

THE ENSIGN OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • JULY 2019

Ensign



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THE
CHURCH
IS HERE

Bengaluru India



Here are a few facts about the Church in India:



1 Temple to be built in Bengaluru

Church members

13,570

43



Wards and branches (the Convent Road Ward meetinghouse is shown in the center of the photo)

Missions

2



5

Indian languages in which part or all of the Book of Mormon is available

Major languages spoken in India

22



1851

Several people are baptized and a small branch begins in Kolkata.

1993

The India Bangalore Mission is established, with 1,150 members in 13 branches.

2007

The India New Delhi Mission is created.

2012

The first stake is organized, in Hyderabad, by President Dallin H. Oaks.



Learn more about the history of the Church in India and other countries at history.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/GlobalHistories.

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Heaven Has Everything to Do with It

It was a rare privilege to interview every member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to write about the holy apostleship (see “We Are Witnesses,” page 12).

After meeting with President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve, I looked back into his office. He was sitting at his desk, writing a general conference address. He is the Church’s longest-tenured General Authority—sustained to the First Quorum of the Seventy in 1976. He looked tired and energized at the same time. “How are you?” he had just asked me, followed by the kindly admonition: “Don’t wear yourself out.” Coming from someone who has accepted a call to literally wear out his life in the service of the Lord, the exchange had great meaning to me.

The Twelve are called to “regulate all the affairs of [the Church] in all nations” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:33). But when you are with them, their focus shifts from a worldwide Church to the individual in front of them. They came to their callings from positions held in high acclaim by the world, yet when I left their offices, the words to define them were always the same—humble and kind.

“I sometimes ask myself, ‘How in the world am I here with these great men?’” President Ballard told me. Then he testified, “Heaven has everything to do with it.” I hope you enjoy this glimpse into the calling of an Apostle.

Sarah Jane Weaver
Church News Editor



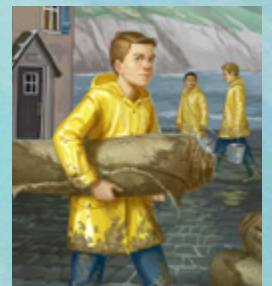
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Support Articles and Activities

To discover articles, videos, and other resources that coincide with your family's study of the New Testament this month, see the digital version of this issue in the Gospel Library app or at ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



Overcoming Discouragement

By Self-Reliance Services

Life is full of challenges. But there is always a way to find joy and hope again.



Supporting Missionaries Who Come Home Early

By Kevin Theriot, PhD

Early-returned missionaries need our love and understanding.

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RELIGION: *A Blessing to Our Lives and Communities*

Faith and religion are a core part of our identity, as Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Presidency of the Seventy explains in this issue (page 52). Our faith, and religion in general, affects our everyday lives. Numerous studies of Christian denominations and other religions show that believers are healthier and more likely to contribute to their communities. The findings presented here are just a sample of the many ways religion improves our lives.

Relationships



NOTES

1. See Arthur C. Brooks, *Gross National Happiness: Why Happiness Matters for America—and How We Can Get More of It* (2008), 52.
2. See Rodney Stark, *America's Blessings: How Religion Benefits Everyone, Including Atheists* (2012), 4.
3. See Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (2000), 66–67.
4. Tyler J. VanderWeele, “Does Religious Participation Contribute to Human Flourishing?” *Big Questions Online*, Jan. 14, 2017, bigquestionsonline.com.
5. Stark, *How Religion Benefits Everyone*, 4.
6. Brooks, *Gross National Happiness*, 48.
7. See Andrew Sims, *Is Faith Delusion? Why Religion is Good For Your Health* (2009), 220.
8. See Stark, *How Religion Benefits Everyone*, 4, 106–7, 111.



RELIGIOUS PEOPLE:

▶ ARE MORE LIKELY TO VOLUNTEER,¹ GIVE TO CHARITY,² AND JOIN CLUBS AND GROUPS.³

▶ HAVE HEALTHIER “SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND STABLE[R] MARRIAGES” AS WELL AS EXPANDED SOCIAL NETWORKS.⁴

▶ “ARE MORE APT TO MARRY AND LESS LIKELY TO DIVORCE [AND THEY] EXPRESS HIGHER DEGREES OF SATISFACTION WITH THEIR SPOUSES.”⁵

▶ “ARE ABOUT A THIRD MORE LIKELY . . . TO SAY THEY ARE VERY HAPPY.”⁶

▶ HAVE LOWER DEPRESSION RATES AND LESS ANXIETY.⁷

▶ TEND TO LIVE SEVEN YEARS LONGER THAN PEOPLE WHO AREN'T RELIGIOUS.⁸ ■

Community



Health





Iona Wikaira

Kaikohe, New Zealand



Although she faces challenges as a corrections officer, Iona finds strength and stays calm through faith in Jesus Christ.

CHRISTINA SMITH, PHOTOGRAPHER

I've found that when people in your work environment know that you're a member of the Church, they will have respect for you and the Church when they see that you don't let your standards drop because of the environment you're in. That's why it's important for me to try to be a good example of a Latter-day Saint.

In each situation, I think, "How would the Savior like me to behave?" or "How would He like me to deal with this?" In all my experiences, I try to make sure that my actions reflect what the Savior would do. This helps me be a lot more level-headed and a lot calmer even in all the chaos of a tough work environment.

LEARN MORE

See more about Iona Wikaira's journey of faith in the digital version of this article in the Gospel Library app or at ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. Find more stories in the "Portraits of Faith" series at ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/18.

Ministering Principles

How Can We Create a Culture of Inclusion at Church?

When we look around our wards and branches, we see people who seem to fit in easily. What we don't realize is that even among those who seem to fit in, there are many who feel left out. One study, for example, found that nearly half of adults in the United States report feeling lonely, left out, or isolated from others.¹

It's important to feel included. It's a fundamental human need, and when we feel excluded, it hurts. Being left out can produce feelings of sadness or anger.² When we don't feel like we belong, we tend to look for a place where we are more comfortable. We need to help everyone feel that they belong at church.

Including Like the Savior

The Savior was the perfect example of valuing and including others. When He chose His Apostles, He didn't pay attention to status, wealth, or lofty profession. He valued the Samaritan woman at the well, testifying to her of His divinity in spite of how the Jews looked down on Samaritans (see John 4). He looks on the heart and is no respecter of persons (see 1 Samuel 16:7; Doctrine and Covenants 38:16, 26).

The Savior said:

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34–35).

What Can We Do?

Sometimes it's hard to tell if someone feels like they are on the outside. Most people don't say it—at least not so clearly. But with a loving heart, the guidance of the Holy



Ghost, and an effort to be aware, we can recognize when someone doesn't feel included at Church meetings and activities.

Possible Signs Someone Feels Excluded:

- Closed body language, such as arms folded tightly or eyes downcast.
- Sitting in the back of the room or sitting alone.
- Not attending church or attending irregularly.
- Leaving meetings or activities early.
- Not participating in conversations or lessons.

These may be signs of other emotions too, such as shyness, anxiety, or being uncomfortable. Members can feel "different" when they are new members of the Church, are from another country or culture, or have experienced a recent traumatic life change, such as divorce, death of a family member, or early return from a mission.

Regardless of the reason, we shouldn't hesitate to reach out in love. What we say and what we do can create a feeling that all are welcome and all are needed.

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES

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

Some Ways to Be Inclusive and Welcoming

- Don't always sit by the same people in church.

- Include others in conversations.

- Take time to think about what it really means when we say the Church is for everyone, no matter their differences. How can we make this a reality?

- Invite others to be part of your life. You can include them in activities you are already planning.

- Express love and offer sincere compliments.

- Don't withhold friendship just because someone doesn't meet your expectations.

- When you see something unique about a person, be interested in that instead of glossing over it or avoiding it.

- Find and build on common interests.

- Look past people's outward appearances to see the true person. (For more on this topic, see "Ministering Is Seeing Others as the Savior Does," *Ensign*, June 2019, 8–11.)



Blessed by Inclusion

Christl Fechter moved to another country after war tore apart her homeland. She didn't speak the language well and didn't know anyone in her new neighborhood, so at first she felt isolated and alone.

As a member of the Church, she summoned her courage and began attending her new ward. She worried that her thick accent would keep people from wanting to talk to her or that she would be judged for being a single woman.

But she met others who overlooked her differences and welcomed her into their community of friends. They reached out in love and acceptance, and she soon found herself busy helping teach a Primary class. The children were great examples of nonjudgmental acceptance, and the feeling of being loved and needed strengthened her faith and helped rekindle her lifelong devotion to the Lord.

It's not always easy to feel comfortable around people who are different from us. But with practice, we can get better at finding value in differences and appreciate the unique contributions each person brings. As Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, our differences can help make us a better happier people: "Come, help us build and strengthen a culture of healing, kindness, and mercy toward all of God's children."³ ■

NOTES

1. See Alexa Lardieri, "Study: Many Americans Report Feeling Lonely, Younger Generations More So," *U.S. News*, May 1, 2018, usnews.com.
2. See Carly K. Peterson, Laura C. Gravens, and Eddie Harmon-Jones, "Asymmetric Frontal Cortical Activity and Negative Affective Responses to Ostracism," *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, vol. 6, no. 3 (June 2011), 277–85.
3. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Believe, Love, Do," *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 48.



DISCOVER MORE

For more ideas, read "We Can Do Better: Welcoming Others into the Fold," *Ensign*, Sept. 2017.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Sister Linda K. Burton, former Relief Society General President, taught, "First observe, then serve" (*Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 78). Following this counsel can help us create wards and branches where everyone is included and needed. Here are some additional ideas to consider:

- When we enter our church building, we can **look around and observe** whom the Lord would have us bring into our circle of friendship that day.
- Sometimes we avoid those who are different than us or who are going through a difficult time because we are afraid of saying the wrong thing. This can leave them feeling isolated, wondering why no one speaks to them. **Sit by them, express love, and ask sincere questions.** Ask them about their experience with their challenges and how you can help.
- In our talks and in our Sunday lessons, we can choose to **use examples that show that individuals and families in a variety of situations** can live the gospel and enjoy its blessings.
- Class members can be greatly blessed when teachers find ways to **include members from a variety of ages, nationalities, and family situations.** We have much to learn from the many faithful members of the Church who have experiences different than our own.
- Teachers can create a safe place for all to share their experiences in living the gospel. Whenever a comment is shared, a teacher can **respond positively to something that has been offered.** Class members will then be more likely to feel confident and comfortable in sharing their thoughts.



We Are Witnesses: The Twelve Apostles Today

Modern Apostles share their thoughts on their sacred calling.

By Sarah Jane Weaver and Jason Swensen

Church News

In the 189 years since the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 102 men have been called to serve as members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Although the Lord has directed many changes in the Church since then, the fundamental duties of an Apostle remain the same.

From his office near Temple Square, President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, spoke of the spiritual mandate given to the Apostles to testify of the Savior around the globe, of the special connection they share with missionaries, and of some common misconceptions about being “an apostle, seer, and revelator.” When asked if there were other members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles he would recommend to talk about their sacred calling as part of this article, President Ballard was quick to answer, “Yes. All of them.”



Being in Tune

Vast challenges face today's Apostles. They minister to worldwide congregations that are being tested by political unrest, breakdown of the family, relentless social media pressures, and economic uncertainties. It is important for the Apostles to understand the challenges and circumstances that members face.

As Church leaders, the Apostles must get to know the people and their circumstances to be able to serve them better. "We need to learn the things affecting the lives of people," said Elder Ulisses Soares. "The Apostles need to be in a constant process of learning, inquiring, and receiving inspiration and revelation."

As important as it is to be in tune with what members face, it is even more important for the Apostles to listen closely to God's guiding voice and to be in tune with the Lord's will, said President Ballard. "This is the Lord's Church, and our major challenge is to be sure we are in tune with how He would want us to carry out His kingdom here on earth," President Ballard said.

Special Witnesses

As each Apostle speaks about his calling, it quickly becomes apparent that administrative matters are not their primary concern. Their principal responsibility is exactly the same as it has always been—they are to be "special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world" (Doctrine and Covenants 107:23).

The Savior's last direction to His Apostles (see Matthew 28:19–20) was to go forth "to teach, to testify, to baptize, and to build and strengthen His Church," said President Ballard.

Today the Apostles' commission hasn't changed. "First and foremost, all the time, we are witnesses of the living reality of the Lord Jesus Christ," said Elder David A. Bednar. "We are not administrators; we are ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Apostles are commissioned "to be traveling witnesses" who go to "all the world," said Elder Jeffrey R. Holland. "We want even the most distant unit of this Church, geographically speaking, to feel that there is a very close link between them and the prophet of the Lord," he said. "It is often said,



‘The Church makes a very small world of it.’ In the case of Apostolic contact, we hope that this is always so.”

Reaching Every Stake

Elder Quentin L. Cook explained that over a four-year period, every single stake and ward, district and branch, in the Church has a member of the Twelve coming and meeting with its leaders—and training them on prophetic priorities.

“Leadership conferences have allowed us to fulfill our doctrinal mandate to ‘[build] up the church and [regulate] all the affairs of the same in all nations’ [Doctrine and Covenants 107:34] under the direction of the First Presidency,” he said.

Collectively, the rich, deep instructive experiences by members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles help guide these local leaders as they make important decisions to encourage and support members through their challenges, Elder Bednar said.

“As we go different places, we feel the goodness of the members,” said Elder Gerrit W. Gong. “We hear the experiences and we learn things that help us to understand as we counsel together as a quorum about what is happening in the different parts of the world and in different groups within the Church.”

Traveling to leadership conferences “gives us the opportunity to interact with wonderful, sweet people,” said Elder Cook. “We go to their homes, and we have a chance to minister to them. . . . It’s the ministering to the Saints that touches our hearts most deeply. We do it with guidance from the Holy Ghost and the Savior and with the knowledge learned by experience, some too sacred to share,” he said.

To the One

After 43 years as a General Authority and now in his fourth decade of service in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, President Ballard’s duties have taken him to most of the



The word apostle comes from a Greek word meaning “to be sent.” As with the early Apostles, the Savior still sends His Apostles “into all the world” (Mark 16:15–16).

Elder Ronald A. Rasband said that after his call to the apostleship, he learned that he needed to add extra time to every activity into his life so he can greet Church members and others. “It is not about me,” he said. “It is about the deference and the honor the members of this Church hold for the office of the apostleship.”

Elder Rasband said that during his ordination to the apostleship, he was instructed, “‘We place you in a position to be a special witness of the name of Christ in all the world . . . at all times and in every circumstance.’ Those words were included in my ordination: ‘at all times and in every circumstance.’”

An Important Relationship

The Apostles and the Church’s 70,000-plus full-time missionaries share a sacred, even interdependent, relationship.

The word *apostle* comes from a Greek word meaning “to be sent,” explained Elder Dale G. Renlund. Consider the Savior’s defining charge to His Apostles of old: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:15–16).

In following that command, the Twelve are “righteously engaged” in missionary work and delivering the message of the gospel, said President Ballard.

Like Paul of old, today’s Apostles prayerfully delegate their duties to share the gospel with others. And, in apostle-like manner, the missionaries are sent across the globe to teach Christ’s gospel. “It is the Twelve, exercising the keys that they have, who assign them to missions,” said Elder Bednar. “And so we send them.”

The Lord remains the guiding director of missionary work. He authorizes His living Apostles, who are assigned at different times to serve on the Missionary Executive Council, to communicate His desires to the full-time missionaries

countries in the world, allowing him to minister face to face to countless members and missionaries. Millions have tuned in to hear his general conference and devotional talks. But while he has a global responsibility, the Holy Ghost allows him to connect with and bless individuals. This seeming paradox is the Savior’s way, he said. “I sometimes get a letter from someone saying, ‘I was in a meeting, and you said something that changed my life.’ That’s the power of the Holy Ghost. The Lord micromanages His Church.”

A “countless number of sweet, simple experiences with members of the Church all over the world” defines the apostolic ministry, said Elder Bednar. “The Lord sends a member of the Quorum of the Twelve to specific places at particular times where we encounter faithful Latter-day Saints and others who often are struggling or are in need of comfort and reassurance. God orchestrates those interactions,” said Elder Bednar.



President Ballard in Spain



Elder Holland in England



Elder Uchtdorf in Russia

laboring in the field. Such administrative duties go beyond simply “running the organization,” said Elder Bednar. The Apostles hold priesthood keys for the gathering of Israel. “We are providing spiritual oversight and direction so that the work is performed in the way that the Lord wants it,” he said.

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf chairs the Church’s Missionary Executive Council. Sitting atop his office desk is a small bronze sculpture of a missionary companionship depicted as pedaling furiously on bicycles, perhaps rushing to a teaching appointment. Whenever he studies that bronze piece, he is reminded of the unbreakable connection between the Apostles and the missionaries. “Every one of the 70,000 missionaries are performing a sacred service and are called by the Lord with a letter from the prophet of God to be representatives of the Savior. They are the extended arm of the Twelve.”

“Whenever we have time, we meet with them,” President Ballard said. “We let them ask questions. We try to help them find, teach, baptize, and strengthen our Heavenly Father’s children.”

Working together, both groups are sent to share the gospel’s good news throughout the world. “We see the full-time missionaries as our companions,” said Elder D. Todd Christofferson.

Misconceptions

While some outside observers might think the Church is led like a corporation, the apostleship “is not like being a business executive; it is quite different,” said Elder Gary E. Stevenson. “The role of an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ is really a ministerial, pastoral role.” The role of being a

witness of Jesus Christ to the world “informs and defines us.”

Elder Neil L. Andersen said that in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, there are no factions, lobbying, or power centers. There are “differing opinions,” but “there are no egos.”

The Lord puts a lot of people together from different professions and backgrounds, Elder Andersen said. But “they are alike in their testimony of the Savior and in their humility. They don’t seek position; they are not trying to be the smartest person in the room. The Lord can work with that. I have never seen anyone [in the Twelve] show anger, and I have never seen anyone put anyone down.”

Humility defines the apostleship, said Elder Uchtdorf. Their callings make them recognizable almost anywhere they travel, “but we know it’s not about us—it’s about Him. We are representing Him. . . . It’s about His greatness.”

We Are All Called to Serve

After the Savior’s death and Resurrection, He instructed His disciples for 40 days and then ascended into heaven. Left

Elder Christofferson in Mexico





Elder Bednar in Peru



Elder Cook in Argentina

with a vacancy in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—created by the betrayal and death of Judas Iscariot—members of the quorum gathered and petitioned the Lord.

Two men, Matthias and Barsabas, were identified, and the Apostles prayed that the Lord would show “whether of these two thou hast chosen, . . . and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles” (see Acts 1:23–26).

Then and now, “being called as an Apostle is not an accomplishment or achievement,” explained Elder Renlund. “It’s not a calling that is earned. Matthias, in Acts chapter 1, was selected by God instead of Barsabas. God didn’t tell us why. But the thing we should know is that Barsabas’s testimony honoring the Savior and His Resurrection was equal to that of Matthias.”

God chose, he explained. “If Barsabas fulfilled whatever calling he had, his reward was no different from that which Matthias would have received, provided he magnified his calling.”

Elder Andersen in Brazil



Just as Barsabas’s testimony was equal to Matthias’s testimony, every member of the Church is entitled to and can “develop an apostolic-like relationship with the Lord,” said President Ballard.

Service to the Lord and the Church is “a privilege and a blessing. It is an honor,” said Elder Uchtdorf. “The Lord shows His love for us, and we can show our love to the Lord by doing whatever He asks us to do.”

A Sacred Experience

Being part of a traveling high council is a sacred experience, said Elder Andersen. “When we bear testimony, that testimony goes into the heart of the people, in part, because of our ordination.”

Elder Christofferson said that early in his apostolic ministry, he felt overwhelmed by perceived expectations. But then he received a simple message from the Lord: “Forget about yourself and what people may think of you, whether they are impressed or disappointed or anything else. Just focus on what I want to give them through you. Focus on what I want them to hear through you.”

Several years ago, Elder Christofferson was visiting Mérida, Venezuela, where a little boy, maybe 7 years old, spotted him through a window and began shouting, “*El Apostol, el Apostol!*” (“The Apostle, the Apostle!”).

“That is a very simple incident, but it illustrates to me the depth of appreciation that even children have for the calling,” he said. “It’s not about the person who holds the calling. That child had learned that level of appreciation for the call and what it represents.” ■

*By choosing
to sustain the
Twelve Apostles,
Church members
demonstrate
their confidence
in each Apostle's
pledge of
obedience to
the Savior.*

How Can We Sustain Our Leaders?

By Sarah Jane Weaver and Jason Swensen

Church News

In the tearful days after a wildfire devastated entire neighborhoods in California's Sonoma County in October 2017, Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles traveled to affected communities to be with the Latter-day Saints.

He was on a mission of ministering. He and Sister Melanie Rasband comforted fire-weary members in their meetinghouses and at the edges of their charred homes.

And wherever he went, members came forward to shake his hand. It was a gesture of appreciation. They thanked the Apostle for his support. But each handshake communicated a common sentiment: "I sustain you."

An Act of Faith

Sustaining is a sacred action that connects membership of the Church to Church leaders, says Elder Gary E. Stevenson. With more than 16 million members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, relatively few Church members will ever speak face to face with an Apostle or shake an Apostle's hand. But every member has the opportunity to make a personal connection with these and other Church leaders through his or her formal sustaining vote and daily sustaining actions, says President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve.

"We sustain with our raised arm but also with our hearts and our actions," says Elder Gerrit W. Gong. "We sustain Church leaders in the same way we sustain each other. We know we are bound by covenant."

Praying for the Apostles remains a priceless element of sustaining, says Elder Ulisses Soares. "We are regular people, and the Lord has called us to something above our capacity. But we feel we can reach that capacity because people are praying for us."

Faith precedes and follows the sustaining, adds Elder Soares. "By sustaining the Apostles, you are helping the Savior accomplish His work. Your faith helps the Lord accomplish what He communicates through His prophets and revelators."

"I love the imagery of arms to the square and the meaning behind that," says Elder Jeffrey R. Holland. For the Apostles, being sustained by the members of the Church is spiritually akin to receiving life-giving food, he adds. "Every voice counts and every helping hand looked to. No one has to serve alone in the Church, whatever our calling."

Elder Rasband in India; Elder Stevenson in Hong Kong; Elder Renlund in Brazil; Elder Gong in Shanghai, China; Elder Soares at Brigham Young University

A Long-Standing Practice

Sustaining the Apostles is a latter-day practice that dates back to Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. From the first day, early Saints were invited to consent to the calling of Church leaders and to sustain them in that calling.

On April 6, 1830, Joseph Smith and his newly baptized followers gathered in a small log farm home belonging to Peter Whitmer, Sr., in Fayette, Seneca County, New York.

Joseph stood and asked those participating if they desired the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Exercising the principle of common consent, the new members raised their hands and consented by unanimous vote. Next they consented to accept Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery as their teachers and spiritual advisers.

“Membership in the Church is a very personal matter,” notes Elder Holland. “Every individual counts. That is why we function on the principle of common consent. We want everyone to have an opinion, to express him or herself, and to be united in going forward.”

An Act That Elevates Us All

When accepting the call to the apostleship, members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles “are constrained” to follow the Lord’s will, says Elder Dale G. Renlund. By choosing to sustain the Twelve, members demonstrate their confidence in each Apostle’s pledge of obedience to the Savior.

Latter-day Saints who give their sustaining vote to an individual Apostle are simultaneously sustaining the consolidated Quorum, says Elder Quentin L. Cook.

That sacred vote lifts and blesses the Apostles—but it also lifts the sustainers, adds Elder Cook. “It empowers them and blesses them and gives them guidance.”

This means that just as members deeply impacted by the Santa Rosa fires offered sustaining support to Elder Rasband, members worldwide can be lifted even as they lift each member of the Twelve. ■







**By Elder
Patrick Kearon**
Of the Presidency
of the Seventy

A Holier Pattern of SERVICE

May we follow the living Christ ever more willingly,
ever more effectively, as we strive to become His true
disciples through ministering as He would.

When I was 15 or 16, I was deeply self-absorbed and, like many of us in our adolescence, unsettled, uncertain, and vulnerable. I felt lost, self-conscious, and awkward. It didn't help that my parents lived far away in Saudi Arabia while I was at boarding school on a desolate bit of coast in England. In terms of the school, Hogwarts with Snape would have been more welcoming.

Bad weather was common along that coast, but one winter a particularly formidable storm blew in across the Irish Sea with hurricane-force winds. Around 5,000 homes were flooded, food was running out, and people were left cut off without electricity or any means of heating and lighting their homes.

As the flood started to subside, we were dispatched by the school to help with cleaning up. I was astonished to experience such a natural disaster close up. Water and mud were everywhere. The faces of those whose homes had been flooded were ashen and gaunt. They hadn't slept in days. My fellow schoolboys and I went to work, moving waterlogged belongings to upper floors and pulling up ruined carpet.

But what struck me most was the camaraderie that developed. There was just a wonderful, good-natured feeling among people united in a worthy cause under challenging circumstances. I later reflected that all those insecure feelings that usually consumed my teenage thoughts left while I was involved in this great effort to assist our neighbors.



The discovery that helping others was the antidote to my gloomy, self-obsessed state should have been transforming. But it wasn't, because the discovery didn't sink deep enough, and I failed to reflect more thoughtfully on what had taken place. That understanding came later.

The Invitation to Minister

I was considering this during the April 2018 general conference as I heard the repeated call to minister as the Savior ministers—and to do so out of love, in recognition that we all are children of our Heavenly Father.

We will serve not because our service is being counted and measured but because we love our Father in Heaven and are motivated by a higher and nobler pursuit—helping our friends find and stay on the path home to Him. We are loving and serving our neighbors as Jesus would if He were in our place, truly trying to improve people's lives and lighten their burdens. This is where joy and lasting fulfillment come from, for both the giver and the receiver, as we share the fruits of knowing and feeling our infinite worth and God's eternal love for each of us.

"A hallmark of the Lord's true and living Church will always be an organized, directed effort to minister to individual children of God and their families," said President Russell M. Nelson. "Because it is His Church, we as His servants will minister to the one, just as He did. We will minister in His name, with His power and authority, and with His loving-kindness."¹

I know that if we heed this call to minister, we can rise out of ourselves; grow in faith, confidence, and happiness; and overcome our self-focus and the sense of emptiness and gloom that come with it.

Ministering Transforms Us

The beauty of this kind of ministering is that it helps others, but it also transforms us by taking us away from our worries, fears, anxieties, and doubts. At first, serving others may simply distract us from our own

problems, but that swiftly grows into something much higher and more beautiful. We begin to experience light and peace, almost without realizing it. We are calmed, warmed, and comforted. And we recognize a joy that comes in no other way.

As President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) explained: "The abundant life noted in the scriptures is the spiritual sum that is arrived at by the multiplying of our service to others and by investing our talents in service to God and to man." He added, "We become more substantive as we serve others—indeed, it is easier to 'find' ourselves because there is so much more of us to find!"²

A Call from the Master

When the Savior called Peter, Andrew, James, and John to follow Him, their change of direction and focus was instant: "They straightway left their nets, and followed him" (Matthew 4:20).

But after the Savior had been taken from them in the cruelest way, they returned to their fishing, to what they felt they knew. On one occasion, the resurrected Savior came to them as they fished in vain.

"And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes" (John 21:6).

This was not only a demonstration that He had lost none of His power but also a bold picture that they were looking in the wrong place and focusing on the wrong thing. As they ate fish together on the shore, the Savior asked Peter three times if he loved Him. Each time with growing anxiety, Peter answered that he did. Following each of Peter's answers, Jesus asked Peter to feed His sheep. (See John 21:15–17.)

Why did the Savior ask Peter three times if he loved Him? Peter had been called to follow Jesus before, and he had responded instantly, leaving his fishing behind. But when Jesus was taken from them, Peter grieved; he was lost. He returned to the only thing he felt he knew—fishing. Now Jesus wanted Peter to really hear Him and to comprehend the gravity of the invitation this time. He needed Peter to understand what it meant to be a disciple of the resurrected Christ now that He would no longer be physically by their side.

What did the Lord want from Peter? He wanted Peter to feed His sheep, His lambs. This was the job that needed doing. Peter recognized this gentle, direct call from his Master, and the chief Apostle responded, valiantly and fearlessly giving the remainder of his life to the ministry he had been called to.

Begin with Prayer

We have another chief Apostle on earth today. President Nelson is extending the invitation to you and me to feed Jesus's sheep. With all the distractions around us and so many lesser things demanding our attention, the challenge is to *respond* to this invitation and *act*—actually do something, really make a change, and live differently.

Your question now might be, “Where do I start?”

Begin with prayer. President Nelson has challenged us to “stretch beyond [our] current spiritual ability to receive personal revelation.”³ Ask your Father in Heaven what you might do and for whom. Respond to any impression you receive, however insignificant it might seem. Act on it. Any small act of kindness causes us to look outward and brings its own blessings. It could be a kind, unexpected text to someone. Perhaps it's a flower, some cookies, or a kind word. Maybe it's clearing a garden or yard, doing some laundry, washing a car, cutting grass, clearing snow, or just listening.

As Sister Jean B. Bingham, Relief Society General President, has said: “Sometimes we think we have to do something grand and heroic to ‘count’ as serving our neighbors. Yet simple acts of service can have profound effects on others—as well as on ourselves.”⁴



You might be reluctant to take the first step, convinced that you don't have time or that you can't really make a difference, but you will be amazed at what even some little thing can do. President Nelson has set out a higher and holier pattern of service for you and me. When we respond, we will discover how fulfilling, liberating, and calming it is for us and how we can be an agent for change and comfort in the lives of others.

At times, such as after completing a mission, we may be tempted to say, "Well, I did it. Let someone else serve. I want a break." But true ministering doesn't pause. It's a way of life. We might take breaks from our regular activities and holidays to rest and rejuvenate, but our covenant responsibility to love one another as He has loved us and to feed His sheep doesn't take a break.

Ministry of the Worldwide Church

I am so proud to belong to a Church that puts ministering into practice. In 2017 alone, our members donated over 7 million voluntary hours growing, harvesting, and distributing food for the poor and the needy. The Church provided clean water for half a million people and wheelchairs

for 49,000 people in 41 countries. Volunteers provided glasses and ophthalmological services, and they trained 97,000 caregivers for those with sight challenges in 40 countries. Thirty-three thousand caregivers were trained in maternal and newborn care in 38 countries. Not to mention Helping Hands, through which hundreds of thousands of our people have donated millions of hours in recent years. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ jump to help those affected by disasters big and small, as well as improve their neighborhoods and communities.

The Church's budding JustServe initiative, which lists service opportunities, already has over 350,000 registered volunteers, who have contributed millions of hours helping in their local communities.⁵

This is a Church of action. This is what we do. This is what you do. Let this be a defining characteristic of who you are.

Three Kinds of Service

I would like to highlight three broad kinds of service we each have the opportunity to engage in.

1. Service that we are assigned or invited to perform as a responsibility at church. We will strive for the kind of ministry that is treasured, not measured, where we think about, pray for, and help those we have been given the responsibility to care for.

2. Service we choose to do of our own volition. This is an expansion of the first, which will flow into all our daily actions and interactions as we more consciously seek to forget ourselves and turn outward toward others. There is no formal assignment, but we are motivated by a desire to follow Christ, starting by being more kind and considerate to those around us.





3. Public service. Where appropriate, involve yourself in politics with an eye on service and on building individuals and communities. Avoid the political tribalism that has become so polarized, strident, and destructive across communities, countries, and continents. Join other politicians who are finding common cause to bring healing to troubled lives in their own jurisdiction and beyond. You can be a voice of balance and reason, advocating fairness in all corners of society. There is a growing need for you to contribute your energy to this kind of worthy civic engagement.

We Can Change Our Own World

When we read the news, we might feel that the world is sliding away. If each of us acts in ways big and small each day, we can change our own world and that of those around us. As you serve your neighbor and serve *with* your neighbor in your community, you will make friends who share your desire to help. These will become strong friendships, building bridges across cultures and belief.

If you will respond to the invitation to minister as Jesus does, you will be transformed, becoming ever more selfless. You will discover

the joy that comes from ministering in the Savior's way, leaving behind your anxieties and uncertainties and the gloom that comes from your perceived inadequacies.

Perhaps a name or a cause has come to mind. This is likely an invitation from the Spirit, and perhaps you have received it before. Reach out, look out, and lift up. Choose to respond to this invitation, and pray today to know what you can do. When you see and feel the blessings this brings to you and those you minister to, you will want to make this a daily pattern.

Our highest and best endeavor is to share the light, hope, joy, and purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ with all of God's children and help them find the path home. Helping, serving, and ministering to them are manifestations of the gospel in action. As we make this a way of life, we will discover that it is uniquely fulfilling, and it is how we can find the peace and joy which may have eluded us.

This is how the Savior lived, and this is why He lived—to provide the perfect balm and the ultimate healing through His great, infinite, atoning gift for you and for me. May we follow the living Christ ever more willingly, ever more effectively, as we strive to become His true disciples through ministering as He would. ■

From a worldwide devotional for young adults, "A Hallmark of the Lord's True and Living Church," delivered at Brigham Young University–Idaho on May 6, 2018.

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, "Ministering with the Power and Authority of God," *Ensign*, May 2018, 69.
2. Spencer W. Kimball, "The Abundant Life," *Ensign*, July 1978, 3.
3. Russell M. Nelson, "Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," *Ensign*, May 2018, 95.
4. Jean B. Bingham, "Ministering as the Savior Does," *Ensign*, May 2018, 104.
5. See JustServe.org. It is available in North America and is being tested in Mexico, the United Kingdom, Puerto Rico, and Australia.



Our Ongoing Legacy of Pioneers



In July of 1847, the first company of pioneers entered the Salt Lake Valley after having trekked across the American West in search of a new home where the Saints could worship the Lord free of persecution. Many members in North America can trace their heritage back to these pioneer ancestors. But for most members of the Church worldwide, their pioneer heritage began elsewhere, either with recent ancestors who joined the Church or perhaps even with themselves as they became the first person in their family, community, or nation to embrace the gospel.

This month, as we celebrate our pioneer ancestry, you could ask yourself: Where did my legacy of faith begin? What sacrifices did the pioneers in my ancestry make to dedicate their lives to the Church? How can I honor and share their legacy? What can I do to help others understand and honor their own pioneer ancestry? ■



LEGACY OF FAITH

"We must be sure that the legacy of faith received from [the pioneers]

is never lost. Let their heroic lives touch our hearts, and especially the hearts of our youth, so the fire of true testimony and unwavering love for the Lord and His Church will blaze brightly within each one of us as it did in our faithful pioneers."

President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Faith in Every Footstep," *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 25.



Clockwise from above left:

Woman Holding Book of Mormon and Basket of Flowers, by Jubal Aviles Saenz

Building Now for Eternity, by Sylvia Huege de Serville

Awake, Awake, Put on Thy Beautiful Garments, by Natalie Ann Hunsaker

The Visit, by Chu Chu

*Joseph William Billy Johnson: *Holiness to the Lord*, by Emmalee Rose Glauser Powell

Family Reading, by Jose Manuel Valencia Arellano

A Stop along the Way, by Carmelo Juan Cuyutupa Cannares

The Fruit of Joy, by Nanako Hayashi

Except as noted, these and other images from the Church History Museum international art competitions can be seen online at ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/71921.*

LEARN MORE ABOUT PIONEERS

To learn about the history and pioneers of the Church in various countries, visit history.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/GlobalHistories.



July 15–21 (Acts 10:34)

The Blessings of Diversity

Being unified in Christ doesn't mean we all must be the same.

By Bryant Jensen

Associate Professor of Teacher Education, Brigham Young University

The 10th chapter of Acts gives us a series of events that dramatically altered the mission and scope of the early Church and further established the principle that all people—across socioeconomic status, race, and nationality—are invited to come unto Christ and “partake of his goodness” (2 Nephi 26:33). No longer would the gospel be preached only to the house of Israel (see Matthew 15:24). Now the glorious news of Christ and the Resurrection would be taught to all God’s children, an effort that has created the rich tapestry of diversity we see in the restored Church today.

Unity in Diversity

By the end of Acts 10, we find that Peter has come to realize that “God is no respecter of persons” (verse 34), meaning that ultimately God will invite everyone to receive His gospel. Like the prophets in the Book of Mormon before him (see 1 Nephi 17:35; Alma 26:37), Peter now understood the universal reach

of the gospel—that when the Savior commanded his Apostles to “go ye therefore, and teach all nations” (Matthew 28:19), the Savior sincerely meant all nations and everyone in them, Jew or Gentile.

Today, missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints serve in more than 400 missions worldwide. Church publications are printed in 188 languages. Over 30,000 congregations meet each Sunday in North and South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and throughout the Pacific.

Latter-day scripture teaches us that the diversity of Church members should enhance our united work in preparation for the Lord’s Second Coming. This distinctiveness includes racial, ethnic, gender, and language differences, as well as our varied gifts, perspectives, and experiences. Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that “the diversity of persons and peoples all around the globe is a strength of this Church.”¹



Yet, in my teaching at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, I find that students sometimes struggle to reconcile their notions of diversity and unity. For many, these two ideas can feel incompatible. Thankfully, through class activities and discussions, many students come to understand that Christ's version of unity is about togetherness, not sameness.² As conveyed by Paul's "body of Christ" metaphor for the Church (see 1 Corinthians 12:12–27), our differences enhance our ability to work together in harmony to accomplish the divine mission of the Church and to help build God's kingdom on earth.

The World's Definition of "Different"

Outside the gospel of Jesus Christ, the word *different* can have a negative and isolating connotation. To the world, *different* means "unlike the norm," "incompatible," or "separate." But within the gospel of Jesus Christ, there is no norm—other than a unified desire to follow the Savior. No one person is

valued more than the other. There is nothing better or worse about being a woman or a man, Argentine or American, tall or short, black or white, impoverished or wealthy, because "all are alike unto God" (2 Nephi 26:33).

We may differ in our obedience to the commandments given to us by our Father in Heaven. But our choices do not diminish God's love and hope for us. And even though we may differ in our commitment, we are taught to love and refrain from judgment³ and to serve in the Church notwithstanding differences in our obedience because, after all, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Additive Unity

Bishop Gérald Caussé, Presiding Bishop, taught that "unity is not achieved by ignoring and isolating members who seem to be different."⁴ Christ's unity is not subtractive, whereby we disregard the significance of our differences. It is



additive. We strive to understand, to appreciate, and to integrate our differences in order to carry out the Lord's work. Our efforts to acknowledge and incorporate what makes each of us unique further unite us in Christ. Thus, our differences bring us together just as our doctrinal commonalities do.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said that “the diversity we find now in the Church may be just the beginning.” He continued: “It’s not just diversity for diversity’s sake, but . . . people can bring different gifts and perspectives. And the wide range of experience and backgrounds and challenges that people face will show us what really is essential in the gospel of Christ. And much of the rest that’s been, perhaps, acquired over time and is more cultural than doctrinal can slip away, and we can really learn to be disciples.”⁵ Our differences, in other words, should help us better understand and live the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Becoming Disciples Together

Being united in Christ with our differences requires concerted effort. Consider the following three personal commitments as you seek to achieve greater unity in Christ in your ward or branch and within the global Church.

1

Seek regular and meaningful interactions with those who differ from you. This can be difficult when we live in isolated communities. At the “Be One” celebration in June 2018, President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, indicated that it was not until he moved from Utah as a young man and lived in Chicago and in Washington, D.C., that he became aware of “the pain and frustration experienced by those who suffered [priesthood and temple] restrictions.”⁶

Elder John C. Pingree Jr. of the Seventy described the experience of a Latter-day Saint family that moved to a new city: “Instead of finding a home in an affluent neighborhood, they felt impressed to locate to an area with considerable social and economic needs. Over the years, the Lord has worked through them to support many individuals and to build up their ward and stake.”⁷ We may need to go out of our way to have meaningful interactions with those who differ from us.

2

Talk openly about differences. Listening closely to and learning from the perspectives and experiences of others can be uncomfortable. However, doing so helps us realize just how much we see the world as we are rather than as it is. When we prayerfully allow ourselves to be open to learn from our differences, we can identify and change our misconceptions and unintended biases. We develop meekness, “the principal protection from the prideful blindness that often arises from prominence, position, power, wealth, and adulation.”⁸

3

Speak up on behalf of your sisters and brothers. The scriptures teach us that “of him unto whom much is given much is required” (Doctrine and Covenants 82:3). The Lord identifies himself as our “advocate with the Father” (Doctrine and Covenants 29:5) and expects us to advocate in Christlike ways on behalf of our sisters and brothers. This should be done in private ways, such as when correcting individuals who make “jokes that demean and belittle others because of religious, cultural, racial, national, or gender differences.”⁹ It should also be done at times in public ways—for instance, when the Church released a public statement in 2015 to defend the religious liberty of all people, including our Muslim sisters and brothers.¹⁰ We should reflect the meek certitude of our Savior and “speak up . . . without speaking down.”¹¹



Our Heavenly Father truly is no respecter of persons. He made us different for important reasons. Increased diversity in the Lord’s Church is not coincidental. These differences serve the purposes of God. I pray we will be the people God wants us to be—united in Christ, with our differences. ■

NOTES

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Come, Join with Us,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 23.
2. See John K. Carmack, “Unity in Diversity,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1991, 7–9.
3. See Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Merciful Obtain Mercy,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 70, 75–77.
4. Gérald Caussé, “Ye Are No More Strangers,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 51.

5. D. Todd Christofferson, “Is There a Place for Me?” (video), *Unity in Diversity* series, ChurchOfJesusChrist.org/media-library.
6. Dallin H. Oaks, “President Oaks Remarks at Worldwide Priesthood Celebration,” June 1, 2018, newsroom. ChurchOfJesusChrist.org.
7. John C. Pingree Jr., “I Have a Work for Thee,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 33.
8. David A. Bednar, “Meek and Lowly of Heart,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 32.
9. John K. Carmack, “Unity in Diversity,” 9.
10. See “Church Points to Joseph Smith’s Statements on Religious Freedom, Pluralism,” Dec. 8, 2015, newsroom. ChurchOfJesusChrist.org.
11. Neal A. Maxwell, “Meekness—A Dimension of True Discipleship,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1983, 73.





Chapter 1

Gather Up a Company

Editors' note: This is an excerpt of chapter 1 from No Unhallowed Hand, volume 2 in the Saints series. (Volume 2 will be released early next year.) Volume 1, The Standard of Truth, released last year, finished with the first Latter-day Saints having received their endowments in the Nauvoo Temple and getting ready to leave Nauvoo to travel west.

Thousands of Latter-day Saints hushed as Lucy Mack Smith's voice echoed through the large assembly hall on the first floor of the nearly completed Nauvoo temple.

It was the morning of October 8, 1845, the third and final day of the fall conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Knowing she would not have many more opportunities to speak to the Saints—especially now that they planned to leave Nauvoo for a new home far to the west—Lucy spoke with a power beyond her feeble seventy-year-old body.

“It was eighteen years ago last twenty-second of September that Joseph took the plates out of the earth,” she testified, “and it was eighteen years last Monday since Joseph Smith, the prophet of the Lord—”¹

She paused, remembering Joseph, her martyred son. The Saints in the room already knew how an angel of the Lord had led him to a set of gold plates buried in a hill called Cumorah. They knew that Joseph had translated the plates by the gift and power of God and published the record as the Book of Mormon. Yet how many Saints in the assembly hall had truly known him?

Lucy could still remember when Joseph, then only twenty-one years old, had first told her that God had entrusted him with the plates. She had been anxious all morning, afraid he would return from the hill empty-handed, as he had the four previous years. But when he arrived, he had quickly calmed her nerves. “Do not be uneasy,” he had said. “All is right.” He had then handed her the interpreters the Lord had provided for the translation of the plates, wrapped in a handkerchief, as proof that he had succeeded in getting the record.



There had been only a handful of believers then, most of them members of the Smith family. Now more than eleven thousand Saints from North America and Europe lived in Nauvoo, Illinois, where the Church had gathered for the last six years. Some of them were new to the Church and had not had a chance to meet Joseph or his brother Hyrum before a mob shot and killed the two men in June 1844.² That was why Lucy wanted to speak about the dead. She wanted to testify of Joseph's prophetic call and her family's role in the Restoration of the gospel before the Saints moved away.

For more than a month, vigilante mobs had been torching the homes and businesses of Saints in nearby settlements. Fearing for their lives, many families had fled to the relative safety of Nauvoo. But the mobs had only grown stronger and more organized as the weeks passed, and soon armed skirmishes had broken out between them and the Saints. The state and national governments, meanwhile, did nothing to protect the Saints' rights.³

Believing it was only a matter of time before the mobs attacked Nauvoo, Church leaders had negotiated a fragile peace by agreeing to evacuate the Saints from the county by spring.⁴

Guided by divine revelation, Brigham Young and the other members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles were planning to move the Saints more than a thousand miles west, beyond the Rocky Mountains, just outside the border of the United States. As the presiding quorum of the Church, the Twelve had announced this decision to the Saints on the first day of the fall conference.

"The Lord designs to lead us to a wider field of action," apostle Parley Pratt had declared, "where we can enjoy the pure principles of liberty and equal rights."⁵

Lucy knew the Saints would help her make this journey if

she chose to go. Revelations had commanded the Saints to gather together in one place, and the Twelve were determined to carry out the Lord's will. But Lucy was old and believed she would not live much longer. When she died, she wanted to be buried in Nauvoo near Joseph, Hyrum, and other family members who had passed on, including her husband, Joseph Smith Sr.

Furthermore, most of her living family members were staying in Nauvoo. Her only surviving son, William, had been a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, but he had rejected their leadership and refused to go west. Her three daughters—Sophronia, Katharine, and Lucy—were also staying behind. So too was her daughter-in-law Emma, the Prophet's widow.

As Lucy spoke to the congregation, she urged her listeners not to fret about the journey ahead. "Do not be discouraged and say that you can't get wagons and things," she said. Despite poverty and persecution, her own family had fulfilled the Lord's commandment to publish the Book of Mormon. She encouraged them to listen to their leaders and treat each other well.

"As Brigham says, you must be all honest or you will not get there," she said. "If you feel cross, you will have trouble."

Lucy spoke more about her family, the terrible persecution they had suffered in Missouri and Illinois, and the trials that lay ahead for the Saints. "I pray that the Lord may bless the heads of the Church, Brother Brigham and all," she said. "When I go to another world, I want to meet you all."⁶

In January 1846, Brigham met often with the Quorum of the Twelve and the Council of Fifty, an organization that oversaw the temporal concerns of God's kingdom on earth, to plan the best and quickest way to evacuate Nauvoo and establish a new gathering place for the Saints. Heber Kimball, his



fellow apostle, recommended that they lead a small company of Saints west as soon as possible.

“Gather up a company who can fit themselves out,” he advised, “to be ready at any moment when called upon to go forth and prepare a place for their families and the poor.”

“If there is an advance company to go and put in crops this spring,” apostle Orson Pratt pointed out, “it will be necessary to start by the first of February.” He wondered if it would be wiser to settle somewhere closer, which would allow them to plant crops sooner.



Seeking relief from persecution, Brigham Young (above) and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles followed the Lord’s direction to move the Latter-day Saints more than 1,000 miles (1,600 km) west, beyond the Rocky Mountains.

Brigham disliked that idea. The Lord had already directed the Saints to settle near the Great Salt Lake. The lake was part of the Great Basin, a massive bowl-shaped region surrounded by mountains. Much of the basin was dry desert land and a challenge to cultivate, making it undesirable for many Americans moving west.

“If we go between the mountains to the place under consideration,” Brigham reasoned, “there will be no jealousies from any nation.” Brigham understood that the region was already inhabited by Native peoples. Yet he was hopeful that the Saints would be able to settle peacefully among them.⁷ ■

To read the rest of the chapter, please visit saints.ChurchofJesusChrist.org or the digital version of this article in the July issue of the Ensign in the Gospel Library app or at ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

The word Topic in the notes indicates additional information at saints.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

NOTES

1. Historian’s Office, General Church Minutes, Oct. 8, 1845; “Conference Minutes,” *Times and Seasons*, Nov. 1, 1845, 6:1013–14. A complete report of Lucy’s October 1845 conference sermon, with annotations, is available in Reeder and Holbrook, *At the Pulpit*, 21–26. **Topic:** Lucy Mack Smith
2. Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–45, book 5, [7]; *Saints*, volume 1, chapters 4 and 44; Black, “How Large Was the Population of Nauvoo?” 92–93. **Topic:** Deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith
3. Solomon Hancock and Alanson Ripley to Brigham Young, Sept. 11, 1845, Brigham Young Office Files, CHL; “Mobbing Again in Hancock!” and “Proclamation,” *Nauvoo Neighbor*, Sept. 10, 1845, [2]; Gates, Journal, volume 2, Sept. 13, 1845; Glines, Reminiscences and Diary, Sept. 12, 1845; “The Crisis,” and “The War,” *Warsaw Signal*, Sept. 17, 1845, [2]; “The Mormon War,” *American Penny Magazine*, Oct. 11, 1845, 570–71; Jacob B. Backenstos to Brigham Young, Sept. 18, 1845, Brigham Young Office Files, CHL; Orson Spencer to Thomas Ford, Oct. 23, 1845; Thomas Ford to George Miller, Oct. 30, 1845, Brigham Young History Documents, CHL; see also Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 525–42.
4. *To the Anti-Mormon Citizens of Hancock and Surrounding Counties* (Warsaw, IL: Oct. 4, 1845), Chicago Historical Society, Collection of Manuscripts about Mormons, CHL; see also Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 536–42.
5. Council of Fifty, “Record,” Sept. 9, 1845, in *JSP*, CFM:471–72; “Conference Minutes,” *Times and Seasons*, Nov. 1, 1845, 6:1008–11.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 29:8 (Revelation, Sept. 1830–A, at josephsmithpapers.org); Doctrine and Covenants 125:2 (Revelation, circa Early Mar. 1841, at josephsmithpapers.org); Historian’s Office, General Church Minutes, Oct. 8, 1845; “Conference Minutes,” *Times and Seasons*, Nov. 1, 1845, 6:1013–14.
7. Council of Fifty, “Record,” Jan. 11, 1846, in *JSP*, CFM:514, 515, 518. **Topic:** Council of Fifty

Thanking God for the Seagulls in Your Life

By Kim Woodbury

Consider these three ways to recognize and remember God's mercy.

On Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, a monument commemorates a significant event in Church history. In 1848, crickets attacked the crops planted by the struggling pioneers, but part of the harvest was saved when flocks of seagulls swooped down and devoured the crickets. In honor of this miracle, the Seagull Monument was erected in 1913. It shows two bronze seagulls on top of a granite column. There are also four raised panels that tell the story of the crickets and seagulls to millions of visitors every year.

One day while walking on Temple Square, I paused to read one of those panels, which says, “Erected in grateful remembrance of the mercy of God to the Mormon pioneers.” As I read those words, a question came to my mind: “How do I remember the mercy of God in my life?”

I’ve been the recipient of divine mercy many times. Like the pioneers, I’ve

been rescued from situations I couldn’t overcome on my own. Although I’m not planning to build a physical structure, I want to find tangible ways to remember and testify of the mercy of God. In the October 2007 general conference, President Henry B. Eyring, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, encouraged us to “find ways to recognize and remember God’s kindness,” and he promised that we “will be blessed as [we] remember what the Lord has done.”¹

As I pondered on how I could build a monument to God’s mercy in my own life, I realized that there are several simple things we all can do.

1. **Write it down.** Creating a written record (such as a journal, personal history, or family letter) allows us to reflect on inspiring memories when times are hard, strengthening our faith and helping us endure well.

2. **Bear testimony.** Sharing our experiences with others—in Church meetings, home evening, or one-on-one conversations—can strengthen those around us and help us remember.
3. **Extend mercy to others.** Another powerful way to remember God’s mercy to us is to extend mercy to His children. Through forgiving and serving others, we demonstrate that we’ve allowed God’s mercy to change our lives and make us more like our Savior.

Just as the Seagull Monument on Temple Square testifies to the world about a pioneer miracle, these simple acts can help each of us create a lasting monument to the mercy of God in our lives. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTE

1. Henry B. Eyring, “O Remember, Remember,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 67.



Tabitha

By Allisa White
Church Magazines

Tabitha, raised from the dead by an Apostle, blessed those around her through her good works and service.

Tabitha, a member of the early Church, was a seamstress well known and loved for her service to the poor and needy. Also called Dorcas in the scriptures, she lived in Joppa, a small town by the Mediterranean Sea that lay south of Jerusalem, where she grew sick and died. Many people mourned her death, including other members of the Church and the widows she had served. (See Acts 9:36–37, 39.)

When Tabitha’s loved ones found out that the Apostle Peter was staying in the nearby town of Lydda, they asked him to “come to them” in their time of mourning (Acts 9:38). Rather than just comfort these people, Peter turned their sorrow to joy when he raised Tabitha from the dead, telling her, “Arise” (Acts 9:40). Word of Tabitha’s renewed life spread, and because of it, many believed in the Savior (see Acts 9:42).

Latter-day Saints can study Tabitha’s

miraculous story and learn much from her example of charity and her testimony of Jesus Christ.

Her Legacy

Tabitha left behind a legacy of love and service by helping those around her, especially the poor and needy. In the scriptures, she is described as a woman “full of good works and alms-deeds” (Acts 9:36). President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) said, “To me the scriptural reference to Tabitha . . . defines some of the fundamental responsibilities of Relief Society; namely, the relief of suffering, the caring for the poor, and all which that implies.”¹ Tabitha is a great example of a Christlike woman.

After she died and Peter came to Joppa, “all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which [Tabitha] made, while she was with them” (Acts 9:39).

This public display of grief and

gratitude suggests that Tabitha made a lasting impact on those around her and earned their love and admiration.

We may not realize it, but we too are building a legacy by the choices we make each day. Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles recalled a time he attended two funerals a few days apart—one funeral was somber, the other joyful. He explained that the main difference between the two men for whom the funerals were held was the decisions they had made and the values they had focused on. The one whose funeral was solemn had focused on worldly values, while the other man, whose funeral was heartwarming, had cultivated Christlike values. At this time in his life, Elder Cook realized, “the choices I was making would define my happiness in this life and determine the legacy I would leave.”²

As we think on Tabitha’s legacy, we



The faith of many people was strengthened after they heard that Tabitha had been raised from the dead.

may also consider what kind of impression we'd like to leave with our family and friends someday.

Questions to Ponder

- What is one thing you remember best about a beloved family member or friend, and how does that legacy affect you?
- What is one thing you would want your posterity to remember you for?

Her Testimony

Not only did Tabitha affect the lives of those around her before she died, but she also touched even more souls after she rose from the dead. She was healed by the Savior's power in the hands of

an ordained Apostle; her renewed life was a miracle, a testimony of Him. Her story of being healed strengthened the faith of those who heard it, and because of her, "many believed in the Lord" (Acts 9:42).

Though we may not have been raised from the dead, all of us have been made whole through the Savior's Atonement. Like Tabitha, we can share our testimony of Christ's healing power with those around us, and perhaps their faith can be strengthened too. Our testimonies need not always be borne at the pulpit on fast Sunday, but they can be borne in our homes, at school, or at work through our words, kind actions, and generous service.

Questions to Ponder

- When have you seen someone bear testimony of the Savior through their actions?
- What is one way you can bear your testimony of Christ through your actions?

When we serve our fellow beings, we "are only in the service of [our] God" (Mosiah 2:17). Tabitha showed her devotion to and testimony of Heavenly Father and the Savior through her service to everyone around her. May her legacy continue today as we emulate her Christlike example. ■

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, "Be Thou an Example," *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 99.
2. Quentin L. Cook, "The Gospel and the Good Life," *Ensign*, Mar. 2017, 36.

He Won't Forget Your Work

Several months ago I had a dream where, sitting in church on the last row as usual, and with no intention of participating, my vision changed. I saw that scattered among the congregation were other early-returned missionaries. A desire to help them grew in my heart as I looked around. I knew that sharing my experiences could be a way of ministering to them and helping them continue along the covenant path despite this seeming speed bump along the way.

Through this dream, Heavenly Father let me know that He cares. **He appreciates the righteous service we gave as missionaries**, no matter how long our full-time service lasted. "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which you have shewed toward his name" (Hebrews 6:10). In my article (see page 45), I share a scripture story and **the experiences of other early-returned missionaries that can help you** as you navigate this unexpected and difficult road. I also love how Alex uses a story from the Book of Mormon to help us see that even for those who return home early for worthiness issues, **there is still hope** (see page 42). And Alec shares how he discovered a new mission after he returned home early (see page 48).

In digital-only articles, you'll read how Emily transformed the feelings of anxiety, fear, and hopelessness she experienced into a personal and sacred joy. Austin shares how he discovered Heavenly Father's plan for his life. And Kevin, a professional counselor, offers suggestions on **how loved ones can support those who struggle with an early return**.

The reason we each returned doesn't matter as much as what we do when we return home. With the Savior's help, we can heal, progress, and continue to find more joy in our eternal journey.

Sincerely,

Liahona Ficquet



YOUNG ADULTS

BEST ADVICE . . .

Young adults share their best advice about returning home early from your mission:

"Just know that everything's going to be OK. I was given this advice: it's hard until you decide it isn't.

You can decide what kind of future you're going to have."

—**Nathaniel Park, Western Australia, Australia**

"It doesn't need to define you."

—**Elena Kingsley, Utah, USA**

"No matter what the circumstances are, try to find a new routine for yourself, to get back into life."

—**Rosa-Lynn Ruiter, Netherlands**

"The end of one mission is the beginning of a new one. Find that new mission!"

—**Roberto Alfonso Martinez IV, Utah, USA**

"God loves you and has a plan for your life. Keep the faith!"

—**Rebecca Stockton, Arizona, USA**

What's the best advice you've ever received about marriage? Send us your response at ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org by July 31, 2019.

SHARE YOUR STORY

Do you have an amazing story to share? Or do you want to see articles about certain topics? If so, we want to hear from you! You can submit your story or your feedback at ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

ABOUT THE YOUNG ADULT AUTHORS

Alex Hugie is from Oregon, USA. He graduated from Brigham Young University with a bachelor's degree in English. He has particular interests in studying young adult literature, writing wonky short stories and novels, and drinking milk.



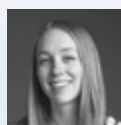
Liahona Ficquet is from Southern France. She is a learner and likes to work around the house with her dad. She enjoys studying in the medical field and aspires to work in women's health. She is currently working on the French translation of a book written by and for early-returning missionaries.



Alec Woodbury has a bachelor's degree in professional sales. He enjoys reading, being outdoors, spending time with friends and family, and going on trips with his beautiful wife, Alex.



Emily Warner grew up in northern Idaho, USA, which is still her favorite place on earth. She studied accounting at Brigham Young University and enjoys hiking, taking pictures, and traveling the world with her husband.



Austin Niederhauser is a senior at Utah State University. He served a mission in Montréal, Canada, and enjoys sports and spending time with his three brothers.



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By Alex Hugie

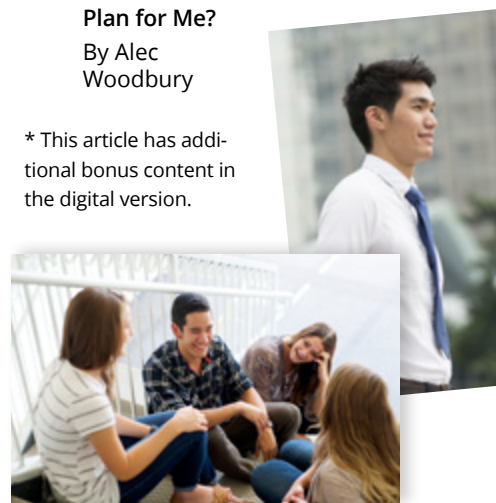
45 Early-Returned Missionaries: You Aren't Alone*

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* This article has additional bonus content in the digital version.



DIGITAL ONLY

Supporting Missionaries Who Come Home Early

By Kevin Theriot, PhD

Finding Joy through Christ Despite Returning Home Early from My Mission

By Emily Warner

Serving a Full-Time Mission Was My Plan, but Heavenly Father Helped Me When Plans Changed

By Austin Niederhauser

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Your value is not diminished by returning home early from your mission.

If Your Mission Ended Early, Don't Give Up

By Alex Hugie

If you're reading this, you probably already know how overwhelmingly difficult it can be to come home early from a mission. Young adults who serve may experience physical injury, mental health issues, civil emergencies, worthiness concerns, serious conflicts with others, or disobedience to mission rules, causing them to leave their mission before their expected release date.

Regardless of the reason, God would not want this setback to leave any of His children spiritually crippled. So how can early-returned missionaries move forward from such a jarring transition? And how can parents, Church leaders, and loved ones help?

A Book of Mormon Missionary

One story from the book of Alma gives us a helpful example. The Nephite prophet Alma directed a mission to the wicked Zoramites, accompanied by a number of trusted individuals. One of these individuals, his son Corianton, “fors[ook] the ministry, and did go over

into the land of Siron among the borders of the Lamanites, after the harlot Isabel” (Alma 39:3). Consequently, Alma sharply reproved Corianton and called him to repentance, noting, “I would not dwell upon your crimes, to harrow up your soul, if it were not for your good” (Alma 39:7).

Corianton received his father’s chastening humbly, repented of his sins, and returned to serve as a missionary among the Zoramites to “declare the word with truth and soberness” (Alma 42:31). The account goes on to say that after Alma had spoken with his sons, “the sons of Alma [both Shiblon and Corianton] did go forth among the people, to declare the word unto them” (Alma 43:1).

Returning with Potential

What do we learn from this story? First, a missionary who leaves early—even for preventable reasons—is still capable of accomplishing great things. Corianton may have made

grave mistakes, but he still went on to accomplish a great work. Likewise, even missionaries who return as a result of their own actions shouldn't feel as if they've destroyed their spiritual potential. Corianton learned from his mistakes and came to build God's kingdom in tremendous ways, and that same capability rests within everyone no matter how much they feel like they've failed.

Second, we learn the crucial role others play in an early-returning missionary's spiritual recovery. Alma—Corianton's father and priesthood leader—counseled Corianton with sharpness but also with confidence in his ability to still achieve his spiritual potential. As with Corianton, consequences for disobedience on a mission must come, but any discipline should be accompanied by love,

forgiveness, and mercy (see Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–44).

Returning to Heal

This same message of hope for early-returning missionaries is echoed today. Marshall, who returned early due to physical and mental health challenges, at times felt regret for both health obstacles and personal inadequacies that kept him from being a fully functional missionary. Nevertheless, he feels that his service was absolutely worthwhile.

"As missionaries, we're not perfect," Marshall says. "We're still subject to temptation; we can still sin. But your imperfections are probably what Satan wants you to focus on—to feel like your offering isn't accepted by the Lord because of those times when you weren't the best missionary."

Marshall believes that the Lord wants missionaries to know He is pleased with the service they offer, even when that service was imperfectly rendered by either choice or circumstance.

Marshall has learned to cope and heal by doing all he can to stay close to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Returning to Repent

Another missionary, who served in Colorado, USA, was sent home from his mission for disciplinary reasons and excommunicated from the Church, but he was later rebaptized. "Coming home was hard," he says. "I felt lost and empty. At times, the most difficult part of coming home was [finding] the motivation to keep going to church,



reading the scriptures, and praying. The simple things were the hardest.”

But he found strength in the support of friends and family and in working to repent.

“Setting goals, meeting with my bishop, and going to the temple when I was worthy were keys in being able to come closer to my Heavenly Father,” he adds. “I remember times when I couldn’t meet with my bishop or accomplish some goals; the adversary was always right there, tempting me.”

His recovery was made possible by “always remembering that I have a Heavenly Father who loves me and wants me to be happy. Having a testimony of the Savior’s Atonement and of repentance, we can always come closer to God no matter how distant we might feel.”

“Looking back on my mission,” he continues, referring to the months he served before the events that led to his being sent home, “I still feel like it was one of the best experiences I’ve ever had. I learned a lot, and although it didn’t turn out the way I had planned, I was still able to see lives change because of the gospel. I made some mistakes, but my testimony has grown so much more as I’ve striven to repent and keep moving forward.”

He wants others who returned early because of their choices to know that “the world isn’t over. Coming home is a first step toward repentance. Once you go through this process of repentance, you will have

gained so much. That heavy burden will be lifted. There is no better feeling than knowing you are in the right in the sight of God.”

Loving Those Who Return Early

Both of these missionaries who returned home early emphasize how important it is for the friends and family of early-returned missionaries to love and support them.

“Give them space,” Marshall says. “But make sure you’re close by, because it can be a little depressing. Be their friend.” By listening to the Spirit, we can gauge their needs and know when to reach out and when to respect their privacy.

“Just love them,” adds the missionary who served in Colorado. “Encourage them to always remember the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.”

How others treat early-returned missionaries could help make the difference between them falling away in shame or moving forward with faith. It’s essential, then, that they be embraced without being judged.

Like Corianton, early-returned missionaries have the potential to rise from their current vulnerable state into mighty instruments of the Lord.

Finding Hope in God’s Plan

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles offers some words of comfort to early-returned missionaries. “When someone asks if you’ve served a mission, you say yes,”

he said. “. . . Cherish the service you rendered. Be grateful for the opportunity to have testified, to have been out in the name of the Lord, to have worn that missionary name plaque. . . . Please, please do not relive this; do not rehash it; do not think you’re inadequate or a failure.”¹

For those who return early as a result of sin, remember these words from Sister Joy D. Jones, Primary General President: “If we sin, we are less worthy, but we are never worth less!”² She asserts that God will help us develop confidence in ourselves in our darkest moments if we will turn to Him.

The message from the Book of Mormon, from modern early-returned missionaries, and from Church leaders is the same: Never give up hope, because God still has plans for you greater than you can imagine. For the loved ones of these missionaries, your response to their return home will make a tremendous difference in helping them to heal and reach their potential. Remember that the Atonement of Jesus Christ can heal all wounds—including those of missionaries who return home early. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

You can find a list of resources for prospective and early-returned missionaries in the digital version of this article at [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org) or in the Gospel Library app.

NOTES

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Elder Holland’s Counsel for Early Returned Missionaries” (video), [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/media-library](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/media-library).
2. Joy D. Jones, “Value beyond Measure,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 14.

Young adults share how they found meaning and peace after coming home early from their missions and how you can too.

Early-Returned Missionaries: You Aren't Alone

By Liahona Ficquet

The army of full-time missionaries striving to fulfill their duty to “invite others to come unto Christ”¹ brings “great hopes and much joy” (Alma 56:17) to many. Those missionaries, just like the stripling warriors in the Book of Mormon, fight every day with “miraculous strength; and with such mighty power” (Alma 56:56).

But even among the 2,060 stripling warriors, there were still 200 who “fainted because of the loss of blood” (Alma 57:25). Did it make them less valiant? Less strong? Less courageous? Less worthy than the others? Not a bit.

Just the same, you missionaries who returned home early for mental or physical health reasons are *not* less valiant, less strong, less courageous, or less worthy. Your perseverance through your trials is—and should be—astonishing. You have been spared—maybe greatly wounded, but spared. Your wounds, whether they be physical, mental, or spiritual, now need to be taken care of (see Alma 57:28). For those who have returned home for reasons having to do with



worthiness, repentance will be a vital part of your healing.

As you adjust to being home, make sure you give yourself time to heal and remember to always trust in God (see Alma 57:27). He has reminded us: “When I give a commandment to any of the sons [or daughters] of men to do a work unto my name”—for example, serving a mission—“and those sons [and daughters] of men go with all their might and with all they have to perform that work, and cease not their diligence, and their enemies”—in some cases, our physical or mental illnesses or other injuries—“come upon them and hinder them from performing that work, behold, it behooveth me to require that work no more at [their] hands . . . , but to accept of their offerings” (Doctrine and Covenants 124:49).

Whatever wounds you have sustained—or had reopened—in battle, as long as you served worthily or repented completely, your contribution was needed and accepted by the Lord.

Reading the following stories may help you find healing in the fact that you are not alone and that sharing your story can help others.

Realize That **THE SAVIOR HAS FELT YOUR PAIN**

On the plane ride to my mission, I imagined what my homecoming would be like. Cheers would erupt, my family and friends would embrace me, and I would live out the rest of my life in peace, enjoying every blessing that came with being an honourably returned missionary.

Eleven months later, on the plane ride home, every moment was spent in aching anxiety about what lay ahead. My family was waiting, and although they did cheer and embrace me, before I knew it, I was alone with no idea about my future.

The Savior saw my dark days. He knew how I felt lying in bed for three weeks crying and sleeping to avoid reality. He knew I would need His strength because no one else around me could understand or even empathise with what I was going through. But He did. I couldn't have survived my mission or returning home early without Him.

Ali Boaza, Queensland, Australia

DON'T WASTE TIME *Wondering Why*

The thought of coming home early was devastating. As soon as the counselor suggested it, I felt a very complicated mix of emotions: Shame. Relief. Guilt. Peace. Sorrow. All at the same time.

I know that God was supporting me because somehow I got through that first week home. And then I got through another week. And another. Until I was finally able to feel like myself again. My dad was my biggest support and really took me under his wing. He always wanted to talk and spend time with me. Not to pry into what “went wrong,” but just to see how I was doing.

When my dad passed away in a rock climbing accident a few months later, I knew without a doubt that God has a plan for me. Being able to be with my dad for the last months of his life strengthened my testimony of the plan of salvation. I still don't understand all the reasons why I had to come home when I did, but I've also learned that if you spend too much time wondering why, then you miss the wonderful miracles God has provided for you every day.

Kristen Watabe, Ohio, USA



Be Willing to **FOLLOW THE LORD'S WILL**

Everything was going well on my mission. I had incredible experiences that will stay in my heart forever. However, after eight months, I started having health problems. After much fasting and prayer, I was sent home. I was devastated. I thought everything was my fault. I stopped reading my scriptures and praying as often. I wondered if I hadn't done everything that I could have to stay.

But I realized I was being tested to see if I would remain loyal to the Lord. It was difficult, but I put my trust in Him, and I returned to the mission field, where I once again had amazing experiences.

Then, my health problems returned. But this time I was more willing to follow Heavenly Father's will. So I returned home a second time. It was difficult, but I know that I can learn from everything I went through.

Even though I didn't serve for 24 months, I know that I served an honorable mission. I know that the time I served the Lord was worth it for me and for the people I helped. I'm grateful to my Savior for His infinite Atonement. He knows each of our challenges. And if we rely on Him with all certainty, we will never be alone.

Fillipe Hoffman, Goiás, Brazil

SURROUND YOURSELF *with Goodness*

I never thought I would go home early from my mission, and I was embarrassed and nervous about facing everyone. Although it was one of the hardest moments in my life, I also grew from the experience. It molded me into a better person.

I returned home to go through a repentance process. Some of the choices I had made before my mission were not in line with the gospel teachings and commandments. Because of my embarrassment and desire to maintain my standing in the Church, I didn't go through the repentance process with my bishop beforehand. But within the first few months, I felt the need to return home to repent so I could serve with honor and integrity.

Things that really encouraged me when I returned home were participating in spiritually uplifting activities, including Church meetings, service projects, and the temple, once I was able to. What helped me the most, however, were the people around me—family, a few friends, and even people I had never met before showed me love and kindness.

Overall, with the help of the Lord and the Christlike examples around me, I was able to return to Florida to finish my mission. My hope is that we will all strive to be Christlike toward others, whether they have returned home early or are simply in need.

Caigen Stuart, Utah, USA

The promise found in your missionary call letter, made to you as you decided to step forward in this work, will be fulfilled: "The Lord will reward you for the goodness of your life." With attention and care, your wounds can be healed and become a tool for you to be able to help others come unto Christ. That is, after all, the duty of missionaries. ■

The author, who is from France, is attending school in Utah, USA.

Find more stories from early-returned missionaries in the full version of this article at ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org or in the Gospel Library app.

NOTE

1. "What Is My Purpose as a Missionary?" *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service*, rev. ed. (2018), ChurchofJesusChrist.org/manual/missionary.

YOUNG ADULTS



I Returned Early from My Mission—Did I Ruin God’s Plan for Me?

By Alec Woodbury

I arrived at the missionary training center as confident and excited as any missionary. No matter what the next two years threw at me, I was sure I would be ready for it.

Less than two hours later, it was like someone had thrown a cold bucket of panic and apprehension at me. I had never experienced anything like it before. A crippling cloud of dread had settled over me, and no matter what I did, it would not go away.

I kept telling myself that things would get better after a few days, but things only got worse.

“I don’t understand,” I wrote in my journal. “It’s probably me doing something wrong. I’ve always heard that you can feel the Spirit so strongly here, that you can almost cut it with scissors because it’s so thick. I don’t feel it.”

Why did I feel so sick? Why did I feel such a massive amount of dread anytime I tried to do anything? And I mean *anything*. I couldn’t even walk to class without panicking. I couldn’t eat, I couldn’t sleep, and I couldn’t focus.

I tried forcing myself to lose myself in the work and in my studies, but the consuming agitation and the sickening dread made it impossible to even think about achieving my goals.

Diagnosed with an Anxiety Disorder

Finally, I felt prompted to tell my branch president everything. He quietly listened as I told him what I had been

experiencing. We cried together, and he immediately contacted a therapist, who then referred me to a doctor.

Finally, I was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder.

The doctor briefly explained that my brain completely overreacts to just about anything it decides to and then pumps tons of adrenaline through me. Unless something changed, it would continue harming my mental and physical health. He told me he could prescribe some medicine that might help, but the anxiety disorder was so severe that he recommended I go home.

Go home? How could I go home? Everyone would judge me. I would never fit in again—I would always be that guy who didn’t serve a mission. And I hated to think I had wasted everyone’s time and money.

But that night, I asked the Lord if the doctor’s recommendation to go home was the right choice. To my complete and utter surprise, it was. As much as I didn’t want it to be, it was. It took a while, but finally I felt peaceful about that decision.

I Felt like a Failure

I knew it was the right decision, and my family and leaders were extremely loving, but as soon as I was home, the anxiety, confusion, and pain came flooding back. But this time, they were accompanied by doubt and regret.

How could this happen? I was worthy and I truly desired

Having come home early from a mission, I felt like a failure. But then I realized Heavenly Father still had a plan for me.



to serve. But now I felt like an absolute failure. My parents assured me that I wasn't a disappointment, but I didn't believe them. I just felt lost, drowning in a swamp of embarrassment, pain, and self-loathing. Why was I feeling this way when Heavenly Father sent me an answer and I followed?

“Are You OK?”

One day I was standing in a checkout line at the grocery store, still feeling terrible about myself, when I felt a soft tap on my shoulder. I turned to see an elderly gentleman.

“Are you OK?” he asked.

I knew that this man was an answer to my prayers. I could just feel it. I completely opened up and told him everything. Then I cried. Right there in the checkout line.

He grabbed my arm, looked right in my eyes, and said, “Don't *ever* think that you failed Heavenly Father. Don't *ever* think that coming home from your mission was a mistake. It's not. Heavenly Father has something in mind for you. Now it's time to move forward to your next mission in life.”

I felt the truth of his words resonate through me. They were an inspired message I desperately needed to hear: I still wanted to follow Heavenly Father's plan. I was doing everything Heavenly Father wanted me to be doing. I was *not* a failure.

My Second Mission

Soon after, I began serving as an ordinance worker in the Bountiful Utah Temple. It was the most beautiful experience I had ever had. It was still a confusing time in my life, but when nothing else made sense, my service in the temple always did. It meant everything to me. As time progressed, I felt myself growing in ways that I had desperately prayed for while I was in the MTC. I felt myself developing a testimony that I knew would never go away.

My patriarchal blessing talks about certain experiences I would have on my mission. I can now see that those promises about my mission were fulfilled during my service in the Bountiful temple.

He Always Has a Plan

My Heavenly Father called me to serve, and I answered the call. I accomplished everything I could on that mission. Through that time of trial and confusion, He blessed me with a powerful testimony of His love and His work, and then He gave me another mission. A mission at the Bountiful temple. A mission that I completed and that changed me forever. My testimony is infinitely greater, and at the heart of that testimony is the abiding knowledge that Heavenly Father has a plan.

I came home early and felt like a complete failure. But I can promise you that if you follow God's word, you don't ever need to feel like a failure. If you allow them to, your difficult experiences can make you more resilient, strengthen your faith, and deepen your relationship with Heavenly Father.

I remember people asking me why my testimony had grown through this experience rather than diminished. I was always surprised by that question. How could my testimony not grow when I could feel Heavenly Father guiding me? We live in a confusing time, but I find it easier to hold on to my faith rather than my doubts. It makes everything much more enjoyable and meaningful.

The Lord is mindful of us. Bad things can and do happen. But with Heavenly Father in charge, we never need to worry. Maybe your full-time mission ended earlier than planned, but there's another mission for you, and if you trust in God and follow Him, He will help you find it. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

MORE INFO

Watch "Anxiety after My Mission" (video), [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/media-library/video](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/media-library/video).

Read Kaitlyn Bancroft, "How to Recognize and Cope with Debilitating Anxiety," Church News, Sept. 18, 2018, news.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

Read Lyle J. Burrup, "Anxiety and Anxiety Disorders," *Ensign*, Mar. 2017, 54–61.



PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING

Missionaries who return home early may wish to seek a referral from their bishop to meet with a counselor at LDS Family Services, where available. Up to six sessions can be provided without charge. Speaking with a mental health professional often proves helpful in the transition back home, whether the return is temporary or permanent.

FIRST PRESIDENCY STATEMENT

"Preaching the gospel to gather scattered Israel will always be the primary purpose of missionary service. . . . [Individuals] unable to serve in this manner . . . may be called to serve the Lord as a service missionary. . . . Some other candidates may, with our appreciation for their desire to serve, be honorably excused from any formal missionary service."

"Service Missions for Young Missionaries (U.S. and Canada Only)," First Presidency letter, Nov. 16, 2018.



**By Elder
L. Whitney
Clayton**
Of the Presidency
of the Seventy

Religious Identity Like Marrow in Our Bones

For millions of people, faith and religious conviction
are their most powerful and defining sources of
personal and family identity.

A few years ago, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke about impoverished 19th-century Latter-day Saint handcart pioneers who walked the dusty or freezing 1,300-mile (3,000 km) trail to the Salt Lake Valley, often burying spouses and children along the way. Why did they do it? How did they do it?

“They didn’t do [it] for a program, they didn’t do it for a social activity,” Elder Holland observed. “They did it because the faith of the gospel of Jesus Christ was in their soul, *it was in the marrow of their bones.*”¹

Failure of Understanding

Modern life has afforded us enormous freedom. We are free like never before to become what and who we want to be. As sources of individual meaning have proliferated, we now better understand that respect for human dignity requires appropriate accommodation of the many ways human identity finds expression. With that realization have come, albeit sometimes slowly, greater social acceptance of those once marginalized and greater legal safeguards to protect basic human rights and to accommodate people’s identities.

SHE STOOD WITH HER BURDENS PLACED BENEATH HER FEET, BY CAITLIN CONNOLLY © 2016, MAY NOT BE COPIED



*Through our faith, we
comprehend more
deeply the meaning of
marriage and family,
gender and sexuality.*

But too often secular elites and government officials focus so much on certain favored identities—such as race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity—that they miss the importance of religion as a profound source of identity. They see religion and religious faith—especially traditional Christian faith—as something akin to a quirky private belief or hobby, like secretly believing in the yeti or UFOs, or belonging to a weekly bowling league. “You are welcome to have your own private fantasy world, but keep it private and don’t make me acknowledge it!”

Perhaps that would be harmless by itself, but too often secular elites and government officials also see faith and faith communities, with their competing demands on loyalty and their adherence to tradition, as an intractable obstacle that interferes with achieving their own ideological views of a just and modern society.

I fear that often they even see religion itself—not only particular beliefs to which they object but also faith in God itself—as outright dangerous, as an uneducated and superstitious way of thinking that ought to be cast aside as soon as reasonably possible. “Religion is obviously a fraud,” this thinking seems to go, “and while sometimes it is harmless enough, the sooner it is abandoned in favor of reason and reality, the sooner we can be secure against its dangerous consequences.”

Some people are increasingly willing to use social and legal forces to pressure people to change or abandon their religious beliefs, convinced they will be better off for having discarded those beliefs as quaint anachronisms.

But this view is profoundly naïve. It fails to account for the fact that for hundreds of millions of people throughout the world, faith and



religious conviction are the most powerful and defining sources of personal and family identity in their lives. To return to Elder Holland’s statement, their faith is marrow to the very bones of who and what they are. The failure to understand this naturally results in discounting the importance of the religious freedom that allows people of faith to live out their core identity in dignity and peace.

The Fateful Choice to Believe

Not *all* secular elites hold these views. But I *am* suggesting that many secular people in positions of influence—government, academia, the media—do hold such views to one degree or another.

Perhaps one reason for this is that many of them have never truly experienced the power of faith. President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, once asked an atheist if he knew what salt tasted like. When the atheist said yes, President Packer asked him to describe it, which of course is impossible.²

So it is with faith. Many secular people simply don’t understand how something they have never experienced and that they ideologically reject as false and even absurd can in fact be true and profoundly real in the life of another person—indeed, so true and real that it defines one’s life, one’s very identity.

Thus, one legal scholar at a prestigious university argued, “There is no apparent moral reason why states should carve out special protections that encourage individuals to structure their lives around categorical demands that are insulated from the standards of evidence and reasoning we everywhere else expect to constitute constraints on judgment and action.”³ In other words, goes the argument, there is nothing special about religion, so why give it special legal protection? That’s an argument that only someone without vibrant religious belief and without a true understanding of the role faith plays in the life and identity of a believer could ever make.

There’s another reason many secular people fail to understand how powerful religion can be in forming one’s identity. That is the view that faith is really just one more personal preference, like deciding whether to become a baseball fan or a teacher, lawyer, or journalist. In this view, one’s religious identity is just an ordinary choice and thus not something fundamental to one’s being. I think this is profoundly mistaken. For many believers, religion is simply not something one can put on or remove like a favorite T-shirt. Dispelling this myth is key to greater understanding between religious and nonreligious people.

It is certainly true that God does not force us to believe in Him. Faith in God is ultimately something we exercise our God-given agency to choose to accept. But that does not mean it is an ordinary choice or merely a preference in the sense that many secular thinkers understand it. In fact, it’s just the opposite. Once experienced and accepted, faith in God is life-altering. The fateful, life-changing choice to believe influences deeply one’s personal, familial, and cultural

identity. It defines who and what we are, how we understand our purpose for being, how we relate to others, and how we deal with pain, suffering, and death. Through our faith, we comprehend more deeply the meaning of marriage and family, gender and sexuality.

In nearly all religions, personal faith brings us into communities of faith, where individual belief and practice combine with communal worship, sacred ceremonies, shared traditions, and holy celebrations. Indeed, for many, faith is experienced primarily in community. We become part of something larger than ourselves, bound in beautiful and complex relationships with those of similar conviction. Religious faith often entails duty and personal sacrifice, where obligation to a higher truth and the good of others is placed before the demands of self.

Religious authority—whether in the form of sacred writ, revered teachers, priestly intermediaries, vows and covenantal obligations, or simply a conscience powerfully informed by

For many, faith is experienced primarily in community. We become part of something larger than ourselves, bound in beautiful and complex relationships with those of similar conviction.



faith—shapes our hearts, minds, and actions in profound ways. Our faith lifts us beyond the trials and tribulations of this life to a loftier vision of salvation and peace. It gives us hope to press forward and joy in the journey.

It is no wonder, then, that in the New Testament, Jesus Christ spoke of being born again, of becoming a new man or woman in God. For Christians, taking upon oneself a new identity as a disciple of Christ is essential for ultimate redemption. (See John 3:3, 5.) There are similar concepts in other faith traditions.

It is also no wonder that something this personally powerful and defining cannot be confined to the private portions of believers' lives. Yet, as a *Washington Post* columnist recently observed: "It is now commonly held that citizens can—and should—practice their religious beliefs in private but remain neutral in public spaces. . . . It's possible, technically, but that approach rests on the assumption that 'beliefs' are not things that influence everyday life. For many religious people, that isn't the case; for them, belief—religious faith—is all about acting out your faith in real life. Those without religious faith often fail to understand how untenable it is to insist on a dichotomy between private beliefs and public performance."⁴

I agree. Just as society has increasingly recognized that other identities should not be required to be hidden from the public's view, society also must recognize the same for religious identity. One cannot check religious identity at the church, synagogue, or mosque exit or at the door of one's home any more than one can check race or ethnicity. Religious identity cannot be compartmentalized and stuffed into a box labeled "private."

Misconstruing religious faith as a mere choice preference—as something that can be adopted

and discarded at will—radically misconceives the nature of religion in the lives of millions of faithful people. It makes light of faith, treating it, in the words of the U.S. Supreme Court, as "something insubstantial and even insincere."⁵ It reduces a way of life and a state of being to a pastime. It takes an identity that for millions is vastly more important and profound than race, color, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, education, profession, wealth, and so on and dismisses it as trivial or something to grow out of, like a childhood belief in Santa Claus.

Again, not all secularists refuse to see the reality of religious faith. And I admit that not all people of faith experience it so thoroughly. Every person is unique. But the simple fact is that many millions *do* experience religion as a fundamental human identity, if not *the* fundamental identity of their lives.

"The Fire of the Covenant"

That is certainly the case for faithful members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The narrow, undemanding, personal-pastime conception of religious faith does not remotely account for its meaning in my life or in the lives of millions of my fellow Church members. And that constricted idea of faith could never account for its meaning in the lives of my pioneer forebears who sought a gathering place to build what they would call *Zion*—the name their modern revelations gave to a place where the pure in heart would dwell in unity and righteousness, where there would be no poor among them, where in time they would be prepared to meet God (see Doctrine and Covenants 97:21; Moses 7:18).

Their faith was indeed, as Elder Holland put it, "in the marrow of their bones." Or as



President Brigham Young (1801–77) said in a related context, it was “the fire of the covenant” that early Latter-day Saints had “burn[ing] in [their] hearts, like flame unquenchable.”⁶

“That’s the only way,” Elder Holland continued, that while on the trek to the Salt Lake Valley, “those mothers could bury [their babies] in a breadbox and move on, saying, ‘The promised land is out there somewhere. We’re going to make it to the valley.’”

“They could say that because of covenants and doctrine and faith and revelation and spirit. . . . [Our faith is] the substance of our soul; it’s the stuff right down in the marrow of our bones.”⁷

That faith sustained early Latter-day Saints as they uprooted themselves and their families and moved from upstate New York, where the Church was founded, to Kirtland, Ohio, to rural Missouri, and then to Nauvoo, Illinois—all in the span of a little less than a decade—with prejudice, mob violence, plunder, and murder driving them to each new location. That faith brought them to the fateful decision to abandon their Illinois

homes, their temple, and the country they loved and make the trek west to a barren wilderness that they were determined to make their Zion—their place of gathering, worship, freedom, and peace. Thousands of others left comfortable homes, extended families, and professions in England and continental Europe and crossed the Atlantic Ocean and America’s plains to settle in what must have seemed like a desert wasteland.

Much of my own religious identity and that of my father’s forebearers was forged in the crucible of those terrible trials. I cannot separate who I am from the faith that inspired those pioneer ancestors to sacrifice everything for the gospel of Jesus Christ. That faith continues to inspire and define my life and that of my family. Let me share with you two family stories to illustrate what I mean.

“All Is Well”

Under the direction of Brigham Young, 60,000 to 70,000 Church members migrated west about 1,300 (3,000 km) miles. Some traveled by horseback or in covered wagons. Most walked or were

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Millions of Church members around the world who have no blood ancestors among the pioneers nevertheless count them as their spiritual forebearers.

carried by their parents. About 3,000 of those pioneers traveled with handcarts. Handcarts had space for a few possessions and a small child or two. The pioneers' migration west commenced from Nauvoo in 1846 and continued through 1868 and was composed of about 250 separate companies of Church members.

The first pioneer account I'll share is from my great-great-grandfather, whose name was William Clayton. On February 27, 1846, William was compelled to leave Nauvoo by unfriendly, threatening neighbors. It was winter. He and the others who fled the city at that time—some prominent, some not—took what few possessions they could and crossed the Mississippi River.

William was appointed as the clerk for the entire Camp of Zion, as the pioneers were called. Because of wet, often freezing weather and deep mud, it would take the company in which he traveled, one of the first, more than

three months to cross the state of Iowa and reach the Missouri River.

William had left his wife, Diantha, at home with her parents in Nauvoo. She was expecting their first child. On April 15, William received a letter informing him that on March 30, Diantha had given birth to a "fine fat boy." He records in his journal that after hearing the news, he wrote a new song, which he titled "All Is Well." The song became an anthem for the pioneers. It is reputed to have been sung frequently as the pioneers worked their way west. Now known as "Come, Come, Ye Saints," the hymn he wrote is sung today all over the world in congregations of the Church.⁸

The second pioneer account is about Emma Jane Dixon, who was born the seventh of nine children in 1855 in Kirtland, Ohio. In Emma's early childhood, her family made the trek west. They traveled in a company of about 120 individuals over an 11-week period, during which the company met regularly for camp devotionals. Emma was six years old.

During the journey, Emma became ill and permanently lost her hearing. She remembered how to talk and retained that capacity throughout her life, although family members remember that she spoke with a "funny accent." She learned to read lips proficiently.

When Emma turned 19, she married Samuel Douglass. She bore and raised 11 children, the eldest of whom was my great-grandmother, named Mary. Mary married John Jasper McClellan, who became the chief Tabernacle organist and accompanist for the famed Tabernacle Choir.

Emma died in Payson, Utah, at age 87, during the time of World War II. She never heard her husband speak, never heard any of her 11

children speak, never heard her grandchildren or great-grandchildren speak, and never heard her first son-in-law, John Jasper McClellan, play the famous pioneer anthem “Come, Come, Ye Saints,” or any other number, on the Tabernacle organ.

The profound faith of earlier Latter-day Saint pioneers, tested and strengthened by these and innumerable other profoundly difficult pioneer experiences, helped bind the Latter-day Saints together, welding tens of thousands of people from diverse backgrounds into a united people with a heroic, sacred history and a distinct religious identity. Millions of Church members around the world who have no blood ancestors among the pioneers nevertheless count them as their spiritual forebearers.

Their sacrifices to be true to the faith and to keep the covenants they made with God are part of every Church member’s personal sacred narrative. It is part of our identity as members of the Church and disciples of Jesus Christ. The same faith that sustained 19th-century pioneers through terrible trials as they sought to build their Zion continues to sustain and define the identities and lives of faithful Church members to this day. That same faith is still in the “marrow of [our] bones.” It is still who we are.

If you have concluded that certain favored classes deserve special legal protections and accommodations but that people of faith do not because

they have *chosen* their beliefs and can just as easily *un-choose* them, I would ask you to reconsider.

If you believe public and private institutions should credit the dignitary claims of racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual minorities, then please consider that many of the same reasons for doing so apply with equal or greater force to the dignitary claims of religious believers.

If you believe that taking constitutional and human rights seriously requires social respect and legal safeguards so people can live out their core identities openly as equal participants in our communities and nation, then I hope that same conviction also extends to religious people and their core beliefs, even when those beliefs may be deeply unpopular.

The Latter-day Saint Approach

While the Church shares with all faith communities a desire to strengthen religious liberty,



The same faith that sustained 19th-century pioneers through terrible trials as they sought to build their Zion continues to sustain and define the identities and lives of faithful Church members to this day.

Zones of family and religious autonomy are vital to preserving our identity as individual disciples of Jesus Christ and as a covenant religious community.

in some respects our approach differs from that of other faiths. A history of fierce persecution against members of the Church has made the Church sensitive to laws and practices that deny believers the right to participate as equals in society without abandoning their faith. No one should be denied free speech rights or the ability to have a job or a place to live based on their religious convictions, practices, or speech, and corporate employers should reasonably accommodate an employee's religious needs. Likewise, religion should not be a basis for being denied the right to participate in one's chosen profession or run a business. Governmental efforts to punish or threaten the licenses of professionals

or business owners for expressing their religious convictions, especially on issues of sexuality, are deeply disturbing.

The Church also acknowledges the right of others to live according to their core convictions and needs. It has openly supported LGBTQ rights in areas such as employment and housing.

Also of vital importance to the Church's religious freedom efforts is what might be called the "right to gather." Much of the Latter-day Saint experience I've just touched upon can be understood as the quest of a people for a place to freely gather in families and communities of faith in the name of their God without interference from government or those who do not share our beliefs. We seek the greatest protection for areas that are most sensitive and essential to the perpetuation of our religion.

At the center of the Church's priorities, therefore, lies the protection of families and the right of parents to pass on their faith to their children. Also at the center is the protection of core Church institutions that preserve, teach, and administer the Church's doctrine, sacraments, and covenants. These religious institutions must have broad freedom to govern themselves in their ecclesiastical affairs, free from government regulation. Why? Because these zones of family and religious autonomy are vital to preserving our identity as individual disciples of Jesus Christ and as a covenant religious community.

Government must not be allowed to marginalize and delegitimize religion by confining it to purely private spheres, as if it were some kind of infection to be quarantined. As a large majority of the U.S. Supreme Court held in 2018, official bigotry against religious business owners, including those with traditional beliefs about marriage and sexuality, has no place in the United States.



Even so, I recognize that the commercial realm is far less vital as a place of religious gathering and thus legitimately subject to greater regulation for the public good than the other family, ecclesiastical, and educational spaces I've just mentioned.

A Moral Imperative

In conclusion, religion remains one of the great sources of human identity and meaning for countless millions worldwide. The Latter-day Saint experience is but one powerful illustration of that reality; there are many similar examples from other faith traditions.

No democratic government that claims to value personal dignity and human rights can ignore the moral imperative to respect the fundamental right to freely, openly, and peacefully exercise one's religion—to be who one truly is, faith and all, in the private *and* public spaces where people live out their lives. I believe religious identity deserves to be taken at least as seriously—and that it should be afforded at least as much protection and accommodation—as other forms of identity that now attract far more attention and sympathy. It is that essential.

Yes, there are challenging situations to be worked out. We cannot escape what Elder Lance B. Wickman, the Church's general counsel, has called “the hard work of citizenship”⁹—the work of finding common ground and generous, even loving, accommodations for those whose beliefs, personal needs, and lives are different from our own. We may not get it right at first. There will surely be tense moments along the way. And no one need affirm the ultimate truth of another's identity, religious or otherwise.

But I believe that religious and secular people of goodwill have big enough hearts, broad enough minds, and strong enough wills to forge



Religion remains one of the great sources of human identity and meaning for countless millions worldwide.

the hard compromises that will allow all of us, whatever our identities, to live together in dignity, respect, and peace. It is to that task that we must commit ourselves for the good of all. ■

From an address, “In the Marrow of Their Bones”: The Latter-day Saint Experience of Religion as Identity,” delivered at a Religious Freedom Annual Review conference, Brigham Young University, June 20, 2018.

NOTES

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Roundtable Discussion,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Feb. 9, 2008, 28; emphasis added.
2. See Boyd K. Packer, “The Candle of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 52.
3. Brian Leiter, *Why Tolerate Religion?* (2013), 63.
4. Christine Emba, “The Supreme Court Wasn’t Ready to Decide on the Wedding Cake. Neither Are We,” *Washington Post*, June 5, 2018, washingtonpost.com.
5. *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*, 584 U.S. 14 (2018).
6. Brigham Young, in *Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Sept. 28, 1846, 5, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
7. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Roundtable Discussion,” 28.
8. See Paul E. Daul, “All Is Well . . .”: The Story of ‘the Hymn That Went around the World,’” *BYU Studies*, vol. 21, no. 4 (Fall 1981), 515–27; “Come, Come, Ye Saints,” *Hymns*, no. 30.
9. Lance B. Wickman, “Promoting Religious Freedom in a Secular Age: Fundamental Principles, Practical Priorities, and Fairness for All,” Religious Freedom Annual Review conference, Brigham Young University, July 7, 2016, newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



If God Loves Me, Why Is Life So Hard?

With the Savior's help, we can endure trials with faith and come out stronger for it.

By Barbara A. Lewis

Methuselah is not only the name of the longest-living prophet of the Old Testament but also the name of one of the oldest living trees in the world. Located in California, USA, this bristlecone pine tree is close to 5,000 years old.

Bristlecone pine trees grow on high, craggy cliffs up to 10,000 feet in elevation. They endure a climate of harsh winds and little rainfall. Their roots fasten like anchors deep in the soil to soak up the few available nutrients. When bristlecones grow at lower elevations, they don't survive to the age and strength of the cliff-dwelling variety.

Like bristlecone pines, we can also grow stronger in difficult conditions, if our faith is firmly rooted in the soil of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Most of us would not raise our hands and ask for extra helpings of adversity, but with the Savior's help, we can learn to face trials with faith and come out stronger for it.

Why Do We Have to Endure Trials?

In the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, Tevye, a poor Jewish milkman, speaks aloud to the Lord: "I know, I know—we are the chosen people. But once in a while, can't You choose someone else?"¹

Like Tevye, we might feel singled out and wonder why we have been "chosen" for trials. But adversity is no respecter of persons. Hardship is a natural result of living on earth. Our

bodies can get injured, become mentally and physically ill, and die. We may be treated unjustly. Our own poor choices can also bring suffering.

Why is hardship part of a loving Heavenly Father's plan? Lehi explained one reason to his son Jacob: "It must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11). In other words, there could not be good without the contrast of bad. We could not experience joy if we did not also experience pain.

Sometimes our Father allows the wicked to harm the righteous in order to justly bring punishment upon the wicked (see Alma 14:10–11). And often He allows us to experience challenges to help us grow. Lehi assured Jacob that God would "consecrate [his] afflictions for [his] gain" (2 Nephi 2:2).

We are not meant to face these trials alone. If we follow the Lord and the teachings of His prophets, we can draw on His strength to endure trials. What happens to us is less important than how we react to it. Trials can be a blessing if we use them as an opportunity to draw closer to the Savior.



PHOTOGRAPH OF BRISTLE CONE PINE (SIMILAR TO THE ONE CALLED METHUSELAH) BY SCOTT BURKIN

Accepting His Will

To endure faithfully, it is essential to accept God's will, even if it is not what we wanted. Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: "To ask, Why does this have to happen to me? Why do I have to suffer this, now? What have I done to cause this? will lead you into blind alleys. . . . Rather ask, What am I to do? What am I to learn from this experience? . . . When you pray with real conviction, 'Please let me know Thy will' and 'May Thy will be done,' you are in the strongest position to receive the maximum help from your loving Father."²



Eight-year-old Lizzy Thomson learned to accept God's will and endure faithfully when she was diagnosed with brain cancer. Lizzy loved life. She was a gifted violinist, a nature enthusiast, and a faithful friend. She believed that her Father in Heaven would heal her if she had faith. With a broad smile and a bald head, she bravely told her curious friends about her cancer and said that Heavenly Father would help her get well. When her mother asked her if she remembered to say her prayers, she answered, "Mom, I am praying all the time."

However, as Lizzy's condition grew worse, she began to realize that she might not get well. Her family watched her accept and endure suffering with pure faith in God's will. She cried very little, but instead placed love notes around the house for her family. She loved a quote she found from Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: "In [Heavenly Father's] plan there are no true endings, only everlasting beginnings."³ She clung to that promise with hope.

At Christmastime, while awaiting her own chemotherapy at the hospital, Lizzy played Christmas carols on her violin

for the other children awaiting treatment. A Santa hat covered her bald head and an IV needle was attached under her sleeve as she played "Silent Night" and other carols. Doctors and nurses stopped to listen with tissues in hand. Her peaceful music filled the cancer clinic with hope.

Lizzy's family continued to fast and pray for her recovery, but God had another plan for Lizzy. Within a few months, she couldn't talk or move. On her last Sunday, as she lay almost lifeless in bed, the sun streamed through the window and bathed her small frame in light. Those gathered around her knew that they were in the presence of a noble spirit. Soon after, Lizzy quietly passed away. With the enduring faith of a child, she had set the example and entered an "everlasting beginning."

The Ultimate Example

As Lizzy patiently endured the trial of her cancer, she followed the example of Jesus Christ, who endured with faith beyond mortal imagining. He took upon Himself every sin, sickness, pain, and affliction we would ever experience (see Alma 7:11–12). He was betrayed, mocked, beaten, and crucified. He "descended below all things" and drank "the bitter cup" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:6; 19:18)—all the while glorifying the Father and faithfully accepting His will.

"What if Jesus had wavered in His commitment to do His Father's will?" President Russell M. Nelson asked. "His Atonement would not have been accomplished. The dead

HOW CAN I ENDURE TRIALS WITH GREATER FAITH?

- See trials as opportunities for growth. Ask, "What can I learn?"
- Ask for a priesthood blessing.
- Read your patriarchal blessing and reflect on all that the Lord has promised you.
- Confide in your ministering brothers and sisters. Welcome their comfort and service.
- Feast upon the words of Christ, both in scripture and in recent general conference addresses.
- Pray for strength and resilience.



Jesus Christ took upon Himself every sin, sickness, pain, and affliction we would ever experience.

would not be resurrected. The blessings of immortality and eternal life would not be. But Jesus did endure.”⁴ He paid for all our sins and suffering and paid the price for our return to our Father. Because He endured with faith, each of us can enjoy the blessings of eternal life.

At times, we may feel stretched to the limit as we seek to follow the Savior’s example of enduring with faith. But of course our Heavenly Father does not desire us to falter. Consider a story of physical endurance that suggests a spiritual parallel. John Stephen Akhwari was a marathon runner who represented Tanzania in the 1968 Summer Olympics. Over an hour after the winner had already crossed the finish line, John continued to stumble on to the end—in spite of cramps, dehydration, and disorientation. He said afterwards, “My country did not send me [9,000] miles to

start the race; my country sent me to *finish* the race.”⁵

Likewise, “our Heavenly Father did not put us on earth to fail but to succeed gloriously.”⁶ He wants each of us to plant our roots deep in His gospel and finish the race, no matter how difficult the course.

Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles encouraged us to “press on no matter how hard it gets, no matter . . . how steep the climb; no matter how little you have left to keep going. Remember and rely upon the Lord’s promise, ‘. . . be of good cheer; I have overcome the world’ [John 16:33].”⁷

It is only by following the Savior’s example to persist through adversity that we can become the people the Lord needs us to be. Like the bristlecone pine whose roots are anchored deep in the soil, we can endure hardships if our faith is firmly rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We can trust in the promise the Lord gave Joseph Smith:

“My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

“And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high” (Doctrine and Covenants 121:7–8). ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

HOW CAN I HELP OTHERS ENDURE WITH FAITH?

- Do not tell others why you think they are suffering.
- Pray for inspiration about how you can give help to someone who needs it.
- Find ways to provide uplifting experiences for those who have trials.
- When appropriate, ask the individual if you can inform the ward council and bishop, so that others can assist as well.
- Dedicate a fast to the individual who struggles.

NOTES

1. Joseph Stein, *Fiddler on the Roof* (film, 1971).
2. Richard G. Scott, “Trust in the Lord,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 17.
3. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Grateful in Any Circumstances,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 77.
4. Russell M. Nelson, “Endure and Be Lifted Up,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 71.
5. See Robert D. Hales, “Behold, We Count Them Happy Which Endure,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 76.
6. Richard G. Scott, “Learning to Recognize Answers to Prayer,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 30.
7. Ronald A. Rasband, “To the Summit” (Brigham Young University–Idaho commencement address, Apr. 8, 2016), byui.edu.

Six Steps to Getting a Job

By Bruno Vassel III

We can't be temporally self-reliant if we need a job and don't have one. Here are six steps to becoming employed.

Do you need employment or a better job? Know someone who does? The challenge today for so many people who desperately need employment or a better job is that they're often not sure how to get the job they want. They ask, "Do I write a résumé, put myself on the internet, or do both, and how?" "What is the right way to answer questions like, 'What are your weaknesses?' and 'Why should I hire you for this job?'"

This article shares a six-step plan of what you must know and then do to get the job you want. These six steps are based in part on the results of a survey I conducted on the hiring practices of 760 employers who were recruiting at Brigham Young University. These steps were also developed from information I received from hiring experts and over 30 years of employment and recruiting training I gave to thousands of people in over 20 countries. Finally, my wife and I recently served as senior missionaries assigned to implement Self-Reliance Services throughout Europe. Our experiences reinforced to us that job seekers need this specific help. Regardless of where you live in the world, what your job skills are, or what job position you want to obtain, these six steps can help you.

This process of getting the job you want can take anywhere from a few days to weeks or even months, but the good news is that this process works. These six steps can help job seekers at all levels who fit into one of three categories: (1) those looking for their first job, (2) those wanting to move to another job or get promoted within their current company or organization, and (3) those wanting to move to a position in another organization.

Step 1. Identify the specific job you want now.

You must identify a realistic job that you can perform right now, that fits your own work-related skills, background, accomplishments, or education. Once you decide, write down the job's title. If you need help, various websites list many different job titles and descriptions. For step 1, you don't need to find a job opening; just identify the type of job that you are qualified for and interested in.





With several job options in front of you, what are the next steps to take to get the job that's right for you?

Two of the biggest mistakes job search candidates make are to not decide on a specific job that they really want or to pick a position for which they are not qualified. If you're not sure what specific job to look for and pursue, then you may end up not getting any job at all. Saying something like, "I just need a job, any job" is not helpful. Saying this does not impress prospective employers and damages your own job search efforts. So pick a specific job you can do now, and then focus on getting that job.

Step 2. Find the job description for the job you want.

The survey I conducted with the 760 employers who recruited at Brigham Young University and my years of employment experience in many countries showed that recruiters and hiring managers almost always consider only candidates for a specific job who have the correct work-related skills, experience, accomplishments, or education for that job. This is especially true for middle- and upper-level positions. As

they carefully consider candidates, these recruiters use an outline or list called a job description to remember the most critical requirements of each open job. The hiring person then compares all candidates to that position's specific description.

You must find the job description for the job you want. It will help you decide if you really are a good candidate for that job. It will also help you decide what to say and not say about yourself on your résumé, in cover



letters, and in interviews with employers. Employers usually list the job description for each of their open jobs on their website, in newspaper ads, and on job search websites. Current workers who know the job may also be able to tell you about the open job's description and requirements.

Your task in step 2 is to find the specific requirements listed in the job description for the job you want. You'll then use that key information in steps 3–6.

Step 3. Identify your skills, experiences, job results, and education that fit the job you've selected.

Here is where you identify your own personal skills and work-related accomplishments that show that your background really does match the critical

requirements of the job you now want, as described in the job description you found in step 2.

As you make this list of your work-related skills and accomplishments, you'll then be able to compare your work background with the key qualifications shown in the job description you found in step 2. If your list shows that your skills match up nicely with the needs of the job you selected in step 1, then move forward now to steps 4–6. If, however, your skills and accomplishments you listed in step 3 don't match up nicely with the job description you found in step 2, then you should seriously consider picking another job to pursue at this time, one that more closely matches your current skills and abilities.

Step 4. Write a customized one- or two-page résumé.

A main purpose of your résumé, also called a curriculum vitae, is to get an interview with the recruiter or hiring person who's looking to fill the open position. Your résumé does this by briefly showing the hiring person that your work-related skills, experience, accomplishments, or education fit what the employer's job description says are the most important characteristics of an ideal candidate for that job.

The résumé you write for each different employer's open job *must be customized*. You don't need to change the same core data that you'll include on all your



résumés, like your employment history, your school information, and your current contact information. Those details will be the same on all your résumés. But if you apply for a job with more than one employer, each employer will have a somewhat different or very different job description for their job. Therefore, you must select which of your skills and accomplishments are relevant to each job description. Put those onto your résumé as concise statements that start with a descriptive verb, such as “researched,” “developed,” “produced,” “managed,” and so on.

For example, if you had work experience in both sales and marketing and you were applying for two different jobs—one focusing on sales and the other on marketing—then you would develop two résumés, one sharing more of your sales activities and accomplishments and the other sharing more of your marketing accomplishments and activities. (If you don’t have much work experience yet, visit ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/71969 to learn how to use experience from your Church service on your résumé.)

Step 5. Find employers who are now hiring people for the job you want.

There are always some open jobs to be filled, even in very hard times. Employees retire, change jobs, get promoted, get demoted, or move away. And there are always some businesses growing and needing more workers. All of these

situations lead to jobs becoming available that need to be filled by qualified candidates. Sometimes this happens in small trickles and sometimes in floods of open jobs to be filled. So don’t get discouraged if you haven’t found a job yet. Just keep looking for that job for you.

Look on employers’ websites, career websites, newspaper ads, and other sources for the job you want. Also, one of the best ways to find open jobs is by networking—contacting lots of people every day, such as neighbors and ward members, telling them of the specific job you’re looking for and asking if they know of such an open job or if they know someone who might know of such an open job. Be sure to give

Plan for and practice answering the questions you might be asked in a job interview.

your contact information to all of these people as you network daily.

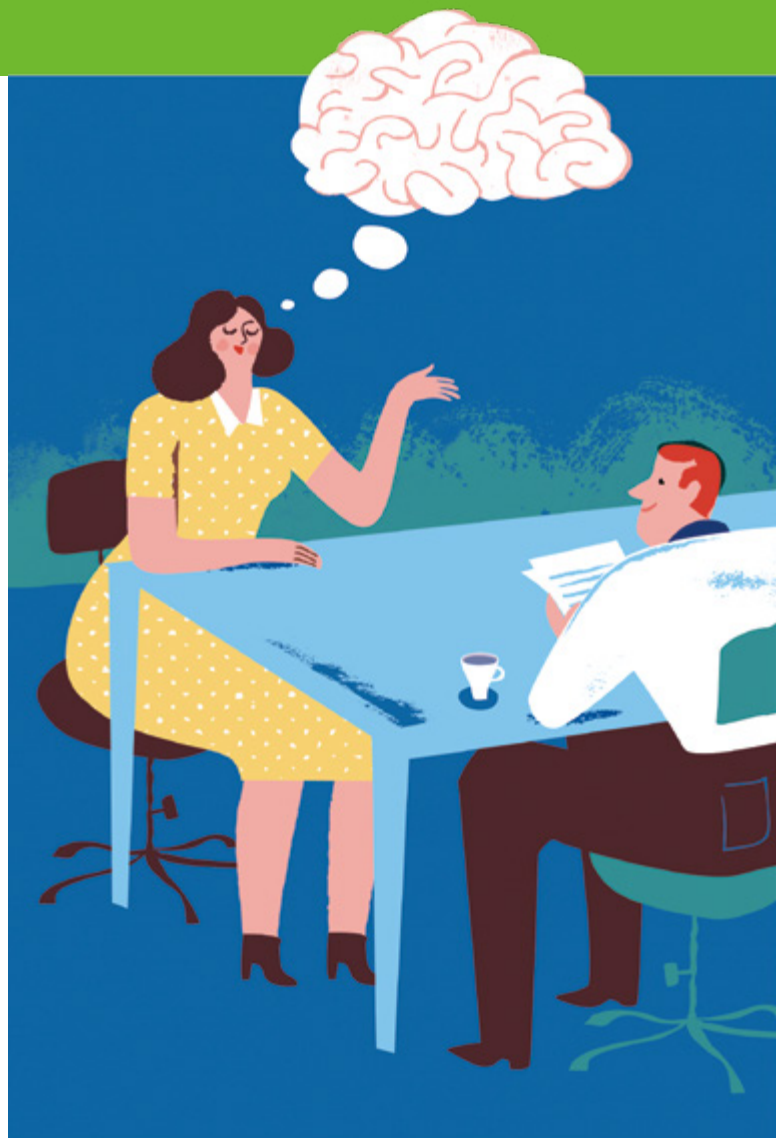
Step 6. Learn to interview well before sending your résumés to employers.

Before you begin to send your finely tuned résumés to prospective employers, you must first learn to interview well. Far too many people begin sending out résumés as quickly as they can, before they're prepared to interview well. The problem with this is that some of these job seekers may get invited right away for an interview. These candidates get excited, go to the interview before preparing adequately for it, don't interview well, and therefore don't get the job. Once you've done this, you can't go back to that company or interviewer and ask for another interview, saying you've now learned how to answer the questions correctly!

How you answer every question in the interview is critical to your success in getting the job you want. Although you must always be fully honest, there are still right and wrong ways to answer each question in an interview. You'll be asked questions like these:

- What are your strengths and your weaknesses?
- What problem did you have in a former job that you would now handle differently?
- What are your salary requirements?
- What would you like to be doing in five years?

As a candidate, the answer you give to every question you're asked must be anticipated and planned out ahead of time. Even one bad answer may cost you the job. Focus your answers on short, one- to two-minute examples that show that your background, skills, and accomplishments do fit their job description. Research the organization before the first interview so you can tailor your responses to their needs.



At the end of most interviews, you will have the opportunity to ask the employer a few questions. Your very best question to ask is about the open job. "What needs to be accomplished or changed in this job?" This will help you in future interviews if you're asked to come back. You can generally save your questions about the organization's goals, work culture, salary (unless you are asked about it), work hours, and benefits for future interviews.

You now have the six steps to getting the job you want. You can't be temporally self-reliant if you need a job and don't have one. If you need employment, a better job, or know someone who does, please use or share these powerful job search tools. They work! May the Lord bless you in your efforts to get the job you want. ■

The author now lives in Utah, USA.

CHURCH RESOURCES TO HELP YOUR JOB SEARCH

Consider joining your ward or stake's "Find a Better Job" self-reliance course. Ask your bishop or branch president if your ward or branch has a self-reliance or employment specialist.

Visit [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/71971](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/71971) to find videos on interviewing, networking, résumé writing, and more.



THE GLORIOUS OPPORTUNITY FOR WORK

"Work is an antidote for anxiety, an ointment for

sorrow, and a doorway to possibility. Whatever our circumstances in life, . . . let us do the best we can and cultivate a reputation for excellence in all that we do. Let us set our minds and bodies to the glorious opportunity for work that each new day presents."

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Two Principles for Any Economy," *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 56.



Family Study fun

Consider these activities during family scripture study or home evening.



Still, Small Voice Obstacle Course

July 1–7 (Acts 1:1–8, 15–26; 2:1–42; 4:1–13, 31–33)

After His Ascension, the Lord directed his Church through the Holy Ghost. Revelation helped leaders call a new Apostle, spread the gospel, and find those in need. This same practice is followed today.

- 1 Scatter pillows, couch cushions, and other soft objects throughout the room.
- 2 Assign someone in the family to be the “person in need” at the end of the obstacle course.
- 3 Place a blindfold on a member of the family and assign someone else to whisper directions into the person’s ear to guide them safely through the course to the person in need.

Discussion: When was a time you felt directed by the Holy Ghost to help someone else? How did you recognize those promptings? What recent changes have been announced by President Russell M. Nelson and others? How are these changes evidence of the Lord guiding His Church today?



Apostle Social Media Scroll

July 8–14 (Acts 6:1–8)

As you read these verses in Acts, make a list of any Christlike attributes you see in the disciples chosen to be the Lord’s servants.

- 1 On your smartphone or computer, go to the Facebook and Instagram accounts of the current Apostles and General Auxiliary leaders.
- 2 Scroll through their posts and read about some of their recent experiences visiting members of the Church throughout the world.

Discussion: What Christlike attributes do you see in the individual Apostles and other Church leaders? Why would the Lord value these attributes in choosing His servants? Which of these attributes would you like to develop?



Mighty Mini Movie Party

July 15–21 (Acts 10)

After a vision and a series of other events, Peter came to realize that “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34), meaning God doesn’t prohibit anyone from participating in His gospel. Now, sit back, pop some popcorn, and see how this is happening throughout the world today.

- 1 With the family, go online to the “Pioneers in Every Land” section of history.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
- 2 Explore the site and watch some of the many video shorts featuring Church members in Ghana, Brazil, South Africa, Holland, and elsewhere.

Discussion: Many members throughout the world have made incredible sacrifices to live the gospel. What can we learn from their examples? What experiences strengthened their faith and helped them persevere? Why does the Lord want His gospel preached to all people?



Decoding Your Divine DNA

July 22–28 (Acts 17:16–34)

In Athens, Paul taught people who believed that gods were powers or forces, not living, personable beings. Help your family recognize that we are literally the “offspring of God” (Acts 17:29).

- 1 Pass out paper to each family member and instruct them to list on the paper the traits they’ve inherited from their parents, such as physical traits or personality traits. Discuss how these traits help you and your family members know who their parents are.
- 2 Next, have each family member list traits they inherited from Heavenly Father. Refer to patriarchal blessings if appropriate. Discuss how knowing that we have inherited these traits can strengthen our testimony that we are children of God. ■



A SANCTUARY OF FAITH

“The new home-centered, Church-supported integrated curriculum has the potential to unleash the power of families, as each family follows through conscientiously and carefully to transform their home into a sanctuary of faith.”

President Russell M. Nelson, “Becoming Exemplary Latter-day Saints,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 113.

Five Truths for Loving Those Who Believe Differently

As our children grow up in a diverse world, it's important that we teach them to peacefully coexist with people who have different backgrounds, ideals, and lifestyles. Consider sharing these truths in your next family home evening or family council.

1 Many good people believe differently.

The fact that someone believes or behaves differently than we do doesn't necessarily mean they're bad. Most people are trying their best to follow what they believe is right. If your children are wondering why a person is making choices that we know are wrong, explain that not everyone has the same gospel understanding we have.

Discussion: Who are some people we know outside the Church? What good things are they doing? Why is it important to look for the good in others?



2 We should respect people's agency.

Agency is "the ability and privilege God gives people to choose and to act for themselves."¹ It is a right that we chose to preserve in premortality and that we must continue to protect now, for us and for others. Therefore, we should respect other people's right to choose, even when their choices are different from our own.

Discussion: What are some daily decisions that we each make? (Examples: wardrobe, food, playtime.) What are the consequences of these decisions? How would we feel if we lost that agency?



3 God loves all of His children.

Every person is a beloved child of God, and "all are alike unto [Him]" (2 Nephi 26:33). Just as God "esteemeth all flesh in one" (1 Nephi 17:35), we should treat others with equal love and respect.

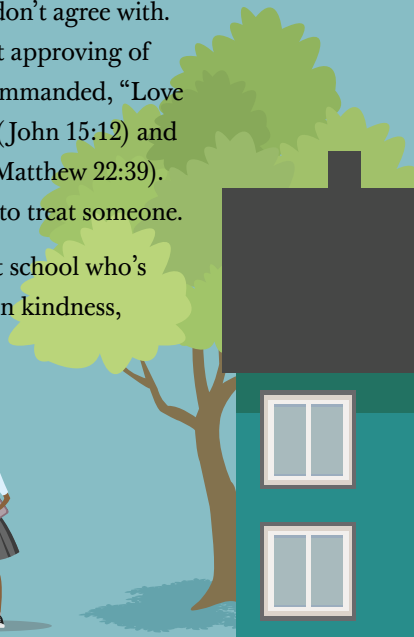
Discussion: Think of a friend not of our faith. Name five similarities we share. Why should we focus on similarities more than differences? What evidence do we see of God's love for those who believe differently?



4 Kindness is not condoning.

People may worry that supporting a person who doesn't live according to gospel teachings means advocating a lifestyle they don't agree with. But you can love someone without approving of that person's choices. The Lord commanded, "Love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12) and "Love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:39). Love will never be the wrong way to treat someone.

Discussion: Think of a friend at school who's different. How can you reach out in kindness, friendship, and love?



5 We can be good examples without making people feel bad.

In our interactions with others, we should take extra care to communicate love and inclusion. We should never make someone feel like they don't belong.

Discussion: How can we make others feel welcomed instead of judged or excluded? How can we be an example? Try role-playing different situations, responding in a Christlike way. ■

NOTE

1. Guide to the Scriptures, "Agency," scriptures.Church of Jesus Christ.org.



CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

With Children

- Julie Cornelius-Huang, "Don't Forget to Pray for Erik," *Friend*, Jan. 2017, 36.
 - Katie Pike Brooks, "The Perfect Match," *Friend*, July 2019, 22.
 - Henry D., "Friends and Other Faiths," *Friend*, July 2019, 21.
- For other resources, visit lessonhelps.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



With Teens

- Jeffrey R. Holland, "Conviction with Compassion," *New Era*, July 2013, 2.
 - David A. Edwards, "Do's and Don'ts of Defending Your Beliefs," *New Era*, Aug. 2014, 18.
 - "What does it really mean to be tolerant and not judgmental?" *New Era*, July 2018, 43.
- For other resources, visit youth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



A Promise to a Child

A few years ago, I was extremely depressed. The only thing I could find a little motivation for was my best friend and her children. We went for walks on weekends, which I enjoyed. Over time, however, we began to go on walks less and less frequently. I began to miss my friend and her family. I later learned that our walks became less frequent because my friend and her family had resumed a practice they had stopped many years before—attending church.

One day they invited me to lunch. Seeing them again made me feel very happy. I told them how much I missed them. My friend's six-year-old daughter suggested that we solve that problem by going to church together. So without thinking twice, she invited me to go.

Oh, no! How could I make this family understand that going to church was right for them but too

boring for me? I hadn't gone to church for years, but how could I say no to a child? I said I would go, but the truth was that I didn't have the least intention of keeping that promise.

That Sunday, I went to breakfast with my dad. My cell phone constantly rang, reminding me that I had promised a little girl that I would go to church with her. I ignored my cell phone until my dad asked me why I wasn't answering it. I admitted that I had been invited to go to a church meeting but didn't want to go. He smiled and said, "Lluvia, never make a promise to a child if you are not

willing to fulfill it." I decided I would keep my promise.

When I arrived at church, I felt something different, something that I can't describe. I still can't explain how it happened, but the next Sunday, I found myself there again, and the next and the next, until I understood what I was feeling: the Holy Ghost.

The Church members began to make me feel at home. Without any doubt, I was curious about the Church. I began meeting with the missionaries, and I also began to gain a testimony. The missionaries' visits became more constant, and my understanding of the gospel grew until I felt an immense desire to be baptized. I was baptized a short time later, and now I enjoy the blessings of the gospel. Because of this, I'm so grateful I kept my promise to a six-year-old girl. ■

Lluvia Paredes Cabrera,
Yucatán, Mexico

BONUS ARTICLE

Read an additional "Latter-day Saint Voices" article in the digital version of this issue in the Gospel Library app or at ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

My cell phone constantly rang, reminding me that I had promised a little girl that I would go to church with her.





Before I left for the hospital, a friend and fellow worker said, “Since we’re so close to the house of the Lord, why don’t we pray together first?”

Let’s Pray Near the Temple

When our son Marco was three years old, he and I suffered a serious bout of food poisoning. Marco became so sick that he fell unconscious. My wife, Marianela, and I rushed him to the hospital. By the time we arrived, he looked like he was dead. Finally, after about four hours, he regained consciousness.

From then on, Marco suffered seizures off and on for the next five years. When we took him to bed each evening, we wondered if in the middle of the night, we would again have to rush him to the hospital. We had a difficult time sleeping during those stressful years, and we relied on prayer, faith, fasting, and priesthood blessings.

When Marco was about six, Marianela called me at work and told me to hurry to the hospital. Marco had suffered a serious seizure and was in a coma. When she called, I was working

on the renovation of the Argentina Missionary Training Center, located adjacent to the Buenos Aires Argentina Temple.

Before I left for the hospital, a friend and fellow worker said, “Since we’re so close to the house of the Lord, why don’t we pray together first?” The temple was closed for renovation and expansion, but we approached the Lord’s house, where I prayed for Marco.

Despite everything we had gone through with Marco, I felt gratitude to God for the time Marianela and I had been able to share with him. As I prayed, I told Heavenly Father that we had tried to be good parents and had taken care of Marco the best we could. I also told Him that we would accept His will if He called Marco home.

When I arrived at the hospital, I didn’t know if Marco would survive the coma or, if he came out of it,

whether he would be able to walk or talk again. After a grueling two hours, he awoke. He was exhausted, but he was all right. From then on, miraculously, he improved. Eventually, Marco was weaned off his medication and released for good from the hospital.

Marianela and I look back on that difficult time grateful that we still have Marco and grateful for the things we learned. Our trial united us and made us stronger spiritually. Without it, we might not have learned to recognize the many ways the Lord shows His hand in our lives.

As Marianela says, “We saw a mountain of evidence and experiences that have given us a testimony of the presence of God, that He is with us and that He listens to us. If we endure and have patience, blessings can come when we least expect them.” ■

Juan Beltrame, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Why Didn't God Warn Me?

My husband and I were living in on-campus housing at the Texas State Technical Institute when our two oldest children were four and two. It was our first experience in Texas hill country, and I loved it! Every spring, central Texas is awash with flowers. In gardens, woods, vacant fields, on roadsides, everywhere I looked there were more blossoms to see.

I took my children on stroller rides nearly every day. We'd find new places to explore, and I let the children pick as many wildflowers as they wanted. We'd finish our ride through a neighborhood where most of the houses had beautifully maintained flower gardens.

One day we came around a corner to discover a large mass of papers spread across one of the flower gardens. The

wind quickly scattered the paper all over the yard. I decided to tidy up the litter before it spread further. I grabbed handfuls of pages and stuffed them in my diaper bag.

As I looked down, I realized I was holding pornography. Appalled, I asked my children to stay in the stroller as I snatched up the rest of the pages. I became upset as I saw glimpses of things I never wanted to see. In my heart, I began complaining, "Why didn't God warn me to go another way home?"

Then I heard the unmistakable huff of school bus brakes. About a dozen kids got off the bus. They all moved past the yard that had been filled with pornography only moments before.

In that moment, my whole perspective changed. I now knew why I hadn't

been warned to go another way. I was grateful I was there to pick up those pages so those children could be spared seeing those damaging images. As I made my way back home, I thought, "What if the school bus had come later? What if I had never found out why I had that experience? How long would I have been upset with God?"

Since that day, the opportunity the Lord gave me to see the "why" of that experience has helped me trust that His wisdom and purposes are greater than my own.

Sometimes I will know why something happened; other times I won't. But no matter what, I know I must have faith that the Lord has a bigger purpose that I can't always see. ■

Lark Montgomery, Texas, USA

The wind quickly scattered the paper all over the yard. I decided to tidy up the litter before it spread further.



When Holding Fast Gets Painful

One sweltering July day, I helped my brother-in-law build a retaining wall. This project eventually pitted me against the roots of a blossoming cherry tree that was in the way.

“Easy,” I thought.

I gathered the appropriate tools and dug around the roots to make room to work. Then I grabbed a saw and, without a second thought, went to work cutting the roots. The smaller roots cut easily, but when I moved to the larger roots, I quickly realized that they weren’t going to be as easy. One root in particular was difficult.

Gritting my teeth, I was determined to cut through that root. Sweat rolled down my neck from the glaring sun overhead as I squeezed the saw tighter. The saw vibrated until my entire body

shook. I could feel my right hand—the one squeezing the saw trigger—start to burn with pain. I ignored the pain and kept holding on.

Finally, the saw cut through the root. I released the trigger and felt the sweet pleasure of victory. As I removed my glove, however, I noticed a small piece of skin had been torn from my hand.

As I thought about this experience, I realized that holding on to the saw was, in a way, like holding fast to the iron rod. We are told to hold fast to the iron rod as we move through life. But just because we hold fast to it doesn’t mean we won’t experience moments of pain. I injured my hand as I clung to the saw. In a similar way, we will pass through trials and tribulations as we continually hold fast to the iron rod.

Heavenly Father knew that the journey back to Him would be fraught with peril. That’s why He has given us the scriptures and words of the prophets to help us. As we hold on to these things through our trials and tribulations in mortality, we will one day return to His presence.

When we return to Him, we will be able to look down at our hands, which held fast to the iron rod, sometimes in spite of pain or difficulty. And we will know that with the help of Heavenly Father and through the atoning power of Jesus Christ, we held on tightly, no matter what obstacles we encountered. ■

Jeff Borders, Washington, USA





By Becky Craven
Second Counselor in
the Young Women
General Presidency

Short-Sighted Sarcasm

Our words should be kind, to promote love and unity.

I wasn't just a short girl. In the schools I attended while I was growing up, I was the *shortest* girl. Because of this, I was often teased. However, I didn't allow myself to be offended. In fact, I often laughed with those who teased me. For whatever reason, I never felt bullied.

But there was another kind of humor some of my fellow students used, and it did hurt. Sarcastic comments, made in an attempt to be funny, often inflicted unseen wounds. Regardless of the intent, sarcastic remarks can pierce the soul like daggers. Perhaps this is because such comments are usually rolled around elements of truth.

This is particularly the case among family members, whom we know well enough to make our sarcastic remarks to them very personal. What might seem comical to one person might not be so humorous from the other side. I believe that since we can't know how



sarcastic comments may hurt others, it is better not to use them at all.

Like most of us, from time to time I have said something sarcastic. Often I have wished, either immediately or later on, that I hadn't. I have recently wondered how often I've hurt someone by my use of sarcasm. Have I been a bully?

We generally overlook sarcasm as a type of bullying. But sarcasm can cut, berate, and belittle, and isn't that bullying? Chances are that we've never considered ourselves as bullies, but when we throw sarcastic darts at another

person, chances are high that they will feel injured.

During the time of King Mosiah, the people of the Church were taught "that they should let no pride nor haughtiness disturb their peace; that every man should esteem his neighbor as himself" (Mosiah 27:4). Knowing that we are sons and daughters of Heavenly Parents should help us determine how we act, what we do, and what we say. And that means sarcasm is often short-sighted.

Remembering that others are also children of Deity should cause us to treat them with the utmost love and respect. When we speak to our fellow brothers and sisters and to our family members, we can promote love and unity as we heed the words of a well-beloved hymn: "Let us oft speak kind words to each other; kind words are sweet tones of the heart."¹ ■

NOTE

1. "Let Us Oft Speak Kind Words," *Hymns*, no. 232.



Love One Another
Emma Taylor

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another. . . .

*"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"
(John 13:34-35).*



YOUNG ADULTS

**DID YOU RETURN
HOME EARLY FROM YOUR
MISSION?**

*Whatever the reason,
you can continue to enjoy the
blessings of the gospel.*

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THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
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