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“Whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God.”

Ether 12:4
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Family Home Evening Ideas

This issue contains articles and activities that could be used for family home evening. The following are two examples.

“Preparing a Place for the Lord,” page 10: Bishop Caussé reminds us of our responsibility to prepare for the Savior’s coming. One way to prepare a place for the Lord is by helping people who need a home. Consider volunteering at a homeless shelter, gathering supplies for refugees, raising funds to contribute to the Church’s humanitarian fund, or getting involved with service activities in your community. You might also discuss long-term ways that you can serve the displaced, such as by fostering friendships.

“How can I feel close to the Savior?” page 70: Jesus Christ certainly is the reason for the season, but you might consider ways that you can remember the Savior’s example all year long. You could brainstorm ways to create a more Christ-centered home, like displaying a picture of the Savior in your house, memorizing weekly scriptures about the Savior, or taking extra care to prepare for the Sabbath day. Create plans to implement your ideas and record in your journal how your efforts have helped you draw closer to Christ.

MORE ONLINE

The Liahona and other Church materials are available in many languages at languages.lds.org. Visit facebook.com/liahona.magazine (available in English, Portuguese, and Spanish) to find inspirational messages, family home evening ideas, and material you can share with your friends and family.

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To all of us who have come into mortality, the Savior said, “In the world ye shall have tribulation” (John 16:33). Yet He gave this wonderful promise to His disciples during His mortal ministry: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you” (John 14:27). It is a comfort to know that this promise of personal peace continues for all of His disciples today.

Some of us live in beautiful and peaceful surroundings, yet we are experiencing inner turmoil. Others feel peace and perfect serenity in the midst of great personal loss, tragedy, and continuing trials.

You may have seen the miracle of peace on the face of a disciple of Jesus Christ or heard it in his or her words. I have seen it many times. Sometimes it has been in a hospital room where a family is gathered around a servant of God who is near death.

I remember visiting a woman in the hospital a few days before she died of cancer. I had brought my two young daughters to accompany me because this sweet sister had once been their Primary teacher.

Her family members were gathered around her bed, wishing to be with her in her final moments on earth. I was surprised as she sat up in the bed. She reached out to my daughters and introduced them both, one by one, to each member of her family. She spoke as if my daughters were royalty being presented at the court of a queen. She found a way to say something about the way each person in the room was a disciple of the Savior. I still remember the strength, the tenderness, and the love in her voice. And I recall being surprised at her cheerful smile even as she knew her time in life was short.

She had received priesthood blessings of comfort, yet she gave us all a living testimony that the Lord’s promise of peace is true: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

She had accepted His invitation, as we all can, whatever our trials and troubles:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:28–29).

It is only through following the Savior that any of us can find peace and serenity in the trials that will come to all of us.

The sacramental prayers help us to know how to find that peace amidst the tribulations of life. As we partake of the sacrament, we can determine to be faithful to our covenants to follow Him.
TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

President Eyring teaches that the sacramental prayers can help us know how to find peace during our trials. They remind us that as we keep our covenants, we have God’s promise that the Holy Ghost will be with us. Consider asking those you teach how having the Holy Ghost with us can help us have peace. You could also share your thoughts or an experience of how the Holy Ghost helped you feel peace in a trial. You might encourage those you teach to ponder this message during the sacrament this week.
How Will You Remember the Savior This Week?

President Eyring encourages us to “choose to remember [the Savior] in the way that best draws your heart to Him.” How do you “always remember Him” throughout the week (see D&C 20:77, 79)?

Do you have favorite scriptures about the Savior? You could mark a different scripture each day this week and share it with someone.

Do you sing a hymn or another uplifting song in your mind when you’re feeling down? Maybe choose one that is specifically about the Savior this week.

Do you ponder the Savior’s life and atoning sacrifice during the sacrament every week? You could prepare for the sacrament by recalling your choices throughout the week to always remember the Savior and repenting of the times when you struggled to.

Do you pray for chances to share the gospel each day? Try to have a gospel discussion this week that focuses on the Savior. You could bear your testimony of the Savior during family home evening or talk to a friend at school about an experience you had at church.

Make a goal to remember the Savior in a special way this week. Tell a parent, a sibling, a leader, or a friend about your goal. At the end of the week, tell them what happened. You will both feel the peace and happiness that President Eyring talked about.

Come unto Christ

The Savior has promised us peace when we “come unto [Him]” (Matthew 11:28). This means following His example and trying to stay close to Him. Cut out this card and hang it where you’ll see it often. What are other ways you can come unto Christ?

- Be reverent during the sacrament.
- Choose to be kind and not judge others.
- Read about the Savior in the scriptures.
- ________________
- ________________
- ________________
- ________________
Family Joy Is Found in Righteousness

God “established families to bring us happiness, to help us learn correct principles in a loving atmosphere, and to prepare us for eternal life.”¹ Of God’s “great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8), President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said: “His plan declares that men and women are ‘that they might have joy’ [2 Nephi 2:25]. That joy comes when we choose to live in harmony with God’s eternal plan.”²

A Christ-centered home provides the greatest opportunities for success. Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles describes it as a place “where the gospel is taught, covenants are kept, and love abounds,” where families can live “an obedient life” and become “firmly rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ.”³

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, said: “We can decide that we will do all we can to bring down the powers of heaven into [our] family.” And we’re most likely to promote love, service, obedience, and happiness in our homes by “[our children’s] hearing the word of God and then trying it in faith. If they do, their natures will be changed in a way that produces the happiness they seek.”⁴

Additional Scriptures
3 John 1:4; 1 Nephi 8:12; 2 Nephi 5:27

Consider This
What could we do to live more righteously within our families?

NOTES
In the Book of Mormon, Amulek preaches a powerful sermon about the Atonement of Jesus Christ (see Alma 34). Among the beautiful verses in this chapter, one verse that stands out for me is when Amulek states, “For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God” (Alma 34:32).

Believing that the purpose of this life is “to prepare to meet God,” we might ask ourselves these questions: What am I doing each day, each week, and each month to prepare for that wonderful reunion with our Heavenly Father? How will I choose to spend the precious time allotted to me?

How Will We Prepare?

There are many ways we could spend our time preparing to meet God. On a week-to-week basis, I believe we can agree that the most important hour of the week is the time spent partaking of the sacrament, renewing our covenants with Heavenly Father, reflecting on the love we feel from Him and the hope we can all have as a result of the Atonement of His Son, Jesus Christ.

I also believe that the hour we spend in our Sunday School classes could have a greater effect on our preparation than we realize. But to take advantage of that opportunity, we may need to examine how we approach Sunday School.

The purpose of Sunday School is to “strengthen individuals’ and families’ faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ through teaching, learning, and fellowshipping.” These essential elements of conversion are vital in our efforts to prepare to meet God. We are thrilled that teachers across the Church are working to improve their ability to teach using *Teaching in the Savior’s Way* and teacher council meetings.

But improved teaching alone is not enough. It must be matched by our efforts to learn in the Savior’s way. He said we are to learn “by study and also by faith” (D&C 109:7). Faith is a principle of action. We must do if we want to know (see John 7:17).

Our Sunday School classes can encourage this kind of teaching and learning when they are safe places to share the experiences we had and the inspiration we felt during the week while learning and applying the scriptures in preparation for class. As we “teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom . . . all may be edified of all” (D&C 88:77, 122).

Call the Sabbath a Delight

Recently the First Presidency invited each of us to “call the sabbath a delight” (Isaiah 58:13) in our lives. The three-hour Sunday block experience helps us accomplish that goal.

In that spirit, let me ask another question: Why do we sometimes choose not to fully embrace the opportunity Sunday School offers?

In recent years, I have witnessed a lot of different Sunday School “alternatives” during Sunday School time, including visiting in the halls, ward leaders conducting interviews, stake leaders training their ward leaders, and more. We must be intentional about how we use this precious time.

Sunday School has an important role to play in helping all of us prepare to meet God. Are you making it a priority?
counterparts, and youth leaders addressing program concerns.

With so many demands on their time, I understand why leaders may use Sunday School time to do other things. But what a blessing it is for all involved when ward leaders set aside an hour to participate in gospel discussions with the members of their flock!

I'm confident you have experienced other examples of “Sunday School neglect.” For one reason or another, many of us have felt at times that we don't get as much out of Sunday School classes as we would like. I have learned that the richness of my Sunday School experience is determined as much by my preparation and participation as that of my teacher. Brother Tad R. Callister, Sunday School General President, has written, “Every time we study the scriptures, come to class a little better prepared, participate in class discussions, ask questions, and record sacred impressions, we are becoming more like God, thus increasing our capacity to experience the joy He feels.”

Prepare for and Protect the Sunday School Hour

I invite you to do your best to prepare for and protect the Sunday School hour. Each ward and branch member, including our leaders, should have the sweet blessing of preparing to meet God during this important hour each week.

NOTES
1. Handbook 2: Administering the Church (2010), 12.1
PREPARING A PLACE FOR THE LORD

Each time I hear the story of the Savior’s birth and earthly ministry, I think of our personal responsibility to prepare welcoming places for Him for the day He returns.

By Bishop Gérald Caussé
Presiding Bishop
Last year just before Christmas, I attended a dinner given in honor of a high-ranking French official who is not a member of the Church. The dinner was held in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Before sitting down to our meal, we took our guest to the observation window on the 10th floor, which offers visitors a beautiful view of Temple Square. The scene was almost magical, with the Salt Lake Temple standing tall amid myriad glittering lights. We stood there for several minutes, almost speechless.

Upon our return to the banquet room, the official asked us an unexpected question: “Do you believe in the end of the world?” This led to an inspiring discussion about the Lord’s Second Coming and the importance for all of us to be prepared to receive Him on the day of His return.

As I was thinking about the temple we had just admired, a wonderful thought came to my mind: “Upon His return, Jesus will at last have a beautiful place in which to dwell!”

The Guide to the Scriptures notes that a temple is “literally the house of the Lord.”¹ In other words, it is not just a symbolic place. The temples of our dispensation are prepared and consecrated houses where He may physically come. The Lord said that His Church should be established so “that my covenant people may be gathered in one in that day when I shall come to my temple” (D&C 42:36; emphasis added).

What a striking contrast with the Savior’s humble beginnings in mortality. He, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, was born in a simple stable and laid in a manger “because there was no room . . . in the inn” (Luke 2:7). During His early childhood, Jesus did not always enjoy the comforts of a permanent home, such as when His family fled to Egypt to escape the cruelty of a tyrant (see Matthew 2:13–14).

We don’t know the details of His family’s sojourn in Egypt, but likely He and His parents lived the strenuous life of refugees—a life comparable to that of the many migrants in our time who have fled theaters of war and civil conflict in Africa and the Middle East.
Even during His adult life, Jesus indicated that He did not have a regular home. One day a man approached Him and said, “Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” The Savior answered, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Luke 9:57, 58).

My brothers and sisters, each time I hear the story of the Savior’s birth and earthly ministry, I think of our personal responsibility to prepare welcoming places for Him for the day He returns. What can we do?

**Go to the Temple**

First, let us be prepared to receive Him in His own house—the temple. Who among us has not dreamed of visiting the places where the Savior was born, lived, and carried out His earthly ministry? Many, with considerable sacrifice, have journeyed to the Holy Land. But how important it is that we visit the places to which He might one day return. One of the best ways we, as His disciples, can prepare for His Second Coming is to go regularly to His holy house and bind ourselves to Him through sacred covenants.

**Prepare Your Home**

Second, we can make our homes places where the Lord would want to stay. In the scriptures, we read numerous accounts of kindly people who welcomed and hosted the Savior in their homes. So let us ask ourselves these questions: Is my home acceptable to the Lord? Is it a safe, peaceful, and Spirit-filled place where He would feel comfortable? Our homes need not be spacious or luxurious. A humble dwelling, centered on the gospel and filled with caring family and friends, would make Him happy.

**Gather the Elect**

Third, we can help gather His elect from all over the world—even if that means leaving our homes for a time to help build His earthly kingdom. The history of the people of God is a history of Saints who were always ready and willing to go where the Lord wanted them to go. I think of the prophets of old, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Lehi, and many others. I think of the Lord’s Apostles in the meridian of time who relentlessly spread the gospel across the Mediterranean.

Latter-day prophets and apostles, along with thousands of missionaries, have taken and are continuing to take the message of Christ to the four corners of the earth. They are willing to leave the comforts of their homes to offer their service in the Lord’s vineyard.

**Help Those in Need**

Finally, a wonderful way to prepare a place for the Lord is to help our neighbors who don’t have a home. The early days of the Restoration included times when the Saints were without shelter. In their quest for Zion, the intolerance and wickedness of their enemies often forced them to leave their homes.

President Brigham Young (1801–77) used these touching words to describe their plight: “We have, time and again, and again, been driven from our peaceful homes, and our women and children been obliged to exist on the prairies, in the forests, on the roads, and in tents, in the dead of winter, suffering all manner of hardships, even to death itself.”

One of the most moving episodes from this era highlights the small village of Quincy, Illinois, during the winter of 1839. At that time, this community of settlers and farmers, situated on the bank of the Mississippi River, included about 1,500 souls living in precarious conditions. In the middle of a harsh winter, they suddenly faced the arrival of approximately 5,000 Church members fleeing the extermination order issued by the governor of Missouri. The Saints were in a state of utter destitution and distress, having crossed the frozen waters of the Mississippi on foot. With incredible generosity, the citizens of Quincy welcomed them with open arms, opening their homes and sharing their meager provisions.

One resident of Quincy described the arrival of these refugees: “Many of the Saints were glad to find shelter in my house from the storms, until they could find a place..."
to live in. Very many nights the floors, upstairs and down, were covered with beds so closely it was impossible to set a foot anywhere without stepping on a bed."

For those of us who are blessed to live in more calm and prosperous circumstances, these accounts have great significance. They teach us to be a people always prepared to reach out to the homeless and the destitute. Regardless of whether we live in areas experiencing a great influx of refugees or in small, isolated communities, there are many ways we can serve those who struggle to have the bare necessities of life. We can contribute to the Church’s humanitarian fund. We can work with others in our communities who provide loving service to those in need. We can extend our friendship to those who have been displaced when they come into our communities. We can genuinely welcome the strangers who visit our wards and branches.

One of our most beautiful hymns recounts the story of a stranger who found sanctuary with a man of great charity.

_Twas night; the floods were out; it blew_  
_A winter hurricane aloof._  
_I heard his voice abroad and flew_  
_To bid him welcome to my roof._

_I warmed and clothed and cheered my guest_  
_And laid him on my couch to rest;_  
_Then made the earth my bed, and seemed_  
_In Eden’s garden while I dreamed . . . _

_Then in a moment to my view_  
_The stranger started from disguise._  
_The tokens in his hands I knew;_  
_The Savior stood before mine eyes._  
_He spake, and my poor name he named,_  
_“Of me thou hast not been ashamed._  
_These deeds shall thy memorial be;_  
_Fear not, thou didst them unto me.”_  

I am proud to belong to a Church that never ceases to reach out to the poor and needy of the earth. I am humbled by the countless acts of love and charity, small and great, performed each day by the Church and its members. These acts will always be an essential part of the mission of the Church because it is the Church of Jesus Christ and we strive to follow His example.

Jesus is our Savior and Redeemer. I testify that He was born in the meridian of time, that He lives, and that one day He will return in glory to rule and reign over His earthly kingdom.

By way of preparation, I invite you to go more often to His holy house; create a safe, loving, and peaceful environment in your home; and participate in gathering His elect from the four corners of the earth. I also pray that you will feel a special desire to reach out in love to those among us who are homeless and destitute. In doing so, you will prepare a place in your heart and home to welcome the Savior, and His return truly will be a great and marvelous day. ■

NOTES
3. Wandle Mace, in Ora H. Barlow, _The Israel Barlow Story and Mormon Mores_ (1968), 156; see also 154–55.
O
f all the attributes of Jesus Christ, perhaps the most significant is that He is “full of grace” (John 1:14). In the scriptures the term grace most often refers to the divine disposition and power to bless, bestow gifts, or otherwise act favorably toward man. The Bible Dictionary puts it this way: “The main idea of the word [grace] is divine means of help or strength. . . . Grace is an enabling power” (“Grace”). It enables the recipient to do and to be what he or she cannot do and cannot be if left to his or her own means.

All of us need such an enabling power. We are the sons and daughters of God. As such, we have the potential to become like Him.
Our Incapacity in Spirit and Body

While it may be expected that we achieve the “fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13), we simply cannot do so on our own. Each of us is made up of two things—an eternal spirit and a mortal body (see Abraham 3:18). Our eternal spirit comes into the world a product of choices made in the pre-mortal world. These premortal choices are part of our personality, character, and spiritual intelligence. Significantly, no two spirits are the same (see Abraham 3:19). Each spirit possesses a different degree of spiritual intelligence, or light and truth (see D&C 93:36), according to his or her premortal choices. While each of our spirits may arrive in its mortal body at birth clean and pure, and even noble and great, no one of our spirits is yet perfectly developed unto the fulness of Christ. Perfection of spirit may be pursued during the schooling of mortality and the additional experience of the spirit world, but perfection of spirit is not finally accomplished until the Resurrection.

In addition to the current imperfection of our spirits, our mortal bodies are also imperfect. As wondrous as they are, our mortal bodies are subject to decay, deterioration, and death and to desires, appetites, and passions previously unknown to us. Under such conditions it is enormously difficult to fully subject the body to the will of the spirit. Too often the spirit succumbs to the dictates of the body. Some of the greatest spirits who have come to earth have struggled to subdue their physical bodies. “My heart sorroweth because of my flesh,” cried Nephi. “I am encompassed about, because of the temptations and the sins which do so easily beset me” (2 Nephi 4:17, 18; see also verse 27).

The war between spirit and body is made all the more difficult by another fact of mortality. Our physical bodies are constructed of the materials of a “fallen” world, which gives Satan a particular “power to captivate” (2 Nephi 2:29). President Brigham Young (1801–77) made the following observation: “Do not suppose that we shall ever in the flesh be free from temptations to sin,” he said. “Some suppose that they can in the flesh be sanctified body and spirit and become so pure that they will never again feel the effects of the power of the adversary of truth. Were it possible for a person to attain to this degree of perfection in the flesh he could not die, neither remain in a world where sin predominates. . . . I think we shall more or less feel the effects of sin so long as we live, and finally have to pass the ordeals of death.”1

The Divine Power of Grace

We need a divine power that can transform our souls with all of our current weaknesses and deficiencies into gods with all of the accompanying strengths, virtues, and capacities. Gratefully, such a divine power exists; it is God’s grace. Only through the endowment of God’s grace are we “added upon” (Abraham 3:26), such that, in time, we attain the fulness of Christ. Indeed, this is exactly how Christ attained His fulness.

As the Lord told Joseph Smith, “He that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light growth brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (D&C 50:24). But if we treat casually, set aside, or even ignore the gracious blessings we receive from the Lord, then “greater...
things are withheld” from us (3 Nephi 26:10). In such circumstances, we receive the “grace of God in vain” (2 Corinthians 6:1) and eventually “fall from grace” (D&C 20:32) altogether.

All this suggests that we must learn patience with ourselves and others in our current weaknesses and imperfections, and we must learn perseverance in the unavoidably gradual process of growth unto perfection.

**Faith in Jesus Christ**

Understanding how grace is granted helps us understand how some principles fully enable grace to fill us. Faith in Jesus Christ is the first principle that welcomes grace (see Romans 5:1–2). Truth, hope, action, and confirming witness are the essential elements of faith and are the pathway to receiving the Lord’s grace.

Consider, for example, Peter’s experience of walking on the water to the Lord. Like us at times, Peter and the disciples were in the midst of a tempestuous sea. Jesus came to them, walking on the water and bidding them to come to Him. With hope, Peter came down out of the boat into the boisterous sea and walked toward the Lord. His hope in Christ, coupled with determined action, permitted him to receive the power of walking on the water. But, looking at the storm around him, Peter doubted and began to sink. “Lord, save me,” he cried. In response, the scripture records that “immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him” (Matthew 14:30–31). When Peter fixed his eyes on the Lord and acted in faith, he had power to do what he could not do on his own—walk on the water.

When Peter took his eyes off of the Lord and doubted, Peter severed himself from that power, was left to his own, and began to
sink. Note well the response of the Lord to Peter’s cry for help. “Immediately” did the Lord extend His hand to save him. Such is the availability of the Lord’s grace in our time of need.

**Repentance**

Repentance is the second principle that enables grace to fill us. Mormon taught: “Blessed are they who will repent and hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; for these are they that shall be saved. And may God grant . . . that men might be brought unto repentance and good works, that they might be restored unto grace for grace, according to their works” (Helaman 12:23–24). From this scripture, it is clear that a repentant heart and good works are in harmony with grace.

Consider the example of Alma the Younger. He, along with the sons of Mosiah, “were the very vilest of sinners” (Mosiah 28:4). When the angel of the Lord appeared unto Alma, he was confronted with all the sins and iniquities of his life. In that moment he became “racked with eternal torment” (Alma 36:12). “The very thought of coming into the presence of my God,” he said, “did rack my soul with inexpressible horror” (Alma 36:14). But Alma remembered that his father had spoken concerning the coming of Jesus Christ to atone for the sins of the world. This recollection moved him to cry out in his heart, “O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me” (Alma 36:18). Immediately, he “could remember [his] pains no more” and “was harrowed up by the memory of [his] sins no more” (Alma 36:19).

Alma’s soul-wrenching repentance welcomed a power that cleansed and transformed him into a new creature. No longer did he seek to destroy the Church of God. Rather, for the balance of his life, Alma labored to build up the Church by working to help others repent and receive the Holy Ghost. Alma the Younger’s conversion from the vilest of sinners to prophet of God is a dramatic example of the power of the Lord’s grace to both justify and sanctify every one of us.

**Humility**

The third principle is humility. The Lord taught Moroni, “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). Making weak things become strong is the work of grace.

If humility is necessary, we might well ask what humility is. Briefly stated, humility is the submission of one’s own will to the will of God and giving Him the honor for what is accomplished. In this regard, Jesus Christ
is our greatest example. His humility and submissiveness were perfectly manifested during His atoning sacrifice. “O my Father,” Jesus prayed, “if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39). The fulness of God’s grace flooded Christ on this occasion.

**Diligence**

The fourth principle is diligence. As Nephi taught his people, “It is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23). Some may read this scripture to mean that God’s grace is withheld until we have given our best efforts. I do not read it this way. There are simply too many examples of God’s grace being extended to man without him doing anything. The power of the Resurrection, for example, is given to all by the grace of God, irrespective of individual effort. I understand Nephi’s “all we can do” language to mean that God’s grace is extended to us when we are diligent. As Elder Bruce C. Hafen, former member of the Seventy, has written, “The Savior’s gift of grace to us is not necessarily limited in time to ‘after’ all we can do. We may receive his grace before, during, and after the time when we expend our own efforts.”

Consider the example of the brother of Jared. He was instructed to build barges and use them to cross the ocean. Step by step, the brother of Jared was diligent in following the Lord’s instructions. As he completed the barges, the brother of Jared became concerned about the darkness in the barges and asked the Lord to provide light. While the Lord could have readily provided the brother of Jared with a solution, He asked instead, “What will ye that I should do that...
ye may have light in your vessels?” (Ether 2:23). In response, the brother of Jared diligently prepared 16 stones, presented them to the Lord, and asked that He touch them so “that they may shine forth in darkness” (see Ether 3:1–4).

The brother of Jared had not completed all that the Lord had given him to do, but the Lord extended His power nonetheless in behalf of the brother of Jared, touching each of the stones and causing them to produce the light needed for the anticipated voyage. In so doing, the Lord showed His willingness and readiness to extend His divine powers to us as we diligently do the best we can.

**Obedience**

The fifth principle is obedience. “If you keep my commandments,” said the Lord, “you shall receive grace for grace” (D&C 93:20).

Moroni puts it this way: “If ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ” (Moroni 10:32).

Without diminishing the Lord’s injunction to keep the commandments or Moroni’s injunction to deny ourselves of all ungodliness, we should understand that grace is not dependent on our perfect compliance. If grace were dependent on our perfectly keeping the commandments or perfectly denying ourselves of all ungodliness, our persistent imperfection in mortality would forever preclude us from acquiring grace. Grace is intended, after all, to enable us to more perfectly keep the commandments and pursue a godlier walk, until we attain the full stature of Christ.
The Lord's injunction to keep the commandments and Moroni's injunction to deny ourselves of all ungodliness must be understood as doing these things the best we can. While our actions are important, more important are the intentions of our hearts.

Receiving the Holy Ghost and Seeking the Gifts of the Spirit

The final principle is to receive the Holy Ghost and seek the gifts of the Spirit (see Mosiah 18:16). Indeed, we are filled with the grace of God when we receive the Holy Ghost, for it is the Holy Ghost who distributes and delivers to us God's sanctifying, enabling, and perfecting powers.

In this regard, Elder Parley P. Pratt (1807–57) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught the following: “The gift of the Holy Ghost . . . quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands, and purifies all the natural passions and affections, and adapts them, by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use. It inspires, develops, cultivates, and matures all the fine-tuned sympathies, joys, tastes, kindred feelings, and affections of our nature. It inspires virtue, kindness, goodness, tenderness, gentleness, and charity. It develops beauty of person, form, and features. It tends to health, vigor, animation, and social feeling. It invigorates all the faculties of the physical and intellectual man. It strengthens and gives tone to the nerves. In short, it is, as it were, marrow to the bone, joy to the heart, light to the eyes, music to the ears, and life to the whole being.”

Such blessings come to us as we receive the Holy Ghost following our baptism and confirmation. Elder Orson Pratt (1811–81) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that “whenever the Holy Ghost takes up its residence in a person, it not only cleanses, sanctifies, and purifies him, in proportion as he yields himself to its influence, but also imparts to him some gift, intended for the benefit of himself and others. . . . These spiritual gifts are distributed among the members of the Church, according to their faithfulness, circumstances, natural abilities, duties, and callings; that the whole may be properly instructed, confirmed, perfected, and saved.”

The Sufficiency of God's Grace

Jesus Christ is full of grace. Christ acquired the riches of His grace from His Father and did so “grace for grace” (D&C 93:12). In like manner we receive grace for grace. We will be endowed with every attribute and characteristic of God. Finally, this enabling and perfecting power of grace is available through the principles of faith, repentance, humility, diligence, obedience, and seeking the Spirit and its gifts.

The Lord's grace is sufficient to lift you from death and sin and to endow you with eternal life. It is sufficient to change you, transform you, and perfect you. It is sufficient to enable you to fully realize your divine potential as a son or daughter of God. ■

From a Church Educational Devotional address, “His Grace Is Sufficient for You,” delivered at Brigham Young University–Hawaii on June 3, 2014. For the full address, go to devotional.byuh.edu.

The Lord’s grace is sufficient to lift you from death and sin and to endow you with eternal life. It is sufficient to change you, transform you, and perfect you.

NOTES
1. Brigham Young, in Deseret News, June 3, 1863.
TELL ME THE STORIES OF JESUS

THE 10TH INTERNATIONAL ART COMPETITION:

Jorge Orlando Cocco Santangelo,
The Call (see Matthew 4:19–20),
Argentina, Purchase Award Winner
Following is a sampling of art from the 10th International Art Competition that was recently on display at the Church History Museum in Salt Lake City, Utah. Ninety-eight pieces of art were selected from among the 944 entries from 40 countries around the world. Artists could choose any story from the life of our Savior Jesus Christ as the subject for their creation. Interpretations of these stories found their way into paintings, drawings, sculptures, ceramics, photography, collages, needlework, stained glass, and digital.

You can view the exhibit online at lds.org/go/10art.

Sabrina Jill Squires,
The Last Supper (see John 13:1-35),
United States

Meagan Ruth Getz,
We Are Come to Worship Him (see Matthew 2:1-2),
United States
Michael Malm, To Be with God (see Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 4:1 [in Matthew 4:1, footnote b]), United States, Purchase Award Winner

Robin Birrell, She Baked the Loaves and Dried the Fishes (see John 6:9–14), United States; Rob Adamson, Mount of Transfiguration (see Matthew 17:2), United States
Caitlin Maxfield Connolly, A Believing Woman
(see Matthew 9:22), United States, Purchase Award Winner

Elspeth Young, Other Sheep
I Have (see John 10:16), United States

Erin Meads, Even All Her
Living: The Widow’s Mite (see Mark 12:44), United States

Matthew Hyrum Dell,
The Plan of Salvation
(see John 3:16), Australia
Michal Diane Onyon, The Good Shepherd (see Luke 15:4), United States

Kathleen Peterson, Jesus and the Woman Taken (see John 8:11), United States
Daniel Alma Wilson,  
*Light in the Darkness*  
(see John 8:12),  
United States

Clark Kelley Price,  
*Truly This Man Was the Son of God*  
(see Mark 15:39),  
United States

Lester Lee Yocum,  
*In the Garden*  
(see Matthew 26:36–39),  
United States

Kazuko Covington,  
*Worlds without End*  
(see Moses 2),  
Japan

Daniel Alma Wilson,  
*Light in the Darkness*  
(see John 8:12),  
United States
May you find the joy and the peace that come from knowing that through your teaching, you have touched a life and lifted one of Heavenly Father’s children on the journey back to His presence.

In a General Authority training meeting, President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) said regarding the teaching of Church doctrine: “We cannot be too careful. We must watch that we do not get off [course]. In our efforts to be original and fresh and different, we may teach things which may not be entirely in harmony with the basic doctrines of this the restored Church of Jesus Christ. . . . We had better be more alert. . . . We must be watchmen on the tower.”

As Church education moves forward in the 21st century, our educators need to consider any changes they should make in the way they prepare to teach, how they teach, and what they teach if they are to build unwavering faith in the lives of our precious youth.

Gone are the days when a student asked an honest question and a teacher responded, “Don’t worry about it!” Gone are the days when a student raised a sincere concern and a teacher bore his or her testimony as a response intended to avoid the issue. Gone are the days when students were protected from people who attacked the Church.

In these remarks to Church Educational System religious educators, Elder Ballard shares principles and counsel that apply to all who teach in the Church.
Fortunately, the Lord has provided this timely and timeless counsel to teachers: “And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118).

This is especially applicable today because not all of our students have the faith necessary to face the challenges ahead and because many of them are already exposed through the Internet to corrosive forces of an increasingly secular world that is hostile to faith, family, and gospel standards. The Internet is expanding its reach across the world into almost every home and into the hands and minds of our students.

You can help students by teaching them what it means to combine study and faith as they learn. Teach them by modeling this skill and approach in class.

President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) observed:

“We would remind you that the acquiring of knowledge by faith is no easy road to learning. It demands strenuous effort and a continual striving by faith. . . .

“Learning by faith is no task for a lazy man [or woman]. Someone has said, in effect, that such a process requires the bending of the whole soul, the calling up from the depths of the human mind and linking it with God—the right connection must be formed. Then only comes ‘knowledge by faith.’”

Knowledge by faith will produce a pure testimony, and a pure testimony has the power to change lives, as illustrated in the following brief stories.

Three Stories

Phoebe Carter left her home in Maine, USA, to gather with the Saints in Ohio in the 1830s. She recalled: “My friends marveled at my course, as did I, but something within impelled me on. My mother’s grief at my leaving home was almost more than I could bear; and had it not been for the spirit within I should have faltered at the last.”
Phoebe followed the Prophet Joseph Smith and gathered with the Saints in Ohio and later in Utah, where she died a faithful Latter-day Saint and equally yoked as the wife of Church President Wilford Woodruff (1807–98).

As a college student, Marion G. Romney (1897–1988) had decided he could not serve a mission because of his family's financial situation. On one occasion, however, he heard Elder Melvin J. Ballard (1873–1939) speak. A biography notes, “Little did [Marion] know that the course of his life, in one very short moment, was about to be completely changed.”

The story continues: “For the first time Marion . . . fully understood what it was [like] to be under the influence of inspiration. A piercing, tingling sensation filled his soul. He . . . never had been so touched as he was now, listening to the words of this newest of the Apostles. . . . “. . . The glow of the Apostle’s countenance and the sincerity of [his] testimony filled him with an irresistible desire to go on a mission. . . . He knew that his plans for further education must be postponed.”

Soon, Marion was on his way to Australia, where he served faithfully. Later he became a mighty Apostle and a member of the First Presidency.

The final story comes from President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, about the impact of an aged teacher on William E. Berrett. The teacher, a convert from Norway, had imperfect English-language skills. Despite the teacher's limitations, President Packer recalled, Brother Berrett testified of his teacher, “We could warm our hands by the fire of his faith.”

Later, William became the head of seminaries, institutes, and Church schools.

For Phoebe, Marion, and William, hearing a pure testimony became the catalyst that changed their lives forever. The same can be true for those you teach. However, given the realities of today's world, pure testimony may not always be enough. Phoebe, Marion, and William were clean and pure and free from pornography and worldliness as they sat at the feet of inspired missionaries, teachers, and leaders. The Spirit easily penetrated their soft and pure hearts.

Today the story is much different. Some of your students are already infected by pornography and worldliness before they ever reach your classes.

It was only a generation ago that our young people's access to information about our history, doctrine, and practices was basically limited to materials printed by the Church. Few students came in contact with alternative interpretations. Mostly, our young people lived a sheltered life.

Our curriculum at that time, though well-meaning, did not prepare students for today—a day when they have instant access to virtually everything about the Church from every possible point of view. Today what they see on their mobile devices is likely to be faith challenging as much as faith promoting. Many of our young people are more familiar with Google than with the gospel, more attuned to the Internet than to inspiration, and more involved with Facebook than with faith.

**Doctrinal Mastery**

In light of these challenges, the Church Board of Education recently approved an initiative in seminary called Doctrinal Mastery. Building on what already has been done in Scripture Mastery, this new initiative focuses on building and strengthening our students' faith in Jesus Christ and fortifying them with increased ability to live and apply the gospel in their lives. Drawing on the scriptures and the words of the prophets, they will learn how to act with faith in Christ to acquire spiritual knowledge and
understanding of His gospel. And they will have opportunities to learn how to apply the doctrine of Christ and gospel principles to the questions and challenges they hear and see every day among their peers and on social media.

This initiative is inspired and timely. It will have a wonderful influence on our young people. However, the success of Doctrinal Mastery, and of all the other programs of study in the Church Educational System, will depend to an important extent upon our teachers.

In the face of these challenges, what are the opportunities and responsibilities gospel teachers have in the 21st century? Obviously you teachers must love the Lord, His Church, and your students. You must also bear pure testimony sincerely and often. Additionally, more than at any time in our history, your students also need to be blessed by learning doctrinal and historical content and context by study and by faith accompanied by pure testimony so they can experience a mature and lasting conversion to the gospel and a lifelong commitment to Jesus Christ. Mature and lasting conversion means they will “stay in the boat and hold on” throughout their entire lives.  

For you to understand the doctrinal and historical content and context of the scriptures and our history, you will need to study from the “best books,” as the Lord has directed (D&C 88:118). The “best books” include the scriptures, the teachings of modern prophets and apostles, and the best LDS scholarship available. Through your diligent efforts to learn by study and by faith, you will be able to help your students learn the skills and attitudes necessary to distinguish between reliable information that will lift them up and the half-truths and incorrect interpretations of doctrine, history, and practices that will bring them down.

Teach them about the challenges they face when relying upon the Internet to answer questions of eternal significance. Remind them that James did not say, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him Google!” (see James 1:5).

Wise people do not rely on the Internet to diagnose and treat emotional, mental, and physical health challenges, especially life-threatening challenges. Instead, they seek out health experts, those trained and licensed by recognized medical and state boards. Even then, prudent people seek a second opinion.

If that is the sensible course to take in finding answers for emotional, mental, and physical health issues, it is even more so when eternal life is at stake. When something has the potential to threaten our spiritual life, our most precious family relationships, and our membership in the kingdom, we should find thoughtful and faithful Church leaders to help us. And, if necessary, we should ask those with appropriate academic training, experience, and expertise for help.

This is exactly what I do when I need an answer to my own questions that I cannot answer myself. I seek help from my Brethren in the Quorum of the Twelve and from others with expertise in fields of Church history and doctrine.

Gospel teachers should be among the first—outside students’ own families—to introduce authoritative sources on topics that may be less well-known or controversial so that students will measure whatever they hear or read later against what they have already been taught.
Spiritual Inoculation

We give medical inoculations to our precious missionaries before sending them into the mission field so they will be protected against diseases that can harm them. In a similar fashion, before you send your students into the world, inoculate them by providing faithful, thoughtful, and accurate interpretation of gospel doctrine, the scriptures, our history, and those topics that are sometimes misunderstood.

To name a few such topics that are less known or controversial, I’m talking about plural marriage, seer stones, different accounts of the First Vision, the process of translation of the Book of Mormon or the Book of Abraham, gender issues, race and the priesthood, and a Heavenly Mother.

The efforts to inoculate our young people will often fall to Church Educational System teachers. With those thoughts in mind, find time to think about your opportunities and your responsibilities.

Church leaders today are fully conscious of the unlimited access to information, and we are making extraordinary efforts to provide accurate context and understanding of the teachings of the Restoration. A prime example of this effort is the 11 Gospel Topics essays on LDS.org that provide balanced and reliable interpretations of the facts for controversial and unfamiliar Church-related subjects.

It is important that you know the content of these essays. If you have questions about them, please ask someone who has studied them and understands them. In other words, “seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118) as you master the content of these essays.

You should also become familiar with the Joseph Smith Papers website, the Church history section on LDS.org, and other resources by faithful LDS scholars.

The effort for gospel transparency and spiritual inoculation through a thoughtful study of doctrine and history, coupled with a burning testimony, is the best antidote we have to help students avoid and deal with questions, doubt, or faith crises they may face in this information age.

As you teachers pay the price to better understand our history, doctrine, and practices —better than you do now—you will be prepared to provide thoughtful, careful, and inspired answers to your students’ questions.

One way to know what questions your students have is to listen attentively to them. All good teachers must be good listeners. In addition to listening to your students, encourage them in class or in private to ask you questions about any topic. One of the most important questions your students may ask is “Why?” When asked with a sincere desire to understand, “Why?” is a great question. It is the question missionaries want their investigators to ask. Why are we here? Why do bad things happen to good people? Why should we pray? Why should we follow Christ? Often the “why” questions lead to inspiration and revelation. Knowing our Heavenly Father’s plan of salvation will help you answer most of the “why” questions.

Here is one final note about answering questions. It is important to teach your students that although the gospel provides many, if not most, answers to life’s most important questions, some questions cannot be answered in mortality because we lack...
the information needed for a proper answer. As we learn in Jacob: “Behold, great and marvelous are the works of the Lord. How unsearchable are the depths of the mysteries of him; and it is impossible that man should find out all his ways. And no man knoweth of his ways save it be revealed unto him” (Jacob 4:8; see also D&C 101:32–34).

A Word of Caution

Now I offer a word of caution. Please recognize that you may come to believe, as many of your students do, that you are a scriptural, doctrinal, and history expert. A recent study revealed that “the more people think they know about a topic, the more likely they are to allege understanding beyond what they know, even to the point of feigning knowledge . . . and fabricating information.”

Identified as overclaiming, this temptation must be avoided by our gospel teachers. It is perfectly all right to say, “I do not know.” However, once that is said, you have a responsibility to find the best answers to thoughtful questions your students ask (see D&C 101:32–34).

As you teach your students and respond to their questions, let me warn you not to pass along faith-promoting or unsubstantiated rumors or outdated understandings and explanations of our doctrine and practices from the past. It is always wise to make it a practice to study the words of the living prophets and apostles; keep updated on current Church issues, policies, and statements through mormonnewsroom.org and LDS.org; and consult the works of recognized, thoughtful, and faithful LDS scholars to ensure you do not teach things that are untrue, out of date, or odd and quirky.

The authors of the overclaiming study noted that “a tendency to overclaim, especially in self-perceived experts, . . . may discourage individuals from educating themselves in precisely those areas in which they consider themselves knowledgeable.”

In addition to becoming lifelong learners, you must also be doing those things in your personal life that allow the Holy Spirit to work within you. Such things include sincere daily prayer, faithful fasting, regular study and pondering of the scriptures and the words of the living prophets, making the Sabbath day a delight, partaking of the sacrament with humility and always remembering the Savior, worshipping in the temple as often as possible, and, finally, reaching out to the needy, poor, and lonely—both those close by and across the world.

To properly fulfill your opportunities and responsibilities, you must practice what you preach!

Be courageous by seeking counsel and correction from those you trust: a spouse, priesthood leaders, or supervisors. Ask them where you can improve in your personal discipleship. Avoid anything that drives away the Spirit.

Additionally, may I suggest that you hold a personal interview with yourself on occasion and review 2 Nephi 26:29–32, Alma 5:14–30, and Doctrine and Covenants 121:33–46? Doing so will help you identify the kinds of temptations we all may face. If something needs to change in your life, then resolve to fix it.

Avoid the temptation to question the motives of your co-laborers. Instead, look deeply into your own heart and search your own desires and motives. Only then can the Savior change your heart and align your desires and motives with His.
The rising generation needs to know, understand, embrace, and participate in God's plan of salvation. Understanding the plan will give them the divine insight through which to view themselves as sons and daughters of God, which provides a lens to understand almost every doctrine, practice, and policy of the Church.

Teachers of the gospel today need to accept the opportunity and the responsibility to teach the 21st century's young people correct principles about the plan, including the divinely sanctioned doctrine of marriage and the role of the family as defined in the proclamation on the family.11

### The Doctrine of Eternal Marriage

The doctrine of eternal marriage and family is a crucial part of God's plan of happiness. It includes our own temple-sealed families as part of Heavenly Father's own eternal family in the celestial kingdom. Because this doctrine relates directly to His own family and to His own spirit children, we are taught in Genesis that "male and female created he them" and that He commanded Father Adam and Mother Eve to "multiply, and replenish the earth" (see Genesis 1:27–28).

It has been said that the plan of happiness begins and ends with family. Indeed, family began in the premortal world, where we lived as members of our heavenly parents' family. And in the end, familial commitments and loving relationships will not only continue to exist but also proliferate through the process of procreation (see D&C 131:1–4; 132:19).

The hinge point that connects it all—on which God's plan and our eternal destiny depend and on which all else pivots—is our Savior, Jesus Christ. His atoning sacrifice makes all things possible, including but not limited to a loving, caring, and eternal marriage and family.

The Lord teaches us that no single person, regardless of his or her righteousness, can obtain all our Heavenly Father has for His children. A single individual is half of the equation, unable to dwell in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom (see 1 Corinthians 11:11; D&C 131:1–4).

Your students need to understand that the purpose of mortality is to become more like God by gaining physical bodies, exercising agency, and assuming roles that previously belonged only to heavenly parents—roles of husband, wife, and parent.

The prophets have assured that all those who are worthy and who rely upon Jesus Christ but have not been able to be sealed to a companion or have children in this life will have those opportunities in the world to come.

Teach young people that in the Lord's Church there is room for all to worship, serve, and grow together as brothers and sisters in the gospel. Remind them what Lehi taught—that God's goal and hope for all of His children can be summed up as follows: "Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy" (2 Nephi 2:25).

Heavenly Father wants us to accept His definition of marriage and obey His first commandment to "multiply, and replenish" (Genesis 1:28)—not only to fulfill His plan but also to find the joy that His plan was designed to give His sons and daughters.

As Church educators, help our youth to have a clear understanding of God's plan of happiness wherein real joy comes to His children. Help them to know it, embrace it, participate in it, and defend it. From my 40 years of experience as a General Authority, I am concerned about the large number of our Church members, younger and older, who simply do not understand the plan for their eternal and divine destiny.

So, my fellow teachers, we should look for and relish these opportunities to explain, doctrinally and spiritually,
why we believe that knowledge of God's great plan of happiness will answer most of the "why" questions we may be asked. Expressing our belief in a premortal life where we lived as the spirit children of a Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Mother allows us to explain why this earth was created. One essential purpose of mortal life is that we can replicate that family experience ourselves, only this time as parents rather than just as children. Treasure your basic understanding of the doctrine and purpose of our Heavenly Father’s plan for our eternal happiness. And continue to teach it.

Conclusion
So, to conclude and to summarize, the points I have shared with you are:

• Teach students to combine learning by study and faith with pure testimony.
• Teach students to stay in the boat and hang on!
• Teach students to control their mobile devices and focus on being connected more to the Holy Spirit than to the Internet.
• Inoculate students with the truths of the plan of salvation found in the gospel of Jesus Christ.
• Remember that “Why?” can be a great question that leads to gospel understanding.
• Master the content of the Gospel Topics essays.
• Don’t overclaim, and don’t be afraid to say, “I don’t know.”
• Become lifelong learners.
• Seek counsel and correction from those you trust.
• Consider holding a personal interview occasionally to review your spiritual preparation, your diligence, and your effectiveness.
• Teach that the plan of happiness begins and ends with family. Keep the plan of salvation in mind at all times.
• Teach that marriage and family bring long-lasting joy.

Remember, combining learning by study, by faith, and by pure testimony brings about true and long lasting conversion. Above all else, strong faith in the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ is essential for our spiritual strength and growth.

May you find the joy and the peace that come from knowing that through your teaching, you have touched a life and lifted one of Heavenly Father’s children on the journey back to His presence.

NOTES
7. See lds.org/topics/essays.
8. See josephsmithpapers.org.
My siblings and I grew up hearing stories of how our parents sacrificed to live the gospel, and we have been blessed for their efforts. I have developed a deep sense of gratitude for all that they and other early Czech Latter-day Saints did so that their posterity could receive the blessings of the gospel.

My mother was born in Poprad, Czechoslovakia (now Slovakia). Her father served in the Czech army during World War II, and his was one of many military families that fled into nearby woods for safety from German occupiers. For five days, my grandparents huddled under a blanket with my mother and her sister, ages one and five, eating a ration of sugar cubes.

My grandparents were not members of the Church at this time, nor did they pray often. However, during this ordeal, their hearts were softened. My grandmother wrote in her journal, “This very night I felt a longing for kneeling down to ask for help from someone who had a higher authority. So I went a little ways into the forest, knelt down, and prayed with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. I pleaded for help.”

Her prayer was answered. Some families in the woods were killed upon discovery, but my grandparents and their two daughters were miraculously protected. Through this exhausting and trying experience, the Lord planted a seed of faith and trust in my grandparents’ hearts.

As they sought religious freedom, my parents were blessed by the kindness and acceptance of Latter-day Saints around them, from Czechoslovakia to Canada.

Faith and Persecution

After World War II ended a few years later, my grandparents were still living in Czechoslovakia when two young missionaries knocked on their door. After attending the small branch and taking the discussions, they received a witness of the truthfulness of the gospel and decided to be baptized. The evening of the baptismal interviews, however, the missionaries and Church leader did not arrive. At the next branch meeting, my grandparents learned that due to political upheaval, all of the missionaries had been required to leave the country. Any further religious practice would now also be prohibited. Nevertheless, the small group of Saints in the area kept their faith, now directed through local leadership and priesthood keys. My grandparents and my aunt were baptized in secrecy in 1950.

Over the next several years, members of the branch, including my grandma and my mother (now in her

_in August 1968, my family said good-bye to their home in Prague and quietly slipped away, headed for Austria._
teens), were sometimes taken in by the secret police for questioning about their religious practices. One time my grandmother was questioned aggressively for five hours. Her questioners told her they would put her in prison for five years if they learned she was teaching religion to her children.

She recorded, “I stayed peaceful and said, ‘If you think that I do something wrong teaching my children religion, then you can lock me up.’ They didn’t answer. From that time on they called me in repeatedly. They talked against the Church, and they tried to get us off our faith. The more they tried the more I clung to the Church, [for] the true Church was always persecuted."

My mother wrote in her journal, “In these most difficult years, members met on Sunday in our branch president’s apartment. We couldn’t sing loud so we whispered. We didn’t want our branch president in jail. For 18 years we were gathering like that and we were dreaming of the time when we all would be able to go to the Rocky Mountains and settle in [Salt Lake City].” They had hope even though at the time families were seldom granted paperwork that would allow them to leave the country.

As my mother grew into her twenties, she prayed longingly to be able to marry a member of the Church and somehow be sealed in the temple.

Finding a New Life

My father, who was raised in a farming village, was living in the city going to school when he met my mother. My mother was beginning her career as a professional opera singer. As they became acquainted, she introduced him to the Church. Although he had not been baptized yet, my parents married on February 18, 1967.

At the end of that year they were blessed with the arrival of my older brother. Eight months after his birth, the branch president received a revelation that the members should prepare to be led out of the country to a place where they could worship in freedom. In August 1968 the Russians invaded Czechoslovakia, creating chaos at the borders and throughout the country. The branch members who had obediently prepared escaped to Vienna, Austria.

My grandmother, who left the country with my parents, wrote: “At night when everybody in the apartment house slept, we said good-by to our home and quietly slipped away in fear that the baby might start crying. We had to do all this in secret because we had in our building three spies who worked for the secret police. We were blessed by the Lord. We escaped. When we left we knew we [would] never return, but we didn’t know where we would go from Vienna either. At this time we couldn’t worry about it.

My parents arrived in Calgary with only a suitcase, a baby buggy, and a few dollars. The Canadian members immediately started helping my family with transportation, shopping, and finding a home.
Lord revealed to the branch president His promises to us if we stay faithful to Him."

**Welcomed to a New Land**

My grandmother, my parents, and two other families lived in the basement of the Böcklinstrasse church building in Vienna for over a month. During this month my father took the missionary discussions and was baptized. Many members of the three families found jobs, and they pooled their wages together until they were all able to immigrate to Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Due to bad weather in Calgary, their plane landed in Edmonton on November 5, 1968.

Leaving behind relatives, a culture, and a land they loved must have been a daunting sacrifice, but the hardships were in many ways just beginning. Arriving in Calgary with only a suitcase, a baby buggy, and CAD $32, my parents were in great need.

The Canadian members immediately started serving my family, generously providing help with transportation, shopping, and finding a home to rent. Within a week my parents and my grandma had a home furnished with beds, a table and chairs, a couch, a crib, bedding, dishes, and even some food in the cupboards. My mother wrote in her journal how surprising and thrilling it was to see these unexpected furnishings and how grateful she was for the service given.

Along with deep feelings of gratitude, however, were other emotions. Culture shock was very real and difficult to deal with. The first year of living in Calgary was filled with English classes and frigid walks to work for Dad. They were doing everything possible to establish a sense of home, but still this was a trying time with so much change. The Saints of their new ward in Calgary worked through the language barrier to become a support system to the newly arrived members. Each Sunday my family gained strength as they attended sacrament meeting to renew their covenants, relying on the Spirit to teach them English.

**The Blessings of Eternity**

Our family of five was sealed together in the Cardston Alberta Temple in October 1976. My mother had set her sights on this day over 20 years earlier and finally, in a country and language that she would have never imagined as a youth, her prayers were answered. I was then almost eight years old, and I have wonderful memories of my parents’ sparkling eyes and smiles as we children entered the sealing room.

My grandmother was also at the temple that day. I recall her excitement at seeing the temple lights as we had arrived in Cardston. Years later, after retiring from her job in Calgary, she moved to Cardston and gave many hours of service in the temple. She loved to play the organ and help inspire reverence there. Her testimony and love for the Savior was evidenced through her kindness to everyone around her. She is to me an example of a strong Latter-day Saint woman.

I feel overwhelming gratitude to my parents—the pioneers in my family—for their sacrifices of career, extended family, homeland, and possessions. It seems they gave up so much, but the Lord has so abundantly blessed them—and their posterity—for living the principles of the gospel. ■

*The author lives in Idaho, USA.*
**ONE BLUE BULB**

My mom and dad disagreed on how to decorate their home at Christmastime. My dad was color-blind, so to him red, green, and brown all looked similar and dull. However, the color blue looked bright and beautiful. He was also a big fan of Brigham Young University football, whose school colors include blue.

Since blue was his favorite color, he wanted to put up blue lights. But my mom said blue was not a Christmas color, so every year Dad neatly hung strings of red, green, and white Christmas lights along their roof. To tease Mom, he replaced one of the bulbs with a bright blue one. If you looked closely, you would see one blue bulb among the red, green, and white lights.

Every year the blue bulb shone from a different location. Sometimes it hid around the corner where no one would notice it, but sometimes he put it over the garage or the front porch. It was a fun game between Mom and Dad.

One year, Dad unexpectedly passed away two days before Christmas. At his funeral, the story was told of the one blue bulb he would hang every year. The following night, my mom looked out the window. Across the street, shining among the white lights above her neighbor’s porch, was one blue light. Within a few days, many neighbors and friends added blue bulbs to their strings of Christmas lights. Some even decorated whole trees in blue.

I’m grateful that my mom’s friends and neighbors showed their love for her by decorating with blue lights. They helped me know what it means to “mourn with those that mourn; . . . and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:9). I’m grateful that Heavenly Father gave us the gift of His Son. Because of Jesus Christ, I will see my dad again.

Amy Brown, Utah, USA

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If you looked closely, you would see one blue bulb among the red, green, and white lights.
My husband and I were missionaries serving in Tarbes, France, in the Pyrenees Mountains. It was Christmas Eve, and we decided to go down to the city at Verdun Plaza to give away copies of the Book of Mormon. The street was deserted, and we started to ask ourselves what we were going to do with so many books. Suddenly, we saw a young man who seemed to not know where to go.

We approached him and offered him a Book of Mormon. He became joyful as he listened to us talk about the gospel. He explained that he was alone that Christmas night and that he would read the Book of Mormon and not feel alone.

After he left, we looked around the street again and saw a woman walking slowly toward us in the cold night. A glimmer of happiness shone in her eyes when we presented her with a Book of Mormon. She told us that she had become a widow recently and was happy that we were concerned about her. She said she was extremely grateful to us. As she walked away, we saw her hold the book against her heart.

That night we distributed every copy of the Book of Mormon that we had brought with us. Most of the people who we gave them to were alone, distressed, and very much in need of love. We went back home that night with the impression that we had received the greatest Christmas gift because of the joy that we were able to give to others.

Jeannine Denise Fabre, Saint-André-les-Vergers, France
After weeks of anticipation, it was finally Christmas Eve. Almost our whole family was with us—Grandma and Grandpa Fletcher, our three daughters and their husbands and children. It was getting dark and the streets were lighting up. Houses sparkled with beautiful decorations while Christmas trees twinkled happily in the windows.

We were getting ready to go to the Nativity Pageant, which the Church had presented for many years in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Every Christmas Eve we looked forward to going to the outdoor pageant that was complete with donkeys, sheep, Wise Men, shepherds, Roman soldiers, angels, and a powerful sound system. It brought the spirit of peace, love, and the real meaning of Christmas to our hectic celebrations.

We arrived at Heritage Park, where the pageant took place, and were soon enjoying the beautiful music of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and the story of the Savior’s birth. Lauren, our oldest grandchild, was three at the time. She was captivated by the sights, the sounds, and the story unfolding before us. Our breath clouded the chilly air under clear, starlit skies. We watched as the people playing Joseph and Mary obeyed the decree of Caesar Augustus to go to Bethlehem to be taxed. The woman playing Mary was “great with child” (see Luke 2:5), and the only place they could find to stay was a lowly stable. There, “she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger” (see Luke 2:7). The spotlights swept over the hill where we could see people as shepherds watching “over their flock by night” (see Luke 2:8). Suddenly, an actor dressed as an angel appeared dramatically in the air, a bright light shining on him. Lauren spontaneously cried out in love, “Jesus, it’s me, Lauren!”

Everyone around us heard her greeting and laughed softly, enjoying the surprise. It was an innocent case of mistaken identity, but for us
Suddenly, an actor dressed as an angel appeared dramatically in the air, a bright light shining on him.

A few days after Thanksgiving, my three-year-old son, Drew, started to get sick. He woke up every morning, ate breakfast, got dressed for the day and seemed fine, but as the day progressed, he became lethargic and wouldn’t eat.

This continued for several weeks. Finally, on Friday, December 18th, I carried Drew into the doctor’s office around 3:00 in the afternoon. Drew couldn’t stand or walk and his skin was ashen.

I looked at the doctor and said, “This is how he has been every afternoon and evening for the past three weeks.” The doctor took one look at Drew and immediately admitted him to the hospital. They ran tests but could not figure out what was wrong with him.

The next day, Drew was transferred to another hospital. That Sunday morning, I was feeling crestfallen. After two days of numerous tests from two different hospitals, no one knew what was wrong with my son. To top it all off, it was the Sunday before Christmas. My favorite sacrament meeting of the whole year is the Christmas program and I was going to miss all the beautiful songs and talks in our ward.

As my husband and I were walking with Drew toward the room in the hospital where a sacrament meeting was to be held, I was miserable. I approached the table where the programs were, picked one up, and was still walking forward and looking down when I bumped into someone. I looked up and said, “I’m sorry,” but no one was there. As I looked into the room where sacrament was to be held, it looked like an auditorium. On the stage there were chairs for the speakers, a piano, and a table set for the sacrament with a few chairs behind it. The room was sparsely filled with sick children and their parents, many hooked up to their portable IVs.

As I scanned the room, I felt the presence of angels. We took our seat and tears flowed down my face as I felt God’s love for His children who were sick and suffering, stuck in a hospital with all manner of illnesses at the most wonderful time of the year.

It turned out to be the most beautiful sacrament meeting of my life.

The doctors never did find out what was wrong with Drew. He was given medicine to treat his symptoms and then released from the hospital the next day. He has had no repercussions since, but that Christmas sacrament meeting will stay with me forever.

Carrie Ketchum, Nevada, USA
Though the book of Moroni in the Book of Mormon is relatively short, with only 10 chapters, it provides a great deal of wonderful counsel. Moroni and Mormon both teach valuable principles of the gospel. As Moroni is completing his father's abridgement of the Book of Mormon, he repeatedly recalls his father's teachings about the links among faith, hope, and charity. Mormon and Moroni clearly wanted to emphasize the importance of these three principles.

In my earlier studies of the Book of Mormon, I usually considered these three principles to be like building blocks. Faith would come first, then hope, and then charity. It seemed a logical progression. As our faith grows, we increase our study and knowledge, and we begin to apply the principle of hope. Faith and hope together mold us and guide us in the paths that the Savior walked, and we start to embrace the qualities of charity.

However, in more recent studies, I have come to understand faith, hope, and charity in a different way. I now think of them more as interlacing virtues, each playing a critical part in developing and defining our testimonies.

Our daughter, Joy, likes to create animals and objects by twisting balloons together. As I watched her do this one day, I thought of how a rope is formed by twisting several strands together. This helped me visualize my newfound understanding of faith, hope, and charity as strands combining with each other to form a sturdy rope.

Faith: “Ye Shall Have Power”

Faith in Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ is foundational not only to obtaining eternal life but also to our lives on earth. “And Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me” (Moroni 7:33). I have applied this power through faith many times in my life. And I have relied on faith to carry me through some difficult moments.
While studying at Brigham Young University–Hawaii, I was in a new environment and English was my second language. It was challenging, and I knew I needed academic help if I was to retain my scholarship. Without it, I would not be able to stay in school. In addition, I had made the commitment that I would not study on Sundays.

One day while I was reading in the Doctrine and Covenants, a particular verse made a big impression on me. As I read in section 109, verse 7, I came across this line: “Seek learning even by study and also by faith.” That verse became the key to my academic success. With faith and diligent study six days out of the week, I was blessed in my studies. Some in my classes wondered how I could do so well without studying on Sunday, as they did. What I learned is that learning by faith can overcome many challenges.

A similar experience occurred as I was pursuing my career in business. I was offered an excellent job opportunity, but it would have likely required me to work on Sunday. I had committed not to work on the Sabbath day. Ultimately, I had to turn down the offer. I could not compromise my commitment to keep the Sabbath day holy. As with my college commitment, I was later blessed with many other business opportunities that did not require me to compromise and that allowed me to devote Sundays to the worship of the Lord.

As we create our imaginary rope that connects us to divine blessings, let's start with a strong strand of faith.

Hope: “To Be Raised unto Life Eternal”

We hope for many things: that we might advance in our careers; that our children will do well; that we will meet the expectations of our Church service; that we will remain healthy; that we will have what we need to sustain life and provide for our families. But where does the highest form of hope come from, and where can it lead us?

Mormon said, “I would speak unto you that are of the church, that are the peaceable followers of Christ, and that have obtained a sufficient hope by which ye can enter into the rest of the Lord” (Moroni 7:3).

As Mormon continues his invitation to us to become true followers of Christ, he once again returns to the topic of hope when he asks, “And what is it that ye shall hope for?” Then he answers this all-important question: “Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal, and this because of your faith in him according to the promise” (Moroni 7:41).

This kind of hope is different from ordinary hope. This divine hope comes through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. It is eternal hope. Without such hope we would come to church each week not knowing that all these marvelous blessings are within our reach. Through Christ our hope can guide us back to our Heavenly Father and to eternal life.

In a recent general conference address, President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency,
stated, “[The Father] allowed His Son to provide, by His atoning sacrifice, the hope that comforts us no matter how hard the way home to Him may be.”¹ Through hope we can see the blessings and opportunities that await us as we stay true to the gospel of Jesus Christ and serve Him with all our heart, might, mind, and strength.

With that understanding, let’s add the next strand to our rope, which is hope.

Charity: Bestowed upon True Followers

The third virtue to further strengthen our rope is charity. We begin to develop the gift of charity through our sincere efforts to emulate the Savior. However, the full measure of this gift is bestowed upon us by God as we earnestly seek it in prayer. As we follow Him who gave us life, we begin to learn the true meaning of charity, which is “the pure love of Christ” (Moroni 7:47).

As Mormon teaches, “Pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God” (Moroni 7:48). As peaceable followers, we may have obtained sufficient hope, but in order to be bestowed with charity, we need to become true followers. If we are true followers, we will become more like Him, which is the purpose of life.

By implanting in our hearts the pure love of Christ, we are more likely to embrace the godlike attribute of charity—to serve both our fellow man and God. “If a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity” (Moroni 7:44).

We now have three essential strands of our rope. Let’s see how they work together.

All Three Work Together

“Wherefore, there must be faith; and if there must be faith there must also be hope; and if there must be hope there must also be charity.

“And except ye have charity ye can in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God; neither can ye be saved in the kingdom of God if ye have not faith; neither can ye if ye have no hope” (Moroni 10:20–21).

When combined, faith, hope, and charity are not like building blocks for me anymore; instead they are intertwined with one another. We don’t finish building faith, and then have hope, or after having hope, finally develop charity. They all work together. And as they become interlaced, they collectively help form our characters and testimonies.

NOTE
I had been a member of the Church for 10 years when I received a confirmation that I needed to begin looking for a companion. I understood the doctrine of celestial marriage, and I had prayed fervently to have such a marriage and to be able to create a family. I didn’t know how I would find a Latter-day Saint woman in Samara, Russia, where I lived, but I trusted that the Lord would help me (see 1 Nephi 3:7).

In 2009 I was invited to participate in a series of single adult conferences to be held in 10 cities throughout the Russia Samara Mission. I hoped that these activities might be the means by which I could meet my eternal companion.

I was happy to attend the conferences, which were fulfilling in many ways, but months passed and I still had not developed any dating relationships.

I began to worry and asked the Lord to help me. In response, thoughts came into my mind warning me that I might be tempted to pursue relationships outside the Church.

I knew that the prophets had taught that we should strive to marry in the temple, and I knew that it would be impossible to have a fullness of joy if my spouse and I weren’t united in striving to follow the Savior. I continued to pray to have the spiritual strength to withstand such temptations and to have the Lord’s help in following His plan for me.

In the meantime, I began preparing for my regular trip to the Helsinki Finland Temple, where I would spend a week.

On the train I met three other travelers, including a woman named Mariya, who I learned was single. She was captivating both physically and spiritually, and I wondered why I hadn’t met any women like her before. I thought back to my earlier warning about being tempted to pursue a relationship outside the Church.

“Be strong,” I thought. “Be true to your principles. You’ll find a worthy and wonderful sister in the Church.”

Thinking that I could at least be a good member missionary and perhaps share the gospel with her, and needing inspiration, I pulled out my
copy of the Book of Mormon to read, wondering if she would notice. To my surprise, Mariya exclaimed, “I think I know where you are going!”

I looked up to see her holding her own copy of the Book of Mormon. She was a member of the Church too and was also on her way to the temple.

The next morning we continued our trip to Helsinki by bus. I learned that Mariya was from Voronezh, a city in the Russia Moscow West Mission. I liked her immediately and prayed fervently for direction. In response, I experienced good feelings in my heart.

“Lord, we have only one week at the temple,” I prayed. “Please help us to get to know each other better during this time.”

And we did. Between sessions in the temple, we took walks, shared meals, went to the store, and talked. At the end of the week, we both went home—Mariya to Voronezh and I to Samara. But we traveled to each other’s cities to get to know each other better, and on September 14, 2010, we were married in the newly dedicated Kyiv Ukraine Temple.

Mariya and I now live in Voronezh and are happy. We understand that it is fairy tales that end with the phrase “and they lived happily ever after.” In real life we create our own happy endings through continually proving our faithfulness to the Lord by keeping our temple covenants, continuing to work on strengthening our marriage, and striving to be like Jesus Christ.

We are grateful for our miraculous meeting and hope that our story will kindle hope and give strength to others who are searching for their eternal companions. Others’ stories may not turn out as ours did, but Mariya and I know that no matter what the challenges, the Lord hears our sincere prayers. He loves each of us and is concerned about each of us. If we let Him, He will guide our paths and let all things work together for our good (see D&C 90:24).

*The author lives in Voronezh, Russia.*

**GOD’S MAP TO HAPPINESS**

“We all search for happiness, and we all try to find our own ‘happily ever after.’ The truth is, God knows how to get there! And He has created a map for you; He knows the way. He is your beloved Heavenly Father, who seeks your good, your happiness. He desires with all the love of a perfect and pure Father that you reach your supernal destination. The map is available to all.”

I was ecstatic when a man called me one day and said he’d seen my bodybuilding shows and wanted to sponsor me. He would pay for my clothes and protein and fly me to Europe to do shows there. He even said I could be in a magazine. Bodybuilding was my passion, and this was my dream! The only problem was that I’d sent in my mission papers a few days earlier. I told the man I would think about his offer and call him back.

I was faced with the hardest decision of my life. For my parents, accepting the sponsor wasn’t an option. They said, “Maybe you’ll have this opportunity after your mission.” But I couldn’t stop thinking about it. I knew I should go on a mission and serve the Lord, but my dream was sitting right in front of me.

I asked a lot of my friends what they thought I should do. Some said I should take the sponsor, and others said it was Satan working against me because he didn’t want me to serve a mission.

One day, a great friend of mine shared with me a quote from President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994): “Men and women who turn their lives over to God will discover that He can make a lot more out of their lives than they can. He will deepen their joys, expand their vision, quicken their minds, strengthen their muscles, lift their spirits, multiply their blessings, increase their opportunities, comfort their souls, raise up friends, and pour out peace.”

That quote hit me hard. So did a scripture I read in the Book of Mormon: “And if it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God he doth nourish them, and strengthen them, and provide means whereby they can accomplish the thing which he has commanded them” (1 Nephi 17:3).

With the help of this quote and scripture and the support of my friends and family, I decided to serve a mission and was called to serve in the Bolivia Cochabamba Mission. Serving a mission was the best choice I’ve ever made. I saw countless blessings while serving, including being blessed to learn Spanish quickly.

The Lord blessed my family too. While on my mission, I received an email from my parents telling me that my older brother went to church for the first time in 12 years. He later changed his work schedule so that he could go every Sunday, and he set a goal to read the Book of Mormon.

Also my younger brother who had been struggling made some changes in his life and strengthened his faith. My cousin became active again and started going to the temple every week to do baptisms for the dead. We truly have been blessed.

Serve a mission or become a professional bodybuilder? A scripture and a quote that my friend shared with me helped me decide.

NOTE
Think of your favorite action hero. Ready, go! Did you think of some swashbuckling daredevil fighting insurmountable odds? Or maybe a suave adventurer with perfect hair? Did you think of anyone from the scriptures?

What about Nephi, Noah, Abish, or Peter? They didn’t fight off armies with just their fists and a witty catchphrase, but they’re what you might call real action heroes. They exercised faith, trusted God, and got going. They took action.

Do you ever avoid getting started because you haven’t received obvious, step-by-step directions? Maybe there’s someone in your class or quorum who hasn’t been coming to
church. Do you hesitate to reach out to them because you’re not sure exactly how to do it? Inspiration is important, and we should always be seeking it. But that doesn’t mean sitting and waiting for a text message from an angel before we go about doing good. Heavenly Father would want you to befriend that person. He wants us to step up and take action!

What if Nephi, Noah, Abish, and Peter had waited? They all had hard things to do. Suppose they chose to sit down with a drink and a cookie until they got further instructions. Things would have turned out a lot differently...

Wait and See?

“I will wait to do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them, so I won’t do anything until I know exactly what that way is” (non-existent version of 1 Nephi 3:7).

Soon after Lehi’s family left their home in Jerusalem, the Lord commanded Lehi’s sons to go back and get the plates from Laban. But as far as we know, He didn’t give them any hints on how to do that. All Nephi and his brothers knew was that the Lord had commanded them to get the plates. Do you ever feel like you have no idea how to do the things you’re supposed to do? (Maybe that’s one reason Laman and Lemuel complained!) It was up to Nephi to use his brain and exercise faith and to go and do. But what if he had stayed and dawdled? What if Nephi had refused to budge until God gave him a plan? Getting the plates was hard! He and his brothers tried twice and failed! What if Nephi had just plopped down against the walls of Jerusalem and waited for God to tell him what to do?

The plates might still be in Laban’s treasury. Good thing Nephi didn’t wait.

Instead, he followed the Spirit, “not knowing beforehand the things which I should do. Nevertheless I went forth” (1 Nephi 4:6–7; emphasis added). He didn’t wait around; he didn’t let the things he didn’t know stop him. He knew God would provide a way, and he was right. Once Nephi was moving, taking action, and pressing forward, the Lord guided and helped him.

But Why?

“And Noah questioned all that the Lord commanded him” (non-existent version of Genesis 7:5).

Sometimes God does give exact instructions. Take Noah for example. When God commanded Noah to build an ark, God provided measurements, explained what materials to use, and even gave Noah a passenger list. Maybe you’ve received specific promptings like that, and we’ve all received specific commandments such as the principles in the For the Strength of Youth pamphlet. But even
when you know exactly what you should do, do you ever still hesitate? Are you ever tempted to question the Lord instead of obeying Him?

What if Noah had heard the Lord and then said, “But why? I don’t get it.” What if he’d stretched out on the couch and refused to move until he understood exactly why the Lord was sending a flood, wondering all the while if the instructions were really from God?

There would have been a flood, but would there have been an ark? And what about the human race? It’s a really good thing Noah didn’t sit back and question everything.

Instead he “did according unto all that the Lord commanded him” (Genesis 7:5). He didn’t question; he acted in faith. If asked in the right spirit, questions are a good thing. They can help us grow and lead us to more truth. But when we refuse to do anything until we receive the answers we want, questioning can hold us back. Noah may have had questions, but he didn’t let them stop him. Even if it seemed odd, he built the boat on dry land, gathered all the animals, and shut his family into the ark. And when it started raining, he was probably very glad he had done so. Noah acted in faith, and God blessed him and his entire family.

But what if she hadn’t? After years of hiding her faith, running from house to house to tell everybody was probably a little scary! Have you ever been prompted to speak up but then felt nervous about it? Sharing your beliefs can be hard! What if Abish had just stood back and hoped that people would wander in on their own? Or that somebody else would say something?

Well, then no one would have gathered to see King Lamoni and his household lying around like they were dead or their miraculous recovery. They wouldn’t have been there to hear King Lamoni, the queen, and Ammon teach the gospel.

Good thing she didn’t just stand back. Instead she “ran forth from house to house, making it known unto the people” (Alma 19:17; emphasis added). She had a testimony of the Lord, and she didn’t let fear stop her. She didn’t wait for someone else to say something. When she had a chance, she didn’t hesitate—she ran! Abish acted, and the Lord blessed her to see many of her countrymen converted to the gospel (see Alma 19).

Listen to the World?

“And [Jesus] said, Come. And when Peter sat down in the ship, he didn’t walk on the water, to go to Jesus” (non-existent version of Matthew 14:29).

As a fisherman, Peter knew a lot about boats. For example, Peter knew that when there is a raging storm at sea, you stay in the boat. He knew that people who stepped onto water sank right through. Can you imagine what he must have thought when he saw Christ walking on the water?

But what if he had stayed in the boat? Everyone knows that people can’t walk on water. What if Peter only focused on what the world “knew”? Sometimes the teachings of Christ and His prophets seem to go against what the world is saying. And the world is persuasive and easy to listen to. What if Peter had told Christ that walking on water was unscientific or illogical? What if Peter had been too scared to step out and walk to Christ?
He would’ve missed sharing an incredible experience with the Master. He would’ve missed a chance to strengthen his faith, and he may have wondered about his faith in the future when he needed resolve. It’s a good thing Peter didn’t stay in the boat. In spite of the waves, the storm, and his experience at sea, Peter wanted to climb out of the boat and walk to Christ. In spite of everything the world “knew,” Peter walked on water. Even when he faltered, Christ was there to catch him (see Matthew 14:28–31).

Me? An Action Hero?

You were sent here to be the action hero of your action-packed life! That doesn’t mean leaping from exploding buildings or driving escape cars every day. It means making choices, taking action, and pressing forward.

The Lord teaches that we “should be anxiously engaged in a good cause.” He doesn’t say exactly what that good cause should be but instead wants us to “do many things of [our] own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness” (D&C 58:27). That means He trusts you to make your own decisions and decide how you will bring about righteousness. Oftentimes, help comes after we’ve exercised faith and taken those first steps.

The Lord is always there to guide us when we need it, but if you refuse to act and to press forward on your own and expect God to tell you every little thing to do, you will be a “slothful and not a wise servant” (see D&C 58:26). And who wants to be a slothful servant when you can be an action hero?
I’m struggling to study the scriptures. Why is it so important to study them?

From this year’s Mutual theme, you’ve learned how to “press forward with a steadfastness in Christ” (2 Nephi 31:20). This scripture teaches that pressing forward includes “feasting upon the word of Christ.” Why is this important? Here are a few ways that studying the scriptures helps us press forward:

- President Thomas S. Monson taught that “if you will study the scriptures diligently, your power to avoid temptation and to receive direction of the Holy Ghost in all you do will be increased” (“Be Your Best Self,” Ensign or Liahona, May 2009, 68).
- You can gain a testimony and strengthen your faith as you prayerfully study the scriptures. Studying the Book of Mormon especially and gaining a testimony of its truthfulness will help you know that Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph Smith was a prophet, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true. (You can learn more about these promises in the introduction to the Book of Mormon.)
- You can receive personal inspiration and answers to your questions through the scriptures. As God communicates to you through the scriptures and through His Spirit, you can gain confidence and strength to press forward through any obstacles you face.
- Perhaps the most important reason to study the scriptures is that they teach about Jesus Christ and how you can follow His example and teachings. Living the principles you read about will help you become more like the Savior.

Answers to My Questions

If I have questions, I know I can turn to the scriptures and find answers. They are the Lord's words, and His doctrine never changes. I know that no matter what opposition I’m facing, the scriptures are always there for me with answers. They also answer questions about where the Church stands on many topics. I know if I read the scriptures carefully, it will help me to have the Holy Ghost with me, which helps me know right from wrong.

Emily A., age 17, Washington, USA

My Burdens Became Light

One school year I began to feel weighed down from the stress of life. During one of these stressful days, I prayed and read the Book of Mormon for 10 minutes. As I read, I felt an incredible warmth fill my heart. I felt loved, uplifted, and happy despite my trials. I felt an incredible peace I had never felt before. From this experience I finally understood what the Savior meant when He said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you” (John 14:27). The next few weeks, I had this experience multiple times, and it propelled me to move forward through my struggles.

Chloe K., age 18, Wisconsin, USA

Power to Change

Before, I really had no testimony of the Book of Mormon, but when I sincerely prayed for guidance from the Holy Ghost, I had such great feelings about...
the Book of Mormon. I already had a desire to know that the book was true, so I started prayerfully reading and studying it. Line upon line, precept upon precept, I received personal revelation that the book is true (see 2 Nephi 28:30). I love the Book of Mormon. I treasure up the teachings I receive while I study it. The Book of Mormon has a power that can lead us to change for the better.

Ariel Candawan T., age 18, Philippines

God’s Love
By the power, example, and teachings in the scriptures, I have been able to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. The scriptures have a divine power in which God can guide and teach us. So whenever you feel alone or abandoned, read the scriptures. Then remember that your Father in Heaven preserved them specifically for you so you could know that He loves you.

Scott H., age 19, Wisconsin, USA

Goodness and Light
I started reading the Book of Mormon for the first time when I became a Beehive. I read it from cover to cover and thought that would be the end. But I was so wrong. My life seemed to be missing something. So I decided to start reading it again, this time paying closer attention. As I did, my life was filled with the light that had dimmed since I had finished it. I understood more and came to really love it. Read it all the time, and you are ensuring yourself a life of goodness and light.

Kellie M., age 17, Utah, USA

Overcoming Temptations
Studying the scriptures helps me live the gospel at school. I’m just starting middle school, and there are a lot of bad things and temptations. When I have a hard time resisting temptation, I try to read the scripture stories to find answers to my problems. It helps to dispel temptation and turn toward the gospel.

Blake C., age 12, Idaho, USA

Scripture Power
This is my first time attempting to read the Book of Mormon. My favorite chapters are in 2 Nephi 25–33. So far, they have strengthened me the most. The Primary song “Scripture Power” has never been more accurate for me. I testify of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and strongly advise you to study it every day.

Sariah J., age 13, Arizona, USA

“A FOUNTAIN OF KNOWLEDGE”

“We should hunger and thirst every day after spiritual knowledge. This personal practice is founded on study, meditation, and prayer. Sometimes we might be tempted to think, ‘I don’t need to study the scriptures today; I’ve read them all before.’ . . . “But the gospel is a fountain of knowledge that never runs dry. There is always something new to learn and feel . . . in every verse of scripture.”


Submit your answer and, if desired, a high-resolution photograph by January 15, 2017, at liahona.lds.org (click “Submit an Article”) or by email to liahona@ldschurch.org. Please include the following information: (1) full name, (2) birth date, (3) ward or branch, (4) stake or district, (5) your written permission, and, if you are under age 18, your parent’s written permission (email is acceptable) to publish your response and photograph.

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.

UPCOMING QUESTION

“I’ve been praying for something important, but I don’t know if I have received an answer. How will I recognize it?”
Giving More Than Presents
What kind of giver do you want to be?

By Emmaline R. Wilson

The Christmas season is all about the Savior, Jesus Christ, and the spirit of giving. While it can be awe-some to give and get presents, remember that we can give so much more than just physical gifts. Each day we can give of our time, talents, and kindness—and those are just some of the meaningful ways we can serve.

So, how well are you doing at focusing on selfless giving? Take this quiz to find out.

You’re getting ready for school. Your mom is asking you to come to breakfast, and she has taken the time to prepare your favorite meal. What do you do?

A. Holler, “I’m not ready yet!” and then take your time getting ready, eat breakfast late, and miss the bus so she has to drive you to school.

B. Eat breakfast quickly and dash out the door; she’s always doing things like that—it’s just what moms do.

C. Thank Mom, get ready quickly, and take time to eat with your family.
It's 10:00 a.m., and your teacher is about to hand out a test. You don't know the person sitting next to you very well, but you notice she's frantically digging through her backpack. What do you do?

A. Ignore her. You're stressed as well and need to cram for the test.

B. Wish her good luck.

C. Ask her if she's looking for something. When you hear she needs a pencil, you give her one of yours. “Keep it,” you tell her with a smile.

After school someone on your football team is having a hard time passing the ball accurately—your specialty. He comes up after practice and asks if you can help him. What do you say?

A. Tell him you're way too busy. Maybe another day.

B. Agree reluctantly and make a few passes with him, giving him one quick pointer before hurrying off to hang out with your friends.

C. Spend several minutes giving him pointers and set up another time to practice together.

At 5:30 p.m., your mom drops you off at the store to buy a Christmas present for your sister. What do you get?

A. That’s easy. You go straight for that new basketball you’ve had your eye on for months. … She’ll probably like it too, right?

B. Select the cheapest item on her list—she won’t be disappointed, and it didn’t cost you much.

C. Find the newest book by her favorite author. You can’t wait to see the look of excitement on your sister’s face when she opens the package!
It's time for bed and you're exhausted. You haven't read your scriptures yet, though. What do you do?

A. Count the reading you did on Sunday instead.

B. While searching for your scriptures, you come across your favorite novel. Thirty minutes later you remember the scriptures and hurriedly read a short passage before turning out the lights.

C. See both your scriptures and your favorite novel, but decide to give Heavenly Father first priority and say a quick prayer before you begin reading. You write down some of your thoughts as you study, and you thank Him again in prayer before you go to bed.

RESULTS!

If you answered mostly (A), you might want to turn your focus a little more toward others. Remember, giving and serving others will bring greater happiness to everyone involved (see Matthew 25:34–46).

If you answered mostly (B), consider that “freely ye have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8). Think about how giving more willingly can help you find even more joy.

If you answered mostly (C), keep it up! Your actions show the true spirit of Christmas.

Consider how you can give heartfelt gifts to those around you this Christmas season. No matter your talents, you can find a way to show your love and appreciation for others by both the gifts you give and how you give them each day. Giving becomes a blessing and not a chore when we understand that by serving others, we’re really serving our Heavenly Father (see Mosiah 2:17).

The author lives in Utah, USA.

FREELY GIVE

“I pray that we will be touched by the feelings of others, that we will give without feelings of compulsion or expectation of gain, and that we will know that sacrifice is made sweet to us when we treasure the joy it brings to another heart.”

The Missionary Service
I Needed

I’m a member of the Church, but I needed the missionaries too.

By Gabriel Costa Silva

When I turned 17, all my friends were gone. They had moved far away, were serving missions, or had just stopped being my friend. Even though I had my family, I still felt alone. I felt I had no support outside of my home, and I couldn’t fit in with others even when I tried.

One day the new missionaries assigned to our ward showed up at our house to introduce themselves. They asked how they could help us. I didn’t care about what they were saying because I was thinking only about how sad and lonely I was. Then the missionaries said they would love my help in teaching some of their lessons. I was surprised! Why would they ask for help from someone who clearly wasn’t in the best emotional state?

I agreed anyway, and I went to some lessons with them. The missionaries not only helped the people they were teaching but were also a good influence on me.

When one of the elders was transferred, I realized my life had been getting better since I started spending time with the missionaries. I had a lot in common with the next elder who came to the area, and I continued to spend time with the missionaries. They encouraged, taught, and supported me. They helped me feel better on difficult days. Despite the language barrier and their busy schedules, the missionaries made an effort to help me. The missionaries helped me realize that I was not alone. Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, were watching over me and helping me through others.

When that new elder left, I thanked him for being an instrument in the hands of the Lord to rescue me. I am grateful he came to that particular mission because he was a blessing to me.

Before this time, I had almost no desire to serve a mission, but as I watched these missionaries, my desire to serve grew. I will leave for my mission soon, and I hope to give my all to the Lord as those missionaries did.

Before that first set of missionaries came to my home, I remember feeling lonely one night and praying. I asked God with all my heart to send just one friend to help and support me. The Lord answered my prayer in an unexpected way—by sending the missionaries. I know that Jesus Christ lives and that the missionaries are His servants.

The author lives in São Paulo, Brazil.
DON’T DELAY

The shepherds heard the message
and “came with haste” to Jesus. So can you.
(See Luke 2:15-16.)
HOW TO BE PATIENT

Waiting can be hard. Children know it, and so do adults. We live in a world offering fast food, instant messaging, on-demand movies, and immediate answers to the most trivial or profound questions. We don’t like to wait. Some even feel their blood pressure rise when their line at the grocery store moves slower than those around them.

Patience—the ability to put our desires on hold for a time—is a precious and rare virtue. We want what we want, and we want it now. Therefore, the very idea of patience may seem unpleasant and, at times, bitter.

Nevertheless, without patience, we cannot please God; we cannot become perfect. Indeed, patience is a purifying process that refines understanding, deepens happiness, focuses action, and offers hope for peace.

Patience isn’t merely waiting. Patience is not passive resignation, nor is it failing to act because of our fears. Patience means active waiting and enduring. It means staying with something and doing all that we can—working, hoping, and exercising faith; bearing hardship with fortitude, even when the desires of our hearts are delayed. Patience is not simply enduring; it is enduring well!

Patience means staying with something until the end. It means delaying immediate gratification for future blessings. It means reining in anger and holding back the unkind word. It means resisting evil, even when it appears to be making others rich.

Patience means accepting that which cannot be changed and facing it with courage, grace, and faith. It means being “willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [us], even as a child doth submit to his father” (Mosiah 3:19). Ultimately, patience means being “firm and steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments of the Lord” (1 Nephi 2:10) every hour of every day, even when it is hard to do so.

The work of patience boils down to this: keep the commandments; trust in God, our Heavenly Father; serve Him with meekness and Christlike love; exercise faith and hope in the Savior; and never give up. The lessons we learn from patience will cultivate our character, lift our lives, and heighten our happiness. They will help us to become faithful disciples of our Master, Jesus Christ.

From an April 2010 general conference address.
It was almost Christmas, but Diego wasn’t feeling very excited. This was the first Christmas since his parents got divorced. And nothing felt the same. He and his brother, Samuel, wouldn’t even get to see Mom this Christmas.

“Everything’s different,” Diego said to Dad.

“I know.” Dad’s eyes were sad. “Sometimes things change before they get better.” He was quiet for a bit, then smiled. “Christmas will be different this year, but that doesn’t mean we won’t have some good times. We’ll still be celebrating the birth of the Savior.”

Diego nodded. It would be hard not seeing Mom, but maybe Christmas could still be good, just as Dad said. Diego wanted to help make this Christmas a happy one.

He went to his room to think. Sometimes for Christmas they did a family service project. What could they do this year?

Diego looked around his room. He saw a toy car he didn’t play
with anymore. He picked it up and spun the wheels. It was still really good. Maybe he and Dad and Samuel could give some toys to kids who didn’t have any! He found a few other toys and put them in a bag with the car.

When Diego finished, he took the bag to Samuel’s room. “Can I help you clean your room?” he asked. “It’s a surprise for Dad.”

Samuel looked up from the picture he was drawing. “Sure.”

The boys worked together to clean Samuel’s room. Diego told him about the plan. They found a few toys that Samuel didn’t play with and added them to the bag.

When they were done, they carried the bag downstairs. “Dad,” Diego said, “we found some toys we don’t play with anymore. Can we give them to kids who don’t have any toys?”

Dad looked surprised and happy. “That’s a great idea! Let’s take them to the homeless shelter this afternoon.”

Visiting the shelter was fun. Diego and Samuel got to play with some of the kids while Dad talked to the grown-ups.

On the way home, Dad asked what else they could do to make this Christmas special.

“Last Christmas we made treats for our neighbors,” Diego said.

“We could do that,” said Dad. “Let’s go buy stuff to make cookies.”

Samuel thought cookies were a great idea.

The boys helped Dad shop for the ingredients at the store. At home they made the dough and cut out star and tree shapes. Diego and Samuel frosted the cookies yellow and green. Then they took little bags of cookies to their neighbors.

At the end of the day, Diego was tired but happy. He and Samuel and Dad had done things together as a family and had helped others. Dad was right. Christmas was different, but it was still good. ■

The author lives in Colorado, USA.
I live in India with my family. I got to plan a special Christmas activity for my school and share the gospel with my friends!

My Primary leaders teach that we should be missionaries. Sometimes I invite my friends to church. Most of the time, they say no. I thought that maybe I was too young to be a missionary.

Then, at family home evening, Dad challenged our family to invite one person to church every month. I wanted to do it, but it was tough! I asked Dad for help. He said I could pray. So I did.

Hi! My name is Blessy!
THE IDEA
The next day at school, the principal asked for ideas for a school Christmas activity. I had a great idea! I told her that all the Primary-age kids could come visit my church. She called my parents, and they talked to the bishop to plan the activity. Our Primary leaders and the missionaries helped too.

AN EXCITING DAY
Soon the day arrived. I felt nervous and excited at the same time. When Dad took me to school, I saw everyone was there and ready to go. Almost 500 students and teachers came!

TOGETHER AT CHURCH
At the church we watched a video about Jesus Christ’s birth. The young adults and missionaries sang Christmas songs. The bishop and my dad gave talks about how Jesus loves children and about loving one another. I gave a talk about Christmas. Everyone had a great time! My principal and my teacher even asked the missionaries questions.

BLESSY’S TIPS FOR STANDING TALL
• Pray for help.
• Invite people to come to church even if you think they’ll say no.
• Remember that Heavenly Father will help you.
After his father, Mormon, died, Moroni wrote on the golden plates. He wrote about the priesthood, the sacrament, and baptism. He challenged us to read the Book of Mormon and ask Heavenly Father if it’s true. If we pray and listen for the answer, the Holy Ghost can tell us it’s true. Moroni buried the plates in the ground to keep them safe.

I have been reading my scriptures with my dad every day. It is helping me get a testimony. I will not give up.

Spencer P., age 10, Wisconsin, USA

“Moroni’s Challenge” – After his father, Mormon, died, Moroni wrote on the golden plates. He challenged us to read the Book of Mormon and ask Heavenly Father if it’s true. If we pray and listen for the answer, the Holy Ghost can tell us it’s true. Moroni buried the plates in the ground to keep them safe.

Memorize Moroni 10:5.
Follow Moroni’s challenge! Pray for the Holy Ghost to help you know that the Book of Mormon is true.
Visit scripturestories.lds.org to watch videos 53–54 of the Book of Mormon stories.
I challenge myself to . . .
This Month’s Scriptures
After you read a scripture passage, color the matching numbered areas on the nativity!

1. 1 Nephi 11:14–28
2. 2 Nephi 19:6
3. Mosiah 15:1–4
4. Alma 5:48
5. 3 Nephi 9:15
6. Matthew 1:19–25
7. Matthew 2:7–11

Picture a Stable
When Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem, the only place they could find to stay was a stable with animals. Jesus Christ was born in the stable and laid in a manger. Shepherds and Wise Men followed a star to find Jesus. The Nephites also saw this star and knew that Jesus had been born. We celebrate Christmas to remember His birth.
How can I feel closer to the Savior?

We can know that the Savior is nearby all the time.

We can remember how He suffered for us so we can be forgiven.

We can picture the stable in Bethlehem where He was born.

We can remember Him when we take the sacrament.

We can know that the Savior is nearby all the time.

From "That I Might Draw All Men unto Me," Ensign or Liahona, May 2016, 39–42.
Use these cards to learn more about the members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. You could also copy the cards and create a matching game. You can print more copies at liabona.lds.org.
To read more stories about prophets and apostles, visit lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/what-are-prophets
Elder David A. Bednar
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

- Grew up on a dairy farm in Idaho, USA
- Was a quarterback on his high school football team
- After serving a mission, baptized his father a member of the Church
- Was president of Ricks College, now Brigham Young University–Idaho

Elder Neil L. Andersen
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

- Helped direct the launch of Mormon.org
- Grew up on a dairy farm in Idaho, USA
- Served as a missionary in France and mission president in France
- Participated in the Hill Cumorah Pageant as a teenager
- Served a mission in Argentina with Elder Scott as his mission president

Elder D. Todd Christofferson
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

- Baked homemade bread for his family growing up
- Worked as a heart doctor
- Gained a testimony after praying with his older brother
- Was a Church leader in the Philippines and the Pacific

Elder Dale G. Renlund
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

- His middle name, Gunnar, means "brave soldier"
- Moved to Sweden as a teenager
- Started a business making exercise equipment
- Was a Church leader in the whole Church

Elder Gary E. Stevenson
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

- Served as a missionary and mission president in Japan
- Started a business making exercise equipment
- Was a Church leader in the whole Church
- Was student-body president in junior high
- Mary, as vice-president, with his future wife
- After serving a mission, baptized his father a member of the Church
- Was student-body president in junior high
- Mary, as vice-president, with his future wife

Elder Quentin L. Cook
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

- Made his motto "It's people that matter most"
- Dedicated the first LDS Church building in the Czech Republic
- Was a Church leader in the Philippines and the Pacific

Elder Ronald A. Rasband
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

- Was mission president in New York City
- Has motto “It’s people that matter most”
- Was a Church leader in the whole Church
- Dedicated the first LDS Church building in the Czech Republic
- Was a quarterback on his high school football team
Every day, Paola listens to a CD of Primary songs and has learned several songs. She really likes “Follow the Prophet.” She also likes to read Book of Mormon Stories with her mom. Recently she visited some of her relatives and told them the story of Ammon and the Lamanites.
Paola C., age 3, Oaxaca, Mexico

Primary children in Rome, Italy, made a Christmas tree with their helping hands.
Moroni wrote down the sacrament prayers. He wrote that everything good comes from God.

Mormon had a son named Moroni. After Mormon died, Moroni wrote on the golden plates.
Moroni wrote that Jesus loves all children. He said we can pray to have love in our hearts.

Moroni made a special promise. He wrote that if we read the Book of Mormon and ask God, the Holy Ghost will tell us it is true. Then Moroni buried the plates in the Hill Cumorah to keep them safe.
Many years later Moroni came to earth as an angel. He showed Joseph Smith where the golden plates were buried. God blessed Joseph with the power to translate the words on the plates. Today we can read Moroni’s words in the Book of Mormon!
I Love My Family
THE TRUE NATURE OF GOD

Jesus Christ was the perfect manifestation of the perfect Father’s care.

After generations of prophets had tried to teach the family of man the will and the way of the Father, usually with little success, God in His ultimate effort to have us know Him, sent to earth His Only Begotten and perfect Son, created in His very likeness and image, to live and serve among mortals in the everyday rigors of life.

To come to earth with such a responsibility, to stand in place of Elohim—speaking as He would speak, judging and serving, loving and warning, forbearing and forgiving as He would do—this is a duty of such staggering proportions that you and I cannot comprehend such a thing. But in the loyalty and determination that would be characteristic of a divine child, Jesus could comprehend it and He did it. Then, when the praise and honor began to come, He humbly directed all adulation to the Father.

“The Father . . . doeth the works,” He said in earnest. “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever [the Father] doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise” [John 14:10; John 5:19]. On another occasion He said: “I speak that which I have seen with my Father” [John 8:38]. . . .

. . . Some in the contemporary world suffer from a distressing misconception of [God our Eternal Father]. Among these there is a tendency to feel distant from the Father, even estranged from Him, if they believe in Him at all. . . . Through a misreading (and surely, in some cases, a mistranslation) of the Bible, these see God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son as operating very differently, this in spite of the fact that in both the Old Testament and the New, the Son of God is one and the same, acting as He always does under the direction of the Father, who is Himself the same “yesterday, today, and forever.”

So feeding the hungry, healing the sick, rebuking hypocrisy, pleading for faith—this was Christ showing us the way of the Father, He who is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, long-suffering and full of goodness.” In His life and especially in His death, Christ was declaring, “This is God’s compassion I am showing you, as well as that of my own.” In the perfect Son’s manifestation of the perfect Father’s care, in Their mutual suffering and shared sorrow for the sins and heartaches of the rest of us, we see ultimate meaning in the declaration: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” [John 3:16–17].


NOTES
1. For example, 1 Nephi 10:18; 2 Nephi 27:23; Moroni 10:19; Doctrine and Covenants 20:12.
2. Lectures on Faith (1985), 42.
"Families are not just meant to make things run more smoothly here on earth and to be cast off when we get to heaven. Rather, they are the order of heaven. They are an echo of a celestial pattern and an emulation of God’s eternal family."

FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Faith, Hope, and Charity: Interlacing Virtues

We don’t stack faith on top of hope on top of charity as we would building blocks—these important virtues must be interlaced in our lives to help us become true followers of the Savior.

FOR YOUTH

BE A REAL ACTION HERO

Imagine for a minute that the prophets of old hadn’t been as obedient as they really were. Luckily for us, they didn’t just sit around, but rather—like superheroes—they acted. You can too.

FOR CHILDREN

A Different Christmas

Diego didn’t know if Christmas without Mom would be the same, but then he had an idea to help make Christmas better for other people!