



Follow the Prophet

Watch for a year of stories from the life of President Thomas S. Monson

# Learning to Serve Others

By Heidi S. Swinton

Thomas Spencer Monson was named for his grandfather Thomas Condie. Young Tommy learned many lessons from his grandfather, who lived just a few houses away. The lesson he best remembers was about how to serve others.

One day when Tommy was about eight years old, he and his grandfather were sitting on the front-porch swing. An elderly man from England lived on the same street. His name was Robert Dicks, but most of the neighbors just called him “Old Bob.” He was widowed and poor.

Old Bob came over and sat down on the porch swing with Tommy and his grandfather. He said that the small adobe house where he lived was going to be torn down. He had no family, no money, and nowhere to go.

Tommy wondered how his grandfather would respond to the sad story. His grandfather reached into his pocket and pulled out a

small leather change purse. He took out a key and put it in Old Bob’s hand. “Mr. Dicks,” he said kindly, “you can move your things into that empty house of mine next door. It won’t cost you a cent, and you can stay there as long as you like. And remember, nobody is ever going to put you out again.” Tears filled Old Bob’s eyes.

Tommy’s mother also taught him how to love and serve others. Every Sunday before the Monson family ate dinner, Tommy’s mother prepared a plate of roast beef, potatoes, and gravy for Old Bob. Sometimes it also included Tommy’s mother’s famous ribbon cake with layers of green, pink, and yellow cake and chocolate frosting. Tommy’s job was to deliver the dinner to Old Bob.

At first Tommy did not understand why he couldn’t eat first and then





## WORDS FROM PRESIDENT MONSON

“I believe that love is shown by how you live, how you serve, and how you bless others. When we serve others, we are showing them that we love them, and we are also showing Jesus Christ that we love Him.”

*From “Friend to Friend,” Friend, Oct. 1996, 7.*

take the plate over. But he never complained. He would run quickly down to Old Bob’s house, balancing the full plate. Then he would wait anxiously as Old Bob came slowly to the door.

The two would then trade plates—Bob’s clean plate from the previous Sunday and Tommy’s plate piled high with food. Then Bob would offer a dime as payment for the kindness.

Tommy’s answer was always the same: “I can’t accept the money. My mother would tan my hide.”

The old gentleman would pat Tommy’s blond hair and say, “My boy, you have a wonderful mother. Tell her thank you.” When Tommy reported the compliment from Old Bob back to his mother, her eyes glistened with tears.

Showing charity, giving unselfishly to others, putting others first, and being a good friend and neighbor were important in the Monson home. They have become the hallmarks of President Monson’s life. ◆

## How Are You Like President Monson?

What do you have in common with the prophet? Below is a list of things that describe President Monson when he was young. Mark the box next to the ones that you have in common.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> He had an older sister.                                | <input type="checkbox"/> He liked homemade ice cream.                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> He was the second child in his family.                 | <input type="checkbox"/> He had a library card.                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> He was born on a Sunday.                               | <input type="checkbox"/> He liked to play with his cousins.           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> He was the oldest brother in his family.               | <input type="checkbox"/> He liked being with his grandpa.             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> He had a nickname.                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> He lived next to train tracks.               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> He had five brothers and sisters.                      | <input type="checkbox"/> He ran errands for his mother.               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> His dad often made breakfast for him.                  | <input type="checkbox"/> He liked to go fishing.                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> He gained a testimony of the gospel when he was young. | <input type="checkbox"/> He was baptized when he was eight years old. |



## NAMES AND NICKNAMES

**Match each of President Monson’s names and nicknames with the situation when it was used. See answers on page 48.**

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. What people called him at church and at school when he was young                           | a. Dad                   |
| 2. What members of the Church call him today  | b. Nervous Willy         |
| 3. What his grandchildren call him  | c. Tom or Tommy          |
| 4. What his children call him   | d. Thomas Spencer Monson |
| 5. A nickname his mother gave him because he liked being busy doing things instead of resting | e. President Monson      |
| 6. His full name, which was used when he was baptized   | f. Grandpa               |

**Do you have a nickname that describes something special about you?**

ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL MANN; PHOTO BY MATT REIER (TOP); PHOTO COURTESY OF MONSON FAMILY (RIGHT)

I have an older sister!



And I like homemade ice cream—I guess we’re both like President Monson!