

# Ensign

A photograph of a family walking through a forest with autumn leaves. A man in a blue and white striped shirt and glasses carries a young girl in a pink shirt on his shoulders. A woman in a floral dress and a beige cardigan walks beside him, holding his hand. The scene is set in a wooded area with fallen leaves on the ground.

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*"Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven,  
which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."*

**Matthew 13:33**

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# Ensign

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## Family Home Evening Ideas

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



**“Celebrating Family Home Evening,”**  
**page 42:** Whether you never miss a week or  
this is your first try, consider holding a special  
family home evening *in honor of* family home  
evening! You could read the article to see  
how families around the world enjoy spending  
time with each other while learning the gos-  
pel. Consider discussing how you will achieve  
your goal of holding family home evening.  
How might you need to adapt it to accom-  
modate your family’s needs? You might  
recommit as a family to make this 100-year tra-  
dition a priority in your own home, regardless  
of your situation.

**“The Worth of Souls and the Problem  
of Bullying,”** **page 70:** You might begin  
family home evening by sharing the story

of Nephi’s suffering at the hands of Laman and Lemuel as they sailed on the promised land (see 1 Nephi 18). Your family could then discuss what bullying is and why some people become bullies, highlighting the strategies given in the article on what a child should do if he or she is ever bullied. You may also want to use the material from the *Friend* suggested on page 71 to talk with your children not only about responding to bullying but also about recognizing the worth of others and being kind.

### USING PICTURES

One of the most memorable family home evening activities we had when I was growing up was what we called “picture chase.” My father would hold up a picture representing a story from the scriptures. The first child to correctly identify the picture then told what he or she could remember of the story. All of us would then look up the story in our scriptures and read it together. After reading it, we would discuss how the scripture story applied to our family. (Find many scripture-related pictures at [lds.org/media-library](http://lds.org/media-library).)

Sarah Hunter Hyatt, Washington, USA

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magazine.



By President  
Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Second Counselor in  
the First Presidency

# Finish

## WITH YOUR TORCH STILL LIT

In ancient Greece, runners competed in a relay race called a *lampadedromia*.<sup>1</sup> In the race, runners held a torch in their hand and passed it on to the next runner until the final member of the team crossed the finish line.

The prize wasn't awarded to the team that ran fastest—it was awarded to the first team to reach the finish line with its torch still lit.

There is a profound lesson here, one taught by prophets ancient and modern: while it is important to start the race, it is even more important that we finish with our torch still lit.

### Solomon Started Strong

The great King Solomon is an example of someone who started strong. When he was young, he “loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father” (1 Kings 3:3). God was pleased with him and said, “Ask what I shall give thee” (1 Kings 3:5).

Instead of asking for riches or a long life, Solomon asked for “an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad” (1 Kings 3:9).

This pleased the Lord so much that He blessed Solomon not only with wisdom but also with wealth beyond measure and a long life.

Though Solomon was indeed very wise and did many great things, he did not finish strong. Sadly, later in his

life, “Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord” (1 Kings 11:6).

### Finishing Our Own Race

How many times have we started something and not finished? Diets? Exercise programs? Commitments to read the scriptures daily? Decisions to be better disciples of Jesus Christ?

How often do we make resolutions in January and pursue them with red-hot determination for a few days, a few weeks, or even a few months only to find that by October, the flame of our commitment is little more than cold ash?

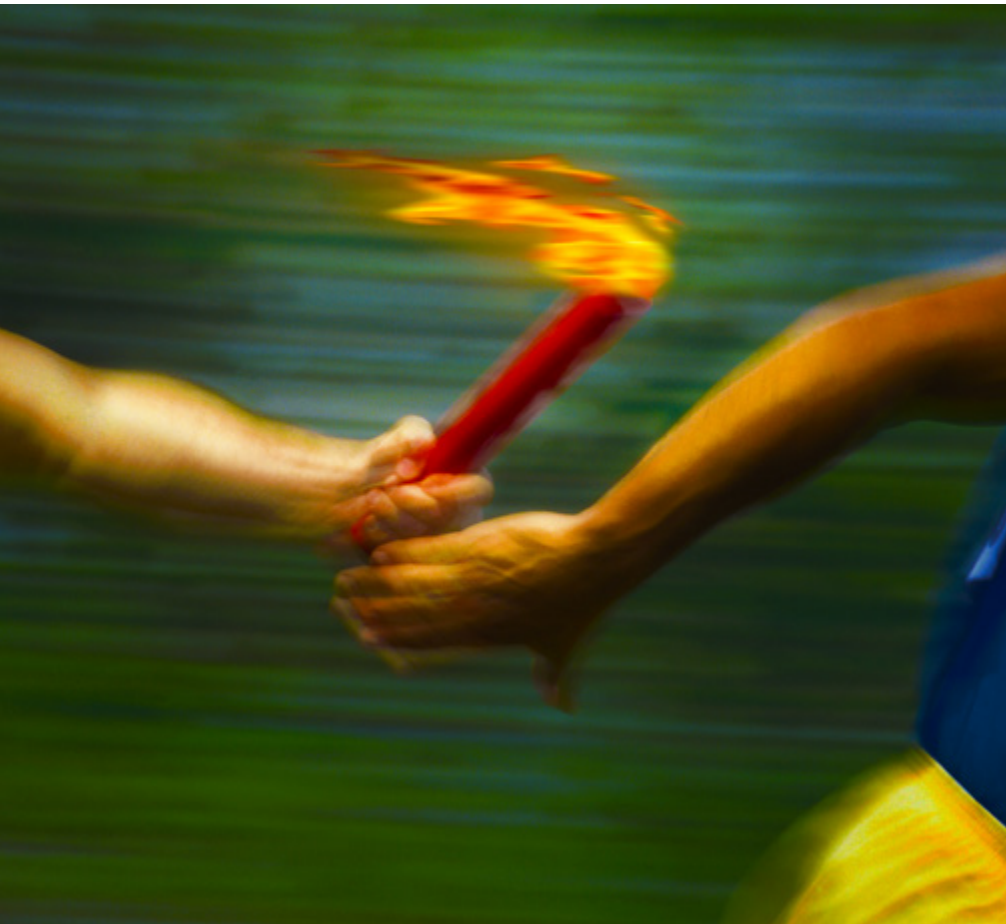
One day I ran across a funny picture of a dog lying next to a piece of paper he had shredded. It read, “Certificate of Dog-Obedience Training.”

We are like that sometimes.

We have good intentions; we start strong; we want to be our best self. But in the end we leave our resolutions shredded, discarded, and forgotten.

It's human nature to stumble, fail, and sometimes want to drop out of the race. But as disciples of Jesus Christ, we have committed not only to begin the race but also to finish it—and finish it with our torch still burning brightly. The Savior promised His disciples, “He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13).





As long as we continue to rise up and move toward our Savior, we win the race with our torches burning brightly.

For the torch is not about us or about what we do.

It is about the Savior of the world. And that is a Light that can never be dimmed. It is a Light that swallows the darkness, heals our wounds, and blazes even in the midst of the deepest sorrow and unfathomable darkness.

It is a Light that surpasses understanding.

May each of us finish the path we have begun. And with the help of our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, we

will finish joyfully and with our torches still lit. ■

**NOTE**

1. *Harpers Dictionary of Classical Antiquities* (1898), "Lampadedromia," [www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper). Pausanias describes a different torch race in which torchbearers, possibly one from each tribe, did not hand off their torch. But as in the *lampadedromia*, the winner was the first to reach the race's end with his torch still lit.

Let me paraphrase what the Savior has promised in our day: If we keep His commandments and finish with our torch still lit, we will have eternal life, which is the greatest of all the gifts of God (see D&C 14:7; see also 2 Nephi 31:20).

### The Light That Never Dies

Sometimes after stumbling, failing, or even giving up, we get discouraged and believe our light has gone out and our race is lost. But I testify that the Light of Christ cannot be extinguished. It shines in the darkest night and will relight our hearts if only we incline our hearts to Him (see 1 Kings 8:58).

No matter how often or how far we fall, the Light of Christ ever burns brightly. And even in the deepest night, if we but step toward Him, His light will consume the shadows and reignite our souls.

This race of discipleship is not a sprint; it's a marathon. And it makes little difference how fast we go. In fact, the only way we can lose the race is by finally giving in or giving up.

### TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

Consider encouraging those you teach to reflect on where they are in their "races" of life. Are their torches burning brightly? You could read the phrase that says the Light of Christ is "a Light that swallows the darkness, heals our wounds, and blazes even in the midst of the deepest sorrow and unfathomable darkness." Then consider discussing with those you teach how the Light of Christ has influenced their lives in the past and how it influences their lives now.

## Fuel Your Torch: The 30-Day Trial

For youth in the Church with busy lives, it can be easy to get stuck in a rut of routine, especially with spiritual things. We read our scriptures, pray, and worship the same way almost every day and then wonder why we seem to be in a spiritual slump.

One of the best ways to keep your spiritual torch burning brightly is to make sure you're having meaningful spiritual experiences. But that is easier said than done, so here is a suggestion to help you continue to spiritually progress: Think of a gospel-related activity you've never done before (or hardly ever do) and commit to doing it every day for a month. You can start small because you'll find that it's easier to turn small



changes into lasting ones. Doing things that take us out of our spiritual comfort zone might require more faith and effort on our part, but when we do them, we are inviting the Holy Ghost to be with us, and we are showing greater faith in Heavenly Father and a desire to draw nearer to Him. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Make a goal to say your prayers morning and night. Try praying out loud.
- Wake up 15 minutes early and read your scriptures before school.
- Read past general conference talks.
- Post a scripture from the Book of Mormon on social media.
- Listen to hymns or Church music instead of your regular music.

## Make Your Torch Brighter

A long time ago in Greece, there was a race where the runners held lit torches. Whoever ran the whole race with the torch still lit was the winner. President Uchtdorf says

life is like that race. The torch we hold is the Light of Christ. When we try to be like Jesus Christ, we make our torches burn brighter.

Smile or say hi to someone who looks lonely

Stay angry at someone

Take care of your body

Make fun of your brother or sister

Obey the prophet

Give up when you make a mistake

Help someone



Color in the circles of things this boy can do to be like Jesus and make his torch brighter.



Prayerfully study this material and seek to know what to share. How will understanding the divine attributes of the Savior increase your faith in Him and bless those you watch over through visiting teaching? For more information, go to [reliefsociety.lds.org](http://reliefsociety.lds.org).



Faith, Family, Relief

# Divine Attributes of Jesus Christ: Filled with Charity and Love

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

The Guide to the Scriptures defines charity as “the highest, noblest, strongest kind of love” (“Charity,” [scriptures.lds.org](http://scriptures.lds.org)). It is the pure love of Jesus Christ. As we learn of Jesus Christ and strive to become like Him, we will begin to feel His pure love in our lives and be prompted to love and serve others as He would. “Charity is having patience with someone who has let us down,” said President Thomas S. Monson. “It is resisting the impulse to become offended easily. It is accepting weaknesses and shortcomings. It is accepting people as they truly are. It is looking beyond physical appearances to attributes that will not dim through time. It is resisting the impulse to categorize others.”<sup>1</sup>

In the Book of Mormon, we learn the great truth that we “pray unto the



Father with all the energy of heart, that [we] may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that [we] may become the sons [and daughters] of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure” (Moroni 7:48).

## Additional Scriptures

John 13:34–35; 1 Corinthians 13:1–13; 1 Nephi 11:21–23; Ether 12:33–34

## From Our History

“A sister who had recently been widowed was grateful for visiting teachers who mourned with her and comforted her. She wrote: ‘I was in desperate need of someone to whom I could reach out; someone who would listen to me. . . . And they listened. They comforted me. They wept with me. And they hugged me . . . [and] helped me out of the deep despair and depression of those first months of loneliness.’

“Another woman summed up her feelings when she was the recipient of true charity from a visiting teacher: ‘I knew that I was more than just a number on the record books for her to visit. I knew that she cared about me.’”<sup>2</sup>

Like these sisters, many Latter-day Saints around the world can attest to the truth of this statement by President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “How consoling it is to know that no matter where [a family may] go, a Church family awaits them. From the day they arrive, he will belong to a quorum of the priesthood and she will belong to Relief Society.”<sup>3</sup>

## Consider This

How is Christ our perfect example of love and charity?

## NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Charity Never Faileth,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 124.
2. *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 119–20.
3. *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 87.

# WAS I DOING ENOUGH?

By Brooke Barton

*A lesson about lost sheep helped me understand how to best fulfill my calling.*

At the age of 23, I was called as a Relief Society president in our married student ward. I remember the inadequacies I felt, coupled with the desire to do my best. I was eager and excited to serve but doubted my ability to be a good leader.

After a few months as the Relief Society president, I felt that I wasn't doing enough. I wanted to be able to connect with the sisters and be in tune with their individual needs, but I felt that I was coming up short.

I talked with my bishop and expressed my concerns. I explained how I just couldn't reach all of the sisters I wanted to. I described how I wished that I had five of me to get the job done the way I thought it should be. I tried to keep my concerns light and humorous, but my eyes quickly filled with tears of discouragement. He smiled and offered some of the best leadership advice I have ever received.

"Are you familiar with the story of the shepherd who, upon losing one of his flock, left 'the ninety and nine' to find it?" he asked (see Luke 15:4–7). I nodded.

"There seems to be so much wisdom in that parable," he continued. "The shepherd knew that the ninety and nine would be all right if he left them to look for the one lost sheep."

Then my bishop offered the following advice:



"You see, the ninety and nine have a great way of looking after each other when you're gone. They will buoy each other up and hold together very well. I suggest that you concentrate on the ones who seem lost. The rest will be OK."

I felt a strong witness that what he had told me was true and that I didn't need to worry about the entire flock all at once. My purpose was to find those who were lost and to invite them back into the fold. In that way, Heavenly Father's purposes could be brought to pass, and I could be a tool in His hands.

As I heeded the bishop's counsel, I felt a greater measure of understanding of how the Lord would have me serve in His kingdom. I also received spiritual fulfillment that strengthened me in my calling because I was serving as the Savior had instructed. Through the power of the Holy Ghost, my bishop had given me a great gift of understanding and insight.

I testify that as we pray and seek inspiration from our priesthood leaders, they will be inspired to show us how to lead in righteous ways. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

# PUMPKINS OR MELONS?

By Rachel Cox

*Sometimes there isn't a wrong choice.  
There's just a choice.*

My father was quite surprised to discover that the pumpkin seeds he planted last year decided to sprout in the middle of the melon patch this summer. The melons were coming along quite well—but so were the pumpkins. So well, in fact, that my father was tempted to let the pumpkin plants continue to grow. Yet he knew if he did, the pumpkins would stifle the growth of the melons.

So he had a choice to make. He could either pull up the pumpkins so the melons would have a better chance of flourishing or let the pumpkin plants grow and watch them possibly crowd out the melon plants, which would likely produce a lesser product from both. Pumpkins or melons? This choice was between two good options.

In weighing the two, my father decided to pull up the prosperous pumpkin plants. Not only were they late to sprout, but he decided that he wanted the *planned* melons more than he wanted the surprise pumpkins.



This experience prompted me to think about the choices we make, particularly in our relationships with others. Whether with our family, our friends, our employer, or those we date or marry, when a choice is between two good things, recognizing the right or best option is sometimes difficult, especially when we want to avoid making wrong choices. Fear of making the wrong choice sometimes paralyzes us, and that fear can inhibit us from moving forward in faith. But the truth is, sometimes there isn't a *wrong* choice. There's just a choice. In my father's case, he based his decision on what he *valued* more. He hated to see the pumpkins die, but he knew he would regret the damage they would do to the melons later.

In life, some choices we face often don't matter, such as, what food should I eat for breakfast? What color of dress should I wear today? When faced with a choice between two good things, we might do as my father did and simply ask, "What do I value more?" Then make a decision and move forward in faith, trusting the Lord to correct us if we are somehow wrong.

But some choices do matter *a lot*. President Thomas S. Monson once said: "Decisions are constantly before us. To make them wisely, courage is needed—the courage to say no, the courage to say yes. Decisions *do* determine destiny" ("The Three Rs of Choice," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 68). When faced with these kinds of choices, a better question to ask is, "What does the *Lord* value more?" If we know the answer to that question, all we need do is align our values with His and then follow through with that choice. It will always be the right one. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

# MY WALK WITH HIM

By Kathy Tawzer

*After a car accident took my daughter's life, the only way I survived the trial was to walk with Christ every day.*

A few years ago, my 16-year-old daughter, Kaylee, was killed in an automobile accident. In an instant, my worst nightmare became a living reality. Kaylee was the youngest child of five. She was outgoing, bold, sensitive, loving, and genuine. She was the joy of our lives.

That dark day became the beginning of a long journey. I felt as though the life I had known was ripped away from me. I prayed continually,

searched for answers, and pleaded for strength. However, the darkness surrounded me, and I sank deep into sorrow and grief. The intensity was unlike anything I had felt before. I felt incapable of dealing with what was now my reality.

I searched every book and article for help in dealing with the death of a teenage child. But I could find nothing that related to me. I took this personally and felt that maybe I just

wasn't important. After all, how could a loving Heavenly Father take someone from me whom I loved so much? He surely knew how deeply I would grieve her loss and that it would be far too much to ask of me.

I realized that I would not pass this critical test if I did not take a giant leap of faith. Only a few weeks following her death, my husband and I were set apart to be ordinance workers in the temple. It was the only thing that felt right. It did not instantly bring peace or take away the pain, but it did, however, give me a place where I felt loved and safe. Serving in the temple helped me see that the Savior was there to comfort me, lift me, take my hand, and guide me minute by minute. The words of my favorite scriptures were never truer than they were now:

"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. . . .



## TO FIND HEALING

"Our daily walk with Jesus Christ leads to peace and purpose in this life and profound joy and eternal salvation in the world to come. . . .

"Those who suffer or grieve find healing [in the gospel of Jesus Christ]."

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "Come, Join with Us," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 22.



“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:18, 27).

We can talk of Christ, but it is very different to walk with Christ. The only way for me to survive this trial was to walk with Him every day. I needed to stay focused on Heavenly Father’s and the Savior’s love and ability to succor me. I had to believe that I do matter and that the Lord can and will make up for all that I am lacking. Only then could I truly turn my broken, fragile heart to Him.

I believe that He feels my pain and sorrow and is willing to mourn with

me, to understand my deepest emotions and feelings of loss. Every day I pray to Heavenly Father to be able to give my heart to Him, to trust Him, and to allow Him to heal me.

This journey is lifelong as I will yearn for and miss Kaylee every day, and the walk will never be easy. But I know in whom I can trust and with whom I can walk to guide me along my journey. ■

*The author lives in Oregon, USA.*

### **HOW CAN I BE “LED THROUGH MINE AFFLICTIONS”?**

Nephi experienced many trials yet remained faithful. Consider reading 2 Nephi 4:20–35 to see how he overcame temptations, enemies, and afflictions.



By **Randall L. Ridd**

Served as second counselor in the Young Men general presidency from 2013 to 2015

# LIVING WITH Real Intent

I learned the importance of real intent when I was a young seminary student. Our teacher challenged us to read the Book of Mormon. To keep track of our progress, he created a chart with our names down one side and the books in the Book of Mormon across the top. Each time we read a book, he placed a star by our name.

At first I didn't put much effort into reading, and it wasn't long before I found myself getting further and further behind. Spurred by a sense of embarrassment and my innate competitive spirit, I started reading. Every time I got a star, I felt good. And the more stars I got, the more motivated I was to read—between classes, after school, during every spare minute.

This would be a great story if I could tell you that as a result of my efforts I finished first in the class—but I didn't. And that would be OK if I could tell you that I got something

better than first place—a testimony of the Book of Mormon. But that didn't happen either. I didn't get a testimony. What I got was stars. I got stars because that was why I was reading. To use Moroni's words, that was my "real intent."

Moroni was clear when he described how to find out if the Book of Mormon is true: "And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with *real intent*, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost" (Moroni 10:4; emphasis added).

## The Right Reasons

Looking back, I can see that the Lord was totally fair with me. Why should I have expected to find

**Real intent means doing the right thing for the right reasons.**

anything other than what I was looking for? Real intent means doing the right thing for the right reasons; I was reading the right book for the *wrong* reasons.

It wasn't until years later that I finally read the Book of Mormon with real intent. Now I know that the Book of Mormon fulfills its divine purpose



of testifying of the life and mission of Jesus Christ because I have read it with real intent.

The lesson I learned about real intent and the Book of Mormon applies to all of us in all aspects of our lives. Too often we passively follow patterns and habits that have been developed through the years—we just go through the motions without carefully considering where those motions are taking us. Living with real intent adds focus and purpose to our lives and can make all the difference. Living with real intent means understanding the “why”—the motives behind our actions. Socrates said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.”<sup>1</sup> So ponder how you spend your time, and ask yourself regularly, “Why?” This will help you develop the ability to see beyond the moment. It’s far better to look ahead and ask yourself, “Why would I do that?” than to look back and say, “Why, oh, why did I do that?”

### **What Does the Lord Want You to Do?**

When I was a young man, I had decided not to go on a mission. After a year in college and a year in the army, I had a good job at a local hospital as an X-ray technician. Life seemed to be going well, and a mission didn’t seem necessary.



***Living with real intent means understanding the “why”—the motives behind our actions. Socrates said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.”***

One day, Dr. James Pingree, a surgeon at the hospital, invited me to lunch. In the course of our conversation, he discovered that I was not planning on serving a mission, and he asked why. I told him I was a little older and it was probably too late. He told me that wasn’t a very good reason, saying that he had gone on his mission after he had finished medical school. Then he bore testimony of the importance of his mission.

His testimony had a significant impact on me. It caused me to pray as I’d never prayed before—with *real intent*. I could think of a lot of reasons not to go on a mission: I was shy. I had a job I liked. I had a scholarship possibility that wouldn’t be available after a mission. Most important, I had a girlfriend who waited for me while I was in the army, and I knew she wouldn’t

wait another two years! I prayed to get confirmation that my reasons were valid and that I was right.

To my frustration, I couldn’t get the easy yes-or-no answer I was hoping for. Then the thought came to me: “What does the Lord want you to do?” I had to acknowledge that He wanted me to serve a mission, and this became a decisive moment in my life. Was I going to do what I wanted to do, or was I going to do the will of the Lord? That is a question we would all do well to ask ourselves often.

Gratefully, I chose to serve a mission and was assigned to labor in the Mexico North Mission.

### **Eternal Consequences**

Thirty-five years later, my son encouraged me to visit Mexico with him. We hoped to find some of the



people I had taught. We attended a sacrament meeting in the little town where I began my mission, but I didn't recognize a single person. After the meeting, we spoke with one of the members and asked if he knew anyone on my list of people I had taught so many years before. We went through the list without any success, until we got to the last name: Leonor Lopez de Enriquez.

"Oh, yes," the man said. "This family is in another ward, but they attend church in this building. Their sacrament meeting is next."

We didn't have to wait long before Leonor came walking into the building. Although she was now in her mid-70s, I recognized her immediately, and she recognized me. We shared a long, tearful hug.

"We've prayed for 35 years that you would return so we could thank you for bringing the gospel to our family," she said.

As other family members entered the building, we shared hugs and tears. Soon we discovered that the bishop of this ward was one of Leonor's sons, the chorister was a granddaughter, the pianist was a grandson, and so were several young men in the Aaronic Priesthood. One of her daughters was married to a counselor in the stake presidency. Another daughter was married to the bishop of a nearby ward. Most of

Leonor's children had gone on missions, and now grandchildren have also served missions.

We learned that Leonor was a much better missionary than I was. Today her children thankfully recall her tireless efforts to teach them the gospel. She taught them that small decisions, over time, result in a full, righteous, and happy life, and they have taught those things to others. All told, more than 500 people have come into the Church because of this one wonderful family.

And it can all be traced back to a conversation over lunch. I often think that if Dr. Pingree had been more focused on his career or other worldly pursuits, he might never have asked why I wasn't serving a mission. But his focus was on others and on furthering the work of the Lord. He planted a seed that has grown, brought forth fruit, and continues to multiply exponentially (see Mark 4:20). My mission taught me the eternal consequences of a single decision to do the Lord's will.

### **Remember Your Eternal Purpose**

I've often looked back on my life and wondered why it was so difficult for me to make the decision to go on a mission. It was hard because I got distracted; I lost sight of my eternal purpose—the real intent of why we are here.

My desires and my will were not aligned with the Lord's will; otherwise, the decision would have been easier. And why were they not aligned? I went to church and I partook of the sacrament on Sundays, but I didn't focus on its meaning. I prayed, but I was mostly going through the motions. I read the scriptures but only sporadically and without real intent.

I encourage you to live a deliberate and focused life—even if you haven't consistently done so in the past. Don't be discouraged by thoughts of what you have already done or not done. Let the Savior wipe the slate clean. Remember what He has said: "As oft as they repented and sought forgiveness, with *real intent*, they were forgiven" (Moroni 6:8; emphasis added).

Start now. Live an intentional life, understanding why you do what you do and where it will lead. As you do these things, you will discover that the most important "why" behind everything you do is that you love the Lord and recognize His perfect love for you. May you find great joy in your search for perfection and in understanding and doing His will. ■

*From a worldwide devotional for young adults, "Living with Purpose: The Importance of Real Intent," delivered at Brigham Young University–Idaho on January 11, 2015. For the full address, go to [devotionals.lds.org](http://devotionals.lds.org).*

#### **NOTE**

1. Socrates, in Plato, *Apology* (2001), 55.

# Faith, Service, and a Loaf of Bread

By Nissanka (Nissh) Muthu Mudalige

I moved to Armenia from Sri Lanka to attend school in 2007, met the missionaries, and was baptized the next year. After my baptism I yearned to serve a full-time mission. I wasn't able to because I was over 25; however, the mission president called me to serve a mini-mission. My responsibilities included working with the other elders and preaching the gospel. I loved it.

## A Test of Courage

At the same time, money was tight. Then my father's business collapsed, and he could no longer send me money. I had just enough for a few days' food. My university was close to my residence, but the mission office was a 30-minute bus ride. The trip there and back cost me 200 drams (about U.S.\$0.50).

I still wanted to magnify my missionary service. When an elder called me to visit a few members with him and asked that we meet at the Central

Branch building—over 40 minutes from me by bus—I said yes, even though I had only enough money to buy one loaf of bread. I walked to the Central Branch building. It was a hot summer day, so I had to rest and drink water along the way. It took over two hours before I finally arrived. On the two-hour walk back home, I spent my last coin on bread.

## A Greater Test

Soon after arriving home, I received a phone call from the same elder. He said, "Nissh, I am sorry to call you again, but one of the members is sick. Could you come and be my companion while I give her a blessing?" I wanted to tell him that I was too tired after walking four hours in the heat, but my heart didn't let me. My faith gave me strength and courage, so I said I would go.

Right then my roommate came in. I asked him if I could borrow enough money to get me to the mission office.

**As I walked home,  
I didn't feel tired.  
The only thing I could  
think of was the  
old woman's smile.**

He said that he had only money to buy food until the end of the month, so he couldn't loan me any.

Suddenly, my eye focused on the bread I had just purchased sitting on the table, fresh—the only food I had. I picked it up and said, "I just bought this bread; can you take it and give me a 100 dram?" He smiled and said he would. I took the money and rode the bus to the mission office.



We visited that Church member, an older woman who was bedridden. She could hardly open her eyes to look at us, but she smiled at me. She talked to me specifically, reminiscing on memories from earlier in her life. She was so happy to see us in her home. Together, the elder and I gave her a blessing. She gave us another smile, and I could see the light in her face. Her daughter mentioned that our visit was the first time in many months that she had seen her mother smile.

I again walked another two hours back home, but this time I didn't feel tired. The only thing I could think of was the smile of the old woman and our conversation. I felt Heavenly

Father had wanted me to visit her; maybe that was what she needed to have greater happiness during some of her last days. I felt very grateful for my opportunity to participate in that visit. I asked Heavenly Father to bless that woman. I also asked Him to bless me with daily food during my difficult financial time.

### **Blessings from Above**

God didn't leave me alone. My friend shared his food with me that month. I never went to bed hungry, even though I didn't have even a penny in my pocket. I walked to the mission office every day—and I never felt tired. The sacrifice made me happy.

That month I received many lunch and dinner invitations. One day my roommate and I were both destitute and had only a small loaf of bread for breakfast. That evening we were so hungry. We walked down the street to try to borrow money from a friend when a car stopped with two native Armenians inside. The men asked us where we were from. After we said we were from Sri Lanka, they invited us to their home for dinner. They loved hearing all about Sri Lanka and we had a wonderful dinner.

I love my Heavenly Father and all the blessings He gives to me continually. He is there to help me, and I feel His loving care for me every day. ■

*The author lives in Armenia.*



By Elder  
Shayne M. Bowen  
Of the Seventy

# The Blessings and Mission of the Seed of Abraham

One night in ancient times three horsemen were riding across a desert. As they crossed a dry riverbed, out of the darkness a voice called, “Halt!” They obeyed. The voice then told them to dismount, pick up handfuls of pebbles, put the pebbles in their pockets, and remount.

“If you have done as I commanded,” the voice then said, “tomorrow at sunup you will be both glad and sorry.”

The horsemen rode on. When the sun rose, they reached into their pockets and found that the pebbles had been transformed into diamonds and other precious stones. Just as they had been warned, they were glad they had taken some pebbles but were sorry they had not taken more.

In this tale, the quantity of pebbles is everything. But in real life, the quality of the pebbles we pick up on our journey is what’s most important. I pray that we may identify which pebbles are of greatest worth. When we understand who we are, identifying those pebbles becomes easier.

And when we know who we are, we are empowered to act in accordance with the potential within us and to avoid deception. The father of all lies—Lucifer, the great deceiver—would have you believe otherwise.

## Rightful Heirs

To avoid being deceived, I have found great protection in personal revelation I received when I was only 17 years old. That personal revelation is called my patriarchal blessing. In that blessing I have found the answers to some of my most profound questions.

I would like to share one example. When faced with a choice, my blessing counsels me, I am to harmonize that choice with the teachings of my parents, leaders of the Church, and the scriptures. Otherwise, because the world’s temptations are both camouflaged and enticing, I could be deceived.

Another way my patriarchal blessing has helped me is by telling me who I am. I testify that you and I are the seed of Abraham and chosen

**We are the covenant people of God. Because we know who we are, we must act accordingly.**

members of the house of Israel. This great truth means we are rightful heirs of all that the Father has. It also means we are heirs of Abraham. In the book of Abraham, we get a glimpse of who Abraham was and therefore who we are.

“Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;

“And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the



midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born” (Abraham 3:22–23).

Abraham was “chosen.” When the scriptures say that “many are called, but few are chosen” (D&C 121:40), I believe that obedience and faithfulness are what cause those who are “called” to become “chosen.” Many are called, but few are faithful and obedient. God says to Abraham that he was one of the great and noble ones because of his obedience before he was born (see Alma 13:3).

Not only do we see our father Abraham in the verses above, but we see ourselves as well. The Prophet Joseph Smith said: “Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was. I suppose that I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council.”<sup>1</sup>

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) said to young men: “You have been born at this time for a sacred

*Because we know who we are, we must act accordingly. There are places we can never go. There are websites we can never visit. There are thoughts we can never entertain. There are impure practices we can never be part of.*

and glorious purpose. It is not by chance that you have been reserved to come to earth in this last dispensation of the fulness of times. Your birth at this particular time was foreordained in the eternities.”<sup>2</sup>

Sisters, do not think you are any less exceptional. I testify that all of you were there in the Grand Council and that you are part of the great and noble ones we learn about in Abraham chapter 3.

Who is Abraham? He is an ancient prophet and the father of many nations. But he is much closer than that to me. He is my grandfather. I know that fact by reading my patriarchal blessing. Abraham is your grandfather too. If you read your patriarchal blessing, you will see that you too are of his lineage.

If you don't have a patriarchal blessing, prepare for it and get it. Our Heavenly Father has some amazing things He wants to share with you. One of the greatest things is the knowledge that you are the seed of Abraham.

### Our Mission

Jesus Christ, Jehovah of the Old Testament, promised Father Abraham specific blessings.

“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations.” Then follows the part that talks specifically about you and me and our mission: “And thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed [us] after thee, that in their hands [our hands] they [we] shall

bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations” (Abraham 2:9).

Why is it so important to our Father in Heaven and the Savior that we bear this priesthood unto all nations? Because “this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. . . .

“And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh” (D&C 84:19, 21).

Without the ordinances of the higher priesthood, received in the holy temples of God, we will never return home to Father. We do missionary work to take the priesthood and the temples to the world. When President Thomas S. Monson called for more missionaries during general conference in October 2010,<sup>3</sup> he was echoing words the Savior uttered thousands of years ago to Abraham, our father:

“And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father;

“And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee

(that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal” (Abraham 2:10–11).

### Blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant

The covenant God made with Abraham blesses us in at least four ways:

1. We are blessed through Jesus Christ, who came through the lineage of Abraham.
2. We are blessed through the priesthood conferred upon Abraham and his descendants.
3. We are blessed through the scattering of Israel, by which the blood of Israel was sprinkled among the nations. Thus, the nations partake of the leaven of righteousness on condition of repentance and are entitled to the promises made to the children of Abraham.
4. We are blessed “that after [Abraham's] time all who embraced the gospel should be called by his name, . . . should be numbered among his seed, and should receive the Holy Ghost.”<sup>4</sup>

Everyone who is a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a descendant of Israel either by bloodline or adoption. If you magnify your callings and receive



*Because we know who we are, we do missionary work to take the priesthood and the temples to the world.*

kingdom, and the elect of God.

“And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord;

“For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

“And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

“And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father’s kingdom; therefore *all that my Father hath* shall be given unto him” (D&C 84:33–38; emphasis added).

This is the promised inheritance: “all that [the] Father hath,” the ability to be like Him. By making and keeping sacred covenants, we will receive all that God has, and He will allow us to return to live with Him the kind of life that He lives.

God has allowed us, through His love and grace, to enter into a sacred covenant with Him, the Abrahamic covenant, which includes the baptismal, priesthood, and temple covenants necessary for exaltation. These covenants and associated blessings flow today through the house of Israel.

We are the house of Israel. We are the seed of Abraham. We are the covenant people of God. Because we know who we are, we must act accordingly. There are places we can never go. There are websites we

all of the ordinances offered by our Father in the temple, you are entitled to all the promised blessings—the inheritance. What is promised to the faithful, obedient seed of Abraham, the inheritance received together by a worthy priesthood bearer who magnifies his calling and a worthy woman who magnifies her calling?

“For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

“They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and

can never visit. There are thoughts we can never entertain. There are impure practices we can never be part of. Those things are not worthy of who we are.

### Precious Pebbles in Our Path

Sometimes as we move through our journey here on earth, we underestimate the value of the precious pebbles Heavenly Father places in our path. To help us know which pebbles are of most worth, He has given us fasting, prayer, and scripture study. He has placed living prophets on the earth to guide us. He has given us patriarchal blessings. He has sent His Only Begotten Son to pay the price we can't pay, to atone for what we can't atone for. He has provided the plan of happiness. He has told us who we are.

Sometimes the pebbles seem small and insignificant. When He says fill your pockets, we sometimes hear another voice say, "Don't worry. They are only pebbles. They will slow you down. They will be heavy and cumbersome to carry. They're not worth the hassle. Besides, if they are that important, your friends will have some extras."

Those who follow that other voice often wander in strange paths that promise excitement and thrills but

*Because we know who we are, we are empowered to act in accordance with the potential within us and to avoid deception.*

always deliver hollow, cheap, and regretful consequences. Brothers and sisters, now is the time to prepare to meet God. Now is the time to act according to the knowledge He has given us.

Because of the goodness of God, the important things "are made known unto us in plain terms, that we may understand, that we cannot err; . . . therefore, we are thus highly favored, for we have these glad tidings declared unto us in all parts of our vineyard" (Alma 13:23).

As we wander in this wilderness below, the pebbles we gather will be transformed, and on that glorious,

light-filled morning when we see Him again, the precious gems we possess will give us rightful entry into His presence. May we be wise enough and diligent enough to accept, understand, and apply all that the Father has prepared for us. ■

*From a devotional address, "Out of the Wilderness into the Light," given at Brigham Young University–Idaho on March 1, 2011.*

*For the full address, visit [web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches](http://web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches).*

### NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 511.
2. Ezra Taft Benson, "To the 'Youth of the Noble Birthright,'" *Ensign*, May 1986, 43.
3. See Thomas S. Monson, "As We Meet Together Again," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 5–6.
4. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 3:246–47.





# ONE TRUE SOURCE OF LIGHT REMAINS

By Emily Armstrong

*I stand once more below the peak,  
Awaiting still the rising sun,  
And with the quiet moment seek  
Assurance from the Holy One.*

*What with the waiting hour comes?  
Will light assail the darkness here?  
The earth unveiled, as ripened plums  
Drip color as the day draws near?*

*Sweet light in radiant softness glows,  
Ethereal canvas painted bright;  
O'er tiered horizon sunlight flows,  
Dismissing doubt and dark of night.*

*We speak of hope, of faith unmoved,  
And yet forget throughout the day  
The light revealed, the promise proved  
When dusk returns and dims the way.*

*But One true source of light remains,  
A single lamp, a rugged path:  
The Son, who suffered all our pains  
To give us all His Father hath.*

*I've yet a mountain peak to climb;  
The journey's end is distant still;  
But trust in Him and in His time  
Renews my strength to do His will.*

See Isaiah 40:31





*By understanding and obediently following God's plan, we keep ourselves from wandering off the path that leads back to our Heavenly Father.*

# The Plan of Salvation

A SACRED TREASURE  
OF KNOWLEDGE TO GUIDE US



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

*The key to our success in our premortal life was  
our support of the Father's plan. It is likewise  
the key to our success in mortal life.*

I have often pondered the hopelessness of God's children wandering in the dark and dreary world, not knowing who they are, where they came from, why they are here on earth, or where they are going after their mortal lives.

We need not wander. God has revealed eternal truths to answer these questions. They are found in His great plan for His children. In the scriptures this plan is known as the "plan of redemption,"<sup>1</sup> the "plan of happiness,"<sup>2</sup> and the "plan of salvation."<sup>3</sup>

By understanding and obediently following God's plan, we keep ourselves from wandering off the path that leads back to our Heavenly Father.<sup>4</sup> Then, and only then, can we live the kind of life He leads, which is "eternal life, . . . the greatest of all the gifts of God."<sup>5</sup>

The gift of eternal life is worth any effort to study, learn, and apply the plan of salvation. All humankind will be resurrected and receive the blessing of immortality. But to achieve eternal life—the life God leads<sup>6</sup>—is worth living the plan of salvation with all our heart, mind, might, and strength.

## Understanding the Plan of Salvation

How empowering it is to know the plan! The plan of salvation is one of the greatest treasures of knowledge ever given to mankind because it explains the eternal purpose of life. Without it, we are truly wandering in the dark. This is why God's pattern is to give commandments to His children "*after* having made known unto them the plan of redemption."<sup>7</sup>

My desire is to help each of us take advantage of this treasure of knowledge—to better understand the plan of salvation and apply that understanding in our daily lives.

### Agency

Because agency is essential to this plan, let us start there. Our Father has given us the capacity to act or to refuse to act<sup>8</sup> according to eternal truths—the truths that make God what He is and heaven what it is.<sup>9</sup> If we use our agency to accept and live these truths, we receive everlasting joy. Conversely, if we use our agency to disobey, to reject God's laws, we experience suffering and sorrow.<sup>10</sup>

Agency provides a fitting backdrop for the three chapters of the plan of salvation: premortal life, mortal life, and postmortal life.

### Premortal Life

As declared in "The Family, a Proclamation to the World," each of us "is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents" with "a divine nature and destiny."<sup>11</sup> In a premortal council, Heavenly Father explained to us His plan of redemption.<sup>12</sup> The plan was based on doctrine, law, and principles that have always existed.<sup>13</sup> We learned that if we accepted and followed the plan, we would be required to willingly leave our Father's presence and be tested to show whether we would choose to live according to His laws and commandments.<sup>14</sup> We rejoiced at this opportunity<sup>15</sup> and gratefully sustained the plan because it offered

us the way to become like our Heavenly Father and inherit eternal life.

But the plan was not without risk: if we chose in mortality not to live according to God's eternal laws, we would receive something less than eternal life.<sup>16</sup> Father knew we would stumble and sin as we learned by experience in mortality, so He provided a Savior to redeem from sin all who repent and to heal the spiritual and emotional wounds of those who obey.<sup>17</sup>

Jesus Christ was the Father's beloved, chosen, and foreordained Son from the beginning.<sup>18</sup> He sustained the Father's plan and offered to be our Savior, saying, "Here am I, send me."<sup>19</sup> Thus, Jesus was appointed by the Father to be the One to live a sinless life in mortality, atone for our sins and afflictions, and be resurrected to break the bands of death.

Lucifer, who came to be known as Satan, also lived in the premortal existence.<sup>20</sup> For selfish reasons he rejected the plan, sought to destroy the agency of man, and rebelled against the Father.<sup>21</sup> As a consequence, Satan and those who followed him will never have a body. They forfeited their

chance to participate in the Father's plan and lost their divine destiny.<sup>22</sup> Today they continue their war of rebellion against God and seek to turn the minds and hearts of humankind against Him.<sup>23</sup>

This earth was designed and created for those who accepted the Father's plan.<sup>24</sup> Here we obtain a body created in God's image and likeness. Here we are tested and proven. Here we gain the experience necessary to inherit eternal life.<sup>25</sup>

### Mortal Life

God created Adam and Eve and joined them as husband and wife, placed them in the Garden of Eden, and commanded them to have children.<sup>26</sup> Exercising their agency,



*Jesus Christ was the Father's beloved, chosen, and foreordained Son from the beginning.*



Adam and Eve together fell from the presence of God and became mortal beings.<sup>27</sup> This fulfilled the Father's plan by making it possible for them to have children, which they could not do in the Garden of Eden.<sup>28</sup> By eternal law, the divine power of procreation must be used within the bounds set by our Heavenly Father. Doing so provides opportunity for eternal joy. Any use of this sacred power outside of God's boundaries will ultimately result in misery.<sup>29</sup>

Satan, who desires that all "be miserable like unto himself,"<sup>30</sup> tries to draw us away from the opportunities available through the Father's plan. Why does Heavenly Father allow Satan to tempt us? Because He knows that opposition is necessary for our growth and testing in mortality.<sup>31</sup> Opposition gives us a priceless opportunity to turn to God and rely on Him. Because good and evil are constantly before us, we can clearly express

the desires of our hearts by embracing one and rejecting the other.<sup>32</sup> Opposition can be found in Satan's temptations but also in our own weakness, the mortal frailties that are inherent in the human condition.<sup>33</sup>

To help us choose wisely, God has revealed His plan of redemption and has provided commandments,<sup>34</sup> the Light of Christ,<sup>35</sup> and the companionship of the Holy Ghost.<sup>36</sup> Yet even with all of these gifts, every one of us in this fallen world commits sin, and so we are all incapable of entering the presence of God on our own merits.<sup>37</sup> That is why His merciful plan provides a Savior.

Jesus Christ came to earth as the Only Begotten Son of God and fulfilled His appointed mission perfectly by submitting to the will of the Father in all things.<sup>38</sup> According to the merciful plan of the Father, the effects of the Fall are conquered through the Resurrection of the Savior,<sup>39</sup> the

***Exercising their agency, Adam and Eve together fell from the presence of God and became mortal beings. This fulfilled the Father's plan by making it possible for them to have children.***



***The very essence of eternal life includes the eternal marriage of man and woman, which is an essential part of becoming like our heavenly parents.***

consequences of sin can be overcome, and weakness can turn into strength, if we avail ourselves of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.<sup>40</sup>

We can qualify for eternal life only through obedience to the commandments. This requires having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repenting, being baptized, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end in following the Savior's example.<sup>41</sup> In practical terms, we must receive all essential priesthood ordinances and endure to the end in keeping the associated covenants.

#### ***Postmortal Life***

After we die, we will one day stand before the Savior to be judged.<sup>42</sup> Because God is merciful, those who exercise their faith in Christ unto repentance will be forgiven and inherit all that the Father has, including eternal life.<sup>43</sup> Because God is just, each person who does not repent will not receive the gift of eternal life.<sup>44</sup> Each person will be

rewarded according to his or her faith, repentance, thoughts, desires, and works.<sup>45</sup>

#### **Applying the Plan of Salvation in Our Daily Lives**

Once we understand the grand panorama of the plan and see ourselves in it, we gain something invaluable, even essential: eternal perspective. Eternal perspective informs our daily decisions and actions. It steadies our minds and souls. When persuasive but eternally flawed opinions swirl about us, we are steadfast and immovable.

As Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “Without an understanding of the plan of salvation, including our premortal existence and the judgment and the resurrection, trying to make sense of this life by itself would be like seeing only the second act of a three-act play.”<sup>46</sup> We must understand the first act

(premortal life) in order to know how to make the best choices in the second act (mortal life), which will determine what happens to us in the third act (postmortal life).

Stated another way, understanding the plan of salvation, coupled with sincere prayer, changes the way we see life, everyone around us, and ourselves. Understanding the plan clarifies our spiritual vision and allows us to see things as they really are.<sup>47</sup> Just as the Urim and Thummim enabled the Prophet Joseph Smith to receive revelation and guidance,<sup>48</sup> so will knowledge of the plan show us how to “act in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity, according to the moral agency” the Lord has given us.<sup>49</sup> Thus, our faith will be strengthened, and we will know how to chart our life’s course and make decisions consistent with eternal truth.

Here are a few examples that are especially relevant in our time.

### ***The Purpose of Marriage in God’s Plan***

Marriage and family are under attack because Satan knows that they are essential to obtaining eternal life—as essential as the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>50</sup> Having failed to destroy any of those pillars of the plan, Satan seeks to destroy our understanding and practice of marriage and family.

With Heavenly Father’s plan as a fixed point of reference, the purpose of marriage comes clearly into focus. The commandment to leave father and mother, cleave to one another in marriage,<sup>51</sup> and multiply and replenish the earth<sup>52</sup> makes His plan possible. Through marriage we bring His spirit children into the world and become partners with Him in helping His children participate in His plan.<sup>53</sup>

The Father’s plan provides us the way to inherit eternal life, the life our heavenly parents lead. In the plan, “neither is the man without the woman, [nor] the woman without

the man, in the Lord.”<sup>54</sup> The very essence of eternal life includes the eternal marriage of man and woman, which is an essential part of becoming like our heavenly parents.<sup>55</sup>

### ***Marriage between a Man and a Woman***

In marriage we complete one another, as only man and woman with their unique and essential differences can. Walking through mortality as husband and wife, we grow together, drawing closer to the Savior as we obey, make sacrifices to do God’s will, and build up His kingdom together. Knowing that eternal marriage is a commandment of God and that He prepares a way for His children to accomplish all He commands,<sup>56</sup> we know that our marriages will succeed as we unite in keeping the covenants we have made.

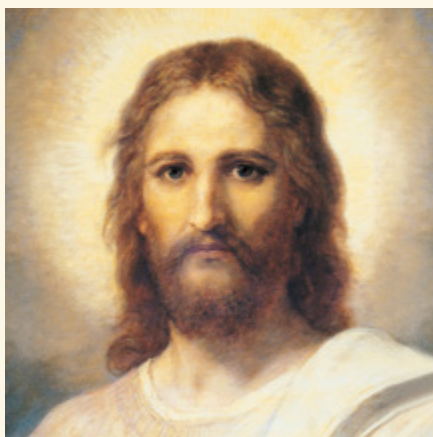
It is through the ordinances of the priesthood and choosing to keep the associated covenants that we receive the power of godliness as we deal with the challenges of mortality.<sup>57</sup>

The ordinances of the temple endow us with power from on high and enable us to return to the presence of our Heavenly Father.<sup>58</sup> The sealing

ordinance enables husband and wife to grow together by God’s power and be one with the Lord.<sup>59</sup> Any substitute for this kind of marriage will not fulfill His sacred purposes for us or for the generations of His children who follow.<sup>60</sup>

### ***Attractions and Desires***

Each of us comes to this fallen world with weakness or challenge inherent in the human condition.<sup>61</sup> Understanding God’s plan enables us to see all human frailties—including attractions and desires inconsistent with His plan—as temporary.<sup>62</sup> Knowing we lived before this life as beloved sons and daughters of heavenly parents enables us to take our personal identity from our divine origin. It is our status as a son or daughter of God—not our frailties or tendencies—that is the true source of our identity.<sup>63</sup>



***According to the merciful plan of the Father, the effects of the Fall are conquered through the Resurrection of the Savior.***

ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES JOHNSON; CHRIST'S IMAGE, BY HEINRICH HOFMANN



***As we daily apply our knowledge of the Father's plan, our life will take on deeper meaning.***

With this perspective, we are better able to wait humbly and patiently upon the Lord,<sup>64</sup> trusting that through our faith, obedience, and endurance to the end, our dispositions and desires will be purified, our bodies will be sanctified, and we will truly become the sons and daughters of Christ, perfected through His Atonement.

The eternal perspective of the plan brings the assurance that for the faithful, the day will surely come that “God shall wipe away all tears; . . . neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”<sup>65</sup> This “perfect brightness of hope”<sup>66</sup> will steady our minds and hearts and enable us to patiently, faithfully wait upon the Lord.

#### **Promises for Those Who Faithfully Endure**

Those who wonder if their current circumstance or condition cuts them off from eternal life should remember that “no one is

predestined to receive less than all that the Father has for His children.”<sup>67</sup>

No blessing will be denied the faithful. President Lorenzo Snow declared: “There is no Latter-day Saint who dies after having lived a faithful life who will lose anything because of having failed to do certain things when opportunities were not furnished him or her. In other words, if a young man or a young woman has no opportunity of getting married, and they live faithful lives up to the time of their death, they will have all the blessings, exaltation and glory that any man or woman will have who had this opportunity and improved it. That is sure and positive.”<sup>68</sup>

#### **Promises for All Who Know the Plan and Apply It Daily**

Each of us wholeheartedly supported the Father's plan in the premortal life. We knew He loved us, and we were awed by



His generous offer of this opportunity to inherit all He has, including eternal life. The key to our success in our pre-mortal life was our support of the Father's plan. It is likewise the key to our success in mortal life.

So my invitation is that together we stand again in support of the Father's plan. This we do with love for all, for the plan itself is an expression of the love of God.

As we daily apply our knowledge of the Father's plan, our life will take on deeper meaning. We will face our challenges with greater faith. We will press forward with the sure, bright, resplendent hope of eternal life. ■

#### NOTES

1. Jacob 6:8; Alma 12:25–26, 30, 32; 17:16; 18:39; 29:2; 39:18; 42:11.
2. Alma 42:8, 16.
3. Jarom 1:2; Alma 24:14; 42:5; Moses 6:62.
4. See Alma 12:32; see also Boyd K. Packer, “The Great Plan of Happiness and Personal Revelation” (Church Educational System broadcast for young adults, Nov. 7, 1993).
5. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
6. See Harold B. Lee, *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 72; see also Bruce R. McConkie, in Conference Report, April 1970, 26.
7. Alma 12:32; emphasis added; see also verse 25.
8. See 2 Nephi 2:13–16; Doctrine and Covenants 101:78.
9. See George Q. Cannon, *Gospel Truth: Two Volumes in One: Discourses and Writings of President George Q. Cannon*, sel. Jerreld L. Newquist (1974), 296.
10. See Richard G. Scott, “How to Live Well amid Increasing Evil,” *Ensign*, May 2004, 102; Robert D. Hales, *Return: Four Phases of Our Mortal Journey Home* (2010), 33.
11. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129; see also Acts 17:29; Romans 8:16–17; Hebrews 12:9; Abraham 3:18–25.
12. See Alma 12:30; see also Job 38:4–7; Abraham 3:22–28.
13. See 2 Nephi 2:13; see also Howard W. Hunter, “To Know God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 97; *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Heber J. Grant* (2002), 30: “Each and every one of [the] commandments has been given for the express purpose that we may be . . . qualified and prepared to go back and dwell in the presence of our Heavenly Father. These duties and obligations are calculated to make us godlike in our dispositions. They are calculated to make Gods of us, and to fit and qualify us that we may become . . . joint heirs with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 136:31; Abraham 3:24–25.
15. See Job 38:7.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:34–36, 39–40.
17. See Isaiah 53:3–5; 2 Nephi 2:8; 9:10–11; 31:21; Mosiah 3:17; Alma 7:11–13.
18. See 1 Peter 1:20; Moses 4:2.
19. Abraham 3:27.
20. See Isaiah 14:12–16.
21. See Moses 4:3–4; see also 1:19.
22. See Revelation 12:7–9.
23. See Doctrine and Covenants 10:26–27.
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:18–19.
25. See Abraham 3:24–26.
26. See Genesis 1:26–28.
27. See Alma 42:2–6; Moses 4:25, 28–31.
28. See 2 Nephi 2:23; Moses 5:11; see also Boyd K. Packer, “The Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 26–28.
29. See Alma 39:3–5; 41:3–4, 10–15.
30. 2 Nephi 2:27.
31. See 2 Nephi 2:11.
32. See 2 Nephi 2:26–29; Alma 34:32–35.
33. See Jacob 4:7; Ether 12:27; Doctrine and Covenants 62:1.
34. See Alma 12:30–32.
35. See Moroni 7:16–19; Doctrine and Covenants 88:7, 11–13.
36. See 2 Nephi 31:12–14, 18.
37. See 1 John 1:8.
38. See Luke 22:39–42; Doctrine and Covenants 19:16–19.
39. See 1 Corinthians 15:20–23; 2 Nephi 9:10–13; Alma 11:42–45.
40. See Alma 42:2–15, 22–31; Moroni 10:32–33.
41. See 2 Nephi 31:10–21; 3 Nephi 27:13–22.
42. See John 5:22; Romans 14:10; Revelation 20:12–13; 2 Nephi 9:41; Alma 11:41–44; 3 Nephi 27:14–17, 20, 22.
43. See Alma 34:14–17.
44. See Mosiah 3:21–27; Helaman 14:15–19; Doctrine and Covenants 88:21–24, 29–32.
45. See Mormon 3:20–22.
46. *The Neal A. Maxwell Quote Book*, ed. Cory H. Maxwell (1997), 252.
47. See Thomas S. Monson, “Be Thou an Example,” *Ensign*, May 2005, 113.
48. See Joseph Smith—History 1:35.
49. Doctrine and Covenants 101:78.
50. See D. Todd Christofferson, “Why Marriage, Why Family,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 52.
51. See Matthew 19:5.
52. See Genesis 9:1.
53. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:36–40.
54. 1 Corinthians 11:11.
55. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Apostasy and Restoration,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 87; see also Dallin H. Oaks, “No Other Gods,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 73.
56. See 1 Nephi 3:7.
57. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–21.
58. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:13–26, 38.
59. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:1–21.
60. See 1 Peter 3:7; Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4; see also Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5 vols. (1957–66), 4:197: “Those who are married in the temple for all time and eternity obtain the blessing of *eternal lives*. I put stress on *eternal lives*. Eternal life is God's life, that is, to be like him. *Eternal lives* means eternal increase—the continuation, as the revelation says, of the seeds forever. To be married outside of the temple is for time only. Death separates—that is an eternal separation, unless in the meantime they repent and are fortunate enough to go to the temple and make amends.”
61. See Ether 12:27.
62. See Ether 12:37.
63. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” 129; see also *God Loveth His Children* (booklet, 2007), 1.
64. See Isaiah 40:31.
65. Revelation 21:4; see also verses 1–3.
66. 2 Nephi 31:20.
67. D. Todd Christofferson, “Why Marriage, Why Family,” 52.
68. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow* (2012), 130. See also Gordon B. Hinckley, “Daughters of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 98: “Some who are not married, through no fault of their own, ask whether they will always be denied the highest degree of glory in that kingdom. I am confident that under the plan of a loving Father and a divine Redeemer, no blessing of which you are otherwise worthy will forever be denied you.”



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

## RECOVERING FROM THE TRAP OF **PORNOGRAPHY**

*All of us must learn to respond appropriately  
to media with sexual content.*

A decade ago I spoke in general conference on the subject of pornography. I added my voice to the voice of other leaders who have warned against the devastating spiritual effects of pornography. I warned that too many men and boys were being wounded by what I called the “promotional literature of illicit sexual relations.”<sup>1</sup> Pornography use of any kind is evil—it is destructive of spiritual sensitivity, it weakens ability to exercise priesthood power, and it harms precious relationships.

Now, over 10 years later, I am grateful that many, hearing and heeding prophetic warnings, have avoided and remained clean and unspotted from the stains of pornography. I am also grateful that many have heeded prophetic invitations to turn from pornography, mend broken hearts and relationships, and move forward on the path of discipleship. But I am more concerned than ever that others among us continue to fall prey to pornography, especially our young men and even an increasing number of young women.

A primary reason for the growing problem of pornography is that in today’s world, words and images with sexual content and influences are everywhere: they can be found in movies, TV programs, social media, text messages, phone apps, advertisements, books, music, and everyday conversations. As a result, it is inevitable that all of us are being exposed to sexualized messages on a regular basis.



*Turning to the Lord  
in humility leads one  
to accept certain  
truths, which, when  
fully understood,  
provide strength and  
eliminate shame.*

## I. Levels of Involvement

To help us deal with this growing evil, I wish to identify several different levels of involvement with pornography and to suggest ways we should respond to each of them.

In earlier times and circumstances, our counsel about pornography focused principally on helping individuals to avoid initial exposure or to recover from addiction. While those efforts are still important, past experience and current circumstances have shown the need for counsel addressed to levels of pornography use between the polar extremes of avoidance and addiction. It is helpful to focus on four different levels of involvement with pornography: (1) inadvertent exposure, (2) occasional use, (3) intensive use, and (4) compulsive use (addiction).

1. **Inadvertent Exposure.** I believe that everyone has been inadvertently exposed to pornography. There is no sin in this when we turn away and don't pursue it. It is like a mistake, which calls for correction rather than repentance.<sup>2</sup>

2. **Occasional Use.** This use of pornography may be occasional or even frequent, but it is always intentional, and that is its evil.

Pornography stirs and magnifies powerful sexual feelings. The Creator gave us these feelings for His wise purposes, but He also gave commandments that limited their expression to a man and a woman who are married. Pornography debases appropriate sexual expression and encourages the expression of sexual feelings outside the boundaries of marriage. Those who use pornography are trifling with forces so powerful that they can create life or destroy it. Don't go there!

The danger with any intentional use of pornography, no matter how casual or infrequent, is that it always invites more frequent exposure, which will inevitably increase preoccupation with sexual

feelings and behavior. Scientists have discovered that sexual images produce chemicals in the brain that reward sexual feelings, which then encourage more attention to sexual behavior.<sup>3</sup> Immoral sexual behavior of any kind or degree produces feelings of shame, which, over time, can be entrenched within an individual.

3. **Intensive Use.** Repeated intentional use of pornography can make its use a habit, "a behavior pattern regularly followed until it has become almost involuntary."<sup>4</sup> With habitual use, individuals experience a need for more stimulus to have the same reaction in order to be satisfied.

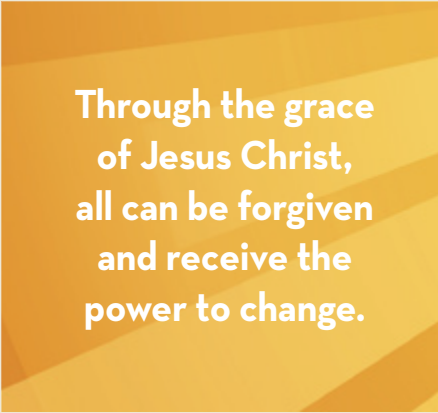
4. **Compulsive Use (Addiction).**

A person's behavior is addictive when it forms a "dependency" (a medical term applied to the use of drugs, alcohol, compulsive gambling, etc.) amounting to an "irresistible compulsion" that "takes priority over almost everything else in life."<sup>5</sup>

## II. The Significance of Understanding These Levels

Once we recognize these different levels, we also recognize that not everyone who uses pornography willfully is addicted to it. In fact, most young men and young women who struggle with pornography are not addicted. That is a very important distinction to make—not just for the parents, spouses, and leaders who desire to help but also for those who struggle with this problem. Here is why.

First, the deeper the level of involvement one engages in—from inadvertent exposure, to occasional or repeated intentional use, to intensive use, to compulsive (addictive) use—the more difficult it is to recover. If behavior is incorrectly classified as an addiction, the user may think he or she has lost agency and the capacity to overcome the problem. This can weaken resolve to recover and repent. On the other hand, having a clearer understanding of the depth of a problem—that it may not be as



Through the grace  
of Jesus Christ,  
all can be forgiven  
and receive the  
power to change.

ingrained or extreme as feared—can give hope and an increased capacity to exercise agency to discontinue and repent.

Second, as with any sinful behavior, willful use of pornography drives away the Holy Ghost. Some who have experienced this will feel prompted to repent. Others, however, may feel embarrassed and seek to hide their guilt through deceit. They may also begin to feel shame, which can lead to self-loathing. If this happens, users may begin to believe one of Satan's greatest lies: that what they have done or continue to do makes them a bad person, unworthy of the Savior's grace and incapable of repentance. That is simply not true. We are never too far out of reach from the Savior and His Atonement.


Finally, it is important not to label even intensive or habitual use of pornography as an addiction because that does not accurately describe the circumstances or the full nature of the required repentance and recovery. Having a better

understanding of where a person is in the process will also allow a better understanding of what action is necessary to recover.

### III. Escaping Pornography

Now let us consider how individuals can escape and recover from the trap of pornography. This will be helpful not only to those struggling to overcome the use of pornography but also to the parents, spouses, and leaders who help them. Individuals will be more successful in both avoiding and recovering from pornography as they discuss these subjects with parents, spouses, and leaders.<sup>6</sup>

Regardless of the level of involvement in intentionally viewing pornography, the road to recovery, purity, and repentance follows and requires the same basic principles: humility, discipleship, commitment to a personal plan for change, accountability and support, and enduring in faith.



***Acting upon these truths also requires individuals to recommit to living as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ and to doing those things that purify and strengthen them to withstand future temptations.***

## A. Humility

To truly conquer pornography and its associated behaviors, individuals must develop humility (see Ether 12:27). Turning to the Lord in humility leads one to accept certain truths, which, when fully understood, provide strength and eliminate shame. Some of these truths include:

- Each of us is a beloved child of a loving Heavenly Father.
- Our Savior, Jesus Christ, loves and knows each of us personally.
- Our Savior's Atonement applies to all of God's children.
- Through the grace of Jesus Christ, all can be forgiven and receive the power to change.
- Each of us has the priceless gift of agency, which allows us to draw on the power and strength of the Atonement.
- Individuals who struggle with pornography can draw hope from the fact that others have succeeded in this battle.
- Pornography is evil, but engaging in it does not make the person evil.
- Any individual can escape the trap of pornography and fully recover, but this is possible only through drawing on the power of the Atonement.
- True repentance from pornography requires more than simply ceasing to use it. Such repentance requires a change of heart through the Atonement of Christ.

Accepting these truths prepares one spiritually to act upon them, which opens the door to receiving the Lord's help to make the needed changes to repent and recover.

## B. Discipleship

Acting upon these truths also requires individuals to recommit to living as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ



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and to doing those things that purify and strengthen them to withstand future temptations. This means commitment to personal religious behaviors: daily meaningful prayer and scripture study, attendance at Church meetings, service, fasting, and (when approved by the bishop) partaking of the sacrament and worshipping in the temple.

## C. Commitment to a Personal Plan

Humble disciples of Jesus Christ will gain the sensitivity to recognize the deep feelings, social situations, and physical surroundings that trigger the temptation to use pornography. Having analyzed those triggers, they will develop a personal escape plan to help them:

- Recognize triggers and cravings as they occur.
- Establish specific actions to help them withdraw from the temptation.
- Redirect thoughts and energy toward the Lord.
- Outline daily specific actions to fortify their personal commitment to live righteously.

When developing a personal plan, individuals should utilize the excellent resources provided by the Church. For example, the Church website [overcomingpornography.org](https://overcomingpornography.org) has content for individuals as well as the family

members and priesthood leaders who support them. In addition, the Church's Addiction Recovery Program is available to all members who struggle with any addictive behavior, and will also help their family members.

#### **D. Accountability and Support**

Humble followers of Jesus Christ who acknowledge that they need the Savior will also seek the help of their bishop, who was called by the Lord as their priesthood leader and who holds the necessary keys to enable them to repent. With the consent of the individuals involved and if the bishop feels so inspired, the bishop may also call someone else to work with and help them. No matter the circumstances, this counsel from President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) applies:

“Plead with the Lord out of the depths of your soul that He will remove from you the addiction which enslaves you. And may you have the courage to seek the loving guidance of your bishop and, if necessary, the counsel of caring professionals.”<sup>7</sup>

Depending on the depth of the problem, individuals may require the support of a trusted, experienced person or a professional counselor to whom they can turn at any hour to be strengthened in moments of weakness and who can hold them personally accountable to their plan.

#### **E. Enduring in Faith**

Persons who have repented and have been blessed to overcome the desire to use pornography must still be vigilant, because the adversary will still seek to exploit their human weakness. Inadvertent exposure may still occur despite all efforts to avoid it. Throughout their lives, individuals must learn to control their God-given sexual feelings and maintain their efforts to be clean.

#### **IV. Compassion for All**

Now a word regarding how we treat those who have been ensnared by pornography. All of us need the

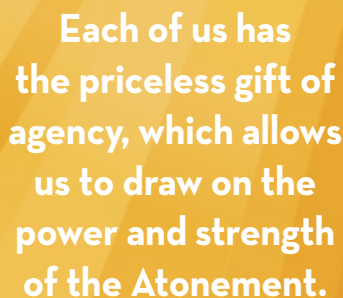
Atonement of Jesus Christ. Those struggling with pornography need our compassion and love as they follow needed principles and steps of recovery. Please do not condemn them. They are not evil or without hope. They are sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father. Through proper and complete repentance, they may become clean, pure, and worthy of every covenant and temple blessing promised by God.

When the time for marriage comes, I encourage young women and young men to be careful to select a partner to be their companion through eternity who is clean and pure before the Lord and worthy to enter the temple. Individuals who fully repent from pornography are worthy of these blessings.

#### **V. Conclusion**

Throughout our lives, all of us will encounter material with sexual content. With the guidance of our loving Savior, including the assurance from the sacramental covenants that we may always have his Spirit to be with us (see D&C 20:77), we can always respond appropriately. I testify that this is what we

should do to enjoy the blessings of Him whom we worship. As we do, we will more fully receive the peace of the Savior and we will remain on the path to our eternal destiny of exaltation. ■



Each of us has  
the priceless gift of  
agency, which allows  
us to draw on the  
power and strength  
of the Atonement.

#### **NOTES**

1. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Pornography,” *Ensign*, May 2005, 87–90.
2. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Sins and Mistakes,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1996, 62–67.
3. See Donald L. Hilton Jr., M.D., “Pornography Addiction—a Supranormal Stimulus Considered in the Context of Neuroplasticity,” *Socioaffective Neuroscience and Psychology*, vol. 3 (2013), [socioaffectiveneuroscipsychol.net/index.php/snp/article/view/20767](http://socioaffectiveneuroscipsychol.net/index.php/snp/article/view/20767); see also “Porn Changes the Brain,” [fightthenewdrug.org](http://fightthenewdrug.org).
4. *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (1989), “habit.”
5. *American College of Physicians Complete Home Medical Guide* (1999), 564.
6. In addition, young people and their parents ought to have frank but appropriate conversations about human reproduction. Youth who hear about human sexuality from their peers rather than their parents are more likely to seek information about it through pornography.
7. Gordon B. Hinckley, “A Tragic Evil among Us,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 62.

# ONLINE RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES AND LEADERS

*Spouses and other family members carry heavy burdens when trying to help a loved one involved with pornography. These resources can help.*

When Church members are dealing with pornography on any of the levels identified in the article by Elder Oaks, Church leaders and the spouses or families of those dealing with the problem have several helps available.

## **Overcomingpornography.org**

This site helps people find healing, forgiveness, protection, and power through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. It includes practical guidance and resources for pornography users, their spouses and family members, and Church leaders.

## **Ministering.lds.org**

This site is primarily for ward and stake council members. It includes specific guidance about ministering to all affected by the use of pornography.

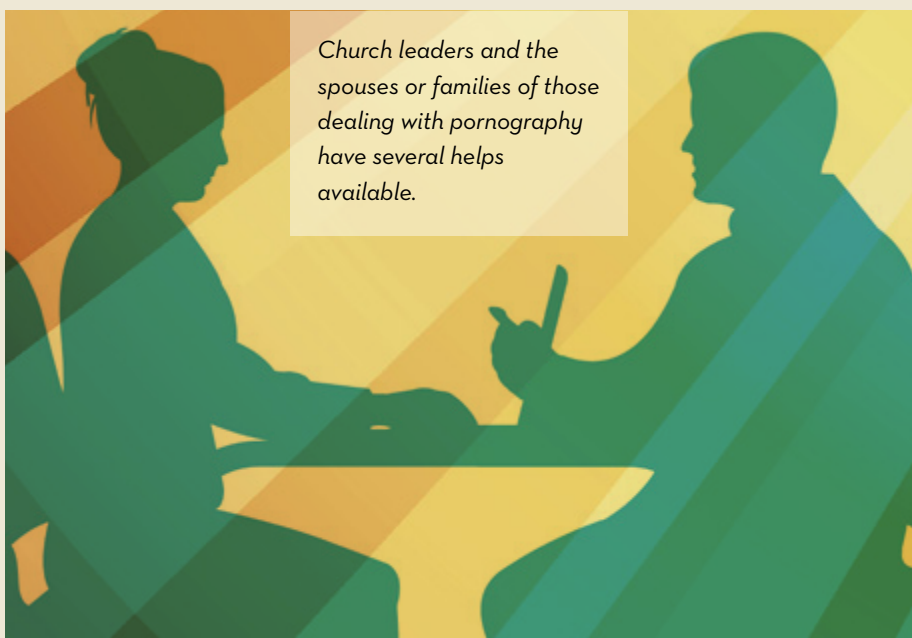
## **Addictionrecovery.lds.org**

The LDS Family Services Addiction Recovery Program offers confidential group meetings to help spouses and families of those dealing with pornography

find peace and healing by applying gospel principles. Visit this site to learn how to join these meetings.

Priesthood leaders may find the site helpful to use during interviews or in Addiction Recovery Program meetings.

Stake presidents who want to start new Addiction Recovery Program meetings in their stakes should contact LDS Family Services, their area welfare manager, or the Area Presidency or assigned member of the Presidency of the Seventy.





## Strengthening Children

Use this article written for children (from the February 2014 Friend) to help them know what to do when they encounter pornography. See also the video "What Should I Do When I See Pornography?" and some family home evening lessons on this topic at [lds.org/go/childrenE1015](http://lds.org/go/childrenE1015).

# Oh No! Now What?

It can happen anywhere—at home, at school, or at a friend's house. Suddenly you see something you *know* isn't good—on a phone, TV, computer, or game device, or in a book or magazine. *Now* what can you do to feel better?



**Don't just sit there.** Watch or read something good. Do something active. Do a good deed. Go be around family or friends.

**Remember who you are.** You're not bad because of what you saw. You are a child of God, and He loves you and wants to help you be safe and happy.

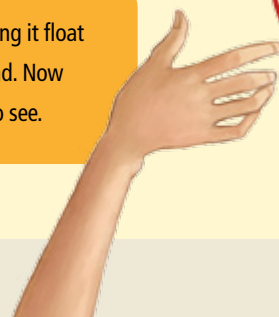
**Get away from it.** Turn it off. Put it down. Treat it like it's poison for your brain—because that's what it is.

**Tell your mom or dad.** Parents know you best, and they want to help you be safe and happy. Don't be embarrassed. What happened to you happens at some time to almost everyone.



**Keep talking.** It might help you to tell your mom or dad whenever anything you saw during the day made you feel uncomfortable. Parents can help you make a plan to protect yourself from seeing inappropriate things. If you feel trapped, worried, or like you want to see something inappropriate again, be sure to tell them about that too.

**Let it go.** Picture yourself letting go of a balloon and watching it float away. Try to relax and let what you saw float out of your mind. Now picture the temple, your family, or something else you love to see.



# HELPING THOSE WHO STRUGGLE

*Elder Oaks's article and other material from Church magazines provide guidance for helping others overcome pornography.*

**P**ornography is everywhere. It is so prevalent that the chances of seeing it are high. Those who struggle with pornography need love, compassion, and support from family, friends, and leaders. How can we show compassion and support? As we prayerfully seek to help those who are struggling, we can find strength and guidance.

The article by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on page 32, “Recovering from the Trap of Pornography,” provides some needed guidance. In it, he explains that there are different levels of involvement with pornography: (1) inadvertent exposure, (2) occasional use, (3) intensive use, and (4) compulsive use, or addiction. He also gives five principles to help us overcome pornography, teaching that hope comes to all who access the Atonement of Jesus Christ, which helps us heal and feel clean again. So important is this article that it also appears in this month’s *New Era* and in the youth pages of the *Liahona*. All members of the Church will benefit as parents, leaders, and teachers address the challenge of pornography from the perspective Elder Oaks provides.

Of course, avoidance is key when it comes to children and pornography. The article on page 39, “Oh No! Now What?” (reprinted from the February

2014 *Friend* magazine), can help children know what to do when they encounter pornography. You can also find help in this month’s *Friend* with “Standing Strong” (page 44) and an article explaining how to have healthy online habits (page 47). Both can help children learn to turn away from pornography.

While pornography is evil and not of God, having a clearer understanding of the depth of the problem—especially that it may not be as ingrained or extreme as feared—can engender hope and an increased capacity to choose to repent and discontinue use of it.

All of us can take comfort and find hope in this promise from the Lord, given in the Book of Mormon: “My grace is sufficient for all men [and women and children] that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them” (Ether 12:27). ■

See [overcomingpornography.org](http://overcomingpornography.org) for more help, including three family home evening lessons and information about the Church’s 12-step program.



THE AUTHOR LIVES IN TEXAS, USA. PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY SERGEI DIDOK/ISTOCK/THINKSTOCK

# BECOMING CLEAN

**By Marsha Ault**

*Soiled hands. Clinging grime and dirt embedded beneath my nails. I turn on the faucet, reach for soap, and scrub, and scrub. Frothy suds drip.*

*I rinse, lather again. With a small brush I cleanse the muck beneath my nails until the water runs clear, down, down the drain.*

*How good it feels to be clean.*





# CELEBRATING FAMILY HOME EVENING

In 1915, latter-day prophets counseled us to set aside an evening a week for our families (see “100 Years of Family Home Evening,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2015, 80). It was called “home evening” at first—a time to learn the gospel and have fun together, while strengthening our earthly and eternal connections.

One hundred years later, family home evening continues to help us build families that will last for eternity. Prophets promise that through it, greater faith and spiritual strength will grow in our hearts, and greater protection, unity, and peace will abide in our homes.

We all belong to a family on earth and are part of the family of our Father in Heaven. Wherever we are in the world and whatever our situation in life, we can celebrate and participate in family home evening. ■

*Left: The Moua family recently moved to Thailand, where they learned the gospel and were baptized. For family home evening they study the Book of Mormon in both Hmong, their native language, and Thai, the language of their new home.*

*Below: Having fun and playing games is one way the Santos family of Portugal creates close friendships in family home evening.*





*Right: Family means more than mother, father, and children in the Democratic Republic of Congo. So when Brother Suekameno gathers his family for home evening, many from the village feel welcome to join in.*

*Top: Sister Gercan of the Philippines uses Primary songs and traditional music to teach her children the joy of the gospel.*

*Above: The Anderson family, pictured here in the kitchen of their Georgia, USA, home, love making cookies. They sometimes use them as part of a lesson or simply as a treat.*





*Above: Brother and Sister Reynolds of Washington, USA, look for ways to teach the gospel simply so their young children can learn and understand.*

*Right, from top: The Espinoza family of Bolivia include their honored grandmother in family home evening as they sing and learn of the gospel.*

*For the Jin family of Georgia, USA, family history is a favorite home evening*

*activity. They enjoy teaching their children about their Korean heritage.*

*The Ligertwood family of Australia sometimes go on outings as part of family home evening, exploring beautiful parts of their city.*





See page 3 in each issue of the Ensign for family home evening ideas.

Share photos or videos of your family home evening using #FamilyNight.



Learn more at [facebook.com/ensign](https://facebook.com/ensign).  
magazine.



# JOSEPH THE Seer

*The historical record clarifies how  
Joseph Smith fulfilled his role as a seer  
and translated the Book of Mormon.*

**By Richard E. Turley Jr.**, Assistant Church Historian and Recorder,  
**Robin S. Jensen and Mark Ashurst-McGee**, Church History Department

**O**n April 6, 1830, the day Joseph Smith organized the Church of Christ (later to be called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints),<sup>1</sup> he proclaimed the words of a revelation to those assembled. “Behold,” the voice of God declared in it, “there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou [Joseph Smith] shalt be called a seer” (D&C 21:1).

The most visible sign of Joseph Smith’s role as a seer in the newly formed Church was the Book of Mormon, which he repeatedly explained was translated “by the gift and power of God.”<sup>2</sup> Many of those closest to Joseph in the year before the Church’s organization had witnessed the process by which the Book of Mormon came forth and had some understanding of the meaning of the word *seer*.

## **The Meaning of Seer**

What did *seer* mean to the young prophet and his contemporaries? Joseph was raised in a family that read the Bible, which mentions seers repeatedly. In 1 Samuel, for example, the writer explains: “Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer” (1 Samuel 9:9).

The Bible also mentions people receiving spiritual manifestations by means of physical objects such as rods,<sup>3</sup> a brass serpent on a pole (which became a widespread symbol of the medical profession),<sup>4</sup> an ephod (a part of the priestly clothing that included two precious stones),<sup>5</sup> and the Urim and Thummim.<sup>6</sup>



**Joseph and his wife, Emma Hale Smith, lived in the single-story portion of this home during part of the translation of the Book of Mormon. The two-story structure on the right of the home was a later addition.**



**For thousands of members during his lifetime and millions since his death, Joseph Smith has been known as prophet, seer, and revelator.**

“Seeing” and “seers” were part of the American and family culture in which Joseph Smith grew up. Steeped in the language of the Bible and a mixture of Anglo-European cultures brought over by immigrants to North America, some people in the early 19th century believed it was possible for gifted individuals to “see,” or receive spiritual manifestations, through material objects such as seer stones.<sup>7</sup>

The young Joseph Smith accepted such familiar folk ways of his day, including the idea of using seer stones to view lost or hidden objects. Since the biblical narrative showed God using physical objects to focus people’s faith or communicate spiritually in ancient times, Joseph and others assumed the same for their day. Joseph’s parents, Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith, affirmed the family’s immersion in this culture and their use of physical objects in this way, and the villagers of Palmyra and Manchester, New York, where the Smiths lived, sought out Joseph to find lost objects before he moved to Pennsylvania in late 1827.<sup>8</sup>

For those without an understanding of how 19th-century people in Joseph’s region lived their religion, seer stones can be unfamiliar, and scholars have long debated this period of his life. Partly as a result of the Enlightenment or Age of Reason, a period that emphasized science and the observable world over spiritual matters, many in Joseph’s day came to feel that the use of physical objects such as stones or rods was superstitious or inappropriate for religious purposes.

In later years, as Joseph told his remarkable story, he emphasized his visions and other spiritual experiences.<sup>9</sup> Some of his former associates focused on his early use of

seer stones in an effort to destroy his reputation in a world that increasingly rejected such practices. In their proselytizing efforts, Joseph and other early members chose not to focus on the influence of folk culture, as many prospective converts were experiencing a transformation in how they understood religion in the Age of Reason. In what became canonized revelations, however, Joseph continued to teach that seer stones and other seeric devices, as well as the ability to work with them, were important and sacred gifts from God.<sup>10</sup>

### **Instruments Used to Translate the Book of Mormon**

Seer stones also appear in historical accounts describing Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon translation. Joseph’s official history, begun in 1838, describes the visit of an angel, identified as Moroni, who told him about golden plates buried in a nearby hill. Joseph recounts that while he was conversing with the angel, a “vision was opened” so clearly in his mind that he “knew the place” when later seeing it in person (Joseph Smith—History 1:42).

In the history Joseph began drafting in 1838, Moroni warns him “that Satan would try to tempt me (in consequence of the indigent circumstances of my father’s family), to get the plates for the purpose of getting rich.” This the angel forbade, Joseph recounts, saying that if he had “any other motive” than building God’s kingdom, he “could not get them” (Joseph Smith—History 1:46). In his earlier 1832 history, Joseph explains, “I . . . sought the Plates to obtain riches and kept not the commandme[n]t that I should have an eye single to the Glory of God.”<sup>11</sup> As a result, he was required to return to the hill annually for four years until

he was prepared to receive the plates (see Joseph Smith—History 1:53–54).

Joseph related that when he finally obtained the plates from Moroni in 1827, he also received two stones to be used in translating them. He and close acquaintances left accounts of these stones, describing them as white or clear in appearance, set in silver bows or rims like modern eyeglasses or spectacles, and connected to a large breastplate.<sup>12</sup> As described, this seeric device would have been bulky. Joseph Smith’s mother said that he detached the stones from the breastplate for convenience while using them.<sup>13</sup>

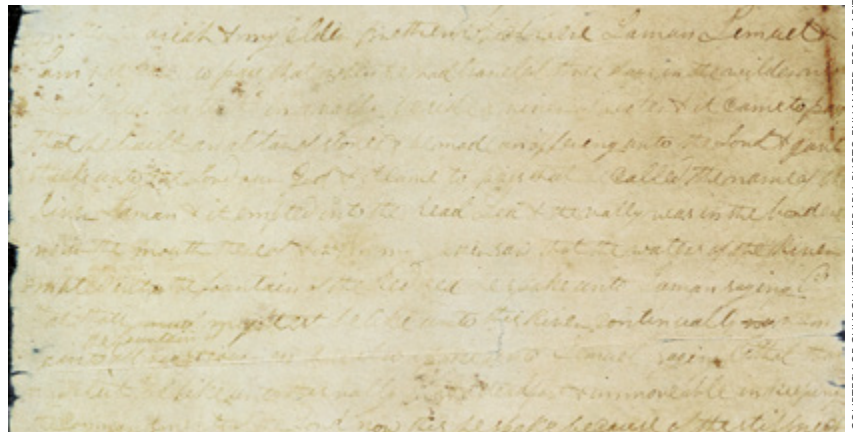
The text of the Book of Mormon calls these stones “interpreters” and explains that they “were prepared from the beginning, and were handed down from generation to generation, for the purpose of interpreting languages,” being “kept and preserved by the hand of the Lord” (Mosiah 28:14–15, 20).

The book also recounts how the Lord gave “two stones” to the brother of Jared, with a promise that they would aid future generations to recover his words. “Write these things and seal them up,” the Lord directs him, “and I will show them in mine own due time unto the children of men.” These stones, the Lord explains, “shall magnify to the eyes of men these things which ye shall write” (Ether 3:24, 27).

By the time Joseph Smith finished dictating his translation of the Book of Mormon to scribes in mid-1829, the meaning of *seer* had been further clarified in the text. The Book of Mormon contains a prophecy attributed to Joseph of Egypt declaring that one of his descendants—clearly Joseph Smith—would be “a choice seer” bringing other descendants

“to the knowledge of the covenants” that God made with their ancestors (2 Nephi 3:6, 7).

In another Book of Mormon account, Alma the Younger gives the interpreters to his son Helaman. “Preserve these interpreters,” Alma



COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY LIBRARY; PHOTO ENHANCED FOR CLARITY

counsels him, referring to the two stones in silver bows. But Alma also quotes a prophecy that appears to refer to a single stone: “And the Lord said: I will prepare unto my servant Gazelem, a stone, which shall shine forth in darkness unto light” (Alma 37:21, 23).

Notably, although given in the context of “interpreters” (plural), this prophecy speaks about giving a future servant “a stone” (singular), “which shall shine forth in darkness unto light.”<sup>14</sup> Early Latter-day Saints believed this prophesied servant was Joseph Smith.<sup>15</sup>

In fact, historical evidence shows that in addition to the two seer stones known as “interpreters,” Joseph Smith used at least one other seer stone in translating the Book of Mormon, often placing it into a hat in order to block out light. According to Joseph’s contemporaries, he did this in order to better view the words on the stone.<sup>16</sup>

***Detail from a page of the original Book of Mormon manuscript containing the departure of Lehi’s family from Jerusalem in what is today 1 Nephi 2. Joseph Smith dictated the Book of Mormon to several scribes, including Oliver Cowdery, who was the scribe for these lines.***



THE ANGEL MORONI DELIVERING THE PLATES TO JOSEPH SMITH, BY C. C. A. CHRISTENSEN

**Members of the Church throughout its history have sought to understand the early history of Joseph Smith and his finding and translating the golden plates. This image by artist C. C. Christensen in 1886 depicts Joseph Smith obtaining the plates from the angel Moroni.**

By 1833, Joseph Smith and his associates began using the biblical term “Urim and Thummim” to refer to any stones used to receive divine revelations, including both the Nephite interpreters and the single seer stone.<sup>17</sup> This imprecise terminology has complicated attempts to reconstruct the exact method by which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon. In addition to using the interpreters, according to Martin Harris, Joseph also used one of his seer stones for convenience during the Book of Mormon translation. Other sources corroborate Joseph’s changing translation instruments.<sup>18</sup>

### After the Book of Mormon Was Published

Following the publication of the Book of Mormon in March 1830, Joseph Smith and his clerks began work on what is now known as the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible, a prophetic revision of the King James Version.<sup>19</sup> By Joseph’s account, using the Nephite interpreters for this translation project was not an option because he no longer had them.

Joseph’s history explains that “by the wisdom of God, [the plates and interpreters] remained safe in my hands, until I had accomplished by them what was required at my hand. When, according to arrangements, the messenger called for

them, I delivered them up to him; and he has them in his charge until this day” (Joseph Smith—History 1:60).

As President Brigham Young (1801–77) explained it, “Joseph put the U[r]im and] T[h]ummim] back with the plates when he [h]ad done translating.”<sup>20</sup>

Joseph had other seer stones, but in the words of Elder Orson Pratt (1811–81), a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and later Church Historian, Joseph had also matured by this time in his spiritual understanding. At a meeting on June 28, 1874, attended by President Brigham Young and many other General Authorities, Elder Pratt told his audience about being “present many times” when Joseph Smith “was translating the New Testament.” Seeing no interpretive instruments in use during the translation process, he wondered why Joseph “did not use the Urim and Thummim, as in translating the Book of Mormon.”

As Elder Pratt watched the Prophet translate, “Joseph, as if he read his thoughts, looked up and explained that the Lord gave him the Urim and Thummim when he was inexperienced in the Spirit of inspiration. But now he had advanced so far that he understood the operations of that Spirit, and did not need the assistance of that instrument.”<sup>21</sup>

Brigham Young told an audience of his thoughts about receiving a seer stone. “I don’t [k]no[w] that I have ever had a desire to have one,” he reflected.<sup>22</sup> Brigham’s statement expressed his understanding that seer stones were not essential to being a seer.

On October 25, 1831, Joseph Smith attended a conference in Orange, Ohio. During the conference, his brother Hyrum said he “thought best that the information of the coming forth of the book of Mormon be related by Joseph himself to the Elders present that all might know for themselves.” According to the minutes of the meeting, Joseph “said that it was not intended to tell the world all the particulars of the coming forth of the book of Mormon” and “that it was not expedient for him to relate these things.”<sup>23</sup> Having matured in his role as seer and coming to believe



PHOTOGRAPH CIRCA 1866, COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY LIBRARY

**Phineas Young, sitting in the middle of the Young brothers and to Brigham Young's left, acquired a seer stone used in translating the Book of Mormon from Oliver Cowdery and gave it to his brother Brigham.**



PHOTOGRAPH BY WELDEN C. ANDERSEN AND RICHARD E. TURLEY, JR.

**The stone pictured here has long been associated with Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon translation. The stone Joseph Smith used in the Book of Mormon translation effort was often referred to as a chocolate-colored stone with an oval shape. This stone passed from Joseph Smith to Oliver Cowdery and then to the Church through Brigham Young and others.**

## WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SEER STONE?

According to Joseph Smith's history, he returned the Urim and Thummim, or Nephite "interpreters," to the angel. But what became of the other seer stone or stones that Joseph used in translating the Book of Mormon?

David Whitmer wrote that "after the translation of the Book of Mormon was finished, early in the spring of 1830, before April 6th, Joseph gave the stone to Oliver Cowdery and told me as well as the rest that he was through with it, and he did not use the stone any more."<sup>1</sup>

Oliver, who was outside the Church for a decade until being rebaptized in 1848, planned to go west to be with the Saints in Utah, but he died in 1850 in Richmond, Missouri, before making the trip.<sup>2</sup> Phineas Young, who had helped bring Oliver Cowdery back into the Church, obtained the seer stone from Oliver's widow, who was David Whitmer's sister, Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdery. Phineas in turn gave it to his brother Brigham Young.<sup>3</sup>

"I have Joseph[']s 1st Seer Stone which I [h]ad from O[liver] C[owdery]," President Young acknowledged in 1853. There were others as well. "Joseph [h]ad 3 which Emma has," he added, "2 small ones and 1 large one."<sup>4</sup> Two years later, Brigham Young told a group of assembled Church leaders that "Oliver sent me Joseph's first Seer stone, Oliver always kept it until he sent it to me."<sup>5</sup>

After Brigham Young died, one of his wives, Zina D. H. Young, who later became the third Relief Society general president, obtained a chocolate-colored seer stone from his estate that matched descriptions of the stone Joseph used to translate the Book of Mormon, and donated it to the Church.<sup>6</sup> Since that time, subsequent Church leaders have acknowledged the Church's ownership of the seer stone.<sup>7</sup>

### NOTES

1. David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (1887), 32.
2. For more information about Oliver Cowdery's return to the Church before his death, see Scott F. Faulring, "The Return of Oliver Cowdery," in John W. Welch and Larry E. Morris, eds., *Oliver Cowdery: Scribe, Elder, Witness* (2006), 321–62.
3. See Minutes, Sept. 30, 1855, Church History Library, Salt Lake City; "David Whitmer," *The Historical Record*, Oct. 1888, 623; Maria L. Cowdery Johnson to David Whitmer, Jan. 24 1887, Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri; and Franklin D. Richards, *Journal*, Mar. 9, 1882, Church History Library.
4. Minutes, Apr. 17, 1853, Church History Library.
5. Minutes, Sept. 30, 1855, Church History Library.
6. See Zina Young to Franklin D. Richards, July 31, 1896, in *Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, July 31, 1896, 4, Church History Library.
7. See B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 6:230–31; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 3:225; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 818–19.



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**In 1883, the Contributor, a magazine published by the Church, highlighted the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon. Latter-day Saints have long recognized the crucial role each man played in helping Joseph Smith translate and publish the Book of Mormon.**

that seer stones were not essential to revelation, perhaps he worried that people might focus too much on how the book came forth and too little on the book itself.

The most salient point Joseph Smith made about the translation of the Book of Mormon was that he did it “by the gift and power of God.”<sup>24</sup> The book itself, he taught Church leaders, “was the most correct of any Book on earth & the keystone of our religion,” and by obeying its precepts, readers would get “nearer to [G]od . . . than [by] any other book.”<sup>25</sup> ■

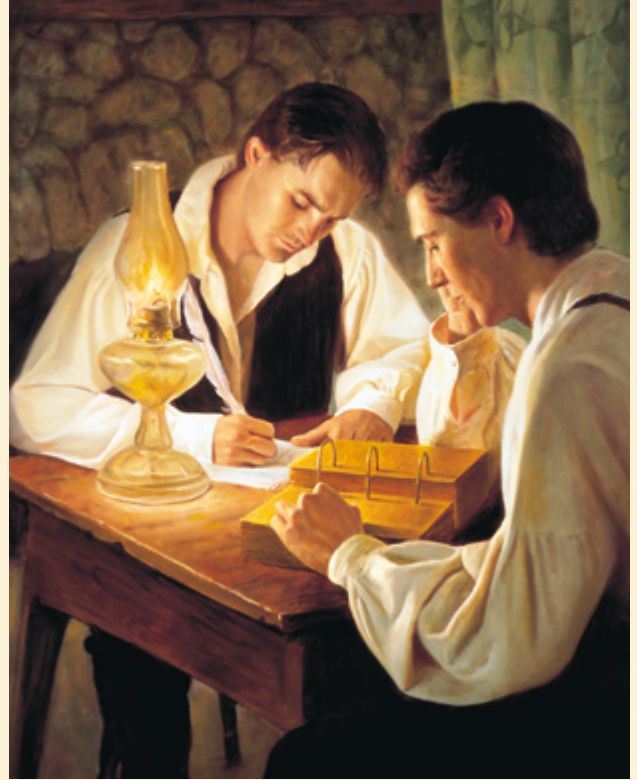
#### NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 115.
2. Preface to Book of Mormon, ca. Aug. 1829, in *Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831*, vol. 1 of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers* (2013), 93. See also “The Testimony of Three Witnesses,” Book of Mormon.
3. See Exodus 4:1–5, 17, 20–21; 7:8–21; 8:16–19; 9:22–26; 10:12–15; 14:15–18; 17:1–13; Numbers 17:1–10; 20:7–11; Hebrews 9:4.
4. See Numbers 21:7–9; John 3:14–15.
5. See Exodus 28:12; 35:9, 27; 1 Samuel 23:9–12; 30:7–8.
6. See Exodus 28:30; Leviticus 8:8; Numbers 27:21; Deuteronomy 33:8; 1 Samuel 28:6; Ezra 2:63; Nehemiah 7:65.
7. For more information on this 19th-century religious culture, see *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, vol. 1 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers* (2008), xix; and *Revelations and Translations, Volume 3: Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3 of the Revelations and Translations series of *The Joseph Smith Papers* (2015), xv–xvi; Dallin H. Oaks, “Recent Events Involving Church History and Forged Documents,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1987, 68–69.
8. See statement of Joseph Smith Sr., as quoted in Francis W. Kirkham, *A New Witness for Christ in America: The Book of Mormon*, vol. 2 (1959), 366; see also Lucy Mack Smith, “Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845,” book 3, page 10, [josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummarylucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845](http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummarylucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845). Martin Harris recalled testing Joseph’s ability by having him find a pin in a haystack (see “Mormonism—No. II,” *Tiffany’s Monthly*, July 1859, 164).
9. See, for instance, Joseph Smith—History in the Pearl of Great Price.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:10–11. See also the earliest wording of what is now Doctrine and Covenants 8, directed to Oliver Cowdery as he desired to assist Joseph Smith in translating the Book of Mormon (Revelation, Apr. 1829–B, in *Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831*, 44–47).
11. Joseph Smith, “History, ca. Summer 1832,” in *Histories, Volume 1: 1832–1844*, vol. 1 of the Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers* (2012), 14.
12. See Joseph Smith—History 1:35; Joseph Smith, “Church History,” in *Histories, Volume 1: 1832–1844*, 495; Martin Harris, in “Mormonism—No. II,” 165–66; “Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845,” book 5, pages 7–8, [josephsmithpapers.org](http://josephsmithpapers.org).
13. See, for instance, “Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845,” book 5, [josephsmithpapers.org](http://josephsmithpapers.org).
14. Understandably, this distinction has puzzled commentators. See, for instance, Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 307–8; Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. (1987–92), 3:278; and Matthew B. Brown, *All Things Restored: Confirming the Authenticity of LDS Beliefs* (2000), 62.
15. See William W. Phelps, Funeral Sermon of Joseph Smith and Hyrum Smith, Church History Library, Salt Lake City; Orson Pratt, “Explanation of Substituted Names in the Covenants,” *The Seer*, Mar. 1854, 229; William W. Phelps, letter to Brigham Young, Apr. 10, 1854, in Brigham Young, Office Files, 1832–1878, Church History Library, Salt Lake City; and *Revelations and Translations, Volume 2: Published Revelations*, vol. 2 of the Revelations and Translations series of *The Joseph Smith Papers* (2011), 708–9.
16. For more information on the translation, see “Book of Mormon Translation,” available at [lds.org/topics/book-of-mormon-translation](http://lds.org/topics/book-of-mormon-translation). See also Russell M. Nelson, “A Treasured Testament,” *Ensign*, July 1993, 61–65; Neal A. Maxwell, “By the Gift and Power of God,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1997, 36–41.
17. Wilford Woodruff, for instance, called a seer stone he saw in Nauvoo a Urim and Thummim (Wilford Woodruff journal, Dec. 27, 1841, Church History Library). See also *Revelations and Translations, Volume 3: Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, xix.
18. See *Revelations and Translations, Volume 3: Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, xviii–xix.
19. For a brief summary of the beginnings of this effort, see *Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831*, 150–52.
20. Minutes, Apr. 17, 1853, Church History Library.
21. “Two Days’ Meeting at Brigham City, June 27 and 28, 1874,” *Millennial Star*, Aug. 11, 1874, 498–99.
22. Minutes, Sept. 30, 1855, Church History Library.
23. Minutes, Oct. 25–26, 1831, in *Documents, Volume 2: July 1831–January 1833*, vol. 2 of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers* (2013), 84.
24. Preface to Book of Mormon, ca. Aug. 1829, in *Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831*, 93. See also the “Testimony of Three Witnesses,” Book of Mormon.
25. Joseph Smith, in Wilford Woodruff journal, Nov. 28, 1841, Church History Library; or introduction to the Book of Mormon.



## ILLUSTRATING THE TRANSLATION PROCESS

Over the years, artists have sought to portray the Book of Mormon translation, showing the participants in many settings and poses with different material objects. Each artistic interpretation is based upon its artist's own views, research, and imagination, sometimes aided by input and direction from others. Here are a few scenes produced throughout the years.



JOSEPH SMITH TRANSLATING THE BOOK OF MORMON. BY DEL PARSON

*Artist's rendition of Joseph Smith studying the plates. Joseph recalled that he "copied a considerable number" of characters from the plates. After he translated these characters "by means of the Urim and Thummim," Martin Harris took the characters to Charles Anthon and other scholars to confirm the translation (Joseph Smith—History 1:62–64).*

*Artist's portrayal of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery working on the translation of the Book of Mormon. Unlike what is depicted here, Oliver Cowdery stated that he did not see the plates until after the translation was finished. Witnesses of the process reported that during the translation, the plates were shielded from view, such as by being covered with a linen cloth.*



*Artist's rendition of Joseph Smith translating while wearing the breastplate with the attached interpreters or spectacles, later referred to as the Urim and Thummim.*

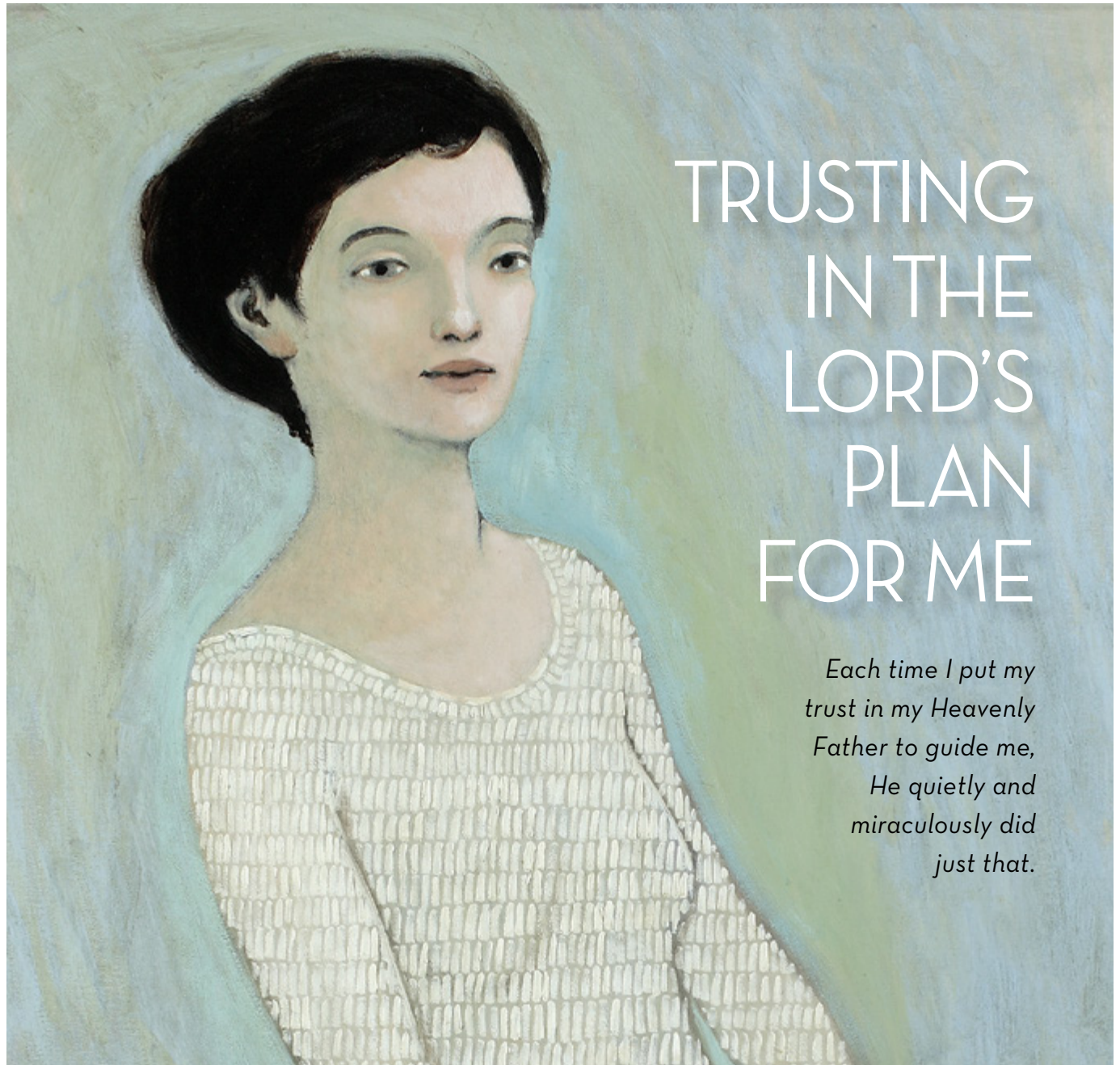


TRANSLATION OF THE PLATES. BY EARL JONES. COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM

*Artist's depiction of Joseph Smith and a scribe translating with a blanket between them. Although no blanket is mentioned in most descriptions of the translation process, one was apparently used at an early point to shield the scribe from a view of the plates, spectacles, or breastplate. During the latter part of the translation effort, a blanket may have been used to shield the translator and scribe from other individuals curious to observe the translation.*



ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT T. BARRETT



# TRUSTING IN THE LORD'S PLAN FOR ME

*Each time I put my  
trust in my Heavenly  
Father to guide me,  
He quietly and  
miraculously did  
just that.*

**By Pamela Clark**

In 1998, after 27 years of marriage, my husband left me. Because I never thought it would happen to me, and because my love for my husband was so strong, the path I was now on was devastating. Although our three children were grown and gone, the shock of knowing that I was really alone was extremely hard. Eventually, however, I came to see that divorce was the only option, and I felt peace about what had to be done. I found an attorney, the papers were drawn up, and our two signatures were affixed.

**In a Wilderness**

As an active member of the Church, I faithfully attended my meetings, attended the temple, tried to magnify my callings, regularly read my scriptures, fervently prayed, and had priesthood blessings. Still, I was in a real wilderness. Then, one Sunday during Gospel Doctrine class, we were reading 1 Nephi 17:13: "And I will also be your light in the wilderness; and I will prepare the way before you, if it so be that ye shall keep my commandments; wherefore, inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall be

led towards the promised land; and ye shall know that it is by me that ye are led.” In the days and years to come, I was to discover how this scripture would be an anchor for me in my redirected life.

### Faith Was the Key

I found that faith was the key to my moving forward. Each time I put my trust in my Heavenly Father to guide me, He quietly and miraculously did just that. However, my life was not without great pain, feelings of abandonment, and vast ignorance of how to accomplish by myself the many tasks once done by two. That scripture in 1 Nephi was my lifeline. In the years that followed, Heavenly Father helped me to sell our family home, continue working as a teacher in the public schools, serve in Church leadership callings, care for our mentally ill daughter, settle the finances, build a new home, learn to take care of car and home repairs, and to live alone happily.

I treasure the tender mercies extended to me from my loving Heavenly Father. Also, I know that despite the fact that my husband left me, that none of my children are active Church members, and that it would be easy to convince myself that my prospects for an eternal family look dark, I have faith in the promise in Isaiah 55:8–9:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

### The Lord Will Make All Things Right

Therefore, I eagerly await eternity, confident that the Lord will make all things right. What His plans are for me, I do not now know. But, nothing doubting, I trust with all my heart in His eternal plan for me—and my broken family. It will be good. It will be right. It will be His plan. And I shall rejoice! ■

*The author lives in Arizona, USA.*



### CHOOSING TO BELIEVE

“Belief and testimony and faith are not passive principles. They do not just happen to us. Belief is something we choose—we hope for it, we work for it, and we sacrifice for it. We will not accidentally come to believe in the Savior and His gospel any more than we will accidentally pray or pay tithing. We actively choose to believe, just like we choose to keep other commandments.”

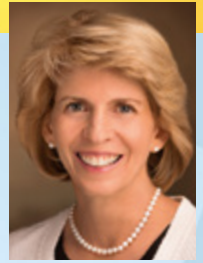
**Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Presidency of the Seventy, “Choose to Believe,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 38.**

### SOME TIPS FOR LIVING ALONE HAPPILY

Single adults from a variety of circumstances shared the following suggestions with the *Ensign*:

- Have daily meaningful prayer; study the scriptures daily; set aside Monday nights to study the gospel or join in family home evening with relatives or friends.
- Treat your home as if you are going to live in it for years. Enjoy it and make it yours.
- Whether you are a man or a woman, keep a good connection to a priesthood holder for blessings.
- Consider having your home or living space blessed and dedicated by a priesthood holder.
- Remember that your situation is not unique to you. Many, if not most, of us will go through some phase of life without a spouse or other family members close to us.
- Look for ways to strengthen families, such as babysitting for friends when they attend the temple, helping watch children during meetings, or helping out when someone is sick.
- Put yourself in situations where you have opportunities to grow. Pursue new hobbies and interests and adopt a mentality of lifelong learning.





**By Carol F. McConkie**

First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

# Teaching Youth

## HOW TO LEAD IN THE SAVIOR'S WAY

*Our youth are not just future leaders. They are leaders today. We can help them lead like the Savior.*

To parents and leaders of youth, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of the delicate balance we need to find: “Invite the young people to act. You have to be there, but you’ve got to get out of the way. You have to provide direction without taking over.”<sup>1</sup>

Parents and leaders can help young men and young women learn principles that will prepare them to lead in righteousness and to build the kingdom of God on the earth.

When I was 14, I met some young women who were excellent leaders. At that time, my family moved across the United States and became members of a new ward. I do not remember who served in the Mia Maid class presidency, but I clearly remember that the young women were particularly kind to me. They sincerely embraced a scared and scrawny new girl as a long-lost friend and made me feel welcome. Coming from Delaware, where I was the only Mormon girl in my junior high school and where the only other Mormon girl I knew lived an hour’s drive from my home, I thought, “*This* must be what heaven is like!”

For the first time in my life, I had a circle of friends who lived the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*, invited me to participate in activities, and shared their testimonies of the gospel with me. Their examples of loving-kindness did more to secure me to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at that time than any talk or lesson could have done. In their love and Christlike light, they were the message of the gospel of Christ, and they were the ones to lead and guide me into His fold.

What was it that made my new friends great leaders?

A young missionary defined leadership very simply. He said: “We have to be in the right place at the right time doing the will of the Lord and helping the person who is in need of our help. That is what makes us a leader.”<sup>2</sup> By virtue of who they are and the Light of Christ that shines in them, faithful young men and young women throughout this Church have the capacity to *lead in the Savior’s way* and “help other people become true followers of . . . Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

As leaders we lead, guide, and walk beside our young men and young women. But it is the class and quorum presidencies who are responsible for leading and directing the work of their classes and quorums, including selecting Sunday lessons and planning weekday activities. Class and quorum leaders are called and set apart under the direction of those who hold priesthood keys; thus they have the authority to lead and to strengthen the other youth. They follow the example of the Savior and learn to serve as He served and to minister as He did.

## Opportunities for Youth Leadership

Leadership begins in the home. “Doing our duty to God as parents and leaders begins with leading by example—consistently and diligently living gospel principles at home,” taught Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “This takes daily determination and diligence.”<sup>4</sup> Parents teach the doctrine of Christ. They help youth set and accomplish goals. Personal Progress and Duty to God help youth strengthen their testimonies of Jesus Christ, be prepared to make and keep sacred covenants, and fulfill their divine roles and responsibilities in the family, the home, and the Church.

At church, Aaronic Priesthood and Young Women leaders can help the youth serving in quorum and class presidencies understand their sacred duties and magnify their callings to nurture and strengthen all other quorum and class members.

As adult leaders, we prepare youth to conduct quorum and class meetings and Mutual activities. We meet with youth in presidency meetings as they determine ways to minister to those who are struggling, to include all youth in Sunday lessons, and to plan activities, service projects, camps, and youth conferences.

We encourage youth presidencies to help all quorum and class members participate in every aspect of the work of salvation, including member missionary work, convert retention, activation of less-active members, temple and family history work, and teaching the gospel.<sup>5</sup> Youth presidencies help all young men and young women learn the joy and the blessing of serving in the name of the Savior and feeding His sheep.

The leader’s work is not about Pinterest-perfect hand-outs or fact-filled lectures. The leader’s work is to help young men and young women learn and apply principles that will help *them* lead in the Savior’s way. The following are four of those principles.<sup>6</sup>

## Prepare Spiritually

Help youth understand the power of their personal spiritual preparation. Teach them to exercise faith in the covenants they make in the ordinance of the sacrament. Their willingness to take upon them the name of Christ, to remember Him, and to keep His commandments qualifies them to always have the companionship of the Holy Ghost. They are not alone in their service when they are able to

receive, recognize, and act upon the promptings of the Holy Ghost.

They prepare spiritually by seeking guidance in fervent prayer and searching the scriptures for answers. They strive to keep the commandments so that the Holy Ghost will speak to them in their hearts and minds that they may feel and know who needs their help and what they can do. They feel the pure love of Christ for each member of the class or quorum.

Spiritual preparation gives youth the confidence that they are the Lord’s agents and that they are on His errand (see D&C 64:29).



## THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF GUIDANCE

Youth need varying levels of support as they learn to lead. Some can do more on their own; others will need more guidance. Parents can counsel together as they help their children learn to lead, and Young Men and Young Women presidencies can counsel together and with the bishopric as they determine how much guidance to provide each youth in the ward. The goal: to help each young man and young woman improve, beginning where they are.



the glorious truth that Jesus Christ laid down His life and opened the way that all might come unto Him. In gratitude for what He has done, true servants of the Lord reach out and minister in loving kindness to every young man and every young woman, for whom the Savior sacrificed everything.

### Teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Help young men and young women recognize opportunities to teach the gospel and understand that their most important teaching will be their example. As youth live according to the words of the prophets and keep the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*, they lead in the Savior's way. By the integrity of their words and actions, they demonstrate what it means to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ. They stand as His witnesses without hypocrisy. Then, when they bear testimony, help teach a Sunday lesson, or share gospel truths with their friends, they will be filled with the Spirit and their words will have converting power.

### Lead in the Savior's Way

To lead in the Savior's way is a sacred privilege that will require youth to give their very best as they serve the Lord at home, in the Church, and in the community. Young men and young women who lead in the Savior's way become the message of the gospel of Christ, the answer to someone's prayer, the angels who minister to those in need, and the light of Christ to the world. ■

*Note: See this month's New Era for a youth article on leadership as well as articles on planning effective youth activities.*

### Participate in Councils

Teach youth the fundamental order and the revelatory power of councils as they participate in this divinely instituted process through which the Lord's Church is governed and individuals and families are blessed.<sup>7</sup> Bishopric youth committee and quorum and class presidency meetings are councils where youth learn their duties and receive responsibilities to minister to others.

Members of councils:

- Are unified with and follow the direction of priesthood leaders, who hold priesthood keys.
- Share their thoughts and ideas in a spirit of righteousness, holiness, faith, virtue, patience, charity, and brotherly kindness.
- Work together, as guided by the Holy Ghost, to plan what they will do to help those in need.

### Minister to Others

Youth lead in the Savior's way when they minister with love and kindness. Joseph Smith taught: "Nothing is so much calculated to lead people to forsake sin as to take them by the hand, and watch over them with tenderness. When persons manifest the least kindness and love to me, O what power it has over my mind."<sup>8</sup>

The Savior taught the precious and priceless value of every soul (see D&C 18:10–15). Help our youth understand

#### NOTES

1. David A. Bednar, "Youth and Family History," [lds.org/youth/family-history/leaders](https://www.lds.org/youth/family-history/leaders).
2. Letter from Carol F. McConkie's grandson, Mar. 13, 2015.
3. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 3.1.
4. Robert D. Hales, "Our Duty to God: The Mission of Parents and Leaders to the Rising Generation," *Ensign*, May 2010, 95.
5. See *Handbook 2*, 5.
6. See *Handbook 2*, 3.2.
7. See *Handbook 2*, 4.1.
8. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 394, 428.

# Words TO CHANGE OUR World

By Norman C. Hill

President, Ghana Accra West Mission

*A district council  
in Ghana  
demonstrates  
how counseling  
together  
and using  
local resources  
can create  
opportunities  
for personal  
growth and  
service to others.*

Sister Vida Osei of Ghana wanted to learn to read and write English. She had tried community programs a number of times but had become discouraged and quit within weeks. Then one Sunday while attending meetings at the Second Branch, she learned that the Asamankese District was sponsoring an English literacy program. She decided to take a chance and enroll.

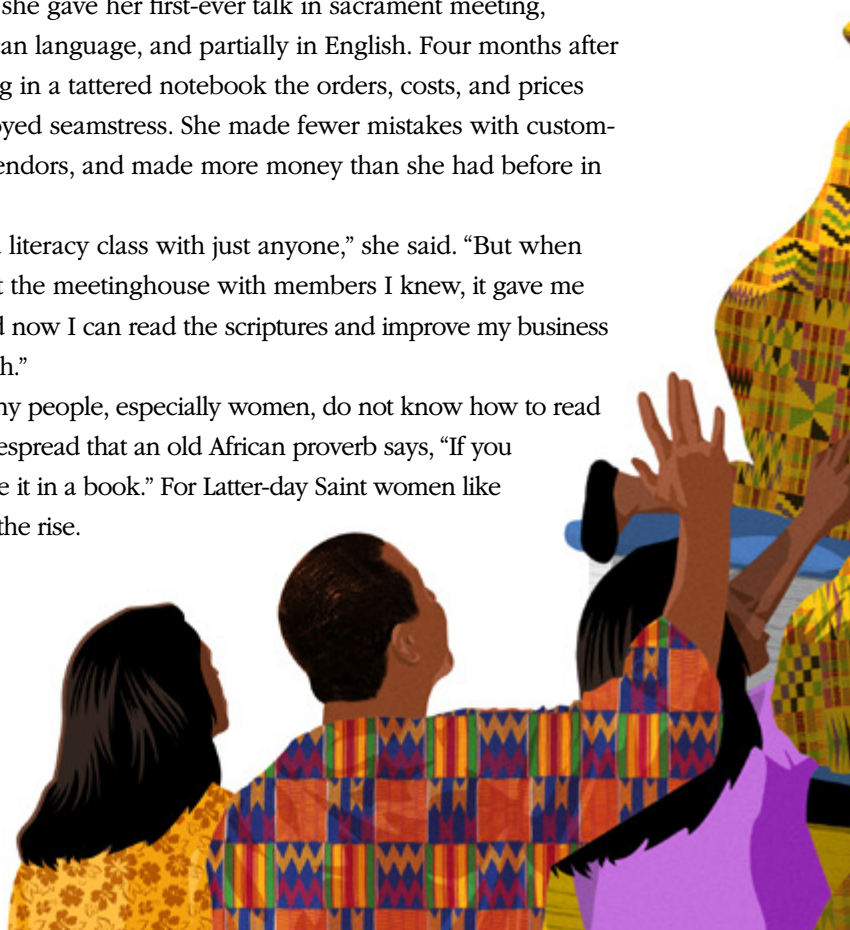
She soon found that this program was different. She would be able to attend with friends from church. Scriptures are used as study materials, so she would learn English and the gospel at the same time.

Two months after starting the class, Vida gave her first prayer in a class—ever. Three months after starting, she gave her first-ever talk in sacrament meeting, partially in Twi, a local African language, and partially in English. Four months after beginning, she began writing in a tattered notebook the orders, costs, and prices for her work as a self-employed seamstress. She made fewer mistakes with customers, got lower prices from vendors, and made more money than she had before in any previous month.

“I was too shy to attend a literacy class with just anyone,” she said. “But when the literacy class was held at the meetinghouse with members I knew, it gave me the courage to try again. And now I can read the scriptures and improve my business by reading and writing English.”

In sub-Saharan Africa, many people, especially women, do not know how to read and write. Illiteracy is so widespread that an old African proverb says, “If you want to hide something, write it in a book.” For Latter-day Saint women like Vida, however, literacy is on the rise.

ILLUSTRATION BY TAYLOR GALLERY









*Participants, family members, and friends celebrate at graduation ceremonies for the district-sponsored literacy program.*

## Challenges to Overcome

Limited infrastructure and limited public education in most sub-Saharan countries means limited opportunities, especially for girls. Because of the high cost of schooling and girls' restricted status in society, to many people reading seems an unattainable skill. In Ghana, for example, although English is the official language, estimates say that less than half of adult women speak English. In rural Ghana, two-thirds of adult women are illiterate.

"Most adult women in our towns and villages do not speak English," says Seth Oppong, president of the Abomosu District in the Ghana Accra West Mission. "Our local language, Twi, has been a verbal language for centuries. Only recently has an alphabet for Twi been created, so few people read it, either."

"Sisters must rely on others—mostly their husbands if they are married, or on word of mouth from friends if they are not married—to understand gospel principles and Church policies," explains Georgina Amoaka, the district Relief Society president. "Many have great desires to serve, but they cannot read manuals or magazines so their opportunities to participate at church are limited."

## Counsel from the Council

Since women do not speak English in their homes or at the market, Church participation provides their main incentive to learn the language. Yet both long-time members and new converts may encounter family resistance concerning literacy programs. The district council discussed this concern, and then President Oppong spoke to priesthood and auxiliary leaders in each branch about a district-wide approach to literacy training. While open to all women in the community, the program would focus on women in the Church. Rather than inviting individuals separately, invitations would be extended to attend in groups—for example, Relief Society and Primary

presidencies would attend together so they could support each other.

Based on discussions with the branches, district leadership decided to hold literacy classes at each branch on Sundays as well as twice during the week. After a concentrated six-month effort, certificates of completion would be awarded to those who attended regularly and completed required homework.

## Resources Adapted to Needs

"One of the challenges was to find a way to teach reading and writing to people who have only a spoken language," explains Elder Jim Dalton, a senior missionary serving in the district. "Because of Twi's long tradition as a spoken-but-not-written language, most people who speak it don't know how to write it, so we had to start with learning to write."

Ransford Darkwah of the Abomosu District high council worked with two returned missionaries, Francis Ansah and Cecelia Amankwah, to use a locally produced manual. Participants were shown pictures and asked to write about what they saw. This helped them develop basic writing skills while learning to think in English. Once some basic abilities were in place, more advanced learning resources could then be used.

## Preparation and Innovation

Before the program began, literacy specialists trained instructors not only in learning methods but also in how to teach practical hygiene and family life skills. But even the best training couldn't have foreseen some of challenges encountered once classes began: frequent power outages in the area made evening classes difficult to conduct, rumors that unruly gold miners were roaming the streets at night created anxiety, and occasionally those with keys were unable to arrive on time to open church buildings.

Once again, the district council discussed what needed

to be done. In response to their counsel, groups of participants began coming to class together. They were given flashlights to help them safely walk along footpaths. Local leaders authorized use of generators to power lights at church buildings at night. Well-trusted members who lived near buildings were entrusted with keys so they could open buildings on time.

### Presentations at Graduation

Sixty-one members and investigators began the program. Forty-three completed all of the sessions and homework. At graduation, they were invited to give short presentations.

“Before the literacy program began, I could not read at all,” said Sandra Obeng Amoh of the Sankubenase Branch. “When my husband traveled for work, I never had family home evening. Some weeks ago when he was gone, my oldest son helped me read the manual and I gave a lesson in English to my children. Since then I have done so every week that my husband is not at home.”

Prosper Gyekete, who despite limited English skills has remained a faithful member in the Abomosu Second Branch, read a three-sentence testimony he wrote himself. He said he could not read or write before the class but now he can help his young children with their homework. “Thanks to what I have learned,” he said, “I can be a better father.”

“Now I can read the scriptures by myself,” said Kwaku Sasu of the Kwabeng Branch. “Before, I knew the Book of Mormon was true even though I could not read it. Now I

know it is true *as* I read it. My testimony is growing and growing.”

The members of the Asunafo Branch Relief Society presidency said they dedicated each Thursday to speaking to each other only in English. “It made some conversations longer that day because we could not think of the right words to say to each other,” said Evelyn Agyeiwaa, Relief Society president. “But we soon began translating for each other, finding the right words to say. Because we were learning together, none of us were embarrassed or afraid to say the wrong words. We simply helped each other.”

### Benefits Abound

Women who completed the Abomosu District literacy program said they felt better about themselves and were more likely to participate in church. They became more willing to accept callings, read the scriptures, and teach both at church and at home. Some men also completed the program. Mostly subsistence farmers, they said they are now better able to calculate costs and sales of their produce, help children with their homework, and read the scriptures on their own and with their families.

Encouraged by the success in Abomosu, the neighboring Asamankese District has launched its own literacy program.

“Being able to read and write is changing our lives and the lives of our children,” said Gladis Aseidu of the Sankubenase Branch. “Words are changing our world, and we thank our Father in Heaven.” ■



### INSPIRED SELF-RELIANCE

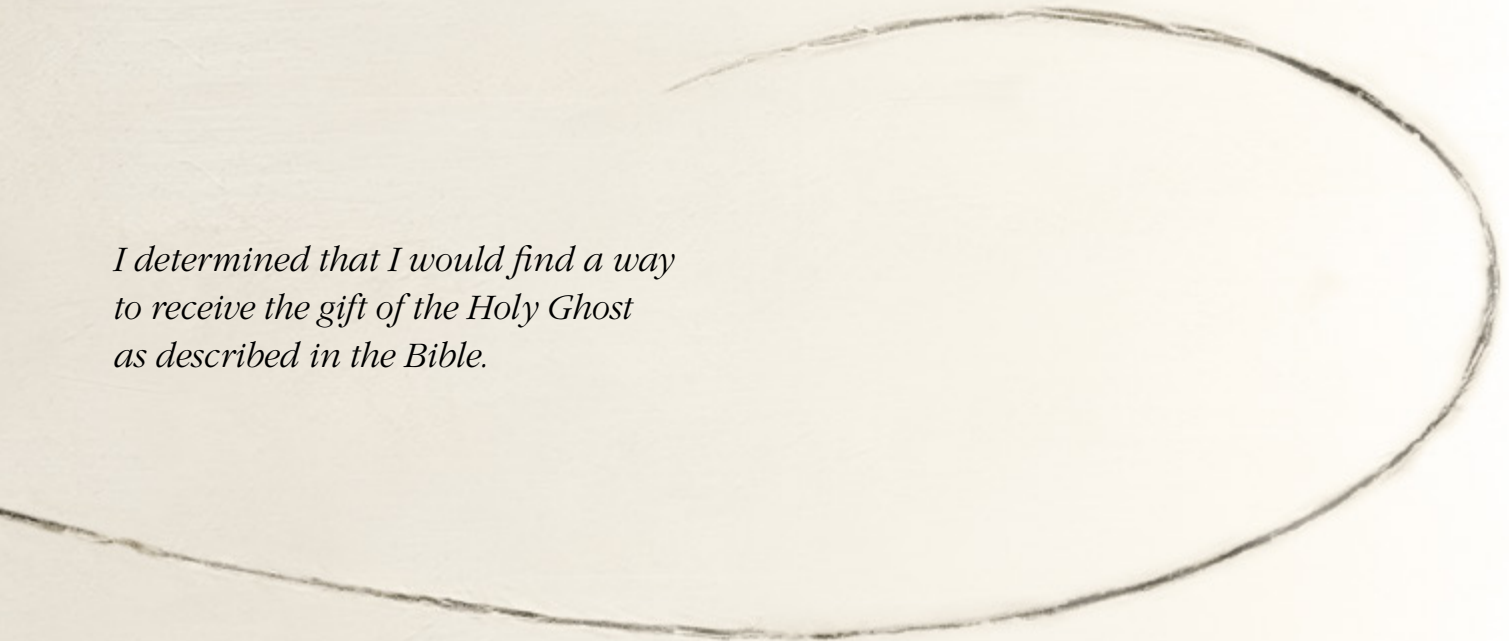
“There is no one-size-fits-all answer in Church welfare. It is a self-help program where individuals are responsible for personal self-reliance. Our resources include personal prayer, our own God-given talents and abilities, the assets available to us through our own families and extended family members, various community resources, and of course the caring support of priesthood quorums and the Relief Society. . . .

“In the end you must do in your area what disciples of Christ have done in every dispensation: counsel together, use all resources available, seek the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, ask the Lord for His confirmation, and then roll up your sleeves and go to work.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Providing in the Lord’s Way,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 53–56.

FILLED WITH THE HOLY  
GHOST





*I determined that I would find a way  
to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost  
as described in the Bible.*

**By Carol M. Truscott**

I grew up in upstate New York, USA, as a member of another faith. I was baptized as an infant and confirmed at age 12. I remember eagerly preparing for my confirmation. I anticipated a memorable occasion that would bring an energizing closeness to the Lord. Yet at the end of my confirmation I felt a pit in my stomach, almost as though something had been vacuumed out of me. Devastated by the emptiness, I determined that I would find a way to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost as described in the Bible.

### **A Long-Term Search**

Over two decades later, I was married and living in Plano, Texas. When our fifth son was born, the nurse asked if I was Mormon. I was horrified. I thought Mormons were a cult. I asked her why she would think such a thing, and she told me it was because Mormons placed high value on family and many had large families. I felt insulted by her question but thought to myself that if Mormons valued solid family relationships, they had at least one thing right.

Life went on. I continued in the church of my youth, but I felt a drive to find which religions taught about the gift of the Holy Ghost. This opportunity came as various local congregations hired me to play the organ. When I did, I would become involved with their worship services, hoping I would recognize truth if I encountered it.

I followed this pattern for some time but couldn't find what I was seeking. I tried traditional and nontraditional worship groups. I remember wanting to give up, but I prayed to Heavenly Father, asking Him that if His Church was on the earth, would He please help me find it?

### **A Knock at the Door**

Days later, I heard a knock at the door and found two Latter-day Saint missionaries standing on our doorstep. I opened the door partway and told them I wasn't interested. They had a response for that. I said something else so that they would leave. They had a response for that too. Then I had a thought: "This could be what you've been praying for." I immediately countered that thought with another: "Nah."

But as they continued to tell me about the Church, I couldn't help feeling interested. They asked if they could come in, and I agreed. They gave me the first discussion and asked me to study what they were teaching me. They also asked whether I would be baptized if I discovered their church was true.

"Absolutely not."

"Maybe you misunderstood the question," they said. "If you *knew* it was true, would you be baptized?"

I knew the Mormons couldn't have the truth, but it seemed that the missionaries wouldn't leave until I agreed



to at least consider their message. So I agreed and committed to read a copy of the Book of Mormon. I was confident that I would see inconsistencies between it and the Bible and that if the Book of Mormon had satanic influences, I would be able to discern them immediately. I could then tell the missionaries that I had read it and that I simply wasn't interested.

### **A New but Familiar Book**

I started reading out of sheer curiosity, and the book grabbed my attention because the introductory matter mentioned events taking place in New York State, near my birthplace. It fascinated me to find out that so much had happened in the area I called home—and I'd never heard about any of it!

The Book of Mormon's history grabbed my attention, but its teachings kept it. So much of what I read rang true with things I'd always felt, or it answered my questions. My testimony of the gospel grew as I prayed, and the Spirit witnessed to me the truth of the book and the Church.

For instance, many churches taught that Adam, Eve, and others in the Bible weren't real people; they were merely the subjects of myths that taught valuable principles. But I believed that Adam and Eve *were* real people who had actually lived on the earth. It was comforting that the Book of Mormon referred to them, to the Tower of Babel, and to other people and places in the Bible.

I also remember thinking about the Joseph Smith story. I had long thought it odd that God would give prophets to people in one age but not another, and I longed to follow a

prophet who taught about relevant things. To discover that the Lord had raised up such a prophet—and that we continued to have prophets on the earth—was wonderful!

I also identified with Book of Mormon teachings on the actuality of a premortal existence. Many religions taught that our existence started at conception. Yet as a mother, I had observed the distinct personalities of my children at an early age—surely those things had developed long before! It excited me to have so many pieces of the puzzle come together.

More than anything, though, the Book of Mormon taught me to have faith in Jesus Christ and His teachings. Whatever else I didn't know, I did know that I wanted to be a follower of Jesus Christ, and this book clearly taught about Him. It had to be true. This was what I had been seeking my entire life. I read the Book of Mormon voraciously. I couldn't get enough.

### **Friendship with Our Family**

When the missionaries returned, I apologized for not yet having finished the book—I was only halfway through Ether, I explained. But they were ecstatic.

By the time they returned four days later, I had finished the Book of Mormon. I wanted to keep going, so they returned with a copy of the Doctrine and Covenants. When I finished that a week later, they gave me a copy of *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*. I finished that in two weeks—I was devouring everything they gave me. They taught me the discussions and challenged me to get baptized.

*When the elders laid their hands on my head to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost, I felt great joy.*



When I told my husband about my desire to join the Church, he told me, “I don’t know what you’re looking for, but it can’t be found with the Mormons.” So I postponed my baptismal date. Meanwhile, my husband encouraged my involvement with another church, but I quickly became convinced that it was not what I needed. During a discussion with several members of my congregation, I suggested that we pray about a decision facing the group. They were taken aback. “Why would we ever do that?” one person said. That was the end of my time with that church.

Meanwhile, the missionaries continued to reach out to our family. They brought us a cake for Valentine’s Day. My cakes were notoriously bad, and theirs was *really* good. My husband suggested that I respond to their kindness by returning their pan full of my “famous” lasagna. This exchange happened a few more times, and when my husband saw their sincere efforts to befriend our family, his heart was touched. He even agreed to take our entire family to church.

The Sunday we first attended was the first Sunday of the consolidated meeting schedule. Because no one was used to the three-hour block, things were a bit hectic. The missionaries apologized profusely, but it ended up being a great thing. My husband had heard that Mormons were slick and smooth, and on that particular Sunday, anyway, that was not the case. It eased my husband’s suspicions. What we *did* find were kind, down-to-earth people in a family-friendly environment.

### **A Series of Surprises**

The missionaries continued to teach me, usually during the day on Wednesdays. Mysteriously, each Wednesday one of our four oldest sons, who at that point ranged in age from 5 to 12, would get “sick” and stay home from school. I didn’t notice this pattern for weeks, but ultimately I realized that they were taking turns sitting in on the lessons so they could share with each other what the missionaries were teaching. The gospel excited them too.

My husband wasn’t yet persuaded, but he agreed to take the discussions. One day he returned from work early and said, “The missionaries are coming over tonight, and I haven’t yet read the materials they left. I came home early to catch up for our appointment.”

That surprised me, but what shocked me later that night was his response to the missionaries when they asked if he would be baptized: he said yes. He’d gone with me to the various churches I’d attended over the years but had never committed to join any of them. It was monumental for him to decide the Church was true.

Those of our family who were old enough were baptized May 31, 1980. Being confirmed and receiving the Holy Ghost was a sacred experience. When the elders laid their hands on my head to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost, I felt great joy.

The gospel really does offer everything I sought. Many years and three generations later, the joy continues. ■

*The author lived in Massachusetts, USA, but passed away before this issue was completed.*





# THE WORTH OF SOULS AND THE PROBLEM OF

# BULLYING

*By teaching our children the appropriate principles and skills, we can help them avoid being bullied—or becoming bullies themselves.*

**By Jonathan Cox**

Psychologist and Assistant Clinical Professor at Brigham Young University

In this dispensation, the Lord made it clear in a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith that “the worth of souls is great in the sight of God” (D&C 18:10). Ideally, all people would treat each other with respect and kindness and as individuals of great worth. Unfortunately, not everyone lives up to this principle.

The problem isn’t unique to our day. In the Book of Mormon, we read how Laman and Lemuel called their younger brother Nephi names, hit him, tied him up, and tried to kill him. They were bullies.

The definition of bullying we have today could well have applied in Nephi’s time: “Unwanted, aggressive behavior . . . that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time.”<sup>1</sup>

Bullying comes in many forms, including verbal, physical, sexual, relational (damaging someone’s relationships or social status), and cyber (bullying through electronic devices).<sup>2</sup> Because bullying is very common, chances are that your children will experience it at different points in their lives, perhaps both as victims and as bullies.<sup>3</sup>

Thankfully, there are ways to deal with bullying that help children feel safe and empowered and give bullies opportunities to change. As you teach your children the relevant principles and skills, they can help others and more effectively avoid being on either side of a bullying situation.

## **If Your Child Is Being Bullied**

Whether or not you currently have a child involved in a bullying situation, it is important to create a relationship with your children in which they feel comfortable talking with you about their lives. Encourage them to tell you if they see or experience bullying themselves. You can also watch for changes that may signal that something is wrong: if they become more irritable, sad, or anxious, or if they begin to avoid people or places they used to enjoy, they may be experiencing bullying.



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If your child is being bullied or sees someone else being bullied, help him or her take effective, assertive action. Although common recommendations include ignoring the bully, turning bullying behavior into a joke, or reacting aggressively, these responses are actually often ineffective and dangerous. Instead, teach your child to:

- Look the bully in the eye.
- Tell the bully calmly and firmly that his or her actions are bullying: “This is bullying, and it’s not okay.”
- Ask the bully to stop doing it: “I need you to stop.”
- If the bullying continues, repeat the same message and tell the bully that an adult authority figure will be informed: for example, “I will tell the teacher what you are doing.”

If the bullying still doesn’t stop after the above steps, you or your child should inform an authority figure about the situation and continue speaking up until your child or any others being bullied have gotten the help they need. The authority figure involved first should be the one closest to the situation—a school or church teacher, recess monitor, parent, or member of the presidency of the ward Primary, Young Men, or Young Women. If the bullying continues, you and your child should seek out the authority figure just higher than

the last. You may need to continue going up the chain of authority until the bullying stops.

During this time, you and your child should keep all evidence of the bullying in case you need to ask local law enforcement or a lawyer for help. Make a list of events and the dates they occurred, ask your child for any notes, print copies of emails and texts, and take screenshots of social media posts that contain bullying messages.

This approach does not guarantee that the bullying will stop. It may even increase the bullying in the short term. Remember that Laman and Lemuel continued to bully Nephi even after an angel intervened (see 1 Nephi 3:29; 4:4; 7:16). However, an assertive and direct approach is the best way to help your child stop the bullying. Additionally, this approach shows love toward the bully by allowing him or her an opportunity to repent and change the behavior.

### Helping Your Child Love Others

No parent wants to imagine his or her child as a bully, but there’s a chance children will bully their siblings or others at some point in their lives. For example, my parents were not aware that as a teenager I would push my younger sister down onto the couch, sit on her, and laugh at her while not allowing her to get up. If my parents had known, they would have acted quickly to stop my behavior.





One helpful way to prevent bullying behavior is to teach your children to love other people, even when those people seem different. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated, “We should be persons of goodwill toward all, rejecting persecution of any kind, including persecution based on race, ethnicity, religious belief or nonbelief, and differences in sexual orientation.”<sup>4</sup>

Teach your children to avoid saying mean things or acting in an aggressive or exclusionary way toward their peers. If you see or hear of your children bullying someone, speak to them privately, kindly, and directly. Tell them that what they are doing is bullying and it needs to stop immediately. Often children aren’t fully aware that their actions are harmful. Most children want to make good choices and will readily take correction, especially when it is followed by “an increase of love” (D&C 121:43).

### There Is Hope

Another great tool against bullying is an understanding that we are all children of God and have great worth. As we help our children develop a testimony of these important truths, they will learn to love themselves and others, even those who are different from them (see Luke 10:30–37). One of the most important gifts we can give our children is a safe place to turn if they need help. We can remind them that they are not alone and that there is always hope. ■

#### NOTES

1. “Bullying Definition,” [stopbullying.gov/what-is-bullying/definition/index.html](http://stopbullying.gov/what-is-bullying/definition/index.html).
2. See Alessio Vieno, Gianluca Gini, and Massimo Santinello, “Different Forms of Bullying and Their Association to Smoking and Drinking Behavior in Italian Adolescents,” *Journal of School Health*, vol. 81, no. 7 (July 2011), 393–99.
3. See Jing Wang, Ronald J. Iannotti, and Tonja R. Nansel, “School Bullying among Adolescents in the United States: Physical, Verbal, Relational, and Cyber,” *Journal of Adolescent Health*, vol. 45, no. 4 (Oct. 2009), 368–75; Kirk R. Williams and Nancy G. Guerra, “Prevalence and Predictors of Internet Bullying,” *Journal of Adolescent Health*, vol. 41, no. 6, suppl. (Dec. 2007), S14–S21.
4. Dallin H. Oaks, “Loving Others and Living with Differences,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 27.

## Sticking Up for a Friend

Ella D.

Latter-day Saint youth from Wales

**W**e watched a Mormon Messages video in family home evening about cyberbullying. A month or so later, one of my friends (I’ll call her Molly) posted a video on a social networking site being nasty to another one of my friends (I’ll call her Sarah). I was surprised she did it, as they used to be best friends, and Molly would never have said such things to Sarah’s face. Another girl had “liked” it. I wasn’t sure if I should say something, because I don’t like confrontations. My mum asked how I’d feel if the video was about me and none of my friends said anything.

I decided to leave a comment that nicely let Molly know I didn’t like what she had posted. I also reported the video as inappropriate because it was bullying.

The next day I checked the site. The video had been taken down, but Molly had now posted it directly to us. This time nobody “liked” it, and two other people wrote comments similar to mine, sticking up for Sarah. Molly then blocked me and another girl but got rid of the video.

I was upset that Molly reacted like that, but I felt pleased I’d been a good influence. And I was pleased that others had stood by our friend too. I hope Molly has learned that good friends don’t do mean things like that and that we’ll say something if they do. I also hope Molly knows we would stick up for her too.

**U**se this article, along with stories on this topic in the September and October *Friend*, to talk with your children about bullying. See also the following videos: “Bullying—Stop It” ([lds.org/go/bullyingE1015](https://lds.org/go/bullyingE1015)); “Angels in Disguise” ([lds.org/go/angelsE1015](https://lds.org/go/angelsE1015)).

# PROTECTING OUR YOUTH THROUGH FAMILY HISTORY

By Maggie Stevens

One of the most difficult challenges leaders and parents of today's youth face is watching a child stray from the gospel. The adversary is working overtime to destroy potential families, and to do this he targets our youth. Teenagers are fighting a tough battle. How do we help them turn their hearts to their fathers (see Malachi 4:6) and thus gain added strength to overcome the challenges they face? The answer could be as simple as using the various family history resources now available. Not only can such resources offer an incredible experience for our youth, but they can help unlock promised blessings.

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has counseled adult leaders of youth to provide direction for planning temple and family history activities without taking over: "You have to be there, but you have to get out of the way. . . . Let them act."<sup>1</sup> Many adult advisers are inviting young men and women to take action and are having success by letting youth plan heart-turning activities.

For example, the young women in the Santa Margarita California Stake recently learned about family history

at their annual stake Beehive activity. To prepare for this activity, all of the Beehives in the stake personally prepared a four-generation family chart. For those who were unable to accomplish this task, a family history specialist was on hand to assist. Using a butterfly theme, the young women helped each other transfer their four generations to a 9-by-11-inch canvas they could hang in their rooms. The project was simple enough to complete in one evening.



## TEMPLE CHALLENGE

Watch a video about the challenge that Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave to youth to find family names, take them to the temple, and teach others to do the same: [lds.org/topics/family-history/temple-challenge](https://www.lds.org/topics/family-history/temple-challenge).

During the activity, the young women shared facts about their own ancestors, displayed period clothing, and told amazing family stories they had discovered. This activity created a desire among the young women to get involved in using the photos and stories features on [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org).

Meredith K., one of the Beehives who participated, sums up the experience for many of the young women there: "Knowing I can do this FamilySearch stuff makes me happy. I feel valuable. I am not really good at a lot of things, but I am good at this. As a member of the Church, I have taken family history for granted. My eyes have been opened. Wow, this is a great blessing!"

I believe this generation of youth will be less likely to stray if we as their parents, their leaders, and their peers can guide them to their ancestors. From learning about the strength of their ancestors, the youth of this dispensation can gain strong testimonies, learn to love the gospel, and find inspiration to conquer the challenges that cross their paths. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

### NOTE

1. David A. Bednar, in "Let Them Act" (video), [lds.org/go/actE1015](https://www.lds.org/go/actE1015).

*Like young plants in a storm, our youth can find protection in doing family history, sinking their roots deep into gospel soil.*



## HOW TO HELP YOUTH PARTICIPATE IN FAMILY HISTORY

- In Cedar City, Utah, leaders from among the youth were taught journal writing, document research, indexing, and how to use [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org). These youth then turned around and taught the same skills to their peers in their quorums and classes.
- In a stake in Mesa, Arizona, missionaries who have recently received their mission calls serve in the local family history center up until the time they report to the missionary training center.
- In San Antonio, Texas, a community Boy Scout troop, along with their parents, were invited to the family history center to complete merit badge requirements.
- In Rio Rancho, New Mexico, youth have been called as family history consultants and assist their peers and ward families.
- In Houston, Texas, youth help plan the stake's annual community family history fair and teach the classes.



## PROTECTION FROM THE ADVERSARY

“Do you young people want a sure way to eliminate the influence of the adversary in your life? Immerse yourself in searching for your ancestors, prepare their names for the sacred vicarious ordinances available in the temple, and then go to the temple to stand as proxy for them to receive the ordinances of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. As you grow older, you will be able to participate in receiving the other ordinances as well. I can think of no greater protection from the influence of the adversary in your life.”

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Joy of Redeeming the Dead,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 94.



When I was escorted to the officers' dining room, the ship's captain was yelling and pointing his finger at a young officer.

## HOW IMPORTANT COULD THIS BE?

During my tour aboard the USS *West Virginia*, a call came for an officer who spoke Portuguese to go on a three-week exchange with the Brazilian Navy. I was the only one in the submarine force who spoke Portuguese.

My initial feeling was not to go. I had just finished a three-month patrol and was looking forward to seeing my family, but the exchange would not leave my mind. I turned to Heavenly Father in prayer, received a strong answer that I should go, and accepted the assignment.

The arrangements proved fraught with hurdles. At one point I felt like

giving up. I thought, "How important could this be?" The Holy Ghost, however, prompted me to push ahead.

Finally, after several delays, I arrived on a Brazilian ship. When I was escorted to the officers' dining room, the ship's captain was yelling and pointing his finger at a young officer. The captain saw me, stopped, and said in broken English, "Ah, my American friend has arrived. Welcome. May I offer you something to drink?"

I responded in Portuguese that I would love a popular Brazilian soft drink I hadn't tasted since my mission. He told me the ship had all kinds of

liquor on board, but I stated I did not drink alcohol.

Later a knock came at my cabin. When I opened the door, there stood the young officer from the dining room.

"You are an American," he said. "You do not drink alcohol. You speak Portuguese. Could it be that you are a Mormon?"

"Yes, I am," I responded.

He threw his arms around me and broke down sobbing.

This officer, Lt. Mendes, was a fairly new convert and a recent graduate of the Brazilian Naval Academy. On board the ship, he quickly learned

that the captain expected him to share in the wild lifestyle of the officers when visiting ports. Instead, Lt. Mendes constantly volunteered for “in-port duty” and otherwise skipped port-of-call activities. The captain grew weary of this. When I entered the dining hall, he was yelling at Lt. Mendes for not joining in.

“You will go out with the officers during our next port of call,” he had ordered the lieutenant. “You will show the visiting American officer what it is like to have a good time. He will expect that of us.”

For months, Lt. Mendes had been praying that his captain would understand and accept his principles. With my arrival, discussion of the gospel became the center of most conversations in the dining room. We talked with the other officers about Joseph Smith, the Restoration, the Word of Wisdom, and the law of chastity. Feelings toward Lt. Mendes soon changed. The officers removed the openly displayed pornography, and at the next port we all enjoyed a meal together at a restaurant instead of going to a club.

Near the end of my three weeks on board, and after many discussions with the captain and officers about our beliefs, the men softened their hearts. “Now I understand,” the captain told Lt. Mendes before I left, adding that he would no longer ask him to go against his principles.

I will never forget this experience. Lt. Mendes and I learned that our Father in Heaven knows us individually, loves us, and is concerned with our personal lives. ■

Kelly Laing, Washington, USA

## SISTER SPAFFORD WAS SPEAKING TO ME

I was playing an online restaurant game late one night when my husband walked by and announced that he was going to bed.

“I’ll be right in,” I told him.

“I’ll believe it when I see it,” he said.

I was playing a game in which I cooked virtual food in a virtual restaurant for virtual customers. I looked at the computer screen and said, “Actually, I have food coming up in 15 minutes.”

To pass the time while I waited, I picked up *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society*, which had lain on the desk since I had received it in Relief Society. I began reading the preface. On the third page I found the following by Belle S. Spafford, ninth Relief Society general president.

“The average woman today, I believe,” she wrote, “would do well to appraise her interests, evaluate the activities in which she is engaged, and

then take steps to simplify her life, putting things of first importance first, placing emphasis where the rewards will be greatest and most enduring, and ridding herself of the less rewarding activities” (2011, xiii).

Other than the scriptures, never has anything I have read touched me so deeply. This woman who died more than 30 years ago was speaking to me. Her words are likely more relevant today than when she said them.

I knew immediately that I would never play online games again. I turned off the computer, went to bed, and told my husband of my decision. The next day I did not even turn on the computer. Instead, I figured out how many hours I had wasted on those games every day.

I multiplied three hours a day by 365 (days in a year) and divided by 24 (hours in a day). I was stunned to learn that I had wasted 45.62 days per year. Those precious hours and days are gone forever. I could have spent them reading my scriptures, spending time with my husband and children, serving others, or magnifying my callings.

General Authorities often address this subject during general conference. Yet it had never hit home, and I thought it did not apply to me.

I am grateful that the Holy Ghost helped me recognize that the General Authorities—and Belle S. Spafford—were speaking to me. ■  
Sandy Howson, Ohio, USA

# I DIDN'T KNOW WHY I WAS THERE

**M**y mother and I had just finished our nightly prayer. We hugged each other and said, "I love you." Then I walked to my bedroom. As I reached for my door handle, a strong impression came into my mind that the next day my mom would die.

My brain and heart tried to fight the thought. There was no way that something was going to happen to my mom. Everything would be fine with her.

Once in my room, I knelt in prayer and told Heavenly Father that the impression about my mom could not be true. I asked Him to please take the thought away, but it didn't leave. I returned to my parents' room and told my mom I wanted one more hug and kiss before I went to bed. We again said, "I love you," and I returned to my room. It took me a while to fall asleep that night.

When I woke up the next morning, I was nervous. Thankfully, there was my mom, happy and well. But in the back of my mind, I still had that nagging feeling that something wasn't right. At fast and testimony meeting that day, Mom stood up and bore a beautiful testimony.

After sacrament meeting she went to teach her Primary class, and I went to Sunday School. I had another distinct impression, this time to get up and leave Sunday School. I didn't want to draw attention to myself, but something pulled me out of my seat and out of the door. Within a few minutes, I found myself sitting in my mom's Primary class listening to her teach. I didn't know why I was there, but I

knew that was where I needed to be.

Later that afternoon at my brother's house, my mom stared straight into my eyes for the last time as she collapsed and passed away from a pulmonary embolism. For His reasons and in His mercy, Heavenly Father had sent the Holy Ghost to prepare me. Those promptings gave me extra time with my mom that I wouldn't have enjoyed had I ignored the still, small voice.

The love of my Heavenly Father had never been so evident to me until the events that took place around my mom's passing. How blessed we are to have a Father in Heaven who loves us enough to give us the special gift of the Holy Ghost. ■

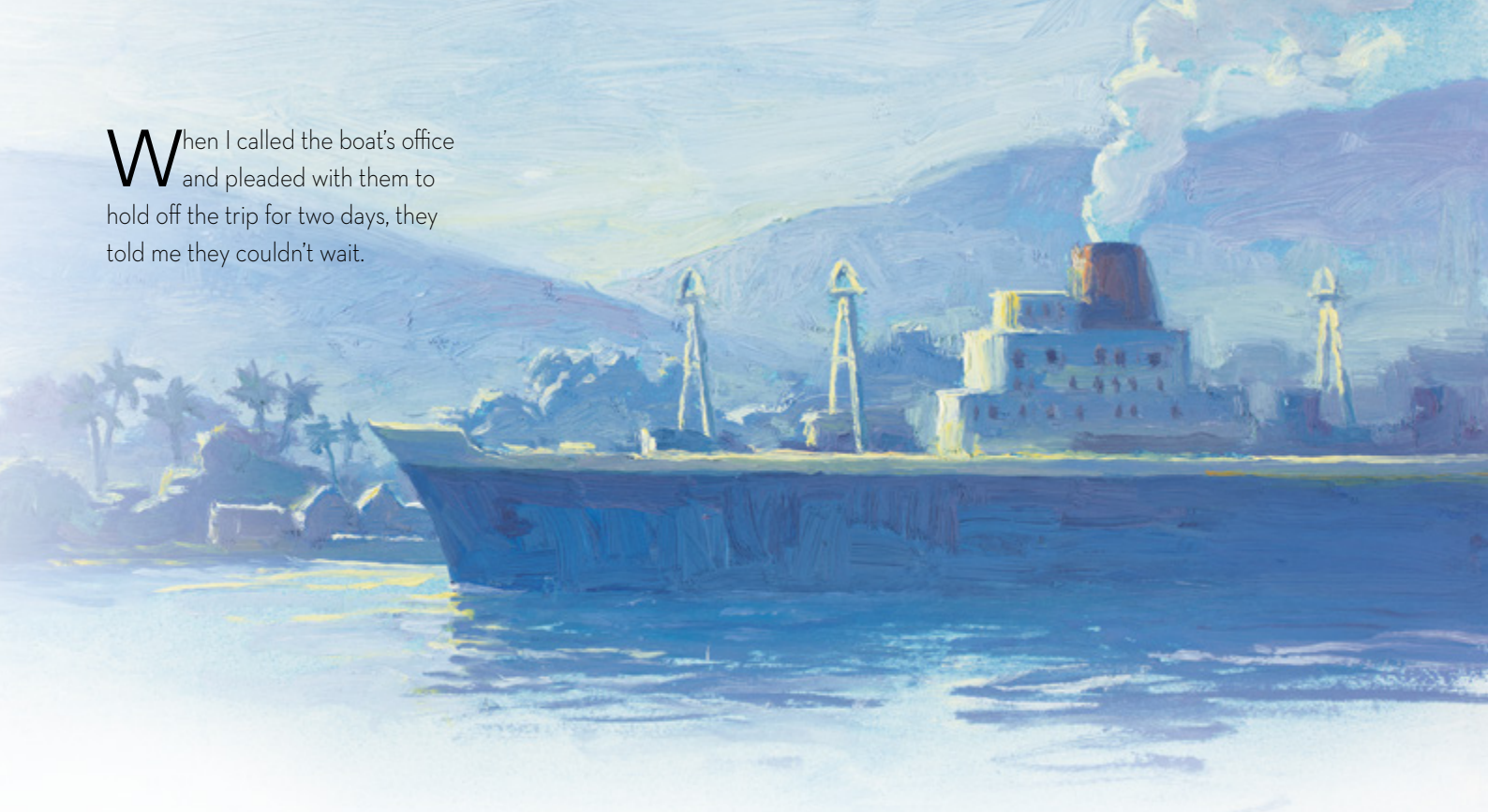
Amber Cheney, Alabama, USA

I returned to my parents' room and told my mom I wanted one more hug and kiss before I went to bed.





When I called the boat's office and pleaded with them to hold off the trip for two days, they told me they couldn't wait.



## PRAYING MY WAY TO ROTUMA

The *Westerland* left yesterday," my sister-in-law said as she greeted us at the Nadi International Airport in Fiji.

I was sad and disappointed at the news. The MV *Westerland* was the boat that was supposed to take us to see my elder brother on Rotuma Island. Rotuma is approximately 375 miles (600 km) northwest of Viti Levu, the largest of Fiji's islands. If you miss the boat, you most likely have to wait days or even weeks for the next one.

A year earlier I had gone to Rotuma to help my brother renovate our grandmother's house, and I left him because of a job-related disagreement. Now I wanted to see him face to face and tell him how sorry I was.

A week before my wife, Akata, and I flew to Fiji from Australia, my niece told me that the *Westerland* would be going to Rotuma the day before we were scheduled to arrive. I

immediately called the boat's office and pleaded with them to hold off the trip for two days.

"No, we couldn't even if we wanted to," came the reply. "The Rotuma Island Council has made preparations for a welcoming feast, and the boat needs to depart as scheduled."

A thought flashed through my mind, and I decided to fast and pray.

"Dear Heavenly Father," I prayed, "I would very much like to catch that boat to Rotuma. I believe they can't hold off departure another day or two, but Thou hast power to do it. Couldst Thou please remove just one bolt anywhere on the boat so as to stall the trip that I might board? I need to go to Rotuma and be reconciled with my brother."

After we had heard the disappointing news, we made our way to the port on the other side of the island. There, however, we learned that the

boat had experienced engine troubles and hadn't left yet. Heavenly Father had answered my prayer! As it turned out, the entire engine—not just one bolt—had to be removed to repair a major oil leak.

When the boat finally left a week later, I was on board. When I arrived in Rotuma, I embraced my brother and apologized, and we restored our relationship. It was certainly a day of jubilation.

I will be forever grateful for this wonderful spiritual experience and for the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a testimony that miracles still occur today, that Heavenly Father lives and answers our sincere prayers, that prayer and fasting go hand in hand, and that the gospel is true—even in a small village on the tiny island of Rotuma. ■

John K. Muaror, New South Wales, Australia  
(The author has passed away.)



**By President  
Henry B. Eyring**  
First Counselor  
in the First  
Presidency

## THE WAY TO SAFETY

*One of the ways we may know that a warning is from the Lord is that the law of witnesses, authorized witnesses, has been invoked.*

There seems to be no end to the Savior's desire to lead us to safety. And there is constancy in the way He shows us the path. He calls by more than one means so that it will reach those willing to accept it. And those means always include sending the message by the mouths of His prophets whenever people have qualified to have the prophets of God among them. Those authorized servants are always charged with warning the people, telling them the way to safety.

When tensions ran high in northern Missouri, USA, in the fall of 1838, the Prophet Joseph Smith called for all the Saints to gather to Far West for protection. Many were on isolated farms or in scattered settlements. He specifically counseled Jacob Haun, founder of a small settlement called Haun's Mill. A record of that time includes this: "Brother Joseph had sent word by Haun, who owned the mill, to inform the brethren who were living



there to leave and come to Far West, but Mr. Haun did not deliver the message" (Philo Dibble, in "Early Scenes in Church History," in *Four Faith Promoting Classics* [1968], 90). Later, the Prophet Joseph recorded in his history: "Up to this day God had given me wisdom to save the people who took counsel. None had ever been killed who [had abided] by my counsel" (*History of the Church*, 5:137). Then the Prophet recorded the sad truth that innocent lives could have been saved at Haun's Mill had his counsel been received and followed.

In our own time, we have been warned with counsel of where to find safety from sin and from sorrow. One of the keys to recognizing those

warnings is that they are repeated. For instance, more than once in these general conferences, you have heard our prophet say that he would quote a preceding prophet and would therefore be a second witness and sometimes even a third. . . . The Apostle Paul wrote that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1). One of the ways we may know that the warning is from the Lord is that the law of witnesses, authorized witnesses, has been invoked. When the words of prophets seem repetitive, that should rivet our attention and fill our hearts with gratitude to live in such a blessed time. . . .

Our Heavenly Father loves us. He sent His Only Begotten Son to be our Savior. He knew that in mortality we would be in grave danger, the worst of it from the temptations of a terrible adversary. That is one of the reasons why the Savior has provided priesthood keys so that those with ears to hear and faith to obey could go to places of safety. ■

*From "Finding Safety in Counsel," Ensign, May 1997, 24–26.*

# CONNECT WITH CHURCH HISTORY



## Renovated Church History Museum Now Open

The mural above depicts a wintry scene during the Saints' last days in Nauvoo as they worked tirelessly to receive their endowments before their journey to the Salt Lake Valley. The mural hangs in the renovated Church History Museum, which features *The Heavens Are Opened* exhibit. This exhibit honors inspirational lives of early Saints and stories of the Restoration from 1820 to 1846. Artwork, artifacts, and interactive media portray important events in Church history. The centerpiece is a large circular theater that provides visitors with an immersive experience of the First Vision. Other sections of the exhibit highlight global missionary work, the organization of the Relief Society, and the translation of the Book of Mormon. This exhibit provides an opportunity to discover, explore, and interact with Church history like never before.

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For more information on the museum and the renovation, visit [history.lds.org/section/museum](https://history.lds.org/section/museum).



# In Church Magazines

**Ensign:** Understanding the “why” of your decisions will help you do the right things for the right reasons. See page 12 to learn about living with real intent.

**New Era:** Elder Dallin H. Oaks’s *Ensign* article on pornography can also be found in this month’s *New Era* (page 2). Other articles in this issue help youth learn how to take the lead in planning and carrying out great youth activities (pages 20, 24, 30).

**Friend:** How can you help your children stay safe online? Read “Standing Strong” (page 44) and talk about the healthy online habits in “I Am Cyber Strong!” (page 47). When your children are prepared, they don’t have to be scared!



THE CHURCH OF  
JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS