

# Ensign

## Me, My Family, and God's Plan

Nine Principles for Your Family  
Now and in the Future, page 12

The Importance of Both Women  
and Men, page 32

Sister Aburto: How God Healed  
My Family, page 42

THE  
CHURCH  
IS HERE

# Carmen **Philippine**



AS

The Carmen Branch, represented by this location in Bohol, is in the Tagbilaran stake and is one of 1,227 congregations in the Philippines. Here are some facts about the Church in the Philippines:

Church members  
(1 in every 134  
people)



785,164

107



stakes and 68 districts

missions

22



2

temples operating, 1 under  
construction, 4 announced

missionary training center

1



1967 First mission organized

1969 Highest number of baptisms compared  
with any other country in the world

1973 First stake formed

2017 Fifth nation in the Church to reach  
100 stakes

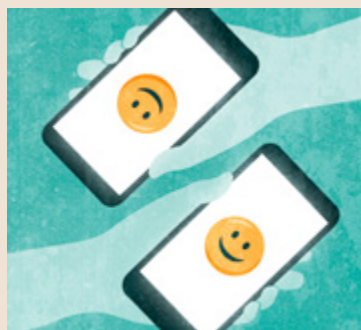


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## COVID-19 and This Issue

Due to the continually changing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the content in this issue may not be applicable in your local circumstances. Please adapt suggestions as needed according to the most recent Church and government guidelines.



**Ministering through  
Come, Follow Me**

**8**



**The Family  
Proclamation  
Today**  
**12**



**Miracles of Healing through  
Temple Ordinances**

*Sister Reyna I. Aburto*

**42**



**How Do I Talk to My Kids about  
the Importance of Both Women  
and Men?**

**32**

## Part of an Eternal Family

Through my own personal experiences and my service in the Relief Society General Presidency, I have seen firsthand that many people in the world don't live in perfect family situations. In fact, I'm not sure anyone does! The ideal described in "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" reminds us of the loving eternal family that we belong to. It teaches that we are all part of the family of God and reminds us that, regardless of our earthly family situation, each of us is surrounded by brothers and sisters.

- Because we are all imperfect mortals, our family situations may never be perfect in this life. But our Savior can provide us with healing. On page 42, I share how temple work brought God's healing to my family on both sides of the veil.
- Learning more about the principles in the proclamation can help you strengthen your faith and those around you, whatever your family circumstances. The article starting on page 12 may prompt you with ideas for applying these teachings to your life.

Our heavenly parents love us, their children, and our Heavenly Father has a plan for each of us. That means that He has a plan for you. Please keep moving toward Him in faith. Help your eternal family members along the way back to Him. He will share hope and healing along your journey. And one day, each of us will have the chance to return to a perfect and eternal heavenly home.

May God bless and strengthen you,

Sister Reyna I. Aburto

Second Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

# Contents

- 5 What If My Family Doesn't Look Like This?** 🕒
- 6 Portraits of Faith** 🕒  
Kevin and Kendra Henderson—North Carolina, USA
- 8 Ministering Principles**  
Ministering through *Come, Follow Me*
- 12 Seeing Yourself in the Family Proclamation**  
Resources to help you better understand and apply the family proclamation.
- 24 Moving Closer: Loving as the Savior Did**  
*By Becky and Bennett Borden*  
We can learn a lot from the Savior's example of interacting with others.
- 28 "Help Meet": Women's Power to Serve**  
*By Angela Ashurst-McGee*  
Understanding what "help meet" in Genesis 2:18 truly means can empower women in their divine work.
- 32 How Do I Talk to My Kids about the Importance of Both Women and Men?** 🕒  
Nine tips to help you teach your children that women and men should be equally valued and respected.
- 34 The Divine Pattern of Eternal Marriage**  
*By Elder David A. Bednar*  
Marriage as defined by the proclamation on the family stands in stark contrast to the modern secular concept of marriage.
- 42 Miracles of Healing through Temple Ordinances**  
*By Sister Reyna I. Aburto*  
Sister Aburto shares how temple work healed her family and how the Savior can heal each of us.
- 48 My Conference Notebook** 🕒  
April 2020 General Conference

## Young Adults

### 68

Each of us experiences **struggles with our mental health**, but we don't have to go through it alone. We can **reach out to others and to our Savior** for love, connection, and strength. Read about how young adults have reached out in seasons of struggling.



## 50 The Book of Mormon and the Descent into Dissent

*By Daniel C. Peterson*

The Book of Mormon shows how contention starts and why unity is essential in the Church.

## 54 Weekly Book of Mormon Insights

- How can I sustain the prophet?
- How can we keep from forgetting spiritual experiences?
- How can we hear God's voice?
- How can I be the salt of the earth?

## 58 Family Study Fun

## 60 Building a Debt-Free Future

*By Bryan Sudweeks and E. Jeffrey Hill*

Four simple principles to help you manage your money and avoid debt.

## 64 Latter-day Saint Voices

A teacher is inspired to teach differently; a letter is answered without being sent; a brother's car crash teaches about Heavenly Father's love; a mother and son build their relationship by reading the Book of Mormon together.

A **3**-Step Guide  
to Maintaining Your  
**Mental Health**



**On the Cover**  
Photograph by  
Cody Bell.

🕒 Quick Reads

📖 *Come, Follow Me* Support

## September Digital-Only Articles

Available in the Gospel Library app or at [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)



### *Come, Follow Me* Resources

For a list of articles and activities (organized by week) that can enrich your family's study of the Book of Mormon, see "Come, Follow Me: Book of Mormon—Support Articles and Activities" in the digital version of this issue (available in the Gospel Library app or at [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)).



#### **I Chose to Stay. Here's How You Can Help Someone Stay Too**

*By Shantelle Avery*

A young adult who experiences clinical depression shares her insight on helping others choose life over suicide.



#### **How Infertility Strengthened My Testimony of the Family Proclamation**

*By Carena Kastello*

A member shares her incredible story of infertility and adoption and how her greatest trials strengthened her faith.



#### **I Finally Admitted That I Had Depression. Jesus Christ Helped Me Out of the Darkness**

*By Nephi Tangalin*

A young adult from the Philippines shares her experience with healing from mental illness.

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## WHAT IF MY FAMILY DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THIS?

**H**ow grateful we are for living prophets and apostles, who issued "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" 25 years ago. It teaches us the eternal doctrine of the family and lists principles that successful marriages and families live by.

However, some people may wonder how the proclamation applies to them when "their own current experience does not fit neatly inside the family proclamation."<sup>1</sup>

Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles addressed this concern in general

conference, sharing this encouragement: "Even if important parts of [the plan of happiness] aren't fulfilled in your life now, they will be yours in the Lord's due time. I also promise you that you can have significant growth and happiness now in your present circumstances. As a daughter or son of God, live whatever portion of the plan you can to the best of your ability."<sup>2</sup> ■

### NOTES

1. Neil L. Andersen, "The Eye of Faith," *Ensign*, May 2019, 36.
2. Richard G. Scott, "The Joy of Living the Great Plan of Happiness," *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 75.

*Beginning on page 12, members and Church leaders share how the family proclamation has guided them.*



ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL KOELSCH



## Kevin and Kendra Henderson

North Carolina, USA



*At first, Kendra was against Kevin's interest in the Church. Now they look back and see how the Lord guided them both to the gospel.*

LESLIE NILSSON, PHOTOGRAPHER

### Kevin:

I told Heavenly Father that I would do anything if He would let me know the path He wanted me to take. When I thought about baptism, I felt this rush, like the wind, come over me. It was the Holy Ghost telling me, "This is what you must do."

### Kendra:

I was a little hesitant when we set a date for my baptism. The missionaries came over, and we talked about it.

Finally, I asked my daughter, Aryanna, "Do you want to be baptized?"

She said, "Mom, I'm ready whenever you are."

At Aryanna's baptism, she cried tears of joy. When I saw her, I thought, *I'm where I need to be.*

### Kevin:

I know Heavenly Father brought the gospel to our family because He loves and cares about us so much.

### DISCOVER MORE

Read the Hendersons' conversion story and see more photos in the digital version of this article in the Gospel Library app or at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/E9206](https://ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/E9206).

Learn from Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf how the Spirit can guide us all to light and truth at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/9207](https://ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/9207).

# Ministering Principles

## MINISTERING THROUGH *COME, FOLLOW ME*

*How can Come, Follow Me help you make a difference to others?*

Whether you're with your family, in a Sunday School classroom as a teacher or student, or at school, work, or somewhere else, *Come, Follow Me* offers ample opportunities to minister to others. Teaching, after all, "is more than leading a discussion on Sunday; it involves ministering with love and blessing others with the gospel."<sup>1</sup>

### Connecting with Students

When Ofelia Trejo de Cárdenas was called to teach young adults in her Mexico City ward, she felt that having a close relationship with each of her Sunday School students would increase her ability to teach and strengthen them.

"If I don't have a close relationship with my students and if they don't feel my love, they may not believe me when I'm teaching a class or bearing my testimony," she says. "They may feel that I'm *just* a Sunday School teacher."

But how could Sister Cárdenas develop such a relationship if she taught only once every two weeks? She found the answer through technology. Using the mobile phone application WhatsApp, she and her students were soon connecting daily through text and voice messages. Now, every day before the next Sunday School lesson, a class volunteer sends to other class members a verse of scripture from that next lesson with a related personal thought. After reading the verse and the thought, class members respond with their own thoughts.





*“When they read the scripture for the day, they send a happy face so I know they have read.”*

“When they read the scripture, they send a happy face so I know they have read or studied the scripture and that they have thought about it,” says Sister Cárdenas. When it’s time for the next Sunday lesson, the students are prepared to participate.

This daily connection recently blessed one young adult whose parents are not active in the Church.

“I love it when I see him come to church because I know that to get there, he had to go through several challenges,” says Sister Cárdenas. “I’m sure that the scriptures and thoughts his classmates have sent out and the scriptures and thoughts he has sent out when it was his turn have strengthened him a lot.”

Sister Cárdenas says ministering through the scriptures doesn’t stop with her Sunday lesson and her class’s daily scriptural connection.

“My preparation includes praying for my students,” she says. “I think of them not only on Sunday but every day of the week as well. Each of them has specific and different needs. Each is a child of God. I think about them while I’m preparing my lessons.”

And when she teaches, she listens—both to her students and to the Holy Ghost.

“The teacher is the Spirit,” which she often hears in the voices of her students. “I have to pay attention because what they say is the revelation that the Spirit is giving to them.”

### **Our Class Is “Like Home Evening”**

Carla Gutiérrez Ortega Córdoba feels blessed to be a member of Sister Cárdenas’s Sunday School class because of its nurturing and ministering environment. Carla attributes that environment to several factors, including:

- Preparation: Sharing scriptures and thoughts helps students prepare for the next class. “Daily scriptures nourish us and expand our knowledge,” she explains.
- Participation: “We all speak. This allows me to know my classmates more deeply, as friends and as brothers and sisters.”
- Love: “Sister Cárdenas takes you by the hand. Our class feels like home evening, with several brothers and sisters. It’s very special.”
- The Holy Ghost: “We have a pleasant, harmonious spirit in our class because we’re on the same page with the Spirit.”
- Testimony: “*Come, Follow Me* has helped me be ready to share my testimony. I have a deeper knowledge of the Book of Mormon and the Bible. That allows me to share what I’m learning with my classmates at school and people at work.”

## Ministering to Spiritual Needs

When Greg and Niki Christensen, from Kentucky, USA, read about the Abrahamic covenant in the scriptures with their three sons, they found it difficult to explain to them. They decided as a family that each of them would study the Abrahamic covenant on their own and then share what they found.

“We got some interesting comments,” Greg says. “Our eight-year-old learned that Abraham’s name used to be Abram. His name changed to Abraham because he made a promise to the Lord to turn from sin and to live a righteous life. I was really surprised that he was able to come up with that.”

They all learned something new and had a good discussion about what the Abrahamic covenant is and what it means for Latter-day Saints today.

“We used to just go around the room and take turns reading scripture verses for our family scripture study,” Niki says. “*Come, Follow Me* is geared more toward teaching by the Spirit. Now when we study together, I feel little nudges from the Spirit to take our discussions in a different direction

based on our family’s needs.”

Using *Come, Follow Me* has not only helped their family be more engaged and interested in family gospel study, but it has also helped Greg and Niki minister to the spiritual needs of their children.

“*Come, Follow Me* helps me teach my children,” Niki says. “It also helps me handle different challenges I sometimes have with my children. I feel more in tune with the Spirit, I listen more closely, and I’ve received promptings on how I can help each child.”

Greg enjoys the longer gospel discussions that *Come, Follow Me* helps generate in the family. “Our sons are all different in where they are with their gospel knowledge,” he says. “*Come, Follow Me* has provided a way for us to help each of them learn based on their needs. Seeing them grow in their love for the gospel and watching them figure out how they can apply gospel knowledge in their lives has been a wonderful blessing.” ■

### NOTE

1. *Come, Follow Me—for Sunday School: Book of Mormon 2020* (2019), 19.

## MINISTERING THROUGH *COME, FOLLOW ME*

The following are some ideas for using *Come, Follow Me* in your efforts to minister to friends or neighbors:

1. Share what you are doing with *Come, Follow Me* and how you are studying the scriptures.
2. Share something you are learning from the scriptures.
3. Invite those to whom you minister to share something they are learning or how they study.
4. Use *Come, Follow Me* with them and study together.
5. Watch a Book of Mormon video together.
6. Share a story from the Book of Mormon.
7. Bring a print copy of *Come, Follow Me* or help them download the Gospel Library app and learn how to use it.
8. Share and discuss some of the artwork in *Come, Follow Me*.

## 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.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) and click “Submit an Article or Feedback.”

## BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

“Those entrusted to your care are Heavenly Father’s children, and He knows what they need and how best to reach them. Through the Holy Ghost, God will guide you as you prepare and while you are teaching. He will reveal to you what you should say and what you should do.”

*Come, Follow Me—for Sunday School: Book of Mormon 2020* (2019), v.





# Seeing Yourself in the Family Proclamation

*While everyone's family circumstances are unique in some way, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" contains eternal principles that provide an ideal to aim for as we strive to reach our divine potential. The following pages include insights that can help us understand the inspired principles of the family proclamation better. If we*

*apply those principles in our circumstances to the best of our abilities, we will be blessed as we press forward toward eternal life.*

## 1. Each of us is part of an eternal family with a divine purpose

No matter what our earthly family looks like, each of us is "a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents" who love us. As part of this eternal family, our divine purpose is to "progress toward perfection and ultimately realize [our] divine destiny as heirs of eternal life." (Unless otherwise noted, quotations come from "The Family: A Proclamation to the World.")

### **WE ALL HAVE A DIVINE NATURE AND DESTINY**

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:16–17).

### **WE ARE ALL CHILDREN OF HEAVENLY PARENTS**

"We are children—but

in what a family and of what Parents! We can picture ourselves as we were, for longer than we can imagine, sons and daughters associating in our heavenly home with Parents who knew and loved us."

President Henry B. Eyring, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "The Family," *Ensign*, Feb. 1998, 12.

## 2. Our mortal family helps us reach our eternal destiny

God gave us families to help us learn and grow as we seek to “progress toward perfection” and inherit eternal life. “The family is central to the Creator’s plan,” and though no family is perfect, God can help us progress with the family we have.

### GOD GAVE US FAMILIES TO HELP US RETURN TO HIM

“Though earthly families are far from perfect, they give God’s children the best chance to be welcomed to the world with the only love on earth that comes close to what we felt in heaven—parental love. Families are also the best way to preserve and pass on moral virtues and true principles that are most likely to lead us back to God’s presence.”

President Henry B. Eyring, “Gathering the Family of God,” *Ensign*, May 2017, 20.

### FAMILY FOSTERS PROGRESS

“Individual progression is fostered in the family, which is ‘central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.’ The home is to be God’s laboratory of love and service.”

President Russell M. Nelson, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Salvation and Exaltation,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 8.



### WE CAN LEARN NO MATTER OUR FAMILY SITUATION

“The reality is that a majority of Church members do not live in perfect family situations. I’m not sure *anyone* lives in that perfect ideal family. So why keep the emphasis? Because **family is our destiny**, and we are on this earth to learn the skills of strong family relationships, no matter what our own situation is. . . .

“ . . . The Lord sees you. . . . If you trust your life to Him, His hand will guide you every step of the way until you are happy and at peace with all the desires of your heart.”

Sister Sharon Eubank, First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency, “A Letter to a Single Sister,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2019, 40, 41; bold added.

### DISCOVER MORE

- Read what a single mother learned about striving to maintain a “forever family” with her children after a devastating divorce: visit [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/92014](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/go/92014).



### **MY FAMILY WAS ENOUGH FOR HIS PURPOSES**

By Miranda Gaubatz, Utah, USA

My family is not what you would call the “ideal” family. My parents split when I had just turned 11, so I was raised by a hardworking, dedicated single mother. I felt like we stuck out like a sore thumb in sacrament meeting.

As a teenager, I remember sitting in a lesson on “The Family: a Proclamation to the World,” getting emotional as I listened to a youth leader testify of the family and coming to gain my own testimony that my little family was divinely approved and could provide everything I needed during this mortal existence.

Even with that knowledge, I dreaded taking the required Eternal Families class a few years later at Brigham Young University. I didn’t want to sit through class after class hearing about my “less-than-ideal” family. But my professor started our first class with this statement: “We preach the ideal but live in reality and rely on the Savior’s Atonement to make up the difference.”

I know that the family is central to Heavenly Father’s plan. Even families that are less than ideal, like I experienced as a teenager, can help us learn and grow. The Savior Himself was raised by an earthly stepfather. I’m so grateful that Jesus Christ can take our “not ideal” families and make them enough to fulfill His purposes for us.

## **3. “Family” can mean more than just parents and children**

There are many family relationships that can be sacred stewardships. Brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, in-laws, and others can be uniquely influential. “Extended families should lend support when needed.” Fostering these family connections can bring needed support and become prized relationships.

### **WE CAN BE BLESSED BY FAMILY ON BOTH SIDES OF THE VEIL**

“When I say families, I don’t [just] mean our modern concept of Mom, Dad, and children. I use the term the way the Lord uses it, as a synonym for kindred or multigenerational families, because everyone has a family. Our Heavenly Father’s plan for His children centers on this kind of family—with children who draw strength from ancestors many generations back and parents who seek to bless their posterity for generations to come.”

Elder Bradley D. Foster of the Seventy, “Gathering, Healing, and Sealing Families,” given at the RootsTech Family History Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, on Feb. 14, 2015.





## YOU CAN BLESS YOUR FAMILY IN MANY ROLES

By Sister Sharon Eubank, First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

The scriptures are full of examples of righteous men and women who made a significant difference in the lives of their extended family. Abraham changed Lot's life as his uncle. Joseph of Egypt saved his brothers and their families. As adults, sisters Mary and Martha blessed each other and their brother, Lazarus. Ruth, as a daughter-in-law, sustained Naomi and then was eternally blessed in return by Naomi's counsel. Elisabeth and Mary supported each other as cousins through the challenges surrounding their pregnancies. Even Zoram, who was not related by blood, was such a faithful support to Nephi that he and his children were adopted as if they were family. This broader view of family is so important to so many who have so much to give but feel cut off because they don't have the nuclear family they want.

### DISCOVER MORE

- Read how one woman's connection to an ancestor through family history helped strengthen her through "The Power of Faith and Family Stories," *Ensign*, Sept. 2018, 34–37.

## 4. You can make a difference in starting or restoring an eternal family

"Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally." Unfortunately, sometimes marriages end, families fall apart, or the links in the chain of an eternal family are broken. Through these "sacred ordinances and covenants," it is "possible for individuals to return to the presence of God" regardless of their family circumstances. With God's help, making and keeping those sacred covenants to the best of your ability can help you create, repair, or strengthen your family, in hopes of one day uniting them eternally.

### DO YOUR BEST; GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF THE REST

"My promise to you is one that a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles once made to me. I had said to him that because of choices some in our extended family had made, I doubted that we could be together in the world to come. He said, as well as I can remember, 'You are worrying about the wrong problem. You just live worthy of the celestial kingdom, and the family arrangements will be more wonderful than you can imagine.'"

I believe that he would extend that happy hope to any of us in mortality who have done all we can to qualify ourselves and our family members for eternal life. I know that Heavenly Father's plan is a plan of happiness. I testify that His plan makes it possible for each of us who has done the best we can to be sealed in a family forever."

President Henry B. Eyring, "A Home Where the Spirit of the Lord Dwells," *Ensign*, May 2019, 25.



## IT CAN BEGIN (OR BEGIN AGAIN) WITH YOU!

"To you who have experienced the heartache of a divorce in your family or felt the agony of violated trust, please remember it begins again with you! One link in the chain of your generations may have been broken, but the other righteous links and what remains of the chain are nonetheless eternally important. You can add strength to your chain and perhaps even help to restore the broken links. That work will be accomplished one by one."

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "A Welding Link" (worldwide devotional for young adults, Sept. 10, 2017), broadcasts .ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

## 5. Marriage is a partnership that requires faith and prayer

The family proclamation affirms that husbands and wives "are obligated to help one another as equal partners." But becoming true partners in marriage can be a challenge. Our upbringing, culture, education, financial circumstances, experiences, and more can affect how we approach relationships and how we manage our families. The proclamation teaches that "successful marriages and families" are established through faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, and other principles as we counsel and work together to meet our individual circumstances.

### HUSBANDS AND WIVES ARE EQUAL PARTNERS

"Husbands and wives are equal partners. They have different but complementary responsibilities. The wife may bear children, which blesses the entire family. The husband may receive the priesthood, which blesses the entire family. But in family council, wives and husbands, as equal partners, make the most important decisions. They decide how the children will be taught and disciplined, how money will be spent, where they will live, and many other family decisions. These are made jointly after seeking guidance from the Lord. The goal is an eternal family."

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Lord Is My Light," *Ensign*, May 2015, 64.



## WE MUST SEEK GUIDANCE FOR OUR OWN SPECIFIC FAMILY SITUATION

"We have a divine pattern to follow as outlined in 'The Family: A Proclamation to the World,' but we know that mortality can be complicated. . . .

"Once you know the Lord's will, you can then move forward in faith to fulfill your individual purpose. One sister may be inspired to continue her education and attend medical school, allowing her to have significant impact on her patients and to advance medical research. For another sister, inspiration may lead her to forego a scholarship to a prestigious institution and instead begin a family much earlier than has become common in this generation, allowing her to make a significant and eternal impact on her children now.

"Is it possible for two similarly faithful women to receive such different responses to the same basic questions? Absolutely! What's right for one woman may not be right for another. That's why it is so important that we should not question each other's choices or the inspiration behind them."

President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Women of Dedication, Faith, Determination, and Action" (Brigham Young University Women's Conference, May 1, 2015), [womensconference.byu.edu](http://womensconference.byu.edu).

## DISCOVER MORE

Learn more about what we can do to strengthen our families:

- Find resources on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org) by selecting, in turn, "Living Life," "Life Help," and then "Family and Relationships."
- Read "The Family," by President Henry B. Eyring, *Ensign*, Feb. 1998, 10–18.
- Read or watch "United in Accomplishing God's Work," by Jean B. Bingham, April 2020 general conference.

## 6. The potential for parenthood is part of God's plan for becoming like Him

One of the ways we can become more like our heavenly parents is by experiencing parenthood ourselves. "The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife." While getting married and having children doesn't always happen according to our plan, that doesn't mean it isn't part of God's plan. For many of us, preparing in faith and waiting on the Lord is an important part of becoming.

## DON'T FEAR PARENTHOOD

"Some years ago, one of our young married daughters and her husband asked Sister Rasband and me a very important, life-influencing question: 'Is it still safe and wise to bring children into this seemingly wicked and frightening world we live in?'

". . . Our answer to them was a firm 'Yes, it's more than OK.' . . .

". . . Yes, we live in perilous times, but as we stay on the covenant path, we need not fear. I bless you that as you do so, you will not be troubled by the times in which we live or the troubles that come your way."

Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Be Not Troubled," *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 18, 21.



### SOMETIMES WE MUST WAIT IN FAITH

"Let me here say a word to console the feelings and hearts of all who belong to this church. Many of the sisters grieve because they are not blessed with offspring. . . . Be faithful, and if you are not blest with children in this time, you will be hereafter."

President Brigham Young (1801–77), "Remarks," *Deseret News*, Nov. 28, 1860, 306.

### INFERTILITY AND OUR WARD FAMILY

By John McMullin, Alberta, Canada

My wife, Gennie, and I always wanted a lot of kids. Always. But after a year of trying, we met the medical definition for infertility.

At first, there was a lot of prayer. Every night we would hold hands and ask Heavenly Father to bless us with the child we had prepared for our whole lives. We fasted every month, sometimes more. Every month we weren't pregnant was even harder. Not only was there no child for us to love, it seemed there was no

answer to our prayers. It felt like God had heard us asking for what we had wanted our whole lives, and He had said no.

We began to question our worthiness. It was easy to believe He had kept His spirit children to be born into more faithful households.

Attending church became difficult. It was hard to hear about how others' prayers had been answered, and how much Heavenly Father loved them.

Two things kept us going. First, we had made covenants to the Lord and to each other when we were sealed in the temple. We belonged with each other, and we were determined to be together both now and in the eternities.

The second was our ward family. We were blessed to have leaders





## 7. The power to create life is given, and guarded, by God

who knew infertility personally. Gennie had a ministering sister who also had experienced infertility and talked openly about the difficulties of being childless at church. We were struggling, but we knew others in our Church community had fought the same struggle.

We still don't have a lot of answers. We still don't have children, even after working with medical professionals. We don't know Heavenly Father's reasons, but because we have our covenants, and because we have a ward family that accepted and supported us, we've had the time to develop more patience and faith (see Hebrews 12:12–13).

We look forward to being parents. And while we wait for that happy day, we have a place to belong here in the Church.

### DISCOVER MORE

- Learn more about planning and preparing to have a family. Read the Young Adults section of the June 2019 *Ensign*.
- Read "Planning Your Family according to God's Plan," in the June 2019 *Ensign* or YA Weekly.
- Learn how one couple found peace from stories of infertility in the Bible: visit [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/92020](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/92020) (includes resources on financial and social support).

In the proclamation, the Lord's Apostles "affirm the sanctity of life." Because life is sacred, God has given commandments regarding the giving and taking of life. How we respect that power has far-reaching effects for good or evil on ourselves and on society.

### SEXUAL INTIMACY HAS A DIVINE PURPOSE

"Physical intimacy is not only a symbolic union between a husband and a wife—the very uniting of their souls—but it is also symbolic of a shared relationship between them and their Father in Heaven. . . .

". . . At such moments we not only acknowledge His divinity but we quite literally take something of that divinity to ourselves. One aspect of that divinity given to virtually all men and women is the use of His power to create . . . a child, your child—with eyes and ears and fingers and toes and a future of unspeakable grandeur. . . .

". . . You and I have been given something of that godliness, *but under the most serious and sacred of restrictions. The only control placed upon us is self-control—self-control born of respect for the divine sacramental power this gift represents.*"

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Personal Purity," *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 77.

### PROPER EXPRESSION OF SEXUAL INTIMACY BRINGS ETERNAL BLESSINGS

"Sexual relations are 'one of the ultimate expressions of our divine nature.' Our proper expression of sexuality makes it possible for God's plan to unfold on earth and in the eternities, qualifying us to become like our Heavenly Father. God promises eternal life for the faithful



that includes eternal marriage, children, and all other blessings of an eternal family.”

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Ruth Lybbert Renlund, “The Divine Purposes of Sexual Intimacy,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2020, 16–17.

#### DISCOVER MORE

- In the August 2020 *Ensign*, learn more about God’s view of sexuality, including its divine purposes, its appropriate development, and how to teach it to children.
- Read “10 Scriptures about the Value of Human Life” *Ensign*, Mar. 2018 digital issue.

## 8. A parent’s responsibility is God-given

To help us become like Him, God has given many of us both the opportunity and the responsibility of parenthood. We are accountable to Him “for the discharge of these obligations.” But we can also count on His help in seeking happiness and success in marriage and family life as we strive to raise our children in love and righteousness and support them through their challenges.

#### WHY A PARENT’S ROLE IS SO IMPORTANT

“Our most important and powerful assignments are in the family. They are important because the family has the opportunity at the start of a child’s life to put feet firmly on the path home.”

President Henry B. Eyring, “Help Them on Their Way Home,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 23.





## **GOD WANTS HIS CHILDREN RAISED IN LOVE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS**

“Fortifying children to become sin-resistant is a task and a blessing for parents, grandparents, family members, teachers, and leaders. We each bear responsibility to help. . . .

“How to ‘bring up [our] children in light and truth’ may be a challenging question since it is individualized for each family and each child, but Heavenly Father has given universal guidelines that will help us. The Spirit will inspire us in the most effective ways we can spiritually inoculate our children.

“To begin, having a vision of the importance of this responsibility is essential. We must understand our—and their—divine identity and purpose before we can help our children see who they are and why they are here. We must help them know without question that they are sons and daughters of a loving Heavenly Father and that He has divine expectations of them. . . .

“ . . . Helping children become sin-resistant is to begin at very early ages to lovingly infuse them with basic gospel doctrines and principles—from the scriptures, the Articles of Faith, the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet, Primary songs, hymns, and our own personal testimonies—that will lead children to the Savior.”

**Sister Joy D. Jones, Primary General President, “A Sin-Resistant Generation,”**  
*Ensign*, May 2017, 88.

## **OUR FAMILY NEEDS OUR SUPPORT**

“Indeed, nothing is more critically connected to happiness—both our own and that of our children—than how well we *love and support one another within the family.*”

**President M. Russell Ballard, “What Matters Most Is What Lasts Longest,”** *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 42; emphasis added.

## **DISCOVER MORE**

- Find more about parenting on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) by selecting, in turn, “Libraries,” “Gospel Library,” “Topics,” and then “Gospel Topics.”



## 9. We can stand up for God's plan for His family

From before the beginning of the world, it has been our role to promote the Father's plan for His family and defend it against disintegration from within and attacks from without. "We call upon responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family." Understanding why and how is essential.

### WHY WE DEFEND MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

"The work of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is ultimately concerned with preparing the children of God for the celestial kingdom, and most particularly its highest glory, exaltation or eternal life. That highest destiny is possible only through marriage for eternity. Eternal life includes the creative powers inherent in the combination of male and female—what modern revelation describes as the 'continuation of the seeds forever and ever.'

"In his talk to young adults, President Nelson taught, 'Abiding by God's laws will keep you safe as you progress

toward eventual exaltation," that is, to become like God, with the exalted life and divine potential of our Heavenly Parents. That is the destiny we desire for all we love."

**President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, "Two Great Commandments," *Ensign*, Nov. 2019, 74.**

### WE CAN DEFEND THE FAMILY WITHOUT BEING OFFENSIVE

"When believers promote their positions in the public square, they should always be tolerant of the opinions and positions of those who do not share their beliefs.

Believers must always speak with love and show patience, under-

standing, and compassion toward their adversaries. Christian believers are under command to love their neighbors (see Luke 10:27) and to forgive (see Matthew 18:21–35). They should also remember the Savior's teaching to 'bless them that curse [them], do good to them that hate [them], and pray for them which despitefully use [them], and persecute [them]' (Matthew 5:44)."

**President Dallin H. Oaks, "Balancing Truth and Tolerance," *Ensign*, Feb. 2013, 30–31.**

### DISCOVER MORE

- Read about one couple's experience defending the family in "We Stood before Parliament" in this month's digital issue.





# MOVING CLOSER: Loving as the Savior Did

*We can learn a lot from the Savior's example of interacting with others.*

By Becky and Bennett Borden

As members of the Church who are gay, we have often turned to the Savior's example for help in understanding how to best navigate relationships with Church members and others. One day we were thinking about how the Savior asked us to “love one another; as I have loved you” (John 13:34). We found it interesting that He didn't say “*because* I have loved you” but rather “*as* I have loved you.” This made us think about *how* the Savior loved people. In what ways did He show love?

We decided to spend some time studying the New Testament, specifically looking for stories about how the Savior interacted with other people during His mortal ministry. As a husband and wife who both experience same-sex attraction, we specifically wanted to better understand how Jesus treated those who seemed to fall outside of society's definition of typical. Here are a few patterns we noticed.

## Jesus Met Cultural Differences with Kindness

We live in a time of great social and political divisiveness, much as the Savior did during His life. Some of the issues of His day were long-standing and deeply rooted in history and cultural beliefs.

For example, the Lord purposefully traveled through Samaria, a place Jews avoided because of a feud going back hundreds of years. When Jesus met a woman and asked her to draw water, she seemed to react as a political and religious “other”—highlighting the differences between Him as a Jew and her as a Samaritan. (See John 4.) Jesus, in response, treated this woman as a daughter of God. His reaction of talking with her lovingly and truthfully is a great example for each of us. A common strategy of the adversary is trying to separate us into differing camps, pitched against each other in battle. “But the Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

It's easy to apply the lesson in this story to our society today. As we go throughout our daily lives, including Church meetings and activities, we meet people from many different backgrounds. Some might even be labeled by the world as political or cultural enemies. Rather than focusing on what might separate us, we can choose to focus on what we have in common as children of heavenly parents and learn to talk with others lovingly, as the Savior did.

When the Savior visited the people in the Americas after His Resurrection, He taught that “the devil . . . is the father of contention,

and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another” (3 Nephi 11:29). The people listened to Him, and over the next generation, they created a society where “there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift” (4 Nephi 1:3).

### **Jesus Moved Toward Instead of Away**

Jesus actively tried to move closer to others, emotionally and even physically at times, instead of using excuses to distance Himself from those who often were despised and ostracized.

For example, Jesus once met a man with a deformed hand. Because it was the Sabbath, there were strict rules limiting what work should be done that day. Rather than avoid someone who needed help until a more acceptable opportunity came along, Jesus chose “to do well” immediately (Matthew 12:12). He invited the man to reach out his hand. “And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other” (Matthew 12:13).

Similar stories are repeated throughout scripture. Jesus acknowledged with

compassion a woman who was considered unclean (see Luke 8), welcomed and healed a man who heard voices and cut himself (see Mark 5), and healed a man who was misjudged by others (see John 9:1–7). One pattern we see throughout scripture is that when “Jesus put forth his hand” (Matthew 8:3), it was usually to encourage and love others and to provide healing and peace.

Perhaps one invitation from these stories is that we can draw nearer to those who might seem different from us. For example, do we sit next to someone who is visiting church, even if they aren’t dressed the same as everyone else? Do we make room for them to join in a hallway conversation? Do we smile and say hello and ask kind questions in an effort to know them better and help them feel included?

And perhaps more important, how can we develop a closer emotional and spiritual relationship with others, sharing peace and love like the Savior did? We know that we are blessed by God when we make an effort to connect—especially with those who might seem different from us.

### **Jesus Invited People to Share a Meal**

During our New Testament study, we were touched by how often the Savior shared a meal with others. In many cases, He was criticized because of the people He chose to spend time with.

In one example, Jesus called as one of His disciples a man named Matthew, who was a “publican,” or someone who represented the ruling government of the time (see Luke 5:27; Bible Dictionary, “Publicans”). Publicans were generally hated by the Jewish people. So, when Matthew hosted a great feast for Jesus and His disciples, the scribes and Pharisees—those who were supposedly following the commandments of God—complained. “Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?” they asked. Jesus answered, “They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick” (Luke 5:30–31).

This is a powerful example of how the Savior chose not to be swayed by outward appearances or worldly reputations. Rather, He focused on each individual’s needs, worth, and potential. An

#### **EXPLORE MORE**

The Church has online resources that can help you better understand, from a gospel perspective, sensitive topics like same-sex attraction and related LGBTQ issues. You could start by exploring [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/topics/gay](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/topics/gay).



interesting realization dawned on us as we read about Jesus sharing meals with Matthew and others. We will never be able to influence someone if we don't have access to them. Unless we take the time to get to know them and love and accept them for where they are in their journey, we will likely have very little impact on their lives.

You may have heard the saying “Love the sinner; hate the sin.” Do we spend enough time on the first half of that invitation? Jesus tells us to “love one another” (John 13:34) and forgive “seventy times seven” (see Matthew 18:22). Instead of spending time trying to identify and hate another person's sin, we can use that energy to nourish relationships with our fellow brothers and sisters.

We like to use the saying “Love the sinner; invite them to dinner!” Because we have *all* sinned “and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), this should give us plenty of opportunities to serve others through lovingly

prepared meals, served in a place where the Spirit of God is present. Let's surround our tables with conversations of sincere kindness, genuine friendship, and intentional efforts to see one another the way Jesus sees us.

### Building Zion

This year we've celebrated the bicentennial of the First Vision, when Jesus Christ announced that His gospel would be restored. Next year, we will learn from the examples of early Saints who helped build the Lord's kingdom here on earth in this dispensation. These early Saints had to find a way to work together and be unified, even though they came from different nations, prior religious beliefs, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

We face a parallel opportunity today. We must somehow figure out how to be unified in our faith, despite the cultural and political differences that try to tear us apart. This will only happen if we let the Savior be our guide. He understands our weakness perfectly and can make weak things strong (see Ether 12:27). He understands our pains perfectly and can help us heal (see Alma 7:11–12). He understands our differences perfectly and still promises that we can—as Doctrine and Covenants 49:25 describes—flourish and rejoice in Zion. Together. ■

*The authors live in Utah, USA.*





# Women's Power to Serve

*The phrase “help meet” in the scriptures used to bother me.  
Now it empowers me.*

**By Angela Ashurst-McGee**

**A**s a Sunbeam in Primary, I learned the truth that I am a child of God. Since then, some of my most cherished experiences have been when the Spirit has testified to me of God's love for each of His children. On many occasions—in the temple, in my private prayers, as I bear testimony—I have felt that God knows, values, and loves each of us individually.

This knowledge is especially dear to me as a woman. The world often demeans and misunderstands women by sexualizing them, devaluing their voices and contributions, and making them the objects of violence and oppression. In contrast, the gospel of Jesus Christ empowers women by teaching of our divine nature. I am a daughter of heavenly parents, tasked with becoming like them.

## **Help Meet**

Because the gospel has been a source of power and encouragement in my life as a woman, I have been confused by this scripture verse: “And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Genesis 2:18).

To me, a “help meet” sounded like a sidekick, like someone filling a lower, supporting role. In fact, throughout history this phrase has often been used to justify the claim that women were created to serve in a subservient position. For example, one of the interpretations for “help meet” proposed by 18-century biblical scholar John Gill was that a woman's purpose as a “help meet” was to make man “comfortable

... to dress his food ... be pleasing to his sight, and ... be in all respects ... entirely answerable to his ... wants and wishes.”<sup>1</sup>

This interpretation did not match my knowledge of God’s views of women! I knew that God doesn’t see me as an assistant or sidekick with a role to merely please others and fill their wishes. But even though I knew this in my heart, seeing that verse in my scriptures felt uncomfortable.

### **Ezer Kenegdo**

Things changed one day when I learned more about the Hebrew words translated as “help meet” in the King James Version of the Bible. This knowledge gave me a whole new perspective and greater understanding of my divine work as a woman.

The phrase translated as “help meet” comes from two Hebrew words, *ezer* and *kenegdo*.

*Ezer* means “help,” but in a distinct way. In English, a “helper” is sometimes thought of as someone in a low position, but *ezer* describes strength. It suggests that the individual has power to rescue others. *Ezer* is used 21 times in the Old Testament, always describing a person with the capacity allowing one to help, protect, or aid.<sup>2</sup> In most of these cases, *ezer* describes the way God offers help to rescue humankind. For example:

- “For the God of my father, said he, was mine help [ezer], and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh” (Exodus 18:4).
- “Happy art thou, O Israel ... saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help [ezer]” (Deuteronomy 33:29).
- “But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: thou art my help [ezer] and my deliverer” (Psalm 70:5).
- “O Israel, trust thou in the Lord: he is their help [ezer] and their shield” (Psalm 115:9).
- “My help [ezer] cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:2).
- “In me [the Lord] is thine help [ezer]” (Hosea 13:9).

Though its meaning is less definitive, scholars agree that *kenegdo* means “corresponding to” and “opposite to.” It describes two things that are next to each other and complementary to each other, but different from each other—like facing opposites.

Putting these two terms together, we see that *ezer kenegdo* suggests that God created Eve in counterpart to Adam, with the power to rescue and serve. “Help meet” is not a label of inferiority but an acknowledgment of strength!

### **Using Our Power to Serve**

While the calling to serve and nurture has often been portrayed by society as weak or inferior, *ezer kenegdo* teaches us that part of our God-given nature as women includes a strength to serve. I help others not because I am a lowly servant but because I possess the power to rescue and aid.

Many of the sweetest experiences of my life have come through service. When I lead my children, I fulfill my role as *ezer kenegdo* by protecting and nurturing them. When I teach the gospel, serve in my community, lift up the weak, or stand for righteousness, I exercise my *ezer kenegdo*. When I further



#### **DISTINCTIVE CAPABILITIES**

“My dear sisters, whatever your calling, whatever your circumstances, we need your impressions, your insights,

and your inspiration. We need you to speak up and speak out in ward and stake councils. ... Married or single, you sisters possess distinctive capabilities and special intuition you have received as gifts from God.”

President Russell M. Nelson, “A Plea to My Sisters,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 97.



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*The greatest power and joy  
available to men or women come  
from loving God and serving others.*

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my education, experience, skills, and talents, I expand the scope of my *ezer*.

I know many women whose abilities, education, and strength of character enable them to provide needed service. They draw on their unique insights and talents to serve in ways others wouldn't have thought of or may not have been capable of. Here are just a few examples from women I know.

- A sister felt guilty about her poor scripture-reading habits but didn't feel confident enough to study on her own. Her ministering sister Anita had strength as a student of the scriptures, so Anita became her "scripture coach." Anita sent a text message to her friend each day with a reading assignment. The sister texted back when she had finished reading, and they shared questions or thoughts with each other. They were both lifted by their study.
- One morning Shannon got a phone call from a friend in crisis. Because Shannon had experienced similar circumstances, she was able to offer honest understanding. After listening to her friend, she felt prompted to say, "As women of God, we are promised blessings of comfort and strength. Let's pray together over the phone, and I have faith God will hear our prayers. We can ask Him together for comfort." Shannon's prayer brought needed strength through the Holy Ghost to help her friend face her challenges.
- In Carrie's ward, an elderly sister had an accident that caused her to lose her sight. Her world went

from colorful to dark in a matter of days. She became afraid to leave home, became increasingly isolated, and felt like a burden. Carrie asked herself, "What could we do to help her other senses experience joy?" Carrie baked a fresh loaf of bread and gathered up her children and their musical instruments to visit her friend. They sang songs and played music. They told jokes and listened to stories about this sister's childhood. Carrie's children still remember playing a concert for the "grandma who couldn't see us."

In each of these examples—and many, many others that occur every day all around the world—women were equipped to offer strength, comfort, and support by virtue of the talents and skills they had developed.

I am grateful for the sisters of strength and virtue around me who have blessed my life with their talents. I am grateful for the opportunity to search the scriptures and attend the temple to continually seek out greater understanding of God's plan of salvation and magnify my calling as a woman and a daughter of God. I am grateful that Jesus Christ's gospel teaches us that the greatest power and joy available to men or women come from loving God and serving others. ■

**NOTES**

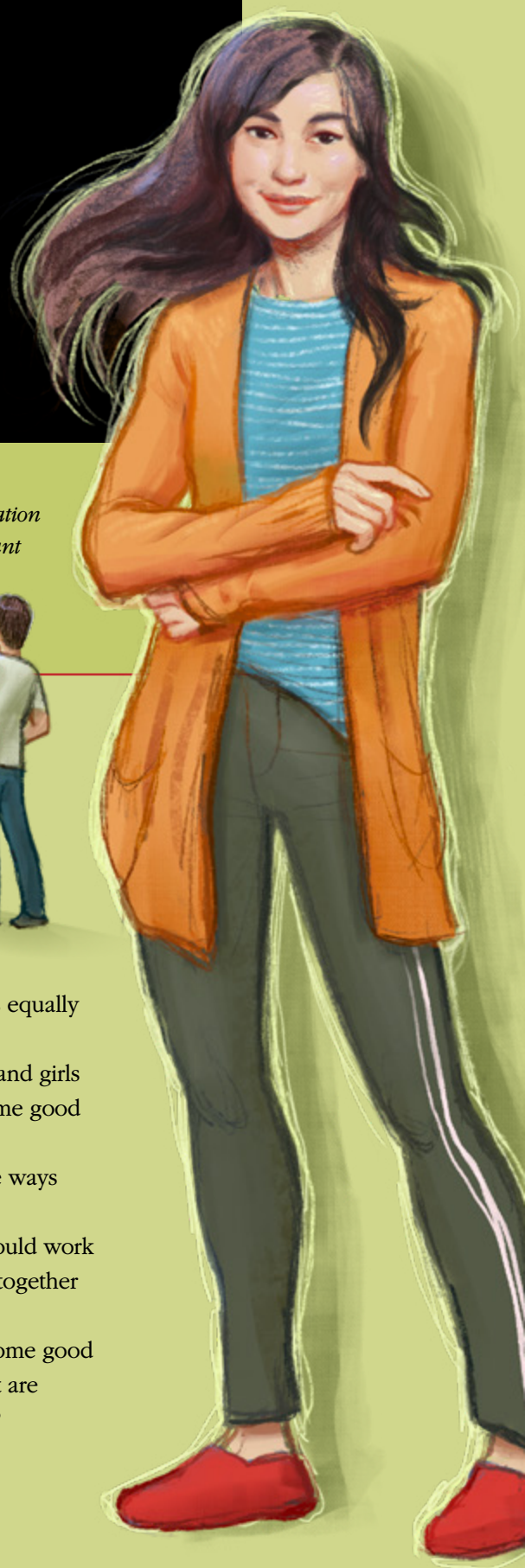
1. John Gill, *Exposition of the Whole Bible* (1746–63), studylight.org.
2. See James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (1984), "help" in main concordance, page 493; "ezer" (no. 5828) in Hebrew and Chaldee dictionary section, page 87.

# How Do I Talk to My Kids about the Importance of Both Women and Men?

*It was 25 years ago this month that a prophet of God shared “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” at a Churchwide General Relief Society Meeting. Here are some important truths we know from that proclamation.*

## 5 Truths to Talk About

- Each one of us is a child “of heavenly parents.” That truth reminds us that both women and men are an important part of the plan of happiness. How would the world be a better place if all men and women, girls and boys, respected each other as equally valuable and needed?
- Both women and men have a “divine destiny.” This means that both boys and girls have the chance to live in a perfect heavenly home someday. What are some good choices that will help you reach your divine destiny?
- Wives and husbands should “love and care for each other.” What are some ways you can practice loving and caring for others?
- Fathers and mothers may help their families in different ways, but they should work together “as equal partners.” When have you seen men and women work together on something important?
- Parents should raise their children “in love and righteousness.” What are some good things you’ve learned from a mother, grandmother, or other woman? What are some good things you’ve learned from a father, grandfather, or other man?





## 4 Activity Ideas

- Find different tools that work together to do something. For example, a knife and fork are very different, but both can help you eat a meal. Men and women are different, but they are both important. And when they work together,



- they can do amazing things.
- Color the pages in the *Friend* magazine this month that show the women and men who help lead the Church.

- Make a goal to help your family show more respect and kindness to both women and men.
- Think of someone who doesn't know that they are important and loved. How can you help them understand that they are a beloved child of heavenly parents? ■



### Additional Resources for Children and Youth

- "Bright Idea," *Friend*, Sept. 2020, 34.
- "Loving Our Families," *Friend*, Sept. 2020, 2.
- "My General Conference Notebook," *Friend*, Sept. 2020, 18.
- "Women Who Help Lead the Church," *Friend*, Sept. 2020, 17.
- "The Role of Families in God's Eternal Plan," *New Era*, Sept. 2020, 2.
- "Choosing to Be Part of Family Life," *New Era*, Sept. 2020, 20.



# The Divine Pattern of Eternal Marriage

“**M**arriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God” and “is essential to [God’s] eternal plan.”<sup>1</sup> This divinely designed pattern of marriage is neither an experiment nor a sociological innovation. Rather, it is a relationship “central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.”<sup>2</sup>

The Apostle Paul taught, “Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:11). Accordingly, husbands and wives are to “cleave” to each other: “Therefore shall a

man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). This commandment for husbands and wives to “cleave” to each other reflects an eternal reality: men and women complement and complete each other in unique ways that enable them individually and as a couple to fulfill their divine potential.

“Because of their distinctive temperaments and capacities, males and females each bring



**By Elder  
David A. Bednar**  
Of the Quorum  
of the Twelve  
Apostles

*As husbands and wives  
“lose” their lives in ful-  
filling the sacred duties  
of marriage and family,  
they find themselves—  
becoming true servants  
of God and disciples of  
Jesus Christ.*

to a marriage relationship unique perspectives and experiences. The man and the woman contribute differently but equally to a oneness and a unity that can be achieved in no other way. The man completes and perfects the woman and the woman completes and perfects the man as they learn from and mutually strengthen and bless each other.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, by divine design, men and women are intended to progress together toward redemption and enduring joy.

Rather than teaching people to pursue their own interests as the way to personal fulfillment, Jesus Christ taught, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 16:25). The

divine doctrine of eternal marriage is infused with ennobling and selflessly motivated duties and obligations. The covenant and responsibilities of marriage provide a sacred context within which we gradually turn from self-centeredness and selfishness to selflessness and service. In marriage, we live not exclusively for ourselves but also for our spouses and children and posterity.

“The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. . . . God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force . . . [and He] has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

“. . . The means by which mortal life is created [is] divinely appointed.”<sup>4</sup>



*In marriage, we live not  
exclusively for ourselves  
but also for our spouses  
and children and posterity.*

The sanctity of life is central and essential in God's eternal plan.

"Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity."<sup>5</sup> Husbands and wives "have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. . . . Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live."<sup>6</sup>

In fulfilling their marriage covenant, husbands and wives perform distinct but complementary roles. "A home with a loving and loyal husband and wife is the supreme setting in which children can be reared in love and righteousness and in which the spiritual and physical needs of children can be met. Just as the unique characteristics of both males and females contribute to

the completeness of a marriage relationship, so those same characteristics are vital to the rearing, nurturing, and teaching of children."<sup>7</sup>

As husbands and wives "lose" their lives in fulfilling these sacred duties of marriage and family, they find themselves—becoming true servants of God and disciples of Jesus Christ.

As President Henry B. Eyring, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, noted at the Vatican: "Where there is selfishness, natural differences of men and women often divide. Where there is unselfishness, differences become complementary and provide opportunities to help and build each other. Spouses

*Marriage as a holy order based on enduring covenants, duties, and lifelong sacrifice stands in stark contrast to a modern secular concept of marriage.*

and family members can lift each other and ascend together if they care more about the interests of the other than their own interests.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Sacred Sacrifice vs. Secular Selfishness**

This vision of marriage as a holy order based on enduring covenants, duties, and lifelong sacrifice stands in stark contrast to a modern secular concept of marriage. That worldly formulation has virtually nothing to do with losing your life in service to family or in self-sacrifice for spouse and children.

To the contrary, many in our society today are quickly turning to, as one expert termed it, “a purely private, contractual model of marriage, in which each party has equal and reciprocal rights and duties and in which two parties, of whatever gender or sexual orientation, have full freedom and privacy to form, maintain, and dissolve their relationship as they see fit.”<sup>9</sup>

This is no less than a full-fledged revolution, transforming marriage from “a social institution with binding claims of its own and with prescribed roles for men and women into a free

association, easily entered and easily broken, with a focus on the needs of individuals.”<sup>10</sup> This revolution is based on extreme conceptions of personal autonomy and individual rights that elevate one’s own will over God’s will, that opt for personal choice over personal responsibility, and that prioritize the desires of individuals over the needs of spouses and children.

This inordinate focus upon rights without a commensurate concern about obligations and responsibilities has produced the shrill and demanding entitlement we encounter so often in our contemporary world. People clamor constantly for their individual rights, believing that the highest good is unfettered freedom to pursue their narrow self-interests, while failing to understand that the most important reason for the protection of individual rights is to allow us to live dignified lives that are whole and rich with the duties of faith and family.

Increasingly obscured is the truth that our individual rights find their greatest expression and fulfillment as we, without compulsion, align our rights, our choices, and our responsibilities with the will of God. Voluntarily allowing covenant responsibilities to supersede



*The building of stable  
marriages and families  
is part of the hard work  
of a meaningful life.*

individual interests and rights is the only surrender that leads to victory.<sup>11</sup> We frequently need to be reminded about the principle we learned early in life and believed was indelibly established and understood by all good men and women: we receive more when we give than when we take.

Never has a global society placed so much emphasis on the fulfillment of romantic and sexual desires as the highest form of personal autonomy, freedom, and self-actualization. Society has elevated sexual fulfillment to an end in itself rather than as a means to a higher end. In this confusion, millions have lost the truth that God intended sexual desire to be a means to the divine ends of

marital unity, the procreation of children, and strong families, not a selfish end in itself.

We are losing the basic understanding that society has a unique and profound interest in marriage because of its power to form a male-female union that is the optimal setting for the bearing and rearing of children—ensuring to the greatest extent possible that every child has an opportunity to know and to be loved and cared for by the mother and father who brought him or her into the world.

No wonder, then, that marriage has become so fragile and transient. Influenced by this increasingly pervasive ideology of self-centeredness and selfishness, men and women too often pursue relationships and marriage focused on their own needs and desires rather than on building stable marital and family relationships. The compulsion to vindicate their freedom, rights, and autonomy overshadows a proper understanding of the enduring commitments, covenants, duties, and sacrifices necessary to build successful marriages and families and to bring lasting joy.

Given this trend, many in our culture could not long resist the call to redefine marriage from





*In marriage and family life,  
we learn and grow together  
as God intended.*

the union of man and woman to the union of any two people, regardless of gender. After all, if marriage is little more than a vehicle for advancing personal autonomy and individual rights—rather than a sacred and enduring union between man and woman centered on self-sacrifice and raising a family—then it becomes very hard to deny marriage—any type of marriage—to any couple or group of people that seek it.

Why, the argument goes, should we limit this efficient vehicle of personal rights and individual satisfaction to only a select few? If the ultimate aim is the highest form of self-satisfaction, why should not marriage be open to all in whatever form will most quickly and easily bring that result? Having lost the predicate upon which marriage has always been based, many find it difficult to dispute the conclusion.

But this skewed conception of marriage has serious personal and social consequences.

### **Personal and Social Consequences**

First, it inevitably cankers the souls of those who seek to employ it, leading to heartbreak and despair. There is no long-term joy to be found in selfishness; nor can it be found in exercising one's individual rights to their fullest extent in order to somehow find "freedom."

Freedom in marriage does not come from doing whatever one wants whenever one wants. Such a course only leads to wanting more and demanding more.

Conversely, peace and joy come from subjecting one's self in love to the needs of spouse and family, tempering one's individual needs and desires, and focusing instead on the needs and desires of others. An increasingly cynical and self-absorbed world sees this principle of selflessness as old school and paradoxical. But we know that it is paradisiacal.

Second, this skewed conception of marriage often leads to divorce as people bounce from one relationship to another, desperate to find something that is elusive because it does not exist: a relationship that will afford people ultimate freedom, ultimate self-fulfillment, and ultimate happiness—all without their having to give anything from within themselves. The relationship sought is no relationship at all because selfishness is by definition singular.

This view inevitably leaves in its wake traumatized children who needed the rich and committed soil of selfless and dedicated parents in which to sink their roots, abandoned

*In marriage and family,  
we can experience profound  
loyalty, pure love, and  
consummate joy.*

because a father or mother has determined that he or she just is not being “true to himself or herself” by remaining in a marriage that he or she selfishly perceives is no longer serving his or her own interests or orientation. Ironically—and tragically—the freedom and personal autonomy they seek will, in the end, leave them bound by chains of isolation, loneliness, and deep regret.

Third, and perhaps worst of all, increasing numbers of people are giving up on the very

idea of marriage, believing that relationships are inherently unstable and transitory, thereby avoiding in their view the unnecessary commitments of formal marriage and pain of the inevitable divorce. Millions of children are being born into situations where they cannot experience the true nature and purpose of marriage and stable family life. Those children find it doubly hard to enter into the divinely designed pattern of marriage because they have never seen an example of what such a marriage should be.

Thus, the vicious circle repeats itself, taking with it the innocent who would have thrived in the relationship marriage was always intended to be. And as the residual societal stability is eroded that was created in the strong marriages and families of previous generations, the prospects for our future grow ever more uncertain and even bleak.

We certainly recognize that all marriages are not perfect, any more than those who defend traditional marriage are perfect. Regrettably, some children and spouses who are in traditional marriages experience only disappointment and heartache. But these sad outcomes do not occur because the principles of



true marriage are in error; rather, failure occurs when we do not live up to those true principles and the serious marriage covenants into which we have entered.

One of the great tasks of our time—one on which diverse faith communities should be united—is to help people understand the true meaning and purpose of marriage. All people, especially the rising generation, need a vision of the richness of family life and its potential for developing the highest and best in each of us. In an age of increasing selfishness, we must highlight marriage's capacity to lift men and women beyond their narrow self-interests to the joys that come from dedicating one's life to a higher and holy purpose.

### Rich Blessings

In truth, the building of stable marriages and families is part of the hard work of a meaningful life. There are spouses and children who struggle, sorrows and disappointments, and illness and death. But marriage affords unique opportunities for some of the richest blessings of life, such as:

- Finding deep meaning in the complementary roles of husband and wife, father and mother, and experiencing the profound unity that can come only from marriage.
- Learning to sacrifice for a higher cause.
- Seeing our own faces in our newborn child, who embodies our shared love, faith, and hopes.
- Establishing family patterns and traditions that give meaning to the ordinary tasks of life.
- Cultivating faith in our children and watching it blossom and grow.
- Imparting our knowledge and wisdom to our children and then striving to be an example to them of the highest and best in life.
- Rejoicing with children who honor their parents and carry on their name, and weeping with those who struggle.
- Helping with grandchildren, as the ever-widening circle of life and family continues.

In marriage and family life, we learn and grow together as God intended. In our families we cannot hide from who we really are

as we strive to become who we are destined to become. In essence, a family is the mirror that helps us become aware of imperfections and flaws we may not be able or want to acknowledge. No one knows us better than a spouse and the other members of our family. Thus, the family is the ultimate mortal laboratory for the improving and perfecting of God's children.<sup>12</sup>

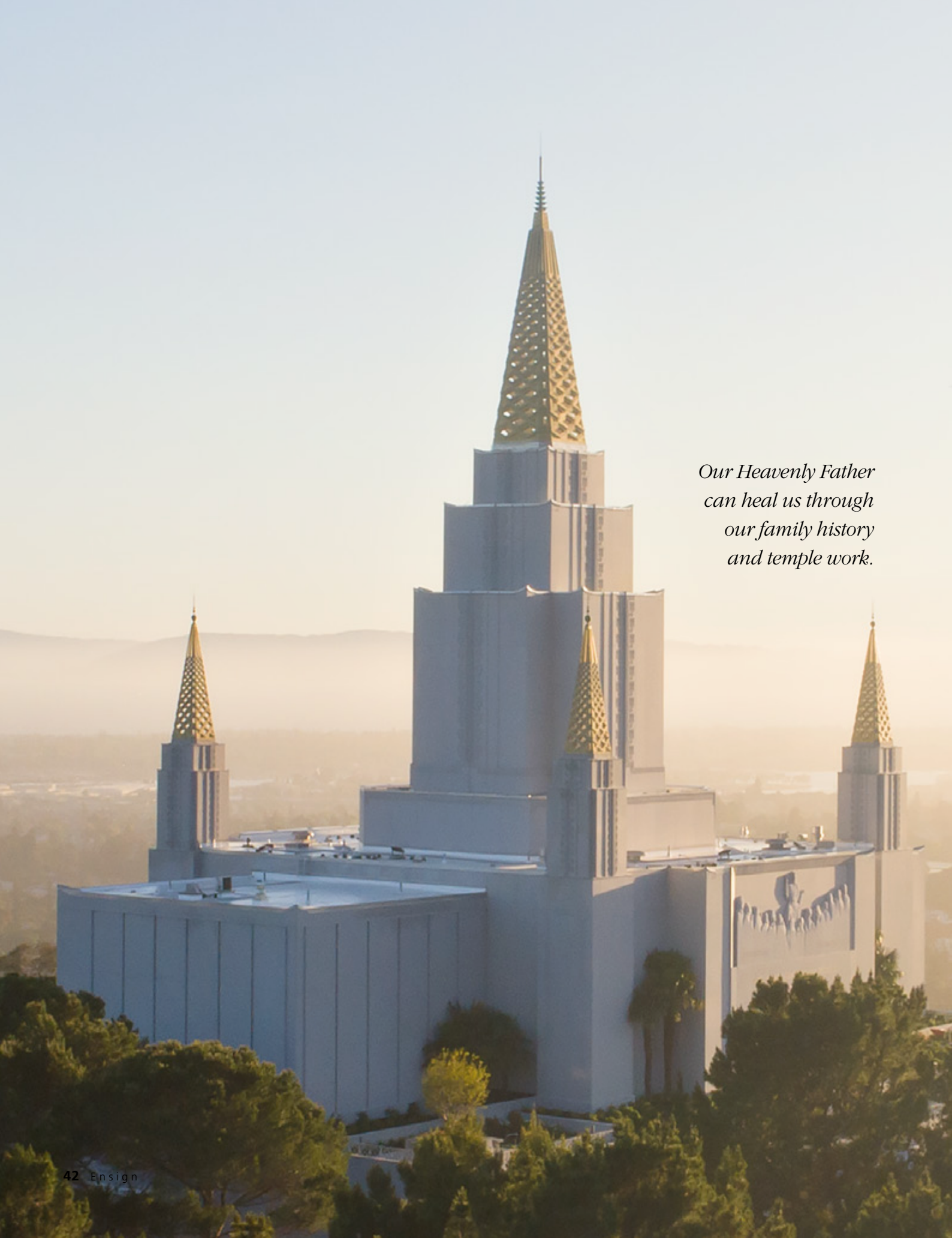
In marriage and family, we can experience profound loyalty, pure love, and consummate joy. We learn in a deeply personal way about God's love for each of us.

To paraphrase what Jesus Christ taught, as we lose ourselves in service to spouse and family, we find our true selves (see Matthew 16:25). Every day we become more of who He wants us to become. And that is the source of enduring joy and true self-fulfillment. ■

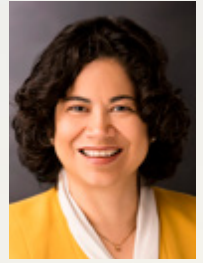
*From an address, "The Divinely Designed Pattern of Marriage," delivered at a colloquium on marriage in New York City, New York, USA, on March 9, 2017.*

### NOTES

1. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, May 2017, 145.
2. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," 145.
3. David A. Bednar, "Marriage Is Essential to His Eternal Plan," *Ensign*, June 2006, 83–84.
4. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," 145.
5. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," 145.
6. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," 145.
7. David A. Bednar, "Marriage Is Essential to His Eternal Plan," 84.
8. Henry B. Eyring, "Renaissance of Marriage: To Become as One" (address given at The Complementarity of Man and Woman: An International Interreligious Colloquium, Vatican City, Rome, Nov. 18, 2014), [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
9. John Witte Jr., "A New Concordance of Discordant Canons: Harold J. Berman on Law and Religion," in *The Integrative Jurisprudence of Harold J. Berman*, ed. Howard O. Hunter (1996), 127.
10. Allan W. Carlson, "The Judicial Assault on the Family," in *The Most Dangerous Branch: The Judicial Assault on American Culture*, ed. Edward B. McLean (2008), 62.
11. See Neal A. Maxwell, "Plow in Hope," *Ensign*, May 2001, 60.
12. See David A. Bednar, "Arise and Shine Forth" (Brigham Young University–Idaho Education Week devotional, June 28, 2003), [web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches](http://web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches).

A photograph of the Salt Lake Temple, a large, light-colored building with a tiered, stepped design. The central spire is the tallest and most prominent, topped with a golden, lattice-like structure. Two smaller spires are visible on either side. The building is set against a backdrop of a hazy, golden sky at sunset or sunrise, with distant mountains visible. The foreground is filled with lush green trees.

*Our Heavenly Father  
can heal us through  
our family history  
and temple work.*



**By Sister Reyna I. Aburto**

Second Counselor  
in the Relief  
Society General  
Presidency

# Miracles of *Healing through Temple Ordinances*

All children of God who are accountable for their decisions—regardless of the place, time, or circumstances in which they live or have lived—need to receive the opportunity to exercise faith in Jesus Christ, to repent, and to accept His gospel, on either side of the veil. Each of God’s children is in need of spiritual healing and as His disciples, we have been called to help make that possible.

Because of the Savior’s atoning sacrifice, saving temple ordinances allow us and our ancestors to be born again, to be changed to a state of righteousness, to be redeemed of God, and to become new creatures (see Mosiah 27:25–26).

President Russell M. Nelson taught: “The temple is the object of every activity, every lesson, every progressive step in the Church. All of our efforts in

proclaiming the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead lead to the holy temple. Ordinances of the temple are absolutely crucial. We cannot return to God's glory without them."<sup>1</sup>

When the scribes and Pharisees murmured against His disciples, Jesus Christ answered them: "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:31–32).

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, declared: "The Lord has provided many avenues by which we may receive [His] healing influence. . . . [He] has restored temple work to the earth. It is an important part of the work of salvation for both the living and the dead. Our temples provide a sanctuary where we may go to lay aside many of the anxieties of the world. Our temples are places of peace and tranquility. In these hallowed sanctuaries God 'healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds' (Ps. 147:3)."<sup>2</sup>

As we travel, we hear stories of miracles of healing that occur in holy temples everywhere. We hear of faithful members who come to the temple in buses and who spend all day and evening performing saving ordinances for their ancestors. We hear of dedicated youth attending the temple early in the morning before school to perform baptisms and confirmations for the dead and helping with different aspects of those sacred ordinances. We hear of groups of young women and young men taking public transportation after school one day each week to offer their ancestors the opportunity to be spiritually born again. We hear of families navigating



***My grandmother Isabel Blanco***

*"Our temples are places of peace and tranquility. In these hallowed sanctuaries God 'healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.'"*

in boats for hours to attend the temple in order to receive saving temple ordinances for themselves, so that through Jesus Christ's Atonement, they can be changed to a state of righteousness. We hear of individual members and families finding names of dear ancestors on the Sabbath and then taking those names to the temple to give those family members the opportunity to be redeemed by God. We hear of 11-year-old boys and girls who are eager to come to the temple and who have to stand on the last step of the baptismal font

because the water is too deep for them—all to give their ancestors the chance to become new creatures.

If we think about it, we all come to the temple to be spiritually healed and to give those on the other side of the veil the opportunity to be healed as well. When it comes to healing, we all need the Savior desperately. I will illustrate this with the story of two of my ancestors.

## Healing My Grandmother and Father

My grandmother Isabel Blanco was born in Potosí, Nicaragua. In my memories, she is a loving, hardworking, and faithful woman. As I was growing up, she planted in my young heart the seed of faith as I saw her pray to God with fervor and as she took me to mass every Sunday to worship Jesus. However, she did not have an easy life. Among many other things that she did, when she was young, she worked as a maid for an affluent family. As was sadly common, her employer got her pregnant and when she could no longer hide her pregnancy, she was dismissed.

My father, Noel, was born from that pregnancy, and although Potosí was a small town and everyone, including Noel, knew who his father was, Noel never had any direct contact or relationship with him.

Isabel never married, and she had two other children out of wedlock. After some time, she and her three children moved to the country's capital, Managua, looking for better employment and educational opportunities.



**My parents, Noel and Delbi Blanco**

*We all come to the temple to be spiritually healed and to give those on the other side of the veil the opportunity to be healed as well.*

Some years after his death, all the vicarious temple ordinances were performed in his behalf, except for one: the sealing ordinance. At the time, I did not dare ask my mother if she wanted to be sealed to him, because I knew how strained their relationship had been.

Then a miracle happened. My mother had a dream in which she saw her husband, Noel, outside the kitchen door in their home in Managua, extending his hand to her and inviting her to come with him. She woke up with a sweet feeling in her heart. Not too long after that, she called me one day and calmly said, "I am going to be sealed to your father this Saturday. You can come if you want."

I replied excitedly, "Of course, I want to be there!" After our phone conversation ended, I joyfully realized that I could also be sealed to them.

On a glorious Saturday morning, my mother, my husband, and I knelt at a sacred temple altar and performed the living and vicarious sealing ordinances that gave my parents and me the opportunity to be together forever. My son was also there as proxy for my brother, who had passed away years before. At that holy moment, all the pains and sorrows were forgotten. We all felt the soothing and healing balm that our Savior, Jesus Christ, offers us through His Atonement, on both sides of the veil.

Years later, I had a dream in which I saw my father at what seemed to be a pulpit in one of our meetinghouses. He was wearing a white shirt and a tie, and he was giving an inspiring message. In my dream, I could perceive that he was a seasoned leader of the Church. I do not know exactly what that dream means, but it gives me the hope that maybe he has accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ in the spirit world.

During his late teen years, Noel developed an addiction to alcohol. He eventually met and married my mother, Delbi, and they had four children. Through the years, his alcoholism took a toll on their marriage and after moving to San Francisco, California, USA, in their 50s, they separated. Unfortunately, he died by suicide a few years later.

My mother and I became members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints a few years before my father passed away.



*Because of the Savior's atoning sacrifice, saving temple ordinances allow us and our ancestors to be born again.*

At some point, we also performed the temple work for my grandmother, Isabel, except for the sealing to spouse ordinance because she was not married in her life. Just think about this, a woman like Isabel, who was not treated with respect by men and who dealt with many struggles in her life, can be given the opportunity on the other side of the veil to exercise her agency and make a sacred covenant with God through a vicarious ordinance in the

temple. She, like all of us, is in need of increased faith, in need of repentance, in need of love, in need of sanctification—in short, in need of healing.

Looking back now, I can see that even though Noel had a difficult childhood and a damaging addiction, his love for his children was stronger than his weaknesses. When he was with us, his best qualities would come out. He was always kind to us, and I cannot remember even one occasion in which he lost his temper with his children. Because God is merciful, Noel is also given the chance to exercise faith, to repent, and to accept Jesus Christ as his Redeemer through saving temple ordinances performed in the holy temple. Noel, like all of us, is also in need of healing.

These are just two examples of the eternal blessings of healing that are offered to individuals and families in all of the Lord's temples around the world. As taught by President Nelson, "We invite all of God's children on both sides of the veil to come unto their Savior, receive the blessings of the holy temple, have enduring joy, and qualify for eternal life."<sup>3</sup>

When I think about all that needed to happen for Isabel and Noel to receive that eternal gift, I realize that it is a miracle made possible by a loving Heavenly Father and a Savior who love us with perfect love and who have called each of us to help in God's work and glory.

Speaking of the gathering of Israel, President Nelson has said: "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. They decide for themselves if they want to know more." And then he explained: "*Anytime* you do *anything* that helps *anyone*—on either side of the veil—take a step toward making covenants with

God and receiving their essential baptismal and temple ordinances, you are helping to gather Israel. It is as simple as that.”<sup>4</sup>

I do not know if my granny Isabel, my daddy, Noel, and the rest of my ancestors for whom temple work has been performed have accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ in the spirit world. However, I can have hope, I can exercise faith, I can make and keep covenants with God, and I can live my life in a way that will allow me to be with my ancestors “in a state of happiness which hath no end” (Mormon 7:7).

And when I get to the other side of the veil, if they have not yet accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ, I will make sure to teach it to them! I can’t wait to give them a hug, to tell them how much I love them, to have heart-to-heart conversations that I never had with them when they were alive, and to testify to them “that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God.”<sup>5</sup>

## The Power to Heal

Sometimes, the natural man or woman in us makes us think that we have been called to “fix” other people. We have not been called to be “fixers” of others, and we have not been called to lecture or to scorn. We have been called to inspire, to lift, to invite others, to be fishers of people, fishers of souls so they receive the opportunity to be spiritually healed by Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer.

In Isaiah 61, we read the Lord’s words, which were also quoted by Him when He started His ministry in Jerusalem (see Luke 4:18–19). He declared:

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

“To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

“To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

“And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations” (Isaiah 61:1–4).

Elder Dale G. Renlund taught: “Family history and temple work [provide] the power to heal that which [needs] healing. . . . God, in His infinite capacity, seals and heals individuals and families despite tragedy, loss, and hardship.”<sup>6</sup>

President Nelson has taught that “the real power to heal . . . is a gift from God”<sup>7</sup> and also explained that the “resurrection is the Lord’s consummate act of healing. Thanks to Him, each body will be restored to its proper and perfect frame. Thanks to Him, no condition is hopeless. Thanks to Him, brighter days are ahead, both here and hereafter. Real joy awaits each of us—on the other side of sorrow.”<sup>8</sup>

I testify that our Heavenly Father loves each of us so much that He has provided “a way”<sup>9</sup> so that each of us can be physically and spiritually healed as we exercise faith in Jesus Christ, make and keep our covenants with God, and follow His commandments. I testify that Christ came to the earth “to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives” (Luke 4:18) so each of us can “become holy, without spot” (Moroni 10:33). ■

*From an address given to temple presidents and matrons on October 17, 2019.*

## NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Prepare for the Blessings of the Temple,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2010, 41.
2. James E. Faust, “Spiritual Healing,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 7.
3. Russell M. Nelson, “Let Us All Press On,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 118–19.
4. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), [HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
5. Title page of the Book of Mormon.
6. Dale G. Renlund, “Family History and Temple Work: Sealing and Healing,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 46, 48.
7. Russell M. Nelson, in Sheri Dew, *Insights from a Prophet’s Life: Russell M. Nelson* (2019), 150.
8. Russell M. Nelson, “Jesus Christ—the Master Healer,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 87–88.
9. See Isaiah 42:16; 51:10; 1 Nephi 3:7; 9:6; 17:41; 22:20; 2 Nephi 8:10; 9:10; Ether 12:8; Doctrine and Covenants 132:50.



## 8 NEW TEMPLES ANNOUNCED

Bahía Blanca, Argentina  
 Tallahassee, Florida, USA  
 Lubumbashi, Democratic  
 Republic of the Congo  
 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania,  
 USA  
 Benin City, Nigeria  
 Syracuse, Utah, USA  
 Dubai, United Arab  
 Emirates  
 Shanghai, People's  
 Republic of China

"We do not come to the temple to hide from or escape the evils of the world. **Rather, we come to the temple to conquer the world of evil.**"

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Let This House Be Built unto My Name," 86; emphasis added.

## HOW DO WE "HEAR HIM"?

How do you summarize a worldwide conference with more than 25 talks? In his concluding address, President Russell M. Nelson did it with "two divinely decreed words: 'Hear Him.' . . . We pray that you will begin anew *truly* to hear, hearken to, and heed the words of the Savior" ("Go Forward in Faith," 114).

Watch or read his talk as well the talks by these speakers as you continually strive to invite and recognize revelation.

- Elder Neil L. Andersen said: "We can 'hear Him' because of the blessing of the Savior's incomparable Atonement. . . . Faith, obedience, humility, and real intent open the windows of heaven" ("Spiritually Defining Memories," 21).
- Elder Quentin L. Cook reminded us that "personal revelation is available to all those who humbly seek guidance from the Lord," and he shared three principles to better help us prepare for revelation (see "The Blessing of Continuing Revelation to Prophets and Personal Revelation to Guide Our Lives," 98–99).
- Elder Ricardo P. Giménez said, "Although many people indeed believe *in* Jesus Christ, the key question is whether we *believe* Him and whether we *believe* the things that He teaches us and asks us to do" ("Finding Refuge from the Storms of Life," 102).

## I WANT TO BE A PART OF THIS!

**By Lauren Soqui Bohman**

Living in Oman, my husband and I rushed to get our kids to bed so we could watch the morning session of conference on the other side of the world. We had been counting down the days until conference, yearning for that guidance and peace we knew would come from Heavenly Father through His prophets and disciples.

Sister Joy D. Jones told us the Lord loves effort, so how much effort am I willing to exert to follow His example?

President Henry B. Eyring asked what role we will play in this hinge point in history.

Sister Bonnie H. Cordon and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland asked us to consider how we will purposely shine our light.

I felt how much I want to be part of the goodness that the Lord is rapidly moving forward. Conference inspired me to renew my efforts to help my children with their personal development, to seek to be a more thoughtful and spiritually authentic friend, to perform family history tasks like data entry, and to look for creative new opportunities to serve God by serving His children.

All page numbers come from the May 2020 *Ensign*, available online at [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).



“We can help. We can intentionally shine our light so others may see. We can extend an invitation. We can walk the journey with those who are taking a step toward the Savior, no matter how halting. We can gather Israel.”

**Bonnie H. Cordon, Young Women General President, “That They May See,” 80.**

## PONDER THIS . . .

### Women’s and Men’s Gifts

We may be surrounded by cultural bias and “me-first” messages, but Sister Jean B. Bingham taught that men and women must be ready to follow the divine pattern of working together in unity:

“Women do possess distinctive, divine gifts and are given unique responsibilities, but those are not more—or less—important than men’s gifts and responsibilities. All are designed and needed to bring about Heavenly Father’s divine plan to give each of His children the best opportunity to fulfill his or her divine potential” (see “United in Accomplishing God’s Work,” 63).

Are we ready to value each other as essential partners in the work of salvation?



# THE BOOK OF MORMON AND THE Descent of Dissent

*The Book of Mormon shows how dissension and contention start, as well as how to create unity in Christ's Church.*

**By Daniel C. Peterson**

Professor of Islamic Studies and Arabic, Brigham Young University

**T**he Restoration began when the Father and the Son appeared to Joseph Smith, dispelling the “darkness and confusion” that had engulfed him during a “division amongst the people,” a “war of words and tumult of opinions” (see Joseph Smith—History 1:5–20).

The revelation of the Book of Mormon followed.

The Book of Mormon testifies “that Jesus is the Christ” (title page). But it also offers case studies in how dissension arises and how it damages the Church and individuals. It was written “unto the confounding of false doctrines and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace” (2 Nephi 3:12).

It doesn’t merely describe the foibles and foolishness of previous generations. It is for our day. We can, therefore, read it as a commentary on our time, a guide and a warning to us.

In many ways, the Book of Mormon is a guidebook on how to unify God’s people in the faith, as well as how contention and dissension creep into the Church.

## **Dissenters: Their Motives and Methods**

Nephite prophets repeatedly condemn contention, strife, and dissension.<sup>1</sup> Satan, says Mormon, created contention to “harden the hearts of the people against that which was good and against that which should come” (Helaman 16:22). Here are some examples of this principle from the Book of Mormon.

### ***Laman and Lemuel***

The division between the Nephites and the Lamanites began with Laman and Lemuel. They were bitter at abandoning their wealth and comfort in Jerusalem, unworthy of succeeding their prophet-father, and unqualified to lead. They were also resentful of their righteous younger brother Nephi.



### ***Sherem***

Shortly after the rift between Nephites and Lamanites, the Nephite anti-Christ Sherem seems to have been devoted to a conventional view of the law of Moses, denouncing belief in a coming Christ as “blasphemy” (Jacob 7:7). “And he was learned, that he had a perfect knowledge of the language of the people; wherefore, he could use much flattery, and much power of speech, according to the power of the devil” (Jacob 7:4).

### ***Nehor***

Nehor, too, flattered his audience, appealing to their self-interest. He said that priests and teachers should be supported financially by the people, “that all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice” (see Alma 1:3–4). Those who followed him “loved the vain things of the world” (Alma 1:16).

### ***Korihor***

Korihor was also eloquent (see Alma 30:31). And, like Sherem, he denied the hope of Christ’s coming (see Alma 30:6, 12). But he was an atheist, or at least an agnostic (see Alma 30:37–38). He insisted that God and the future could not be known (see Alma 30:15, 24, 26, 28, 48), dismissing the teachings of the prophets as “silly” and “foolish” (Alma 30:13–14, 23, 27, 31). Believers, he said (sounding very modern), suffered from “frenzied” minds and “derangement” (Alma 30:16).

But he directed his harshest criticisms at the prophets, priests, and teachers of the Church, saying they taught “foolish traditions” so they could “keep [the people] down” and “glut [themselves]” (Alma 30:27).

Korihor’s denial of God also led him to deny moral values and accountability, as well as life after death and the need for an Atonement. For him, life was simply a matter of the survival of the fittest. (See Alma 30:16–17.) It isn’t difficult to see why some were attracted to his teaching (see Alma 30:18).

### *Amalickiah*

The Nephite traitor Amalickiah seems to have had no religious motivations at all. “Amalickiah was desirous to be a king,” the record bluntly remarks. And those who supported him “were seeking for power,” and he promised to “make them rulers over the people” (Alma 46:4–5).

He also used “many flattering words” (Alma 46:10), and, in fact, his ability to appeal to people’s desires was key to his success (see Alma 46:5, 7).

### *The King-Men*

Later, political disagreements so angered some Nephites that they sought to remove Pahoran, the chief judge, from office and restore a monarchy. They “were those of high birth, and they sought to be kings” (Alma 51:8).

But these “king-men” failed to gain popular support and, in their frustration, refused to defend their country against Lamanite aggression (see Alma 51:2–21). So the Nephite military commander Moroni had to resort to force to “pull down their pride and their nobility” (Alma 51:18).

### *Gadianton Robbers*

Following Pahoran’s death, his sons vied to succeed him. One who was not elected, Paanchi, attempted to flatter his supporters into an uprising (see Helaman 1:7). And when he was executed for treason, those supporters formed the core of the infamous Gadianton robbers.

Gadianton, their leader, was “exceedingly expert in many words” and “did flatter [his followers] . . . that if they would place him in the judgment-seat he would grant unto those who belonged to his band that they should be placed in power and authority among the people” (see Helaman 2:4–5).

### **Lessons for Today**

Here are some of the things we can learn from the dissent and contention in the Book of Mormon:

- **Dissenters harm themselves.** This is the lesson, first and foremost, the Book of Mormon gives us about dissension (see 3 Nephi 3:11).
- **Dissension hinders the growth of the Church and fosters unbelief** (see Mosiah 26:5; 27:9; Alma 1:21–25; 4:6–9). Repeatedly, contention and dissension exposed the Nephites to jeopardy from external threats (see Alma 53:8–9; 60:14–16; 3 Nephi 2:18). Mormon specifically cites them as a cause of their destruction (see Alma 51:16; Helaman 2:13).
- **Contention reflects spiritual error.** It is often a sign of pride and denying the Holy Ghost (see 2 Nephi 28:4; 26:20–21). Significantly, there was no contention immediately after the coming of Christ to the Americas, when all were truly converted (see 4 Nephi 1:2, 13, 15–18).
- **Dissenters can often be articulate and persuasive.** Many accounts mention their power of flattery or expertness in using words.
- **Contention often reflects greed, self-interest, and political ambition.**<sup>2</sup> It’s linked with envy, strife, malice, and, especially, pride (see Alma 4:6–10; 16:18; Helaman 13:22; 3 Nephi 21:19; 30:2; Mormon 8:36–37).
- **Dissenters are often deceived or deceivers.** Even if dissenters feel justified, the Book of Mormon portrays them as either deceived or deceivers.<sup>3</sup> Although Gadianton’s followers said (and may even have believed) that their principles were “good” and “of ancient date” (3 Nephi 3:9), Nephite writers call them “Gadianton’s robbers and murderers” (Helaman 6:18) and identify Satan as their founder (see Helaman 6:26–30; Ether 8:13–26; see also Moses 5:29–31).
- **Dissenters can become the fiercest enemies of the Church and the gospel.** Those who bear grudges or seek to gratify pride, greed, or ambition can become imbued with the spirit of contention and work aggressively against the Church and its teachings (see Alma 24:30).<sup>4</sup>



## How to Be One

“Be one,” the Lord said early in our dispensation, “and if ye are not one ye are not mine” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:27).

The Book of Mormon demonstrates that we can still fall into factions if we ignore or rebel against the prophets. But one reason the gospel was restored was to end contention and lead us to unity in the faith (see Ephesians 4:11–15). So the Book of Mormon also gives us guidelines for achieving that unity. For instance, we should:

- Center our lives on Jesus Christ and His gospel.
- Follow God’s prophets.
- Humbly stand up for truth without engendering a spirit of contention.
- Be humble and esteem our neighbor as ourselves (see Mosiah 27:4).
- Strive to avoid contention (see 3 Nephi 11:29) and “look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having [our] hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another” (Mosiah 18:21).

Following these and other Book of Mormon teachings will help members of the Lord’s Church to be one and to therefore be His. ■

## NOTES

1. See 2 Nephi 26:32; Mosiah 2:14–15, 32; 18:21; Alma 16:18; 3 Nephi 11:22, 28–30; 18:34; Moroni 8:4–5.
2. Consider, for example, King Laman’s deliberate provoking of strife for self-serving ends (see Mosiah 9:13) or Amlici’s rebellion (see Alma 2–3). It’s striking that both *Korihor* and *Coriantumr* (the military leader who was “a descendant of Zarahemla” and “a dissenter from among the Nephites” [Helaman 1:15]) are Jaredite names, suggesting that their families may have been ethnic non-Nephites who had not been fully converted or reconciled to Nephite rule (see Ether 7:3–5; 8:4–6; Omni 1:21; Ether 12–15).
3. To some degree, at least, Sherem (see Jacob 7:18–19) and Korihor (see Alma 30:52–53) were deceived. Amalickiah was simply a cynical deceiver.
4. Compare Alma 47:36; 48:24. Of course, repentance and forgiveness are always possible (see Helaman 5:35–41 and the account of Zeezrom in Alma 10–15).

## DISCOVER MORE

See the 2020 *Ensign* articles about Sherem (April), Nehor (April, digital only), and Korihor (July).



## Helaman 13–16

AUGUST 31–SEPTEMBER 6

# How can I sustain the prophet?

**S**amuel the Lamanite

was a prophet who preached to the Nephites. Many rejected him, but a few listened and believed his inspired teachings. During general conference and at other times, we have the chance to listen to and sustain President Russell M. Nelson, the prophet in our day.

As you read about Samuel the Lamanite, consider the ways you can sustain the prophet today in both word and deed.

### NOTE

1. Russell M. Nelson, “The Love and Laws of God” (Brigham Young University devotional, Sept. 17, 2019), 3, speeches.byu.edu.

### Instructions for Our Time

The Nephites had become wicked, so Samuel invited them to repent. He also testified of Jesus Christ’s birth and warned of the dangers of sin (see Helaman 14:11–12). What other principles did Samuel teach? What has President Nelson taught in our day?

### It’s Not about Popularity

Angry with Samuel’s teachings, the people attacked him with stones and arrows. Samuel said that they were only willing to follow those who said there was no consequences for sin (see Helaman 13:25–27).

In our day, President Nelson has said, “Prophets are rarely popular.”<sup>1</sup> How can we avoid using the “stones” and “arrows” people cast at prophets today?

### Will You Listen?

Some accepted Samuel’s message, repented, and were baptized. What can you do to not only hear but also act on the teachings of our latter-day prophets and apostles?





## 3 Nephi 1–7

SEPTEMBER 7–13

**T**he Nephites marveled at the fulfillment of Samuel the Lamanite's prophecy of Christ's birth when they saw a night and a day with no darkness (see 3 Nephi 1:15–21). Unfortunately, a few years later, "the people began to forget those signs and wonders" (3 Nephi 2:1) and turned to wickedness.

### DISCUSSION

What other ways can we avoid forgetting the "unforgettable" spiritual experiences in our lives?

What spiritual experiences have you had? Consider writing them down. You could also share them with your family.

### NOTE

1. Ronald A. Rasband, "Lest Thou Forget," *Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 114.

# How can we keep from forgetting spiritual experiences?

## How Did the Nephites Forget So Quickly?

There are several reasons the Nephites forgot the signs and wonders they had witnessed. Read 3 Nephi 1:22 and 3 Nephi 2:1–3, 10 and list the ways people forgot the Lord.

How does Satan use these same ways to deceive us today?



## How Do We Not Forget?

Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said: "Recall, especially in times of crisis, when you felt the Spirit and your testimony was strong; remember the spiritual foundations you have built. I promise that if you will do this, . . . those precious times when your testimony prospered will return again to your memory through humble prayer and fasting. I assure you that you will once again feel the safety and warmth of the gospel of Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup>

What can you do to better remember the past spiritual experiences you have had?





## 3 Nephi 8–11

SEPTEMBER 14–20

**J**ust before the Savior's ministry among the Nephites following His Resurrection, the Nephites heard Heavenly Father's voice introducing Jesus Christ as "my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (3 Nephi 11:7). The Nephites' experience can teach us a lot about how we can hear God's voice through the Holy Ghost in our own lives.

### DISCUSSION

By paying closer attention and desiring to understand, the Nephites finally heard Heavenly Father introduce His Son to them.

How can you better focus on seeking spiritual guidance in your life?

# How can we hear God's voice?



### Go to the Temple

The Nephites had gathered around the temple in the land Bountiful (see 3 Nephi 11:1). Being in that sacred place provided them an opportunity to hear God's voice.

How can we prepare to attend the temple and hear God's voice through the Spirit?



### Feel the Power

At first, the Nephites heard a "small voice" but "understood not the voice" (3 Nephi 11:3). This voice "did pierce them that did hear to the center" (3 Nephi 11:3).

How can we feel the power of the "still small voice" of the Spirit? (see 1 Kings 19:11–12).



### Open Your Ears

After the Nephites heard the voice a third time, they "open[ed] their ears to hear it" (3 Nephi 11:5). They humbled themselves and were willing to listen.

How can we humble ourselves to hear the voice of God through the Spirit?



### Turn toward the Source

Once the Nephites opened their ears, they "look[ed] steadfastly towards heaven, from whence the sound came" and "did understand the voice which they heard" (3 Nephi 11:5–6).





## 3 Nephi 12–16

SEPTEMBER 21–27

**U**nder the law of Moses, meat needed to be salted before it was used as an offering (see Leviticus 2:13). Just as salt prepared meat for an offering, we can help prepare the world for the Lord by becoming “the salt of the earth” (3 Nephi 12:13).

“As the ‘salt of the earth,’ we are also the ‘light of the world,’ and our light must not be hidden (see Matthew 5:13–16).”

President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “Repentance and Change,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 40.

### **Lose its savor:**

We are to be a “light unto the world” and help others come to Christ. If we neglect to do so, we may become “as salt that has lost its savor” (Doctrine and Covenants 103:9–10).


### **DISCUSSION**

How can I better honor my covenants with God? How can I be “the salt of the earth” and bless those around me?

# How can I be the salt of the earth?

### **Salt of the earth:**

When we make covenants with Jesus Christ, we promise to prepare the world for His Second Coming (see Doctrine and Covenants 34:5–7).



“I give unto you to be the **salt of the earth**; but if the salt shall **lose its savor** wherewith shall the earth be salted? The salt shall be thenceforth **good for nothing**, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men” (3 Nephi 12:13; emphasis added).

### **Good for nothing:**

Salt that loses its savor becomes good for nothing. We are the salt of the earth when we “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in” (Mosiah 18:9).

# fun Family Study

Consider these activities during family scripture study or home evening.



## Go Forth!

**Helaman 13–16 (August 31–September 6)**

Read Helaman 16:1–3 together. Those who believed Samuel “went forth” to do what he taught. Talk about how we should follow our Church leaders today.

- 1 Invite each family member to find a quote from general conference. (Perhaps browse “Inspirational Picture Quotes” at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/media-library/images](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org/media-library/images).)
- 2 Take turns standing on a chair or stool, like Samuel on the wall, and reading these quotes to the group.
- 3 After each quote, talk about what your family can do to “go forth” and do what was taught.

**Discussion:** What could we do to get ready for general conference next month? What would help us listen to and act on the teachings of our Church leaders?



## Remembering Jar

**3 Nephi 1–7 (September 7–13)**

Read 3 Nephi 2:1–3 together and talk about how some people “began to forget those signs and wonders which they had heard.” Then play an activity to help your family remember God all week.

- 1 Label a jar “God loves me.”
- 2 Give each family member a small piece of paper and ask them to write down a blessing God has given them. Put the papers in the jar.
- 3 Encourage family members to add more papers to the jar as they notice blessings during the week.
- 4 At the end of the week, pick a handful of papers to read out loud and talk about.

**Discussion:** Why do you think the adversary wants us to forget the spiritual “wonders” we notice in our lives? How can we remember God every day?

## FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

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



### Opening Our Ears

#### 3 Nephi 8–11 (September 14–20)

Read 3 Nephi 11:3–7 together. Before Jesus Christ appeared to the people in Bountiful, they had to “open their ears” to the words of God.

- 1 Invite everyone to turn to each other and talk about their day.
- 2 Meanwhile, have someone softly read 3 Nephi 11:7. Then ask the group if they can repeat what was said.
- 3 Read the scripture again, this time with everyone listening quietly. Now repeat the verse together.

**Discussion:** Why was it easier to remember the verse the second time? How can we eliminate distractions and “open our ears” to the Spirit this week?



### True Treasure

#### 3 Nephi 12–16 (September 21–27)

Read 3 Nephi 13:19–21 together and talk about what it means to focus on heavenly treasure.

- 1 Decorate or label a box as a “treasure chest.” Invite each family member to put a gospel item inside (Book of Mormon, picture of ancestor, temple recommend, etc.).
- 2 Tell everyone to close their eyes while one person hides the treasure chest nearby. Then everyone should try to find it.
- 3 When someone finds the treasure, they should take their item out of the box and share why it is special to them.
- 4 Take turns hiding and sharing until all the treasure is gone.

**Discussion:** Why is spiritual treasure more valuable than earthly treasure? What can our family do to focus on spiritual instead of earthly treasure this week?

*From ideas contributed by Joan Saunders Orchard, Mitzi Schoneman, Brenda Slade, and Lisa Thomas*



**WHEN FAITH  
IS INVOLVED,  
FINANCIAL  
DECISIONS  
BECOME  
MUCH MORE  
MANAGEABLE.**

# BUILDING A DEBT-FREE FUTURE

By Bryan Sudweeks and E. Jeffrey Hill

Marriott School of Business and School of Family Life,  
Brigham Young University

As confidence in the world economy is shaken, there is one truth we know we can trust: that the Lord wants to help us. We grow closer to Him as we seek His help with any problems, including financial ones. Here we share four gospel-based principles for avoiding or getting out of debt. We have confidence that if you prayerfully consider these principles, the Lord will help guide you toward a firmer financial future.

## 1. Ponder where your choices will lead before you make a financial decision.

President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, said: “We make better choices and decisions if we look at the alternatives and ponder where they will lead. As we do, we will be following President Russell M. Nelson’s counsel to begin with the end in mind.”<sup>1</sup>

Before accepting any debt, ask yourself, “Am I borrowing for a *need* or a *want*?” And

carefully consider interest rates and the potential for financial bondage. It’s usually better to save and sacrifice for what you need rather than borrow and pay interest. If your choices lead you closer to your Savior, including obeying His commandments to get and stay out of debt, you are moving in the right direction.

## 2. Learn from your challenges.

The Lord said, “I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them” (Ether 12:27). Weakness, which can cause us to make a financial mistake, is given to help us humble ourselves and have faith and trust in Christ. As you deal with debt challenges, ask, “What is the Lord trying to teach me from my problems?” As you humble yourself, strengthen your faith in Christ, and ask prayerfully, you will find great insights, direction, and motivation. Moreover, you can find the peace that comes from



following this principle: “If ye are prepared ye shall not fear” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:30).

### 3. Focus on principles and truths relating to debt.

Understanding the principles of debt includes knowing yourself, your vision, and your goals. It includes seeking, receiving, and acting on the Spirit’s guidance. The Spirit can teach us all things, including how to be better at handling our finances.

Understanding the key areas of debt also includes heeding your leaders’ counsel to get and stay out of debt and the scriptural commandment to “pay thy debt, and live” (2 Kings 4:7). It includes setting goals and paying as you go. And if you’re already in debt, it includes prioritizing your goals, developing a repayment plan, and following through until the debt is gone.

Focusing on eternal truths and keeping the commandments is critical. This includes knowing your true identity—a child of God (see Psalm 82:6) who can do hard things. Attend Church meetings, and strive to put the Lord first.

One of the most powerful principles we can focus on is that of tithing, which prophets have said will invite blessings. As President Oaks once taught, “Tithing is a commandment with a promise.” The Lord will bless, both temporally and spiritually, those who faithfully pay a full tithe. And, President Oaks said, the Lord will bless their nations as well.<sup>2</sup>

Being a good caretaker over all that God has given you (see 2 Nephi 9:51) and having gratitude will also be helpful. And finally,

accountability is especially important, meaning that you hold yourself accountable not only for your words, thoughts, and actions but also for every dollar that goes through your hands (see Doctrine and Covenants 72:3).

Work on strengthening your understanding of these important principles and truths, and they will give you the spiritual power, protection, and direction promised by Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “The answers always are in the doctrines and principles! And the doctrines and principles need to be in us!”<sup>3</sup>

### 4. Understand the keys to tackle debt effectively.

- *Build and maintain your emergency fund.* Keep three to six months’ worth of income in an emergency fund. When you have an emergency fund, it changes emergencies into inconveniences. If you have a sudden emergency surgery, for example, you can pay off your medical bills quickly instead of making payments

for months. Once you use these emergency funds, replenish them as soon as possible for future emergencies.

- *Be wise in your use of debt.* President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, taught, “Over the years the wise counsel of our leaders has been to avoid debt except for the purchase of a home or to pay for an education.”<sup>4</sup> Try to borrow only for your home and education, as advised by the prophets. The less you borrow, the less you need to pay back. Be wise in your use of any debt, and keep your payback amounts in perspective.
- *Keep interest rates low and terms short.* If you must borrow, borrow at interest rates as low as possible and keep the terms as short as possible. Avoid high-interest consumer and credit card loans.
- *Pay off debt quickly.* If in debt, reduce your standard of living until you are out of all debt (except perhaps your home mortgage). Budget and cut your expenses to the minimum amount possible, and pay off your debt quickly.
- *As you pay down debt, continue long-term investments.* Though becoming debt free is a priority, it is often wise to continue to contribute to long-term investments (for example, retirement funds, especially when they are matched by your employer) while paying off debts.

### Faith in the Lord's Help

The Lord reminded the Prophet Joseph Smith, “And inasmuch as you are diligent and humble, and exercise the prayer of faith, behold, I will soften the hearts of those to whom you are in debt, until I shall send means unto you for your deliverance” (Doctrine and Covenants 104:80).

As this scripture teaches, our financial challenges can help us develop more diligence, humility, prayer, and greater faith in Jesus Christ. He can calm our troubled hearts and guide our daily decisions. Staying close to Him will help us eventually weather whatever economic storms currently surround us. ■

#### NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks, “Where Will This Lead?” *Ensign*, May 2019, 62.
2. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Tithing,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 34.
3. David A. Bednar, *Increase in Learning* (2011), 170.
4. James E. Faust, “Doing the Best Things in the Worst Times,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1984, 43.
5. Thomas S. Monson, “Constant Truths for Changing Times,” *Ensign*, May 2005, 20.



### Words of Financial Wisdom

“Avoid the philosophy and excuse that yesterday’s luxuries have become today’s necessities. They aren’t necessities unless we ourselves make them such. . . . It is essential for us to live within our means.”<sup>5</sup> —President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018)

### DISCOVER MORE

Find additional financial resources at the Church’s Provident Living website ([providentliving.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://providentliving.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)) and at the BYU Personal Finance website ([personalfinance.byu.edu](http://personalfinance.byu.edu)). To explore what Church leaders have said on the subject, go to [gc.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://gc.ChurchofJesusChrist.org), and under the “Topic” menu, select “financial management.”



# Inspiration and *Come, Follow Me*

Saimar Karina Romay De Rojas, Guayas Province, Ecuador

*While preparing a lesson for the young women,  
I decided to try something new.*

I flipped through the pages of the Young Women lesson I was going to give the following Sunday. The General Authority quotes it included were important and applicable, but they were old.

For example, President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) was President of the Church when I was baptized. I valued his words, which filled the manual, but I worried that the young women wouldn’t connect to the words of leaders they didn’t know.

I prayed for guidance and felt prompted to try something new. I updated some of the stories and included quotes from the most recent general conference, quoting President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018). The results were overwhelming. We had a special lesson with a lot of participation. From then on, I used the lesson manual as a guide to prepare my lessons.

Such preparation took extra work. I had to study more, I had to get to know the young women better, and I had to think about the experiences they were having. Then I would look for examples and words from living Church leaders I could use to relate to their lives. I was happy to go the extra

mile for the young women because of my love for them.

My leaders eventually noticed what I was doing. I feared they might reprimand me for being rebellious, but they encouraged me to continue.

A few weeks before the end of 2012, youth leaders in our stake were asked to attend a training meeting where stake leaders introduced a new curriculum for youth called *Come, Follow Me*.

I could hardly believe what I heard. Stake leaders explained that we should teach as the Lord taught, seek inspiration for our lessons from living prophets and apostles, and get to know our youth better. I already had a testimony of those things.

Others asked questions about how to prepare lessons, but for me, the new approach was crystal clear. I felt that *Come, Follow Me* was an answer from the Lord that I was not being rebellious. I felt that He had been preparing me to teach this new curriculum. I know that if we are humble and diligent and listen to the Holy Ghost, we will be in harmony with all the changes announced by our prophets and apostles. ■

# An Unsent Answered Letter

Elisabeth Allen, Utah, USA

*I noticed the letter in my scripture bag and opened it. I am so glad I did not mail it!*

**M**y wonderful parents welcomed four sons and me, their only daughter, into their home in close succession. We have always been close to each other's hearts even more than we are in age. We have supported each other and had many precious memories of time spent together. We have always been such good friends!

That is why I felt so broken when one of my brothers ended his life. I worried my heart would not be able to survive the pain—*pain* is not really the right word. There is no word strong enough to convey the awful experience of losing a loved one to suicide. It turns your world upside down.

I relied on the Lord to help me care for my family and meet my other commitments while I dealt with soul-distressing questions about my brother and his death.

When I asked the Lord for help, I felt prompted to write my questions to the prophet in a letter. I truly believed that my questions were so big and deep that only a prophet could answer them, but I knew it

probably wasn't necessary to send the prophet a letter. I hesitated but then recalled the success I've had acting on past promptings.

I went ahead and wrote a tearful letter to President Russell M. Nelson. I wrote about how I felt and how I could move forward if I just knew the answers to the questions swirling in my mind. I concluded my letter, put it in an envelope addressed to President Nelson, and tucked it into my scripture bag.

I forgot about the letter. I noticed it in my scripture bag some time later and opened it. As I read through the letter, I realized that through faith and my own scripture study, prayer, temple attendance, and patience, the Holy Ghost had led me to the answers to every single question I had written down! I felt close to the Savior and His love.

I am so glad I did not mail the letter! Instead, I gained

important experiences that taught me again that the Lord cherishes me and all His children individually, and that He will guide and direct us.

I once believed that my questions were so complex that only a prophet could answer them, but I have come to know for myself the truth of the Savior's words: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:18). ■



# My Brother's Recovery and Heavenly Father's Love

Makarena Molina, Viña del Mar, Chile

*After my brother's accident, I came to know that I have a Father who loves me.*

**M**y brother, Yerko, was 19 when he was hit by a drunk driver. Fortunately, Yerko's friend had taken a first aid course two weeks before. He kept my brother alive until emergency crews could take him to the hospital.

Most local hospitals have only one neurologist on duty, but when Yerko arrived, a group of neurologists had gathered for a special conference. They all immediately attended to him.

Yerko spent six months in the hospital, three of those months in a coma. While he was there, my mother stayed with him from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. every day. Ward and stake members prayed and fasted for Yerko and gave him priesthood blessings. Our prayers were

answered on January 1, 2011, when he woke up. Members continued to visit Yerko and helped us care for him while he recovered in the hospital. They were like ministering angels during this difficult time.

Today, Yerko still has some physical problems, including short-term memory loss. But he walks, and he can carry on a normal conversation. Doctors can't believe it.

I was in Young Women when Yerko suffered his accident. Every week I recited, "We are daughters of our Heavenly Father, who loves us," but I didn't really understand the significance of the words. After the accident, I came to know that I really do have a Father who loves me.

The temple is a manifestation of that love. Yerko and I were sealed to our parents, so I knew that if I lost

my brother, I would be with him again. This was a tremendous comfort for my family and me.

Immediately after the accident, when doctors told us that Yerko had only a few hours to live, I earnestly prayed for Heavenly Father to save him. When Yerko survived, I wanted to serve a mission to share with others the miracles we had experienced.

The story of my brother's recovery was a blessing for many people I taught as a missionary in Peru. As I shared our experiences, especially with people facing difficult situations, their hearts were touched.

We often wonder why difficult things happen, but when we trust in our Heavenly Father's love, we know that eventually, everything will work together for our good (see Romans 8:28). ■



# My Son, the Book of Mormon, and Me

Anne Maxson, Idaho, USA

*Just as the Savior ministered and taught one by one, He helps us teach our children one by one.*

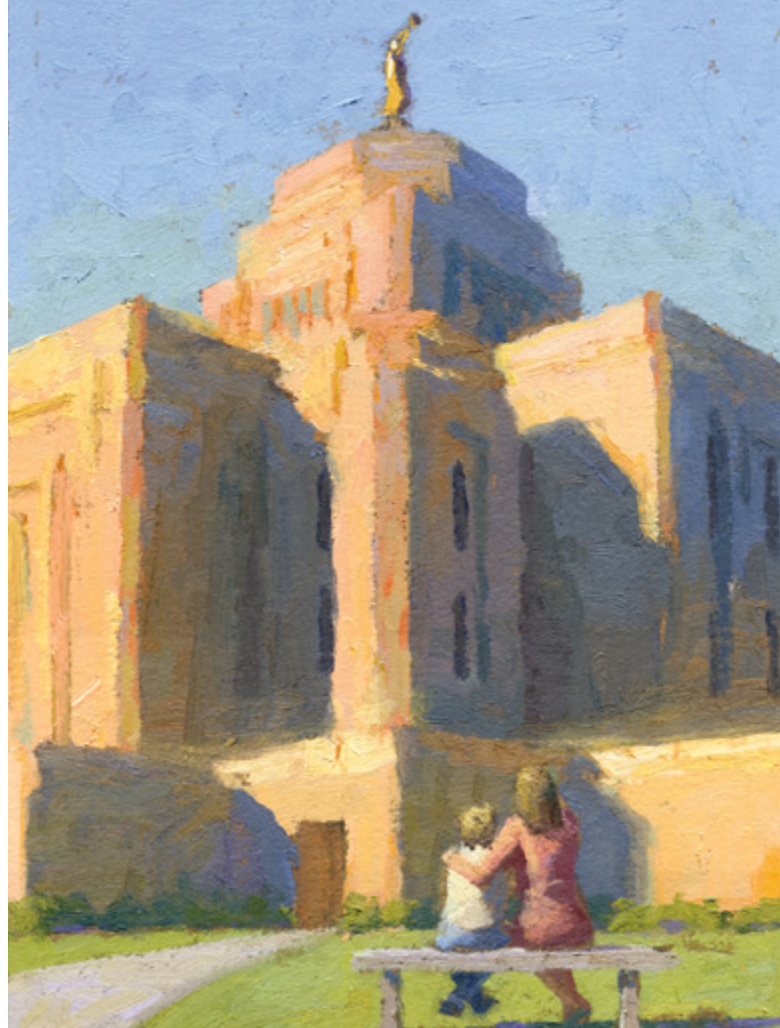
One day I watched an interview with Brother Tad R. Callister, who was then the Sunday School General President. As I took notes, I had an impression on how to heal my relationship with my son, John. I was impressed that we should read the entire Book of Mormon together prior to his baptism six months later.

This impression was so clear that I even knew which room we should read in and at what time we should read. I also felt a distinct impression that we should finish our reading on the grounds of the Meridian Idaho Temple.

As we took time to read one-on-one each night, our relationship sweetened. We had more patience for each other, we better understood each other's perspectives, and we regularly felt the presence of the Holy Ghost.

The night before we finished the book, we read Moroni's promise that if we ask God with a sincere heart, with real intent and faith in Christ, if the Book of Mormon is true, we will know the truth of it by the power of the Holy Ghost (see Moroni 10:4–5). We felt the confirmation that the Book of Mormon is true, that Joseph Smith was a prophet, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the kingdom of God upon the earth.

The next day we sat on a bench on the temple grounds. We looked up at the statue of angel Moroni and



read again his final testimony. Since that day, John has mentioned on multiple occasions the time we read the Book of Mormon together at the temple. Now every time I attend the temple, I see the bench and reflect on the special moment John and I had when we completed our inspired goal.

President Henry B. Eyring, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said, “The wise parent will see that opportunity lies in leading each child, and themselves, to accept more fully the Lord’s invitation to come unto Him.”<sup>1</sup>

I think there is value in the phrase “each child.” Just as the Savior ministered and taught one by one, He helps us teach our children one by one.

The spiritual direction I received to read with John showed me that the Lord knows my children better than I do. I know if I listen to and follow His counsel, He will give me direction on how I can help lead and guide each of my children back to Him. ■

#### NOTE

1. Henry B. Eyring, “A Home Where the Spirit of the Lord Dwells,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 23.

# Young Adults

## In This Section

### 70 A 3-Step Guide to Maintaining Your Mental Health

By Michael Gardner

### 74 Connection Helped Me Combat Depression

By Emilia Brändh

### 76 Including Your Spouse in Your Mental Health

By Kathryn Duval

### 80 Insights from Young Adults on Helping Those Who Struggle with Mental Health

## Digital Only

### For Missionaries Struggling with Mental Health

#### I Chose to Stay. Here's How You Can Help Someone Stay Too

By Shantelle Avery

#### I Finally Admitted That I Had Depression. Jesus Christ Helped Me Out of the Darkness

By Nephi Tangalin

#### How to Set Boundaries for Well-Being

By Kevin Keovongsa

#### What Mental Illness Taught Me about Who I Am

By Courtney Oakden

#### Finding Peace in Christ in the Midst of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

By Sydney Squires

## The Savior Knows Your Pain

During our journey on this earth, most of us at some point will face burnout from stress, tension from anxiety, the grey clouds of sadness, or even (like in my case) the numbing fog of depression. **These feelings occur for many of us** along the path toward green hills and sunshine, and they can easily make us feel hopeless.

### Mental health struggles can come when you least expect them.

When you're serving a mission and focusing so much on others that you forget yourself. When you have a baby and feel like you should be the happiest person in the world, but you simply aren't. When you lose a loved one and can hardly imagine life without them. Or even when everything seems to be going well, but you have an overwhelming feeling that you're not OK.

These are moments when we need to fill our lives with the peacefulness of Jesus Christ's never-ending love. **Our Savior is always there**, even when we feel abandoned or lost. He has felt our pain and knows how to help.

**Don't be afraid to reach out.** Part of Heavenly Father's plan is to love and care for one another (see Mosiah 18:21). And that's what this month's section is about—**overcoming mental health challenges by reaching out** to others, especially the Savior.

You are loved.

From someone who keeps on struggling and keeps on going,

Emilia Brändh



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

## Share Your Story

Do you have an experience 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](https://www.ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

PHOTOGRAPH BY ASHLEE LARSEN





# A 3-Step Guide to Maintaining Your **Mental Health**

Stress, depression, and anxiety can creep into our lives at any time. Here are three ways to maintain your mental health.

1

**By Michael Gardner, PhD**  
Family Services

**A**s a mental health counselor with 30 years' experience, I am often amazed at people's ability to face and overcome challenges. We live in difficult times. And stress, depression, and anxiety can creep into our lives often, especially during a time of life that is so uncertain, like young adulthood. These difficulties sometimes leave us confused and doubting our ability to cope and move forward.

But I've learned that when we take time to tend to our mental health, we gain more strength and more resilience to face challenges. There are many things we can do for ourselves to strengthen our mental capacity so we can better navigate obstacles (and enjoy the good times too!). Here are just three areas of focus that can help you keep your mental and emotional health in tip-top shape.

### **Don't Underestimate the Power of Small and Simple Spiritual Things**

Those small spiritual things you can do each day to draw closer to Heavenly Father pack a lot more power in helping you maintain your mental health than you might think (see Alma 37:6–7). Spiritual habits don't necessarily make our challenges go away, but they do give us the strength, mental clarity, eternal perspective, hope, and courage to move forward.

I often tell clients to do the "dailies." These include meaningful daily prayer, daily scripture study, serving in our Church callings or responsibilities, attending church weekly and going to the temple often, and striving to follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost.

I've seen these small and simple spiritual practices transform people's ability to cope with and overcome challenges in profound ways. When my clients commit to doing these little spiritual habits consistently, they feel greater influence from the Savior's power in their lives. I have seen that power increase their spiritual and mental strength. And that makes a major difference in their ability to find happiness and focus on what truly matters.

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles testified of this, saying, "The spiritual pattern of small and simple things bringing forth great things produces firmness and steadfastness, deepening devotion, and more complete conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ and His gospel."<sup>1</sup>

## 2

Don't allow feelings of inadequacy or uncertainty prevent you from doing these small spiritual things with real intent (see Moroni 10:4). If you believe, or even if you simply have the desire to believe (see Alma 32:27) that these spiritual habits can give you strength, healing, peace, and hope, they will.

### Remember to Practice Self-Care

We've all heard about the gospel principle of self-reliance. Most of the time we talk about it in regards to financial or temporal needs. But one of the most important parts of this concept is emotional self-reliance—self-care—which is vital to maintaining our mental health.

Self-care begins with being conscious of your own needs and how much you can give.

As much as we do for others, why is it so difficult for so many of us to make time for ourselves? I think sometimes the idea of taking time for ourselves seems selfish or like a waste of time. But that couldn't be further from the truth! Self-care isn't selfish! If we fail to take care of ourselves, how can we have anything left to share with others?

Self-care begins with being conscious of your own needs and how much you can give. Recognizing, understanding, and acknowledging the emotions you feel is important in discovering what your needs are. Here are some self-care practices that can fulfill some of your mental and emotional needs:

- Take care of your body by eating a proper diet, getting enough sleep, and exercising regularly.
- Develop relationships with people you can talk to and share both your concerns and your happiness with.
- Seek good entertainment, hobbies, and activities that bring you joy and a sense of accomplishment.
- Journal to help you express your feelings and organize your thoughts.
- Spend time outdoors.
- Set healthy boundaries and say no when you already have too much going on.
- Practice gratitude. Being grateful helps us avoid feeling sorry for ourselves or blaming others for our unhappiness. Try writing down three things you are grateful for at the end of each day.
- Change negative thoughts and negative self-talk to something positive.
- Remember who you are—a divine child of heavenly parents. You are loved and supported by so many in heaven and on earth.
- Lessen the time you spend on social media (or avoid it altogether).
- Forgive yourself and others. Holding on to grudges or past mistakes adds an unnecessary burden on your shoulders.



### 3

## Humble Yourself and Ask for Help

None of us were meant to make it through this mortal journey on our own. Even if you're self-reliant, connection with others is essential to caring for your mental and emotional needs. And we have parents, other family members, friends, Church leaders, and our Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost to guide, direct, and help us on our way. Take a moment to review your current social network. Ask yourself:

- Do you have healthy relationships with others?
- Could you use more support from others?
- Do you push people away? Or are you able to ask for help when you need it?

Most of the time, to help others, we need to know if they are struggling. Don't be afraid, ashamed, or reluctant to seek help when you need it, whether it's confiding in someone about your anxieties or even asking someone for help. It definitely takes courage and humility to admit you need help. But Heavenly Father often blesses us through others as we let them in and allow them to be there for us.

True emotional self-reliance begins by knowing our limits and seeking help outside of ourselves to fill in the gaps. Apart from friends and family, your Church leaders may also offer you counsel, guidance, and hope when you're in need. If you could benefit from professional counseling or medical assistance to get your mental health to a healthy place, your bishop can also refer you to qualified therapists.

As you know all too well, we live in challenging times. But we also live in the best of times because of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ! We have knowledge of the plan of salvation and so many tools that can help give us joy, hope, and peace no matter our circumstances. And if we utilize those tools, they will help us make it back to our Heavenly Father. ■

### NOTE

1. David A. Bednar, "By Small and Simple Things Are Great Things Brought to Pass" (Brigham Young University Women's Conference address, Apr. 29, 2011), [womensconference.byu.edu](https://www.byu.edu/womensconference).

# Connection Helped Me Combat Depression

Struggling with depression has taught me the healing power of meaningful relationships.

By Emilia Brändh

It was almost Christmas, and my apartment was the only one with lights on.

My friends were scattered all over Europe, and my immediate family was celebrating together in Finland. And here I was, alone in a little apartment in England, tears rolling down my cheeks, a letter in hand.

But I wasn't crying because I was lonely—these were happy tears. The letter was from one of my closest friends, and it got me thinking about all the good times we had when we were younger. I had no idea that all those moments would mean so much to me in the future.

## Facing Loneliness

There have been times in my life when I've felt like the loneliest person in the world because of depression, wondering if I would ever find friends who would love me.

When I was a teenager in Finland, I had the coolest group of Church friends that I sometimes took for granted. But then we grew up, slowly drifting apart without really noticing, until we barely spoke at all.

After this, I fell into a deep depression. Losing closeness with these friends made me feel like a burden. I wanted to reach out to them, but I told myself it would be selfish to drag them into my misery. So I lived in isolation and only dug myself out of my self-made hole of sadness (my bed) when I had to keep up my façade that everything was fine.

Despite getting professional help and taking antidepressant medications, I was still miserable and lonely when summer came. I was desperately seeking for ways to talk to people, and I became even more anxious because I felt like I was so bad at it. But when I heard about a summer school program at my university, I applied simply to force myself out of my apartment.

On the first day, I participated in one group activity and then quickly slipped away to cry at home.

But I had been trying to get better for too long to give up that easily. So I went back.

I didn't know how to make conversation, and I was stressed about getting to know these strangers. But I knew I had to try. I refused to be alone any longer.



## Making Life-Changing Connections

When I felt self-conscious and afraid, I reminded myself that we are all children of heavenly parents. We may all seem very different because of our varying backgrounds and lifestyles, but we all come from the same place. And that can bring us together.

Slowly and steadily, my teammates and I got to know each other. We would hang out in our free time, and then one day we ended up sitting on my apartment floor playing cards and eating cake that we had baked together.

I wanted to open my window in that moment and scream, “I did it!” These friendships were miracles in my life.

When I connected with these friends, combatting my depression

became a lot easier. I even opened up about my mental health to them. And it turned out that most of them had similar struggles to mine. Many of them were going through difficult things and confided in me because I opened up first. Being vulnerable brought me closer to others and gave me the strength, hope, and support I needed to heal.

In the fall, I ended up moving to England as an exchange student, and I had to start all over again with making new friends. But this time I was confident that I could do it.

## Accepting and Sharing the Savior’s Light

When I was in the colorless depths of depression, I struggled to feel God’s love and His Spirit. But by showing love and service and making deep friendships, I was able

to accept the Savior’s healing power and bring His light back into my life.

Depression can make life difficult at times, but it also teaches me how to realign myself with God’s plan and gives me great purpose in loving and connecting with others and myself.

Spending Christmas so far away from home would have once sounded unimaginably lonely. But knowing and trusting that God provides all that I need to make connections and find peace—no matter where I find myself on this planet—I know I don’t have to feel that old loneliness again. ■



**Emilia Brändh** is a student who spends her days writing about adventures real and made up. She loves reading fairy tales, cooking spicy food, taking long hikes to ponder in the woods, and can often be seen wandering around old villages with her beloved camera in her hand.

# Including Your Spouse in Your Mental Health

By Kathryn Duval

If someone in a marriage has mental illness, what can a spouse do to help?



**T**he month before I got married, I gradually stopped taking medication for anxiety and depression. I'd been working hard with therapists and reading about mental health, and I was feeling great. But about a month after we were married, my husband was called away for five months of military service. Despite all of my hard work, I hit an all-time low.

I was hardly ever able to feel calm, and my mind focused on worst-case scenarios constantly. I cried a lot and felt too tired to do things that would help cheer me up. What scared me the most, though, were the recurring thoughts that I wouldn't be able to make it through life feeling like this all the time. And, unlike before, my mental health struggles didn't just affect me—they affected my husband too. He is not a "worrier" like I am, but he was worried about me. I was terrified I was hurting him.

That got me thinking: if someone in a marriage has mental illness, what can a spouse do to help?

This article represents some of the answers I've discovered along my personal journey to healing. I found it helpful to think about how mental illness affects four different areas of a person's life—physical, emotional, social, and spiritual. Then I considered how someone could involve their spouse as they worked toward healing in each of these areas. If this seems overwhelming at first, remember that you only need to work on one area at a time. Celebrate each small step taken, realizing you will have your own journey to healing.



## Physical Health

Our bodies and minds are very connected. As the scriptures teach, “the spirit and the body are the soul of man” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:15). We can heal physically by getting enough sleep, exercising, eating healthily, and, if needed, taking medication. If one area of your physical health is lacking, it might be time to make some adjustments to your schedule.

My husband was extremely helpful in this area of life. While we were dating, I had a couple of

homework-heavy semesters in college. I was very stressed about these assignments, but I was also worried about spending enough time with him. So I stayed up hours after our dates to finish everything. When he found out about this, he started helping me make homework a priority earlier so I could get enough sleep. Sometimes our “dates” became him keeping me company while I did schoolwork. As I got more sleep, both my depression and my anxiety levels improved.

If you choose physical goals to improve your mental health, let your spouse in on your plan. Talk to them about ways they can support you. Perhaps you could even tackle a physical health challenge together!

## Emotional Health

Common ideas for improving emotional health include spending time in nature, writing in a journal, and going to therapy. Let's talk about therapy for a moment. I know some people with anxiety or depression who say they would rather keep their emotions to themselves or talk with a friend instead of seeing a therapist.

Although talking with someone you love is important in healing, we often need to learn and practice new emotional skills as part of our journey. And that's where professional therapists are important. Just as it would be extremely difficult to learn a new sport or instrument without a coach, sometimes you need a pro to teach you and help you develop mental health skills.<sup>1</sup> If you're concerned about the cost of therapy, reach out to your bishop. He can help you connect with Family Services or other resources in your area.

As my husband and I searched together to find solutions to my mental health struggles, we were led to professionals who helped us find peace. At first, telling my husband I needed therapy took me out of my comfort zone because I didn't want him to know how weak I felt.

But over time I realized that being vulnerable about my feelings was actually a sign of strength. As I was open with him, he learned to understand me and connect with me better emotionally. We were able to search for healing together and become closer through discussing my emotional needs. Now I believe that this is part of what it means to "be one" (Genesis 2:24).



## Social Health

Sometimes when depression and anxiety are hitting me hard, the one thing that would help me find relief is the one thing I don't feel like doing. This is often the case with social healing. It can feel exhausting to look outward and help another person when you feel like you're barely making it through the day. But the invitation to connect and "be ye kind one to another" (Ephesians 4:32) really is a major key to happiness.

A study from 2010 states that one reason quality friendships are associated with happiness is because friends help each other meet basic needs.<sup>2</sup> When this happens, both people find purpose and increased self-esteem.<sup>3</sup> My husband and I have found joy in serving others and getting together with friends, even when I don't feel like it. When it is difficult or I don't want to be social, he encourages me, reminding me that it helps me feel more positive. Connection makes my anxiety and depression less daunting.

## Spiritual Health

While my husband and I were apart because of his military assignments, I found myself hungrier than ever



for spiritual connection. *Come, Follow Me* became a lifeline of support for me and my husband. I would study the materials and send him the notes I had written down that week. This helped us feel more connected to each other and also more connected to the Savior. It gave us feelings of peace that were otherwise hard to come by at that time.

Now that my husband is home, we still try to connect our marriage to the Savior. Every night he reads scriptures out loud, which helps the worries of the day shift out of my mind. We often go to the temple together, which gives us feelings of gratitude for our covenants and for God's sustaining power.

I recently read interesting research about the benefits of religious activity.<sup>4</sup> These studies indicate that practicing religion with others and nurturing internal spiritual beliefs (you need both) can help improve mental health. The idea is that spirituality provides each one of us with an internal support system—helping us face challenges with faith, inviting feelings of peace, encouraging forgiveness, and connecting us with resources during difficult times. Holy habits can help us find “a more excellent hope” (Ether 12:32).



## On the Front Lines Together

My battle with mental illness isn't over. But I'm so grateful my husband has joined me on the front lines. He helps me do things I struggle to do on my own, and I offer him the same support. It is a relief that I don't feel the need to hide my mental health struggles from him. By allowing each other to see our real feelings, we are able to find solutions together and draw closer to the Savior. If you are searching for mental healing, prayerfully consider how you can involve your spouse. Although this honesty and vulnerability may seem scary at first, it may end up making your eternal relationship stronger than ever. ■

**Kathryn Duval** graduated from Brigham Young University in family studies. She and her husband live in Utah, USA, and have been married for a year. Together they have 12 siblings and 15 nieces and nephews, and they are the biggest fans of spending as much time with family as they can.



### NOTES

1. See David D. Burns, “Solution to David’s Tuesday Tip #13,” July 11, 2018, Feeling Good website, [feelinggood.com/category/davids-paradoxical-tuesday-tips](https://feelinggood.com/category/davids-paradoxical-tuesday-tips).
2. See Melikşah Demir and Metin Özdemir, “Friendship, Need Satisfaction and Happiness,” *Journal of Happiness Studies*, vol. 11 no. 2 (Apr. 2010), 243–59.
3. See Barbara R. Edwards, “Why Being of Service Improves Happiness,” blog, July 8, 2018, Psych Central website, [psychcentral.com](https://psychcentral.com).
4. See Carolyn McNamara Barry and others, “Profiles of Religiousness, Spirituality, and Psychological Adjustment in Emerging Adults,” *Journal of Adult Development*, May 30, 2019; Adam Burke and others, “Re-examining Religiosity as a Protective Factor: Comparing Alcohol Use by Self-Identified Religious, Spiritual, and Secular College Students,” *Journal of Religion and Health*, vol. 53, no. 2 (Apr. 2014), 305–16; Alen Malinovic and others, “Dimensions Of Religious/Spiritual Well-Being in Relation to Personality and Stress Coping: Initial Results from Bosnian Young Adults,” *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2016), 43–54; Shannon Gwin and others, “The Relationship between Parent–Young Adult Religious Concord and Depression,” *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, vol. 22, no. 1 (2020), 96–110.

# INSIGHTS

from YOUNG ADULTS

*on helping those who struggle with mental health\**



“Just be a listening ear and **encourage them** to get whatever help they need for their health.”

—Janka Toronyi, Győr, Hungary

“Remind them of what they have already accomplished and that with **faith in Christ** they can face whatever comes next.”

—Andy Young, Texas, USA

“**Listen, love, and show them you are there** for them and that you understand them by sharing your own experiences.”

—Nadia Frenkel, Frankfurt, Germany

“Be a friend, listen to and laugh with them, and help them understand **the Savior’s Atonement.**”

—Arjohn Harold Barillo,  
Metro Manila, Philippines

from CHURCH LEADERS

“Listening with love is one of the greatest gifts we can offer, and we may be able to help carry or lift the heavy clouds that suffocate our loved ones and friends so that, through our love, they can once again feel the Holy Ghost and perceive the light that emanates from Jesus Christ.”

Sister Reyna I. Aburto, Second Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency, “Thru Cloud and Sunshine, Lord, Abide with Me!” *Ensign*, Nov. 2019, 58.

\* Editors’ note: Mental health refers to the health and stability of our emotional and psychological state, while mental illness refers to a wide range of disorders that affect mood, thinking, and behavior. These suggestions refer to helping others through mental health issues; mental illness should be addressed with health professionals.

## SHARE YOUR INSIGHTS

How do you hold on to hope and faith **when your loved ones disagree with your beliefs?**

Send us your response at [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) by September 30, 2020.

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# THE FAMILY

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## A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD

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### THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

**WE**, THE FIRST PRESIDENCY and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

ALL HUMAN BEINGS—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

IN THE PREMORTAL REALM, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

WE DECLARE the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God's eternal plan.

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

to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

THE FAMILY is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

WE WARN that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

WE CALL UPON responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.

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*This proclamation was read by President Gordon B. Hinckley as part of his message at the General Relief Society Meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.*

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## YOUNG ADULTS

Struggling with your mental health?  
This month, find tips and stories  
about maintaining and improving  
your mental health.

68



## INCLUSION

**WHAT ONE UNIQUE  
COUPLE LEARNED  
FROM THE SAVIOR'S  
EXAMPLE OF LOVE**

24

## MARRIAGE

**ELDER BEDNAR TALKS  
ABOUT SECULAR  
SELFISHNESS AND  
SACRED SACRIFICE**

34

## UNITY

**LESSONS FROM  
SHEREM, NEHOR,  
AND OTHER BOOK OF  
MORMON DISSENTERS**

50

