

Ensign



When Loved Ones Choose a Different Path

Learning from Book of Mormon Families, page 48

One Mother's Realization, page 52

Advice from Church Leaders, page 58

THE
CHURCH
IS HERE


Punta Arenas **Chile**






PHOTOGRAPH FROM GETTY IMAGES


The Church is strong in Chile, from the desert towns of the north to metropolitan Santiago in the center to the Punta Arenas stake in the south, with its seven wards and two branches. Here are some more facts about Chile and the Church there:


Church members  **595,526**

3.3  percent of the population who are members of the Church

77 stakes,
590 congregations,
10 missions 

100  family history centers

temples: Santiago (dedicated 1983), Concepción (dedicated 2018), Antofagasta (announced 2019)  **3**

2,653  miles (4,270 km) from the northern border of Chile to the southern border, 217 miles (350 km) from east to west

1956 First congregation organized

1972 First stake organized

1988 Fourth country in the world to reach 50 stakes

1994–96 26 new stakes created





From the *Ensign*

Content in this issue was created before the COVID-19 pandemic. Some details may not be currently applicable. Please adapt suggestions as needed according to current Church and government guidelines.

Church History: A Source of Strength and Inspiration
Elder Quentin L. Cook,
Kate Holbrook, and
Matt Grow



12

I Experience Same-Sex Attraction—Would Church Members Welcome Me Back?
Bouke “Bob” S. Ecoma Verstege

54



When I Felt Deceived about the Church
Travis Ewell

44

How We Strengthen Our Faith—Together

In our study of the Book of Mormon this month, we learn about Korihor, who convinced many Church members that they had been deceived by the prophets but later acknowledged that he himself had been deceived by Satan and had deceived others. We learn about the Zoramites, a whole people who separated themselves from the Church. And we see Alma the Younger, who had once actively fought against the Church, seek to strengthen his own adult children against choices that would lead them away from the Lord and His Church.

Some of us have family members or friends who choose to no longer participate in the Lord’s restored Church. This can be painful for those of us who feel our faith so strongly. We want to help, but many of us wonder how.

One magazine issue could never cover every reason for why faith cools or explain exactly how to respond if it

does. Everyone’s journey of faith is different. But with this issue we hope to provide some help, such as:

- One man’s experience coming back to the Church and what he has learned from it (page 44).
- The importance of welcoming everyone (page 54).
- Suggestions for parents whose children have chosen a different path (pages 48 and 52).
- What leaders say on the subject of loved ones turning away from the Church (see page 58).
- Helpful perspectives on Church history (page 12).

We hope these articles provide a starting point for you to seek divine guidance for your personal circumstances.

Sincerely,
Adam C. Olson
Managing Editor



Contents

- 5 An Invitation to Artists Worldwide** 🕒
- 6 Portraits of Faith** 🕒
Ignatius and Adelaide Baidoo—Accra, Ghana
- 8 Ministering Principles**
Ministering through Church Activities
- 12 Church History: A Source of Strength and Inspiration**
By Elder Quentin L. Cook, Kate Holbrook, and Matt Grow
How can studying Church history deepen our faith and desire to live the gospel more fully?
- 20 Surviving and Thriving like the Pioneers**
By Elder Lawrence E. Corbridge
Pioneer examples show us how to flourish in the midst of trials.
- 26 Picturing Pioneers in India**
By Taunalyn Rutherford
These faithful Saints exemplify what it means to be pillars of the Church.
- 32 Family Study Fun** 📖 🕒
- 34 Weekly Book of Mormon Insights** 📖 🕒
- What Is the Importance of a Name?
 - How Can We Withstand False Teachings?
 - Why Does Alma Share the Story of Moses and the Brass Serpent?
 - How Does Repentance Turn Sorrow to Joy?
- 38 The Choice of Humility** 📖
By Elder Adrián Ochoa
Alma's experience with the Zoramites teaches us that we can choose to be humble and become more Christlike.
- 42 Korihor's Charisma: The Philosophies of an Anti-Christ** 📖
By Benjamin Hyrum White
What can we learn about confronting worldly philosophies from Alma's encounter with Korihor?

Young Adults

68

The future can be a scary thing. But with Heavenly Father's help, we can all **move forward with faith in the future**. This month, read stories from other young adults who have learned some **keys to preparing** for the future.



- 44 When I Felt Deceived about the Church**
By Travis Ewell
After Brother Ewell learned things that shook his faith and caused him to leave the Church for a time, he realized what he had been missing.
- 48 When Loved Ones Leave the Church**
By Merrilee Browne Boyack
These Book of Mormon examples can help us find inspiration when members of our families struggle with their faith.
- 52 You Love, He Saves** 🕒
By Krista Rogers Mortensen
A mother realizes that regardless of the choices of her adult children, she simply needs to love them.
- 54 I Experience Same-Sex Attraction—Would Church Members Welcome Me Back?**
By Bouke "Bob" S. Ecoma Verstege
When Brother Verstege felt a pull to return to the Church, he worried about other members accepting him.
- 58 What Church Leaders Are Saying about When Loved Ones Turn Away from the Church**
- 62 How Do I Talk To My Kids about Family Members with Different Beliefs?** 🕒
- 64 Latter-day Saint Voices** 🕒
A family sets aside their own trials to minister; a brave airman stands up for his beliefs and inspires others; a mother holds to a promise; forgiveness comes at an unexpected time.



🕒 Quick Reads

📖 Come, Follow Me Support

On the Cover

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July Digital-Only Articles

Available in the Gospel Library app or at ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org



Come, Follow Me Resources

For a list of articles and activities (organized by week) that can enrich your family's study of the Book of Mormon, see "Come, Follow Me: Book of Mormon—Support Articles and Activities" in the digital version of this issue (available in the Gospel Library app or at ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).



What Should You Do When It Seems Like Promised Blessings Will Never Come?

By *Eliza Broadbent*

A young adult shares insight on what she chooses to focus on as she moves forward with faith.



Bouncing Back after My Plans for the Future Unexpectedly Changed

By *Rachel Libby*

A young adult shares how she held on to faith and hope when plans for the future seemed to shatter.

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AN INVITATION TO ARTISTS WORLDWIDE

You are invited to create new works of art for the upcoming 12th International Art Competition, sponsored by the Church History Museum in Salt Lake City, Utah.

All artistic media, styles, and cultural approaches are welcome. Selected entries will be displayed at the Church History Museum and online.

This juried competition draws from artists around the world in an effort to encourage the creation of quality art by Latter-day Saints, to showcase the breadth and diversity of Latter-day Saint cultural production, and to expand the Church History Museum's collection.

- Theme: "All Are Alike unto God," inspired by 2 Nephi 26:33
- Submission dates: February 1–June 1, 2021
- Ages: Artists must be age 18 or older
- Awards: Artists whose works will be selected for exhibition will be notified in October 2021
- Exhibition dates: March 2022 to October 2022

Visit [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/artcompetition](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/artcompetition) for detailed rules, eligibility requirements, and online registration and to view inspiring works from past competitions. ■



"[The Lord] doeth nothing save it be plain unto the children of men; and he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile."

—2 Nephi 26:33



All Are Alike unto God



Ignatius and Adelaide Baidoo

Accra, Ghana



Ignatius and Adelaide have seen how the Church's literacy program and emphasis on home-centered gospel learning have blessed the members of their stake and family.

CHRISTINA SMITH, PHOTOGRAPHER

Ignatius:

I became involved in the gospel literacy program as a member of the stake presidency. I visited a class and realized that it's not only for those who cannot read and write. It's for all of us to better understand the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Come, Follow Me and home-centered gospel learning will also help families read the scriptures together and learn from each other.

Adelaide:

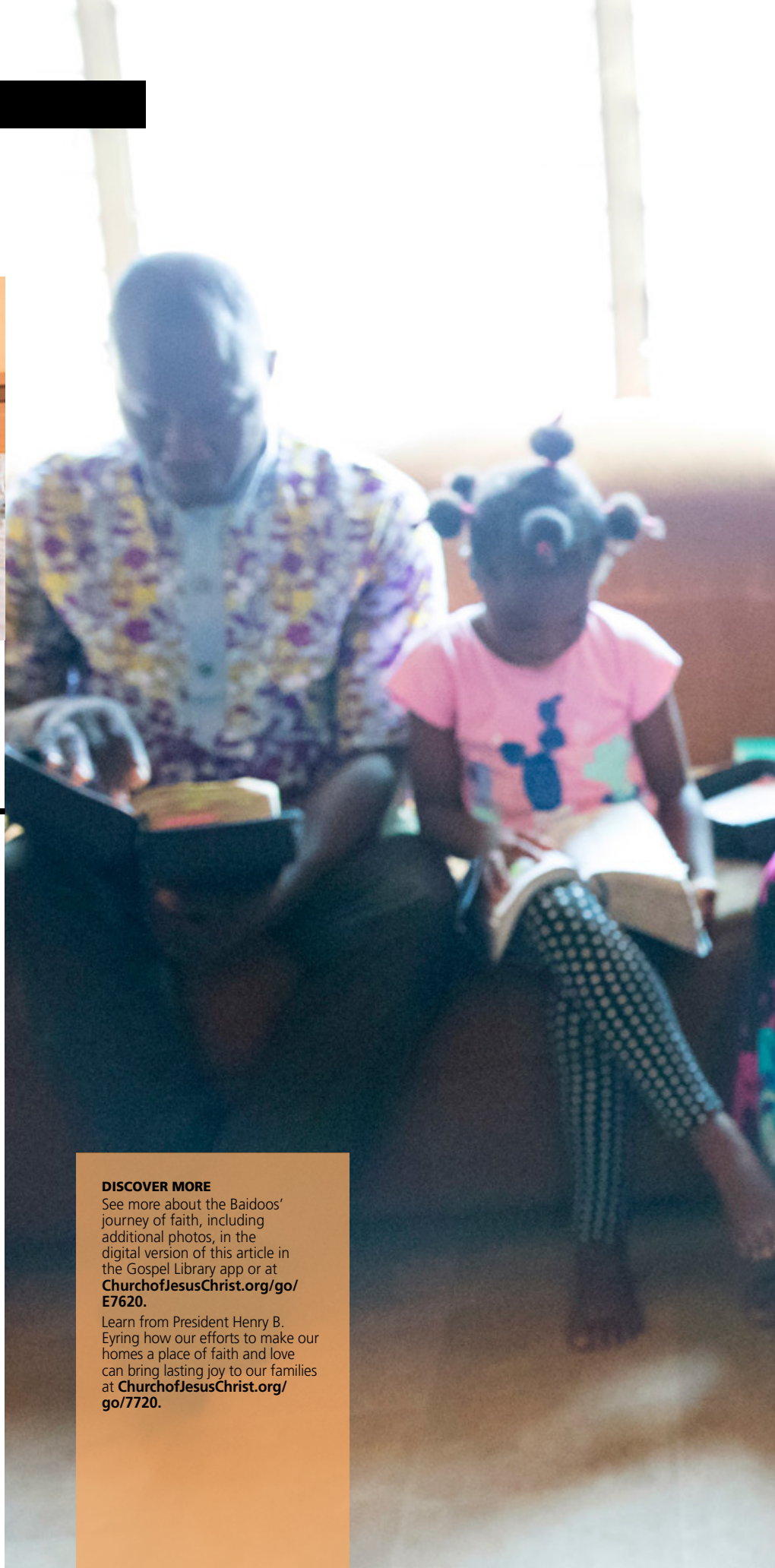
In our family, we try and do all that we can. Everybody gets involved. I am so happy with how my children help each other as we read the Book of Mormon together. They love the Book of Mormon. We've had a nice time reading and sharing our testimonies together.

Ignatius:

President Russell M. Nelson has said, "Exaltation is a family matter."¹ I love my wife and children. I want to be with them and our Heavenly Father forever, so we need to help each other.

NOTE

1. Russell M. Nelson, "Come, Follow Me," *Ensign*, May 2019, 89.



DISCOVER MORE

See more about the Baidoos' journey of faith, including additional photos, in the digital version of this article in the Gospel Library app or at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/E7620](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/E7620).

Learn from President Henry B. Eyring how our efforts to make our homes a place of faith and love can bring lasting joy to our families at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/7720](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/7720).



Ministering Principles

MINISTERING THROUGH CHURCH ACTIVITIES





One way we can minister to our fellow ward members, neighbors, and friends is through Church activities. Whether you plan an activity around the needs or interests of someone you minister to or you invite them to participate in activities or service opportunities for others, activities on a ward, stake, or even multistake level can provide meaningful and entertaining ways to foster unity and strengthen members.

Church activities can also open the door to many opportunities to minister. For example, Church activities can provide opportunities to participate in service projects that bless others and build positive relationships in the community. Church activities can also be a chance to reach out to less-active members of the Church and to friends of other faiths or friends with no religious affiliation.

Including many people in Church activities creates an opportunity for the Lord to bless and strengthen our wards and branches, our neighborhoods, and our communities.

Building Positive Relationships

Winter was coming, and David Dickson had no idea how to keep his family warm.

David, his wife, and two daughters had just moved to the rural city of Fredonia, Arizona, USA, a high-desert landscape surrounded by majestic red cliffs, sagebrush, and evergreens.

The home the Dicksons had rented relied on a wood-burning stove as its primary heat source. David quickly learned that gathering firewood was a necessary skill because winters in Fredonia are full of snow and ice.

“I didn’t have any firewood or a chainsaw or even the knowledge of how to use one!” David says. “I didn’t know what I was going to do.”

Some ward members asked David if his family had enough wood to get through the winter. “It didn’t take them long to realize that I didn’t,” David says. “The elders quorum soon offered to help me gather wood. Overwhelmed with gratitude, I accepted their offer.”

David soon found out that this wood-gathering trip was typical of many well-planned, well-organized, and well-attended ward activities. One Saturday morning, David, the elders quorum, and other ward members headed into the mountains in a caravan of trucks and trailers.

“In a single afternoon, thanks to their tools and know-how, ward members provided my family with a woodpile that lasted us the better part of two winters,” David says. “Even more important, I was taught everything I needed to know about gathering wood on my own. By the time I left Fredonia, I knew how to handle a chainsaw, and I helped out on more ward wood-gathering activities than I can count.”

Such ward activities not only built positive relationships among members of the Church but also built positive relationships with everyone in the community.

“I remember one woman, not a member of the Church, who was new to the area,” David says. “She had been reduced to burning wood paneling from her home to keep warm. Once we learned about her plight, we made sure she had enough firewood to get through the winter. She was so thankful she could barely speak.”

Ministering efforts in Fredonia ensured that everyone stayed safe and warm through the winter.





Reaching Out to Others

While serving a mission in Romania, Meg Yost and her companion regularly visited a family who hadn't attended church in a long time. "The Stanicas were among the earliest members of the Church in Romania," Meg says, "and we loved them."

When it came time to plan and organize a branch activity, leaders decided that the branch would have a "Pioneer Night." This would be an evening to celebrate the courageous pioneers who crossed the United States to get to the Salt Lake Valley. It would also be an opportunity to honor the pioneers of the Church in Romania.

"We thought it would be a great way for some of the members to bear testimony of their conversion and how they have seen the Church grow in Romania," Meg says. "We immediately thought that the Stanica family should be involved. We invited them to participate, and they were excited!"

On the night of the activity, the Stanicas still hadn't arrived when it was time to start.

"We were worried that they wouldn't come," Meg recalls. "But just in time, they walked through the door. The Stanicas bore a beautiful testimony of the gospel and the Church. They also got to socialize with other members whom they hadn't seen in a long time."

The members of the branch opened their arms and welcomed the Stanicas. The next Sunday, Meg was pleasantly surprised to see Sister Stanica at church.

"When I visited the branch a few months later, she was still coming!" Meg says. "I think the chance to bear her testimony and to feel involved and needed in the branch really helped her."

4 Ideas for Ministering through Church Activities

- **Plan activities that meet needs:** Activities are a great way to meet many different needs. They may be planned to meet the specific needs of an individual or group. They should also meet the needs of those who participate, whether that need is to get to know each other better, learn more about the gospel, or feel the Spirit.
- **Invite everybody:** As you plan activities, make a special effort to invite those who would benefit from participating. Keep in mind new members, less-active members, youth, single adults, people with disabilities, and people of other faiths. Extend the invitation with their best interests in mind, and express how you would love to have them come.
- **Encourage participation:** Those you invite will get a lot more out of the activities if they have the opportunity to participate. One way to encourage participation is to have individuals use their gifts, skills, and talents during the activity.
- **Welcome everyone:** If your friends attend an activity, do all you can to make them feel welcome. Likewise, if you see people you don't know, be friendly and welcome them too! ■

DISCOVER MORE

On ChurchofJesusChrist.org, you can watch the video "Inviting Others to 'Come and Help'" to see how easy it can be to invite others to serve with us.





OPEN YOUR HEART

“We should always be attentive and look for new faces when attending Church activities and meetings. . . . We can do simple things to help these new

friends feel embraced and welcome . . . , such as giving a warm greeting, smiling sincerely at them, . . . introducing them to other members, and so forth. As we open our hearts to our new friends . . . , we are acting in the spirit of ministering.”

Elder Ulisses Soares of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “One in Christ,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 38.

MINISTER BY INVITING

Check for upcoming ward or branch activities. Think of those you minister to and consider inviting them to activities.



SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES

Send us your experiences of ministering to others or being ministered to. Go to [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) and click “Submit an Article or Feedback.”



**By Elder
Quentin L. Cook**

Of the Quorum
of the Twelve
Apostles

Sidebars by
Church historians
Kate Holbrook and
Matt Grow

Church History

A SOURCE OF STRENGTH AND INSPIRATION

In this article, from a worldwide devotional held at Nauvoo, Illinois, on September 9, 2018, Elder Quentin L. Cook and Church historians Kate Holbrook and Matt Grow answer questions about Church history posed by young adults from throughout the world.

Elder Cook: Church history can be a significant source of faith, but for some people, it has been misunderstood or overlooked. Some people have even purposely misrepresented stories of the past to sow doubt.

In learning *credible* history of the Church, we will bind our hearts together with the Saints of yesterday and today. We will find examples of imperfect people like you and me who went forward with faith and allowed God to work through them to accomplish His work. I promise that studying the history of the Church can deepen your faith and desire to live the gospel more fully.

RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH OF WOMAN FROM GETTY IMAGES; FAR RIGHT: ADDISON PRATT AND HIS JOURNAL, FRENCH POLYNESIA, 1844

As we learn more about the Saints of the past, we will be strengthened in fulfilling our own mission as a daughter or a son of God.

The story of the Restoration is a story of sacrifice, determination, and faith. We are all part of the Restoration and Church history. Each of us has a mission to accomplish in this life that will help the gospel to fill the earth. As we learn more about the Saints of the past, we will be strengthened in fulfilling our own mission as a daughter or a son of God.

In the over 24 years that I have served as a General Authority, the desire of the Brethren has been to be as transparent as possible, both in terms of Church history and in doctrine. We feel that the effort to put forth new resources—particularly *The Joseph Smith Papers*, the Gospel Topics Essays, Church History Topics, and now the multi-volume *Saints*¹—is a wonderful way of getting people to study things in context that are true and that will help them

understand the gospel of Jesus Christ in a credible way.

One of my favorite accounts in *Saints* is the story of Addison Pratt going to the South Pacific. He had about 60 baptisms. My wife, Mary, and I had a chance to visit the Austral Islands, French Polynesia, where Addison Pratt taught.

One of the most remarkable experiences I've ever had was to hear a young woman there say, "I am a seventh-generation member of the Church." Addison Pratt had baptized her distant ancestor before the Saints went to Utah.

Wherever you are in this world, whatever lineage you come from, you're important, you're part of Church history. We very much need you and want you. You will bless people's lives.



Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon

When I was in my teenage years, we thought that my older brother wouldn't get to serve a mission because the ward was allowed to send only one young man at a time on a mission. Everybody else had to be available for the military draft. But our bishop and stake president found out that they could send one more. So, they talked to my brother about it, and he came home and told my parents.

My father was a wonderful man, but he was not active in the Church. His response was negative—but for an unusual reason. He wasn't critical of the Church or even of a mission, but my brother was preparing for medical school. My father said, "You've prepared yourself to go to medical school. You've

Why isn't the Church more open about some of the controversial things in its history?

By Kate Holbrook

When I was four years old, my mother and my grandmother worked at the Beehive House, Brigham Young's old house in Salt Lake City, Utah. They taught me all about Brigham Young and that he had many wives. About 10 years later, I learned that Joseph Smith had many wives. I didn't learn about seer stones, which Joseph used to help translate the Book of Mormon, until I was an adult. The Church did not hide information from me, but the historical information was not as emphasized when I was young.

What I did learn in my Sunday meetings and my seminary classes was what the main work of the Church is. I learned to repent. I learned to bring my life into harmony with the gospel of Jesus Christ. I learned how to establish a relationship with my Father in Heaven. These are the things in my life that I hold most dear. I know that for some people, it can be really painful to learn about something you

thought you should have known but didn't know. That's why Matt and I do the work we do. We hope that that experience for people will now become a part of the past because we have the book *Saints*, which portrays a full history for people.



How do we know if a source about Church history is reliable?

By Matt Grow

I've worked for the Church for the past nine years writing about history. I've seen the attitude of our General Authorities with relationship to our history. The conversations are not about "How do we hide or censor history?" Rather, the conversations are about "How do we make history accessible, available, and understandable?"

We all know that the challenge in the information age is not to find answers—we're surrounded by answers—but to discern between good answers and bad answers, good information and bad information. There are so many discussions online about our history, and most of these discussions produce a lot more heat than light.

Be careful about sources of information that just seek to tear people down. Look instead for sources of information that are based on the records left by the people themselves and that seek to be fair to them. It is really easy to play "gotcha" with the past, to pull a quotation or an incident out of context and make it look alarming.

As a historian, I try to follow the advice of a British novelist. He said: "The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there" (L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* [1953], prologue). That means when we visit the past, we don't want to be an "ugly tourist." We want to try to understand people within their own context and their own culture. We want to be patient with what we perceive as their faults. We want to be humble about the limits of our own knowledge. And we want to have a spirit of charity about the past.



taken the classes. You can do more good if you go to medical school than you can if you go on a mission."

That evening, this faithful, wonderful brother of mine sat with me, and the two of us talked. We concluded that there were really three questions that would determine his response to our father. The first one was, "Was Jesus Christ the Savior of the world?" The second one was, "Is the Book of Mormon the word of God?" And the third one was, "Was Joseph Smith a prophet?" I realized that the answers to those three questions would affect almost every decision I would make for the rest of my life.

I had always loved the Savior and I had read the Book of Mormon, but realizing how significant those answers were, I prayed that night and received through the Holy Ghost a profound favorable answer to those questions. Jesus Christ is the Savior, the Book of Mormon is the word of God, and Joseph Smith was a prophet. I testify that these things are true.

Plural Marriage

I want to make three points about plural marriage. First, it's clear that there was a lot of sacrifice in plural marriages. There was a lot of love and unity, but there was also sacrifice, and parents in those marriages taught their children to sacrifice. Many of the children of those plural marriages took the gospel of Jesus Christ across the world and blessed many lives.

Second, there were some, such as Vilate Kimball, who received their own personal revelation—before they even knew fully about what was coming—that this doctrine came from God.²

And third, in the senior councils of the Church, there's a feeling that plural marriage, as it was practiced, served its purpose. We should honor those Saints, but that purpose has been accomplished.

Now, there are unanswered questions. But I want you to know that we have a loving Heavenly Father who has a perfect plan, that His plan is one of happiness, and that we have a Savior who did everything for us. We can trust in Them.

Why are the accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision a little different?

By Matt Grow

Joseph Smith recorded or asked his scribes to record four different accounts of the First Vision. The accounts tell a consistent story, but there are differences. That shouldn't surprise us. If there were complete uniformity among the accounts, that's when I, as a historian, would become suspicious because that's just not the way memory works. We see the same pattern in other accounts in history or in the scriptures (see Acts 9:7; 22:9).

Also keep in mind how hard it is to capture a sacred experience in language. Joseph called language a "little, narrow prison" (in *History of the Church*, 1:299). Think about your own most sacred experiences. How easy is it to put them into words? We should celebrate that we have multiple accounts because they give us new insight and new perspective. Go read the four accounts of the First Vision in the Gospel Topics essays. Doing so will deepen your appreciation of what happened that day.

What role did the Urim and Thummim play in the translation of the Book of Mormon?

By Kate Holbrook

Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of God. The Urim and Thummim, mentioned in the Book of Mormon, was buried with the plates. When Moroni gave Joseph the gold plates, he also gave him the Urim and Thummim. The seer stone, which Joseph also used to translate, was not buried with the plates. It was something that Joseph had found on his own years earlier that helped him to feel in tune with spiritual revelation. So he used both.

Emma Smith, one of his scribes, later remembered that whenever Joseph sat down to start translating again, he wouldn't ask, "Now, where was I? Where did we leave off?" He would just start right at the point where they had left off. If you look at a page of Joseph Smith's personal journal that he wrote three years after translating the Book of Mormon, it's full of crossed-out words, incomplete thoughts, and broken sentences. When you look at a page of the dictated Book of Mormon, there's none of that. It's complete, beautiful prose—complete sentences, nothing crossed out.

That is all interesting to think about, but what matters to me more is the contents of the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is where King Benjamin taught me to prioritize generosity over judgment, where Alma taught me what it means when I get baptized, what I promise to do for and with my fellow Saints. The Book of Mormon is where Mormon and Moroni taught me about how important charity is and what to do to obtain it. This book has shaped who I am and how I see the world.





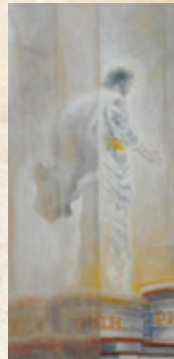
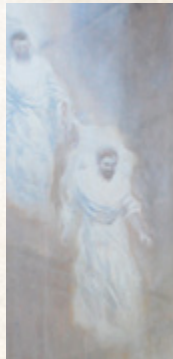
Why did they practice plural marriage in the early days of the Church?

By Kate Holbrook

Book of Mormon instruction about plural marriage says that monogamy is the Lord’s wish for His people, but there are rare exceptions when He commands the practice of plural marriage to raise up a righteous people (see Jacob 2:30). This is the rare exception that Joseph Smith was commanded to instigate. Joseph dragged his heels for years to implement this practice, but eventually he did implement it because he wanted to be obedient to God’s commandment to him. He tried to practice plural marriage in the middle of the 1830s, but it was really in 1841 that he slowly, more officially, began to introduce the practice to his trusted associates. They were shocked. They pled in prayer with their Father in Heaven for understanding of this principle, and they received personal spiritual witnesses that it was right for them at that time.

Plural marriage, practiced officially for about 50 years, was something people could choose. Scholars are still trying to determine how many adult Latter-day Saints actually were in plural marriages, but we know that it was generally a minority of the Saints. And we know that many of them were the most devout, stalwart members of our Church. In 1890, President Wilford Woodruff (1807–98) issued a manifesto that was to end the practice of plural marriage. When some people heard this manifesto, they were relieved. Plural marriage had been hard for them. When others heard this manifesto, they were devastated. They had sacrificed so much, and they had testimonies of this principle.

Some Church members wonder what our past practice of plural marriage means for the afterlife. Church leaders have taught that plural marriage is not necessary for exaltation or for eternal glory. Although I’m personally grateful that monogamy is the rule and that plural marriage is the exception, I do not discount the testimonies and honorable obedience of our spiritual ancestors who practiced this principle. They were being obedient, and they had a testimony that it was right.



Temple and Covenants

In Kirtland, Ohio, one of the incredible things that happened was the building and dedication of the Kirtland Temple. The dedicatory prayer, which Joseph received by revelation, appears in the 109th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. In that prayer he asked the Lord to accept the Saints’ workmanship and sacrifice in building the temple.

One week after the dedication of the temple, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had another vision. This occurred on Easter, which was also Passover. The Lord came in vision and accepted the house. He told the Saints that they should rejoice for having, “with their might, built this house to my name” (Doctrine and Covenants 110:6). After that vision closed, three ancient prophets appeared: Moses, who restored the keys for the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth; Elias, who committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham; and Elijah, who restored the keys of the sealing power (see Doctrine and Covenants 110:11–16).

The restoration of those keys was absolutely essential to accomplishing the Lord’s purposes. We needed not only the Book of Mormon but also those keys and temple ordinances. Those keys have never been more important than they are now.

I have noticed that when one of the

Twelve Apostles is called as the prophet, his heart turns toward the ordinances of the temple in a dramatic way. I was privileged to be at the dedication of the Nauvoo Illinois Temple with President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008). I

ABOVE: KIRTLAND TEMPLE BY AL ROUNDS; RIGHT: MOSES, ELIAS, AND ELIJAH, BY GARY ERNEST SMITH

remember how deeply touched he was to have this temple built and how important it was to him to bring temples to the Saints. President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) continued that effort and received the same inspiration from heaven that President Hinckley did. And we have seen that inspiration in a dramatic fashion with President Russell M. Nelson. The mantle of prophet has come upon him, and he has had an increased sense of the preciousness of temple ordinances.

One of his first messages as President of the Church was to encourage people to go to the temple, receive their ordinances, and stay on the covenant path. Right after that, he said that if for any reason you have fallen off the covenant path, get back on that path.³

How did temple work bless the early Latter-day Saints?

By Matt Grow

When Joseph Smith died, the walls of the Nauvoo Temple were less than halfway done, and soon it became apparent to President Brigham Young (1801–77) that the Saints would again be driven out. So he asked the Lord: “Should we stay here and finish the temple, knowing that we will have to abandon it almost as soon as it’s done, or should we go now?” The answer came clearly, “Stay” (see Brigham Young diary, Jan. 24, 1845, Church Archives; Ronald K. Esplin, “Fire in His Bones,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1993, 46). The ordinances of the endowment and of sealing were so important that the Saints needed to stay.

And so for the next year, they poured all they had into the temple. Toward the end, their homes were being burned around Nauvoo, and the Saints were preparing to go west just as they were finishing the temple. In December 1845, enough of the temple was completed that the Saints could dedicate part of it, give endowments to those who were worthy, and seal husbands and wives to each other.

Over the next few months, they worked around the clock to prepare everyone spiritually for the great trek west. To me it’s profound and sacred that I am sealed by that same power to my wife, children, parents, and generations who have gone before and generations yet unborn. That is what the Restoration has made possible.

Can you share an event from the Restoration that has strengthened your testimony?

By Kate Holbrook

I remember the story of Emma Smith trying to escape the persecution in Missouri. The Mississippi River was only partially frozen—not enough that a wagon with people and their possessions could travel on it. It is a wide river, and it was dangerous to cross. Emma had a six-year-old child holding onto one side of her skirt, an eight-year-old on the other side, a two-year-old in this arm, and an infant in that arm.

The sister-in-law of one of Joseph’s scribes had sewn cotton bags that buttoned around the waist. In those bags under her skirt, Emma carried the only copy of Joseph’s translation of the Bible, which he had been working on for months. With the documents and with her children, she took one step after another across that frozen river, hoping she wouldn’t fall in.

To me, that is the consummate signal of courage and faith—that when you need to do something for what you believe, you just move forward, one foot in front of the other.





“Be of Good Cheer”

Many of you have trials and tribulations. Some of that comes because there is agency. Some of that comes because there is an adversary. But you need to know that we have a loving Father in Heaven and that the Atonement of Jesus Christ can bless us in ways we perhaps don't fully understand.

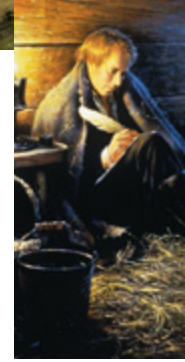
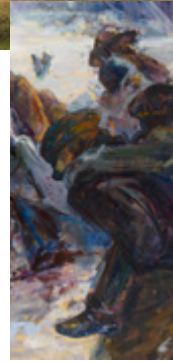
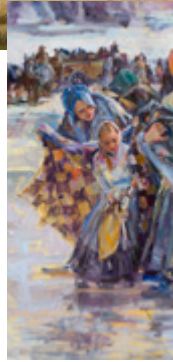
Some historians say that the number of Saints who escaped from Missouri to Nauvoo during the winter of 1838–39 was as high as 8,000. It was winter. Where was Joseph? He was in Liberty Jail, heartbroken over what the Saints were experiencing. He felt that he had been abandoned.

In that precarious circumstance, he received some of the most beautiful scripture—sections 121, 122, and 123 of the Doctrine and Covenants. They are significant. I hope you will read them. *Saints* has a short account of this event:

“Joseph cried out in behalf of the innocent saints. ‘Oh Lord,’ he pleaded, ‘how long shall they suffer these wrongs and unlawful oppressions, before thine heart shall be softened toward them?’

“‘My son, peace be unto thy soul,’ the Lord responded. ‘Thine adversity and thine affliction shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shall triumph over all thy foes.’

“The Lord assured Joseph that he was not forgotten. ‘If the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee,’ the Lord told Joseph, ‘know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience and shall be for thy good.’



“The Savior reminded Joseph that the Saints could not suffer more than He had. He loved them and could end their pain, but He chose instead to suffer affliction with them, carrying their grief and sorrow as part of His atoning sacrifice. Such suffering filled Him with mercy, giving Him power to succor and refine all who turned to Him in their trials. He urged Joseph to hold on and promised never to forsake Him.”

Elder Heber C. Kimball (1801–68) had thought that the justices of the Missouri Supreme Court were going to free Joseph, but they decided not to. Heber returned to Liberty Jail and, not allowed into the dungeon, called down to Joseph with the bad news.

Joseph was warm and friendly to him. “Be of good cheer,” he said. Then he instructed Heber to “get all the Saints away as fast as possible.”⁴

There's a lesson for you in that: be of good cheer regardless of your challenges. If certain things tempt you, get away from them. Rely on the Holy Ghost. The example of Joseph in Liberty Jail and the Saints fleeing from Missouri to Nauvoo are wonderful examples of strength and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

As an Apostle, I bear witness of Jesus Christ. I am a sure witness of His divinity. I want you to know that He guides and directs the Church in a way that will bless all of us. I testify to you that He lives. ■

To watch the full devotional, go to [devotionals.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/devotionals).

NOTES

1. These sources can be found at [history.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.history.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
2. See Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* (1945), 327.
3. See Russell M. Nelson, “As We Go Forward Together,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2018, 7.
4. See *Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days*, vol. 1, *The Standard of Truth, 1815–1846* (2018), 389–90; [saints.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.saints.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

ABOVE: ILLUSTRATION BY DAN BURR; MIRACLE AT QUINCY, BY JULIE ROGERS; JOSEPH SMITH IN LIBERTY JAIL, BY GREG K. OLSEN

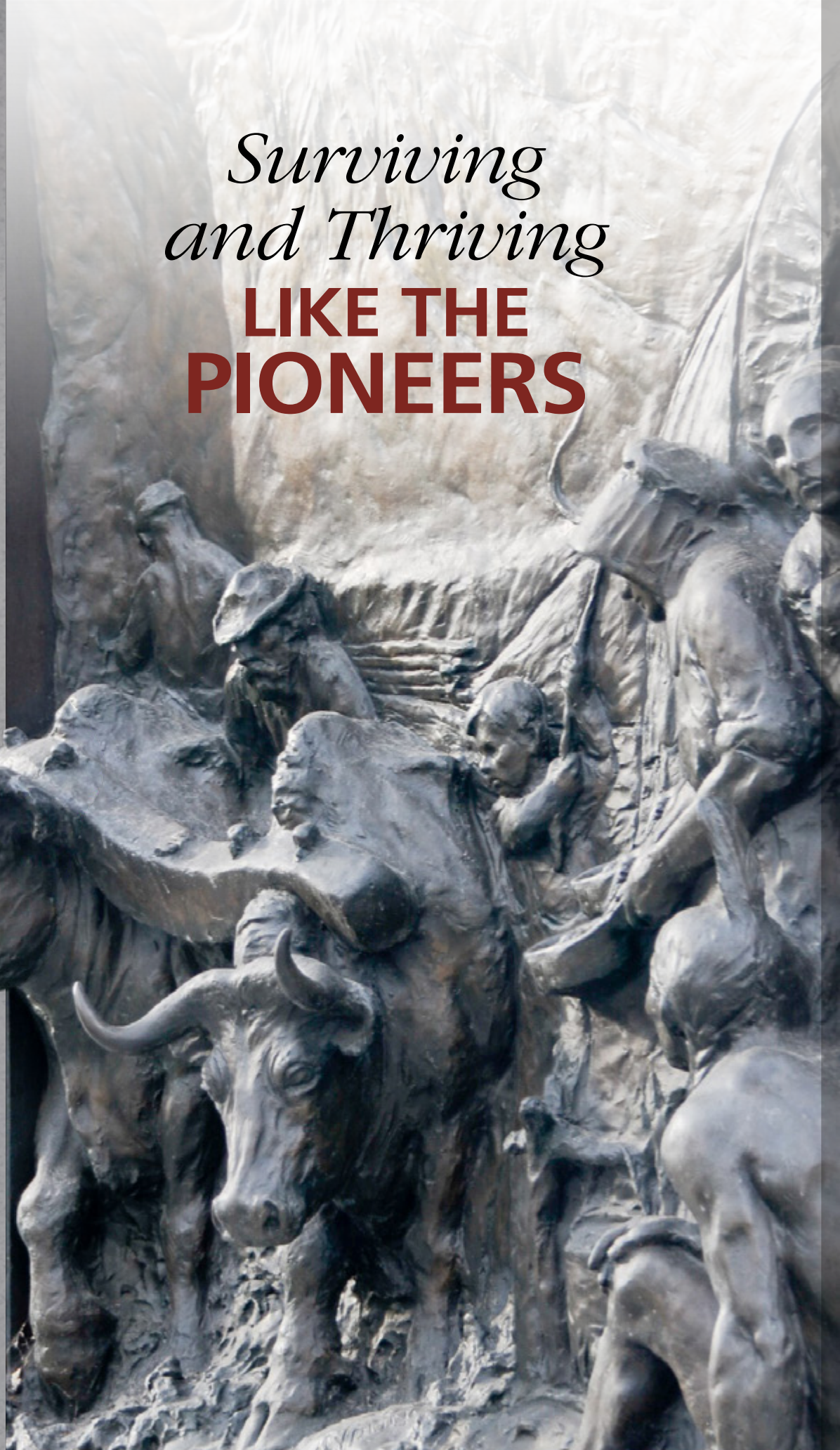


By Elder Lawrence E. Corbridge

Served as a General Authority Seventy from 2008 to 2019

With heavenly help and pioneer persistence, we can not only survive adversity but also thrive because of it.

Surviving and Thriving **LIKE THE PIONEERS**





90,000

Saints had gathered to the United States by 1900

1. Why did so many intelligent people give up so much and willingly endure such great suffering to gather with the Saints?

There is nothing easy about the pioneers and the story of the Restoration, but there is nothing easy about the children of God receiving and following His guidance from the beginning of time. The best and highest road, the road of greatest worth, the only road to fulfillment and eternal life is not an easy road.

Hardship, suffering, disappointment, failure, and faith—always leading to ultimate triumph—have been the common lot of the faithful in all ages. When I think of the Restoration, including pioneers, I think of hardship and suffering, but I also have questions.

This is a particularly relevant question today, as some chart a course of ease, cherry-picking among what the gospel, the Restoration, and the Church offer. They quietly hunker down in the routines of their lives and shrink from any level of inconvenience, sacrifice, and service—much less the level of hardship willingly endured by the early members of the Church.

Why not accept the ordinances and the scriptures and live a good life without extraordinary sacrifice? Why not simply embrace a new religion and remain in place? Why uproot everything and everyone? Why leave one's family, home, and homeland forevermore to traipse off to a strange land, how-

ever great the promise may be? Why not build the kingdom of God in New England, the British Isles, Scandinavia, or wherever is home? Could the Saints not simply live the gospel where they were? Does faith, faithfulness, and righteousness require willing abandonment of almost everything else?

Our natural instinct understandably is to shrink from hardship, but it is a grave mistake for that to be life's primary objective. That kind of thinking wrongly equates the pursuit of joy with the hollowness of ease. While that has



some appeal, it is a deeply flawed strategy because suffering and joy are not incompatible but rather essential companions. You can suffer and never know joy, but you can't have joy without suffering. (See 2 Nephi 2:23.)

On April 6, 1830, the restored Church of Jesus Christ was organized. In September of that year the Lord declared:

“Ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect. . . .

“ . . . The decree hath gone forth from the Father that they shall be gathered in unto one place upon the face of this land” (Doctrine and Covenants 29:7–8).

Over time there were four gathering places, beginning with Kirtland, Ohio (1831–37), then Missouri (1831–38), followed by Nauvoo, Illinois (1839–46), and then Utah (1847–early 1900s).

In a series of wagon trains and a few handcart companies over 22 years, between 60,000 and 70,000 people gathered in the Salt Lake Valley.¹ By 1900, about 90,000 Saints had gathered to the United States. Approximately 50,000 emigrated from the British Isles. About 30,000 came from Scandinavia. Others came from Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Italy, France, Australia, and the South Pacific.²

You can't explain it as religious fanaticism, not on this scale. It is one thing for a new convert or even a few zealots here and there to pack up a few things and leave everything else behind blinded by a new faith. It is quite another for tens of thousands of intelligent, good, rational people to do that in the same time frame and do it willingly and largely independently

of others. They were, as Charles Dickens described them, “the pick and flower of England”³ and other nations.

How does one explain that, tens of thousands of times over? There is nothing like it and there is no good explanation, at least in human terms. You cannot explain it away by the charisma of Joseph Smith, whom these emigrants had never met, and you can't explain it away as the power of a so-called cult either, not on the scale of what actually occurred.

Some have said it was the result of a sense of community. But while a sense of community evolved over time as diverse converts gathered and melded together in increasingly greater numbers, that was after they had left home and homeland. A sense of community might have kept them together once they were together, but what sense of community would have urged leaving home in the first place?

What about a need to find refuge from persecution and the evils of the world? Maybe, here and there, but can that explain the scale of sacrifice we are considering? Can't you hunker down at home and let the winds of scorn blow overhead?

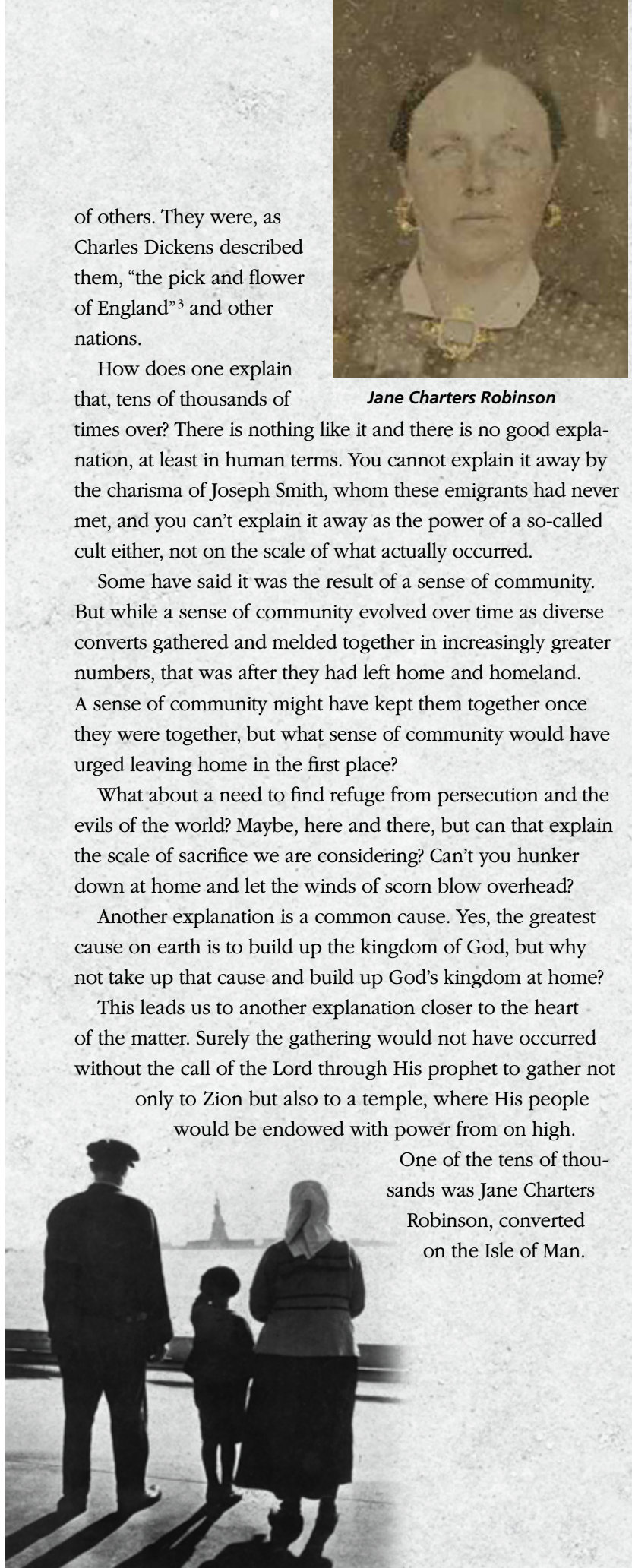
Another explanation is a common cause. Yes, the greatest cause on earth is to build up the kingdom of God, but why not take up that cause and build up God's kingdom at home?

This leads us to another explanation closer to the heart of the matter. Surely the gathering would not have occurred without the call of the Lord through His prophet to gather not only to Zion but also to a temple, where His people would be endowed with power from on high.

One of the tens of thousands was Jane Charters Robinson, converted on the Isle of Man.



Jane Charters Robinson





50,000

Saints emigrated from the British Isles

2. Why did the early Saints persist after repeated failure and constant opposition?

She said: "In the year 1855 . . . I, together with a younger sister, left home and sailed . . . for Liverpool, and arrived there next day for the purpose of going to America, very much against my father's wishes. But I believed in the principle of the gathering and felt it my duty to go, although it was a severe trial to me in my feelings to leave my native land and the pleasing associations that I had formed there, but my heart was fixed. I knew in whom I had trusted, and with the fire of Israel's God burning in my bosom, I forsook my home, but not to gather wealth or the perishable things of this world."⁴

In the end, however, all of the above explanations fall short. There is no satisfactory explanation, at least in human terms, because it was not merely a human endeavor but rather the work of God. The story of the Restoration, the pioneers and the westward migration, the willing and total sacrifice of tens of thousands, and the hardship and suffering and making the desert to blossom as a rose is the story of God's hand bringing about His purposes. It is that simple. This story stands alone in history and is a testament to the truthfulness of the Restoration and the work of God gathering Israel, which continues today on both sides of the veil.

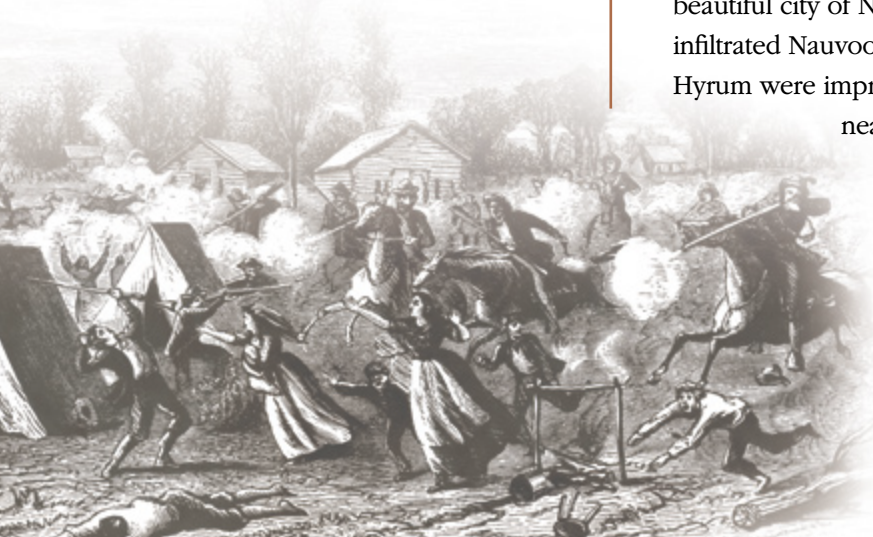
Some say that nothing breeds success like success. If that is the formula for success, then the story of Joseph Smith, the Restoration, the pioneers, and the early Saints should have been a very different story because it is a story of repeated failure and unrelenting opposition. It is the story of ultimate success arising out of the ashes of repeated failure.

The early Saints were driven from home and lands in New York to Kirtland, Ohio, where they built homes, a community, and the first temple in this dispensation. After a 900-mile (1,450 km) march to Missouri, Zion's Camp failed to regain land from which the Saints had been dispossessed. The bank established under the direction of Joseph Smith failed. From Kirtland the Saints were driven to Missouri, but soon an order was issued from the highest level of the state government to expel them.

Some were massacred, and others were beaten, tarred and feathered, and left for dead. Many women were brutally assaulted, and time and time again, houses were robbed; food, wagons, tents, and clothing were stolen; and livestock was driven off. Joseph Smith and other leaders were imprisoned for many months. Opposition came from every direction, from without and within. There was apostasy, dissent, and betrayal even among trusted leaders.

The Saints were driven from Missouri to Illinois, where out of the swamps of the Mississippi River they built another temple and the beautiful city of Nauvoo. Within a few years, persecution and discord infiltrated Nauvoo as well. The Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were imprisoned and martyred by a mob of about 200 men in nearby Carthage. The Saints were driven into the bleak winter, at first without a clear destination in sight. The temple was ransacked and burned.

During the trek across the western plains, hundreds, if not thousands, would die along the



350

communities of Saints were established in the western U.S. within 20 years

3. What are the characteristics of people who not only **survive** but also **thrive in great adversity**?

trail.⁵ Once the Saints arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, homes, farms, and communities had to be carved out of the wilderness. Surely some, if not many, questioned, “If this is God’s work, where is He?”

People ask a similar question today. Some lose faith because of hardship. A daughter dies and, in their grief, parents question their faith in God. Another thinks her life should be happier and better because of her righteousness. But it is more than “Why me?” Rather, it is “Where is God? Why would He allow this to happen despite my faithfulness?”

God declared His purpose for the creation of the heavens and the earth, saying, “And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them” (Abraham 3:25).

The question is not whether we will be faithful when things go well; rather, will we be faithful when they don’t? Faith is faithfulness in uncertainty and disappointment, faithfulness not to get one’s way, faithfulness regardless of the outcome.

So, back to the primary question: Why did the early Saints keep going after repeated failure and constant opposition? Why not step back from the lightning rod of the body of the Saints, hunker down, keep the faith without talking about it so much, and live a life of quiet devotion? Wouldn’t that be the prudent course of action?

Surely some quietly stepped away, but we know little about them, and in that fact alone, we find the answer to our question. Faith does not step back or hunker down. Faith is rarely, if ever, quiet or obscure, and in this case, silence is not golden.

It is one thing to survive the desert but quite another to make it blossom as a rose. It is one thing to survive; it is another to thrive. What makes the difference?

Just four days after arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, President Brigham Young (1801–77) stated “that he intended to have every hole and corner from the Bay of San Francisco to Hudson Bay known to us.”⁶ Small settlements emerged along the Wasatch Front almost immediately to the north and south of the Salt Lake Valley. Within 20 years the Saints had established approximately 350 communities in the West. That is not surviving but thriving in hardship.

While serving in Chile, my wife and I experienced the fifth-strongest earthquake in recorded history anywhere in the world. In the aftermath we observed different reactions.

We witnessed what some experts have termed the 10-80-10 principle, which suggests that 10 percent of people will handle crisis and trauma with a relatively calm and rational state of mind. They pull themselves together quickly. They accept the situation, make decisions to improve it, and take action. However, the vast majority of us, 80 percent, are immobilized, stunned, and bewildered and wait for help to come or someone to tell us what to do. The group we try not to be in, however, is the last 10 percent. They freak out and make the situation worse.

Our missionaries in Chile responded quickly by helping others rebuild their lives and homes. They were in the first group, the top 10 percent, perhaps because they were on the errand of the Lord.

Another characteristic of those who not only survive but also thrive is adaptability, or



coming to terms with a new reality. We are most rattled when our lives suddenly change, especially by events outside our control. Those who fare best are the most flexible and less dependent on their environment and the normal routines of life for stability. This is more than optimism or a positive attitude. It is faith, which is different.

Survivors and thrivers see things for what they are—good and bad—and they deal with them. Bad things happen, but as did the early Saints, we must accept life’s realities, even the harsh ones, and trust that with the Lord’s help we may endure well and that all things, both good and bad, will ultimately work together for our good (see Doctrine and Covenants 98:3).

Adapt with Faith

I am grateful for the marvelous heritage we share. I testify of the hand of God in bringing about His purposes both in the early days of this last chapter and today. I pray that we will be valiant, that our faith not be quiet or obscure, that we not step back or hunker down, that we adapt with faith to whatever our circumstances may be, knowing that all things will work together for our good if we endure them well. I pray that we

will not only survive the adversities of life but also thrive because of them. ■

From a Pioneer Day devotional, “Survive or Thrive,” delivered July 24, 2019, in the Assembly Hall on Temple Square.

NOTES

1. See Susan Easton Black, “Do We Know How Many Latter-day Saints Died between 1846 and 1869 in the Migration to the Salt Lake Valley?” *Ensign*, July 1998, 41.
2. See Richard L. Jensen, “Immigration to Utah,” in *Utah History Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan Kent Powell (1994), 270–73.
3. Charles Dickens, *The Uncommercial Traveller* (1896), 193.
4. Jane R. Hindley journals, 1855–1905, Feb. 12, 1856, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, spelling and punctuation standardized; see also “Saints by Sea: Latter-day Saint Immigration to America,” saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu.
5. Estimates range between 1,900 and 5,000. See Melvin L. Bashore and H. Dennis Tolley, “Mortality on the Mormon Trail, 1847–1868,” *BYU Studies*, vol. 53, no. 4 (2014), 109–23; Black, “Do We Know How Many Latter-day Saints Died between 1846 and 1869 in the Migration to the Salt Lake Valley?” 40–43.
6. Wilford Woodruff, in *Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, July 28, 1847, 2, Church History Catalog, catalog.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



Picturing Pioneers in India

By **Taunalyn Rutherford**

Adjunct Professor, Religious Education, Brigham Young University

Meeting pioneer members of the Church in India has changed the way I picture pioneers.

“Whenever I think about pioneers,” as the Primary song goes, “I think of brave women and men.”¹

Stories of Latter-day Saint pioneers who blazed trails of faith have always inspired me. As a young mother, the stories of pioneer women reminded me of my latter-day blessings. I could give birth in a hospital rather than a handcart!

The definition of a pioneer as “one who goes before to prepare or open up the way

for others to follow”² describes Latter-day Saint pioneers on wagon and handcart trails gathering to Zion. But it also describes modern pioneers and the trails of faith they forge all over the world.

When my five children were all enrolled in school, I began graduate studies in religious history. I chose to research The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in India as the topic for my PhD dissertation. My research in India has changed the way I picture pioneers.



A mission was established in Bangalore in 1993, and a temple will soon be built here.

Pillars of the Church

Years earlier, as a young college student in 1986, I had traveled to South Asia with the Brigham Young University Young Ambassadors. It was a life-changing experience that included spending a day in Calcutta (now called Kolkata) with Mother Teresa. It was equally exciting to meet Latter-day Saints who were modern-day pioneers in India and Sri Lanka.

One of these members was Raj Kumar, who found the Church when he attended a performance of the BYU Young Ambassadors in 1982. When we met him, he had recently returned from his mission to Fresno, California, USA. He still wore his missionary name tag and continued to teach anyone in Delhi who would listen. Raj was one of approximately 600 members in India at the time, but to me he seemed like a lone Latter-day Saint in a sea of hundreds of millions of people.



In 1986, I met Raj Kumar after his mission. Still wearing his missionary name tag, he shared the gospel with anyone who would listen.



Siblings Suvarna and Sarala Katuka joined the Church in 1984 and later served missions.

I was inspired by Raj Kumar's example as I chose to serve a mission. Raj also blazed a trail of faith for some of the first native Indian missionaries to serve in the country. Suvarna Katuka and his fellow missionaries had received some missionary training in Chennai. Their mission president, stationed in Singapore, assigned Raj to give them additional training in Delhi.

Suvarna Katuka remembers how their missionary work changed because of Raj Kumar's example and training. They were able to replace feelings of fear with greater faith and courage. Suvarna explained, "That's when I think my real conversion started. I felt the Holy Ghost, and that is when I decided to help build the kingdom here in India."³

Suvarna had joined the Church in Rajahmundry. He, along with five brothers and one sister, was baptized in 1984. On the day of his baptism, Suvarna was ordained a priest and set apart as the second counselor in the branch presidency. He was also promised in a blessing that if he remained faithful, he would be a "pillar of the Church in India."

Suvarna's sister Sarala also served a mission. Before she left, she introduced the gospel to her friend Swarupa. When Suvarna returned from his mission, he was blessed by his sister's missionary work and married Swarupa. That small branch in Rajahmundry has now become



Elders Kandavalli, Sharma, Katuka, and Raju.



The family of Elsie and Edwin Dharmaraju on the day they were baptized.

The devoted service of many Church members in India has truly made them pillars of the Church.

a stake. Many returned missionaries from Rajahmundry have become leaders within the Church throughout India.

I met the children of Suvarna and Swarupa Katuka while teaching at BYU in 2014. Josh Katuka had recently finished serving a mission in Bangalore, India, and his sister Timnah had just received her call to the same mission. When I asked Timnah and Josh if they knew Raj Kumar, they said, “Yes, he’s our uncle!” Raj Kumar had married Sarala.

I am grateful to the Katukas for introducing me to several other pioneers as they helped me travel in India. Many of them trace their pioneer trail back to the love and example of the Katuka family. At one point, Suvarna and Swarupa had the opportunity to emigrate to Canada. But they turned it down because they felt that the Lord needed them to stay in India and build the kingdom of God there. Their devoted service has truly made them pillars of the Church.

Pioneer Members in Bengaluru and Hyderabad

During the last half of the 20th century, the Church has been established in diverse cities in India through pioneer members.⁴ Each story witnesses how the Lord has been leading people to the restored gospel.

Michael Anthoney, a pioneer member in Bangalore (now Bengaluru), miraculously connected with a Church member in 1970. When Delwin Pond, a bishop in Utah, went to a chiropractor because of back pain, he saw a magazine article at the chiropractor’s office for a nonprofit organization that sponsored students in India. He felt a strong prompting to support one of these students. This led to a 10-year anonymous correspondence that culminated in the Ponds making contact with Michael and sharing the gospel with him. Michael was baptized in 1981 and served a mission in Salt Lake City in 1982. He returned



Delwin Pond (center) introduced Michael Anthony to the Church in 1981.



Hyderabad, a city of over eight million people and home to the first stake in India.

to India early because his mother was critically ill, so he served the final three months of his mission in Bangalore, where he taught several of his friends and others who became members of the first branch there.⁵ Now plans are underway to build a temple in Bengaluru.

Elsie and Edwin Dharmaraju joined the Church in Samoa and were called by President Spencer W. Kimball to return back to their home in Hyderabad as missionaries to their family. In 1978, 22 of Elsie and Edwin's family members were baptized, and from this beginning the first stake in the country was organized in Hyderabad in 2012.⁶

The members of the Hyderabad Stake today picture themselves as latter-day pioneers. Their stake Pioneer Day celebrations have commemorated the trek of the early pioneers as well as modern pioneer journeys. Their celebrations have included square dancing, commemorative hikes, and even handcart rides.

In their 2014 Pioneer Day celebration, they placed blocks of ice in a row behind the

church and invited members to remove their shoes and walk across the ice, thinking about how the early pioneers crossed icy rivers. At the conclusion of their celebration, the members of the Hyderabad stake were encouraged to remember the spirit of early pioneers and that "all of them are pioneers for their families."⁷

They also listened to John Santosh Murala, then serving in the mission presidency, talk about how his aunt Elsie and uncle Edwin Dharmaraju came to Hyderabad to teach their family the gospel. John was the youngest of the 22 pioneer members to be baptized in 1978.

When I visited Hyderabad in 2014, John Murala told me his story and much of the Church history that he has been diligently gathering. He also introduced me to his wife, Annapurna, who told me one of the most powerful Latter-day pioneer stories I have ever heard.



Annapurna and John Murala, who were pioneer members in Hyderabad, are shown here helping with a handcart trek reenactment and on the day they were sealed in the Hong Kong Temple.



Members of the Hyderabad stake commemorate Pioneer Day through song, dance, and even handcart rides.



The stake center of the Hyderabad India Stake, organized in 2012 by President Dallin H. Oaks.

Church members in India picture themselves as pioneers for their families as they persevere in living the gospel.

Annapurna was 12 years old in 1991 when her brother Murthy was taught the gospel by two missionaries in Hyderabad. Annapurna’s parents didn’t allow her to listen to the missionaries or attend church. However, Murthy gave her a Book of Mormon and a constant stream of Church literature for her to read. For seven years, Annapurna studied the gospel on her own and gained a strong testimony of its truth. She dreamed of being baptized, serving a mission, and being married in the temple but did not have permission from her parents.

Annapurna faced a difficult decision in her life when she was introduced to John Murala. John had remained strong in his testimony since his baptism in 1978 and was looking for a member of the Church to marry. After a very brief meeting where Annapurna shared her testimony of the gospel, John was convinced that he had met his future wife. Annapurna

knew that if she married John, she would be able to be baptized and one day be sealed in the temple. However, at about the same time, Annapurna’s parents were planning to arrange a marriage for her.

Annapurna made the difficult decision to leave home and marry John. She felt it was the only way she could join the Church. She said she was “totally heartbroken” to leave her parents. But even today she affirms, “For everybody’s salvation, . . . for my posterity and for my parents and their ancestors, to do their temple work, I had to take that step.”⁸

John and Annapurna are grateful that her parents have now accepted their marriage. Many members in India have made sacrifices, just like the early pioneers, to become members of the Church. Yet these Saints pressed forward with faith because they picture themselves as pioneers and welding links for their



Artist rendering of the Bengaluru India Temple. The site will also include a meetinghouse, a distribution center, Church offices, and housing for temple patrons.

families on both sides of the veil. I cherish the many stories of faith, sacrifice, and courage that I have heard from members blazing trails in new gospel frontiers. I still think about pioneers pulling handcarts and crossing icy rivers, but now I can picture modern pioneers in India and all over the world.

Ultimately, all pioneer trails have been blazed by individuals following in the footsteps of the Savior Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, Christ is called “the pioneer of [our] salvation” (see Hebrews 2:10, New Revised

Standard Version). Jesus Christ has prepared the way for us to return to our heavenly home. True pioneers follow and point us to Christ, who is leading this marvelous work and wonder in the latter-days. ■

NOTES

1. “Whenever I Think about Pioneers,” *Children’s Songbook*, 222–23.
2. *Oxford English Dictionary* (1971), “Pioneer.” See also Thomas S. Monson, “Led by Spiritual Pioneers,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2006, 3.
3. Suvarna Katuka, oral history interview by Taunalyn Rutherford, May 2014, Delhi, India.
4. Many of the pioneer stories from India can be found in the Church History section of the Gospel Library under “Global Histories.”
5. See “A History of the Church in India,” comp. Jerry C. Garlock (unpublished, 1995), 49–50.
6. See “I Will Establish a Church by Your Hand,” history.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
7. See “Hyderabad Stake Pioneer Day Activity,” in ChurchofJesusChrist.org/hyderabad-stake-pioneer-day-activity.
8. Annapurna Guru Murala, oral history interview by Taunalyn Rutherford, Hyderabad, India, May 7, 2014. See also Rochelle Welty and Jan Pinborough, “God Had His Own Plans for Me,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2003, 54–56.

Family Study

fun

Consider these activities during family scripture study or home evening.



Joyful Service Charades

Alma 27:17–19; 29:13–14 (June 29–July 5)

Read Alma 27:17–19 and Alma 29:13–14 together, paying special attention to the word *joy*. Ammon and Alma found great joy in serving other people and the Lord.

- 1 Invite one or two people to act out helping someone else—no speaking allowed! Examples could include opening the door for someone, helping a person in their yard, helping fix dinner, and so on.
- 2 While the scene is being acted out, other family members guess what the service is.
- 3 Take turns until everyone has had a chance to act.

Discussion: Why is it important to help other people? When have you felt joy after helping someone? What could our family do to help someone this week?



Creations A to Z

Alma 30:44 (July 6–12)

Read Alma 30:44 and talk about how God created this beautiful world for us. Then play this game to continue thinking about God's creations.

- 1 Have each family member write the letters of the alphabet in a list down one side of a paper.
- 2 For two minutes, everyone should try to write a creation that begins with each letter. For example, you could write "Trees" for the letter *T*.
- 3 When time runs out, have everyone share their list.

Discussion: How do these blessings from God make you feel? What can we do to take care of God's creations?

FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

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



Testimony Art Show

Alma 32:26–43 (July 13–19)

Alma compared the word of God to a seed. He explained that if we exercise faith to plant the seed in our hearts and nourish it, it will grow little by little into a tree that bears delicious fruit.

- 1 Give each family member art supplies, like paper and crayons.
- 2 Listen to Alma 32 on the Gospel Library app or on the Church website. While listening, invite everyone to draw a plant that represents how strong and healthy they want their testimony to be.
- 3 Hang these pictures somewhere you'll see them during the week.

Discussion: What can we do to help plants grow strong? How can we help our testimonies grow? How does a strong testimony bless our lives?



Liahona Treasure Hunt

Alma 37:38–47 (July 20–26)

Read Alma 37:38–40 together, which describes the Liahona. When Lehi's family was faithful, the Lord used this compass to guide them.

- 1 Draw a circle with an arrow in it. Ask someone to hold this pretend Liahona.
- 2 Pick a small object to use as treasure. Have someone leave the room while the rest hide the treasure. Then ask the person to come back in the room and try to find it.
- 3 If that person shares one way they can keep the commandments this week, the person with the Liahona can point them toward the treasure.
- 4 Each person takes a turn searching and holding the Liahona.

Discussion: How does God try to lead and guide us in our lives? When have you felt that God was guiding you? For additional insights, read and discuss Alma 37:41–47.

Selected activity ideas contributed by Crystal Harris and Mitzi Schoneman



Alma 23–29

JUNE 29–JULY 5

Following their conversion, the faithful Lamanites wanted a new name to distinguish themselves from other Lamanites and to symbolize their conversion to Jesus Christ. They called themselves the Anti-Nephi-Lehies (see Alma 23:16–17). We distinguish ourselves today by taking Jesus Christ’s name upon us.

What Is the Importance of a Name?

A Symbol of Our Conversion



At baptism we covenant to take upon ourselves the name of Christ. Each time we take the sacrament, we renew that covenant. What do we covenant to remember and do as we take upon us His name? (See Mosiah 18:8–9; Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.)

A Witness of Christ



The Apostles are “special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:23). We can be witnesses of Christ too. How can you stand with the prophet and apostles and be a witness of the name of Christ to people around you?

A Source of Power



Recently, President Russell M. Nelson has implored us to call the Church by its correct name: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He promised that power will pour down upon the Saints as we do so (see “The Correct Name of the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 89). What are some things you can do to better use the correct name of the Church and help others do the same?

DISCUSSION

How does taking upon you Christ’s name in your daily thoughts and actions motivate you to be a better disciple of Him?





Alma 30–31

JULY 6–12

How Can We Withstand False Teachings?

Korihor was an anti-Christ who preached “against the prophecies which had been spoken by the prophets, concerning the coming of Christ” (Alma 30:6). He preached other falsehoods and led “away the hearts of many” (Alma 30:18).

Even though this happened more than 2,000 years ago, many people today preach similar things. What can we do to fortify ourselves against false teachings in our day?

DISCUSSION

Who teaches falsehoods today? What messages do they send? What has God given us to withstand falsehoods and learn truth?

▶ We Can Gain Our Own Testimony

Korihor taught people “that there should be no Christ” and “no atonement,” and he denied the existence of God (see Alma 30:12, 17, 28).

How can we know that God and Jesus Christ live? What scriptures and personal experiences have strengthened your testimony about Them?

▶ We Can Rely on Revelation

Korihor denied the spirit of prophecy and revelation. He tried to get people to believe that “no man can know of anything which is to come” and “ye cannot know of things which ye do not see” (Alma 30:13, 15).

We can look to the prophets and apostles to receive God’s word for our time. How does following the prophet protect you against false teachings?

▶ We Can Remember That Truth Is Truth

Korihor told people that there was no way that they could know what is true (see Alma 30:24), but President Russell M. Nelson has taught: “Some things are simply true. . . .

“ . . . Truth is based upon the laws God has established.

. . . Eternal laws operate in and affect each of our lives, whether

we believe them or not” (“The Love and Laws of God” [Brigham Young University devotional, Sept. 17, 2019], speeches.byu.edu). How can we discover God’s truths, and how do they bless our lives?





Alma 32–35

JULY 13–19

Why Does Alma Share the Story of Moses and the Brass Serpent?

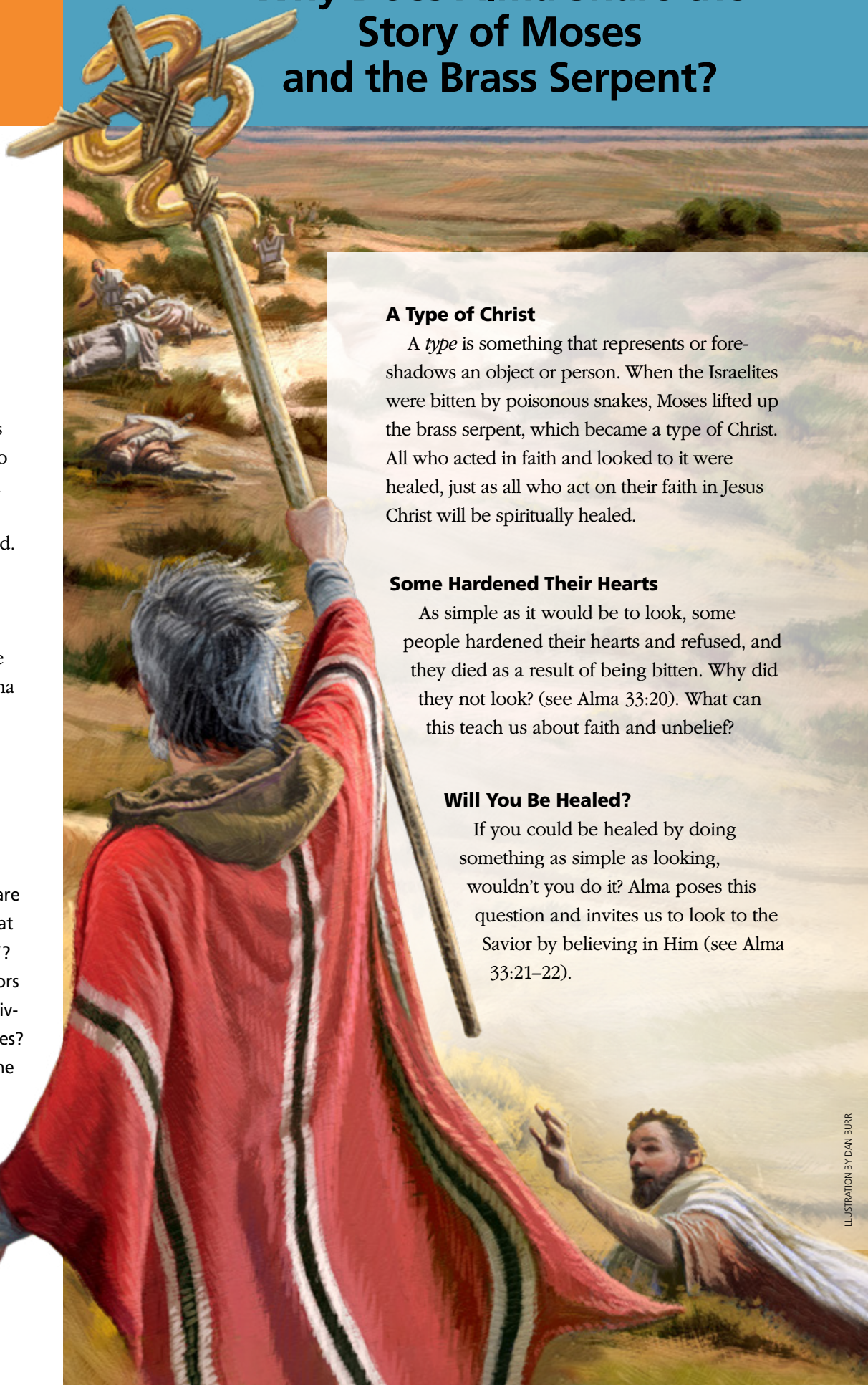


After Alma compares the word of God to a seed (see Alma 32:28–43), people asked him how to plant the seed. Alma used the account of Moses and the brass serpent from Numbers chapter 21 as an example of acting in faith (see Alma 33:19–23).

DISCUSSION

The Israelites only had to look to be healed. What are some gospel principles that seem as easy as “looking”? What attitudes or behaviors sometimes keep us from living simple gospel principles?

How can you look to the Savior in the things you experience each day?



A Type of Christ

A *type* is something that represents or foreshadows an object or person. When the Israelites were bitten by poisonous snakes, Moses lifted up the brass serpent, which became a type of Christ. All who acted in faith and looked to it were healed, just as all who act on their faith in Jesus Christ will be spiritually healed.

Some Hardened Their Hearts

As simple as it would be to look, some people hardened their hearts and refused, and they died as a result of being bitten. Why did they not look? (see Alma 33:20). What can this teach us about faith and unbelief?

Will You Be Healed?

If you could be healed by doing something as simple as looking, wouldn't you do it? Alma poses this question and invites us to look to the Savior by believing in Him (see Alma 33:21–22).



Alma 36–38

JULY 20–26

How Does Repentance Turn Sorrow to Joy?

Alma shared his conversion experience with his son Helaman. Alma told him how he was “racked with eternal torment” because of “all [his] sins and iniquities” (Alma 36:12–13). How do you feel when you experience guilt from sin?

Born of God

After three days of internal torment, Alma had a thought that eased the torment he had felt (see Alma 36:19). He testified that he had “been born of God” (Alma 36:23). What thought led to his being born of God? (See verse 18.)

Joy after Great Sorrow

Alma experienced great sorrow because of his sins, but when he remembered and called upon Jesus Christ, his sorrow was replaced with the sweet and exquisite joy of forgiveness (see Alma 36:20).

Trust in God

By remembering the Atonement of Jesus Christ, Alma learned to trust in God and knew he would be lifted up at the last day (see Alma 36:3). How has remembering and relying on the Savior’s Atonement brought you joy?

DISCUSSION

What can you do to continually trust in the Lord and remember His atoning sacrifice?

How can you bring more souls unto repentance that they might also experience great and everlasting joy?



By Elder
Adrián Ochoa
Of the Seventy

The Choice of Humility

When we humble ourselves without being compelled to be humble, we are more blessed; then as we are grateful, we do the will of the Lord and become the light of the world.

I am often impressed with how the Book of Mormon ties to and reinforces the same gospel principles taught in the Bible. One such principle is humility. This principle is taught dramatically when Alma is approached by a “great multitude” of Zoramites who have been cast out of their places of worship—synagogues they built with their own hands—and are now “despised of all men because of their poverty.”

Alma recognizes that these people are now teachable because they are humble. He sees that they are “truly penitent” and says they are blessed because they have become “lowly in heart.” “It is well that ye are cast out of your synagogues,” he says, “that ye may be humble, and that ye may learn wisdom.”

He adds:

“And now, as I said unto you, that because ye were compelled to be humble ye were blessed, do ye not suppose that they are more blessed who truly humble themselves because of the word? . . .

“. . . Blessed are they who humble themselves without being compelled to be humble; or rather, in other words, blessed is he that believeth in the word of God . . . without stubbornness of heart.” (See Alma 32:4–16.)

A Great Promise

There is a great promise here—that if we humble ourselves “because of the word,” we will be more blessed. “The word of God” includes the scriptures as well as the teachings of our prophets and leaders, who provide counsel and guidance. It includes the invitation to help gather Israel, to teach and live the gospel in our homes, and to minister to those in spiritual and temporal need. As we do these things, we will see the hand of God in our lives, and this allows us to become humble without being compelled to be humble.

The Parable of the Other Son

My wife and I once had the opportunity to visit the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, Russia. It includes splendid art from all over the world, but one particular painting caught my eye. *The Return of the Prodigal Son* was not displayed in some grandiose way but in a setting where the light could illuminate it as the painter, Rembrandt van Rijn, intended. Of course, the light falls on the prodigal son, humbled and heartbroken. And it falls on the loving father,



embracing his returning son. But light also falls on the other son, and I wondered why.

So I did some research and found that when the Savior gave this parable, He was not addressing those who loved and followed Him. He was talking to the Pharisees and scribes, who murmured because He associated with sinners. So His main message is not to the prodigal son, telling him to repent, or to the father, commending him for welcoming the repentant sinner. The main message is for the other son, who symbolically represents the Pharisees.

What is in this other son's heart? He is not humble; he is angry. He feels that he is the righteous one, that he deserves more, that he's always been faithful, and so on. The message to him is that if he were truly like his father, he would have the same love and forgiveness for his brother that his father has and would be blessed because of those feelings. In fact, the father tells him, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." (See Luke 15:2–3, 11–32.)

Becoming His Instruments

One of the important messages of the parable of the prodigal son is that if we strive to love Heavenly Father with all our heart, soul, and mind (see Matthew 22:37), we become humble enough to see how blessed we are. We humbly acknowledge our relationship with our Heavenly Father. In our prayers, we express gratitude for the help He gives us. We become willing to submit our will to God's. And as we do, we can then become instruments in His hand because we are feeling and acting like Him. We rely on His strength rather than our own.

Similar counsel is given in the Old Testament. In Proverbs 3:5–6 we read:

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

And in Proverbs 16:3, 9 we are taught:

"Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established. . . .

"A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps."

When we choose to be humble, we acknowledge our relationship with our Heavenly Father, and we recognize that it is through the Atonement of His Son, Jesus Christ, that we can repent and be healed, then help others to do the same.

Because of the Word

Alma says we should become humble "because of the word" (Alma 32:14). And what is the word? In addition to the scriptures, the counsel of leaders, and the promptings of the Holy Ghost, Jesus Christ is "the Word" (John 1:1). When we become humble enough to submit ourselves to the will of Heavenly Father, we reflect the light of Jesus Christ, who *always* submitted Himself to the will of the Father (see John 6:38; 3 Nephi 27:13).

"Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world," the Savior said. "Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do" (3 Nephi 18:24). As we share the example of Jesus Christ, because of the Word we become "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). Through our

*When we choose to be humble,
we acknowledge our relationship
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then help others to do the same.*

actions, others may be inspired to find their way to Him.

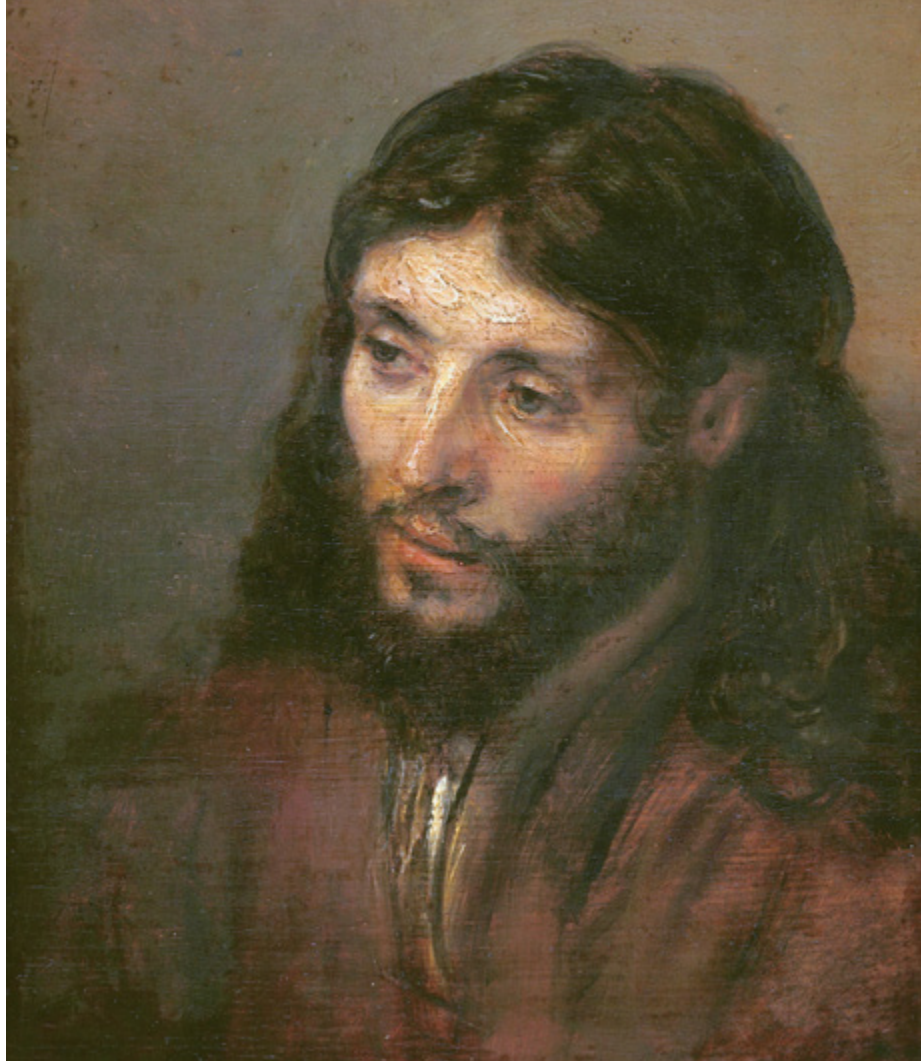
That thought alone is humbling. Sometimes we may feel that our efforts are useless. We may say, “We’re only but a few” or “Evil is rampant around me.” We may feel that the battle will be lost or that we are not worthy enough to represent Him.

But we have God’s assurance that *He* will win the battle. Remember, although Nephi “beheld the church of the Lamb of God, and its numbers were few,” he also foresaw “that the church of the Lamb, who were the saints of God, were also upon all the face of the earth” (1 Nephi 14:12). We have been reassured that the kingdom of God “shall never be destroyed” (Daniel 2:44) and that “the enemy shall not overcome” (see Doctrine and Covenants 38:9).

Trust the Blessings

Because of the Word, we are blessed, and we need to trust those blessings. When we submit our will to Heavenly Father’s by hearkening to the Word, by repenting, and by bringing His light and salvation to those who are willing to listen and follow Him, we then become the light of the world, reflecting the light that will ultimately win the war of good versus evil.

As Paul said, “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21). When we strive to become humble and thankful at the same time, we are blessed with the redeeming, healing, and strengthening power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. We may not be great in numbers, and we may not be able to instantly change the whole world. But by becoming instruments in the hands of the Lord, we learn to trust His promises, which are sure (see 2 Nephi 10:17).



Without Being Compelled

One other lesson we can draw from Alma’s experience with the Zoramites is that even when we are compelled to be humble, it can work for our good.

“For a man sometimes, if he is compelled to be humble, seeketh repentance; and now surely, whosoever repenteth shall find mercy; and he that findeth mercy and endureth to the end the same shall be saved” (Alma 32:13).

Alma says, “It is necessary that ye should learn wisdom” (Alma 32:12), and in order to do that we must become humble. So one way or the other, eventually, we must come to understand our relationship with Heavenly Father.

Like the Zoramites, and like the prodigal son, we can be compelled to be humble. But one of the great messages we learn from Alma is that we can *choose* to be humble. We can do it without being forced. Then like the brother of the prodigal son, we will see that what matters is the love of and the will of the Father. What we must do is to seek His will and welcome—with open arms—all who are trying to do the same. ■

Korihor's Charisma: The Philosophies of an Anti-Christ



Follow Alma's example when confronting philosophies of faithlessness.

By Benjamin Hyrum White

Visiting Instructor in Ancient Scripture, Brigham Young University

During a time of unparalleled missionary success in the Book of Mormon, a man named Korihor appears among the Nephites and preaches against belief in the coming of Jesus Christ. Many today preach the same appealing philosophies, “their arguments . . . not so different from those in the Book of Mormon.”¹

Understanding how righteous Nephites dealt with these philosophies can give us strength and insight to stay anchored to Christ.

One religious educator dubbed Korihor's beliefs the 13 articles of faithlessness.² Korihor tries to tear down faith in Christ using distinct methods. Four times he claims that Church members “cannot know” or “do not know” spiritual realities (Alma 30:15, 24, 26, 48). Furthermore, he mocks believers by calling them “frenzied” and deranged, and their traditions and ordinances “foolish” and “silly” (verses 16, 23, 31). Sound familiar?

Korihor styles himself as enlightened—in contrast to believers who embrace the prophecies and traditions of those he considers outdated and unsophisticated. Many of Korihor’s arguments in Alma 30 parallel language we hear today:

- There is no God or Savior (see verses 12, 28, 38).
- There is no need for faith or repentance (see verses 15–16).
- There can be no atonement made for sin (see verse 17).
- There is no afterlife (see verse 18).
- Commandments restrict freedom and lead to blind obedience (see verses 23, 28).
- Church leaders exercise power over Church members and use funds for selfish purposes (see verse 27).
- Nothing is a crime when you only live once (see verse 17).

Dealing with Anti-Christ Philosophies

When Korihor preaches his brand of faithlessness to the consecrated and converted people of Ammon, they cause Korihor to “be carried out of the land” (Alma 30:21). Korihor’s message also falls on deaf ears in the city of Gideon. The people there perceived the hardness of his heart and “would not make any reply to his words” (verse 29).

We aren’t obligated to respond to every attack on our faith. The Savior was silent when questioned by Herod (see Luke 23:8–9). As a Church leader once said, “*You cannot prove the Church is true by disproving every claim made against it.* That will never work. It is a flawed strategy.”³

Korihor, brought before Alma, rises in great swelling words, reviling and accusing him. Alma brilliantly appeals to Korihor’s intellect, adding logic as a dual witness to his own testimony. We need not appeal only to *our* testimonies when addressing accusations that shake beliefs. Like Alma, we can offer “evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1) from four sources:

1. Testimonies of Church members
2. Testimonies of the prophets
3. The scriptures
4. The earth and the planets, which “do witness that there is a Supreme Creator” (Alma 30:44)

Lessons Learned from Korihor

Korihor led away the hearts of the people and caused “them to lift up their heads in their wickedness” (Alma 30:18). We must beware. Satan still uses false doctrine to tempt us to commit sin, especially sexual sin.

Korihor dares Alma to show him a sign, is struck dumb, confesses that he “always knew that there was a God,” goes begging from house to house, and is finally trodden down and dies (see verses 48–59).

So, why did he preach false philosophies? Because they pleased the natural man and made him successful, and he came to believe “they were true” (verse 53). In the end, he fooled himself.

Mormon observes, “The devil will not support his children at the last day” (verse 60). The philosophies of Satan are unsustainable because the adversary cannot make good on his promises. Contrast that with the Book of Mormon theme that God always fulfills His promises (see 2 Nephi 1:20; 10:17; Alma 37:17).

When you confront philosophies that may weaken your faith, trust in a God whose word yields fruit “which is sweet above all that is sweet” (Alma 32:42). Faithful gospel living bears fruit that is always abundantly sweeter than the empty promises and shallow satisfaction of ripening in iniquity. ■

NOTES

1. Boyd K. Packer, “Lehi’s Dream and You,” *New Era*, Jan. 2015, 4–5.
2. I thank Scott Woodward for his memorable way of remembering Korihor’s philosophies.
3. Lawrence E. Corbridge, “Stand Forever” (Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 22, 2019), 5, speeches.byu.edu.



By Travis Ewell

Several years ago, I was following a conversation on social media between two of my former mission companions. These were men whom I loved and respected.

They were discussing questions they had about the Church and its doctrine. It soon became clear that they both had left the Church. It shocked and disturbed me. I had never heard of some of the things they were discussing. I felt like I had to know if these things had any merit. So I began looking into the arguments of those who had concerns about the Church.

Some of the things I read over the next two years led me to question everything about the Church. Some who go through this feel sad. They grieve for the loss of their faith. I became angry. I felt that the Church had deceived me. I wasn't sure what was real or whom I could trust.

I had a difficult time going to church. I asked to be released from my calling. My relationship with my wife, Cheri, and my family was strained. I continued to go to church, but it was really just for show and to try and keep my family together. Life was a mess. I couldn't feel the Spirit and questioned whether or not I had ever really felt the Holy Ghost.

When my oldest child, Kayson, was leaving on his mission, I cast a gloomy cloud over what should have been a joyous occasion. After two years, most of my family knew what I was going through. When they all went to the temple with Kayson for his first time, I was not there.

Through all of it, I felt so alone.

Support All around Me

One day my brothers got together to talk to me about what I was going through. I don't really remember what



When I Felt Deceived about the Church

Why I left. And why I came back.

they said, but I knew it was done out of love. As we talked, I started to realize what I was missing. It became the catalyst for change. It should have been me to ordain Kayson an elder. It should have been me to escort him through the temple. It should have been me to give him a father's blessing before he left. Those most important events in his life were meant for me to be there, not someone else. I remember asking myself, "What am I doing?"

Shortly after, a good friend felt inspired to introduce me to a member of his stake presidency. This kind man listened intently to my story and seemed to know what I was going to say before I said it. We talked for hours. My story, my questions, the logic I had been exposed to were so similar to what others had shared with him. I began to realize that there were reasonable answers for many of my concerns and that many of my questions, while sincere, had been planted by people intent on damaging faith.

Were all my questions and concerns immediately resolved? No, of course not. But my heart was softened enough to realize a great truth: questions are good, but some questions are more important than others.¹ Was losing my family and standing before God worth a few unanswered questions? When I focused first on the questions that were most important and put God back in first place in my heart, I began to find answers that reassured me that I was getting back on the right path.

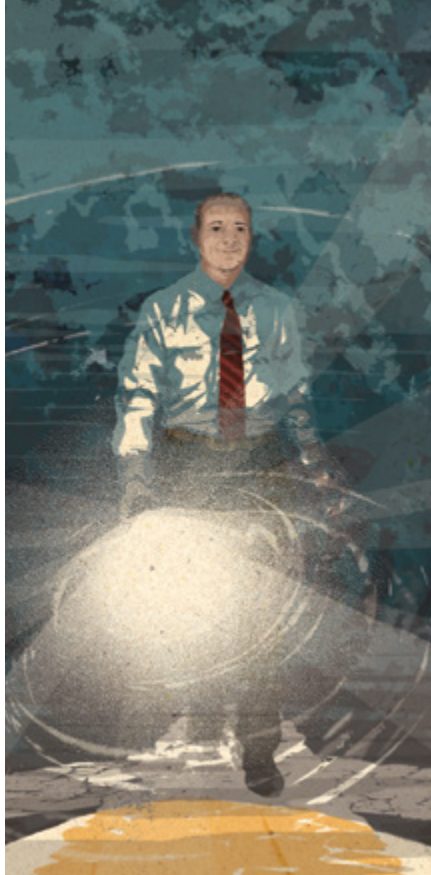
My stake president and bishop also reached out to me. They were a great help to me and Cheri during some dark times. They never gave up. They and my family on both sides of the veil were instrumental in helping me. I know that Heavenly Father knows and loves us. He puts people in our path when we need them. We just need to be willing to accept their help.

What to Do If It's You

I know there are others out there who may be going through something similar. It may be you or someone you know.

I know that the Savior established His Church with the authority to provide the ordinances and covenants we need to return to Him. Satan is working overtime to discredit the Lord's Church using any means possible. Raising questions and creating doubts is easy. Falling into his traps can happen to anyone. Relying on the information and answers that others provide can be far easier than doing the work of discovering truth for ourselves “by study and *also* by faith” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:118; emphasis added). But ultimately, that's what God requires.

If you are struggling with questions or doubts about the Church or your faith, you won't find truth by reading blogs or listening to podcasts from those who disagree with the Church or have left it. But you



When I focused first on the questions that were most important and put my heart back in God's hands, I began to find answers that reassured me that I was getting back on the right path.

also probably won't be satisfied with shallow answers, and you might not like the suggestion to “put your questions on the shelf.”

I learned that we cannot always live on borrowed light, but instead we must turn to God who is the source of all light and truth (see Doctrine and Covenants 93:26). We must study it out in our own minds, but we must also ask God if what we are thinking is right (see Doctrine and Covenants 9:8). We must learn for ourselves, as Joseph Smith did (see Joseph Smith—History 1:20), and be patient in our searching (see Alma 32:41). But learning by faith means we must prove the truth by living it (see John 7:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:21).

When I was studying things antagonistic to the Church, I felt like I was literally in the mists of darkness (see 1 Nephi 8:23–24; 12:17). When I grabbed hold of God's word and took that first step toward Him, that was all He needed to send His Spirit to touch my heart.



UNANSWERED QUESTIONS VS. DOCTRINAL CERTAINTIES

“I can live with some human imperfections, even among prophets of God—that is to be expected in mortal beings. I can live with some alleged scientific findings contrary to the Book of Mormon; time will correct those. And I can live with some seemingly historical anomalies; they are minor in the total landscape of truth. But I cannot live without the doctrinal truths and ordinances restored by Joseph Smith, I cannot live without the priesthood of God to bless my family, and I cannot live without knowing my wife and children are sealed to me for eternity. That is the choice we face—a few unanswered questions on one hand versus a host of doctrinal certainties and the power of God on the other.”

Elder Tad R. Callister was serving in the Presidency of the Seventy when he gave this address, “What Is the Blueprint of Christ's Church?” (Church Educational System devotional for young adults, Jan. 12, 2014), broadcasts.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



Is Hope Enough?

A few weeks after Kayson left on his mission, my stake president visited me. I caught him up on what had happened during those weeks after my brothers had talked with me. I said I would like to get a new temple recommend. He asked if I could answer the recommend questions properly. I confessed, “President, I don’t think I can say I know that the Church is true yet, but I sure hope with all my heart that it is. And I am going to live my life in accordance with that hope. Is that enough?”

He paused for a moment then said, “Travis, that will always be enough.”

There are some things I’m still waiting to understand, but some things have become very clear to me. I know that Heavenly Father loves me. I know that we might wander and struggle for a time. But I know that through Christ, His Atonement, and the hope it brings, it is possible to return to the path that leads back to Him. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTE

1. See Lawrence E. Corbridge, “Stand Forever,” (Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 22, 2019), speeches.byu.edu.

IDEAS FOR HELPING SOMEONE YOU LOVE

Like me, many people who have questions or doubts feel like they don’t belong in the Church. But we can’t afford to close the door on them or others. The Savior commanded His people to “continue to minister” to them because we never know when they will return to Him and be healed (see 3 Nephi 18:22–32).

Here are five ways we can continue to minister to those who are wrestling with doubt so that they will feel welcome, whether or not they choose to come back.

1. **Continue to love.** Throughout my wrestle, I felt like I was alone. Of course, Heavenly Father had not given up on me, and neither had my family or Church leaders. Feeling His love through them helped me know I could go back.
2. **Continue to reach out.** Loving others shouldn’t depend on their beliefs, their participation at church, or even how they feel about us. Jesus asks us to reach out to more than those who are already in our circle (see Matthew 5:46–47).
3. **Continue to hope.** We fast, we pray, we watch and wait patiently, and we never give up hope. “God has devised means to save each of His children” (Henry B. Eyring, “To My Grandchildren,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 71).
4. **Respect their agency.** Have hope but respect their decisions. We don’t need to convince them or argue doctrine with them. Like the prodigal son, many of us need some event in life that will soften our hearts first.
5. **Treat them with dignity, not like they’re bad.** Avoid statements that are judgmental, critical, or belittling. Reasonable people can have beliefs different than ours, and we should give them the same respect we hope they’ll give us.

I don’t think I can say I know that the Church is true yet, but I hope that it is and I am going to live my life in accordance with that hope.



When Loved Ones Leave the Church

By Merrilee Browne Boyack

One of the things I have always found curious about the Book of Mormon is the repeated descriptions of families with children who struggle with their faith. It's remarkable. Here are prophets who are writing about their own children who are struggling with sin or a crisis of faith. They could have left out those parts. But instead they described them for us.

Many of us will experience having a child, other family member, or dear friend reject or become indifferent to the gospel of Jesus Christ. My husband and I have a son who does not believe in our faith. It can be difficult to know what to do. But these Book of Mormon examples can help us find inspiration for our own families.

1. Never give up

I had a young plumber come to my home once. He was a nice young man covered in tattoos. He said he had come back to full activity in the Church and was about to be sealed in the temple. I asked him, "What brought you back?" He related that his mother had sent him an article by Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and that he actually read it and was converted back to his faith.

I learned a great lesson from that: we should never give up on our loved ones.

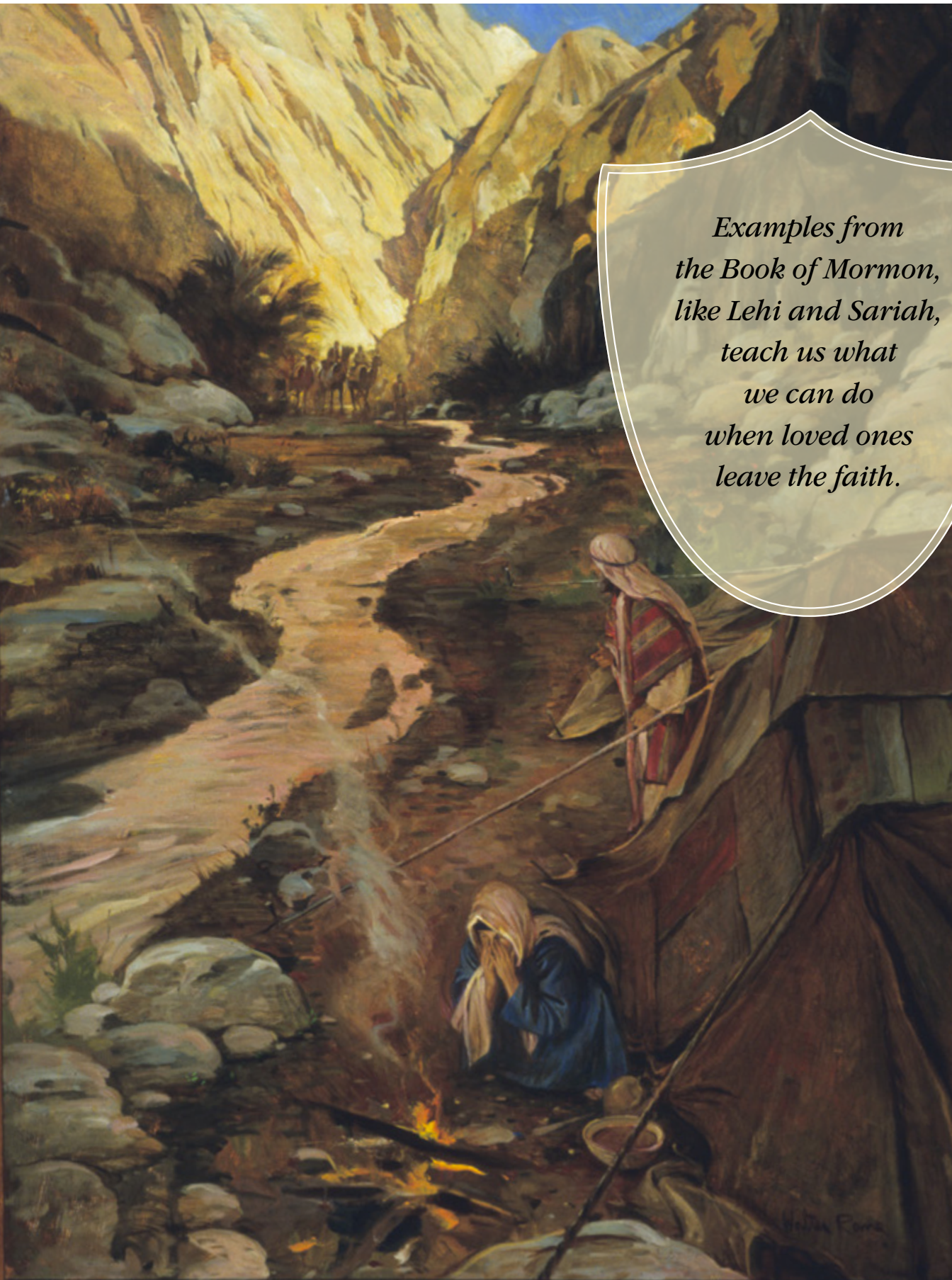
Lehi was a great example of this principle. He never stopped loving his children, and he never gave up hoping and praying that all of them would be faithful. Even as he was facing death, he taught his children it wasn't too late: "Awake, my sons; put on the armor of righteousness. Shake off the chains with which ye are bound, and come forth out of obscurity, and arise from the dust" (2 Nephi 1:23).

This can be a challenge. It is hard to continually hope, love, and encourage our loved ones when we face hostility or rejection. But Lehi showed that it is possible to never give up on our love for our loved ones or on our faith in Christ.

2. Continuously pray for miracles

Every parent of a child who has chosen another path hopes for a story similar to Alma's. Again, it is remarkable that this story is shared in great, painful detail.

Alma the Elder had been a wicked man when he was a priest of the corrupt King Noah. But he "repented of his sins and iniquities" (Mosiah 18:1) and went on to become the high priest of



*Examples from
the Book of Mormon,
like Lehi and Sariah,
teach us what
we can do
when loved ones
leave the faith.*

the Church in Zarahemla and a prophet of God.

Imagine how painful it was for him to have his son become a serious enemy to the Church. Alma was deeply concerned both for his son and for the members of the Church who were being led away. So, in addition to whatever else he had tried, he turned to mighty prayer to seek help for his son and others.

And a miracle came. An angel appeared to his son.

Many of us have turned to prayer hoping to receive guidance and miracles on behalf of those we love. Those prayers can be deep and anguished in the dark of the night or extend day after day, year after year, as we beg the Lord for help.

These prayers *will* be answered, according to the Lord's will and timing. He may not send an angel, and He will never remove someone's agency, but it doesn't mean He won't work miracles—whether small or large. The Lord delights to answer our prayers on behalf of those we love.

When Jesus came to the Americas, He taught, "Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed" (3 Nephi 18:21).

We must continue to pray (and listen to and act on the promptings we receive) and have faith that those prayers are heard and answered.

3. Ask others to help

Alma did not seek for blessings from God alone. He asked others to help.

When the angel appeared unto Alma the Younger, he said, "Behold, the Lord hath heard the prayers of *his people*, and also the

prayers of his servant, Alma, who is thy father" (Mosiah 27:14; emphasis added).

Then when Alma heard all that had happened to his son, he rejoiced "and *he caused that a multitude should be gathered together* that they might witness what the Lord had done for his son. . . .

"And *he caused that the priests should assemble themselves together*; and they began to fast, and to pray to the Lord their God" (Mosiah 27:21–22; emphasis added).

Alma shared his concerns about his son with other members of the Church, and they joined their faith and prayers with his. He involved the leaders of the Church in praying and fasting. He asked his friends and neighbors and fellow Church members to pray and then invited them to become part of the process of the miraculous conversion of his son.

In contrast, we often suffer in silence. We are reluctant to talk about the struggles of our children or family members. We sometimes blame ourselves and wonder what we could have done better or differently.

Alma teaches us the importance of asking others for help.

Sometimes a fellow ward member may be the best one to help our child. Sometimes having the entire extended family fast and pray can

In asking others to fast and pray, Alma invited them to become part of the miraculous conversion of his son.



bring power to help the family know what steps to take to help. Perhaps a dear friend can counsel us with just what we need to hear.

As we ask others to assist us, we can activate all kinds of efforts that can bless those we love. We should humbly and prayerfully seek this help.

4. Teach truth with clarity and fearlessness

When Alma the Younger had older children of his own, he didn't let fear or embarrassment keep him from sharing with each of them some of the details of his own mistakes and the process he went through to repent (see Alma 36:17–20).

When his son Corianton went after a local harlot (see Alma 39), Alma did not shy away from teaching him with great clarity: “Now my son, I would that ye should repent and forsake your sins, and go no more after the lusts of your eyes, but cross yourself in all these things; for except ye do this ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God” (Alma 39:9).

It could not have been easy for Alma to be so forthright in such a painful situation. Just as he had brought pain and sorrow to his father, his son was now doing the same. But Alma was clear with each of his sons because he loved them and was concerned about their eternal state.

Sometimes we are fearful and reluctant to discuss doctrine and truth with our loved ones. We worry that we might offend them or that they will reject us. And this may occur.

But the Book of Mormon teaches us repeatedly of the critical importance of continually testifying of truth to those who struggle with sin or with their faith. Lehi, Jacob, Alma the Elder, Alma the Younger, and more taught



their children with absolute faith in God and were fearless in their testimonies.

Some had their children return to faith. Others did not. But each one continued to teach and testify with faith not fear.

5. Trust God to save our loved ones

The Book of Mormon ends with the tender story of Mormon and his beloved son, Moroni. Moroni included letters he received from his father that reveal the sweet relationship between father and son.

Mormon wrote, “My son, I recommend thee unto God, and I trust in Christ that thou wilt be saved; and I pray unto God that he will spare thy life, to witness the return of his people unto him, or their utter destruction; for I know that they must perish except they repent and return unto him” (Moroni 9:22).

This reveals a great principle: we must trust God to save our loved ones.

My own mother fasted and prayed for years and years that her children would be faithful. One night she prayed with heartbroken tears, begging the Lord to save her loved ones. Finally, she grew tired and was quiet. It was then that the Spirit whispered gently to her, “Be still and know that I am God” (Doctrine Covenants 101:16).

Mother came to a great realization in that moment. She had not been trusting God. She had been so afraid, so desperate, that she had not had faith that God knew her children well and loved them dearly and that He will save them if they will allow it. This understanding allowed her to focus on being their mom and lay the burden of “saving” at the Savior’s feet where it belonged.

We must seek the peace that comes from trusting God and having faith in His ability to rescue our loved ones. He won’t force them to choose Him and neither can we. But we can rest assured that He knows exactly what they need if they will accept His help. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

You Love, He Saves

I prayed that our children's hearts would be changed. Then came an uncomfortable (and liberating) realization.

By Krista Rogers Mortensen

My husband and I raised our children in the gospel. We had family scripture study every morning, family prayer, and weekly family home evening. We attended church, ate dinner together, and went on family vacations. Our children regularly attended the temple to perform baptisms for the dead, they graduated from seminary, and two of them served missions.

And then as adults, they started exploring paths and ideas that were different from the things we had taught them. One by one, our children stopped participating in the Church until only one of our five children still chose to attend. We shed many tears over our children and wondered if we had failed as parents or if there was something we could have done differently.

For a long time, I pleaded with the Lord to change their hearts, and finally the Lord answered my prayers. But not in the way I expected.

Instead of simply changing my children's hearts, He showed me that I needed to start by changing my own heart. While parents play an important role in teaching their children, He reminded me that my role isn't to judge or save them but to love them. Jesus Christ is their Savior and Judge.

In my determination to save my children, I had spent many hours praying, reading my scriptures, and going to the temple, thinking that if I did all of the right things, I would qualify for God's intervention—as if somehow my actions would lead God to override their agency and influence them to believe as I do.

My husband and I wanted so badly to save them, but our version of saving looked more like lecturing, nagging, or showing disapproval of their choices, which ultimately led to contention. We realized that in our desperation to bring our



children back, we were actually driving them away. The more they felt our judgment and disappointment, the more they avoided us.

My prayers changed to a plea for my own heart to be changed. I prayed for more love. I also prayed to overcome my feelings of shame and embarrassment that my family didn't look anything like the perfect families my friends displayed on social media with photos from their children's temple marriages or grandchildren's baptisms.

As I turned to the Savior for healing, my heart began to soften toward my children. I realized that to love them as He loves them meant I needed to make some changes. Trusting in the Savior's ability to do His work (see 2 Nephi 27:20) allowed me to focus on loving my children and turning the saving over to the Lord. It didn't mean giving up on trying to help them, but when loving them became the driving force behind my interactions with them, it changed *how* I interacted.

I started to see them in a different light. I began focusing on their strengths and their talents and began to see what loving, generous, intelligent, and good people they were.

I listened more and talked less. I asked questions about their lives and their interests. Instead of judgment, I showed curiosity. I replaced criticism and disappointment with expressions of love, and my children could feel that it was genuine.

Home became a safe place where they could feel love and acceptance. They stopped hiding things from me and started being honest and open about what was going on in their lives. We grew closer.

What Helped Me

prayer

a plea for my heart to change



perspective

seeing my children in a different light



love

don't just talk—listen



trust

my efforts are in partnership with God's

Our family is still a work in progress, but my children enjoy coming home and spending time with me now. They feel safe in my presence, and through my love I hope they can feel God's love for them. I don't know if in this lifetime they will return to the things they were taught as children, but I know that they are in the Savior's hands. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

I Experience Same-Sex Attraction—

Would Church Members Welcome Me Back?

By Bouke “Bob” S. Ecoma Verstege

Note from the author: I share my story as an expression of my gratitude for the Church leaders and members who welcomed me with open arms, helped me return to full activity, and have served alongside me as fellow disciples of Christ.

On July 27, 2013, after a long battle with Alzheimer’s disease, my life partner of 25 years passed away. Jay Eldredge was a world-renowned cardiologist. We had both served missions for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when we were younger but then distanced ourselves from the Church because of same-sex attraction.

Jay’s death, although not unexpected, was devastating. I felt heartbroken and lost and alone.

While driving home after making the funeral arrangements, I felt the influence of the Spirit overwhelm me so strongly that I had to pull over to the side of the road. I knew that God was speaking to me, calling me back to Him, but I was resistant. “Can’t you see that I’m suffering?” I said aloud. “I can’t face going back to church right now.”

But the more I protested, the more the Spirit pulled at me, inviting me back to church.





Would I Be Accepted?

I was deeply worried about returning to church. I hadn't been to a sacrament meeting in 25 years. Would they even accept me? Would I accept them? What would the bishop say? I felt anxious and unsettled and still heavy with grief.

But my testimony of the gospel had never wavered in all those years. Jay and I loved the Church and its guiding principles—namely, charity, mercy, and forgiveness. I knew that Christ was my Savior and that His Church was The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I had known that since my conversion and baptism at the age of 14. I wasn't about to deny that now.

Finally, after mustering the necessary courage, I called the Linwood Ward in New Jersey, USA, to find out what time sacrament meeting started.

As Sunday approached, the adversary put many obstacles in my path that could have easily prevented me from attending. How grateful I am that the Holy Ghost persisted.

I felt nervous as I entered the building, but the opening hymn in sacrament meeting reassured me that I was home again. The hymn "Come, Come, Ye Saints" (*Hymns*, no. 30) invited the Spirit so powerfully that tears flowed down my face. I knew in that instant that Heavenly Father was aware of me and the deep sadness I was feeling.

That hymn has become an unofficial anthem of sorts for the Church, but it has become my personal anthem as well.

"Come," the hymn invites me. "Though hard to you this journey may appear, grace shall be as your day."

My journey *was* hard. But grace *did* attend me as promised.



FULL-FLEDGED MEMBERS

“Someone who is following the covenants and the standards and teachings of the gospel of Christ—though they

may be dealing with same-sex attraction—really there’s no reason they cannot be fully participative [or] be a full-fledged member of the Church and hold callings and speak and enter the temple and serve there. And all the other opportunities and blessings that can come from Church membership will be available to them.”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “LGBT People Who Live God’s Laws Can Fully Participate in the Church” (video), ChurchofJesusChrist.org/topics/gay.

Bishop Darrin Bird and the rest of the congregation were wonderful and welcoming. They accepted me as their brother in Christ.

Reconciling with God, through Christ

The words of “Come, Come, Ye Saints” took on greater meaning to me, however, as I felt Heavenly Father directing me on how I should proceed.

*We'll find the place which God for
us prepared,
Far away in the West,
Where none shall come to hurt or
make afraid;
There the Saints will be blessed.*

I went west and bought a home in Fountain Hills, Arizona, USA, where I met Bishop Jerry Olson. When I requested to meet with him and shook his hand, the Spirit impressed upon me that this man would help bring me back into full activity in the Church.

As I began visiting with the bishop and embarking on this reconciliation with

Heavenly Father, I witnessed many spiritual miracles. I was open with the bishop, for which he was grateful. He said that helped him better understand where I had been and where I was now in my relationship with God. He also lovingly informed me that this was the first time that he had had an opportunity to minister to someone with same-sex attraction, and he asked for my patience and forgiveness if he said or did anything to offend me throughout the process.

I thanked him for his honesty and said, “Well, this is my first time as well. We’ll learn together.”

Thus began a wonderful journey and friendship!

Soon I had an action plan on how to become a member in good standing again. I accepted the loving and prayerful counsel with a grateful heart and began the process.

Solace in the Temple

Later, as I followed that counsel and worked hard to draw closer to Christ, I accepted a call to serve in the elders quorum and received a temple recommend. In the holy temple, as I communed with Heavenly Father, He showed me how much He loves all His children. I felt solace and a deep desire to please Him.

Months later, a new bishop was called, with whom I have also developed a loving friendship. Bishop Larry Radford knew of my circumstance and appreciated my service in the elders quorum, where he



ILLUSTRATION BY JENNA PALACIOS

said I had served with love and devotion not only for the quorum but also—and more importantly—for God. His kind words and encouragement helped me feel that the Lord and my fellow Saints were pleased with my service.

I now faithfully serve as the ward clerk.

Understanding Who I Am

Having same-sex attraction and being an active member of the Church is not always easy. But as I put all my faith and trust in God, I can feel Him strengthening me. Critics will no doubt say that I'm not being true to who I am or that I'm disappointing the LGBT+ community.

I understand their frustration, and I obviously don't have all the answers. I can only speak of my own experience. And that experience has taught me this: I am Heavenly Father's son, a child of God. That's the one and only label that matters to me. As a result, I try not to allow the world's labels to define me. I fear that will limit my potential and eternal progression.

Satan is very clever. He knows that by using labels, he can divide us as a community and as a church.

With that perspective in mind, the choices I make are not based on my same-sex attraction but on how to be a true disciple of Christ *with* same-sex attraction. As Nephi said:

“O Lord, I have trusted in thee, and I will trust in thee forever. I will not put my trust in the arm of flesh. . . .

“ . . . I know that God will give liberally to him that asketh. Yea, my God will give me, if I ask not amiss; therefore I will lift up my voice unto thee; yea, I will cry unto thee, my God, the rock of my righteousness. Behold, my voice shall forever ascend up unto thee, my rock and mine everlasting God” (2 Nephi 4:34–35).

Love of My Fellow Saints

Throughout my return, I felt the loving companionship of my leaders and fellow Saints, including active and less-active LGBT+ members. I found a place where I could thrive. I found among them the attributes of Christ that I had always associated with my faith: mercy, compassion, understanding, and, above all, love.

As I struggled along the path with my Savior, I felt comfort and peace as I turned to Him, knowing that I wasn't walking that path

DISCOVER MORE

For more information and resources, see the Church's "Same-Sex Attraction" web page at ChurchofJesusChrist.org/topics/gay.

alone. Several bishops were there beside me. Members of my quorum. Sisters in the ward. I even had a young man in the ward ask me if I would ordain him a priest. His kind invitation deeply moved me. He saw me as a man who holds the priesthood of God and who can exercise that priesthood in service to others.

These opportunities to serve and worship with my fellow Saints have lifted me and—along with the many blessings I've received from the Lord—helped me experience the love, understanding, and acceptance that I needed.

The Savior said, “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (John 14:18). Those words are true. I needed comforting, and He came to me, more abundantly than I could have imagined. ■



THE GOSPEL TENT

“The gospel tent truly is big enough for everyone with a desire to follow the Lord. Whenever someone says or feels contrary to that, I think of Bob Verstege and wish they could meet him and serve with him. Brother Verstege is a walking example of what the Atonement of Jesus Christ can do when put into action. As a bishop, I am lifted, taught, and encouraged by this humble man on a daily basis.”

Bishop Larry Radford, Fountain Hills Ward, Scottsdale Arizona North Stake

What Church Leaders Are Saying

about

When Loved Ones Turn Away from the Church

Show Understanding

“Question: If I have family or friends who are less active, how far do I go in my attempts to bring them back?”

“My answer is please do not preach to them! Your family members or friends already know the Church’s teachings. They don’t need another lecture! **What they need—what we all need—is love and understanding, not judging.** Share your positive experiences of living the gospel. *The most powerful thing you can do is share your spiritual experiences with family and friends.* Also, be genuinely interested in their lives, their successes, and their challenges. Always be warm, gentle, loving, and kind.”¹

—President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Listen with Love

“Let us follow the Savior’s path and increase our compassion, diminish our tendency to judge, and stop being the inspectors of the spirituality of others. **Listening with love is one of the greatest gifts we can offer,** and we may be able to help carry or lift the heavy clouds that suffocate our loved ones and friends so that, through our love, they can once again feel the Holy Ghost and perceive the light that emanates from Jesus Christ.”²

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

Listening with love is one of the greatest gifts we can offer.



The Influence of Faithful Parents

“One of the greatest heartaches a valiant parent in Zion can suffer is a child who strays from the gospel path. Questions of ‘Why?’ or ‘What did I do wrong?’ and ‘How can this child now be helped?’ are pondered without ceasing in the minds and hearts of such parents. . . .

“ . . . Parents who honor temple covenants are in a position to exert great spiritual influence over time on their children. Faithful members of the Church can find comfort in knowing that they can lay claim to the promises of divine guidance and power, through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and the privileges of the priesthood, in their efforts to help family members receive the blessings of salvation and exaltation. . . .

“ . . . The influence of parents who honor covenants and obey commandments indeed can have a decisive spiritual impact upon children who stray. . . . However, righteous parental influence (1) does not replace in the life of an individual the need for the redeeming and strengthening power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, (2) does not overrule the consequences of the unrighteous exercise of moral agency, and (3) does not negate the responsibility of an individual as an agent ‘to act . . . and not to be acted upon’ (2 Nephi 2:26). . . .

“ . . . Thus, *faithful parents can invite the power of heaven to influence their children. Nevertheless, those children remain agents unto themselves, and the choice to repent or not ultimately is theirs.* . . .

“As parents are patient and persistent in loving their children and in becoming living examples of disciples of Jesus Christ, they most effectively teach the Father’s plan of happiness. The steadfastness of such parents bears powerful witness of the redeeming and strengthening powers of the Savior’s Atonement and invites wayward children to see with new eyes and to hear with new ears (see Matthew 13:43).”³

—Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



God Knows and Loves Each Child

“God has devised means to save each of His children. For many, that involves being placed with a brother or a sister or a grandparent who loves them no matter what they do. . . .

“ . . . From before the world was, a loving Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son loved and worked with those who They knew would wander. God will love them forever.”⁴

—President Henry B. Eyring, Second Counselor in the First Presidency

The Atonement Is for All

“Some of you . . . have family members who have temporarily lost their way. The Savior’s instruction to all who have 100 sheep is to leave the ninety and nine and go after and rescue the



one. His instruction to those who have 10 pieces of silver and lose one is to search until you find it. When the lost one is your son or your daughter, your brother or your sister, and he or she has chosen to leave, we learned in our family that, after all we can do, we love that person with all of our hearts and we watch, we pray, and we wait for the Lord's hand to be revealed.

“. . . All of us fall short of the glory of the Father (see Romans 3:23). *All of us need the Savior's Atonement to heal us. All of us are lost and need to be found.*"⁵

—Elder Brent H. Nielson of the Seventy

The Testimony of the Spirit Is Real

"A man who grew up in the Church, served as a full-time missionary, and married a lovely woman was surprised when some of his siblings began speaking critically of the Church and the Prophet Joseph Smith. After a time they left the

Church and tried to persuade him to follow. As often happens in such cases, they bombarded him with essays, podcasts, and videos produced by critics, most of whom were themselves disaffected former members of the Church. His siblings mocked his faith, telling him he was gullible and misled. He didn't have answers for all their assertions, and his faith began to waver under the relentless opposition. He wondered if he should stop attending church. He talked with his wife. He talked with people he trusted. He prayed. As he meditated in this troubled state of mind, he recalled occasions when he had felt the Holy Spirit and had received a witness of truth by the Spirit. He concluded, *'If I am honest with myself, I must admit that the Spirit has touched me more than once and the testimony of the Spirit is real.'* He has a renewed sense of happiness and peace that is shared by his wife and children."⁶

—Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH FROM GETTY IMAGES

The Church Has Never Been Stronger

“Some have asserted that more members are leaving the Church today and that there is more doubt and unbelief than in the past. This is simply not true. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has never been stronger. The number of members removing their names from the records of the Church has always been very small and is significantly less in recent years than in the past. The increase in demonstrably measurable areas, such as endowed members with a current temple recommend, adult full-tithe payers, and those serving missions, has been dramatic. Let me say again, the Church has never been stronger. *But, ‘remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God’ [Doctrine and Covenants 18:10]. We reach out to everyone.*”⁷

—Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Blessed by Simple Gestures

“Simple acts of service can have profound effects on others—as well as on ourselves. . . .

“ . . . I have heard countless stories of brothers and sisters who were blessed by a simple gesture of inclusion and welcome at church, a thoughtful email or text message, a personal contact at a difficult time, an invitation to participate in a group activity, or an offer to help with a challenging situation. Single parents, new converts, less-active members, widows and widowers, or struggling youth may need extra attention and priority help from ministering brothers and sisters. . . .


*“ . . . With love as the motivation, miracles will happen, and we will find ways to bring our ‘missing’ sisters and brothers into the all-inclusive embrace of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”*⁸

—Sister Jean B. Bingham, Relief Society General President



NOTES

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2. Reyna I. Aburto, “Thru Cloud and Sunshine, Lord, Abide with Me!” *Ensign*, Nov. 2019, 58.
3. David A. Bednar, “Faithful Parents and Wayward Children: Sustaining Hope While Overcoming Misunderstanding,” *Ensign*, March 2014, 28, 31, 32, 33.
4. Henry B. Eyring, “To My Grandchildren,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 71, 72.
5. Brent H. Nielson, “Waiting for the Prodigal,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 103.
6. D. Todd Christofferson, “Firm and Steadfast in the Faith of Christ,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 32.
7. Quentin L. Cook, “The Lord Is My Light,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 65.
8. Jean B. Bingham, “Ministering as the Savior Does,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 104, 106.



How Do I Talk to My Kids about **FAMILY MEMBERS WITH DIFFERENT BELIEFS?**

What do you tell your children when a family member stops coming to church? Or when you visit someone who lives by different standards? A husband-and-wife team, one a Latter-day Saint and the other not, had these tips to share. You could use them to start a conversation about your family's situation.

WE CAN SHOW LOVE

In the Bible, Jesus taught that there are two great commandments. The first is to love God, and the second is to love our neighbor. Both of these commandments are important! We need to keep God's commandments, and we also need to love everyone. *How can we work on "keeping the commandments and walking the covenant path, while loving our neighbors along the way"?*¹

Scripture connection: Matthew 22:37–39

WE CAN RESPECT THEIR AGENCY

Heavenly Father gave each of us the power to make decisions. This is called "agency." We should respect the agency of others and let them make their own choices. We hope other people will respect our agency too. *How can we love others even when they choose things we don't agree with?*

Scripture connection: Luke 15:11–32

WE CAN BUILD ON COMMON GROUND

Instead of focusing on differences, we can work on building a relationship with others. When others talk about their beliefs, we should listen and try to understand. Then we can look for what values we share. *What common ground can we build on?*

Scripture connection: Alma 18:24–40

Additional Helpful Resources

- M. Russell Ballard, "Questions and Answers" (Brigham Young University devotional, Nov. 14, 2017), 5, speeches.byu.edu.
- "Different but Together," *Friend*, July 2020, 20.
- "My Brand New, Old Family," *New Era*, July 2020, 8.
- "Don't Forget to Pray for Erik," *Friend*, Jan. 2017, 36.
- "It's Not Easy," *New Era*, Feb. 2009, 26.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO WHEN . . . ?

- Pretend you are visiting extended family members who don't believe in God. They don't want to talk about religious things. How could you show them respect while still living what you believe? (See "Different but Together" from the additional resources.)
- Imagine that a family member decides to stop coming to church or does something else that makes you sad. How should you treat them? (See "Don't Forget to Pray for Erik" from the additional resources.)
- Think about a time you disagreed with someone. How could you be respectful while disagreeing? (See the tips below.)

Scripture connection: Articles of Faith 1:11

WHEN WE DISAGREE, WE CAN . . .

- Talk calmly instead of yelling.
- Share what we think and feel.
- Listen while others share. Don't think about what to say next—just listen.
- Ask questions and try to understand why others believe the way they do. Imagine ourselves in their shoes.
- Express compassion for what they share. Honor their journey.
- Politely agree to disagree. We could say something like, "It's OK if we disagree about this. I still love and respect you."

Scripture connection: Luke 6:35–38

NOTE

1. Dallin H. Oaks, "Two Great Commandments," *Ensign*, Nov. 2019, 75.

They Set Aside Their Trials

By Natalie Jones, Utah, USA

That day, Kendra, Brent, and Tyson were true examples of Christlike ministering.

We all experience ups and downs in life, but 2013 was a particularly difficult year for our family. We experienced many unexpected and costly home and auto repairs. My husband, Ryan, lost his job, and our youngest son was born with complications and had to spend a few weeks in the neonatal intensive care unit. I also struggled with postpartum depression. These circumstances, combined with being parents of four young children, strained us financially and emotionally.

Ryan found new employment, but he worked long hours and was out of town for weeks at a time. Our

five-year-old son, Wesley, began having anxiety about his dad being gone so often. He constantly woke up during the night from nightmares.

Our extended family supported me when they could, but I still felt exhausted and alone most of the time. I knew that Heavenly Father loved and was aware of my family, but I felt like we were drowning.

One afternoon, while Ryan was out of town for work, I drove my kids home from school and desperately prayed for help. Later that night, my neighbor Kendra knocked on our door. She knew about our situation and asked how I was doing. I had no

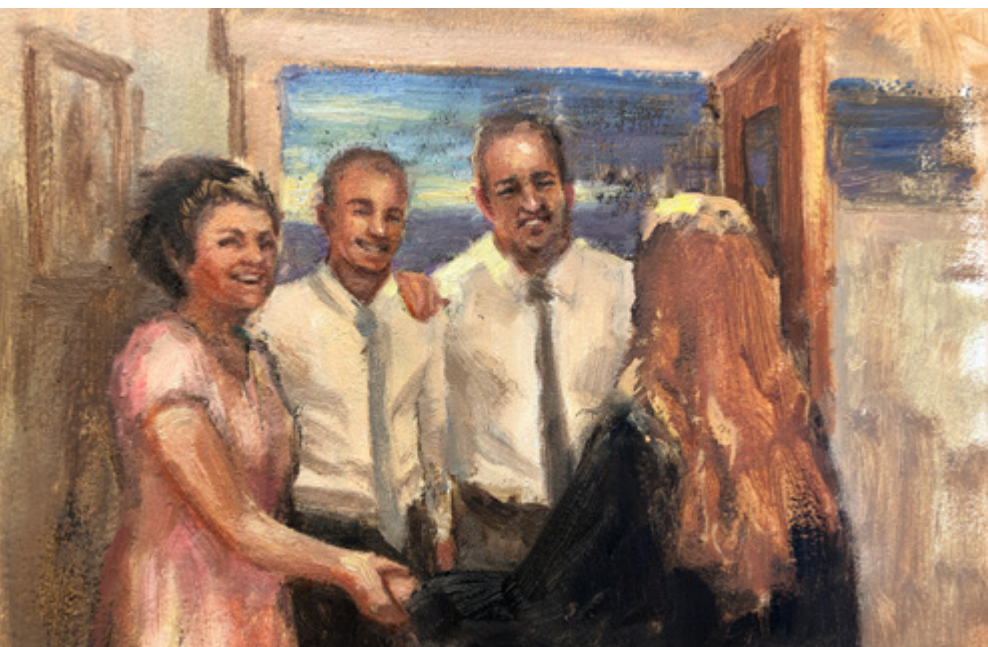
intention of complaining to her, and she was the last person I would have asked for help. Her husband, Brent, had been battling cancer for the past four years.

I told Kendra I was fine, but she sincerely asked again. Tearfully, I opened up to her about my struggles. When I told her about Wesley's anxiety and nightmares, she asked if I would like Brent to give Wesley a blessing.

A while later, Kendra, Brent, and their oldest son, Tyson, came to our door dressed in church clothes. Brent was frail. I'm sure it took all the energy he had to come to our house. He gave Wesley a blessing, and Tyson gave me a blessing.

That day, Kendra, Brent, and Tyson were true examples of Christlike ministering. They set aside their own trials to sincerely offer us love and compassion. I felt blessed that Heavenly Father answered my prayer in this tender way. Brent died two weeks later.

That day in our home, Brent stood as a witness of God through righteously exercising the priesthood (see Mosiah 18:9). To me, it is sacred that his ministering to our family was one of his last acts on earth. ■



The Brave Airman

By Wayne L. Bell, South Dakota, USA

No one dared answer the drill instructor, but surprisingly, one young man raised his hand.

Many years ago, I joined the United States Air Force to serve my country. Soon I found myself at boot camp in Texas, USA. The weeks passed slowly as I endured the many things one typically experiences at boot camp.

One day I attended a large meeting of over 200 airmen, all in training just like me. The meeting began with one of our drill instructors—who regularly shouted loud and vulgar things—yelling out, “Does anyone object to the way I’m running things around here?”

Of course, no one dared answer, but surprisingly, one young man raised his hand.

“Airman, stand up!” the instructor shouted. “What do you object to?”

We all listened intently as the young man loudly declared, “I object to you taking my Savior’s name in vain. It hurts my soul. I would ask that you stop.”

The room fell completely silent. The instructor stared at him and then asked him what religion he belonged to. The brave airman proudly said, “I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints!”

The instructor thanked the airman for his courage to speak out, and the meeting continued. This act

had a tremendous effect on me. I often thought that I would like to have the kind of courage that airman had.

experience in boot camp with the brave airman. My wife and I met with the missionaries, and we were soon baptized.



After boot camp and medical training, I was assigned to an air force base in Colorado, USA. One day, I received a letter from my oldest brother stationed in the Philippines. He had joined the air force about a year before I did. He told me that he had become a member of the Church, and he wanted me to meet with the missionaries. I immediately recalled the

A few months later, I had the missionaries visit my younger brother. He and his wife were also baptized. My brothers and I now have large families with grandchildren. We all love the Lord and His Church.

I don’t know the brave airman’s name. I never saw him again, but I will be eternally grateful for his courage to stand up for what he believed. ■

Waiting on the Promise

By Juana Moreno de Ruiz, Sonora, Mexico

My daughter has distanced herself from the Church, but I know that she will be blessed by the things she was taught about the gospel.

Three months before turning 21 years old, I was baptized along with my sister, my mother, and my eight-year-old nephew. Over the years, we have held tight to the gospel despite our many challenges.

When my husband and I got married, we were determined to stay active in the Church. As children came, my husband and I strived to be good parents and to teach the gospel in our home.

One day I attended a conference with our one-year-old daughter. In the conference, an Area Seventy talked about the responsibility of parents to teach the gospel to their children. He then made a promise that left a huge impression on me. He said: “If, after everything you can do to teach the gospel, one of your children leaves the Church, they will still be blessed because of the memory of the things they experienced at home.”

The words of that Area Seventy filled me with hope because I had nieces and nephews who had left the Church. Years later my daughter, the same one-year-old I held in my arms during that conference, left the Church

when she turned 17. She had met someone who was not rooted in the gospel, and they got married. She never went to church after that.

This was painful for me. I asked myself over and over what we did wrong. Her father and I always tried to keep

the commandments and serve in the Church. We love our children and want the best for them. After many tears and questions, we finally concluded that children grow, exercise their agency, and don't always believe the things they're taught at home.

Unfortunately, my daughter's marriage fell apart, and she still doesn't want to come back to the Church. All I can do is remember the promise that she will remember and be blessed

because of the things she was taught at home.

I continue to pray for my daughter. I love her with all my heart, and it hurts me to see her distanced from the Church. But I know that, despite my imperfections, the things I taught her are right and true. I know that Heavenly Father is just and loving and that He listens to our prayers. Without any doubt in my heart, I know that if I do my part, He will answer them in the moment He sees right. ■



“Who Hit My Son?”

By Sandra Beatty, Ontario, Canada

I envisioned myself yelling at the person who had hit my son, but then I came face to face with the driver.

I had just dropped off my daughter at a friend's house when I received a call from my husband, Jonathan. He told me that our 11-year-old son, Aiden, had been hit by a car while he and Jonathan were crossing the street.

The driver had made a left turn in front of Jonathan and didn't see Aiden on his bike. The driver hit the front of Aiden's bike. He flew up into the air, still holding on to the bike, and hit his head on the side of the car when he came down. Then he landed on the road with his bike on top of him. Thankfully, he was wearing a helmet. The driver and several other people stopped to help while Jonathan called for an ambulance.

My mind and emotions suddenly went into a frenzy. I sped toward the intersection where the accident had occurred, hoping to catch the ambulance so I could be with Aiden.

Thoughts of lashing out at the driver raced through my mind. “What on earth was the driver thinking?” I thought. “Were they drunk? Were they on their phone?” I was furious and beyond worried.

I had no idea how badly Aiden was hurt.

When I arrived at the scene, the ambulance had already left. Only a couple of police cars and a car parked on the side of the road remained at the scene. A distressed-looking woman stood next to the car.

I approached her and asked, “Did you see who hit my son?”

She quietly said, “I did.”

I envisioned myself yelling at the careless person who had hit my son, but when I came face to face with the driver, the negativity disappeared. I found myself crying and hugging her. She apologized, and I told her that everything would be OK. I found out later that those were the exact words Aiden had said to her before the police arrived. In the end, Aiden made it through with only some scrapes and bruises.

I am grateful that at that pivotal moment, our loving Heavenly Father blessed me with the strength to extend forgiveness instead of hate, even when I didn't ask Him to. I know He is aware of us and always offers us His help. ■



Young Adults

In This Section

- 70** **Why Heavenly Father Wanted Me to Get an Education**
By Gloria Cornelio
- 74** **One Thing about the Future I Can Control**
By Laura Campaner
- 76** **To Those Thinking, “I Can’t Do This”**
By Onnastasia Cole
- 78** **Losing Dad and Trusting God**
By Emma Antonucci
- 80** **Insights from Young Adults on Facing the Future with Faith**

Digital Only

- What It Takes to Receive Our Righteous Desires**
By Marc Deo Dela Cruz
- 5 Certainties in an Uncertain World**
By Meg Yost
- What Should You Do When It Seems Like Promised Blessings Will Never Come?**
By Eliza Broadbent
- Bouncing Back after My Plans for the Future Unexpectedly Changed**
By Rachel Libby
- How to Build a Debt-Free Future**
By Bryan Sudweeks and E. Jeffrey Hill
- The How, Why, When, and Where of Saving Money**
- 5 Lessons I Learned When I Didn’t Seem to Ever Have Enough Money**
By Ryan Brown

Facing the Uncertain Future with Faith

I am a planner. I like to know what to expect out of every day, so that I can be prepared for it. But **how do I prepare for the future** when it is so distant and uncertain?

Life is vast. There is so much of it ahead! There is so much that could happen! There is so much I could do! **Sometimes the possibilities are overwhelming.**

There are plenty of things I want: a spouse, a good job, to live abroad, to own a cat, to write a novel, to learn Russian . . . But I also know that desires and goals change. Priorities shift.

One priority that must never shift is **our commitment to God and His plan**. With His foresight, **we can navigate through a future** that is full of questions because He will help us find the answers, one step at a time. We just have to make the best choice we can with each step.

In this section, young adults share their personal experiences of how they plan for their future with Heavenly Father’s help and **how they move forward with faith** when faced with so much uncertainty.

When it comes to the future, there are so many questions, but that just means **there is so much potential**. We have potential too—divine potential to become like our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

And that makes our future glorious.



Meg Yost

Find these articles and more:

- At [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)
- In **YA Weekly** (under the Young Adults section in the Gospel Library)



Why Heavenly Father Wanted Me to Get an Education

By Gloria Cornelio

No matter what
your righteous
desires are,
Heavenly Father
will provide a
way for you to
achieve them.

Since I was little, I always wanted to make my Heavenly Father and my present and future family proud. I wanted to get all the education I could to improve myself and my life.

In my country, Peru, quality education is very expensive and, in some areas, totally inaccessible. My family didn't have all the resources to support my education either. But my parents taught me that working hard, being diligent, and asking Heavenly Father for help can help make our righteous desires come true. And I planned to work hard.

In elementary and high school, I was diligent in my studies to be able to improve myself each year. After high school, I was admitted to Peru's top-ranked university and received a good scholarship. While there, I worked with several organizations, including an internship with a global organization, and had opportunities to lead many different types of projects.

During that internship, I felt like it would be a great opportunity for me to gain an education in English. So I decided to transfer to Brigham Young University–Idaho. It felt daunting, but I knew that Heavenly Father would help me to achieve this goal—I just needed to trust Him and do my part.





I was the first international student to receive a bachelor's degree through BYU-Pathway Worldwide.

A Change of Plans

I was set to go to BYU-Idaho, but during the application process, I felt a strong prompting that I should serve a mission before transferring there. So I followed Heavenly Father's will and was called to serve in Trujillo, Peru. When I returned home, I planned to go back to the university in Peru because I felt like I could get a degree there quickly. However, I found out that my scholarships there were revoked because I had left my studies for more than a year to serve my mission.

I was devastated and lost. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know why I had felt prompted to serve a mission if it meant losing my opportunity to get a college degree.

But one day, I remembered my mission president telling us about BYU-Pathway Worldwide. He had invited us to improve our English and to pursue this opportunity when we came back home—and I did!

My Journey with BYU-Pathway Worldwide

I knew that my mission president telling me about BYU-Pathway was not a coincidence. When I began the Pathway program, it required me to travel almost three hours each week to meet with my group. I sacrificed a lot, but I knew that getting an education was both important to me and to the Lord. And those sacrifices led to many blessings.

BYU-Pathway Worldwide was the window of opportunity I was looking for. It gave me access to education at an affordable cost, allowed me time to hold a job, and helped me get an education in English. And through it all, I found great friends who encouraged me to be brave and continue working toward my goals. I feel spiritually stronger and have become a better disciple of Jesus Christ.

Eventually, I was the first international student to receive a bachelor's degree through BYU-Pathway Worldwide. Education has opened amazing opportunities for me. I am now a welfare and self-reliance specialist for the South America Northwest Area of the Church, and I'm also a volunteer missionary for BYU-Pathway

in Peru. I see so much light in each student, and I encourage them to move forward just as I was encouraged by my friends during school. Through this journey, I've realized that Heavenly Father has been with me every step of the way.

Heavenly Father Wants Us to Succeed

My journey has strengthened my testimony of education. And I still plan to keep growing and learning as much as I can each day. We are on earth to progress, to be tested, to grow, to prove our obedience, and to rely on the Savior to become worthy to return to our Heavenly Father. Unto God, "all things . . . are spiritual"—including education (see Doctrine and Covenants 29:34). All the experiences we have and the knowledge we gain on earth will help us to be more like our Savior and will prepare us to make better decisions, to serve better in the world, and to be better instruments in His hands.

Education provides a way to gain knowledge and then to act, to stand for truth and right, and to live a life that our Heavenly Father wants for us—a life full of joy.

I know our Heavenly Father blesses our efforts, especially when our heart's desire is to progress and to serve Him and His children. I know that when He gives His children direction, "he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (1 Nephi 3:7). He wants us to succeed!

Each of us should take advantage of each opportunity for education and growth that the Lord puts in our path, whether it's through BYU-Pathway or any other educational opportunity. He loves us and will always guide us. He wants us to learn all we can here on the earth. And I know we can experience great miracles as we work joyfully and diligently and trust in His guidance. I know I have. ■



Gloria Cornelio is from Lima, Peru. She is passionate about making the impossible possible, serving others and improving lives, teaching, and always learning as much as she can, especially about other cultures.

To find out more about BYU-Pathway Worldwide, go to byupathway.org.



EDUCATION FOR A BETTER FUTURE

Young adults share how getting an education has been the key to feeling more hopeful about the future:

"I was born and raised in Honduras—a country full of opportunities but challenging in lifestyle. I grew up listening to stories about how my ancestors were always looking for opportunities to help make the next generation better.

"Thanks to my parents' sacrifices, my brother and I got the best education possible. I came to learn that education is not limited to a college degree. Education is linked to heaven.

"If we prepare, we will not fear. Education is a commandment from Heavenly Father, and He has given us the promise that inasmuch as we will keep His commandments we will prosper in the land (see 2 Nephi 1:20). Education has helped me create, grow, and prepare to be the strongest link of my generations, and it is allowing me to help others do the same."

—Sara M. Barlow, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

"Education has helped me recognize and unravel my role and place in the human family, and that brings me a lot of joy."

—Keriata Kurene, Canterbury, New Zealand

"Education makes me feel that with my future job, I can be a light in this world and preach the gospel."

—Claudio Acuña Thomas, Antofagasta, Chile

One Thing about the Future I *Can* Control

By Laura Campaner

That little voice in my head was getting hard to ignore. Here I was at age 28, still single and not really sure of what I wanted to do professionally even though I had a good career as a labor and delivery nurse. I felt like every aspect of my life wasn't working out. I was doubting life choices and didn't know which path to take. I just felt lost.

One day when I was feeling particularly down, a friend whom I hadn't talked to in a while called me. When he asked how I was doing, I explained all those feelings I had been struggling with. He listened and then said, "OK, but how are you doing spiritually?"

"Oh yeah, that's perfect," I responded automatically. "I've never felt closer to God in my life."

He replied, "Then you don't have to worry about anything else."

Confidence in God's Perfect Plan

Since the conversation, I realized two things. First, I realized that I am so grateful to have a strong testimony of the restored gospel and to be able to live the commandments and feel connected with heaven.

Being spiritually self-reliant is so important to me, and I'm still learning how to open the heavens in my life. Praying and studying the scriptures every morning are two simple things that I feel make the biggest difference in my ability to receive personal revelation. I also feel more connected with heaven when I make an effort to be kind, to live a healthy life so the Spirit can always be my companion, to obey the commandments, and to repent sincerely.



ILLUSTRATION FROM GETTY IMAGES

Second, I realized that my response to my friend's question wasn't totally right—I thought I was doing "perfect" spiritually, but I needed to have more faith, stop worrying so much, and trust God to take care of the things I can't control.

Even when some aspects of my life aren't going as well as I would like, I know that the important thing is to act in faith and show God that I use my agency to make good choices. I've learned that when life doesn't work out the way I expect it to, it's so that I can learn and grow in ways I wouldn't be able to otherwise.

I never imagined that in my 29th year I would find myself having doubts about my career and the next stage of my life. Still, even with all these unknowns, I have total confidence that God has a perfect plan for me. He knows exactly what's happening and what I need, and He will always take care of me (see Matthew 6:28–34). Just as Elder L. Todd Budge of the Seventy taught, "As difficult as it is to understand, especially at the times in our lives when the headwinds are strong and the seas are turbulent, we can take comfort in

knowing that God in His infinite goodness is always blowing us toward home" ("Consistent and Resilient Trust," *Ensign*, Nov. 2019, 48).


Trust More; Worry Less

Some days life feels just so difficult, but when I really think about it, I know that I don't have to worry. Little by little, I have come to realize that I need to trust God a little more and worry less about things I can't control. The one thing I *can* control about the future is trusting God and working on growing closer to Him every day.

When I feel lost, there is always enough light for me to take a step into the unknown and move forward. And as long as I exercise faith and keep my covenants, as long as I remember my true identity as a daughter of Heavenly Parents and try over and over again, things will happen when and how they're supposed to, and that's really all that matters. ■



Laura Campaner grew up in the south of France in a Spanish family. She works as a midwife and is always looking for new adventures. She's a people person and is fascinated by different cultures.



"At the times in our lives when the headwinds are strong . . . , we can take comfort in knowing that God in His infinite goodness is always blowing us toward home."

—Elder L. Todd Budge of the Seventy

To Those Thinking, “I Can’t Do This”

By **Onnastasia Cole**
Church Magazines

I never thought I was smart enough to go to college. Growing up watching my single mom struggle to support me and my sister, the fear of poverty sank deep in my heart. Our meals, clothes, and school supplies depended on the generosity of her clients. One tip made the difference between paying a bill or filling our stomachs. Meanwhile, life always seemed to get in the way of education. By seventh grade, I was failing my classes. By ninth, I had given up trying in school entirely. I believed I was too behind, too far gone to go anywhere worthwhile.

That all changed when my English teacher, Mrs. Temple, gave me a notebook. Written on

the first page were these words: “Onnastasia, when you are struggling—when you are hurting—who is there for you?” That small gift marked a turning point in my life that I never saw coming. I realized that I needed support to grow, and that I was worth supporting.

Shortly after this realization, my school counselor told me I wouldn’t graduate unless I transferred to an alternative high school. I put that notebook, now decorated with my hopes and fears, into my bag and prepared for my first day.

Can I Do This?

For the next two years, Heavenly Father blessed me with another teacher who saw my potential. When I’d



turn in an assignment halfway completed, he'd say, "You can do better, Onnastasia. I know you can." I'd return to his desk after another attempt and say, with a sigh, "I can't do this. It's too hard." But he wouldn't have it. He challenged my claims of inadequacy and reassured me that I was capable. By the time I walked across the stage to get my diploma, I'd grown more than I'd thought possible.

However, a fear of the future persisted. After months of thinking, "I can't do this. I'm too stupid," I finally took the entrance test at my community college and registered for a few courses. I still didn't quite know how

Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

HEBREWS 10:35

to study, but I had developed a love for learning and a desire to prove myself that gave me the determination I needed to overcome my negative thoughts.



A year later I went to my first Pathway (now PathwayConnect) meeting.¹ And two years later I sat down in my first class at Brigham Young University–Idaho, determined to silence that voice in the back of my mind telling me I wasn't smart enough to be there.

Remember How Far You've Come

Like many young adults, I often find myself wondering, "Am I good enough? Will I make it? Does Heavenly Father really have a plan for me?" Sometimes those thoughts momentarily cause me to draw back, doubting my talents and progress. In these moments, it's easy for me to forget who I am, where I've been, and where I'm going.

As I prepare to finish my undergraduate degree, I can't say I've completely conquered my doubts. With tremendous emotional, academic, and spiritual growth under my belt, I still wonder, "Can I do this?" every now and then.

But now when those thoughts creep into my mind, I think of everyone who helped me along the way. Doing this reminds me who I am and how far I've come. Even in my darkest moments of self-doubt, I know the Savior is there. When I wonder, "Am I smart enough? Can I do this?" He gives me strength to try again. He reminds me to "cast not away therefore [my] confidence, which hath great recompence of reward" (Hebrews 10:35).

With hard work and His loving hands, we don't have to wonder anymore if we can accomplish what we are striving for.

I know we can. ■



Onnastasia Cole is a writer, editor, and enthusiastic succulent grower. She is passionate about helping others and enjoys learning, listening to podcasts, and spending time with her husband.

NOTE

1. For information about PathwayConnect, part of BYU-Pathway Worldwide, see Breanne Su'a, "BYU-Pathway Worldwide: 'A Monumental Moment in Church Education,'" *Ensign*, Aug. 2019, 52–55; see also byupathway.org.

Losing Dad and Trusting God

When my father died unexpectedly, our family worried about the future. But we also trusted that Heavenly Father had a plan for us.

By Emma Antonucci

I can still remember the sound of Mom banging on my bedroom door, screaming for me to unlock the front door for the paramedics. They were there for my dad.

This kind of thing had happened before, and at first I didn't think much of it. Dad had struggled with uncontrolled diabetes for years. But I'd never seen my mother as frantic as she was on this cold November morning. The paramedics did all they could. The emergency room staff did all they could. After their efforts were exhausted, it became clear that my dad would leave this life earlier than we ever expected.

Plagued with Uncertainty

The weeks that followed were excruciating. I'd dealt with

uncertainty before— whenever my dad lost a job, or whenever we moved to a new city—but this kind of uncertainty bordered on complete desperation. Dad had been our sole provider, and now he was gone. Mom, heartbroken and with three children still at home during the day, desperately looked for work.

For a brief time, I thought we'd be homeless.

But I held on to the faith that Heavenly Father would take care of us. I didn't know how or when, but I knew that He would in His own time (see Proverbs 3:5–6). Over the following months, we experienced miracles. Friends stepped in and helped us. And after months of searching, my mom finally got a job.

Blessings and Grief

Looking back, I can see so many instances of the Lord's mercy that I

Heavenly Father
and Jesus Christ
have promised to
hold my hand and
guide me through
the darkness.

couldn't begin to count or explain them all. People often ask me if I'm angry at God for taking my dad when He did. Truthfully, I'm not. Instead, I'm thankful to Heavenly Father for the blessings that have been mine: a dad who blessed my life for 18 years; a caring boyfriend who listened to and comforted me; friends (many of whom have also lost parents) who helped guide me in my new life without my dad. And most importantly, I have been blessed with the strongest mother on earth.

And that list doesn't even include all of the other spiritual blessings I continue to receive through the Savior and His Atonement! Both these blessings and the devastating and life-altering event of losing my dad are part of my mortal experience, and in God's perfect fairness, eventually it will all be made right.

Choosing Light and Trust

I want others to feel Christ's light and know of Heavenly Father's plan



for them. So I've decided to serve a mission. When I met with my stake president as part of the application process, he said, "When people are faced with grief, they are also faced with a decision. They can choose to cling to Christ or to turn away from Him." I realized that losing my dad had prompted me to cling to the Savior as tightly as I could.

I know life will continue to be hard. There are challenges that I have not yet faced, sorrows I cannot yet comprehend. But Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have promised to hold my hand and guide me through the darkness (see Matthew 11:28–30). Their light will direct me to a future They are preparing for me.

The Savior is our beacon of hope. His light, if we choose to follow it, will guide us safely home to our Heavenly Father. ■



Emma Antonucci is from Virginia, USA. She's a returned missionary from the Italy Rome Mission and is currently attending Brigham Young University, where she's pursuing a degree in information systems.

INSIGHTS

from YOUNG ADULTS

on facing the future with faith



“Every morning I **ask God to help me** do what He would have me do. This is a big help for me!”

—Ciara Galvin, Iowa, USA

“Don’t worry about tomorrow; God will provide. Just **continue to pray and believe in Him**. He knows your needs.”

—Caroline Wamboi Juma, Kenya

“**Do your best today!** The Lord will help you.”

—Anli Jay Naelga Emano, Misamis Oriental, Philippines

“**Keep an eternal perspective**—there are greater things in life to come than what is happening right now. I’ve realized there is a lot out of my control. But I can trust in the Lord and in His timing.”

—Claire Parsons, Western Australia, Australia

from CHURCH LEADERS

“The restored gospel of Jesus Christ encourages us to think about the future. It explains the purpose of mortal life and the reality of the life to follow. It teaches great ideas about the future to guide our actions today. . . .

“Take the long view. What is the effect on our future of the decisions we make in the present? Remember the importance of getting an education, studying the gospel, renewing our covenants by partaking of the sacrament, and attending the temple.”

President Dallin H. Oaks, *First Counselor in the First Presidency*, “Where Will This Lead?” *Ensign*, May 2019, 60, 61.

Share Your Insights

How have you been able to adjust to **big life transitions**, like returning home from a mission, moving away from home, or getting married? Send us your response at ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org by July 31, 2020.

Come, Follow Me Shareable Scriptures

Download these picture quotes from July's *Come, Follow Me* readings and share them on social media—or send them to those you minister to, your Sunday School class, or your family: [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/72081](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/72081).

JUNE 29–JULY 5

JULY 6–12



JULY 13–19

JULY 20–26



**WORRIED
ABOUT THE
FUTURE?**

Facing uncertainty, young adults share what they've done to trust God and prepare for the future.

68



HAPPY PIONEER DAY
**WE CAN FOLLOW
EXAMPLES OF
COURAGE AND FAITH**

20

RETURNING TO CHURCH
**A MAN WITH
SAME-SEX
ATTRACTION
SHARES HIS STORY**

54

KORIHOR'S CLAIMS
**AND WHAT WE CAN
LEARN FROM ALMA'S
RESPONSES**

42

