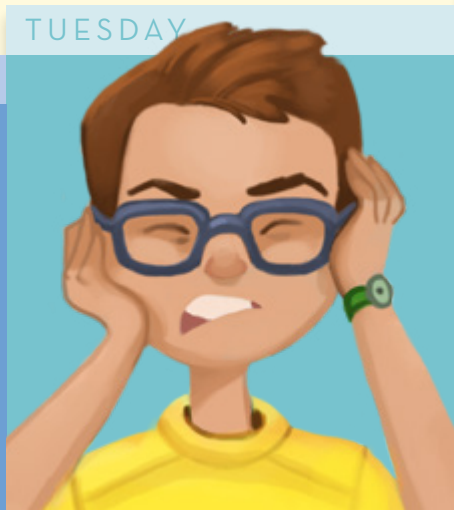
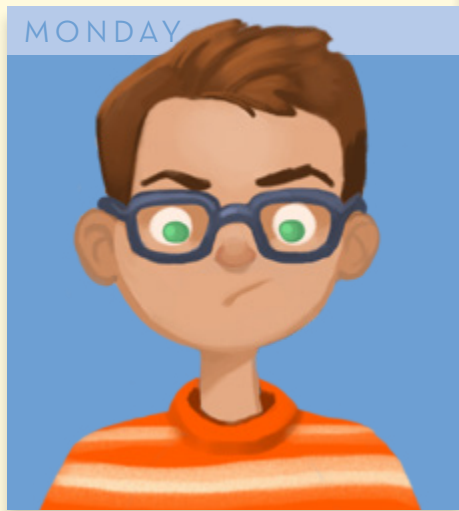


The NEXT Level



By Alex Masterson

(Based on a true story)

“The Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit” (D&C 84:46).

Max’s family visited the temple grounds every week. He always brought his video game with him.

Otherwise it would be too boring to just walk around. On the way home, Max’s sisters joked and giggled beside him in the car, but he didn’t hear them. He was too focused on his game.

When they all got home, Max walked inside. He was so proud of himself. He didn’t even have to look up to make it to the living room. So much gaming must have made his brain bigger.

“Max, how did you like the temple?” Mom asked. He didn’t answer.

“Max!” she said a little louder. He jumped. He hadn’t seen her sit down next to him.

“Did you like the temple?” Mom asked again.

“It was nice,” he said. His eyes moved back to the game.

“Did you feel anything special?” she asked.

Max sighed and paused the game. Couldn’t she see he was busy?

“I don’t know, Mom. I guess it was all pretty special,” he said with a grin.

Mom didn’t smile back. “Max, I’m a little worried. It seems like you’re playing that thing more and more.”

“Mom, I’m fine,” Max said. “I’m just having fun. I can stop anytime.”

“Oh, really?” Mom said. Now *she* was smiling. “How about you stop playing your games for a week? And maybe when we go to the temple you’ll be surprised.”

A whole week! What would he *do*? He worried about giving up his games, but he loved Mom and thought he could give it a try.

Max sighed. “OK. I’ll do it.”

Mom gave Max a big hug. Max looked at his game and frowned. What had he gotten himself into?

The first two days were the worst because all he could think about was his game. He was so bored that even cleaning sounded good. So he did all his chores, and since he had more time before dinner, he did his sisters’ chores too.

After dinner, Max helped with the dishes. Then he thought of something else to do.

“Hey, Dad, wanna play catch?”

Dad smiled. “I’d love to! It’s been too long. Grab your mitt.”

Max went to bed feeling happy. He usually played video games until he fell asleep, but tonight he didn’t even want to. He thought of what he was going to do tomorrow. It



seemed like he had so much more time now.

The week raced by. Max spent time with his family, helped his sisters, read the scriptures, and even started learning how to crochet! He had to admit that using his time differently felt pretty good.

Soon the day of the temple trip came. Max had totally forgotten what Mom had said about a surprise. He was just excited to spend time with his family.

The sun was setting as Max's family walked around the temple grounds. The sky was red, orange, and yellow. Max felt something special as he watched the light shine on the temple windows. *This is what it must feel like to live with Heavenly Father*, he thought.

Max knew he was feeling the Spirit. He thought about how serving and spending time with other people made him feel happier than always playing his games did. He felt closer to Heavenly Father too.

Mom walked up beside him. "What are you thinking?"

Max looked up at the Angel Moroni glowing gold in the sunset. "That this is even better than video games."

Mom wrapped her arm around his shoulders. "Surprise," she said.

Max just smiled. ◆

The author lives in Utah, USA.



I was playing on my dad's phone before a baptism. When I heard the music start, I turned the phone off and listened to the music.

Paige J., age 8, Oregon, USA