

THE ENSIGN OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • SEPTEMBER 2019

Ensign



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**A Lesson on Spiritual Well-Being
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Paycheck . . .” page 34**

THE
CHURCH
IS HERE

Praia

Cape Verd



e



PHOTOGRAPH FROM GETTY IMAGES

Here are a few facts about the Church in Cape Verde:

1 Temple announced, to be built in Praia

Church members **14,205**

42 Congregations

Full-time missionaries **100+**

9 Islands inhabited out of 10; members and missionaries live on all 9

Distance in miles to the west coast of Africa (560 km) **3 5 0**

1989 First missionaries arrive

1991 Members from Cape Verde begin receiving mission calls

1994 Islands formally dedicated for the preaching of the gospel

2012 First stake organized

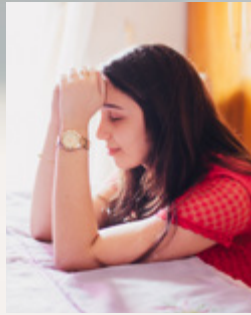


Learn more about the Church in various locations at history.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/GlobalHistories.



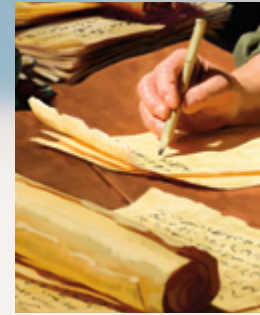
How the Spirit Can
(and Will) Help You
Minister

8



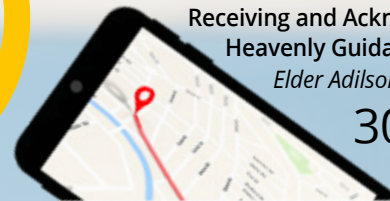
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Spiritual Armor
for Today's Youth
*Elder Lynn G.
Robbins*

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Heavenly Guidance

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The Virtue of Resilience

While serving as a mission president in Uruguay from 1994 to 1997, I often likened missionary work to being enrolled in high-level college courses. I would tell our missionaries that serving a mission is like taking advanced classes in diligence and patience, among other virtues, which would help prepare them for their future as spouses and parents.

Unfortunately, some young people today aren't prepared for life's hard lessons. They lack the virtue of resilience. We see that lack of resilience among college freshmen, new military recruits, and even some of our full-time missionaries.

As parents, we love our children and want what's best for them. We want their lives to be easier than ours have been. But we—and the culture in which we live—may be doing some things that result in the unintended consequence of lowering their resilience.

Thankfully, there's an antidote. It is found in the application of powerful gospel principles that can help our youth become more like the Savior (see Luke 2:52). As we embrace and apply these principles, which I discuss beginning on page 36, I am confident that the Lord will bless us to strengthen the young men and young women He has reserved to confront and conquer today's challenges.

Elder Lynn G. Robbins
Of the Seventy



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Photograph by
Pixdeluxe/Getty Images

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September Digital-Only Articles

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Come, Follow Me

Support Articles and Activities

To discover articles, videos, and other resources that coincide with your family's study of the New Testament this month, see the digital version of this issue in the Gospel Library app or at ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



You Don't Always Have to Wait for an Answer

By Leah Barton

An experience about the power to choose and act without definite personal revelation.



Knowing "Enough" about Suicide *By Hannah DeTavis*

I felt overwhelmed with questions about suicide. How could I ever receive spiritual closure?

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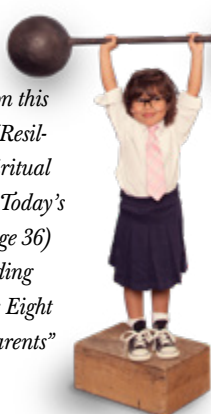


HOW TO HELP CHILDREN BECOME MORE RESILIENT

"**T**he original definition of the word *resilience* had to do with a material's ability to resume its shape or position after being bent, stretched, or compressed. Today we commonly use the word to describe our ability to bounce back from adversity. . . .

"As children develop resilience, they believe they can influence and even control outcomes in their lives through effort, imagination, knowledge, and skill. . . . They focus on what they *can* do rather than on what is outside their control" (Lyle J. Burrup, "Raising Resilient Children," *Ensign*, Mar. 2013, 13).

For more on this topic, see "*Resilience—Spiritual Armor for Today's Youth*" (page 36) and "*Building Resilience: Eight Tips for Parents*" (page 42).

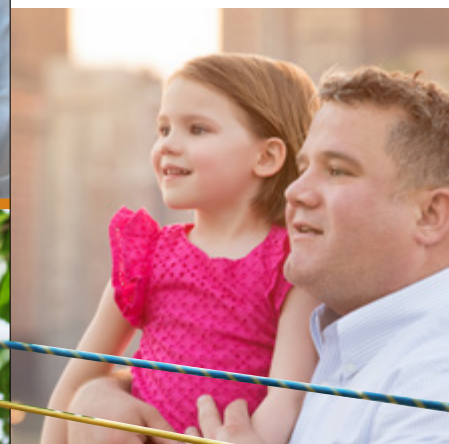


Define success as a product of hard work and sacrifice.

Define failure as temporary and as an opportunity to learn.

Consistently offer desirable rewards for the actions and behaviors you would like to reinforce.

Tell **children** they **have inherent worth** because they are sons or daughters of God.



Praise children's efforts.

Discuss rules and set logical consequences that are reasonable, related to the behavior, and respectful of both parent and child.



Debbie Cole

Leinster, Ireland



Debbie was sexually assaulted in 1989 at age 19. Determined that this event would not ruin her life, Debbie (shown with her daughter) has relied on her faith as she has worked as a volunteer helping other victims of sexual assault and campaigning for legislation to help protect others from sex offenders.

LESLIE NILSSON, PHOTOGRAPHER

It is so difficult to try to explain how it feels to experience sexual trauma to someone who has not been through that trial. An experience like this will always be with you—it will never go away. There will be days when something will trigger the memory and you'll feel that your power, your confidence, and your safety is taken from you.

At those times, the only thing I can do is get on my knees and talk to my Heavenly Father. I know without a shadow of a doubt that He hears and answers my prayers. I have a divine heritage, and this gives me the strength to carry on when life gets hard.

Also, knowing that my Savior loves me gives me hope and focus. I love what Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said: "It is not possible for you to sink lower than the infinite light of Christ's Atonement shines" ("The Laborers in the Vineyard," *Ensign*, May 2012, 33). The Savior can help us no matter where we are or what we are going through. I look to Him for an example of what to do in tough times.

DISCOVER MORE

See more about Debbie's journey of faith, including more photos, in the digital version of this article in the Gospel Library app or at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/E9196](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/E9196).

Elder Neil L. Andersen testifies of the Savior's healing power at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/9197](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/9197).

Ministering Principles

How the Spirit Can (and Will) Help You Minister

The priesthood assignment to minister, given to both men and women, includes the right to receive revelation.

The call to minister and serve and even love as the Savior did can sometimes seem challenging—especially when it involves reaching out to those we may not know very well. With a million ways to minister, we wonder how we can know the best ways to reach out to those we’ve been assigned.

We don’t have to wonder long because our sincere efforts can be guided by the Holy Ghost.

“Your sacred ministering assignment gives you the divine right to inspiration,” said Sister Bonnie H. Cordon, Young Women General President. “You can seek that inspiration with confidence.”¹

When we seek to serve as the Savior did, we can be guided by the same Spirit that guided Him. This is especially true when serving in assignments, such as ministering, made under the authority of the bishop’s priesthood keys. Here are six suggestions for ministering with the Spirit.

How Can I Have the Spirit When Ministering?

1

Ask for Guidance. Heavenly Father wants us to communicate with Him through prayer. Prayer not only allows us to draw closer to Him, but it also secures “blessings that God is already willing to grant but that are made conditional on our asking for them.”² “As we pray and seek to understand their hearts,” said Sister Cordon, “I testify that Heavenly Father will direct us and His Spirit will go with us.”³



2

Don't Wait for a Prompting. Be proactive. Be “anxiously engaged” (Doctrine and Covenants 58:27), and you’ll find that your efforts can be guided and magnified. “Going forward with our service and work is an important way to qualify for revelation,” said President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency. “In my study of the scriptures I have noted that most revelation to the children of God comes when they are on the move, not when they are sitting back in their habitations waiting for the Lord to tell them the first step to take.”⁴



INVITATION TO ACT

As you go about your daily ministering, prayerfully seek and respond to the promptings of the Holy Ghost. Remember that Heavenly Father will bless you and those you minister to as you do!

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES

Send us your experiences as you have ministered to others or have been ministered to. Go to [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) and click “Submit an Article or Feedback.”

How Do I Recognize Promptings to Minister?

3

Take Mormon's Advice. We don't need to hang around fretting over whether a thought was a prompting or not. Not when we have Mormon's easy key to knowing: If you have a thought that prompts you to do good and to believe or to help others believe in Christ, you can know it is of God (see Moroni 7:16).



4

Don't Worry about It. "Just jump into the pool and swim," said Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. "Head toward those in need. Don't be immobilized wondering whether you should do the backstroke or the dog paddle. If we follow the basic principles that have been taught, stay aligned with priesthood keys, and seek the Holy Spirit to guide us, we cannot fail."⁵



THE SAVIOR'S EXAMPLE

The Savior was prepared for His ministry. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost," and then Christ "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). He was "full of the Holy Ghost" and was often "led by the Spirit" (Luke 4:1). Christ surely went about doing good before being anointed with the Holy Ghost, but receiving the Holy Ghost and having that right to inspiration was an important part of His ministry—just as it's an important part of ours.

DETAIL FROM HE HEALED MANY OF DIVERSE DISEASES, BY J. KIRK RICHARDS

What's the Best Way to Follow a Prompting?

5

Immediately. Sister Susan Bednar (wife of Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles) is a great example of following promptings. After praying “for the spiritual eyes to see those who have a need,” she looks around the congregation and will often “feel a spiritual nudge to visit with or make a phone call to a particular person,” shared Elder Bednar. “And when Sister Bednar receives such an impression, she promptly responds and obeys. It often is the case that as soon as the ‘amen’ is spoken in the benediction, she will talk with a teenager or hug a sister or, upon returning home, immediately pick up the phone and make a call.”⁶

6

Courageously. Fear of rejection and feelings of shyness, inadequacy, or being an inconvenience can hinder us from following a prompting to minister. “In various times and ways, we all feel inadequate, uncertain, perhaps unworthy,” said Elder Gerrit W. Gong of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “Yet in our faithful efforts to love God and to minister to our neighbor, we may feel God’s love and needed inspiration for their and our lives in new and holier ways.”⁷

One brother shared how he was hesitant to reach out to the husband of a woman who had attempted suicide. But he finally asked the husband to lunch. “When I said, ‘Your wife attempted suicide. That must be overwhelming for you. Do you want to talk about it?’ he openly wept,” he shared. “We had a tender and intimate conversation and developed a remarkable closeness and trust within minutes.”⁸ ■

NOTES

1. Bonnie H. Cordon, “Becoming a Shepherd,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 76.
2. Bible Dictionary, “Prayer.”
3. Bonnie H. Cordon, “Becoming a Shepherd,” 76.
4. Dallin H. Oaks, “In His Own Time, in His Own Way,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2013, 22.
5. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Ministry of Reconciliation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 77.
6. David A. Bednar, “Quick to Observe,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2006, 33.
7. Gerrit W. Gong, “Our Campfire of Faith,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 42.
8. See Bonnie H. Cordon, “Becoming a Shepherd,” 76.



DISCOVER MORE

The prophet teaches how to receive personal revelation: see “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” by President Russell M. Nelson (*Ensign*, May 2018, 93–96).

f Family Study fun

Consider these activities during family scripture study or home evening.



Post-Resurrection Family Reunion

September 2–8 (1 Corinthians 15:21–22)

Paul corrected some of the Corinthians who believed that there would be “no resurrection of the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:12) by teaching them that “in Christ shall all be made alive” (verse 22).

- 1 Show pictures of your family’s ancestors.
- 2 Explain what you know of their lives, accomplishments, and personalities. If possible, show other pictures or art from the time period to illustrate daily life.
- 3 Imagine meeting your ancestors as resurrected beings. What questions would you ask? What stories would you want them to tell?

Discussion: What does the doctrine of the Resurrection teach us about God’s love and mercy?



Nature Charades

September 9–15 (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Paul taught the Corinthians that through the Savior’s Atonement, we can each become a “new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

- 1 On strips of paper, write examples of things in nature that go through a transformation (caterpillar to butterfly, egg to bird, seed to flower, tadpole to frog, and so on).
- 2 Fold each paper and place it in a container.
- 3 Take turns pulling out a strip of paper and silently acting out the example while everyone else guesses what the transformation is.

Discussion: How does Jesus Christ, through His Atonement, change our character and nature? What must we do to become new creatures in Christ?

FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Find more home evening ideas in
this month's *Friend*.



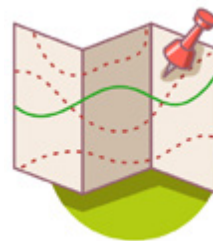
Muscleman Challenge

September 16–22 (2 Corinthians 12:5–10)

Paul wrote of “a thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7) to describe challenges and personal weaknesses. These challenges can weigh us down. With the Savior’s grace, however, we can find strength.

- 1 Gather some heavy objects (personal challenges).
- 2 Give each family member one or more heavy objects to carry.
- 3 Make these “challenges” even more challenging by completing tasks while holding them (for example, making a sandwich, folding clothes, dancing).
- 4 Try the same activity again, but this time ask someone to help you with the heavy objects.

Discussion: What was difficult about carrying the objects alone? How does Christ lighten our burden? What are some trials or challenges that we’ve experienced as a family? When have we been strengthened by the Savior’s grace? (see Ether 12:27).



Nations Blessing Bonanza

September 23–29 (Galatians 3:7–8)

Paul taught that all those who have come unto Christ through the gospel covenant become “the children of Abraham” and that “in [Abraham] shall all nations be blessed” (Galatians 3:7–8).

- 1 Flip back to the Cape Verde article at the beginning of this issue to see an example of how one nation of the earth is being blessed.
- 2 Review the various statistics about Church growth.
- 3 Find Cape Verde on the map. Discuss what life may be like on the islands.

Discussion: What blessings have come to the people of Cape Verde? What blessings have come to our family as “the children of Abraham”? What must we do to receive all the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant? ■

Selected activity ideas contributed by Sheena Perron and Joan Saunders Orchard

August 26–September 1 (1 Corinthians 12:27)

Strengthening “the Body of Christ”

The new *Come, Follow Me* curriculum helps Latter-day Saints all over the world strengthen themselves, their homes, and their fellow Saints.

By David Dickson
Church Magazines



Have you ever tried picking up a pencil with your toes? or walking on your hands? Neither activity is especially easy for the obvious reason that walking is for feet and pencil lifting is for fingers. But that’s the wonder and beauty of our bodies. Each part serves a unique and critical function in our everyday life.

The Apostle Paul understood this principle when he compared the early Church to the body of Christ. He taught, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13), meaning that when we join the Church we are added to and function like a critical part of a body. Each of us has unique talents, gifts, and abilities that make us crucial to the work. That’s true whether we’re from Boston or Buenos Aires; whether we’re old, young, single, married, widowed, divorced, from a part-member family, childless, or have a house full of kids. Whoever you are, wherever you are, you’re a valuable member of the body of Christ.

And just as a person can’t function as well without hands or eyes or feet, neither can the Church function as easily without you. Or as Paul put it, “The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you” (verse 21).

Stronger Conversion, Stronger Body

In the same way that exercise can strengthen human muscles, members of the Church can strengthen the body of Christ by exercising spiritual muscles. We do so by ministering to others, serving in the Church, doing family history, attending the temple, sharing the gospel, participating in our Church meetings, teaching the gospel in our homes, and growing in our own personal conversion.

The new *Come, Follow Me* curriculum for individuals and families is particularly designed for the last three in that list: strengthening ourselves, our families, and our Church meetings. However, as we do so and grow in our conversion, we’ll feel further motivated to contribute to all the many efforts that strengthen the body of Christ.





Strengthening Yourself

Studying the scriptures more intently strengthens us because the scriptures bring the influence of the Holy Ghost more powerfully into our lives. That influence can burn away discouragement, give hope, and build faith. Just ask Angela Rivera, a returned missionary in Kentucky, USA, who feels a big difference in her life, now that she's studying more consistently in the scriptures. "*Come, Follow Me* has definitely given me hope because it has broken that cycle of hopelessness that I feel when I don't study," Angela says.

For Lee Gil-Yong in Korea, *Come, Follow Me* helps him feel a "positive spiritual feeling every time I read the scriptures. I feel like I am being protected from evil. And when I am in trouble, I am comforted when I read the scriptures."

Olivia Cruz Dominguez from Mexico, a widow and mother of four, finds daily strength in *Come, Follow Me* as well. "Being always focused on the scriptures helps me to keep going. I am able to feel the influence of the Spirit. The Spirit can tell me where I must be, what I have to do on that day. I feel relaxed."

Jenna Peterson, a young adult from Kentucky, says that gospel study invites the Spirit and that as a result she is "so much happier. For me, really knowing and feeling that the Lord is on my side is the absolute best way I've found to deal with my life that is so full of uncertainties and unknowns."

Maria Eugenia Servin Lopez in Mexico shares, "*Come, Follow Me* has changed the way I study the scriptures. And it is beautiful. [I feel like] the lessons

are made for me. I feel more focused. [My thoughts are] more specific. I understand better the content of some scriptures. That helps me to have inspiration and to continue moving forward. I end my day in peace and knowing that the Lord loves me."



Strengthening Families

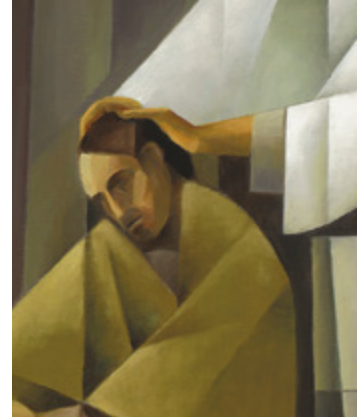
No two families have the same mix of people, personalities, or preferences, but whatever your family situation, studying the scriptures together strengthens family bonds. Fernando and Maria de Milla, a couple from Mexico whose children have all grown and moved out, used to study separately. Now, however, with *Come, Follow Me*, they've been studying together. And what a change it has brought. "For us, it has been a way for us to come closer as a couple," Maria says. "We need each other more. It has set a precedent in our relationship to connect more through the gospel. And it has strengthened our testimony and faith."

Guadalupe Pallares Juarez from Mexico has also noticed tighter relationships in her family. She says, "The most valuable thing from *Come, Follow Me* is that we have been able to come closer as a family."

Alisa Buxton from Utah, USA, has seen real value in studying daily with her husband and son. "It helps our family," she says. "Rather than showing up to church [spiritually] starving, we choose to nourish ourselves every single day. We're able to share because we are full."

Adaline Swanbeck, a mother of four children in Kentucky, adapts her family scripture study to best serve her children. "We don't read a lot of verses," Adaline says, "but I pick the ones that are really important for them to hear, and we talk about what those verses mean." Adaline also takes advantage of the many study resources the Church provides. "Videos and pictures are a helpful tool when teaching kiddos, especially younger kids," she explains. "If you can tell them a story and they see a visual aid or watch a video, it just brings it to light."

For Jack Wang, a single adult high school teacher in Kentucky, his group of friends has been blessed as well, even though some of them aren't members of the Church. "I've been able to share with my coworkers or my students some of the doctrines that I've understood better and how [those doctrines] can help them in their own situations."



Strengthening Church Classrooms

As you draw deeply from the scriptures, you'll have more to share with others during your Sunday meetings. Glenda Staples from Utah says, "My attitude changed from dreading to do more study on my own to looking forward to sharing in class. My purpose [now] is to find something in the *Come, Follow Me* lesson plan where my knowledge and wisdom may help someone else become stronger and know more about the gospel."

Ofelia Trejo de Cardenas, a young adult Sunday School teacher in Mexico, says, "With *Come, Follow Me*, I have a closer relationship with my students because I use technology to connect with them every day of the week and not just be a teacher on Sunday. If Satan can use technology for his purposes, then I can use technology for the purposes of the Lord."

The whole class uses social media to communicate about the lesson throughout the week. Ofelia explains, "One of the students will send a scripture and thought to the class each day from Monday to Sunday. When the students read the writing, they send a happy face. That way I can know that they have studied or read that scripture."

Even though class participation was already high, Ofelia says it's become that much better with this new approach. When Sunday rolls around, each member of the class is ready to connect and share.

Alan Gee in Utah has also noticed a change in his adult Sunday School class. "There's participation from more people because I think more people feel confident in what they've read and in the principles they've studied. [Now] they're willing to speak up."

Ileana Isabel Vela Bernal, a young mother in Mexico, agrees. As more people have shared in her class, she's been richly blessed. "Listening to others' experiences has truly helped me a lot during the Sunday School lesson. To [hear them] talk about how they've lived [the principles] and what they've learned with their families during the week has truly strengthened me."

Your Role in the Body of Christ

Your personal skills, spiritual gifts, doctrinal insights, and life experiences are needed in God's kingdom. *Come, Follow Me* can only truly succeed with you in the middle of it, doing your best and sharing what only you can share.

This month, as you study spiritual gifts (see 1 Corinthians 12) and how they help build the body of Christ, remember that you are an absolutely essential part of that body. Just as a body needs fingers and feet, the Church needs you. ■

We can strengthen the body of Christ by ministering to others, participating in our Church meetings, teaching the gospel in our homes, and growing in our own personal conversion.





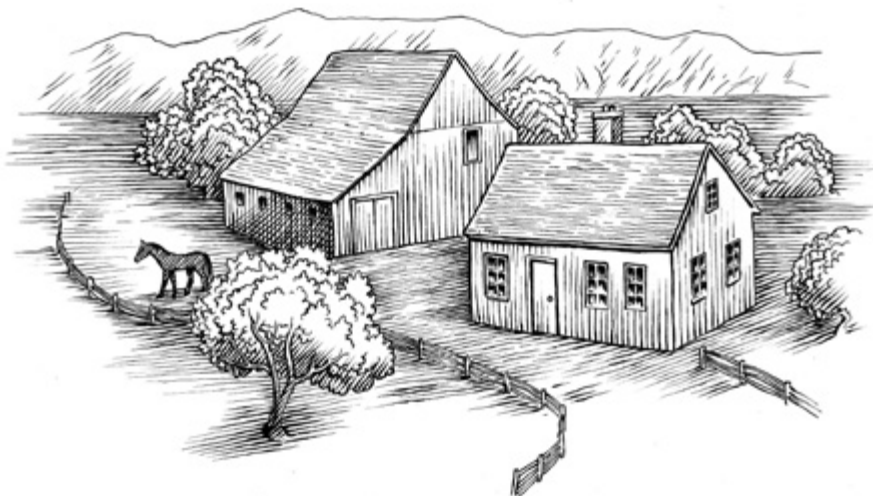
By Elder
Vern P. Stanfill
Of the Seventy

September 9–15 (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Becoming a “New Creature” in Christ

One horse’s miraculous transformation is a perfect metaphor for how the Savior can see our full potential and make us our best selves.

In the early 1930s, the era of the Great Depression, conditions were difficult in the United States, and northern Utah was no exception. There was little extra cash to be had, especially among farmers. My grandparents had four children to provide for, but they did their best to help others. Their farm in Tremonton was known as a place where hospitality would be extended to anyone who was struggling. Many walked for miles to enjoy a good breakfast prepared by my grandmother’s rough, tired hands. No one was ever turned away.



During this time, my Aunt Sherma was a child. She desperately wanted a horse—not the pony she had been riding but a real, full-sized, honest-to-goodness horse. Her older brother, John, was the proud owner of a beautiful thoroughbred. He never missed an opportunity to tease Sherma. He told her she would never be big enough or strong enough for a real horse. This annoyed Sherma because she was certain she could do anything anyone else could do—especially anything John could do. Unfortunately, her hopes had been dashed over and over again. There just wasn't enough money for another horse.

A Herd of Castoffs



One day, an itinerant stockman stopped by my grandparents' place to visit and enjoy a meal. He had with him a small herd of animals headed for the slaughterhouse in Ogden, about 40 miles (64 km) to the south. Stockmen would often ride into town with animals like these, castoffs from farms in the area—old, worn out, or undesirable in some way.

When Grandpa looked at this scruffy group, a certain sadness came over him. He too was a stockman. He knew and loved animals. (In all my years of watching my grandfather work with livestock, I never saw him lose his patience or abuse them in any way. He especially loved horses.)

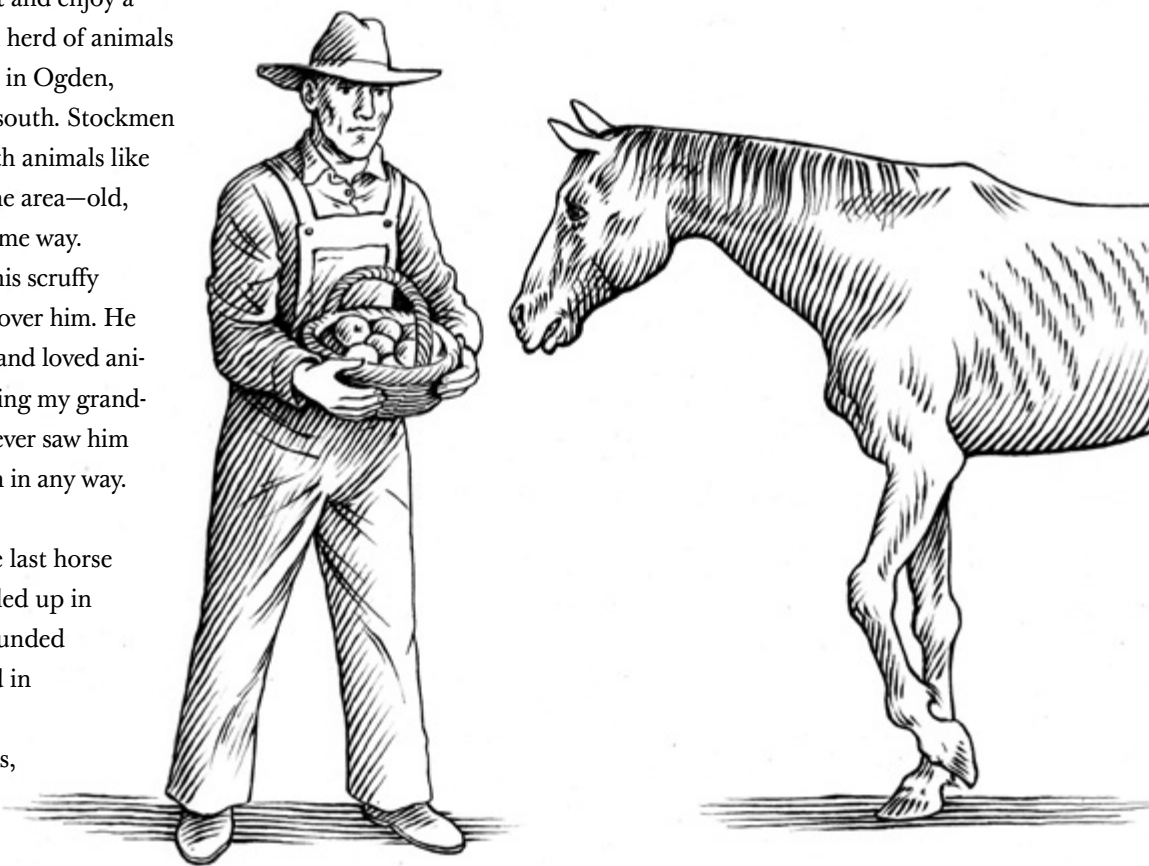
Grandpa's eye fell upon the last horse in the string. Compassion welled up in him as he took pity on the wounded animal. The horse was covered in mud. His joints were swollen. His skin, hanging on his bones, showed marks of neglect and

abuse. Grandpa noticed open, infected wounds and wasn't sure if the horse would survive the remainder of the trip.

Instinctively Grandpa cradled the horse's drooping head in his arms, rubbed the horse's ears, and whispered softly. The desperate animal quivered at his touch. When Grandpa looked in the horse's mouth, he was surprised that the horse's teeth indicated he was not that old. Grandpa stepped back and looked at the animal. He would have preferred a well-bred draft horse or a beautiful thoroughbred, yet there was something about this horse that drew Grandpa to him.

Grandpa asked the stockman if he knew anything about the horse. The man said the horse was a Standardbred trotter, but he was sold off the track because he liked to run in a sport that demanded the discipline of trotting. Purchased by a farmer, the horse proved ill-suited for farmwork. After an accident, he was deemed worthless and sold for slaughter.

Grandpa pondered quietly. After a minute or so, he made an offer to buy the pitiful animal. The offer was immediately accepted.



Many felt that Grandpa had been foolish or softhearted. Grandma may have been the least impressed. Given the dire nature of the economy and the shortage of essential items around the farm, she did not appreciate one more horse in their lives—especially this worthless one. To her, it was simply one more animal to feed.

Restored by Love



Grandpa was never affected much by what others thought. He quietly led the horse to the barn. He treated the horse's wounds, brushed and cleaned him, and gave him oats and hay to eat. He then found Sherma, introduced her to her new horse, and told her she would be responsible to care for him. He suggested that she give him a name.

Sherma was not impressed. She could see that this horse would never measure up to John's fancy thoroughbred. In disgust she exclaimed, "He's just a sack of old doorknobs! I'll call him Old Knobby!"

At dinner that night, Grandpa sat quietly, enduring the sudden "drop in temperature." Grandma was mad. Sherma was mad. John was snickering. And the other kids were not oblivious to the chill in the air. But Grandpa was a patient man, patient with the livestock and patient with his family.

Sherma grudgingly began to care for the horse. With regular feed and exercise, Knobby's muscles came back and his coat began to shine. But even though the horse's health and appearance improved, the name Sherma had given him in frustration and disrespect—Old Knobby—stuck. Through most of the summer, his former talent, athleticism, and beauty were restored as Sherma showed love for him. Like Grandpa, Sherma began to feel something special about this horse.

The Big Race



As the crisp air of fall settled into the valley and the dust devils of late summer ceased to dance across the fields, an exciting event took place in Tremonton. It was an old-fashioned fair, a chance for the community to gather together to enjoy the beautiful fall air and forget some of the economic woes of the time.

One of the most popular events at the fair was the kids' horse race. Many young people throughout the valley waited all summer for the

chance to race in hopes of winning the small cash prize. John was no exception. He was certain his magnificent steed would win the day and made his opinion well known to all around him. Sherma, in the meantime, quietly convinced Grandma to let her ride in the race.

The rules were simple. The race included three laps, one at a walk, one at a trot, and one at a run. Most of the crowd paid



little attention to Sherma and Old Knobby, especially when they fell behind in the first lap. Old Knobby's legs were simply not long enough to keep up with the big thoroughbreds. But when the second lap began, Old Knobby the Standardbred started to trot. The small horse soon left the field behind. In the third lap, Sherma let the reins down and Old Knobby took off running.

The crowd went wild! One lady began to jump and shout, pounding the straw hats of the men around her as she cried, "Go, girlie, go!" She lost her balance and nearly toppled over several other people. Everyone cheered as Sherma and Old Knobby crossed the finish line. Sherma

and her "sack of old doorknobs" won the race, bragging rights, and the small cash prize.

Grandpa smiled with understanding.

What the Savior Sees in Us



Just as Grandpa—and later Sherma—saw something of worth in Old Knobby, our Savior, Jesus Christ, knows our worth and sees our full potential.

For example, when the Savior met the Samaritan woman at the well, He saw and understood the difficulties in her life (see John 4:6–29). She was astonished when the Savior asked her for a drink from the well. In disbelief, she asked, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (John 4:9).

During the conversation that followed, the Savior didn't chastise her; He simply taught her about the "living water" He had to give—the gospel of Jesus Christ—and witnessed to her that He was the Messiah. Through His calm, peaceful ministering, the Savior let her know she was valued by our Heavenly Father.

During His ministry, the Savior never turned His back on those who might be shunned or disregarded by society. The blind, the lame, the beggars, the soldiers, the sinners—all felt His ministering, healing hand.

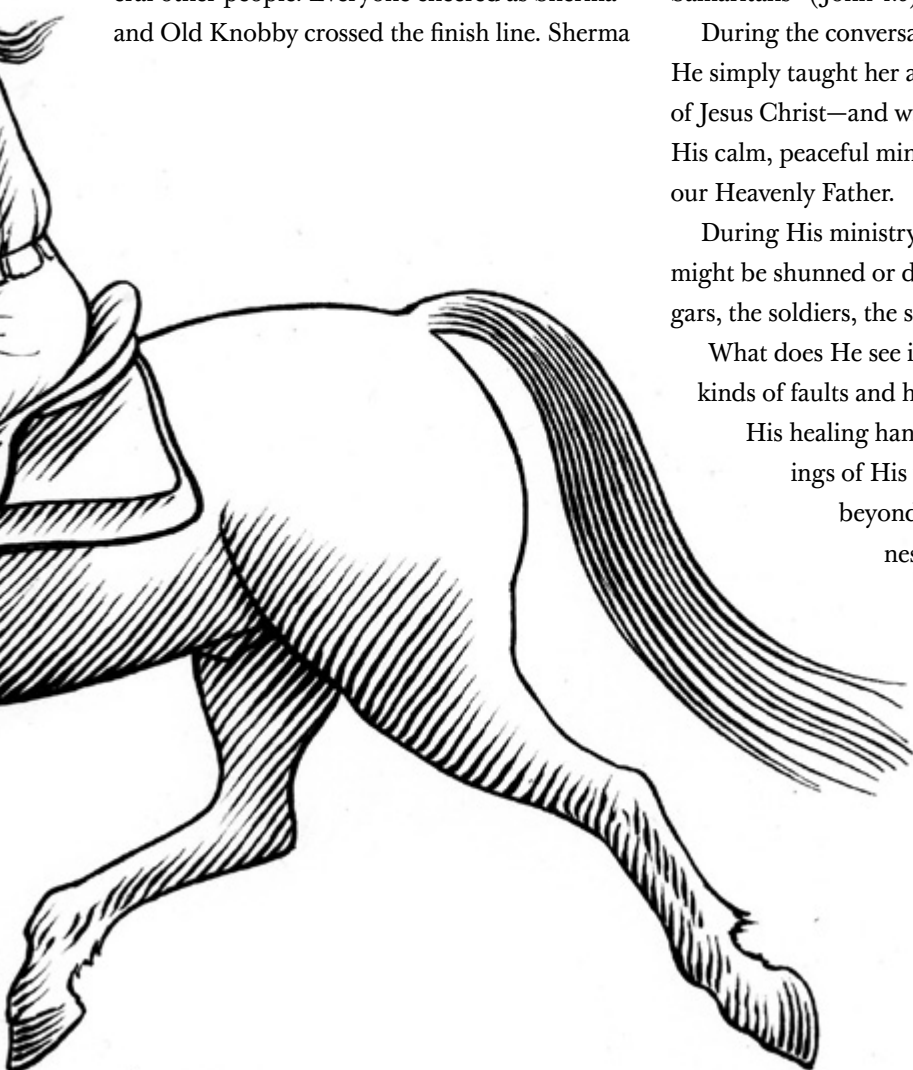
What does He see in us? As we struggle to come unto Him, bearing all kinds of faults and human frailties, do we not feel the gentle touch of

His healing hands? Do we not hear the soft, comforting whisperings of His voice to our wounded souls? I testify He can look

beyond our faults, our sins, our insecurities, and our weaknesses. He sees us as children of a loving Heavenly Father. He sees our potential for exaltation. He sees us as souls worth saving.

His love for us is evident in His atoning sacrifice and in His invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

As we do our part to come unto Him, repent, and endure to the end, He can pull back the shroud that covers our hearts and help us see who we really are—children of God. ■





An Epistle from an Apostle



**By President
M. Russell
Ballard**

Acting President
of the Quorum
of the Twelve
Apostles

I raise my voice to
warn you of some
of the challenges
we face today.

The Apostle Paul kept in touch with the ancient Saints through letters, or epistles, that he sent to different branches communicating his love, direction, and teachings. Because I am unable to personally meet with all of you, I will verbally give to you my own epistle to express my love, gratitude, and teachings.

To the Saints in Corinth, Paul wrote, “Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God” (1 Corinthians 1:1).

I also have been called to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ, and as a special witness of the Lord, I testify, as Paul did in his letters, that Jesus Christ gave Himself for us and that the Father raised Him from the dead (see Galatians 1:1, 4). I further testify that Jesus Christ restored His Church through the Prophet Joseph Smith in these last days and that the fulness of the gospel and the blessings associated with eternal covenants are available to all who will believe and follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

In greeting you, I use Paul’s words: “Unto the church of God . . . , to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, . . . grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:2–3).

My brothers and sisters, to keep our gospel hearts healthy, we need regular check-ups. As I have prayed for heaven’s help, I have received some recommendations for you that will keep you spiritually healthy and strong.

Paul warned the Saints in his own day of the spiritual dangers they faced. To the Galatians he wrote:

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

“Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.



“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:6–8).

I raise my voice as Paul did, that there are those “that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.” I would be shirking my duty if I did not raise my voice to warn you of the challenges we face today.

Individuals who don't stay focused on the simple doctrine and gospel of Jesus Christ will eventually listen to false teachers and self-declared prophets and adopt worldly philosophies.



Two Powers in the Universe

My brothers and sisters, never forget that there are two powers in the universe: one invites us to choose the right and experience eternal joy and happiness, and the other invites us to choose the opposite, bringing sadness and regret. Our doctrine teaches us that life is a test—a time to see which invitation we will accept.

I remind you of Jesus's prophecy regarding the last days in which we now live: “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matthew 24:24). We are saddened when we witness some of the “very elect” deceived, as Jesus warned.

Recently I visited a small grove of sequoia trees planted many years ago on the Brigham Young University campus. A friend of mine explained to me that sequoias are the world's largest trees and

that they can grow to 286 feet (87 m) tall in the wild. They can live more than 3,000 years.

One of the trees died and needed to be cut down, leaving only a stump to remind anyone passing by that a tall, majestic tree once stood there. The campus arborist wanted to know what had killed the tree, as the sequoia certainly did not die of old age. After an examination, he determined that the tree's feeding roots had died from a lack of water.

How was that possible since the tree had flourished there for more than five decades? The arborist discovered that the aquifer that nourished the little grove had shifted as an unintended consequence of the construction of a new building, just east of the grove.

To me this is a perfect analogy of what happens when stalwart Church members—the “very elect,” those who for all appearances seem to stand tall and erect in the faith—die spiritually.

Like the dead sequoia, these Church members once received their spiritual nourishment from the well of living water offered by Jesus Christ. But for one reason or another, they have shifted away from the source of spiritual nourishment, and without that nourishment their spirit was dulled, and they eventually died spiritually.

How can we ensure that our spiritual feeding roots are always connected to the well of living water?

Essential Habits

The Lord outlined simple, personal habits that keep us rooted, grounded, and connected to Him. Such habits, when done with full purpose of heart, real intent, and without hypocrisy and deception, allow us to be unwavering disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

These essential habits include the things that seem to easily slip away in the rush of our very

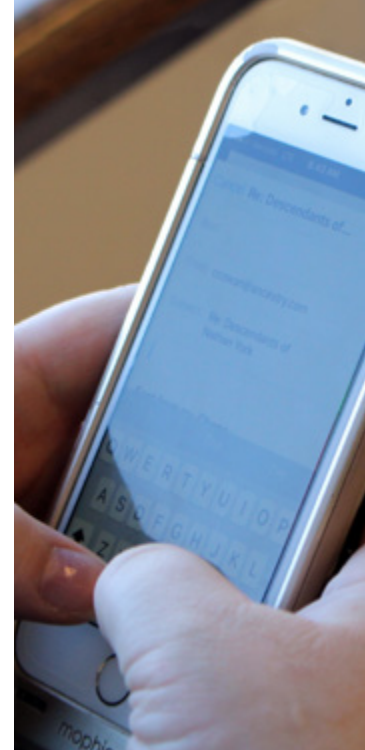
busy lives, even when we are engaged in good things like pursuing an education, working to support a family, and involving ourselves in community and Church service.

They include sincere daily prayer, faithful fasting, regular study and pondering of the scriptures and the words of the living prophets, making the Sabbath day a delight, partaking of the sacrament with humility and always remembering the Savior, worshipping in the temple as often as possible, and, finally, reaching out to the poor and lonely—both those close by and across the world.

When someone stops doing these simple but essential things, they cut themselves off from the well of living water and allow Satan to muddy their thinking with his deceptively polluted water, which clogs arteries of faithfulness and drains the spirit with counterfeit nutrition. Sin and guilt cloud the mind—leading many to deny past inspiration and revelation and causing a “de-conversion” from the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

One thing that is constantly on my mind is knowing that individuals who don’t stay focused on the simple doctrine and gospel of Jesus Christ will eventually listen to false teachers and self-declared prophets and adopt worldly philosophies. These alternative voices include:

- The allure of prideful wealth.
- Wants that overrule needs, thus increasing personal debt.
- Recreation and entertainment that can take away from the wholesome goodness of the gospel.
- Activities that prevent us from properly observing the Sabbath day.
- Podcasts and internet sites that raise questions and doubt without being intellectually honest enough to adequately and honestly present the Lord’s perspective.



Help Others Find Answers

Let me make sure that you understand this important point. There is absolutely nothing wrong with asking questions or investigating our history, doctrine, and practices. The Restoration began when Joseph Smith sought an answer to a sincere question.

Parents, auxiliary leaders, Church teachers (including seminary and institute teachers), bishops, and stake presidents: When someone comes to you with a question or a concern, please do not simply brush off the question. Do not tell him or her not to worry about the question. Please do not doubt the person’s dedication to the Lord or His work. Instead, help the person find answers to questions.

I am concerned when I hear of sincere people asking honest questions about our history, doctrine, or practices and then being treated as though they were faithless. This is not the Lord’s way. As Peter said, “Be ready always to give an answer to every man [or woman] that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).

We need to do better in responding to honest questions. Although we may not be able to answer every question about the cosmos or about our history, doctrine, and practices, we can provide many answers to those who are sincere. When we don’t know the answer, we can search answers together—a shared search that may bring us closer to each other and closer to God. Of course, we may not always find satisfying answers to our questions. At such times, it’s good to remember that there is still a place in religion for faith. Sometimes we can learn and study and know; sometimes we have to believe and trust and hope.

Help those with questions to realize that the Lord does not require His Saints to have advanced degrees in history and doctrine. Therefore, we should not expect that parents, leaders, and teachers will have all the answers to every



question. Even among the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, there are those who have very different backgrounds and training that allow a sharing of a wide range of experience during our discussions and deliberations.

When I have a question that I cannot answer, I often turn to those who can help me. The Church is blessed with trained scholars and those who have devoted a lifetime of study, who have come

with their neighbors. We make a very serious mistake when we compare our lives with those who have much wealth, forgetting that most of us have already prospered in the land. Please be content and enjoy the blessings you have already received instead of becoming a slave to unwise use of consumer debt. Never, ever fail to pay your tithing, and make generous offerings to help the poor.

If you will carefully consider prophetic counsel, you will find your spiritual feeder roots connected to the “well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).



to know our history and the scriptures. These thoughtful men and women provide context and background so we can better understand our sacred past and our current practices. Blessed by this information they provide, I am better equipped to seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

The Church is dedicated to transparency and has published precious resources to provide new insights and offer even more context to the story of the Restoration through the Joseph Smith Papers website and the Gospel Topics essays on ChurchofJesusChrist.org. It is a remarkable time to study Church history and doctrine, with abundant resources and experts providing helpful background and understanding of our past. Always pray and follow the prompting of the Holy Ghost, who reveals spiritual truths.

Live within Your Means

I am concerned that some members live beyond their means as they attempt to keep up

Enjoy Each Other's Company

Some of you may be overprogrammed with lots of activities, including good ones. Please be careful not to overprogram your children. Turn off social media and other outside distractions from time to time to sit and talk and enjoy each other's company. As I recently taught in general conference, regularly hold a family council (see “Family Councils,” *Ensign*, May 2016, 63–65).

Remember, the Lord counseled us to find time to “be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10; see also Doctrine and Covenants 101:16).

To keep family members occupied and away from what matters most, someone is always creating something new—a new app or game, for example, that prompts young people to look down at their smartphones rather than up to see the beautiful creations of God's wonderful world or even someone they may want to meet, date, and marry and with whom they could have a real-world relationship that results in eternal blessings.

Love Thy Neighbor

I offer a word about our friends, neighbors, and associates at school and work who are not members of the Church. Although we take seriously the great commission and charge from the Lord “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19), we honor and respect everyone’s agency to think and believe—or not believe—as they choose.

If a neighbor, work colleague, or schoolmate is not interested in investigating the gospel, we must always continue to extend the hand of friendship. Our love for them should not be conditional; it should be sincere and without strings attached.

Our children learn best by the example of parents and leaders. Let us be careful regarding what we say about others and how we treat our fellowmen. And remember, we have every right to disagree, but we must not become disagreeable.

Jesus taught, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 19:19). If we are His disciples, we must practice Christian civility and kindness with all we meet, including those who have chosen to disassociate themselves from the Church.

Let us join hands with all people of goodwill in every good cause and include them in our circles of friends and associates. Let us truly welcome them into our chapels and ward activities.

Peace and Prophetic Counsel

My apostolic epistle to you concludes as I testify that if you will carefully consider prophetic counsel, you will find your spiritual feeder roots connected to the “well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14). You will not die spiritually like the beautiful sequoia tree; rather, I testify that you will have more peace, joy, and happiness in your lives by accepting Jesus Christ and the servants He has called and by following His gospel plan. Unless the peoples of the nations turn their hearts back to God and His teachings and plan, we will surely face the consequences revealed in the scriptures.

My beloved brothers and sisters, we are charged to prepare the Church and ourselves for those days that will surely come if the people in the world continue to ignore and disregard God our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The scriptures are clear on the consequences of turning away from God.

We love you. It is my privilege to invite our Heavenly Father to bless you. May you have peace. May you have joy in your hearts. May you have the courage to repent if you need to. If there is something going on in your lives that is not good, may the Lord bless you with the courage to repent and change, beginning today. May the Lord give you the strength to turn your hearts to Him, to love Him, and to serve Him so that you may safely continue through mortality, preparing for that day to be held in the arms of our Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son.

As a special witness of Christ, I testify to you that I know that Jesus is the Christ. He is the Son of God. These things I have said are true, and I hope you will receive my epistle in the spirit in which I have spoken. I testify that this is the Church of Jesus Christ.

May God bless you, my beloved brothers and sisters, as we do all we can to prepare for that day when the Savior and Redeemer of the world will come once again as our Lord and King. ■

From an address, “An Epistle to the Saints of the Utah Salt Lake Area,” delivered at a multistake conference on September 11, 2016.





8 NEW TEMPLES ANNOUNCED

President Russell M. Nelson announced plans to build eight new temples in the following locations. There are 162 temples in operation and 47 more announced or under construction.

Antofagasta, Chile
Budapest, Hungary
Moses Lake, Washington, USA
Neiafu, Tonga
Okinawa City, Japan
Pago Pago, American Samoa
San Pedro Sula, Honduras
Tooele Valley, Utah, USA

"SMALL ACTS OF **FAITH** ARE REQUIRED TO
IGNITE GOD'S PROMISES."

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Abound with Blessings," *Ensign*, May 2019, 71; emphasis added.

FIND THE LIGHT AGAIN

Sister Sharon Eubank gave five suggestions for when "you feel that the beacon of your testimony is sputtering and darkness is closing in":

1. Take courage.
2. Keep your promises to God.
3. Ask your questions.
4. Patiently melt stone to glass.
5. Turn to Jesus Christ, who loves you still.

See "Christ: The Light That Shines in Darkness," *Ensign*, May 2019, 75.

HOME-CENTERED, CHURCH-SUPPORTED SANCTUARIES

Many of our leaders spoke about strengthening our homes, particularly with the new emphasis on home-centered, Church-supported gospel study. You can learn more about:

- Inviting the Spirit more frequently into your home (see Henry B. Eyring, "A Home Where the Spirit of the Lord Dwells," *Ensign*, May 2019, 22).
- Making your home the ultimate missionary training center, family history center, and temple preparation class (see David A. Bednar, "Prepared to Obtain Every Needful Thing," *Ensign*, May 2019, 101).
- Using curriculum and time with your family to help "deepen our conversion and help us become more like Jesus Christ" (see Ronald A. Rasband, "Build a Fortress of Spirituality and Protection," *Ensign*, May 2019, 107).





FROM PANIC TO PEACE

Not long ago, my day-to-day struggles to keep up with work and Church responsibilities were overwhelming, and I felt a sense of panic instead of peace.

Then one day I was listening to a recording of President Dallin H. Oaks's priesthood session talk from April general conference. He quoted from his own earlier conference address "Good, Better, Best": "We have to forego some good things in order to choose others that are better or best" (see "Where Will This Lead?" *Ensign*, May 2019, 61). His words seemed to speak to my exact concerns and helped me regain a feeling of peace, proper priorities, and order in my life.

Arthur A. Hovley, Utah, USA

You can share your experience with general conference by submitting it at ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



HOME, A HEAVENLY PLACE

"We hope and pray that each member's **home will become a true sanctuary of faith, where the Spirit of the Lord may dwell.**

Despite contention all around us, one's home can become a heavenly place, where study, prayer, and faith can be merged with love."

President Russell M. Nelson, "Closing Remarks," *Ensign*, May 2019, 111; emphasis added.





**By Elder Adilson
de Paula Parrella**
Of the Seventy

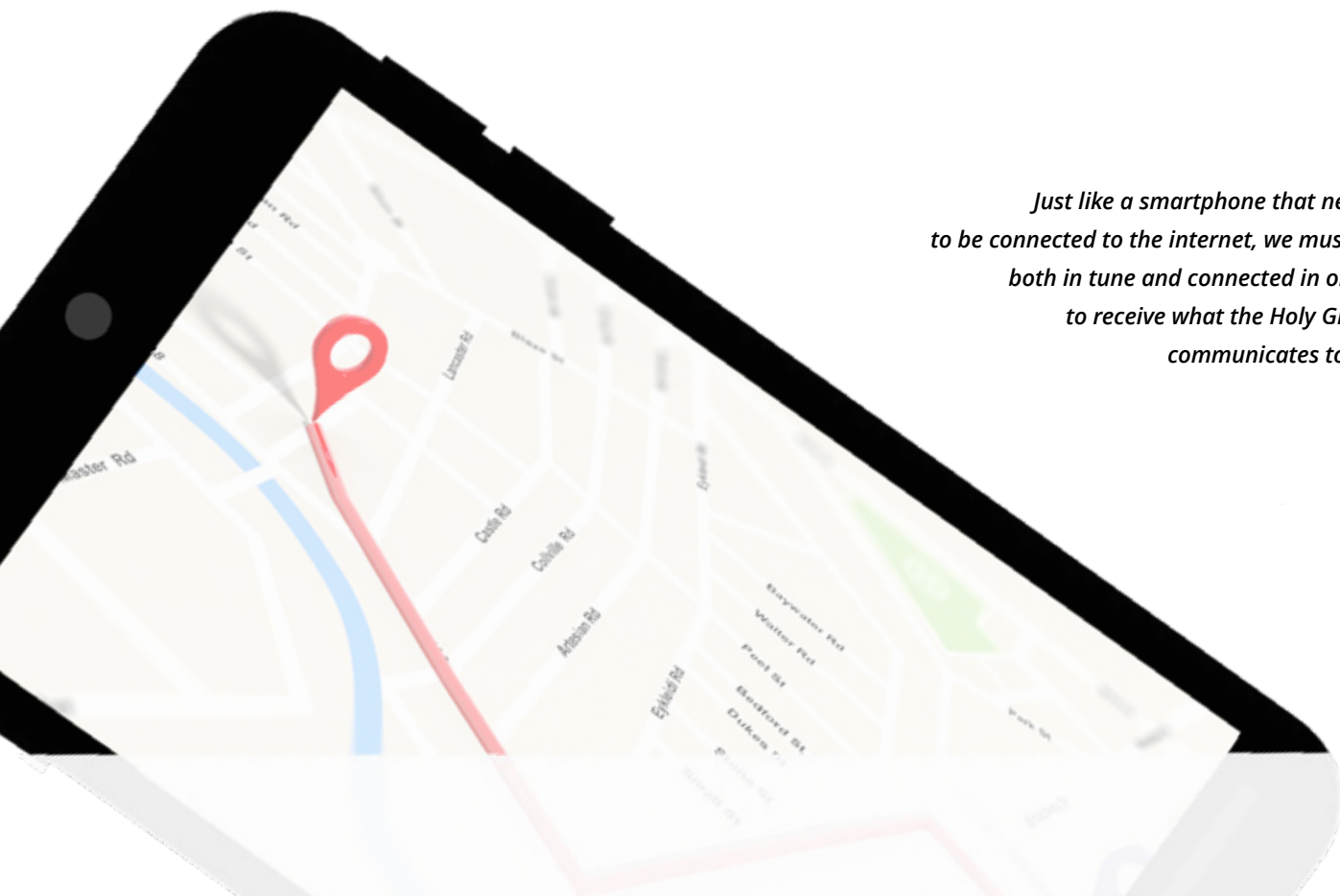
Receiving and Acknowledging Heavenly Guidance

God is willing to give us direction, but we must be willing and ready to receive it.

As young missionaries in the missionary training center in Brazil, we had a day assigned to go, as companionships, into the streets of São Paulo to invite people to hear the missionary lessons. After a few hours we came back to the MTC and held a testimony meeting.

Many spoke of promptings they received to go to a specific street or approach a certain person. These experiences sounded marvelous to me. However, because I had no similar experience, I felt that perhaps I was not good enough, or prepared enough, to be a missionary.

Feeling discouraged, I sought help from MTC leadership. They helped me understand that God *is* willing to give us instructions through the Holy Ghost, and while my experience may not be the same as those of others, I still needed to qualify for the Spirit's direction. Just like a radio that needs to be tuned to a specific station, or a smartphone that needs to be connected to the internet, we must be both in tune and connected in order to receive what the Holy Ghost communicates to us.



*Just like a smartphone that needs
to be connected to the internet, we must be
both in tune and connected in order
to receive what the Holy Ghost
communicates to us.*

Spiritual Survival

President Russell M. Nelson gave the following warning: “In coming days, it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost.”¹

He urged us to “stretch beyond [our] current spiritual ability to receive personal revelation, for the Lord has promised that ‘if thou shalt [seek], thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal’ [Doctrine and Covenants 42:61].”²

During our journey here on earth, the Lord expects us to “do many things of [our] own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness” (Doctrine and Covenants 58:27). However, some things we can accomplish only with heaven’s help. The Holy Ghost will reveal to us what we need to do to stay on—and progress along—the path to happiness in this life and to inherit eternal life. “For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:5).

The Lord’s Pattern

The scriptures explain how the Lord gives us personal revelation: “I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart” (Doctrine and Covenants 8:2).

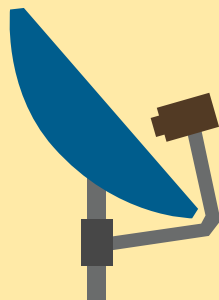
The Lord also tells us to “put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good” (Doctrine and Covenants 11:12). Sometimes the Spirit will lead us to do good through thoughts, ideas, a sequence of ideas, impressions to refrain from or to start doing something, insights or understanding, the unfolding of things we would not learn by our own capacity alone, the remembrance of things forgotten, and more.³

In Galatians 5:22–23, we learn that the Holy Ghost often communicates through feelings and emotions such as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. The help we receive from the Holy Ghost will frequently come as customized instructions for our specific needs, but remember, such guidance will entice us to do good (see Moroni 7:13) and will always be in harmony with the teachings of the living prophets and the holy scriptures.

Receive and Recognize

Perhaps one of the main challenges we face in mortality is to know how to receive, recognize, and act upon promptings and guidance from the Holy Ghost. The following lessons may help us.

Lesson 1: The Lord is willing to give us personal revelation, but we need to be ready to receive it.

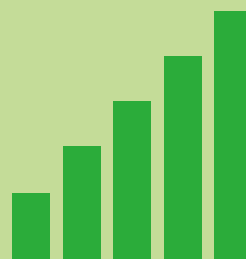


“One of the things the Spirit has repeatedly impressed upon my mind since my new calling as President of the Church,” President Nelson said, “is how willing the Lord is to reveal His mind and will. The privilege of receiving revelation is one of the greatest gifts of God to His children.”⁴

At the MTC, I learned that I needed to be ready to receive whatever the Lord wanted to send me, in His time and His way. I learned that interference can cause us to be so distracted that we will not be able to identify when the Lord is talking to us or to listen carefully to the message He would have us hear.

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “As we desire and invite the Holy Ghost into our lives and learn to heed simple promptings quickly, we too can block out the distracting noises of the world and clearly focus upon the promptings of the Holy Ghost.”⁵

Lesson 2: We need to study and learn how the language of the Spirit works.



Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “The Spirit most often communicates as a feeling. You feel it in words that are familiar to you, that make sense to you, that prompt you. . . .

“ . . . These feelings are gentle, a nudge to act, to do something, to say something, to respond in a certain way.”⁶

Learning to receive revelation from the Holy Ghost may be compared to learning a language. At first we understand little or perhaps nothing at all. But as we continue to apply ourselves, we pick up on words, then sentences, then whole thoughts. Eventually we find ourselves understanding what is being said. To learn the language of the Spirit, we must:

- Desire to learn.
- Study, in the scriptures and in the words of the living prophets, how revelation is received.
- Be attentive to spiritual impressions.
- Ask God to send us guidance through the Holy Ghost.
- Be willing to receive—not ignore or take lightly—the instructions received.
- Obey the promptings.
- Earnestly seek to receive additional guidance.

Lesson 3: Heavenly Father has His own way and time to give us revelations.



This lesson involves three principles:

1. *God can and will let us know what to do to progress.*

Our Heavenly Father's work is to help us gain eternal life (see Moses 1:39). "[He] is concerned not just about our comfort but even more about our upward progress," said President Henry B. Eyring, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.⁷

This means that Heavenly Father is concerned about the steps we take here on earth. He knows which decisions we must make and which actions we must take so that we "may become the sons [and daughters] of God" (Moroni 7:48). "More than you could ever imagine, He wants you to achieve your destiny—to return to your heavenly home in honor," said Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.⁸

2. *Sometimes we don't understand the reason for heavenly instructions.* God will occasionally send us instructions that we do not expect. I remember sitting in a sacrament meeting when an impression came clearly to my mind. The instruction was not a voice or a whisper but a clear thought indicating something I should do. I did not expect to receive such instruction during sacrament meeting.

I turned to my wife and told her the prompting I had just received. She indicated that I should obey the prompting, even though we did not understand the reason behind it.

As we obeyed that instruction, and as time went by, we had several witnesses that the direction we received brought us greater peace and ensured we remained on our path of growth.

3. *We must be willing to do God's will.* In His perfection and wisdom, God knows what is best for us. His will, based on divine perspective, shows us a better way. But it will often challenge us. In this, as in all things, the Lord Jesus Christ is our perfect example. He made the Father's will His own. As the Savior suffered for our sins, He prayed, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

We too must be willing to put God's will above our own desires. As we accept His will and do it, we prepare ourselves to receive further guidance. Elder Bednar taught that "as we honor our covenants and keep the commandments, as we strive ever more consistently to do good and to become better, we can walk with the confidence that God will guide our steps."⁹

Receiving Heaven's Help

Our eternal progress depends on receiving personal guidance from the Holy Ghost. May we each be determined to follow President Nelson's counsel to seek revelation for our lives. When we believe and trust that God wants to send us direction through the Holy Ghost, then, as we earnestly center our lives on pursuing heaven's help, we will receive the guidance we need. ■

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, "Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," *Ensign*, May 2018, 96.
2. Russell M. Nelson, "Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," 95.
3. See David A. Bednar, "The Spirit of Revelation," *Ensign*, May 2011, 87–90.
4. Russell M. Nelson, "Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," 94.
5. David A. Bednar, "Receiving, Recognizing, and Responding to the Promptings of the Holy Ghost" (Ricks College Devotional, Aug. 31, 1999).
6. Ronald A. Rasband, "Let the Holy Spirit Guide," *Ensign*, May 2017, 94.
7. Henry B. Eyring, "My Peace I Leave with You," *Ensign*, May 2017, 17.
8. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Living the Gospel Joyful," *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 123.
9. David A. Bednar, "The Spirit of Revelation," 90.

The Course That Changed Our Course

By Michael R. Morris
Church Magazines

Chris and Alfreda Rubio were living paycheck to paycheck until a self-reliance course showed them a better way.

When Chris and Alfreda Rubio's van broke down recently, they didn't worry about how they were going to pay for repairs. And it wasn't because they were wealthy.

"We had the money we needed because we had saved it," says Chris. "We were good to go. We took the van to get fixed that day without having to think, 'Oh, no.' It felt nice."

It wasn't always that way. Not long ago, the Rubios would have taken out a loan, used a credit card, or waited until payday to get their van fixed. But that was before they took a course on personal finances offered through the Church's self-reliance initiative.

"We Were Drowning Financially"

Chris and Alfreda met while serving in the U.S. Air Force in Germany and

were married in Denmark. Chris finished his enlistment in 2008, and health problems forced Alfreda to retire a few years later. They found the Church shortly after settling in Alabama, USA, but Chris couldn't find a job. "I was either overqualified or underqualified," he recalls.

Alfreda found work at an office supply store, but that was their only income. "We were drowning financially," she says.

"We had a lot of debt and overdue bills, and collectors were calling," Chris adds. "It reached the point that we began selling off stuff to pay bills. Our car got repo'd, and we lost our house. It was bad."

After they lost their home, the Rubios moved to an apartment in a new ward. They didn't know anyone, and

as their finances waned, so did their church attendance. Chris remembers that the more they focused on finances, the less they focused on faith.

"It was very easy to say, 'We can't go to church today because we've got to find a job or because we're worried about bills or because we don't have money for gas,'" he says.

When they visited with their new bishop about their financial situation, he told them about a Personal Finances for Self-Reliance course that was about to begin in their ward meetinghouse, located just outside Montgomery, Alabama.

"We both grew up in pretty modest families," Chris says. "We didn't have a whole lot, so we never really learned budgeting and saving. We lived paycheck to paycheck. Oftentimes, the



check would run out after a couple of days and we'd have to go long periods with no money. So we were like, 'Yeah, let's take the course. If it's going to help us in any way, we want to do it.'

"It Changed Our Thinking"

During their course on personal finances, the Rubios and three other families learned how to create and stick to a budget. They learned about debt and how to conquer it. They learned how to protect their families from financial hardship. And they learned about the important role tithing plays in financial self-reliance.

"It changed our whole thinking process," Chris says. "We learned how to monitor not just our income and spending but also our savings, which we didn't have at the time. I never thought we would have savings, to be honest."

The Rubios especially enjoyed the council nature of the course, where participants shared ideas, successes, and failures. The camaraderie strengthened

their faith and their efforts to become financially self-reliant, and the course facilitator happened to be able to offer Chris a job.

"It makes a difference when you meet other people in the same situation," Chris says. "You find out that you're not alone and that we're all trying to make ends meet and develop skills to become self-reliant so that we can make things better for our kids."

"An Amazing Journey"

As they implemented the financial principles they were learning, their financial situation improved.

"We're not to the point where we're rich or no longer have financial worries, but it's so much easier now to handle our callings and go to church without worrying about finances," Chris says. "The course definitely changed us spiritually."

Alfreda adds: "The course tied directly into how much stronger our faith became. We started praying more and reading

the scriptures more. We felt that the course's financial principles and spiritual principles went hand in hand."

Chris likens those principles to a pair of glasses that have helped him and Alfreda find and stay on the path to spiritual and financial self-reliance.

"Without the class and without learning all the things we did, we wouldn't be where we are now—financially or spiritually," he says. "It has been an amazing journey. We learned that you don't need a lot of money to be rich. We're spiritually rich." ■

Chris Rubio, a painter, arrives for work with his wife, Alfreda.





By Elder
Lynn G. Robbins
Of the Seventy

Resilience

SPIRITUAL ARMOR FOR TODAY'S YOUTH

Our children are capable of thriving in the face of today's challenges. Our charge as parents is to help prepare them to meet those challenges head-on.

The story is told that during British rule of colonial India, an unacceptable number of venomous cobras lived in and around Delhi. To solve the problem, local authorities began paying a bounty for dead cobras. The ill-advised bounty backfired when enterprising locals began breeding cobras for profit. When the bounty ended, the breeders set the cobras free, further compounding the problem.

The phenomenon of unintended consequences sometimes causing more harm than intended benefits is known as the “cobra effect.”¹

The Cobra Effect on the Rising Generation

During my visit to Brigham Young University–Idaho in the fall of 2017, the school's new president, Henry J. Eyring, told me that his foremost concern was the high drop-out rate of college freshmen. Students leave college for a variety of reasons, but a lack of resilience is one of the leading reasons that many universities across the United States are experiencing this same challenge.²

Resilience is “an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.”³ Discovering a lack of resilience among its recruits, the U.S. Army started offering the Master Resilience Training (MRT) program to fortify soldiers against the stress, demands, and hardships of military service.⁴

We face the same concern in the Church with a higher percentage of full-time missionaries returning home early from their missions than in previous generations. Some missionaries face serious health challenges or other trials that necessitate early release, but others simply may not have developed enough of the virtue of resilience.



Understanding and applying powerful gospel principles can help youth strengthen their resilience.

Lyle J. Burrup, who served as a mental health counselor in the Church's Missionary Department, has observed that the most common cause of emotional problems faced by missionaries is a lack of resilience. "In many cases," he says, "the missionary just hadn't learned how to deal with challenges well."⁵

Universities, the military, and the mission field aren't causing the problem; they are simply revealing it. Lower resilience among today's youth may actually be an unintended consequence—a modern-day cobra effect—resulting from such factors as:

- Too much time on the couch and on digital devices, and not as much exercise and physical activity as earlier generations.⁶
- Too much exposure to an unrealistic virtual or pretend world, causing distorted self-images, anxiety, depression, and lower self-worth.⁷
- Impatience in a world of instant gratification and answers at Google speed. (Conversely, resilience is developed in great part through the virtue of patience.)
- Protection from rough seas. "Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors."⁸
- Innumerable options that distract us; fake news and half-truths that confuse us; and a life of ease that desensitizes us to the things of the Spirit.

- Too much digital face time and not enough face-to-face time, resulting in underdeveloped interpersonal skills.

Many books have been written addressing this complex and formidable challenge, including this one with the telling title *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy—and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood*.

Fortifying Our Youth

In our highly digital age—with countless modern conveniences—we might conclude that children and youth today have it easy. But in truth, youth are inundated with challenges, trials, and temptations that previous generations never faced.

The good news is that youth today are exceptional. President Russell M. Nelson recently told them: "Our Heavenly Father has reserved many of His most noble spirits—perhaps, I might say, His finest team—for this final phase. Those noble spirits—those finest players, those heroes—are *you!*"⁹

The bad news is that Satan knows this as well. He is doing all in his power to derail, detract, diminish, and destroy these noble members of the Lord's team. But our children are capable of thriving in the face of Satan's onslaught. Our charge as nurturing parents is to help prepare them to meet those challenges head-on by cultivating and encouraging their resilience, faith, and fortitude.

With powerful gospel principles to assist us, we can help youth strengthen their resilience, enabling them to become more like the Savior



Charity (giving someone a fish) and self-reliance (teaching someone the art of fishing) also apply to parenting.

by “increas[ing] in wisdom [intellectually] and stature [physically], and in favour with God [spiritually] and man [socially and emotionally]” (Luke 2:52). I want to discuss four of these gospel principles: (1) self-reliance, (2) opposition in all things, (3) the gift of the Holy Ghost, and (4) moral agency.

1. Raising Self-Reliant Children—Santa Claus vs. Scrooge

In efforts to help the needy, we strive to find the right balance between two complementary principles: charity and self-reliance. Charity without self-reliance is Santa Claus. Self-reliance without kindness is Scrooge.¹⁰ Either extreme by itself is unbalanced.

Charity (giving someone a fish) and self-reliance (teaching someone the art of fishing) also apply to parenting. We could make every decision for our children, but it would be wiser to teach them the art of decision-making and thus help them become intellectually, spiritually, socially, and emotionally self-reliant.

An inspiring example is found in the touching production *The Miracle Worker*, a dramatic work derived from the autobiography of Helen Keller, who suffered an illness as an infant that left her deaf and blind.¹¹ In their Santa-like approach in raising their daughter, Helen’s hovering and coddling parents were overprotective and overindulgent, with the counterproductive results of stunting Helen’s progress.

Conversely, Anne Sullivan, Helen’s private teacher, recognized that Helen had received far too much indulgence and therefore began helping Helen confront her problems and become more self-reliant. In the end, it was Anne Sullivan, who helped Helen live up to her true potential.

Because we love our children, we want to see them succeed. We may be tempted to remove obstacles from their path, which would make us “snow-plow” parents.¹² Or to minimize their disappointment and failure, we may be tempted to do the hard work for them, like Helen’s parents. When we do so, however, we may be unwittingly impeding our children from developing the resilience they need to be strong, independent disciples of Christ.

Rather than raise our children as Helen’s parents did, we should consider the Savior’s approach. Rather than remove our burdens, He strengthens us to “bear up [our] burdens” (Mosiah 24:15). Often, He does not come to our rescue as quickly as we would like (see Doctrine and Covenants 121:1–3).

The path is
often steep
and rocky,
and we will
all have our
share of
stumbles and
setbacks.



2. Opposition—the Blessing of Hard Things

One of the ways Heavenly Father raises us to be resilient and to prepare us for our future happiness is by sending us into a world where our resilience will be tried and refined, as evidenced in the following scriptures:

- We will be “tried, even as Abraham” (Doctrine and Covenants 101:4).
- Adversity “shall give [us] experience, and shall be for [our] good” (Doctrine and Covenants 122:7).
- “There is an opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11), so Heavenly Father allows us to “taste the bitter, that [we] may know to prize the good” (Moses 6:55).
- We “receive no witness until after the trial of [our] faith” (Ether 12:6).

Learning to develop the Christlike virtues of faith, patience, diligence, and resilience, among many others, cannot happen without opposition or the “furnace of affliction” (Isaiah 48:10). Our Father in Heaven, therefore, allows us to face difficult challenges and do hard things. How can we ever become like our great Exemplar if we don’t face trials similar to those that made Him who He is? Likewise, how can we as parents help our own children progress if we don’t allow them and even encourage them to do hard things?

The greatest and most enabling thing a parent could teach a child is to recognize the whisperings of the Holy Ghost.

I often tell missionaries, “In the mission field you’re going to be enrolled in high-level courses: Diligence 501 and Patience 505, among many others. It is only through this advanced curriculum that you will learn to become great missionaries and later outstanding husbands and wives, fathers and mothers. If you have a tough day, celebrate your suffering as did the Apostles Peter and John did, who after being imprisoned and beaten, “rejoic[ed] that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name” (see Acts 5:18, 40–41; see also 1 Peter 4:13; Colossians 2:8).

It is the hardships, the struggling, and the stretching that help us develop resilience—the ability to get up, dust ourselves off, and continue on the strait and narrow path. That path is often steep and rocky, and we will all have our share of stumbles and setbacks. It is the Lord’s gift of unlimited second chances that enables us to move forward with resilience.¹³

3. The Holy Ghost and Inspired Decision-Making

Rather than receiving easy answers, children need to grow in the art of decision-making. We can provide guidance but should allow them to think for themselves and begin making even the smallest of decisions.

Because the gift of the Holy Ghost is the greatest gift that mortal man can receive,¹⁴ it would logically follow that the greatest and most enabling thing a parent could teach a child is to recognize and follow the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. Teaching children to be worthy of this great gift and how to receive personal revelation is the foremost thing we can do to raise spiritually self-reliant and resilient children. The Holy Ghost, along with the other members of the Godhead, is every parent’s strongest ally in raising resilient youth.

We learn an important lesson from Oliver Cowdery, who asked in prayer and didn’t receive. The Lord told him:

“But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right” (see Doctrine and Covenants 9:7–8).

When our children come to us and ask for help with a math assignment, for example, we don’t do the homework for them. We provide guidance, and then, as the Lord said to Oliver, say, “Now, go work on it, and when you’re finished, come back and I’ll see if you have the right answer.”

Teaching children how to face, work through, and conquer their trials helps them think for themselves, reason through problems, and recognize and understand the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. Only through their own experience in solving problems do they develop common sense and wisdom and grow in their ability to “study it out” and receive revelation.

Not teaching our children spiritual self-reliance and resilience comes with this sobering warning from President Nelson: “In coming days, it will



When our children come to us and ask for help with a homework assignment, we don’t do the assignment for them.

The gift of
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not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost.”¹⁵

4. Honoring Agency at the Crossroads

Many years ago, I read of a father who awakened his son one Sunday to get ready for church. The son replied, “I’m not going to church today.” Many parents in a moment like that would be tempted to say, “Oh, yes you are” and then add a threat. This father was wiser and simply said, “Son, you don’t need to explain why to me, because this isn’t my Church. But you ought to get down on your knees and give your excuse to your Father in Heaven.”

The father then left his son at the crossroads with the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost can bother our children far better than we can if we will just trust in that great gift. “There is no witness so terrible or no accuser so powerful as the conscience.”¹⁶ Within a few minutes, the teen was up and getting ready for church. Had the father forced his son to go to church, he might have planted seeds of resentment and rebellion, with the cobra effect slithering in.

There is risk in honoring the agency of our children and leaving them at the fork in the road. Because the doctrine of agency was indispensable to the plan of salvation, our Father in Heaven took that same risk in the premortal life.

If I could amend slightly a quote by the Prophet Joseph Smith, I would state it this way regarding children: “We teach them correct principles because whether we like it or not, they will govern themselves.”¹⁷ The day will come when our children will leave home. Our only hope as parents is to teach them correct principles about the plan of salvation and help them recognize the whisperings of the Spirit to guide them in the wise use of their agency. Otherwise, they may lack the spiritual self-reliance and resilience to face future trials, with a chance that we could lose them.

We are all profoundly and eternally grateful for the greatest act of resilience in the history of the world—the Atonement of Jesus Christ. The Savior did not shrink from facing His crucible, even when under incomprehensible pressure and stress.

The gift of the Holy Ghost and spiritual self-reliance nurture spiritual resilience, which is a synonym for enduring. And those who faithfully “endure to the end . . . shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:20).



May the Lord bless us as parents in our imperative duty of raising intellectually, physically, spiritually, socially, and emotionally resilient children. ■

For additional practical ideas, see Lyle J. Burrup, “Raising Resilient Children,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2013, 12–17.

NOTES

1. Horst Siebert, a German economist, is credited with coining the phrase “cobra effect,” which occurs when a solution to a problem worsens the problem.
2. See Connie Matthiessen, “Why Are So Many College Students Returning Home?” Jan. 9, 2019, greatschools.org.
3. *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (2003), “resilience,” [merriam-webster.com](https://www.merriam-webster.com).
4. See “Master Resilience Training (MRT) in the U.S. Army: PowerPoint & Interview,” Positive Psychology Program, positivepsychologyprogram.com.
5. Lyle J. Burrup, “Raising Resilient Children,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2013, 13.
6. See Meena Azzollini, “Declining Physical Activity Levels in Children and Teens,” *WellBeing*, July 10, 2017, [wellbeing.com.au](https://www.wellbeing.com.au).
7. See Rachel Ehmke, “How Using Social Media Affects Teenagers,” Child Mind Institute, June 6, 2016, [childmind.org](https://www.childmind.org).
8. African proverb.
9. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), [HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
10. Scrooge is the miserly character in Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*.
11. See Helen Keller, *The Story of My Life* (1902).
12. “Snowplow parents have it backward. . . . The point is to prepare the kid for the road, instead of preparing the road for the kid” (Julie Lythcott-Haims, in Claire Cain Miller and Jonah Engel Bromwich, “How Parents Are Robbing Their Children of Adulthood,” *New York Times*, March 16, 2019, [nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com)).
13. See Lynn G. Robbins, “Until Seventy Times Seven,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 21–23.
14. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* (2004), 49.
15. Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 96.
16. Sometimes attributed to Polybius or Sophocles.
17. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 284.

Building Resilience:

EIGHT TIPS FOR PARENTS

By Wendy Ulrich, PhD, and Lyle J. Burrup, MSW

Research shows that a supportive, nurturing relationship with an adult is a strong predictor of resilience in children.¹ The suggestions below will help you cultivate that kind of warm and helpful relationship as you seek to build your children's resilience and prepare them for the challenges of life. Is there an idea here that you could begin working on now?



1. Model good coping skills.

Teach by example. When your own emotions are high, say things like, "I can tell I'm getting frustrated. So, I'm going to take a deep breath (or pray, or take a little walk, etc.) before I try again." Or, "I'm sorry I got angry. I need to try again."



3. Praise more than you correct.

Do you find yourself constantly scolding? Make an effort to point out small daily victories. "You're ready on time. Nice job!" "Thank you for being so reverent during the prayer." Sincere praise helps children feel encouraged, understand more clearly what is expected, and be more willing to take on challenges.

2. Praise effort, not just success.

Children should understand that success is a product of hard work and sacrifice. But even when they try hard, sometimes they'll fail. Commend your children for trying, then encourage them to figure out what's going wrong and to try another approach or practice more. Celebrate small steps in the right direction.



4. Teach that mistakes and failure are part of life. Emphasize that your child's worth does not depend on success or winning. You and God will always love them.

This will help your child feel comfortable discussing their mistakes and problems with you. As they grow to understand that mistakes are temporary and an opportunity to learn and grow, their self-worth will be attached to their eternal potential instead of to momentary success or failure.



5. Ask questions to help children solve their own problems. Rather than give your child the answers, ask questions that help them solve their own problems—specifically questions that help the child (1) recognize what happened, (2) identify options that might have led to greater success, and (3) figure out ways to fix the problem or avoid it next time.



6. Allow children to experience natural and logical consequences to their choices. Discuss rules about related behaviors and set reasonable consequences that are respectful of both parent and child. Resist the temptation to let consequences slide. Consistency is crucial here. Resilient children are accountable and take responsibility.



7. Help children stay positive during trials. It's hard to stay happy during tough times, partially because our brains are on high alert searching for additional threats or problems. Humans are just wired that way. Parents can help rewire children's brains to search for the good even during hard times by regularly asking:

- What are three new things you're grateful for today?
- When did you see God's hand in your life today?
- What was hard today? What did you learn from it? How might you try again?



8. Give them opportunities to do hard things. Children must learn that they don't have to *want* to do hard things; they just have to *do* them. You are a resource to help, but they can do a lot on their own. Calmly offer guidance and clarify expectations, then problem-solve with them to complete hard tasks. ■



NOTE

1. See Emmy E. Werner, "Risk, Resilience, and Recovery: Perspectives from the Kauai Longitudinal Study," *Development and Psychopathology*, vol. 5, no. 4 (Fall 1993), 503–15.

For more on this topic, see Lyle J. Burrup, "Raising Resilient Children," *Ensign*, Mar. 2013, 12–17.



By Elder
Enrique R.
Falabella
Of the Seventy

Many Ways to Minister

When we minister as the Lord ministered, the possibilities
for showing Christlike love are limitless.

We may not always think of sharing the gospel as a form of ministering, but my wife does. She often tries to find people who are prepared to receive the gospel simply by smiling at them.

Ministering by Smiling

For example, some time ago we were at an airport. While I was taking care of the luggage, she, with a beautiful smile on her face, was observing the passengers around her. She noticed a man who saw her smiling, so she smiled even more. As expected, he smiled back, and that allowed her to start a conversation.

When I had retrieved our luggage, she called me over and introduced me to him. Soon the conversation turned to the gospel. It turned out he had a friend who had just left to serve a mission. He agreed to receive the missionaries, and in a few weeks, he joined the Church.

I call this “Ministering through the Power of a Smile.”

Ministering While in Line

Another time, my wife was waiting in line at a government agency where we were taking care of some documents. As she was completing the required forms, she noticed that a person behind her was watching what she was writing. My wife said hello and, again, began a conversation that soon turned to the gospel. After a few minutes, she asked if he was interested in speaking with the missionaries. He agreed! Not long after that, he accepted the invitation to be baptized. On the Sunday after his baptism, we attended his ward’s sacrament meeting, and I had the blessing of confirming him a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I call this “Ministering While Waiting in Lines.”

Sharing the Gospel Is Ministering

Whether it is by using a smile to start a conversation, visiting with someone as we stand in line, or some other way, every day we meet people who need the peace that only the gospel

of Jesus Christ can bring. As we overcome the fear of rejection by replacing it with love for our fellowmen, we will be prepared when opportunities to share the gospel arise. You may not have previously thought of this as ministering, but it is one of many opportunities we have to show Christlike love. And showing that love is true ministering.

We must remember that the power of conversion comes through the Holy Ghost. We are not the ones who convert people; we invite them to come unto Christ. The Holy Ghost testifies of the truth and confirms in their hearts that the gospel is true.

The heavens rejoice for a person who repents and accepts the gospel:

“Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God. . . .

“And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!” (Doctrine and Covenants 18:10, 13).

In addition to the joy that Heavenly Father feels, He promises that we will also be partakers of that joy:

“And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

“And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!” (Doctrine and Covenants 18:15–16).

Ministering as the Lord Ministered

In the April 2018 general conference, President Russell M.



Nelson made an announcement that penetrated many hearts: “We have made the decision to retire home teaching and visiting teaching as we have known them. Instead, we will implement a newer, holier approach to caring for and ministering to others. We will refer to these efforts simply as ‘ministering.’”¹

Although we will be assigned people to minister to, it’s important to remember that the Lord wants us to learn to minister to all of His children: to those in our families, our workplaces, our schools, our communities—and even to those we meet in airports or lines where we fill out paperwork. Wherever there is a child of God in need, we should be there also. Ministering is part of discipleship. We can’t become like Christ unless we live the two great commandments He taught us:

“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

“And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30–31).

Ministering to All

Ministering to those we are assigned to watch over is good. However, ministering to all who need our help is what identifies us as true Christians. The Lord is no respecter of persons, and we must follow His example. He didn’t serve only those who were His followers. He often focused on needs without regard to religious affiliation, ethnic background, or nationality. He helped friends, foes, and strangers alike. He knew, as we should remember, that we are all children of the same Heavenly Father.

The Savior said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). By developing love for all of our brothers and sisters, we increase our capacity to serve them. And as we serve them, our love for them increases. It’s like a circle that links love with service—the more we love, the more we serve; the more we serve, the more we love.

Spiritual Ministering

“When true ministers do the Lord’s will, they represent the Lord in their official duties and act as His agents



[Doctrine and Covenants 64:29], thus conducting the work necessary for the salvation of mankind.”²

When ministering to others, we need to remember that God’s children have both physical and spiritual needs, needs that must be met to enable them to progress toward salvation. As we help to meet the temporal needs of our fellow brothers and sisters, we can also bring joy and comfort to them when we minister to them spiritually as well.

Ministering on Both Sides of the Veil

There are also those we can no longer see and with whom we can no longer speak, who have passed from mortal life without receiving the ordinances and covenants essential to their salvation. We cannot as readily discern their needs because they are no longer physically among us. They are still our family. They love us and we love them. Those who have been taught the gospel in the spirit world, and who have accepted it, are eager to receive the saving ordinances but cannot do so on their own. They are aware of our actions, waiting for us to take their names to the temple so they can fully enjoy the blessings that gospel ordinances and covenants will bring into their lives.



I testify that as we commit ourselves to finding the elect on this side of the veil and to finding our ancestors who are on the other side of the veil, making sure that the ordinances are done for them in the Lord’s temples, our hearts will turn to them. Our joy will increase and our understanding of the marvelous plan of happiness will begin to unfold in our hearts and minds.

Ministering by Gathering Israel

Though President Nelson was speaking to the youth of the Church when he said the following, his words can apply to all Latter-day Saints:

“These surely *are* the latter days, and the Lord is hastening His work to gather Israel. That gathering is the most important thing taking place on earth today. Nothing else compares in magnitude, nothing else compares in importance, nothing else compares in majesty. And if you choose to, if you want to, you can be . . . part of something big, something grand, something majestic!

“When we speak of the *gathering*, we are simply saying this fundamental truth: every one of our Heavenly Father’s children, on both sides of the veil, deserves to hear the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. . . .

“. . . Would you like to be a big part of *the greatest* challenge, *the greatest* cause, and *the greatest* work on earth today?

“Would you like to help gather Israel during these precious latter days?”³

A Reminder to Minister

What a blessing it is to have a prophet in our day who reminds us not only of our responsibilities to minister but also of our opportunities to grow and progress. I testify that President Russell M. Nelson was called of God. I hope we will all follow President Nelson as he invites us to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves (see Mark 12:30–31). ■

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2. Guide to the Scriptures, “Minister,” scriptures.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
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WHEN SENIOR MISSIONARIES Return Home

By Christy Monson
Church Magazines

My husband and I served as member and leader support missionaries in the Arkansas Little Rock Mission. We loved the Saints there and knew we were serving where the Lord wanted us to be.

When our mission ended, however, I was surprised at how disoriented I felt. I had expected to be overjoyed to be home again, but in truth my heart was heavy. We had been so busy in the mission field, and now, suddenly, I felt as if I had almost nothing to do. Plus, I missed the Saints in Memphis, Tennessee, where we had served. Was this normal? I wondered. Do all senior missionaries experience a letdown when they come home? I spoke with several returned senior couples to find out, and their advice on how to reenter “normal life” worked wonders.

1. Keep serving.

Find new ways to minister to others, serve at Church, or help in your community. As we serve, we focus on the needs of others rather than on our own worries, concerns, and disappointments. We look outward instead of inward. Our love and empathy for others grow, as does our circle of friends.

Jeff and Tracy Scussel served in the Wyoming Mormon Trail Mission. “We felt like we were constantly filled with light,” Jeff recalled. “As missionaries our lives were full of work and service, so when we returned home to Montana, we felt lost.”

New service opportunities at home helped the Scussels reacclimate to normal life. Both volunteered for community organizations—Sister Scussel with foster care for children and Brother Scussel with Scouting.



When our mission ended, my heart was heavy. I wondered, “Do other senior couples feel this way too?”

My husband and I also learned the value of post-mission service. Soon after coming home we were called to serve in the Ogden Utah Temple, where we had worked before our mission. We also started volunteering at a local hospital. Once our lives were busily engaged in service again, my feelings of displacement passed.

Susan Last served as a member and leader support missionary in the Illinois Chicago Mission. She loved the members she worked with, and she bonded with the missionaries too. “When I returned home to Utah,” she recalled, “I felt like a stranger. In my ward, there were a lot of new people that I didn’t know.” So, she immersed herself in service. She took soup to elderly people in her area. She volunteered for the American Cancer Society and continued to do missionary work in her ward. “I enjoy using social media to keep in touch with the people I grew to love on my mission,” she said. “I also go to lunch with

some of the missionaries who live in my area. We share mission experiences and talk about the Saints we love.”

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “Christ did not just speak about love; He showed it each day of His life. He did not remove Himself from the crowd. Being amidst the people, Jesus reached out to the one. He rescued the lost. He didn’t just teach a class about reaching out in love and then delegate the actual work to others. He not only taught but also showed us how to ‘succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees’ [Doctrine and Covenants 81:5].”¹

As we continue to seek ways to love and bless others, just as we did during our missions, we can be confident that we are engaged once again in the Lord’s work. As King Benjamin said, “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17).



2. Keep praying for help and guidance.

As a missionary, you no doubt felt an assurance that God leads the work of salvation and cares for all His children. You likely even felt Him leading and guiding you. His careful attention to your needs will continue at home as you reach out to Him in prayer. He can bless you with a feeling of peace and normalcy. He can even help you reengage in service if you ask for His help.

“Pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ” (Moroni 7:48).

3. Keep sharing.

Your experiences in the mission field built your faith and testimony. As you share your experiences with others, those experiences will continue to sustain you and invite the Spirit. Speaking in sacrament meeting, before the high council, or at firesides are all wonderful opportunities. Even simple conversations with neighbors and friends give them a chance to rejoice with you in the blessings you have received.

And of course, there’s your family. Consider holding a family reunion. Bring all your children and grandchildren together. Or, if such a reunion isn’t feasible, consider visiting them each individually in their homes. The spirit of missionary work is catching. Spreading it will lift your family and possibly inspire them to pursue a full-time mission as well.

Milan and Leslie Kunz presided over the Nebraska Omaha Mission. For three years they served the Lord every hour of every day. It was a great experience but so intense that they were ready to come home to Pennsylvania when it was over. “It took us a while to reengage with normal life,” Elder Kunz, currently an Area Seventy, said.

They scheduled a large family reunion soon after their mission—anxious to see everyone again. The stake president asked them to serve in the Pathway program (now known as BYU-Pathway Worldwide), and soon they were asked to coordinate the Philadelphia Pennsylvania Temple open house and dedication. “We love being engaged in the work of the Lord,” Sister Kunz said. The two have been called to serve as president and matron of the temple beginning in November.



4. Spend time in the temple.

My husband and I found that spending as much time as possible in the temple helped us feel close to the Lord and His servants. Service in the temple and association with family history activities are actually additional forms of missionary work. I find a heavenly peace in the temple that comes to me in no other place.

5. Let music heal your soul.

President Russell M. Nelson said: “Music has power to provide spiritual nourishment. It has healing power. It has the power to facilitate worship, allowing us to contemplate the Atonement and the Restoration of the gospel, with its saving principles and exalting ordinances. It provides power for us to express prayerful thoughts and bear testimony of sacred truths.”²

Cecilia Turrado served as a family history consultant in the Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah. She loved the fellowship she felt among the missionaries at the library. “Love,” she said, “is the best word to describe my mission.”

When she returned home to California, she surrounded herself with family and ward friends, but she missed the intense love she felt as a missionary. To cope, she said, “I immersed myself in the scriptures, and I listened to classical and Church music. That helped me feel better.”

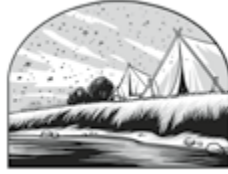
6. Consider serving another mission.

Kuhn and Norma Marshall served as humanitarian missionaries in the Cambodia Phnom Penh Mission. They shed many tears as they left the mission field and returned to Oregon, USA. “If we had it to do over again,” Sister Marshall said, “we would have immediately served another away-from-home mission.”

The Church has made it easy for seniors to serve missions—either at home or away. Council with your spouse, your family, and your priesthood leaders to decide what’s best for you. Perhaps all the wonderful blessings you enjoyed on your first mission can be yours all over again. ■

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2. Russell M. Nelson, “The Power and Protection of Worthy Music,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2009, 16.



CHAPTER 3

Word and Will of the Lord

Editors' note: This is an excerpt of chapter 3 from No Unhallowed Hand, volume 2 of Saints. (Volume 2 will be released early next year.) In the fall of 1846, about 2,500 Church members, including President Brigham Young, are living in Winter Quarters, a temporary Latter-day Saint settlement on the west of the Missouri River. Many Saints there are suffering from disease.

Amid the suffering in Winter Quarters, Brigham received word that a mob of about a thousand men had attacked the small community of Saints still in Nauvoo. About 200 Saints fought back, but they were defeated in battle after a few days. City leaders negotiated for a peaceful evacuation of the Saints, many of whom were poor and sick. But as the Saints left the city, the mob harassed them and ransacked their homes and wagons. A mob seized the temple, desecrated its interior, and mocked the Saints as they fled to camps on the other side of the river.²⁸

When Brigham learned about the desperation of the refugees, he dispatched a letter to Church leaders, reminding them of the covenant they had made in Nauvoo to help the poor and assist every Saint who wanted to come west.

“The poor brethren and sisters, widows and orphans, sick and destitute, are now lying on the west bank of the Mississippi,” he declared. “Now is the time for labor. Let the fire of the covenant, which you made in the house of the Lord, burn in your hearts, like flame unquenchable.”²⁹

Though they had sent 20 relief wagons to Nauvoo two weeks earlier and had little food and few supplies to spare, the Saints at Winter Quarters and neighboring settlements sent additional wagons, ox teams, food, and other supplies back to Nauvoo. Newel Whitney, the presiding bishop of the Church, also purchased flour for the impoverished Saints.³⁰

When relief parties found the refugees, many of the Saints there were feverish, ill-equipped for cold weather, and desperately hungry. On October 9, as they prepared to make the journey to the Missouri River, the Saints watched as a flock of quail filled the sky and landed on and around their wagons. Men and boys scrambled after the birds, catching them with their hands. Many recalled how God had also sent Moses and the children of Israel quail in their time of need.



“This morning we had a direct manifestation of the mercy and goodness of God,” wrote Thomas Bullock, a Church clerk, in his journal. “The brethren and sisters praised God and glorified His name that what was showered down upon the children of Israel in the wilderness is manifested unto us in our persecution.”

“Every man, woman, and child had quails to eat for their dinner,” Thomas wrote.³¹

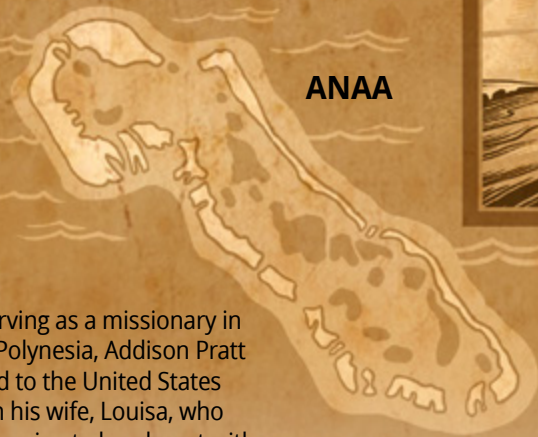
Meanwhile, thousands of miles away on the Anaa atoll in the Pacific Ocean, an Aaronic Priesthood holder named Tamanehune addressed a conference of more than 800 Latter-day Saints. “A letter should be sent to the Church in America,” he proposed, “requesting them to send out here immediately from five to one hundred elders.” Ariipaea, a member of the Church and a local village leader, seconded

the proposal, and the South Pacific Saints raised their hands in assent.³²

Presiding at the conference, Addison Pratt agreed wholeheartedly with Tamanehune. Over the last three years, Addison and Benjamin Grouard had baptized more than a thousand people. But in that time they had received only one letter from any of the Twelve, and it had given no instructions for returning home.³³

In the six months since that letter had arrived, the two missionaries had heard nothing else from family, friends, or Church leaders. Whenever a newspaper came to the island, they scoured its pages for news about the Saints. One paper they read claimed that half the Saints in Nauvoo had been slaughtered while the rest had been forced to flee to California.³⁴

Anxious to learn the fate of Louisa and his daughters, Addison decided to return to the United States. “To know



After serving as a missionary in French Polynesia, Addison Pratt returned to the United States to rejoin his wife, Louisa, who was preparing to head west with their children.

the truth, even if it is bad,” he told himself, “is better than to remain in doubt and anxiety.”³⁵

Addison’s friends Nabota and Telii, the husband and wife who had served with him on Anaa, decided to return to Tubuai, where Telii was beloved as a spiritual teacher among her fellow women of the Church. Benjamin planned to remain on the islands to lead the mission.³⁶

When the Pacific Saints learned of Addison’s coming departure, they urged him to return quickly and bring more missionaries with him. Since Addison already planned to return to the islands with Louisa and his daughters, provided they were still alive, he readily agreed.³⁷

As colder weather settled over Winter Quarters, Brigham prayed often to know how to prepare the Church for the journey beyond the Rocky Mountains. After almost a year on the trail, he had learned that organizing and equipping the Saints for the road ahead was vital to their success. Yet setback after setback had also shown him how important it was to rely on the Lord and follow His direction. As in the days of Joseph, only the Lord could direct His Church.

Soon after the start of a new year, Brigham felt the Lord open his mind to new light and knowledge. In a meeting with the high council and the Twelve on January 14, 1847, he began recording a revelation from the Lord to the Saints. Before Brigham went to bed, the Lord gave him further instructions for the coming journey. Taking out the unfinished revelation, Brigham continued recording the Lord’s directions for the Saints.³⁹

The next day, Brigham presented the revelation to the Twelve. Called the “Word and Will of the Lord,” it

emphasized the need to organize the Saints into companies under the leadership of the apostles. In the revelation, the Lord commanded the Saints to provide for their own needs as well as work together on their journey, looking after widows, orphans, and the families of Mormon Battalion members.

“Let every man use all his influence and property to remove this people to the place where the Lord shall locate a stake of Zion,” the revelation directed. “If ye do this with a pure heart, in all faithfulness, ye shall be blessed.”⁴⁰


The Lord also commanded His people to repent and humble themselves, treat each other kindly, and cease drunkenness and evil-speaking. His words were presented as a covenant, directing the Saints to “walk in all the ordinances,” keeping the promises made in the Nauvoo temple.⁴¹

“I am the Lord your God, even the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob,” He declared. “I am he who led the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; and my arm is stretched out in the last days.”

Like the ancient Israelites, the Saints were to praise the Lord and call on His name in times of distress. They were to sing and dance with a prayer of thanksgiving in their hearts. They were not to fear the future but to trust in Him and bear their afflictions.

“My people must be tried in all things,” the Lord declared, “that they may be prepared to receive the glory that I have for them, even the glory of Zion.”⁴²

For the rest of the winter, the apostles continued to seek revelation as they prepared to send wagon companies over the Rocky Mountains. Under their leadership, a small advance company would leave Winter Quarters in the spring, cross



GREAT SALT
LAKE VALLEY

WINTER QUARTERS

NAUVOO

the mountains, and establish the new gathering place for the Saints. To obey the Lord's command and fulfill prophecy, they would raise an ensign to the nations and begin work on a temple. Larger companies, made up mainly of families, would soon follow them, obeying the Word and Will of the Lord on their journey.⁴⁸

Before leaving Nauvoo, the Quorum of the Twelve and the Council of Fifty had contemplated settling in the Salt Lake Valley or the Bear River Valley to the north. Both valleys were on the far side of the Rocky Mountains, and descriptions of them were promising.⁴⁹ Brigham had seen in a vision the spot where the Saints would settle, but he had only a general sense of where to find it. Still, he prayed that God would direct him and the advance company to the right gathering place for the Church.⁵⁰

On the afternoon of April 16, 1847, the advance company began their journey under cold and gloomy skies. "We mean to open up the way for the salvation of the honest in heart from all nations, or sacrifice everything in our stewardship," the apostles declared in a farewell letter to the Saints at Winter Quarters. "In the name of Israel's God, we mean to conquer or die trying."⁵¹ ■

To read the rest of the chapter, please visit saints.ChurchofJesusChrist.org or see the digital version of this article in the Gospel Library app or at ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. The word Topic in the notes indicates additional information at saints.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

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THE BREAD & WATER OF HOPE

Hope and help are available in every desert of despair.

By Marissa Widdison
Church Magazines

If you had to describe how “hope” feels to you, what would you say? Is it warm like sunshine? Does it bubble with excitement? Maybe it feels like a safety net underneath you if something goes wrong.

Have you ever felt opposite feelings—those of hopelessness? If so, you are not alone. Even prophets have struggled with feelings like those. For example, the scriptures describe the prophet Elijah fleeing for his life. Running into the desert, he took shelter under a juniper tree and begged the Lord to let him die.

“It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life,” Elijah prayed.

But the Lord had other plans for Elijah. When the prophet fell asleep, an angel visited him, telling him to “arise and eat.” Elijah woke up and found a loaf of bread and a jar of water nearby. After eating and drinking, he fell back asleep, only to have the angel wake him again.

“Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee,” the angel said.

After eating and drinking again, Elijah received the strength he needed for the next part of his journey. (See 1 Kings 19:1–8.)

Like Elijah, each of us travels through a personal desert of despair at times. For some, that desert may seem never-ending. When we feel hopeless, we can cry out to God. He hears us. He wants us to continue our mortal journey. His help can take many different forms, including friends, family members, professional and medical resources, gospel realizations, and other resources as varied as are our experiences and needs. As we use this help, we invite strength, hope, and purpose into our lives.



If you, or someone you love, is struggling to feel hope, here is a collection of ideas and information that may help. Because each situation is different and these are only general ideas, be sure to use those that seem most helpful to you. And if the hopeless feelings continue for months or become intense, please reach out to trusted family members, friends, professional counselors, or others you feel can help. You are not alone!

REPLACE TWISTED THINKING WITH TRUTH

Sometimes feelings of hopelessness come when, instead of seeing things clearly, our view of life becomes temporarily twisted. This distorted thinking can happen when disappointing and unexpected things occur—like a rejection, betrayal, trauma, or loss—and we can’t make sense of those events. Smaller daily triggers that accumulate over time can also open the floodgates to negative thinking. Psychologist Dr. Martin Seligman wrote about three common thought distortions:¹

- *Permanence.* Things will never change or get better.
- *Pervasiveness.* Because something negative happened in one area of life, my entire life is a failure.
- *Personalization.* Everything is my fault, whether or not it was truly in my control.²

Do any of these sound familiar? The next time you notice a twisted thought, try to replace it with one that is more accurate. It might even be helpful to write down the distorted thought, cross it out, and write the more accurate thought instead. For example:

~~“I’m so lonely tonight. I’m doomed to be lonely forever.”~~

“Even though I feel lonely now, I can’t see the future. Tomorrow is another chance to meet new people.”

~~“I got another bad review at work, and that proves I can’t do anything right.”~~

“Work doesn’t define my whole life. I have other relationships and talents.”

~~“The abuse was my fault. I should’ve done more to protect myself.”~~

“The abuse was not my fault. I was an innocent victim.”

Dr. Seligman also recommended doing something that might seem difficult when we are feeling down in the dumps: try to recognize our “signature strengths.”³ Perhaps reading the list of spiritual gifts in Moroni 10:8–18 will help you

identify some of the strengths that are an important part of your character. The scriptures say that every single person is blessed with at least one gift of the Spirit (see Doctrine and Covenants 46:11), and we shouldn’t let the adversary tell us otherwise!

Finally, another suggestion from Dr. Seligman might sound familiar. He recommended that we name what we are grateful for.⁴ Counting our blessings isn’t just the title of a hymn—it’s an action that can help replace bitterness with hope.⁵ It can remind us that our loving Heavenly Father is eager to bless us in ways both seen and unseen.

FIND SAFE WAYS TO COPE

What else can we do when hopeless feelings hit hard? Try to remember what activities have helped you feel better in the past. Sometimes, focusing outward helps—research has shown that compassionately helping others may be a powerful tool for feeling less anxious and depressed.⁶ Other times, we may benefit from taking a walk or getting extra sleep. One young man immersed himself in listening to and playing music. A woman found that going to the movies helped interrupt the cycle of negative thinking, giving her a much-needed rest.

Husband-and-wife scholars Dr. Steven Wolin and Dr. Sybil Wolin identified traits that help people be resilient during challenges. Two of those were humor and creativity⁷—activities that Church leaders have spoken about. For example, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “The next time you’re tempted to groan, you might try to laugh instead. It will extend your life.”⁸ And Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles once wrote: “Attempt to be creative, even if the results are modest. . . . Creativity can engender a spirit of gratitude for life.”⁹

Try a variety of ideas, and don’t be surprised if they are uncomfortable at first; sometimes trying to access coping skills is most difficult right when we need them the most. When you find something that you are able to do that provides relief, start making a list of those things. Then, when hopeless feelings come, pull out the list and go through each suggestion. If after trying everything you still feel hopeless, it may be a good time to reach out to a professional for help.¹⁰



SHOW COMPASSION TO YOURSELF

What if, for one week, we were only able to say *out loud* to other people the phrases we told ourselves *inwardly* each day? Some of us might discover that our self-talk is harsher than anything we would say to others. What if we flipped that inner dialogue—only saying to ourselves what we would say to a dear friend? Perhaps we would notice a change in our feelings as we approached our inner selves with more compassion.

Psychology professor Dr. Kristin Neff once spoke about a time her autistic son threw a tantrum on an airplane. Feeling the sting of judgmental looks from other passengers, and overwhelmed by her son's continued screaming despite her best efforts to calm him, Dr. Neff realized she could show compassion to herself in that moment. Instead of echoing the criticism in her mind, she chose comforting and hopeful thoughts along the lines of, "This is so hard. I'm sorry you have to go through this. I'm here for you."¹¹

As President Russell M. Nelson once pointed out, the commandment "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:39) has two parts—loving others but also loving ourselves!¹² When, during hard times, other help becomes scarce, each one of us has the power to be our own compassionate friend.

TURN TOWARD GOD'S LIGHT

Depression and emotional suffering are not spiritual failings. And living the gospel won't always prevent pain and sorrow. But when we turn to God, even in small ways, the light of His love can refresh and renew our souls. "Even though we may feel lost in the midst of our current circumstances, God promises the hope of His light," taught Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.¹³ He also observed, "We learn to cultivate hope the same way we learn to walk, one step at a time."¹⁴ On some days, the steps we take toward God's light might be small. But each prayer offered, each commandment kept, and each scripture read is a victory. These acts of faith will nourish our souls and help us "abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Romans 15:13).

Meanwhile, Satan wants you to believe that hope is not possible for you—that you've made too many mistakes to deserve love, for example. Like clouds that mask the warmth of the sun, these lies and life's challenges can keep us from feeling the abundance of hope and happiness that exists. But our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ are always there. They love us. They want to help us find peace.

Sister Sharon Eubank recently encouraged us to "take courage" when we feel darkness closing in. "I testify you are



Visit mentalhealth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org to watch a video entitled “Like a Broken Vessel.”

beloved. The Lord knows how hard you are trying,” she said. “Take a few more steps on the covenant path, even if it’s too dark to see very far. The lights will come back on.”¹⁵

It’s important to acknowledge that in some cases, divine healing won’t come in this life. For example, a person with mental illness may experience—through no fault of their own—persistent hopelessness and anxiety, a frequent inability to feel the Spirit, or any number of other challenges. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland spoke about mental illness when he said: “If you are the one afflicted or a caregiver to such, try not to be overwhelmed with the size of your task. Don’t assume you can fix everything, but fix what you can. If those are only small victories, be grateful for them and be patient.”¹⁶

Sometimes just making it through the day is the victory. Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles testified that even on those days, the Savior is with us: “If the best you can do is to get up and out of bed in the morning, just know that He’s there with you.”¹⁷

Visit mentalhealth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org for additional inspiration and resources about coping with mental illness.

CHOOSE LIFE

Because ongoing suffering can lead to hopelessness and even suicidal thoughts, it may be helpful to address a few

basics about suicide here. While suicide is complex and has no single cause, a common thread for those who struggle with suicidal thoughts is that they feel hopeless and helpless about the challenges they face.

Did you know that people who attempt suicide do not necessarily want to die? Rather, they want relief from the pain they are experiencing. If you are worried that a loved one is thinking about suicide, ask them about it directly and with compassion. If they tell you they’ve been thinking about suicide, and especially if they have a plan to harm themselves, help them connect with professional help right away. The site suicide.ChurchofJesusChrist.org has tips for holding a conversation like this, as well as additional resources on the topic.

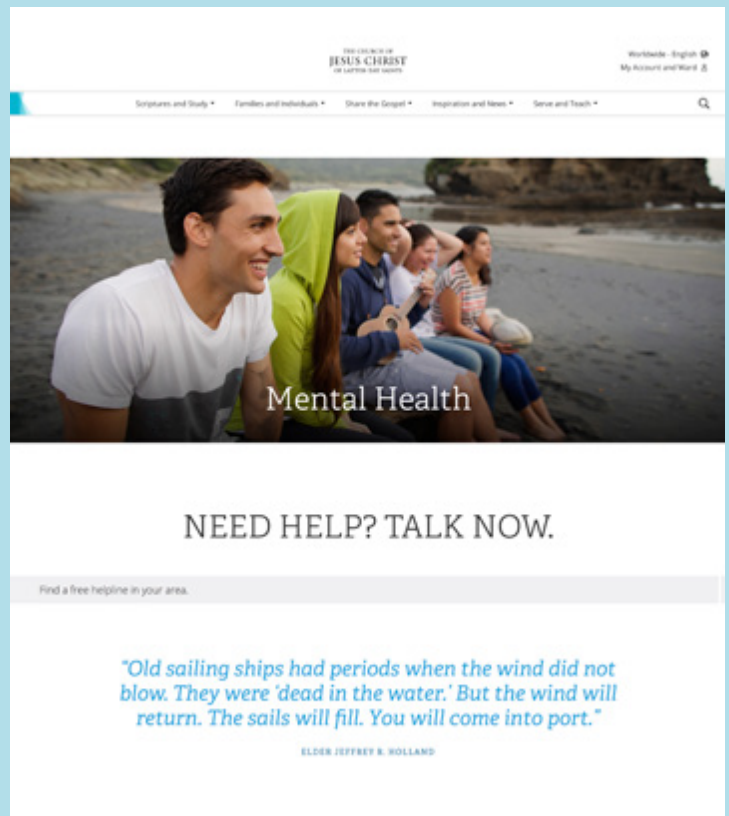
And if *you* are the one struggling, please don’t give up! Help is available. As Elder Holland said: “Whatever your struggle, my brothers and sisters—mental or emotional or physical or otherwise—do not vote against the preciousness of life by ending it! Trust in God. Hold on in His love. Know that one day the dawn will break brightly and all shadows of mortality will flee.”¹⁸ Reach out to those who can help you find healthy ways to cope with your pain. There is no shame in experiencing these feelings, and there is no shame in asking for help when you need it.¹⁹

BREAD OF LIFE, LIVING WATER

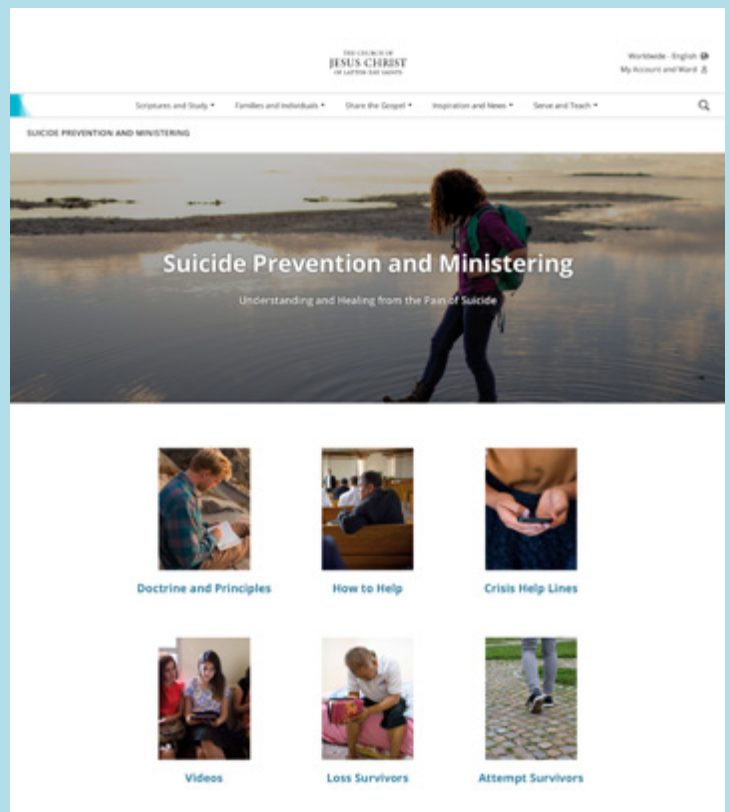
The prophet Elijah was given bread and water to strengthen and sustain him. When we consider that Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life and Living Water, this part of Elijah's story becomes beautifully symbolic of the nourishment that is constantly available to each of us. No matter what form our desert of despair takes, Jesus Christ is there with us. And let's be compassionate to each other along this journey of life! We, like the angel in Elijah's story, can help the weary travelers we meet find the strength to carry on. ■

NOTES

1. See Martin E. P. Seligman, *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life* (2006), 44–51.
2. There are other cognitive distortions people commonly grapple with, such as “catastrophizing,” or consistently believing that the worst is going to happen. Learning more about cognitive distortions may help you identify and replace them in your own thinking.
3. See Martin E. P. Seligman, *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment* (2002), 134–61.
4. See Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*, 70–75.
5. See “Count Your Blessings,” *Hymns*, no. 241.
6. See the article “Compassionate and self-image goals as interpersonal maintenance factors in clinical depression and anxiety,” *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 12 September 2017.
7. See Steven J. Wolin and Sybil Wolin, *The Resilient Self: How Survivors of Troubled Families Rise Above Adversity* (1993).
8. Joseph B. Wirthlin, “Come What May, and Love It,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 27.
9. Richard G. Scott, *Finding Peace, Happiness, and Joy* (2007), 162–63.
10. This process of identifying coping skills to use during a crisis is sometimes referred to as creating a safety plan. For a more complete outline of a suicide-prevention safety plan, see page 63 of the Sept. 2016 *Ensign*.
11. See Kristin Neff, “The Space between Self-Esteem and Self-Compassion” (TEDx talk), [youtube.com/watch?v=IvtZBUSpr4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IvtZBUSpr4).
12. See Russell M. Nelson, “Joy Cometh in the Morning,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 68.
13. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Hope of God's Light,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 70.
14. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Infinite Power of Hope,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 23.
15. Sharon Eubank, “Christ: The Light That Shines in Darkness,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 75–76.
16. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Like a Broken Vessel,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 41.
17. Dale G. Renlund, from a video on the page “Doctrine and Principles” on suicide.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
18. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Like a Broken Vessel,” 42.
19. In many countries, a 24-hour crisis line is available for those who need help. Some countries even have a text-message option. In the United States, text 741741. In Canada, text 686868.



Home page of mentalhealth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org



Home page of suicide.ChurchofJesusChrist.org

Helping Children Understand Their Emotions

1

Notice Your Children's Feelings

Children and youth experience the whole range of emotions. They are excited, disappointed, hurt, lonely, hopeful, sad, afraid, confused, and jubilant. To be helpful, try to notice your children's moods and feelings. Don't try to talk them out of their feelings; initially just notice.

Emotions can be confusing, especially for teens and children, whose brains are still developing and whose experience with certain emotions is limited. Helping our children to understand their emotions can help them navigate the flurry of feelings that come on so unexpectedly in childhood and adolescence.

This month, take time to strengthen your children's emotional awareness.

2

Show Empathy and Understanding

When a child expresses strong feelings, we have an opportunity to show compassion. As we listen carefully and work to imagine what the experience is like for the child, we demonstrate that their feelings matter and we care about them. This helps children feel safe in a world that is sometimes confusing to them.

"I can see that you're sad. I'm sorry that you feel that way. I know this is hard."

"You must have felt angry!"

"If that had happened to me, I would have felt frustrated too."

By vocalizing our sincere compassion, our children will be reminded of our love and concern for them. They will see us as an ally in whom they can confide.

3

Practice Compassionate Listening

After we show understanding, children will likely be more willing to talk about what troubles them. We can listen with compassion and validate what they share. Perhaps they feel a sense of isolation and hopelessness greater than we realize. Perhaps they feel friendless or confused. These feelings can be difficult for them to understand and articulate.

Listen. Show patience. Don't be afraid of silence. Let them gather their thoughts. Communicate your willingness to hear them, however long that will take.

When our children feel understood, their love for us will grow. And, importantly, they will be more willing to share with us in moments of emotional crisis. That knowledge will then enable us as parents to help them find solutions to what is bothering them.

4

Get Help When Needed

Experts suggest that if a child is persistently sad, angry, or withdrawn for more than a month—or is suddenly calm and positive after a period of depression—they might need professional help. And there is no shame in that. LDS Family Services, if available in your area, can direct you toward counseling resources. Visit **providentliving.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/lds-family-services** for information. Or seek a referral from your family doctor. Your bishop may also help connect you with counseling resources. You are not alone! ■

TO LEARN MORE

For more help with children and feelings, consider "Feelings First-Aid Kit" from the September 2018 *Friend*. If your child experiences suicidal thoughts, promptly obtain professional help. You may also consult **suicide.ChurchofJesusChrist.org**, **mentalhealth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org**, or the resources below:

- "Understanding Suicide: Warning Signs and Prevention," *Ensign*, Oct. 2016, 34.
- "How to Create a Suicide-Prevention Safety Plan," *Ensign*, Sept. 2016, 63.
- "What's on Your Mind?" *Friend*, Sept. 2018, 34.
- "Dealing with Depression," *New Era*, Sept. 2016, 32.
- "Understanding Suicide," *New Era*, Sept. 2016, 36.

This well-traveled bag has become a part of a family tradition of missionary service that I hope never wears out.



A Laundry Bag of Love

My decision to become a Latter-day Saint was difficult for my family to accept. As I announced that I would be serving a full-time mission without pay, not everyone understood how or even why I would want to. My parents wanted to share my enthusiasm, but they had difficulty seeing me “give up” the religion they had raised me in.

When I received my call to the Honduras Tegucigalpa Mission, included in the envelope was a checklist of things I needed to bring. My mom noticed that one of the items on my list was a laundry bag. Now that was something she could understand! She quickly purchased some heavy blue denim and handcrafted a simple, functional laundry bag made with love. It

was a gift that would keep on giving.

That laundry bag accompanied me to the missionary training center and then to Honduras. It traveled with me from one small village to another, little by little aging from dark blue to light blue, in the way a pair of jeans becomes a favorite and perfect-fitting pair of pants. At the end of my mission, I gave away most of my clothes to a special family I had grown to love, but I held on to the laundry bag. My mom had made it just for me even though she did not understand the significance of a mission.

Nearly 30 years later, our oldest son received his call to the California Carlsbad Mission, along with a checklist of items he would need. We read it

together, and when we came to “laundry bag,” we retrieved the bag my mom had made for me. Though it was even more faded by then, off it went to California.

A few years later, my daughter was called to serve in the Ohio Cleveland Mission, and the laundry bag accompanied her there. When she returned, she brought it home a bit more aged but still without significant wear and tear.

The bag reminds me that some things, like the lessons learned from serving a mission and from showing love for others—as my mother did for me—can bless us over and over again. It has become part of a family tradition of missionary service that I hope never wears out. ■

Brian C. Heckert, Utah, USA

Elevator Samaritans

When a family in my ward posted photos on Facebook about their experience being stuck in an elevator for two hours, I could not relate to it. That was, until I got stuck in an elevator myself.

I had left my cell phone at home, so I pounded on the elevator doors and called out for help. I also prayed. Soon, several young men heard me and—like good Samaritans—called emergency services. Then they said they lived in apartment number 38 and joked that when I got free, I could bring some food by their apartment to say thanks.

They left, and I found it hard to calm down. What if the emergency crew didn't arrive? I prayed more. I knew that my husband would soon return home from work and would not know where I was.

I began pounding again. Between the crack in the elevator doors, I could see people walking by. I called out to them and asked if they could call my husband and tell him about my situation. They did, and I was able to calm down. My husband now knew, and he would make sure I didn't stay stuck.



I sat in the elevator for about an hour. Finally, a maintenance worker came and freed me. He said the elevator had jammed, so he had to climb up the elevator shaft to get the elevator working again. I thanked him for his help.

Later that day, I went and thanked my neighbors in apartment 38. I brought them some home-cooked food. They said they were just joking about the food, but I was glad to thank them. As I look back on this experience, I now know what the family in my ward went through, and I am grateful to the people who did not pass me by but stopped and helped.

They might not have known it, but they followed the Savior's example. He did not pass us by or leave us. He gave His life so we can be saved from physical and spiritual death. Because of this, I will try to follow His example and never pass by someone else's trouble. I'm grateful for this experience that has unexpectedly given me a greater appreciation for Him and for His blessings. ■

Katerina Tyltina, Kyiv, Ukraine

I was stuck in an elevator with no cell phone. I pounded on the doors and called for help. I also prayed.

From Crisis to Friendship

One Sunday during sacrament meeting, I sensed something that disturbed me. I did not know what it was, but the feeling would not leave. I looked nervously at the clock and longed for the end of the meeting. This was unusual for me.

After the closing prayer, the feeling was still there. I glanced around the chapel and noticed a man clutching his chest. I went to him, and he asked if I would take him to the train station. I told him I should take him to the emergency room instead. He said he had medication at home that would help him. I told him I would drive him home because taking a train in his condition would be too dangerous.

I helped him into my car and asked again if I should take him to the doctor. He said that was not necessary and that I could just go to his home. I silently prayed, asking my Father in Heaven to help him be all right and to help me drive him home safely! I drove carefully, opened the car windows, and tried to calm him down. After some time, he leaned back in his seat and slowly began to relax.

When we arrived at his home, he invited me in. I was glad because I wanted to make sure he got his medication and that it worked. He took his medication and started to feel better. He said his chest still hurt a bit but that he felt safe at home.

He invited me to stay for dinner, and since that afternoon, we have

become good friends. We often go on outings together and help each other. Before this experience, I had many friends who were not a good influence on me. But my friendship with this man has blessed my life.

Sometimes out of a crisis, a great friendship can arise. If I had simply put him on the train, I wonder if he would have made it home. I would

never have forgiven myself if something had happened to him. I am grateful to my Father in Heaven that the Holy Spirit led me into this situation and that, in the process, I was able to gain a true and dear friend! ■

Rolf Schweizer, St. Gallen, Switzerland

I glanced around the chapel and noticed a man clutching his chest. I went to him, and he asked me to take him to the train station.

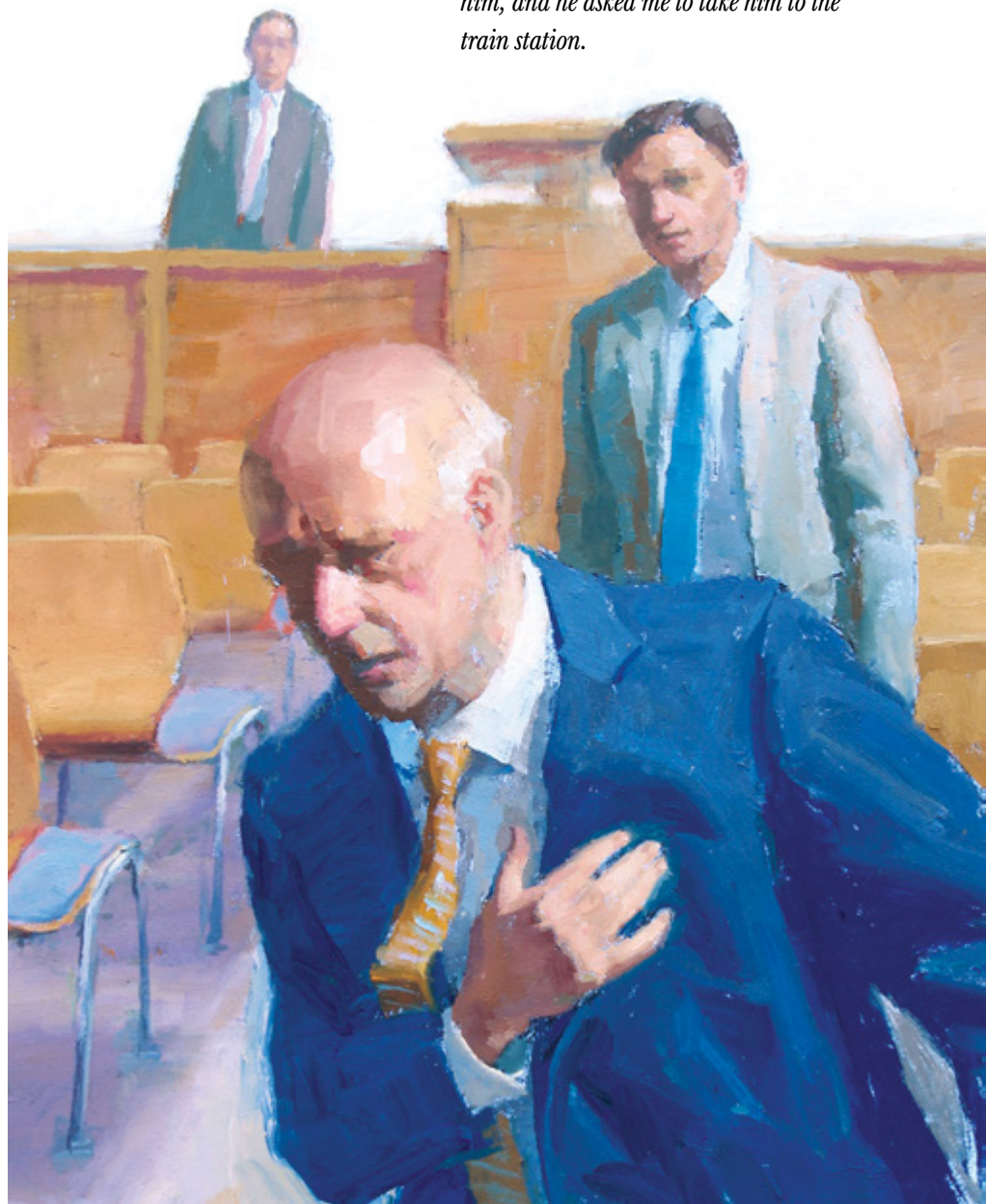


ILLUSTRATION BY ALLEN GARBIS

The Sweet Sound of Family History

On a visit to my daughter in Kentucky, USA, I discovered an old Appalachian musical instrument called the mountain dulcimer. I was teaching some of my grandchildren to play music and found it is easy to learn to play simple melodies on the dulcimer. This portable and easy-to-store stringed instrument makes for fun family music while we sit around the campfire or at home.

One afternoon my daughter and I went to see if we could find someone who built dulcimers. We found an elderly man who lived in a little cabin on a country road. He built mountain dulcimers and had the perfect one for me.

Over the next few years, I learned to play and taught several of my grandchildren to play as well. I wanted to give each grandchild a dulcimer, but buying 17 of them would be expensive. So I decided to learn to build them myself.

I began by researching the history of this uniquely American instrument. I found that an instrument similar to the dulcimer, called a

scheitholt, was probably brought to the United States in the 1700s by German or Scandinavian immigrants. At about the same time, Scotch-Irish immigrants also played the scheitholt. As time went on, people began to create modified versions of the scheitholt, which eventually became the mountain dulcimer. I also found that the name dulcimer is derived from the Latin *dolce melos*, or “sweet sound.”

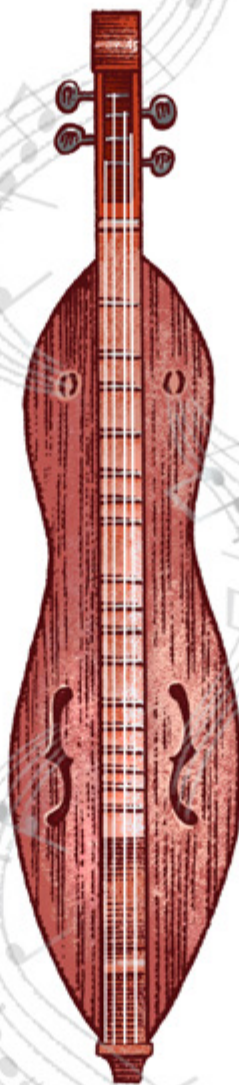
Imagine my surprise when later, as I was preparing family history stories, I discovered that some of my mother’s mostly German ancestors and my father’s Scotch-Irish ancestors had played the mountain dulcimer! I was amazed that, generations later, I had discovered the instrument and had been teaching my grandchildren how to play it! What a wonderful musical connection between me and my ancestors and descendants! I am grateful for family history work, which has helped me appreciate my ancestors and feel a connection with them through the sweet sound of the mountain dulcimer. ■

Gary McCallister, Colorado, USA

BONUS ARTICLE

Read an additional “Latter-day Saint Voices” article in the digital version of this issue in the Gospel Library app or at [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

The mountain dulcimer is a wonderful musical connection between me and my ancestors and descendants.



Young Adults

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DIGITAL ONLY

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Could I Feel the Spirit in My Messy House?

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Even with Your Flaws, You Can Be a True Man or Woman of God

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My Battle with Religious OCD

By Derek Baker

Understanding Scrupulosity (Religious OCD)

By Debra Theobald McClendon, PhD

You: A Work in Progress

By David Dickson

One Step at a Time

Perfection can sound terrifying—especially when we make it the standard for our imperfect selves. I mean, everyone messes up sometimes. Often, these mistakes can help us make necessary changes, but if we spend too much time dwelling on being perfect, those thoughts can become debilitating.

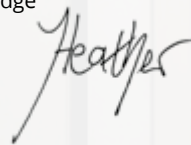
If you ever feel like you're not good enough, read Joëlle's article on page 70 about how understanding the Savior's Atonement helped her overcome her perfectionism. In his article on page 72, Nathan helps us recognize what perfection really is and how we can get there one little step at a time. And on page 76, Kathryn shares insights about what it means to improve yourself after having a very imperfect morning.

In digital-only articles, you can read how perfectionism can fixate on things like cleanliness, like with Amber's worries, or on aspects of the gospel, like Aaron's struggle to be a man of God. Derek and a licensed psychologist also both explore an anxiety disorder called scrupulosity, also known as religious OCD, that causes people to accept nothing but perfection in their religious pursuits. And David also offers steps to overcoming perfectionism and tells us that "be ye therefore perfect" (Matthew 5:48) might not mean what we think it means.

As we strive to improve, we need to keep in mind that the Lord wants us to be inspired and uplifted—not dejected. We can be way too hard on ourselves (see my digital-only article) and should remember to be kind to ourselves on our journeys to perfection.

Focus on Heavenly Father and the Savior. They know your divine worth and, over time, can help you become even more than you ever thought you could be. One step at a time.

Sincerely,
Heather Claridge



Find these articles and more:

- At [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)
- In **YA Weekly** (under the Young Adults section in the Gospel Library)



PHOTOGRAPH FROM GETTY IMAGES

Struggling with perfectionism helped me understand more about the Savior's Atonement.

I'm Not Perfect . . . Yet

By Joëlle Spijkerman

In 3 Nephi 12:48, Jesus teaches, “Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect.” This scripture always hit me hard because I have struggled with perfectionism for my entire life. And as great as it is to want to do my best at everything, perfectionism can be so toxic. For a long time, whenever I made a mistake, or even when I would succeed, I never felt like I was good enough.

Asking Too Much of Myself

I've always asked a lot of myself, especially in high school. And I often fell short because I tried to accomplish so many things at once to prove that I was good enough. One year I decided to learn ballroom dancing, take music lessons, and join an ensemble. I thought I needed to do as much as I could to develop and perfect my talents. But at a certain point, I had to give everything up because it was all just too much for me to handle. I was so hard on myself. I felt like a failure, and failing was one of my biggest fears.

I know I'm not the only person who struggles with perfectionism. So many of us are trying our best every day and feeling discouraged when we don't accomplish everything perfectly. But despite our efforts, none of us will ever be completely perfect here on the earth. So how can we strive for perfection when all efforts seem so futile? Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles shares an answer: “Be ye therefore perfect—eventually.”¹

Striving for perfection is a good thing, but it can become negative if we let it overwhelm us. With everything this life asks of us physically, mentally, emotionally, and even spiritually, it's important that we don't burn ourselves out by settling for nothing less than perfection. And it's even more important to think about what Heavenly Father asks of us. He doesn't want us to be burnt out from trying to do too much.

The Lord taught in Doctrine and Covenants 10:4, “Do not run faster or labor more than you have strength and means provided to enable you

to translate; but be diligent unto the end.” We can apply that to our lives. Heavenly Father wants us to be happy, and we will be if we do what He tells us to do in the best way we can. Even if our efforts are not quite perfect yet.

Perfection Means “Complete”

The word *perfect* originally comes from the Latin word *perficere*, which breaks down into *per-* (“completely”) and *facere* (“do”). So perfection

actually means “complete.” And we cannot be complete without Jesus Christ (see Moroni 10:30). I think many of us often think we aren’t good enough. And, well, we aren’t! That is, without Christ we aren’t. As Ammon said: “I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things” (Alma 26:12).

With Jesus Christ, we can always

strive to become better, even so much that we will become perfect and complete one day because He will make up for our imperfections. “Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ” (Moroni 10:32).

Over the years I’ve realized I didn’t fully understand and comprehend what the Savior’s Atonement means for and to me. I thought I needed to have a flawless performance here on earth and that I was left alone to figure out how to fulfill this task. But now I know that we are never alone. If we strive to focus on Jesus Christ and keep Him in our hearts and in our minds, our weaknesses will change into strengths—just like how my struggle with perfectionism is changing. I know I’m not perfect. But Christ can help us overcome any weaknesses, sins, challenges, or fears. He understands us and knows how to succor us. I hope we may all enjoy His infinite love. And realize that although we aren’t perfect now, if we strive to follow Him, we will be one day. ■



Joëlle Spijkerman, who lives in the Netherlands, enjoys laughing and smiling, and she’s often overexcited about life. She loves the gospel, kids, and music, and she is currently studying to become a primary schoolteacher. One of her goals is to share light with everyone around her.

NOTE

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Be Ye Therefore Perfect—Eventually,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 40.

Perfectionism

A TOXIC GAME
OF
"SPOT-THE-
DIFFERENCE"

There are times when we all feel we don't measure up. But we need to make sure we're measuring ourselves correctly.



By Nathan Read

When I was younger, I enjoyed playing “Spot-the-Difference” in our local newspaper. Two almost identical images, side by side, presented a challenge to find the minor differences between the pictures. If you focused close enough to the individual elements of the image, you could successfully find most, if not all, the differences. The purpose of this activity was not to appreciate the images nor to complete the second picture; the purpose was to identify every imperfection in the incomplete copy of the first picture.

A common challenge for young adults is the feeling that we fail to measure up to the standard that we envision we should be at. Increasingly, we compare ourselves to each other and see one person beginning a successful career, another who achieves perfect grades in their studies, another with a larger circle of friends, and another whom we perceive as kinder, wiser, more generous and gracious than us. And they’re probably younger than us too! It is certainly easy to play “Spot-the-Difference” between ourselves and the people around us and invariably we are able to produce a long list of reasons that other people are “better” than we are.

This way of thinking is particularly dangerous if we believe our self-worth is determined by our achievements, our attributes, or our accumulation of worldly wealth. Furthermore, our game of “Spot-the-Difference” rarely identifies the strengths and Christlike qualities we have developed in our lives and

omits the fundamental truth that we all have the potential to be perfect like Christ . . . one day. When the Savior pronounced, “Be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect” (3 Nephi 12:48), I believe He sought to raise our vision and give us hope—after all, His invitations are both a call to repentance and an expression of His confidence in us that we can achieve what He asks us to do. The great challenge for us is to rise above the tendencies of the natural man to be jealous, resentful, despairing, and doubting, and to choose humility, repentance, faith, and hope.

Righteous Now, Perfect Later

Part of overcoming the negative “perfectionism” peddled by the adversary is understanding what perfection really is. In a talk by President Russell M. Nelson on the topic of perfection, he explained that the original Greek word for *perfect* in Matthew 5:48 means “complete.”¹ None of us will be “complete” in this mortal life; completeness will come in the eternities.

When we find perfection overwhelming, we can take steps along the path to perfection: for example, as we pay a full tithe,



**Be Righteous
Now;
Expect
Perfection
Later**



**Look to
Christ**

**Expect Failure,
and Love
Repentance**



**Beware
of Pride**



we can keep the commandment of tithing *completely*. As we pray daily, we may find we are *perfect* at choosing to pray each day. Each step on the path to perfection (also known as the covenant path) is designed to bring us joy. Regular personal inventories will reaffirm to us that we are progressing and that our Father is pleased with the spiritual momentum of our life.

Righteousness and perfection are not synonymous. While perfection is an outcome, righteousness is a pattern of faith and repentance which we choose every day. If perfection is a destination, then our covenants are our passport and righteousness is the steps on the journey. If this is our perspective on perfection, we can hope in good things

to come as we patiently and persistently develop righteous patterns.

Expect Failure; Love Repentance

Recently, I have reflected on a statement by Elder Lynn G. Robbins of the Seventy: “Repentance isn’t [God’s] backup plan in the event that we might fail. Repentance *is* His plan, knowing that we will.”² This life is a probationary period given to us to prepare for eternity. Repentance prepares us by changing the way we see ourselves and brings us closer to God and to the Savior. We should expect to fail or make mistakes, probably daily; that shouldn’t be unexpected, nor should it lead us to despair. In fact, we should be happy when we recognize

our shortcomings or mistakes as we have the opportunity to partner with Christ in changing our weaknesses into strengths.

So, while perfection is the goal, the path we take involves repenting and moving forward every day with a smile on our face and gratitude in our hearts.

Look to Christ

It was Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles who said, “What we insistently desire, over time, is what we will eventually become and what we will receive in eternity.”³ Our daily choices determine who we become. If our heartfelt desire is to become like the Savior and our motivation is love for Him, our



choices will reflect that desire and we will change.

When we hit roadblocks, when we make mistakes, and when we fall to temptation, we can respond by looking away from Christ, or we can look to Christ with faith, hope, patience, a broken heart, and a contrite spirit. The solution or answer to our difficult circumstances is always found in Christ and His gospel. As we look to Christ, He will teach us and transform us.

Many of life's challenges fall into two categories: those we will overcome in this life and those we will overcome in the next, perhaps a disability, depression and anxiety, or a constant temptation. Christ has the power to make us whole. He has the power to transform

us. As we choose humility, we accept the Lord's timing and His will and if we actively seek for His help and guidance, we find strength, divine encouragement, and peace.

Beware of Pride

The adversary never offers good solutions to our challenges. When we discover our failures and weaknesses, he encourages us to hide them from others because we want to appear as flawless as possible. This is a form of pride. Christ always offers good solutions to our challenges, however, that does not make His solutions easy. For example, the Lord invites us to trust Him as we share the gospel while Satan tells us that we shouldn't share the gospel because we are not eloquent. But the Lord promises that He will give us what to say "in the very moment" (Doctrine and Covenants 100:6). Indeed, the adversary feeds our doubts while the Lord feeds our faith.

Rather than occupying ourselves with playing "Spot-the-Difference" and "Hide-the-Weakness," Christ would have us look to Him and engage in "Change-the-Weakness." Pride is fundamentally competitive; however, life was never designed as a competition. As we choose Christ as our exemplar, friend, and supporter, we can put away our damaging comparisons and find peace on the path to perfection.

Remember, in life we all face the challenge of imperfection and its attendant weaknesses. If we see

others struggling, we can be a positive force lifting them higher. If we see others succeeding, we can offer genuine praise. But at no point will we benefit from trying to determine whether our righteousness or success compares favorably or otherwise with another person. Others may not see our value, but God does: to Him we are of infinite worth. We will always be His children. He loves us unconditionally, and He is pleased with our righteous efforts to become like Him.

Jesus Christ is not an absent spectator of our lives. He is present, aware, and working to save us and lead us back to a celestial home. It's in His strength that we can do all things and through Him that nothing is impossible. In this life defined by imperfection, the Lord is our hope and exemplar and will not judge us by comparing us to our brothers and sisters. He sees our heart and will put the wind in our sails on our ongoing journey to completeness. Let us act in faith, repenting and looking to Christ with hope in His promise that ultimately, we can "be perfected in him" (Moroni 10:32). ■



Nathan Read, who lives in Tasmania, Australia, has a bachelor's degree in economic analysis and currently works for the government. Outside of his job and teaching seminary in his ward, he enjoys performing in local musicals and reading good books.

NOTES

1. See Russell M. Nelson, "Perfection Pending," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 86.
2. Lynn G. Robbins, "Until Seventy Times Seven," *Ensign*, May 2018, 22.
3. Neal A. Maxwell, "According to the Desire of [Our] Hearts," *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 21.

What It Means to Pursue **Perfection**

We try so hard to be perfect,
when really we should just be
doing the best we can.

By Kathryn Grover

One morning I took a day off from work and slept in. I woke up without an alarm, made myself a fruit parfait, and started on some homework. When it was almost time for me to go to class, I put on my makeup, got dressed, and fixed my hair. As I looked in the mirror while brushing my teeth, I thought, “Wow! What a perfect morning. I got enough sleep, I’ve gotten everything done that I needed to, and my hair looks great!” Right at that moment, I opened my mouth to adjust my toothbrush, and *BAM*—toothpaste drool dribbled all the way down my black shirt. Perfection ruined.

I quickly cleaned the toothpaste off my shirt and walked to class only slightly damp. “It’s fine, it’s fine—today is still going to

PHOTOGRAPH INSIDE THE ROME ITALY TEMPLE VISITORS CENTER BY MASSIMO CRISCIONE, POSED BY MODEL





be great,” I told myself. When I got to class, however, I was asked to say the opening prayer. I stood up in front of everyone and was about to pray, when I looked down and realized that my quick cleanup was far from perfect. There were white toothpaste drool stains running all down my shirt. “Welp . . . there goes my perfect day,” I thought.

Pressures of Perfection

Every day we are faced with the constant pressure to be perfect. This can stem from a variety of sources, including photoshopped ads, flawless photos on Instagram, or the class rankings listed next to our grades in school. Or it can even have a religious basis, stemming from the need to have a perfect testimony or a perfect marriage and family. I mean, Jesus Christ even commands in Matthew 5:48, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” And reading that can be super overwhelming if not properly understood. It may lead many of us to think, “I’m not good enough” or “I’ll never succeed.” This phenomenon is known as perfectionism.

Perfectionism “refers to an inner desire or the longing to establish and achieve higher standards and successes.”¹ Although it’s good to have high standards, thinking we must achieve perfection now can cause certain implications in our lives. In a recent research study on perfectionism in the area of academics, one conclusion was that “in addition to causing depression, perfectionism can also lead to negative traits such as narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, aggression, and poor social relationships that lead to the lack of prosocial behavior.”² Surely, Christ did not mean for us to invite these negative thoughts and effects of perfectionism into our lives.



In trying to steadily improve, we can find motivation and direction by focusing on Christ as our example.

Perfection Is Pending

Interestingly, the scripture footnote for the word *perfect* provides an alternative Greek translation: “complete, finished, fully developed” (Matthew 5:48, footnote *b*). Thankfully our knowledge of the plan of salvation teaches us that we are not and cannot be fully developed in this mortal life. President Russell M. Nelson stated in the October 1995 general conference: “We need not be dismayed if our earnest efforts toward perfection now seem so arduous and endless. Perfection is pending. It can come in full only after the Resurrection and only through the Lord.”³

President Nelson’s statement reaffirms what the Savior said to the Pharisees when they warned Him to depart before Herod killed Him.

Jesus told them: “Tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected” (Luke 13:32). Although Christ was perfect—or sinless—in mortality, this passage suggests that resurrection would bring an additional aspect of perfection. With a glorified, resurrected body, Jesus would be perfect, like His Father (see 3 Nephi 12:48).

If perfection is not achieved in full until after we are resurrected, it can be easy for us to think we can just give up on being perfect now and wait until after the day of resurrection comes. But that shouldn’t be our approach either. We can always try to do a little better.

In trying to steadily improve, we can find motivation and direction by focusing on Christ as our example. However, as young adults, we may wonder what that means, when the majority of what we read about concerning Christ’s life took place when He was in His 30s. There is one verse in the entirety of the Bible that describes what Christ did during what might be considered his young adult years: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52). He simply increased. By following His example, we should also strive to increase in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and man. This may include studying our scriptures more, taking an extra class, going to the temple more often, or even reaching out to someone sitting alone at lunch.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated: “Our perfect Father does not expect us to be perfect children yet. He had only one such Child. Meanwhile, therefore, sometimes with smudges on our cheeks, dirt on our hands, and shoes untied, stammeringly but smilingly we present God with a dandelion—as if it were an orchid

or a rose! If for now the dandelion is the best we have to offer, He receives it, knowing what we may later place on the altar. It is good to remember how young we are spiritually.”⁴ Keeping this in perspective helps us remember that God recognizes every ounce of effort we put into trying to become like Him and His Son.

We all mess up. We all fail. We might all even spill toothpaste on our shirts. However, this mortal life, thankfully, is not the end. I am eternally grateful for God’s perfect plan and perfect Son. He provides a way for us to return to Him in a fully developed, completed, perfected state. All that matters is that we try a little harder to be a little better every single day. ■



Kathryn Grover grew up in Southern California and currently lives in Utah, USA, where she is studying human development. She loves hanging out with her cute husband and teaching missionaries in the Provo Missionary Training Center.

NOTES

1. Muhammad Ibrahim and Cathy Sofhieanty Syamsuri, “Academic Perfectionism among Adolescents: A Qualitative Study,” *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, vol. 139 (July 2018), 116, atlantispress.com/proceedings/uipsur-17/25899595.
2. Ibrahim and Syamsuri, “Academic Perfectionism among Adolescents,” 116.
3. Russell M. Nelson, “Perfection Pending,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 88.
4. Neal A. Maxwell, *That Ye May Believe* (1992), 100.



CONTINUE IN PATIENCE

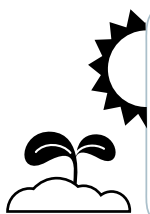
“Let us do the best we can and try to improve each day. When our imperfections appear, we can keep trying to correct them. We can be more forgiving of flaws in ourselves and among those we love. We can be comforted and forbearing. The Lord taught, ‘Ye are not able to abide the presence of God now . . . ; wherefore, continue in patience until ye are perfected’ [Doctrine and Covenants 67:13].”

“ . . . [Perfection] awaits all who love [the Lord] and keep his commandments. It includes thrones, kingdoms, principalities, powers, and dominions. It is the end for which we are to endure. It is the eternal perfection that God has in store for each of us.”

Russell M. Nelson, “Perfection Pending,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 88.

Best Advice . . .

Young adults share their best advice about overcoming perfectionism.



“Perfect people don’t need a Savior. God gives us weakness so we can rely on Christ.”

—Mckenna Clarke, Virginia, USA

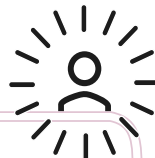
“I give myself this advice: I’m here to learn to focus on what’s important so I can return to Him.”

—Paola Vargas, Aguascalientes, Mexico



“At church I have learned that perfection doesn’t come in this life, but it comes in the next life. Our Savior is a perfect example for us. Follow Him in this life so you can become perfect someday.”

—Vennela Vakapalli, Andhra Pradesh, India



LEFT: ILLUSTRATIONS FROM GETTY IMAGES



BE PATIENT WITH YOURSELF

“Be patient with yourself. Perfection comes not in this life, but in the next life. Don’t demand things that are unreasonable. But demand of yourself improvement. As you let the Lord help you through that, He will make the difference.”

President Russell M. Nelson, “Men’s Hearts Shall Fail Them” (video), mormonchannel.org.



What’s the best advice you’ve ever received about dating? Send us your response at ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org by September 30, 2019.

SHARE YOUR STORY

Do you have an amazing story to share? Or do you want to see articles about certain topics? If so, we want to hear from you! You can submit your articles or your feedback at ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

Come, Follow Me Shareable Scriptures

Download these picture quotes (from September's *Come, Follow Me* readings) and share them on social media—or send them to those you minister to, your Sunday School class, or your family: [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/91981](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/91981).

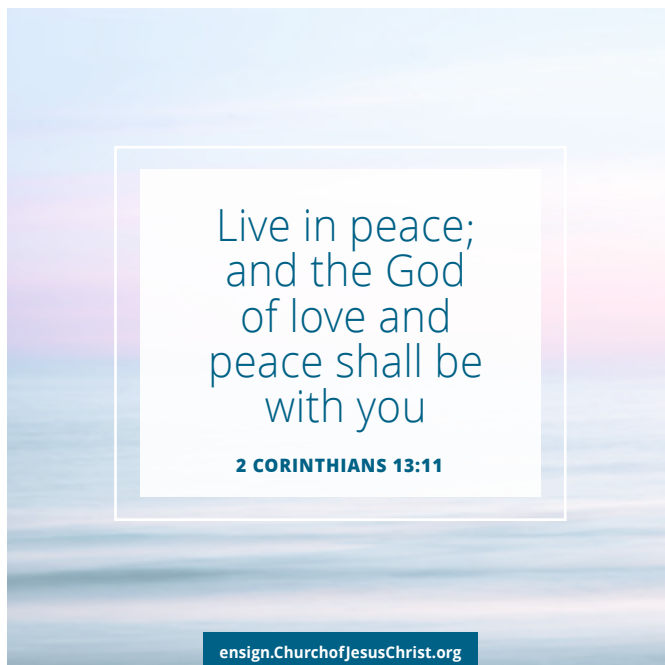
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