

Ensign



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Hinckleys, p. 22**

**Longing for
Family Joy, p. 28**



About My Father's Business, by Harry Anderson

"After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, . . . and all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers" (Luke 2:46-47).

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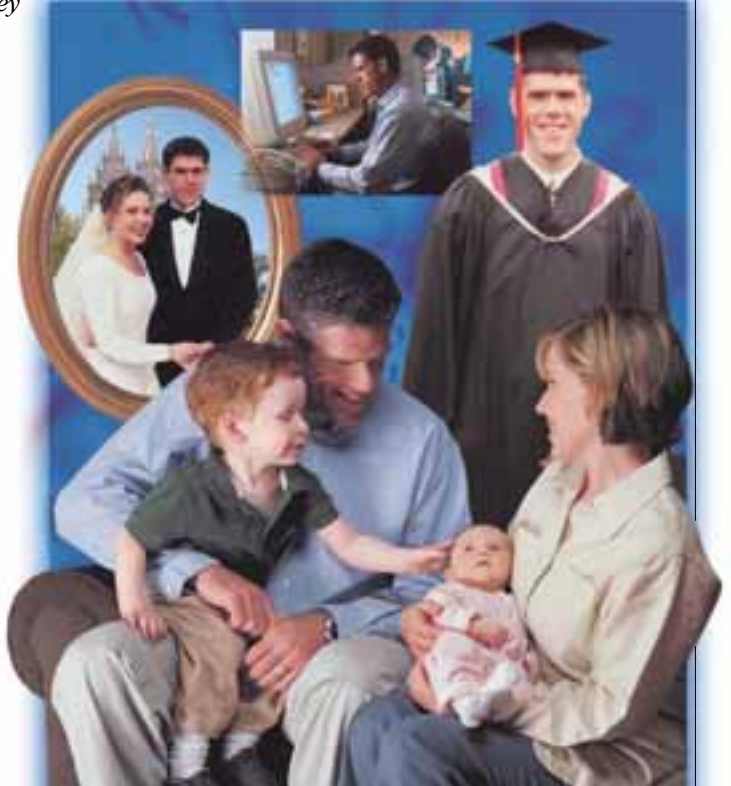


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AN OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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TO SUBSCRIBE: Send \$10 U.S. check or money order to Distribution Services, P.O. Box 26368, Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368. Credit card orders (Visa, MasterCard,

American Express) may be placed by phone. Subscription help line: 1-800-537-5971.

TO CHANGE ADDRESS: Sixty days' notice required. Include old address as well as new.

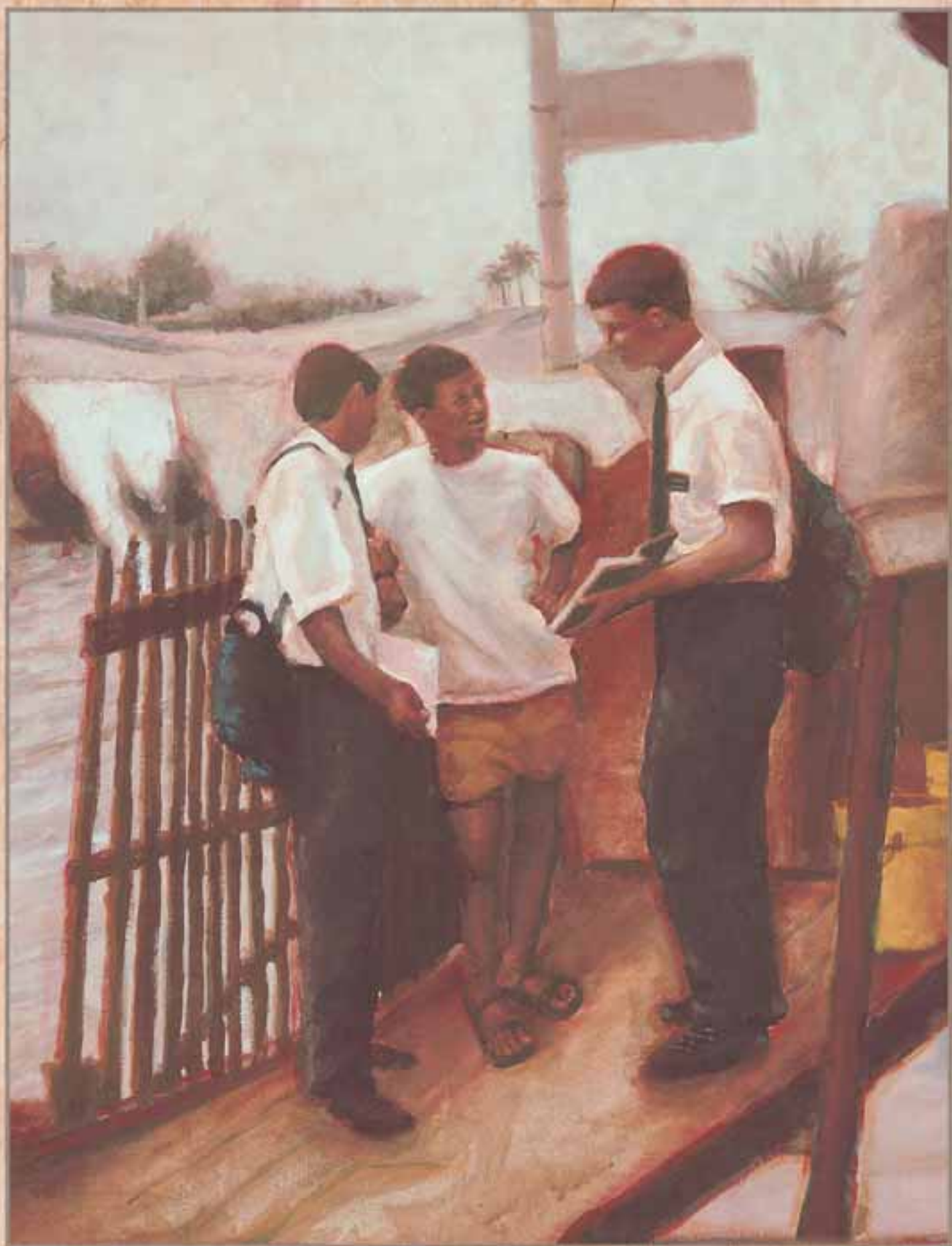
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The Ensign can be found on the Internet at www.lds.org. Click on "Gospel Library."

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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Distribution Services, P.O. Box 26368, Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368, USA.

CANADA POST INFORMATION: Publication Agreement #40017431



Inspirational Thoughts

BY PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY

Missionary Process

“The missionary process is fourfold: (1) finding the investigator, (2) teaching the investigator, (3) baptizing the worthy convert, (4) fellowshipping the new member. . . . It is important that 5 years from now, 10 years from now, 20 years from now, the man or the woman whom you baptized is an active and faithful and devoted and worthy member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (missionary meeting, Houston, Texas, 20 Sept. 1998).

Sharing the Gospel

“In behalf of the missionaries . . . , I want to plead with the Saints to do all that you possibly can to provide referrals [of people] whom they might teach. You will be happy if you do so. Everyone that you see come into the Church because of your effort will bring happiness into your lives. I make that as a promise to each of you” (fireside, Pusan, Korea, 21 May 1996).

You Never Can Foretell the Consequences

“You never can foretell the consequences of that which you do. And the man or the woman, or the boy or the girl, on whom you call today, with whom you speak, with whom

you may leave a Book of Mormon, who may turn you down, may later become interested and come into this Church. . . . Strange are the ways of the Lord in touching the hearts of people. You never can tell the consequences of that which you do” (missionary meeting, Boston, Massachusetts, 22 Mar. 2002).

Conversion

“It is so important, my brethren and sisters, to see that [newly baptized members] are converted, that they have in their hearts a conviction concerning this great work. It is not a matter of the head only. It is a matter of the heart and its being touched by the Holy Spirit until they know that this work is true, that Joseph Smith was verily a prophet of God, that God lives and that Jesus Christ lives and that They appeared to the boy Joseph Smith, that the Book of Mormon is true, that the priesthood is here with all of its gifts and blessings. I just cannot emphasize this too strongly” (missionary meeting, Bogotá, Colombia, 8 Nov. 1996).

This Church Expects Something of People

“This Church expects something of people. It has high standards. It has strong doctrine. It expects great service from people. They



“This Church is concerned with individuals, notwithstanding our numbers. Whether they be 6 or 10 or 12 or 50 million, we must never lose sight of the fact that the individual is the important thing.”

don't just idly go along. We expect them to do things. People respond to that. They welcome the opportunity to be of service, and as they do so, they grow in their capacity, in their understanding, and in their qualifications to do things and do them well" (interview with ORF [Austrian] television, 6 Nov. 2001).

Feeling Welcome

"We ought to see that everyone who joins this Church is made welcome, is made to feel at home, has friends in the Church, and has something to do in the Church with which he can grow in faith and faithfulness" (meeting, Aruba, 16 Mar. 2001).

An Encouraging Word

"We have such an obligation to those who are baptized into the Church. We cannot neglect them. We cannot leave them to stand alone. They need help as they become accustomed to the ways and culture of this Church. And it is our great blessing and opportunity to afford that help. . . . A warm smile, a friendly handshake, an encouraging word will do wonders" (regional conference, Ensign/Rose Park, Utah, 28 Feb. 1999).

Putting Our Arms around Them

"They [the missionaries] still have an obligation to nurture and help those they have baptized—to befriend them, to write to them, to give them encouragement. But greater than that is your responsibility, my brethren—as bishops, as stake presidents, as elders

quorum presidents—to put your arms around these people and make them feel comfortable and at home and warm and happy. It is an imperative" (regional conference, Woods Cross, Utah, 10 Jan. 1998).

Constant Nurturing

"Every convert needs a friend in the Church, someone who will be close to him, someone who will answer his questions, someone who will look after him and keep him coming. He needs a responsibility. He needs something to do. He won't grow without responsibility. He must have a responsibility. We must take care of those who come into the Church as converts. They need constant nurturing in the gospel" (regional conference, Woods Cross, Utah, 10 Jan. 1998).

Build People's Spirituality

"If I were a bishop or stake president today, what would I do? I think that I would try to put my major efforts on building the spirituality of the people. I would work as hard as I knew how to work in building their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in God our Eternal Father, in the Prophet Joseph Smith and the Restoration of this work and what it means and what it is all about. I would encourage my people to read the scriptures, to read the Book of Mormon, to read the New Testament. I would urge them with all the capacity I have to read quietly and thoughtfully and introspectively, if you please. I would urge them to read the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith" (regional conference, Eugene, Oregon, 14 Sept. 1996).

The missionary process is fourfold:
(1) finding the investigator,
(2) teaching the investigator,
(3) baptizing the worthy convert,
(4) fellowshipping the new member."



IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS

After you prayerfully prepare, share this message using a method that encourages the participation of those you teach. A few examples follow:

1. Gather six to eight small pieces of wood or plastic. Invite family members to build something using these small objects. Then ask what “building blocks” we might use to build personal spirituality. Label the small objects with some of President Hinckley’s suggestions in this message. How might each suggestion build faith in Jesus Christ?

2. Read the first four statements, and discuss ways family members and missionaries in your area can work together.

3. Read “Feeling Welcome” and the three statements after it. Invite family members to tell about experiences they have had assisting a new member. Read “Remember the Individual,” and bear testimony of the Savior’s love.

Remember the Individual

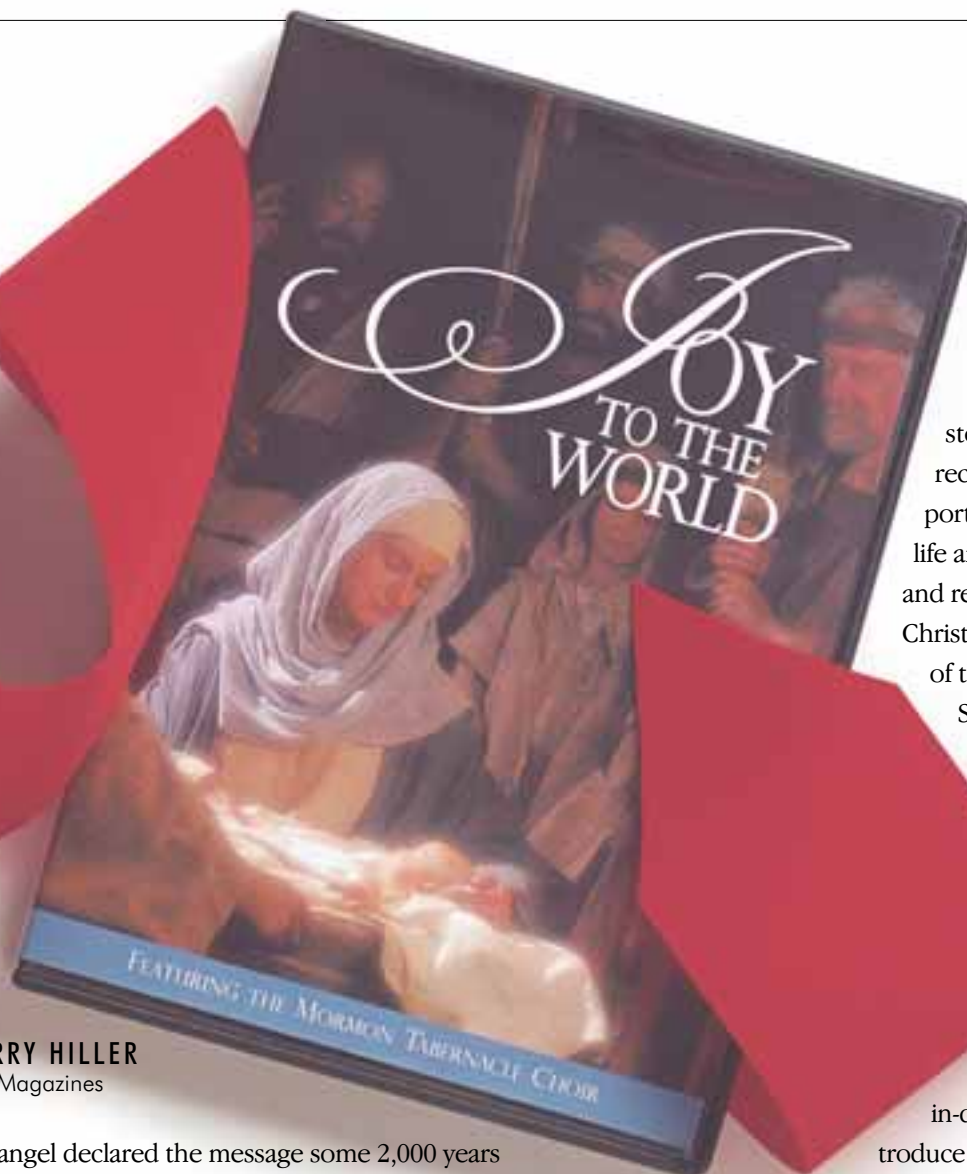
“We must look after the individual. Christ always spoke of individuals. He healed the sick, individually. He spoke in His parables of individuals. This Church is concerned with individuals, notwithstanding our numbers. Whether they be 6 or 10 or 12 or 50 million, we must never lose sight of the fact that the individual is the important thing” (interview with *Deseret News*, 25 Feb. 2000).

I Have a Testimony

“I have a testimony, real, burning, and vital, of the truth of this work. I know that God our Eternal Father lives and that Jesus is the Christ, my Savior and my Redeemer. It is He who stands at the head of this Church. All I desire is that I go forward with this work as He would have it go forward” (stake conference, Washington, Utah, 20 Jan. 2002). ■

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BY LARRY HILLER
Church Magazines

An angel declared the message some 2,000 years ago: “Good tidings of great joy . . . to all people” (Luke 2:10).

Today Latter-day Saints proclaim the same message, one that the Prophet Joseph Smith described as “a voice of gladness” (D&C 128:19). All of us who have tasted the sweetness of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ want to lend *our* voices to this marvelous message. Sometimes, however, approaching our family or friends who are not Latter-day Saints may seem difficult. Here is a way for you to share the gospel message during the coming Christmas season confidently and in a natural and comfortable setting.

A soon-to-be-released DVD, *Joy to the World*, explains beautifully the message of Christ’s birth and ministry. It is an excellent way to help others understand what we believe and feel about Jesus Christ. It’s a way to share your testimony. It’s a way to build on the spirit of love and friendship that naturally permeates the Christmas season, opening

hearts that are prepared and building bridges of mutual understanding.

Joy to the World tells the story of the Savior’s birth as recorded in the Bible and portrays major events in His life and ministry. It reinforces and reaffirms the belief in Jesus Christ as Son of God and Savior of the world that Latter-day Saints have in common with the rest of Christianity.

Beyond that, this DVD takes advantage of the technology’s interactive capabilities to offer a number of additional in-depth segments that introduce topics relating to the restored gospel. Members and missionaries can share these segments to help answer questions and to introduce basic Latter-day Saint beliefs. Individuals can use them for self-guided study.

Included are explanations of the Savior’s great gifts to the world, the Atonement and the Resurrection; testimonies of the Savior from some of the Brethren; an account of New World events at the time of the Savior’s birth; an overview of the Restoration of the gospel; and selections from Tabernacle Choir Christmas concerts.

A Gift to Share

A DVD copy of *Joy to the World* will be included with the December 2003 issue of the *Ensign* for subscribers in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. DVD and video copies will also become available through Church distribution centers at that time.



A heartfelt gift is a wonderful way to begin sharing the gospel with friends. Many members used the previous DVD to great effect at Easter time. Imagine what you could do with this new DVD during the Christmas season.

This is a gift that is meant to be shared, one that is given *to* you and, it is hoped, *through* you to many others.

Many Latter-day Saints, when *Finding Faith in Christ* was introduced last April, accepted the opportunity to share their testimonies of Jesus Christ by sharing the DVD or video with friends and neighbors. Those who had been actively involved as member missionaries and those who were getting involved for the first time both found using the DVD an easy way to approach others.

A Few How-To's

For example, a number of families and wards put together Easter baskets to give to friends and neighbors and included the DVD as part of the gift. In the Issaquah Second Ward of the Washington Bellevue Stake, Samantha Breese helped spearhead such an effort as part of her Laurel project. About 75 ward members participated, giving a total of

150 baskets. The gifts included not only treats but also packets that included a picture of the Savior, copies of *The Family: A Proclamation to the World* and *The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles*, and an invitation to Church services on Easter Sunday.

Samantha's mother, Gail Breese, says ward members have commented on how much easier it was to contact people and talk about the gospel when they gave the DVD and a beautiful basket. "People were eager to receive it, especially the children. It helped members go outside their comfort zone."

In Cambridge, Massachusetts, members of the Cambridge Second Ward invited friends and acquaintances of other faiths to a carefully prepared Easter sacrament meeting. Following the meeting, the *Finding Faith in Christ* video was shown. Ruby Von Dwornick, who helped organize the program, carefully watched the reactions of those who viewed the video. "Everyone was riveted," she



As we celebrate the great gift that makes eternal families possible, we ought to prayerfully consider friends and neighbors with whom we might share the good news.

reports. Afterward, guests were heard to make comments like “It’s magnificent.” Sister Von Dwornick continues, “You can’t watch that video without inviting the Spirit.”

Leaving the Comfort Zone

In Orlando, Florida, the Waters family had been feeling the need to more actively share the gospel with others. “We have always been willing to discuss our beliefs, and all our friends know we are members of the Church,” says Keith Waters. “But we felt we needed to do more.”

So the family ordered 10 copies of the *Finding Faith in Christ* DVD. Then it occurred to the Waterses that giving them as gifts in Easter baskets “would be received as an expression of friendship rather than a proselyting effort.” After spending a home evening assembling the baskets, the family presented the gifts to next-door neighbors, a daughter’s lacrosse coach, and other friends and acquaintances.

The results? At the time of this writing, it was too early to tell as far as the recipients were concerned. But the effects on the givers were immediate. “This has been a good experience for our family,” Brother Waters reports. “My wife readily acknowledges that she has a great desire to share the gospel but feels somewhat timid about doing so. This experience has broken the ice and given her more confidence. Another blessing is that our children have seen their parents’ faith in action.”

Families all over the Church have been reporting the same kinds of feelings and experiences.

Cookies and Conversation

In the Brea First Ward of the Placentia California Stake, the Cannings took some fresh-baked cookies and a copy of *Finding Faith in Christ* to their neighbors across the street. They were invited in for a visit that stretched into two hours as they compared home remodeling stories, talked about kids and school, and learned more about each other’s lives.

It was toward the end of the visit that the subject naturally turned to religion. “Just be their friend,” says Bob Canning. “The more shared experiences you have, the stronger your relationship gets because you can relate to each other. Then it’s perfectly natural to make comments about your lifestyle because your lifestyle involves them.”

In Missouri, a member of the Liberty Stake high council told President Detlef Lehnardt about a man he worked with who happened to live near the Lehnardts. Later, as the Lehnardts prayed to know which of their acquaintances they should focus their missionary efforts on, President Lehnardt felt impressed to visit the high councilor’s coworker and invite his family to view *Finding Faith in Christ*. The family accepted, came to the Lehnardts’ to have dessert and watch the video, and were so touched that they agreed to have the missionaries teach them.

President David Henderson of the California Ventura Mission reports that a couple from Bakersfield chose to send an *Ensign* subscription to friends they met at physical therapy. After viewing the DVD *Finding Faith in Christ* that came with their April 2003 issue, the husband walked into a missionary zone conference and announced, “I’m here to join your church.” He was invited to bring his wife back to have lunch; the missionary discussions started that same evening. They are now members, enjoying full fellowship with the Saints. As President Henderson noted, “As we remember others, He remembers us. Sharing the gospel brings blessings to everyone involved.”

Nurturing Friendships

In the Timberline Ward of the Fort Collins Colorado Stake, Alva and Wendy Barney have developed good

relationships with many of their neighbors of other faiths. One family with three children have become particularly good friends. So when the *Finding Faith in Christ* video became available, the Barneys invited their friends over for a family night. And knowing they share a common faith in Christ, the Barneys invited their friends to bring along some Bible verses on the Resurrection to share. Unfortunately, at the last minute the father was unable to come. But the mother and children came. “In spite of the restless children, the Spirit was there,” the Barneys report. “Near the end of the video we noticed tears in the eyes of the mother and could tell she was touched.” Before the evening was over, she said she wanted her husband to see the video too.

After the video, the Barneys shared simple testimonies of Christ and then gave a small treat to the children. “It was very comfortable,” the Barneys continue. “Although their family hasn’t started listening to the missionaries, there was a definite feeling of love there. We feel our relationship has grown stronger and sense the same feelings from her. It seems that the simple act of sharing something so important and personal tends to strengthen friendships.”

What Are You Giving for Christmas?

We all have friends and neighbors we would like to share the gospel with. Perhaps the most expensive Christmas gift we’ve ever given most of them is a card or a plate of homemade candy. Now, another Christmas is just around the corner, and we have the opportunity to give a gift that is priceless.

When possible, it is very effective for our friends and neighbors to view a production like *Joy to the World* in a spirit of friendship

with members who already have testimonies and the gift of the Holy Ghost. After viewing the video with those we have prayerfully invited, we can bear simple testimony, express love and friendship, answer questions, and invite our friends to learn more.

Families could use home evening time to identify those they wish to approach, perhaps preparing simple invitations and inexpensive treats to accompany them. They could then invite those friends into their homes to view *Joy to the World* and share their thoughts and feelings about Jesus Christ.

Wards and branches could organize appropriate fellowshiping and missionary activities around *Joy to the World*. These might include open houses or firesides where those invited could view the video, hear appropriate music, join in singing Christmas hymns, and perhaps partake of light refreshments. There are many possibilities suitable for all circumstances and available resources.

We could simply give a copy of *Joy to the World* along with a card or a plate of goodies or a gift basket. Many hearts were touched as people watched *Finding Faith in Christ* on their own. The Spirit bears witness of the message to those whose hearts are prepared.

Each Christmas season we are reminded often not to forget the true meaning of Christmas. Here is an opportunity for all of us to make this Christmas season one of the most meaningful ever by sharing the greatest gift ever—the restored gospel. ■

Larry Hiller is a member of the Taylorsville Ninth Ward, Taylorsville Utah Central Stake.



The new DVD Joy to the World has the potential to touch the hearts of others if we will only help get it into their hands. The pass-along card (above) can help us do this.

Timing

In all the important decisions in our lives, what is most important is to do the right thing. Second, and only slightly behind the first, is to do the right thing at the right time.

BY ELDER DALLIN H. OAKS

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Many years ago I heard a story at the inauguration of a university president that illustrates the importance of timing. One university president had come to the end of his period of service, and another was just beginning. In a gesture of goodwill, the wise outgoing president handed his young successor three sealed envelopes. “Hold these until you have the first crisis in your administration,” he explained. “Then open the first one, and you will find some valuable advice.”

It was a year before the new president had a crisis. When he opened the first envelope, he found a single sheet of paper on which were written the words “Blame the prior administration.” He followed that advice and survived the crisis.

Two years later he faced another serious challenge to his leadership. He opened the second envelope and read, “Reorganize your administration.” He did so, and the reorganization disarmed his critics and gave new impetus to his leadership.

Much later the now-seasoned president encountered his third major crisis. Eagerly he opened the last envelope, anticipating the advice that would provide the solution for his troubles. Again he found a single sheet of paper, but this time it read, “Prepare three envelopes.” It was time for new leadership.

The familiar observation that “timing is everything” surely overstates the point, but timing is vital. We read in Ecclesiastes:

“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

“A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; . . .

“A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

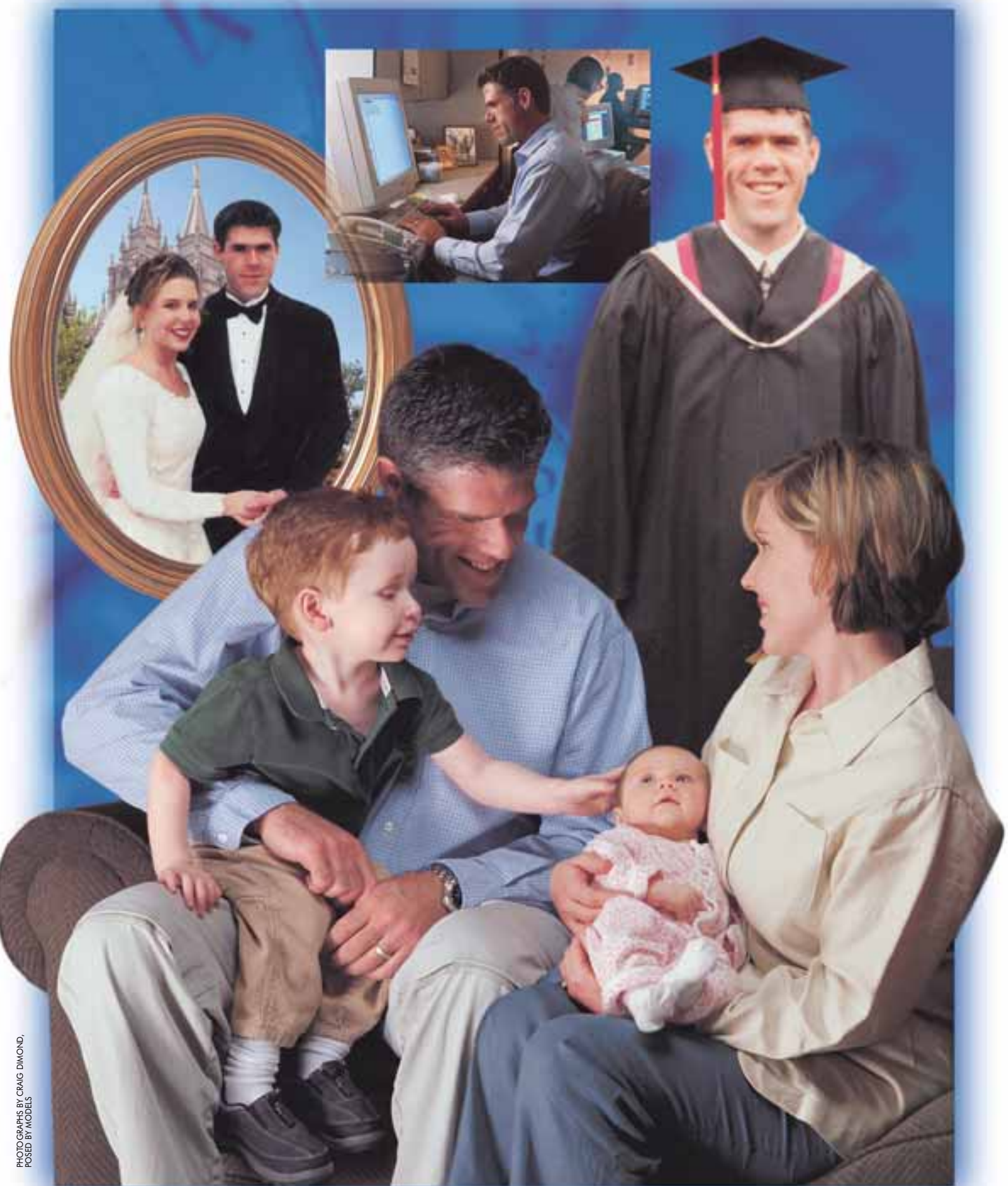
“ . . . A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; . . .

“ . . . A time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (Ecclesiastes 3:1–2, 4–5, 7).

In all the important decisions in our lives, what is most important is to do the right thing. Second, and only slightly behind the first, is to do the right thing at the right time.



***Faith in the Lord
Jesus Christ prepares
us for whatever life
brings. This kind of
faith prepares us
to deal with life’s
opportunities—to
take advantage
of those that are
received and to
persist through the
disappointments of
those that are lost.***



PHOTOGRAPHS BY CRAIG DIMOND,
POSED BY MODELS

People who do the right thing at the wrong time can be frustrated and ineffective. They can even be confused about whether they made the right choice when what was wrong was not their choice but their timing.

The Lord's Timing

My first point on the subject of timing is that the Lord has His own timetable. "My words are sure and shall not fail," the Lord taught the early elders of this dispensation. "But," He continued, "all things must come to pass in their time" (D&C 64:31–32).

The first principle of the gospel is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith means trust—trust in God's will, trust in His way of doing things, and trust in His timetable. We should not try to impose our timetable on His. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said:

"The issue for us is trusting God enough to trust also His timing. If we can truly believe He has our welfare at heart, may we not let His plans unfold as He thinks best? The same is true with the second coming and with all those matters wherein our faith needs to include faith in the Lord's timing for us personally, not just in His overall plans and purposes."¹

Indeed, we cannot have true faith in the Lord without also having complete trust in the Lord's will and in the Lord's timing.

In our service in the Lord's Church we should remember that *when* is just as important as *who*, *what*, *where*, and *how*.

For a vivid illustration of the importance of timing, we can look to the earthly ministry of the Lord and His succeeding instructions to His Apostles. During His lifetime the Lord instructed the Twelve Apostles not to preach to the Gentiles but "rather to the lost sheep of the house of

Israel" (Matthew 10:6; see also Matthew 10:5; 15:22–26). Then, at the appropriate time, this instruction was reversed in a great revelation to the Apostle Peter. Only then, at the precise time dictated by the Lord, was the gospel taken to the Gentiles (see Acts 10–11).

As this example shows, continuing revelation is the means by which the Lord administers His timing. We need



Having additional temples has always been the direction to go, but until the prophet of the Lord signaled this as a major initiative, no one could have properly urged such a sudden and dramatic increase.

that revelatory direction. For example, many of us or our descendants will doubtless participate in the fulfillment of prophecies about the building of the city of New Jerusalem (see D&C 84:2–4). But in this matter the timing is the Lord's, not ours. We will not be approved or blessed in clearing the ground or pouring the footings for that great project until the Lord has said that it is time. In this, as in so many other things, the Lord will proceed in His own time and in His own way.

We prepare in the way the Lord has directed. We hold ourselves in readiness to act on the Lord's timing. He will tell us when the time is right to take the next step. For now,

we simply concentrate on our own assignments and on what we have been asked to do today. In this we are also mindful of the Lord's assurance: "I will hasten my work in its time" (D&C 88:73).

People who do not accept continuing revelation sometimes get into trouble by doing things too soon or too late or too long. The practice of plural marriage is an example.

The importance of the Lord's timing is also evident in His dietary laws. The Lord gave one dietary direction to ancient Israel. Much later, because of the "evils and designs" that exist in these "last days" (see D&C 89:4), He has given us a Word of Wisdom suited to the circumstances of our time, accompanied by the promised blessings we need in our time.



The Lord's timing also applies to the important events of our personal lives. A great scripture in the Doctrine and Covenants declares that a particular spiritual experience will come to us "in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will" (D&C 88:68). This principle applies to revelation² and to all of the most important events in our lives: birth, marriage, death, and even our moves from place to place.

It is not enough that we are going in the right direction. The timing must be right, and if the time is not right, our actions should be adjusted to the Lord's timetable as revealed by His servants.

Several years ago President Gordon B. Hinckley announced the construction of a large number of new temples, essentially doubling the number of operating temples of the Church from about 50 to about 100 in just a few years. Having additional temples

has always been the direction to go, but until the prophet of the Lord signaled this as a major initiative, no one could have properly urged such a sudden and dramatic increase for the Church and its people. Only the Lord's prophet could signal the Church to double its operating temples in just a few years.

In my October 2001 general conference talk, I gave another illustration—the importance of following the Lord's timing with those we try to interest in hearing the gospel message.³ Proclaiming the gospel is His work, not ours, and therefore it must be done on His timing, not ours. There are nations in the world today that must hear the gospel before the Lord will come again. We know this, but we cannot force it. We must wait upon the Lord's timing. He will tell us, and He will open the doors or bring down the walls when the time is right. We

For a vivid illustration of the importance of timing, we can look to the earthly ministry of the Lord and His succeeding instructions to His Apostles.

A missionary can plan and work and do all within his or her power, but the desired result will depend upon the additional agency and action of others.

should pray for the Lord's help and directions so that we can be instruments in His hands to proclaim the gospel to nations and persons who are now ready—persons He would have us help today. The Lord loves all of His children, and He desires that all have the fulness of His truth and the abundance of His blessings. He knows when groups or individuals are ready, and He wants us to hear and heed His timetable for sharing His gospel with them.

The Agency of Others

The achievement of some important goals in our lives is subject to more than the timing of the Lord. Some personal achievements are also subject to the agency of others. This is particularly evident in two matters of special importance to young

people of college age—missionary baptisms and marriage.

In the summer of 2001, Sister Oaks and I were in Manaus, Brazil. I spoke to about 100 missionaries in that great city on the Amazon. As I stood to speak, I was prompted to put aside some notes I usually use on such occasions and substitute some thoughts on the importance of timing—some of the scriptures and principles I have been discussing here.

I reminded the missionaries that some of our most important plans cannot be brought to pass without the agency and actions of others. A missionary cannot baptize five persons this month without the agency and action of five other persons. A missionary can plan and work and do all within his or her power, but the desired result will depend upon the additional agency and action of others.



LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH BY SCOTT WELTY, RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH BY WELDEN C. ANDERSEN, POSED BY MODELS

Consequently, a missionary's goals ought to be based upon the missionary's personal agency and action, not upon the agency or action of others. But this is not the time to elaborate on what I told the missionaries about goals. Instead I will share some other applications of the principle of timing, giving illustrations from our personal lives.

Applications to Our Lives

Because of things over which we have no control, we cannot plan and bring to pass everything we desire in our lives. Many important things will occur in our lives that we have not planned, and not all of them will be welcome. Even our most righteous desires may elude us or come in different ways or at different times than we have sought to plan.

For example, we cannot be sure that we will marry as soon as we desire. A marriage that is timely in our view may be our blessing or it may not. My wife Kristen is an example. She did not marry until many years after her mission and her graduation.

The timing of marriage is perhaps the best example of an extremely important event in our lives that is almost impossible to plan. Like other important mortal events that depend on the agency of others or the will and timing of the Lord, marriage cannot be anticipated or planned with certainty. We can and should work for and pray for our righteous desires, but despite this, many will remain single well beyond their desired time for marriage.

So what should be done in the meantime? Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ prepares us for whatever life brings. This kind of faith prepares us to deal with life's opportunities—to take advantage of those that are received and to persist through the disappointments of those that are lost. In the exercise of that faith, we should commit ourselves to the

priorities and standards we will follow on matters we do not control and persist faithfully in those commitments, whatever happens to us because of the agency of others or the timing of the Lord. When we do this, we will have a constancy in our lives that will give us direction and peace. Whatever the circumstances beyond our control, our commitments and standards can be constant.

The commitments and service of adult singles can

anchor them through the difficult years of waiting for the right time and the right person. Their commitments and service can also inspire and strengthen others. Wise are those who make this commitment: I will put the Lord first in my life, and I will keep His commandments. The performance of that commitment is within everyone's control. We can fulfill that commitment without regard to what others decide to do, and that commitment will anchor us no matter what timing the Lord directs for the most important events in our lives.

Do you see the difference between committing to what you will do, in contrast with trying to plan

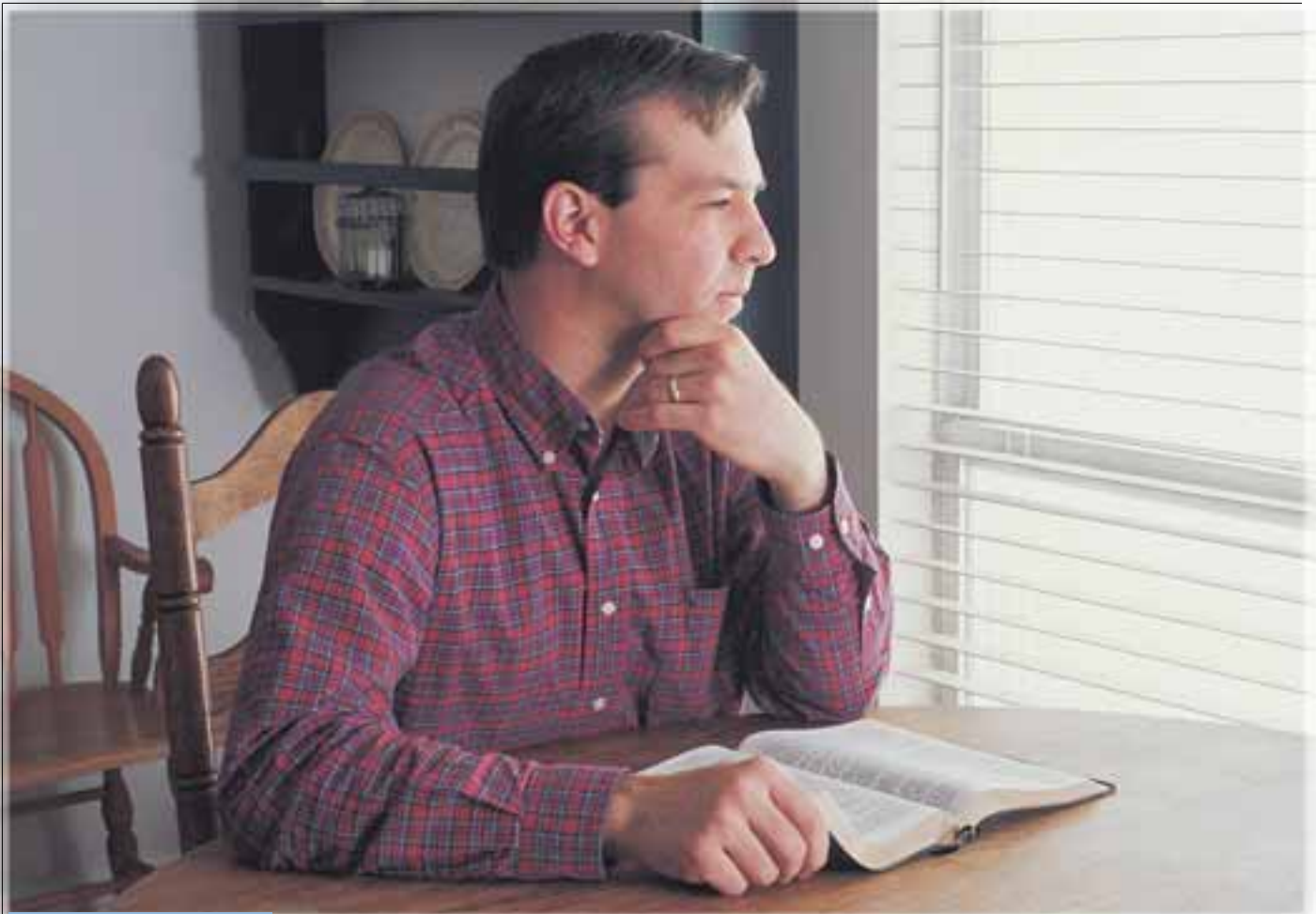
that you will be married by the time you graduate or that you will earn at least X amount of dollars on your first job?

If we have faith in God and if we are committed to the fundamentals of keeping His commandments and putting Him first in our lives, we do not need to plan every single event—even every important event—and we should not feel rejected or depressed if some things—even some very important things—do not happen at the time we had planned or hoped or prayed.

Commit yourself to put the Lord first in your life, keep His commandments, and do what the Lord's servants ask you to do. Then your feet are on the pathway to eternal life. Then it does not matter whether you are called to be



The timing of marriage is perhaps the best example of an extremely important event in our lives that is almost impossible to plan. Like other important mortal events, it may depend on the agency of others or the will and timing of the Lord.



Ancor your life to eternal principles, and act upon those principles whatever the circumstances and whatever the actions of others. Then you can await the Lord's timing and be sure of the outcome in eternity.

a bishop or a Relief Society president, whether you are married or single, or whether you die tomorrow. You do not know what will happen. Do your best on what is fundamental and personal and then trust in the Lord and His timing.

Life has some strange turns. I will share some personal experiences that illustrate this.

When I was a young man I thought I would serve a mission. I graduated from high school in June 1950. Thousands of miles away, one week after that high school graduation, a North Korean army crossed the 38th parallel, and our country was at war. I was 17 years old, but as a member of the Utah National Guard, I was soon under orders to prepare for mobilization and active service. Suddenly, for me and for many other young men of my generation, the full-time mission we had planned or hoped for was not to be.

Another example: After I served as president of Brigham Young University for nine years, I was released. A few months later the governor of the state of Utah appointed me to a 10-year term on the supreme court of the state. I was then 48 years old. My wife June and I tried to plan the rest of our lives. We wanted to serve the full-time mission neither of us had been privileged to serve. We planned that I would serve 20 years on the state supreme court. Then, at the end of two 10-year terms, when I would be nearly 69 years old, I would retire from the supreme court and we would submit our missionary papers and serve a mission as a couple.

I had my 69th birthday two years ago and was vividly reminded of that important plan. If things had gone as we planned, I would have submitted papers to serve a mission with my wife June.

Four years after we made that plan I was called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—something we never dreamed would happen. Realizing then that the Lord had different plans and different timing than we had assumed, I resigned as a justice of the supreme court. But this was not the end of the important differences. When I was 66, my wife June died of cancer. Two years later I married Kristen McMain, the eternal companion who now stands at my side.

How fundamentally different my life is than I had sought to plan! My professional life has changed. My personal life has changed. But the commitment I made to the Lord—to put Him first in my life and to be ready for whatever He would have me do—has carried me through these changes of eternal importance.

Faith and trust in the Lord give us the strength to accept and persist, whatever happens in our lives. I did not know why I received a “no” answer to my prayers for the recovery of my wife of many years, but the Lord gave me a witness that this was His will, and He gave me the strength to accept it. Two years after her death, I met the wonderful woman who is now my wife for eternity. And I know that this also was the will of the Lord.

I return to the subject with which I began. Do not rely on planning every event of your life—even every important event. Stand ready to accept the Lord’s planning and the agency of others in matters that inevitably affect you. Plan, of course, but fix your planning on personal commitments that will carry you through no matter what happens. Anchor your life to eternal principles, and act upon those principles whatever the circumstances and whatever the actions of others. Then you can await the Lord’s timing and be sure of the outcome in eternity.

The most important principle of timing is to take the

long view. Mortality is just a small slice of eternity, but how we conduct ourselves here—what we become by our actions and desires, confirmed by our covenants and the ordinances administered to us by proper authority—will shape our destiny for all eternity. As the prophet Amulek taught, “This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God” (Alma 34:32). That reality should help us take the long view—the timing of eternity.

I pray that each of us will hear and heed the word of the Lord on how to conduct ourselves in mortality and set our standards and make our commitments so that we can be in harmony and in tune with the timing of our Father in Heaven. ■

NOTES

1. *Even As I Am* (1982), 93.
2. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Teaching and Learning by the Spirit,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1997, 6.
3. See “Sharing the Gospel,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 8–9.

From a devotional address given on 29 January 2002 at Brigham Young University.



Commit yourself to put the Lord first in your life, keep His commandments, and do what the Lord’s servants ask you to do. Then your feet are on the pathway to eternal life.

LET’S TALK ABOUT IT

1. Invite family members to discuss how different their lives might be if events such as joining the Church, moving to a new city, or getting married had happened years before or after they actually did. Take turns reading “The Lord’s Timing” section, and tell how being ready to act on the Lord’s timetable has blessed your life.

2. Assign to a family member a task that would be impossible without the help of another. Have the individual recruit another family member to help accomplish the task. Discuss the role of agency and others’ actions in achieving our goals. Read “The Agency of Others” and “Applications to Our Lives” sections. Share experiences that show how taking eternal effects into account helped you or someone else make a righteous decision.

The Red Knit Scarf

I grew up being taught there was no God, but an earthquake and a pair of missionaries helped me find Him.

BY HRIPSIME ZATIKYAN WRIGHT

I was born in Armenia when it was part of the Soviet Union. My parents taught me and my two siblings to be honest, good, and morally clean, and they did everything to give us a good education. But one of the first things I learned in kindergarten was a philosophy that religion is the opium of the people. And until I was 12 years old, I never knew there was a God.

Blessed Be Thy Name, God

When I was 12, a terrible earthquake destroyed 90 percent of my hometown, killing more than 50,000 people. I was in school when the noise became louder and louder, and everything around us began to shake. I was pulled into the crowd, trying to escape the building. Amid all the confusion, I suddenly realized I might never see my family again. In that moment, I saw a red knit scarf my mother had made for me hanging in a large hallway to the right of the stairwell. Following an impression, I broke from the crowd and went to retrieve the scarf. In that instant the ground shook for the third and last time, and I witnessed the stairwell collapse with all my friends in its ruins. Upon regaining my senses, I found that the whole school was a huge mass of rubble—with the exception of that tiny area housing me and my red knit scarf.



My entire family of five survived. When my father saw my mom, my eight-month-old sister, my seven-year-old brother, and me sitting in the middle of the street after seven hours of searching for us, the only thing he said was, “Blessed be Thy name, God.” I had lost my home, but for the first time I heard the name of God.

Feelings of Home

Eleven years passed. I had just graduated from the medical university in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, where I was a medical resident in ophthalmology. While doing some volunteer work, I met two Latter-day Saint missionaries and we became good friends. They were welcomed in our home just as anyone else, but as soon as they started to talk about God, the whole atmosphere became tense. My parents told me that missionaries “teaching their religion” were not welcome in our home. Personally, I was not interested in religion, but I had not stopped them because there was something different in the eyes of those missionaries—something so innocent, pure, and magnificent. I was very interested in finding the source of the light I noticed in their eyes.

After my parents expressed their disapproval, I avoided meeting with the missionaries and finally arranged to meet



them at their church building but just to say I was too busy to proceed with our discussions. Arriving at our appointment one hour early, I entered a room with lots of chairs and about 15 people in it. As I sat quietly, trying not to disturb anyone, I was astonished by the unusual but unbelievably familiar feelings. I felt just like I had when I was five years old and could run home, hug my mom, and tell her all that I had done—certain that she loved me, that she would always be there for me, and that everything was all right. After the long years of wandering in spirit, I knew I was home.

That night for the first time in my life, I knelt and prayed to God. If there was a Heavenly Father, I wanted Him to answer me, to tell me if the things the missionaries taught were true, to show me why I felt so different. It is hard to describe what happened next. I had never before felt the presence of my Heavenly Father so tangibly. I knew He loved me. He knew me. He had

I broke from the crowd on the stairs to retrieve the red knit scarf my mother had made for me. In that instant the ground shook again, and I witnessed the stairwell collapse with all my friends in its ruins.



Above: On the day of her baptism, Hripsime (right) went alone to the church. Many friends, including Sister Anderson (left), attended. At the last minute, Hripsime's mother and brother arrived. Below: Sister Zatikyan during her mission on Temple Square in Salt Lake City.

always been there. I slept that night knowing with all the strength of my heart that I had found my way home.

I started studying the gospel very carefully. After four months of intense investigation, I decided to be baptized.

My life soon turned upside down. I lost my job and had to end my medical residency. As my interests and values started to change, my old friends started to disappear. But hardest of all for me to accept was that my parents were against my baptism.

I loved my parents dearly. They had given everything they had to provide me with the best education and environment. They were proud of my accomplishments. But when they

heard my decision, they were shocked. It was the first time I had wanted to do something they did not agree with, and it was very difficult for all of us. But I knew that God wanted me to be baptized. So even if my family would deny me, I couldn't deny my Heavenly Father.

My family did not accept the invitation to my baptism, so on my baptism day I went alone to the church. There were many people at the baptism, but I felt my only "family members" were the two missionaries. Then as I turned to go to the baptismal font, I saw my mother and brother. It was the happiest day of my life. The presence of my family was like a beam of sunshine that brought me the hope of a brighter tomorrow.



Sharing the Gospel Light

The following year was full of blessings. In addition to responsibilities in my branch and much volunteer work, I found work in a private hospital and was able to continue my education. My mother came to Church meetings several times after my baptism, and she joined the Church five months later. But most important, I had my Heavenly Father's love as part of my life, and I had the assurance that I was finally on my way home.

I wanted to share the light the gospel brought to my life, so exactly one year from the date of my baptism, I sent in my application to serve a full-time mission. Hoping that my father's heart had softened, I told him about my decision. His reaction was unexpectedly angry. I sat quietly in my room all night, and after work the next day, I was too scared to come home. I was still working when my father came into my workplace. After a long silence he finally asked, "Do you really want to leave all of these things—your home, your friends, your education, your work—only to go someplace you don't even know?" I said, "Yes." After that, we did not talk until the day I left for my mission. That day came 10 short days after I received my call to serve in the Utah Salt Lake City Temple Square Mission.

An Extra Book of Mormon

When I left to serve a mission, my mother and sister were members of the Church. Six months later my mother wrote me a letter, saying, "I found an extra copy of the Book of Mormon in our home. Your father said I must have put my book in the wrong place. I'm so excited. Something is happening." We later found out that four months after I left, my father stopped the missionaries in the street to ask them what a mission was like, where they ate and slept, how they were supported, and what their schedule was. He wanted to know why this Church was more important to me than anything else.

Eight months after I left, I received my first letter from my dad. He wrote, "On 2 December 2000, I was baptized. Little by little I learned about the gospel. I am so proud of you. I'm so proud of my girl who didn't give up and pulled



When Hripsime finished her mission, all of her family and many relatives and friends had been baptized (top), including her father (above), who wrote, "I'm so proud of my girl who didn't give up and pulled us onto this path."

us onto this path." By the time I finished my mission, all of my family members were converted to the gospel and many relatives and friends had decided to join the Church.

Living in the Light

Because of the truths I have learned, I feel obligated to live a meaningful life. I know that God lives and He knows each one of us. It doesn't matter what education or background we have; when we are close to Him, we can feel His love. I know these things not because my parents taught me, not because everyone else around me believed them, but because I feel them with all my heart. The light I saw shining in the eyes of those first missionaries is the same light I felt when I visited the meetinghouse for the first time and knew I had come home. It is the light I saw in the eyes of my family members as one by one they came into the Church. And it is the light described in the scriptures: "If your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light" (D&C 88:67). ■

Hripsime Zatikyan Wright is a member of the Salt Lake University Third Ward, Salt Lake University First Stake.



When Sister Marjorie Pay Hinckley stands at a pulpit to address crowds of Latter-day Saints, she immediately makes us feel at home. With her charming wit and genuine love, she gently draws us into her family circle. Then—as if she were our own mother or grandmother—she says she is proud of us. And she encourages us by saying that with the Lord’s help, we can overcome life’s difficulties and find joy.

When her husband, President Gordon B. Hinckley, speaks at the pulpit, he often shifts into the role of a loving father and grandfather, teaching us how we can be better children, parents, husbands, wives, and family members.

Wherever they go throughout the Church, President and Sister Hinckley seem to find “family”—in addition to their 5 children, 25 grandchildren, and 35 great-grandchildren. Teaching the lifestyle they have exemplified during more than 90 years of life and 66 years of marriage, the Hinckleys are remarkably qualified to give advice on the most important roles we will ever fill. They recently visited with editors from the Church magazines about ways to strengthen marriage and family.

Marjorie Pay Hinckley (above, shortly before her marriage in 1937) and Gordon B. Hinckley (above, in his 1932 university graduation photo) have spent 66 years walking side by side in loving partnership.

At Home with the Hinckleys

“HE GAVE ME SPACE AND LET ME FLY”

Church magazines: Why has your marriage been so happy for so long?

President Hinckley: The basis of a good marriage is mutual respect—respect for one another, a concern for the comfort and well-being of one another. That is the key. If a husband would think less of himself and more of his wife, we’d have happier homes throughout the Church and throughout the world.

Church magazines: Sister Hinckley, you have said that your husband “always let me do my own thing. He never insisted that I do anything his way, or any way, for that matter. From the very beginning he gave me space and let me fly.”¹ How has he done that?

Sister Hinckley: He never tells me what to do. He just lets me go. He has made me feel like a real person. He has encouraged me to do whatever makes me happy. He doesn’t try to rule or dominate me.

Church magazines: President, you have said: “Some husbands regard it as their prerogative to compel their wives to fit their standards of what they think to be the ideal. It never works.”² How have you avoided doing this with Sister Hinckley?

President Hinckley: I’ve tried to recognize my wife’s individuality, her personality, her desires, her background, her ambitions. Let her fly. Yes, let her fly! Let her develop her own talents. Let her do things her way. Get out of her way, and marvel at what she does.

Church magazines: What are some of the things she does that make you marvel?





Above: Gordon B. Hinckley as a Church employee in 1935.



President Hinckley gives credit for their happy life to his wife (above with two of their children in about 1943).



President Hinckley: Oh my, many things . . .
Sister Hinckley (smiling): This will be

hard for him.

President Hinckley: . . . She has run the house all these years. When our children were growing up, I was away much of the time on Church assignments. In the early days, when I had responsibility for the work in Asia, which I had for a long time, I would be gone for as long as two months at a time. We couldn't telephone back and forth all the time in those days. She took care of everything. She ran the home. She ran everything and took care of the children.

We had a garden in our backyard. When I came home from one of my long assignments, I found that it had all been planted to lawn. She and the children had spaded up that backyard, sown lawn seed, and there was a beautiful lawn! The garden didn't suffer, because we could plant another garden to the south of us. But that whole backyard became a beautiful patch of lawn.

That's typical of the way she did things. She was independent and had a great eye for beauty.

"I PREFER TO LAUGH"

Church magazines: Sister Hinckley, you have said: "The only way to get through life is to laugh your way through it. You either have to laugh or cry. I prefer to laugh. Crying gives me a headache."³

Sister Hinckley: If we can't laugh at life, we are in big trouble.

Church magazines: Can you think of a time when laughter was the best medicine for you?

Sister Hinckley: I think that could be most anytime. One day when our children were young, I made a casserole. And I really did a good job. When I took it out of the oven, our son Dick said, "How come you baked the garbage?"

Church magazines: How old was he at that time?

Sister Hinckley: Fourteen—old enough to know better!

"EVERYBODY ENJOYS EVERYBODY ELSE"

Church magazines: What do the two of you do to keep your family close?

President Hinckley: Oh, we've done lots of things through our lives—many, many things. In the summertime, from the time our children were very small, we've tried to go someplace, see something. We extended that up into the later years of our children's lives, after they were married.

The Hinckley family at the time of President Hinckley's call as a General Authority.



My wife once said that one of her great ambitions was to walk down the streets of Hong Kong with her children. So we all went to Asia on one occasion. Then she said she'd like to walk down the streets of Jerusalem with her children. So we arranged our family finances and all went to Jerusalem. We've had good times.

I want to say this for her: our children enjoy one another. We still get together. We have a family home evening of our extended family once a month—with all of our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren who are in town and available. That is simply an extension of what we did when the children were small. We had family home evening. When I was away, she would go forward with family home evening and other important things. She just kept things moving.

Church magazines: Describe a home evening with your extended family.

President Hinckley: We eat together and we talk together. We just have a delightful time together and discuss one or two things. Everybody enjoys everybody else. That is a wonderful thing, really, in this day and time.

Church magazines: You have mentioned having family home evenings as a young boy in the home of your father and mother.

President Hinckley: Right, going back to 1915, when President Joseph F. Smith announced the program. My father said, "We'll have family home evenings." We tried it, and it wasn't very successful at first. But it got better, and we've always had family home evenings—in my father's home and in my home, and the children have it in their homes.



President and Sister Hinckley have traveled the world together (right), including a visit to Canada for the rededication of the Cardston Alberta Temple in 1991 (above).

"YOU DO THE VERY BEST YOU CAN"

Church magazines: What would you say to parents who have heeded the counsel to have family home evening and are living their covenants to the best of their ability—and yet they have a son or daughter who has gone astray?

President Hinckley: Well, you do the very best you can. And when you have done that, you just place the matter in the hands of the Lord. Go forward with faith.

Sister Hinckley: Never give up. You never give up on them.

President Hinckley: Nobody is lost until somebody has given up. You stay with it. Now, fortunately, we have never had that experience in our home, I'm grateful to say. Our family has turned out amazingly well in my judgment. And I give all of the credit to this little lady.

Sister Hinckley: Thank you.

Church magazines: What counsel would you give to children who are living in a home where family home evening isn't held—and yet they want it desperately?



PHOTOGRAPH BY GERRY AVANT, CHURCH NEWS



Above: At the dedication of the México City México Temple in 1983.



Above: President and Sister Hinckley with their children and children's spouses at the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem in June 1996.



Above: Sister Hinckley with a daughter, granddaughter, and two great-granddaughters.

Below: At President Hinckley's 80th birthday party.



President Hinckley: Children can do a great deal. It is unfortunate that we have those situations, but they are real. Children can do the best they can do. They can sometimes influence their parents. Many a home has been brought to a better standard of living because children prayed for it and asked their parents for it. Some children in unfortunate circumstances can have uplifting experiences in the homes of their friends in the Church. But it is just sad when children can't have the blessings and benefit of a home in which there is a desire to live the gospel and follow the program of the Church.

Church magazines: You have said that your father never laid a hand on any of his children when disciplining them.⁴

President Hinckley: That's right. I don't believe that children need to be beaten, or anything of that kind. Children can be disciplined with love. They can be counseled—if parents would take the time to sit down quietly and talk with them. Tell them the consequences of misbehaving, of not doing things

in the right way. The children would be better off, and I think everyone would be happier.

My father never touched us. He had a wisdom all his own of quietly talking with us. He turned us around when we were moving in the wrong direction, without beating us or taking a strap to us or any of that kind of business. I've never been a believer in the physical punishment of children. I don't think it is necessary.

Church magazines: Sister Hinckley, you have said that "you don't teach a child not to hit by hitting."⁵

Sister Hinckley: When my daughter Jane was a young girl, she said to me one day that she had a friend who was grounded. I said, "Grounded? What does that mean?" We let our children figure things out for themselves. They knew when they were doing wrong, and they would fix it themselves. One of our daughters decided to stay home from church one Sunday. So she stayed home. She got very lonely. Everybody was in church but her, and she just sat on the lawn. She didn't try that again. She figured it wasn't any fun. It was lonely.

"IT TURNED OUT BETTER THAN I EXPECTED"

Church magazines: You have delighted audiences, Sister Hinckley, with your comment that when your husband became President of the Church, you wondered, "How did a nice girl like me get into a mess like this?"⁶ Could you put that comment into perspective now that you have been married 66 years to this fine man?

Sister Hinckley: Well, it turned out better than I expected. It has been a good life.

President Hinckley: We've really had a good life. Really we have. We don't have many regrets in our lives. We've made mistakes, of course, here and there, but nothing of any serious consequence. I think we've done all right.

Church magazines: Do you think young people getting married today face the same kinds of challenges you did, or do they have different challenges?

President Hinckley: They face the same challenges, essentially. We were married in the Depression. We didn't have anything when we were married, to speak of. No one else did either. Everyone, it seemed to me, was poor.

Sister Hinckley: We didn't know we were poor.

President Hinckley: We started out in a modest way. The Lord has so richly blessed us. I don't know how anyone could have been more richly blessed than we have been. We've had problems. We've lived through all the things that parents go through—sickness with their children, things of that kind. But really, when all is said and done, if you can live with a good woman through your life and see your children grow to maturity as happy, able individuals who are making a contribution, then you can count your life a success.

It isn't how many cars you own, the size of your house, or things of that kind. It is the quality of life that you've lived that makes a difference.

Church magazines: How do you handle differences of opinion?

President Hinckley: We've just gone along and tried to be decent to one another. As I've said, mutual respect makes all the difference in the world—having respect for one another as individuals and not trying to change your partner after your manner. You let her live her life in her way and encourage her talents and her interests. You will get along better then.

If there is anything that concerns me, it is that some men try to run their wife's life and tell her everything she ought to do. It will not work. There will not be happiness in the lives of the children nor of the parents where the man tries to run everything and control his wife. They are partners. They are companions in this great venture that we call marriage and family life.

Sister Hinckley: I married well, didn't I?

President Hinckley (laughing): We've had a good life. We still appreciate one another. ■

NOTES

1. Quoted in Sheri L. Dew, *Go Forward with Faith: The Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1996), 141.
2. *Cornerstones of a Happy Home* (pamphlet, 1984), 5.
3. Quoted in Virginia H. Pearce, ed., *Glimpses into the Life and Heart of Marjorie Pay Hinckley* (1999), 107.
4. See "The Environment of Our Homes," *Ensign*, June 1985, 5.
5. Quoted in *Glimpses*, 53.
6. See *Glimpses*, 108.

This interview was conducted by Marvin K. Gardner and Don L. Searle.



PHOTOGRAPH BY GERRY AVANT, CHURCH NEWS



Top: Visiting Fiji in October 1997. Above: At Yellowstone National Park.



PHOTOGRAPH BY GERRY AVANT, CHURCH NEWS

Above: Arriving in Shenzhen, China, in May 1996. Left: Celebrating President Hinckley's 85th birthday with family in 1995.



YOUR LONGING FOR

FAMILY JOY

*As young adults, hold on to your dream,
and work to fulfill your hope for
eternal family love.*

BY ELDER BRUCE C. HAFEN
Of the Seventy

Most people like Hollywood love stories that have happy endings. Some recent films even express the hope that love and family life can exist beyond death. That is a message most people today want to believe is true. Yet, ironically, many families today are dysfunctional. As President Gordon B. Hinckley said: “The family is falling apart. Not only in America, but now across the world.”¹ In the United States, as well as many other countries now, one-third of all babies are born outside of marriage, and over half of all new marriages will probably end in divorce. No wonder Hollywood is looking for happy endings.



The longing of the heart for this fulness is a central vision of the gospel. It is also a source of great power, especially on those cloudy days, or years, when your dreams seem impossible.

Is eternal family joy possible, or is that just the stuff of dreamy movie plots and Church videos? Even some Latter-day Saint young people worry that their family dreams won't come true. One returned missionary said he'd seen so many family disasters, he didn't dare get married unless someone could guarantee that his family would not fail.

The Restoration is a light of hope in this dark world. Not only does our Church offer the clearest vision about family history but also about future eternal families. These doctrines then shed a unique light on our present, everyday family ties. With a nod to Charles Dickens, let's consider all three perspectives—Family Future, Family Past, and Family Present.



FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF CAMILYNNE PHOTOGRAPHY AND VARIOUS FAMILIES; OTHER PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATT REER, POSED BY MODELS; ELECTRONIC COMPOSITION BY CHARLES M. BAIRD

Family Future

Modern studies show that the public feels a widespread hunger for heaven—and family life in heaven. Many people still believe in life after death and in the eternal nature of love and the hope for heavenly reunion with their families. Yet, these non-LDS researchers report, most churches today offer little response to this deep yearning—with one major exception: “the theology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” which offers the most complete “understanding of life after death” available in today’s world.² What a discovery! Most people long for eternal families, and the Restoration fulfills that longing better than any other teachings.

I have interviewed many people whose earlier mistakes cost them their temple blessings, and now they want to return. I often ask, “What motivates your desire for full Church fellowship?” Most answers are similar to that of a

man who worked as a lonely shepherd after his wrong choices separated him from his family. He would sit alone looking into his campfire each night, thinking about his wife and his children. He would say to himself over and over, “I want to be with my family eternally more than I want anything else.” That powerful vision of his Family Future gave him the courage and strength to repent and come back.

Family Past

No church has a greater commitment to family history than we do. We pursue family roots and records partly to know our ancestors but also to provide temple ordinances that build eternal bonds across the generations. Our understanding of family history also extends back to our pre-earth life, showing that our individual spirits are only one generation away from Him who is the literal Father of

our spirit. Thus we pray to Him as “Heavenly Father,” and we call each other “brother” and “sister.” He sent us to earth to develop through demanding experience the personal qualities we need to live forever with Him. Then the Atonement makes it possible for us, if we are faithful, to return to be eternally “at one” with Him and with our mortal families.

As we sing in “I Am a Child of God,”³ our earthly home is an extension in both purpose and pattern of our pre-earth home—and it prepares us for our eternal home. This “great plan of happiness” is all about family life. As Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “The fulness of eternal salvation is a family affair. . . . The gospel plan originated in the council of an eternal family; it is implemented through our earthly families, and has its destiny in our eternal families.”⁴

Family Present

Our understanding of the earthly family is like the second act in a three-act play. Act 1 was our pre-earth life in the family of God, act 2 is our current mortality, and act 3 is our eternal sealing after death. Without the perspective gained from acts 1 and 3, the second act can seem too hard or too confusing. But with that vision, act 2 has infinite meaning.

I’ve been asked by non-LDS people, “How do you explain the amazing *confidence* in marriage and family life your Church members have, even in this age of family decline?” As one Japanese family scholar asked after being around some Brigham Young University students, “What is the secret behind all the shining eyes?” I told him the “secret” was not in these students’ sociology but in their theology. Family life is a case where our doctrine influences our

behavior far more than talking about behavior influences our behavior.⁵

Those who lack eternity’s perspective on time can easily yield to the pessimism of believing that “there’s no tomorrow.” King Macbeth’s chilling speech upon hearing of Lady Macbeth’s death captures the cynical attitude of those who view act 2 as the entire play: “To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow, / Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,

/ . . . / And all our yesterdays have lighted fools / The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle! / Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage / And then is heard no more: it is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing.”⁶

Thank *heaven* there *is* tomorrow. Because there is tomorrow, all our yesterdays have meaning and all our dreams have hope. We do not strut and fret for but an hour on life’s stage, and our candles go not out in the darkness called death. As the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote,

“Death is not extinguishing the light; it is putting out the lamp because the dawn has come.” Because of Family Future and Family Past, true love in Family Present is never wasted, and our sacrifices for the sake of eternal love signify everything.



The shepherd's vision of his eternal family gave him the strength to change his life.

The Struggle between the Ideal and the Real

It isn’t easy to translate these principles into a tidy, daily reality. Family life is by its nature a continual struggle between the ideal and the real. But if your home often knows warm feelings of love and laughter, if your family is trying—even most of the time—to have family prayer,

home evening, and honestly shared gospel experiences, you are learning the pattern for happiness. We know each other at our worst, and our best, in the closeness of family life. At our worst, we might wonder how we can keep living with each other. But in the best moments, we can't really imagine living without each other.

For some, your family life is very torn. In the musical *Les Miserables*, Fantine sings of her childhood dream "that love would never die." Then she cries, "But the tigers come at night . . . [and] tear your [dreams] apart."⁷ I have seen plenty of tigers tear at people's dreams.

I also know some valiant Church members who have absorbed the pain of their own family trauma rather than passing it on to others. They "renounce [family] war and proclaim [family] peace, and seek diligently to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers" (D&C 98:16). They are a great force for good, acting as saviors on Mount Zion for their families with examples of love and forgiveness. Emulating Jesus, they often give sweet commitment in exchange for bitterness. How I admire them.

Whatever our trials, we all feel the longing to belong in eternal unity with a loving family. That longing is a real source of power. The mental image of his wife helped Viktor Frankl survive a Nazi concentration camp. In his agony, he kept thinking of his wife's image, "more luminous than the sun." As a result, he "grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: *The salvation of man is through love and in love.*"⁸ Frankl often quoted the statement "He who has a *why* to live can bear with almost any *how*."⁹ His "why" was

the vision of one day reuniting with his family. Full of such hope, he could live with the awful "how" of imprisonment.

Now, what must you do to make your family dreams become a reality? It has been said: "Vision without a task is only a dream. A task without a vision is but drudgery. But vision with a task is a dream fulfilled."¹⁰ Some people believe in the vision of an eternal family, but they aren't willing to pay the price to fulfill the dream. Without the heavy lifting—the work—of preparation and obedience, even a celestial family vision is just dreaming.

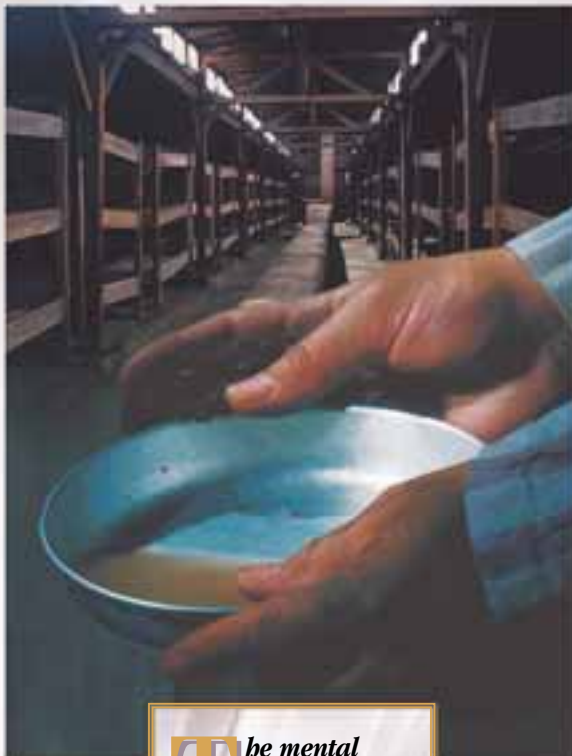
Your Most Crucial Years

You young adults are in some crucial years of making your family dreams come true. You will be confronted this year, maybe this week, with some frank realities that will force you to decide how much your dream really matters to you.

Imagine with me a young man I'll call Jared. Jared's parents tried to teach him the gospel but felt they hadn't reached him. He was attending college far from his home, where

he could be his own person and do his own thing. He was tired of seminary and what he called "cheesy Church kids." Jared loved his freedom. He got involved with the wrong kind of movies, dancing, and girls. Soon he began hanging out with a cute non-LDS girl named Stephanie. Their relationship became very physical, which Jared found exciting.

One night Jared and Stephanie were moving toward real intimacy. She was very playful and willing. Jared gulped, "What if you get pregnant?" She said, "I'm on the pill. And if that doesn't work, it's no big deal. I know how to get an abortion."



The mental image of his wife helped Viktor Frankl survive a Nazi concentration camp.

“An abortion?” Jared asked. “Wait a minute.” It hit him that they were now talking, even if only hypothetically, about a possible baby—his own child. He felt confused and uncomfortable. He saw a link he’d somehow missed before between sexuality and children—what the scriptures call “posterity.” He also felt hurt to sense how much intimate experience Stephanie had had.

“Listen,” he said. “Sex is really about getting married and having kids. And that’s all about our relationship with God. I don’t like this, Stephanie. I know where the spirits of babies come from, and I know what sex is supposed to mean. Sorry, but I’m out of here.”

Stephanie was shocked. She asked him not to push religion on her. Jared didn’t think he’d said anything about the Church. He was just expressing what he believed about life. He took her home, then drove off, fighting back tears, trying to settle down and clear his head.

After an hour of aimless driving, Jared called his cousin, a married returned missionary attending his college. When they met, Jared told him he’d just broken things off with Stephanie. Then Jared became very serious. “You know what—I need to date active LDS girls who really care about the whole family thing the same way I do. Why couldn’t I see that before?”

We give our lives, even an hour at a time, for what we believe, what we value, and whom we love. Jared realized that he was about to give a big chunk of his life, his procreative power of posterity, to a senseless, even evil cause. Then he awoke to claim the testimony he didn’t know he had. His heart was telling him things his mind did not yet clearly know.¹¹

He was like Amulek, who said, “I did harden my heart, for I was called many times and I would not hear; therefore I knew concerning these things, yet I would not know; therefore I went on rebelling against God” (Alma 10:6). What then got Amulek’s attention was a vision from an angel. What got Jared’s attention was a vision from evil.

Imagine, like a beautiful vision, being with the man or woman you love, dressed in white, kneeling at a holy altar in a temple. Then imagine the two of you, like Adam and Eve, holding each other and walking back together into God’s presence. Will you remember this picture with enough power to live for it and work for it, this week and next month? It is a vision worth living for, working for, a day at a time, an hour at a time.

“Touch Not Their Unclean Things”

Too many Latter-day Saints today somehow believe they can stand with one hand touching the walls of the temple while the other hand fondles the unclean things of the world.

We can’t do that. As Alma said, “Touch not their unclean things” (Alma 5:57). I plead with you, put both hands on the temple. Put your arms around the temple, and hang on for dear life to your family dream. If you don’t, the tigers will come at night and tear

your dreams apart.

For example, as you date and hang out, even when you feel there is a growing foundation of love in a relationship, show your profound respect for that love—and for the doctrines about eternal love and family life—by bridling your passions. Don’t be deceived by the false idea that anything short of the sex act itself is okay. That is a lie, not



My heart reached out to touch him—my son, my posterity.

only because one step overpoweringly leads to another, but because even touching another person's body with sexual intent is part of the intimacy that is kept holy by the sanctuary of chastity. Please also beware of unnatural sexual acts that are just as immoral, if not worse, than traditional fornication or adultery. If for any reason you think you may have dashed your own hopes by a past mistake, I testify of the power of Christ's Atonement when coupled with honest repentance.

"He Satisfieth the Longing Soul"

Returning to our vision of family life, I remember a bright fall afternoon some years ago when I went fishing with my seven-year-old son, Mark. As I splashed up the shallow stream in my waders, I carried him on my back. He held his feet above the water and hugged me tight, laughing in my ear when I would stumble on the rocks; he said he hoped we'd fall into the water.

We stopped at one spot to fish. I soon looked up at the clear blue sky, almost tasting the crisp fall air. I saw early snow on a distant mountain peak. I drank in the color of autumn leaves in the backlighting of the sun. I saw Mark downstream, skipping rocks on the water. The sun caught the pure whiteness of his blond hair, and his agile form stood out against the shadows of the wooded background.

I felt a sudden rush of feeling that I suppose only a father or mother can know. My heart reached out to touch him as I realized: That is my son, my posterity, and I am his dad. He is filled with a child's love. I am responsible to God for my conduct as his father. He and I are sealed together, if we are faithful. He is the fruit of the deep love I feel for his mother. The constancy of her daily life is teaching him the way of truth and light. Thank God for

such a child. What miracles are worked by the laws of nature and of nature's God! In that moment, I felt in harmony with everything I saw. It was a witness to me of the Lord's love.

I promise you that you can experience the fulfillment of

your desire for eternal love, if you really want it, so long as you don't want anything else more. I pray that you will do the work required to fulfill your family dream. The longing of the heart for this fulness is a central vision of the gospel. It is also a source of great power, especially on those cloudy days, or years, when your dreams seem impossible. Even when love wounds you, that's because love matters so much. The deep hurt is the mirror image of the deep joy that still awaits you.

Your longing to belong forever to a loving family comes from God, and He has promised its fulfillment, if you are faithful: "For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness" (Psalm 107:9). I know His promise is sure. ■

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

1. What are the differences between the three dimensions of family Elder Hafen describes: Family Past, Family Present, and Family Future? How does knowing about Family Past and Family Future make Family Present more meaningful?
2. Have one person hold a statue or picture of a temple firmly in one hand. Let another person hold onto the temple with one hand and then try to get some "worldly" object like money or candy that has been placed just out of reach. Why is it a problem to have one hand on the temple and the other hand touching the unclean things of the world? Share your testimony of the blessings that come from the temple.
3. Discuss the statement "Vision without a task is only a dream. A task without a vision is but drudgery. But vision with a task is a dream fulfilled." What family dreams could be coupled with vision to make dreams a reality?



NOTES

1. "No Nation Can Rise Higher Than the Strength of Its Families," *Church News*, 3 Oct. 1998, 6.
2. See Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, *Heaven: A History* (1988), 307, 308, 320.
3. See *Hymns*, no. 301.
4. "Parental Leadership in the Family," *Ensign*, June 1985, 7.
5. See Boyd K. Packer, "Little Children," *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 17.
6. William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, act 5, scene 5, lines 19–28.
7. Claude-Michel Schonberg and others, "I Dreamed a Dream" (1980).
8. *Man's Search for Meaning*, rev. and upd. (1984), 56–57; emphasis in original.
9. Friedrich Nietzsche, quoted in *Man's Search for Meaning*, 12.
10. Attributed to Willie Stone.
11. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* (2000), 37, 38.

Adapted from a devotional address given at BYU—Idaho on 13 November 2001.

The people we let ourselves be drawn to can have a great influence on the choices we make, for good or ill.



IN

GOOD

COMPANY

BY LISA ANN JACKSON
Church Magazines

Young adulthood is a crucial time to seek out friends who make it easier to live the gospel.

April stopped going to church about the time she left for college. At school she met people who, although they had good hearts, did not live by the same values she had been taught. The more she cultivated friendships, the more April concluded the Church crowd was not for her. She decided to align her life and decisions with her newfound friends and had little to do with the Church throughout college.

By the time April finished school, she felt she was ready to make some changes. So with a master's degree in information systems, she headed to Silicon Valley in California to join the technology boom of the late 1990s.

She had a good job and faced the transition of settling into a new city and a new life as part of the workforce.

When she arrived in the San Francisco Bay area, she was alone and needed to establish herself in a social circle. She weighed her options: meet friends as she had during school—at bars—or go back to church and meet friends there.

April chose church. It was not easy. She still thought the Church crowd was stale and even odd, but she felt an inner pull to reconnect with the Spirit. She gave herself six months to find friends, and if unsuccessful, she would return to the scene she felt more accustomed to. April began attending a young single adult ward, sitting on the back row and sneaking out after sacrament meeting. She gradually stayed for all meetings. Almost six months to the day after deciding to come back to church, she realized she felt comfortable there, she had made several good friends, and most important, she was feeling the Spirit again and gaining a testimony of the gospel. She decided to stay.

“Thank goodness I chose the Church,” April says. “It’s made all the difference. I’ve been able to make lots of friends, and that’s helped me get my life back on track and going in the right direction. I’ve been on both sides of the fence, and although I have many good friends who aren’t LDS, I still need to have the influence of my friends who are.”



Finding and cultivating good associates is important throughout our lives. But during the years after leaving our families and before starting our own, our associates are particularly pivotal. Our friends are the people with whom we spend much of our time. They influence our choices as we establish our identities and habits. Ultimately one of our associates will become the person with whom we establish our own family. Young adulthood is a crucial time to seek out friends who make it easier for us to live the gospel.

Positive Associations

As a young single Church member myself, I have often been struck by the power my friends and associates have to influence the choices I make—large and small. Most often I've been struck by how that power can be wielded for good. I have been impressed again and again as I've watched individuals and groups make good decisions—and as my friends have helped me make good choices too.

Surrounding ourselves by good people is a principle most of us have been taught since our youth, but finding good associates—especially when we are establishing our own lives away from our parents—can be challenging.

Several young single adults have shared their ideas with me about where and how to cultivate good associates.

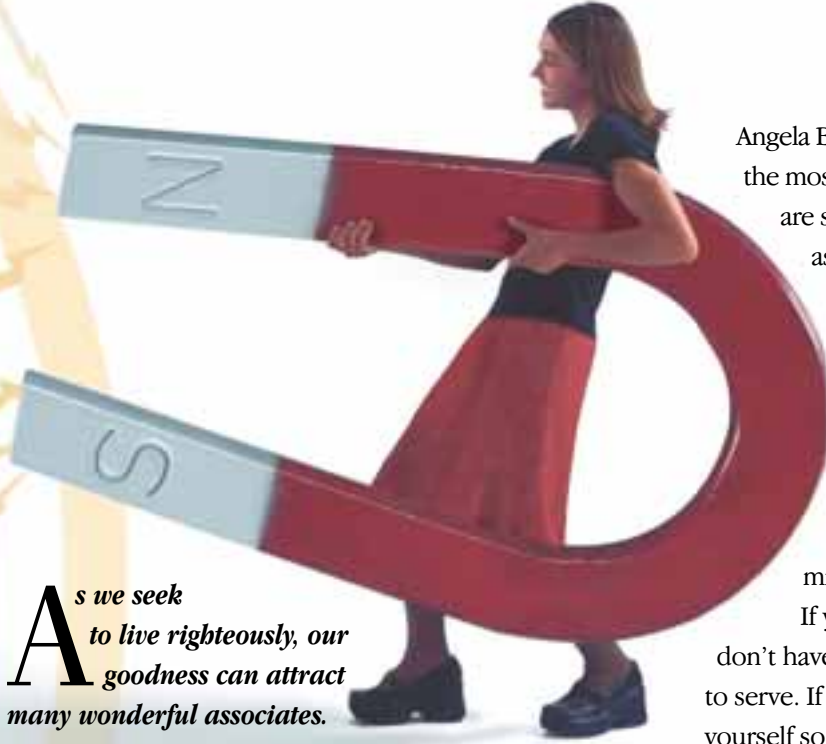
Attend Church

April's experience demonstrates a fundamental place to meet good associates: at church. Whether you attend a traditional ward or a young single adult ward, church provides not only a place to worship but also a congregating place for people of like values and goals. Through activities, lessons, callings, and Church programs, we are influenced for good because of the principles taught, and we can cultivate relationships with others who share our love for the gospel.

Join Institute

With programs around the world, institute is a powerful force for good. Like other Church meetings, it provides a place for personal spiritual development and for congregating with young adults who have similar goals and a similar focus. It also presents opportunities to serve and to participate in activities—both great ways to get to know people and cultivate positive friendships.

For Amy Valentine of Wellington, New Zealand, institute provides a sharp contrast to the environment at her



As we seek
to live righteously, our
goodness can attract
many wonderful associates.

university. “Institute helps you keep your standards because you are surrounded by good people,” she says. “It’s so good to find people having pure fun, without alcohol or drugs.”

Tom Cumner from Reading, England, credits the friends he made through institute with helping him decide to serve a mission. Tom joined the Church when he was in his early 20s. He was unsure about going on a mission because he was older than the typical missionary. However, his friends at institute strongly encouraged him to serve. Then he and his friends attended a single adult conference, and there, amid deep pondering and prayer, he received an answer to serve a mission.

“Institute has always been a place of gain for me—whether through friendships, knowledge, or answers to prayers,” Tom says.

Fulfill Your Church Callings

Faithfully fulfilling our callings gives us a chance not only to serve in the kingdom but also to associate with our brothers and sisters. Through planning a ward activity, teaching a lesson, scheduling bishop’s interviews, or organizing visiting teaching routes, callings allow us personal interactions with people who may become our dearest friends.

Angela Barrus of Washington, D.C., understands that the most important reasons for serving in a calling are spiritual, but she also knows there are blessed associations to be had through our callings: “I have served in many callings and capacities with people who desire to put the Lord first in their lives. I have recently become a temple worker with many others in my ward. It is a blessing to be a temple attending people and to associate with others there who desire to serve Heavenly Father with all their heart, might, mind, and strength.”

If you have a calling, fulfill it valiantly. If you don’t have a calling, let your leaders know you are eager to serve. If you aren’t worthy to hold a calling, prepare yourself so you can.

Find Good Roommates

Many of us no longer live with our parents and siblings, and we don’t yet live with a future spouse and children. For some, it is a time to live alone and independently. For others, it is a time to have roommates. We get to select associates who will influence us each day in our homes. Good roommates can bless our lives; roommates who make poor choices can cause heartache.

Trisha Barker from Sterling, Virginia, recalls one of her first experiences with a new roommate: “Before we moved into our townhouse, we collected a few pieces of dilapidated old furniture from neighbors and friends. One day we were told of a family who had moved overseas and were giving away all their furniture and appliances. It seemed like an answer to our prayers, but when we called to inquire, the agent said we could only pick up the furniture on Sunday at 2:00 P.M.

“I hung up the phone and consulted with my roommate. We needed the financial help so badly, but we knew Sunday was the Lord’s day and couldn’t bear to break the Sabbath. We called the agent back and asked for a different pickup day, but she would not budge. It felt so good to be able to tell her that as much as we

THE MARKS OF A TRUE FRIEND

The scriptures provide the surest guide to finding and being true friends:

Bear one another's burdens.

"Ye are . . . willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light;
"Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort"
(Mosiah 18:8–9).

Share testimony with each other.

"Stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in" (Mosiah 18:9).

Love unceasingly.

"A friend loveth at all times" (Proverbs 17:17).

Be a good influence.

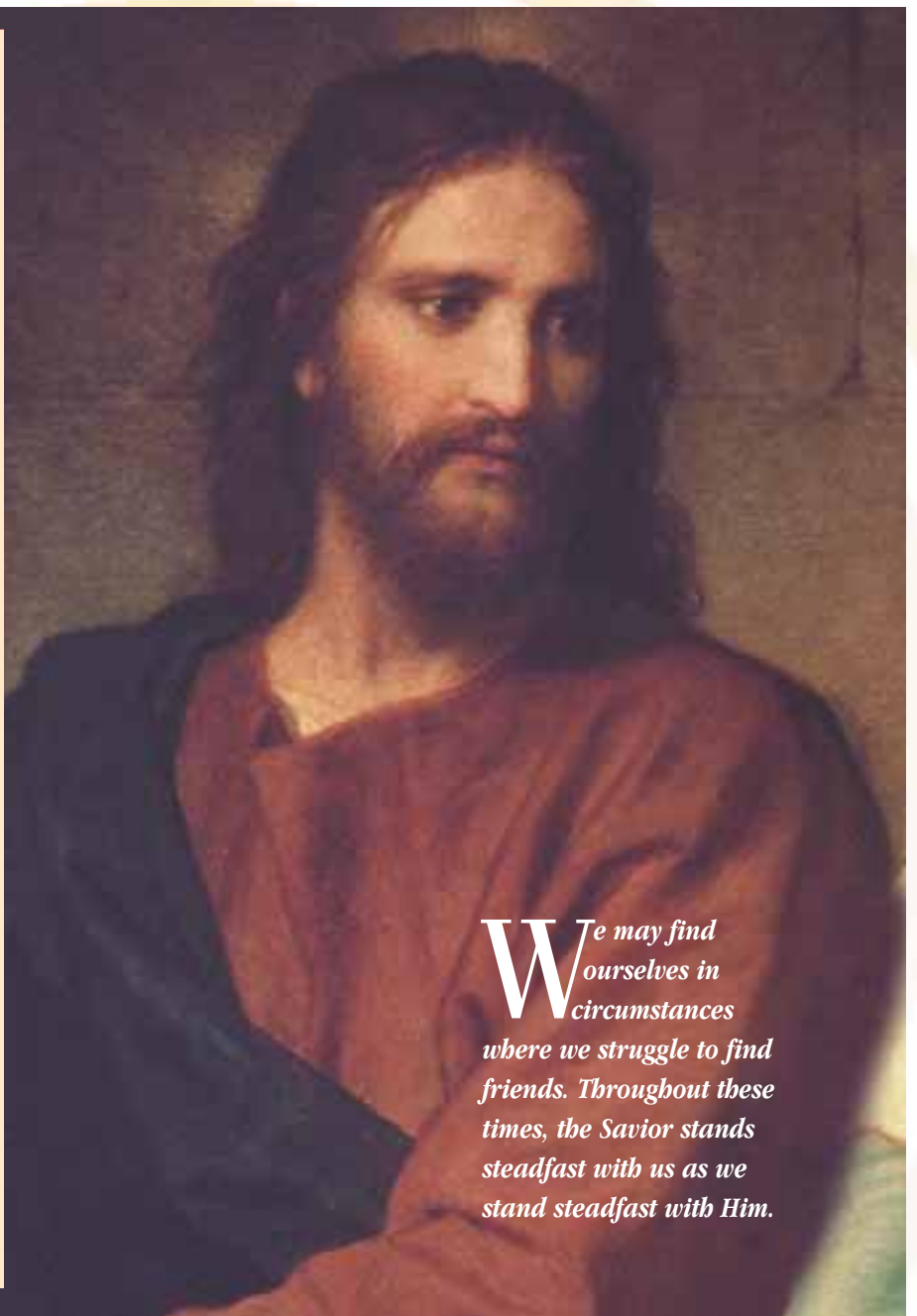
"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend"
(Proverbs 27:17).

Be loyal.

"Thy friends do stand by thee, and they shall hail thee again with warm hearts and friendly hands" (D&C 121:9).

Give of yourself.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"
(John 15:13).



We may find ourselves in circumstances where we struggle to find friends. Throughout these times, the Savior stands steadfast with us as we stand steadfast with Him.

needed the furniture, Sunday was a day of worship and we would not use the day to move furniture.

"Our townhouse is still empty and bare, but we have never regretted the decision we made. It was a defining moment in our relationship as roommates and in our personal conviction of the Savior's gospel."

Cultivate Good Environments

Our work and school environments will provide us with a wealth of associates. Some of these associates will be our cherished friends and will help us live up to our potential. Some of them will not. Inasmuch as we are able, we

should be selective with our work and school environments, placing ourselves in uplifting and supportive situations. However, in some cases, we may have little control over the environment, and it may fall on our shoulders to provide those around us with positive associations.

Natalie Slaugh from Sunnyvale, California, shares a simple but poignant example of how we can be a force for good in the workplace: "I have a nonmember coworker who was very offended by the language used by people at work, especially a young man in our department. She said she was glad I started to work there because she used me as an excuse when she told him to watch his language.

Since I live by high standards, it was easier for her too.”

For Chris Wilde, being an example of what he believes helps him cultivate a good work environment. As an airline pilot, Chris works with a variety of people. Because he is from Sandy, Utah, the topic of religion often comes up when his coworkers ask if he is “Mormon.” Just knowing his coworkers are aware that he is a Latter-day Saint is a positive influence. “You can maintain that mantle of missionary work, and that can recharge your batteries,” he says.

Treasure the Friendships You Already Have

Finally, some friends we simply acquire along the way and keep. We should treasure those good associations. I know of two women who have been fast friends since junior high school in Denver, Colorado. Shauna is a Latter-day Saint, and Amy doesn’t claim a particular church. Amy may not share all of Shauna’s specific standards or religious convictions, but she does respect them. Throughout their junior high and high school years, Amy knew Shauna’s beliefs and was supportive of her choices to live them.

As young adults, Shauna and Amy have faced more complex issues such as where to live, what jobs to take, whom to date, and whom to marry. They continue to be influences for good in each other’s lives, and Amy continues to support Shauna in her choices to live the gospel. In Shauna’s most difficult decisions, Amy has offered support and counsel that has helped Shauna cling to the principles she knows to be true.

Good associates may not ultimately share all our values or beliefs, but they

will understand them, respect them, and help us honor them. True friends never ask us to be less than we should be, and they consistently help us to be better. These are the friendships we should honor and treasure.

Draw Close to the Lord

During our young adulthood and throughout our lives, our closest and choicest association should be with the Savior. He sets the perfect example of a true friend. He possesses charity and long-suffering for our shortcomings; He offers gentle and sometimes strong nudgings to follow Him; He is patient and kind but firm in His commands; He wants the best for us; and He helps us achieve our highest potential on earth and in heaven.

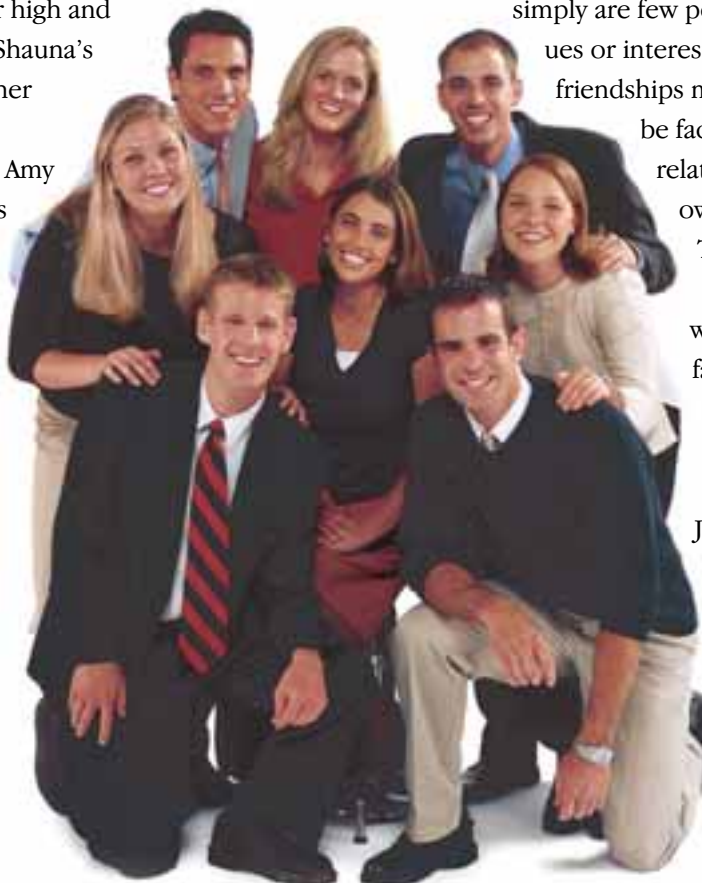
He is also unwavering. There will be times when, despite our best efforts, we will struggle to find close associates who share or respect our desires to live the gospel. We may be in circumstances where there

simply are few people with common values or interests. Our efforts to develop friendships may be rejected. We may be faced with cultivating new relationships as we make our own personal changes.

Throughout these times, the Savior stands steadfast with us as we stand steadfast with Him. He will see us through storms and through calm.

We are true disciples of Jesus Christ when we live His commandments. And we are true friends to others when we make it easier for them to do so too. ■

Lisa Ann Jackson is a member of the Major Meadows Ward, Clearfield Utah South Stake.





M E S A A R I Z O N A

The Gathering of Israel

PHOTOGRAPHS BY P. GAIL WILLIS

Sometimes unnoticed amid the overall beauty and power of the Mesa Arizona Temple are eight dramatic carvings high on its corners. These intricate panels represent the gathering of Israel as spoken of in Isaiah 11:12: “And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”

Following are close-ups of these panels and an identification of those being gathered.

1. After crossing the plains, early Latter-day Saints see the Rocky Mountains, thus fulfilling the prophecy in Micah 4:1 that many nations will flow to the “top of the mountains.”



1



IONA TEMPLE



2. As this ship lands in America, an Englishman leads the way, followed by the Welsh in native costumes, and then the Irish and Scottish.

3. Between 1856 and 1860, Latter-day Saint pioneers traveled by handcart from Iowa and Nebraska to the Salt Lake Valley.

4. This panel depicts the people of Mexico, who are a mixture of Spanish and Indian blood. They are leaving their old home and religion and joining with the Saints.

5. Traveling single file, as was their ancient custom, the Native American people go to unite with the Church. The chief and his council and medicine men direct them.

6. This panel represents the Pacific Islanders and is the only panel where the people are not represented as traveling.

7. Here we see the French and Swiss people on their way to Holland, having just come from the Alps. They are followed by the Italians.

8. German Saints prepare to cross the Atlantic Ocean. Next come the Dutch in their wooden shoes, leaving their windmills and homes behind. ■



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



The Unprofitable Servant

Jesus taught His disciples about faith and faithfulness, and the relationship between His grace and our works.

BY ELDER W. ROLFE KERR
Of the Seventy



As one of four boys raised on a family farm in northern Utah, I was taught many valuable lessons by wise, loving, and farsighted parents. We were taught by word and example to put our trust in the Lord and that “all victory and glory is brought to pass unto [us] through [our] diligence, faithfulness, and prayers of faith” (D&C 103:36). We were taught to be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ and His teachings.

While the Savior was completing His mortal ministry, He taught His disciples of faith and faithfulness. His words required new and seemingly demanding patterns of conduct (see Luke 10–19). Some of His disciples felt

overwhelmed and pleaded, “Lord, Increase our faith” (Luke 17:5). The Savior responded by giving them more of what may seem to us hard doctrine—a parable about faith and faithfulness. In the parable of the unprofitable servant, we find images of farm life, images they could easily understand. Its principles are as applicable today as the day they were given.

The Servant and the Master

Jesus began, “Which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle . . .” (Luke 17:7). In Jesus’ day servants were the property of masters and were more similar to



slaves than employees. They were legally required to do whatever the master needed, such as planting crops, looking after the sheep, or preparing and serving meals. Servants were, in return, cared for by the master.

The Savior continued His question: “. . . Will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?” (vv. 7–8). The servant’s duty was to provide for the master’s needs first. It was unthinkable that the

master would excuse the servant for dinner while the master’s meal was unprepared.

Jesus then concluded the parable with this rhetorical question: “Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow [think] not” (v. 9). The servant should not expect to be thanked for his efforts because, after all, he was simply performing what he had already committed to do.

To ensure that His disciples understood the point of this parable, the Savior emphasized, “So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we

In Jesus’ day servants were legally required to do whatever the master needed, such as planting crops, looking after the sheep, or preparing and serving meals. Servants were, in return, cared for by the master.

have done that which was our duty to do” (v. 10). Since the master had provided for all of the servant’s needs, the servant’s efforts were but the performance of what he owed the master and what was already his duty to do.

I believe that in this parable Jesus was teaching His disciples about faith and faithfulness, principles I began learning as a boy on the farm.

The Principles of Faithfulness and Valiance

Picture in your mind’s eye four young boys growing up on a farm. For us, faithfulness meant going the extra mile. It meant that we should not need to be told everything to do but that we should anticipate what was needed and do it. Feeding the cattle was not just a matter of throwing the hay, grain, and silage into the manger. It also meant cleaning up the baling wire, scattered hay leaves, and spilled grain. Caring for the cattle meant checking the fences and gates, cleaning and strawing the lounging sheds, and checking for sick or lame animals. Plowing the fields was more than just driving the tractor from one end of the field to the other. It included properly setting the plows, doing the job neatly—close to the fences and ditch banks—maintaining the machinery, and returning the tools and equipment to their proper places.

The dinner table was more than just a place to eat; it was a place to be taught, to share feelings and experiences, and to make plans for the future. Home was not just a place where we lived but a place to be kept clean and periodically redecorated, with our full involvement. Beds were not just to be slept in but to be made each day and changed weekly. Dishes were not just to be eaten on but to be washed and properly stored in cupboards. Fruits and vegetables were not just to be ravenously consumed but to be canned, bottled, or frozen. Household duties were part of what was expected of us

boys. We learned the old adage that “A job worth doing is a job worth doing well.”

Valiance means to faithfully perform one’s duties beyond the minimum requirement. It is laboring at a standard that represents our best efforts and is substantially more than what might be minimally expected. It was helpful for us to watch the faithful examples of valiance in our parents. When a long day’s labor on the farm was completed, our father fulfilled home teaching assignments and accepted and magnified many Church callings through the years. In addition to supporting her husband in his farm and priesthood responsibilities, our mother carried her own heavy load of ward and stake callings. Our parents were faithful. Indeed, they were valiant.



On our family farm, valiance meant to faithfully perform one’s duties beyond the minimum requirement.

From time to time we hear some Church members express the feeling that it is hard to be faithful in today’s world. They say, “It is hard to pay a full tithing,” “It is hard to stay morally clean,” or even, “It is hard to be a Latter-day Saint.” The fact that some things are hard is not new to those who have embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ. He will also provide an outpouring of strength to help us do those hard things.

Jesus taught His disciples many hard things (see John 6:60). What would the Savior say if we were inclined to feel that our lot was hard or too challenging? Perhaps He would ask, as He did of His Apostles, “Will ye also go away?” (John 6:67). It is my prayer that we would recognize His generosity and mercy toward us and respond as Peter: “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:68–69).

Faithfulness, even to what we feel are the hard doctrines, is a quality the Savior encouraged in His disciples. However, Jesus also wanted them to understand that

pleasing the master was more than just a work ethic. He taught them that it was also a matter of the heart and their relationship with their heavenly Master.

The Principles of Faith and Grace

As young boys on the farm, we recognized that we owed everything, physically and spiritually, to the Lord and our parents. We were taught, as Amulek taught the Zoramites, to pray “both morning, mid-day, and evening” for our own welfare and for the welfare of those around us (see Alma 34:19–27). Family and individual prayers were a part of our daily experience. We learned by word and example to have faith in “the Lord of the harvest” (see Alma 26:7). After we plowed, planted, irrigated, and cultivated the fields, we cast our fate in His hands. We worked hard but knew that without the sunshine and rain, the grace and mercy of God, and the benevolence of loving parents, we could accomplish nothing.

Is not this faith in and dependence upon God what King Benjamin taught when he said: “If you should render all the thanks and praise which your whole soul has power to possess, to that God who has created you, . . . if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants. . . . And now I ask, can ye say aught of yourselves? I answer you, Nay. Ye cannot say that ye are even as much as the dust of the earth” (Mosiah 2:20–21, 25).

We are indebted to God for our very lives. When we keep His commandments, which is our duty to do, He immediately blesses us. We are therefore continually indebted and unprofitable to Him. Without grace, our valiance alone cannot save us.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of



the Twelve Apostles has written regarding this parable:

“God’s generosity [or grace] toward us is not to be expressed by the dilution of the demands of duty that He lays upon us. Where much is given, much is expected—not the other way around. Nor is divine generosity to be expressed by a lessening of God’s standards concerning what is to be done. Rather, when much is given and much is done by the disciple, then God’s generosity is overwhelming!

“When we have given and done our all, we will one day receive ‘all that [our] Father hath’ [D&C 84:38]. Therein lies God’s generosity. When we do our duty, He is bound—and gladly bound.”¹

In the parable of the unprofitable servant, the Savior taught His disciples and us about faith and faithfulness. He taught about valiance and grace. May we be valiant, doing more than would be minimally expected. May we gratefully acknowledge that only His grace is sufficient to make us perfect in Him (see Moroni 10:32–33). ■

NOTE

1. *Even As I Am* (1982), 86.

We are indebted to God for our very lives. When we keep His commandments, which is our duty to do, He immediately blesses us. We are therefore continually indebted and unprofitable to Him. Without grace, our valiance alone cannot save us.

Words of
the Early
Apostles

Grace

“The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23).



Jesus actually purchased us through the shedding of His blood. His grace is dispensed freely in the sense that we are not required to satisfy the demands of the law of justice. His Atonement reconciles us to God, subject to certain conditions.

BY ELDER CHRISTOFFEL GOLDEN JR.
Of the Seventy

Many believers in Jesus Christ consider the Apostle Paul’s teachings on grace among the most profound and sublime in all Christian literature. They know this fundamental doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ gives Christians hope of a better life through the grace of a merciful and just God.

Yet members of the Church sometimes have difficulty understanding Paul’s teachings in light of the restored gospel’s emphasis on individual effort and righteousness as requirements for eternal life.

On the road to Damascus, Saul, the Pharisee, scholar, and persecutor of the Saints, received a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ and, “trembling and astonished” (Acts 9:6), was persuaded to acknowledge his error. The scriptures evidence that after “certain days” in Damascus, Paul was a changed man (Acts 9:19; see also vv. 20–22). He had tasted of the power of the Atonement through the grace of a merciful God and had received a remission of his sins through the ordinance of baptism (see Acts 20:26). Paul

often bore witness of the grace of Jesus Christ he had personally received. He had been born of the Spirit, had been tutored by authorized servants of God, had come to understand the great plan of redemption, and as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ had become acquainted with Him in a manner few in mortality are privileged to enjoy. Thus when Paul taught of grace, he did so with both personal knowledge and authority.

Works and Grace

The doctrine of grace is better understood when we distinguish between grace and mercy, even though the words are often used interchangeably in the scriptures. The mercy of God might be defined as His compassion or forbearance. God displays or extends His mercy by granting grace to His children. This grace is an extension of divine help or enabling power.

Latter-day Saints believe that the same apostolic power and authority Paul enjoyed is evident within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints through modern-day prophets and apostles. The Prophet Joseph Smith declared, “Paul perfectly understood



the purposes of God in relation to His connection with man.”¹ It would therefore be logical to suppose that the Latter-day Saint view of grace, as taught by modern-day prophets, and the teachings found in the writings of the Apostle Paul, when properly understood, are the same.

Some years ago, President David O. McKay (1873–1970) related a story which illustrates the relationship between works and grace. He told of a group of boys who were learning to swim when one fell into a treacherous hole in the stream. The boy would have drowned but for a quick-thinking companion who extended a branch to him and helped pull him to shore.

“There are those who claim that no one will sink and be lost if he will look to Jesus on the shore and say, ‘I believe.’

There are others who declare that every one must by his *own* efforts swim to the shore or be lost forever. The real truth is that both of these extreme views are incorrect. Christ redeemed all men from death which was brought upon them through no act of theirs, but He will not save men from their personal transgressions who will put forth no effort themselves, any more than the young rescuer on the river bank could have saved the drowning lad if the latter had not seized the means provided him. Neither can man save himself without accepting the means provided by Christ for man’s salvation.”²

President McKay’s illustration of the relationship between grace and works is similar to the teachings of the Apostle Paul on the subject.



Christ redeemed all men from death, but He will not save us from our transgressions if we put forth no effort ourselves. Like the drowning boy, we must reach out for the offered help if we are to be rescued.

Justification and Grace

Whenever the gospel has been present on the earth and administered by authorized servants of the Lord, the plan of salvation has been taught. The essence of this plan is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Eternal life is typified by the kind of existence God our Eternal Father enjoys.

Yet without divine intervention, man remains sinful and unworthy to enter the presence of God. We are assured that “no unclean thing can dwell with God” (1 Nephi 10:21), or as Paul concludes, “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). However, a plan devised “before the foundation of this world” (1 Peter 1:20) calls for a physical resurrection from death for all mankind (see 1 Corinthians 15:21–22) and for a reconciliation of sinful and alienated mankind to God through the Atonement of Christ, that He might “present [us] holy and unblameable and unreprouvable” (Colossians 1:22) before the throne of God.

Because of mankind’s fallen condition, none of us could redeem ourselves from the effects of the demands of justice. Jesus was the only one who was perfectly obedient and thus able to comply with all of the laws of justice and satisfy its demands in our behalf. In the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross, by His power as the Son of God, He actually purchased us through the shedding of His blood. His grace is dispensed freely in the sense that *we* are not required to satisfy the demands of the law of justice. His Atonement reconciles us to God, subject to certain conditions.

The gift of resurrection is given *unconditionally* to all, whether they accept and obey the gospel or not. Both the wicked and the righteous shall rise from the grave, meaning that the spirit and the body shall once again be reunited in an immortal state. On the other hand, spiritual death, which is the separation of man from God, is overpowered by the Atonement on *condition* that we comply with requirements the Lord has set.

These include having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repenting, being baptized by authorized servants of the Lord, and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, which we will use with a determination to serve Him all the days of our lives. These conditions were well understood and were taught by Paul (see Acts 19:1–6; Ephesians 4:1–15).

Paul and the Law

One of the commonly held misconceptions generated by a misunderstanding of Paul’s writing comes through his frequent references to the “law.” As an example, when Paul says, “we are not under the law, but under grace” (Romans 6:15), we should know that he is referring to the law of justice as embodied in the commandments of the law of Moses and not to the higher law of God. Being under grace, or to put it more clearly, under the law of God, simply means that we are subject to the conditions He has set forth for this grace. Paul also teaches, “If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Galatians 2:21). The meaning is obvious: if man had the capacity to obey the law of justice perfectly, there would be no need for a Savior (Christ).

Another clear misconception is the notion that the Atonement of Jesus Christ saves us *in* our sins. On the contrary, the Savior’s Atonement saves us from sin while never abandoning justice. The Atonement satisfies justice with mercy, “that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Romans 6:6). Paul, in fact, implored the Roman Saints to understand that the Atonement would allow them to be “made free from sin” and become “the servants of righteousness” (Romans 6:18). He understood that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Romans 1:18). Surely Paul understood the Savior’s commandment to be “perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). He accordingly counseled the Saints in Rome, “For not the *bearers* of the law are just [i.e., accepted] before God, but the *doers* of the law shall be justified” (Romans 2:13; emphasis added).

Only the Atonement can rid man of sin, making one

justified in the sight of God. Afterward comes the gift of sanctification—being made clean, pure, and spotless—which can only be dispensed through the power of the Holy Ghost on conditions of obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ.³

Paul himself testified that he had been baptized for a remission of sins (see Acts 22:12–16) and reminded Titus that we would be saved “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but . . . by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5).

In summary, forgiveness through the grace of the Lord is conditional and therefore dependent upon our compliance with all of His laws, ordinances, and commandments.

Faith and Grace

President McKay’s story of the swimmers illustrates the futility of faith without effort. It can be truly stated that faith without works is a misnomer; as James taught, it is “dead” (James 2:17). Likewise, Paul’s statement to the Ephesians “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8) is frequently misunderstood. That salvation is a gift of God—and thus a manifestation of His grace—has already been demonstrated. In this vein, the faith Paul subscribes to is a living faith in which men and women are able, through individual effort, to obtain “a good report” (Hebrews 11:2). He teaches that it is only “by grace [we are] saved through faith” (Ephesians 2:8) as we submit ourselves fully to the requirements of the gospel of Jesus Christ and “work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12).



Paul often bore witness of the grace of Jesus Christ he had personally received. When Paul taught of grace, he did so with both personal knowledge and authority.



Israel prevailed in battle against the Amalekites only as long as Moses held the rod of God aloft. To assist Moses, Aaron and Hur held up his arms. The Lord required Israel to exercise faith in Him and His prophet and to do all that they could before He would intervene for them.

The fact that our faith must be accompanied by works is illustrated by a story from the Old Testament, the account of the battle between Israel and the people of Amalek. When confronted with Amalek’s army, Moses instructed Joshua to “choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek” (Exodus 17:9). Moses stood on a hill and held the rod of God aloft. As Moses maintained this position with his arms and his staff, Israel prevailed in battle. When he tired and dropped his hands, the tide changed against Israel. In order to assist him, as he sat on a stone, Aaron and Hur on either side held up his arms (see Exodus 17:8–16).

This passage of scripture is an excellent example of how the Lord expresses His power in grace when we express our faith. God *could* have defeated the Amalekites without the army of Israel if He so desired, but He required Israel to exercise faith in Him and His prophet and to do all that they could before He would intervene for them.

The Spirit of Paul’s Teachings

Paul wrote to the Saints in Corinth that “my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

“That your faith should not stand in the

wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:4–5).

He had received the gift of the Holy Ghost and taught his fellow Saints by its power; they in turn were in a position because of the gift of the Holy Ghost to “[compare] spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Corinthians 2:13). As fellow recipients of the same grace of the Lord that Paul had received, they could understand the deep meanings of the doctrines he taught.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, the prophet of our day, provides this singular witness:

“I sense in a measure the meaning of his atonement. I cannot comprehend it all. It is so vast in its reach and yet so intimate in its effect that it defies comprehension. . . .

“When all is said and done, when all of history is examined, when the deepest depths of the human mind have been explored, there is nothing so wonderful, so majestic, so tremendous as this act of *grace* when the Son of the Almighty, the Prince of His Father’s royal household, . . . gave his life in ignominy and pain so that all of the sons and daughters of God, of all generations of time, every one of whom must die, might walk again and live eternally.”⁴

Ultimately, when fellow believers begin to feel what Paul felt, understand what Paul understood, experience what he experienced, and *do* what he did, his writings on grace will touch us with power and immediacy. ■

NOTES

1. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 168.
2. “The Gospel of Work,” *Instructor*, Jan. 1955, 1; emphasis added.
3. See Bruce R. McConkie, “Sanctification,” *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 675.
4. “First Presidency Extols Meaning of Christmas,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 78; emphasis added.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Question

What are some ways that Church members of any age—adults, youth, and children—can get more from the spiritual feast available during conference?

A good way to help prepare our hearts before conference is to pray for those who will be speaking to us. Praying in behalf of the speakers not only makes us more in tune with the Holy Ghost but also helps us feel a vested interest in what the speakers are inspired to say. I also have found that wonderful things happen when I pray that my children will be prepared to hear.

We gain spiritual strength by listening for needed counsel and making notes of impressions that come.

Devoting the preceding fast Sunday to the purpose of being ready to receive all the Lord wants us to know also helps us as we prepare our minds and hearts.—**Michelle Martin, St. Peters Ward, St. Louis Missouri North Stake**

A few weeks before conference, I show my three small children the poster of the General Authorities that appears in each conference issue of the *Ensign*. I tell them stories about the prophet and the members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Many of these stories can be found in the magazine database on the Church's Web site www.lds.org. Family home evening is a good time to share these stories in the weeks before conference. My children like watching and recognizing the leaders they have learned about.—**Jennifer Dale, Riverview Ward, Mesa Arizona Maricopa North Stake**

In our family, we anticipate conference by examining our lives and identifying areas of concern in which we need help and added light. Examples might include our roles as parents, our responsibilities in our Church callings, insights into the Savior and His ministry, insights for Saints living in a secular world, and so on. Then during the conference, we diligently try to listen for promptings that relate to these areas of concern (and others) and make note of the impressions as they come.

I find it useful to put my notes into two columns—the left-hand column for notes on the talk I am listening to, the right-hand column for impressions I receive. Some impressions relate to the message of the talk, but many are flashes of inspiration that relate to other concerns. After conference, this list of impressions will serve as my spiritual agenda for the six months until the next conference.

—**Richard Boyer, Holladay Third Ward, Salt Lake Holladay Stake**

In our previous ward in another state, we hosted a simple potluck lunch between general conference sessions for several families in the ward, the full-time missionaries, investigators, and recently baptized members. Food assignments were made the week before so that cooking could be done ahead of time.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

This potluck lunch was a good opportunity to get to know families in the ward as well as newly baptized members. It provided another place for the missionaries to interact with investigators and for ward members to begin to build relationships with these individuals. Those watching conference for the first time were able to ask ward members any questions they had.—**Wylie Ann Anderson, Grove Creek Fourth Ward, Pleasant Grove Utah Grove Creek Stake**

By far the most effective way I have found to get more from the spiritual feast available during conference is to buy and frequently listen to the conference CDs (available at distribution centers). I listen while I lift weights or do any other repetitive tasks. I listen when I clean the kitchen. When I'm discouraged or struggling, I sit down, take notes, read along in the *Ensign*, and apply certain talks on a personal level. I especially enjoy listening to the music on the conference CDs as I go about my daily tasks. As I listen, I am frequently reminded of goals I have made. By playing a conference CD, I now have a sure and effective way of being inspired and uplifted.

—**Merlene Lillywhite, Reedville Ward, Cedar Mill Oregon Stake**

For two to three weeks after general conference, our family scripture study is spent reading and discussing each talk. We take turns choosing and reading a talk, and we

discuss the principles spoken of and how they apply in our lives today.

Family home evenings are based on conference talks as well. For example, for one of our family home evenings I photocopied and handed out to each person in the family a copy of one of the talks. I had previously made up 25 questions from the talk, and each family member had to scan the talk to find the answers.

—**Wendy Daniels, Church College New Zealand First Ward, Temple View**

New Zealand Stake

A few years ago I began making conference packets for our school-age children. I would prepare a folder with a variety of conference-

related games (see past issues of the April *Friend* magazine for ideas), and I also made snack bags the children could eat from during the hymn in the middle of the meeting.

Between the sessions on Saturday we go to the park to play and have a picnic, and between the Sunday sessions we go for a family walk. It has been a joy to watch our children learn to love conference.—**Jenny Marie Hatch, Louisville Ward, Boulder**

Colorado Stake

To help children pay attention during conference, pick one word such as *love, joy, Jesus*, and so on, and have everyone use tally marks to keep track of how many times the speaker says that word during his or her talk. At the end of the talk, take a moment to count up how many times the word was said. Later, look up the word in the Bible Dictionary and discuss why Heavenly Father might inspire Church leaders to refer often to this topic during conference.

—**Cathy Jones, Corona Fourth Ward, Corona California Stake**

Using a three-ring binder and notebook paper, you can make a family conference journal that will be valuable to you later. First, encourage each family member to take notes during the talks. After conference, have all family members write about their favorite talk, describing the main points and explaining why the talk was important to



Listening to conference CDs while going about our daily tasks can uplift and inspire us.

When children are taught to recognize Church leaders, they are more likely to pay attention during conference.

them. Date and sign each of these journal entries. Family members may choose to illustrate their entries with drawings or with cutouts from old Church magazines. Put the pages in the family conference journal. This journal can become a family keepsake as well as a resource for family night or Church talks.— **Paula Lewis,**

**Blanding Seventh Ward, Blanding Utah
West Stake**

Before each general conference, the Young Women leaders in our ward choose three general conference talks from the previous conference, one for each age group, and make a copy for each girl. At our Mutual activity, the girls split up into age groups for about 30 minutes to read and review their assigned talk. The girls take notes as they discover the *counsel, warning, instruction,* and *blessings* (“CWIB”) in each talk. This motivates them to think about each message and how it applies in their lives. Then we all come back together, and a spokesperson from each group reviews for everyone the “CWIB” found in the talk. Our girls have come to learn that there really is a lot in general conference that applies to their lives.— **Kim McDowell,**
Glendive Ward, Glendive Montana Stake

When the conference edition of the *Ensign* arrives, my husband and I choose a brief quotation from each of the talks given by the members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. We post these



quotations in the kitchen where we can review them often. Each morning before family prayer, someone picks a “prophet quote,” as we call them, to share with the family. Sometimes we briefly discuss the meaning of the statement or how it can apply in our lives. This keeps the words of the prophets before us daily and reminds us of the special callings given to these leaders.— **Kelly Barfield,**
Hartsville Ward, Florence South Carolina Stake

We attend all the sessions of conference as a family; then each Sunday, we enjoy hearing again one or two selected talks from the conference. In the past we have watched the talks on video or read them out loud from the *Ensign*. Now we listen to them on the Internet. We try to pace our listening so we finish all the talks before the next conference. Listening to the servants of the Lord

every Sunday has been a constant blessing to us.— **David D. Ames,**
**Moses Lake Fifth Ward, Moses Lake
Washington Stake**

I was surprised when my in-laws first told me that their most celebrated family tradition was general conference weekend. As I have regularly celebrated this special occasion with them since then, I can now say it has become my favorite family tradition as well.

The entire family, including babies, children, youth, parents, and grandparents, join together for this special event every April and October. The Friday night before conference, we camp out in tents in the backyard, preparing to hear the prophets speak as did the people in King Benjamin’s time. The children love it!

We enjoy every session of conference together, and everyone is encouraged to bring his or her scriptures to look up verses referred to by the speakers. We share our thoughts about the conference messages after each session. On Saturday night the priesthood holders go to the general priesthood session while the others stay together for family fun and games. When the priesthood holders return, dessert is served as they share the messages given at the priesthood session. On Sunday afternoon we all have a testimony meeting together. Now general conference weekend is becoming our children’s most celebrated tradition.

— **Nancy Hauck,**
**Morningside First Ward,
St. George Utah Morningside Stake** ■

THE DOCTRINE OF Temple Work



The temple is a place of revelation, of inspiration, meditation, and peace—a place to restore ourselves, to clear our minds, to find answers to our prayers, and to enjoy the satisfaction of worship and service.

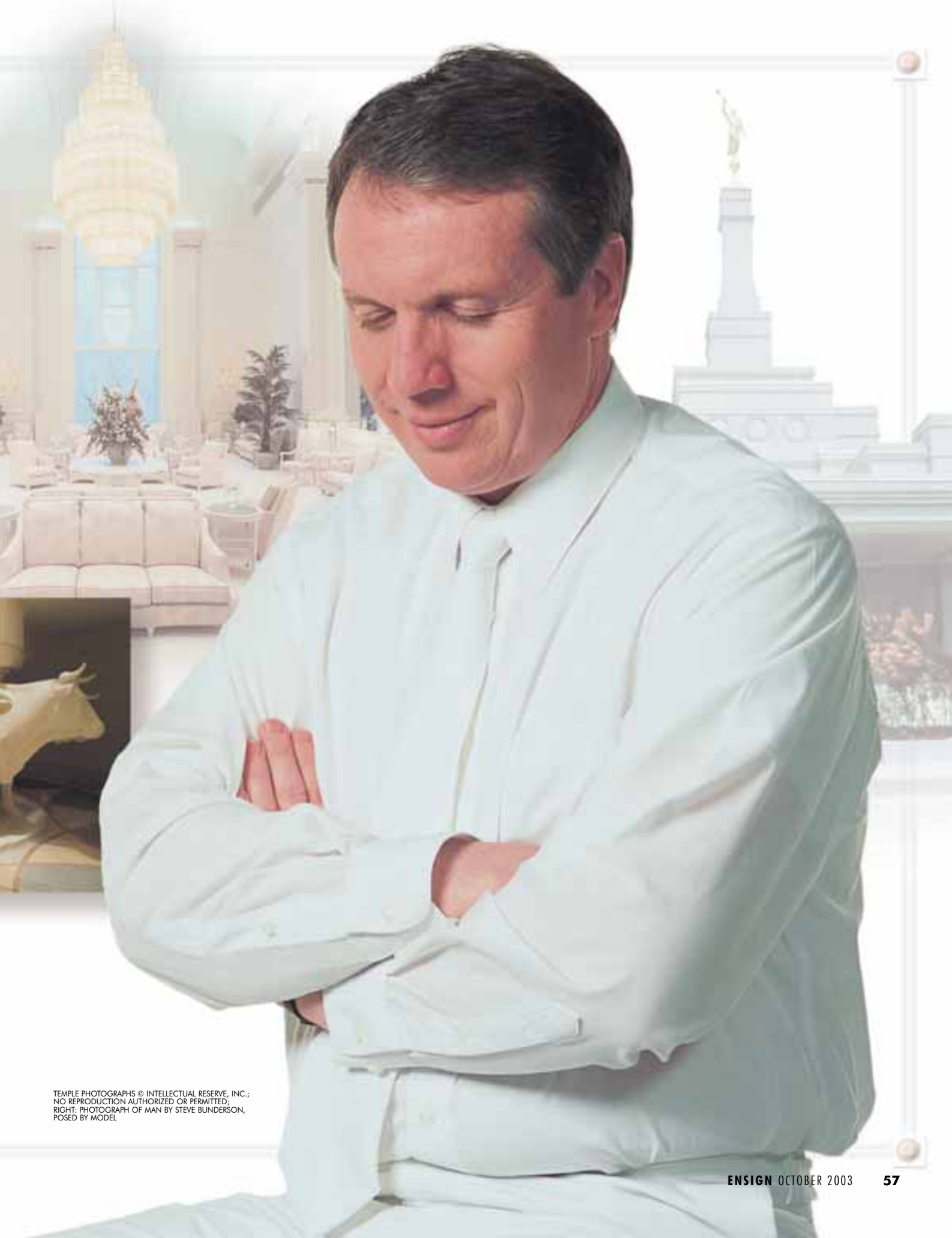
BY ELDER DAVID E. SORENSON
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

After I finished my military service as a young man, I returned to my parents' home in central Utah, about 40 miles (65 kilometers) from the town of Manti. Not long before, plans had been announced for a small addition to the temple in Manti, and Church leaders were asking for volunteers to come help with that project. I signed up for a two-week shift, and soon I found myself swinging a pickaxe, breaking up boulders, and clearing rocks outside of the temple. The hot summer sun shone down on us all day long, and the work was physically harsh and mentally boring. A few times as I struggled to remove another rock, I wondered if perhaps I had been a little too hasty in responding to the call for volunteers.

As the days went by, though, I had a remarkable spiritual experience. Several times in the midst of that backbreaking labor, I



heard and felt the Holy Ghost tell me that sometime in the future I would be involved in building other temples also. It was a very quiet but very clear feeling. At the time I was preparing to return to work on a cattle ranch, so it was not at all obvious to me how I might be involved in building temples, but I accepted that feeling as inspiration. Over the



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years I occasionally wondered about it, still uncertain about how it might come to pass, but very certain that the still, small voice had spoken those words to me.

For the past several years I have had the privilege of seeing that promise fulfilled in ways I never imagined as I have had the opportunity to work in the Temple Department during this exciting period of growth. I have seen firsthand

President Gordon B. Hinckley's commitment to bringing temples closer to more of the people of the world, and I share in his enthusiasm for the blessings that can come from the temple ordinances. President Hinckley said, "I urge our people everywhere, with all of the persuasiveness of which I am capable, to live worthy to hold a temple recommend, to secure one and regard it as a precious asset, and to make a greater effort to go to the house of the Lord and partake of the spirit and the blessings to be had therein."¹ In this, President Hinckley is echoing prophets before him. For example, the Prophet Joseph Smith warned of the consequences when we fail to use the temples available to us: "Those Saints who neglect [temple work] in behalf of their deceased relatives, do it at the peril of their own salvation."²

Clearly the ordinances of the temple are of eternal significance, but they can also be challenging. I hope to offer some insights that may help members of the Church better understand the nature of temples and also to offer some reminders and practical advice on ways to prepare for temple worship.

The "Work" in "Temple Work"

Temple work is an act of service. The temple is a place where we have an opportunity to do something for others. In recent temple dedications President Hinckley has suggested we not focus so much on the personal benefits of attending the temple but rather focus on temple work as "work." While the personal blessings resulting from temple attendance are numerous, we must not lose sight of the

fact that it is work and requires commitment and duty.

Temple work is not unlike other types of service given in the Church, such as going on missions or home and visiting teachers providing emergency help for someone. Such acts of service typically cost us something and often require some sacrifice. Our prophet is inviting us to consider that same mode or attitude when we attend the

temple. Our attendance should be for the giving of service rather than a selfish or self-centered act. The Savior said, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:24).

If we go to the temple solely for ourselves, we may actually be short-circuiting access to maximum spiritual benefits. Think about the things we do when we attend the temple. Are they similar to or different from activities we typically call "work"? Often, work is difficult, challenging, and sometimes tedious; otherwise we might think of it as play. Work requires us to be engaged in the process. Perhaps, along these lines, if we are finding our temple attendance mainly a passive activity, we may not be gaining all we could.

An obvious example might be the difference between attending the temple as an ordinance worker versus as a patron. When working in the temple, an ordinance worker

finds it really is work; from memorization to procedure, there is much to do. The result of this effort is that ordinance workers gain familiarity with the ordinances and have an opportunity to learn and grow even more. And as I discovered during my physical labors on the Manti temple as a young man, a willingness to work and serve can prepare our hearts to receive spiritual insights.

While the temple is certainly a place of refuge, a retreat to learn and understand ourselves, there may be even more benefit in going to the temple to actually do exacting, weighty, rigorous, demanding work. One of the benefits



"I urge our people everywhere . . . to live worthy to hold a temple recommend, to secure one and regard it as a precious asset, and to make a greater effort to go to the house of the Lord."
—President Gordon B. Hinckley



Like the parables the Savior taught, the temple ordinances can have parts that seem simple, but for those with advanced spiritual eyes, deep insights are there for the taking.

of having numerous temples is not only that more members can attend but that more members can serve as ordinance workers.

Furthermore, an attitude of service may help us see old things in a new light. Consider the parallels between the teaching patterns in the temple ordinances and the scripture parables. Both have multiple levels of meaning. Many of the parables the Savior taught were difficult to understand for most listeners. To some, they sounded trite and simple. For example, in the parables of the ten virgins, of the talents, of the lost sheep, of the widow and the unjust judge, or of the prodigal son, there is a story, a message that even a casual observer would perceive. But in plain sight, right there in the same stories, are tremendous truths that explain some of the central, fundamental principles of the kingdom. Similarly, the temple ordinances can have parts that seem simple, but for those with advanced spiritual eyes, deep insights are there for the taking.

Basic Doctrine for the Dead

A key function of temples is to perform ordinance work for our deceased ancestors. When we think of temple ordinances and the necessity to do them perfectly, without error, we think of this powerful scripture:

“You may think this order of things to be very particular; but let me tell you that it is only to answer the will of God, by conforming to the ordinance and preparation that the Lord ordained and prepared before the foundation of the world, for the salvation of the dead who should die without a knowledge of the gospel. . . .

“ . . . For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation, as Paul says concerning the fathers—that they without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect” (D&C 128:5, 15; see also Hebrews 11:40).

Consider the powerful and revealing vision of President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918):

“Thus was the gospel preached to those who had died in their sins, without a knowledge of the truth, or in transgression, having rejected the prophets.

“These were taught faith in God, repentance from sin, vicarious baptism for the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands,

“And all other principles of the gospel that were necessary for them to know in order to qualify themselves that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit” (D&C 138:32–34; see also 1 Peter 4:6).

Basic Doctrine for the Living

The temple is a place of revelation, of inspiration, meditation, and peace—a place to restore ourselves, to clear our minds, to find answers to our prayers, and to enjoy the satisfaction of worship and service.

The Lord revealed through the Prophet Joseph: “All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, . . . through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power . . . are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead” (D&C 132:7).

Let us teach one another the supreme value of “the new and everlasting covenant of marriage” (D&C 131:2) in our talks and lessons and by example. When a couple is sealed in the temple by the priesthood, a new family is organized. We rejoice when a new branch, ward, or stake is organized. How much more should we rejoice when we organize the basic unit of the Church: a new eternal family!

There is only one way for the priesthood to properly set up this new unit, and that is in the house of the Lord. We shall all eventually be released from our callings in the Church but not from our eternal roles in the organization of the family.

As explained in the Doctrine and Covenants: “It may seem to some to be a very bold doctrine that we talk of—a power which records or binds on earth and binds in heaven. Nevertheless, in all ages of the world, whenever the Lord has given a dispensation of the priesthood to any man by actual revelation, or any set of men, this power has always been given. Hence, whatsoever those men did in authority, in the name of the Lord, and did it truly and faithfully, and kept a proper and faithful record of the same, it became a

law on earth and in heaven, and could not be annulled, according to the decrees of the great Jehovah” (D&C 128:9).

The Endowment

What is the meaning and nature of the endowment? President Brigham Young (1801–77) gave us these words: “Your endowment is, to receive all those ordinances in the

house of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, . . . and gain your eternal exaltation.”³

The word *endowment* suggests receiving a gift, something of value for our eternal journey, as President Young described. The Lord is giving a blessing of spiritual power and protection to us so that we may enjoy life more fully, more abundantly.

The highest blessings in the kingdom of God come to us through the grace of Jesus Christ, by obedience to His word. Latter-day revelation clarifies that the fulness of Christ’s grace is bestowed on those who keep the commandments, including making and keeping covenants: “For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and be

glorified in me as I am in the Father; therefore, I say unto you, you shall receive grace for grace” (D&C 93:20). The Doctrine and Covenants further explains, “Blessed are they who have kept the covenant and observed the commandment, for they shall obtain mercy” (D&C 54:6; see also Moroni 10:33).

One reason for the power of covenants may be due to the capability they have for effecting changes in our lives, especially sacred covenants. This capacity comes in part because when we make a covenant with God, we are making a promise to our Heavenly Father who knows us best, who knows exactly what we feel and think and intend in our heart of hearts—and this provides unique motivation to keep our promises. Additionally, sacred covenants are even



“Those Saints who neglect [temple work] in behalf of their deceased relatives, do it at the peril of their own salvation.” —The Prophet Joseph Smith

more powerful than regular covenants or promises because by entering a covenant that is sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise (the Holy Ghost), we gain special access to the grace of God to help us keep the promises we have made.

The purpose of temple work is to make more effective the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and since covenants can be such an effective tool for change, covenants feature prominently in the temple and particularly are a key component of the endowment. Consider how the covenants of baptism, the sacrament, and the laying on of hands are all centered upon the Savior and His atoning sacrifice and how they lead us to change our lives. In a similar way, the covenants we make when we receive the endowment can propel us to even greater changes and greater Christlike behavior. Put another way, we might ask, How do we gain access to the fulness of the Atonement, this additional dispensation of grace? Only by covenants, which are entered into only through ordinances, which can be performed only through priesthood keys (see Articles of Faith 1:3–5). The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “Being born again, comes by the Spirit of God through ordinances.”⁴

These truths help us understand the spiritual power of temple work and how that power can come into a person’s life by covenant. Then, keeping the covenant brings the promised blessing in time and in eternity.



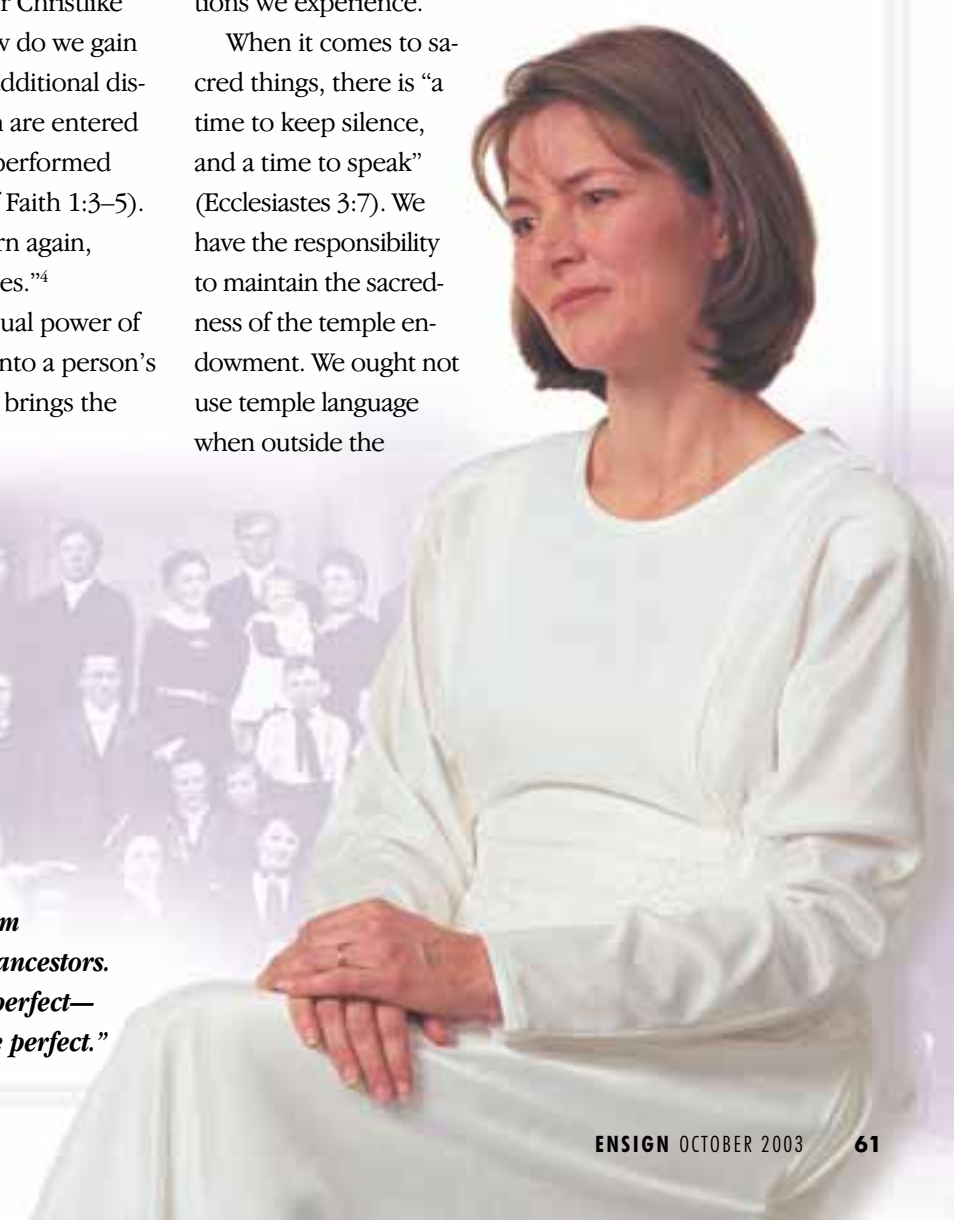
A key function of temples is to perform ordinance work for our deceased ancestors. “They without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect.”

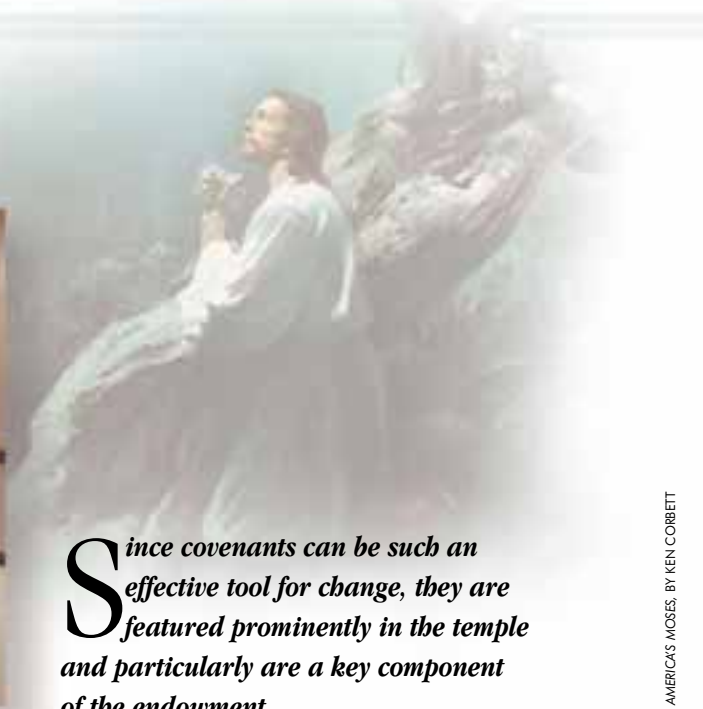
Let us review some practical matters that can enhance the temple experience.

Standards

Reverence is an indispensable key to revelation. To receive the promised revelation we must maintain the sacred nature of the house of the Lord. We can have the temple as a significant part of our lives as we prepare in reverence to enter and as we stay true to the beauty, dignity, and solemnity of the temple when we leave. Part of that reverence is maintaining an attitude of great respect for Deity in our hearts. Our words and some of our practical actions can affect the reverence we feel and thus the spiritual manifestations we experience.

When it comes to sacred things, there is “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (Ecclesiastes 3:7). We have the responsibility to maintain the sacredness of the temple endowment. We ought not use temple language when outside the





Since covenants can be such an effective tool for change, they are featured prominently in the temple and particularly are a key component of the endowment.

temple. We should also be cautious about using common or worldly language within the sacred confines of the temple. Vulgarity should not be a part of our communication outside of the temple, and it certainly has no place in the Lord's house. But even excessive joking and laughing may prevent us from feeling the reverence and respect that we should.

Worthiness

Some members who are anxious to receive the blessings of the temple may push to receive a recommend before they are fully ready. However, becoming temple worthy is in fact preparing us to understand the "spiritual things" of the temple (see 1 Corinthians 2:11–16). Our prophet has counseled: "I know it is difficult for a bishop to deny a recommend to someone who is in his ward and who may be on the borderline with reference to personal behavior. Such denial may be offensive to the applicant. But he or she should know that unless there is true worthiness, there will be no blessing gained, and condemnation will fall upon the head of him or her who unworthily crosses the threshold of the House of God."⁵

The Garment

Those endowed should wear the garment appropriately. One of the great privileges we have is the wearing of the garment. It is appropriate to think of the garment as part of

the temple, as a reminder of the covenants made in the house of the Lord. In this sense, as we wear the garment properly we take the temple with us in our daily walk in life.

We should adhere to the instruction of the First Presidency regarding the wearing of the garment:

"Wearing the garment is the sacred privilege of those who have taken upon themselves the covenants of the temple. The garment, . . . when properly worn, will serve as a protection against temptation and evil.

"It is expected that members will wear the garment both night and day, according to instructions given in the temple. Members should not adjust the garment or wear it contrary to instructions in order to accommodate different styles of clothing, even when such clothing may be generally accepted. The garment should not be removed for activities which might reasonably be done with the garment worn beneath the clothing.

"Members should be guided by the Holy Spirit to answer for themselves personal questions about wearing the garment. This sacred covenant is between the member and the Lord and is an outward expression of an inner commitment to follow the Savior Jesus Christ."⁶

Appropriate Dress

Dressing appropriately to enter the temple will help us to leave behind our worldly concerns and prepare to

participate in the ordinances of the house of the Lord. Consider this counsel from President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, on preparing to enter the temple: “It is pleasing to the Lord when we bathe our bodies and put on clean clothing, however inexpensive the clothing may be. We should dress in such a way that we might comfortably attend a sacrament meeting or a gathering that is proper and dignified.”⁷

When we enter the temple, we all change into modest white clothing. For men, this is long-sleeved white shirts and white slacks. For women, this is a long-sleeved, floor-length white dress or a white blouse and long white skirt. The white clothing in the temple symbolizes purity and being clean from our sins—the state in which we hope to return to our Father in Heaven. The change into white clothing also serves as a reminder that we are all the same before God, that He is looking upon our hearts and souls and not on our status in this world.

Brides-to-be should note that wedding dresses should be as modest as standard temple dresses. “All dresses worn in the temple should be white, have long sleeves, be modest in design and fabric, and be free of elaborate ornamentation. Sheer fabric should be lined. Women’s pants are not permitted in the temple. The dress should not have a train unless it is removable so that it will not be encumbering during the temple ceremonies.”⁸

Sealing Ordinances

Finally, consider again the power of the temple, particularly as it pertains to our deceased relatives. Who among us has not wept in the night for a brother or sister or some other departed relative who did not fully accept the gospel in this life for one reason or another? The sealings performed in the temple offer us great hope for the possibility of reunification with *all* our loved ones. The sealing ordinance confers a powerful blessing

upon Latter-day Saints who remain true and faithful to their covenants. I have always received great strength, encouragement, and comfort from President Lorenzo Snow (1814–1901) when he described this profound promise:

“God has fulfilled His promises to us, and our prospects are grand and glorious. Yes, in the next life we will have . . .

our sons and daughters. If we do not get them all at once, we will have them some time. . . . You that are mourning about your children straying away will have your sons and your daughters. If you succeed in passing through these trials and afflictions and receive a resurrection, you will, by the power of the Priesthood, work and labor, as the Son of God has, until you get all your sons and daughters in the path of exaltation and glory. This is just as sure as that the sun rose this morning over yonder mountains. Therefore, mourn not because all your sons and daughters do not follow in the path that you have marked out to them, or give heed to your counsels. Inasmuch as we succeed in securing eternal glory, and stand as saviors, and as kings and priests to our God, we will save our posterity.”⁹

There is great power in the sealing ties of the covenant. I bear my witness and testimony that these eternal truths and covenants were given before the foundation of the world and will bless our lives if we will prepare our hearts and minds to receive them. ■



“Your endowment is, to receive all those ordinances in the house of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, . . . and gain your eternal exaltation.”
—President Brigham Young

NOTES

1. “Of Missions, Temples, and Stewardship,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 53.
2. *History of the Church*, 4:426.
3. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 416.
4. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 162.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Keeping the Temple Holy,” *Ensign*, May 1990, 52.
6. First Presidency letter, 5 Nov. 1996.
7. *The Holy Temple* (1980), 73.
8. *Bulletin*, 1992, no. 1, p. 2.
9. In *Millennial Star*, 22 Jan. 1894, 51–52; see also Boyd K. Packer, “Our Moral Environment,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 68.

A Song for Ryan

By Luana Lish

It was the kind of Saturday that makes me appreciate the warm coziness of staying in bed. But this luxury was not to be. The annoying sound of my pager alerted me to a fire at a nearby cement plant, so I threw on my equipment and headed for the door, thankful my helmet would cover my messy hair. Vanity had taken a backseat ever since I joined our small town's fire department and then

became an emergency medical technician (EMT).

The cement plant fire was soon contained. But our pagers went off again, this time asking for EMTs to respond to a freeway injury accident involving a four-year-old boy. I knew this would be difficult, so my partner and I immediately began to pray. No EMT can truthfully say he or she is not affected when caring for seriously injured children.

We arrived to find a white van upside down in the median. I quickly looked around for our patient, thinking perhaps he was still in the vehicle. But I was called to the opposite side

of the freeway where several people were huddled over the small form of a child. One man was a doctor. He gave me a rundown of the boy's most serious injuries, then disappeared into the crowd. A woman was holding the child's hand and reassuring him. I asked if she knew his name. "His

M*y little patient was crying, and I wanted to calm his fears, kiss his burts away, and comfort his frightened mother. My hands went through the routines I knew so well, but I felt so inadequate.*



name is Ryan,” she said. “I am his mother.” Remarkably, she and two older children were unhurt.

EMTs follow certain protocols to ensure the best care for patients, but none of these procedures can prepare us for the human suffering we must deal with when responding to horrifying accidents. I remember reviewing my training in my mind but also feeling overwhelmed. My little patient was crying, and I wanted to calm his fears, kiss his hurts away, and promise his frightened mother that he would be all right. My hands went through the routines I knew so well, but I felt so inadequate, so alone. My partner was not able to assist me with Ryan because he was caring for the little boy’s father, who was still trapped in the van.

Ambulances soon arrived. I was assigned to stabilize Ryan’s head on the way to the hospital. I knelt above his head and spoke softly to him, but he continued to cry and thrash about. I worried that he might injure himself further, but restraining him would have caused other problems.

At this point my prayers became more fervent, and I asked Heavenly Father to bless me to know how to comfort and calm Ryan and ease his pain. I immediately received an impression: “Sing to him.” I hesitated. I questioned whether I had understood correctly. After all, I was a professional, and what would it look like to have an EMT singing in an ambulance over a critically injured patient?

Ryan cried out, and again I received the distinct impression: “Sing to him.” As I held his head I quietly leaned close to his ear and started singing, “I am like a star shining brightly, Smiling for the whole world to see” (“I Am like a Star,” *Children’s Songbook*, 163). As I sang, Ryan became quiet. I sang “I Am a Child of God” and many other Primary songs. I realized Ryan was a Latter-day Saint when I noticed his very distraught mother trying to sing with me. More than once the paramedics became concerned because he was too quiet, but Ryan would respond as asked. I continued singing all the way to the hospital and into the emergency room, where the trauma team took over his care.

Later that day I returned to the hospital to check on Ryan and his father. I learned that Ryan had undergone surgery and was now stabilized and doing well. Even though he and his father would require a lengthy hospital stay to recover, I was grateful for the news. Ryan and I soon became good friends, and I still look forward each year to receiving a Christmas card with Ryan’s picture inside.

I will always remember an answered prayer when my little patient quieted instantly in response to songs he loved, songs that reminded him of how much his Heavenly Father loves him. The effectiveness of emergency medicine is truly a marvel, but the beauty and simplicity of a few Primary songs will

forever remain in my memory as a gentle and profound miracle. ■

Luana Lish is a member of the Rapid Creek Ward, McCammon Idaho Stake.

Not Just Another Business

By Yolanda Zayas

Although my husband and I came from families with religious and moral principles, we were not satisfied with the way our own family of five was progressing spiritually. I attended the same church we had been reared in, accompanied by our three children—Beverly, Janice, and Ralph. My husband, Raúl, didn’t go to church because he thought that all churches were businesses. He thought they were highly commercialized and that many of the leaders profited from the members’ donations. He also believed religious literature should not be purchased but should be given to people who are interested in it.

In February 1986 my husband chanced to see two Latter-day Saint missionaries walk by our house, and he called them over. His intent was to ask them if the church they represented was interested in buying a lot to build a meetinghouse on. My husband is in the real estate business, so he saw this meeting as a sales opportunity.



The missionaries were not able to give him any information on that matter, but they didn't miss this chance to ask him if they could set up an appointment for a discussion about the restored gospel. My husband was certain this was just another church like all the others he had come in contact with before, so he asked them to come back the next day. He intended to show them that their church just used God to do business.

We received the missionaries the next day with a bit of suspicion. But as they proceeded to talk to us about the Church and its history, we began to feel something very special in our hearts. When they left they gave us copies of the Book of Mormon, and my husband asked how much he owed for them. To his surprise, the books were free. His surprise was even greater when he realized that this Church was not a business. He

The missionaries gave us copies of the Book of Mormon, and my husband asked how much he owed for them. To his surprise, the books were free.

became interested and started asking the missionaries all kind of questions.

We went to church every Sunday after that, and by 15 July 1987 our whole family had become converted. We were baptized and later were sealed for eternity as a family in the temple. Our son, Ralph, served as a full-time missionary and later married in the temple. Our two daughters have married returned missionaries in the temple, and we now have nine beautiful and healthy grandchildren.

My husband and I have served in many callings in the Church and have continued to grow spiritually and to help the gospel grow in our branch,

located in the southern part of our beautiful isle of enchantment, Puerto Rico. My husband has presided over the Salinas Branch twice. The work has been hard, but we know that our example as a branch has left many seeds scattered over our little town.

What more could we ask of our Heavenly Father? Our gratitude is eternal. What started as a simple sales conversation and an effort to prove the Church was a business came to be the greatest possible celestial transaction for our family—the opportunity to be united with each other, with our Savior Jesus Christ, and with our Heavenly Father. ■

Yolanda Zayas is a member of the Salinas Branch, Guayama Puerto Rico District.

Guided to Church

By Yadamsuren Munkhtuya

I grew up in Mongolia and believed in Buddhism. But one day a friend came to my home. She was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She talked to me about Jesus Christ and invited me to attend her church. I didn't listen to her. She came again, but still I didn't listen.

A few weeks after her visit I had a dream. In the dream a voice told me to go to church. I asked, "What? What church? I don't understand." The voice gave me directions on how to get to church. I was told, "Tomorrow

morning go to this church. When you enter, two missionaries will be there to meet you.”

When I woke up the next morning, I was confused. “Who had come to me in a dream? Who had talked to me?” I wondered. But I decided to go to church.

I followed the directions and found the church. At the door were two missionaries to meet me. They shook my hand and invited me to attend the

meeting. The members were nice, and everyone smiled. I felt very happy.

After sacrament meeting the missionaries invited me to hear the discussions. I said yes.

When Elder Johnson and Elder Sampson taught me the first discussion, I was confused, but they explained everything again. They had powerful testimonies. I asked many questions, and the elders always answered me. They read the


scriptures with me and invited me to pray about what they had shared with me. Then they left my home.

I felt happy. I decided to ask God if what I was learning was true. I knelt down and prayed, “If God lives and loves me, if Jesus Christ lives, and if this Church is true, let me feel the Spirit.” After I prayed, my heart felt so good and so comfortable. I felt like I was flying. I felt the answer come to my heart: “God lives. He loves you! Jesus Christ lives. Do not be confused. This is the only true Church.” I knew this was the Holy Ghost testifying of the truth. I had received my answer from God.

Two days later the missionaries returned to my home. I told them about my feelings and that I wanted to be baptized. I was so happy I jumped up and down. During the next three weeks, the elders taught me the rest of the discussions, and I was baptized.

I know that God lives and that He loves us. Jesus Christ is our Redeemer and Savior. I know that Joseph Smith saw God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. I love the Book of Mormon and know it is the word of God. I served as a full-time missionary in Raleigh, North Carolina, in the United States. I loved my mission. This is the Lord’s work. I am so grateful I was guided to the true Church of Jesus Christ. ■

Yadamsuren Munkbtuya is a member of the Old Darkhan Branch, Ulaanbaatar Mongolia North District.



In a dream a voice told me to go to church. “What church?” I asked. The voice gave me directions on how to get to this church. “When you enter, two missionaries will be there to meet you.”

BY VICKIE MASON RANDALLS

When I quit my job to spend more time with my teenage children, I hoped it wasn't too late.

It never occurred to me that I would become one of those women who wait with anticipation for their children to come home at the end of the day. I thought I was much too busy, my time far too valuable for such trivia. I had a career, after all.

I loved my job. I enjoyed the travel; I was seeing places I had never been before. I loved the constant challenge and growth demanded of me; my talents surged and developed as time went on. I loved the sometimes immediate and always regular awards and rewards. I felt appreciated and valued, and the people I worked with were among my best friends.

So why was there a hole in my heart?

When I told my husband I needed to quit and stay home with our teenage children, he thought the feeling would pass. I had quit once before, years ago, but the world had pulled me back in, and we were thoroughly committed, financially and socially, to my working. But when I wouldn't, couldn't, let this idea go, my husband thought I was crazy. I thought he might be right.

It would turn our world upside down. Financially we would be compromised. My children thought it was the dumbest idea I had come up with. After all, what teenager wants more Mom and less money and things?

Following through with my decision took dogged determination and more tears than I care to remember. I felt I was betraying a boss and an organization that had put their trust and faith in me and had sacrificed endless hours of mentoring toward my career. I felt I was forcing my husband to search for a higher-paying career at a time in his life when things should have started becoming easier rather than harder. And my children hated what I was doing.

The period after giving my 30 days' notice, with the

Mom, Are You There ?

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DILLEEN MARSH



endless good-byes and whys and checkout reports, was one of the most difficult times of my life. I second-guessed myself a hundred different times in a hundred different ways, but deep down in a place that is only understood spiritually, in that part of me that has been dubbed “mother,” I knew I had to do it. And as scared as I was that it was too late to get it right, to measure up, I knew I *wanted* to do it.

At that time, in 1997, my 18-year-old daughter was into a two-year relationship that was not heading for a temple marriage. My 15-year-old son was having trouble in school and was starting to make a name for himself as he continued to get into more and more mischief. I was watching my 14-year-old son slip into the same pattern. My marriage of 20 years was strong and loyal but stressed and battered.

Nothing magical happened those first weeks and months. I think I was in shock and withdrawal. I substituted work around our minifarm for the work I used to do outside the home. My son continued to get into more and more trouble during the next two years; some patterns just can't be turned around overnight. But I was right there with him.

Sitting with my mother for five weeks, a thousand miles from my husband and children, I watched her slowly die of cancer. But I was right there with her. My daughter and I sat and talked for endless hours about the importance of eternal marriage, and I held her while she cried over a young man she'd given her heart to, a young man who just didn't understand. But again, I was right there with her.

There has been time now to weigh and measure the impact of that decision I made more than six years ago. Some exciting things that can be measured and seen have happened. My

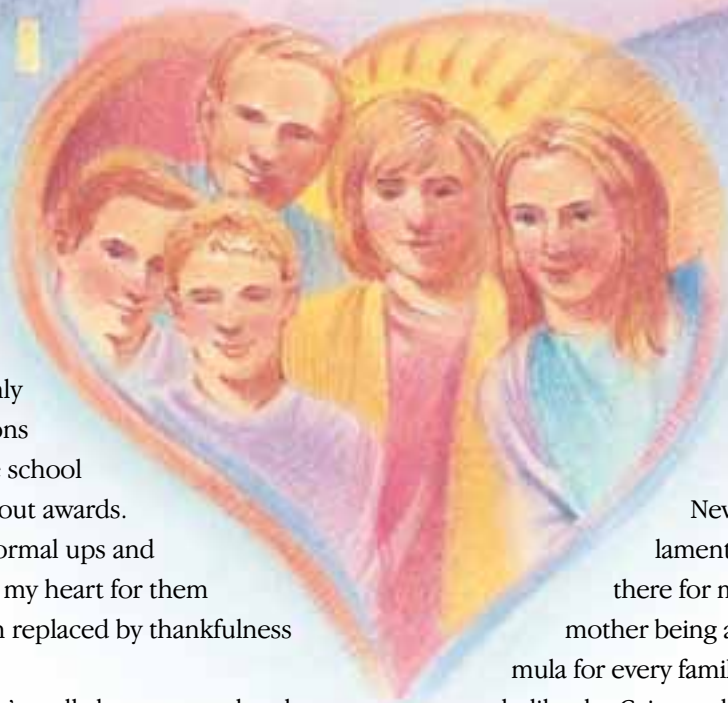
daughter was married shortly after her 21st birthday in the Denver Colorado Temple to a wonderful returned missionary who has enriched our family in ways we've only begun to realize. My two sons have graduated from home school and received their Eagle Scout awards. Though we still have the normal ups and downs, those fears I had in my heart for them several years ago have been replaced by thankfulness for their steady progress.

There are things that can't really be measured and seen, though. In even the smallest events, such as when the phone rings in the middle of the day and my daughter wants to know how to cook her first turkey, or when she e-mails me for our family's favorite chocolate cake recipe, I can feel how our relationship has become one that will continue throughout the eternities.

And then there is the feeling that comes over me when my young men, almost a foot taller than I am—the same ones who used to be cold and distant—come bounding through the door at all times of the day and immediately call out, "Mom, are you there?" The thrill that comes to me when I answer "I'm right here" is a thousandfold better and more satisfying than anything I experienced in a career. It is eternal, a lasting, intangible monument to the power and joy of motherhood.

I also note how my relationship with my husband has changed. We have always valued our eternal partnership. But what I have learned by having time to truly nurture, explore, and expand that relationship has brought joy that otherwise I wouldn't have known existed.

Has my being at home contributed to all these changes? I think so. I believe motherhood simply takes *quantity* time. Quality time by itself will not place a mother where she needs to be at the most important, pivotal moments in her family members' lives. Motherhood



is an almost overwhelming responsibility, but God has given us what it takes. We just have to make it our priority, our career, our purpose, and the objective of our scheduling.

Is it worth it? Absolutely.

Never again will I have to lament over the question "Am I there for my family?" I know that a mother being at home isn't the magic formula for every family; some of our precious youth, like the Cains and Lamans, will be lost no matter what we do. I know too that due to genuine financial constraints, many mothers—particularly single mothers—don't have the option of staying home, despite the earnest desires of their hearts. It is even possible that the success I have experienced with my own youth could be temporary; all of us have our agency. But even that would be bearable because I know I am doing my best. And that is the most any of us can do.

I know now that it is never too late to be a better mother. The improvement we make will benefit our posterity throughout all the generations to come.

Have I lost myself? There were times I honestly thought I had. Sometimes I wanted to run again. That's when I had to have faith in the prophets' counsel, grit my teeth in determination, and fall on my knees. Satan had a lot to lose, and he fought a dirty fight.

Those times when I felt lost became fewer and farther apart, until they finally disappeared. In their place has come a solid and lasting certainty that I am fulfilling the measure of my creation. Now I have a knowledge, born of that one simple but powerful decision, that tells me I can answer in the affirmative the question that will be asked of me throughout all eternity: "Mom, are you there?" ■

Vickie Mason Randalls is a member of the Mankato Ward, Burnsville Minnesota Stake.

Prepare to Meet God

Prayerfully select and read from this message the scriptures and teachings that meet the needs of the sisters you visit. Share your experiences and testimony. Invite those you teach to do the same.

Alma 34:32: “This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.”

Elder Marvin J. Ashton (1915–94) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “The ten virgins [see Matthew 25:1–13] represent the people of the Church of Jesus Christ, and not alone the rank and file of the world. . . . The responsibility for having oil in our personal lamps is an individual requirement and opportunity. The oil of spiritual preparedness cannot be shared. . . . The oil could have been purchased at the market in the parable, but in our lives it is accumulated by righteous living, a drop at a time” (“A Time of Urgency,” *Ensign*, May 1974, 36).

President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973): “How long have you postponed the day of a repentance from your own misdeeds? The judgment we shall face will be before the Righteous Judge who will take into account our capacities and our limitations, our opportunities and our handicaps. One who sins and repents and thereafter fills his life with purposeful

effort may not lose as much in that day of righteous judgment as one who, though not committing serious sin, falls down miserably by omitting to do that which he had capacity and opportunity to do but would not” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* [2000], 229).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “The Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts—what we have *done*. It is an acknowledgment of the final effect of our acts and thoughts—what we have *become*. It is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions. The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of deposits required to be made in some heavenly account. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become” (“The Challenge to Become,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32).

Alma 5:28: “Behold, are ye stripped of pride? I say unto you, if ye are not ye are not prepared to meet God.”

Moroni 7:47: “Charity is the pure love of Christ, . . . and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.”

Anne C. Pingree, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency: “We can alter the face of the earth *one family and one home at a time* through charity, our small and simple acts of pure love. . . . Little by little our charitable acts change our natures, define our characters, and ultimately make us women with the courage and commitment to say to the Lord, ‘Here am I; send me’” (“Charity: One Family, One Home at a Time,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 108–9).

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985): “For those who heed the warning and make their preparations, for those found at midnight with the oil of righteousness in their lamps, for those with patience, long-suffering, and full dedication, the promise is that they shall sit down at the banquet with their Lord” (*Faith Precedes the Miracle* [1972], 257).

- How can we increase the oil in our lamps (see D&C 45:56–57)?
- What can we do to become more charitable and less prideful? ■



Tips for Preparing Your Missionary

In preparing for my mission, I wanted to do my best to meet the challenges of being away from my family and the comforts of home for two years. My preparations blessed me and enhanced my ability to serve. Following are ideas parents might use to help their teenagers prepare for missions and other opportunities away from home.



1. Become familiar with the scriptures. In the Book of Mormon, we learn that the righteous were those who followed the teachings of the Lord and “believed those records which

were brought out of the land of Jerusalem” (see Alma 3:11–12). Wherever I travel or live, my standard works and other Church publications go with me. Make family and personal scripture study a priority in your home.

2. Be friendly. Encourage your children to make friends

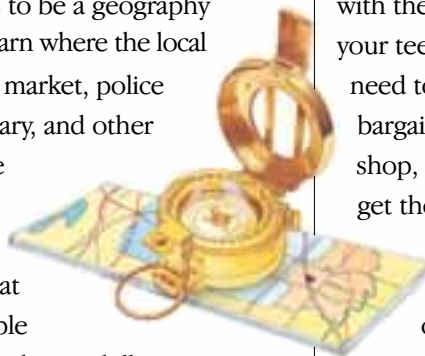


with neighbors and trusted individuals wherever they go. Emphasize the importance of remembering people’s names. Having a circle of good friends will enrich your teenager’s experience.

3. Appreciate other cultures. People respect visitors from other countries who enjoy the culture. Your children may encounter new foods or ways of dressing, communicating, and socializing. Help them learn to appreciate appropriate traditions found in their new surroundings.

4. Learn about the new locale. No one has to be a geography expert to learn where the local post office, market, police station, library, and other facilities are located. It is also essential that young people develop good map skills to navigate their way successfully, independent of your assistance.

5. Develop a talent. Wherever I go, I want to enrich others’ lives. Prior to serving my mission, I learned to play the piano to accompany Church hymns and teach piano lessons in the wards and



branches where I would serve. Encourage your children to develop talents that will help them grow as they share with others.

6. Learn to cook. Before my mission whenever my mom cooked, I tried to assist her and write down her recipes. In the process, I created my own recipe book to use on my mission. It is also helpful to teach your children other household tasks to encourage their self-reliance.

7. Become a smart shopper. To be frugal with their funds, your teenagers will need to look for bargains. When I shop, I’m careful to get the most for my

money. In many countries, parents can teach their children to compare weekly grocery advertisements or in-store displays and product labels to discern which product sizes are most economical.

I have continued to use these skills to help me with school and other aspects of my life. I wanted to prepare well for my mission, and in doing so, I have prepared well for my future too.

Mbaba Manasseh S., Ibadan Fourth Branch, Ibadan Nigeria District



Using Church Magazines

During a visit from our high councilor to our ward, he gave a short but profound talk encouraging us to read the Church magazines with our families. Referring to Lehi beckoning his family toward the tree of life, our high councilor admonished us to read the magazines and “partake of the fruit.”

To help our family, I first divided the magazines into different “bite-size” portions that we could easily read on several occasions.

1. Read a short article or parts of an article aloud at family council each Sunday. Suggest that one person choose an article from a magazine and share a message in his or her own words.

2. Read aloud one or two articles at dinner or bedtime. By doing this, we gradually make our way through an issue of the *Friend*.

3. Study an article at family home evening. Once a month have the family choose an article to focus on from old or current Church magazines. (Past issues of the Church magazines are available on the Internet at www.lds.org.) Pair older children with younger siblings so they can read aloud to them. Others read silently for a few minutes and then come back together to share what was learned. This is a time of

TAKING CARE OF “FAMILY BUSINESS”

Throughout the years, our family home evenings have changed to meet our growing family’s needs. One practice that has helped us accommodate change has been what we call “family business.” After the opening prayer and song, we take time to discuss the week’s schedule: Who needs to be where and when? Who is taking the car? Sister

Smith needs help; could we help her on Thursday? We also discuss family policies: Could we change the way we are doing the dishes? I don’t agree with the 10-minute phone rule. Could we discuss it?

“Family business” is an important part of our family home evenings. It is often the best time to listen, compromise, and enforce where needed, instead of during the



heat of a debate. During the week I sometimes find myself saying, “Let’s think about that and discuss it at home evening,” giving me the time needed to seek insight and inspiration. Of course, not every issue will wait for a Monday-night discussion. But if your family has already practiced problem-solving skills together, it will be much easier to resolve conflicts whenever they arise.

Cecelie Costley, Mink Creek Ward, Preston Idaho North Stake



feasting for the family when everyone contributes to the process.

4. Make a goal chart to encourage reading. Create with your children a reading chart of articles they would like to read from the different magazines. Hang the chart in a location where they will see it daily. A sticker can be placed beside each completed article as family members finish their various readings. Then discuss with your children what they liked and learned. To help encourage your children, make a chart for yourself and let them play the role of marking it and asking you questions about what you read. When the chart is completed, you could

give a small reward or treat to celebrate the achievement of your goals together.

Whether you choose to incorporate the Church magazines into your family life in large or small bites, they can have a significant influence on family unity and spirituality. Though choosing to make them a part of your life takes some planning, the resultant blessings are well worth the effort. “Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great” (D&C 64:33).

Cynthia Mar Thomas, Oak Hills Second Ward, Provo Utah Oak Hills Stake



In a canoe pageant, performers represent the King of Hawaii and his entourage, welcoming guests to the Polynesian Cultural Center. The center celebrates its 40th anniversary this month.

Polynesian Cultural Center Celebrates 40 Years of Aloha

By Richard M. Romney, Church Magazines

Two numbers have big significance for the Polynesian Cultural Center (PCC) this year. One is 40. On 12 October the center, located in Laie, Hawaii, will celebrate its 40th anniversary. The other number is 30 million. On 25 April 2003, the 30 millionth visitor walked through the center's entrance.

"Of course the surprise and hoopla of being the 30 millionth visitor was incredible," wrote Dianna Cheri Hill of Woodland, California, in a thank-you letter to the center. "But the beauty and authenticity and genuine camaraderie that ensued throughout that day were the most memorable of all. We truly felt like we had met the 'real' people of Polynesia."

That is the spirit of aloha that makes the Church-owned center a must-see attraction.

Located adjacent to Brigham Young University—Hawaii, the PCC is a 42-acre (17-hectare) refuge of tropical foliage and flowers where canoes glide along a freshwater lagoon and friendly islanders in scenic villages share the customs and cultures of Pacific island nations. Guests see demonstrations of islanders climbing a palm tree, throwing spears, starting a fire with a coconut husk, hosting traditional welcoming ceremonies, and much more. In the evening, visitors can join in an authentic luau, then attend the largest Polynesian revue in the world—a staged spectacular featuring more than 100 dancers.

Some 760 of the 1,200 center employees are students at BYU—Hawaii, working 20 hours a week to help finance their studies. The

university has a total student body of around 2,400 from more than 70 nations, with half of the students coming from the Pacific Basin. Many could not afford tuition and expenses without their work at the PCC.

"The center is an extraordinary extension of our campus," says BYU—Hawaii president Eric B. Shumway. "We're joined at the heart."

What visitors to the PCC may not realize is that all of these facilities, as well as the neighboring community of Laie, are fulfilling a prophecy made in 1955 by President David O. McKay, ninth President of the Church. In the dedicatory prayer at the groundbreaking ceremony for what was then called the Church College of Hawaii, President McKay asked the Lord that the college, the temple, and the town would become "a missionary factor, influencing not thousands, not tens of thousands, but millions of people who will come

seeking to know what this town and its significance are."

When the cultural center opened in 1963, tourism experts in Honolulu were skeptical that anyone would travel to the north side of Oahu just to see students perform. But over time the center gained a positive reputation. The PCC has been the number-one paid attraction in Hawaii every year since 1977, with the highest guest satisfaction ratings of any paid attraction, according to the Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau.

"The spirit of aloha, the spirit of love and welcome, is legendary in Hawaii," says PCC president Von D. Orgill. "Every person who comes here feels it. But at the center they also feel something more. The students who work here begin their day by sharing scriptures and spiritual thoughts. They pray together and ask that the Lord's Spirit will shine through their lives and touch people, and it does."

Iolani Mariteragi, a student and performer from French Polynesia, agrees: "When visitors come through the center, they ask, 'How can you all be so happy?' I tell them it's because we live according to the gospel."

That spiritual preparation is reflected in another interesting fact: the visitors' center of the nearby Laie Hawaii Temple is second only to Temple Square in Salt Lake City in the number of non-Latter-day Saints taking guided tours and the number of referrals coming from those tours.

President McKay also described how students from BYU—Hawaii would become an influence for international peace, building bridges between nations. That statement is also coming true. As one example, the Polynesian Cultural Center has become the primary contact with the government of the People's Republic of China for the Asian Executive Management Training Program, a joint effort of BYU—Hawaii and the PCC. Participants work 20 hours per week at the PCC, rotating through various departments to understand how an American

business operates. They also receive training at BYU—Hawaii. Since the program started in 1985, there have been 138 participants who have gone on to positions of international responsibility and influence.

What is more, it is commonplace for the PCC to host dignitaries not only from China but also from 50 to 75 other countries each year. The reach of the PCC and BYU—Hawaii is remarkable. "It's impressive when you think about it," says President Orgill. "Here is this little tiny town on this little island in the middle of

this gigantic ocean, and it is exercising an influence around the world that is incredible."

A monthlong celebration is planned for the Polynesian Cultural Center's 40th anniversary in October, and considerable renovation has been completed. Plans are also underway to commemorate the 50th anniversary of BYU—Hawaii in February 2005.

For more information about the Polynesian Cultural Center, visit www.polynesia.com; for more information about BYU—Hawaii, visit www.byuh.edu. ■

It was the first time that the Boston Pops and Mormon Tabernacle Choir have performed together. "If the Boston Pops is America's Symphony, then the Mormon Tabernacle Choir is America's Choir," said Pops conductor Keith Lockhart in his opening comments at the packed Boston Esplanade by the Charles River.

The tour also launched a yearlong commemoration of the 75th anniversary of *Music and the Spoken Word*, the longest continuously running network broadcast. The weekly 30-minute program of music and inspirational commentary first aired on 15 July 1929 and today is broadcast on more than 2,000 radio, television, cable, and satellite stations worldwide.

Wherever the choir performed, a trail of compliments followed. World-renowned conductor Rafael Fruhbeck de Burgos had an opportunity to conduct the choir at its concert at

Choir Carries Audiences on a "Cloud of Sound"

By Taralyn Trost, Church Magazines

A reviewer for the *Grand Rapids Press* in Michigan summed it up in one word: awesome. "There's no other way to describe the Mormon Tabernacle Choir's performance," wrote Jeff Kaczmarczyk of the choir's first performance on its summer tour. The accolades only continued as the 360-member Mormon Tabernacle Choir and 25-member ensemble from the Orchestra at Temple Square performed 11 concerts in 18 days across 3,000 miles in June and July.

But ask any participant and they'll tell you the tour throughout the northeastern United States wasn't about those exhausting stats or even the rave reviews—it was about the individual lives that were touched by the Spirit.

"At the end of the concert, people just kept standing there. They wanted to stay there and feel that resonance, almost a reverence for what happened to them," author Heidi Swinton, who is writing a documentary about the choir, told the *Church News*.

Singing hymns of praise, selections from the masters, folk music, and patriotic songs, the Tabernacle Choir entertained nearly one million people in live audiences from 24 June to 11 July 2003.

"Exhilarating, exhausting, exuberant, and extraordinary" are the words used by Mormon Tabernacle Choir director Craig Jessop to describe the tour. "In my professional life, it was probably the finest tour I've ever been on, truly. We had the

finest venues and the finest audiences."

In addition to live performances, the choir performed on two network television programs: NBC's *Today* show in New York City and the CBS coverage of the Fourth of July Concert with the Boston Pops.



The Tabernacle Choir performs for a full house at Wolf Trap in Washington, D.C.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND



Singing for a nationwide broadcast, the Tabernacle Choir joined the Boston Pops to celebrate the Fourth of July.

Tanglewood—the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and a premiere venue for music festivals. When asked what it was like to direct the choir, Mr. de Burgos exclaimed, “Glorious! Absolutely

glorious! You don’t need any other word to describe it.” One of America’s most respected broadcasters, Charles Osgood, expressed similar sentiments after sharing the stage with the choir in New York’s Avery Fisher Hall

at the Lincoln Center on 2 July. “It’s one of the world’s greatest choirs,” said Mr. Osgood. “I felt as though I was carried on a cloud of sound.” ■ Church News contributed to this report.

Saints Celebrate Pioneer Day

By Taralyn Trost, Church Magazines

Starting off a weeklong celebration commemorating the 156th anniversary of the pioneers entering the Salt Lake Valley, President James E. Faust reminded Saints of the faith, courage, and spiritual strength demonstrated by the pioneers and those who live the gospel of Jesus Christ.

President Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, spoke to thousands gathered at the Conference Center and more via broadcast satellite on 20 July for the annual Pioneer Day devotional.

President Faust’s remarks came at the conclusion of a musical tribute to early LDS pioneers by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and the Orchestra at Temple Square.

“In the spirit of the pioneers, together we welcome and embrace one another in the community of Saints to which we all belong,” President Faust said. “We go forward with our lives in devotion, loyalty, and integrity,” building on the foundation laid by the pioneers, but calling on “a different kind of spiritual strength to resist the sometimes overpowering influences of our time.”

On Pioneer Day—the 24th of July—Elder Merrill C. Oaks, a member of the Seventy and Second Counselor in the Utah North Area Presidency, addressed more than 1,000 people gathered in the Tabernacle on Temple Square for an early morning service to pay homage to the Saints’ pioneer forefathers.

“May those today—who are the beneficiaries of the pioneers’ courage and sacrifice—hold in remembrance not only the great individuals who gave so much, but also

the principles and cause for which they sacrificed,” said Elder Oaks.

Later that day, unseasonably hot temperatures didn’t keep parade-goers from lining the streets in downtown Salt Lake City to view the 120 floats and entries depicting the theme “Utah! For the Pioneer in All of Us” in the annual Days of ’47 Parade. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, and his wife, Frances, made an appearance in the parade.

Other events celebrating pioneers included the Days of ’47 Youth Parade, where some 5,000 children and youth gathered on 19 July to walk with brightly decorated floats, some of which observed the 125th anniversary of the Primary organization.

Pioneer celebrations also took place in other corners of the world. More than 100 members of the Vaiola Ward, Savaii Samoa Stake, on the island of Savaii in Samoa held



President Thomas S. Monson, accompanied by his wife, Frances, waves to crowds gathered for the Pioneer Day parade held in Salt Lake City in July.

a pioneer trek reenactment complete with six covered wagons.

In Moscow, Russia, cooks at the hotel where Utah athletes were staying for the

Moscow Utah Youth Games presented the athletes with three large cakes on Pioneer Day. ■

Church News contributed to this report.

Employment Center in Mexico Helping Students Achieve

By Don L. Searle, Church Magazines

Students in Mexico cannot afford to take lightly the opportunity to attend post-secondary school. Space is limited in public high schools, called “preparatory schools”—*la escuela preparatoria* or *la prepa*—and students have to take tough entrance exams to get in, a necessary step if they want to go on to a university later.

But a program available through the Church’s Employment Resource Center in Monterrey, Mexico, is helping Latter-day Saint students pass the exams with a high rate of success. And that is all part of fulfilling the center’s mission, says its director.

“Our primary purposes are to help place people in jobs, to prepare them to get better jobs, or to help them create their own jobs,” says the center’s director, Francisco Gámez. And the center is obviously doing things right. In the first trimester of 2003, it had 2,750 job placements—nearly 128 percent of its established goal.

But job placement addresses only one element of employment challenges in Mexico. “The greatest

employment problem for the country is [lack of] education,” says Brother Gámez. Many people struggle to gain the education they need to get a well-paying job or improve their circumstances. So in addition to its regular services, the Monterrey center offers educational help in two significant ways. The first is an exam tutoring program for young students, and the second is a program for adults who did not have similar educational opportunities in their youth.

The center works from the assumption that helping

students gain an education early on will head off future employment problems, and tutoring for the *preparatoria* entrance exams is an effective way to help. One stake has been using the tutoring program for seven years now, and during that time period 97 percent of the students who went through the program passed their *preparatoria* tests.

For those who did not have full opportunities for education when they were young, the Monterrey center has developed, in cooperation with a government agency—the National Institute for the Education of Adults (*Instituto Nacional para la Educación de los Adultos*)—a program to help adult Mexicans complete the equivalent of a high school education. Three things were required to get it underway: potential students, places to hold the classes, and qualified instructors. The Church meets part of the first need and all of the second. Many

students are Church members, who may also refer friends or neighbors to the program, and classes are held in Church meeting-houses. The government meets the third need by certifying qualified instructors recruited by the Church.

As with all of the employment center’s services, no distinction is made between Church members and others when it comes to providing services. The educational program is open to anyone prepared to take advantage of it.

“This program blessed the lives of some 1,200 people during 2002,” Brother Gámez says. Some students, including a few stake presidents who had never had the opportunity to complete secondary school, enrolled with tears of gratitude in their eyes, he says. And the example of these adults seems to have an effect on young members of their families faced with the choice of going on to the *preparatoria*; many seem to be taking the choice more seriously. ■



Patrons of the Church’s Employment Resource Center in Monterrey, Mexico, have access to resources to help them find jobs, prepare for education exams, and learn job-hunting skills.

PHOTOGRAPH BY DON L. SEARLE

First Branch Conference Held for Island Saints

By Bill Davis

Over a quarter of the population of Lae, a small atoll in the Marshall Islands, joined with Latter-day Saints on the island in May 2003 for the first branch conference held in the Lae Branch.

Under a canopy of coconut and pandanus trees, branch members had the opportunity to sustain President Gordon B. Hinckley and other leaders of the Church for the first time since Lae Branch, part of the

Kwajalein Micronesia District in the Micronesia Guam Mission, was organized in August 1992.

There are 40 Church members on this tiny atoll, which has a population of 400. The members were so excited about the branch conference they invited their friends and families of other faiths to join them. In all, 110 people attended. Because the small chapel could not hold them all, the meeting was held outdoors.

Elder Robert M. Mills, Second Counselor in the Micronesia Guam Mission presidency, spoke on the importance of the gospel and keeping the commandments. He explained the significance of the temple and receiving the fulness of the gospel.

The small group of leaders that traveled to Lae for the branch conference was also aware that the regular supply boat had not come for more than three months, creating a shortage of food on the island. Church leaders brought bags of rice, chicken, and other food items and delivered them

to the branch president for disbursement.

Before the group of leaders left the island, three young men approached Elder Mills and asked how they could join the Church. Elder Mills promised them that he would see what he could do to send missionaries to Lae to teach them the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Marshall Islands are made up of two atoll chains in the South Pacific. As of 2002, there were 3,625 members in the Marshall Islands, with 1 in every 19 people being LDS. The Marshall Islands have two districts and 11 branches. ■

Strengthening the Community

Materials Donated to Juvenile Facility

An extensive repair project at Borstal Institution, a juvenile detention facility in Accra, Ghana, has improved the lives of young inmates. Through the mutual cooperation of Latter-day Saint Charities, which provided the materials and donated medical supplies and equipment, and the Borstal Institution, the inmates were able to build and paint bookshelves, desks, and chairs, and make repairs to a new library building, a wood-working shop, and other facilities.

At a 26 June celebration marking the end of the project, many of the inmates and institution officers expressed gratitude for LDS Charities.

"We are overwhelmed

with all these tools and medical supplies, too numerous to imagine. I am grateful to all members of the Church," said Nai Alhaji, deputy director of prisons.

The project was designed to work hand in hand with the already-established goals of Borstal—to help young offenders be rehabilitated and return to society better able to be useful and self-reliant citizens. Borstal is working with 142 young men to help them plan for a useful future.

Elder Neil Darlington, representing LDS Charities, said during the celebration, "This has been an exciting project. With our limited resources, the funds have gone to the boys to help them help themselves to do as much as they can with their own hands. . . . These desks and chairs that

you [boys] made yourselves is symbolic of the gift. It is the reason we made the donations so you can do something for yourself, to try to improve your lot in life."

Volunteers Move Supplies to New School

Saving the Oregon City School District tens of thousands of dollars, volunteers from the Oregon City Oregon Stake packed and moved thousands of boxes of books and supplies from the old Oregon City High School to its new building.

The massive move was selected by the stake as its annual community service project, held each summer in one of the suburb communities that comprise the stake.

"Part of our effort each year is to get members of the community to work along with us to build bridges of faith and understanding," said Linda

Conlee, a member of the stake.

Church volunteers arranged for the use of at least a dozen trucks donated by businesses, along with everything from donated forklifts and pallets to 700 lunches for hungry helpers, said Larry Blunck, one of two coordinators for the June service project.

Teachers boxed their classroom supplies and marked each box with yellow tape and black markers. Volunteers helped with the rest. The fleet of trucks, from 20-footers to tractor-trailer rigs, split up between the two campuses the morning of the move.

A crew of volunteer amateur radio operators was stationed in the front offices of each building, with more radio operators roaming the halls putting in requests for supplies or more helpers.

"It was an enormous



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF LINDA CONLEE

Members of a stake in Oregon help move supplies from a local high school to its new building.

logistical effort that required more than a year of planning and communication,” said Sister Conlee.

Ken Rezac, business manager for the Oregon City School District, said the district is glad to have had the help. It might have cost as much as \$100,000 to hire movers, Mr. Rezac said.

Medical Supplies Donated to Island

Just a few feet from the Colonia Chapel on the island of Yap in Micronesia, missionaries and members were busy unloading a 40-foot container of medical supplies donated by the Church to the Yap Wellness Clinic. The supplies included general medical supplies, critical-care equipment, and clothing to help provide better health care services to the 12,000 people on Yap.

Dr. Ayesha Adelbai, head of the Yap Wellness Clinic, thanked Church members for

their help. “We have limited resources in Yap, and [this] is very helpful to us,” she said. “It shows how much the Church cares about people. I can’t believe how freely the Church gives to others.”

Students Donate Teddy Bears to Children

Students from the Latter-day Saint Student Association at Valdosta State University in Georgia recently donated 275 handcrafted teddy bears to local children and children in Iraq as part of a service project they dubbed Operation Teddy Bear.

The service project is ongoing, with approximately 50 people from the Latter-day Saint Student Association and community working on the bears.

One hundred of the donated teddy bears were given to local first-response teams to be distributed to children who have recently

suffered traumatic experiences, including car accidents, fires, and tornados. The students are arranging to send the remaining 175 teddy bears to soldiers in Iraq for them to give to children.

The idea for Operation Teddy Bear originated when local LDSSA adviser Elaine Cronin read an article about teddy bears being donated to traumatized children.

Instead of purchasing bears to donate, students decided to make them, setting a goal of producing 250 bears by the end of April 2003. The students surpassed their goal by 25 bears.

Students have already begun making bears for next year’s teddy bear drive. ■

Comment

For Parents of

“Perfect” Children

“Entrusted with Her Care” in the July 2003 *Ensign* (page 67) caused me to ponder about “special” children being sent to parents who can handle their challenges. I always wondered if, since all three of our children are free from mental and physical defects, Heavenly Father didn’t trust me and my wife with a challenging child. Then I heard the still, small voice whisper to me: “What about your oldest son, who isn’t attending church right now? I’ve entrusted to your care some of my precious children who need parents who can lead them back to my presence, which might be as big a challenge as coping with Down’s

syndrome or cerebral palsy.” A powerful message for parents of physically and mentally “perfect” children who are wayward at this point in their lives.

Larry Beck
Tigard, Oregon

Ennobling Biography

I was extremely pleased to read the article on Emmeline B. Wells in the July 2003 *Ensign* (page 16). It was the first article I have ever read in this magazine that truly describes the type of well-rounded women we can and should be. It was the most ennobling and elevating biographical story of a woman I have read. I would like to see more articles of this nature, which not only focus on the important role of women as wives and mothers, but also on our ability and obligation to effect changes for good within our communities.

Laura Root
Boise, Idaho

Help for Family Home Evening

In reading the June 2003 *Ensign* and enjoying the articles on family home evening, I noticed there was no reference made to the *Family Home Evening Resource Book* or the Gospel Art Picture Kit as resources in teaching family home evening. Is the Church not encouraging use of these resources anymore? We find them to be invaluable and think they should be at the center of family home evening teaching.

Pete Charles
Medford, Oregon

Editor’s note: The Family Home Evening Resource Book (item no. 31106) and the Gospel Art Picture Kit (item no. 34730) are excellent resources for families to use in teaching the gospel during family home evening. They are available at distribution centers or online at www.ldscatalog.com. ■

Correction

In the August 2003 *Ensign*, the building in the photograph on page 74 was incorrectly identified as the sawmill in Kirtland, Ohio. The building is the restored ashery in Kirtland. ■



MAKING THE MOST OF THIS ISSUE

O C T O B E R 2 0 0 3

adulthood. Discover why in “In Good Company,” page 34.

- Things can run more smoothly in your home if you attend to some business as part of every family home evening.

See “Taking Care of Family Business,” page 73.

For Family Discussion

- What are some of the things that make a marriage both durable and enjoyable? The prophet and his wife share some delightful and wise advice in “At Home with the Hinckleys,” page 22.

- How can you get more out of general conference as individuals and as a family? That’s the topic of this month’s Questions and Answers. See page 53.

- Good friends are crucial not just in childhood and the teen years but in young

Giving a Gift That Lasts

If you agree that an introduction to the gospel is a wonderful gift to give someone, then your Christmas shopping is about to become easier this year. See “Joy to the World,” page 6.

Clock or Calendar?

Exercising true faith often depends as much on our trust in the Lord’s timetable as our trust in His power. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explains this vital principle in “Timing,” page 10.

Understanding the Temple

Many of us do not gain all we could from temple work and worship. Sometimes we struggle to explain temple-related symbols and concepts as we teach our children. Elder David E. Sorensen of the Seventy provides valuable insights and understanding in

“The Doctrine of Temple Work,” page 56.

It Started with an Earthquake

Before the gospel message could reach the author and her family, their world had to be shaken up. See “The Red Knit Scarf,” page 18.

How to Grow Missionaries

There are certain basic skills and attitudes that help every missionary, and these can be taught as part of home and family life. See “Tips for Preparing Your Missionary,” page 72.

Home Teachers, Visiting Teachers

Find your monthly messages on pages 2 and 71.

You’ve Got Resources!

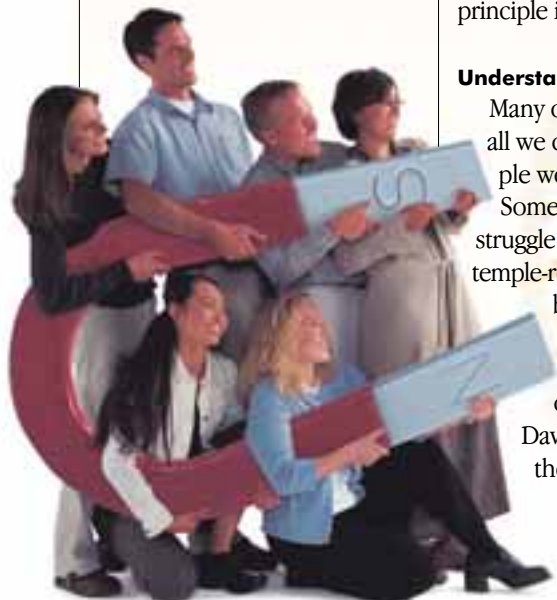
If you have anything to do with children or teens—as a parent, teacher, or leader—you’ve got some powerful players on your

team. The *Friend* and *New Era* magazines are packed with articles, stories, and activities to help you teach gospel principles at home or in the classroom. For example:

- In this month’s *Friend*, you’ll find “I Want to See the Prophet,” the story of how a young girl misses seeing the prophet at conference but receives a witness more sure than sight.

You’ll also find an installment of the New Testament Reader, “Paul and Silas in Prison,” telling how Paul obeyed the Holy Ghost and brought about the conversion of the jailer. A learning activity is included.

- In October’s *New Era*, Elder Ross Workman of the Seventy describes his own teenage struggle to choose between what he wanted and what the Lord wanted in “Staying Power.” Q&A answers questions a young man may have as he prepares to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. In “The Success Story” a girl tells how she discovered the real reasons for giving service. ■



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Necessary for Salvation, by Clark Kelley Price

Latter-day Saint pioneers have chopped a hole in the ice so a Native American woman can be baptized by immersion. Family and friends reverently bow their heads. Though it is not a convenient time or place to be baptized, all realize that this ordinance is necessary for salvation.



When all is said and done, if you can live with a good woman through your life and see your children grow to maturity as happy, able individuals who are making a contribution, then you can count your life a success,” explains President Gordon B. Hinckley, reflecting on his 66 years of marriage and family life. “It isn’t how many cars you own, the size of your house, or things of that kind. It is the quality of life that you’ve lived that makes a difference.” See “At Home with the Hinckleys,” p. 22.