

Ensign




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“WE ... EXPRESS
GRATITUDE FOR LATTER-DAY
SAINT PIONEERS THROUGH-
OUT THE WORLD WHO
HAVE BLAZED—AND ARE
BLAZING—A GOSPEL PATH
FOR OTHERS TO FOLLOW.”

ELDER RONALD A. RASBAND

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Ensign

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MUSIC AND THE SPOKEN WORD

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir's program *Music and the Spoken Word* is the longest continuously running weekly network broadcast in the world. This month, the Choir celebrates 90 years of broadcasting. Read about the history of the program and find Choir-related links at lds.org/go/ChoirE718.

LEARNING FROM FAILURE

The next chapter of *Saints*, included in this issue, focuses on the loss of 116 Book of Mormon manuscript pages in 1828 (see page 64). We may commonly think of this story as an example of failure, but it has many applicable lessons for our lives. Find more ways we can learn from stories of failure at lds.org/go/failureE718.



PIONEER LESSONS

In this issue, read about pioneer Latter-day Saints past and present who have persevered through difficulties (see page 26), been faithful in isolation (see page 52), and pursued their own journeys of courage and sacrifice (see page 14). We can learn much from their examples. To learn about five pioneer virtues that can help us today, visit lds.org/go/pioneerE718.



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PORTRAITS OF FAITH

Victor was born three months premature. As a result, he has several disabilities and was unable to walk until he was seven years old. Despite the challenges he faces, Victor has chosen to be a happy person. He finds joy in reaching out and showing love to others.

LESLIE NILSSON, PHOTOGRAPHER

Victor Barbinyagra

Kharkiv, Ukraine

I do have problems, just like everyone else has. They're not bigger or smaller, and though we may not be able to solve them 100 percent, I know we can cope with our problems and we can move forward for sure.

Because of the Church, I know that you can be happy no matter what, because the plan of God is a plan of happiness. I believe that happiness is something that is inside of us, not outside.

Happiness comes from having faith, relying on God, and living the gospel. This helps us have the right attitude and use what we have to better ourselves.

FIND MORE

See more about Victor's journey of faith at lds.org/go/E7185.

Visit "Plan of Salvation" at lds.org/topics to find out how the plan of salvation helps us find happiness.

Ministering Principles

REACH OUT IN COMPASSION

*As you follow the Savior's example of compassion,
you will find that you can make a difference in others' lives.*

Compassion is having an awareness of others' distress along with a desire to lighten or relieve it. A covenant to follow the Savior is a covenant of compassion to "bear one another's burdens" (Mosiah 18:8). An assignment to watch over others is an opportunity to minister as the Lord would: with "compassion, making a difference" (Jude 1:22). The Lord commanded, "Shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother" (Zechariah 7:9).

The Savior's Compassion

Compassion was a driving force in the Savior's ministry (see sidebar: "A Compassionate Savior"). His compassion for His fellowman caused Him to reach out to those around Him on countless occasions. Discerning people's needs and desires, He

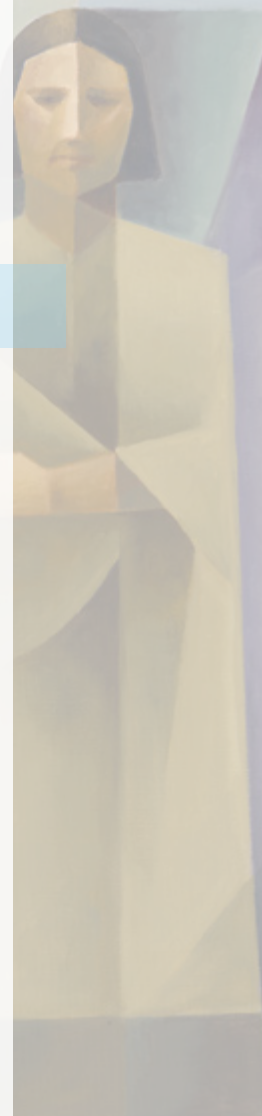
could bless them and teach them in ways that mattered most to them. The Savior's desire to lift us above our distress led to the ultimate act of compassion: His Atonement for the sins and suffering of humankind.

His capacity to respond to the needs of the people is something that we can strive for as we serve. As we live righteously and listen to the promptings of the Spirit, we will be inspired to reach out in meaningful ways.

Our Covenant of Compassion

Heavenly Father wants His children to be compassionate (see 1 Corinthians 12:25–27). To become true disciples, we must develop and show compassion to others, especially to those in need (D&C 52:40).

Taking upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ through our baptismal covenant, we





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

witness that we are willing to exercise compassion. President Henry B. Eyring, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, taught that the gift of the Holy Ghost helps us do so:

“You are a covenant member of the Church of Jesus Christ. . . .

“That is why you have a feeling to want to help a person struggling to move forward under a load of grief and difficulty. You promised that you would help the Lord make their burdens light and be comforted. You were given the power to help lighten those loads when you received the gift of the Holy Ghost.”¹

For example, a sister in Russia had a difficult family situation that prevented her from attending church for more than a year. Another sister in the branch reached out in compassion every Sunday by calling her to tell her about the talks, lessons, mission calls, babies born, and other news of the branch. When the housebound sister’s family situation was resolved, she felt like she was still a part of the branch because of her friend’s weekly calls. ■

NOTE

1. Henry B. Eyring, “The Comforter,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 18.



A COMPASSIONATE SAVIOR

Consider studying some of these scriptures to see how Jesus Christ’s compassion moved Him to heal, bless, and teach those around Him during His ministry: Matthew 9:35–38; 14:14; 18:27, 33; 20:30–34; Mark 1:40–42; 5:19; 6:30–42; 9:22; Luke 7:13; 10:33; 15:20.

Four Suggestions for Developing Compassion

While compassion is often increased after we experience our own trials, there are some things we can do today to develop compassion. Consider ways you could apply these four principles.

1. Prayer

Pray for it. As you appeal to Heavenly Father, He will open your heart, and “you will come to feel a sincere concern for the eternal welfare and happiness of other people” (*Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* [2004], 118; see also Moroni 7:48).

Practice it. You can show compassion by listening to others and being understanding. Put yourself in their circumstances and consider how they might feel. If appropriate to the situation and timing, you could offer to help alleviate their pain, suffering, or distress.

COMPASSION

4. Friendship

2. Practice

Be a personal friend. Showing compassion can be as simple as showing genuine interest in peoples’ lives. Learn to listen well (see “Ministering Principles: Five Things Good Listeners Do,” *Ensign*, June 2018, 6–9). Your love for them will increase, and it will be easier to recognize ways to show that love.

3. Promptings

Follow promptings. The Lord can reveal to us ways to show compassion that we might not have noticed on our own. When you feel a nudge from the Spirit to help others, don’t hesitate to act on it.

KNOWING WHO YOU ARE— AND WHO YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN

By Sheri L. Dew

This series highlights the lives of devoted women and their messages, excerpted from the book *At the Pulpit: 185 Years of Discourses by Latter-day Saint Women* (2017). The complete book, along with seven bonus chapters, is available in the Gospel Library app and online at churchhistorianspress.org/at-the-pulpit.

Recently, my 16-year-old niece Megan and two of her friends came for a sleepover. As we talked that evening, one of them asked me what it had been like growing up on a farm in the olden days. . . . I told Megan and her friends that in the “olden days,” I had been painfully shy and had absolutely no self-confidence.

“How did you get over feeling that way?” Megan asked. A pat answer was on the tip of my tongue when I stopped, sensing that these terrific young women were receptive to more. So I told them that the reason was a spiritual one: It wasn’t until I began to understand how the Lord felt about me that my feelings about

myself and my life slowly began to change. Their questions then came in a hurry: How did I *know* how the Lord felt? And how could they find out how He felt about them?

For several hours, scriptures in hand, we talked about how to hear the voice of the Spirit, about how eager the Lord is to unveil the knowledge stored safely inside our spirits concerning who we are and what our mission is, and about the life-changing difference it makes when we know.

. . . There is nothing more vital to our success and our happiness here than learning to hear the voice of the Spirit. It is the Spirit who reveals to us our identity—which isn’t just who we



ABOUT SISTER DEW

Sheri Linn Dew was born in Ulysses, Kansas, USA, in 1953.

She is the oldest of five children, and by the time she finished fifth grade, she was driving a tractor on the family grain farm. On Sundays her grandmother Maudie Dew would pick her up early for church, which was held in a rented hall. They would sweep up cigarette butts and beer cans to prepare the room for church. Participating in a small branch meant she did a lot of speaking and teaching. She became the branch pianist when she was a young woman and served in her branch Primary presidency when she was 16.

After earning a history degree at Brigham Young University in 1978, she took a job as an editor with Bookcraft. She joined Deseret Book in 1988, becoming an executive vice president in 2000.

She was 35 when she joined the Relief Society general board during the presidency of Barbara W. Winder. She was only 43 when she became Mary Ellen W. Smoot’s Second Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency in 1997.

Sister Dew exhorted women to understand their worth during her discourse at the 2001 BYU Women’s Conference, excerpted here (punctuation standardized).

are but who we have always been. And that when we know, our lives take on a sense of purpose so stunning that we can never be the same again.

. . . Our spirits long for us to remember the truth about who we are, because the way we see ourselves, our sense of identity, affects everything we do. . . . It affects the very way we live our lives. So, today, I invite you to ponder in a new way not just who you are but who you have always been.

. . . Can you imagine that God, who knew us perfectly, reserved us

to come now, when the stakes would be higher and the opposition more intense than ever? When He would need women who would help raise and lead a chosen generation in the most lethal spiritual environment? Can you imagine that He chose us because He knew we would be fearless in building Zion?

. . . Noble and great. Courageous and determined. Faithful and fearless. That is who you are, and that is who you have always been. Understanding that truth can change your life, because this knowledge carries a

confidence that cannot be duplicated any other way.

. . . When you understand that *you* were chosen and reserved for now, and when you live in harmony with that mission, you'll be happier than you have ever been before.

. . . God is our Father, and His Only Begotten Son is the Christ. May we rejoice in once again standing tall for the Savior and serving with valor and vigor in His vineyard. And may we be fearless in building up the Zion of our God—because we know who we are and who we have always been. ■



MY CONFERENCE NOTEBOOK

April 2018 General Conference



Diving Deeper

DIVINE PROMISES

President Russell M. Nelson made this divine promise during the April 2018 general conference: “There may be times when you feel as though the heavens are closed. But I promise you that as you continue to be obedient, expressing gratitude for every blessing the Lord gives you, and as you patiently honor the Lord’s timetable, you will be given the knowledge and understanding you seek” (“Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 95–96).

Many other leaders also made divine promises in general conference. As you study the most recent messages, see if you can identify any divine promises given. Here are a few talks to get you started:

- Henry B. Eyring, “His Spirit to Be with You,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 86.
- David A. Bednar, “Meek and Lowly of Heart,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 30.
- Dale G. Renlund, “Family History and Temple Work: Sealing and Healing,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 46.

Consider recording in your journal your thoughts and feelings about these divine promises.

OUR PATH IS
not about what we have
done **OR WHERE WE HAVE BEEN;**
IT IS ABOUT WHERE WE ARE GOING AND
what we are becoming,
in unity.

Reyna I. Aburto, “With One Accord,”
Ensign, May 2018, 79–80.



Answers to Questions

As a young mother, I struggle to feel God’s love and understand my worth in His plan. How does God really feel about me?



“To mothers, especially young mothers, who often feel overwhelmed and underwater while striving to raise ‘a sin-resistant generation,’ never underestimate your central role in God’s plan. In stressful moments—perhaps when you are chasing little ones and a charred smell from the kitchen informs you that your lovingly prepared dinner is now a burnt offering—know that God sanctifies your most difficult days. ‘Fear thou not; for I am with thee’ [Isaiah 41:10], He peacefully reassures.”

Elder Brian K. Taylor of the Seventy, “Am I a Child of God?” *Ensign*, May 2018, 13.

What questions did you have that were answered by something you heard at conference? Share your experience on our Facebook page: facebook.com/ensign.magazine.

What Will I Do?

LOOKING FOR GUIDANCE

This past February my sweet husband of two years explained that he no longer has a testimony and is discontinuing his membership in the Church. With this change in faith, various lifestyle choices shifted as well. I was absolutely devastated, with no idea where my life was headed. I have never pleaded so hard to receive guidance as I did during the April 2018 general conference. I sat listening to each talk, and as President Russell M. Nelson began his address on personal revelation, I found the direction I was seeking.

President Nelson outlines how to receive answers to the heart's most pressing questions. He invites us to "pray in the name of Jesus Christ about your concerns, your fears, your weaknesses—yes, the very longings of your heart. And then listen! Write the thoughts that come to your mind." I cried during the entire talk and took copious notes. President Nelson might as well have included my name in his talk when he asked, "Does God really want to speak to you? Yes!"



("Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," *Ensign*, May 2018, 95).

While I can't say I know what God has in store for me quite yet, I learned two important lessons this conference. First, there is no doubt in my mind that President Nelson is a prophet. Second, God knows us individually, and He will reveal His will to us in His time. President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) once said, "I never cease to be amazed by how the Lord can motivate and direct the length and breadth of His kingdom and yet have time to provide inspiration concerning one individual" ("Consider the Blessings," *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 89). I was the individual inspired that day with the assurance that His hand is guiding me.

—Name withheld

Have an experience you would like to share? Submit your story at ensign.lds.org, or share it on our Facebook page.

Ponder This...

HOW CAN I "GROW INTO THE PRINCIPLE OF REVELATION"?

See President Russell M. Nelson, "Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," *Ensign*, May 2018, 95.

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

Conference Numbers!

16,118,169

Church members as of December 31, 2017

233,729

 converts baptized

421

 missions around the world

SABBATH WORSHIP + DAILY WORSHIP

"Ours is not just a Sunday church. Our worship continues each day of the week, wherever we are and in whatever we do. Our homes in particular are 'the primary sanctuaries of our faith.' It is most often in our homes that we pray, we bless, we study, we teach the word of God, and we serve with pure love. I can testify from personal experience that our homes are sacred places where the Spirit can abound— as much as, and sometimes even more than, in our formal places of worship."

Bishop Gérald Caussé, Presiding Bishop, "It Is All about People," *Ensign*, May 2018, 113.

Three young adults share their stories of joining the Church and creating a heritage of faith for themselves and their families.

Three Modern Pioneer Journeys

By Sarah Keenan

While I was serving my mission in Melbourne, Australia, I was in a ward that was made up of international students. When they were learning about pioneers in Sunday School, I wondered how interested they would be—they were almost all recent converts, and none of them had any ancestors who crossed the plains of North America.

Surprisingly, many of the international students were captivated by the stories shared. Some of them mentioned how they related to the early Saints on a personal level: just like the pioneers, these international students were new converts and had made sacrifices to establish the Church in the areas they lived in. For some of these members, the Church was either small or nonexistent in their homeland. They were modern pioneers, forging a new religious heritage for future generations.

Here are three experiences from converts who have joined the ranks of modern pioneers.

Honoring My Family in New Ways

Nami Chan, Taoyuan, Taiwan

▶ My family and a lot of my extended family in Taiwan are Buddhist. When I was young, I remember helping prepare sacrifices for ancestors and multiple gods on Chinese New Year and other holidays. It was a family tradition for us, as well as a way to commemorate our ancestors and bring peace and prosperity to my family.

When some of my relatives joined a nondenominational Christian church, it had no impact on my family at first. But during the Ching Ming Festival, when you worship ancestors and burn incense at their graves, my Christian relatives refused to participate. They said that they were committed to following the Ten Commandments, particularly “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). My family had not discussed any other beliefs before, but from that



day on, Christianity represented the destruction of traditions in my family's eye and was seen in a negative light.

When I was attending a university, I met LDS missionaries on the street. Normally, I wouldn't have been interested in what they had to say, but some experiences had readied my heart to receive their message. While meeting with them, I agreed to pray and read the Book of Mormon, and I began developing a personal testimony of what I was being taught. But, because of my parents' feelings against Christianity, I didn't want to tell them I wanted to be baptized. Many months after my first meeting with the missionaries, I finally told my parents that I wanted to get baptized and that I wanted to serve a mission. They were upset, but I knew I was making the right choice.

I don't have any pioneer ancestry, but I do feel like I understand their sacrifice. It is difficult to give up some traditions and face opposition from family members. Even now,

five years after I joined the Church, in which time I have served a mission, my family doesn't completely support my decision, but they've come to accept it. Joining the Church has allowed me to honor my family in new ways, by doing family history and researching my ancestors. My testimony of Jesus Christ and His Atonement helps me in resolving any conflict I may have with my family.

Finding Joy from the Gospel

Harry Guan, Utah, USA

► I grew up in China and considered myself a Christian, despite the fact that I never actually went to church. I was interested in God and Jesus Christ, and I thought Christian doctrine was very comforting.

When I moved to the United States for college, I started attending a nondenominational Christian church. After a few months, I heard about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from some friends who were considering attending Brigham Young University. I asked a few students at the Christian church about the Latter-day Saints and was surprised when they fervently

warned me to stay away from the “Mormons.” I listened to their advice at first, but as I was scrolling through social media about a week later, I came across an address by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. In the talk, he mentioned that members of the Church should be respectful to other religions (see “Faith, Family, and Religious Freedom,” [lds.org/prophets-and-apostles](https://www.lds.org/prophets-and-apostles)). As I listened to Elder Holland, I felt what I now know as the Spirit and decided that I needed to learn more about the Church.

I ended up going to church and later met with missionaries. I was touched by their teachings, particularly the plan of salvation. My parents weren’t too happy when I decided to be baptized, but they accepted that I was old enough to make my own decisions. When

my grandparents visited me in America a few months later, I was able to teach them about the gospel. They both decided to be baptized.

The gospel has brought me so much joy and it has led me to my soon-to-be wife. It is worth every sacrifice I have had to make or will make.

Paving the Way for Future Generations

Brooke Kinikini, Hawaii, USA

► I joined the Church when I was 15 years old, but I had been going to church and developing my faith and testimony since I was a child. Even though I was the only member in my family, my faithful friends loved me and led me by their example.

Unlike the pioneers of old, I never had to trudge with a handcart across the frozen plains. In fact, I didn’t face

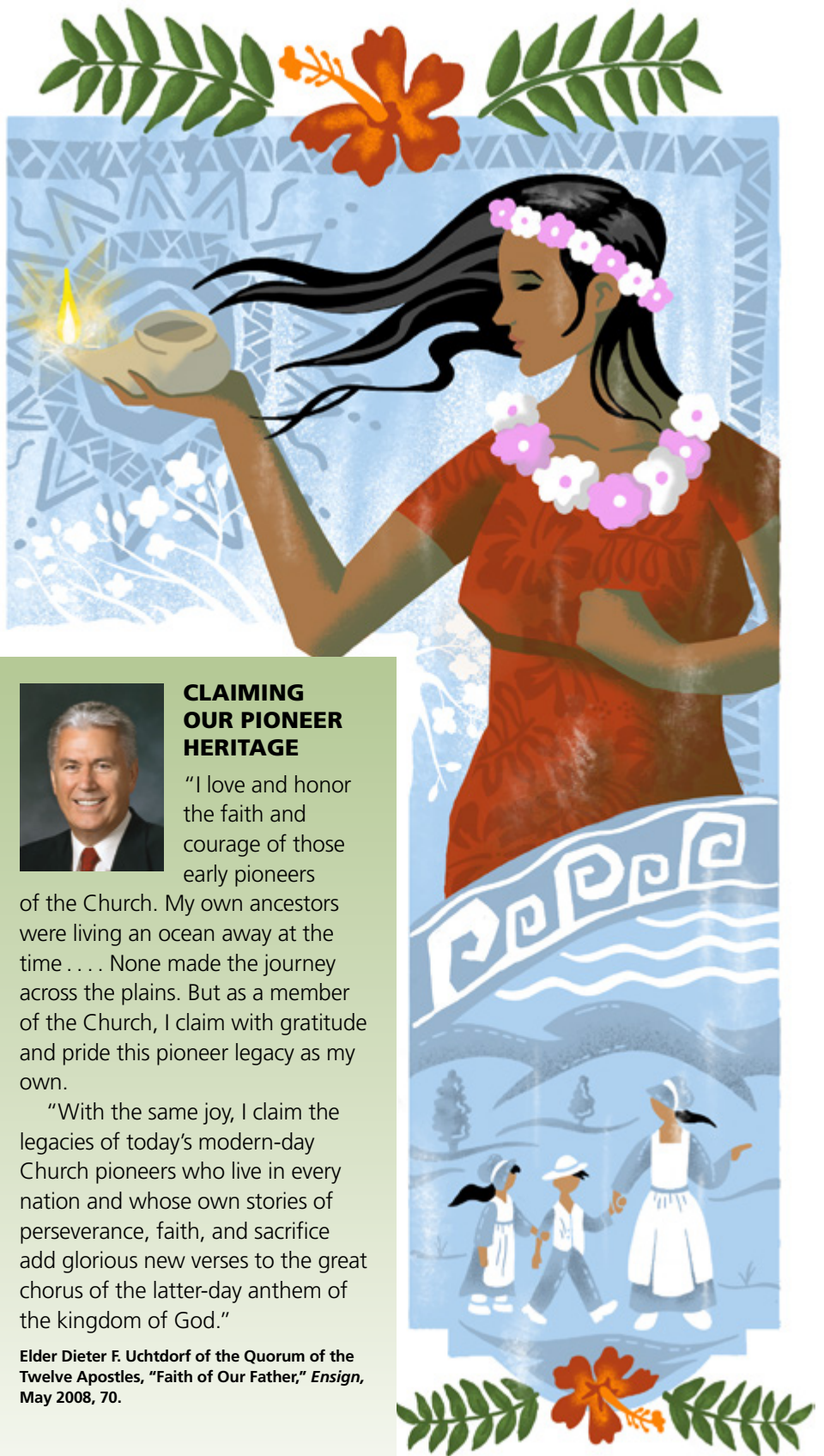


many hardships at all when joining the Church. Sure, I lost some friends and I had to attend church alone and go to seminary by myself. But when I think about the impact it has had and continues to have on my family, I know that it was one of the best decisions I ever made. My decision to be baptized, to be sealed in the temple, and to remain faithful to my covenants has created a chain reaction that will positively impact the lives of my three beautiful children, as well as future generations, forever.

Being a pioneer is about paving the way for others. I like to think that one of the many blessings I've received for being a faithful member of the Church is that I can help bring others unto Christ. A seemingly small event—like the baptism of a 15-year-old girl in Maui, Hawaii, or the humble prayer of a 14-year-old boy in a grove—can change the lives of families in the past, present, and future.

The modern title of pioneer isn't just reserved for converts. As we seek to build a lasting heritage of faithfulness for future generations, we can all become pioneers. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.



CLAIMING OUR PIONEER HERITAGE

“I love and honor the faith and courage of those early pioneers

of the Church. My own ancestors were living an ocean away at the time None made the journey across the plains. But as a member of the Church, I claim with gratitude and pride this pioneer legacy as my own.

“With the same joy, I claim the legacies of today's modern-day Church pioneers who live in every nation and whose own stories of perseverance, faith, and sacrifice add glorious new verses to the great chorus of the latter-day anthem of the kingdom of God.”

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Faith of Our Father,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 70.

“I love waiting,”
said no one ever.
But maybe they
should.

Feel Disconnected? Try Slowing Down

By Charlotte Larcabal

Church Magazines

If you rank standing in long lines right up there with spiders and snakes on your list of personal nightmares, you're not alone.

Whether we're standing in line, sitting in traffic, or watching for the bus, we hate waiting.

Luckily for us, wait times are truly becoming the stuff of nightmares: a dreaded possibility but not a daily reality. We live in the age of zero wait times. Technology is speeding everything up so much that we have shorter attention spans than goldfish (yes, really).¹ When the need to wait does arise, we try to fill our time—usually by turning to a mobile device.

There's nothing inherently wrong with technology or efficiency, but a rapid pace and constant distractions might be keeping us from something more important.

More Than a Quippy Scripture

Not long ago, I was feeling spiritually adrift. I couldn't understand it. I was going to church, rattling off prayers, and glancing at my scriptures. I occasionally felt spiritual

promptings, but overall, I felt somewhat disconnected.

As I told Heavenly Father this in an anxious prayer, these words came to mind: “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).

It was as if the word *still* was highlighted, underlined, and in bold type.

I may have been doing all the right things, but I was doing them at high speeds and with shallow focus. I had adopted a distracted approach to living the gospel.

No religious practice could bring me deep spiritual connection if my participation was cursory and distracted. It was much more than a quippy scripture. To come to know God and to connect with the divine, permeating knowledge I was craving, I needed to slow down and be still.

Heeding that prompting wasn't easy. But it made all the difference.

Now, Slow Down There . . .

Nephi teaches that those who “*diligently seeketh* shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be *unfolded* unto them, by the power of the Holy

Ghost” (1 Nephi 10:19; emphasis added).

Let’s break it down: Learning the mysteries of God requires *diligently seeking*. It’s a consistent and intentional practice, not a onetime google. Next, the mysteries don’t pop up; they gradually *unfold*. This process takes time. And that time is critical! The *time* we take to ponder and seek gives us *time* to connect to the Spirit, by whose power answers come.

President David O. McKay (1873–1970) declared that meditation—“deep,

continued reflection on some religious theme”—is “one of the . . . most sacred doors through which we pass into the presence of the Lord.”² By slowing down, we can open a door to revelation. We can transcend the world’s pervasive ideals and connect with the divine. We *need* that door. We need to slow down.

It Takes Effort

For me, slowing down meant kneeling and speaking out loud as I

prayed. The reverent posture and my own audible words helped me focus better. Slowing down meant studying from physical scriptures and taking physical notes. It takes more effort and time, and that increased effort and time is a good way to “awake and arouse your faculties,” thus allowing the Spirit and the desire for truth to “work in you” and that seed of testimony to “get root, and grow up, and bring forth fruit” (Alma 32:27, 37).

We can find almost any information with a few keystrokes, but spiritual understanding and conversion require *time* and diligent *effort*. *How* you slow down and devote effort to the gospel isn’t important, just that you do! When we are spoon-fed information, we eliminate much of our personal participation in our own learning. We eliminate chances to connect with the Spirit.

We can certainly embrace the technology and advances that make daily tasks easier and enable us to use our time more efficiently. But we can’t afford to adopt the distracted living and shallow thinking that so often come with it. Instead of dreading the need to wait, we can embrace it as an opportunity to slow down, meditate, and deepen our connection with the Spirit. ■

NOTES

1. See Leon Watson, “Humans Have Shorter Attention Span Than Goldfish, Thanks to Smartphones,” *The Telegraph*, May 15, 2015, telegraph.co.uk.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* (2011), 31, 32.



Am I Majoring in the Gospel?

As young adults, are we balancing studying for our careers with healthy doses of gospel learning?

By Destiny Yarbro

I remember at one point while I was in college, my testimony started to waver. I was so busy with homework and tests that I had begun to neglect my scripture study and prayers. I never seemed to have enough time to do everything I was expected to do. But in a moment of clarity, I suddenly had the thought, “Destiny, you’re majoring in history, but shouldn’t you really be majoring in the gospel?”

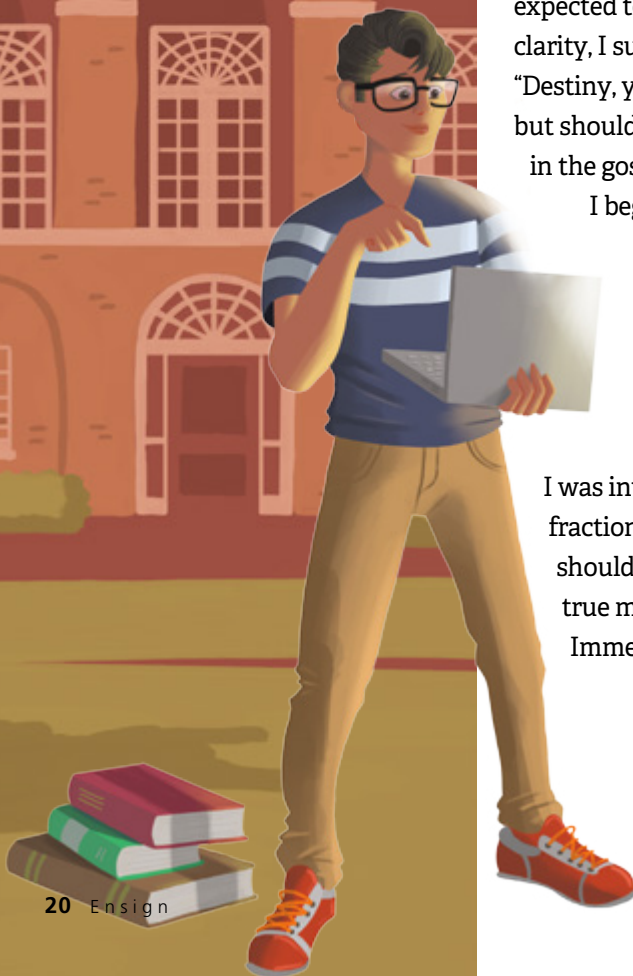
I began to look at where I invested the majority of my time. I realized that while I was investing hundreds of hours per year reading secular resources,

I was investing only a fraction of that in what should have been my true major: the gospel. Immediately, it made

sense why my testimony was wavering. And I knew how to fix it.

Ways to Major in the Gospel

There are a variety of ways to make the gospel our major, regardless of what subject we’re studying at school.



Holding Morning Devotionals

One way (my personal favorite) is to always have a morning devotional to start my day, no matter what.

Daily devotionals may seem overwhelming if you think of them as only a long scripture study. For me, a devotional can be short or long, depending on my commitments that day. My morning devotional consists of prayer, scripture study (usually a few verses at a time to ponder), writing a few thoughts in my journal, and then reviewing my goals for the day,

week, or year. It's something that can be done in as little as 15 minutes, or it can be as long as an hour or two if I'm really on a roll and have only a few commitments that day.

By starting off my day with my number-one priority—my relationship with my Heavenly Father and a review of both my eternal and my temporal goals—I feel I can dedicate the rest of the day to school, work, and so on, armed with the Spirit that came from my devotional.



FOCUSING ON WHAT MATTERS MOST

"Strength comes not from frantic activity but from

being settled on a firm foundation of truth and light. It comes from placing our attention and efforts on the basics of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. It comes from paying attention to the divine things that matter most.

"Let us simplify our lives a little."

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Of Things That Matter Most," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 22.



Taking the Sabbath Off from School

Another way I did my best to major in the gospel was to decide not to do any homework on Sunday. At first the idea seemed impossible, and I was very nervous to try to compete with my classmates when they had an entire extra day to study each weekend. However, let me share some of the unanticipated blessings that came from this decision:

1. The Lord increased my ability on weekdays so that I could do well in my classes even when I had to get up early to study.
2. Because I had to plan when to do my homework in advance, I learned the critical skills of setting up and following a schedule as well as how to estimate and manage time. I struggled less with procrastination than most of my classmates. (And, ironically, I found that some friends would often party on Saturday and cram last-minute on Sunday, which meant that they really didn't have an "extra" day for homework after all.)
3. I believe strongly that taking a day off to clear my mind helped me be

more mentally and emotionally healthy than I would have been without a break.

4. My Sabbath worship was more meaningful because I wasn't thinking about rushing home to do my homework. I was never tempted to miss church because of a paper due the next day.

Other Ways to Prioritize

Deciding how to major in the gospel is between you and the Lord, but maybe consider one of these other ways you could make sure the gospel is your number-one priority:

- Sign up for a religion class (whether at a Church-sponsored school or at your local institute of religion).
- Set up "companionship study" with a roommate or friend each morning to help get you out of bed.
- Listen to a general conference talk when you're getting ready in the morning, during your workouts, while you walk to school, or at any other moments when your mind would otherwise be distracted with trivial things.
- When you sit down to do your homework, first open up your scriptures, read a few verses to invite the influence of the Spirit of the Lord, and pray for help to recall what you are learning.

Conclusion

By making the gospel your true focus, you are establishing good habits that will bless your whole life, from your future marriage and children to your ability to serve in Church callings and in your community. Take a moment to write down a few ways you can show your Heavenly Father that He is your number-one priority. ■

The author lives in Arizona, USA.



Making the Gospel a Priority

Other young adults share ways they have chosen to make the gospel a priority while at school.



"I make the gospel a priority by making sure I am communicating with my Heavenly Father through prayer, thanking Him for all blessings in my life, expressing my thoughts and feelings and my dreams and hopes for the future. I also try to see what gospel truths I can learn in the secular learning in school. I personally believe that spiritual truths and reminders of our Heavenly Father's teachings and love for us are everywhere. We just need to look with the right eyes or right perspective to see it."

Stephanie Eldenberg, Sweden



"I have two things particularly. First is to ponder the scriptures while reading. Second is to remember how blessed my life is every single moment. I am trying to read the scriptures daily, pray daily, go to the temple, help the bishop, and help others in various ways."

Sei Kuwahara, Japan



"My stake president said to sign up as a temple worker. I didn't and as a freshman only went to the temple maybe one time. I finally decided that I don't want to miss a week without going to the temple. I've been doing it weekly since August 2016."

Mikeila Aquino, California, USA



"Daily scripture study is huge for me. It starts my day off with thinking about the gospel. I'm also pretty good [at casually mentioning the gospel] at work or school. Little things like 'When I was at family home evening' or 'While I was on my mission' help the gospel stay at the front of my thoughts and help bring up missionary opportunities."

Jared Valdez, Utah, USA



THE SPIRITUAL SHOULD NOT BECOME SECONDARY

"If we will keep spiritual learning in its proper place, we will have to make some hard choices of how we use our time. But there should never be a conscious choice to let the spiritual become secondary as a pattern in our lives. Never. . . .

. . . . When we put God's purposes first, He will give us miracles. . . .

. . . . Those apparent prison walls of 'not enough time' will begin to recede, even as you are called to do more."

President Henry B. Eyring, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "Education for Real Life," *Ensign*, Oct. 2002, 18, 20, 21.

Take Your Selfie to the Temple

By Jessica Hansen and Tiffany Pontius

The challenge: encourage members of the ward to attend the temple. The solution? Selfies.

Jessica: As a newly called ward temple committee leader, I heard the bishop's words to me ringing in my head for months: "Sister Hansen, let's not be afraid to do more than just plan a regularly scheduled temple trip." I knew that Heavenly Father wanted our ward to be more diligent in attending the temple—especially since we lived in an area with temples nearby—but I wasn't sure how to make that happen. I talked to people, prayed about it, studied the topic often, and slowly I started to see pieces of what the Lord wanted us to do.

Then one Sunday I woke up knowing exactly what to do. We would call it #takeyourselfietothetemple.

A Miracle Unfolds

Every week for nine weeks we would attend the temple. Afterward we would each take a picture (or "selfie") in front of the temple and post the photo, along with our testimony, on social media.

Over the next nine weeks we watched a miracle unfold. Members of our ward were attending the temple and posting their selfies and testimonies constantly. They were taking their friends and family with them. Members who were normally silent or shy at church suddenly had a lot to share in their posts. And for some, like Tiffany, this activity was an answer to prayers.

A Lack of Motivation

Tiffany: Growing up as a member of the Church in Texas, USA, had its challenges, one of which was access to the temple. As a child, I traveled five hours with my family to visit the temple in Dallas. Then the Houston Texas Temple was built only two hours away.

We've all been counseled to attend the temple as often as our circumstances allow, but for us that was usually only once a quarter.

In college, I lived only minutes away from a temple, yet I rarely attended. It just wasn't high on my list of priorities. After college, I moved to an area where there was more than one temple nearby, and in three and a half years I had been to only one of them.

I always felt like I should increase my temple attendance but had no motivation to do so. I've always been a very spiritual person and felt like I didn't need the temple to increase my spirituality.

One day I found myself talking to a friend about my lack of testimony concerning the temple, and he suggested that it could be from a lack of consistent temple attendance. I started praying for the desire to attend the temple.

And then our ward invited us to #takeyourselfietothetemple.

No More Excuses

Suddenly I couldn't make excuses not to attend the temple. People were depending on me, and I wanted to be a good example by participating. My friends on Facebook who weren't even members of my ward started

commenting on what we were doing and—amazingly—started participating as well. Everyone had a newfound enthusiasm for attending the temple and sharing gospel truths through social media.

But the most amazing thing was how people's testimonies of the temple—mine included—changed as they shared them. We went from sharing simple truths to sharing profound and personal thoughts. The sacred and peaceful feelings of the temple stayed with those who participated—and with friends who saw their selfies and testimonies on social media.

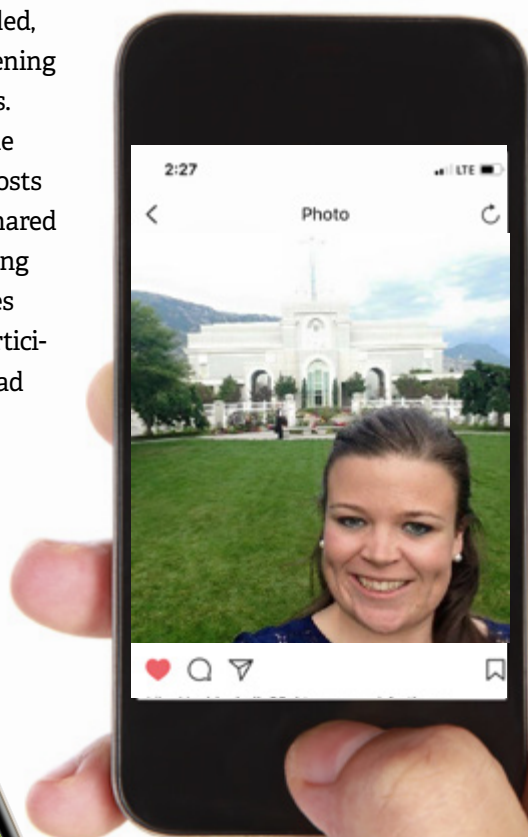
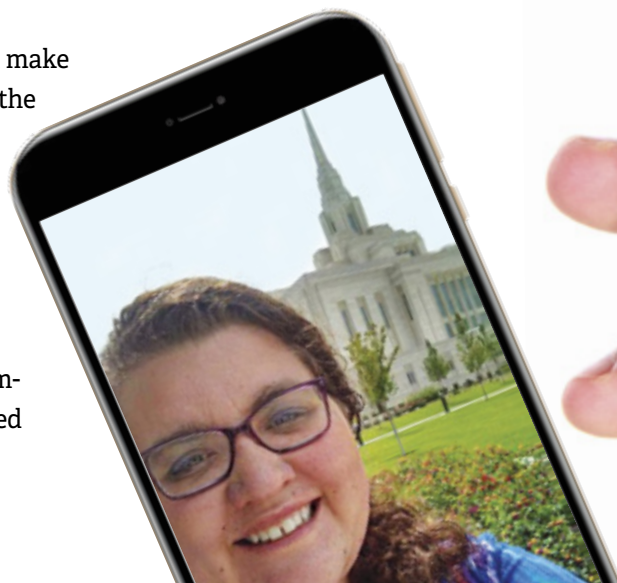
Reflecting on Our Experiences

When the nine weeks ended, our ward hosted a home evening to reflect on our experiences. We watched a video of all the selfies (there were over 80 posts on social media) and then shared our testimonies. The following Sunday our ward boundaries changed. Some who had participated felt that the temple had

given us the spiritual strength we needed to prepare us for whatever Heavenly Father had in store for us.

Jessica and I both took note of the miracles we personally experienced. Jessica felt the Lord guiding her in her calling, allowing her to touch the lives of ward members needing spiritual strength. I gained a testimony of the blessings of attending the temple, and I now attend regularly. Both of us saw answers to our prayers—and the miracles that happen when you make the effort and sacrifice to attend the temple. ■

Tiffany Pontius (below right) lives in Utah, USA. Jessica Hansen (below left) now lives in Wyoming, USA.



SELFIE OF JESSICA HANSEN IN FRONT OF OGDEN UTAH TEMPLE; SELFIE OF TIFFANY PONTIUS IN FRONT OF MOUNT TIMPANOGOS UTAH TEMPLE; IMAGES OF PHONES FROM GETTY IMAGES



FAITH TO PUSH FORWARD

Armed with a testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, members of the Willie handcart company pushed forward against hardship and hunger.

The story I would like to share began in the rolling green countryside of rural England, where John Bennett Hawkins was born in Gloucester in 1825. He was baptized a member of the Church in 1849 and left that same year for America with a company of Latter-day Saints on the ship *Henry Ware*. He arrived in Utah in August 1852 and was one of the pioneer blacksmiths in the early days of the Utah settlement.

His future bride, Sarah Elizabeth Moulton, also came from rural England. Irchester is a small village near the River Nene, about 65 miles (105 km) north of London and about the same distance east of Birmingham. Sarah Elizabeth was born there in 1837 to Thomas Moulton and Esther Marsh. Sarah Elizabeth's mother died when she was just two years old, and in 1840 her father married Sarah Denton.

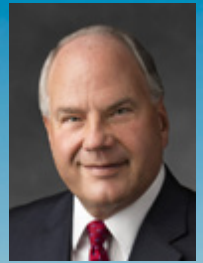
In June 1837, Elder Heber C. Kimball (1801–68) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and other Church leaders were in England doing missionary work. Among the many converts taught by these missionaries was a family who gave the Moultons a copy of the tract *A Voice of Warning*, by Elder Parley P. Pratt (1807–57) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Upon reading it, Thomas and Sarah were converted and baptized on December 29, 1841. At that time, their family consisted of just two children—Sarah Elizabeth, age four; and Mary Ann, seven months old.

The spirit of gathering was strong in the hearts of the converts in Europe. Their great desire was to immigrate to America, where they might be with the majority of the Saints. Like many others, the Moultons did not have enough money to fulfill this desire. But their resolution was strong, and they began to save money in a fruit jar.

Perpetual Emigration Fund

In 1849, President Brigham Young (1801–77) set up the Perpetual Emigration Fund to help Church members secure passage to America. The first to travel with the aid of this fund did so by wagon train, but this means of transportation was slow and expensive. Even with the help of the Perpetual Emigration Fund, few could afford to make the journey. Church leaders investigated the use of handcarts and learned that handcarts would make travel faster and less costly.

Left: Present-day Gloucester, England, countryside



**By Elder
Ronald A.
Rasband**

Of the Quorum
of the Twelve
Apostles

PHOTOGRAPH © EDDIECLOUD / STOCK.ADOBE.COM



Scotts Bluff National Monument in western Nebraska, USA

By then the Moulton family numbered seven children, but with their fruit jar savings, help from the Perpetual Emigration Fund, and the cheaper means of transportation, their dreams of immigration became a possibility. For a family of nine, it took careful planning to prepare for the trip. To save even more money for the purchases they would need to make, they lived chiefly on barley flour for nearly a year.

As the time of their departure approached, Thomas hesitated to make the journey because his wife was expecting a baby. But Sarah Denton Moulton was a woman of faith and could not be deterred. Before they left England, one of the missionaries gave Sarah a blessing in which he promised her that if she would go to Utah, she would make the journey safely without losing even one member of her family—quite a promised blessing to a soon-to-be family of 10!

The family, who set sail from Liverpool, England, in 1856 on the ship *Thornton*, welcomed a new baby boy just three days into the voyage. The *Thornton* had been chartered to carry 764 Danish, Swedish, and English Saints. They were under the direction of a missionary named James Grey Willie.

Six weeks later the *Thornton* sailed into New York Harbor. The Moulton family then boarded a train to make the long journey westward. They arrived in Iowa City, Iowa, in June 1856, which was the starting point for the handcart companies. Only three days before their arrival, Captain Edward Bunker's handcart company had pulled away from Iowa City, taking many of the available handcarts.

Handcart Headaches

About two weeks later, the Willie company was joined by another company of Saints, under the direction of Edward Martin. Church agents at Iowa City, who had worked hard to equip and send off the first three handcart companies, now had to struggle frantically to provide for an unexpectedly large body of late arrivals. They had to construct 250 handcarts before these Saints could continue their journey.

Every able-bodied man was put to work making handcarts, while the women made dozens of tents for the journey. Many of these amateur cart makers did not adhere to specifications but made carts of various sizes and strength, which would prove a handicap to them. Of necessity, the number of needed handcarts required that they be built out of green, unseasoned timber, and in some instances, using rawhide and tin for the wheels. Each cart carried food as well as the total earthly possessions of many of the Saints.

Often, 400 to 500 pounds (180 to 230 kg) of flour, bedding, cooking utensils, and clothing were loaded onto each handcart. Only 17 pounds (8 kg) of personal luggage on a cart was allowed each person.

Thomas Moulton and his family of 10 were assigned to the fourth handcart company, again under the direction of Captain Willie. It comprised over 400 Saints, with more than the usual number of aged folks. A report made in September of that year listed “404 persons, 6 wagons, 87 handcarts, 6 yoke of oxen, 32 cows, and 5 mules.”¹

The Moulton family was allowed one covered and one



open handcart. Thomas and his wife pulled the covered cart. New baby Charles and sister Lizzie (Sophia Elizabeth) rode in this cart. Lottie (Charlotte) could ride whenever the cart was going downhill. Eight-year-old James Heber walked behind with a rope tied around his waist to keep him from straying. The other heavy cart was pulled by the two oldest girls—Sarah Elizabeth (19) and Mary Ann (15)—and by brothers William (12) and Joseph (10).

In July 1856 the Moultons bade farewell to Iowa City and began their 1,300-mile (2,090 km) journey westward. After traveling 26 days, they reached Winter Quarters (Florence), Nebraska. As was customary, they spent several days there, mending carts and taking on supplies since there were no major cities between Winter Quarters and Salt Lake City.

It was so late in the season before the Willie company was prepared to leave Winter Quarters that a council was held to decide whether they should go or remain until spring. Some who already had been over the route strongly cautioned them against the danger of traveling so late in the season. But Captain Willie and many company members felt that they should go on because they had no accommodations to spend the winter in Florence.

Dwindling Provisions

With inadequate provisions, members of the Willie company started their journey again on August 18, thinking they could replenish their supplies at Fort Laramie (north of present-day Laramie, Wyoming). In the face of the warning

they had received, they placed an extra 100-pound (45 kg) sack of flour in each cart and trusted that they would meet supply wagons sent out from Salt Lake City. However, the drivers of the supply wagons, thinking there were no more immigrants on the trail, headed back to Salt Lake City in late September, before the Willie company reached them.

In Florence, the Moultons found it advisable to leave behind a box of supplies because the load they had to pull for a family of 10 was just too heavy. By then, they had left baggage at the port in Liverpool, a box of clothing onboard ship, a trunk of clothing at New York City, and a trunk of supplies containing most of their personal belongings at Iowa City. Even on the trail, they looked for ways to ease their burden.

It is difficult for those who enjoy all the comforts of modern life to imagine the daily misery of the Moulton family and the other remarkable men and women of those handcart companies. Can we imagine the blistered hands and feet, sore muscles, dust and grit, sunburn, flies and mosquitoes, stampeding buffalo herds, and Indian encounters? Can we imagine the river crossings and the difficulties of sand and slippery rocks as they tried to get the handcarts across swift or deep-running water? Can we understand the weakness that comes from a lack of sufficient nourishment?

During their travels, the Moulton children went into the fields with their mother to glean wild wheat to add food to their rapidly diminishing supplies. At one point the family had only barley bread and one apple a day for every three members.



Sweetwater River near Martin's Cove, Wyoming, USA

Just before dusk on September 12, a party of missionaries returning from the British Mission arrived in camp. They were led by Elder Franklin D. Richards (1821–99) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, my wife's great-great-grandfather. When Elder Richards and the others saw the difficulties of the handcart company, they promised to hurry on to the Salt Lake Valley and send back help as soon as possible.

On September 30 the Willie company reached Fort Laramie, Wyoming, 400 miles (645 km) east of Salt Lake City.

With the beginning of October, winter set in, and the difficulties multiplied as the company attempted to press onward. Provisions were running so low that Captain Willie was compelled to cut rations to 15 ounces (425 g) of flour for men, 13 ounces for women, 9 ounces for children, and 5 ounces for infants. Soon they would face howling wind and drifting snow. By the morning of October 20 the snow was 4 inches (10 cm) deep, and tents and wagon covers had been smashed by its weight. Five members of the company and some of the draft animals had died of cold and starvation the night before the storm, and five more members died over the next three days. Feeding the women, children, and sick first, many of the reasonably strong men were forced to go without anything to eat.

Relief Parties Set Out

Two miles (3 km) below Rocky Ridge on the Sweetwater River, the company made camp and waited in starvation, cold, and misery for the storm to pass.

When the Franklin D. Richards party reached Salt Lake City, they immediately reported to President Young the precarious condition of the immigrants. The Saints in the valley had not expected more immigrants until the following year, and news of their plight spread like wildfire.

Two days later, October 6, 1856, general conference was held in the Old Tabernacle. From the pulpit, President Young made the call for men, food, and supplies in mule- or horse-drawn wagons to leave the following day to render assistance.²

John Bennett Hawkins was in the Old Tabernacle on that day and answered the call to help. He was one of the hundreds of individuals in relief parties that set out from Salt Lake City. On the evening of October 21, the rescuer wagons finally reached the Willie camp. They were greeted with joy and gratitude by the frozen and starving survivors. This was the first meeting of John Bennett Hawkins and Sarah Elizabeth Moulton, who would become my great-grandparents.

On October 22, some of the rescuers pushed on to help the other handcart companies, while William H. Kimball, with the remaining wagons, started back to Salt Lake City in charge of the Willie company.

Those too weak to pull their handcarts placed their possessions in the wagons and walked beside them. Those unable to walk rode in the wagons. When they arrived at Rocky Ridge, another terrible snowstorm fell upon them. As they struggled up the side of the ridge, they had to wrap themselves in blankets and quilts to keep from freezing to death. About 40 of the company had already perished.³



The weather was so cold that many of the Saints suffered frostbite on their hands, feet, and faces while crossing the ridge. One woman was blinded by the frost.

We can imagine the Moultons, with their brood of eight children, pulling and pushing their two carts as they struggled through the deep snow. One cart was drawn by Thomas and his wife with its precious cargo—Lottie, Lizzie, and baby Charles—with little James Heber stumbling and being dragged along by the rope around his waist. The other cart was drawn and pushed by Sarah Elizabeth and the other three children. A kind, elderly woman, seeing little James Heber's struggle, grasped his hand as he trailed behind the handcart. This kindly act saved his right hand, but his left hand, exposed to the subzero weather, froze. When they reached Salt Lake City, several of his fingers on that hand were amputated.

Early in the afternoon of November 9, the wagons of suffering humanity halted in front of the tithing office building, where the Joseph Smith Memorial Building now stands in Salt Lake City. Many arrived with frozen feet and limbs. Sixty-nine had died on the journey. But the promise to the Moulton family in that blessing in England had been fulfilled. Thomas and Sarah Denton Moulton had not lost a child.

From Rescue to Romance

The company was greeted by hundreds of Salt Lake citizens anxiously awaiting their coming and ready to help with their care. Gratitude and appreciation toward one of the young heroes who had helped save the Moultons from

the grasp of death soon blossomed into romance and love for Sarah Elizabeth.

On December 5, 1856, amidst the happy wishes of her loved ones, Sarah Elizabeth married John Bennett Hawkins, her rescuer. They were sealed for time and eternity the following July in the Endowment House. They made their home in Salt Lake City and were blessed with three sons and seven daughters. One of those daughters, Esther Emily, married my grandfather Charles Rasband in 1891.

On July 24 we celebrate Pioneer Day, and we express gratitude for the many pioneers who gave everything to build up the Salt Lake Valley and many other communities in the western United States. We also express gratitude for Latter-day Saint pioneers throughout the world who have blazed—and are blazing—a gospel path for others to follow.

What moved them on? What pushed them forward? The answer is a testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a great-grandson of pioneers, I add my witness and testimony that their struggles were not in vain. What they felt, I feel. What they knew, I know and bear record of. ■

From a Pioneer Day sunrise service message delivered at the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City on July 24, 2007.

NOTES

1. Report by F. D. Richards and Daniel Spencer, in Marilyn Austin Smith, *Faithful Stewards—the Life of James Gray Willie and Elizabeth Ann Pettit* (1985), 103; excerpt available at history.lds.org.
2. See Brigham Young, "Remarks," *Deseret News*, Oct. 15, 1856, 252; see also LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion* (1981), 120–21.
3. Of these, 19 had died prior to the company reaching Fort Laramie, including 7 who died on the ocean voyage and 4 who died at Iowa City. Another 19 died between Fort Laramie and the onset of winter, most in the days leading up to the rescuers' arrival.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CODY BELL

The Book of Mormon Changes Lives

*These converts developed faith through
reading the Book of Mormon.*

The Book of Mormon is indeed a gift intended to bring us, God's children, to a knowledge of the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Enrique Serpa Bustamante, a member from Lima, Peru, thinks of the Book of Mormon as letters from a loving parent: "Our Heavenly Father wrote 'letters' through the prophets, giving counsel, comfort, and guidance for our good and blessing us at all times. He is so wise in His plan that He knows how to give us those letters of love precisely when we have our hearts prepared to understand His blessings and His gospel."

Here are some testimonies from several converts around the world on what it was about the Book of Mormon that stood out to them when they were learning about the Church.

Another Testament of Jesus Christ

I saw a copy of the Book of Mormon in my niece's house in Ibadan, Nigeria. Being an avid reader, I was curious to understand why the book says it is "Another Testament of Jesus Christ," so I took the book and read it.

The subtitle "Another Testament of Jesus Christ" opened my mind to the possibility of a universal Savior rather than just the Savior of the Israelites, which at that time was a great concern to me. His visit to the Nephites and the establishment of His laws and

ordinances among those people got me wanting to know more about His ministry.

That subtitle led me to learn more about the Church. I started feeling the Spirit as I obeyed the admonitions written in the Book of Mormon, like praying to know the truth for myself (see Moroni 10:4). Now I know that the Savior lives and loves all of us.

Ezekiel Akeh, Idaho, USA

1 Nephi 8—Fruit "above All That I Ever before Tasted"

In 1 Nephi 8:11–12, Lehi describes the fruit of the tree of life as "most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted. . . . It filled my soul with exceedingly great joy." When I read these verses, I felt strongly that this fruit was very special, and I desired to have it too.

I felt a lot of empathy for Lehi. I thought about how if I were Lehi and this fruit did exist, I'd feel the same as him and would desperately want my family to eat it too. This felt especially true for me because my parents are not yet members of the Church; so even when I read these verses now, they seem to speak what is in my heart.

I knew that this fruit was special, even before I knew that it represented God's love and His gospel. Later on, once I understood the meaning of the fruit, I thought about how accurately it is described in the scriptures.

The scriptures are truly records of truth from the prophets and contain God's word.

Eun Jin Yeom, Gyeonggi, South Korea

Jacob 5:74—A Desire to Serve God

When I was learning about the Church, I read Jacob 5:74. It stuck with me from the moment I read it. I was a very active member of my previous church for my whole life and had always had a desire to serve God. I even hoped to one day study philosophy and theology in order to serve Him. I had already passed my entrance exams to study philosophy.

But I will never forget when I first read that scripture. I remember that it was the night after I had first attended an LDS Church service. During one of the breaks between classes, I saw on the bulletin board the revelation received

by President Thomas S. Monson concerning the lowering of the missionary age.

When I read Jacob 5:74 that night, I knew that I had to serve God. And somehow, looking at the missionaries—those two young men who were the same age as me—giving their lives for Him, I knew that this was how I could do so. The night before that Church service, I had decided to get baptized. The night after the service, I decided to go on a mission. Now I have returned home honorably after serving the beautiful people of the Philippines Cebu East Mission.

Josef Gutierrez, Batangas, Philippines

The Book of Enos—Forgiveness for Sins

When I first read the Book of Mormon, I didn't know where to start. I was struggling with forgiveness, especially in forgiving myself and knowing whether I was worthy of being forgiven. One of the sister missionaries told me that I would get the answer in the scriptures and that if I didn't know where to start, I should pray about it and the scriptures I needed would be there. I decided to flip through and read where I stopped—the book of Enos, verses 4–6. I knew the Book of Mormon was true at that very moment after reading it.

Jennifer Andreski, California, USA

Mosiah 27—The Opportunity to Change

When I first read the Book of Mormon, the section of the Book of Mormon that I liked the most was in Mosiah when Alma's son was renouncing the Church and trying to destroy it. But there was a huge change in him—he felt the Holy Ghost and he was transformed into a believer. I really loved that because the opportunity to change should be given to everyone.

Maria Gracia Henrique Gonzalez, Maule, Chile

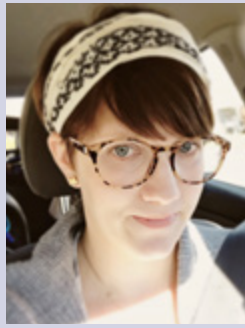




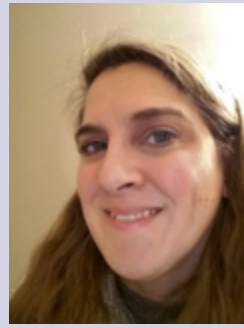
Ezekiel Akeh



Josef Gutierrez



Jennifer Andreski



Marie-Chantal Hogue



Venu Bhaskar Nakka

Mosiah 27:28–29—Happiness and Redemption

As a new member, I was impressed by Mosiah 27:28–29. I was—and I am still—so thankful that the Lord had mercy on me and redeemed me from a life of sin. Before my baptism, I thought I was happy, but nothing could compare to the happiness I felt once I accepted the restored gospel. I had never felt so confident and so certain that a bright future was in store.

After accepting Alma’s invitation to “come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye also may be partakers of the fruit of the tree of life” (Alma 5:62), I experienced the same comforting and peaceful deliverance as Alma the Younger when he wrote: “I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God. My soul was racked with eternal torment; but I am snatched, and my soul is pained no more” (Mosiah 27:29). This passage helped me understand that my new lease on life and my newfound happiness was established upon the acknowledgement that Jesus Christ is my Savior and my Redeemer. Now I am infinitely grateful that my Savior paid the price of justice and allows me, over and over, to feel that same redeeming love each time I repent.

Marie-Chantal Hogue, Ontario, Canada

That Small Blue Book

I grew up in India, where I met the missionaries and first attended church. That Sunday happened to be Easter Sunday. Because of my work schedule, I came to church late and attended a youth Sunday School class, where one

of the missionaries taught the lesson. He quoted some scriptures from a blue book that I had never seen before but that sounded like the Bible. As he was teaching, I felt a strong feeling in my heart and knew that I too should possess this book.

I went directly to him after class and told him, “I need that book.” Since the book was his own set of scriptures, he could not give it to me, but he let me look at and feel it. I could see golden words embossed on the front: “The Book of Mormon.” I got the same feeling again that I needed the book for myself. The missionary got my address and promised to bring me one. Sure enough, the missionaries came to my house soon after and presented me with my own copy of the Book of Mormon. They then started teaching me the discussions.

That year, Easter brought an unbelievable blessing into my life: the Book of Mormon. That small blue book has brought a spirit of life into my life, and I am so thankful that I had the privilege to learn from it. ■

Venu Bhaskar Nakka, California, USA



POWERFUL TRUTHS IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

“Something powerful happens when a child of God seeks to know more about Him and His Beloved Son. Nowhere are those truths taught more clearly and powerfully than in the Book of Mormon. . . .

“My dear brothers and sisters, I testify that the Book of Mormon is truly the word of God. It contains the answers to life’s most compelling questions.”

President Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 61, 62.



**By Elder
Lance B. Wickman**

General Counsel
for the Church

Served as a General
Authority Seventy from
1994 to 2010

Religious Freedom in a Secular Age

Wisdom, fairness, and love for our religious freedoms require that we engage with our fellow citizens and find common ground.

It is easy today for pundits to dismiss concerns about religious freedom as overblown. After all, no one has repealed the First Amendment, and the Supreme Court has even ruled in favor of religious liberty in certain controversial cases.

But make no mistake. Threats to religious freedom are real and growing. Most Americans are willing to let others believe and worship as they choose, but the sphere for free and open exercise of religion is shrinking as society grows more hostile toward religion and as government enforces secular values in areas once considered private.

Yet, the Lord said, “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9). It is our Christian duty to find ways to make peace. And making peace sometimes requires that we make compromises—not compromises in our doctrines, beliefs, or moral standards, of course, but compromises in the application of religious freedom to the practical realities of life in a diverse nation.

Setting Priorities and Seeking Peace

Those of us who care deeply about religious freedom have two important responsibilities if we want to be peacemakers. First, we must set priorities so we are clear about what is core to religious freedom and what is less vital. Only then can



To Almighty God.

we understand where compromises can be struck. Second, we must learn how to get involved politically, socially, and professionally both to defend religious freedom as a fundamental right and to make appropriate compromises in the interest of peace and fairness to others. I want to touch on both these responsibilities.

First, let's discuss setting religious freedom priorities. Some may be shocked to hear this, but not all religious freedoms are equally important. This is an obvious point, but it is an important one for clear thinking.

If you had to make a choice, for example, between the freedom to pray with your family in your home and the freedom to hire only people of your own faith in your big business, I think it's obvious which one you would choose. While both involve religious liberty, one is more essential than the other. Although it can limit the free exercise of religion, barring big business owners from hiring only people of their own faith has been the law for decades. Discriminating against others because of their religious belief is wrong in a pluralistic society. But barring someone from praying at home would be an intolerable act of tyranny.

So, in a pluralistic nation where religious people and institutions find themselves competing for influence with others who have much different priorities and interests, sometimes we have to make hard choices. We have to prioritize. Defenders of religious freedom have to decide what is closer to the essential core of religious freedom and what is more peripheral. To do otherwise risks weakening our defense of what is essential. If everything that could even loosely be considered "religious" is treated as equally important, we lose the notion of what is truly essential and what is truly worth fighting for.

The Innermost Core

Let's talk, then, about what rights are at the innermost core of religious freedoms. Here our constitutional and

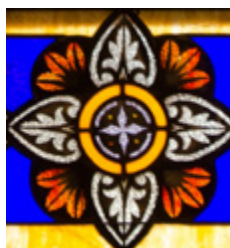
legal traditions provide some guidance. Courts have long recognized the need for greater protections for private and intimate matters than for public or commercial ones. As a general matter, religious liberty claims are more compelling the more closely they relate to purely private, family, and ecclesiastical matters and, conversely, less compelling the closer they get to public and governmental functions. There may be exceptions, but that's a good starting point when thinking about religious freedom priorities and potential compromises.

Certain freedoms are at the core of religious liberty because they lie within a fundamentally private sphere.

Regarding these freedoms, there is little room for compromise. They include freedom of belief; freedoms related to family gospel teaching and worship; freedom to express your beliefs to another willing listener, such as in missionary work; and freedoms related to the internal affairs of churches, including the establishment of church doctrine, the selection and regulation of priesthood leadership, and the determination of membership criteria. These religious freedoms fall within a zone of autonomy—personal and that of religious institutions—and thus are subject to little if any regulation by government. They are basically nonnegotiable.

The inner core includes more than just private matters. Believers are entitled to the same rights of free speech and expression in the public square as nonbelievers. That means they have the same First Amendment right as any other citizen to express their views on public streets and sidewalks; to publish their beliefs via print, radio, the internet, and social media; to participate fully in democratic debates over matters of public policy, including controversial matters; and to petition the government for protection of their interests. These are basic freedoms inherent in American citizenship and are likewise nonnegotiable.

The inner core also includes the right not to be punished, retaliated against, or discriminated against by





government based on religion. No believers should be excluded from public office or employment based solely on their faith. America doesn't have religious tests for governmental positions. Similarly, there should be no religious test for working in the various professions regulated by government.

For example, those with traditional beliefs regarding marriage, family, gender, and sexuality should not be excluded from being professional counselors, teachers, lawyers, doctors, or any other category of occupation where the government grants licenses. Nor should it be more difficult to establish a nonprofit religious organization than a secular nonprofit. And religious organizations should not be denied nonprofit status based on their doctrines and religious practices. Again, these basic rights to equal treatment are fundamental American freedoms and should not

be open for discussion or compromise.

What I've just described may be called the inner core of religious freedom. Unless that core is strongly protected, there is no religious freedom as Americans have known it. These freedoms are essential to individual believers and their families in their private lives. They are also essential to prevent official persecution and to ensure that members of particular faith communities are not rendered legal and social outcasts.

Near the Core

Close to this innermost core are freedoms that pertain to religiously important nonprofit functions carried out by religious organizations. This includes the freedom of religious nonprofits to have employment policies that reflect their religious beliefs, including the freedom to hire based

Religious liberty claims are more compelling the more closely they relate to purely private, family, and ecclesiastical matters.



Religious charities should have the right to conduct their good works according to the dictates of their respective faiths.

on religious criteria. This is the freedom, enshrined in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, that allows the Church to have a temple recommend standard for Church employment. Without this freedom, the ability of religious organizations to carry out their missions would be severely impaired.

Also in this category is the right to establish religious schools, colleges, and universities. Such institutions should have the freedom to establish student honor codes that reflect their religious teachings, including standards governing sexually appropriate conduct. And government should not use its ability to fund education to coerce or pressure religious schools into abandoning their religious standards.

Likewise, religious charities should have the right to conduct their good works according to the dictates of their respective

faiths—without substantial interference by government and without being forced to engage in activities that are fundamentally contrary to their beliefs.

These freedoms are vitally important to the Church and other religious organizations. But as you can tell, they already get us into areas that are increasingly controversial because sometimes they can extend beyond the purely private or religious.

Moving beyond the Core

As we move to more commercial settings, our expectations of unfettered religious freedom must be tempered. This is not because commerce is unimportant but because it is now heavily regulated and overlaps with what for decades have been considered civil rights—such as the right not to be discriminated against in

employment or denied service at a public accommodation based on certain characteristics.

Claims by business owners for religious freedom are strongest in small, intimate, and family business settings and are correspondingly weaker in large and impersonal corporate settings. Still, businesses should not be forced to produce products or types of services that fundamentally conflict with their religious beliefs. For instance, no one could seriously contend that a business should be required to print or distribute pornography; that principle can also apply in less obvious circumstances as well. Similarly, businesses should be able to use symbols and messages that reflect their beliefs. I understand that one fast-food restaurant prints scriptural verses on packaging and cups.

But the ability of secular businesses to deny employment or services to those whose lifestyles they consider immoral will often be limited. While a restaurant should have the right to put scriptural messages on its cups, it cannot expect to refuse service to non-Christians or LGBT persons.

Hence, the commercial setting is an area where defenders of religious freedom sometimes must be willing to make prudential compromises. Not every aspect of your business will be able to reflect your religious beliefs in the same way your home or religious congregation can. Preserving the ability of business owners to conduct every aspect of their businesses according to their religious beliefs will be impossible. And the Church itself is not in a position to fight that fight if doing so comes at the expense of more core religious freedoms. Protecting those core freedoms must remain the priority, or we risk losing even them.

The Outer Circle

Finally, there are zones where claims for religious freedom are much weaker and will be difficult to defend. Some of these pertain to government services, where officials are required by law to perform certain functions. In these

areas, religious beliefs should be reasonably accommodated, but other governmental interests may significantly limit the degree of accommodation. For instance, if it is your job to perform marriages for the county clerk's office and no one else can easily take your place, then your freedom to refuse to perform marriages that are contrary to your religious beliefs may be limited.

Still, a government that respects religious liberty should accommodate the religious needs of its civil servants to the greatest extent reasonable. Appropriate accommodations should also be made for religious dress and, where possible, Sabbath observance.

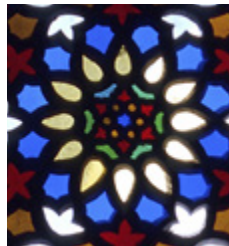
In summary, as I see things, there is a hierarchy of religious freedoms, and we are best served by setting priorities. Those that relate to private and ecclesiastical contexts, or are part of the basic rights of all citizens, are the most essential and least subject to compromise. Those that relate to commercial and governmental settings will of necessity require greater pragmatism and compromise.

Please understand that in labeling some freedoms part of the "core" of religious liberty, I am not suggesting that freedoms outside that core are unimportant or not worth defending. What I am suggesting is that if we want to preserve religious freedom and live in peace in a society that is increasingly intolerant of faith, then we will have to be clear about what matters most and make wise compromises in areas that matter less.

If we embrace an all-or-nothing attitude, we risk losing essential rights in the societal clash that will surely follow.

Lift Where You Stand

I said earlier that those who care about religious freedom must, first, set priorities and, second, learn how to get involved to defend religious freedom and make appropriate compromises in the interest of fairness and peace. I turn now to this second imperative—how to get involved in the defense of religious freedom.



Recently, Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke about how ordinary citizens can defend religious freedom. He outlined a simple four-part approach that applies to all of us:

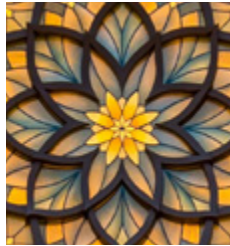
1. Become informed. To defend religious freedom, we need wisdom—indeed, inspired wisdom. And that requires knowledge. So, it is vital that we become informed about what religious freedom means; what freedoms are most essential; which competing social interests exist; how society and our friends, neighbors, and children view religious freedom; what challenges religious freedom faces; and how those challenges will affect real people living real lives.

2. Learn to speak up with courage and civility. This is a fine line. On the one hand, we cannot be intimidated into silence by intolerant voices that claim to represent “progress” and “open-mindedness.” Such voices do not represent progress, and we cannot allow them to silence us. But by the same token, we must state our views with genuine civility. This isn’t the time for anger. So, when you speak up, speak calmly. Smile a bit. Seek true understanding. Acknowledge legitimate points. And explain why the freedoms you defend are so important to you, your family, and your church—make it personal. Stand firmly for principle while understanding that in some areas we will have to compromise to protect our most vital freedoms.

3. As Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles would say, “Lift where you stand.”¹ You don’t need to run for Congress or the legislature to make a difference. And the Church doesn’t need you to undertake lawsuits on its behalf. What is needed is for you to get involved in the political, community, professional, and business organizations around you and to express your concern and support for religious freedom. The time for an insular focus on just our own families and congregations is gone. We have to get involved in the community

organizations around us and encourage them to be respectful and supportive of religious freedom, even when that means accommodating to some extent beliefs and practices we don’t like.

4. At all times, be “an example of the believers” (1 Timothy 4:12). Let others see your good works, experience your genuine friendship, and be sympathetic toward your concerns about religious freedom. As Elder Christofferson said: “Americans tend to respect and protect what they believe is good. So let us show them the highest and best in our faiths—our willingness to love and serve others, to build strong families, to live honorable lives, to be good citizens. As our fellow citizens see the goodness of your faith, ‘they will want to listen to you and understand when you say your religious freedom is being abridged. They may not agree with you or even understand entirely the issue that is so important to you. But if they know you and respect you because you are a true [example of the believers], they will be far more inclined to work toward a solution that respects [essential] religious freedoms.’”²



Compromises

Finally, I offer some thoughts on compromises. As we face difficult social and legal issues where other interests are competing with religious freedom, we need to be prepared to make wise compromises in areas that, although important, may not be core to religious freedom. When such conflicts arise, we should think in terms of “fairness for all,” a phrase the Church has used in a number of settings.

What does “fairness for all” mean? At bottom it means that every person—including people of faith and their religious communities—should have enough space to live according to their core beliefs so long as they don’t harm the fundamental rights of others. It means pluralism. It means a fair opportunity for each person to participate in society, professions, the job market, and commerce. It means looking for



less-burdensome alternatives when accomplishing important objectives. It means balancing competing interests so that as many people as possible can live as equal citizens according to their deepest values and needs.

Such balancing is not a precise science. No one can have all they want. It requires dialogue, understanding, goodwill, principled stances, hard compromises, and a willingness to adjust so that our laws and communities make space for everyone. It requires—as the Savior required—that we be peacemakers.

Conclusion

This is a tall order, to be sure. I know that some people believe religious freedom should never have to compromise. I know that some believe we should stand and fight on every front. Such feelings are visceral and emotional, and I understand them. But if we do that—if

we merely give vent to our emotions—in the current cultural environment, we risk losing more than we gain. And we risk failing to follow the example of Jesus Christ.

Wisdom, fairness, and love for our religious freedoms require that we engage with our fellow citizens, reaching across serious cultural divides, and find common ground so that everyone can live together in freedom and peace. I hope we will all do our part to achieve that lofty goal. ■

From an address, “Promoting Religious Freedom in a Secular Age: Fundamental Principles, Practical Priorities, and Fairness for All,” given at the 2016 Brigham Young University Religious Freedom Conference on July 7, 2016.

NOTES

1. See Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Lift Where You Stand,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 53–56.
2. D. Todd Christofferson, “Religious Freedom—A Cherished Heritage to Defend” (address given at the Freedom Festival Patriotic Service in Provo, Utah, June 26, 2016), mormonnewsroom.org; see also “Watchmen on the Tower: Religious Freedom in a Secular Age,” *Clark Memorandum*, spring 2015, 11.

Every person—including people of faith and their religious communities—should have enough space to live according to their core beliefs so long as they don’t harm the fundamental rights of others. It means pluralism.

HOW WE SUCCEEDED IN Sharing the Gospel

As recent converts, my wife and I didn't know much about how to be missionaries. But we set a goal to share with 100 people.

By Never Chikunguwo

Church History Adviser, Zimbabwe

My wife, Everjoyce, and I are from the small town of Mutare, on the eastern border of Zimbabwe. Soon after we were baptized and confirmed, we became excited about doing missionary work. We read that “the field is white already to harvest” (D&C 33:7), and even though we didn't know a lot about how to be missionaries, we decided we needed to “thrust in [our] sickles, and reap with all [our] might, mind, and strength.”

We were members of the newly created Dangamvura Branch located in one of the townships of Mutare. At that time, 1991, the branch had 25 members. Soon we were called as branch missionaries. We learned a lot from a senior missionary couple serving in our area. One suggestion they made was that we set goals.

We wanted to share the gospel with everyone, so we set the goal of sharing it with 100 people during the first year we were branch missionaries. Maybe we were naïve, but it seemed realistic to us. We trusted that the Lord would help us.



Never and Everjoyce Chikunguwo

By singing hymns at Church meetings, we discovered that we had a hidden talent for music. We decided to use our talents, so we started singing for—and with—people who showed interest in the gospel as we met to teach them. The Spirit accompanied us as we sang sacred music, and He touched the hearts of those we were teaching. So did the message of the restored gospel. We encouraged everyone to join our branch choir, and many did, whether they were Latter-day Saints or not. As more people learned about the gospel, many entered the waters of baptism.

As we continued our missionary efforts, we continued to fast and pray for the families who had joined the Church. We felt that others in the community were witnessing these families' righteous examples. We received more and more invitations to teach families, and our teaching pool filled with prospective members.

As a result of learning and living the gospel, newly baptized couples became closer and more loving. Parents were able to leave behind traditions that were not compatible with



gospel culture. They abstained from alcohol and tobacco. They taught their children correct principles. Many who had been overly absorbed in worldly things in the past were now able to accept callings in the Church. They became a blessing to their branch *and* their community. The hand of the Lord brought a mighty change to their lives.

Although great persecution arose in Mutare at that time, it did not stop the growth of the Church. It seemed that as opposition grew, so did the number of people who wanted to learn about the Church. For example, when men from the national army came in disguise to investigate the

Church for wrongdoing, they were touched by the Spirit. Many were later baptized and ordained to the priesthood.

With the Lord's help, we ended up sharing the gospel with many more than our original goal. Because we were willing to look for ways we could reach out to others, we were able to witness a mighty change in the lives of many in our whole community. ■

Editors' note: The rapid growth of the Dangamvura Branch soon led to the construction of a chapel. Missionary efforts spread to additional areas, and in 1995, Mutare was organized into a district with eight units.



By Bishop
Gérald Caussé
Presiding Bishop

THE SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS OF

Church Financial Self-Reliance

I recently had an opportunity to visit Kirtland, Ohio. In this historic place, where many remarkable events of the Restoration took place, visitors are invited to reflect on the faith and legacy of the valiant men and women who laid the foundations for this great latter-day work. While the Kirtland period was a time of unprecedented growth and spiritual outpouring, most of these early Saints were extremely poor and lived in precarious conditions. They had sacrificed everything—often prosperous farms and well-established professions—to follow Jesus Christ and His prophet Joseph Smith.

As I walked these sacred grounds, I could not help but reflect on the dramatic contrast that exists between the original poverty of Kirtland and the current relative prosperity of the Church and many of its multi-generational members. The Lord has blessed His Church and the Latter-day Saints in a remarkable fashion!

This abundance of temporal blessings is built upon God's often-repeated promise that "inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land."¹

This promise is central to the story and teachings of the Book of Mormon. It appears in 18 different verses, and in seven of its 15 books. Although the blessing of prosperity mentioned in these scriptures is principally of a spiritual nature, it also includes the ability for the people of God to enjoy economic progress and become temporally self-reliant.

Most notably, temporal prosperity originates in the faithful observance of a few

As leaders of the Church, we continually feel our great responsibility to use the sacred tithes and offerings in a manner that is pleasing to the Lord.



guiding principles that were revealed by the Lord through His prophets and have become part of the daily life and culture of Latter-day Saints. These principles include the law of tithing, the law of the fast, and the need for education, employment, and self-reliance. Church members are also counseled to live within their means, avoid unnecessary debt, and prepare for the future by developing temporal reserves, including food and financial assets.

As these temporal principles have been taught to members, Church leaders have also implemented them on a larger scale for the entire Church. In its finance and investment policies, the Church simply practices the doctrine and precepts that it teaches to its members. I will now discuss four of these principles.

First Principle: The Law of Tithing

In a revelation received by Joseph Smith on July 8, 1838, the Lord directed that “those who have thus been tithed shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually.” It was also explained that this particular instruction would be for all the Saints “a standing law unto them forever.”²

The law of tithing was received that day as a commandment from the Lord and the reestablishment of a divine law which had been observed in times past by the people of Israel. It was a sign of the covenant made by the Lord with His people—that if they remained faithful to it, He would bless them both spiritually and temporally. Today, the law of tithing continues to be an essential practice of Latter-day Saints, regardless of where they live, their social standing, or their material circumstances. It is also the foundation of the financial stability of the Church.

Since my call to the Presiding Bishopric, I have never ceased to be amazed at the faith and loyalty of Church members as they live this law. Without tithing, the Church would be incapable of accomplishing its divine mission. In a memorable general conference address, President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) declared: “I am profoundly grateful for the law of tithing. To me it is a constantly recurring miracle. It is made possible by the faith of the people. It is the Lord’s plan for financing the work of His kingdom.”³



Members living near Church-owned farms have the opportunity to volunteer to pick fruits and vegetables. Produce from Church farms supplies canneries and bishops’ storehouses to help members in need.

That same day in 1838, Joseph received another revelation in which the Lord clarified the manner in which the utilization of tithing should be approved and administered. He declared, “It shall be disposed of by a council, composed of the First Presidency of my Church, and of the bishop and his council, and by my high council; and by mine own voice unto them, saith the Lord.”⁴ The “bishop and his council” and “my high council” referred to in this revelation are known today as the Presiding Bishopric and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, respectively.

In our time, these instructions contained in section 120 of the Doctrine and Covenants continue to be meticulously applied. Every first Friday of December, the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric meet together to examine and approve the allocation of the Church’s sacred funds from estimated tithes and offerings for the following year. Holding such a council ensures that decisions are made in a spirit of counseling together, revelation, and unanimity.

As leaders of the Church, we continually feel our great responsibility to use the sacred tithes and offerings in a

manner that is appropriate and pleasing to the Lord. As Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has expressed so well, “We are keenly aware of the sacred nature of the widow’s mite.”⁵ President Hinckley added:

“The money the Church receives from faithful members is consecrated. It is the Lord’s purse. . . . The funds for which we are responsible involve a sacred trust to be handled with absolute honesty and integrity, and with great prudence as the dedicated consecrations of the people.

“We feel a tremendous responsibility to you who make these contributions. We feel an even greater responsibility to the Lord whose money this is.”⁶

We are not a financial institution or a commercial corporation. We are the Church of Jesus Christ, and this Church has no other objective than that which the Lord Himself assigned to it—namely, to invite all to “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him,”⁷ by “helping members live the gospel of Jesus Christ, gathering Israel through missionary work, caring for the poor and needy, and enabling the salvation of the dead by building temples and performing vicarious ordinances.”⁸

By policy, sacred tithing funds are approved and appropriated to support the spiritual and religious mission of the Church. They are spent in support of six major areas: (1) providing and maintaining places of worship for more than 30,000 congregations around the world; (2) administering

In July 2016, LDS Charities donated 280 wheelchairs and hand-powered tricycles in Karimnagar, India. Since 2001, LDS Charities has distributed over 500,000 wheelchairs in 133 countries.



the Church’s welfare and humanitarian aid programs, including more than 2,700 projects in 2017; (3) providing education programs, including Church schools, universities, and seminary and institute programs; (4) supporting our worldwide missionary operations, including 420 missions and the resources needed by approximately 70,000 missionaries; (5) building and operating nearly 160 temples around the world, with many more to come, and administering an expansive family history and records preservation program; and (6) supporting the general administration of the Church.

I am grateful for the law of tithing. It is a source of blessings, both spiritual and temporal, for the Church and for each of its members.

Second Principle: Self-Reliance and Independence

Personal agency is one of the greatest gifts of God. It is crucial for our earthly progress and our eternal salvation. By becoming self-reliant temporally and spiritually, God’s children progress in their ability to make choices independently and thus fulfill the measure of their creation.

Consequently, it is not surprising that the prophets of our dispensation have unceasingly invited Church members to strive to become self-reliant. The words of President Hinckley are particularly eloquent:

“I urge you . . . to look to the conditions of your finances. I urge you to be modest in your expenditures; discipline yourselves in your purchases to avoid debt to the extent possible. Pay off debt as quickly as you can, and free yourselves from bondage.

“This is a part of the temporal gospel in which we believe. May the Lord bless you . . . to set your houses in order. If you have paid your debts, if you have a reserve, even though it be small, then should storms howl about your head, you will have shelter for your [families] and peace in your hearts.”⁹

President Russell M. Nelson also emphasized the blessings of self-reliance when he said: “Working with a will, Saints gain a new appreciation of who they are and of their eternal worth. Righteousness, independence, thrift, industry, and self-reliance become personal goals. These qualities transform lives.”¹⁰

Just as wise budgeting at home enables individual members and families to maintain independence, prudent financial management is key to the Church's ability to act independently. This follows the divine injunction given through Joseph Smith that "through [the Lord's] providence, . . . the church may stand independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world."¹¹

This providence is particularly evident in our time. We rejoice in the fact that the Church has achieved complete financial independence and is able to accomplish its mission without any type of debt. As President Hinckley stated: "If we cannot get along, we will curtail our programs. . . . We will not borrow."¹²

Policies of financial management have been determined by Church leaders and are carefully applied in building the annual budget and allocating expenditures. These policies include two simple and clear principles:

- First, total expenditures will not exceed forecasted revenue.
- Second, the budget for operating expenses will not increase year to year at a more rapid rate than the anticipated growth in tithing contributions.

Third Principle: Provident Living

Church members are conscious of the fact that they live in a period of calamities, caused both by human actions and the furies of nature. The prophecies about the last days are unequivocal, and there is great wisdom in preparing for the future—whether it be for possible famine, disaster, financial depression, or any other unforeseen adverse circumstance. Church leaders have frequently counseled members to practice provident living by establishing home storage, including extra water, basic food items, medications, clothing, and other supplies that could be needed in case of emergency. Members have also been counseled to "gradually build a financial reserve by regularly saving a portion of their income."¹³

This same principle of temporal preparation has also been applied at the general Church level. For example, grain silos and warehouses filled with basic emergency



Members get help preserving family photos at their local family history center. Tithing donations help fund the Church's worldwide family history efforts.

necessities have been established throughout North America. The Church also methodically follows the practice of setting aside a portion of its resources each year to prepare for any possible future needs.

The moneys set aside are then added to the investment reserves of the Church. They are invested in stocks and bonds; majority interests in taxable businesses (some of which date to the Church's early Utah history); commercial, industrial, and residential property; and agricultural interests. The Church's reserves are managed by a professional group of employees and outside advisers. Risks are diversified, consistent with wise and prudent stewardship and modern investment management principles.

In the parable of the talents, the lord who asked for an accounting from his servants chastised the one who had not invested the money entrusted to him but instead had hid that money in the earth. He characterized the servant

as “wicked and slothful”¹⁴ for not investing that money for a reasonable financial return. Consistent with this spiritual principle, the Church’s financial reserves are not left idle in nonproductive bank accounts but are instead employed where they can produce a return.

These invested funds can be accessed in times of hardship to ensure the ongoing, uninterrupted work of the Church’s mission, programs, and operations and to meet emergency financial needs. The funds are also needed to provide additional financial resources to support the Church’s mission to prepare for the Lord’s Second Coming. They will help sustain Church growth as prophecy is fulfilled that the gospel of Jesus Christ will be taught and the Church established in all nations of the earth. We anticipate that a large part of this growth will take place in the developing and populous nations of the world. Ever-increasing financial means will be required to provide thousands of meetinghouses, additional temples, and other essential resources to bless members’ lives wherever they are. In short, all these funds exist for no other reason than to support the Church’s divinely appointed mission.

Fourth Principle: In the Lord’s Own Way

Paul warned the Saints of Corinth that their “faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”¹⁵ I came to better understand the importance of this principle when I was called to serve in the Presiding Bishopric of the Church.

As a Bishopric, we counsel together to study issues, making use of our personal backgrounds, experiences, and areas of expertise. But ultimately our decisions are made in the spirit of prayer and the constant seeking of revelation as to the Lord’s will. While we consider such things as macro-economic indicators and financial analyses, our ultimate goal is to fulfill our responsibilities in a manner that will carry out the designs of the Lord and sacred mission of the Church to invite all to come unto Christ. This goal can only be achieved and implemented through inspiration and the power of His priesthood. Given the directive to do things in the Lord’s own way, this calling fills me with humility each and every day.

Conclusion

Some people occasionally describe today’s Church as a powerful and prosperous institution. This may be true, but the strength of the Church cannot be measured merely by the number or beauty of its buildings or by its financial and real estate holdings. As President Hinckley once said, “When all is said and done, the only real wealth of the Church is in the faith of its people.”¹⁶ The key to understanding the Church “is to see it not as a worldwide corporation, but as millions of faithful members in thousands of congregations across the world following Christ and caring for each other and their neighbors.”¹⁷

In other words, the Church is all about people. It is all about individual members who are bound together by common beliefs and covenants. They are its strength and its future. I am deeply grateful for the revelations given by the Lord during the early days of the Restoration concerning the law of tithing, self-reliance and independence, provident living, and providing for the Saints in the Lord’s own way. I testify that these principles are the source of great spiritual and temporal blessings for Church members, their families, and the Church in its entirety. These principles will continue to guide our steps and support the mission of the Church until the Savior’s return. ■

Adapted from an address delivered at the 2018 Church History Symposium, “Financing Faith: The Intersection of Business and Religion,” at Brigham Young University on March 2, 2018.

DISCOVER MORE

Visit the Mormon Newsroom Q&A to learn more about Church finances: lds.org/go/financesE718.

NOTES

1. See, for example, 2 Nephi 1:20.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 119:4.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Of Missions, Temples, and Stewardship,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 53.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 120:1.
5. David A. Bednar, “The Windows of Heaven,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 20.
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Latter-day Saints in Very Deed,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 85.
7. Moroni 10:32.
8. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 2.2.
9. Gordon B. Hinckley, “To the Boys and to the Men,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 54.
10. Russell M. Nelson, “In the Lord’s Own Way,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 27.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 78:14.
12. Gordon B. Hinckley, “To the Boys and to the Men,” 54.
13. *Handbook 2*, 6.1.1.
14. See Matthew 25:14–30.
15. 1 Corinthians 2:5.
16. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The State of the Church,” *Ensign*, May 1991, 54.
17. “The Church and Its Financial Independence,” July 12, 2012, mormonnewsroom.org.

KEEPING THE

Faith IN Isolation

By Ryan W. Saltzgeber
Church History Department

Most Latter-day Saints today worship in wards and branches, where they can “meet together oft, to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls” (Moroni 6:5). But Moroni, the prophet who wrote those words, did some of his most lasting work when he alone remained as a disciple after the destruction of his people.

Throughout Church history, many Latter-day Saints have kept the faith alone when circumstances left them isolated. Some, like Moroni, have lived out their days as witnesses and examples for future generations. Others have lived to see a day when they were again able to share their faith.

Praying for Years for This Day

Františka Brodilová could hardly have foreseen the role she would play in Church history when a missionary knocked on her

When war, disease, or other circumstances left these Church members alone in their countries, here's how they stayed faithful.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY KEN SPENCER

door in Vienna in 1913. The year after her conversion, World War I engulfed the Austro-Hungarian Empire, missionaries returned home, and many male members were called into military service, leaving Františka and a few other sisters to meet on their own.

It was the most contact Františka would have with Church members for many years. After the war, Františka's husband, František, was promised a post in the new government of Czechoslovakia. After they moved to Prague, Františka was the only member of the Church in the country. František passed away a few months later, and Františka was left with two young daughters—Frances and Jane—to provide for.

On her own, Františka taught her daughters the gospel. "I was raised in the Church," Frances recalled. "The church was our home!"¹ Františka also wrote to Church leaders in Austria asking that



Františka Brodilová joined the Church in Vienna in 1913—a year before the start of World War I—and didn't have contact with other Church members until 1929.

Františka was present when Elder John A. Widtsoe (both in the middle row) dedicated Czechoslovakia for the preaching of the gospel in 1929.



missionaries be assigned to Czechoslovakia. Church leaders were reluctant because the last missionary in Prague, some 40

years earlier, had been jailed for preaching and then banished from the city. Despite the new government, Church leaders feared that little had changed.

Undeterred, Františka continued writing letters and praying for a mission to be established. In 1928, after Františka had been on her own for a decade, 83-year-old Thomas Biesinger—the same missionary who had preached in Prague years before—returned. It seemed that the family's isolation had come to an end. A short time later, however, Elder Biesinger's declining health forced him to leave the country.

Františka was discouraged but decided to keep writing letters to members and Church leaders abroad. Her perseverance was rewarded: on July 24, 1929, Elder John A. Widtsoe (1872–1952) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles arrived in Prague with a group of missionaries. That evening, Františka and the group climbed a hill near Karlštejn Castle, where Elder Widtsoe dedicated Czechoslovakia for the preaching of the gospel and formally organized a mission. “Few people can realize the joy we experienced,” Františka later wrote. “We [had] been praying for years for this day.”²

For nearly six months, the branch met in Františka's home. Františka eventually assisted her daughters in translating the Book of Mormon into Czech and laid a foundation for the Church in what is now the Czech Republic.

Like Františka, many Latter-day Saints have endured isolation. The following accounts describe the efforts of valiant men and women who were among the first to share the gospel and lay the foundation of the Church in their homelands.



After her husband died, Františka raised their two daughters alone.

Like Františka, many Latter-day Saints have endured isolation. These men and women nurtured the fire of their faith, shared the gospel, and built the Church in their homelands.

As the presiding elder, Fujiya Nara (behind the man in the dark suit) took responsibility for keeping in contact with members after the Japan Mission closed in 1924.



The Constant Gift of True Faith

When the Japan Mission was closed in 1924, many members felt lost and abandoned. Leadership for the approximately 160 members in Japan fell to Fujiya Nara, the presiding elder in the country, whose employment with the railroad allowed him to visit scattered members. When he was unable to visit, Fujiya maintained contact by publishing a magazine titled *Shuro (Palm Leaf)* in which he shared gospel messages and encouraged the remaining Saints through the turbulent years that followed.

After Fujiya's employment transferred him to Manchuria and his replacement as presiding elder died suddenly in 1937, contact with members in Japan was soon lost. "Even though we had no correspondence with Salt Lake City," Fujiya said, ". . . we had conviction the Church would reopen [here]."³

During World War II, Fujiya

returned to Tokyo, where he preached to his neighbors and organized weekly Sunday School meetings. After the war, Fujiya found a notice placed by Edward L. Clissold—a Latter-day Saint serving in the American military—inviting

Church members in the country to contact him. Fujiya immediately visited Edward in his hotel room. When Edward attended the Latter-day Saint meetings in Tokyo, he was surprised to find nearly 100 people attending.

"Through it all," Fujiya said later, "the greatest gift, and a constant gift, has been to know and embrace the true faith—that means to know Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost."⁴

Building the Church in Hawaii

Jonathan H. Napela was a well-respected judge on the island of Maui before he and his wife, Kiti, were baptized in 1851. After Jonathan was forced to resign his judgeship for joining the Church, he devoted his energy to building up the Church among Hawaiian speakers. Jonathan tutored missionary George Q. Cannon in the language, helped translate the Book of Mormon, and developed the first program for training missionaries in any foreign language.

As a result, more than 3,000 native Hawaiians joined the Church within three years. "It is very plain to us that this is the church of God," Jonathan wrote. "There are many upon these islands who have obtained strong faith by the grace of God, through Jesus Christ the Lord, that we might receive the Holy Ghost."⁵

In 1872, Kiti Napela contracted leprosy and was required to move

Right: One of the first converts in Hawaii, Jonathan Napela helped translate the Book of Mormon into Hawaiian. Below: Wilhelm Friedrichs (second from left) and Emil Hoppe (center, back row) attended the first baptisms in Argentina.



PORTRAIT OF JONATHAN NAPELA, COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY LIBRARY

to the leper colony on Moloka'i. Rather than staying among the Saints, Jonathan petitioned the colony to admit him as well. "During the brief time remaining," he wrote to the board of health, "I want to be with my wife."⁶ The petition was granted, and Jonathan became the branch president in Moloka'i. Jonathan worked closely with the local Catholic priest, Father Damien, to minister to all those afflicted with the disease. Jonathan eventually died of leprosy he contracted in the colony.

"I Rejoice in Being an Instrument in the Hands of God"

The Friedrichs and Hoppe families were the only Latter-day Saints in Argentina when they moved there from Germany in the early 1920s. Wilhelm Friedrichs and Emil Hoppe tried to share the gospel in their



new country, distributing pamphlets and inviting others to join their meetings. "I have full trust in my Heavenly Father that he will send sincere friends who will accept the Gospel," Wilhelm wrote, "for I rejoice in being an instrument in the hands of God."⁷

There were significant challenges, however. The families lived far apart and had to travel two hours to meet together. Because Emil was a deacon and Wilhelm a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood, they were unable to administer ordinances such as the sacrament or give priesthood blessings.

In 1924, Hildegard Hoppe gave birth to a baby girl, who died two months later. As she mourned, Hildegard asked how the baby's name could be



Their persistence in laying the foundation of the Church allowed others to later share in the fellowship of the Saints.

For more information on these and other faithful Saints from around the world, visit Country Histories in the Church History section of the Gospel Library app or at history.lds.org.

When Phillipe and Annelies Assard (left) met Lucien and Agathe Affoué in Côte d'Ivoire, both couples rejoiced to know they were not alone in the Church there.



included in the records of the Church. As a result, Wilhelm began corresponding with Church leaders in Salt Lake City.

A year and a half later, Elder Melvin J. Ballard (1873–1939) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was sent with other missionaries to meet the growing group of converts in Buenos Aires. When they arrived in December 1925, Elder Ballard baptized several converts and organized a branch. On Christmas Day, Elder Ballard dedicated South America for missionary work and organized the first mission on the continent.

Bringing the Gospel Back to His People

Phillipe and Annelies Assard had built a comfortable life when the missionaries knocked on their door in Köln, Germany, in 1980. They quickly embraced the gospel and felt “overwhelmed with blessings.” Phillipe

soon felt a powerful desire to return to his native country of Côte d’Ivoire to share the restored gospel. “So in 1986, after many prayers and fasting with my wife,” Phillipe recalled, “I decided to return to Ivory Coast to give what I had received, to improve the lot of my family and my people.”⁸

Before leaving Germany, Phillipe consulted with Church leaders. Though there were no Church units in Côte d’Ivoire, there were a number of members there who had joined the Church while in other countries. The Assards were given a list of their names and for the next year diligently wrote to each one. Gradually, the Assards rekindled the spark of faith in others and were given permission to begin holding Sunday meetings in their home. Wards and branches followed, and in 1997 the first stake in Côte d’Ivoire was organized. ■

NOTES

1. Frances McOmber, in Ruth McOmber Pratt, “Frantiska Vesela Brodilova,” unpublished manuscript (2009), 18.
2. Františka Brodilová, in Pratt, “Frantiska Vesela Brodilova,” 25.
3. Fujiya Nara, in Lee Benson, “Japanese Member Survives Adversity,” *Church News*, Feb. 17, 1979, 7.
4. Fujiya Nara, in Benson, “Japanese Member Survives Adversity,” 7.
5. Jonathan Napela, in “Foreign Correspondence: Sandwich Islands—Minutes of Conference, Makawao, April 1st, 1852,” *Deseret News*, Nov. 27, 1852, 4.
6. Jonathan Napela, in Fred E. Woods, “A Most Influential Mormon Islander: Jonathan Hawaii Napela,” *The Hawaiian Journal of History*, vol. 42 (2008), 148.
7. Wilhelm Friedrichs, letter, dated Mar. 5, 1924, Argentine Mission Correspondence, Church History Library.
8. Robert L. Mercer, “Pioneers in Ivory Coast,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1997, 27.





By Elder
Jorge F. Zeballos
Of the Seventy

Let Us Not Fail to Feel

*There is a force more powerful than earthquakes, ferocious winds, or raging fires.
But it is still and small, and we must pay attention if we want it to guide us.*

On February 27, 2010, at 3:34 a.m., an earthquake of magnitude 8.8 on the moment magnitude scale violently shook much of Chile, causing panic, fear, and concern in millions of people.

A few days later, I was assigned to preside over a stake conference at a location close to the epicenter of this great quake. I wondered if the earthquake and the continuing aftershocks would affect attendance at the conference. I was surprised when attendance at each session of the conference was greater than it had ever been at previous conferences.

Apparently, the earthquake reminded stake members, at least temporarily, about the importance of getting close to God, sanctifying the Sabbath, and attending meetings. Several weeks later I telephoned the stake president. I asked if attendance at Church meetings was still high. He replied that as the number and magnitude of the aftershocks declined, so did attendance at church.

Similar behavior followed the sad events that destroyed the World Trade Center in New York, USA, in September 2001. Thousands of people turned to their churches in search of peace of mind and comfort they badly needed. But as time passed, this search lessened and things returned to normal. It is not earthquakes, storms, or

disasters and tragedies, whether natural or man-made, that develop faith, testimony, and lasting conversion.

Elijah and the Still, Small Voice

In the days of the prophet Elijah, Ahab was the king of Israel. Ahab married Jezebel, a Phoenician princess. She introduced the Israelites to the ways of the Phoenicians, including idolatrous worship. After Elijah challenged and overcame the priests of Baal who abounded in the court of King Ahab, Jezebel threatened the prophet's life and he escaped into the wilderness. (See 1 Kings 18:4, 13, 19, 21–40; 19:1–4.)

After being fed by an angel in the wilderness, Elijah walked 40 days and 40 nights to Mount Horeb (see 1 Kings 19:5–8). In the wilderness, the word of the Lord came to Elijah. He was told to come out of the cave where he had spent the night. As he stood upon the mount before the Lord, “a great and strong wind” arose, so powerful that it broke the rocks and the mountains, “but the Lord was not in the wind.” Then came an earthquake, “but the Lord was not in the earthquake.” Then came a fire, “but the Lord was not in the fire” (1 Kings 19:11–12). Despite the fierceness of the wind, earthquake, and fire, they were not manifestations of the Lord's voice to the prophet.

After these powerful expressions of the forces of nature, “a still small voice” came to Elijah, and he heard it (see 1 Kings 19:12–13). The soothing voice of the Lord told him whom to anoint as the next king of Syria, whom to anoint as the next king of Israel, and that he should anoint Elisha as the prophet who would succeed him.

Finding the Voice

The same voice that came to Elijah—the voice that told him what to do in a difficult time in his life and ministry—is still available to every child of God who sincerely wants to do the will of the Father. But in the midst of the many loud, worldly voices inviting us to travel dark and confusing paths, where can we find the still, small voice that will tell us what to do, what to say, and what God wants us to become?

Nephi counsels us to “feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:3).

And where do we find the words of Christ so that we can feast on them? We can look to the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon, which was written and preserved in its purity for us, the inhabitants of this generation. We also hearken to the words of modern prophets, who tell us the desires of our Eternal Father and our Savior Jesus Christ today.

The words of living prophets guide us when we face new and complex challenges. In recent years, for example, while the prevailing confusion of the world and its philosophies have sought to permanently alter the concept of marriage and family, the words of the prophets have firmly, courageously, and lovingly emphasized the sacred nature of the family, declaring that “marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.”¹



Today’s prophets and apostles have also stressed the importance of observing the Sabbath at home and at church and achieving the salvation of our ancestors through family history and temple work. At every general conference, they provide additional spiritual guidance for the Church.

The Holy Ghost Will Guide You

Nephi further teaches, “If ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:5). So, having reinforced the importance of seeking the words of Christ, now Nephi instructs us regarding the direct, personal communication we must have with the Holy Ghost, the third member of the Godhead.

Nephi knew exactly what he was talking about. Some 30 or 40 years earlier, while his family was still in the desert and he was building a ship that would take them to the promised land, Nephi rebuked his older brothers



for committing iniquities, even after hearing the voice of an angel.

Nephi said to them, “Ye are swift to do iniquity but slow to remember the Lord your God. Ye have seen an angel, and he spake unto you; yea, ye have heard his voice from time to time; and he hath spoken unto you in a still small voice, but ye were past feeling, that ye could not feel his words; wherefore, he has spoken unto you like unto the voice of thunder, which did cause the earth to shake as if it were to divide asunder” (1 Nephi 17:45).

Let Us Not Stop Feeling

God’s communication with His children usually comes through the Holy Ghost, who most often communicates with us in a voice that enters our minds and hearts, “the still small voice, which whispereth through and pierceth all things” (D&C 85:6). Let us listen to that gentle voice and not wait until someone must speak to us with a voice of thunder! Remember, Elijah learned that the voice of the

Lord was not in wind, earthquake, or fire. The Lord spoke to him through the Holy Ghost, a still, small voice.

“The voice of the Spirit comes as a *feeling* rather than a sound,” said President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “You will learn, as I have learned, to ‘listen’ for that voice that is *felt* rather than *heard*. . . .

“. . . It is a spiritual voice that comes into the mind as a thought or a feeling put into your heart.”²

We *feel* the words from the Holy Spirit, more than those we *hear* with our ears, in our minds and hearts. Let us not fail to feel those promptings! May we open our minds and hearts to receive the words of the prophets. May we allow the Holy Ghost to continue to teach us through the still, small voice. Teaching His disciples about the Holy Spirit, which would be sent unto them after His departure, the Savior told them, “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance” (John 14:26).

Each faithful member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has the right and the blessing of receiving personal guidance, inspiration, and personal revelation from heaven through the Holy Ghost.

President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) said: “Be influenced by that still, small voice. Remember that one with authority placed his hands on your head at the time of your confirmation and said, ‘Receive the Holy Ghost.’ Open your hearts, even your very souls, to the sound of that special voice which testifies of truth. As the prophet Isaiah promised, ‘Thine ears shall hear a word . . . saying, This is the way, walk ye in it’ [Isaiah 30:21].”³ ■

NOTES

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, May 2017, 145.
2. Boyd K. Packer, “Counsel to Youth,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 17–18.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “Believe, Obey, and Endure,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 129.

Hear the Sound of the Trumpet

This instrument can teach us about the role of prophets and how we should treat their words.



TRUMPET

Probably the oldest and most common instrument in ancient Israel (and certainly the one most frequently mentioned in the Bible) is a trumpet made of a ram's horn, called a *shofar* in Hebrew. Sometimes it was heated to soften it so that it could be straightened or shaped. Its sound was unusual and easily recognizable. As an instrument, it was simple, producing only two or three notes.

"If when [the watchman] seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people;

"Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.

". . . But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul."

Ezekiel 33:3-5.



BIBLE FACTS

- In ancient Israel, the *shofar* was blown to send an alarm or signal a gathering of the people. This was done in times of war (see Judges 3:27; 6:34; Nehemiah 4:18–20) as well as at times of celebration, such as a feast or the anointing of a king (see Leviticus 25:9; 1 Kings 1:34; 2 Kings 9:13; Psalm 81:3).



WHAT WE CAN LEARN

A trumpet:

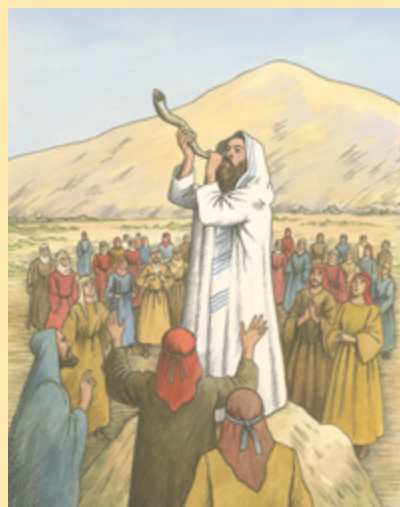
Has a simple, unmistakable sound. Nephi said, “I glory in plainness; I glory in truth” (2 Nephi 33:6). Prophets teach the Lord’s word with clarity. As the Apostle Paul said, “If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (1 Corinthians 14:8).

Calls the Lord’s people to gather. We gather to seek refuge and strength. Our meetinghouses, temples, and homes can be places of gathering to hear God’s word so that we can combat evil and rally around the “ensign on the mountains” (Isaiah 18:3).

Warns of coming danger. The watchmen of Israel would raise the alarm by blowing the trumpet. Prophets give us clear warnings of spiritual perils in our time. And we should also remember that “it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor” (D&C 88:81), “in mildness and in meekness” (D&C 38:41).

Calls to remembrance, celebration, and praise. Prophets also invite us to remember the Lord and His goodness. They call upon us to praise and thank Him and to “make a joyful noise” (Psalm 98:6) through our own prayer and testimony.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARTIN HARGREAVES; TEXTURED BACKGROUND AND IMAGES OF SHOFAR AND RAM FROM GETTY IMAGES; RIGHT: BACKGROUND SYMBOLS BY EMILY CHIEKO REMINGTON



- A few Old Testament verses also mention a trumpet made of bronze or silver (*khatsothrah*). It was short and straight, with a four- or five-note range in a bright tone, and was played by the priests. Its purpose was to gather the congregation to the tabernacle or temple (see Numbers 10:2–10). It was among the sacred utensils of the temple (see 2 Kings 12:13–14).







CHAPTER 5

All Is Lost

This is chapter 5 of the new four-volume narrative history of the Church titled Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days. The book will be available in 14 languages in print, in the Church History section of the Gospel Library app, and online at saints.lds.org. The next several chapters will be published in upcoming issues until volume 1 is released later this year. Those chapters will be available in 47 languages in the Gospel Library app and at saints.lds.org.

After Joseph brought the gold plates home, treasure seekers tried for weeks to steal them. To keep the record safe, he had to move it from place to place, hiding the plates under the hearth, beneath the floor of his father's shop, and in piles of grain. He could never let his guard down.

Curious neighbors stopped by the house and begged him to show them the record. Joseph always refused, even when someone offered to pay him. He was determined to care for the plates, trusting in the Lord's promise that if he did everything he could, they would be protected.¹

These disruptions often kept him from examining the plates and learning more about the Urim and Thummim. He knew the interpreters were supposed to help him translate the plates, but he had never used seer stones to read an ancient language. He was anxious to begin the work, but it was not obvious to him how to do it.²

As Joseph studied the plates, a respected landowner in Palmyra named Martin Harris had become interested in his work. Martin was old enough to be Joseph's father and had sometimes hired Joseph to help on his land. Martin had heard about the gold plates but had thought little

about them until Joseph's mother invited him to visit with her son.³

Joseph was out working when Martin stopped by, so he questioned Emma and other family members about the plates. When Joseph arrived home, Martin caught him by the arm and asked for more details. Joseph told him about the gold plates and Moroni's instructions to translate and publish the writing on them.

"If it is the devil's work," Martin said, "I will have nothing to do with it." But if it was the Lord's work, he wanted to help Joseph proclaim it to the world.

Joseph let Martin heft the plates in the lockbox. Martin could tell something heavy was there, but he was not convinced it was a set of gold plates. "You must not blame me for not taking your word," he told Joseph.

When Martin got home after midnight, he crept into his bedroom and prayed, promising God to give all he had if he could know that Joseph was doing divine work.

As he prayed, Martin felt a still, small voice speak to his soul. He knew then that the plates were from God—and he knew he had to help Joseph share their message.⁴

Late in 1827, Emma learned she was pregnant and wrote to her parents. It had been almost a year since she and Joseph had married, and her father and mother were still unhappy. But the Haleses agreed to let the young couple return to Harmony so Emma could give birth near her family.

“Let me see that certificate,” Anthon said.

Martin reached into his pocket and gave it to him.

Anthon tore it to pieces and said there was no such thing as ministering angels. If Joseph wanted the plates translated, he could bring them to Columbia and let a scholar translate them.

Martin explained that part of the plates were sealed and that Joseph was not allowed to show them to anyone.

“I cannot read a sealed book,” said Anthon. He warned Martin that Joseph was probably cheating him. “Beware of rogues,” he said.¹⁸

Martin left Professor Anthon and called on Samuel Mitchill. He received Martin politely, listened to his story, and looked at the characters and translation. He could not make sense of them, but he said they reminded him of Egyptian hieroglyphics and were the writings of an extinct nation.¹⁹

Martin left the city a short time later and returned to Harmony, more convinced than ever that Joseph had ancient gold plates and the power to translate them. He told Joseph about his interviews with the professors and reasoned that if some of the most educated men in

America could not translate the book, Joseph had to do it.

“I cannot,” Joseph said, overwhelmed by the task, “for I am not learned.” But he knew the Lord had prepared the interpreters so he could translate the plates.²⁰

Martin agreed. He planned to go back to Palmyra, set his business in order, and return as soon as possible to serve as Joseph’s scribe.²¹

In April 1828, Emma and Joseph were living in a home along the Susquehanna River, not far from her parents’ house.²² Now well along in her pregnancy, Emma often acted as Joseph’s scribe after he began translating the record. One day, while he translated, Joseph suddenly grew pale. “Emma, did Jerusalem have a wall around it?” he asked.

“Yes,” she said, recalling descriptions of it in the Bible.

“Oh,” Joseph said with relief, “I was afraid I had been deceived.”²³

Emma marveled that her husband’s lack of knowledge in history and scripture did not hinder the translation. Joseph could hardly write a coherent letter. Yet hour after hour she sat close beside him while he dictated the record without the aid of any book or manuscript. She knew only God could inspire him to translate as he did.²⁴

In time, Martin returned from Palmyra and took over as scribe, giving Emma a chance to rest before the baby came.²⁵

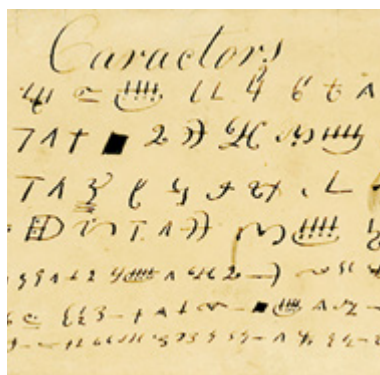
But rest did not come easy. Martin’s wife, Lucy, had insisted on coming with him to Harmony, and both Harrises had strong personalities.²⁶ Lucy was suspicious of Martin’s desire to support Joseph financially and was angry that he had gone to New York City without her. When he told her he was going to Harmony to help with translation, she had invited herself along, determined to see the plates.

Lucy was losing her hearing, and when she could not understand what people were saying, she sometimes thought they were criticizing her. She

also had little sense of privacy. After Joseph refused to show her the plates, she started searching the house, rifling through the family’s chests, cupboards, and trunks. Joseph had little choice but to hide the plates in the woods.²⁷

Lucy soon left the house and lodged with a neighbor. Emma had her chests and cupboards to herself again, but now Lucy was telling the neighbors that Joseph was out to get Martin’s money. After weeks of causing trouble, Lucy went home to Palmyra.

With peace restored, Joseph and Martin translated quickly. Joseph was growing into his divine role as a seer and revelator. Looking into the interpreters or another seer stone, he was able to translate whether the plates were in front of him or wrapped in one of Emma’s linen cloths on the table.²⁸



Facsimile of characters from the Book of Mormon plates.

Throughout April, May, and early June, Emma listened to the rhythm of Joseph dictating the record.²⁹ He spoke slowly but clearly, pausing occasionally to wait for Martin to say “written” after he had caught up to what Joseph had said.³⁰ Emma also took turns as scribe and was amazed how after interruptions and breaks, Joseph always picked up where he left off without any prompting.³¹

Soon it was time for Emma’s baby to be born. The pile of manuscript pages had grown thick, and Martin had become convinced that if he could let his wife read the translation, she would see its value and stop interfering with their work.³² He also hoped Lucy would be pleased with how he had spent his time and money to help bring forth God’s word.

One day, Martin asked Joseph for permission to take the manuscript to Palmyra for a few weeks.³³ Remembering how Lucy Harris had acted when she visited the house, Joseph was wary of the idea. Yet he wanted to please Martin, who had believed him when so many others had doubted his word.³⁴

Unsure what to do, Joseph prayed for guidance, and the Lord told him not to let Martin take the pages.³⁵ But Martin was sure showing them to his wife would change things, and he begged Joseph to ask again. Joseph did so, but the answer was the same. Martin pressed him to ask a third time, however, and this time God allowed them to do as they pleased.

Joseph told Martin he could take the pages for two weeks if he covenanted to keep them locked up and show them only to certain family members. Martin made the promise and returned to Palmyra, manuscript in hand.³⁶

After Martin left, Moroni appeared to Joseph and took the interpreters from him.³⁷

The day after Martin’s departure, Emma endured an agonizing labor and gave birth to a boy. The baby was frail and

sickly and did not live long. The ordeal left Emma physically drained and emotionally devastated, and for a time it seemed she might die too. Joseph tended to her constantly, never leaving her side for long.³⁸

After two weeks, Emma’s health began to improve, and her thoughts turned to Martin and the manuscript. “I feel so uneasy,” she told Joseph, “that I cannot rest and shall not be at ease until I know something about what Mr. Harris is doing with it.”

She urged Joseph to find Martin, but Joseph did not want to leave her. “Send for my mother,” she said, “and she shall stay with me while you are gone.”³⁹

Joseph took a stagecoach north. He ate and slept little during the journey, afraid that he had offended the Lord by not listening when He said not to let Martin take the manuscript.⁴⁰

The sun was rising when he arrived at his parents’ home in Manchester. The Smiths were preparing breakfast and sent Martin an invitation to join them. By eight o’clock, the meal was on the table but Martin had not come. Joseph and the family started to grow uneasy as they waited for him.

Finally, after more than four hours had passed, Martin appeared in the distance, walking slowly toward the house, his eyes fixed on the ground in front of him.⁴¹ At the gate he paused, sat on the fence, and pulled his hat down over his eyes. He then came inside and sat down to eat in silence.

The family watched as Martin picked up his utensils, as if ready to eat, then dropped them. “I have lost my soul!” he cried, pressing his hands on his temples. “I have lost my soul.”

Joseph jumped up. “Martin, have you lost that manuscript?” “Yes,” Martin said. “It is gone, and I know not where.”

“Oh, my God, my God,” Joseph groaned, clenching his fists. “All is lost!”

He started pacing the floor. He did not know what to do. “Go back,” he ordered Martin. “Search again.”



Joseph and Emma Smith’s home in Harmony, Pennsylvania.

“It is all in vain,” Martin cried. “I have looked every place in the house. I have even ripped open beds and pillows, and I know it is not there.”

“Must I return to my wife with such a tale?” Joseph feared the news would kill her. “And how shall I appear before the Lord?”

His mother tried to comfort him. She said maybe the Lord would forgive him if he repented humbly. But Joseph was sobbing now, furious at himself for not obeying the Lord the first time. He could barely eat for the rest of the day. He stayed the night and left the next morning for Harmony.⁴²

As his mother, Lucy, watched him go, her heart was heavy. It seemed everything they had hoped for as a family—everything that had brought them joy over the last few years—had fled in a moment.⁴³ ■

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

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

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Ministering to Members

WHO ARE DIVORCED



We can act as ministering angels to those who are suffering from the heartache of divorce.

By Brian Duncan

Several years ago I was faced with the most trying and difficult event of my life, divorce. Having been married in the temple, I had believed that my marriage would be eternal. But life doesn't always go as planned.

Divorce can be devastating, and unfortunately, as the adversary continues to wage war on marriage and families, divorce is likely to remain a challenge we face, even within the Church. The incidence of divorce among those who have been married in the temple should merit our collective concern. It should also prompt us to consider the needs and concerns of our brothers and sisters in the Church who have been divorced as we continue to minister to them.

Common Feelings and Fears

Many covenant-keeping men and women in our midst forge ahead despite hearts that have been broken and dreams that have been shattered. Many yearn to be useful and needed. All of them need the Savior's atoning power to "bind up the brokenhearted, . . . to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Isaiah 61:1, 3).

But the road is daunting even for the most committed of Saints. As one researcher found, "Divorced Latter-day Saints have lower religious participation than married members. They attend Church less often, and they pray, pay tithing, and hold Church callings less frequently than married members. These may be symptomatic of both the causes and the consequences of divorce."¹

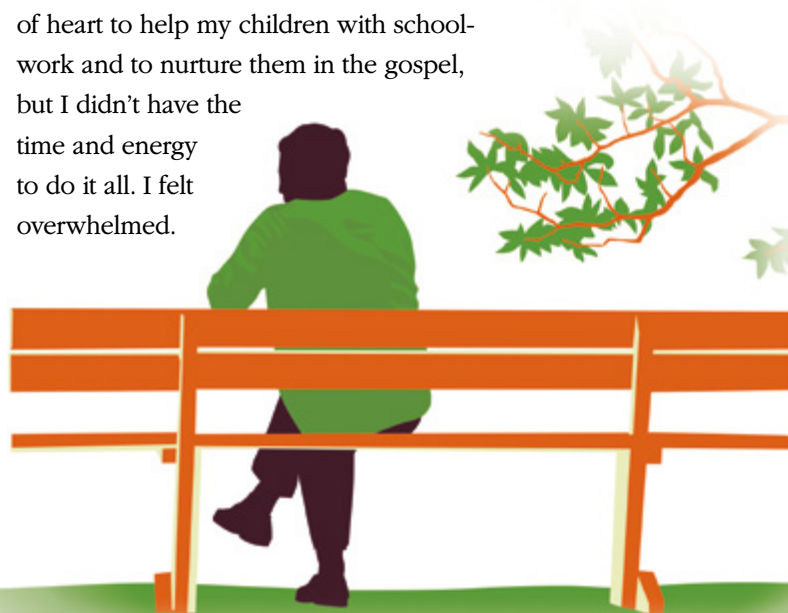
The emotions of a broken marriage are complex and painful. Divorcees may feel they are barely surviving, both emotionally and financially. Joy can seem impossible to imagine. Parents as well as children

suffer grief, anger, resentment, guilt, fear, loneliness, and loss. Many fear being labeled, judged, and, worst of all, ignored by Church leaders and peers. They may become shy or withdrawn; they may become resentful and bitter.

As a divorced man in the Church, I have had many of these feelings. But as I prayed diligently for help, I found that the Lord sent various people to minister to me and my children. Because of my experiences, I believe that as ward members and fellow Saints we may be given opportunities to act as a ministering angel to someone near to us. Here are some of the experiences when such "ministering angels" helped me and my family along the way.

The Relief Society, the Bishop, and Service

As a single parent, I found myself suddenly in charge of all the family needs. While working a full-time job, I also had to shop, clean the house, do the laundry, cook meals, mow the lawn, take children to and from school, attend their sports and Church activities, and more. Personal free time became a forgotten luxury; I wanted to have enough time and presence of heart to help my children with schoolwork and to nurture them in the gospel, but I didn't have the time and energy to do it all. I felt overwhelmed.



Because I'm not a member of the Relief Society, I was afraid to ask for their help. But kind sisters and neighbors offered relief anyway. For example, when I was busy at work and couldn't get to the school in time to pick up my children, these kind women would pick them up for me. They invited my children to their homes to play so that I could run errands or do much-needed housework. I am still grateful for their nurturing influence when my children were under their care.

My bishop would answer my phone calls day or night. He followed the spirit of discernment. Whenever I needed guidance, a priesthood blessing, or just a safe place to talk, he was there. I appreciated his leadership and understanding. He helped me to keep my eyes on the Savior during my darkest hours.

I was blessed with meaningful callings from my bishopric during and after my divorce. My callings were given to me with love and trust. This gave me confidence. It helped me to be consistent in my church attendance and to focus on others through service.

Family and Friends

Close friends, ward members, and family offered their faith and prayers on behalf of me and my family. I was so grateful for an occasional kind word. One family member put our names on the temple prayer roll.



On one particularly difficult Sunday, I was feeling invisible and unimportant. I felt that I didn't belong in a ward with so many "normal" families. So as soon as I led my children to their Primary classes, I found myself walking toward the exit. I didn't know where I would go; I just wanted to disappear.

But before I could slip away, a kind brother in my ward put his arm around me. He told me that he was impressed with me and praised my diligence in bringing my kids to church every week. I was so grateful for his kindness. His fellowship came at a crucial moment and he gave me courage to endure.

Our home teacher was a genuine friend to me and to my children. He knew that I was alone and suffering, and he would text me and call me often. When he and his companion would visit, I knew that he loved me and my children. He was a tall man, and as he taught his inspired messages, he would get on his knees to look my children in the eye. He asked genuine questions and he remembered the details. He told them Jesus loved them. He was a disciple of Christ.

The young men of my ward visited me one evening as part of a missionary preparation activity. My children were gone that night and the house was uncomfortably quiet and empty. I was so glad to have visitors. These cheerful Aaronic Priesthood holders were simply fulfilling their duty to "watch

over the church" (D&C 20:53), but they gave me companionship and helped lighten my burden.

On one cold December night, our doorbell rang. My children answered the door to find a collection of small gifts. An anonymous giver had selected us to receive gifts for the 12 days leading up to Christmas. We eagerly looked forward to their secret visit every night as Christmas drew near. I will never forget the joy my children and I received that Christmas season because of someone else's thoughtfulness.

Finding the Light

Many times I felt hopeless and fearful on my journey through a dark tunnel. But I can testify that there is light, not just at the end of the tunnel, but all along the way. The Lord is that light! He stands with open arms to comfort, heal, forgive, and deliver us from every source of anguish. He sends the Holy Ghost and ministering angels to help those who suffer. There are opportunities for each of us to act as angels for those around us—"to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort" (Mosiah 18:9).

Divorce is a source of mourning for many of our Latter-day Saint brothers and sisters. It can feel like the death of certain hopes and dreams that they held dear. It is a trial of disappointment and loneliness. But the Lord has condescended below all things and He heals the heavy laden. Through His infinite Atonement, He gives peace and rest. As President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has taught, "All who have been through divorce know the pain and need the healing power and hope that come from the Atonement."²

May we all take notice of those weary travelers in our path who need our friendship, love, and understanding. No matter who we are, we all can minister to those around us. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

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

DIFFERENT KINDS OF FAMILIES

Families are part of Heavenly Father’s plan. Like people, they come in different shapes and sizes. Sometimes it may seem like there are “perfect families” all around us, but in reality, this world is made up of imperfect people in family units just trying to figure things out. That’s right, no family is perfect! You can use these articles from this month’s *Friend* to talk to your children about different families and set goals for your own family.

“Goodly Grandparents” (page 8)

Andrew is self-conscious about a school activity because he is being raised by grandparents. But then he has a great experience when his grandpa comes to school. What makes your family wonderful and unique?



“A Different Kind of Pioneer” (page 28)

Gabby learns that even though she doesn’t have any ancestors who wore bonnets and pulled handcars, she has ancestors who were pioneers in other important ways. Who are the pioneers in your family? See the activity on page 18.



“Funstuff: Different Families” (page 10)

This activity illustrates that no two families are exactly the same. Though every family is different, what do you notice that *is* the same?

Find stories, activities, and media about the topic of “family” at lessonhelps.lds.org. For past Friend Connection articles, visit FriendConnection.lds.org.

TALK ABOUT IT

- If you teach children in Primary, be sensitive to their different family situations and include stories that show a variety of families.
- Help children understand how they can contribute to their family’s happiness—even if their family doesn’t seem “ideal” right now—and that they can look forward to creating a happy family of their own one day. Each one of us is also part of a loving heavenly family.
- Teach children that we should not be critical of other families but respectful and inclusive, even when we don’t agree with the choices other families make.

RELATED RESOURCES

- In 1992, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued a public statement that said: “We call upon all people everywhere to recommit themselves to the time-honored ideals of tolerance and mutual respect. We sincerely believe that as we acknowledge one another with consideration and compassion we will discover that we can all peacefully coexist despite our deepest differences” (in Russell M. Nelson, “Teach Us Tolerance and Love,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 71).
- Neil L. Andersen, “Whoso Receiveth Them, Receiveth Me,” *Ensign*, May 2016, 49–52.



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

Caring about Others and Serving Them

This month's *New Era* has the following articles about loving and serving others:



"Courage around the Campfire." A young woman's friend who is of another faith wants to go to Young Women camp, and she wonders what kind of experience her friend will have (page 8).



"When Serving Was Hard." When asked to care for her bad-tempered grandfather, a young woman finds a way to change her attitude, which makes all the difference (page 14).



"Youth in Greece." Youth gather together to strengthen one another in their faith (page 16).

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Here are some questions answered in this month's *New Era* (pages 42–43):

How can I motivate myself to do the things I ought to—like prayer, scripture study, and homework?

What does it really mean to be tolerant and not judgmental?

TALK WITH THEM

Here are some questions you might ask:

- What can you do to help the people you care about be happier?
- Have you ever been asked to help someone but not felt like doing it? How do you overcome that feeling?
- What are some simple things that others have done that have really helped you, uplifted you, or strengthened your faith?

TEACH THEM

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

- Read Elder Ronald A. Rasband's message, "Your Talent Trove" (page 2), and share how you discovered some of your talents.
- Point out the article "7 Tips for Giving a Talk" (page 36), and tell about your first experience giving a talk in church and what you've learned since then.
- Read Elder Quentin L. Cook's message, "You Can Be Temple Worthy" (page 48), and share your feelings about being worthy to hold a temple recommend and what it means to you.

SEND US YOUR SUGGESTIONS

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

THE GOOD PEOPLE OF ST. GEORGE

When I was about 12 years old, I saw a Church movie that showed President Lorenzo Snow (1814–1901) praying for Latter-day Saints in St. George, Utah, USA, who were suffering from severe drought.

“Lord,” President Snow prayed, “bless the good people of St. George.”

That phrase, “the good people of St. George,” left a lasting impression on my young mind. Since I lived in Chile, I tried to imagine what kind of faithful Saints “the good people of St. George” must be. I wanted to meet them.

More than 30 years later, in 2005, my family and I took our second son to Provo, Utah, to join his brother, who was studying at Brigham Young University. The evening after we arrived, I said, “I want to go see the good people of St. George.”

“But, Papá,” my oldest son protested, “St. George is far away.”

“Look,” I replied, “Papá paid for the plane tickets. Papá is paying for the food. Papá is paying for the gas. Papá wants only one thing for himself. He wants to meet the good people of St. George!”

“OK,” my son said after he realized I was serious.

The next day we made the 260-mile (418 km) drive. After arriving in St. George, we went to the visitors’ center at the temple and toured the winter home of President Brigham Young (1801–77). We also visited the tabernacle, where I was invited to speak to my family for a minute from the same pulpit where President Snow had addressed “the good people of St. George.” We walked around the city, watching and meeting people. They seemed like normal, faithful Latter-day Saints.

I was happy we went. But when

we returned to Chile, I realized something: I had seen “the good people of St. George” before.

Because of my work and my Church callings, I have traveled throughout Chile. In Calama, I have seen young adults who strive to keep the commandments. In La Serena, I have seen dedicated parents who arrive early with their children for Church meetings. In Antofagasta, I have seen Latter-day Saints who fight for what is right every day. In Vallenar, Copiapó, Caldera, Tocopilla, and other cities, I have seen members who get on their knees to pray and then move forward even when things aren’t easy.

When I see faithful Latter-day Saints who obey and endure—no matter where they live or what challenges they confront—I say to myself, “These are the good people of St. George.” ■ Claudio Gonzalez, Antofagasta, Chile

When I see faithful Latter-day Saints—no matter where they are—I say to myself, “These are the good people of St. George.”



“ACTUALLY, I AM ONE”

I had just sat down on the bus when a man across the aisle leaned over to me and said, “You have a beautiful soul.”

Needless to say, I was surprised. I had never been complimented on my soul before. Unsure how to respond, I just said, “Thank you.”

The man told me he could tell because of his work with his religious group. I listened to him as he gave me advice on how to keep my soul beautiful.

When the bus rolled to a stop, we both stood to exit and he imparted a final thought to me: “Be sure you don’t listen to those Mormons.”

Time seemed to stand still for a moment. This man had seen something special in my countenance, but he had no idea that it was *because* of my religion.

How was I going to respond? To be honest, my first thought was to say nothing and pretend I hadn’t heard him. I was worried that if I told him I was a member of the Church, he might respond negatively or even harshly.

But then a scripture came to mind: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16). I realized that I was not ashamed of the gospel, and I knew that my soul could not shine for others if I did not stand as a witness. With my new resolve,



I knew that my soul could not shine for others if I did not stand as a witness.

I looked at the man and said, “Actually, I am one.”

The man stared at me and I stared back. To my surprise, he laughed and said he could not join the Church because he was too fond of coffee. I laughed too, and we went our separate ways.

To this day I am glad about the choice I made. I know that it can be difficult to stand as a member of the Church. Sometimes it can be terrifying! But when we stand for God, our souls can shine as lights to the world. ■

Abby Thorne, Utah, USA



My runs in the parking lot continued, off and on, for three years.

RUNNING INTO THE CHURCH

One day, while looking for a place to run, I decided to try the parking lot of a church in my neighborhood. I liked it because it was lighted and paved. I found that running 10 to 15 times around the building would complete my three-mile (4.8 km) workout.

My runs in the parking lot continued, off and on, for three years. From time to time, I would see people in the parking lot because I would sometimes run during Church services and other activities.

Several times, I had the impression that I needed to talk with someone about the Church, but I had no idea how to do it. On my way home from work one evening, I decided to stop by and see if I could find someone there. When I walked into the church building, I found the missionaries as

they were finishing interviews with their mission president. I introduced myself and we sat down in the foyer. That was where they taught me my first gospel lesson.

Over the next couple of weeks, I continued meeting with the missionaries. When I attended sacrament meeting, the members of the ward showed me love, acceptance, fellowship, and encouragement. As I thought about what I was learning, I realized that my curiosity about the Church had developed into the need for me to decide to be baptized. I felt I was being prompted by the Spirit to do what my Heavenly Father wanted me to do, but I continued to wrestle with the decision. Finally, I was baptized in November 2001, at the age of 36.

My decision to run in the church parking lot seemed unremarkable at the time. But it led to my greatest blessings: my membership in the Church; meeting my wonderful wife, Jennefer; and being sealed to her for time and eternity in the San Diego California Temple.

So, if you happen to see someone exercising in the parking lot of your meetinghouse, introduce yourself! You never know—he or she may soon become the newest member of your ward! ■

Daniel R. Thompson, California, USA

COUNSEL I DID NOT WANT TO HEAR

When my husband and I decided to start our own business, the first three years were difficult. We were failing to make a profit and falling into debt. We worked hard, but unimaginable problems made that time the most difficult of our lives.

It became worse when my mother-in-law passed away the day after Christmas and just a week later, on New Year's Eve, I became extremely ill. At the time, we were broke, we had lost our car, and worst of all, we had lost our health insurance.

Eventually, I was diagnosed with an aggressive type of cancer that had been developing for at least five years. It was serious and required immediate surgery. I was running out of time, and we had no money for the expensive medical care I needed.

My husband and I met with our bishop and asked for help. We explained that this was literally a case of life or death. The bishop was concerned, but he told us that he felt prompted to wait a little longer before giving assistance to see if another way might be opened to us. He assured us that if our faith was sufficient, the Lord would provide a way for me to get the help I needed.

At first, the bishop's response made me angry and resentful. I felt that both he and the Lord had forsaken me. But I had a testimony of the gospel, and I believed that our bishop was called of God. Despite my heartache, I prayed

that Heavenly Father would help me continue to love, respect, and support my bishop. When I prayed for this, I was comforted and felt that the Lord would help me in some way.

My husband and I moved forward with faith, and I received needed medical tests and scheduled my surgery, despite our lack of money. The day before my surgery, we sold our business for a good price, which allowed us to pay all my medical bills.

It now became clear why my bishop had hesitated to help. He had acted on inspiration in order for me to have a valuable spiritual experience. That experience taught me to trust the Savior, even when the path seems frustrating and scary. I am grateful for the counsel I did not want to hear from my bishop. I know now that God is a God of miracles and that He never forsakes us. ■

Name withheld, Porto Alegre, Brazil





By President
Ezra Taft Benson
(1899–1994)

THE BOOK OF MORMON BRINGS ABUNDANCE

There is a power in the book which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study.

Is there not something deep in our hearts that longs to draw nearer to God, to be more like Him in our daily walk, to feel His presence with us constantly? If so, then the Book of Mormon will help us do so more than any other book.

It is not just that the Book of Mormon teaches us truth, though it indeed does that. It is not just that the Book of Mormon bears testimony of Christ, though it indeed does that, too. But there is something more. There is a power in the book which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of the book. You will find greater power



to resist temptation. You will find the power to avoid deception. You will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path. The scriptures are called “the words of life” (D&C 84:85), and nowhere is that more true than it is of the Book of Mormon. When you begin to hunger and thirst after those words, you will find life in greater and greater abundance. . . .

These promises—increased love and harmony in the home, greater respect between parent and child, increased spirituality and righteousness—are not

idle promises, but exactly what the Prophet Joseph Smith meant when he said the Book of Mormon will help us draw nearer to God. . . .

Over ten years ago I made the following statement regarding the Book of Mormon:

“Do eternal consequences rest upon our response to this book? Yes, either to our blessing or our condemnation.

“Every Latter-day Saint should make the study of this book a lifetime pursuit. Otherwise he is placing his soul in jeopardy and neglecting that which could give spiritual and intellectual unity to his whole life. There is a difference between a convert who is built on the rock of Christ through the Book of Mormon and stays hold of that iron rod, and one who is not.”

. . . Let us not remain under condemnation . . . by treating lightly this great and marvelous gift the Lord has given to us. Rather, let us win the promises associated with treasuring it up in our hearts. ■

From “The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion,” Ensign, Nov. 1986, 4–7.



**HEADED WEST,
BY DAVID MEIKLE**

From 1856 through 1860, 10 handcart companies made up of 3,000 Latter-day Saint emigrants from England, Wales, Scotland, and Scandinavia walked 1,300 miles (2,090 km) to join other Saints in Zion. These pioneers pulled everything they owned across the American plains in 3' x 5' (1 x 1.5 m) wooden carts.



YOUNG ADULTS

FEELING DISCONNECTED?

We live in a time of distracted living and zero waiting. But to really connect with God, we need to slow down and be still.

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RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
EFFECTIVE WAYS TO PRESERVE A VITAL LIBERTY

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YOUR DONATIONS
PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE THE CHURCH'S USE OF SACRED FUNDS

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MEMBERS WHO ARE DIVORCED
THEY NEED OUR FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE

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THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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