

Ensign



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Facing Uncertainty with Faith, p. 22

Regaining My Covenants after Excommunication, p. 54

The Prophet's Four Accounts of the First Vision, p. 60



When Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) served as President of the Church from 1973 to 1985, Church membership almost doubled, an LDS edition of the King James Bible was published in English, and the number of temples increased from 15 to 36. In June 1978, President Kimball received the revelation saying that all worthy men could receive the priesthood, regardless of race (see Official Declaration 2).

Photograph courtesy of Church History Library

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Cody Bell



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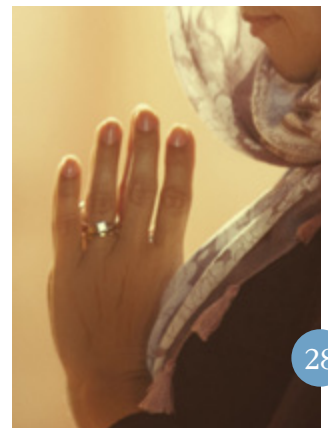
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Ensign

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Family Home Evening Ideas

*This issue contains articles and activities that could be used for family home evening.
The following are some examples.*



"Self-Reliance and Gospel Learning,"

page 14. To illustrate the importance of
gaining your own spiritual light, consider
this activity. Turn off the lights and ask family
members to draw a picture. Have someone
with a flashlight or candle use it only for
their own picture.

After a few
minutes, turn the
lights back on.
Talk about the
difference in being
able to complete
the task and then
discuss the princi-
ples found in the
article.

**"The First
Vision: Key to
Truth,"** page 60:
Consider selecting
a family member

to tell about a life experience. Have him
or her tell the story several times, but each
time have the storyteller pretend to address
a different audience (such as a five-year-old,
a grandparent, a teacher, or a friend). Then
discuss how the retellings were different and

how they were the
same. Compare
this activity to
how Joseph Smith
gave different
accounts of the
First Vision as
described in Elder
Maynes's article.
Talk about how
the different First
Vision accounts
work together
to give a clearer
picture of Joseph's
experience.

TEACHING SONGS TO CHILDREN

Primary songs enhance gospel learning, and
family home evening is an ideal time to teach
them to children. Here are some methods to
try:

Review the lyrics. Talk about what the
song means and explain any words that might
be difficult to understand.

Experiment with rhythms. Have children
clap, tap their feet, or conduct to help them
feel the song's meter.

Use visuals. Visuals can be simple draw-
ings, pictures, puppets, or hand actions.

Repeat with variety. Reinforce the song
with fun activities. Have children stand or
march as they sing.

Help children feel the song's message.
Invite them to talk about how they felt while
singing.

Astrid Terri Simmermon, Alberta, Canada

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saying about the Ensign at
ensign.lds.org. How has
the Ensign blessed your life?
How might the magazine improve?
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or questions, use the "Submit an
Article" link on our web page.



By President
Thomas S.
Monson

CALLED TO THE WORK

When the Prophet Joseph Smith called Elder Heber C. Kimball (1801–68) to “open the door of salvation” as a missionary to England, Elder Kimball was seized by feelings of inadequacy.

“O, Lord,” he wrote, “I am a man of stammering tongue, and altogether unfit for such a work.”

Elder Kimball accepted the call nevertheless, adding: “These considerations did not deter me from the path of duty; the moment I understood the will of my Heavenly Father, I felt a determination to go at all hazards, believing that He would support me by His almighty power, and endow me with every qualification that I needed.”¹

My young brothers and sisters who are called to full-time missionary service, you are called to the work because you, like Elder Kimball, “have desires to serve God” (D&C 4:3) and because you are ready and worthy.

Senior couples, you are called to the work for the same reasons. You, however, bring not only a desire to serve but also wisdom gained from seasons of sacrifice, love, and experience that your Father in Heaven can use to touch the hearts of His sons and daughters who are looking for the truth. No doubt you have learned that we can never truly love the Lord until we serve Him by serving others.

To your desires to serve as missionaries, you will add faith and fortitude, courage and confidence, resolve and resilience, determination and dedication. Dedicated missionaries can bring about miracles in the mission field.

President John Taylor (1808–87) summed up the essential qualities of missionaries this way: “The kind of men [and women and couples] we want as bearers of this gospel message are men who have faith in God; men who have faith in their religion; men who honor their priesthood; men in whom . . . God has confidence. . . . We want men full of the Holy Ghost and the power of God[,] . . . men of honor, integrity, virtue and purity.”²

The Lord has declared:

“For behold the field is white already to harvest; and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul;

“And faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work” (D&C 4:4–5).

Your call has come through inspiration. I testify that whom God calls, God qualifies. You will receive heavenly help as you prayerfully labor in the Lord’s vineyard.

The beautiful promise the Lord gave to the missionaries early in this dispensation, as contained in the Doctrine and Covenants, will be yours: “I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up” (D&C 84:88).

As you serve, you will build rich eternal memories and friendships. I know of no field which produces a more bounteous harvest of happiness than the mission field.



Now, a word for those elders, sisters, and couples who, for whatever reason, may not be able to finish their assigned time in the mission field: The Lord loves you. He appreciates your sacrifice. He is aware of your disappointment. Know

that He still has a work for you to do. Don't let Satan tell you otherwise. Don't get down; don't become discouraged; don't despair.

As I observed in general conference shortly after I was called to lead the

Church: "Fear not. Be of good cheer. The future is as bright as your faith."³ That promise still holds true for you. So don't lose your faith, because the Lord has not lost faith in you. Keep your covenants and move forward.

The world needs the gospel of Jesus Christ. May the Lord bless all of His Saints—regardless of where we serve—with a missionary heart. ■

NOTES

1. Heber C. Kimball, in Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 3rd ed. (1967), 104.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* (2001), 73.
3. Thomas S. Monson, "Be of Good Cheer," *Ensign*, May 2009, 92.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

Whether or not we serve as full-time missionaries, each of us has the opportunity to share the gospel and serve those around us. Consider pairing this message with a recent general conference talk on this topic, such as "Sharing the Restored Gospel" by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (*Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 57). You could also discuss the phrase "whom God calls, God qualifies" with those you teach. How have they felt God supporting them in missionary work and in their callings? You could invite those you teach to pray for strength and inspiration to know how to share the gospel with their family, friends, and neighbors.



Get ideas at
lds.org/go/6176.
 #futuremissionary

A Missionary without a Tag

By Kirsti Arave

At school I have a teacher who has the kind of personality that might scare someone from sharing opposing views on a subject. One day we got on the topic of LDS missionaries. I knew I could have answered his questions, but I felt like I shouldn't. So I said just enough to satisfy him for the time being.

For the next few weeks I couldn't stop thinking about our conversation.

A thought came to me that I should give him a Book of Mormon.

Finally, a thought came to me that I should give him a Book of Mormon with a few highlighted phrases about missionary work. The thought scared me, but it persisted. I knew it was a prompting I had to follow.

About two months later, I had the Book of Mormon ready. All day long I felt

like the book was burning a hole in my backpack. The three seconds it took for me to hand it to him as I left for winter break was the scariest moment of my life.

On the first day back, I passed his classroom but was scared to go in. Then I heard him call for me, and he gave me a card. I read it in the hallway. He wrote that he had studied "at length" the passages I had marked, and he was beginning to see some reasons behind my faith.

I get excited sharing the gospel now, and I am even more excited to serve my Heavenly Father on a mission soon.

The author lives in Utah, USA.

CHILDREN

Missionary Service

Missionaries are called to teach the gospel and also to serve people. Help the missionaries find these tools hidden in the picture!



Prayerfully study this material and seek for inspiration to know what to share. How will understanding the purpose of Relief Society prepare daughters of God for the blessings of eternal life?

Priesthood Power through Keeping Covenants

“My message to . . . all is that we can live every hour ‘blessed by the strength of priesthood power,’ whatever our circumstance,” said Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

“ . . . As you worthily participate in the ordinances of the priesthood, the Lord will give you greater strength, peace, and eternal perspective. Whatever your situation, your home will be ‘blessed by the strength of priesthood power.’”¹

How do we invite priesthood power into our lives? Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles reminds us that “those who have entered the waters of baptism and subsequently received

their endowment in the house of the Lord are eligible for rich and wonderful blessings. The endowment is literally a gift of power . . . [and] our Father in Heaven is generous with His power.” He reminds us that men and women “are both endowed with the same power” in the temple, “which by definition is priesthood power.”²

Linda K. Burton, former Relief Society General President, said: “Since priesthood power is something we all desire to have in our families and homes, what do *we* need to do to invite that power into our lives? Personal righteousness is imperative to having priesthood power.”³

“If we will humbly present ourselves before the Lord

and ask Him to teach us, He will show us how to increase *our* access to *His* power,” said President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.⁴

Additional Scriptures and Information

1 Nephi 14:14; Doctrine and Covenants 121:36; 132:20; reliefsociety.lds.org

NOTES

1. Neil L. Andersen, “Power in the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 92, 95.
2. M. Russell Ballard, “Men and Women and Priesthood Power,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2014, 32.
3. Linda K. Burton, “Priesthood Power—Available to All,” *Ensign*, June 2014, 39.
4. Russell M. Nelson, “The Price of Priesthood Power,” *Ensign*, May 2016, 69.



Faith
Family
Relief



Consider This

How does keeping our covenants bless us with priesthood power?

LIVING THE GOSPEL NOURISHES SACRED FAMILY RELATIONS

We are all children of loving Heavenly Parents who sent us to earth to learn how to return to Them. The family is a central part of the plan of salvation. God gives us families so we can gain bodies, learn correct principles, and prepare for eternal life.

Heavenly Father wants each of His children to be raised in loving environments. The best way to achieve these caring environments is by living and practicing gospel principles. “Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.”¹ Homes that are established on gospel principles become places of peace, where the Spirit of the Lord can guide, influence, and uplift all members of the family.

The family is ordained of God and is “the *order* of heaven . . . , an echo of a celestial pattern and an emulation of

God’s eternal family.”² These familial relationships and their accompanying responsibilities are sacred. We learn in the scriptures that parents have a duty to raise their children in truth, light, and love (see Ephesians 6:4; D&C 68:25). Husbands and wives should love and respect each other (see Ephesians 5:25), and children should honor their parents (see Exodus 20:12).

“Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities.”³ Following gospel principles strengthens family relationships and increases family members’ individual and collective spiritual strength. These principles will also help us come closer to Christ.

Every family has its challenges. In the spiritual turmoil of these days,

not every family has ideal circumstances. As Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “With millions of members and the diversity we have in the children of the Church, we need to be even more thoughtful and sensitive.”⁴ Some individuals do not have family support in living the gospel. Some challenges are especially difficult, including (but not limited to) divorce, abuse, and addiction.

God is aware of each family’s situation and of individual desires to have love at home. Even if we have imperfect relationships with our families, living the gospel can still bless our lives and our homes. It can strengthen our relationships with our spouse, parents, children, brothers and sisters, and with our Heavenly Father. Some of these blessings will come now, and others not until eternity, but God will not withhold any blessing from those striving for righteousness. ■

NOTES

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “In Praise of Those Who Save,” *Ensign*, May 2016, 77.
3. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” 129.
4. Neil L. Andersen, “Whoso Receiveth Them, Receiveth Me,” *Ensign*, May 2016, 50.



DIVINE AND SACRED

“The family is divine [and] encompasses the most sacred of all relationships.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Gordon B. Hinckley* (2016), 167.

How to strengthen family relationships
by living the gospel:



*Being kind, apologizing,
extending forgiveness*



*Participating in
wholesome family
activities and
traditions*



*Worshipping through
family prayer, scripture
study, home evening,
and church and temple
attendance*



*Giving
service*



*Listening and
showing respect*

IN RECORD TIME

By Richard L. Bairett Jr.

Only with the Lord's help could I get home in time for my daughter's baptism.



My daughter had just turned eight and was excited for me to baptize her. Her grandparents were also coming for the special occasion, which added to her excitement and anticipation. However, as the big day drew close, it looked like I might not be at the baptism.

My job as a military aircraft pilot and squadron assistant operations officer was rarely boring, but the pace became even more intense when my operations (ops) officer left on another assignment. I was dealing

with wave after wave of airlift missions. To produce the required number of flight crews, I was forced to cancel training, suspend some squadron functions, and cancel vacations that had been planned for months.

Aircrews were departing on 21-day flight orders with little chance of returning home early. And when my ops officer and another assistant ops officer returned, it became difficult to justify my staying behind for a family event. How could I hang back when I had required sacrifices of so many others?

I felt torn in half. I always tried to put my family ahead of my career, but I also had a duty to serve my country. My ops officer, while not a member of the Church, understood the importance of this event to my family and allowed me to make the decision myself. After much prayer and family discussion, I did what I felt was right and scheduled myself on the next mission out.

When my crew was alerted for a mission to begin on Monday morning, it didn't look like there was any

chance I'd be back for my daughter's baptism on Saturday. We were to fly to a cargo pickup location, then to a staging base on the East Coast of the United States, where we would be required to enter crew rest before flying again. Later we would fly to Europe and rest, then deliver cargo to a Middle East location, and on the return flight, stop for yet another crew rest, return to Europe, stop for another crew rest, and return to the United States to collect more cargo and cycle back through. It normally took at least seven days to complete this circuit just once, but I knew my family was praying to have me back. Their faith and prayers helped me to have faith, and it quickly became apparent that this wasn't going to be a typical mission.

First, instead of stopping on the East Coast for a day or two, our mission was assigned to air-refuel and continue non-stop to Europe. Then, after the minimum legal crew rest period, we were alerted to fly a different mission out-and-back to the distant cargo delivery location. The equipment offload and ground-refueling at our destination went uncharacteristically well, and after another bare-minimum crew rest period, we were amazed when we were alerted to return directly to our home base. We were going home for a day or so!

Calling from the plane, I was elated to tell my family I was nearly home. My wife told me the baptismal service had just been moved from 5:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. to accommodate a youth activity. I next called our airlift stage manager and explained my situation. After a pause, he replied that he could delay our alert until 5:00 p.m. on Saturday—the time the baptismal service had originally been scheduled to begin!

As we cleared the mountain range near my home, I saw that I had one more trial of faith remaining: the city lights below were blanketed in fog. This would be the worst visibility I'd ever flown an approach in. We quickly put together a plan to divert to another airfield if necessary, completed our checklists, and flew down to take a look.

As we sped toward the runway at 200 feet (60 m) above ground level, we were completely shrouded in fog. Suddenly, passing 120 feet (37 m), there was a lighted runway in front of us, and a few seconds later we were safely on the ground. Everyone exhaled in relief.

An unprecedented string of seeming coincidences had enabled my crew to make a multi-stage trip to the other side of the world and back in record time, and I was able to be home for a brief window that

coincided with my daughter's baptism. With the Lord's help I was able to fulfill my duty to my country, to my squadron, and most of all, to my family. While life would have gone on if we needed to reschedule our daughter's baptism, Heavenly Father was letting us know that He loved us and heard our prayers. He gave my daughter the memory of those miraculous events as a witness that He loves her, and my wife and I both gained a stronger witness that "whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you" (3 Nephi 18:20). ■

The author lived in California, USA, at the time of this experience.



WATCHED OVER BY OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

By LaRene Porter Gaunt

Church Magazines

Before Alzheimer's took his mind, my father always had a story or song for his children. I can remember him sitting in his big chair cradling my baby brother on his lap as his mellow voice filled the room with stories from his youth—everything from tending the cows with his cat draped over his shoulder to sliding down the red rock of Escalante, Utah, USA. Then, as my brother's eyes began to droop, the stories stopped, and the same cowboy lullaby began:

*Close your sleepy eyes, my little buckaroo,
While your Heavenly Father watches over you.
Don't you know it's time for bed,
another day is through.
So go to sleep, my little buckaroo.¹*

Now my baby brother is a father, and my dad lies in a hospital bed in San Diego, California, USA. Though he sees palm trees, he thinks he is a boy turning irrigation water down the rows of corn, tomatoes, and green beans. But he is not. He is dying.

Day after day, my mother, brothers, and sister gather around his bed. My mother calls me at my home in the mountains of Utah, USA. She tells me that when she shows my dad old family photos, a smile comes across his sunken face. Other times, his brothers, long since dead, wander in and out of his mind and heart. She tries to get him to eat, but he refuses. He tells her that his brothers have caught some trout and he has to go take care of the horses before dinner.

One by one we have made peace with the knowledge that when he passes from this mortal life, our dad will be “taken home to that God who gave [us] life,” to “paradise, . . . where [he will] rest from all [his] troubles and from all care, and sorrow” (Alma 40:11–12).

I call my mother and she hands the phone to my dad. To my surprise, he begins to sing to me: “Close your sleepy eyes, my little buckaroo, while your Heavenly Father watches over you.”

I wonder if my dad really knows it's me. He probably doesn't, but this song comes as a gift drifting into my heart. I weep in gratitude for this tender mercy from my Heavenly Father and for His plan of salvation. Soon the lullaby is over, and I imagine my dad's eyes beginning to droop. The moment is gone, but I find hope in the knowledge that death is part of God's plan to bring us home to Him. I believe in God's plan and in His love for us as we pass from this life. I whisper, “Good night, Daddy. Go to sleep. Our Heavenly Father is watching over you.” ■

NOTE

1. See Jack Scholl and M. K. Jerome, “My Little Buckaroo” (1937).



SOLITARY SERVICE IN SARAJEVO

By Armin Wilhelm

On Sundays, I sang, prayed, and gave talks by myself. Would other members begin attending meetings too?

As a member of the German military, I spent more than half of 1999 in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. My military assignment came with great challenges and long hours, but I always took time off to attend church in a small chapel used by various denominations in our camp of 750.

When I arrived at the chapel one Sunday afternoon, I found the doors locked. I learned that the other members of the Church in the camp had been transferred. I was disappointed because I had looked forward to worshipping and partaking of the sacrament. Before coming to Sarajevo, I had been busy serving as a branch president in Germany and was able to partake of the sacrament regularly.

Several weeks later, I was assigned to accompany my general on a visit to an American division. During lunch, an American captain who had seen me talking to other soldiers asked if I was a member of the Church. After I told him I was, he gave my name and contact information to the senior group leader of the Church there.

Soon a Brother Fisher contacted me. Following an interview, he set

me apart as the group leader of the Church in Sarajevo with the assignment to set up a group. (A group is a Church unit in military installations, similar to a branch.)

I began posting meeting times on bulletin boards and sending out invitations, hoping to find other Latter-day Saints in military barracks in Sarajevo. For the first few weeks, no one else attended. So on Sundays, I sang, prayed, and gave talks by myself. Following Church guidelines for leaders and members in the military, I was

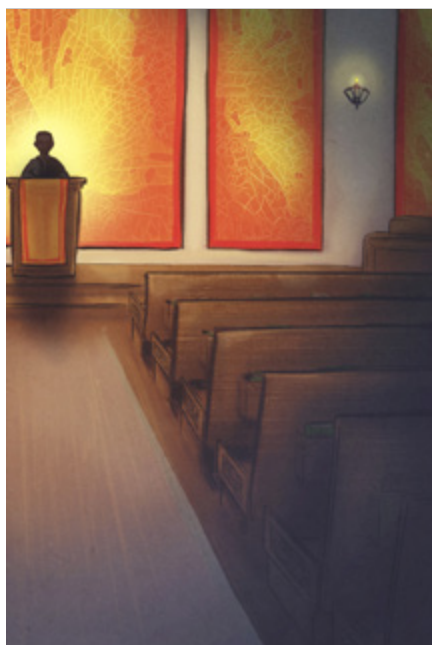
able to bless and partake of the sacrament without a second priesthood holder. This brought me great joy.

I held my solitary meetings in English so I could improve my English language skills. The first talk I gave was about Joseph Smith. No one visible was in the room, but I sensed the presence of others. The Holy Ghost strengthened me and revealed to me how important it was for the work of the Lord to begin anew in this place.

A few weeks after I held my first Sunday meeting, a young American soldier entered the chapel. She had been baptized only a few months before. I was so happy! Two weeks later, another sister arrived. Then two brothers came. With the help of the Lord, the Church began growing in Sarajevo.

Now the Church has a branch in Sarajevo. As I remember my time there, I reflect on the honor the Lord gave me to serve in a special way—to be a little cog in His work and to know that “out of small things proceedeth that which is great” (D&C 64:33). ■

The author lives in Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany.



Self-Reliance and Gospel Learning

By David B. Marsh

Priesthood and Family Department of
the Church

A kindergarten teacher was once observing her class of children while they drew. As she walked around to see each child's artwork, she asked one little girl, "What are you drawing?" The girl replied, "I'm drawing God." Somewhat surprised, the teacher said, "But no one knows what God looks like." Without hesitation, the girl replied, "They will in a minute."

Wouldn't it be nice to have such confidence? In actuality, Heavenly Father wants us to become confident in our knowledge of Him. The Lord told Jeremiah that we should not glory in our wisdom or in our might or in our riches. Rather, He said, "let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me" (see Jeremiah 9:23–24).

The Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44) taught, "God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what He will

make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them, for the day must come when no man need say to his neighbor, Know ye the Lord; for all shall know Him . . . from the least to the greatest."¹

Becoming confident in our knowledge of God does not happen without personal effort. Parents and teachers can help, but we must become self-reliant gospel learners. Just as we learn how to feed ourselves physically to sustain our bodies, we must learn how to feed ourselves spiritually to sustain our spirits.

Years ago the seagulls in St. Augustine, Florida, USA, were starving. For generations the gulls had learned to depend on the shrimp fleets to feed them scraps from their nets. The shrimpers eventually moved from the area. The seagulls had not



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learned how to fish for themselves; nor did they teach their young how to fish. Consequently, the big, beautiful birds were dying even while there was plenty of fish all around them in the water.²

We cannot afford to become like the seagulls; nor can we let our children go through life dependent on us, or others, for their knowledge of the Lord. “Our efforts,” said President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988), First Counselor in the First Presidency, “must always be directed toward making able-bodied people self-reliant.”³ When we become self-reliant gospel learners, we know how to feed ourselves spiritually and strengthen our relationship with God.

President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, taught: “Spiritual

self-reliance is the sustaining power in the Church. If we rob you of that, how can you get the revelation that there is a prophet of God? How can you get answers to prayer? How can you get *know*? If we move so quickly to answer all your questions and provide so many ways to solve all of your problems, we may end up weakening you, not strengthening you.”⁴

While we enjoy learning and receiving inspiration at church, we cannot rely solely on that for our spiritual nourishment. President George Albert Smith (1870–1951) explained: “I fear that as members of the Church we depend too much upon the auxiliary organizations, and upon the advice and counsel of those outside our own households. We have already heard of many of the blessings that the Lord has given to us in the sacred

records that have been kept until our day, and that contain the advice and counsel of an all-wise Father. It seems strange that so many of our people . . . lack familiarity with the contents of these sacred records.”⁵

I enjoy learning the gospel at church, but I get more excited about the gospel when I discover inspired insights during my personal study. There is nothing more thrilling to me than finding a small treasure of truth in the scriptures that enlightens my understanding and fills me with the Spirit of the Lord.

Learn How to Learn

When I returned from my mission, I found it necessary to go to firesides and devotionals almost weekly to maintain my spirituality. The speakers fed me with their gospel insights, and I appreciated the way those insights made me feel. I had studied and taught the gospel for two years, but I didn’t seem to have the necessary skills to feed myself on a regular basis. I was just reading the scriptures and not really searching them diligently.

Gospel study is much like learning to paint. It is not intuitive or natural for everyone. We would not think of giving someone a paint palette and expect that person to become an artist immediately. Becoming a self-reliant gospel learner is the same. We can’t expect to discover great insights on a regular basis if we haven’t learned

some basic gospel-study skills. President Packer explained that the scriptures “contain the fulness of the everlasting gospel, an eternity of knowledge. But one must learn to use them or the search will be discouraging.”⁶

That’s how it was for me—discouraging—when I first tried to find meaning and guidance from my scripture study. So I began to analyze how the speakers got their insights. It took a while, but I eventually saw how they extracted specific statements of doctrine from the scriptures; how they mined meaningful teachings about the Savior from the verses; how they formulated life-guiding principles from scriptural phrases; how they interpreted symbols; and how they connected the teachings of prophets and apostles to specific verses of scripture.

As I continued my study of the scriptures and the teachings of prophets and apostles, I found myself asking questions:

- What doctrine is being taught in these verses, and what do I learn about that doctrine?
- Where and when have I seen this gospel principle effectively applied?
- What do I learn about Heavenly Father and His plan for my happiness?
- What do I learn about Jesus Christ and His Atonement?





- What does the Lord want me to learn from this?
- What inspired thoughts and feelings am I receiving as I read?
- Is there something here that helps me with a current challenge in my life?
- What do I learn that will help me live from day to day?

Powerful, Persuasive Teachers

As my scripture study changed, so did my teaching. I became more interested in helping people discover gospel truths that would guide them than I was in telling them what the scriptures meant to me.⁷ It thrilled me to see the joy others felt when they discovered something new. It was, and is, one of the most gratifying experiences of my teaching experience.

I also found that when I helped those I taught consistently use the

skills and questions above, their ability to become self-reliant gospel learners accelerated. They didn't have to go through the long process I went through.

Learning comes before teaching, and good learners make more spiritually inspiring teachers. "Seek not to declare my word," said the Lord, "but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men" (D&C 11:21). Who wouldn't want that magnificent blessing!

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has emphasized the growing need for us to become self-reliant gospel learners:

"I suspect we emphasize and know much more about a teacher teaching by the Spirit than we do

about a learner learning by faith. Clearly, the principles and processes of both teaching and learning are spiritually essential. However, as we look to the future and anticipate the ever more confused and turbulent world in which we will live, I believe it will be essential for all of us to increase our capacity to seek learning by faith. . . .

"Ultimately, the responsibility to learn by faith and apply spiritual truth rests upon each of us individually. This is an increasingly serious and important responsibility in the world in which we do now and will yet live. What, how, and when we learn is supported by—but is not dependent upon—an instructor, a method of presentation, or a specific topic or lesson format."⁸

Blessings of Self-Reliant Learning

We are certainly blessed by the inspired teachings of parents and Church teachers, but perhaps more important is learning to inspire ourselves. When we become self-reliant gospel learners, we are better able to invite personal revelation. Self-reliant gospel learners don't need incentives to study regularly beyond knowing that the next time they study they will be edified rather than bored. Self-reliant gospel learners are also better equipped to survive the onslaught of sophistry that is so prevalent in our 21st-century society.

At least one of the Lord's promises seems largely meant for self-reliant gospel learners: "Whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived" (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37).

President Thomas S. Monson has promised, "If you will study the scriptures diligently, your power to avoid temptation and to receive direction of the Holy Ghost in all you do will be increased."⁹

Self-reliant gospel learners experience the Savior's promise:

"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37–38).

I still have a lot to understand, but becoming a self-reliant gospel learner is one of the best things I've done. It has blessed every aspect of my life. ■

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 268.
2. See "Fable of the Gullible Gull," *Reader's Digest*, Oct. 1950, 32.
3. Marion G. Romney, "The Celestial Nature of Self-Reliance," *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 91.
4. Boyd K. Packer, "Self-Reliance," *Ensign*, Aug. 1975, 87.
5. George Albert Smith, in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 30; see also *The Teachings of George Albert Smith*, eds. Robert and Susan McIntosh (1996), 53.
6. Boyd K. Packer, "Agency and Control," *Ensign*, May 1983, 67.
7. President Heber J. Grant (1856–1945) taught, "The aim of the Church is to help the people to help themselves" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1936, 3).
8. David A. Bednar, "Seek Learning by Faith," *Ensign*, Sept. 2007, 61, 65.
9. Thomas S. Monson, "Be Your Best Self," *Ensign*, May 2009, 68.



SOLDIER FOR THE LORD

By Enoc R. Verde Reyes

Many years ago I served as a full-time missionary in the Mexico Monterrey North Mission. I felt it a great privilege to give missionary service.

When I began my mission, I left one matter unresolved. I had not yet received the paper relating to my discharge from military service. This document is extremely important. It means that a young man has completed his mandatory military service and has the right to work and study. He is recognized as a citizen of Mexico.

As the date for the issue of this document approached, I began to worry. I wrote to my parents and asked them to see if it was possible for them to pick up my military service book. When I received their next letter, I worried even more. They told me that they had already been informed that it could be released only to the person to whom it belonged.

I felt an urgent need to pray to the Lord and ask Him what to do. The

answer, which did not come immediately, was that I should explain my problem to my mission president. During my conversation with him, two alternatives were discussed. One was that I could simply “trust in the Lord.” The second was that I could go in person to pick it up. The decision was mine.

I was unsure about what to do. I confided my concerns to my companion, and we were strengthened as we read this scripture: “Know ye not that ye are in the hands of God? Know ye not that he hath all power, and at his great command the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll?” (Mormon 5:23). This scripture dissolved my cloud of confusion. From the moment I read it, I knew that it was my duty to give my complete efforts to my missionary labors. My problem was in the hands of the Lord.

A little while later, I received another letter from my parents. My father wrote the following:

I had to choose to either take care of the matter myself or leave it in the Lord’s hands and focus on my missionary service.

“Son, I went back to the National Defense offices one more time, to try to find a person who could help us solve your problem. After speaking with a great many people, I was directed to a certain place. I arrived feeling quite discouraged and desperate. The first thing I saw was a huge door, which was opened wide and guarded by two very imposing soldiers. I gathered my courage and passed through, and found the office



to which I had been directed. As I knocked, I felt nervous but also that I was being guided by the Spirit of the Lord.

“When I went in, I saw an officer seated behind a desk. On his chest were a great number of medals, and the walls of his office were covered with colorful certificates. He shook my hand firmly and solemnly, and asked, ‘What is the purpose of your visit?’

“I have a son who is serving a

mission,’ I replied. ‘Because of this, he could not come to pick up his military service book. I have come to see if I can pick it up in his place.’

“‘No, you cannot. It can be released only to the individual to whom it belongs,’ stated the officer.

“At that moment, the Lord enlightened me with His Spirit, and I said, ‘Sir, you have many soldiers under your charge who are responsible to you for the fulfillment of their

duties. In the same way, my son is fulfilling his duty to preach the gospel of the Lord at this time. At this very moment, he is a soldier for the Lord.’

“At this, the officer arose from his seat and said, ‘Do you have any identification? What is the name of your son?’

“After I had answered his questions, he called a secretary and said, ‘Bring me the papers for this young missionary.’

“He signed them, sealed them, and turned them over to me. Nothing else was required. I shook his hand firmly and gratefully. My son, your papers are now in order and you must show your gratitude to the Lord by serving Him as a true soldier.”

After receiving this letter, I thanked the Lord for using His great power to intercede on my behalf, for the answer He had sent in response to my prayers, and for enlightening my father. I pray that we may all place our full confidence in the Lord, and never forget His promise: “Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened” (3 Nephi 14:7–8). ■

The author lives in Mexico City, Mexico.

How to *FACE* *with* UNCERTAINTY FAITH

By Megan Armknecht

As young adults, it is easy to worry about the future. From our education and career choices to our decisions about dating, marriage, and missions, we are making crucial choices that will affect the rest of our lives. With so much at stake, we “counsel with the Lord in all [our] doings” (Alma 37:37). We study things out and use the resources available to us, including scriptures, prayer, parents, trusted mentors and priesthood leaders, and patriarchal blessings.

But what do we do when there *is* no clear-cut answer and heaven seems silent?

When we are unsure, it is easy to let fear paralyze us. Sometimes we even *choose* not to make a decision because we think we are going to mess up.

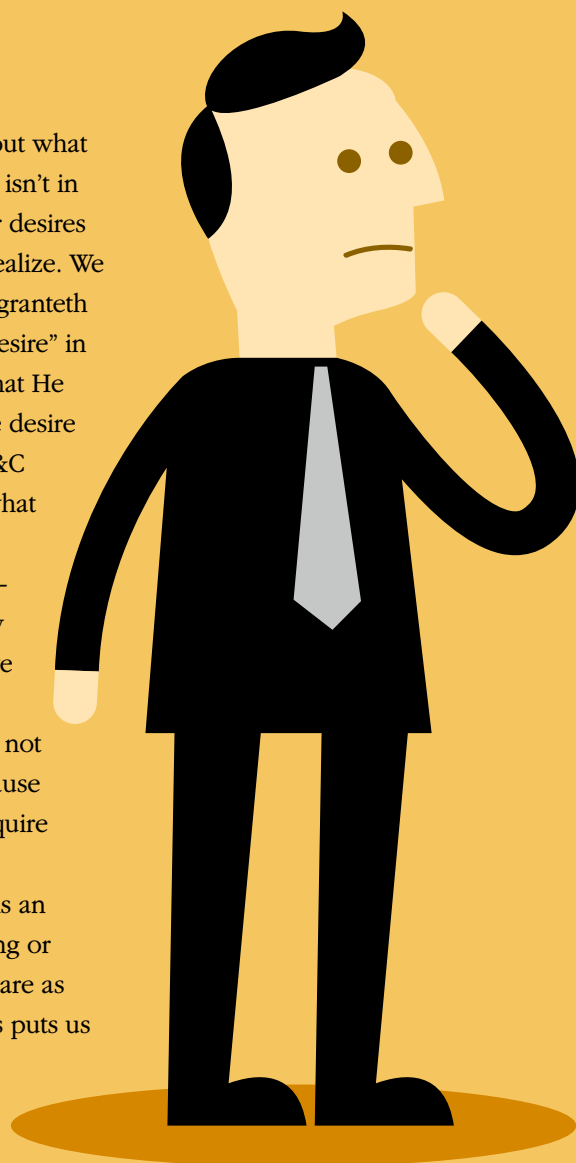
Don’t be afraid of uncertainty. Here are three things you can do when you don’t know what else to do: Educate your desires, move forward with faith, and “glory in the mystery” of your future.

Educate Your Desires

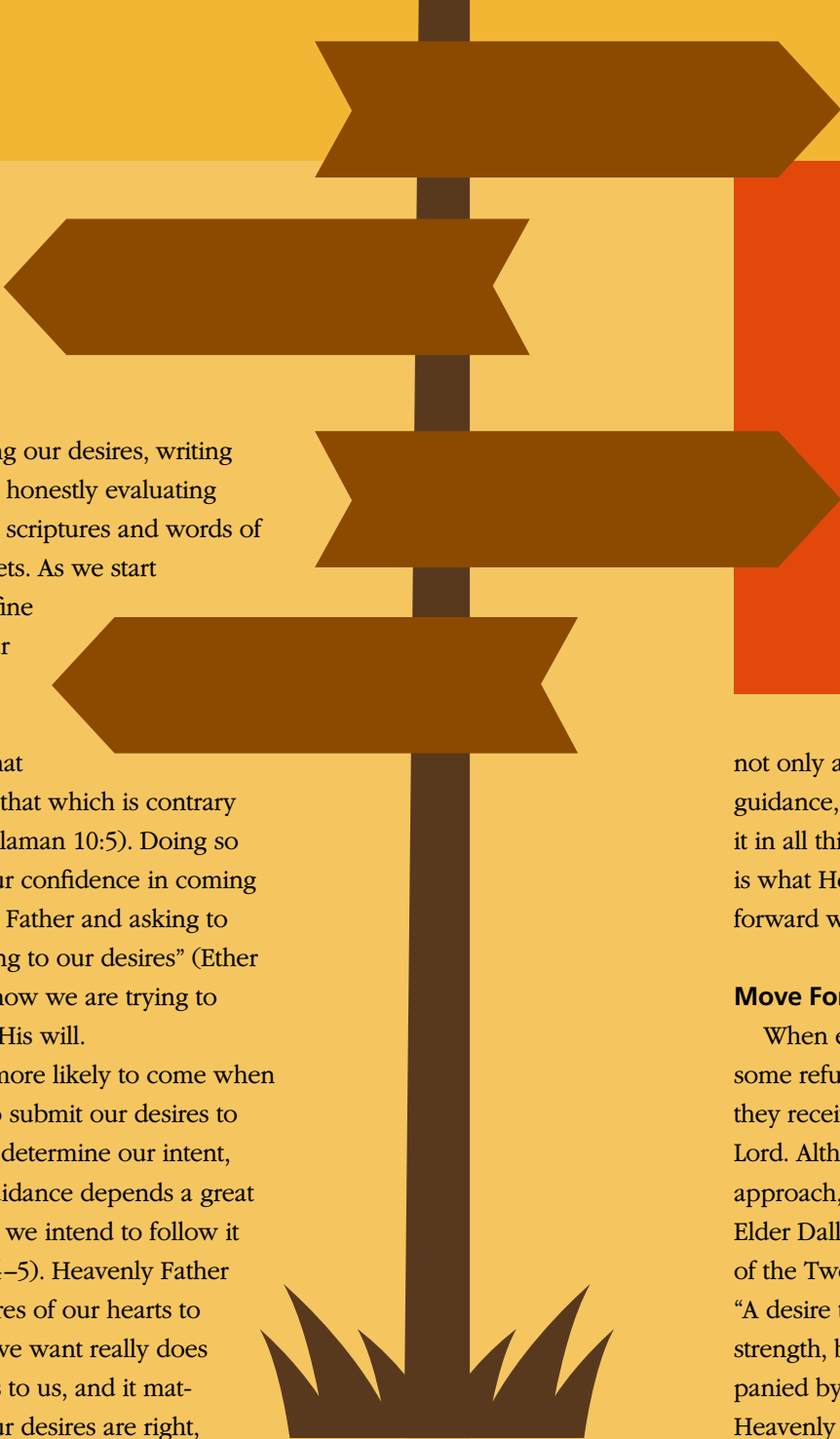
When we are uncertain about what to do, sometimes the problem isn’t in our head; it’s in our heart. Our desires are more important than we realize. We are taught not only that God “granteth unto men according to their desire” in this life (Alma 29:4) but also that He will judge us “according to the desire of [our] hearts” in the next (D&C 137:9). That’s a lot riding on what we want.

There are many things competing for our desires. We may not know what we want, or we may be afraid of wanting the wrong thing. At times we may not even want the right thing because we’re afraid of what it may require of us.

Understanding our desires is an important step toward changing or educating them. Being self-aware as to the desires that influence us puts us in a position to control them, rather than the other way around. This process can



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include vocalizing our desires, writing them down, and honestly evaluating them against the scriptures and words of the living prophets. As we start to define and refine the desires of our hearts, we give Heavenly Father reason to trust that we will “not ask that which is contrary to [His] will” (Helaman 10:5). Doing so also increases our confidence in coming before Heavenly Father and asking to “receive according to our desires” (Ether 3:2), since we know we are trying to align them with His will.

Answers are more likely to come when we are willing to submit our desires to His. Our desires determine our intent, and receiving guidance depends a great deal on whether we intend to follow it (see Moroni 10:4–5). Heavenly Father can use the desires of our hearts to guide us. What we want really does matter. It matters to us, and it matters to Him. If our desires are right,

**When
uncertainty
strikes, you can
find the faith
to move
forward.**

not only are we more likely to receive guidance, but we’re less likely to need it in all things, because what we want is what He wants, and we can move forward with faith.

Move Forward with Faith

When encountering uncertainty, some refuse to make a decision until they receive clear direction from the Lord. Although there is merit in this approach, there is also danger. As Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled: “A desire to be led by the Lord is a strength, but it needs to be accompanied by an understanding that our Heavenly Father leaves many decisions

for our personal choices. . . . Persons who try to shift all decision making to the Lord and plead for revelation in every choice will soon find circumstances in which they pray for guidance and don't receive it."¹

God will never take away our agency. He reminds us:

"It is not meet that I should command in all things. . . .

"Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

"For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves" (D&C 58:26–28).

Did you catch that? *The power is in us*. This power, agency, enables us to hope, dream, and act as free agents. Of course we should make sure we are keeping the commandments and seeking our Heavenly Father's will. But we also need to be agents of choice. We need to act for ourselves and do "many things" of our own free will. God doesn't want us to be "compelled in all things" (verse 26), even the big things. For how would we grow?

If we are to become like our Heavenly Parents, then we must learn to act instead of passively being acted upon (see 2 Nephi 2:26). When we face uncertainty, we can choose to move forward and act in faith. Elder



Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles promised, "When you are living righteously and are acting with trust, God will not let you proceed too far without a warning impression if you have made the wrong decision."²

"Glory in the Mystery"

When I was choosing where I would go to graduate school, I was faced with many wonderful options. As I weighed the choices in my mind and prayed for direction, I had the

overwhelming sense that this decision was up to me; the Lord would ratify any decision I made in this situation.

Instead of comforting me, this answer terrified me. I was nervous that I was going to make the wrong decision. I didn't trust myself.

I went to a trusted mentor for help. As we talked, I laid out all of the factors: pros, cons, fears, hopes, and so on. I had thought (and worried) about this a lot, and my mentor could tell.

As I finished talking, he looked me straight in the eye.

“Look, Megan,” he said. “You have two great options here. I don’t think you can mess this choice up. It might seem trite, but ultimately it comes down to the heart wants what the heart wants. So, what do you want?”

The directness of the question opened my understanding. I finally saw what Heavenly Father was trying to tell me in this decision-making process: I had come before Him in humility in the steps leading up to this choice, He had directed me in my desires, and He now trusted me enough to choose the next step of this path. I could choose whatever I felt was best, and He would be with me. The choice *was* mine, and that *was* liberating.

As we talked more about what I wanted, my mentor gave one last piece of advice.

“I know that these choices can be agonizing,” he said. “I’ve gone through them myself. But before you make any decision, just take an hour or two to go outside, walk around, and glory in the mystery that is your future.”

That concept has stuck with me through the years and has helped me when I have had to make other decisions. Because even though making such decisions can be agonizing, it is true freedom.

Instead of anguishing about making a wrong decision, we can look forward with hope, trust that we’re not supposed to know everything right now, and glory in the promises that God has made to us personally:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye are little children, and ye have not as yet understood how great blessings the Father hath in his own hands and prepared for you;

“And ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. The kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours” (D&C 78:17–18).

Enhance the Opportunity to Grow

Trust in the Lord. Live to have His Spirit, and let Him lead and guide you. But when uncertainty strikes—and

it will—take comfort in the fact that the Lord trusts you and is giving you an opportunity to learn, grow, and become more like Him.

One of the most important principles of the restored gospel is that we are not slaves of circumstance. We are free to choose—with all of the glorious responsibilities that come with that knowledge and power.

So examine your desires, replace fear with faith, and glory in the mystery of your future. The future may be uncertain, but we can be sure that our efforts to face it with faith will be for our “profit and learning” (2 Nephi 2:14). ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks, “Our Strengths Can Become Our Downfall,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1994, 13.
2. Richard G. Scott, “Using the Supernal Gift of Prayer,” *Ensign*, May 2007, 10.



OTHER RESOURCES

Still nervous? Here are some other sources on decision making and dealing with uncertainty:

- Bruce C. Hafen, “On Dealing with Uncertainty,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1979, 63–67.
- Dallin H. Oaks, “Revelation,” *New Era*, Sept. 1982, 38–46.
- Kathleen Lubeck Peterson,

“Making Major Life Decisions,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2006, 12–16.

- “Move Forward in Faith,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2013, 54–57.
- Anthony D. Perkins, “Go Forth in Faith,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2015, 16–20.
- David A. Bednar, “Being an Agent to Act” (video), [lds.org/go/bednarE617](https://www.lds.org/go/bednarE617).

When I Lost My Father

By Amy Cook

The Oregon, USA, coast was a beautiful setting for a camping trip that I took with some of the members of my immediate family. I was there with my mother, two older sisters and their families, my younger brother, and my husband. I was 23 years old at the time and enjoying life as a newlywed. We were taking this camping trip as a precursor to a family reunion that was going to take place in Oregon with my mother's family in a couple of days. My father had to work the few days before the reunion, but he was going to join us soon on our camping trip. The day he was planning to join us was a day that changed my life drastically. We received a call from my grandmother, informing us that she was at the hospital with my father. He had suffered a heart attack. My grandmother gently told us, "He is already gone."

The days that followed my dad's passing were some I will never forget.

We came together as a family. We had tremendous support from our extended families, ward members, and people who knew my father in the community. It was a spiritual time for us. There were times when we cried on each other's shoulders and when we felt moments of peace. My father was a good man who held many callings in the Church and was an exemplary priesthood holder and a devoted husband and father. The day of his funeral was one of peace. We celebrated his life and were reminded once again of our Savior's love and the wonderful plan of salvation that Heavenly Father has prepared for us. We went away from the funeral missing our father but with hope in our hearts that we would be reunited with him.

It was a couple of weeks after the funeral when my suffering began. I had returned home to Utah, USA, away from my mother and other

After my father passed away, I felt peace at first. But then came the despair, and I knew I had a choice to make.

family members, and unfortunately I started to forget the peaceful feelings I had at the funeral. I felt alone and my heart ached for my father; we had been very close and had spoken together often. I also worried about being so far from my mother because it was not an easy time for her either. I became despondent, angry about losing my father so suddenly. And I began asking, "Why?"

On one particularly bad night when I was home alone and sobbing, I felt I was slipping further and further into despair. I was prompted to pray and pour my heart out to my Heavenly Father. I told Him everything that was in my aching heart and asked

for help to not be angry. As I finished my prayer, a realization came to me that I had to make a choice: either let myself fall deeper into despair and be angry or allow my Savior to encircle His arms of love around me and carry my burdens (see D&C 6:20).

I looked up and glanced at a painting of the Savior I had hung up on the wall two years earlier. It depicts the Savior reaching His hand down and helping a little girl climb up onto some rocks to where He is standing. I knew that I needed the Savior, and because of those moments in Gethsemane, He was the only person who knew exactly what I was going through (see Matthew 26:36–39; Luke 22:39–44; Alma 7:11–13). He was reaching out for me. I took that as an answer to my prayer and began studying the gospel more devotedly so I could feel peace again.

My testimony of the Savior was strengthened because of this experience. I have become forever grateful for the Savior's Atonement and Resurrection and for the gift of eternal life available to us through Him. I thank Heavenly Father in my prayers daily for sending His Only Begotten Son to earth for us. I think of my own father every day and miss him, but I always have hope in my heart that we will be reunited in the next life because of the Savior's love and ultimate sacrifice. I am in awe of Jesus Christ, and I strive every day to follow His example so that when my judgment day comes I will be deemed worthy to live with Him and with my family forever. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.





By Elder
Dallin H. Oaks
Of the Quorum of
the Twelve Apostles

Religion's Vital

For more than 30 years, I have been one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ. As directed by our First Presidency, we govern our worldwide Church of almost 16 million members in just over 30,000 congregations. We teach and testify of the divinity of Jesus Christ and of His priesthood and the fulness of His doctrine. Unique to our doctrine is our knowledge that God continues to call prophets and apostles to receive revelation and teach how to apply His commandments in the circumstances of our day.

1. The Importance of Religion Globally

Religious freedom is a lifelong interest of mine. My first publication as a young law professor at the University of Chicago 54 years ago was a book I edited on the relationship between church and state in the United States.¹

Today, much more than then, none of us can ignore the importance of religion globally—in politics, conflict resolution, economic development, humanitarian relief, and more. Eighty-four percent of the world's population identifies with a particular religion,² yet 77 percent of the world's inhabitants live in countries with high or very high restrictions on religious freedom.³ Understanding religion and its relationship to global concerns and to governments is essential to seeking to improve the world in which we live.

Although religious freedom is unknown in most of the world and threatened from

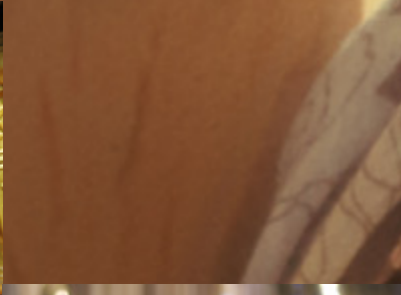
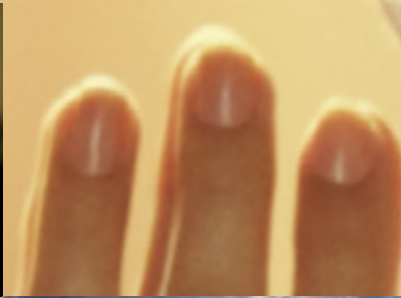
secularism and extremism in the rest, I speak for the ideal in which the freedoms that religion seeks to protect are God-given and inherent but are implemented through mutually complementary relationships with governments that seek the well-being of all their citizens.

Consequently, a government should secure religious freedom for its citizens. As stated in article 18 of the United Nation's influential Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."⁴

The complementary responsibilities of religion, through its adherents, are to observe the laws and respect the culture of the country that secures its freedoms. When religious

Elder Oaks gave this address on June 9, 2016, at Oxford University in England during a symposium on religious freedom.

Global Role



*We cannot
lose the
influence of
religion in
our public
life without
seriously
jeopardizing
all our
freedoms.*

freedoms are secured, such a response is a debt of gratitude gladly paid.

If there were uniform acceptance and application of these general principles, there would be no need for these discussions on freedom of religion. But as we all know, our

exercise of religious beliefs in the public square. Such attempts of course violate the Universal Declaration's assurance of the right to manifest religion or beliefs "in public or private." The free exercise of religion must also apply when believers act as a community, such as by their efforts in education, medicine, and culture.

2. Social Values of Religion

Religious beliefs and practices are also criticized as irrational and contrary to important government and social goals. I, of course, maintain that religion is uniquely valuable to society. As one atheist admitted in a recent book,



Many of the most significant moral advances in Western civilization have been motivated by religious principles and persuaded to official adoption by pulpit preaching.



Clockwise from top left: Mother Teresa, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., U.S. president Abraham Lincoln, Bishop Desmond Tutu, William Wilberforce.

world is bedeviled with conflicts on these general principles. For example, prominent voices are now challenging the whole idea of unique protections for religion. One such book bears the title *Freedom from Religion* and another, *Why Tolerate Religion?*²⁵

Other voices seek to marginalize religion and believers, such as by limiting religious freedom to teaching in churches, synagogues, and mosques, while denying the

"One does not have to be a religious believer to grasp that the core values of Western civilization are grounded in religion, and to be concerned that the erosion of religious observance therefore undermines those values."⁶ One of those "core values" is the concept of inherent human dignity and worth.

Here are seven other examples of the social values of religion:

1. Many of the most significant moral advances in Western civilization have been motivated by religious principles and persuaded to official adoption by pulpit preaching. So it was with the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire, the Emancipation Proclamation in the United States, and the Civil Rights movement of the last half-century. These advances were not motivated and moved by secular ethics but were driven primarily by persons who had a clear religious vision of what was morally right.

2. In the United States, our enormous private sector of charitable works—education, hospitals, care for the poor, and countless other charities of great value—originated with and is still sponsored most significantly by religious organizations and religious impulses.

3. Western societies are not held together primarily by the overall enforcement of laws, which would be impractical, but most important by citizens who voluntarily obey the unenforceable because of their internal norms of correct behavior. For many, it is religious belief in right and wrong and an anticipated accountability to a higher power that produces such voluntary self-regulation. In fact, religious values and political realities are so interlinked in the origin and perpetuation of Western nations that we cannot lose the influence of religion in our public life without seriously jeopardizing all our freedoms.

4. Along with their private counterparts, religious organizations serve as mediating institutions to shape and temper the encroaching power of government on individuals and private organizations.

5. Religion inspires many believers to render service to others, which, in total, confers enormous benefit on communities and countries.

6. Religion strengthens the social fabric of society. As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks has taught: “[Religion] remains the most powerful community builder the world has known. . . . Religion is the best antidote to the individualism of the consumer age. The idea that society can do without it flies in the face of history.”⁷

7. Finally, Clayton M. Christensen, a Latter-day Saint who is hailed as a worldwide “thought leader” on business management and innovation,⁸ has written that “religion is the foundation of democracy and prosperity.”⁹ Much more could be said about the positive role of religion in economic development.

I maintain that religious teachings and the religiously

motivated actions of believers are essential to a free and prosperous society and continue to deserve special legal protections.

3. Complementary Responsibilities of Religion

So far I have spoken only of governments’ responsibilities to religious believers and organizations. I now turn to the complementary responsibilities that religions and believers owe to their governments.

From those who enjoy their protections, governments obviously have a right to expect obedience to laws and respect for culture. Governments have an overriding interest in preserving the security of their national borders and defending the health and safety of their citizens. They obviously have the right to insist that all organizations, including religions, refrain from teaching hate and from actions that could result in violence or other criminal acts toward others. No country need offer sanctuary to organizations that promote terrorism.

Religious freedom is no barrier to government power in any of these circumstances.

Today the complementary functions of religion and government are being severely tested in Europe. The massive inflow of refugees of mostly Muslim religion and culture into countries with a different culture and different religions obviously creates serious political, cultural, social, financial, and religious challenges.

What can religion and religious organizations contribute to help refugees and the countries that have received them—short term and long term? We know that some professionals are skeptical of the role of religious organizations in these matters, some even seeing religion as a disruptive influence. I will try not to contradict opinions based on facts with which I am not familiar. I will only share the policies and experience of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which I believe will illustrate the positive



Refugees cross the border from Syria into Turkey.

influence that religious organizations can and should have, short term and long term.

We who are known as Latter-day Saints, or Mormons, take literally Christ's teaching that we should give food to the hungry and shelter to the stranger (see Matthew 25:35).



these efforts has averaged about U.S. \$40 million per year.

We avoid one of the objections to faith-based organizations by rigorously separating our humanitarian services from our worldwide missionary efforts. Our humanitarian aid is given without regard to religious affiliation because we want our missionary efforts to be received and considered without influence from force or food or other favors.

4. What Can Churches Do?

What can church organizations do in addition to what the United Nations or individual countries can do? Again, I refer to our own Church's experience. While our



Religious teachings and the religiously motivated actions of believers are essential to a free and prosperous society and continue to deserve special legal protections.



We are likewise directed by a modern revelation from the same source to “remember in all things the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted, for he that doeth not these things, the same is not my disciple” (D&C 52:40).

Care for the poor and the needy is not optional or incidental in our Church. We do this worldwide. For example, in the year 2015 we had 177 emergency response projects in 56 countries. In addition, we had hundreds of projects that benefited more than a million people in seven other categories of assistance, such as clean water, immunization, and vision care. For more than 30 years, the magnitude of

membership—half in the United States and half elsewhere—is small in terms of capacity to help, we have three great advantages that magnify our impact.

First, the service traditions of our membership give us a resource of committed and experienced volunteers. To translate that into numbers, in 2015 our volunteers donated over 25 million hours of labor in our welfare, humanitarian, and other Church-sponsored projects,¹⁰ not counting what our members did privately.

Second, through our members' financial contributions to humanitarian causes, we come to the table with our own funding. While we have the ability to operate independent of bureaucratic structures and appropriations, we are also eager to coordinate our efforts with individual governments and with United Nations agencies for the greatest impact. We call upon them to look increasingly to the strengths of religious organizations.

Third, we have a global grassroots organization that can

be mobilized immediately. For example, on the worldwide problem of refugees, in March 2016 our First Presidency and our Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary General Presidents sent messages to members worldwide reminding them of the fundamental Christian principle of helping the poor and the “stranger” in our midst (Matthew 25:35). They invited girls and women of all ages to join in helping refugees in their local communities.¹¹

As a representative example of our members’ responses in Europe, one evening in April 2016, more than 200 Mormon congregants and their friends in Germany volunteered and packed 1,061 “welcome bags” for children living in six refugee centers in Germany in the states of Hessen and Rheinland-Pfalz. The bags contained new clothing, hygiene items, blankets, and art supplies. One of the women leading the effort said, “While I cannot change the tragic circumstances which made [refugees] flee from their homes, I can make a difference in [their] environment and be an active player in [their] lives.”

Here are two examples of our formally organized worldwide humanitarian efforts. In 2015, in full partnership with the British-based AMAR Foundation, LDS Charities constructed primary health care

centers for the Yezidi minority in northern Iraq, who were brutally targeted by ISIS. These health care centers—fully equipped with laboratory, urgent care, pharmacy, and ultrasound—bring relief to a population hurting both physically and spiritually. They employ Yezidi medical professionals and volunteers who aid their own people in culturally sensitive ways.

In 2004 the devastating earthquake and resulting tsunami in Southeast Asia on December 26 killed 230,000 people in 14 countries. Our LDS Charities arrived on site one day later and worked actively for five years. In the heavily affected Banda Aceh region alone, our charities built 900 permanent

houses, 24 village water systems, 15 primary schools, 3 medical centers, and 3 community centers that doubled as mosques. Additionally, we supplied copies of the holy Koran and prayer rugs to help those communities in their worship.

These are only some illustrations of the value of religion in a culture for which we in the religious community do not just advocate but also demand religious freedom, which we

consider to be the first freedom. ■

For the full text and video of this address, go to mormonnewsroom.org.



AMAR chair Baroness Emma Nicholson with Elder Jeffrey R. Holland in London, England.

NOTES

1. See *The Wall between Church and State*, ed. Dallin H. Oaks (1963).
2. See Pew Research Center, “The Global Religious Landscape: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World’s Major Religious Groups as of 2010,” Dec. 2012, 9, 24, pewforum.org.
3. See Pew Research Center, “Latest Trends in Religious Restrictions and Hostilities,” Feb. 26, 2015, 4, pewforum.org.
4. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nation’s General Assembly on Dec. 10, 1948, un.org. This array of protections for religious practice is recognized widely in international and regional human rights documents. See, for example, the “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,” Dec. 16, 1966, Article 18; “Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief,” 1981, Article 1; “European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms,” 1950, Article 9; “American Convention on Human Rights” Nov. 22, 1969, Article 12; and “African Charter on Human and People’s Rights,” June 27, 1981, Article 8.
5. Amos N. Guiora, *Freedom from Religion: Rights and National Security* (2009) and Brian Leiter, *Why Tolerate Religion?* (2012).
6. Melanie Phillips, *The World Turned Upside Down: The Global Battle over God, Truth, and Power* (2010), xviii.
7. Jonathan Sacks, “The Moral Animal,” *New York Times*, Dec. 23, 2012, nytimes.com.
8. Jena McGregor, “The World’s Most Influential Management Thinker?” *Washington Post*, Nov. 12, 2013, washingtonpost.com.
9. Clayton Christensen, “Religion Is the Foundation of Democracy and Prosperity,” Feb. 8, 2011, mormonperspectives.com.
10. This is a total of over 14 million Church-service hours by missionaries, nearly 8 million by welfare and humanitarian workers, and over 4 million by welfare work in wards.
11. See First Presidency letter, Mar. 26, 2016, and letter by General Presidents of Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary, Mar. 26, 2016.



THE Faithful

HIGH COUNCILOR

*I learned a valuable lesson about “lifting where you stand”
from a faithful high priest in Germany.*

By Donald A. Coe

In October 2008, as I was listening to the broadcast of the priesthood session of general conference, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, began speaking about serving in the Church. He related a story about how he and some other brethren had tried to move a heavy piano. When all efforts failed, one man urged them to simply stand close together and “lift where you stand.”¹

President Uchtdorf went on to talk about serving in the Church wherever you are called to serve. Some people feel they could serve better if only they were called to do something befitting their considerable talents. He said, “No calling is beneath us. Every calling provides an opportunity to serve and to grow.”²

As President Uchtdorf spoke, my mind drifted to a time I met an unassuming member of the Church who was willing to lift wherever he was standing.

In 1985, I was stationed as a U.S. Army officer in a small town in Germany. I had served a mission in Germany 10 years previously. Upon arriving in 1983 as a soldier with my wife, Debra, and two young daughters, we began attending a serviceman’s branch of about 100 members strong. After two years, we decided to immerse ourselves fully into the German culture and began attending the small Bad Kreuznach Branch, which had about 12 members.

About the second week after we began attending, we noticed a new man there. He was in his mid-40s, and we learned that he was the high councilor assigned to our branch. He wasn’t there to conduct stake business, just to visit. We spoke for some time after church, and when we said good-bye, I figured we would next see him again in perhaps six months.

The next week, the high councilor was there again. I learned he lived about an hour away from our small town. During the remainder of his calling as a high councilor, he came to our branch two or three times a month. He was friendly, low-keyed, and encouraging. He always spoke with each member of the branch. And, with a branch that small, he was often asked to speak from the pulpit. Impressed with his dedication, in my mind I nicknamed him “the Faithful High Councilor.”

One Sunday he came to the branch services in the morning and then returned at 6:00 p.m. to attend a baptism. In between, he had gone to another branch. I have to admit that the thought actually crossed my mind, “What did he do to upset the stake president? Why else would he have been assigned to the smallest and most remote branch in the stake?” Maybe he wasn’t really the intelligent, humble, and likeable man I thought him to be. Maybe he didn’t like his home ward and used this assignment to get

away. I couldn't figure it out, so I just accepted it.

Several weeks after this baptism, I returned home after midnight on a Sunday morning. I had been training near the border between East and West Germany, and it had taken me three and a half hours to get home. I was exhausted when I walked in the door. My wife, Debra, was still up. She told me that "the Faithful High Councilor" had called. He wanted to meet with me. I asked, "Before or after church?" Church started at 10:00 a.m. I was hoping it was after church so I could sleep until 8:30.

"Before," she said.

"9:30?"

"No. He has to go somewhere else on stake business. He wants you to meet him at his office in Frankfurt. He said to go to Gate 5."

"What time?" I asked.

"Six," she responded.

Now I was upset. It was already 12:30 a.m. In order to make the appointment at 6:00, I would have to get up at 4:30. That meant less than four hours of sleep. What was I going to do? I didn't even have a phone number to call him the next morning to tell him I wouldn't be meeting him. I dropped my clothes next to the bed and lay down without setting the alarm clock. As I lay there, these thoughts went through my mind:

If I didn't meet "the Faithful High Councilor," what would happen? If I didn't show up at his office, I was sure he would make productive use of his time. The next time I spoke to him and explained why I hadn't met him, he would respond, "Of course you made the right decision. I would never have asked you to come if I had known you were getting home so late. We can take care of that business now." And besides, I wasn't *really* a member of the branch. Sure, our records were there and we attended every week, but we were foreigners, spoke some pretty atrocious German, and would be moving in five or six months.

My conscience was almost clear. A few more minutes



I set the alarm for 4:30 a.m. because I truly respected "the Faithful High Councilor."

and I could drift off to sleep. Then I remembered the nickname I had given him and all the times "the Faithful High Councilor" had come to the branch since we had been attending. He came to that baptism late on a Sunday night. He came to a branch activity in the middle of the week. He always spoke to all the members and encouraged and inspired them. He never seemed judgmental or indifferent. He was respectful of the branch president and of his efforts. If he was disappointed in being assigned to this little branch, he certainly never showed it.

I got up and walked over to the dresser where my alarm clock sat. I set the alarm for 4:30 a.m. In deciding to meet "the Faithful High Councilor," I was not concerned about what he would say or think if I did not. After all, I would probably never see or hear of him again after we moved. I decided to get up in less than four hours and drive 50 miles (80 km) to his office because I truly respected him for what he was, "the Faithful High Councilor." I decided to follow his example.

I pulled my car up to Gate 5 at 6:00 a.m. that Sunday morning to be greeted by a security guard with a machine



inquired about her health and refused to take “I’m doing all right” for an answer. Every assurance from Debra was met with a gentle but effective inquiry into the actual condition of the family. Finally he explained, “Debra, you need

gun. He eyed my American Armed Forces license plate. He may have wondered if I was lost. Had “the Faithful High Councilor” decided not to show up? Not more than two minutes later, though, his car pulled up next to mine. He said, “Good morning, Don. Let’s go into my office.” The guard opened the gate and let us pass.

After some small talk and showing me around his office building, he came to the point of the meeting. He said he was calling me to serve as the counselor to the branch president. Not the first or second counselor—the only counselor. Before my arrival, there had been only two priesthood holders in the branch, and they had traded off every few years between being branch president and elders quorum president.

I accepted the call and served until I left three months later to attend a two-month training in the United States.

During my absence, my wife and young son both became ill. His medical issues took him to a hospital about 60 miles (97 km) from our base. Being a strong army wife, Debra never complained or asked me to return to Germany. In fact, I didn’t learn of the true nature of *her* illness until after I got home. After one visit to the local clinic, the doctor had driven her home because he didn’t think she was well enough to drive herself. The branch president and Relief Society president both offered to help, but she politely refused. In addition to language and cultural difficulties, Debra didn’t want to put anyone out.

One day “the Faithful High Councilor” called her. He had recently been called to be the stake president. He gently

to let the branch help you. They really want to help, and it will bring the branch closer together to be able to assist you.” She gratefully accepted their assistance.

Upon my return from the United States, we stayed in the branch for another two months before finally moving to a larger city.

My memories of that time in my life faded as I leaned forward in my seat and refocused my attention on President Uchtdorf’s voice coming over the speaker system. I was truly impressed by the implications of his message. Unlike other times when I’ve wondered about the correlation between a speaker’s words and the speaker’s personal actions (in business, in the military, and, yes, even some talks I have heard in church), I had no doubt about President Uchtdorf’s message. It wasn’t just the fact that President Uchtdorf’s accent reminded me of Germany and my experience with “the Faithful High Councilor.” It was the fact that President Uchtdorf *was* “the Faithful High Councilor.” The industrial complex we met at that early Sunday morning was the Frankfurt International Airport, where he was Chief Pilot for Lufthansa German Airlines.

I can honestly say I have never known a man more humble and more faithful in practicing what he preached. I was grateful to have learned a valuable lesson of what it means to “lift where you stand.” ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Lift Where You Stand,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 53.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Lift Where You Stand,” 56.

Our Personal Progress One-on-One

*I wanted to help my daughters discover the gospel.
So I decided to help them with Personal Progress.*

By Alan Hills

I have three daughters, and I wanted to facilitate gospel discovery in their lives. As each of my daughters reached the age of 12, I asked to sit down with her weekly. At first, each daughter wondered if she was in trouble. I would reassure her that I just wanted to help with her Personal Progress. We talked about expectations, formed a plan, and committed to meet every week—same time, same place—for half an hour. We called it our one-on-one.

What resulted from this weekly half hour together was remarkable.

Every Sunday I would sit down with each daughter. Sometimes we'd talk about events other than Personal Progress. I'd learn about her thoughts, feelings, trials, challenges, and successes. I would listen and ask questions. Sometimes I would be inspired to share my thoughts. Mostly I listened. Then she would pull up her list of Personal Progress goals from the previous week. We would go over the goals she had made for herself. Then I'd ask questions—lots of them. "What did you learn from the scriptures you read this week?" "How did your goal of cooking dinner with Mom go?" "As you studied faith, how did you think it applies to you?" "What experience most stands out in your mind?"

I would listen not just to the answers but to the emotion behind the words. Sometimes I would be prompted to ask deeper questions. It was usually the follow-up questions



that encouraged the best conversations we've had over the years. Sometimes there were feelings of inadequacy expressed, and sometimes pure testimony was shared. This was when the Spirit was the strongest and teaching moments were revealed.

Occasionally a daughter would come unprepared. I would simply ask what got in the way of her goals for the week and what could be done during the coming week that might make a difference. With the discovery of these roadblocks, she would recommit and reschedule her goals.

Most of the time each daughter came prepared. We'd talk about what she had learned. Then we'd celebrate! We'd give high fives or fist bumps, and I would praise her diligence in accomplishing her goals. Then I would sign off her accomplishment right then and there. Over time, I learned the importance of praise and celebrating. Creating a positive and energetic atmosphere fueled the desire to do more and work harder.

We would usually spend the last 10 minutes talking about her goals for the next week. She would pull up the Personal Progress requirements online, look at what needed to be done, and pick one or two experiences to work on. Then she would pull up her calendar and schedule specific times when she would work on her goals. She was able to see what was scheduled for the week,



whether it was homework, preparing for an exam, Personal Progress, reading her scriptures, or praying.

After her calendar was filled in, I'd ask, "As you look at your week, what might get in the way of your goals?" Often my daughter would remember an after-school choir concert or significant homework assignment that would conflict with her scheduled Personal Progress activity. She would reschedule her time until she was satisfied, print out the calendar, and hang it up in her room as a constant reminder.

My daughters also reached out to their mother or grandmother, explained what they had committed to work on, and sought help and advice. They spent a lot of time working together, talking about the principles they were learning during the week, and strengthening relationships.

During the week I committed to be a resource to my daughters if they had questions or needed help. But I promised never to ask about their goals during the week. This strengthened our relationships of trust.

Now all three of my daughters have received their Young Women medallions. They did the work. They learned about goal setting, time management, accountability, worthwhile activities and skills, and commitment to self.

As a father, I'm grateful for the opportunity I've had to help and encourage my daughters. I have a testimony of Personal Progress. It is a challenging, time-intensive program to help young women gain a testimony of the gospel. But it is worth it. It's not about the award. It's about the process of discovery. I've seen incredible growth in my daughters as each of them discovered the gospel through Personal Progress. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

This article presents one father's efforts to reach out to his daughters. Its inclusion does not suggest that everyone needs to follow a similar pattern. There are many different ways that fathers can strengthen their families, depending on each individual's time, talents, and circumstances.

SPECIAL GIFTS FROM HAVING

SAM

Having a son with autism has put the plan of salvation in a new light for me.



Sam as a newborn being held by his father.

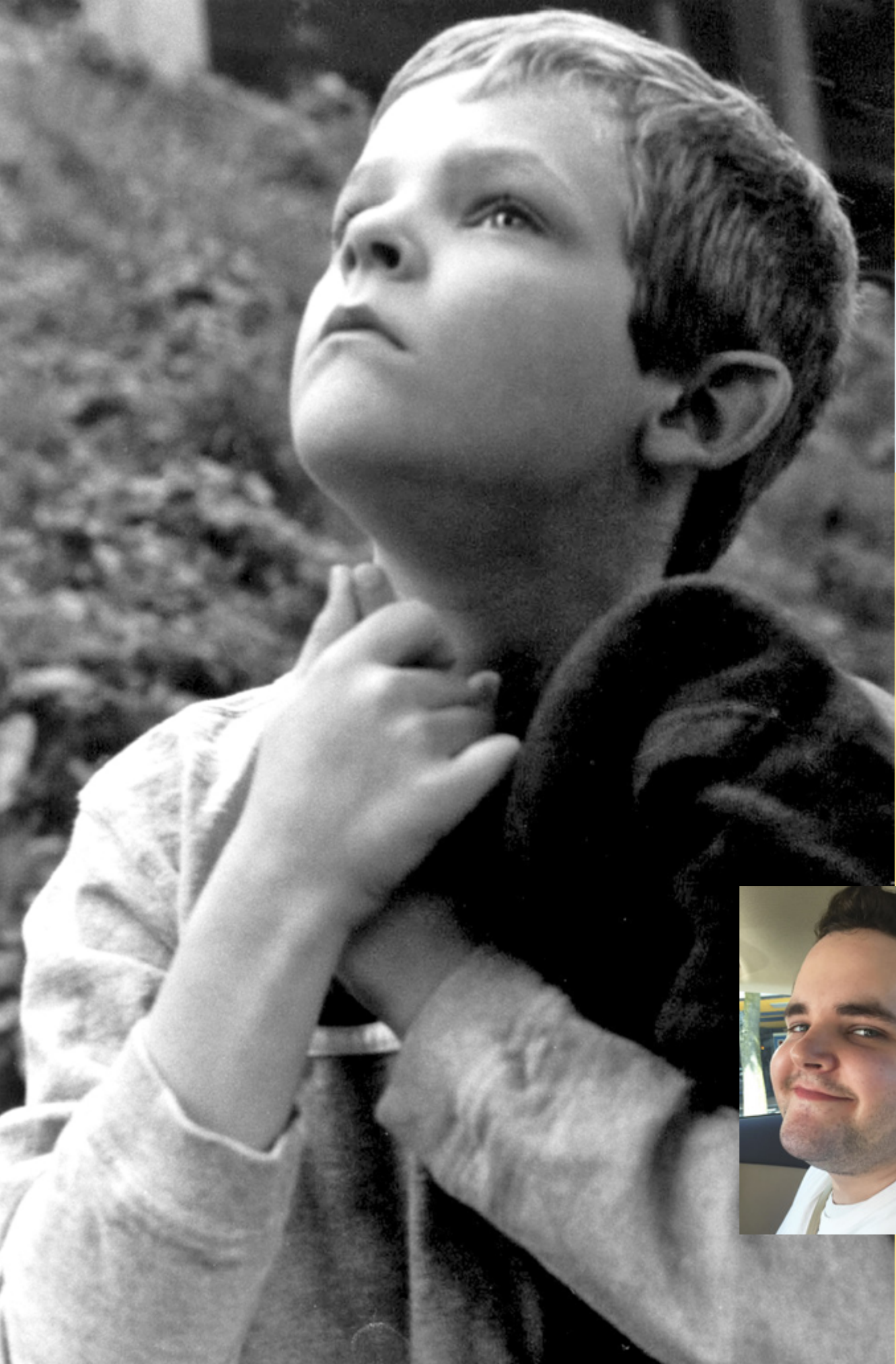
By David Gee

Every individual with a disability has a unique story. Every family who supports such an individual has a different experience. But one commonality we all share is a lifetime of looking for meaning. Here are a few of the lessons one family has learned in caring for a son with severe autism.

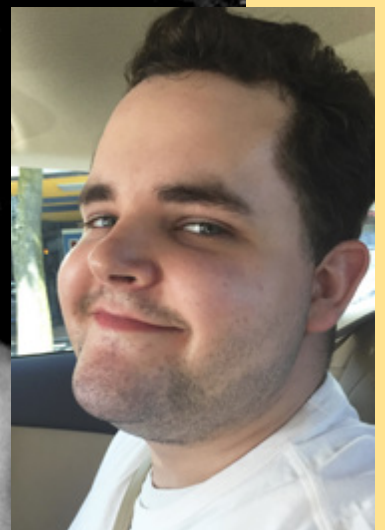
When our son Sam was born, my wife, Megan, and I were over the moon. We were married later in life, and it took us nearly five years to have our first child, Anna. Then 15 months after Anna's birth, we had a beautiful, dark-haired baby boy named Sam. We were beyond pleased with our two precious little children.

Our hopes were high for our bright and active little boy. Sam began to grow quickly. He learned to walk on his first birthday. I remember he was holding the string of a red helium balloon when he surprised us all by taking his first steps. We joked that it was as if the balloon were holding him aloft. He also learned to talk around the same time.

However, in the months leading up to Sammy's second birthday, things changed. He stopped talking. He withdrew from the things that nursery-age kids usually enjoy. After taking him to doctors and specialists, we were told that Sam had autism. We immediately went into overdrive to learn all we could and to help Sammy learn how to talk and associate with his world. Sam, who is now 23, can understand most of the things we ask him to do, but he has limited cognitive ability and even more limited expressive communication.



Sam
as he
looks
today.





Sam as a
little boy.

As the years have gone by, one of the most challenging conversations I have repeatedly had is the one that starts with my telling someone I have a son with autism and receiving the response, “That must be so hard for you” or “I’m so sorry.” Because the issue is so complicated, I often say nothing. At times, it *has* been hard. But if I could, I would express to everyone the gratitude I feel for the chance to be Sam’s dad. Because Heavenly Father has given me this opportunity, I have received priceless gifts of greater understanding about Heavenly Father’s plan, the Savior’s Atonement, and the growth that comes from challenging experiences.

Gift 1: Heavenly Father Has a Loving Plan

One gift I’ve received through associating with Sam is a sure knowledge that my Father in Heaven lives and that He loves me and all of His children. I also know that “all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things” (2 Nephi 2:24).

Likewise, I know that Father in Heaven loves Sam even more than I am able to love him. I had a memorable experience in which I first understood this concept. Shortly after Sam’s autism diagnosis, Megan and I attended the temple. I was struggling with the situation. I sat in the temple chapel and opened the scriptures to 3 Nephi 17, the account of the Savior’s interaction with the Nephite children:

“He took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.

“And when he had done this he wept again;

“And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones.

“And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them” (verses 21–24).

I read these words with tears in my eyes and love in my heart for my young son. In that moment, I knew that in the end, everything would be OK. I knew that the same

God who loves little children enough to send angels to minister to them also loved Sam enough to watch over him throughout his life. Heavenly Father is in charge, and He loves my son. I return often to this experience in my times of doubt. When things get hard, it is for me a font of living water to which I go for renewal and assurance that God has a loving plan for us.

Gift 2: The Savior’s Atonement Is for Everyone

Our life on earth plays an essential part in God’s plan for us to become like Him. Mortality is a time to learn and grow through trial and testing as we prepare to return to the presence of Heavenly Father. The Atonement of Jesus Christ is essential to our progress. He redeems us from sin when we repent, and He enables us to become more than we are. For some who suffer from severe disabilities, there may be no need for repentance. Yet even if accountability may be limited, every one of us has a God-given ability to





grow, though it too may be limited for some of His children in mortality.

Prophets ancient and modern have taught that little children and those without the law are redeemed from the foundation of the world through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. This doctrine is taught in the closing chapters of the Book of Mormon:

“All little children are alive in Christ, and also all they that are without the law. For the power of redemption cometh on all them that have no law; wherefore, he that is not condemned, or he that is under no condemnation, cannot repent; and unto such baptism availeth nothing” (Moroni 8:22).

I’ve also been blessed to learn that Sam has the promise of the Savior’s grace in fulfilling his mission on earth as he experiences what personal growth is possible with the limitations he has.

President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, taught: “Every quarter of an inch of physical and mental improvement is worth striving for. The Prophet Joseph Smith said that ‘all the minds and spirits that God ever sent into the world are susceptible of enlargement.’”¹

We’ve watched Sam learn and grow. Sometimes he surprises us with things we didn’t know he knew. Although his verbal skills are limited, he has a wealth of knowledge that he shows if we give him the right opportunities.

Most parents soon learn that providing learning experiences for their children requires some prayer, pondering, and planning. We’ve found that knowing what Sam is interested in and building a learning environment around that is important. Sam loves colors. It has motivated him to learn

Above: Sam with his family. Pictured from left are David (Sam’s father), Anna, Eli, Sam, Megan (Sam’s mother), and Sophie.

Left: Sam and his mother.



HEAVENLY FATHER'S LOVE

"To all of you who have challenges, concerns, disappointments, or heartaches with a dear one, know this: with infinite love and everlasting compassion, God our Heavenly Father loves your afflicted one, and He loves you!"

Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Special Lessons," *Ensign*, May 2012, 80.

LEARN MORE

Visit disabilities.lds.org for helpful suggestions, resources, and answers to frequently asked questions.

how to spell. Though he rarely speaks, he will always spell a color for you. And we're always surprised at how well he remembers movie characters.

It brings us peace to know that his abilities will continue to develop here as well as in the eternities because of the Atonement.

Gift 3: Sam Helps Us to Grow

In our life with Sam there have been a few "great things" (D&C 29:48) required of my wife and me, and I know there will be more. However, as with all that is required by the Father, much, much more is given when we try to give what is asked of us.

As Sam's family, we have been blessed greatly in our personal quests for perfection. Our family has had to earnestly and prayerfully seek the Lord's guidance to help us address Sam's special needs. Along the way, we have seen the hand of God in our lives and have drawn closer to Him. I am more patient and understanding because of Sam. Our other three children have cultivated kindness. While growing up, our son Eli loved spending time

with Sam. Eli would say his life goal involved eating lots of pizza and living in a house somewhere with Sam and their dog, Mae.

Sam doesn't just bless our immediate family; he blesses the lives of many others too. When we moved to Washington State, USA, several years ago, Megan and our children lived with my parents for almost a year while we waited for our house in North Carolina to sell. I remember expressing concern to my mom that Sam was getting into some of her valuable things and apologizing for the intrusion. She stopped me short and gently scolded me. "David, Sam belongs to me too," she said. My mom was right. I have seen how association with Sam blesses his aunts and uncles, who love him as their own. Sam's cousin Tucker declares Sam to be his best friend. Another cousin, David, who could easily bench-press me, devoted a high school senior essay to how Sam has contributed to and influenced his life.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: "Most of us experience some measure of what the scriptures call 'the furnace of affliction' (Isa. 48:10; 1 Ne. 20:10). Some are submerged in service to a disadvantaged family member. . . . Still others struggle with personal impairments. . . . Through the justice and mercy of a loving Father in Heaven, the refinement and sanctification possible through such experiences can help us achieve what God desires us to become."²

Caring for Sam is at times challenging, but the Lord recognizes the sacrifices we make for Sam out of love and uses them to refine us, because "all these things shall give [us] experience, and shall be for [our] good" (D&C 122:7).



Sam with
his father.



We See the Works of God

Caring for Sam has taught me countless things about our Father in Heaven's plan—both in general and for me as an individual. I've learned that Heavenly Father loves my son and that my son has an important place in the Lord's plan. The Lord knows Sam, and He knows our family. He knows specifically what experiences each of us needs to have in order to progress and return to His presence. As we go through these experiences, we are witnesses of countless tender mercies and recipients of personal blessings.

I am reminded of the man in the Bible who was blind from birth. When Jesus was asked the reason for the man's blindness, Jesus responded, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9:3). The manifestation of God's power in the man's life blessed him and those around him. I testify that our family has seen the works of God in Sam's life and in ours.

And I know that someday after we have learned all we can in this mortal life, "the soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, . . . all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame" (Alma 40:23).

Because of this great gift of resurrection given to all mankind, I know that I will reunite with Sam, "breathtakingly perfect in body and mind."³ I imagine at that time and ever after he will share with me in perfect prose his side of the story. And knowing Sam, he will laugh merrily as we review the many goofy things we have done to help him during his mortal life to learn and to talk with us. Until that day, I will continue to trust in the Lord's plan for my son and for me, and I will be grateful for the lessons I learn along the journey. ■

The author lives in Washington, USA.

NOTES

1. Boyd K. Packer, "The Moving of the Water," *Ensign*, May 1991, 9; for the quotation from Joseph Smith, see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 210.
2. Dallin H. Oaks, "The Challenge to Become," *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 33–34.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Like a Broken Vessel," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 42.



By Elder
Hugo Montoya
Of the Seventy

Overcoming THE Danger OF DOUBT

During the Savior's earthly ministry, He was tested by Satan.

"And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.

"And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread" (Matthew 4:2-3).

The adversary tempted the Savior by placing His divinity in doubt. He used the conditional phrase "*If* thou be the Son of God."

But using the strength that comes from knowing the scriptures, the Lord rejected the temptation. "It is written," He said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

This conversation between Jesus Christ and Satan gives us a clear idea of how the adversary tempts us to place insidious doubts in our hearts and minds.

A Hidden Invasion

Where I grew up in Sonora, Mexico, there are large trees called Indian laurel. They are nearly 100 feet (30 m) high, with huge trunks and well-developed branch and leaf structures. Recently many of these trees were attacked by a disease called Texas root rot. When this fungus attacks, the

Even large trees can succumb to unseen fungus. It's the same with faith. If we let doubt grow, it can rot spiritual roots until we topple.

effects are not seen for some years. However, the fungus gradually rots the roots of those beautiful trees, and they begin to die. The leaves turn yellow and fall. Then the trunk and branches dry up, and the trees must be cut down.

Like the fungus that enters these trees, doubts can invade our thoughts. If we let them grow, over time they can affect our roots and rot our foundation of faith until we too may be cut down.



So-called friends can introduce doubt by asking hurtful questions. Internet sites can generate doubt by presenting information out of context. But doubts especially intensify when we ourselves, feeling abandoned or overwhelmed, question the burdens we bear. The natural man's complaints, such as "Why me, Lord?" or "If I am Thy servant, why dost Thou allow . . .," can be whispered in our ears by the father of lies. He has a sinister purpose: to weaken

our certainty that we are God's children.

To counter such doubt, we must remember the perfection of our Father's plan. Rather than dwelling on negative questions, we should ask for strength, as did Joseph Smith: "Remember thy suffering saints, O our God; and thy servants will rejoice in thy name forever" (D&C 121:6). We must also trust that the Lord will deliver us (see 1 Corinthians 10:13).

Robbed at Gunpoint

I remember a personal experience that helped me learn to replace doubt with hope. I was serving as a stake president at the time. My children were small. My wife and I owned a tortilla-making business, and we worked long hours.

One of those nights, when my wife and I had to make tortillas from midnight until 3:00 a.m., three young men came to our shop. All three were high on drugs. Two of them wore ski masks and long raincoats. The raincoats hid their weapons. They threatened us, put us inside the shop, and closed the door. One stood guard outside, repeatedly shouting, “Kill them! Kill them!”

One of the young men put the barrel of his gun against my temple and forced me to lie down. The other put the barrel of his gun to my wife’s chest. I prayed that my children would not become orphans, and the Lord protected us. The robbers finally locked us in the bathroom and disappeared, driving away in my truck.

We escaped and called for help. The police came and so did my brother. As soon as possible, we took my wife home. Then my brother and I went looking, unsuccessfully, for my truck. Feeling very sad, I returned home at 5:00 a.m.

Where Was My Family?

To my surprise, my wife and children were not there. A neighbor told me that my four-year-old daughter was suffering stomach pain, and they had rushed her to the hospital. Knowing that we would desperately need money for her care, I felt I had no choice but to return to the tortilla shop and fill the orders for the day. Since my wife and I were the only workers, I was alone, rushing like crazy, kneading, putting dough in the hopper, adjusting the size, running back and forth to finish tortillas and wait on customers.

By now it was 8:00 a.m. I began to reflect on the events of the night. The question went through my mind, “If you are the stake president, why is all this happening to you?”



Everything but Tortillas

I pushed the malicious thought aside and prayed for strength. Then I heard a voice behind me: “President.” It was my bishop and a brother from the ward, my home teachers.

The bishop said, “We don’t know how to make tortillas, so we can’t help you here. But don’t worry about your truck, your wife, your sick daughter, or your other children. You stay here and we will help you with the rest.” My eyes filled with tears of gratitude.

They took charge of everything but tortillas. That afternoon when I returned home, I found my house clean and tidy, my shirts ironed, and food waiting for me. No one was home, but I knew that the Relief Society had been there. The police had found my truck, and someone from the ward had paid to get it released.

I quickly went to see my wife and daughter. The bishop had been there and had given my daughter a blessing. She

The spiritual roots of my family tree have been strengthened for three generations because of the unwavering faith of my great-grandfather.

had appendicitis, but everything was under control.

As my wife and I talked, we were impressed that the bishop had not used fast offerings or items from the bishops' storehouse to assist us. Rather, he used the resources and mercy of the members of our ward.

A few days later, while my daughter was recuperating and my wife was helping me in the tortilla shop, three women arrived. They were the mothers of the young thieves and had come to offer their apologies. They explained that the police had caught their sons. Later these mothers practically dragged their sons into the shop to ask forgiveness, and we forgave them.

They Did Not Doubt

Another example in my family history reminds me not to doubt. In 1913 in Mexico, Elder Ernest Young and his companions preached the gospel to my great-great-grandmother Maria de Jesus de Monroy, a widow; her three daughters, Natalia, Jovita, and Guadalupe; and her only son, Rafael—my great-grandfather. They were baptized on June 10. Two months later, citizens of the United States left the country because of the Mexican Revolution.

On August 29, 1913, the day President Rey L. Pratt and all American missionaries were to depart, Rafael Monroy, a 34-year-old convert of two months, went to the mission home to express his concern. "What is going to become of us?" he asked. "There is no organized branch in San Marcos, and we don't have the priesthood." Listening to Rafael's concerns, President Pratt asked him to sit down. He placed his hands on Rafael's head, conferred on him the Melchizedek Priesthood, ordained him an elder, and set him apart as president of the San Marcos Branch.

Rafael, who understood that his baptismal covenant was sacred and eternal, also understood that he should share the gospel. For 23 months he and his counselor, Vicente Morales, helped in the conversion and baptism of more than 50 people. They preached to dozens more.

Then, on July 17, 1915, the revolution arrived in San Marcos. Revolutionary soldiers accused Rafael and Vicente

of belonging to and supporting the opposing army, hiding weapons, and belonging to a strange religion. They took them prisoner, tortured them, and hanged them until they fainted. Then the soldiers gave them one last chance to save their lives. They would be spared if they would renounce their religion. Rafael answered, "I cannot do it, for I know that what I have received is true."

Rafael and Vicente did not doubt. They acted consistent with their knowledge and testimony. At the end of that day, they were executed by the Liberation Army of the South, giving their lives for what they believed.¹

Still True Today

Let us not doubt that this work is true. Whenever we are tried with doubts, let us ponder our spiritual experiences. Doing so will help us to erase the doubts. This is particularly true for those who have returned from full-time missionary service and then allowed doubts to creep in, for longtime members who have grown tired of enduring, and for recent converts who initially felt great joy but have not nourished their faith.

If such is your case, I would like to say: If the gospel was true when you sent in your missionary application (and it was!), if it was true when you entered the temple (and it was!), if it was true when you were converted and baptized or when you converted and baptized others (and it was!), if it was true when you were sealed (and it was!), then it is equally true today!

Jesus showed by example that we can receive strength from the scriptures. Joseph Smith showed that asking in prayer will bring relief. Those who have given their lives, nothing doubting, have shown that even when faced with death, we have hope.

We must not succumb to desperation, for trials and temptations are temporary. We can all find hope in the Savior's declaration: "Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not" (D&C 6:36). ■

NOTE

1. See Rey L. Pratt, in Conference Report, Apr. 1920, 90–93.





Waiting

FOR AN ETERNAL FAMILY

My husband was of another faith, but I put my trust in God that we would make it to the temple.

By Amy Veer

I stopped attending church as a teenager, so when I married Jared, whose religious beliefs were different from mine, I wasn't too concerned. But that changed when our first child was born. I realized that because I was not active in the Church, our daughter wouldn't grow up learning the things I had been taught as a child. "How will she know where she came from?" I asked myself. "How will she know she is a child of God?" I still knew that those things were true, and I wanted her to learn them both at home and in Primary. That gave me the motivation I needed to go back to church.

Back on the Path

I had a good visiting teacher who sent me notes and called me occasionally, so I knew whom to call to find out what time Church meetings were held. Because I would need to nurse our daughter, Jared agreed to let me take her with me. This was a great blessing. I felt an overwhelming happiness and warmth each time I attended, confirming that I was on the path I needed to follow.

I decided to read the Book of Mormon on my own for the first time. After I had read it, I prayed to know of its truth. Just as I had felt the Spirit affirm my decision to go back to church, I received a personal witness of the truth of the Book of Mormon.

I then started preparing to go to the temple and receive my endowment. I was concerned that going to the temple would put additional strain on our marriage, but my strong desire and the companionship of the Spirit kept me going. I never doubted my decision and was blessed when Jared supported me in receiving my endowment.

A Softening of the Heart

After I went to the temple, I had a greater desire to be sealed to my family. I knew that Jared might never choose to be baptized, but I still prayed for his heart to be softened. I felt that I could not expect a change in his heart

until I was truly living the gospel, so I made it part of my everyday life. We visited temples while we were on vacations. We listened to general conference. I initially thought those activities were for only me, to strengthen *my* faith. But now I know that Jared felt the Spirit at times, and I believe he was being prepared to accept the gospel.

We were blessed with more children over the years, and in 2004 we moved to a new home and into a new ward. Our new home teacher took an interest in our family from the beginning. He visited regularly and became Jared's friend. He helped with our landscaping, invited Jared to play softball with ward members, and invited him to join in other activities. Most important, he loved our family.

As Jared's feelings toward the Church continued to grow, he began to have spiritual experiences that I was not aware of. Then, one Sunday morning three years after we had moved to our new home, Jared came to me while I was getting myself and the children ready. He asked, "Can I go to church with you?"

I was shocked but said, "Yes!"

Soon he began meeting with the missionaries and accepted the invitation to be baptized.

As we visited temples while on vacation and as we listened to general conference, Jared was being prepared to accept the gospel.



Overcoming Challenges

As much as I'd like to say that our lives were perfect after Jared decided to be baptized, I can't. The time leading up to his baptism was difficult for both of us. We were faced with many trials and obstacles. Yet with the help of our loving bishop, home teacher, family, and most of all, our Father in Heaven, we overcame personal challenges that otherwise could have destroyed our marriage.

My husband was baptized on June 23, 2007, 10 years after we had met. I couldn't believe it—I had come to accept that he might never get baptized. But the Lord knew exactly how to help my husband.

Though we still had trials to overcome, now we faced them with a united viewpoint. Through that difficult year following my husband's baptism, there were times that I wondered if we'd ever get to the temple. But, as our Heavenly Father always does, He helped us. Shortly after the birth of our fifth child, we were sealed together as a family for time and all eternity.

On the Same Path

The covenants Jared and I made in the temple have put us on the same path. With our journey to the temple complete, our goal now is to continue to endure to the end and live worthy of our covenants.

I know that our Heavenly Father hears and answers our prayers, even if it isn't always in the way we expect. He is eagerly waiting to help us achieve our righteous desires. He loves us and wants us to be happy. Although it may require patience and faith, our Father in Heaven will help us—often in ways we cannot even imagine. ■

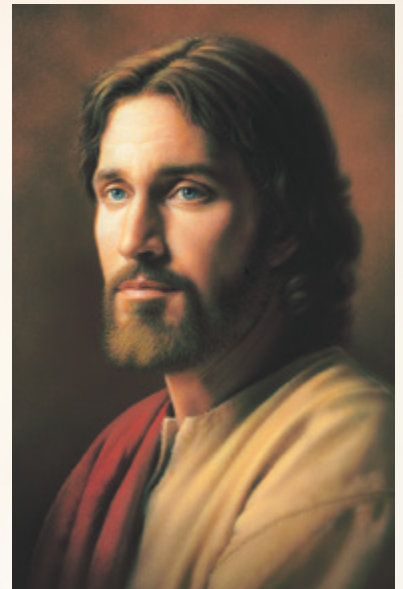
The author lives in Colorado, USA.



THE LORD KEEPS HIS PROMISES

"Throughout your life on earth, seek diligently to fulfill the fundamental purposes of this life *through the ideal family*. While you may not have yet reached that ideal, do all you can through obedience and faith in the Lord to consistently draw as close to it as you are able. Let nothing dissuade you from that objective. . . . Obtain all of the ordinances of the temple you can receive. If for the present, that does not include sealing in the temple to a righteous companion, live for it. Pray for it. Exercise faith that you will obtain it. Never do anything that would make you unworthy of it. If you have lost the vision of eternal marriage, rekindle it. If your dream requires patience, give it. As brothers, we prayed and worked for 30 years before our mother and our nonmember father were sealed in the temple. Don't become overanxious. Do the best you can. We cannot say whether that blessing will be obtained on this side of the veil or beyond it, but the Lord will keep His promises."

Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "First Things First," *Ensign*, May 2001, 7.



FOR MORE ON THIS TOPIC

To read more about meeting the challenges of interfaith marriages, visit [LDS.org](https://www.lds.org) and search for the following articles:

- Ernest Eberhard Jr., "How to Help Nonmembers in Your Own Family," *Ensign*, Oct. 1977, 63–65.
- Renon Klossner Hulet, "Partners in Everything but the Church," *Ensign*, July 1988, 48–50.
- "Questions and Answers: What are some ways I can strengthen myself and progress spiritually when my spouse is not supportive of my Church activity?" *Ensign*, Sept. 2008, 58–61.





REGAINING MY Covenants

I learned to hold dear my covenants after experiencing their loss through excommunication.

Name withheld

I was raised in the Church and baptized and confirmed at eight years old. The gospel was a way of life for me and for most of the people around me. The Holy Ghost was a very familiar presence in my life.

When I was excommunicated, I felt an almost tangible feeling leave me. I felt like my thinking process had been disrupted and slowed, and making decisions was confusing and difficult. I was anxious and had a hard time feeling peace.

I never realized how losing my membership would change my life completely. I could no longer wear the temple garment or attend the temple. I could not pay my tithing, serve in any calling, take the sacrament, or bear my testimony or pray in church. I no longer had the gift of the Holy Ghost. Most importantly, I was not in a covenant relationship with my Savior through the ordinances of baptism and the temple.

I was devastated and frightened. My three children were then 16, 14, and 12. They were my heritage, and I so badly wanted to leave them with an inheritance of hope. I sat them down and told them that if I should die before I could get rebaptized, I needed them to perform the ordinance again in my behalf as soon as it was allowed. I was frightened that I no longer had the blessings of keeping my baptismal covenants, and I worried that I might not be washed clean again.

My Journey Back

I never had any question that the Church was true and that the gospel was how I wanted to live my life, so I continued going to church. I wanted Heavenly Father to know that I loved Him and that I was so sorry for my actions. I went to church every week, even though it was very hard. The ward was uncomfortable with my being there, and only

a few people talked to me. However, one special young woman with Down syndrome named Holly was particularly loving. Every Sunday as I would walk into the chapel, she would run up to me, throw her arms around me, give me a big hug, and say, “It’s so good to see you! I love you!” I felt as if she were acting for the Savior, letting me know that He was happy I was there.

It was particularly difficult to have to let the sacrament pass by without being able to take it because I knew I was not receiving the blessings. Taking the sacrament is such a blessing. It is incredible to have the blessing of being made clean through the power of the Savior and His atoning sacrifice, to be forgiven of our sins and shortcomings week after week, and to recommit with love and faithfulness to the covenant we have made to always remember our Savior and keep His commandments.

Because paying my tithing was so important to me, I set up a bank account and put my tithing in it each month. I needed the Lord to know that even though He couldn’t take my tithing now, I still wanted to pay it. I was single at the time and raising my three teenage daughters, and I felt that I needed those blessings of showing the Lord my willingness to pay tithing, even though I couldn’t. I have no doubt we were extremely blessed because of it.

Blessings Restored

I was rebaptized a little over a year after my excommunication. What a relief it was to come up out of the water knowing that Jesus was now my advocate, my partner. He had paid for my sins, and I was again in a covenant relationship with Him. I was filled with gratitude!

I received the gift of the Holy Ghost again. I felt once again a tangible presence: my dear friend was back to stay! I wanted to try so hard not to offend Him again so that He wouldn’t have to leave me.

I closed out the account with my tithing in it, wrote the check, and excitedly gave it to my bishop.

Five years later I was able to have my temple blessings restored. I felt so relieved and grateful. Once again I was covered in love and protected with the power of the covenants I had made in the temple.

I am now sealed to a man who adores me, and I him, and together we are actively working to establish our sealing as a covenant relationship that will last through the eternities.

The Bondage of Guilt

In the 20 years since, I have sometimes felt a sense of deep guilt wash over me and cause me great unhappiness and worry. I wondered if I had done enough to repent and whether I was truly forgiven. As recently as just a few years ago, my feelings matched those of Alma the Younger, described in Alma 36:12–13:

“I was racked with eternal torment, for my soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree and racked with all my sins.

“Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell; yea, I saw that I had rebelled against my God, and that I had not kept his holy commandments.”

One day I knelt down in prayer and asked, “Father, have I done enough? I will do whatever I need to, to have this taken from me.” Then I waited and listened with my heart.

The answer came very clearly: “You have done enough.” I was overcome with pure joy. I couldn’t stop smiling, and happy tears flowed. All that day I found myself giddy with joy. All the shame and guilt were gone for good.

Again I reflected on the experience of Alma the Younger:



"I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

"And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!" (Alma 36:19–20).

My journey to regain my membership in the Church and my covenant relationship with the Savior was heart-wrenching and tender. I came out of this trial knowing that the Atonement of Jesus Christ is most precious. It has taken me almost all of these 20 years to get past the shame and guilt of my excommunication and to find the strength to share my experiences with others. I hope my experience inspires others to find courage to change and to reach out to those who want to change. I can stand and testify without a doubt that the Atonement of Christ is real. His power can change your life not only for the better but for the very best.

I love my membership in the Church dearly. It is a priceless gift and an incredible blessing in my life. I never want to be without it again. ■



THE WAY TO GREATER HAPPINESS

"Wherever you are on the path to inherit the gift of eternal life, you have the opportunity to show many people the way to greater happiness. When you choose whether to make or keep a covenant with God, you choose whether you will leave an inheritance of hope to those who might follow your example."

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, "A Priceless Heritage of Hope," *Ensign*, May 2014, 22.



We found that inviting Nikolai to live gospel principles was more effective than just telling him about them.

Many years ago, while working as a street vendor in a little town in Poland, I met a man named Nikolai Shaveko. We discovered that we both came from Chernigov, Ukraine, and quickly became friends.

Eventually I learned that Nikolai had no place to stay, so my wife and I invited him to stay with us. Our apartment wasn't very warm or comfortable, but we had an extra room. He gratefully agreed and stayed with us for a time. He began to see how we lived.

No Work on Sunday?

Like most vendors selling household goods, we needed to work long and hard to have enough money to live. But unlike most people, my wife and I didn't work Sundays. One day, Nikolai asked why. Why would we skip working and making money for an entire day?

"Sundays do not exist for working or making money," I told him. "They were made for a different purpose."

"But how can you afford to pay for food and rent if you don't work seven days a week?" he asked.

To answer his question, we invited him to come worship with us. That was his first experience hearing about the Church, and he didn't take to it right away. He still thought we were incredibly odd for choosing going to meetings over making money. But from that moment on,

SUNDAYS ARE FOR SOMETHING MORE

By Alexei Chemezov



we frequently talked to him about our beliefs, and little by little, he became more and more interested.

Try It, and You Will See

Nikolai saw us living what we knew to be true. He saw the blessings that came into our lives. Yes, it was hard to earn enough money to live, but we knew that it was right to keep the Sabbath day holy. And the Lord blessed us. We always had enough money for the things we needed. That strengthened our testimony of the principle and helped us be better witnesses to Nikolai. We had the conviction to invite him, “Try it, and you will see!”

One week, he did.

Instead of going to work, he came to church with us. He didn’t think it was possible to work only six days a week, but because of the hope and blessings he saw in our lives, he tried it.

That week, when he counted his money, he was surprised. He had made more money that week than he normally made by working seven days a week!

Try Tithing Too

The same thing happened when we talked about tithing. At first, Nikolai couldn’t understand how we could give up 10 percent of our income.

“I will never have enough to do that!” he insisted.

We just shrugged. “If you try it, you will see.”

He was incredulous, but then slowly smiled. “So it’s like not working on Sundays,” he said. “If you pay your tithing, you will have enough money for yourself and what you need.”

That was a big revelation for Nikolai. He learned for himself that if we follow God’s commandments, God will bless us and things will work out for our benefit.

When Nikolai returned home to Chernigov, he invited the missionaries to teach him and his family. Soon he and his family joined the Church. Later, Nikolai served as a branch president, and his daughter served a mission in Russia.

We loved talking to Nikolai about the Church, but in the end, *inviting* him to live the principles of the gospel was more powerful than simply telling him about them. He and his family gained testimonies and changed their lives because they chose to live gospel truths. ■

The author lives in L’viv, Ukraine.



COME AND SEE

“We [invite] you to hear the restored truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ so you can study, ponder, pray, and come to know for yourself if the things we are sharing with you are true.

“ . . . Just as Jesus beckoned two of His disciples to ‘come and see’ (John 1:39), so we urge you to come and see if the restored gospel of Jesus Christ enlarges and enriches that which you already believe to be true.”

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Come and See,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 107.





**By Elder
Richard J. Maynes**

Of the Presidency
of the Seventy

The First Vision

KEY TO TRUTH

*Let us not forget or take for granted the many precious truths
we have learned from Joseph Smith's First Vision.*

The Restoration of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the latter days was foreseen and predicted by prophets throughout history. The Restoration, therefore, should not come as a surprise to those who study the scriptures. Dozens of prophetic statements throughout the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Book of Mormon clearly predict and point toward the Restoration of the gospel.¹

In the late 1790s, approximately 2,400 years after King Nebuchadnezzar saw in a dream that “the God of heaven [shall] set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed” (Daniel 2:44), a decades-long series of religious revivals

began in the United States. These revivals are known by historians as part of the Second Great Awakening. It was through these revival meetings’ competing notions of salvation that Joseph Smith and his family navigated their religious commitment.

Joseph was greatly influenced by the teachings and discussions of his father, who searched for but could not find among the revivalist sects any that were organized like the ancient order of Jesus Christ and His Apostles. Joseph would listen and ponder during family Bible study. By the age of 12, he began to worry about his sins and the welfare of his immortal soul, which led him to search the scriptures for himself.



As Joseph Smith searched the scriptures, he decided to “do as James directs, that is, ask of God.”

As he searched, he decided to “do as James directs, that is, ask of God” (Joseph Smith—History 1:13; see also James 1:5). The subsequent appearance of God the Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to Joseph ushered in the dispensation of the fulness of times.

Four Accounts

The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote or dictated four known accounts of his First Vision. Additionally, his contemporaries recorded their memories of what they heard Joseph say about the vision; five such accounts are known. It is a blessing to have these records. They make Joseph’s First Vision the best-documented vision in history. I encourage you to visit history.lds.org to learn more about the accounts and see how they work together to paint a more complete picture.

The Gospel Topics essay “First Vision Accounts” states: “The various accounts of the First Vision tell a consistent story, though

naturally they differ in emphasis and detail. Historians expect that when an individual retells an experience in multiple settings to different audiences over many years, each account will emphasize various aspects of the experience and contain unique details. Indeed, differences similar to those in the First Vision accounts exist in the multiple scriptural accounts of Paul’s vision on the road to Damascus and the Apostles’ experience on the Mount of Transfiguration. Yet despite the differences, a basic consistency remains across all the accounts of the First Vision. Some have mistakenly argued that any variation in the retelling of the story is evidence of fabrication. To the contrary, the rich historical record enables us to learn more about this remarkable event than we could if it were less well documented.”²

1832 Account

First, the 1832 account is the earliest detailed written account of the First Vision. It is part of a six-page autobiography, most of which is in Joseph’s hand. This document has been in the Church’s possession since it was written. After the pioneers’ trek West, it remained packed in a trunk for several years and was generally unknown until it was published in a master’s thesis in 1965.³ It has since been published repeatedly, including on LDS.org and in *The Joseph Smith Papers*.

In this document, Joseph relates distress at not knowing where to find the Savior’s forgiveness. He testifies, “The Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord.”⁴ Some have interpreted this statement to mean that Joseph referred to the appearance of only one divine being, but when read in light of the other documents, this phrase can be

understood to mean that God the Father opened the heavens and revealed His Son, Jesus Christ, to Joseph.

This account beautifully emphasizes the Savior's Atonement and the personal redemption He offered to Joseph. It says, in part: "The Lord . . . spake unto me saying, 'Joseph my son thy sins are forgiven thee. . . . I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have eternal life.'" Joseph testified that he experienced joy and love but could find no one who believed. "My soul was filled with love and for many days I could rejoice with great joy and the Lord was with me, but [I] could find none that would believe the heavenly vision. Nevertheless, I pondered these things in my heart."⁵

1835 Account

Next, the 1835 account is Joseph's description of his vision to Robert Matthews, a visitor to Kirtland, Ohio, in 1835. It was recorded in Joseph's journal by his scribe. It was not included in early editions of Joseph's history and was first published in *BYU Studies* in the 1960s. In this account, Joseph testifies that God appeared to him first, and then he saw the Savior as well: "I called on the Lord in mighty prayer. A pillar of fire appeared above my head; it presently rested down upon me and filled me with joy unspeakable. A personage appeared in the midst of this pillar of flame, which was spread all around and yet nothing consumed. Another personage soon appeared like unto the first. He said unto me, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.'" In this account, Joseph also noted, "I saw many angels in this vision."⁶

1838 Account

The 1838 account is the best-known account and comes from Joseph's Manuscript History. The first draft was written after Joseph fled Kirtland early in 1838, and the second draft was prepared shortly after his escape from Missouri in 1839. So it was written in the context of great opposition. It was first published in 1842 in the *Times and Seasons*, the Church's newspaper in Nauvoo, Illinois. It was also included in the Pearl of Great Price in 1851, which was originally a pamphlet for British Saints. It was canonized as scripture in 1880.

Multiple drafts of this account have been published in

The Joseph Smith Papers. Like the 1835 account, the central question of this account is which church is right. As a history of the Church, and not just of Joseph, this account "focuses on the vision as the beginning of the 'rise and progress of the Church.'"⁷ Therefore, it doesn't include the information about the personal forgiveness mentioned in the previous two accounts.

1842 Account

And finally, the 1842 account is in response to a request for information from John Wentworth, the editor of the *Chicago Democrat*. Joseph wrote him a letter that included not only the Articles of Faith but also a description of his First Vision. The letter was published in the *Times and Seasons* in 1842. With Joseph's permission, it was published again in 1844 by historian Israel Daniel Rupp in his book about Christian denominations in the United States.⁸ This account was intended for an audience unfamiliar with Mormon beliefs. It was written during a welcomed lull in the opposition the Prophet faced.

As with other accounts, Joseph noted the confusion he had experienced and the appearance of two personages in answer to his prayer: "I was enwrapped in a heavenly vision and saw two glorious personages who exactly resembled each other in features, and likeness, surrounded with a brilliant light which eclipsed the sun at noon-day. They told me that all religious denominations were believing in incorrect doctrines, and that none of them was acknowledged of God as his church and kingdom. And I was expressly commanded to 'go not after them,' at the same time receiving a promise that the fulness of the gospel should at some future time be made known unto me."⁹

It is a blessing to have these accounts of Joseph's First Vision. Like the individual New Testament Gospels that together more completely describe Christ's life and ministry, each of the accounts describing Joseph's First Vision adds unique detail and perspective to the total experience. Together they tell Joseph's consistent, harmonious story. They all emphasize that there was confusion and strife among Christian churches; that Joseph desired to know

which, if any, was right; that he searched the scriptures and prayed; that a light descended from heaven; and that divine beings appeared and answered his prayer.

“I Could Not Deny It”

The canonized 1838 version of Joseph Smith’s account of the First Vision is the most powerful learning experience anyone on earth could have. This experience changed Joseph’s life, it has changed my life, and I know it has or will change your life as you go to the Lord for confirmation of its reality.

As stated in the document “First Vision Accounts,” found on [LDS.org](https://www.lds.org): “Joseph Smith testified repeatedly that he experienced a remarkable vision of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Neither the truth of the First Vision nor the arguments against it can be proven by historical research alone. Knowing the truth of Joseph Smith’s testimony requires each earnest seeker of truth to study the record and then exercise sufficient faith in Christ to ask God in sincere, humble prayer whether the record is true. If the seeker asks with real intent to act upon the answer revealed by the Holy Ghost, the truthfulness of Joseph Smith’s vision will be manifest. In this way, every person can know that Joseph Smith spoke honestly when he declared, ‘I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it’ [Joseph Smith—History 1:25].”

According to President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918), “The greatest event that has ever occurred in the world, since the resurrection of the Son of God from the tomb and his ascension on high, was the coming of the Father and of the Son to that boy Joseph Smith.”¹⁰

Truths from the First Vision

It is an amazing and enlightening experience to analyze what we learn from this sacred, awe-inspiring experience. I would like to share a sampling of truths we learn from Joseph Smith’s First Vision regarding the eternal nature of our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ; the reality of Satan; the struggle between good and evil; and other important aspects of the great plan of salvation.

We learn that the scriptures are true and can be taken literally and applied in our lives.

We learn that pondering the scriptures brings power and insight.

We learn that knowledge alone isn’t enough; acting on what we know results in God’s blessings.

We learn to put our trust in God and look to Him for answers to life’s most important questions and not to put our trust in man.

We learn that prayers are answered according to our unwavering faith and according to Heavenly Father’s will.

We learn the reality of Satan’s existence and that he has actual power to influence the physical world, including us.

We learn that Satan’s power is limited and superseded by God’s power.

We learn that Satan will stop at nothing to destroy the work of God and that Satan must have known the



importance of Joseph Smith in his role as the prophet of the Restoration.

We learn that we can overcome Satan by calling upon God and putting our complete faith and trust in Him.

We learn that where there is light, darkness must depart.

We learn that God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, are two separate and distinct beings, resembling each other in features and likeness.

We learn that we are created in God's image.

We learn that Christ is risen.

We learn that God knows us personally and is aware of our needs and concerns. He called Joseph by name.

We learn of the relationship between the Father and the Son. Jesus defers to His Father, and the Father communicates with mortals here upon the earth through His Son.

We learn that Jesus Christ is beloved of His Father by the Father's designating Jesus as His Beloved Son.

We learn that the true Church of Jesus Christ as He originally organized it was not found upon the earth at the time of Joseph Smith, confirming the reality of the Great Apostasy foretold by Paul the Apostle.

We learn that when we care enough to desire God's input in our life, He will reveal a refining course for us. At Joseph's time all the denominations and sects were wrong.

We learn that every dispensation of time receives the visions, blessings, and glories of God.

We learn insight into how God chooses His prophets.

We learn that God chooses the pure in heart who are righteous and have righteous

desires to do His work, confirming the teaching from the Bible that God looks upon the heart and does not choose based on outward appearance or social status or standing (see 1 Samuel 16:7).

Joseph Smith's First Vision is the key to unlocking many truths that had been hidden for centuries. Let us not forget or take for granted the many precious truths we have learned from the First Vision. ■

From a worldwide devotional for young adults, "The Truth Restored," delivered at the Salt Lake Tabernacle on May 1, 2016; for the full text and video, go to lds.org/broadcasts. The full text of the four accounts of the First Vision can be found at history.lds.org/firstvision.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Deuteronomy 4:27–31; Isaiah 60–62; Jeremiah 30–33; Ezekiel 37:15–28; Amos 9:11; Malachi 3:1; Matthew 17:11; Mark 9:12; Acts 3:19–21; Romans 11:25–27; Ephesians 1:9–10; 2 Thessalonians 2:1–3; Revelation 14:6; 1 Nephi 13:34–42; 2 Nephi 26:14–17; Jacob 6:1–4; 3 Nephi 21.
2. "First Vision Accounts," Gospel Topics, topics.lds.org.
3. See Paul R. Cheesman, "An Analysis of the Accounts Relating Joseph Smith's Early Visions" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1965), 126–32, scholarsarchive.byu.edu.
4. Joseph Smith, in *Histories, Volume 1: Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844*, vol. 1 of the Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (2012), 12–13; spelling, punctuation, and capitalization modernized; see also Dean C. Jessee, "The Earliest Documented Accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision," in John W. Welch and Erick B. Carlson, eds., *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844* (2005), 1–34; "First Vision Accounts," Gospel Topics, topics.lds.org.
5. See Joseph Smith, in *Histories, Volume 1: Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844*, 12–13; spelling, punctuation, and capitalization modernized; see also "First Vision Accounts," Gospel Topics, topics.lds.org.
6. See Joseph Smith, in *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, vol. 1 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (2008), 88; spelling, punctuation, and capitalization modernized; see also "First Vision Accounts," Gospel Topics, topics.lds.org.
7. "First Vision Accounts," Gospel Topics, topics.lds.org.
8. See I. Daniel Rupp, *He Pasa Ekklesia: An Original History of the Religious Denominations at Present Existing in the United States* (1844), 404–10.
9. Joseph Smith, in *Histories, Volume 1: Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844*, 494; see also "First Vision Accounts," Gospel Topics, topics.lds.org.
10. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 14.



WHAT JOSEPH LEARNED

"Joseph Smith learned in those minutes [of the First Vision], however long or brief, more about the nature of God than all of the learned divines of all time had ever learned."

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), "Inspirational Thoughts," *Ensign*, Aug. 1997, 3.

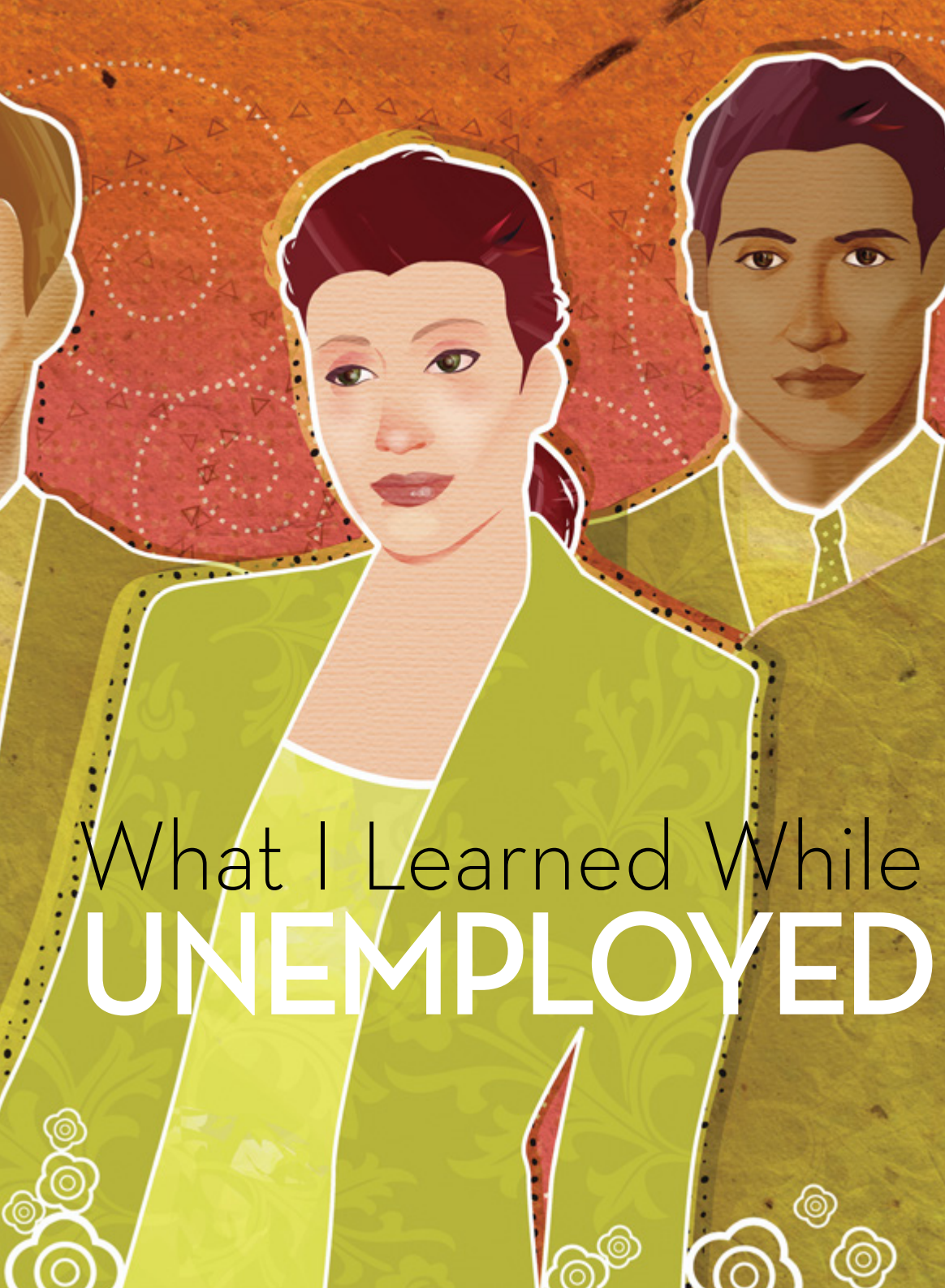


By Paul Johnson

In February 2012, after 36 years of steady service for two different employers in industrial distribution, I became unemployed due to a significant downturn in sales. It was not unexpected. As part of the management team, I understood the trends. But we had made a successful run during the

preceding 16 years and had been awarded several lucrative projects that kept the commerce going during slow times. I was blessed to have been compensated well during these good times and even more blessed to have a spouse who knew how to put aside some savings in preparation for a rainy day.

ILLUSTRATION BY HUAN TRAN/GETTY IMAGES



In a year of unemployment, I couldn't seem to find a job, but I found something more valuable.

What I Learned While **UNEMPLOYED**

Our First Steps

My wife and I immediately took inventory of all of our resources and had a meeting with our bishop, who graciously volunteered to assist wherever we thought it might be helpful. I reassured our bishop that I was confident in my ability to secure another

position with a different firm in a few weeks or, at the most, within a month or two.

In addition to beginning my search for a new job, I promptly applied for state unemployment compensation, and we got our two children (ages 12 and 6) on a state health insurance plan. We cut out nonessential

My inspired bishop encouraged me to increase my reading of the scriptures and promised me strength and blessings from doing so.

expenses and reduced our life insurance plan to give us a break from making premium payments.

My wife, who has a master's degree in accounting, began to search for jobs as well. We soon started to secure interviews; however, for one reason or another, the positions we applied for just did not work out. I thought it was a matter of the jobs not being right according to Heavenly Father's plan for us. We fasted, prayed, attended the temple, and did all the things we thought would help us to secure guidance from the Lord.

A Test of Patience

Days quickly turned into weeks, and weeks turned into months. It soon became easy to be disappointed and get discouraged. One day my wife placed a note on the mirror in our bathroom for us to read daily: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5–6). She further explained that when we prayed, we needed to make sure we let God know that we were willing to do whatever He had in store for us, according to His will. This gave me a new outlook, and I was even more determined to attempt to help accomplish God's will for us.

My personal scripture study time and intensity reached an all-time high. One day I read in the Book of Mormon, "And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you" (3 Nephi 18:20). Surely the Lord wanted me to be able to provide for my family; it seemed that all I needed to do was mention details, and my prayers would be answered. However, I did not take into consideration that this scripture has a qualifying phrase—"which is right." I later realized that even though I was being specific, my prayers still had to be right according to God. I was still trying to force my own will upon Him.

These experiences tested my patience, a virtue I didn't feel I previously possessed. After nearly seven months without work, I felt like I was getting nowhere. In my



discouragement, I began to let some things slide. I complained about how human resources departments were filled with employees in their early 20s who were making poor management decisions, and I was sure that my job applications were being put into piles with hundreds of others. I felt like the chances of having my application viewed were like winning the lottery. Networking was not effective either. I hit a low point.

An Inspired Bishop

About this time, my bishop, who is incredibly in tune with the Holy Ghost, called me into his office and asked me how I was doing. I confessed that I had been struggling and that I had let go of my daily scripture reading. Showing forth an increase of love toward me, he gently and persuasively encouraged me to increase my reading of the scriptures and promised me strength and blessings from doing so.

As I followed the advice of my bishop, I began to discover additional blessings flowing into my life from areas I had never considered previously. The brethren in my priesthood quorum had been providing love and emotional support in ways that I had never imagined. Additional job interviews gave me hope for employment and helped me be optimistic.

In November my ever-sensitive bishop caught me in the hall between Sunday meetings and told me he felt inspired to inform the brethren in priesthood meeting that three or four of our quorum members needed employment. I consented and thought it might help. During his comments, the bishop mentioned some skills of those in need. As a result, I received four or five leads for employment. I followed up on all of the opportunities. These leads and the hope that came from them kept me going.

Still several more weeks passed. Almost daily I would feel a panic attack coming on, and I would begin to feel emotionally weighed down. Only persistent prayer helped me through these perilous times. My prayers included expressions of gratitude for the strength that allowed me to continue to move ahead according to my Father's will and pleas for the ability to endure. I continued to serve others to the best of my ability in my callings and wherever else I was asked.

Strength from the Book of Mormon

Again turning to the Book of Mormon for strength, I read where Alma and Amulek struggled while attempting to teach the people in Ammonihah. They were bound and cast into prison. I realized that they were delivered from bondage according to their faith in Jesus Christ, and this helped me to apply this same concept in becoming free from the overwhelming burden of not being able to provide for my family. I applied the words of Alma to myself: "How long shall [I] suffer these great afflictions, O Lord? O Lord, give [me] strength according to [my] faith which is in Christ, even unto deliverance [from unemployment]. And [I] broke the cords with which [I was] bound" (Alma 14:26).

I also tried to apply other virtues Alma spoke of:

"I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long-suffering; being temperate in all things; being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times; asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal; always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive.

"And see that you have faith, hope, and charity, and then ye will always abound in good works" (Alma 7:23–24).

Such principles became a standard in my life.

Near my one-year mark of unemployment, my wife secured a position with a firm that allowed her the freedom of working online from home most of the time. After 14 months of unemployment, I secured a management position in our area in which I could use my best skill set.

Our Many Blessings

Every day I count my many blessings, naming them in my prayers. My loving wife has been compassionate and supportive during the process of job hunting, always encouraging me to stay close to our Heavenly Father. Our home teachers have been encouraging and loving in ways I could not have predicted. My priesthood leader, a physician, actually made house calls when an infection set in my leg, offering professional counsel and showing genuine charity toward me. The kindness, benevolence, and understanding from many families in our ward have been beyond belief and have kept me going when I could not have moved forward otherwise. With my bishop's assistance, I was able to keep my hopes up and be optimistic for success.

I am most grateful for the pure love of Jesus Christ and the knowledge that He knows "according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:12). He certainly has comforted, supported, and strengthened me in my need. ■

The author lives in Washington, USA.

Visit LDSjobs.org for help in finding work. Additional information is available at srs.lds.org and facebook.com/selfrelianceservices.



Learn how the *Friend* magazine can help your family understand a different sensitive topic each month.

CARING FOR OUR BODIES

There are many opinions in the world about what it means to live a healthy life. Let's make sure our children are equipped with a basic understanding of how precious their bodies are and a gospel-centered view of how to care for them. An important part of that discussion could include talking about abuse—what it is, how to protect themselves from it, and what to do if someone hurts them in any way. If you're not quite sure how to start these conversations, don't panic! This month's *Friend* can help.

“Martin’s Choice” (page 8)

This article tells about a boy in Kenya who decides not to drink tea even though his friends are doing it. What Word of Wisdom challenges are common where you live? How can you help each other make healthy choices as a family? Two other items in the June *Friend* also feature healthy-living habits: “Ready to Rest” (page 34) and “Running with Dad” (page 36).



“Tickling Trouble” (page 22)

In this story, a brother and sister learn to respect the bodies of other people—and to pay special attention if someone says, “No!” You could use this story to start a conversation about what is appropriate touch, and how it's OK

to stand up for yourself if you are being touched in a way you don't like or a way you have been taught is wrong.

“Healthy from Head to Toe” (page 24)

These pages use the idea of “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes” (*Children's Songbook*, 275) to guide kids through different aspects of good health—including emotional well-being, sleep, nutrition, dental hygiene, exercise, respect, and being safe from abuse. You could review this for family home evening and play some of the games in the exercise section.

Find stories, activities, and media about other gospel topics at lessonhelps.lds.org. For past *Friend* Connection articles, visit FriendConnection.lds.org.



SCRIPTURE SUPPORT

- The Word of Wisdom (D&C 89): Review the revelation given to Joseph Smith. How has following these guidelines blessed your life?
- Teachings of the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 6:19–20): Our bodies are beautiful gifts from Heavenly Father. How can we treat our bodies like we would a temple?
- Promised blessings (Mosiah 2:41): Explain that God cares about us temporally—or physically—just like He cares about us spiritually. Keeping His commandments will help us stay safe in this life and receive blessings in the life to come.



TEACHING THE PROCLAMATION TO CHILDREN

Each month, we'll give you tips for talking with your children about a portion of "The Family: A Proclamation to the World."¹

This Month's Selection

"The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally."



...God as their Eternal Father...
...by which His children could obtain a peace...
...body and gain earthly experience to progress toward per...
...fection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of...
...eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family...
...relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred...
...ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it...
...possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and...
...for families to be united eternally.

How to Explain This to Children

Because we know about Heavenly Father's plan, we know we can be a family even after we die. In the temple, we make promises with Heavenly Father and learn how to be obedient. We can also be sealed as a family in the temple, which means that if we are faithful, we can live with Heavenly Father and our families forever.

Activity Idea

Hang a picture of a temple somewhere in your home—cut a picture out of the Church magazines or draw a temple if you wish. Look at the picture as a family and talk about what you can do to live together with Heavenly Father someday. If you haven't already been sealed as a family, make a plan to get to the temple. If your family has been sealed, share your testimony of what happened on that special day, and set goals to continue making faithful choices. Visit FamilySearch.org and learn more about family members who have died. Talk about meeting them again someday. Are there any family members who need temple ordinances done?

NOTE

1. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.



Find other teaching tips and a copy of the family proclamation at ProclamationKids.lds.org.

LEADING OURSELVES BACK TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

By Miriah Ikemiyashiro

Reading my old journal taught me about the importance of recording spiritual impressions.

I have always been an avid journal keeper. I have diligently written the comings and goings of my days since I was 13 years old. I knew that Church leaders had encouraged us to keep a journal, but every once in a while I wondered why I was doing it. My life was so simple and common compared with the glamorous and impressive lives of those I usually read about. I didn't really see how my words and thoughts could ever inspire or be of interest to anyone. However, writing has always been my outlet, a time to ponder and articulate my thoughts and feelings, so despite my doubts about their significance, I continued to write.

Then life became hectic with marriage, a move across the country, schooling, and a new baby. I didn't have much time to ponder or write in my journal. Every day seemed like a struggle I didn't have energy for. I felt like I had somehow lost my spirituality and could no longer hear or feel the Holy Ghost regularly, even though I was reading the scriptures and attending my Church meetings.

One night I dug through a closet, looking for an old journal that had my patriarchal blessing folded up inside of it, hoping that it would give me some answers. I found the journal I was looking for and reread my patriarchal blessing. I also read through my journal entries and some miscellaneous papers included with the journal, remembering the things I'd recorded, reliving moments of pain and joy, of utter confusion, and some of complete clarity.

As I read of my past, I found answers to the present. I realized that nearly every entry included a scripture or spiritual thought, along with the daily happenings of my life. I was sorry to realize that my more recent journals had large gaps between entries, and nearly all of them were about people and events but didn't go any deeper. The core of my existence, why I choose to do the things I do, was missing. The Lord was missing from my journal and thus, to a point, from my life. Reading my past journal entries redirected my perspective and brought about a change of heart.

Even though I was attending church and reading the scriptures, my journal entries showed that my heart was not centered on the right things. I desired to return to being the woman I used to be when I wrote in those earlier journals. I made a goal to start writing in my journal regularly again and to make sure to include any spiritual impressions or thoughts that came to me. In only a week's time I could feel a significant difference in my demeanor and in my home. I began to feel more often an atmosphere of peace and guidance.

Sometimes the changes we make are so slow and subtle that we don't even recognize what we're losing until it's gone. I am grateful to have written diligently in my journal, not knowing why or how it would ever help. It turns out that it did help. I helped my future self bring the spirit of Christ back into my life and home.

I have a testimony that our simple thoughts and lives do matter, that our recorded words can make a difference. By small and simple means, great things can come to pass (see Alma 37:6). Sometimes we are our own greatest example. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.





MAKE A GOAL TO KEEP A JOURNAL

Do you want to keep a journal but don't know where to start? Consider one or more of the following ways to document your life and testimony:



- Keep a traditional written journal.



- Use a journal app.



- Keep an audio journal with a digital recorder.



- Keep a gratitude journal.



- Make a photo journal, complete with captions.



- Use your social media account to document your experiences.

AS APPROPRIATE, SHARE YOUR JOURNAL (OR AN ANCESTOR'S JOURNAL) ONLINE:



Go to [FamilySearch.org](https://familysearch.org) and click "Memories."



Memories



Upload your journal or one written by an ancestor.

FOR ADDITIONAL IDEAS, SEE:

- Tara Walker, "Keeping a Journal Your Way," *Ensign*, July 2014, 22–25.
- Ellen Bahr, "How One Man Writes His Personal History—Three Words at a Time," lds.org/go/wordsE617.
- "Share #52Stories from Your Personal History This Year," lds.org/go/storiesE617.



PRESERVE THE MEMORIES

"Tonight, and tomorrow night, you might pray and ponder, asking the questions: Did God send a

message that was just for me? Did I see His hand in my life or the lives of my children? I will do that. And then I will find a way to preserve that memory for the day that I, and those that I love, will need to remember how much God loves us and how much we need Him."

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, "O Remember, Remember," *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 69.

Mikael is a physician scientist. His clinical specialty is in neuro-oncology, and he has a PhD in molecular biology. He sees patients with brain tumors at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Harvard University's cancer hospital, and he does research in the development of cancer drugs.

LESLIE NILSSON, PHOTOGRAPHER

Mikael Rinne

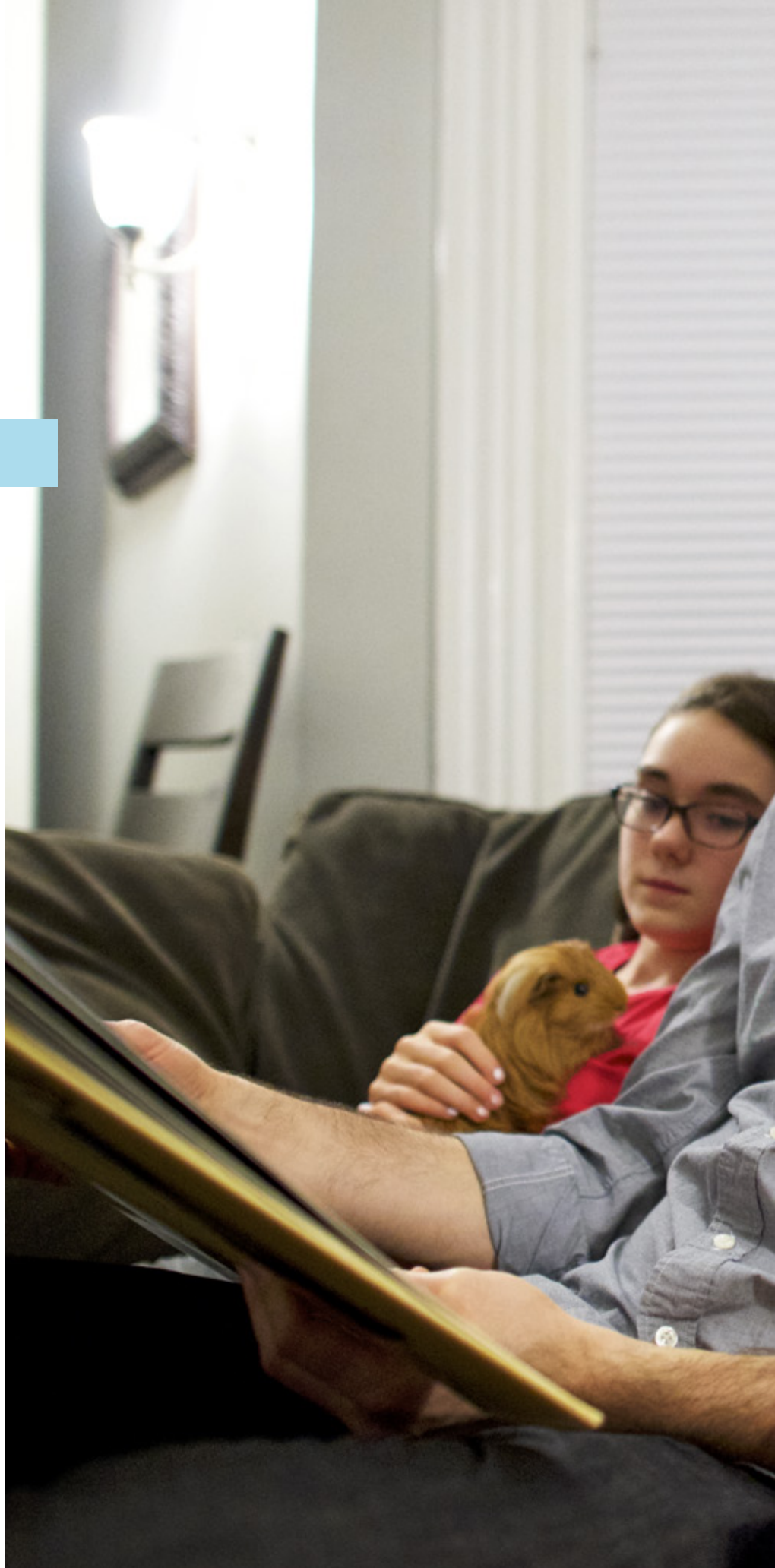
Massachusetts, USA

There's a myth that faith and science are in conflict. We're given the impression that science has all the answers, that we've "figured it all out." But there's far more that we don't know than we do know.

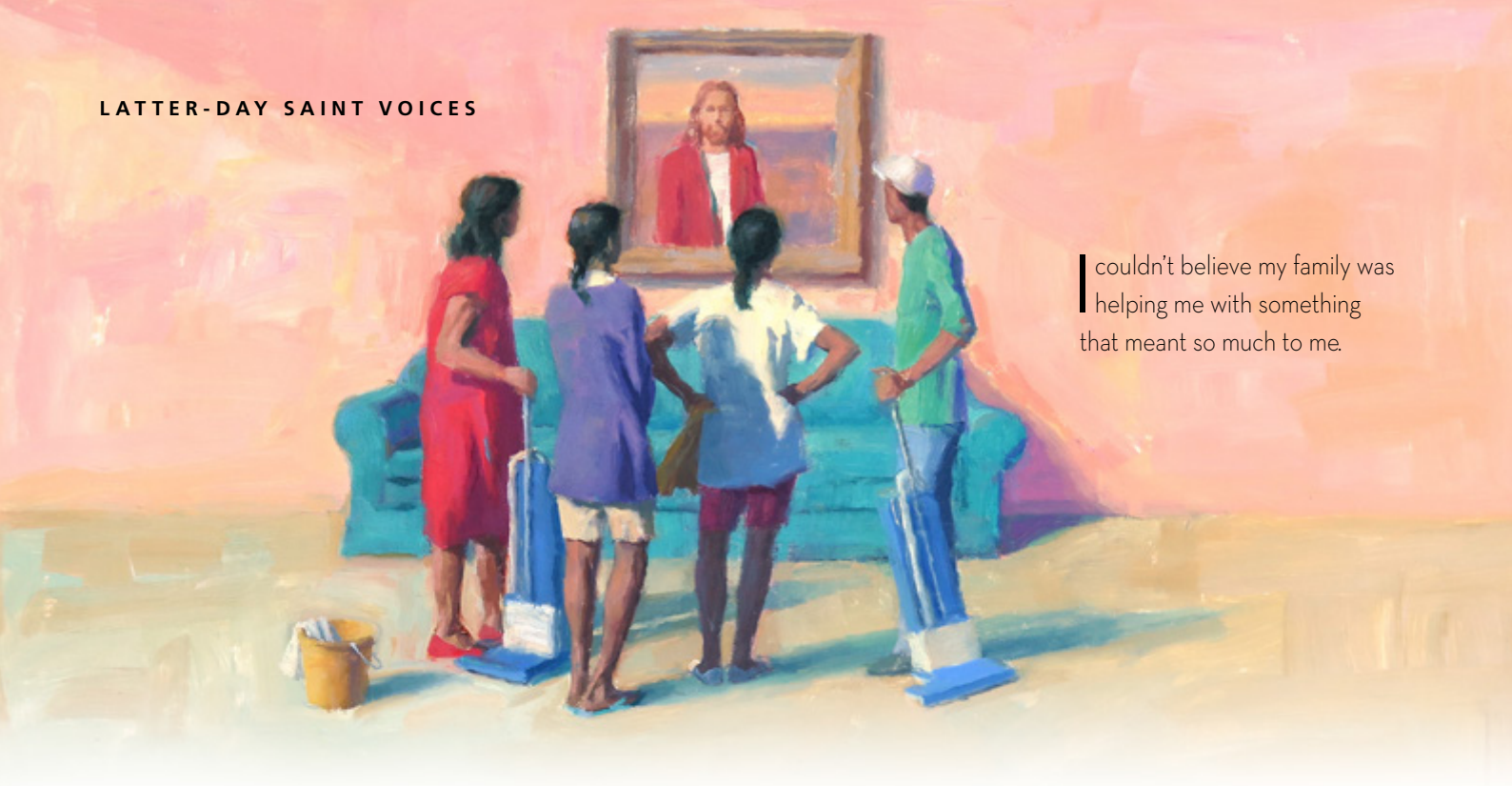
As a bishop, I see members with crises of faith. They come to me and say, "I think more scientifically, so I have a really hard time with faith." It helps some of them who have doubts to know that their bishop is a Harvard scientist who believes in God. That helps them realize, "I can believe but also be intellectual."

Read more of Mikael's story in the *Ensign* online at lds.org/go/portraitsE617.

Read "Science and Our Search for Truth" in the July 2016 *New Era* at lds.org/go/scienceE617.







I couldn't believe my family was helping me with something that meant so much to me.

CHURCH CLEANING AND GOSPEL TEACHING

On a Saturday afternoon, I was getting ready to go to the beach with my family. They had traveled from Amazonas to La Guaira to spend a few days with me. The sun was bright, the ocean breezes were perfect, and I was happy to see my sisters' excitement.

Once we were on the road, I remembered that I was in charge of cleaning the church building that day. I now had a choice to make: Should I fulfill my responsibility or continue to the beach with my family? I decided to talk to my mom and sisters about it. They had never been inside an LDS church and enthusiastically offered to help me clean, as long as we headed right to the beach when we finished.

When we entered the church, I explained what needed to be done and how to do it. What we thought would be a quick cleaning job ended up taking four hours because they

were so interested! I showed my family each room, the paintings, and the baptismal font. An immense joy filled my heart. I couldn't believe my family was helping me with something that meant so much to me. While we were there, my teenage sisters, Thalia and Gineska, learned some hymns and asked me questions about the Church. On Sunday my family attended church for the first time. They were well received in the ward. The young women quickly welcomed my sisters. The sister missionaries met them and set an appointment to meet with them the next day. We held family home evening, and I taught them how to pray. We prayed together often. We also listened to hymns and watched Church videos.

Before my family returned home, I took my sisters to Caracas to see the temple and its grounds. I bore my

testimony of temple blessings and encouraged them to find the Church when they returned to Amazonas.

When they left for home, I contacted the missionaries in their area. The missionaries and members of the ward council visited my family and helped them on their way to conversion. My sisters prayed often for our father to give them permission to be baptized.

With great gratitude and joy, I traveled to Amazonas to baptize Thalia and Gineska. The glow in their eyes reflected their hope and their gratitude to Heavenly Father for leading them to the gospel. Through fulfilling an assignment to clean the church, my family came closer together and was strengthened. I will never forget this experience and I know my sisters will not either. ■

Armando Córcega, La Guaira, Venezuela

CHRISTLIKE MOTHERING

I swept pretzels, cereal, popcorn, and chips into a pile.

"Nope. I didn't eat any of these things," I said as I brushed them into a dustpan.

My husband, sitting at the table, said quietly, "It's the mother's sacrifice."

I straightened up. "What?" I asked.

He spoke louder and clearer between bites of breakfast: "It's what mothers do. They spend their lives cleaning up messes that they had no hand in making—just like the Savior did."

This observation was profound to me. I should have been pleased to consider that sweeping crumbs was more Christlike than I had thought. But instead, I felt a wave of guilt. I felt uncomfortable with the comparison. How many times had I mentioned to my spouse or simply to myself all the things I had done for my children, hoping for recognition and gratitude?

My husband, sitting at the table, said quietly, "It's the mother's sacrifice."

It didn't seem wrong to desire that my children be more grateful, but in that moment of clarity, I saw that my desire was more about *me* receiving praise or compensation than it was about them learning gratitude. But the Savior never required praise. He never asked for it or wanted it.

I can recall conversations with my teenage children when they would list all the things they had done for me in an attempt to get out of a work request.

I would usually reply, "Well, if you'd like to compare service lists, we can, but you'd lose, so get to work!"

I then realized my motives were rarely pure enough for the comparison my husband had made. The Savior never keeps a list to compare what He's done to what I've done. I would lose every time.

With the broom still in my hand, I awoke to a new concept of mothering—mothering as *He* would. Not for

praise, recognition, a hug, or even a thank-you. I would sweep up crumbs with love because that is what He would do.

Everything He did was in obedience to His Father. It was never about Him. The Lord always mends the broken and cleans up our messes infinitely with perfect love, for His Father and for us. I will now strive to teach and serve my children with the purest love I can. Only then do I feel like I am truly participating in Christlike mothering. ■

Rachel Hixon,
Arizona, USA





We heard a faint voice calling to us from the compound. We looked over the fence and saw a man lying on the cement.

A BLESSING FOR A STRANGER

Years after my family and I joined the Church, I received a call to serve in the Nigeria Port Harcourt Mission. On a sunny day shortly after I arrived in my first area, my companion and I set out for our usual proselyting and contacting.

As we passed through a populated street, we heard a faint voice calling to us from a low-fenced compound. We looked over the fence and saw a middle-aged man lying flat on his stomach by the gate.

He bade us come in, but there was no way we could enter the compound. The gate was locked and we thought that scaling over the fence would be unethical. I was prompted to check the padlock on the gate again. After a few minutes we managed to remove the padlock from the outside and open the gate. We could see that the man had been sick and unattended to. He explained that he

had been ill and felt intense pain that prevented him from standing up.

After talking with him, we followed him as he crept back into his house. He asked that we pray for him, and we offered to give him a blessing. When we laid our hands upon his head, I felt a lump in my throat and couldn't utter a word. Fear came over me, I began to shake and sweat, and tears flowed down my cheeks. I struggled to pray aloud, so I began to pray in my heart that Heavenly Father would loosen my tongue according to His will.

Suddenly, my tongue gained utterance. I knew I was speaking, but I wasn't in control of the words. I just heard my own voice asking Heavenly Father to heal this suffering man. Before we said amen, the man had fallen asleep. We left him and went to our other appointments but planned to come back on our way to our apartment to check on him.

We returned and to my great astonishment, the man came running toward us, shouting, "It worked! It worked!" We were so overwhelmed with joy I couldn't hold back my tears.

In sacrament meeting the following Sunday, the bishop suddenly paused at the pulpit and looked straight at the chapel door. We looked back and saw the man we had blessed. The bishop knew him and was surprised at his entering a church. From then on, the man attended sacrament meetings and other classes regularly. I was eventually transferred out of the area.

It is amazing to me how God provided a miracle that day, and I am humbled that Heavenly Father found me worthy. I know we were instruments in God's hands. The blessing of healing belonged to that man, but the blessing of testimony and joy belonged to me. ■

Stanley Olaye, Lagos, Nigeria

FASTING FOR HELP AT WORK

After faithfully serving a mission in Mozambique, I returned home and, like many other returned missionaries, quickly turned to my studies and work.

I lived in Brazil in a city that borders Paraguay and found employment importing products for a large supermarket on the Paraguayan side. The blessing of having learned English on my mission helped me gain this position. During this time, I was married and blessed with a daughter.

When a financial crisis in Brazil culminated in the decline of Brazil's currency, my work was directly affected. It caused a decline in the sales of the products I regularly imported. By the end of February the following year, I was left with

practically nothing to do. Losing my job was almost certain, as had been the case with other colleagues. I became worried about supporting my wife and little daughter. I even started looking for another job.

I spoke with my wife about the situation. She suggested that we fast. While we fasted, peace enveloped our hearts and we felt that all would be well, although I could not imagine how.

The following day at work, my manager called me in. I thought that the dreaded moment had come—I was about to lose my job. But to my surprise, my manager told me that he had an idea. Because I had ability with English, he proposed that I translate legal documents that normally were

handed over to lawyers to arrange for translation. He told me if I succeeded in performing the translation, I would be given that task and it would result in a savings for the department. I immediately began translating the documents. When I presented my manager the successful translations, he was thrilled! I was thrilled too because I was able to remain employed.

When I went to receive my check, which could have been my last, I was surprised to see that my salary had increased. My heart was touched, and I was grateful to our Heavenly Father. Through this experience I know that fasting opens the windows of heaven. ■

Carlos Alberto Paim Quadros, Ponta Porã, Brazil

I know that fasting opens the windows of heaven.



**By Elder
Robert D. Hales**
Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

THE PRIESTHOOD IS HERE TODAY

*What a dark world this would be without
priesthood blessings for you and me.*

Can you imagine how dark and empty mortality would be if there were no priesthood? If the power of the priesthood were not upon the earth, the adversary would have freedom to roam and reign without restraint. There would be no gift of the Holy Ghost to direct and enlighten us; no prophets to speak in the name of the Lord; no temples where we could make sacred, eternal covenants; no authority to bless or baptize, to heal or comfort. Without the power of the priesthood, “the whole earth would be utterly wasted” (see D&C 2:1–3). There would be no light, no hope—only darkness. . . .

. . . [However,] the priesthood of God gives light to [Heavenly Father’s] children in this dark and troubled world. Through priesthood power



we can receive the gift of the Holy Ghost to lead us to truth, testimony, and revelation. This gift is available on an equal basis to men, women, and children. . . .

. . . The glorious priesthood of God, together with a fulness of its blessings, has been restored to the earth in our own time. The restoration of the priesthood and its blessings began in 1820, when Joseph Smith, a young boy prophet, beheld and spoke with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, in a sacred grove of trees.

Later, additional heavenly messengers—John the Baptist; Peter, James, and John; Moses, Elias, and Elijah; and

others—brought to the Prophet Joseph Smith the power, authority, and keys necessary for the salvation and exaltation of mankind. . . . The Church of Jesus Christ was restored upon the earth, complete with the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods of old. Now, as God covenanted with Abraham, all the individuals and families of the earth may be blessed.

Think of it, brothers and sisters—the priesthood has been restored. It is here on the earth today. . . . Under the direction of . . . prophets, seers, and revelators, who hold the keys in this dispensation, priesthood holders in the Church today have the legitimate right to act in the name of God. . . .

. . . All of the magnificent, eternal blessings that God makes available to men and women and families upon this earth can be ours through the power of the priesthood. ■

From an October 1995 general conference address.



GOLDEN, BY DANIEL F. GERHARTZ

"Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).



In Church Magazines

Ensign: As you become a self-reliant student of the gospel, you strengthen your relationship with God. See “Self-Reliance and Gospel Learning” (page 14). Plus, learn about overcoming the danger of doubt (page 46).

New Era: This month, President Henry B. Eyring teaches about the restoration of priesthood keys (page 2). Also, youth can learn about patriarchal blessings (pages 10, 47) and get advice on social media (pages 24, 26) and true friendship (pages 28, 32).

Friend: Use the *Friend* this month to help kids stay healthy from head to toe (see page 24). You can make personal challenges related to the Word of Wisdom (page 8), learn about getting enough rest (page 34), and talk about respecting each other’s bodies (page 22).

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

