

THE ENSIGN OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • JUNE 2019

Ensign



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THE
CHURCH
IS HERE

Taxco Mexico





PHOTOGRAPH FROM GETTY IMAGES

Once a mining town, Taxco de Alarcón, Guerrero, Mexico, is known today as one of the country's *pueblos mágicos* (magic towns), famed for its silver jewelry production, Spanish colonial architecture, and the beauty of the surrounding countryside. The city lies on rugged terrain and has steep, irregular streets. Its main landmark is the 18th-century Santa Prisca church.

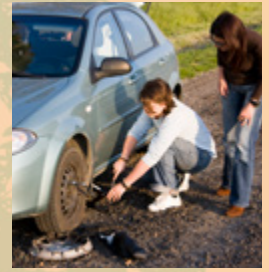
Taxco is also home to the Taxco Branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which meets each Sunday in a building on *avenida de los Plateros*. The branch, part of the Iguala Mexico Stake, is one of 1,987 Latter-day Saint congregations in Mexico, where the Church has more than 1.4 million members, 34 missions, and 13 temples. Mexico is also home to the Mexico City Missionary Training Center, the second largest MTC in the Church. The center can accommodate more than 1,000 missionaries at a time.

- The first five members in Mexico were baptized in 1876.
- Mexico was the first country outside the United States to have 100 stakes.
- The Mexico City Mexico Temple, the first in Mexico, was dedicated in 1983. The most recently dedicated is the Tijuana Mexico Temple, dedicated in 2015. The Puebla Mexico Temple was announced in October 2018.
- When President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) visited Mexico in 1994, he created the Mexico City Contreras Stake, the Church's 2,000th stake.



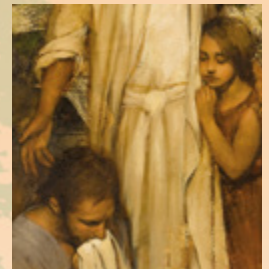


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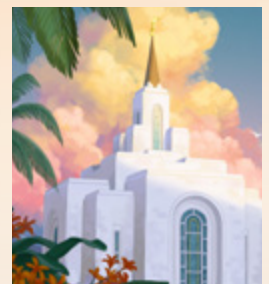
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Can Our Ministering Help Others Heal?

One Sunday I was sitting in sacrament meeting pondering, when I read in my scriptures that we are to do the works that the Savior did (see 3 Nephi 27:21). I thought to myself, “What were Christ’s works upon the earth?” I thought primarily of two things: service and healing. Service I could do, but healing?

The concept of healing has been one I have pondered often. I have had 16 surgeries so far in my life and have had to do a *lot* of healing! But I wondered how I could be like Jesus Christ and help others heal. Certainly I did not have the healing powers He possessed. So how did He want me to do His works of healing on the earth? What *could* I do?

As I pondered how others had helped me to heal, my mind was opened to the incredible works of healing—comforting, serving, and ministering—that others had performed for me in my life. With our focus on ministering to others in ways the Savior would, this concept of helping others heal is a powerful one.

All of us suffer during our mortal journey on earth. So many have physical or mental illnesses or are suffering spiritually. All of us are in need of healing. As I explain in my article (page 20) and as Elder Neil L. Andersen teaches in his article (page 12), all of us can participate in ministering to others in ways that will help them heal.

Sincerely,
Merrilee Boyack



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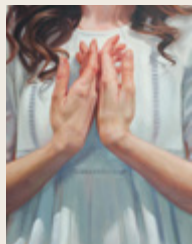
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Support Articles and Activities

To discover articles, videos, and other resources that coincide with your family's study of the New Testament this month, see the digital version of this issue in the Gospel Library app or at ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



Finally Making It to the Temple

By Ramona Morris

A young adult from Barbados shares her story of preparing for and finally being able to visit the temple.



IMAGE FROM GETTY IMAGES

Are You Learning Something New Every Day?

By Self-Reliance Services

Learning new things has its perks, including Alzheimer's prevention and improving mental health.

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"A FATHER'S CALLING IS ETERNAL, AND ITS IMPORTANCE TRANSCENDS TIME."

Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson (2014), 194.

SOME OF OUR FAVORITE TEACHINGS ABOUT FATHERHOOD

When you need a little encouragement, take a look at one of these messages:

- Luke 15:20–24
- D. Todd Christofferson, "Fathers," *Ensign*, May 2016, 93–97.
- L. Tom Perry, "Fatherhood, an Eternal Calling," *Ensign*, May 2004, 69–72.
- "The Sacred Callings of Fathers and Mothers," chapter 15 in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014).
- "Love at Home," chapter 14 in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* (2000).

Rodrigo Quintanilla

Valparaíso, Chile



When a construction accident left him unable to walk, Rodrigo Quintanilla could no longer work as a welder—or do a lot of other things. But he decided to move forward with faith, trusting in Heavenly Father’s plan for him and his family.

LESLIE NILSSON, PHOTOGRAPHER

When something really bad happens to us, we can respond in one of two ways. We can get angry with God and leave the Church, having nothing more to do with it. Or we can get on our knees, pray, and continue to grow.

I didn’t lose my faith, nor did I ask myself, “Why did this happen to me?” I refused to go down that road.

When a trial comes to us, I know our Father in Heaven provides a way through that trial. As I recuperated, having the company of the Holy Ghost was essential. I had to reinvent myself professionally, so I prayed for the Spirit’s guidance. God answered me.

To those who have suffered a life-changing accident or event, I would say, “Things can be difficult, but stay in the Church. Stay with the gospel. Life is more difficult without it. Put forth as much effort as you can, and Heavenly Father will do the rest.”



FIND MORE

See more about Rodrigo Quintanilla’s journey of faith, including additional photos, in the digital version of this article in the Gospel Library app or at ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

Learn about the Church’s disability resources at ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/9184.



Ministering Principles

MINISTERING IS SEEING OTHERS AS THE SAVIOR DOES

*Jesus spent much of His time with those who were seen as different;
He saw their divine potential.*

In our efforts to minister like the Savior, we may be asked to minister to someone who is different from us. This presents an opportunity for us to learn and grow.

Cultural, educational, racial, economic, age, past or present behaviors, or other differences can make it easy to judge someone before we even know them. This pre-judging is at the heart of

prejudice, and the Savior warned against it (see 1 Samuel 16:7; John 7:24).

Can we look past differences and see others as the Savior does? How can we learn to love others for who they are and who they can become?

Beholding and Loving

The Bible tells the familiar story of the rich young man who asked how to obtain



eternal life: “Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me” (Mark 10:21).

When Elder S. Mark Palmer of the Seventy studied this scripture some years ago, a new part of the story suddenly stood out to him.

“*Then Jesus beholding him loved him.*”

“As I heard these words, a vivid image filled my mind of our Lord pausing and *beholding* this young man. *Beholding*—as in looking deeply and penetratingly into his soul, recognizing his goodness and also his potential, as well as discerning his greatest need.

“Then the simple words—Jesus *loved him*. He felt an overwhelming love and compassion for this good young man, and *because* of this love and *with* this love, Jesus asked even more of him. I pictured what it must have felt like for this young man to be enveloped by such love even while being asked to do something so supremely hard as selling all he owned and giving it to the poor. . . .

“[I asked myself,] ‘How can I be filled with Christlike love so [others] can feel the love of God through me and desire to change?’ How can I *behold* [the individuals around me] in the same way the Lord beheld the rich young man, seeing them for who they really are and who they can become, rather than just for what they are doing or not doing? How can I be more like the Savior?”¹

Learning to See Others

Learning to see others as the Savior does brings rich rewards. Here are some suggestions that can help as we work toward this goal.

GET TO KNOW THEM

Make the effort to get to know people beyond superficial details. Recognize that building relationships takes time and sincere effort. (See the August 2018 Ministering Principles article “Building Meaningful Relationships” for help.)

EXAMINE YOURSELF

Pay attention to judgments you may be making consciously or subconsciously. Take note of the assumptions you are making about others and try to understand why you feel about them the way you do.

WITHHOLD JUDGMENT

Realize that circumstances don’t define the worth of an individual. Put yourself in their shoes and consider how you would want someone to see you if you were in the same circumstances. Separating someone’s choices and behavior from their intrinsic value and divine potential can help us see them as the Savior would.

PRAY TO LOVE THEM

Pray for them regularly by name and for the patience to develop a true friendship. Take a prayerful look at your service. Is there a gap between what you are doing and what they really need?



Jesus spent His time with people from many different walks of life: the rich, the poor, rulers, and common people. He was often the victim of incorrect judgment by others when they looked upon Him and His apparently poor or insignificant circumstances. “When we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. . . . He was despised, and we esteemed him not” (Isaiah 53:2–3).

INVITATION TO ACT

Whom do you need to look at differently? What will you do to change how you see them?

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES

Send us your experiences as you have ministered to others or have been ministered to. Go to ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org and click “Submit an Article or Feedback.”

Christlike Vision

A sister shares this story of learning to see a neighbor with Christlike eyes:

“Julia (name has been changed) lived by me and seemed to not have any friends. She always looked upset and angry. Despite that, I decided to be a friend to her. Not just a casual friend in passing, but a true friend. I spoke to her whenever I saw her and showed interest in whatever she was doing. Slowly, I created a bond of friendship with her, bringing joy in my heart.

“One day, I decided to visit Julia and ask her about her decision to not attend church.

“I learned that she has no family or relatives nearby. Her only sibling, a brother who lives far away, communicates with her only once a year by phone. As I listened to her pour out her bitterness, anger, and frustrations about her family and the Church, an undeniable feeling of compassion and love for this sister came over me so strongly. I felt her pain and frustrations. I realized just how lonely her life was. It was as though I heard a quiet phrase behind me: ‘I love her too. Love and respect her.’

“I sat and listened until she had no more to say. I felt love and compassion for her. This is a sister who has never known what it is like to be loved. Suddenly I understood her more deeply. I thanked her for allowing me to visit with her, and I



left her with a hug and with my love and respect for her. She will never know how much she touched me with that visit. Heavenly Father has opened my eyes and taught me that I had a capacity to love with increased compassion. I am determined in my resolve to not only be a friend to her but also to be family to her.”

It’s a sacred thing to be invited into someone else’s life. With prayer, patience, and help from the Spirit, we can learn to do so with a more Christlike vision. ■

NOTE

1. S. Mark Palmer, “Then Jesus Beholding Him Loved Him,” *Ensign*, May 2017, 115.

DISCOVER MORE

Learn more about being more welcoming:

- Read “We Can Do Better: Welcoming Others into the Fold” in the September 2017 *Ensign*.
- Watch Church leaders explain these principles at ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/61911.





**By Elder
Neil L. Andersen**
Of the Quorum
of the Twelve
Apostles

Ministering in a Holier Way

I promise that as you love God with all your heart and pray to be an instrument in His hands, the Lord will put His special sons and daughters in your path.

The book titled *The Narcissism Epidemic* begins with exaggerated examples of modern American culture:

“On a reality TV show, a girl planning her 16th birthday party wants a major road blocked off so a marching band can precede her grand entrance on a red carpet. A book called *My Beautiful Mommy* explains plastic surgery to young children whose mothers are going under the knife for the trendy ‘Mommy Makeover.’ It is now possible to hire fake paparazzi to follow you around snapping your photograph when you go out at night—you can even take home a faux celebrity magazine cover featuring the pictures. A popular song declares, with no apparent sarcasm, ‘I believe that the world should revolve around me!’ . . . Babies wear bibs embroidered with ‘Supermodel’ . . . and suck on ‘Bling’ pacifiers while their parents read modernized nursery rhymes from *This Little Piggy Went to Prada*.”¹

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we strongly reject the notion that our lives are all about ourselves. Rather, we follow the Savior, who said:

“Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

“And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

“ . . . The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:26–28).



We treasure His words:

“Love one another; as I have loved you” (John 13:34; see also John 15:12).

“Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep” (John 21:15, 16).

“When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32).

“Succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees” (Doctrine and Covenants 81:5).

Here is an example of the kind of Christlike ministering that happens among members of the Lord’s Church. A student at Brigham Young University recently wrote:

“I was going through a really rough time. One day I was really struggling and on the verge of tears. I pleaded and prayed silently for strength to continue. In that exact moment, my roommate sent me a text expressing her love for me. She shared a scripture and bore a testimony. It brought me so much strength and comfort and hope in that moment of despair.”

Let me share a few thoughts that I hope will strengthen the already outstanding way you minister to one another. My first point is this: Remember the first commandment before you exercise the second. One young man came to the Savior and asked Him:

“Master, which is the great commandment in the law?”

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first and great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:36–39).

Your ability to bring a holier approach to loving your neighbor, to caring for and ministering to others, will rest upon how strongly you keep the first commandment.

Another Kind of Ministering

There is a unique and divine gift of ministering that can come from someone who loves God with all his or her heart; who is settled, grounded, steadfast, and immovable in his or her faith in Jesus Christ and in the restored gospel (see Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 1:23; 1 Nephi 2:10; Mosiah 5:15; Alma 1:25; 3 Nephi 6:14); and who keeps the commandments with exactness.

Let me give you some context you already know. Across the world, the younger generation is slipping in its faith and especially in its belief in a specific religion. When I graduated from BYU in 1975, the number of young adults (ages 18 to 24) with an affiliation with a religion was near 90 percent. It is now at 66 percent. “A full third of young adults do not affiliate with any organized religion.”²

In 2001, religious scholar Robert C. Fuller wrote a book called *Spiritual, But Not Religious*.³ A trend toward personal spirituality outside formal religious organizations may have been true 20 years ago, but it is less true today. Young adults in the United States today pray with less frequency, believe less in God, believe less in the Bible, and believe less in the commandments.⁴ It is naïve to believe that the trends of the world are not able to influence all of us—even the very elect.

Caring for others, physically and emotionally, requires an unselfish and sensitive heart. This caring is an important part of the gospel. It is done in and out of the Church by good people, believers and nonbelievers. There are many wonderful, kind people all over the world, and we can learn from them.

However, unique to a converted member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is another kind of ministering. As disciples of the Savior, we have opportunities to minister in a way that helps keep a friend's faith from faltering, that reminds a roommate in a kind way that reading the Book of Mormon every day really does bring miracles, and that shows a ward member that the standards of the Church are not just a set of rules but rather a way to keep us close to God and bring us happiness.

A person with a good heart can help someone fix a tire, take a neighbor to the doctor, have lunch with someone who is sad, or smile and say hello to brighten a day. But a follower of the first commandment will naturally add to these important acts of service, encouraging the person who is doing well in keeping the commandments and sharing wise counsel to strengthen the faith of someone who is slipping or who needs help in moving back onto the path once traveled.



I challenge you to strengthen your efforts to spiritually minister to one another. To minister spiritually can begin with baking cookies or playing a basketball game. But eventually, this holier way of ministering requires opening your heart and your faith, taking courage in encouraging the positive growth you are seeing in a friend, and expressing concerns about things you see and feel are not consistent with discipleship.

Let us not be self-righteous, but let us be spiritually courageous in ministering in a holier way, specifically by strengthening the faith of others. To stir your thinking, consider these possible situations:

- You notice that a friend spends an inordinate amount of time playing games on a smartphone but rarely engages in conversations relating to gospel topics.
- You sense that a ward member may have a problem with pornography.
- Your friends are spending enormous amounts of time taking and posting pictures of themselves that move to the edge of immodesty.
- You notice that someone who once seemed to love to talk about the Book of Mormon now never mentions it.
- You notice that a family member who once seemed to love to go to the temple now is not going.
- You notice that a friend who once spoke with faith about the prophet's counsel now speaks critically.
- You know a returned missionary who has become casual in wearing clothing that reflects temple covenants.
- You notice that a ward member finds reasons to go places on Sunday other than to church.

- You sense that a friend has started to be dishonest in small things.
- You know someone who had a light in her eyes after returning from a mission, but now that light seems to have faded.
- You have a friend who jokes about sacred things.
- You have a friend whose discouragement with dating has moved to “God doesn’t love me.”
- You see a friend’s faith being affected by compromised worthiness and a need to repent.

Can you envision these situations or others like them? Have specific names come into your mind? The Apostle Paul said, “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12). One of the greatest needs throughout the world is to have more faith in our Heavenly Father and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and to have a greater willingness to follow the commandments.

Ministering to the One

If we follow the pattern of the Savior, most of our ministering will be from one person to another. To the Samaritan woman at the well, the Savior said:

“Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. . . .

“The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not. . . .

“[Then she said,] I know that [the] Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

“Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he” (see John 4:13–15, 25–26).

Even in declaring His own divinity, Jesus ministered to the one.

Unlike changing a flat tire, just one ministering experience rarely fixes a spiritual problem. It takes time, conversations, and encouraging experiences that will help rebuild faith. It



comes more like the dew from heaven than a one-time blast from a fire hose. You have to minister again and again as you help someone turn back to God and again rely on the Savior and His Atonement.

To minister in the Lord’s way, we need the help of the Holy Ghost. President Russell M. Nelson spoke powerfully on this subject during general conference in April 2018: “In coming days, it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost.”⁵

President Nelson added, “I urge you to stretch beyond your current spiritual ability to receive personal revelation.”⁶ He counseled us to pray, to listen, to write down our thoughts, and to take action.

Can we apply this to ministering in a holier way? Let us pray, listen, record our thoughts, and take action regarding those to whom we can minister.

Pray for opportunities to build faith in others. Not all of those you help will be people you know. When Jesus ministered to the widow of Nain, He was on His way to the city.

However, He saw her, had compassion for her, and raised her son from the dead. His ministry changed her life (see Luke 7:11–15).

Pray that ministering opportunities will come to you, listen, write down your thoughts, and then be ready to take action as people are put in your way.

I have always been moved by the Psalmist's cry: "I looked on my right hand, . . . but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man [or woman] cared for my soul" (Psalm 142:4). Let's help those who feel this way.

Make Time for the Spirit

To have the help of the Holy Ghost, we have to prepare our minds and hearts. In our generation, we need discipline and restraint in how we use our technological devices. Adam Alter, in his book *Irresistible*, spoke about the addictive behavior of technology and social media. He quoted Greg Hochmuth, one of Instagram's founding engineers, who commented, "There's always another hashtag to click on. Then it takes on its own life, like an organism, and people can become obsessive."⁷

Mr. Alter added: "Instagram, like so many other social media platforms, is bottomless. Facebook has an endless feed; Netflix automatically moves on to the next episode in a series; Tinder encourages users to keep swiping in search of a better option. . . . According to Tristan Harris, a 'design ethicist,' the problem isn't that people lack willpower; it's that 'there are a thousand people on the other side of the screen whose job it is to break down the self-regulation you have.'"⁸

Mr. Alter continued: "A like on Facebook and Instagram strikes one of [the right neurological] notes, as does the reward of completing a World

of Warcraft mission, or seeing one of your tweets shared by hundreds of Twitter users. The people who create and refine tech, games, and interactive experiences are very good at what they do. They run thousands of tests with millions of users to learn which tweaks work and which ones don't—which background colors, fonts, and audio tones maximize engagement and minimize frustration. As an experience evolves, it becomes an irresistible, weaponized version of the experience it once was. In 2004, Facebook was fun; [today,] it's addictive."⁹

For the Spirit to dwell in us, we have to have time and space. Learn to put your smartphones down. Schedule time when your technology is intentionally not accessible.

During general conference in April 2018, President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said: "Too many allow themselves to almost live online with their smart devices—screens illuminating their faces day and night and earbuds in their ears blocking out the still, small voice of the Spirit. If we do not find time to unplug, we may miss opportunities to hear the voice of Him who said, 'Be still, and know that I am God' [Psalm 46:10]. Now, there is nothing wrong with taking advantage of the advances in the technologies inspired by the Lord, but we must be wise in their use."¹⁰



Strengthening Each Other

During my undergraduate days at BYU, other than my wife, Kathy, whose eternal influence is impossible to measure, two roommates—one before my mission and one after—greatly shaped my spiritual foundation. One was Reid Robison, now a professor at BYU in organizational behavior. I met him on my mission, and we were roommates afterward. Reid’s exactness in following the commandments, his love for the prophet, and his unwavering testimony of the Savior strengthened me and all those around him. And he has continued to be an example to me for the past 45 years.

The other roommate I mention is Terrel Bird, who now lives in St. George, Utah, USA.



I met Terrel as we attended high school together in Pocatello, Idaho, USA. Although we played basketball together, our friendship came as I observed his spiritual maturity. He would openly share spiritual insights he was having and principles of life he was reading about and learning. I was surprised to hear these things from a 17-year-old. We decided to room together at BYU.

In those days, we didn’t have computers; we had typewriters. Terrel would take scriptures that were meaningful to him and quotations that instilled character, type them, and then store them in a small box so he could draw from them frequently. It was not uncommon for him to have more than a thousand scriptures and quotations, many of which he would memorize. Although I was working—cleaning the library every morning from 4:00 to 7:00—and carrying a full load of classes, in watching Terrel, I began to build my own file box.

Here is one of the quotes I still remember from almost 50 years ago:

*Mind is the Master power that moulds and makes,
And Man is Mind, and evermore he takes
The tool of Thought, and, shaping what he wills,
Brings forth a thousand joys, a thousand ills:—
He thinks in secret, and it comes to pass:
Environment is but his looking-glass.¹¹*

I also remember, of course, powerful scriptures like this one:

“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

“And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (John 11:25–26).

Terrel helped me put into my mind as a freshman at BYU words of scripture and words of wisdom that have influenced me all of my life. I thank Reid Robison and Terrel Bird for caring about me spiritually at a time when it made a difference.

Here is some poetry written by my neighbor Thomas L. Kay:

*Thank God for all who give relief
for those who really care
Who put their arms around the weak
and plead for them in prayer

Thank God for those who hear the heart
and listen to the words*



*Who know a look or gentle touch
mean more than all the world*

*Thank God for those who lift the hands
and strengthen feeble knees
Who go about restoring souls
in quiet ministry.¹²*

My dear friends and fellow disciples, I give you my sure witness that I know the Savior lives. He is resurrected. He guides this holy work. President Nelson is His anointed prophet upon the earth. Our time upon the earth is eternally important.

I promise that as you love God with all your heart, pray to be an instrument in His hands, minister to individuals, build your capacity to receive revelation, and trust in the influence of the Holy Ghost, the Lord will put His special sons and daughters in your path and you will become their ministering angels, blessing their lives eternally. You will minister in a holier way.

I pray that this can be something that is important to you as you continue along this most important pathway of our mortality. I give you my firm and sure witness of the Savior and of your eternal worth to Him and that He will come again and will embrace us as His sons and daughters, as His disciples. ■

*From a devotional address, “A Holier Approach to Ministering,”
delivered at Brigham Young University on April 10, 2018.*

NOTES

1. Jean M. Twenge and W. Keith Campbell, *The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement* (2009), 1.
2. Jean M. Twenge, *iGen: Why Today’s Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy—and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood* (2017), 121; see also Figure 5.1, 121.
3. See Robert C. Fuller, *Spiritual, But Not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America* (2001).
4. See Jean M. Twenge, *iGen*, 119–42.
5. Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 96.
6. Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” 95.
7. Greg Hochmuth, in Adam Alter, *Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technology and the Business of Keeping Us Hooked* (2017), 3; see also Greg Hochmuth, in Natasha Singer, “Can’t Put Down Your Device? That’s by Design,” *New York Times*, Dec. 5, 2015, nytimes.com.
8. Adam Alter, *Irresistible*, 3; see also Tristan Harris, in Natasha Singer, “Can’t Put Down Your Device? That’s by Design.”
9. Adam Alter, *Irresistible*, 5.
10. M. Russell Ballard, “Precious Gifts from God,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 10.
11. James Allen, *As a Man Thinketh* (1902), frontispiece.
12. Thomas L. Kay, “Saints,” in *The Road I’ve Taken* (2016), 16; see also “Saints,” music by Rachel Bastian, *New Era*, Sept. 1999, 51.



Helping Others Receive the Lord's Healing

By Merrilee Browne Boyack

One Sunday I read the scripture, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; *for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do*” (3 Nephi 27:21; emphasis added).

I thought to myself, “What were Christ’s works upon the earth?” I thought primarily of two things: service and healing. Service I could do, but healing? Certainly I wasn’t capable of healing others—or was I?

I was recently in the process of recovering from a surgery that had been followed by a severe allergic reaction. I immediately thought of those who had helped me in my healing process, and the list was long. If they could help me heal, couldn't I do the same for others?

Each of us can learn the healer's art.¹ We are surrounded by those suffering from physical, mental, and spiritual sicknesses who would be blessed by our help.

Visiting the Sick

Mosiah 4:26 states, "I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants."

Being sick—whether physically, mentally, or spiritually—can be very isolating. People spend many lonely hours in bedrooms or hospital rooms trying to recuperate, and it is easy for their spirits to become depressed. As the darkness accumulates, the visit of a caring friend or family member can bring light into their lives.

How we visit the sick can also be important. Several women responded to my query asking how others have helped them through the healing process. Judi of Arizona, USA, commented, "Listening . . . [is] such a great help in troubled times. Listening and *not* judging." Listening patiently, sincerely, and lovingly is a valuable support to those who are trying to heal.

We practice the healer's art when we help bring the Lord's healing blessings to those suffering from physical, mental, and spiritual sicknesses.

Linda of California, USA, shared how a friend's visits helped her: "I remember those special people in my life—especially those who really listened and conveyed the Spirit's sweet counsel. After being widowed at 30 years old with five young children, I felt my Heavenly Father's

and Savior's love more deeply because of my good friend Karen. She was always in tune and had her 'listening ears' on. I never felt alone as she consistently reminded me of the beautiful bond I have as a daughter of God."

Ministering brothers and sisters especially can perform this healer's art. It is important to tune in to the needs of those who are suffering. Sometimes a short visit is in order because they are very tired. Sometimes they are lonely and bored and a longer visit will meet their needs. It's also important to tune in to their personalities. Some want privacy and quiet while others want lots of interaction and support. We should first determine their needs and then reach out accordingly.

Bearing One Another's Burdens

Alma described most eloquently our commitment to follow the Savior's example when he asked the believers in the Book of Mormon if they were willing "to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and [be] willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light" (Mosiah 18:8).

We each carry burdens of many kinds. These are most difficult to handle when we are sick or struggling with mental



WE ARE THE LORD'S HANDS

"Christ knows how to minister to others perfectly. When the Savior stretches

out His hands, those He touches are uplifted and become greater, stronger, and better people as a result.

"If we are His hands, should we not do the same?"

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "You Are My Hands," *Ensign*, May 2010, 70.

illness or spiritual difficulties. One of the healer's arts is to help bear the burdens of others when they are suffering.

Shannon from Utah, USA, shared how her neighbors helped her: "The day we buried our young son, we returned from the cemetery to find our neighborhood had come together in those hours while we were at his funeral to completely re-landscape our yard. They had planted beautiful shrubs, trees, and flowers, and even new sod. In the midst of our unimaginable sadness, their thoughtful demonstration of love and support began the healing process for us. We were reminded that love and life are eternal every year when our beautiful yard came back to life again. [It was] truly a sacred and symbolic experience that we will never forget."

When I was diagnosed with breast cancer, I was serving as Relief Society president and running for reelection to our city council. My husband had lost his job, and we were hit with many other serious trials during this time. My counselors took to heart "bearing one another's burdens" and helped spread the load I was carrying. My bishop took on some of my responsibilities.

My husband took over many duties of cooking and homemaking. It was truly humbling to see that my burdens were not taken away but instead were shared by many, many people who exercised the healer's art.

Comforting

Alma also taught that Christ's followers "are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort" (Mosiah 18:9).

Giving comfort encompasses empathy, kindness, thoughtfulness, caring, love, and charity. It is wrapping those who are sick or afflicted in loving arms to help them face their suffering.

Luann (name has been changed) faced a spiritual and moral struggle and reflected on her experience with others who comforted her: "They looked past my present person and saw my promising potential, the potential to become someone greater, wiser, kinder. I look back on my former self and sometimes cringe with a bit of embarrassment for my ignorance—a bit of shame for my transgressions and sinful ways. But the sting of embarrassment and shame is always followed by the healing

balm that is grace, mercy, forgiveness, and love. When I see there were people around me, showering me with those things, the sting goes away. And I see they were helping me heal. Maybe it's more accurate to say they were creating a safe environment around

"They were creating a safe environment around me where the Savior, the Master Healer, could work on me."

me—a cocoon of grace, maybe—where, within, the Savior, the Master Healer, could work on me. Changing me. Changing my heart."

An important part of comforting the sick is turning them toward the Master Healer. Sabrina from Utah, USA, said, "There is no better healing than that of anyone who helps you search out or go back to God. It may be just a reminder of what you already know—that you're trying to be tougher



than need be, taking it all on your own, and not truly relying on God.”

Comforting the sick and helping them be positive takes sensitivity to the Spirit. At one point in my life, I had not slept well in many months, usually averaging about two to three hours per night of disrupted sleep. I was suffering greatly from anxiety and exhaustion; I had been to many doctors to no avail. Finally, a friend referred me to a Latter-day Saint doctor who immediately gave me a proper diagnosis. But what he said next was a surprise: “Merrilee, the most important thing you need to do is to turn your anxiety over to God.” He then encouraged me to meditate each day for a short time on “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles.”

I had tried this meditation a few times without success, but I was desperate for healing. The next day, I quietly meditated on the powerful words, “We offer our testimony of the reality of His matchless life and the infinite virtue of His great atoning sacrifice.”² A thrill ran through me as I began to ponder the testimony of our great Healer and knew that I had found comfort and peace in my soul.

Paying Attention

As we study the scriptures in order to emulate Jesus in His works of healing, we read of Jesus doing one thing over and over: He paid attention to those around Him.

Christ noticed people. He spoke with the Samaritan woman despite cultural taboos. He took time to bless the children. He ate with publicans and sinners and ministered to lepers and outcasts. He gave His attention to each.

As followers of Christ seeking to learn His healer’s art, we can begin to look upon people with the eyes of Christ. We can take the time to say hello, to smile, to ask about their day. We may never know the healing balm that our efforts may be to those around us who are lonely, depressed, sick, weak, or suffering. Even simple gestures of love can have a powerful influence.

As we do the works of Christ and participate in the healing of others, great blessings will flow. As Christ stated, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40). To Him who healed each of us, to Him who has wrapped us in His loving arms more times than we even know, to Him who has offered us the healing balm of His Atonement, we can offer our small efforts to help heal our brothers and sisters. This is truly the healer’s art. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. See “Lord, I Would Follow Thee,” *Hymns*, no. 220.
2. “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign*, May 2017, inside front cover.

Flowers and Financial Security

By Mechel Wall

The Lord has increased my capacity, enlarged my abilities, and made much more of me than I would have become on my own.

The fact that I had never graduated from college always bothered me. I knew that if anything happened to my husband, I wasn't prepared financially to provide for our family.

Then the unthinkable happened. I received a gut-wrenching, life-shattering phone call.

"Call 911!" my distressed husband yelled. "I'm pinned under the tractor!"

I called for help and then made it in record time to the land he had been clearing, passing a long line of emergency vehicles on the gravel road to our property in Pea Ridge, Arkansas, USA. Barry was alive, but he was indeed pinned beneath the engine of a tractor that had flipped.

Using hydraulic rescue tools, emergency workers lifted the tractor and pulled Barry free. His legs, soaked in diesel fuel, looked broken in several places. He was rushed to a trauma center, where he received a priesthood blessing before having his legs X-rayed.



We were surprised that not one bone was broken, but the back of one of Barry's legs had been severely burned by diesel fuel. The crush injury had also led to toxification of his kidneys. His life was in jeopardy.

After Barry spent five tense days in the hospital, his toxin levels finally began to drop. Months of dressing changes, skin grafts, surgeries, and hyperbaric oxygen therapy followed. Once he felt well enough, Barry resumed his sales job from home.

No One Would Hire Me

This experience was a wake-up call. As I spent the next few years contemplating what I could do if I lost Barry, I did volunteer work, attended workshops, and applied for several part-time jobs. But I had no marketable skills, and no one would hire me.

We live on a farm, with pastureland for a few animals, so I began to research farming as a living. One day an idea came to me: flowers. After researching flower farming, I decided to give it a try. I went to a conference for flower growers and prepared to transition from pastureland to row crops. Then, in November 2016, I signed up for a

Self-Reliance Services class on how to start and grow my own business.

Our Own Flower Shop

The 12-week course was exactly what I needed. I had a basic business plan and lots of fun ideas, but I lacked organization. Ideas came up in class that I hadn't considered before. I acted on each one. As I worked that first year growing and selling flowers, the suggestions and principles I learned in the class came into play:

- I found a low-interest business loan.
- I expanded my market to include farmers markets and flower shops.
- I booked several events on our farm as an expansion of my services.

In late 2017, after my first year of farming, I realized that selling to flower shops was taking too much time. "What if I opened my own flower shop?" I wondered. The local flower shop had closed, and the building had become an eyesore. So my husband and I bought it, fixed it up, and opened a flower shop that also sells art and local crafts. In addition, I opened a plant rental and interior plant design business.

I sell my flowers through our shop and at coffee shops, boutique stores, and a kiosk at the local airport. Each day, I harvest what I need.

The Lord Cares

I have a testimony that the Lord cares about my business. He has helped me create financial security for myself *and* part-time jobs for several women who want to work flexible hours and for students working their way through school. One of our daughters manages the flower farm, and two of our sons do much of the farm work, including helping to build a greenhouse. Barry helps in the evenings and on weekends, doing the heavy lifting.

We all support each other and work together. It has been a blessing for everyone involved. I keep busy but still have time for my family, Church callings, ministering duties, and volunteer work.

Working from the time I plant a seed or a bulb to when I present a flower to a customer gives me a tremendous sense of accomplishment. I have no doubt that the Lord has enlarged my abilities and made much more of me than I would have become on my own. ■

The author lives in Arkansas, USA.



**By Bishop
Dean M. Davies**

First Counselor
in the Presiding
Bishopric

Divinely Directed Discipleship

If you will seek to become true disciples of our beloved Savior,
the Lord God of heaven will direct your paths.

I want to address two questions I myself wanted answers to when I was young.

First, if you dedicate your life to God's service, will He direct your steps and use you for His righteous purposes? Second, if you choose to follow the Savior and walk in the path of discipleship, will the Lord watch over you, guide you, bless you, and fill you with a spirit of joy and fulfillment as He uses you for His purposes?

My beloved brothers and sisters, if you give your hearts to the Savior and strive to walk in faith and compassion on the path He has commanded, I know the Lord will use you in ways you cannot now imagine.

"But I'm no one special," you say. "I'm average in every way. I'm not particularly smart, eloquent, well-dressed, or even well-behaved. How could God use me?"

Since the beginning of time, our Heavenly Father has reached out to those who are average and used them for His purposes. The Apostle Paul wrote to you today, just as he did to the ancient Corinthians:

"God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

"And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

"That no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Corinthians 1:27–29).

When it came time for our Savior to restore His Church to the earth, why do you suppose He chose a humble boy with little formal schooling?

Why do you think God told Gideon, a farmer, to keep sending troops home until he had only 300 men left to face an innumerable enemy? (see Judges 7:1–25).

Why do you suppose our Savior chose a fisherman to be His chief Apostle and to lead the Church after He was gone? (see Matthew 16:18).

First, because "the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

Second, because God is able to take the most humble clay and create of it a masterpiece. Truly, "if God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

Third, God chooses the weak so that no one can boast and say, "I have done this out of my own ability."





When Peter, a humble fisherman, takes a small group of believers and then shepherds them into a mighty Church, people lift up their voices and give thanks to God.

When an army of thousands is routed by a band of 300, people give praise to God.

When a frontier boy leaves the plow and translates the most inspiring and life-changing text since the Bible, people glory not in the intellect of man but in the power of God.

Heavenly Father does not need you to be mighty, intelligent, or well-spoken. He needs you to incline your heart to Him and seek to honor Him by serving Him and reaching out in compassion to those around you.

Ministerings of the Holy Spirit

The second thing I want to impress upon you is that if you will follow God in truth and might, He will bless you in ways you cannot comprehend.

In 2006, President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) and the First Presidency determined that there should be a temple considered for San Salvador, El Salvador. We visited a number of properties, including a full city block located in the older central part of the city. As we drove from property to property, nothing seemed right.

Eventually, we passed by an emerging area in the west part of the city. I felt something in that area and walked around a number of blocks. One property surrounded by a wall was of particular interest. I reached out to the owners and received word that the property was not available, so I went home.

But the prophet had said a temple would be built in San Salvador, so I returned to look at other properties. Once again I found myself drawn to the property with the wall, and I made contact again. They repeated that the property was unavailable.

I returned home again but couldn't shake the feeling that this was where the temple should be. I contacted the family and asked if they would at least meet with me. They agreed to do so. Once again, I traveled to San Salvador, accompanied by Robert Fox, a friend and employee in the Church's real estate division. That morning we knelt in prayer in my room before beginning the day and asked for the Lord's assistance.

As we drove through the gate to the home, it was almost like entering a sacred garden. There were trees and flowers, and the busy noise from outside stopped at the gate. Mr. Miguel Dueñas, his brother, and two of Miguel's sons were awaiting us. They greeted us and escorted us into their ancestral home—which was large and spacious.

We told them we were there by assignment of the president of our Church and that he wanted to bless the country and Church members by building a temple there. I showed pictures of other temples. I said we felt that their property, their ancestral home, was the right place.

It was no surprise when they once again declined, but we had to make the attempt. And so for almost an hour we tried every avenue of approach, such as a straight outright purchase, an exchange of property, and every other option we could think of. But they were firm in their resolve and said no to every offer.

We had done everything we could do. We had prepared. We had done the best we knew how. But it simply was not enough.

My heart was filled with an urgent prayer: “Father, please help us to know what to say or do.”

At last it became evident that our trip had been in vain. It appeared that nothing would change their minds. But as we began to prepare to leave, something happened. The Spirit of the Lord entered the room. It was tangible. Everyone in the room felt it. It was one of the most powerful spiritual experiences I have ever felt.

Miguel Dueñas, who was not a member of the Church, was clearly touched. With tears in his eyes, he turned to his brother and said, “If we can’t sell our ancestral home, couldn’t we sell the very best of the property we have across the street?”

His brother responded affirmatively. We then talked about the other property. They owned several hundred acres across the main road from their ancestral home, with the heart of the property jutting out slightly so that every car that traveled the road would see the temple.

That was the property they offered for the temple of the Lord. It truly was a miracle. From that moment forward, the blessings of the Lord attended the process. On August 21, 2011, President Henry B. Eyring, then-First Counselor in the First Presidency, dedicated the temple to the Lord’s service.

I testify that a beautiful temple graces the hills of San Salvador not as a result of anything Brother Fox or I said or

did. It stands there today because of the powerful ministrings of the Holy Spirit of our Almighty God.

Our Merciful Father

If the Lord cares enough to send His Spirit and make available a site for a temple, do you not suppose He will send His Spirit and prepare your heart and guide your steps?

You are inexpressibly more precious than a plot of land. You are a beloved child of your Eternal Father. You are the offspring of the God of the universe!

Do you not suppose that He is mindful of you? Do you not suppose that He will use you and bless you in ways more glorious than are possible for you to imagine?

The scriptures tell us that if we “trust in the Lord with all [our] heart; and lean not unto [our] own understanding,” if in all our ways we “acknowledge him, . . . he shall direct [our] paths” (Proverbs 3:5–6).

King Benjamin perfectly summarized the message I wish to leave with you. He said: “I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness” (Mosiah 2:41).

I raise my voice in praise of and witness to this truth. I testify that I have seen the promised blessings of God fulfilled over and over in my own life and in the lives of many others.

I promise that if you will but incline your hearts to your Father in Heaven, if you will strive each day to love and follow Jesus Christ more perfectly, if you will in compassion and kindness share the burdens and lift up the hands of those around you who are struggling, if you will seek to become true disciples of our beloved Savior, the Lord God of heaven, will direct your paths. He will use you for His sublime purposes. He will bless you in ways you cannot imagine. ■

From a devotional address, “God Will Use You, God Will Bless You,” delivered at Brigham Young University on November 3, 2015.

We Believe in Being Perfect—in Christ

During His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave us the challenging command to be perfect (see Matthew 5:48). But since we are all bound to make mistakes, how does God expect us to keep this commandment? By gaining a correct understanding of God's expectations for us, we can come to know what the prophet Moroni meant when he said we can become "perfect in Christ" (see Moroni 10:32–33).

What Does It Mean to Be Perfect?

"The Greek word for *perfect* can be translated as 'complete, finished, fully developed' (in Matthew 5:48, footnote *b*). Our Savior asks us to become complete, finished, fully developed—to be perfected in the virtues and attributes He and our Father in Heaven exemplify."¹

"The perfection that the Savior envisions for us is much more than errorless performance. It is the eternal expectation as expressed by the Lord in his great intercessory prayer to his Father—that we

might be made perfect and be able to dwell with them in the eternities ahead."²

"I believe that Jesus did not intend His sermon on this subject to be a verbal hammer for battering us about our shortcomings. No, I believe He intended it to be a tribute to who and what God the Eternal Father is and what we can achieve with Him in eternity."³ ■

NOTES

1. Gerrit W. Gong, "Becoming Perfect in Christ," *Ensign*, July 2014, 17.
2. Russell M. Nelson, "Perfection Pending," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 86.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Be Ye Therefore Perfect—Eventually," *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 41.



"Understanding the Savior's freely given atoning love can

free us from self-imposed, incorrect, and unrealistic expectations of what perfection is."

Elder Gerrit W. Gong of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Becoming Perfect in Christ," *Ensign*, July 2014, 14.

What God Expects

“Deny yourselves of all ungodliness . . . and love God with all your might, mind and strength” (Moroni 10:32).

With faith in Jesus Christ, repent when we fall short.

Keep the covenants, or promises, we have made with God.

Do our best to keep the commandments throughout our lives.

“Continue in patience until ye are perfected” (Doctrine and Covenants 67:13).



What God *Doesn't* Expect

Be perfect *now!* Never make mistakes.

Be burdened by an attitude of perfectionism.

Be constantly busy—all work and no play.

Be critical of self for lack of progress.

Try to “earn” your way into heaven.

The Telescope Perspective

We thought we'd humor a man who invited us to look at the moon. But he helped our family to see something we otherwise might have missed.

By Peter Coomans

As our family exited a museum, we saw a man standing outside who had set up a telescope. “Do you want to look at the moon?” he asked.

We hesitated. We could already see the moon. It was right there in the sky. But to humor him, we agreed.

As each of us took our turn, we gasped in amazement. Seen in the sky, the gentle light of the moon was beautiful as always. But seen through the telescope, the moon was magnificent.

We thanked our newfound friend and asked him for his recommendations to buy a telescope of our own. He said to look for two things: (1) a sturdy base and (2) the biggest aperture possible (referring to the diameter of the lens) so that the telescope lets in a lot of light.

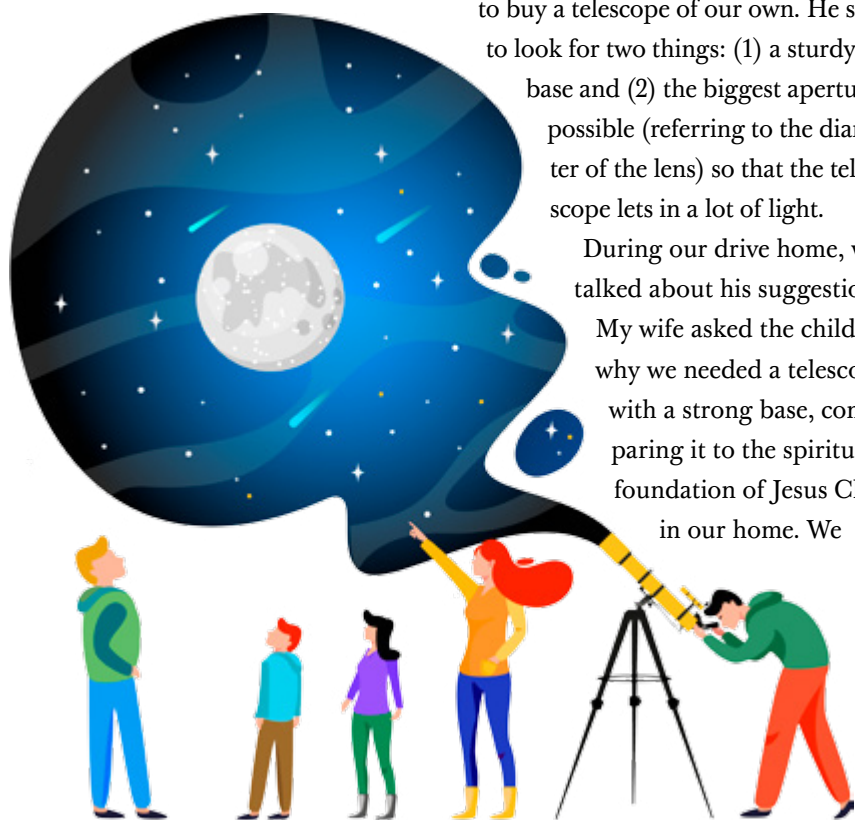
During our drive home, we talked about his suggestions.

My wife asked the children why we needed a telescope with a strong base, comparing it to the spiritual foundation of Jesus Christ in our home. We

discussed ways the Savior strengthened our family. True disciples stand on a sure foundation and teach others by example. “Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation” (Isaiah 28:16).

The light captured by the telescope reminded us that the Savior is the Light of the World. We decided that if we would look to Him, our perspective would change, just as our view of the moon had changed when we looked through the telescope. If we fill ourselves with the light that comes from Christ, we will see life in a true perspective. “That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (Doctrine and Covenants 50:24).

When we take upon ourselves the name of the Savior, He becomes our foundation. As we follow Him, we see the world in a new light, His light. ■
The author lives in Utah, USA.



Child of Promise

By Larry Hiller

Church Magazines

*They held their child of promise one more time,
Then whispered soft farewell until the day
When, glorious, she would rise again and run
Into their eager, outstretched arms to stay.*

*Until that time they set aside
A parent's cherished dreams for her—
First step, first word, first simple prayer,
The many joys they'd hoped to share
Too soon outgrown and put away,
Replaced with dreams more sweet and fair.
Bright hope illuminates the night
As they await the perfect Light.*

*Another mother held her promised Child,
Rejoiced in Him and marveled as He grew
From grace to grace to perfect Son of God.
Still, came the time when sorrow pierced her, too,
As suffering, dying on the cross,
He kept His promise to atone,
To conquer death and rise again,
Make all things right, restore all loss.
From dawn of time to end of days,
With power and grace from heaven's throne,
His love and mercy span the years
To heal all sorrows, dry all tears.*



Geckos, Crickets, and Time with Children

By Nancy Thomas

I never imagined that reptiles would have a lasting effect on my relationship with my son.

My son Dallin has always loved reptiles. I, on the other hand, have never liked them. He was allowed to own a reptile on the condition that whatever he chose was able to fit in the hose of a vacuum, just in case it got out of its cage while he was at school. We went through several options, from frogs to iguanas, before settling on two velvety leopard geckos named Fuzz and Diane.

Dallin's new buddies joined our family when he was seven years old. One aspect of owning geckos that I did not anticipate was the need to feed them crickets—live crickets—once a week. For years Dallin and I made “cricket runs.” They were rarely convenient, usually happening late at night while trying to beat the clock before the pet store closed.

Diane only lived for three years, but Fuzz lived for many years, healthy

and happy. Toward the end of Dallin's senior year in high school, he was assigned to give a demonstration for his public speaking class. He prodded my husband and me for ideas. We suggested he discuss leopard geckos because he already knew so much about them and could bring Fuzz in as a prop. Dallin then told us that Fuzz had died.

“Are you serious? When did he die?” I asked in disbelief.

Dallin told us that Fuzz had died a week before.

“He's in my room, but don't worry. He won't stink. He's double-bagged.”

After seeing our astonishment, Dallin explained, “I'm doing an experiment—I want to watch him decay.”

Dallin's experiment turned out to be more than watching him decay. He would stall the process by putting Fuzz in the freezer for a couple of weeks and

then bring him out to thaw and decay some more.

A year later, when Dallin was on his mission, I was cleaning out the freezer and found Fuzz, still double-bagged, in the back. Since I was preparing a package to send to Dallin, I thought it would be funny to pass on his little experiment. I carefully put Fuzz in a box, wrapped it in beautiful black and white polka-dot paper, and tucked it neatly into Dallin's care package with a note that read, “There is a surprise in your package.” Then I anxiously waited for his response.

“I've thought about that gecko since getting it back,” he wrote. “Not so much about the actual gecko, but about all of the time spent on car rides every week to get crickets and run other errands, listening to your ideas, stories, and your testimony while in the car. It was a good excuse to have to go and get



to talk to you (not that I talked much, but I did listen)."

Buying crickets. Who knew? As parents we can't always plan the timing of our influence. It often just happens. It may be when we are tucking our kids in bed at night, riding a ski lift together, or just running errands in the car. We have to take time to be with our children.

The Savior showed the greatest example of taking time for children. After a long day of teaching the

Nephites, Christ commanded the people to bring their little ones to Him. He knelt among the little children and prayed. After the prayer, He wept. And then "he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them" (3 Nephi 17:21).

Those children knew that Jesus loved them. He willingly took time for them. He listened to them, prayed for them, and blessed them. Those who witnessed this were filled with such

power that the account records, "The eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard, before, so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father" (3 Nephi 17:16).

The influence that Jesus Christ had on those children lasted for generations. As we invest our interest and time in our children, even if we're just going with them to buy crickets, hopefully our influence will last for generations as well. ■

The author lives in Maine, USA.



By Neill F. Marriott

Served as Second Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency from 2013 to 2018.

Let's Go Together

We have to be willing to sit by, listen to, and share
with those who seem different from us.

While attending a conference in Tennessee, USA, I was invited to a formal dinner. As my husband, David, and I walked into the banquet hall, I noticed name cards at each setting that indicated where everyone should sit. When I found my name card, my heart sank.

Sitting next to my assigned chair was a man with a white beard, a turban, and a rather unexpressive face. He looked so different from me. I considered asking David to switch seats with me, but that wouldn't have been polite. So, I sat down and introduced myself.

The man's face came alive. His eyes sparkled as he introduced himself as Baldev Singh. We started off with normal chitchat, and soon I felt like I was talking to an old friend. I asked if he would tell me about his turban. "Sure!" he said. And he told me about his beliefs as a Sikh.

It turned out that we were very much alike. Baldev believes in family with all his heart. He values his religious community. He believes in feeding the poor. Just like me.

He talked about Sikhism's hundreds of years of tradition. I talked about my beliefs and why I joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We had some wildly different beliefs about what happens after death, but that was OK. As we talked and shared, I came to love him.

When we got up to leave after the dinner, Baldev took David and me by the hand. "I'd like to pray with you," he said, and he asked David to pray. So, the three of us stood in the banquet hall, held hands, and bowed our heads while David prayed. He prayed for unity, love, and understanding. When he finished, we hugged. As we said good night, I knew I would support Baldev Singh's right to live his religion just as fervently as I'd support my right to live mine.





How grateful I am that I overcame my initial hesitation that night. Had I let my fear and misunderstanding stop me from talking to Baldev, I would have missed out on connecting with a wonderful person. Instead of building a foundation of understanding, I could have built a wall between us. We can't do that. We've got to break down those walls. We have to be willing to sit by, listen to, and share with those who seem different from us. That is one way we can defend religious freedom.

I'm not a politician or a theologian, but I don't have to be to defend religious freedom. To me, it is all about being personal. You can take a powerful stand for religious freedom just by reaching out on a one-on-one, personal level.

Three things come to mind as I think about this personal, one-on-one level. First, we need to be aware of what's really happening and what's really needful. Second, we need to be articulate about who we are at our core and why. And third, we need to be active.

Be Aware

In 1962, when I was about 12 years old, my father was a member of the board at a church in Louisiana, USA. At breakfast one morning, he sat deep in thought until he finally turned to me and asked if I thought we should let black

people come to our church. "The board spent a long time talking about it last night," he said.

My father was an attorney and a judge. He had helped start a home for battered women and another home for runaway youth. He worked with black people all the time. He cared about them; he served them. And yet there he was wondering if we should let them in.

A hurt feeling bloomed in me, and I said, "Daddy, could you stand at the door and turn them away?"

Being aware means being aware of whatever ruts we may be in and being willing to climb out of those unthinking, cultural habits to get a broader view. I was stuck in a rut when I first looked at Baldev, and my father was following a cultural attitude back in 1962 as he thought about who should be allowed in church. But we climbed out of those ruts. Every time we do this, even on an individual level, we start to shift our culture.

We need to be aware of what is happening in the world around us. We need to read up on what is going on, about attacks on religious freedom.

We need to be aware of the gaps that may be dividing us and of how to bridge them. We need to be aware of the goodness of others and to identify the strength even in those with differences. Just saying, "I see your earnest desire to do

what you feel is right and good; let's talk," can be that start. Being aware can lead to a groundswell of unity, understanding, and coming together as a community, but it takes one-on-one experiences.

Be Articulate

What is your core identity? Can you state it clearly to people?

My core identity is that I'm a daughter of God. I know of my dependence on Jesus Christ and His Atonement for my sins. I know that my path is part of the plan of salvation given by Heavenly Father to return me to Him. Were it not for Jesus Christ, I could not return, nor could I have great joy, hope, or direction. He is the source to which I must go. And from that source, I feel a need and a desire to reach out and build bridges and cross gaps of misunderstanding. That's who I am.

What would you say to someone who asked you what makes you tick? That's where we start—we can be articulate about who we are.

Being articulate means having the courage to speak up and offer your opinion. Sister Joy D. Jones, Primary General President, told me about a time she and her husband, Rob, attended a parent-teacher meeting for one of their children. As the teacher reviewed the curriculum for the class, she mentioned a scheduled movie that Rob and Joy knew wasn't up to their family's standards.

Rob raised his hand and in a calm and respectful way said, "I would prefer that my son not see this movie. It is not something we feel would be good for him to view, and its content is against our principles."

The teacher was a little taken aback, but then another hand went up and then another. Before long, about a third of the parents had their hands up, saying, "We feel the same."

The teacher said: "It seems that there are enough people here who do not feel right about this movie; I'll remove it from the curriculum."

One couple with courage to state their opinion made a difference for the class.

Being articulate does not mean trying to squash differing opinions. We want to allow differences to live. They are what give us the grit to grow and the impetus to learn and to stretch. We're not trying to all be the same, but one voice of courage can make a big difference in many people's lives. So, be articulate.

Be Active

I think there are times when we need to be willing to fight for our beliefs, but that doesn't mean we need to fight one another. Wars of words and ill feelings in our families and neighborhoods won't get us anywhere. They just pull us further apart. Instead, we can defend religious freedom by

taking a first step in reaching out to others and starting a conversation.

You might be surprised by who wants to join you. I asked the Relief Society president of my ward if she and her counselors would come chat about religious freedom. She suggested that we meet at the church and invite anyone who wanted to come.

That night I set up ten chairs. Forty people showed up! Our discussion was robust and rich with shared feelings, questions, and answers. We talked about what religious freedom is and why we have to defend it. A sense of awareness grew as people started to ask themselves questions and reach out to others.

"By small and simple things are great things brought to pass" (Alma 37:6). We might be that small and simple thing that reaches out and starts a circle of influence. And that circle of influence will grow, whether you're a politician, a theologian, or a nonpolitical person like me.

About a year ago, David and I participated in a prayer service at a mosque in our area. We joined in the rituals and got a feel for the Muslim faith. Afterward, the imam, or prayer leader, rushed over and threw his arms around David. There is a hunger in many people to connect, to understand, and to be understood. We can act and be that bridge of understanding.

Let's Go Together

I once saw a huge mural in Johannesburg, South Africa, that read, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

When you are aware, articulate, and active, you can have a personal influence. If everyone would do that, culture would change, understanding would deepen, and freedom would grow. ■

From an address, "What Can a Lay Person Do to Protect Religious Freedom?" delivered at the Religious Freedom Annual Review, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University, June 21, 2018.



The Perfect Plan

When was the last time your plans fell through? Last week? Mine did. No matter how perfect our plans, **unexpected twists and turns through life** seem to be a fact of mortality. I never planned to have four miscarriages between my two children, but I did. When prayerfully laid plans surprise us in unexpected ways—or come crashing down all together—**what do we do?** In this issue, young adults from a variety of circumstances share the answers they have found to this question **when their family planning didn't go as planned.**

For me and my husband, miscarriages stopped our tracks and broke our hearts (see page 42). For Katherine and her husband, sorting through the opinions of society to find the voice of the Lord proved an obstacle in their path (see page 46). For Mindy, a wait on marriage delayed her plans, and then, once she was married, the surprise of twins sped plans forward. She shares some **things to remember as we face the many unexpected challenges** that may arise (see page 48). Sarah and her husband were blessed with a child earlier than expected. She provides inspiring insights on how to **align our will with the Lord's on a journey that often turns out differently than we anticipated** (digital only). For James

and his wife, children came much, much later than expected. He shares the guidance, comfort, and even joy they experienced as they dealt with the poignant challenges of infertility (digital only).

In additional digital-only articles, Christina shares her fears and hesitations about becoming a mother, and Brian details how deployment almost derailed his and his wife's family plans. Katie, a wise young single adult, provides insight into the eternal nature of our identity as parents.

Whether you are waiting for children to bless your home, have more children than you originally planned, or are simply waiting for marriage, one thing is certain: **Heavenly Father has the perfect plan**, and He is ever guiding and sustaining us in personal, one-on-one ways as we seek to align our will with His.

Regardless of the outcome, simply **aspiring to bring children into this world will bless us** with a more profound perspective of Heavenly Father's great plan of happiness. Wherever you are on your family-growing journey, as you read our stories, I sincerely hope the Holy Ghost will guide you to insights or answers that may help you along your way.

Happy reading!

Martina

YOUNG ADULTS

BEST ADVICE . . .

Young adults share the best advice they've ever received about having children:

"When we were first married, a wonderful teacher said that it's a decision between you, your spouse, and the Lord. He warned us that often people say it's between husband and wife but leave the Lord out. Keeping the Lord in our decisions has blessed us more than I can say."

—**Bonnie Cornick, Idaho, USA**

"Don't wait for the 'perfect time' to have children—you'll be waiting forever."

—**Annie Hall, Queensland, Australia**

"Don't worry about what others say! It's between you and your spouse and Heavenly Father."

—**Kulani Walters, Auckland, New Zealand**

What's the best advice you've ever received about overcoming adversity? Send us your response at [ensign](https://www.ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

ChurchofJesusChrist.org by June 30, 2019.

SHARE YOUR STORY

Do you have an amazing story to share? Or do you want to see articles about certain topics? If so, we want to hear from you! You can submit your articles or your feedback at [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

ABOUT THE YOUNG ADULT AUTHORS

Marianne von Bracht

delights in family time, music, and sunlight. As a native to Michigan, USA, where the sun doesn't always shine, she knows the Light of Christ can brighten any day, no matter how thick the clouds.



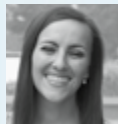
Katherine Ramirez de Pineda

is from Managua, Nicaragua, and joined the Church when she was 18 years old. She studied how to teach English as a foreign language and works as an elementary school teacher. She and her husband were sealed in the Guatemala City Guatemala Temple and have three beautiful children.



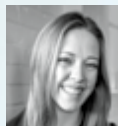
Mindy Selu

is an editor for the *Liahona* magazine. She's also a wife, a cat lover, and the mother of twin girls. Her hobbies include taking pictures, watching movies, and making endless to-do lists.



Katie Sue Embley

thinks the world is full of beautiful people whose stories should be shared. She studies journalism and Spanish, with the goal to #sharegoodness.



Brian Morrill, his wife, and their two girls are stationed at Naval Station Norfolk in Virginia, USA. As a lieutenant, he works as a naval flight officer on the E-2 Hawkeye.



Christina Crosland

recently graduated from Brigham Young University. She spends her free time reading and collecting books for her future dream library. She and her husband are now enjoying their new home in Texas, USA, with their baby girl.



Sarah Keenan lives in upstate New York, USA, with her husband and baby girl. She served a mission in Melbourne, Australia, speaking Mandarin Chinese. She loves to read books, try (and often epically fails at) new DIY projects, and go hiking with her little family.



James Knab's favorite things include spending time with his wife and children near water, especially on his old sailboat. He grew up in Utah, USA, but has lived in Texas for the past 10 years. He served in the China Hong Kong Mission and loves to travel with his wife.



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DIGITAL ONLY

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Overcoming My Fear of Having Children

By Christina Crosland

Changing the Plan

By Sarah Keenan

Happiness during Infertility

By James Knab

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Waiting at the Stoplights of Life

Experiencing one miscarriage after another felt like a series of stoplights in my life, but as I turned to the Lord, I found that each loss was accompanied by peace, perspective, and growth.





By Marianne von Bracht

My fingers clenched the steering wheel as I stared anxiously at the red light. When it finally changed to green, I sped forward only to wait at another seemingly endless stoplight. I was still 10 minutes away from the lesson with the sister missionaries that was supposed to have started 5 minutes ago. If I had been a wiser mother, I would have predicted the 15-minute tantrum my almost-three-year-old daughter erupted into as we headed out the door, but I hadn't. Yes, the world would go on if I was late, but since I was trying to do something good, didn't I deserve at least *some* of the traffic lights to work in my favor? As I waited impatiently at yet another stoplight, I could feel my frustration tightening into anger. "I'm trying to do something good; trying my best! Where is the help I need?"

Twenty months earlier, I had found myself asking parallel questions in a parallel situation, only in a place with all the peace and serenity that my stoplight moment lacked.

In the Sacred Grove, in Palmyra, New York, the leaves were barely budding on the brown branches surrounding me. The newly green shrubbery sprinkling the ground seemed to breathe life into the air. Only the rustles of a gentle breeze, our stroller, and my footsteps reached my ears—no cars, no roads, no loud conversations. Yet despite the serenity, my mind swayed with questions and uncertainty. My husband, Lance, and I had been waiting 72 painstaking hours for my doctor to call with results of a last-minute ultrasound and blood test. I was desperate for answers and consolation.

Receiving Comfort

"The Lord did visit them with his Spirit, and said unto them: Be comforted. And they were comforted" (Alma 17:10).

I found myself staring at the winter-worn flower beds outside the Palmyra New York Temple. My mind fully articulated the questions weighing on it: "If I lose this pregnancy, why? What then?" As gentle as the spring breeze around me, the Lord spoke to my mind the comfort I had been yearning for. I no longer needed the doctor to let me know; I knew I would lose this pregnancy, but I suddenly understood that this tiny soul was in the perfect, loving hands of Heavenly Father. All at once, the desperation that had consumed me was replaced with a reassuring peace that sustained me through the following weeks and months.

Waiting for the Green Light

*"I have been thankful for the many ways the Lord has visited me with the Comforter when I needed peace. Yet our Father in Heaven is concerned not just about our comfort but even more about our upward progress."*¹ —President Henry B. Eyring

Several days after visiting Palmyra, I experienced a traumatic miscarriage. Although a sense of peace continued to sustain me, I felt physically and emotionally weak from the loss and unprepared for the waiting that followed. I first waited for lab results, which indicated a rare, partial molar pregnancy. I then waited for blood tests weekly, biweekly, and finally monthly to ensure no signs of a possible resultant cancer. Even through the long months of waiting, Lance and I could easily see the Lord's hand comforting and reassuring us through that time. The partial molar pregnancy had no lasting effects, and after only six months my doctor said we could try to have another baby. I was back on the path to progress in my life; the light had finally changed from red to green.

But just under three months and several blood tests later, I miscarried again—this time only a week before Christmas. Another three months passed and my hopes soared after another positive pregnancy test, only to miscarry a week later—yet another stoplight.

Putting Faith to the Test

*"Even if we have strong faith, many mountains will not be moved. . . . If all opposition were curtailed, if all maladies were removed, then the primary purposes of the Father's plan would be frustrated."*² —Elder David A. Bednar

I got pregnant again, and my next due date was going to land right around the following Christmas. I had a good feeling about this

pregnancy. We had seen the heartbeat on an early ultrasound and knew that family members were praying for us. While we were sitting in an endowment session in the temple one day, I had a distinct stream of thoughts: "If I were to lose this pregnancy, would my faith hold up? Of course it would. But of course I won't have another miscarriage because this time I am ready to accept the Lord's will no matter what."

Despite my positive attitude, several weeks later I saw the signs, went in for the ultrasounds, and began the painful process that I felt all too familiar with. My faith did not hold up quite like I had expected. The answers that had sustained me through my previous miscarriages no longer seemed adequate. A wave of depression set in. I felt broken, empty, and even slightly betrayed. My husband and I weren't the only ones waiting on the Lord; our daughter frequently told us how much she wanted a baby brother or sister. Our hearts ached for her as well. As I turned my vulnerable emotions over to the Lord in fervent prayer, I again received a clear witness that Heavenly Father was very aware of my pain and circumstances and that He loved me. Although my circumstances remained the same, this sweet and simple experience miraculously lightened the burden I felt and gave me the ability to cope and even feel happy as I continued through my day-to-day life. Whatever the future held, I would be OK.

When genetic testing came back several months later with no answers, we again felt confused about the purpose of these setbacks in our lives. I tried my best to set my own desires aside and align my will with the Lord's, but during the difficult moments my heart would cry out, "What am I supposed to learn from this? I'm trying to do something good! Where is the help I need?"





Changing My Reaction

*"Hard is the constant! We all have challenges. The variable is our reaction to the hard."*³ —Elder Stanley G. Ellis

Eight months after my fourth miscarriage and just several weeks after my stressful drive to meet the sister missionaries, I was peacefully waiting at a stoplight on my way home when my answers came. As I watched the cars stopped next to me and the cars making their way down the road ahead of me, I caught an eternal perspective of my life. I suddenly realized that all that mattered in my journey was that I stay on the path that would take me back to my heavenly home. How many "stoplights" I waited at would have no effect on my destination. How I responded to them would.

I began to cherish every stoplight in my life, both metaphorical and literal. Instead of wasted time, each became an opportunity to acquire patience and to gain perspective that comes only through waiting. Just as every red traffic light is paired with a green light in a different direction, I found that every stoplight in my life opened an avenue for growth, just not necessarily in the way I had been planning to grow right then. Instead of dwelling on the disappointments, I began to delight in the opportunity for progress that every unexpected turn of events provided.

Focusing on the Savior

*"A critical question to ponder is 'Where do we place our faith?' Is our faith focused on simply wanting to be relieved of pain and suffering, or is it firmly centered on God the Father and His holy plan and in Jesus the Christ and His Atonement?"*⁴ —Elder Donald L. Hallstrom

Two long years after my first miscarriage, I gave birth to a beautiful, healthy baby boy. In the time leading up to that joyful day for our family, I came to realize that Jesus Christ did not suffer for me in order to remove all suffering from my life. Rather, He suffered so that I could be strengthened through and grow from the challenges I face. Although the heartbreaking moments of loss and the long months of waiting are still painful to remember, they have become a treasure in my life. In those sacred moments, I came to understand how individually the Savior knows my suffering. He succored me in a way that only one who knows my personal sorrows could succor. While the opposition in our lives often seems to thwart our plans for progress, as we turn to the Lord, that opposition can function as the friction that propels us to a higher end: knowing and abiding in the Savior's perfect love. ■

The author lives in Texas, USA.

NOTES

1. Henry B. Eyring, "My Peace I Leave with You," *Ensign*, May 2017, 17.
2. David A. Bednar, "Accepting the Lord's Will and Timing," *Ensign*, Aug. 2016, 34.
3. Stanley G. Ellis, "Do We Trust Him? Hard Is Good," *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 113.
4. Donald L. Hallstrom, "Has the Day of Miracles Ceased?" *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 90.

People questioned us for having more children, but through our posterity, we are able to better understand Heavenly Father's love and develop our divine potential.

Blessed by Having Children

By Katherine Ramirez de Pineda

Is this your last child?" When I was pregnant with my third child, already having two other kids under age five, people often seemed to have an opinion about my children. "Is this your last one?" "Don't you think you're going too fast?" "What are you going to do with three kids?" were questions I would normally hear. Although it was understandable, since people in my country usually have only one or two children because of economic issues, what people didn't know is that when my husband and I were dating, we talked about how many children we wanted and when to have them. Family planning was an important and serious decision to us, so it had to be made between the two of us, always

seeking for God's guidance. We listened to the Spirit rather than the voices of those around us, and we have been blessed by having children.

When the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, He promised him a numerous posterity (see Genesis 17:5–6; 22:17). From that passage of scripture, we get the sense that to our Heavenly Father, having children is one of the greatest blessings we can receive. Through our posterity, we are able to better understand our Heavenly Father's love, and we develop our divine and eternal potential. When you have children, you not only help those spirits that are in the premortal life to come to the earth and get a body, but you also have the privilege of teaching them the gospel.





I believe that few things in life prepare us better for eternal life than having children. Our families are where we best learn to apply the Lord's attributes. Now that I'm a mom, I'm reminded daily of how important it is to stay close to my Heavenly Father. I pray all the time, asking for guidance, strength, and patience and thanking Him for the many blessings that come along with having children.

Parenthood is a life-changing experience filled with some challenges but lots of joy. Every time I listen to my oldest daughter singing a Primary song, or watch my two-year-old son trying to keep his eyes closed during our family prayer, or when I hold my sleeping baby boy in my arms, I feel my heart fill with

indescribable joy. Our children are the fuel that keeps us enduring until the end, no matter how many challenges we face in life. I'm really thankful to my Heavenly Father for giving me the opportunity to be my children's mother.

I know that our Heavenly Father loves us. I have felt His love during those sweet little moments full of real everlasting happiness as well as during trials. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to show us the way back to our heavenly home. I love my family, and I know that families can be together forever. ■

The author lives in Managua, Nicaragua.

Planning Your Family

ACCORDING to
GOD'S PLAN

By Mindy Selu
Church Magazines

Despite your best intentions and righteous desires, your plans for your family likely won't go according to plan. Here are a few things to keep in mind.

When I was younger, I had my life pretty much planned out: attend college, marry young, and get started on having my six or so children—all before I turned 30.

Well, with 30 fast approaching, I had graduated college but wasn't married yet. Plans foiled.

When I did get married, my husband and I made a new plan together. But several months and one shocking ultrasound later, there was again an unexpected piece to our plan. The appearance of twins reminded my husband and me that despite your best intentions, things rarely go as planned. (But for the record, if I could have chosen twins, I definitely would have!)

Perhaps you've had experiences when trying to plan out your family—and life in general—did not go as planned. There are surprise babies, surprise promptings, and other surprises that make things complicated (to say the least). Certainly no one really plans on having triplets or a child with disabilities. No one plans on any of the countless medical issues that can delay or deter childbearing. And yet it happens.

So while you can't plan for every situation, here are five things you can keep in mind as you go.

1. The Commandment to Have Children Is, Well, a Commandment

Church leaders have stated, “We believe in children.”¹ It was the first commandment given to Adam and Eve, and it’s the same commandment given to husbands and wives today: “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Genesis 1:28). As President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) taught, “It is our solemn duty, our precious privilege—even our sacred opportunity—to welcome to our homes and to our hearts the children who grace our lives.”²

For those who have tried but are unable to have children, the Lord knows your righteous desires. He keeps all His promises to those who are faithful to Him. “Faithful members whose circumstances do not allow them to receive the blessings of . . . parenthood in this life will receive all promised blessings in the eternities, provided they keep the covenants they have made with God.”³

2. It’s between You, Your Spouse, and the Lord

Despite what your ward members, casual acquaintances, people at the grocery store, and all of your relatives might think, your family plans are really not up for public debate or discussion. Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “When to have a child and how many children to have are private decisions to be made between a husband and wife and the Lord. These are sacred decisions—decisions that should be made with sincere prayer and acted on with great faith.”

He also added, “We should not judge one another on this matter.”⁴ Even with that admonition, however, odds are that someone, somewhere, is still going to judge you about some aspect of your plans, so just remember that no one besides you, your spouse, and the Lord knows all the intimate details of your life, your health, your unique situation, and the personal revelation you’ve received regarding childbearing.

Likewise, make sure that you aren’t the one judging others—you don’t know all the private details of *their* lives or what trials they might be facing.



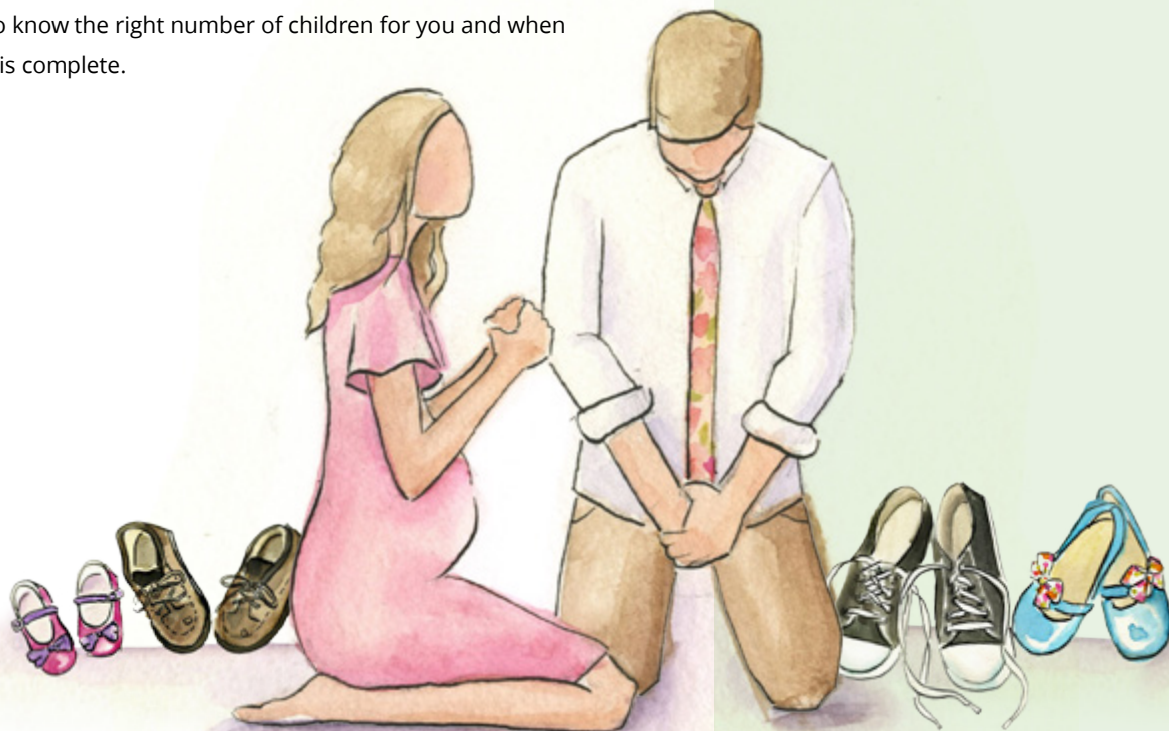
3. There's No Magic Number

As husband and wife, you are commanded to “multiply, and replenish the earth” (Genesis 1:28), but there's no magic number for how many children we're supposed to have, and it's not a contest. For some couples, a large number of children might end up being welcomed. For others, fewer children may complete their family. And that's OK; that's wonderful!

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) taught: “The Lord has told us to multiply and replenish the earth that we might have joy in our posterity. . . . But he did not designate the number, nor has the Church. That is a sacred matter left to the couple and the Lord.”⁵

There are so many factors to take into account when considering the number of children to have: both a husband and a wife's physical, mental, and emotional health; their financial situation; and more. It's OK to know your limits when it comes to your “sacred duty to rear [your] children in love and righteousness, [and] to provide for their physical and spiritual needs.”⁶ As you seek His direction, the Lord will guide you to know the right number of children for you and when your family is complete.

"As you face the decision to start your own eternal family, do not wait because you are afraid."



4. It's a Matter of Faith

Let's be honest, the thought of having a living, breathing human being who is completely dependent on you is kind of mind-blowing. And the thought of bringing children into this increasingly scary world can be overwhelming. But if fear is stopping you from having children, don't let it.

Elder Gary E. Stevenson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles addresses this fear:

"Many of you are . . . waiting to finish school, or pay off debt, or buy a home, or establish your career before getting married and starting a family. . . .

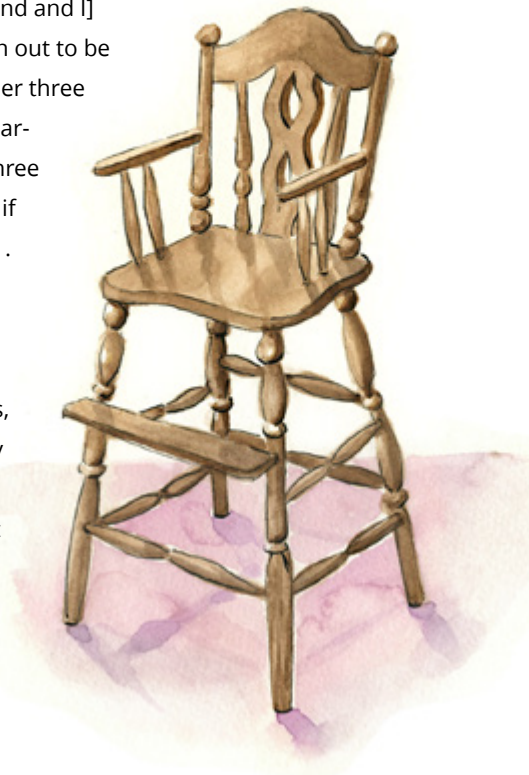
"Satan understands that the family is central to the Lord's plan of happiness. . . . He is striving to sow the dark seeds of fear in your heart, anything to keep you from experiencing the most glorious, rewarding part of mortality: the bright holiness and happiness that comes from finding an eternal partner and bringing Heavenly Father's children into this world.

"As you face the decision to start your own eternal family, do not wait because you are afraid. Remember the scripture, 'be not afraid, only believe' [Mark 5:36]. My marriage and family are . . . a literal personal manifestation of the great plan of happiness for me. I promise you that the same can be true for you. Focusing on the joyous light family life brings will cast out fear."⁷

5. Plan on Things Not Going as Planned

Regardless of our desires, our plans for our family aren't always completely up to us. Many Church leaders have shared how planning their family didn't go as planned. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles recalls: "[Sister Holland and I] wanted children as soon as we could get them, which in our case did not turn out to be as easy as we thought. . . . It took us three years to have our first child, another three to get a second, and four to get a third. And then that was it. A full-term miscarriage for a fourth closed that door to us forever, so we have rejoiced in the three children we have been able to raise. But what would our lives have been like if we had waited or delayed or worried unduly about the economics of it all? . . . I shudder to think of it."⁸

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and his wife, Ruth, faced an enormous challenge when Ruth was diagnosed with ovarian cancer when their only daughter was just 16 months old. Sister Renlund says, "It wasn't in our plan for me to have cancer as a young woman and have only one child."⁹ She explains, "I didn't expect to have a huge family, but I always thought we'd have more children. . . . Of course, adoption was an option, but because my health was uncertain, we weren't sure if I would be around to raise the child I had. I prayed for guidance, and at that point we knew our family was complete."¹⁰



Ardeth G. Kapp, former Young Women General President, and her husband, Heber, were never able to have children. She explained that to deal with life's unfulfilled expectations, we must accept that there will be trials. "Part of those trials is facing alternatives and making decisions," she says. "For those of us without children, the choices may seem incredibly difficult to make. What would the Lord have us do? To what extent do we seek medical attention? What about adoption and foster children? What about no children? . . . The choices are never simple."¹¹

Regardless of the challenges thrown into your plans, and whether your plans lead to adoption or other options, prayerfully relying on Heavenly Father's guidance will help you know how to adjust your plans. You never know what unexpected miracle He might have planned for your life. As Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said:

"Believe that your life will be infinitely better if you rely on God to guide your steps. He knows things you cannot possibly know, and He has a future prepared for you that you cannot possibly imagine. . . .

"You may not see it until much later, but you will look back and know that the Lord did indeed direct and guide your path."¹²

If planning out your family does go smoothly, be sensitive to those for whom it does not. Try to be aware of them and their feelings. We are to "love [our] neighbour" (Matthew 19:19), and we can better do so as we work to be more understanding and sensitive to the pains and struggles that others are experiencing.

"Your life will be infinitely better if you rely on God to guide your steps."



A Greater Plan

When planning your family doesn't go *exactly* as you and your spouse planned (and odds are it won't!), have faith in Heavenly Father's greater plan. His plan of happiness provides an eternal perspective that we can hold on to when our lives don't follow the path we think they should. President Russell M. Nelson reminds us, "If you've got faith, you can handle difficulties, knowing that with an eternal perspective, all will be well."¹³

What I'm trying to say is this: don't hold on too tightly to the plan you have for your future family. It might include more children than you thought. It might include fewer. It might include adoption, disabilities, twins, medical treatments, or loss. It might include not having children in this life. It will undoubtedly include vast amounts of trusting that Heavenly Father knows you and loves you and "wants your eternal happiness even more than do you."¹⁴

He sent us to earth to learn and grow and to do so in a family. As you and your spouse prayerfully make plans together and with Him for how you will help bring His children into this world, remember that they will be your greatest blessings—whether you have them in this life or in eternity. President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, reminds us: "The Savior taught that we should not lay up treasures on earth but should lay up treasures in heaven (see Matt. 6:19–21). In light of the ultimate purpose of the great plan of happiness, I believe that the ultimate treasures on earth and in heaven are our children and our posterity."¹⁵ ■

NOTES

1. See Neil L. Andersen, "Children," *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 28; Gordon B. Hinckley, *Cornerstones of a Happy Home* (pamphlet, 1984), 6.
2. Thomas S. Monson, "Precious Children—A Gift from God," *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 67.
3. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 1.3.3.
4. Neil L. Andersen, "Children," 28, 30; see also *Handbook 2*, 21.4.4.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Cornerstones of a Happy Home*, 6.
6. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, May 2017, 145.
7. Gary E. Stevenson, "Conquer Fear with the Fire of Faith" (Brigham Young University–Hawaii devotional, Apr. 18, 2015), devotional.byuh.edu.
8. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Be Not Afraid, Only Believe" (address to Church Educational System Religious Educators, Feb. 6, 2015), broadcasts.lds.org.
9. Ruth L. Renlund, in Quentin L. Cook, "Elder Dale G. Renlund: An Obedient Servant," *Ensign*, July 2016, 29.
10. Ruth Lybbert Renlund, "Just Call Me Ruth," The Mormon Women Project, May 12, 2010, mormonwomen.com.
11. Ardeth G. Kapp, "Just the Two of Us—for Now," *Ensign*, Feb. 1989, 22.
12. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "The Adventure of Mortality" (worldwide devotional for young adults, Jan. 14, 2018), broadcasts.lds.org.
13. Russell M. Nelson, "Men's Hearts Shall Fail Them" (*Mormon Messages* video), mormonchannel.org.
14. Richard G. Scott, "Trust in the Lord," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 17.
15. Dallin H. Oaks, "The Great Plan of Happiness," *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 75.



Things My Dad **Never** Taught Me

It's not just what our fathers teach us that matters; often it's what they *don't* teach us that can make the difference.

By Robison Wells

When I think of my dad, the words that the Lord said about Hyrum Smith come to mind: "I, the Lord, love him because of the integrity of his heart, and because he loveth that which is right before me" (Doctrine and Covenants 124:15).

Loving that which is right, my dad taught me many life lessons as I was growing up. But I'm especially grateful for the things he never taught me.

He never taught me to curse. I have a brother just a year older than I am, and the three of us would go camping or hiking as "just us men," and Dad never used that as a time to be profane or tell dirty jokes. He was as respectful when he was around us boys as when he was around my mom or my sister or his mother. I remember one time he was having a particularly bad day, working long hours on a Saturday when he probably would have rather been relaxing. With my brother and me in the backseat of our station wagon, he backed up into a curb, and in the heat of the moment he yelled an expletive. Then, getting his calm back, he turned to us and, with the most brokenhearted look I'd ever seen, apologized for what he had said. In the 30 years since, I've never heard him repeat it.





He never taught me to be selfish.

When my mom was pregnant with me, and my dad was in college, hoping to become a doctor, she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. She went downhill quickly, having to quit her job and having trouble taking care of my older brother. My dad, knowing where his priorities lay, went to his school counselor to figure out the quickest way to graduate: they found that instead of pre-med, he could graduate soon with a degree in psychology. It wouldn't get him to his goal, but he'd have a degree and maybe he could get a better job. He did it in a heartbeat. He gave up his career dream because he loved his wife more than that dream.



He never taught me that there was “men’s work” and “women’s work.”

My dad would go to work every morning, work all day, eat a lunch he prepared himself, come home tired, and then make dinner for the family. I remember as a boy, when my mom went into the hospital and the Relief Society started bringing meals to us, I was confused and said to Mom, “You mean they think *you* cook?” My dad did laundry, he vacuumed, and he helped us with our homework. And he never complained that my sick mom wasn’t “pulling her weight.”



He never taught me to quit learning.

In the evenings, after all his work was done, my dad would occasionally curl up with a novel, but more often he was hunched over an atlas or looking up something in a reference book. He was, and still is, a military history buff—his father having served in the infantry in World War II—and my dad would read histories and watch documentaries and study and take notes. And when he wasn’t reading to himself, he was reading to us: *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* and King Arthur stories and a dozen other things. He taught us that reading was cool, that stories were exciting, and that you never get too old for it.





He never taught me to shirk a calling. From my earliest memories, Dad was always engaged with the Church. He was in the bishopric. He was in the Young Men presidency. He was a high counselor. He was a bishop. And he took every calling seriously and magnified it. I remember when I first became an elder, before my mission, I went with him to give a blessing to a woman. The house was filthy. The couch was not just unwashed; it had bugs on it. I didn't want to touch anything. But Dad sat right down and made himself comfortable, as though he were visiting a relative. When the time came to give the woman a blessing, I admit that I hesitated placing my hands on her head, but my dad treated her as he would treat anyone else. He blessed her. And he helped her family.



My dad never taught me to be less than my best. I'm grown now, with kids of my own. And I'm striving to be the kind of man who loves that which is right and who knows not only what to teach his children but what *not* to teach them. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

Mary Magdalene— Tower of Strength

By Margot Hovley
Church Magazines

One of the Savior's most devoted disciples showed an enduring example of faithfulness.

On the western shore of the Sea of Galilee was the city of Magdala, an important fishing settlement and the hometown of Mary Magdalene. In Hebrew, the word *Magdala* means “tower,” and indeed, Mary Magdalene became a tower of strength, both to her fellow disciples and to us today as well.

Mark and Luke report that Mary was possessed of seven devils and that Jesus cast them out of her (see Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2). We don’t know when Mary’s discipleship began, but it’s safe to assume that this miracle performed by the Savior had a profound effect on her life. It freed her of an unthinkable burden and left her with a deeply personal and unforgettable witness of the Savior’s divine power, mercy, and kindness.

Later, Mary was among several women who witnessed the Crucifixion of Jesus. Matthew, Mark, and Luke say that the women watched from afar (see Matthew 27:55; Mark 15:40; Luke

23:49). But in the Gospel of John, we learn that Mary Magdalene stood near the cross, along with Mary, the Savior’s mother (see John 19:25). Whether near or far, what’s clear is that Mary felt compelled to be with the Savior as He endured immense agony and suffering. Even in—and perhaps *especially* in—this dark hour, her devotion to and love for the Savior were manifest. She would remain His disciple to the end.

Following the Savior’s death, Mary’s insistence to remain at His side continued. She was there among those at the tomb as His body was laid to rest and the stone was rolled in front of the sepulchre (see Matthew 27:61; Mark 15:47), even though Jewish Sabbath law dictated that she and the other disciples return home to rest.

But even the finality of a great, heavy stone could not break Mary’s devotion or keep her from her Lord. She returned to the tomb with other

devoted women on Sunday morning (see Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1–4; Luke 23:55). How distressing and confusing it must have been to see the tomb empty.

Mary, believing that the Savior’s body had been taken, wept openly. Behind her, the resurrected Savior asked, “Woman, why weepest thou?” (John 20:15). Today, some may think it strange that when Jesus first spoke to her, He called her “woman” instead of by her name, even though He clearly knew her well from their long association. But in Mary’s time, “woman,” as a form of address, was a term of great respect. The Lord used this form of address on various occasions in speaking to different women, and it was always with concern, kindness, respect, and tenderness (see John 2:4; 19:26; 20:15).

Mary, “supposing him to be the gardener,” asked where Christ’s body had been taken (see John 20:15). Jesus



then tenderly called her by name, and Mary turned to Him, recognizing Him instantly and showing Him great respect in return by saying, “Rabboni; which is to say, Master” (John 20:16).

The honor of being the first person to see the Savior as a glorified and resurrected being can’t be overstated. His victory over death is the greatest event in human history, and it was Mary, humble and devoted to the very end, who was the first to see the truth of it.

In part because of Mary Magdalene’s faithfulness and friendship with the Savior, she has become the subject of much speculation and elaborations.

Camille Fronk Olson writes, “The dearth of further details about Mary from the Gospels only stirred imaginations of later Christians to elaborate on history and morph her into whatever image fit their purposes.” Regardless of these speculations, however, says Sister Olson, “both history and scripture agree that she was a faithful disciple, teacher, and leader among the early Christians.”¹

May each of us follow her example and turn our hearts to the Savior, and may we always be found at His feet. ■

NOTE

1. Camille Fronk Olson, *Women of the New Testament* (2014), 211.

Magdala was a fishing community on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. *Magdala* means “tower” in Hebrew.



Cast Your Net

“And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.”

John 21:6

FISHING WITH A TRAMMEL NET

Usually, four to five people fished in one or more boats. They fished overnight so that the fish would not see the nets and be frightened away.

After the fish were hauled in and the fishermen returned to shore, the net layers were separated, washed, rinsed, and then hung to dry so that the net would not rot.

ADDITIONAL FACTS

The three main types of fish caught in the Sea of Galilee were musht (tilapia), biny (in the carp family), and sardines (tiny fish).

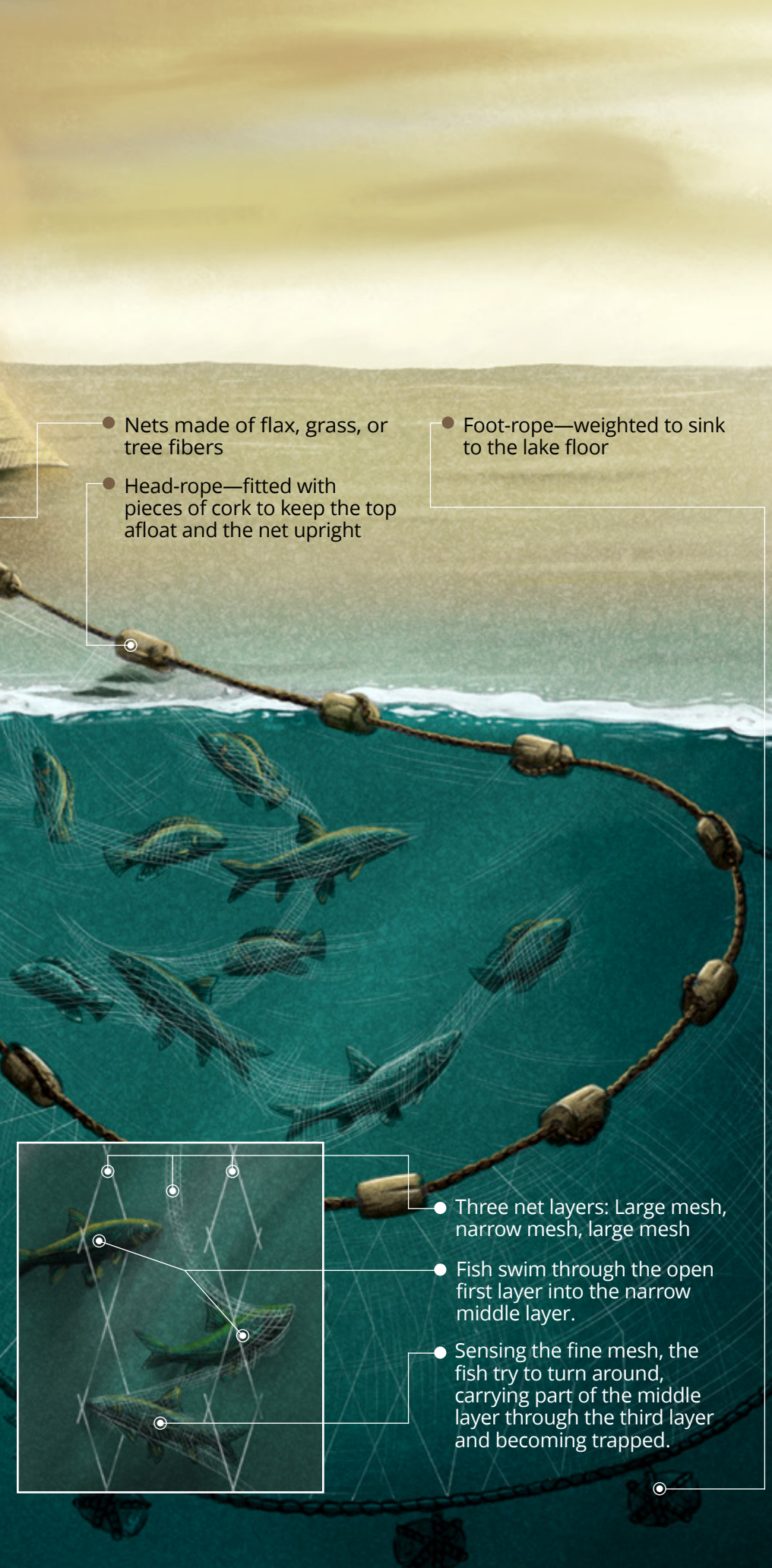
Trammel-net fishermen likely spent much of their time mending their nets.

The Savior twice guided the disciples to a miraculously large

haul of fish: once when He called them (see Luke 5:1–11) and once after His Resurrection (see John 21:1–11).

The Galilean fishermen whom the Savior called as His Apostles likely had a somewhat larger and thriving enterprise—they owned their boats and employed others (see Matthew 4:22; Mark 1:20). So when they “forsook all” (Luke 5:11), they may have been forsaking a lot.

The town of Taricheae (in Greek, “the place where fish are salted”) was a fish-salting center on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. After their miraculous catches, the disciples could have taken the fish there to preserve them. About four and a half miles (7.24 km) away is the town of Capernaum, where they could have taken the fish to market.



● Nets made of flax, grass, or tree fibers

● Head-rope—fitted with pieces of cork to keep the top afloat and the net upright

● Foot-rope—weighted to sink to the lake floor

● Three net layers: Large mesh, narrow mesh, large mesh

● Fish swim through the open first layer into the narrow middle layer.

● Sensing the fine mesh, the fish try to turn around, carrying part of the middle layer through the third layer and becoming trapped.

WHAT WE CAN LEARN

Fishing with trammel nets:

Requires dedication. When the Savior called His disciples to follow Him and be “fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19; see also Luke 5:10), He was inviting them to devote themselves to Him and the spreading of His gospel with the same dedication, hard work, skill, and knowledge their profession required. Though most of us must still earn a living in the world, we should avoid worldly distractions and strive to serve the Lord “with all [our] heart, might, mind and strength” (Doctrine and Covenants 4:2).

Requires teamwork. Uniting to work with fellow family members, ward members, friends, missionaries, and others is the most effective way to spread the gospel.

Brings in all kinds of fish. We share the message of the Lord’s restored gospel with all people.

Isn’t finished when the haul comes in. Simply casting the net and hauling it in may bring the fish in, but they’re useless unless they can be processed and brought to market. Similarly, we must take care to continue to give fellowship and love to all who come unto Jesus Christ and His Church through baptism.

Is most effective with the Lord’s help. To be successful, we must seek the Lord’s guidance and do His work in His way.



**By Elder
Anthony D.
Perkins**
Of the Seventy



PHOTOGRAPH OF KANSAS CITY MISSOURI TEMPLE BY ALAN FULLMER

The Greatest Cause in History

I invite you to be inspired by
and consecrated to the cause of Christ.

I begin with a war story from the ancient Americas. You might remember the confrontation between 25-year-old Captain Moroni and Zerahemnah. The Nephite dissenters and Lamanite armies who followed Zerahemnah fought to gain power (see Alma 43:5–8). In contrast, the Book of Mormon records, “The Nephites were inspired by a better cause, for they were not fighting for monarchy nor power but they were fighting for their homes and their liberties, their wives and their children, and their all, yea, for their rites of worship and their church” (Alma 43:45).

“Inspired by a better cause,” Captain Moroni and his people eventually won the battle.

Causes versus Institutions

When my son came home from his mission, he started a business with the support of his sister. As they were getting ready to launch their product, they asked me, “What cause should we support?” Unwittingly, I asked, “Why does a cause matter?” They chided me and said, “Dad, every successful business today must have a cause that it supports.”

Researchers have found that 91 percent of millennials will pay more for a product if it supports a cause.¹ As much as millennials are committed to causes, researchers have found that they distrust institutions—including organized religion.² Some young people may think that an institution cannot be dynamic and change the world the way a cause can, but history shows that most causes fade away after an initial period of excitement. The causes that survive are those that get organized as institutions.³

I recognize that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has institutional attributes, but I testify that the Church is more than just an institution. Our standardized approach to ward organization, meetings, ministering, lesson manuals, hymnbooks, handbooks, family home evening, and so forth serves a purpose.

That purpose, explained Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, is “to preach the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ and administer the ordinances of salvation—in other words, to bring people to Christ.”⁴ Elder Christofferson has also taught that the Savior works through His Church “to achieve needful things that cannot be accomplished by individuals or smaller groups,” such as dealing with poverty, taking the gospel to all the world, and building and operating temples.⁵

The Church is more than just an institution—it was organized by Jesus Christ to fulfill the Father’s cause to gather His family on both sides of the veil! This is the greatest cause in the history of the earth. I invite you to be inspired by and consecrated to this “better cause”—the cause of Christ and His Church—for the rest of your life.

The Cause of Zion

In the spring of 1829, Joseph Smith received several revelations that included this admonition: “Keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion” (Doctrine and Covenants 6:6; 11:6; 12:6). By 1842, Joseph himself said concerning the cause of Zion: “The building up of Zion is a cause that has interested the people of God in every age; it is a theme upon which prophets, priests and kings have dwelt with peculiar delight; they have looked forward with joyful anticipation to the day in which we live; and fired with heavenly and joyful anticipations they have sung and written and prophesied of this our day; but they died without the sight; we are the favored people that God has made choice of to bring about the Latter-day glory; it is left for us to see, participate in and help to roll forward the Latter-day glory.”⁶

How exciting is that? Prophets and kings yearned for the time in which we now live. In our day there are more Church members and more temple-worthy people than in any other dispensation. Every other dispensation ended in apostasy. In our day, a people will be prepared for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

The cause of building up Zion to which Joseph Smith and the Lord referred is set forth in the description of the holy city of Enoch: “And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them” (Moses 7:18).



Ministering is reaching out to serve as the Savior did. Some of that ministering will take place within the Church, but we hope that some of your ministering will take place among those not of our faith, motivated by the pure love of Christ.

Unity, righteousness, no poor—that is the cause of Zion that will prepare a people for the Savior’s return! That is what you and I are called to embrace, starting in our own families and then going to the world! Wisely, Elder Christofferson has taught, “We cannot wait until Zion comes for these things to happen—Zion will come only as they happen.”⁷

1. Unity

The first characteristic of a people prepared for the Second Coming is unity. Pride, inequality, and contention are enemies of a united society and were “the cause of much affliction” (see Alma 4:6–13) throughout the Book of Mormon. The Lord has spoken clearly: “Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:27).

Ironically, group unity begins with personal repentance. If we are at war with God, we can never be at peace with our fellowman. As we turn



to the Savior, align our will with God, and plead for mercy, the burden of sin can be lifted, peace of conscience comes (see Mosiah 4:3), and—as with Enos—our thoughts naturally turn outward to our family, friends, acquaintances, and community (see Enos 1:2–9).

During a landmark general conference in April 2018, President Russell M. Nelson announced, “We will implement a newer, holier approach to caring for and ministering to others.”⁸ Ministering is reaching out to serve as the Savior did. Some of that ministering will take place within the Church, but we hope that some of your ministering will take place among those not of our faith, motivated by the pure love of Christ.

The Savior taught, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). As Latter-day Saints and disciples of Jesus Christ, we need to love more and judge less. We must shun bigotry of every kind. There is room in the Church for everyone.

That said, the Lord does set behavioral standards, as we see in His interaction with the woman taken in adultery. To fully repent and be

forgiven, she needed to believe in His name, forsake the sin, and change her nature (see John 8:3–11). Like the Savior, we too need to love more and judge less while people make needed changes in their lives—especially members of our own families and wards.

The 450 souls who departed with Alma into the wilderness had “their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another” (Mosiah 18:21). Starting now, help shape a ward culture of love and unity.

2. Righteousness

The second characteristic of a people ready to greet the Savior is that they dwell in righteousness. The Lord revealed, “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” (Doctrine and Covenants 58:27). True disciples of Jesus Christ go about lifting people to a higher spiritual plane, beginning in their own homes.

In recent years, a new word has emerged: *clicktivism*. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *clicktivism* as “the practice of signalling support for a political or social cause by means of the Internet, through social media, online petitions, etc.”⁹ While such causes may be good, the Lord expects more of His disciples than a mouse click.

A graduation speaker at Brigham Young University once observed: “The easiest thing to do is to support great causes, sign stirring petitions, endorse grand philosophies. The hardest thing to do—and it is getting harder all of the time—is to be a good husband or wife, a strong father or mother, an honorable friend and neighbor.



“The truly good deeds are the small, everyday actions of ordinary life.”¹⁰

Dwelling in righteousness requires each of us to both do and become. Of course, we must do the basics—read the scriptures and pray daily, attend sacrament meeting weekly, and worship regularly in the temple. These basics qualify us for the companionship of the Holy Ghost, and the Spirit enables us to push aside temptation and live God’s commandments.

But we must also strive to become righteous and holy, “a saint” (Mosiah 3:19), “in process of time” (Moses 7:21). President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has taught: “The Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts—what we have *done*. It is an acknowledgment of the final effect of our acts and thoughts—what we have *become*. It is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions.”¹¹

As you consecrate your God-given gifts and unique talents to bless others, you will become more saintly and will meaningfully contribute to a righteous society, no matter your circumstances.




3. No Poor

The third characteristic of a people worthy to welcome the Savior’s Second Coming is that there are no poor among them. Caring for the poor and needy has always been in the heart of the Savior and His prophets (see Proverbs 31:9). In our day, the Lord gave a newly called bishop this instruction: “And let him lift up his voice long and loud, in the midst of the people, to plead the cause of the poor and the needy” (Doctrine and Covenants 124:75).

You might be thinking, “What can I do to care for those in need outside of my own family?” First, you can participate in the work of the





Church. You can contribute fast offerings to help Church members in need who live in your ward, stake, and area (see Isaiah 58). You can donate to the humanitarian fund, which enables the Church to do things members cannot do on their own. The Church provides millions of dollars annually, for example, to serve starving people and to build schools and medical facilities that bless refugees. Second, you can participate in community service opportunities through JustServe—a website the Church has established to match volunteers with organizations that need help.

A few years ago, serious flooding occurred in Louisiana. Our daughter stayed home in Houston while her husband went to Louisiana to help muck out houses. The next weekend he stayed home with their three small children while she went to Louisiana to muck out houses. One year later, that training became practical when Houston was hit by devastating Hurricane Harvey. In her role as Relief Society president, our daughter coordinated relief efforts within her ward boundaries. People wept as they saw Church members in yellow Helping Hands T-shirts come to assist.

Following the example of the Savior, we each need to have our eyes open to those who are in need and reach out to help them.

A Consecrated Life

I now return to where I began. Like Captain Moroni of old, I urge you to be inspired by a better cause than the many good causes that surround you in mortality. I invite you to consecrate your life to the cause of Christ and His Church.

Some Latter-day Saints mistakenly believe that because the Church no longer practices an economic form of the United Order, we are somehow exempt from living the law of

consecration. But Elder Christofferson has taught: “The Lord’s law of consecration . . . is an application of celestial law to life here and now (see D&C 105:5). To consecrate is to set apart or dedicate something as sacred, devoted to holy purposes. True success in this life comes in consecrating our lives—that is, our time and choices—to God’s purposes. . . . In so doing, we permit Him to raise us to our highest destiny.”¹²

The Lord does not esteem the Apostle over the deacon, but He does favor those who consecrate their all, whether 2 mites or 10 talents, to His cause (see 1 Nephi 17:35; Mark 12:41–44; Matthew 25:14–30). I testify that as you consecrate your time and choices to the cause of Christ and His Church, God will pour out greater blessings than you can imagine.

We Are His Cause

Have you ever considered that you, individually, are also the cause of our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son? Their work and glory is to bring about your immortality and eternal life! (see Moses 1:39).

On Judgment Day, you and I will be lifted up to stand before the Savior to be judged for our works (see 3 Nephi 27:15). That thought can be scary because of our sins (see Romans 3:23), but I am comforted that Jesus Christ is not only our judge but also our advocate. I am so grateful that He will plead my cause before the Father. He will point to His sinless life and infinite Atonement as a recompense for the sins I have repented of (see Doctrine and Covenants 45:3–5; see also Psalm 119:154; Moroni 7:28).

I testify of Jesus Christ, “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). I invite all of us to consecrate our lives to His cause and His Church. I pray that by so doing, we will prepare ourselves, our families, and our neighbors for His return. ■

From a devotional address, “Inspired by a Better Cause,” delivered at Brigham Young University–Idaho on May 22, 2018. For the full address, go to web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches.

NOTES

1. See “2015 Cone Communications Millennial CSR Study,” Cone, conecomm.com; see also Christine Barton, Jeff Fromm, and Chris Egan, “The Millennial Consumer: Debunking Stereotypes,” The Boston Consulting Group, Apr. 2012, 7, bcg.com.
2. See Kipp Jarecke-Cheng, “Millennials and the Age of Distrust,” Feb. 24, 2017, mediapost.com.
3. See Greg Satell, “Why Some Movements Succeed and Others Fail,” May 31, 2015, digitaltonto.com; see also Greg Satell and Srdja Popovic, “How Protests Become Successful Social Movements,” *Harvard Business Review*, Jan. 27, 2017, hbr.org.
4. D. Todd Christofferson, “Why the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 108.
5. See D. Todd Christofferson, “Why the Church,” 110.
6. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 186.
7. D. Todd Christofferson, “Come to Zion,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 38.
8. Russell M. Nelson, “Ministering,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 100.
9. *Oxford English Dictionary*, oed.com, “clicktivism.”
10. James Q. Wilson, “The Moral Life,” *Brigham Young Magazine*, Aug. 1994, 55.
11. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Challenge to Become,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32.
12. D. Todd Christofferson, “Reflections on a Consecrated Life,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 16.

MY STUTTER DIDN'T STOP THE SPIRIT

By Scott D. Buck



I didn't think I could fulfill my new calling because of my speech problem, but I was willing to trust the Lord.

As my wife and I sat in our stake president's office, he asked me if I would serve on our stake's high council. The first thought that raced through my mind was that I'd never be able to fulfill that calling with my stuttering problem. From the time I first learned how to talk, I struggled with stuttering. Whether ordering at a fast-food restaurant or speaking on the phone, I quickly learned that life was easier when I kept my mouth shut.

As I got older and couldn't always remain silent, I learned a few coping strategies, but stuttering remained a difficult issue when I became nervous.

I explained to the stake president exactly what kind of person he would be getting if I said yes. He listened with compassion and understanding. When I finished, this wise man said something that the Spirit delivered to me with unusual force: "The Lord will accept what you have to offer."

This was what I had to offer. It might not have been much, but it was my offering, and He was giving me the opportunity to make it. I looked over at my sweet wife, whose eyes told me I needed to do this, and I said yes.

I left the stake president's office knowing that accepting this calling was the right thing to do but still not knowing how it was all going to work out. In the back of my mind was the thought, "What will I do when I have to get up in front of people and say things that I can't say?" I tried to focus my thoughts on my faith that the Lord would work it all out. I had to take a few steps of faith into the dark unknown before I discovered that more steps on the pathway ahead were lighted for me.

The day soon came when I needed to conduct some stake business in my home ward by reading the names of newly released and newly called stake members. In the congregation that day were many of my neighbors and most of my own family members. My turn came, and I stood up.

Regardless of how well I prepare for an event or how much

I try to remain calm, I can never be positive how fluent my speech will be. On this day, it did not go well. I couldn't finish saying many of the words, and I was totally stuck on others. I struggled awkwardly until the job was finished and I sat down.

I felt bad for the people whose names I had read and for the congregation who had to sit through it, but most of all I was truly sorry for having let the Lord down. I hated the thought that I had detracted from the usual dignity and organization of His Church.

It happened to be fast Sunday that day, so I thought I needed to stand up, bear my testimony, and try to make some short explanation. As I spoke, despite my nervous feelings, I was strangely at peace. Deep down it felt okay.

I was not prepared for the ward members' responses to the events of that day. At the end of the meeting, many people approached me and thanked me. Some explained that they had never spoken or prayed in church because they were afraid they wouldn't do it well enough. They said that seeing me struggle made them think they could try. Some people said it was the most "real" Church meeting they had ever attended. I realized that this must have been part of the reason I was called—so that the Lord could use my stuttering to help others.

Several years have passed since these events took place, and I now have the opportunity of serving in my ward's bishopric. There are still plenty of awkward moments, but I try to use humor where possible to put the congregation, and hopefully myself, at ease. I am grateful for the blessings the Lord has poured out upon my family and me through these experiences. His tender mercies have been plentiful.

Despite our individual challenges, each of us has an offering to give the Lord. I believe that when our hearts are sincere and we make our best efforts to serve Him, our imperfect offering becomes perfect in His eyes.

I love the scripture, "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

When we do all we can and then place our trust in the Lord, He accepts our offering and makes more out of our lives than we ever could on our own. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.



Compassion and Forgiveness in Our Families

Our relationships with loved ones can improve as we allow the power of the Savior's Atonement to work in our lives.

By Andrea Lystrup

As a marriage and family therapist, I frequently have people come to me asking for advice on how to improve their relationships. I once had a client tearfully list her grievances against her husband. She told me how he wouldn't listen to her. He would come home from work and go straight to the computer. As I listened, I could see that she was in a lot of emotional pain. We talked about some of her goals, but at the end of our session she said, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, all that sounds great, but what are you going to do to fix my husband?"

The fact is we can't make anybody change. If the thought of changing family members sounds appealing, then consider applying these therapeutic gospel principles.



Compassion before Change

In order for change to happen in our family relationships, we often need to do the opposite of what we're inclined to do. Instead of seeking to alter the other person, we need to love those around us for who they are. Paradoxically, this kind of compassion can ultimately lead to change.

Jesus Christ modeled compassion before change when the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman to Him who had committed adultery. Christ said to them, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7). The scribes and Pharisees realized that they were not without sin and left one by one. The Savior then said:

"Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?"

"She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:10–11).

When conflict arises in our families, perhaps we may find ourselves casting figurative stones at our loved ones. Our stones usually take the form of criticism: "You never appreciate me." "You always nag me." How many times do we try to change people by condemning or arguing with them? We need to recognize that change comes through love.

When the woman was presented to the Savior, He didn't point out all the things she had done wrong in her life. Instead, He gave her compassion and love, and then He invited the woman to take action and stop sinning.

Why does compassion need to come before change? Partly because when we're constantly criticized, our sense of self-worth diminishes, along with the hope that we can improve our lives.

When we come to Jesus Christ in our weakness and seek the blessings of His Atonement, does He reply with, "It's about time" or "While you're at it, can you change this about yourself too"? Of course not. He meets us with love. Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, "The invitation to repent is rarely a voice of chastisement but rather a loving appeal to turn around and to 're-turn' toward God [see Helaman 7:17]."¹

Forgiveness

Extending compassion conveys to those around us that they are worthy of love as they are. Forgiveness takes it a step further and communicates that we have stopped feeling angry toward them. Forgiveness replaces bitterness with love and allows us to move on. Sometimes others hurt us in such a way that it seems impossible to stop feeling bitter and angry. This is where we must let the power of the Savior's Atonement work in our lives.

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, taught: "The Atonement not only benefits the sinner but also benefits those sinned against—that is, the victims. By forgiving 'those who trespass against us' (JST, Matt. 6:13) the Atonement brings a measure of peace and comfort to those who have been innocently victimized by the sins of others. The basic source for the healing of the soul is the Atonement of Jesus Christ."²

Not only do we find a measure of peace and comfort by forgiving others, but we are also commanded to forgive: "I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men" (Doctrine and Covenants 64:10).



However, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave the following caution: “[Christ] did *not* say, ‘You are not allowed to feel true pain or real sorrow from the shattering experiences you have had at the hand of another.’ *Nor* did He say, ‘In order to forgive fully, you have to reenter a toxic relationship or return to an abusive, destructive circumstance.’ But notwithstanding even the most terrible offenses that might come to us, we can rise above our pain only when we put our feet onto the path of true healing.”³

I’m sure many of us may think in our hearts, “I really want to forgive this person, but I don’t know where to begin.” I use a four-step guide to forgiveness with those I counsel, and I’ve seen it bring about dramatic improvements in their relationships.

Step 1: Choose forgiveness as an option.

Sometimes we withhold forgiveness because we are hoping that it will motivate someone to repent and change his or her behavior. You might say to yourself, “If I forgive them, who is holding them responsible for the mess they caused?” or “How can I forgive someone who hasn’t apologized yet or even acknowledged they’ve done wrong?” The problem with this mind-set is that you are only prolonging your hurt. You cannot control the repentance process of others.

So how do we choose to forgive? When Alma taught about how to increase our faith in Jesus Christ, he said, “If ye will . . . experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you” (Alma 32:27). I believe this same principle applies to forgiveness. If we desire to forgive and let this desire work in us, then the Lord will help that desire to grow until we are able to forgive.

Step 2: Communicate your feelings of hurt and anger in non-hurtful ways.

Joseph Smith received revelation counseling us to persuade each other with long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, and love (see Doctrine and Covenants 121:41). How do we keep our conversations gentle and meek and still let our feelings be known?

A basic rule of communication skills training is to speak in “I feel” statements. For example,

instead of saying, “You never spend time with me,” a wife might say to her husband, “I feel lonely when you come home from work and spend the evening on your computer.”

When you make your feelings the focus of communication, you open up the invitation for others to comfort you. On the other hand, when you make the focus of communication the wrongdoings of others, you open up the door to defensiveness. Think of how much better your relationships could be if you continually opened the door of comfort and compassion instead of defensiveness and anger.

Step 3: Recognize your own role in your relationship problems.

This is the hardest step to do because it requires us to move past our pride. In his great talk on that topic, President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) taught:

“The proud do not receive counsel or correction easily. . . . Defensiveness is used by them to justify and rationalize their frailties and failures. . . .

“Think of the repentance that could take place with lives changed, marriages preserved, and homes strengthened, if pride did not keep us from confessing our sins and forsaking them.”⁴

As you humble yourself, you are more open to hearing another’s perspective on how you may have contributed to the problem at hand. This allows you to shift your perspective from hoping the other person repents and changes to working together to improve your relationship.

Step 4: Change how you treat the other person.

If you’ve gone through all the previous steps but still feel that you haven’t forgiven someone, then practice acting like you *have* forgiven them.

How would you behave toward your husband or wife if you did forgive them? Probably with more affection, trust, expressions of appreciation, and encouragement. Even if it starts with forcing yourself to act that way, soon you will find that the feelings of forgiveness, love, and trust follow.

I have seen time and time again that relationships do not improve without the broken heart and the contrite spirit that we hear about so often in the scriptures (see 3 Nephi 9:20; Doctrine and Covenants 59:8). These conditions can be achieved by accepting and forgiving our loved ones and will allow us to begin making the small steps that lead to increased peace and love in our lives. ■

The author lives in Washington, D.C., USA.

NOTES

1. Neil L. Andersen, “Repent . . . That I May Heal You,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 40.
2. James E. Faust, “The Atonement: Our Greatest Hope,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 20.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Ministry of Reconciliation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 79.
4. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 236, 237.



When One or Both Parents Don't Attend Church

By Karmel Newell

President Russell M. Nelson grew up in a loving home with parents he adored. Yet as a child he went to church without his mother or father, and he longed to be sealed to his family in the temple.¹ But no child needs to walk the covenant path alone. The love and care of family and ward members can fill gaps for children who might not have gospel support at home. Ultimately, sound gospel teachings and good experiences at home and at church can help every child feel Heavenly Father's love.

For Parents Who Attend Church without a Spouse

1. **Share the blessings of living the gospel.** Help your children see that living the gospel can bring peace—and lift burdens. Explain why you choose to participate in the Church, without speaking ill of a parent who chooses not to attend. Share your feelings about how keeping your baptismal covenant gives you comfort and guidance.
2. **Cultivate a positive attitude.** Help children see the good in their family. You can also help them see the good in their Church teachers, leaders, and ward members. Talk about what



Talking to children about the good they experience at home and at church can help them feel Heavenly Father's love.

- your children learned at church. Don't dwell on the weaknesses or insensitive remarks of others. Instead, speak positively and show a willingness to learn from others.
3. **Work through negative emotions.** Help children label negative emotions, such as fear, loneliness, disappointment, and anger. Then you can help them process their emotions

through drawing, playing, or talking. When needed, you can also seek professional help. Healing wounded hearts will help everyone be more receptive to spiritual feelings and have better experiences at church.

4. **Ask for help when necessary.** If you need help, don't wait for someone to offer. Sometimes Church leaders and ward members may not notice

a need, or they may hesitate to help without an invitation. If a child needs a blessing, prayerfully consider who might be able to help, and then ask. Also consider who you might help.

For All Adults

1. **Notice and love children who attend church without one or both parents.** Learn their names and greet them with warmth and kindness. Withhold judgment about their circumstances, and don't ask questions about absent parents. As children feel sincere love from fellow Church members, they are more likely to relax, learn, and feel the Spirit.
2. **Be sensitive to special needs.** When children attend church without one or both parents, be mindful of how specific teachings or activities might affect them. In a lesson on priesthood blessings, teach that everyone has access to these blessings. If an activity involves parents, include all parents. Be aware of children who might have sensitive feelings on special days like Father's Day or Mother's Day.
3. **Help them love and strengthen their family.** Teach children that the family is ordained of God.² Encourage them to appreciate the good in their

families. Family history work can help children realize that their family began before they were born. And doing family history work can bless them "with more closeness and joy in [their] family."³

4. **Teach them true doctrine.** Agency is a key doctrine in the plan of salvation, and children are not responsible for their parents' choices and sins (see Moses 6:54). Parents' problems are neither their children's fault nor their children's responsibility to repair. Knowing this can help children worry less about things they cannot change and appreciate the many daily blessings of family.

President Henry B. Eyring, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, taught: "Our Heavenly Father is anxious to gather and bless all of His family. . . . His plan gives each of His children the opportunity to accept or reject His invitation. And families are at the heart of this plan."⁴ ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. See Russell M. Nelson, "Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," *Ensign*, May 2018, 93–96.
2. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, May 2017, 145.
3. Quentin L. Cook, "The Joy of Family History Work," *Ensign*, Feb. 2016, 33.
4. Henry B. Eyring, "Gathering the Family of God," *Ensign*, May 2017, 20–21.

FOR CHILDREN

In the *Friend*:

- President Nelson's childhood experience: "Grateful for Parents" (June 2019, page 2)
- "A New Chapter" (June 2019, page 4)
- "Steven's First Future Father's Day" (June 2015, page 8)

FOR YOUTH

In the *New Era*:

- "Youth in Greece" (July 2018, page 16)

Change of Heart, Change of Friends

As a teenager, I had a rebellious streak a mile wide, and I acted in ways that were contrary to how I was raised. I began drinking alcohol when I was 13, and by my senior year of high school, I drank every weekend.

I attended church on occasion to reduce confrontations with my parents, but I would sleep through sacrament meeting and then head to the beach before Sunday School. To say my parents were unhappy with my behavior would be an understatement. To their credit, they respected my agency while continuing to encourage me to live the gospel. Still, I had no intention of staying active in the Church, and I certainly didn't see a mission in my future.

After high school, I attended a community college and continued my rebellious ways. But late one night,

I remember lying on my couch wondering about my future. What type of girl would I marry? If I turned my back on the Lord, would I ever find my way back? As important as these decisions were, I wasn't motivated to change.

A short time later, I attended a friend's backyard party with alcohol and a blazing bonfire. After joking around with my buddies for a while, I stepped away for a moment and closed my eyes.

When I opened my eyes again, I had a moment of clarity. I watched my friends acting foolishly and no longer saw myself belonging to that group. I left and decided to stop drinking and going to parties. That meant I would need to change my group of friends, which was not easy. But I did it.

Those decisions have blessed my life. I eventually served a mission and

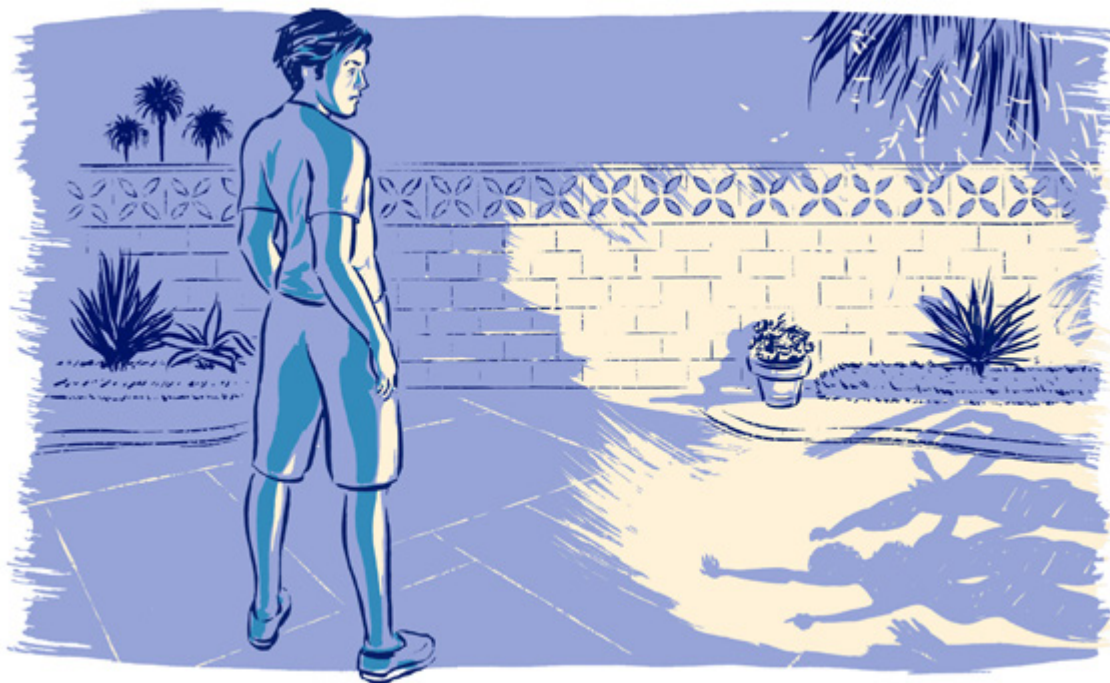
have fulfilled many callings. Most importantly, I married a wonderful woman in the temple. This has led to the choicest blessings of my life.

I recently read about the conversion of Alma and the sons of Mosiah (see Mosiah 27) and how they experienced a mighty change of heart (see Alma 5:12–14), brought about in part by the faithful prayers of Alma's father. Then I thought of my parents and realized, over 30 years later, that my sobering experience at that party was a direct result of their prayers.

Now, as a parent of a struggling child, I find myself in a similar place as Alma's father and my parents. But likening the scriptures unto myself, I have faith and hope that one day my child will also experience a change of heart. ■

Name withheld, California, USA

***A**t a party, I watched my friends acting foolishly and no longer saw myself belonging to that group.*



My Missionary Dream Fulfilled at Last

For many years, I dreamed of serving a full-time mission. But when I returned home after university graduation, I saw how badly my family needed me. My father's health was challenged, and the family needed financial help. As the eldest of four children, I felt I should stay home and help. Heavenly Father blessed me with a decent job. Though it didn't pay much, it was enough to get by.

Whenever I was asked about serving a full-time mission, I answered that I would. Every time I said this, however, my mother would look at me with a mixture of excitement and sadness in her eyes. I knew that if I asked to go, she would say yes and quietly keep in her heart her apprehension of losing family income.

A few years passed, and a worthy priesthood holder asked me to marry him in the temple. I said yes, and we were later blessed with three children—two girls and one boy. One of our greatest joys was when our son left for his mission. A spirit of comfort

and peace filled our home. It seemed to me that a portion of my longing to serve a mission had been filled.

I was excited when my eldest daughter said she also wanted to serve a mission. Every week in the mission field, she sent me stories of her work. Her testimony inspired me and filled me with the missionary spirit. I prayed for missionary opportunities every day.

One day, I was inspired to ask a friend through a private message on social media if she would be interested in meeting with the missionaries. She said, "Yes!" I filled out an online referral form on the Church website, and soon the missionaries began to teach her. In three months she joined the Church. Her children followed a few months later. As the Spirit directed me, I invited other friends to listen to the missionaries. When my daughter came home, I too felt that I had completed 18 months of missionary service.

Heavenly Father knew the desires of my heart and what was best for my family and me. I am grateful He granted my desire to serve as a missionary, which had dwelt in my heart for so long. ■

Jean Daniel Daroy, Ontario, Canada



Reading my daughter's stories from her mission filled me with the missionary spirit. I prayed for missionary opportunities and felt prompted to send my friend a message.



Our 30-Year Journey to the Temple

Before my brother left for Switzerland, the Spirit whispered to my heart that this journey would bring him closer to the Savior and His Church.

Several months after my baptism, my younger brother, Oswaldo, joined another church and actively participated in its congregation. But I wanted Oswaldo to know what I knew to be true. In particular, I wanted him to connect with the words of the prophets.

Each month, when I received the *Liahona* magazine, I would share it with Oswaldo. I suggested that some of the topics in the magazine could help him prepare for meetings in his church. I was pleased when he accepted my suggestion. Many years went by, however, and I was saddened to see that my brother would not accept the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

One morning, Oswaldo told our family that he was planning to leave our home in Ecuador and travel to Switzerland. He accepted a blessing from me the day he departed. It was an emotional moment for me because the Spirit whispered to my heart that this journey would bring Oswaldo closer to the Savior and to His Church.

In Switzerland, Oswaldo met the missionaries and eventually invited them to his home. Over time he established a close friendship with

them. But he told me that if the missionaries brought up the topic of baptism, he would no longer receive them. Imagine my surprise and joy when I received an email from him telling me that he was getting baptized. I had joined the Church in 1981. Oswaldo was baptized 20 years later, in May 2001. He received his endowment in July 2002, and he was sealed to his wife in February 2003.

When Oswaldo returned to Ecuador, he bore his testimony in a sacrament meeting. With tears in his eyes, he said, “My brother shared the words of the prophets with me. These words inspired me as I prepared for meetings in the church I attended before, and many people were edified this way. The words of the prophets changed my life. Through them, I came to know that the gospel of Jesus Christ is again upon the earth in its fulness, with power and authority.”

In February 2011, Oswaldo and I were sealed to our parents in the Guayaquil Ecuador Temple. The words of prophets have blessed our family for eternity. ■

Francisco W. Fierro, Lima, Peru



Martyrs and My Testimony

I was skeptical when the missionaries taught me about Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. My first thought was that Joseph Smith, like many other so-called “prophets,” may have brought a false book into the world seeking to become wealthy, famous, or heroic.

I had no intention of reading the Book of Mormon. But over time the missionaries’ friendship and their enthusiasm for the gospel allowed my curiosity toward their message to grow.

As I read the verses the missionaries gave me in the Book of Mormon, I found Moroni’s invitation to ask God with a sincere heart, real intent, and faith in Christ if the Book of Mormon is true (see Moroni 10:4–5). I thought, “Who, knowing the book was fake, would dare challenge us to ask God with real intent and sincerity if the Book of Mormon is true?”

Then one day the missionaries explained that Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were martyred for their testimony. Suddenly, a thought came to me that they would never have given up their own lives for something they knew was false. At that moment, a warm feeling, like a burning fire, spread through me. It was a witness of the Holy Spirit confirming to my heart that Joseph Smith was a true prophet. With this witness, I was baptized and confirmed.

I was reminded of this experience 25 years later when I read a talk by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. In his talk, Elder Holland asked if, in the critical moment of their martyrdom, Joseph and Hyrum would continue to blaspheme before God by fixing their lives, their honor, and

their eternal salvation on a book they knew was false.

“*They would not do that!*” Elder Holland said. “They were willing to die rather than deny the divine origin and the eternal truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.”¹

Elder Holland’s words made so much sense to me and further strengthened my testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the power of the Book of Mormon.

I am grateful for the Prophet Joseph Smith. He brought forth the Book of Mormon and willingly gave his life to be a witness of Jesus Christ. Through the Book of Mormon, I have come to know of God’s existence and of His love for me. ■

Sunju Kim Muir, Maryland, USA

NOTE

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Safety for the Soul,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 89.

When I learned that Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were martyred, the Spirit confirmed to me that they would never have given up their own lives for something they knew to be false.





By Brian K. Ashton

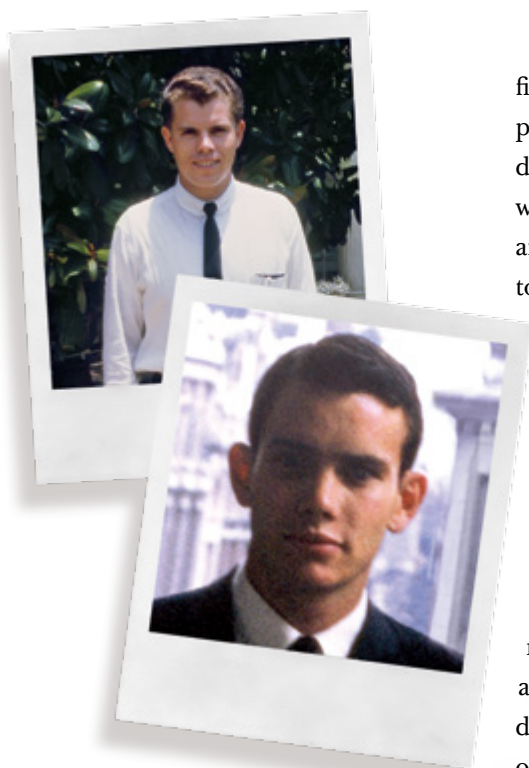
Recently Released
Second Counselor
in the Sunday
School General
Presidency

Two Living Examples

By the way they live, my father and father-in-law have helped me know how to teach my children about the Father and the Son.

I am fortunate to have two fathers—my dad and my father-in-law—who have taught me that one of the primary roles of fathers is to teach their children about Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Although they grew up with fathers who were not active in the gospel, both my dad and my father-in-law served missions. On his mission, my dad came to love the scriptures. From them he learned that fathers—just like Heavenly Father—should teach about, testify of, and point their children toward Jesus Christ (see, for example, Joseph Smith—History 1:17). Because of what my father learned as a missionary, he and my mother consistently led our family in daily scripture study, where we learned about the Savior, about His life and



Brian K. Ashton's father, Kent L. Ashton (right), and father-in-law, J. Lawrence Earl (left), as missionaries

mission, and about Heavenly Father.

I remember how my father frequently bore testimony of Jesus Christ. For example, one day our family was eating at a restaurant. With two adults and five or six children in tow at that time, we were hard to miss. When a gentleman who had been sitting nearby

finished his meal, he complimented my parents on the behavior of their children. My father told him our behavior was a result of our faith in Jesus Christ and His teachings. My dad's willingness to share his testimony, even in everyday situations like this, greatly strengthened my own testimony.

My father-in-law internalized Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–46 on his mission. From these verses, he learned how Heavenly Father treats His children—humbly, with persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, love unfeigned, kindness, and pure knowledge. My father-in-law decided he would treat his family and others in this manner. As I came to know my father-in-law, his example had a profound impact on me and helped me see the Father and the Son as beings who also act this way.

I am so grateful for these two fathers, who have taught me by their living examples. They have blessed me eternally. I am now trying to follow their examples by teaching my children about Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father, just as these men taught me. ■



Invite Him In
Joseph Brickey

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).



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THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
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