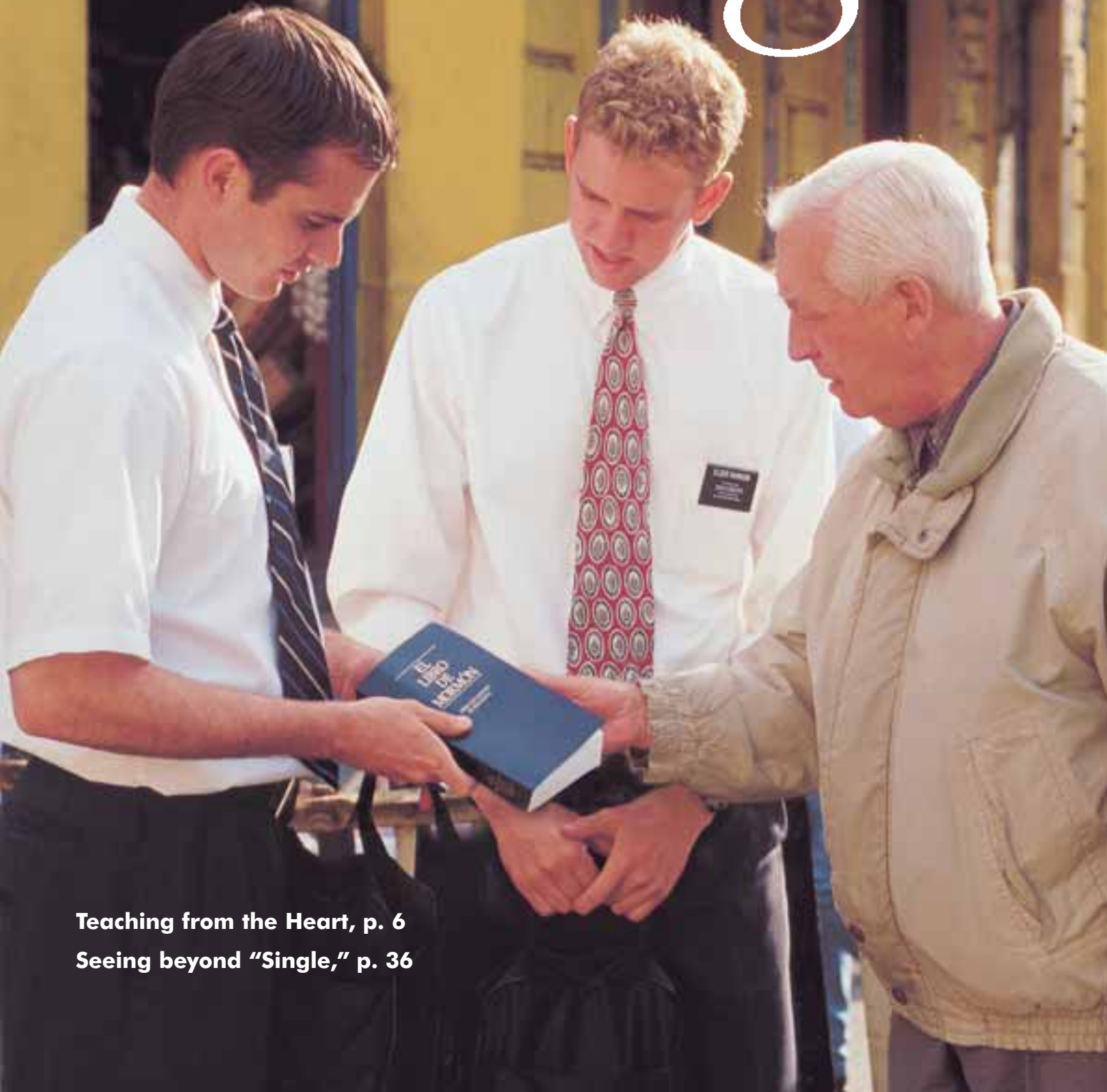


THE ENSIGN OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • JUNE 2004

Ensign



Teaching from the Heart, p. 6
Seeing beyond "Single," p. 36



MAY NOT BE COPIED

Going as a Lamb, by Liz Lemon Swindle

In June 1844 “when Joseph went to Carthage to deliver himself up . . . two or three days previous to his assassination, he said: ‘I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer’s morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men’ ” (D&C 135:4). Here he bids farewell to his family.

Ensign



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

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Inspirational Thoughts

BY PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY

A Marvelous and Wonderful Work

“What a marvelous and wonderful work [this] is . . . when you think of all the effort that goes into it and how much is expected of you. . . . This is the Church and kingdom of God. This is the work for which the Savior gave His life. We are serving with Him in the great work of the Father to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of mankind [see Moses 1:39]. How important it is and how glorious it is to see what is happening, to see it spread across the earth” (meeting, Worcester, Massachusetts, 23 Mar. 2002).

The Only True Church

“The Lord said that this is the only true and living church upon the face of the earth with which He is well pleased [see D&C 1:30]. I didn’t say that. Those are His words. The Prophet Joseph was told that the other sects were wrong [see Joseph Smith—History 1:19]. Those are not my words. Those are the Lord’s words. But they are hard words for those of other faiths. We don’t need to exploit them. We just need to be kind and good and gracious people to others, showing by our example the great truth of that which

we believe and leading them in the direction which we would like to see them go” (regional conference, North Ogden, Utah, 3 May 1998).

Miracle of Mormonism

“What a wonderful thing we have in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to reform people’s lives, to make them better, to lift their reach and look to the stars and make something good of their lives. Miracles happen when people accept the gospel. We see people who are dragging along in their slothful ways. The gospel touches their lives, and they come alive. Something really wonderful happens. I call it the miracle of Mormonism, this marvelous transformation that takes place in the lives of people” (meeting, Boston, Massachusetts, 16 Oct. 1998).

Church Is Moving Forward

“The Church is moving forward. Never has there been a day in the history of this Church when the Church has moved forward with greater vitality than today. How fortunate we are to be a part of this great movement which is going over the earth to change the lives of



This is the work for which the Savior gave His life. We are serving with Him in the great work of the Father to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of mankind.

All of us need to stand up and declare the truth. Walk in faith and faithfulness. Do good. Help others and bring glory to the great cause of the Lord Jesus Christ in these latter days.

people, to make them wish to live better, to do better, to give them a knowledge of the plan of salvation, to bring to them recognition of the meaning of the great Atonement of the Savior, to bless their lives wherever they may be found” (regional conference, Houston, Texas, 19 Sept. 1998).

Bring Credit and Honor to the Church

“Let everything that you do bring credit and honor to the Church, of which you are a member, and the Lord will bless you and magnify you. Let there be no animosity among you but only love, regardless of race, regardless of circumstances. Let us love one another as the Lord would have us do” (meeting, Nadi, Fiji, 21 May 2001).

These Are the Days of Restoration

“‘Repent ye therefore,’ said Peter, ‘and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began’

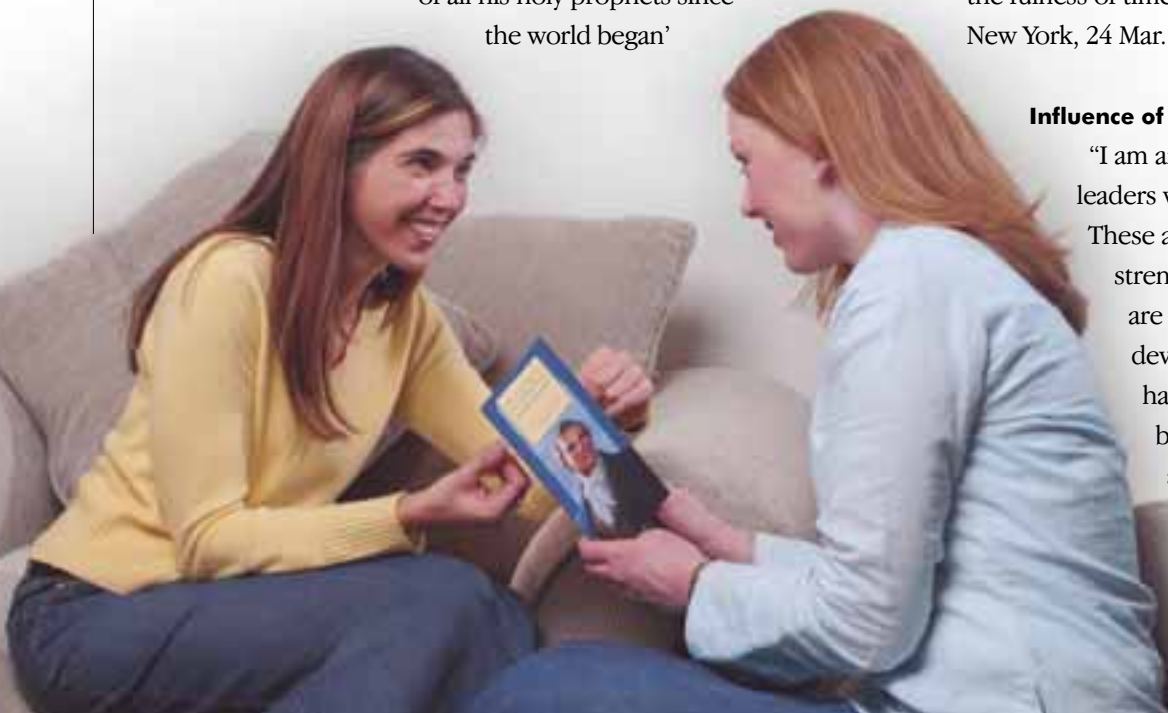
(Acts 3:19–21). These are the days of restitution. These are the days of restoration spoken of in the Holy Bible plainly and forcefully by Peter the Apostle and by Paul. I repeat, you and I are a part of prophecy fulfilled, a part of the divine plan of the God of heaven, that there should be a falling away and that there must be a restoration” (meeting, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, 8 Aug. 1998).

A Great and Marvelous Family

“You are part of a great and marvelous family—more than 11 million strong and scattered throughout some 160 nations—who carry in your hearts a great and strong conviction of the reality of God our Eternal Father, of the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ, of the actuality of the Holy Ghost and its power to influence you and affect you, of the fact that God has moved again in this dispensation to restore His work and bring to pass His eternal purposes in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times—this glorious and wonderful period in the history of the earth when He has gathered together all of the wonderful things of all previous dispensations in this, the great and final and last dispensation—the fulness of times” (meeting, New York, New York, 24 Mar. 2002).

Influence of a Generation

“I am amazed at the quality of leaders who are being developed. These are men and women of strength and capacity. They are quick learners. They are devoted and faithful. They have become better husbands and fathers and wives and mothers under the family-strengthening programs of the Church. They



are an asset to the society of which they are a part, as will be the generations who come after them. That is the beauty of this work. When you touch the life of a man of this generation, that influence is felt through generations yet to come” (remarks to National Press Club, Washington, D.C., 8 Mar. 2000).

Called to Serve

“We are sort of garden-variety people whom the Lord picks up, one here and one there and another over there, and makes a bishop or a stake president or a mission president or a temple president or whatever. The marvelous and wonderful thing is that he rises to that responsibility under the inspiration and power of the Lord” (meeting, Richmond, Virginia, 14 Nov. 1998).

Let Us Be Latter-day Saints

“Let us live the gospel, my brothers and sisters. Let us as husbands treat our wives with respect and honor and dignity. Let us as wives treat our husbands with love and concern and helpfulness. Let us as parents, as fathers and mothers, treat our children, who are sons and daughters of God, with respect and love and helpfulness. And let us as children be obedient to our parents, following their counsel and seeking to walk after the ways which they point out to us.

“Let us be faithful in the payment of our tithes and offerings. The Lord has promised that those who pay their tithes shall not be burned [see D&C 64:23]. . . .

“Let us be more neighborly. Let us be kind. Let us be gracious to those in our midst who are not of our faith. Let us be helpful and generous and good. Let us be Latter-day Saints in the full and complete meaning of that word” (regional conference, Payson, Utah, 16 Sept. 2001).

What Does the Lord Expect?

“What does the Lord expect of Latter-day Saints? What does He expect us to do? He expects us to be good people, to be good fathers who love their wives, who love their children, who honor the priesthood, who stand a little taller and walk a little straighter in their lives—good and faithful and wonderful men. . . .

“To you women, you mothers, be good wives. Support your husbands. Treat them with kindness. . . . Help them in all that they do. Be good mothers to your children. . . . Rear them in love.

“You children, look to your parents as your very best friends. Listen to what they say. Do what they ask, because that is what the Lord has asked of His people, that children be raised in light and truth and love” (meeting, Nouméa, New Caledonia, 17 June 2000).

Great Cause of the Lord

“This great cause of the Lord is growing in strength and power and capacity across the earth. You and I are a part of it. You have as great a responsibility within the sphere of your assignment as I have within the sphere of my assignment. None of us can afford to slacken. All of us need to stand up and declare the truth. Walk in faith and faithfulness. Do good. Help others and bring glory to the great cause of the Lord Jesus Christ in these latter days” (fire-side, Sydney, Australia, 14 May 1997). ■

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. Read the paragraph “The Only True Church.” Discuss with family members some ways we can bear our testimonies of the truth without demeaning anyone else’s beliefs. You might want to consider reviewing “The Parable of Two Lamps,” by Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (see *Liahona*, Feb. 2003, 40; *Ensign*, Feb. 2003, 12).
2. Read the paragraph “Bring Credit and Honor to the Church.” Ask family members to consider whether the way they live brings credit and honor to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Ask them to list some ways we can all honor the Church.
3. Ask someone to read the last paragraph. Ask family members to discuss ways we all can fulfill our responsibility to move the work of the gospel forward.

Teaching from the Heart

*How missionaries are learning to teach more effectively than ever—
and how we can help: A conversation with two members of the Missionary
Executive Council—Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
and Elder Charles Didier of the Presidency of the Seventy.*

There have been some changes in the way missionaries teach investigators. Could you give an overview of those changes?

Elder Richard G. Scott: There has been a transition from presenting the gospel message by rote memorization to what has been defined as teaching by the Spirit. Missionaries are being taught to fill their minds and hearts with the basic doctrine, with supporting scriptures, and with relevant experiences from their own lives. Those become resource material upon which they can call as they identify through the Spirit the need of a particular investigator family or individual.

As missionaries have begun to make these adjustments in their teaching, it is thrilling to see how they develop and how they study personally and as companionships. Now their message is more understandable to those who are honest in heart and want to understand.

Have there been changes in the lessons themselves?

Elder Scott: There has been some change in the content



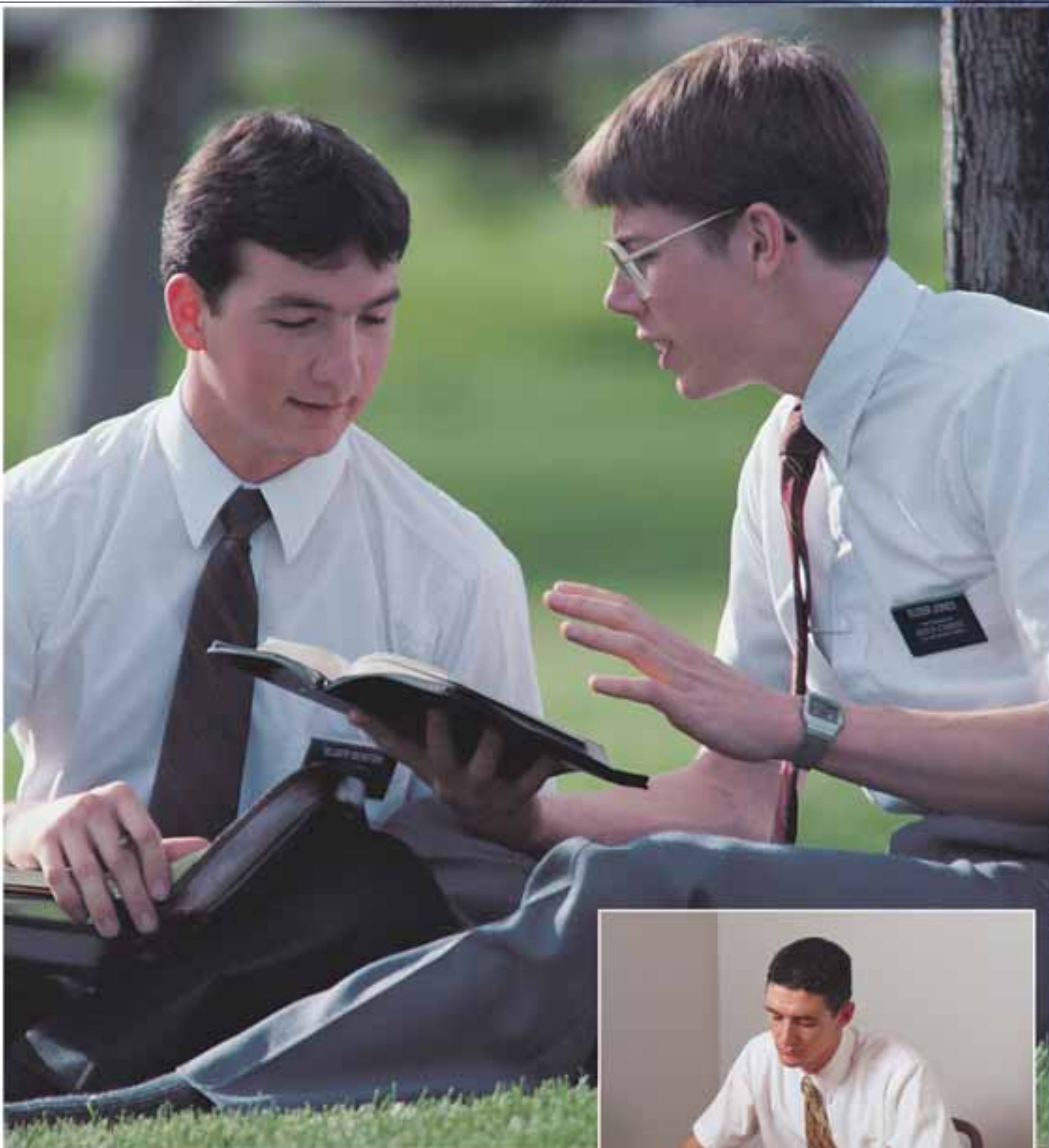
of the first discussion. It makes the story of Joseph Smith more understandable in the context of how Father in Heaven reveals truth to His children through prophets.

Elder Charles Didier: We help people understand that Joseph Smith is not an anomaly in the his-

tory of mankind. The Lord has repeatedly taught the plan of salvation through prophets. And mankind has also consistently rejected the prophets or gone astray from the message. That's why you have restorations. Joseph Smith was a foreordained prophet who restored—this time for the last time—the fulness of the gospel so that we might know how to return to the presence of our Heavenly Father.

Have there been any other changes in how the gospel is taught by the missionaries?

Elder Didier: The curriculum has not changed. The missionaries still have the same six discussions, which present the gospel in a logical progression. We ask them to teach



As missionaries have begun to make these adjustments in their teaching, it is thrilling to see how they develop and how they study personally and as companionships.





LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND; BELOW RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE BUNDERSON

If I were a parent today with children in my home, I'd make sure they understood the pattern that started with Adam, where a prophet is called of the Lord, teaching the fulness of the gospel with authority. I'd teach them about the cycle of apostasy and of restoration.

the doctrine that is found in the discussions. They start the first discussion by teaching the message of the Restoration. But when prompted by the Spirit, they can teach the third discussion before the second or the fourth before the third. That doesn't matter, as long as they teach all the doctrine.

Every investigator is different. So the missionaries prepare outlines to plan how they are going to teach an investigator according to his or her needs. The outline helps the missionaries conceive the presentation in their own minds. If the presentation is well conceived, it is clear, and then the words will come easily as missionaries teach by the Spirit.

Elder Scott: When missionaries do this consistently over a period of time, not only are they going to be more effective missionaries, but they will eventually be better husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, because the reality of the magnificent message becomes a part of their very being.

What are the implications of all this for teaching and training missionaries?

Elder Scott: The best place for that training to occur is in the home. If I were a parent today with children in my home, I'd make sure they understood the pattern that started with Adam, where a prophet is called of the Lord, teaching the fulness of the gospel with authority. I'd teach them about the cycle of apostasy and of restoration of truth that has continued until the final dispensation. I'd make sure they understood what happened through the Prophet Joseph Smith, how it was so very important that the Father and the Son personally came and taught Joseph Smith, and how he was called to be the prophet of the Restoration.

That, taught in the home and understood, with ancillary help from priesthood and auxiliary classes and from seminary and institute, will prepare a missionary like nothing else. You don't have to have special courses as long as they understand the importance of living the

principles and teaching them. Missionaries who have paid tithing, for example, can bear witness of the promised blessings that the Lord gives for obedience. A missionary who has lived a righteous life can bear powerful witness because he has had spiritual experiences in his life. Such experiences are conditioned upon worthiness and faith in the Savior.

How has the formal training of missionaries changed?

Elder Didier: In the Missionary Training Centers, missionaries called to teach in their own language are being taught how to prepare a discussion outline, how to start teaching with their own words, and how to teach by the Spirit. For those who have been called to teach in a foreign language, there's a slightly different approach, because if you learn a foreign language you need to memorize certain things. You need the vocabulary, you need to memorize the grammar rules, and so on. They start to practice the language so that when they arrive in the field they'll be ready, in addition to that, to teach a discussion in their own words. Learning to teach the gospel in a new language does take more time.

Elder Scott: In some ways it is a fundamental shift from what was being done before. The missionaries are learning the content of the discussions in their native language while they are learning to teach in an acquired language. That means that when they get to the mission field, a companion is much more important to help them in their continued study of a language and to help them learn to teach the message they have learned.

As they prepare themselves, what should potential missionaries focus on being or becoming?

Elder Scott: Worthy—so that the Spirit can guide them. And they will have learned the basic message of the Restoration. They will have read the Book of Mormon to gain a witness of Jesus Christ and His Atonement and how significant He is in the life of each individual. And to the degree that they learn those things, they're going to be further advanced than those who come to the Missionary Training Center just beginning to learn.

In the Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting held on 11 January 2003, President Gordon B. Hinckley said, "We simply cannot permit those who have not qualified

MISSIONARY SERVICE



LIFEBLOOD OF THE CHURCH

"Missionary work is the lifeblood of the Church. It is the principal means by which it grows. It is because of this service that the Church has reached its present size in 172 years."

President Gordon B. Hinckley, "Missionary Service," First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, 11 Jan. 2003, 17.

A FOURFOLD ENDEAVOR

"Missionary work is more than two young men giving a memorized presentation to investigators. It is more than baptizing. It is a fourfold endeavor that concerns the missionaries, yes, and also ward members, bishops, the ward mission leader, and the entire Church organization. This fourfold effort includes (1) finding investigators, (2) teaching by the Spirit, (3) baptizing worthy converts, and (4) strengthening new and less-active members."

President Gordon B. Hinckley, "Missionary Service," First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, 11 Jan. 2003, 18.



MISSIONARY SERVICE

AN ATTITUDE OF NEIGHBORLINESS

“Let us cultivate within our people a constant awareness of opportunities to reach out to others. Let neighborliness, an outreach with love toward others, become the attitude of our people wherever they are across the entire world.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley, “Missionary Service,” First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, 11 Jan. 2003, 19.

A CALL TO THOSE WHO ARE WORTHY

“Missionary work is not a rite of passage in the Church. It is a call extended by the President of the Church to those who are worthy and able to accomplish it. . . . It demands that those who serve as missionaries be worthy in every respect. . . . I am confident that raising the bar on eligibility will cause our young people, particularly our young men, to practice self-discipline, to live above the low standards of the world, to avoid transgression and take the high road in all their activities.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley, “Missionary Service,” First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, 11 Jan. 2003, 17.



PHOTOGRAPH BY NATHAN CAMPBELL

themselves as to worthiness to go into the world to speak the glad tidings of the gospel.” Specifically, what do prospective missionaries need to know about worthiness to be prepared to serve?

Elder Scott: They need to stay as far away from the boundaries of sin as they can. That gives them the greatest happiness as they’re preparing. It assures them the greatest capacity to be led by the Spirit and to be the examples they need to be in the mission field.

Almost any young person can recite the “Rs” of repentance or some other way of describing it. What they really need to do, though, is understand the gravity with which the Lord views some transgressions and not commit them.

Elder Didier: I wish we could teach the youth how to avoid the need for major repentance. Prevention is better than redemption. We need to teach them to have a spirit of love for the Lord and His commandments. If they have that, we don’t need to establish barriers where we tell them, “If you go over that, you cannot serve.”

We’ve talked about what parents can do in the home to prepare our young men for missions—especially the need to teach fundamentals. Do you have additional suggestions?

Elder Didier: The teen years are a time when parental influence begins to diminish and peers and trusted adults grow in influence. That’s why participation in the Aaronic Priesthood program is so important. Youth leaders can supplement the teachings and examples of parents, and the quorum can provide a positive peer influence.

Elder Scott: Another wonderful preparation is for young men approaching missionary age to go out and have experiences with missionaries. They see how missionaries teach and testify. In particular, if they begin to do some testifying or teaching of truth, either with missionaries or in their own quorum meetings—more than standing in a testimony meeting and bearing that kind of testimony, but teaching gospel truths—they will feel the guidance of the Spirit.

Elder Didier: There are so many different ways to do missionary work. Write a letter; share a Church video; give pass-along cards to friends. Youth can fellowship or help in

the activation process. If the youth can start participating in missionary work now, then when they go into the mission field they will have so much the advantage because they have done it before.

What results have you seen from the changes in how missionaries teach?

Elder Scott: The world is getting worse, but our capacity to teach the gospel is improving. President Hinckley has been so personally dedicated to increasing the number of truly converted individuals and retaining them. It's exciting to see the missionaries catch that vision. We have missionaries for whom the gospel message is such a part of their very beings that at a corner bus stop they can give a one-and-a-half-minute overview, a five-minute overview. They are much better equipped to begin with individuals at whatever level they are on and to introduce them to the magnificent message of the Restoration. Communicating truth is facilitated when there isn't a memorized dialogue.

Now, what about all of us ordinary members? How do we participate in the missionary effort?

Elder Didier: Everyone can do something. We don't have to be involved in teaching per se. If we have the desire and we pray about it, we can receive inspiration on how to help prepare a child for a mission or how to share the Book of Mormon with a neighbor. We can share Church videos. Let's each find the best way according to our best possibilities.

Elder Scott: Members can participate in the conversion process by finding investigators, by being there as friends during the conversion process, and by bearing testimony at critical points. But after baptism, converts need strength to move from the world



they've been in into a new environment. And that's probably where members can most easily serve in missionary work. It's not difficult for members who understand what the need is and who seek guidance from the Lord to respond to it, whether it's inviting new members to their home or sitting next to them in sacrament meeting or helping them better understand who we are and how we live.

Elder Didier: I'm here today first of all because a missionary became my friend. But missionaries were replaced all the time. There comes a time when you would like to have a stable friend, and I had to look within the Church.

Elder Scott: We could change our mind-sets from "missionary work is something I *have* to do" to "missionary work is something I *get* to do." Once you begin, it's exciting. It's stimulating. It's not a burden; it's a thrilling experience. ■

This interview was conducted by Larry Hiller and Adam C. Olson of the Church magazines staff.

Another wonderful preparation is for young men approaching missionary age to go out and have experiences with missionaries. They see how missionaries teach and testify. In particular, if they begin to do some testifying or teaching of truth, they will feel the guidance of the Spirit.

BY TROY L. LOVE

In 1994 I was serving as a missionary among the Hmong people in the California Roseville Mission. The work among the Hmong people in Eureka was new, and my companion and I had only one family in our teaching pool. No one else seemed interested.

This family had already had all six discussions twice, but they were unwilling to make commitments regarding church attendance, prayer, and baptism. Since the Book of Mormon was not yet available in Hmong, it was difficult for the family to grasp its teachings. I felt very discouraged and powerless to make anything happen.

One afternoon the stake had a celebration near the coast. I had invited the family we were teaching to come, hoping that some fellowshiping might help. I waited and waited. Finally the children arrived, but no parents. I became increasingly discouraged during the celebration, for I knew if the work remained stagnant, missionary work among the Hmong people in Eureka might soon be closed.

My companion and some of the other missionaries wanted to see the ocean after the activity, so I joined them. We stopped at a gigantic rock formation overlooking the sea. The sun was blocked behind darkening clouds. My

heart felt as heavy as the gray sky above me, and I cried silently, "What am I doing wrong?"

I began to share with my Father in Heaven the disappointments of the last few months. I felt my heart sinking further with every sentence. I gazed at the ocean waves, then bowed my head.

As I looked down I noticed jagged black boulders near the bottom of the rock formation. The waves slammed against these rocks, swirled around with frigid bubbles, and then hurried back out to sea. As I watched, fascinated, my eyes spotted a small red starfish hanging onto one of the rocks. Even though the cold water crashed against it with salty severity, the little starfish did not move.

Then I felt the Spirit whisper, "I love you. Be of good cheer. Be like the starfish and just hold on. I will take care of everything." At last I felt hope. I knew the Lord loved me, my companion, and the family we were working so hard to teach. I understood that He has a plan and that I needed to exercise faith in Him.

We did not give up on the family. We continued to love them and teach them the gospel of Jesus Christ. We prayed with them and for them. And about a month later, they

THE RED STARFISH



agreed to be baptized. There was no gray in the day that my companion and I watched the first Hmong family in Eureka enter the waters of baptism.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has taught: “I know some of you do truly feel at sea, in the most frightening sense of that term. . . . It is not without a recognition of life’s tempests but fully and directly because of them that I testify of God’s love and the Savior’s power to calm the storm. . . . Christ knows better than all others that the trials of life can be very deep and we are not shallow people if we struggle with them. But . . . He rebukes faithlessness and He deplores pessimism. He expects us to believe!”¹

I realized that day at the beach that despair is not from heaven. Whenever I think about that red starfish holding on under difficult circumstances, I feel my load lighten—not because the pressures of life are alleviated, but because I know there is power



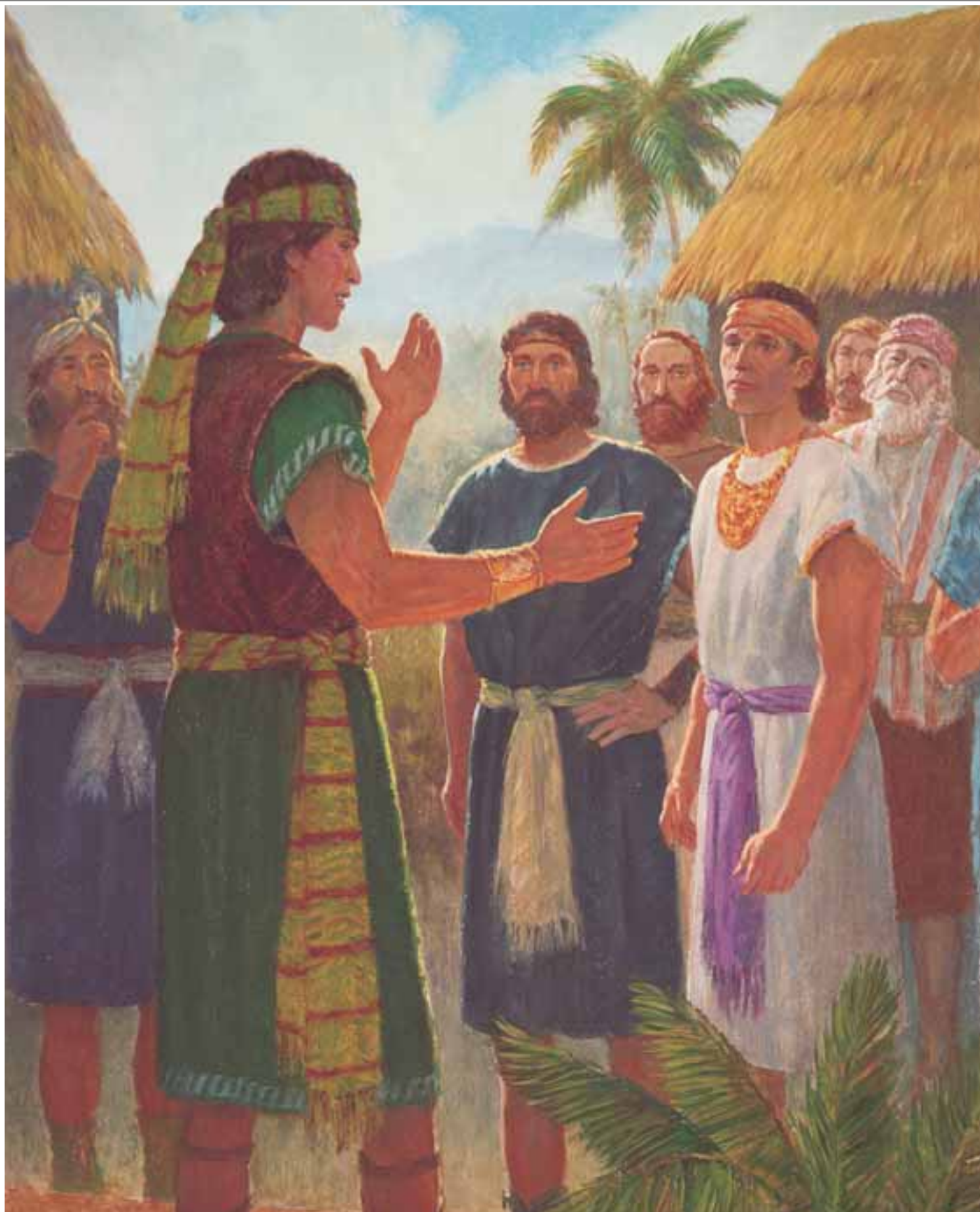
in putting my trust in the Lord. If we hold on, we will find peace. ■

Troy L. Love is a member of the Yuma Fourth Ward, Yuma Arizona Stake.

NOTE

1. “An High Priest of Good Things to Come,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 36–37.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has taught, “It is not without a recognition of life’s tempests but fully and directly because of them that I testify of God’s love and the Savior’s power to calm the storm.”





He Knows Our Suffering

Alma bore strong testimony of the Savior's compassion and understanding of our earthly tribulations.

BY ELDER FLÁVIO A. COOPER

Area Authority Seventy
Brazil South Area

When I was a new member of the Church, I heard the comment, “Nobody can read the book of Alma without coming to know the Book of Mormon is true!” This statement awoke my curiosity. It made me wonder: Who was Alma? When did he live? What did he teach?

Named after his father, also a prophet, Alma was rebellious in his youth. But in response to divine correction (see Mosiah 27:8–32), Alma the Younger mended his ways and became a great force for good. His conversion and continued diligence in serving the Lord prepared him for the call to preside over the Church in his time. He was also the chief judge to his people, a responsibility he resigned when he realized the

only way to reform the people was to teach the gospel and bear a pure and vigorous testimony of Jesus Christ (see Alma 4:16–20).

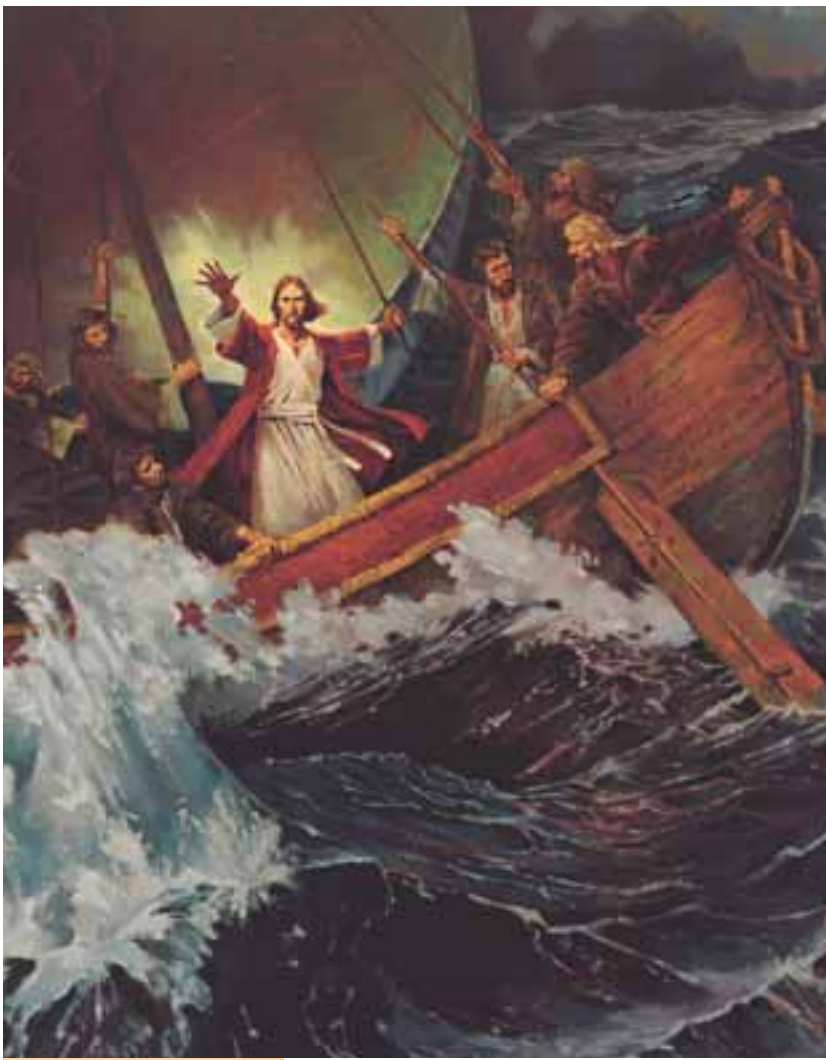
A portion of Alma’s eloquent testimony of the Savior is summarized in Alma 7:10–13. First, Alma teaches that the Savior would have a miraculous birth in the flesh as the Son of God, explaining that He would suffer “pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind” in fulfillment of prophecy (v. 11). Second, the Lord would take upon Himself physical death, that He might “loose the bands of death which bind his people” (v. 12). And third, the Savior would take upon Himself the sins of His people, “that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance” (v. 13).

He Understands Our Trials and Suffering

Alma’s prophetic testimony of the Lord’s life and His Atonement and Resurrection—a testimony sealed with a prophetic blessing (see Alma 7:25–26)—was given about 83 years before our Savior’s birth. Central to Alma’s message is the fact that by Christ’s suffering



Without a doubt, we learn more and develop ourselves more as we are guided by the Lord through the problems, challenges, and opportunities we face.



The disciples “ *marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!*” *He is the Christ, the Son of God, the Creator of heavens and earth— He who calms the storms in our lives.*

and death in the flesh He would be filled with mercy, “that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people” (Alma 7:12). The Savior’s experiences were such that there is not a single trace of our problems or afflictions that He does not know deeply. He who was so misunderstood and despised, who suffered both physically and spiritually (see Mosiah 3:7; D&C 19:18–19), who was tempted by the adversary to forsake His mission (see Matthew 4:1–11), nevertheless remained blameless and without sin (see Hebrews 4:15).

Thus the Lord knows deeply of our human afflictions; He is able to understand them and to be compassionate whenever we are involved in difficult situations, having perfect empathy.

Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord promises that “thine adversity and thine

afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high” (D&C 121:7–8). He continues: “All these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good. The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he? Therefore, hold on thy way, . . . for God shall be with you forever and ever” (D&C 122:7–9).

As we seek Him, the Lord, in the greatness of His love, teaches and counsels us, showing His care for us even in our afflictions.

He Succors Us in Our Afflictions

The Savior can respond to our requests for help in several ways, including *(a)* relieving or lightening our burdens, *(b)* increasing our strength to carry our burdens, *(c)* allowing increased burdens to give us needed experience, and *(d)* not providing immediate help in order to test and strengthen our faith and to teach us.

The scriptures are replete with examples of the Lord lifting the burdens of His people (see, for example, Alma 36:16–23; 3 Nephi 17:7). And beyond the scriptural accounts are innumerable experiences in the lives of His followers in many eras that demonstrate the real fulfillment of the Savior’s promise: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

Sometimes our burdens are not removed, but our strength to carry them is increased. One example is the story of Limhi and his people. The Lamanites “put heavy burdens upon their backs,” oppressing them (see Mosiah 21:3). The people of Limhi humbled themselves and prayed that God “would deliver them out of their afflictions” (v. 14).

Heavenly Father heard “their cries, and began to soften the hearts of the Lamanites that they began to ease their burdens; *yet the Lord did not see fit to deliver them out of bondage*” (v. 15; emphasis added). Just a few chapters later in Mosiah, similar help came to another group when “the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord” (Mosiah 24:15). Many times our brothers and sisters in the gospel offer talents, counsel, resources, time, care, or priesthood blessings to help us bear our burdens, “that they may be light” (Mosiah 18:8).

Sometimes our burdens even increase to give us needed experience. I remember an occasion when I was a bishop. There were several members in the ward going through some dire problems; I felt a heavy responsibility on my shoulders. One night I poured out my soul to the Lord, supplicating Him to take from my shoulders the burden that weighed so heavily on me.

It was a special prayer. He heard and answered it. A few weeks later I was released as bishop and called to preside over a large stake.

Elder Helio da Rocha Camargo, a former member of the Seventy, once told of a ward clerk who sincerely prayed that he would be able to learn what he needed to know to fulfill his calling. At the time, all statistical and financial records were kept manually, without the help of a computer. That month, it seemed every possible problem occurred for this ward clerk: bank statements did not reconcile, records contained incorrect dates, and so on. These problems brought extra and overwhelming work. That clerk went to Heavenly Father in prayer and said, “Father, I asked Thee to help me learn to be a clerk, and then all sorts of problems happened with the records.” The response came quickly to his mind: “And didn’t I help you?”



As we seek Him, the Lord, in the greatness of His love, teaches and counsels us, showing His care for us even in our afflictions.

Without a doubt, we learn more and develop ourselves more as we are guided by the Lord through the problems, challenges, and opportunities we face (see 1 Nephi 1:1), including our callings in the Church.

President John Taylor (1808–87) said that afflictions shouldn’t overwhelm us, but we should rejoice in our challenges, for we need these experiences for our eternal well-being with God.¹

Our living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, said that regardless of the tribulations that come to many and in various forms, “ours is the duty to walk by faith, rising above the evils and trials of the world.”²

He Will Not Forsake Us

If the Lord does not remove our afflictions when we want, it may be for our good and to fulfill His purposes, though we may not always understand why at the moment. Such times can be a test of faith or even a learning experience. Divine comfort, support, or deliverance may well come later. A scriptural example is the Savior’s intentional delay in going to Bethany to help Lazarus (see John 11:4, 6, 21–44).

Another example of delayed deliverance occurred on the Sea of Galilee, when the Lord did not immediately calm the storm. Even as gusting winds and waves tossed and covered the boat to the point that His disciples believed they would perish, the Master slept (see Matthew 8:23–26). Then in a majestic exercise of divine power, the Lord controlled the elements, subdued the storm, and brought calm. The disciples “marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!” (v. 27).

I testify that He will not forsake us. He is the Christ, the Son of God, the Creator of heavens and earth. He who calms the storms in our lives knows how to succor His people. ■

NOTES

1. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* (2001), 207.
2. *Stand a Little Taller* (2001), 164.



A Change of Heart

BY ELDER GERALD A. MEAD

Area Authority Seventy
Idaho Area



Conversion is not a one-time event but rather a lifelong process that ultimately changes our very nature.

Because of the Fall, each of us is separated from the presence of God (see Helaman 14:16). Without God's influence in our lives, we are, by nature, disposed to do evil. We find ourselves an enemy to our own Creator (see Mosiah 3:19), in a state that is contrary to His nature and to our own happiness. To escape this condition, it is necessary for each of us to undergo the process of conversion. We must come to know the love of Jesus Christ and the reality of His Atonement, receive a remission of our sins, and experience a change of heart.

While some may initially experience conversion as a single, life-changing event, all of us will find that changing our hearts is a lifelong process. Thus we see the significance of the great question that Alma asked the members of the Church in Zarahemla: "If ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?" (Alma 5:26).

Do we feel to sing the song of redeeming

love? Do we still feel the joy and the love and the desire to do good and to be good that we felt when we first experienced a change in heart? Do we feel clean and redeemed? If we still have these feelings, how do we retain them? If we do not now have these feelings, how can we once again experience them in our lives?

An Early Witness

As a young teenager I came to know for myself in a wonderful way that God lives and that He loves me. I was blessed with a powerful witness of these truths. From the time that I received this knowledge and witness, my life took on a different meaning and purpose. I had a great desire to serve God. I began to pray that I could become a Methodist minister so that I might serve Him in a more meaningful way. Much good came into my life and my outlook brightened. At the same time, an intense struggle began within me to find and walk the path that He would have me walk.

Even though I grew up in a community



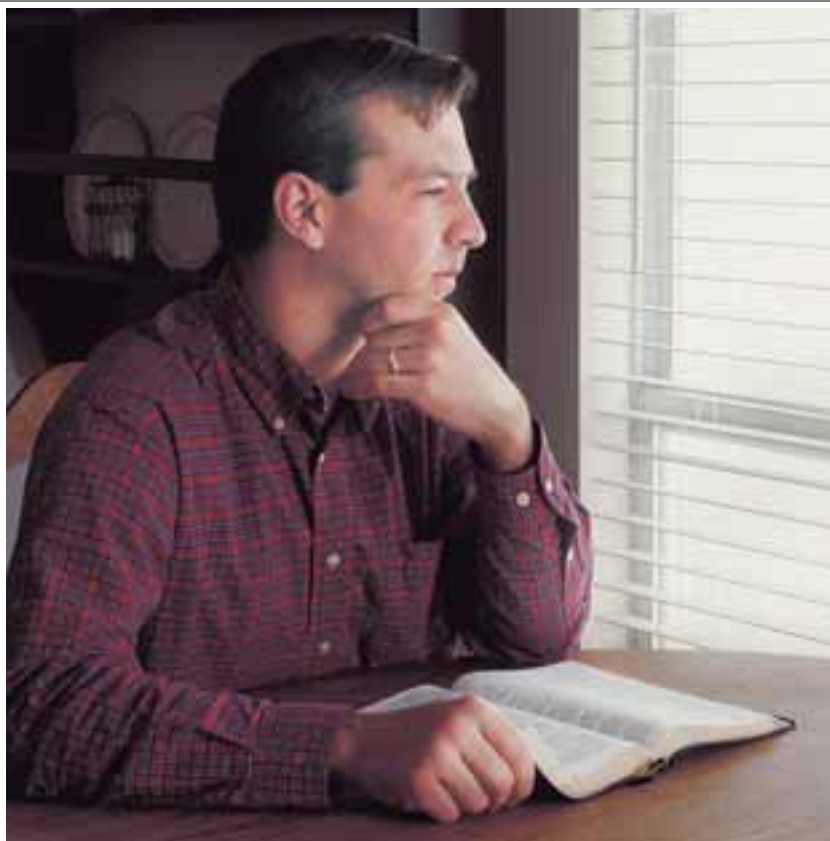
It was not until I was baptized and received the gift of the Holy Ghost that I really began to notice a change of heart.

that consisted predominantly of wonderful Latter-day Saints, and even though I attended Primary regularly and other Church meetings from time to time, I resisted the truths and the doctrine of the restored Church. However, as a skeptical 15-year-old boy, I found myself visiting Nauvoo, Carthage, and Palmyra in company with my LDS friends en route to the National Boy Scout Jamboree. In the process of visiting these sacred places, I came to know, in the same powerful way I had learned God lives, that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and that the fulness of the

gospel had been restored to the earth through him.

Becoming a Different Person

Even though I knew then that God lives and that His church and priesthood had been restored to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith, it was not until I was baptized and received the gift of the Holy Ghost that I really began to notice a change of heart. I began to experience, in a greater way, changes in my life, my attitude, and even in my disposition.



Through prayerful supplication, studying, and pondering, I have come to know the goodness, long-suffering, and mercy of the Lord.

I know that I am a substantially different person than I would have been if I had not gone through this process. I hardly dare to think of what or who I might have become without that change of heart.

And what about now? Am I the person I need to be in order to enter into Father's presence and inherit all that He has? Have I become the manner of man that He is? I realize that there is much left to do and that I must yet become a better person.

"And if men come unto me," the Savior said, "I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them" (Ether 12:27).

I know I must make a great effort to continue to come unto Him. Through humility, desire, prayerful supplication, studying, pondering, and likening the scriptures unto myself, I come to know, over and over, of

His goodness, long-suffering, mercy, and wisdom, and of my own nothingness before Him. I realize that I fall short of who I could become. In these moments of realization, I feel the conviction of guilt and the shame that comes with knowing I could be better. I am compelled to call on Him for mercy and forgiveness and guidance.

My Reality Check

I had an experience to illustrate this process while serving as a stake president. I had a very busy schedule one particular day that included some important meetings and interviews in the evening that I knew required the Lord's Spirit and guidance. However, early in the day, my plans for preparation fell apart as I had to go to several places of business to have something fixed or clarified that was totally unrelated to my plans for the day. The distraction was frustrating, and, in my opinion, entirely unnecessary. Why couldn't people do their jobs properly and live up to their commitments? Why couldn't they do things right the first time?

As I went from business to business, my impatience began to grow until it nearly consumed me. I was angry and frustrated and in a state of high anxiety, all of which was of my own doing. I do not know whether or not those with whom I had interacted knew of my state of mind, but I certainly had negative feelings toward them. Things got worse, and I had to go back for repeat visits to some of the businesses to get things straightened out. Before I was finished, I fully felt the tribulation of being in the world.

The Savior said, "In me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the

world” (John 16:33). But by my own doing, I had put the Savior and all good things far, far away. There seemed to be no way to access Him or that promised peace. I was lost and helpless.

I began to call upon Heavenly Father. I pled for His Spirit to be with me. After all, He knew of my assignments for the evening, and He knew of my desire to perform my duties “in the meekness of [His] Spirit” (D&C 19:23). Still I felt no relief. I was devastated. I needed His Spirit to guide me. I was hungry for the peace and calm and assurance that come from being in His presence. As the time approached to go to the stake center and to do the things that my calling required, I was pleading for His grace and mercy and forgiveness. Nothing changed. I was suffering even to the extent of feeling an almost physical pain. I continued to plead and pressed forward toward my meetings, not knowing what else to do. As I entered the stake center, I paused and heard a voice in my heart and in my mind: “President, you ask me for grace and mercy. You could have been gracious.”

Reconciliation

Oh, how ashamed I was. I viewed myself in my “own carnal state” (Mosiah 4:2), and I knew I could have and should have done better. I pled for forgiveness and made resolution to be better and to bless the lives of those whom I had recently treated so contemptuously. I cannot express the joy I felt when the Spirit of the Lord finally came upon me and I received peace of conscience.

My feelings changed for all of those with whom I had interacted. I saw them as wonderful people only trying to do their jobs and to please me the best they could. I saw them differently and felt differently because my heart had been softened and changed. Subsequent days bore out this change of heart. I made several trips into those same businesses to make amends and to bless and to lift their lives. I came to love those whom I had once held contemptible.

To always retain a remission of our sins, we must come unto Christ as He invites. We must keep ourselves clean to



My heart was softened, and my feelings changed for all of those with whom I had interacted. I made several trips into those same businesses to make amends and to bless and to lift their lives.

the best of our ability and be obedient to the commandments and to the promptings we receive. We must always remember Him and keep Him in our remembrance as we covenant to do during the sacrament. If we have made temple covenants, we must live up to them. We must accept the Savior’s invitation: “Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me” (D&C 19:23.) ■



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

1. Read together the scriptures mentioned in this article. Discuss how each verse relates to experiencing our own change of heart.
2. Invite family members to describe Elder Mead’s lifelong process of experiencing a change of heart. Discuss how his experiences are similar to or different from those of family members. Bear testimony of the Savior’s grace and mercy.



FROM ME TO WE

BY RANDAL THATCHER

The more you give of yourself in thoughtful, selfless deeds, the more you get back in love, tenderness, and happiness.

During our six-month engagement, my wife and I received marital advice from just about every married person we collectively knew, which, when considered in total, amounted to a good deal of counsel. But now, 20 years later, I can recall only one small gem of wisdom given us by one individual.

It is the same bit of advice that I now pass along to friends and relatives who become engaged to wed (with the silent hope it won't get lost amid all the other advice they're sure to receive).

My stake president had requested a meeting with my fiancée and me. Since my bride-to-be was from another

region, he wanted a chance to meet her and to speak with us together as a couple.

After congratulating us and complimenting me on my excellent judgment, he struck a serious tone. He asked us whether we thought couples who ended up divorced were as much in love during their engagements as we were at that moment (and we were feeling very much in love to be sure). We both supposed that they probably were. He then asked us what we thought could possibly have gone so

wrong in a relationship that began with as much love as we two shared at that moment. His point was not lost on us: No one ever expects to get divorced when they're blissfully engaged or newly married. And yet, it happens. We both sensed there was also a deeper, more personal, even somewhat ominous signal in his observation: It could happen even to us!

ENEMY OF A GOOD HOME



Elder Mark E. Petersen (1900–1984) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, *The Way to Peace*, 1969, 68.

"The enemies of a good home are many. Selfishness is the first. Out of selfishness come quarrels, misunderstandings, and often divorce."



PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND

Here was a prospect that neither of us had ever contemplated before. It's doubtful that many engaged couples ever ponder the possibility of their own divorce, even though a disturbingly high number do eventually end up divorcing. I think he must have noticed our concerned glances at one another, because the next thing he said to us was reassuring and profound in its simplicity.

He suggested that virtually every divorce is the result of just one single, solitary thing: selfishness. Either one or both of them place

themselves and their wants and desires above those of their spouse. While the resulting symptoms may become much more complicated, the underlying disease is the same: plain old selfishness. President Gordon B. Hinckley seemed to support this premise when he taught some years ago, "Selfishness is the cause of most of the domestic problems that afflict so many homes of our nation."¹

My stake president then gave us the antidote against this insidious, love-killing cancer with a single word: *selflessness*.

We were challenged to look for opportunities to serve each other, to do little chores around the house, and to think up ways to surprise and delight one another.

Please remember this one little gem of wisdom: selflessness is key to happiness in marriage.

He challenged us both to look for opportunities to serve the other, to do little chores around the house, and to think up ways to surprise and delight one another. And he promised us that if we would both do this faithfully and without ever keeping tally of what each had done for the other, not only would we never divorce but we would live quite happily ever after. What a promise!

For 20 years now we've been field-testing this sage counsel from a wise stake president, and I am pleased to report that so far, his promise is golden.

In the interest of complete disclosure, I must admit that we've had the same ups and downs that most married couples have. But during the down times, if I stop to check myself against the challenge we were given, I can always recognize where I've been selfish. Even seemingly small things, like leaving the house without a good-bye squeeze or



thoughtlessly pouring the last of the milk into my own bowl of cereal, contribute to these down times.

Thankfully, however, when I begin to look for any opportunity to do some kind thing for my wife—like decorating our front door with a Welcome Home message when she's been away, or calling our home answering machine and leaving a funny recording to make her laugh—it never takes long to correct the slide and raise our happiness quotient significantly.

It's a simple little one-to-one correlation: the more you give of yourself in thoughtful, selfless deeds, the more you get back in love, tenderness, and happiness. The best part is that it really works. It works in any relationship but seems particularly well adapted to marriage partners.

And so to anyone who is now married or who plans to be married someday, amid the copious and varied advice that you receive, please remember this one little gem of wisdom: selflessness is key to happiness in marriage. And if you accept the challenge of selflessness, fulfillment of its promise will follow. ■

Randal Thatcher is a member of the Seattle First Ward, Seattle Washington North Stake.

NOTE

1. *Without Sacrifice There Is No True Worship*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (17 Oct. 1962), 5.



MONDAY

Bringing Church HOME



BY JUDY KAY W. FROME

Many years ago, I heard President Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles say to sisters like me whose husbands did not attend church, “If your husband doesn’t feel at home going to church, then do everything you can to make him feel at church while he’s at home.”¹ This was a terrific concept to me, and it was my guiding theme for many years before my husband returned to full activity in the Church.

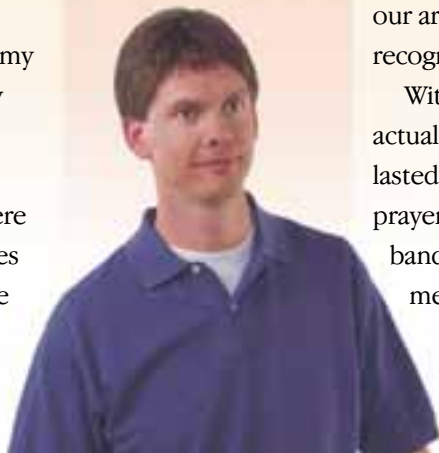
One of the ways I thought I could help my husband feel at church was through family home evening. But I believe family home evening doesn’t happen in a vacuum. It is likely to be most successful in a home where prayers are said before meals, the scriptures are read, and pictures of the Savior and the

Before my husband returned to full activity in the Church, family home evenings helped him feel the spirit of the gospel.

temples are part of the decor. These things were all part of the gradual transformation of my husband’s attitude toward the Church from openly hostile to sincerely trying to gain his own testimony.

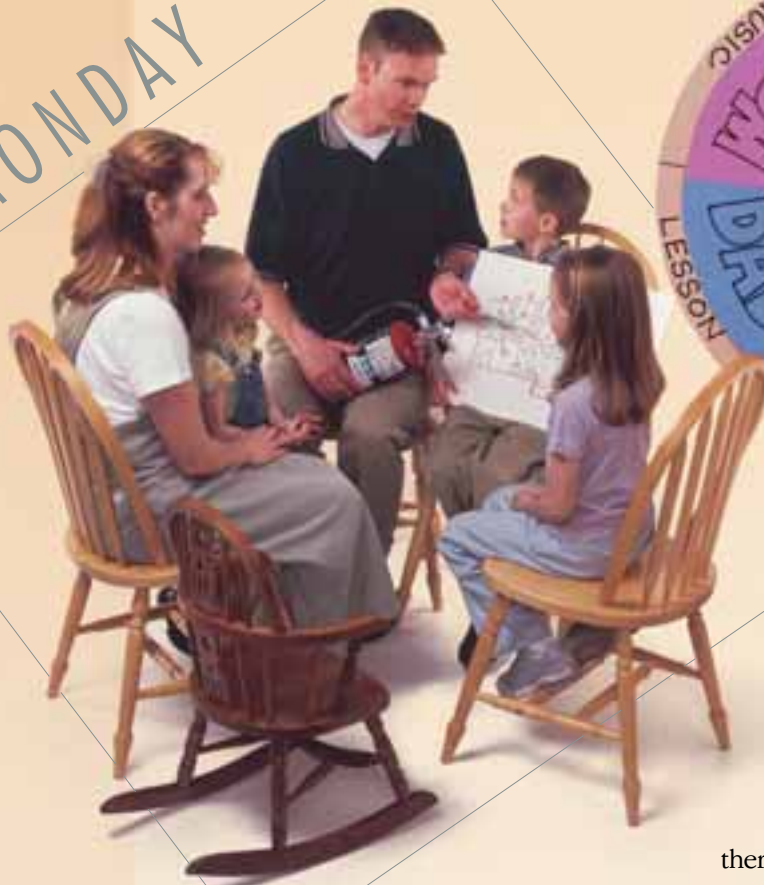
I started out slowly. When we had just two tiny tots, family home evening was not a structured occurrence; it was more of an ongoing idea. The children and I included scripture stories each night at bedtime, sang Primary songs every day, practiced folding our arms to pray for meals, and learned to recognize pictures of the General Authorities.

With three children, we began to hold an actual event called family home evening. It lasted about 20 minutes and featured songs, prayers, a short lesson, and treats. My husband, Kelly, joined us sometimes. On one memorable occasion as we sang “Jesus



PHOTOGRAPHY BY WELDEN C. ANDERSEN, POSED BY MODELS

MONDAY



I invited my husband to join us every week. I didn't leave it unspoken. Several times over the years when it was his turn for the lesson, he'd talk about fire safety, and we'd practice a fire drill.

Wants Me for a Sunbeam," three-year-old Josh suddenly stopped in midverse and asked his father in astonishment, "How come you know this song?"

"Well, I used to go to Sunbeams at church too," he said, smiling. "Well, why don't you go now?" Josh replied in a puzzled tone. There followed an awkward silence.

But we continued to hold family home evening. Many nights Kelly would go over to the neighbors' house or find something else to do. We held family night anyway—not in a defiant way and not to be divisive; we simply enjoyed it. He had his own reasons for not wanting to participate, and he didn't want to spoil it for us.

There were several key things I did to help make family home evenings successful, and that meant trying to involve my husband:

1. I made a chart for keeping track of who

had which job. Each family member, including Kelly, had a specific assignment every Monday night. Then I rotated the names and responsibilities each week. When Dad had the lesson but wasn't there, we read a story or just talked. Someone substituted when he wasn't there to give a prayer or lead the music.

2. I invited my husband to join us every week. I didn't leave it unspoken. I would mention it in the morning before he left for work and then remind the whole family at dinner. Then I'd say privately to him that I hoped he'd join us. I tried hard to be friendly and neutral with my weekly invitations.

3. It was OK that we didn't always have a doctrinal lesson. Several times over the years when it was Kelly's turn for the lesson, he'd talk about fire safety, and we'd practice a fire drill. Sometimes we would even set off the smoke alarm so everyone would know how it sounds. Other times he focused on Scouting requirements or held discussions on specific topics like drug and alcohol abuse or stranger safety.

4. Many family home evening nights involved playing board games, going for a bike ride or a walk around a park, or looking at Christmas lights and singing carols. I know we are urged to have a gospel lesson, but our family dynamics at the time often precluded

that. Just being together as a family was a testimony-building experience. Family night helped show us all that we didn't have to live on a separate track from Dad.

5. Above all, I recognized my husband as the head of our family. I always asked him to join in and lead family home evening. I didn't hesitate to get everything set up and have everyone gather in the living room. But then I would turn the time over to Kelly, literally and figuratively.

6. And finally, I never gave up on family home evening. There were many spectacular failures—with surly teenagers, nine-year-olds who just had to tease, and restless toddlers. Sometimes it seemed like there was a quarrel between Kelly and me every Monday night. Satan was doing his best to keep any spirituality from entering our home. He didn't want my husband to get used to feeling the Spirit and become comfortable with the gospel.

Through those difficult years, I learned that blessings result from following the counsel to hold family

home evening and diligently striving to include every member of the family, even those who might be hostile to the gospel or disinterested. By bringing the family together to play games, go for walks, or just talk, we have been blessed. In my husband's case, our family nights showed him that even though he had chosen to opt out of the lifestyle of the other family members, he hadn't opted out of the family. In my case, I found that my family, my marriage, and my own heart were strengthened. ■

Judy Kay W. Frome is a member of the Patuxent Ward, Suitland Maryland Stake.

NOTE

1. "Begin Where You Are—At Home," *Ensign*, Feb. 1972, 71.

Our family nights showed my husband that even though he had chosen to opt out of the lifestyle of the other family members, he hadn't opted out of the family.

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY



Our Son's **BATTLE** with **Drugs**



My wife and I learned that it was imperative to follow the promptings of the Spirit in order to help our son.

NAME WITHHELD

From the earliest days of our marriage, my wife, Paula (names have been changed), and I were staunchly committed to strengthening and protecting our family. Individual and family prayer and scripture study, attendance at meetings, Sabbath day observance, family home evening—all of these we resolved to do, confident that if we did our part spiritually, our children would never stray.

The Lord blessed us, and we saw the prophetic wisdom in adhering to the Lord's counsel. It appeared as though family life would be a relatively smooth journey for us. Our two eldest sons accepted calls to serve full-time missions, and our other children anticipated the time when they too could serve. However, several months into our second son's mission, Paula and I noticed some disturbing

changes in our third son, Marcus. One morning I received a phone call at work from Marcus's seminary teacher. He shared with me a conversation overheard in his seminary class indicating that Marcus was using drugs regularly. Suddenly the fractured puzzle Marcus had become fell into place. Convinced that this teacher was inspired to call me, I felt prompted to leave work immediately and drive to the high school, where I had Marcus called from class. I didn't explain why I was there. We simply went to my car and drove to a secluded spot.

Facing Hard Facts

At first Marcus denied everything. Then, after some simple but calm probing, he opened up and revealed the culture into which he had immersed himself over the past

few months. As I fought to remain calm, my mind and emotions reeled. Marcus was a brilliant student with a keen mind and tremendous ability. He was athletic and kept himself in top form. I asked him how he could do this to himself after the meticulous care he had taken to stay healthy and strong. He admitted he hadn't meant to go so far, then casually remarked, "But, Dad, it feels so good. You and Mom wouldn't understand." He shrugged and added with a strange smile, "I'm high right now."

Heartbroken and discouraged, Paula and I talked late that first night, trying to comprehend this unexpected horror. Naturally, we asked ourselves the proverbial "why?" That was the first time in my life that I came face to face

with the staggering realization that this kind of tragedy could happen in any family—even ours!

We were determined to do anything to help Marcus, but we soon realized this was going to be a long, torturous process. We contemplated rehabilitation. We thought of moving, of sending Marcus to relatives, anything to get him away from his new friends and the influences destroying him. After considering all the possibilities, we ruefully realized that no amount of effort on our part would be successful until Marcus was committed to changing. Sadly, his lack of commitment was painfully apparent.

Over the next months we witnessed the insidious, satanic control that drug abuse has over those who fall into



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The **Spirit** was undeniably clear. Finally there was only one remaining item, the very first one, the one I had almost discarded before writing it down: love him and let him feel the influence of home.



SPIRIT

its malevolent clutches. More horrifying even than what drugs do to the physical body was what drugs do to the mind, to the spirit, to the personal will to rise above evil and strive for good. The prophet Nephi seems to have understood this condition when he wrote of Satan's influence, "Thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell . . . until he grasps them with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance" (2 Nephi 28:21–22). Marcus lost all desire for self-improvement, and his sense of conscience was blurred past feeling.

Paula and I had always maintained home rules and assigned chores and family responsibilities. At first Marcus made a semblance of conformity, but one by one the family rules were blatantly broken. Curfews were ignored. He refused to do household chores. Coming in late, he didn't get to bed until the early hours of the morning, and then he slept his daytime hours away.

There were many times that Paula and I sat down with

Marcus and explained to him as lovingly and calmly as we could (and sometimes not so calmly) that he was an adult and had his agency, but he had to choose between the life he was leading and life in our home. He let it be known that if we wanted to "kick him out," he would leave, but he insisted that the decision be ours, not his. It was one more example of Marcus shirking his responsibility.

Developing a Plan of Action

One Sunday afternoon, after a considerable amount of prayer and reflection, I sat down to make a list of things that Paula and I should do in order to deal with Marcus. The first thing that came to my mind was "Love him and let him experience the positive influences of home." That idea was so basic, so obvious, that I was inclined to discard it as not being practical. In my mind, merely loving Marcus didn't address our dilemma. In my impatience to solve his problems quickly, I wanted to get to the other things I believed would be more effective. Reluctantly, I did write

down that first idea; then I proceeded to make a list of 20 or 25 actions I felt were much more significant.

My list was loaded with wise parenting practices, things like insisting that Marcus accept responsibility for household chores, home rules, and specific consequences for his behavior. My list also included a warning to Paula and me not to facilitate Marcus's inappropriate behavior by ignoring his violation of rules. I believed that Marcus needed to be treated just like the other members of the family. And if he refused to abide by our family rules of conduct, then we would fairly, but firmly, ask him to leave our home.

After finishing my list, I went back and evaluated each item, eliminating some so as to leave only the most helpful and effective ideas. Strangely, the elimination process progressed further than I had anticipated as the Spirit moved me. Finally there was only one remaining item, the very first one, the one I had almost discarded before writing it down: love him and let him feel the influence of home. The Spirit was undeniably clear. We couldn't influence Marcus for good unless he was in our home.

I shared this frustrating experience with Paula. She had received the same answer that we should love Marcus with all our hearts, keep him as close to us as we could, and expose him to positive family influences.

Although we know that other people with similar challenges receive equally strong answers to prayer through doctors, counselors, and rehabilitation programs, we felt certain that the Spirit had guided my wife and me to the right answer for us at that time.

However, conditions worsened. I went to Paula several

times, arguing that we needed to ask Marcus to leave home if he was not willing to change his lifestyle. Each time, Paula asked me whether I thought the Spirit had rescinded the earlier impression. I had to admit that the impression had not been repealed.

Marcus went from paycheck to paycheck, spending most of his earnings on drugs.

Then one day he asked Paula to save a portion of each check for him. He knew if he kept his money, he would waste it. He also gave Paula his tithing and asked her to pay it. We saw this inclination as a ray of hope.

Then our hopes were dashed when Marcus didn't return home one night. The following night he came in late, obviously under the influence of something. He demanded his money. We pleaded with him, but he was insistent. Over the next few days Paula gave him part of his money.



One day Marcus asked Paula to save a portion of each check for him. He knew if he kept his money, he would waste it. He also gave Paula his tithing and asked her to pay it. We saw this inclination as a ray of hope.

Feeling a Sense of Hopelessness

In a drug-induced tailspin, Marcus left home for several days, and we didn't know where he was. One Sunday, while at church, I felt

impressed to return home. Arriving home, I found Marcus searching the house for the remainder of his money. He wasn't expecting me and was embarrassed and irritated when I discovered him. He demanded his money. I pointed out to him that he had made the arrangement with his mother and the implied agreement was that he would use that money for something worthwhile, not for drugs. He denied wanting it for drugs but insisted he could use the money however he chose.

Although he became angry and tried to bait me, I remained calm. Over the months I had gradually learned

not to become angry as I spoke with Marcus. On this particular Sunday, I was more calm than usual, and we had a good talk.

Not wanting to be home when the rest of the family arrived, Marcus prepared to leave, indicating that he would get his money from Paula later that day. I felt impressed to remind him that often I had warned him that if he refused to change his behavior, he would have to find another place to live. As lovingly as I could, I told him that I had had a change of heart. “Marcus,” I said, “this is your home. It will always be your home. Whatever happens to you, I want you to come back here.”

Sullenly, he left the house. There was no noticeable change in his demeanor, but as he walked out the door

and across our front lawn, I called after him, “Marcus, I love you.” Although my words didn’t cause a noticeable change in Marcus, I knew I had finally accepted the answer the Spirit had whispered to me months earlier.

When Paula returned from church, I explained all that had happened, hoping she would refuse to give Marcus his remaining money. She prayed and pondered. Surprising to me, the Spirit indicated to her that the money belonged to Marcus and that she should give it back to him.

Over the next three days Marcus squandered his money on drugs. That Wednesday, Paula saw Marcus stumble into the backyard and collapse for a time on our trampoline. A while later he came into the house. His first words were spoken in agony and fear: “Mom, I



The Savior’s Atonement, which allowed Marcus the opportunity to return from his bleak encounter with the world, was indisputable proof of our Heavenly Father’s mercy and love.

A SUCCESSFUL PARENT



“A successful parent is one who has loved, one who has sacrificed, and one who has cared for, taught, and

ministered to the needs of a child. If you have done all of these and your child is still wayward or troublesome or worldly, it could well be that you are, nevertheless, a successful parent. Perhaps there are children who have come into the world that would challenge any set of parents under any set of circumstances. Likewise, perhaps there are others who would bless the lives of, and be a joy to, almost any father or mother.”

**President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95),
“Parents’ Concern for Children,” *Ensign*,
Nov. 1983, 65.**

don’t know what I’ve done to myself. Can I come home?”

Changing a Life

Some of the most torturous times of this ordeal crushed in upon us over the next several weeks. During this time Marcus tried desperately to break from his habits; then he would lose his resolve and crash again. It was painful and discouraging to watch him battle without conquering the adversary. Heartbroken, we wondered if we had lost him, if he had crossed the line of no return. But his siblings rallied round him with love and determination. Never had we pulled together with such united resolve. Still, Paula and I were frightened and dismayed because we recognized what an insidious force held Marcus. Our entire family fought on against what seemed insurmountable odds, but we persisted, fasted, and prayed.

Finally Marcus returned to an old job where he worked out of town for a week at a time, usually isolated from civilization. Returning at the end of that first week, Marcus announced he had gone the whole time without so much as a cigarette—the first time in almost two and a half years. Our elation was guarded, but we were immensely grateful for even a sliver of hope. The following weekend he reported the same glad news. He began taking his Book of Mormon to work. Soon he was taking extra copies of the Book of Mormon to give away, which he did regularly.

I don’t know exactly what clicked inside Marcus, but he turned his life around. It was inspiring and humbling to see an Alma the Younger–type transformation unfold in our home. Marcus wasn’t the same person anymore. More than anything he wanted to serve a mission. He determined that whatever it took, no matter how long, he was going to follow the path of complete repentance

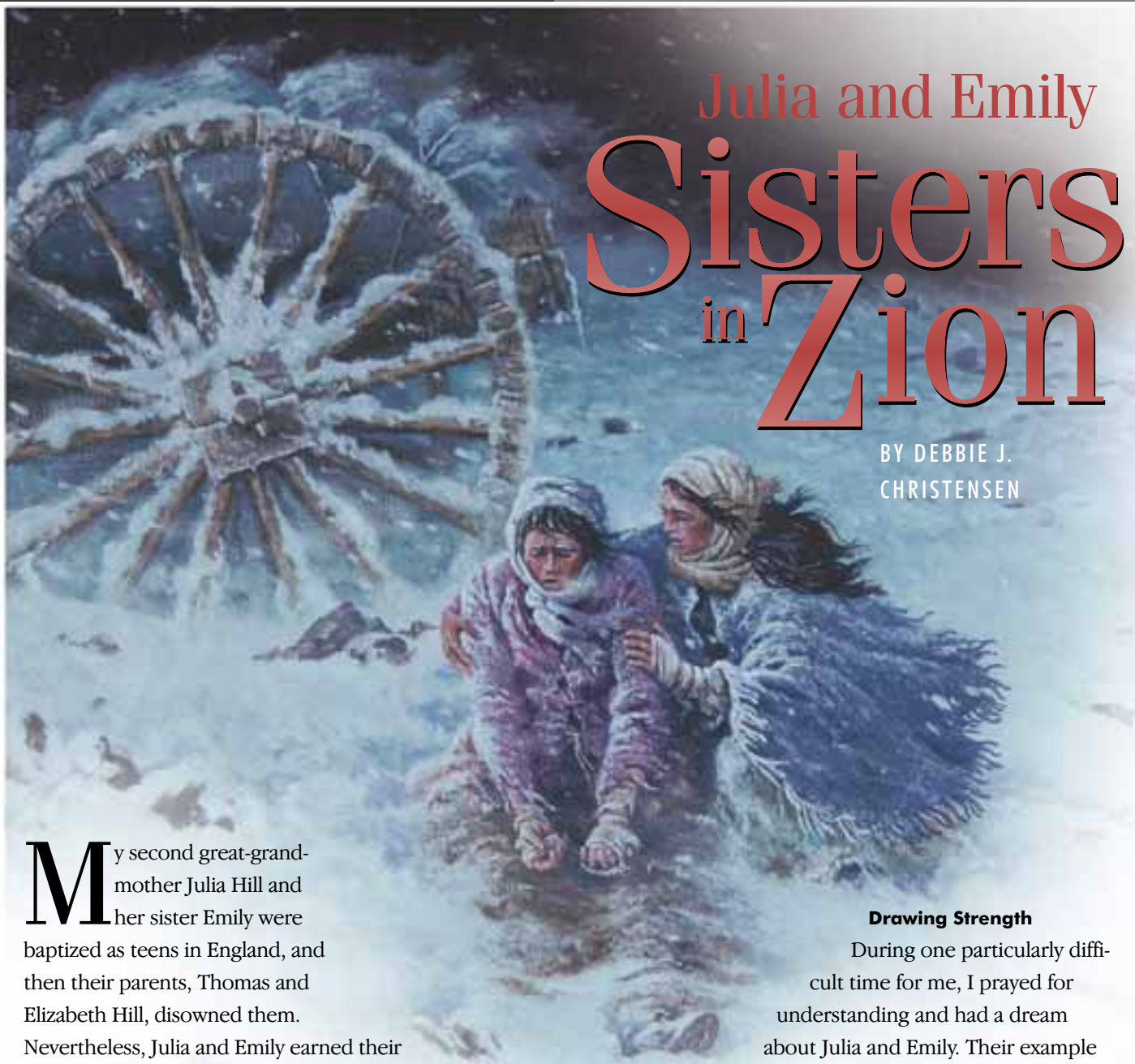
and prepare himself to serve a mission.

Two weeks after Marcus’s 21st birthday, he entered the Missionary Training Center. Paula and I still have a difficult time reflecting on the last several years. When we consider the pain and heartache as well as the subsequent joy of Marcus’s reformation, it is difficult to control our emotions. We learned a great deal from our experience. We learned that no person or family is free from the buffeting of Satan. It is absolutely vital that we heed the Lord’s counsel to pray, study the scriptures, and be together as a family. These are wonderful protections, but

they don’t exempt our children or us from tragedy, trials, and temptations.

We learned that we must heed the spiritual promptings from the Holy Ghost. The Spirit whispered to a seminary teacher, who called me at work. The Spirit whispered to me to leave work to visit with Marcus. I remember so well the direct impression as I made my list: Love him and let him feel the influence of family. The Spirit prompted me to leave church, return home, and express my love to Marcus. There were many times that the Spirit whispered to Paula and me, and we learned it was absolutely imperative that we follow the promptings. I am convinced that had we ignored these soft whisperings, we would have lost Marcus.

Heavenly Father loves Marcus, as He loves each of us. Throughout this period of struggle and hurt, I was gently reminded that long before Paula and I assumed earthly custody of this young man, he had been, and was still, our Heavenly Father’s son. The Savior’s Atonement, which allowed Marcus the opportunity to return from his bleak encounter with the world, was indisputable proof of our Heavenly Father’s mercy and love. ■



Julia and Emily Sisters in Zion

BY DEBBIE J.
CHRISTENSEN

My second great-grandmother Julia Hill and her sister Emily were baptized as teens in England, and then their parents, Thomas and Elizabeth Hill, disowned them. Nevertheless, Julia and Emily earned their own passage to America and sailed from Liverpool on the ship *Thornton*. Also on board this ship was Captain James G. Willey, who led the fourth handcart company west.


Once 23-year-old Julia and 20-year-old Emily arrived in Iowa, they joined the Willey handcart company. Early winter snowstorms caused everyone to suffer from hunger and exposure. On Rocky Ridge in Wyoming, many starved or froze to death. Those who survived were comforted in their suffering by their testimonies of Jesus Christ. But I believe what saved Julia and Emily, in addition to their testimonies, was their love for each other as sisters.

Drawing Strength

During one particularly difficult time for me, I prayed for understanding and had a dream about Julia and Emily. Their example of sisterhood lifted and encouraged me.

Whether what I saw in my dream really happened exactly as I imagined does not matter to me. What does matter is the lesson I learned. I came to see clearly the parallel between it and my own struggle.

In my dream, I could see Julia and Emily stranded in the snow on the windy summit of Rocky Ridge with the rest of the Willey handcart company. They had no heavy clothing to keep them warm. Julia was sitting in the snow, shaking. She could not carry on. Emily, who was freezing as well, knew that if she did not help Julia stand up, Julia would die. As Emily wrapped her arms around her sister to help her up,



*My ancestors' experiences
as handcart pioneers
on Rocky Ridge in 1856
reminded me that
we are not alone
in our struggles.*

Julia began to cry—but no tears came, only soft whimpering sounds. Together they walked slowly to their handcart. Thirteen died that terrible night. Julia and Emily survived.

We all have trials, but like Julia and Emily we needn't perish on the windswept summit alone. Though we may feel abandoned, we are not. The Savior is near, and our brothers and sisters in the gospel are near as well. Perhaps we can even do as Emily did and lift another, even though we ourselves are suffering. When we do this, our brothers and sisters become as important as ourselves. We become sanctified—made clean and holy through our service. We become more like our Savior.

Julia and Emily understood this.

Writing Music

Years after passing through the intense trials on Rocky Ridge, Emily penned the words to the hymn "As Sisters in Zion." I have often drawn strength from them:

*As sisters in Zion, we'll all work
together;
The blessings of God on our labors
we'll seek.*

*We'll build up his kingdom with earnest endeavor;
We'll comfort the weary and strengthen the weak.*

*The errand of angels is given to women;
And this is a gift that, as sisters, we claim:
To do whatsoever is gentle and human,
To cheer and to bless in humanity's name.*

*How vast is our purpose, how broad is our mission,
If we but fulfill it in spirit and deed.
Oh, naught but the Spirit's divinest tuition
Can give us the wisdom to truly succeed.*

(Hymns, no. 309)

IN TIMES OF NEED



*"Life never was
intended to be
easy. Rather, it is
a period of prov-
ing and growth.
It is interwoven*

*with difficulties, challenges, and
burdens. . . . Yet these very forces,
if squarely faced, provide oppor-
tunity for tremendous personal
growth and development."*

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Plan for Happiness and Exaltation," *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 11.

I love Julia and Emily for their example to me. I love my sisters in the gospel. I know we must love and serve others with tenderness if we would live with God. If we do, we will be of one heart and one mind and therefore will be His. ■

*Debbie J. Christensen
is a member of the
Sherwood Hills Ward,
Provo Utah Edgemont
North Stake.*

SEEING BEYOND SINGLE

*Married Church members can do much
to help single adults feel welcome and accepted.*

BY CHRIS BROUGH

As a young boy, I had my entire life planned out. I would serve a mission at age 19. Upon my return I would start my college career and find someone to marry. I would graduate by age 25 with at least one child and live happily ever after.

I'm 31 now, and my life has not turned out exactly the way I imagined. While my mission and education have passed in the time frame I expected, marriage has not. Being an "older" single hasn't been easy, but I can say that in many ways I am grateful for this experience because I have grown tremendously from it. However, one aspect of being single still perplexes me: the separation I sometimes feel from married members of the Church.

Since most Church members marry at a younger age, they may find it difficult to relate to older single members. While I can't speak for all single members of the Church, there are some experiences many of us seem to share. In light of this, I would like to offer some suggestions to married members for interacting with singles—at the same time recognizing that we single members also bear responsibility for reaching out to married members of the Church.

Finding Common Ground

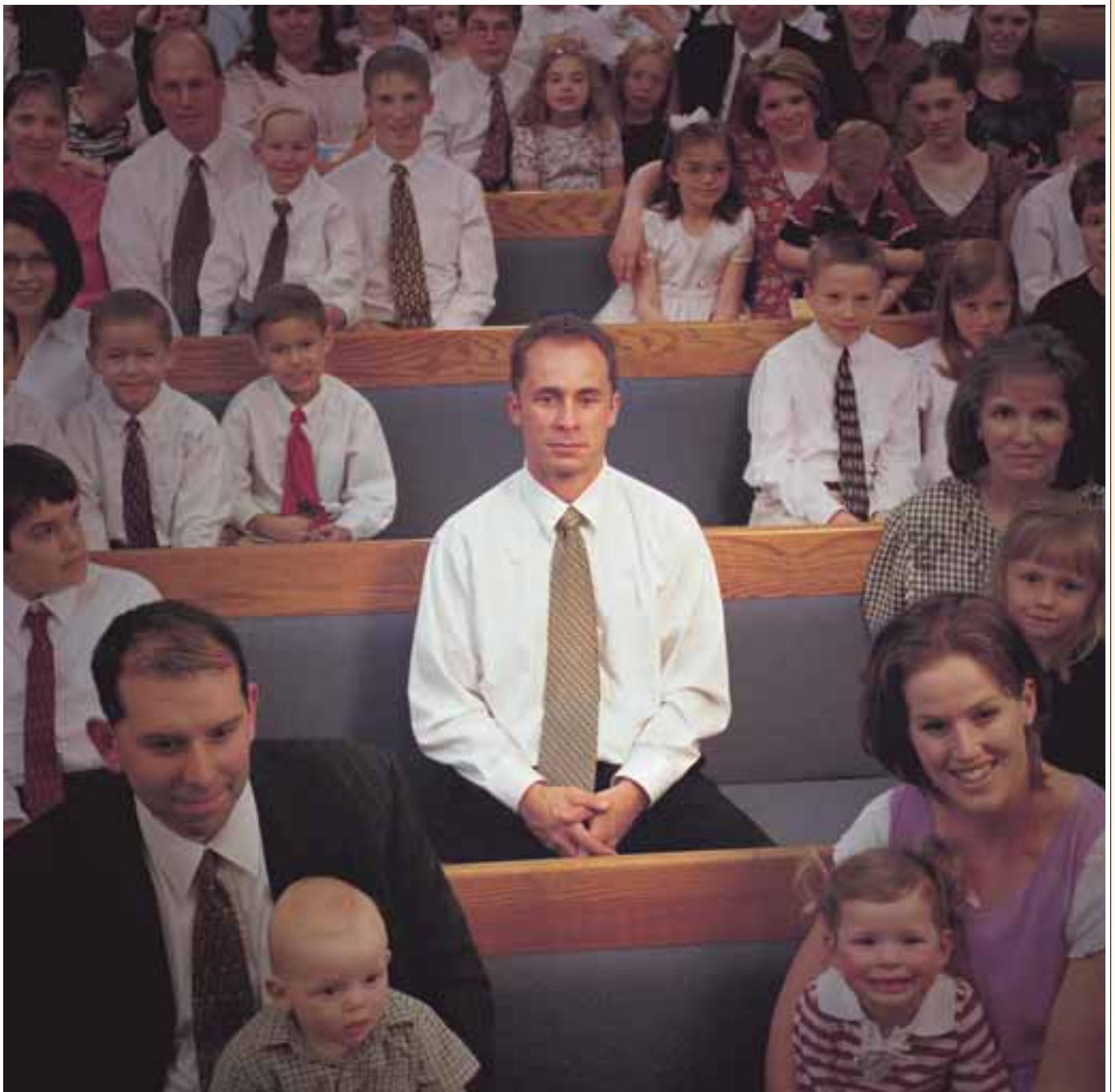
My single friends and I lead busy, productive lives. In addition to work, school, and Church responsibilities,

many of us are involved in civic activities, charities, hobbies, and other activities. I always appreciate it when others ask me about these activities rather than focusing on my marital status or whether I am dating anyone. It is also much easier to find common ground that way.

I believe the vast majority of single Church members wholeheartedly support the Church's emphasis on the family. But because we don't have families of our own, it can be painful when our marital status is frequently the main topic of conversation. I have friends who unfortunately have chosen inactivity in the Church because they feel out of place, even though they have a testimony. They plan on returning to activity when they get married. Some do return—others get lost in the mists of darkness. Of course, these individuals are responsible for their own decisions. But we are much more likely to feel comfortable in Church settings when we are welcomed by members who don't focus on what we lack but rather accept us and value what we have to contribute.

"Fellowship One with Another"

Some good-natured teasing can be enjoyable in almost any relationship. But I will admit that I groan when I hear the all-too-familiar quote about single men above 25 being



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT REIER, POSED BY MODELS

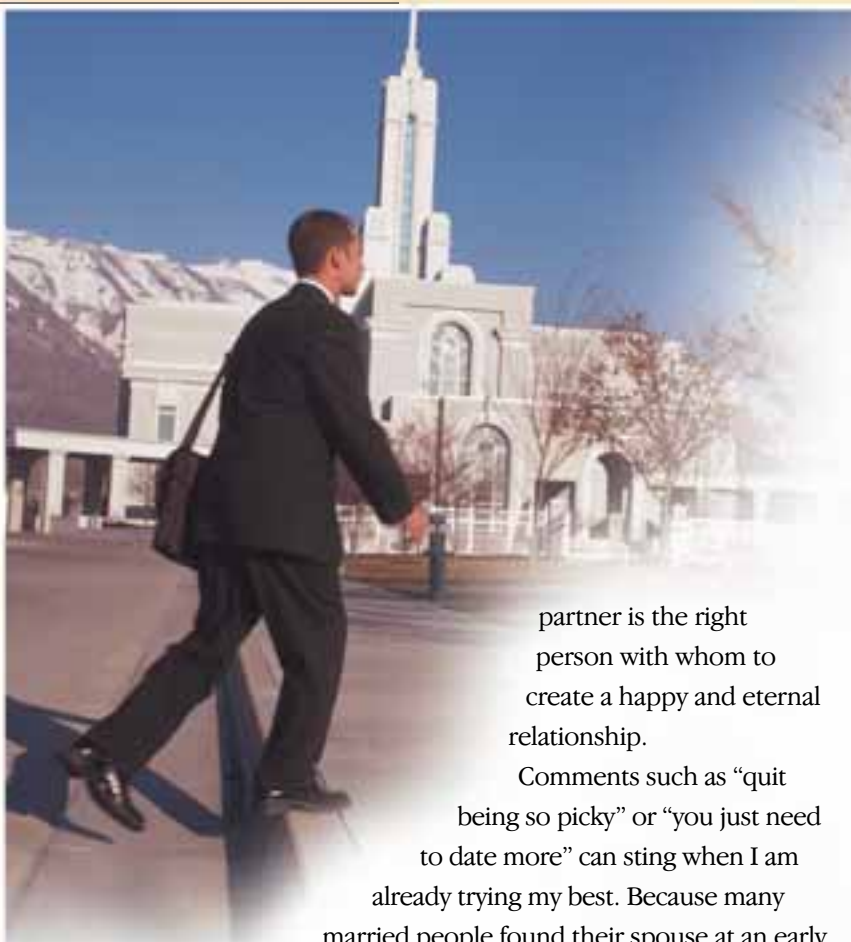
“a menace to society.” Even though people who say this are usually well intentioned, such comments send the indirect message that we single men are purposely shirking the responsibility of marriage.

I’ve heard single women say that when they reveal their age and marital status, some people react with pity. My single friends don’t want others to feel sorry for them. We just want to be warmly greeted, as were members of the Church during Helaman’s day: “And they did fellowship one with another, and did rejoice one with another, and did have great joy” (Helaman 6:3).

Giving Advice

People often try to give advice to my single friends and me about dating or marriage. I am grateful for their concern, and I know they want me to be happy. However, I am most receptive to advice that I have requested—usually from people I have a close relationship with.

Sometimes people will tell me that I “just need to get married.” But that is like telling a starving person that they “just need to eat.” We truly want to be married but are simply struggling with *how* to do it. And after all, marriage involves seeking and receiving confirmation that a potential



My single friends and I are responsible for trying to align our will with the Lord's by working to develop our spirituality.

partner is the right person with whom to create a happy and eternal relationship.

Comments such as “quit being so picky” or “you just need to date more” can sting when I am already trying my best. Because many married people found their spouse at an early age, they might not fully appreciate the fact that for others, finding the right partner does not come so soon or so easily. But when someone is guided by the Holy Ghost in offering suggestions and I can feel that influence, I am comfortable following their counsel regardless of their dating expertise. As the scriptures tell us, “The Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach” (D&C 42:14).

Blind Dates

Many of my friends enjoy being lined up with people who have similar interests. But please bear in mind that two people should have more in common than the fact that they are both single and LDS. If I wanted to help a friend find a job, I would not suggest any job opening I happened to come across. Instead, I would learn more about my friend's background and previous employment, then suggest something he or she might like.

The matchmaking process should be similar.

There are many reasons why some people may choose not to accept an offer for a blind date. Please know that we value your interest in us but that we must make our own decisions regarding our personal lives.

Pull, Don't Push

When someone is struggling with something, we may say that person “needs a little push.” May I suggest that when referring to single adults, the expression could be changed to “needs a little pull”? These two statements seem similar but actually have different meanings.

A bishop once said to me, “What is it going to take to get you married?” On another occasion a different bishop said, “What can I do to help you in your dating?” Both bishops were concerned about my welfare, but the second bishop, rather than pushing me, indicated his desire to be a part of my life and to offer help. He helped *pull* me along, and he let me decide how much I wanted him to be involved. The push method often causes feelings of resistance, while the pull method most often results in feelings of validation and closeness.

The one who best exemplified the “pull” approach is the Savior. Many scripture stories illustrate this, but two stand out in my mind: the story of Matthew's call to the ministry (see Matthew 9:9–12; Luke 5:27–32) and the story of the rich man (see Luke 18:18–22). The Savior didn't just tell these people what to do; He sought to work with them. Christ went *with* Matthew to his home to dine and teach. He told the rich man to sell all he had and join *with* Him in His ministry. The Savior knew that if people would journey with Him,

He could pull them in the right direction through teaching and example. Likewise, if you will journey with us and help pull us through the challenges we may face, we will be much more successful than if we are pushed.

Being Single Does Not Mean Being Unworthy

Because certain callings in the kingdom are reserved for married men, some people might mistakenly think that being single implies unrighteousness. But while my dating methodology may be imperfect, that does not mean I am unworthy. Single people can be particularly vulnerable to the world's temptations regarding morality and chastity, so I feel it is a great accomplishment to be worthy to carry a temple recommend.

I have often been told that if I had more faith, I could get married. Yet many faithful people don't always get what they wish for. Some people long for better health, some people wish for financial stability, some couples are not blessed with children, and so on. The prophet Abraham was 100 years old and his wife Sarah was 90 years old when she bore Isaac (see Genesis 17:17). Surely they were not made to wait because they lacked faith.



Most faithful single Saints are committed to being good neighbors, family members, and ward members.

Only the Lord knows our time and season for marriage and what we must do to learn and progress. The Bible tells us, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has stated:

"The Lord has His own timetable. . . . Like other important mortal events that depend on the agency of others or the will and timing of the Lord, marriage cannot be anticipated or planned with certainty."¹

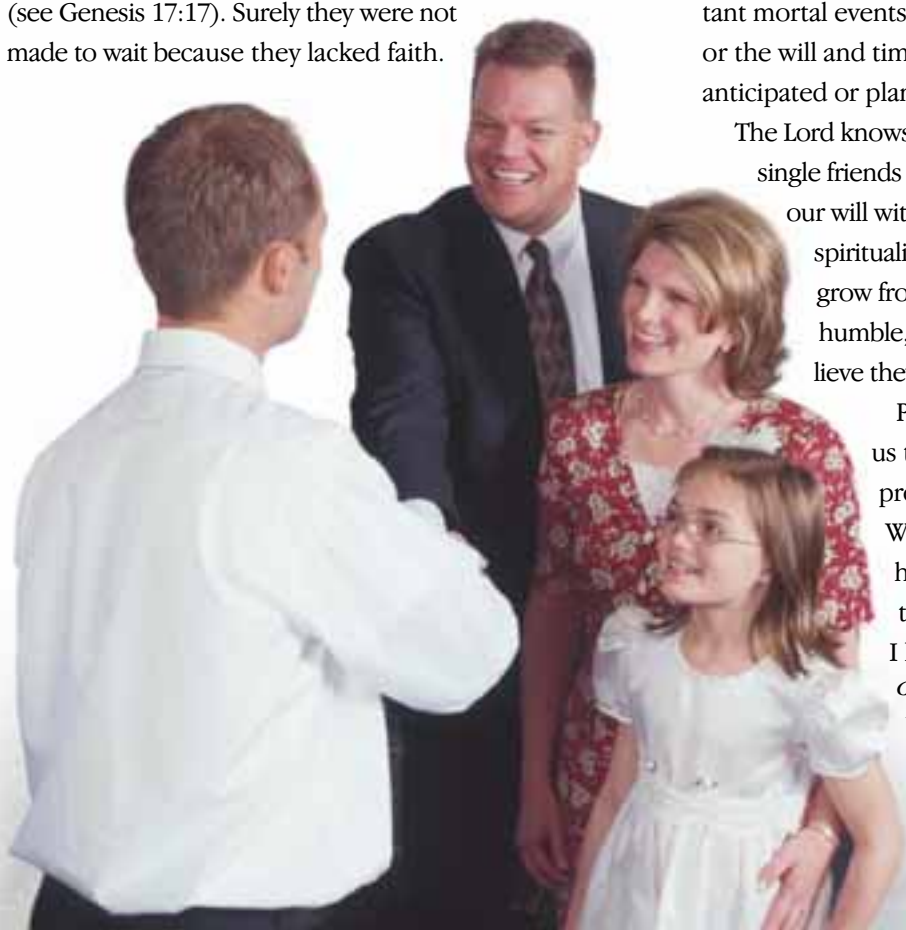
The Lord knows when it will be our time. Until then, my single friends and I are responsible for trying to align our will with the Lord's by working to develop our spirituality. We do this by seeking to learn and grow from our trials. As a result, some of the most humble, spiritual people I know are single. I believe they are a great asset to the kingdom of God.

Parents, leaders, family, and friends want us to get married. We want to be married—probably more than you want us to be. We have similar goals and desires. You have the power to be a positive influence to uplift and inspire. If we work together, I know the Lord will bless our efforts. ■

Chris Brough is a member of the Bair Canyon Branch, Kaysville Utah East Stake.

NOTE

1. See "Timing," *Ensign*, Oct. 2003, 12, 15.



TEACHING OUR CHILDREN TO Accept

BY GAYLE M. CLEGG

Second Counselor in the Primary General Presidency



We can help our children see beyond differences in others and recognize that we are all children of a loving Heavenly Father.

Every day at school four-year-old Brandon looked out for Jonathan, an autistic classmate. He helped Jonathan line up for recess. In the classroom, he would often find Jonathan's crayons and paper for him. One day the teacher told Brandon's mother about Brandon's unusual kindness. Later the mother shared the teacher's observations with her son and asked him why he was so kind. Brandon looked at his mom in disbelief that she would have to ask a question with such an obvious answer: "Why, Mom, Jonathan is my friend, and he would get lost if I didn't help." To Brandon, Jonathan was not a child who was different; he was a friend.

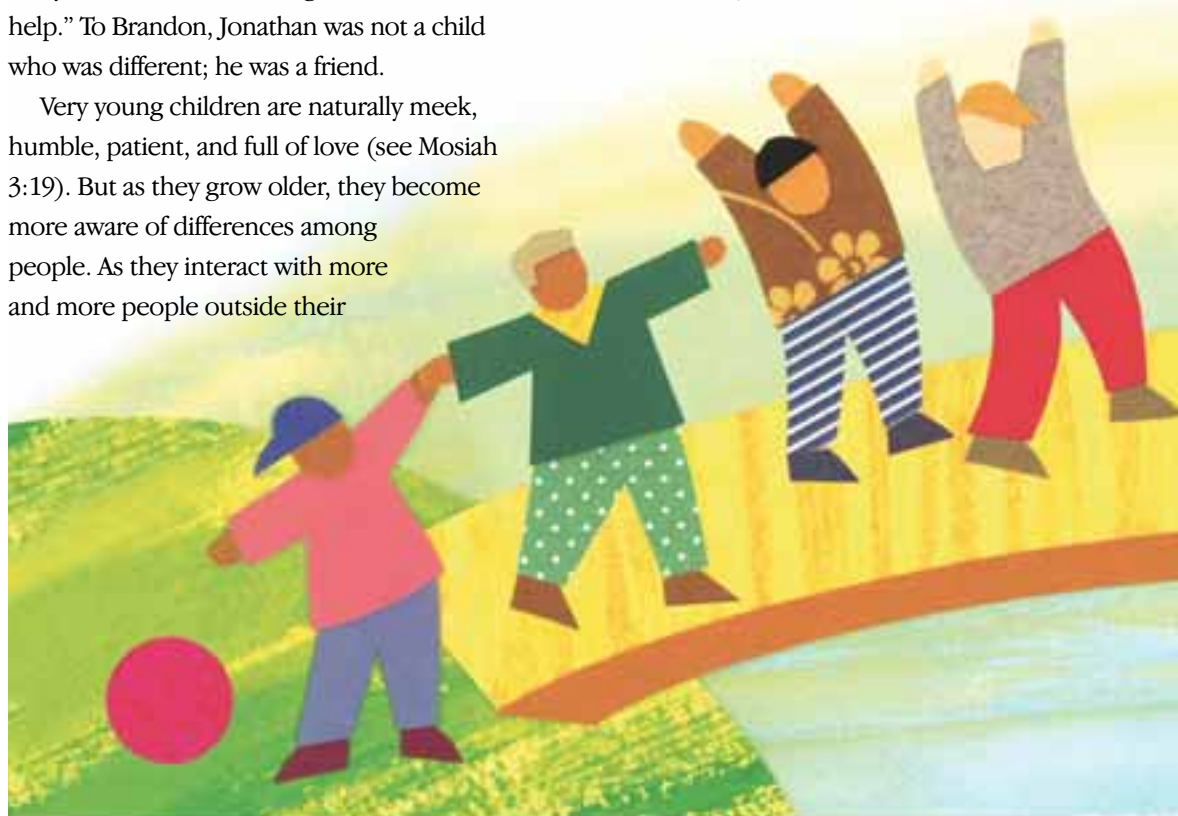
Very young children are naturally meek, humble, patient, and full of love (see Mosiah 3:19). But as they grow older, they become more aware of differences among people. As they interact with more and more people outside their

families, they encounter people who are different from themselves in language, skin color, religion, physical and mental abilities, and social standing. As parents we want to help our children retain the Christlike attributes of meekness, humility, and compassion. We want them to have hearts full of love for everyone. How can we help them do this?

He Gave His Love to Everyone

One of the best ways we can help our children accept those who are different is to teach them that Jesus wants us to be kind to

ILLUSTRATIONS ELECTRONICALLY COMPOSED



Differences

everyone. Five-year-old Jodi and her family held a special family home evening at a care center to entertain and sing for the people living there. Jodi was nervous as she walked into the care center and sat next to a girl who wore a helmet on her head and a towel around her neck and sat in a wheelchair. The girl could use only one side of her body. She couldn't talk but did make happy sounding noises when she heard the music of Jodi's family.

Later that night Jodi's mother said, "It was wonderful that we could sing for them, but we probably should have taken the time to give each one of them a hug. There are some people who don't have anyone to give them hugs."

Jodi admitted, "I don't think I could have hugged that girl I sat by." Jodi's mother took her daughter to the piano and played as she sang:

*If you don't walk as most people do, . . .
Some people talk and laugh at you,
But I won't! I won't!
I'll walk with you. I'll talk with you.
That's how I'll show my love for you.
Jesus walked away from none.
He gave his love to ev'ryone.
So I will! I will!*



The words “He gave his love to ev’ryone” caused Jodi to think. Later she told her mother that in her dreams she gave the girl in the wheelchair a hug and that she hoped the family would be able to go to the care center again. A mother’s gentle teaching through a Primary song opened understanding for a young girl.

The words “He gave his love to ev’ryone” caused Jodi to think. Later she told her mother that in her dreams she gave the girl in the wheelchair a hug and that she hoped the family would be able to go to the care center again. A mother’s gentle teaching through a Primary song opened understanding for a young girl.

The words *empathy* and *compassion* have roots in Latin and Greek words meaning “to suffer with.” *Empathy* means getting behind the eyes of another person, identifying with that person, and understanding why he or she feels and acts the way he or she does. Having *compassion* causes you to help someone feel better because you understand when the person is suffering.

What better example to use in teaching our children how we should treat others than the parable of the good Samaritan? “A certain Samaritan, . . . when he saw [the wounded man,] had compassion on him, and went to him, . . . and took care of him. . . . Go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10:33–34, 37).

Guiding Them As They Grow

As our children grow older and become more aware of differences in people around them, we can ask them questions to help them clarify their thinking:

Who is our neighbor? Do you think Jesus meant us to love only the people who live close to us? How can we follow Jesus’ teachings and show love for other people? How should we treat someone

who needs our help? How should we treat someone who is different from us?

Parental attitudes are like a template parents begin to hold up to their children from their children’s infancy. An attitude, like a language, is learned, not inherited. And it is critical that children learn correct attitudes when they are very young. When children learn a language after age eight, they often speak it with an accent. Attitude errors can be changed when children are older, but the older they become the greater the effort it takes to correct “the accent.”²

When a child notices something different about a person and brings it to your attention, turn it into a teaching moment. Suppose you are in the supermarket with your daughter and she says, “That man has only one leg.” Instead of hushing her up and telling her not to stare, acknowledge what she has seen and share some insight. “Yes, I see, and he uses a wheelchair to get around. I suppose that makes shopping difficult when he has a lot of groceries to buy.” You can normalize awkward situations and teach your child important values about acceptance and empathy. Children need to learn that people with disabilities are like the rest of us (they go shopping too) but they do have challenges to face (being in a wheelchair).

Children might be fearful or hesitant in talking to or helping someone with a disability. We need to listen carefully to our children’s concerns and allay their fears. Children readily accept differences in people when parents teach that while human beings may look different on the outside, we are basically the same on the inside. Teach your child that people with disabilities are people first. They



are more similar to people without disabilities than they are different from them.

Teaching by Example

If we want to teach our children the Christlike attributes of tolerance and compassion, our own example will speak loudest. Showing is more powerful than telling.

As children are treated with kindness and compassion, they will know how that feels, and then they can begin to treat others the same. If you get behind the eyes of your child, he or she will learn to get behind the eyes of others.

A woman wondered how a friend living in a foreign country had helped her young children adjust so well to a different culture. She commented that she and her husband had been trying to teach their children to be tolerant and to value differences in others by inviting children from the community to play in their home. But their children were still judgmental and critical of the other children. "What more can we do to teach our children tolerance?" she asked her friend. The friend answered that she and her husband invited not only children into their home but also the parents of the children.

We can encourage our children to play with a variety of children, hoping the experience will enlarge their circles of friendships. But if in our own socialization we friendship only those similar to ourselves, all the encouraging and teaching we do will fall on deaf ears. The children will hear what is being said but will not be sure of what it means.

Our daughter Emily often takes her one-year-old daughter, Ella, to the park to play. As they stroll the six blocks, Ella smiles and says "Hi" to folks on the street. If Ella can catch



THE GOOD SAMARITAN, BY WALTER RANE, COURTESY OF MUSEUM OF CHURCH HISTORY AND ART

someone's attention, she immediately begins to babble. A foreign accent, the color of skin, or a wheelchair doesn't deter Ella's friendly smile. Ella's smile is as spontaneous as her mother's smile.

Looking to the Heart

Some years ago our family was taking a drive into the countryside after a week of being confined to our home due to excessive rainfall. As we pulled off to the side of the road to take a look at the cherry blossoms, we felt the car's tires sink into the wet, soft mud. All of our attempts to drive back onto the center of the road only pushed us farther down until the quicksand-like mud was above the car's hubcaps. We were hopelessly stuck and hadn't seen another car for some time.

Suddenly we noticed a large dilapidated truck with six boisterous teenagers coming to a stop behind our car. As they jumped out of the truck, we noticed tattoos, chewing tobacco, and extreme hairstyles. My husband became fearful for our family's safety and told us all to get into the car and lock the doors. The young men asked my husband if we needed help. My husband said no, we could easily handle the problem.

The boys' appearance looked more ominous than the car stuck in the mud up to the axle.

"A certain Samaritan, . . . when he saw [the wounded man,] had compassion on him, and went to him, . . . and took care of him. . . . Go, and do thou likewise."



The boys' appearance looked more ominous than the car stuck in the mud, yet they were happy to help someone in need. The wheels spun sheets of mud in every direction, covering the boys from head to toe while they pushed the car onto the pavement.

The boys noticed the five small children and wife in the car as the “we” my husband was referring to and suggested that he get back into the car and start driving while they pushed. The wheels spun sheets of mud in every direction, covering the boys from head to toe while they pushed the car onto the pavement.

My husband pulled money out of his wallet to pay the teenagers, but they refused and jumped back into the truck, saying they were happy to help a brother. They were gone before we could even thank them properly. My husband, who had expected the worst at the outset, was overcome with gratitude. Physical coverings can impede seeing into the heart.

Our family has often retold the story of being stuck in the mud and rescued when we have temporarily forgotten the basic goodness of people and judged needlessly. Jesus

saw beyond the temporal coverings to the heart as He reached out to the tax collectors, forgave the debtors, and healed the sinners.

A Compassionate Community

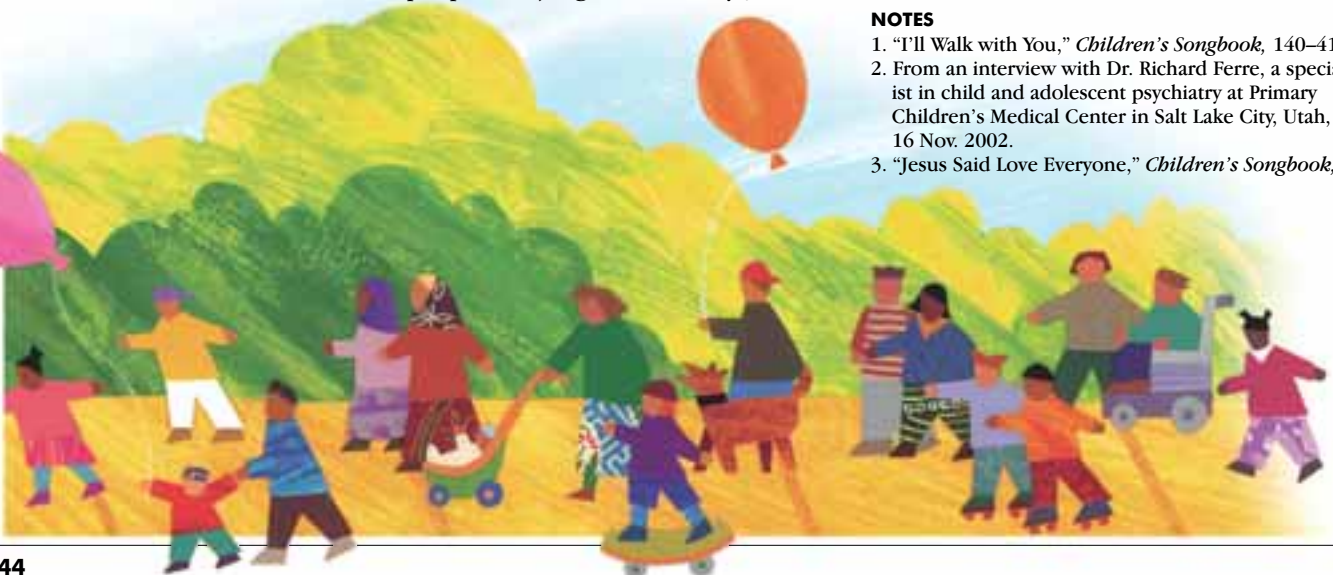
As our children learn to be tolerant and accepting, they will feel the joy of loving others in a Christlike way. A 10-year-old child with Down syndrome and limited speech attempted to give a short scripture during a children’s sacrament meeting presentation. As she struggled, her 4-year-old sister instantly came to her side and whispered the words into her ear. The Primary leaders were sensitive enough to not assist and to allow the growth and learning to occur naturally with both girls. As the 10-year-old returned to her seat on the stand, many children complimented her quietly with touches and nodding eyes.

A whole community of compassionate children had experienced the joy described in the Primary song:

*Jesus said love ev’ryone;
Treat them kindly, too.
When your heart is filled with love,
Others will love you.³ ■*

NOTES

1. “I’ll Walk with You,” *Children’s Songbook*, 140–41.
2. From an interview with Dr. Richard Ferre, a specialist in child and adolescent psychiatry at Primary Children’s Medical Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, 16 Nov. 2002.
3. “Jesus Said Love Everyone,” *Children’s Songbook*, 61.



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Question

I recently joined the Church, and I feel I don't measure up to others in my ward. What can I do to move beyond those feelings and become a strong Latter-day Saint?

I have been in the Church almost 35 years, and I fought this same battle for about 20 of those years. But with age has come a little wisdom that I share with those feeling they don't measure up: Stop measuring. Enjoy the wonderful blessings of the gospel.

There are no perfect Latter-day Saints. There *are* a lot of people just like us, striving to live the gospel to the best of their ability. Some are more advanced in one area, some in another, but all struggle daily to overcome weaknesses and improve over what they were the day before.

Realize that you already are a strong Latter-day Saint—strong enough to have struggled until you found the gospel and then strong enough to have accepted it.

Jane Stringer, Dallas Fourth Ward, Richardson Texas Stake

I joined the Church in Ecuador four years ago. When I first started going to church, I felt out of place. I didn't know anybody besides the missionaries and my family. I felt



PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN LUNE

I couldn't do anything right. Other people in my ward knew so much about the gospel, about the Presidents of the Church, about everything. Every time they talked about the scriptures, I couldn't say anything; I just tried to follow the conversation.

I decided to start reading the scriptures. I loved the feelings in my heart while reading, so I tried to study more carefully. I felt peace, and I kept

learning. I also accepted every calling I received, and I learned a lot from each of them. I tried to go to the activities, and I met more members and felt that the Church was my home. Soon I found that I felt stronger, I was enjoying every word in the scriptures, and I was enjoying every time I was at church. I've realized it is not just what you know that matters; more important is how much love you feel and the desire you have to become more like Jesus Christ.

Daniela Carchi, Greenville Second Ward, Greenville South Carolina Stake

Coming from outside the Church did not make me inferior or superior to anyone else; it was simply where the Lord wanted me to start. When I joined the Church, I brought everything I had that was good and true. Over the years, immeasurable good and truth have been added to what I had. As I teach and serve in the Church, I find repeatedly that my experiences before I was a member have added a dimension to my testimony for which I will always be grateful.

Terri Brown, Garrison Creek Ward, Renton Washington Stake

Ask Heavenly Father for help with your challenges. Listen, write down any ideas you think of, then choose some ideas to implement.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Read your scriptures and study the Gospel Essentials manual, *Gospel Principles* (item no. 31110000; U.S. \$3.00), even if your ward or branch doesn't have a Gospel Essentials class. You can order the manual from the Church Web site www.lds.org. Church members living in the United States and Canada can also order the Church magazines through this Web site.

Howard Coons, Oak Hills Eighth Ward, Provo Utah Oak Hills Stake

Remember the Apostle Paul's teaching that every member is a vital part of the whole body of the Church (see 1 Corinthians 12:12–27). We all are important and are needed in the Lord's great work. If you come upon one of us "veterans" in the gospel who seems impatient with you, please gently remind us that you are new at this and need help. Sometimes we forget you have not grown up with the Church as we have.

Serving in a calling helps you get to know others as you contribute to building the Lord's kingdom.



Prepare to receive the blessings of the temple. There you will receive the full blessings of the gospel, and you can feel a sweet spirit of peace and the conviction that you are God's child and He loves you. That's what really matters.

Victoria Draper, Kimberly First Ward, Kimberly Idaho Stake

Comparing yourself with others is unproductive. While society trains us to be competitive, the gospel is essentially cooperative in nature. The comparison should be between what you are now and what you hope to become. Focus on improving your relationship with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, gain strength from those in the Church who have strengths you do not have, and lend your strength to others who need it from you.

You are probably seeing others in terms of stereotypes instead of as actual individuals. Despite appearances, no member of the Church is perfect. When I was younger, I thought everyone else at church was the same: righteous, middle class, and happy. As I consciously looked beyond the stereotypes and labels and got to know people as individuals, I found a rich variety of personalities, many of whom have become my closest friends. It takes time to develop meaningful relationships with people, and the process is made easier when we don't make assumptions about them.

Traci Dysart, Kent First Ward, Kent Washington Stake

When I joined the Church as a college student, I felt inadequate compared to many of my new friends. Most had been members of the Church their entire lives and had pioneer ancestors. I expressed my feelings to my branch president, and he said that as the first member in my family, I was a pioneer, and my descendants would be eternally grateful that I joined the Church.

A cloud lifted from my mind as I reflected on his words. I had made sacrifices to join the Church, just like the pioneers. Each day was a journey across my spiritual plains. I was part of the Church's tradition of pioneer heritage.

I recently celebrated five years of Church membership. I still have moments when I feel I don't measure up to other members, but those are eclipsed by my knowledge that in the Lord's eyes, there is no measuring tape. Whether we are the first member of the Church in our families or part of a fifth generation of members, we can each be faithful in our testimony and commitment to the Lord.

Brandy Sanders, Ocean Branch, Santa Cruz California Stake

After I joined the Church, I asked a lot of questions at every opportunity. Often other members would thank me for asking a question they were too embarrassed to ask. (Apparently many Latter-day Saints believe they should know the answers if they grew up in the Church.) Your testimony is new and shiny. You can breathe life

into other members' testimonies simply by sharing how your own testimony has grown.

I have now been in three branches or wards. During my first meeting with a branch president or bishop, I always tell him I would like a calling. Serving in a calling helps me feel part of things, helps me interact more with others, and provides another reason to participate in Church activities.

Lori Solomon, Suncheon Branch, Suncheon Korea District

Shortly after joining the Church, I decided to serve a mission. It didn't take long, however, before my enthusiasm was overshadowed by my feelings of inadequacy. How could I teach people about the gospel when I felt I had so little knowledge?

After I had been serving in Hong Kong for several months, a young, less-active girl taught me an invaluable lesson. We had been trying to get her to come to church for weeks, but she was evasive. Finally, one Sunday she surprised us by showing up. During Sunday School the teacher asked the class members to name the person in their lives who had shown them the most love. When it was her turn, A-Ling said, "The missionaries." I realized then that what mattered most to A-Ling was that she could count on us to love her.

I learned that people who need our service probably aren't concerned about whether we can recite all the Articles of Faith or sing all



Prepare to receive the blessings of the temple. There you will feel the conviction that you are God's child and He loves you.

the Primary songs. What they will remember and what will help them the most is our love for them.

Patricia Porch-Hooper, Orland Park Ward, Chicago Illinois Stake

As a new convert, I shared with several other members my feelings of inadequacy. They opened up to me, and I learned that many of my new friends who I thought were almost perfect were actually coming back into activity. What a surprise to me! I learned that we are all imperfect and are on the same path. We are all working toward a common goal: to return to Heavenly Father. Along this path we make mistakes, but the important thing is to get back on the path and to help others who may be slipping. And as we exercise repentance and grow in faith,

any mistakes we have made in the past no longer matter.

Karen Hansen, Lodi Third Ward, Lodi California Stake

Feelings of inadequacy are "common to man" (see 1 Corinthians 10:13). Even the prophets Moses and Enoch expressed such feelings (see Exodus 4:10; Moses 6:31). In many cases we compare our weaknesses with others' strengths without considering that every one of us has both weaknesses and strengths. If we will forsake these negative judgments of self and express gratitude for the gifts the Lord has given us, we will become more receptive to the promptings of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is a great equalizer and allows ordinary people to achieve extraordinary results. ■

Doug Mainord, Royal Oaks Ward, Keizer Oregon Stake

*The summer the McMillan family moved in,
our neighborhood changed—and not for the better.*



THE NEIGHBORS NO ONE WANTED

BY MARILYNN BARNES

My family and I had thoroughly enjoyed living in our quiet, peaceful neighborhood. Everyone on our street was friendly, and we were all happy to welcome new neighbors. But then the McMillans (all names have been changed) moved in.

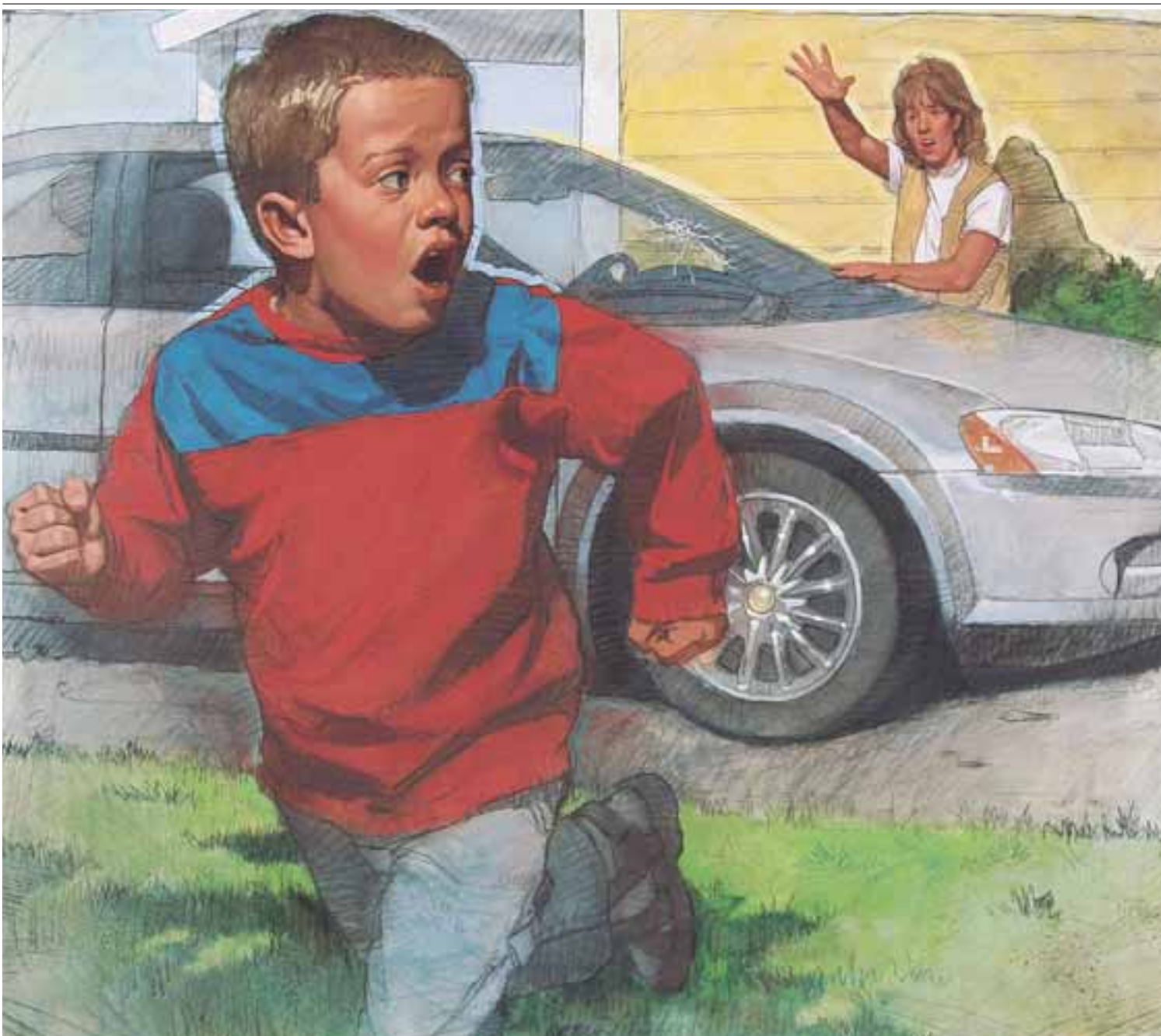
Sandra McMillan, a single mother, worked nights at a 24-hour bar and grill. The person who stayed overnight with the children always left early in the morning as soon as Sandra got home from work. The children were sent out to play at the beginning of each day, while their mother tried to sleep. Frequently the children's laughter—or fighting—brought her to the door to yell at them. More than one judgmental thought crossed my mind as I watched what I considered very poor parenting.

The family hadn't lived there long when two of the children started a fire in my next-door neighbor's trash can. A few days later the youngest, Carl, let the air out of another neighbor's tires. This was the beginning of a series of incidents between the McMillan children and

the neighborhood in general that began to change the neighborhood atmosphere. A pall of hostility was settling over the street.

We were the only members of the Church in the subdivision. My family and I had always felt that good relationships with our neighbors were of utmost importance. We knew most of the neighbors by name and felt comfortable stopping and chatting with any of them. We welcomed the neighborhood children into our yard and home. We took meals when someone was sick, mowed lawns when others were on vacation, and watched children when parents got in a pinch. We had made a sincere, constant effort to be good friends and examples to everyone in our subdivision, and it had been easy. But now the whole neighborhood equation had changed with the addition of Sandra and her undisciplined offspring.

I didn't detect neglect in the legal sense in the McMillan household. The children seemed well fed and their clothing was usually presentable, but there



was little doubt they were growing up like wild grass. They were disruptive—at times even destructive—and their mother was hostile toward reported complaints, regardless of how well founded.

Because of her nocturnal schedule and her low threshold for negative information concerning her children, I had not made my usual efforts to get to know Sandra. I had heard accounts of a number of verbal confrontations that had taken place when neighbors had approached her about the

children's behavior. Honestly, I don't believe I really *wanted* to know her. She seemed too unpleasant and, underneath it all, I resented the changes her family had brought to our happy little neighborhood.

A Quiet Reminder

One day while listening to a neighbor tell of finding the McMillan children showing off an adult magazine, I could feel my dismay and frustration grow. I was tired of this unrest and contention. As I half listened to all the details

The rock bit the windshield of my car. Carl turned pale, looked at me, and took off for home. I called after him: "Carl McMillan, come back here!"

of the latest affront to our tranquility, I was surprised by a sudden thought, as clear as if spoken to me: “She is doing the best she can with what she understands; be patient with her and her children.”

Shame and concern washed over me. That idea was so different from what I had been feeling that I immediately recognized it as the Spirit instructing me. I suddenly remembered a passage in my patriarchal blessing. It counseled me to remember to be kind and patient with those who are not members of the Church, for by kindness and patience I would do much missionary work that I would not be aware of. Clearly, I had a responsibility to do the best I could to learn to love this neighbor, and I felt ashamed that I had needed to be reminded. Yet I was still unsure exactly what to do, so I decided to make the issue a matter of prayer.

I asked my children if they minded playing with the McMillan children. To my surprise, they readily agreed that when the McMillans were behaving themselves, they were fun to be with. But they also agreed that the siblings were an unwelcome challenge at times. As we talked, I felt an inner assurance that the McMillans’ behavior was not going to have a detrimental effect on the choices my children made.

When I suggested that we pray for the McMillans and pray for ourselves so that we could be better neighbors to this family, my children and husband agreed. Considering all the past problems, I was not under the illusion this was going to be an easy change. But I felt determined.

As I sincerely pondered the situation, the Spirit kindly gave me some insights into Sandra’s struggles—even her exhaustion and loneliness were made known to me in a very powerful way. These insights were a great gift to me,

especially when the McMillan children were over in our yard most of each day. I found that if a feeling of impatience or resentment arose, the Spirit reminded me in a kind, gentle way that as inconvenient as it was to me, I was doing what the Lord would have me do in this situation.

When the children began to come over on a regular basis, I sat them down and explained the yard rules. I let them know they were always welcome as long as they followed these rules and that they were the same rules my

children had to follow: no hitting, no name calling, no bad words, and absolutely no fire. The McMillan children solemnly agreed.

As I had assumed, our efforts to be kind were not problem free. But as long as they were in our yard, the three children did try very hard to behave. Perhaps they did not want to be banned from the last place that welcomed them in the neighborhood.

We occasionally invited the children over for family home evening, took them out for ice cream, and even took them with us to the zoo. I never spoke to Sandra directly though—I’m not exactly sure why. I always wrote a

friendly note asking permission for the children to come with us, and she would reply with a note of permission, usually just a simple yes. Occasionally I sent over fresh bread or cookies, but she never responded.

A Chip in My Windshield

One day I was sweeping the front steps while the children were playing in the yard. Carl became upset with his brother and began to yell at him. Before I could intervene, Carl picked up a rock and threw it at his brother. Only five years old, Carl had poor aim and fortunately missed his brother by many feet. The rock hit the windshield of my car instead,



I heard a knock at my door. Answering it, I found myself looking into the eyes of Sandra McMillan. Standing beside her—or rather trying to hide behind her—was a trembling, crying Carl.



I knelt down so I could look him in the eye, and I was taken aback when he fell into my arms and cried as if his little heart would break. My soul was filled with a powerful love for this child.

creating a long chip on the driver's side.

Carl turned pale, looked at me, and took off for home. I called after him: "Carl McMillan, come back here!"

At that, the other McMillan children made a hasty retreat. I had not yelled at Carl in anger but had raised my voice to get his attention. I can't explain why, but I honestly didn't feel angry at him. I had just wanted to talk to him about not throwing rocks at people.

I was certain that Carl wasn't going to come back to talk to me, so I went back into the house to ponder how to handle what had happened. As frustrated as I was by the incident, I knew that I did not have the will to go over and inform Sandra—this was hardly the ideal time to have our first face-to-face conversation.

A few moments later, I heard a knock at my door. Answering it, I found myself looking into the eyes of Sandra McMillan. Standing beside her—or rather trying to hide behind her—was a trembling, crying Carl. I said a

quick prayer and braced myself for the unpleasantness I was sure was coming. I was caught off guard when instead of an angry attack, Sandra, nervously looking down at her feet, said, "My son Carl has something he wants to say to you."

She then pushed Carl toward me, where he sobbed out a soft "I'm sorry I threw a rock and hit your car."

I knelt down so I could look him in the eye, and I was taken aback when he fell into my arms and cried as if his little heart would break. My soul was filled with a powerful love for this child. I knew these feelings of love were a gift to me to help me understand Carl's importance to our Heavenly Father.

I sensed Carl was afraid he had done the unforgivable, so I reassured him. I explained to him that I wasn't angry and that I had just wanted to talk to him about the danger of throwing rocks. When he could see that he was still going to be welcome in our yard, he calmed down.



I stood up and was surprised to see Sandra fighting back tears. She had not said anything the whole time I was speaking to Carl. When I finished, she took him by the hand and simply said, “Thank you; it won’t happen again.” She then walked back across the street with her son. Shaken by the incident, but knowing that the Spirit had attended all of us, I felt peaceful about what had just happened.

Moving Out and Moving On

A short time later, on a weekend when we were out of town, the McMillans moved away. No one knew where they had gone or why they had left. In spite of the tender moment I had shared with them, I felt a certain sense of relief to be out from under the stress of that situation. The months passed, and I seldom thought of the McMillan family.

The neighborhood gradually settled back into its previous calm. About a year later my family and I moved to another wonderful neighborhood, where we again made many good friends.

Another two years passed, and I was serving as Relief Society president in my ward. It was the practice of the bishopric to have the auxiliary leaders stand at the chapel doors and greet ward members and visitors before sacrament meeting. One Sunday as I was greeting people, I was taken by surprise when Sandra McMillan and her children walked up to me. I was astounded by the transformation. Here was a lovely, modestly dressed young mother, her pretty face free of most of the stress I remembered it bearing, and her scrubbed and cheerful children in tow.

I returned her smile, uncertain she would remember me; but to my surprise, she threw her arms around me as if we were long-lost friends.

I asked why she was there, and she informed me that she had joined the Church about 10 months before and had just moved into the ward. Her eyes were misty as she

recounted how the missionaries had tracted her out one afternoon when she had been feeling about as low as she had ever felt. She then said something that caused me to catch my breath in surprise.

I returned her smile, uncertain she would remember me; but to my surprise, she threw her arms around me as if we were long-lost friends.

“I let the missionaries in partly because of your family and how you treated us, especially how you treated my children. I didn’t

know you were a member of the Church—I didn’t even know the Church existed. But I had seen how you lived, and I saw what sort of neighbor you were. I didn’t know why I felt what I did around you, but because of watching you, I knew there had to be a better way to live. When the missionaries knocked on my door, I knew somehow they could show me that better way.”

I was speechless—I had done so little, and not all of that with the best attitude. She went on to tell me of how the gospel had brought her peace she had not thought possible, even though life was still a great struggle for her and her family.

As we spoke, a powerful impression swept over me. I realized what could have taken place if I had given in to my frustration and anger at the behavior of the McMillan children. As a fellow Saint or as her Relief Society president, I would not have had any credibility with her. All of the difficulties that could have been created if I had not loved my neighbor paraded before me, leaving me shaken and so grateful that I had heeded the Spirit that prompted me to remain patient. This was immediately followed by peace at the joyous reality that this wonderful family had found and embraced the gospel.

Sandra really had been doing her best under her difficult circumstances, and when she was ready, the gospel came into her life. How grateful I was that I had not been a stumbling block for her and that my family had tried to reach out to love a difficult neighbor. ■

Marilynn Barnes is a member of the Springfield Second Ward, Springfield Missouri Stake.



Obeying the Lord's Spirit

BY ELDER ROSS H. McEACHRAN

Area Authority Seventy
North America Northeast Area

A little more than 25 years ago, when I was a relatively new member of the Church, I contemplated starting a new business. This move would involve mortgaging our home and borrowing additional funds, certainly a major decision for our family.

After considerable research, I took the matter to the Lord in prayer. I prayed about it for several weeks. Then on one particular Sunday, our family went to stake conference, and during the meeting this

business idea came to my mind. I quickly pushed the thought away as I did not want to contemplate business ventures on the Sabbath day. Again it came to my mind, and again I tried to block the thought. A third time, as we were standing to sing the intermediate hymn, the matter entered my thoughts in an even stronger way. It occurred to me that maybe the Spirit was trying to tell me something. I silently prayed to Heavenly Father, asking Him if it was a good decision for me to start this business. The answer came immediately and powerfully. As the tears ran down my face, I knew with a surety that the decision to start this new business



As we heed the promptings of the Spirit, we can attain the assurance that permits us to go forward with confidence and peace.



In recounting the wars between the Nephites and the Lamanites, Mormon wrote, “And in one year were thousands and tens of thousands of souls sent to the eternal world, that they might reap their rewards . . . according to the spirit which they listed to obey.”

was a correct one. I subsequently went forward with confidence, borrowed the appropriate funds, and commenced operations of the business.

Six months into this new venture, after we had spent nearly all of the money, things started to look bleak. Nothing seemed to be working right. We simply did not have enough customers or sales volume to make the business work.

On a Saturday morning I knelt beside my bed and poured out my heart to Heavenly Father. I did not receive any specific direction, but a beautiful, warm feeling, which only the Spirit can bring, came over me. I knew everything would be fine. I continued working hard, and one week later, the following Saturday, we received the biggest contract I could have ever imagined. That contract was all we needed to start making this venture a successful one.

That experience helped teach me, among other things, to understand and recognize the promptings of the Spirit and to know that

blessings do come to those who “list,” or choose, to obey the Lord’s Spirit.

According to Our Works

Mormon, in recounting the wars between the Nephites and the Lamanites and those who joined with them, recorded:

“And in one year were thousands and tens of thousands of souls sent to the eternal world, that they might reap their rewards according to their works, whether they were good or whether they were bad, to reap eternal happiness or eternal misery, according to the spirit which they listed to obey, whether it be a good spirit or a bad one.

“For every man receiveth wages of him whom he listeth to obey” (Alma 3:26–27).

The Old Testament story of Naaman illustrates what the Book of Mormon teaches about the importance of choosing to obey the Lord’s Spirit. After Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, contracted leprosy, a young maid from Israel who waited on Naaman’s wife stated that if he were in Samaria, the prophet would heal him. That was an impressive concept, since there was no cure for leprosy at that time.

Naaman decided to heed the maid’s words. He traveled to Samaria and was directed to the house of the prophet Elisha, who sent a messenger to the door and instructed Naaman to wash seven times in the Jordan River. Naaman had thought the prophet would come out and heal him directly. He was so upset that the scriptures record he “went away in a rage” (2 Kings 5:12).

Then his servants came to him and said, “If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?” (v. 13). Naaman realized the truth of what

they said. Humbled, he followed Elisha's direction, dipping himself seven times in Jordan. "And his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (v. 14). He had a change of heart, chose to obey the Lord's Spirit as given through His prophet, and was blessed.

But our story does not end there. Naaman, rejoicing to be rid of his leprosy, returned to Elisha and offered him gold, silver, and clothing as tokens of his appreciation. As we would expect, Elisha declined the gifts.

When Naaman left for home with his servants, Elisha's servant Gehazi let greed get the better of him. He followed after Naaman and told him Elisha had changed his mind about the offered reward. After Gehazi had gathered the bounty, returned home, and hid it for himself, Elisha said to him, "Whence comest thou, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither.

"And he said unto him, Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants?

"The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow" (vv. 25–27).


Making Wise Decisions

How sad it was for Gehazi when he listed to obey the wrong spirit. We may not see such dramatic and immediate results in our own lives, but as surely as the sun will rise tomorrow, we will receive—perhaps in this life and surely in the next—the wages of him whom we list to obey.



Naaman was humbled and chose to obey the prophet's instructions. "And his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

Each of us has countless decisions to make in a lifetime, many every day. Through the promptings of the Spirit, we can attain the assurance that permits us to go forward with confidence and peace, knowing that we have listed to obey the Lord's Spirit in making our decisions and that we will be blessed in time and in eternity. ■



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BE YE

Unity in a ward is not just a desirable state; it is a commandment of God.

BY ELDER H. ALDRIDGE GILLESPIE
Of the Seventy

It was an exciting proposal. The leaders were all in favor, and the home teachers were thrilled. The idea was to renovate the home of a ward family. The bishopric, the priesthood executive committee, and the ward council were all united in their enthusiasm. This was a service that was desperately needed. To be sure, it would require enormous effort, many hours of labor, and the support of the entire ward. Without total unity, it could not be accomplished.

When the idea was presented in priesthood meeting, there was heartfelt approval, and the brethren began lining up for assignments in work and contributions. The Relief Society sisters quickly prepared lists of volunteers for each phase of the project.

This family whose house we planned to repair had joined the Church just a few years before. Their difficult situation was the product of years of hard but ill-rewarded labor. Nonetheless, each year they shared the

abundance of their vegetable garden with many families in the ward. Unfortunately, advancing age, ill health, and scarce resources limited their ability to maintain their home.

As is often the case with such projects, the initial work revealed that the renovation would need to be more extensive than had been initially planned. However, the ward leaders never doubted the inspiration that prompted the effort, and as they asked for even more from the ward, the members increased their efforts, contributions, and sacrifices. It seemed that everyone—young and old, active and less active—came forward to give of their time, labor, money, materials, equipment, skill, food, and moral support. Finally, the work was completed, and everyone involved felt greatly blessed for the experience.

The effort began with inspired vision and the unity of the ward leaders, but the result was a ward that showed signs of fulfilling the objectives of Zion: “They were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them” (Moses 7:18).

Achieving true ward or branch unity may be as difficult as it is rare. But great progress can be made





in each ward
and branch of the

Church as leaders and members
apply the following principles: (1) learn the
doctrine, (2) eliminate contention, (3) forgive
others, (4) watch over and strengthen each
other, and (5) sacrifice for the kingdom of God.

Learn the Doctrine

In the Book of Mormon, Alma instructed the
members of his new congregation “that
there should be no contention one with

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The unifying doctrines we teach in our meetings (or in our home teaching and visiting teaching visits) must be grounded firmly in the gospel of Christ as found in the four standard works.

another, but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another” (Mosiah 18:21). Those new Saints in the wilderness of Nephi truly did unite themselves, accepting Alma’s challenge: “And thus they became the children of God. . . . And they did walk uprightly before God, imparting to one another both temporally and spiritually according to their needs and their wants” (Mosiah 18:22, 29).

Unity in a ward is not just a desirable state; it is a commandment of God and is one of the observable fruits of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord said, “If ye are not one ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27). Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (1915–1985)

stated: “Unity within the Church and among the saints is the goal of the gospel. There is no place in the Church for division, for disagreement on doctrine, for cults and cliques. . . . Among the faithful saints there is only one mind and one judgment and these are the Lord’s.”¹

As we move toward this goal, we also progress in establishing a ward that is truly unified, displaying increasingly the characteristics of Zion. If our wards and branches are to be spared the divisive influence that has been the downfall of many people, we must avoid the foolishness and precepts of men when teachers and speakers do not focus on “the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves” (2 Nephi 9:28). On many such occasions, “they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof” (Joseph Smith—History 1:19).

The unifying doctrines we teach in our meetings (or in our home teaching and visiting teaching visits) must be grounded firmly in the gospel of Christ. President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) put it this way: “We are not set apart to teach philosophies or sciences of the world. We are set apart to teach the principles of the gospel as found in the four standard works. . . . We are convinced that our members are hungry for the gospel, undiluted, with its abundant truths and insights.”²

Eliminate Contention

The resurrected Savior, knowing the “carnal, sensual, and devilish” nature of most

people (see Moses 5:13), taught His doctrine to the Nephites at Bountiful, also warning them: “Neither shall there be disputations among you. . . . He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil” (3 Nephi 11:28–29). Establishing unity in a ward requires that leaders be alert to every facet of discord that arises, being careful not to ignore the potential for contention to destroy testimony and faith. We must teach what Christ taught, that His doctrine is not “to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away” (3 Nephi 11:30).

To build unity we must avoid contention by controlling our own words as well as rumor, gossip, accusation, and criticism. The seven evils the Lord “hates” all seem to be associated with the failure to control our thoughts and words. These are “a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren” (Proverbs 6:17–19). We must be constantly alert to and eliminate such behavior among us.

Forgive Others

In spite of our best efforts, sometimes people in the ward will have hurt feelings, misunderstandings, and hardness toward others. We must not ignore those who have taken offense, whether or not we believe their feelings are justified, for when hardness enters into a person’s heart, his spirit begins to shrivel. The Lord counseled, “My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another and forgave not one another in their hearts; and for this evil they were afflicted and sorely chastened. Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin” (D&C 64:8–9).

Unfortunately, this concept has escaped many of us, but as Elder McConkie explained: “It is not the sinner, the transgressor, the offender, the liar who is commanded to take the initiative in restoring peace and unity among brethren. If perchance he should do so, well and good,

but the Lord commands the innocent person, the one who is without fault, the one who has been offended, to search out his brother and seek to repair the breach.”³ This principle applies equally to ward leaders, especially bishops, who are sometimes the object of criticism and backbiting. Their example in such situations can determine whether unity governs in a ward or if pride is to rule.

Watch Over and Strengthen Each Other

The degree of unity in a ward or branch is closely associated with the efforts of the priesthood quorums and Relief Society in seeing that the homes of all members are visited faithfully and that sound doctrine is taught in these visits. “The scriptural foundation of home teaching is the



Although it can be a slow process to knit hearts together, those who put forth the effort will grow in love and charity toward their fellow members.

commandment for priesthood holders to ‘watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them’ (D&C 20:53).” Similarly, visiting teachers are to “offer support, comfort, and friendship.”⁴

The result of personal contact in the homes of the members is a powerful force for good: “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one”



(Hebrews 2:11). Although it can be a slow process to knit hearts together (see Mosiah 18:21), those who put forth the effort will grow in love and charity toward their fellow members. They will become part of each other's lives and become truly willing to bear one another's burdens, to mourn together, and to comfort one another (see Mosiah 18:8–9).

Church callings fill a critical role in ward unity, opening the door to greater service as we share our time, talents, and means. The Apostle Paul taught: “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11–12). Everyone needs to feel that he or she is an integral part of the ward; unity and perfection come through involvement in the ministry. President Gordon B. Hinckley teaches that every new convert needs a Church responsibility. This may suggest that without the opportunity to be part of the Lord's work, the perfecting and edifying process is incomplete and a precious soul may be lost.

Sacrifice for the Kingdom

“Sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven.”⁵ It is also true that sacrifice is the basis of love, and without love we cannot achieve the unity that must exist in Christ's true kingdom on earth. A people as diverse as the membership of the Church cannot be prepared for Zion, or be truly “pure in heart” (see D&C 97:21) unless “their hearts are honest, and are broken, and their spirits contrite, and [they] are willing

to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command” (D&C 97:8).

Our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have shown us what true love entails: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). And as Amulek taught, “It is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice, . . . an infinite and eternal sacrifice” (Alma 34:10). Christ's sacrifice for us was infinite and eternal, and His love for us is no less. “Power dwells in unity, not in discord; in humility, not pride; in sacrifice, not selfishness; obedience, not rebellion.”⁶

To exemplify, we might consider the basis of the boundless love a mother feels for her children. Is it not because of her years of sacrifice for their welfare and happiness? The more she willingly gives up the things of the world for

them, the greater her love. So it is with all of us; we develop a love for that for which we sacrifice. As we honor our covenants and sacrifice our own interests for the well-being of other Church members, we build a greater unity through love.


Bishops and other leaders must teach, encourage, and give members opportunities to sacrifice for the Lord's kingdom and for each other. Even as “the first fruits of repentance is baptism” (Moroni 8:25), so payment of tithing and generous fast offerings are the first signs of the sacrifice that leads to salvation.

Unity can and must be developed in each ward and branch of this, the

Church of Jesus Christ. My family and I have been blessed to live in such wards. We have witnessed the good that ward unity brings about in the lives of members and in the communities where these wards are located. Our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, are one, even as we must become one. Let us, therefore, be fully committed as disciples of the Lord to become united as a church and as a people. ■

NOTES

1. *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (1966–73), 2:313.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* (2000), 65.
3. *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:422–23.
4. *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders* (1998), 168, 202.
5. “Praise to the Man,” *Hymns*, no. 27.
6. Orson F. Whitney, *The Life of Heber C. Kimball* (1945), 64.



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

1. Read together the home renovation story. Invite family members to share similar experiences.
2. Review the five principles that can enable a ward or branch to become unified. When and how have you been blessed by a sense of true ward or branch unity?
3. According to Elder Gillespie, what are some ways we can eliminate contention from a ward or branch? How can we encourage the spirit of forgiveness? Invite family members to do something this week to promote unity in your ward or branch.

Feeling the Love of the Lord through Exercising Charity

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

Moroni 7:47: “Charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.”

Elder Gene R. Cook of the Seventy: “It is part of the gift of charity to be able to recognize the Lord’s hand and feel His love in all that surrounds us. . . . Ponder with me a moment the following majestic gifts: the glories of all creation, the earth, the heavens; your feelings of love and joy; His responses of mercy, forgiveness, and innumerable answers to prayer; the gift of loved ones; and finally the greatest gift of all—the Father’s gift of His atoning Son, the perfect one in charity, even the God of love” (“Charity: Perfect and Everlasting Love,” *Liabona*, July 2002, 92; *Ensign*, May 2002, 83).

Elder Marvin J. Ashton (1915–94) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “Real charity is not something you give away; it is something that you acquire and make a part of yourself. And when the virtue of charity becomes implanted in your heart, you are never the same again. . . .

“Perhaps the greatest charity comes when we are kind to each other, when we don’t judge or categorize someone else, when we simply give each other the benefit of the doubt or remain quiet. Charity is accepting someone’s differences, weaknesses, and shortcomings; having patience with someone who has let us down; or resisting the impulse to become offended when someone doesn’t handle something the way we might have hoped. Charity is refusing to take advantage of another’s weakness and being willing to forgive someone who has hurt us. Charity is expecting the best of each other” (“The Tongue Can Be a Sharp Sword,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 19).

Anne C. Pingree, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency: “As we try to deal patiently and lovingly every day with fussy babies, challenging teenagers, difficult roommates, less-active spouses, or elderly, disabled parents, we may ask ourselves: ‘Is what I am doing really important? Does it matter or make a difference?’ Dear sisters, what you are doing with your families *matters!* It matters so very, very much. Daily, each of us learns and relearns at



home that charity, the Savior’s pure love, never faileth.

So many Relief

Society sisters do great good serving in their fami-

lies” (“Charity: One Family, One Home at a Time,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 109).

Elder Bruce C. Hafen of the Seventy: “[Charity] is not developed entirely by our own power, even though our faithfulness is a necessary qualification to receive it. Rather, charity is ‘bestowed upon’ the ‘true followers’ of Christ (Moroni 7:48; emphasis added). . . . The purpose of the endowment of charity is not merely to cause Christ’s followers to engage in charitable acts toward others, desirable as that is. The ultimate purpose is to transform his followers to become *like him*” (“Beauty for Ashes: The Atonement of Jesus Christ,” *Liabona*, Apr. 1997, 46; *Ensign*, Apr. 1990, 12).

- How can you further acquire the charity that will prompt you to love others as the Savior loves them?

- What can you do to overcome uncharitable thoughts and feelings? ■

Building a Lesson

from *Teachings of Presidents
of the Church*

Struggling to prepare a Relief Society or Melchizedek Priesthood lesson? Follow a few simple principles to build an inspiring, relevant lesson.

BY JAN PINBOROUGH

Most building projects begin with two things: a set of building materials—such as boards, nails, and shingles—and a blueprint showing how to put the materials together.

Building a lesson from *Teachings of Presidents of the Church* (the Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society course of study) is another kind of project. You have building materials, of course—the *Teachings* book, the scriptures, and your own and your quorum or class members' testimonies and experiences in gospel living. But where is the blueprint showing you exactly how to put these materials together into an inspiring lesson?

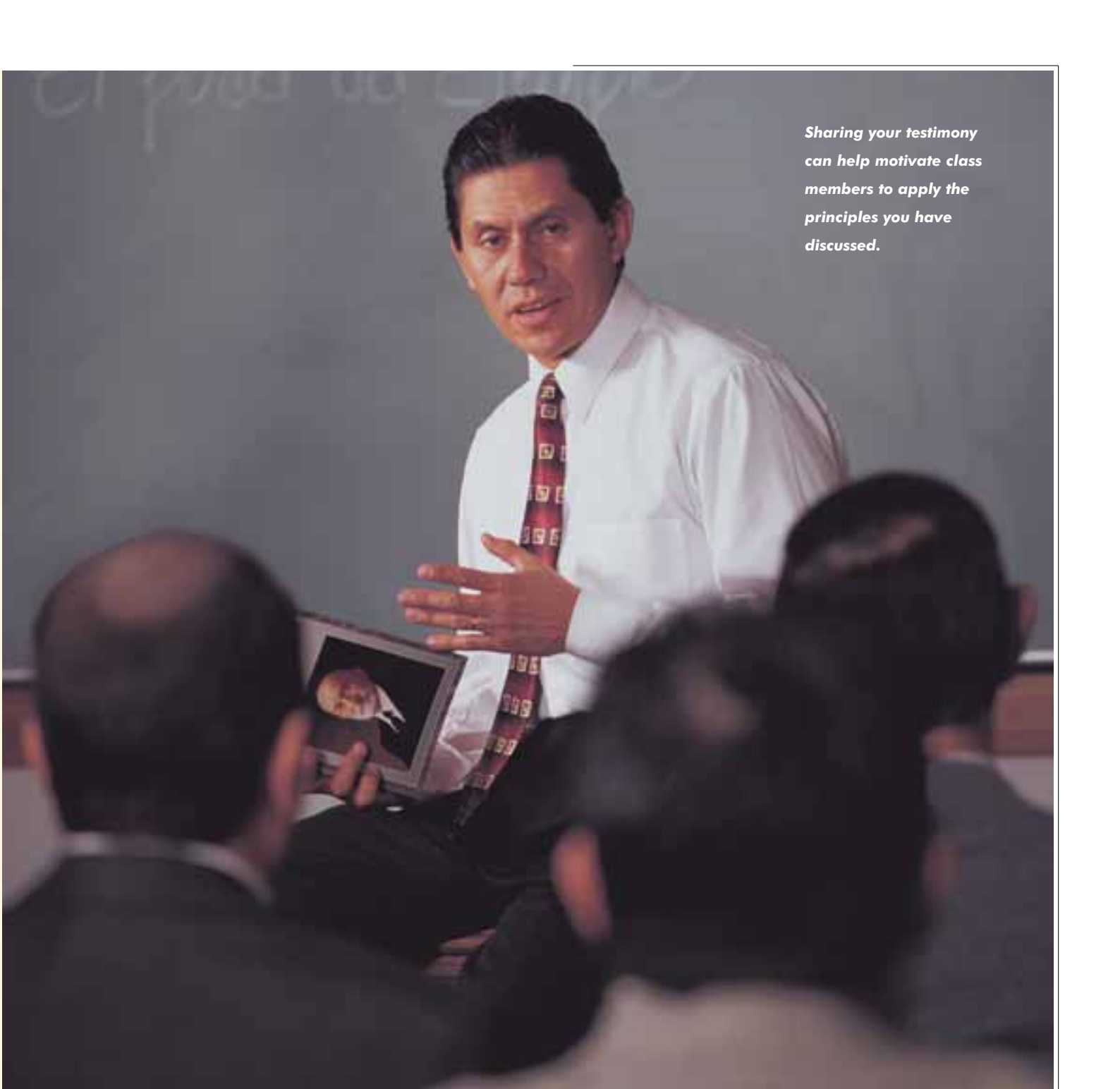
Most other Church manuals do contain an outline showing how to teach each concept. But the *Teachings of*

Presidents of the Church volumes are personal resource books—as well as manuals—and they do not contain lesson plans. So when you prepare a *Teachings* lesson, you are the architect as well as the builder.

Designing Your Own Plan

This task might seem daunting—especially if you haven't had a lot of teaching experience. But designing your own lesson plan gives you great flexibility to “build to suit” the needs of your class. And following a few simple principles can make preparing an inspiring, relevant lesson a task you can accomplish.

Always begin lesson preparation with prayer. To all teachers, the Lord has given a comforting promise, along with a caution: “The Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach” (D&C 42:14). Praying for the influence of the Holy Ghost as you choose how to teach the lesson is an indispensable first step. It can make all the difference between an uninspiring lesson and one that will be a vehicle for true gospel learning. Sister Karen Knickerbocker, serving

A man in a white shirt and tie is standing in a classroom, gesturing with his hands as he speaks to a group of students. He is holding a laptop that displays a portrait of a man. The students are seen from behind, looking towards the man. The background is a chalkboard with some faint writing.

Sharing your testimony can help motivate class members to apply the principles you have discussed.

in the Micronesia Guam Mission, finds that her most valuable lesson preparation is “constantly praying for the sisters’ ears and hearts to be opened for understanding.”

Plan a discussion, not a lecture. “An effective *Teachings* lesson is usually more of a discussion than a tightly structured presentation,” explains R. Val Johnson, former manager of core curriculum in the Church Curriculum Department. Instead of thinking of yourself as a lecturer

who must be prepared to answer every possible question, think of yourself as a guide on a journey of discovery. Your role is not to give a history lesson or even a lesson about the prophet’s life. Nor is your job to create a lesson from other sources on the topic of your lesson found in the *Teachings* manual. Your role is at once more simple and more profound: to guide class members in discovering and applying to their own lives truths revealed by a prophet.



Asking questions to encourage class discussion is usually more helpful than giving a tightly structured presentation.

Before class, read the assigned chapter completely, marking quotations that especially impress you. Often a chapter in *Teachings* contains far too much material to teach effectively in one class period. Marking the quotations that seem especially important will help you make your final selection of what to read and discuss.

Choose the quotations you will use for the lesson. These quotations will be the core content you will plan to cover in your lesson. The topical headings in the chapter and the questions at the end can help you make your selection. In your planning, remember that you and the class members can spend time discussing how the quotations apply to our lives. Consider also that your assignment is not just to discuss a gospel topic, but to discuss the given prophet's teachings on that topic.

Find scriptures that support the topic. Because the scriptures are the words of the Lord, they bring His Spirit into the classroom.

"The scriptures add depth and insight to the discussion," observes Rodrigo Durán of the Providencia Ward, Santiago Chile Las Condes Stake.

Plan an attention-getting introduction. The first two minutes of any lesson are critical. It is usually during these 120 seconds that class members decide whether or not they will devote their mental energy to the lesson. To introduce one Relief Society lesson, Roxana San Martín de Seguel of the Providencia Ward, Santiago Chile Las Condes Stake, passed a mirror around and asked the sisters to tell what they saw in it. "A face," said one. "A daughter of God," said another. The class members were instantly involved, and the lesson began with a wonderful spirit, Sister de Seguel recalls.

Select teaching methods appropriate for the topic. Object lessons, thought-provoking questions, role plays, and many other



THE TEACHER'S RESPONSIBILITY

"The goal of gospel teaching today . . . is not to 'pour information' into the minds of class members. It is not to show how much the teacher knows, nor is it merely to increase knowledge about the Church. *The basic goal of teaching in the Church is to help bring about worthwhile changes in the lives of boys and girls, men and women. The aim is to inspire the individual to think about, feel about, and then do something about living gospel principles.*"

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 107.

techniques can create interest and motivation to learn. For ideas on teaching methods, see *Teaching, No Greater Call* (item no. 36123) or the *Teaching Guidebook* (item no. 34595).

Apply, apply, apply. Applying lesson concepts to real life is perhaps the most crucial part of any lesson. It may also take the most thought and planning. But unless students make connections between gospel truths and their own lives, the lesson may remain merely an intellectual exercise.

Vital Jonel of the Petit Goave Branch, Haiti Port-au-Prince Mission, explains how using appropriate personal experiences brings the Spirit into his classroom: “I ask for examples from the lives of the class members. These stories edify, as well as inform and hold the attention of the class. An appropriate story, drawn from personal experience and confirmed by a testimony of the heart, will help carry the message of the lesson.”

Choose some questions ahead of time. You might consider questions that will help your students think about how a principle applies to people in different circumstances. Consider choosing some of your discussion questions from those at the end of each chapter. One Relief Society teacher says, “I like to ask questions that can be answered at least in part by a particular quotation. If class members don’t immediately offer their ideas, we read the quote to see what the prophet has taught. His words often jog memories, prompting class members to share their own



THE STUDENT’S RESPONSIBILITY

“Education—particularly spiritual education—is constantly stressed by the Lord.

We cannot be saved in ignorance, but the Lord can only reveal light and truth to us as we are prepared to receive it. And so it is incumbent upon each of us to do everything we can to increase our spiritual knowledge and understanding by studying the scriptures and the words of the living prophets. When we read and study the revelations, the Spirit can confirm in our hearts the truth of what we are learning; in this way, the voice of the Lord speaks to each one of us. As we ponder the teachings of the gospel and apply them in daily living, we become better prepared to receive additional light and truth.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Marvelous Are the Revelations of the Lord,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 32.

tions to keep on track studying the chapters at home. Those attending the class might benefit from a reading schedule as well—and the suggestion that they study the lesson and bring their manuals to class. It may be easier for them to contribute to the discussion if they have their manuals in front of them and are familiar with the material. They may even find that they are more receptive to the

promptings of the Spirit and more willing to share their own insights. You might also suggest that class members discuss the lesson with their spouse, roommates, or friends before and after class. That way, they can continue to see implications for their lives.

Building Something of Eternal Worth

Each time you plan and teach a lesson from one of the books in the *Teachings of Presidents of the Church* series,

insights and experiences.” You might also want to assign a class member to read part of the lesson in advance and report to the class insights relating to that topic.

Bear your own testimony, and give others the opportunity to do so. Sharing testimonies can help your students make the crucial step from learning to application. President Gordon B. Hinckley explained that if teachers will speak from their hearts, “it will catch fire in the hearts of those they teach.”¹

Encourage class members to study the lesson before class and to discuss it at home afterward. A schedule of reading assignments can help those serving in the Primary, Young Women, and Young Men organiza-

Object lessons, thought-provoking questions, and role plays can be effective tools in capturing class members’ attention.

tion to keep on track studying the chapters at home. Those attending the class might benefit from a reading schedule as well—and the suggestion that they study the lesson and bring their manuals to class. It may be easier for them to contribute to the discussion if they have their manuals in front of them and are familiar with the material. They may even find that they are more receptive to the

promptings of the Spirit and more willing to share their own insights. You might also suggest that class members discuss the lesson with their spouse, roommates, or friends before and after class. That way, they can continue to see implications for their lives.

you are building something of eternal worth. In a time when men and women need the steady, anchoring words of God's prophets as never before, it is your great privilege to build faith in the Lord, to build understanding of His gospel, and to build strength of spirit to follow His teachings today.

"Being a teacher is wonderful!" says Patricia Arancibia de Moya of El Labrador Ward, Santiago Chile Vicuña Mackenna Stake. "If we prepare to give a lesson in the right way



FOCUS ON INSPIRED TEACHINGS

"Many of the inspired teachings of our modern prophets are

compiled in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church*, our course of study for Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society. The timeless doctrines and principles included in these books are fountains of divine wisdom and guidance. Wise teachers in wards and branches will not substitute their own subjects and wisdom but focus on these inspired teachings and their application to current circumstances and challenges."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Give Thanks in All Things," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2003, 96.

by seeking the guidance of the Spirit through prayer, our knowledge of the Savior grows. We feel how beautiful the gospel is. And when we bear our testimonies to the people we teach, we are able to touch their hearts because the Holy Spirit testifies to each of them of these eternal truths." ■

Jan Pinborough is a member of the East Mill Creek Fourth Ward, Salt Lake East Mill Creek Stake.

NOTE

1. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 620.

For additional help, see Dallin H. Oaks, "Gospel Teaching," *Liabona*, Jan. 2000, 94–98; *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 78–80.

In preparing to teach, read the assigned chapter completely, marking quotations that especially impress you.



LEARNING FROM THE PROPHETS

How have you benefited most from the *Teachings of Presidents of the Church* books? We are looking for ideas, suggestions, and experiences that will inspire others to enjoy fully the blessings of studying and applying these resources. Please send your submissions to Learning from the Prophets, *Ensign*, Room 2420, 50 East North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA; or e-mail to cur-editorial-ensign@ldschurch.org. Include your complete name, address, telephone number, and ward and stake (or branch and district).

How Could I Sustain Him?

By Irene Coimbra

I had been a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints only a short while, and I was very happy. I arose early every Sunday to attend church with my young daughter, and I knew I was being well fed spiritually. Then one Sunday I had a disturbing experience.

It was ward conference, and when our stake president spoke, his words were very special to me. Then he said, “Brothers and sisters, I would like you to raise your right hand to show that you sustain President Gordon B. Hinckley as our prophet and President of the Church.” All 50 or so members of my ward raised their hands—except me. The stake president then asked that we sustain the other General Authorities. Once again I did not raise my hand. Finally he asked us to sustain our local leaders. “Now I can raise my hand,” I thought. “I know these leaders, so I can sustain them.”

No one asked me why I had not raised my hand to sustain the prophet and the General

Authorities—probably because they knew I was a new member of the Church. But the experience continued to disturb me. “How can I sustain President Hinckley when I do not know him?” I wondered. “And how can I possibly know him when I live in Brazil and he lives in the United States? To sustain him, I need to know

him and see him face-to-face.”

Then the Spirit began to speak to me: “You never saw Jesus Christ face-to-face, but you sustain Him.”

“Yes, but I know Him through the scriptures, which testify of Him.”

“You can also know the prophet, even without seeing him face-to-face.”

“How?”

“By reading and pondering his words. Pray for guidance from Heavenly Father, and He will help you to understand how to sustain the prophet.”



For a long time I looked at the picture of the prophet. Suddenly I felt as though I were right in front of him.

ILLUSTRATED BY DILLEN MARSH

And that is what I did. During the following days I read several of President Hinckley's talks. I watched him and listened to him speak on videos, observing every detail I could about him and his teachings. And I prayed for understanding.

Then one day as I was reading an article in the *Liabona*, President Hinckley's words penetrated my soul deeply: "It is never too late to learn. I believe this with all my heart" ("A Conversation with Single Adults," *Liabona*, Nov. 1997, 22; *Ensign*, Mar. 1997, 62). I also believed with all my heart and felt that it was not too late for me to learn.

For a long time I looked at the picture of the prophet printed beside his article. Suddenly I felt as though I were right in front of him. I looked at his eyes—eyes that seemed to speak of eternity. I looked at his face—which radiated peace. I had studied his teachings and felt the Spirit testify of them. For the first time I knew that I knew President Hinckley and that I could trust him and sustain him.

Profound well-being enveloped me, and I felt a desire to raise my right hand, not only in front of the members of my ward, but in front of the entire world. Through the witness of the Spirit, I could declare with complete conviction, "I too sustain the prophet." ■

Irene Coimbra is a member of the Jardim Independência Ward, Ribeirão Preto Brazil East Stake.



Encircled by Her Love

By Ethelyn D. Graham

It was a bright, clear morning, and I was preparing to give a bridal shower. I love giving parties—any kind, any time, any number of people. Why, then, couldn't I shake this black heaviness that kept threatening to reduce me to tears? A recent family problem had brought my husband and me many sleepless nights and much despair, and we had been pleading with the Lord for help.

Although I had offered silent prayers all morning, I could not suppress my anguish. Past experience had taught me that a kind Heavenly Father could lift me from the depths when I was sufficiently in tune. But there was little time left before I would need to have pulled myself together to look after my guests.

Only an hour before the party, I looked up to see the Relief Society compassionate service leader coming up the path. She looked at me for a long moment and said, "I felt I needed

to come see you this morning." My first thought was that there must be some problem. I was the Relief Society president, and I knew I must take whatever time was needed.

Then Norma's arms were around me. She held me and told me how much she loved me. This dear woman had been quietly putting her arms around sisters in need for a long time. Many had recounted their joy at having her appear miraculously when they needed her most.

Now I was encircled by her love when I needed it most. The tears I had been fighting all morning ran freely. But what had been tears of desperation and pain now turned to the sweet release that cleanses the soul and brightens the outlook.

Ten minutes later she was off down the walk, and I knew that an angel had ministered to my needs that day. ■

Ethelyn D. Graham is a member of the Bountiful Fourth Ward, Bountiful Utah South Stake.

Protect Me on My Way

By Gloria Olave

Please don't panic, ma'am, but your son was hit by a car on the way to school."

The young woman's words fell on my ears with the intensity of a bomb. Without stopping to think, I threw down the phone, snatched my sleeping little girl, and ran toward the school. I wept and prayed.

Within minutes I was at the school. There was five-year-old Abraham, sitting in his classroom, looking completely healthy, and telling me that he had been hit by a car. I looked him over, and although I could see no apparent harm from the accident, we took him to the hospital.

When we got to the emergency room, we saw a man with his head down, sobbing. Someone must have pointed me out to him, because while the doctors examined my son, the distraught man nervously approached me and said, "I am the one responsible for hitting your son. I will take care of the expenses for anything that has to be done."

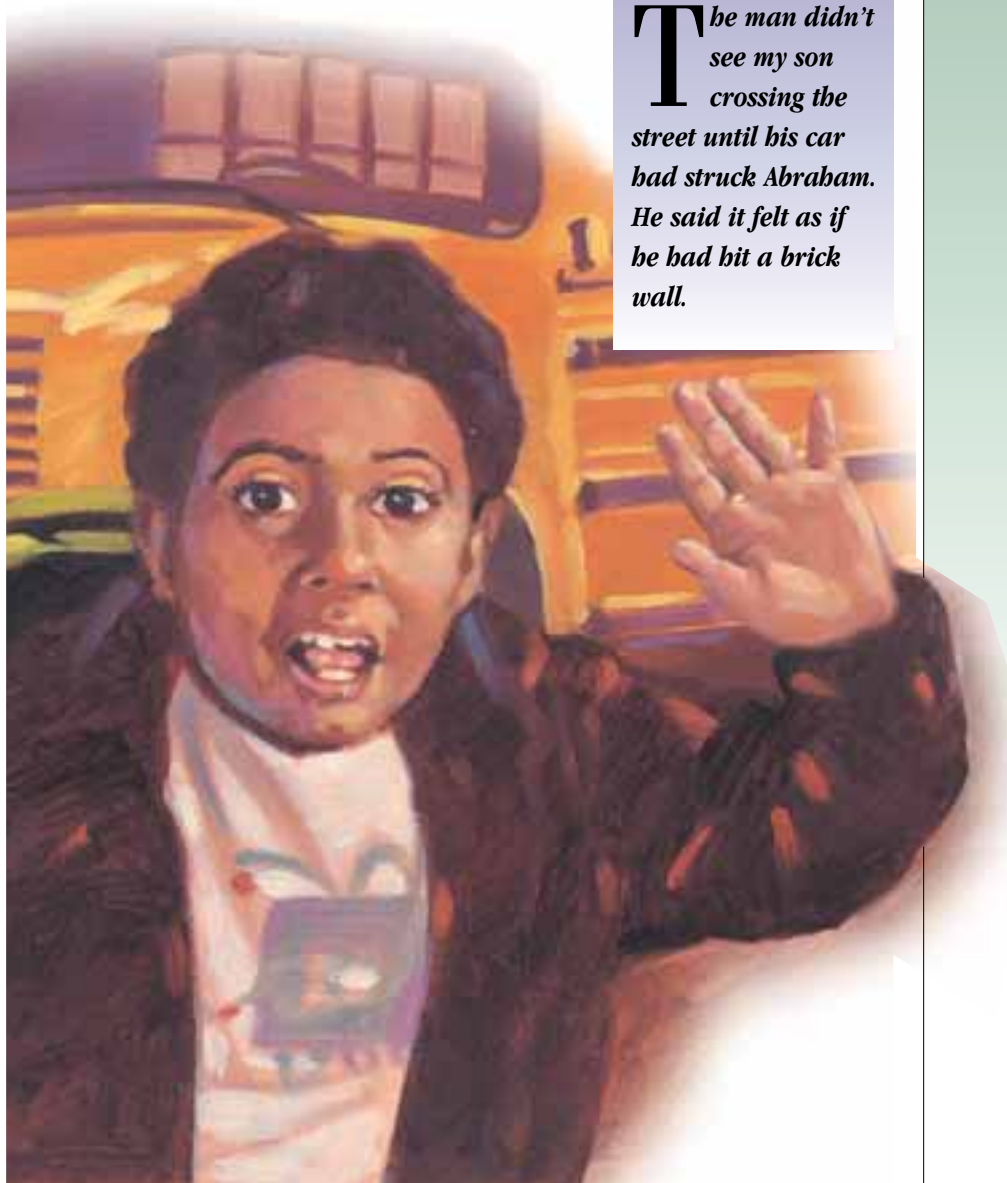
The man began to tell me exactly what had happened. He had driven through an intersection with a traffic light that was out of order and didn't see the boy crossing the street in front of the stopped bus. He noticed

the child only after striking him with the car. He said the impact felt as if he had hit a brick wall. The collision destroyed his car and caused injury to his passengers. He told me he had shut his eyes and thought about the little child lying on the street.

In his despair at reliving the experience, the man did not even notice

that my son was now running and jumping through the halls. Suddenly, he stopped his story, and his eyes began to follow the leaps and jumps of Abraham. He cried, "It's him. It's him! It's a miracle!" He looked at me and said, "I don't believe in God, but I'm going to tell you something. I hit something very hard and strong. If

The man didn't see my son crossing the street until his car had struck Abraham. He said it felt as if he had hit a brick wall.



you believe in anything, be thankful, because a host of angels protected your little boy today.”

That was when I remembered the prayer Abraham had offered that morning. He had a habit of saying very long prayers, which included gratitude for everything from our distant relatives to the dishes on the table. But on this particular day he had been very brief and had said only, “Heavenly Father, protect me on my way to school.”

We later went to the site of the accident, and I saw with my own eyes the magnitude of the damage to the man’s car. A wheel was out of place, a door was dented in, and the bumper was destroyed. But my little Abraham had just a scratch on his elbow. Although I know all prayers are not answered so quickly or so dramatically, Abraham is a living witness of the love and power of God. ■

Gloria Olave is a member of the Paterson First (Spanish) Branch, Paterson New Jersey District.

Missing!

By Christopher Alan Klein

Late one evening shortly after I had been called as bishop, I received a telephone call from a distressed member. She told me her elderly husband was missing. He had left home to perform some errands and was long overdue. Tearfully, this sister explained that she had called all the hospitals in Southampton to check if he had

been admitted following an accident of some sort. The police had also been alerted and were on the lookout throughout the city.

I said I would visit immediately to see if the ward members could help in any way and to give her a priesthood blessing if she wished. She gratefully agreed.

I quickly called the elders quorum president. By now it was after 10:30 P.M. I didn’t normally like to bother members late at night, but this was an exceptional situation and I knew I could rely on Brother Rosser to assist me.

When we arrived at the sister’s home, members of her family were there, and it soon became clear that all that could reasonably be done to help had been done. There was little to do other than to offer comfort and perform the priesthood blessing. We laid our hands upon this dear sister’s head and blessed her by the power of the Melchizedek Priesthood. But when I reached the point when one usually adds comfort and insight as directed by the Spirit, my mind was completely blank. I found myself pleading with Heavenly Father for some words with which I might bless her, while simultaneously examining my life to see if some personal unworthiness was acting as an impediment to divine communication. After what seemed a lengthy silence, I was at last inspired to ask Heavenly Father to bless her with the Holy Ghost in His role as Comforter

and then I closed the blessing.

After the blessing as Brother Rosser and I walked to the car, I expressed my concerns about feeling nothing other than to make the request concerning the Holy Ghost. The more I dwelt on the matter, the more my fear increased that something dreadful had happened to the missing husband.

It was now past midnight. As Brother Rosser and I drove away, I felt impressed to drive through a particular district of town rather than taking the direct route home. Brother Rosser agreed that we should follow the impression.

After a few minutes we were halted by a red traffic light where I intended to make a left turn. At that moment what seemed to be a loud and distinct voice instructed me to turn right. The light changed to green, and I turned right. As we drove over the junction, I saw a solitary figure seated on a bench in a deserted shopping precinct. I pulled over, and we got out of the car. As we approached the person huddled against the cold, we called out the name of the missing man. He looked up, and we recognized him. We had been sent directly to him!

This elderly brother had fallen and been knocked out earlier in the day. By the time we found him, he had regained consciousness but was in pain and suffering from exposure to the cold. We quickly called the police, summoned an ambulance,

and informed his wife that he had been found.

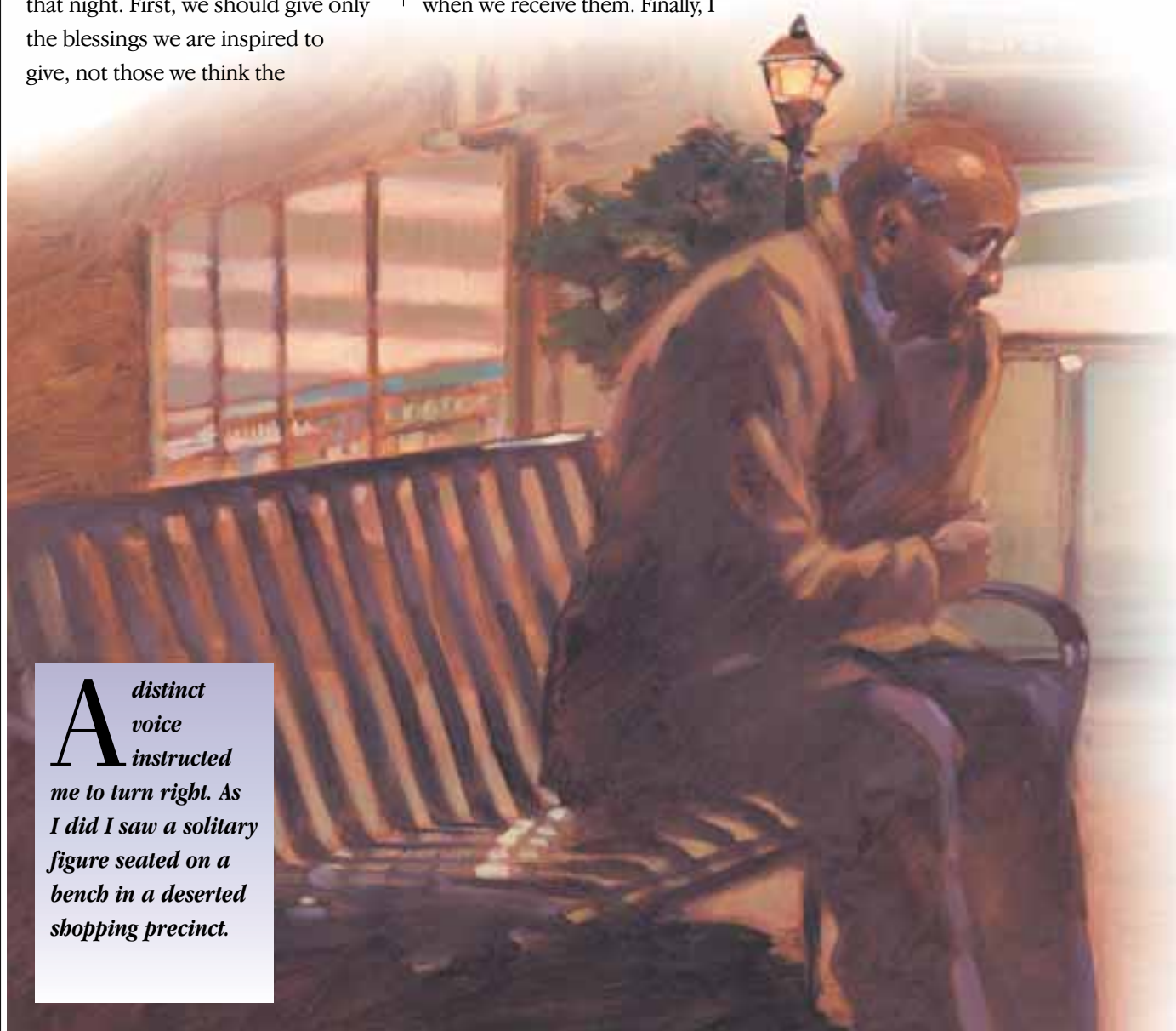
After we had ensured that all was well, Brother Rosser and I started again for home. We reflected upon what had happened. We had been specifically guided by the Holy Ghost. Our tears flowed freely.

I learned a number of things that night. First, we should give only the blessings we are inspired to give, not those we think the

recipient would like to hear. Second, a priesthood holder must always keep himself worthy to be called upon at a moment's notice. Third, Heavenly Father makes known His will in His own time and way. Fourth, we need to recognize the many ways in which the Holy Ghost communicates to us and to act upon those promptings when we receive them. Finally, I

learned that at times the Lord does intervene directly to help, and we can sometimes be the means through which His help comes. I am grateful for the many lessons of that cold, dark night. ■

Christopher Alan Klein is a member of the Southampton Ward, Portsmouth England Stake.



A *distinct voice instructed me to turn right. As I did I saw a solitary figure seated on a bench in a deserted shopping precinct.*

Primary Talks from the Heart

When our daughter Madison was three, she agreed to give a talk in Primary. “I get to talk in front of the kids,” she said excitedly, “while you whisper in my ear!” But we knew she wouldn’t need to repeat our words verbatim. Here are a few tips that helped our daughter give her first talk in her own words:

1. Read and discuss. Early in the week, my husband and I read and discussed articles from the *Friend* with our daughter.

From the information we read together, we organized the talk into

six brief sections or main ideas. During the week, we reviewed each section, asking Madison to say, in her own words, what she knew.

2. Use visuals. We found visual aids (a prop and pictures) for her to show during her talk, each illustrating a section’s key point. We also discussed what each represented.

3. Make a review sheet. Using a table format, we made a column with six sections, each showing a simple drawing or scanned image of the visual to be used. In the next column, we wrote the main ideas (usually two or three simple sentences) that Madison had expressed during our preparation that

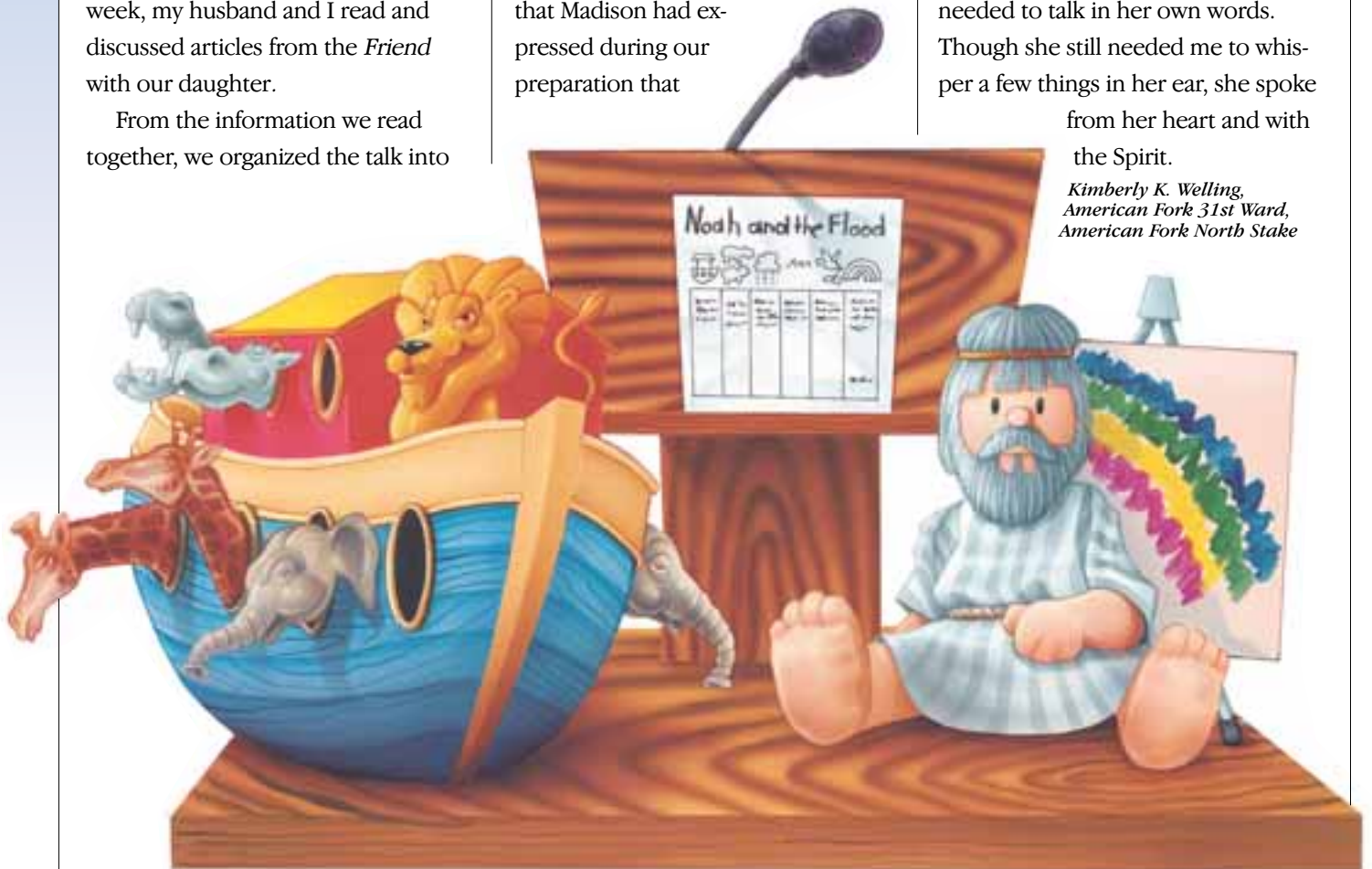
week. By following the pictures on the review sheet, she could easily remember the correct order and what to say. Because we had listed main ideas, we could consistently review the wording with her.

4. Practice. We arranged an advance practice in the Primary room, where Madison learned how to use the microphone and where to place the visuals. If rehearsing at the local meetinghouse is not possible, practice at home, reviewing a final time before church.

By preparing well for her first talk, Madison gained the confidence needed to talk in her own words. Though she still needed me to whisper a few things in her ear, she spoke

from her heart and with the Spirit.

*Kimberly K. Welling,
American Fork 31st Ward,
American Fork North Stake*



Family Newsletters Made Easy

As our family circle has expanded and some members have moved away, keeping in touch has become a challenge. Our solution? A family newsletter. It has proven to be an inexpensive, simple way to stay connected while simultaneously providing a lasting record of our most important news. Motivation and a little up-front organization can also help you get started.

1. Choose a format. Before presenting the idea to your family, determine a few things first. How often do you plan to publish—monthly, bimonthly, quarterly, yearly? How will you assemble your newsletter? Word processing and desktop publishing programs as well as Internet sources often contain newsletter templates that make it easier to format and cut and paste articles. You're not computer savvy? No problem. Typing or handwriting the information and photocopying it serve the purpose too.

2. Brainstorm article and column ideas. To make the newsletter a family affair, consider everyone's talents and expertise. Articles might feature family updates; a calendar of family events; family home evening ideas; gardening, cooking, and household tips; children's artwork; and poetry, to name a few ideas. Family



FAMILY HOME EVENING HELPS

Birthday Spotlights

Our family loves the special birthday spotlights we periodically do for family night. Since birthdays often occur on weekdays when it's difficult for all of us to gather, we celebrate on the Monday night closest to the actual birth date. In addition to traditional festivities, we spotlight the birthday guest by reading selections from his or her baby book, which contains information through age 12. Based on what we read, the birthday person tries to guess how old he or she was when the event occurred. This tradition

helps all of us recall past family events. If you don't have a scrapbook or baby book, you can easily create similar birthday spotlights using yearbooks or family photos or by simply retelling favorite past events from memory.

Next, we dim the lights to watch family slides or video clips featuring the guest of

honor. With these fun memories fresh on our minds, we then take a moment to individually express our sentiments about that person. It has been very heartwarming to hear my family's expressions of love and gratitude for one another. We've generally done this activity for our immediate family, but at times we've also invited grandparents and others. In our home, birthday celebrations involve more than presents, cake, and ice cream. We celebrate wonderful memories and strong family ties.

*Thelissa Zollinger,
Willow Creek Ward,
Denver Colorado Stake*



newsletters also provide opportunities to share testimonies and appropriate faith-promoting experiences.

3. Show the family a sample newsletter. My first front-page article talked about the possibility of doing the newsletter, including column ideas and guidelines. Having the newsletter in hand helped my family feel excited to participate. Depending on family resources, you may decide to mail each newsletter, with family members contributing to all or part of the expense. Family Web sites may also be a good way to share your newsletter. Or you may opt to skip a design format and just batch e-mail text.

4. Establish deadlines. Our articles are due a week before publication, but that may vary for your family. Keep in mind that articles sent via e-mail or saved on computer disk can speed the process. Otherwise, allow time to receive items via postal mail and to type any handwritten material, if needed.

Above all, enjoy creating your family's newsletter! Don't worry if you don't have many articles in an issue or if you're late sending it out. The most important thing is that you're helping your family stay in touch.

Stephanie Yrungaray, Herriman Meadows Ward, Herriman Utah Stake

PHOTOGRAPH BY DON SEARLE



The Manhattan New York Temple—which will occupy the top floors of this Church building—will be a U.S. \$2 subway fare away for many New York City Saints.

Church Blossoms in the Big Apple

By Don Searle, Church Magazines

New York City is the kind of place that draws visitors. At a sacrament meeting in Manhattan, you might talk with a sampling of members and find that most see themselves as temporary residents, here only to begin or advance a career.

But attitudes toward the city are changing, says President Brent J. Belnap of the New York New York Stake, which covers the borough of Manhattan. More members from other areas are putting down roots and raising their families in the city, and the number of native New Yorkers among members is also growing.

President Belnap and his wife, Lorinda, are examples of the shift in attitude. Now senior vice-president and general counsel for a division of an

international financial institution, President Belnap came to New York nearly 18 years ago to study law. After marrying President Belnap and living in Manhattan for five years, Sister Belnap thought of their life there as temporary. Then she awoke one morning in 1997 thinking, “I like living in Manhattan. It’s all right if we stay and raise our children here and send them on missions from here.” Shortly afterward, her husband was called as stake president.

Michelle Larsen of the stake’s Inwood First Ward is originally from Louisiana, and her husband is from Maryland. They came to the city when Sister Larsen, now a scientist studying the causes of tuberculosis, was beginning her graduate work. Her husband owns a book

importing business. New York City, she says, “is a very friendly place. It’s just a whole bunch of little neighborhoods strung together.” There are many educational and social opportunities for their children. “We like the energy of the city. It’s home.”

Young Latter-day Saints in New York City are a minority in their schools, but there is strength for them in the Church. Ellen Comp, director of an afternoon television program and a member of the Manhattan First Ward, says that the possibilities Mutual offers to her children are “exciting.” She notes that Latter-day Saint families in Manhattan cultivate friendships in the ward and stake in order to have associates with similar values, particularly for their children. “We work at being friends.”

Schoolteacher Ross McDonald, a member of the Inwood First Ward originally from El Paso, Texas, admits to having reservations about rearing children in the city because of some of the problems in public schools. While he sees many parents in the stake who find ways to deal with those public school difficulties, others choose to send their children to private schools. Still, he enjoys his teaching and leaves it to his wife to decide if she wants to stay. So far she does. Andrea McDonald, who grew up in the suburbs of Salt Lake City, has come to love the vibrancy of Manhattan. A dancer and musician, she says there are more opportunities than she could ever have imagined.

And there will soon be a temple, located in a Church-owned building across the street from the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, just west of Central Park. After the temple is dedicated on June 13, Sister Larsen says, “I can get on the A [subway] train, ride down to 59th Street, get off, and walk to the temple. It’s amazing just to think about it.”

The subway fare will be U.S. \$2. That compares with as much as U.S. \$100 in costs to travel to the next nearest temple in Boston, Massachusetts, President Belnap says.

In the past, one of the Church’s biggest challenges in Manhattan has been temporal success among the members, President Belnap says. Many become successful in business, law, or entertainment and are often drawn



The Canal Street (Chinese) Branch is one of seven units that have been formed in the New York New York Stake since the early 1990s, bringing the stake's total to 12.

away from Church activity. "But the stronger the Church gets, and with the temple here now, we are going to be able to retain more of these people."

Members in the entertainment industry, for example, are challenged daily. Sandra Turley, who performed the role of the adult Cosette in *Les Miserables* on Broadway, says those challenges can be met. Problems come when people lower their standards to perform on stage, she says. A performer can learn in advance what a role will require and avoid ones that may lead to compromise.

When President Belnap came to Manhattan, there were five units: four English-speaking wards and one Spanish-speaking ward. Now the stake has twelve units, including two Spanish-speaking wards, wards for both older and younger singles, a branch in Harlem, a deaf branch, and a small Chinese branch that meets in an office suite in Chinatown.

Dolores Zecca of the Manhattan First Ward, baptized in 1996, is one of the local members who grew up in the area. A former stake missionary, she is one of the Latter-day Saints on a committee to help to strengthen the Church in Harlem, where a new meetinghouse will soon be built. Last Christmastime she was energized by a project to help police collect toys for needy children. A letter from the local precinct commended Sister Zecca and Harlem member Herbert Steed for their work, adding, "This is an example of the type of positive interaction we have begun to develop and wish to continue."

Sister Zecca looks forward to "being able to go [to the temple] as often as I like." She still recalls the first time: "Oh, what a feeling!"

It is a feeling that she and other New York City Saints hope to recapture again and again. ■

State of Illinois Expresses Regret for Expulsion of Saints

By Elisabeth Liljenquist, Church Magazines

A delegation of Illinois government officials met with Church leaders and members of the media on 7 April 2004 to officially express regret for events that happened nearly 160 years ago.

Beginning in early 1846, approximately 20,000 Saints were forced out of Illinois, which was the start of what would become the "largest forced migration in American history," according to Resolution 793 of the Illinois House of Representatives. Passed with unanimous consent on 1 April 2004, the resolution expresses regret for the murder of Joseph Smith in 1844 and the ultimate expulsion of the Saints from their beloved Nauvoo.

The resolution recognizes that "biases and prejudices of

a less-enlightened age in the history of the State of Illinois caused untold hardship and trauma for the community of Latter-day Saints by the distrust, violence, and inhospitable actions of a dark time in our past."

The idea for the resolution came from Chicago Alderman Edward Burke while he was vacationing in Utah with his wife, Anne, an Illinois Appellate Court Justice. At a dinner with Governor Olene S. Walker, Alderman Burke heard about the Church's history in Illinois from Governor Walker's husband, Myron. "I am embarrassed to say that was the first time I learned about Nauvoo and the details of what happened," said Alderman Burke. "I thought that, number one, the people



Left to right: President James E. Faust and President Thomas S. Monson accept a copy of the resolution from Illinois Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn and State Representative Dan Burke.

of Illinois ought to know more about their own history; and number two, it's a travesty that's gone on for too many years."

When he returned home, Alderman Burke spoke to his brother, Illinois State Representative Daniel Burke (D-Chicago), about drafting a resolution. Ed and Anne Burke showed President Gordon B. Hinckley a draft of the resolution in March 2004.

At the 7 April press conference, President Thomas S. Monson and President James E. Faust, First and Second Counselors in the First Presidency, formally accepted the resolution from Illinois delegates Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn and Representative Dan Burke. (President Hinckley, whose wife, Marjorie, had passed away the evening before, was excused from the event.) Ed and Anne Burke also attended the conference.

On behalf of the State of Illinois, Lieutenant Governor Quinn expressed regret for the injustices suffered by the early Latter-day Saints in Illinois. "There was a day in February 1846 on Parley Street [in Nauvoo] where people who were practicing their faith, people of good faith, were asked to leave the state and . . . move to another place," said Lieutenant Governor Quinn. "It wasn't right. We acknowledge it was wrong and express our regrets and look forward to the future."

Representative Dan Burke read Resolution 793 aloud to reporters and presented a leatherbound

copy to President Monson.

President Monson thanked the delegation for their "kind words and this gracious gesture. We're grateful to you and the good people of Illinois," he said.

"We view this resolution as an affirmation that Nauvoo is and will always be a place of peace," said President Faust. "We know that Latter-day Saints will always have a home in Illinois." ■

Church Launches Interactive Music Web Site

By Adam C. Olson, Church Magazines

Music has long been associated with the gospel, from before the foundation of the world "when the morning stars sang together" (Job 38:7) to the closing hymn of last week's sacrament meeting. Almost all members have been affected by music somehow, whether as part of their worship or simply as uplifting entertainment.

In an effort to make the blessings of Church music more accessible to members, the Church has created and launched the Church Music

Web Site (www.lds.org/churchmusic) as a resource for Church members, families, choir directors, music leaders, speakers, accompanists, and performers.

"The most important benefits of the new site will be spiritual," says David Warner, director of the Church's Music and Cultural Arts division. "As the First Presidency teaches in the preface to our hymnal, music has the power to move us toward greater spirituality in our homes and families. Whether or not members have a background

in music, the site will help them in studying doctrinal principles, conducting family home evenings, serving in Church callings, and teaching the gospel in many settings."

The centerpiece of the site is the Interactive Church Music Player, a tool that will play, print, download, or transpose most of the hundreds of songs from *Hymns* and *Children's Songbook*. (A few songs from *Hymns* and *Children's Songbook* had to be omitted because of copyright restrictions.) The player can play the music with or without vocals. Users may isolate and play specific parts of a song—helpful in learning a part. The player also allows users to change a song to a higher or lower key and even print it out in the new key.

Members can download any of the available songs with or without vocals as MP3s. The songs are all searchable by title, first line, topic, scripture reference, keywords, or author's first or last name. Information about each song is available, as are quotes from current and past General Authorities regarding the blessings of good music.

"The hymns and children's songs present gospel concepts in musical form," says Diane Bastian, the Web site's coordinator. "By including a variety of searches, the site becomes a resource for parents, leaders, and speakers to teach the gospel through the hymns."

The site includes help for members who have a range of musical experience from basic to more advanced. Suggestions are included on



The Church's new music Web site was created to provide a resource for Church members, families, choir directors, music leaders, speakers, accompanists, and performers.

selecting hymns for meetings, adapting hymns for choral use, teaching songs to children, adding variety to singing, accompanying singers, and choosing easy-to-play hymns. The Interactive Conducting Course provides helpful instruction on leading music.

Also included on the site

are guidelines and rules for sending original songs and hymns to the Church's annual music submission. Members can also print out sheet music from a number of past submissions.

"By including approved submissions, we hope the site will become a sort of living choirbook," says Brother

Warner. "We think it will become a great resource for ward choirs."

Macromedia Flash 7.0 is required to view most of the site's content. Flash is included in many newer Web browsers. Older browsers may be directed to download the free software before being able to access the site. ■

presentation is April 1 of the same year. Entrants will be notified in August if their submission has been selected.

Plays, musicals, readers' theaters, oratorios, and poetry are welcome. Entries should be suitable for ward/branch or stake/district use, teach gospel principles in uplifting ways, be doctrinally correct, and be Church-oriented and accurate if historically based. Scripts should be a minimum of one act long. Submissions are welcome in all languages.

Submissions should include:

1. Two copies of the entry and any applicable music on 8 1/2 x 11 inch (22 x 28 cm) paper.

2. A statement signed by all contributors that says, "The work submitted, entitled _____, is my original work, is owned by me, and conforms to the submission rules."

3. A cover letter with the piece's title; author's name, address, phone number, and e-mail address; central theme; synopsis; and cast requirements.

The names of all contributors should appear on the cover letter, entry, and signed statement. Authors of productions accepted by the committee may be asked to grant the Church a nonexclusive, perpetual license for unlimited use.

Send submissions to: Church Theatrical Script Submission, 50 East North Temple Street, Room 2082, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84150-6070, USA. For more information, call 1-801-240-6492. ■



The Church is seeking scripts for dramatic and musical productions. This musical was part of the cultural celebration held in conjunction with the Anchorage Alaska Temple rededication.

Church Seeks Cultural Arts Submissions

As part of the Church's encouragement that wards, branches, stakes, and districts plan and participate in more cultural events such as dramas and dance and music festivals, the Church's Music and Cultural Arts Division is accepting cultural arts submissions from Church members.

By creating a year-round submission process, the division hopes to accomplish two goals: to awaken

members' creative talents by providing an outlet for devoted artistic expression and to share gospel-oriented works with other Church units as they plan similar activities. The ultimate goal is that Church members will be strengthened in the gospel and unified in fellowship through planning and performing cultural arts activities.

"The cultural arts have been part of the Church for

a long time," said David Warner, director of the Music and Cultural Arts Division. "They can draw people closer to the gospel."

Selected submissions will be performed—some in an abbreviated form—in the Conference Center Theater in the days leading up to October general conference. While the division will accept submissions year-round, the deadline to be considered for the October

In the News

Spanish Members Finding Comfort After Attacks

In the aftermath of the 11 March terrorist train bombings in Madrid, Spain, Spanish members of the Church are gaining comfort from the Lord and from one another.

Killing nearly 200 and injuring 1,400 more, the bombs exploded in several commuter trains carrying passengers into Madrid. Ángel Gómez, bishop of the Azuqueca Ward, Madrid Spain East Stake, said that when he learned of the bombings, he immediately called his ward members who frequently use the trains. He was relieved to find that none had been hurt.

A member of another ward, Bitin Uema, was seated not far from where one of the train bombs exploded. Knocked unconscious by the blast, he awoke in the wreckage and was at first counted among the dead. His hearing was damaged by the

explosion, but Brother Uema is grateful his life was spared. “Although I was very [shaken] by the nightmare that I was going through, . . . I broke into tears and thanked Heavenly Father that I was still alive,” he wrote in an e-mail to *Church News*. A physician, Brother Uema regrets he was unable to use his skills to help other bomb victims.

One of the bombs detonated at the Santa Eugenia train station, located within a few kilometers of the Madrid Spain Temple. Though temple operations were not disrupted by the blasts, some evening sessions were cancelled the next day because of a national anti-terrorism rally. In an effort to help, a number of members also donated blood.

“The members are very sad,” said Bishop Gómez, but he noted that the tragedy has brought his ward closer together. “I have witnessed love and unity among the members. Our ward is big, and the members don’t see each other much. . . . But the

members are showing love for each other.”

A commemoration of the organization of Relief Society for the Madrid Spain East Stake was held on 13 March, two days after the bombings. Stake leaders had considered canceling it in light of the attacks, but decided to go ahead with it. “It was a great activity. Attendance was strong,” said stake president José Reina. “It was good for the sisters to be together.” Approximately 34,000 Church members live in Spain.

Missionaries Transferred; Members in Haiti Continue to Meet

The Church pulled all 56 non-native single missionaries out of Haiti in February prior to the ousting of former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide as intense civil conflict swept across the Caribbean nation. The missionaries were temporarily transferred to other missions. Native Haitian missionaries remaining in the country were transferred from unstable areas and continue to follow safety measures, avoiding crowds and demonstrations and staying indoors when they feel it is unsafe to be outside.

Despite the deaths of dozens of Haitians during the unrest, no Church members have been reported harmed. Several member families’ homes were destroyed in northern Haiti, where fighting was most intense. There has been no reported damage to Church property. Church membership in Haiti exceeds 10,000.

In an interview with *Church News*, President Eddy Bourdeau of the Port-au-Prince Haiti Stake reported that Sunday services and stake and ward business have mostly continued despite tension between insurgents and supporters of the former government. During the insurgency, some Church meetings were cancelled. As of press time, the Haiti–Dominican Republic border remained closed, preventing Haitian members from attending the Santo Domingo Dominican Republic Temple.

Vanuatu Saints Picking Up after Tropical Cyclone Ivy

The lives of about 1,100 Church members on the islands of Vanuatu, west of Fiji, are finally beginning to return to normal after tropical cyclone Ivy tore through the southern and northern islands. The storm, which occurred on 26 February 2004, killed two people and caused major damage, with winds up to 125 mph (200 kph). All missionaries and members were reported safe.

Among the estimated 2,500 families seriously affected by the cyclone, 10 member families sustained major damage to their homes, while the homes of 62 other member families sustained less serious damage. The roofs of three temporary meetinghouses on the island of Tanna required repairs.

Residents of the islands are left facing potential hardships because of substantial crop losses. The Church has sent aid to the islands, including containers of clothing and medical supplies.



Workers and police search the debris of a train destroyed by terrorist attacks in Madrid, Spain.

Call for Articles

Have you had an experience in which the hymns have strengthened your testimony, provided comfort in a difficult situation, or helped you learn a gospel principle?

Please send your response by 15 August 2004 to *Ensign* Editorial, 24th Floor, 50 East North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA, or to cur-editorial-ensign@ldschurch.org. Clearly mark your submission "Hymns," and on top of your submission, write your name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, ward, and stake (or branch and district).

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

Two Family History Products Now Sold Together

Personal Ancestral File (PAF) 5.2 and PAF Companion are now being sold together as a single package. PAF is the Church's personal genealogy management software. It allows members to capture and

organize their personal and family history electronically on a personal computer and helps in preparing and tracking ancestors' names and information for temple ordinances. Users can attach digital pictures or images of original sources, print charts and reports, capture personal notes about an ancestor, and add research notes. PAF 5.2 can be downloaded for free from the Internet at familysearch.org.

PAF Companion allows users to create additional reports and charts from their family history databases. Using information from the user's PAF database, the Companion software can also print narrative reports on an ancestor in a book format that includes pictures, notes, and sources. PAF Companion is also compatible with earlier PAF versions (PAF 3, 4, and 5). The package of both CDs sells for \$8.25 and is available at distribution centers (item no. 77065).

New Digital Keyboards Available to Units, Members

Two new digital keyboards, suitable for use in Church meetinghouses, are now available. Both instruments are combination piano/organ keyboards that never need tuning and can be played by members with limited or no keyboard skills.

The Kawai LH-1 Digital Piano/Organ is housed in a cabinet the size, appearance, and weight of an upright piano. It includes 176 pre-recorded hymns and children's songs in its memory that can be played

automatically or as directed by a person tapping out the rhythm on any key. The price is \$5,950 for individual purchase.

The Kawai L1-LDS Digital Piano/Organ is a keyboard designed to provide accompaniment for smaller groups, such as priesthood and auxiliary meetings, choir rehearsals, sacrament meetings with fewer than 50 people, or in the home. It includes 88 prerecorded hymns and children's songs in its memory. The keyboard is supported by a wooden pedestal. It costs \$895 for individual purchase.

Local priesthood leaders may request these items by contacting their physical facilities support team. The Kawai LH-1 is approved as an alternative instrument to an acoustical upright piano and may be provided for new meetinghouses. It is also approved as a replacement instrument for an existing upright.

Individual members may purchase the instruments for personal use by calling the Kawai America Corporation at 1-800-421-2177, ext. 358. ■ Church News contributed to these reports.

Correction

The Castle Valley Pageant in Castle Dale, Utah, runs 29–31 July and 3–7 August 2004. For more information on Church pageants, call 1-801-240-7800 or visit www.lds.org and click on "Other Resources," then "Places to Visit." ■

Comment

Lending Support During Unemployment

"Helping Marriage Survive Unemployment: Seven Principles" (*Ensign*, Apr. 2004) struck a resonant chord in my heart. Jim's feelings, experiences, and challenges in dealing with unemployment were all too familiar to me. We should be open to lending our support to those in our midst who are faced with this and similar situations. In our home, home teachers and priesthood leaders have been a great comfort. A concerned Relief Society president was also there to lend encouragement to our family. I have found great strength from my friends, both in and out of the Church, who remain in contact to give their support. Thank you, *Ensign*, for dealing with such an important topic.

Bill Gaudette,
Shawnessy Ward,
Calgary Alberta Foothills Stake

Interest in Finances

Lane V. Erickson's article on financial well-being ("Five Steps to Financial Well-Being," *Ensign*, Mar. 2004) was excellent and timely. However, rather than paying off the smallest debts first, I suggest paying down those with the highest interest rates. The more quickly people can pay off high-interest debts, the more money will be available for paying off the rest.

Harold Lillywhite,
Reedville Ward,
Cedar Mill Oregon Stake

MAKING THE MOST OF THIS ISSUE

J U N E 2 0 0 4



Accept Differences,” page 40.

The Well-Schooled Heart

Are you preparing a missionary? Preparing for a mission yourself? Wanting to teach a friend? You'll find valuable help in “Teaching from the Heart,” an interview with Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Elder Charles Didier of the Presidency of the Seventy, page 6.

His Constant Help

The Savior can respond to our requests for help by giving immediate relief, increasing our capacity, or trying our faith, Elder Flávio A. Cooper explains. No matter what, He'll never forsake us. See “He Knows Our Suffering,” page 14.

A Blueprint for Teaching

Building a lesson from *Teachings of Presidents of the Church* can be simpler and more effective for Relief Society and priesthood

instructors who use these tools. See page 62.

A Mighty—and Continual—Change

We might be converted through a single, heart-shaping event or a slow process, but holding onto that conversion is a lifelong pursuit for all of us. See “A Change of Heart” by Elder Gerald A. Mead, page 18.

Home Evening for Your Less-Active Family

You want family home evening, but loved ones don't share your faith? Six key elements helped one woman involve everyone in her family and strengthen her own conviction. See “Bringing Church Home,” page 25.

Home Teachers, Visiting Teachers

Find your monthly messages on pages 2 and 61.

Worldwide Church

on the Worldwide Web

Do you have a special interest in the Church in Chile? Norway? Taiwan? You can find out what's going on in the Church in specific countries by logging on to www.lds.org and clicking on the “Country Sites” link in the upper-right corner of the home page. The sites, which are maintained locally, offer news and other country-specific information, as well as links to resources on the Church's main Web site.

Several sites have already been launched; an estimated 33 will be completed by the end of 2004 with several more under way for 2005.



Single-Minded

Married and single members may feel they don't have much in common, but the gospel unites us no matter our background. Find suggestions for bridging the gap in “Seeing beyond ‘Single,’ ” page 36.

Accepting Differences

Our own attitudes toward people with cultural, physical, or mental differences are powerful tools in teaching our children, especially when coupled with the Savior's example. As Sister Gayle M. Clegg explains, “We want to help our children retain the Christlike attributes of meekness, humility, and compassion. We want them to have hearts full of love for everyone.” See “Teaching Our Children to



GOSPEL TOPICS

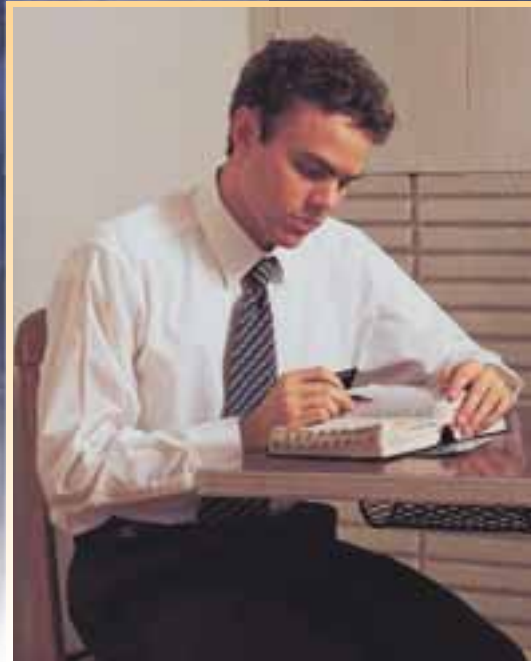
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Waters of Mormon, by Linda Curley Christensen

Alma gathered and taught the people, saying, "Behold, here are the waters of Mormon . . . and now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, . . . what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him" (Mosiah 18:8, 10).



The world is getting worse, but our capacity to teach the gospel is improving,” explains Elder Richard G. Scott. “We have missionaries for whom the gospel message is such a part of their very beings that at a corner bus stop they can give a one-and-a-half-minute overview, a five-minute overview. They are much better equipped to begin with individuals at whatever level they are on and to introduce them to the magnificent message of the Restoration.” See “Teaching from the Heart,” p. 6.