

Ensign



WHY WE NEED THE CHURCH

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THE
CHURCH
IS HERE

Salt Lake City Utah



ty



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN LUKE

The administrative center of the Lord's restored Church is clustered around Temple Square in the heart of Salt Lake City. Some buildings of interest include:

1. **Church History Library:**
Archives for the preservation of **latter-day Church history**.
2. **Church Office Building:**
Central offices for various **Church departments**.
3. **Relief Society Building:**
Headquarters for the **Primary, Young Women, and Relief Society General Presidencies**.
4. **Church Administration Building:**
Offices for the **First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**, and some members of the Seventy.
5. **Joseph Smith Memorial Building:**
Originally a hotel, now contains a theater for Church films, restaurants, Church administrative offices, and a chapel.
6. **Salt Lake Temple:**
Before it closed in December 2019 for renovations, it was one of **166 operating temples** worldwide. It will reopen in 2024.
7. **North Visitors' Center:**
Helps welcome **3 to 5 million visitors** to Temple Square each year.
8. **Salt Lake Tabernacle:**
Home of the **Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square**.
9. **Church History Museum:**
Helps tell the story of the Church through **art and artifacts**.
10. **Family History Library:**
The largest **genealogical library** in the world.
11. **Conference Center:**
Current site of **general conference**; seats 21,000 people; also used for concerts and cultural events.





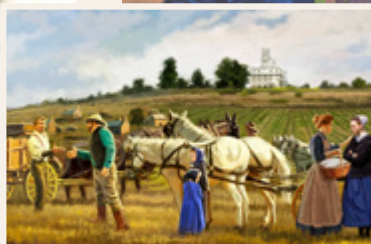
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The Blessings of Church Membership

This year we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the visit of the Father and the Son to Joseph Smith. Ten years after the First Vision, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized, providing the ordinances, gospel teachings, and priesthood authority necessary for our salvation.

As the world becomes increasingly secular, however, many people wonder why organized religion is necessary. They feel that they can be close to God in settings outside of a church. While it is true that we can feel the Lord's Spirit in many places, this issue of the *Ensign* explores a few of the reasons the Lord organized His Church and how His restored Church focuses our learning and amplifies our individual responses to His Spirit for good in our day.

As I note in my article on page 26, Church members are following the teaching of the Prophet Joseph Smith to "feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, . . . to comfort the afflicted, whether in this church, or in any other." In my work with Latter-day Saint Charities, I've witnessed the tremendous contributions the Church is making in more than 100 countries each year. Thanks to small donations from Church members, our brothers and sisters throughout the world have been blessed with the necessities of life and much more.

On page 14, President Dallin H. Oaks explains why the Lord leads His Church through prophets and apostles, and on page 20, Sister Jean B. Bingham, with whom I serve in the Relief Society General Presidency, shares a message about the influence of women and how we help each other reach our divine potential by working together in the Church. The compilation of quotations on page 32 and the article by Kate Holbrook and Samuel Brown on page 38 provide additional perspectives on the blessings that the Church offers us.

May God bless us as individuals and as a people to continue ministering in a higher and holier way until the Savior comes again.

Sister Sharon Eubank

First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

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Available in the Gospel Library app or at ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org



Come, Follow Me Resources

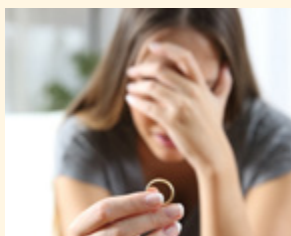
For a list of articles and activities (organized by week) that can enrich your family's study of the Book of Mormon, see "Come, Follow Me: Book of Mormon—Support Articles and Activities" in the digital version of this issue (available in the Gospel Library app or at ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).



Meeting the Prophet Taught Me to Stop Over- thinking the Gospel

By Nelesoni Mailei

A young adult from Australia shares insight from meeting President Nelson.



Finding My Place in the Church after My Divorce

Name withheld

A young adult woman tells how the gospel of Jesus Christ and her loving ward helped her find true healing.



How I Know the Prophet Is Called and Led by God

By Anne Vadly Louis

A young member from Haiti tells how meeting an Apostle impacted her testimony of living prophets.

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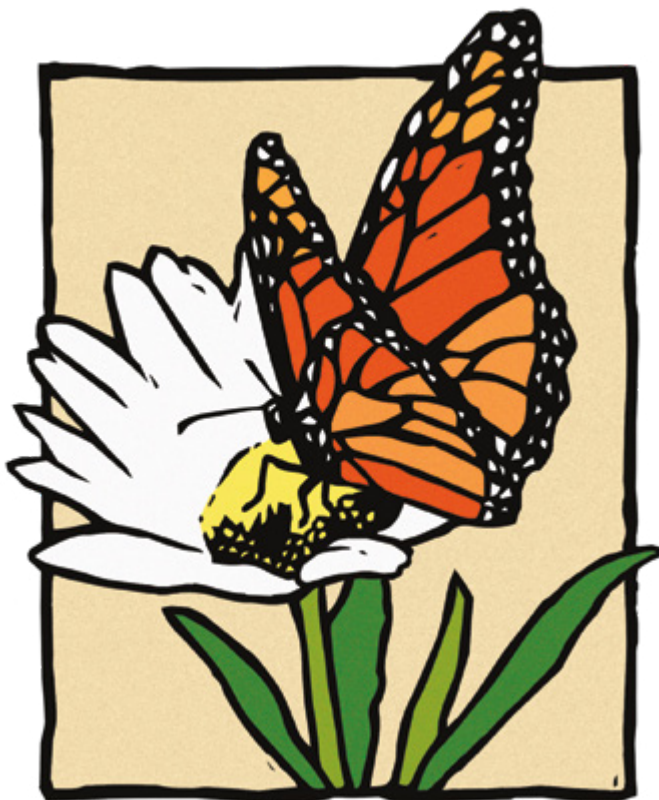
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BELONGING TO THE CHURCH IS LIKE . . .

To help commemorate the 200th anniversary of the First Vision, in this issue we celebrate the blessings of belonging to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Here are three ways Church leaders have described belonging to the Church.



BEING A MONARCH BUTTERFLY

"Like the monarch butterflies, we are on a journey back to our heavenly home, where we will reunite with our Heavenly Parents. Like the butterflies, we have been given **divine attributes that allow us to navigate through life. . . . Like them, if we knit our hearts together, the Lord will protect us . . . and will make us into a beautiful kaleidoscope."**

Sister Reyna I. Aburto, Second Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency, "With One Accord," *Ensign*, May 2018, 78.

BEING A LIFELINE TO OTHERS

"When we keep our covenants, it may make us different from others in our culture and society, but it gives us access to inspiration so we can think of different solutions, different approaches, different applications. We aren't always going to fit in with the world, but **being different in positive ways can be a lifeline to others who are struggling."**

Sister Sharon Eubank, First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency, "Turn On Your Light," *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 8.



BEING IN A CHOIR

"It is by divine design that not all the voices in God's choir are the same. It takes variety—sopranos and altos, baritones and basses—to make rich music. . . .

" . . . Don't abandon your role in the chorus. Why? Because you are unique; you are irreplaceable. The loss of even one voice diminishes every other singer in this great mortal choir of ours, including the loss of those who feel they are on the margins of society or the margins of the Church."

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Songs Sung and Unsung," *Ensign*, May 2017, 49, 50.





Ulisses and Emilia Maio

Porto, Portugal



Emilia Maio's sister, Custodia, was born with significant disabilities. Fifteen years ago, Custodia came to live with Emilia and her husband, Ulisses. As a family, they have learned that selfless family service is a great source of joy.

LESLIE NILSSON, PHOTOGRAPHER

Emilia:

Of course it was hard in the beginning. I had to leave my job to take care of my sister. But it has been a blessing. When Ulisses and I were first married, we discovered we couldn't have children. Custodia is like a child sent from God for us to take care of. In many ways, she helps fill the void we feel being childless. She's loving and caring. She loves to laugh and loves going to church. She is a joy.

Ulisses:

Serving my family has always spiritually uplifted me. Although we do not have as much alone time as a couple, we are close to each other spiritually. We are closer as a family. The whole time we have seen the hand of the Lord helping us. He has showed us miracle after miracle. We are truly blessed.

DISCOVER MORE

See more about Ulisses and Emilia's journey of faith, including additional photos, in the digital version of this article in the Gospel Library app or at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/E3206](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/E3206).

Ministering Principles

MINISTERING THROUGH TEMPLE SERVICE

When we help others enjoy the blessings of the temple, we are ministering.

Temple attendance is worth the effort. President Russell M. Nelson taught that “the temple is crucial to our salvation and exaltation and to that of our families. . . .

“ . . . Each one of us needs the ongoing spiritual strengthening and tutoring that is possible *only* in the house of the Lord.”¹

Attending the temple requires managing our time, responsibilities, and resources, as well as being spiritually prepared. We are ministering when we identify the barriers that keep our brothers and sisters from the temple and help them find solutions.

The Temple Is a Blessing Anyone Can Enjoy

A recently returned missionary, Meg, was walking toward the doors of the Kona Hawaii Temple when she noticed a young woman sitting alone on a bench outside. Meg felt that she should speak to the young woman, but she wasn’t sure what to say. So she asked about the meaning of a tattoo

on the young woman’s ankle. That began a conversation that allowed the young woman, Lani, to share her story.

Lani told Meg about her struggle to return to full participation in the Church, the nice members who were helping her, and her hope to someday be sealed to her baby daughter.

Meg invited Lani to come sit in the temple waiting room with her. They would not be able to go further into the temple yet, but they would be able to cross the threshold. Lani agreed, and they went together through the main doors. A temple worker showed them to a bench beneath a painting of the Savior.

As they sat together, Lani whispered, “I really wanted to come into the temple today, but I was nervous.” Because Meg followed the Spirit, she helped answer Lani’s silent prayer.



SHARE YOUR MINISTERING EXPERIENCES

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

Ideas to Help Those without a Recommend

Even those who don’t have a temple recommend yet can be blessed by the temple.

- Share your feelings about how the Lord has blessed you through temple work.
- Invite someone to attend a temple open house or visitors’ center. Find upcoming open houses at temples.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
- Take a virtual tour of the Rome Italy Temple with Elders David A. Bednar and Ronald A. Rasband. (At ChurchofJesusChrist.org, search for “Two Apostles Lead a Virtual Tour of the Rome Italy Temple.”)



You can scan this QR code to watch a video of a temple open house.



You can scan this QR code to watch Elder Bednar and Elder Rasband give a virtual tour of the Rome Italy Temple.





Make Temple Attendance Easier for Others

Even for members with a temple recommend, attending the temple can be a challenge. Some may need to travel long distances. Others may have small children or aged family members who need care. We can work together to make temple service possible for everyone.

Leola Chandler felt overwhelmed by caring for her ill husband and their four children. So she decided to set aside time each Tuesday to attend a nearby temple. It became a source of peace and power in her life.

One day she heard that a few elderly sisters in her ward desperately wanted to attend the temple, but they had no means of transportation. Leola offered to give them a ride. For the next 40 years, she rarely went to the temple alone.²

Leola was blessed, and she blessed others when she offered to take them with her to the temple.

Ideas to Help Others Attend the Temple

How can you help others get to the temple more often? You might find that the same ideas help you too.

- Go together. Offer to provide or arrange for transportation for someone. It might encourage someone else to attend the temple too.
- Ask members of your family or ward to help you perform ordinances for your ancestors, especially when you have lots of family names ready for ordinances.
- Offer to babysit so parents can attend the temple. Or arrange to take turns watching each other's children. (For more ideas, read “Temple Night Simplified: 6 Tips to Make Temple Trips Easier” [digital-only article], *Ensign*, Jan. 2018.)

You can scan this QR code to read “Temple Night Simplified: 6 Tips to Make Temple Trips Easier.”



When the Temple Is Far Away

Chandradas “Roshan” and Sheron Antony of Colombo, Sri Lanka, decided to be sealed in the temple. Their friends Ann and Anton Kumarasamy were so excited for them. But they knew that getting to the Manila Philippines Temple wasn’t easy or cheap.

Roshan and Sheron had saved their money and booked flights months in advance to get a flight they could afford. Finally, the day came. However, during their layover in Malaysia, they discovered that to continue on to the Philippines, they either needed a visa or needed to fly on a different airline. It wasn’t possible to get a visa, and they couldn’t afford to buy tickets on another airline. But they couldn’t bear the thought of returning home without being sealed.

Unsure what else to do, Roshan called Anton. Anton and Ann desperately wanted to help. They were one of the few couples in Sri Lanka who had been sealed in the temple, and they knew what a blessing it was. But they had recently used their savings to help a family member in need, and they didn’t have enough money to help Roshan and Sheron buy tickets for a new flight.

In Sri Lanka it is customary for the groom to buy the bride a gold necklace so that she will have some money if her husband dies. Ann decided to sell her necklace to help buy the new tickets. Her generous gift made it possible for Roshan and Sheron to make their temple appointment in Manila.

“I know the value of a temple sealing,” Ann said. “I knew Sheron and Roshan would be a great strength to the branch. I didn’t want them to miss this opportunity.”³



Ideas to Help Those Who Can’t Visit the Temple

You may be called to minister to those who can’t get to the temple often or at all because of distances or costs. But you can still find ways to help them appreciate the blessings of the temple.

- Teach or participate together in a temple preparation or family history class.
- Give them a photo of a temple to hang in their home.
- If you have been in the temple, share your feelings about your experience and your testimony of temple ordinances.
- Help them learn more about the covenants they have made and how to keep them. Consider using “Understanding Our Covenants with God: An Overview of Our Most Important Promises,” in the July 2012 *Ensign*. ■



You can scan this QR code to read “Understanding Our Covenants with God.”



NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Becoming Exemplary Latter-day Saints,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 114.
2. See LaRene Gaunt, “Finding Joy in Temple Service,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1994, 8.
3. Ann and Anton were able to get their necklace back after they were reimbursed by the Church’s General Temple Patron Assistance Fund, which gives one-time financial assistance to Church members who otherwise could not afford to attend the temple.

fun Family Study

Consider these activities during family scripture study or home evening.



Spiritual Stepping Stones

March 2–8 (2 Nephi 31:5–20)

Christ said, “Follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do” (2 Nephi 31:12).

- 1 Place a picture of Christ on the opposite side of the room.
- 2 Write on narrow pieces of paper or cards the “stepping stones” to Christ:
 - Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ
 - Repentance
 - Baptism
 - The gift of the Holy Ghost
 - Enduring to the end
- 3 Have someone put the steps in order.
- 4 Place the steps on the floor in a “strait and narrow path” (2 Nephi 31:18) to Christ.

Discussion: Which stepping stone is next for each of you? How can we honor the steps we have taken? What can we do to strengthen our resolve to stay on the path?



Off-Target Ball Toss

March 9–15 (Jacob 4:14)

The prophet Jacob taught that the spiritual blindness of the Jews caused them to look “beyond the mark” (Jacob 4:14), which resulted in their stumbling spiritually and missing many gospel truths.

- 1 Place a bucket or sturdy bowl in the backyard.
- 2 Take turns tossing a ball into the bucket, standing a short distance away.
- 3 Now try tossing the ball into the bucket without looking at the bucket.

Discussion: Why was it harder to hit the target when we’re not looking at it? How did the Jews look “beyond the mark”? (Jacob 4:14). Read “Looking beyond the Mark” by Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (*Ensign*, Mar. 2003, 40–44). Discuss how we might find ourselves looking beyond the mark today.

FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Find more home evening ideas in this month's *Friend*.



Digital Vineyard Harvesting

March 16–22 (Jacob 5:61–75)

The allegory of the olive tree teaches us that we have a duty to help gather Israel, both among the living and beyond the veil.

- 1 Open the Family Tree app on your phone (or go to [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org)).
- 2 Select “Temple.” If you don’t already have a name prepared for the temple, select “Ordinances Ready.”
- 3 Choose the ordinance you’d like to perform, and the names of any ancestors who need that ordinance will appear.
- 4 Create a barcode to print the names at the temple or print them at home.
- 5 Set a date in the near future to go to the temple and do the ordinances.

Discussion: How does it make you feel to know you are assisting the Lord in gathering His people?



Mighty, Meaningful Prayer

March 23–29 (Enos 1:4–27)

Enos prayed all day and into the night. Our prayers may not be that long, but they can be that meaningful.

- 1 Identify all the things Enos prayed for:
 - His own soul (Enos 1:4)
 - His people (Enos 1:9)
 - His enemies (Enos 1:11)
 - Preservation of the records (Enos 1:13)
- 2 Discuss some modern equivalents of each of these (forgiveness; family, ward members, and the bishop; bullies at school; understanding the scriptures; and so on.)
- 3 Kneel together and see if you can give a thoughtful, meaningful prayer for all that you identified.

Discussion: Why are our prayers more meaningful when we are more specific in our expressions? What else can you do to make your family and personal prayers more thoughtful? ■

Idea contributed by Crystal Harris



The Lord Leads His Church through Prophets and Apostles



**By President
Dallin H. Oaks**

First Counselor in
the First Presidency

Editors' note: President Oaks teaches that the Savior organized His Church to help God's children qualify for exaltation. This article explores how the Lord accomplishes that purpose through prophets and apostles who are authorized to act in His name.

The work of the Lord requires an organization led by the Lord through leaders He has chosen and authorized and whom He directs in carrying out His purposes. Scriptural history shows that such leaders have been either a prophet or prophets and apostles. This was the pattern in the years of covenant Israel and in the meridian of time, and it continues in the restored Church of Jesus Christ.

The Lord Leads His People through an Organization

Our Heavenly Father's purpose is "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life" of His sons and daughters (Moses 1:39). In this dispensation, He does this through The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, whose purpose is "to help individuals and families qualify for exaltation."¹

"The great and compelling triad of responsibility laid upon the Church," President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) taught, is "to, first, carry the gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of the earth; second, to implement that gospel in the lives of the membership of the Church; and, third, to extend through vicarious work its blessings to those who have passed beyond the veil of death."²

In our day many seem to want spirituality or religion but think they can have it without any religious organization. Those who think they can achieve this apart from a formal organization ignore the well-recorded history of what the Lord Jesus Christ established to assure the continuity and effectiveness of His gospel and teachings. As Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles reminded us in a notable general conference talk five years ago, "In the meridian of time, Jesus organized His work in such a way that the gospel could be established simultaneously in multiple nations and among diverse peoples."³ That organization included the Apostles and other officers described in the New Testament.

Why is an organization required to accomplish the purposes of the Lord? Though our Savior loves and helps us individually, to accomplish



The organization of the Church of Jesus Christ must have leaders chosen by Him and given the power and authority to declare His will to His people.

AD 30 JESUS CHRIST and TWELVE APOSTLES

His purposes for the whole body of God's children—especially His covenant people—He acts through an organization led by prophets and apostles.

Only through an organization can the individual members of what the Apostle Paul called “the body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:27) receive the opportunities they need to achieve the spiritual growth that is the purpose of their creation. And only an organization with different talents and a variety of efforts can achieve what is necessary to accomplish the Lord's work.

Things that can be accomplished only through organized groups of believers include major efforts to help the poor, to proclaim the gospel in all the world, and to build and maintain temples. The Prophet Joseph Smith said God's objective in gathering His people was “to build unto the Lord a house whereby He [can] reveal . . . the ordinances of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation.”⁴

An organization is also needed to achieve the Lord's commandment to “be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:27). President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency has taught that we cannot achieve that oneness—that unity—as individuals. “We must seek it and qualify for it with others. It is not surprising then,” he observed, “that God urges us to gather so that He can bless us.”⁵

Individual believers also need to experience religion through a religious organization because only in this way

can we be authoritatively reprov'd or chastened for sin and error. That chastisement is essential for our spiritual growth (see Doctrine and Covenants 136:31; 101:4–5; see also Mosiah 23:21–22).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) gave another reason for religious or spiritual persons to be organized: “because random, individual goodness is not enough in the fight against evil.”⁶

The Restored Church of Jesus Christ Is Governed by Prophets and Apostles

The organization of the Church of Jesus Christ must have leaders chosen by Him and given the power and authority to declare His will to His people.

“Ye have not chosen me,” the Savior taught, “but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit” (John 15:16). The Bible is clear on who chooses prophets and apostles. In the Old Testament this is clearly seen in the callings of Moses and Samuel, and in the New Testament it is seen in the callings of the Twelve Apostles and the Apostle Paul (see Exodus 3; 1 Samuel 3; Mark 3; Acts 9). These leaders did not volunteer, and they were not elected by believers.

The Bible also shows that religious leaders must have the authority of God's priesthood, which is conferred by one already holding that authority. The Bible descriptions of the callings and authorizations of Aaron, of members of the Twelve Apostles, and of the Seventy illustrate this principle (see Exodus 28:1–4; Mark 3:14–15; Luke 10:1,



1835 JOSEPH SMITH and TWELVE APOSTLES



TODAY RUSSELL M. NELSON and TWELVE APOSTLES

17). Priesthood authority did not come from reading the scriptures or from a desire to serve. And the ordination that confers priesthood authority comes from the heads of the Church, and it is known publicly (see Doctrine and Covenants 42:11).

In the Old Testament, the spiritual leaders were *prophets*. They are described in three different roles. Some were holy men performing a prophetic function for their posterity, like Abraham. Some were leaders exercising political as well as priestly power, like Moses and Joshua. Most were performing their prophetic role independent of patriarchal or political position, like Samuel and Isaiah. The Book of Mormon reports the same three positions of prophets, such as Lehi (patriarch), King Benjamin (political leader), and Alma the Younger (after he relinquished his position as the chief judge) (see 1 Nephi 1–2; Mosiah 1–6; Alma 4–5). However, it is clear that all the prophets who preceded Jesus Christ called the people to repentance, and, most of all, they prophesied of the coming Messiah.⁷

The office of Apostle is first identified in the New Testament, when the Savior called Apostles as He organized His ministry to proclaim, baptize, and heal. The Apostle Paul wrote that the Church of Jesus Christ is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20). Jesus also called Seventies and sent them forth to minister (see Luke 10:1, 17), and He authorized the calling of other officers, such as pastors and teachers (see Ephesians 4:11).

A paramount function of Apostles in the Church that Jesus established was to hold the keys of the priesthood. When the Savior promised the Apostle Peter “the keys of the kingdom of heaven,” He described this as the power that “whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven” (Matthew 16:19). In other words, the keys assure heavenly effect to the authorized actions of priesthood authority on earth. Apostles who hold the keys of the priesthood have the right and responsibility to preside over and direct the activities of the priesthood of God and the Church of Jesus Christ upon the earth.⁸ This includes the performance and supervision of the essential ordinances of the gospel.

As part of their responsibilities, prophets and apostles have the prophetic duty and gift to teach the truths of the gospel and to testify as “special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:23). They identify truth and error and authoritatively state, “Thus saith the Lord.” President J. Reuben Clark Jr. (1871–1961), First Counselor in the First Presidency, declared that Apostles “have the right, the power, and the authority to declare the mind and will of God to his people, subject to the over-all power and authority of the President of the Church.”⁹

As servants of the Father and the Son, apostles and prophets teach and counsel as directed by the Holy Ghost, with no desire other than to speak what is true and to encourage all to follow the pathway to God’s blessings, including His ultimate destiny for all of His children: eternal life, “the greatest of all the gifts of God”



“There is one clear, unpolluted, unbiased voice that you can always count on. And that is the voice of the living prophet and the apostles.”

—PRESIDENT M. RUSSELL BALLARD



(Doctrine and Covenants 14:7). Their voices can be trusted.

President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has said: “In today’s world, where 24 hours a day television and radio commentators spew forth conflicting opinions, where marketers compete for everything from your money to your vote, there is one clear, unpolluted, unbiased voice that you can always count on. And that is the voice of the living prophet and the apostles. Their only motive is ‘the everlasting welfare of your souls’ (2 Ne. 2:30).”¹⁰

Access to the teachings of apostles and prophets is both a blessing and a great responsibility. The blessing is the ready access to what the Lord would have us hear. The responsibility is that this access to the Lord’s teachings makes us accountable to hear and to heed those teachings. Unfortunately, some believers fail in this responsibility. Not surprisingly, many in the world reject the fact that God gives apostles and prophets the authority and inspiration to speak in His name. Even more reject prophets and apostles on the premise that God or that absolute right and wrong do not exist.

Fortunately, many choose to believe and follow the teachings of prophets. They receive the promised blessings. President Russell M. Nelson has taught this: “God’s long-established pattern of teaching His children through prophets assures us that He will bless each prophet and that He will bless those who need prophetic counsel.”¹¹

Prophets and Apostles Act through Councils

The Lord leads His Church through prophets (plural) and apostles (plural), as they act through councils. There are many illustrations of this.

The Lord calls one prophet to initiate a new dispensation. Then, when that new restoration grows and matures, doctrine and policies for the group are revealed and taught through an organization led by apostles and prophets. Thus, as the restored Church

grew and matured in this final dispensation, the Lord revealed that its most important business and most difficult cases should be decided by a council of the First Presidency and Twelve Apostles (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:78–79). There, every decision “must be by the unanimous voice of the same” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:27). Otherwise, they would not be “entitled to the same blessings which the decisions of a quorum of three presidents were anciently” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:29).

All of this shows the Lord’s direction that His Church must be governed by councils of apostles and prophets. This protects and promotes the unity that is essential in the Lord’s Church.

“The Lord in the beginning of this work revealed that there should be three high priests to preside over the High Priesthood of his Church and over the whole Church,” President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) taught in the general conference where he was sustained as President of the Church.¹² He affirmed the importance of *three* high priests in the presidency by declaring “that it is wrong for one man to exercise all the authority and power of presidency in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”¹³ He added, “The Lord never did intend that one man should have all power, and for that reason he has placed in his Church, presidents, apostles, high priests, seventies, [etc.]”¹⁴

The reference to the plural, *prophets* and *apostles*, is also prominent in this familiar teaching by President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972): “There is one thing which we should have exceedingly clear in our minds. Neither the President of the Church, nor the First Presidency, nor the united voice of the First Presidency and the Twelve will ever lead the Saints astray or send forth counsel to the world that is contrary to the mind and will of the Lord.”¹⁵

To become the official doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ, the individual teachings of apostles and even prophets need to be affirmed through the process of approval by other apostles and prophets. This is illustrated in the Bible in the approving action of the Apostles when Peter reported his revelation to take the gospel to the Gentiles (see Acts 11:1, 18). Similarly, when the dispute over the need for circumcision was brought to the Apostles, Peter reminded them of the significance of the revelation he had received, and the council then approved and settled the dispute with a confirming epistle to the Church (see Acts 15).

Similarly, in the restored Church, doctrine is not canonized until the body of the Church has received it by the law of common consent (see Doctrine and Covenants 26:2, 28:13). That principle was revealed in 1830 and has been applied since that time.¹⁶ This practice, which had not been followed by churches existing during the period we call the Apostasy, protects gospel truths from being altered or influenced by private ideas or individual opinions.

Finally, the essential unity on doctrine among different leaders is preserved by the long-standing rule that questions addressed to individual Apostles or other authorities about doctrine or policy that is not clearly defined in the scriptures or handbooks are to be referred to the First Presidency (see Doctrine and Covenants 124:126).¹⁷

Prophets and Apostles Witness of Jesus Christ

During his ministry, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught this: “As God governed Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as families, and the children of Israel as a nation; so we, as a Church, must be under His guidance if we are prospered, preserved and sustained.”¹⁸

This article has described how the Lord has done His work through the ages and how this pattern and procedure continues in our own day. As the Apostle Peter taught, “all the prophets” have given “witness” of Christ (Acts 10:43). In our day, the Lord continues to do His work through prophets and apostles who are authorized to act in His name to do His work to bring to pass the eternal life of man. ■

Read more insights from Church leaders on the blessings the Church brings us (page 32 of this issue).

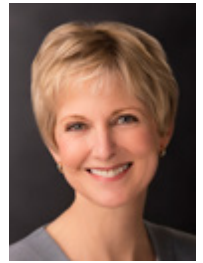
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1. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 2.2.
2. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 118.
3. D. Todd Christofferson, “Why the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 108 (this talk is a valuable source for the first part of this article); see also David A. Edwards, “We Need Christ’s Church,” youth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
4. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 416.
5. Henry B. Eyring, “Our Hearts Knit as One,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 69.
6. Neal A. Maxwell, “Why Not Now?” *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 13.
7. See Bible Dictionary, “Prophet.”
8. See *Handbook 2*, 2.2.
9. J. Reuben Clark Jr., in Boyd K. Packer, “The Twelve Apostles,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 6.
10. M. Russell Ballard, in “Sustaining Our Prophets and Apostles,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also “Here Am I, Send Me” (Brigham Young University devotional, Mar. 13, 2001), 5, speeches.byu.edu.
11. *Teachings of Russell M. Nelson* (2018), 305.
12. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 223.
13. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 176–77.
14. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 177.
15. Joseph Fielding Smith, “Eternal Keys and the Right to Preside,” *Ensign*, July 1972, 88.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants, introduction to section 138; explanations to Official Declaration 2; and Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple* (1980), 202.
17. See James E. Faust, *Reach Up for the Light* (1990), 28–29; see also Doctrine and Covenants 68:4 and its explanation in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (1954), 1:185–86.
18. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*, 161.



These paintings by female Latter-day Saint artists depict the influence and many roles of women.





By Jean B.
Bingham
Relief Society
General President

Extraordinary Daughters of God

Reaching out in small and simple ways can bless our families and others in extraordinary ways.

Editors' note: As we look at why we need the Church, Sister Bingham explains how belonging to an organization like the Relief Society helps us fulfill our divine potential through opportunities to participate together in the Lord's work of salvation.

My story is quite ordinary. Growing up, I loved learning, but I was never the top student in any class. I cannot boast of any expert skills. I play the piano but only enough to stumble through a hymn. I love to visit art museums, but my artistic talents are limited to doodling designs in my notebooks. I can sew a wearable skirt, but tailoring a suit is definitely beyond my ability.

Although I was blessed with good health and loved to run through the park or swim in the lake, I didn't participate in school sports at any level. I was never asked to the prom, and I wasn't the president of anything. I was never one of the popular group, and one strikingly attractive friend once scrutinized my features and said, "Well, you'll never be beautiful, but you could be cute." In other words, I was just average.

Some of you may relate to these kinds of experiences, feeling that you are also just average—maybe even less than average. If you're human—and particularly, female—you have probably experienced those times of self-doubt and discouragement that you are not all that you want to be.

And yet, even in my ordinariness, Heavenly Father saw value and has helped me begin to develop the gifts and graces He knows will help me become all that He has designed me to be. Know that your Heavenly Father will provide all that *you* need to become extraordinary as a daughter of God. Every one of us can be spectacular because of our unique bundle of talents and abilities.



Unlike in the world, in His kingdom there is no winner's platform that has room only for one or two. *Each* of His daughters has been taught and prepared and gifted premortally with marvelous potential to become a queen in the celestial kingdom.

Your Potential for Greatness

What do you want to accomplish in your life? What are your goals and aspirations? If your long-term goal is to enter the celestial kingdom to live forever with our Heavenly Parents and with loved family members, that singular focus will take you farther than you now think is possible (see 1 Corinthians 2:9).

You have incredible potential for good because you are a covenant daughter of Heavenly Parents. The evidence of your inherent potential for greatness is the simple fact that you were born on the earth because you made the choice in the premortal world to accept Heavenly Father's plan of salvation and to follow the example of His Son, Jesus Christ. And because Jesus Christ was willing to take upon Himself the sins and infirmities—or inadequacies—of each of us (see Alma 7:11–13) and fulfilled that sacred trust through His infinite Atonement, we can have every confidence that we can become all we were divinely designed to be. As we make and keep sacred covenants, we demonstrate our desire to fulfill that divine potential. We know we cannot do this on our own, but through Heavenly Father's love and the Savior's grace, we can accomplish all that is required for exaltation.

That thought sustained me when I was called to be Relief Society General President. Knowing that I do not have all the wisdom and ability to fulfill what is required, I nevertheless take comfort and strength from the knowledge that God “has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth” (Mosiah 4:9) and that if we just try, just do our best, imperfect as that will be, the Lord “will be on [our] right hand and on [our] left, . . . and [His] angels round about [us], to bear [us] up” (Doctrine and Covenants 84:88). All He requires is “the heart and a willing mind” (Doctrine and Covenants 64:34). As we are obedient to His commandments, we will be strengthened to accomplish all that is required in this life as well as for entrance into His kingdom in the life hereafter. The choice to become a disciple of Jesus Christ gives us the opportunity to wield a more-than-might-be-expected influence on those around us.

No matter where we live, the makeup of our family, the size of our bank account, or how long we have been a member of the Church, we can each be a powerful influence for good. Living with integrity

at home and in the community, using a gentle voice and kind words with a challenging child or difficult co-worker, demonstrating your standards by your modest way of dressing, and reaching out of your comfort zone to become acquainted with those who live around you are just some of the many simple actions we can take that will influence others to also rise to a higher plane.

Those who are familiar with the history of the settlement of frontier areas around the world know that many towns began as haphazard gatherings of rough men who came to do business and find their fortunes. It wasn't until women arrived in increasing numbers and insisted on establishing churches and schools and an orderly environment that real progress was made on what could be called civilized living.

"From age immemorial, societies have relied on the moral force of women," said Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. "While certainly not the only positive influence at work in society, the moral foundation provided by women has proved uniquely beneficial to the common good. Perhaps, because it is pervasive, this contribution of women is often underappreciated. . . . Women bring with them into the world a certain virtue, a divine gift that makes them adept at instilling such qualities as faith, courage, empathy, and refinement in relationships and in cultures."¹

Women are given gifts that allow them to see the details as well as the big picture, often at the same time. Discover those gifts and use them, dear sisters!

I remember President James E. Faust (1920–2007) telling us in his rich yet humble voice: "You sisters do not know the full extent of your



influence. You sisters enrich all of humanity. . . . Each woman brings her own separate, unique strengths to the family and the Church.”²

What Does Relief Society Mean to You?

As adult female members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, you and I belong to one of the oldest and largest women’s organizations in the world. With more than 7.1 million sisters around the globe, we have a bond that can be eternal.

Relief Society is more than a class on Sunday. As President Faust taught, it is a divinely established sisterhood. It is a place of learning. It is an organization whose basic charter is caring for others as expressed in our motto, “Charity Never Faileth.”

“Membership in Relief Society . . . provides a home away from [our] heavenly home, where [we] can fellowship with others who share [our] beliefs and values.”³

There have been bumps and challenges along the way. If you have had a less-than-comfortable experience at Relief Society, remember that we are all learning. It is a safe place for sisters to bring their questions and for those who are searching for identity and purpose. It is a place that will help us blossom individually and improve collectively.

If you are familiar with the updated Relief Society purpose statement, you know that “Relief Society helps prepare women for the blessings of eternal life as they increase faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and His Atonement; [as they] strengthen individuals, families, and homes through ordinances and covenants; and [as they] work in unity to help those in need.”⁴

So, number one, we work to fulfill our divine potential. To do that, we “all work together” to love, “to cheer and to bless in [the Savior’s] name.”⁵ We participate in the work of salvation, which includes member missionary work, convert retention, activation of less-active members, temple and family history work, and teaching the gospel⁶—all things which you are already doing.

Where Do We Start?

Where and how do we do this work? As we put our arm around a shy sister at church, as we reach out to a young woman who is struggling, as we work to feed and clothe and teach a child on a daily basis, as we share what makes us happy about the restored gospel with our neighbor, as we attend the temple at an inconvenient time, as we work to develop our talents with the goal of being an instrument for the Lord—all of these actions and many more acts of simple but meaningful service are part of the work of salvation. *That* is our mission, and it truly is vast,⁷ but it *is doable* when we each do something—and keep at it!

As Emma Smith, the first Relief Society General President, said in 1842, “We are going to do something extraordinary.”⁸

For instance, a busy young mother in Arizona, USA, wondered what she could do to help a newly arrived refugee family in her



community. She soon learned that she could give them a few things for their empty apartment. When she and her children visited the family to bring the items, she realized that the mother had no purse to carry her personal belongings. She knew that she and many of her friends had extra purses, so she posted a request on social media. That simple beginning has blossomed into a warehouse full of items needed by just-arriving families and helped create a sweet bond between these women of different faiths.

Sister Eliza R. Snow, the second Relief Society General President, testified regarding the blessings of Relief Society: “If any of the daughters and mothers in Israel are feeling in the least [limited] in their present spheres, they will now find ample scope for every power and capability for doing good with which they are most liberally endowed.”⁹

So, what extraordinary thing will you choose to do? Choose something according to your available time and resources. “Do not run faster or labor more than you have strength and means . . . ; but be diligent” (Doctrine and Covenants 10:4). Whether your work of salvation is largely in the home at this time in life or your influence extends to a global scale, or somewhere in between, the Lord is pleased with your efforts when you are focused on serving God’s children and the eternal goal of returning to Him as a new and improved version of your spiritual self. As Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles phrased it so succinctly, “Exaltation is our goal; discipleship is our journey.”¹⁰

As we go forward in this journey of discipleship, may we each determine to reach out in small and simple ways that bless our families and others in extraordinary ways. May we treasure our relationships in this divinely designed organization and come to know and follow Jesus Christ, whose teachings and perfect example will lead us back to our Heavenly Father. ■

From an address given at BYU Women’s Conference on May 5, 2017.

Read more about how participating together in the Church can help us fulfill our divine potential (page 38 of this issue).

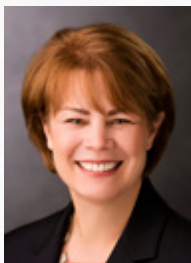
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1. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Moral Force of Women,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 29.
2. James E. Faust, “What It Means to Be a Daughter of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 102.
3. See James E. Faust, “What It Means to Be a Daughter of God,” 100.
4. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 9.1.1.
5. “As Sisters in Zion,” *Hymns*, no. 309.
6. See *Handbook 2*, 5.1.
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8. Emma Smith, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 14.
9. Eliza R. Snow, in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 44.
10. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “It Works Wonderfully!” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 23.



*There are
many simple
actions we
can take that
will influence
others to rise
to a higher
plane.*





By Sharon Eubank

First Counselor in
the Relief Society
General Presidency



And the Lord Called His People

ZION

*May we fulfill the
prophetic charge to
build Zion—to be of
one heart and one mind,
dwell in righteousness,
and strive to have
no poor among us.*

Editors' note: As a member of the Relief Society General Presidency and president of Latter-day Saint Charities, Sister Eubank shares here her unique perspective on how the purpose and organization of the Church can help us work together to eradicate poverty in our communities and in our hearts.

When people visit the Church's Humanitarian Center in Salt Lake City, I often ask them to read aloud a statement made by Joseph Smith that hangs in the lobby: "[A member of the Church] is to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to provide for the widow, to dry up the tear of the orphan, to comfort the afflicted, whether in this church, or in any other, or in no church at all, wherever he finds them."¹

The statement was made at a time when the Church was severely in debt, leaders were settling converts into a new country, and the Nauvoo Temple was under construction. How could the Prophet Joseph possibly consider providing for the poor in *this* Church, let alone any other? But even under those dire circumstances, Joseph understood that the care of those in need must *always* be a central focus of the Lord's covenant people.



A Vision of Zion

One of the first tasks Joseph undertook after organizing the Church in April 1830 was an inspired translation of the Bible. I have often wondered why. At this critical juncture in the Church's history, why would he work on retranslating Genesis? That book was already so well-known. But part of that translation work eventually became the book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price, with precious details of critical doctrinal importance to the modern Church.

These chapters revealed the experiences of Moses and Enoch, which are in some ways remarkably similar to Joseph's own experience. Each prophet was called by the Lord to do a great work. The Lord showed each of them His creations so they could better envision their part in the plan (see Doctrine and Covenants 76; Moses 1; 7). A summary of their overarching task could be stated as follows: **Gather Israel as a priestly nation, build Zion, and prepare to welcome Jesus Christ.**

But how is such a thing to be accomplished? Enoch gives a succinct answer: "And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of *one heart* and *one mind*, and *dwelt in righteousness*; and there was *no poor among them*" (Moses 7:18; emphasis added).

A central part of the latter-day mission of the Church is to eradicate the poverty that exists in our communities

and in our hearts; establish a unified Zion; and prepare the people for the return of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Providing in the Lord's Way

Trillions of dollars have been expended by governments and organizations in the last century to eradicate poverty. Yet for all of the well-intentioned work, a great deal of it has been unsuccessful and wasted. Why? Because it inadvertently created dependency instead of ability.

The Lord's way is to build both givers and receivers, to allow people to be agents for themselves, and to exalt the poor in "that the rich are made low" (Doctrine and Covenants 104:16). We sometimes call this *self-reliance*, but it really means unleashing the divine power inside every individual to solve his or her own problems with the help of God, enabling them to in turn serve others.

Examples Old and New

Joseph Smith cheerfully practiced serving others in the Lord's way. James Leach and his brother-in-law, after looking for work in Nauvoo many days without success, determined to ask the Prophet for help. James recalled:

"I said, 'Mr. Smith, if you please, have you any employment you could give us both, so we can get some provisions?' He viewed us with a cheerful countenance, and



with such a feeling of kindness, said, ‘Well, boys, what can you do? . . . Can you make a ditch?’ I replied we would do the best we could at it.

“. . . When it was finished I went and told him it was done. He came and looked at it and said, ‘. . . If I had done it myself it could not have been done better. Now come with me.’ He led the way back to his store and told us to pick the best ham or piece of pork for ourselves. Being rather bashful, I said we would rather he would give us some. So he picked two of the largest and best pieces of meat and a sack of flour for each of us, and asked us if that would do. We told him we would be willing to do more work for it, but he said, ‘If you are satisfied, boys, I am.’

“We thanked him kindly and went on our way home rejoicing in the kindheartedness of the Prophet of our God.”²

A modern example of the same delicate balancing of generosity and self-reliance occurred in 2013 when Typhoon Haiyan swept through the central Philippines, damaging or destroying over a million homes. Rather than just handing out aid indiscriminately, which could result in dependency and waste, the Church applied self-reliance principles to help affected residents develop the skills needed to rebuild. Housing materials were purchased, and local Church leaders contracted with construction mentors. Residents in need of housing were provided with tools, materials, and training, while they furnished the labor to construct their own shelters. They then assisted their neighbors to do the same.

In the end, each participant received a vocational certificate attesting to their newly learned skills and qualifying them for key employment opportunities. This combination of aid coupled with on-the-job training not only built shelters—it built capability. It did more than just restore housing—it restored the people’s confidence in themselves.³

Small Contributions Matter

We don’t need to be wealthy to assist. A young man wrote about his experience with Joseph Smith: “I was at Joseph’s house . . . and several men were sitting on the fence. Joseph came out and spoke to us all. Pretty soon a man came up and said that a poor brother who lived out some distance from town had had his house burned down the night before. Nearly all of the men said they felt sorry for the man. Joseph put his hand in his pocket, took out five dollars and said, ‘I feel sorry for this brother to the amount of five dollars; how much do you all feel sorry?’”⁴

I recently met a 10-year-old boy from a rural community who was



spending his own meager amount of money to buy a voucher that would provide a polio immunization for a child. The boy had read about children who were paralyzed by polio, and he didn't want others to suffer from this disease. I was amazed at how much he had studied and how thoughtful he was about his small contribution.

Clearly each of us has something to give, regardless of our circumstances, and the true significance of our contribution cannot be measured solely by its monetary value.

The Power of Combining Hearts

If we are serious about our covenants, we will each strive to be of one heart and one mind, to live in righteousness, and to have no poor among us. This will knit our hearts together and help to reduce the inequities in the world. But there is an even greater power when people of the covenant combine their efforts: families, quorums, Relief Society, Young Women classes, and stakes can organize to address specific needs in their communities to tremendous effect.

The Church's humanitarian organization, Latter-day Saint Charities, combines many small efforts to aid people in emergencies around the world.⁵ Members of the Church generously contribute time, money, and expertise. Most of these contributions are modest: a small monetary donation or a few hours of volunteering. This becomes a modern parallel to the widow's mite (see Mark 12:41–44); these seemingly minor contributions show the world what widows and farmers and 10-year-old boys can do when they pool their resources and then ask the Lord to add His increase (see 1 Corinthians 3:6).

We have come a long way since the early days of the Church in building the conditions for Zion, but there is much yet to do. May God bless each of us to seek out those in need and do what we can to alleviate their burdens and strengthen their capacity. And may He also bless His Church to coordinate and magnify the individual efforts of its members and thereby fulfill the prophetic charge to build Zion—to be of one heart and one mind, dwell in righteousness, and strive to have no poor among us—until the Savior comes again. ■

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 426.
2. James Leach, in "Recollections of the Prophet Joseph Smith," *Juvenile Instructor*, Mar. 1, 1892, 152–53; punctuation modernized; paragraph divisions altered.
3. See "Mormon Volunteers Building Homes for Typhoon Haiyan Victims," Feb. 21, 2014, newsroom.ChurchOfJesusChrist.org.
4. Andrew J. Workman, in "Recollections of the Prophet Joseph Smith," *Juvenile Instructor*, Oct. 15, 1892, 641.
5. See latterdaysaintcharities.org.

INSPIRATION AT THE WHARF

By Afatia Silaga

My family was hurting, and I had a four-hour wait for the boat home. It was time to pray.



I was a boat ride away from home when I got the news that there had been a big argument in my family earlier that day. A *very* big argument.

My wife was angry. My kids were angry. Everyone was hurt. And I didn't know what to do.

I had taken my work truck early that morning from my home island of Upolu, Samoa, and boarded the ferry to Savai'i, Samoa. This trip takes

several hours in each direction.

After I talked with my wife on the phone and heard the anger in her voice, I admit that I had a hard time thinking about coming home to this situation. I wasn't sure how I could help resolve so many hurt feelings in my family.

I pulled up to the wharf and began to pray. For the next four hours, I sat in my truck, praying about my family

while waiting for the boat home.

After a long time in prayer, I received a clear spiritual impression. "Just show your love to your children. *Show the love.* Tell them, 'I love you, and God loves you.'"

I've always gotten along with my kids. They know that I love them, and they know how much they mean to me. But I understood clearly, through revelation, that showing even greater

love would be the only thing to bring my family close again.

When I arrived home late that night, my wife was still very upset. “What are you going to do?” she asked me.

I told her about the revelation I received. I told her that I felt we needed to show our love even more clearly to our kids. “I believe that will be the key to heal the pain everyone is feeling,” I said. We decided to give it a try.

Now, this was the normal night for our weekly family council. Because of the argument, however, most of my family wanted to cancel it that week. My wife and I decided we would hold family council anyway.

At first, nobody said a word. I could tell there had been a lot of tears and emotional pain in my family that day.

Then my wife began talking. “I just want you to know how much I love all of you,” she said. I watched the

change in their body language. They had all been sitting on the edge of their chairs. But as soon as my wife started explaining how much she loved them, our children leaned back and relaxed. Soon they opened up as well. I also told them how much I love them and how glad I am that we are a family.

That solved the whole problem. It was incredible. All the anger was gone from our home, and we were able to fix what was broken.

Now, my family isn’t perfect. But we love each other very much. And we make time for each other. Whether it’s getting up early to read the scriptures together, going to church together, playing basketball together, sharing meals, or just listening to music together, we work hard to stay close.

Through it all, my wife and I know more than ever how important it is to show our love for our children. ■

LESSONS FROM THIS DAD

- Brother Silaga recognized that he wouldn’t be able to solve this problem on his own. He prayed for hours to seek revelation on how to help his family.
- The Silaga family centers their home in Jesus Christ. Despite busy schedules, they wake early for family scripture study. They hold family council weekly. They attend church. They do all they can to bring the blessings of the gospel into their home and family.
- Brother Silaga counseled with his wife before they spoke to the children about the argument.
- Brother and Sister Silaga regularly tell their children how much they love them.
- The Silagas work together, but they also play together. They exemplify the following counsel given by Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “In family relationships *love* is really spelled *t-i-m-e*, time. Taking time for each other is the key for harmony at home” (“Of Things That Matter Most,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 22).





What Church Leaders Are Saying

about Why We Need the Church

To Create a Community of Saints

"It is important to recognize that God's ultimate purpose is our progress. His desire is that we continue 'from grace to grace, until [we receive] a fulness' [Doctrine and Covenants 93:13] of all He can give. That requires more than simply being nice or feeling spiritual. It requires faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism of water and of the Spirit, and enduring in faith to the end. One cannot fully achieve this in isolation, so *a major reason the Lord has a church is to create a community of Saints that will sustain one another* in the 'strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life' [2 Nephi 31:18]."¹

—Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

"Girls and boys, young women and young men, sisters and brothers, we are on this journey together. In order to reach our sublime destiny, we need each other, and we need to be unified. *The Lord has commanded us, 'Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine'* [Doctrine and Covenants 38:27]."²

—Sister Reyna I. Aburto, Second Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency



ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID GREEN



To Care for the Needy

"Since its origins 175 years ago, *the purpose of the Relief Society has been to minister to 'the relief of the poor, the destitute, the widow and the orphan, and . . . the exercise of all benevolent purposes.'*

Today, the Relief Society is the oldest and one of the largest women's organizations in the world, with more than 7 million members across the globe. Its purposes, however, remain the same: to increase faith, strengthen the family, and relieve suffering. . . .

"... When you can mobilize 7 million women, each doing what they can according to their own time and resources, there is no limit to what they can achieve."³

—Sister Jean B. Bingham, Relief Society General President

"There is a second major reason the Savior works through a church, His Church, and that is to achieve needful things that cannot be accomplished by individuals or smaller groups. One clear example is dealing with poverty. It is true that as individuals and families we look after the physical needs of others. . . . *But together in the Church, the ability to care for the poor and needy is multiplied to meet the broader need*, and hoped-for self-reliance is made a reality for very many."⁴

—Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

To Have Living Prophets and Apostles

"I have served under the keys and directions of six prophets and Church Presidents, from Spencer W. Kimball to Russell M. Nelson. I testify that each one of them was and is God's chosen prophet. They have taught us essential principles about the Church and the gospel and doctrine of Christ. *President Nelson is carrying the Lord's work forward at a breathtaking pace.* I say 'breathtaking' because he's the only one of the Apostles who is older than me, and I am having a difficult time keeping up with him!"⁵

—President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



"Why are we so willing to follow the voice of our prophet? *For those diligently seeking eternal life, the prophet's voice brings spiritual safety in very turbulent times.* . . .

"Anchoring our souls to the Lord Jesus Christ requires listening to those He sends. Following the prophet in a world of commotion is like being wrapped in a soothing, warm blanket on a freezing cold day."⁶

—Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

To Teach and Preserve Doctrine

"As we feast on and live by every word of God and teach only true doctrine by the power of the Holy Ghost, we will discover the Lord changing our hearts and the hearts of those we teach. *I thank God each day for the change His word has brought to my heart and for teachers who taught me true doctrine with power and authority.*"⁷

—Brother Douglas D. Holmes, First Counselor in the Young Men General Presidency

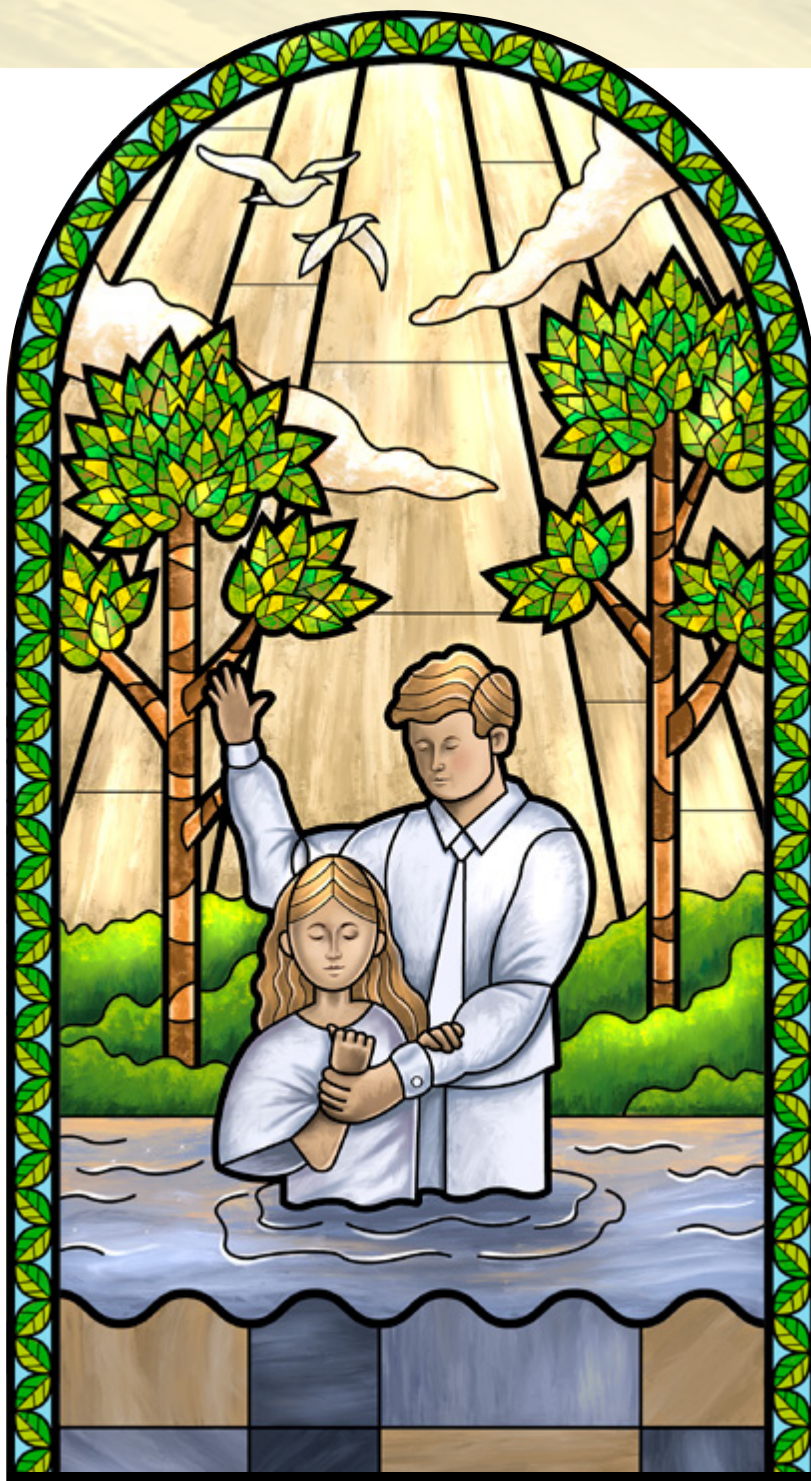
"In the Church today, just as anciently, *establishing the doctrine of Christ or correcting doctrinal deviations is a matter of divine revelation* to those the Lord endows with apostolic authority."⁸

—Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

To Spread the Gospel

"During this past year, I have had the exciting opportunity to be deeply involved with the worldwide missionary activities of the Church. . . .

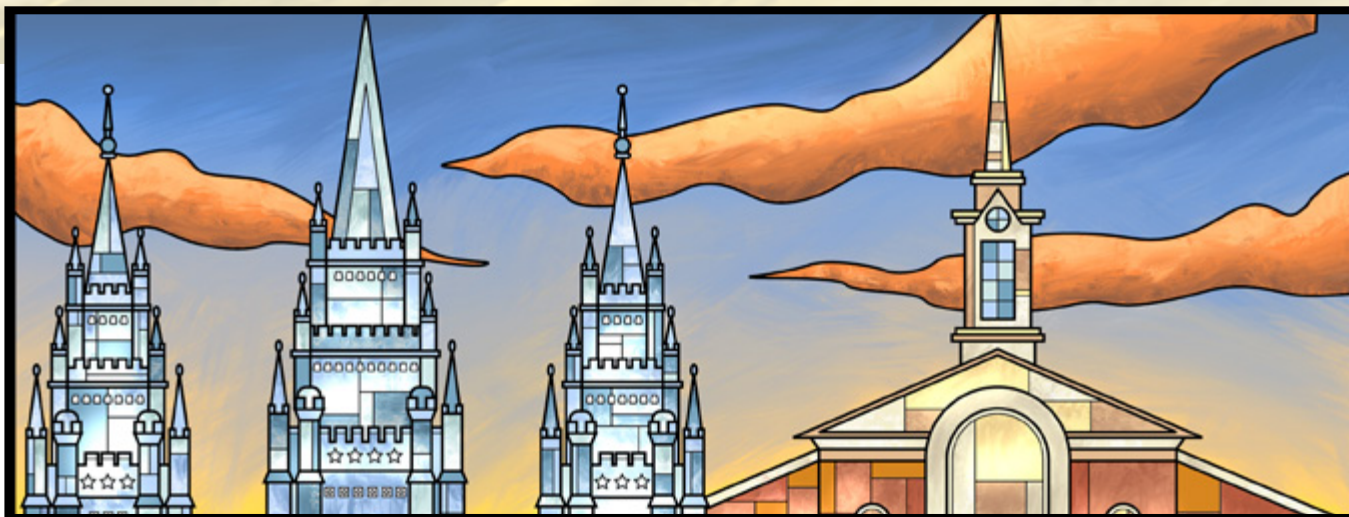
"In whatever ways seem natural and



normal to you, share with people why Jesus Christ and His Church are important to you. Invite them to 'come and see' [John 1:46; emphasis added]. Then encourage them to *come and help*. There are numerous opportunities for people to help in our Church.

"Pray not only for the missionaries to find the elect. *Pray daily with all your heart that you will find those who will come and see, come and help, and come and stay.*"⁹

—Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



To Provide Ordinances and Covenants

“Our Heavenly Father’s great plan of happiness includes the doctrine, the ordinances, the covenants, and the exceeding great and precious promises whereby we can become partakers of the divine nature. His plan defines our eternal identity and the pathway we must follow to learn, change, grow, and ultimately dwell with Him forever. . . .

*“Priesthood ordinances and sacred covenants are essential in this ongoing process of spiritual rebirth; they also are the means God has appointed whereby we receive His exceeding great and precious promises.”*¹⁰

—Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

To Establish the Kingdom of God

“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the kingdom of God on the earth. . . .

*“The chief cornerstone and building block of the Church and for our lives is Jesus Christ. This is His Church. President Nelson is His prophet.”*¹¹

—Bishop Dean M. Davies, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

To Prepare the World for the Second Coming

“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is uniquely empowered and commissioned to accomplish the necessary preparations for the Lord’s Second Coming;

indeed, it was restored for that purpose.

Can you find anywhere else a people who embrace the present era as the prophesied ‘dispensation of the fulness of times,’ in which God has purposed to ‘gather together in one all things in Christ?’ [Ephesians 1:10].

If you don’t find here a community intent on accomplishing what needs to be accomplished for both the living and the dead to prepare for that day, if you don’t find here an organization willing to commit vast amounts of time and funds to the gathering and preparation of a covenant people ready to receive the Lord, you won’t find it anywhere.”¹²

—Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

NOTES

1. D. Todd Christofferson, “Why the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 108.
2. Reyna I. Aburto, “With One Accord,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 78.
3. Jean B. Bingham, “Sister Bingham United Nations Transcript” (address given on Apr. 13, 2017), newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
4. D. Todd Christofferson, “Why the Church,” 110.
5. M. Russell Ballard, “The True, Pure, and Simple Gospel of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 31.
6. Neil L. Andersen, “The Prophet of God,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 26.
7. Douglas D. Holmes, “The Power of Teaching Doctrine,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2017, 16.
8. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Doctrine of Christ,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 86.
9. Dieter F. Uchtdorf “Missionary Work, Sharing What is In Your Heart,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 15, 17.
10. David A. Bednar, “Exceeding Great and Precious Promises,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 90–91.
11. Dean M. Davies, “Come, Listen to a Prophet’s Voice,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 36.
12. D. Todd Christofferson, “Preparing for the Lord’s Return,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 82.

DISCUSSION

What blessings does the Church bring you? How can you help others receive those blessings? How do you participate in establishing the kingdom of God?

UBON WARD CAN DO IT!

Our ward members were rarely all together—even at church. What could we do to bring everyone together?

By Akanit Sapprasert

A lot of members here in Thailand have difficulty coming to church because of required school meetings, bad weather (most of our members travel by motorbike), and distance. The members in my ward, the Ubon Ward, face all of these challenges and more, which makes attending church difficult.

One Sunday, I was wondering how we could help the members recognize the blessings of exercising the faith to worship together more often. The idea came to me, “What if we picked a Sunday to focus on getting every member to church that day?” If we were able to get everyone to come on the same day, it would allow members to really see and feel the strength of the ward.

Other leaders and members in the ward liked the idea and became involved in planning for it. We decided on a date, June 17, 2018—the Sunday closest to the anniversary of when the Ubon Thailand Stake was founded—and started sending messages about it through social media. We named the event “Let’s Come to Church on the Same Sunday! 200 Sacrament Meeting Attendance—Ubon Ward Can Do It.”

Practically the whole ward was involved in encouraging each other to come. Everybody kept sending messages persuading others to join the event. Members also invited returning members and friends who weren’t members. And so many people said yes!

We realized that this was more than just a fun event to see how many people could come. We wanted it to be an especially spiritual

experience to help motivate members to make attending sacrament meeting a priority. So in the months leading up to the event, the bishopric encouraged people to avoid any activities that might minimize the importance of the sacrament or the worship of the Lord.

We even made bookmarks to help people remember the event and the Spirit that we knew would be there because of everyone’s efforts to attend. The bookmark had the name of the event and also a scripture: “I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High” (Psalm 82:6). We chose this scripture because we wanted everyone to realize that they are children of God and have the potential to be like Him.

Members planned for a long time to all be able to attend on the set day. Finally, the day came. But so did obstacles. It rained heavily the evening before and continued raining all through the night. Another obstacle for some members was that an important school meeting was happening at the same time as church.

We asked everybody to pray for these obstacles to be removed or overcome. At about 7:00 a.m. Sunday morning, the rain stopped. And when we arrived at church, we found those families who needed to go to the school meeting. When we asked them about their other meeting, they said, “We have to come to sacrament meeting first.” It was a great testimony to me of the importance of the Lord’s sacrament.

Members brought a lot of friends and neighbors to the meeting. One sister in the ward brought eight friends who had never been to church before! As more and more people arrived, we needed to open the overflow room. The count of the sacrament attendance was 215 people! All through the

meeting, I could feel that the Holy Ghost was with us and that God helped us to be successful in this endeavor.

After this amazing Sunday, the number of people who regularly attend sacrament meeting increased. This included three Melchizedek Priesthood holders who began attending church regularly with their families. One family even had two of their children baptized and confirmed the following month.

Our stake leaders saw what a good experience this was for our ward and decided to hold a similar event. For the stake event, the members in the stake each made a commitment to attend their own wards on the same Sunday. The event also had great success throughout the stake—I know that one ward in our stake had 208 people attend! I am so grateful for the blessings that I and my ward and my stake have received because of these events and for the Spirit we felt preparing for and participating in them. ■

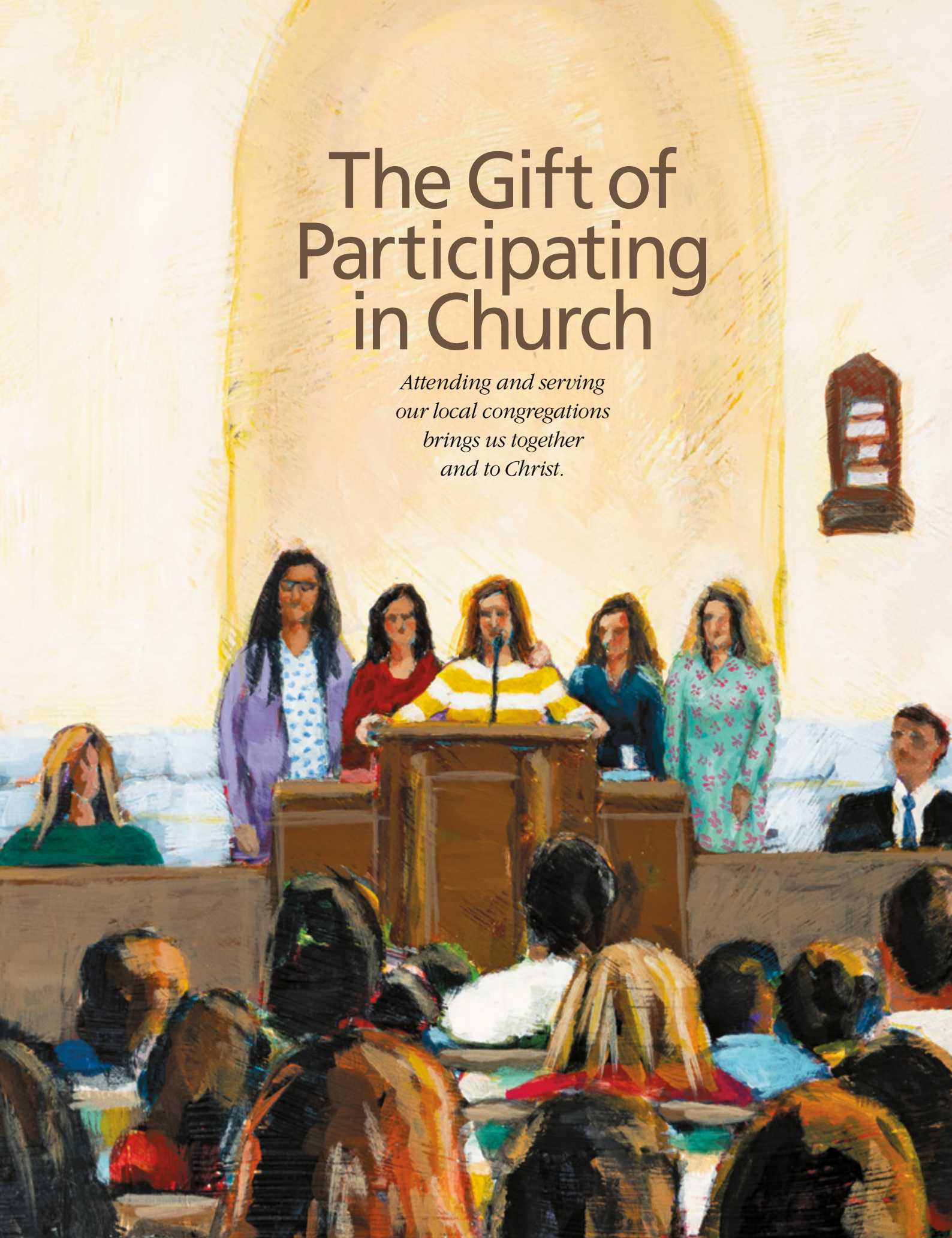
The author lives in Isan, Thailand.



Weather, distance, and school schedules prevent many Thai members from attending church, so the Ubon Ward decided to set a date and encourage as many people as possible to attend.

The Gift of Participating in Church

*Attending and serving
our local congregations
brings us together
and to Christ.*



By Kate Holbrook and Samuel Brown

June (name has been changed), a 12-year-old young woman in our ward, sat on the stand, staring at the congregation. As the deacons finished passing the sacrament and returned to their seats, Brother Cazier announced that June was our youth speaker. Many eyes looked to June as she shook her head to say she was not ready to take her turn. My husband, Sam, and I exchanged concerned looks.

Brother Cazier looked at the next speaker, a man new to the ward, and caught his eye. The man stood up and delivered a talk that was smart, spirited, and funny, and for a moment we forgot about June's stage fright.

When he was finished, though, we saw that June had been crying. She moved to the podium but no words came out. In the congregation, we worried she would criticize herself later if she didn't give the talk. She held a written copy in her hands; she only needed to read it.

"Help her give this talk," we silently prayed.

Another young woman walked toward the stand. Before she reached the podium, three other young women left

the safety of the congregation to share the weight of June's vulnerability and offer her support. None of the young women spoke a word, but they gathered around June at the podium. A hand patted June's, an arm circled her shoulders, and together they faced the audience as June opened her mouth, tested her voice, and delivered her talk. Now the tears were on our cheeks instead of hers.

Later, June told us, "It was definitely a positive experience for me. I realized how blessed I am to have an amazing group of young women step outside of their comfort zone just to make me feel loved."¹

We've often thought about what guided those young women that day to such a powerful act of unity. The answer is rich, but it is also simple: church participation prepared them. Through participation in church, they knew each other and were aware of each other's needs; they had learned to give and receive service; and they were actively developing the ultimate virtue of charity. The covenants, Holy Spirit, and priesthood ordinances they experienced in church turned effective social structures into a force both holy and transformative.





A Community of Saints

By helping us to know each other and be known, church participation acts as an antidote to the sometimes isolating, angry, and divisive environments we live in. In other words, while the world sometimes divides us, church unites us. The relationships we develop, the unity we experience, the comforting Spirit that comes to us all as we worship together with fellow Saints—all contribute to making church a community that deeply blesses all of us.

In the words of Sister Reyna I. Aburto, Second Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency, “To reach our sublime destiny, we need each other.”²

That need is met each week as we are strengthened by each other’s testimonies, service, compassion, and unique life experiences. While some critics of the Church claim that all members are the same, wards and branches are actually richly diverse, filled with members of different ages, backgrounds, political persuasions, and socioeconomic statuses.

By worshipping and serving together, we’ve developed lasting, loving relationships with people we wouldn’t have otherwise known. For example, as a couple we became close friends with a man in our ward who had been homeless for several years before we met him. We were busy students and new parents at the time, but the Church created an opportunity for us to love and be loved by

this man who would not have otherwise been in our social circles.

Not only do these relationships help us to expand our understanding of and love for all of God’s children, but they also free us from the prisons of self-absorption, cultural ignorance, and prejudice. Simply put, church participation helps us to love and serve as the Savior would have us do.

Several of our most beloved friends who grew up attending church have stepped away from the Church as adults. They continue to be generous and true friends today; we love them unconditionally and hope that they’ll always feel our love, regardless of their religious affiliation. They have told us that what they most miss about the Church is the way it creates a loving community. In those conversations, we have come to realize that church community is so effective because its roots live in something bigger than civic community: the love, Spirit, and priesthood power of God.

A Place to Serve and Be Served

Knowing others through church has also made our children aware of the needs of those around them, including the loneliness of our widowed neighbor. One evening when both of us were gone for work, our children had our neighbor over for dinner. Our neighbor enjoyed the dinner, and we as parents felt grateful for a church that had instilled in our children empathy and a desire to serve others.

In an 1888 letter to a Church publication, British Church member Marion E. Scoles wrote, “There is a luxury above all others in this world, and it is the exquisite luxury of doing good to our fellow creatures.”³

Of all that we want to offer our children as parents, we believe raising them in a church that provides this “exquisite luxury” is the best legacy we can give.

But the great blessing of Church service is that it goes both ways. Since birth, both of us have been recipients of Church members’ service. When I (Kate) was six weeks old, my alcoholic father disappeared just two days before we were scheduled to move. In one day, our home



and visiting teachers swooped in and moved my mother and me into a new apartment, where they even hung our art and placed my mother's toothbrush in the exact place it had been in the old apartment.

I (Sam) was a rebellious teenager and didn't believe in God, but the men in my ward took me under their wing and taught me to be a responsible adult. They helped me find jobs and transportation. Their loving parental influence opened my heart to the influence of the Spirit.

Thanks to the generosity of Church members—single, married, divorced, widowed, male, and female—we have been edified and strengthened throughout our lives, never having to face surgeries, moves, or other hardships alone.

Forgiveness at Church

Working with others isn't always easy. Our collaborations with other members can be pleasant, even joyful, but sometimes, serving with others can be challenging. As Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles observed: "All of us are imperfect; we may offend and be offended. We often test one another with our personal idiosyncrasies."⁴

In these situations, the Spirit can show us how to turn a challenging situation into a growth opportunity. Usually, the Lord softens our hearts and helps us find common ground, but when relationships remain difficult, He can help us develop patience or charity (see Moroni 7:44–48; 1 Corinthians 13).

The Blessings of Priesthood Ordinances

Church attendance also allows us to witness and participate in priesthood ordinances that further bind us together as a community of Saints. Attending baptisms, partaking of the sacrament together, witnessing baby blessings—all unify us as we feel the Spirit and a shared gratitude for the priesthood.

Recently, we performed temple sealings with members of our ward. One of the sealing ceremonies, wherein a child was sealed to

his parents, was especially sacred. While we represented the deceased parents, a much older man from our neighborhood represented the child. We all smiled together as the generations were reversed. As the words of the ceremony were pronounced, we all felt the significance of an earnest and hopeful son being bound to his parents for eternity, an experience none of us is likely to forget.

When the young women in our ward left their seats to support June, they showed love to her and to God. They knew how to serve her because they had participated with her in church. The church setting also brought them the Spirit, who gave them the idea and the courage to stand.

Christ promised that when we, as His disciples, assemble ourselves together, He will pour out His Spirit upon us (see Doctrine and Covenants 44:2). As He does so, and as we follow His commandment to care for each other (see Doctrine and Covenants 44:6), our congregations become gifts from the Lord that draw us closer to each other and to Him. ■

Kate Holbrook is a Church managing historian. She and her husband, Samuel Brown, live in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. Text from "June" to Kate Holbrook, Aug. 21, 2019.
2. Reyna I. Aburto, "With One Accord," *Ensign*, May 2018, 78.
3. Marion E. Scoles, "Letter to the *Exponent*, circa December 1888," in Jill Mulvay Derr, Carol Cornwall Madsen, Kate Holbrook, and Matthew J. Grow, eds., *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society: Key Documents in Latter-day Saint Women's History* (2016), 558.
4. D. Todd Christofferson, "Why the Church," *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 109.



2 Nephi 26–30

FEBRUARY 24–MARCH 1

How Does Satan Try to Deceive Us?

Nephi warned us about three of the devil's deceptive tactics.

1. RAGE AGAINST THE GOOD (2 Nephi 28:20)

How does Satan get people to be *angry* about *good* things?

Here are some good things Satan may tempt people to be **angry** about:

- Traditional marriage and family
- Kindness and compassion for all, including those who are different from you
- Organized religion

How does Satan get people to be so *comfortable* that they *stop caring* about fighting against evil or *stop trying* to grow spiritually?

Here are some lies the devil may tell us to make us **apathetic**:

- All that matters is enjoying life and having cool stuff.
- Anything inconvenient or uncomfortable must be bad, so avoid it.
- As long as life *appears* to be going well, that's all that matters.

How does Satan get people to *stop believing* that evil is real and that God will judge us?

Here are some lies Satan tells us to convince us there's **no evil** and **no consequences**:

- This life is it, so live it up.
- If it feels good, do it.
- Look around. The wicked aren't being punished. So why not have fun like them?

2. EASE AND APATHY (2 Nephi 28:21)

3. NO DEVIL, NO EVIL, NO CONSEQUENCES (2 Nephi 28:22)

AVOIDING DECEPTION

Consider reviewing President Dallin H. Oaks's October 2004 general conference talk, "Be Not Deceived," to find his counsel on how to avoid being deceived.

WEEK

1



MARCH 2-8

We return to Heavenly Father by making and keeping covenants with Him. Jesus Christ showed us the way along this covenant path, and we gain eternal life by following His example.

DISCUSSION

Where are you on the covenant path? What must you do to continue progressing?

“To each member of the Church I say, keep on the covenant path. Your commitment to follow the Savior by making covenants with Him and then keeping those covenants will open the door to every spiritual blessing and privilege available to men, women, and children everywhere.”

President Russell M. Nelson,
"As We Go Forward Together,"
Ensign, Apr. 2018, 7.

What blessing can we receive if we endure to the end? (See 2 Nephi 31:20.)

What is the gateway to the covenant path? (See 2 Nephi 31:17–18.) How do we show our willingness to follow the example of Jesus Christ and keep His commandments?

How do we progress along the path? (See 2 Nephi 31:16, 20; Mosiah 5:7-9.)

Sin takes us off the path.
How do we return? (See
1 Nephi 10:18; 3 Nephi
9:13–14.)



Jacob 1–4

MARCH 9–15

The prophet Jacob taught that the Jews' spiritual blindness came from "looking beyond the mark" (Jacob 4:14). How do we avoid looking beyond the mark?

What Is the Mark?

"[Some] are blinded because they are 'looking beyond the mark' (Jacob 4:14) when the mark is Christ."

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Jesus of Nazareth, Savior and King," *Ensign*, May 1976, 26.



How Do We Avoid "Looking beyond the Mark"?



What Does It Mean to Look beyond the Mark?

In archery, if you want to hit the target, you have to aim for it. Looking beyond the target will cause you to miss. That may be one reason the word *sin* in the New Testament comes from the Greek word *hamartia*, which means "missing the mark." What were the sins of the Jews noted in Jacob 4:14?

How Do We Hit the Mark?

"If our primary focus, thoughts, and efforts are centered on increasing our love for Almighty God and extending our hearts to others, we can know that we have found the right target and are aiming at the bull's-eye—becoming true disciples of Jesus Christ."

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Aiming at the Center," *Ensign*, Jan. 2017, 5.



Jacob 5–7

MARCH 16–22

What Can We Learn from the Allegory of the Olive Tree?



PRUNING removes dead branches and bad fruit from a tree. The master cut off the dead branches and cast them into the fire (see Jacob 5:9). How does God help us “prune” our lives of sins and weaknesses?



DIGGING includes clearing away obstacles, such as weeds, from around a tree. Digging ensures nothing will hinder the tree’s ability to grow. What obstacles keep us from growing spiritually?

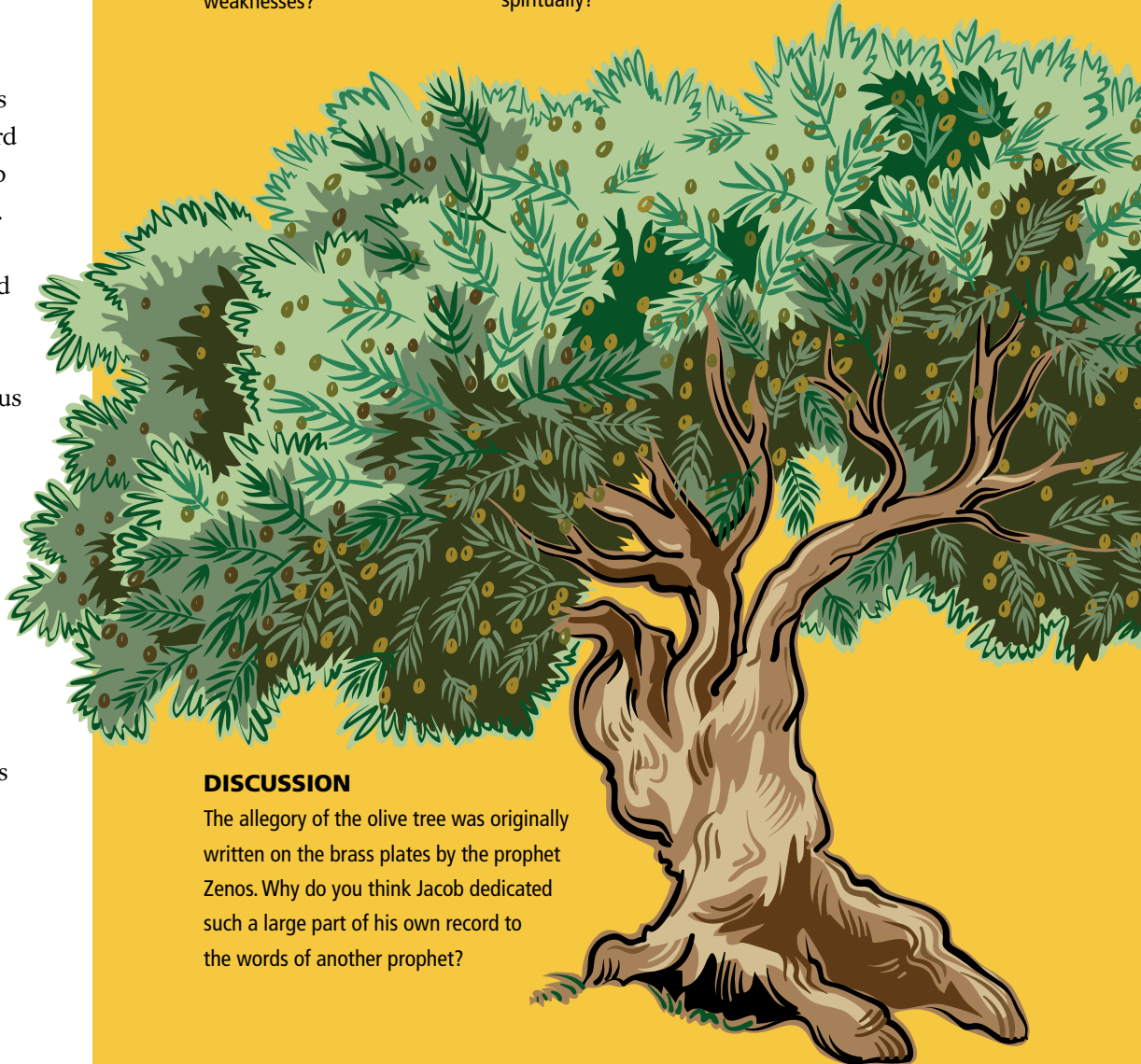


NOURISHING keeps a tree healthy by providing minerals and other nutrients. Like trees, our spirits need nourishment. How can we nourish our spirits?

In the allegory of the olive tree, the master of the vineyard finds his olive tree in a state of decay and says, “I will prune [the tree], and dig about it, and nourish it” (Jacob 5:4).

Throughout the allegory, the master and his servant visit the vineyard several times (see Jacob 5:15–18, 29–32, 37–42). Each time, the process of pruning, digging, and nourishing is repeated.

The master of the vineyard represents Jesus Christ. The tree and its branches represent His people. This allegory is much more than a story about trees and fruit. It is a powerful witness of God’s involvement in His children’s lives and the Savior’s mission and His love for all mankind.



DISCUSSION

The allegory of the olive tree was originally written on the brass plates by the prophet Zenos. Why do you think Jacob dedicated such a large part of his own record to the words of another prophet?

WEEK

4

March 2020

45



Achieving Oneness in Marriage

By Alan J. Hawkins, PhD, Director of the School of Family Life at Brigham Young University, and Laura Waters Black

An arch consists of two pillars that curve upward and fuse together, forming a single architectural support that can carry enormous amounts of weight. In fact, architects and builders know that an arch is many times stronger and can thus uphold far more weight than two separate pillars with a lintel (or cross-beam) placed between them.

This is a beautiful metaphor for marriage. Just as two pillars in an arch lean in and fuse together at the apex to create greater strength, a woman and man, truly committed and united to one another, become stronger together than they could ever be apart.

Christ taught this principle when a cunning Pharisee asked: “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?”

Jesus responded:

“Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

“And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?”

“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh” (Matthew 19:3–6).

Marriage is more than a legal partnership between two people. It is two people reaching upward toward heaven, where they fuse together to form a union so complete and indivisible that they become one.

Achieving that oneness, however, requires sustained effort from husband and wife.

With God's loving guidance, a husband and wife can form a special, unbreakable, eternal bond.

1. Make Your Spouse's Happiness Your First Priority

The first principle of becoming one is to make our marital relationship and the well-being of our spouse the most central element in our lives. Latter-day scripture teaches, "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else" (Doctrine and Covenants 42:22).

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) said: "I have learned that the real essence of happiness in marriage lies . . . in an anxious concern for the comfort and well-being of one's companion. Thinking of self alone and of the gratification of personal desires will build neither trust, love, nor happiness. Only when there is unselfishness will love, with its concomitant qualities, flourish and blossom."¹

Many people lose this perspective and see marriage as something that will hold them back from accomplishing their dreams. In reality, a gospel-centered marriage enlarges rather than shrinks us. This enlargement comes because of the promise found multiple times in the scriptures: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 16:25; see also Matthew 10:39; Doctrine and Covenants 98:13).

Putting our spouse's well-being and happiness above our own may mean rearranging our priorities and reconsidering how we spend our time.

President Russell M. Nelson put it this way:

"Months ago, I received a heartbreaking letter from a dear sister. She wrote: '[My daughters and I] feel we are in fierce competition for our husbands' and sons' undivided

attention, with 24/7 sports updates, video games, stock market updates, [and] endless analyzing and watching of games of every [conceivable] sport. It feels like we're losing our front-row seats with our husbands and sons because of their permanent front-row seats with [sports and games].'

"Brethren, your first and foremost duty as a bearer of the priesthood is to love and care for your wife."²

The instruction here is clear: in our list of priorities and duties, our spouse always takes first position.

One newly married sister shared with us her experience. Both she and her husband led busy and successful lives before deciding to date and marry each other. Their biggest obstacle during their courtship and new marriage was learning how to give each other quality time and attention amidst their busy and ambitious lives.

Eventually they realized that a husband and wife can come together in a couple identity (what some like to call a "we-identity") while still maintaining their individual interests and strengths and that couples should support one another's growth and development. This newly married sister shared, "If something matters to my husband, even if it is not a huge interest or passion for me, that thing matters to me because I love him. I may not love the thing, but I love him more than anything and want to support him."

The importance of giving our spouse top priority is unmistakable in the context of the gospel. Indeed, becoming one in marriage is at the heart of the plan of salvation and is essential to becoming like our heavenly parents. No wonder "marriage is ordained of God" (Doctrine and Covenants 49:15).

2. Commit Completely, Especially When Challenges Arise

Most marriages go through cycles of happy and hard times. Sometimes those hard times are caused by external

stresses. Other times our personal weaknesses, immaturities, and underdeveloped relationship skills divide our hearts.

Whatever the reason, it is wise to be patient and give ourselves time to mature and allow our marriages time to improve rather than abandon them when they are hurting. Jesus affirmed, “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:6). A second principle of marital oneness, then, is that we remain together; oneness means forever.

Sometimes married couples run into unanticipated problems and doubt their choice to marry. Research shows that more than half of married couples in the United States have thought seriously about divorce at some time and about one in four married individuals have thought about divorce recently.³

Clearly there are legitimate justifications for divorce, but ending the marriage is not the right solution for most marital difficulties. We should work hard to repair our marriages.

President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, taught: “Under the law of the Lord, a marriage, like a human life, is a precious, living thing. If our bodies are sick, we seek to heal them. We do not give up. . . . The same should be true of our marriages, and if we seek Him, the Lord will help us and heal us.”⁴

3. Seek Oneness through Fidelity and Marital Intimacy

To be truly one in marriage, we must refrain from developing or maintaining intimate physical or emotional relationships with anyone online or in person who isn’t our spouse. We must never divide our sexual desires—we invest our affection fully and exclusively in our spouse. This includes shunning pornography.

If our health and individual circumstances allow, we also need to nurture sexual intimacy in our marriages and not let that aspect of the marriage be neglected. Sexual inactivity robs a couple of one of God’s most powerful gifts for uniting our hearts.

As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, “Such an act of love between a man and a woman is . . . a symbol of total union: union of their hearts, their hopes, their lives, their love, their family, their future, their everything.”⁵

Sister Wendy W. Nelson, wife of President Russell M. Nelson, echoed this sentiment when she said, “As an important part of the expression of their love, the Lord wants a husband and wife to partake of the wonders and joys of marital intimacy.”⁶

4. Become Equal Partners

In “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” we are taught that “fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners.”⁷ As President Gordon B. Hinckley said, “In the marriage companionship there is neither inferiority nor superiority.”⁸


This side-by-side, equal partnership manifests itself in all aspects of the marriage relationship, including in how couples make decisions together. To be one we must counsel with our spouse in all things and strive to come to a union of mind and heart on all matters.

The Blessings of Becoming One

As in all things, Jesus Christ is our example. He is perfectly united with His Father in purpose, in mission, in mind, and in heart (see John 17:3). Christ expects the same from us. As He taught the early Saints, “If ye are not one ye are not mine” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:27).

As we strive for that oneness, as we—like two pillars of a marital arch reaching upward to God—form a lasting union, great blessings result. President Russell M. Nelson taught, “Marriage brings greater possibilities for happiness than does any other human relationship.”⁹

Achieving that oneness requires more than exchanging rings and vows. It is a long and challenging journey. But it is an exciting and fulfilling one. And because marriage is ordained of God and core to our eternal growth and



*Achieving oneness
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and fulfilling one.*

development, God will multiply our fishes-and-loaves efforts in marriage to become one. ■

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Gordon B. Hinckley* (2016), 162.
2. Russell M. Nelson, "We Can Do Better and Be Better," *Ensign*, May 2019, 68.
3. See Alan J. Hawkins and others, "What Are They Thinking? A National Study of Stability and Change in Divorce Ideation," *Family Process*, vol. 56, no. 4 (Dec. 2017), 852–68. (Sample included married individuals aged 25–50.)
4. Dallin H. Oaks, "Divorce," *Ensign*, May 2007, 71–72.
5. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Of Souls, Symbols, and Sacraments" (Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 12, 1988), 5, speeches.byu.edu.
6. Wendy W. Nelson, "Love and Marriage" (worldwide devotional for young adults, Jan. 8, 2017), broadcasts.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
7. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, May 2017, 145.
8. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Personal Worthiness to Exercise the Priesthood," *Ensign*, May 2002, 54.
9. Russell M. Nelson, "Nurturing Marriage," *Ensign*, May 2006, 36.

PROACTIVE PARENTING

We shouldn't wait to arm our children against the evils of the world.

By Laura Padilla-Walker

Professor, School of Family Life at Brigham Young University

Raising teenagers in a fallen world isn't easy, particularly when the adversary is so relentless in his efforts to lead youth astray. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described it this way:

"Some days it seems that a sea of temptation and transgression inundates [our children], simply washes over them before they can successfully withstand it, before they should have to face it. And often at least some of the forces at work seem beyond our personal control.

"Well, some of them may be beyond our control, but I testify with faith in the living God that they are not beyond His."¹

As parents, we work in tandem with Heavenly Father and the Savior to fortify our youth and help them put on the whole protective armor of God to withstand "the fiery darts of the adversary" (1 Nephi 15:24).

But we shouldn't wait until after the battle is raging to do so. We should do it long before the battle even begins.

Proactive Parenting

Scholarly research and parenting books often focus on *reactive* parenting, or what can parents do *after* their child has done something wrong. But waiting for bad behavior to occur before taking action means that destructive patterns may already have become established, making them harder to change.

In contrast, *proactive* parenting refers to a parent's efforts to anticipate temptations and other challenges children might experience in the future and to provide protection or tools they can use when faced with these situations. In the gospel sense, this is akin to helping children put on the whole armor of God (see Ephesians 6:11–17).



Three Proactive-Parenting Practices

Parents may use three common proactive-parenting practices with different frequency, depending on the age of the child. For each of these practices, keep in mind counsel from the Children and Youth introductory guide:

- “Pray for guidance.”
- “Help your children seek and recognize the influence of the Holy Ghost.”
- “Express love.”
- “Frequently compliment your children in their efforts to do well and for the Christlike qualities you see in them.”
- “Offer support, help, and encouragement along the way.”²

1

COCOONING

(protecting your children)

The first, and most restrictive, proactive-parenting practice is called *cocooning*. In this method, parents protect their children from anything that poses a potential threat. Cocooning is common during early childhood and may include forbidding certain television shows or avoiding potentially dangerous activities. By doing this, parents teach children right from wrong.

2

PRE-ARMING

(preparing your children for danger)

A second approach to proactive parenting is called *pre-arming*. This means that parents provide guidance, coaching, and instruction to their children to help them know how to respond to potentially harmful situations. For example, parents may ask a child to practice exact dialogue that could be used if a peer were to offer the child a dangerous substance. Or, parents may ask a child to share specific actions that could be taken to steer away from damaging situations.

This method allows parents to teach why something is right or wrong and becomes more effective as children mature. Pre-arming conversations might teach:

- Healthy sexuality and intimacy.
- Responsible media use, including safeguards against pornography.
- Modesty and other standards from *For the Strength of Youth*.³



3

DEFERENCE

(respecting your children's agency)

The third proactive strategy is called *deference*, which allows children to make their own decisions as they practice choosing between right and wrong. Deference demonstrates great trust in a child. Because of the complexities in granting a child sufficient responsibility to make decisions, deference requires that a child have adequate maturity to understand the consequences of decisions. Deference works well with adolescent or older children after parents have employed strategies like pre-arming and cocooning for several years.

Using a balanced approach to these three practices while raising children—especially within a gospel context—allows them opportunities to grow as they exercise their agency and learn to choose between right and wrong.

When the Savior called His disciples, He used a similar pattern. First, He showed them the importance of shunning the world (cocooning; see Matthew 4:10, John 16:33). Then, through discussion and example, He taught them why His ways were best (pre-arming; see 3 Nephi 27:21–22). Finally, He left their presence and allowed them, with guidance from the Holy Ghost, to use what they had learned to lead the Church and preach the gospel (deference; see John 16:7–13).



Keeping the lines of communication open is essential.

Frequent, Open, Age-Appropriate Discussions

Implementing a flexible approach to these three teaching strategies allows parents to effectively respond to different situations a child may face. An essential component to these techniques is keeping open the lines of communication, especially as children ask questions.

The Children and Youth introductory guide encourages parents to “be involved in their [children’s] lives” and “to talk with and listen to [their] children.”⁴ Children need to know they can talk with and learn from their parents.

For example, if my seven-year-old son asks me a question about sexuality, I have a great opportunity to teach him that he can come to me when he has a question—any question. Given his age, however, I might cocoon him from some of the specific details of sexuality, saving those for when he’s a little older and more mature. The scriptures counsel, “Line upon line, precept upon precept” (2 Nephi 28:30). So, I share only those things he is ready to hear.

But allowing the conversation to take place is key at any age.

Joint Decision-Making

Open communication also allows parents and children to engage in joint decision-making, which increases the likelihood that adolescents will “buy into” family rules.

For example, when we wanted to establish a curfew with our older children, rather than deciding on a time and informing them, we had a family discussion and asked for their input. My husband and I felt more comfortable with 10:00 p.m., and the children were pushing hard for midnight.

After a lengthy family council, we settled on 11:00 p.m. We also added a caveat that unique opportunities with friends might allow for an extended curfew. Both parents and children sacrificed, but because the children were part of the decision, they were very good about coming home on time and keeping us informed of what they were doing. I believe that allowing them to take part in the decision-making process was key to this positive outcome.⁵

Knowing Which Technique to Use

Pre-arming combined with cocooning may be more appropriate when children are younger and more willing to be sheltered from negative influences.

Most teens, however, want greater independence. As a result, they may balk at the idea of being controlled or may even interpret well-meant parental suggestions as infringing upon their ability to make their own decisions. Some conflict is bound to arise as parents and teens figure this out, but if parents use these techniques with young children, welcome their questions and communication, continue teaching them sound principles and doctrine as they mature, and give them opportunities to exercise their agency, parents will be able to increasingly stand back and defer to their children.

Knowing Our Children’s Vulnerabilities

Being proactive parents also means taking time to get to know our children and their vulnerabilities so we can help them prepare to combat Satan’s influence. Where are the chinks in their armor, so to speak? Do they easily fall victim to peer pressure? Are they too attached to digital devices or games? Do they have difficulty recognizing the influence of the Spirit? Do they struggle with personal prayers or scripture study?

By knowing where Satan may try to influence our children, we can know which gospel principles we should focus on in our teaching and create opportunities for our children to develop in that specific area. This watchful, mindful, active, and strategic approach is at the heart of proactive parenting.

With the help of Almighty God and Jesus Christ, we can seize the opportunity to be proactive today in the lives of our children. Doing so will help shield them in enemy territory and lead them, ultimately, back to our Heavenly Father with honor. ■

NOTES

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, “A Prayer for the Children,” *Ensign*, May 2003, 85.
2. *Children and Youth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: An Introductory Guide for Parents and Leaders* (2019), 4.
3. *For the Strength of Youth* (booklet, 2011).
4. *Children and Youth*, 10.
5. The Lord used this parenting model as He taught the brother of Jared an important lesson about finding answers (see Ether 2–3).



“When we
COVENANT ALL
we are, we can
BECOME MORE
than we are.”

Elder Gerrit W. Gong of
the Quorum of the Twelve
Apostles, “Covenant
Belonging,” 80;
emphasis added.

Our Need to Love and Minister

“We all know where we can
do better. There is no need to
repeatedly remind each other,
but there is a need to love and
minister to each other and, in
doing so, provide a climate of
willingness to change.”

Elder Hans T. Boom of the
Seventy, “Knowing, Loving,
and Growing,” 105.

COUNSEL FROM PRESIDENT NELSON

During general conference, President Russell M. Nelson gave important counsel to Latter-day Saints.

He encouraged youth to:

- “Qualify for limited-use temple recommends” (“Closing Remarks,” 121).
- Remember his invitation “to enlist in the Lord’s youth battalion” to gather Israel (“Witnesses, Aaronic Priesthood Quorums, and Young Women Classes,” 39).

He counseled women to:

- “Seek to understand what the Lord would have you know and do,” and “study prayerfully section 25 of the Doctrine and Covenants and discover what the Holy Ghost will teach *you*.”
- “Shift your focus away from worldly distractions,” and “embark upon and continue this lifelong process of consecrating your life to the Lord.”
- Teach the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and provide “input in family, ward, and stake councils.”
- Serve, pray, fast, study the scriptures, serve in the temple, and do family history work, all of which “will open the heavens to you.”
- “Study prayerfully *all* the truths you can find about

priesthood power,” beginning with Doctrine and Covenants sections 84 and 107. (See “Spiritual Treasures,” 77, 79.)

He encouraged all Church members to prepare for general conference in April 2020 by:

- Reading Joseph Smith’s account of the First Vision.
- Pondering how the Book of Mormon and the events since the First Vision have made a difference for us and our loved ones.
- Making the new Book of Mormon videos part of our individual and family study.
- Selecting our own questions, designing our own plans, and immersing ourselves “in the glorious light of the Restoration.” (See “Closing Remarks,” 122.)

All page numbers come from
the November 2019 *Ensign*.

DIVING DEEPER

Walking the Covenant Path

To keep the two great commandments, said President Dallin H. Oaks, “we walk a fine line between law and love—keeping the commandments and walking the covenant path, while loving our neighbors along the way. This walk requires us to seek divine inspiration” (“*Two Great Commandments*,” 75). Watch or read his talk and the talks by the following speakers for strength along the covenant path:

- Elder Terence M. Vinson, who said, “What we need here is less Wi-Fi and more Nephi!” (“*True Disciples of the Savior*,” 9).
- Brother Stephen W. Owen, who encouraged us to seek “spiritual nourishment” by disconnecting from the world and connecting with heaven (“*Be Faithful, Not Faithless*,” 12).
- Sister Michelle Craig, who spoke about “four ways to increase your spiritual capacity to receive revelation” (“*Spiritual Capacity*,” 19).
- Elder Gary E. Stevenson, who said, “We must continue to be faithful and vigilant, for so is the only way to discern truth and to hear the voice of the Lord through His servants” (“*Deceive Me Not*,” 96).
- President M. Russell Ballard, who said, “One of the most important things we can learn in this life is how to emphasize our eternal spiritual nature and control our evil desires” (“*Giving Our Spirits Control over Our Bodies*,” 109).
- Elder Peter M. Johnson, who taught us how we can overcome three tools of the adversary: deception, distraction, and discouragement (“*Power to Overcome the Adversary*,” 110–12).

HOW TO . . .

Share the Gospel

When it comes to sharing the gospel, Sister Cristina B. Franco asked the following questions and then told members of the Church, “The answer to all of these questions is yes! We can do it!”

- “Can we invite a friend who is not of our faith to come to church with us on Sunday?”
- “Can we perhaps share a copy of the Book of Mormon with a relative or a friend?”
- “Can we help others find their ancestors on FamilySearch or share with others what we have learned during the week as we have been studying *Come, Follow Me*?”
- “Can we be more like our Savior, Jesus Christ, and share with others what brings us joy to our lives?”

Sister Cristina B. Franco, Second Counselor in the Primary General Presidency, “*Finding Joy in Sharing the Gospel*,” 85.



Seven Sure-Fire Blessings from the Children and Youth Program

This inspired new effort may be an adjustment, but enormous blessings await.

By David Dickson
Church Magazines

The new Children and Youth program is only three months old, but youth and parents all over the world are already seeing a difference in their lives. That's the promise to those who seek to become more like the Savior: He pours out blessings and gives rest to our souls (see Matthew 11:28–29).

As we patiently and lovingly help our children become more like Him, great things will happen in our hearts and homes.

Blessing 1: God's Sustaining Help

Whether you're just getting started or feel like a seasoned pro, you're in the best possible hands. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles shared the following in the Children and Youth introductory guide for parents and leaders: "We love you. We have confidence in you. We promise that our Father in Heaven will continue to bless and sustain you as you lead and guide His children in faith."¹

In other words, you can count on Heavenly Father's guiding and sustaining help as you learn and grow in this effort.



Blessing 2: Goals Tailored to Your Children's Needs

"Home-centered, Church-supported" represents a big shift in thinking from the way many efforts in the Church have been carried out in the past.

Katie Gardner, a mother in Ohio, USA, admits that she struggled in the beginning. "I didn't like the new program at first," she says. "It was actually a little bit confusing. I thought, 'This isn't going to work.'"

But things changed once Katie met with other parents to discuss how things were going. Katie said, "One of the mothers talked about how much easier this made her life. The mother said, 'Now we're focusing on the goals in our family that our kids are actually interested in.'"

For Katie, that made a lot of sense. She could easily see how that might bless her own family. Katie's son had been trying to pass a hard test that would allow him to advance to the next grade. He'd already tried and failed three times. So, this became something that they worked on as a family.

"We kind of wrote out what we were going to do," Katie said. "And we worked on [the goals] for a couple months. He passed the test! That's when I realized this new program is all about working on the things that are important to your children—on the things that are going to help them succeed."



Blessing 3: Greater Opportunities for Parental Involvement



Natalia, a young woman from Brazil, explains that her success in the program also begins at home. "My parents are essential to the process," she explains. "I had set some goals and told my mother of my difficulties. So we set some goals together, and from there she helped me a lot."

Joleno A. from Argentina feels the same way. "I know that if I have a doubt or I need help, I can go to my family and I can trust them with what is hard or what I need," he said.



Blessing 4: Greater Opportunities for Leader Involvement

Church leaders and teachers are essential in this process. Even in a home with every family member strong in the gospel, leaders and teachers provide valuable strength, support, and instruction. How much more critical, then, becomes the help of leaders and teachers in families where a child or youth doesn't have full gospel support at home?

Natalia, who shared earlier how her parents are critical to her success, has also seen the importance of relying on her Church leaders. She remembers one time when she felt totally stuck in a goal. No matter how she and her parents tried to tackle the problem, Natalia couldn't move forward.

Then her bishop asked her to come in for an interview. "In the interview, the bishop asked about my goal," Natalia says. "I knew it was an inspiration because I hadn't told him I was blocked. And he really helped me to get through that problem."



Blessing 5: Stronger Friendships, Quorums, and Classes

Many children and youth are the only Church members in their entire family. One example is Joao, a 16-year-old from Brazil. "My family are not members of the Church, so I ended up making friends here at church," Joao says. "These friends are like family to me now."

Friends and Church leaders have helped Joao feel accepted and part of a loving community. And he, in turn, has been a blessing to them. "If I were in the world, I would be lost," he says, "but the Church strengthens me more and more. And I also strengthen my friends. It's a constant exchange of testimonies, jokes, and fun."

Juan, a 15-year-old from Brazil, feels closer to the members in his quorum as he's spent time in the Children and Youth program. Not long ago, he and others organized a large soccer championship event with the young men in the area. They invited many youth who hadn't been out to church in a long time and even some nonmembers. The event was a resounding success. To Juan, it's important that everyone has a good time when they get together and that everybody has real friends they can rely on.

"I know that I am important to the members in my quorum, and they are important to me," he says. "If one day I'm sad, they will come and talk to me. If someday they're sad, I'll talk to them too. To help my neighbor is to love my neighbor. This is the process Jesus Christ taught. His love is incredible."

Here's another great example of this principle. A quorum from Ohio was planning their summer activities, when one of them mentioned that he hoped to attend film school. Maybe they could try shooting a movie, he suggested.

The idea caught on. In fact, this group decided to do not merely one activity but a whole series of them as they worked and learned together.

They had so much fun making the movie that they grew closer as a quorum. "The first thing we need to do is build unity," Spencer Bardsley, one of their adult leaders, said. "Once we come together, then we can start to explore the things that will help us come closer to the Savior."



Blessing 6: Stronger Family Ties

Ideally, our family members are our closest friends. Children and Youth can help you and your children deepen those friendships.

Fernanda, a young woman from Brazil, has long enjoyed watching her father cook for a living. “Always, when my father was going to cook,” says Fernanda, “I was there watching him, and I still really like it.”

In Children and Youth, Fernanda set a goal to improve her own cooking skills. And who better to help her with this goal than her father?

“Working on this goal has brought me closer to my father,” Fernanda says. “Every time we cook, we get closer together because as I see him cooking, I help him. I’m not distracted by my cell phone. We’re getting a closer and closer relationship.”

Others have found the same truths. As family members spend time together and support one another, their families grow stronger.

Blessing 7: Personal Revelation

Any effort in the Church ultimately aims to bring souls closer to God. Children and Youth is no different. The three elements of gospel learning, service and activities, and personal development combine in a powerful effort to help our children connect with God.

Martina, a young woman from Argentina, found herself drawing closer to God in ways she hadn’t even thought of before.

“I feel that I was able to make changes in my life that I did not even notice that I needed to make,” Martina said, after spending time in the Children and Youth program. “I noticed that I wanted to be better. I wanted to be like Jesus Christ. And I was able to notice those changes when I knelt and said to Heavenly Father, ‘What is it that you want me to change?’ Thanks to the guidance of the Holy Ghost, I can really be better.”

One young man from Brazil, Gustavo, age 17, has found a similar pattern he can follow with great success from here on out. “The new program has taught me that I can develop more like Christ if I plan my own life,” he says. “Personal revelation is fundamental.”




Learn and Grow

As you guide the children and youth in your life through the three elements of gospel learning, service and activities, and personal development, this new and inspired effort will indeed help you and those you love to draw closer to Christ.

Simply keep your feet moving and allow God to guide your steps along the way. The future is going to be bright. ■

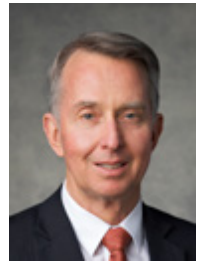
NOTE

1. In *Children and Youth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: An Introductory Guide for Parents and Leaders* (2019), inside front cover.



My mother's words linger as a reminder that we all can labor diligently to help Heavenly Father gather His children.

"Don't Give Up on Me"



By Elder
Larry S. Kacher
Of the Seventy

I am the only member of the Church in my parents' family. I was baptized at age 19. As a convert, I have felt the call to gather Israel, particularly within my own family. After my baptism, I looked for opportunities to share my testimony with them. While serving a full-time mission in French Polynesia, I wrote home and shared missionary experiences, hoping the Spirit would touch their hearts. Over the years, family members have come to witness the blessings and baptisms of our children, or to hear talks or attend special meetings. Yet, after 47 years, none of them showed interest in learning about or understanding the restored gospel.

My Mother's Words

Finally, when my mother was 90 years old, she agreed to let the sister missionaries teach her. She was in Minnesota and I was in Utah. I waited prayerfully for the appointed time, hoping her heart would be softened. I expected her to call after the lesson, but I heard nothing. Finally I called her. "They were very nice," she said. "But I did all the talking, and I don't want them to come back."

My heart sank. I had waited a long time. My patriarchal blessing said that, because of my testimony, members of my family and friends would join the Church. A few days later, as I was arriving at a stake meeting, my cell phone rang. I saw that it was my mother, but I couldn't take the call. Later I listened to her voice message. She simply said, "Don't give up on me."

I have never forgotten her words. They are a powerful reminder to me. Heavenly Father does not give up on us. He gives us countless opportunities to hear His word and abide by His admonitions. He loves us. He cares for us. His arms are always outstretched (see Alma 5:33). If He will never give up on us, is it right for any of us to give up on those we love or those with whom we associate?

Jacob's Allegory

In the Book of Mormon, Jacob gives the allegory of the olive tree. Toward the end of the allegory, the Lord of the vineyard calls for his servants to "labor diligently" to gather the good fruit scattered throughout the vineyard and bring the natural branches back together until they

become “like unto one body” (Jacob 5:61, 74). That allegorical event is happening all over the world today as members of the Church assist in gathering Israel.

However, too often we are inclined to see our role in that gathering with our natural eyes. We may become discouraged. Our faith may waver. Such was the case, at first, with Enoch.

Seeing with Spiritual Eyes

When Enoch was called by the Lord, he struggled. He could not see what the Lord saw. He said, “Why is it that I have found favor in thy sight, and am but a lad, and all the people hate me; for I am slow of speech; wherefore am I thy servant?” (Moses 6:31).

But gently the Lord taught Enoch, telling him to anoint his eyes with clay. The Lord did this to help Enoch see with spiritual eyes. “And he beheld the spirits that God had created; and he beheld also things which were not visible to the natural eye” (Moses 6:36). When Enoch saw through spiritual eyes, his faith increased. His desire to share the gospel expanded. And Enoch went forth as a true disciple of the Lord, trusting that if he did his part, God would make up the difference.

Alma’s Perseverance

Alma the Elder is another example of using spiritual vision to access the powers of heaven. He could easily have given up, along with King Mosiah, when their



sons went about trying to destroy the Church. Instead, Alma turned to the Lord. As a result, a great miracle occurred. His son’s heart and the hearts of his comrades were changed

and they became great missionaries. When Alma saw with spiritual eyes, he knew that with sufficient faith, he could bless his family. (See Mosiah 27:8–27; 28:3; Alma 26:22).

Reminders to Trust God

The scriptures are replete with examples of such faith, along with reminders that we must learn to trust God:

- “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes” (Proverbs 3:5–7).
- “Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers” (Doctrine and Covenants 112:10).
- “For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:5).

Gathering Israel in the Lord’s Way

I have a personal testimony that as we learn His will and act accordingly, the Lord will enable us to help gather Israel. Many years ago while living in Brussels, Belgium, I was a home teacher to the McCormick family, doing what we now call ministering. Ken and Mary Kay McCormick had been married for 21 years. Mary Kay was raised in the Church, but Ken was not a member. Still, out of respect for his wife, Ken would usually attend Sunday meetings with the family. I loved the McCormicks. We visited regularly, traveled together, and did many fun things together. One day, though, I realized that as long as Ken stayed outside the Church, this family could not enjoy all the blessings of the covenant path.

The next Sunday I invited Ken to listen to my testimony. His response





startled me: “No, thank you.” I was dumbfounded. I returned home, a little downcast, wondering what I had done wrong. As I counseled with my wife, the thought came to me: “You have tried to do this in your own way. You have not depended upon Me.” It was true. I had good intentions, but I had acted on my own.

I was determined to repent. Time was short. We were moving back to America in a matter of weeks. I contacted my companion, Gerald Cardon, and a few days later we returned to the McCormick home. But this time, like Nephi, we were “led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which [we] should do” (1 Nephi 4:6).

First, I felt prompted to invite Brother Cardon to stand and sing, “I Know That My Redeemer Lives” (*Hymns*, no. 136). He looked at me like I was crazy, but in his beautiful baritone voice he sang a wonderful rendition of this sacred hymn. Then the thought came to me to invite Ken’s wife and his daughter, Kristin, to share their testimonies. As they did, a powerful spirit filled the room. Ken started to cry. His heart was softened. Six days later, after 21 years of unbelief, Ken entered the waters of baptism. One year later, the McCormick family became an eternal family as they were sealed in the Mesa Arizona Temple.

We may not always see what God sees, but as we diligently labor in His vineyard, God will perform miracles through us.

Another 90-Year-Old

Recently, I had the opportunity to preside at a stake conference. During one session, I shared the story of my 90-year-old mother who did not join the Church but who had counseled me not to give up on her. Unknown

to me, there was in the congregation a 90-year-old grandmother who had come to hear her grandson (a high councilor) and his wife speak. Seated next to this sweet grandmother was her daughter, the high councilor’s mother. This mother had been baptized 40 years previously but, like me, had no one in her family follow her into the gospel.

Something happened during that meeting. The 90-year-old grandmother’s heart was softened by the Spirit. She turned to her daughter and said, “Don’t give up on me.” The next day, surrounded by family, this 90-year-old announced that she wanted to be baptized. Forty years of unbelief melted away. A few weeks later Norma Pitt was baptized by her grandson. Now this wonderful family is anxiously awaiting Norma’s one-year anniversary so they can be sealed in the house of the Lord.

We Can All Help

Not long ago, after both my parents had passed away, my wife and I knelt across the altar in the Accra Ghana Temple to be sealed for them. Yes, it would have been wonderful had I been able to see my mother and father baptized in this life, but as we exercise the prayer of faith and follow the teachings of the prophets, we can know that the work of salvation continues on both sides of the veil.

As we—like the servants in Jacob’s allegory—go forward with a quiet assurance that the Lord will never give up on us, we too must never give up on those we love, acting as instruments in the Lord’s hands to gather Israel.

President Russell M. Nelson said, “*Anytime* you do *anything* that helps *anyone*—on either side of the veil—take a step toward making covenants with God and receiving their essential baptismal and temple ordinances, you are helping to gather Israel.”¹ How blessed we will be if we but respond to this call from a living prophet. ■

NOTE

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), [HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).



"Inconveniently True"

The New York Pennsylvania Historic Sites Mission offers unique opportunities to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. We proselyte, teach, and baptize as other missionaries do, but we also have the wonderful assignment to teach about the sacred events that happened in these places.

We serve at the Smith family farm, the Book of Mormon publication site, the Hill Cumorah Visitors' Center, and the Peter and Mary Whitmer farm. We take guests around these sacred sites and help them become more familiar with the history and events surrounding the Restoration.

One day my companion and I gave a tour of the Smith family farm to a young family from Ireland. They were recent converts of only two years.

As we stood in the reconstructed log home where Joseph Smith and

his family lived in the spring of 1820, my companion and I recounted the important events in Joseph's childhood that led him to enter a grove of trees to pray to know which church he should join. We shared with them Joseph's experience when Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ appeared to him and answered his prayer. We then asked them how they had felt when they first learned of Joseph Smith and his First Vision.

I expected them to express the same feelings most people share—that they felt a burning in their heart or that they knew that it must be true because the Spirit they felt was just so powerful. Instead, they said they felt it was "inconveniently true." That made us pause for a minute. We asked them to explain what they had meant.

They told us that things had been

good for them before they heard the gospel, and the idea of changing their comfortable lifestyle seemed like an inconvenience to them. But when they received a spiritual witness that it was true, they knew they had to make a lifestyle change.

Their interesting and sincere testimony impressed us. Because they really had a testimony of Joseph Smith and the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, they were willing to make inconvenient changes in their lives and join the Church. They did so because they knew those changes would be the best thing for their family!

I absolutely loved my mission. I have no doubt that the sites I served in are all sacred. Everything we say happened here really did happen. It is a miracle. ■

Taylor Crofts, Wyoming, USA

They felt the First Vision was "inconveniently true." We asked them to explain what they had meant.



ILLUSTRATION BY CHERYL CHALMERS

I Became 14 Again

While on business in Rochester, New York, USA, I decided to make the short drive to Church history sites in Palmyra, about 25 miles (40 km) away. I especially wanted to see the Sacred Grove.

At the time, I struggled with frustrations at both work and home, and I longed for a sacred experience of my own that would confirm to me in some majestic way that Heavenly Father was mindful of me.

This was years before the Hill Cumorah Visitors' Center and the Palmyra New York Temple were built. I parked near the Smith family home, got out of the car, and followed the signs to the Sacred Grove. With a prayer in my heart, I walked along the path through the trees. I pondered as I walked, and I even knelt to pray. I felt calm, but I saw no

pillar of light and felt no overwhelming emotion. My worries and concerns still weighed on my mind.

Somewhat disappointed, I made my way to the reconstructed log home where the Smith family had lived. I imagined them working, reading scriptures, and praying there. I visited the upstairs room and the kitchen, with its brick fireplace, wooden table and chairs, plank floors, and simple furnishings. I was struck by the thought that it was in a home like this that a 14-year-old boy lived when, full of questions, he determined to go and ask of God.

As I stood in the doorway, ready to leave, I looked toward the Sacred Grove. I knew that Joseph Smith had gone into the nearby woods, prayed, and saw God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Suddenly, compassion

for Joseph washed over me. It was as if I was feeling what Joseph had felt before he prayed. I lacked wisdom, but I knew that I could ask of God and receive answers (see James 1:4–5). I remembered how I had prayed with faith as a teenager and felt peace and reassurance. I felt that same hope and love fill my heart. It was as if I was 14 again.

I bowed my head and offered a silent prayer of gratitude. I had received my answer. Heavenly Father *was* aware of me. And if I continued to trust Him, He would continue to respond. ■

Richard M. Romney,
Church Magazines

BONUS ARTICLE

Read an additional "Latter-day Saint Voices" article in the digital version of this issue in the Gospel Library app or at ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



My Island of Faith

When I was a child on Robinson Crusoe Island, located 416 miles (670 km) off the coast of Chile, my parents taught my siblings and me about faith and perseverance.

One of their memorable lessons occurred during a torrential downpour one Sunday. My parents knew they had a commitment to keep with the Lord—they had to go to church. Our umbrellas were broken, so we only had jackets and boots to shelter us from the storm. My mother got the idea to cover us with plastic garbage bags. We weren't embarrassed to be the only people walking down the street in the rain. We knew we were doing what the Lord would have us do.

When we arrived at the house we used for a chapel, we realized that we would be the only ones attending that day. Many Sundays were like that. My father served as the branch president and often conducted meetings attended only by children and a few Relief Society sisters. He would also bless and pass the sacrament.

I miss those days we attended church as a family. Singing hymns together and learning about our Father

in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, remains a treasured memory. My heart is still on Robinson Crusoe Island. All my childhood memories, including gospel teachings I received from my parents, occurred there.

With few members of the Church on the island, we didn't have the programs or resources many members enjoy. But my parents taught us to attend church, pray, and read the scriptures. I found strength and direction as I read the scriptures and had moments of personal revelation. I remember one Sunday in particular when I received confirmation to serve a mission.

When I was a college student in Viña del Mar, Chile, I remembered my parents walking to church with me in the sun, rain, hail, and wind. Each Sunday, this memory prompted me to get out of bed, get ready, and go to church—regardless of what was happening outside.

The gospel of Jesus Christ has been the center of my life as a child, missionary, and now as a wife and mother. Now that I have my own family, my husband and I will pass down to our children the faithful example of my parents. ■

Belén Aros, Coquimbo, Chile

We weren't embarrassed to be the only people walking down the street in the rain. We knew we were doing what the Lord would have us do.



Should We Accept the Calling?

As parents of a toddler and a newborn, we had faced difficulty fulfilling Church callings. So when my husband was called to serve as the bishop of a young single adult ward, we were both filled with hesitation.

Questions flooded our minds regarding our ability to manage everything with the added responsibility. We found out a few days after receiving the call that I was pregnant with our third child. Due to my medical history, previous pregnancies had been difficult. As we discussed what we would expect over the next few months if my husband accepted the call, we weren't sure what to do. We began to pray earnestly for comfort and guidance.

At one point, my husband wondered if he should explain our

situation to the stake president and turn down the calling. This made the most sense to us, but as we prayed and fasted, we were reminded of the words of President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018): “When we are on the Lord’s errand, we are entitled to the Lord’s help” (“Duty Calls,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 44).

Our hearts were comforted and our worries eased. We received the assurance that this call did not come from the stake president. It came from the Lord, and He knew before we did that I was pregnant when the calling was extended. He could do more for our family than my husband could on his own if he did not accept this call.

With faith in our hearts, my husband accepted the call and we took each day as it came. My third pregnancy proved to be a great miracle, and our son was born healthy and strong. The years I spent attending our home ward with our children helped us grow closer not only as a family but also to fellow ward members as well. While my husband diligently labored in his calling, I learned to turn to my ward family for help with my children.

My husband and I are grateful to many faithful Saints and, most important, to our Heavenly Father for helping us as we strived to balance work, family, and service in the Church. ■

Norma-Jean Livai, Hawaii, USA



Young Adults

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Yes, I'm Single, and Yes, I Belong

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Finding My Place in the Church after My Divorce

Name withheld

Our Shared Struggle to Feel Like We Belong

Have you ever walked into a room and felt everyone's eyes shift in your direction? Or worse—felt like no one noticed you at all? I have. Those situations can be hurtful because within all of us is a yearning to belong.


The gospel of Jesus Christ brings us together. But sometimes our differing circumstances can make it **hard to feel like we belong**. Among the many individuals who make up the Church, there are new converts who might be **trying to find their way**. On page 70, I share how my perspective on belonging and fulfilling the Lord's expectations changed.

There are also many like Jodi and her husband (page 72), whose struggles with infertility or **other challenges can make them feel like they don't belong**. Another example is provided by Onnastasia, who grew up feeling inadequate without a father in her home (page 76).

In digital-only articles, you can also read stories of how members who are welcoming can make all the difference for those returning to church; how **we're all needed** in the body of Christ; how to thrive when you are introverted or you struggle with social anxiety; and how you truly belong whatever your circumstances, including having a disability or being divorced.

The Church is full of people who don't feel like they belong. You might be one of them. **But we all can do our part to make every member feel welcome**. Because belonging isn't a matter of circumstance—it's a matter of who you truly are and who you are striving to become. As children of God, we all belong in Christ's Church.

Sincerely,
Brian S. King



Find these articles and more at [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) or in **YA Weekly** (under the Young Adults section in the Gospel Library app).



New Members: This Is Where You Belong

Are you trying
to meet
the wrong
expectations?



By Brian S. King

When you meet someone, how do you introduce yourself? What things are important to your identity? My name is Brian. And I belong to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. But I haven't always felt like I belonged.

I joined the Church my first year of college. What seemed like only moments after my baptism, well-intended members started asking, "Will you serve a mission?" A mission wasn't something I had been able to give serious thought to yet. But I felt like the expected answer was yes.

Am I Enough?

Just over a year after I joined the Church, I received my call to serve in England and arrived eager to teach. But within a few days, I realized how homesick I was. I was not prepared to serve a full-time mission.

While discussing my feelings with my mission president, he felt impressed to sing "There Is Sunshine in My Soul Today" (*Hymns*, no. 227) over the phone. It struck me as a little odd, but it brought me feelings of light and warmth.

And yet a week later I was on a plane heading home. I wrestled with my feelings the entire flight. I felt overwhelmed worrying about what others might be thinking about my choices. I was angry at myself that I didn't serve a full two years—after all, I had left behind friends and family and postponed school to serve a mission. I had endured so much heartache, and now it just felt like Heavenly Father had abandoned me in my time of need. I wondered if I even belonged anymore because I hadn't lived up to every expectation.

Come as You Are

A week after coming home, my best friend's family invited me over to watch a session of general conference. It was the last thing I wanted to do. But I went.

Halfway through the session, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland walked to the podium and said, "There is sunshine in my soul today"—the same thing my mission president had unexpectedly sung two weeks earlier. The Spirit whispered, "This is the Church you belong in." Over the next 15 minutes, my entire perspective changed.

It's easy to feel like we don't belong when we feel like we've fallen short of each other's expectations. But we all fall short (see Romans 3:23). And yes, God says there is still a place for each of us in His Church (see 1 Corinthians 12:20–23).

Elder Holland taught during that conference talk: "'Come as you are,' a loving Father says to each of us. But He adds, 'Don't plan to stay as you are' " ("Songs Sung and Unsung," *Ensign*, May 2017, 51). God wants us here no matter who we are or what we've done because it allows Him to help us change who we'll become (see 3 Nephi 18:22).

Before hearing Elder Holland's talk, I thought belonging meant meeting every expectation. Now I understand better that the Lord's Church isn't for those who are already perfect but to help perfect those who aren't. And when you are trying to follow Him, you belong in His Church. ■



Brian S. King is a family studies major at Brigham Young University. He was born and raised in rural North Carolina, USA, where he enjoys spending time in the mountains.

FIVE THINGS I wish I would have known as a new member:

1. **Be yourself.** Your unique personality and gifts strengthen the Church as a whole (see 1 Corinthians 12).
2. **Join in.** Surrounding yourself with others who share your values will help you stay on the covenant path.
3. **Go to the temple.** Spending time in the temple—or preparing to go—will help you keep an eternal perspective.
4. **Focus on what's most important.** When things get overwhelming, focus on keeping and preparing for covenants.
5. **Be patient with yourself.** Don't judge yourself against others as you progress at your own pace.



Belonging in the Church through the Lens of Infertility

Dealing with infertility made me feel like I didn't have a place at church.

By Jodi King

I never felt like I didn't belong at church until my husband, Cameron, and I began struggling with infertility. The children and families who had typically brought me joy to see at church now started causing me grief and pain.

I felt barren without a child in my arms or a diaper bag in hand. In Relief Society, playgroups were announced, moms chatted, and it seemed every lesson tied back to motherhood.

I felt lost.

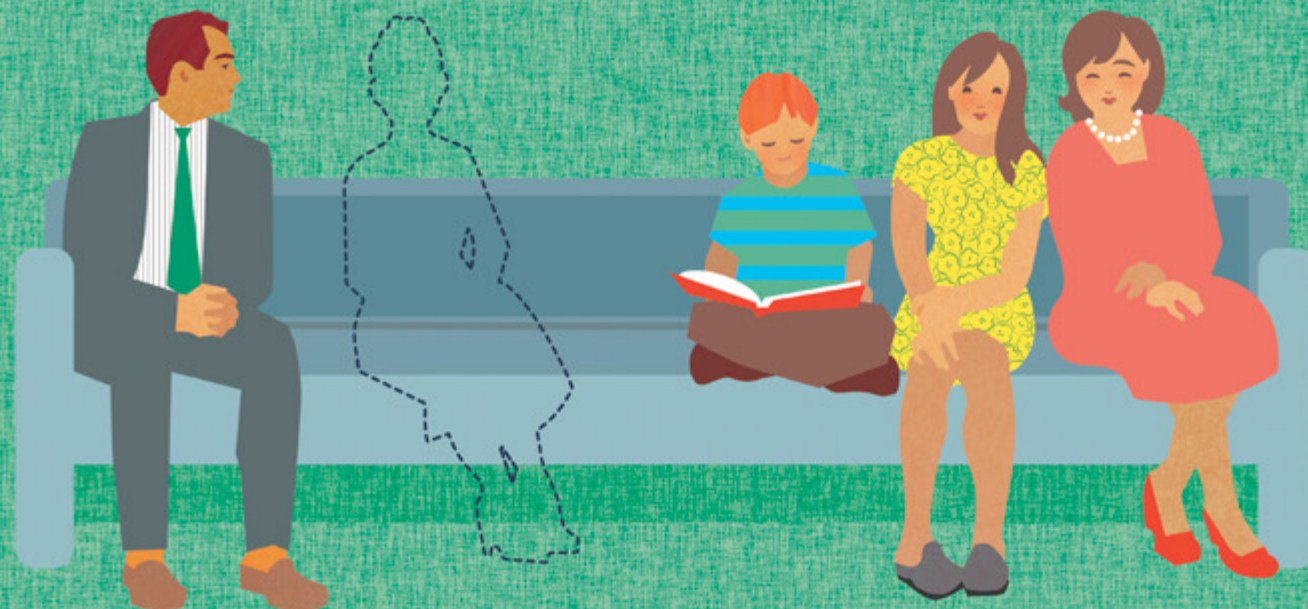
I didn't have a child to bring to playgroup. I didn't have personal stories to share about rearing my child in the gospel. I desperately wanted to be a part of the conversations about

motherhood and to make friends with the sisters in my ward, but I felt like there was no connection between us because I wasn't a mother.

The hardest Sunday was our first one in a new ward. Because we didn't have kids, we were asked if we were newlyweds and when we planned on starting a family. I had gotten pretty good at answering these questions without letting them affect me—I knew they weren't meant to be hurtful.

However, on this particular Sunday, answering those questions was especially hard. We had just found out, after being hopeful, that we were—yet again—not pregnant.

I walked into sacrament meeting feeling downtrodden, and





answering those typical “get to know you” questions was hard for me. During the sacrament, I scanned the congregation looking for other young couples without children whom my husband and I could relate to. We didn’t see anyone else.

But it was Sunday School that truly broke my heart. The lesson—intended to be about the divine role of mothers—quickly shifted gears and became a vent session. My heart sank and tears silently flowed down my cheeks as I heard women complain about a blessing I would give anything for.

I bolted out of church. At first, I didn’t want to go back. I didn’t want to experience that feeling of isolation again. But that night, after talking with my husband, we knew we would keep attending church not only because the Lord has asked us to but also because we both knew that the joy that comes from

renewing covenants and feeling the Spirit at church surpasses the sadness I felt that day.

We All Feel Like We Don’t Belong at Times

That experience happened four years ago. Time has passed. And I still don’t have a baby in my arms or a diaper bag in my hand, but I know now more than ever that I do belong in church.

While processing my own grief, I’ve become more observant of those around me. I still scan the congregation, but now I try to notice those who might have come to church feeling like they don’t belong. And I’ve learned that we all feel like we don’t belong at times.

In the Church, there are widowed, divorced, and single members; those with family members who have fallen away from the gospel; people with chronic illnesses or financial struggles; members who experience same-sex attraction; members working to overcome addictions or doubts; recent converts; new move-ins; empty-nesters; and the list goes on and on.

Each of us may feel that our trials or circumstances prevent us from belonging, but the truth is that our unique lives and our individual adversities are actually what make us belong in Christ’s Church the most.

Now I try to notice those who might have come to church feeling like they don’t belong.

We Belong with Our Savior

The purpose of being a member of the Church is to follow Him. We belong with our Savior, and so we belong in His Church. He has told us, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

The Savior invites us to come unto Him—no matter our circumstances. We come to church to renew our covenants, to increase our faith, to find peace, and to do as He did perfectly in His life—minister to others who feel like they don’t belong.

There might be times when I’m the only one in Relief Society who doesn’t have children. And times when people still ask why we don’t have children. Those times may be difficult, but for as many difficult experiences, there are even more joyful ones.

Feeling the Spirit at church and showing my love for my Savior will always surpass any feeling of being alone. I know there is peace in Christ. I know there is healing in attending church. I know we’re blessed as we keep going. Our trials may be different from others’ at church, but our personal experiences can help us become more empathetic to others who may feel like they don’t belong. And as a result, those experiences can unite us.

I know that by sharing my testimony and opening my heart, I can help others come to understand that they—and each and every individual—belong in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. ■



Jodi King grew up in Iowa, USA, and will always call it home. She met and married her husband while attending Brigham Young University. She currently teaches kindergarten and also works as a virtual assistant.



The Father I Never Knew I Would Have

After my father
walked out,
where would I turn?

By Onnastasia Cole

Church Magazines

I'll never forget the morning my father left. Just a few months after my sister was born, he decided fatherhood was too heavy a burden to bear. He said it was only temporary, but the tone of his voice and the way he wouldn't look me in the eyes showed that he was walking out the front door—out of my life—for good, and there was nothing I could do to stop it.

But I held out hope. On my sixth birthday, he called and said he was coming to see me. I was ecstatic, so I asked my mom to curl my hair, I put on the new outfit my grandparents had bought me, I strapped on my kneepads and helmet, and I sat outside waiting for him. My mom had just gotten me my first bike without training wheels, and I couldn't wait for him to teach me how to ride it.

After a few hours of waiting, I got out my old bike and practiced going around the block. Before I knew it, the sun crept back behind the mountains, and my mom called me inside. The look in her eyes said it all: he wasn't coming today. He wasn't coming ever again.

From that day forward, I dreaded Father's Day more than going to the dentist. Every year, I listened as my friends and family paid tribute to their fathers, and I couldn't help but feel cheated. No matter how many years passed, Father's Day felt like salt on my wounded heart.



My father's absence had a profound effect on the way I viewed myself. Throughout my life, I often wondered if I was the reason he left, and I doubted my worth. Time and time again, I'd ask myself, *If he doesn't love me, who will?*

For years these feelings ate away at me; every time I'd see what seemed to be a perfect family at church or school, I'd remember how broken mine was. And although I was born into the Church, my mom became inactive soon after I was baptized, so by the time I was able to really understand the statement "I am a child of God," it was too late. I felt I would never belong, no matter how desperately I wanted to.

Heavenly Father, Are You Really There?

When I was 18, my boyfriend (now husband) began learning about the Church, and I hesitantly started attending the local ward with him. On one of our first Sundays, the bishop announced the schedule for the Primary program, and my heart swelled as I watched the children shuffle to the front of the chapel. In less than a minute, they were lined up and delivered the first lines of "A Child's Prayer":

*Heavenly Father, are you really there?
And do you hear and answer ev'ry child's prayer?*

As they sang, each word pierced my heart. For a moment, I felt like I was the only one in the congregation, like the words were written just for me. They continued:

*Pray, he is there;
Speak, he is list'ning.
You are his child;
His love now surrounds you.¹*

Tears streamed down my face. Instinctively, I pushed against what I was feeling—a longing for my father, a longing for a father. The walls I'd built around my heart for years were strong, but that song quickly broke them down. By the time the program was finished, I knew what I needed to do.

Seeking a Witness of His Love

When I got home that night, I awkwardly knelt in prayer for the first time in years and poured out my heart to Heavenly Father. Between my tears and trembling voice, I finally built up enough courage and asked, "Heavenly Father, am I really your daughter?"

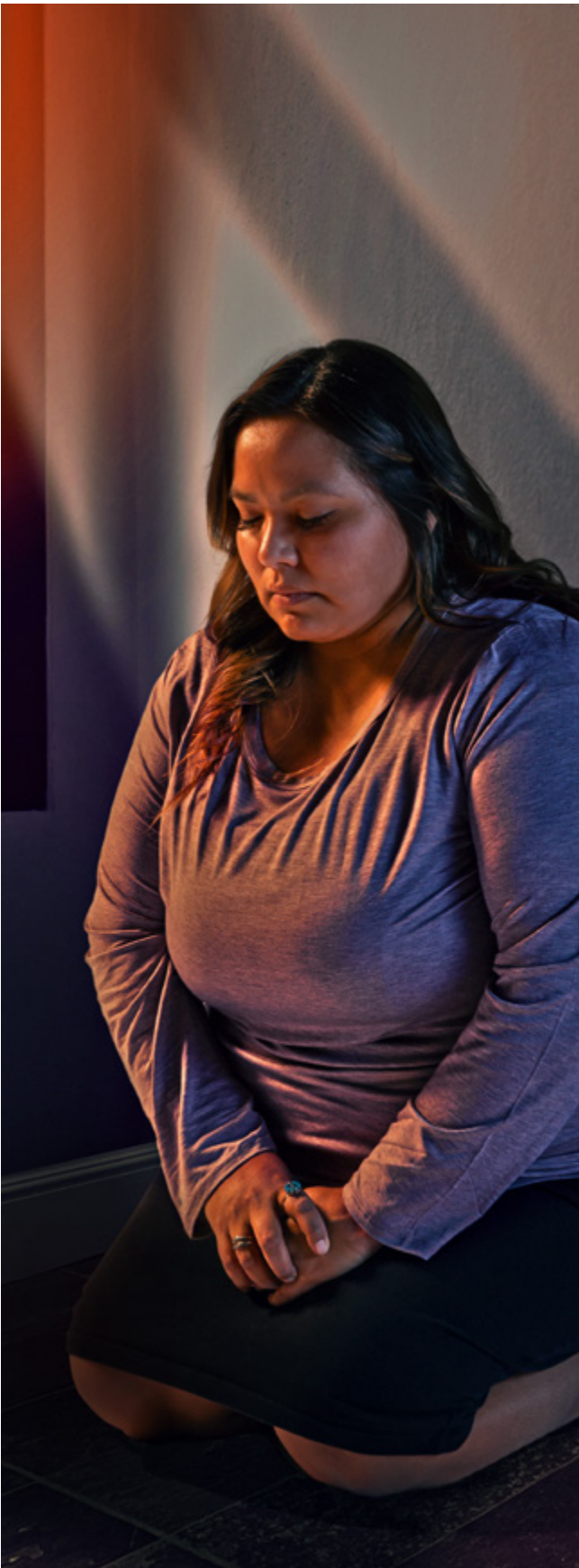
Almost immediately, warmth flooded my body, and I heard these words in my mind: "Of course you are. Nothing will ever change that."

Finding Strength in my Divine Identity

In the months that followed, I began taking the missionary lessons with my boyfriend and decided to come back to the Church. As I wrestled with tough questions and tried to change, old feelings and doubts resurfaced. Sometimes I'd wonder, *Why am I even trying?*

In those moments, remembering His answer gave me the confidence and strength I needed to push forward. For the first time in my life, I *knew* that I was a daughter of God. Nothing could take that away from me—not even the persistent feeling that I would never belong.

Slowly but surely, I learned to turn to Heavenly Father and put my trust in Him. Through the healing power of the Savior's Atonement, I took the first step on the journey of repentance and forgiveness and, in doing so, made room in my heart for the Father I always wanted but never knew I would have. I



thought it was impossible, but His love and patience showed me that I could forgive my earthly father who left me all those years ago.

It has been five years since the day I walked into that chapel and heard the angelic children's chorus sing "A Child's Prayer." In that time, Heavenly Father has shown me who I am and who He knows I can become one day at a time.

If I could go back, I would tell that young, confused little girl circling the block on her bike that it isn't her fault. Her father used his agency to leave, and while she will undoubtedly feel the pain of his absence, she must never forget whose child she is.

While she may skip the daddy-daughter dances at school and ask the ward missionaries for priesthood blessings, her Father in Heaven will always be there. He will watch over her as she teaches herself to ride a bike, and He will stretch out His hand to help her up every time she falls.

He promises, "I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up" (Doctrine and Covenants 84:88).

No matter where she goes, no matter what choices she makes, He will always be there waiting for her to grab His hand again and will be ready to welcome her back home. He created her, He loves her, and He knows her by name.

She is a daughter of God. ■

NOTE

1. "A Child's Prayer," *Children's Songbook*, 12–13.

Almost immediately, warmth flooded my body, and I heard these words in my mind: "Of course you are. Nothing will ever change that."

INSIGHTS

from YOUNG ADULTS

on belonging in the Church



“It’s OK to feel like you don’t belong at times, but remember that **we are all unique** and that’s why we fit.”

—Estefany Sofia Correa Unas,
Alberta, Canada

“Being a convert to the Church has made me **appreciate the little things** with friends. For me, they helped me hold on to choosing the right path. So be that friend. You don’t know; they may just be the friend *you* needed.”

—Hikairoa Mohi, Waikato,
New Zealand

“Remember that the real purpose for going to church is to **follow Christ**.”

—Paula Sáenz, Buenos Aires,
Argentina

“Everyone can learn something from everyone else, no matter who you are or what stage of life you are in. **You have something to contribute**, and God loves you just as much as He does everybody else, which is a whole lot.”

—Stephanie E. Jensen,
Washington, USA

from CHURCH LEADERS

“When people wonder, ‘Is there a place for me?’ it may be any number of things behind that. And now they ask themselves, ‘Do I fit? Do I belong here? Do they really need me?’ And I want to say emphatically, ‘Yes.’ . . .

“ . . . Each of us, whenever that sense may come upon us, need to stop and think, ‘Jesus Christ died for me. Jesus Christ thought me worthy of His blood. And He loves me, He has hopes for me, and He can make a difference in my life. His grace can transform me. And maybe this person sitting next to me, ignoring me or even wanting to move away, maybe he or she doesn’t. But that doesn’t change the reality of what Christ feels toward me and the possibilities I have in Christ.’ ”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Is There a Place for Me?” (Unity in Diversity video series), ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

SHARE YOUR INSIGHTS

What would you tell someone who is looking for **answers to gospel questions**?

Send us your response at [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) by March 31, 2020.

Come, Follow Me Shareable Scriptures

Download these picture quotes from March's *Come, Follow Me* readings and share them on social media—or send them to those you minister to, your Sunday School class, or your family: [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/32081](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/32081).

MARCH 2–8



MARCH 9–15



MARCH 16–22



MARCH 23–29



YOUNG ADULTS

**DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU
DON'T BELONG?**

Young adults share how they
have developed a sense of
belonging in the Church.

68



MARRIAGE

**FOUR KEYS TO HELP
COUPLES BE ONE**

46

PARENTS

**PREPARING OUR
CHILDREN TO STAND
ON THEIR OWN**

50, 56

SHARING THE GOSPEL

**WHY WE SHOULD
NEVER GIVE UP**

60

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

