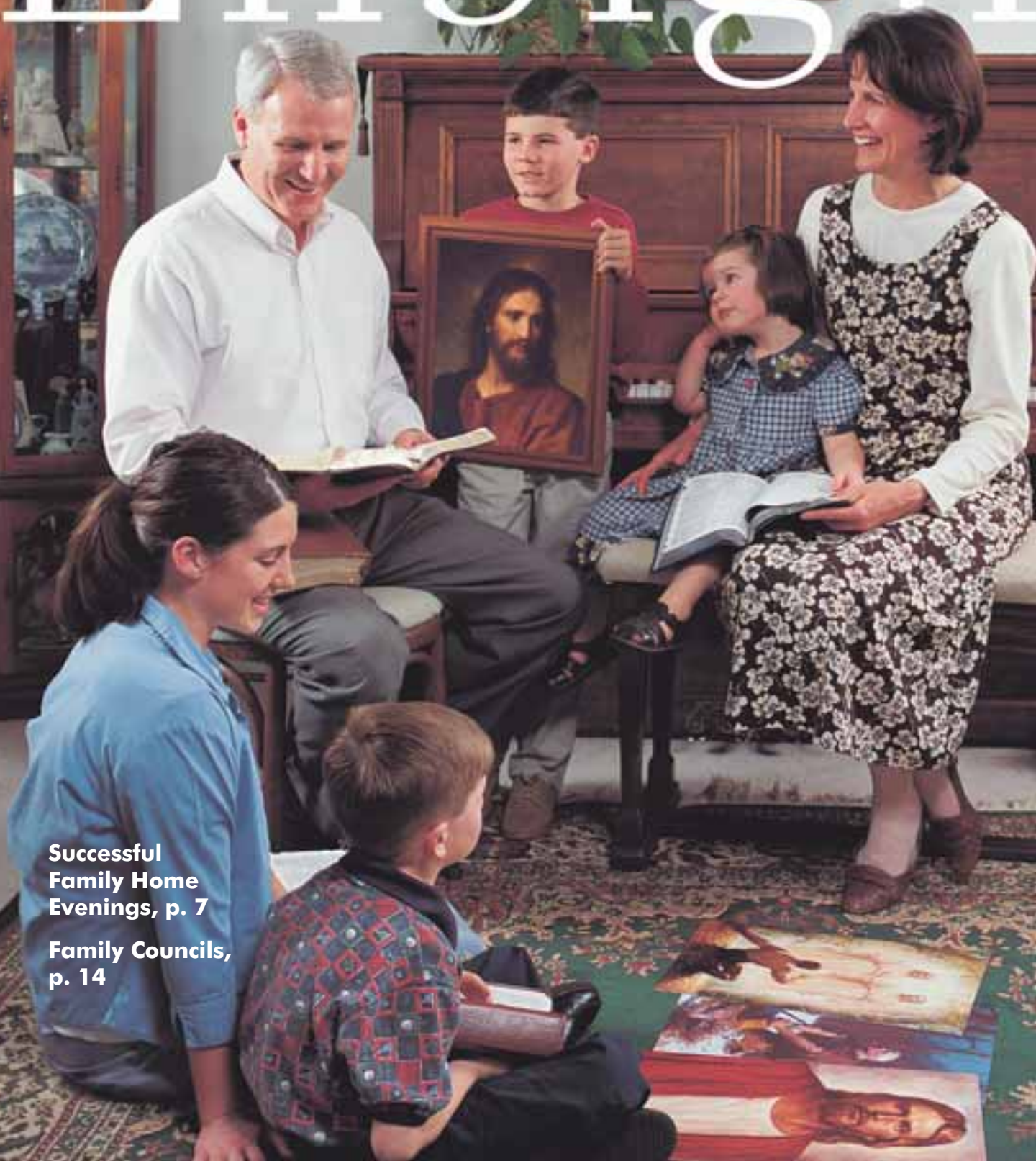


# Ensign



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**The Woman Taken in Adultery, by Harry Anderson**

*The scribes and Pharisees brought unto Jesus a woman taken in adultery and said the law demanded that she be stoned. "But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:6-7).*

# Ensign



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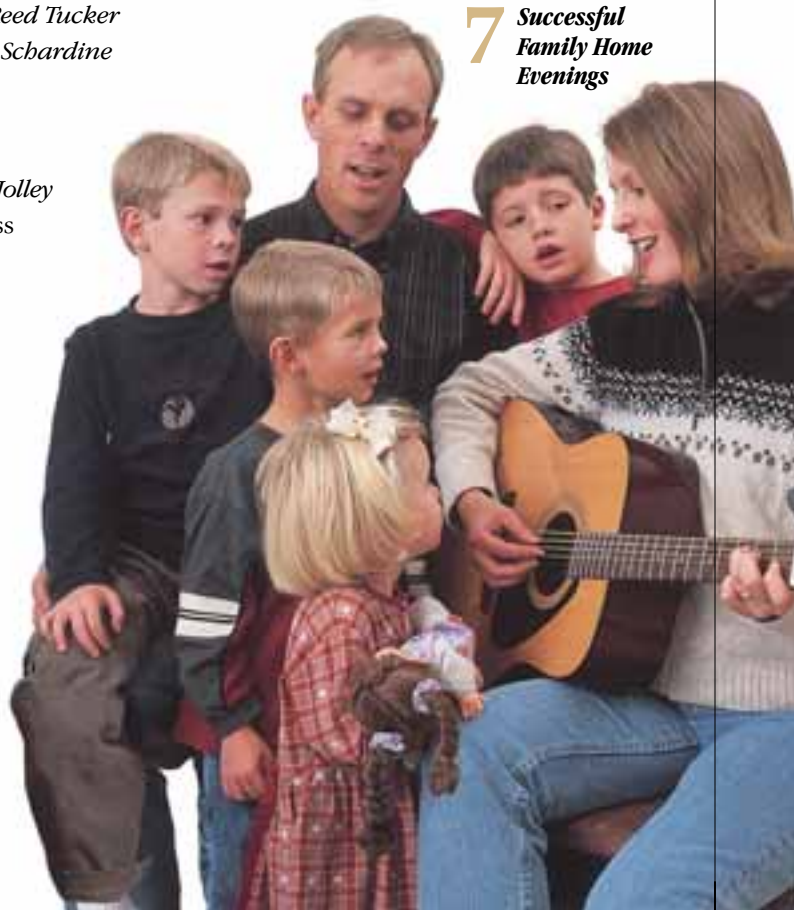
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**AN OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS**

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# Enriching Our Lives through Family Home Evening

BY PRESIDENT JAMES E. FAUST  
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

As a young man I heard President J. Reuben Clark (1871–1961), a member of the First Presidency, plead time after time that there be unity in the Church. He would quote frequently the message of the Lord: “I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27). Unity in the Church will always be a reflection of the unity in our homes. One of the most important ways to foster unity in the home is holding family home evening regularly. Whether we are young or old, single or married, whether we have children at home or have become empty nesters, family home evening can increase unity and love in our homes. Family home evening is for everyone.

## Stable, Strong Families

One wonders why so many homes are now being weakened and why so many families are disintegrating. The reasons are complex. No doubt it has much to do with the social disorders of the day. We are all subjected to sparkling, enticing, false advertising. Violence is powerfully portrayed everywhere. Our society is permeated with the suggestion

that selfishness and instant gratification are acceptable and even respectable conduct. The tragic consequences of alcoholism have exploded and been magnified by other forms of drug abuse. The sexual revolution has been crippling to the spiritual, mental, and physical health of families.

Why is one family strong, yet another family weak? The reasons are infinitely complex. Yet there are answers. Abundant evidence shows that the presence of a firm, loving father in the home is far more likely to produce responsible, law-abiding children than if the father is not there or if he does not fulfill his duties as a father at home. In either case an ineffective father throws a double burden on the mother.

The active presence of the father in the home—along with one or both of the parents being active in church and with discipline and gospel teaching in the home—seems to produce stable, strong families.

When I hear of a family breaking up, I question if family home evening and family prayers have been regularly held in that home. Surely, the most important ingredient in producing happiness at home for members of this Church is a deep religious



***Devotion to God developed in family home evening seems to forge the spiritual moorings and stability that can help families and individuals cope with the complexities of life.***

commitment to God and His gospel. In family home evening, such commitment can be nurtured in children by the wise, mature supervision of parents. Couples can strengthen and sustain each other in living and understanding gospel principles. Single members can gather under the direction of their priesthood leaders in small groups for gospel discussions and appropriate activities. Devotion to God developed in these settings seems to forge the spiritual moorings and stability that can help families and individuals cope with the complexities of life. Some may say this is an oversimplification of a very complex problem, yet I believe the answers lie within the framework of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

### Family Home Evening Builds Unity

May I suggest ways to strengthen our commitment to God and build unity and love during our family home evenings:

**1. Pray.** The source of our enormous individual and family strength is no mystery. It is an endowment from God.

We need not consume  
addicting chemicals



**T**ime together  
is precious—  
time needed  
to encourage and  
to show how to do  
things.

found in drugs and alcohol to make us capable of meeting life's problems. We need only draw constantly from the divine power source through humble prayer.

It often takes a seemingly superhuman effort to get everyone together for family home evening. You may not always feel like praying when you finally do get together, but it will pay great dividends if you persevere.

**2. Sing or listen to sacred music.** Church hymns and children's songs can invite the Holy Spirit into family home evening. The Lord has said that "the song of the righteous

is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads" (D&C 25:12).

**3. Study the scriptures.** All of us need the strength that comes from reading the scriptures. Parents must obtain a knowledge of the standard works to teach them to their children. Those who lead family home evening discussions should be adequately prepared to use the scriptures in the lesson. A child who has been taught from the scriptures has a priceless legacy. We are all fortified when we become acquainted with the heroic figures and stories of the scriptures, such as Daniel in the lions' den, David and Goliath, Nephi, Helaman and the stripling warriors, and all the others.

**4. Work together and serve others.** Children need to learn to work. Every household has routine daily chores for which children can be responsible. Meaningful service can be given during family home evenings through well-planned home or community work projects.

**5. Focus on developing discipline and obedience.** If parents do not discipline their children and teach them to obey, society may have to discipline them in ways neither the parents nor the children will like. If adults do not discipline themselves, setting the proper example for others, the consequences





can be devastating for themselves and society. Without discipline and obedience in the home and in our personal lives, unity within a family collapses.

**6. Place a high priority on loyalty to each other.** The dictionary defines the word *loyal* as being “faithful to a private person to whom fidelity is due.”<sup>1</sup> If family members are not loyal to each other, they cannot be loyal to themselves.

**7. Build self-worth.** One of the main problems in society today is that we spend less and less time together. Some, even when they are together, spend an extraordinary amount of time in front of the television, which robs them of personal time for reinforcing feelings of self-worth. Family home evenings give individuals and families important time to talk and listen as parents and children, brothers and sisters, spouses, and friends. Time together is precious—time needed to encourage and to show how to do things. Less time together can result in loneliness, which may produce feelings of being unsupported, untreasured, and inadequate.

**8. Develop traditions.** Some of the great strength of families can be found in the traditions they have

established. Traditions can include making special occasions of the blessing of children, baptisms, ordinations to the priesthood, or birthdays. Traditional activities such as fishing trips or skits on Christmas Eve can help create fond memories of times together. Weekly family home evenings can also be a time for traditions. Home evening groups of any kind can likewise establish traditions by the activities they choose to continue on a regular basis and the way they celebrate special occasions and accomplishments.

**9. Do everything in the spirit of love.** Elder LeGrand Richards (1886–1983) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles shared a tender relationship with his father. Said he: “I walked into my father’s apartment when he was just about 90 . . . , and as I opened the door, he stood up and walked toward me and took me in his arms and hugged me and kissed me. He always did that. . . . Taking me in his arms and calling me by my kid name, he said, ‘Grandy, my boy, I love you.’”<sup>2</sup>

Some parents have difficulty expressing their love through words or actions. I do not ever recall my own father using the words “Son, I love you,” but he showed it in a thousand ways that were more eloquent than words.



He rarely missed a practice, a game, a race, or any activity in which his children participated.

The touch and time of the mother in the home make it warm, comfortable, and pleasant. Wives and mothers deserve special support from husbands and children. President George Albert Smith (1870–1951), addressing husbands and fathers, said: “Some seem to think that the woman’s responsibility is to take care of the home and everything else while the man goes to his meetings. I want to tell you that your chief responsibility is in your own home.”<sup>3</sup>

Family home evening is a time for patience and mutual respect. Let there be no ill will or anger between parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, and kinsmen. Let there be unity and love between all members of the ward or branch. Lingering feelings of hurt or disagreement should be settled quickly. I pray that the rich humanness of warm, loving family life will prevail in all our relationships.

#### **For Everyone**

I wonder if having unplanned and infrequent family home evenings will be enough to fortify ourselves and our children with sufficient moral strength to meet the complexities of our day. Infrequent family scripture study may be inadequate to arm ourselves and our children with the virtue necessary to withstand the moral decay of the environment in which we live. Where in the world will we learn chastity, integrity, honesty, and basic human decency if not at home? These values will, of course, be reinforced at church, but teaching them in family home evening can be particularly consistent and effective. To combat the world’s evil influences, we need the strength that comes from family home evening.

The First Presidency stated in 1976:

“Family home evening is for everyone. It is for families with parents and children, for families with just one parent, and for parents who have no children at home. It is

**I**n family home evening, couples can strengthen and sustain each other in living and understanding gospel principles.

for home evening groups of single adults and for those who live alone or with roommates. . . .

“Regular participation in family home evening will develop increased personal worth, family unity, love for our fellowmen, and trust in our Father in heaven. It is our promise that great blessings will come to all who conscientiously plan and hold weekly family home evenings.”<sup>4</sup> I testify that this is as true today as it was almost 30 years ago.

If we go forward with our family home evenings, our homes will be enriched, our wards and branches will grow and prosper, our lives will be purified, and the gates of hell will not prevail against us. ■

#### **NOTES**

1. *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. (1996), 691.
2. In Conference Report, Oct. 1967, 111–12.
3. Seventies and stake missionary conference, 4 Oct. 1941, 8.
4. *Family Home Evening: Happiness through Faith in Jesus Christ* (1976), 3.

## **IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS**

After prayerful preparation, share this message using a method that encourages the participation of those you teach. A few examples follow:

1. Tell about a favorite family home evening you have participated in. Invite those you teach to do the same. Review together President Faust’s nine guidelines. Help those you teach identify ways their family home evenings are successful and what they would like to improve about them.
2. Write “Family home evening is for everyone” on a piece of paper, and show it to family members. Read together President Faust’s message, looking for reasons everyone should participate in family home evening. Bear testimony of the blessings you have received from family home evening.
3. You may want to point out and discuss other articles in this issue relating to family home evening.



# SUCCESSFUL



*We can create simple yet effective family home evening lessons from a variety of gospel resources around us.*

**W**hen you begin planning family home evening, is your first question “What will I do for a lesson?” If it is, then read on.

The Church magazines asked readers to share ideas for successful family home evenings. Following are several simple lesson ideas or procedures that can help your family.

## **Express Gratitude**

Simply giving thanks for the good things in our lives makes a wonderful family home evening and can be used successfully several times a year. James and Kelly Peterson of the Burley 10th Ward, Burley Idaho Stake, enjoyed such a lesson. “One week we had some unexpected challenges and some extraordinary blessings,” writes Sister Peterson. “So we sat as a family and talked about the things we were grateful for. We started with simple things like a home and food. Then we began to notice many things we had taken for granted, and we realized how much the Lord had blessed us. As we expressed gratitude, warmth filled our home; it was a spirit of thankfulness, a feeling of comfort and peace.

We felt so close to our Heavenly Father and to each other that night. It was one of our most memorable family home evenings.”

## **Read a Scripture**

When we combine scripture reading with sharing personal testimony, we always have an inspiring family home evening lesson. Jules and Judith Kon Bofanga of the Ngaba Ward, Kinshasa Democratic Republic of Congo Masina Stake, have had success unifying their family using the scriptures. “It is in our home that we have come to know our Heavenly Father better, thanks to our family home evenings,” writes Sister Bofanga. “Since challenges are never lacking, we turn to our Heavenly Father through prayer and scripture reading. We have gained knowledge, and we have also learned to love and serve one another.”

## **Sing Hymns Together**

A familiar hymn can easily become the basis for a family home evening lesson. After singing a hymn as a family, we can read and discuss the text of the hymn and the



PHOTOGRAPHS BY WELDEN C. ANDERSEN, POSED BY MODELS

scriptures listed with it. Music tapes of Church hymns (item no. 52175, U.S. \$13.25) or hymns and songs (item no. 52052, U.S. \$6.00), available at distribution centers, can help us learn and sing the hymns.

Wendy M. Mitosinka of the Bradshaw Ward, Prescott Arizona Stake, remembers one such lesson from her childhood: "My mother played our piano, and we sang and sang. When we sang 'The Lord Is My Shepherd,' I felt the Spirit strongly, and tears came to my eyes. The melody stayed with me, and later I learned to play it on my guitar. Today when things get rough, the hymns I learned as a child bring me peace and happiness."

#### Share Journal Entries

Everyone benefits from hearing uplifting personal experiences and testimonies found in the journals of family members and ancestors. We can use family home evening to write in our journals and, when appropriate, to share entries with each other.

Ramona Morreale of the Cannonville Ward, Escalante Utah Stake, writes of a special family home evening when she read from her journal: "I found entries about our children and humorous things they said and did when they were younger. Before long we were all laughing. Our children often ask to have a 'journal' lesson again. Sometimes we also read spiritual entries from an ancestor's journal. This brings great joy and helps us get to know them."

#### Use Church Magazines

Church magazines provide many gospel materials and ideas for

family home evening lessons. "The First Presidency Message and Visiting Teaching Message, with their many quotes and questions, make great lessons," writes one reader. "Our family also likes to read and discuss stories in Latter-day Saint Voices and talk about the questions in Questions and Answers."

An index of gospel topics can be found near the end of each magazine. Families can choose a topic, then read and discuss articles on that topic. Families with small children can find other activity ideas in Sharing Time articles. Teenagers might try making posters like the ones in the *New Era* by using the same words and creating their own art.

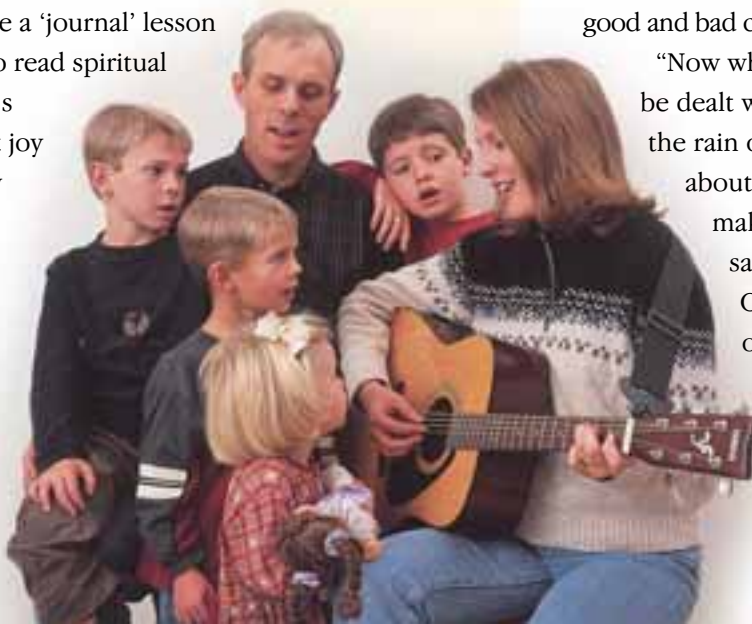


**A** familiar hymn can easily become the basis for a family home evening lesson, as can acting out a scripture story.

#### Tell Stories

Kathryn Marrett of the Camp Hill Ward, Brisbane Australia Stake, discovered the power of storytelling. "As a mum with small children, I found it a challenge to keep them interested in family home evening," writes Sister Marrett. "After praying for inspiration, I decided to focus on a different value every month. I chose honesty as the first topic. Soon ideas began to flow, and the children and I began making up stories together about honesty. We made up imaginary children and used them in every story. It was fun to create different situations and explore the results of good and bad choices.

"Now when something needs to be dealt with, such as a bike left in the rain or bad language, we talk about the appropriate value and make up stories featuring the same imaginary children. Of course, these stories are only one way we teach good values. The scriptures and other



Church materials provide the foundation for our gospel teachings.”

### Take Turns

Victor and Susana Mendoza of the Ramona (Spanish) Branch, Hemet California Stake, have found that rotating the opportunity to teach is an excellent way to come up with innovative lessons. “Our family home evenings are truly exciting,” writes Sister Mendoza. “Our children each take a turn and invent ways to make family home evening different and interesting. For example, Victor Daniel makes invitations and gives them to us in advance so we can be on time. When Jasmin finishes her lesson, she gives us a certificate of achievement for paying attention. Melissa tells us interesting stories she has learned in seminary.

“It wasn’t easy at first, but we put our faith in the Lord, and He has helped us. I testify that holding family home evenings has strengthened our marriage as well as our family. Our bonds of love grow stronger each week. We’re grateful to Jesus Christ for showing

us the way and for giving us His Spirit in our home and in our hearts.”

### Meet Weekly

Family unity comes from getting together often. Alfredo and Tita Obial of the Quirino Second Ward, Quezon City Philippines South Stake, are the parents of five sons. “We want to be a forever family,” writes Sister Obial. “We have regular family home evenings to share our talents, learn gospel principles, and have fun. Sometimes we have family councils to discuss our needs and make family decisions. We are grateful for the family home evening program of the Church, which not only brings our family closer together but also brings us closer to our Heavenly Father.”

Family home evening can be a blessing in all our lives, just as it has been in the lives of these families, if we will pray for inspiration; “be of good cheer” (D&C 78:18); meet regularly; and invite the Spirit with music, prayer, and personal testimony. Above all, we shouldn’t let lesson preparation become a barrier to holding family home evening. Sometimes the simplest lessons are the best. ■



**E**veryone benefits from hearing uplifting personal experiences and testimonies found in the journals of family members and ancestors.





# EASY TO PREPARE

## EASY TO PRESENT

*Any gospel topic can become a family home evening lesson when you follow these three simple steps:*

1. Choose one of the gospel resources listed in column A.
2. Focus on a single topic or idea to keep your lesson simple.
3. Select any of the teaching methods listed in column B to develop the topic into a lesson.

### A

The following items and many other gospel resources are available from Church distribution centers.

1. Scriptures
2. General conference talks (see Church magazines and [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org))
3. Articles in Church magazines
4. Hymns (item no. 31243, U.S. \$5.00)
5. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" (see *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102)
6. Relief Society declaration (see *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 92–93)
7. *For the Strength of Youth* (item no. 36550, no charge)
8. Young Women theme (item no. 35224, no charge)
9. The purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood in *Aaronic Priesthood: Fulfilling Our Duty to God* (item nos. 36412, 36413, 36414, no charge)
10. "My Gospel Standards" in *My Achievement Days* (item no. 35317, U.S. \$.50)

### B

For additional ideas, see *Teaching, No Greater Call* (item no. 36123, U.S. \$2.00) or *Teaching Guidebook* (item no. 34595, no charge).

1. Ask questions (who, what, where, when, why, how).
2. Show a picture, chart, or object.
3. Sing a song.
4. Give a writing assignment.
5. Bear your testimony or share a personal experience.
6. Write important points on a chalkboard or piece of paper and discuss them.
7. Memorize a scripture.
8. Draw a picture.
9. Act out a story.
10. Show a Church video. ■

# Family Home Evening Counsel and a Promise

BY THE FIRST PRESIDENCY OF THE CHURCH, 1915

*A formal family home evening program was developed in the Granite Utah Stake and was first endorsed and made Churchwide by this 1915 First Presidency statement.*



God giveth thee” [see Exodus 20:12].

These revelations apply with great force to the Latter-day Saints, and it is required of fathers and mothers in this Church that these commandments shall be taught and applied in their homes.

Dear Brethren and Sisters:

**W**e counsel the Latter-day Saints to observe more closely the commandment of the Lord given in the 68th section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

“And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents;

“For this shall be a law unto the inhabitants of Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized;

“And their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when eight years old, and receive the laying on of hands,

“And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord” [see vv. 25–28].

The children of Zion should also observe more fully the commandment of the Lord given to ancient Israel and reiterated to the Latter-day Saints: “Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy

To this end we advise and urge the inaugura-

tion of a “home evening” throughout the Church, at which time fathers and mothers may gather their boys and girls about them in the home and teach them the word of the Lord. They may thus learn more fully the needs and requirements of their families, at the same time familiarizing themselves and their children more thoroughly with the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This home evening should be devoted to prayer, singing hymns, songs, instrumental music, scripture reading, family topics, and specific instruction on the principles of the gospel and on the ethical problems of life, as well as the duties and obligations of children to parents, the home, the Church, society, and the nation. For the smaller children, appropriate recitations, songs, stories, and games may be introduced. Light refreshments of such a nature as may be largely prepared in the home might be served.

Formality and stiffness should be studiously avoided, and all the family should participate in the exercises.

These gatherings will furnish opportunities for mutual confidence between parents and children, between brothers

and sisters, as well as give opportunity for words of warning, counsel, and advice by parents to their boys and girls. They will provide opportunity for the boys and girls to honor father and mother and to show their appreciation of the blessings of home so that the promise of the Lord to them may be literally fulfilled and their lives be prolonged and made happy.

We request that the presidents of stakes and bishops throughout the Church set aside at least one evening each month for this purpose and that upon such evenings no other Church duties shall be required of the people.

We further request that all the officers of the auxiliary organizations throughout the Church support this movement and encourage the young people to remain at home that evening and use their energies in making it instructive, profitable, and interesting.

If the Saints obey this counsel, we promise that great blessings will result. Love at home and obedience to parents will increase. Faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influences and temptations which beset them. ■

Your brethren,  
**JOSEPH F. SMITH**  
**ANTHON H. LUND**  
**CHARLES W. PENROSE**

First Presidency

*(Published in the Improvement Era, June 1915, 733-34. Capitalization and punctuation modernized.)*

## GIVE HIGHEST PRIORITY



*“We call upon parents to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles which will keep them close to the Church. The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions in carrying forward this God-given responsibility.*

*“We counsel parents and children to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities.”*

**The First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, James E. Faust (letter, 11 Feb. 1999; printed in the Ensign, June 1999, 80).**

## LET’S TALK ABOUT IT

1. Discuss ways family life in your community has changed in the past 90 years. Invite family members to find the counsel and the promise in this article. Explain why this message is even more important today than it was in 1915.

2. As husband and wife or whole family, read and discuss the counsel on pages 7–19 of this magazine. List ways you want to improve your weekly family meetings. Hold a family council using ideas from Elder and Sister Ballard (pp. 14–19).

3. Ask family members to complete the sentence “A family council is . . .” Study Elder and Sister Ballard’s counsel, looking for ways to finish this sentence.



PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE BUNDERSON, POSED BY MODELS

# Family Councils



A CONVERSATION WITH ELDER AND SISTER BALLARD

*Elder M. Russell Ballard and his wife, Barbara, discuss how councils can help families grow spiritually, gain unity, and function successfully.*

In an April 1994 general conference address, Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “Before I was called as a General Authority, I was in the automobile business, as was my father before me. Through the years, I learned to appreciate the sound and the performance of a well-tuned engine. To me it is almost musical, from the gentle purring of an idling motor to the vibrant roar of a throttle that is fully open. The power that sound represents is even more exciting. . . .

“On the other hand, nothing is more frustrating than a car engine that is not running properly. No matter how beautiful the

paint or comfortable the furnishings inside are, a car with an engine that is not operating as it should is just a shell of unrealized potential. An automobile engine will run on only a part of its cylinders, but it never will go as far or as fast, nor will the ride be as smooth, as when it is tuned properly.”

Elder Ballard then likened a properly tuned car to a ward or stake that is functioning well. He urged Church leaders “to harness and channel spiritual power through councils.”<sup>1</sup>

The Church magazines recently met with Elder Ballard and his wife, Barbara, to talk about how the council system can be applied to families, some of which, Elder Ballard said, are hitting on only a few cylinders.

**Question:** Why do you feel so strongly about family councils?

**Elder Ballard:** There has never been a time when the world was in greater need of the strength and security that are best sown and cultivated in the deep, fertile soil of family love. The family is under heavy attack from antagonists bent on extinguishing this powerful source of light in a darkening world. Successful families have a wide assortment of tools, and one of the most useful tools is the family council.

**Question:** How might a family council differ from a family home evening?



**An engine that is running on only a few cylinders will never go as far or as fast, nor will the ride be as smooth, as when it is tuned properly. The same can be said of families.**





**Elder Ballard:** Family home evening is a social and teaching time. In a family council we talk about the needs of the family and the needs of individual members of the family. It is a time to solve problems, make family decisions, plan day-to-day and long-range family activities and goals. It is a time to share one another's burdens and joys and counsel together, to keep each family member on the right track spiritually. It is the time when we discuss family matters, much as a bishop or branch president does with his ward or branch leaders. It is when parents use the tremendous powers of the council system. A family council could certainly be part of family home evening, but it could also take place at any time.

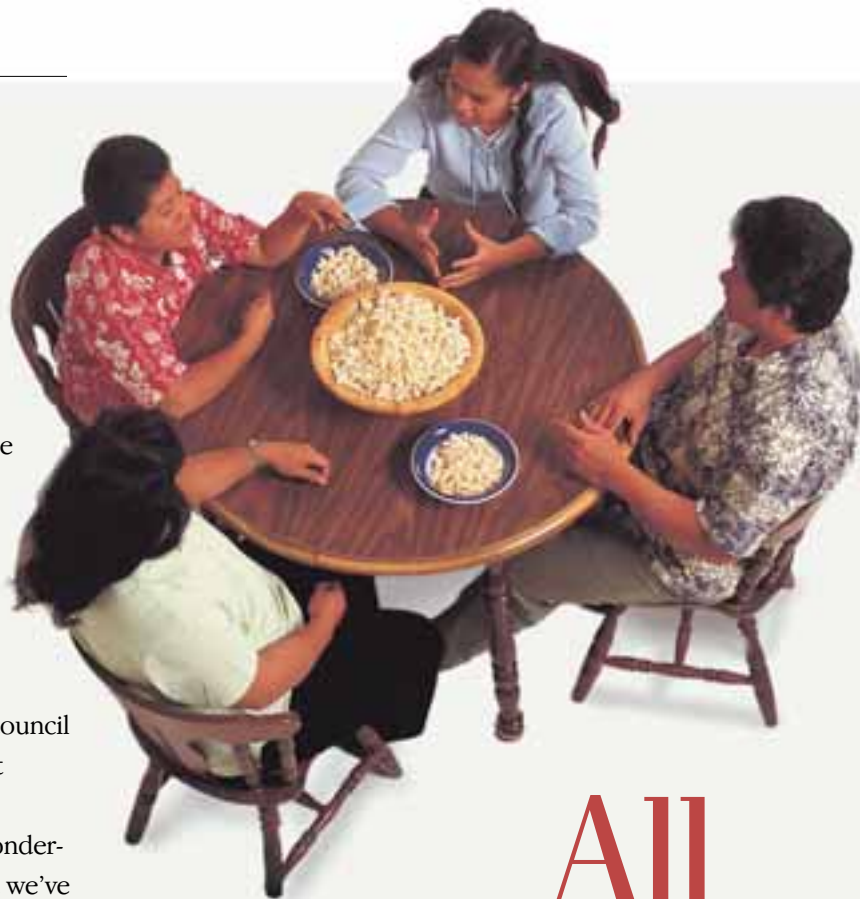
**Sister Ballard:** Our seven children have been wonderful to raise, but we've had worries and concerns, and we've had to go through the normal anxieties and problems. This is why we needed family councils—and why we had lots of discussions and prayers. For example, when my husband was called to serve as mission president in Toronto, Canada, some of the children were not happy about moving there.

**Elder Ballard:** They cried all the way to Toronto. They cried for two months after we were there.

**Sister Ballard:** Yes, but they were good sports. It was harder for the ones in high school, but we discussed their feelings in many family councils. In time, they realized it was a wonderful opportunity.

**Question:** So how would you define a family council?

**Elder Ballard:** Whenever there are two or more members of a family together and a discussion is going on, that is a council! Family councils can be held in one-on-one talks



# All Together

between a parent and a child or among parents and several children. When a husband and wife talk to each other, they are holding a family council.

I think of the traditional definition that says a family council is a time when a father and mother sit down and go through a list of dos and don'ts with their children. I was never able to make it work that way. I found that when the list came out, it turned the children off. So I tried bringing up a specific problem—such as the garden needs weeding—and then simply asked the family, “What can we do about it? What are your ideas?”

A council is when parents let their children help solve the problem. And when everyone agrees to a solution, everyone will have ownership of the problem. If I tell the family, “You go out and pull the weeds,” there may be complaining or hurt feelings. But if I can help them to feel, “We all decided this,” then the family council is truly working. Before you know it, family members will be organizing themselves, saying, “You do this and I'll do that.” That's the power of a council.



***If I tell the family, “You go out and pull the weeds,” there may be complaining or hurt feelings. But if I can help them to feel, “We all decided this,” then the family council is truly working.***

**Question:** What are some ways parents can begin to make family councils work?

**Elder Ballard:** First, parents need to draw the children into the problem-solving process by letting them be heard. For example, I came home at times to find that the children had not cleaned their rooms or done other things they were supposed to do. My wife had her hands full with seven children to raise. So I called the children together for a short council meeting. We talked about what needed to be done and decided on a course of action. Talking about the course of action makes all the difference. If it's mandated or dictated, there will usually be resistance. But if parents will establish a climate conducive to openness, where every person is important and every opinion is valued, they can create a kind of spiritual synergism in the home, where the combined action or cooperation that results is greater than the sum of the individual parts.

**Sister Ballard:** Informal communication among parents and children is crucial. If children are old enough to talk, we should be showing them we care by listening to them. We should be asking them how they are and what they would change about their lives. It seems that one of the best times for a family council is right before children fall asleep. It may be just one child with a father or mother, but it can be a very important family council. You don't have to have everyone sitting together in order to have a family council.

**Elder Ballard:** My feeling is that the more fluid, the more nonthreatening, the more natural a family council is, the more effective it is. Let children tell their perception of what needs to happen. Point out why you feel the way you feel. You can then start to connect and teach. But the exchange can't be phony or staged. If it is fabricated, the council system doesn't work. Communication has to be open and candid.

**Question:** How might a father and a mother work together in family councils?

**Elder Ballard:** A father, who is the priesthood bearer and patriarch in a home, has the responsibility to make the decisions. I emphasize the term *responsibility*—not the

term *authority*. But it is far better if those decisions are made in a spirit of unity of purpose and pulling together as a family.

I think a mother is probably the key to making councils work. I say that because she is often more sensitive and gentle than her husband.

I remember a time when one of our daughters came home and I had a dialogue with her. I don't remember the subject, but afterward she went up to her room. Later Sister Ballard came to me and lovingly said, "I don't think you realize the impact of what you said to her. You've hurt her feelings."

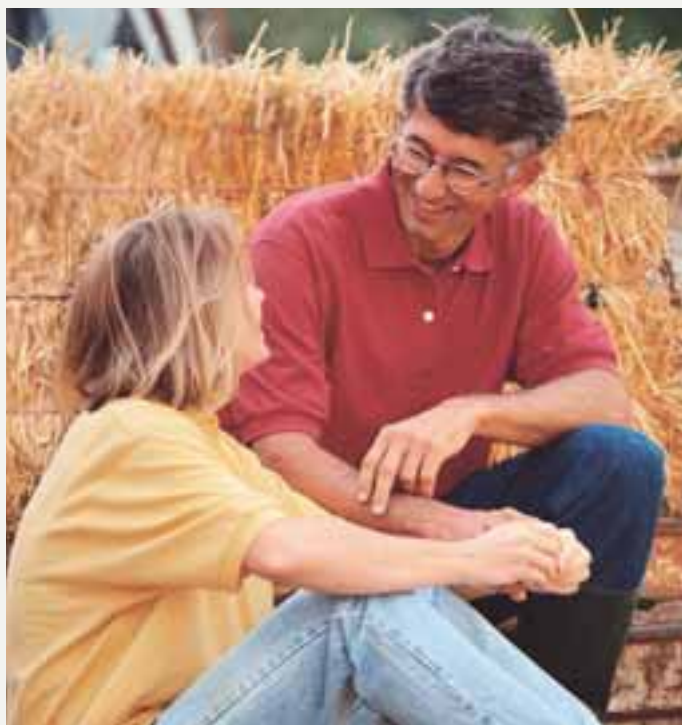
I said, "I did? How did I do that?" I didn't have a clue, so Sister Ballard explained.

I went upstairs and sat down with my little girl. She was on her bed, crying. We had another family council. I asked her to forgive me. It was a great moment for us, and it was all done as we counseled together.

My wife has also been great at keeping even our formal family councils more relaxed and fun.

**Sister Ballard:** My husband and I made a pact long ago. If he

# Couples



# Extended Family

disagrees with me or I disagree with him, we talk about it, whatever it is.

**Elder Ballard:** It seems to me that whoever is in charge of a council needs to have some idea of a desired outcome—perhaps a change in behavior—before discussion starts. Then both parents need to work with the children until things change for the better.

**Question:** How about single parents? Any advice for them?

**Sister Ballard:** I have compassion for single mothers and fathers. I don't know how they do all they need to do.

**Elder Ballard:** Single parents often come home tired after a day at work. Then they've got to prepare dinner and help children with homework. They stretch themselves emotionally to the point that they may not have the energy or time to sit down and have a family council in a formal way. But the more stress there is on a family, the more important family councils become.

The key for a single parent—and other parents as well—is to take advantage of informal counseling opportunities with a child. They might be while driving in the car, doing the dishes, or in the morning and evening just before prayers. As tired as you may be, it's wise to invest the time and attention it takes to make an effective connection with your children.

It is far better to lovingly communicate in the beginning, while they are young, than to try and hammer it into them later when behavior changes more slowly.

**Question:** How about extended family councils?

**Elder Ballard:** I hope parents will not overlook the potentially powerful asset grandparents can be. Grandparents



**Take advantage of informal counseling opportunities with a child. They might be while driving in the car, doing the dishes, or in the morning and evening just before prayers.**

can be welcomed and listened to in formal councils or on informal occasions. They've walked the road of life 30 or more years longer than anyone else in the council. Even if grandparents

live far away, grandchildren can call or e-mail; I know ours do. A single parent may have this resource and may not be utilizing it. Grandparents can be a tremendous resource.

**Question:** What other factors can make a family council successful?

**Elder Ballard:** We have to understand the circumstances of family members. Each child is different. All the counseling in the world won't solve a problem if there's a medical challenge. For example, one of our children has struggled with attention deficit disorder. When we were younger, we didn't know what that was. Nobody knew what it was. We have grandchildren with dyslexia. That can be very tough for a child to deal with. Parents have got to counsel together about such issues, then hold a family council to discuss how to best deal with the situation. It is not enough just to tell them, "You can do it. Just try harder." Additional outside help may be needed.

Siblings can also be a great help. Older children can become mentors, tremendous assets, if the father and mother will use the council system. In this way, a family is much like a ward. If a bishop knows how to involve his Relief Society, elders quorum, and Young Women president, they can make a huge difference in getting the work done in a ward. Father and mother need to see their children as mentors to each other. That way, the power of the family council is put to work.

**Question:** The relationship between a husband and wife is crucial to the success of family councils, isn't it?

**Sister Ballard:** I've been very fortunate to have a husband with whom I could talk. Raising a family is hard enough when parents get along. If a father and mother disagree all the time, children learn to pit one parent against the other.



And couples need to spend time together away from their children. When our children were little and my husband was serving as bishop, we would get a baby-sitter and go out at least once a week—nothing fancy but we spent some time together. We would sit down and try to talk objectively about our lives. I would ask, “How do you think we’re doing?”

**Elder Ballard:** And I would ask what I should be doing. They were great councils.

**Sister Ballard:** I still remember those times. All couples should take advantage of those opportunities. There won’t be many surprises, but once in a while there might be.

**Elder Ballard:** Let me share the advice I give to couples when I perform a sealing in the temple: Never retire without kneeling together and holding hands and saying your prayers. And those prayers should be prayers of gratitude. There is something that happens, even when a husband and a wife are upset with each other, if they kneel at the end of the day and pray together. I do a lot of counseling with people troubled in their marriages. I always ask, “Do you kneel and hold hands at the end of the day, praying for Heavenly Father’s blessings in your home?” Not once in a struggling

marriage is the couple still doing that. So I send them home, saying, “Why don’t you do that for 30 days and then come see me?” Almost always, they return and comment, “Elder Ballard, we’re going to make it; we’re going to work it out.” When communication with Heavenly Father breaks down, communication between spouses also breaks down. And Heavenly Father will not interfere. He doesn’t generally intrude where He is not invited. But if we ask, great blessings will flow.

**Question:** Any final thoughts?

**Elder Ballard:** Let me say that leadership based on love brings incredible power.<sup>2</sup> In these perilous times, we need the cooperative efforts of parents and children in the family because absolute vigilance is required on the part of all.

God never intended that His children should stand alone. We have the gospel, the scriptures, living prophets and apostles, and the Holy Ghost to help us. This is not man’s work nor woman’s work; it is God’s work, which is centered on the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

May God bless us all to find inspired consensus and unity as we counsel together in our families. Only in so doing can our families begin to approach their full potential. ■

**NOTES**

1. “Counseling with Our Councils,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 24.
2. See “Strength in Counsel,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 76–78.

# One-on-One



# Injured

## in the Wilderness

*Alone, with a broken arm, I wondered if I'd ever make it to safety.*

BY REED TUCKER

**A**t age 53, I still loved the adventure of horse packing in the remote backwoods. So when July came, I prepared my horses and started through the two-and-a-half million acres of Idaho's "River of No Return" wilderness. My trail would include the Middle Fork of the Salmon River, famous for its rushing water, scenic beauty, and many river-running expeditions.

My wilderness solitude was serene and undisturbed until the third day. When I stopped for a brief rest early that afternoon, an insect stung the lead pack horse, and in an instant he had taken off in a trot, leading the other pack horses with him. My saddle horse started after them, and I lunged for the trailing lead rope to keep him from running away. As I grabbed the rope, the horse jerked his head, throwing me off balance and flinging me onto a rock as he ran off to follow the other horses.

A sharp pain shot up my left elbow. I had struck it violently on the rock and saw immediately that it was broken. Bleeding profusely, I said a quick prayer for help and set off to find my horses.

A painful mile later, I found the lead pack horse tangled in his rope with the others standing beside him. My bleeding hadn't stopped as I stood there considering what to do. I knew that six miles downstream I'd find river runners at the confluence of the stream and the Middle Fork, but

remounting my saddle horse with a broken elbow would be excruciating. Climbing onto a large rock, I looped the lead rope to the pack horses over the shoulder of my injured left arm and pulled myself awkwardly onto the saddle horse with my right arm.

Those six miles took two difficult hours on horse, but when I reached the river, I saw a bustling camp.

"Could someone help me clean my wound?" I called out. Two guides hurried over.

"You'll need to be airlifted out of here," one of the guides commented grimly. "This will have to see a hospital."

I looked at my still-bleeding elbow and the hands of the two guides cleaning it. On one of the hands was a CTR ring.

"Are you a Latter-day Saint?" I asked the young guide. He nodded, concentrating on my wound.

"My name is Josh," he said. "I'm doing some guiding on the Middle Fork until school in the fall."

I paused for a moment. "Would you give me a priesthood blessing, Josh?"

While the other guide called on a two-way radio for air assistance, my LDS river guide and I took a canvas chair into a stand of trees.

As I listened to the words of the blessing, the pain in my elbow seemed to subside. When the blessing ended, I



ILLUSTRATIONS BY SAM LAWLOR

knew that the marathon to save my arm had only begun, but I found comfort in the inspired assurances that all would work out.

When we reached the small backcountry airstrip, a stiff wind was blowing its wind sock to a nearly 90-degree angle.

"I'll circle the strip, but if the wind's too strong, I won't be able to land," the pilot radioed down to us before he arrived. We watched nervously as the small plane neared the airstrip. Just as the plane arrived and began to circle, the wind sock went

completely limp. A paramedic quickly loaded me into the plane, and we departed for McCall, Idaho, where the nearest hospital was located.

A paramedic relayed my vital signs ahead to the emergency room, and when an x ray was taken at the hospital, the diagnosis was confirmed: a compound, open fracture requiring immediate surgery for repair. Since 2:00 P.M. that day, I had been steeling myself against the pain, knowing I would have to be conscious in order to get to safety.

**W**hen I grabbed the rope, the horse jerked his head, throwing me off balance and flinging me onto a rock.



**O**ne of the guides wore a CTR ring. “Are you a Latter-day Saint?” I asked. He nodded, concentrating on my wound. I paused for a moment. “Would you give me a priesthood blessing?”

Now, in the hands of capable medical personnel, I began to relax.

The McCall hospital wasn’t equipped for surgery such as I needed, so a life flight to Boise was ordered. But the wind that had deterred the small plane earlier that evening had become a major storm that was rapidly approaching: timing was essential if I was to fly to Boise for the necessary surgery before the storm struck.

With lightning cracking around the plane, we touched down, and the rain began pouring in earnest.

“Lucky we made it now,” the pilot remarked. “Another few minutes and we wouldn’t have been able to complete the trip.”

From the airport, an ambulance rushed me to the hospital. An orthopedic surgeon began reattaching the two-inch piece of bone with rods, pins, and screws, and the slow work of recovery began. The storm blustered outside, my horses were far away in the Idaho wilderness, and the guide with a CTR ring was probably still at a riverside camp, but I had finally been brought to safety.

The priesthood blessing assuring me

that everything would work out was fulfilled against daunting odds. Not only did the weather barely hold until I had arrived at the right hospital, but the surgery was performed just in time. Compound fractures like mine require medical attention within 10 to 12 hours of the injury in order to avoid major infection. I had broken my elbow at 2:00 P.M.; the surgery took place 12 hours later at 2:00 A.M.

Over a year later and with my arm completely healed, I can see in amazement that everything happened according to the priesthood blessing I had received in the remote wilderness of Idaho at the hands of a righteous young man wearing a CTR ring. ■

*Reed Tucker is a member of the Twin Falls 15th Ward, Kimberly Idaho Stake.*



**T**iming was essential if I was to fly to Boise for the necessary surgery before a major storm struck.



BY SHIRLEY SCHARDINE

**A**fter many years of not being active in the Church, I was blessed with a return of faith and testimony. Several months of study, soul searching, and spiritual healing brought me to a point where I was ready to reach out to others in love and service. But how?

My prayers focused on asking the Lord's help in directing me to a service that I could enjoy and do enthusiastically. I pondered a great deal about my abilities, and I began doing some reading aloud, soon realizing that I enjoyed this activity very much.

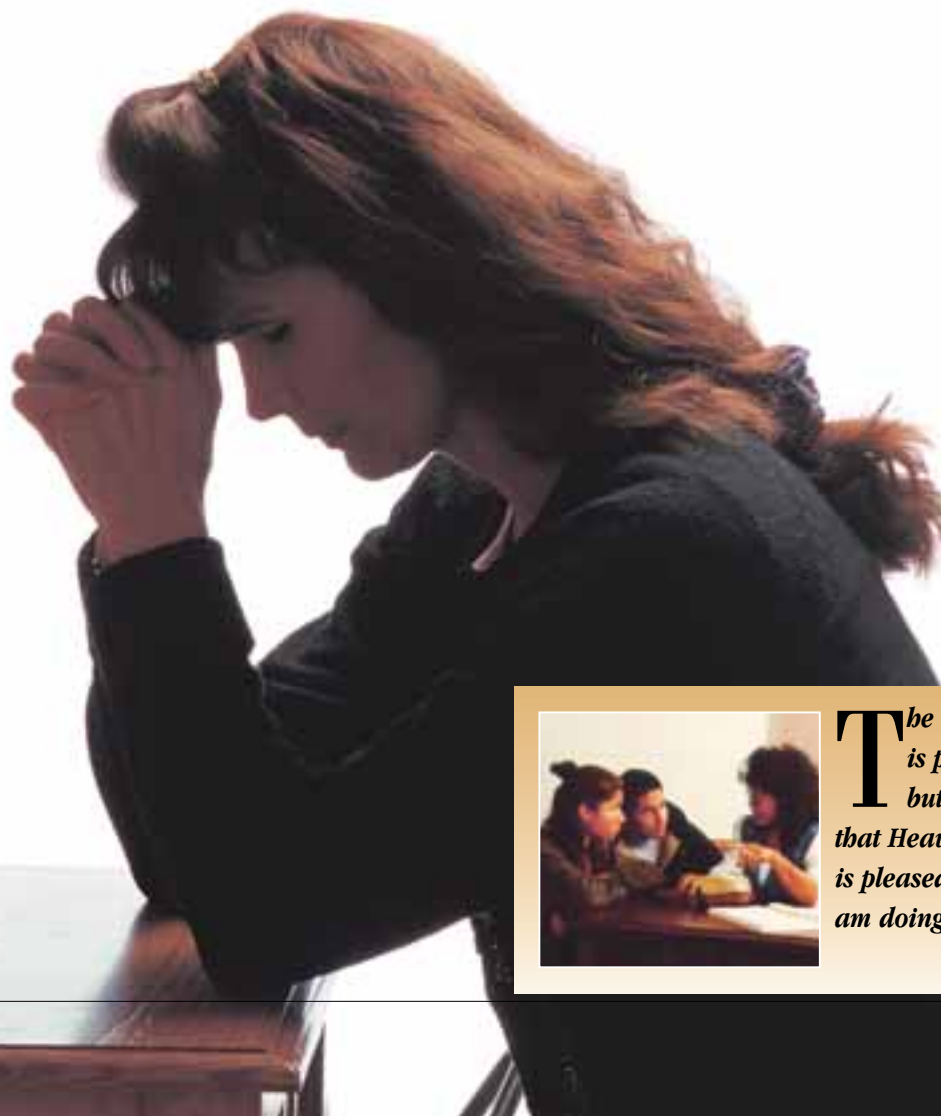
One Sunday in church I was called upon to read some verses from the scriptures. After class the teacher complimented me on my reading ability and asked if I'd had training. A spiritual prompting confirmed to me that this was a talent I should develop and use to bless others.

I located a center for the blind at a nearby university, passed a reading test, and have been recording textbooks for blind students for several years. This is a most satisfying activity for me, and I've received many additional blessings besides the joy of serving those unable to read. I've met and enjoyed the companionship of these students; I've gained strength and vigor in my voice, which helps in public speaking, teaching, and singing; and, above all, I know that Heavenly Father is pleased with what I'm doing.

With thoughtful prayer and introspection we can find some area of service that will please others, ourselves, and our Father in Heaven. He will guide us to those paths if we earnestly seek His will. ■

*Shirley Schardine is a member of the Hobbie Creek 13th Ward, Hobbie Creek Utah Stake.*

# How Could I Serve?



**T**he opportunity I found is personally satisfying, but above all, I know that Heavenly Father is pleased with what I am doing.

# The Cost *of* RICHES

*When we selfishly seek after wealth,  
we put our families and our spiritual health at risk.*



**BY ELDER LYNN G. ROBBINS**  
Of the Seventy

**I**n early Church history, members were constantly on the move—from New York to Ohio to Missouri and then to Nauvoo and beyond. Building new homes was a frequent chore. Many of the homes were modest by today’s standards, sometimes measuring just 12 feet by 12 feet (3.6 m). However, when Mary Richards moved into her new log cabin at Winter Quarters after spending the winter in a tent, she remarked, “Our little house seemed to me almost like a palace.”<sup>1</sup> Interesting how grateful her attitude was, even when she had so very little.

Today Mary Richards’s cabin would be dwarfed by most homes. It seems that while the average home has increased in size, the average family has decreased in size; and while homes have more time-saving devices, the average family spends less time together. Affluence is up, but happiness is down, as indicated by rising divorce rates. Why isn’t more money buying greater happiness?

## **What Is Sufficient?**

In his book *How Much Is Enough?* Alan Thein Durning says that in the 1990s, people were “on average four-and-a-half times richer than their great-grandparents were at the turn of the century, but they [were] not four-and-a-half times happier.”<sup>2</sup> The authors of the book *Your Money or Your Life* suggest that fulfillment seems to increase during the initial stages of spending, when one is buying necessities and some nice things, but begins to decrease with excess spending.<sup>3</sup> If that is true, one of life’s most fundamental questions should be, “What is sufficient for our family to be happy?” Our success will depend not only on answering the question “What do we need to be happy?” but also on answering the question “What *don’t* we need to be happy?”

Because the natural man’s perceived needs are forever expanding, “sufficient” is forever elusive, and his time is increasingly devoted to money and the things of this world. Take the extreme case of Prince Jefri Bolkiah, brother of the Sultan of Brunei, for example. The prince squandered \$15 billion

***If Satan can tempt us to overpurchase, we risk not only becoming a time slave to unnecessary debt but also being “time-consumed” with too many things of this world.***



PHOTOGRAPH © SUPERSTOCK

by building marinas, palaces, and apartment complexes and purchasing luxury hotels, aircraft, thousands of cars, and so on. His panicked brother finally had to cut the purse strings and limit him to a *monthly* allowance of \$300,000.<sup>4</sup> For the natural man, there is never enough money.

Along with obeying the law of tithing and avoiding unnecessary debt, one of the most oft-repeated financial principles taught by the prophets is to live within our means, regardless of our income. If Satan can tempt us to overpurchase, we risk not only becoming a time slave to unnecessary debt but also being “time-consumed” with too many things of this world. The result is less time for the Lord and for our family.

#### **More Money Equals Less Time**

Juliet B. Schor, who teaches economics at Harvard University, says that due to improvements in productivity, Americans could work 22-hour workweeks if they were satisfied with a 1948 standard of living. While we are certainly grateful for the progress made since 1948, that would give many of us at least 18 extra hours per week!<sup>5</sup>

In the book *Your Money or Your Life*, the authors convincingly illustrate how everything we buy consumes a part of our life—hence the title of their book.<sup>6</sup> Applying simple math to an hourly wage, for example, can illustrate how upgrading to a bigger home (or an unnecessary home equity loan on an existing home) could cost an extra 5 or 10 years of life to purchase, depending on its cost. And if not 10 years of the father’s life, then perhaps 10 years of the mother’s life as a second wage earner. When we spend beyond what is sufficient, the trade-off is less time.

It has been said that a rich man doesn’t own his things; rather, his things begin to own him. “A thatched roof once covered free men; under marble and gold dwells slavery.”<sup>7</sup> In his book *Clutter’s Last Stand*, Don Aslett gives us additional insight into this self-imposed slavery. Each item we accumulate, he says, “stifles us and robs us of freedom because it requires so much of our time to tend.” He writes further: “We have to pay for it, keep track of it, protect it, clean it, store it, insure it, and worry about it. . . . Later we have to move it, hide it, apologize for it, argue over it. . . . But these things are

valuable, you say? What about the value of the life and time to store, to clean, to insure, to transport, to protect—what does that cost? More than money.”<sup>8</sup>

#### **Being Content**

One antonym for *greed*, and perhaps the antidote to it, is *contentment*. The Apostle Paul stated, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Philippians 4:11). Contentment and gratitude are essential if one is to be truly happy.

The ability to be content was one of Benjamin Franklin’s greatest traits. It had a profound impact on his life and upon the new nation he helped to found. Author Catherine Drinker Bowen writes of Franklin: “He was forty-two when he retired. . . . Had Franklin stayed in business there is little doubt he could have amassed a fortune . . . the kind of estate built up in America by royal governors. . . . Once assured of a competence, he showed no desire for increasing it; Franklin never changed his simple style of living and seemed to have no ambition for outward show.”<sup>9</sup>

For Franklin, “outward show” was dangerous. He said: “*The eyes of other people* are the eyes that ruin us. If all but myself were blind, I should want neither fine clothes, fine houses, nor fine furniture.”<sup>10</sup> He knew time is the one thing that is purchased by not spending money. With more time, he was available to help establish a free land where the gospel could be restored (see D&C 101:80).

President Brigham Young (1801–77) also understood the value of spending his time on that which is most important. After gaining a testimony of the restored gospel, “he gave away many of his possessions and reduced his business.” This downsizing gave Brigham Young a gift of time that he could devote to building the kingdom. “He served a series of missions. He held meetings and baptized in the countryside surrounding Mendon. He also traveled into upper New York and Ontario, Canada, to preach the gospel and bear witness that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God.”<sup>11</sup>

Of course, the Savior Himself is the greatest example of proper prioritizing. With few possessions to distract Him, He focused all of His time and effort on His mission. The



Lord doesn't expect us to seek out poverty, but His counsel is direct: "Thou shalt lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better" (D&C 25:10) and "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15).

#### **Putting the Family First**

Benjamin Franklin said, "When you have bought one fine thing you must buy ten more, that your appearance may be all of a piece; . . . 'tis easier to suppress the first desire than to satisfy all that follow it."<sup>12</sup> This is especially true with today's tendency to purchase the biggest home possible, which requires not just 10 more "fine things" but hundreds to fill it. Families with barely affordable mortgage payments often turn to credit cards or a second wage earner to pay for these fine things. Too often the result is ever-increasing debt, manifest by record numbers of people filing for bankruptcy.

The pioneers had to discern what their true needs were. As they hurriedly left Nauvoo, they took with them essentials such as food, clothing, blankets, cooking utensils, and perhaps a few extras that weren't life sustaining but were nevertheless precious, such as a favorite rocking chair. They tearfully left other keepsakes behind.

The trek that lay before the pioneers was not easy, but with faith they began their westward march. Then they came to the slopes of the Rocky Mountains. The trail that was manageable before seemed almost insurmountable now. Many had to lighten their load and again face the difficult process of choosing what to leave behind. Subsequent travelers migrating west on the same trail would come across tools, chairs, and other valuables left to decay and rust on the plains at the foot of the Rockies.

The Saints who had to make these sacrifices must have made many longing backward

**T***he natural man's perceived needs are forever expanding. Yet when we spend beyond what is sufficient, the trade-off is less time.*



**The pioneers had to leave many cherished items behind, but they didn't leave behind their most precious asset: their children.**

glances as they continued their journey. Yet while they left many cherished items behind, they didn't leave behind their most precious asset: their children. That would have been unthinkable.

Now, some 150 years later, we are facing different challenges but a similar choice. Tragically, this time it isn't furniture and fineries that are being left behind but our children. Believing that possessions and "personal fulfillment" are paramount, many parents are leaving the primary care of their children to day-care centers. Some, such as single parents, may have no choice, but others do. The Savior tells us:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, . . .

"But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (3 Nephi 13:19–20). Surely we should consider our family to be among our greatest treasures.

In "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," we learn that "the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children."<sup>13</sup> Since the family is central, then the most important work we do, according to President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973),

is "within the walls of [our] own home."<sup>14</sup>

Note the word *within*. Parents earn money outside the home to make a *living*, but they spend time inside the home to make a *life*.

The cycle of affluence leading to pride is depicted numerous times in the Book of Mormon. The Lord warns us, "The riches of the earth are mine to give; but beware of pride, lest ye become as the Nephites of old" (D&C 38:39). We would be wise to avoid the Nephites' mistakes by being wary of "outward show," learning what is sufficient for our true happiness, and discovering how to be content. I believe these principles are deserving of our sincere pondering and prayer. ■

#### NOTES

1. Quoted in William W. Slaughter, "The Strength of Sacrifice," *Ensign*, Apr. 1997, 38.
2. (1992), 23.
3. Joe Dominguez and Vicki Robin (1992).
4. See Seth Mydans, "Gluttony Is Undoing of Brunei," *Deseret News*, 17 Aug. 2001.
5. *The Overworked American* (1991).
6. Joe Dominguez and Vicki Robin (1992).
7. Seneca, quoted in John de Graaf and others, *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic* (2001), 125.
8. (1984), 5, 4, 46.
9. *The Most Dangerous Man in America* (1974), 59.
10. Quoted in Andrew M. Allison and others, *The Real Benjamin Franklin* (1987), 364.
11. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society course of study, 1997), 3.
12. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, Poor Richard's Almanac, and Other Papers* (n.d.), 227.
13. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
14. In Conference Report, Apr. 1973, 130; or *Ensign*, July 1973, 98.

#### LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

1. Invite family members to describe what they think the life of a happy, successful person is like. Show some money and discuss how much money it takes for a person to be happy and successful. Read and discuss the section "Being Content."

2. Display a paper with the following equations: More Money = Less Time; More Money ≠ More Happiness. Ask family members what they think the equations mean. Read and discuss what Elder Robbins said about money, time, and happiness.



# The Lost Coin

*Are we doing all we can  
to cultivate the faith of others?*

BY ELDER J. KENT JOLLEY  
Of the Seventy

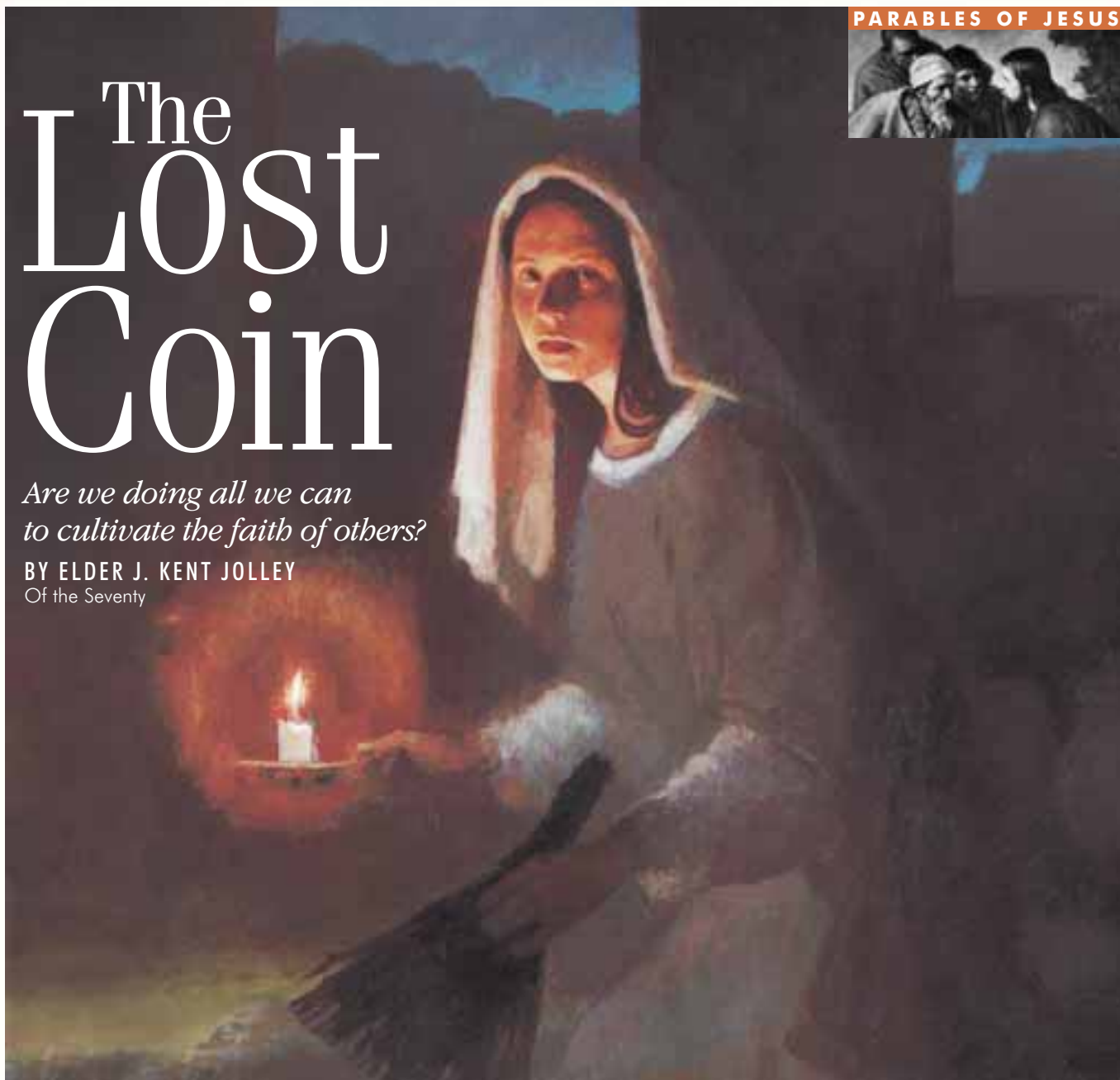


ILLUSTRATION BY KIRK RICHARDS

Over the years I have collected a few rare coins. My favorite one is a prized 1886 U.S. silver dollar. When the subject of rare coins occasionally comes up for discussion in my family, I love to scurry off to find and exhibit it, as though it were the only silver dollar ever minted.

One day our young son Jeff discovered the coin lying around the house when I had failed to properly put it away. He took the coin and rode his bicycle to a nearby grocery

store to purchase some candy. Later that day when I saw his cache of candy, I asked him where he had gotten the money to pay for it. He readily responded that he had simply taken “one of those old coins.”

Frantically, I dashed to the grocery store. Much to my relief, the clerk knew Jeff and had placed my silver dollar in the back of the cash register, anticipating that someone from the family would want to reclaim it. She readily accepted a paper dollar in exchange, and I



breathed a great sigh of relief at having found my precious lost coin. This experience was for me much like one described by the Savior long ago.

### **Sheep, Coins, and Sons**

In the 15th chapter of Luke, the Savior taught the scribes and Pharisees three parables that illustrate the value of a human soul.

Each teaches how a soul can become lost and then be found and returned to the Lord. The first parable talks of a sheep who strays, as sheep sometimes do simply by following their noses from patch to patch of grass in the meadow. The shepherd must search out the lost sheep and lead it back to the fold. The third parable speaks of a lost and prodigal son who purposely squanders his inheritance. When he chooses to repent and return home, he is joyfully received and restored to a place of honor in the family. The middle parable is about a woman who has 10 coins. It differs from the first and third parables because it is the carelessness of the owner that causes the coin to be lost.<sup>1</sup> In relating this parable, Jesus said:

“Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?

“And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost” (Luke 15:8–9).

### **Our Attitude toward Others**

The clarion call of President Gordon B. Hinckley is that every member needs to have a friend, to have a responsibility in the Church, and to be “nourished by the good word of God” (Moroni 6:4). This is particularly true for new and returning members. We must take a closer look at ourselves to see if we are making an honest effort to cultivate the faith of those in our midst. Precious souls are waiting to be found. Let us get our candles and brooms and

## **LET’S TALK ABOUT IT**

1. Hide a coin somewhere in a room, and announce to family members that you have “lost” a coin. Have them search until they find it. Read the section “Sheep, Coins, and Sons.” Ask whose fault it was that the coin was lost. Read “Precious Souls, Coins of the Realm,” and express your love for family members.

2. Read Luke 15:8–9 and the sections “Our Attitude toward Others” and “It Begins with Prayer.” Encourage family members to identify someone they could fast and pray for. Share an experience you have had with “finding a lost coin” and strengthening that person spiritually.

start “sweeping.” We can give a friendly gesture, an act of kindness, a fervent prayer, or even a clear and caring invitation to attend a Church activity.

I enjoy reflecting on the experience of Enos in the Book of Mormon and how it affected his mind-set toward others. Enos had been taught “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” by his fa-

ther, Jacob (Enos 1:1). Hungering for the spiritual burdens he was carrying to be lifted, he prayed mightily all day and all night. Then the voice of the Lord came to him: “Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed” (Enos 1:5).

After this renewing encounter with the Lord, it appears that Enos’s attitude toward others changed dramatically. Rather than dwelling on his own burdens, he turned his attention and efforts in a new direction: “I began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren, the Nephites; wherefore, I did pour out my whole soul unto God for them” (Enos 1:9). Enos also prayed to the Lord for his enemies, the Lamanites, “with many long strugglings” (Enos 1:11).

### **It Begins with Prayer**

If we are to do the work of spiritually recovering “lost coins,” many of us may need to have an Enos-like experience. As we are taught in the nurture and admonition of the Lord by the prophets, seers, and revelators of the Church today, let us hunger and petition for the easing of our personal burdens in prayer. Then let us continue in prayer for the welfare of those around us who have become spiritually “misplaced.” An experience similar to Enos’s can happen to us if we seek after it as Enos did.

Once our hearts are right, we can get involved much more successfully in the great work of reaching out to others.

Perhaps someone you visit as a home or visiting teacher is in need of a special kindness. Maybe you could invite a



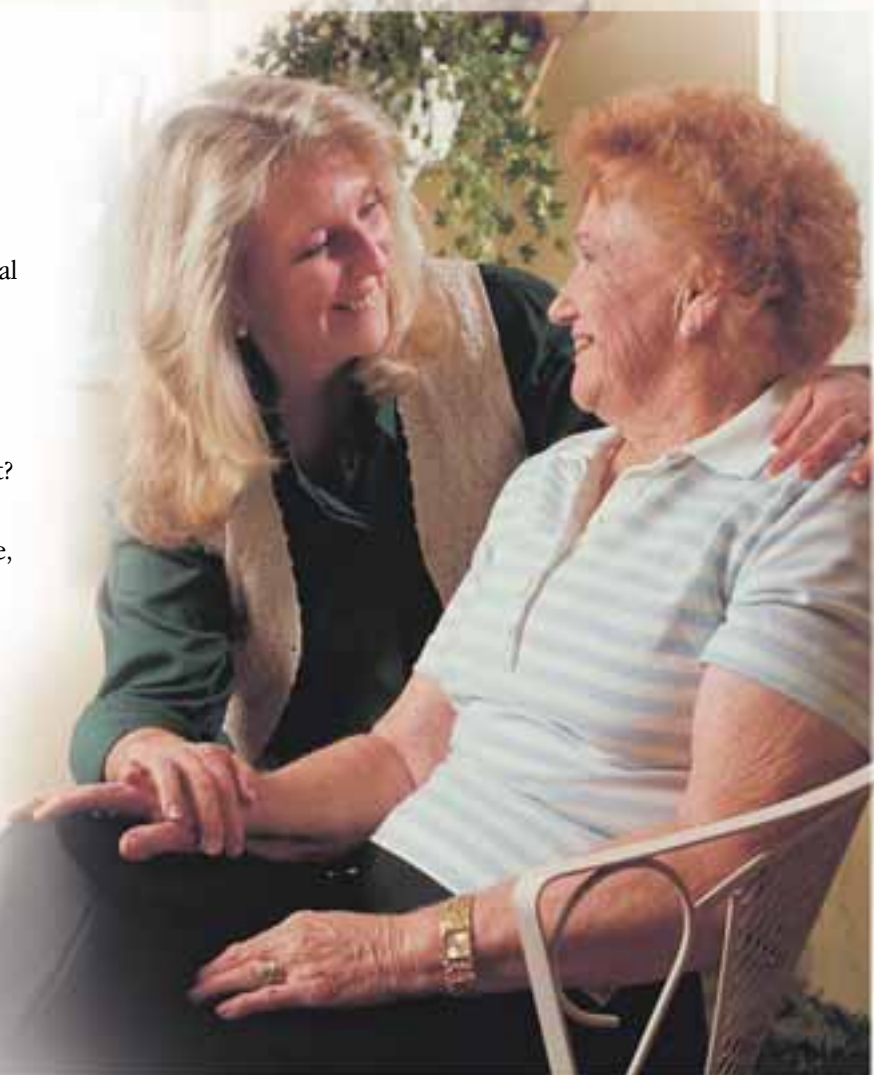
young man or young woman to Mutual. Would an invitation to your home for a meal or family home evening be the right thing to do? Maybe there is a community or sporting event you could attend with that individual. Is there something you could take to the person that would open a heart? Is there some other kind of service, such as helping with yard work or offering a ride, that could help the process of trust and friendship begin or progress? The time may be right to involve the full-time missionaries.

But it all begins with prayer. The Holy Ghost will guide us to know what is best. What would happen in our wards and branches if each family used a fast Sunday to fast and pray about a less-active person or family, then to reach out in love and friendship? The key is to pray and then do! President Thomas S. Monson of the First Presidency has said, “Whatever our calling, regardless of our fears or anxieties, let us pray and then go and do, remembering the words of the Master, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who promised, ‘I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world’ ” (Matthew 28:20).<sup>2</sup>

### Precious Souls, Coins of the Realm

As with the woman and the lost coin, many souls are not active participants in the blessings of the gospel because they have lacked for someone who could make a spiritual difference in their lives. We, like Alma, who sought to reclaim the once-faithful Zoramites, need to go to the Lord in prayer, asking:

“Wilt thou grant unto us that we may have success in bringing them *again* unto thee in Christ.



PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE BLUNDERSON, POSED BY MODELS

“Behold, O Lord, their souls are precious, and many of them are our brethren; therefore, give unto us, O Lord, power and wisdom that we may bring these, our brethren, *again* unto thee” (Alma 31:34–35; emphasis added).

Let us not carelessly leave, as I did, our precious “silver dollars” in a place that is not secure. As we prepare ourselves and our families through diligent prayer, we will have the direction of the Holy Ghost in recovering the lost coins of the eternal realm, in whose countenance has been stamped the divine mintage of heavenly parentage.<sup>3</sup> ■

### NOTES

1. See James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. (1916), 455–56.
2. “They Pray and They Go,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 51.
3. See *Jesus the Christ*, 546–47.

**W**e can give a friendly gesture, an act of kindness, a fervent prayer, or even a clear and caring invitation to attend a Church activity.



WORDS  
OF  
JESUS

# On the Cross

*As we ponder the lessons contained in Jesus' final words, we exclaim with the centurion, "Truly this man is the Son of God" (see Mark 15:39).*



**BY ELDER ALAIN A. PETION**

Area Authority Seventy

**W**hile driving alone for long distances, I enjoy listening to Handel's *Messiah* and other sacred music that uses the scriptures as the text. This music has always brought deep emotions for the Savior to my heart.

Many years ago, a friend presented me with a recording of Franz Joseph Haydn's oratorio called *The Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross*. This oratorio came to my mind again more recently as I was reading and pondering anew the gospel accounts of the Savior's Crucifixion, attempting to better understand His death. I gained further appreciation for the final earthly moments of our beloved Redeemer while reading Psalms 115–18, which Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles suggested must have been sung by the Savior in His last Passover. Both Haydn and Elder McConkie organize the last mortal utterings of the Son of God in the same chronological order, which I will follow here.<sup>1</sup>

**To appreciate our Redeemer's last precious sayings, one needs to remember that the Crucifixion was the final act in a series of profound and difficult events.**

## **The Painful Prologue**

To appreciate our Redeemer's last precious sayings, one needs to remember that the Crucifixion was the final act in a series of profound and difficult events. First was the Passover meal, followed by the mental, physical, and spiritual agony of Gethsemane. Then came the arrest and subsequent illegal trials. Pilate and Herod questioned Him. He was scourged with leathern thongs weighted with jagged edges of bone and lead. The derision of soldiers rang in His ears as they dressed Him in a purple war robe, crowned Him with thorns, and placed a reed as a scepter in His bound hands. He then bore His cross to Golgotha with the help of Simon of Cyrene. At the third hour, they crucified Him (see Mark 15:25).

Securely fastened to the infamous cross between two crucified thieves, stripped of His outer garments that were parted between the soldiers, tortured by pain with each breath in this unnatural position, the Son of God was publicly and ignominiously exposed before the chief priests, the scribes and the elders,



the soldiers, passersby, and a handful of friends and relatives. Even then and there, His last words are a reflection of His divine nature.

**“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).**

The Prophet Joseph Smith provided significant insight by clarifying that *them* and *they* in this statement refer to the soldiers who crucified Him (see Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 23:35).

The soldiers who whipped, mocked, and nailed Jesus to the cross were obeying orders. Their choice was to do the will of Pilate or be

punished. Jesus’ teachings had likely never come to their ears. To them He was but one more man from a strange and difficult-to-manage nation. Our Savior pled with His Father that their acts not be counted as sins upon their heads. The responsibility for His death rightly rested upon those who had said, “His blood be on us, and on our children” (Matthew 27:25).

He who taught, “Love your enemies, . . . do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which . . . persecute you” (Matthew 5:44) was concerned for the spiritual well-being of the persons who pierced Him. What a lesson for us! Looking beyond their

***T****he Savior was publicly and ignominiously exposed before the chief priests, the scribes and the elders, the soldiers, passersby, and a handful of friends and relatives. Even then, His last words are a reflection of His divine nature.*

apparent motives, we must show concern for those who do not know what they are doing.

**“To day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43).**

One thief who was crucified recognized that he was like a sheep who had gone astray and turned to his own way (see Isaiah 53:6). His inner light was rekindled in the presence of “the true Light, which lighteth every man” (John 1:9). He did not join in the mocking. Instead he appealed to the Good Shepherd, seizing upon the tenuous hope that he might be saved: “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom” (Luke 23:42). The Savior graciously answered and gave him hope. This criminal likely did not understand that the gospel would be preached to him in the spirit world or that he would be given an opportunity to live according to God in the spirit (see 1 Peter 4:6; D&C 138:18–34). Truly the Savior cared for the thief who hung beside Him; surely He cares greatly for those who love Him and strive to keep His commandments!

**“Woman, behold thy son!” (John 19:26).**

The Savior’s mother, Mary, stood there by the cross. Perhaps at that moment, as she suffered to see the infinite burden placed upon her son, the Son of God, she recalled Simeon’s prophecy: “Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. . . . Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also” (Luke 2:34–35). Yet in her own pain, she must have sensed He was fulfilling the will of God, His Father, for it was she who had responded to the angel, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word” (Luke 1:38).

**“Behold thy mother!” (John 19:27).**

Now as He was about to exit this earthly stage, the Savior’s attention and ministering words turned to His mother, Mary. Joseph, her husband, had passed away. John the Beloved would now see to her needs. These words teach an everlasting lesson from the Firstborn on family responsibilities: honor God’s will from generation

to generation, honor parents, and see to each other’s needs.

The preceding words from the cross were uttered between the third and the sixth hour. At the sixth hour, darkness covered the whole land for three hours as the “God of nature” suffered (see 1 Nephi 19:10–12). “It seems, that in addition to the fearful suffering incident to crucifixion, the agony of Gethsemane had recurred, intensified beyond human power to endure.”<sup>2</sup>

**“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34).**

In Gethsemane, an angel had appeared to strengthen the Savior (see Luke 22:43). Now He had to tread the winepress alone. No answer. No angel. Alone. To which hiding pavilion had the Father withdrawn (see D&C 121:1)? It is difficult to consider these words from His dying lips without experiencing deep emotion.

Golgotha’s excruciating public suffering reaffirmed the private agony of Gethsemane, allowing Jesus henceforth and forever to address the Father thus: “Behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed” (D&C 45:4).

Jesus’ loneliness in suffering reminds us that in His infinite love and respect for His children, God our Father may at times be silent so as to allow our meager efforts to gain the humble victory and to represent the “all we can do,” after which He will save us by His almighty grace (see 2 Nephi 25:23).

**“I thirst” (John 19:28).**

These words confirm in part the awfulness of Jesus’ physical agony on the cross. His bodily needs cried out for relief. His tongue struggled to articulate as it clung to His parched lips. In terms of physical suffering, we have a God who has “descended below them all” (D&C 122:8).

A sponge soaked in vinegar was raised to His mouth. Jesus received it and gave His final statements in mortality.

**“It is finished” (John 19:30).**

The perfect Atonement had been wrought! His suffering for the sins of the world was completed. Could there be a more glorious moment in all eternity? The Prophet Joseph’s inspired additions to the Bible teach us that before the Son said, “It is finished,” He addressed the Father. He then announced that the will of the Father had been done (see Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 27:54).

From the first words of His prayer in Gethsemane to His last words on the cross, Jesus did the will of His Father. He drank out of the bitter cup that the Father had given Him, bringing glory to the Father and salvation to all humankind (see 3 Nephi 11:11). May we be so submissive, humble, and selfless in our mortal victories and successes!

**“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46).**

The Son of the Almighty gave His life voluntarily. He had inherited mortality from His mother, Mary, and He had inherited the ability to live forever in a mortal state from God, the Father of His mortal body. He gave His life to bring to pass the Resurrection of all humankind. The righteous spirits in prison “were filled with joy and gladness” (D&C 138:15) at the news of His death, for His death and Resurrection guaranteed their deliverance from the chains of death. And so can we, every day of our lives, be filled with joy and gladness because of the gift of His sacrifice and Resurrection.

The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob expressed a hope “that all men would believe in Christ, and view his death”



THE BURIAL OF CHRIST, BY CARL HEINRICH BLOCH, COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIC MUSEUM AT FREDERIKSBORG IN HILLERÖD, DENMARK

(Jacob 1:8). The Savior’s atoning sacrifice provides the means for all men to repent and thus obtain eternal life. As we marvel at the events of His death and ponder the depth and fulness of the lessons contained in His words while on the cross, may we exclaim with the centurion, “Truly this man [is] the Son of God” (Mark 15:39). ■

**NOTES**

1. See *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (1966–73), 1:744, 818.
2. See James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. (1916), 661.

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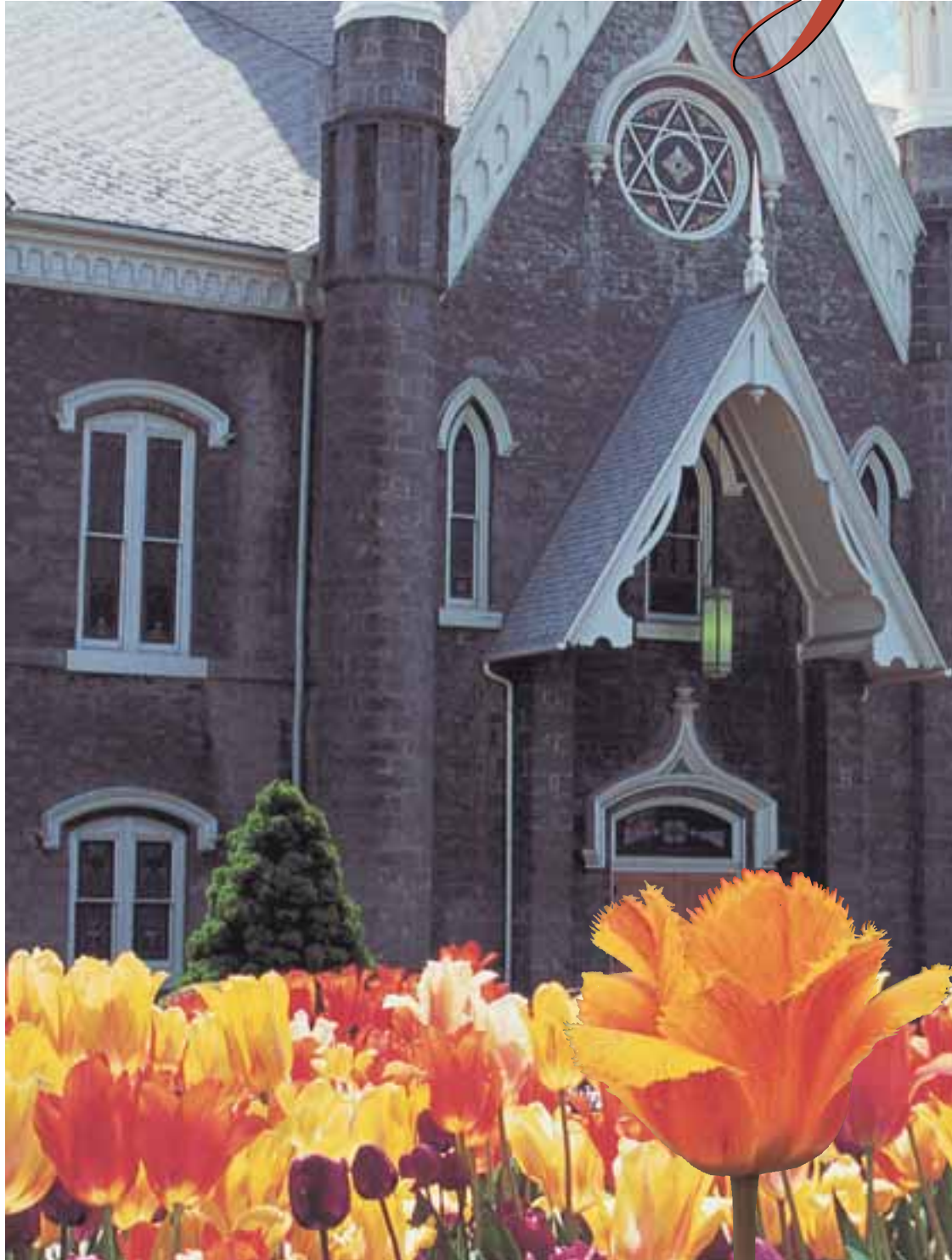
**B**ecause the Savior gave His life to bring to pass the Resurrection of all humankind, we can, every day of our lives, be filled with joy and gladness.

# Blooming

**T**hink of the gardens on Temple Square in Salt Lake City as a symphony composed of floral notes and themes originated by the Creator of all things beautiful.

That is the way Peter Lassig, who recently retired as the gardener of Temple Square, designed them. The plan for each garden was like a musical score, with the designer of that plot as composer and the planter as performer, placing the floral notes and compositions where they harmonize perfectly.

The floral performance goes on year-round. Gardeners on the square recognize 14 different annual seasons for floral display or cultivation—seasons such as the June flush, when all the perennials



# *with Beauty*

**Drifts of tulips blossoming next to the Assembly Hall (below) are among the spring flowers and blossoms providing color accents on Temple Square.**



PHOTOGRAPHS BY CRAIG DIMOND, GREG FRIE, KELLY LARSEN, DON L. SEARLE, AND STEVE TREGEAGLE



come out early in the month. Thanks to a staff of 50 volunteer designers and 50 planters, the fall and spring “down time,” when gardens are empty while replanting takes place, is no more than 10 days.

There are 35 acres (14.2 hectares) of garden plots on Temple Square, which includes not only the city block where the Salt Lake Temple stands but also the block to the east of it, with the Church Office Building plaza; the block to the north, where the Conference Center is located; part of the block to the west, where the Family History Library and Museum of Church History and Art are located; as well as a small park and the Brigham



***The transition from spring to summer brings a variety of color accents around the Salt Lake Temple (left), the Lion House (right, top), the Tabernacle (right, center), and office buildings.***







*Changes in the season, changes in the weather, changes in the light—change is a constant in the scenery on Temple Square.*

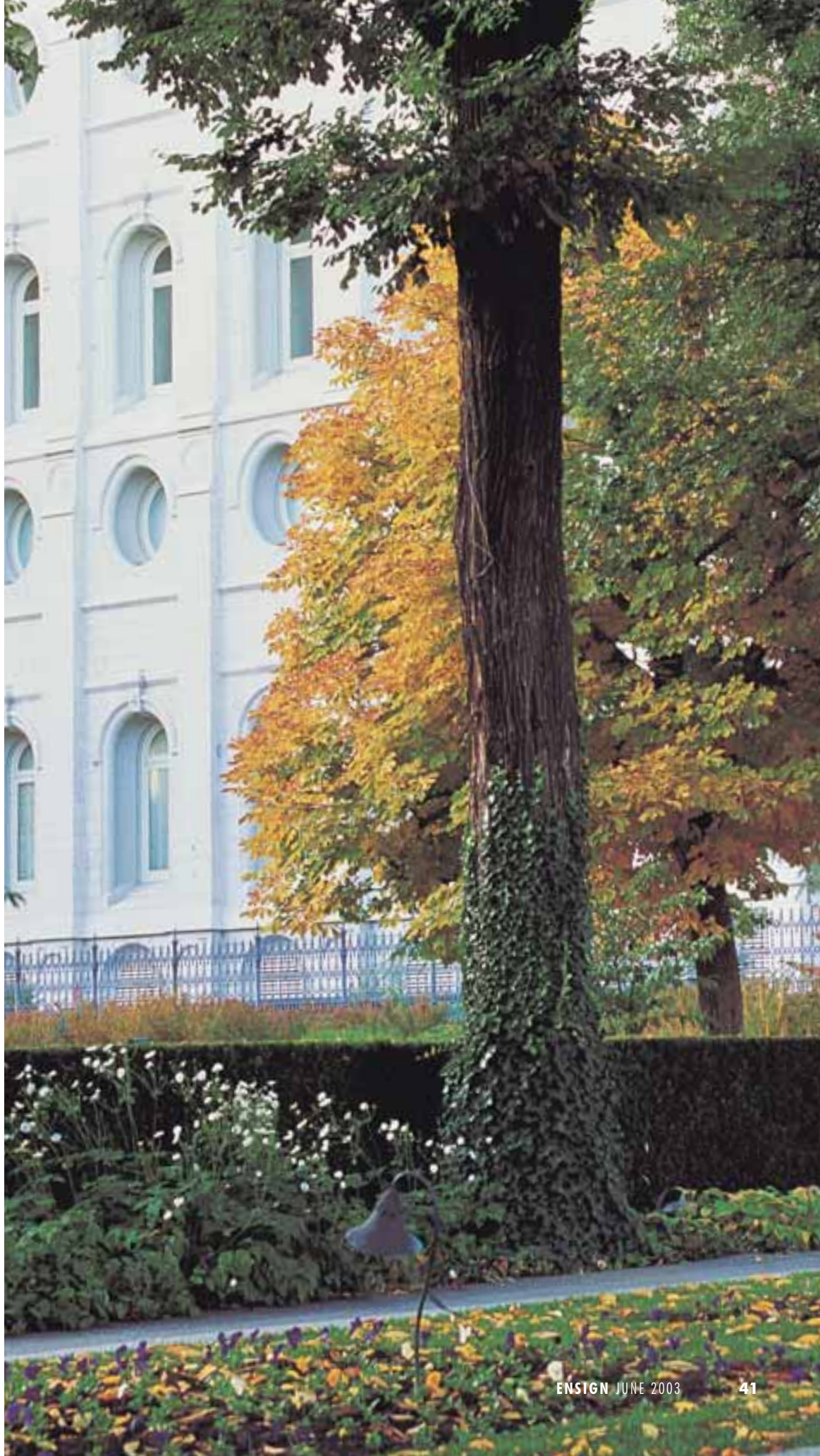
Young Cemetery tucked into two urban green spaces east of the Church Office Building.

Visitors to Temple Square won't see any formal floral designs—clocks, faces of prophets, world maps—in the gardens. The reason is a matter of reverence for the Creator. The gardens are meant to showcase the variety and magnificence of His creations, not the cleverness of man.

Of course, the gardens draw recognition for their beauty; there have been prestigious awards from gardening organizations. But more important, they contribute to the feelings of reverence, peace, and awe experienced by visitors.



***Autumn-colored leaves decorate trees and bushes in front of the Salt Lake Temple.***





Like our Father's other works, the gardens can teach lessons at different levels. There are obvious lessons about the genius and artistry of this earth's design. And there are more subtle lessons about faith in His loving, providing care for us:

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

"And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

"Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (Matthew 6: 28–30). ■



***While winter weather makes the garden areas inhospitable for flowers and plants, Temple Square blossoms with decorations at the Christmas season.***



# A Rock-Solid Foundation for Marriage

*In Helaman 5:12, every couple and individual can find solid counsel for building a lasting marriage relationship.*

BY BRENT A. BARLOW

**T**oward the end of Jesus Christ's mortal ministry, some disciples inquired about the last days and His Second Coming. The Lord spoke of some of the conditions that would exist prior to His return. Of particular interest with regard to marriage and family relationships were these words: "And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. . . . And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matthew 24:10, 12).

The Apostle Paul taught that in the last days some would "be lovers of their own selves, . . . without natural affection" (2 Timothy 3:2-3) and "that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry" (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

The Lord has revealed that we are now living in the last days, even "the eleventh hour" (D&C 33:3), and we can easily see some of those prophesied conditions in our



world, particularly with regard to marital relationships. A report from Rutgers University released in July 1999 summarized the current status of marriage in the United States. It seems readily apparent that many other countries are experiencing similar trends. The report said: "Key social indicators suggest a substantial weakening of the institution of marriage. Americans have become less likely to marry. When they do marry their marriages are less happy. And married couples face a high likelihood of divorce.

Over the past four decades, marriage has declined as the first living together experience for couples and as a status of parenthood." The report concluded, "Persistent long-term trends suggest a steady weakening of marriage as a lasting union, a major stage in the adult life course, and as the primary institution governing childbearing and parenthood."<sup>1</sup>

We have been taught that "marriage is ordained of God" (D&C 49:15). Yet in the face of such reports, some Latter-day Saints might wonder, along with other people in the world, how to build marriages that can survive amid contemporary social turmoil and upheaval.

The good news is that our marriages can not only survive but thrive when we follow principles and teachings of the gospel. Revelations, both ancient and modern,





**Just as the foundation of the Salt Lake Temple provides a solid structural base, the stability of a marriage is dependent on the depth and strength of its foundation.**

provide guidelines that can help people of any age or geographical area build enduring marriages. Even when his or her spouse is not a member of the Church or is less active, a husband or wife can still seek divine guidance to build a stronger foundation for the relationship by following these principles.

#### **Secure Foundations**

In attempting to secure or stabilize our marriages, we should first look to our foundations. Architects and builders know that the stability of a building is dependent on the depth and strength of its foundation.

Those who built the Salt Lake Temple realized the truth of this statement while the temple was under construction. Work on the temple began on 14 February 1853 but was interrupted during several years of difficulty for the Saints. When the work resumed, the builders found they needed to lay a new foundation. President Brigham Young (1801–77) stated that he expected the temple to stand through the Millennium, “and this is the reason why I am having the foundation of the temple taken up.”<sup>2</sup> The new foundation, 16 feet (4.9 m) deep and 16 feet (4.9 m) wide, was built strong enough to withstand the weight of the granite walls and roof that followed.

A solid foundation is also essential for lasting marital relationships. Husbands and wives need to plan from the beginning to give their marriages a strong foundation. Sometimes, like the builders of the Salt Lake Temple, they may need to go back and rebuild the marriage on a more stable foundation, committing anew to guide their relationship by gospel principles. At the end of the Sermon on the

Mount, our Savior used the analogy of foundations: “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock” (Matthew 7:24–25).

The prophet Helaman in the Book of Mormon spoke of the sure foundation upon which we might build our lives and relationships with spouses and family members: “And now . . . remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall” (Helaman 5:12).

#### **Foundation Principles**

What would a marriage look like if it were built on the rock of Christ? The gospel offers many solid building stones. Following are a few of the principles to consider if we want to build on the sure foundation that will support not only present happiness but also lasting joy.

**1. Keep the commandments Jesus Christ taught.** A large number of marriages end because one or both spouses feel they are unhappy. How can people attain happiness in marriage? We are taught in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” that “happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

King Benjamin admonished, “Moreover, I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God” (Mosiah 2:41). Captain Moroni spoke “of the sacred word of God, to which we owe all our happiness” (Alma 44:5). And Mormon said of the Nephites who lived what the resurrected Christ had taught them, “Surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had



been created by the hand of God” (4 Nephi 1:16). No lasting happiness is attained without obedience to the commandments of God.

Prayer is one of the building blocks that support long-term happiness and joy. Numerous scriptures encourage disciples of Christ to pray frequently. One such verse has particular relevance for husbands and wives at the present time: “Pray always, lest you enter into temptation” (D&C 31:12). By kneeling together as husband and wife to say vocal prayers, we invite the Holy Ghost to remain in or reenter our lives. Then when the times of temptation or stress occur, we can better deal with them. The Holy Ghost can offer comfort and bring to our minds inspired solutions to help us deal with challenges.

Another key building block is regular attendance at Church meetings and, where possible, at the temple. The Lord has counseled, “And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day” (D&C 59:9). Husbands and wives may sometimes overlook the value of attending Church meetings together. In surveying a national sample of individuals in the United States, researchers found “that those who attend church weekly, regardless of denomination, are slightly more than one-third, or 36 percent, less likely to divorce than those who never attend.”<sup>4</sup> The many benefits of attending religious services together as husbands and wives include partaking of the sacrament

***Building a marriage on the rock of Christ means grounding our lives in the teachings of the Savior and—as husbands and wives—continually approaching our Heavenly Father in prayer.***

“that [we] may always have his Spirit to be with [us]” (D&C 20:77).

**2. Make marriage a high priority.** Many occupational pursuits, outside interests, other concerns, and occasionally even Church activities and callings can relegate a spouse or a marriage to secondary status if we are not careful to arrange our priorities according to gospel principles. In 1831 the Lord revealed that we should keep marriage a high priority in our lives. He declared, “Thou



shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else” (D&C 42:22).

Of this particular verse, President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) noted: “The words *none else* eliminate everyone and everything. The spouse then becomes preeminent in the life of the husband or wife, and neither social life nor occupational life nor political life nor any other interest nor person nor thing shall ever take precedence over the companion spouse. We sometimes find women who absorb and hover over the children at the expense of the husband, sometimes even estranging them from him. This is in direct violation of the command: *None else.*”<sup>5</sup>

**3. Practice frequent forgiveness and resolve conflicts quickly.** Some believe that marriages are made in heaven, but it should be remembered that mortals choose their partners. Married people soon learn that their spouses, like themselves, have weaknesses and imperfections. For these and other reasons we have been admonished to forgive freely: “Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother [or spouse] . . . standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin. I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all” (D&C 64:9–10).

Since it is nearly impossible for one spouse to meet all the needs of another, we would be wise to focus on our strengths and try to forgive or pay less attention to our shortcomings. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “It is a time-honored adage that love begets love. . . . I do not dwell upon your faults, and you shall not upon mine.”<sup>6</sup>

## PRINCIPLES TO LIVE BY



*“As I have performed marriage ceremonies for young couples, I have talked with them about their future and the things*

*that will go into building an increase of love. . . .*

*“First, I remind them to keep the covenants which they make as they are married.*

*“Second, addressing myself to the young man, I tell him to make her happy. If he will do all he can to make her happy, she cannot help but want to reciprocate and do everything she can for his comfort and welfare.*

*“Third, I stress the importance of clearing up any misunderstandings they may have. I remind them that it does not matter who is right, but what is right. . . .*

*“Fourth, and very important, I remind them to continue to love one another.”*

**President N. Eldon Tanner (1898–1982), First Counselor in the First Presidency, “Celestial Marriages and Eternal Families,” *Ensign*, May 1980, 17.**

Another insight on building a marital relationship on the rock of Jesus Christ is found in Ephesians 4:26:

“Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” This particular verse has likely been the source of the advice often given to newlyweds, “Never go to bed angry.” My wife, Susan, and I were given this advice by a well-meaning relative when we were married. I joke that there was one time during our first year of marriage when we went nearly three days without sleep! Many married couples may realize, as we did early in our marriage, that late at night when they are tired is not always the best time to resolve conflicts. But undoubtedly the spirit of Paul’s counsel to the Ephesians would motivate us to resolve conflicts quickly so they do not persist and grow more intense over time. The Savior also admonished His disciples to resolve conflicts with dispatch so they could approach their God with pure hearts (see Matthew 5:23–24).

**4. Enjoy wholesome recreation to reduce stress.** The proclamation on

the family states that successful marriages and families are built on, among other things, “wholesome recreational activities.” When the early Saints were making the 1,300-mile (2,000-km) trek westward in 1847, the Lord admonished them to “praise the Lord with singing, with music, with dancing” along the way (D&C 136:28). One of President Young’s daughters recalled that he had taught: “Life is best enjoyed when time periods are evenly divided between labour, sleep and recreation. All men, women and children should labour; all must sleep; and if mental and physical balance is to be maintained, all people should spend one-third of their time in recreation which

is rebuilding, voluntary activity—never idleness. ‘Eight hours work, eight hours sleep, and eight hours recreation’ was Brigham Young’s motto.”<sup>7</sup>

Many of today’s marriages end at least in part because of stress, fatigue, and overcommitment. A husband and wife may try to do too much in too little time and with too little opportunity for regeneration. Consequently, spouses and family members often get only leftover time and attention. Perhaps this is one of the reasons we have been admonished not to run faster than we have strength (see Mosiah 4:27). This counsel was even given to the Prophet Joseph Smith in connection with his calling during the early part of his marriage (see D&C 10:4). Brigham Young’s eight-eight-eight formula—eight hours of sleep, eight hours of work, and eight hours of recreation (alone and together)—would likely help many contemporary husbands and wives.

### Our House Will Stand

We have divine assistance to help us through difficult times if our lives are founded on the rock of Christ. The rains will descend, the floods will come, and the winds will blow. But if we are obedient and faithful, our house will stand. We have been promised that we will not be dragged “down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which [we] are built” (Helaman 5:12). We have also been promised that the Lord will lead us by the hand and give answers to our prayers if we seek His guidance (see D&C 112:10). Latter-day revelation gives this interesting insight: “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10). We, like Nephi of old, can be confident that when we make the effort to keep the Lord’s commandments, He will prepare the way that we may accomplish what He commands (see 1 Nephi 3:7).

By building on the foundation of the teachings of Jesus Christ, husbands and wives can make their marriages strong enough to withstand the trials and

tribulations that come during turbulent times. We can avoid having our marriages “go on the rocks,” as so many now do, if we build on the Rock. “And now . . . remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; . . . a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall” (Helaman 5:12). ■

### NOTES

1. David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, *The State of Our Unions: The Social Health of Marriage in America* (1999), Internet, <http://marriage.rutgers.edu/soou.htm>.
2. In B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 5:136.
3. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
4. David B. Larson and others, *The Costly Consequences of Divorce* (1996), 246.
5. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 311.
6. *Teachings of the Propbet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 316.
7. Susa Young Gates and Leah D. Widtsoe, *The Life Story of Brigham Young* (1931), 251.

*Brent A. Barlow is a member of the Canyon View Eighth Ward, Orem Utah Canyon View Stake.*



***The proclamation on the family states that successful marriages and families are built on, among other things, “wholesome recreational activities.”***

# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

## Question

*As a married couple with busy schedules, we want to make sure that we continue our courtship. What are some creative, less expensive ways for husbands and wives to show each other they are still in love, even after many years of marriage?*

Although the nearest temple is a hundred miles from our home, we attend weekly and use the long drive together to talk. Having one-on-one time with my husband helps me when he travels for work.

**Elise M. Tolman, Delta Second Ward, Delta Utah West Stake**

We once raided the change drawer for all the change we could find, split it between us, and went to the mall. We decided we'd have 30 minutes to spend all our change on the other person. We both ended up with some inexpensive gifts and, much more important, a feeling of love and gratitude for each other.

**Dave and Becky Oldroyd, Iowa City First Ward, Iowa City Iowa Stake**

One Christmas my husband gave me a calendar with a weekly date



scheduled for the entire year! Whether they were long walks or games after our children were in bed, I loved knowing that our dates were always on the calendar.

**Katherine Rollins, Misawa Branch, Aomori Japan District**

When my husband, Ron, and I worked opposite shifts, he would sometimes bring me lunch, and I would sometimes bring him dinner. For our anniversary, I set up a table in his parking lot with a special dinner and our best china. For about a week, he was the envy of many of his coworkers.

**Patti A. Sperry, Melrose Ward, Roseburg Oregon Stake**

When my wife was invited to manage the riding program at a summer camp, I made her lunch every morning and hid a love note in the bag. When she was gone overnight, she would leave me a note in the house. We are now into

the third year of summer love notes.

**Dan Knudson, Seneca Ward, Seneca Maryland Stake**

While we were dating, my husband once performed a private clarinet concert for me. Fifteen years later he began practicing again. I will sometimes stop what I am doing and sit next to him as he plays. What a special feeling to know that David is practicing and courting me all at the same time! I always remember his first private performance. I am as much in love now as I was then.

**Tina Wiley, Calgary 13th Ward, Calgary Alberta North Stake**

After the birth of our first son, my husband volunteered to read to me while I fed the baby. We liked it so much that over the past 21 years we've read together while doing the dishes, going on road trips, and while I'm cutting his hair. Reading together has filled the years with shared insight, goals, and hours of pleasure.

**Jessica McAdam, Rincon Valley Ward, Santa Rosa California Stake**

My wife and I formed a baby-sitting co-op with two other couples in the ward. On three of the Fridays each month each couple takes a turn watching all the children; there are eight among the three families. This

means that on two of those Fridays, my wife and I have a date just for the two of us. On the fourth Friday of the month, we may find another baby-sitter or do something as a family. The kids love it; our five-year-old describes it as the kids' party.

**Bruce L. Pickett, Sparks Eighth Ward, Sparks Nevada Stake**

After hiking dates, dinner dates, and board game dates, I wanted to surprise my husband with something different. I took a bag of his favorite candies, attached a question to each one, and hid them around the house. After the kids were in bed, I sent my husband on a search. As he found each one, we talked about how each of us felt about the issue—great conversation and great fun!

**Amiee House, Pullman Second Ward, Pullman Washington Stake**

One evening my husband instructed me to stay upstairs while he prepared a surprise. The wait was worth it! My husband had

hung a blanket over the dining room entrance. Inside, the table was set with candles, homemade placemats, and

construction paper hearts. After dinner, we went to the living room—our dance floor, complete with blue Christmas lights and our favorite music. I will never forget the genuine love and creativity my husband shared with me that wonderful evening. ■

**Tawnya Hall, Alameda Fourth Ward, Pocatello Alameda Idaho Stake**

## MORE IDEAS FOR STAYING CLOSE

- Record a message for your spouse on a cassette tape.
- Do errands together.
- Read old letters and journal entries to each other.
- Have something your spouse made, drew, or wrote matted and framed.
- Tape-record for your children the story of how you met.
- Re-create your first date.
- Leave special phone messages expressing your love.
- Write letters to each other in a shared journal that you pass back and forth.
- Take pictures of special events and make a scrapbook together.
  - Cook meals or simple treats together and try new recipes.
  - Go for walks together.
  - Write biographies of family members together.
  - Create a piece of art together.
- Enjoy nature by camping or hiking together.
- Write a list of reasons you love your spouse.
- Do a household chore that your spouse would normally do.
- Plant and tend a garden together.
- Take a class together.
- Sign up at a local theater to usher for a play, ballet, or concert.
- Look through scrapbooks or watch home videos together.
- Take a picnic and a game to a local park.
- Do service projects together for your neighbors and community. ■



# Our Struggle to "Be **F**ruitful"

BY ALAN D. HARRISON

*After seven years of disappointments, we began to wonder if we could ever have children.*

**A**s newlyweds, my wife, Merrilie, and I were ready to build on the covenants we'd made in the temple as well as heeding our patriarchal blessings that encouraged us to begin a family. But over the following eight years our expectations of having a family became blurred. During the first seven years of our marriage, we averaged one or more miscarriages a year. Merrilie spent much time in hospitals and doctors' offices discussing and undergoing treatment plans. Each passing month, each hospital stay, and each medical disappointment became that much more difficult to accept.

One day we went to the temple with some friends who were going to be married. As we listened to the ceremony, we were reminded that seven years earlier we too had been instructed to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Moses 2:28). Returning home, Merrilie pulled out her patriarchal blessing. Her blessing, like mine, talked of her eternal family, adding that her greatest joy would be in watching the lives of her children unfold and seeing them follow in her footsteps. Tears streamed down her cheeks, and she came over to me and took my hand, asking for a priesthood blessing. As I spoke the words of the blessing, I promised her that she would soon become a mother.

Not long after, we were happy to discover she was once again pregnant, and this time she carried the child full term. It was a happy time for us. We purchased a room full of white baby furniture and frequently went to the baby's room just to look at it with anticipation.

Near the end of the ninth month, I drove Merrilie to the doctor for a routine exam. After her checkup, our doctor, a nonmember friend, put his arm around me and walked me down the hall and told me that while Merrilie and the baby checked out medically, he had sensed something unusual about the child. "I've never experienced anything quite like it," he said. "I have a feeling of impending problems."

It was a puzzling discussion, and as I drove Merrilie home I silently pleaded, "Oh, please, let this baby come normally." At the house I called our elders quorum president and asked him to come by with one of his counselors. The two of them anointed Merrilie and pronounced a blessing on her and the baby. In the midst of the blessing he stopped, then began speaking again with new intensity. He told her to be at peace, that she was carrying a perfect child of God and that her Heavenly Father was watching over her.





**I**t seemed as though that which we most wanted in this world was denied us. The years of wanting to have a baby compounded my feelings into inexpressible grief.



***One Sunday, after an especially spiritual fast and testimony meeting, I found a quiet place where I could pour out all that was in my heart.***

Ten hours later Merrilie started into labor. A gallant attempt to save our baby's life ensued, but available medical resources were not enough. Our daughter did not survive the birth process, and Merrilie came close to dying too. At my request, the doctor let me pick up our tiny baby girl and hold her. I held her small earthly tabernacle close, but the life-giving spirit had left mortality. It was one of the most difficult moments of my life. Love for my daughter flooded my heart, and it seemed as though that which we most wanted in this world was denied us. The years of wanting to have a baby compounded my feelings into inexpressible grief.

As I drove home alone, I cried out in frustration. I felt like smashing the new baby furniture, but by the time I arrived home, a perceptive neighbor had already removed it. The next day the bishop, Relief Society president, and an employee of the mortuary accompanied me to the cemetery with baby Lisa. Merrilie was still in the hospital and could not come with us. The four of us stood around the small grave while the bishop dedicated the site. The only tangible result of eight years of trying to have a family now lay in the earth.

The following days were some of the most difficult I have ever spent. My beloved companion was in the

hospital suffering, our daughter was in a grave, and I felt totally alone. I could not comprehend how a loving Father would allow a trusting son and daughter to experience such anguish and disappointment. In a secluded spot under a clear, star-filled Arizona sky, I dropped to my knees between two Joshua trees. I prayed for long hours that night, then returned to the cemetery, and my falling tears were absorbed by the loose soil on top of the freshly filled grave.

When I returned home, the first rays of dawn were starting to pierce the eastern sky, and I was at the breaking point. Doubt and discouragement temporarily overcame my faith and trust, and I began to complain bitterly to God. For the next several weeks I did not attend a Church meeting, offer a prayer, or fulfill my calling.

The final blow came when the doctors informed us that due to serious medical complications, it would be necessary to terminate forever Merrilie's ability to have children. At the age of 29 it was suddenly no longer a matter of trying again. What was the meaning of our patriarchal blessings? What was the meaning of the many promises given in subsequent blessings?

I felt empty and alone. One day while talking to the bishop, I implied that I wanted to terminate my relationship with the Church, but he chose to ignore that comment. He didn't even release me from my calling. Yet it seemed I was spinning toward self-destruction. The adversary seemed to constantly remind me how unfairly I had been treated, and I often felt anger. The bishop counseled me to pray. He told me that if I would ask God, I would receive comfort and understanding. I replied that I had severed the circuit and that it was unlikely I could receive any help. With tears in his eyes, the bishop bore his testimony to me that Father in Heaven longed to help if I would just splice the severed circuit.

In response to the bishop's gentle but persistent supplications, I reluctantly agreed to begin praying again. My first attempts were awkward and uncomfortable. I nevertheless returned to church and continued to pray. One Sunday, after an especially spiritual fast and testimony meeting, I found a quiet place where I could pour out all that was in my heart.



When my mental bank was exhausted and I had no more to expend, a quiet peace washed over me. Comforting thoughts came to me, and I meditated on them. Some of the things that came to mind were that God's ways are not man's ways and that my lack of faith had added to my distress. The day we buried our daughter we had not been alone. The angels had been there weeping with us, but they could not comfort me because I had blocked them out. Going through this alone had been due to *my* use of agency, not Father in Heaven's will. The sweetness and purity and perfection of my daughter was made known to me, and with that the knowledge that she would be part of our eternal family. What I thought of as disappointment was in reality a blessing. Losing that which I most wanted was a necessary part of earth life—a mortal trial required for my growth.

Then my meditations turned to the many blessings and assurances we'd had that we would become parents. I felt that they were correct, that every promised blessing would still be ours. I rose from my knees with the firm conviction that Heavenly Father did love us and was watching over us and that the experiences we were having were for our growth.

Although we lived in northern Arizona, we were directed by Church leaders to the LDS Family Services office in Las Vegas, Nevada. There we met Sister Regenia Chadwick, a loving and supportive woman. After extensive interviews and forms that needed filling out, she told us we were qualified for their program. When they had the right child for us, they would let us know.

Four months later we received a joyous



call. Sister Chadwick asked if we would like to drive over to pick up a new baby daughter. In a stirring meeting at the agency, she placed a three-day-old infant in Merrillie's arms, explaining that she had felt early on that this was the child meant for us. Twenty-seven months later we repeated the process and picked up a three-day-old son.

It took many years for me to understand that for those who remain worthy and who strive in righteousness, promised blessings do come—but in accordance with the Lord's timetable, not ours. ■

*Alan D. Harrison is a member of the Stone Creek Ward, Las Vegas Nevada Green Valley Stake.*

**For additional information about adoption services, contact LDS Family Services at 800-537-2229 or visit [www.ldsfamilyservices.org](http://www.ldsfamilyservices.org).**

**O**ur hearts were filled with gratitude for our healthy baby. And when we remembered our losses, we found peace in Doctrine and Covenants 137:10: "All children who die before they arrive at the years of accountability are saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven."

# S I N G U L A R L I V I N G

**F**or Latter-day Saints who are single, it may seem challenging at times to be part of a church with a strong emphasis on the traditional family. Yet single members have much to offer the Church, and, conversely, the Church can bless their lives in numerous ways. As Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has stated, “Some of our Father’s children are married, some are single—but the gospel is the same for all; the doctrines are the same for all” (“Belonging to a Ward Family,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1996, 15). Here, members share their insights into the experience of being single, as well as ways in which they have found happiness and fulfillment.

## Reach Out to Others

I consider myself a member of the Church who happens to be single rather than a single member of the Church. I do not allow the fact that I am single and childless to distance me from the fellowship and harmony the Church offers. My life is filled with varied experiences and wonderful people. I have found that the best antidote for loneliness in my life has been a cheerful attitude, a ready smile, and a willingness to extend myself

to others. Instead of sitting in corners waiting for someone to notice me and draw me out, I make the effort to join in right away.

This was not always the situation in my life; in fact, I was painfully shy for many years. An experience several years ago led me to resolve to change. While on vacation, I visited a ward in a large city. After sacrament meeting, I waited in the foyer for someone to reach out to me and tell me where to go for Gospel Doctrine class. When that didn’t happen, I finally decided to approach someone despite my fear and ask for directions. Surprisingly, the person I asked was also a visitor—as were several other

**I** have found that the best antidote to loneliness is a cheerful attitude and a willingness to extend myself to others.



people standing nearby who overheard my question. We were all waiting for someone to tell us where we should go. This was a great learning experience for me. I realized that everyone wants to be part of the group, but many are hesitant to make the first overture of friendship. Since making this discovery, I have found it much easier to be the person who initiates reaching out.

We all lead busy lives, but I have found that by extending friendship to others, my life has been richly blessed, far beyond the effort and time I have invested.

*Katbe Green, Carson City Second Ward, Carson City Nevada Stake*



### **Happiness Is a Choice**

My husband, Richard, and I were sealed for time and all eternity when I was 31 and he was 36. It was the first marriage for both of us. We experienced many wonderful moments together and enjoyed married life greatly. Nine months later Richard died suddenly, and I found myself in a different category: widow.

Although my experience has been painful at times, I have found many ways to find happiness and fulfillment as a single member of the Church. I believe happiness is a choice; our circumstances don't automatically make that choice for us. Though the road to happiness is never easy, the trip is worth the struggles.

Any time I feel discouraged, lonely, or left out, I know it is time to reach out to others. As I have helped others, I have actually gained more than the recipients of my service because I have let the sunshine back into my

own life. One can't help but be happy while making a difference in someone else's life!

Another thing I try to do often is to read the scriptures and Church periodicals. There are so many stories of people who have been in difficult circumstances and have overcome discouragement. I feel the Spirit of the Lord when I read these materials, and I am spiritually uplifted.

*Sberrin Benson McHenry, Cedar Eighth Ward, Cedar City Utah West Stake*

### **Never Alone**

Because I live alone, it can sometimes seem that I am left to bear the burdens of day-to-day life on my own. But I am *not* alone.

Each one of us who has been baptized and confirmed a member of this Church has been given a tremendous blessing: the gift of the Holy Ghost. We must always seek to

***As I have helped others, I have actually gained more than the recipients of my service because I have let the sunshine back into my own life.***



**I** knew that as long as I kept reaching toward my goal of eternal marriage, there was always hope.

take advantage of this gift. If we are living worthily, we have the promise of the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost 24 hours a day to guide and comfort us in all our daily decisions and struggles. While I do not currently have the support and companionship of a spouse, I do have access to this great gift, which President James E. Faust has called “the greatest guarantor of inward peace” in our world today and an association to cherish above all others (see “The Gift of the Holy Ghost—A Sure Compass,” *Ensign*, May 1989, 32). Being single provides me with an excellent opportunity to strengthen this association.

*Keith A. Miller, Palo Alto First Ward, Menlo Park California Stake*

#### **Don't Give Up**

After many years of dating without finding an eternal mate, one can become understandably disheartened in the process. As a single member of the Church, I followed the advice of our leaders and did not become obsessed with the goal of marriage. Yet at times the worthy endeavor of

finding a companion seemed discouragingly impossible. After all, successful courtship calls for the agency of two individuals to coincide—no small feat!

When I would begin to question the effectiveness of my efforts, I would quickly remind myself of one simple truth: while I knew there was no assurance I would marry in this life, I also knew that to do nothing would guarantee my

falling short of this goal. As long as I kept trying, however, there was always hope. For me, to keep trying meant going on a blind date, attending a Church dance, expanding my circle of friends to include those with whom I might not routinely associate, or simply summoning the courage to ask out someone new. Although uncertain of the outcome of such actions, I wanted Heavenly Father to know I was doing my part to obtain the blessing of marriage. If I had the requisite faith and patience, I was confident the Lord would “consecrate [my] performance . . . for the welfare of [my] soul” (2 Nephi 32:9).

Along with praying, fasting, attending the temple, and working toward personal improvement, I continued to date. Realization of my marriage goal came slowly and unexpectedly, but at long last I met the woman who would become my wife. Michelle and I were married on 12 August 2000 in the Denver Colorado Temple.

*Jedd Fowers, Carrollton First Ward, Carrollton Texas Stake*

### Adversity Is Temporary

Of course single members face periods of grieving, whether we mourn the loss of a spouse, a relationship, or hopes for the family we had envisioned. Yet I have found great comfort in the knowledge that all adversity is temporary. We have been assured that if we will be patient in our afflictions, our righteous longings will be eased and we shall have all the blessings of which we are worthy. Doctrine and Covenants 121:28 promises “a time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld,” and verse 7 reminds us that our “afflictions shall be but a small moment.” If we endure these tests well, God will exalt us (see v. 8).

The Savior knows exactly who and what we are; He does not judge us on the basis of our education, possessions, or marital status. “For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). I am so grateful for the Savior, who fills my needs with His unshakable love, and for the priceless gift of the Holy Ghost. I truly know why He is called the Comforter.

*Lara Kerr, Paso Robles First Ward,  
San Luis Obispo California Stake*

### The Church Is for Singles

As a young woman, I dreamed of the wonderful husband and children I would have someday. I dated, and at one point I became engaged, but things didn't work out. Eventually I earned a bachelor's and then a master's degree, and I found a job teaching school. Yet despite what I had accomplished, I was unhappy, lonely, and bitterly disappointed that what I hoped for most had not yet come to pass. I somehow felt I had let down Heavenly Father and my parents because I was not married.

I assumed that because I did not have a family of my own, I couldn't enjoy the blessings that come from Church participation. I began to feel the Church was not for me. My activity waned and then stopped completely. All kinds of thoughts entered my mind that I felt justified my inactivity.

One summer I had the occasion to do a lot of driving. I grew tired of listening to the radio, so I decided to listen to some books on tape. For some reason I found a box of Book of Mormon tapes my mother had given me many years before. I decided I might as well listen, even though I had no interest in the Church. Looking back, I know it was divine intervention that led to that experience. As I listened to the tapes, the flame of my testimony began to rekindle, and I couldn't get enough. I later read more Church material, and finally I made the decision to attend church one Sunday. From then on, I rarely missed a meeting.

I have since learned how wrong I was in believing the Church had nothing to offer me as a single person.



**W**hen I listened to the Book of Mormon tapes, the flame of my testimony began to rekindle, and I couldn't get enough.



**A**s a “family of one,” I spend my time on Monday nights studying the scriptures and gospel subjects.

I now spend much of my time on Church-related activities that keep me close to the Spirit of the Lord, and I have met so many people who have enriched my life and whom I love deeply.

The day I went to the temple was a day of rebirth and reawakening for me. Yes, I learned the importance of the marriage covenant, but I also learned that the blessings of marriage will someday be available to all who live worthily. I learned that our own personal relationship with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ should be of paramount importance to each of us. I learned that we make temple covenants individually with the Lord.

I have realized that God has a plan for me, as He has for all of us. I know that no blessing will be denied those of us who are single if we endeavor to live close to the Spirit, obey the commandments, partake of temple covenants, and do our part to find joy and happiness. We can find joy in this earthly journey and be prepared for the blessings of eternity. I regret those years I spent away from the Church, but how

grateful I am for the happiness I have found since returning to the fold.

*Deanne Ercanbrack, Sharon Park Fourth Ward, Orem Utah Sharon Park Stake*

### **A Family of One**

Instead of labeling myself as “single,” I consider myself to be a “family of one.” I do not deny myself the enjoyment of family life just because I do not have a husband or children. For example, as a “single,” I felt exempt from family home evening. As a “family of one,” I spend my time on Monday nights studying the scriptures and gospel subjects of particular interest. I occasionally invite other families, particularly single-parent families, to my home for family home evening, thus giving me companionship while lightening their load. I also frequently visit my parents on Monday nights.

As a “single,” I felt uncomfortable attending ward activities designed for families. As a “family of one,” I go and have a great time. I don’t sit by myself at church; I look for someone sitting alone or a mother who needs help with her young children. I listen to the lessons and talks about marriage and family and store away ideas for the future. In class discussions I often share insights into family life that might be missed by those who are busily involved with their own family responsibilities.

I try to concentrate more on the generous blessings the Lord has given me than on those I do not have yet. I know that with His help, and if I am worthy, I will eventually extend my current family of one to an eternal family of many. ■

*Karen Elder, Mint Canyon Ward, Santa Clarita California Stake*

## Prepare Youth to Meet Opposition in the World

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

### What tools can help parents and leaders prepare youth?

**President Gordon B. Hinckley:**

“My heart reaches out to our youth. . . . I hope they can share their burden with you, their fathers and mothers. I hope that you will listen, that you will be patient and understanding, that you will draw them to you and comfort and sustain them in their loneliness. Pray for direction. Pray for patience. Pray for the strength to love even though the offense may have been serious. Pray for understanding and kindness and, above all, for wisdom and inspiration” (“Great Shall Be the Peace of Thy Children,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 51).

**President N. Eldon Tanner (1898–1982), First Counselor in the First Presidency:** “Parents must themselves read and then encourage their children to read and study the scriptures and seek for the right answers in the right places. Youth must be fortified in the home in order to meet the challenges and opposition they will face”

(“Right Answers,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1973, 6).

**Gayle M. Clegg, second counselor in the Primary general presidency:**

“Whatever your mother tongue, learn to teach and speak in the language of heartfelt prayers and joyful testimony so that angels, earthly and heavenly, can encircle and minister to us. We need gospel mentors who speak the language of praise and friendship. . . . We should smile upon [children] and wrap them in the blanket of our affection throughout the great journey in the universal language of love” (“The Language of Love,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 69).

**How can a testimony help youth take their gospel knowledge from principle to practice?**

**Moroni 7:33:** “If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me.”

**Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:** “To gain unshakable faith in Jesus Christ is to flood your life with brilliant light. You are no longer alone to struggle with challenges you know you cannot resolve or control yourself” (“Obtaining Help from the Lord,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 86).

**Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:**

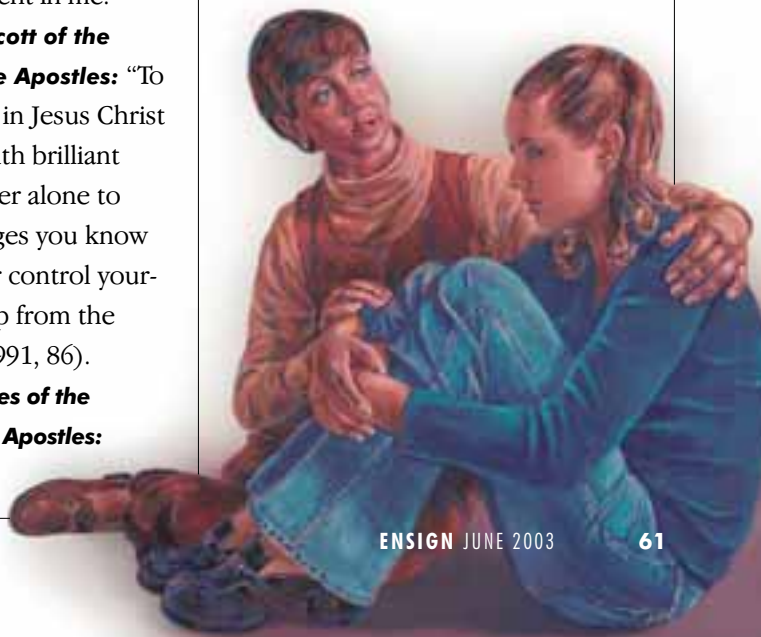
“When I was a boy, I

used to ride my bicycle home from basketball practice at night. I would connect a small pear-shaped generator to my bicycle tire. Then as I pedaled, the tire would turn a tiny rotor, which produced electricity and emitted a single, welcome beam of light. It was a simple but effective mechanism. But I had to pedal to make it work! . . .

“The generation of spiritual light comes from daily spiritual pedaling. It comes from praying, studying the scriptures, fasting, and serving—from living the gospel. . . .

“The covenant we make at baptism and renew as we partake of the sacrament—to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ, always remember Him, and keep His commandments—includes the promise that we will always have His Spirit, that we will always have that light to be with us” (“Out of Darkness into His Marvelous Light,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 71). ■

*For additional information, see For the Strength of Youth (item no. 36550).*



# It's "Only" VIOLENCE

*Does the media really reflect the level of violence in society?  
Does it have any effect on aggression? The answers may surprise you.*

BY BRAD J. BUSHMAN

Not long ago I decided to conduct an informal survey to find out about Church members' views on television and movies. When I asked members what makes some movies and TV shows objectionable, the most common response was sexually explicit scenes, followed by profanity. Nobody mentioned violence. When I asked about specific movies, a common response was, "That movie had only one bad scene." I asked, "What happened? Did someone get killed?" The answer was always the same: "No. It was a sex scene."

Sex outside of marriage is a serious sin. In fact, Alma taught that it was among the most grievous of sins. But what did Alma rank as the two most serious sins? Denying the Holy Ghost and "shedding . . . innocent blood," or committing murder (see Alma 39:5–6). I was puzzled that many Church members did not feel concerned about watching people being murdered on the screen. And many seemed to consider profanity to be more objectionable than violence in movies and TV programs.

In my profession as a psychology professor at Iowa State University, I have spent many years in extensive study of the effects of media violence. I have also examined statements of Church leaders on the subject. Both the teachings of Church leaders and the findings from hundreds of scientific studies make it clear that we need to better understand the consequences of violent media on individuals and on society at large.

## **Spiritual Consequences of Media Violence**

The pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth* contains a statement on media violence that all people, not just the youth, should give heed to: "Depictions of violence often glamorize vicious behavior. They offend the Spirit and make you less able to respond to others in a sensitive, caring way. They contradict the Savior's message of love for one another."<sup>1</sup>

Interestingly, an examination of the Word of Wisdom helps provide insight into the spiritual effects of media violence. Scientists have shown that tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and too much meat can harm us physically. But the most important blessings of keeping the Word of Wisdom are *spiritual*, not physical. Our bodies are temples, and when we abuse our bodies by consuming harmful substances, the Spirit of the Lord is restrained in our lives (see 1 Corinthians 3:16–17; 6:19). The Spirit will not inhabit a polluted temple.

Similarly, the Spirit is offended when we pollute our minds with harmful, violent material, whether or not such material causes us to commit violent acts. Consuming violent media makes it more difficult to keep ourselves "unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). It is troubling that so many people consider it entertaining to view violence or play violent video games.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles expressed it well when he said: "I believe the entertainment industry cannot portray on film people





gunned down in cold blood, in living color, and not have it affect the attitudes and thoughts of some of the people who see it. . . . I believe that the desensitizing effect of such media abuses on the hearts and souls of those who are exposed to them results in a partial fulfillment of the Savior's statement that 'because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.' ”<sup>2</sup>

### **How Much Violence Do We Watch?**

The American public consumes what the media produce as if it were harmless. A U.S. study reported that it is the equivalent of a full-time job for the average American child, who spends about 40 hours per week watching TV and videos, playing computer games, and so on.<sup>3</sup> Children in other developed countries display similar habits.

A recent content analysis of more than 8,000 hours of television programming showed that about 60 percent of the programs contained violence. Only 4 percent of the violent programs contained an antiviolence theme. In most programs, the violence was sanitized and depicted as trivial and glamorous.<sup>4</sup>

Over time, the accumulated numbers of violent acts an individual sees on television can be staggering. By the time the average American child graduates from elementary school, he or she will have seen more than 8,000 murders and more than 100,000 other assorted acts of violence, such as assaults, on network television.<sup>5</sup> The numbers are

even higher if the child has access to cable television or a videocassette or DVD player, as most do.

Violent video games might be even more harmful than violent TV programs. While television viewing is usually a passive activity, video game playing is highly interactive. Most violent video games require the player to take on the identity of a violent game character, and most of these games reward individuals for behaving aggressively (for example, players get points for killing people). The violence portrayed in these video games is almost continuous. Scientific research has shown that violent video games increase aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behavior.<sup>6</sup> Lamentably, the most popular video games are violent ones.<sup>7</sup>

### **Some Myths about Violent Media**

**Myth #1: The mass media simply mirror the level of violence in the real world.** The entertainment industry often makes this claim. For example, Zev Braun of CBS-TV said: “We live in a violent society. Art imitates the modes of life, not the other way around. It would be better for Congress to clean up that society than to try to clean up the reflection of that society.”<sup>8</sup>

However, even in reality-based TV programs, violence is grossly overemphasized. For example, one study compared the frequency of crimes occurring in the real world with the frequency of crimes occurring in reality-based police TV programs. About 87 percent of the crimes occurring in the real world are nonviolent, whereas only 13 percent of crimes occurring in reality-based TV programs are nonviolent. The largest discrepancy between the real world and the world depicted on television was for murder—the most violent crime of all. Only 0.2 percent of the crimes reported by the FBI are murders, whereas about 50 percent of the crimes shown in reality-based TV programs are murders.<sup>9</sup>

**Scientific research has shown that violent video games increase aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behavior.**



According to film critic Michael Medved, the claim that the entertainment industry merely reflects the level of violence in society simply is not true:

“If this were true, then why do so few people witness murders in real life but everybody sees them on TV and in movies? The most violent ghetto isn’t in South Central L.A. or Southeast Washington, D.C.; it’s on television.

“About 350 characters appear each night on prime-time TV, but studies show an average of seven of these people are murdered every night. If this rate applied in reality, then in just 50 days everyone in the United States would be killed—and the last left could turn off the TV.”<sup>10</sup>

If the entertainment industry is a mirror that reflects the level of violence in society, it is a treacherous funhouse mirror that provides a distorted image of reality. There is far more violence in the “reel” world than in the real world.

**Myth #2: Viewing violence actually decreases aggression.** The television and motion picture industries often claim that viewing violence has a cathartic effect. For example, Alfred Hitchcock said: “One of television’s greatest contributions is that it brought murder back into the home where it belongs. Seeing a murder on television can be good therapy. It can help work off one’s antagonism.”<sup>11</sup>

Although this idea has been around a long time, dating back to Aristotle, there is virtually no scientific evidence to support it. Six major professional societies have signed a joint statement on the hazards of exposing children to media violence, noting that the research data “point overwhelmingly to a causal connection between media violence and aggressive behavior in some children.”<sup>12</sup> A recent review in *Science* magazine, written by this author and a colleague, came to the same conclusion.<sup>13</sup> And although media violence is especially likely to increase aggression in children, it also increases aggression in adults.<sup>14</sup>



**If your child is viewing a program you are unfamiliar with, watch with him or her so you can turn off the TV if an inappropriate scene comes on.**

**Myth #3: Viewing violence has a trivial effect on aggression.** Many people claim that the effect of violent media on aggression is so small that the risk to society is trivial. However, the research evidence indicates that the effect of violent media on aggression is stronger than the effect of calcium intake on bone mass, the effect of asbestos on cancer, the effect of lead exposure on mental functioning, and the effect of secondhand smoke on lung cancer.<sup>15</sup>

It may be useful to compare viewing media violence with smoking cigarettes. Smoking one cigarette has little impact on the likelihood that a person will get lung cancer, but repeated exposure to tobacco smoke dramatically increases the risk of cancer. Similarly, watching one violent TV program or film has little impact on the likelihood that a person will behave more aggressively. But repeated exposure to media violence dramatically increases aggressive behavior.<sup>16</sup>

**Myth #4: Decreasing rates of violent crime prove that media violence does not increase societal violence.** Some people think that because violent crime rates in the United States have decreased in recent years, viewing violence can’t cause an increase in societal violence. Such reasoning might be valid if all of the following three assumptions were true: (a) exposure to media violence has remained the same or increased during this time span; (b) violent crime rates among youth are decreasing during this time span; and (c) media violence is the only factor that causes societal violence.

The first assumption is probably true. The second assumption is highly debatable; the rate of self-reported acts of violence by youth rose sharply from 1983 to 1993 and then remained level from 1993 to 1998.<sup>17</sup> Most important, the third assumption is clearly false. Other factors contribute to changes in societal violence and might well account for the recent overall decline in violent crimes in the United

States. Four such factors are: (a) the U.S. population was getting older during this time span, and older people are much less likely to commit violent crimes than are younger people; (b) U.S. residents were being imprisoned at record rates during this time span, and therefore some of the most violent people in society were locked up in prisons; (c) unemployment and poverty rates were low during the period of time when overall crime rates were declining; and (d) due to recent medical advances, fewer deaths have resulted from acts of violence, leading to decreased murder rates.<sup>18</sup>

**Myth #5: One cannot know whether media violence causes aggression.** Experimental studies can be used to determine whether violent media in general increase aggression. In a typical experiment, the researcher shows subjects either a violent or a nonviolent program. The researcher flips a coin to determine which program each subject watches; thus, because the subjects are not given a choice, one cannot claim that the subjects exposed to the violent program are more aggressive to begin with. The researcher then treats the two groups of subjects identically, except for the program they watch. After the subjects view the program, the researcher measures their aggressive behavior. The findings from numerous experimental studies conducted in this manner have shown that violent media cause an increase in aggressive behavior.<sup>19</sup>

**Myth #6: “Media violence doesn’t affect me!”** Suppose that a particular violent TV program increases aggression in just 1 percent of viewers. Should society be concerned

about a percentage so small? Yes! Suppose 20 million people watch the program. If the program increases aggression in just 1 percent of viewers, then 200,000 people will behave more aggressively after watching the program. Because so many people are exposed to TV violence, the effect on society can be immense, even if only a small percentage of people are immediately affected by what they see.

Even if only 1 percent of viewers will behave more aggressively immediately after viewing a particular program, the cumulative effects are likely to increase the aggressiveness of most, if not all, viewers. Furthermore, experimental studies have shown that merely viewing 15 minutes of a relatively mild violent program increases the aggressiveness of at least one-fourth of viewers.<sup>20</sup>

Scientific studies have also found evidence that violent media can be desensitizing—a finding that has been validated by our priesthood leaders. Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (1915–94) said: “A diet of violence or pornography dulls the senses, and future exposures need to be rougher and more extreme. Soon the person is desensitized and is unable to react in a sensitive, caring, responsible manner, especially to those in his own home and family. Good people can become infested with this material and it can have terrifying, destructive consequences.”<sup>21</sup>

As Church members, we are seeking to become like Christ and to cultivate loving relationships with our families and those around us. Consequently, the effects of media violence on our interactions with others should be of particular concern.

The words of the Apostles and of many social scientists converge on this topic—media violence has harmful effects on

**Let us choose carefully the material we allow to enter our hearts and minds. We must recognize for ourselves the effects of media violence.**



Although media violence affects people of all ages, young children are the most vulnerable. Compared to adults, children are more impressionable, have more difficulty distinguishing fantasy from reality, and are less likely to understand different motives for aggression. What can parents do to protect their families from the harmful effects of media violence?

- Become educated on this issue. Be sure what you read is based on scientific research rather than opinion. Because the entertainment industry profits from marketing a harmful product, it often claims that violent media are not harmful—much like the tobacco industry used to claim that smoking cigarettes was not harmful. Thus, you may want to look elsewhere for reliable and valid information.

- Monitor the content of the programs your children watch. Have a supply of nonviolent videotapes, DVDs, and computer



### WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

games, and let your children choose the ones they want to use. If your child is viewing a program you are unfamiliar with, watch with him or her so you can turn off the TV if an inappropriate scene comes on. Explain your standards to your children so they can make appropriate entertainment choices outside of the home.

- Limit the amount of time your children watch TV and play computer games.
- Set a good example for your children by avoiding violent media yourself. When parents and older siblings have a heavy diet of media violence, younger children

are thereby exposed to more media violence.

- If advertisers didn't sponsor violent programs, they would cease to exist. If you don't like the violence in a particular program, contact the advertisers and inform them of your objections. ■

individuals and on society at large. Let us choose carefully the material we allow to enter our hearts and minds. We must recognize for ourselves the effects of media violence, both temporal and spiritual, and take responsibility for our choices. ■

*Brad J. Bushman is a member of the Ames Ward, Ames Iowa Stake.*

### LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

1. Ask family members what television programs or movies come to mind when they think of media violence. Read and discuss the author's six myths. Plan a family council on protecting the home from media violence, using the suggestions in "What Can Parents Do?"

2. Review with family members a recent television or movie guide from a newspaper or magazine. Have them note how much violence is in the media. Read and discuss the section "Spiritual Consequences of Media Violence" and Moroni 7:13.

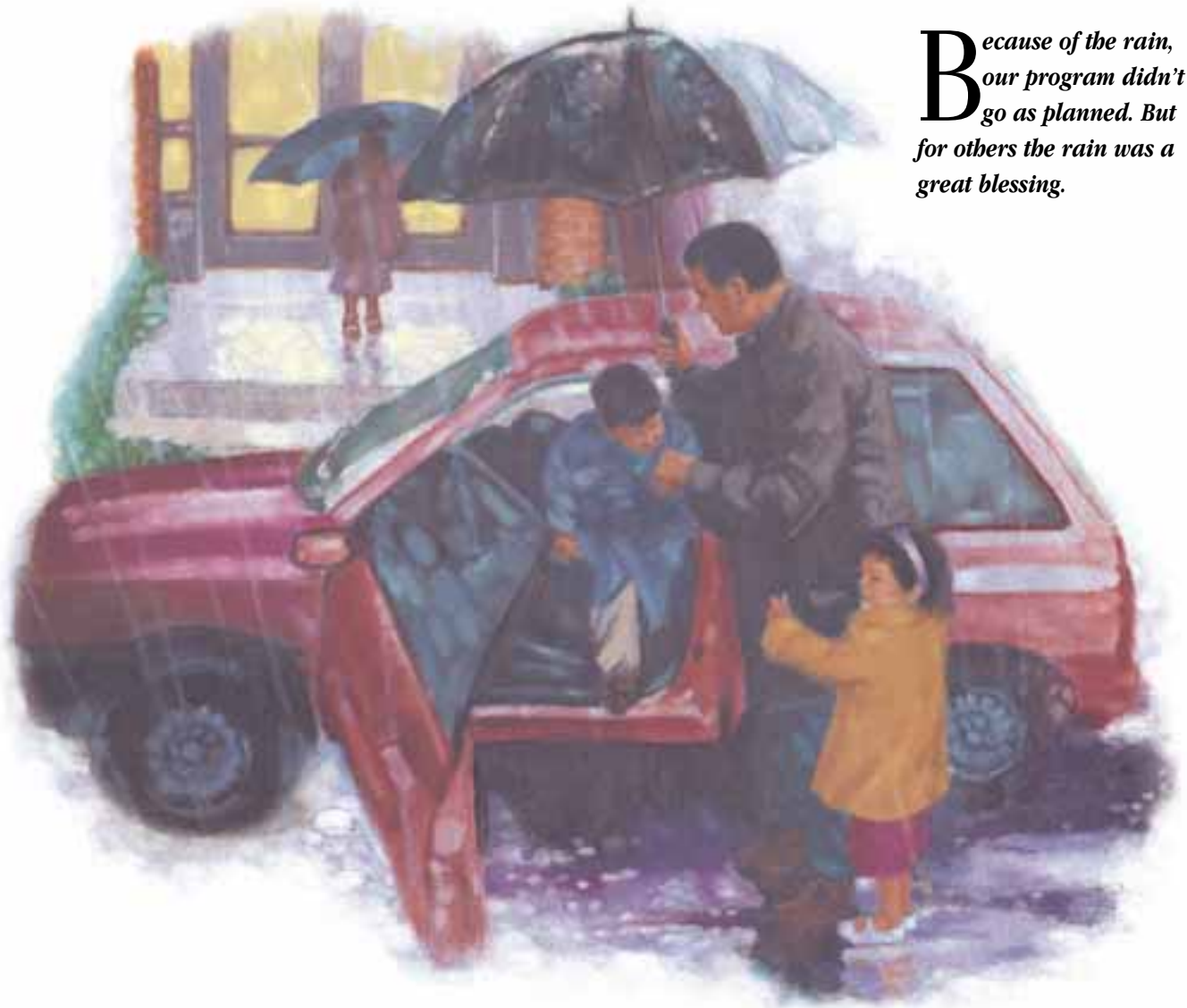
#### NOTES

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5. See Aletha C. Huston and

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6. Craig A. Anderson and Brad J. Bushman, "Effects of Violent Video Games on Aggressive Behavior, Aggressive Cognition, Aggressive Affect, Physiological Arousal, and Prosocial Behavior: A Meta-Analytic Review of the Scientific

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  8. As quoted in "Violence Bill Debated in Washington," *Broadcasting*, 5 Feb. 1990, 78.
  9. See Mary Beth Oliver, "Portrayals of Crime, Race, and Aggression in 'Reality-Based' Police Shows: A Content Analysis," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, spring 1994, 184–85.
  10. "Hollywood's Three Big Lies," *Reader's Digest*, Oct. 1995, 156–57.
  11. Quoted in David G. Meyers, *Social Psychology*, 6th ed. (1999), 412.
  12. *Joint Statement on the Impact of Entertainment Violence on Children*, congressional public health summit, 26 July 2000. The societies that signed the statement were the American Psychological Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and the American Psychiatric Association.
  13. See Craig A. Anderson and Brad J. Bushman, "The Effects of Media Violence on Society," *Science*, 29 Mar. 2002, 2377–79.
  14. See Jeffrey G. Johnson and others, "Television Viewing and Aggressive Behavior during Adolescence and Adulthood," *Science*, 29 Mar. 2002, 2468–71.
  15. See Brad J. Bushman and Craig A. Anderson, "Media Violence and the American Public: Scientific Facts versus Media Misinformation," 2001, revised manuscript under review at *American Psychologist*.
  16. See *Science*, 29 Mar. 2002, 2468–71.
  17. See *Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General* (2001), 27.
  18. See Anthony R. Harris and others, "Murder and Medicine: The Lethality of Criminal Assault 1960–1999," *Homicide Studies: An Interdisciplinary and International Journal*, May 2002, 128–66.
  19. See Bushman and Anderson, "Media Violence and the American Public."
  20. See Brad J. Bushman, "Moderating Role of Trait Aggressiveness in the Effects of Violent Media on Aggression," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1995, 950–60.
  21. "Rated A," *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 71.

**B**ecause of the rain, our program didn't go as planned. But for others the rain was a great blessing.



## *The Much Needed Rain*

By Juan Carlos Rodríguez

**T**hat Sunday was not just any Sunday. It was the day of the annual children's sacrament meeting presentation. As a member of the bishopric I felt responsible to make sure everything went well.

Leaders, teachers, and Primary children had been preparing for months. The children knew the songs and hymns and their parts, and they were excited to share them.

On Saturday, the day of our

rehearsal, it rained all afternoon. Even though we gave rides to many of the children who live far from the meetinghouse, not all were able to attend. We went ahead with the rehearsal, hoping the rain would stop by the next day and more children would make it to Sunday's presentation.

The storm continued Sunday

morning. In fact, it was even windier than the day before. Suddenly I felt downhearted. The bad weather would hurt the attendance in our small ward. “Why doesn’t the Lord stop the rain?” I wondered.

Even though we picked up all the children we could in our cars, we still managed to get only about 60 percent of them. It was hard for me to be satisfied. The Primary president was worried too. We had wanted everything to go as planned, and we hadn’t planned for the unexpected.

But as the program began, with teachers taking the parts of the missing children, the Lord’s Spirit permeated the meeting. The 40 ward members who attended were especially touched by the testimonies of our little ones.

After the presentation a humble, thoughtful brother gave the closing prayer. During the prayer he said, “And, Lord, we thank Thee for the rain, for we know it is much needed in many places.”

I kept pondering that phrase: “It is much needed in many places.” Then I realized the Lord knows precisely what He is doing. Our presentation had not gone exactly as we had planned, but it had succeeded in inspiring those present. And the rain that we had seen as such a trial was actually a great blessing to those in the many areas that needed it. ■

*Juan Carlos Rodríguez is a member of the Azcuénaga Ward, Rosario Argentina West Stake.*

## Honoring the Lord’s Day

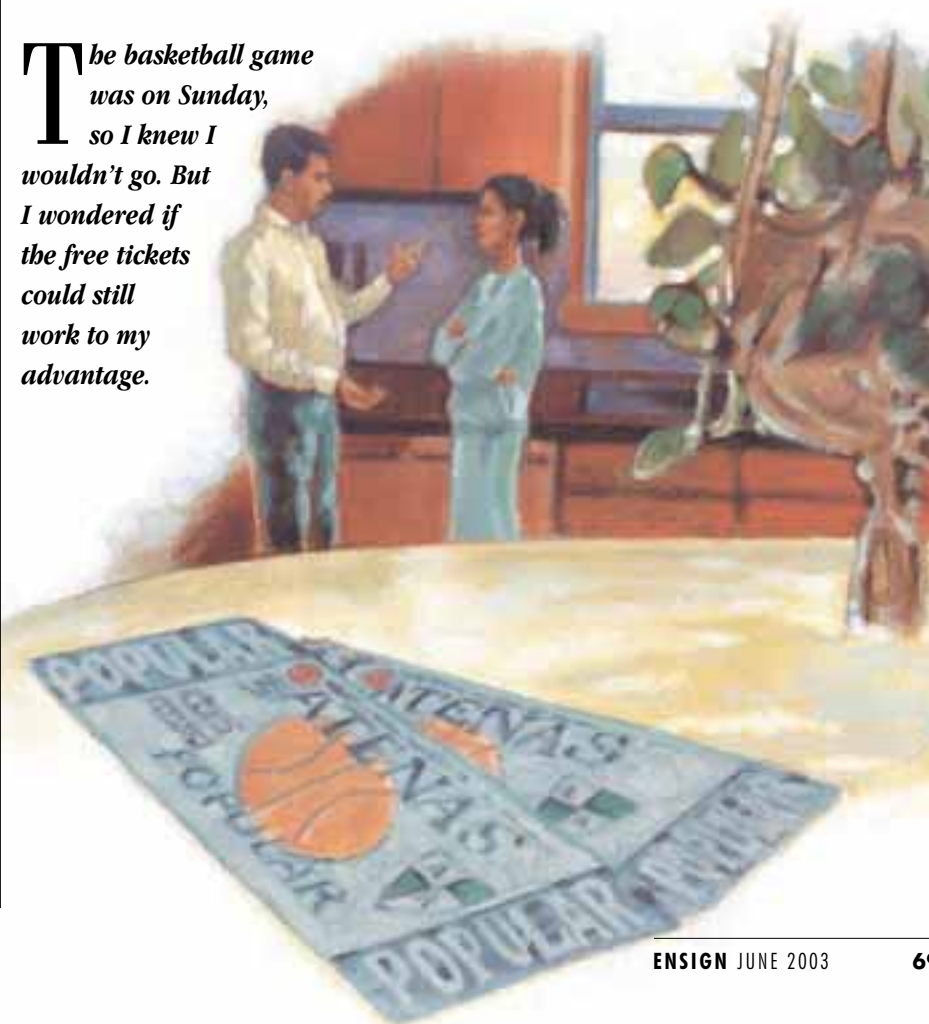
By David Oscar Sarmiento

**W**hen we ask ourselves whether we are keeping the Sabbath day holy, we may sometimes answer, “Yes. I attend Church meetings, spend time with my family, read the scriptures, write in my journal, and refrain from working.” But one particular experience caused me to search my soul, asking, “Is this enough?”

Each week I travel from Octavo, Argentina, to Cordoba to buy merchandise for my business. During one trip, I found that for each purchase I made from one vendor, I could participate in a contest. The contest’s top prize was a ticket to a basketball game played by the top team in Cordoba.

When I won one of the tickets, I was excited—until I realized there was a problem. The game was on Sunday, so I wouldn’t be able to go myself. But I quickly figured out how I could use the ticket. I had some advertising space on a radio

**T**he basketball game was on Sunday, so I knew I wouldn’t go. But I wondered if the free tickets could still work to my advantage.



station in my city, and I could give this ticket away in a promotion for my business.

The following week I made a purchase from the same vendor and strangely enough won another ticket to the same game. Now I could give away two tickets. I knew my promotion would be even more successful.

A few hours after winning the second ticket, I had an unusual feeling. It was a soft, quiet voice telling me I should not run the promotion. When my wife asked why I was canceling the promotion, I responded that if we couldn't go to a sports event because it would be dishonoring the Sabbath, I felt it would not be right to encourage others to do so through a radio promotion.

This experience helped me understand that honoring the Sabbath is more than just following a list of things we should and should not do. Although prophets have not spoken about the particular situation I found myself in, when I felt the Spirit's prompting, I knew I needed to keep the spirit of the Sabbath by helping others to enjoy it as well.

I am grateful to my wife for supporting this decision and to my Heavenly Father, whose Spirit helped me understand how to better honor His holy day. ■

*David Oscar Sarmiento is a member of the Octavo Branch, Cordoba Argentina South Stake.*

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## *He Took My Purse*

By Rebecca Thomas

**A**s a single woman, I am used to being careful about safety. But in the weeks before my trip to the Atlanta Georgia Temple, my usual concern escalated into a recurring nightmare in which a man mugged me, getting away with my credit cards, checks, and driver's license. My concern became so great that the day before leaving for the temple, I checked my wallet three times to make sure everything—including my temple recommend—was still there.

That same evening I went to a party with my wallet in my purse, along with a small mirror and the tube of lipstick I am never without. After parking my car and adding my keys to my purse, I started toward the church where the party was underway. I was alone in a big city, but I wasn't afraid. Having asked for the Lord's protection earlier that evening, I felt safe.

As I walked up a path, I sensed someone behind me and turned to see a man running at me with lightning speed. There was a sharp tug on my purse, a strong hand on my arm, and I heard, "Give me your purse!" As I struggled to free myself, my purse flew across the broad lawn, landing in the nearby bushes. I cried out, but the

man ran, retrieving my purse as he left.

After calling the police, I found an empty room in the church where I could send a silent prayer up to Heavenly Father. "I don't understand," I thought, fighting tears. "I was going to the temple tomorrow! Now he has my temple recommend! Father, why wasn't I protected?" Feeling helpless and hopeless, I went out to face the police officers.

"I'm sorry, Ms. Thomas. The officers didn't find anything—not the thief, not your purse," I was told. But as the police officers and I walked to my car, an impression came to me.

"I'm going to look in the grass to see if anything fell out of my purse, OK?" I tried not to get my hopes up, but when I saw something metallic reflecting light from the streetlamps, I scooped it up triumphantly and shouted, "My keys! My keys are here!" I said a silent prayer of thanks as we started toward my car once again.

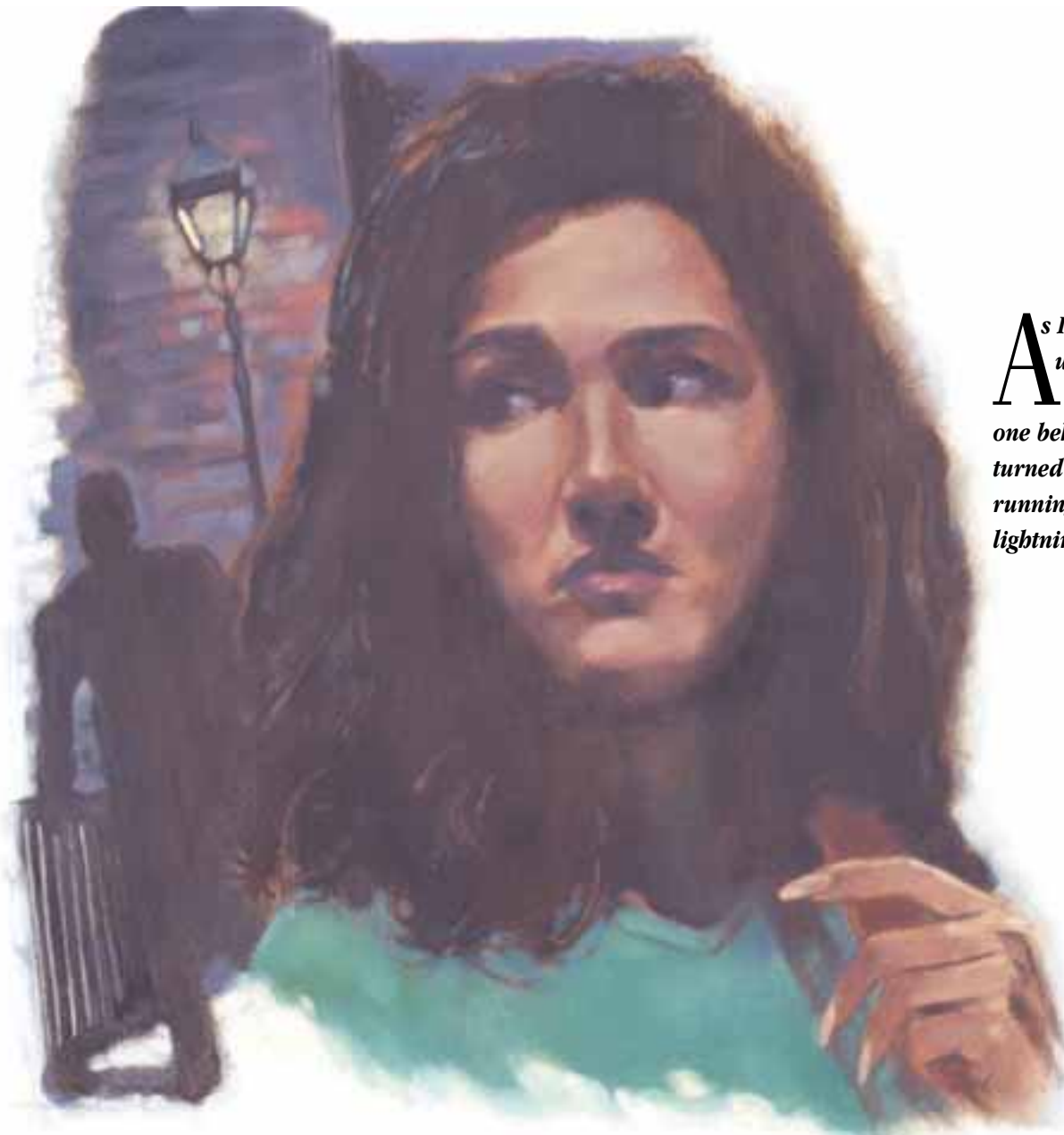
"Wait! I want to look in the bushes too."

Shaking his head, the officer escorting me answered with a half-grin, "Go ahead, but no one has that kind of luck."

He was wrong. Unable to contain my tears, I shouted from the bushes, "My wallet!" Inside it, everything—including my temple recommend—was intact. The police officers were dumbfounded.

"I've never seen anyone so lucky," one commented.





**A**s I walked  
up the path,  
I sensed some-  
one behind me and  
turned to see a man  
running at me with  
lightning speed.

“It’s not luck,” I answered without thinking. “It’s protection from God.” I doubted the police officers would understand the importance of my trip to the temple, so to break the skeptical silence, I jokingly added, “The guy did get one thing of value though—my lipstick!” No one laughed.

Feeling awkward, I glanced back

at the bush where I had made my last amazing find. What I saw astonished me: there, upright on the little mirror I carry in my purse, was my tube of lipstick.

Before the police arrived, I had wondered why God hadn’t protected and blessed me. But standing on that lawn next to the flabbergasted police

officers, I realized He had done both. Now, whenever I have the slightest doubt that Heavenly Father is aware of my struggles, I remember the night He saved my keys, my wallet, my temple recommend, and even my tube of lipstick. ■

*Rebecca Thomas is a member of the  
Clermont Ward, Orlando Florida Stake.*

## Who Needs a Will?

Facing our mortality is sometimes a big obstacle, but we should plan for the future. An important part of that planning, depending on our situations, could be to make a will. As a director of financial planning, I know people who resist preparing this important document.

When preparing a will and estate plan, keep in mind that individual circumstances and state laws vary. In some cases, legal assistance may be required. If so, look for an attorney who is experienced with drafting wills and estate planning.

A will is important for several reasons, some of which are:

- 1. Nominating a guardian** for your minor children (younger than 18 in most states) and **establishing a trust fund** to take care of them.
- 2. Controlling the distribution of your estate**, which is everything you own. Thus, you can clarify which heirs will receive your assets.
- 3. Reducing estate taxes and probate expenses.** Wills can be used to establish certain tax-saving types of trusts to reduce the amount of estate taxes paid. Probate, the legal process of administering a deceased person's will, is not particularly expensive in



most states unless a dispute arises among your heirs. Spelling out your intentions in a carefully drafted will could help or possibly avoid the probate process altogether.

**4. Choosing an executor**, the person who will carry out the wishes described in your will.

**5. Authorizing continuation of a business.** If you have a business and choose to have your children run it after your death, grant them permission to do so in your will. Specifying which child or children should minister business dealings helps family unity as it provides organization and

an upfront understanding of your intentions.

Update your will whenever you experience life changes such as marriage, divorce, more children, a move, or fluctuating assets.

Because there are different types of wills to meet various circumstances, research what will best meet your needs. Legal fees vary, but you can also begin to educate yourself through information found in public libraries, listings in phone books, and on-line sources, to name a few ideas.

*Mark Groesbeck, Kingwood First Ward, Kingwood Texas Stake*

## Forefather's Day

When I learned that my son and daughter-in-law were coming to dinner with their four children to celebrate Father's Day with me, I reflected sadly that they had not known my father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, who were now deceased. They were good men who had been wonderful examples of faith and character. "All we have left are their pictures," I mused. Then an idea flashed to mind. "Pictures—that's it!" I took framed pictures of my father and grandfathers off the walls and gathered all the pictures I could find in the photo albums. Then, on the dining room table, I created a display of the pictures and added a placard that read, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12).

When my grandchildren arrived for dinner, I was happy to see that even at their young ages, they were interested in their ancestors. I told them who each one was, where he had been born, and whatever I knew about him. The afternoon brought a wonderful feeling as we honored our fathers and grandfathers on their special day.

*Ann Blacksbear Alldredge, Panama City Ward, Panama City Florida Stake*

## A TIME LINE FOR THE SCRIPTURES

My husband and I used family home evening to create a time line of scriptural events beginning with Adam and Eve. Then we added events from world history to give the children an overview of how these events fit together.

We started by teaching them about the seven 1,000-year periods described by the Lord in D&C 88:108–10. Then we made a book with seven pages, each page representing 1,000 years. We used the chronology in the Bible Dictionary to help us create a basic time line with approximate dates of the following key events: Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden; Enoch and his city; Noah and the Flood; the Tower of Babel; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the Abrahamic covenant; Joseph taken captive into Egypt; Moses and the exodus of the children of Israel; Lehi's exodus to the Americas; and the birth of Jesus Christ. We focused on these stories and dates until our children knew them well.

Next we added the

story of Daniel and his interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream (see Daniel 2:31–49). From this, our children learned about the civilizations of Babylon, Persia, Macedonia, Greece, and Rome. Against this historical background, we studied King Nebuchadnezzar's dream in detail and helped our children see that it was a prophecy of the coming forth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Then we moved our focus to American history and studied Nephi's vision in 1 Nephi 13, the Apostasy, Christopher Columbus, the Reformation, the Pilgrims, and the Revolutionary War.

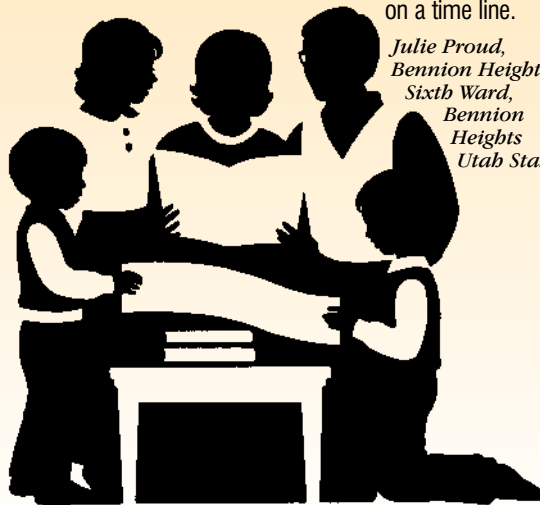


Against this historical background, we helped our children see that these things helped prepare the way for the gospel to be restored on the earth.

We finished by studying Church history from 1820 to the present.

With this basic framework of scriptural events in place, we have found that our children are better prepared to place other events, scientists, explorers, composers, artists, and prophets where they belong on a time line.

*Julie Proud, Bennion Heights Sixth Ward, Bennion Heights Utah Stake*



## A Primary Idea

When I was Primary president, I found the *Family Home Evening Resource Book* helpful as I prepared junior

and senior Primary sharing times. There are a number of lessons in the resource book that can be modified to use with a large group. It makes a wonderful resource for Primary!

*Becky Christensen, Nampa 11th Ward, Nampa Idaho Stake*



**The Smith family drove from Jonesboro, Arkansas, to hear President Hinckley speak at a gathering near Memphis, Tennessee. “Rise to the divinity that is within you,” President Hinckley counseled Church members in the meeting.**

## “Grab Life by the Horns,” President Hinckley Tells Saints in Southern States

A century and a half ago, the lower Mississippi River in the southern United States was the pathway to Zion for hundreds of converts who traveled the waterway on their journey to Nauvoo and later to the Salt Lake Valley.

Faithful members again descended on two of the river’s prominent cities in March to listen to the counsel of President Gordon B. Hinckley. He spoke to more than 10,000 people during a trip to Memphis, Tennessee, and New Orleans, Louisiana.

With a free weekend coming up, President Hinckley had asked his secretary where he hadn’t been before. “And he said, ‘You have not been to Memphis.’” The congregation gathered outside Memphis in Southaven, Mississippi, near the borders of Tennessee,

Mississippi, and Arkansas.

President Hinckley was accompanied by Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Elder Gene R. Cook of the Seventy, President of the North America Southeast Area; and Elder Jon M. Huntsman, an Area Authority Seventy, who also spoke at the meeting.

Referring to 1 Peter 2:9 as his theme, President Hinckley told the congregation to “live up to the great and wonderful opportunity that is yours.” He mentioned an advertising sign outside the arena and said, “I would like to suggest to you that you ‘grab life by the horns’ and do not let life grab you by the horns. You take control of your lives. . . . Do not let life control you. . . . Take charge. Rise to the divinity that is within you.”

Lee Palmer of the Hot Springs Ward, Little Rock

Arkansas Stake, who left home at 11:00 A.M. to attend the 6:00 P.M. meeting, said: “This will be a significant memory for us. President Hinckley is a wonderful man.”

Down river in New Orleans, Louisiana—while revelers filled the streets for Mardi Gras—members of the Church enjoyed the peace and serenity of a meeting with the prophet.

Arriving in cars, vans, and buses on a pleasant Sunday afternoon, nearly 5,000 people poured into the University of New Orleans Lakefront Arena on the shore of Lake Pontchartrain to hear President Hinckley.

The prophet told them the story of the resurrected Savior’s encounter with the Apostle Thomas as recorded in John 20:24–29, including His charge to “be not faithless,

but believing” (verse 27). “My brothers and sisters, I’d like to leave with you those great words of the Lord spoken on that occasion: ‘Be not faithless, but believing.’ . . . Be not faithless, but believing in yourselves, in your capacity as a son or daughter of God, to do great and good things.”

Freddie Lee Brown of the La Place Ward, New Orleans Louisiana Stake, was happy to hear the prophet speak. While growing up as a member of another faith, she said, “I often wondered why the Lord loved people in the olden days more than He loved us, because He gave them prophets.” When missionaries knocked on her door, she invited them in. “They asked me if I knew there was a prophet on the earth today. . . . I just knew it and believed.”

While in Mississippi and Louisiana, President Hinckley and those he was traveling with made a detour to visit the grave site of Parley P. Pratt, an early Apostle of this gospel dispensation. Elder Pratt was assassinated on 13 May 1857 near Van Buren, Arkansas, and buried there while serving a mission. President Hinckley characterized his visit to the grave site as a “significant event.”

The day after the meeting in Louisiana, New Orleans Louisiana Stake president Scott N. Conlin showed Elder Gene R. Cook some of the Church historical sites in the city where early pioneers landed by ship from Britain and Europe to make their

way up the Mississippi River. They discussed the growth of the Church in the area and the impact of the meeting with President Hinckley. “Who knows the number

of souls that were touched,” Elder Cook commented, “not only by what was taught, but by who was teaching it.” ■ Church News contributed to this report.

## President and Sister Hinckley Celebrate 66th Anniversary

By Don L. Searle

Marjorie Pay was the lovely young woman who had lived across the street and came to consider him her best friend. When they married two years after his mission, on 29 April 1937, Gordon Bitner Hinckley had already begun what would become his life’s work—teaching the gospel of the Master and helping to build up The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Their relationship has grown sweeter and deeper through the years. Today it stands as a model—in some ways a textbook—for anyone wishing to build an eternal marriage. On 29 April 2003 the couple celebrated their 66th wedding anniversary, and as they recently reflected on their lives together, President and Sister Hinckley each spoke of the other’s strengths that have contributed to their relationship.

“The basis of a good marriage is mutual respect,” President Hinckley said in an interview with the Church magazines. “If a husband would think less of himself and more of his wife, we’d

have happier homes throughout the Church and throughout the world.”

Sister Hinckley expressed gratitude for the way her husband has lived by that advice, encouraging her growth and development as an individual. His efforts, she said, have “made me feel like a real person.” She spoke with gratitude of his confidence in and respect for the way she taught their children and cared for their household while he was away so often in connection with Church responsibilities.

“Mutual respect makes all

the difference in the world—having respect for one another as individuals and not trying to change your partner after your manner,” President Hinckley said. “You let her live her life in her way and encourage her talents and her interests.”

Young Gordon Hinckley first noticed Marjorie Pay’s talents when she was the neighbor girl across the street. They courted in their early twenties while he was a university student. By the time she saw him off on a mission, a step she supported fully, she knew she would miss him as her “best friend and confidant” (see Sheri L. Dew, *Go Forward with Faith* [1996], 41, 58).

When they married in 1937, he had already been working for two years as executive secretary of the Church Radio, Publicity, and Mission Literature Committee. Except for a short time working for a railroad company during World War II, Gordon B.

Hinckley was employed producing Church literature and audiovisual materials until his call as a General Authority—as an Assistant to the Twelve—in 1958. He was called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1961.

President and Sister Hinckley have five children: Kathleen Hinckley Barnes, Richard Gordon Hinckley, Virginia Hinckley Pearce, Clark Bryant Hinckley, and Jane Hinckley Dudley. They have 25 grandchildren and 35 great-grandchildren thus far.

Family home evening was always a family priority when their children were growing up, President Hinckley recalled; when he was away on a Church assignment, Sister Hinckley carried through with it. Today, President and Sister Hinckley still enjoy a once-a-month family home evening with their extended family. Their children and grandchildren know that President and Sister Hinckley count as one of their greatest blessings in life the opportunity to spend time with members of their family. Traditionally, that is how they celebrate their anniversary—in an intimate family gathering.

“I don’t know how anyone could have been more richly blessed than we have been,” President Hinckley said. “If you can live with a good woman through your life and see your children grow to maturity as happy, able individuals who are making a contribution, then you can count your life a success.” ■



President Gordon B. Hinckley shares memories of his family life as his wife, Sister Marjorie Pay Hinckley, listens and smiles. They celebrated their 66th wedding anniversary in April.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND

## Encouraging Temple Worthiness and Preparation

*The First Presidency sent the following letter, dated 11 March 2003, to priesthood leaders to be read in sacrament meeting:*

**W**e are grateful for the increased availability of temples worldwide and invite adult members to have a current temple recommend and visit the temple more often. Where time and circumstances permit, members are encouraged to replace some leisure activities with temple service.

“Millions of our ancestors have lived upon the earth without receiving the benefit of temple ordinances. We particularly encourage newer members and youth of the Church who are 12 years of age and older to live

worthy to assist in this great work by serving as proxies for baptisms and confirmations.

“We request that local priesthood leaders encourage temple-worthy members to consider ways in which more frequent daytime temple attendance could occur. Home and visiting teachers may wish to arrange transportation for those who need it, particularly during the daytime.

“All of the ordinances which take place in the House of the Lord become expressions of our belief in



**Mount Timpanogos Utah Temple**

that fundamental and basic doctrine of the immortality of the human soul. As we redouble our efforts and our faithfulness in going to the temple, the Lord will bless us.” ■

## Church Sends Aid to Ethiopia

By Lisa Ann Jackson

**I**n response to one of the most widespread droughts in Ethiopia since the mid-1980s, Church Humanitarian Services has donated more than 3,000 tons (2,722 tonnes) of food to famine-stricken areas of the African nation. Included in the donation was a life-saving porridge to be given to the most severely malnourished children—the first donation of its kind in the current crisis.

“The assistance your organization has provided is critical,” says Mary Lewellen, director of USAID/Ethiopia. “While many donors provide cereals that are available in the

market or in the communities for the adults, what is needed is food for the children.”

More than 11 million Ethiopians—roughly 20 percent of the nation’s population—are at immediate risk for starvation. An additional 3 million people are under close watch. The Ethiopian government estimates that it will take 1.46 million metric tons of food to address the crisis.

Using a centuries-old recipe, the Church has produced a food product called Atmit—an Ethiopian term for “nourishing porridge.” Atmit is a oat flour-based powdered

milk product used to feed the most severely malnourished children and elderly adults whose bodies can no longer digest whole grains.

When Humanitarian



**Relief workers walk through a drought-stricken field in Ethiopia to distribute food to villagers at risk for starvation. The drought and famine are the country’s most severe in 20 years.**

Services staff in Salt Lake City received the recipe, they decided they could quickly produce the product locally at the Welfare Department’s food production facilities. Nutritionists from Brigham Young University were brought in to create the right blend of nutritional supplement for the recipe. Approximately 160 tons (145 tonnes) of Atmit were produced and shipped to Ethiopia. The Church was the first organization to provide Atmit in the current crisis.

“It is because of our Welfare Services program and the resources we have at Welfare Square that we were able to make this and be ready within a week’s time,” says Garry Flake, director of humanitarian emergency response for the Church. Brother Flake was in Ethiopia in March to coordinate the delivery of the Church’s food donations with Catholic Relief Services and Project Mercy.

The Church also donated 3,000 tons (2,722 tonnes) of a corn/soybean product called Unimix, which was produced and purchased in Ethiopia. The protein-based food is used to supplement whole-grain corn or wheat in the diets of those particularly



**Garry Flake holds a child suffering in Ethiopia's current hunger crisis. Brother Flake was in Ethiopia in March to coordinate the Church's donation of more than 3,000 tons (2,722 tonnes) of food.**

vulnerable to starvation, such as pregnant and lactating mothers and small children.

This assistance resonates back to the roots of the Church's current emergency response program. Almost 20 years ago the Church made its first large-scale humanitarian donation, sending aid to Ethiopia and other African nations suffering from widespread drought and famine. In early 1985, members of the Church fasted for famine victims in Africa and contributed generous fast offerings to be used for their relief. More than U.S. \$6 million donated through the fasts was distributed to relief agencies working in Ethiopia and other African nations. The event marked the beginning of

what has grown into an established program of emergency response by the Church.

"The welfare program, growing out of principles of giving and receiving, has always emphasized preparedness and service," says Dale Bills, a spokesperson for the Church who accompanied Brother Flake to Ethiopia for the recent food distribution. "And it is on the strength of the Welfare Services infrastructure that we have been able not only to meet the needs of our own, but also to reach out through humanitarian efforts to bless the lives of others."

Through the most recent donation to Ethiopia, an estimated 220,000 people will benefit for five months from

the Unimix supplement, and tens of thousands of children and elderly will benefit from Atmit.

"Your efforts are going to save many, many lives," says Marta Gabre-Tsadick, Project Mercy's Africa representative. "I wish I could tell you how many lives this is going to save."

"This is being done through the contributions and generosity of the members of the Church," Brother Flake emphasizes. "There is a spirit that permeates what we do when it comes from the sacrifices and generosity and love of the members of the Church and concern for people in need wherever they are." ■

## Church Leaders Share Goodwill with Various Nations

### Germany

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Presidency of the Seventy met with German president Johannes Rau in December to honor a commitment made by the First Presidency during the 2002 Winter Olympics.

Meeting in Bellevue Palace, the residence of the president of the Federal Republic of Germany, Elder Uchtdorf presented a three-volume history of President Rau's family and also his wife's family.

"President Rau is a religious man," says Elder Uchtdorf, who was accompanied by his wife, Harriet, and Elder Holger D. Rakow, an Area Authority Seventy. "He has teenage children and values the family. He believes the majority of people are looking for successful marriages with happy, secure families."

The commitment to perform family history research came last year during the 2002 Winter Olympics when President Rau and his wife,

Christina, met with President Gordon B. Hinckley and his counselors in the First Presidency. After learning of President Rau's interest in family history, the Church leaders made a promise to research the Rauses' family history.

Missionaries serving in the Family History Library found 400 names in President Rau's ancestry and another 800 names in his wife's family.

Elder and Sister Uchtdorf, who have hosted President Rau at various events including a Tabernacle Choir broadcast during the Olympics, presented the findings in a private meeting on behalf of the Europe Central Area Presidency.

"It was a politically busy day when an important ruling was announced by the German courts," Elder Uchtdorf says. "Because of the announcement, we expected a short visit. But it did not deter President Rau. We spent half an hour with him."

"He thumbed through the pages, examining names,"



**Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf (right) and his wife, Harriet, present German president Johannes Rau (center) with his family history. The presentation fulfilled a promise made to President Rau by the First Presidency when they met with him during the Winter Olympics.**

Elder Uchtdorf says. “He was impressed that original copies of birth and death and marriage certificates were included in the old German handwriting, along with a more easily read copy in modern German.”

Elder Uchtdorf later received a letter expressing gratitude for the family history. “The joy and gratitude of receiving these volumes were immense,” President Rau wrote. “Many generations [in our families] are grateful for the effort of your Church.”

### **Bulgaria**

The First Presidency welcomed the ambassador of Bulgaria and her family during a February visit to Utah. Elena Borislavova Poptodorova was in Utah for a speaking engagement at Brigham Young University’s Kennedy Center for International Studies. Ambassador Poptodorova, along with her husband, Georgi Petrov, and her son, Georgi, met with Elder Merrill J. Bateman of the Seventy, then president of

Brigham Young University. They also enjoyed a performance of the university’s International Folk Dance Ensemble and a tour of the Missionary Training Center.

While in Salt Lake City, the ambassador and her family met with the First Presidency. Ambassador Poptodorova noted that Latter-day Saints are “people who lead wholesome lives.” She expressed her support of missionaries working in her country, and President Hinckley thanked her for her efforts to help missionaries enter Bulgaria.

The ambassador and her family also toured Welfare Square, Temple Square, and the Family History Library and met with Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander of the Presidency of the Seventy.

During her visit, the ambassador expressed great appreciation for the hospitality she had been shown, saying that she has never seen such a concentrated expression of love,

warmth, and appreciation for her country. Expressing her desire to continue a positive relationship between the Church and Bulgaria, Ambassador Poptodorova said, “We would like to have you always in our lives, no matter where we are.”

### **French Polynesia**

In Tahiti, M. Gaston Flosse, president of French Polynesia, and several of his cabinet members paid a courtesy visit to Church leaders at the Faaa Tahiti Stake Center in January.

“We thanked him for the government efforts on cleaning up the environment, reducing road accidents, and providing health programs for people in Tahiti,” says

Elder Jean A. Tefan, an Area Authority Seventy. “We also expressed appreciation for his approval of our request to extend a land lease from 9 to 25 years for the construction of the institute building.”

President Flosse thanked the Church for the institute program and for the continuing efforts to support families and develop high moral and ethical standards for youth.

Yolande Bennett, Tahiti director of public affairs, presented information on families and family home evening, including the *Liabona* magazine and the proclamation on the family, to each of the government officials. ■

*Church News* contributed to this report.

## **In the News**



### **Missionary Dies in Argentina**

While attempting to save a 13-year-old boy, a full-time missionary in Argentina was killed on 9 March 2003. Elder Nathan Scott Godfrey, serving in the town of Gualaguaychu in the Argentina Rosario Mission, died when he jumped into a deep puddle to save the boy. A

power line made contact with the water and electrocuted both of them.

Elder Godfrey, son of Scott Reyns Godfrey and Sarah Crookston Godfrey of the Columbia Heights Ward, Kaysville Utah South Stake, had been in Argentina since January. “He was where he should have been, doing what he should have been doing. We take comfort in that,” says Brother Godfrey.

### **LDS Servicemen Killed, Prisoner of War Rescued**

Lieutenant Nathan White, a United States Navy pilot, died on 2 April over central Iraq when his aircraft was hit in what may have been a friendly fire incident. Brother White, 30, is survived by his wife, Akiko, and their three children, members of the



Sandbridge Ward, Virginia Beach Virginia Stake. Brother White served a mission in Japan and later graduated from Brigham Young University, where he majored in Japanese.

James W. Cawley, a U.S. Marine staff sergeant and member of the Fox Creek Ward, Layton Utah Stake, died 29 March during combat in Iraq. He was responding with fellow soldiers to a firefight when he was struck and killed by a coalition forces Humvee military vehicle, according to U.S. Marine Capt. Jason Dougherty.

Brother Cawley, 41, leaves behind his wife, Miyuki, and two children. He completed a full-time mission in the Japan Fukuoka Mission and was a detective in the Salt Lake City Police Department, serving on the department's SWAT team.

John Darren "J. D." Smith, 32, was killed when his U.S. Army helicopter crashed in Kuwait on 25 February before the Iraq war began. Stationed in Italy before being sent to Kuwait, Brother Smith, his wife, Meredith, and their two daughters were members of the Pordenone Military Branch, Trieste Italy District. Brother Smith and his wife were high school sweethearts who married after each served a mission.

Chief Warrant Officer Ronald D. Young Jr., 26, a U.S. Army aviator based out of Fort Hood, Texas, was captured by Iraqi forces when his Apache helicopter went down 24 March during a combat mission. He was rescued on 13 April by coalition forces outside of Tikrit.

### Sister Dew Serves As Delegate for Women's Commission

Sheri L. Dew, former counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, served as a United States White House delegate and private-sector adviser to the Commission on the Status of Women, an international organization.

"My recent experience serving in the Relief Society general presidency has given me a great deal of love for the women of the world as well as an appreciation for some of the challenges they face," says Sister Dew. "My hope is that that experience will prove helpful to the commission."

At the invitation of the White House, Sister Dew participated in the 47th session of the commission, held in New York City in March. The commission, established in 1946, promotes women's rights in political, economic, social, and educational fields. ■

## Comment

### Positive Depictions of Women

The March 2003 issue of the *Ensign* is one of the most beautiful issues I can recall seeing, as a subscriber to the magazine for more than a decade. Throughout the magazine are illustrations portraying beautiful, sensitive, and realistic representations of women as they are today, were in the past, and may become in the future. I found the illustrations to be

uplifting, encouraging, and accurate in portrayals of women of the Church. For those women in the world who may be struggling with their identity, I believe this issue to be quite enlightening. My father used to say to me, "Remember who you are." This beautiful issue is one I will refer to again and again for encouragement and support.

Randi L. Phillips  
Citrus Heights, California

### Unifying Effort

Thank you so much for streamlining the *Ensign* to help with the publication of the *Liabona* international magazine. I am currently working among the wonderful and humble Saints in Japan. The efforts to unify the Church worldwide are so greatly appreciated. They make gospel study so much easier for people who speak different languages. To be unified in learning the gospel of our Lord and Savior is such a wonderful blessing.

Elder McCord Larsen  
Japan Sendai Mission

### Across the Kilometers

Thank you for adding the metric equivalents in President Thomas S. Monson's message in the January 2003 *Ensign*. Please continue. This is very helpful to those of us who enjoy reading Church publications in English but have problems "translating" the different measuring units. You have taken another step toward a truly international Church.

Terez Nilsson  
Lund, Sweden

### More Family Resources

Thank you so much for your articles in March 2003 about family home evening. I want to add one more thing to your list of lesson resources. In the Sunday School Class Member Study Guide, each weekly reading assignment includes a section called "Suggestions for Family Discussion." We use this section as the basis for our home evening lessons each week and have found it to be very useful. It reinforces what we learned in church on Sunday and enhances our personal scripture study during the week. The discussions are short and to the point and usually include an object lesson, which helps keep our young children focused.

Lynae McKay  
Derwood, Maryland

### Call for Freelance Writers

From time to time the *Ensign* magazine has need for freelance writers for news and feature articles. We are currently compiling a database of professional freelancers to draw from as needs arise. If you would like to be included in our database, please send three clips; a cover letter detailing your writing experience; and your name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and ward and stake (or branch and district). Send materials to **cur-editorial-ensign@ldschurch.org** with "Freelance Writers" in the subject line, or post materials to *Ensign* Editorial, attention News Editor, 50 East North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3224, USA. Clips will not be returned.

# MAKING THE MOST OF THIS ISSUE

J U N E 2 0 0 3



## Strengthening Your Marriage

- Today, too many relationships don't even last a lifetime. An eternal marriage must be built on solid gospel principles. Author Brent Barlow tells us what some

of those principles are and how to apply them in "A Rock-Solid Foundation for Marriage," page 44.

- Keeping courtship alive is vital for a healthy marriage. Here are 32 creative, inexpensive ways to nurture your relationship. See "Questions and Answers," page 50.

## His Words from the Cross

The Savior's last mortal words, spoken in agony on the cross, were relatively few. But they tell us much about our Redeemer and His great love. See "On the Cross," page 32.

## Empty Arms, Aching Hearts

For years they had yearned for children. Now, after his wife's pregnancy ended in

disappointment, a father stands beside a tiny grave. Would the promises ever be fulfilled? See "Our Struggle to 'Be Fruitful,'" page 52.

## Singular Happiness

Being single doesn't automatically bring unhappiness, any more than being married automatically brings joy. In "Singular Living," unmarried Latter-day Saints share their experiences and tell of the ways they have found happiness and fulfillment. See page 56.

## Even My Lipstick

The line from Shakespeare's *Othello* "Who steals my purse steals . . . nothing" might apply to this story of miraculous protection from a thief. See "He Took My Purse," page 70.

## Read It on the Web

The *Ensign* can be found on the Internet at [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org). Click on "Gospel Library."

## Violence Hurts

Repelled by all of the sexual content in the media? Maybe you should be just as worried about the effects of viewing violence. See "It's 'Only' Violence," page 62.

## Where There's a Will

Depending on your situation, a will may be important to your family's future. To understand some of the whys and hows, see page 72.



## Did You Know?

Every *Ensign* staff member has the usual allotment of eyes and ears—two of each. But that's not enough. We need yours. If you are aware of a newsworthy local event or story, or if you have a faith-promoting experience to share, please contact us by writing to *Ensign* Editorial, Room 2420, 50 E. North Temple Street, Salt Lake City UT 84150-3220, USA. Or e-mail us at [cur-editorial-ensign@ldschurch.org](mailto:cur-editorial-ensign@ldschurch.org).

## Helps for Family Home Evening

- Want your family to be stronger? More united? More loving? President Faust offers practical reasons for using one of the most powerful family-building tools available. See "Enriching Our Lives through Family Home Evening," page 2.

- Is planning the hardest part of your family home evening? Families from all over the world sent us their tips for making FHE successful. See "Successful Family Home Evenings," page 7.

- How is a family like a car? It may look great on the outside, but if the engine isn't running smoothly, it's just a shell of unrealized potential. Elder M. Russell Ballard and his wife, Barbara, tell how family councils work and how they help a family run on all cylinders. See "Family Councils," page 14.

- Hints for preparing family home evenings—you'll find them with several articles in this issue. See "Ideas for Home Teachers," page 6, and "Let's Talk about It," pages 13, 28, and 67.



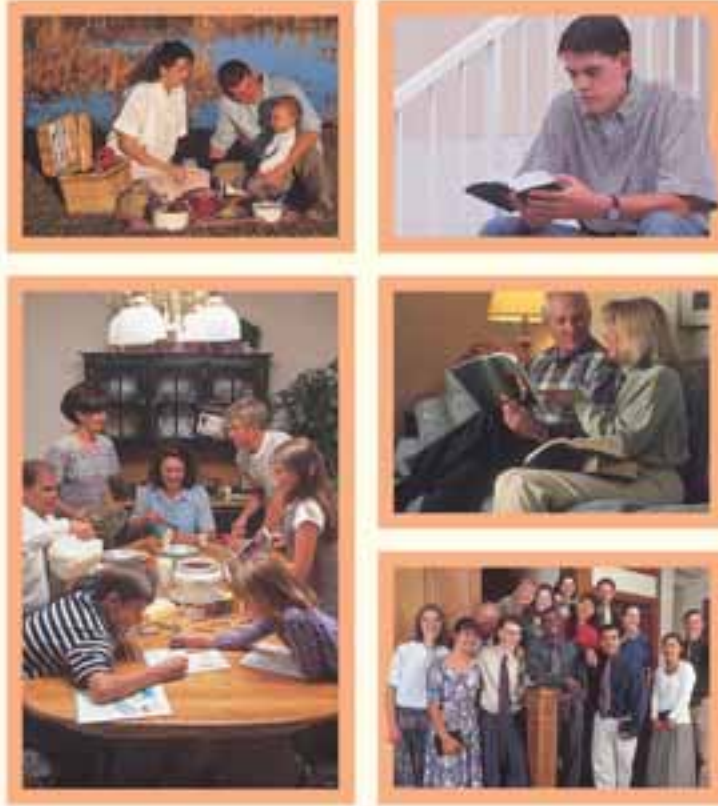
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**Baptizing in Mountain Waters, by Meridene Grant**

*“Now I say unto you that ye must repent, and be born again; for the Spirit saith if ye are not born again ye cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven; therefore come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye may be washed from your sins, that ye may have faith on the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, who is mighty to save and to cleanse from all unrighteousness” (Alma 7:14).*



*“Whether we are young or old, single or married, whether we have children at home or have become empty nesters, family home evening can increase unity and love in our homes. Family home evening is for everyone.”*  
See President James E. Faust, “Enriching Our Lives through Family Home Evening,” p. 3.

