

Ensign



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"Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life."

2 Nephi 31:20

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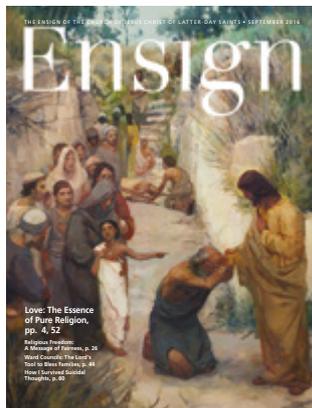
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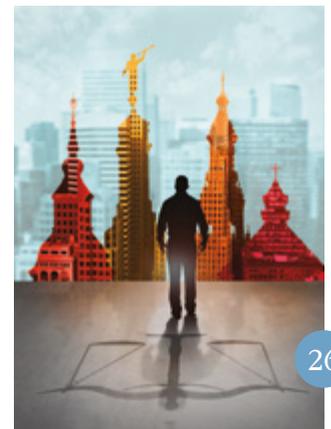
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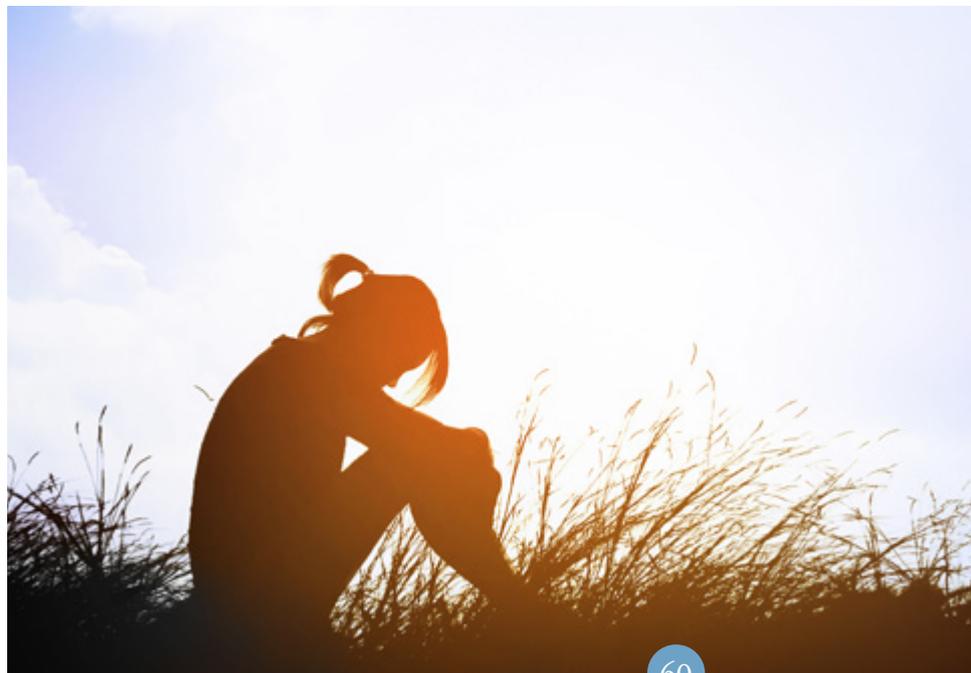
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Ensign

A magazine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
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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.



“Faith, Fairness, and Religious Freedom,” page 26. Consider beginning family home evening by reading the statements by the Prophet Joseph Smith as quoted in the article (pages 29–30). What underlying principles do these statements illustrate? Ask family members on what it means to be fair to all. You could then discuss ways your family can follow Elder Rasband’s three suggestions for supporting and promoting fairness (pages 31–32). How can the Savior’s example guide us in living these principles?

NEVER TOO LATE TO START

As longtime Church members, we had heard of family home evening but had never held one. One day my wife said, “We have to hold family home evening so that we will have the Spirit of God in our home and so that it will be a refuge of peace.” After our first family home evening, we felt so good we’ve never stopped! Our lessons have mostly consisted of reading the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon, and other Church materials. One of my weaknesses is that I don’t have a good memory and can’t always explain all that we read, but the feeling that stays with me is one of great spiritual well-being.

Rainer Beck, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany

“Practice Pure Religion,” page 52. You may want to begin by asking family members what they do when they want to feel the Holy Ghost in their lives and be closer to the Savior. Then have a family member read James 1:27, followed by John 21:15–17. Point out Elder Clarke’s teaching that in the second scripture passage, “Peter was really being instructed to practice pure religion, or to care for the people.” Then invite family members to discuss the four key practices of pure religion identified in the article and how those practices can bless their lives. Close by singing “Because I Have Been Given Much” (*Hymns*, no. 219).

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**By President
Dieter F. Uchtdorf**

Second Counselor in
the First Presidency

AFTER LOVE, THEN WHAT?

Our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, has taught that “love is the very essence of the gospel.”¹

Love is so important that Jesus called it “the first and great commandment” and said that every other particle of the law and words of the prophets hang upon it.²

Love is the central motive for all we do in the Church. Every program, every meeting, every action we are part of as disciples of Jesus Christ should spring from this attribute—for without charity, “the pure love of Christ,” we are nothing.³

Once we understand this with our mind and heart, once we declare our love for God and for our fellowman—what then?

Is feeling compassion and love for others enough? Does declaring our love for God and our neighbor satisfy our obligation to God?

The Parable of the Two Sons

At the temple in Jerusalem, the chief priests and elders of the Jews approached Jesus to trap Him in His words. The Savior, however, turned the tables on them by telling a story.

“A certain man had two sons,” He began. The father went to the first and asked him to go work in the vineyard. But the son refused. Later that son “repented, and went.”

The father then went to his second son and asked him to go work in the vineyard. The second son assured him that he would go, but he never went.

Then the Savior turned to the priests and elders and asked, “Which one of these two sons did the will of his father?”

They had to admit that it was the first son—the one who said he would not go but later repented and went to work in the vineyard.⁴

The Savior used this story to emphasize an important principle—it is those who obey the commandments who truly love God.

Perhaps this is why Jesus asked the people to listen to and follow the words of the Pharisees and scribes but not to follow their example.⁵ These religious teachers did not walk the talk. They loved to talk about religion, but sadly they missed its essence.

Actions and Our Salvation

In one of the Savior’s final lessons to His disciples, He spoke to them of the Final Judgment. The wicked and the righteous would be separated. The good would inherit eternal life; the wicked would be delivered to eternal punishment.

What was the difference between the two groups?

Those who demonstrated their love through action were saved. Those who did not were condemned.⁶ True conversion to the gospel of Jesus Christ and its values and principles will be witnessed by our actions in our daily lives.

In the end, mere declaration of love for God and fellowmen will not qualify us for exaltation. For, as Jesus taught, “not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter



into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”⁷

What Comes after Love?

The answer to the question “After love, then what?” can be simple and straightforward. If we truly love the Savior, we incline our hearts to Him and then we walk in

the path of discipleship. When we love God, we will strive to keep His commandments.⁸

If we truly love our fellowmen, we extend ourselves to help “the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted.”⁹ For they who do these selfless acts of compassion and service,¹⁰ the same are disciples of Jesus Christ.

This is what comes after love.

This is the essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ. ■

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Love—the Essence of the Gospel,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 91.
2. See Matthew 22:36–40.
3. See Moroni 7:46–47.
4. See Matthew 21:28–32.
5. See Matthew 23:3.
6. See Matthew 25:31–46.
7. Matthew 7:21.
8. See John 14:15.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 52:40.
10. See Mosiah 18:8–9.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

President Uchtdorf defines true disciples of Jesus Christ as those who show their love for Him and for others through their actions. He teaches us that “if we truly love the Savior, we incline our hearts to Him and then we walk in the path of discipleship.” Consider asking those you teach in what ways love has motivated them to walk in the path of discipleship. You could share your experiences with them as well. You might consider inviting them to pray for more charity and strength to act out of love.

Keeping the Commandments and Loving Others

When we think of love, often the first things that come to mind are romantic movies, chocolate, and flowers.

But love—*true* love—is a lot deeper and a lot more selfless than that. Jesus Christ lived for us and died for us because of His love for us. In fact, the two great commandments are to love God and love everyone else (see Matthew 22:36–40). But how can we *show* others that we love them?

President Uchtdorf shares Christ’s parable of the two sons, one who works for his father and one who does not. The Savior makes the point

that only the son who obeyed his father truly loved him. Similarly, when we obey God’s commands, we show that we love Him and want to return to Him.

But how do we show we love everyone else? President Uchtdorf explains that too: “If we truly love our fellowmen, we extend ourselves to help ‘the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted.’ For they who do these selfless acts of compassion and service, the same are disciples of Jesus Christ.”

So the next time you see your parent, a sibling, or a friend, think about serving them to show your affection for them. Not only will it make them and you happy, but it will make your Father in Heaven happy too.



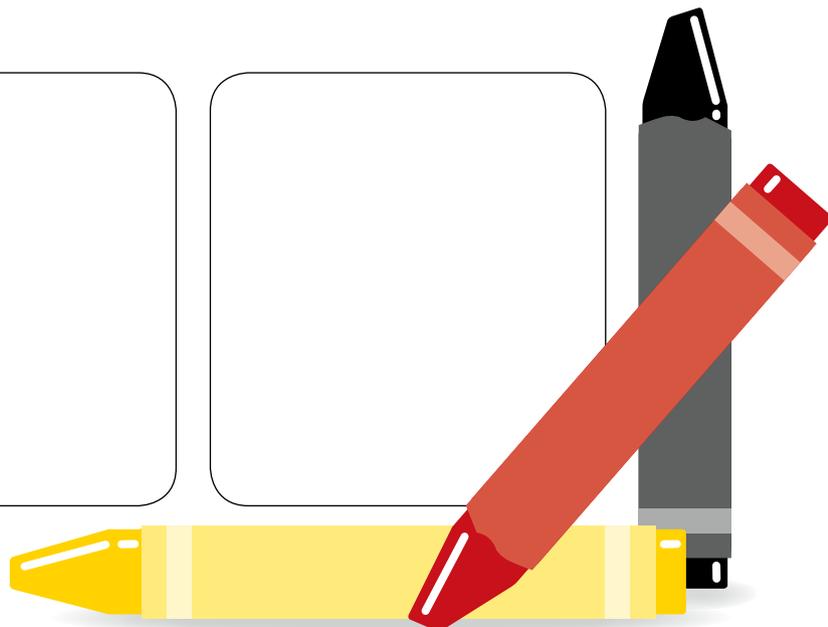
CHILDREN

Showing Love

Jesus shared a story of a father and his two sons. The father worked in a vineyard and asked his two sons to help. The first son said no at first but later came to help in the vineyard. The second son said that he would help, but then he never did. Jesus

taught that the first son showed more love for his father by being obedient.

Act out this story! Then write or draw three things you can do to show your love for Heavenly Father.



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.

Parenthood Is a Sacred Duty

Our Heavenly Father established families to help us teach correct principles in a loving atmosphere. President Thomas S. Monson said: “Give your child a compliment and a hug; say, ‘I love you’ more; always express your thanks. Never let a problem to be solved become more important than a person to be loved.”¹

Susan W. Tanner, former Young Women general president, taught: “Our Father in Heaven exemplifies the pattern we should follow. He loves us, teaches us, is patient with us, and entrusts us with our agency. . . . Sometimes discipline, which means ‘to teach,’ is confused with criticism. Children—as well as people of all ages—improve behavior from love and encouragement more than from fault-finding.”²

“If we faithfully have family prayer, scripture study, family home evening, priesthood blessings, and Sabbath day



observance,” said Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “our children will . . . be prepared for an eternal home in heaven, regardless of what befalls them in a difficult world.”³

Additional Scriptures

1 Nephi 8:37; 3 Nephi 22:13; Doctrine and Covenants 93:40; 121:41

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Love at Home—Counsel from Our Prophet,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2011, 4.
2. Susan W. Tanner, “Did I Tell You . . . ?” *Ensign*, May 2003, 74.
3. Quentin L. Cook, “The Lord Is My Light,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 64.
4. Robert D. Hales, “Our Duty to God: The Mission of Parents and Leaders to the Rising Generation,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 96, 95.

Faith, Family, Relief



Living Stories

“I was reading the newspaper when one of my young grandsons snuggled up to me,” said Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “As I read, I was delighted to hear his sweet voice chattering on in the background. Imagine my surprise when, a few moments later, he pushed himself between me and the paper. Taking my face in his hands and pressing his nose up to mine, he asked, ‘Grandpa! Are you in there?’

“ . . . Being *there* means understanding the hearts of our youth and connecting with them. And connecting with them means not just conversing with them but doing things with them too. . . .

“We must plan and take advantage of teaching moments. . . .

“ . . . The more I live, the more I recognize that the teaching moments in my youth, especially those provided by my parents, have shaped my life and made me who I am.”⁴

Consider This

Why is the gospel best taught by the language and example of love?

APRIL 2016 CONFERENCE NOTEBOOK

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

As you review the April 2016 general conference, you can use these pages (and Conference Notebooks in future issues) to help you study and apply the recent teachings of the living prophets and apostles and other Church leaders.



DOCTRINAL HIGHLIGHT

Atonement of Jesus Christ

“I can emphatically state that because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, ultimately, in the eternal scheme of things, there will be no unfairness. ‘All that is unfair about life can be made right’ [*Preach My Gospel*, 52]. Our present circumstances may not change, but through God’s compassion, kindness, and love, we will all receive more than we deserve, more than we can ever earn, and more than we can ever hope for. We are promised that ‘God shall wipe away all tears from [our] eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away’ [Revelation 21:4].”

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “That I Might Draw All Men unto Me,” *Ensign*, May 2016, 42.

Answers for You

Each conference, prophets and apostles give inspired answers to questions Church members may have. You can use your May 2016 issue or visit conference.lds.org to find answers to these questions:

- What are the four types of family councils, and why are they important? —See M. Russell Ballard, “Family Councils,” 63.
- How do we prepare for the temple? —See Quentin L. Cook, “See Yourself in the Temple,” 97.
- What are priesthood keys? —See Gary E. Stevenson, “Where Are the Keys and Authority of the Priesthood?” 29.

“Choose faith over doubt.”

Bonnie L. Oscarson, Young Women general president, “Do I Believe?” *Ensign*, May 2016, 89.

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



Rescue

“Here on earth . . . the dust and filth of the world stain our souls, making it difficult to recognize and remember our birthright and purpose.

“But all this cannot change who we truly are. The fundamental divinity of our nature remains. . . .

“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.

Future Roles

Multiple speakers sometimes address the same topic. Here is what three speakers said about preparing for future roles:

- “Young men, . . . live your life so that as a man you will bring purity to your marriage and to your children.” —D. Todd Christofferson, “Fathers,” 96.
- “Prayerfully determine what you can do—according to your own time and circumstance—to serve the refugees living in your neighborhoods and communities.” —Linda K. Burton, “I Was a Stranger,” 14.
- “In God’s plan of happiness, we are not so much looking for someone perfect but for a person with whom, throughout a lifetime, we can join efforts to create a loving, lasting, and more perfect relationship.” —Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “In Praise of Those Who Save,” 78.

Great Stories from Conference

What catches our attention better than a story? The following stories are among the many shared at conference:

- What doctrine comforted a couple in South America who longed to have their baby son sealed to them? —See W. Christopher Waddell, “A Pattern for Peace,” 90.
- What realization did a mother make as she flew with her critically ill toddler in a helicopter to Primary Children’s Hospital? —See Bonnie L. Oscarson, “Do I Believe?” 87.
- How did a priests quorum leader get one of his priests back to church? —See Mervyn B. Arnold, “To the Rescue: We Can Do It,” 53.



EXPECTING TWINS, FINDING MIRACLES

By Cheryl Lapating-La Torre

We thought everything in our lives would go smoothly, but things soon became complicated and I was terrified of what else could go wrong.



One night as I was watching the news, something caught my attention. I recognized the reporter as a college classmate. She had achieved her dream of being a newscaster!

“What about me?” I asked myself. “What have I achieved?” I looked at the baby asleep in my arms and thought about the events of the past three years.

I had always thought I would have a career, but when my husband, Charles, and I had our first daughter,

Chevy, my priorities changed. I quit my job to care for her. We had faith in Jesus Christ that as long as we paid our tithing and obeyed the commandments, everything would be OK.

Things were going smoothly until, one day, Charles was laid off from his job. We had faith we’d be all right, but we knew we needed to act. We decided I should get a job too, so Charles and I started job hunting. After a few weeks, I was hired at a

call center. I hated leaving my nine-month-old with a babysitter every day, but it was our best solution.

Just a month into my job, I found out I was expecting. Fortunately, Charles soon found a job. It didn’t pay much, but it would help. For a while we felt relieved.

My pregnancy became very difficult, and I had to quit my job. At my monthly checkup, we were shocked to discover I was having twins. Charles

and I were scared, but we trusted Heavenly Father.

About three and a half months into my pregnancy, I woke up bleeding. I thought I was having a miscarriage, so I went to the hospital. The babies were OK, but the doctor put me on bed rest for the rest of the pregnancy.

Things were becoming so complicated. The hospital bills left our bank account empty, and Charles's meager income was not enough to provide for our needs. I felt worthless. I could not help earn income or take care of Chevy. I sometimes forgot that I was carrying two special spirit children. I pleaded every day and night with my Heavenly Father for relief. I was terrified of what else could go wrong. But one thought kept returning to my mind: Heavenly Father lives and He knows our needs.

Charles was struggling too, but he stayed strong. He assisted me and cared for Chevy on top of his job. His priesthood blessings comforted me, and his love strengthened me. We were scared, but we faced this new test together.

I did my best to accept the situation. Instead of moping around, I read the scriptures, Church magazines, and good books. I sang hymns too—"How Firm a Foundation" (*Hymns*, no. 85) in particular made a huge difference. I came closer to my Savior. I realized

how much I did have to be thankful for despite our circumstances.

As days went by, we felt God's hand work in our lives. Big and little miracles popped up everywhere. Our families and friends paid for some of our expenses. I felt their love and concern for our family. The Relief Society presidency assigned one or two sisters to visit me each day. They brought groceries, cooked and cleaned, took care of Chevy, shared spiritual thoughts, and cheered me up. They prayed for my recovery and the continued safety of the twins. We never went hungry. These sisters didn't know how much their service helped me carry my burden. When the time came, Heavenly Father made my delivery very easy, and both girls were healthy.

Years have passed since that challenging time in our lives, but there hasn't been a day when we haven't felt God's love. Our financial situation is much better now, and our children are growing up to be smart and talented. We are stronger and better prepared for future challenges because we know that Heavenly Father blesses His children in His own time and will never leave them helpless or comfortless. Life is not an easy journey, but God will always be with us and guide us. ■

The author lives in the Philippines.

PURPOSEFUL CHALLENGES



"I do not know why we have the many trials that we have, but it is my personal feeling

that the reward is so great, so eternal and everlasting, so joyful and beyond our understanding that in that day of reward, we may feel to say to our merciful, loving Father, 'Was that all that was required?' . . . What will it matter, dear sisters, what we suffered here if, in the end, those trials are the very things which qualify us for eternal life?"

Linda S. Reeves, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, "Worthy of Our Promised Blessings," *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 11.

SISTER MABEL, SINGING

By R. Val Johnson

Church Magazines

Sister Mabel's passion for singing was painfully unrestrained.

My best friend shoved his elbow into my side to keep me from laughing. We were in sacrament meeting, after all, and we were singing the sacrament hymn.

But it was hard not to laugh, and Pat wasn't doing much better than I at keeping his mouth shut.

We were 15, and we knew everything. We knew that everyone in our ward was supposed to be perfect—but wasn't. We knew that sacrament meeting talks were supposed to be inspiring—but mostly were boring. And we knew that the worst singer in the world sat among us, mangling hymns that were supposed to send our thoughts heavenward—but usually sent them the other direction.

We could only cover our ears and wince. The occasional laugh seemed to help.

We weren't sure whether Sister Mabel (her first name, and the only one I remember anyone using for her) knew she was painful to listen to and didn't care or if she was totally oblivious to the effect her singing had on the rest of us. It's quite possible

no one had ever broached the topic with her. Though elderly, she was a formidable woman. Not in size, but in energy. Everything she did was energetic and loud. Especially her singing.

Her passion for singing found expression not only in our congregational singing but in our ward choir as well. Her enthusiasm there was unrestrained. Though I don't remember her singing ever being restrained in the congregation, in the choir it had free reign, rising to heights and depths I doubt any diva in the world has ever reached. Or wanted to.



Well, that was a long time ago. In the intervening years, Sister Mabel has passed away. Pat and I have gone our separate ways. And I, at least, have discovered I didn't know as much at 15 as I thought I did. I believe I've learned a few things about life—and singing—over the past 50 years.

I've learned that life needs to be lived with passion and energy. Each minute is a treasure, and once it passes, it's gone forever, reflected only weakly in memory. I've learned that if you're going to serve others or worship the Lord, you're happiest and most effective when you do it with all the joy and energy you have.

I've learned that no one this side of the veil is perfect. All that the Lord asks of us is our hearts, might, minds, and strength—to the degree that we can offer them. He accepts our unrestrained offerings, as poor as they may be, as the full measure of our devotion.

It's ironic, I suppose, that I've also discovered I'm no better a singer than Sister Mabel was. I hope my fellow ward members have more charity for me than I had for her. If she were still here, I'd invite her to sing for me. I miss her angelic voice. ■

BLESSED FOR MY SERVICE

By John A. Grincer

The Lord delights to bless us, and I have found that no matter how much I serve, I continue to be in His debt.

As I was being introduced as a speaker recently, the person conducting politely mentioned some of my more prominent past Church callings, such as bishop, mission president, and member of a stake presidency. This brother was being gracious, but the thought occurred to me, why not introduce me as a ward mission leader (my current calling) or by some of my less-public callings?

I can honestly say that I felt the same guiding spirit in each calling, and each has been rewarding. I have always sought the Lord's guidance in my callings, and never have I felt let down. I have concluded that the Lord delights to bless us—regardless of where we serve.

I believe we will receive “a crown of immortality, and eternal life” (D&C 81:6) not because of prominent callings but rather because we have humbly served in whatever callings we have received. The Savior has said:

“Let not the head say unto the feet it hath no need of the feet; for without the feet how shall the body be able to stand?”

“Also the body hath need of every member, that all may be edified together, that the system may be kept perfect” (D&C 84:109–10).

I have feared some Church callings during my life. Whenever I had such thoughts about a potential calling, it was a sure bet I would soon receive it. To accept such callings has required faith and reliance on promises found in the scriptures.



Nephi said, “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). Paul declared, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7).

At times we may feel that it's our right to refuse a calling if we fear it. But we need to remember that Church leaders pray about callings and the individuals who are to receive them.

When we refuse a calling, the position passes to another, who will have the opportunity to grow and be blessed for serving (see D&C 58:32).

The Lord delights to bless us, and I have found that no matter how much I serve, I continue to be in His debt. Truly, He has blessed my family and me beyond my wildest dreams for our service in His kingdom. ■

The author lives in Western Australia.

Following Heavenly Father's PLAN FOR YOU

By Shelley D. Bennett

The author is the wife of Elder Randall K. Bennett of the Seventy and lives in Utah, USA.

When I turned 20, I wanted to finish my university education. I also deeply desired to serve a full-time mission. The minimum age for sister missionaries at that time was 21, so I was preparing for a mission while still enrolled in school.

During one evening activity at the institute, I met a seemingly shy, *very* recently returned missionary—he had been home only 24 hours! Rand and I quickly became friends. We got to know one another at group activities, and then, as we began dating, our friendship deepened.

After several months and much fasting and prayer, Rand asked me to marry him. I felt love for him, but I felt conflicted because I still yearned to serve a mission. I also felt inadequate as a future wife and mother. Those feelings led me to decline his offer of marriage.

Over the next few weeks, Rand expressed to me that he felt he had received his own personal revelation, but he also knew he needed to respect my own inspiration. I appreciated his respect and encouragement for me to seek my own personal revelation.

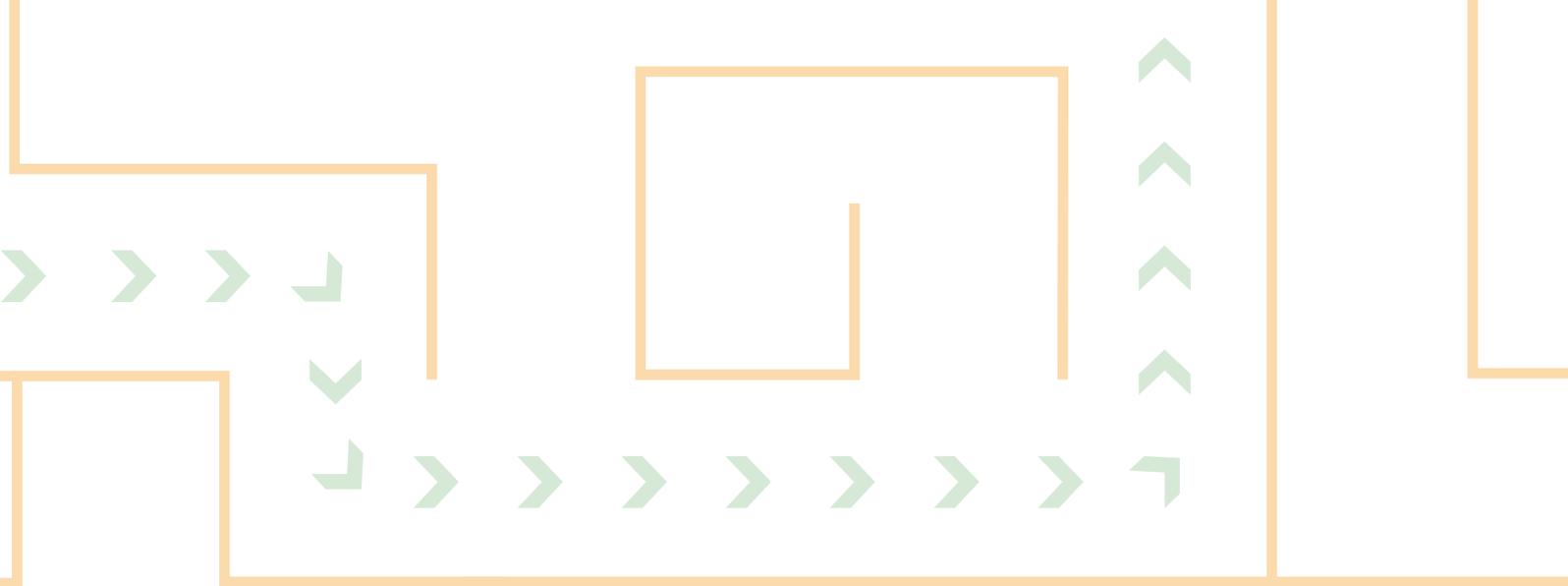
Rand asked—and I declined—more than once, but at no point was he offended. He just felt that the Spirit was prompting him to be gently persistent.

Throughout this time we both searched our scriptures and the words of our prophet and apostles. One evening Rand was reading the counsel of the prophet, which reemphasized the importance of temple marriage. I smile today as I remember him bringing me flowers and his highlighted copy of that Church magazine. He sincerely asked me if I would read the prophetic counsel, focusing on the highlighted parts, and then prayerfully ponder that counsel.

As he was leaving, Rand suddenly turned back and said, “I *will* take you on a mission and we will serve as missionary companions after we have raised our family—I *promise*.” I didn’t feel pressure; I simply felt Rand’s encouragement to seek again for an answer from Heavenly Father.

This time as I read the words of our prophet and then pondered, fasted, and prayed, I felt it was right to accept Rand’s proposal. As soon as I made this decision, a sweet calm enveloped me. I felt assured that my decision to marry him was the right answer for me. I still felt inadequate about filling the roles of wife and mother, but my faith overcame my fear.

I still felt determined to serve a mission someday. But *for me*, marrying this worthy man in the temple now would be a *better*



decision—the *best* decision—and I trusted that he would keep his promise to serve as my missionary companion when the time was right.

The next time we met, I accepted Rand’s proposal on the condition that he keep his promise (which he has, by the way!).

I had a plan for my life, but I decided to trust God enough to follow His plan for me instead.

In the years following that crucial decision, it has been confirmed to me again and again that the decision to marry in the temple and raise a family in the light of the gospel, prior to a later mission as a couple, was the right path for me.

This, of course, is *my* story. Others may make different choices as prompted by the Spirit. For those sisters who decide to serve

a mission in their young adult years, they will surely find that full-time missionary service is great preparation for marriage, parenthood, and lifelong service in the Lord’s kingdom. As President Thomas S. Monson stated, sisters “make a valuable contribution as missionaries, and we welcome their service.”¹

Other sisters may feel specifically directed to focus on education while being actively engaged in sharing the gospel with others, helping rescue less-active members, strengthening recent converts, being a faithful visiting teacher, or participating in family history and temple service. All of these can play a great role in preparing us for specific works that the Lord has for each of us to do (see D&C 9:4; Moses 1:6; Joseph Smith—History 1:33).

Heavenly Father loves each of us, and as we remain faithful and worthy, through the gift and power of the Holy Ghost we will be guided along the gospel path and receive answers to our sincere prayers (see 2 Nephi 32:3, 5). If we will act with faith in Jesus Christ, He will help each of us fulfill His plan. ■

NOTE

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Welcome to Conference,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 5.



ARE YOU AFRAID of "Missing Out"?



PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID STOKER

By Natalie Cherie Campbell

Do you know young adults who feel frustration or even severe anxiety when trying to decide between attending a spur-of-the-moment social event and staying home to finish an important assignment or responsibility? Do they usually choose social activities ahead of everything else? Does it seem to become easier and easier for them to turn a blind eye to the consequences of disregarding responsibilities? Perhaps you have even had these same feelings yourself.

I have had friends like that and have wondered how it seemed to become easier for them to deny impending consequences as time went on. When I talked with my

friends about it, they admitted having an overwhelming “fear of missing out” that they felt they couldn’t control. It seemed like the more they gave in to their anxiety and did what they wanted to do, the less they felt any accountability for the consequences of missed responsibilities. This seems to be a growing phenomenon among some young adults.

We are all trying to learn to balance our pursuits. But when fear and anxiety control our choices, the results can be damaging. For my friends, it was as if they had sometimes stopped consciously making responsible decisions and were in turn surprised when the consequences came. They made excuses that the decision was out of their control, and thus they undermined their own agency by disregarding the things that matter most (see Matthew 23:23). These outcomes seem to be typical of the fear of missing out. But there is hope.

Using Our Gift of Agency

We know that exercising our agency—the gift that allows us to make choices—is one of the important reasons we are here on earth (see Abraham 3:24–25). It is by making choices and learning from experience

that we can progress and gain eternal life. President David O. McKay (1873–1970) testified that “next to the bestowal of life itself, the right to direct that life is God’s greatest gift to man.”¹

We also know that we have a responsibility to make wise choices. Sometimes it seems overwhelming to have to decide certain things, like which job to accept or whom to marry. Often it feels easier to say, “I won’t decide—whatever happens will happen,” or “I’m too afraid of missing out,” or even “Why won’t the Lord just tell me what to do?”

But the Lord rarely just tells us what to do. Instead He allows us to prayerfully work out our decisions. Sometimes He confirms them (see D&C 9:7–9), and sometimes He lets us make our choices and learn from them (see D&C 122:7). He would never take away our agency, instead counseling us and teaching us how to best use our agency, because He wants us “to act for [our]selves and not to be acted upon” (2 Nephi 2:26). Similarly, we should not allow our agency to be controlled by outside influences such as natural occurrences or a fear of missing out, recognizing that in the end, we will always make some kind of choice, whether or not we make it consciously.

Sometimes we’re so worried we’ll miss out on this or that activity, we ignore the things of greatest importance.

Finally, we can't expect that making bad choices or not making any choices will yield the consequences we want. It may be that such courses of action or inaction will make us feel less pressure in the moment, but the results—whether good or bad—will come. So when choices arise, we should actively decide with the end in mind.

Choosing Balance

During the general priesthood session of the April 2009 general conference, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, noted: "I imagine that any priesthood holder listening to my voice today, if asked to prepare a talk on the subject 'what matters most,' could and would do an excellent job. Our weakness is in failing to align our actions with our conscience."² It can be difficult to ignore what may seem paramount in the moment, even though it will be insignificant in the long run.

For example, college students may know they are at school for the sake of gaining an education, but aligning their actions with this knowledge becomes increasingly difficult if concern about missing out on a party outweighs their commitment to getting good grades. Similarly, we may



We would do well to ask ourselves, "Is my fear of missing out preventing me from choosing to have a balanced life?"

know that "this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God" (Alma 34:32), but it is still hard to choose to make time for scripture reading when we're compulsively looking at social media before bed or feeling too tired to wake up to our alarm because we stayed out too late.

Thus, we would do well to ask ourselves this question: "Is my fear of missing out preventing me from choosing to have a balanced life?" If

we do not ask ourselves where our real priorities lie, then we may find ourselves attending to every triviality and to nothing of eternal importance. Of course, sometimes finding a balanced life may mean putting relationships ahead of homework.

Actively Making Choices

Whether or not a fear of missing out on social events is governing our choices, we all have to confront the



THE DOCTRINE OF AGENCY

“Think of it: in our premortal state we chose to follow the Savior Jesus Christ! And because we did, we were allowed to come to earth. I testify that by making the same choice to follow the Savior now, while we are here on earth, we will obtain an even greater blessing in the eternities. But let it be known: we must continue to choose to follow the Savior. Eternity is at stake, and our wise use of agency and our actions are essential that we might have eternal life. . . .

“ . . . Whenever we choose to come unto Christ, take His name upon us, and follow His servants, we progress along the path to eternal life.

“In our mortal journey, it is helpful to remember that the opposite is also true: when we don’t keep the commandments or follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost, our opportunities are reduced; our abilities to act and progress are diminished.”

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Agency: Essential to the Plan of Life,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 25.

consequences of the choices we make (see 2 Nephi 2:27–30). This can feel stressful, especially when what we want isn’t always where we should be devoting our time. But we must remember that our agency is a gift that we should never relinquish and that choosing what matters most will be the most rewarding in the long run.

Actively making wise choices will require us to act according to determined priorities. As Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, “We have to forego some good things in order to choose others that are better or best because

they develop faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and strengthen our families.”³ As we do this, we will begin to view our agency as a blessing and not a source of anxiety.

No matter what we choose, it is inevitable that we will miss out on something. We just need to be sure that what we fear missing out on is what matters most eternally. ■

The author lives in Massachusetts, USA.

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* (2003), 208.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “We Are Doing a Great Work and Cannot Come Down,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 59.
3. Dallin H. Oaks, “Good, Better, Best,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 107.



WHAT MATTERS MOST

“Pause for a moment and check where your own heart and thoughts are. Are you focused on the things that matter most? How you spend your quiet time may provide a valuable clue. Where do your thoughts go when the pressure of deadlines is gone? Are your thoughts and heart focused on those short-lived fleeting things that matter only in the moment or on

things that matter most? . . .

“Our Heavenly Father seeks those who refuse to allow the trivial to hinder them in their pursuit of the eternal. He seeks those who will not allow the attraction of ease or the traps of the adversary to distract them from the work He has given them to perform. He seeks those whose actions conform to their words.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “We Are Doing a Great Work and Cannot Come Down,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 60, 62.

Building the Kingdom in Australia

By Ben Robinson

As the sun rises over Mount Baw Baw, Callan Brooks is doing what he loves: building. He smiles as he fits another two-by-four into place, feeling the sense of accomplishment for a job well done.

Watching Callan work, you'd never guess that he is hearing impaired. But it hasn't slowed him down. To Callan, it seems he was born to do this. And perhaps he was—for five generations his family has been builders.

"When I was 15, I left school to start my apprenticeship," he says. "If you find an apprenticeship you like, it's common among Australians to leave school and do that full time." Callan has been building ever since. Whether he's constructing homes, bolstering his own testimony, or magnifying a calling, Callan is consistently engaged in building God's kingdom.

Just as his hearing loss hasn't held him back from his work in construction, it hasn't hindered his desire to learn and preach the gospel.

"While growing up, I barely understood 10 percent of what was said from the pulpit," Callan says. He wanted to serve a full-time mission but didn't qualify because of his hearing. However, he prayed and trusted that the Lord's will would be done. Then something unexpected happened: Callan's hearing worsened.

"When I was 18, I was completely deaf for six long months. I went to church for the feelings, because that's all I got out of it," he explains.

During this time, Callan built his testimony and relied on the Spirit. But what initially seemed to be a larger trial turned out to be the answer to his prayers. Because of the sudden drop in his hearing ability, he qualified for a cochlear implant, which improved his hearing enough to qualify him for a full-time mission. Callan soon left to serve in Perth, Australia.

Now home in Moe, Victoria, Callan serves in his ward's Young Men presidency, where he helps 10 young men

Setbacks and hearing loss couldn't stop this young adult from helping hasten the Lord's work in Australia.

stay strong in the gospel in a place where remaining so is particularly difficult. To do this, he emphasizes the role of the Spirit in building up true conversion.

"We try to lead the young men to experience their own conversion through reading the Book of Mormon and utilizing Church programs," he says.

The impact of this fifth-generation builder's work is obvious, through his work on buildings, his witness of the gospel, and his mentoring of young men in his ward. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.



MORE ABOUT CALLAN

What kinds of activities are there for young single adults?

Australia has large conventions every year where all the YSAs are invited to gather together. Because young adults are so spread out in Australia, it helps to have a time for everyone to meet. This is a great sacrifice for members, as they will travel thousands of miles to attend.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I love to play sports, primarily basketball. We have a big Easter basketball competition run by the members every two years. It includes a women's division, a three-point competition, and a dunk competition.

THE CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

143,891 Latter-day Saints

303 congregations

145 family history centers

6 missions

5 temples

FACTS ABOUT AUSTRALIA

Capital: Canberra

Official language: English

BY THE NUMBERS

Over 23 million people

Over 500 national parks

Highway 1 is the world's longest national highway, with 9,000 miles (14,500 km) of road circumnavigating the country



No Neutral Ground

HOW MEDIA INFLUENCES US

By Aysia Tan

In our modern, technology-filled world, we are bombarded with options: watch this, read that, listen to this. Our society is saturated with media and entertainment, and the influence they have on our beliefs, thoughts, and actions is subtle but powerful. The things we allow to fill our minds end up shaping our being—we become what we think about. My graduate studies took me on an exploration of the influence of media, and the overwhelming conclusion I found is that the media we choose to consume will inevitably affect us, whether positively or negatively.

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has explained: “Technology in and of itself is neither inherently good nor bad. Rather, the purposes accomplished with and through technology are the ultimate indicators of goodness or badness.”¹ Our task is not to reject technology but rather to use it in ways that will enrich our lives.

We can use the power of media to our



advantage, to better our thoughts and behaviors by:

(1) Acknowledging our susceptibility to media influence and recognizing how it influences us.

(2) Identifying and choosing positive media options.

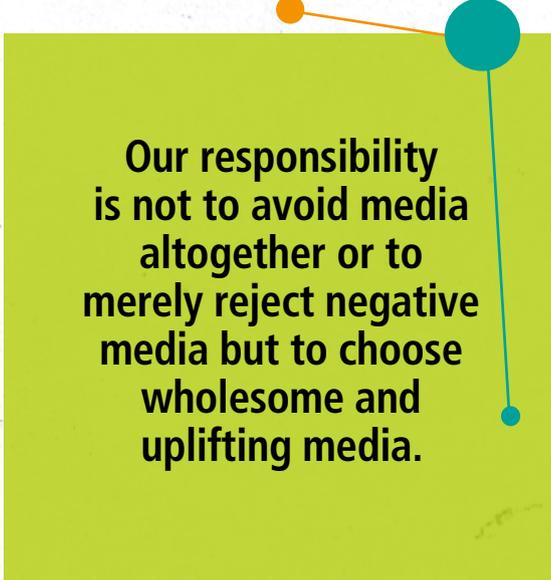
How Does Media Affect Us?

No one is immune to media's influence. We cannot expect to indulge in media designed to affect us mentally and emotionally without its influence being sustained in our subconscious long after the movie is over, the book is closed, or the song ends. Those who believe media does not affect them are often the people who are most affected because they deny the influence and are therefore not guarded against it. Just as water will continue to seep through a leak in a boat, whether or not we acknowledge the leak, so will media continue to influence our thoughts whether or not we address its impact.

Entertainment media can influence our thoughts as we turn to it for relief from the stresses of our everyday lives. We often seek entertainment as a temporary solace from our everyday troubles, whether through movies, books, television, magazines,

or music. Although we turn to entertainment media to relax, we must not relax our standards. It is at that very time we must be cautious of what we allow into our minds.

To fully enjoy the entertainment experience, some people instinctively accept whatever messages the medium offers and therefore allow the suggested perspectives to influence their perceptions. Film critics described the use of this concept in film:



Our responsibility is not to avoid media altogether or to merely reject negative media but to choose wholesome and uplifting media.

“Truth depends on early and thoroughly convincing establishment of a strange or fantastic environment, sense of another time, or unusual characters, so that we are caught up in the film's overall spirit, mood, and

atmosphere. If the filmmaker is skillful at creating this semblance of truth, *we willingly agree to suspend our disbelief*, and we leave our skepticism and our rational faculties behind as we enter the film's imaginary world.”²

If we suspend our disbelief, we tend to be more open to the values, expectations, and beliefs the media portrays. Thus, media may subtly influence our thoughts. But in this influence is the danger of accepting viewpoints that may not be in harmony with gospel principles.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles brought attention to the function of entertainment media when he said, “Did you know that the original Latin meaning of the word *amusement* is ‘a diversion of the mind intended to deceive?’”³ At times, we seek diversion. We turn to media to distract us from our own real-world problems, and we depend on it to make us believe whatever it has to offer. The more believable the medium, however true or false, the more we enjoy it.

Social psychologist Karen E. Dill said: “When we are transported by the world of fiction, our attitudes and beliefs change to be more consistent with ideas and claims that take place

within the story. We suspend our disbelief and in so doing, we open ourselves up to absorbing involuntarily the belief system dramatized in the fictional world and to acting on those beliefs and ideas. Many times what we see on the screen provokes a change or a response outside our awareness. This is how the fantasy world of media shapes our realities.”⁴

By allowing media to fulfill its purpose in *amusing* us, we might replace our ordinarily rational thought processes with thoughts proposed by the media, which ultimately leads to changes in our beliefs and behaviors. Elder David B. Haight (1906–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “As the thought is father to the deed, exposure can lead to acting out what is nurtured in the mind.”⁵

To remain in control of the media influence in our lives, it is essential that we choose uplifting media and recognize our susceptibility to the media’s influence. Media affects our thoughts and can therefore influence our actions. King Benjamin’s counsel applies to us today: “Watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds” (Mosiah 4:30).

How Do We Choose Positive Media Options?

By understanding the influence media has on our lives, we can consciously address the options before us. Our choices make all the difference in determining our sensitivity to the Spirit and the goodness around us. Every decision we make brings us closer to or further from our Father in Heaven.

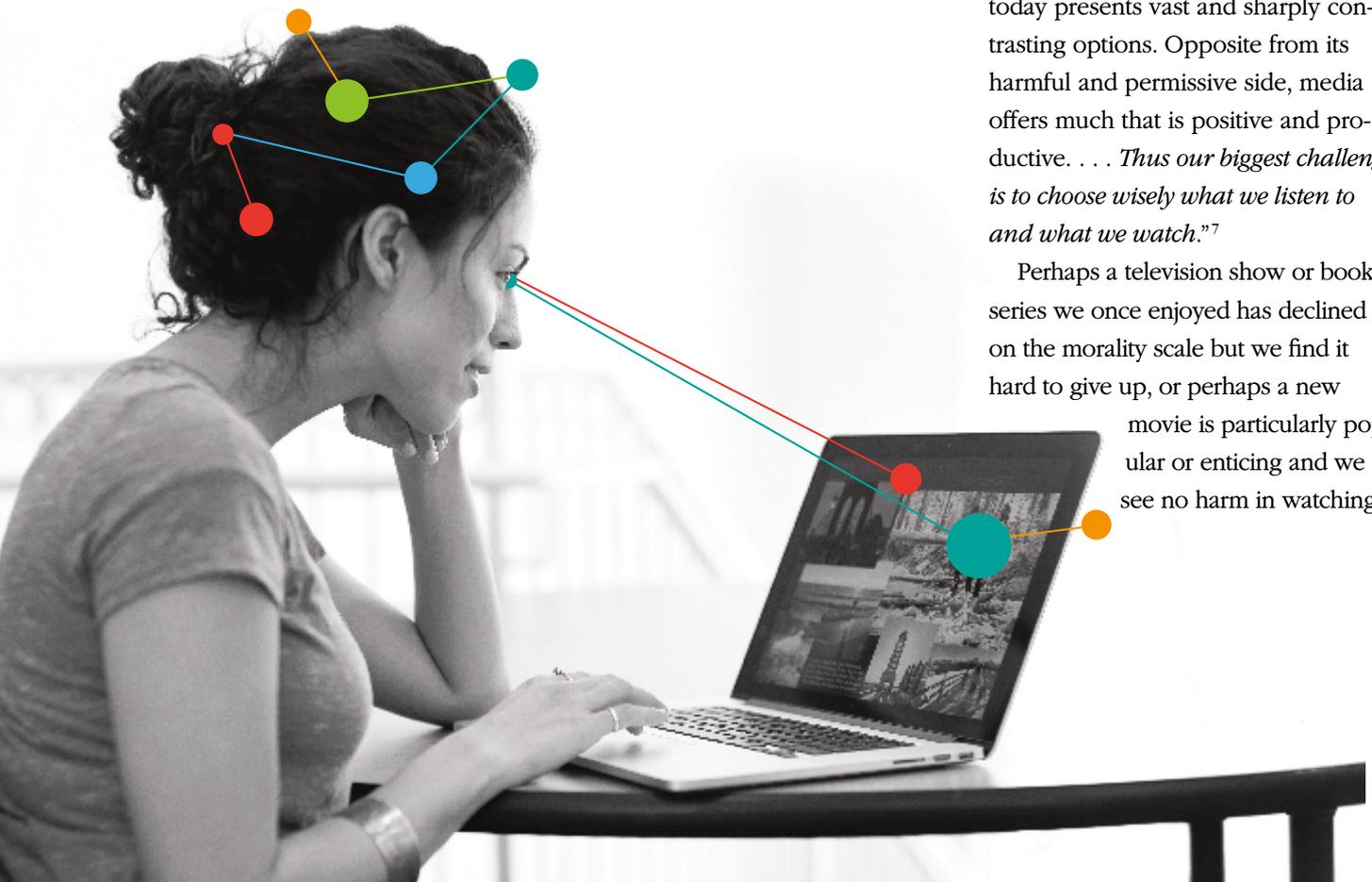
Christian author C. S. Lewis wrote: “Our leisure, even our play, is a matter of serious concern. There is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan.”⁶

Our responsibility is not to avoid media altogether or to merely reject negative media but to actively surround ourselves with wholesome and uplifting media. Fortunately, in the vast media offerings, there is much that is good and wholesome, where traditional values are upheld and respected. There are countless books, movies, songs, and more with messages of hope and happiness, love and kindness, joy and forgiveness.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “Because of its sheer size, media today presents vast and sharply contrasting options. Opposite from its harmful and permissive side, media offers much that is positive and productive. . . . *Thus our biggest challenge is to choose wisely what we listen to and what we watch.*”⁷

Perhaps a television show or book series we once enjoyed has declined on the morality scale but we find it hard to give up, or perhaps a new

movie is particularly popular or enticing and we see no harm in watching



it. However, giving in just a little makes it easier to give in a little more down the road until we have given ourselves over to indulgences from which we find it difficult to bring ourselves back. But by setting standards for ourselves to allow only wholesome media into our lives, we allow ourselves to be more receptive to the Spirit.

We can follow the timeless advice that Susanna Wesley gave in 1725 to her son John, a founder of Methodism: “Would you judge the lawfulness or unlawfulness of pleasure, [of the innocence of malignity of actions? Take this rule.] Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off your relish of spiritual things; in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind; that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself.”⁸

The Power to Choose

By choosing to participate in morally uplifting media, we invite the Spirit and allow ourselves to be strengthened. The gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us that we are given the power to act for ourselves (see 2 Nephi 2:26). Seeking after those things which are “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy” (Articles of Faith 1:13) opens

our hearts and minds to adopting thoughts and attitudes that lead us to righteous behaviors. In these efforts, we will be blessed with protection against the influences of the adversary (see Helaman 5:12).

The great advances in media technology with which the Lord has blessed us come with a responsibility for us to choose how to use those technologies. Through study and experience, I have seen the impact media has, whether or not we choose to acknowledge it. Before us are the options of the morally degrading or the wholesome and uplifting. We have the choice—but more importantly, we have the power to choose. ■



The *For the Strength of Youth* booklet can also be for the strength of young adults. The section “Entertainment and Media” has some excellent guidelines for our media choices.

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. David A. Bednar, “To Sweep the Earth as with a Flood” (Brigham Young University Education Week devotional, Aug. 19, 2014), lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/to-sweep-the-earth-as-with-a-flood.
2. Joe Boggs and Dennis Petrie, *The Art of Watching Films* (2004), 43; emphasis added.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Sanctify Yourselves,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 39.
4. Karen Dill, *How Fantasy Becomes Reality: Seeing through Media Influence* (2009), 224.
5. David B. Haight, “Personal Morality,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 70.
6. C. S. Lewis, *Christian Reflections*, ed. Walter Hooper (1967), 33.
7. M. Russell Ballard, “Let Our Voices Be Heard,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 16; emphasis added.
8. Susanna Wesley: *The Complete Writings* (1997), 109.





**By Elder
Ronald A.
Rasband**

Of the Quorum
of the Twelve
Apostles

Faith, Fairness, AND Religious Freedom

As you follow the invitation to reach out to others in a spirit of fairness, you will feel an increase in the Savior's love for you and for all of Heavenly Father's children.

I suspect that for some of you the phrase “religious freedom” feels more like “freedom to discriminate.” I want to talk with you about this view and help you understand what the Church means when it talks about religious freedom and why it is so vitally important for your future and for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I also plan to address some misgivings and misunderstandings some of you may have when it comes to religious freedom.

Some of you may struggle with an understanding of religion's role in society, politics, and civic issues. Some of you may wonder why religious groups are involved in politics in the first place, and often you may be skeptical of the motives of religious people when they become involved. In recent years the collective voice of groups who feel that religion should not play a role in political deliberation has grown louder.

The opportunity to be involved in the political process is a privilege given to people in most nations. Laws and legislation play an important teaching role in shaping social and moral culture. We need every individual in society to take an active role in engaging in civic dialogue that helps frame laws and legislation that are fair for everyone.

Freedom for All

What are we talking about when we refer to religious freedom? I am going to tell you the stories of two people. As I do so, I would like you to think about how you would feel if you were one of these individuals.

The first story is about someone I will call Ethan. He had recently started his job in a career he had longed for, and he wanted to make a good impression. He came early to work and stayed late. He picked up extra projects and did excellent work. He was well liked by many of his colleagues and was enjoying his job. One day at lunch with a couple of co-workers, he felt comfortable telling them he was gay. An awkward silence followed because no one knew how to respond. Ethan was disappointed by his colleagues' cold response, and he felt hurt and rejected.

After that lunch meeting, things became increasingly awkward for Ethan at work. He began to feel vulnerable and less valued. He found himself excluded from large projects and social activities after work, and his productivity began to suffer because he felt he did not belong and was not wanted. After a few months he was let go because his boss felt he was not keeping up. Despite all the claims to the contrary, Ethan knew he had been fired for being gay.

Now I want to tell you about Samantha. Samantha had just started work in the administrative offices of a local university. She was excited to work in a stimulating environment full of diverse thoughts, ideas, and backgrounds. One day at work a co-worker approached Samantha, said she had heard that Samantha was a Mormon, and asked if

that was true. Samantha cheerfully responded that it was, but the question that followed surprised her.

"So why do you hate gays?" her co-worker asked. Samantha was surprised by the question but tried to explain her belief in God and God's plan for His children, which she said includes guidelines on moral and sexual behavior. Her co-worker countered by telling her that the

rest of society had progressed beyond those beliefs. "And besides," she said, "history is full of people using religious teachings to wage wars and marginalize vulnerable groups."

Samantha restated her convictions and her understanding of God's love for all people and then asked her co-worker to respect her right to believe. The co-worker felt compelled to tell other employees about their conversation, and over the next few weeks, Samantha felt increasingly isolated as more and more co-workers confronted her with questions and attacks.

Samantha's boss, seeing the increase in religious conversations in the workplace, cautioned Samantha that proselytizing in their work environment would put her job in jeopardy. Her work, like Ethan's, began to suffer. Rather than risk being fired, Samantha started to look for another job.

Now, these are hypothetical stories, and yet they are not. There are many Samanthas and Ethans. However we choose to live and whatever choices we make, we all share a common humanity and desire for fairness and kindness. Ethan should not have been fired for being gay, and Samantha should not have been intimidated for being religious. Both were wrongly criticized, judged, and retaliated against.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

"We must understand that the faithful use of our agency depends upon our having religious freedom. We already know that Satan does not want this freedom to be ours. He attempted to destroy moral agency in heaven, and now on earth he is fiercely undermining, opposing, and spreading confusion about religious freedom—what it is and why it is essential to our spiritual life and our very salvation."

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Preserving Agency, Protecting Religious Freedom," *Ensign*, May 2015, 111–12.



In today's society it is politically correct to empathize with Ethan's situation but less so with Samantha's. Ethan may find his case picked up by an advocacy group as yet another example of antigay discrimination. And, indeed, he does deserve protection.

But what about Samantha? Who will defend her right to religious conscience? What about her right to live authentically as a person of faith, committed to loving and serving everyone but also having the right to choose what is right and wrong and to live her life accordingly?

Fairness for All

Our society has become so blinded by its quest to redress wrongful discrimination against one class of people that it is now in danger of creating another victimized class: people of faith, like you and me.

Already some religious schools are being questioned because they require students and faculty to adhere to an honor code that

requires fidelity and chastity. CEOs of large companies have been marginalized or forced to resign because their personal religious views are no longer politically acceptable. And some businesses have been forced to close because their owners have spoken their conscience.

Despite what you may have heard or read over the years, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has stood consistently for freedom of choice and conscience. Many years ago the Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44) wrote, "We believe . . . that all men are created equal, and that all have the privilege of thinking for themselves upon all matters relative to conscience."¹

He later went on to say: "If . . . I have been willing to die for a 'Mormon,' . . . I am just as ready to die in defending the rights of a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or a good man of any other denomination; for the same principle which would trample upon the rights of the Latter-day Saints would trample upon the

The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote, "We believe . . . that all men are created equal, and that all have the privilege of thinking for themselves upon all matters relative to conscience."



Jesus Christ looked past people's ethnicity, rank, and circumstances in order to teach them simple truth.

rights of . . . any other denomination who may be unpopular and too weak to defend themselves.”²

So what is the position of the Church on religious freedom? I can assure you that apostles and prophets, under the inspiration of heaven, have given significant consideration to this issue. We believe in following the commandments of God, which are designed to secure our eternal happiness. However, “God will force no man to heav’n.”³ We believe in creating a space for everyone to live their conscience without infringing on the rights and safety of others. When the rights of one group collide with the rights of another, we must follow the principle of being as fair and sensitive to as many people as possible. The Church believes in and teaches “fairness for all.”⁴

Protecting conscience is about safeguarding the way someone thinks and feels and safeguarding that person’s right to act on those beliefs. I am talking about someone

telling you that the thoughts, feelings, and beliefs you have are not allowed, valued, or acceptable because your views are not popular. A war in heaven was fought for agency, and it is a gross violation of that agency to force you to betray your conscience because your views do not align with the crowd.

Please do not misunderstand. When I speak of being authentic, I do not mean the Lord gives us a free pass to live any way we choose without consequences. We are still accountable to Him for our choices. He has said, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). The commandment to seek perfection implies that we start where we are and seek the Lord’s help to lift us to where He wants us to go. Being true to our authentic self requires continual effort to increase our light, knowledge, and understanding.

The younger generation is the most “wired” in history. They are always

connected. And you know that everything on the Internet is always perfectly 100 percent accurate, right? Of course not. So do not believe everything you see on the Internet about the Church and its position on gay rights.

A recent example of the Church's "fairness for all" approach occurred in January 2015, when the Church held a press conference with three Apostles and a member of the Young Women general presidency to remind our members, the community, and the Utah state legislature that the Church favors a balanced approach that secures the rights of all people.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles expressed the following at that press conference: "We call on local, state and the federal government to serve all of their people by passing legislation that protects vital religious freedoms for individuals, families, churches and other faith groups while also protecting the rights of our LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender] citizens in such areas as housing, employment and public accommodation in hotels, restaurants and transportation—protections which are not available in many parts of the country."⁵

With the passage of protections for both LGBT and religious people six weeks later, our Church leaders and others congratulated the LGBT community. It was encouraging to see them protected against eviction, housing discrimination, or being fired from a job because of their sexual orientation or gender. We also congratulated our religious friends of other denominations, seeing them similarly protected in the workplace and in the public square.

Utah—and the Church—received national news coverage and praise for such a historic compromise. Now, note that no doctrinal or religious principles were sacrificed. No changes were made to God's moral law or to our belief that sexual relations should occur only within marriage between a man and a woman. The outcome was fair to all and reflected a consistency in moral standards and teachings and in respect for others.

A Message of Fairness

Not many of us will play prominent roles in government and lawmaking, so you may be wondering how this topic pertains to you personally in your day-to-day life. I would like to talk about three things you can do to support and promote a message of fairness.

First, try to view others through a lens of fairness. To do this requires you to first acknowledge that Heavenly Father loves all of His children equally. There is no choice, sin, or mistake that you or anyone else can make that will change His love for you or for them. That does not mean He excuses or condones sinful conduct; nor do we—in ourselves or in others. But that does mean we reach out in love to persuade, help, and rescue. The Savior has said, "Love one another; as I have loved you" (John 13:34).

When you feel completely and perfectly loved, it is much easier to love others and to see them the way the Savior does. Please turn to our Heavenly Father in prayer and ask to receive the pure love of Christ both for yourself and for others. The Father has promised that you will feel this love if you ask in faith (see Moroni 7:48).

Being filled with this pure love will guide your thoughts and actions, especially in a political arena that can at times be contentious. Tensions can flare easily when we discuss politics, especially when we discuss religious freedom. If we allow these moments to get the better of us, we will appear unchristian to our family, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances.

Remember how the Savior handled tough questions and challenging viewpoints. He remained calm, He showed respect, and He taught truth, but He never forced anyone to live the way He taught.

Second, let fairness guide your treatment of others. Jesus Christ looked past people's ethnicity, rank, and circumstances in order to teach them simple truth. Remember the Samaritan woman at the well (see John 4:5–30), the Roman centurion (see Matthew 8:5–13; Luke 7:1–10), and the unpopular publican (see Luke 18:9–14). The Lord has commanded us to follow His example, saying, "Follow me,

and do the things which ye have seen me do” (2 Nephi 31:12). Do not judge people or treat them unfairly because they sin differently than you, or we, do.

Perhaps the greatest challenge in treating others fairly is in the balance required in supporting religious freedom when you have friends or family members who experience same-sex attraction or who are firm supporters of LGBT rights. Some of you worry that you will appear intolerant or unsupportive if you seek protections to exercise your faith publicly and freely.

Again, study the life of our Savior and seek His guidance. The Savior demonstrated perfectly how to reach out in love and encouragement while also holding firm to what we know to be true. Remember that when the woman was caught in adultery, the Lord asked for anyone without sin to step forward and be the first to condemn her. When no one approached, our Savior, who was without sin, commented, “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more” (John 8:11). The forgiveness and kindness He showed her did not contradict His teachings that sexual intimacy is meant for a husband and a wife who are legally and lawfully married. You too can be unyielding in right and truth yet still reach out in kindness.

When Christ’s friends and followers ended their relationships with Him, He expressed sadness and pain. However, when a relationship ended, it was because others were uncomfortable with His teachings, not because He was uncomfortable with others.

As we seek to treat others fairly, we must remember the principle of agency. We must always respect the ability of others to make choices and ask that they extend to us the

same courtesy. When talking with others about religious freedom, we must always remember that we can disagree without becoming disagreeable. Please do not shy away from a dialogue regarding these important issues simply because you are worried that it might be difficult or uncomfortable. We can pray for help, and we can expect that the Savior will help us speak and act in a way that is pleasing to Him.

Third, stand up for fairness if you see another’s rights being impeded.

Elder L. Tom Perry (1922–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was a great example of someone who firmly believed in man-woman marriage, and yet he was willing to stand up for the rights of others. He left an example of ensuring that others’ rights were protected when he witnessed unfair treatment or an imbalance in law.

From the time of Joseph Smith to our day, our legacy is one of reaching out to heal breaches and hurt without compromising the doctrine that is not ours to change.

Be Actively Involved

This brings me to my final point, and that is the need for active involvement from your generation on this issue. I stand with the leaders of our Lord’s Church when I say that

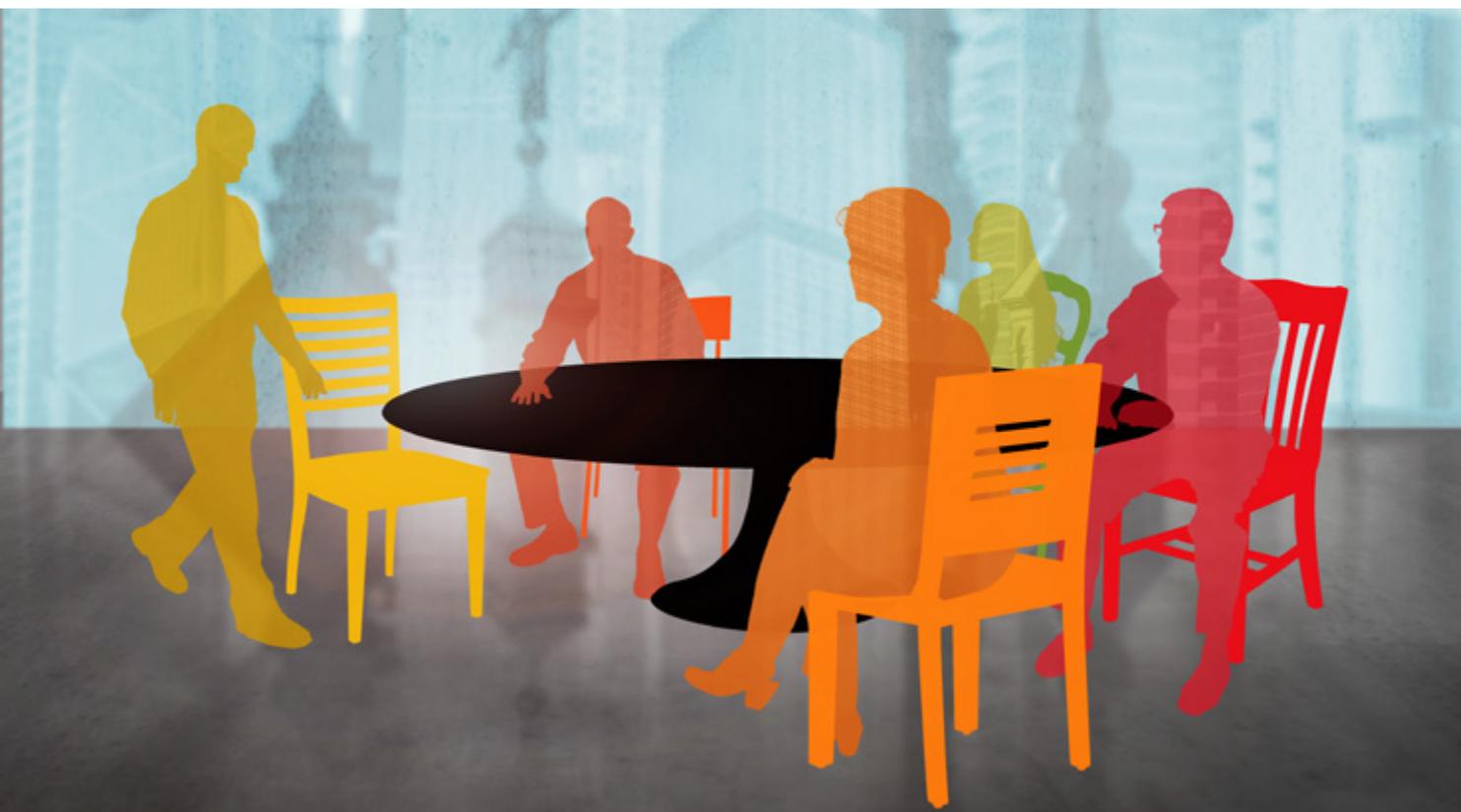
we need your generation’s natural understanding of compassion, respect, and fairness. We need your optimism and your determination to work through these complex social issues.

We have faith that you will turn to the Savior to understand how to live a Christlike life while also showing fairness and love to others who do not share your beliefs. We know that you want to be a part of something meaningful,

SUPPORT AND PROMOTE FAIRNESS BY:

1. Viewing others through a lens of fairness.
2. Letting fairness guide your treatment of others.
3. Standing up for fairness if you see another’s rights being impeded.





and we know that you are resilient and collaborative.

Most important, we need you to engage in dialogue regarding the complexities of this issue and find solutions for how to best extend fairness to everyone, including people of faith. These conversations need to be occurring in our schools, in our homes, and in our relationships with friends and co-workers.

When you have these conversations, please remember these principles: see others through a lens of fairness, treat them with respect and kindness, and expect the same treatment in return.

An Increase of Love

Finally, I want to leave you with my testimony and my witness that as you follow the invitation to reach out to others in a spirit of fairness, you will feel an increase in the Savior's love for you and for all of Heavenly Father's children. Your example of respect

and fairness will open doors and create meaningful friendships that you will cherish throughout your life.

I witness to you that our Heavenly Father lives, that He knows you, and that He loves you personally. He stands ready to help you. He has revealed His plan to us not only so that we can return and live with Him forever but also so that we can be blessed and happy in this life. As you follow His teachings and as you reach out in love and consideration to others, you will feel even more His power and love. ■

From a devotional address, "Religious Freedom and Fairness for All," delivered at Brigham Young University on September 15, 2015. For the full address, go to speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 344.
2. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 345.
3. "Know This, That Every Soul Is Free," *Hymns*, no. 240.
4. "Transcript of News Conference on Religious Freedom and Nondiscrimination," Jan. 27, 2015, mormonnewsroom.org.
5. Dallin H. Oaks, in "Transcript of News Conference on Religious Freedom and Nondiscrimination."

The Savior demonstrated perfectly how to reach out in love and encouragement while also holding firm to what we know to be true.



Tithing,

TIMING, AND TRANSPORTATION

By Atilio Coitiño Guzmán

One Saturday my wife and I realized that we did not have enough money to take public transportation to church the next day, and there was no way to make a cash withdrawal. Our tithing was in a donation envelope ready to be given to the bishop. We began to talk about how we would travel to church. If we used the tithing money to pay for transportation, we felt that the Lord would understand; however, we decided that it was not right.

The other possibility was to not go to church, and again we thought that the Lord would understand since we had never missed before. However, if that happened, we would not be able to take our tithing to the bishop, so that possibility was also ruled out.

Trying to be faithful, we decided to leave earlier than usual and walk to church. We left on that beautiful Sabbath day for the chapel, which was about three miles (4.8 km) from our home. For our four children (the oldest was six), it was like a party, and they enjoyed running and playing along the way.

When we reached a certain point on a wide and dangerous street, I heard the Spirit tell me, “You should cross now.” I told my wife, and she responded that it was dangerous because that part of the street began to curve, blocking our view of oncoming cars. I responded that I felt we should cross there, so we quickly crossed, my wife and I each taking two children. Just as we stepped onto the sidewalk, a car stopped on that side, and the driver asked, “Are you going to church?”



We had no money to go to church, so we started to walk.

The driver was a brother who did not belong to our ward, but I had met him before because I had visited his ward. We responded affirmatively, and he offered to drive us there. As we got in the car, the brother explained that he never took this route and he was only passing that way because his business partner had lost the keys to the office and he was taking his keys to his partner.

I thought to myself that this hadn't happened by chance. The Lord knew we needed transportation to go to church. Our tithing was in my pocket, and it provided

us the opportunity to teach our children about the blessings that come from paying tithing. We arrived at the chapel earlier than ever but happy and grateful. We participated in all the meetings and did not tell anybody about what had happened.

Summers in São Paulo are very hot, especially at midday, when our Church meetings ended. We were preparing to return when someone came up and asked us, "Do you have someone to take you back?" We responded that we didn't, and he said to us, "Do you want me to take you?" We accepted his offer, and my wife and I looked at each other with emotional smiles.

More than once the Lord had given us a great blessing for our obedience. ■

The author lives in São Paulo, Brazil.



OBEDIENCE BRINGS HAPPINESS

"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 [Heavenly Father's] promised blessings. But while He gives us laws and commandments, He also allows us to choose whether to accept them or to reject them. Our decisions in this regard will determine our destiny. . . .

"May we realize that our greatest happiness in this life will come as we follow God's commandments and obey His laws!"

President Thomas S. Monson,
"Keep the Commandments,"
Ensign, Nov. 2015, 83, 84.

According to Our Will

*Do we really want God's blessings?
Or do we simply say we do?*

By Clyde J. Williams

Correlation Department

The relationship between God, His prophets, and His children is often misunderstood. For example, one may wonder why many of the people in Enoch's day attained Zion, and yet in Moses's day the people rejected the higher law and were obliged to settle for the law of Moses as a schoolmaster designed to bring Israel to Christ (see Galatians 3:24). If Enoch had lived in Moses's day and Moses in Enoch's day, would the outcomes have been different? The scriptures make it clear that, in reality, it is the people and not the prophet who most often make the difference.

This was the case in the days of Samuel the prophet. The people in Israel rejected the Lord's warning given through Samuel that their request to have a king instead of the system of judges the Lord had established would lead to oppression and loss of freedom (see 1 Samuel 8:4–22). The Lord did not blame Samuel but explained, "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me" (1 Samuel 8:7).

The scriptures are full of examples where the Lord's people, because of their choices, received less than what they could have had. In the allegory Zenos shared, we read how the Lord of the vineyard wept and on three occasions asked, "What could I have done more for my vineyard?" (see Jacob 5:41, 47, 49). He had nourished the vineyard and worked in it "almost all the day long" (verse 47), and yet the vineyard brought forth little righteous fruit. Clearly the Lord's people do not receive fewer spiritual blessings because He or His prophets desire to give them less. God's love for us is manifest in His giving us the precious gift of agency and allowing us to "live and . . . do according to [our] own will" (Mosiah 2:21).



Aligning Our Will with God's

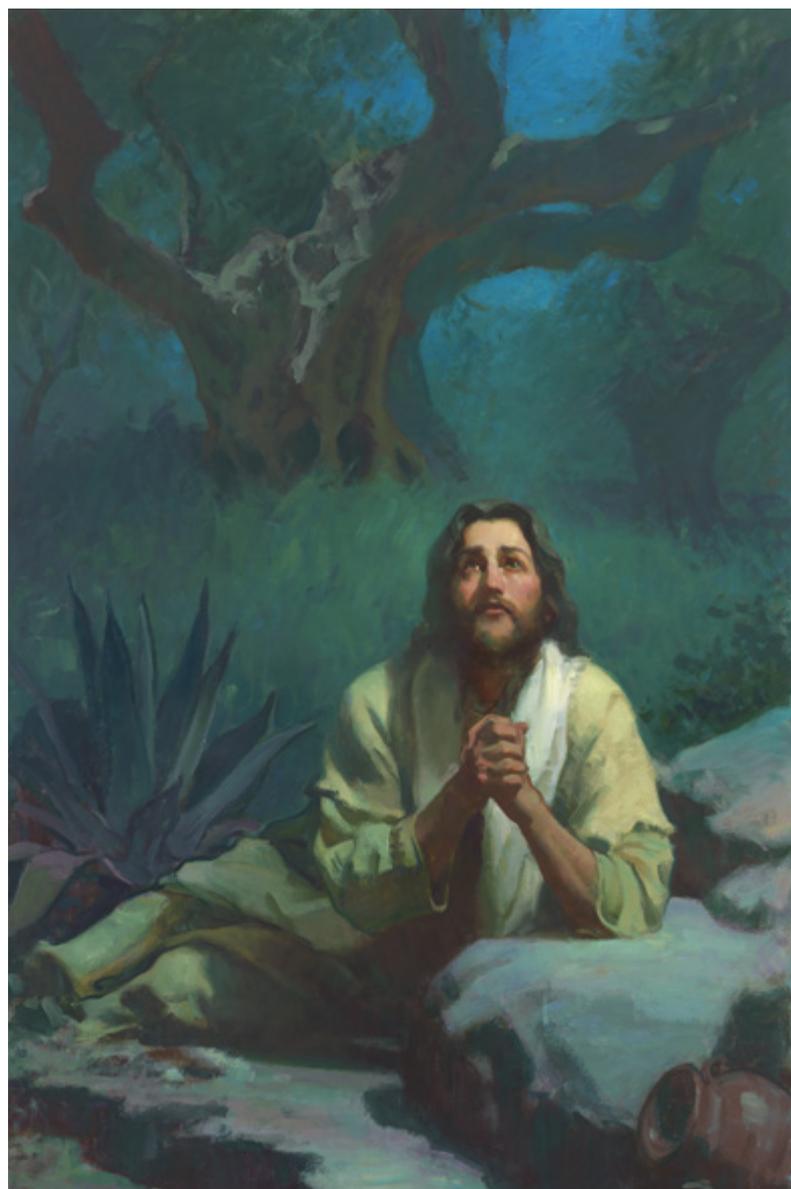
The Savior is the perfect example of how to use our agency best. He declared, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38). Further, He said of His relationship to the Father, "I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29). Abinadi aptly described the Savior's submission as "the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father" (Mosiah 15:7).

Submitting one's will to God's is not always easy. The Savior Himself declared, "I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:11). Thus, part of the key to a prophet's success in bringing people to Christ has much to do with the willingness of the people he serves to "suffer the will of the Father," or allow their will to be "swallowed up in the will of the Father." The implication is that submitting our will to God's will requires sacrifice and likely some suffering.

One of the classic examples of these principles in action is found in the Book of Mormon. The Lord called Abinadi to prophesy against the wickedness of King Noah and his people. All that is known of Abinadi is that he was "a man among them" (Mosiah 11:20). He alone stood against the trends and standards of his society. His position was not popular or well received, and it ultimately led to his death (see Mosiah 12:8–9; 17:12–13).

With the exception of Alma, one of Noah's priests, Abinadi's words fell on deaf ears. Yet that one conversion had a lasting impact on Nephite society for over 500 years and is still impacting millions today. Alma allowed his will to be "swallowed up in the will of the Father." His outspoken defense of Abinadi forced him to flee for his life (see Mosiah 17:2–4). His secret proselyting ventures back into the city of Nephi ultimately led to the conversion of 450 souls who were willing to leave their homes and society and depart into the wilderness (see Mosiah 18:33–35).

The success of this people, in the city they called Helam (see Mosiah 23:16–20), was rooted in their faithfulness to their covenants made at baptism. Indeed, they stood as "witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places" (Mosiah 18:9; see verses 8–10). The people were



The Savior showed us how to use our agency. He always submitted His will to the Father's.

not just going through the motion of doing good things. Their faithful activities led them to become "children of God" (verse 22), "knit together in unity and in love" (verse 21). They faithfully observed the Sabbath and gave thanks to God every day (see verse 23). Because of "their own free will and good desires towards God," they imparted of their substance both temporally and spiritually to those in need and to one another (see verses 27–29). Their faithfulness, joy, and unity in their society led Mormon to declare retrospectively, "How blessed are they, for they shall sing to [the Lord's] praise forever" (verse 30).

In the midst of their prosperity, Alma's people were subjected to enslavement for a time by the Lamanites and Amulon and his fellow priests. Even in these circumstances they were strong in their faith and continued to submit to the will of God, knowing He would ultimately deliver them from their trials. (See Mosiah 23:36–24:16.)

They were eventually led by the hand of God to the land of Zarahemla, where they formed the basis of a righteous reformation in that land (see Mosiah 25:5–10, 14–24). From Abinadi's one convert, Alma (in approximately 148 BC), would spring a succession of righteous leaders and record keepers going primarily from father to son down to Amos (in approximately AD 194; see 4 Nephi 1:21). Amos would turn the records over to his brother Ammaron (see 4 Nephi 1:47), who would eventually entrust them to Mormon (see Mormon 1:2–3), who abridged them and compiled most of the Book of Mormon.

Although Abinadi may have died believing he had been unsuccessful in bringing King Noah's people to the Lord, he had in fact succeeded. Because of the will and desires of one convert, Alma, the lives of many of the people Alma taught were changed and the entire history of the Book of Mormon people was affected. Alma's story is a reminder of the significant impact that can occur when one individual determines to align his or her will with the will of the Father.

Receiving What We Really Want

When details of the lives of the Lord's prophets have been preserved, it is easy to see that some of them were not popular in their day (for example, see Helaman 10:1–3; 3 Nephi 7:15–20). Clearly these prophets desired to give more than they were allowed

to, being hindered by the wickedness of the people. Like the Savior, they could have said, "How oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens, and ye would not" (3 Nephi 10:5).

This yearning to give people more of the blessings of the plan of salvation is common among the Lord's prophets. One of the most profound expressions of this desire comes from the words of Alma's son, also named Alma. After Alma the Younger and his close friends—the sons of King Mosiah—had spent years in missionary and activation efforts, Alma declared his desire that he could be an angel (see Alma 29:1). His motivation was

Submitting one's will to God's is not always easy. It requires sacrifice and likely some suffering.

not to receive fame or even to impress doubters and unbelievers. His desire was that people would "repent and come unto our God, that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth" (verse 2).

Even with this righteous, unselfish desire, Alma realized he was asking amiss. He could not coerce people to repent or change their nature. His words are sobering and insightful. He declared, "I know that [God] granteth unto men according to *their desire*, whether it be unto death or unto life; yea, I know that he allotteth unto men, yea, decreeth unto them decrees which are unalterable,

according to *their wills*, whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction” (verse 4; emphasis added).

In essence, Alma’s message is that we will get what we really want, not what we say we want. It is easy to express a desire for exaltation but not so easy to live worthy of it. “What we insistently desire, over time, is what we will eventually become and what we will receive in eternity,” said Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.¹ Because of our agency, God grants us what we really want. If we want to rebel and reject His plan, He allows that, even though He would deeply desire

Alma’s message is that we will get what we really want, not what we say we want.

otherwise. But it also means that if we really want exaltation and demonstrate our desire by living worthy of it, we will receive it. In the instance of Alma, he apparently seems to have been granted his desire (see Alma 45:18–19).

Desiring What Matters Most

The perpetual problem Heavenly Father’s children have had throughout history is keeping their desires focused on the things that matter most. “How powerful a role our true desires play in our lives!” declared Elder Maxwell. “Desire both initiates our actions

and sustains us—for good or evil. If we desire wealth or power, these will tend to be the moving causes of our actions. If instead we desire spiritual things and are obedient, the promised blessings will come to us. Just as it is not possible to save an individual against his will, so blessings do not come against our wills.”²

The scriptures tell us that the Lord grants unto us “line upon line, precept upon precept” as we listen to his precepts and follow his counsel. The sobering thought is, He has warned that for those who refuse to accept and abide by what He has already given, “from them shall be taken away even that which they have” (see 2 Nephi 28:30). This last phrase is intriguing. Apparently our faith in the Lord’s word will be diminished if we refuse to accept and live up to the principles He has already given us. Alma the Younger explained it this way: “They that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word *until* they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the devil” (Alma 12:11; emphasis added).

So what are we to do as we face challenging times? Elder Maxwell stated:

“I do not know what lies ahead of you . . . , but my advice would be to fasten your seat belts and hold on firmly to your principles! . . .

“ . . . As you submit your wills to God, you are giving Him the *only* thing you *can* actually give Him that is really yours to give. Don’t wait too long to find the altar or to begin to place the gift of your wills upon it! No need to wait for a receipt; the Lord has His own special ways of acknowledging.”³

Each of us is in charge of our own destiny. We will receive that which we ultimately choose. The famous author and theologian

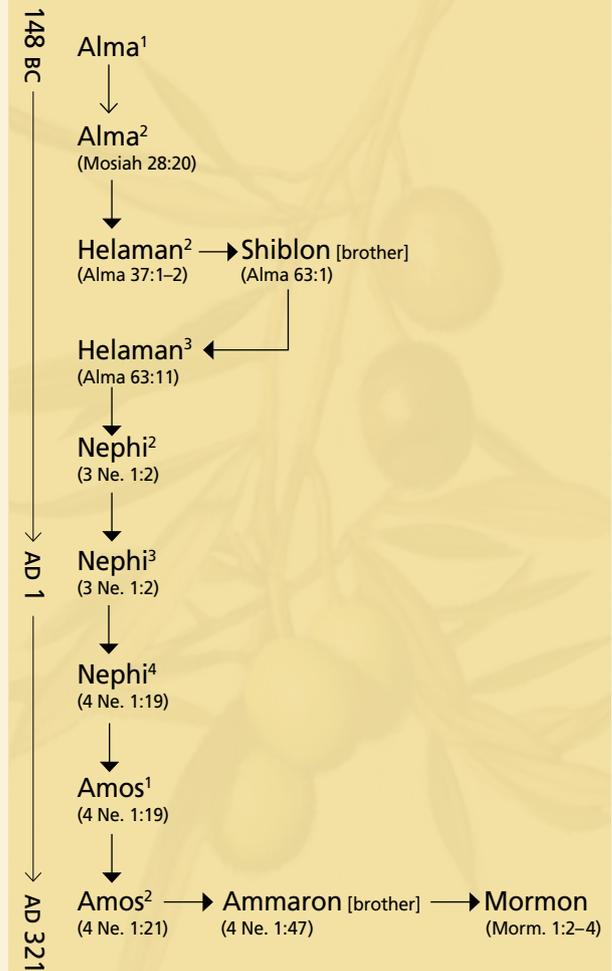


The story of Alma illustrates the significant impact one person can have who aligns his or her will with God's.

C. S. Lewis profoundly explained: “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’ All that are in Hell, choose it. . . . No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it.”⁴ ■

NOTES

1. Neal A. Maxwell, “According to the Desire of [Our] Hearts,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 21.
2. Neal A. Maxwell, “*Not My Will, But Thine*” (1988), 89.
3. Neal A. Maxwell, “Remember How Merciful the Lord Hath Been,” *Ensign*, May 2004, 44, 46.
4. C. S. Lewis, *The Business of Heaven: Daily Readings from C. S. Lewis*, ed. Walter Hooper (1984), 142; see also Doctrine and Covenants 88:32.



THE IMPACT OF A SINGLE CONVERSION

As far as we know, the Nephite prophet Abinadi had only one convert: Alma. But Alma’s decision to align his will with the Lord’s had a ripple effect that still impacts people more than 2,000 years later. Alma’s descendants kept the records of the Nephites for more than 400 years. The last of them, Ammaron, turned the records over to Mormon, whose compilation and abridgment of the records as the Book of Mormon blesses countless lives today. (The superscripts in the chart identify the first, second, third, or fourth person in the Book of Mormon who had that name.)

The Prayers of Our Hearts

Accounts from two Latter-day Saints show how heartfelt prayer can strengthen our faith and help us feel God's love.

A Valuable Lesson in Faith

By Lee Allen

The Primary “Family Day” had been a wonderful success and was made even better when our son Ben, a recently returned missionary, came home from the university just for the occasion. We played softball, cricket, hide-and-seek, and Frisbee, and enjoyed the swings and playground equipment. We were one of the last families to leave.

As we began packing up all our things, Ben discovered his keys had fallen from his pocket. A frantic search ensued. During the activities of the day, he had been running around with his siblings and other children over many acres of the park; finding his keys seemed an absolutely hopeless task.

The older children raced towards the playground equipment to search. I followed, hand-in-hand with our five-year-old son, Mitchell. I suggested to him that we should

have a prayer and ask Heavenly Father to help us find Ben's keys. So in the middle of a playing field, Mitchell and I had a quiet prayer together telling Heavenly Father how much Ben needed to find his keys and how difficult the task would be without His help. After the prayer I asked Mitchell whether he thought Heavenly Father would answer our prayers. He replied confidently, “Oh, yeah!”

As I looked across the vast fields we had covered during the day, common sense told me it wasn't going to happen. I secretly feared for the faith of this five-year-old child. But time has never dimmed the significance of what happened next. We literally took one pace and there the keys were. I was overwhelmed with emotion. My young son had taught me a valuable lesson that day about faith in Heavenly Father, who I know answers our prayers. ■

The author lives in Queensland, Australia.



His Love through Her Prayer

By Susan Morris

My Relief Society president asked if she might begin our visiting teaching interview with prayer. I expected her to ask for the presence of the Spirit as we discussed the needs of the sisters I visited. This she did, but then she proceeded to pray earnestly and specifically for me in the challenges I was facing—some of which she knew, others that she didn't.

I cannot express the comfort and joy that filled my soul as I heard her pray for me. Outside my own family, I had never before heard someone pray for me in this way. I truly felt that my Relief Society president was inspired to convey the love and blessings of the Lord to me.

After I collected myself, we discussed the sisters for whom I had responsibility, and my leader compassionately encouraged me in my efforts to support one particular sister who was also experiencing difficulties.

I left this far-from-ordinary interview with a renewed hope for my own situation and a heightened sense of the importance of caring for others. While my family has always prayed for those we know are in need, now I do it more frequently and specifically in my individual prayers as well. I know from personal experience that “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man [or woman] availeth much” (James 5:16). ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.



THE PASSPORT TO PEACE

“Prayer is the provider of spiritual strength; it is the passport to peace. . . . Miracles are wrought through prayer.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Be Your Best Self,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 68.



“GATHERED TOGETHER in My Name”

*The Lord has appointed ward and branch councils
to help us minister in love and unity.*

By Jakob R. Jones

Not long ago I attended a family home evening with a family whom I love very much: a young husband and wife and their little daughter. As their bishop I had come to their home acting partly on a prompting from the Spirit and largely on a prompting from this young father’s concerned mother and sister, who were also present. The Lord had been working with this family to make big changes in their lives and bring them back to the blessings of the gospel and the Church. But something had happened that day.

For months this young father had been deeply concerned about providing for his family. His employment was expected to end soon, and he and his wife were in the midst of deciding whether to relocate their family to another state. That would mean significant changes for the family. Earlier that day this father learned that some greatly anticipated financial relief would not be coming; it was crushing news.

When I arrived at their apartment, I could see the deep discouragement in his face. The responsibility of providing for a family and the unwelcome news weighed heavily on the shoulders of this young father.

His wife had chosen a chapter of scripture for the lesson to address their concerns of feeling overwhelmed. The father read the entire chapter. You may recognize these words from Isaiah 55:

“Every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,
and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat;
yea, come, buy . . . without money and without
price. . . .





“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, . . . behold, there will I be in the midst of them” (D&C 6:32).

Those words from the Savior are not just good advice or mere words of comfort. For the young prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, those words of the Savior set forth the doctrine and pattern for obtaining revelation and guidance and for making decisions in the kingdom of God.

The Lord was in the midst of that family council that night. They had invited His Spirit through prayer and scripture study. They were united in purpose. They were filled with love for one another. They brought their best ideas and experiences and laid them before each other and before the Lord and asked for His guidance. They made decisions in unity and then took action.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord” (verses 1, 8).

And then the family discussed what those verses meant to them. The Spirit of the Lord filled that little apartment as this family home evening evolved into a family council. This young father shared his fears and concerns and desires, and everyone shared their love and concern for each other. They talked about what to do, what options they had, what actions to take.

It was a very open discussion. There were some disagreements. I felt impressed to simply listen and observe. Finally, in unity the husband and wife determined they should make the decision together with the Lord through prayer. I then offered words of support and encouragement.

The Lord’s Pattern of Revelation

I can recall few times when I’ve recognized the Spirit of the Lord more strongly than in that little apartment that evening with that humble, struggling family. It was a fulfillment of the Lord’s promise given to His disciples long ago: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, as touching one thing, behold, there will I be in the midst of them—even so am I in the midst of you” (D&C 6:32).

The Church Is Governed through Councils

The Church handbook teaches the doctrine of councils:

“The Lord’s Church is governed through councils at the general, area, stake, and ward levels. These councils are fundamental to the order of the Church.

“Under the keys of priesthood leadership at each level, leaders counsel together for the benefit of individuals and families.”¹

At all levels of this Church, we strive to operate by those same principles the Savior taught to His disciples and to Oliver and Joseph—to come together in unity and council.

Each ward has a ward council that “includes the bishopric, ward clerk, ward executive secretary, high priests group leader, elders quorum president, ward mission leader, and presidents of the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School.”²

All the work done by this group of ward leaders is ultimately focused on helping “individuals build testimonies, receive saving ordinances, keep covenants, and become consecrated followers of Jesus Christ.”³

You may have heard the statement “There is safety in counsel.”⁴ Why? One of the reasons is the simple fact that no one of us is as smart as many of us together. Each of us brings a unique perspective and set of experiences and insights.

The Church handbook also teaches how ward council meetings can be most effective at including the unique perspectives of each member of the council: “During the meeting, the bishop explains each matter being considered, but he does not normally decide how to resolve the matter until he has heard the discussion. He encourages discussion without dominating it. He asks questions and may ask particular council members for their suggestions. He listens carefully before making a decision. These discussions should foster a spirit of inspiration.”⁵

Simply put, we bring our unique talents and abilities and perspectives. We plead with the Lord to be with us, to guide us with His Spirit, to make up the difference in what we lack, and to know the needs of the members we serve. We discuss the needs of families and individuals and strive to come to decisions in unity. Then we go to work and ask the Lord to bless the members of the ward.

Counseling Together in Ward Council

Eight months before I attended that home evening with that young family, the ward council was gathered on a Sunday morning. We opened with prayer and watched a video about helping individuals and families receive the blessings and ordinances of the gospel. I asked the council members if anyone had come to mind as we viewed the video. That led to a discussion of this family. We expressed our love for them. We talked about possible callings, how we could help the father work toward Melchizedek Priesthood ordination, and how we could help the

couple work toward receiving temple ordinances.

As the bishop I made some assignments. It seemed the discussion was nearly closed, but something did not feel quite right. It was the Young Women president who finally said, “I think we’re moving too fast. I kind of feel like we need to focus on the basics with them, like family home evening and scripture study and prayer.” Then that “not quite right” feeling went away. She spoke, not on behalf of the Young Women organization, but out of love for this family, and in that moment the Spirit bore witness to us of the truth of her counsel.

This sister’s comment reopened the discussion. We talked about how to help the family develop a pattern of scripture study, prayer, and home evening. The young father’s sister was serving as one of our ward missionaries, so the ward mission leader took the assignment to work with her and the home teachers to institute regular family home evenings. My wife and I delivered a copy of the *Family Home Evening* resource guidebook and a hymnbook to their home.

The most consistent support and strength came from the mother and sister of this young father as they consistently attended family home evening



*“When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God”
(Mosiah 2:17).*

with the family, ultimately leading to that important family night that I was privileged to attend.

The handbook states: “Both men and women should feel that their comments are valued as full participants. . . . The viewpoint of women is sometimes different from that of men, and it adds essential perspective to understanding and responding to members’ needs.”⁶ As a young bishop I sit in council with Primary, Young Women, and Relief Society presidents who have much more wisdom and life experience and insight than I. They are often very much my teachers in Christlike character and even in how to be a good father and priesthood holder.

I am so grateful for the women of this Church. I hope our sisters never feel unheard or disregarded in our council meetings. Ward council members operate as equals. The keys of presidency given to a bishop are a matter of order, organization, and assigned responsibility but never a designation of dominance or spiritual superiority.

Unity

The handbook describes the importance of unity: “After open discussion, the bishop may make a decision, or he may wait to discuss the matter further with his counselors. After he makes a decision, council members should support it in a spirit of unity and harmony.

“If council members have strongly unsettled feelings about an important decision, the bishop may wait for another council meeting to consider the matter further and seek spiritual confirmation and unity.”⁷

Unity is another reason there is safety in councils. Sometimes as individuals we think we know what action needs to be taken, and we often want to jump right to the end result. We forget that the Lord’s end goal is not in our developing a plan of action. It is that each of His children come to know Him. You remember how the Lord prayed for His disciples:

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. . . .

“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. . . .

“ . . . Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. . . .

“I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one” (John 17:3, 9, 11, 23).

The Lord’s objective is that we become His—that we become one with Him, with our Heavenly Father, and with each other. The process is as important as the result. Councils are part of the divinely appointed process by which unity is achieved and by which we become Christ’s. The Lord has stated, “Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27).

That commandment may also be used as a test. For example, the Lord might have conversely stated, “By this ye shall know that ye are mine, when ye are one with each other and one with me.”

The father of a family may receive revelation that



relocating the family will bring blessings and unity. But without the unity of his wife and children, his plan may not bring the expected results.

A bishop may receive revelation for a ward mission plan, but unless the ward council is united with that revelation, the blessings will not come, and the bishop will be left to wonder what went wrong.

Here is how President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, described how the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles operates:

“The calling of 15 men to the holy apostleship provides great protection for us as members of the Church. Why? Because decisions of these leaders must be unanimous. Can you imagine how the Spirit needs to move upon 15 men to bring about unanimity? These 15 men have varied educational and professional backgrounds, with differing opinions about many things. Trust me! These 15 men—prophets, seers, and revelators—know what the will of the Lord is when unanimity is reached!”⁸

I bear witness that the Lord is interested in the details of our individual lives. I am ever amazed at how far the Savior is willing to go, or to send one of His servants, to rescue one of His children. How grateful I am for the councils appointed with the responsibility to care for Heavenly Father’s children. ■

The author lives in California, USA.

To learn more about family councils, see Elder M. Russell Ballard’s April 2016 general conference address, “Family Councils.”

NOTES

1. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 4.1.
2. *Handbook 2*, 4.4.
3. *Handbook 2*, 4.4.
4. See Henry B. Eyring, “Listen Together” (Brigham Young University devotional, Sept. 4, 1988), 2, speeches.byu.edu.
5. *Handbook 2*, 4.6.1.
6. *Handbook 2*, 4.6.1.
7. *Handbook 2*, 4.6.1.
8. Russell M. Nelson, “Sustaining the Prophets,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 75.



IF YOU’RE NOT SERVING ON THE WARD COUNCIL

- As a visiting teacher or home teacher, you can pray for those you visit. You care for them. When you report to your leaders on how your families are doing, you can pray that the information will make it to the ward council and that the members of the council will be guided by the Spirit to address the needs of those families.
- You may have a spouse whom you regularly send off to a ward council meeting. You may be tempted to complain of his or her absence, especially if you are left alone to get your children ready for church. You can pray that your spouse will be guided by the Spirit, that his or her service will bring some of our Heavenly Father’s children to Christ, and that your family will be blessed.
- When you receive a calling or an invitation to speak in sacrament meeting, you can know that that opportunity to serve has come from the Lord through His servants through the council.

FOUR GENERATIONS STRONG

One hundred descendants have been blessed by the conversion of one family in Peru.

By Robert D. Boyce

It was a mercilessly hot day in Callao, Peru, where my missionary companion, Elder Jerry D. Stevenson, and I had been knocking on doors for days with no discernible results. It was my turn to knock on the next door, and a pleasant, middle-aged woman answered.

“Good afternoon, ma’am,” I said, using the rudimentary Spanish I knew at the time. “We’re missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and we have a message for you. May we come in?”

“I’m busy. Please come another time.”

Right then I was blessed: out of my mouth came something spontaneous, something I was not until then capable of saying. “You’re Christian, right?”

“Yes, of course.”

“Our message is about Christ. Don’t you have 10 minutes for our Lord?”

A long pause. “Well, yes, I do. I do have 10 minutes for my Savior. In fact, I’m quite concerned about our oldest son. He’s 17 and beginning to make some bad choices. Maybe you can help us with him.”

Another blessing: I understood what she said.

Elder Stevenson took over from there, and the Hooker family joined the Church in February of 1963—the father, Alberto; the mother, Isabel; and the three children old enough to be baptized.

Some 45 years later I was in Salt Lake City for a mission reunion. I had with me an advertisement for a tour of Peru. The travel agent associated with the tour was named Estefani Hooker. Could she be related?



The travel agency was in the area, and I had some free time one afternoon, so I decided to go by to find out. After we were introduced, the conversation went something like this:

“Ms. Hooker, do you happen to be from Peru?”

“Yes.”

“From Callao?”

“Why, yes.”

“Was your family baptized in the early 1960s?”

“Yes!” Her eyes were getting brighter with every question.

“I think I may have been one of the missionaries who taught and baptized—let’s see, would it have been your grandparents?”

“Who was your companion?” she asked.

“Elder Stevenson.”

“My father has been looking for him for years now, and here, out of the blue, his companion walks through that door! Do you even realize how happy this will make him when he finds out?”

I learned that Estefani’s father, Cesar H. Hooker, just two years old

when his parents joined the Church, had served a mission, was married in the Los Angeles California Temple, had served as mission president, and was now an Area Seventy. Estefani further told me that there were now nearly 100 Hooker descendants, all but a handful active in the Church, with the majority still living in Peru.

Following this meeting, I received tender expressions of gratitude from the Hooker family via email and during a particularly sweet phone call from Grandma Hooker, still healthy and vibrant at 88.

April 2008 general conference found both Elder Hooker and me in Salt Lake City. We met in person for the first time since he was a toddler, along with two of his daughters, their husbands, Elder Stevenson, his wife, and our youngest daughter, who was a student in the area. We ate, chatted, reminisced, caught up, and took pictures.

Then Elder Hooker asked for our attention and said these inspiring words:

“While growing up, my mother had us pray daily, by name, for you, our missionaries, expressing our deep gratitude and asking the Lord to bless you. My daughters and the rest of my mother’s grandchildren all know the names of the missionaries who found our family; and they also pray for you, every day.”

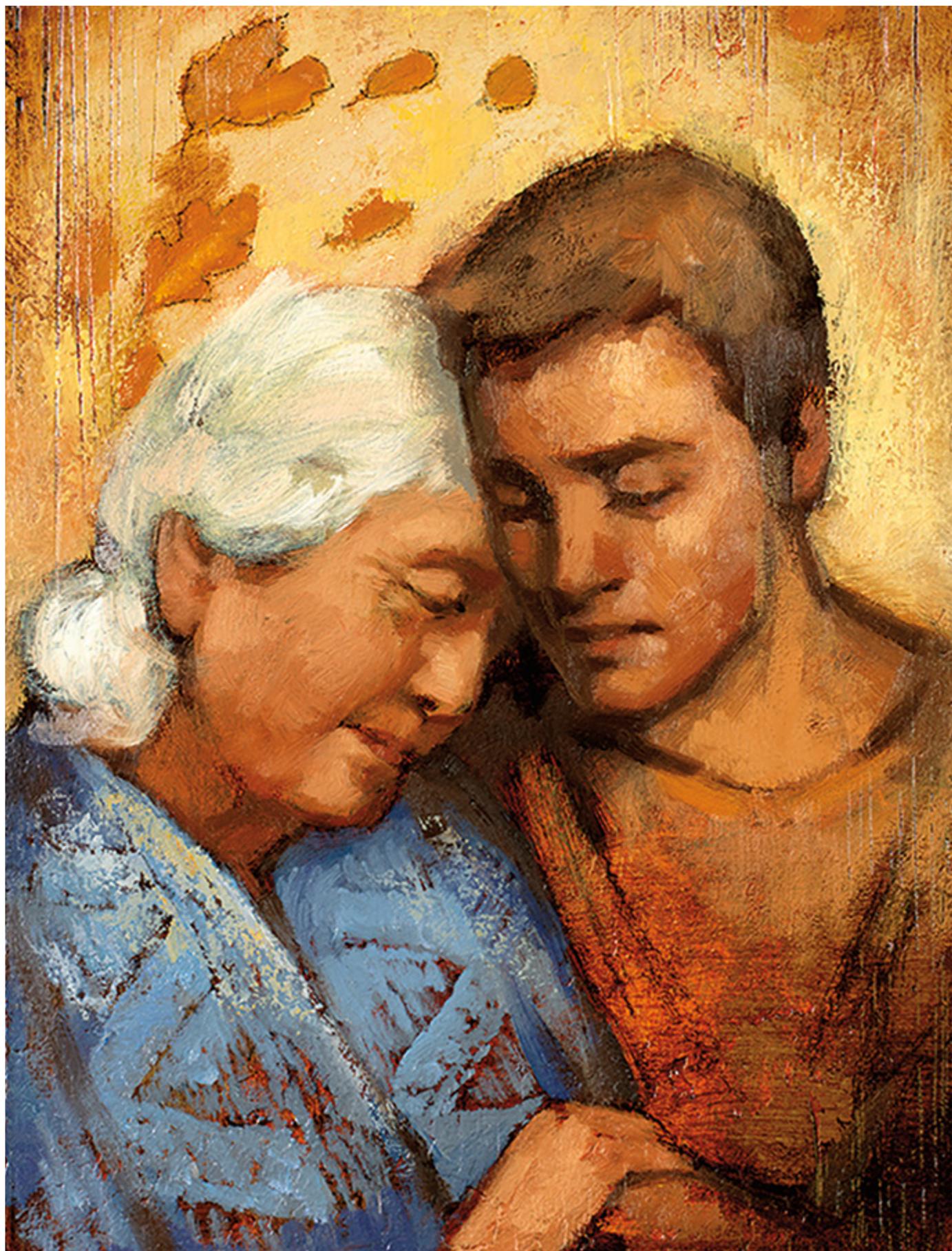
Elder Hooker’s daughters were nodding enthusiastically in agreement.

He continued: “Now, some of my mother’s grandchildren have children; they too are being taught who their family’s missionaries are. They too are praying for you. So you see, my beloved brethren, you are being blessed by not one, not two, not three, but four generations of prayers on your behalf, for the sacrifices you made in performing this tremendous service to our family. We thank you again, with our whole soul.”

He concluded: “When I was a mission president I would recount this to every new group of missionaries and end by saying that they are not only serving those they meet but also the generations that follow, and that blessings will be called down from heaven on them for generations to come, if they will serve a good mission.”

What joy that brought me! I scarce can take it in. (See Alma 29:9.) ■

The author has passed away since writing this article.





**By Elder
Don R. Clarke**

Served as a General
Authority Seventy
from 2006 to 2015

PRACTICE

Pure Religion

If you want to be happy, feel the Holy Ghost, and grow closer to the Savior, then practice pure religion.

A couple of years ago, a young man I'll call John came to my office shortly after he had returned from his mission. "Elder Clarke, I need help," he said to me with great concern. "I loved my mission. It changed me. However, I am losing some of those sacred and special feelings that I felt in the mission field. What can I do to feel like I felt in the mission field?"

I have seen this happen many times. What he was asking was, "What can I do to be happy, feel the Holy Ghost, and be close to the Savior?" This is a question we all should ask every day.

On that afternoon in my office, we turned to James 1:27 and read, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

Next we read Alma 34:28: "If ye turn away the needy, and the naked, and visit not the sick and afflicted, and impart of your substance, if ye have, to those who stand in need—I say unto you, if ye do not any of these things, behold, your prayer is vain, and availeth you nothing, and ye are as hypocrites who do deny the faith."

Then we reviewed the story in the Gospel of John in which Peter and other disciples had gone fishing and caught nothing but then were told by the Savior to

move their net to the other side of the boat and caught 153 fish. After they had eaten, Peter and the Savior talked. The Savior knew He was instructing this soon-to-be prophet and President of the Church for one of the last times.

“Lovest thou me?” the Savior asked.

Peter answered, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.”

Then the Savior said, “Feed my lambs.”

The Savior asked the same question two more times and then instructed: “Feed my sheep” (see John 21:3–17).

Peter was really being instructed to practice pure religion, or to care for the people. The prophet of God today also cares for and loves the people. President Thomas S. Monson is a great example of one who practices pure religion. He has spent his entire life loving and caring for people.

I have seen many returned missionaries like my friend John. If you ask them why they loved their missions, almost always they will say because of their love for the people. The day missionaries start to care more about

others than themselves, they become happy. It is that way for all of us. Our lives will always be happier if we care for and love others.

The opposite of caring for others is thinking about oneself: my car, my studies, my job, my problems. When it is always about us, our connection with heaven isn’t as strong as it could be.

I told John that if he would practice pure religion, he would be happy and feel as he had felt on his mission. Likewise, if *you* want to be happy, feel the Holy Ghost, and grow closer to the Savior, then practice pure religion. From the scriptures above we learn four key practices that can be defined as pure religion.

1. Visit and Care for Widows

John went back to college and acted upon what we had discussed. Later he sent me an email in which he shared his experience reading inspirational stories from the Church magazines to elderly people at an assisted-care facility.



“Many individuals felt a great amount of love and support from the Savior as the Spirit testified of simple truths and testimonies,” he wrote. “I had never known I was capable of feeling such love from and for strangers with whom I had little connection. But I felt the Savior’s love for them, for those kind souls. It appeared clear to me that I would meet these individuals—now riddled by dementia and physical ailments—on the other side. I would see their husbands and wives, who have been looking over them from the other side of the veil. I felt very much the presence of my grandfather—whom I had never met—as I sat with my grandmother, and his spirit strengthened me and supported me. I knew he was thankful for my simple visit.”

He continued: “Who knew that I could find such tender mercies? It seems so meaningless to come home after something like that and just turn on the TV or tune out in some other way. It has changed me to realize that these tender experiences are available at all moments of the day as we, as Saints, strive to focus and help others in some way.”

You can do this too, and the Lord will bless you as He blessed John.

2. Help Orphans

There are many orphans throughout the world. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could connect with or write to one regularly?

When our son, Nate, returned from his mission, he had the same feelings as my friend John. Nate decided to volunteer to become a mentor in a program that matches adults with children in need of supportive one-on-one relationships. That service changed his college experience.



Now that he is married, Nate and his wife, Carla, have “adopted” again through the program. It has been a great blessing for them in their marriage to share what they have with those in need.

When my wife, Mary Anne, and I served in the Bolivia Santa Cruz Mission, we had a missionary who was an orphan boy. He had no family. The Lord assigned him to be Elder Hawkins’s trainer. I don’t think he was the best trainer, but Elder Hawkins was the best companion for an orphan boy who had become one of the Lord’s missionaries.

Elder Hawkins’s parents wrote to this missionary during his mission and have continued to write to him for the past 15 years. Because of Elder Hawkins and his family, this orphan boy has been loved and cared for and is now happily married, employed, and active in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We all can help change orphan children.

Does the Lord trust us to be an answer to someone else’s prayer? Can He count on us to follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost?



3. Care for the Poor and Needy

The scriptures constantly remind us of the importance of helping the poor and the needy. We all have this responsibility.¹ One way we can increase our help to the poor and the needy is to pay a generous fast offering. President Brigham Young (1801–77) said:

“The first year that I came into this valley I had not flour enough to last my family until harvest . . . , and persons were coming to my house every day for bread. I had the blues about [it] one day; I went down to the old fort and by the time I got back to my house I was completely cured. I said to my wife, ‘Do not let a person come here for food and go away empty handed, for if you do we shall suffer before harvest; but if you give to every individual that comes we shall have enough to last us through.’ . . .

“I intend to keep doing so, that my bread may hold out, for if I do not I shall come short.

“Do you believe that principle? I know it is true, because I have proven it so many times.”²

The following experience was posted on a Christian website by a physician in Colorado, USA, who coasted into a gas station after his car had sputtered and died. As he prepared to call a tow truck, he saw a woman, whose old car was parked by a gas pump, slip and fall down.

“I got out to see if she was okay. When I got there, it looked more like she had been overcome by sobs than that she had fallen; she was [a] young woman who looked really haggard with dark circles under her eyes. She dropped something as I helped her up, and I picked it up to give it to her. It was a nickel.

“At that moment, everything came into focus for me: the crying woman, the ancient [car] crammed full of stuff with three kids in the back (one in a car seat), and the gas pump reading [U.S.] \$4.95. I asked her if she was okay and if she needed help, and she just kept saying, ‘I don’t want my kids to see me crying.’”

Understanding her situation, the physician took out his credit card, filled up her car with gas, and then bought two big bags of food and some gift certificates for her and her children at a fast-food restaurant next to the gas station.

“She told me her name, and that she lived in Kansas City [Missouri, USA],” he said. “Her boyfriend [had] left two months ago, and she had not been able to make ends meet. . . . In desperation [she] had finally called her parents, with whom she had not spoken in about five years. They lived in California and said she could come live with them and try to get on her feet there. So she packed up everything she owned in the car.”

The doctor gave her a hug and offered a prayer for her safety on the road. As he walked to his car, the woman asked, “Are you like an angel or something?”

The doctor replied, “Sometimes God uses regular people.”

Then he observed: “It was so incredible to be a part of someone else’s miracle. And of course, . . . when I got in my car it started right away and got me home with no problem. I’ll put it in the shop tomorrow to check, but I suspect the mechanic won’t find anything wrong.”³

Does the Lord trust us to be an answer to someone else’s prayer? Can He count on us to follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost? The more we follow the Spirit’s promptings, the more opportunities the Lord will present to us to be the answer to someone else’s prayer.

4. Feed His Lambs and Sheep

When Jesus had His conversation with Peter, His first counsel was, “Feed my lambs.” The Savior knows that if we feed the lambs, we won’t have to look for lost sheep. Some of us may have younger brothers or sisters, nephews or nieces, or other people we know who need help. May we be great examples for them, and may we find the lambs who need our help.

Will you find and help a lamb? Will you, as a shepherd, be trustworthy enough to care for the lambs and the sheep, as the Savior has asked us to do?

The question the Savior asked of Peter could be asked of each of us: “Lovest thou

me?” As we practice pure religion by visiting and caring for widows, helping orphans, caring for the poor and needy, and feeding His lambs and sheep, we will show the Savior that we love Him! As we do this, we will be happy, feel the Holy Ghost, and feel closer to Him. ■

From a devotional address, “Pure Religion,” given at Brigham Young University on January 13, 2015. For the full address, go to speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

1. See Jeffrey R. Holland, “Are We Not All Beggars?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 40–42.
2. Brigham Young, “Remarks,” *Deseret News*, June 18, 1856, 116.
3. “Friends Are God’s Way of Taking Care of Us,” lisburn.com/stories/friends_are_gods_way.html.



WE TOO MUST GIVE

“Although I may not be my brother’s keeper, I am my brother’s brother, and ‘because I have been given much, I too must give.’ ”

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



I Did All That for This

*A would-be dinner, a dead car battery, yelling children—
was it all worth it?*

By Julianne Heywood

One Saturday, as part of our ward's "temple week," our family planned to go to the Mesa Arizona Temple, have a picture taken of us on the temple grounds with our five children—two boys and three girls—and spend some time at the nearby visitors' center.

That morning my husband, Scott, took our 11-year-old son, Kaden, to football practice, while I got the other four children fed, dressed, and ready to go. It took me two hours. When Scott and Kaden returned, we loaded up the family and headed to the temple. The whole way there, Brylee and Branson, our nine-year-old twins, yelled in the backseat.

It was so hot. We all sweated through the family picture. Once inside the visitors' center, the kids scattered. While looking at the Jerusalem model, my boys decided to have a shoving match.

Four-year-old Ella wanted to see "the statue," so Scott and I corralled everyone and headed to see the *Christus*. We were the only family there, and as the lights dimmed and the soothing voice representing the Savior came over the speakers, I looked down the row at my children. All their little faces were turned upward, their eyes were wide, and everyone was perfectly reverent.

I swallowed hard and thought, "I did all that for this."

On Thursday, I decided to try a new recipe. Having completed the prep work, I was about to cook it all up, when Scott called from work and said he had received free tickets to a Cardinals football game. He asked if he and the boys could go. I knew it was a great opportunity. With a

yes, I quickly got everyone into the car and delivered the boys to Scott.

When I got home, I cleaned up my would-be dinner and put Ella and baby Cali to bed so I could watch a movie with Brylee, my oldest daughter. We happily snuggled together in my bed and talked about school, shampoo, and babies. She laid her head on my stomach while I tickled her back. I told her that I loved her and that Heavenly Father did too.

We held hands as she drifted off to sleep, and I thought, "I did all that for this."

On Friday, I took Branson and the little girls to play at my mom's house. On the way there I suggested we stop for ice cream on the way home. At Mom's, Branson was chasing, teasing, and tickling Ella, who was a willing participant, alternating between full-out screams and shrieking laughter. I asked them to stop so many times that I lost count.

We loaded up the car, only to find that the battery had died. After we managed to jump-start the car, Branson asked on the way home where we were stopping for ice cream. I responded, "We're not getting ice cream because you and Ella didn't listen to me." Branson said a few less-than-kind words, so when we got home, I sent him straight to bed.

Later on, I was lying half asleep on my bed when I heard Branson say, "Mom, don't open your eyes." I felt him putting something around my wrist, and then he ran out. It was a bracelet made of duct tape with the words "I am sorry" written on it.

And I thought, "I did all that for this."

I got up Saturday morning and started chores. In the

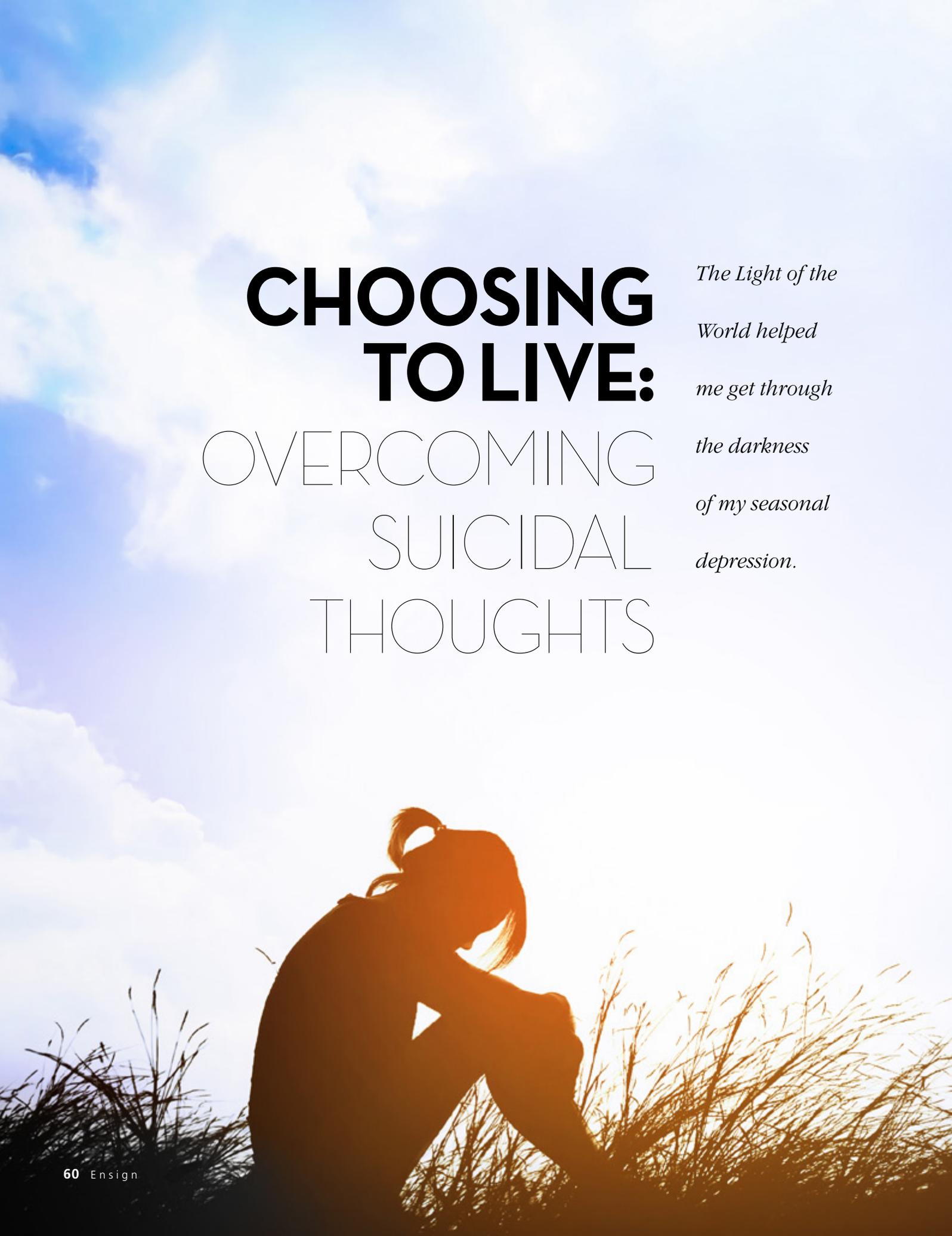


office I pulled my camera down from the shelf and began looking at the pictures I had taken the previous Saturday. I came to the one that a sister missionary had taken for us under the *Christus*. I remembered Scott and I showing our kids the nail marks in the marble feet of the statue. We had run our fingers in the grooves, looked up at the marks in His outstretched hands, and talked about how He got the wound in His side.

While remembering our precious minutes of peace, I felt the Lord whisper to my heart, "I did all that for this."

And He did. The Savior's sacrifice is essential in the divine plan "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). His Atonement provides us with the enabling and strengthening power to return to live with Him and our Heavenly Father. Jesus did all of that so I could have all of this, so my children and husband could be mine forever, so I could repent and try again. How I love Him for "doing all that" for us! ■

The author lives in Arizona, USA.



CHOOSING TO LIVE:

OVERCOMING SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

*The Light of the
World helped
me get through
the darkness
of my seasonal
depression.*

Name withheld

My battle with suicidal thoughts began shortly after I moved to a cold city in Iceland, where the lack of sunlight during the winter triggered severe seasonal affective disorder (SAD). As my pain grew too intense for me to handle, I considered suicide.

During the first year I didn't accept that I was depressed. I was scared to tell anyone, even my own husband, about my thoughts. No one in my family or at church knew I suffered from a life-threatening illness; they saw me as an active Church member with a fervent testimony who faced no major challenges. I prayed often, begging for relief, and Heavenly Father strengthened me. I became more careful with my diet, exercised often, immersed myself in the scriptures, served others, and kept all the commandments. But it wasn't enough.

Depression surged toward me like a giant wave. So I ran faster and prayed harder, but I couldn't always outrun the wave. I swam against the current, praying I would survive until my kids came home from school or until lunch. Some days I would live from minute to minute, using sheer willpower to defeat my thoughts and urges.

I remember feeling intense mental pain the first time I almost committed suicide. I did not plan or think ahead—I temporarily lost the ability to logically think. Afterwards I realized how close I had come to taking my own life. I wondered what was wrong with me. I told myself that I shouldn't have suicidal thoughts, and I pretended that they had never existed. I convinced myself that I would never have these thoughts again.

But suicidal thoughts continued to enter my mind when I least expected them. The temptation to end my excruciating pain was very strong. But I wanted to be healed. Though I didn't understand then that I was suffering from an acute illness (an illness that is severe and sudden), I knew I could be healed. So I asked for a priesthood blessing.

My husband, unaware of my struggles, said many things during the blessing that told me Heavenly Father was aware of me. He promised me that I would handle my challenges. Immediate healing was not the solution, but I accepted that Heavenly Father would help me overcome my struggle.

Summer arrived, full of sunshine and long days. It was never dark, not even at midnight. I was happy and felt like myself again. But as the days rapidly shortened in



September, my depression returned and suicidal thoughts infiltrated my mind. I was frightened. At first I tried what I had tried the previous year: praying more, exercising more, and trying harder at everything. But the suicidal urges grew stronger and more severe. I struggled for two months and finally realized that I couldn't survive another winter on my own. I realized that Heavenly Father has blessed us with modern medicine and doctors. To recover, I needed to be willing to open up about my depression and visit a doctor.

Asking for help was the hardest thing I've ever done. I could hardly speak through my tears when I told my husband about my depression and that I needed help. I couldn't say the word *suicide* out loud. My husband made an appointment with a psychiatrist for me.

My doctor prescribed medicine, which helped me get through the winter. Like many people, I struggled to find the right dosage and deal with the side effects. This brought additional stress to my marriage and my family, but my husband and my children supported me.

When spring came, my deep depression lifted, and I no longer needed medication. We moved to a sunny city. I thought all was well and that I would leave my mental illness behind. But I was not completely healed. Feelings of guilt arose for my previous thoughts, feelings, and urges. I disliked that my teenagers had figured out that

I had been suicidal. I felt like I had wasted more than a year of my life.

Also, I was scared—especially when the shorter days in September arrived again. I experienced intense daily flashbacks and feared I would suffer acute depression again. But I could see the Lord's hand in my life as I was led to a wonderful doctor and started therapy. I learned that I also suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). With my doctor's guidance, I dealt with PTSD.

And then I experienced a miracle. After mighty prayer and seeking to apply the Savior's Atonement in my life, the Lord removed my feelings of guilt rapidly, distinctly, and tangibly. His voice explained that I didn't have to carry guilt because my depression wasn't my fault. Jesus Christ carries that burden for me through the power of His Atonement. I was filled with light and felt hopeful again.

I don't know all the reasons why I had to face the challenges of life-threatening illness. Although I still carry all the memories, the mental and physical pains are gone. Every day I am grateful for my family, my doctor, and my time here on earth. Because of my illness, I gained empathy and love for others. I grew emotionally and spiritually and gained knowledge that I would not have learned otherwise. I experienced precious spiritual moments with my Heavenly Father and my Savior. My experiences have encouraged me to embrace life. ■



HE CAN HEAL US

“There is no physical pain, no spiritual wound, no anguish of soul or heartache, no infirmity or weakness you or I ever confront in mortality that the Savior did not experience first. . . . He can reach out, touch, succor, heal, and strengthen us to be more than we could ever be and help us to do that which we could never do relying only upon our own power.”

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

HOW TO CREATE A SUICIDE-PREVENTION SAFETY PLAN

By Doug Thomas

Licensed Clinical Social Worker

You can create a safety plan so that if you have thoughts of hurting yourself, you can start at step 1 and continue through the steps until you feel safe. The best time to create your plan is before you find yourself in a crisis. Keep your plan where you can easily access it, such as in your cell phone. There are websites and apps that have helpful templates to fill out, or you can create a plan with the help of an expert (see step 6 below) or on your own using these suggestions:

1. Recognize the warning signs.

What sorts of thoughts, moods, and behaviors tell you a crisis might be developing? Write them in your own words. For example: “When I cancel all my activities and only want to sleep.” “When I keep having thoughts of being a burden.” “When I feel agitated, like I need to do something immediately to get out of pain.” Noticing these warning signs will help you know you need to activate your plan.

2. Try to calm and comfort yourself.

Create a list of soothing and relaxing activities that you can do when you have thoughts or urges to harm yourself. Examples may include going for a walk, taking a warm bath, exercising, praying, or writing in a journal.

3. Think about your reasons for living.

At times, the pain may swallow up positive feelings. Create a list to remind

yourself of the people you love, things you like to do, and blessings you have felt grateful for.

4. Reach out to others and ask for help.

List several people (with phone numbers) you can talk to and who would be willing and available to help you through the rest of your safety plan during a crisis. These people could include friends, ward members, and family members.

5. Make sure you are in a safe environment.

This may involve asking someone to help remove items that you are likely to use to hurt yourself, or going somewhere else until your feelings shift. Make a list of social settings—such as parks, gyms, movie theaters, and so on—that are safe and distracting.

6. If you still feel like harming yourself, contact a professional.

List names, numbers, and locations of clinicians, emergency rooms, and crisis hotlines. Suicide.org/international-suicide-hotlines.html lists hotlines for dozens of countries. For example, the United States number is 1-800-273-TALK.

7. After doing all of this, if you still don't feel safe, call emergency services or go to your nearest hospital and ask for help.

Editors' note: An article in next month's magazine will have additional helps for those struggling with suicidal thoughts. The website PreventingSuicide.lds.org also has helpful links, talks, and information.



By Elder
Brent H. Nielson
Of the Seventy

CAN WE LIVE

“after the Manner of Happiness”?

The one thing we all have in common as children of God is our desire to be happy. Is it possible to live “after the manner of happiness” (2 Nephi 5:27) when confronted with the challenges of daily life?

My wife, Marcia, and I have been young single adults, and we have been young married adults. We have watched our six children go through high school, serve missions, date, attend college, marry, seek employment, and have children. We have learned that there are obstacles that may detour us from living “after the manner of happiness.” May I offer a few suggestions to help you along the way?

In our premortal life the Father explained His plan to us. He told us we would come to earth and receive a body. We learned that we would have appetites and passions that would be difficult to control and that we would sin. We also learned that to return to the Father, we had to be clean.

We had a serious dilemma: by entering mortality we would certainly sin, but how could we also be clean? The Father promised us He would provide a Savior who would come and atone for our sins. We “shouted for joy” (Job 38:7).

Let the Savior’s Redeeming Power Cleanse You

The Savior came in the meridian of time and atoned for our sins. Do you want to be free? Do you want to live “after the manner



As we make our way through life, the Savior’s Atonement can make our burdens light and allow us to live “after the manner of happiness.”

IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE. BY CARL HEINRICH BLOCH; RIGHT: PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CHALABALA/ISTOCK/THINKSTOCK

of happiness” with no fear? Let the Savior, through His redeeming power, take your sins.

We profess a belief in the Savior and in His Atonement, but we may have doubts that the Atonement will actually work for us. So we carry our own sins. We worry, we doubt, and sometimes we despair. That is not God’s plan for us.

From the very beginning, the Father told us the Savior would atone for our sins if we would repent. Let Him do it. There is no reason for you to carry your own sins. If you

will allow the Savior to do this, you will be free to act for yourself (see 2 Nephi 2:26; 10:23; Helaman 14:30).

I learned a lesson from a faithful missionary I interviewed during a mission tour a few years ago. He was obedient and faithful, but he carried some things he had done that he could not get over. As I spoke with him, he shared with me a past serious transgression. I asked if he had confessed it to his bishop and stake president before his mission. He had. I asked if he had asked forgiveness from those he had hurt or offended. He had. I asked if he



had sought forgiveness from his Heavenly Father. He had. Then I asked him: “Why do you want to pay for your sins when the Savior has already paid for them? He is standing at the door knocking. He is inviting you to come and partake of the fruit of His Atonement. Turn it over to Him. Let it go. Let Him take it.” (See Mosiah 3:7; Revelation 3:20; Alma 5:33–34; 22:18; D&C 88:33.)

As we talked and shed some tears, he finally understood. He left behind in the office that day a huge burden he had been carrying. He was free to live “after the manner of happiness.”

If you are trying to pay for your sins, understand that you are missing the very essence of God’s plan for you. The Savior has paid the price already. Only Satan wants you to think you can’t be forgiven and that you have to pay for your own sins. Let them go, and do it today. Your daily happiness comes as you free yourself from thinking and worrying about your past sins.

You may ask, “But what if I sin again?” Then you repent again. Let the redeeming power of the Savior’s Atonement work for you as you make repentance a daily part of your life.

Embrace Your Trials

What else might stand in the way of living “after the manner of happiness”? Perhaps it is the difficult trials you confront. These trials may come from physical or emotional illness, family difficulties, schoolwork, dating, employment, or lack of money. How can you possibly live “after the manner of happiness” while facing trials?

In our premortal life the Father explained that we would come to earth to be tested and tried. Facing trials is not only a part of our earthly existence but also essential to our progression. It is how we *become*. Years ago a General Authority told me if I didn’t have trials in my life, the plan wasn’t working for me.

When I was young, President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) was the prophet. During his ministry as an Apostle and then as Church President, he had many health challenges. He suffered from heart problems. He had cancer

of the larynx and had to learn to speak again. He suffered three subdural hematomas (a collection of fluid outside the brain). After all of his trials and difficulties, and just days after an operation to treat his first subdural hematoma, do you know what he taught at general conference? He said, “‘Give me this mountain,’ give me these challenges.”¹

I was stunned. Why, after all he had been through, would he ask for another mountain, for more challenges? He taught us with the example of his life that we grow through trials.

I find it fascinating to think that our pioneer ancestors, who lost limbs and lives and loved ones as they crossed the plains, said after all their suffering, “We became acquainted with [God] in our extremities.”²

If we know we are going to live eternally with the Father after our mortal life, can we find freedom and happiness in knowing that our trials are learning experiences? They forge our souls and help us become more like God. You may not feel you are ready to pray for challenges, as did President Kimball, but if you will embrace your trials, ask yourself what you can learn for your eternal life from those trials, and exercise faith in Jesus Christ, He will lift you, direct your paths, and help you overcome. His invitation in Matthew is:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. . . .

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28, 30).

Don’t let your trials own you. You own them. Look in the face of adversity with faith and ask this powerful question: “What can I learn from this?”

Joseph Smith was taught this lesson in Liberty Jail: “Know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good” (D&C 122:7).

Embrace your trials and move forward with faith.

Access the Savior’s Enabling Power

You might then ask, “What can I do in the moment to obtain the strength to overcome sin and to make it through difficult trials?”



We know that through the infinite Atonement, the Savior has paid for our sins. But we must also know that as we make our way through life, the “enabling power”³ of the Savior’s Atonement can make our burdens light and allow us to live “after the manner of happiness.”

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has stated: “Do we also understand that the Atonement is for faithful men and women who are obedient, worthy, and conscientious and who are striving to become better and serve more faithfully? I wonder if we fail to fully acknowledge this strengthening aspect of the Atonement in our lives and mistakenly believe we must carry our load all alone—through sheer grit, will-power, and discipline and with our obviously limited capacities.”⁴

Alma learned this lesson as he and his people faced a trial that required them to literally carry heavy physical burdens on their backs. Alma and his people prayed to the Lord, but He did not change their circumstance at first. Rather, He did something unexpected. We read in Mosiah 24:15: “It



The Savior came in the meridian of time and atoned for our sins. Do you want to live “after the manner of happiness”? Let the Savior take your sins.

came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord.”

When you face burdens in life, the key to access the Savior’s enabling power is to submit cheerfully and with patience to the will of the Lord. Allow the enabling power of the Savior to make your burdens light.

As you struggle with sin and pass through trials, can the Lord really make your burdens light? Yes. We see it every day. How do young single adults go to school, work, serve others, date, keep the commandments, and still live “after the manner of happiness”? They do it through the enabling power of the Savior’s Atonement. How do young married couples go to school, work two jobs, have children, serve in the Church, and still live “after the manner of happiness”? They do it through the enabling power of the Savior’s Atonement.

If you “endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7). Knowing the end, free yourself from sin, embrace your trials with faith, and allow the Savior’s enabling power to make your burdens light so you and your family can live “after the manner of happiness.” ■

From a devotional address, “The Truth Shall Make You Free,” given at Brigham Young University–Idaho on November 10, 2014. For the full address, visit web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches.

NOTES

1. Spencer W. Kimball, “Give Me This Mountain,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 79.
2. In David O. McKay, “Pioneer Women,” *Relief Society Magazine*, Jan. 1948, 8.
3. Bible Dictionary, “Grace”; see also David A. Bednar, “Bear Up Their Burdens with Ease,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 90.
4. David A. Bednar, “Bear Up Their Burdens with Ease,” 89.



GROWING IN MY GOLDEN YEARS

I questioned my worth but learned that now was my time to develop a talent that would enable me to serve and have much joy.

By Joan Hill Cheney

I was 72 years old, and my life and my attitude were beginning to change. My energy and health were also changing, and I was feeling an emptiness that I had not experienced before. My three children and their families did not live close by, and although we emailed and called each other frequently, I didn't get to see them regularly. I had remarried after the death of my first husband, and my second husband also had three children, but only one lived nearby. He and I had served a mission together, and our life had been good. I had fulfilled many callings in the Church, and through each one I had gained increased testimony and understanding of the gospel and welcomed new friends into my life.

But I started to question my worth and what I had left to offer.



Praying for Guidance

I began praying frequently to Heavenly Father about my feelings, asking for guidance and help in finding what it was that could bring me a feeling of comfort and fulfillment. I wanted to be able to continue to serve in some way.

Then I realized that there was something I had always desired to do but had never taken the time to work at and make happen—that was to become better and more qualified in music. Music had been an important part of my growing-up years, and I loved it. However, through the years of raising the children, working part-time as a nurse, and fulfilling Church callings, I had played the piano only occasionally. At the same time, I did make sure that my children took music lessons.

Becoming a Temple Organist

Then a good friend suggested that she and I volunteer to play the organ at the Idaho Falls Idaho Temple (one of the few temples with live background organ music). I loved going to the temple and always enjoyed listening to the organ, but I also realized that I was not prepared to do such a thing.

Shortly after this discussion with my friend, I enrolled in an organ training class. I was motivated and excited to take this brief course, but I knew I would need much

additional practice to feel confident and ready to volunteer at the temple. I knew it was important to play the correct notes, get the timing right, and play softly so that the patrons would feel the Spirit through the music.

After about five months of practicing many hours, I put my application in at the temple to be a volunteer organist. There was an opening available, and I started my new position. A year earlier I would never have thought it possible that I would be having such an opportunity! My prayers had been answered.

Reflecting on What I've Learned

Being a temple organist has been a great blessing in my life. It has made me stretch and work at something to become better. I have an increased love for the hymns, and I pay more attention to their messages. They bring peace and comfort to my heart as I practice and play them.

I have learned that we can always find a way to serve if we so desire. Talents can be developed more fully or even begun as old age approaches, life can take on new meaning, and we can have a feeling of self-worth. We just have to turn to Heavenly Father for inspiration and guidance, and then, as that direction comes, we need to take a step forward and make the effort required. ■

The author lives in Idaho, USA.



LIFT UP YOUR SOUL IN PRAYER

“Lift up your soul in prayer and explain to your Heavenly Father what you are feeling. . . . Pour out your heart and express your gratitude. Let Him know of the trials you are facing. Plead with Him in Christ’s name for strength and support. Ask that your ears may be opened, that you may hear His voice.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “The Hope of God’s Light,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 75.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- Develop a talent or artistic ability.
- Take a class in something I’ve always wanted to learn about.
- Help and serve my family.
- Serve diligently in my Church calling.
- Volunteer for community service.
- Become involved in a humanitarian project.
- Serve a mission either at home or away.
- Take a family history class.
- Volunteer to serve in the temple.
- Join a senior group offering classes or activities.



*In the Lord's eyes, true greatness
does not come through worldly
strength, power, or position.*

It comes through humility.

WHAT IS HUMILITY, AND HOW DO WE DEVELOP IT?

By Barbara A. Lewis

Hyrum Lefler served a mission to Poland in 2002. He had been in the country only a short time and was struggling to learn the difficult Polish language when he learned that his father had died in a construction accident. Elder Lefler wondered why the Lord would take his father while Elder Lefler was serving a mission. Why was his father not protected?

As grief swept over him, he fell to his knees and humbly begged the Lord for understanding. Then it hit him. With his earthly father gone, he needed to rely more on his Father in Heaven. He had another Father who loved him.

Elder Lefler decided he would not question the Lord. He dedicated himself to submit humbly to the Lord's will in all things and put all his energy into his mission. Peace flowed into his heart and strength filled his soul. Because of his choice to be humble, Elder Lefler could feel the support of both his earthly father and his Heavenly Father. He continued to study diligently, and within a week of his father's death, he could understand the Polish language as people spoke. He knew that his Heavenly Father was helping him as a confirming gift of love.

Qualities of Humility

Having humility means that we present to our Heavenly Father and the Savior "a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:20), as Elder Lefler did. We become meek and teachable like a child (see Matthew 18:4; Mosiah 3:19). We overcome pride and "recognize gratefully our dependence on the Lord."¹ We repent when

we need to repent. We understand that we need Heavenly Father's support and that our talents and our gifts come from Him.

The defining characteristic of humility is the submission of our will to God's will. "The submission of one's will is really the only uniquely personal thing we have to place on God's altar," said Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. "The many other things we 'give' . . . are actually the things He has already given or loaned to us. However, when you and I finally submit ourselves, by letting our individual wills be swallowed up in God's will, then we are really giving something to Him! It is the only possession which is truly ours to give!"²

Humility is not a sign of weakness; it is just the opposite. It shows that we know our strength comes from God.³ When Christ's disciples asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" our Savior taught, "Whosoever . . . shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:1, 4). Contrary to what we might often think, greatness does not come only because of strength and power; true greatness requires humility.

Pride Is the Opposite of Humility

Unless we are careful to cultivate the characteristics of humility described above, it is easy to be distracted by humility's opposite: pride. As author C. S. Lewis wrote, "Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man."⁴ President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) taught, "The proud make every man their adversary by pitting their intellects, opinions, works, wealth, talents, or any other worldly measuring device against others."⁵ That is when we run into trouble. Delighting in being richer than our neighbors, more athletic than our friends, or better looking than others is being prideful. For example, when Saul heard Israelite women chant, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Samuel 18:7), Saul compared himself to David, and his feelings of inferiority led him on to works of wickedness.⁶

President Benson also declared, "The proud wish God would agree with them. They aren't interested in changing their opinions to agree with God's."⁷ They believe they

know better than God what is best for them, and they care more about what people think of them than about God's judgment. The Book of Mormon describes the Nephites' tragic fall from greatness (see Moroni 8:27), and modern revelation confirms that pride helped bring about their fall (see D&C 38:39). God does not look for the richest, the most beautiful, or the cleverest person. He blesses the humble and meek who are willing to submit to His will.

Humility Enables Repentance

Martin Harris was an example of one who humbled himself through repentance. He was a wealthy and



LOOKING INSIDE: HOW CAN WE DEVELOP HUMILITY?

- Submit our will to the Lord's will (see 3 Nephi 11:11; Moroni 10:32).
- Recognize the Lord's hand in all things (see D&C 59:21).
- Pray to our Father to help us grow in humility (see Helaman 3:33–35; Ether 12:27).
- Choose not to be offended (see D&C 42:88).
- Recognize, confess, and forsake our sins (see Mosiah 26:29–30; D&C 58:43).
- Fast and pray for the needs of others (see Isaiah 58:6–7; Alma 6:6).
- Think of the Savior and renew our covenants during the sacrament (see Mosiah 18:8–10; D&C 20:77, 79).

respected landowner in Palmyra, New York, USA, in 1827. He risked his reputation by supporting the Prophet Joseph Smith and became a scribe during part of the Book of Mormon translation. After losing 116 pages of the manuscript, he was described in a revelation as a “wicked man” who had “boasted in his own wisdom” (D&C 3:12–13). However, he humbled himself and repented. He pledged his farm to cover the publication costs of the Book of Mormon and was allowed to be one of the Three Witnesses to see the golden plates.

Nevertheless, he later gave in to pride and was excommunicated. Five years later he once again humbled himself



LOOKING OUTSIDE: HOW CAN WE HUMBLY SERVE OTHERS?

- Donate our time and resources to help others (see Deuteronomy 15:11; Malachi 3:8–10; Mosiah 4:26).
- Accept Church callings willingly (see Mosiah 2:16–17).
- Refrain from boasting (see Matthew 23:12; Alma 38:11).
- Share our testimonies (see Mosiah 28:1–3).
- Serve a mission, if we can (see Alma 4:19; 31:5; D&C 112:28).
- Obtain or keep a current temple recommend, and attend the temple often (see Isaiah 2:2–3; D&C 124:39).

and was rebaptized. Eventually he traveled to Utah to join the Saints there. He never denied his testimony of the Book of Mormon, and he spent the rest of his life sharing it.⁸

The Greatest Example of Humility

Ultimately, our perfect example of humility is Jesus Christ. He was born in a shelter for animals, where his bed was a manger. The first people to visit Him were poor shepherds. (See Luke 2:7–20.) After Jesus miraculously fed the 5,000, the people wanted Him to become their king. Concerning this episode, Elder Athos M. Amorim of the Seventy taught: “Such popularity and power would have severely tempted or corrupted most people. But Jesus ignored the intoxicating influence of the praise of the world, departing into a mountain to be alone (see John 6:15).”⁹

On another occasion, the Savior knelt humbly before His disciples and washed their feet (see John 13:2–5). He also rode triumphantly into Jerusalem on a donkey, a symbol of both royalty and humility known to the people (see John 12:12–18; Zechariah 9:9).

Jesus spent His life in the service of others, without regard for personal fame or fortune. He taught the people this great truth: “Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant” (Matthew 20:27).

Under the heavy weight of the sin and pain of the world in Gethsemane, our Savior submitted Himself to His Father’s will: “Not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39). His final mortal act was the greatest example of humility ever witnessed, as He allowed Himself to be hung upon the cross. His example sets the standard of humility for all of us to follow. Through Him we can overcome pride, repent, and learn to submit our will to the Father’s. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. “Humility,” Gospel Topics, [topics.lds.org](https://www.topics.lds.org).
2. Neal A. Maxwell, “Swallowed Up in the Will of the Father,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 24.
3. See “Humility,” Gospel Topics, [topics.lds.org](https://www.topics.lds.org).
4. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1960), 109.
5. Ezra Taft Benson, “Beware of Pride,” *Ensign*, May 1989, 4.
6. See Ezra Taft Benson, “Beware of Pride,” 5.
7. Ezra Taft Benson, “Beware of Pride,” 4.
8. See Larry E. Morris, “The Life of Martin Harris: Patterns of Humility and Repentance,” *Ensign*, July 2012, 56–61.
9. Athos M. Amorim, “Words of Jesus: Humility,” *Ensign*, March 2003, 50.

REFINER'S **Fire** AND FULLERS' **Soap**

In comparing Himself to these two things, the Lord teaches us a lot about how He purifies us.

“But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap.”

Malachi 3:2



A Refiner of Silver



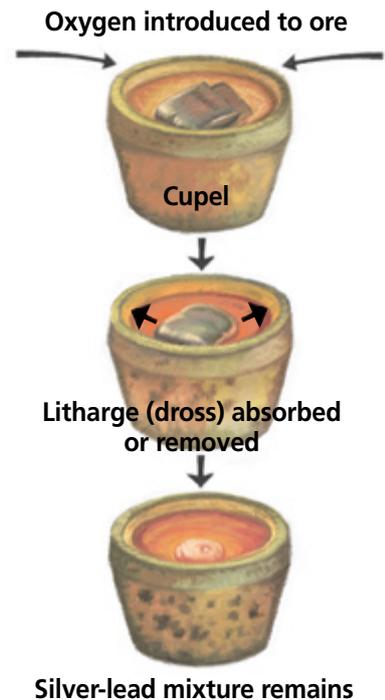
Galena

1. Silver was extracted from ores containing lead (such as lead sulfide, or galena).
2. The ore was heated in a fire and the lead sifted out of the ashes.
3. The lead was placed in a dish known as a cupel, which was made of bone ash or clay containing calcium carbonate, and heated in a furnace to 1,600–1,800°F (900–1,000°C).
4. When the metal reached the right temperature, the refiner introduced oxygen by blowing air over it through a bellows.
5. Litharge, or silver dross, would form on the surface of the molten metal, and the

refiner would blow or scrape it off, leaving pure silver. Litharge was also absorbed into the cupel as the lead reacted with the calcium carbonate.

6. A refiner would usually apply this process twice, reintroducing lead to the silver so that newly formed litharge could remove any remaining impurities.

The process was delicate, requiring just the right temperature and just the right amount of lead. The refiner would often know he had achieved pure silver by seeing its unmistakably pure glowing light.



The cupellation process



Fullers' field

Fuller "walking" cloth, or treading on it

Fuller beating cloth



PREPARE TO MEET GOD

"There are many kinds of challenges. Some give us necessary experiences. Adverse results in this mortal life are not evidence of lack of faith or of an imperfection in our Father in Heaven's overall plan. The refiner's fire is real, and qualities of character and righteousness that are forged in the furnace of affliction perfect and purify us and prepare us to meet God."

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Songs They Could Not Sing," *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 106.

A Fuller of Cloth

A fuller's job was to cleanse and whiten cloth. In Jerusalem, the cleansing process took place in a fullers' field outside the city because of the smell. Dirt and oils were removed from the wool so that it would be pure white and ready to be dyed, if desired.

Soap contained alkaline substances such as sodium carbonate or potassium carbonate (the word *alkali* comes from *kali*, the Arabic word for the saltwort or glasswort plant, whose ashes were used for soap). These chemicals remove oil (and the dirt that clings to it) by combining with the oil molecules to make them water soluble. For many centuries, the process for making soap was a closely guarded secret among select Jewish families.

With the cloth soaking in soap and water, the fullers beat or stamped it to remove the impurities (the Hebrew word for *fuller* comes from a root meaning "to tread").



Saltwort

What We Can Learn

The Lord purifies us. Like clean, white cloth or brightly shining silver, the end product of our purification is something beautiful and valuable—a soul perfected in virtue and holiness. We can attain this state only with the Lord's help and in His way.

The purification process can be harsh and difficult. The trials of this life are not only unavoidable but also necessary. We must be "willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [us]" (Mosiah 3:19) so that we can become like Him.

The Lord is with us through our trials. The refiner of silver and the fuller of cloth could not set their processes in motion, walk away, and return later when it was finished. They had to be there at every stage and see it through to the end. Likewise, the Lord is not distant from us in our trials but is intimately engaged in our lives. ■

PRESSING FORWARD THROUGH THE PLATEAUS

Outdoor activities such as hiking, cycling, and skiing are a big part of my life. Recently, it struck me how similar our time on earth is to the time I dedicate to outdoor fitness. I tend to focus on building my stamina and skills in one activity for a time or season. Then by choice, chance, or invitation, I switch to another. No matter how fit and confident I feel in a type of fitness, though, upon switching to a new enterprise, I find myself winded, falling short, and feeling muscles I've "never felt before." Then I settle into the new type of fitness and rebuild the necessary endurance and skills.

Similarly, in life we tend to become focused on certain habits. We become comfortable. Then by choice, chance, or invitation, our plateau of comfort and ease becomes a period of challenge and opportunity for growth.

Tackling life's challenges can be a daunting task. Nephi encourages us, saying, "Press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and

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of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:20).

Occasionally, I wonder how nice it might have been to have remained indefinitely in the premortal existence, listening to Heavenly Father simply *tell* us about His great plan of happiness. However, our progression required a "classroom"—earth—where we could experience mortality for ourselves.

Over the years as I have testified of the truthfulness and need for Heavenly Father's plan, new opportunities and

sometimes-painful experiences have embedded this teaching into my soul. We seem to learn gospel truths in layers, revisiting the same subjects again and again. I sometimes find myself asking, "How much deeper are we going to go here?" Or, like fitness, "How many other muscle groups do I still need to train?"

Still, as the seasons of life change and challenges vary, I know that the Lord will provide me with the experiences I need. And as I press forward, I will learn to become more like Him and return to His presence. ■

Christopher Drake, California, USA



ILLUSTRATION BY ALLEN GARRIS

THIS TIME I ACTED

I buckled my daughter into the well-worn car seat. Our budget was tight, so I was grateful for the recent hand-me-down. It served as a booster seat since my daughter had outgrown her previous car seat. I looked forward to running errands on that beautiful day.

We pulled into our first stop, the library. As I unstrapped my daughter, I noticed a young Hispanic woman parked next to us. A baby, unable to fully support himself, sat directly on the backseat, hunched into a little ball. The young mother struggled to cinch the seat belt tight enough for his small form. I had two thoughts.

“She doesn’t have a car seat for her baby. I could give her mine.”

And then I talked myself out of it.

“She probably doesn’t speak English. I might offend her. My car seat is awfully worn; maybe she wouldn’t want it. If she did, how would I replace it?”

So I did nothing.

She slipped into the driver’s seat and drove away.

Before I reached the library’s doors, regret engulfed me. I knew I had made the wrong choice, and there was no way to undo it.

I pulled on the doors but they didn’t budge. The library hadn’t opened yet. I spent the rest of my errand run endlessly replaying the scene, haunted by the fact that I had done nothing.

After my last errand, I decided to try the library again. I pulled into the same parking spot as before. To my surprise, I saw the same mother and son parked beside me again. An immense burden lifted from my heart.

This time I acted without hesitation. I unbuckled my child’s car seat and approached the young mother. She didn’t speak English. With gestures, I pointed to her baby and the car seat and her car. Together we buckled the car seat in the car. As I showed her how to use it, I realized I already knew the only Spanish I needed to know: “gracias.”

My heart overflowed with gratitude to a merciful Heavenly Father for

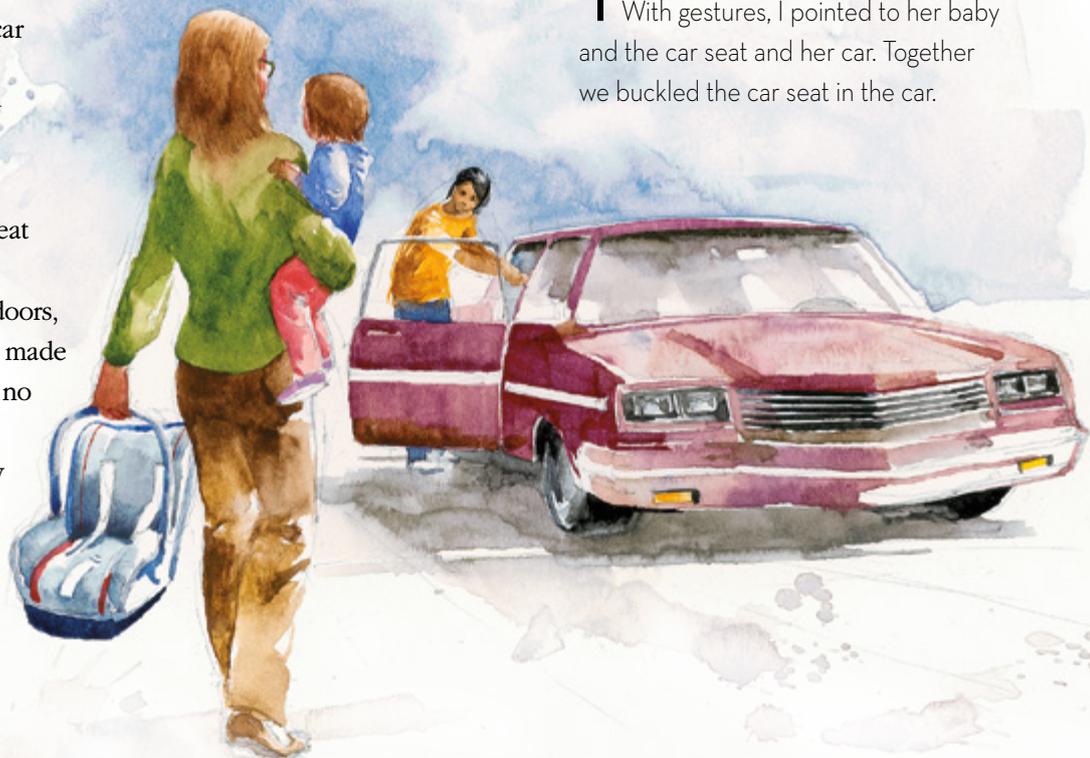
giving me a second chance to help a sister in need.

I added one final errand to the list—a nearby thrift store. I buckled in my daughter and drove carefully to the store. In the back corner of the shop, sitting on the floor, was a car seat—identical to the one I had just given away and just as worn. I purchased it, awed and humbled at the morning’s sequence of events.

Through the Savior’s gentle but effective teaching, the lesson had been planted deep into my heart: follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost—the first time. ■

Teresa Weaver, Texas, USA

This time I acted without hesitation. With gestures, I pointed to her baby and the car seat and her car. Together we buckled the car seat in the car.



MY UNSEEN INVESTIGATOR

I was blessed with wonderful parents. My mother was a member of the Church, and although my father wasn't, he still supported us in our Church activities. Growing up, I prayed daily that my father would join the Church.

When I received my patriarchal blessing at age 16, I was promised that I would be an influence in helping my father join the Church. I talked with him about the things I learned in seminary. I told him about the scriptures that state that it is necessary to be baptized and confirmed to enter the kingdom of God (see John 3:5). Tearfully, I told him about the blessings of the temple that would make it possible for us to be together forever.

I attended a small school in Arizona, USA. I had wonderful friends during high school, even though I was the only Church member in my class. At the time, President David O. McKay (1873–1970) was the prophet. We often heard his counsel for

While I was outside the house painting and you and the kids were inside holding those meetings, I was convinced I had been on the outside looking in long enough.

“every member [to be] a missionary” (see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* [2011], chapter 6). One summer my sister Marilyn and I invited some friends to take the missionary lessons. They took two lessons and were no longer interested. We were disappointed, but it didn't end our friendships.

I went to college at the end of that summer. During spring semester, I received a letter from my dad. He wrote: “It is my greatest privilege to be the head of a household of wonderful girls. Because of all of your strong testimonies of the gospel and the meetings and interest in other young people last summer, I really started getting interested in the Church. While I was outside the

house painting and you and the kids were inside holding those meetings, I was convinced I had been on the outside looking in long enough. I have thanked Heavenly Father many times for your mother and the fact that she was brought up in the Church and for the way she has brought up you girls.”

My father was soon baptized, and a year later our family was sealed for time and eternity in the Mesa Arizona Temple.

Even though none of our friends joined the Church, the most important person in our lives did. We never know how we will be blessed when we follow the counsel of the prophet. ■

Diane Mitchell Call, Arizona, USA



ILLUSTRATION BY ALLEN GARMS

SEEKING ETIENE

A few weeks before leaving to serve a full-time mission, I went to visit the home of an old friend who was not a member of the Church. I intended to stay for just a few minutes, but due to a heavy rainstorm, I had to stay longer than anticipated. So my friend, his mother, and I sat down and began to talk about the Church and my upcoming mission.

I explained that I might be assigned to serve in cities such as Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, or Brasília.

For some reason, my friend's mother decided to give me the address of her sister who lived in a town near Rio de Janeiro. She said that I should go and visit her if I were ever sent there.

I left for my mission on July 7, 1982. I served in many different cities,

including one near the place my friend's aunt lived. I thought about visiting her, but her home was not in my area. I didn't tell the missionaries assigned to that area about her because I was still hoping I would be able to go myself.

At that time, missionaries served for 18 months. The time passed without seeing my friend's aunt and her family.

Years later, while attending a ward social, I happened to see my non-member friend. I learned that he had been invited by one of his relatives, an aunt named Etiene who had recently been baptized into the Church. I then found out that Aunt Etiene had just moved into our ward from the state of Rio de Janeiro. I quickly came to love his aunt Etiene, and we loved to talk

together about our memories of Rio de Janeiro. To my embarrassment, I learned that she was the same woman I wanted to visit during my mission. She had been baptized only recently, after the unexpected death of her husband.

Fortunately, she has forgiven me for not encouraging other missionaries to visit her. However, she was disappointed over the time she lost while she was not enjoying the blessings of the gospel.

Regrets such as these are not felt just by returned missionaries but may also come to all of us if we neglect to heed the promptings of the Spirit, whether that means inviting friends to come to a Church activity or giving a referral to the missionaries. Let us go to the Lord and ask for inspiration. He will speak to us by the still, small voice of the Spirit. He will give us the help we need to do missionary work with dedication and love. ■

Elson Carlos Ferreira Paraná, Brazil



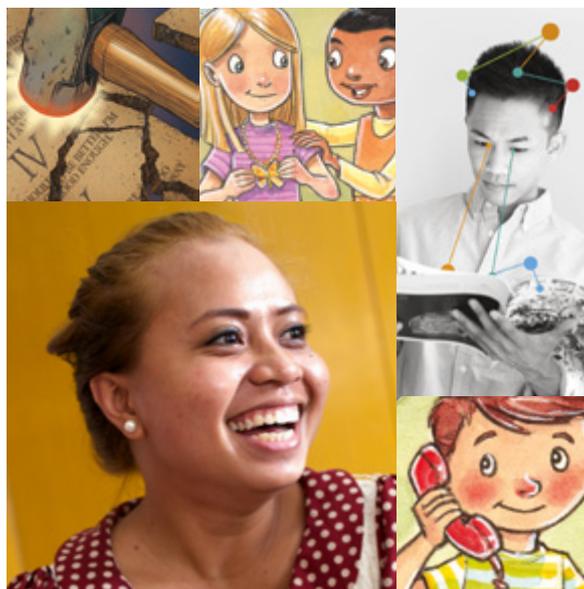
INSIGHTS



What is a father's most important work?

“Perhaps the most essential of a father’s work is to turn the hearts of his children to their Heavenly Father. If by his example as well as his words a father can demonstrate what fidelity to God looks like in day-to-day living, that father will have given his children the key to peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come.”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Fathers,” *Ensign*, May 2016, 94.



In Church Magazines

Ensign: Whether we like it or not, media affects us one way or another. It's up to us to choose wisely. See "No Neutral Ground: How Media Influences Us" (page 22). Plus, read about what it means to have humility and how we can develop this Christlike trait (page 70).

New Era: Read a message from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland about how to live "after the manner of happiness" (page 2), as well as articles that show how keeping the commandments is really all about joy and love (pages 24, 26, and 30). Also, find advice and help for youth regarding depression (page 32) and suicide (page 36).

Friend: Do any of your children or their friends struggle with long-term sadness or depression? Read "A Butterfly for Courtney" (page 34) and "Don't Give Up!" (page 36). It's never too early to lay the groundwork for healthy emotional development.



THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS