

# Ensign

A photograph of a family in a kitchen. A man in a dark jacket and glasses stands with his arms crossed, looking down at a young girl in a red jacket and blue glasses who is also looking down. A woman in a white sweater holds a baby, looking towards the man. A young girl in pink pajamas stands in the center, looking up. Another girl is partially visible in the bottom right corner. The kitchen has white cabinets and a wooden countertop.

**Your Best Chance for  
Being Happy, p. 26**

**Four Things New Members  
Want You to Know, p. 38**

**Why Silence Loses in a War of  
Words, p. 48**

**How My Ward Saved Me after  
My Daughter's Suicide, p. 66**





*This peaceful scene shows the Hill Cumorah in the distance. In ancient America, a Nephite prophet named Moroni hid his people's records in the hill. About 1,400 years later, Moroni returned to the vicinity as an angel and revealed the records' location to young Joseph Smith. Joseph unearthed and translated the records, which became known as the Book of Mormon.*

Photograph by George Edward Anderson,  
courtesy of Church History Library

# Contents September 2017

Volume 47 • Number 9



## MESSAGES

### FIRST PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

- 4** **Prophets to Guide Us**  
By President Thomas S. Monson

### VISITING TEACHING MESSAGE

- 7** **Of One Heart**

**ON THE COVER**  
Photograph  
by Leslie Nilsson

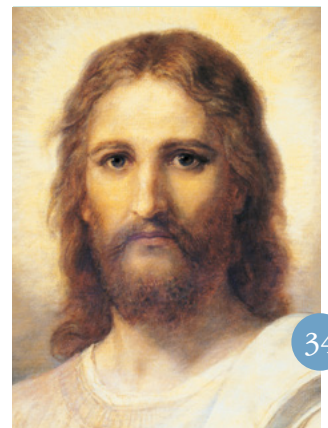


## YOUNG ADULT FEATURES

- 14** **Experimenting on the Music**  
By Marcel Hall  
*I found that something so simple could change everything.*
- 16** **Seeking Refuge, Finding Peace**  
By Boone J. Chen, as told to Beth Quist Beck and Margaret Willden Willes  
*A Laotian refugee recognizes the hand of God in his life.*
- 20** **A Better Way to Measure Myself**  
By Heather J. Johnson  
*Have you ever worried about whether you are doing enough? You're not alone.*
- 22** **Facing Health Setbacks with a Gospel Perspective**  
*Meet some young adults who face their health challenges with faith.*

## FEATURES

- 26** **The Gospel Path to Happiness**  
By Elder Jeffrey R. Holland  
*How do we pursue happiness, especially when life lies ahead of us as a challenging mountain to climb?*
- 34** **Joy in the Face of Death**  
By Jerri A. Harwell  
*After her son died and her own health declined, this mother still found joy.*
- 38** **We Can Do Better: Welcoming Others into the Fold**  
By Betsy VanDenBerghe  
*Four ways we can help new and returning members feel welcome in the Church.*
- 44** **An Unexpected Life**  
By Janine MacDonald  
*As a single sister, I decided to choose optimism rather than discouragement.*







## 48 **Defending the Faith**

By Elder Jörg Klebingat

*What are we willing to do to defend our belief in Jesus Christ?*

## 54 **Living the Gospel Alone in Your Family**

By Megan Armknecht

*Here are some tips and encouragement for part-member families and their friends.*

## 58 **A Burned Book of Mormon**

By Joshua Sanchez

*I was about to throw away the burned book, but I couldn't do it.*

## 61 **Poem: From the Fountain**

By Sharon Price Anderson

*Reflections on the powerful gospel symbol of water.*

## 62 **Feasting on the Words of Christ**

By Elder Randy D. Funk

*Savoring the scriptures will give us strength and faith to overcome life's challenges.*

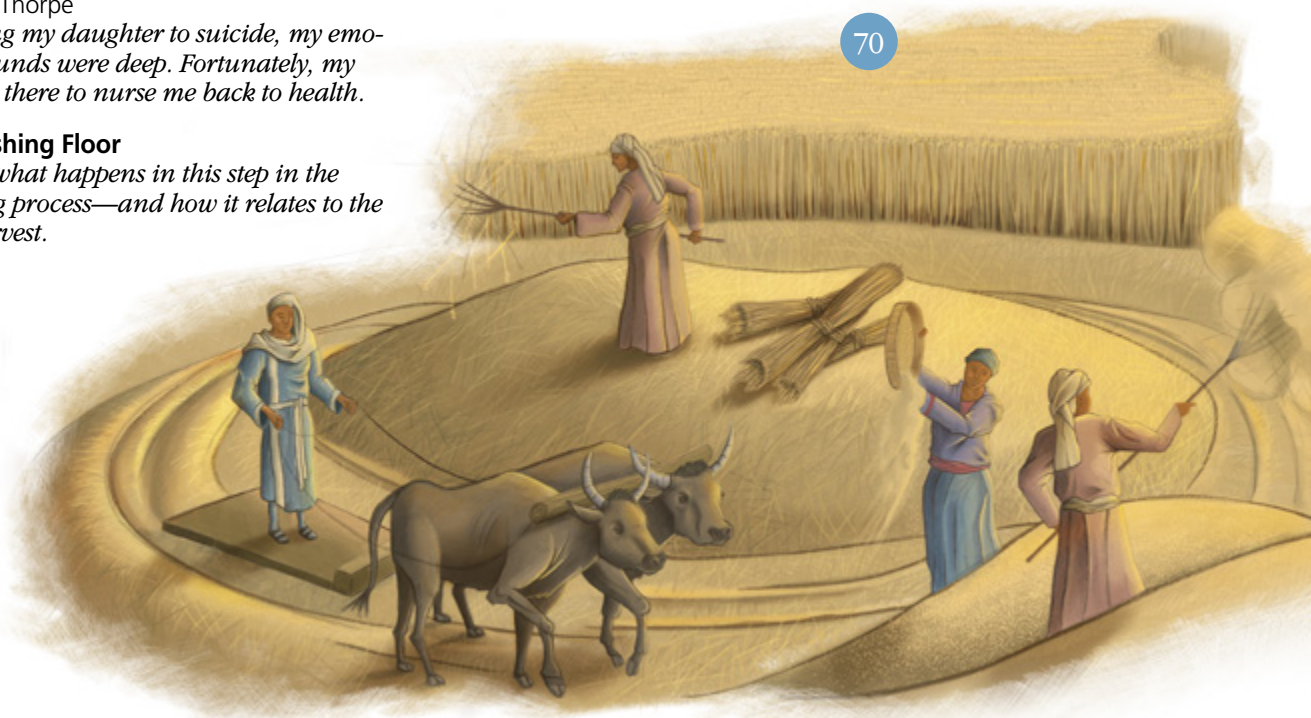
## 66 **Saved after My Daughter's Suicide**

By Le Etta Thorpe

*After losing my daughter to suicide, my emotional wounds were deep. Fortunately, my ward was there to nurse me back to health.*

## 70 **The Threshing Floor**

*Find out what happens in this step in the harvesting process—and how it relates to the Lord's harvest.*



## DEPARTMENTS

### 8 **April 2017 Conference Notebook**

### 10 **Teaching in the Savior's Way: Love and Chocolate Cake—What Will You Give to Bring Them Back?**

By Devin G. Durrant

### 72 **Friend Connection: Respecting Others**

### 73 **Teaching the Proclamation to Children**

### 74 **Portraits of Faith: Cayo and Anthony—Paris, France**

### 76 **Latter-day Saint Voices**

### 80 **Until We Meet Again: The Book of Mormon—Truly a Miracle**

By Elder Mark E. Petersen



# Ensign

A MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF  
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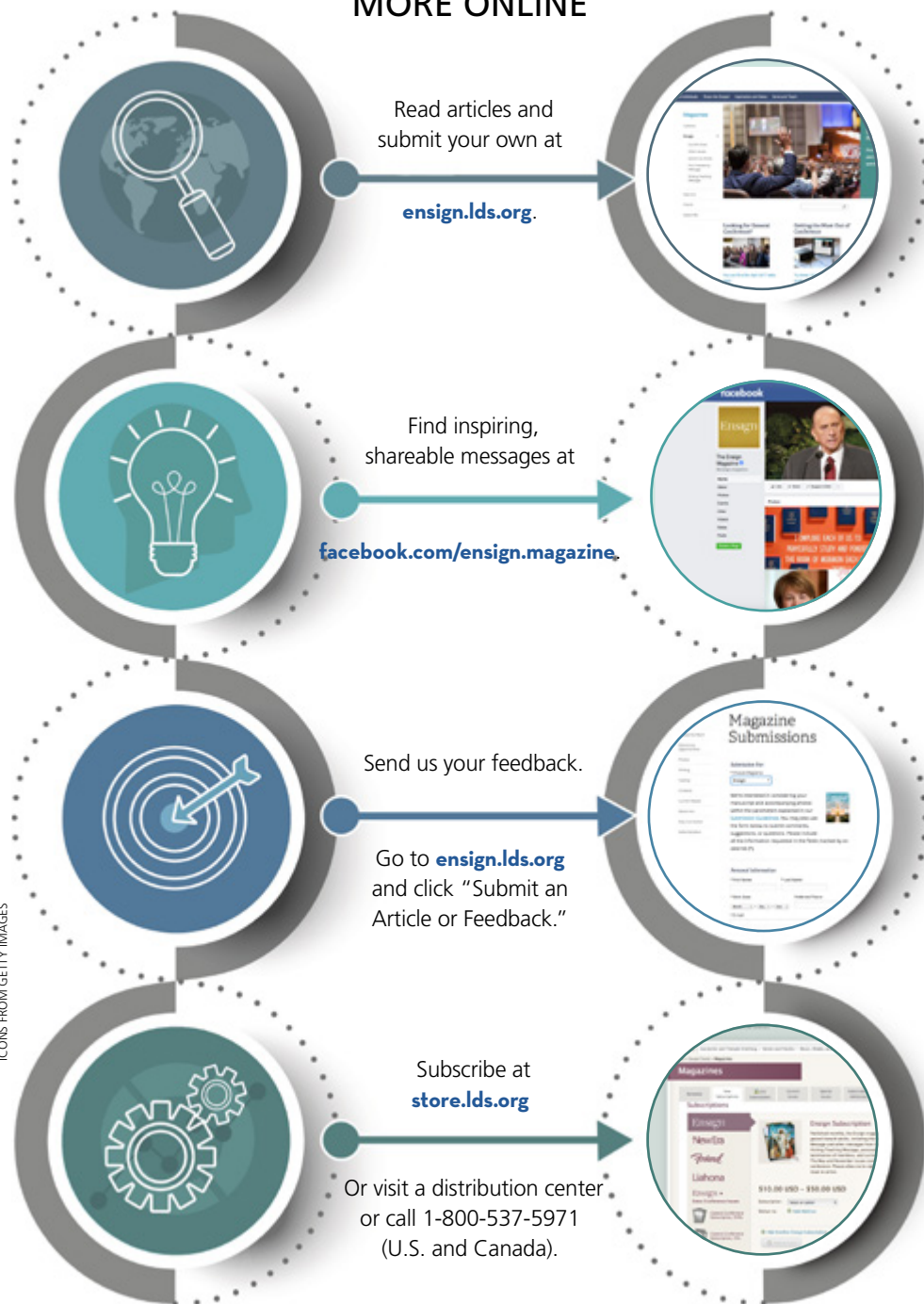
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## MORE ONLINE



ICONS FROM GETTY IMAGES

### PREPARING FOR GENERAL CONFERENCE

In this issue, President  
Monson counsels us to pre-  
pare to be taught at general  
conference (see page 4).  
Check out these fun activities  
to help you get ready: [lds.org/  
go/conferenceE917](http://lds.org/go/conferenceE917).

### SUICIDE: HELPING THOSE LEFT BEHIND

How can we show sup-  
port to those who have  
lost loved ones to suicide?  
(see page 66). Read article  
highlights and find additional  
resources at [lds.org/go/  
supportE917](http://lds.org/go/supportE917).

### BLESSED BY REFUGEES

This issue features the power-  
ful story of a Laotian refugee  
(see page 16). Watch a related  
video, and read article excerpts  
about the contributions  
refugees often make to the  
communities that help them:  
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*Liahona* under "2017 Digital Articles."





By President  
Thomas S. Monson

## PROPHETS TO GUIDE US

A few years ago, I was sitting in the room of the Salt Lake Temple where the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles meet once a week. I gazed up at the wall which faces the First Presidency, and there I observed portraits of each of the Presidents of the Church.

As I gazed at them, my predecessors—from the Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44) to President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008)—I thought, “How grateful I am for the guidance of each one.”

These are great men who never wavered, never faltered, and never failed. These are men of God. As I think of the modern-day prophets I have known and loved, I recall their lives, their attributes, and their inspired teachings.

President Heber J. Grant (1856–1945) was President of the Church when I was born. As I contemplate his life and teachings, I believe a trait President Grant always exemplified was that of persistence—persistence in those things which are good and noble.

President George Albert Smith (1870–1951) was President of the Church during the time I served as bishop of my ward in Salt Lake City. He observed that there is a great tug-of-war going on between the Lord and the adversary. “If you will stay on the Lord’s side of the line,” he taught, “you will be under his influence and will have no desire to do wrong.”<sup>1</sup>

I was called to serve as a member of the Quorum of the

Twelve in 1963 by President David O. McKay (1873–1970). He taught consideration for others by the way he lived his life. “True Christianity,” he said, “is love in action.”<sup>2</sup>

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972), one of the Church’s most prolific writers, had as a guiding principle in his life gospel scholarship. He read the scriptures unceasingly and was as familiar with the teachings and doctrines found within their pages as anyone I have ever known.

President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) served as my stake president when I was a boy. A favorite quotation of his was “Stand ye in holy places, and be not moved.”<sup>3</sup> He encouraged the Saints to be in tune with, and responsive to, the whisperings of the Holy Ghost.

I believe a guiding principle in the life of President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) would be dedication. He was completely, unequivocally dedicated to the Lord. He was also dedicated to living the gospel.

When President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) became President of the Church, he called me to serve as his Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Love was his guiding principle, which is embodied in his favorite quotation, spoken by the Savior: “What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.”<sup>4</sup>

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) was one who always looked for the best in others. Ever was he courteous; ever was he humble. It was my privilege to serve as his Second Counselor.





President Gordon B. Hinckley taught us to do our best. He bore powerful testimony of the Savior and His mission. He taught us with love. Serving as his First Counselor was an honor and a blessing for me.

The Savior sends prophets because He loves us. During general

conference this October, the General Authorities of the Church will again have the privilege of sharing His word. We approach this responsibility with great solemnity and humility.

How blessed we are that the restored Church of Jesus Christ is upon the earth and that the Church is

founded upon the rock of revelation. Continuous revelation is the very lifeblood of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

May we prepare to receive the personal revelation that comes in abundance during general conference. May our hearts be filled with deep determination as we raise our hands to sustain living prophets and apostles. May we be enlightened, uplifted, comforted, and strengthened as we listen to their messages. And may we be ready to recommit ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ—His gospel and His work—and to live with renewed resolve in keeping His commandments and carrying out His will. ■

#### NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith* (2011), 191.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* (2003), 181.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 87:8.
4. 3 Nephi 27:27.

#### TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

**P**resident Monson shares powerful lessons he learned from prophets before him. He also reminds us that “the Savior sends prophets because He loves us.” In ministering to those you teach, you might discuss how prophets and apostles are signs of God’s love for us.

Consider sharing counsel from one of President Monson’s past general conference addresses. Invite those you teach to prepare for general conference by reviewing talks that have particularly inspired them and helped them feel the Savior’s love.





## YOUTH



You can download the music to “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet” at [lds.org/go/9176](https://lds.org/go/9176).

### We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet

**H**ow has our prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, influenced you? What will you remember most about him? Consider writing in your journal about President Monson and his life—much as he describes in

this message the influence of each prophet *he* remembers.

You might also want to choose a favorite quote from him and write it where you’ll see it often, like on a school binder or a note in your room.

You could even make a picture quote out of it and make it your phone’s background! Each time you see the quote, you could reflect on the importance of a living prophet and remember that he is here to love and guide us today.

PHOTOGRAPH BY PEGGY MARIE FLORES

## CHILDREN

### Prophets Guide Us to Christ

**T**he Savior gives us prophets because He loves us. Following the prophets helps us choose the right. Which path should the children take to follow the prophet?

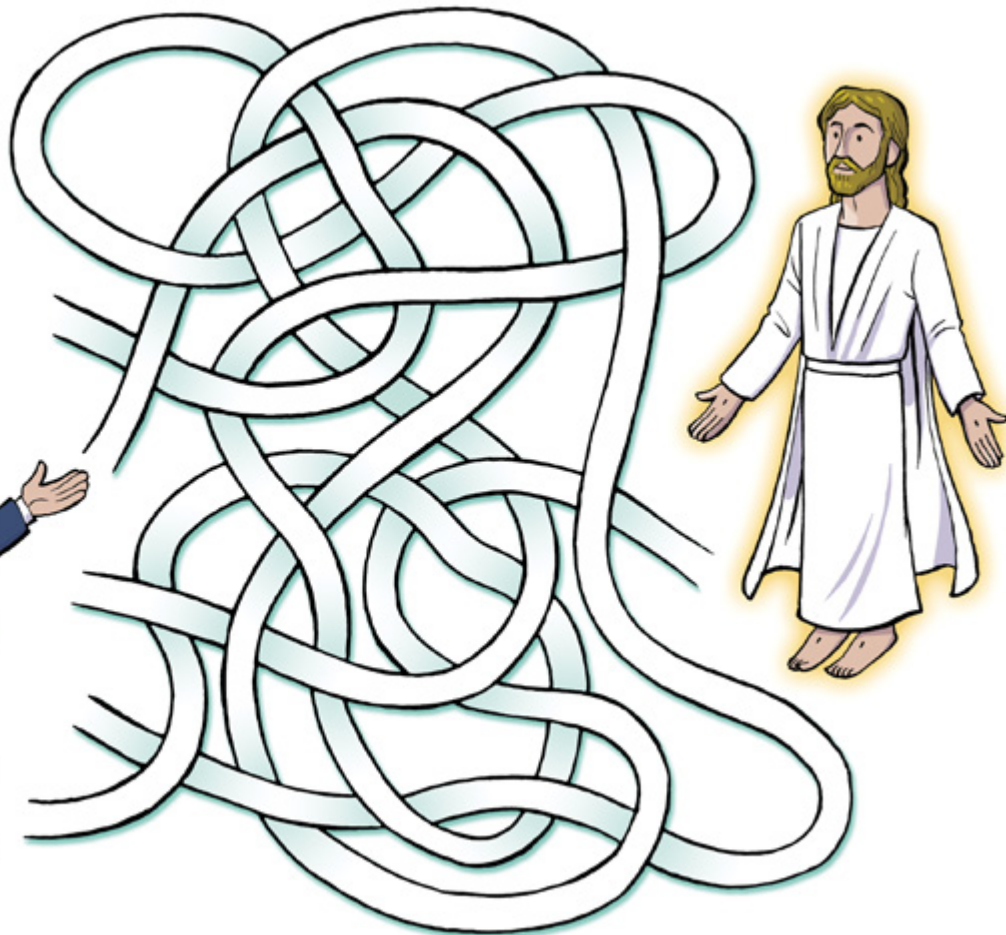


ILLUSTRATION BY ADAM KOPORD

# Of One Heart

*Prayerfully study this material and seek for inspiration to know what to share. How will understanding the purpose of Relief Society prepare daughters of God for the blessings of eternal life?*

“And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them” (Moses 7:18). How can we become one?

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “At the heart of the English word *atonement* is the word *one*. If all mankind understood this, there would never be anyone with whom we would not be concerned, regardless of age, race, gender, religion, or social or economic standing. We would strive to emulate the Savior and would never be unkind, indifferent, disrespectful, or insensitive to others.”<sup>1</sup>

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, taught: “Where people have [the] Spirit with them, [they] may expect harmony. . . . The Spirit of God never generates contention (see 3 Nephi 11:29). . . . It leads to personal peace and a feeling of union with others.”<sup>2</sup>



Faith  
Family  
Relief

Speaking of family challenges, Carole M. Stephens, who served as First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency, said: “I’ve never had to live through divorce, the pain and insecurity that comes from abandonment, or the responsibility associated with being a single mother. I haven’t experienced the death of a child, infertility, or same-gender attraction. I haven’t had to endure abuse, chronic illness, or addiction. These have not been my stretching opportunities.

“ . . . But through *my* personal tests and trials . . . I have become well acquainted with the One who does understand. . . . And in addition, I have experienced all of the mortal tests that I just

mentioned through the lens of a daughter, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, and friend.

“Our opportunity as covenant-keeping daughters of God is not just to learn from our own challenges; it is to unite in empathy and compassion as we support other members of the family of God in their struggles.”<sup>3</sup>

## Additional Scriptures and Information

John 17:20–23; Ephesians 4:15; Mosiah 18:21–22; 4 Nephi 1:15  
[reliefsociety.lds.org](http://reliefsociety.lds.org)

## NOTES

1. M. Russell Ballard, “The Atonement and the Value of One Soul,” *Ensign*, May 2004, 86.
2. Henry B. Eyring, “That We May Be One,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 67.
3. Carole M. Stephens, “The Family Is of God,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 11–12.



## Consider This

How does unity with one another help us become one with God?



# APRIL 2017 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 2017 general conference, you can use these pages to help you study and apply the recent teachings of the living prophets and apostles and other Church leaders.*



## DOCTRINAL HIGHLIGHT

### The Godhead

**B**ecause we have the truth about the Godhead and our relationship to Them, the purpose of life, and the nature of our eternal destiny, we have the ultimate road map and assurance for our journey through mortality. We know whom we worship and why we worship. We know who we are and what we can become (see D&C 93:19). We know who makes it all possible, and we know what we must do to enjoy the ultimate blessings that come through God's plan of salvation. How do we know all of this? We know by the revelations of God to His prophets and to each of us individually.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Godhead and the Plan of Salvation,” *Ensign*, May 2017, 103.

## PROPHETIC PROMISE



### CALLING DOWN THE POWERS OF HEAVEN

“The scriptures teach us that the righteous exercise of the priesthood is dependent upon our living the principles of kindness, charity, and love. . . .

“ . . . Let us examine our lives and determine to follow the Savior's example by being kind, loving, and charitable. And as we do so, we will be in a better position to call down the powers of heaven for ourselves, for our families, and for our fellow travelers in this sometimes difficult journey back to our heavenly home.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Kindness, Charity, and Love,” *Ensign*, May 2017, 66, 67.

To read, watch, or listen to general conference addresses, visit [conference.lds.org](http://conference.lds.org).



## CENTERED ON CHRIST

"'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean

not unto thine own understanding' [Proverbs 3:5]. . . .

" . . . In English the word *lean* has a connotation of physically listing or moving to one side. When we *physically* lean toward one side or another, we

move off center, we are out of balance, and we tip. When we *spiritually* lean to our own understanding, we lean away from our Savior. . . .

" . . . Each of us can trust in the Lord and lean *not*. We can center our lives on the Savior by coming to know Him, and He will direct our paths."

Bonnie H. Cordon, First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency, "Trust in the Lord and Lean Not," *Ensign*, May 2017, 6, 9.

## WHO SAID THIS?

1. "A repenting sinner draws closer to God than does the self-righteous person who condemns that sinner."
2. "The motivation for raising the warning voice is love—love of God and love of fellowman. To warn is to care."
3. "If love of God is the melody of our shared song, surely our common quest to obey Him is the indispensable harmony in it."
4. "It used to be a rare but welcome exception for youth to bring the names of their own ancestors to the temple. Now this is the norm."

Answers: (1) Dale G. Renlund, (2) D. Todd Christofferson, (3) Jeffrey R. Holland, (4) Henry B. Eyring

## DRAWING PARALLELS

## True Discipleship

**M**ultiple speakers sometimes address the same gospel topic. Here is what three speakers said about being a true disciple of Christ. Use the May 2017 issue or visit [conference.lds.org](http://conference.lds.org) to read more of what they said.

- "True disciples of Jesus Christ are willing to stand out, speak up, and be different from the people of the world. They are undaunted, devoted, and courageous." —Russell M. Nelson, "Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives," 39.
- "Genuine discipleship is a state of being. . . . Disciples live so that the characteristics of Christ are woven into the fiber of their beings, as into a spiritual tapestry." —Robert D. Hales, "Becoming a Disciple of Our Lord Jesus Christ," 46.
- "Our love for the Sabbath day does not end when the chapel doors close behind us but instead opens the doors to a beautiful day of resting from routine tasks, studying, praying, and reaching out to family and others who need our attention." —Neil L. Andersen, "Overcoming the World," 58.





# LOVE AND CHOCOLATE CAKE: WHAT WILL YOU GIVE TO BRING THEM BACK?

By Devin G. Durrant

First Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency

Sister Babata Sonnenberg was discouraged. As a young mother of five girls age eight and younger, she was surprised to be called to teach the 16- to 17-year-old Sunday School class in her ward. Months into her calling, she found class attendance sporadic and usually sparse. One Sunday a single boy showed up for class. Rather than teach just one student, she combined her class with another. She was ready to give up. But as she pondered and prayed about her bleak situation, inspiration came, and she had a change of heart.

## Team Effort

Her husband, Ken, was the ward mission leader. The two of them felt prompted to combine their efforts to reach out to the youth of the ward. She would make chocolate cake, and he would invite the young people in

the ward to come to their home each Sunday evening to eat the cake and discuss mission preparation. While the teens ate her cake, Sister Sonnenberg would invite them to her Sunday School class.

As a result of this “sweet” invitation, attendance climbed in the Sunday School class. But one young man, Nate, was not swayed by persistent invitations. Sister Sonnenberg felt she was losing one of her sheep. Her response to that feeling was to “go after that which [was] lost, until [she found] it” (Luke 15:4). So rather than give up on Nate, Sister Sonnenberg came up with a plan.

## Home Visits

One Sunday evening she went to Nate’s house. She found him home with another member of her class, who also hadn’t attended that day.

She told both of them she had missed them in class and proceeded to teach them the lesson right then and there. Nate’s father, who had been recently released as bishop of the ward, was touched by this teacher’s persistence. He sent a text message to her husband that read: “Ken, please tell your wife thank you for me. Coming here and teaching Nate and McKay was inspired.”

Nevertheless, the next Sunday Nate again chose not to attend Sunday School. So Sister Sonnenberg went again to his home to have a gospel discussion with him. Nate figured that might happen, and he had gone to a friend’s house to hide. Sister Sonnenberg discovered him a few doors down from his home and shared the lesson there.

Finally, Nate decided to return to his Sunday School class.









### **What Worked?**

Why did Nate come back?

Was it the chocolate cake Sister Sonnenberg served in her home?

Was it the visits she made to Nate's home (and the neighbor's home) to find him?

Was it encouragement from friends and family to attend church?

Or was it the love he felt from Sister Sonnenberg, his Sunday School teacher?

The answer is probably all of the above. For all these reasons and more, Nate began to attend Sunday School consistently, along with his friends.

### **The Rest of the Story**

So let me add the rest of the story. Because of how Nate came to feel about his Sunday School teacher, he didn't pass up the opportunity to buy her chocolates when he later saw her at the mall. Sister Sonnenberg, who had shown him so much love, became a recipient of his love.

Soon thereafter, in September 2015, Nate completed his mission application and is now serving in the Mississippi Jackson Mission.

Other class members who struggled to attend Sunday School also decided to serve missions. Five young men and three young women who attended Sister Sonnenberg's 16- to 17-year-old Sunday School class during her time as the teacher have





served, or are serving, missions, and several others may yet serve.

### Reach Out to Those Who Do Not Attend

“Love Those You Teach,” part 1 of *Teaching in the Savior’s Way*, includes a discussion topic titled “Reach Out to Those Who Do Not Attend.” The topic reads: “Reaching out to less-active members is not only the duty of a home teacher, a visiting teacher, or a priesthood or auxiliary leader—teachers can help with this work as well. Teaching is much more than presenting a lesson on Sunday. It involves ministering with love and helping others receive the blessings of the gospel, and this help is often exactly what a less-active class member needs. We all need to work together to reach out to those who struggle, and as a teacher you may be in a unique position to help.”<sup>1</sup>

Sister Sonnenberg recognized the unique position she was in to help her class members. She was blessed with a weekly opportunity to touch their hearts, and she was determined to do so—either in her classroom or in their homes. Clearly, all teachers may not be in a position to visit the homes of those who do not attend class each week, nor is it always possible, but we all can do something, even something small, to show love to those in our stewardship.



Remember the words of the prophet Alma: “By small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37:6).

### Invite with Love

The “Invite with Love” section of this same discussion topic includes this perspective: “Sincere expressions of Christlike love have great power to soften the hearts of class members who are struggling with the gospel. Often these individuals simply need to know they are needed and loved.”<sup>2</sup>

As a result of Sister Sonnenberg’s efforts to reach out to Nate, he felt needed and loved. As full-time missionaries, Nate and his classmates now have the opportunity to help others feel that same Christlike love. What a blessing that they can

remember and emulate the example of their Sunday School teacher.

### Until You Find That Which Is Lost

As a General Sunday School Presidency, we are grateful to Sunday School teachers throughout the world who, in a variety of ways, invite their class members to come unto Christ. We pray that the Lord will bless you in your efforts to love those you teach and, because of that love, to “go after that which is lost, until [you] find it”—as He did during His mortal ministry. ■

#### NOTES

1. *Teaching in the Savior’s Way* (2016), 8, [teaching.lds.org](https://teaching.lds.org).
2. *Teaching in the Savior’s Way*, 9.

To learn more about teaching as the Savior taught, you can watch the video “Love Those You Teach,” found at [teaching.lds.org](https://teaching.lds.org), as well as the other *Teaching in the Savior’s Way* videos.



# Experimenting on the Music

By Marcel Hall

I always thought that I was one of the lucky exceptions to some gospel standards. So I did my own thing, deciding which standards were important and which weren't. One of the standards I saw as optional was not listening to profane and vulgar music (see *For the Strength of Youth* [2011], 22). I didn't think that the music I listened to made a difference in how I acted and how I felt about the gospel. I still had a strong testimony of Jesus Christ, and I did my best to serve others and attend my Church meetings. I told myself that it was unfortunate that those musicians didn't live virtuous lives, but I was OK listening to their music—after all, it didn't keep me from living a gospel-oriented life.

As I prepared to serve a mission, I didn't think twice about how the music I listened to was

stifling my spiritual progression.

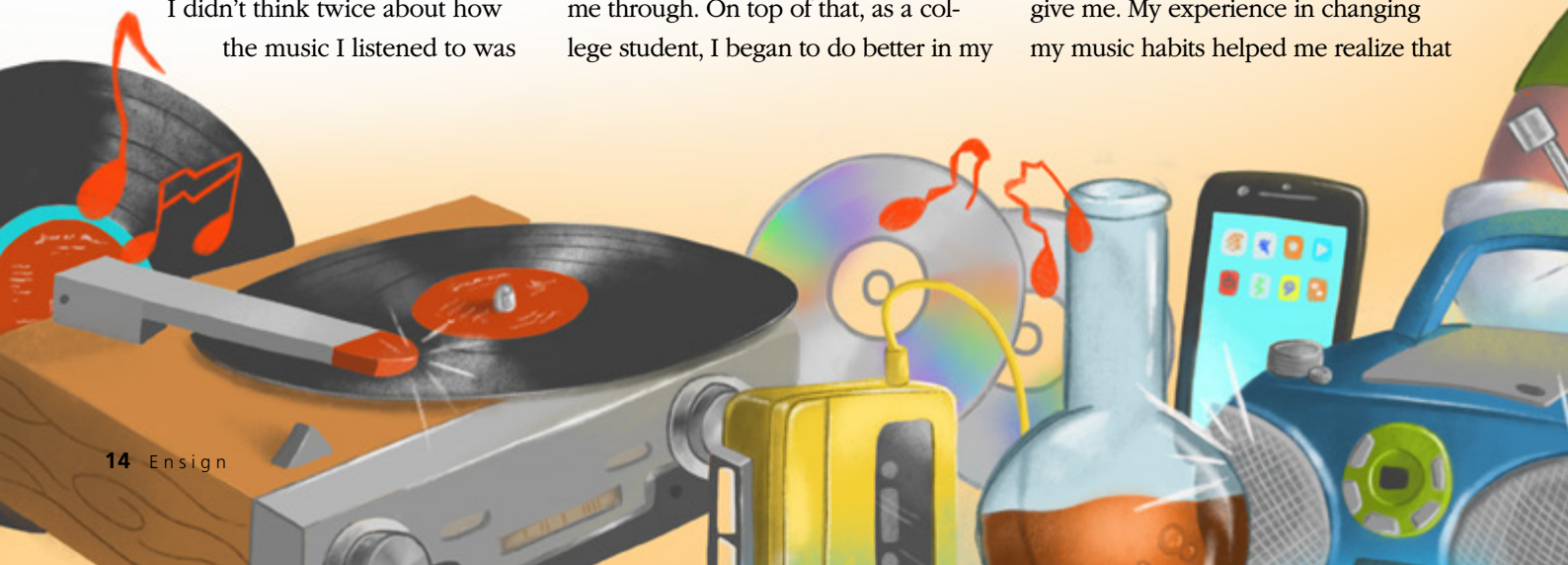
However, within hours of opening my mission call, the scripture Alma 32:27 came into my head: "But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words."

And then I thought of that one word: *experiment*. If I wanted to receive the blessings I was missing out on, I had to experiment. So for the next three weeks, I went without my inappropriate music. It was hard at first, and I had many relapses. But after a few days, the peaceful feelings I began having every day were enough to get me through. On top of that, as a college student, I began to do better in my

**If I wanted to  
deepen my  
testimony and  
progress spiritually,  
I had to stop  
making excuses for  
my behavior.**

classes. I could focus more, and I was more in tune with the Spirit in a time of my life where heavenly guidance was especially important.

I found that even my desires changed. I wanted to have every blessing that Heavenly Father is waiting to give me. My experience in changing my music habits helped me realize that





### ALIGNING OUR WILLS

"Only by aligning our wills with God's is full happiness to be found. Anything less results in a lesser portion (see Alma 12:10–11). . . .

"So many of us are kept from eventual consecration because we mistakenly think that, somehow, by letting our will be swallowed up in the will of God, we lose our individuality (see Mosiah 15:7). What we are really worried about, of course, is not giving up self, but selfish things—like our roles, our time, our preeminence, and our possessions. No wonder we are instructed by the Savior to lose ourselves (see Luke 9:24). He is only asking us to lose the old self in order to find the new self. It is not a question of one's losing identity but of finding his true identity!"

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Swallowed Up in the Will of the Father," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 23.

there are no optional standards and that every commandment we are given is designed to deepen our relationship with our Heavenly Father and make us more like Him. Skipping out on ones we don't like will only deny us His promised blessings.

Following gospel standards and keeping the commandments set us apart as true disciples of Christ. When we make that step to go from good to even better, we truly please our Father

in Heaven. We cannot be fence-sitters in this gospel. We are either moving forward or falling back, and the idea of "I'm doing well enough right now" will inevitably cause us to fall back. But if we rely on Jesus Christ and the power of His Atonement to improve at least a little bit each day, then we can live with His peace and know that we are becoming the kind of people He knows we can be. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*





# Seeking Refuge, Finding Peace

By Boone J. Chen, as told to Beth Quist Beck and Margaret Willden Willes

If you believe in luck, then we sure had a lot of it.

I remember the first day of our escape. We told my grandparents we were leaving Laos forever. We couldn't tell them where we were going for fear of being discovered. With nothing but the clothes on our backs, my mother, older sister, and I rode a cargo bus to the middle of nowhere.

The next day, we hiked for 10 hours through the jungle. We hired locals who knew the land to guide us across the border. We were lucky they didn't just rob and abandon us in the middle of our escape, as some others had experienced.

Upon reaching the Mekong River, we hid in the dense brush along the riverbank, anxiously waiting until we could cross the river under the cover of night. The Laotian soldiers

and their dogs were on the hunt for villagers like us who had fled the horrors of the Vietnam War and its aftermath.

The soldiers set the animals loose, and one of the dogs came close to us, hardly 10 feet away. I heard the soldiers talking, loading their guns. The dog looked at us, and I knew we were dead. But then our luck returned, and the dog turned away. We crossed the river that night in a canoe and found safety across the border in a refugee camp in Thailand.

Our luck had held out. But as I would later learn, it wasn't just luck. God was intervening because He had plans for us, and He needed us somewhere else. That escape didn't mark the end of our troubles, but it did mark an important moment where I saw God's hand before I even knew who He was.

**For years I didn't understand the coincidences in our flight to refuge. And then I learned to see God's hand in my life.**

## Our Flight to Safety

Years earlier, my grandparents had fled from China to Laos in the wake of World War I, and there my father was born. He became an influential businessman.

But with the Vietnam War came political instability, and with the fall of Saigon in 1975, the economy in Laos





collapsed. To make matters worse, my father passed away.

So a generation after my grandparents had picked up and started over, we found ourselves seeking refuge in another land. We were safe at the refugee camp in Thailand, but life there was still grim. Every 15 days, we received three or four buckets of rice that would have to last until the next delivery.

In the camp we applied for sponsorship to immigrate to a new country. Each application was denied. It didn't make sense; completion of the paperwork generally guaranteed aid.

Then we received word that the camp was going to be shut down. We would be sent back to Laos, where we'd surely be hanged. The day before the camp was to close, a United States agency offered to take families who had not yet been sponsored. Three and a half years after entering the camp, we found new hope and were saved once again.

### New Beginnings

We'd been assigned a sponsor in Utah, USA. But when we arrived at the airport in Salt Lake City, all the other families were met by their sponsors except for us. One of the sponsors discovered our situation. She called her parents, Mary and Dan Davidson, to see if our family could stay with them for a few days until a sponsor was found. Mary knew what it was like to flee from one's home:

as a youth, she had escaped from the poverty in the Netherlands following World War I. "Let's not turn them over to someone else," she said.

And so the Davidsons became my American mom and dad. I began attending school and became interested in photography. I also began attending Scouting activities with members of the Davidsons' church, and that's when I began to see that something was different about this couple. I couldn't understand why they wanted to share their life with us, why they would take my family into their home.

I began attending church with them and taking the missionary lessons. I soon knew that I wanted to be baptized, and at age 17, I became a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

### "It's Your Turn"

Soon after, I graduated from high school and was offered several university scholarships to study photography. I began my university studies close to the Davidsons' home and found a job as a freelance photographer for a newspaper. I was promoted to photo editor in a matter of months.

But one day I received a prompting that I needed to serve a mission. "You've got everything blessing you. It's your turn," came the prompting. This thought returned three times, and it reminded me of the scripture in Doctrine and Covenants 82:3: "Unto whom much is given much is required." But I had no money and was just a recent convert. I didn't think I knew enough to teach the gospel to others. "You will find a way," came the response.



By this time I had purchased some expensive photography equipment, and I realized I would have to give it up, along with my scholarship and my job. It was a testing point in my life. But my employer purchased my equipment for top dollar, and I was able to submit my mission papers. I was called to serve in Dallas, Texas, USA.

I didn't understand why I had been assigned to Dallas until I was asked to serve in a small Laotian branch there. And that's when it all clicked: my patriarchal blessing told me I would come to the promised land, accept the gospel, and carry it back to the people from the land I was born in. It wasn't luck—God had saved me from danger and had opened up new doors. He had been there all along, watching me and guiding me.

### Finding the Promised Land

After two years, I returned from the mission field to finish my college degree. One day I went to a party where I was the only member of the Church—the only member except for Sherryl. She was a Taiwanese convert to the Church who had recently graduated from Brigham Young University. She had been baptized the same month and year that I was baptized. She too was the only member in her family. I instantly felt drawn to her. We were married three months later in the Salt Lake Temple, and today we have three children.

When I recall these experiences, I can't help but reflect on how the Lord has guided me throughout my life, much like Lehi and his family were guided in their flight into the wilderness:

"Notwithstanding our afflictions, we have obtained a land of promise, a land which is choice above all other lands. . . .

". . . There shall none come into this land save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord" (2 Nephi 1:5–6).

For years, I hadn't understood why—why the dog hadn't barked during our escape, why my family had been rejected for sponsorship so many times, why our sponsor hadn't come to the airport to pick us up, why the Davidson family accepted us so readily, why I'd been assigned to serve a mission in Dallas.

And then I realized it was God who had provided me with opportunities to be where He needed me. He had allowed me to meet the Davidson family. They lived the gospel, and I saw the light in their lives. I had opportunities to get a college education, serve a mission, meet my wife, and raise a family in the gospel.

From my experiences, I know the Lord is there, and I know that He is able to turn even difficult things into opportunities that serve our good (see Romans 8:28) and His glory (see Moses 1:39). ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

## THE VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION OF REFUGEES

Given the opportunity, many refugees become significant contributors to the communities that take them in and give them an opportunity to get back on their feet.

Sister Beth Beck, who lived in the ward where Boone Chen started attending church, notes: "From the start, Boone had a positive outlook and an eagerness to be a part of what the Church had to offer. His interest and appreciation for the prospects provided to him gave an invaluable lesson to the rest of the boys, who might have otherwise been passive about being members of the Church, holding the priesthood, or participating in Scouting. I hope people understand that helping refugees gives back multiple blessings to those who extend their hands and hearts to them."

In the April 2016 general conference, Elder Patrick Kearon of the Seventy reminded us of the valuable knowledge and experiences refugees can bring to our communities: "Being a refugee may be a defining moment in the lives of those who are refugees, but being a refugee does not define *them*. Like countless thousands before them, this will be a period—we hope a short period—in their lives. Some of them will go on to be Nobel laureates, public servants, physicians, scientists, musicians, artists, religious leaders, and contributors in other fields. Indeed, many of them *were* these things before they lost everything. This moment does not define them, but our response will help define us."<sup>1</sup>

### NOTE

1. Patrick Kearon, "Refuge from the Storm," *Ensign*, May 2016, 114.



# A Better Way to Measure Myself

By Heather J. Johnson

Throughout my time as a missionary, I struggled with questions like these: “Am I doing enough?” “Am I doing all of the specific things God wants me to accomplish as a missionary?” I worried that despite my working hard and striving to be obedient, my imperfections and mistakes made my sacrifice in serving not as acceptable as it might have been. I especially worried about leaving things undone—even if I didn’t know exactly what those things were.

Even after my release, I kept worrying about these questions. Six weeks after returning home, I read an article by Elder Brent H. Nielson of the Seventy called “Can We Live ‘after the Manner of Happiness?’” In it he tells of interviewing a missionary who was worried about mistakes he had already repented of. Elder Nielson asked the missionary, “Why do you want to pay for your sins when the Savior has already paid for them?”<sup>1</sup>

I realized that by beating myself up over my perceived shortcomings, I was trying to pay for them myself. What’s more, some of the expectations I was holding myself to were of my own making and not God’s.

I could almost hear the Savior asking me, “Why are you trying to pay for your mistakes? I suffered so you wouldn’t have to. When I sent you on a mission, I knew you would make mistakes. But you don’t have to be condemned by those mistakes. Because of my Atonement, you can repent. And you have repented. Move on and remember your time as a missionary with joy.”

Moving on is a process that I’m still working on, but as I’ve tried to apply this direction I’ve been happier, less anxious, and more focused on the future rather than the unchangeable past. Imagine how much better off I would have been if I’d gone into the mission field with more of

an attitude of trust in Christ’s ability to make things right. I wouldn’t have wasted as much time with unnecessary guilt. I would have seen my mistakes and shortcomings as opportunities to repent and learn. We should never purposefully sin or make mistakes, but neither should we be so fearful of imperfection that we give up or wallow in guilt.

We’re often told to just do our best and then not worry. This advice isn’t particularly helpful to people who feel the weight of falling short of perfection. “Our best” is always out of reach to those of us who are sure we could do better. I’ve found I can better measure my efforts when I ask myself questions like these:

**1. Am I making choices that strengthen my faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement?**

**2. Am I committed to keeping my covenants (even though my efforts are imperfect)?**

**3. Am I repenting daily?**

**4. Am I learning how to better recognize the promptings of the Holy Ghost and follow them?**

**5. Am I joyfully enduring to the end or have I given up trying?**

I was focused on my mistakes and convinced I hadn't lived up to God's expectations.

Pondering my answers to questions like these helps me determine my spiritual direction, not just my location on the path. Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, "Our absolute distance from Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ is important, but the direction we are heading is even more crucial."<sup>2</sup> If we can answer yes to these questions, we are on the right track. We can press forward diligently, joyfully, and faithfully.

Often when I ask myself one of these questions, my response is something like, "Well, I'm trying, but it's really hard, and I don't know if I'm doing very well." At those times I take comfort in what Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: "The great thing about the gospel is we get credit for *trying*, even if we don't always succeed."<sup>3</sup> Sincerely trying to live the gospel is living the gospel.

As we live the gospel, Jesus Christ enables us to do things we could not do on our own.

We can go on missions, take challenging classes, explore our hidden talents, and take on new opportunities with confidence in our Savior and His ability to help us, forgive us, and make things right. ■

*The author lives in Idaho, USA.*

#### NOTES

1. Brent H. Nielson, "Can We Live 'after the Manner of Happiness?'" *Ensign*, Sept. 2016, 66.
2. Dale G. Renlund, "That I Might Draw All Men unto Me," *Ensign*, May 2016, 40.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Tomorrow the Lord Will Do Wonders among You," *Ensign*, May 2016, 125–26.



# Facing Health Setbacks with a Gospel Perspective

**These young adults have found peace as they have faced their health challenges with faith.**

Many people will face health challenges at some point in their lives. Such health setbacks can be discouraging and sometimes unexpected. These young adults have found they have much to contribute, regardless of their physical setbacks. They've developed a deeper appreciation of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and have found answers and peace in the plan of salvation.

## FINDING WAYS TO SERVE

I was diagnosed at birth with a form of muscular dystrophy called spinal muscular atrophy, a disease that progressively weakens all voluntary and involuntary muscles. I have lived a life where I have to have people help me daily, hand and foot, and that is all I have ever known. Many times while growing up, I questioned what I am supposed to be doing. I always prayed for a way to give back to others and serve them.

I joined the Church in my late twenties, and one of the biggest blessings of being a member of the Church has been the ability for me to serve. I clearly remember my first time inside the temple. I was sitting with my friend Julia in the baptistry, and she said to me, “You need people to help you with everything because you can’t do it for yourself. That’s what it’s like for those who have died. They don’t have bodies, so they need someone else to do their temple work for them. We can do for them what they can’t do for themselves.”

In that moment, for the first time ever, I felt needed. I finally knew what I was supposed to do. A year later I went to the temple to receive my own endowment. I started attending the temple once a week, and eventually I was set apart to work in the temple.

Once I enter the temple, I feel as though I have the strength of a million people. I can suddenly do anything. The worldly barriers I face daily are lifted and I can give back.

Bianca Berry, California, USA



## LIVING A FULL LIFE

When I was five years old, I was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. Despite the everyday struggle of living with diabetes, as I’ve grown up I have come to realize that this disease is an opportunity that is helping me become more like my Savior, Jesus Christ.

At one point I became troubled about living a full life with diabetes. One morning I read in the Book of Mormon about the second time the stripling warriors were spared from death in battle. It really was a miracle that not one life was lost, though all were wounded. “And we do justly ascribe it to the miraculous power of God, because of their exceeding faith [in God]” (Alma 57:26).

Those verses struck me with power. The Spirit whispered to me that I too, if I had enough faith, would be preserved to live a long and happy life. Hope filled me as I knelt down and thanked Heavenly Father for sending me peace. I realized my mistake in not trusting and having faith in God. In the scriptures, the young men in Helaman’s band were devoted to protecting their families and fighting for their freedom, religion, and country. I too needed to focus more on helping those around me.

I have hope that if I strive to be healthy, put my faith and trust in God, and focus more on my purpose than on myself, I will be sustained and my days will “not be numbered less” (D&C 122:9).

Aubri Robinson, Minnesota, USA





## LEARNING ABOUT THE ATONEMENT

My health issues started before I was born. I had what was called an omphalocele, meaning I was born with some of my internal organs on the outside of my body. Since then, scar tissue has caused many bowel obstructions, which paralyze the digestive tract. Between these bowel obstructions, I suffer from chronic abdominal pain.

This condition affects every aspect of my life. Sometimes I miss out on family parties and activities with friends. There are times when I have to call in sick to work and email my college professors to work out how to make up schoolwork. Luckily, I have an extremely supportive wife who always encourages me and helps me to stay positive.

My health challenges have altered my plans in many ways. For instance, I've had to repeat many classes in college due to multiple unplanned hospital stays and surgeries. I have had to change my studies to something that will be easier to complete in my condition.

I honestly don't think I could bear this trial in my life without a firm testimony of the gospel, especially



Jennie and Tyler Aldous

of the Savior's Atonement. Knowing that Jesus Christ is my Savior and Redeemer has had a profound impact on my perspective. Without Him, I would feel helpless and hopeless. Through Him, I am empowered and enabled. Because Jesus Christ endured all pains and sicknesses for us, I'm never alone in my trials if I come unto Him. He knows exactly how I feel at any given time because He has felt it Himself. Relying on the Savior has truly changed my life and helped me to make the best of my situation and not pity myself.

I'm blessed to have a testimony of the Resurrection and to know that my body will be made perfect and whole. I came to this testimony through many years of doing the established things that bind me to God: praying, studying the scriptures, going to church, and pondering. It hasn't been easy, but through the power of the Spirit I have learned much about what the Lord has in store for me, even though I have these physical limitations.

Tyler Aldous, Utah, USA



### BELIEVE IN THE PROMISES OF GOD

"I have observed in the lives and examples of others that exercising strong and abiding faith in Jesus Christ and His promises

provides the sure hope of better things to come. This sure hope steadies us, bringing the strength and power we need in order to endure. [See Ether 12:4.] When we can link our suffering to an assurance of purpose in our mortality and *more specifically* to the reward awaiting us in heavenly places, our faith in Christ increases and we receive comfort to our souls."

Elder Evan A. Schmutz of the Seventy, "God Shall Wipe Away All Tears," *Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 118.

## RELYING ON FAITH

My mental image of being diagnosed with a disease was completely different from reality: I imagined myself lying in a hospital bed, weakly breathing as the doctors broke the news to me that I was sick. My family would be surrounding me, encouraging me as I raced back to health.

Reality, more often than not, is a lot less cinematic. When I was diagnosed with my disease, I was sitting on the floor of my apartment, feeling the healthiest I'd ever been. I was alone in my room, frantically taking notes as the doctor told me over the phone that I had a gene mutation that prevented my body from processing folate. The doctor told me what to expect and what preventative measures I could take. The worst part about the diagnosis, though, was that I already knew exactly what to expect if I didn't take action—I'd seen it all my life. I had inherited my disease from my mom.



Jessica (right) and her mother

Growing up, I knew my mom had health problems. As the years passed, her illness reared up like the Greek monster Hydra—once one problem was figured out, two more would take its place. It wasn't until one of her biggest medical emergencies—a brain tumor that had to be immediately removed—that I realized just how much spiritual strength my mom had to have through all these events.

My mom showed me how to “not shrink”<sup>1</sup> when overcome with trials. No matter the state of her health, she has always been faithful and reliant on God. Although she does everything she can to become healthy, she also has the faith to follow God's plan, whether that involves a healthy body or not. Instead of shrinking in fear, my mom relies on God to help her become a kinder, more patient version of herself, serving others and becoming more Christlike every day. Instead of turning into a shell of her former self, she has blossomed into an exemplary child of God. She has understood that this disease, while painful, is not who she is. Her example has taught me one of the most important lessons I've ever learned.

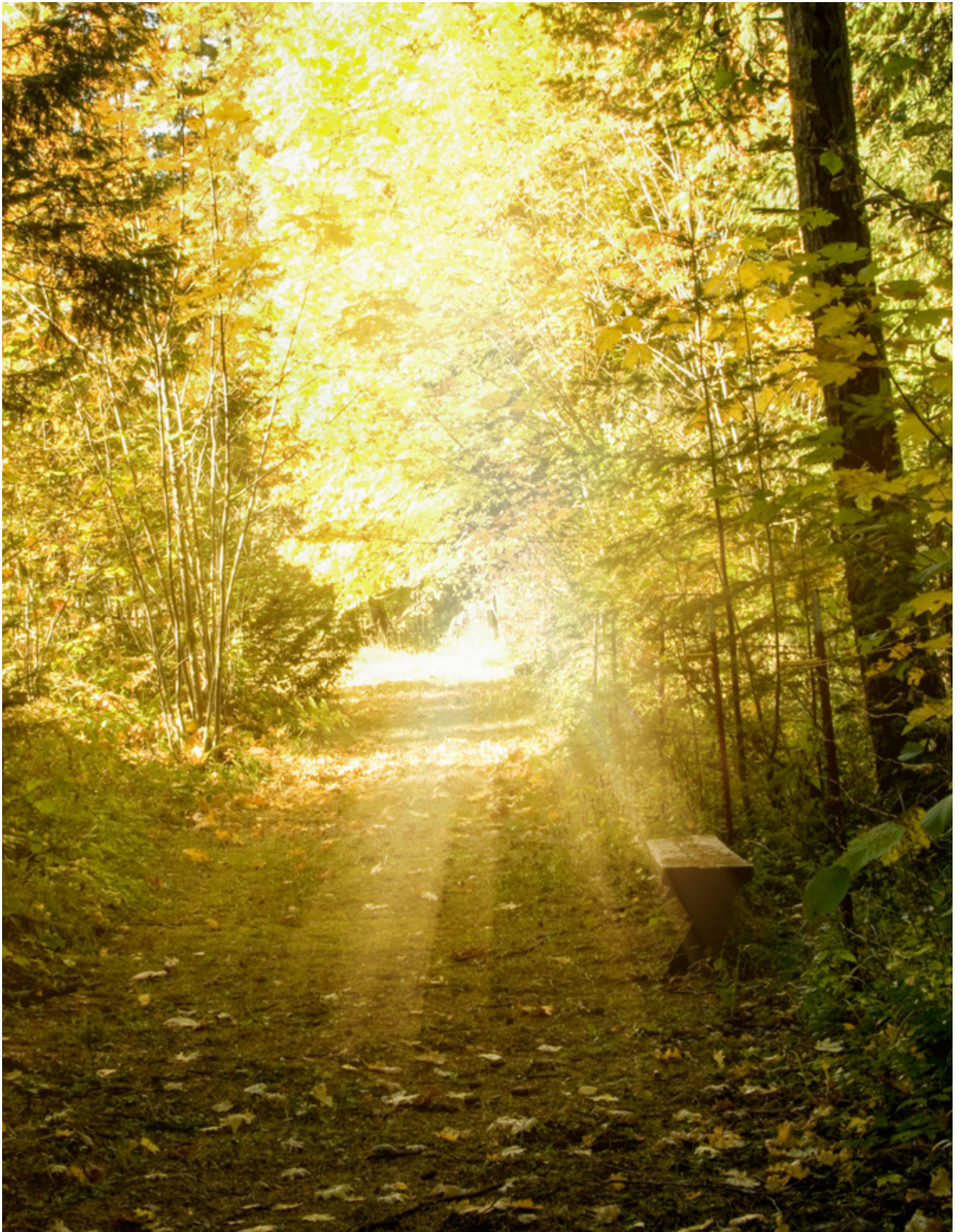
I'll be the first one to tell you that the future terrifies me; I've seen what my genetic disease can do. At the same time, however, I feel extremely blessed to know how to handle it. I know what it looks like to have faith in the face of fear because I've seen it first-hand. Just like I need to take preventative measures for my disease not to worsen, I need to take equally as many measures to make sure I do not shrink. I will, like my mom has, “look unto [God] in every thought; doubt not, fear not” (D&C 6:36).

Jessica Griffith, Texas, USA

### NOTE

1. See David A. Bednar, “Accepting the Lord's Will and Timing,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2016, 28–35.







**By Elder  
Jeffrey R. Holland**  
Of the Quorum of  
the Twelve Apostles

# THE GOSPEL PATH TO Happiness

*Jesus Christ is “the way, the truth,  
and the life.” No one comes to true  
happiness except by Him.*

**I**n a phrase I am sure you have heard many times, the Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44) once said, “Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it.”<sup>1</sup>

It is that worthy quest for happiness of which I wish to speak. Note that I said “quest for happiness,” not happiness itself. Remember the Prophet Joseph’s choice of language: he spoke of the path that leads to happiness as the key to realizing that goal.

This is not a new quest. It has been one of the fundamental pursuits of humankind through the ages of time. One of the greatest intellectual minds the Western world has ever known once said that happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence.<sup>2</sup>





PHOTOGRAPH FROM GETTY IMAGES

**Henry David Thoreau** said, *“Happiness is like a butterfly; the more you chase it, the more it will elude you, but if you turn your attention to other things, it will come and sit softly on your shoulder.”*

That was Aristotle, but note how presciently his statement parallels that of the Prophet Joseph—almost the exact phrasing. In the opening lines of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson immortalized both our personal and political quests by forever linking (at least in America) the three great inalienable rights of “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” But notice in that magnificent troika that it is not happiness that is a right (like life and liberty) but specifically the *pursuit* of happiness.

So how do we “pursue” happiness, especially when we are young and inexperienced, maybe a little fearful, and life lies ahead of us as a challenging mountain to climb? Well, we know one thing for sure: happiness is not easy to find running straight for it. It is usually too elusive, too ephemeral, too

subtle. If you haven’t learned it already, you will learn in the years ahead that most times happiness comes to us when we least expect it, when we are busy doing something else. Happiness is almost always a by-product of some other endeavor.

Henry David Thoreau, one of my favorite writers from my university days, said, “Happiness is like a butterfly; the more you chase it, the more it will elude you, but if you turn your attention to other things, it will come and sit softly on your shoulder.”<sup>3</sup> This is one of those great gospel ironies that often don’t seem obvious, like “the last shall be first” (Matthew 19:30; D&C 29:30) and “lose your life to find it” (see Matthew 16:25). The gospel is filled with such ironies and indirections, and I think the pursuit of happiness is one of them. So how do we optimize our chance for

happiness without pursuing it so directly that we miss it? Let me go to a most remarkable book for some answers.

### Living “after the Manner of Happiness”

The first 30 years of Book of Mormon history do not present a pleasant story. The hostility within the family of Lehi and Sariah became so intense that the two halves of their family split asunder, with one group fleeing yet farther into the wilderness, fearing for their lives lest they fall victim to the bloodthirsty quest of the other. As the first group plunged into unsettled terrain to seek safety and fashion a life for themselves as best they could, the prophet-leader of this Nephite half of the family says they “lived after the manner of happiness” (2 Nephi 5:27).

In light of what they had just been through for 30 years and with what we know yet lay in store for them in the trials ahead, such a comment seems almost painful. How could any of this be described as anything remotely like “happiness”? But Nephi does not say they were happy, though it is evident they were. What he says is, they “lived *after the manner of happiness*.” I would have you understand that there is a wonderful key in that phrase that can unlock precious blessings for you the rest of your life.

I do not think God in His glory or the angels of heaven or the prophets on earth intend to make us happy all the time, every day in every way, given the testing and trials this earthly realm is intended to provide. As President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, once phrased it: “Happiness is not given to us in a package that we can just open up and consume. Nobody is ever happy 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”<sup>4</sup>

But my reassurance to you is that in God’s plan we can do much to find the happiness we desire. We can take certain steps, we can form certain habits, we can do certain things that God and history tell us lead to happiness with the confidence that *if we live in such a manner*, that butterfly is much more likely to land upon our shoulder.

In short, your best chance for being happy is to do the things that happy people do, live the way happy people

live, and walk the path that happy people walk. As you do so, your chances to find joy in unexpected moments, to find peace in unexpected places, and to find the help of angels when you didn’t even know they knew you existed improve exponentially. Here are five ways we can live “after the manner of happiness.”

### Live the Gospel

Above all else, ultimate happiness, true peace, and anything even remotely close to scriptural joy are found first, foremost, and forever in living the gospel of Jesus Christ. Lots of other philosophies and systems of belief have been tried. Indeed, it seems safe to say that virtually *every* other philosophy and system has been tried down through the centuries of history. But when the Apostle Thomas asked the Lord the question young people often ask today, “How can we know the way?”—which for many translates, “How can we know the way to be happy?”—Jesus gave the answer that rings from eternity to all eternity:

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. . . .

“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do. . . .





“If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it” (John 14:5–6, 13–14).

What a promise! Live my way, live my truth, live my life—live in this manner that I am showing you and teaching you—and whatsoever you ask will be given, whatsoever you seek you will find, including happiness. Parts of the blessing may come soon, parts may come later, and parts may not come until heaven, but they will come—all of them. What encouragement that is after a mournful Monday or a tearful Tuesday or a weary Wednesday! And it is a promise the realization of which *cannot come any other way* than by devotion to eternal truth!

In the words of then newly ordained Elder David O. McKay (1873–1970) just short of a full century ago, unlike gratification or pleasure or some kind of thrill, true “happiness is found only along that well beaten [gospel] track, *narrow as it is . . . [and] straight [as it is]*, which leads to life eternal.”<sup>5</sup> So love God and each other, and be true to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### Choose Happiness

Second, learn as quickly as you can that so much of your happiness is in your hands, not in events or



circumstances or fortune or misfortune. That is part of what the battle for agency was over in the premortal councils of heaven. We have choice, we have volition, we have agency, and we can choose, if not happiness per se, then to live after the manner of it. U.S. president Abraham Lincoln had plenty to be unhappy about in the most difficult administration a president of the United States has ever faced, but even he reflected that “most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.”<sup>6</sup>

Happiness comes first by what comes into your head a long time before it comes into your hand. Joseph Smith was living “after the manner of happiness” in a very unhappy situation when he wrote from Liberty Jail to those on the outside who were also the victims of great injustice and persecution:

“Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God. . . .

“The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth” (D&C 121:45–46).

“Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly.” That is not only good counsel against the modern plague of pornography, but it is also good counsel for all kinds of gospel thoughts, good thoughts, constructive thoughts, hopeful thoughts. Those faith-filled thoughts will alter how you see life’s problems and how you find resolution to them. “The Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind” (D&C 64:34), the revelation says.

Too often we have thought it was all up to the heart; it is not. God expects a willing mind in the quest for happiness and peace as well. Put your head into this. All of this takes effort. It is a battle but a battle for happiness that is worth waging.

In a popular book a few years ago, the author wrote: “Happiness is the consequence of personal effort. You fight for it, strive for it, insist upon it, and . . . [look] for it. You have to participate relentlessly in the manifestations of your own blessings. And once you have achieved a state of happiness, you must never become lax about maintaining



it, you must make a mighty effort to keep swimming upward into that happiness . . . to stay afloat on top of it.”<sup>7</sup>

I love the phrase “participate relentlessly in the manifestations of your own blessings.” Don’t be passive. Swim upward. Think and speak and act positively. That is what happy people do; that is one aspect of living after the manner of happiness.

### **Be Kind and Pleasant**

Here is another. In preparing this message, I sat in my study for a long time trying to think if I had ever known a happy person who was unkind or unpleasant to be with. And guess what? I couldn’t think of one—not a single, solitary one. So learn this great truth early in life: You can never build your happiness on someone else’s unhappiness.

Sometimes, maybe especially when we are young and insecure and trying to make our way up in the world, we think if we can tear someone else down a little, it will somehow miraculously lift us up. That is what bullying is. That is what catty remarks are. That is what arrogance and superficiality and exclusiveness are. Perhaps we think if we are negative enough or cynical enough or just plain mean enough, then expectations won’t be too high; we can keep everyone down to a flaw-filled level, and therefore our flaws won’t be so glaring.

Happy people aren’t negative or cynical or mean, so don’t plan on that being part of the “manner of happiness.” If my life has taught me anything, it is that kindness and pleasantness and faith-based optimism are characteristics of happy people. In the words of Mother

***If my life has taught me anything, it is that kindness and pleasantness and faith-based optimism are characteristics of happy people.***





***Be industrious and labor, including laboring for and serving others—one of the truly great keys to true happiness.***

Teresa, “Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God’s kindness—kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting.”<sup>8</sup>

A related step along the path toward happiness is to avoid animosity, contention, and anger in your life. Remember, it is Lucifer, Satan, the adversary of us all, who loves anger. He “is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another” (3 Nephi 11:29).

After quoting that verse in general conference a few years ago, Elder Lynn G. Robbins of the Seventy said, “The verb *stir* sounds like a recipe for disaster: Put tempers on medium heat, stir in a few choice words, and bring to a boil; continue stirring until thick; cool off; let feelings chill for several days; serve cold; lots of leftovers.”<sup>9</sup> Lots of leftovers indeed.

Anger damages or destroys almost everything it touches. As someone has said, to harbor anger is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die. It is a vicious acid that will destroy the container long before it does damage to the intended object. There is nothing in it or its cousinly vices—violence, rage, bitterness, and hate—that has anything to do with living the gospel or the pursuit of happiness. I do not think anger can exist—or at least be fostered and entertained and indulged in—in a life being lived “after the manner of happiness.”

#### **Work at It**

Here is one last suggestion when there are so many others we should consider. Nephi said that in an effort to find happiness in their new land after their 30 years of trouble, “I, Nephi, did cause my people to be

industrious, and to labor with their hands” (2 Nephi 5:17). By contrast, those from whom they fled became “an idle people, full of mischief and subtlety” (2 Nephi 5:24).

If you want to be happy in school or on a mission or at a job or in a marriage—work at it. Learn to work. Serve diligently. Don’t be idle and mischievous. A homespun definition of Christlike character might be the integrity to do the right thing at the right time in the right way. Don’t be idle. Don’t be wasteful. “Seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118). Be industrious and labor, including laboring for and serving others—one of the truly great keys to true happiness.

Now, let me close by citing Alma’s straightforward counsel to Corianton. With all the encouragement a father would want to give a son or daughter, he said that in the Resurrection the faithful are raised to a state of “endless happiness” wherein they “inherit the kingdom of God” (Alma 41:4). At that time, he added, we will be “raised to happiness according to [our] desires of happiness” (Alma 41:5). But he also sternly cautioned: “Do not suppose . . . that [without repentance] ye shall be restored from sin to happiness. Behold, I say unto you, *wickedness never was happiness*” (Alma 41:10; emphasis added).

Sin is the antithesis of “living after the manner of happiness.” Indeed, those who believe otherwise, Alma says, “are without God in the world, and . . . have gone contrary to the nature of God; therefore, they are in a state contrary to the nature of happiness” (Alma 41:11).

## Reject Transgression

I ask you to reject transgression in order to live consistent with the nature of God, which is the nature of true happiness. I encourage you and applaud you in your efforts to “pursue the path that leads to it.” You can’t find it any other way.

My testimony is that God, the Eternal Father in Heaven, is always encouraging and applauding your pursuit even more lovingly than I. I testify that He wants you to be happy, to have true joy. I testify of the Atonement of His

Only Begotten Son, which provides the right path and, if necessary, a new start on it, a second chance, a change in our nature if necessary.

I pray that you will know that Jesus Christ is “the way, the truth, and the life” and that no one comes to true happiness except by Him. I pray that someday, sometime, somewhere you will receive every righteous desire of your heart as you live the gospel of Jesus Christ, thus living “after the manner” that leads to those blessings. ■

*From a devotional address, “Living after the Manner of Happiness,” delivered at Brigham Young University–Idaho on September 23, 2014. For the full address, go to [web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches](http://web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches).*

## NOTES

1. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 5:134.
2. See Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham (1982), 31.
3. Henry David Thoreau, *Thoreau on Nature: Sage Words on Finding Harmony with the Natural World* (2015), 72; this quote has also been attributed to Nathaniel Hawthorne and to anonymous.
4. James E. Faust, “Our Search for Happiness,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2000, 2.
5. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Oct. 1919, 180; emphasis added.
6. This quote was attributed to Abraham Lincoln by Dr. Frank Crane in the *Syracuse Herald*, Jan. 1, 1914 ([quoteinvestigator.com/category/frank-crane](http://quoteinvestigator.com/category/frank-crane)).
7. Elizabeth Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman’s Search for Everything Across Italy, India and Indonesia* (2006), 260.
8. Mother Teresa, in Susan Conroy, *Mother Teresa’s Lessons of Love and Secrets of Sanctity* (2003), 64.
9. Lynn G. Robbins, “Agency and Anger,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 80.







# Joy

## IN THE FACE OF DEATH

By Jerri A. Harwell

I have always said that after studying the life of Job, I think it's important whether we go out of this life praising the Lord or cursing His name. Since we don't know which breath will be our last, it's best to always praise the Lord with every breath, thought, deed, and word.

So I agreed 100 percent when President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said in the October 2016 general conference, "When the focus of our lives is on God's plan of salvation . . . and Jesus Christ and His gospel, we can feel joy regardless of what is happening—or not happening—in our lives."<sup>1</sup>

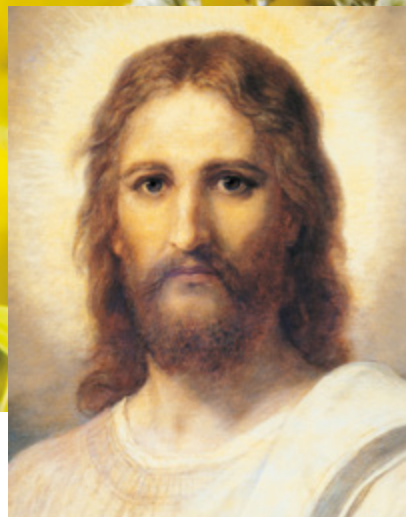
In 2012, as I lay in the hospital, diagnosed with two huge blood clots in my lungs, I didn't know which breath would be my last, and it was time to "walk the talk." Every time I awoke, I'd pinch myself, open one eye, and look around to see if I was in the spirit world or still in the hospital. After determining I was still earthbound, I thanked God.

On my first day in the hospital, a doctor hurried in and asked me if I wanted to be intubated if my lungs should fail. I realized she was asking about putting a tube down my throat to keep me breathing. I responded yes.

The doctor hurriedly turned to leave, stopped, turned back to me, and asked, "If your heart should fail, do you want us to get it started again?" Thinking about all I still wanted to do in life and the joy I felt about life, I replied, "Doc, I still have a great deal to do in life; save me." She then said, "Let me hurry and get this into your records," and rushed out of the room.

I thought, "Wow, this is serious." I could die at any moment. Was I ready?

Yes, I was. I was at peace. I was at a good place in life; I could still rejoice in life. I could still praise God in every thought and word. I continued to praise God for the life I had lived, the love I felt, and the family I had—even with all of the ups and downs.



Why was I lying in bed not doing anything? Well, if any act could be my last, I didn't want to be watching television. My daughter Rene thought I must be bored, so she brought a book for me to read. But if my next thought was my last, I didn't want to be reading just any book. I lay contemplating life, the gospel, and my relationships.

Thinking each meal could be my last, I ordered steak and potatoes for lunch and dinner. "Might as well die happy and well fed," I told myself.

I attempted to plan my funeral with my husband and children, but they didn't want to listen. While I was hopeful and positive, I thought it best to be prepared for any event.

I had recently experienced planning a funeral. About five months before, my youngest son, Morgan, had died unexpectedly at just 21 years old. He had died without my holding him one last time.

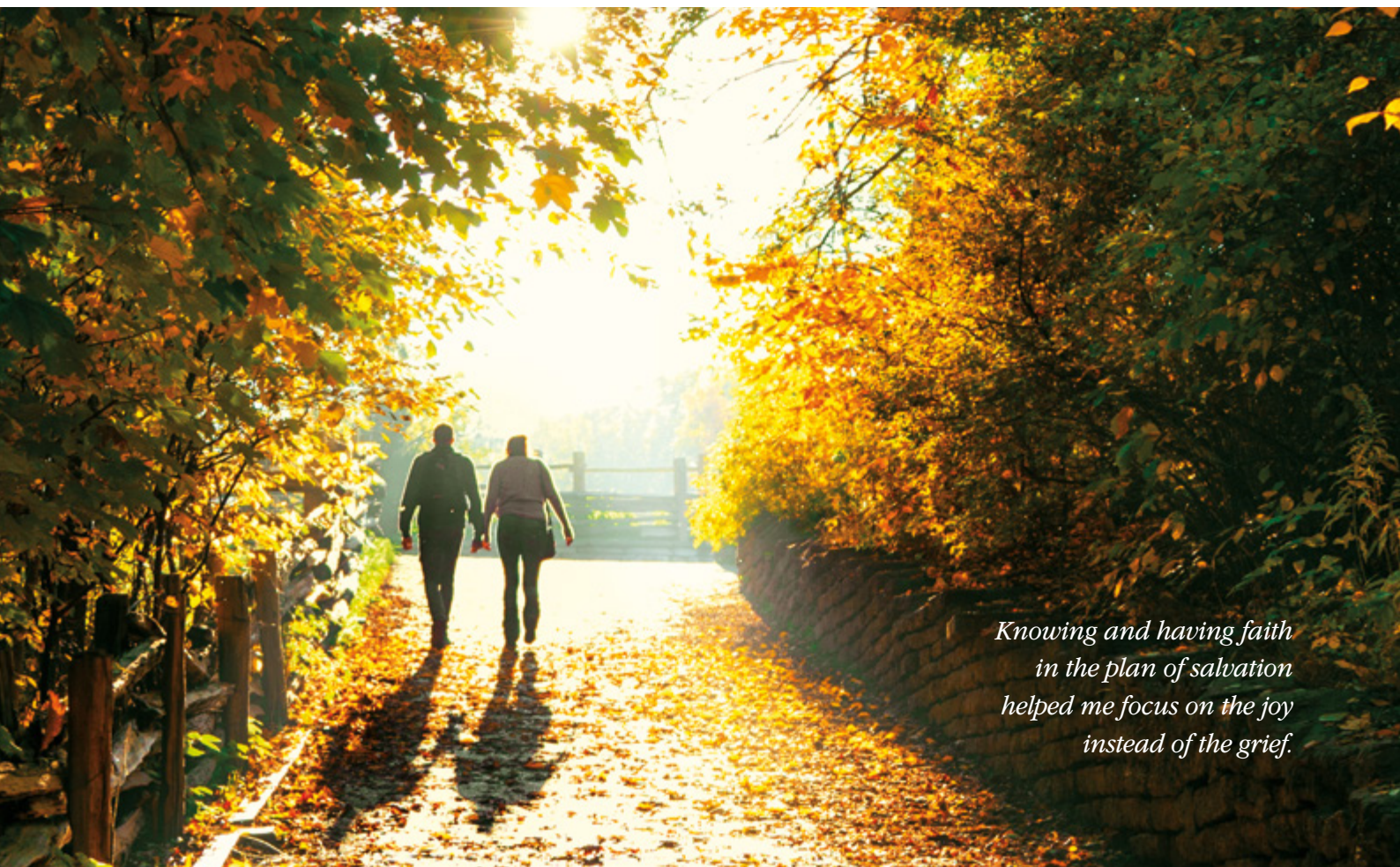
*When we focus on Jesus Christ and the plan of salvation, we really can have joy—no matter what is happening in our lives.*

You see, Morgan was incarcerated when he died.

He was transported from jail to the emergency room. Once he arrived, his heart kept failing and was restarted numerous times. A medical helicopter was called and then cancelled because the doctor could not keep him stable enough for transport.

Months later, when I could bring myself to read the autopsy report, I learned he had had an enlarged heart and had succumbed to a viral infection.





*Knowing and having faith  
in the plan of salvation  
helped me focus on the joy  
instead of the grief.*

I accepted his death. What else could I do?

A friend once told me that he personally does not believe we are here one day longer or one day shorter than God intends. I thought of my son. I was happy for him.

I was also thankful and filled with joy that my husband, Don, and I had driven two and a half hours and visited him the day before his death.

Yes, we grieved, as did Morgan's siblings. But knowing and having faith in the plan of salvation helped me focus on the joy instead of the grief. The thought of an eventual joyous reunion with Morgan and my parents kept me going.

A few hours after learning of our son's untimely death, my husband still had been able to joyfully praise God. The call had come in the middle of the night; it was still dark out, and we were in shock as we were standing in our family room. Don had said, "You know, in 24 years of marriage, this is our first tragedy; God is good." He still saw the joy in our lives. He was right. We had had Morgan for 21 years. I was grateful for that time with him. I did not question my faith.

In fact, it was not until six weeks later that the idea of questioning my faith came up. As a college professor, I assign students to write a letter to me the first day of class to introduce themselves and to ask me two

questions so they can get to know me better. I had mentioned my son's dying.

One student asked, "Did losing your son make you doubt your faith?" What? Doubt my faith? Doubt God? The question had never entered my mind. As the Psalmist wrote, "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord" (Psalm 150:6).

Still I rejoiced in life, or so I thought.

Prior to my son's death, I had always enjoyed the holidays. I enjoy singing the Christmas hymns, especially "Joy to the World" and its first line, "Joy to the world, the Lord is come" (*Hymns*, no. 201). Why *wouldn't* I feel joy? I even played Christmas music throughout the year.

But five years after Morgan's death, after our Thanksgiving dinner, one of my sons remarked, "This is our first Thanksgiving dinner together as a family since Morgan died." I realized he was right. For the past few years, I had not cooked our traditional meal on Thanksgiving. My husband and I went out to dinner, joking about how much easier it was for us. In reality I was still grieving. Where was the joy?

The scriptures teach us that in the premortal life, we rejoiced when we were told of the plan of salvation—"when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7).

We knew death would be a part of that plan, and we still rejoiced. We need to keep an eternal perspective; we must pass through the experience of death to return to our Heavenly Father. We will experience the death of friends and loved ones—and yes, even our own death at some point. As my Aunt Mamie used to say, "Our tomorrows aren't promised."

President Nelson was right. We can truly feel joy when we understand and focus on the plan of salvation, regardless of what has happened, what is happening, or what may happen in our lives. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

#### NOTE

1. Russell M. Nelson, "Joy and Spiritual Survival," *Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 82.

## RECOGNIZING AND ACKNOWLEDGING JOY IN OUR LIVES

The scriptures teach us how to see and acknowledge the joy in our lives. Here are a few examples:

- *2 Nephi 2:25*: "Men are, that they might have joy."
- *2 Nephi 10:23*: "Cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves"—in other words, agency is a reason for joy.
- *Doctrine and Covenants 11:13*: The Spirit is a source of joy for the soul.
- *Doctrine and Covenants 59:13*: Fasting is equated with joy.
- *Doctrine and Covenants 136:29*: Prayer is a cure for sorrow and is a key to a joyful soul.
- *Doctrine and Covenants 19:39*: Reading the scriptures and the Lord's promises contained in them brings us joy.
- *Doctrine and Covenants 42:61*: Revelation brings joy.
- *Alma 29:13–16*: We should have joy in the success and righteous labors of others.
- *Doctrine and Covenants 6:31*: We can "have joy in the fruit of [our] labors." Faith and good works within the gospel of Jesus Christ can bring us joy.







We Can Do Better:

# WELCOMING OTHERS into the Fold

*Here are four ways you can help new and returning members feel like they belong.*

*Note: No matter how strong someone's belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ, staying faithful can be difficult for new and returning members if they feel like they don't belong. In this article we examine what members who are already in the fold can do to welcome others in. In the December issue we will look at what those who feel they're on the outside can do to find their place.*

**By Betsy VanDenBerghe**

Within a month of Melissa's (all names have been changed) baptism in the midwestern United States, she offered the opening prayer in sacrament meeting. She was nervous about praying publicly but "felt every confidence in my ability to speak to my Heavenly Father," she recalls. "After all, I had been praying for years, especially while investigating the Church, and could feel the Holy Ghost helping me."



So it was with surprise that she received an email from a ward member who described “in great detail” all of the ways her prayer was wrong. Shame, embarrassment, and an onslaught of doubt raced through Melissa until she felt prompted to call the returned missionary who had taught her. “He quickly assured me that it was totally inappropriate for this member to criticize me in such a way,” she says. “He also told me the bishopric would never ask another member, as I had assumed, to give me this kind of feedback.”

Reassured, Melissa remained active in the ward, accepted callings, and went on to flourish in her faith.

But it took several months to get over the pain and lost confidence from receiving that discouraging email.

Unfortunately, Melissa’s story is not unique. Many new and returning members face significant, but often avoidable, challenges from feeling like they don’t belong. Sometimes even those with strong testimonies struggle to remain faithful when they feel excluded. In a recent video series titled *Unity in Diversity*, Church leaders address this issue, encouraging members to be more sensitive, inclusive, and loving in our interactions.

The following stories help to illustrate how we as members can apply these principles and offer genuine





friendship and emotional support to those who hunger for heartfelt acceptance in the Lord's Church.

### Be a Friend in the Faith

*"When anyone's shadow darkens the door of a chapel, they ought to feel immediately embraced and loved and lifted and inspired . . . to go and be better because they know the Lord loves them and because they have friends in their faith."*

—Carol F. McConkie, First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

Melissa needed genuine friends, especially in her ward, she could approach when she needed advice or help. Her husband and daughter hadn't joined the Church with her.

"Coming to church and seeing all the families made me feel deeply alone," she says. Everyone was friendly, but even their happiness made her feel as though "I would never attain that Mormon glow because I was the only one with problems."

In addition to the returned missionary who had taught her, Melissa was blessed with Cindy, an online friend who had first introduced her to the Church. "It was hard to watch Melissa struggling in her local area as I looked on helplessly," Cindy explains. "So I created a private Facebook group with a few incredibly grounded, loving, diverse members who helped and befriended her in ways I could never do alone."

The group not only offered a sense of inclusion for Melissa while she found her place in her ward but also responded to questions about lifestyle and cultural concerns. "I was raised in tank tops and short shorts," Melissa says. She appreciated online friends who responded with photos of outfits she could check out in local stores. This encouraged her

to ask sisters in her ward for movie recommendations after she no longer felt comfortable with some selections in her collection.

An important aspect of friendship, Melissa points out, is that she sought the advice. Unsolicited advice feels like intrusion rather than inclusion, an invasion of privacy that can be hurtful to those who aren't prepared for it.

Eventually, Melissa was called to teach in Relief Society. Her calling provided opportunities to interact with others in the ward. Melissa shared with the sisters her difficulties not only in adjusting as a new member but also in dealing with an autistic child, some personal health issues, and "Oh, and my dog is dying." The experience of having other sisters listen and respond with their own difficulties in class and in private conversations proved deeply healing. These connections helped Melissa feel that she finally had true friends in the faith.

### **Include Everyone**

*"The Savior commanded His followers to 'love one another; as I have loved you' (John 13:34; emphasis added).*

*So we look at how He loved us. . . . If we make Him our role model, we should always be trying to reach out to include everyone."*

—Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Robert, an investigator in Canada, has attended a variety of LDS meetings and activities. He has researched various religions but continues studying the Church because of the inspiration he has found in its doctrine and the Book of Mormon. He attends institute to learn more and finds the social environment "refreshingly wholesome, friendly, with a really good vibe," he says. "Mormons are the nicest people in the world."

A self-described introvert, Robert wants to interact but says, "I tend to hug the walls, unsure of how to be part of the groups, some of them long-term LDS friends who don't seem to need anyone else." But it doesn't take much to ease this sense of isolation. During an activity, he recalls, "someone came up to me after dinner and encouraged me to stay for the movie; otherwise, I would have left, but instead I had a great time. I just needed to know that someone wanted me there."

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL INTERACTIONS WITH NEW MEMBERS AND INVESTIGATORS**

- Go out of your way to warmly greet them, interact with them, and introduce them to other members.
- Invite them into your home or to other activities so that they will have friends during the week as well as on Sunday.
- Listen and ask questions that help them feel understood.
- Share your own stories of overcoming difficulties so they know that we all struggle.
- Wait for them to ask for your advice, and when offering it, don't be prescriptive or overbearing.
- Allow priesthood and Relief Society leaders to give ecclesiastical direction; fellow members should worry more about being a good friend.
- Avoid comparing their progress to your own or anyone else's.
- Teach the fundamental doctrines of the Church, not cultural tendencies.
- While you can look for opportunities online to reach out to new converts, investigators, and less-active members, in-person friendships can be more meaningful.



Like Melissa, he appreciates LDS friends who explain doctrine but don't get too specific about how to live it. Friends who listen more than they admonish are like "someone who walks beside you, as opposed to pushing from behind to make you go faster. Most of the time, you just trip and stumble."

Robert has struggled to give up smoking. His discomfort illustrates how those who are new are deeply aware of their differences. "Not one member has ever said anything to me about smelling like smoke," he says. "Yet if my clothes aren't fresh out of the laundry, I will stay home from institute or church."

We can create a greater sense of belonging as we reassure and include those who are new to the Church. Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles says, "It breaks my heart if someone comes and is very vulnerable and says . . . , 'I want to be here,' and then gets a cold shoulder or a lack of interest. That's tragic. . . . We have to be better than that" ("Is There a Place for Me?" [video], [lds.org/media-library](https://www.lds.org/media-library)).

### Put Yourself Out There

*"When you choose to put yourself out there, you are blessing someone else's life. . . . Can you look for the person who is sitting on the outside, sitting on the fringe? . . . When you've opened your heart to other people, you see that we all belong."*

—Jean B. Bingham, Relief Society General President

After Elsa joined the Church in the Netherlands, she experienced a genuine connection with a loving Heavenly Father. But as a young single adult, she also dealt with loneliness when family members and friends felt uncomfortable with her new religious beliefs and habits. "The best thing members have done for me," she said, "is to willingly befriend me outside of church. Some go to the temple to do baptisms with me even though they have been endowed. I need to interact with members beyond Sunday to get strength and endure to the end."

Elsa feels like her biggest challenge as a recent convert is "the expectation to suddenly understand everything," she says. "All the acronyms, events, callings. It can be a little mind-blowing, and I sometimes worry people are judging me for not learning faster." Additionally, like many others, she experiences social anxiety that "keeps me comfortable sitting toward the back of the chapel, rarely interacting." Large groups are daunting, and she wonders if others judge her for her lack of participation. "It's not that I don't want to take part in the lessons or sing hymns openly or say a public prayer," she explains. "It's just that I'm afraid I might actually burst out crying in front of these people I don't really know yet."

Sister McConkie says: "I know people who come to church every Sunday so that they can be inspired and uplifted and who just simply walk away feeling judged and unloved—unneeded, like there is no place for them at church. We need to do this differently."

Members who are nonjudgmental, Elsa says, help her the most. "They listen to my dilemmas and don't intrude into my personal space. They act with sincerity and patience while I learn for myself what being a member is all about." In spite of her anxiety, she accompanies the missionaries and looks out for new members and investigators. "I know how it feels to be new," she explains, "and want to make sure no one turns away from the gifts of the gospel that saved me from despair."

### Live the Gospel, Become Disciples

*"People can bring different gifts and perspectives. The wide range of experience and backgrounds and challenges that people face will show us what really is essential in the gospel of Christ. And much of the rest that's been, perhaps, acquired over time and is more cultural than doctrinal can slip away, and we can really learn to be disciples."*

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

In spite of having previously been critical of the Church, Jim joined because he received "an unquestionable spiritual testimony from the Holy Ghost that testified of the



truth of the gospel and its doctrine.” One of his greatest challenges, however, was adapting to LDS culture.

After baptism, he discovered that many generally accepted behaviors among members were cultural rather than doctrinal. “While this happens in any organized religion,” he explains, “I felt that if I didn’t conform in certain ways, I would be accused of not fully embracing the gospel. My struggles weren’t with the gospel or doctrine but with a level of conformity that felt only cultural.”

As Elder Christofferson explains, we need our new converts, investigators, and others to help us shed non-doctrinal practices that have accumulated over time and become true disciples.

Extolling the benefits of interacting with people of different backgrounds, Elder Oaks encourages Latter-day Saints to avoid focusing on differences and, instead, begin by asking, “Where are you coming from? What are your basic values? What do you want to accomplish?” This kind of openness and acceptance, in turn, helps those new to our circle feel included, lifted, loved, and ready to embrace salvation within the body of Christ.

Like Church leaders today, the Apostle Paul worried about divisions in the ancient Church of Christ. He urged members with strong opinions to avoid offending fellow Saints about practices that did not, in the end, really matter, explaining that while “knowledge puffeth up, . . . charity edifieth” (1 Corinthians 8:1). He called for “no divisions among you” and to focus on “Jesus Christ, and him crucified” rather than on the ways members differ from each other (1 Corinthians 1:10; 2:2).

Today, modern apostles and prophets urge us to find unity in diversity, encouraging us to make room for each member of the Church of Christ as an important part of our purpose to come to a “unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God . . . unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

### **WATCH UNITY IN DIVERSITY**

Watch a series of short videos from Church leaders on what it means to belong to the Church at [lds.org/go/unity917](https://lds.org/go/unity917).



# AN UNEXPECTED LIFE

By Janine MacDonald

When I was a child, getting married and having children was an expected norm. As children on the playground, we laughed and teased each other and speculated as to which of our playmates we would eventually marry when we grew up. When I began keeping a journal at age 12, I intended that it would eventually be read by my children.

I dated a lot in my late teens and in college, so at the age of 21 when I wasn't married, I wasn't concerned and went off to serve a mission.

When I hit the age of 25 and still wasn't married, I didn't panic. Instead I assessed my career choices. What I really wanted was to become a doctor of chiropractic, so I joined the U.S. Army for two years to earn the money for chiropractic college. (Hey, I could find a really great LDS guy in the army, right? Well, it could happen!)

I served in the army's 101st Airborne Division and then went to chiropractic college. During my post-graduate college years, I had an active dating life, but when I graduated without a husband at age 30, I began to worry. I just

knew, though, that I would marry and have children.

I became an associate professor at my alma mater, launched my own practice, and developed my professional skills. My 30s passed. But I knew there was still a little time for having children. (Right?) Eventually I realized that I had officially become "old" without realizing my dream of marriage and children. I had not expected this!

My (married) girlfriends hastened to offer me support and comfort. They reviewed with me all the outstanding Latter-day Saint sisters they knew of who had never married or who married later in life yet still made stellar contributions to the world. We also talked about the many single women in our area who served as presidents of various auxiliaries, served multiple missions, and volunteered in our community. Even though my friends' encouragement could not take away the pain of knowing I'd never have children of my own in mortality, I did find wisdom in their words.

So, I could either think of my situation as a tragedy and feel sorry for myself, or I could make my life a triumph as these women had.

NEGATIVE THOUGHTS POOR CHOICES  
GRIEF DISAPPOINTMENT  
DELAYED DREAMS



*As a single sister, I consciously chose to live with confidence and hope.*

ANGER DOUBT POOR DECISIONS HOPELESSNESS  
ESPAIR TEARS ANGER  
SIMISM CADALTE





## DISTINCTIVE CAPABILITIES

"My dear sisters, whatever your calling, whatever your circumstances, we need your impressions, your insights, and your inspiration. . . . Married or single, you sisters possess distinctive capabilities and special intuition you have received as gifts from God. We brethren cannot duplicate your unique influence."

President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "A Plea to My Sisters," *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 97.

## Redefining Success in Life

I believe that for the most part, successful single women are still single due to events beyond their control. Realizing, however, that living with hope and confidence *is* within our control—that it's a matter of choice—I decided to take President Gordon B. Hinckley's advice and choose optimism rather than discouragement or cynicism. I saw that as I kept my mind hopeful and optimistic, this allowed many positive things to enter into my life.

Choosing this kind of life and becoming a "successful single" in my book definitely required some adjusting on my part. Heavenly Father helped me to understand that one of the major reasons we are here on earth is to learn lessons and to develop godly characteristics such as sacrifice, patience, compassion, empathy, faith, hope, charity, self-discipline, service, righteous leadership, and learning to discern and follow the Spirit. I feel blessed to have had experiences in my life that have taught me many of these important lessons (just without the midnight feedings and sticky jam fingers).

## Turning Hurts Over to the Savior

What are the steps to initiate emotional healing? I once believed that all personal healing had to be done by myself alone. A friend helped me to learn how to turn my hurts over to the Savior. The more I turned my issues over to the Lord and invited Him into my life, the more I felt His miraculous healing in my soul. Even though I did consult with competent professionals whose wisdom and tools were important and helpful, I discovered that the healing process remained incomplete until I practiced giving up and letting go of my hurts and allowing my Savior to carry them (see Alma 7:11–12).

## Sweet Blessings in Service

I am so thankful that my Church leaders have taken the time to get to know me personally and to prayerfully extend callings to me as they would to anyone—either married or single. As a result, for the most part I feel that when other members of my ward look at me, they see Janine and not "that single girl."





Being single without children has presented me with opportunities for service I could not have rendered at my age if I were still raising a family, such as serving as a temple ordinance worker.

I learned that a single person who consciously chooses a successful single's life of triumph can be blessed with experiences that teach most of the important lessons in life. Married people may find that they can turn to their successful single friends for support and empathy, just as they could their mature married friends. Often they discover that even though their single friends have a somewhat different life story, the wisdom and empathy that their single friends possess are like their own. My married friends are often pleasantly surprised to discover that I can empathize with them regarding things like empty-nest syndrome, the death of close family members, chronic illness, and so on.

## Leaving a Meaningful Legacy

As my life goes on and my peers begin empty nesting and passing around pictures of their new grandchildren, I sometimes wonder what kind of legacy I will leave. In the good LDS home where I was raised, leaving a legacy meant having posterity. So once again I pretty much needed to redefine what it meant for me to leave a legacy.

I've discovered that there is a huge demand in the world for caring aunts as well as for other caring, well-adjusted adults. Over the years I've had the opportunity to be a support person for young people inside and outside my family, as well as provide a resource for their parents. I've enjoyed activities such as holding children on my lap and reading to them, assembling toys on Christmas Eve (to the relief of exhausted and stressed out parents), teaching youngsters the finer points of Wii bowling and *Guitar Hero*, teaching teenage girls how to talk to boys, and teaching young, unsuspecting males the basics of understanding women. I have given skin care and grooming tips, helped with chemistry homework, and provided a secure home where nieces and nephews could enjoy staying while they gain a better perspective on life. I have also been able to provide an example of missionary and temple service and the power of optimism and positive choices.

All in all, it's been a good life, and I'm looking forward to many rich years in the future, which may still include marriage to a good man (see my optimism?). I'm actually kind of looking forward to the day when I get to meet the Savior and we review my life together. I look forward to getting to show Him what I've had to work with, who I have become, and the life I've made. And I suppose that's the most important legacy I can leave. ■

*The author lives in Oregon, USA.*



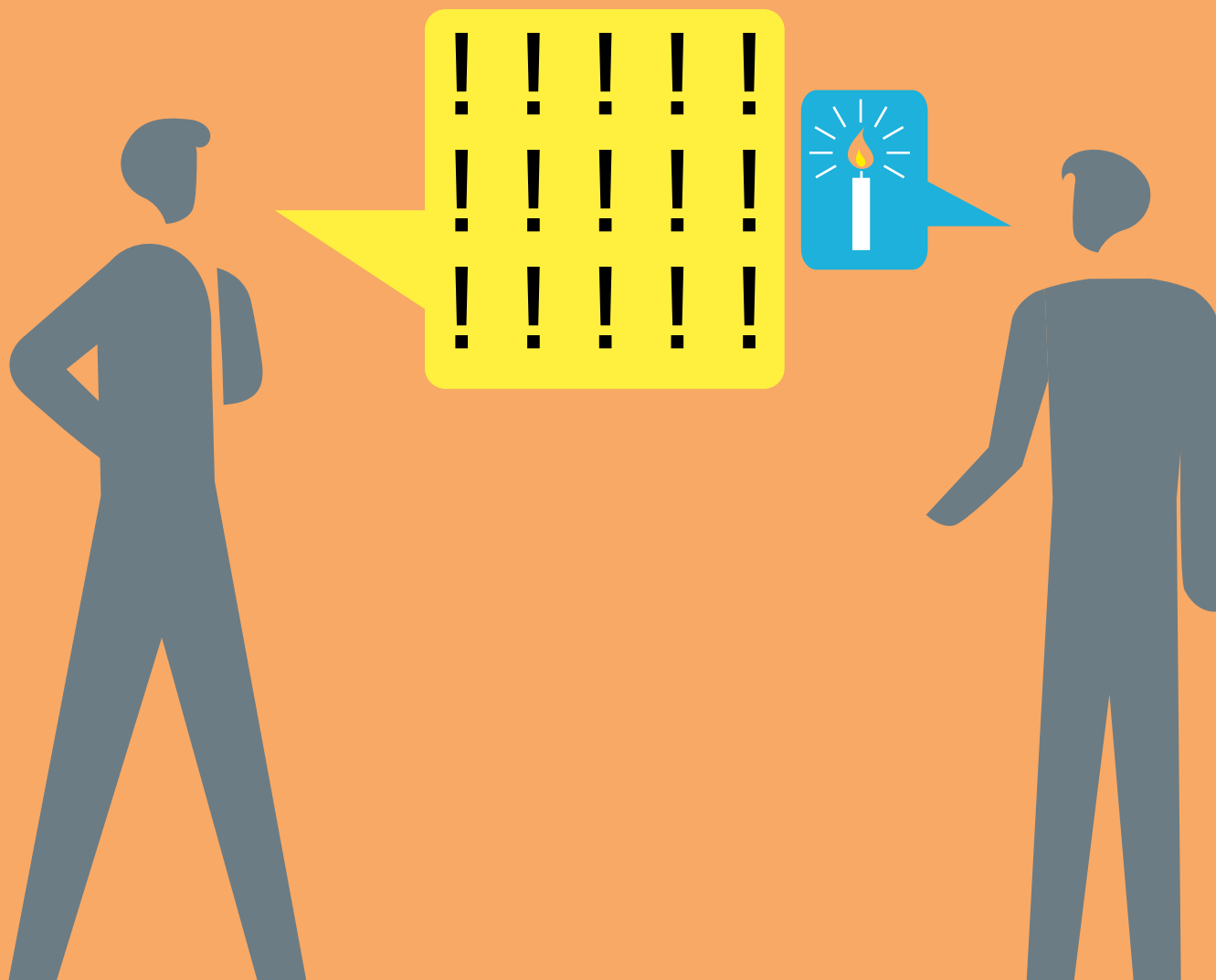
## TEMPORARY FRUSTRATIONS

"We know that many worthy and wonderful Latter-day Saints currently lack the ideal opportunities and essential requirements for their progress. Singleness, childlessness, death, and divorce frustrate ideals and postpone the fulfillment of promised blessings. In addition, some women who desire to be full-time mothers and homemakers have been literally compelled to enter the full-time work force. But these frustrations are only temporary. The Lord has promised that in the eternities no blessing will be denied his sons and daughters who keep the commandments, are true to their covenants, and desire what is right."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Great Plan of Happiness," *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 75.







# Defending THE FAITH



By Elder  
Jörg Klebingat  
Of the Seventy

*The Lord needs a people willing and able to humbly yet firmly defend Christ and the kingdom of God.*

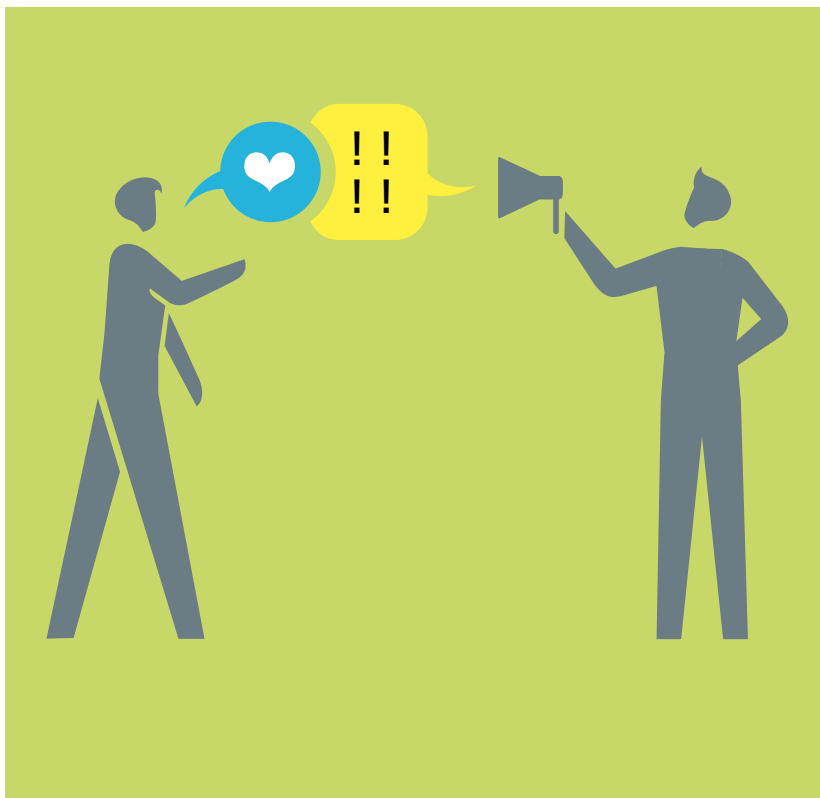
**I**n the premortal existence we possessed agency, reasoning powers, and intelligence. There we were “called and prepared . . . according to the foreknowledge of God” and were initially “on the same standing” with our brothers and sisters (Alma 13:3, 5). Opportunities for growth and learning were widely available.

However, equal access to the teachings of a loving heavenly home did not produce a uniform desire among us—Heavenly Father’s spirit children—to listen, learn, and obey. Exercising our agency, as we do today, we listened with varying degrees of interest and intent. Some of us eagerly sought to learn and obey. With war in heaven on the horizon, we prepared for graduation from our premortal home. Truth was taught and challenged; testimonies were borne and ridiculed, with each premortal spirit making the choice to either defend or defect from the Father’s plan.

## **No Neutrality**

Ultimately, retreating indecisively to neutral ground was not an option in this conflict. Nor is it today. Those of us armed with faith in the future Atonement of Jesus Christ, those energized by testimonies of His divine role, those possessing spiritual knowledge *and the courage to use it in defense of His sacred name* fought





*The Lord needs a host of true Latter-day Saints willing, in a spirit of meekness and love, to testify of truth when any aspect of the restored gospel is challenged!*

on the front lines of this war of words. John taught that those valiant spirits, and others, have overcome Lucifer “by the blood of the Lamb, and by *the word of their testimony*” (Revelation 12:11; emphasis added).

Yes, the promise of a Savior and of a bloodstained Gethsemane and Calvary won the premortal war. But our premortal *courage and testimony*, our willingness to explain, reason with, and persuade other spirits also helped stem the tide of falsehoods from spreading unopposed!

Having successfully completed a premortal tour of duty in His defense, we became witnesses of His holy name. Indeed, having proven us in battle and being thus assured of our hearts and courage, the Lord later said of us—members of the house of Israel—“Ye are my witnesses” (Isaiah 43:10). Let us ask ourselves: Is this declaration still true of us today?

### **Our Current Battle**

A conflict for the minds, hearts, and souls of our Father’s children still rages today in

anticipation of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. While many in the world are sincerely curious about the teachings of the Church, an ever-widening gulf between the wicked and the righteous separates a world in moral free fall from restored gospel truths. When imperfect yet striving Saints who seek for light are accused of following darkness, when the sweetness of their intent and works is declared to be bitter (see Isaiah 5:20), is it any wonder that mocking fingers are pointed toward the Lord’s restored Church and His faithful servants? (see 1 Nephi 8:27).

President Thomas S. Monson has taught: “We live in a time when we are surrounded by much that is intended to entice us into paths which may lead to our destruction. To avoid such paths requires determination and courage.”

Passive, casual membership is not enough in this latter-day conflict! President Monson continued: “As we go about living from day to day, it is almost inevitable that our faith will be challenged. . . . Do we have the moral courage to stand firm for our beliefs, even if by so doing we must stand alone?”<sup>1</sup>

Despite the permanent background noise emanating from the great and spacious building (see 1 Nephi 8:26–27), are we determined to walk steadfastly along the road less traveled by?<sup>2</sup> Are we both willing and able to engage in polite discussion with those who have honest questions? Without resorting to contention, are we able and willing to clarify and defend the teachings of the restored Church of Jesus Christ?

Counseling us to be able to disagree without being disagreeable, Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, “Even as we seek to be meek . . . ,

we must not compromise or dilute our commitment to the truths we understand.”<sup>3</sup>

### Become Valiant

Let us consider carefully President Monson’s invitation: “Once we have a testimony, it is incumbent upon us to share that testimony with others. . . . May we ever be courageous and prepared to stand for what we believe, and if we must stand alone in the process, may we do so courageously, strengthened by the knowledge that in reality we are never alone when we stand with our Father in Heaven.”<sup>4</sup>

Church membership alone does not automatically make one a valiant witness of Christ and His restored Church. The Lord taught us to let our light shine through gospel living, yet a few members keep their membership a secret by putting their light under a bushel. Some will answer occasional gospel questions but hesitate to testify and invite. Yet others actually look for opportunities to share the gospel and do so willingly. How many of us are proactive, valiant *defenders* of the faith?

To hold and regain ground in today’s war of words, the Lord needs a people both willing and able to humbly yet firmly defend Christ, His living oracles, the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the standards of the Church. He needs a people “ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh . . . a reason of the hope that is in [them]” (1 Peter 3:15). He needs a host of true Latter-day Saints willing, in a spirit of meekness and love, to testify of truth when any aspect of the restored gospel is challenged!

### The Example of Captain Moroni

If you feel inadequate as a valiant defender of truth in our day, you are not alone. Most of us feel that way to some degree. Yet there are simple things we can do to gain both ability and confidence.

In the Book of Mormon, we learn that Captain Moroni “prepar[ed] the minds of the people to be faithful unto the Lord their God” (Alma 48:7). He realized that the first line of defense was a life built on a foundation of personal

obedience. Furthermore, he “erect[ed] small forts, . . . throwing up banks of earth . . . , and also building walls of stone to encircle them about” (verse 8). Not only did he take some obvious defensive precautions, but he also strategically strengthened “their weakest fortifications” (verse 9). His precautionary strategies were so successful that his enemies were “astonished exceedingly” (Alma 49:5) and unable to execute their evil designs.

You may ask, “Can someone as weak as I am be a valiant defender of Christ and His restored gospel?” Your perceived weakness can be made strong as you accept that all the Lord initially requires is “[your] heart and a willing mind” (D&C 64:34). Endowed with a courageous spirit, the “small and simple” of the world are His favorite recruits. Remember that by “very small means,” He delights to “confound the wise” (see Alma 37:6, 7). If you are willing to share and defend the restored gospel and its leaders and doctrines, you may consider the following suggestions.

**1. Know whom and what to defend.** A solid defensive strategy is the foundation for a solid offense. While you *can’t* effectively defend that which you know nothing or little about, you *won’t* defend it if you don’t deeply care. Just as a hireling, who is paid to care for the sheep, will retreat or flee at the first sign of trouble, so you will not hold your defensive lines very long unless you have a





spiritual conviction that your cause is just and true. To witness of and defend Christ and His Church, you must know that He lives and that this is His restored Church!

Those who know *and* live the gospel are filled with both understanding and a burning conviction kindled from worthiness and personal experience. They are more prepared to witness of the truth than those who have given attention only to learning how to give the answers.

**2. Evaluate your fortifications.** Follow the example of Captain Moroni. Honestly evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your gospel understanding. Are you setting a good example by living a Christlike life? Are you able to find answers to questions by searching the scriptures? Are you comfortable bearing your testimony? Can you answer questions regarding the Church's doctrines and teachings, even some that are more challenging to explain, by appealing to the scriptures? Are you prepared to say, "I don't know, but I will find out," or to direct people to places where they can find answers? Could it be that diligent study will help you gain the confidence and courage you seek?<sup>5</sup>

**3. Strengthen your fortifications.** With an assessment of your doctrinal "fortifications" before you, begin a focused, long-term study with the aim of making weak things become strong unto you (see Ether 12:27). Respond to Moses's cry, "Would God that all the Lord's people were

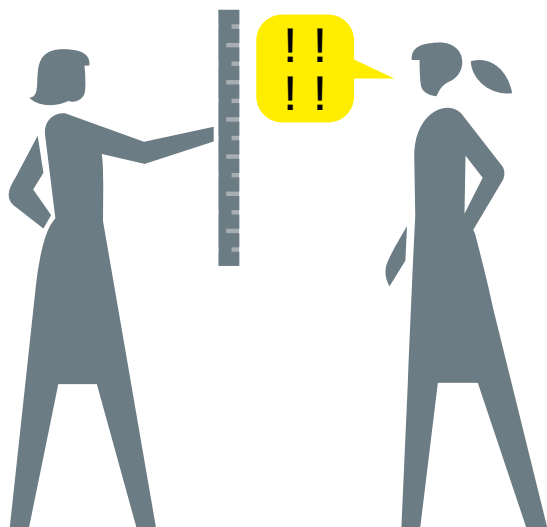
prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11:29). Weary the Lord with the request that for every spoonful of daily effort, He will heap pounds of earth onto your defensive walls.

Prayerfully read the scriptures, again and again. Don't merely sip familiar stories through a straw. Feast upon them. Consider keeping doctrinal study notes and continually adding to them. For each topic, consider identifying and then memorizing in logical order a few scriptures to support your own thoughts and teachings. As Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, "When scriptures are used as the Lord has caused them to be recorded, they have intrinsic power that is not communicated when paraphrased."<sup>6</sup>

Consider memorizing a few quotes by prophets and apostles. The Holy Ghost typically can "bring . . . to your remembrance" only that which you first put there (see John 14:26). True Christ-centered doctrinal knowledge combined with "the sword of [His] Spirit" (D&C 27:18) is the greatest fortification and offensive weapon you possess.

**4. Practice!** The Church's full-time missionaries are encouraged to role-play to prepare for situations in which they might find themselves. Because you may be asked to defend the Church or to explain its doctrine at the most unexpected times or places, consider following the missionaries' example by preparing yourself *spiritually* before you have a conversation *naturally* (see Moses 3:5, 7). Role-play before you find yourself in circumstances in which you are teaching or defending gospel standards. Whether alone or with family or friends, pose hypothetical questions and then answer them! As you become increasingly prepared, you will "wax stronger and stronger" in your confidence as a witness of Christ (see Helaman 3:35). Start with brief and simple answers. They will be adequate in most situations. But you can also strengthen your defenses even more by studying related scriptures and connecting various doctrines.

**5. Seek opportunities.** Having thus prepared yourself, pray for opportunities to humbly yet confidently share and, if needed, defend the gospel. Remember, "*discouragement* is not the absence of adequacy but the absence of



courage.”<sup>7</sup> Pray that you will love Heavenly Father’s children in and out of the Church sufficiently to share and defend gospel standards. Pray that you will never experience indifference or resignation regarding personal doctrinal blind spots, but with faith in Christ work to overcome them.

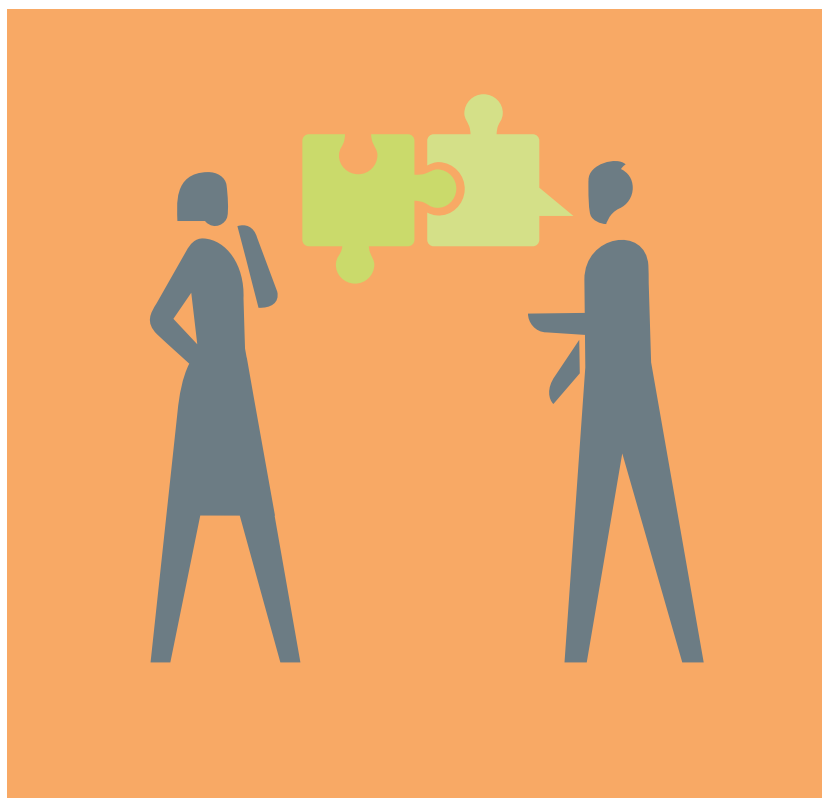
Remember that even a child can be a defender of Christ on the playground by bearing a simple testimony; that you don’t have to be a gospel scholar to be a witness of the truth; that you don’t have to have all the answers; that it is OK to sometimes say, “I don’t know” or “these mysteries are not yet fully made known unto me; therefore I shall forbear” (Alma 37:11). Not being “ashamed of the gospel of Christ” (Romans 1:16) is more than simply ignoring or enduring half-truths and falsehoods; it means knowing and defending the doctrines! Hence, if we remain silent, let it not be out of fear but because we are following a prompting (see, for example, Alma 30:29).

### Stand as a Proactive Witness

As you continue defending the gospel of Jesus Christ, “faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify [you] for the work” (D&C 4:5). Let us here call to mind that Christ was meek but never weak—that He invited but also rebuked, and that He also said, “He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me” (3 Nephi 11:29).

As a wicked world continues violating the moral and doctrinal standards of God, Christ depends on even the least of the Saints to be living witnesses of His name.

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) reminded us that “it is not enough just to be good. You must be good for something. You must contribute good to the world. The



world must be a better place for your presence. . . . In this world so filled with problems, so constantly threatened by dark and evil challenges, you can and must rise above mediocrity, above *indifference*. You can become involved and speak with a strong voice for that which is right.”<sup>8</sup>

If you desire to be a witness of the restored gospel, join the ranks of a latter-day army of witnesses by letting your light so shine! May your gospel living *and* your defense of that same gospel be a reflection of the depth of your conversion to Jesus Christ. ■

*Start with brief and simple answers. They will be adequate in most situations. But you can also strengthen your defenses even more by studying related scriptures and connecting various doctrines.*

### NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Dare to Stand Alone,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 60.
2. See “The Road Not Taken,” *The Poetry of Robert Frost*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem (1969), 105.
3. Dallin H. Oaks, “Loving Others and Living with Differences,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 26.
4. Thomas S. Monson, “Dare to Stand Alone,” 67.
5. The Gospel Topics essays at [topics.lds.org](https://www.topics.lds.org) are particularly helpful in answering questions about the history and doctrine of the Church.
6. Richard G. Scott, “He Lives,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 88.
7. Neal A. Maxwell, “Notwithstanding My Weakness,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 14.
8. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Stand Up for Truth” (Brigham Young University devotional, Sept. 17, 1996), 2; emphasis added.



# Living the Gospel

## ALONE IN YOUR FAMILY

By Megan Armknecht

When Luis Lopez Rodriguez of Ecuador decided to be baptized, his mother fought the idea. “Initially, the situation was quite complicated. She thought I was being forced to join the Church.” Luis was eventually baptized but knew he would be living the gospel alone in his family.

Like Luis, many members of the Church—particularly youth and young adults—do not come from families where everyone belongs to the Church. Sometimes children join but parents do not. Other times one spouse is an active member of the Church while the other has different religious beliefs. A couple could marry in the temple, yet one spouse could drift away from the Church.

Each family’s situation is unique, but differences in beliefs and practices can strain family relations, says



Dr. Adam Fisher, a psychologist who has worked with LDS Family Services and Brigham Young University Counseling and is now with the Family Institute at Northwestern University.

However, the gospel of Jesus Christ offers hope to *all* families, regardless of individual circumstances, as “happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup> Gospel principles strengthen every family, no matter the situation. This includes families in which not all are members of the Church—what we sometimes call “part-member families.” Although Latter-day Saints in such families face unique challenges, striving for love, communication, and respect in their families can help them strengthen their testimonies, build friendships, and bring peace into their homes.

### Live Together in Love

Love heals and strengthens both members and nonmembers in part-member families. As President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has taught, love is part of the “fabric of the plan of salvation”<sup>2</sup> as well as the family. When members and nonmembers living in the same family show love through service and kindness, the family becomes more unified.

Some Latter-day Saints in part-member families have family members who support their activity in the Church.

Pamela Suárez Méndez of Mexico and her sister Yuli are the only members in their family, but their other family members are kind and supportive. Love comes easily for their family. “As we’ve learned to see them as God sees them, then we love them even more and they respond with more love,” Pamela said.

However, this is not the case for every family. When Amanda (name has been changed) joined the Church, her father was antagonistic toward any type of religion. “He said that religion was a crutch for the weak,” Amanda said. “It was really hard for me to feel like he loved me, and it was hard for me to honor him when he was so mean about religion.”

To “love one another” (John 13:34) is not always the easiest commandment to follow. Sometimes, even when a member of the Church reaches out in love to his or her nonmember family members, there will still be anger or indifference on their part. In these cases, it is vital to obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit to know how to handle individual situations and continue in faith.

### Learn to Communicate

In addition to love, effective communication can strengthen part-member families. When Scarlett Bradley of Florida started investigating the Church, her family was concerned. However, through communication—sharing and listening to each other’s thoughts and feelings—Scarlett and her family have grown together in love and respect for each other. “The peace and love that is in my home comes from the open dialogues we have,” she said. Her family members have regard for one another’s perspectives.

Dr. Fisher also stressed the importance of communication. “Communication seems like a simple answer, but it is crucial.” He has noticed that in counseling, family members “sometimes use God or the Church in order to win an argument.” In contrast, couples and families can communicate with kindness and “care for each other like good friends” rather than see each other as enemies. “It is challenging but possible—and even rewarding—for two adults in a family to remain close while holding different beliefs.”





## Respect Each Other's Agency

Members should respect the agency of others in their families, particularly in relation to attitudes about the gospel. Pamela has found that the best she can do is to “always respect my family members’ beliefs. We cannot ask others for respect if we are not willing to give it.”

It can be even more difficult if family members do not respect the Church member’s agency and are hostile about the member going to church, meeting with other members, or keeping commandments.

For Amanda, learning to respect her father’s agency and to be patient with his anger toward her choices took time. One day in institute, the class was talking about charity. “As we were talking, it hit me,” she said. “I realized that he really loved me, just because I’m his daughter.” This realization helped her learn to respect her dad, even if he didn’t respect her decisions about the Church. “I recognized that we’re all here on earth to make our own choices—he made different decisions than me, and I made different decisions than him. I can still love him, and he can still love me.”

## Hold On to Your Testimony

Since family support can be mixed, it is important for Latter-day Saints in part-member families to develop their own testimonies and live the gospel faithfully, even if no one else urges them to.

Laura Rytting of Utah grew up in a part-member family in New Jersey, USA. Her mother was a convert to the Church, but her father was never baptized. Laura learned the importance of living the gospel on her own. “My seminary experience was all up to me,” she said. She had an inner drive that helped her make friends, attend activities, and develop her own testimony.

Living your testimony can help show family members the strength of your convictions and your determination to follow Jesus Christ. For example, Luis said that the way he lives his life shows his mother that Latter-day Saints are kind people. “Knowing that I’m an example to her motivates me to live the gospel in the best possible way I can.”

## Building Friendships

Other members of the Church can also help strengthen part-member families through friendship and good examples. Amanda remembered how seeing other families treat their children with kindness at Church meetings showed her that there was a different way to live and that a future home that was happy and loving could become a reality for her.

However, the actions of other Church members can also be troubling if the people in a part-member family feel like a burden or a project. Rachel (name has been changed) of Utah married a nonmember. She explained that sometimes her family has felt like a project for other members. On the other hand, she said that her family has benefitted from the genuine friendship of home teachers who came to repair roofs and just talk about life.

“It’s easier to build a relationship with someone who is friendly without being pushy,” Rachel said. “We should just treat each other as people by helping someone who is in need of help, being a friend, cheering someone up, or leaving a kind note.”

Members can and should include part-member families in ward activities and social circles without forcing nonmembers to take part in these activities. Home and visiting teachers, bishops, and other ward members can support members and nonmembers in part-member families by including them in neighborhood parties, by giving members rides to church and other activities, and by just being friends.

When ward members show part-member families love, hearts can soften and strong relationships can form, regardless of whether or not the nonmembers of the part-member families join the Church.

## Conclusion

Part-member families come in all shapes, sizes, and situations. Each family’s circumstance—like each family—is unique. It is essential for Church members in part-member families to follow the guidance of the Holy Ghost to know how best to support their families and stay strong in the gospel. Living the gospel takes



courage. As Pamela said, “We can be courageous in our testimony, in our words, in our actions, and in our faith. This will give us power to be the instruments in the hands of our Heavenly Father to bless our families.”

The gospel of Jesus Christ can provide hope for any family. Although there are no picture-perfect families in the Church (as every family has its challenges), the Church still strives for the ideal.<sup>3</sup>

We should take hope in the knowledge that God is aware of each family’s situation. We are all part of His family, and He has provided a plan for all of us to return to Him. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, families can find joy, peace, and healing. Through the challenges, joys, and relationships in families, we learn how to become better disciples of Christ and how to return to live with God again.

“Our family is a precious gift from Heavenly Father,” said Scarlett. “We are to learn vital lessons from them and the experiences we have with them. As we keep an eternal perspective focused on Jesus Christ, blessings will be poured out on our families.” ■

*The author lives in New Jersey, USA.*

#### NOTES

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “In Praise of Those Who Save,” *Ensign*, May 2016, 80.
3. See Neil L. Andersen, “Whoso Receiveth Them, Receiveth Me,” *Ensign*, May 2016, 49–52.

#### DO’S AND DON’TS

- **Don’t** treat part-member families as projects.
- **Do** be a friend.
- **Don’t** be afraid to talk directly to the family member who is not a Church member. In most cases they still want friendship and don’t want to argue about the Church.
- **Do** respect boundaries and agency.
- **Don’t** gossip.
- **Do** include all of the family in planning ordinances.
- **Don’t** ever suggest that an inactive spouse is a bad influence on the family.
- **Do** invite part-member families to participate, with no strings attached, in things that they may be interested in, such as campouts, sporting activities, and so on.





IMAGE BY PAUL TAYLOR / GETTY IMAGES

# A BURNED BOOK OF MORMON

*The burned and tattered copy of the Book of Mormon I kept from my mission still reminds me of the book's power.*

By Joshua Sanchez

Oscar Cruz had not been active in the Church for more than 15 years when he stopped my companion and me on the street and told us how he wanted to return to church. We immediately set up an appointment to meet with his family the following day. Over the next few weeks we shared numerous Spirit-filled discussions as we taught Oscar's family about the restored gospel. We gave a copy of the Book of Mormon to each of his children. His four oldest children were soon baptized.

A few weeks after their baptism, my companion and I stepped off the bus on our way to visit the Cruz family. They lived about half a mile away from the bus stop, at the end of a dirt road. As we began walking toward their home, we noticed plumes of smoke rising from the direction of their house. However, we paid little heed, assuming it was a farmer burning brush and debris. As we got closer, we realized that this wasn't a brush fire.

## **"The Lord Will Watch Over Us"**

The Cruz family's house had been constructed out of two-by-four wood pillars wrapped with heavy plastic that formed the walls. The roof was made of corrugated plastic. Now everything was gone except for a few scattered two-by-fours protruding from the ground, smoldering from the blaze. Fortunately, no one had been home when the fire occurred.

Shortly after we arrived, Oscar and his family pulled up in their truck and we tried to console them. They had

lost every physical possession except the clothes on their backs. After spending a short time with the family and the branch president, who had come over as soon as he heard about the incident, we decided to meet back there the next day to help sort through the debris.

It was a long bus ride home for my companion and me that night. I was worried that a trial like this, so soon after Oscar's reactivation and the baptism of his children, might be too much if they allowed doubt to enter their minds. I prayed fervently that the Cruz family would find strength in the face of adversity.

We left early the next morning to meet at the scene of the fire with members of the branch. I approached Oscar the moment we arrived to once again offer my condolences. I had tried to prepare responses to the questions I felt were inevitable. Why would the Lord allow something like this to happen? Why do I feel punished for coming back to church? But Oscar didn't ask any of these questions. He only said, "Elder Sanchez, it's OK. I know that everything will be OK. The Lord will watch over us."

I was very humbled by the sincere testimony of this dear brother. The Lord reminded me that every trial can be overcome when we turn to Him and keep our focus on what is really important. With my spirits lifted, I went to work sifting through the rubble. A member of the Church had brought a large trailer for us to use to remove anything that could not be salvaged. Unfortunately, that was almost everything.





## LOOK TO THE BOOK

"Do you realize that the Book of Mormon was written for you—and for your day? This book is one of the blessings of living in what we call the dispensation of the fulness of times. Although the Book of Mormon was written by inspired, ancient authors—many of whom were prophets—they and the people of their day did not have the benefit of possessing the whole book. . . .

"Within the book's pages, you will discover the infinite love and incomprehensible grace of God. As you strive to follow the teachings you find there, your joy will expand, your understanding will increase, and the answers you seek to the many challenges mortality presents will be opened to you. As you look to the book, you look to the Lord."

**Elder Gary E. Stevenson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Look to the Book, Look to the Lord," *Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 46, 47.**



## A Precious Book

As I was shoveling up ash, a small rectangular object caught my attention. I stooped down and picked up a burned Book of Mormon. The cover was missing, and the edges were charred and black. I realized that this was one of the copies of the Book of Mormon I had given to Oscar's children. Heavyhearted, I walked over to the trailer to dispose of a book that meant so much to me but that couldn't be salvaged.

As I reached up to throw away the book, I couldn't do it. It was almost as if it were sticky and my hand couldn't let go. I looked at the burned pages once again. I still couldn't bring myself to throw it away, so I set it aside, planning to throw it away later. The rest of the afternoon my thoughts kept returning to that Book of Mormon. Stories and verses from its pages ran through my mind. I thought about its importance in my life, the sacrifices that had been made so that I could read the words of these ancient American prophets today. I recalled the discussions we had had with Oscar's family and the gospel truths we had shared from the Book of Mormon.

As we finally finished cleaning up that afternoon, I walked back to the place where I

had hidden the book and picked it up. Again I thought about throwing it away, but once again I couldn't bring myself to do it. Burned, tattered, and unreadable as it was, it was still a Book of Mormon. I had always known the Book of Mormon was important, but I don't think I had truly realized until then just how much I cherished its words. I wrapped it in a plastic bag for safekeeping.

I carried that burned Book of Mormon around with me in a plastic bag for the rest of my mission. The story of the Cruz family had become part of my story. For the rest of my mission I shared how they lost their house in a fire but relied on their faith in God to help them move forward. Then I shared my story of finding the burned Book of Mormon and how I couldn't throw it away because its doctrine and stories meant so much to me. In the decade or so since I have been home, I have continued to share this story about the burned Book of Mormon with my family, youth groups, missionaries, and elders quorums. Every time I share the story, the Spirit reconfirms to me the divinity and truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and its teachings. ■

*The author lives in Kentucky, USA.*

# FROM THE FOUNTAIN

By Sharon Price Anderson

*From freely flowing fountain,  
living water, pure as love,  
fully fills the holy vessel.*

*Willingly I enter  
liquid abundance of the font,  
become a momentary embryo  
wholly covered by  
God's goodness,  
each part immersed  
in this new birth,  
then quickened by the  
Spirit's breath.*

*In desert of thirst,  
shadow of death,  
I willingly receive  
the copious cup.  
Drinking deeply,  
I empty it completely  
and am perfectly imbued  
with abounding grace  
of living water flowing  
freely from the fountain.*







as he read, he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord

press forward, feasting upon the word





# Feasting

ON THE  
WORDS  
OF  
CHRIST

*As we press forward, we  
will remain stronger  
and more faithful as  
we study and savor the  
scriptures.*

*id of Christ, and endure to the end*



**By Elder  
Randy D. Funk**  
Of the Seventy

I remember well our missionary visits to a small home in Semarang, Indonesia. With a dirt floor and only two rooms, the home was illuminated more by the goodness of the family that lived there than by the single light bulb hanging above the small table around which we met.

During heavy rains our shoes would go underwater as we pedaled our bicycles to and from their neighborhood. The air was always hot and the mosquitoes were always hungry, but the experience of sharing the gospel in that home was one of the most joyful of my mission.

As one of the early missionaries in Indonesia from 1971 to 1973, I was assigned to help begin the work in the city of Semarang in central Java. When Elder Peterson and I arrived, there were no members.

A local newspaper published an article about the new church in the city and mentioned the English classes we taught. Samad,<sup>1</sup> a young husband and father, read the article and visited our English class. At the time, he was an acting minister for another Christian church, but he expressed interest in learning about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

## Several Verses

Samad was a sincere seeker of truth. He was also faithful in keeping commitments. Soon he began attending our meetings every Sunday morning before meeting with his congregation in the afternoon. We continued teaching him, and he understood well what we taught. But as we finished the standard discussions,





despite his sincere prayers and diligent efforts, he had not yet received a spiritual confirmation of the truthfulness of our message.

So I did something I felt would help Samad to gain a testimony. Because the Book of Mormon had not yet been translated into Indonesian, I translated several important verses into Bahasa Indonesia, the official language.

A few years ago, I returned to Indonesia as a General Authority for a mission tour. I invited Brother Samad and his wife, Katoningsih, to join me in a meeting with missionaries serving in the Surakarta Indonesia Stake.

As Brother Samad shared his testimony, he held up his well-read Indonesian Book of Mormon. He encouraged the missionaries to use the sacred book in their teaching and testified of its power to change hearts. Then he shared his own experience.

He said that as he read those few verses I had translated, he felt a strong spiritual witness that they were the word of God. He knew if those verses were the word of God, then the Book of Mormon was the word of God. The Spirit confirmed to him that the Book of Mormon was true; therefore, what we had taught him about Joseph Smith, the Restoration, priesthood authority, and the plan of salvation was also true.

The next Sunday, Samad informed us that his prayers had been answered. He and his wife were baptized on September 16, 1973. A branch was organized a few months later, and Brother Samad was called as branch president. Later, he served as district president. When the Surakarta Indonesia Stake was organized in 2012, he was called as its first patriarch.

### A Different Experience

I contrast Brother Samad's experience with that of another young husband and father who came to see me when I was serving as a stake president. This man had grown up in the Church and served a mission, but he was struggling with his testimony. He still believed in God and prayer, but when I asked if he believed the Book of Mormon to be true, his response surprised me. He said, "I don't know. I've never given it much thought."



With access to only a few verses in a language he could read, Brother Samad had followed Moroni's exhortation to read, ponder, and ask. He had done so with a sincere heart, real intent (meaning a willingness to act), and faith in Christ. He gained a testimony of the book's truth by the power of the Holy Ghost. (See Moroni 10:3–4.)

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

In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Nephi powerfully teaches the doctrine of Christ. Speaking to those who have already been baptized, he says, "Ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ." Then he adds, "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 31:19–20).

We need to study the Book of Mormon both before and after baptism.

Without "the word of Christ" as found in the Book of Mormon, most investigators struggle to develop sufficient



# 4 WAYS TO FEAST

1. *Read for knowledge and to be filled with the Spirit.* In the first chapter of the Book of Mormon, Lehi has a vision in which he is given a book and told to read. “As he read, he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord” (1 Nephi 1:12). We can liken Lehi’s experience to the outpouring of the Spirit we can receive as we read the Book of Mormon.
2. *Study for understanding and wisdom.* Study is more than reading; it requires searching. Footnotes and other resources, such as the Topical Guide and the triple combination index, can help us study topics and themes and find connections and patterns.
3. *Ponder for inspiration.* Prayerful contemplation allows the Spirit to guide our thoughts and opens our minds to inspiration. Answers to our sincere questions and desires often come as we ponder the scriptures.
4. *Pray for confirmation.* Remember Moroni’s promise that those who read the Book of Mormon and pray about it with a sincere heart and real intent will receive a witness of its truthfulness (see Moroni 10:3–4). That witness can be received over and over again as we seek to “know the truth of all things” (Moroni 10:5).

*feasting upon the word of Christ*



faith to act—to repent and to be baptized. For that reason, *Preach My Gospel* teaches missionaries and all of us that “the Book of Mormon, combined with the Spirit, is your most powerful resource in conversion.”<sup>2</sup>

## Savoring and Enduring

Conversion is an ongoing process, however, not a one-time event. President Thomas S. Monson recently taught that “once obtained, a testimony needs to be kept vital and alive through continued obedience to the commandments of God and through daily prayer and scripture study.”<sup>3</sup> As Nephi emphasized, to gain eternal life we must “press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end” (2 Nephi 31:20).

The second man I mentioned was struggling, in part, because he had never given much thought to the Book of Mormon. Brother Samad, on the other hand, has pressed forward, feasting on these precious words of Christ. He continues to diligently study the Book of Mormon, nourishing the faith that has guided him throughout his life. Today more than 35 members of his family enjoy the blessings of the gospel.

“To feast means more than to taste,” President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has taught. “To feast means to savor. We savor the scriptures by studying them in a spirit of delightful discovery and faithful obedience.”<sup>4</sup>

I know that as we read the Book of Mormon, gain a witness of its truthfulness, and then press forward feasting upon its words throughout our lives, we will remain stronger and more faithful as we encounter the challenges of life. Our spiritual roots will go deeper, our faith will increase, and our ability “to remain true to the commandments of God despite temptation, opposition, and adversity”<sup>5</sup> will be enhanced. ■

## NOTES

1. In Indonesia, some people have only one name. Such is the case for Samad.
2. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 104.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “The Power of the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign*, May 2017, 87.
4. Russell M. Nelson, “Living by Scriptural Guidance,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 17.
5. *Preach My Gospel*, 70.





PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID STOKER, POSED BY MODELS

# Saved

## AFTER MY DAUGHTER'S SUICIDE

*My ward stepped in to help me  
through this trial because I  
was without family of my own.*

By Le Etta Thorpe

A friend of mine recently asked me a question that took me by surprise. Of all the questions that are left unanswered after a loved one takes his or her life, she had just one on her mind. Her question was, “How has the Church helped you after the suicide of your 15-year-old daughter?”

My initial thought was, “It hasn’t. I pushed everyone away, hibernated in my home, and suffered in absolute solitude.”

But after a few days of reflection, I realized that thought was totally off base. I have no doubt that the unimaginable horror I experienced clouded my perspective.

While at the hospital where they took my daughter Natalie (who had already passed), I was in a state of shock. I was completely numb, physically and mentally. Things were happening around me that I could see but not feel: police asking questions, friends crying, medical staff informing. It’s all a blur yet perfectly clear.

My former bishop and his wife were there. A colleague of mine had called them. My daughter, Natalie, and I had moved from their ward only a few months prior. My bishop and his wife were beloved friends of ours.

The bishop’s wife, also named Natalie, said I would be staying with them. The next thing I knew, I was in their vehicle riding back to my old neighborhood. I had no comprehension of time passing, yet I was aware it was dawn

of the next day when I received a priesthood blessing from the bishop and a friend.

I was kept in the loop with all of the funeral arrangements, yet I was unaware of all the details. I would get dressed when I was told to get dressed. I would get in the car when I was told we had somewhere to go. I was a robot following simple commands. That was all I was capable of doing. Surprisingly, I had not yet shed a tear.

My daughter’s funeral was beautiful. There was a lot of laughter mixed with tears, and the Spirit was very much present. My oldest daughter, Victoria, traveled back to Utah from another state. She wrote a song and performed it at the funeral.

I was never approached about the funeral costs except to be informed it was being handled. Within a few weeks the funeral had been paid in full by donations from Church members.

At the time, I was still staying with my former bishop’s family. Members from my previous ward were looking for a new place for me to live. A cute little basement apartment became available, and the next thing I knew, I was signing a lease. This did not happen by my own doing. It was the actions of a network of Church members, including my dear friend Natalie, the bishop’s wife.

Ward members helped move my personal effects and got



me and Victoria settled in. The first two months' rent had been paid in advance—again, by Church member donations. I still had no perception of time, and I was still emotionally numb to a certain degree, yet I was starting to get feeling back.

A few weeks after my daughter's death, the realization and magnitude of what had happened started to creep in. It was like heavy, thick black smoke seeping in at first, followed by all-consuming billows until I was surrounded by complete darkness. Grief in its rawest form has its own dimension of blackness.

Natalie had died on Thanksgiving Day. It was now Christmas. The holidays only magnified my loss. The agony lingered throughout the day and tormented me throughout the night. It was relentless. The tears poured endlessly for days. Minutes passed like hours. Hours passed like days. Days passed like years.

As a divorced woman, I did not have a husband who could go out and earn a living. If I could have, I would have curled up in a ball, locked myself in a closet, and remained there forever. But I didn't have that luxury. I had to somehow gather the strength to function. I had to find a job. I was working when Thanksgiving Day happened, but somehow in all the chaos, I had forgotten about my job. I could have gone back to it, but my Natalie loved to hang out there, and

the thought of going back without her was unbearable.

By the first week of January, I had gotten a low-paying job. I tried to act like I was normal. My body kept going, but I felt like my soul had died. No one knew I was a hollow shell of a being just going through the motions. It was only during the drive to and from work that I was able to break down emotionally. This was my new normal.

I started going to my new ward a little at a time. I just knew if someone asked me how I was doing, I would fall to pieces. I desperately wanted to go to church, but I didn't want to talk to anyone, much less make eye contact. I wished with all my heart that I could be invisible. More than anything, I just wanted to rip this all-consuming pain out of my chest! But it wouldn't begin to diminish until sometime later.

I have no idea what the sisters in Relief Society thought of me, and at the time I didn't much care. I was too busy just trying to breathe! I'm sure I gave off the impression that I wanted to be left alone, for none of them bothered me. They did, however, occasionally give me a warm smile that I found a little comforting—just the exact small dose to keep me from running out the nearest exit, which was a constant thought.

Time is a healer. It doesn't erase events, but it allows gaping wounds to slowly close.

That fateful Thanksgiving Day was in 2011, and it took me a few years to realize just how much I was helped by my brothers and sisters in the Church. I felt like I was carried off the battlefield after having been critically wounded. I was nursed back to health and cared for until I could stand on my own.

Countless blessings have come my way, in a variety of ways. My testimony has grown to near full maturity. I know now what it feels like to be held in the loving arms of our Savior.

So to answer my friend's question, "How did the Church help you through this ordeal?" I say, "They didn't help me. They saved me." ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

***Natalie was a source of joy and laughter in my life. I am grateful for the support of my friends and ward members as I grieved her loss.***



LEFT: PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID STOKER,  
POSED BY MODELS



# How Survivors Heal

By LDS Family Services

When someone chooses to end their pain with suicide, a complicated and uniquely painful grieving process begins for loved ones left behind (typically referred to as survivors). Feelings of confusion, guilt, abandonment, rejection, and anger are intensified. The unanswered questions of Why? What did I miss? Why didn't I receive a prompting? How will this affect eternal rewards? etc., can cause tremendous turmoil as well as thoughts that perhaps they were somehow responsible for their loved one's death.



There is a tendency for survivors to withdraw from others in shame because of fears of blame, judgment, and stigma. Survivors might also feel trauma-related reactions, especially for someone who discovers the body. Survivors can even develop suicidal thoughts themselves in their grief.

Notwithstanding such deep pain and anguish, our Savior “descended below all things” (see D&C 88:6; 122:8) “that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:12) so “that we may . . . find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

## To those who are grieving:

- Don't blame others, especially yourself.
- Take care of yourself spiritually: Trust in the gift of agency, allow for unknowns (see 1 Nephi 9:6), and trust in the Lord's power to heal and provide peace (see Philippians 4:7).
- Take care of yourself physically: Maintain a routine of good diet, rest, and exercise.
- Reach out for support from those you trust (family,

friends, bishop), and let others help you through this crisis.

- Engage in healthy activities that provide distraction.
- Talk with a professional counselor and/or attend a suicide support group.
- Be patient in your healing process.

## To those caring for someone who is grieving:

- Be compassionate and do not blame or judge. Understand how “the Lord . . . suit[s] his mercies” (D&C 46:15).
- Reach out and ask the survivors how you can help even in simple tasks, or accompany them in activities.
- Be patient, listen, and accept the feelings they share at their pace.
- Avoid clichés and false assurances such as “It'll be OK,” “It could be worse,” “I know how you feel,” “I understand,” “It's God's will,” “Time heals all wounds,” and so on.
- Don't try to provide answers to their unanswerable questions.
- Don't compare their grief to yours even if it was related to a suicide.
- Talk to them about their loved one in similar ways as you would about someone who died in another manner.
- Reassure affected children that they are not responsible.
- Offer to help them find additional resources for their grieving (counseling, support groups, etc.). ■

## Additional Resources:

[PreventingSuicide.lds.org](https://PreventingSuicide.lds.org)

[afsp.org/find-support/ive-lost-someone](https://afsp.org/find-support/ive-lost-someone)



# The Threshing Floor

*Find out what happens in this step in the harvesting process—and how it relates to the Lord's harvest.*

Threshing floor

Ox

Wheat or barley

Board or sledge

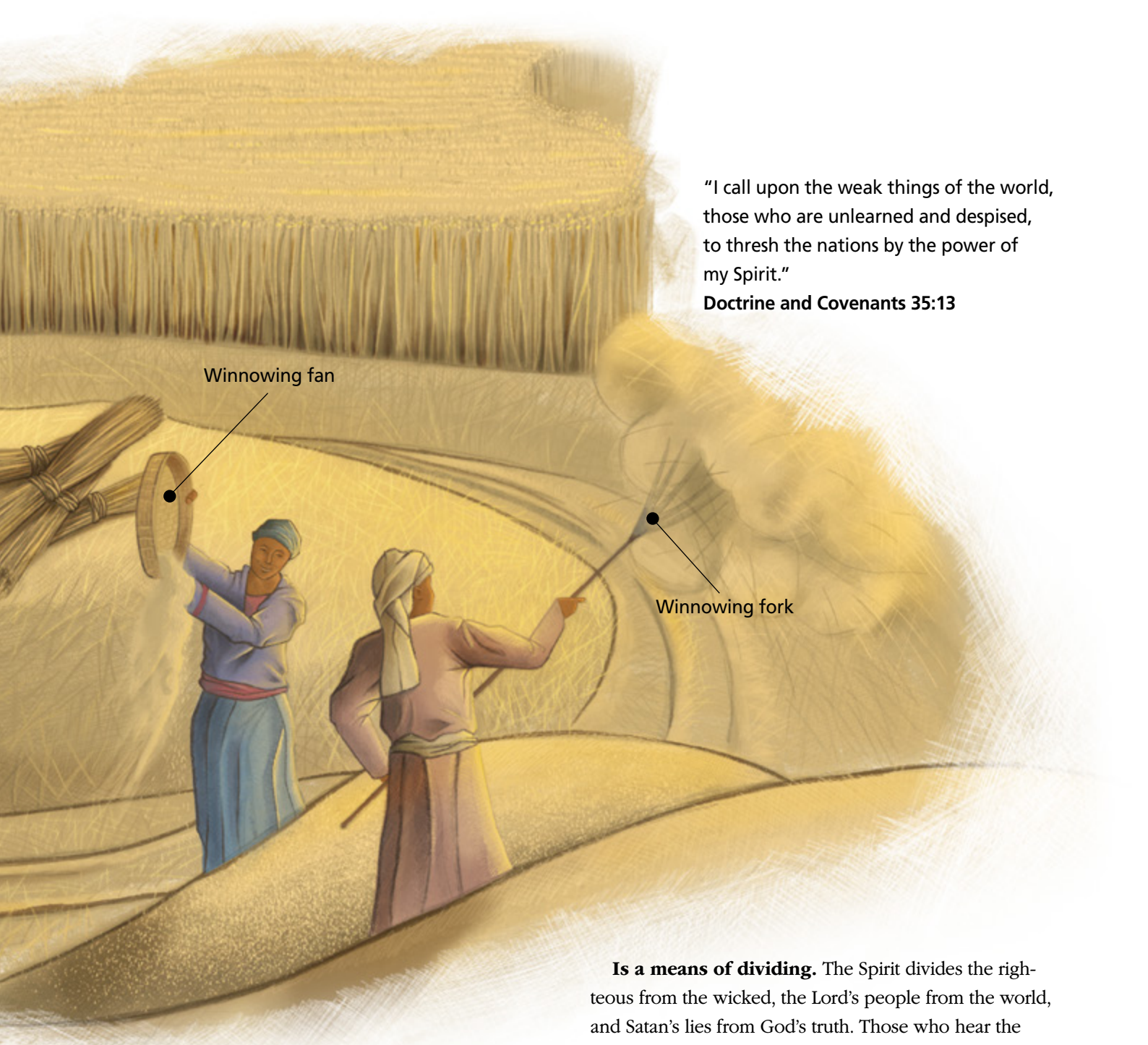
## THRESHING

Threshing is the process by which the grain husks, or chaff, are loosened. It is done after the fields have been harvested and usually involves crushing the grain stalks on a flat surface, or threshing floor. Threshing is necessary before the final process of winnowing, which separates the husks from the edible grain before the grain is ground and stored.

## BIBLE FACTS

- The harvested and cut grain, such as wheat or barley, was spread to dry on flat, open surfaces, or threshing floors (see 1 Chronicles 21:20–23).
- The dried stalks were either beaten with flails or crushed by an ox or a donkey dragging a heavy board in which sharp stones were embedded (see Deuteronomy 25:4; 1 Corinthians 9:9).
- The Lord often used the image of threshing as a metaphor for the judgments that He or His people would mete out on other nations or the world, either anciently or before His Second Coming (see Isaiah 28:27–28; Isaiah 41:15; Jeremiah 51:33; Micah 4:13; Habakkuk 3:12; Luke 3:17).





"I call upon the weak things of the world,  
those who are unlearned and despised,  
to thresh the nations by the power of  
my Spirit."

**Doctrine and Covenants 35:13**

Winnowing fan

Winnowing fork

## WHAT WE CAN LEARN

Threshing:

**Is powerful.** Just as threshing involves a strong physical act (crushing), the Lord sends forth His humble servants to "thresh the nations by the power of [His] Spirit" (D&C 35:13). Of course, the Spirit's power isn't violent in the same way threshing is, but its effects can be similarly impressive. Although it is still, small, and peaceful, the Spirit can penetrate to people's hearts and help bring about great things, such as the conversion of souls and the breaking down of barriers to the Lord's work.

**Is a means of dividing.** The Spirit divides the righteous from the wicked, the Lord's people from the world, and Satan's lies from God's truth. Those who hear the Lord's voice through His servants, who have not hardened their hearts, and who choose to repent are counted among the righteous. The wicked experience the Lord's judgments against them.

**Precedes the final separation.** Threshing is a necessary step before the final winnowing. Throughout history, the Lord has at times sent His judgments against wicked people. At His Second Coming, He will separate the wicked from the righteous in preparation for His millennial reign. Before this separation, His servants and His people help prepare the world for the judgment to come by bearing witness through the power of the Spirit. ■





Learn how the *Friend* magazine can help your family understand a different sensitive topic each month.

## RESPECTING OTHERS

Children learn early to group people by similarities and differences. We can help children learn that all types of people deserve respect—whether they are different culturally, physically, or in other ways. Here are a few ideas for starting the conversation.

### “All Children of God” (page 4)

A Latter-day Saint boy visits a Buddhist temple with his family and learns about respecting other religions and cultures. Page 6 includes an activity idea for using this story for family night. What beautiful things do you notice in other religions or cultures? Page 38 follows a similar theme, featuring a Latter-day Saint girl with a Catholic friend.



you could role-play standing up for people in different situations. Does anyone at school or church need your family’s extra kindness?

### “Jesus Is Kind” (page FJ4)

Jesus Christ is a perfect example of treating others with kindness. Read this story and talk about other times Jesus showed love. How can you follow Jesus’s example this week? If you haven’t done so already, help your child send the *Friend* a heart with an act of love written on it. The magazine is collecting them until October 2017!



### “Earrings for Jasmine” (page 36)

This story is about a girl who befriends a new classmate who is being picked on. During family night,

Find stories, activities, and media about other gospel topics at [lessonhelps.lds.org](http://lessonhelps.lds.org). For past *Friend* Connection articles, visit [FriendConnection.lds.org](http://FriendConnection.lds.org).

### CHURCH CHECK!

Church should be a haven, but sometimes meanness and bullying still happens there. Talk with your children to see what their Primary experiences are like. Are there ways they can be more kind? Is there anything they need your help with?



### SCRIPTURE SUPPORT

- *Christ’s teachings (Matthew 22:37–40)*: Jesus told us to “love thy neighbour as thyself” (verse 39). Talk about what this means. Can you think of different ways Jesus taught people to love one another?
- *We believe . . . (Articles of Faith 1:11)*: Memorize the eleventh article of faith as a family and clarify what the different words mean. Why do we believe in letting people worship how they want? What do we hope for in return?
- *King Benjamin’s teachings (Mosiah 2:17)*: When we treat other people with kindness and respect, who else are we showing love for?
- *Children of the Most High (Psalm 82:6)*: Each person is a child of God. For older children, you could talk about how every person on earth chose to follow Heavenly Father’s plan in the pre-earth life.

# TEACHING THE PROCLAMATION TO CHILDREN

Each month, we'll give you tips for talking with your children about a portion of "The Family: A Proclamation to the World."<sup>1</sup>

## This Month's Selection

"Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. 'Children are an heritage of the Lord' (Psalm 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations."



man, lawfully wedded as husband and wife. We declare the means by which mortal life is created and divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God's eternal plan.

HUSBAND AND WIFE have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. "Children are an heritage of the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness,

*This proclamation was read by President Gordon B. Hinckley at the General Relief Society meeting, 1994.*

## How to Explain This to Children

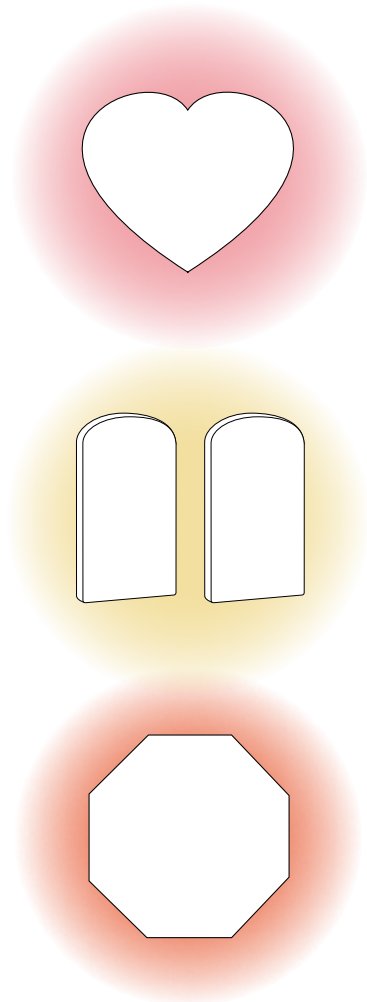
Moms and dads are supposed to take care of each other and their children. This is very important to Heavenly Father because He loves His children! He wants parents to teach their children to love and serve each other, keep the commandments, and obey the law.

## Activity Idea

Draw these three large shapes on pieces of paper or a whiteboard: (1) an outline of a heart, (2) an outline of the commandment tablets, and (3) an outline of a stop sign. Talk about the different ways your family shows love, keeps the commandments, and obeys the law. Write or draw your answers in the matching shape. With a different color pen, write or draw goals your family could work toward in each area. ■

### NOTE

1. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.



Find other teaching tips and a copy of the family proclamation at [ProclamationKids.lds.org](http://ProclamationKids.lds.org).







## PORTRAITS OF FAITH

*Cayo Sopi (far left) and Anthony Linat have been friends since childhood. Cayo, a member of the Church, always hoped Anthony would join.*

LESLIE NILSSON, PHOTOGRAPHER

### Cayo and Anthony

Paris, France

Anthony:

I could see that Cayo was different from my other friends. We all do dumb things as we're growing up, but Cayo helped me choose a good path.

From age 8 to age 18, I reflected a lot about getting baptized. But it took me a long time because I had a lot of things I needed to change in my life, even though I tried to live good principles.

Cayo:

It took the time that it took, more than 10 years, but finally he was baptized.

I believe the Lord does everything He can so we can truly, honestly, and deeply change. Becoming a Latter-day Saint and a disciple of Christ is not just a question of deciding to adopt certain attitudes; it is to witness a profound change in ourselves. I saw that change in Anthony.

See more about Cayo and Anthony's story at [lds.org/go/portraitsE917](https://lds.org/go/portraitsE917).

Learn more about sharing the gospel from Elder Dallin H. Oaks at [lds.org/go/91739](https://lds.org/go/91739).





When our baby boy began to breathe on his own, it was as if he was saying, “Mom, I’m going to be strong and do my part.”

## WATCHING OUR BABY LEAVE THIS LIFE

After the first ultrasound, the doctor told us there was a chance that our new baby had Down syndrome. My husband and I didn’t expect to hear this, and my vision for the future changed immediately.

All through the pregnancy, I was filled with questions and concerns about what to expect. But we prepared carefully for our baby’s arrival. When the day finally arrived, I felt in my heart that someone beautiful and special was about to be born.

We named our baby boy Santiago, and shortly after his birth we learned that he had not only Down syndrome but also several serious health complications that affected his heart, liver,

and lungs. Immediately, the doctors and nurses connected him to an artificial respirator and a heart-lung machine. As the days went by in the hospital, my husband and I began discussing how we were going to raise Santiago alongside his brothers. It was then we realized how much we needed our Heavenly Father.

Our little “Santi” improved enough to be disconnected from the artificial respirator. When he began to breathe on his own, it was as if he was saying, “Mom, I’m going to be strong and do my part.” He squeezed our fingers in his tiny hand. He was strong, but his heart could not hold up. He went into cardiac arrest, and a short while later,

he returned to his Heavenly Father.

I never dreamed I’d go through something like that. To wait for your child to arrive with so much anticipation, to make so many plans for him, and then to watch him leave this life is one of the most painful things a father and mother can go through.

My husband and I went to the temple after Santiago’s burial. When we entered, we felt comforted. I knew someday I would know my baby and enjoy him as his mother. I’m grateful for temples and for eternal families. Now it is up to us to live in a way that we can be with our little Santiago again. ■  
Rocio Alvarado, Santiago, Chile

# THE SAVIOR: THE PERFECT PHYSICIAN

As a physician, I once had a patient come to me after a routine blood test was out of normal range. In the days between her test and our visit, she had consulted the internet about what the results could mean. When we met, she was upset and worried. I tried to explain the results, but she was still distraught.

“Don’t worry about what could go wrong,” I told her. “That’s my job! This is what I’m here for. I studied hard to know what to do about this. We’ll get through this together, and if you’ll follow my instructions, you’ll know how to be whole again. Trust me and let me take the burden of medical worries. Then you can focus all your energy on getting better.”

This helped to calm her fears. We

made plans to run more tests, and I promised we would move forward on this together.

Months later, I was experiencing turmoil in my own life. Pressures at work, a baby on the way, and an upcoming move overwhelmed me. I found myself frustrated, anxious, and afraid.

I prayed earnestly about my worries, sins, and frustrations. As I prayed, the Spirit testified of the Savior’s importance in my life. It was as if He said to me:

“Don’t worry about all the things that could happen. That’s my job! It’s what I’m here for. I suffered all things to know what to do about this. Have faith in me, and we’ll get through this together. If you’ll follow my instructions, you can again be whole. Trust

me and let me take those spiritual burdens. Then you can focus all your efforts on becoming your best self.”

With this realization, my worry, guilt, and frustration were lifted. Faith in Him removed unproductive feelings that blocked my progress. I could focus on the things in my control. I could live the gospel and turn to the Savior in my challenges.

In the same way that a physician might lead us to physical wholeness, the Savior, who is the perfect Physician, can take away the burden of shame, worry, guilt, and even feelings of frustration and anxiety and show us the way to be spiritually whole again. That’s His job, and He performs it perfectly. ■

Matt Lindsey, Hawaii, USA

“Don’t worry about all the things that could happen. That’s my job! That’s what I’m here for.”





## MY ADDICTION; THE SAVIOR'S HELP

Several years ago, my wife and I were on the verge of getting a divorce because of my problem with alcohol. Not even our daughters' tears could change me. When the missionaries visited our home, it did not take long for my wife and daughters to be baptized, but I would not accept the things of God.

My addiction to alcohol controlled my life. I would go to bars after work and often missed work because I was drunk. When I drank, I became physically aggressive. I often got into arguments and fights with others.

When I would leave for work, my daughters would cry and ask to go

with me to keep me from drinking. I promised them I wouldn't drink, but I never kept my promises. I just wanted to keep drinking.

Eventually, I realized I needed help. With the help of the missionaries, I worked to overcome my addiction. For a while, I couldn't stop drinking for more than a week at a time.

Then one day the missionaries shared a passage from the Book of Mormon that changed my life: "And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for

if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them" (Ether 12:27).

I needed the Savior's help. Without Him, I would never overcome my addiction. I found that the more I relied on Him, the longer I could go without drinking. After several visits with the missionaries, I accepted their invitation to be baptized.

Since then my life has changed. More than eight years have gone by, and I have not tried even one drop of alcohol. Today I am free, and I owe it all to the Lord. ■

Victor Muñoz Walde, Huancayo, Peru

I promised my daughters  
that I would not drink, but I  
never kept my promises.





As Mom struggled to fall asleep, I felt prompted to read the scriptures to her.

## PHYSICAL COMFORT FROM THE SCRIPTURES

As a child, I was diagnosed with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis. I was often sick, and my parents spent many hours with me in doctors' offices. They worried about my health and felt helpless because they could not fix what was wrong. I never appreciated how they felt until it was my turn to helplessly watch my mother battle breast cancer.

One weekend, I drove to Mom's home in New Jersey to be with her as she went through a round of chemo. I wanted to be with her and to provide my brothers a break from her daily care. Someone needed to monitor her during the night because of her treatment. A bed had been set up for her

in the living room, and I planned to sleep on the couch. Mom was in pain and there was nothing I could do. I felt helpless and frustrated.

As Mom struggled to fall asleep, I felt prompted to read the scriptures to her. She loved the scriptures, but she was too weak to hold or read them herself. When I asked her what she wanted me to read, she said she loved the book of Alma. After scanning the chapter headings, I felt prompted to read from chapter 7.

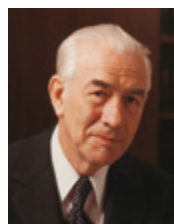
The Spirit filled the room as I read the words describing Christ's earthly mission: "And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this

that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

"And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy" (Alma 7:11–12).

I continued reading until Mom fell into a peaceful sleep. The scriptures had invited the Comforter into her home and helped her sleep. I gained a greater testimony of the power of the scriptures and of Jesus Christ, who was willing to act as our Savior and to comfort us in all of our afflictions. ■  
Inger de Montecinos, Virginia, USA





**By Elder Mark E. Petersen (1900–1984)**

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

## THE BOOK OF MORMON: TRULY A MIRACLE

*From cover to cover, the Book of Mormon is a revelation, an inspired translation, the work of God and not of any man.*

I . . . testify to the divine calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith and . . . declare my faith in the miracle by which the Book of Mormon was translated and published. . . .

On the 22nd day of September 1823, near Palmyra, New York, an angel of God revealed its resting place to [a seventeen]-year-old boy named Joseph Smith. . . .

. . . Let us consider for a moment the actual translation of this record. Joseph Smith says he did it by the gift and power of God. . . . As unlearned as he was at that time in his life, he could have done it in no other way. . . .

. . . How can critics [then] say that Joseph Smith, in his youth, was so scholarly that he could or would



deliberately take passages from the Bible and skillfully make it appear that they were part of the Book of Mormon manuscript?

His mother said that at that early point in his life he had not yet even read through the Bible. Then how could he select carefully chosen passages and work them into the Book of Mormon so appropriately and skillfully?

Not having read through the Bible in his early years, he had no adequate knowledge with which to do such an editing job even if he had been adept at writing or editing, neither of which skills he possessed that early in life.

[Yet] the Book of Mormon is a literary and a religious masterpiece, and is far beyond even the fondest hopes or abilities of any farm boy. . . .

Read, for example, some of the Savior's beautiful sermons in that book. Note that the Lord quotes Bible prophets. Are we to say that the unlearned Joseph Smith had the audacity or the skill to rewrite the Savior's sermons and insert [Bible] passages in them, thinking to improve on what Jesus said?

. . . [Joseph Smith] . . . did not tamper with the work of Mormon, the sermons of Jesus, the marvelous defense of Abinadi, or the writings of Malachi or Isaiah. He was strictly a translator, not an editor or a composer; nor was he a thief plagiarizing someone else's work. . . .

From cover to cover the Book of Mormon is a revelation, an inspired translation, the work of God and not of any man. From cover to cover it is true. ■

*From "It Was a Miracle!" Ensign, Nov. 1977, 11–13.*



**MORONI TUTORS JOSEPH,  
BY CLARK KELLEY PRICE**

*On the night and morning of September 21–22, 1823, the angel Moroni told Joseph Smith about the golden plates. Joseph went to the Hill Cumorah but couldn't remove the plates because he felt tempted to use them to gain wealth. Moroni appeared again and showed Joseph "the glory of the Lord" and "the prince of darkness." Moroni explained the purpose of the contrasting visions: "that you may know hereafter the two powers and never be influenced or overcome by that wicked one." (See Latter-day Saints' Messenger and Advocate, Oct. 1835, 196–98.)*





# In Church Magazines

**Ensign:** A Laotian refugee discovers through numerous hardships and challenges that God was directing him toward a path of happiness. See “Seeking Refuge, Finding Peace” (page 16). Plus, learn how a burned Book of Mormon became a symbol of faith for one missionary (page 58).

**New Era:** This month, read what Elder Neil L. Andersen teaches about the Savior’s loving invitation to repent (page 2). Find out how to follow Joseph Smith’s example and stay true through tough times (page 8). And learn how to help friends whose loved ones have committed suicide (page 16).

**Friend:** Learning doesn’t just happen at school! With this month’s *Friend*, your children can learn new ways to do family history (page 14), why it’s important to pray (page 16), about respecting others’ differences (page 4), and more. Read, learn, grow, repeat!

THE CHURCH OF  
JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

