

Ensign



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Blessed Women
of Faith, p. 50**

**Why and How to Defend
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**The Right Way to
Resolve Questions, p. 36**



*“Verily I say unto you,
If ye have faith as a
grain of mustard seed,
ye shall say unto this
mountain, Remove
hence to yonder place;
and it shall remove;
and nothing shall be
impossible unto you.”*

Matthew 17:20

These mustard seeds, which grow in the pods, are the variety that are found in Israel. The straight pin, which is just over one inch (3 cm) long, is included to show scale.

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Ensign

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Family Home Evening Ideas

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



“When Doubts and Questions Arise,”
page 36: After reading the article, con-
sider discussing as a family the difference

between questions and doubts. Read accounts of people in the scriptures who had questions and what they did about them (for example, 1 Nephi 11; Ether 2:19–3:16; Joseph Smith—History 1:10–19; or the references under endnote 1 in the article). You could ask family members to identify a few questions they have. Then use the scriptures, lds.org/topics, or personal experiences to find answers. Cultivating an atmosphere of openness and honesty in the home will help family members feel comfortable voicing questions as they arise.

“Put On the Armour of Light,” page
70: You might begin the lesson by darkening the room and then turning on a flashlight or lighting a small candle.

Read John 8:12 and then Matthew 5:14–16. Ask family members why they think Jesus, the Light of the World, asks us to be the light of the world. Consider reading and discussing the section of the article called “Reflect the Savior’s Light.” Ask: In what ways can we reflect the Savior’s light to bless the lives of others? Invite family members to think of one thing they can do during the week to better reflect the Savior’s light. You may want to conclude by singing “Lead, Kindly Light” (*Hymns*, no. 97). Sing it occasionally during the week as a reminder of the lesson.

DID YOU KNOW?

Your children are more likely to develop strong testimonies if you read the scriptures together, if you pray together, if you have family home evening, and if you as parents attend the temple. Families who engage in these activities see more youth going on missions and being married in the temple than those who don’t. And the results are the same whether you are first-generation Latter-day Saints or you have ancestry back to the earliest days of the Church. In next month’s *Ensign*, watch for an expansive article listing the specific promises from the scriptures and our Church leaders that are linked to each of these family activities.

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DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

We welcome donated submissions showing the gospel of Jesus Christ at work in your life. Please submit articles through ensign.lds.org. Authors whose work is selected for publication will be notified.



**By President
Dieter F. Uchtdorf**

Second Counselor in
the First Presidency

ENCIRCLED IN His Gentle Arms

Like many others, I have often been inspired by beautiful works of art and music. One such occasion was when I stood before a masterful painting created by the Danish artist Frans Schwartz titled *The Agony in the Garden*.¹

This achingly beautiful painting depicts the Savior kneeling in the Garden of Gethsemane. As He prays, an angel stands next to Him, enfolding Him in gentle arms, offering comfort, heavenly succor, and support.

The longer I contemplate this painting, the more my heart and mind swell with inexpressible feelings of tenderness and gratitude. I can sense, in small part, what it must have been like to be present as the Savior began His great culminating work of mortality by taking upon Himself the sins of the world. I marvel at the infinite love and compassion the Father has for His children. I am overwhelmed with profound gratitude for what the sinless Son did for all mankind and for me.

The Sacrifice of the Son of God

Each year at this time we commemorate and ponder the sacrifice Jesus Christ made for all mankind.

What the Savior did from Gethsemane to Golgotha on our behalf is beyond my ability to grasp. He took upon Himself the burden of our sins and paid an eternal and binding ransom not only for Adam's original transgression but also for the sins and transgressions of the billions upon billions of souls who have ever lived. This eternal, sacred sacrifice caused "even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit" (D&C 19:18).

He suffered for me.

He suffered for you.

My soul overflows with gratitude when I contemplate the precious meaning of this sacrifice. It humbles me to know that all who accept this gift and incline their hearts to Him can be forgiven and cleansed of their sins, no matter how dark their blemish or how oppressive their burden.

We can be made spotless and pure once again. We can be redeemed by the eternal sacrifice of our beloved Savior.

Who Will Comfort Us?

Though none of us will ever have to experience the depth of what our Lord suffered, we each will have our



own dark and bitter hours—times when our sorrow and grief may appear to be greater than we can bear. There will be times when the weight and remorse of our sins will press mercilessly upon us.

Even so, if we will lift our hearts to the Lord during those times, surely He will know and understand. He who suffered so selflessly for us in the garden and on the cross will not leave us comfortless now. He

will strengthen, encourage, and bless us. He will encircle us in His gentle arms.

He will be more than an angel to us.

He will bring us blessed comfort, healing, hope, and forgiveness.

For He is our Redeemer.

Our Deliverer.

Our merciful Savior and our blessed God. ■

NOTE

1. The priest who spoke at Frans Schwartz's funeral said "his art was divinely endowed and seemed worthier than many a sermon" (Emmie Buchanan-Whitlock, "History of Artists' Lives Gives Greater Context for Exhibit," *Deseret News*, Sept. 29, 2013, deseretnews.com).

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

Before you teach, seek the Spirit's guidance to help you understand the specific needs of those you teach. As you share excerpts from President Uchtdorf's message, bear testimony of the Savior and of His redeeming sacrifice. Consider asking those you teach what His Atonement means to them and how they have felt the Lord's comfort during their "dark and bitter hours."

Victory through Jesus Christ

Name withheld

I had a problem with overeating. My repeated bouts of gorging resulted in a harrowing mass of guilt, frustration, and disappointment. I felt so weak when I tried to overcome my problem.

For a long time I neglected the fact that the Savior's Atonement not only saves us but also redeems us and perfects



us, and that this even applies to my obviously imperfect habit of overeating.

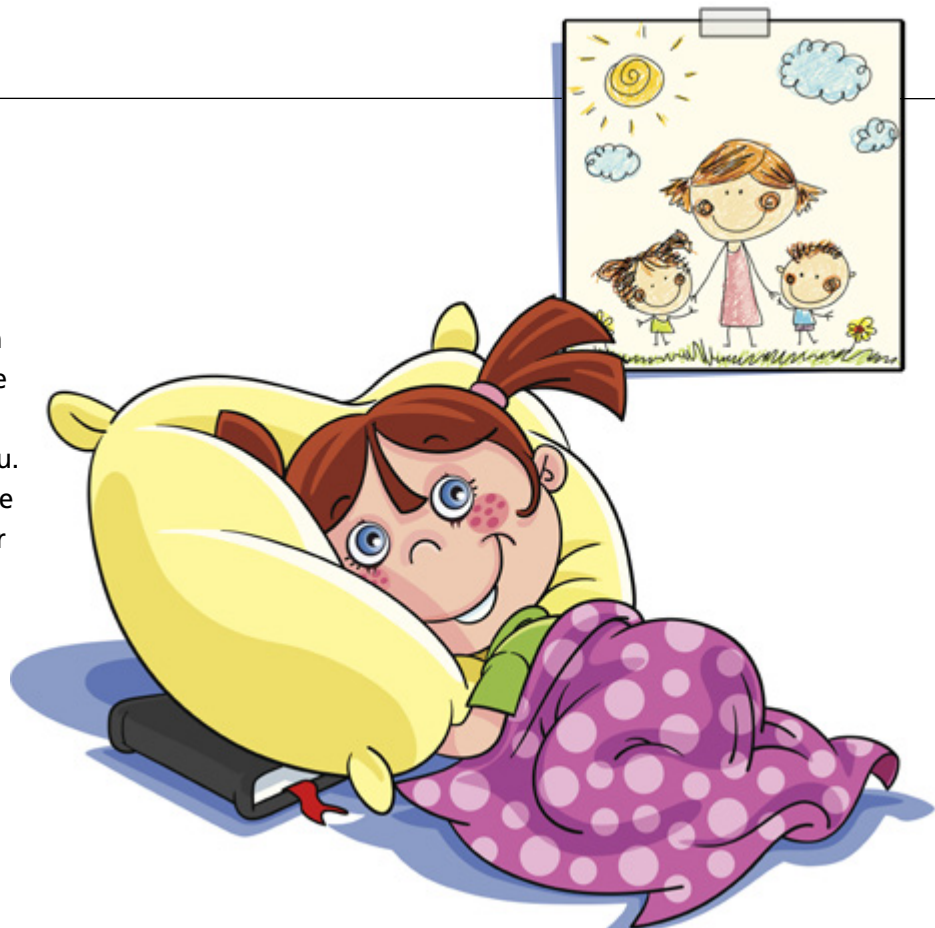
I decided to give myself to my Savior. I prayed. I sincerely admitted my weakness and my need for grace, and then I asked Heavenly Father to bless me with His divine assistance in the upcoming day. That night I felt the assurance of a loving Father that He had the immeasurable desire to help His son and the unquestionable power to fulfill His will.

Since that night, food no longer has the same overwhelming influence over me. I know Jesus Christ is the reason for my success. Just like Paul, I am learning that "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). And I'm trying to never forget another lesson from Paul: "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

CHILDREN

The Savior Will Comfort You

Ask a family member or a friend about a time when he or she felt comforted by the Savior. Try to think of a time when the Savior comforted you. You could draw a picture of the experience and hang it by your bed to remind you that Jesus Christ will always be there to comfort you.



Prayerfully study this material and seek to know what to share. How will understanding the life and roles of the Savior increase your faith in Him and bless those you watch over through visiting teaching? For more information, go to reliefsociety.lds.org.



The Attributes of Jesus Christ: Long-Suffering and Patient

This is part of a series of Visiting Teaching Messages featuring attributes of the Savior.

Patience is often thought of as a quiet, passive trait, but as President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said, “Patience is not passive resignation, nor is it failing to act because of our fears. Patience means active waiting and enduring. It means staying with something . . . even when the desires of our hearts are delayed. Patience is not simply enduring; it is enduring well!”

In our premortal life, our Heavenly Father prepared a plan for us—His spirit children—and we shouted for joy at the opportunity to come to earth (see Job 38:7). As we choose to align our will with His during our earthly life, He “will make an instrument of [us] in [His] hands unto the salvation of many souls” (Alma 17:11).

President Uchtdorf continued, “Patience means accepting that which



cannot be changed and facing it with courage, grace, and faith. It means being ‘willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [us], even as a child doth submit to his father’ [Mosiah 3:19]. Ultimately, patience means being ‘firm and steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments of the Lord’ [1 Nephi 2:10] every hour of every day, even when it is hard to do so.”¹

Additional Scriptures

Psalm 40:1; Galatians 5:22–23; 2 Peter 1:6; Alma 17:11

Consider This

From the account in Luke 8, how was this woman’s years of patience and then her faith in Jesus Christ rewarded?

Faith, Family, Relief

From the Scriptures

The scriptures tell us that in our earthly life, we should “be patient in afflictions, for [we shall] have many.” God then gives us this comforting promise, “Endure them, for, lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of thy days” (D&C 24:8).

The following Bible story is an example of patience and faith.

“And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years . . . touched the border of [Christ’s] garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch[ed] [stopped].

“And Jesus said, . . . Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.

“And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately.

“And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace” (Luke 8:43–48).

Like her, we can find blessings and comfort, and even healing, as we reach out to Jesus Christ—whose Atonement can heal us.

NOTE

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Continue in Patience,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 57, 59.

OCTOBER 2014 CONFERENCE NOTEBOOK

“What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken; . . . whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

As you review the October 2014 general conference, you can use these pages (and Conference Notebooks in future issues) to help you study and apply the recent teachings of the living prophets and apostles and other Church leaders.

DOCTRINAL HIGHLIGHT



Caring for the Poor and Needy

“A journalist once questioned Mother Teresa of Calcutta about her hopeless task of rescuing the destitute in that city. He said that, statistically speaking, she was accomplishing absolutely nothing. This remarkable little woman retorted that her work was about love, not statistics. . . . She said she could keep the commandment to love God and neighbor by serving those *within* her reach with whatever resources she had. . . . Soberly, the journalist concluded that Christianity is obviously *not* a statistical endeavor. . . .

“So how might we ‘do what we can’? . . .

“ . . . I pay a personal tribute to President Thomas Spencer Monson. . . . The image of him I will cherish until I die is of him flying home from then—economically devastated East Germany in his house slippers because he had given away not only his extra suit and shirts but the very shoes from off his feet.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Are We Not All Beggars?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 40, 41, 42.

PROPHETIC PROMISE



Heavenly Blessings

“Perhaps during [hard times], we might find ourselves asking, ‘Do

we really need to obey *all* of God’s commandments?’

“My response to this question is simple:

“I think God knows something we don’t—things that are beyond our capacity to comprehend! Our Father in Heaven is an eternal being whose experience, wisdom, and intelligence are infinitely greater than ours. [See Isaiah 55:9.] . . .

“Part of our challenge is, I think, that we imagine that God has all of His blessings locked in a huge cloud up in heaven, refusing to give them to us unless we comply with some strict, paternalistic requirements He has set up. But the commandments aren’t like that at all. In reality, Heavenly Father is constantly raining blessings upon us. It is our fear, doubt, and sin that, like an umbrella, block these blessings from reaching us.

“His commandments are the loving instructions and the divine help for us to close the umbrella so we can receive the shower of heavenly blessings.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Living the Gospel Joyful,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 121–22.

Fill in the Blank

1. "When we _____ wrong choices, big or small, which are inconsistent with the restored gospel, we lose the blessings and protections we need." (Quentin L. Cook, "Choose Wisely," 48.)
2. "According to the world's standards, following the prophet may be unpopular, politically incorrect,

or socially unacceptable. But following the prophet is always _____." (Carol F. McConkie, "Live according to the Words of the Prophets," 78.)

3. "Lowering the Lord's standards to the level of a society's inappropriate behavior is _____." (Lynn G. Robbins, "Which Way Do You Face?" 10.)

4. "Absolute _____ exists in a world that increasingly disdains and dismisses absolutes. In a future day, 'every knee [shall] bow' and 'every tongue [shall] confess that Jesus Christ is Lord . . .'" (Philippians 2:10–11)." (David A. Bednar, "Come and See," 110.)

A Toolbox for Your Home

Evaluate "your personal use of each tool; then seek the guidance of the Lord to determine how you could

make better use of each one of them." —Elder Richard G. Scott, "Make the Exercise of Faith Your First Priority," 93.

1. Prayer
2. Scripture Study
3. Family Home Evening
4. Temple Attendance



Answers: 1. rationalize; 2. right; 3. apostasy; 4. truth

To read, watch, or listen to general conference addresses, visit conference.lds.org.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN, BY WALTER RANE, TOOLBOX PHOTOGRAPH BY SCOTT DAVIS

TALKING ABOUT TOUGH TOPICS

By Sheree Lyn Clarke

Clinical Psychologist, LDS Family Services

When your children face challenges, it's important to talk to them in ways that will strengthen your relationship with them.

As a parent, you know the value of challenges and trials to your children's growth, but it's still difficult to see your children struggle. These struggles, however, can be a chance for you to build solid relationships with your children as you foster an environment of love at home. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) encouraged parents to provide such an environment: “My plea—and I wish I were more eloquent in voicing it—is a plea to save the children. Too many of them walk with pain and fear, in loneliness and despair. Children need sunlight. They need happiness. They need love and nurture.”¹

There are many difficult issues your children could face, such as bullying, bad language, cheating at school, same-sex attraction, eating disorders, depression, and suicidal thoughts, for example. As a Latter-day Saint parent, you know you “have a sacred duty to rear your children in love and righteousness,”² but how do you go about that when your children struggle with

difficult issues, whether in their own lives or in the lives of their friends? Here are some guidelines:

Ask questions that invite conversation. You can ask a question like this: “It looks like something may be bothering you. Do you want to talk about it?” This question not only acknowledges that you have noticed that something is bothering your child, but it also opens a door for your child to share as much (or little) as he or she chooses.

After your child has shared some thoughts about the issue, your response could be: “Thank you for sharing that with me, and thank you for trusting me with this information. I can only imagine what that must feel like. How can I be helpful?”

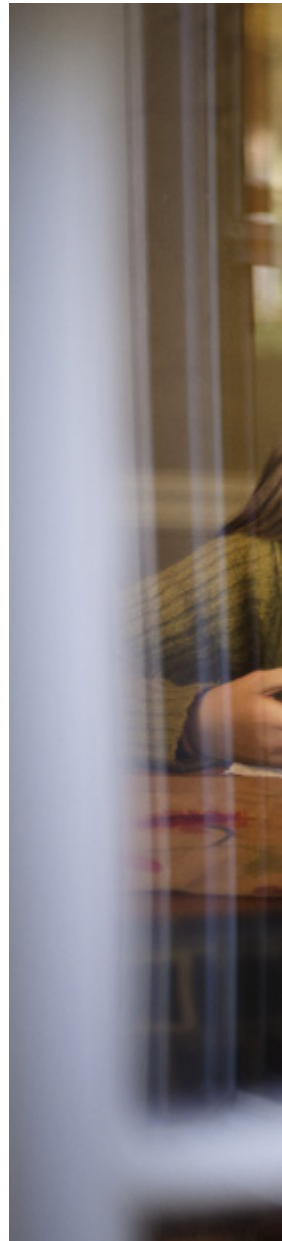
These kinds of loving responses tend to open the door to ongoing dialogue. It is important that children know of your sincerity. A hug or a loving look can also help to express genuine, heartfelt concern.

Listen to understand. Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of

the Twelve Apostles said: “The time to listen is when someone needs to be heard. Children are naturally eager to share their experiences. . . . If they try to express their anguish, is it possible for us to listen openly to a shocking experience without going into a state of shock ourselves?

Can we listen without interrupting and without making snap judgments that slam shut the door of dialogue? It can remain open with the soothing reassurance that we believe in them and understand their feelings. Adults should not pretend an experience did not happen just because they might wish otherwise.”³

Show respect. The scriptures give excellent guidance on how to create an environment of love and respect.





Notice some of the key words in Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42: *persuasion* (not force), *long-suffering* (not immediate, forced compliance or impatience), *gentleness* (not loud, aggressive, intense communication), *meeekness* (not proud or domineering responses), *kindness* (not cruel manipulation), and *love unfeigned* (genuine, sincere expressions of love). As we deepen our conversion, “the way we treat others becomes

increasingly filled with patience, kindness, a gentle acceptance, and a desire to play a positive role in their lives.”⁴

Avoid criticism. Latter-day Saint parents try to pattern their lives after the Savior. His interactions were filled with love, empathy, and genuine concern. Even when people had committed serious sins, He called for repentance but did not condemn (see John 8:3–11). Avoid criticizing your

children, which can lead them to poor self-esteem and a lack of confidence; rather, find and emphasize the good in each of your children.

Control your anger. “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty” (Proverbs 16:32), and “the spirit of contention . . . is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger” (3 Nephi 11:29). Anger drives away the Spirit and has

the potential to destroy fragile parent-child relationships. In general conference, President Hinckley said, “I plead with you to control your tempers, to put a smile upon your faces, which will erase anger; speak out with words of love and peace, appreciation, and respect. If you will do this, your lives will be without regret. Your marriages and family relationships will be preserved. You will be much happier.”⁵

Strengthen the relationship. All of these suggestions can be helpful, but if you can’t remember them when you are in the middle of a difficult conversation with your child, simply ask yourself, “How can I use this situation with my child as an opportunity to strengthen our relationship?” Then listen to and follow the inspiration you receive.

Keep trying. Parenting can be very difficult, yet you can succeed if you keep trying. President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) offered these words of encouragement: “A successful parent is one who has loved, one who has sacrificed, and one who has cared for, taught, and ministered to the needs of a child. If you have done all of these and your child is still wayward or troublesome or worldly, it could well be that you are, nevertheless, a successful parent.”⁶ ■

The author lives in South Africa.

NOTES

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Save the Children,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 54.
2. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
3. Russell M. Nelson, “Listen to Learn,” *Ensign*, May 1991, 22.
4. Marvin J. Ashton, “The Tongue Can Be a Sharp Sword,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 20.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Slow to Anger,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 66.
6. Howard W. Hunter, “Parents’ Concern for Children,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 65.

TALKING WITH TEENAGERS

Talking about challenges is difficult enough but can be even more so with teenagers, who are struggling to form their own identities— independent of their parents. Adolescents deal with enormous academic, emotional, and social pressures. Their belief and value systems are sometimes called into question by friends and peers. Their relationships with their parents can become fragile at this stage of their development, and it is not uncommon for teenagers to end up feeling confused, alone, anxious, uncertain, helpless, isolated, and even depressed.

Parents who understand and are sensitive to these developmental challenges can better help their teenagers at a time when they need their parents most.



GRANDPA, FATHER

By Aaron L. West

Church Publishing Services

Picture 3,000 missionaries gathered in a large room. Two thousand nine hundred ninety-nine of them are talking excitedly and looking toward the same spot in the room. Some are on their tiptoes. Some are jumping to snatch quick glances over those on tiptoes. Some are standing on folding chairs. One missionary is sitting on a folding chair, elbows on his knees, hands clasped, head bowed.

That might not be exactly what happened, but that's how I remember it. That was how I felt. I was that one missionary.

As you picture the scene, you might think I was lonely or sad. Actually, I was experiencing one of the happiest moments of my life—a moment that I have been glad to relive many times since then.

I was at the missionary training center in Provo, Utah, preparing to serve as a full-time missionary in the Ecuador Quito Mission. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), who was then First Counselor in the



First Presidency, came to speak to all the missionaries in the MTC.

It was after the meeting that the hubbub began. I noticed that people weren't filing to the doors, so I asked another elder what was going on.

"President Hinckley's grandson is here at the MTC," he said, "and President Hinckley just left the stand to give him a hug!"

With that explanation, the elder stepped onto his chair to get a better view, exclaiming, "Wow! Wouldn't it be great to have President Hinckley as a grandpa?"

I loved and respected President Hinckley, and I had been inspired by his message that day. But in that moment I was struck by a thought that led me to sit on my chair rather than stand on it. In the middle of all that cheerful enthusiasm, I sat still and thought, "I'm sure it would be great to have President Hinckley as a grandpa. But I wouldn't trade my Grandpa Felt or my Grandpa West for him." I lifted my head and felt the warm embrace of gratitude as I reflected on my heritage, my family.

Then another thought came, more powerful than the first: "Besides, I am a son of God." I knew that I, a grandson of a dentist and a factory supervisor, had just as much worth as a grandson of a prophet. Why? The two of us had the same Father in Heaven.

The other 2,999 missionaries eventually walked toward the doors of that large room. I joined them, more prepared to serve the Lord than I had been a few minutes earlier. ■

EVERY TRIAL CAN BRING GREATER FAITH

By Giorgia Murgia

As a seven-year-old, when I learned that my father was killed in an accident, I prayed for a miracle.

When I was a child, one of my favorite parts of the day was waiting for my dad to come home from work. I would look out the window and see him coming, and I would count each of his steps toward the house, looking forward to the joy he brought. I never thought I would have to do without that feeling.

One day when I was seven years old, in my father's place came a man with a somber face who stood at the door and told us that my father had been killed in an accident.

That day I was silent. I looked at my four-year-old brother and my mother, so young and alone, and I did not cry. I didn't think it could be

true, so I went to the window and stared at the street. I began to feel an unbearable force pressing down on my shoulders, a weight that would not let me breathe normally, a pressure that oppressed me.

Not long after my father's death, I went into my room alone at the fading light of sunset and, as I had been taught, prayed to my Heavenly Father. I pleaded with Him to let me see my beloved father again, just to hug him. In my heart I was certain that Heavenly Father could give me this miracle.

That day I didn't get to see my dad or hug him, but I was given much more. It was as if I felt the hands of the Savior on my shoulders. His presence was almost tangible as He removed the weight that pressed down on my chest.

Now, over 20 years later, that relief has never left me. At times I have felt sadness but never emptiness at the loss of my father. I can look back and see how many times



THE SAVIOR CAN HEAL AND STRENGTHEN

"Because of His infinite and eternal sacrifice (see Alma 34:14), [the Savior] has perfect empathy and can extend to us His arm of mercy. He can reach out, touch, succor, heal, and strengthen us to be more than we could ever be and help us to do that which we could never do relying only upon our own power. . . .

"The unique burdens in each of our lives help us to rely upon the merits, mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah (see 2 Nephi 2:8). I testify and promise the Savior will help us to bear up our burdens with ease (see Mosiah 24:15)."

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Bear Up Their Burdens with Ease," *Ensign*, May 2014, 90.



Now, over 20 years later, the relief the Savior gave me has never left. Many times the Spirit has come to console me, help me, and show me the way.

the Spirit has come to console me, help me, and show me the way to follow the Savior's precious steps. I can feel His presence in my life thanks to that first trial, which helps me see everyday trials with an eternal perspective. I know it is the gospel in our lives that allows us to feel the invisible caress of the Savior's hand.

I have married for eternity, and now my husband and I have three little girls, who bring a taste of heaven into our home. When I see them, I rejoice in the peace and knowledge that every sorrow, trial, and challenge in their lives can bring with it greater faith, new witnesses, and

wonderful miracles. I rejoice in the profound certainty that when they need something beyond what my husband and I can give

them, they will be protected, consoled, and saved, just as I was. ■

The author lives in Sardinia, Italy.

LEARNING FROM TRIALS

While it is important to pray for strength and help in trials, it is also important to pray to learn from trials. You can pray for "eyes to see, and ears to hear" (Deuteronomy 29:4) the Lord's tender mercies and grace in your life (see Ether 6:12).

Consider writing in your journal some of the lessons you have learned and some of the evidences of Heavenly Father's love that you have experienced during a difficult time in your life.

What We Learned Parents

Young adults share how they are using the lessons they learned from their parents.

from Our

DILIGENT WORK

In my home I learned to work hard. My family used a system we called the "diligence list." At the beginning of the month, we received a list of various chores, such as doing the dishes, caring for the horses, and so on. We checked off the chores as we completed them, and then at the end of the month, we were given an amount of money for our diligent work based on how many check marks we had on the chart. From this I have learned to work diligently and to be careful with money.

Peter Stegeby of Västerbotten, Sweden



RIGHTEOUS PARENTHOOD

As a single parent, my mother had many things to do, but she always took time to help me, comfort me, or simply listen to me. Knowing that she was always there was invaluable, and I want to give that to my own children in the future.

When my mother remarried, her new husband chose to become the father of my older brother and me. Soon afterward, a little sister joined our family, but I have never felt the slightest difference in the affectionate and loving way he has taken care of us all as his own. Thanks to his attitude, my older brother and I have been able to grow up in a strong and unified family with the priesthood in the home. The day we were sealed as a family was very special. His loving example has taught me that a father isn't just something you are—it's something you become.

Amanda Cornelius of Stockholm, Sweden



DIVINE PROTECTION

When I was a child, my dad worked far away and always came home when it was pitch dark. I would stay awake until he came home. But one day he was very late, and I couldn't reach him on the phone. I was very scared. I remembered that my parents had taught me to pray always and to ask for help whenever I was scared, so I knelt down and prayed that my father would return home safely. To my surprise, as I ended my prayer, I heard my dad's bike outside. I was so grateful to my Heavenly Father for watching over my father.

As a young adult, whenever I'm confused or scared, the first person who comes to my mind is Heavenly Father. I know He is always with me and He listens to my prayers.

Rohini Krishnan of Bangalore, India

PRAYER

One night I went in my parents' bedroom to ask my dad something, but he was kneeling in prayer, so I left and returned a few minutes later to find him in the same position. I decided to get ready for bed, thinking he would surely be done praying when I was finished with my bedtime routine. I returned to my parents' bedroom about 10 minutes later to find him still praying! Seeing that example from my father strengthened my testimony. He was truly pouring his heart out in prayer to Heavenly Father.

Jen Hansen of Idaho, USA

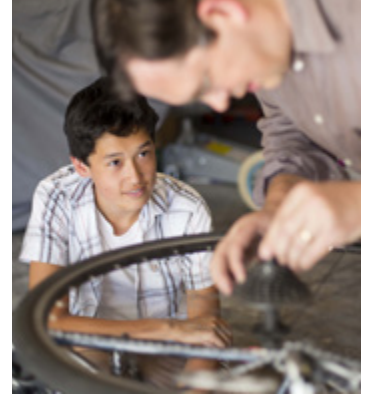


TEMPLE MARRIAGE

I'm grateful that my parents shared the story of their relationship with me. They became good friends at age 14, and they grew up and learned together. With time, their friendship developed into true love, and they were married in the temple. I plan to follow my parents' example of marrying in the temple and hope that I will experience happiness and true love as they have.

Pasăre Ana Maria of Prahova, Romania





A CHRIST-CENTERED HOME

Jesus Christ has always been at the center of my parents' relationship. They focus on creating a home where the Spirit resides and set a high priority on family scripture study, family prayer, and family home evening.

My mother was called to visit teach a young mother who was struggling after a recent divorce. I often came home to my mom babysitting this woman's two young boys. Occasionally we would stop by this woman's home as we were running errands, and my mom would leave a note at the door. I am so grateful for my mom's example that charity "seeketh not her own" (Moroni 7:45).

My parents are always learning and using their new skills and knowledge to build up the kingdom of God. Because of their example, I have made education a priority in my own life. The example of my parents led me to marry a man who also has Jesus Christ at the center of his life.

Rachel Nielsen of Utah, USA



RELIANCE ON HEAVENLY FATHER AND JESUS CHRIST

My dad can repair just about anything. As a teenager, I asked him how he was able to fix things so well. He said, "Before I start working, I say a prayer to ask Heavenly Father to help me. Then I go to work." His example has taught me to be humble and to seek heavenly inspiration.

When my mother has felt disheartened, she has sought healing and peace at the Savior's feet. When I have had similar moments, she has encouraged me to draw on the power of the Atonement. As a young adult, I continue to find the Savior's peace and reassuring love by following her righteous example.

Isak Malm of Jönköping, Sweden

DIVINE NATURE

When I was young, my parents planted within me the pure love from my Father in Heaven. I began to know Him as my mom sang "I Am a Child of God" (*Hymns*, no. 301) to me, and over time my parents' examples have been my greatest inspiration to come to know and love my Father in Heaven through service and by faithfully attending Church meetings and activities.

Marlin Ortega Vásquez of Managua, Nicaragua

YOUNG ADULTS

Look UP

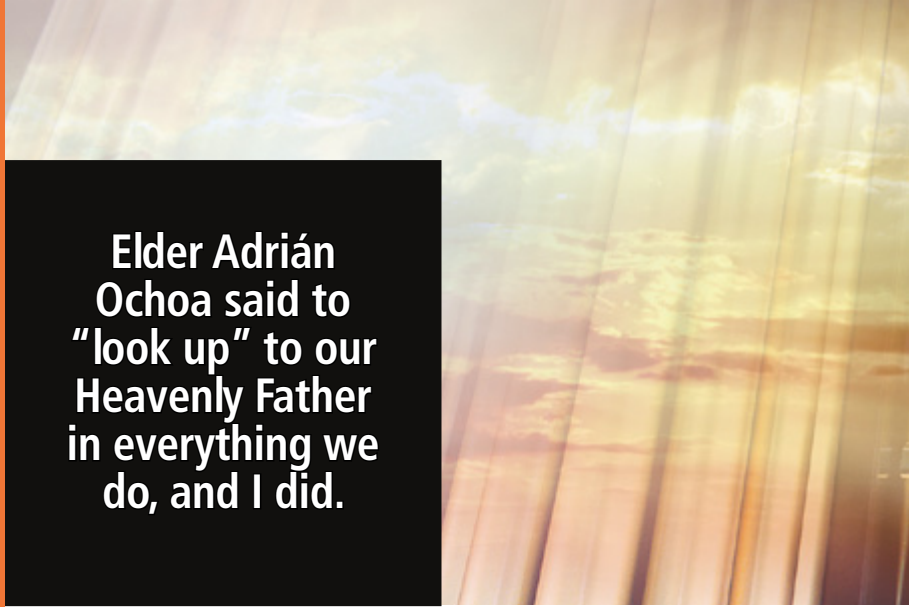
Elder Adrián Ochoa said to “look up” to our Heavenly Father in everything we do, and I did.

By Dominique Brya Simon

On October 6, 2013, I walked into the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, for the first time. The missionaries had been teaching me for about 10 months, but I still had one last, fundamental question—were there modern-day prophets and modern-day prophecy? The missionaries had given me tickets to the Sunday afternoon session and challenged me to have in mind specific questions that I wanted answered. I entered the Conference Center that day ready to find an answer to my question about modern revelation and about whether or not I should be baptized.

Before conference my roommate said I needed to make a point of admiring the incredible Conference Center ceiling by looking up. From the moment I entered the building on that beautiful warm Sunday afternoon, I felt an immediate peace in my heart. I loved seeing all of the faithful families. As I looked into their smiling faces, I felt excitement as I thought about their eternal future.

Throughout all of the wonderful talks in that session, my feeling of peace continued. I took notes on all of the speakers, but I especially admired the talk “Look Up” by Elder Adrián Ochoa of





the Seventy.¹ He spoke about the signs of our times and the urgency for spiritual preparation. He kept reiterating to always “look up” to our Heavenly Father in everything we do and to remember we are not alone. He urged us to follow the words of the prophet Moroni—“Ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ” (Moroni 10:4)—which he said was another way of saying, “Look up.”

After the session, I asked my group to wait so that I could look up at the ceiling. I slowly walked down the maroon carpeted aisle toward the center of the auditorium. When I looked up at the golden organ pipes toward the ceiling, it took my breath away. As I stood there looking up, I felt a voice inside my head telling me very clearly, “This is what you need to do.” As chills ran down my spine, I could not decipher whether the voice was my own or the voice of the Spirit. However, the phrase “This is what you need to do” kept running through my head as I pictured the faces of the families I had seen earlier. I thought about the happiness they shared because of the gospel of Jesus Christ in their lives.

For weeks I had been “looking up” to God for guidance. As a result, the answer I was seeking had come as I stood in that sacred setting.

After taking this in for a moment, which truthfully felt like eternity, I decided to pray earnestly. I asked our Heavenly Father to bless me and give me the strength to accept this as the answer I came looking for. I prayed to have the courage to follow through with the truth I had found and tell my family I was going to be baptized.

Less than a month later, on November 1, I was baptized and confirmed a member of the Church. I gained a testimony of prophets and modern-day revelation. I knew Heavenly Father would bless me with the answers I needed to take steps of faith and that the prophet and other Church leaders had good counsel for me. I could live my life so that someday I could have a beautiful family of my own and attend conference with them.

Now a year later, I am the only active member of the Church in my family and hold a calling in my young single adult ward. I thank Elder Ochoa for his divinely inspired words and encouragement to slow down when prompted by the Spirit. May we all seek to be spiritually and temporally prepared—and may we eagerly look up to Heavenly Father in everything we do. ■

The author (pictured left) lives in Utah, USA.

NOTE

1. Adrián Ochoa, “Look Up,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 102–3. Elder Adrián Ochoa said to “look up” to our Heavenly Father in everything we do, and I did.

Making Your
Young Adult Years

Productive

**You can succeed in
your young adult
years as you become
more independent,
work on your
education, and make
important decisions.**

By Garth A. Hanson

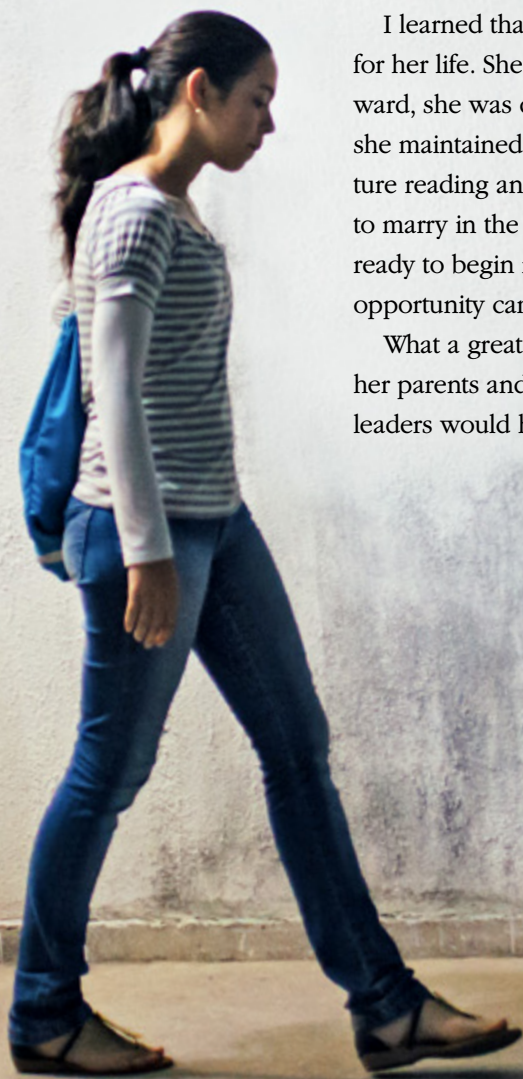
Marilyn, a second-year university student, moved into my singles ward just as I was called to be the bishop. She asked for an appointment to meet with me in my first week there. She was so excited when she came to see me. She bounced into my office with a smile as big as one can have. We greeted each other and sat down.

I learned that she had a direction for her life. She was active in the ward, she was dedicated at school, she maintained her personal scripture reading and prayer, she wanted to marry in the temple, and she was ready to begin married life when the opportunity came along.

What a great interview! I knew her parents and Young Women leaders would have been proud.

She really glowed.

Marilyn is one of many young single adults I have worked with over the years. I have taught at four universities, served as a mission president, and served at the Provo Missionary Training Center. I know this about young adults: You are important to the Church, and the Lord has a plan for your life. He has provided all that you need to make good things happen, but you have to do your part. He expects you to be prepared for important decisions. And you can consult Heavenly Father so He can help you make the right decisions. He knows your name, He knows your needs, and He wants what is best for you. But you must do the necessary things to be able to receive His loving guidance.





As a young single adult, you are more independent and have fewer people to help you make decisions. You are a family of one. You have access to support and encouragement, but you make your own decisions—critical decisions, such as education, career, lifestyle, marriage, and Church activity. The Lord expects you to be able to find and weigh options and to make good, gospel-centered decisions.

Seven Suggestions for Successful Young Adult Years

1. Realize that you are somewhat on your own as you leave your parents' nest. Your relationships with your parents are not the same now as they were. Do what you can to keep those relationships but also maintain your independence. You may not be able to please them with all of your decisions, but you are moving toward your own marriage and family, and you will do the best you can.

2. Grow personally. Establish a personal routine that includes daily prayer and scripture study, weekly church attendance, and regular attention to your physical fitness and personal appearance. If possible, regular temple attendance should be a part of this plan.

3. Be active in your ward or branch. Get to know the leaders, make yourself available for callings, and attend activities. Your bishop would love it if you asked for an initial interview when you're new in the ward. Then stay in touch with your leaders.

4. Develop your own personal "board of directors." Find people who know you and can counsel you on important matters. Your parents and a significant Church leader should be members of that board. A good friend, an educator, and a professional person who works in an area of your interest could round out that board. The board never meets together, but you talk with them as needed. Counsel with them and seriously consider what they say.

5. Develop a one-year, three-year, and five-year plan. Counsel with members

of your personal board of directors about your plan. Follow that plan and adjust it as necessary. Make good things happen. Be someone who is going somewhere.

6. Make formal education and financial independence part of that plan. Select an area of interest and make progress toward an educational goal. Time is important, and there is urgency in getting your life put together. You can do this.

7. Be active in finding a spouse. Men especially could set up a plan to have a date every week. Most of the dates need to be in twosomes rather than in groups. Sometimes marriage comes later. Develop a healthy attitude, and do not suffer internally by feeling you are flawed. You are a child of God. Push on with a productive life.

FIVE-YEAR PLAN
THREE-YEAR PLAN
ONE-YEAR PLAN



Developing Independence

I am impressed with the Lord's plan. He has seen to it that most children have solid support from birth to the age of maturity, about age 18. Most youth have parents, teachers, Church leaders, relatives, and friends who help discuss their options. They are often corrected or supported as important decisions are made.

As a young single adult, however, you are more independent and have fewer people to help you make decisions. You are a family of one. You have access to support and encouragement, but you make your own decisions—critical decisions, such as education, career, lifestyle, marriage, and Church activity. The Lord expects you to be able to find and weigh options and to make good, gospel-centered decisions.

Jane was a 20-year-old woman in the ward where I served as bishop. I received a phone call at 5:00 one morning from Jane's mother. She was angry and almost shouted at me: "It is your responsibility to keep Jane away from Sam. She is getting too serious with him, and she has to finish college [in three years] before she gets married. You keep those two apart!"

Jane and Sam (names have been changed) had dated for several months. Sam was a returned missionary doing all the right things. I would

have been very pleased to have my daughter consider marriage with a young man like Sam.

I told Jane's mother I would look into it. When I told Jane of the call, she was upset but gained control, and we talked. She decided to visit her mom soon and share her plans. In a spirit of fasting and prayer, she would explain to her mom that Sam was a viable option for marriage.

She did this, and Jane and Sam were married a few months later. Sam became a great friend to Jane's mother.

Jane made this decision for herself as she relied on Heavenly Father and personal revelation. She was active in the Church and had been careful in her interaction with Sam. She was ready for marriage. She did need, however, to keep her parents informed and work through her mother's concerns.

Success Takes Effort

In summary, here's what I've learned from the hundreds of young adults I've known: Those who handle decisions best are those who make activity in the Church a significant part of their lives. They are either supporting themselves financially or making significant contributions toward their financial independence. They have a healthy personal life, which often includes a job and education.

Don't feel alone when making decisions. You have resources in friends, parents, Church leaders, counselors, and associates, but remember that none of these people can make your decisions. The final decision belongs to you—after making it a matter of prayer (see D&C 9:8–9).

The young single adult years are important years. They can be fun and pleasant, but they should include much purposeful activity that involves study, work, and service, which can also be enjoyable. There is some urgency in finding a spouse and in being actively involved in education and church.

Brother Tad R. Callister, Sunday School general president, told this story about finding a spouse. His mother had overheard his prayers one night. "When I finished, she said, 'Tad, are you asking the Lord to help you find a good wife?' . . . I replied, 'No,' to which she responded, 'Well, you should, Son; it will be the most important decision you will ever make.'¹ That sounds like excellent advice.

Making progress through your young adult years takes a constructive effort but is manageable. As you make the effort, you will be greatly blessed. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTE

1. Tad R. Callister, "Parents: The Prime Gospel Teachers of Their Children," *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 33.

A New Destination

By Amancay Kotecka-Miño

Sometimes my life feels like one continuous plane flight. My mother is Ecuadorian and my father is Polish. I was born in Ecuador, but when I was 10 years old we moved to Spain. We lived there just two years. When I was 12 that plane took off again, this time for Poland. I yearned for stability, for friends and family nearby, and to be done with good-byes.

Initial Encounters with the Elders

There was knocking at our door. I opened it to find two young men standing there. Tactlessly, I closed the door before they could say anything.

“Open the door again and say you are sorry,” my father’s voice commanded from the back of the house. “We did not teach you to treat people this way!”

Feeling a little ridiculous, I opened the door. “I’m sorry,” I mustered.

“I want to know about you, about your beliefs. Please come in,” my father invited. The young men introduced themselves as missionaries

from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Reluctantly, I listened to their message—at age 13, I had no choice but to participate.

For four months those missionaries visited my home, teaching the doctrines of the restored Church of Jesus Christ. “We respect and admire your courage, but we will never change our religion,” my father finally told them, and we never saw those elders again.

A Desire to Find the Truth

Two years passed, and changing family circumstances forced me into a profound sadness. My father had left Poland in search of work so our family was divided. I felt desperate, searching for God. My prayers became more sincere, pleading with Heavenly Father to help me find His presence.

One day my mother told me, “Some person by the name of Garling asked for you. I told him to call back next week.” She knew that it was a missionary and wasn’t interested in the message, so she didn’t feel it necessary to respond quickly.

My whole life felt like never-ending plane rides. I yearned for peace and stability but never found them until I truly turned to the Lord.

That Friday night I again heard knocking at the door. This time I gave the emissaries a sincere welcome and a smile. “You are welcome in my home, but you need to know I will never become a Mormon,” I told them.

These elders taught me anyway—every Friday afternoon for six months. Loads of my mom’s cookies and thousands of questions later, all my deepest questions began to be answered. It seemed like every time the missionaries visited, another piece of life’s puzzle came together. Intrigued, I finally did what the elders had asked me to do: pray and ask Heavenly Father if their words and the Book of Mormon were true. They assured me that God answers prayers.

Confirmation and Hesitation

As I prayed and studied the scriptures more deeply, these doctrines became sweet to my soul. For months I hesitated, feeling that I needed solid evidence, needed to know everything about the gospel before joining this Church. Finally, the words of the

world and became fearful that my choice to be baptized wouldn't be accepted by loved ones.

Little by little, mistakes and decisions made me deaf to the whisperings of the Spirit. My scriptures ended up in the deepest part of my trunk and I even stopped praying.

That prayer marked the beginning of my return to the Church, which I knew would require repentance. That Sunday, for the first time in nearly a year, I attended sacrament meeting. The next day I again decided to be baptized.

The Lord helped me through my difficult process of returning to what I had once known to be true. I now define those difficult circumstances as some of the sweetest blessings from God. He did not forget me. He listened to my prayers and waited for me to recognize His answer. He helped me through all the suffering I endured, strengthening and protecting me. In the process I gained greater clarity on the meaning of Christ's divine mission and His Atonement.

I was baptized in April 2011. My plane has taken off since—I now reside in France, which means more changes. However, I am now grateful to Him for my life and for the circumstances that He had me live through. Because of my testimony of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, I now understand that I am not alone, no matter what destinations life brings next. I don't know if my plane will take off again. The only thing I do know is that my new destination is that straight path that leads to life eternal with Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. ■

The author lives in France.



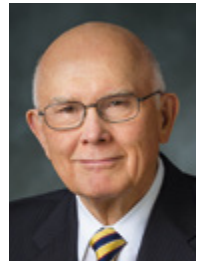
Savior in John 20:29 spoke to my soul: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." I decided to be baptized.

My parents required that I wait until I was an adult to be baptized, but the time waiting helped in my progression and knowledge of the gospel. Sadly, as my baptism date drew closer, I lost confidence in my answer. I got into the things of the

The Blessing of Repentance

My life was not turning out—too many tears and disappointments. It was hard to understand why my family had to undergo so many trials. Right before my last year of high school, my parents had to leave Poland. The prospect of relocating again caused me anguish. Finally, I again knelt in prayer, truly meaning my words: "Heavenly Father, Thy will be done, not mine."





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

WITNESS AS Witnesses OF GOD

As the “salt of the earth,” we Latter-day Saints must retain our savor by living our religion and by asserting ourselves as witnesses of God.

We live in a world where many deny the existence of God or the significance of His commandments. I hope what I say will help you be more effective in your duty to witness of God and to act for truth and righteousness.

I.

I begin with the first three of our Articles of Faith:

“We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.

“We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam’s transgression.

“We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel” (Articles of Faith 1:1–3).

A great Book of Mormon prophet taught these same truths:

“Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend.

“And again, believe that ye must repent of your sins and forsake them, and humble yourselves before God; and ask in sincerity of heart that he would forgive you” (Mosiah 4:9–10).

In contrast, today many deny or doubt the existence of God and insist that all

rules of behavior are man-made and can be accepted or rejected at will.

Why do I speak of such basic truths as the existence of God and the reality of the absolutes of right and wrong that govern our behavior? Sometimes the most needed things we can teach are things we tend to take for granted. We can neglect simple basic truths because we assume they are understood by all, but they are not. We must stress the fundamental truths on which our beliefs are based. Ultimately, these include the existence of God and the eternal reality of the truths and the right and wrong defined by His teachings and His commandments.

II.

The denial of God or the downplaying of His role in human affairs that began in the Renaissance has become pervasive today. The glorifying of human reasoning has had good and bad effects. The work of science has made innumerable improvements in our lives, but the rejection of divine authority as the ultimate basis of right and wrong by those who have substituted science for God has many religious people asking this question: “Why [is] the will of any of the brilliant philosophers of the liberal tradition [or even the will of any branch of the United States Supreme Court] . . . more relevant to moral decisions than the will of God?”¹

Those who have used human reasoning to supersede divine influence in their lives have diminished themselves and cheapened civilization in the process.

I am grateful to know that there are two methods of gaining knowledge—the scientific method and the spiritual method, which begins with faith in God and relies on scriptures, inspired teaching, and personal revelation. There is no ultimate conflict between knowledge gained by these different methods because God, our omnipotent Eternal Father, knows all truth and beckons us to learn by them both.

Prophecies of the last days foretell great opposition to inspired truth and action. Some of these prophecies concern the anti-Christ, and others speak of the great and abominable church.

Anti-Christ

The Apostle John uses the term anti-Christ to describe one who “denieth the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:22). Today those who deny the existence of God are called atheists. Some of these ridicule the faith of those who believe in what cannot be proven, even as they aggressively deny a godly existence they cannot disprove.

We are prepared for such denials of God by the Book of Mormon’s account of a man named Korihor. In terms reminiscent of the most atheistic writings of our day, Korihor, twice called an “Anti-Christ” (Alma 30:6, 12), taught:

“Ye cannot know of things which ye do not see; therefore ye cannot know that there shall be a Christ.

“Ye look forward and say that ye see a remission of your sins. But behold, it is the effect of a frenzied mind; and this derangement of your minds comes because of the traditions of your fathers, which lead you away into a belief of things which are not so” (Alma 30:15–16).

Korihor also declared “that there could be no atonement made for the sins of men.” His description of the consequence of his rejection of the idea of sin and a Savior is strikingly similar to the belief of many in our time: “Every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature; therefore every man prospered according to his genius, and . . . every man conquered according to his strength; and *whatsoever a man did was no crime*” (Alma 30:17; emphasis added).

Moral Relativism

Today we call Korihor’s philosophy moral relativism. Two observers describe that philosophy as follows: “When it comes to moral issues there are no universally objective right or wrong answers, no inappropriate or appropriate judgments, and no reasonable or rational ways by which to make moral distinctions that apply in every time, in every place, and to every person.”²

This is the belief applied by many in the popular media and in response to peer pressure. “Break free of the old rules. Do what feels good to you. There is no accountability beyond what man’s laws or public disapproval impose on



“Humanism makes a man to be god, the supreme being, and the educated human mind becomes the arbiter of all that is true, good and beautiful.”

those who are caught.” Behind such ideas is the assumption that there is no God or, if there is, He has given no commandments that apply to us today.

Secular Humanism

The rejection of an unprovable God and the denial of right and wrong are most influential in the world of higher education. Secular humanism, a branch of humanism probably so labeled because of its strong alignment with secularism, is deliberately or inadvertently embodied in the teachings of faculty members in many colleges and universities.

For religious people, the objectionable element in the various humanist philosophies is their rejection of the existence of God and their denial of the moral absolutes rooted in His commandments. Thus, the 1973 Humanist Manifesto rejected “traditional

moral codes” and “traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience.” It further declared, “We can discover no divine purpose . . . for the human species. . . . Humans are responsible for what we are or will become. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves.”³

Of course, adherents of humanism, called humanists, have made many positive contributions. For example, they have supported democracy, human rights, education, and material progress. So long as these advancements do not exclude believers, our issue with humanists is their rejection of divine authority and values.

As former BYU philosophy professor Chauncey Riddle has written, “Humanism makes a man to be god, the supreme being,



Nephi was told by revelation that there were only “two churches”: “the church of the Lamb of God” and “the church of the devil.”

and the educated human mind becomes the arbiter of all that is true, good and beautiful.” He also reminds us that humanism “enjoys good press in the world today because most of the writers, publishers, scholars and media people are of this persuasion.”⁴

Many who deny or doubt the existence of God would probably disclaim the philosophy of moral relativism. They would see themselves as having some external standards of right and wrong, though absolute standards not based on belief in God are difficult to explain. Secular humanists, who formally reject “traditional religious morality” and declare their reliance on “the tests of scientific evidence,”⁵ seem to fulfill a Book of Mormon prophecy of those “who live without God in the world” (Mosiah 27:31).

The Great and Abominable Church and Other “Churches”

Book of Mormon prophecies describe the “great and abominable church of all the earth, whose founder is the devil” (1 Nephi 14:17). This “church” is prophesied to have

“dominion over all the earth, among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people” (1 Nephi 14:11). Called “most abominable above all other churches,” this church is also said to act “for the praise of the world” in bringing “the saints of God . . . down into captivity” (1 Nephi 13:5, 9).

Because no religious denomination—Christian or non-Christian—has ever had “dominion” over all nations of the earth or the potential to bring all the saints of God down into “captivity,” this great and abominable church must be something far more pervasive and widespread than a single “church,” as we understand that term today. It must be any philosophy or organization that opposes belief in God. And the “captivity” into which this “church” seeks to bring the saints will not be so much physical confinement as the captivity of false ideas.

Nephi was told by revelation that there were only “two churches”: “the church of the Lamb of God” and “the church of the devil” (1 Nephi 14:10; see also 13:4–6).

This description suggests the contrast between those who believe in God and seek to serve Him according to their best understanding and those who reject the existence of God (see 1 Nephi 14:10).

Other teachings in the Book of Mormon also use the word *church* to signify belief or nonbelief in God. The final chapters of 2 Nephi prophesy that in the last days the Gentiles will build up “many churches” that will “put down the power and miracles of God, and preach up unto themselves their own wisdom and their own learning, that they may get gain” (2 Nephi 26:20). They tell of “churches which are built up, and not unto the Lord” (2 Nephi 28:3), which will “teach with their learning” and “deny the power of God” (2 Nephi 28:4, 5). They will “say unto the people: Hearken unto us, and hear ye our precept; for behold there is no God today” (2 Nephi 28:5).

In the Savior’s ministry among the Nephites, He warned against a church that is not “built upon my gospel, [but] is built upon the works of men, or upon the works of the devil” (3 Nephi 27:11; see also the teaching about the “great and spacious building” in 1 Nephi 8:26–33; 11:35; and 12:18). These warnings are not limited to religious organizations. In the circumstances of our day, they include a multitude of secular philosophies and activities.

III.

Many people who believe in God and the right and wrong that exist because of His commandments experience scorn and mocking from worldly teachings and denial of God that occur in many organizations, including educational institutions and media. Such prophesied challenges are faced by the diminishing numbers of God-fearing people who share our belief in God and the right and wrong that exist because of His commandments. This only repeats what existed at the time of the Savior.

Even as we are “troubled on every side,” we are “not in despair” (2 Corinthians 4:8). We know that our spiritual growth requires “an opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11). We also know that the Lord “seeth fit to chasten his

people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith” (Mosiah 23:21). But the scriptures also teach that He will deliver those who put their trust in Him (see 1 Samuel 17:37, 45–46; Psalm 34:22; Proverbs 3:5–6; Alma 36:27; 38:5).

I will now suggest three kinds of things we can do in response to current conditions, beginning with what is easiest. All of these respond to a great Book of Mormon teaching that we should “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in, even until death” (Mosiah 18:9).

Honor the Name and Influence of God

We are taught to “believe in Christ, and deny him not” (2 Nephi 25:29); to “look unto [Christ] in every thought; doubt not, fear not” (D&C 6:36); and to “talk of Christ,” “rejoice in Christ,” and “preach of Christ” (2 Nephi 25:26). Two ways we can do this are in our private prayers and in our personal greetings.

In our private and family prayers, we should ask God to help us and our neighbors and leaders recognize God our Creator and the right and wrong established by His commandments. We should do this for the good of His children everywhere.

We should also assert ourselves against the current trend to refrain from religious references even in private communications. In recent years the inclusion of religious symbols and reverent words in Christmas greetings and sympathy cards has almost disappeared. When we make choices about these kinds of communications, we should not participate in erasing sacred reminders from our personal communications. As believers, we have a duty to preserve the name and influence of God and Christ in our conversations, our lives, and our culture.

Publicly Recognize the Blessings of God

Support public recognition of the blessings of God. This seeks to counter the diminishing mention of religious faith and references to God and His blessings in our public discourse. Contrast, for example, current public documents and rhetoric of government leaders in the United States with similar documents and words of leaders during America’s

first two centuries. In that contrast you will have evidence of deliberate efforts to edit out references to God and the influence of religion in America's founding and preservation.

What can we do about this? First, we can set the right example in our family and Church teachings by acknowledging the blessings of the Lord in our lives and in our nations. To do this "in wisdom and order" (Mosiah 4:27), we should not seem to deny that our nations include and are blessed by citizens of Jewish, Muslim, and other non-Christian persuasions, as well as by atheists. But we should speak truthfully of the fact that, for example, the United States was founded by persons and leaders who were predominantly Christians and who embodied the principles of their faith in the Constitution, laws, and culture of the nation.⁶

A recent essay by Brother Clayton Christensen, professor at the Harvard Business School and a former Area Seventy, insists that religion is the foundation of both democracy and prosperity. He reminds us that democracy and capitalism both depend on large-scale obedience to the unenforceable and that this prerequisite depends upon religions that teach fundamentals such as "the equality of people, the importance of respecting others' property, and of personal honesty and integrity." Secularism, which aspires to displace theistic religion, has no power or program to provide what Brother Christensen calls "the requisite foundation of extensive obedience to the unenforceable."⁷

Contend for the Free Exercise of Religion

Contend for the free exercise of religion. This is more difficult because it requires cooperative action by believers of various faiths. Where government-guaranteed free exercise of religion exists, we should press government officials to honor those guarantees. Here I will emphasize only two examples of current concern.

The first involves public prayer. Prayer occurs when people address the Divine Being, whatever their concept of God and however they choose to address Him. Regardless of the content of a prayer, which will vary according to the belief of the one who prays, when a prayer is offered in a public setting, it is important as an affirmation or symbol

of a group's common dependence upon and reverence for God. This is the nature of the prayers offered at the beginning of legislative assemblies or council meetings and in oaths administered to precede court testimony or official installations. Whatever the designated pray-er's concept of God and whatever his or her religious persuasion or language of prayer, I hope we will witness our belief in God by the symbol of prayer, wisely and tolerantly administered. That is worth contending for.

Second, we should be alert to oppose government officials and public policy advocates who suggest that the free exercise of religion is limited to "freedom of worship." In the United States, for example, the guarantee of "free exercise" protects the right to come out of our private settings, including churches, synagogues, and mosques, to act upon our beliefs, subject only to the legitimate government powers necessary to protect public health, safety, and welfare. Free exercise surely protects religious citizens in acting upon their beliefs in public policy debates and in votes cast as citizens or as lawmakers.

As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said in a powerful address to a nationwide audience of Christian leaders, we Latter-day Saints are "eager to join hands . . . to guarantee the freedom of religion that will allow all of us to speak out [and act out] on matters of Christian conscience regarding the social issues of our time."⁸

We need to support the coalitions of religious leaders and God-fearing people who are coming together to defend the traditional culture of belief in God and the acknowledgment of His blessings.

IV.

In conclusion, I suggest to all believers everywhere that we have a solemn religious duty to be witnesses of God. We must affirm our religious faiths, unite to insist upon our right to the free exercise of our religions, and honor their vital roles in establishing and preserving and prospering nations.

I remind my fellow Christians of the solemn teaching of the Apostle John:



We need to support the coalitions of religious leaders and God-fearing people who are coming together to defend the traditional culture of belief in God and the acknowledgment of His blessings.

“And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world” (1 John 4:3).

The consequence of our failing to speak out as witnesses of God is evident in our Savior’s teaching about the salt that has lost its savor. Mixed with other substances—just as we can be diluted by the values of the world—it loses its unique influence on the mixture of the mass. As the Savior taught, “It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men” (Matthew 5:13).

As “the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13), we Latter-day Saints must retain our savor by living our religion and by asserting ourselves as witnesses of God. When we do so, we associate ourselves with those who will enjoy

the ultimate victory of truth and righteousness, when “every knee shall bow . . . and every tongue shall confess to God” (Romans 14:11) and to the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we worship and whose servants we are. ■

From a devotional address, “Witnesses of God,” given at Brigham Young University–Idaho on February 25, 2014. For the full address, visit web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches.

NOTES

1. Stephen L. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion* (1993), 226; see chapter 11 generally.
2. Francis J. Beckwith and Gregory Koukl, *Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air* (1998), 12–13.
3. In Paul Kurtz, ed., *Humanist Manifestos I and II* (1973), 14, 15–16.
4. Chauncey Riddle, *Think Independently: How to Think in This World but Not Think with It* (2009), 120, 121.
5. In Kurtz, *Humanist Manifestos I and II*, 16.
6. See John A. Howard, *Christianity: Lifeblood of America’s Free Society, 1620–1945* (2008), 51.
7. Clayton Christensen, “Religion Is the Foundation of Democracy and Prosperity,” see mormonperspectives.com/2011/02/08/religion-is-the-foundation-of-democracy-and-prosperity.
8. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Standing Together for the Cause of Christ,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2012, 46.



WHEN Doubts AND Questions ARISE

Questions are a critical part of our eternal growth, and searching for answers in the Lord's way can bring us closer to our Heavenly Father.

By Adam Kotter

Largely because of the Internet, it is not uncommon for members of the Church to encounter ideas that challenge their beliefs. Some members find the questions raised to be disconcerting and wonder whether it is acceptable to have a question about their faith.

It is important to understand that it's good to have questions. In fact, asking questions in faith is essential to our spiritual progress. However, sincere questions are not the same thing as doubts.

Questions versus Doubts

What, then, is the difference between a question and a doubt? Questions, when asked with a sincere desire to increase one's understanding and faith, are to be encouraged. Many ancient and modern revelations have come as the result of a sincere question.¹ The scriptural injunction to seek and to ask in order to find is among the most frequently repeated. Sincere questions are those asked with the "real intent" (Moroni 10:4) to better understand and more fully obey the will of the Lord.

A sincere questioner continues to be obedient while searching for answers. By contrast, I have seen that when people doubt their beliefs, they often suspend their commitment to commandments and covenants while waiting

for answers. The doubter's posture is generally to withhold obedience or limit it, pending resolution of the doubts.

There is no suggestion in the scriptures or the teachings of the prophets that encourages doubt. In fact, the scriptures are full of teachings to the contrary. For example, we are enjoined to "doubt not, fear not" (D&C 6:36). And in Mormon 9:27, we are encouraged to "doubt not, but be believing."

One problem with doubt is the intent to obey *only after* the uncertainty is resolved to the satisfaction of the doubter. This is the attitude personified by Korihor, who said, "If thou wilt show unto me a sign . . . then will I be convinced of the truth" (Alma 30:43).

The power of doubt to destroy faith, hope, and even family is diminished the minute one sincerely says, "I will do the things the Lord has commanded, whether my questions are resolved quickly or ever, *because I have covenanted to do so.*" The difference between a faithful "I will keep the commandments *because . . .*" and a doubtful "I will keep the commandments *if . . .*" is of powerful and eternal import.

The Lord's Pattern for Receiving Answers

As a network engineer, I have to follow strict guidelines if I want my computer networks to be able to communicate with other networks. Sometimes these rules can seem

tedious, but when each network engineer follows the same standards, we are able to create something more powerful than each of us working on our own could.

Likewise, if you seek an answer to a spiritual question from the Source of all knowledge, then you have to follow His rules to get the answer. This process requires at least a desire to understand the truth and a willingness to follow God's will (see Alma 32:27). Otherwise, you run the risk of talking yourself into the answers you want to believe rather than receiving true answers from God.

It is perfectly normal to feel concern and uneasiness when confronted with an unfamiliar idea, especially if it challenges a strongly held belief. What matters is not letting that uneasiness turn us from our covenants during our search for answers. I have learned from personal experience that we cannot turn our back on God and then expect Him to answer our questions on our terms. It takes faith to continue keeping the commandments while our uncertainty is being resolved. It may be tempting to withhold or limit our obedience pending convincing resolution of our concerns, but this is not God's way.

In practical terms, we must first ask ourselves, "Am I willing to do what it takes to get an answer from the Lord, or do I simply want to do things my way?" The Savior Himself taught this pattern when He said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17).

So the first step in resolving questions is to stand "steadfast and immovable in keeping the commandments of God" (Alma 1:25). Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles asked:

"How do you remain 'steadfast and immovable' during a trial of faith? You immerse yourself in the very things that helped build your core of faith: you exercise faith in Christ, you pray, you ponder the scriptures, you repent, you keep the commandments, and you serve others.

"When faced with a trial of faith—whatever you do, don't step away from the Church! Distancing yourself from the kingdom of God during a trial of faith is like leaving



"Distancing yourself from the kingdom of God during a trial of faith is like leaving the safety of a secure storm cellar just as the tornado comes into view."

the safety of a secure storm cellar just as the tornado comes into view."²

Elder Andersen also taught that "faith . . . is a decision."³ The Lord will not force your intellect or your obedience. You must choose faith intentionally! That choice does not violate your intellectual honesty; it is evidence of eternal and divine respect for your agency.

Questions Increase Understanding

Some incorrectly suppose that having sincere concerns about Church history or doctrine is evidence that one is not living up to the standards of the Church. Having questions does not mean you are guilty of some great sin. Questions are a part of life and are necessary for our progression and increased understanding. The concern is not if we develop questions but if we keep the commandments as we work through the process of revelation that leads to answers.

Be aware that Satan can magnify our doubts or lead us to justify our sins. The Holy Ghost will prompt us with uncomfortable feelings when we sin, and we can either repent or reject these promptings. As doubts arise, it may be useful to honestly ask yourself, Is there something I am doing or desiring that is contrary to the gospel? If you answer yes, seek help from your bishop. It can make all the difference! Letting your doubts justify your sins is never a successful substitute for repenting.

Some people also stumble over statements made by Church leaders that have turned out to be incorrect, not about doctrine but in their personal opinions. For example, President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) wrote in the first edition of his book *Answers to Gospel Questions*, “It is doubtful that man will ever be permitted to make any instrument or ship to travel through space and visit the moon or any distant planet.”⁴

Later, following the Apollo moon landings and the death of President David O. McKay, Joseph Fielding Smith became President of the Church. At a press conference, a reporter asked him about this statement. President Smith replied, “Well, I was wrong, wasn’t I?”⁵

As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles observed: “We [can] consume such precious emotional and spiritual capital clinging tenaciously to . . . an incident in Church history that proved no more or less than that mortals will always struggle to measure up to the immortal hopes placed before them.”⁶

Searching in an Uplifting Way

Volumes of books have been written and countless hours have been spent exploring the story of the Restoration. This often leads to an increased understanding, but it can also prompt uncomfortable questions, especially when we don’t understand the motives of the people at the time. It is also easy to get bogged down in searching for historical

facts that may be misunderstood or lost to us now, but it is always possible to get real and relevant information from the One who understands all.

This is perhaps the most important key of all: *when we are firm in keeping our covenants and living true to the light we have, the Lord will bless our lives and give us inspiration.* I have felt these tender mercies; they are very personal, direct experiences between us and our Heavenly Father. They are light and knowledge. No amount of reading or studying third-hand experiences can match the power of first-hand experiences given to us by the mercy and love of our Father.

Questions will continue to come up as we pursue a course of daily scripture and other gospel study. When the Lord wants to teach us, He will often do it by giving us a question to ponder. Answers come by being faithful to our covenants and serving others as we study, because that is the pathway to having personal experiences that, over time, provide the answers to all questions. ■

The author lives in Georgia, USA.

Answers to many gospel questions can be found at [lds.org/topics](https://www.lds.org/topics).

NOTES

1. See, for example, Genesis 25:21–23; Exodus 3:11–22; Mosiah 26; Alma 40; 3 Nephi 27; Doctrine and Covenants 76; 77; 138.
2. Neil L. Andersen, “Trial of Your Faith,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 40.
3. Neil L. Andersen, “You Know Enough,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 14.
4. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions* (1958), 5 vols., 2:191.
5. Personal reminiscence of David Farnsworth; the press conference took place on Jan. 23, 1970, six months after the moon landing.
6. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Laborers in the Vineyard,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 32.



DOCTRINAL CERTAINTIES

“I can live with some human imperfections, even among prophets of God—that is to be expected in mortal beings. I can live with some alleged scientific findings contrary to the Book of Mormon; time will correct those. And

I can live with some seeming historical anomalies; they are minor in the total landscape of truth. But I cannot live without the doctrinal truths and ordinances restored by

Joseph Smith, I cannot live without the priesthood of God to bless my family, and I cannot live without knowing my wife and children are sealed to me for eternity. That is the choice we face—a few unanswered questions on one hand versus a host of doctrinal certainties and the power of God on the other.”

Tad R. Callister, Sunday School general president, “What Is the Blueprint of Christ’s Church?” (CES devotional, Jan. 12, 2014), [cesdevotionals.lds.org](https://www.cesdevotionals.lds.org).

SAVIOR *of the* WORLD

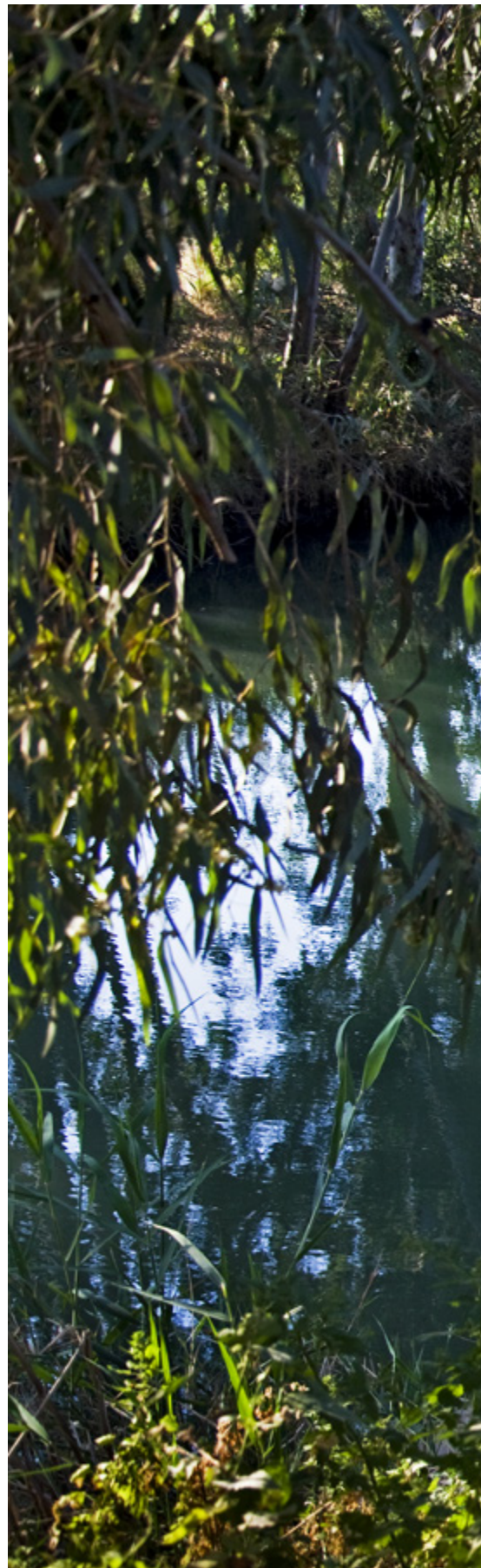
As we draw nearer to Jesus Christ through seeing where He lived during His mortal ministry, our love for Him and gratitude for His Atonement will increase.

*T*hrough the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we are saved from sin and death. Christ paid the price of our sins through His suffering in Gethsemane and on Golgotha. It is through our repentance and through God's mercy and grace that we grow line upon line and become pure enough to return to Him.

Of this, President Thomas S. Monson has said: "With all my heart and the fervency of my soul, I lift up my voice in testimony as a special witness and declare that God does live. Jesus is His Son, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. He is our Redeemer; He is our Mediator with the Father. He it was who died on the cross to atone for our sins. He became the firstfruits of the Resurrection. Because He died, all shall live again. . . . May the whole world know it and live by that knowledge" ("I Know That My Redeemer Lives!" *Ensign*, May 2007, 25).

May we strengthen our testimonies of Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world as we view photographs of the Holy Land and read scriptures that describe events from Christ's mortal ministry. ■

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIM JEFFERY, EXCEPT WHERE NOTED





**DOVE FLYING
OVER THE
JORDAN RIVER**

“And John went down into the water and baptized [Jesus]” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 3:44 [in the Bible appendix]).

“And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him” (Luke 3:22).



**PINNACLE OF THE TEMPLE,
WHERE SATAN TEMPTED JESUS**

“And the Spirit brought [Jesus] to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple. And the devil came unto him, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence” (Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 4:9 [in Luke 4:9, footnote a]). This is the traditional corner of the temple described in Luke. This wall would have been 33 to 50 percent taller at the time of Christ.





STEPS ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE TEMPLE MOUNT

These steps are traditionally considered one of the places where Jesus taught. The “whited sepulchres” of the cemetery (upper right) are in full view and are a reminder of Jesus’s rebuke, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones” (Matthew 23:27).



SHEEP FOLLOWING THEIR SHEPHERD

This photograph taken in the fields of Bethlehem shows how sheep today still follow their shepherd just as they did in days of old (see John 10:3–4). Notice at the top and the bottom of the picture that it is the goats that insist on wandering around in their own way (see Matthew 25:31–46).

ANCIENT OLIVE TREES WITH NEW GROWTH SPROUTING UP

It was amid the olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane that Jesus prayed, “Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt” (Mark 14:36).



GOLGOTHA, THE PLACE OF THE SKULL

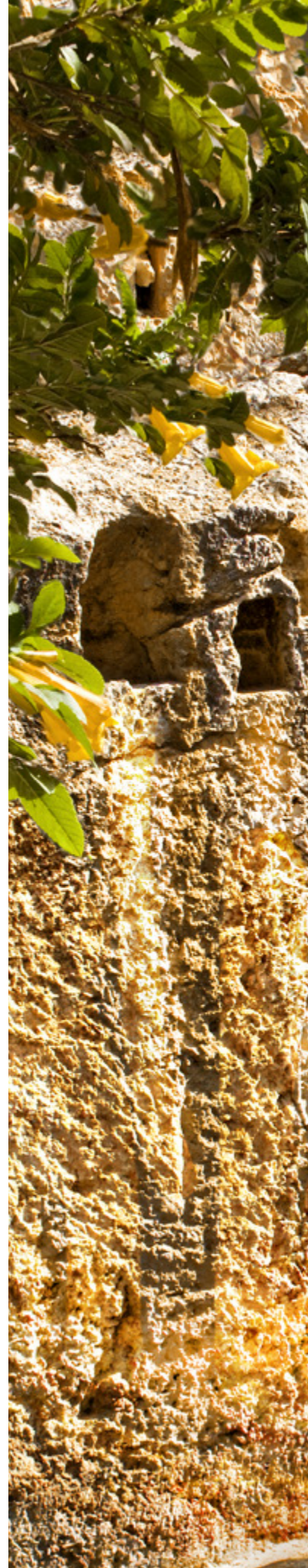
After His prayers in Gethsemane, Christ was condemned to death, scourged, and taken to Golgotha.

“And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

“And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS” (Mark 15:25–26).



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POSSIBLE SITE OF THE GARDEN TOMB

"In the place where [Jesus] was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.

"There laid they Jesus" (John 19:41–42).

"Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping; and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,

"And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

"And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

"And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

"Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master" (John 20:11–16).

Small AND Simple ACTS OF SERVICE

Relief Society sisters can become instruments in the hands of God by finding small and simple ways to serve.

President Thomas S. Monson has reminded Relief Society sisters: “You are . . . surrounded by opportunities for service. . . . Often small acts of service are all that is required to lift and bless another.”¹ Lani Axman of Arizona, USA, has found this to be true (see her story on pages 48–49). “Making a difference in the world can happen in the day-to-day moments all around us,” she writes. “We don’t have to look far to find opportunities to lift others. Our service needs only love to make it powerful.”

Here four Latter-day Saints share experiences from their lives when sisters’ acts of service, both big and small, have comforted and helped them and others in their time of need.

Welcome Home

In 2010, my wife, Jocelyn, and I faced a number of health problems. On one occasion Jocelyn was in one hospital while I was in another. During what was a difficult time for us physically and emotionally, the Relief Society sisters of our ward served us in very real ways.

When I returned home, I thought Jocelyn would soon be joining me, but instead she took a turn for the worse and was transported to



another hospital, where she was confined to bed for the next six months.

During that period, some of these same wonderful sisters made the 117-mile (188-km) trip to visit my wife at the hospital. Others took time to send her get-well cards. These visits and messages were a lifeline to Jocelyn and kept her feeling connected to the ward and to the Relief Society.

As Jocelyn's release neared, several sisters came to our home to help with cleaning in preparation for her arrival. On the day I brought her home, we pulled up to find a large yellow bow tied to the tree in the front yard and another tied to the carport. A large "Welcome Home!" banner hung above the carport.

These wonderful Relief Society sisters have continued to bless us with visits and meals, particularly during times when I have had to attend to some of Jocelyn's other physical and medical needs in her ongoing recovery. This spirit of compassion and helpfulness has filled our hearts with love and thanksgiving. These sisters not only profess to follow the Savior; their actions show that they truly do.

David G. Robertson,
Alberta, Canada



Kindness in a Cup

One of the first things I did after we settled into our new home was to secure services for our developmentally delayed three-year-old. He had qualified to enter a special education preschool. Even though we were pleased with the services offered, I was apprehensive. The thought of being away from my son for several hours was difficult for me.

The day finally came. I got my little guy ready for his new school. He clung to me tightly. I pried his

hands from around my neck and gave him a kiss good-bye. I prayed fervently for strength to follow through on our plans. How would I pass the time without going crazy with worry? Back in my house, I sat down and let the tears come.


Just then there was a knock at my door. Trying to get control of myself, I looked out the window to see my neighbor Louanne. She was a single mom I had met soon after our move. When I opened the door, Louanne smiled and gave me a warm hug. She said simply, "I knew this

day would be hard for you." She sat me down at the kitchen table, opened a small grocery bag, and pulled out a mug, some cocoa, sugar, and canned milk. "I'm going to make you a cup of hot cocoa," she said.

As she taught me how to make the cocoa, we talked and talked. I don't remember everything we said, but before I knew it, it was time for my son to come home. Louanne smiled and said, "See how fast the time will go by?" She gathered up her things, gave me another hug, and went home.

This became one of my most cherished memories, an act of kindness that taught me that service doesn't have to be big or complicated, just sincerely given—even perhaps in a cup.

Melissa Maxfield, Tennessee,
USA



More Than Quilts

Not long after my mother moved into her new home in the Riverton 15th Ward in Utah, her cancer returned and she knew her time was short. Nevertheless she set a goal to make a unique quilt for each of her 11 grandchildren. This goal kept her focused and gave her hope. She spent hours designing each quilt, purchasing the fabric, and cutting out the

pieces. Mom was always so sure she would complete this project that she had everyone convinced she wouldn't die until it was done. And with so many quilts to do, we felt sure she had plenty of time left.

The first time I heard her admit she might not be able to finish the quilts was just two weeks before she died. Seeing her weakened condition, the sisters in her Relief Society came to help her finish what she could not. They gathered up the quilts and told Mom they would finish them.

I remember Mom calling me

to say how pleased she was that each grandchild would have a quilt and how much she appreciated the love of the sisters in her ward. She was so relieved. Speaking now took a lot of effort, but she never stopped praising the women who had come to her aid.

The day Mom passed away, the quilts were far from done. That evening about 50 sisters set up quilt frames all over the church cultural hall and lovingly tied and bound each of the quilts. By the day of the funeral, each quilt was finished and had the

name of one of Mom's grandchildren lovingly embroidered on it. In the end, our family was left with more than quilts to remember Mom by; we were left with the Christlike example of love, service, and compassion that these Relief Society sisters displayed. Shelly Griffin, Utah, USA

Her Words Meant Everything to Me

One of my close friendships started with a "small and simple" thing (Alma 37:6). My husband and I moved to a new area for school a few months before our first baby was due. I was nervous about all the unknowns ahead of me, but the Lord knew what I needed—He sent me Tricia.

I remember her warm, friendly smile. Her husband had just started school with my husband, and she had recently had her first baby. It was comforting to know that I had a fellow sister going through the same experience I was, and we talked together often.

Soon thereafter I gave birth to our daughter, Annika. Her birth was a wonderful experience, but my husband and I went roughly 72 hours with



i wish you
luck and
peace
little baby

almost no sleep before bringing our new baby home. Adjusting to the reality and exhaustion of caring for a newborn was shocking and difficult for me. I didn't know how I was going to find the energy to care for our infant daughter. Everything had changed so abruptly, and I was utterly overwhelmed.

With all of this weighing heavily on me, we walked

motherhood
the greatest
thing
eventually
they do sleep
smiles for
the first time

up to our front door. There, inside the screen door, was a card. As I opened it, I saw Tricia's name signed at the bottom. Her words broke through all my fears, exhaustion, and despair:

"I wish you luck and peace with your little baby girl. Motherhood truly is the greatest thing in the world, and it only seems to get better and more fun as the children get older. If it seems really tough in the beginning (it did to me), just remember they eventually do sleep through the night, and there are few greater feelings than when your baby looks up at you and smiles for the first time."

I burst into tears as I read those words. They



could not have come at a more perfect moment. Tricia's love and friendship filled me with courage, peace, and hope. I was overcome by the power of her simple act of love. It meant everything to me in that moment.

Ultimately, she was absolutely right—caring for Annika got a little easier, and her first precious smiles made all the exhaustion of the previous weeks fade away. Tricia's kindness helped carry me through that difficult time of transition. ■

Lani R. Axman, Arizona, USA

NOTE

1. Thomas S. Monson, "Three Goals to Guide You," *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 120.



WE WILL BE INSTRUMENTS

"Through our organization the gospel has been preached, the needy have been looked after, the sick have been comforted, the downhearted have been cheered, a message of love and of blessing has ever emanated from Relief Society workers. . . . The greatest thing in the world is love. And if we keep that always in our hearts, and give it as a message to those about us, we will be blessed and will be instruments in blessing those with whom we associate."

Clarissa S. Williams, sixth Relief Society general president, quoted in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 74.



THE SAVIOR'S RESPECT FOR Women

By Robert and Marie Lund

In a day when women were generally treated as inferior, John's Gospel reveals that Jesus Christ treated women with compassion and respect and that, as Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated, “the world's greatest champion of woman and womanhood is Jesus the Christ.”¹

This article focuses on the following women in the Gospel of John: (1) Mary, the mother of Jesus (see John 2:1–11; 19:25–27); (2) the Samaritan woman at the well (see John 4:4–30, 39–42); (3) the woman taken in adultery (see John 8:1–11); and (4) Mary Magdalene (see John 20:1–18). Although the life experiences of these women ranged widely, John highlights the Savior's understanding of the varying circumstances of their lives, and he records the blessings that came to each woman because of her faith in Jesus Christ.

By studying Christ's interactions with women in the book of John, we can better understand our potential relationship with Him.

Mary's Faith Preceded the First Public Miracle

John introduces the reader to Mary early in his Gospel. His account of Jesus Christ's first public miracle at the wedding in Cana contains a tribute to Mary's faith.

Mary's position at the wedding was likely one of responsibility.² When the guests "wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine" (John 2:3). This passage suggests that when Mary turned to Jesus Christ for help, she may have been respectfully expecting a miracle.³

In response, Jesus Christ said, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come" (John 2:4). In Joseph Smith's inspired rendering of this verse, the Savior asks Mary what she wants Him to do and promises to do it.⁴ The title *woman* may sound harsh and disrespectful to a modern reader; however, its use here by the Savior was likely meant to convey the opposite meaning.⁵ One scholar explains, "'Woman,' or, rather, 'Lady,' is in Greek a title of respect, used even in addressing queens."⁶ It was as though He said to His mother, "My lady, whatsoever you ask of me in faith, I will grant it unto you." This account shows that the Savior was interested in the routine pressures that women faced. Jesus Christ honored His mother by offering to help her with her burdens and responsibilities.

The account then records Mary's continued faith as she directed the servants to obey Jesus Christ: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it" (John 2:5). The water pots were filled, and the Savior turned the water into wine in response to Mary's request to help provide for the guests at the wedding. What a beautiful lesson we learn from Mary: when in need, seek after and trust in Jesus Christ, who has all power. Like Mary, Latter-day Saint women today can rely on Jesus Christ in faith when they are feeling overwhelmed with their responsibilities.

This brief account not only teaches the power of Mary's faith but also confirms Jesus Christ's true identity as the Son of God through His first public miracle. The next woman John introduces to the reader is the woman of Samaria.



What a beautiful lesson we learn from Mary: when in need, seek after and trust in Jesus Christ, who has all power.



Because of her faith, the Samaritan woman received a witness from the Spirit and desired to testify that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah.

Jesus Christ Showed Respect for a Woman from Samaria

The account in John 4 attests to Jesus Christ's respect toward all women, regardless of their nationality or religious background. Some Jews viewed the Samaritans as "more unclean than a Gentile of any other nationality"⁷ and shunned interactions with them. Not only did Jesus Christ set aside the traditions of the day, but Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has acknowledged the honor the Savior bestowed upon this woman: "The first time the Lord acknowledged Himself to be the Christ, it was to a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well."⁸

After traveling in the heat of the day, Jesus Christ stopped to rest and obtain water. The Savior initiated the conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well by asking for a drink. Gradually, through the conversation, she gained a testimony of His divinity. John records that she first addressed Jesus as "a Jew," then "Sir," then "prophet," and finally as "the Christ" (see John 4:9–29). Her increasingly respectful choice of titles indicates that she developed faith in Jesus Christ and was converted.

The Savior taught her that He had "living water" (John 4:10) and that those who drank from it would never thirst. Puzzled, the woman inquired further. Jesus Christ then revealed the Samaritan woman's past life and her present sinful relationship. Although she may have felt embarrassed, perhaps she also felt that Jesus Christ spoke with respect, because she thoughtfully responded, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet" (John 4:19). Her sins already revealed, with nothing left to hide, the woman exercised faith in Jesus Christ as He taught her. One of His responses can be a key to gaining salvation: "Woman [or, my lady], believe me" (John 4:21).

Because of her faith, the Samaritan woman received a witness from the Spirit and desired to testify that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah. Leaving her water pot (symbolic of her worldly possessions), she went to the city and proclaimed, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4:29).

Becoming an instrument in God's hands, the Samaritan woman's faith and missionary zeal helped soften the hearts of others to accept Jesus Christ.

By featuring this experience, John shows that the Savior is aware of women and knows the details of their lives. Furthermore, He respects all women regardless of their background. For women who don't feel that they have a relationship with Christ or feel like an outcast in their own society, this account shows that Jesus Christ knows each woman's challenges and can accept and lift her. John's Gospel emphasizes this point by teaching about Christ's compassion for the woman caught in adultery.

Jesus Christ Showed Compassion for the Woman Taken in Adultery

John 8 contrasts the ruthless treatment of the woman by the Pharisees with the gentle respect and compassion that Jesus Christ showed her. Perhaps in an attempt to allow the Pharisees to realize and retract their harsh treatment of the woman, the Savior "stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not" (John 8:6). The act of "writing on the ground was a symbolical action well known in antiquity, signifying unwillingness to deal with the matter in hand."⁹

Nevertheless, the scribes and Pharisees continued to pester Jesus Christ and embarrass the woman. Out of compassion for the woman, Jesus "lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground" (John 8:7-8). Standing exposed and self-condemned, the accusers one by one shamefully filed out, leaving only the adulterous woman to face Jesus.

To her credit, the woman stayed at the side of Jesus Christ instead of fleeing. She likely felt lifted and strengthened by the respect with which Jesus treated her. He asked, "Woman [or, my lady], 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).¹⁰



To her credit, the woman in John 8 stayed at the side of Jesus Christ instead of fleeing. She likely felt lifted and strengthened by the respect with which Jesus treated her.



Mary Magdalene was chosen as the first person to witness and then be commissioned to testify of the resurrected Savior. The Lord continues to rely on women in our day to stand as witnesses of Him.

Again, John's Gospel testifies that Jesus Christ treated women with compassion and respect, regardless of their sins. Inasmuch as all have sinned, we can gain great hope from the example of this woman who exercised faith in Jesus Christ. Just as the Savior showed empathy to this woman under troubled and distressful circumstances, He comforted Mary Magdalene when He found her in tears at the garden tomb.

Mary Magdalene Was Chosen as a Witness of the Resurrected Christ

John is the only Gospel author who identifies the first person to see the resurrected Lord, showing that valiant and capable women can receive great spiritual manifestations. John records, "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre" (John 20:1). Seeing that the stone was taken away, Mary ran to obtain help and to alert the Apostles that Jesus's body was missing. She found Peter and John, who ran to the sepulchre and found only the burial clothes. Then the two Apostles left, leaving Mary alone at the garden tomb.

Mary was weeping in the garden by the sepulchre: the thought of not knowing what had happened to the body of the Lord may have overwhelmed her. Although the Savior appeared and spoke to her, she did not initially recognize Him. But then "Jesus saith unto her, Mary" (John 20:16). Something caused her to know that it was her Savior. "The recognition was instantaneous. Her river of tears became a sea of joy. It is He; he has risen; he lives."¹¹ After witnessing the resurrected Lord, Mary was asked to testify to the Apostles that He was alive.

Although the disciples were initially skeptical (see Luke 24:11), Mary's witness must have had some impact. Later, the disciples were gathered to discuss the events of the day, likely pondering the testimony of Mary, when Jesus "stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you" (John 20:19).



This experience emphasizes Jesus Christ's high regard for women, because Mary Magdalene was chosen as the first person to witness and then be commissioned to testify of the resurrected Savior. The Lord continues to rely on women in our day to stand as witnesses of Him. Elder M. Russell Ballard has declared, "Our dispensation is not without its heroines. Countless women from every continent and walk of life have made dramatic contributions to the cause of Christ. . . . My question is, 'Will you be one of those women? And will you men who hold the priesthood answer the same call?'"¹²

We Can Follow Their Example

Through faith in Jesus Christ, we can follow the example of these women in the writings of John. We can trust that the Savior understands the routine pressures of our lives and can help carry our burdens. We can believe Jesus Christ will lift us notwithstanding our transgressions. In addition, we may know that Christ can succor us in our deepest sorrows, sufferings, and anguish. ■

The authors live in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. (1916), 475.
2. See Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (1965–73), 1:135.
3. See James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 145.
4. See Joseph Smith Translation, John 2:4 (in John 2:4, footnote *a*).
5. See James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 144–45.
6. In J. R. Dummelow, ed., *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (1909), 778.
7. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 172.
8. M. Russell Ballard, "Women of Righteousness," *Ensign*, Apr. 2002, 66.
9. In Dummelow, ed., *Commentary*, 788–89.
10. The Joseph Smith Translation adds that from that moment on, the woman glorified God and believed in Him (see Joseph Smith Translation, John 8:11).
11. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 4 vols. (1979–81), 4:263.
12. M. Russell Ballard, "Women of Righteousness," 69–70.

A FEW **Kind** WORDS CHANGED EVERYTHING

As we sat in the chapel, I noticed that a sister looked back at us several times. Soon she came back and told us we were too noisy.

By Jonene Ficklin

In the early years of our marriage, my husband and I lived on the east coast of the United States with our three children. Going to church was a challenge, but we always went (including for general conference broadcasts), even though it was an hour drive.

One October morning, we walked into the chapel to watch general conference. It was very peaceful as we slipped onto the back row. The broadcast began, and the Spirit was wonderful.

As usual, my children—ages four, two, and three months—made little noises. We did our best to keep them reverent, but

I noticed that a sister looked back at us several times. After a few minutes, she came back and told us we were too noisy. Embarrassed, my husband and I whispered our apologies. We collected our children and closed the doors behind us.

Out in the foyer we held our children on our laps and shushed them as we listened to conference over a speaker. A few minutes later, the same woman came out, looking upset, and said she could still hear us and that she and others couldn't focus on general conference. I was mortified. We gathered up the children and drove home. I wondered if we were really that loud or if the sister was just having a bad day.



Struggling to Forget

Over the next week, I couldn't get what happened at church off my mind. Had we really been that distracting to others, despite our efforts to be reverent? One thought led to another. I began dwelling on how much effort it took to bring children to church. What if the other members really didn't want us there? Wouldn't it be easier on everyone if I just stayed home?

By the next Sunday, I was really struggling. If I hadn't had a calling, I probably wouldn't have gone to church. Throughout the first two hours I was aware of every little disturbance my children made. When sacrament meeting came at the end of our block of meetings, I was close to the breaking point. We sat in the very back. Partway through the service, I noticed an older sister looking back at us every few minutes.

"Oh no," I thought. "Here we go again."

A Small Thing

When the service ended, we scurried to get the children and go.

Before we made it to the door, the sister grabbed my arm. I could already feel tears coming.

"You sweet little mother," she said. "What a great thing you and your husband are doing by bringing your children to church! Because of your hard work, they will grow up knowing where they belong."

I cried all the way home, but with joy, not pain. With a few kind words, this sister changed everything. That was many years ago, but her kind words helped me weather many Sundays when going to church was a challenge.

I also still think about the sister who rebuked us. I chose not to take her words personally or hold them against her.

What I learned from these experiences is that there is power in a few kind words. It may have been a small thing for that sweet older sister to speak to me, but it had a huge impact. Because of what she said, I knew the Lord was aware of my struggle and loved me. Because of her example, we seldom miss a week of church. Our children have grown up knowing where they belong and that the Lord loves them. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.



CHOOSE NOT TO BE OFFENDED

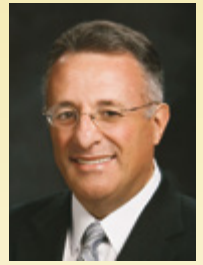
"You and I cannot control the intentions or behavior

of other people. However, we do determine how we will act. Please remember that you and I are agents endowed with moral agency, and we can choose not to be offended."

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "And Nothing Shall Offend Them," *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 91.







**By Elder
Ulisses Soares**
Of the Presidency
of the Seventy

HOLD ON TO THE ROD

If we exercise faith and diligently obey the commandments of the Lord, we can more easily choose the right.

I know a good member of the Church who had a difficult experience while in college. He was invited to a party at the house of a classmate. My friend's college professors were also invited, especially those who were friendly to the students. The party seemed inviting and secure.

When my friend arrived, however, he quickly realized that the atmosphere was not what he had expected. Students were drinking, smoking, using drugs, and doing horrible things in every corner of the house. He became concerned and decided to leave, but the party was being held far from his home. He had gotten a ride with friends, so he had no way to leave on his own.

At that moment he prayed silently to the Lord, asking for help. After some pondering, he felt that he should go outside. He followed his feelings and stayed outside the house until the party had ended.

During the ride home, his friends talked about the horrible things that had happened during the party. My friend felt uncomfortable

with the situation. It was not easy for him to bear.

However, when he partook of the sacrament the next day at church, he felt calm, peaceful, and certain he had made the correct decision. He realized what it means to grasp the iron rod and not let go, even in the mists of darkness. He understood clearly what Nephi had taught his brothers when he said that “whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction” (1 Nephi 15:24).

Imagine what might have happened had that young man, out of embarrassment, not been strong enough to hold on to the iron rod. As a result of this and other decisions in his life, he married a young woman in the temple, formed a righteous family, and became successful. He serves faithfully in the Church today and seeks to be a good example for his children.

The Natural Man

It is not easy to face daily temptation. We are all exposed to an environment that is hostile to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We live in a world that is deteriorating morally. Media and technology invite us to participate in destructive and life-shattering activities that oppose our beliefs and the values of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Pressures from friends who do not share our values, or who share our values but are weak in their faith, push us to participate in degrading behaviors. On top of this, we have to deal with the natural man that exists in each of us.

The Guide to the Scriptures defines the natural man as “a person who chooses to be influenced by the passions, desires, appetites, and senses of the flesh rather than by the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Such a person can comprehend physical things but not spiritual things. . . . Each person must be born again through the atonement of Jesus Christ to cease being a natural man.”¹

President Thomas S. Monson often quotes a simple adage that can help us avoid the distraction of temptation and keep us moving in the right direction: “You can’t be right by doing wrong, and you can’t be wrong by doing right.”²

If we exercise faith and diligently obey the commandments of the Lord, we can more easily choose the right.

The Light of Christ

The prophet Mormon taught his people:

“Wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in



My friend felt that he should leave the party and stay outside until it had ended. He realized what it means to grasp the iron rod and not let go, even in the mists of darkness.

Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

“But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him” (Moroni 7:16–17).

Our Heavenly Father has given us the Light of Christ, which is the “divine energy, power, or influence that proceeds from God through Christ and gives life and light to all things.”³ It helps a person choose between right and wrong. This gift, in conjunction with the companionship of the Holy Ghost, helps us to determine whether a choice places us in the territory of the Lord or behind enemy lines. If our behavior is good, that is evidence that we are being inspired by God. If our behavior is bad, that is evidence that

we are being influenced by the enemy.

My college friend used these two gifts. The Light of Christ helped him to identify what was right, and the Holy Ghost guided his decision about which path to follow. These two gifts are available to those who hold on to the iron rod.

The Gift of Repentance

Let us imagine that for some reason we have been deceived or confused by temptation and end up committing sin. What should we do? If we fall into temptation and sin, we have to reconcile ourselves with God. In the language of the scriptures, we must repent.

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught:

“When we sin, we turn away from God. When we repent, we turn back toward God.

“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]. It is the beckoning of a loving Father and His Only Begotten Son to be more than we are, to reach up to a higher way of life, to change, and to feel the happiness of keeping the commandments. Being disciples of Christ, we rejoice in the blessing of repenting and the joy of being forgiven. They become part of us, shaping the way we think and feel.”⁴

Repentance is a wonderful gift available to all who desire to return to God and allow Him to mold their lives.

We were born with the seed of divinity in our spirits because we are God’s children. This seed needs to grow. It grows as we exercise our agency in righteousness, as we make correct decisions, and as we use the Light of Christ and the Holy Ghost to guide us in the decisions we make during the course of our lives. This process takes time, and it is not possible to shape our lives from one day to another.

Recognizing our dedication and perseverance, the Lord will give us what we are unable to obtain by ourselves. He will shape us because He sees our efforts to overcome our imperfections and human weaknesses.

In that regard, repentance becomes part of our daily lives. Our weekly taking of the sacrament—to come meekly, humbly before the Lord, acknowledging our dependence upon Him, asking Him to forgive and renew us, and promising to always remember Him—is very important.

Sometimes in our daily efforts to become more Christlike, we find ourselves repeatedly struggling with the same difficulties. It is as if we were climbing a tree-covered mountain. At times we don’t see our progress until we get closer to the top and look back from the high ridges. Don’t be discouraged. If you are striving and working to repent, you are in the process of repenting.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “Overcoming bad habits or addictions often means an effort today followed by another tomorrow and then another, perhaps for many days, even months and years, until we achieve victory.”⁵

As we improve, we see life more clearly and feel the Holy Ghost working more strongly within us. For those who are truly repentant but seem unable to feel relief, continue keeping the commandments. I promise you that relief will come in the timetable of the Lord. Healing requires time.

Let us maintain an eternal perspective by overcoming the natural man, judging by the Light of Christ, seeking guidance from the Holy Ghost, repenting when we fall short, and allowing our Heavenly Father to transform our lives into that which He has planned for us. ■

From a devotional address, “Becoming a Work of Art,” given at Brigham Young University on Nov. 5, 2013. For the full address, visit speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

1. Guide to the Scriptures, “Natural Man,” scriptures.lds.org.
2. Thomas S. Monson, “In Harm’s Way,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 48.
3. Guide to the Scriptures, “Light, Light of Christ,” scriptures.lds.org.
4. Neil L. Andersen, “Repent . . . That I May Heal You,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 40.
5. D. Todd Christofferson, “Recognizing God’s Hand in Our Daily Blessings,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2012, 21.



A PROMISE TO ALL

“The Savior wrought the Atonement, which provides a way for us to become clean. . . . Those who will repent and forsake sin will find that His merciful arm is outstretched still. . . . The result of His sacrifice is to free us from the effects of sin, that all may have guilt erased and feel hope.”

President Boyd K. Packer,
President of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles,
“The Reason for Our Hope,”
Ensign, Nov. 2014, 6, 7.

THE Purifying Path

OF OBEDIENCE, SACRIFICE, AND CONSECRATION

By Lauren Bangerter Wilde

When Ammon and his brothers served their mission among the Lamanites, they saw thousands of people baptized. Faith in Jesus Christ and in the gospel caused these new converts to change their lifestyle (see Alma 24:17–18), their culture (see Alma 23:5), their name (see Alma 23:17), and their homeland (see Alma 27:15, 22–26). The scriptures say that the Anti-Nephi-Lehies, as they called themselves, were “distinguished for their zeal towards God, and also towards men; for they were perfectly honest and upright in all things; and they were firm in the faith of Christ, even unto the end” (Alma 27:27). In other words, they were a people whose hearts had become pure through faith and gospel living (see Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:22; Helaman 3:35).

This example is one we would do well to follow as we individually strive to become pure in heart—a process that starts with obedience and sacrifice and culminates in consecration.¹

Obedience

The conversion of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies began with their individual obedience to the first principles and ordinances of the gospel (see Articles of Faith 1:4). The faith and repentance that preceded the baptism and confirmation of so many is best exemplified by King Lamoni’s

father, who said, “O God, . . . I will give away all my sins to know thee” (Alma 22:18).

After their baptism, the Anti-Nephi-Lehies “did walk in the ways of the Lord, and did observe to keep his commandments and his statutes” (Alma 25:14; see also Alma 21:23). They made a special covenant to ensure that they would not break the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13). They buried their weapons of war deep in the earth and covenanted never to use them again for the shedding of blood (see Alma 24:17–18). Their desire to be obedient led them to make this sacrifice and covenant.

We too are led to sacrifice and make covenants when we decide to keep the commandments (see Mosiah 18:8–11). If we falter, the merciful gift of repentance allows us to renew our commitment to be obedient.²

Sacrifice

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained the relationship between sacrifice and obedience this way: “Sacrifice allows us to learn something about ourselves—what we are willing to offer to the Lord through our obedience.”³ The Anti-Nephi-Lehies sacrificed their past way of life

The Anti-Nephi-Lehies sacrificed their past way of life when they buried their weapons of war.



ILLUSTRATION BY DAN BUIR

*Parenthood and nurturing children
move us along the path of obedience,
sacrifice, and consecration.*

when they buried their weapons. Later, after trying to live their new religion despite persecution from unbelieving Lamanites, they followed the counsel of their priesthood leader and moved to a new land, relying on the charitable actions of the Nephites who welcomed them there. The sacrifice made by the Anti-Nephi-Lehies blessed not only them but the Nephites as well (see Alma 27:24–27; 53:10–19).

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said that “our highest sense of sacrifice is achieved as we make ourselves more sacred or holy. This we do by our obedience to the commandments of God.”⁴ As we are obedient, we become willing to sacrifice such things as our time, our energy, and our means. Sacrifice changes our natures; it is the process by which we become holy enough to be willing to give up all we have for the Lord if we are called upon to do so.

Consecration

Latter-day Saint scholar Hugh Nibley observed that the law of consecration, “the consummation of the laws of obedience and sacrifice, is the threshold of the celestial kingdom, the last and hardest requirement made of men [and women] in this life.”⁵ For some of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies, consecration meant literally laying down their lives for what they believed (see Alma 24). While we aren’t normally required to put our lives in jeopardy for the gospel or give all that we have, we do consecrate our lives in other ways. Elder Stephen B. Oveson of the Seventy and his wife wrote,



LIVING A CONSECRATED LIFE

“Spiritual confidence increases when you are truly striving, for the right reasons, to live a consecrated life in spite of your imperfections.”

Elder Jörg Klebingat of the Seventy,
“Approaching the Throne of God with

Confidence,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 36.



“In the long run, offering ourselves for sacred uses might simply mean maintaining a consistent attitude of meek willingness to offer all we are capable of giving at any given time while we help those about us do the same.”⁶

A consecrated life doesn’t happen all at once. The Ovesons described consecration as “a day-to-day process of dedication, humility, refinement, and purification as we follow the example of . . . our Savior.”⁷

The Book of Mormon succinctly summarizes this process with regard to the Anti-Nephi-Lehies: “They became a righteous people” (Alma 23:7). They became pure in heart. We too can become pure in heart as we strive to be more obedient, more willing to sacrifice, and more consecrated to the Lord and His work. ■

The author lives in Maine, USA.

NOTES

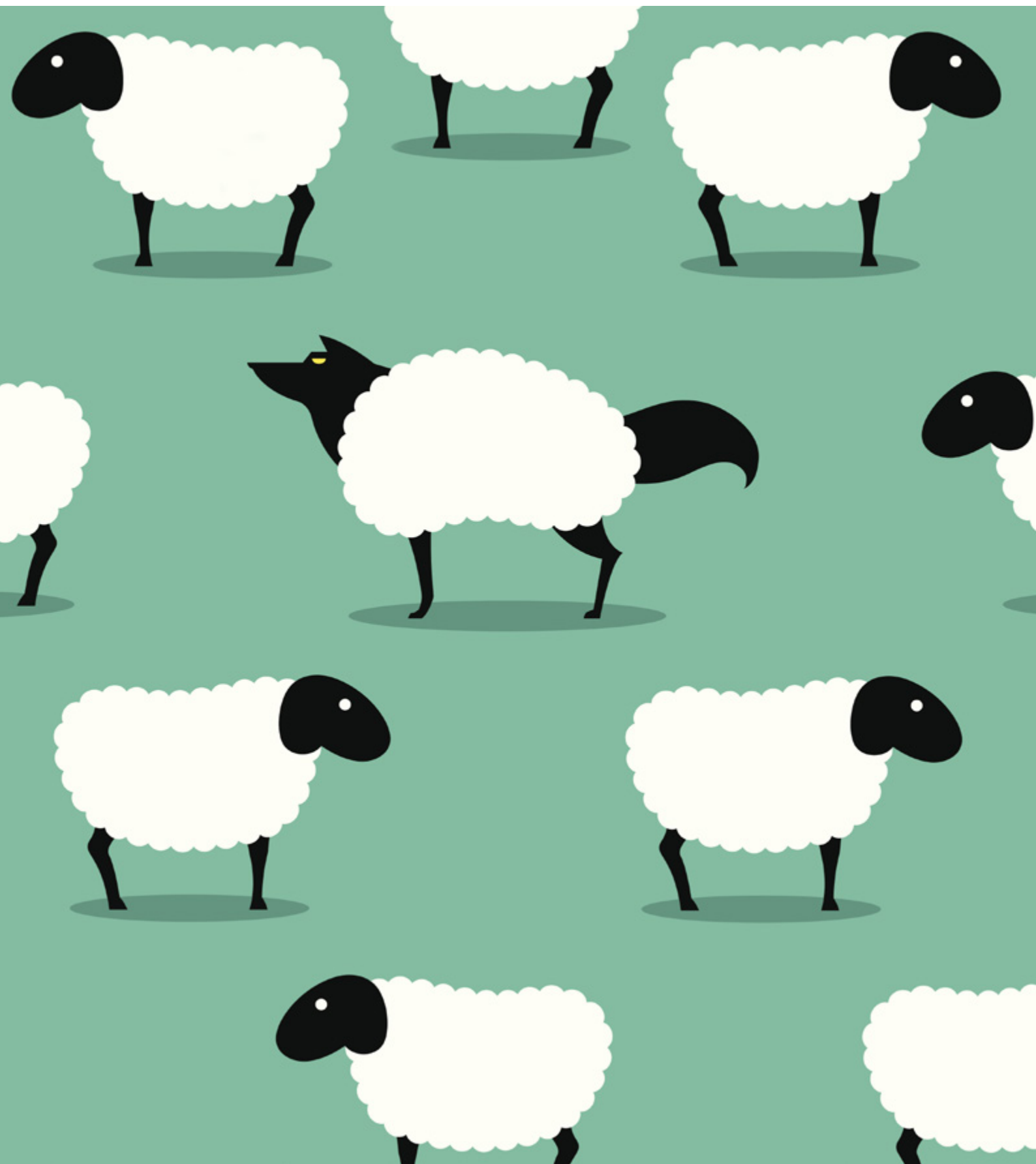
1. See Spencer W. Kimball, “Becoming the Pure in Heart,” *Ensign*, May 1978, 80–81.
2. See D. Todd Christofferson, “The Divine Gift of Repentance,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 38–41.
3. M. Russell Ballard, “The Law of Sacrifice,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1998, 7.
4. Russell M. Nelson, “Lessons from Eve,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 88.
5. Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion*, vol. 9 of *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (1989), 168.
6. Stephen B. Oveson and Dixie Randall Oveson, “Personal Consecration,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2005, 46.
7. Oveson and Oveson, “Personal Consecration,” 46.

Remember and Partake

By John Wright

*The body, that I may be resurrected,
The blood, that I may be redeemed,
The bread, that I may remember,
The water, that I may become clean.
Gethsemane's garden, so much suffering,
But the empty tomb, filled with hope.
Come, let us remember, let us partake.*





Satan's Rebellion

What is the true nature of what Satan proposed in the premortal council?

By Mark A. Mathews

Seminaries and Institutes

When I was a young man, I began noticing a curious tendency among some Church members. When they saw a situation where rules were agreed upon and consequences for disobedience were applied (for example, in Church discipline, parental discipline, or enforcing mission rules or standards of conduct at Church schools), they would often say, “But isn’t that like Satan’s approach? Aren’t they forcing people to be righteous?”

This response was surprising to me at first—how could someone think that practices approved of by the Lord and His Church could be part of “Satan’s plan”? I have since come to realize that misunderstandings like this about Satan’s rebellion and the War in Heaven are actually quite common, as are hasty accusations of what looks like that plan today. Unfortunately, these doctrinal misunderstandings can lead to damaging results.

For example, these misunderstandings could lead some parents to think they cannot encourage their children to attend church. They can lead Church members to support the legalization of serious moral sin. And these misunderstandings can even lead some Church members to think that making and keeping covenants and commitments of obedience is somehow contrary to God’s plan when, ironically, such covenant obedience is central to God’s true plan of salvation.

What the Scriptures Say

Some ideas about what Satan proposed in the premortal world appear to come more from tradition than from actual

revelation on the subject. As a result, it is helpful to return to the scriptures themselves to find out what the Lord has actually revealed on this important matter. In the scriptures, the primary source on what Satan proposed is in the first verses of the fourth chapter of Moses:

“And I, the Lord God, spake unto Moses, saying: That Satan, whom thou hast commanded in the name of mine Only Begotten, is the same which was from the beginning, and he came before me, saying—Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor.

“But, behold, my Beloved Son, which was my Beloved and Chosen from the beginning, said unto me—Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever.

“Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down;

“And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice” (Moses 4:1–4).

The Father of All Lies

From these verses it is clear that our Heavenly Father did not ask for volunteers to invent and present different and competing plans of salvation, as some have assumed.

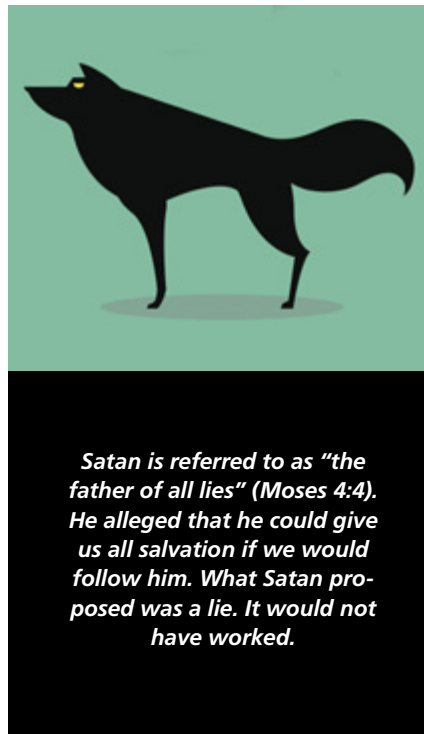
Rather, it was our Heavenly Father's plan, and He presented it to His spirit children who were gathered in the Grand Council in Heaven. Jesus Christ, who was "chosen from the beginning" to be the Savior in that plan, humbly proposed that Heavenly Father's plan be sustained, saying, "Father, thy will [i.e., plan] be done." It was in this setting that Satan made an unwelcome and arrogant proposal to change Heavenly Father's plan so that it provided universal salvation for everyone (see Moses 4:1). Before we discuss how he claimed to accomplish this, it is important to note that Satan is referred to in these verses as "the father of all lies" (Moses 4:4). On another occasion he is called "a liar from the beginning" (D&C 93:25). We would be absurdly naïve to assume that Satan was telling the truth when he made this exaggerated claim of universal salvation.

If we understand Satan's character and history, it would be more appropriate to view him as the first con man trying to sell us a product that he knew he could never provide. He alleged that he could give us all salvation if we would follow him rather than the plan our Heavenly Father had created for our salvation and which was upheld by our Savior Jesus Christ.

What Satan proposed was a lie. It would not have worked. It was not a viable alternative to Heavenly Father's already perfect plan, but rather it was a trap set to ensnare and deceive people into following Satan. It was, in the end, a plan of damnation, not a plan of salvation.

Destroying Agency

Importantly, these verses of scripture do not clearly state *how* Satan proposed to carry out this lie. All that the scriptures state is that it would "destroy the agency of man" (Moses 4:3). President J. Reuben Clark (1871–1961), First



Counselor in the First Presidency, suggested two main possibilities for what Satan proposed to do and reminded us that neither would have worked. He explained: "As I read the scriptures, Satan's plan required one of two things: Either the compulsion of . . . man, or else saving men in sin. I question whether the intelligence of man can be compelled. Certainly men cannot be saved in sin" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1949, 193; quoted in *Doctrines of the Gospel Student Manual* [2010], 15).

Although neither of these possibilities would have worked, we see elements of each in Satan's efforts and tactics today. For example, compulsion and force are used today by tyrants seeking power over nations and by political activists who seek to limit religious freedom and compel society to accept sinful behavior. The Lord has specifically condemned the exercise of "control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness" (D&C 121:37).

However, the Lord also explained that power and influence can be used to encourage righteousness by loving persuasion, righteous reproof, and appropriate consequences (see D&C 121:41–43). This important clarification shows that carrying out proper Church and parental discipline, enforcing rules and standards in missions and Church schools, and establishing righteous laws in society are all practices approved of the Lord and not part of "Satan's plan." Honoring agency does not mean embracing anarchy.

The second possibility for how Satan proposed to save everyone is described in the Bible Dictionary: "Lucifer and his followers wanted salvation to come automatically to all who passed through mortality, without regard to individual preference, agency, or voluntary dedication" ("War in Heaven"). In other words, another interpretation is that Satan proposed to save us all, no matter what we did. This

would destroy agency by rendering it useless. If consequences of our choices were all removed and everyone received the same reward, our choices become meaningless and our agency is destroyed.

This interpretation of how Satan proposed to save us is also seen in many of his efforts and tactics that we are familiar with today. Satan is constantly promising people that they can live a life of sin and still be saved or that they can find happiness in wickedness. This seductive message of easy salvation and a lifestyle of sin is very popular today, as was Satan's proposal in the War in Heaven, when "many followed after him" (Abraham 3:28).

We can see by these examples that Satan's approach has not changed much since premortality. Satan continues to lie to people by promising them that if they follow him they will be saved or be happy or whatever else they want to hear. He also continues to use compulsion to try to force his unrighteous views and practices on others. Thus, "the warfare is continued in mortality. . . . The same issues are doing battle, and the same salvation is at stake" (Bible Dictionary, "War in Heaven").

A Plan of Rebellion

Perhaps the simplest way to describe Satan's plan is not based on speculative theories about what Satan proposed to do but on what his plan led him and his followers to actually do—that is, rebel. The scriptures repeatedly state that Satan openly rebelled against God. For example, the Lord declared that "Satan rebelled against me" (Moses 4:3); "an angel of God who was in authority in the presence of God . . . rebelled against the Only Begotten Son" (D&C 76:25); and "he rebelled against me, saying, Give me thine honor, which is my power" (D&C 29:36).

From these verses it is clear that Satan's proposal was not an innocent suggestion to amend God's plan. It was a rebellion, a revolt, an attempted mutiny to dethrone God and take over heaven. Those who followed Satan declared war in heaven and made themselves enemies to God. Their agency was destroyed because they refused to choose

"liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator," and instead chose "captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27). As a result, "a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from [God] because of their agency" (D&C 29:36).

In other words, the simplest way to view Satan's plan is as a plan of rebellion and disobedience to God. In contrast, God summarized His plan in these words: "And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them" (Abraham 3:25). In addition, "We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel" (Articles of Faith 1:3). Thus, God's plan is a plan of obedience and righteousness, while Satan's plan is one of disobedience and rebellion.

Recognizing the Plan

Properly understanding the difference between God's plan and Satan's goals will help us more clearly discern who is and who is not *really* following Satan. It will help us avoid accusing those who encourage righteousness and advocate obedience of following Satan's plan when they are actually following God's plan. It will also expose the true followers of Satan's plan today.

Those who protest and rebel against God and His prophets, those who seek to change God's plan, those who demand a lowering of the standards of righteousness and seek to compel others to accept immoral behavior, and those who seek to deceive people into believing that wickedness is happiness and that we can find salvation in sin all support different elements of Satan's rebellious strategy.

May we follow Heavenly Father's true plan, a plan of salvation "through the Atonement of Christ" and by "obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel" (Articles of Faith 1:3). ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

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By Elder
S. Gifford Nielsen
Of the Seventy

“PUT ON THE Armour OF Light”

*May each of us let our light shine as we strive to become like
the perfect Light—our Savior, Jesus Christ.*

When I was 23 years old, I experienced one of the most enlightening events of my life, even though I was terrified at the time. After I was drafted by the Houston Oilers, an American professional football team, Wendy and I moved our family of four to Texas, USA.

After the first practice of summer training camp, I was greeted by several of the team’s veteran players. They invited me to have a beer with them for “team bonding.” They looked pretty serious about it, and I felt prompted to join them. With a huge prayer in my wildly pounding heart, I said, “Sure, I’ll go with you this one time—on two conditions: I choose what I drink, and I choose what we talk about.”

Have you ever sipped soda for several hours straight? Around the table sat famous, award-winning football icons, some of whom I had revered since following their every game as a starstruck child. They peppered me with questions about my faith, family, and lifestyle. I, the rookie, began telling my football heroes all about Latter-day Saint standards. After that day there wasn’t much they didn’t know about me and what we as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints stand for.

Reflecting on that experience reminds me of my favorite New Testament scriptural passage, which comes from the Sermon on the Mount:

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

“Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14–16).



I have been blessed to see for myself the paths Jesus walked. As I sat on the Mount of Beatitudes one beautiful spring day, I thought of how I have always been drawn to the Sermon on the Mount. I see it as the foundation for a life that would be acceptable to Heavenly Father. In fact, President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) referred to the first part of the sermon, the Beatitudes, as “the constitution for a perfect life.”¹

President Lee also said: “Christ came not only into the world to make an atonement for the sins of mankind but to set an example before the world of the standard of perfection of God’s law and of obedience to the Father. In his Sermon on the Mount the Master has given us somewhat of a revelation of his own character, which was perfect, . . . and in so doing has given us a blueprint for our own lives.”²

What did the Savior mean when He taught these thought-provoking doctrines? He often described Himself as “the light of the world” (John 8:12), yet in this sermon He said, “Ye are the light of the world.” Do we realize that with His help, *we* can become like *Him*?

Reflect the Savior’s Light

At the end of a cultural seminar in Greece, author Robert Fulghum asked the organizer of the event, Dr. Alexander Papaderos, “What is the meaning of life?” Dr. Papaderos responded by pulling a small, round mirror from his wallet. Then he said:

“When I was a small child, during the war [World War II], we were very poor and we lived in a remote village. One day, on the road, I found the broken pieces of a mirror. A German motorcycle had been wrecked in that place.

“. . . I kept only the largest piece. . . . I began to play with it as a toy and became fascinated by the fact that I could reflect light into dark places where the sun would never shine—in deep holes and crevices and dark closets.”

Reflecting light into inaccessible places became a game for him. But when he became an adult, Dr. Papaderos realized that his childhood game was a metaphor for his life’s mission.



Light will shine in dark places only if we reflect it.

“I came to understand that I am not the light or the source of light. But light—the light of truth, understanding, and knowledge—is there, and that light will only shine in many dark places if I reflect it.

“. . . I can reflect light into the dark places of this world . . . and change some things in some people. Perhaps others may see and do likewise. This is what I am about. This is the meaning of my life.”³

When we encounter people who are struggling, can we reflect the Savior’s light to encourage them? The Apostle Paul taught the Romans, “Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light” (Romans 13:12). How do we do this?

Dispel Darkness with Music

Uplifting music can overcome darkness. One-third of our hymns directly reference light, and most of them allude to it in some way. We can become enlightened by listening to inspired music and memorizing sacred words. President David O. McKay (1873–1970) taught, “Music is truly the universal language, and when it is excellently expressed how deeply it moves our souls!”⁴

I know of two missionaries who, while serving in Mexico, learned the power of music. A family that had excitedly

anticipated joining the Church encountered serious challenges the week before their baptism and felt a spirit of darkness. The elders were shocked when the family revealed that they had decided not to be baptized. The family told the missionaries of their recent trials, and a somber spirit filled the room. The senior companion asked the couple to close their eyes and simply listen as the missionaries sang:

*Lead, kindly Light, amid th'encircling gloom;
Lead thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home;
Lead thou me on!
Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene—one step enough for me.*⁵

At the end of the hymn, there was silence for an extended period of time as the family members sat still, tears streaming down their faces. The elders waited patiently, knowing that the Spirit was dispelling the darkness in the hearts of this little family and teaching them eternal principles.

Finally, the husband said, “The Lord has spoken to my heart. You were not singing alone—you were surrounded by a chorus of angels. We want to be baptized as scheduled.”

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has taught, “Music can set an atmosphere of worship which invites [the] spirit of revelation, of testimony.”⁶

Brighten Lives with Service

Another powerful protection against spiritual darkness is service. Opportunities to help our neighbors abound. On September 13 and 14, 2008, Hurricane Ike swept across North America, becoming the third most destructive storm ever to strike the United States.

After the storm had cleared the Texas Gulf Coast, 5,000 Latter-day Saint volunteers completed 2,500 work orders and contributed 50,000 hours of service. Wearing yellow “Helping Hands” T-shirts, the Church members went to work canvassing neighborhoods, clearing debris, and

removing tree limbs. One government official called the volunteers “angels in yellow T-shirts.”⁷

Sometimes simple things like hard work and gentle smiles can send sunshine to soften the storms we face. One recipient of our service offered to pay me. I responded, “No, we do this because we love the Lord and love our neighbors.” Serving others brightens their lives as well as ours.

I’ve been asked if sharing my beliefs so openly with my Oiler teammates ever backfired on me. Thankfully, just the opposite occurred. As the starting quarterback in a pre-season win against the Dallas Cowboys, I had just finished answering questions from the media. It was a hot, humid August night in north Texas, and I felt exhausted and thirsty.

While sitting by my locker, I was longing for something to drink. One of my teammates offered me an icy can of beer and said, “You can ask any doctor in the world if one beer will hurt you, and he’ll say no. Celebrate your big win with me!”

Before I could decline, another veteran player confronted him, grabbed the drink, and said, “Don’t you ever offer our young quarterback another beer! He doesn’t drink!”

Not all experiences are ideal, but in this case my teammates protected me on and off the field.

In 3 Nephi, the Savior says, “Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do” (3 Nephi 18:24).

We can reflect the Savior’s light and become more like Him. We can lift and bless the lives of those around us as we “put on the armour of light” and feel the protecting safety offered through living the gospel of Jesus Christ. May each of us let our light shine as we strive to become like the perfect Light—our Savior, Jesus Christ. ■

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* (2000), 200.
2. *Teachings: Harold B. Lee*, 199–200.
3. Robert Fulghum, *What on Earth Have I Done?* (2007), 290–91.
4. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1945, 119.
5. “Lead, Kindly Light,” *Hymns*, no. 97.
6. Boyd K. Packer, “Reverence Invites Revelation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 22.
7. The information in this paragraph, including the quote, comes from a public affairs video prepared by the Houston Bishops’ Storehouse.

BECAUSE HE LIVES



By Elder
Russell M. Nelson
Of the Quorum of
the Twelve Apostles



Discover
◆
Embrace
◆
Share



One of the most significant of all scriptural phrases is found in Matthew 28:6, “He is not here: for he is risen.” Given by angelic messengers near an empty tomb, this proclamation declared that the Lord Jesus Christ had overcome death through His Atonement and Resurrection. Later He appeared to His Apostles and charged His followers to declare their witness to the world that He lives.

As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ in these, the latter days, we have also been charged with testifying of the realities of the Savior’s Atonement and Resurrection. This Easter season gives each of us a personal opportunity to discover His sacrifice, embrace His teachings, and share His joy.

Discover His Sacrifice

During that first Easter season two millennia ago, the Lord suffered unspeakable agony in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross as He took upon Himself the sins and pains of all humankind. Betrayed by one He had called friend, He was arrested, scourged, mocked, and crucified. The Savior Himself has taught that this great sacrifice was for a purpose:

“For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

“But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;

“Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—

“Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men” (D&C 19:16–19).

As we discover, through prayerful and purposeful study, the impact His mission in mortality has on us, the Holy Ghost can teach and testify to us of the Atonement’s eternal significance.

Embrace His Teachings

With the understanding that comes from discovering the power of His Atonement, we ask ourselves, as did the Jews of ancient Jerusalem, “What shall we do?” The Apostle Peter instructed them to be baptized. “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized” (see Acts 2:37–41). Likewise, we also need to embrace the Savior’s teachings.

Indeed, embracing His teachings—and helping others do so—is the great work of these latter days. That is why we have missionaries; that is why we have temples—to bring the fullest blessings of the Atonement to faithful children of God. That is why we respond to our own calls from the Lord. When we comprehend His voluntary Atonement, any sense of sacrifice on our part becomes completely overshadowed by a profound sense of gratitude for the privilege of serving Him.

Share His Joy

During His brief ministry in the American hemisphere, the Savior observed that the Nephites had discovered His sacrifice and embraced His teachings, and He said unto them, “Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full” (3 Nephi 17:20). As we follow this pattern of discovering the power of the Savior’s Atonement and embracing His teachings, we experience the joy that comes from striving to be more like Him. As we do so, we naturally want to share our joy with those we love, inviting them to discover His sacrifice, embrace His teachings, and share in His joy.

To share the joy of this Easter season, please visit HeLives.mormon.org to view a powerful video and share your testimony of the Savior using the social media hashtag #BecauseHeLives.

Like those angelic messengers in the meridian of time, we also declare, “He is not here: for he is risen.” He lives. And because He lives we, too, can know “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come” (D&C 59:23). ■

YOU MUST PRAY

On January 12, 2010, Heavenly Father showed me His power after a four-story concrete building collapsed around and on me following a terrible earthquake that devastated Haiti.

While I was crying out under the weight of the rubble, a peaceful voice spoke to me: “Jimmy, why don’t you pray instead of shout?”

I couldn’t stop shouting, however, because I was afraid I was going to die within a few minutes. The voice, which sounded like a good friend motivated by a great desire to help, spoke to me again: “Jimmy, you must pray.”

The pain in my legs was becoming unbearable, and I was running

out of oxygen in the darkness that surrounded me. The voice came one more time: “Jimmy, you must pray.”

At that moment I stopped resisting. In a feeble voice I said: “Heavenly Father, Thou knowest my strength, and Thou knowest how long I can bear this pain. I ask Thee, please take this pain from me. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.”

Immediately after uttering this simple prayer, I fell asleep. I don’t remember what happened after that, but when I awoke from a profound sleep, the pain was gone. A short while later, rescuers found me as they searched for victims among

the ruins of my office building.

Afterward I learned that of the five employees on the second floor of the Port-au-Prince building where I worked, I was the only one who came out of the debris alive. Because of my injuries, I lost one of my legs and spent several months in the hospital. But I know that the Holy Ghost prompted me to pray and that Heavenly Father answered that prayer.

I can testify that Heavenly Father answers our prayers in His own way and according to His own desires—wherever we are and whenever we pray. ■

Jimmy Saint Louis, Haiti



WHAT I LEARNED CHANGED MY HEART

After the death of our 18-year-old son, Jaxon, I reflected deeply on the quality and direction of my life. I had a child in the eternities, and I had an intense desire to live my life in a way so that someday we could again enjoy our family relationship. I also wanted to better understand the scriptures so that they would guide my life.

I am not quite sure when my interest in the heart began, but it was fueled by the hope of seeing our son again. As I read the Book of Mormon, I began to notice how the heart was used symbolically as the condition of a person's life or a people's direction or condition.

Every time the heart was mentioned, whether hard or soft, I would make a little red heart in the margin. I began to see patterns. When the hearts of the people were softened, they had strength to handle adversity, their love for others increased, and they became kinder and gentler. I learned that repentance is what changes hearts as we call upon the Savior and His atoning sacrifice.


I enjoyed a wonderful journey through the Book of Mormon. What I learned changed my heart, which has changed my life. What I learned has also helped me in my professional work as I assist couples through their

challenges. I have come to understand that I can teach and remind couples about the common principles that bring marital satisfaction and true intimacy. But until they bring a soft heart to their marriage, change has little chance of occurring or enduring.

Since the time I made the hearts in the margins of my Book of Mormon, I have returned often to reread those passages and have continued to learn from those verses. I have even found new heart passages that I missed on the first reading, which reminds me that there will always be something new in the scriptures to learn, understand, and apply.

Most significant, I am reminded of the love of my Heavenly Father and my Savior. Because of that love, I will have my family forever. I know this with all of my heart, for which I am deeply grateful. ■

Darcy Logan, Alaska, USA



The pain in my legs was becoming unbearable, and I was running out of oxygen in the darkness that surrounded me.



After quickly cleaning and buffing my companion's shoes, I would carefully put them back where they were.

MY COMPANION'S CELESTIAL SHOES

Years ago, after leaving the Provo Missionary Training Center, I arrived in Florida feeling prepared and excited to get started in the mission field. When I met my new companion, we had many of the same interests and our companionship seemed like a perfect fit.

After a few weeks, however, I noticed some differences. For example, I was ready to go tracting every day, but my companion was not so enthusiastic about knocking on doors. In fact, even though he was the senior companion, he chose not to do much of it.

I also noticed that my companion seemed to talk a lot about himself. His family was financially well-off, and he had experienced many things

that I, coming from lesser circumstances, had not.

These things started to develop some uncomfortable feelings inside of me, almost to the level of resentment. Harboring resentment toward my companion affected me spiritually, especially while I was attempting to teach the gospel. I had to do something. At first I considered talking to my companion and simply venting all my frustrations. But I chose a different approach.

Each morning my companion and I would take turns showering and preparing for the day. While he was in the shower, I decided to sneak over to the foot of his bed and shine his wingtip shoes. After quickly cleaning and buffing them, I would carefully put his

shoes back where they were. I did this every morning for about two weeks.

During this time I noticed that my resentment began to leave. As I served my companion, my heart began to change. I said nothing to him about my little act of service. One day, however, my companion mentioned that he must have been blessed with "celestial shoes" because they never seemed to get dirty.

I learned two great lessons from this experience. First, I learned that the real problem was within me—even though the catalyst for my feelings came from outside. My companion was fine.

Second, I knew that we generally serve those we love. But I didn't realize that the same principle works in reverse: we come to love those we serve. ■

Michael Reid, Arizona, USA

I RECOGNIZED THE PROPHET'S VOICE

One Sunday night about three months after I had moved from my native Mexico to the United States to attend school, I flipped through several radio stations trying to find some good Sunday music. As I listened to several local stations, I heard a familiar voice and stopped.

I suspected that the voice was that of President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), who was President of the Church at the time. I realized that it was odd for me to be able to distinguish his voice. I was accustomed to listening to general conference, Church Educational System firesides, and other Church broadcasts through the voice of a Spanish interpreter speaking over the speaker's voice. Yet somehow I knew the voice on the radio was that of President Hinckley.

I wasn't yet fluent enough in English to understand what he was saying, but I listened to the talk on the radio anyway. His voice brought a feeling

of peace. When the talk ended, the radio announcer said, "We have just heard President Gordon B. Hinckley."

I knew that the Lord speaks through His servants and that whether the message comes by His voice or that of His prophets, it is the same (see D&C 1:38).

I thought about how unusual it was that I had recognized President Hinckley's voice. Having done so made me realize that I always want to be able to recognize the voice the

Lord uses to communicate with His children—regardless of the source.

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me," the Savior said (John 10:27).

In a world filled with many voices—many "stations"—to flip through, I hope I can always be attuned to recognize the voice of my Shepherd and His servants and to be willing to follow their counsel. ■

Miriam Ruiz, Utah, USA

As I listened to several local stations, I heard a familiar voice and stopped.





By Elder Orson F. Whitney (1855–1931)
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

BUILT UPON THE ROCK

There is no book big enough or good enough to preside over this Church.

Many years ago there came to Utah a learned prelate of [another] church. . . . He had been to a “Mormon” sacrament meeting and had much to say in criticism of our method of administering the Lord’s Supper, particularly our use of water instead of wine on such occasions. He said it made him shudder when he saw the people sipping the water; and he pointed out the fact, for it is a fact, that according to the Bible, the Savior, when He instituted the sacrament among the Jews, used wine, declaring that it was His blood or that it represented His blood. I could add that the Book of Mormon also states that the Savior used wine when He introduced the sacrament among the Nephites.

My . . . friend, whether he knew it or not, had hit upon the great distinguishing feature that differentiates God’s Church from all other churches under the sun—in this, that while they are founded upon books and traditions and the precepts of men, this Church is built upon the rock of



Christ, upon the principle of immediate and continuous revelation. The Latter-day Saints do not do things because they happen to be printed in a book [of scripture]. They do not do things because God told the Jews to do them; nor do they do or leave undone anything because of instructions that Christ gave to the Nephites.

Whatever is done [officially] by this Church is because God, speaking from heaven in our day, has commanded this Church to do it. . . . That is the constitution of the Church of Christ. If we use water instead of wine in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, it is because Christ has so commanded [see D&C 27:1–4].

Divine revelation adapts itself to the circumstances and conditions of men, and change upon change ensues as God’s progressive work goes on to its

destiny. There is no book big enough or good enough to preside over this Church.

In saying this, I speak with all due reverence of the written word of God, that which is printed in the books, part of which may be obsolete, having fulfilled its purpose and been laid upon the shelf [such as animal sacrifices; see 3 Nephi 9:19–20], while the other part is virile, full of life, and applicable to our present state—our present degree of development. But even this part must be interpreted aright. No man ought to contend for what is in the books, in the face of God’s mouthpiece, who speaks for Him and interprets His word [see D&C 1:37–38]. To so contend is to defer to the dead letter in preference to the living oracle, which is always a false position.

What the Lord said to the Jews and Nephites 2,000 years ago or what He said to the Latter-day Saints 50 or 60 years ago has no force whatever at this time unless it agrees with present-day revelation, with the Lord’s most recent instructions to His people through His chosen or appointed servants or servant; and they who ignore this fact are liable to get into trouble. ■

From an address delivered in general conference on Oct. 7, 1916, as reprinted in “Built upon the Rock,” Liahona, June 2010, 12–13.

INSIGHTS



What is the father's role in parenting?

"Fathers give blessings and perform sacred ordinances for their children. These will become spiritual highlights in their lives. Fathers are personally involved in leading family prayers, daily scripture reading, and weekly family home evenings. Fathers build family traditions. . . . Memories of these special times together will never be forgotten by their children. Fathers hold one-on-one visits with their children and teach them gospel principles. Fathers teach sons and daughters the value of work and help them establish worthy goals in their own lives. Fathers set an example of faithful gospel service. Please remember, brethren, your sacred calling as a father in Israel—your most important calling in time and eternity."

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Finding Lasting Peace and Building Eternal Families," *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 44–45.

Gather with Family, Friends, and Neighbors

For the 185th Annual General Conference of
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

April 4–5, 2015: General sessions for all members

March 28, 2015: The general women's session for women and girls age eight and older

April 4, 2015: The priesthood session for men and boys age 12 and older

All sessions are held at the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, and broadcast to meetinghouses throughout the world. You can watch or listen to conference live in many languages on LDS.org and in limited languages on BYUtv, Mormon Channel platforms, and the LDS general conference YouTube channel. Archives of the addresses will be available on LDS.org and the Gospel Library app.

