

Ensign

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Virtue, by James Christensen

“Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God. . . . The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion” (D&C 121:45–46). President Thomas S. Monson said of virtue, “Great courage will be required as you remain chaste and virtuous amid the accepted thinking of the times” (“May You Have Courage,” Ensign, May 2009, 125).

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Canada Post Information: Publication Agreement #40017431.

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**By President
Henry B. Eyring**
First Counselor in the
First Presidency



Called of God

AND SUSTAINED BY THE PEOPLE

As members of the Church, we are invited often to sustain people in callings to serve. Years ago an 18-year-old student showed me what it means to sustain the Lord's servants. I am still blessed by his humble example.

He had just begun his first year in college. He was baptized less than a year before he left home to begin his studies at a large university. There I served as his bishop.

As the school year began, I had a brief interview with him in the bishop's office. I remember little of that first conversation except that he spoke of his challenges in a new place, but I will never forget our second conversation.

He asked to see me in my office. I was surprised when he said, "Could we pray together, and may I be voice?" I was about to say that I had already prayed and expected that he had as well. Instead I agreed.

He began his prayer with a testimony that he knew the bishop was called of God. He asked God to tell me what he should do in a matter of great spiritual consequence. The young man told God he was sure the bishop already knew his needs and would be given the counsel he needed to hear.

As he spoke, the specific dangers he would face came to my mind. The counsel was simple but given in great clarity: pray always, obey the commandments, and have no fear.

That young man, one year in the Church, taught by example what God can do with a leader as he is sustained

by the faith and prayers of those he is called to lead. That young man demonstrated for me the power of the law of common consent in the Church (see D&C 26:2). Even though the Lord calls His servants by revelation, they can function only after being sustained by those they are called to serve.

By our sustaining vote, we make solemn promises. We promise to pray for the Lord's servants and that He will lead and strengthen them (see D&C 93:51). We pledge that we will look for and expect to feel inspiration from God in their counsel and whenever they act in their calling (see D&C 1:38).

That promise will need to be renewed in our hearts frequently. Your Sunday School teacher will try to teach by the Spirit, but just as you might do, your teacher may make mistakes in front of the class. You, however, can decide to listen and watch for the moments when you can feel inspiration come. In time you will notice fewer mistakes and more frequent evidence that God is sustaining that teacher.

As we raise a hand to sustain a person, we commit to work for whatever purpose of the Lord that person is called to accomplish. When our children were small, my wife was called to teach the little children in our ward. I not only raised my hand to sustain her, but I also prayed for her and then asked permission to help her. The lessons I received of appreciation for what women do and of the Lord's



love for children still bless my family and my life.

I spoke recently with that young man who sustained his bishop years ago. I learned that the Lord and the people had sustained him in his call as a missionary, as a stake president, and as a father. He said as our conversation ended, “I still pray for you every day.”

We can determine to pray daily for someone called by God to serve us. We can thank someone who has blessed us by his or her service. We can decide to step forward when someone we have sustained asks for volunteers.¹

Those who uphold the Lord’s servants in His kingdom will be sustained by His matchless power. We all need that blessing. ■

NOTE

1. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 211–12.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

After sharing the message, consider reading the following quote: “The Lord will make you an instrument in His hands if you are humble, faithful, and diligent. . . . You will receive added strength when you are sustained by the congregation and set apart” (*Teaching, No Greater Call* [1999], 20). Have the family gather around a heavy object and ask one person to try to lift it. Adding one more person at a time, invite other family members to help lift the object. Discuss what happens when everyone helps. Consider emphasizing President Eyring’s counsel about practical ways we can sustain others in their callings.

YOUTH

Thanks to My Sunday School Teacher

Name withheld

My Sunday School class isn't always reverent. I love listening to the lesson every week, but sometimes it seems as though others in my class do not. Often they talk to each other or play games on electronic devices while our teacher is trying to teach us. Sadly, I sometimes find myself part of the problem.

One week we were worse than usual, and by the end of class, our teacher was reduced to tears because nobody would listen to her lesson. As we walked out of the classroom, I felt bad for her.

The next Sunday our teacher explained that she had prayed a lot that week, seeking for guidance, and it occurred to her that she needed to show us a Church film. She began the movie, which was about the life of Jesus Christ and the miracles He performed.

As I thought about the film that evening, I felt something different. Suddenly I realized that I was feeling the Spirit, more so than I ever had before. Immediately I decided that I wanted to make changes in my life to be more like the Savior, and I realized the experience in Sunday School that day had greatly strengthened my testimony. I am so thankful for my Sunday School teacher and everything she does for our class every week. ■



CHILDREN



Sustaining Means Helping

President Eyring said that when we raise our hands to sustain people, we promise to help them do what they have been called to do.

Which of the children above are sustaining a leader or teacher?

- • • Here are some of the people we sustain:
- prophet, bishopric or branch presidency, ward
- or branch mission leader, Primary teacher,
- Primary leaders.
- Write down or discuss with your parents
- something you can do to sustain these people.



Prayerfully study this material and, as appropriate, discuss it with the sisters you visit. Use the questions to help you strengthen your sisters and to make Relief Society an active part of your own life.

Visiting Teaching— a Sacred Assignment

As visiting teachers, we have an important spiritual mission to fulfill. “The bishop, who is the ordained shepherd of the ward, cannot possibly watch over all of the Lord’s sheep at one time. He is dependent on inspired visiting teachers to help him.”¹ Seeking and receiving revelation as to who should be assigned to watch over each sister is essential.

Inspiration begins as members of the Relief Society presidency prayerfully discuss the needs of individuals and families. Then, with the bishop’s approval, the Relief Society presidency gives the assignment in a way that helps sisters understand that visiting teaching is an important spiritual responsibility.²

Visiting teachers sincerely come to know and love each sister, help her strengthen her faith, and give service when needed. They seek personal inspiration to know how to respond to the spiritual and temporal needs of each sister they visit.³

“Visiting teaching becomes the Lord’s work when our focus is on people rather than percentages. In reality, visiting teaching is never finished. It is more a way of life than a task.”⁴



From the Scriptures

Matthew 22:36–40; John 13:34–35;
Alma 37:6–7

NOTES

1. Julie B. Beck, “Relief Society: A Sacred Work,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 114.
2. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 9.5; 9.5.2.
3. See *Handbook 2*, 9.5.1.
4. Julie B. Beck, *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 114.
5. Eliza R. Snow, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 108.
6. Eliza R. Snow, in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 45–46.

What Can I Do?

1. How can I improve in my ability to fulfill my important responsibility as a visiting teacher?
2. As a visiting teacher, how can I help other sisters fulfill their responsibility as visiting teachers?

Faith, Family, Relief



From Our History

Eliza R. Snow, the second Relief Society general president taught, “I consider the office of a teacher a high and holy office.” She counseled visiting teachers “to be filled with the Spirit of God, of wisdom, of humility, of love” before they visited homes so they would be able to ascertain and meet spiritual needs as well as temporal ones. She said, “You may feel to talk words of peace and comfort, and if you find a sister feeling cold, take her to your heart as you would a child to your bosom and warm [her] up.”⁵

As we go forth in faith as the early Relief Society sisters did, we will have the Holy Ghost with us and be inspired to know how to help each sister we visit. “Let [us] seek for wisdom instead of power,” said Sister Snow, “and [we] will have all the power [we] have wisdom to exercise.”⁶

Fasting

STRENGTHENS US SPIRITUALLY AND TEMPORALLY

Fasting has been part of the gospel of Jesus Christ since Old Testament times (see, for example, Daniel 9:3; Joel 2:12). Fasting strengthens people spiritually and increases the effectiveness of their prayers (see Isaiah 58:6–11). Today members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints fast and give the money they would have spent on food to the Church to help the poor and needy.

“The Church designates one Sunday each month, usually the first Sunday, as a day of fasting. Proper observance of fast Sunday includes going without food and drink for two consecutive meals [in a 24-hour period], attending fast and testimony meeting, and giving a fast offering to help care for those in need.

“Your fast offering should be at least the value of the two meals you do not eat. When possible, be generous and give much more than this amount.

“In addition to observing the fast days set aside by Church leaders, you can fast on any other day, according to your needs and the needs of

others. However, you should not fast too frequently or for excessive periods of time.”¹ Those with a medical condition that would be worsened by fasting should exercise wisdom and modify their approach.

Members of the Church fast for various purposes. We can fast and pray for a family member who is sick, for example. We can fast to express gratitude to God, to develop greater

humility, to overcome a weakness or sin, to receive inspiration for our Church responsibilities, and so on. Fasting helps us feel compassion for those who regularly experience hunger. Fasting also helps our spirit triumph over the body. ■

NOTE

1. *True to the Faith* (2004), 67–68.

For more on this topic, see Matthew 6:16–18; Alma 5:46; 6:6.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY TALAT MEHMOOD, JOHN LUKE, AND WEIDEN C. ANDERSEN; DETAIL FROM *FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS*, BY ELSBETH YOUNG

Fasting means voluntarily going without food or drink for the purpose of drawing closer to the Lord and asking for His blessings.



We are encouraged to be generous in our fast offerings: the Church uses the money to help the poor and needy.



Fast Sunday includes the bearing of testimonies in sacrament meeting.



Fasting is more effective when accompanied by prayer.



Fasting has always been practiced by true believers. The ancient Jews, for instance, fasted for Esther so she could ask the king for protection for her people (see Esther 4:16).

"[Fasting] is simple and perfect, based on reason and intelligence, and would not only prove a solution to the question of providing for the poor, but it would result in good to those who observe the law. It would . . . place the body in subjection to the spirit, and so promote communion with the Holy Ghost, and insure a spiritual strength and power which the people of the nation so greatly need. As fasting should always be accompanied by prayer, this law would bring the people nearer to God."

President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918), *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 197–98.

COUNSELING TOGETHER IN Marriage

By Randy Keyes

As a marriage and family therapist in Victoria, Canada, I counseled with a couple, Bob and Mary (names have been changed), who often had disagreements when they tried to make decisions together. During one meeting Bob said to me, “I try to

preside and get things done, but when I come up with ideas of what we need to do, *she won't sustain the priesthood!*”

From his comment I could tell that he did not fully understand what it means to preside. When couples marry, they form an equal partnership in which they strive to make decisions together in a spirit of unity.

I shared with this couple some principles about counseling together that I learned from the model of priesthood councils. Although councils in the home function somewhat differently than councils do in the Church, many of the same principles apply. As we strive to employ these principles in our homes, they can help us strengthen our marriages in a way that is pleasing to the Lord.



PRINCIPLE 1: UNANIMOUS DECISION MAKING

In Priesthood Councils

Presidencies, councils, and bishoprics all work upon principles of unanimous, harmonious agreement. Elder M. Russell Ballard explained that the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles comes to a united decision before they act on any issue: “We discuss a wide variety of issues, from Church administration to world events, and we do so frankly and openly. Sometimes issues are discussed for weeks, months, and occasionally even years before a decision is made.”¹ Unity is so important that they will not move forward with a decision until unity has been achieved.

The Lord taught the same principle of unity in councils to Joseph Smith: “And every decision made by either of these quorums must be by the unanimous voice of the same; that is, every member in each quorum must be agreed to its decisions, in order to make their decisions of the same power or validity one with another” (D&C 107:27).

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles reinforced this principle when he taught, “We can’t receive inspiration if we’re not united.”² When we are unified in purpose and prayer, we invite guidance and inspiration from the Holy Ghost.

In the Home

The principle of unity is true for priesthood councils, and it is true for marriages. The Brethren have taught that the family council is the basic council of the Church.³ Notice that they have not taught that the husband is the most basic council or that the wife is the most basic council. This council consists of both of them together.



It is not uncommon for couples to struggle in coming to a unanimous decision, especially when the issue at hand is significant. Further, when spouses are more concerned with being right than with gaining consensus, “communication with Heavenly Father breaks down, [and] communication between spouses also breaks down. And Heavenly Father will not interfere. He doesn’t generally intrude where He is not invited.”⁴ The key is to actually invite—rather than exclude—our Heavenly Father into our discussions. If we humbly work together and listen to each other, we gain the essential blessing of the Lord’s guidance.

It is important to make united decisions with the guidance of the Spirit—especially if the decision doesn’t seem logically to be the best choice. President George Q. Cannon (1827–1901), First Counselor in the First Presidency, explained that the Lord sustains the counsel of united leaders and that He will improve their less-than-perfect plan and will “supplement it by His wisdom and power and make it effective.”⁵ This promise is offered to all councils, including couples.

However, decision making does not always have to be accomplished through a formal process. Elder Ballard teaches that “when a husband and wife talk to each other, they are holding a family council.”⁶

Additionally, just as the Lord does not

Just as priesthood councils strive for unity in their decisions, unity in marriage is essential.

command us in all things, spouses do not need to hold councils for every decision. Couples should trust each other to make daily decisions that eternally have little consequence. Together, with guidance from the Lord, the scriptures, and the words of the prophet, they determine those decisions that require mutual discussion.

PRINCIPLE 2: FULL PARTICIPATION

In Priesthood Councils

In the worldwide leadership training meeting in November 2010, Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president, shared the following scripture: “Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not all be spokesmen at once; but let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken that all may be edified of all, and that every man may have an equal privilege” (D&C 88:122). Elder Walter F. González of the Presidency of the Seventy followed her comments with the observation that participation fosters inspiration.⁷ When everyone has an equal chance to contribute, the combined ideas of individual people become stronger.

In the Home

The principle of participation teaches us the importance of having both spouses contribute to the decision-making process. It is not enough for one spouse to make all the decisions and the other to merely agree. Couples achieve greater success as they both seek inspiration and then listen to each other’s thoughts and feelings.

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) said: “A man who holds the priesthood accepts his wife as a partner in the leadership of the home and family with full knowledge of and full participation in all decisions relating thereto. . . . The Lord intended that the wife be a helpmeet for man (*meet* means equal)—that is, a companion equal and

necessary in full partnership.”⁸ We are made to help each other. When we invite and accept our spouse’s participation, we can enjoy one of the great benefits of marriage.

PRINCIPLE 3: PRESIDING RIGHTEOUSLY

In Priesthood Councils

Understanding the correct meaning of *presiding* is vital in conducting an effective priesthood council. Those who preside “watch over the church” (Alma 6:1) and are responsible for ensuring that unity, equal participation, and other principles of counseling are being practiced. Elder Ballard reminds us that “those who hold the priesthood must never forget that they have no right to wield priesthood authority like a club over the heads of others. . . . Priesthood is for service, not servitude; compassion, not compulsion; caring, not control. Those who think otherwise are operating outside the parameters of priesthood authority.”⁹

In the Home

The husband’s patriarchal duty as one who presides in the home is not to rule over others but to ensure that the marriage and the family prosper. President David O. McKay (1873–1970) explained that one day every man will have a personal priesthood interview with the Savior: “First, He will request an accountability report about your relationship with your wife. Have you been actively engaged in making her happy and ensuring that her needs have been met as an individual?”¹⁰

The husband is accountable for growth and happiness in his marriage, but this accountability does not give him authority over his wife. Both are in charge of the marriage. In righteous marriage councils both spouses share a set of virtues that when applied help them focus on each other.

We can study some of these virtues in Doctrine and Covenants 121:41: “No power or influence can or ought

Elder Ballard reminds us that “those who hold the priesthood must never forget that they have no right to wield priesthood authority like a club over the heads of others.”



to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned.”

We cannot use the priesthood to assert power and influence. Therefore, we can’t use unrighteous means to establish dominance in marriage. True power comes only when we work together in righteousness and so qualify for blessings from the Lord.

BUILDING AN ETERNAL MARRIAGE

Couples who struggle with control issues or disagreements over how to handle time, money, children, in-laws, or anything else should consider reassessing the foundational principles they have chosen to follow in their marriage. Can they improve their marriage by establishing a pattern where they counsel together with love unfeigned?

The principles of unity, participation, and presiding in righteousness allow us to

reach a proper consensus with our spouse and invite the Spirit into our lives. Applying the virtues of love and kindness will soften many arguments, lead to deeper satisfaction in marriage, and build a relationship that can last through eternity. ■

NOTES

1. M. Russell Ballard, *Counseling with Our Councils: Learning to Minister Together in the Church and in the Family* (1997), 18–19.
2. David A. Bednar, in “Panel Discussion,” *2010 Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, lds.org/broadcasts/archive/worldwide-leadership-training/2010/11.
3. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 211.
4. M. Russell Ballard, “Family Councils: A Conversation with Elder and Sister Ballard,” *Ensign*, June 2003, 19.
5. *Gospel Truth: Discourses and Writings of George Q. Cannon*, sel. Jerreld L. Newquist (1957), 163.
6. M. Russell Ballard, “Family Councils,” *Ensign*, June 2003, 16.
7. See “Panel Discussion,” *2010 Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*.
8. Howard W. Hunter, “Being a Righteous Husband and Father,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 50–51.
9. M. Russell Ballard, “Strength in Counsel,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 78.
10. David O. McKay, quoted by Robert D. Hales, “Understandings of the Heart” (Brigham Young University devotional address, Mar. 15, 1988, 8), speeches.byu.edu.

In righteous marriage councils, both spouses try—through respect, kindness, and full participation—to build the relationship and seek for unity.



*The prompting came again,
except this time it was stronger.*

INSPIRED IN THE TEMPLE

By Nancy del Plain

One of the many important things my husband helped me learn during his lifetime was the value of going to the temple frequently. His goal was for us to attend weekly, but many times as a young mother of four I went with him out of a feeling of duty rather than desire.

One Friday afternoon as my husband and I participated in an endowment session, an impression came clearly to my mind that I needed to renew my teaching certificate. I was surprised by the impression. I was a very happy stay-at-home mom and thoroughly believed in the prophets' counsel that mothers should be at home with their children if at all possible.¹

Several years earlier, when my youngest child entered preschool, I had begun teaching

toddler labs three mornings a week for our community college. This had been necessary for financial reasons, and I had been blessed to find this job, which coincided with my daughter's preschool schedule and allowed me to be home when she was at home. Why then would I receive an impression that would take time away from being with my children? I decided I would look into the recertification process, and my mind returned to the endowment session.

When we arrived home from the temple, it was late, and the next day was busy. Within a few days I forgot about the inspiration I had received. My husband and I continued to attend the temple regularly over the next several weeks, but the thought of renewing my teaching certificate didn't return to my mind.

Then, two months later during another endowment session, the same impression again entered my mind, except this time it was even stronger. I knew that I needed to heed the prompting. I told my husband about my two experiences, and he wholeheartedly supported my efforts to renew my teaching certificate.

The steps to do so just seemed to fall into place, and within a few months I had renewed my certificate. Still, I wondered what I was supposed to do now that I had it.

I decided that since school was still in session, I would try substitute teaching in district positions that didn't conflict with the hours my children would be at home. In less than one week, I found a permanent substitute job that lasted until the end of the school year. I saw blessings continue to flow as I acted on the prompting I had received. The following September I decided to substitute teach

full time as long as it didn't interfere with our family life. Two weeks later, through another substitute teaching job, I was offered a permanent half-day position as an assistant teacher. My husband and I felt strongly that I should take the position, and so I did.

One year later my husband was diagnosed with cancer. My job allowed us to keep the medical insurance we needed, as well as the part-day freedom to take care of our family's other needs. My husband passed away after two years of debilitating illness, but I could see that the Lord had placed me in the perfect position to handle the challenges that came our way. The following September I was promoted from assistant teacher to lead teacher, giving me the time and means to support my family as well as pursue a higher degree.

In my experiences since then, I have learned that remarkable blessings come as we attend the temple frequently and with a willing heart. In 1 Nephi 18:3, Nephi's comments about his spiritual life show us the blessings of going frequently to the temple. In the land of Bountiful he was prompted to go to a mountain—a place of peace and refuge away from everyday life—where he could pray and receive instructions from the Lord. He says, "And I, Nephi, did go into the mount oft, and I did pray oft unto the Lord; wherefore the Lord showed unto me great things." It is my testimony, too, that when we go to the temple often and listen carefully to the whisperings of the Spirit, we also will have great things shown unto us by the Lord. ■

NOTE

1. See Gordon B. Hinckley, "Women of the Church," *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 69; and Ezra Taft Benson, "To the Fathers in Israel," *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 49.

ACTING ON Promptings

It is the privilege of every Latter-day Saint to receive daily inspiration through the Spirit. By being worthy of and willing to heed spiritual promptings, we can obtain the guidance Heavenly Father wishes to bless us with. Below, three members share how they listened and responded to promptings of the Spirit and, in turn, received abundant blessings.



I Needed to Turn Back

One night, while I was serving as a stake priesthood leader in Loulé, Portugal, I was taking some youth home after a stake activity. It was very late, and as I drove home after dropping off the youth, I turned onto a dark road in a rural area with few cars. Along the way I drove over a small bridge and saw a light flickering on my right side down by the river as though there was a fire.

Because of the humidity of the night, I thought that even if there was a fire, it would quickly be put out by the moisture, so I returned my attention to the road ahead.

I had driven only a few meters, however, when I heard a voice say, “Stop!” I was surprised since I was traveling alone, but I ignored it and continued to drive. A voice of thunder then sounded, “Stop and go back!” I immediately turned the car around and drove back. As I did so, I asked Heavenly Father,

“Lord, what is it?” As soon as I reached the bridge, I got out of the car, and the Lord’s answer was immediate, for I could hear someone below yelling, “Please, help us!”

There was almost no light, and I couldn’t see anything except the small, orange light flickering below. There was a steep ravine below the bridge, and with insufficient light, I didn’t know how to help. I quickly called an emergency phone number, and rescuers were there shortly to help.

That small light was from a car carrying five people that had fallen off the road. Two had lost their lives, but it could have been worse had I not paid attention to the voice of the Holy Ghost.

I testify that the Lord speaks to us through the Spirit, whether by a mild voice or by a voice of thunder. I am grateful to have listened to it that night. I know that the Lord lives, that



He loves us, and that the Holy Ghost communicates with us. We need only be attentive to His voice. ■

Nestor Querales, Portugal

I Decided to Listen

Years ago I began having a persistent nagging feeling that I needed to put together a family cookbook, including recipes from my extended family. I dismissed the idea. I often thought to myself, “I don’t have time to make a silly cookbook! I have six busy children! Making cookbooks is for the bread-making, cinnamon-rolls-from-scratch type of moms. I don’t have time for that!”

The compelling feeling stayed with me for years until one day I finally decided to consider it seriously. But I wondered who in my family would even want to participate. I was the only member of the Church in my family, my parents had passed away, I had no siblings, and most of my extended family lived far away. However, I decided to listen to the prompting anyway.

I contacted my family, explaining that I was compiling a family cookbook and inviting them to send recipes. Over the next year, I received several recipes. Some relatives even sent family stories and photographs. This prompted me to interview my oldest living relatives and gather our family history, which I decided to include in the book also.

In putting the book together, I realized I did not even know many of the family members who had submitted recipes. For this reason I decided to include a family tree. I asked for everyone’s information, wrote out



THE SPIRIT WILL GUIDE YOU

“The gift of the Holy Ghost, if you consent, will guide and protect you and even correct your actions. It is a spiritual voice that comes into the mind as a thought or a feeling put into your heart. . . . It is not expected that you go through life without making mistakes, but you will not make a major mistake without first being warned by the promptings of the Spirit. This promise applies to all members of the Church.”

**President Boyd K. Packer,
President of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles,
“Counsel to Youth,” *Ensign*,
Nov. 2011, 17–18.**

the family tree, and put it in the manuscript.

As I took one last look at the completed book, I turned to the family tree page and became overwhelmed with the Spirit. Tears ran down my cheeks as I became keenly aware of why I was to put this “silly” cookbook together. It had very little to do with recipes. I had gathered names and dates of generations of my ancestors. All these people could now have their temple work done. Additionally, I had preserved wonderful stories for future generations.

Today I am in contact with several of my cousins on a regular basis and enjoy a wonderful relationship with my extended family. When I look at my cookbook, I often think of the scripture, “Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great” (D&C 64:33). I am still amazed when I stop and think of all the joyous and wonderful things that came out of heeding a prompting and putting together a simple cookbook. ■

Nancy Williamson Gibbs, Colorado, USA

It Just Felt Right

The Spirit communicates in a number of ways. I’ve experienced moments of peace, feelings of comfort, and clarity of thought. Some of my strongest impressions come simply as a feeling of truth or correctness. The feeling is hard to describe, but it is there when you simply know that something is true or that you need to act.

One of the most powerful experiences I’ve had with this feeling was in my search to find a house to purchase. I was single and had been contemplating buying a house for several years. I told my realtor what I was looking for, and she did an excellent job of finding houses that fit my description. She would show me houses, but I would turn them down because they didn’t feel right. She started asking me what I disliked about each one so that she could better show me homes that would fit my needs. Unfortunately, I couldn’t articulate very well what was missing.

Finally, one afternoon we walked through a house that wasn’t as nice as some of the others we had seen. It was a little more expensive than others. It fit my description for what I





had said I wanted but not as perfectly as some we had seen. Nevertheless, after walking through it, I told my realtor I wanted to put in an offer. She seemed somewhat surprised at my willingness to act so quickly. Considering my reluctance through previous months, she was right to be surprised. But the feeling that this was where I needed to live was almost overwhelming. I didn't feel a need to stop and think about it.

I put in an offer, and the sellers accepted my bid, despite the fact that it was not the highest offer they had received. I told my family that I knew I was supposed to live

in that house, though I didn't know why.

I found out why I needed to live there fairly quickly. I met a woman in the singles ward within a month of moving in. A little over a year later, we knelt across the altar in the temple, where we were sealed as husband and wife.

The Lord truly moves in mysterious ways. I had no idea that He was leading me toward eternal marriage when He helped me choose a house. All I knew was that I was being guided to take this step, and now I can see that that guidance came from His Spirit. ■
Jeffery Stockett, Utah, USA

EIGHT PURPOSES OF REVELATION

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that the Spirit communicates for eight purposes:

To testify: The Spirit can witness that Jesus is the Christ and that the gospel is true.

To prophesy: Within the limits of one's areas of responsibility, a person may be inspired to predict what will come to pass in the future. The prophet, patriarchs, and even we can receive prophetic revelation.

To comfort: The Spirit can comfort us as He comforted Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail: "Peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment" (D&C 121:7–8). Comfort also comes in connection with priesthood blessings, visions of departed loved ones, and forgiveness of sins.

To uplift: The Spirit can lift us up from depression, feelings of inadequacy, or a plateau of spiritual mediocrity. He comes as we read scriptures or enjoy wholesome music, art, or literature.

To inform: You may be given the words to speak on a particular occasion. The Lord told Joseph Smith and Sidney

Rigdon, "For it shall be given you in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what ye shall say" (D&C 100:6). On some sacred occasions, information has been given face to face from heavenly personages. Other times, needed information is communicated by the quiet whisperings of the Spirit.

To restrain: This form of revelation will deter us from things we should not do. It often comes by surprise, when we have not asked for guidance on a particular subject.

To confirm: You can receive a confirmation through the Spirit after proposing a particular course of action and praying to know if it is the right choice.

To impel: This type of revelation is not sought after but comes to call a person to some action not proposed. This type of communication from the Spirit is rare but, therefore, significant.

From "Revelation," in *Brigham Young University 1981–82 Fireside and Devotional Speeches* (1982), 20–26.



THE HONOR AND ORDER OF THE Priesthood

By President Boyd K. Packer

President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



“The authority and power of the priesthood form the foundation of all that we do in the Church,” said President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.¹ During his more than 40-year ministry as a member of the Twelve, President Packer has elaborated on that statement, speaking extensively on the priesthood—its importance, its proper use, and its keys. The following excerpts highlight some of his significant teachings on the priesthood, including his witness as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Keys of Priesthood

In 1976 an area general conference was held in Copenhagen, Denmark. Following the closing session, President Spencer W. Kimball [1895–1985] desired to visit the Vor Frue Church, where the Thorvaldsen statues of the *Christus* and of the Twelve Apostles stand. . . .

“To the front of the church, behind the altar, stands the familiar statue of the *Christus* with His arms turned forward and somewhat outstretched, the hands showing the imprint of the nails, and the wound in His side very clearly visible. Along each side stand the statues of the Apostles, Peter at the front to the right and the other Apostles in order.

“Most of our group was near the rear of the chapel with the custodian. I stood up front with

President Kimball before the statue of Peter with Elder Rex D. Pinegar and Johan Helge Benthin, president of the Copenhagen stake.

“In Peter’s hand, depicted in marble, is a set of heavy keys. President Kimball pointed to those keys and explained what they symbolized. Then, in an act I shall never forget, he turned to President Benthin and with unaccustomed firmness pointed his finger at him and said, ‘I want you to tell everyone in Denmark that I hold the keys! We hold the *real* keys, and we use them every day.’

“I will never forget that declaration, that testimony from the prophet. The influence was spiritually powerful; the impression was physical in its impact.

“We walked to the back of the chapel where the rest of the group was standing.



The priesthood does not have the strength that it should have and will not have until the power of the priesthood is firmly fixed in the families.

Pointing to the statues, President Kimball said to the kind custodian, ‘These are the dead Apostles.’ Pointing to me, he said, ‘Here we have the *living* Apostles. Elder Packer is an Apostle. Elder Thomas S. Monson and Elder L. Tom Perry are Apostles, and I am an Apostle. We are the living Apostles.

“‘You read about the Seventies in the New Testament, and here are two of the living Seventies, Elder Rex D. Pinegar and Elder Robert D. Hales.’

“The custodian, who up to that time had shown no emotion, suddenly was in tears.

“I felt I had had an experience of a lifetime.”²

The Priesthood Is Not Divisible

“The priesthood is greater than any of its offices. When someone first receives the Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood, it is conferred upon him by the laying on of hands. After the priesthood has been conferred upon him, he is ordained to an office in the priesthood. All offices derive their authority from the priesthood.

“The priesthood is not divisible. An elder holds as much priesthood as an Apostle (see D&C 20:38). When a man receives the priesthood, he receives all of it. However, there are offices within the priesthood—divisions of authority and responsibility. One may exercise his priesthood according to the rights of the office to which he is ordained or set apart. . . .

“Whoever holds the Melchizedek Priesthood or higher priesthood holds all of the authority of the Aaronic or lesser priesthood as well.”³

The Preparatory Priesthood

“The fact that it is called the lesser priesthood does not diminish at all the importance of the Aaronic Priesthood. The Lord said it is necessary to the Melchizedek Priesthood. (See D&C 84:29.) Any holder of the higher priesthood should feel greatly honored to perform the ordinances of the Aaronic Priesthood, for they have great spiritual importance.

“I have, as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, passed the sacrament. I assure you I have felt honored and humbled beyond expression to do what some might consider a routine task. . . .

“Anciently they looked forward to the atonement of Christ through the ceremony of the sacrifice. We look back to that same event through the ordinance of the sacrament.

“Both sacrifice before, and the sacrament afterward, are centered in Christ, the shedding of His blood, and the atonement He made for our sins. Both then and now the authority to perform these ordinances belongs to the Aaronic Priesthood.

“This is indeed a sacred responsibility and includes you in a brotherhood with those ancient servants of the Lord. It is no wonder that we feel so humble when we participate

in the ordinances assigned to the Aaronic Priesthood. . . .

“A few of you who now sit there as deacons, teachers, and priests will one day sit here as Apostles and prophets and will preside over the Church. *You must be prepared.*

“It is indeed correct to call the Aaronic Priesthood the preparatory priesthood.”⁴

An Invitation to Prospective Elders

“The office of an elder is a calling of dignity and honor, spiritual authority and of power. The designation ‘prospective’ implies hope and optimism and possibility. Now I speak to them today, knowing there are perhaps many others to whom this message will apply. . . .

“If you will return to the environment where spiritual truths are spoken, there will flood back into your minds the things that you thought were lost. Things smothered under many years of disuse and inactivity will emerge. Your ability to understand them will be quickened. . . .

“If you will make your pilgrimage back among the Saints, soon you will be understanding once again the language of inspiration. And more quickly than you know, it will seem that you have never been away. Oh, how important it is for you to realize that if you will return, it can be made as though you have never been away. . . .

“Soon you will feel complete and adequate in His church and in His kingdom. Then you will know how much you are needed here and how powerful your voice of experience can be in redeeming others.”⁵

Callings in the Priesthood

“A call is more than an invitation or a request. It is a call from the Lord through His chosen servant. Years ago, President

Spencer W. Kimball, then president of a stake in Arizona, had an experience with extending a calling. There was a vacancy in the presidency of the Young Men organization in the stake. President Kimball left his desk at the bank, walked down the street a few doors into a business, and said, ‘Jack, how would you like to be president of the Young Men in the stake?’

“Jack said, ‘Oh, Spencer, you don’t mean me.’

“He said, ‘Of course I do. You’re a young man, and you get along with young people. You’d make a very good president.’

“Then there occurred what President Kimball thought was a very disagreeable conversation because Jack turned down the call. He went back to the bank and sat at his desk, smoldering over his failure. Then it came to him. He left his desk, went down the street—same door, same man—called him by his full name, and said, ‘Last Sunday the stake presidency met to consider a vacancy in the Young Men’s presidency. We prayed about it, talked about it. Finally, on our knees we inquired about it and received the inspiration from the Lord that you should be called. As a servant of the Lord, I am here to deliver that call.’

“Jack said, ‘Well, Spencer, if you’re going to put it that way.’

“And he said, ‘I’m putting it that way.’”⁶

“Every elder should know that a call is more than an invitation or a request, even more than an assignment. Too frequently we hear such expressions as, ‘I have been asked to serve as a counselor in the elders quorum presidency.’ It would be more proper to say, ‘I have been called to serve as a counselor.’

“We do not call ourselves to offices in the Church. Rather we respond to the call of those who preside over us. It is the responsibility of those who preside to prayerfully consult the

The priesthood is not divisible. An elder holds as much priesthood as an Apostle. When a man receives the priesthood, he receives all of it. However, there are offices within the priesthood—divisions of authority and responsibility.

Power in the priesthood comes through faithful and obedient living in honoring covenants. It is increased by exercising and using the priesthood in righteousness.

Lord as to His will concerning a position in the Church. Then the principle of revelation is at work. The call is then delivered by the presiding officer who is acting for the Lord.”⁷

The Importance of Ordination

“The priesthood is conferred through ordination, not simply through making a covenant or receiving a blessing. It has been so since the beginning. Regardless of what they may assume or imply or infer from anything which has been said or written, past or present, specific ordination to an office in the priesthood is the way, and the only way, it has been or is now conferred.

“And the scriptures make it very clear that the only valid conferring of the priesthood comes from ‘one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church’ [D&C 42:11]. . . .

“Do not miss that one simple, obvious absolute: The priesthood ever and always is conferred by ordination by one who holds proper authority, and it is known to the Church that he has it. And even when the priesthood has been conferred, an individual has no authority beyond that which belongs to the specific office to which one has been ordained. Those limits apply as well to an office to which one is set apart. Unauthorized ordinations or settings apart convey nothing, neither power nor authority of the priesthood.”⁸

The Power of the Priesthood

“We have done very well at distributing the *authority* of the priesthood. We have priesthood authority planted nearly everywhere. We have quorums of elders and high priests worldwide. But distributing the *authority* of the priesthood has raced, I think, ahead of distributing the

power of the priesthood. The priesthood does not have the strength that it should have and will not have until the *power* of the priesthood is firmly fixed in the families as it should be. . . .

“The authority of the priesthood is with us. After all that we have correlated and organized, it is now our responsibility to activate the *power* of the priesthood in the Church. *Authority* in the priesthood comes by way of ordination; *power* in the priesthood comes through faithful and obedient living in honoring covenants. It is increased by exercising and using the priesthood in righteousness.

“Now, fathers, I would remind you of the sacred nature of your calling. You have the power of the priesthood directly from the Lord to protect your home. There will be times when all that stands as a shield between your family and the adversary’s mischief will be that power. You will receive direction from the Lord by way of the gift of the Holy Ghost.”⁹

“The *power* you receive will depend on what you do with this sacred, unseen gift.

“Your authority comes through your ordination; your power comes through obedience and worthiness. . . .

“Power in the priesthood comes from doing your duty in ordinary things: attending meetings, accepting assignments, reading the scriptures, keeping the Word of Wisdom.”¹⁰

True Servants of the Lord

“We do not hear of the priesthood keys being exercised in other Christian churches. It seems odd that we are described by some as being non-Christian when we are the only ones who have the authority and the organization that He established.

“The present Twelve are very ordinary people. They are not, as the original Twelve were

not, spectacular individually, but collectively the Twelve are a power.

“We come from a variety of occupations. We are scientists, lawyers, teachers.

“Elder [Russell M.] Nelson was a pioneer heart surgeon. . . .

“Several in this Quorum were military men—a sailor, marines, pilots.

“They have held various positions in the Church: home teachers, teachers, missionaries, quorum presidents, bishops, stake presidents, mission presidents, and of most importance, husbands and fathers.

“They all are students and teachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. What unites us is our love of the Savior and His Father’s children and our witness that He stands at the head of the Church.

“Almost to a man, the Twelve come from humble beginnings, as it was when He was here. The living Twelve are welded together in the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When the call came, each has put down his nets, so to speak, and followed the Lord.”¹¹

“I certify to you that the 14 men with whom I share the ordination are indeed Apostles. In declaring this, I say no more than the Lord has taught, no more than may be revealed to anyone who seeks with a sincere heart and real intent for an individual witness of the Spirit.

“These men are true servants of the Lord; give heed to their counsel.”¹²

An Apostolic Witness

“There are many qualifications that I lack. There is so much in my effort to serve that is wanting. There is only one single thing, one qualification that can explain it. Like Peter and all of those who have since been ordained, I have *that* witness.



“I know that God is our Father. He introduced His Son, Jesus Christ, to Joseph Smith. I declare to you that I know that Jesus is the Christ. I know that He lives. He was born in the meridian of time. He taught His gospel and was tried. He suffered and was crucified and resurrected on the third day. He, like His Father, has a body of flesh and bone. He made His Atonement. Of Him I bear witness. Of Him I am a witness.”¹³ ■

Fathers, I would remind you of the sacred nature of your calling. You have the power of the priesthood directly from the Lord to protect your home.

NOTES

1. “How to Confer the Priesthood: The Doctrine, the Principle, and the Practice,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, June 21, 2003, 1.
2. “The Twelve,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 85.
3. “What Every Elder Should Know—and Every Sister as Well: A Primer on Principles of Priesthood Government,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1993, 8.
4. “The Aaronic Priesthood,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 30–31.
5. “An Appeal to Prospective Elders,” *Ensign*, May 1975, 104, 105, 106.
6. “How to Confer the Priesthood,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, June 21, 2003, 1–2.
7. “What Every Elder Should Know,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1993, 11.
8. “The Temple, the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, May 1993, 20.
9. “The Power of the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 7, 9.
10. “The Aaronic Priesthood,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 32, 33.
11. “The Twelve,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 85–86.
12. “The Twelve Apostles,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 8.
13. “The Twelve,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 87.



POWER IN THE Priesthood Restored

Great blessings come through the privilege and blessing of holding and exercising the priesthood.

One evening some years ago, a companion and I were visiting with a sister in our ward. This good, faithful woman had suffered much, including divorce, poor health, and limited income. All her children except one were grown, with families of their own.

It was a difficult time for this sister. Like so many of us, in her hour of suffering she needed to feel the power of God in her life. She needed to feel that He loved her. She needed to feel that she was not alone.

I felt prompted to offer a blessing to her, and she accepted. Through the ministration of the priesthood, a choice blessing was bestowed in a sacred and humbling experience.

Words came to my mind unbidden as our Heavenly Father comforted one of His daughters. Through the blessing, she felt of His love in great measure and gained a fuller understanding of her eternal worth, as did I.

It amazed me then, as it does now, how marvelous priesthood blessings are. They

invoke the power of heaven on earth. In this and in so many other ways, priesthood power heals, comforts, guides, strengthens, and opens up the way to eternal life.

The restoration of the priesthood to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery nearly two millennia after it was taken from the earth illustrates how much trust our Heavenly Father shows in His children by granting them the privilege of having among them those who are authorized to hold His power and act in His name, thereby blessing the lives of others.

The Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood

During His mortal ministry, the Savior Jesus Christ bestowed upon His Apostles the priesthood (see Matthew 10:1, 16:18–19; John 15:16), which is “the power and authority that God gives to man to act in all things necessary for the salvation of God’s children” (*Handbook 2: Administering the Church* [2010], 8). After the Savior’s death, the Apostles and other Church leaders were persecuted, and many of them

The Joy of the Restoration

The assurance that we were in the presence of an angel, the certainty that we heard the voice of Jesus, and the truth unsullied as it flowed from a pure personage, dictated by the will of God, is to me past description, and I shall ever look upon this expression of the Savior's goodness with wonder and thanksgiving while I am permitted to tarry; and in those mansions where perfection dwells and sin never comes, I hope to adore in that day which shall never cease."

Oliver Cowdery
(Joseph Smith—History 1:71, endnote)



were killed. Members of the Church began to stray from the true gospel taught by the Savior.

This eventually led to a period called "the Apostasy, or falling away from the original Church organized by the Lord" (M. Russell Ballard, "How Is It with Us?" *Ensign*, May 2000, 33). Further, "with the death of the

Apostles, priesthood keys and the presiding priesthood authority were taken from the earth" (*Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* [2004], 35).

Priesthood keys provided the authority to govern the work of the priesthood. Without apostles, priesthood, and priesthood keys,

much of the true knowledge of God was lost and the doctrines of the gospel were distorted. No ordinances required for salvation, such as baptism, could be properly performed.

But the world would not struggle through such dark times forever. On the 15th of May, 1829, Joseph Smith sat busily translating the Book of Mormon. Oliver Cowdery sat with him as scribe. They were living in Harmony, Pennsylvania, at the home of Joseph's in-laws, near the Susquehanna River.

When their work brought them to a passage in the Book of Mormon describing baptism, Joseph and Oliver wondered how they might receive this ordinance themselves. They desired to be clean and pure, as the ancient disciples had been, and to walk more fully in the Lord's paths.

They retired to the woods to pray in a secluded spot where they could seek private counsel of the Lord.

"While we were thus employed," recorded Joseph, "praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us, saying:

"Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.

"He said this Aaronic Priesthood had not the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on us hereafter; and he commanded us to go and be baptized, and gave us directions that I should baptize Oliver Cowdery, and that afterwards he should baptize me.

"Accordingly we went and were baptized. I baptized him [Oliver Cowdery] first, and afterwards he baptized me—after which I laid my hands upon his head and ordained him to the Aaronic Priesthood, and afterwards he laid his hands on me and ordained me to the same Priesthood—for so we were commanded.

"The messenger who visited us on this occasion and conferred this Priesthood upon us, said that his name was John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament" (Joseph Smith—History 1:68–72; see also D&C 13).

The Restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood

Joseph Smith explained that John the Baptist "acted under the direction of Peter, James and John, who held the keys of the Priesthood of Melchizedek, which Priesthood, he said, would in due time be conferred on us, and that I should be called the first Elder of the Church, and he (Oliver Cowdery) the second" (Joseph Smith—History 1:72).

Within two weeks following John the Baptist's visit, Peter, James, and John did appear to Joseph and Oliver and did confer upon them the Melchizedek Priesthood, which was the same authority the Apostles held anciently. (See Larry C. Porter, "The Restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods," *Ensign*, Dec. 1996, 30–47.)

While the Aaronic Priesthood provides the authority to administer the sacrament, teach the gospel, baptize, and administer the outward ordinances, the Melchizedek Priesthood provides a higher authority. Through it priesthood holders confer the gift of the Holy Ghost and confirm members of the Church, bestow blessings, heal the sick,

The Priesthood Changes Lives

The priesthood has given me the opportunity to see others' lives change, and most importantly, my own. Anytime I have the chance to bestow a blessing, it amazes me that God would trust me to represent Him.

Striving to live up to that responsibility has made me a better person today than I was yesterday, and it will continue to help me grow and progress tomorrow and on through eternity. The amazing thing is that the ability to be able to help others blesses not only their lives, but mine as well.

In short, the gospel means everything. To think that the God of Heaven, in all His power and might, grants this is most precious.

I am forever grateful that I have this blessing in my life, and I hope that I can continue to live my life so that I can share it with others.

**Derek J. Steele,
Tempe, Arizona, USA**



The Priesthood in My Life

Having the knowledge of priesthood power has blessed my life on so many levels. I can be sealed to my husband and children forever! It has given me comfort in times of need and stress, giving me reminders of my Heavenly Father's love for me. It has healed me and guided me.

Tracey Condie,
West Jordan, Utah, USA

direct the affairs of the Church, and administer the saving ordinances, including the blessings of the temple.

What the Restoration of the Priesthood Means

To a convert such as me, the First Vision, in which God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, visited Joseph Smith, is miraculous. Likewise, the visitation of the

angel Moroni and the translation of

the Book of Mormon are remarkable.

These visitations send a powerful message. They establish the necessity of the restoration of priesthood authority and emphasize that man can receive divine authority to act in God's name for the temporal and eternal benefit of others. All our efforts to keep His commandments and enjoy salvation are fruitless without the authority of the priesthood. The Lord's work can move forward only according to His principles. His commandments can be honored only in the manner He prescribes.

The joy that comes in knowing that such blessings are available to us, that we can indeed follow the commandment to be baptized and be clean, is best described in the words of Oliver Cowdery:

"The angel of God came down clothed with glory, and delivered the anxiously looked for message, and the keys of the Gospel of repentance. What joy! what wonder! what amazement! . . . We listened, we gazed, we admired!

'Twas the voice of an angel from glory, 'twas a message from the Most High! And as we heard we rejoiced, while His love enkindled upon our souls, and we were wrapped in the vision of the Almighty!" (Joseph Smith—History 1:71, endnote).

The gift of holding the priesthood is a privilege given to all worthy men in the Church from our Heavenly Father. It shows immense confidence in His children and bestows the potential to bless all of them. In a recent talk during the priesthood session of general conference, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the First Presidency explained, "The fact that our Heavenly Father would entrust this power and responsibility to man is evidence of His great love for us and a foreshadowing of our potential as sons of God in the hereafter" ("Your Potential, Your Privilege," *Ensign*, May 2011, 58).

When priesthood holders exercise faith unto repentance and call upon the name of the Lord, minister in the power of His priesthood, and strive to build His kingdom through priesthood covenants, great blessings come. In fact, the Lord has promised that "whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods . . . and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies. They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God. . . . Therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto [them]" (D&C 84:33–34, 38).

All this is made possible by the grace of God through the Atonement of His Son and made available through the priesthood. That message lies at the core of the plan of happiness, provides peace to the brokenhearted, and is the great hope and joy of humanity. ■

When I joined the Church, the bishop of the ward seemed a little distant to me. Perhaps years of law enforcement in a large metropolitan area had taken their toll, but he always struck me as a bit gruff.

My son, Jordan, was a rambunctious three-year-old at the time. Since we were new to the Church, he wasn't used to sitting still for sacrament meeting. Sometimes he would slip away and run around the chapel before returning to our seat.

One fast Sunday I went up to bear my testimony, and Jordan came with me. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw him as he was about to start running up and down the choir steps. Just then the bishop pulled Jordan into his lap and began whispering into his ear. I could tell Jordan was taking in every word. After concluding my testimony, I retrieved him from the bishop's lap, and Jordan shyly waved goodbye as we returned to our seats.

At the end of testimony meeting, the bishop stood to give his closing remarks. He began to reprimand the congregation for not reaching out to moms, especially single moms, when their little ones give them a hard time. I wished the floor would open and swallow me; I was so embarrassed.

On following Sundays the bishop made a point to greet Jordan and whisper a few words of encouragement to him

as we entered the chapel. Jordan was getting used to sacrament meeting and had started to behave better.

Several months later, we were about to get a new bishop. Jordan was chattering away, so I whispered, "Shhh, we need to listen. We are going to get a new bishop today."

Jordan's eyes grew big. "Oh Mommy, a new bishop," he said. "He will love me too!" My heart softened as I realized my little son only saw love in the man I perceived as stern. What a wonderful lesson for him to learn at that tender age.

I never could have imagined that in just a few weeks my Jordan would be gone. He was killed by a drunk driver. At Jordan's viewing, our former bishop came to pay his respects. He stood next to the tiny coffin, a tear sliding down his cheek. He gently removed the Moroni tie tack from his own tie and pinned it on Jordan's.

As I watched this kind gesture, I could again hear Jordan's words, "Oh Mommy, a new bishop. He will love me too!" Finally I could see what my little son saw. This man, like all great men carrying the responsibility of being bishop, was filled with the love of the Lord.

It has been nearly 20 years and many bishops since that time, yet the whispers of a small child still echo in my mind to remind me the word "bishop" will always mean love. ■



A Friend in the Bishop

By Bonnie Sprinkel Bell Nielson

Gathering IN A *Unity* OF THE FAITH



Centers for young adults offer opportunities for gospel learning, social activities, missionary work, and activation efforts.



By Stephanie J. Burns

Barbara Matovu from Uganda. Sam Basnet from Nepal. And Elisabeth Olsen from Norway. Three different people, three different countries. Yet Barbara, Sam, and Elisabeth have all gathered in one place, the center for young adults in Oslo, Norway, under one truth: the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

These three joined the Church in Oslo, receiving the missionary lessons at the center for young adults. Facilities like the one in Oslo are dedicated to providing a place to socialize at activities, learn in institute classes, enjoy computer and Internet access, study for school, and even cook dinner.

Barbara moved from Uganda to Norway in 1998, when she was nine years old. Ten years later, while living in Oslo, two missionaries invited her to learn about the restored gospel, telling her that they could meet in the center for young adults. Barbara was skeptical, at best.

“I thought to myself, ‘Yet another youth center,’” she admits. “I had been to plenty of

places like that before, and I honestly never felt comfortable being in any of them.”

But this center proved to be different. “My mind was blown away when I took the first step into the door,” Barbara remembers. “I stood still for a moment, trying to figure out the feeling I had. I felt warmth and love. I felt assured that I was in the right place, with the right people, for the right cause.”

Gathering to the Centers for Young Adults

The initiative to build centers for young adults started in 2003. Centers expand the reach of institute by offering more than just religious education classes; young single adults also have opportunities to serve on a center activities council, work with full-time missionaries to help teach and activate their peers, and associate with a senior couple who keep the whole operation running. Local priesthood leadership, under the direction of Area Seventies, determines the creation of centers in their respective areas.

The first 4 centers were in Copenhagen, Denmark, and in Berlin, Hamburg, and Leipzig, Germany. Those initial 4 have since blossomed into 141 in 2011, in locations as diverse as Sweden and Cyprus. Many more are in various stages of development in other parts of the world, including the United States and Africa.

Gerald and Nancy Sorensen served at the



Above, from top:
Barbara Matovu,
Sam Basnet,
Elisabeth Olsen.



center for young adults in Trondheim, Norway. There they met young adults from countries all across the globe, including Afghanistan, China, Ghana, Iran, Iraq, Mozambique, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine.

“There were many languages, customs, and educational and religious backgrounds,” observes Brother Sorensen, “but all these young adults had a common bond in wanting to know more about their Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. As we got to know them and their personal dreams and challenges, it was easy to look at each one as a child of God. It was plain to see that God answered their prayers and guided their steps, showing His great love for them.”

President Armand Johansen of the Norway Oslo Mission feels that the young adults are being guided to the center for a purpose, including being trained for responsibilities in the future. “The Church in Norway is going to become more and more diverse,” he says. “The centers help the young adults know how to deal with that, to recognize how important the Church is as the common bonding element of all cultures and people,” says President Johansen. “I see the centers as great unifiers, places where you find a lowering of social barriers and biases.”



Young adults have opportunities to serve on a center activities council, work with full-time missionaries to help teach and activate their peers, and associate with a senior couple.

Becoming Unified in Christ

Barbara Matovu remembers the first time the missionaries brought her to the center for an activity to meet other young single adults. She thought she knew what to expect.

“Throughout my life I’ve always had a group that I belonged to,” explains Barbara. “And the groups were always stamped with something—you were the sporty group or the international group or some other group. So when people started coming into the center,





The initial 4 centers for young adults have blossomed into 141, with more planned for other parts of the world.

it was so strange because no one seemed to have the attitude of ‘I’m in the popular group, so I can’t talk to you.’

“At first, I thought, ‘Are they acting? Is this a show?’ But after a while I realized it actually doesn’t matter who we are or where we come from or which language we speak. The love of our Heavenly Father is for everyone. Usually it takes me a bit of time to find my group, but this time I felt like I didn’t need a group. I was just Barbara, and I could be Barbara for everybody.”

Elisabeth Olsen says she feels humbled to see her place in her heavenly family. “When you meet people from a different culture or society, it’s so easy to label them. I’ve learned to open up my eyes more and to see people through the eyes of Christ,” she says. “At the center we all have different cultural backgrounds, but we all have one thing in common: we want to be with Jesus Christ and God again.”

Becoming One but Not the Same

Some might be wary of the idea of unity because they think it must come at the cost of sacrificing individuality. “A lot of people are

scared of religion because they think that it makes us all the same, because we live by the same commandments,” explains Elisabeth. “But that’s not how it is at all. God made us all individuals. We may have the same beliefs, but we have different qualities and gifts, and that’s what makes us individuals. God wants us all to be different because we all have different missions.”

Sam Basnet has also fielded concerns from friends who believe religious rules are restrictive. “One friend told me, ‘If you go to church, you have to follow the rules of others,’” he reports. But Sam follows the standards of the Church because he has prayerfully sought personal revelation to confirm his actions.

And it’s by individually speaking to His children that God is unifying them, explains Sam. “God says that all nations and all tongues will worship Him” (see Mosiah 27:31), he says. “By meeting different people, I learn to appreciate different cultures. But experiencing such diversity also makes me feel that, yes, God has a great plan to unite us in peace.”

Arriving at the Ultimate Gathering Place

As much as these young adults appreciate the power of gathering to a center for young adults, these future leaders of the Church understand that it’s just the beginning. As Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, one of the most important gathering places is the temple.¹

Sam has prepared to enter the house of the Lord by surrounding himself with good friends at the center. “By getting to know people from so many different places, it has helped me to feel positive about the world,” he says. “I want to be a good example for my friends, and this has made me more fit for God and more fit to enter His temple.”



STRENGTH IN KNOWING WE ARE ALL CHILDREN OF GOD

“There is strength even in our very diversity. But there is greater strength in the God-given mandate to each of us to work for the uplift and blessing of all His sons and daughters, regardless of their ethnic or national origin or other differences.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 664.

One month after her baptism, Barbara first started thinking about attending the temple while she was at a family home evening lesson at the center. After the lesson, she started asking questions.

“Having friends who understood what the temple meant for them helped me understand what the temple might mean for me. As they explained to me about the temple, I felt the Holy Spirit,” Barbara recalls. “I realized that all the places I’d been thinking about getting married—a nice church or the beach—couldn’t even be compared to the temple. From that moment the temple was no longer just a building. It was something I wanted to look forward to and a place to one day enter with my future husband.”

Elisabeth has also included the temple as one of her most important goals. “Whenever I get to travel to a temple, I just smile like I won a million dollars,” she says. “I know that God wants everyone to go there and receive all the blessings and gifts He has in store for us. Going to the temple and being temple worthy are true success. I can enter the temple and be the closest to God—the closest to home—as I can get on this earth.”

The celestial kingdom is, of course, the ultimate gathering place, one where Barbara doesn’t want any empty seats. “Christ says that it is only through Him that we can come to Heavenly Father, but He also says that one of the biggest things we can do in life is to serve one another [see John 21:15–17]. And serving one another is helping somebody come home to Heavenly Father, because you don’t want to go alone.” ■

NOTE

1. See David A. Bednar, “Honorably Hold a Name and Standing,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 97.

GATHERING ACROSS THE GLOBE

The centers for young adults of the Church are organized under the direction of priesthood authority, often at the Area Seventy level. As of 2011, centers were found in 3 countries in Africa, 28 countries in Europe, 7 states in the United States, and the Dominican Republic. For more information, visit with your bishop or branch president.



- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| Africa | Denmark | Scotland |
| Democratic Republic of the Congo | England | Slovenia |
| South Africa | Finland | Spain |
| Zimbabwe | France | Sweden |
| | Germany | Switzerland |
| | Greece | Wales |
| Central America | Hungary | |
| Dominican Republic | Iceland | United States |
| | Ireland | Arizona |
| Europe | Italy | California |
| Albania | Moldova | Georgia |
| Austria | Netherlands | Indiana |
| Belgium | Norway | Louisiana |
| Cape Verde | Poland | New Mexico |
| Cyprus | Portugal | Wisconsin |
| Czech Republic | Romania | |

OBTAINING the Spirit THROUGH Counseling TOGETHER

*Five principles
General Authorities
use to invite the Spirit
into their councils.*

By R. Val Johnson

Church Magazines

As members of the Church, we can experience the guidance of the Holy Ghost in our personal lives. Whether we are struggling with a family challenge, a problem at work, or a Church assignment, we can receive divine direction if we will ask, seek, and knock (see Matthew 7:7; D&C 88:63). The Church magazines and manuals are filled with stories of members and leaders who have sought revelation and received it.

These stories usually reflect a solitary effort involving individual study, prayer, fasting on occasion, sincere repentance if necessary, and moving forward in faith. But we can obtain direction from our Heavenly Father in another way, and it can be quite powerful. This is the revelatory process of counseling with others.

The principles that guide a person to receive individual revelation are much the same as those that influence members of a group, but other principles are involved as well. Because members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles regularly counsel together to arrive at decisions, their experiences illustrate these principles in action.

Principle 1: Pray, Ponder, and Counsel Together

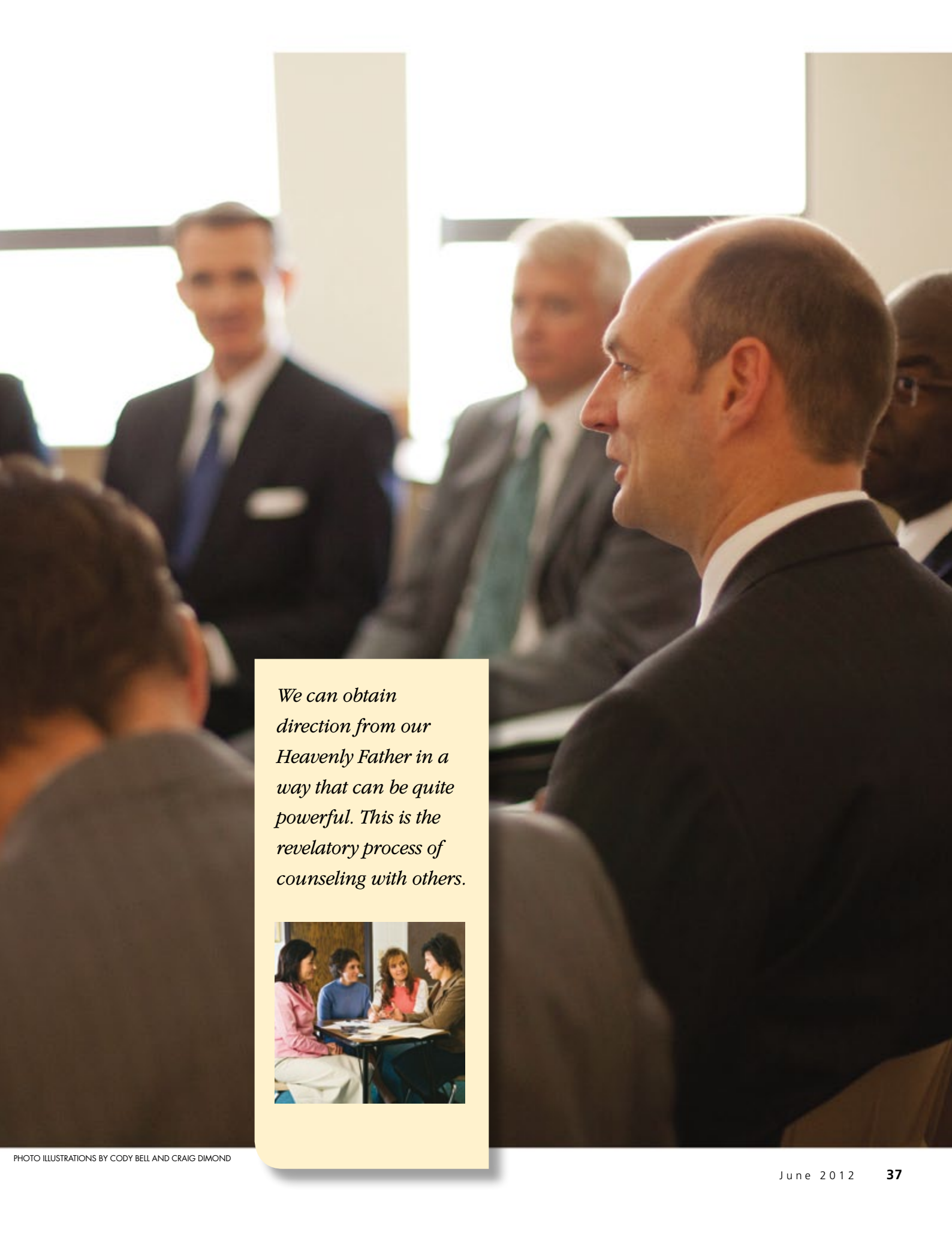
Before being called to the Quorum of the Twelve, Elder Robert D. Hales learned from President Boyd K. Packer the first vital step in obtaining the Spirit when seeking inspiration with another: praying, pondering, and counseling together. He related:

“We were assigned to reorganize a stake and began by kneeling in prayer together. After interviewing priesthood leaders and having prayer, Elder Packer suggested that we walk around the building together. As we walked, he demonstrated a vital principle of seeking . . . revelation—the principle the Lord taught Oliver Cowdery: ‘Behold, . . . you must study it out in your mind’ (D&C 9:8). We pondered our assignment, counseled together, and listened to the voice of the Spirit. When we went back, we prayed and studied further, and then we were prepared to receive revelation.”¹

Principle 2: Seek Unity

The next principle is to seek unity in making the decision. Such unity is difficult





*We can obtain
direction from our
Heavenly Father in a
way that can be quite
powerful. This is the
revelatory process of
counseling with others.*



to achieve without the Spirit. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve related an experience common in meetings of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. He said that a proposal was brought to a meeting, and the president of the quorum at the time, President Howard W. Hunter (1907–1995), said, “This is so critically important [that] I would like to hear the feeling of each member of the Twelve independently about this proposal.”

Elder Scott remembered, “We were going around the circle giving our feelings: ‘I think that’s all right; seems all right to me.’ [Then] it came to one of the members of the Twelve, and . . . he said, ‘I don’t know why; I can’t put my finger on any specific thing that I don’t feel good about, anything that I’d change, but I think we’re about ready to commit a disaster.’” Elder Scott said that this one comment stopped the discussion. He remembered that when the same item came up on the agenda at the next meeting, President Hunter looked around the room. No one said anything. Then President Hunter wisely said, “I see there’s still unsettled feelings about this; we’re not going to make a decision today.”

Elder Scott continued, “Now that’s the way I think the Lord wants us to relate to each other—to not force things, not be in such a hurry . . . , but to truly let the Spirit guide, and sometimes that takes time. But it’s better to make the right decision guided by the Spirit than make one that

meets a time schedule or to check off an agenda item.”²

Principle 3: Move Forward with Faith

Elder Scott’s comment about not forcing a decision is echoed by Elder Hales, who shared a story that illustrates the need for patience and faith in seeking heaven’s help:

“As a General Authority, I was assigned to help reorganize a stake presidency under the direction of Elder Ezra Taft Benson. After praying, interviewing, studying, and praying again, Elder Benson asked if I knew who the new president would be. I said I had not received that inspiration yet. He looked at me for a long time and replied he hadn’t either. However, we *were* inspired to ask three worthy priesthood holders to speak in the Saturday evening session of conference. Moments after the third speaker began, the Spirit prompted me that he should be the new stake president. I looked over at President Benson and

saw tears streaming down his face. Revelation had been given to both of us—but only by continuing to seek our Heavenly Father’s will as we moved forward in faith.”³

Principle 4: Let the Spirit Help You See Others’ Points of View

Counseling together is not always a smooth experience. Individuals with strong opinions can prevent a group from coming to a consensus. In such situations, humility and a willingness to be guided by the Spirit can move the group through the impasse.

Elder Scott gave this advice: “Humility is teachability by the Holy Spirit. . . . When we are humble in that sense, we can be prompted by the Lord. . . .

“[One] way the Spirit might guide you is to lead you both to recognize each other’s point of view. And when there are differences, to try and understand where each one’s coming from so that you can reach an agreement . . . that’s not powered by either



individual's desires or point of view. . . .

"Another [way the Spirit might guide us is in] the ability to change. We aren't just necessarily born with the right decisions in our mind. Sometimes we need to adjust . . . our perspective. . . . The Twelve do this all the time by talking about an issue. We may begin at opposite points, but we talk it through and the Spirit guides what [each person] says. . . . And pretty soon we're beginning to coalesce an agreement—not a forced agreement—but an honest agreement and a direction to take. . . .

"It generally requires some relaxation of my own feelings, some accommodation of my own desires and feelings, so the group can make a unanimous decision that is satisfactory but may not absolutely meet the desires of every individual. You make some concession, not a major one necessarily, but some concession—never a concession in principle, but maybe in approach, so that we can get a decision that works."⁴

Principle 5: Look to the Person Who Presides to Confirm the Inspiration

Elder M. Russell Ballard shared an experience President David O. McKay (1873–1970) related of a council meeting in which the Apostles were considering a question of great importance. President McKay and the other Apostles "felt strongly about a certain course of action that should be taken, and they were prepared to share their feelings in a meeting with the First Presidency. To their surprise, President Joseph F. Smith [President of the Church at the time] did not ask for their opinion in the matter, as was his custom. Rather, he arose and said, "This is what the Lord wants."⁵

Even though the decision was different from what the President of the Twelve,

Francis M. Lyman, had decided, President Lyman "was the first on his feet to say, 'Brethren, I move that that becomes the opinion and judgment of this Council.'"

The motion was seconded and then agreed upon unanimously. "Six months did not pass before the wisdom of that leader was demonstrated," wrote President McKay.⁶

"When a council leader reaches a decision," Elder Ballard concluded, "the council members should sustain it wholeheartedly."⁷

Years ago, President Stephen L. Richards (1879–1959), First Counselor to President David O. McKay, testified that "in the spirit under which we labor, men [and women] can get together with seemingly divergent views and far different backgrounds, and under the operation of that spirit, by counseling together, they can arrive at an accord. . . .

"I have no hesitancy in giving you the assurance, if you will confer in council as you are expected to do, God will give you solutions to the problems that confront you."⁸

What works for the General Authorities can work for wards, branches, and families—indeed, for any group of people, large or small—seeking inspiration from our Heavenly Father. ■

NOTES

1. Robert D. Hales, "Personal Revelation: The Teachings and Examples of the Prophets," *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 87.
2. Richard G. Scott, in "A Conversation on 'Act under the Direction of the Spirit'" (interview, Leadership Enrichment Series for Church employees, Salt Lake City, Feb. 23, 2011).
3. Robert D. Hales, "Personal Revelation," 87–88.
4. Richard G. Scott, in "A Conversation on 'Act under the Direction of the Spirit.'"
5. M. Russell Ballard, "Strength in Counsel," *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 78.
6. David O. McKay, *Gospel Ideals*, 264, in M. Russell Ballard, "Strength in Counsel," 78.
7. M. Russell Ballard, "Strength in Counsel," 78.
8. Stephen L. Richards, in Conference Report, Oct. 1953, 86.

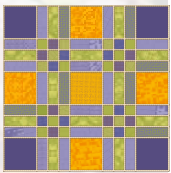
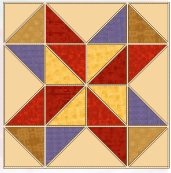
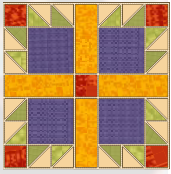


Perfect Order in All Things

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught a group of priesthood leaders a principle that all those in counsel with one another could well adopt:

"Each [person in the council] should speak in his turn and in his place, and in his time and season, that there may be perfect order in all things; and . . . every man . . . should be sure that he can throw light upon the subject rather than spread darkness, . . . which may be done by men applying themselves closely to study the mind and will of the Lord, whose Spirit always makes manifest and demonstrates the truth to the understanding of all who are in possession of the Spirit."

History of the Church, 2:370.



Quilted Expressions of Human Ties

Seemingly commonplace quilts can illustrate the complex nature of human ties and our relationship with self, family, community, and the world.

Life is like a crazy quilt (right)—a colorful representation of oddities stitched together into one complete composition of who we are. In spite of the chaotic appearance of the fabric scraps in a crazy quilt, the quilt creates a beautiful whole, organized on a basic structure, often a square. Likewise, all our uniquely shaped experiences are pieced together to create individual identities founded upon our spiritual nature and the experience of human relationships.

Many small relationships are integral pieces in the fabric of the person we call “me.” The narrative of “my life” starts as a relationship with self, involves family ties, expands to interactions within a community, and reaches out to connect with the world. Our relationship with God is at the heart of all other relationships. He is the thread that ties us together.

The art of quilting can help us share stories of the relationships that make up our individual and communal identities. Seemingly commonplace quilts can illustrate the complex nature of human ties and tell a story that beautifully ties together all the pieces of “me.” A recent exhibit at the Church History Museum, “Pieces of Me: Quilted Expressions of Human Ties,” featured quilts and artifacts, most made by Latter-day Saint artists. Selections are shown on the following pages. More information about these and other quilts and artifacts is available at piecesofmeexhibit.lds.org. ■

▼ *Detail from Crazy Quilt, 1890, by Emma Green Bull. The body of this 69-by-90-inch quilt is made up of irregular-shaped pieces of fabric (velvets, silks, brocades, taffeta prints, solids, stripes, and plaids) augmented with various types of embroidery.*



► Schimmelbusch Family Quilt, 2008, commissioned by Krista Schimmelbusch and made by Jaimie Davis.

Some quilts serve to etch the life story of an ancestor into the hearts of posterity. This quilt symbolically records the ancestry that ties generations together. Traditional Baltimore Album Quilt motifs represent the family's lineage and religion, which in this quilt includes the thirteen Articles of Faith. These symbols collectively illustrate a narrative about the family's identity.



COURTESY OF KRISTA SCHIMMELBUSCH, DO NOT COPY



EMMA GREEN, COURTESY OF WALTER STEVEN BURDETTE, © IRI

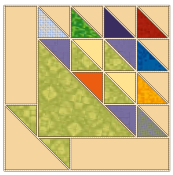
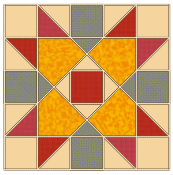
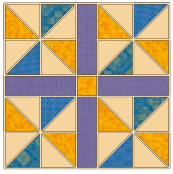


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▲ Sampler, 1793, by Mariam Messelmenin (left), and Sampler, circa 1842, by Maria Louisa Cowdrey (right). As Maria learned to embroider from her grandmother, Mariam, she developed a sense of the aesthetic and learned her figures and letters. Several motifs repeated in the two samplers show that Maria copied stitches exactly from her grandmother's older sampler.



Four Key Relationships

“As we turn to our Heavenly Father and seek His wisdom regarding the things that matter most, we learn over and over again the importance of four key relationships: with our God, with our families, with our fellow-man, and with ourselves.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Of Things That Matter Most,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 21.

► *Detail from Robbing Peter to Pay Paul, circa 1852, by Thomas and Betsy Bullock. Family bonds are nurtured as husband and wife labor together in the creation of a home. After their marriage, Thomas and Betsy worked together to make this quilt for their bed. (Robbing Peter to Pay Paul is the name of the quilt block pattern. The effect is created by starting with a square of cloth, cutting a wedge from each side, then exchanging them with those of the alternate color.)*



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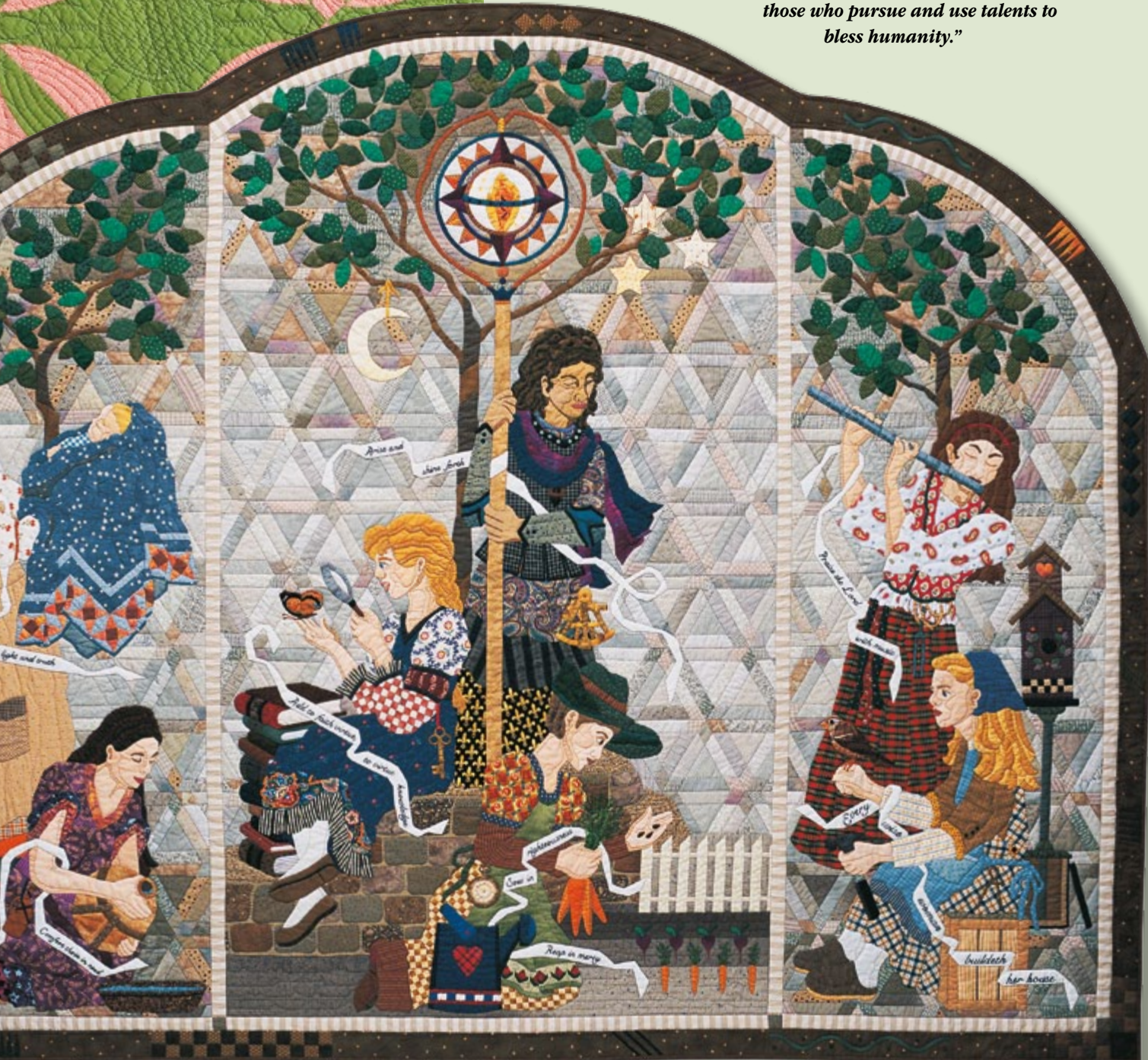
▲ *Women of All Nations Nurturing Peace, 1996, by Emma Allebes. Like the women depicted in this Scandinavian-influenced quilt, women all over the world move across the earth, extending the reach of human ties. As their identities (shown in their skirts) shift from the farm woman (on the left) to the modern woman (on the right), these women nurture people throughout the world. Bird motifs represent the peace the women bring into the world.*



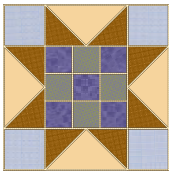
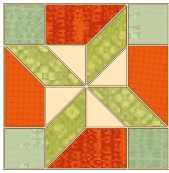
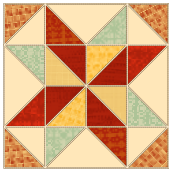


COLLECTED BY PAULI BULLOCK BEARD;
DONATED BY PAULINE BEARD HILLS

▼ **Angel's Portion: Seeking Virtue, 2002, by Jodi Warner.** Depicted in this story quilt are seven heroic figures, each shown in an active pursuit of virtue. Each of these women possesses a trait that can be shared with others to bless humanity: sentinel, scholar, gardener, nurturer, caregiver, musician, and home builder. The artist explains that these women "honor those who pursue and use talents to bless humanity."



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► *Detail from To All Worthy Male Members, 1990, by Emma Allebes. On June 8, 1978, the Church announced to the world that all faithful, worthy male members could receive the priesthood, making it possible for men of every race and nationality to share in this responsibility. In commemoration of this declaration, Sister Allebes physically traced the right hands, held at the square, of 24 priesthood bearers from around the world and pieced them together in this story quilt. She used 24 African printed fabrics.*



EMMA ALLEBES, COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM



▲ *Hmong Traditional Life (story cloth), after 1970, created by Hmong women. An understanding of one's cultural heritage contributes to a sense of identity. Through migrations, wars, and refugee camps, traditional Hmong needlework has served as a reminder to the Hmong people of where they have come from and who they are. A traditional story cloth uses images to preserve family history, community traditions, and recent or historic events. This story cloth depicts daily tasks and rituals.*

© IRI, COURTESY OF TONG LOR LEE



COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM

▲ *Russian Quilt of Testimonies, 1997, quilt blocks created by Relief Society sisters in Ufa, Russia. Each of the blocks was later pieced together and quilted by sisters in the Harrisville Seventh Ward, Harrisville Utah Stake, USA.*

THE POTENTIAL OF YOUTH-LED SERVICE

By Norman C. Hill

Nigerians like to say that they live under “a fierce African sun.” Temperatures near the equator vary only slightly regardless of the season. So when we had our all-Africa service project in August, we began at 7:00 a.m. in order to get as much as possible done in the cooler morning hours.

With shovels, rakes, and machetes, we got to work clearing weeds and hauling trash from the vacant lot near our Yaba Ward building in the Lagos Nigeria Stake. After working for three hours, we had cleared about three acres (1.2 ha) of the four-acre (1.6 ha) lot.

“What do you think of rounding off with this small section and scheduling another day to finish clearing the lot?” the bishop asked.

Overhearing the bishop, Emmanuel, the teachers quorum president, expressed disappointment.

“If we leave this section undone, none of the youth will feel that they have done much today,” he said. “Please, let’s finish.”

Because the weeds were about six feet (1.8 m) high in most places, they obstructed our view and made it difficult to determine how much remained.

“Brother Hill, let’s see how long it might take you and me to clear a



narrow path, maybe only two feet wide,” Emmanuel said. “If we can do it quickly, others may see that it is possible to finish sooner than they might imagine.”

The young men, divided in two groups, had been working on opposite ends of the lot all day. No one had broken through the maze of weeds to the other side. With an aching back, I went to my knees to find some relief while continuing to hack away at the weeds with a machete. Worried, some youth came to see if they could help and then pitched in when they saw Emmanuel and me working toward each other. Within minutes we had broken through to each other, and a small cheer went up. Seeing the breakthrough, others began working in pairs doing the same thing.

In less than an hour, we finished. Beaming with satisfaction, we congratulated each other—especially Emmanuel, who had literally provided a path for others to follow.

The bishop and I thought that we, in our age and wisdom, knew what these young men could accomplish.



GIVING YOUTH A CHANCE TO SERVE

“How many deacons and teachers quorum presidencies consist of

merely calling on someone to offer a prayer or pass the sacrament? Brethren, these really are special spirits, and they can do things of significance if given a chance!”

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Unto the Rising Generation,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1985, 11.

We saw only hot, tired boys, but Emmanuel saw an opportunity for his friends to build dignity and confidence. He knew that exerting extra effort would bring greater satisfaction to them than finishing the job later. He reminded us of the strength of the youth of the Church and how we all benefit when they contribute and lead.

I realized that we don’t need to wait for our youth to grow up—they can make a difference *now* if we let them. ■

Capturing



the Vision of SCOUTING

By David L. Beck
Young Men
General President



Our efforts as Young Men advisers and Scout leaders can have eternal consequences.

When I was a mission president, one particular zone was having a lot of success. I asked one of the zone leaders, “Elder, what’s going on here?”

He said, “President, in high school I ran cross-country with a handful of friends. We trained hard and competed together. For four years none of us could break a certain time barrier on the 5K. But at a cross-country race during our senior year, one of us finally broke that barrier. Then, within seven days of that meet, the whole group had broken the time barrier.”

The cross-country runners—like the missionaries in that zone—succeeded because, in the zone leader’s words, “they *believed* they could do it.”

Young Men advisers called by inspiration to serve in Scouting can succeed too. But a believing attitude requires that they be strong in the Spirit, committed to strengthening the young men they serve, and properly trained.



Learning Our Duty

One of the tools Satan uses against the Church is to convince priesthood holders that they can do tomorrow what they should do today. But the Lord tells us, “Wherefore, *now* let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence” (D&C 107:99; emphasis added).

This counsel is foundational to any calling we receive in the Church, including callings in Scouting. And a key word to this counsel is *now*.

In a program as demanding as Scouting, some leaders are concerned and tentative and might feel inadequate or overwhelmed. These feelings are normal. The best way to deal with such feelings is to just jump in—*now*. The Lord has called you, and He will qualify you¹ and bless you to the degree that you learn your responsibilities and magnify your calling.

Training is essential to understanding Scouting and feeling confident that we can implement the program. Training motivates us to succeed because as we develop a

LEFT: PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT CASEY; INSET BY JOHN SHARPE; BACKGROUND BY LAKE CONNER; RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM: PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL MORRIS, DIANE CONNER, DEANNA VAN KAMPEN



THE POWER OF SCOUTING

“Impossible to measure is the great good which has come from this organization during the past century.

. . . I believe in Scouting. I believe in the goals of the organization. I believe in the power of Scouting to bless and enrich lives for good.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “President Monson Discusses Strengths of Scouting,”
<http://lds.org/study/prophets-speak-today/unto-all-the-world/president-monson-discusses-strengths-of-scouting>.



degree of mastery, we gain confidence that we really can be successful Scout leaders. We hope Young Men advisers, in addition to receiving training, are given enough time in their Scout callings to make a difference in the lives of the young men they serve.

Young Men advisers in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints should be the best implementers of Scouting in the world. Training is an important step toward that end.

Strengthening Young Men

Scouting is more than camping and merit badges. Scouting is spirituality, duty, growth, and leadership. When the Church adopted Scouting in 1913, leaders wanted a program that would develop and strengthen young men. Properly trained leaders can better understand Scouting and appreciate the program’s potential to help young men grow.

We have a legacy of doing hard things in the Church. We’ve always done hard things, and we will continue to do hard things. Hard things stretch us and allow us to bless others. Our youth are the future of the Church, and they must be prepared for difficult days

ahead. Scouting is one way to help prepare our young men to do hard things, such as serve as faithful full-time missionaries.

When properly implemented, Scouting and Duty to God strengthen faith in Jesus Christ, character, relationships, and skills. In addition, they provide opportunities for young men to develop abilities that are essential to the priesthood ministry to which they are called, such as leading and serving.

Scouting and Duty to God help prepare young men to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and temple ordinances and to bless others as full-time missionaries. Scouting has proved for many young men to be a major component in building a bridge to activity in the kingdom of God.

Scouting’s outdoor program is part of its message of self-reliance, but it’s more than that. It’s a relationship-building program in which young men work with each other and with their advisers, doing things that stretch them physically and emotionally. It puts them in contact with nature, freeing them from the distractions of a world that is growing increasingly noisy. And it allows them an opportunity



to commune with the Spirit and to reflect upon their lives and their relationships, including their relationship with Deity.

Being Strong in the Spirit

“If any man among you be strong in the Spirit,” the Lord tells us, “let him take with him him that is weak, that he may be edified in all meekness, that he may become strong also” (D&C 84:106).

If there ever were a time when our young men needed to associate with adult advisers who are strong in the Spirit, that time is now. As leaders of young men, we have the blessing of working with them during the time that they transition from childhood to adulthood. It is a time fraught with temptations and challenges. What a great privilege and an awesome responsibility we have.

Young men need to be guided, motivated, and strengthened by those who are strong in the Spirit. They need to discover through spiritual experiences the intrinsic motivation of being a disciple of Christ—to taste for themselves the fruits of the gospel and of the Spirit.

Young men need to know that their leaders are men of God who can be trusted, who truly care about them, and who take seriously their Scout callings. Trusted leaders can become a powerful resource to help and bless young men.

To “edify in meekness” means to build up in meekness. A meek man edifies young men with patience, gentleness, and an absolute commitment to do God’s will. Confidence and trust are built in young men when they feel that their leaders have the Spirit of the Lord with them.

The Lord also tells us, “Therefore, . . . let not the head say unto the feet it hath no need of the feet; for without the feet how shall the body be able to stand?” (D&C 84:109).



Just as the feet provide support for the physical body, so does the Aaronic Priesthood help support and strengthen the Church. For the body—the Church—to stand now and in the future, we need to acknowledge and honor the Aaronic Priesthood by helping our young men become strong in the Spirit.



Contemplate a simple 14-year-old farm boy with limited formal education. God took him and trusted him to be His instrument in the Restoration of the Church in this dispensation. When you look at a young man, think of Joseph Smith and realize that any young man—with God’s priesthood power—has the capacity to do great things *now*.



Becoming Shepherds of Young Men

Thank Heavenly Father for this season in your life to influence young men. Be there

for them and give them a vision of what they can become as they learn their duty as priesthood holders—whether they are wearing a Scout uniform or a white shirt and tie.

Young men need shepherds, and we need to be the kind of shepherds God expects us to be (see Ezekiel 34:1–16). Our efforts as Young Men advisers and Scout leaders can have eternal consequences (see Jacob 1:17–19).

The adversary does not want us to act, and he will do everything he can to deter us. I pray that we will press forward in preparing the young men of this Church by engaging them in good and glorious things—the great work of the Aaronic Priesthood and the wonderful Scouting program. ■

NOTE

1. See Thomas S. Monson, “Our Sacred Priesthood Trust,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2006, 57.



Why I Love 50-Mile Hikes

By David C. Pack

Director of LDS-BSA Relationships
from 2007 to 2012

I love 50-mile (80 km) hikes, not so much because they're fun but because they teach young men to do hard things.

Most young men who start 50-milers think they're prepared, but it doesn't take long—just a few miles up that first ridge—before they wonder who talked them into it. That night, unlike on other camps, they're quiet and they go to bed early rather than stay up late talking.

The next morning, there's a solemn feeling in the camp—not a lot of discussion. And as the young men start their climb again, they contemplate life and death. By that afternoon they're missing their mothers and wondering whether they'll ever see them again.

By the second night around the campfire, you have the most teachable, ready-to-learn, ready-to-listen-to-the-Spirit young men you will ever see. You won't see them that way in priesthood meeting or at home or at school or on activity night. As a result, there will be an opportunity around that campfire for testimony bearing and teaching that will sink deep into their hearts and that they will remember for a lifetime.

Such experiences require dedicated adult leaders who are willing to get out with the young men,

mentor them, allow them to lead, and be there for them.

By the last day of a 50-miler, the young men feel that they have accomplished the hardest thing they've ever done—and they've survived! They go home realizing that doing better in school and serving a mission may not be so difficult after all. The bar has been raised for them. In the process they come to love and appreciate their parents more, and they can't wait to see them again.

When we do and teach hard things,

we bring young men to a level of competence and confidence that prepares them for the future—the opportunity to serve an honorable mission, be successful in school, become a worthy husband and father, and do other things the Lord expects of them.

That's why a functioning Aaronic Priesthood quorum is so important in the life of a young man. When we successfully integrate Duty to God and Scouting into an Aaronic Priesthood program, we help the priesthood quorum strengthen its young men and prepare them for the future. ■





Questions

I have heard Church leaders say that those of us who come from dysfunctional homes can be “cycle breakers.” I want to build a life founded on righteous traditions, but I’m not sure how I can be someone different from what I’ve been shown and taught my whole life. Where do I start?

& Answers

The words of the living prophets have greatly helped me. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “You were taught and prepared for the circumstances you would personally encounter in mortality. . . . Your memory of premortal life would be kept from you to assure that it would be a valid test, but there would be guidance given to show you how to live.”¹ Knowing the Lord prepared me for my life’s most difficult experiences reminds me that He loves me deeply. When I seek the inspiration of the Spirit through prayer and righteous living, I receive guidance to treat my family in a loving and healthy manner. Name withheld, Minnesota, USA

When I got married, I wanted my home to be different than the one I grew up in. After years of trying to build a strong family, I now realize that breaking a cycle is an ongoing task. These ideas have been helpful in my pursuit.

1. *Make the decision.* Some people don’t think about their behavior, they just continue the traditions of the home they came from. If there was yelling, they yell. If there was abuse, they abuse. We are not solely products of our environment: a loving Heavenly Father has given us the agency to make our own choices



PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT CASEY

and construct the environment we choose. Decide to make your home a place where the Spirit can dwell.

2. *Be specific.* It’s a good first step to say, “I want to be different,” but you also need to set specific objectives to work toward. For example, I never wanted to fight with my spouse the way I heard my parents fight. Personal attacks and dredging up incidents from years past were specific things I didn’t want in our marriage. Think of breaking the cycle like achieving any other goal: set a goal and then take specific steps to attain it. You will have to be willing to work at it, but I testify it’s worth every effort.

3. *Look for new examples.* Pay attention to those around you. There are good, healthy marriages that you can learn from. There are parents who discipline their children with love. You can learn from these



His Power to Heal
“Moral agency is a vital element in our Father in Heaven’s plan of happiness. He understood that some of His

spirit children would use that agency improperly, causing serious problems to others. Some would even violate sacred trust, such as a father or family member abusing an innocent child. Since our Heavenly Father is completely just, there has to be a way of overcoming the tragic consequences of such damaging use of agency for both the victim and the perpetrator. That secure healing comes through the power of the Atonement of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to rectify that which is unjust. Faith in Jesus Christ and in His power to heal provides the abused with the means to overcome the terrible consequences of another’s unrighteous acts. When combined with complete repentance, the Atonement also affords the perpetrator a way to avoid the severe punishment the Lord has decreed for such acts.”

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “To Heal the Shattering Consequences of Abuse,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 40.

Share Your Ideas

An upcoming Questions and Answers feature will focus on the following question:

I am a new convert and the only member of the Church in my family. How can I encourage my family to understand and respect my new values and beliefs without making them feel that I am rejecting them as my family?

If you'd like to contribute your ideas and experiences, please label them "New Convert" and follow the submission guidelines under "Do You Have a Story to Tell?" in the contents pages at the beginning of the magazine. Please limit responses to 500 words and submit them by July 20, 2012.

people. My friends and ward family have been a huge support for me.

4. *Turn to the Master Teacher.* The Savior has shown us the way in everything. Through scripture study I've received answers to many questions and learned from His perfect example of patience and love. In the story of Mary and Martha (see Luke 10:38–42), the Savior lovingly and gently corrected Martha, knowing her intent and responding accordingly. He was forgiving and merciful toward the soldiers who crucified Him. He endured our trials, sorrows, and challenges so we don't have to ever feel alone.

Name withheld, Idaho, USA

I come from a family in which the last three generations on my father's side have created a heartbreaking trail of damaged families and lives. Looking at the situation honestly has imbued me with a determination not to repeat the cycle of destruction I grew up with. I have found two principles to be particularly helpful:

First, set appropriate boundaries between yourself and family members who are still caught in the cycle. You can love and forgive and at the same time choose not to associate with those whose actions are incompatible with breaking the cycle.

Second, be patient with yourself. We are each given talents and gifts in this life. We are also given unique challenges to overcome. Heavenly Father knows my challenges. When I turn to Him, He helps me see that I am not a bad parent because I struggle with the same behaviors that my parents and other family members display. He loves me for fighting against those behaviors. Unlike the adversary, who teaches me that my family's dysfunction both defines and eternally limits me, my loving

Heavenly Father reveals to me the beautiful miracle of a life emerging from the ashes of sin. Name withheld, South Carolina, USA

The talk "You Know Enough" by Elder Neil L. Andersen² of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles offered me comfort during a time when I did not feel worthy or capable of feeling the happiness that the gospel, family, and eternal marriage bring. I had convinced myself that I was a product of my past and that change was impossible. I followed the patterns I had seen as a child because they felt normal. When healthy relationships progressed, the unfamiliar territory scared me and I pushed away. I rejected love and friendship because I was afraid they wouldn't last.

When I recognized that the Lord not only had a plan but had a plan for *me*, I began to have hope. I moved forward knowing that at least I knew what not to do. I found that as I exercised faith, the Lord provided. I made decisions out of faith instead of fear, and I began to succeed where I had previously failed. As I kept the commandments, I learned not only that I was a lovable and capable person, but that I could love others.

I have since married in the temple, and I know I can become the wife and mother the Lord wants me to be. Together my husband and I can build a home with righteous traditions founded on gospel principles. I have learned that we don't have all the answers in life, but with the gospel we have enough, and with faith in its teachings we can be happy. ■
Name withheld, Utah, USA

NOTES

1. Richard G. Scott, "Truth Restored," *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 78–79.
2. Neil L. Andersen, "You Know Enough," *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 13–14.



Conversion WAS THE KEY

By Beverly Fitzgerald

Although my family had been members of the Church for many generations, when I was growing up, my parents, siblings, and I rarely attended church. My parents saw to it that each of their seven children was baptized at age eight. But before and after our baptisms, our church attendance was limited to three- or four-week spurts followed by months of staying home.

I don't know that there was a particular reason we didn't go. I think more than anything, it was a matter of whether we felt like it when Sunday rolled around. Culturally, we were Latter-day Saints in many ways. We had copies of the scriptures in our home, but we never read them. We had food storage, but we never talked about why it was important. And when we went to church, it was just something to do.

Shortly after high school graduation I moved from my home in Seattle, Washington, USA, to Essex, Massachusetts, USA. In this small New England town in the late 1970s, I met Rob, the man who would become my husband. After we married we moved across the United States to Washington State to be close to my family.

Rob was not a member of the Church, and I followed the pattern I had been raised with: I rarely attended sacrament meeting, or any church meeting for that matter. But as our oldest child approached her eighth birthday, I wanted her to be baptized as I had been. Some weeks before Theresa's birthday, I decided she should meet with the missionaries. Rob would sometimes listen in on the discussions, usually from the doorway. But with each succeeding lesson, he listened more and stayed longer. By the time the missionaries

The positive ripple effect from our conversion has touched the lives of not only our children but also other family members.



BECOMING TRULY CONVERTED

"To receive the blessings promised from true conversion, make the changes that you know are needed in your life now. The Savior said: 'Will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you? . . . If ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life.' "

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Full Conversion Brings Happiness," *Ensign*, May 2002, 26.

had taught Theresa all of the lessons, they had two baptisms scheduled: hers and Rob's.

Rob's joining the Church revitalized our family's attendance for a while, but after a few years we became less active again. As with my parents, there wasn't anything particular keeping us from the gospel; usually it was a matter of just wanting to stay in bed rather than getting up and getting everyone ready to go. It was a pattern I knew well.

After eight years of living in Washington, our family returned to New England. We attended the local ward for a while, but never consistently. Before long, we stopped going altogether. In the years that followed, our only contact with the Church was with the missionaries, who came regularly to have dinner with us. We felt affection for them and were always glad to have them join us.

Sometimes the missionaries would invite

Rob to join them at their teaching appointments. Around 1996, the missionaries were teaching a man Rob had grown up with and the man's family. After several weeks, the man's wife said to Rob: "We've been going to church for weeks. When are we going to see you guys [meaning our family] there?"

The question stunned Rob, and he came home and told me about it. We realized that we had waffled long enough. It was time for us to make a decision. We realized our lives were better in the Church than out of it, and we committed to each other that we were going to change for good. We began attending church consistently and accepted callings. We started reading the Book of Mormon. A year later, our family was sealed in the Washington D.C. Temple. The intervening years have been full of rich opportunities to grow and serve.



We've witnessed amazing things happen because of our commitment and conversion. I have seen Heavenly Father's hand in the lives of our children, who are now in their 20s and 30s. Like me, they have all had periods of being less active. Some of them have returned to the Church and have been sealed to their families in the temple. Some of them have not yet done so, but we trust Heavenly Father and His timing and continue to pray for them. I have seen from my own experience and from watching my children that we don't always know His ways and that His ways are higher than our ways (see Isaiah 55:9). There have been times when I have offered soul-wrenching prayers in their behalf and have wondered if Heavenly Father has heard those prayers or if He has simply forgotten us. I have since discovered that He has always been aware of us and involved in our lives. He is working in our lives and in the lives of those we love in ways we cannot possibly imagine.

The positive ripple effect from our conversion has touched the lives of not only our children but also other

family members. Since Rob and I have returned to the Church, my mother and sister have come back to the Church as well. Both have received their temple endowment, and both tell us that their return is due in part to conversations with Rob and me about our own experiences with returning to full Church activity. Small changes for one or two people can lead to powerful things happening in wider circles. What Alma taught is true: "By small and simple things are great things brought to pass" (Alma 37:6).

What did it take for this turnaround to happen? I think the first step was for us to decide to decide. We had to stick to our decision, which meant going to church consistently. It also meant being nourished—reading the Book of Mormon has played an especially important role for our family. Once we were doing those things, the Holy Ghost had the opportunity to work in us, to truly convert us.

Even though I grew up with food storage, the scriptures, and occasional church attendance, I can see now that I wasn't truly converted. That conversion is what I was missing all those years—it has made all the difference. ■

LEARNING
TO COPE

WITH
Infertility

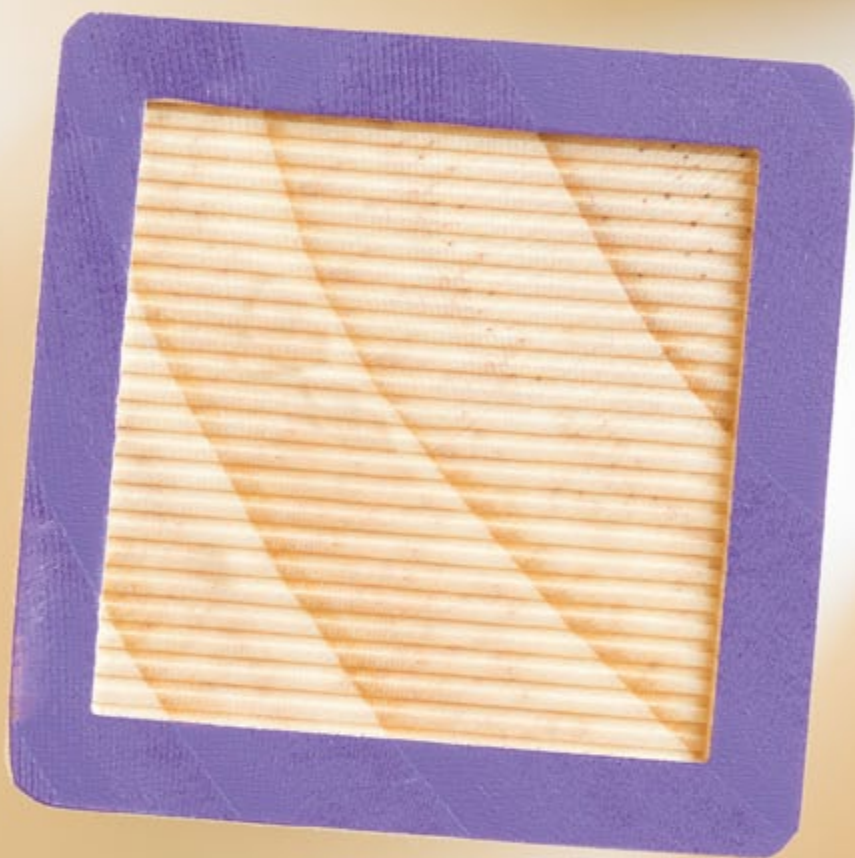
*How personal
revelation, insight
from the scriptures,
and the prophetic
word have
sustained us.*

ByCarolynn R. Spencer

I sat in the temple seeking peace, but there it was again: the first commandment given to Adam and Eve, and to all of us, to “be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Genesis 1:28). I wanted nothing more than to obey this commandment. I had a firm testimony that “the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them” (1 Nephi 3:7). Why, then, could I not get pregnant? My husband, Tim, and I had been married in the temple and felt ready in every way to welcome a child into our family, but even with the most advanced medical intervention, our hopes remained unfulfilled and

our prayers seemed to remain unanswered as the years passed by.

The career I had begun without much thought upon graduation from college moved forward, and at a certain point I realized that from the world’s standpoint I had achieved success: a beautiful home, a flourishing career, a comfortable lifestyle. I thought how ironic it was that those things didn’t matter much to me; my dreams all centered on raising an eternal family—which, in my mind, included children. Although my close friends and family knew of my anguish, others in my ward and extended family didn’t. It was awkward to respond to questions regarding when we



would start our family and devastating to hear hurtful comments regarding our selfishness in putting our careers before having children. Others tried to compensate; unfortunately, that wasn't always helpful either.

I learned to dread few days as much as I did Mother's Day. On many other days, I

From Abraham's wife, Sarah, I learned that miracles do happen, that nothing is "too hard for the Lord."



cringed when I listened to women complain about their pregnancies or their children or the responsibilities of mothering. Didn't they realize how blessed they were? Didn't they realize that others longed to be in their shoes?

Month after month, and then year after year, Tim and I rode waves of hope, only to feel them come crashing down when our dreams failed to materialize.

I tried not to give in to despair. I accepted invitations to baby showers for friends or loved ones and rejoiced in their happiness and good fortune. Despite being told by a doctor after surgery that it was impossible for me to have a child, I never gave up; my patriarchal blessing was too specific about the children who would one day be "born" to me. However, in my darkest moments of sorrow, I couldn't help but wonder why babies seemed to come easily to some women and not to others.

I wondered if Heavenly Father felt I was in some way unworthy or undeserving. Could He not entrust me with one of His children? Was His love for me somehow less than for my sisters and friends who were blessed to become mothers? I began to search the scriptures and soon found others, beloved daughters of God, who had shared my pain.

Lessons from Women in the Scriptures

From Abraham's wife, Sarah, who "was barren; she had no child" (Genesis 11:30), I learned that miracles do happen, that nothing is "too hard for the Lord" (Genesis 18:14), and that the Lord's timing is critical. I learned that even when we think the time has completely passed for a miracle to occur in our lives, it still can: "For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him" (Genesis 21:2).

From Isaac's wife, Rebekah, I learned I needed to keep trusting in the words of my patriarchal blessing, recognizing that blessings aren't always fulfilled in mortality or in

From Isaac's wife, Rebekah, I learned that if my prayers weren't answered right away, I still needed to keep praying.



From Zacharias's wife, Elisabeth, I learned that infertility was not God's punishment for imperfections, weaknesses, or unworthiness to be a mother.

the ways we expect. I learned that if my prayers weren't answered right away, I still needed to keep praying. I could also ask loved ones to pray with and for me. Rebekah had been blessed that she would "be . . . the mother of thousands of millions" (Genesis 24:60). Despite this blessing, she too had no children until "Isaac intreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren: and the Lord was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived" (Genesis 25:21).

From Elkanah's wives, Hannah and Peninnah, I learned some unexpected lessons (1 Samuel 1:1–21). I instantly empathized with Hannah because of her childlessness, but I soon realized she wasn't the only one suffering. I was moved by Hannah's pain in her barrenness, Elkanah's pain in Hannah's unhappiness, and Peninnah's pain in her loneliness, which despite her many children must have been great as she understood she was less loved by her husband than was Hannah. From Hannah and Peninnah, I understood that we each have trials and challenges; we each have secret sorrows and pain. Was Hannah's pain in her barrenness greater than Peninnah's pain in her loneliness? I didn't know. I couldn't say. But I suddenly realized that I wouldn't trade trials with Peninnah. For me, it was a revelation.

I learned from Hannah's despair that it makes no sense to let gratitude for the blessings we do have be crowded out by sorrow over the one thing we lack. I wondered if Hannah recognized how blessed she was in her marriage, despite her childlessness. Her husband, Elkanah, wondered the same: "Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?" (1 Samuel 1:8). We each have joys in life despite our trials; what a waste to fail to notice or cherish or celebrate all the reasons we do have to rejoice. Our gratitude



helps us recognize that Heavenly Father loves us and does hear and answer our prayers in many, many ways—even if it's not always with a "yes."

Finally, I learned from Hannah to continue to seek peace at the temple. I found special solace in doing initiatory work and listening to the sacred promises given during that ordinance. I understood that these promised blessings pertaining to motherhood were not limited to mortality; motherhood was an eternal role I would always have, no matter what happened during this life.

From Zacharias's wife, Elisabeth, I learned that infertility was not God's punishment for my imperfections, weaknesses, or unworthiness to be a mother. In Luke, we find that Zacharias and Elisabeth "were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

"And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years" (Luke 1:6–7).

Elisabeth remained steadfast and immovable despite the fact that her dreams of motherhood went unfulfilled for so many years. How could Elisabeth have known during those long years of waiting that she would one day become the mother of the forerunner to Jesus Christ? From Elisabeth, I learned patience and faithful endurance, and I learned that God's plan for our lives might just be greater than we could ever imagine.

From all of these women in the scriptures, I learned that I was not alone in my heartache; other women who had gone before knew just how I felt, and surely there were others surrounding me who knew as well. Most of all, the Savior knew; not only could He comfort me in my burden of sorrow, but He could ease it for me as Isaiah promised: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4).

Further, Isaiah 54 taught me about joy. I knew this passage of scripture had a larger, deeper meaning



FAMILY PHOTOGRAPH BY CLAIR ISSA COOPER; PHOTOGRAPH OF ELDER WIRTHIN © 2004 IRI

encompassing the redemption of Zion, but as I searched for understanding and continued to liken the scriptures to myself, I learned that it would still be possible to find joy *even if I never had children*. I clung to the fact that the Lord spoke of mercies and kindnesses—and above all, peace—for both the barren woman and the children her future eventually held.

Our Story

When we had finally done everything we could possibly do to try to have a child, including two surgeries and then beginning the in vitro fertilization process, doctors discovered I was already expecting; I had become pregnant without further medical intervention. Tim and I were stunned, thrilled beyond belief, and filled with gratitude. Our first son, Tristan, was born just after we celebrated our seventh wedding anniversary. Motherhood was more fulfilling than I had even imagined it would be, and after a while we began to hope that we could have a sibling for Tristan. Doctors had told me it would be much easier for me to get pregnant a second time, but we soon found they were wrong. However, after four more years of fervent prayer and fasting and more medical intervention, I gave birth to our second son, Gavin.

After two such miracles, we hardly dared to hope that there could be one more baby for us. In fact, I struggled with feelings of guilt that I would be so greedy as to ask for yet one more miracle. I focused on my gratitude for the two sons we had already been blessed with, but I still couldn't shake the feeling that our family was incomplete. As once again the years passed by, I began to feel we

The Spencer family today: Tristan,Carolynn, Tim, Gavin, and Caden.

couldn't wait for a miracle much longer. I felt that if there was another baby meant for our family, I needed to somehow get that baby on its way—soon!

We did a lot of research, prayed, and fasted to know whether our avenue this time should be in vitro fertilization or adoption. After all, I had had two children “born” to me, so maybe now my patriarchal blessing was fulfilled and we would add to our family in another way. Our hearts were completely open to either option, and we felt we just needed confirmation from Heavenly Father before we moved forward. By the end of our appointed day of fasting, which was filled with studying the scriptures, praying, and rereading my patriarchal blessing, I knew that for whatever reason we were not to pursue adoption. I knew if another

child was to join our family, it would be our own biological child. I turned my focus to the in vitro option, thinking that no adoption automatically meant in vitro. I did not receive a confirmation that we were to move forward with in vitro and neither did Tim. As we discussed this, Tim reminded me that the Lord had His own time frame.

Two days later, I sat down to read my scriptures and decided to read the October 2003 issue of the *Ensign*, which had just arrived. I opened to Elder Dallin H. Oaks's talk entitled "Timing." Among the many passages that spoke directly to my heart was one in which he quoted Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004):

"The issue for us is trusting God enough to trust also His timing. If we can truly believe He has our welfare at heart, may we not let His plans unfold as He thinks best?"¹

After I finished reading the article, I asked the Lord if this was my answer, and if we just needed to wait upon Him and not pursue in vitro either (having already received the answer "no" regarding adoption). I started feeling a burning in my chest. I savored this feeling for a few minutes, but then I started doubting and panicking that I was making it up. I prayed fervently for a stronger confirmation, and the thought was immediately impressed on my mind in regard to all the women I had studied in the scriptures—Sarah and Elisabeth, as well as Rebekah and Hannah: none of these women had in vitro as an option,² yet nothing is too hard for the Lord (see Genesis 18:14). I wept as I realized that the Lord had confirmed my impression of moments before. He was aware of Tim and me and our righteous desires, and we simply had to await His timing.

I quickly called Tim at work, and luckily he had a minute to discuss the experience with me. I said, "I still want you to get a confirmation too," and he responded that honestly, he didn't feel like he needed one. He felt this had been my struggle because all along he had felt we needed to accept and trust in the Lord's timing. My desire to alter the Lord's timing had been the cause of my anguish. My answer just confirmed what his heart already knew.

Nearly one year after that powerful answer to prayer and fasting, and four years after the birth of our second son, Gavin, I gave birth to our third son, Caden. We felt overwhelmed with gratitude. We also felt at peace and knew that our family was complete. "God remembered Rachel" (Genesis 30:22)—and Sarah, and Rebekah, and Hannah, and Elisabeth, and yes, Peninnah too. And He remembered me. How grateful I was, and how grateful I am that "He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the Lord" (Psalms 113:9).

Each person's story is unique, but I have a testimony that miracles do happen—even if they don't happen in the way we hope for or expect. I know that we can find peace in the scriptures, in prayer, in the temple, and in the words of the prophets. We have a loving Heavenly Father who will help us. He will strengthen us to meet our challenges if we put our trust in Him and in His timing. ■

NOTES

1. Neal A. Maxwell, quoted in Dallin H. Oaks, "Timing," *Ensign*, Oct. 2003, 12.
2. The answers we received were specific to us at that specific time. We recognize that others who are struggling with similar problems may receive different answers that are specific to their situations, whether the answer be in vitro, other medical procedures, or adoption. I know Heavenly Father will give each of His children the guidance we need if we ask in faith.



THE PRINCIPLE OF COMPENSATION

"The Lord compensates the faithful for every loss. That which is taken away from those who love the Lord will be added unto them in His own way. While it may not come at the time we desire, the faithful will know that every tear today will eventually be returned a hundredfold with tears of rejoicing and gratitude."

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (1917–2008), "Come What May, and Love It," *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 28.

FINDING PEACE THROUGH Forgiveness

Name withheld

I wrestled with rage after someone had deeply hurt me. How could I find peace?

Sick with anger, confusion, and grief, I decided to search LDS.org for articles about forgiveness. I wanted to know what Church leaders had said about how to find peace after experiencing an egregious offense. As the search engine processed my request, I mentally relived the painful episode. My stomach churned and my pulse quickened. “How is it humanly possible to be at peace?” I asked myself.

Dozens of general conference talks seemed to address the issue. I clicked on a promising piece from President James E. Faust (1920–2007) and quickly skimmed its contents.¹ An Amish community forgave the distraught milkman who shot and killed several of its schoolgirls. A man forgave the drunk driver who caused the deaths of his wife and children. What could I learn from these scenarios?

As I considered this question, I became agitated. These stories did not mirror mine. In both cases, the offender had either died or faced immediate prosecution, so the victims did not have to fear ongoing or future offenses. In my case, the perpetrator was still part of my life and wasn’t facing death or a public justice system. This person had not committed a crime, but had nearly destroyed two significant relationships. How could I

forgive someone who had not yet repented or suffered any punishment? How could I forgive when the offense might even recur?

I reread Elder Faust’s article and noticed I’d missed a few vital points:

- “Forgiveness is not always instantaneous.”²
- “Most of us need time to work through pain and loss.”³
- “Forgiveness comes more readily when . . . we have faith in God and trust in His word.”⁴
- “If we will get on our knees and ask Heavenly Father for a feeling of forgiveness, He will help us.”⁵

Each of these truths inched me closer to the hope that eventual peace might be attainable.

That evening I pondered something about forgiveness that I had understood in principle but never fully appreciated: Forgiveness was not primarily about restoring my relationship with the person who had offended me. Instead, its focus was restoring and improving my relationship with God. It was about trusting—really trusting—that He would take care of me and that He hadn’t allowed anything to happen to me that wouldn’t eventually work out for my benefit. Forgiveness centered on



drawing close to Heavenly Father, understanding the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and laying everything on the altar—and doing this cheerfully, with confidence that I was safe in Heavenly Father’s care.

Being safe, I learned, didn’t mean living an idyllic, stress-free life. It meant that even while coping with harrowing challenges, I had a lifeline to my Father. As I navigated life’s perils, I could be as safe as Daniel in the lions’ den (see Daniel 6), David facing Goliath (see 1 Samuel 17), Esther approaching the king (see Esther 2–7), Alma and Amulek in prison (see Alma 14), or Nephi when he returned to Jerusalem for the brass plates (see 1 Nephi 3–4). Like Abinadi, I could experience peace and loving direction even in the midst of profound distress (see Mosiah 12–17). If I stayed connected to heaven as circumstances and conversations unfolded, then I could, in the way He wanted me to, interact with—or avoid—the person who had caused me pain. I took strength in envisioning how the Savior would live if He stepped into my shoes. Turning my focus to Him was the key to freedom, the key to forgiveness.

However, staying focused wasn’t easy. Often tempted to mentally replay the offense and re-stir the painful emotions it wrought,



I constantly battled negativity. Again, I was helped by what President Faust taught: “The Savior has offered to all of us a precious peace through His Atonement, but this can come only as we are willing to cast out negative feelings of anger, spite, or revenge.”⁶ Knowing it was important to redirect my thoughts, I groped for ways to focus my energy on light, hope, and joy. For me, it was helpful to memorize scriptures whenever I was troubled by hurt and anger. After a few weeks of implementing this practice, I’d memorized several chapters from Isaiah, and my recollection of the troubling offense seemed to hold less prominence in my thoughts.

Time passed. In response to much fasting and prayer, Heavenly Father helped me heal. But healing was a gradual process, not an overnight miracle. Some days I felt peaceful and forgiving. Other times I wrestled with rage or despondency. As I drew near to Heavenly Father, however, He helped me think more as He did and see others more as He saw them—through eyes of mercy. As time passed, I experienced promptings that helped me understand, empathize with, and finally love the person who had hurt me. While it would be premature to say I’m now completely at peace with the past, I do feel more connected to God than I have ever felt before. That’s an invaluable blessing.

President Faust closed his conference talk with this testimony: “With all my heart and soul, I believe in the healing power that can come to us as we follow the counsel of the Savior ‘to forgive all men’ (D&C 64:10).”⁷ I share this testimony. Healing does come. In fact, it’s my experience that the Savior doesn’t heal souls by simply restoring us to our former state of wellness. When He heals, He graciously overdoes it. He makes us healthier than we ever were before the onset of the affliction. His objective is our happiness and peace. ■

NOTES

1. James E. Faust, “The Healing Power of Forgiveness,” *Ensign*, May 2007, 67–69.
2. James E. Faust, “Forgiveness,” 68.
3. James E. Faust, “Forgiveness,” 68.
4. James E. Faust, “Forgiveness,” 68.
5. James E. Faust, “Forgiveness,” 69.
6. James E. Faust, “Forgiveness,” 69.
7. James E. Faust, “Forgiveness,” 69.



Forgiveness Heals Your Wounds

“Forgiveness . . . can be hard to understand, even more difficult to give. *Begin by withholding judgment.* . . . Leave the handling of aggressors to others. As you experience an easing of your own pain, full forgiveness will come more easily.

“You cannot erase what has been done, but you can forgive. (See D&C 64:10.) Forgiveness heals terrible, tragic wounds, for it allows the love of God to purge your heart and mind of the poison of hate. It cleanses your consciousness of the desire for revenge. It makes place for the purifying, healing, restoring love of the Lord.

“The Master counseled, ‘Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them *who despitefully use you and persecute you*’ (3 Nephi 12:44; italics added).

“Bitterness and hatred are harmful. They produce much that is destructive. They postpone the relief and healing you yearn for. Through rationalization and self-pity, they can transform a victim into an abuser. Let God be the judge—you cannot do it as well as he can.”

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Healing the Tragic Scars of Abuse,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 32–33.



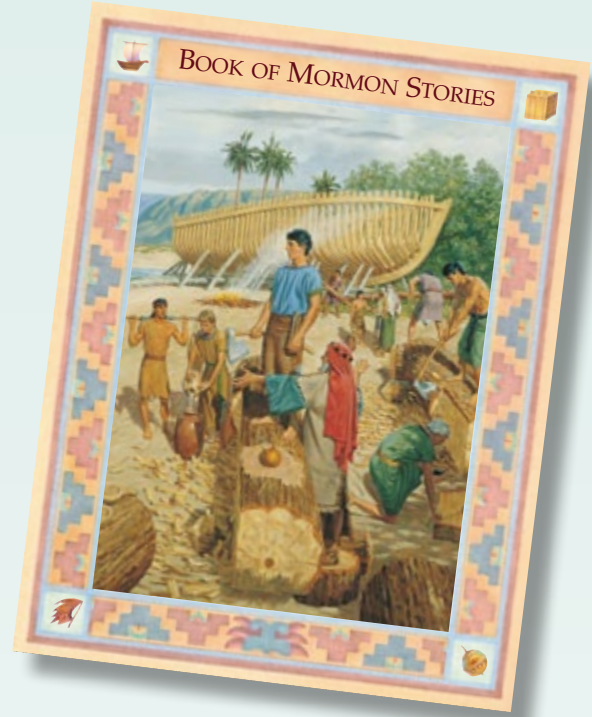
Book of Mormon Reenactment

In order to keep our young children focused during family home evening, we started reenacting scripture stories as part of our lessons. We use *Book of Mormon Stories* (item number 35666000), the Church's publication for children, as a resource. Each week one parent reads a chapter while the other helps our children act out the story.

By reenacting the stories in addition to reading them, we've realized the importance for our

children not only to read the principles of the Book of Mormon, but also to live those principles. As our children grow, we look forward to having more opportunities for involved conversations and lessons during family home evening. For now we enjoy teaching our children the stories in the Book of Mormon at a level they can understand and making family home evening a weekly habit.

Ben and Jade Stellmon, Idaho, USA



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

“Fasting Strengthens Us Spiritually and Temporally,” page 8: Read the article, sharing the points illustrated on the second page. Point out that fasting includes more than just going without food and drink—it should be accompanied by prayer and by donating a generous fast offering. You may wish to ask family members how they have been blessed by fasting. Consider sharing the story of Esther and fasting found in Esther 4–5.

“Obtaining the Spirit through Counseling Together,” page 36: Familiarize yourself with the article before family home evening. With your family, you may want to outline the five principles discussed in the article and then apply them to counseling together as a family. Ask family members why it is important to counsel together as members of the Church and as a family.

“Acting on Promptings,” page 16: Read or summarize the sidebar “Eight Purposes of Revelation.” Then read the stories in the article one at a time, identifying as a

family the purpose for which the Spirit was communicating. Encourage family members to pay attention this week to when and how they may feel the Spirit, explaining the benefit of recording impressions and acting upon them. You may want to follow up the next week to see if anyone learned anything new that they would like to share about how the Spirit speaks to them. ■

ACTING ON Promptings

It is the privilege of every Latter-day Saint to receive daily inspiration through the Spirit. By being worthy of and willing to heed spiritual promptings, we can obtain the guidance Heavenly Father wishes to bless us with. Below, three members share how they listened and responded to promptings of the Spirit and, in turn, received abundant blessings.

I Needed to Turn Back
On a school bus in Lehi, Utah, I was taking some math tests. I suddenly felt a strong prompting to stop and pray. I closed my eyes and felt a peace and joy that I had never felt before. I felt a sense of calm and a sense of purpose. I knew that I needed to turn back to the Lord and listen to His voice. I felt a strong prompting to turn back to the Lord and listen to His voice. I felt a strong prompting to turn back to the Lord and listen to His voice. I felt a strong prompting to turn back to the Lord and listen to His voice.

I Decided to Listen
Vision and prayer have a powerful way of leading me to see things that I had never seen before. I had a vision of a family and a sense of purpose. I felt a strong prompting to listen to the Spirit and act upon His voice. I felt a strong prompting to listen to the Spirit and act upon His voice. I felt a strong prompting to listen to the Spirit and act upon His voice.

GO TO THE MISSION HOME!

The morning after I returned home to Ghana from my mission in the Ivory Coast, I woke up at 6:00 a.m. My appointment with the stake president to have him release me was not until the afternoon, so I decided to sleep in. While I was falling asleep, an impression flashed through my mind: “Go to the Cape Coast mission home.” I knew the Ghana Cape Coast Mission home, but I had no idea why I needed to go there that morning.

After having these thoughts, I began to feel anxious about the impression, so I headed to the

mission home. On my way I worried about what I would say to the mission president. I knew he would ask me the purpose of my visit, so I tried to prepare a suitable answer.

When I arrived, I still did not know the answer. The mission president, Melvin B. Sabey, invited me into his office, thinking that I came there for him to release me. After asking a few questions, President Sabey told me to go to my stake president to be released.

“I know that, President,” I replied.

He paused for some seconds and

The mission president asked me the very question I had been striving to answer: “Why are you here this morning?”

then asked me the very question I had been striving to answer: “Why are you here this morning, Elder Mobio?”

“President Sabey, I don’t have a suitable answer to that question,” I said. “It’s just that this morning I had a strong impression to come here.”

He paused again for a moment and told me softly, “Elder Mobio, your presence here is the assistance I prayed for yesterday.” He explained that his assistants had just arrived with new missionaries. Among them was an Ivorian, the first French-speaking missionary he had ever received, and he didn’t know how he was going to communicate with him. Then he declared, “I am certain Heavenly Father heard my concern yesterday night.”

I had finally learned the reason for my morning impression. We immediately joined the new missionaries, and I interpreted for the Ivorian elder as he started his mission.

Seven months later I traveled back to the Ivory Coast to renew my passport and to share that wonderful experience with my mission president. He told me, “We are instruments in the Lord’s hands. He knows how and when to use us in His work.”

I know that if we immerse ourselves in the glorious work of Heavenly Father, we don’t need to worry. We just need to give heed to the promptings of the still, small voice and let the Lord guide us.

Felicien Dogbo Mobio, Ghana



I LISTENED THE SECOND TIME

I was drifting off to sleep the night before a trip when I received an impression to buy a rim and a tire for our 15-year-old minivan, which came without a spare. The next day I was busy and forgot about the impression. We loaded the vehicle with our three children and gear and headed to my dad's house four hours away.

On the way, a tire on the van blew. We had the van towed to the nearest town to replace the tire. It cost three times what it would have to buy a rim and tire at home, and we lost 90 minutes waiting. I gained an appreciation for the promptings of the Spirit and decided to better follow them in the future.

Four years and two more children later, we were again planning to visit my dad, who now lived 13 hours away. By then we had a different van, one that was 14 years old. About a week before leaving, I felt that I needed to replace the van's spare tire. Remembering my previous experience, I followed the prompting. A couple of days later I felt an impression to buy some ratchet tie-downs to use on some gear we had previously tied with ropes. I needed two but bought a case of four. I put the extra two in our emergency kit.

On the way back from visiting my dad, we stopped to buy dinner. As I was getting some items out of a container on the roof of the van, my three-year-old daughter touched the

sliding door. It fell to the ground! We were grateful the door didn't hit her. We were almost 500 miles (805 km) from home on a Friday evening, so I wrangled the door into place so we could be on our way, but it wasn't on the track and we could hear the highway as we drove. I pulled over again and used one of the extra tie-down straps to secure the door.

Several hours later the van began to shake violently. A loud banging came from the shaking door, but the strap held it in place. I pulled over

and found that one of our tires had lost its belt. I quickly replaced it with the spare tire I had bought a few weeks before, and we were again on our way.

I am grateful for the promptings of the Holy Ghost, which have kept us safe during our travels. I know Heavenly Father watches over us if we listen to the "still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12; see also 1 Nephi 17:45; D&C 85:6), heed His promptings, and ask for help when we need it.

Matthew D. Flitton, Church Magazines

The van began shaking violently. I pulled over and found that one of our tires had lost its belt.



I WAS PLANTING SEEDS

In a business ethics class for my master's program at the Schiller International University in Heidelberg, Germany, each student was asked to do a 20-minute oral presentation at the end of the semester. The professor asked me if I would talk about ethics from a Latter-day Saint perspective.

I was baptized at age 18 and was called to serve a mission in Brazil a year later. Since then I continued to

share the gospel with many.

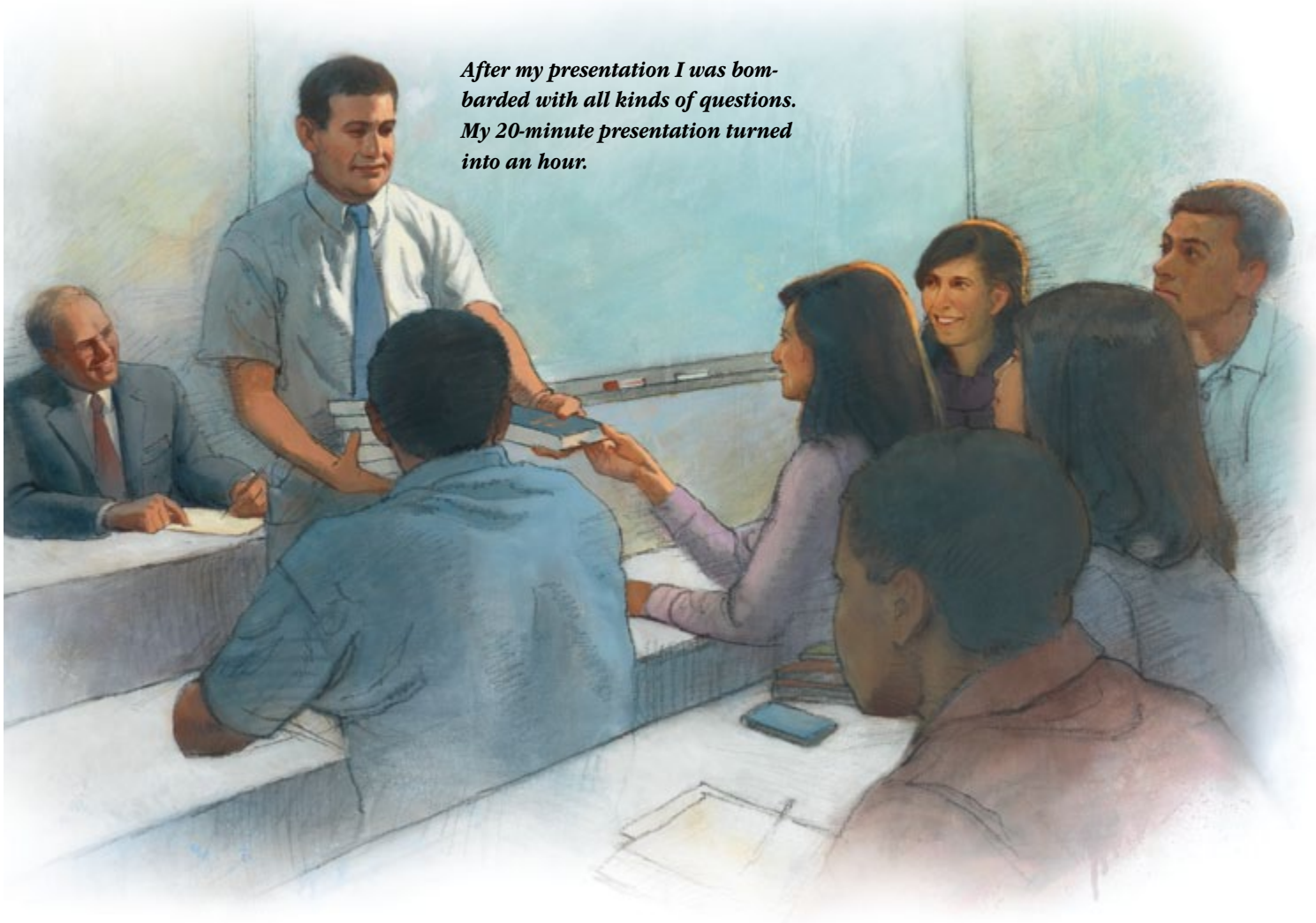
I knew it would be a challenge to discuss religious issues in the university environment, but I accepted the challenge. I decided to prepare a presentation covering information from Mormon.org.

My university has students from all over the world. My ethics class reflected that diversity, with 18 students from various nations.

The ethics presentations began with two students from India followed by a student from Myanmar. I was the last to present. I talked about “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” the Articles of Faith, and other gospel topics. For most of the students, it was the first time they had heard about the Church.

I concluded with my testimony of the gospel and the importance of doing what is right despite the

After my presentation I was bombarded with all kinds of questions. My 20-minute presentation turned into an hour.



HOW DID YOU KNOW TO COME?

pressure around us. Finally I gave everyone a Book of Mormon in his or her own language. After my presentation I was bombarded with all kinds of questions. My 20-minute presentation turned into an hour.

The next school day, a friend from India told me he was impressed with my presentation and had read part of the Book of Mormon already. His friend, also from India, asked for a copy as well. Later a friend from Myanmar told me she was happy to hear about the Church, especially the teachings about families and the law of chastity because she believed those principles. She promised to read the Book of Mormon.

My friends from Ghana thanked me for telling them about the Restoration, promising that they would try to see the temple in Accra. My friend from Liberia told me my message was an inspiration to him and gave him hope for the future.

I was pleased that the Spirit of the Lord had confirmed my message. We may not always witness the impact of our words, but I know my class presentation will produce fruit in the future. I hope that some of the people in that classroom will someday accept the gospel and become instruments in the Lord's hands to spread the message of the Restoration to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people (see D&C 133:37).

Abel Chaves, Germany

When I was 33 years old, my husband died of a brain tumor. Suddenly I was a single parent raising our three children alone. It was a challenging time in my life, but the Lord's counsel that "all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good" (D&C 122:7) gave me the courage to go on.

Later I remarried and moved to a new ward, where I was called as the Relief Society president. One day while I was cleaning my house, I had the distinct impression to visit a less-active sister who had recently lost her husband. I brushed away the thought, thinking that I needed to do other things that day. I'm embarrassed to say I received the same impression two more times before I finally acted on it.

When I arrived at the sister's house that evening, it was dark. I rang the doorbell and waited. I knocked loudly and waited some more.

As I turned to leave, the porch light came on, and the door slowly opened. The sister hesitantly poked her head through the opening. I will never forget what she asked: "How did you know to come?" She told me she had spent the whole day crying and felt that she couldn't go on without her husband.

We talked for a couple of hours that night. I don't remember much of what we said, but I do remember telling her, "I truly know what you are going through." I assured her that



As I turned to leave, the porch light came on, and the door slowly opened. The sister poked her head through the opening.

time was her friend and that the Lord would watch over her. As we talked, I noticed that the grief-stricken look on her face had been replaced with an expression of peace.

At the end of our conversation, I gave her a heartfelt hug. I felt so thankful that I had been prompted to visit her. I knew that our loving Heavenly Father had allowed me to help Him help this sweet sister in her time of need.

Sherrie H. Gillett, Utah, USA

Small & Simple Things

“By small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37:6).

Mormon Tabernacle Choir Highlights



Millions of people worldwide are familiar with the music of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, whether through the choir's performances in general conference or through programs like the 83-year-old *Music and the Spoken Word* weekly performance. Less familiar, however, are the day-to-day details regarding this group of singers.

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir is made up of 360 volunteer singers who are 25 to 60 years old. Through the years, the choir has traveled to 28 countries and performed in 37 states and Washington, D.C. They usually fly as a group to the area where they will perform. From there they load onto 11 tour buses, which are followed by 4 buses of luggage and 4 semitrailers carrying equipment. They then travel to various cities, sometimes 6 to 10 hours away.

While traveling, each member of

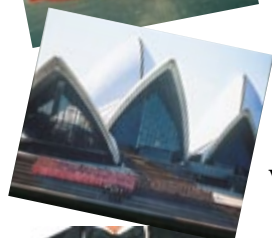
the choir wears a blue name tag printed with the choir logo and his or her name. All choir and orchestra members have been set apart as “music missionaries”; they represent the Church wherever they go.

When choir members are not traveling, their normal week consists of at least one weekday rehearsal, along with productions of *Music and the Spoken Word*, which is a program broadcast internationally on television and radio each Sunday morning.

Church members accepted into the choir treat it like a calling. When they join the choir, they are told to consider the time commitment equivalent to serving as elders quorum president or Relief Society president in a ward. Once they are accepted into the choir, members may stay for up to 20 years or until they turn 60 years old.

FUN FACTS ABOUT THE CHOIR

- The dresses worn by the women in the choir are designed and sewn by a wardrobe committee.
- There are approximately 20 married couples in the choir and in the Orchestra at Temple Square.
- The choir has earned two platinum and five gold albums.
- The choir has performed at the inaugurations of five U.S. presidents.



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CHOOSING MUSIC FOR CHURCH MEETINGS

- For sacrament meetings, consider the spirit that each hymn will bring. Opening hymns in sacrament meeting express praise and gratitude to God and for the Restoration of the gospel. Sacrament hymns reflect on the sacrament or on the Savior's sacrifice. Closing hymns can inspire the congregation to recommit to the covenants they have renewed and can testify of the gospel principles members have learned.
- For Relief Society or priesthood meetings, consult with the instructor. He or she may want to suggest a hymn related to the lesson. If the instructor does not have a preference, leaders could suggest a hymn that will supplement the topic of the lesson.
- Before the meeting, make sure that the presiding authority approves the music that has been selected.
- Several days in advance, contact the accompanist so he or she knows which hymns to practice for the meeting.

See Hymns, 380–81; Handbook 2: Administering the Church (2010), 14.4; 14.6.

Do You Know the Women in the Scriptures?

See if you can match the descriptions of the women from the scriptures with their names. Use the scripture references if you need help.



A. Mary, mother of the Lord



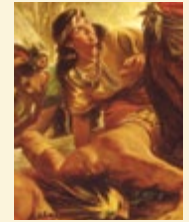
B. Sariah



C. Anna



D. Eve



E. Abish



F. Sarah



G. Esther



H. Mary, sister of Martha



I. Emma Smith



J. Ruth

1. My husband comforted me when I mourned because of my sons, who were on a dangerous journey (see 1 Nephi 5:1, 6).
2. I was a servant in the house of King Lamoni and had been converted to the Lord many years before the king was converted (see Alma 19:16).
3. When my husband died, I “clave unto” my mother-in-law and told her I would make her people my people and her God my God (see Ruth 1:14, 16).
4. I am mentioned by name in both the New Testament and the Book of Mormon. I am described as “exceedingly fair and white” and “a precious and chosen vessel” (see 1 Nephi 11:13; Alma 7:10).
5. I “[chose] that good part” by listening to the words of Jesus Christ when He visited my family in Bethany (see Luke 10:42).
6. My people fasted for me when I risked my own life by pleading with the king to spare them (see Esther 4:16).
7. My name means “mother of all living” (see Genesis 3:20).
8. I was called “an elect lady” in the Doctrine and Covenants, and I made “a selection of sacred hymns” (see D&C 25:3, 11).
9. I had been a widow for about 84 years when I greeted the infant Jesus at the temple (see Luke 2:36–38).
10. When the Lord changed my husband's name, He changed mine to a name meaning “princess” (see Genesis 17:15).

Answers: 1. B; 2. E; 3. J; 4. A; 5. H; 6. G; 7. D; 8. I; 9. C; 10. F

News of the Church

Visit news.lds.org for more Church news and events.

Closed Captioning Added Online to Recent General Conference Videos

By **Melissa Merrill**

Church News and Events

Closed captioning in English has been added to the April 2012 and October 2011 general conference videos posted online at LDS.org. The release of the October video marked the first time that videos on LDS.org have offered closed captioning.

In the past, closed captioning has been offered for the live broadcast on television and satellite, but not on the Church's website. Archived general conference content on LDS.org has included conference videos in American Sign Language (available by selecting ASL from the language drop-down menu), but not everyone who is Deaf or hard of hearing knows or uses ASL, said Christopher Phillips, manager of Disabilities Services for the Church.

Closed captioning, on the other hand, is more widely accessible and can be helpful to those without hearing disabilities as well. Captions also can help make video content more searchable online.

"This improvement will be a benefit to many who struggle with hearing loss, including those who might have lost their hearing later in life and haven't had the opportunity to learn sign language," said Karen Staley, a member of the Church who lives in Maryland and is Deaf. "The captioned videos will help make the gospel more accessible to a large group of people."

As a child, Sister Staley learned to speak without any special assistance and started to read



lips without being conscious of it. When she was six years old, one of her schoolteachers suspected hearing loss and recommended to Karen's parents that they have her hearing checked. Eventually Karen began wearing hearing aids.

Although hearing aids enable Sister Staley to hear many more sounds than she otherwise would, they don't fully correct her hearing. For that reason, it's difficult for her to accurately glean information from video, and she rarely watches TV programs or movies that are not captioned.

When Sister Staley joined the Church in 1998, the local public access channel where she lived in Southern California televised general conference—including captions. And she says that in

Closed captioning has been added to the October 2011 and April 2012 general conference videos on LDS.org.

every place that she has lived since, “those organizing the local general conference satellite reception have worked hard to provide a way for members to view the captions at the meetinghouse.” She said she has also appreciated the Church’s providing online transcripts of the general conference talks within a week of the original broadcast.

But now with LDS.org offering captioned video, Sister Staley and her family will be able to watch conference at home.

“I am looking forward to having access to conference videos with closed captioning,” she said. “It will help me to share general conference with my children since we will be able to watch the videos at home, and I will have the ability to lead games such as Conference Squares and encourage the children to pay attention to the talks. In addition, I will be able to more readily incorporate general conference talks into lessons I might give at home or at church.

“The availability of captioned talks will enable English-speaking Deaf and hard-of-hearing members to gain a more complete conference experience,” she continued. “I’m very grateful for, and excited about, this change!”

Bret Barton, digital media producer for the Church, agrees that this change will have positive effects for many.

“The goal is to give as many people as we can access to the prophetic word,” he said. “This project allows a lot more people to have that access.”

Other closed-captioned material from the Church currently includes Mormon Messages on the Mormon Channel on YouTube. ■

Addiction Recovery Program Calls for Stories of Recovery

In preparation for an Addiction Recovery Program (ARP) website debuting this year, the Church is seeking personal stories of addiction recovery.

Those who decide to share their stories should send an e-mail to arp@ldschurch.org containing the following information, which will be kept confidential:

- Full name, age, and gender.
- A photo of yourself (preferred but not required).
- Your affiliation with the Church (membership status).
- A brief description of your addiction or the addiction of your loved one.
- An indication of your willingness to share your story through video, audio, text, or all of the above.
- Your story. Include the consequences of your addiction; a brief description of your life when you were at your lowest point and the circumstances and events you experienced when you knew that you needed help; an explanation about the point at which you experienced healing through Christ and the circumstances and events you experienced when your hope was restored; and a description of your life today and the lessons and blessings you have experienced through forgiveness, repentance, and service. ■

In preparation for a new website, those who direct the Addiction Recovery Program (meeting shown here) are seeking personal stories of addiction recovery.



PHOTOGRAPH BY RICK WALLACE

Family History Missionaries Serve in Ancestor's Home

By Lok Yi Chan

Church News and Events

When Raymond Clark and his family left their home and their livelihood—a mercantile store—in Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1846 and headed for Winter Quarters, they probably doubted that they would ever return to the place they had loved so much. Perhaps even more doubtful was the possibility of a member of their posterity returning to the home.

But 166 years later, Joy Price,

Raymond Clark's third-great-granddaughter, has returned to Nauvoo to embrace her family heritage. With her husband, Merlin Price, she hopes to help others embrace their heritage as well.

In April the Prices, family history missionaries from Shelley, Idaho, USA, began serving in the Iowa Des Moines Mission. They work at the Nauvoo Family History Center, which is housed

in the Raymond Clark Store.

Raymond and Louisa Clark, who came to Nauvoo with early Latter-day Saints from Kirtland, Ohio, purchased the property across the street from the Nauvoo Temple in 1842, building a red-brick duplex that functioned both as a home for the family and as a mercantile store. While Raymond farmed and worked on the construction of the Nauvoo Temple, Louisa operated the store. This was also where Louisa coordinated the efforts of the sisters in LaHarpe and Macedonia, Illinois, to collect funds to erect a crane to help with the construction of the Nauvoo Temple.

Like all family history centers of the Church, the new Nauvoo Family History Center, set to open in May 2012, serves both Latter-day Saints and other members of the community. The center is equipped with 15 Internet-connected computers and film readers. Patrons will be able to identify their ancestors and Church pioneers, do research for their personal family histories, and prepare names for temple work.

The Prices hope the opening of the new center will help create interest in family history—a work that has been so meaningful to them personally. ■

Merlin and Joy Price of Shelley, Idaho, USA, pictured here in Salt Lake City, serve as family history missionaries in the Raymond Clark Store in Nauvoo, Illinois, where a new family history center opened in May. Sister Price is Raymond Clark's third-great-granddaughter.



PHOTOGRAPH BY RICK WALLACE

Church Asks Members to Understand Policies

By Sarah Jane Weaver

Church News assistant editor

Church leaders are asking Latter-day Saints to learn and better understand the Church's family history policies on submitting names for temple ordinances.

The conditions of use for the New.Family Search.org website were set in place "for reasons of common sense, reasons of doctrine, and reasons of respect," said Dennis C. Brimhall, managing director of the Church's Family History Department.

The conditions are simple and straightforward. "Users should not submit the names of nonrelated persons for vicarious temple ordinances, including names of celebrities or famous people, or those gathered from unapproved extraction projects," state the terms all users must accept every time they log onto the site.

The reemphasis on the guidelines, which are also stated in *Handbook 2: Administering the Church*, follows violations of the Church's proxy baptism policy.

"One of the things we need to remember is that the searching out of our family and preparing the names for the work to be done in the temple is, yes, a responsibility, but it is also a privilege," said Brother Brimhall. "That privilege is extended to the members by those who hold the keys to the work. The keys to this work are held by the First Presidency of the Church."

Church leaders have asked the members who are submitting names for proxy baptisms for the deceased to:

1. Work only on their own family lines.
2. Not submit names of celebrities.
3. Not submit names of unauthorized groups, such as Jewish Holocaust victims.



Church leaders have asked members who are submitting names for baptisms for the deceased to work on their own family lines, not to submit names of celebrities, and not to submit names of unauthorized groups, such as Jewish Holocaust victims.

Church leaders issued a statement on February 21, 2012, in response to questions about violations of the Church policy, which was established in 1995 after discussions with leaders of the Jewish faith.

The statement repeated the Church's firm commitment to not accept the names of unauthorized groups for proxy baptism and noted that in order to bypass safeguards already in place a submitter would have to use "deception and manipulation."

He said in order to help members of the Church understand the conditions of use, the Church will make them more prominent.

"We are going to see a season of education," Brother Brimhall said. "We will remind ourselves again of rights and responsibilities, and keys and privileges, and whose work this is and how it should be done, and who directs the work. If we just remember that, I think we are going to be fine. . . . We can make the system better for everyone."

For more on this story, visit news.lds.org and search using keywords "proxy baptism." ■

Church Pageants Celebrate LDS Heritage

Four Church pageants will be held between June and August 2012 to honor the sacrifices and contributions of early Latter-day Saints:

- The Mormon Miracle Pageant will take place from June 21 to 23 and 26 to 30, 2012, at the foot of the Manti Utah Temple. The pageant begins about 9:30 p.m. each night.
- The Nauvoo Pageant will be held from July 10 to August 4, 2012, excluding all Sundays and Mondays. Performances will begin at 8:30 p.m. every night two blocks west of the Nauvoo Illinois Temple.
- The Hill Cumorah Pageant, which celebrates its 75th anniversary this year, will be held on July 13, 14, and 17 to 21, 2012, near Palmyra, New York. Performances will begin at 9:00 p.m. each night.
- The biennial Castle Valley Pageant will take place from August 2 to 4 and 7 to 11, 2012, in Castle Dale, Utah, approximately 30 miles (48 km) south of Price, Utah. The pageant will begin at 8:30 p.m. each night.

For more information visit pageants.lds.org. ■

IN THE NEWS

Elder Steven E. Snow Called as Church Historian

The First Presidency recently announced the call of Elder Steven E. Snow of the Presidency of the Seventy as Church Historian and Recorder, a role previously filled by Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy.

Elder Snow has been released from the Presidency of the Seventy, and Elder Jensen will be given emeritus status at the October 2012 general conference.

Until then, Elder Snow and Elder Jensen will work together for training and transition purposes.

FamilySearch Indexing App Now Available

The free FamilySearch Indexing app for iPhone and iPad users now helps individuals preserve and share precious genealogical records from around the world on mobile devices.

The app is available for download from the Apple App Store (iOS devices) or Google Play (Android version).

Available in English and Spanish, the app allows users to view image snippets—a name, a place, or other relevant piece of information—from handwritten historical documents such



The new FamilySearch Indexing app will allow more individuals to contribute to family history research on a small or large scale.



Elder Steven E. Snow will step completely into the role of Church Historian and Recorder later this year.

as birth certificates, marriage certificates, or census records. Individuals simply transcribe (index) what they see, and the FamilySearch indexing system adds the data to the collection of free genealogy records available at FamilySearch.org.

BYU Campus Education Week Celebrates 90th Anniversary

Brigham Young University will present its annual Campus Education Week, now in its 90th year, from August 13 to 17 in Provo, Utah, USA.

This year's theme, taken from Proverbs 29:18, is, "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he."

The program will feature more than 1,000 classes presented by BYU faculty members, seminary and institute instructors, and other professionals on subjects such as education, family relations, genealogy, health, history, marriage, religion, and science, as well as classes of special interest to youth ages 14 and over. Registration and other information can be found at ce.byu.edu/edweek. ■

In Other Church Magazines

THE NEW ERA

Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Young Women Camp

By Elaine S. Dalton
Young Women general president

This year you will celebrate a century of Young Women camp. Young Women camp was developed as a response to a need for summer work for the young women of the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association the same of the Young Women organization at the time.

Camp—A Favorite Activity
Since 1912, more Young Women camps have been established and held all around the world. A camp with the most basic and simple accommodations can become a second place where the spirit of the Lord is present, where daughters of our past perpetuate the gospel and the glorious heritage of names are remembered in happy ways.

THE FIRST YOUNG WOMEN CAMP
The first Young Women camp was held in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1912. It was held at the first resort summer camp. The young ladies organized weekly meetings to plan events, and report their camp experience. They engaged in fund-raising activities, including a complete entertainment to advertise their project. The camp cost only \$5 cents per girl. The young ladies had no tenting, well-balanced, easy-to-prepare menus in preparation for camp.

By girls in camp, the young ladies were taught about history, young folk, and plants. They cooked and ate in the open. They concluded the week with a banquet, cake and a night to entertain parents and well-wishers who visited the camp.

During the week, young ladies were taught about history, young folk, and plants. They cooked and ate in the open. They concluded the week with a banquet, cake and a night to entertain parents and well-wishers who visited the camp.

During the summer of 1912, 82 young women and 15 others attended the camp.

A Century of Young Women Camp

This year is the 100th anniversary of Young Women camp. On page 24 read an article by Elaine S. Dalton in celebration of this event.

THE FRIEND

Children Serving Others

Are you looking for ways to serve with your children? The June *Friend* is full of stories about children who found different ways to help others. The *Friend* would love to receive

photos and letters about how your children chose to serve others after reading this issue. See page 48 of the *Friend* to find out how to submit.

How You Can Help

When you put these things you can also include a donation to the Humanitarian Aid Fund.

Comfort Doll

Items which help you and do you love work you will need:

- 10 inch square of flannel
- 3 x 4 inch piece of cardboard
- 2 1/2 inch strips of muslin or soft knit fabric
- 2 inch piece of gathered lace
- 2 pieces of soft fabric
- needle and thread
- fabric ties
- yarn
- knitting needles
- pushpins

1. To make the doll's blanket, fold the flannel in half into a triangle. Then the cardboard square with muslin inside. Fold the flannel in half again, and press the corners with your fingers to work the corner of the triangle. Place the muslin on the side with the folded side at the bottom and the peak at the top.

2. To make the doll's body, place the piece of cardboard over with the folded edge of the fabric. Use a pencil to mark the rectangle shape with the cardboard. Remove the cardboard, and use a needle and thread to stitch along the long edge of the rectangle. In between the layers of fabric,

3. To make the doll's head, fold the flannel in half into a triangle. Then the cardboard square with muslin inside. Fold the flannel in half again, and press the corners with your fingers to work the corner of the triangle. Place the muslin on the side with the folded side at the bottom and the peak at the top.

4. To make the doll's body, place the piece of cardboard over with the folded edge of the fabric. Use a pencil to mark the rectangle shape with the cardboard. Remove the cardboard, and use a needle and thread to stitch along the long edge of the rectangle. In between the layers of fabric,

I Can Be a Missionary

Children have special talents that can help them be wonderful missionaries, but they don't always understand what they can do. See Question Corner on page 43 of the magazine to find ideas from children about things they do to be missionaries.

I don't know anyone I can invite to church. What are other ways I can be a missionary now?

Being a missionary can be an exciting or scary thing. There is a big difference between the two. Being a missionary is not about going to a new place to spread the gospel. It is about being a missionary in your own neighborhood. You can be a missionary in many ways.

Help the elderly or people in need. You can help the elderly or people in need. You can help them with their groceries or with their bills. You can help them with their transportation and with a ride to work. You can help them with their housework and with their laundry. You can help them with their yardwork and with their lawn care. You can help them with their car and with their tires. You can help them with their car and with their tires.

Invite someone to your neighborhood. You can invite someone to your neighborhood. You can invite them to your home or to your church. You can invite them to your home or to your church. You can invite them to your home or to your church. You can invite them to your home or to your church.

You can be a missionary in many ways. You can be a missionary in many ways. You can be a missionary in many ways. You can be a missionary in many ways. You can be a missionary in many ways.

COMMENT

Book of Mormon Issue

Thank you for the October 2011 *Ensign* on the Book of Mormon. It is a wonderful uplift to my life—encouraging, fortifying, and testimony strengthening.

Sandra Van Dyke, Utah, USA

Rugby Contract or Mission Call?

Would you give up 1.5 million dollars and a chance to pursue your lifelong dream in order to serve a mission? On page 20 of this month's *New Era*, read about an Australian rugby star who faced this decision.

Aaronic Priesthood Duties

Read about the duties of deacons, teachers, and priests on page 4 of this month's issue.

Wonderful Graphic Arts

The graphic arts in the October 2011 *Ensign* are a wonderful teaching tool in my home—for example, the time line on pages 20–21. The picture layout on pages 16–19 also helped me teach my children the names of characters in the Book of Mormon. Thanks to your entire department of gifted, dedicated artists for their inspiring work.

Judy M. DalPonte, Utah, USA

A VOICE OF THUNDER, A VOICE OF SILENCE

By Kristin Boyce

I had been on my mission only a few weeks when I was awakened in the middle of the night by a rumbling sound. It started in the distance and grew louder as it approached. Soon our entire house was shaking. Fairly quickly the pounding ceased, and the roaring sound faded. Fortunately my companion had warned me that earthquakes were common. Since everything seemed fine, I rolled over and soon went back to sleep.

Several weeks after my middle-of-the-night wake-up, I heard people talking about an earthquake earlier that morning. I wondered what was wrong with them, since I hadn't heard or felt anything. Confused, I finally asked when the "earthquake" had occurred. Realizing that I was exercising or showering at the time mentioned, I couldn't believe it had really happened. The first earthquake had woken me up, so surely if there had been another when I was awake, I would have noticed.

But this was just the first of many supposed earthquakes. I never felt them, so I wondered if people were confused as to what an earthquake was like.

After eight months of what I thought were pretend earthquakes, my Sunday School teacher paused midsentence to say, "Feel that? There was an earthquake." Everyone nodded in agreement—except me. I didn't understand. There was no rumble or roar. My chair didn't

shake. The walls didn't rattle. How could there have been an earthquake?

Then I tried to remember what I had felt when the teacher mentioned the earthquake. It was an ever-so-slight dizziness—almost as if I had just spun around. Could that subtle feeling be an earthquake?

Because of my teacher, I started to be

aware and to know that the supposed earthquakes were real. I realized that I hadn't felt them when I was exercising or showering or sleeping because they were just a subtle shake. But gradually I became more aware of a dizzy feeling or a slight sway, recognizing it as evidence of an earthquake.

Later in my mission, I had a new missionary as a companion. One day when we were teaching, a woman said, "Oh, an earthquake," and I agreed. My companion looked at us as if we were crazy.

But I pointed out the slight sway of the hanging lamp and assured her that with time she too would feel the subtle shifting of the earth.

I'm so grateful for what earthquakes taught me about recognizing the Spirit. There are times when the Spirit is undeniable, a voice of thunder piercing our souls. Yet more often, the Spirit is a silent whisper, a new thought, an impression, a subtle feeling of something to do or say (see Helaman 5:30). If we notice only the strong soul shaking, we miss many of the sweet impressions of the Spirit. We may sometimes need others to point out the feelings of the Spirit so we can focus our attention and fine-tune our perceptions. When we do, we find an entirely new world of awareness and wonder. ■



How could others feel earthquakes when I was oblivious to them? The answer taught me about more than just seismology.



MAY NOT BE COPIED

From Fear to Faith, by Howard Lyon

“But as they sailed [Jesus] fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy. “And [the disciples] came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm.” (Luke 8:23–24).



“Authority in the priesthood comes by way of ordination,” writes President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “Power in the priesthood comes through faithful and obedient living in honoring covenants. It is increased by exercising and using the priesthood in righteousness.” See “The Honor and Order of the Priesthood,” page 20.

