

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
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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

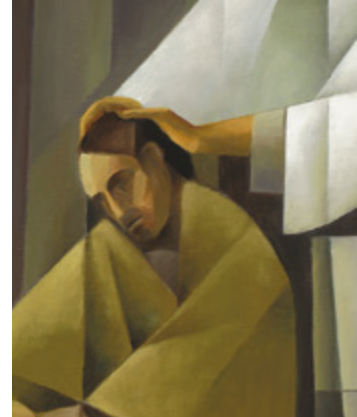
No two families have the same mix of people, personalities, or preferences, but whatever your family situation, studying the scriptures together strengthens family bonds. Fernando and Maria de Milla, a couple from Mexico whose children have all grown and moved out, used to study separately. Now, however, 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.

