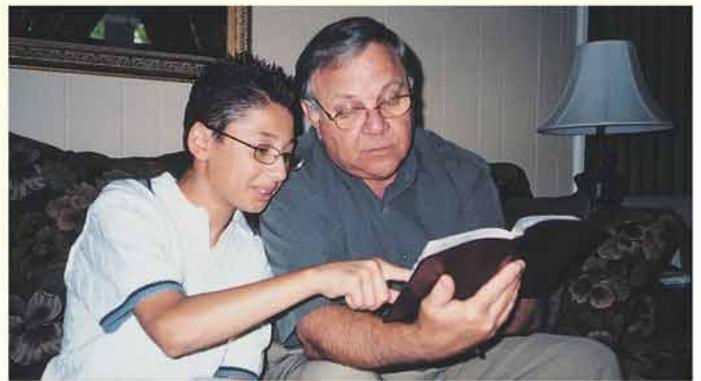
At last the Sunday arrived. He awoke early and got ready for the 9:00 a.m. sacrament meeting of the Arlington Ward, Jacksonville Florida East Stake.

“George was ready at 8:00. He had his white shirt and tie on. He was set to go well before any of us were,” his dad, Bill, remembers. “At sacrament meeting that day, I didn’t hold the tears back when I saw him up there passing the sacrament for the first time. When I thought that he was a part of our family and now also a holder of the priesthood, it was wonderful.” George, who is from Russia, was adopted by the Bonds on April 29, 2002.

Because Brother Bond joined the Church as an adult in 1991, he is watching his son have experiences as a young man that Brother Bond never experienced. “I wish I had grown up in the Church,” Brother Bond says. “I wish I could have grown up with the knowledge that George is getting now as an Aaronic Priesthood holder. Many times I’ve wished that.”

“Bill has really helped George understand certain things, such as the way he needs to dress when he goes to church,” says George’s mom, Fran. “I’ve noticed in the time that George has been in our family how much he is drawn to follow in his dad’s footsteps. He really wants to be like his dad.”

George, the first counselor in his ward’s deacons



quorum presidency, continues to grow in both the gospel and the priesthood. He took the initiative to find out exactly what fast offerings are and what the donations are used for. “I was reading in a book about fast offerings,” he says. “That’s how I know why people donate the money and why I collect fast offerings each month.”

“It’s been a learning experience for him, but I’m impressed by how he pays such close attention to what has to be done,” Brother Bond adds. “We’re very fortunate to have him as a son.” ■

Laury Livsey is a member of the Mandarin First Ward, Jacksonville Florida East Stake.





THE LESSON
I REMEMBER
BEST!

The Ensign received an unusually large number of responses to a request for articles in August 2003. Following are only a few of the accounts of lessons or gospel discussions that blessed lives. Perhaps these experiences can help you in your responsibilities as a gospel teacher.

Letting the Holy Ghost Teach

I had spent several weeks planning a lesson about the

Holy Ghost for my Laurel class. I wanted the girls to learn more about the Spirit and what the Holy Ghost means to us as members of the Church. I was prepared with quotations, scriptures, and even some cute handouts. I was very excited and very prepared to give my lesson.

That Sunday morning, opening exercises were chaotic and some of the

girls were irreverent. I was patiently dealing with the disorderly conduct until one of my Laurels hurled an open bag of candy across the room and sent pieces flying everywhere. That's when I blew a fuse. Needless to say, the room quickly filled with a spirit of contention. When we finally separated for classes, I was still angry, but I was determined to proceed with my lesson—after all, I *was* prepared and I *knew* the lesson material.

As I began, nothing that came out of my mouth made sense. I stumbled over words and couldn't write simple phrases on the chalkboard. After a few minutes of useless attempts, I stopped. It was hopeless. Distraught and miserable, I turned around and faced the chalkboard. What was I going to do? I said a quick prayer, then turned around and looked at the girls. "I'm sorry," I said. "I am not able to go on with the lesson."

The room was very quiet. As I stood there, not knowing what we were going to do for the next 30 minutes, a calming thought crossed my mind. "Have someone say a prayer." Desperately, I asked for a volunteer. One of the young women offered to pray, and then the most amazing thing happened. The very moment she opened her mouth to pray, the Spirit entered the room. Immediately! When she finished, I felt prompted to bear my testimony.

After I finished, I sat down. I wondered how the girls would learn about the Holy Ghost. Then, one by one, every Laurel stood and bore witness of the Holy Ghost and the

incredible presence we were feeling.

This was the most important lesson I have ever learned as a teacher or a student. *It is the Spirit that teaches.*

Darla F. Jones, Maple Hills Ward, Tooele Utah East Stake

As my roommate and I taught the lesson, many seemed to feel the Spirit. But the lesson's impact did not end there.

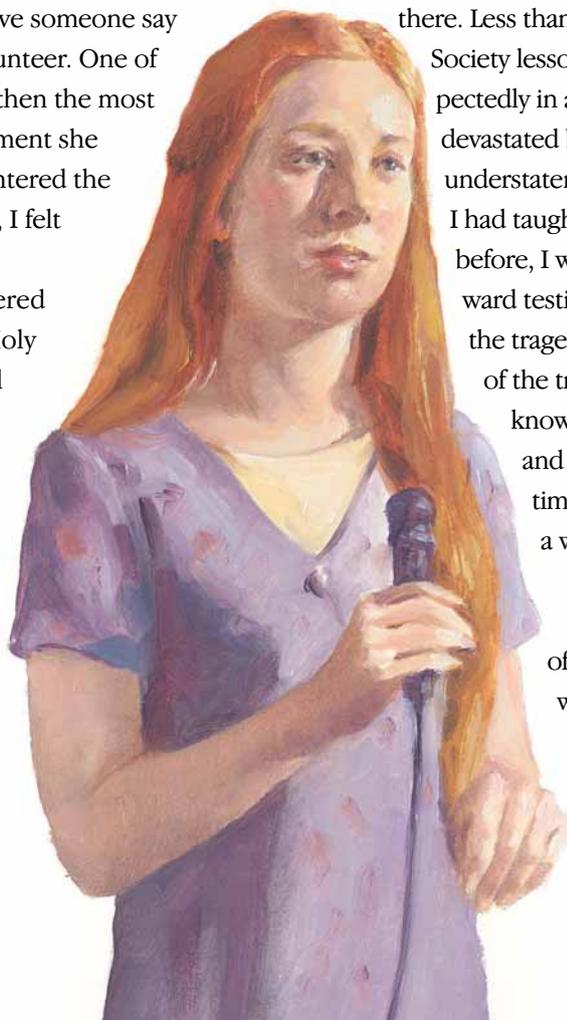
The "Irrelevant" Lesson

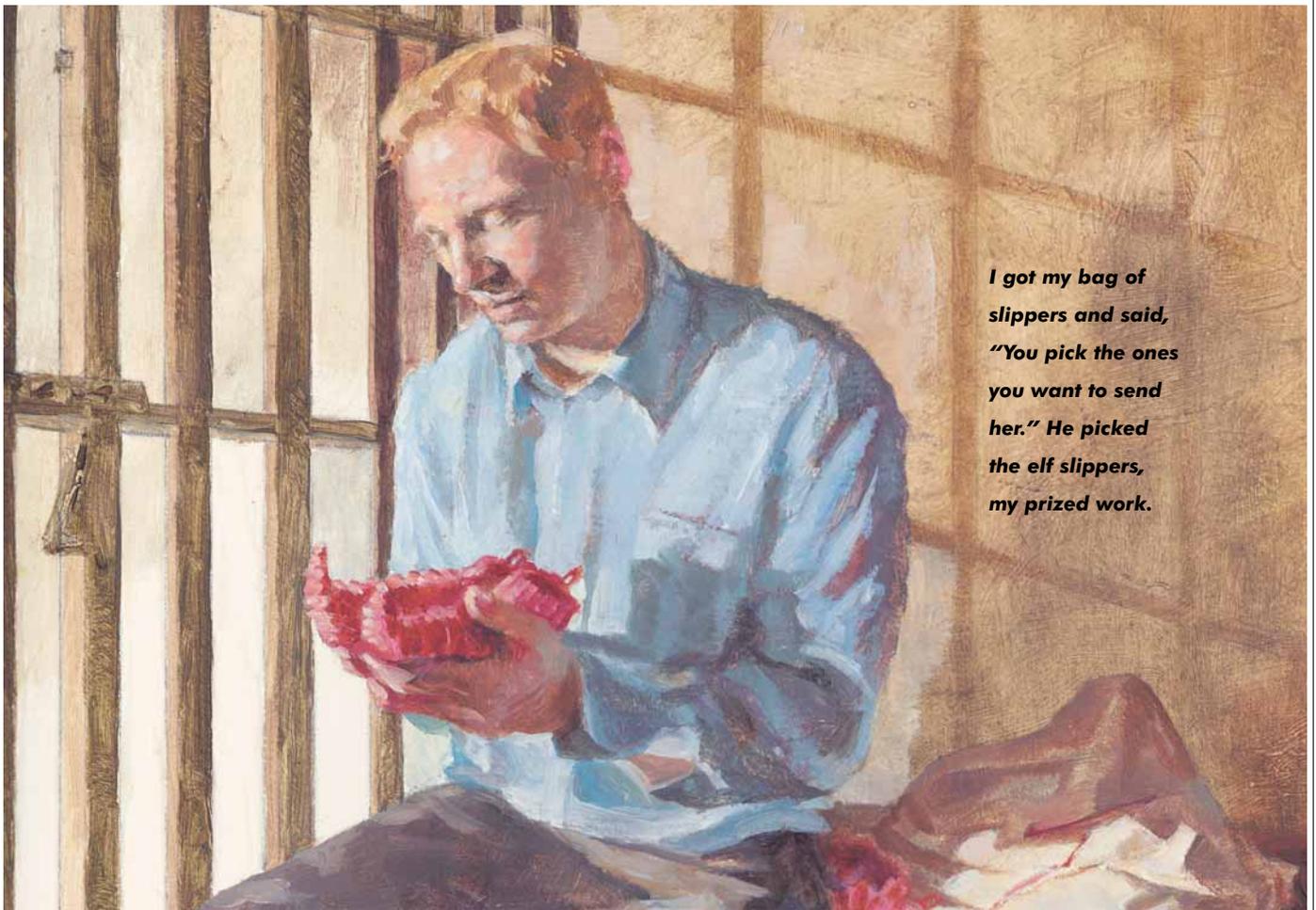
I was a student at Brigham Young University, and my roommate and I had been asked to teach a lesson to the Relief Society sisters in our student ward. We agreed to participate, but I had to hold back my groans when I saw the topic: understanding death. It seemed strange to discuss a topic that appeared to have no relevance to young women with little life experience—college students living youthful and vital lives. It also seemed a daunting challenge to prepare a lesson on a subject I had such little experience with. But I prepared intensely for my part of the lesson. Through my preparation and prayers I was blessed with a deeper understanding of death. My testimony increased as I gained a new perspective on mortality and eternity.

My roommate and I taught the lesson, and many in our class seemed to feel the Spirit as we discussed a topic of eternal significance. But the lesson's impact did not end there. Less than two weeks after that Relief Society lesson, my dad was killed unexpectedly in an airplane crash. To say I was devastated by that event would be an understatement. But because of the truths I had taught in Relief Society two weeks before, I was able to stand in my home ward testimony meeting two days after the tragedy and express my testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel, my knowledge of the plan of salvation, and my gratitude for the limited time I had in mortality with such a wonderful father.

This experience reaffirmed to me that the Lord knows each of us individually and blesses us with the things we need if we are to grow and develop according to His design.

Andrea C. Merriman, Saddle Rock Ward, Arapahoe Colorado Stake





I got my bag of slippers and said, "You pick the ones you want to send her." He picked the elf slippers, my prized work.

Give, Give, Give

My grandmother taught me the lesson I remember best. I had been selfish, and she took me into the kitchen and said, "I want to read you something." She then took her journal from the shelf and opened it to a poem. I cannot remember a single word of that poem now, but I remember looking up at her and saying, "What does it mean, Grandma?"

"I'll tell you what it means," she answered. The poem could sum up your experiences here on this earth, she explained: "Give, give, give, and soon you will have everything. But take, take, take, and soon you'll have nothing."

My heart leaped within me, and I knew that what she said was true. But I chose to ignore her wisdom. And I now write these words from the Utah State Prison.

I'll tell you something else. I've never felt this happy before, because since remembering her lesson I've been giving. Not long ago one of my friends here in prison told me his daughter would soon have a birthday and he didn't have anything to send her. I was crocheting slippers at the time. I got my bag of slippers and said, "You pick the ones you want to send her." He was delighted and picked the elf slippers,

my most prized work. I hesitated, then gave them to him.

Two weeks later he came to talk to me after a phone call. He was in tears. His wife had told him that his daughter had jumped up and down and screamed: "Daddy sent me elf shoes! Daddy sent me elf shoes!" He was so grateful that he was able to give her that gift of love.

What more can I say? My grandmother was right. Give, give, give, and soon you'll have everything. But I didn't understand her then. I had thought she was only talking about things!

Name Withheld

I Was Not Lost

When I was four years old, my mother, who had recently remarried, moved me from the security of my grandma's home to a new town, with a new daddy, new ward, and new life. I was confused and sad after leaving everything that was familiar.

At this time, Primary was held on a weekday afternoon, and when that first Primary day came, I just couldn't face any more newness. I begged my mother to let me stay home "just this once." Uncharacteristically, she agreed.

Instead of joining my class at Primary, I stayed home near the warm fire, snuggled under a blanket.

Just before dinnertime there was a knock at the door. My Primary teacher, a stranger to me, was standing on the steps, smiling at me. She asked if she could come in and visit with me and my mother for a few minutes. We sat on our couch while she gave me a minilesson. She brought a tiny loaf of bread made from colorful Indian corn for me to nibble while she talked.

I don't remember what the lesson was about—probably something about pioneers. What I do remember was feeling that I was an important member of her class, missed when I wasn't there. I no longer felt like an outcast in a strange world. My Primary teacher helped me know that I was loved by her and, even more important, by my Heavenly Father. I was not lost to Him just because I had moved. I was known by name and personality.

That was an important lesson to learn at an early age. Since then, I've moved from one end of the country to another and lived in more than 10 wards as an adult. Never again have I been tempted to "drop out of sight." I know, wherever I live, I can find a strong, loving support system by going to church and participating fully in my new ward.

Sandra Rush, Crest Haven Ward, Rexburg Idaho East Stake

He was able to help the trapped raccoon only because he had been feeding the raccoons.

TEACHING WITH POWER



"It is our privilege to have the Holy Ghost, a member of the Godhead, as our constant companion, to edify and inspire us in our preparation as teachers. We should prepare ourselves through obedience to God's commandments, that our confidence will wax strong when we call upon the Lord, that His Spirit might magnify us as we teach. When we have the Spirit to direct us, we are capable of teaching with great power."

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Teach Them the Word of God with All Diligence," Ensign, May 1999, 8.

Feeding the Raccoons

I was a new member of the Church, the only member in my family. I had been a widow for several years, struggling to balance the demands of job and home. My teenage daughter had been through a very difficult time in her life. She had recently moved out of our home and was staying with friends. In my frustration I never missed an opportunity to tell her of all the changes I felt she needed to make in her behavior.

Although I was reluctant to give up a Saturday of catch-up-at-home time, I agreed to attend a tri-stake singles conference with a sister from my ward. One of the workshops was about parables in life. The instructor caught our attention immediately when he walked into the classroom carrying an old, rusty animal trap.

He told of a year when his family had lived in the mountains and of the raccoons they had fed and befriended there. One day a raccoon had come dragging a trap in which one of its feet was painfully caught. Our instructor told us he

was eventually able to get close enough to the raccoon to get hold of the trap and free the





The teacher asked us how we knew we had chosen to follow Heavenly Father in the premortal existence. No one answered.

animal. He then asked what parallels we could draw to life. Several class members commented that, like the unfortunate raccoon, people can become trapped in sin. Finally, one sister observed that the instructor was able to help only because he had been feeding the raccoons. In that moment it was as if a light had been turned on for me. I understood that I could be of help to my daughter only if I consistently gave her the kind of love and compassion the Savior would give.

The brother who taught the workshop and the sister who made the inspired comment never knew how their efforts helped change lives, but, figuratively speaking, I have been feeding the raccoons ever since, doing my best to respond with love to all those around me. I have seen the great difference it can make.

Faith Smith, Cottage Grove Second Ward, Eugene Oregon Stake

Because You Are Here on Earth

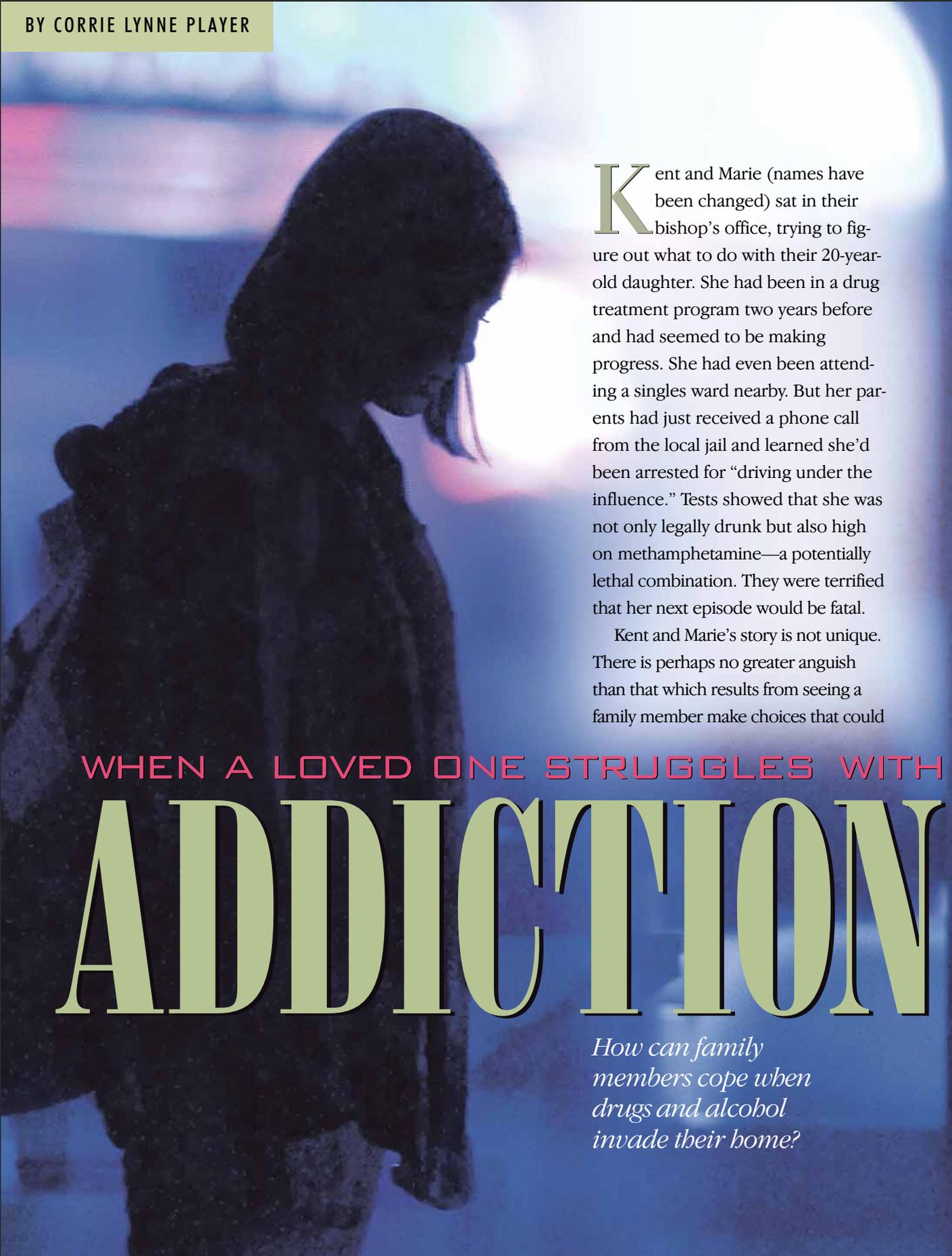
When I was a child, I walked to the meetinghouse with my friends after school one day a week for Primary. Since my father and mother were not active, this was the only affiliation I had with the Church. I remember well one

sunny afternoon. The lesson was on the premortal existence. One teacher asked us, “How do you know you chose to follow your Father in Heaven?” Not receiving a response, she answered, “Because you are here on earth.” She then went on to explain about our first estate, the war in heaven, receiving a body, the blessings of earth life, and our obedience to God.

I knew what she said was true. The Holy Ghost testified to the divinity of this truth, and I was so grateful I had made the right choice in the premortal life. This knowledge sustained me through many trials and was the beginning of my testimony.

I look back with gratitude and recognize the preparation of my teacher, the presence of the Holy Ghost, and the love of Heavenly Father for an impressionable young girl. I have received answers to many questions in many lessons, but none so profoundly given and none that have had such an impact. I do not remember my teacher’s name, but I remember her message. She was truly an instrument in God’s hand. ■

Tina Riddle, Cedar Fifth Ward, Cedar City Utah Stake



Kent and Marie (names have been changed) sat in their bishop's office, trying to figure out what to do with their 20-year-old daughter. She had been in a drug treatment program two years before and had seemed to be making progress. She had even been attending a singles ward nearby. But her parents had just received a phone call from the local jail and learned she'd been arrested for "driving under the influence." Tests showed that she was not only legally drunk but also high on methamphetamine—a potentially lethal combination. They were terrified that her next episode would be fatal.

Kent and Marie's story is not unique. There is perhaps no greater anguish than that which results from seeing a family member make choices that could

WHEN A LOVED ONE STRUGGLES WITH

ADDICTION

How can family members cope when drugs and alcohol invade their home?

result in alienation from God and a descent into darkness.

When a family member is addicted to alcohol or drugs, the whole family must deal with the situation. Douglas LeCheminant, program specialist for LDS Family Services, has four suggestions for family members trying to help their loved ones without losing their own spiritual moorings: allow consequences to occur, turn to the Church, extend love, and rely on the Lord.

Allow Consequences to Occur

According to Brian Whipple, a senior therapist for the Central Utah Counseling Center, family members and friends often mistakenly think that if they love someone who is addicted to drugs, they should rescue that individual from the consequences of the addiction. Their behavior “lets the addict continue to use,” says Brother Whipple. For example, a family member might make excuses for the loved one’s behavior, assume his or her responsibilities, even bail the loved one out of jail. But, says Brother Whipple, “The secret is to love the person without condoning the addiction.”

One recovering alcoholic said his wife did not try to lessen the effects of his addictive behavior: “When I was too hung over to go to work, she didn’t call in sick for me. She let me face my boss’s anger and figure out how to keep my job. She’d leave the house and go to a hotel or to her cousin’s, and she didn’t come back until I’d cleaned up my messes myself.” He credits her actions with motivating him to get treatment for his problem.¹

Another man described how his wife responded to his alcoholism: “She never told me I couldn’t drink, but she also never lessened the consequences when I did. She never poured out my alcohol. She never yelled at me. She never came to my rescue. All of her actions and words faithfully affirmed that *she believed* I was going to get well.” With his wife’s support, this man eventually was able to stop his addictive behavior.²

Turn to the Church

Family members may feel embarrassed or ashamed that their loved one is struggling with an addiction, and they may think they should handle the problem privately. However, outside help may be needed. A family should use any appropriate resources that are available to them, such as professional resources where necessary. Their bishop or branch president can also help. He can give inspired counsel about spiritual matters and can refer them to Church resources, including LDS Family Services, when needed.

LDS Family Services sponsors an addiction recovery program in many locations throughout the United States and Canada, with plans for im-

plementation in other areas. In places where LDS Family Services does not operate, bishops can refer members to counselors or programs with values that are supportive of LDS principles and standards.

Extend Love

Family members will find that love is more effective than shame or control in motivating



Love is more effective than shame or control in motivating addicts to change. But love does not mean acceptance of sinful behavior.

addicts to change, says Brother LeCheminant. If addicts feel shame—in other words, if they feel that they are inherently bad or unworthy because of their addiction—they may turn to alcohol or drugs to help dull the pain associated with that shame. Christlike love, on the other hand, can give an addict hope and can help change the most desperate situation. But love doesn't mean acceptance of sinful behavior.

A father whose son finally repented, learned how to stop his addictive behavior, and came back into full Church fellowship after 15 years said: "For a long time I didn't even know



Through regular scripture study, parents and other family members can gain spiritual strength to help them face their challenges.

where [my son] was. When he would finally get in touch with us, I had to bite my tongue to keep from yelling at him. But one thing I always did was to tell him I loved him and that I wanted him with me forever. When the light finally came on and he invited us to his rebaptism, I tasted just a little of what

I believe Heavenly Father must feel for us."

A mother who grieved for years about her daughter's addictions encouraged other parents to "never, never give up." She said: "I prayed every day for [my daughter]. I prayed for a mighty miracle like Alma's or Paul's. But nothing really happened for a long time—I

THE PROCESS OF ADDICTION

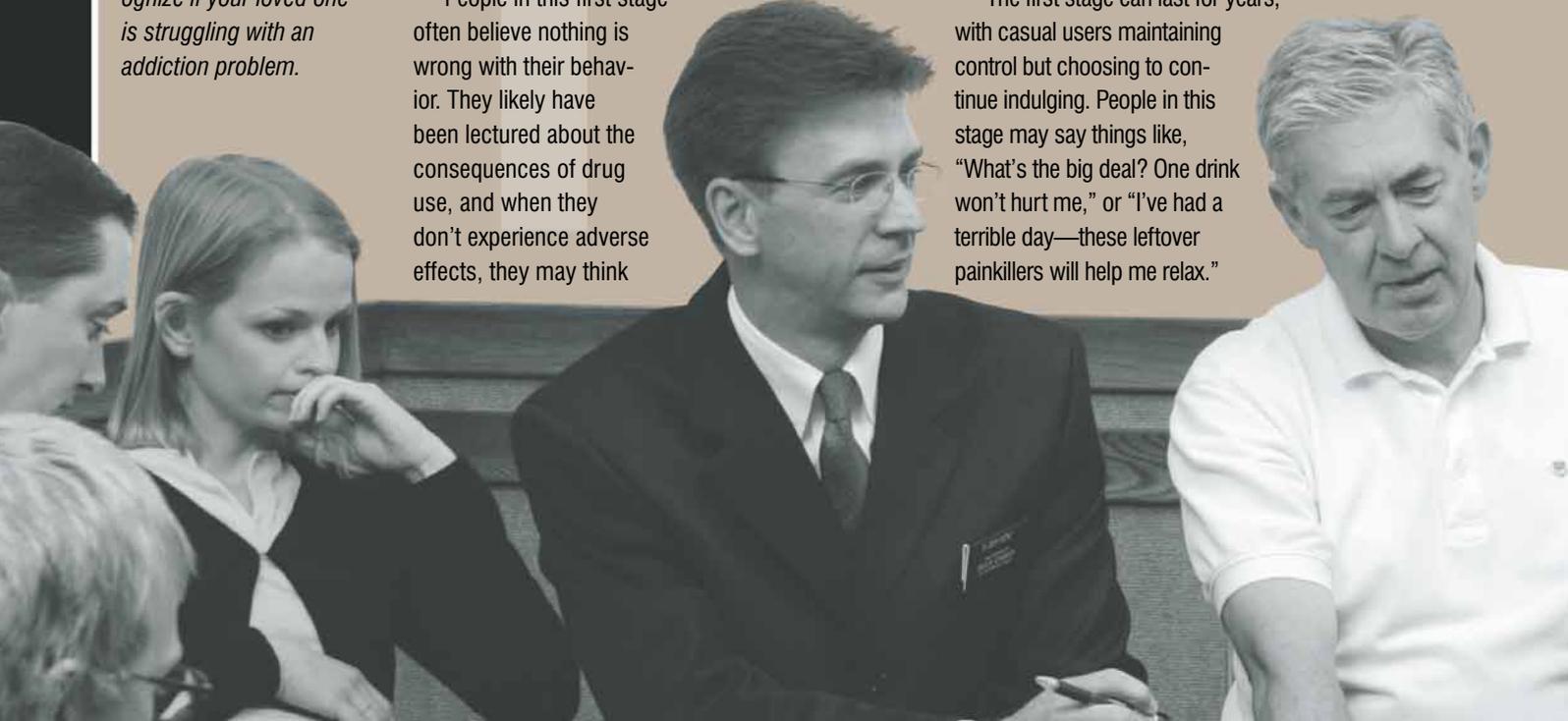
Therapists have identified three stages of addiction. Understanding these stages can help you recognize if your loved one is struggling with an addiction problem.

First stage. This starts when individuals discover that drugs or alcohol bring pleasure or a "high." When the effects of the substance wear off, the users usually return to normal without evidence of harm.

People in this first stage often believe nothing is wrong with their behavior. They likely have been lectured about the consequences of drug use, and when they don't experience adverse effects, they may think

the warnings are exaggerated. They begin to rationalize, and although they may experience guilt from breaking a commandment, the guilt often lessens as the disobedience continues.

The first stage can last for years, with casual users maintaining control but choosing to continue indulging. People in this stage may say things like, "What's the big deal? One drink won't hurt me," or "I've had a terrible day—these leftover painkillers will help me relax."



just felt a calmness, and the knot in my stomach loosened. Maybe the miracle wasn't anything spectacular, but it was a miracle. I always loved her, and I always knew that she'd eventually come back."

Rely on the Lord

The Savior understands the challenges and struggles faced not only by those who find themselves in the nightmare world of addiction but by family members and friends who share that world (see Alma 7:11–12). Through the power of the Atonement, He can help family members bear seemingly unbearable situations,



The Lord perfectly understands the pain caused by a loved one's addiction. Family members can experience His love and healing power through prayer.

such as when a loved one appears to give up and there seems to be nothing the family can do, other than rely on the Lord.

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave the following counsel to those suffering from trials: "No matter what the source of difficulty and no matter

how you begin to obtain relief—through a qualified professional therapist, doctor, priesthood leader, friend, concerned parent, or loved one—no matter how you begin, those solutions will never provide a complete answer. The final healing comes through faith in Jesus Christ and His teachings, with a broken

Second stage. This stage starts when users develop a tolerance for the substance. To experience a high, they need more and more of the drug. As use escalates, guilt typically escalates because they are devoting more time and energy to getting and using their substance. Their behavior changes; they may become irritable, secretive, and dishonest. Their spirituality decreases, and they may go to great lengths to deny they are being disobedient. It is common during this stage for family members and others to suspect a substance abuse problem.

Third stage. The last stage of addiction begins as users experience more pain and are unable to reach the high they were once able to achieve. Worse, they experience discomfort and pain when they don't use the substance. They feel they must have it to function. At this stage they have developed an addiction that cannot be overcome through willpower alone, and they must seek outside help.

(See Hidden Treasures Institute, *Hold On to Hope: Help for LDS Addicts and Their Families*, 3rd ed. [1996], 3–15; Colleen C. Harrison, *He Did Deliver Me from Bondage*, rev. ed. [2003].)

Church resources can provide valuable support to those who are trying to overcome an addiction.

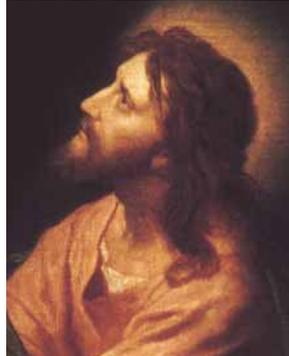


heart and a contrite spirit and obedience to His commandments.”³

Family members can help their addicted loved ones by keeping their own spiritual reservoirs filled. Daily scripture study, consistent attendance at Church meetings, frequent prayer, and reliance upon the Atonement can help give them the strength they need to face their challenges.

Hang on to Hope

When hope seems lost, when the very jaws of hell seem to gape after us (see D&C 122:7), we can be secure in the knowledge that Christ’s love is eternal and everlasting. Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles wrote: “[The Lord] knows our bearing capacities. Though we ourselves may feel pushed to



Through the power of the Atonement, the Lord can help us bear seemingly unbearable situations. We can be secure in the knowledge that His love is eternal and everlasting.

the breaking point, ere long, thanks to Him, these once-daunting challenges become receding milestones.”⁴

We can trust that the Savior is mindful of our struggles: “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows” (Isaiah 53:4). There are no easy solutions to the problem of addiction. But with faith we can endure all of our challenges, knowing that if we will seek the Lord’s guidance, He will stand by us and strengthen us. ■

Corrie Lynne Player is a member of the Cedarview Ward, Cedar City Utah West Stake.

For more information on LDS Family Services as well as links to articles on substance abuse, see the Church Web site www.ldsfamilyservices.org.

NOTES

1. Unless stated otherwise, all quotations are from interviews conducted by the author.
2. See Phil S. [no last name given], *The Perfect Brightness of Hope* (2002), 98.
3. “To Be Healed,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 9.
4. “The Precious Promise,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2004, 45.

Rejoice in the Restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Prayerfully select and read from this message the scriptures and teachings that meet the needs of the sisters you visit. Share your experiences and testimony. Invite those you teach to do the same.

Joseph Smith—History 1:18–19:

“I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right. . . . I was answered that I must join none of them.”

Why Is the Restoration Such a Glorious Event?

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “Following the Crucifixion of Christ an apostasy occurred. Leaders began to ‘teach for doctrines the commandments of men’ [Joseph Smith—History 1:19]. They lost the keys of authority and closed themselves off from the channels of revelation. That lost authority could not just be repossessed. It had to be restored by those who held the keys of authority anciently” (“The Standard of Truth Has Been Erected,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 24).

President Gordon B. Hinckley: “After centuries of darkness and pain and struggle, the time was ripe for the restoration of the gospel. . . . That glorious day dawned in the year 1820, when a boy, earnest and with faith, walked into a grove of trees

and lifted his voice in prayer. . . .

“There came in response a glorious manifestation. God the Eternal Father and the risen Lord Jesus Christ appeared and spoke with him. The curtains which had been closed for much of two millennia were parted to usher in the dispensation of the fulness of times. . . .

“. . . Do you recognize our place in the great drama of human history? This is the focal point of all that has gone before. This is the season of restitution. These are the days of restoration” (“At the Summit of the Ages,” *Liabona*, Jan. 2000, 88–89; *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 73–74).

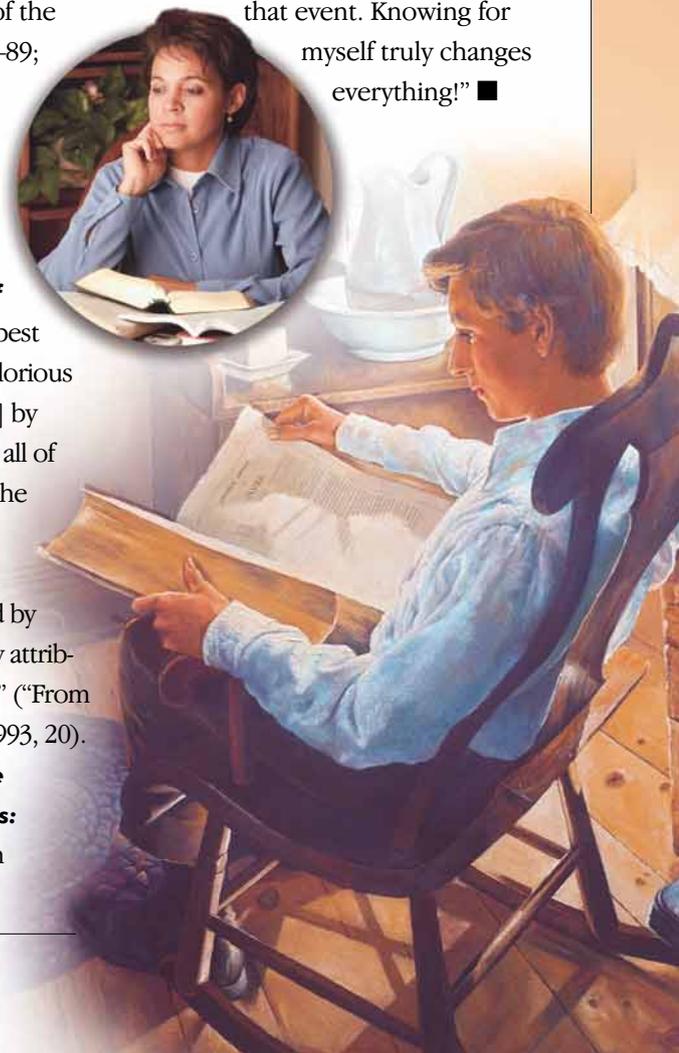
How Can You Rejoice in the Restoration?

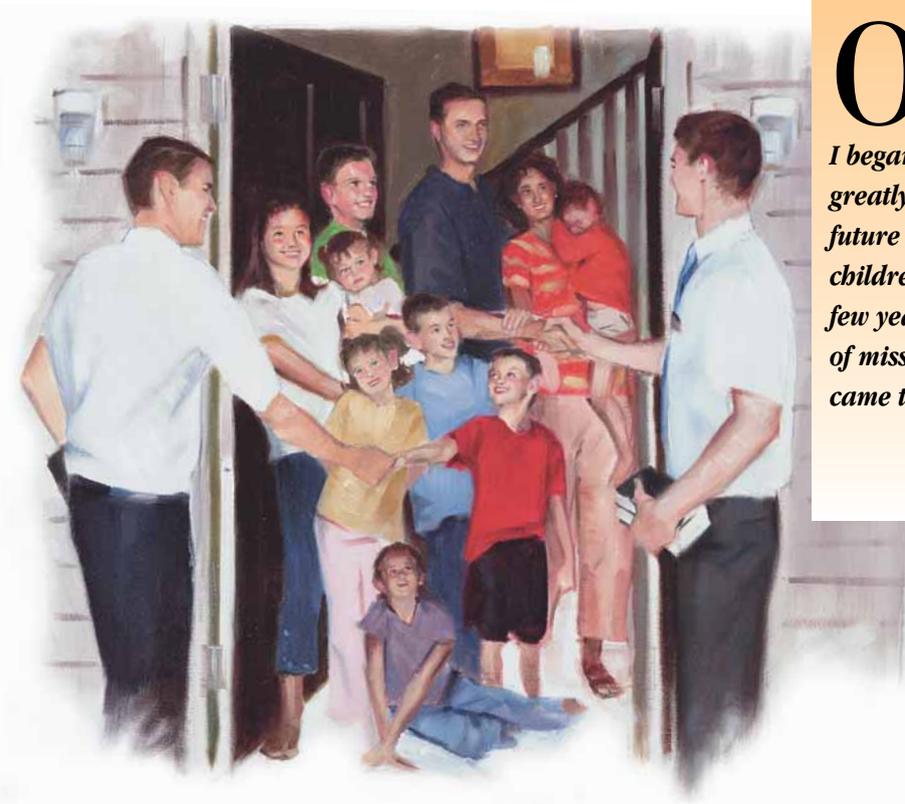
Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “We can best express our gratitude for this glorious fulness [of the restored gospel] by developing a more full love for all of humankind. And why not, for the Restoration tells us who our neighbors really are! Let our gratitude likewise be expressed by striving to become, attribute by attribute, more and more as Jesus is” (“From the Beginning,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 20).

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “Follow the example of Joseph Smith and the pattern of the

Restoration. Turn to the scriptures. Kneel in prayer. Ask in faith. Listen to the Holy Ghost. Learn that your name and needs are known by our Heavenly Father, just as Joseph’s were. Live the gospel with patience and persistence” (“Receiving a Testimony of the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 31).

Bonnie D. Parkin, Relief Society general president: “Few miracles compare with the miracle of the Restoration. In fact, many emanate from the Restoration. I’ve taught discussions with sister missionaries. I’ve heard them tell this simple story of Joseph Smith time and time again. And the Spirit has never failed to bear witness to me of the reality of that event. Knowing for myself truly changes everything!” ■





One day about 22 years ago I began to fear greatly for the future of my children. After a few years, a pair of missionaries came to our home.

lived with their mother), I began to hear the discussions, attend church, and get acquainted with the members and their beliefs. After several months we made the wise decision to join the Church, and 17 years have now gone by.

I understood that I had to make changes in my

life if I wanted to teach my children the right way. For example, I could not teach them to keep the Word of Wisdom and live a chaste life if I was not living these commandments. By striving to live the teachings of the gospel, I was able to change my life and teach my children. I was also able to baptize my three children from my first marriage and get them back from the world. All eight children belong to the Church now. Four have served missions. One was too old to go on a mission, but he served as a stake mission president. Six are married, all in the temple.

At the beginning of 1999, we had a regional conference in southern Florida. After fulfilling an assignment to deliver earphones for the conference translation, I went into a hall where thousands of Church members were seated. I remained standing at the back of the hall, and I was able to observe one of my sons with his baby. I looked in another direction and saw another son with his wife and children.

A wonderful feeling of joy came

I Worried about Their Future

By Adalberto S. Sánchez

I grew up in an environment where many men smoked, drank, and lived unchaste lives. I saw this kind of example in my own family and in most of the men in the vicinity, so I came to believe it was normal. At the early age of 20, I got married. Four years later, after we had three children, we divorced. But I later met a wonderful woman, who not only accepted me with three children but gave us five more. We have been married for more than 30 years.

One day about 22 years ago I began to fear greatly for the future of my eight children. I didn't want them to go through the same dangerous

situations I had, and I was afraid they would be lost in the wickedness of the world. I didn't know what to do to help them, but I became very receptive to the things of God. Whenever someone knocked on the door with a religious message, I opened my door and my heart. I listened attentively, accepted their pamphlets, and went with them to their houses of worship. Still, I wasn't at peace; I couldn't find what I was looking for.

A few years passed, and a pair of young missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints came to our home. With my wife and our five children (the other three

over me at that moment, and I could not keep tears from my eyes. I remembered those terrible days when I was so worried about my children's future. Now I was weeping for joy because I no longer had those worries.

The gospel and true Church of Jesus Christ made it possible for us to find the right way to help our children and to have joy and happiness. Christ is the light guiding our lives. His teachings persuade us to do good. ■

Adalberto S. Sánchez is a member of the Miami Lakes (Spanish) Ward, Hiialeah Gardens Florida Stake.

A Small Thing

By Shannon Vanderspool Watson

I joined the Church when I was in high school and was the only member in my family. I had a difficult time making the transition to life in the Church, finding many of the

activities and callings unfamiliar. So when I was asked to be a visiting teacher for the first time during my second year in college, I struggled to understand exactly what that meant. My companion was a faithful young mother, Sister Bray (names have been changed), and it was easy for me to let her set the appointments, direct our visits, and care for our sisters. One sister, in particular, proved more challenging than the rest. Cassie was less active, living with her boyfriend, and expecting their first child. She always seemed sad or troubled.

One Sunday the branch presidency asked us to make sure we invited everyone on our visiting teaching routes to a missionary fireside that evening. “No problem,” I thought. “Sister Bray will call Cassie.” I scanned the chapel. Sister Bray was out of town that Sunday and would not be making any calls.

Finally the Spirit was impossible to ignore, and I grudgingly made the call—only to get an answering machine.

When I reached my apartment after church, I felt the tugging of the Spirit: “Call Cassie.” I stoutly refused. Surely she wouldn't come even if I did call. A second time the Spirit prompted strongly: “Call Cassie!” Again I refused. Finally the Spirit was impossible to ignore, and I grudgingly made the call—only to reach Cassie's answering machine. “See,” I thought, “I knew it wouldn't do any good.” I left a message telling Cassie and her boyfriend, Will, that there would be a fireside that evening and we'd love to see them there.

At the fireside I noticed that although many were in attendance, Cassie and Will were not among them. “I knew they wouldn't come,” I thought, somewhat smugly. With 10 minutes left in the fireside, I was quite surprised to see Cassie and Will enter the chapel. The missionaries stood up quietly and left with them. “How about that!” I said to myself.

Christmas break came soon after that, and I attended my home ward for the holidays. A month later when I returned to my college ward, one of the members excitedly approached me and asked if I would be at the baptism that evening. “Of course,” I said, “but who is getting baptized?” The sister answered, “Will, Cassie's husband.” Husband? I went to look for Cassie as quickly as I could.

When I found Cassie and Will, I congratulated them on their marriage and Will's baptism and asked how it had all come about. “Remember that



fireside you invited us to attend?”

Cassie answered. “We got there late, so the elders took us into another room and showed us a video. Will liked it so much he asked to hear the discussions. We were married, and today Will is getting baptized.” I was humbled and ashamed of myself and yet in total awe of Heavenly Father’s love for each of His children.

But this isn’t the end of the story. Not long ago I had the opportunity to return to my college ward after being away for six years. I was thrilled to see many familiar faces and to introduce my old friends to my husband and two children.

As I passed through the foyer, I saw someone I thought I knew but who looked different somehow. “Don’t I know you?” I said. “Yes, I’m Cassie. You were my visiting teacher. You remember Will, don’t you?” She pointed to the man standing to her left, then called to two children in the hallway. “And these are our two children.” She looked happy, peaceful, and sure of herself. She said she was serving in the Primary presidency. “Have you had a chance to go to the temple?” I inquired. “Which one?” she asked with a smile. “Chicago? Detroit? Nauvoo? We’ve been to all of them.”

This encounter once again reminded me “that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37:6)—even a small thing like a phone call. ■

Shannon Vanderspool Watson is a member of the Lake Villa Second Ward, Buffalo Grove Illinois Stake.

Home Teaching with Brother Skinner

By Kevin Probasco

I was baptized into the Church as a teenager but stopped attending not long afterward. Three years in the army did nothing to restore my spiritual health. Yet soon after I was discharged, the gentle but insistent urging of the Spirit of the Lord directed me to return to activity in my home ward. I dutifully obeyed.

Although I was rough around the edges, the elders quorum welcomed me without question and put me to work as a home teaching companion to Burniss Skinner, second counselor in the bishopric. Under Brother Skinner’s loving tutelage, I felt my testimony begin to take root.

Some of our assigned families struggled with tight finances, young children, chronic illness, loneliness, and Church activity. Others exemplified the peace of gospel living. Among these families, Hazel and John Peterson were particularly special. Their son Mike had been a high school friend and one of the young men most instrumental in my conversion. As a young investigator, I had taken the missionary discussions in their home; now I was returning as their home teacher.

In each home we visited, Brother Skinner pleasantly and patiently ministered from the abundance of his heart.

His words and gestures of comfort, blessing, care, and counsel have remained in my heart as lessons of the Savior’s love. Home teaching with Brother Skinner was not a burden but the greatest privilege and honor.

Within a year I had advanced in the priesthood, was sealed in the temple to my dear wife, and moved away from Brother Skinner and our home teaching families. After finishing college and law school, I spent 20 years in the military, moving my family to live in four countries on three continents. But I never forgot Brother Skinner, and while serving in various wards and branches, I tried to emulate his compassion and commitment.

After retiring from the air force, I moved back to my hometown to continue practicing law. The intervening 20 years had reordered the wards along entirely different boundaries, but I felt that I should visit Sister Hazel Peterson, who had lived alone since her husband died of cancer.

Six months later, however, I still hadn’t visited her. One winter morning I was driving to my law practice when the image of Sister Peterson unexpectedly came into my mind. Passing by the freeway exit closest to her home, I discounted the feeling and continued driving. But by the time I reached the

next exit, I found myself leaving the freeway and backtracking to Sister Peterson's home. Just as the Spirit had gently compelled me to return to activity almost 25 years earlier, it now gently whispered that I should visit my old home teaching sister.

I knocked on Sister Peterson's door and waited. After several minutes, I wondered sheepishly if she was out. Another knock, another few minutes. Finally the window above the door rattled and slid along its track. Sister Peterson peered down at me. The years had whitened her hair to the purest wool, and she looked tiny and thin. Her face was contorted in pain. Despite her labored breathing, she began weeping as she recognized me. "Oh, Kevin," she said, "I'm

so glad you're here. I'm in such terrible pain from my arthritis, and I need a priesthood blessing. Thank you for waiting—please come in." Before turning away from the window, she added, "I thought you were Burniss."

I was startled to hear the name Burniss. "Do you mean Brother Skinner?" I asked her. "Does he still live around here?"

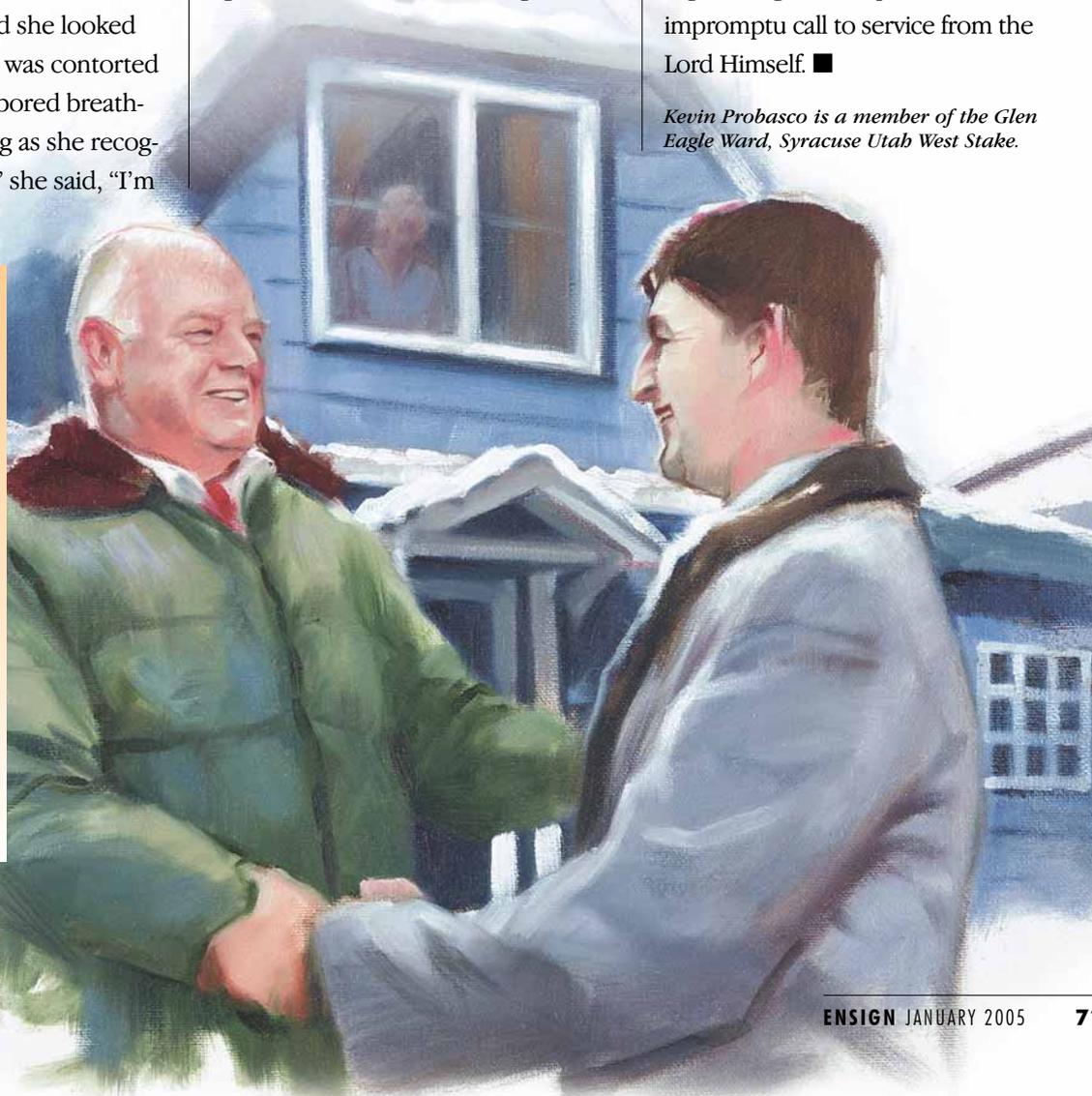
"No," she said. "He lives another 40 miles [65 km] north. But he still works near here, and I have his work number. I called about 20 minutes ago and asked him to come give

me a blessing. He should be here any minute."

A car pulled into the driveway, and Brother Skinner stepped out—much grayer but with the same pleasant spring in his step and kind smile on his face. We shook hands, and 20 years of distance melted away. We entered Sister Peterson's familiar home, the site of my spiritual apprenticeship to Brother Skinner so many years before. I anointed Sister Peterson's head with consecrated oil, and Brother Skinner pronounced the blessing. We were together again, companions in an impromptu call to service from the Lord Himself. ■

Kevin Probasco is a member of the Glen Eagle Ward, Syracuse Utah West Stake.

Brother Skinner and I shook hands, and 20 years melted away. We were together again, companions in an impromptu call to service.



Winter Fitness Fun

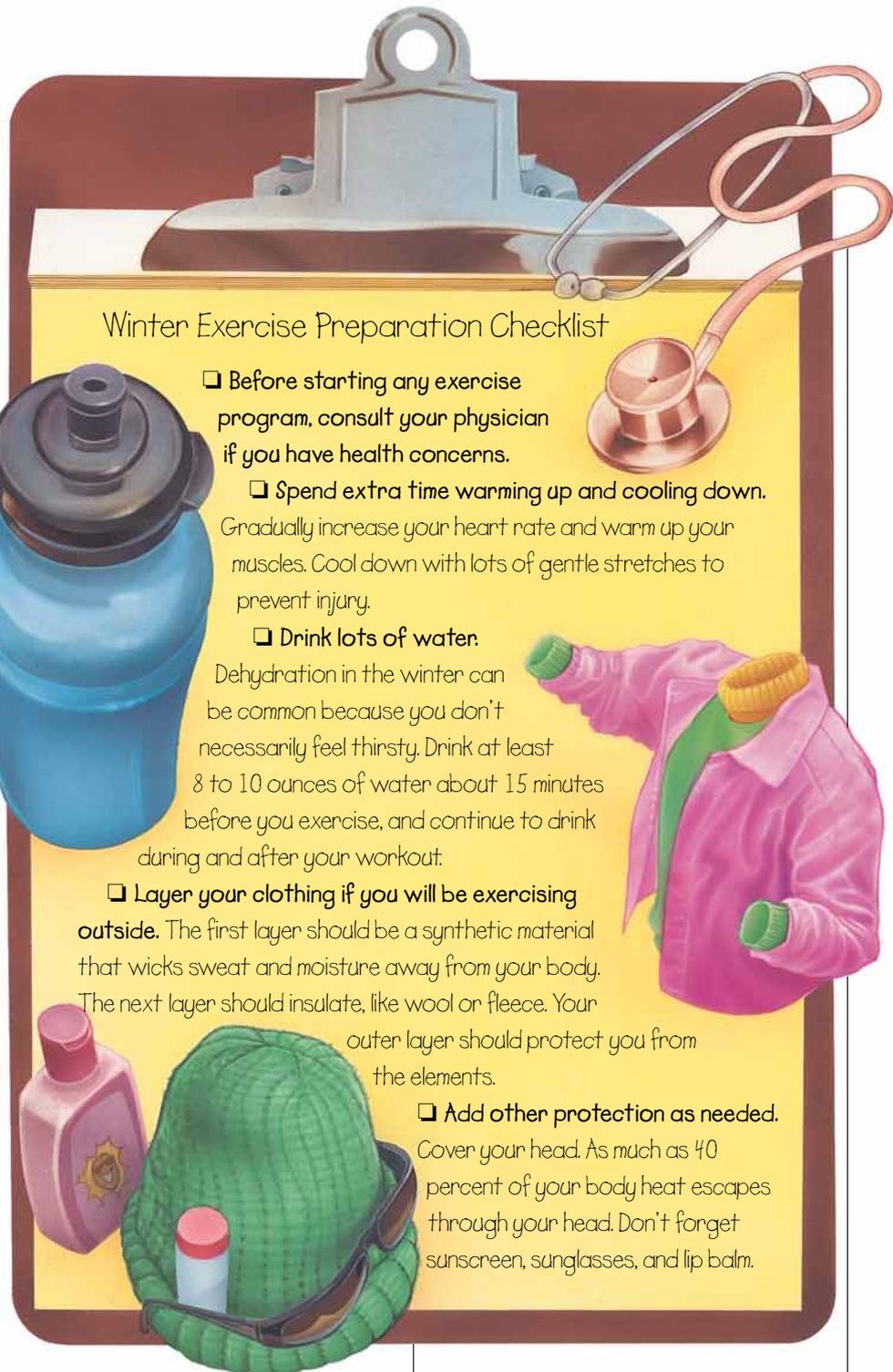
While many of us may be good warm-weather exercisers, statistics suggest that about one-third of us are almost completely inactive during the winter months. Yet we know that in order to care for our bodies we need exercise year-round. Exercise reduces anxiety and depression, helps increase our body's resistance to illness, and provides a host of other benefits. Having worked in the fitness industry for over eight years, I enjoy sharing inexpensive, creative exercise ideas with others so their activity level doesn't go dormant during the cold winter months.

Group Activities

Have a snowball shot-put contest; go sledding (and hike up that hill!); go snowshoeing or on a winter hike; try "snow running," following someone else's footprints; have mock-Olympic figure-skating contests at a local rink; or make "snow pets" or "snow people" to represent each member of your family. Doing a variety of exercises with others will help you stay motivated.

Activities for One

Take the stairs to your office or apartment, exercise to a fitness video



Winter Exercise Preparation Checklist

- ❑ Before starting any exercise program, consult your physician if you have health concerns.
- ❑ Spend extra time warming up and cooling down. Gradually increase your heart rate and warm up your muscles. Cool down with lots of gentle stretches to prevent injury.
- ❑ Drink lots of water. Dehydration in the winter can be common because you don't necessarily feel thirsty. Drink at least 8 to 10 ounces of water about 15 minutes before you exercise, and continue to drink during and after your workout.
- ❑ Layer your clothing if you will be exercising outside. The first layer should be a synthetic material that wicks sweat and moisture away from your body. The next layer should insulate, like wool or fleece. Your outer layer should protect you from the elements.
- ❑ Add other protection as needed. Cover your head. As much as 40 percent of your body heat escapes through your head. Don't forget sunscreen, sunglasses, and lip balm.

(or better yet, play a favorite music CD and *you* be your own fitness instructor), walk inside a local shopping mall or school, or use

household items to do resistance training (for example, bags of rice or beans can serve as weights, or you can do push-ups against the wall).



Family Home Evening with Baby

After our daughter, Ella, was born, my husband and I started holding family home evening when she was asleep so we could discuss an adult lesson. But without our baby there, our family felt incomplete. We've since learned how to plan activities suited especially for babies and toddlers so we can all share the fun and learning.

1. Use music. Even infants respond to music, particularly when it's sung by familiar voices. Sing favorite hymns and Primary songs, or play instrumental versions. Older toddlers can learn simple hand motions to songs like "Popcorn Popping" (*Children's Songbook*, 242-43).

2. Display gospel-themed pictures. For a simple, toddler-friendly lesson, show a painting of the Savior and say, "This is Jesus. He loves you." Talking about pictures of the Prophet Joseph Smith, President Gordon B. Hinckley, or a temple can help toddlers learn gospel truths.

3. Visit the temple. If you live near a temple, explore the grounds with your children as you speak reverently of the temple. Doing so will help them associate the temple with peaceful feelings. A visit to other Church sites might serve a similar purpose.

4. Teach stories creatively. Our two-year-old enjoyed making simple paper-bag puppets of Jonah and the whale, which my husband and I used to act out the story. Dolls or flannel-board figures can also help teach scripture stories.

5. Share Heavenly Father's creations. Rub a feather or a blade of grass across your baby's cheek, or help him or her taste snow for the first time. Explain that the Lord made the world and everything in it because He loves us.

It may be a few years before our toddler can sit still for a more traditional lesson and activity. For now, these simple teaching ideas help us share with her our love of the gospel as we establish a pattern of holding regular family home evenings together.

Melody Warnick, Cotton Manor Ward, St. George Utah Pine View Stake



President David O. McKay (1873-1970) counseled us that "the healthy man, who takes care of his physical being, has strength and vitality; his temple is a fit place for his spirit to reside" ("The 'Whole' Man," *Improvement Era*, Apr. 1952, 221). Like the physical temples we build, our bodies require year-round maintenance and attention.

Chalyce Petersen-Nöllsch, Falcon Park Ward, Highlands Ranch Colorado Stake

My Achievement Journal

For years, setting and keeping New Year's resolutions was difficult for me. But then I discovered that by first keeping a journal of my accomplishments I could build on my successes and set goals for what I wanted to achieve next. With a notebook or journal to write in or a computer to key in your thoughts, you can do the same.

Just think back over your life and write down the events or accomplishments that brought you peace, courage, and confidence. Don't eliminate anything that comes to mind. If it was important to you, write it down. Feel free to organize your journal any way you want. Then keep your record in an accessible place where you can easily record any subsequent meaningful events.

Review your journal frequently to remember what accomplishments

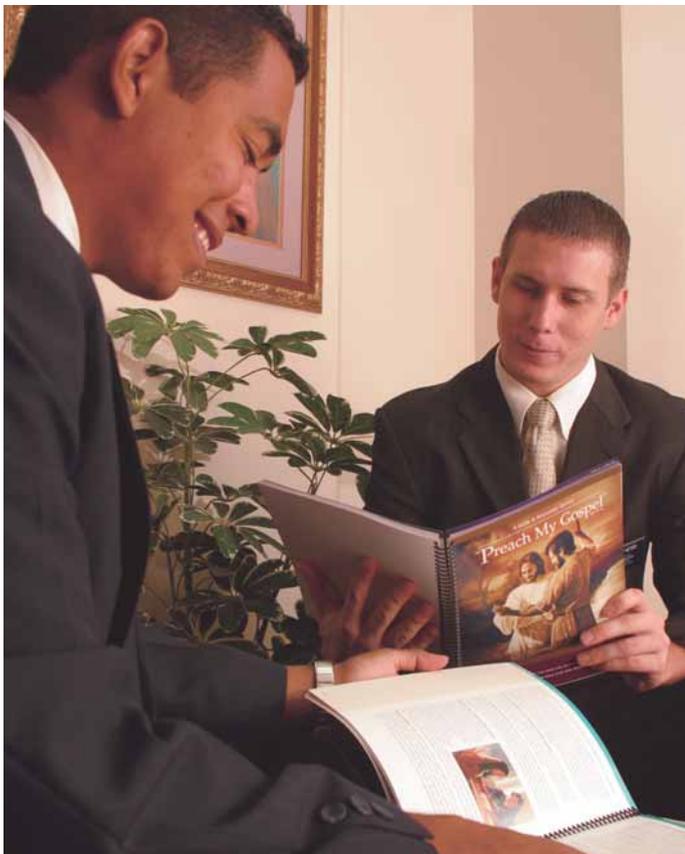
you have achieved. As your list grows, look for areas where you feel ready to stretch a bit more. For instance, if you walked every day for the past several months, why not set a goal to enter a local 5K run/walk?

The important idea is to focus on

our achievements, no matter how small. By focusing on our successes, we can set goals and achieve all that our Father in Heaven would have us do in this life.

Janine Simons Creager, Davis Creek Second Ward, Farmington Utah South Stake

PHOTOGRAPH BY ADAM C. OLSON



Using the flexible lessons found in Preach My Gospel, missionaries will give messages tailored to the individual.

New Preach My Gospel Program Being Launched in Missions Worldwide

By Adam C. Olson, Church Magazines

After Church leaders first talked about raising “the bar that is the standard for missionary service” in general conference of October 2002, heavy emphasis was placed on sending out more young men and women who are better prepared and more capable of teaching by the Spirit.

The results of that effort have made possible *Preach My Gospel*, a recently released manual that introduces

significant changes to the missionary program in the way missionaries will teach, plan, and work.

“*Preach My Gospel* is intended to help you be a better-prepared, more spiritually mature missionary,” wrote the First Presidency in an introductory message to the manual. “We challenge you to rise to a new sense of commitment to assist our Father in Heaven in His glorious work.”

“We are hopeful that by

adopting the Preach My Gospel plan, the Spirit will be felt and will dictate the conversation between the missionaries and their investigators,” said President Gordon B. Hinckley upon introducing the new program to missions around the world by satellite in October 2004. “This program will require greater effort on the part of the missionaries. It will require much of prayer and much of study.”

“This is a major change in direction,” President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, told mission presidents at the 2004 Seminar for New Mission Presidents. “We know it is the right direction. Where it will lead is on the right course.”

The program, which has been successfully piloted in 14 missions around the world, is being implemented in each of the Church’s 338 missions. The centerpiece of the program, the *Preach My Gospel* manual, which includes new missionary lessons and changes to how lessons are taught, has arrived in all missions across the world. Spanish and Portuguese editions were scheduled to be released by the end of 2004, with most other language editions scheduled to be available during the first half of 2005.

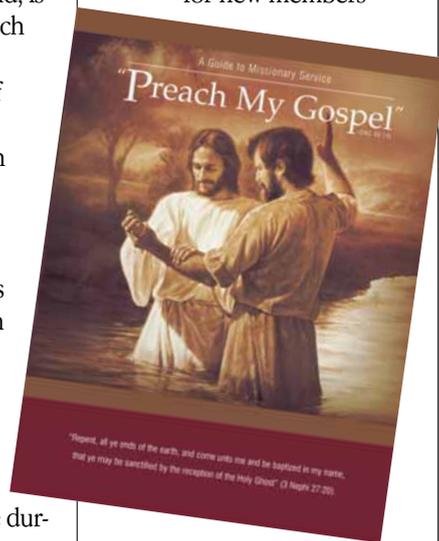
While introducing the new program at the seminar for mission presidents, Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained why the changes were necessary.

“Missionaries have to be prepared spiritually today in order to go into a world that has become as difficult as the one we are now living in. They must be powerful gospel teachers. They must know the doctrine.”

Raising the standards for missionary service was an important step, but in addition to having “raised the bar,” Elder Ballard said, “we have worked very hard in preparing materials that we hope will make a significant difference in preparing missionaries to find, teach, baptize, and retain more of our Father in Heaven’s children.”

A New Guide

Among the most significant of the changes to the missionary program are modifications to the missionary discussions and discussions for new members



The Preach My Gospel manual takes the place of the Missionary Guide, previous discussions, discussions for new members, and the Missionary Gospel Study Program.

and planning materials for missionaries.

The former *Missionary Guide*, discussions, discussions for new members, and the missionary gospel study program—a combined total of about 676 pages—have been replaced by a single publication of about 230 pages called *Preach My Gospel*. It addresses topics such as learning what a missionary's purpose is, studying effectively and preparing to teach, recognizing and understanding the Spirit, understanding the role of the Book of Mormon, developing Christlike attributes, learning another language, using time wisely, finding people to teach, improving teaching skills, helping people make and keep commitments, preparing people for baptism and confirmation, and working with stake and ward leaders.

"This manual is a guide to what a missionary needs to know and to become in order to be a teacher prepared to declare the message of the Restoration to the people of the world," said Elder Ballard.

Teaching, Conversion, and Retention

The program inseparably ties together teaching, conversion, and retention. It integrates the efforts of Church members and missionaries in all important elements of missionary work.

"If there is better teaching in the conversion process, there will be greater retention of those who are baptized," President Hinckley said.

At the heart of *Preach My*

Gospel are the new missionary lessons. Missionaries will no longer memorize and teach six discussions for investigators and six discussions for new members. Instead they will study and learn the doctrines and principles in five basic lessons and create and present individualized lessons as needed for each investigator or new convert. Each lesson focuses on preparing investigators to meet the scriptural requirements for baptism found in Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.

Missionaries can no longer simply read or recite a standard presentation. The doctrine "has to be understood by the missionaries so that they can teach," said Elder Quentin L. Cook, executive director of the Missionary Department. It is based on the scriptural injunction to "seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men" (D&C 11:21).

The new materials are also more member-friendly. Church members can cooperate more freely with missionaries as their friends and acquaintances are being taught. Members should feel more comfortable in giving referrals and in having missionaries come into their homes to teach people with whom they wish to share the gospel. There should also be greater cooperation between missionaries and wards and stakes in finding, teaching, and fellowshiping

Teaching by the Spirit

The lessons found in *Preach My Gospel* require missionaries to "treasure up in [their] minds continually the words of life, and it shall be given [them] in the very hour that portion that shall be meted unto every man" (D&C 84:85). Missionaries must now study and learn and teach the gospel by the Spirit.

"When I was a missionary some 70 years ago," observed President Gordon B. Hinckley in a missionary satellite broadcast on October 15, 2004, "we had no proselyting program. Missionaries would decide each morning what tract they would use for the day and then go out and knock on doors. Remarkably, interested investigators were found and taught.

"Years later, when I had responsibility for the missionary program, under the direction of the First Presidency and Twelve, the first unified plan was introduced and used. The effects were wonderful, but the plan through the years grew into a procedure where memorization was the principal endeavor. The lessons were given in a rote manner from memory. Missionaries were more prone to rely on their memories than on the Spirit of the Lord."

During the first Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting on January 11, 2003, President Hinckley

warned against ignoring the guidance of the Spirit in missionary teaching.

"For many years now we've had a standard set of missionary lessons. Great good has come of this. The missionaries have never lacked for something to teach in a systematic way. But unfortunately this method in all too many cases has resulted in a memorized presentation lacking in spirit and personal conviction."

He then quoted Doctrine and Covenants 46:2: "But notwithstanding those things which are written, it always has been given to the elders of my church from the beginning, and ever shall be, to conduct all meetings as they are directed and guided by the Holy Spirit."

President Hinckley promised: "If this principle is observed . . . there will come a new force into their teaching. . . . Let the missionaries shake loose from their memorized lessons. Let them speak with great conviction prompted by the Spirit of the Lord."

The lessons in *Preach My Gospel* are at the same time a return to the unscripted preaching of early Church missionaries and a step forward, providing missionaries with greater support materials that have been developed based on many years of experience. ■

investigators and in retaining new converts.

Planning

Aside from the new lessons, some of the most important aspects of missionary work taught in the new manual are goal setting, planning, and accountability in using time wisely.

“When you set a goal, an objective,” said Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “and begin to work to it, then the

Spirit comes in and gives guidance.”

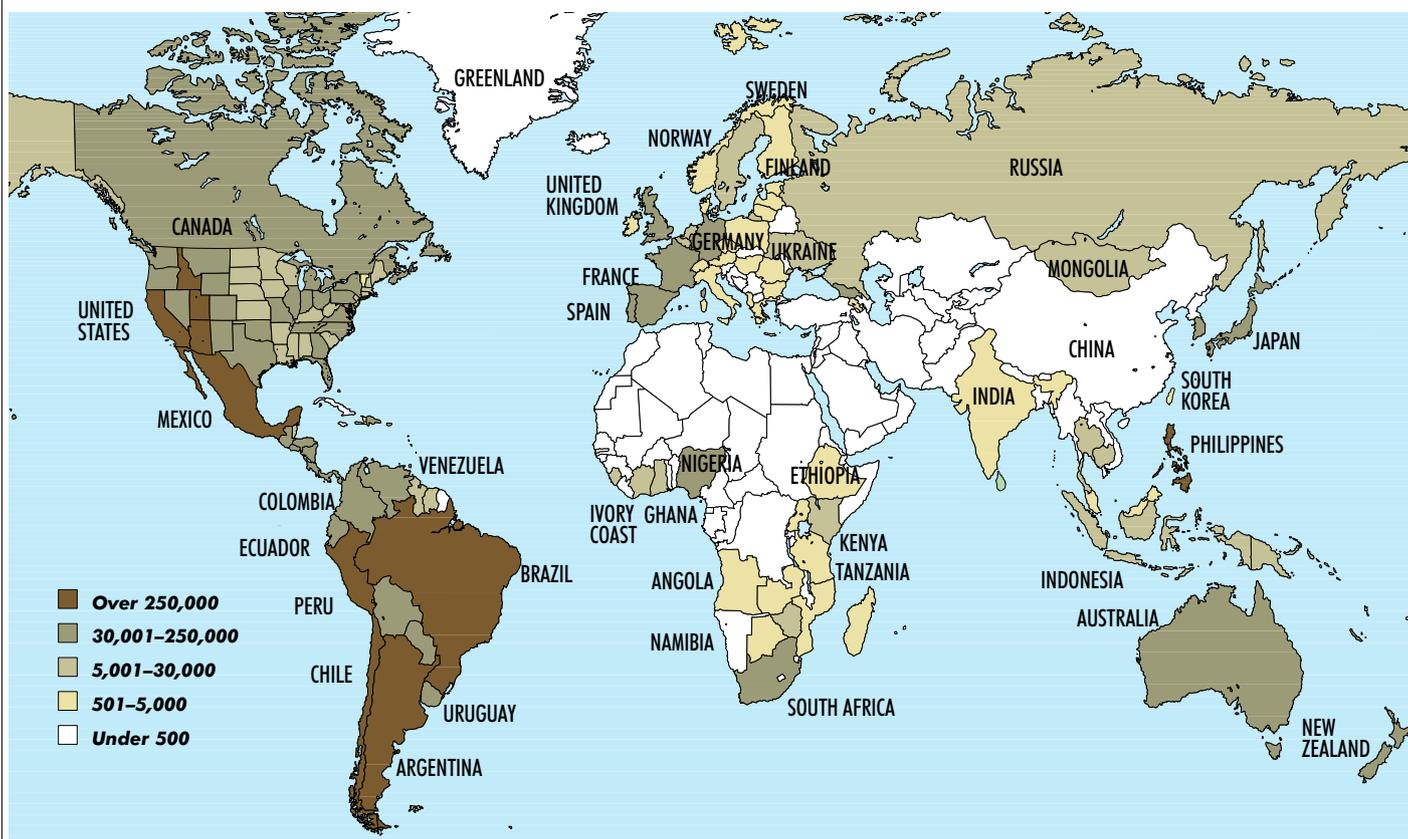
To this end, the previous one-page weekly planner has been replaced by a six-week planner. The booklet includes planning guidelines, ideas for finding new investigators, weekly goals, and a daily plan that provides space for backup plans and notes.

Aside from a two-to three-hour weekly planning session, companionships will spend a half hour each

evening planning for the next day and a short time reviewing those plans each morning before going to work. The planner, in conjunction with information from the area book, will give missionary companionships tools to help them plan their time and record important information about the people they are teaching.

“When a missionary . . . has the Spirit of the Lord with him . . . the investigator feels something,” said Elder

Ballard. “That’s what *Preach My Gospel* is designed to do, to prepare the missionaries with that kind of power. . . . In some parts of the world there are those who just simply are not interested in religion. We have to help people understand the message of the Restoration to penetrate through that. . . . The only way that that is going to happen is to prepare the missionaries as never before.” ■



Church Growing in More than 160 Countries

In 2004, worldwide Church membership reached 12 million, the Church was ranked among the fastest-growing churches in the United States, and Mexico

became the first nation outside of the U.S. to top one million members. Brazil is projected to surpass one million members during 2007.

Growth outside of the

United States continues to surpass growth within the U.S. More than half of all Church members live outside the United States. Members of the Church are found in

more than 160 countries and territories, speaking more than 178 languages.

The accompanying map shows membership distribution around the world. ■

Countries with Highest Church Membership

1. United States	5,503,192
2. Mexico*	980,053
3. Brazil	866,988
4. Chile	530,739
5. Philippines	526,178
6. Peru	384,663
7. Argentina	330,349
8. Guatemala	192,207
9. Canada	166,442
10. Ecuador	161,396

Based on 2003 year-end totals.

* Mexico surpassed the one million mark after these figures were compiled.

Countries with Highest Percentages of Church Membership*

1. Tonga	46.0	(1 out of 2)
2. Samoa	34.0	(1 out of 3)
3. American Samoa	19.1	(1 out of 5)
4. Kiribati	10.0	(1 out of 10)
5. French Polynesia	7.8	(1 out of 13)

6. Chile	3.4	(1 out of 30)
7. Uruguay	2.4	(1 out of 42)
8. New Zealand	2.3	(1 out of 43)
9. Honduras	1.6	(1 out of 62)
10. Bolivia	1.5	(1 out of 64)

Based on 2003 year-end totals.

* Minimum 10,000 members. Four countries have higher percentages but fewer than 10,000 members: Niue (13.0), Marshall Islands (6.8), Cook Islands (6.5), and Micronesia (3.2).

Languages Most Frequently Spoken by Church Members

1. English	5,828,000
2. Spanish	3,681,000
3. Portuguese	907,000
4. Tagalog (Philippines)	165,000
5. Cebuano (Philippines)	126,000
6. Japanese	117,000
7. Ilokano (Philippines)	109,000
8. Samoan	102,000
9. Tongan	76,000
10. Korean	75,000

Estimates based on 2003 year-end data.

Church Preparing Film for Prophet's 200th Birthday

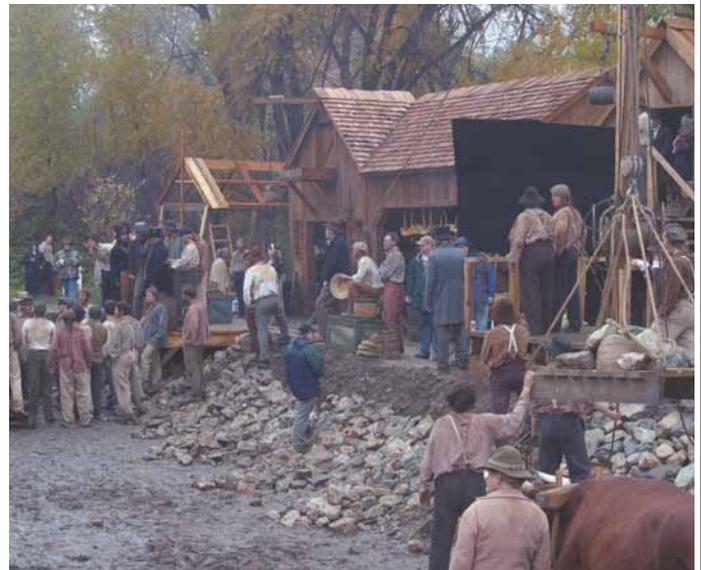
By Patricia S. Norwood, Church Magazines

Journeying down a narrow, tree-lined road just off a traffic-packed street in Provo, Utah, one can find a little piece of 19th-century New York. It is a little settlement where the men still wear beards and suspenders and the women wear ringlets and carry parasols. But this small town is a little different from the real 1820 version—it also has high-tech cameras, state-of-the-art sound and lighting equipment, and a director yelling, “Cut!”

It is the set for the new Church-produced motion picture *Joseph Smith: Prophet of the Restoration*. The film will premiere in the

500-seat Legacy Theater in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building in December 2005, marking the 200th anniversary of the Prophet's birth, on December 23, 1805. The new film will replace *The Testaments of One Fold and One Shepherd*, currently playing in the Legacy Theater.

The one-hour film will “testify of Joseph Smith's sacred calling,” says Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Quorum of the Seventy and executive director of the Church Audiovisual Department. “[Joseph Smith] is so foundational to the Church. We want to honor his legacy and [the Church]



Cast and crew members prepare to film a scene for the Church film *Joseph Smith: Prophet of the Restoration*.

can in a way no one else could. The 200th anniversary [of his birth] is a good time to do it.” The film, he says, will “capture the majesty of the Prophet.”

To make sure the script is

accurate, it has been historically researched, examined by the Church's Correlation Department, and reviewed by several members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and by the First

PHOTOGRAPH BY SHANNA BUTLER

Presidency. “A film does not get much better than its script,” producer Ron Munns says. “Doctrinally it is sound; historically it is accurate.

Hopefully people will learn some things and feel some things.”

The film spans Joseph Smith’s life, so four actors were cast to portray him. There is a young Joseph, a 14-year-old Joseph, a 17-year-old Joseph, and a mature Joseph, Elder Hallstrom says. On the last week of filming in October 2004, the actor portraying 17-year-old Joseph, 19-year-old Dustin Harding, got a day off from his new calling as a full-time missionary for the Church. He was needed to complete a few scenes that could not be finished before he was to report to the Missionary Training Center in Provo. He is now serving in New Hampshire, near the Prophet Joseph’s birthplace.

While shooting, the cast and crew have felt a unique and special spirit, Brother Munns says. Every actor and crew member working on the film is an active member of the Church. They begin every day with prayer, knowing that they can make this film better than any Hollywood production because “they know that the Spirit can expand their talents, efforts, and abilities.”

And once the film is complete, members and those of other faiths will be able to feel the Spirit as they watch how the Prophet Joseph became an instrument in the Lord’s hands. ■

New BYU Web Site Aids Scripture Study

If you aren’t as familiar with the scriptures as you would like to be, a new Web site may be the perfect tool for you to use in your personal study or lesson preparation. The site, scriptures.byu.edu, links individual scripture references to every general conference address in which they have been quoted.

The concept came from two Brigham Young University professors, one with a passion to learn more about the scriptures, the other with the technical know-how to make the site work. Richard Galbraith, a professor in the School of Family Life, and Stephen Liddle, professor of accountancy and information services and eBusiness director, have been working on the site, which puts the words of modern-day prophets next to the words of the scriptures.

The site is easy to use. For example, to learn more about 1 Nephi 1:1, you can click on the Book of Mormon tab, then open up 1 Nephi, then chapter one. You will find that the verse has been quoted 31 times in general conference addresses, with the references listed in order from the oldest to the most recent. When a reference is selected, the site links the visitor to the general conference address that refers to the scripture on www.lds.org. The site can also be searched by speaker, date, and citation frequency.

The site includes a

database of 347 speakers and general conference addresses since 1942. Talks delivered before 1971 are not available online, so for these references the page number is

given in the *Improvement Era* where they were originally published.

“If you need some insights on the scriptures, the General Authorities have thought about them and have beautiful insights. They are all seeing the same jewel—just different facets of it,” Brother Galbraith says. ■

2005 Church Pageant Schedule

Pageant	Location	Dates
<i>Jesus the Christ</i>	Mesa, Arizona	March 17–19 (Spanish); March 22–26 (English)
<i>Mormon Miracle</i>	Manti, Utah	June 16–18, 21–25
<i>America’s Witness for Christ</i>	Palmyra, New York	July 7–9, 12–16
<i>And It Came to Pass</i>	Oakland, California	July 9, 12–16, 19–23
<i>Castle Valley</i>	Castle Dale, Utah	July 28–30, August 2–6
<i>Martin Harris: The Man Who Knew</i>	Clarkston, Utah	August 5–6, 9–13, 16–20

All pageants are free of charge, but the Clarkston and Oakland pageants require tickets. Details about the Nauvoo pageant have not yet been announced. For more information on any of these pageants, call 1-801-240-7800 or visit www.lds.org and click on “Other Resources,” then “Places to Visit.” ■



Pioneer children kneel to pray in this production of the *Castle Valley Pageant*, held in Castle Dale, Utah.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JED A. CLARK

Call for Articles

If you have had experience with the following situation, we invite you to share your suggestions: *How can I encourage my children to spend less time in front of the television and computer and more time engaged in healthy physical activity?*

Send responses by February 15, 2005, to *Ensign* Editorial, 24th Floor, 50 East North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA, or to cur-editorial-ensign@ldschurch.org. Clearly mark your submission "Questions and Answers," and at the top of your submission, write your name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and ward and stake (or branch and district).

While we cannot acknowledge receipt of individual responses, authors whose submissions are selected for publication will be notified. If you would like your manuscript returned, enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope and allow up to a year.

Comment

Social Issues

Thank you for the excellent articles you have recently published on social issues. Your willingness to address these issues is commended. I am particularly referring to "Raising a Child with a Disability" by Marleen S. Williams (October 2004). As the parent of a disabled child,

I can identify with all of the points she so clearly makes.

I would also like to thank you for the September 2004 article, "Compassion for Those Who Struggle." What a sensitive topic, one that should not be swept under the table but met openly with compassion. These articles and others reaffirm my understanding of Heavenly Father's love for all of us.
Ruth M. Workman,
Lake Herman Ward,
Napa California Stake

Ensign Pronunciation

I work in the Ogden Distribution Center, and we carry the *Ensign* magazine for sale. People so often call it the *Ensun* that I would encourage you to put the correct pronunciation in the front of the magazine again.
Linda Pfaff,
Riverdale Third Ward,
Riverdale Utah Stake

Editor's note: Sister Pfaff is correct. The name of this magazine is pronounced *en-sine*, not *en-sun* or *en-zine*.

Disabilities

I just finished reading the article "Raising a Child with a Disability" in the October 2004 issue, and I can't begin to tell you how wonderful it was. I have an autistic child, and often I feel so alone. It



was helpful to read about the struggles others have had and to know that I am not alone. Many times my faith has kept me going when things have been tough. I am so grateful you chose to include this article, and I hope it helps parents of disabled children know what special spirits they have been entrusted with. Thank you.
Danielle Masters,
Cleveland First Ward,
Cleveland Ohio Stake



We All Struggle

The article "Compassion for Those Who Struggle" in the September 2004 issue has helped me to understand the challenge of one who is tempted by same-sex attraction. I have been upset by recent articles in national magazines that mentioned the struggles of Latter-day Saints who face this particular challenge. Some of those articles have implied that the individual's membership in the Church is the root cause for his or her damaged self-worth.

How enlightening and how encouraging it is to read of Church members who are faced with this challenge but are willing to choose the

higher path and live the gospel faithfully. I do not personally know any individuals with this challenge, but I felt that this article was universal to all of us because we all deal with weaknesses and we all need to feel the compassion of those around us.

Alice Quan,
Victoria First (English) Branch,
Hong Kong International District

A Sense of Heritage

As a new sister missionary, my life is busy and full of learning, but when we received the October 2004 *Ensign* from the mission office I wanted to find time to read it. Finally, one night before bedtime I opened it and turned the

pages until I came to the story "You Taught Me," by Vinita R. Greer. I paused to read this article, and you can imagine my surprise when I came across "Steeleville, Illinois." That is my hometown! A smile came to my face and warmth to my heart.

As a convert to the Church, I have often felt that I have no heritage—I am the only member in my family. But Sister Greer's story of her introduction to the Church in my hometown gave me that sense of heritage. Our branch is small but powerful, and that great spirit Sister Greer felt is still there in the Steeleville Branch. I'm proud to be from that small town with the big spirit.

Sister Amy Gooden,
California Long Beach Mission



MAKING THE MOST OF THIS ISSUE

J A N U A R Y 2 0 0 5

Ezra Taft Benson say these two volumes of scripture “are bound together”? See the Gospel Classic on page 24.

- For a visual smorgasbord of the people, places, and events surrounding the revelations in sections 1–64 of the Doctrine and Covenants, turn to “Doctrine and Covenants Times at a Glance,” page 20.

by the situation. What can you do when addictive substances invade your home and destroy your peace? See page 62.

Confidence and Self-Worth

“Too often we wallow in our weaknesses so much that we do not allow ‘weak things’ to ‘become strong.’ Our condition is frequently misdiagnosed as humility, when in reality it is a lack of confidence.” If you are struggling with feelings of inferiority, Elder Glenn L. Pace has a message for you. See page 32.

Climbing Back into Love

Can you fall in love again after you’ve “fallen out” of it? One member tells how she climbed back in. “Falling Out of Love . . . and Climbing Back In” may change your mind, and your heart, about your spouse and about yourself. See page 50.

Think You Know the Doctrine and Covenants?

- Last year’s Sunday School course of study was the Book of Mormon. This year we turn to the Doctrine and Covenants. Why did President

President David O. McKay

If you’re over 60 and were a member before 1970, you may well consider this man *your* prophet. If you’re younger, you may want to know why David O. McKay holds such a special spot in so many hearts. To read about the life of the prophet whose teachings we will study this year, see page 40.

“Prison”? No, Opportunity

If you tend to view your unmarried status as a prison, you’re missing out on a

multitude of opportunities and relationships that can make your life happy and fulfilling. See “Singular Happiness,” page 36.



What Is a Quorum?

Beginning with this issue, the *Ensign* will publish a series of articles about priesthood quorums of the Church. See “The Deacons Quorum,” page 54.

Addiction

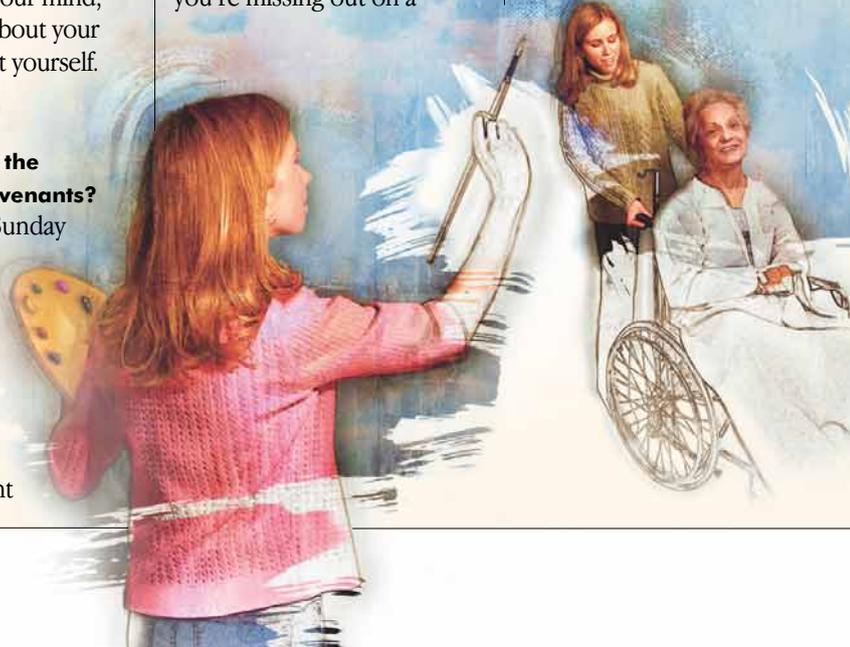
When a family member is addicted to alcohol or drugs, the whole family is affected

Home Teachers, Visiting Teachers

Find the monthly messages on pages 2 and 67.

GOSPEL TOPICS

Aaronic Priesthood, 54, 56	Journal, 73
Achievements, 73	Leadership, 54
Addiction, 62	Love, 57, 62
Adversity, 62	Marriage, 50
Agency, 8	McKay, David O., 40
Book of Mormon, 24	Missionary Work, 69
Church History, 20	Obedience, 8, 68
Commandments, 2	Parenthood, 48
Confidence, 32	Prayer, 50
Conversion, 68	Priesthood Blessings, 70
Doctrine and Covenants, 20, 24, 29	Prophets, 40
Education, 40	Repentance, 62
Eternal Nature, 32	Restoration, 14, 67
Family, 48, 62, 68, 73	Scripture Study, 24
Family Home Evening, 73	Self-Worth, 32
Forgiveness, 50	Service, 40
Freedom, 8	Single Adults, 36, 38
Gender, 48	Smith, Joseph, 2, 14, 20
Gratitude, 47	Standards, 2
Health, 72	Submission, 8
Holy Ghost, 57	Teaching, 57, 73
Home Teaching, 70	Temple Work, 29
Hope, 38	Visiting Teaching, 69
Inspiration, 36, 50, 57, 69, 70	Word of Wisdom, 62





MAY NOT BE COPIED

Windows of Heaven, by David Lindsley

Portrayed in a scene likely in fall 1835, the Prophet Joseph Smith (center) assists Joseph and Brigham Young (top) with window installation in the Kirtland Temple, the first of the latter-day temples. Oliver Cowdery (left) and Sidney Rigdon (right) assisted in the temple's preparations.



T*his work began with a most remarkable manifestation when the Father and the Son appeared to the boy Joseph Smith on a spring morning in the year 1820. All of the good we see in the Church today is the fruit of that remarkable visitation, a testimony of which has touched the hearts of millions in many lands.” See President Gordon B. Hinckley, “Pursue the Steady Course,” p. 2.*