

# Ensign



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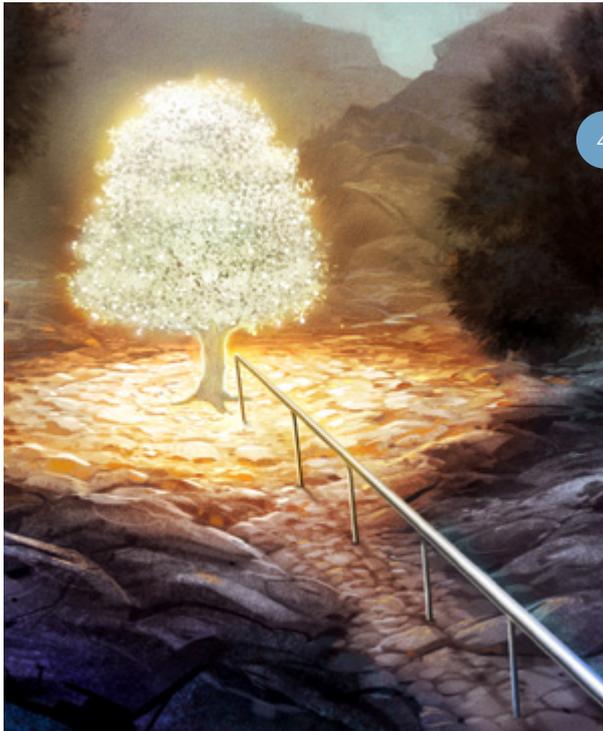


*"I would that ye should remember, that as much as ye shall put your trust in God even so much ye shall be delivered out of your trials, and your troubles, and your afflictions, and ye shall be lifted up at the last day."*

Alma 38:5

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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.*



### “Little Children and the Sacrament,”

page 32. After reading the article as parents, you could discuss ways to teach your

young children about the importance of the sacrament and the covenants they will one day make at baptism. You could use the sacrament prayers (found in Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79) to teach about the promises we make at baptism and how taking the sacrament each Sunday allows us to renew those promises. You could also come up with ideas to help your young children focus on the Savior during the sacrament, such as creating simple picture books filled with images of the Savior.

### “Five Ways to Help Youth Tackle Tough

Social Issues,” page 66. Consider reading aloud to your family this statement from

Elder Foster found in the sidebar on page 69: “We cannot let society give our family a makeover in the image of the world.” Ask family members to share ways they think worldly influences try to shape our beliefs and our behavior. Then discuss ways we can strengthen our foundation in the gospel to stand strong against these influences. You might want to focus your discussion on one or two of the suggestions the author gives for helping youth deal with the false and misleading messages they often encounter in their daily lives.

### CELL PHONE LIAHONA

For one of our family nights, we talked with our four children about the story of the Liahona in the Book of Mormon (see 1 Nephi 16; 18; Alma 37:38–46). We then told them to use my son’s cell phone as if it were a Liahona (I had taped a picture on the back), and it would lead them to the “promised land.” I sent text messages to the cell phone every few minutes with directions that took the children on a journey through the neighborhood. The messages finally led them to a neighbor’s house, where my wife and I were waiting with open arms and some delicious treats. The activity helped the Liahona story come to life for our children.

Brad Peterson, Utah, USA

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By President  
Thomas S.  
Monson

# THE BLESSINGS OF OBEDIENCE

**T**he greatest lesson we can learn in mortality,” President Thomas S. Monson has taught, “is that when God speaks and we obey, we will always be right.”<sup>1</sup>

We will also be blessed. As President Monson said during a recent general conference: “When we keep the commandments, our lives will be happier, more fulfilling, and less complicated. Our challenges and problems will be easier to bear, and we will receive [God’s] promised blessings.”<sup>2</sup>

In the following excerpts from President Monson’s teachings as President of the Church, he reminds us that the commandments are the surest guide to happiness and peace.

## Guidelines for the Journey

“God’s commandments are not given to frustrate us or to become obstacles to our happiness. Just the opposite is true. He who created us and who loves us perfectly knows just how we need to live our lives in order to obtain the greatest happiness possible. He has provided us with guidelines which, if we follow them, will see us safely through this often treacherous mortal journey. We remember the words of the familiar hymn: ‘Keep the commandments! In this there is safety; in this there is peace’ [see “Keep the Commandments,” *Hymns*, no. 303].”<sup>3</sup>

## Strength and Knowledge

“Obedience is a hallmark of prophets; it has provided strength and knowledge to them throughout the ages. It is essential for us to realize that we, as well, are entitled to this source of strength and knowledge. It is readily available to each of us today as we obey God’s commandments. . . .

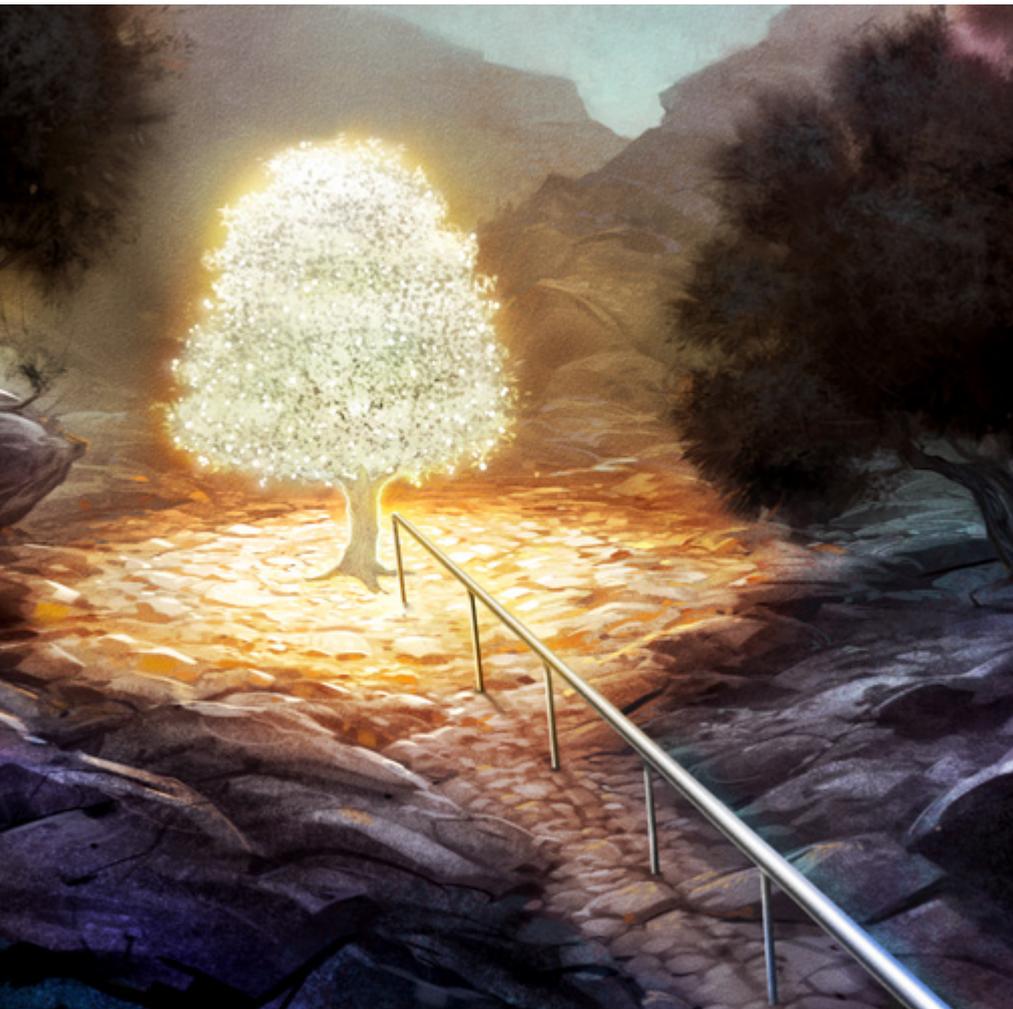
“The knowledge which we seek, the answers for which we yearn, and the strength which we desire today to meet the challenges of a complex and changing world can be ours when we willingly obey the Lord’s commandments.”<sup>4</sup>

## Choose to Obey

“The tenor of our times is permissiveness. Magazines and television shows portray the stars of the movie screen, the heroes of the athletic field—those whom many young people long to emulate—as disregarding the laws of God and flaunting sinful practices, seemingly with no ill effect. Don’t you believe it! There is a time of reckoning—even a balancing of the ledger. Every Cinderella has her midnight—if not in this life, then in the next. Judgment Day will come for all. . . . I plead with you to choose to obey.”<sup>5</sup>

## Joy and Peace

“It may appear to you at times that those out in the world are having much more fun than you are. Some of



as we walk uprightly and keep the commandments. There will be nothing in this world that can defeat us.”<sup>7</sup>

### Follow the Savior

“Who was this Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief? Who is the King of glory, this Lord of hosts? He is our Master. He is our Savior. He is the Son of God. He is the Author of our Salvation. He beckons, ‘Follow me.’ He instructs, ‘Go, and do thou likewise.’ He pleads, ‘Keep my commandments.’

“Let us follow Him. Let us emulate His example. Let us obey His word. By so doing, we give to Him the divine gift of gratitude.”<sup>8</sup> ■

### NOTES

1. “They Marked the Path to Follow,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2007, 7.
2. “Keep the Commandments,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 83.
3. “Keep the Commandments,” 83.
4. “Obedience Brings Blessings,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 90, 92.
5. “Believe, Obey, and Endure,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 129.
6. “Stand in Holy Places,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 83.
7. “Be of Good Cheer,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 92.
8. “Finding Joy in the Journey,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 88.

you may feel restricted by the code of conduct to which we in the Church adhere. My brothers and sisters, I declare to you, however, that there is *nothing* which can bring more joy into our lives or more peace to our souls than the Spirit which can come to us as we follow the Savior and keep the commandments.”<sup>6</sup>

### Walk Uprightly

“I testify to you that our promised blessings are beyond measure. Though the storm clouds may gather, though the rains may pour down upon us, our knowledge of the gospel and our love of our Heavenly Father and of our Savior will comfort and sustain us and bring joy to our hearts

### TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

**P**resident Monson teaches us about the many blessings we can receive by being obedient, including strength, knowledge, joy, and peace. Consider asking those you teach how they’ve been blessed by keeping commandments. You might encourage them to continue to reflect

on their blessings and write down their thoughts and experiences in a journal. You might also encourage them to show gratitude to God for their blessings by continuing to be obedient.

## Fires and Lessons of Obedience

President Thomas S. Monson once told about a time when he learned the importance of obedience. When he was eight years old, his family visited their cabin in the mountains. He and his friend wanted to clear a grassy spot for a campfire. They tried to clear the grass by hand, tugging and yanking as hard as they could, but all they got were handfuls of weeds. President Monson explained, "And then what I thought was the perfect solution came into my eight-year-old mind. I said to Danny, 'All we need is to set these weeds on fire. We'll just burn a circle in the weeds!'"

Even though he knew he wasn't allowed to use matches, he ran back to the cabin for some, and he and Danny set

a small fire in that grassy spot. They expected it to go out by itself, but it instead grew into a large and dangerous fire. He and Danny ran for help, and soon adults were rushing over to put out the fire before it reached the trees.

President Monson continued, "Danny and I learned several difficult but important lessons that day—not the least of which was the importance of obedience." (See "Obedience Brings Blessings," *Ensign*, May 2013, 89–90.)

Like President Monson, have you ever had to learn a lesson in obedience the hard way? What goals can you make to keep yourself safe through obedience in the future?

## CHILDREN

### Choose the Right

Choosing the right brings us closer to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. It also helps us be happy and safe. Circle ways you can choose the right.



Cheat in school



Read the scriptures



Go to church



Serve others



Play good games



Fight with your siblings

Prayerfully study this material and seek for inspiration to know what to share. How will understanding “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” increase your faith in God and bless those you watch over through visiting teaching? For more information, go to [reliefsociety.lds.org](http://reliefsociety.lds.org).



Faith, Family, Relief

## The Family Is Ordained of God

“In the words of [the Primary song] ‘The Family Is of God,’ . . . we are reminded of pure doctrine,” said Carole M. Stephens, First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency. “We learn not only that the family is of God but also that we are each part of God’s family. . . .

“ . . . The Father’s plan for His children is a plan of love. It is a plan to unite His children—His family—with Him.”<sup>1</sup>

Elder L. Tom Perry (1922–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “We also believe that strong traditional families are not only the basic units of a stable society, a stable economy, and a stable culture of values—but that they are also the basic units of eternity and of the kingdom and government of God.

“We believe that the organization and government of heaven will be built around families and extended families.”<sup>2</sup>



“Everyone, no matter what their marital circumstance or number of children, can be defenders of the Lord’s plan described in the family proclamation,” said Bonnie L. Oscarson, Young Women General President. “If it is the Lord’s plan, it should also be our plan!”<sup>3</sup>

### Additional Scriptures

Doctrine and Covenants 2:1–3; 132:19

### Doctrine of the Family

Sister Julie B. Beck, former Relief Society General President, taught that the theology of the family is based on the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement of Jesus Christ:

“The Creation of the earth provided a place where families could live. God created a man and a woman who were the two essential halves of a family. It was part of Heavenly Father’s plan that Adam and Eve be sealed and form an eternal family.

“ . . . The Fall made it possible for them to have sons and daughters.

“[Christ’s] Atonement allows for the family to be sealed together eternally. It allows for families to have eternal growth and perfection. The plan of happiness, also called the plan of salvation, was a plan created for families. . . .

“ . . . This was Christ’s doctrine. . . . Without the family, there is no plan; there is no reason for mortal life.”<sup>4</sup>

### Consider This

Why is the family the most important unit in time and in eternity?

### NOTES

1. Carole M. Stephens, “The Family Is of God,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 11, 13.
2. L. Tom Perry, “Why Marriage and Family Matter—Everywhere in the World,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 41.
3. Bonnie L. Oscarson, “Defenders of the Family Proclamation,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 15.
4. Julie B. Beck, “Teaching the Doctrine of the Family,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2011, 32, 34.

# SACRED THINGS

By C. Gary Allred

*As I tried to multitask during general conference, I realized it wasn't going as well as I thought it would.*

A very pointed lesson was presented to me during the Sunday afternoon session of the April 2012 general conference. I sat in front of my computer screen and marveled at the reality of the speaker's image and the bell-clear tone of his words. With my computer I would also be able to access the speaker's words for sharing and later listening, or even print a hard copy as a study aid and future reference. It was truly amazing.

My eyes wandered across the toolbar at the bottom of my screen. I somehow decided that as long as I could hear the words being spoken, I could easily understand and absorb their meaning while also doing something else at the same time. After all, I was constantly hearing about the wonders of multitasking.

It didn't take long to convince myself. Soon I had opened another tab and was messing with some mindless game whose image effectively covered up the pulpit and the speaker and most of the Tabernacle Choir. I could hear the speaker talking, though. General conference was still streaming live onto my flat-screen monitor.



Elder Paul B. Pieper of the Seventy was speaking about how we should hold some things sacred. I heard him say:

*“Sacred* means worthy of veneration and respect. By designating something as sacred, the Lord signals that it is of higher value and priority than other things.”<sup>1</sup>

I told myself that I agreed with him. Then, as I made another move on my game, I heard Elder Pieper pass on another bit of counsel:

“But ‘there is an opposition in all things’ (2 Nephi 2:11). The opposite of sacred is profane or secular—that which is temporal or worldly. The worldly constantly competes with the sacred for our attention and priorities.”<sup>2</sup>

I nodded once more—he had my attention now. I listened to his words intently for a few minutes, though I couldn't see his face behind my game. My multitasking probably



## A PROPHETIC EPISTLE JUST TO YOU

"I ask you to reflect . . . on the unique phenomenon that general conference itself is. . . . We testify to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people that God not only lives but also that He speaks, that for our time and in our day the counsel you have heard is, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, 'the will of the Lord, . . . the word of the Lord, . . . the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation' [D&C 68:4]. . . .

". . . If we teach by the Spirit and you listen by the Spirit, some one of us will touch on your circumstance, sending a personal prophetic epistle just to you."

**Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "An Ensign to the Nations," *Ensign*, May 2011, 111, 113.**

wasn't going as well as I thought it should be. Then I heard Elder Pieper say this:

"The sacred cannot be selectively surrendered. Those who choose to abandon even one sacred thing will have their minds darkened (see D&C 84:54), and unless they repent, the light they have shall be taken from them (see D&C 1:33)."<sup>3</sup>

Something was nudging the back of my mind. Then a strange thing happened. The edges of my on-screen game began to waver and break into scattered pixels. In just a second or two, everything—including the sound—was gone. My computer had crashed.

I shut off the whole system for a couple of minutes. Then I turned it back on and watched the machine reboot. Soon it was up and running. I signed back on to the Church's website and saw that Elder Pieper had concluded his talk. Conference was again streaming in, clear and true. But I didn't put my game back on.

My computer has certainly crashed on other occasions, but I kept thinking of the last words I heard from Elder Pieper that day. It seemed that my mind was "darkened" when I mixed the worldly with the spiritual, and then that which I still had was

taken from me. I know the Lord often teaches us in more subtle ways or requires us to make a greater effort. And I suppose that the reason things happened the way they did could be open to debate, but I had learned a lesson, felt remorse, and repented.

A few days later I was able to listen to all of Elder Pieper's talk and then print it out. What I had lost was restored and renewed, and so was my testimony that "sacred things are to be treated with more care, given greater deference, and regarded with deeper reverence"<sup>4</sup>—especially during general conference. ■

*The author lives in Alberta, Canada.*

### NOTES

1. Paul B. Pieper, "To Hold Sacred," *Ensign*, May 2012, 109.
2. Paul B. Pieper, "To Hold Sacred," 109.
3. Paul B. Pieper, "To Hold Sacred," 111.
4. Paul B. Pieper, "To Hold Sacred," 109.



# MY SERVICE-FILLED SUNDAYS

By Jeffery A. Hogge

*My Sundays are full, but I feel grateful that I can serve without the hardships faced by early Church leaders like Elder Parley P. Pratt.*

It's Sunday morning. Ahead of me I have a 12-hour schedule of meetings, interviews, confirmations, and ordinations. I will start in one stake center and end in another meetinghouse on the other side of town—all on a very hot day.

I look forward to each meeting, interview, confirmation, and ordination. But yesterday, as I thought about how busy I would be, I indulged in a dose of self-pity—until I opened the *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* and started reading where I had left off. Elder Pratt had been taken prisoner, along with Joseph and Hyrum Smith and others, during difficult days in Missouri. After being taken to Independence, the Brethren were confined to a hotel to sleep on the floor with a block of wood for a pillow.

One cold, snowy morning Elder Pratt arose and, unnoticed, slipped out of the hotel. He made his way eastward through town and into adjacent fields. After walking about a mile (1.6 km), Elder Pratt entered a forest, the falling snow covering his tracks and the trees hiding his presence.

He reflected on his predicament. To continue eastward

meant escape into another state, where he could send for his family. To return to the hotel meant incarceration and accusations of high crimes. Tempted to escape, Elder Pratt thought of the “storm of trouble, or even of death” he would cause the other prisoners if he left.

In his quandary, a scriptural thought struck him: “He that will seek to save his life shall lose it; but he that will lose his life for my sake shall find it again, even life eternal” (see Mark 8:35; D&C 98:13).

Elder Pratt returned to the hotel. Months of arduous incarceration

would follow—without family, fellowship of the Saints, or the ability to serve in his apostolic calling.<sup>1</sup>

Closing the book, I pondered the deprivations of the early Saints—some of them my ancestors. Because of their testimony of the gospel and their faith in Jesus Christ, they endured cruelty and persecution. Because of their endurance, today I can serve and worship freely, bound to them in faith and testimony.

As I prepare for this Sabbath day, my family is safe, looking forward to a day of worship in a comfortable meetinghouse. The fellowship of the Saints will brighten our day. We will rejoice with them in confirmations and ordinations performed, responsibilities fulfilled, and faith fortified. We will partake of the sacrament, remembering our Savior and His atoning sacrifice. And tonight we will gather in our home to read the Book of Mormon and pray together before we lie down on comfortable beds and settle our heads onto soft pillows.

My Sundays are full. For that I am grateful and blessed. ■

*The author lives in California, USA.*

#### NOTE

1. See Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt Jr. (1979), 194–97.



# MELVA'S LAST SUPPER

By Cheryl Harward Wilcox

*"Would you like to try to take the sacrament?" I asked my dying mother.*

My mother lived to be 92 years old and recently passed away. She was in the hospital when the doctors decided that there was nothing more that could be done except to keep her as comfortable as possible until she passed on.

As preparations were being made to take her home, two brethren from a local ward came into the room and asked me if my mother would like the sacrament. At first I told them, "No, thank you." Mom could hardly swallow. Then I said, "On second thought, let me ask her." I leaned close to her ear and said, "There are two priesthood holders here. Would you like to try to take the sacrament?" In a faint but clear voice she answered, "Yes."

After the blessing, I picked up a piece of bread from the tray, broke off a tiny crumb, and gently placed it in her mouth. She worked on it for a bit, and I quietly apologized to the men for it taking a while. They assured me it was OK. After the second prayer, I took a small plastic cup of water and held it to her lips. She took only a

small sip, but I was surprised at how well she swallowed it.

I thanked the brethren, and they left for the next room. Mom died peacefully about an hour later.

In the days that followed, I realized what a sacred moment I had been allowed to share with my mother. The last thing she did in this life was partake of the sacrament. The last word she spoke was "Yes"—yes to receiving the sacrament, yes to offering her sacrifice of "a broken

heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:20), yes to taking upon herself the name of Jesus Christ and promising to always remember Him, yes to receiving His Spirit. The last things that passed through her lips were the emblems of the sacrament.

How sweet her last supper must have tasted to her! Although too weak to move or speak, how alive in Christ she must have felt! How grateful she must have felt for His redeeming and enabling power, which carried her through those final moments of her mortal journey and extended to her the hope for eternal life.

Each week as we partake of the sacrament, may we all be grateful for the opportunity we have to renew our covenants and to feel forgiveness and grace as we strive to become more like our Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ. Then the bread and water can be for us, just as it must have been for my mother, "sweet above all that is sweet, . . . and pure above all that is pure" (Alma 32:42). ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*





By Tad R.  
Callister

Sunday School  
General President

*As we become more  
committed learners, we  
will experience the divine  
joy that comes from  
learning and living the  
gospel of Jesus Christ.*



# THE Joy OF Learning

**T**he story is told of a man who became known as the town idler. He was unwilling to work, unwilling to seek employment. He simply lived off the efforts of others. Finally the townspeople had had enough. They decided to take him to the outskirts of town and banish him. As one of the townspeople escorted him in a wagon to the edge of town, the driver felt a wave of compassion sweep over him. Perhaps the derelict should be given one more chance. Accordingly, he asked, “Would you like a bushel of corn to get a new start?”

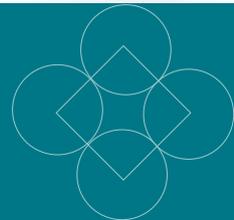
The derelict responded, “Is it husked?”<sup>1</sup>

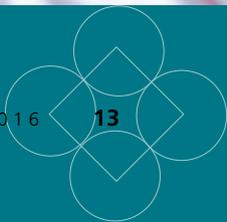
## Teachers and Learners: Equal Responsibility to Contribute

Sometimes we find people on the scriptural dole—they want the scriptures husked before they partake. They want the gospel in a series of entertaining sound bites or video clips. They want the Sunday School teacher to prepare and spoon-feed them the lesson with little preparation or participation on their part.

In contrast, the Savior once invited His learners to go home because they could not understand His words. He commanded them to pray, ponder, and “prepare [their] minds for the morrow,” when He would “come unto [them] again” (see 3 Nephi 17:2–3).

The lesson was this: It is the responsibility not only of the teacher to come prepared but also of the learner. Just as the teacher has the responsibility to teach by the Spirit, so too the learner has the responsibility to learn by the Spirit (see D&C 50:13–21).





The Book of Mormon records: “The preacher was no better than the hearer, *neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal*” (Alma 1:26; emphasis added).

Following are some suggestions for what we can do to experience the joy that comes when we do our part in learning and living the gospel.

### **Learning at Home** **Study the Scriptures**

Every member is responsible for his or her own gospel learning; we cannot delegate that responsibility. Most of that learning comes through regular scripture study. President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) declared: “If we are not reading the scriptures daily, our testimonies are growing thinner.”<sup>2</sup> The Apostle Paul observed that the Jews in Berea “were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind,” and then he shared the reason for such receptivity: “[They] *searched the scriptures daily*” (Acts 17:11; emphasis added).

Daily scripture study is an essential ingredient to our spirituality. Nothing else can fully compensate for its absence in our daily routine. For this reason, scripture study should be set-aside time, not leftover time.



Some may say, “But I don’t have time for daily scripture study amid all my other duties in life.” This statement is somewhat reminiscent of the story of two axmen who held a contest to determine who could cut down more trees in a day. At sunrise the contest commenced. Every hour the smaller man wandered off into the forest for 10 minutes or so. Each time he did this, his opponent smiled and nodded, assured that he was forging ahead. The larger man never left his post, never stopped cutting, never took a break.

When the day ended, the larger man was shocked to learn that his opponent, who seemingly wasted so much time, had cut many more trees than he. “How did you do it when you took so many breaks?” he asked.

The winner replied, “Oh, I was sharpening my ax.”

Every time we study the scriptures, we are sharpening our spiritual ax. And the miraculous part is that when we do so, we are able to use the remainder of our time more wisely.

### **Prepare in Advance**

Studies have shown that only a minority of Church members read in advance the scriptures to be discussed in Sunday classes. Each of us can help reverse this





condition. We can carry our share of the learning experience by coming to class better prepared, having read the scriptures and ready to share insights. Our preparation can be a spiritual gift we give to all class members.

## Learning in Class

### **Participate in Class**

The command to open our mouths (see D&C 60:2–3) applies not only in a missionary setting but also in a classroom setting. When we participate, we invite the Spirit, who can then bear witness of the truth of our comments and enlighten our minds with further insights. In addition, our participation may inspire the thoughts of another and thus encourage his or her input.

In this way, we are following a teaching principle taught by the Lord: “Let one speak

at a time and let  
all listen

unto his sayings, that when all have spoken *that all may be edified of all*” (D&C 88:122; emphasis added). Sometimes participating in class is not easy; it requires us to step outside our comfort zone. But doing so brings increased growth to all in the class.

### **Record Impressions**

For some time I have carried blank note cards to church and sought for doctrinal insights or spiritual impressions I might record. I can honestly say I have been richly rewarded. This approach has changed my perspective; it has focused and accelerated my learning; it has increased my anticipation for church.

Why is it so important to record spiritual experiences we receive at church and elsewhere? Suppose for a moment that a mother is speaking to her teenage son and at one point he says, “Mom, this is really good counsel.” He then takes out a notebook and starts to record impressions he received from their conversation. Once the mother has recovered from the shock, would she not want to give him more?

No doubt the same principle applies to counsel from our Father in Heaven. As we record the impressions He gives to us, He is more likely to give us further revelation. In addition, many of the impressions we receive may seem at first like small acorns of thought, but if we nurture and ponder them, they may grow into spiritual oak trees.

The Prophet Joseph Smith spoke of the importance of recording insights and impressions: “If you . . . proceed to discuss important questions . . . and fail to note them down, . . . perhaps, for neglecting to write these things when God had revealed them, not esteeming them of sufficient worth, the Spirit may withdraw . . . and there is, or was, a vast knowledge, of infinite importance, which is now lost.”<sup>3</sup>



## The Joy of Learning

Learning is much more than a divine duty. It is also meant to be an exquisite joy.

On one occasion, an ancient mathematician named Archimedes was asked by his king to determine if the king's new crown was solid gold or if the goldsmith had dishonestly substituted some silver for gold. Archimedes pondered the solution; finally an answer came. So overjoyed was he by this discovery that, according to legend, he ran about the city crying, "Eureka! Eureka!"—meaning, "I have found it! I have found it!"

As great as was his joy in discovering a scientific principle, there is a far greater joy in discovering the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ: those truths that not only inform us but also save us. For this reason the Savior said, "These things have I spoken unto you, . . . that your joy might be full" (John 15:11). And for this reason "the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7) when they learned the plan of salvation. Just as seeds have the inherent power to grow, so gospel truths have the inherent power to bring joy.



It is not only a divine command to "seek learning" (D&C 88:118), but it is also a godlike pursuit. Every time we study the scriptures, come to class a little better prepared, participate in class discussions, ask questions, and record sacred impressions, we are becoming more like God, thus increasing our capacity to experience the joy He feels.

May we all strive to become more committed learners, more divine learners—at home, in class, and wherever we are. As we do so, we will experience the supernal joy that comes from learning and living the gospel of Jesus Christ. ■

### NOTES

1. A similar story was told by Elder D. Todd Christofferson in the October 2014 general conference.
2. Harold B. Lee, regional representatives' seminar, Dec. 12, 1970.
3. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 2:199.

## A Godlike Pursuit



## to Seek Learning



Every time we study the scriptures, come to class a little better prepared, participate in class discussions, ask questions, and record sacred impressions, we are becoming more like God, thus increasing our capacity to experience the joy He feels.



CONVERTED FOR LIFE

My missionary companion and I stopped at the gate, unaware we would soon witness the converting power of the Book of Mormon.

By Joshua Oram

I was serving as a full-time missionary in the Nicaragua Managua Mission, when one day my companion and I passed a well-kept property with a garden. “Someday I want to contact that house,” he said. Then suddenly he stopped. “Wait a second. Today might be that day, Elder Oram. Look, there’s a man in the garden. Let’s talk to him.”

With some trepidation, I followed my companion to the garden gate, where a large, intimidating man greeted us reluctantly. He agreed to let us sit on his porch but made it clear that he was merely being polite and that we could speak with him only, not his family. We sat down, and as was customary, this man went inside his home to get a drink of water for my companion and me. We took advantage of his absence to form a plan.

“Doesn’t look good,” I said.

“Yeah,” my companion agreed. “He seems polite but not receptive, and we really should be looking for whole families to teach.”

“Let’s make it quick,” I suggested. “We’ll just give him a pamphlet rather

than teach a whole discussion. Five minutes and we’re out.”

“Sounds good.”

### A Change of Plan

The man returned with drinks and told us his name was Camilo. As we sipped our drinks and made small talk, I received a sudden and distinct impression that we should stay to teach Camilo a full discussion about the Restoration of the gospel.

“Okay,” I thought, “I’ll give it a try, but how to let my companion know the change of plan?” I looked to my companion, and to my surprise, he nodded his head knowingly, as if to say, “Yeah, we should stay. Let’s teach a full discussion.”

Forty-five minutes later I was more anxious than ever to abandon ship! Camilo was combative, challenging us on every particular. At one point we used a poor choice of wording that offended him, and he nearly shouted at us in anger. It was clear at that point that we needed to go, and quickly. We offered to leave a Book of Mormon, and Camilo accepted with the disclaimer that he was only interested in searching it for errors,



### AN INVITATION TO ALL

“We invite all men everywhere to read the Book of Mormon, to ponder in their hearts the message it contains, and then to ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ if the book is true. Those who pursue this course and ask in faith will gain a testimony of its truth and divinity by the power of the Holy Ghost. (See Moroni 10:3–5.)

“Those who gain this divine witness from the Holy Spirit will also come to know by the same power that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, that Joseph Smith is His revelator and prophet in these last days, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord’s kingdom once again established on the earth, preparatory to the Second Coming of the Messiah.”

Introduction to the Book of Mormon.

which he would be sure to highlight in case missionaries ever called on him again.

Confusion and frustration lingered in my mind for the rest of the day. Why had the Spirit prompted us to stay, when the result had been so disastrous? I comforted myself with the thought that our job was only to plant the seed and that something might come of it years later. I’d simply have to trust the Spirit, because I’d never find out why we had been prompted to teach that lesson.

But I *did* find out, the very next morning! Ready for another day of contacting under the hot tropical sun, we stepped out of our house and were surprised when the door nearly struck someone waiting on our porch. There stood Camilo, red-faced and out of breath. I felt a flash of fear at the thought that this big man might still be angry and had come to fight us!

“I apologize, Elders,” Camilo explained. “I’m out of breath because I just ran all the way here from my house. I left as soon as the sun came up.”

We were speechless, so he continued: “Last night I sat down to read the book you left me, and I was still so upset. I felt sure that I’d easily spot the falsehood in its words.” He shook his head. “But within five minutes of reading, I felt something unlike anything I’ve ever felt. I read the chapter you left me, then started from the beginning and read all through 1 Nephi. I know this Book of Mormon has the truth. I came here to ask you to please return to my home and teach me everything. I want to be baptized into your church.”

Two weeks later, Camilo and his eight-year-old son received a humble baptism in a large drum behind our house.

### Courage and Determination

For the next seven months I spent in the area, Camilo’s testimony continued to grow stronger, despite considerable opposition from family and friends. At one point a family member even attacked him with a knife to keep him from paying tithing! Camilo defended himself by grabbing the blade with his bare hands, then showed up at church to deliver the tithing envelope with bandaged fingers.

I marveled at his courage and determination. What accounted for his commitment to the gospel? Clearly he had not been baptized simply to be polite or because he liked the missionaries or because he was too afraid to say no. The only conclusion left was that he had truly felt something amazing as he read the Book of Mormon. His heart had changed, literally overnight. By the

time I left the area, Camilo was serving as first counselor in the branch presidency and had never missed a Sunday at church.

### “What Ever Happened to Camilo?”

Some 15 years later, after I recounted Camilo’s story in an elders quorum lesson, a brother raised his hand and asked, “What ever happened to Camilo? Is he still active?” I had to admit I had no idea how Camilo was doing because I had not tried to contact him since completing my missionary service. But that brother’s question awoke a resolve in me to reach out to Camilo, even though I knew it might be difficult—there were no phones where he lived, and I didn’t know his address. That same night I prayed to Heavenly Father to help me know how I might get in touch with Camilo.

Once again, I only had to wait until the very next morning. To my amazement, I woke up to find a message on my computer from none other than Camilo. He explained how the night before he had finally decided to try out an online social media site, and the first person he had thought to contact was me.

I wrote back to Camilo and asked if he was still active in the Church. After a day of nervous waiting, I finally received his reply. Yes, he said, of course he was still active in the Church. In fact, he was happy to report that he had recently been set apart as the branch president, his wife was the Primary president, and they had more children who were now being raised in the gospel. “Thank you, thank you,” he said, “for

changing my life all those years ago.”

I didn’t change Camilo’s life. But his life *had* changed; his heart had changed deeply, profoundly. For life. That’s the power of the Book of Mormon. Two set-apart missionaries spent the better part of an hour with him, doing our best to teach him about the Restoration of the gospel. With only five minutes spent reading the Book of Mormon, however, Camilo’s anger and pride melted away. He was converted, truly *converted* in every sense of the word. It makes me wonder how many other Camilos are out there, waiting for us to show up at their garden gate, perhaps with trembling heart but bearing in our hands a book with all the power needed to do the Lord’s work. ■

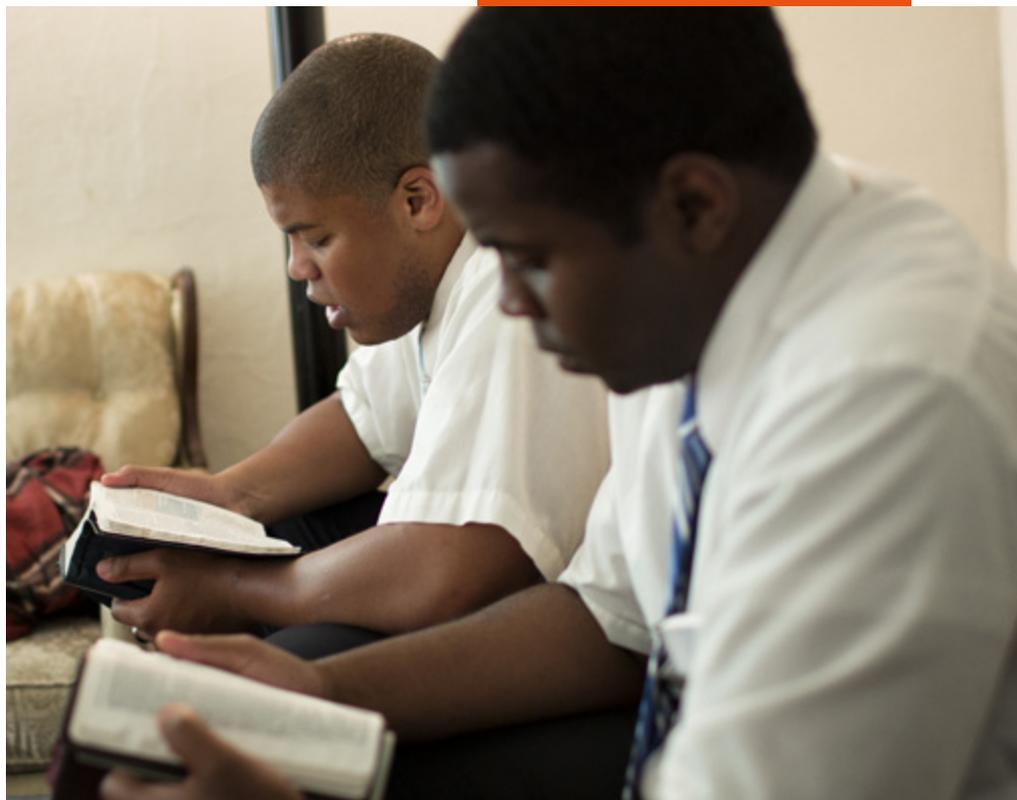
*The author lives in Arizona, USA.*

### THE GREATEST TOOL

“Combined with the Spirit of the Lord, the Book of Mormon is the greatest tool which God has given us to convert the world. If we are to have the harvest of souls, we must use the instrument which God has designed for the task—the Book of Mormon. . . .

“There is a difference between a convert who is built on the rock of Christ through the Book of Mormon and stays hold of the iron rod, and one who is not.”

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 282.



# I MISSED

## The Message

By Michael R. Morris

Church Magazines

**Y**ou *are* different from the rest of the world,” Elder David B. Haight (1906–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles had told the young men a few months earlier during general conference. “You must not succumb.”

Among the temptations Elder Haight had counseled us to avoid, he included “pornography, filthy literature and movies, vile language, and suggestive music.” He warned, “They can destroy you.”<sup>1</sup>

At the time, the Internet was still in its infancy. The main source of pornography back then was magazines, not the World Wide Web. I don’t think stores even sold pornography in the small town where I took a job just after graduating from college.

Which is why I was surprised by what I found one morning between the front door and the screen door of my apartment.

**When someone started leaving pornographic magazines on my doorstep and in my car, I knew what to do with them.**

When I picked it up, I recognized immediately what it was—a pornographic magazine.

Without opening it, I threw the magazine in the trash bin next to the apartment complex parking lot. Someone had played a joke on me. Very funny.

Because I was new to the area, I was still making friends. The young adults I had met were all active members of the Church. Pornography wasn’t something I had ever heard them laugh about. When I mentioned the magazine, they all denied having left it.

That summer I had renewed my efforts to live close to the Spirit. I was striving to keep the commandments and honor my priesthood. I was reading the Book of Mormon every day and had accepted a calling to teach Sunday School. I had earned a college

degree but hadn’t found a wife, so I was trying to meet and date someone I could marry in the temple. And I stayed away from pornography.

I shrugged off the mysterious appearance of the magazine and forgot about it—for a few days anyway.

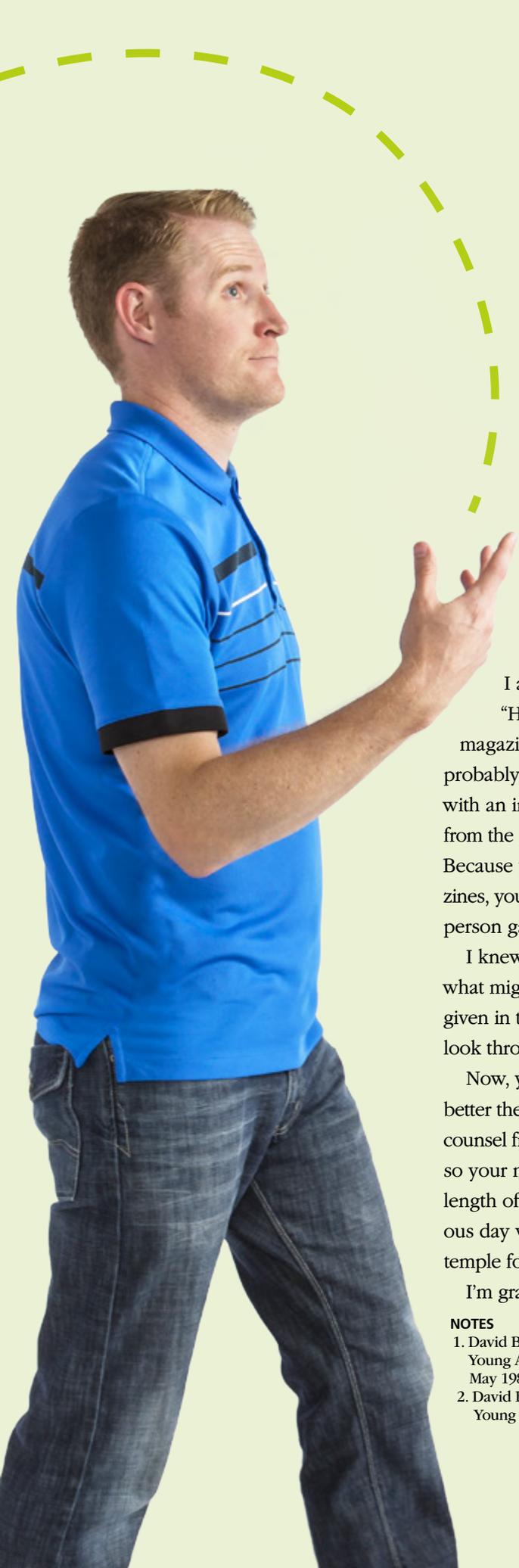
One morning about a week later, I grabbed my car keys and headed out the door to go to work. When I got to my car, which I had left unlocked, I saw something on the driver’s seat. I opened the door, reached in, and grabbed . . . another pornographic magazine.

Immediately I had the feeling that somebody was watching me. I was parked next to the complex garbage bin, so I threw the magazine inside with the other trash.

I wasn’t laughing. It was no longer a joke. I realized that somebody wanted me to have—and look at—the magazines. But why? And how many more magazines would the person leave?

As it turned out, the second magazine was the last. And nobody ever admitted responsibility.

I didn’t figure out the mystery of the magazines until several years later, after my fiancée and I had been



married in the Mesa Arizona Temple.

"You missed the message," my wife said when I told her the story.

"What do you mean?"

I asked.

"Had you looked through the magazines," she explained, "you probably would have found a note with an invitation or a proposition from the person who gave them to you. Because you didn't look at the magazines, you missed the message, and the person gave up on giving you more."

I knew she was right. Who knows what might have happened had I given in to curiosity or temptation to look through the magazines?

Now, years later, I understand even better the importance of Elder Haight's counsel from his conference talk: "Live so your memories can bless the full length of your life. Live for that glorious day when you will go to the holy temple for eternal blessings and joy."<sup>2</sup>

I'm grateful I did. ■

#### NOTES

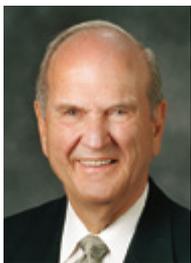
1. David B. Haight, "The Responsibility of Young Aaronic Priesthood Bearers," *Ensign*, May 1981, 41, 42.
2. David B. Haight, "The Responsibility of Young Aaronic Priesthood Bearers," 41.



#### AVOID THE TRAP

"My beloved friends, under no circumstances allow yourselves to become trapped in the viewing of pornography, one of the most effective of Satan's enticements. And if you have allowed yourself to become involved in this behavior, cease now. Seek the help you need to overcome and to change the direction of your life. Take the steps necessary to get back on the strait and narrow, and then stay there."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Until We Meet Again," *Ensign*, May 2009, 113.



**By President  
Russell M. Nelson**

President of the  
Quorum of the  
Twelve Apostles

# Stand as True Millennials

**M**any people refer to you as *millennials*. I'll admit that when researchers refer to you by that word and describe what their studies reveal about you—your likes and dislikes, your feelings and inclinations, your strengths and weaknesses—I'm uncomfortable. There is something about the way they use the term *millennial* that bothers me. And frankly, I am less interested in what the *experts* have to say about you than what the Lord has told me about you.

When I pray about you and ask the Lord how *He* feels about you, I feel something far different from what the researchers say. Spiritual impressions I've received about you lead me to believe that the term *millennial* may actually be perfect for you—but for

a much different reason than the experts may ever understand.

The term *millennial* is perfect for you if that term reminds you of who you *really* are and what your purpose in life *really* is. A true millennial is one who taught and who was taught the gospel of Jesus Christ pre-mortally and who made covenants there with our Heavenly Father about courageous things—even *morally* courageous things—that he or she would do while here on earth.

A true millennial is a man or woman whom God trusted enough to send to earth during the most compelling dispensation in the history of this world. A true millennial is a man or woman who lives now to help prepare the people of this world for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and

**You are "a chosen generation," fore-ordained by God to do a remarkable work—to help prepare the people of this world for the Second Coming.**

His millennial reign. Make no mistake about it—you were born to be a true millennial.

The question is "How can you stand and live as a true millennial?" I have four recommendations.



## 1. Learn Who You Really Are

Take time to think prayerfully about these facts:

- You are an elect son or daughter of God.
- You are created in His image.
- You were taught in the spirit world to prepare you for anything and everything you would encounter during this latter part of these latter days (see D&C 138:56). That teaching endures within you!

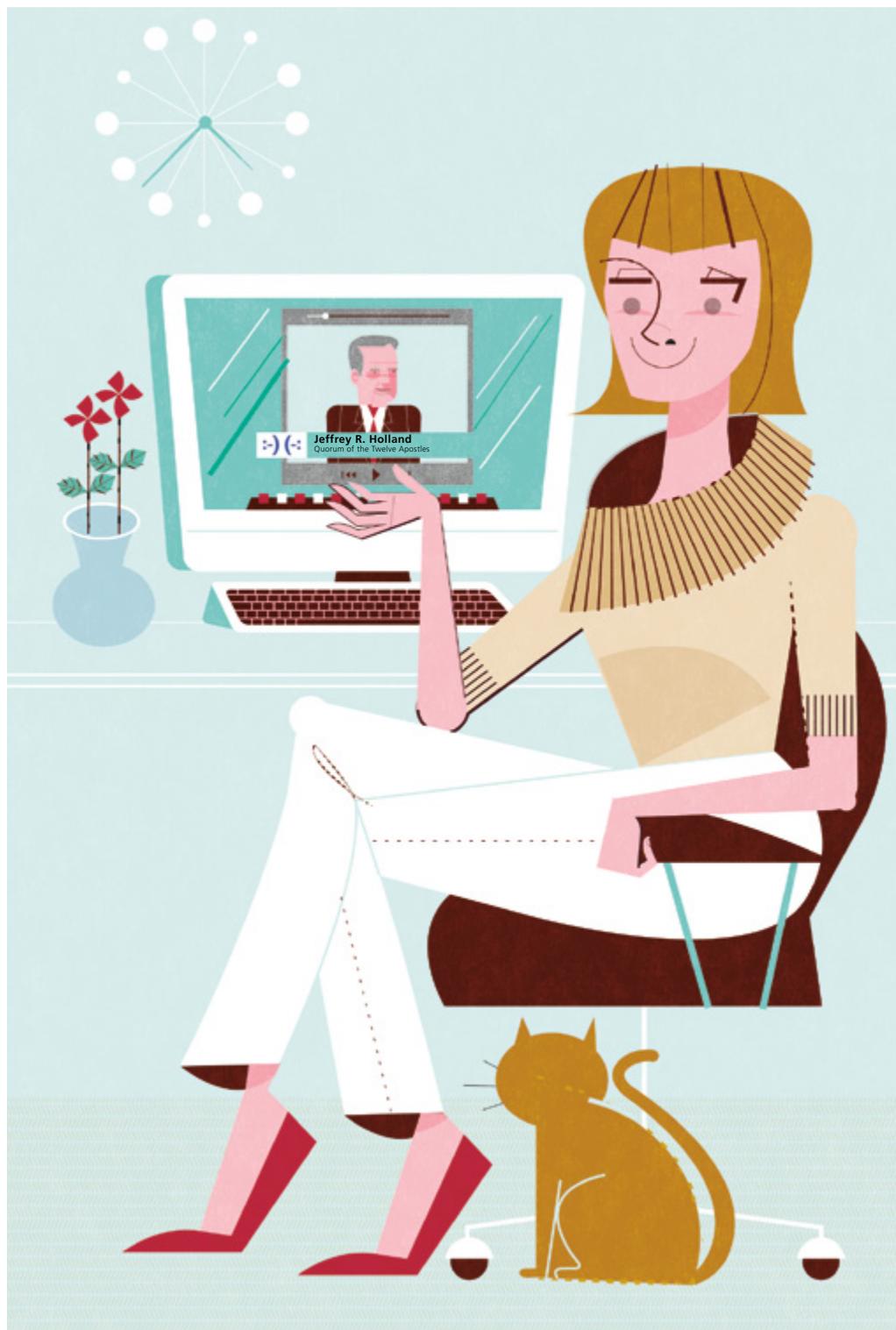
You are living in the “eleventh hour.” The Lord has declared that this is the last time He will call laborers into His vineyard to gather the elect from the four quarters of the earth. (See D&C 33:3–6.) And *you* were sent to participate in this gathering. Again and again I have seen firsthand the powerful influence of true millennials as they bring others to a knowledge of the truth. This is part of your identity and your purpose as the seed of Abraham (see Galatians 3:26–29)!

Several months ago my wife, Wendy, and I had a remarkable experience in remote Siberia. Among those traveling with us on our preparation day in Irkutsk were the mission president, Gregory S. Brinton; his wife, Sally; and their returned-missionary son, Sam, who had served his mission in Russia. We visited beautiful Lake Baikal and a marketplace on its shores.

When we returned to our van, we noticed that Sam was missing. Moments later he appeared, accompanied by a middle-aged woman named Valentina. In her native Russian, Valentina enthusiastically exclaimed, “I want to meet this young man’s mother. He is so polite, intelligent, and kind! I want to meet his mother!”

Valentina was drawn to Sam’s bright, light-filled countenance.

Sam introduced Valentina to both his mother and father, gave her a tract about the Savior, and arranged for missionaries to visit her. When the missionaries returned later with a copy of the Book of Mormon, she promised to read it. Several other



women who work at the marketplace were also excited about the new book Valentina had received. We don't yet know the end of this story, but because of the distinctive light Sam radiated, Valentina and some of her friends have been introduced to the gospel.

True millennials like Sam know who they really are. They are devout disciples of Jesus Christ who instinctively seize every opportunity to help themselves and others prepare for the millennial reign of our Savior.

Therefore, my first recommendation is to learn *for yourselves* who you really are. Ask your Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ how He feels about you and your mission here on earth. If you ask with real intent, over time the Spirit will whisper the life-changing truth to you. Record those impressions, review them often, and follow through with exactness.

I promise you that when you begin to catch even a glimpse of how your Heavenly Father sees you and what He is counting on you to do for Him, your life will never be the same!

## **2. Expect—and Prepare—to Accomplish the Impossible**

God has always asked His covenant children to do difficult things. Because you are covenant-keeping sons and daughters of God living in the latter part of these latter days, the Lord will ask *you* to do difficult things.

You can count on it—Abrahamic tests did not stop with Abraham (see D&C 101:4–5).

I know how unnerving it can be to be asked to do something that seems far beyond your capacity. I had been a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles for only 19 months when President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) passed away. In the first meeting of the First Presidency and

**You were sent to participate in gathering the elect. Again and again I have seen firsthand the powerful influence of true millennials as they bring others to a knowledge of the truth.**

the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles following the ordination of President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), he gave specific assignments to the Twelve. His instructions to me included these words: “Elder Nelson, you are to open the countries of Eastern Europe for the preaching of the gospel.”

That was 1985. During the politically frigid years we refer to as the Cold War, not only did a literal wall divide the city of Berlin, but all of Eastern Europe was under the oppressive yoke of communism as well. Churches were closed, and religious worship was strictly limited.

I had spent much of my professional life opening hearts to perform life-saving operations, but I had *no* experience that would lead me to believe I could open countries for the preaching of the gospel. And yet, a prophet had given me an assignment, so I set out to do what seemed utterly impossible.

From the outset, obstacles were placed in my way. I arrived in most countries not knowing where to go. Even when I was able to find the name of an appropriate government official, it was not unusual for a meeting to be canceled at the last minute or to be postponed. In one country, when an appointment was delayed for two days, a number of temptations were intentionally placed in my way to test me—including traps for black market money and other illicit activities. On another occasion, a meeting was opened with the demand that I depart *immediately!*

But the Lord is able to do His own work (see 2 Nephi 27:20–21), and I was privileged to watch the unfolding of one miracle after another—always, and only, *after* I had brought my best thinking, my most courageous efforts, and my most fervent prayers to the task.

Recognition of the Church was granted by some of those countries before the Berlin Wall came down. Recognition from others came later. In 1992, I was able to report to President Benson that the Church was then

established in every country in Eastern Europe!

As a true millennial whom the Lord can count on, *you* will make history too! You will be asked to accept challenging assignments and to become an instrument in the Lord's hands. And He will enable you to accomplish the impossible.

How will you accomplish the impossible? By doing whatever it takes to strengthen your faith in Jesus Christ, by increasing your understanding of the doctrine taught in His restored Church, and by relentlessly seeking truth. When asked to do impossible things, you—as a true millennial anchored in pure doctrine—will be able to step forward with faith and dogged persistence and cheerfully do all that lies in your power to fulfill the purposes of the Lord (see D&C 123:17).

You will have days when you will be thoroughly discouraged. So pray for courage not to give up! You will need that strength because it will become less and less popular to be a Latter-day Saint. Sadly, some who you thought were your friends will betray you. And some things will simply seem unfair.

However, I promise you that as you follow Jesus Christ, you will find sustained peace and true joy. As you keep your covenants with increasing precision, and as you defend the Church and kingdom of God on the earth today, the Lord will bless you

with strength and wisdom to accomplish the impossible.

### 3. Learn How to Access the Power of Heaven

Every one of us has questions. Seeking to learn, understand, and recognize truth is a vital part of our mortal experience. Much of my life

has been spent in research. You too will learn best by asking inspired questions.

At this very moment some of you are struggling to know what you should be doing with your life. Others of you may wonder if you have been forgiven of your sins. Most of you are wondering who and where your



eternal companion is—and those who aren't should be.

Some may question why the Church does some of the things it does. Perhaps many of you are not sure how to get answers to your prayers.

Our Heavenly Father and His Son stand ready to respond to your questions through the ministering of the Holy Ghost. But it is up to you to learn how to qualify for and receive those answers.

Where can you start? Begin by spending more time in holy places. The temple is a holy place. So is the chapel, where you renew covenants each Sunday by partaking of the sacrament. I invite you also to make your apartment, your dorm, your home, or your room a holy place where you can safely retreat from the dark distractions of the world.

Prayer is a key. Pray to know what to stop doing and what to start doing. Pray to know what to add to your environment and what to remove so the Spirit can be with you in abundance.

Plead with the Lord for the gift of discernment. Then live and work to be worthy to receive that gift so that when confusing events arise in the world, you will know exactly what is true and what is not (see 2 Nephi 31:13).

Serve with love. Loving service to those who have lost their way or who are wounded in spirit opens your heart to personal revelation.

Spend more time—much more time—in places where the Spirit is present. That means more time with friends who are seeking to have the Spirit with them. Spend more time on your knees in prayer, more time in the scriptures, more time in family history work, more time in the temple. I promise you that as you consistently give the Lord a generous portion of your time, He will multiply the remainder.

**You will be asked to accept challenging assignments and to become an instrument in the Lord's hands. And He will enable you to accomplish the impossible.**

We sustain 15 men who are ordained as prophets, seers, and revelators. When a thorny problem arises—and they seem only to get thornier each day—these 15 men wrestle with the issue, trying to see all the ramifications of various courses of action, and they diligently seek to hear the voice of the Lord. After I fast, pray, study, ponder, and counsel with my Brethren about weighty matters, it is not unusual for me to be awakened during the night with further impressions about issues with which we are concerned. And my Brethren have the same experience.

The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counsel together and share all the Lord has directed us to understand and to feel individually and collectively. And then we watch the Lord move upon the President of the Church to proclaim the Lord's will.

This prophetic process was followed in 2012 with the change in minimum age for missionaries and again with the recent additions to the Church's handbook, consequent to the legalization of same-sex marriage in some countries. Filled with compassion for all, and especially for the children, we wrestled at length to understand the Lord's will in this matter.

Ever mindful of God's plan of salvation and of His hope for eternal life for each of His children, we considered countless permutations and combinations of possible scenarios that could arise. We met repeatedly in the temple in fasting and prayer and sought further direction and inspiration. And then, when the Lord inspired His prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, to declare the mind and will of the Lord, each of us during that sacred moment felt a spiritual confirmation. It was our privilege as Apostles to sustain what had been revealed to President Monson. Revelation from the Lord to His servants is a sacred process, and so is your privilege of receiving personal revelation.

My dear brothers and sisters, you have as much access to the mind and will of the Lord for your own life as we Apostles do for His Church. Just as the Lord requires *us* to seek and ponder, fast and pray, and study and wrestle with difficult questions, He requires *you* to do the same as you seek answers to your own questions.

You can learn to hear the voice of the Lord through the whisperings of the Holy Ghost.<sup>1</sup> As helpful as Google, Twitter, and Facebook may seem, they simply do not provide answers to your most important questions!

My dear young friends, you can know the mind and will of the Lord for your own life. You do not have to wonder if you are where the Lord needs you to be or if you are doing what He needs you to do. You can know! The Holy Ghost “will tell you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:3).

#### 4. Follow the Prophets

In 1979, while serving as Sunday School General President, I was invited to attend a regional representatives’ seminar during which President Kimball gave an inspiring address about opening the doors of nations then closed to the Church, such as China. He challenged all present to study the Mandarin language so we could offer our professional skills to help the people of China.

To me, President Kimball’s challenge seemed like a prophetic mandate. So that very night I asked my late wife, Dantzel, if she would be willing to study Mandarin with me. She agreed, and we found a tutor to help us. Of course we didn’t learn to speak Mandarin very well, but we learned enough so that when I was

invited the very next year (through a series of highly unexpected events) to go to China as a visiting professor to teach open-heart surgery, I was in a better position to accept the invitation.

Fast-forward five years to 1985, the year after I had been called to the Quorum of the Twelve. One day I



received an urgent request to go to China to perform open-heart surgery on that nation's famous opera star, regarded throughout China as a national hero. I explained that my full-time ecclesiastical responsibility prevented my coming, but the doctors in China pleaded with me to come at once to perform the life-saving operation.

I discussed the matter with my quorum president and the First Presidency. They felt impressed that, as a favor to the people of China, I should make the trip and perform the operation.

That I did. Gratefully, the operation was a success! Incidentally, that was the last open-heart operation I ever performed. It was in Jinan, China, on March 4, 1985.

Now fast-forward again, this time to October 2015. Wendy and I were invited to return to Shandong University School of Medicine in Jinan. We were amazed when I was warmly welcomed as “an old friend” of China and was reunited with surgeons I had taught 35 years earlier. A highlight of our visit was meeting with the son and grandson of that famous opera star. All of these amazing experiences were enabled for one reason: I heeded the counsel of a prophet to study Mandarin!

Prophets see ahead. They see the harrowing dangers the adversary has placed or will yet place in our path. Prophets also foresee the grand

possibilities and privileges awaiting those who listen *with the intent to obey*. I know this is true! I have experienced it for myself over and over again.

The Lord has promised us that He will never allow the prophet to lead us astray. President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) declared: “You may not like what comes from the authority of the Church. It may contradict your

**When you know  
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proclaimed.**

political views. It may contradict your social views. It may interfere with some of your social life. But if you listen to these things, as if from the mouth of the Lord Himself, with patience and faith, the promise is that ‘the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name’s glory’ (D&C 21:6).”<sup>2</sup>

You may not always understand every declaration of a living prophet. But when you know a prophet is a prophet, you can approach the Lord

in humility and faith and ask for your own witness about whatever His prophet has proclaimed.

Around 40 B.C. many Nephites joined the Church, and the Church prospered. But secret combinations began to grow, and many of their cunning leaders hid among the people and were difficult to detect. As the people became more and more prideful, many of the Nephites made “a mock of that which was sacred, denying the spirit of prophecy and of revelation” (Helaman 4:12).

Those same threats are among us today. The somber reality is that “servants of Satan” (D&C 10:5) are embedded throughout society. So be very careful about whose counsel you follow (see Helaman 12:23).

My beloved brothers and sisters, you were born to be true millennials. You “are a chosen generation” (1 Peter 2:9), foreordained by God to do a remarkable work—to help prepare the people of this world for the Second Coming of the Lord! ■

*From a worldwide devotional for young adults, “Becoming True Millennials,” given at Brigham Young University–Hawaii on January 10, 2016. For the full address, go to [broadcast.lds.org](http://broadcast.lds.org).*

#### NOTES

1. In February 1847, nearly three years after the Prophet Joseph Smith was martyred, he appeared to President Brigham Young and gave him this message: “Tell the people to be humble and faithful and sure to keep the Spirit of the Lord and it will lead them right. Be careful and not turn away the small still voice; it will teach [you what] to do and where to go” (in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 98).
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* (2000), 84–85.

# Little Children AND THE Sacrament

*Our little children sensed that the sacrament was important to us. We could have done more to help them see that it was also important to them.*

By Aaron L. West

**H**ave you ever wondered why we allow unbaptized children to partake of the sacrament? Is it just to avoid the inevitable squawks and struggles when they want a piece of bread? Is it just to make the ordinance easier to administer, just to keep the peace?

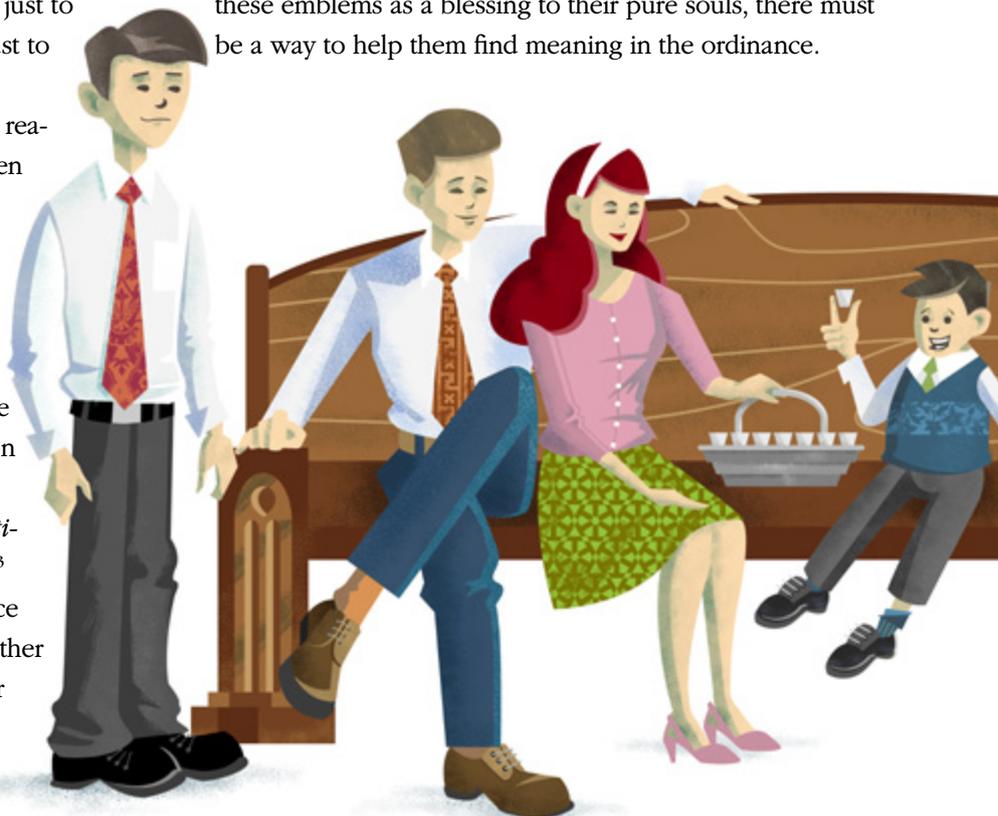
I don't think so. I believe there are deeper reasons. I believe this because I believe that when Jesus Christ says "all," He means all. And when He speaks to a multitude, He doesn't exclude anyone.

When the resurrected Savior introduced the sacrament to His people in the Americas, He emphasized that the ordinance had special meaning for those who had been baptized.<sup>1</sup> Even so, He commanded His disciples to "give [the sacrament] unto the *multitude*."<sup>2</sup> That multitude included "little ones."<sup>3</sup>

When priesthood holders today pronounce the sacrament prayers, they ask Heavenly Father to bless and sanctify the bread and the water

"to the souls of *all* those" who partake.<sup>4</sup> All. Each person who partakes—including each little child.

If in partaking the bread and water, children receive these emblems as a blessing to their pure souls, there must be a way to help them find meaning in the ordinance.



With this understanding, I look back at the days when my children were little. My wife and I did a pretty good job of keeping them quiet during the administration of the sacrament. I think they sensed that the ordinance was important to us. But we could have done more to help them see that it was important to *them*.

What could we have done? We could have remembered that little children are capable of keeping the promises in the sacrament prayer. They can understand, in their own small but powerful way, what it means to “always remember” Jesus. They can pledge to “keep his commandments.” They can even show that they are “willing to take upon them the name” of Christ, knowing that they will soon have that privilege when they are baptized and confirmed.<sup>5</sup>

But what about renewing covenants? Church leaders have taught that when we partake of the sacrament, we renew all the covenants we have made with the Lord.<sup>6</sup> Little children don’t have any covenants to renew.

I think again about the time when our children were little. We couldn’t have helped them look back on covenants, but we could have helped them look forward. I

picture myself with a young son or daughter on a Sabbath morning:

“When you are eight years old,” I say, “you will be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. You will make a covenant. The covenant you make *then* will be like the promises you make *now* when you take the sacrament.



“When I take the sacrament today, I will renew my baptismal covenant, like I’m making those promises again. You will be there with me, but you won’t renew a covenant. You haven’t made one yet. Instead, you can *practice* making a covenant. Every time you take the sacrament, you can prepare to be baptized and confirmed. That way, you’ll be ready when you turn eight years old.”

If it seems unusual to use the word *practice* in this way, consider this: In a reverent setting, a father might help his children prepare for the ordinance of baptism by showing them how they will stand together in the water and by sharing the words of the baptismal prayer. He doesn’t perform the ordinance in that setting. In a sense, he helps his children practice. That way, they will not worry about what will happen when they enter the waters of baptism. I believe that mothers and fathers can also help children practice making and keeping the baptismal covenant. Each sacrament meeting can be a sacred practice session for little children as they partake of the emblems of the Savior’s Atonement.

And so I return to my original question. Why do we allow unbaptized children to partake of the sacrament? Is it just to “keep the peace”? Of course not. We help our little ones partake of the sacrament so they can remember their Savior and keep His peace—a peace unlike anything the world can offer.<sup>7</sup> We help them prepare to receive that peace in greater and greater abundance in the future, when they will make and keep covenants with Him. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

#### NOTES

1. See 3 Nephi 18:5, 11.
2. 3 Nephi 18:4; emphasis added.
3. See 3 Nephi 17:21–25; 18:1–4.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79; emphasis added.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
6. See L. Tom Perry, “As Now We Take the Sacrament,” *Ensign*, May 2006, 41.
7. See John 14:27.



# UNDERSTANDING Suicide

## WARNING SIGNS AND PREVENTION

**By Kenichi Shimokawa, PhD**

LDS Family Services, Japan Office

**W**hen Kevin was 16 years old, his parents went through a divorce. Around the same time, he discontinued the use of his epilepsy medication, which had helped stabilize his mood. Without knowing that he had a bipolar disorder, he began experiencing paranoia, debilitating mania, and severe depression. Medications did not seem to help. It reached a point that he felt so tired of everything, he decided to end his life without letting others know of his intentions.

Kevin recounts the day he attempted to take his life: “I was crying. I was just so tired, so emotionally drained. I was just looking at people, wanting someone, anyone, to say, ‘Are you OK?’ As much as I wanted that, I was hearing these voices [in my head] saying, ‘You have to die.’ . . . The whole time begging myself not to [go through with it], but the voices were too strong, I just couldn’t fight them.”<sup>1</sup>

Tragically, no one noticed his distress. Convinced that no one cared for him, he made the attempt—but miraculously survived.

Can we feel at least some of his overwhelming distress and desperate, silent cry for help?

Suicide is one of the most difficult trials in mortality, both for those suffering with suicidal thoughts and for surviving family members. Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated: “In my judgment, there is no more difficult time for a family than when a loved one takes his or her own life. Suicide is a devastating family experience.”<sup>2</sup> Considering the serious nature of this trial,

let us discuss (1) what we know about suicide, including its warning signs and things we can do to help prevent it; (2) what surviving family members and communities can do; and (3) what we all need to do to strengthen our hope and faith in Christ so that we do not despair.

## Understanding Suicide

Over 800,000 people end their lives by suicide each year worldwide.<sup>3</sup> That means someone in the world is ending his or her life every 40 seconds. The actual number is likely even higher because suicide is a sensitive matter and illegal in some countries and therefore underreported. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among people between 15 and 29 years of age. In most countries, suicide rates are the highest among people over 70 years of age. Directly or indirectly, suicide affects a large segment of our society.

## Warning Signs

When life's challenges feel beyond our capacity to cope, we can experience extreme stress. When emotional distress feels unbearable, a person's thinking can become clouded and can lead them to feel as if death is the only

option. They may feel that no one can help, which can lead to social isolation and further aggravate the distress and feeling of being stuck and hopeless, eventually leading to thinking that suicide is the only option.

When someone shows *any* of the following serious warning signs,<sup>4</sup> we should immediately get help from a mental health provider or emergency services such as police:

- Making threats to hurt or kill themselves
- Seeking for ways or means to kill themselves
- Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide

The following signs may present a less urgent situation, but we should not hesitate to reach out and get help for the person showing any of these:

- Expressing hopelessness and loss of purpose in living
- Showing rage or anger or seeking revenge
- Behaving recklessly
- Feeling trapped
- Increasing their alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawing from friends, family, or society
- Feeling anxiety or agitation or having dramatic mood changes
- Struggling to sleep or sleeping all the time
- Feeling that they are a burden to others

Not everyone who tries to commit suicide lets others know of their intentions, but a majority show warning signs such as these. So take these signs seriously!

Even if professional help is not readily available, the power of truly caring friends and family cannot be overstated.

## Prevention

When someone is suicidal, family and friends play a vital role. As Alma taught, we must “bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; . . . mourn with those who mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:8–9).

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Here are some helpful things family and friends can do:

*Reach out and listen with love.* As Elder Ballard counseled, “There is nothing more powerful than the arm of love that can be put around those who are struggling.”<sup>5</sup> “We must see them . . . through Heavenly Father’s eyes,” taught Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “Only then can we sense the Savior’s caring concern for them. . . . This expanded perspective will open our hearts to the disappointments, fears, and heartaches of others.”<sup>6</sup>

*Help with concrete things.* If the person is going through a crisis affecting his or her safety and basic needs, offer to provide tangible help, but let the person choose to accept it or not. For instance, if someone becomes suicidal due to losing a job, helping them find job openings gives them options to

choose from and helps free them from feeling stuck.

*Ask if they are considering suicide.* When you are worried that someone is distressed and showing warning signs of suicide, ask if they are considering suicide. Doing so may feel uncomfortable, but it’s best to find out by directly asking if they are considering suicide. It may open the door for the person to talk about their troubles and concerns.

Examples of such questions may be “That sounds like a lot for anyone to handle. Are you thinking of suicide?” or “With all those pains you are experiencing, I’m wondering if you are considering suicide.” If they are not suicidal, they will likely let you know.

If you sense they are not open with you about suicidal thoughts, stay close to the promptings of the Spirit to know what to do. You may be prompted to simply stay with



them until they can open up to you.

*Stay with the person and get help.* If someone lets you know that they are suicidal, stay with the person and have them talk to you about what is troubling them. If they talk about specific methods and timing for suicide, help the person contact a crisis hotline or local psychiatric emergency department.

### **Reactions to a Suicide**

Whether they showed warning signs or not, some people do take their lives. When faced with the devastating experience of a loved one's suicide, surviving family members and friends often experience profound, intense, and complex grief. Some of those reactions may include the following:

- Shame and a sense of stigma
- Shock and disbelief

- Anger, relief, or guilt
- Hiding the cause of death
- Social isolation and disruption in family relationships
- Active and even obsessive involvement with suicide-prevention efforts
- A consuming desire to understand why
- Feeling abandoned and rejected
- Blaming the deceased, self, others, and God
- Increased thoughts of suicide or feelings of self-destructiveness
- Increased stress during holiday seasons and the anniversary of the death<sup>7</sup>

### **What Surviving Families and Communities Can Do**

*Refrain from judging.* While suicide is a serious matter, Elder Ballard also reminds us: "Obviously, we do not know the full

circumstances surrounding every suicide. Only the Lord knows all the details, and he it is who will judge our actions here on earth. When [the Lord] does judge us, I feel he will take all things into consideration: our genetic and chemical makeup, our mental state, our intellectual capacity, the teachings we have received, the traditions of our fathers, our health, and so forth.”<sup>8</sup>

*Allow and respect each person’s unique grieving process.* People will grieve in different ways, as their relationship with the deceased person is different than everyone else’s. So validate and honor each person’s way of experiencing grief.

When loved ones part from us, strong and even overwhelming emotions can overcome us. Experiencing grief does not mean a lack of faith, however. The Savior said, “Thou shalt live together in love, insomuch that thou shalt weep for the loss of them that die” (D&C 42:45). Grief is a token of our love for our deceased loved ones and what the relationship meant to us.

*Ask for help.* As you grieve, things can feel overwhelming. Reaching out for help can provide sacred opportunities for others to love and serve you. Allowing them to help can be healing and strengthening not only for you but also for them.

*Stay connected.* Some people mourn privately and can sometimes become isolated, so stay connected with your families and friends. Reach out periodically to your grieving family members, relatives, and friends, and offer help because they may not come to you.

*Rely on the Savior.* Ultimately, the Savior is the source of healing and peace. “His Atonement . . . provides the opportunity to call upon Him who has experienced all of our mortal infirmities to give us the strength to bear the burdens of mortality. He knows of our anguish, and He is there for us. Like the good Samaritan, when He finds us wounded at the wayside, He will bind up our wounds and care for us (see Luke 10:34).”<sup>9</sup>

Let us realize that we all need to rely completely on the Lord Jesus Christ and His Atonement as we seek to do

our part. In that humble recognition, let us seek to understand our families and neighbors in distress, reach out to them in love, and cultivate together greater faith and trust in the Savior, who will return and “wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain” (Revelation 21:4). ■

#### NOTES

1. Kevin Hines, in Amanda Bower, “A Survivor Talks About His Leap,” *Time*, May 24, 2006, Time.com.
2. M. Russell Ballard, in Jason Swenson, “Elder Ballard Offers Comfort and Counsel to Those Affected by Suicide,” *Church News*, Dec. 19, 2014, [news.lds.org](http://news.lds.org).
3. See World Health Organization, *Preventing Suicide: A Global Imperative* (2014), 2.
4. See M. David Rudd and others, “Warning Signs for Suicide: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications,” *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, vol. 36, no. 3 (2006), 255–62.
5. M. Russell Ballard, in “Sitting on the Bench: Thoughts on Suicide Prevention” (video), [lds.org/media-library](http://lds.org/media-library).
6. Dale G. Renlund, “Through God’s Eyes,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 94.
7. See John R. Jordan, “Is Suicide Bereavement Different? A Reassessment of the Literature,” *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, vol. 31, no. 1 (2001), 91–102.
8. M. Russell Ballard, “Suicide: Some Things We Know, and Some We Do Not,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1987, 8.
9. Dallin H. Oaks, “Strengthened by the Atonement of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 64.

#### RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Jeffrey R. Holland, “Like a Broken Vessel,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 40–42.

Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Hope of God’s Light,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 70–77.

Shayne M. Bowen, “Because I Live, Ye Shall Live Also,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 15–17.

M. Russell Ballard, “Suicide: Some Things We Know, and Some We Do Not,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1987, 6–9.

Steven Eastmond, “The Healing Power of Grief,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2014, 62–65.

Find crisis hotline numbers for different countries at [www.iasp.info/resources/crisis\\_centres](http://www.iasp.info/resources/crisis_centres).

For more resources, visit [PreventingSuicide.Lds.org](http://PreventingSuicide.Lds.org).

# Prophetic Words IN AN Unexpected Place

*An abandoned magazine would  
change Oscar Castro's life forever.*

By Colette Lindahl

**T**he day Oscar's wife left him and his two small children was one of the hardest of his life. So many decisions needed to be made. He had been searching for a job, and now he would need a new place to live. It seemed to him that his life was in ruins. He thought of just giving up, and he might have if not for his two beautiful children.

In San Juan, Argentina, not many homes were available to rent in Oscar's price range. But a small home in a safe neighborhood had just been left empty by a group of young men, so Oscar rented it and prepared to begin anew with his children.

In their new home, some magazines and books had been left lying on the floor, and after working all day cleaning and putting things away, Oscar sat down and looked at one of the magazines. The cover intrigued him for some reason. Underneath the title, *Liahona*, there was a picture of an old man standing on a tower talking to the people. The man reminded him of pictures of biblical prophets.

Oscar opened the magazine and began to read, "Each of us already knows we should tell the people we love that we love them. But what we know is not always reflected

in what we do."<sup>1</sup> Oscar thought about the sharp words that had been said many times between him and his wife. He wanted to teach his children to be better than that. Oscar continued to read the magazine, and he began to feel hope growing within him. Before the week was out, he had read every article and wanted to know more.

A month later two missionaries were walking in Oscar's neighborhood. Oscar approached them and asked if they were Latter-day Saint missionaries and how much it would cost to get more of those Church magazines. The elders told him that it would cost him only about 20 minutes of his time.

The next day the two missionaries visited Oscar at his home. Oscar told them about moving in and finding old books, magazines, and pamphlets that let him know about the Church. He explained that the first article he read related directly to his life at the time. He already knew the importance of family and wanted to know more about family home evening and family prayer. He told the elders what else he had learned about the Church, including about Joseph Smith and the Restoration of the gospel.

He looked directly into the eyes of the elders and said the words every missionary longs to hear: "I believe that



Joseph Smith was a prophet of God.” The elders invited him to be baptized, and with tears in his eyes, Oscar accepted. A few weeks later, Oscar Castro was baptized and confirmed a member of the Church.

The Lord had prepared Oscar, and his spirit was contrite and ready to learn and grow. On that memorable, moving day, the spirit of the messages in the general conference issue of the *Liahona* touched Oscar’s heart. The previous

owners of the home did not know the effect that leaving behind a few Church magazines would have, but the gospel messages in those magazines became an important missionary tool. In leading him to the truths he was searching for, they forever changed Oscar’s life. ■

*The author lived in Argentina while her husband was serving as mission president.*

**Oscar Castro was baptized and confirmed after finding a general conference issue of the *Liahona* in the home he moved into.**

**NOTE**

1. David A. Bednar, “More Diligent and Concerned at Home,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 17.



By Elder  
Bradley D. Foster  
Of the Seventy



# FAMILY HISTORY: PEACE, PROTECTION, & PROMISES



*As your family participates in the gathering of records, the healing of hearts, and the sealing of family members, you and your posterity will be blessed forever and ever.*

**T**he story of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a story about families. When I say *families*, I don't mean our modern concept of Mom, Dad, and children.

I use the term the way the Lord uses it, as a synonym for *kindred* or *multigenerational families*, because everyone has a family. Our Heavenly Father's plan for His children centers on this kind of family—with children who draw strength from ancestors many generations back and parents who seek to bless their posterity for generations to come.

In this sense the Book of Mormon also tells stories of families. As we read these stories, we find that families haven't changed that much over the centuries. Even those who lived in another time and place are a lot like us—and God's desire for His children to live in happy, eternal families hasn't changed.

Why did the Lord preserve the record of these stories? What did He want us to learn from them? Do they contain lessons that could help us in our efforts to gather, heal, and seal our families?

### **A Lesson from Lehi**

I believe that the first family in the Book of Mormon—Lehi's family—has a powerful lesson for us that we might not have noticed. Lehi's family can teach us a great deal about family records—why they're important to the Lord and why they should be important to us.

When the story begins, Lehi and Sariah are raising their daughters and four sons in Jerusalem, leading a relatively comfortable life in that great city. Their lives changed forever when the Lord commanded Lehi to take his family into the wilderness.

GENEALOGY CHANGES  
OUR CHARTS;  
FAMILY HISTORY CHANGES  
OUR HEARTS.

Lehi obeyed, and he and his family left their material possessions behind and ventured into the wilderness. After traveling a while, Lehi said to his son Nephi:

“Behold I have dreamed a dream, in the which the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brethren shall *return* to Jerusalem.

“For behold, Laban hath the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of my forefathers, and they are engraven upon plates of brass” (1 Nephi 3:2–3; emphasis added).

Because of this commandment, our families are blessed with the following great declaration of faith and obedience from Nephi: “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them” (1 Nephi 3:7).

The brass plates were a record. They contained the scriptures, but they also contained Lehi’s family history. The Lord knew how important it would be to preserve that record for many generations to come.

Have you ever wondered why the Lord didn’t command Lehi, rather than his sons, to go back for the record? He was the patriarch of the family. The Lord gave *him* the vision. Wouldn’t Lehi have had more influence on Laban than his sons?

We don’t know why the Lord commanded Lehi’s sons to return to Jerusalem, but we do know that they struggled to accomplish what the Lord asked them to do. The task was difficult, and it tested their faith. They learned valuable lessons that would serve them well throughout their journeying in the wilderness. Perhaps most important, they learned that when the Lord commands, He really does provide a way.

We might ask ourselves, what does the Lord want our sons and daughters to learn as they “return” to retrieve our family records? How is He providing a way for them? Are there experiences He wants them to have? Are we inviting them to have these experiences? What blessings is He hoping to give your



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sons and daughters through temple and family history service?

When Nephi and his brothers returned to their father’s tent, Lehi “took the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass, and he did search them from the beginning.” There he found “the five books of Moses,” “the prophecies of the holy prophets,” and “a genealogy of his fathers; wherefore he knew that he was a descendant of Joseph . . . who was sold into Egypt.” And when Lehi “saw all these things, he was filled with the Spirit” (1 Nephi 5:10, 11, 13, 14, 17).

Lehi then taught his family what he had learned from the plates. You might say his tent became a family history and learning center—just as our homes should be.

It’s easy to see why the Lord wanted Lehi’s family to have these records. They gave his descendants a sense of identity, linking

them to faithful patriarchs of the past and planting in their hearts “the promises made to the fathers” (D&C 2:2; Joseph Smith—History 1:39). These records were so important to the faith of unborn generations that the Spirit warned Nephi that without them, an entire “nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief” (1 Nephi 4:13).

The experience of another people in the Book of Mormon shows how true it is that when records are lost, truth is lost, and the results for future generations can be disastrous.

The Mulekites left Jerusalem about the same time as Lehi’s family. But unlike Lehi’s family, “they had brought no records with them.” By the time Mosiah discovered them about 400 years later, “their language had become corrupted; . . . and they denied the being of their Creator” (Omni 1:17). They had lost their identity as a covenant people.

Mosiah taught the Mulekites his language so they could learn from the records he possessed. As a result, the Mulekites underwent a transformation from a troubled, godless society to a society that understood God’s plan of happiness for them—and their families.

## Return with Your Family

The knowledge of who we are in relation to God and to each other changes the way we think, act, and treat others. Records are a vital piece of our identity and perspective. Looking back prepares us to go forward.

Parents, have you invited your family to “return”? Has your family been separated from their records—or from each other—in one way or another? Has your family’s tie between the present and the past been severed? What occurred in your family’s history to cause this separation? Was it immigration, family conflict, conversion to the gospel, or simply the passage of time? Have you reached out recently to find your ancestors on [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org)?

The house of Israel has been scattered, and in many ways that includes the scattering of our families and records. Our responsibility is to gather them and, where necessary, to heal the wounds of separation. As we seek diligently to turn the hearts of our children to their fathers, our hearts will also turn to our children<sup>1</sup> and we will discover together the peace and healing that come of this work (see D&C 98:16).

Just as Lehi sent his sons back to Jerusalem for the sacred records, let us send our children back for our family records. Just as the Lord provided a way for Nephi, He has provided the Internet and other technologies that will enable our children to gather and heal our families. And He has provided temples where we can take the names we find and make our gathering permanent through sealing ordinances.

## Joy in the Wilderness

When my wife, Sharol, and I were married, we decided we’d have four sons. The Lord had a different plan. He gave us four daughters.

We’ve traveled with our daughters through the wilderness. Now they’re married with children and traveling through their own wilderness. Has everything been easy along the way? No. We’ve had our share of murmuring, and there have been plenty of struggles.

Life’s wilderness can be tough on families. When people ask, “How are you and your family doing?” I often say, “We’re between crises right now. Thanks for asking.”

But there are also moments of true joy along the way. As patriarchs and matriarchs, we spend a lot of time fortifying our children for the wilderness. Prophets in our day have promised that family history work provides “protection from the influence of the adversary”<sup>2</sup> and a “deep and abiding” conversion to the Savior.<sup>3</sup> What a powerful way to gather, heal, and seal our families.

As the patriarch of our family, I’ve asked my daughters to “return” to *find* the records, *take* the names to the temple, and *teach* our grandchildren. I have asked them to get to know who they are made of by participating in our family history.

## A Promise

I promise that as you invite your children to “return” and find your family records, together you will “rejoice exceedingly” like Lehi and Sariah and give “thanks unto the God of Israel.” As you search your records, you will be “filled with the Spirit,” for you will find “that they [are] desirable; yea, even of great worth.” And you will know that “it was wisdom in the Lord that [you] should carry them with [you]” as you journey “in the wilderness towards [your] land of promise” (1 Nephi 5:9, 17, 21–22).

The Church is here to support and strengthen your family in this journey. I promise that as your family participates in the gathering of records, the healing of hearts, and the sealing of family members, you and your posterity—your family—will be blessed forever and ever. ■

*From an address, “Gathering, Healing, and Sealing Families,” given at the RootsTech Family History Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, on February 14, 2015.*

### NOTES

1. For examples of how the records contained on the plates of brass brought healing to Lehi’s posterity, see Alma 37:8–10.
2. Richard G. Scott, “The Joy of Redeeming the Dead,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 94.
3. David A. Bednar, “The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 27.



### MORE ONLINE

Two Apostles promise blessings to youth who participate in family history and temple service. Scan this QR code or visit [lds.org/go/1016000](https://lds.org/go/1016000) to watch the video.

# SERVING Beyond Jordan

*Or wherever else the Lord needs you.*

**By R. Val Johnson and Rachel Coleman**

Church Magazines and Publishing Services

**T**he need was critical.

In early 2013, five cases of measles broke out in the Za'atari refugee camp in the Middle Eastern country of Jordan. More than 100,000 Syrian refugees, living in overcrowded conditions, were at risk of contracting this highly contagious, dangerous virus. The Jordanian government planned a massive immunization campaign to keep the disease from spreading. The plan was to immunize at least 90,000 Syrian refugees between the ages of 6 months and 30 years within a two-week period.

But there was a problem. The United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) had the serum. The Jordanian Ministry of Health had the clinics. What they didn't have were cold-chain supply items—syringes, containers for sharp instruments, serum coolers—and time was running out.<sup>1</sup>

Enter Ron and Sandi Hammond, senior welfare missionaries serving as country directors in Jordan for LDS Charities. As Ron and Sandi already had working relationships with UNICEF and the Ministry of Health, they quickly joined the collaboration between these organizations to determine how LDS Charities could help.

Ron says, “We inquired about the cost of purchasing the cold-chain supply items. When they told us, we said, ‘We think LDS Charities can help.’ They said, ‘How fast? We’ve got to get moving on this!’”

Within 20 hours LDS Charities had approved the purchase of the necessary cold-chain supplies. “When we informed the Ministry of Health and UNICEF,” Ron says, “they were awestruck. How could an NGO [non-governmental organization] move so quickly? Not only did the immunization campaign go forward on schedule, but it also inspired a nationwide campaign that inoculated hundreds of thousands of Jordanians and Syrian refugees.”

Crisis averted.

Furthermore, this productive partnership among UNICEF, Jordan's Ministry of



**LDS Charities helped immunize 90,000 Syrian refugees for measles.**



Health, and LDS Charities created the potential for future collaboration.

How Ron and Sandi Hammond arrived at that important moment in the Middle East is a testament of the Hammonds' faith and the inspiration behind the Church's senior missionary program.

### Needed: Missionary Couples

In 2012 the Hammonds were serving as ordinance workers in the Rexburg Idaho Temple. Ron had a successful dental practice and was teaching in the Religion Department at Brigham Young University–Idaho. But the serene routine of their lives changed abruptly with a distinct spiritual impression to immediately submit papers to serve a mission. The timing surprised them. Their married children were in various stages of career moves and relocations, and Ron was not yet looking to retire. But the Spirit assured them that they were needed and that all would be well.

As it turned out, priesthood leaders at Church headquarters had been fasting and praying to find the right couple to serve as country directors for LDS Charities in Amman, Jordan.

"It was so evident," says Sandi, "that the Lord was out ahead of us, preparing the details of the specific assignment

Amman, Jordan



He had for us. We know that He does this for every missionary who serves. It is comforting knowing that the Savior is arranging things for you to serve before you ever arrive."

"In retrospect," Ron says, "we are grateful we were neither specific nor insistent on where we wished to serve. Leaving such matters in the Lord's hands allowed Him to give us an experience we would not have had otherwise."

That experience included working with Jordan's royal family on humanitarian projects of interest to the royals. The Hammonds collaborated with local hospitals and clinics to provide training to Jordanian medical staff on life-saving neonatal resuscitation skills, resulting in a significant reduction in mortality among newborns. Through their efforts and the efforts of other missionary couples, LDS Charities

### HOW TO HAVE THE BEST 6 OR 12 OR 18 OR 23 MONTHS OF YOUR LIFE

A couple can serve a mission of 6, 12, 18, or 23 months, depending on their situation.

In addition, the biggest financial cost of a mission—housing—has been made manageable by limiting the cost of housing to no more than U.S. \$1,400 for couples serving

from the United States, Canada, western Europe, Japan, and Australia. Those from all other countries pay what they can afford.

For information on applying for missionary service and to read more stories of couples who have had the best months of their lives serving missions, go to [lds.org/callings/missionary/senior](https://lds.org/callings/missionary/senior).



provided training and equipment to vision clinics and organizations serving those with physical disabilities. Among those that the Hammonds and other welfare missionaries supported was a center that teaches women with physical disabilities how to design and make specialty clothing and craft items. These skills gave students the opportunity to better provide for themselves and their families.

Other projects included working with other NGOs and the Jordanian government on emergency response and screening Jordanian students to receive one of two scholarships each year to attend Brigham Young University. One of the most satisfying experiences the Hammonds had was working with the Latin Catholic Church to build school rooms for Iraqi Christians who had nowhere else to meet.

### **With the Lord in His Vineyard**

While in Jordan the Hammonds learned how true the Lord's promise is to those who serve Him: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left,



*Ron and Sandi Hammond and other humanitarian missionaries worked with the royal family of Jordan to decrease the mortality of newborns there.*

and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up" (D&C 84:88).

"God is involved in the work," Ron says. "He is down in the vineyard with His servants. Any couple who goes on a mission is joined in the vineyard by the Lord of the vineyard. We don't believe in miracles in Jordan; we lived them."

Indisputably, the angels they felt "round about" them included the heavenly variety, but they also included the mortal variety, especially their children, who supported their decision to serve so far from home.

And their family in turn was blessed by the Lord's protective, sustaining power. Significant career and relocation decisions were made, and concerns with potential birth complications were resolved as their children turned to the Lord, counseled together, and prayed and fasted for one another.

The blessings their children received were so remarkable that when Brother and Sister Hammond were invited to extend their two-year mission to three, each of their children expressed enthusiastic support. They sensed the Lord was doing something very special for them as a direct result of their parents' service.

Still, the separation the Hammond family felt was a sacrifice. Being halfway around the world from those they loved was difficult. But it wasn't as difficult as it would have been in the past. Technology made it possible for the family to be involved in one another's lives as often as needed. Sandi says, "Couples don't lose contact with their families. We kept in frequent contact with our children's families back home. Because of FaceTime and emails, our four new grandchildren, born while we served, knew us and were warm and welcoming when we returned."

### **Opening Eyes and Hearts**

Among the many blessings the Hammonds feel they received from their service is having their eyes opened to the generosity and friendliness of the Jordanian people. When the Hammonds first received their call, they were uncertain about the people they would be serving.

"But we found our Muslim friends to be gentle and



**One concern for potential couple missionaries is being away from children and grandchildren at important times in their lives. The Hammonds learned that, in remarkable ways, the Lord blesses the families of couples who serve and that technology enables them to remain close even if half a world away.**

generous,” Ron says, “and we are certain that had they sensed we were ever in harm’s way, they would have gone out of their way to protect us.

“Their charity is amazing. Jordanians can’t bear knowing others are going without if they can help. They have been welcoming refugees since pre-Davidic times. The Bible contains many references to ‘beyond Jordan,’ and we began signing our letters ‘Beyond Jordan’ as recognition of the compassionate service we were privileged to provide in this historically compassionate country. For centuries Jordan has been a place of charity, and the Lord has blessed the people for it.”

Working so closely with the Jordanian people enabled the Hammonds to develop some strong friendships. “We were invited to several Iftar meals, the meal that ends the daily Ramadan fast,” Sandi says. “Our Muslim friends also invited us to attend engagement parties, weddings, and other family-focused occasions.”

The Church doesn’t proselyte or permit baptisms of Muslims in Jordan or anywhere else where the law forbids it, so the Hammonds didn’t share information about the

Church. Instead, they focused on building and maintaining relationships—with the royal family, local humanitarian partners, other couple missionaries serving with them, and religious and government leaders. When asked for details about the Church, the Hammonds encouraged inquirers to visit LDS.org.

### The Call to Serve

Considering the remarkable experiences Ron and Sandi had, do they feel they are somehow special among couples called to serve—or that could be called to serve?

Yes—and no. “We served where and when the Lord needed a couple with our specific skills and life experiences,” the Hammonds say. “But that’s true for all senior missionaries.

Every couple with the ability to serve a mission has been prepared to serve in ways special to them. They just need to exercise faith enough to go where the Lord has need of them, and He will use them to make a difference in the lives of others.”

“Couples can make a difference,” said Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “Couples can accomplish remarkable things no one else can do. . . .

“ . . . The ways in which couples can serve are virtually limitless. From mission office support and leadership training to family history, temple work, and humanitarian service—there is an opportunity to use almost any skill or talent with which the Lord has blessed you. . . .

“ . . . You have received much in your life; go forth and freely give in the service of our Lord and Savior. Have faith; the Lord knows where you are needed. The need is so great, brothers and sisters, and the laborers are so few.”<sup>2</sup> ■

### NOTES

1. See “Mass Vaccination Campaigns in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey Amid Measles Outbreaks,” Apr. 30, 2013, [unicef.org](http://unicef.org).
2. Robert D. Hales, “Couple Missionaries: A Time to Serve,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 26, 27.

LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF LDS CHARITIES; RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE HAMMONDS

## FASTING AND PRAYING FOR EMMA

By Cecilie Norrung

*After my daughter fell out of a window, I thought our worst fears had come true.*

My family had just returned from a wonderful vacation. After dinner I let our two children, four-year-old Markus and three-year-old Emma, play in the upstairs bedroom of our fourth-floor apartment. In Denmark, windows open out like shutters. The windows are usually locked, but we had left them slightly ajar during our vacation so the apartment would be ventilated during our trip.

As I was doing the dishes, I suddenly felt that something was terribly wrong. I ran into the living room as Markus came running down the stairs. He was screaming with fear, saying Emma had fallen out of the window—a window about 40 feet (12 m) above a cement sidewalk. I ran down the stairs, repeatedly screaming Emma's name. I saw my little daughter lying on the cement as if she were lifeless. She was completely limp when I picked her up, and I thought my worst fears were confirmed. My husband, who had followed me outside, took her in his arms and immediately gave her a priesthood blessing.

The ambulance came quickly, and Markus and I said a prayer while the paramedics worked on Emma. Soon we were all in the ambulance heading to the hospital.

At the intensive care unit we were quickly joined by family members who came to support us. Markus went home with his cousins, while my husband and I stayed behind, not yet knowing about Emma's condition.

After what seemed like a long wait, one of the doctors finally came in, asking for details about the accident. They said that normally a fall from such a height would have resulted in internal injuries and only a small chance of survival. Emma had a broken pelvis and a concussion, but her scrapes were only superficial. The doctor said an angel must have caught her.

Even though Emma's survival was a miracle, she was still unconscious because of head trauma. My husband and two close friends again administered to Emma. In that blessing she was promised a complete recovery without any lasting problems and that this would be a positive experience in her life. I felt immense gratitude for the power of the priesthood. All my nightlong pleadings had been heard.

Emma came out of her coma four days later. During those four days, friends, members of the Church, and others fasted and prayed for her. I felt the prayers of faithful



IMAGE BY BIRGER/ISTOCK/THINKSTOCK



Saints weave around me, strengthening my family and me. I felt as if Heavenly Father had wrapped His arms around me and filled me with comfort.

Our stake had held a fast on the day before she woke up. We believe that Heavenly Father heard our prayers and that Emma's waking up was a direct result of the fast. From there Emma recovered quickly. Five days later she said her first word since the accident, and nine days later she was released from the hospital. She spent five weeks in a wheelchair and then started physical therapy.

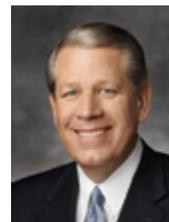
About a month after the accident, my back suddenly gave out on me from lifting Emma. A feeling of not only physical but also spiritual powerlessness came over me. How could I continue to take care of her?

One night the guilt of being so powerless became too much to bear. I left the house and found a park bench, where I prayed to Heavenly Father for about an hour. For the first time in my life, I felt the miraculous power of the Savior's Atonement overcome me. All the pain and sorrow I had been carrying was taken from me; all my burdens were lifted off my shoulders after that prayer. Emma was still in a wheelchair, and I was getting regular back treatments, but I was strengthened to carry on.

One year later, Emma could run, laugh, tell stories, and think as a four-year-old should.

We know there is a loving Father in Heaven, who cares for us and knows us individually. He knows what challenges we go through. I will never doubt the miracles He gives us through prayer, fasting, and priesthood blessings. ■

*The author lives in the Capital Region of Denmark.*



### **WHAT IS OUR RESPONSE TO TRIALS?**

"When difficult things occur in our lives, what is our immediate response? Is it confusion or doubt or spiritual withdrawal? Is it a blow to our faith? Do we blame God or others for our circumstances? Or is our first response to remember who we are—that we are children of a loving God? Is that coupled with an absolute trust that He allows some earthly suffering *because* He knows it will bless us, like a refiner's fire, to become like Him and to gain our eternal inheritance?"

**Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Presidency of the Seventy, "I Am a Child of God," *Ensign*, May 2016, 27.**

# THE SPIRIT OF VISITING TEACHING



By Joy M. Gatherum-Hanson

As a mother with five young children, I learned that finding the time for visiting teaching could be stressful but that it was always worth it.

A sister had recently moved to our neighborhood, and I was assigned to be her visiting teacher. When I called to make an appointment, she suggested a later time because her morning schedule was busy with her daughter's "daily ritual." I wasn't sure what that meant, but I agreed to an afternoon stopover.

My companion and I rang the doorbell and were greeted by a small, silver-haired beauty in her early 60s. She introduced herself as Joyce and invited us into her home. There on a reclining bed lay her daughter.

There was no way to miss viewing her daughter because Joyce sat across the room with the bed between us. We tried not to stare. The incapacitated young woman thrashed her arms and legs. A constant drool slipped from her mouth onto the large terry-cloth bib around her neck.

As she wiped her daughter's mouth, Joyce explained, "This is Daisy. She does not communicate in our way."

Daisy wore a flowered pastel dress and had satin slippers on her feet. Joyce explained that Daisy was born blind and severely handicapped, both mentally and physically.

Joyce showed great love and compassion to her 20-year-old daughter. She said that her husband had left them when the burden of Daisy's care became too much for him. Joyce refused to have Daisy institutionalized as the doctors had suggested. The other children were grown and married, so Joyce carried on alone with Daisy's care. Medical expenses had forced them out of their larger home. They now shared a two-bedroom, government-subsidized apartment.

My heart ached for this dear mother, and my companion was deeply touched. Our visit lasted a long time, and we hesitated to leave. We could tell that our new friend truly enjoyed—and needed—the visit.

Months went by, and our visits multiplied. Just one visit a month never seemed like enough. Soups, homemade bread, and cookies were often left for our two new friends. Joyce was so very grateful.

One warm summer day, I was out walking with my children. I pointed out Joyce and Daisy's apartment as we were passing by. The children had heard me speak of Daisy and Joyce before, and now they wanted to know if they could go in and visit. I looked at my watch and saw that it was afternoon. I knew it would be okay to visit.



*Spirit spoke to spirit as I visited Joyce and Daisy with my children.*

As Joyce opened the door, she radiated delight with her pleasant smile.

“Oh, you brought your children! My daughter loves young ones. They seem to be able to reach her in ways adults can’t. Won’t you come in?”

Walking in, I was amazed that my children seemed so prepared to see the ungainly motions of Joyce’s daughter. They showed no shock at seeing Daisy.

“Can we touch her?” Tom asked.

After being reassured, they touched her on the cheek. She jerked her head to the side where they stood, and my children began to talk to her.

“You have on a pretty dress,” Rachelle said.

“I like the ribbon in your hair,” said Todd.

Joyce smiled as Troy asked, “Does she have a pet?”

“We can’t have pets here, but we had a dog at our old home. When he would lick her face she would always smile.”

My youngest son, John, kept patting

Daisy’s hair softly. I noticed that her thrashing arms and legs had calmed down.

“Can your children sing? My daughter loves to listen to music.”

I asked if the children would sing “I Am a Child of God.” After I gave them a starting pitch, they sang every verse. The Spirit in the room was noticeable. Daisy’s movements stilled completely. When the children had finished, we all noticed the tears running down Daisy’s cheeks. Spirit had spoken to spirit as my children sang.

Several times that summer my children and I visited Joyce and Daisy. Each time, the children and I sang. We all felt kinship with these two sisters as we were welcomed into their home.

Years later Joyce and Daisy moved away, but I will never forget the presence of the Spirit during visits to their home. How grateful I am that I made the time to meet those wonderful sisters. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*



### **INSTRUMENTS IN THE SAVIOR’S HANDS**

“I marvel as I witness the countless acts of charity performed daily by visiting teachers all over the world. . . . To these faithful visiting teachers, I say, ‘Through those small acts of charity, you follow the Savior.’ ”

**Silvia H. Allred, former First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 118.**

# SEAN'S

## WHILE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

By Lynne Crandall and Jennifer Johnson

Every Wednesday, Sean Atkisson wears white. This is the day he attends the temple with his wife, Tawnya, to serve and to remember the covenants they have made there. Sean stays in white the entire day because he has been quadriplegic since 2006 and needs someone to help him dress. Their weekly service in the temple is a small representation of how the Atkissons' lives are guided by their baptismal and temple covenants. In this and many other ways, they serve others in spite of often needing service themselves. Through what many would consider unimaginable hardship, they remain devoted disciples of Jesus Christ.

### Introduction to the Gospel

Sean was raised a member of Community of Christ (formerly the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) in Washington, USA. In high school some friends invited him to attend seminary with them, and he began learning about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. "My idea was that if I would go to church with them, they would go with me," he says. "We never made it that far. I made it to church with them, and then I was baptized." That was the beginning of Sean's covenant path.

Soon after high school graduation, he served a mission to Colombia. His parents moved across the country while he was gone, so he returned to their new home in Missouri. It was there that he met Tawnya at a daylong Church activity ending in a barn dance. She was not a member of the Church, but like Sean in high school, she had been invited to participate by a Latter-day Saint friend. "That was the first thing I had ever gone to Church-wise, so I didn't know anything," Tawnya says, laughing. When Sean told her he was a returned missionary, she didn't know what he meant.

Sean helped the missionaries teach Tawnya, and soon she too decided to be baptized. A few months after she joined the Church, Sean and Tawnya were married. A year after her baptism, they were sealed in the temple.

Over the next 12 years they had five children and moved several times as Sean earned two master's degrees, one in social work and another in human development and family studies. At age 29, Sean was called as a bishop in Washington. Eventually the Atkissons returned to Missouri, where Sean practiced as a therapist.

### Sudden Stillness

One afternoon in October 2006, Sean climbed a tree to bird-watch and take

*Even when they thought they couldn't serve,  
the Atkissons kept their covenants and found  
ways to bless the Lord's children.*



photographs in the wooded area behind his house. He lost his balance and fell to the ground onto his head, paralyzing him from the neck down. He was 45. For nearly seven hours Sean lay on the ground, assuming that the reason he couldn't move was that he was in shock. As Tawnya and others searched the woods for him, he said a prayer that he would live. "If I could, then I would repent of things that I had done in my life and try to make my life better and more worthy," he promised the Lord.

They found him after dark that evening, and he spent the next month in an induced coma while doctors stabilized him. In addition to meeting such physical challenges as learning how to breathe without a ventilator, Sean and his family had to come to terms with their new life. For Tawnya, life seemed to stop suddenly when the accident happened and then restart. She said it took a number of years for them to get to a place where they felt stable. "It felt like we were riding a roller coaster that was out of control," she says.

Tawnya explains that Sean's positive attitude made all the difference. He remembered his promise to the Lord that he would improve, and he kept his word. He tried to make his life and the lives of those around him better by having a happy attitude and being easy to work with. Ten



### LIFELONG DISCIPLESHIP

"Making the covenant to be a disciple of Christ is the beginning of a lifelong process, and the path is not always easy. As we repent of our sins and strive to do what He would have us do and serve our fellowmen as He would serve them, we will inevitably become more like Him. Becoming like Him and being one with Him is the ultimate goal and objective—and essentially the very definition of true discipleship."

Elder Daniel L. Johnson of the Seventy, "Becoming a True Disciple," *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 102.

years later, Tawnya says he's still patient and kind on even his hardest days.

Sean had lived an active life, and he remembers how hard it was to be still and stare at the same spot for hours. Time seemed to pass slowly, and Sean had to get used to spending a lot of that time alone, which was new for him. "It bothered me that I didn't think that I could take an active role in my family," he says. However, Sean and Tawnya feel that their service in the Church at an early age prepared them for the stillness after the accident.

Sean says that throughout his recovery and adjustment, "I felt, at what seemed to be the lowest times, that tender mercies would come my way. They would lift my hope for another day and let me see things a little bit differently."

Sean spent time in several different medical facilities, and then the Atkissons decided to move to Utah. Tawnya and their two daughters still living with them traveled there to find a place to live, and Sean followed a month later. Tawnya enrolled in nursing school, fulfilling a longtime dream. She remembers that going to school was good for her but extremely hard because she also worked two jobs. "I have no idea how I did it," she says. "Certainly it wasn't me. The Lord was really there, and I've been blessed with wonderful jobs since."

As she works and cares for Sean, members of their ward also help them. For example, members of the high priests group often help Sean eat dinner because he can't feed himself, and they built a ramp outside the Atkissons' house to accommodate Sean's wheelchair.

### Desires to Serve God

Sean and Tawnya remark that many couples where one spouse becomes quadriplegic choose to get divorced, but the Atkissons' temple marriage became the foundation that helped them stay together. "We had covenants that we needed to live up to," Sean says. Living up to their covenants has helped them and their children heal.

What also helped them was fulfilling their dream of serving as senior missionaries. One of Sean's first thoughts



***Sean dresses in a shirt and tie every day to fulfill his missionary calling.***

after his accident was that he and Tawnya would never be able to serve a mission as a couple because of his physical challenges. To him it seemed like there was nothing he could do. He was disappointed because he had wanted to serve as a senior missionary ever since serving as a young man and seeing the incredible examples of senior couples.

But then, after helping a Church-service missionary on a Church history project, Sean himself was called to be a Church-service missionary for the Church History Department, primarily researching the Peter Whitmer family. “What a joy it was to receive a call,” he says. Because of advances in technology, Sean is able to do research on a computer that works by voice commands.

Mark Staker, a lead curator in the Church History Department who directs Sean’s work, says that Sean is a dedicated and productive missionary. When he stopped by the Atkissons’ house unannounced one day, he found Sean working on his computer. “I came in and Sean had on his white shirt and his tie and his name badge,”

Brother Staker says. Sean dresses in a shirt and tie every day to fulfill his missionary calling.

The Atkissons’ dreams of serving as senior missionaries were further fulfilled when Tawnya was called to serve as a Church-service missionary in the Church’s Addiction Recovery Program. She has found joy in serving, meeting weekly with participants and giving presentations. “[The Lord] is the only one who can put us together in missionary callings that utilize our talents and gifts and help us to contribute, even at a time in our life when you wouldn’t think we could,” she says. “He takes our small amount of effort and what we do and magnifies it.”

Tawnya says it’s been a joy to learn to accept and love people because they are children of God. The Atkissons truly feel that “the worth of souls is great in the sight of God” (D&C 18:10). As they have served despite their difficulties and have kept their covenants, they have been blessed with opportunities to strengthen their relationship with each other and with the Savior. ■

*The authors live in Utah, USA.*



# Love

## VERSUS LUST

**By Joshua J. Perkey**

Church Magazines

LUST.

It certainly is an ugly word. Most of us don't want to think about it, much less learn about it. The term invokes a sleazy feeling, something dark—alluring yet wrong.

There is good reason for that. If “the love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Timothy 6:10), then certainly lust is its secret ally. It is base and degrading. Lust turns people, things, and even ideas into objects to possess or acquire to satisfy a craving. But if we already know that, why do we need to know more about it?

Because if we can better understand what lust really means, we can learn how to shape our thoughts, feelings, and actions so that we can avoid and overcome its manifestations. This will lead us to a closer association to the Holy Spirit, which purifies our thoughts and intentions and strengthens us. And that will lead to a much happier, peaceful, and joyful life.

### Defining Lust

We tend to think of lust primarily as having inappropriate, intense feelings of physical attraction toward another person, but it is possible to lust after or covet just about anything: money, property, objects, and, of course, other people (see Topical Guide, “Lust”).

IF WE CAN BETTER UNDERSTAND WHAT LUST REALLY MEANS, WE CAN LEARN HOW TO AVOID IT AND MAKE CHOICES THAT DRAW US CLOSER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.



## DEFINING LOVE AND LUST

Love is ennobling; lust is degenerating. Love embraces truth; lust embraces lies. Love builds and strengthens; lust destroys and weakens. Love is harmonious; lust is discordant. Love brings peace; lust brings conflict. Love inspires; lust deadens. Love heals; lust debilitates. Love energizes; lust combusts. Love illuminates; lust darkens. Love fills and sustains; lust cannot be satisfied. Love is intimately connected with promise; lust finds its home with pride.

Lust compels a person to seek to acquire something that is contrary to God's will. It encompasses any feeling or desire that causes an individual to focus on worldly possessions or selfish practices—personal interests, desires, passions, and appetites—rather than keeping the commandments of God.

In other words, desiring things contrary to God's will or desiring to possess things in a manner that is contrary to His will is lust, and it leads to unhappiness.<sup>1</sup>

### The Danger of Sexual Lust

Although we have been cautioned against lust as a form of coveting generally, in its sexual context lust is particularly dangerous. The Savior cautioned, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28).

Ancient Apostles warned extensively against lust in this sense. As just one example, the Apostle John said, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:16; see also verse 17; Romans 13:14; 1 Peter 2:11).

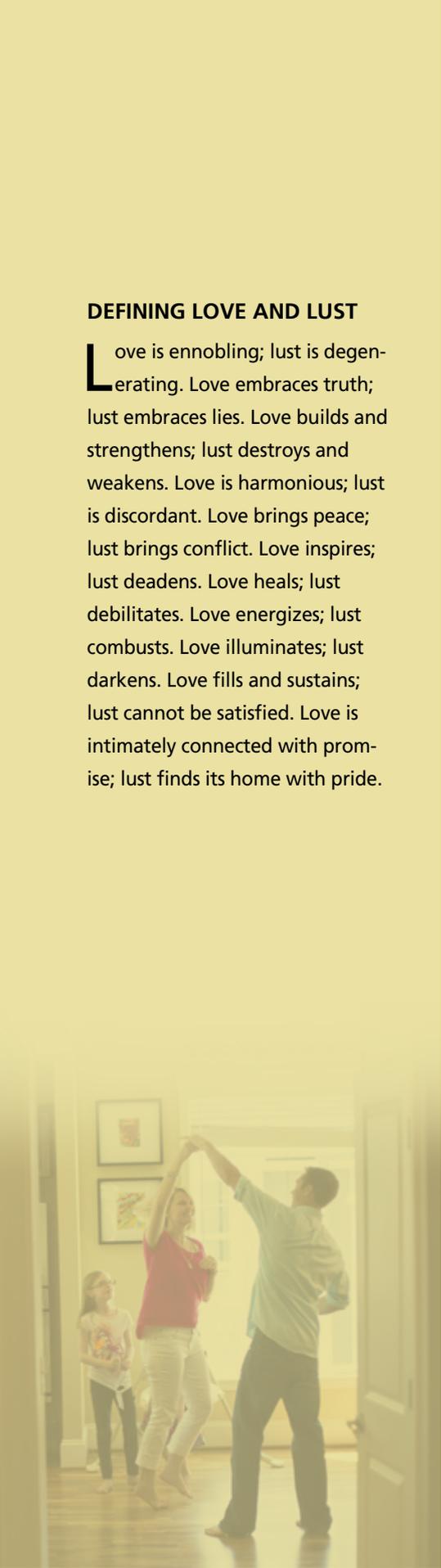
And the warnings continue today.<sup>2</sup> Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explains: "Why is lust such a deadly sin? Well, in addition to the completely Spirit-destroying impact it has upon

our souls, I think it is a sin because it defiles the highest and holiest relationship God gives us in mortality—the love that a man and a woman have for each other and the desire that couple has to bring children into a family intended to be forever."<sup>3</sup>

Allowing lustful desire to germinate has been at the root of many sinful acts. What begins with a seemingly innocent glance can grow into sordid infidelity with all its disastrous consequences. That is because lust drives away the Holy Ghost and leaves us vulnerable to other temptations and vices and the wiles of the adversary.

The tragic choices of King David are a sad example of how powerful and deadly this emotion can be. David happened to see Bathsheba bathing and lusted after her. Lust yielded to action, and he had her brought to him and he lay with her. Then, in a misguided effort to hide his sin, David ordered Bathsheba's husband to be stationed in battle where he was certain to be killed (see 2 Samuel 11). As a result, David lost his exaltation (see D&C 132:38–39).

David's situation may seem extreme, but it certainly proves the point: lust is a powerful temptation. Surrendering to it can cause us to engage in things that no one in their right mind would do. The fact that it is so insidious, so easily aroused, and so effective at tempting us to turn from the Holy Ghost and yield our will to something forbidden makes it all the





***Lust encompasses any feeling or desire that causes an individual to focus on worldly possessions or selfish practices rather than keeping the commandments of God.***

more dangerous. It can be triggered by viewing pornography, listening to explicit lyrics, or engaging in inappropriate intimacy. At the same time, lustful feelings can prompt an individual to seek pornography. This cyclical relationship is extremely powerful and dangerous.<sup>4</sup>

Lust of a sexual nature degrades and weakens all relationships, not the least of which is one's personal relationship with God. "And verily I say unto you, as I have said before, he that looketh on a woman to lust after her, or if any shall commit adultery in their hearts, they shall not have the Spirit, but shall deny the faith and shall fear" (D&C 63:16).

As Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: "Sexual immorality creates a barrier to the influence of the Holy Spirit with all its uplifting, enlightening, and empowering capabilities. It causes powerful physical and emotional stimulation. In time that creates an unquenchable appetite that drives the offender to ever more serious sin."<sup>5</sup>

### **What Lust Isn't**

Having considered what lust *is*, it's also important to understand what it is *not* and to be careful not to label

appropriate thoughts, feelings, and desires as lust. Lust is a *kind* of desire, but there are also righteous desires. For example, we can desire good and appropriate things that will help to accomplish the Lord's work.

Think about:

- **The desire to have money.** In and of itself, desiring money isn't evil. Paul didn't say that *money* is the root of all evil. He said, "the *love of money* is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10; emphasis added). Jacob's teachings add additional clarification: "Before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God. And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted" (Jacob 2:18–19).
- **Having appropriate sexual feelings toward your spouse.** Those God-given feelings help strengthen, fortify, and unify a marriage. But it *is* possible to have inappropriate feelings toward a spouse. If we seek fulfillment only for our own sake, or only to gratify



***Because Heavenly Father gives us agency, we have power over our thoughts, feelings, and actions.***

our own cravings or feelings, we might be slipping into lustful desires, and that can be damaging to a marriage relationship. The key to seeking and maintaining appropriate physical intimacy in a marriage is pure and loving intent.

The important principle is to seek things for the right purpose—to build God’s kingdom and increase goodness in the world. In contrast, lust encourages us to step outside of appropriate boundaries, where our desires can debase God, objectify people, and turn objects, wealth, and even power into monstrosities that warp our sensibilities and damage our relationships.

### **Why We Often Yield to Lust**

Given how damaging and dangerous lust is, why is it so tempting and so prevalent? Why do we so often let it overpower us? On the surface, it may seem that selfishness or lack of self-control are at the heart of lust. Those are contributing factors, but the deep root of lust is often emptiness. Individuals may succumb to lust in a vain attempt to fill a vacancy in their life. Lust is a false emotion,

a poor substitute for genuine love, true value, and enduring discipleship.

Proper emotional control, in one sense, is a condition of the heart. “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7). Wherever we place our mental and spiritual focus will over time become the driving force behind our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Whenever we feel ourselves tempted to lust, we need to replace that temptation with something more appropriate.

Idleness can also cause lustful thoughts. When we have too little going on in our lives, we tend to be more susceptible to evil influences. As we actively seek to be anxiously engaged in good causes (see D&C 58:27) and strive to use our time productively, we will be less prone to lustful thoughts or other negative influences.

As Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explains, the desires we choose to adhere to affect not only our actions but also who we eventually become: “Desires dictate our priorities, priorities shape our choices, and choices determine our actions. The desires we act on determine our changing, our achieving, and our becoming.”<sup>6</sup>

In other words, we must guard not only the emotions that we allow ourselves to engage in but also the thoughts that precipitate or are caused by those feelings. As Alma taught, if our thoughts are impure, “our thoughts will also condemn us” (Alma 12:14).

### The Antidote: Christlike Love

Lust isn’t inevitable. Because Heavenly Father gives us agency, we have power over our thoughts, feelings, and actions. We don’t have to pursue lustful thoughts and feelings. When temptations arise, we can choose not to go down those paths.

How do we overcome the temptation to lust? We begin by developing a proper relationship with our Heavenly Father and choosing to serve others. And we engage in daily religious behaviors, including prayer and scripture study, which invite the Holy Ghost into our lives. Ultimately, the secret ingredient is Christlike love—pure, sincere, honest love, with a desire to build the kingdom of God and to keep an eye single to His glory. That love is possible only when we have the companionship of the Holy Ghost.

Removing lust requires heartfelt prayer where we ask God to remove those feelings and provide, in their place, charitable love (see Moroni 7:48). This is made possible, as all such repentance is, through the grace

of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup> Because of Him, we can learn to love the way that He and our Heavenly Father love us.

When we continually focus on our Heavenly Father, when we live according to the first and second great commandments—to love God and our neighbors as ourselves (see Matthew 22:36–39)—and when we do all that we can to live as He has taught, pure and honest intentions influence our lives with greater and greater intensity. As we unite our will with the will of the Father, the temptations and effects of lust diminish, replaced with the pure love of Christ. Then we are filled with a divine love that replaces the base desires of this world with the beauty of building the kingdom of God. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Joy and Mercy,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 75; and Thomas S. Monson, “Finishers Wanted,” *Ensign*, July 1972, 69.
2. For just a few examples, see Doctrine and Covenants 88:121; Spencer W. Kimball, “President Kimball Speaks Out on Morality,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 94–98; Neal A. Maxwell, “The Seventh Commandment: A Shield,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 78–80; Russell M. Nelson, “Where Is Wisdom?” *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 6–8. For more scriptural warnings against lust, review the following topics in the Topical Guide: Adulterer, Carnal Mind, Chastity, Covet, Desire, Fornication, Homosexual Behavior, Lust, Pleasure, Sensuality, Sexual Immorality.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Place No More for the Enemy of My Soul,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 44–45.
4. For more on this topic, see Dallin H. Oaks, “Recovering from the Trap of Pornography,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2015, 32.
5. Richard G. Scott, “Making the Right Choices,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 38.
6. Dallin H. Oaks, “Desire,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 42.
7. See, for example, D. Todd Christofferson, “The Divine Gift of Repentance,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 38–41.

## FIVE SUGGESTIONS FOR A PURE LIFE

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland gives five suggestions for how to regain and maintain a pure life:

1. Separate yourself from people, materials, and circumstances that will harm you.
2. Seek help.
3. Develop and exercise self-control to eliminate bad influences.
4. Replace lewd thoughts with hopeful images and joyful memories.
5. Cultivate and be where the Spirit of the Lord is.

From “Place No More for the Enemy of My Soul,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 44–46.



By Christina H. Fairweather



# TUTORED

**W**hen I was attending college, I noticed two very different beginning piano classes listed in the course catalog. The first, “Group Piano Instruction,” featured row upon row of electronic keyboards where students wearing headphones all practiced the same song from the same book and received grades based on their ability to perform at a predetermined level.

By contrast, “Private Piano Instruction” was a class of one. Here a teacher worked individually with one student to correct blunders and hone technique. Even though the teacher often had many students, each one received individualized instruction and assignments based on the student’s needs. The final grade was based on individual progress, not on how well the student did compared to the group. There was a catch, however: private lessons

*I felt overwhelmed as a new Primary president, but then I realized the Lord had unique lessons to teach me.*

required a fee above the basic tuition.

I once overheard two students comparing these classes. “I can either take group instruction or private lessons for beginning piano,” one said, “but there is a fee for private lessons. If it’s just beginning piano, it probably doesn’t make much difference which one I take, so why pay the fee?”

At the time, I attached little significance to this conversation, but years later, when I was called to be Primary president of my ward, this curious memory would come back. Like many who receive new callings, I doubted my ability to meet the looming challenges and felt overwhelmed by all of my new responsibilities. Surely I lacked the qualifications that had made all the other Primary presidents successful! Would I be capable of

was. Listening to another, I noticed that her responses were more creative. Nervously I glanced up at the teacher, wondering if I would get in trouble for not doing as well as the others. “Sorry, you’re falling behind,” I could imagine the teacher saying. “You’ll never become a real Primary president.”

As I began serving in my new calling, I quickly realized how terribly wrong this idea of group instruction was. Accepting a calling was more like enrolling in private lessons—with the Lord. Knowing both our strengths and weaknesses, He places us in situations where our unique gifts are needed to bless a ward member, a class, even a Primary. Although the former Primary president may have just finished performing a concerto, the Lord knows when it’s time for my simple sonata. Through our callings, He gives us the experiences we need to become more like Him. Whether teacher, secretary, or president, callings throughout our lives are part of the individual curriculum the Lord develops for our progress.

There is, of course, a fee for these precious lessons. We pay with the time we spend in seeking the Lord’s direction and diligently fulfilling our callings. We pay with the patience we extend, both to those we serve and those with whom we serve. We pay with the faith we demonstrate when we’re plunged into situations we didn’t ask for or anticipate. But no matter how great the fee extracted from us, it does not begin to compensate for the glorious privilege of participating in the music the Lord orchestrates to bless people’s lives.

The Lord is our Master Teacher. He knows when and where He wants us to serve in His Church. He also knows us completely and loves us infinitely. As we accept callings to build His Church and serve others “unto the end” (see D&C 10:4), we offer ourselves as willing students, and, privately, He teaches us to become more like Him. ■

*The author lives in New York, USA.*

doing everything expected of me? Would my efforts be acceptable to the ward members and to the Lord? Would I do the job as well as the past presidents? As I wrestled with these questions, I remembered that long-ago conversation about the choice between group lessons and private piano lessons.

I had assumed that accepting my new calling was like joining a group piano lesson with all of the other women called to be Primary presidents. In my mind, we all sat in rows with copies of a manual, *How to Be a Primary President*, in front of us. The teacher assigned lessons like “Conducting Sharing Time” or “Preparing Eight-Year-Olds for Baptism,” and we all started studying and practicing the appropriate things to say and do. Watching one Primary president, I could see she was working faster than I

## BY THE LORD

# 5 WAYS

## TO HELP YOUTH Tackle Tough Social Issues

*Our youth need to develop more confidence in the gospel than they have in pop culture, the media, and academic philosophies.*

By Angela Peterson Fallentine

For the past decade, I've had the opportunity to work with youth, their leaders, and their parents in a variety of Church callings in both North America and overseas. Through this service, I've found that one of the greatest concerns parents and leaders have is how they can help their youth understand doctrine and eternal truths in relation to current—often serious and confusing—social issues. Here are a few things we might want to consider as we teach the rising generation how to stand strong in the world.

### 1 HELP YOUTH UNDERSTAND GOD IS THE SOURCE OF ALL TRUTH

We need to assure our youth that Heavenly Father loves us and has provided ways for us to know the truth. As President Thomas S. Monson has explained: “To help guide us we have the words of God and of His Son found in our holy scriptures. We have the counsel and teachings of God’s prophets. Of paramount importance, we have been provided with a perfect example to follow—even the example of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

Knowing there are very real attacks waged against our children of all ages, let’s better arm them with all the tools they need to discern between the world’s teachings and the Lord’s and to help them “stand as witnesses of God at all

times and in all things, and in all places” (Mosiah 18:9).

The world bombards our youth with messages that are filled with half-truths, misleading headlines, falsified studies, and all types of immorality. These things are hitting them at an alarming speed and coming at them from every direction. Some of the errors are obvious, while many are subtle and require a great deal of discernment. We need to better equip youth to question what they learn from the world—especially those things that contradict gospel teachings. In their quest to find and understand truth, our youth need to develop more confidence in the words of the prophets and the scriptures than they place in pop culture, the media, and many of the philosophies of academia.

### 2 TEACH THE DOCTRINE CLEARLY

One of the sources that teaches doctrine clearly and that we should refer to often is “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Satan’s attacks are directed against everything the proclamation stands for: marriage between a man and a woman; the law of chastity; the sanctity of life; the birth of children within marriage; the divine roles of mothers and fathers. Parents and leaders need to have a testimony of this prophetic document in order to help youth tackle these



Blessings

Atonement

Same-Sex  
Marriage

Jesus  
Christ

Family

Faith

Substance  
Abuse

Charity



*Our young people can easily fall into the trap that truth is relative. Teach them that God's truths are unchanging.*

issues head-on—and to speak out when necessary. Let's not just assume that youth will somehow get the drift of these beliefs on their own.

Remember, Satan is bold and unapologetic in teaching youth his false doctrines. I think we do our youth a great disservice if we apologize for the Lord's standards and commandments or shy away from boldly teaching truth.

The adversary is using false teachings and confusion to undermine our youth's ability to progress spiritually. With the rapid growth of alarming social trends, we need to teach the doctrine clearly, concisely, and without apology. It is critical to keep up to date with current social issues and trends in order to understand what the youth are dealing with at school and online. We have to be better prepared and willing to talk to them about tough issues candidly—without tiptoeing around the doctrine. Youth and young adults can handle it! They want to talk about these things. They are craving guidance and direction on these tough issues.

### **3** HELP YOUTH EXAMINE SOCIAL ISSUES USING A LENS OF ETERNAL DOCTRINE

We can hope our children don't accept false doctrines mixed with elements of truth, but if we aren't helping them look at specific, real-life examples from the perspective of gospel teachings, they may fall for the philosophies that make sin look reasonable and justifiable.

For example, the importance of looking at sexuality from an eternal perspective cannot be overemphasized. Much of the misunderstanding youth have about their bodies and human sexuality comes from not fully understanding the sanctity of the body and its connection to the spirit. The Doctrine and Covenants teaches us that “the spirit *and* the body are the soul of man” (D&C 88:15; emphasis added). If we can help our youth understand that our bodies are sacred and are an essential part of our souls, they will be better able to discern truth amidst the very confusing messages they receive from the world.<sup>3</sup>

For doctrinally based discussions on this and other social and doctrinal issues, parents and leaders may want to consult some of the “Gospel Topics” essays on the Church's website ([topics.lds.org](http://topics.lds.org)). Essays now available include “Chastity,” “Pornography,” “Race and the Priesthood,” “Same-Sex Attraction,” and “Same-Sex Marriage.”<sup>4</sup>

### **4** TEACH YOUTH THAT GOD'S TRUTHS ARE UNCHANGING

Our young people can easily fall into the trap of believing that truth is only relative or that popular messaging or societal pressures create or change truth. Each day they face moral relativism among their peers, in their high schools and universities, and in the media (witness, for instance, current discussions on gender identity). Elder

Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said, “Unlike other organizations that can change their policies and even their doctrines, our policies are determined by the truths God has identified as unchangeable.”<sup>5</sup>

In the words of President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency:

“There is indeed such a thing as absolute truth—unassailable, unchangeable truth.

“This truth is different from belief. It is different from hope. Absolute truth is not dependent upon public opinion or popularity. Polls cannot sway it. Not even the inexhaustible authority of celebrity endorsement can change it.”<sup>6</sup>

## 5 HELP YOUTH HOLD FAST TO GOD’S TRUTHS BUT SHOW LOVE

An increasing number of our youth are getting confused about how to adhere to gospel truths while also trying to be kind to those who believe differently. Through scriptures and the teachings of modern-day prophets and apostles, the Lord has clearly set the standards of morality. Our youth need to understand that we cannot lower our standards to embrace or tolerate popular social trends that go against the commandments of God. We need to teach them that they are not being judgmental, unkind, or un-Christlike when they adhere to God’s standards.

As Elder Oaks has taught, “If a person understands the teachings of Jesus, he or she cannot reasonably conclude that our loving Heavenly Father or His divine Son believes that Their love supersedes Their commandments.”<sup>7</sup>

Teaching both obedience to God’s laws and love for others, including the wise use of righteous judgment, must be done so clearly that it cannot be misunderstood. Social trends that go against God’s commandments will often focus solely on love, ignoring moral laws.

In the words of Elder Holland: “Christlike love is the greatest need we have on this planet in part because righteousness was always supposed to accompany it. So if love is to be our watchword, as it *must* be, then by the word of Him who is love personified, we must forsake transgression and any hint of advocacy for it in others. Jesus clearly understood what many in our modern culture seem to forget: that there is a crucial difference between the commandment to forgive sin (which He had an infinite capacity to do) and the warning against condoning it (which He never ever did even once).”<sup>8</sup>

It is my hope—borrowing language from Elder Holland—that we will teach our youth to be strong; to live the gospel faithfully, even if others around them don’t live it at all; and to defend their beliefs with courtesy and with compassion but to *defend* them. A long history of inspired prophets, apostles, parents, and leaders can point them toward the path of Christian discipleship. If the rising generation will courageously pursue such a course, they will forge unshakable faith, find safety against ill winds that blow, and feel the rock-like strength of our Redeemer, upon whom if they build their unflinching discipleship, they cannot fall.<sup>9</sup> ■

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### NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Ponder the Path of Thy Feet,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 86.
2. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
3. A good place to start a conversation with youth on this topic is an address by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “Personal Purity,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 75–78. See also Jeffrey R. Holland, *Of Souls, Symbols, and Sacraments* (2001); David A. Bednar, “We Believe in Being Chaste,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 41–44.
4. For working with younger children, try “Lesson Helps for Teaching Children” ([lds.org/children/resources](http://lds.org/children/resources)), which includes material on such topics as bullying, pornography, and the Word of Wisdom.
5. Dallin H. Oaks, “No Other Gods,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 74–75.
6. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “What Is Truth?” (Church Educational System devotional, Jan. 13, 2013), 4, [speeches.byu.edu](http://speeches.byu.edu).
7. Dallin H. Oaks, “Love and Law,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 28.
8. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Cost—and Blessings—of Discipleship,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 8.
9. See Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Cost—and Blessings—of Discipleship,” 9.



### A BATTLE WE MUST WIN

“We are engaged in a battle with the world. In the past, the world competed for our children’s energy and time. Today, it fights for their identity and mind. Many loud and prominent voices are trying to define who our children are and what they should believe. We cannot let society give our family a makeover in the image of the world. We must win this battle. Everything depends on it.”

Elder Bradley D. Foster of the Seventy, “It’s Never Too Early and It’s Never Too Late,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 50.

# EMOTION AND ADDICTION

*We need to learn to deal directly with painful feelings rather than attempt to self-medicate our emotional escape.*



**By Peter L. Howell**

Psychologist, LDS Family Services, Melbourne, Australia

**T**he Word of Wisdom, found in Doctrine and Covenants 89, is the Lord’s code of health as revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith. It advises us to eat nutritious foods and warns against using harmful substances like strong drinks (alcohol), tobacco, and hot drinks (tea and coffee). Prophets have since taught that harmful substances include all substances and practices that harm our bodies or minds and that could lead to addiction.<sup>1</sup>

Regarding the Word of Wisdom, President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, explained: “There are many habit-forming, addictive things that one can drink or chew or

inhale or inject which injure both body and spirit which are not mentioned in the revelation. Everything harmful is not specifically listed.” He added that “he who must be commanded in all things . . . ‘is a slothful and not a wise servant’ (D&C 58:26).”<sup>2</sup> We each have a responsibility to learn the do’s and don’ts of healthy living that are not necessarily spelled out in the Word of Wisdom.

I believe that Satan understands the processes that make the natural man susceptible to the enslavement of compulsive behaviors and addictions. In this article I describe how the misuse of food to manage stress and emotional pain can operate like an addiction, and I share some solutions.



### Patterns of Eating

Although food is not addictive in and of itself, certain patterns of eating can become like an addiction. Consuming sweet, fatty, or salty foods (or any combination of these) may help us avoid, escape from, or suppress painful emotions. Such foods function to relieve our stress by activating pleasure pathways in the brain.<sup>3</sup>

Most of us engage in comfort eating at times, but the consequences of using food to cope with the stresses of life are complex and can be serious. The numerous adverse consequences of persistent overeating include weight gain, self-image concerns, lethargy, reduced concentration, an imbalanced diet, harmful weight-loss practices, reduced mobility, spiritual numbing, and diabetes.

### Contributing Factors

I don't wish to condemn those who struggle with comfort eating or overeating, as the causes are also complex. Contributing factors may include the effects of modern

technology (such as ready access to food in refrigerators); the availability of foods that are effective for self-medicating (people don't usually eat carrots for comfort food); inadequate care or nurturance during childhood, which can contribute to the establishment of self-soothing patterns; cultural factors or patterns of eating; and the influence of consumer behavior (marketing), to name but a few.

The latter point is worth further consideration. The Lord revealed, "In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation" (D&C 89:4). Multi-billion-dollar industries seek to entice us to use foods for purposes and in quantities that are unhealthy. Counter to what many corporations want, the Lord counsels us to use certain substances with "prudence" and "sparingly" (D&C 89:11, 12).



## Managing Negative Emotions

Having worked for three decades with clients who struggle with unhealthy eating patterns, I have learned that people can overcome even persistent patterns of overeating or restrictive eating. A number of critical elements are needed for change, but the one I wish to elaborate upon is the need to manage negative emotions in more direct and healthy ways.

It is natural for us to seek to reduce suffering, but how we do so is key. Escaping from or suppressing painful feelings in unhealthy ways usually provides limited relief and certainly does not solve the problems that trigger such feelings. I suggest that we learn to approach our suffering and deal directly with painful feelings rather than escape from them in unhealthy ways. The following suggestions are not exhaustive but may provide some guidance:

**1. Take time for negative feelings.** Feel them and observe them. Such a process is the enemy of addiction. One cannot learn how to manage feelings without paying some attention to them. Sometimes negative emotions will pass if we simply allow ourselves to observe and experience them.

**2. Find productive ways to express negative feelings.** Jesus taught, “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4). I wonder if the Savior

is teaching that there is a helpful relationship between the outward expression of our sorrow and the receipt of comfort. Expressing the painful feelings of our hearts can occur through open and heartfelt prayer, talking to a loved one or a Church leader, writing in a personal journal, or counseling with a professional.

**3. Reduce self-condemnation.** Self-condemnation seldom helps us work through our struggles with negative emotion. Negative emotions are a normal, expected part of life. They do not automatically mean we lack faith or are unrighteous. Even when our painful emotions relate to our sins or shortcomings, we do not help ourselves by condemning ourselves. President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) explained: “Jesus saw sin as wrong but also was able to see sin as springing from deep and unmet needs. . . . This permitted him to condemn the sin without condemning the individual.”<sup>4</sup>

**4. Identify and correct wrong beliefs.** Expressing our negative emotions can help us become aware of beliefs or thought patterns that fuel emotional pain. Dr. Martin Seligman, known for his research on optimism, describes ways to dispute negative or distorted beliefs. They include examining the evidence supporting or disconfirming our beliefs, seeking alternative explanations for our judgments,

**As we take positive steps to examine and productively express negative feelings, the Holy Spirit will teach us to better understand our emotional struggles.**

and examining the implications of our beliefs to temper overly extreme predictions.<sup>5</sup> Also, we need to remember that the Holy Spirit can help us understand in different ways and teach us all things (see John 14:26).

**5. Seek to solve directly the problems that are causing feelings of distress.** For example, if we are overwhelmed by a child-rearing challenge, then we may need to learn and implement more effective parenting strategies. If our employment is not producing sufficient income, then we may need to complete additional career training or explore ways to find better-paying employment. Negative or stressful emotions can sometimes alert us to real-life problems that require a solution. Numbing such feelings through overeating or some other avoidance behavior is obviously not a helpful solution.

**6. Serve others even while going through personal emotional struggles.** Lehi taught that good and bad experiences coexist (see 2 Nephi 2:11). Using our time and talents to bless others can edify us and change our perspective. But we need to be careful not to serve others as a way to avoid dealing with negative emotions or problems.

**7. Learn not to get stuck in negative emotions and suffering.** Once we have taken positive steps to manage our suffering, we need to notice when our minds are going over the same negative stories we have already given sufficient time to.

**8. Use the many resources the Church has made available on its various websites.**<sup>6</sup>

## The Process of Healing

A past client, Meredith (name has been changed), exemplified some of these processes. Abusive childhood and adolescent experiences caused her to suffer in silence for many years. She kept up a competent facade, but inwardly she suffered all the agonizing effects of abuse and experienced a deep feeling of worthlessness.

One of Meredith's coping strategies involved numbing her painful emotions with unhealthy eating patterns. This

strategy was in some ways healthier than acting upon her constant suicidal feelings and urges. With counseling, Meredith made the courageous decision to face her pain and open up to herself and to others she trusted, including her supportive husband. Although opening up intensified her suffering in the short term, it allowed the process of healing to progress.

During her childhood, Meredith's relationship with Heavenly Father had been affected when her repeated prayers for the abuse to stop had no apparent effect. Thus her relationship with Heavenly Father and her prayers over time became superficial at best. She felt unworthy of His love, did not expect that He would value her enough to help her, and had no hope that she could ever be worthy to return to His presence.

One day she took the risk to pray to her Heavenly Father in a frank and honest manner. Meredith shared with Him what she was really feeling and experiencing. Her emotions were raw and tears flowed. The ensuing 45 minutes were emotionally agonizing and exhausting, but Meredith had a small but significant experience. During this prayer a phrase came into her mind that she recognized as a message from her Father in Heaven: "Everything will be OK." This small message of hope came as a consequence of her ceasing to suppress and avoid her pain.

Rather than turn to harmful substances or patterns of behavior, may we instead turn to our Father in Heaven and our Savior. May we more earnestly follow the Savior's invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). ■

### NOTES

1. See "Catching the Vision of Self-Reliance," [lds.org/topics/welfare/the-church-welfare-plan/catching-the-vision-of-self-reliance](https://www.lds.org/topics/welfare/the-church-welfare-plan/catching-the-vision-of-self-reliance).
2. Boyd K. Packer, "The Word of Wisdom: The Principle and the Promises," *Ensign*, May 1996, 17.
3. See W. F. Mathes, K. A. Brownley, X. Mo, and C. M. Bulik, "The Biology of Binge Eating," *Appetite*, vol. 52, no. 3 (June 2009), 545–53.
4. Spencer W. Kimball, "Jesus: The Perfect Leader," *Ensign*, Aug. 1979, 5.
5. See Martin E. P. Seligman, *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life* (1990).
6. For example, see [addictionrecovery.lds.org](https://www.addictionrecovery.lds.org); [providentliving.org](https://www.providentliving.org); [overcomingpornography.org](https://www.overcomingpornography.org).

# FINDING WILLIAM

By Sally Johnson Odekirk

Church Magazines

*A prompting in the temple convinced me that my Civil War ancestor wanted his work done.*

I had seen the name of my great-great-grandfather listed on my pedigree chart for years. All I knew was that he had served in the American Civil War and died shortly after my great-grandfather was born. Since he had the common name of William Johnson, I thought it would be nearly impossible to find out much more about him, but I was wrong.

One evening while I was enjoying the peaceful spirit of the temple, his name suddenly popped into my mind. I knew without a doubt that he wanted me to have his temple work done. That was the beginning of the sweet experience of finding William.

I knew my great-grandfather's date and place of birth, so I looked for and found his parents' marriage record.

I was excited! With that piece of information, their temple work could begin, but I still wanted to know more about them.

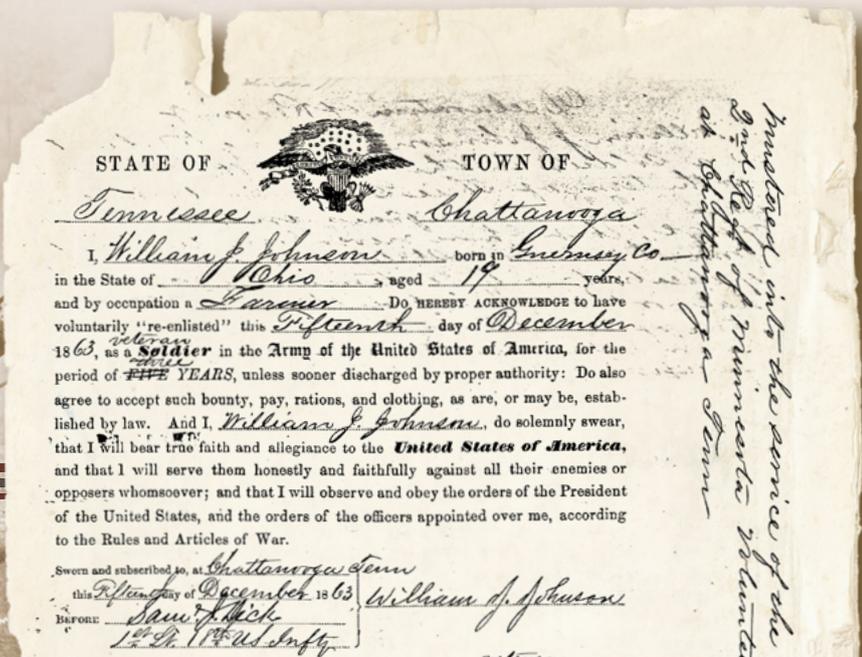
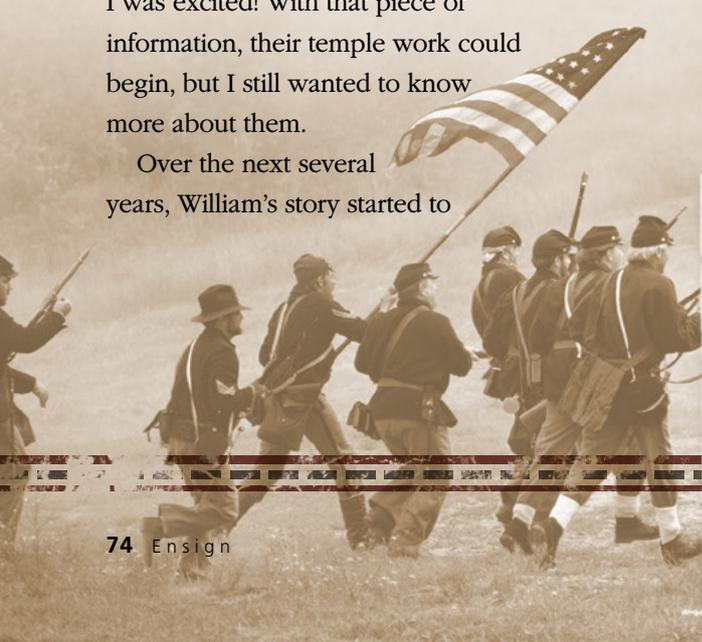
Over the next several years, William's story started to

unfold. One of my cousins contacted me and shared a copy of William's Civil War record, complete with his age, the state and county where he was born, his physical description, and his service record. Shortly after that, I found a book chronicling his regiment's experience in the Civil War, including a record of when he was injured. I was moved to tears when I compared his record with the regiment's story and began to understand a little of what he had endured. I also felt William's delight at being remembered.

Along the way we have found census records showing him with his parents and siblings, brief stories about his family in a county history where they lived, and photos of his parents'

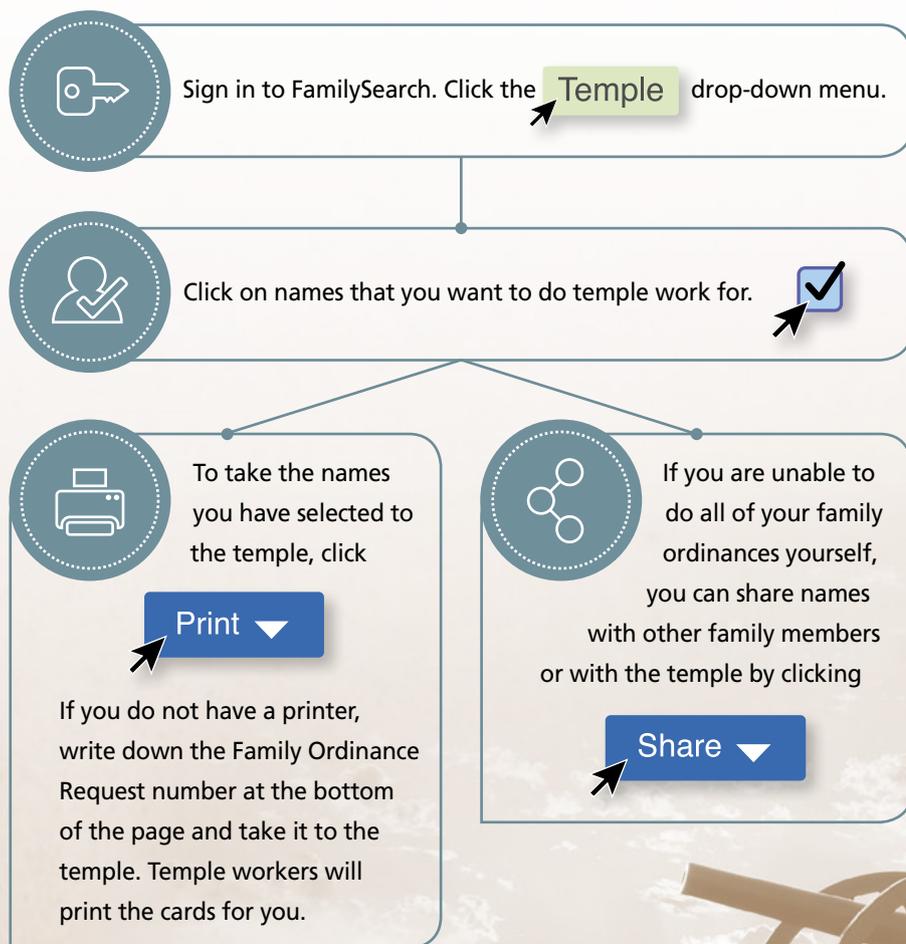
gravestones, along with his mother's obituary, at Findagrave.com. As each new piece of information is found, we take family names to the temple to have their temple work done, and we often feel their joy at being able to progress and be reunited with their loved ones. I still haven't found William's death date or grave site, but all of the records and stories that I have found have given me a glimpse into his life. He will never again be forgotten.

Finding William has helped me to understand myself better by deepening my love and appreciation for those who came before me. When I take family names to the temple, I feel more connected to my ancestors, and temple covenants feel sweeter and become more meaningful. ■



## TAKING THE MYSTERY OUT OF SUBMITTING NAMES FOR THE TEMPLE

Thanks to modern technology, finding and taking family names to the temple has never been easier. [FamilySearch.org](http://FamilySearch.org) makes it possible to print out cards that you can take to the temple:



### FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY

“I bear testimony that the feelings of love you have for your family members—

wherever they may be—are a fulfillment of the promise that Elijah would come. He did come. Children’s hearts are turning to their fathers, and fathers’ hearts are turning to their children (see Malachi 4:5–6; Joseph Smith—History 1:38–39). When you feel the urge to find the names of your ancestors and take those names to the temple, you are experiencing the fulfillment of that prophecy.”

**President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “The Promise of Hearts Turning,” *Ensign*, July 2014, 5.**

The screenshot shows the FamilySearch Temple interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs: Family Tree, Memories, Search, Indexing, and Temple (which is highlighted). Below the tabs, there are statistics: ALL RESERVED 52, NOT PRINTED 28, PRINTED 24, SHARED 0, and OPPORTUNITIES 0. There are buttons for Filter, Print, Share, and Unreserve. Below this is a table of reserved names with columns for NAME, ORDINANCES, and DATE RESERVED.

NAME	ORDINANCES	DATE RESERVED
Margaret S. [unclear] 1870-Deceased - L747-LJX	B C I E SP	27 May 2016
Margaret S. [unclear] 1870-Deceased - L747-LJX	SS	27 May 2016

PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY JUPITERIMAGES/PHOTOS.COM, THINKSTOCK (LEFT) AND WILLARD/ISTOCK/THINKSTOCK (RIGHT)

## BEGGING FOR MERCY

On a trip to a nearby city in Estonia, I saw a man begging for money. Amazingly, I recognized him from when I served as a missionary in that city 10 years earlier. He was carrying a big bag of plastic bottles, just as before, to collect for recycling money. I remembered he always asked for spare change, and if you gave him some he would ask if you had any more.

I was shocked to see him. And after 10 years he was still the same—a little more gray, but it looked like he had been living the same life begging for money day after day. I thought about the wonderful 10 years I had lived in the meantime, which included marrying in the temple, gaining an education, finding a good

job, and enjoying good health.

I figured this might be the last time I saw him, and I felt like I should give him something. The problem was I only had a bill that was worth more than I was willing to give. I cringed at the choice I had—give him nothing or give him more than I wanted. I decided it wouldn't really make a big difference for me and it would make his day, so I gave him the money.

Less than two days later I found myself in a similar situation, but this time I was the one begging for mercy. I had mixed up the date for an important scholarship application. I thought I had turned it in two weeks early, but I was horrified when I

double-checked the date and saw that I had sent it in one day late.

The sum of the scholarship was exactly 100 times the amount I had given to the beggar, and the irony was not lost on me. I found myself begging for mercy, both in prayer to my Heavenly Father and via email to the university officials. They said they would include the application but note it was late.

My prayer was answered and I was blessed to receive the scholarship, which financially helped my wife and me a lot. But more importantly this experience taught me a valuable lesson: are we not all beggars before God (see Mosiah 4:19)? ■

Matthew Crandall, Harju, Estonia

On a trip to a nearby city in Estonia, I saw a man begging for money. Amazingly, I recognized him from when I served as a missionary in that city 10 years earlier.



## ANGELS NAMED MR. AND MRS. DUNN

I was watching TV when my mother called to tell me that her brother—my 92-year-old uncle, Floyd—and his wife, Aunt Millie, were sick with the flu and had no food in their house. Neither was well enough to go to the store to get anything. Uncle Floyd and Aunt Millie had no other family nearby, so they had no one to help them.

My mother wondered if I could help. I am the only member of the Church in that part of my family, and I had been called on in situations before. The problem was that I lived in Utah, USA, and my aunt and uncle were in Hemet, California, USA.

I told my mom to give me a few minutes to think about what to do. I had a friend who lived near Hemet, so I called and asked if she knew anyone in Hemet. She told me about a lady she served with at the Redlands California Temple named Sister Dunn who was a Relief Society president there.

When Sister Dunn answered the phone, I began, “Hi, Sister Dunn. You don’t know me, but my name is Nancy Little, and I live in Utah. I’m a member of the Church, but my aunt



Sister Dunn insisted that she and her husband would take food to my aunt and uncle.

and uncle who live in Hemet are not. They are ill and have no food in their house.” I told her where they lived, which was far from where she was, and explained that I just wanted to get information about a restaurant near them that might deliver food.

Instead, Sister Dunn insisted that she and her husband would take food to my aunt and uncle. They happened to have some homemade soup and bread, and her mother had just made cookies. I protested but she persisted.

A few hours later, Sister Dunn called and assured me that all was well. My mother called later to tell me what Uncle Floyd had said of their visit. He said, “Angels arrived at my home named Mr. and Mrs. Dunn. They came with armloads of food: fruits, vegetables, homemade soup, bread, and cookies. They were the best cookies I have ever eaten.” The Dunns visited with my uncle and helped with various needs, and then Brother Dunn carried my frail aunt Millie, who suffered from Alzheimer’s disease, from her bed to a chair in the kitchen so that Sister Dunn could feed her.

When Uncle Floyd called my mother to tell her about the visit, he wept. He said he had never met such kind and caring people. He told my mom that I was lucky to live in Utah and be surrounded by “all those Mormons.”

Four days after the visit, Uncle Floyd walked out to his mailbox and slipped and fell. He hit his head and died four days later. With the exception of a home-care nurse, Brother and Sister Dunn were the last people my uncle saw before he died.

I am grateful for the Christlike example of one of my Relief Society sisters who lived hundreds of miles away, someone I have still never met, and who helped my aunt and uncle. ■  
Nancy Little, Utah, USA

# A SEASON FOR FAMILY HISTORY

As a mother of two young daughters, I have often made the excuse that I cannot participate in some of the things that I would like to because it is simply not my “season” to do so. One of those things was family history work.

Though I had participated in indexing as an enjoyable Sabbath activity in the past, I found myself making excuses that I had neither the time nor the knowledge to embrace my family history work at the time.

My heart changed early one morning a few months ago as I sat in the temple. As I reviewed the names of the deceased on the temple cards, praying that they would accept the temple ordinances performed for them, I thought to myself, “Wouldn’t it be nice if these were my own family members? I’d like to do the work for them.” The Spirit confirmed to me that if these were my desires, then the Lord would help me do my family history work, specifically on the Sabbath

day. He could help me find the time and the knowledge to accomplish His purposes.

That Sunday, I went home and logged onto [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org). Tears immediately flooded my eyes as I saw the names of my ancestors. My connection to them became stronger. What added to my love for them were the personal photographs and documents, recently added by my grandmother, making my family members come to life even more for me. I felt joy in involving my two-year-old, who learned to identify pictures of her great-grandfather and great-great-grandmother, calling them by name. I felt the way that President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, described:

“The Sabbath provides a wonderful opportunity to strengthen

family ties. After all, God wants each of us, as His children, to return to Him as endowed Saints, sealed in the temple as families, to our ancestors, and to our posterity” (“The Sabbath Is a Delight,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 130).

Since that initial experience, I have continued to participate in family history work on the Sabbath day. I have been blessed to do temple work for some of my deceased family members. A particular blessing has been learning about my relatives and gaining a closer relationship with my grandparents who are not members of our faith. It has strengthened my resolve to keep my covenants and endure to the end so that I may be a strong link in my eternal family.

Though there is still much work to be done, I am grateful to my Heavenly Father for increasing my capacity so that I can participate in His work, especially on His day. For me, the Sabbath is truly a delight. ■

Rachel Lewis, Utah, USA



I felt joy in involving my two-year-old, who learned to identify pictures of her great-grandfather and great-great-grandmother, calling them by name.



I happened to have a Captain Moroni figurine, and he sat in my shirt pocket the rest of the school year as a reminder of how Captain Moroni had taught me.

## CAPTAIN MORONI HELPED ME TEACH MIDDLE SCHOOL

I was in the middle of a difficult year teaching 13- and 14-year-olds. I had just come home from a frustrating meeting with the assistant principal going over a recent evaluation. Being a new teacher and needing to create most of my lessons, I found myself struggling to keep the students on task and interested. Basically the conversation came down to the need for me to force my students to make a choice—get on task or get in trouble—and to follow through with my warnings.

I left the conference feeling down

and overwhelmed. I made it a point to make this meeting the question of the day as I studied my scriptures the next day. Incredibly, answers came to me as I read from the Book of Mormon.

I prayed to learn from the scriptures that morning how to be a better teacher. The Holy Ghost taught me as I read about Captain Moroni in Alma 44. At this point in the story, Captain Moroni and the Nephites had surrounded the Lamanites at the river Sidon and scared them to the point of making the Lamanites drop their

weapons. I continued to read, thinking of how I'd like to be like Captain Moroni in the classroom: commanding, confident, and successful.

I read through the dialogue and noticed Moroni telling Zerahemnah and the Lamanites that they were being forced to make a choice: "Deliver up your weapons of war unto us, and . . . we will spare your lives, if ye will go your way and come not again to war against us" or else "if ye do not this, . . . I will command my men that they shall fall upon you" (Alma 44:6, 7). I realized he was doing what my administrator had told me to do! "Give them two choices, and follow through," he had said. With that in mind, I adopted Moroni's motto, "Behold, we will end the conflict" (Alma 44:10).

Armed with the principles I had learned in a scripture story about one of my heroes, I returned to class confident with my battle plan. I happened to have a Captain Moroni figurine, and he sat in my shirt pocket the rest of the school year as a reminder of how Captain Moroni had taught me to manage a middle school classroom. As I gave my students two choices, their behavior improved, they did their work, and we got along better. The year finished, and it was still hard, but with the answered prayer and the power of the scriptures, I was able to "end the conflict." ■

Ben Floyd, Washington, USA



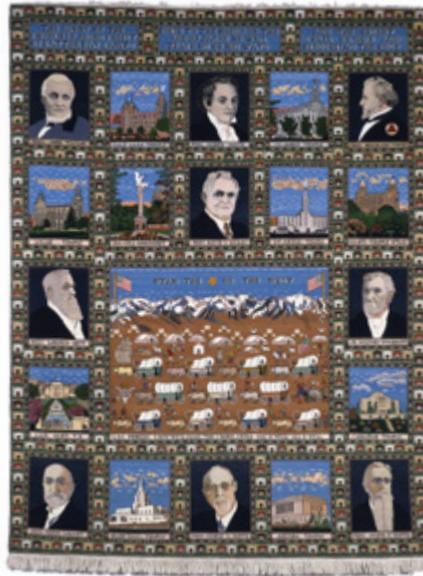
By President  
Gordon B. Hinckley  
(1910–2008)

## THE DIVINE GENIUS OF THE LORD'S CHURCH

*God is weaving His tapestry according to His own grand design.*

The divine genius of the organization of this work and of calls to leadership is evident. The General Authorities are all individuals, each with his own personality. Each brings to his responsibilities a wide variety of experience and background. When matters come up for discussion in the leading councils of the Church, each is free to express his views. As one observes that interesting process at work, it is fascinating to witness the power of the Holy Spirit influence these men. Initial differences never sharp but nonetheless perceptible soften and meld into an expression of unity. “My house is a house of order,” said the Lord (see D&C 132:8). In witnessing this process at work, I experience a constant renewal of faith. . . .

Some express concern that the President of the Church is likely always to be a rather elderly man, to which my response is, “What a blessing!” The work in this dispensation



was first put in place through the instrumentality of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He was at the time young and vigorous, one whose mind was not set in the traditions of his day. His was a youthful mind which the Lord could mold as fresh, moist clay as He initiated His work.

Joseph’s successor was relatively young when he was faced with the terrible responsibility of leading an entire people across the wilderness to pioneer a new land.

But the basics of our doctrine are now well in place, and we are firmly established as a people, at least until the Lord should mandate another

move. We do not need innovation. We need devotion in adherence to divinely spoken principles. We need loyalty to our leader, whom God has appointed. He is our prophet, our seer and revelator. We shall never be left without a prophet if we will live worthy of one. He does not need to be youthful. He has and will continue to have younger men to travel over the earth in the work of the ministry. He is the presiding high priest, the repository of all of the keys of the holy priesthood, and the voice of revelation from God to His people.

There is an old proverb which says, “Youth for action. Age for wisdom.”

To my mind there is something tremendously reassuring in knowing that for the foreseeable future we shall have a President who has been disciplined and schooled, tried and tested, whose fidelity to the work and whose integrity in the cause have been tempered in the forge of service, whose faith has matured, and whose nearness to God has been cultivated over a period of many years. . . .

We need not fear the future if we hold fast to revealed principles. ■

*From “He Slumbers Not, nor Sleeps,” Ensign, May 1983, 5–8. Punctuation and capitalization standardized.*

# INSIGHTS



## **Where can I find the courage to go on?**

“You may feel that your life is in ruins. You may have sinned. You may be afraid, angry, grieving, or tortured by doubt. But just as the Good Shepherd finds His lost sheep, if you will only lift up your heart to the Savior of the world, He will find you. He will rescue you. He will lift you up and place you on His shoulders. He will carry you home.”

**President Dieter F. Uchtdorf**, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “He Will Place You on His Shoulders and Carry You Home,” *Ensign*, May 2016, 104.



## In Church Magazines

**Ensign:** Learn how to help prevent suicide and help surviving family members. See “Understanding Suicide: Warning Signs and Prevention” (page 34). Plus, find out how parents and leaders can help youth examine tough social issues through the lens of gospel truth (page 66).

**New Era:** This month, Elder Rasband teaches youth about true friendship (page 2), and examples from the lives of living Apostles show youth how to face challenges (page 28). Also, find out what the miracle of medium heat is and what it can teach us about grilled cheese sandwiches—and life (page 34).

**Friend:** Learn about some of the amazing women in the scriptures on pages 24–25. Find stories about other good examples on pages 32 and 36. Let’s point our children to righteous role models!

THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS