

New Dress,



BY LINDA G. PAULSEN

(Based on a true story)

By the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things (Moroni 10:5).

I looked down at my lap. No matter how I tugged at my skirt, it didn't cover my knees. It just wasn't fair! I almost never got a store-bought dress. It was a

to be as skinny as a pencil, and have a huge mouth full of oversized teeth. Beverly had long blonde hair, long eyelashes, and no glasses, either. Next to Beverly, I felt ugly and awkward. One way to make up the difference was with fashionable clothes.

Old Rules

summery green fabric, and when I wore it my eyes looked more green than their normal gray-blue. It fit perfectly too. And it was modern, without being weird.

Beverly had a new outfit that made my eyes blink. It was an orange and purple skirt and top with matching tights in a big, wild, diamond pattern. Beverly always wore the latest styles. When I'd worn my new green dress the week before, she had complimented me for the first time.

It was hard to be me. It was bad enough to wear glasses as thick as a sugar bowl,



Finding that green dress was amazing. Buying it had been a miracle. Mom had taken down the hem, and it was perfect. Now, one laundry day later, my chance to be noticed was over.

My mother came into the room. "What's the matter?" she asked. I guess my tear-misted glasses gave me away.

"Look at this dress!" I wailed. "It shrank in the wash!"

Mom understood how much that dress meant to me. "Oh, Linda," she said softly. "I promise I followed the washing directions on the tag." But she could see as I did that it had shrunk just enough to be too short.

We talked it over, but there wasn't a happy solution. The hem had already been



lengthened as far as it could go. Mom and Dad were immovable on their rule: girls in our family covered their knees. Mom cried with me as we took the dress to the thrift store box in the garage.

I moped for several days. It seemed so unfair that my parents could ruin my life by something as silly as a rule about knees. I had never been a rebel. I knew my parents loved me, so I had trusted them to be sensible. Until now.

I was troubled. I realized that this was a major decision: I could continue to follow my parents' rules or I could choose not to. There were ways to rebel. I saw girls at school sometimes roll up their skirts at the waist to make them shorter. It was up to me.

One day in church, our class talked about Joseph Smith's First Vision. As the teacher read about Joseph's decision to ask God which church to join, I realized that I was in a similar situation. I needed to know for myself if my parents' dress standards were right or if they were too strict. Like Joseph, I decided I could simply ask Heavenly Father.

I thought about it for several days. I remembered the process I had gone through when I'd prayed about being baptized. The answer

had come because I had been ready to receive it. I decided to fast and pray. Because this was an important decision, I knew it would probably take more than one day's effort to learn the answer. I talked to my parents about my plan.

"I'll fast with you," Mom offered.

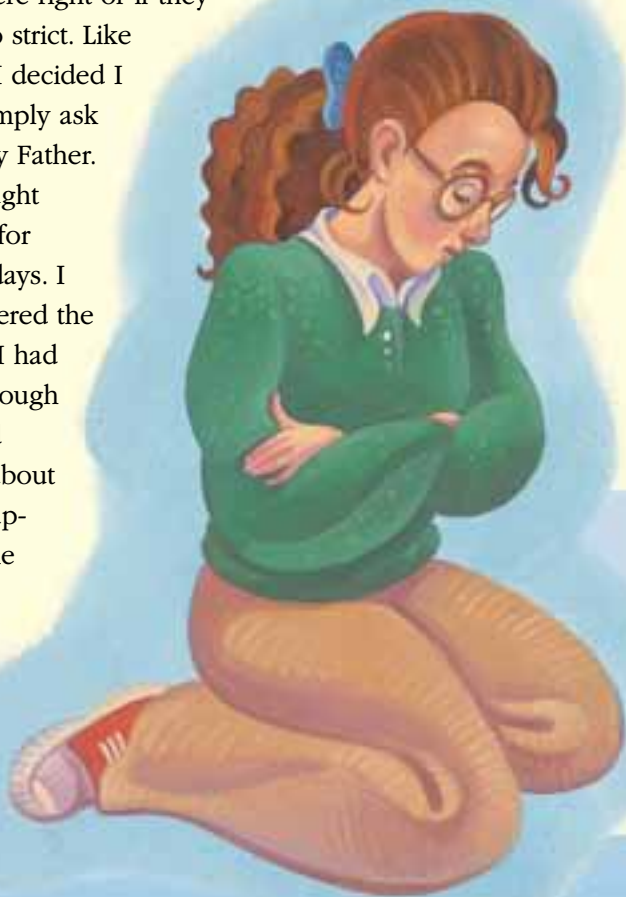
Dad gave me a clue. "Linda," he said, "if you want a testimony of a certain principle, practice living it."

I tried to do everything I could so that I would be able to hear that still, small voice. Meanwhile, I practiced keeping the standard that my parents required.

Heavenly Father answered my prayers through my feelings and in my mind. One day, as I was getting ready for church, I realized that I knew what Heavenly Father wanted me to do. Through the prompting of the Holy Ghost, I knew that Heavenly Father expects me to dress modestly. Just like Joseph Smith, I knew that I had received an answer and that I could not deny it. The knowledge was like a warm, peaceful understanding that filled me from head to toe. I wondered how I could have ever felt sorry for myself for living a righteous standard. I felt that Heavenly Father was pleased with me. Nothing else mattered as much as that.

"I'm lucky to be me," I thought. I didn't need to be like Beverly or anybody else. What a relief!

I had friends, but I was never really popular. I learned how to be happy without being popular. That's how I know it can be done. Never again was I an invisible nobody. Heavenly Father helped me become beautiful in my own way. ●



"Through your dress and appearance, you can show the Lord that you know how precious your body is."

For the Strength of Youth (2001), 14.

