

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • JANUARY 2015

Liahona



**Ezra and
Flora Benson:
United in the
Work of the
Lord, p. 32**

**Learning to Teach as
the Savior Taught, p. 24**

**The Most Important Person
in Your Life, p. 56**

Little Hands, Big Difference, p. 64



*"Salt is good: but if
the salt have lost his
savour, wherewith
shall it be seasoned?"*

Luke 14:34

Dawn in winter at the Ein Gedi
Beach of the Dead Sea with salt in
the foreground.



MESSAGES

- 4 First Presidency Message:
Follow the Prophets**
By President Thomas S. Monson
- 7 Visiting Teaching Message:
The Attributes of Jesus Christ—
Obedient Son**

FEATURE ARTICLES

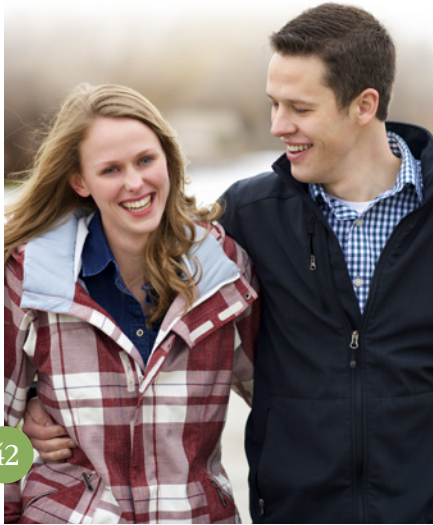
- 18 What Will You Choose?**
By Elder Russell M. Nelson
*At a time in your life when choices
abound, be sure you're making
the right ones.*
- 24 What Manner of Teachers
Ought We to Be?**
By the Sunday School General
Presidency
*The Savior can teach us best how
to teach His gospel.*
- 28 Prophetic Counsel and
Temple Blessings**
By Elder Koichi Aoyagi
*When we follow the prophet and
make temple worship a priority,
blessings will flow into our lives.*
- 32 Flora and I: Equal Partners in
the Work of the Lord**
By Aaron L. West
*Learn how the loving, supportive
marriage that Ezra Taft Benson
enjoyed with his wife, Flora,
helped the 13th President of the
Church.*

DEPARTMENTS

- 8 October 2014 Conference
Notebook**
- 10 We Talk of Christ: An Hour to
Watch with Him**
By Maritza Gonzales Espejo
- 12 Our Homes, Our Families:
The Road to a Forever Family**
By Garth and Sandy Hamblin
- 14 Reflections: Fireflies**
By David Wright
- 15 Serving in the Church: A Potato
for the Teacher**
By Bonny Dahlsrud
- 16 News of the Church**
- 38 Latter-day Saint Voices**
- 80 Until We Meet Again: How
Can I Know That the Lord Has
Forgiven Me?**
By President Harold B. Lee

ON THE COVER

Front: Photograph courtesy of Church History
Library. Inside front cover: Photograph by
Gilad Mass.



42

42 Counsel Together Oft: Family Councils for Couples

By Nichole Eck

How to get started on holding meaningful, successful family councils.

46 The Courage to Marry

By Christian Hägglund

I knew that marriage was the next step for me, but I wanted to wait until the Lord told me what to do.



50

48 2015 Mutual Theme

By the Young Women and Young Men General Presidencies

This year's Mutual theme helps us understand how to best serve Heavenly Father.

50 One Step at a Time

By Hillary Olsen

Youth in Italy share how they serve God with all their heart, might, mind, and strength.

53 Serve God with All Your Heart, Might, Mind, and Strength

How do you put this year's Mutual theme into practice? Here are a few ideas.

55 Poster: Embark

56 Why Is Jesus Christ Important in My Life?

Here are five reasons why the Savior can be the most important person in your life.

60 How to Achieve Eternal Goals

By Elder Robert D. Hales

These four goals will bring you joy as you fulfill your mission on this earth.

61 How I Know: The Center of My Life

By Roberto Pacheco Pretel
Christ in the Americas? The missionaries must have been mistaken.

62 To the Point

63 Giving the Best Gift

By Mariela Rodriguez

By following the prophet's counsel, I was able to give the best gift ever.



See if you can find the Liahona hidden in this issue. Hint: Find a seat on the bus.



72

64 Give Us a Hand!

Like these children, you can show you care by finding ways to help others.

66 New Testament Scripture Challenge

This activity will help you read a few verses from the New Testament each week this year.

69 Doing Something Good with My Time

By Clayton W.

It was too cold to play outside, so what else could I do?

70 Our Page

71 Special Witness: How can the scriptures help me?

By President Boyd K. Packer

72 The Secret Weapon

By Jessica Larsen

Ivy was the smallest one in our class—how could she help us win?

74 Scripture Time: A Journey to Learn about Jesus Christ

76 Abby's Top-10 List

By Rosemary M. Wixom

What are your top-10 life goals?

77 New Testament Scripture Figures: Jesus Teaching in the Temple

78 Prayer on the Bus

By Mitzy Jiménez Ramírez

Heavenly Father can hear your prayer no matter where you are.

International magazine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The First Presidency: Thomas S. Monson, Henry B. Eyring, Dieter F. Uchtdorf

The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson, Neil L. Andersen

Editor: Craig A. Cardon

Advisers: Mervyn B. Arnold, Christoffel Golden, Larry R. Lawrence, James B. Martino, Joseph W. Sitati

Managing Director: David T. Warner

Director of Operations: Vincent A. Vaughn

Director of Church Magazines: Allan R. Loyborg

Business Manager: Garff Cannon

Managing Editor: R. Val Johnson

Assistant Managing Editor: Ryan Carr

Publication Assistant: Lisa Carolina López

Writing and Editing: Brittany Beattie, David Dickson, David A. Edwards, Matthew D. Flitton, Lori Fuller, Garrett H. Garff, LaRene Porter Gaunt, Mindy Anne Leavitt, Michael R. Morris, Sally Johnson Odekirk, Joshua J. Perkey, Jan Pinborough, Richard M. Romney, Paul VanDenBerghe, Marissa Widdison

Editorial Intern: Ethan D. Parry, Cody Phillips

Managing Art Director: J. Scott Knudsen

Art Director: Tadd R. Peterson

Design: Jeannette Andrews, Fay P. Andrus, C. Kimball Bott, Thomas Child, Nate Gines, Colleen Hinckley, Eric P. Johnsen, Susan Lofgren, Scott M. Mooy, Mark W. Robison, Brad Teare, K. Nicole Walkenhorst

Intellectual Property Coordinator:

Collette Nebeker Aune

Production Manager: Jane Ann Peters

Production: Kevin C. Banks, Connie Bowthorpe Bridge, Julie Burdett, Bryan W. Gygi, Denise Kirby, Ginny J. Nilson, Gayle Tate Rafferty

Prepress: Jeff L. Martin

Printing Director: Craig K. Sedgwick

Distribution Director: Stephen R. Christiansen

For subscriptions and prices outside the United States and Canada, go to store.lds.org or contact your local Church distribution center or ward or branch leader.

Submit manuscripts and queries online at liahona.lds.org; by email to liahona@ldschurch.org; or by mail to *Liahona*, Rm. 2420, 50 E. North Temple St., Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA.

The *Liahona* (a Book of Mormon term meaning “compass” or “director”) is published in Albanian, Armenian, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cambodian, Cebuano, Chinese, Chinese (simplified), Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Fijian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Kiribati, Korean, Latvian, Lithuanian, Malagasy, Marshallese, Mongolian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Samoan, Slovenian, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Tagalog, Tahitian, Thai, Tongan, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Vietnamese. (Frequency varies by language.)

© 2015 by Intellectual Reserve, Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America.

Text and visual material in the *Liahona* may be copied for incidental, noncommercial church or home use. Visual material may not be copied if restrictions are indicated in the credit line with the artwork. Copyright questions should be addressed to Intellectual Property Office, 50 E. North Temple St., Salt Lake City, UT 84150, USA; email: cor-intellectualproperty@ldschurch.org.

For Readers in the United States and Canada: January 2015 Vol. 39 No. 1. *LIAHONA* (USPS 311-480) English (ISSN 1080-9554) is published monthly by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 50 E. North Temple St., Salt Lake City, UT 84150. USA subscription price is \$10.00 per year; Canada, \$12.00 plus applicable taxes. Periodicals Postage Paid at Salt Lake City, Utah. Sixty days' notice required for change of address. Include address label from a recent issue; old and new address must be included. Send USA and Canadian subscriptions to Salt Lake Distribution Center at address below. Subscription help line: 1-800-537-5971. Credit card orders (American Express, Discover, MasterCard, Visa) may be taken by phone or at store.lds.org. (Canada Post Information: Publication Agreement #40017431)

POSTMASTER: Send all UAA to CFS (see DMM 707.4.12.5). NONPOSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES: Send address changes to Distribution Services, Church Magazines, P.O. Box 26368, Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368, USA.

Family Home Evening Ideas

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



“How to Achieve Eternal Goals,” page 60, and **“Abby’s Top-10 List,”** page 76: With the beginning of a new year, you and your family might be thinking about certain goals you hope to achieve individually and as a family. Consider reading Sister Rosemary M. Wixom’s article about a young woman’s top-10 goals in life, and invite your children to come up with their own list of goals. Your older children might also benefit from a discussion of Elder Robert D. Hales’s article about eternal goals and the importance of making plans to achieve those goals. Encourage family members to write down their goals and hang them in a prominent place in your home.

“New Testament Scripture Challenge,” page 66: Consider starting the New Testament reading challenge as a family. You could begin by asking each family member to share his or her favorite story from the life of Jesus Christ. Then, as a family, visit gospelart.lds.org or scripturestories.lds.org to find videos and artwork that go with your reading schedule. Or consider acting out scenes from the New Testament as you read along.

IN YOUR LANGUAGE

The *Liahona* and other Church materials are available in many languages at languages.lds.org.

TOPICS IN THIS ISSUE

Numbers represent the first page of the article.

Agency, 18

Articles of Faith, 69

Atonement, 10

Contention, 62

Conversion, 12

Decisions, 4, 6, 18

Education, 18

Eternal life, 14, 60, 76

Ezra Taft Benson, 32

Family, 12, 28, 32, 42, 46

Forgiveness, 80

General conference, 8

Goals, 60, 76

Jesus Christ, 7, 10, 24, 56, 61, 74

Kindness, 72

Love, 15

Marriage, 28, 32, 42, 46

Missionary work, 40, 48, 53, 55, 63

New Testament, 66, 68, 74, 77

Obedience, 7

Prayer, 78

Premortal life, 18

Prophets, 28, 32

Repentance, 12, 39, 80

Respect, 72

Sacrament, 10

Scriptures, 66, 71

Service, 15, 38, 41, 48, 50, 53, 55, 64

Teaching, 24

Temple work, 12, 28

Temptation, 14



By President
Thomas S. Monson

FOLLOW THE Prophets

I served in the United States Navy toward the end of World War II. I was a seaman, the lowest possible rank in the navy. Then I qualified to be Seaman First Class, after which I qualified to be Yeoman Third Class.

World War II ended, and I was later discharged. But I made a decision that if ever I went back into the military, I wanted to serve as a commissioned officer. I thought, “No more mess kitchens for me, no more scrubbing the decks, if I can avoid it.”

After I was discharged, I joined the United States Naval Reserve. I went to drill every Monday night. I studied hard that I might qualify academically. I took every kind of examination imaginable: mental, physical, and emotional. Finally, there came the beautiful news: “You have been accepted to receive the commission of an ensign in the United States Naval Reserve.”

I gleefully showed it to my wife, Frances, and said, “I made it! I made it!” She hugged me and said, “You’ve worked hard enough to achieve it.”

But then something happened. I was called to be a counselor in my ward bishopric. The bishop’s council meeting was on the same evening as my navy drill meeting. I knew there was a terrible conflict. I knew that I didn’t have the time to pursue the Naval Reserve *and* my bishopric duties. What was I to do? A decision had to be made.

I prayed about it. Then I went to see the man who was my stake president when I was a boy, Elder Harold B. Lee

(1899–1973), then of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. I sat down across the table from him. I told him how much I valued that commission. In fact, I showed him the copy of the letter of appointment I had received.

After pondering the matter for a moment, he said to me, “Here’s what you should do, Brother Monson. You write a letter to the Bureau of Naval Affairs and tell them that because of your call as a member of the bishopric, you can’t accept that commission in the United States Naval Reserve.”

My heart sank. He added, “Then write to the commandant of the Twelfth Naval District in San Francisco indicating that you would like to be discharged from the reserve.”

I said, “Elder Lee, you don’t understand the military. Of course they will decline to give me that commission if I refuse to accept it, but the Twelfth Naval District isn’t going to let me off. With a war brewing in Korea, a noncommissioned officer will surely be called up. If called back, I would rather go back as a commissioned officer, but I won’t if I don’t accept this commission. Are you sure this is the counsel you want me to receive?”

Elder Lee put his hand on my shoulder and in a fatherly way said, “Brother Monson, have more faith. The military is not for you.”

I went home. I placed a tear-stained commission back in its envelope with its accompanying letter and declined to accept it. Then I wrote a letter to the Twelfth Naval District



I would not hold the position in the Church I hold today had I not followed the counsel of Elder Harold B. Lee.

and requested a discharge from the Naval Reserve.

My discharge from the Naval Reserve was in the last group processed before the outbreak of the Korean War. My headquarters outfit was activated. Six weeks after I was called to be a counselor in the bishopric, I was called to be the bishop of my ward.

I would not hold the position in the Church I hold today had I not followed the counsel of a prophet, had I not prayed about that decision, had I not come to an appreciation of an important truth: the wisdom of God oftentimes appears as foolishness to men.¹ But the greatest single lesson we can learn in mortality is that when God speaks and His children obey, they will always be right.

It has been said that history turns on small hinges, and so do our lives. Decisions determine destiny. But we are not left unaided in our decisions.

If you want to see the light of heaven, if you want to feel the inspiration of Almighty God, if you want to

have that feeling within your bosom that your Heavenly Father is guiding you, then follow the prophets of God. When you follow the prophets, you will be in safe territory. ■

NOTE

1. See 1 Corinthians 2:14.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

Not many members of the Church will receive one-on-one counsel from an Apostle, as President Monson did. But we can still be blessed as we follow the teachings of prophets and apostles. Consider reading President Monson's addresses from the last general conference (remember his opening and closing remarks too). Look for specific directions or calls to action. You could discuss what you learn with those you visit and consider ways to apply President Monson's counsel.

For ideas on how to teach this message to youth and children, see page 6.

Counsel for Hard Choices

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, told about a time when he followed prophetic counsel. During one general conference, President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) urged members to get out of debt—specifically mortgage debt.

President Eyring said: “I turned to my wife after the meeting and asked, ‘Do you think there is any way we could do that?’ At first we couldn’t.”

But by that evening he thought of a property they had unsuccessfully tried to sell for years. “We trusted God and . . . His servant’s message, [so] we placed a phone call. . . . I heard an answer that to this day strengthens my trust in God and His servants.” That same day a man had placed an offer on the Eyrings’ property for an amount just greater than their mortgage. The Eyrings soon became free

of debt (see “Trust in God, Then Go and Do,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 72–73).

You may not have a mortgage to pay, but prophetic counsel can guide you here and now through difficult decisions regarding work, education, a mission, and dating. Discuss with your family or peers about how you can follow the prophet when you have to make decisions.

CHILDREN

Find Your Way

We have to make a lot of choices to get back to our Heavenly Father. We can make the best choices when we follow the prophet.

Find your way through the maze. When you come to a decision, look to the prophet’s counsel!



Read the scriptures
Go right



Pray
Go down and then right



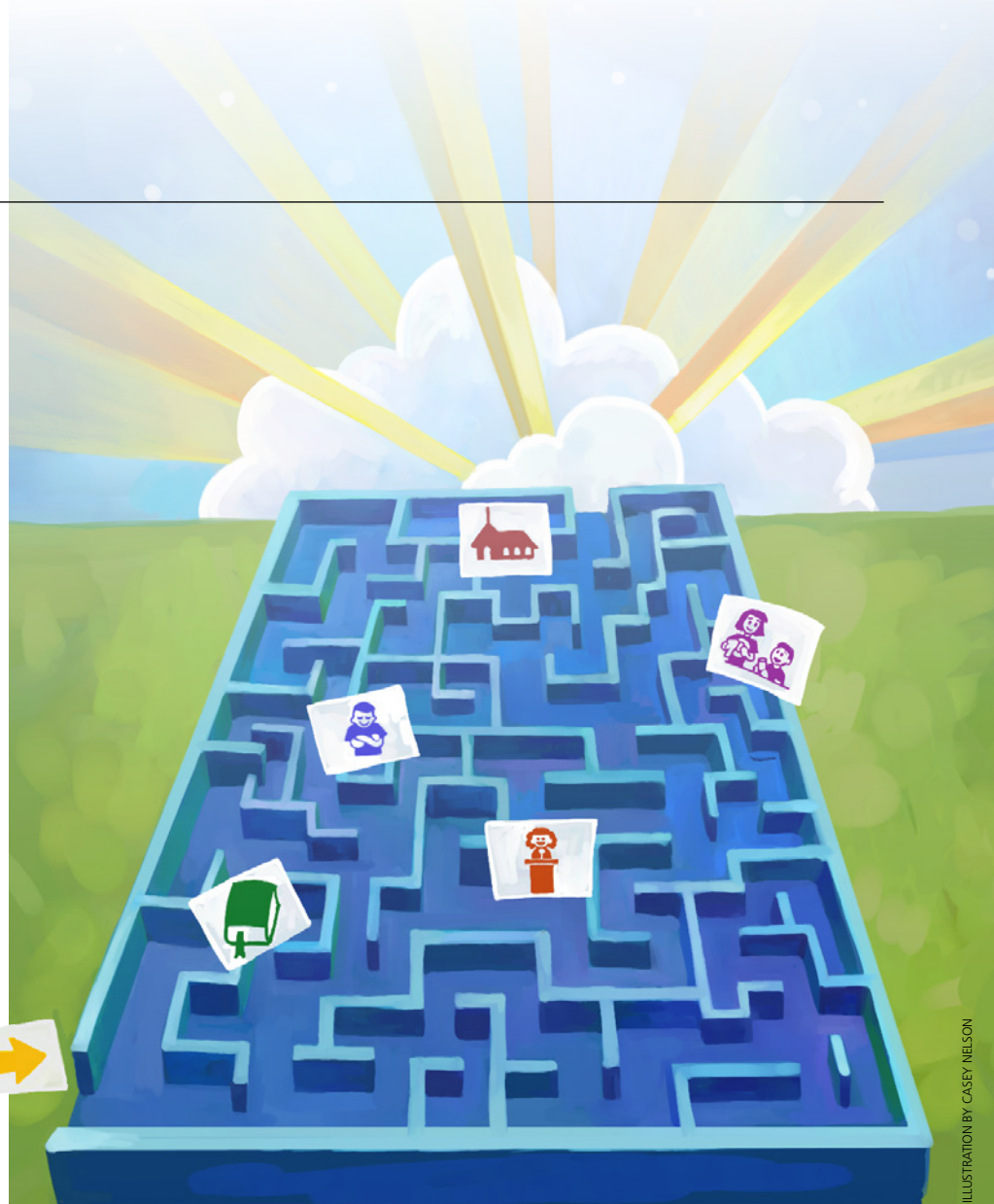
Share your testimony
Go right



Help others
Go down and then left



Go to church
Go up



Prayerfully study this material and seek to know what to share. How will understanding the life and roles of the Savior increase your faith in Him and bless those you watch over through visiting teaching? For more information, go to reliefsociety.lds.org.

The Attributes of Jesus Christ: Obedient Son

This is part of a series of Visiting Teaching Messages featuring attributes of the Savior.

Following Jesus Christ's example of obedience increases our faith in Him. "Is it any wonder," said Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "that Christ chooses first and foremost to define himself in relation to his father—that he loved him and obeyed him and submitted to him like the loyal son he was? . . . Obedience is the first law of heaven."¹

The scriptures teach "when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated" (D&C 130:21). Our spiritual growth takes place as we draw close to God through obedience and invite the power of the Savior's Atonement into our lives.

"As we walk in obedience to the principles and commandments of the gospel of Jesus Christ," said Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "we enjoy a continual flow of blessings promised by God in His covenant with us. Those blessings provide the resources



we need to act rather than simply be acted upon as we go through life. . . . Obedience gives us greater control over our lives, greater capacity to come and go, to work and create."²

Additional Scriptures

Luke 22:41–46; Doctrine and Covenants 82:10; 93:28

Consider This

What are some examples of obedience in the scriptures?

NOTES

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Will of the Father in All Things" (Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 17, 1989), 4, speeches.byu.edu.
2. D. Todd Christofferson, "The Power of Covenants," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 21.
3. David A. Bednar, "Converted unto the Lord," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 109.

Faith, Family, Relief



From the Scriptures

"Can the spiritual strength that results from consistent obedience to the commandments be given to another person?" asked Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. "The clear answer . . . is no."³

The parable of the ten virgins is an example of this principle. While all of the virgins took their lamps to "meet the bridegroom," only five were wise and took oil in their lamps. The other five were foolish because they "took no oil with them."

Then the cry came at midnight: "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." All the virgins trimmed their lamps, but the foolish virgins had no oil. They said to the wise virgins, "Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out."

The wise virgins answered, "Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go . . . and buy for yourselves." And while the foolish virgins were gone, the bridegroom came and the wise virgins went with him and "the door was shut" (Matthew 25:1–13).

OCTOBER 2014 CONFERENCE NOTEBOOK

“What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken; . . . whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same (D&C 1:38).

As you review the October 2014 general conference, you can use these pages (and Conference Notebooks in future issues) to help you study and apply the recent teachings of the living prophets and apostles and other Church leaders.

DOCTRINAL HIGHLIGHT



We Are Led by Living Prophets

“Last year, when President Monson reached the milestone of five years of service as President of the Church, he reflected on his 50 years of apostolic service and made this statement: . . . ‘I assure you that the Church is in good hands. The system set up for the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve assures [us] that it will always be in good hands and that, come what may, there is no need to worry or to fear. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, whom we follow, whom

we worship, and whom we serve, is ever at the helm.’¹

“President Monson, we thank you for those truths! And we thank you for your lifetime of exemplary and dedicated service. . . . We sustain you, not only with uplifted hands but with all our hearts and consecrated efforts.”

Elder Russell M. Nelson, “Sustaining the Prophets,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 76.

NOTE

1. “Message from President Thomas S. Monson,” *Church News*, Feb. 3, 2013, 9.

PROPHETIC PROMISE



Christ’s Path

“As we strive to place Christ at the center of our lives by learning His words, by following His teachings, and by walking in His path, He has promised to share with us the eternal life that He died to gain. There is no higher end than this, that we should choose to accept His discipline and become His disciples and do His work throughout our lives. Nothing else, no other choice we make, can make of us what He can do.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Ponder the Path of Thy Feet,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 88.



ALL ARE BLESSED BY FASTING

"I bear witness of the miracles, both spiritual and temporal, that come to

those who live the law of the fast.

. . . Cherish that sacred privilege at least monthly, and be as generous

as circumstances permit in your fast offering and other humanitarian, educational, and missionary contributions. I promise that God will be generous to you, and those who find relief at your hand will call your name blessed forever."

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, "Are We Not All Beggars?" *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 42.



ANSWERS FOR YOU

Each conference, prophets and leaders give inspired answers to questions Church members may have. Use your November 2014 issue or visit conference.lds.org to find answers to these questions:

- How are Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ one? See Robert D. Hales, "Eternal Life—to Know Our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ," 80.
- What is a testimony and how do I get one? See Craig C. Christensen, "I Know These Things of Myself," 50.
- What do I do while seeking answers to my questions? See M. Russell Ballard, "Stay in the Boat and Hold on!" 89.



DRAWING PARALLELS

TEMPLES

More than one speaker sometimes address the same gospel topic. Here is what three speakers said about temples:

- "We can receive inspiration and revelation in the temple—and also power to cope with the adversities of life." —Sister Linda K. Burton, "Prepared in a Manner That Never Had Been Known," 111.
- "By the nourishing spirit of the temple, we can learn the reality, the power, and the hope of the Savior's Atonement in our personal life." —Sister Neill F. Marriott, "Sharing Your Light," 117.
- "If we are to receive all the blessings God so generously offers, our earthly path must lead to the temple. Temples are an expression of God's love." —Sister Jean A. Stevens, "Covenant Daughters of God," 114.

To read, watch, or listen to general conference addresses, visit conference.lds.org.

AN HOUR TO WATCH WITH HIM

By Maritza Gonzales Espejo

One day I was preparing to give a talk in sacrament meeting. I was studying the article “The Atonement of Jesus Christ” by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the March 2008 *Liahona*. In his article, Elder Holland relates a dream Elder Orson F. Whitney (1855–1931) had in which he saw the Savior in the Garden of Gethsemane. Elder Whitney described the pain and suffering he saw the Savior bear. Then he wrote:

“Presently He arose and walked to where [the] Apostles were kneeling—fast asleep! He shook them gently, awoke them, and in a tone of tender reproach, untinctured by the least show of anger or scolding, asked them if they could not watch with Him one hour. . . .

“Returning to His place, He prayed again and then went back and found them again sleeping. Again He awoke them, admonished them, and returned and prayed as before. Three times this happened.”¹

As I read this, the spirit of revelation entered my mind. In that instant, I realized that the way I could “watch with Him one hour” was in the way

I approached sacrament meeting each Sunday. Since then, I have learned that this is an hour in which we can pray to our Heavenly Father in a more meaningful way. Prayer is fundamental at all times, but the Spirit present in that hour of the sacrament is an opportunity to elevate ourselves closer to Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ. When we focus our thoughts on the Lord, it is, in a way, accompanying

Him at the moment of the agony He endured when taking upon Himself our sins. It is a time to acknowledge the pain He suffered for us.

Sacrament meeting means everything to me. For me it is the hour of infinite salvation. It has become a sacred time in which I remember and commit in prayer and in spirit to honor my covenants and to follow the perfect example of my Savior. I know that He lives and loves me. I know



A REFLECTIVE, REVERENT MOMENT

“[The sacrament] should be a powerful, reverent, reflective moment. It should encourage spiritual feelings and impressions. As such it should not be rushed. It is not something to ‘get over’ so that the real purpose of a sacrament meeting can be pursued. This is the real purpose of the meeting. And everything that is said or sung or prayed in those services should be consistent with the grandeur of this sacred ordinance.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “This Do in Remembrance of Me,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 68.



that it is only through His sacrifice and His precious blood that was spilt that we can all be saved. I know this is true because as I have worked at “watching with Him,” my understanding has been enlightened, my life has been blessed, and my vision of eternal life in His presence has been deepened. ■

The author lives in Ica, Peru.

NOTE

1. Orson F. Whitney, quoted in Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Atonement of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Mar. 2008, 33.

HOW CAN TAKING THE SACRAMENT CHANGE MY LIFE?

In the October 2012 general conference, Elder Don R. Clarke of the Seventy taught, “If we properly prepare for the sacrament, we can transform our lives.” He then suggested “five principles that can bless our lives as we partake of the sacrament worthily”:

1. Have a feeling of gratitude for the Atonement of Jesus Christ.
2. Remember that we are renewing baptismal covenants.
3. Seek to feel forgiven of our sins.
4. Seek inspiration for solutions to our problems.
5. Partake of the sacrament worthily so we can be filled with the Holy Ghost.

Elder Clarke promised: “It will always be a great sacrament meeting if the sacrament is the center of our worship.”¹

NOTE

1. See Don R. Clarke, “Blessings of the Sacrament,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 104–6.

THE ROAD TO A FOREVER FAMILY

By Garth and Sandy Hamblin

Once they were converted, the 'Akau'olas were determined to make it to the temple.

One Sunday morning, after drinking alcohol and kava with friends for most of the night, Siope 'Akau'ola of Tonga was returning home when he saw a family dressed in their Sunday best. They were laughing and talking as they walked together. Siope wondered what made them so happy, so he followed them to see where they were going.

Siope saw the family enter a Latter-day Saint Church building. He watched through the window as others arrived. Happiness radiated from their faces as families sat together and sang songs of worship.

Siope's thoughts drifted to his wife, Liu. The love they had shared when first married was fading. Siope wanted to recapture that love. He hurried home and told his wife he had found the way to help their family succeed: they needed to join the Church.

That very day Siope went to the bishop's home in his village. The bishop recognized Siope, having seen him drunk in the streets. As they talked, Siope could see doubt on the bishop's face, but he was firm in his resolve; he boldly told the bishop he wanted to be baptized. The bishop paused, invited Siope in, and began teaching him the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Liu was reluctant at first but watched as her husband gradually changed for the better. Siope began spending more time with their children and showing more love for his wife and family through his actions. So Liu began taking the missionary lessons also, and soon they were both baptized.

As the one-year anniversary of their baptism drew near, the 'Akau'ola family contemplated the wonderful blessings of the temple. Siope said, "If the blessings of the temple are so much greater than those we have received from being baptized, imagine how wonderful temple blessings must be." Despite their desire to be sealed, the temple in Tonga was undergoing renovations, so they would have to wait over a year or make an expensive trip to New Zealand or Fiji to attend the temple.

The family thought hard and prayed about what to do. They eventually decided to take out a small loan. While waiting for approval, the bank processing their loan was destroyed in a fire. All loans would be delayed until the following year.

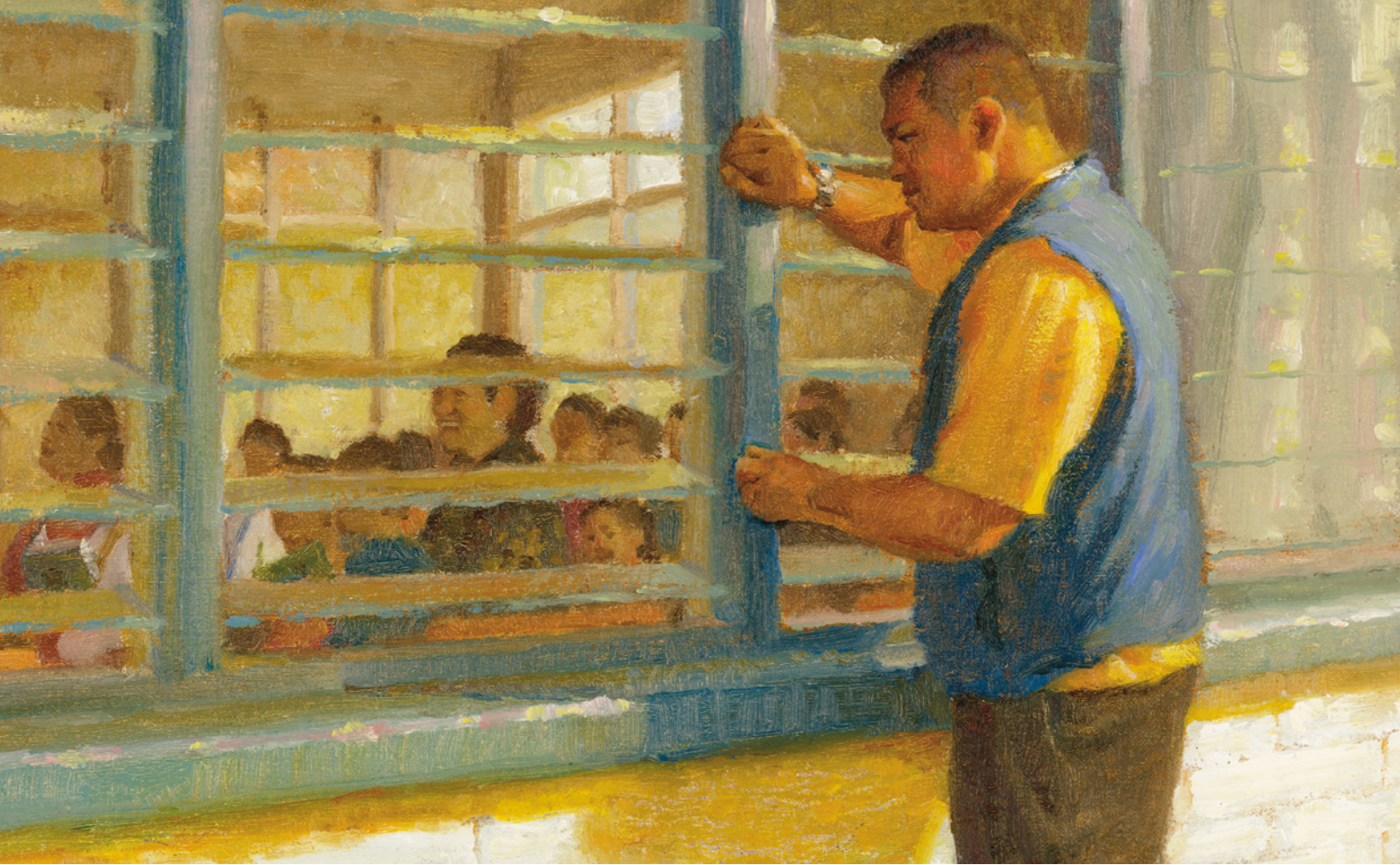
Siope and Liu were feeling discouraged. They sat together in their small living room and prayed for a

miracle. As they prayed and counseled together, the answer came: "I saw in my mind's eye the family van smiling at us and knew this was the answer to our prayers," Siope said. They were able to sell the van the next day and purchase airline tickets to Fiji for their family of five.

They arrived very late into Nadi, Fiji, with three tired children and a long drive ahead of them to the temple in Suva. Liu said, "I learned that the more we try to get closer to the Lord's house the more Satan tries to get us to give up before we get the blessing."

While sitting in the airport trying to decide what their next step would be, a woman helped them arrange lodging and a ride to Suva the next day for a fraction of the usual rates.





They felt that God had sent an angel to help them.

They arrived at the temple the next day. “As we entered the temple I felt a peace and calm in my heart,” Liu said. “I have never seen clean and white in my life like in the temple. A thought came to my mind: If the temple is a house made by man and it is so beautiful, then how wonderful must the home be that Heavenly Father has promised us!”

Their experiences in the temple were life-changing for the family. Liu said, “The whole time we were

in Fiji, I experienced the love of our Heavenly Father for us. When we choose to follow Him, He really takes good care of us.”

Wonderful blessings continued to come for the ‘Akau’ola family after they returned home. Both Siope and Liu received college scholarships, earned teaching degrees, and were hired at Liahona High School.

While teaching, they became aware of children who needed a place to live. Sometimes by ones, more often by twos and threes, children began

knocking on Siope and Liu’s door. And Siope and Liu took them in. Their small home now holds 20 people. They have five other “adopted” children who have since gone away to attend college or to serve missions.

Siope and Liu know that these children will grow and blossom when they are given love and structure in their lives. Those who were not members of the Church have embraced the gospel and now have growing desires to serve missions. Siope and Liu call all the children under their care *their* children, and all the kids call Liu and Siope Mom and Dad. The ‘Akau’olas know they’ve been richly blessed and are happy to share these blessings with others. ■

The authors are from Alaska, USA, and are serving a mission in Tonga.



FIREFLIES

By David Wright

Are we keeping our eyes on eternal rewards—or on something else?

Several years ago I worked at an archaeological site called Aguateca, which is located in a beautiful and remote part of Guatemala accessible only by a long boat ride up the winding Petexbatún River.

One evening I was returning to Aguateca with several archaeologists after spending the day at a neighboring site. As we traveled by boat up the river, with only the quiet hum of the motor and the chirp of insects in the background, I reclined against the side of the boat, enjoying the peaceful ride and the moonless, unusually clear night. As the boat followed the serpentine twists of the river, I tried to maintain my sense of direction by tracking the North Star. Sometimes the North Star disappeared behind the dark silhouettes of the trees lining the riverbanks, but it always reappeared shortly.

At one bend in the river, I lost the North Star behind the treetops again. Once the boat turned southward, I quickly relocated it, feeling like an old-time mariner, proud of my ability to stay oriented. After a minute of watching it, however, I realized I was mistaken: I had not relocated the North Star or even a star at all. I was watching a firefly.

Only then did I become aware that many of the “stars” above me were actually fireflies hovering silently in the warm night air. Amazingly, the glow of the dozens of fireflies overhead was almost identical to the glow of the distant stars and galaxies, and the twists and turns of the boat on the river had made it easy to confuse the two.

“How could I mistake a miniscule firefly for a star of almost infinite brilliance?” I wondered. The answer was clear: it was just a matter of perspective. The relatively faint and fleeting light of the fireflies rivaled that of the stars only because the fireflies were just a few feet above me and the stars were so distant. From my perspective, the two appeared nearly identical.

Like the fireflies, temptations and trials loom large because they are

close at hand. Meanwhile, the promised blessings, like stars, can appear very distant.

Our spiritual shortsightedness can have many consequences. The more distant the reward appears, the more tempted we are to think we can procrastinate the day of our repentance and still return to Heavenly Father to claim our eternal inheritance (see Alma 34:33–34). We may begin to doubt the eternal reward or decide that it’s more fun to indulge the natural man now than to wait for blessings that may come much later. We may fear the relentless, lifelong struggle against sin or lack faith that our Savior will help us withstand the buffetings of Satan.

We all lose our eternal perspective occasionally; the challenge is to regain it as quickly as possible. Though the world may offer attractive, counterfeit rewards, we can look to Jesus Christ as we navigate the twists and turns of life and trust that He truly is “a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

It has been years since I took that boat ride on the river, but even today I pause when confronted with temptation and remind myself, “It’s just a firefly.” ■

The author lives in Florida, USA.



A POTATO FOR THE TEACHER

By Bonny Dahlsrud

I learned that I don't have to give grand gestures of service every time.

A small gesture of love is just as nice.

As an elementary school teacher of more than 25 years, I have received a lot of interesting things from my young students. Silly notes, drawn pictures, and imaginative crafts are common gifts. Last year, however, was the first time I had ever received a potato.

"A potato for the teacher," young Emma said proudly when she came to my desk, "because I didn't have an apple." It was a medium-sized potato, scrubbed clean, and beautiful as far as potatoes go. I thanked her and placed it on my desk. I saw Emma's large blue eyes shine with pride whenever she looked at it throughout the day.

After school, when I was working at my desk, I couldn't help but regard the potato with a tender smile. Children see things so simply, and with that common potato, Emma taught me something important. I left it on my desk for over a week

because it served as a reminder to me.

As a visiting teacher and a sister in my ward, I wanted to serve others, but I was always waiting for an "apple" before I took time to help. If I was busy and couldn't make an extra casserole or if I wanted to give a special flower but didn't get to the floral shop, I ignored the still, small voice of the Spirit whispering of someone who needed my service.

"I'll do something this weekend, when I have time," I would convince myself. "Nobody needs me today."

But what if someone really did need me? What if I hadn't ignored the promptings to visit an elderly

neighbor or the young widow who had just lost her husband? Could I have helped or served, even with what I could offer then—a "potato"?

I learned a great lesson from Emma that I am trying hard to put into practice. If I don't have an apple, I give a potato instead, and I do it now. I don't wait to make a casserole or my special lemon cream pie; I buy a box of cookies instead. I don't often get to the florist, but I can drop in for a chat without the flower. A homemade card would be great, but so would a quick phone call. It doesn't have to be a grand gesture of service every time. A small gesture of love is just as nice.

I have the potato at home now, but I don't think I'll ever eat it. It serves as a constant reminder to serve when I'm prompted. I give what I can now instead of waiting until later. A potato for the teacher really was the nicest gift. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.



NEWS OF THE CHURCH

Visit news.lds.org for more Church news and events.

Requirements Encourage Seminary Students to Elevate Learning

New requirements for seminary graduation that will help students “elevate learning” are being implemented throughout the Church. The requirements, which take effect at the beginning of this year’s study of the Doctrine and Covenants and Church history, include two major elements:

1. Seminary students will be required to read the book of scripture they are studying for the year, in addition to receiving credit based on attendance

Seminary students in Guyana, South America, studying the scriptures together.



- and an ecclesiastic endorsement from their bishop or branch president. Scripture reading has been emphasized in the past, but it is now a requirement for graduation.
2. Students will be required to pass two course-learning assessments during the year, with a score of at least 75 percent. One assessment will be held halfway through the year and the second at the end of the academic year. Assessments will deal primarily with doctrinal understanding and application of gospel principles in everyday life.

The new seminary requirements—together with *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* and the Sunday youth curriculum, *Come, Follow Me*—will provide youth with the opportunity to become more self-sufficient in their testimonies, deepen their understanding of the gospel, and increase their ability to share their knowledge as they prepare for lives of service and discipleship.

At the end of every year, students will receive either a certificate indicating they completed the requirements necessary (including the reading and assessments) or a certificate of recognition indicating they met attendance requirements. ■

Indexing Challenge Sets Record

Participants in the International Indexing Challenge established a new record for the most indexing participants online in a single day. A total of 66,511 volunteers went on the Internet on July 22, 2014, to view images of historical records and transcribe the information for inclusion in the searchable database on FamilySearch.org. The previous one-day record of 49,025 volunteers was set in July 2012 at the height of the 1940 U.S. Census indexing effort.

The challenge also produced the second-highest combined (indexed or arbitrated) total of submitted records, reaching just over 5.7 million. (Each record is indexed by two volunteers and then reviewed by a third volunteer, known as an arbitrator, to ensure quality and accuracy.)

“Our members, young and old, have participated with a happy heart,” said Bishop Crouet in Toulouse, France. “What a beautiful experience.”

Christopher Jones of Wales said, “We arranged our family home evening so that we could all index—two parents and seven children aged 18 to 5. All told, as a family we indexed just over 900 records!”

Natalie Terry of Bangkok, Thailand, said she loved participating in the worldwide indexing day with her 13-year-old daughter. And Chris Shead of Chorley, England, said he was able to find about 30 new family names, including “a little girl who died soon after her baptism and had fallen through the gaps between the census records.” ■



Elder David A. Bednar says social media provides a unique opportunity to share the gospel.

Apostle Offers Counsel about Social Media

“Beginning at this place on this day, I exhort you to sweep the earth with messages filled with righteousness and truth, messages that are authentic, edifying, and praiseworthy, and literally to sweep the earth as with a flood,” Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said during an address at Education Week at Brigham Young University on August 19, 2014.

“I pray we will not simply participate in a flash flood that rises swiftly and then recedes just as rapidly,” he said in a message that focused on the power of social media to communicate truth. Elder Bednar called our time a “unique season in the history of the world,” in which we are blessed with “a miraculous progression of innovations and inventions that have enabled and accelerated the work of salvation.

“Approximately 40 percent of our worldwide missionary force soon will be using digital devices as tools in the work of conversion, retention,

and activation,” he said. “I am confident all of us also recognize how technology has accelerated family history and temple work, our individual and family study of the restored gospel, and made it possible for us to learn about, see, and experience the world in remarkable ways.”

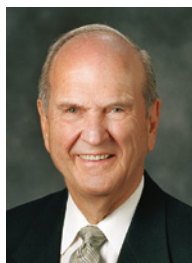
He pointed to recent social media efforts including an Easter video produced by the Church, *Because of Him*, that was viewed more than five million times in 191 countries and territories, and the #didyouthinktopray hashtag, which led to more than 40,000 conversations about the need for prayer.

These and other efforts are “only a small trickle,” he said, calling upon Latter-day Saints to “help transform the trickle into a flood.” He also said that when using social media:

- “We should not exaggerate, embellish, or pretend to be someone, or something we are not. Our content should be trustworthy and constructive.”
- “Our messages should seek to edify and uplift, rather than to argue, debate, condemn, or belittle.”
- “Be courageous and bold, but not overbearing, in sustaining and defending our beliefs, and avoid contention. As disciples, our purpose should be to use social media channels as a means of projecting the light and truth of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.”
- “Too much time can be wasted, too many relationships can be harmed or destroyed, and precious patterns of righteousness can be disrupted when technology is used improperly. We should not allow even good applications of social media to overrule the better and best uses of our time, energy, and resources.”
- “We need not become social media experts or fanatics. And we do not need to spend inordinate amounts of time creating and disseminating elaborate messages.” ■

*May you choose to be a light to the world
to help save God's children, to have joy, and
ultimately to earn the blessing of eternal life.*





**By Elder
Russell M. Nelson**

Of the Quorum of
the Twelve Apostles

WHAT WILL YOU CHOOSE?

*You were commissioned by your Heavenly Father
to build up the kingdom of God on earth right now
and to prepare a people to receive the Savior.*

As “youth of the noble birthright,”¹ you are literally sons and daughters of God, born at this particular time in the world’s history for a most sacred purpose. Although the moral and religious values of society seem to be weakening across the globe, youth of this Church are to be standard bearers of the Lord and beacons of light to attract others to Him. Your identity and purpose are unique.

What is your identity? You are children of the covenant that God made with Father Abraham when Abraham was promised that “in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed” (Acts 3:25; see also 1 Nephi 15:18; 3 Nephi 20:25). You are also “children of the promised day,”² this period of world history when the gospel is being broadly proclaimed across the entire planet.

What is your purpose? You brethren were foreordained in a premortal realm to bear the priesthood (see Alma 13:2–3). And you sisters were chosen before the foundation of the world to bear and care for God’s children; in doing so, you glorify God (see D&C 132:63). Have you sisters considered what it really means to be co-creators with God?

Each of you young men and young women was commissioned by your Heavenly Father to build up the kingdom of God on earth right now and to prepare a people to receive the Savior when He will rule and reign as the Millennial Messiah. Your noble birthright, identity, purpose, and divine commission set you apart from all others.

But neither your birthright nor your premortal ordinations and commissions can save or exalt you. You will do that through your individual decisions and as you choose to access the power of the Lord’s Atonement in your lives. The great eternal principle of agency is vital to our Father’s plan. So, you youth of the noble birthright, what will you choose?

Will you choose to increase in learning?

Education is yours to obtain. No one else can gain it for you. Wherever you are, develop a deep desire to learn. For us as Latter-day Saints, gaining an education is not just a privilege; it is a religious responsibility. “The glory of God is intelligence” (D&C 93:36). Indeed, our education is for the eternities.

“Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.

“And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life . . . , he [or she] will have so much the advantage in the world to come” (D&C 130:18–19).

Such a long-range perspective will help you make good choices about learning.

Don’t be afraid to pursue your goals—even your dreams! But know that there is no shortcut to excellence and competence. Education is the difference between *wishing* you could help other people and *being able* to help them.

What manner of living will you choose?

You are expected to live differently than others. You know what Paul said to young Timothy: “Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).³ Choose to think and act differently than those of the world. Choose to look different, and see what an influence for good you will become. As Ardeth G. Kapp, former Young Women general president, once said, “You can’t be a life saver if you look like all the other swimmers on the beach.”⁴

As youth of the noble birthright, you have a great start in life, but you also have an additional responsibility. “For of him [or her] unto whom much is given much is required” (D&C 82:3; see also Luke 12:48). Part of that requirement is to be a recruit. When you were baptized, you actually reenlisted in the Lord’s army.⁵ Premortally, you stood by Jesus Christ during the War in Heaven. And now the conflict between the forces of good and evil continues here on earth. It is real! (See Revelation 12:7–9; D&C 29:40–41). On God’s side is Jesus Christ,

foreordained to be the Savior of the world (see 1 Nephi 10:4). On the other side is Satan—a rebel, a destroyer of agency (see Moses 4:3).⁶

God’s plan allows the adversary to tempt you so that you can exercise your agency to choose good over evil, to choose to repent, to choose to come unto Jesus Christ and believe His teachings and follow His example. What a huge responsibility and a huge trust!

Your freedom to act for yourself is so central to your eternal progress and happiness that the adversary exerts extraordinary efforts to undermine it (see 2 Nephi 2:27; 10:23).

Will you establish priorities to help you make your choices?

Your choices will not all be between good and evil. Many will be choices between two good options. Not all truths are created equal, so you will need to establish priorities. In your pursuit of knowledge, know that the most important truth you can learn comes from the Lord. In His Intercessory Prayer to His Father, the Savior Himself confirmed this. He said, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). Above everything else you are seeking to learn, seek to know God, your Heavenly Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ. Come to know Them and love Them, as I do.

Another priority scripture that has helped me throughout my life is this one: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

More than anything else in this world, you want to make choices that lead to the ultimate and glorious destiny of eternal life. That is God’s great glory for you (see D&C 14:7; Moses 1:39). Choose eternal life as your highest priority! Study the scriptures, such as sections 76 and 88 of the Doctrine and Covenants, to understand more about the different blessings awaiting those who choose eternal life and those who don’t. Choose eternal life as your highest priority, and notice how other choices fall into place.



Many people have not yet found divine truth and don't know where to look for it. But you youth of the noble birthright are coming to their rescue.

With whom will you choose to associate?

You will mingle with many good people who also believe in God. Whether they be Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, or Muslim, believers know that there actually is absolute truth. Believers in God have a conscience. Believers obey civil and divine law voluntarily, even laws that might otherwise be unenforceable.

With your commitment to obey civil and divine law, you stop for a red light, even if no other traffic is in sight. As a child of God you know, even if the police don't catch you, that stealing and murdering are wrong and that God will ultimately hold you accountable. You know that the consequences for not playing by the rules are not only temporal but also eternal.

As you move along life's journey, you will also become acquainted with people who do not believe in God. Many of them have not yet found divine truth and don't know

where to look for it. But you youth of the noble birthright are coming to their rescue. In great numbers, you are rallying to the call of God's prophet for more missionaries. We are deeply grateful for each one!

As you mingle with nonbelievers, be aware that there may be a few who do not have your best interest at heart (see D&C 1:16; 89:4). As soon as you discern that, flee from them quickly and permanently (see 1 Timothy 6:5–6, 11).

Sadly, you will meet people whose desperate search for something that seems to them like happiness takes them down the slippery slopes of sin. Beware of that slimy slide! Any pleasure in sin is only fleeting, while haunting memories of sin are filled with gnawing and grinding guilt. The sinful warping of the embrace divinely designed to unite husband and wife is but a hollow counterfeit. Each unlawful experience is stripped of deep meaning and sweet memory.

Will you choose freedom or bondage?

Godless forces are all around. You are literally living in enemy territory.⁷ A plague of poisonous pornography abounds. It ensnares all who yield to its insidious grasp.

This was foreseen by the Lord, who said, “And now I show unto you a mystery, a thing which is had in secret chambers, to bring to pass even your destruction in process of time, and ye knew it not” (D&C 38:13; see also verse 28).

Consider how many people in secret chambers are seeking to destroy your life and happiness! Carnal temptation is not new. The Apostle Peter warned of this same snare when he wrote:

“They allure through the lusts of the flesh . . . those that were clean. . . .

“While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage” (2 Peter 2:18–19).

Avoid that bondage, my beloved brothers and sisters. If you are currently viewing pornography, stop it now! Seek help from your bishop. None are smart enough to outwit the adversary on their own once they have been poisoned by pornography. It is as destructive as leprosy, as addictive as meth, and as corrosive as lye.

Will you choose to follow the Lord or the philosophies of men?

Carefully study “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”⁸ The family is under attack across the entire world, but the truths of the family proclamation will fortify you.

You need to understand the far-reaching consequences of society’s current skirmish over the definition of marriage. The present debate involves the question of whether two people of the same gender can be married. If you have a question about the position of the Church on this or any other important issue, prayerfully ponder it and then heed the prophetic messages of living prophets. Their inspired words, with inspiration from the Holy Ghost, will bring to your mind a fuller and truer understanding.⁹

The marriage debate is but one of the many controversies

that will challenge you in the future. Against the strident voices of the adversary, you, as youth of the noble birthright, will choose to stand for the Lord and His truth.

The Apostle Paul prophesied about the plight of our day (see 2 Timothy 3:1–5). His accurate vision of the spiritual devastation of our day was followed by his reassuring conclusion, telling us how to stay safe: “From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15).

To his advice I add my own: Keep studying the scriptures. Keep doing the things that build your faith in Jesus Christ. And then notice the wise choices you are naturally drawn to make.

Your faith in Jesus Christ and His gospel will give you the courage to marry and to bring children into your family while you are young and able to have them. When you are my age, you will prize your children, your grandchildren, and their children above any fame or fortune that otherwise might have come.

How will you prepare for your personal interview with the Savior?

You youth of the noble birthright are not perfect yet. None of us are. So you, along with the rest of us, are very grateful for the Atonement of the Savior, which provides full forgiveness as you truly repent. You also know that your stay here in mortality is relatively brief. In time, each of you will graduate from this frail existence and move on to the next world.

Judgment Day awaits each of us. I know that “the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there” (2 Nephi 9:41). Yes, each of us will have a personal interview with Jesus Christ.

Each day on earth gives you time and opportunity to prepare for that interview. Please know this: As you choose to live on the Lord’s side, you are never alone. God has given you access to His help while you move along mortality’s perilous pathway. As you diligently, earnestly pour out your heart to Him in daily prayer, He will send His angels to help you (see D&C 84:88). He has given you



*Choose to think and
act differently than
those of the world.
Choose to look
different, and see
what an influence for
good you will become.*

the Holy Ghost to be by your side as you live worthily. He has given you the scriptures so that you can fully feast upon the words of Jesus Christ (see 2 Nephi 9:51; 32:3). He has given you words to heed from living prophets.

In whom will you put your trust?

You know that God is your Father. He loves you. He wants you to be happy. Put your trust in Him (see 2 Nephi 4:34; 28:31). Maintain your focus on His holy temple. Be worthy to receive your endowment and sealing ordinances. Remain faithful to those covenants, and return frequently to the temple. Remember, your loftiest goal is to gain the greatest of all the blessings of God, that of eternal life (see D&C 14:7). Temple ordinances are essential for that blessing (see D&C 131:1–3).

I invite you to prayerfully study the scriptural statement of your identity, purpose, and blessing (see D&C 86:8–11). Yes, you truly are youth of the noble birthright, created

in God's image. You are the lawful heirs, to be tried and tested. May you choose to be a light to the world to help save God's children, to have joy, and ultimately to earn the blessing of eternal life. ■

From a Church Educational System devotional address, "Youth of the Noble Birthright: What Will You Choose?" delivered at Brigham Young University–Hawaii on September 6, 2013. For the full address, go to cesdevotionals.lds.org.

NOTES

1. "Carry On," *Hymns*, no. 255.
2. "Hope of Israel," *Hymns*, no. 259.
3. The Greek word *anastrophe*, from which *conversation* was translated, means an upward manner of living.
4. Ardeth Greene Kapp, *I Walk by Faith* (1987), 97.
5. See "We Are All Enlisted," *Hymns*, no. 250.
6. Some people describe agency as *free agency*, but that expression is not scriptural. Scripture speaks only of *moral agency* (see D&C 101:78).
7. See Boyd K. Packer, "Counsel to Youth," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 16, 18.
8. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
9. The Church's inspired proclamation on the family states: "The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129).

WHAT MANNER OF Teachers OUGHT WE TO BE?

If we truly want to become like the Savior, we must learn to teach in the way He taught.

**By the Sunday School
General Presidency**



**Tad R. Callister, president (center);
John S. Tanner, first counselor (left);
and Devin G. Durrant, second counselor
(right)**

The resurrected Lord was nearly finished with His ministry in the Americas. Not long before, He had descended from heaven, bringing light to dispel the darkness that had engulfed the lands of the Nephites and Lamanites following His death. He had taught and testified and prayed. He had blessed, settled questions, and established His Church. Now, as He prepared to leave His disciples, He presented them with a charge that must have filled them with confidence:

“Ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do . . .

“ . . . Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:21, 27).

Jesus invited us to become like Him, and one of His great attributes is His ability to teach. He is the Master Teacher. To become like Him, we too need to become more loving and life-changing teachers, not only

at church but also in our homes. To become like Him, we ought to have a burning desire in our hearts to teach as He taught.

Questions and Invitations

Jesus often taught through questions and invitations. Consider an example from the time He spent with His disciples on the American continent. Once while they were praying, the Savior appeared to them and asked an inviting opening question: “What will ye that I shall give unto you?” (3 Nephi 27:2). How would you respond if the Savior asked you this question?

The disciples responded: “Lord, we will that thou wouldst tell us the name whereby we shall call this church; for there are disputations among the people concerning this matter” (3 Nephi 27:3).

Christ answered their question with one of His own: “Have they not read the scriptures, which say ye must take upon you the name of Christ, which is my name?” (3 Nephi 27:5).



This question reminded His learners that they should put some effort into answering their own questions and that answers to many questions could be found in the scriptures.

He then concluded by reminding the disciples of the significance of His name. His words invited them to act and promised them a blessing: “And whoso taketh upon him my name, and endureth to the end, the same shall be saved at the last day” (3 Nephi 27:6).

A Teaching Model

In these few short verses, Jesus Christ gave us a divine teaching model. He began with a thought-provoking question designed to discern the needs of His learners. He then waited for and listened to their response.

After His learners replied, He helped them find what they were looking for by directing them to the scriptures.

Finally, He extended two invitations and promised a wonderful blessing to those willing to act on His invitations. Christ’s teaching method on this occasion might be summarized in these five principles:

1. Ask effective questions.

The Savior asked, “What will ye that I shall give unto you?” This question invites a variety of responses. As we ask such questions, we help learners articulate what they want to learn, and we help them focus on those things of greatest importance; we engage them in active learning.

2. Listen to your learners.

Jesus Christ listened as they said, “Lord, we will that thou wouldst tell us

the name whereby we shall call this church.” By listening intently, we are better prepared to focus on the needs of our learners.

3. Use the scriptures.

Christ reminded His disciples, “Have they not read the scriptures, which say ye must take upon you the name of Christ, which is my name?” Both teacher and learner should spend time in the scriptures to prepare for lessons. Scripture study is a key part of spiritual preparation for both teachers and learners.

4. Invite your learners to act.

The Lord invited His disciples to (1) take His name upon them and (2) endure to the end. *Preach My Gospel* says, “Rarely, if ever, should you talk to people or teach them without extending an invitation to do something that will strengthen their faith in Christ.”¹ This is good counsel not just for missionaries but for all gospel teachers.

5. Remind your learners of the promised blessings of obedience.

Finally, Jesus Christ promised His learners that those who act upon His invitations “shall be saved at the last day.” Christ frequently promises us His choicest blessings for our obedience (see D&C 14:7). We can do the same, as teachers of His gospel.

The example above illustrates several important teaching methods used by the Savior. In addition, sometimes He taught by parable or analogy. Occasionally He challenged and even

chastised His detractors. But always He taught with love, even for those chastened (see Revelation 3:19).

Love Your Learners

We too must always teach with love and charity if we would teach in the Savior’s way. Love opens the heart of teacher and learner alike, so “both [can be] edified and rejoice together” (D&C 50:22).

A vivid example of the Savior’s love for His learners can be found in 3 Nephi where He prays for, weeps with, and blesses the people. As He prayed to His Father for them, the Nephites felt His love: “No one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father” (3 Nephi 17:17).

He joyfully wept for them and blessed them for their faith, so great was His love:

“Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full.

“And when he had said these words, he wept” (3 Nephi 17:20–21).

Great love enables great learning. The scripture records that “his countenance did smile upon them” and “their hearts were open and they did understand in their hearts” (3 Nephi 19:25, 33).

Encourage Your Learners to Testify

The Savior also gave His learners opportunity to share their testimonies. For example, “when Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

“And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

“He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?



“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:13–16).

After Peter shared his testimony, Christ pronounced marvelous blessings on him:

“Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:17–19).

In trying to become master teachers, we too will frequently ask questions that prompt learners to share their testimonies, both verbally and in their hearts. We will invite our learners to seek personal testimony-building experiences in their daily lives. Then, if the atmosphere in the classroom or home is conducive to the Spirit, our learners will feel comfortable in sharing spiritual experiences and testimonies with each other.

Live What You Teach

Jesus Christ exhorted others to do the things He did (see 3 Nephi

27:21)—to follow Him (see Matthew 4:19). He lived what He taught, and thereby He taught by example.

He taught about service by serving. What a lesson it must have been for His disciples as He washed their feet! “If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.

“For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (John 13:14–15).

He taught about love by loving. “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (John 13:34).

He taught about prayer by praying. After offering prayers so intimate and so sublime that they cannot be recorded, He said, “And as I have prayed among you even so shall ye pray in my church . . . Behold I am the light; I have set an example for you” (3 Nephi 18:16).

Jesus Christ has provided a pattern for all gospel teachers who desire to teach in His way. While not perfect as was He, we can strive diligently to live what we teach. In the words of a children’s song, teachers should be able to say, “Do as I’m doing; follow, follow me!”²

Teach in the Savior’s Way

All gospel teachers are invited to adopt the following six core principles, which reflect the way the Savior taught:

1. Love those you teach.

- Seek after the one.
- Focus on the needs of your learners.

2. Prepare yourself spiritually.

- Live what you teach.
- Know available resources.

3. Teach by the Spirit.

- Help your learners recognize the Spirit.
- Be a teachable teacher.
- Create a learning atmosphere.

4. Discover the gospel together.

- Set high expectations.
- Encourage your learners to testify.
- Ask effective questions.
- Listen to your learners.

5. Teach the doctrine.

- Use the scriptures.
- Use stories and examples.
- Promise blessings and testify.

6. Invite learners to act.

- Help your learners practice.
- Follow up on invitations.

As we apply these principles, we will become better teachers, better learners, better parents, and better disciples of Jesus Christ. For He has commanded us to “teach one another” “diligently,” in a way “that all may be edified of all” (D&C 88:77, 78, 122). May those we teach glimpse in us something of the Master Teacher and come away from the experience not merely informed, but transformed. ■

NOTES

1. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 196.
2. “Do As I’m Doing,” *Children’s Songbook*, 276.



By Elder
Koichi Aoyagi
Of the Seventy



PROPHETIC COUNSEL AND Temple Blessings

When I was a young man, Elder Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, visited Japan and spoke at a conference I attended. I still remember his counsel: “Young people are to go on missions, and they are to be married in the temple.”

I felt prompted by the Holy Ghost and resolved that I would serve a mission and marry in the temple, even though Japan did not yet have a temple.

At the time, I was 19 and in my second year of university studies. My parents, who were not Latter-day Saints, strongly opposed my decision to serve a mission. Every day I prayed that they would give me their permission and blessing. Six months later the Lord answered my prayer.

“We are having financial difficulties, and we can no longer pay for your school and living expenses,” my parents told me. “From this point onward you will have to live on your own. We don’t mind if you go on a mission either!”

I had my parents’ blessing, so I quit school, served a Church construction mission, and then began looking for a job to raise money for a proselyting mission. With the Lord’s help, I found three jobs! Every day except Sunday for the following year, I delivered newspapers from 3:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m., cleaned buildings from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00

I testify that when we pray for guidance, follow the living prophets, and make the temple a priority in our lives, Heavenly Father will lead us and bless us.

p.m., and worked as a cook from 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Then I would change clothes and work nights as a district missionary.

When I was 22, I was called to the Northern Far East Mission. Through my mission service I experienced the greatest joy I had ever felt, had many opportunities to come to know God’s love, and received many blessings. My family was also blessed during my service when my parents resolved their financial challenges.

Following the Prophet

When I completed my mission, the Spirit prompted me to follow the second part of President Kimball’s counsel and not delay marriage in the temple. A year before, Church members in Japan began planning a trip to the Salt Lake Temple. Because they were going to leave in three months, I prayed and fasted to be led to a worthy young woman I could take to the temple.

A short while later I attended a Church activity in my hometown of Matsumoto City. While there I ran into Shiroko Momose, who had attended the same high school I was attending when I joined the Church. The Spirit immediately confirmed that she was the one who had been prepared for me.

I proposed to Shiroko shortly after we began dating. She made me happy when she accepted, but she surprised me by what she said next.

“I am very happy to know that your Lord is my Lord,” she said. “When they announced the trip to the Salt Lake Temple, I longed to go. I prayed many times that the Lord would help me find someone I could marry there. About a year ago I came to know through the Spirit while praying that I should wait for you and that you would propose to me when you returned from your mission.”

That was a great spiritual experience for us, and it strengthened our resolve to marry in the Salt Lake Temple. We had little money to make the trip, but we did not let that discourage us. By then we knew that when we rely on the Lord and keep His commandments, He helps us accomplish things we could not otherwise accomplish.

We appealed to our Heavenly Father in prayer and exerted all our efforts to raise the necessary funds. Those efforts, combined with financial help from one of Shiroko’s friends, enabled us to join the Japanese Saints who went to the Salt Lake Temple.

It is not possible to express the joy we felt in being sealed there as an eternal couple. We will never forget that experience. What added to our joy is that we had researched five generations of our ancestors and had prepared their names for temple work. While in Salt Lake City we performed proxy ordinances for those ancestors. Doing those ordinances helped us feel close to them. We knew they were filled with joy because of our efforts.

We were poor newlyweds, but we made temple attendance a priority, later going to the Laie Hawaii Temple as often as finances permitted.

Blessed by the Temple

“We need the temple more than anything else,” said the Prophet Joseph Smith.¹

In God’s plan of salvation, the temple is essential to our eternal happiness because we perform sacred ceremonies and ordinances of salvation there. The Bible Dictionary tells us that the temple is the holiest place of worship on earth and is “a place where the Lord may come.”²

If we honor our temple covenants and come to the temple “with humble hearts, in cleanliness, and honor, and integrity,”³ we will feel the Holy Spirit and receive further light and knowledge. When we leave the temple, we will depart armed with power from the Lord and with His name upon us, His glory round about us, and His angels to watch over us (see D&C 109:13, 22).

When we returned to Japan after our marriage, the Lord’s promises came to pass in my life as I looked for full-time employment.

The Lord Fulfills His Promises

I was working only part-time when our first child arrived. We were elated, but I knew I would not be able to support our growing family without a full-time job. We began praying earnestly for heaven’s help.

Before I served my mission, I had wanted to work in foreign trade. But to be hired by a trading company, an



OBEDIENCE— AN UNFAILING GUIDE

“A loving Heavenly Father has plotted our course and provided an unfailing guide—even *obedience*. A knowledge of truth and the answers to our greatest questions come to us as we are obedient to the commandments of God.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Obedience Brings Blessings,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2013, 89.



applicant generally had to be a university graduate who held certain certifications. I hadn't finished college and had no certifications, but when we prayed, we felt that the Lord would bless us and prepare a job for me.

I decided to take the hiring exams at a number of trading companies despite my lack of education. The first two turned me down, but I had a curious experience when I applied at a third company.

The Church had few Japanese members during that era, and many people were prejudiced against the Church. When three representatives from the third trading company interviewed me, they looked at my résumé and learned that I was a Latter-day Saint. They began asking me questions about the Church, requesting detailed answers. Having recently returned from my mission, I had no problem talking about the restored Church of Jesus Christ.

For what must have been at least 40 minutes, I spoke about the gospel and bore my testimony of the life of Jesus Christ, the Apostasy, Joseph Smith's First Vision, the

Book of Mormon, the Restoration of the true Church of Jesus Christ, and the teachings of the Church.

Not one of the interviewers stopped me while I spoke. A few days later the trading company offered me a job at an astoundingly high salary. Later, when I asked my manager why they had hired me, he replied, "During your interview I gained an assurance that you were conscientious, sincere, and loyal, and that you would be someone who would work in such a way for our company."

I testify that the Lord fulfills His promises. During my interview I felt the power and Spirit of the Lord upon me, just as He promises to those who attend the temple and honor their temple covenants. I also felt His Spirit with me while I worked for the company, where I was blessed to make many valuable contributions.

A Temple Comes to Japan

At a regional conference in Tokyo in 1975, President Kimball announced construction of the Tokyo Japan Temple. The Japanese Saints, overcome with emotion, spontaneously burst into applause to show their joy and gratitude.

The Tokyo Japan Temple was completed in 1980. During the open house and dedicatory ceremonies, the Saints were blessed with wonderful spiritual experiences and great joy. Those experiences continued following the temple's dedication as the Saints began receiving their temple ordinances and acting as proxy for their deceased ancestors.

Today, almost 45 years after Shiroko and I were married, my decision to follow prophetic counsel continues to bless our lives and the lives of our children. We have built a wonderful home the Lord's way—founded upon the gospel of Jesus Christ, including temple covenants.

I testify that when we pray for guidance, follow the living prophets, and make the temple a priority in our lives, Heavenly Father will lead us and bless us. ■

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 416.
2. Bible Dictionary, "Temple."
3. Spencer W. Kimball, from the Tokyo Japan Temple dedicatory prayer, in *2013 Church Almanac* (2013), 297.

Flora and I

Equal Partners in the Work of the Lord



Left: Flora Amussen and Ezra Taft Benson in their younger years. Right: Flora and Ezra enjoying a day with their six children.





As we learn of the supportive, loving partnership that President Ezra Taft Benson enjoyed with his wife, Flora, we gain a deeper understanding of his ministry.

By Aaron L. West

Church Publishing Services

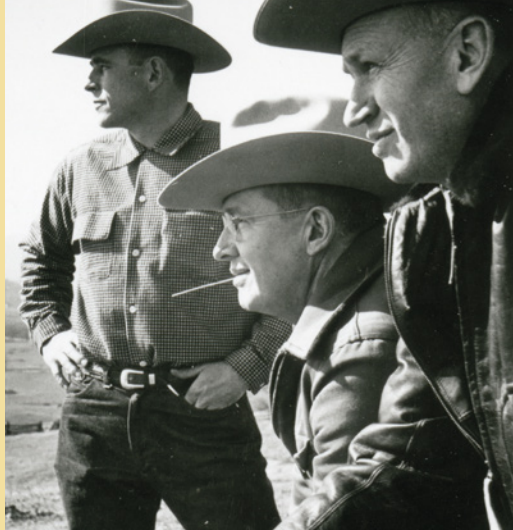
Sometimes, if we listen closely, a short phrase can be as powerful as a sermon. Such was the case on November 11, 1985. The phrase was “Flora and I.”

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) read those words as part of a prepared statement for news reporters the day after he was set apart as President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) had died six days earlier, leaving President Benson as the senior Apostle.

President Benson and his wife, Flora, had been together when they received word of President Kimball’s passing, and they “immediately dropped to their knees” in prayer.¹ Now, in the first paragraph of the statement that would be published throughout the world, President Benson again placed himself beside Flora. He said: “This is a day I have not anticipated. My wife, Flora, and I have prayed continually that President Kimball’s days would be prolonged on this earth and another miracle performed on his behalf. Now that the Lord has spoken, we will do our best, under his guiding direction, to move the work forward in the earth.”²

After 59 years of marriage, the phrase “Flora and I” came naturally to President Benson. And when he said, “we will do our best, under his guiding direction, to move the work forward,” he did not use the word *we* to refer to himself and the other General Authorities, although he certainly would be united with them. In this statement, the Church’s prophet, seer, and revelator spoke of being united with his wife in the work of the Lord.

To read about how farm life shaped Ezra Taft Benson's character, see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson*, pages 2–5.



Clockwise from top: Ezra Taft Benson with other farmers; Ezra, second from the left, with his mother and siblings; Ezra's parents, George T. Benson and Sarah Dunkley Benson.



And why wouldn't he? He and Flora had been united in the Lord's work for almost six decades. While many aspects of their life had changed over the years, their partnership had been a constant source of strength for both of them.

This year the course of study for Relief Society sisters and Melchizedek Priesthood holders includes an opportunity to learn from President Ezra Taft Benson. As you study his teachings, you may feel inclined to learn about his character. This article provides a few glimpses into his life and ministry, through the perspective of his wife, Flora Amussen Benson. All chapter and page numbers in the article refer to *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson*.

"I'd Like to Marry a Farmer"

In the fall of 1920, 21-year-old Ezra Taft Benson traveled from his family's farm in Whitney, Idaho, USA, to Logan, Utah, where he enrolled at the Utah Agricultural College (now Utah State University). One day when he was with some friends on the school's

campus, a young woman stole his attention. He later recalled:

"We were out by the dairy barns when a young woman—very attractive and beautiful—drove by in her little car on her way to the dairy to get some milk. As the boys waved at her, she waved back. I said, 'Who is that girl?' They said 'That's Flora Amussen.'

"I told them, 'You know, I've just had the impression I'm going to marry her.'"

Ezra's friends were amused by this announcement. They said, "She's too popular for a farm boy." His response? "That makes it all the more interesting."³

Ezra's friends couldn't have been more wrong in their judgment of Flora Amussen. Since her teenage years, she had seen something special in men who worked the land. One day when her mother, Barbara, told her "that she could not attain the highest degree of glory without celestial marriage, Flora replied, perhaps naively but with some insight, 'Then I want to marry a poor man materially, but rich spiritually, so we can get what we get together.' After a pause she added, 'I'd like to marry a farmer.'"⁴

Flora and Ezra met later in 1920, and their friendship soon became courtship. In Ezra Taft Benson, Flora found a young man who had begun to accumulate the spiritual riches she valued so much. And as she must have expected, the roots of his spiritual strength went deep into the soil of his family's farm.

Working Together to Put God First

Just when Flora and Ezra were beginning to grow closer to each other, they learned that they would be separated for two years. Ezra received a call to serve in the British Mission.

He and Flora were excited about his opportunity to serve, and they “talked about their relationship. They wanted their friendship to continue, but they also recognized the need for Ezra to be a devoted missionary. ‘Before I left, Flora and I had decided to write [letters] only once a month,’ he said. ‘We also decided that our letters would be of encouragement, confidence and news. We did just that.’”⁵

In approaching the mission call this way, they exemplified a truth Ezra would teach the Saints many years later: “When we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives. Our love of the Lord will govern the claims for our affection, the demands on our time, the interests we pursue, and the order of our priorities.”⁶

As Ezra approached the end of his mission, he and Flora looked forward to seeing each other. But Flora “did more than anticipate the immediate prospect of spending time with him. She truly looked forward—to his future and his potential. . . . She was happy with Ezra’s apparent desire to settle on the family farm in Whitney, Idaho. However, she felt that he needed to finish his education first.”⁷ In her effort to help him do so, she joined him in putting God first. Less than a year after he returned from his mission, she surprised him by telling him that she was going to serve a mission herself. To learn more about her decision, see pages 10–11.

A Diamond in the Rough

Flora and Ezra were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple on September 10, 1926. Despite Ezra’s innate goodness and his success in school, “some people continued to question Flora’s judgment. They did not understand



To read accounts of Ezra Taft Benson’s service as a full-time missionary, see pages 9–10 and 103–4 in the manual. To read about his service in post–World War II Europe during his apostleship, see pages 17–21, 54–55, 69–70, 264, and 268.



Top: Young Ezra Taft Benson, before receiving a mission call. Above and right: As an Apostle he helped serve the people in post–World War II Europe.

why someone so accomplished, wealthy, and popular would settle for a farm boy. But she continued to say that she had ‘always wanted to marry a farmer.’ Ezra ‘was practical, sensible and solid,’ she said. And, she observed, ‘He was sweet to his parents, and I knew if he respected them, he’d respect me.’ She recognized that he was ‘a diamond in the rough,’ and she said, ‘I am going to do all within my power to help him be known and felt for good, not only in this little community but for the entire world to know him.’”⁸

With this vision of her husband’s potential, Flora happily went wherever they needed to go to provide for their children and serve the Church, their community, and their nation. This sometimes required her to live a simpler life than she had been accustomed to, but she embraced the challenge.

For example, on their wedding day, “the only festivity . . . was a breakfast for family and friends. After the breakfast, the new



Elder Ezra Taft Benson served as U.S. secretary of agriculture while also serving as an Apostle. To read about these responsibilities, see pages 21–25 and 47–48.



Top: President Benson among the Saints. Left and above: Serving as United States secretary of agriculture.

couple left immediately in their Model T Ford pickup truck for Ames, Iowa,” where Ezra would pursue a master’s degree in agricultural economics. “Along the way, they spent eight nights in a leaky tent. When they arrived in Ames, they rented an apartment one block from the college campus. The apartment was small, and the Bensons shared the space with a large family of cockroaches, but Ezra said that ‘it soon looked like the coziest little cottage one could ever imagine.’”⁹

As Ezra became more “diamond” and less “rough,” he became increasingly more involved in service outside the home. This led to a refining process for Flora as well. When he was away she sometimes struggled with loneliness and discouragement. But she loved being a wife and mother, and she expressed gratitude for her husband’s goodness and for his devotion to the family. To learn more about Flora and Ezra’s early marriage and parenthood, see pages 12–15.

Two Life-Changing Phone Calls

On July 27, 1943, Flora received a phone call from her husband. He was in Salt Lake City, Utah, preparing to return from a business trip with their son Reed. She was at their home near Washington, D.C., about 2,000 miles (3,200 km) away. After a sleepless night full of prayer and tears, he telephoned to let her know that the previous day he had been called to serve as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The news did not surprise Flora. She “had had a strong impression that something of magnitude would happen on [her husband’s] trip.”¹⁰ She expressed confidence in Ezra, and her words had a calming effect on him. He later recalled: “It was reassuring to talk to her. She has always shown more faith in me than I have myself.”¹¹

Even though Flora had confidence in her husband, she knew he could not fulfill his calling alone—he needed support from his family and strength from heaven. At one general conference, a whispered message demonstrated Flora’s love for her husband and her understanding of his reliance on the Lord (see pages 48–49).

Flora received another life-changing phone call from her husband on November 24, 1952. This time he was visiting the Washington, D.C., area, and she was at their home in Salt Lake City. Dwight D. Eisenhower, who would soon begin his service as president of the United States, had just asked Elder Benson to serve as his secretary of agriculture, a high-ranking position that would require great sacrifice and dedication. Elder Benson accepted the position, having been counseled to do so by the President of

the Church, David O. McKay (1873–1970).

When Elder Benson told Flora that President-Elect Eisenhower had offered him a position and that he had accepted, she replied, “I knew he would. And I knew you would accept.” She acknowledged that it would be difficult for the family but added, “It seems to be God’s will.”¹²

Elder Benson served as secretary of agriculture for eight years. During that time, the family endured periods of separation, and Elder Benson had to deal with the criticism and adulation that often accompany public service. The Bensons received great opportunities. For example, Elder Benson once took Flora and their daughters Beverly and Bonnie on a four-week trip in which he worked to establish trade relations with 12 different countries (see pages 181–82). An invitation from a news reporter led to a unique missionary experience for the family (see page 24).

Equal Instruments in the Hands of the Lord

Like all Presidents of the Church, Ezra Taft Benson was foreordained for his calling. But on his own he could not have fulfilled that foreordination or served with such strength. Certainly no other person influenced him as much as Flora did. In the Church and in their family, they worked

side by side as powerful instruments in the Lord’s hands.

Just as President and Sister Benson kneeled together when they learned that he would preside over the Church, they worked together to “move the work forward in the earth.”¹³ As she had hoped when she was a teenager, they got what they wanted—together.¹⁴



From the pulpit, President Benson exhorted Latter-day Saints to flood the earth and their lives with the Book of Mormon (see chapters 9–10). At home, Flora read the Book of Mormon to him every day, and then they discussed what they had read.¹⁵ From the pulpit, President Benson urged the Saints to regularly serve and worship in the temple (see chapter 13). Privately, Flora and

Ezra Benson attended the temple every Friday morning when they were able to do so.¹⁶ From the pulpit, President Benson warned of the sin of pride and the “applause of the world.”¹⁷ But even though Flora had succeeded in helping “the entire world to know him,”¹⁸ they were content, together, with the quiet “applause of heaven.”¹⁹

President Ezra Taft Benson delivered hundreds of sermons as an Apostle and President of the Church. It is difficult to imagine any of those sermons without the influence of that three-word sermon he delivered on November 11, 1985: “Flora and I.” ■

NOTES

1. Sheri L. Dew, *Ezra Taft Benson: A Biography* (1987), 479.
2. Ezra Taft Benson, in Don L. Searle, “President Ezra Taft Benson Ordained Thirteenth President of the Church,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1985, 5.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 7–8.
4. Dew, *Ezra Taft Benson*, 74–75.
5. *Teachings: Ezra Taft Benson*, 8.
6. *Teachings: Ezra Taft Benson*, 40.
7. *Teachings: Ezra Taft Benson*, 10.
8. *Teachings: Ezra Taft Benson*, 11–12.
9. *Teachings: Ezra Taft Benson*, 12.
10. Dew, *Ezra Taft Benson*, 176.
11. Ezra Taft Benson, in *Teachings: Ezra Taft Benson*, 16.
12. Flora Amussen Benson, in *Teachings: Ezra Taft Benson*, 23.
13. Ezra Taft Benson, in Searle, “President Ezra Taft Benson Ordained Thirteenth President of the Church,” 5.
14. See Flora Amussen Benson, in Dew, *Ezra Taft Benson*, 74–75.
15. See Derin Head Rodriguez, “Flora Amussen Benson: Handmaiden of the Lord, Helpmeet of a Prophet, Mother in Zion,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1987, 20.
16. See Dew, *Ezra Taft Benson*, 511.
17. *Teachings: Ezra Taft Benson*, 229.
18. *Teachings: Ezra Taft Benson*, 11–12.
19. *Teachings: Ezra Taft Benson*, 229.

SERVICE THAT CAME FULL CIRCLE

When I was a college freshman, I would go with my roommate to visit her 98-year-old great-great-uncle, whom we affectionately called Uncle Joe. He lived alone and was lonely, so we tried to visit him as often as possible. During our visits he would tell us stories about when he lived in Mexico and in several border towns in Arizona, including Nogales.

When my roommate temporarily moved back home, I felt prompted to continue visiting Uncle Joe. He became a close friend, and I visited him until he passed away a year and a half later. I was sad to lose my friend but grateful for the valuable time we had spent together.

Ten years after Uncle Joe passed away, I was reading through my

great-grandmother's journal. The journal told of her husband leaving her with no money, \$30 due in rent, and nine mouths to feed.

Then she wrote: "In Bisbee [Arizona] the people were so good to us. Even when we lived out of town south of Bisbee, they brought us home [from church]. Brother Joseph Kleinman, who lived in Mexico,

Uncle Joe lived alone and was lonely. So my roommate and I tried to visit him as often as possible.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRADLEY CLARK

COULD I CONFESS?

brought us home many times, and not only that, but [his family] took us all to eat dinner with them. They served fried rabbit with all the trimmings, which we enjoyed very much. They were transferred to Nogales . . . and they let us have their rabbits, pretty white ones, and we sure had all we could eat then.”

As I read this entry, I realized that the Joseph Kleinman who had helped my great-grandmother was Uncle Joe! I felt the Spirit whisper that I had been inspired to continue visiting Uncle Joe as a small thank-you for the kindness he had shown to my great-grandmother and her family.

I was thrilled to be a part of a story of love and service that came full circle. I know the Lord is aware of His children. If we heed the promptings of the Holy Ghost, we can bless the lives of others and in return be blessed ourselves. ■

Krisi Church Summers, Utah, USA

As I sat across from a member of the stake presidency, my heart started pounding. I had felt jumpy since the stake clerk had called to set an appointment. *Would he know I was not worthy to serve?*

I had decided that some sins would be easier to take to the judgment bar of God than to reveal here on earth, thinking it would be selfish to disclose things that would bring pain or embarrassment to my wife. Better to overcome them by myself and live with the burden. The only problem was that I couldn't overcome them on my own.

I sat there as the counselor in the stake presidency extended a call to serve. He asked, “Brother, would you accept this calling?” How I wanted to shout, “Yes!” Instead, almost involuntarily, I heard myself say, “I cannot; I need to clear up some sins.”

Anxiety and relief poured into me simultaneously as I confessed the general nature of the sin. He asked if I had spoken with my bishop. “No.” My wife? “No.” He shook my hand, smiled, told me he was proud of me for confessing, and directed me to talk with the bishop and my wife.

I obeyed, telling my wife first—thereby eliminating my biggest fear. She still loved me! Yes, she was upset, and we would have to work out some things, but she loved me and encouraged me to visit the bishop.

When I went to see the bishop, he immediately welcomed me into his office. With difficulty, I tried to articulate why I was there. After hiding my sins so long, I hardly knew where to start. He lovingly encouraged me to come clean. I explained the general nature of my sins and asked for time to provide the full inventory of my misdeeds. He readily agreed.

I still had yet to fully confess, but I felt the weight of the world lifting from my shoulders. I also felt a renewed hope of freedom, finally, from this burden.

I spent the next weeks praying, reading the scriptures, and creating my inventory to present to both my bishop and my Heavenly Father. First I took my list to Heavenly Father, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, to let Him know I was sorry and sincerely desired to change. I set another appointment with the bishop and shared my list in its entirety. He didn't frown, yell, or chastise me; instead, he gave me a big hug. He let me know of his love and the Lord's love, informing me that I was now on the path of true repentance. I knew it was true.

Confessing my sins, formerly my biggest fear, became one of the most beautiful experiences of my life. It was the first step for me to truly understand the gift and the healing power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. ■

Name withheld



WE FOLLOWED THE PATH

In the last area of my mission, my companion and I served in two villages located in the interior of the state of São Paulo, Brazil. Between the two villages was a shortcut through the forest we had never taken because we felt it was dangerous and that we weren't likely to meet anyone there.

One afternoon as we approached the shortcut, the Holy Ghost touched my heart, telling me that we should enter the forest. I looked at Elder Andrade and told him about the impression I had just received. He told me he had felt the same thing.

Shortly after we had started down the unfamiliar trail, we saw a woman walking toward us. The trail was narrow, and as we passed her, we couldn't help but notice that she was crying.

When she looked up, she invited us to follow her to her home, where we met her husband. Immediately we began teaching the receptive couple the gospel. After a few weeks we invited them to be baptized. We were excited when they readily accepted because it had been a year since the ward's last baptism. We were grateful we had acted on the prompting to enter the trail that day.

A short time before their baptism, however, the wife said she needed to talk to us. She said that for years she had had a recurring dream. In her dream she found herself waiting in the center of São Paulo. An older man

approached her and said two young men were coming to change her life. She would then see two young men approaching, but her dream always ended at that point.

One day a few weeks earlier, she was sweeping the floor in her house when a voice told her that two young men were approaching and that she needed to go at that moment to the shortcut trail, where we had first seen her. Not understanding the prompting but wanting to know the answer to her dream, she dropped her broom and walked to the trail.

As she walked, the images of her dream came to her mind as if in a

movie that ended with her finally seeing the faces of the two young men. She also saw that each wore a black name badge. Moments later, she said, Elder Andrade and I appeared before her on the trail. Emotion overtook her, and she could not help but weep.

Today, remembering that sacred experience, I feel the Spirit and again see in my mind the tear-streaked face of that sister who embraced the gospel. Gratefully, my companion and I had the sensitivity and the courage to follow the path the Lord wanted us to take that day. ■

Rut de Oliveira Marcolino, Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil

Shortly after we had started down the unfamiliar trail, we saw a woman walking toward us. We couldn't help but notice that she was crying.



WOULD YOU LIKE SOME FLOWERS?

One day after a particularly hard shift in the hospital's pediatrics unit, I was tired and grumpy. As I walked to the security desk, I noticed some beautiful flowers. When I commented to the person at the desk how beautiful they were and how good they smelled, she told me I could have them.

I was so happy! I thought that surely Heavenly Father wanted me to have the flowers to brighten my day.

Walking out of the hospital, I found myself behind a woman in a wheelchair. I grew impatient with her but finally was able to pass her as we exited the building. As I passed, she lifted her head and said, "Oh, what beautiful flowers." I thanked her and hurried toward my husband, who was waiting in our car. I was excited to show him my flowers.

Suddenly I felt the Holy Ghost tell me that the woman needed the flowers more than I did. I was reluctant to give them to her, but I followed the prompting. When I asked if she would like them, I hoped she would say no.

"Oh, yes!" she replied. "I would love them. They are beautiful."

I handed them to her, but as I turned to leave, she began to sob. When I asked if she was all right, she told me that her husband had passed away several years ago and that it had been more than a year since any of her children had visited her. She said she had been pleading with God to show her a sign of His love.

"You are an angel sent from God to give me my favorite flowers," she said. "Now I know that He loves me."

My heart broke. I had been so selfish. This woman needed a loving word, and I didn't even want to talk to her. I was no angel. As we parted, I also started to cry.

When I reached the car, my husband asked what was wrong and why I had given away my flowers. He seemed confused but then relieved as I related the story.

"I sent you roses today. I felt that you needed them," he said. "I was worried you had just given them away. If those weren't the flowers I sent you, where are they?"

It turned out that the floral shop had forgotten to deliver the roses, so we drove to the shop. My husband went in and soon came out with a beautiful bouquet.

I couldn't help but cry again. Heavenly Father had asked me to sacrifice those flowers, knowing that there was something better waiting for me and also that His lonely daughter needed a reminder of His love. ■

Cindy Almaraz Anthony, Utah, USA





COUNSEL TOGETHER OFT

Family Councils for Couples

By Nichole Eck

Councils in the Church follow a divine pattern at every level, from the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to stake, ward, branch, quorum, and other leadership

councils. “The most basic council of the Church,” said President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), is the family council.¹

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught that “family councils are ideal forums for effective communication to take place.”² They are, he explained, a time to “talk about the needs of the family and the needs of individual members of the family, . . . solve problems, make family decisions, [and] plan day-to-day and long-range family activities and goals.”³

If you haven’t had a family council, you can start today. If you have children living with you, you can include them. However, it is also important that husbands and wives have a separate family council where they can

discuss family and personal issues privately.

Here are some principles and practical suggestions you can apply to your family councils between husband and wife.

Start with Prayer

“When communication with Heavenly Father breaks down, communication between spouses also breaks down.”⁴

The Lord can be a vital participant in your marriage. In your prayer, you can thank Heavenly Father for your many blessings, including your spouse, and ask for His Spirit to permeate your conversation. His Spirit can guide your discussion and help foster good feelings and good communication.

Couples face many problems and decisions. These six principles of family councils can help.



Decide Together

“Consensus of the council members must be obtained, through prayer and discussion, to achieve that unity which is prerequisite to the Lord’s help.”⁵

You and your spouse must make important decisions, such as whether or not to take a job offer, where to apply for school, when to have children, or how to divide housework. Husbands and wives can propose possible solutions to problems and

discuss them. Humbly listen to your spouse’s input. This can help you learn to understand another point of view and will remind your spouse that you value his or her opinion.

In family councils, we must reach our important decisions “by divine consensus, not by compromise.”⁶ You may not be able to achieve this unity on every issue immediately. It may take several councils and sincere

prayer—both individually and with your spouse—to agree on a decision. But “if you will confer in council as you are expected to do, God will give you solutions to the problems that confront you.”⁷

It may also be helpful to decide beforehand on a topic for a family council. This will give you time to ponder the subject so you and your spouse can feel more prepared to voice your thoughts.

Evaluate Yourself

“Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?” (Matthew 7:3).

You have the power to change only one person: yourself. You may be tempted to use a family council to present a list of criticisms of your spouse. Instead, approach these councils with a desire to improve yourself. Ask your spouse if there is anything problematic or worrisome he or she has noticed in your words or behavior.



Make goals for personal improvement and ask for your spouse's support as you strive to change. Support your spouse in any personal goals he or she wishes to make.

Talk about the Hard Stuff

*"Every family has problems and challenges. But successful families try to work together toward solutions instead of resorting to criticism and contention."*⁸

Strong marriages are built by overcoming challenges, not by ignoring or avoiding them. There will be times when serious issues arise that need to be discussed. You may struggle to work through issues of sin and repentance or financial burdens, for example, but the open and honest communication of a family council can help soften strong feelings. A family council can act as an appropriate

and comfortable forum to bring up concerns or to ask for help.

Focus your energies on possible solutions to the problem and avoid bickering or criticism. Be humble. Share love for your spouse and remind each other that you are working together to build a happy, eternal marriage and family.

Keep It Positive

*If you call family councils only "in times of stress . . . and never to recognize . . . achievements or to compliment [your family members] and show your love to them, then they will learn to dread family councils."*⁹

Not all family council meetings need to focus on problems or decisions. You can take opportunities to share something positive about your spouse or share the blessings in your life. You can celebrate

individual achievements, discuss ways to spiritually strengthen your marriage and family, make goals together, or express gratitude for your spouse's strengths or acts of service. Use family councils to "establish habits of communication and mutual respect on which . . . [you and your spouse] can rely when serious and difficult problems arise."¹⁰

Persevere

*"Let us do the best we can and try to improve each day. When our imperfections appear, we can keep trying to correct them. We can be more forgiving of flaws in ourselves and among those we love."*¹¹

Finally, remember that replacing poor communication habits with positive patterns takes time and practice. Your first family council may seem awkward or





intimidating, but as you humbly strive to communicate with each other and include the Lord in your decisions, you will better understand the blessings of family councils.

The Lord intends for us to have peace in our homes and in our communication. He helps us where we fall short and blesses our efforts. With His help, we can nurture “an atmosphere of respect, understanding, and harmony”¹² that will make our homes, as President Thomas S. Monson promised, “a bit of heaven here on earth.”¹³ ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 211.
2. M. Russell Ballard, *Counseling with*

Our Councils: Learning to Minister Together in the Church and in the Family (2012), 165.

3. M. Russell Ballard, “Family Councils: A Conversation with Elder and Sister Ballard,” *Ensign*, June 2003, 16; *Liahona*, June 2003, 14.
4. M. Russell Ballard, “Family Councils,” *Ensign*, 19; *Liahona*, 17.
5. Ronald E. Poelman, “Priesthood Councils: Key to Meeting Temporal and Spiritual Needs,” *Ensign*, May 1980, 91.
6. Ronald E. Poelman, “Priesthood Councils,” 91.
7. Stephen L. Richards, in Conference Report, Oct. 1953, 86.
8. Ezra Taft Benson, “Counsel to the Saints,” *Ensign*, May 1984, 6.
9. *When Thou Art Converted, Strengthen Thy Brethren* (Melchizedek Priesthood study guide, 1974), 168.
10. “Family Councils: A Heavenly Pattern,” *Follow Me: Relief Society Personal Study Guide* (1989), 171.
11. Russell M. Nelson “Perfection Pending,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 88.
12. “Working Together in Family Councils,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1985, 31.
13. Thomas S. Monson, “Hallmarks of a Happy Home,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 69.

WHAT DO WE TALK ABOUT?

If you don’t know what to talk about in a family council, consider questions like these:

- How can we divide up the work so that each member shares home responsibilities and feels good about what he or she is doing?
- What sort of media will we allow in the house?
- What new skills can we learn as a family?
- What can we do as a family to eliminate quarreling?
- What activities will encourage us to keep the Sabbath day holy?
- How can we prepare for a natural disaster?
- How will we be more involved in our community?
- What new traditions can we start as a family?
- How can we be better about managing our finances?
- What can we do to spiritually strengthen our marriage?

The Courage

By Christian Hägglund

When I returned home to Sweden after my mission, I wrestled for a long time with the next step in my life—temple marriage. The Spirit reaffirmed that I needed to start my family to become the person I needed to become. I focused so much on how this was the most important decision of my life, that even though I felt that I had found the eternal companion for me, and that the Lord approved of my choice, my faith wavered. My girlfriend, Evelina, and I chose a time for our temple sealing, booked our honeymoon, and bought engagement rings before actually becoming engaged—all because of my fear of committing to marriage. I wanted Heavenly Father to command me to marry Evelina because I feared being accountable for the decision in case our marriage ended. Fear and misguided prayers left me paralyzed with my important decision still looming.



I learned to use my agency to act instead of being acted upon when I made the most important decision of my life.

Agency—the Lord’s Way

The promptings of the Holy Ghost eventually made the difference when I turned to Doctrine and Covenants 58:26–29: “For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is [slothful]. . . .

“ . . . Men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

“For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. . . .

“But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned.”

As I pondered these verses, I gained an understanding of the role of agency in our Heavenly Father’s plan, which changed my thinking and gave me courage to move forward. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of

to Marry

the Twelve Apostles taught that if we received inspired guidance without personal effort, we would miss out on “essential personal growth” that comes “as [we] struggle to learn how to be led by the Spirit.”¹

Power to Move Forward

I then resolved to exercise my faith and make a decision, and the Lord blessed me with confidence in my ability to decide. I realized that I should “be anxiously engaged . . . and do many things of [my] own free will”—including getting engaged. The Lord encourages us to use our power as agents to govern ourselves. The use of this power is a central feature in our lives.

I believe that the Lord is more eager to see us exercise our agency than to see us always make perfect decisions. He has, however, given us the necessary tools to make good decisions, especially when it comes to deciding whom to marry. As President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) taught, “Emotions must



not wholly determine decisions, but the mind and the heart, strengthened by fasting and prayer and serious consideration, will give one a maximum chance of marital happiness. It brings with it sacrifice, sharing, and a demand for great selflessness.”²

We even have scriptural instruction on how to receive spiritual confirmations: “You must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within

you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.

“But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought” (D&C 9:8–9). Not all of us, however, will experience a burning in our bosom in response to the Lord’s spiritual confirmations. Each of us must learn to recognize our own particular way of receiving these confirmations.³ By following this pattern, we will gain faith in our ability to make choices.

Heavenly Father knew the needs of my heart, soul, and mind. He gave me these truths, which made all the difference. Evelina and I were married. We have now enjoyed several years of happy family life, and we have three beautiful children. I am so grateful to the Lord for my testimony of agency and its role in making life’s most important decisions. ■

The author lives in Stockholm, Sweden.

NOTES

1. Richard G. Scott, “To Acquire Spiritual Guidance,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 7.
2. Spencer W. Kimball, “Oneness in Marriage,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2002, 40; *Liahona*, Oct. 2002, 36.
3. See also Doctrine and Covenants 8:2–3.

2015 MUTUAL THEME

"Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day" (D&C 4:2).



O YE THAT
EMBARK
IN THE SERVICE OF GOD

SERVING WITH YOUR WHOLE SOUL

By the Young Women
General Presidency

As we learn in the Mutual theme for 2015, it is a sacred privilege to serve God. It is our hope that this year each of us will learn to serve with greater commitment in the way the Savior has instructed—with all our heart, might, mind, and strength. How can we do that? Here are some ideas.

First, we serve with all of our **hearts**. We understand this to mean that your service of God must be motivated by your love for Him and His children. "Our love of the Lord will govern the claims for our affection, the demands on our time, the interests we pursue, and the order of our priorities."¹ You show the Lord your love when you keep His commandments (see D&C 42:29). You serve in your home and strengthen your family. You magnify your calling and reach out to those who need a friend. You find family names to take to the temple.

Second, we serve with all of our **might**. Physical labor and diligent



Bonnie L. Oscarson, president (center); Carol F. McConkie, first counselor (left); Neill F. Marriott, second counselor (right)

effort are required. Missionary work requires stamina and endurance. You serve with might when you attend to the needs of others, “such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally” (Mosiah 4:26).

Next, we serve with all of our **mind**. Your thoughts must be clean and pure, centered on the Savior. You have covenanted to always remember Him. You seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost through scripture study and prayer. As you align your thoughts, words, and actions with the mind and will of God, you recognize the needs of others and are worthy and ready to serve.

Finally, we serve God with all of our **strength**. One way to obtain strength is to exercise faith in the Savior’s Atonement. You repent and sanctify yourself through obedience to His commandments. You feel the Savior’s enabling power and witness miracles as you serve in the strength of the Lord (see Alma 26:12).

As you serve God with your whole soul, He promises that you will be cleansed from sin and prepared to stand before Him and receive His eternal glory. ■

NOTE

1. Ezra Taft Benson, “The Great Commandment —Love the Lord,” *Ensign*, May 1988, 4.

THIS MARVELOUS WORK

By the Young Men
General Presidency

When you hear the word *embark*, what do you think of? A ship setting sail? Joining a great cause? The beginning of a journey?

When you “embark in the service of God,” you’re joining the greatest journey ever. You’re helping God hasten His work, and it’s a great, joyful, and marvelous experience.

Don’t just take our word for it. Last year in a small town in Utah, young men in a teachers quorum visited the youth activities website (lds.org/youth/activities) to find ideas for an activity. One in particular caught their attention: “Seven Days of Service.”

These young men decided to do something even bigger: they would provide service each day for an entire week to anyone in the ward who requested it. When 19 families signed up, the young men were a little surprised and perhaps even a little overwhelmed. How would they be able to do so much service in such a short time? But they had made a

commitment, so they decided to serve all of the families.

In just one week, they gave over 250 hours of combined service, doing such projects as moving a huge pile of rocks, digging a sandbox, cleaning out gutters, and stacking wood. And it changed the young men too.

They felt awed by the strength they felt and the blessings they received. They described feeling united as a quorum and receiving divine help to do homework and other responsibilities. Now, when their ward needs service, the teachers quorum responds enthusiastically. They didn’t just serve for a week—they try to serve every day.

Serving and building the kingdom of God truly is a marvelous work. It brought joy to these young men, and it will bring joy to you as you lift others and see their lives changed by pure and honest efforts. As the Young Women general presidency notes on page 48, it is a privilege to serve God.

Embark right now in your service to God “with all your heart, might, mind and strength” (D&C 4:2). We want to know about your service experiences! Make videos and take pictures of your service, upload them onto social media sites, share them with your family and friends, and email them to liahona@ldschurch.org. You can also tell others about them on the youth activities site. Please invite others to join you in this marvelous work, and let’s see how much we can change the world. ■



David L. Beck, president (center); Larry M. Gibson, first counselor (left); Randall L. Ridd, second counselor (right)

ONE STEP AT A TIME

Youth in Italy share how they serve God with all their heart, might, mind, and strength.

By Hillary Olsen

Now that you know this year's Mutual theme is about service, what are you going to do? The Lord has asked you to serve Him with *all* your heart, might, mind, and strength (see D&C 4:2). That's a lot, and it can feel overwhelming. But it doesn't have to.

"It's like climbing a mountain," says Marco D., of Taranto, Italy. "Thinking about climbing the whole mountain at once is hard, but if you take it one step at a time, it's a lot easier. Put one foot in front of the other, and once you take a step, think, 'I did it!' and then take the next step."

Amid the pizza, pasta, and cobblestones of Italian life, youth in southern Italy have found some useful steps to focus on as they try to serve with *all* their heart, might, mind, and strength.



SEEK SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

Receiving spiritual guidance is an important step to serving the Lord, and Davide C., 15, knows that it won't happen without effort on his part. "I need to be an instrument in God's hands," he says. "I have to be ready to receive and follow the promptings of the Spirit. To do that, I need to constantly surround myself with the things of the Lord."

Davide and his family are converts to the Church. Before he was even baptized, Davide learned how important scripture study is. His brother was the first to be baptized, and his parents soon followed. Davide knew that he needed his own testimony. As he studied the Book of Mormon, he felt the Spirit. The good feelings he felt helped him make the decision to join the Church.

Four years later, Davide still relies on guidance from the Spirit. "We have to be constant. We can't slack off in our scripture study and prayer," he says.

STAY PURE

Marco D., 17, points out the importance of obeying the commandments, specifically the law of chastity. "The adversary tempts us in every way, trying to get us to mess up," says Marco. "Friends can also be a bad influence." Several years ago Marco had to change the friends he spent time with because

he recognized the negative influence they were making on his choices. "I had to find friends who accepted me for who I am and not for who the world expects me to be."

Sometimes in our climb up the mountain, we stumble. When this happens, "go see the bishop and talk openly with him," urges Marco. "The bishop is our brother. We can trust him."

His efforts to be obedient and stay pure give Marco opportunities to serve God now, and they are also preparing him to be worthy to one day serve a full-time mission.

MAKE TIME

Manuel M., 17, recognizes that it's not always easy to serve God. "We are often put to the test," says Manuel. "Sometimes we'd rather do other things. Sometimes I'd rather sleep, go to a football game, or hang out with my friends. But my mom has always taught me that we have to choose to serve the Lord. It's OK



to do other things too, but serving the Lord needs to be our priority."

Miriam D., 14, knows that the only way for her to ensure that scripture study and prayer happen each day is to set aside a specific time to do it. "I feel like I'm able to accomplish so much when I set aside the time," said Miriam. "Besides, when we dedicate more time to the Lord, we can't be tempted as much—it makes us stronger."

SERVE WILLINGLY

For Sabrina D., 15, serving with all her heart, might, mind, and strength means serving with *buona volontà*. That means doing things with a willing and cheerful attitude.

Alessio I., 12, agrees: "It doesn't make sense to do it just because the bishop or your parents tell you to. You shouldn't feel obligated. The Lord wants us to serve for the right reasons."

How can we have more *buona volontà* as we serve? "Reading the scriptures helps me, because they teach us that serving is the right thing to do," says Sabrina.

Studying and understanding the Atonement better can also help us serve willingly and cheerfully. Elvira D., 17, says, "Just as Heavenly Father sent His Son, who sacrificed



everything for us, we need to be willing to dedicate all we can to serving the Lord.”

FOCUS ON OTHERS

Sisters Giulia, 16, and Veronica D., 14, know it's important to focus on others. “Service helps us to see people differently. When you serve someone, you're both blessed,” says Giulia.

Veronica says, “At one point I really wanted to share the gospel, but I didn't feel ready. I was scared. But when I focused on the people I was serving, I felt more confident because I knew that the Lord would help me.”

Giulia and Veronica were able to serve their friend Virginia in a life-changing way. They started inviting her to come to Church activities with them. They also invited Virginia's family to do things with their family. Soon Virginia's family started meeting with the missionaries. A year later, Virginia and her little sister were baptized.

Now that she's a member of the Church, Virginia looks for ways to serve the people around her. She really wants to share the gospel with others. Sometimes her friends at school make fun of her for her new beliefs, so she prays to know whom she should talk to. One day the Spirit prompted her to talk to a girl she knew. “I gave her a Book of Mormon and invited her to come to church

with me. She came! And now she's reading the Book of Mormon.”

Samuele D., 14, looks for opportunities to strengthen the members of his quorum: “I try to help the other boys in my quorum by encouraging them in class. Sometimes they feel embarrassed or nervous to participate.” Samuele says that helping others feel confident is one way he can serve God and prepare for future responsibilities.

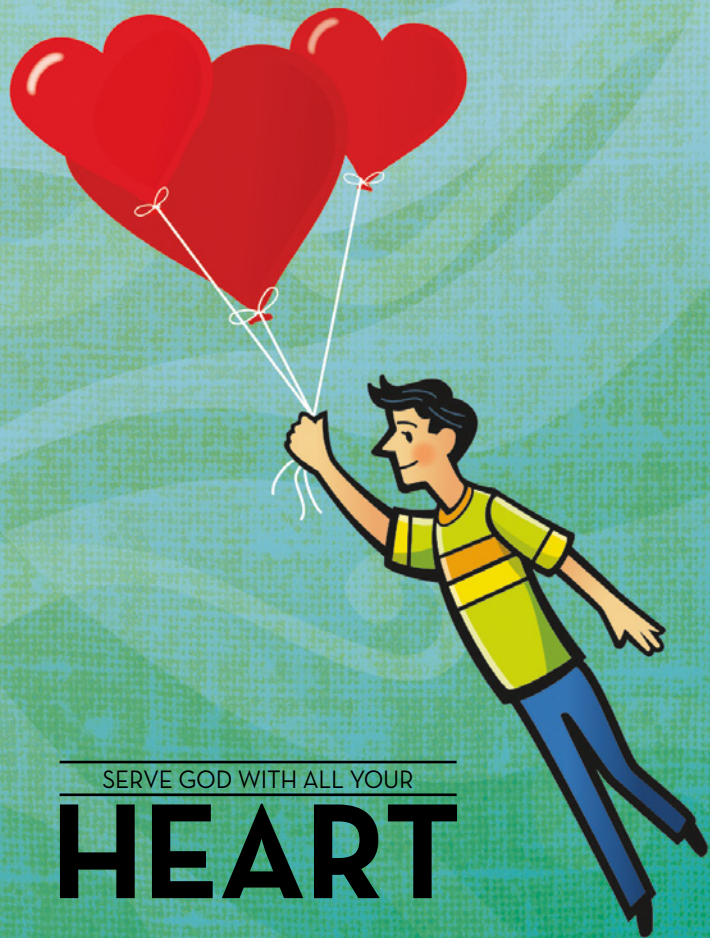
START NOW

So, what are *you* going to do? Alessio I. says, “I don't have to wait till I'm older to make a difference. I need to do it now.”

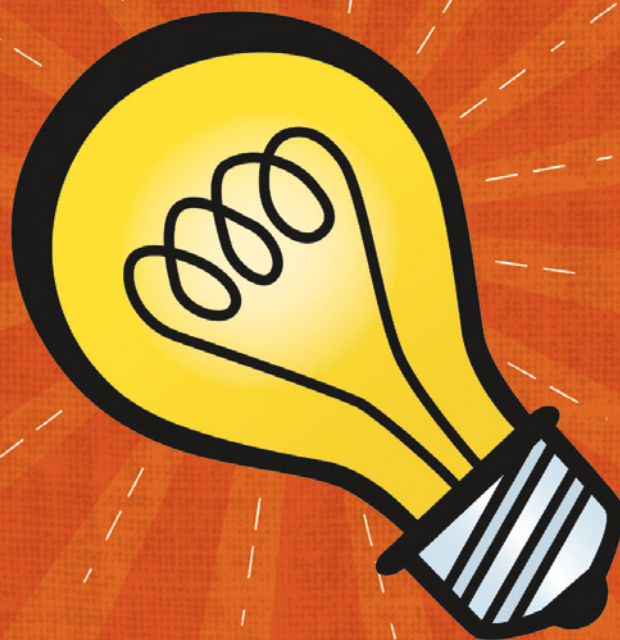
These steps will help you too as you come to realize that you are a valuable part of the Lord's work. Take it a step at a time. You will make an important difference as you learn to give your all to the Lord's service. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.





SERVE GOD WITH ALL YOUR
HEART



SERVE GOD WITH ALL YOUR
MIND



SERVE GOD WITH ALL YOUR
MIGHT

SERVE GOD WITH ALL YOUR
STRENGTH



SERVE WITH ALL YOUR MIND

“The power to think is a gift from God. . . . The way we think greatly affects attitudes and behavior, as well as our standing after this life” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Thoughts,” scriptures.lds.org). Our minds help us learn and change for the better—if we seek after good things. Here are some ideas for serving God with all your mind:

- Study the scriptures and the words of prophets.
- Think positive thoughts about others and yourself.
- Seek knowledge, especially of edifying things.
- Choose wholesome and uplifting entertainment.
- Research something important to you—for example, an event in Church history or an ancestor.
- Focus your thoughts on the Savior during the sacrament.
- Keep a journal and review it periodically.

SERVE WITH ALL YOUR HEART

The heart sustains life. “Heart” often means the center or core of something and the place where desires and emotions reside. To serve God with all our heart is to give Him all of our desires, will, and love. He asks us to love Him by keeping His commandments and loving others. Here are some ideas for doing this:

- Put prayer, scripture study, and Church attendance above your own wishes.
- Show compassion and kindness toward someone in your family or at school.
- Spend time doing what someone else wants to do.
- Try to understand how someone else feels.
- Give a sincere compliment to someone.
- Talk or sit next to someone who is alone.

SERVE WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH

The energy with which we serve God is part of giving Him all our strength. Strength is also spiritual power, inner commitment, resilience, and diligence in doing good. We can show our strength as we live the principles the Savior Himself lived. Then we can receive divine spiritual power. Here are ideas for serving with all your strength:

- Give your undivided attention to your scripture study.
- Work in unity with those in your ward or branch.
- Stand strong for moral standards.
- Act on promptings from the Holy Ghost to bless others.
- Commit to live righteously and stick to your commitment when temptations arise.
- Take care of your body through nutrition and exercise.
- Keep your covenants to gain greater spiritual power.

SERVE WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT

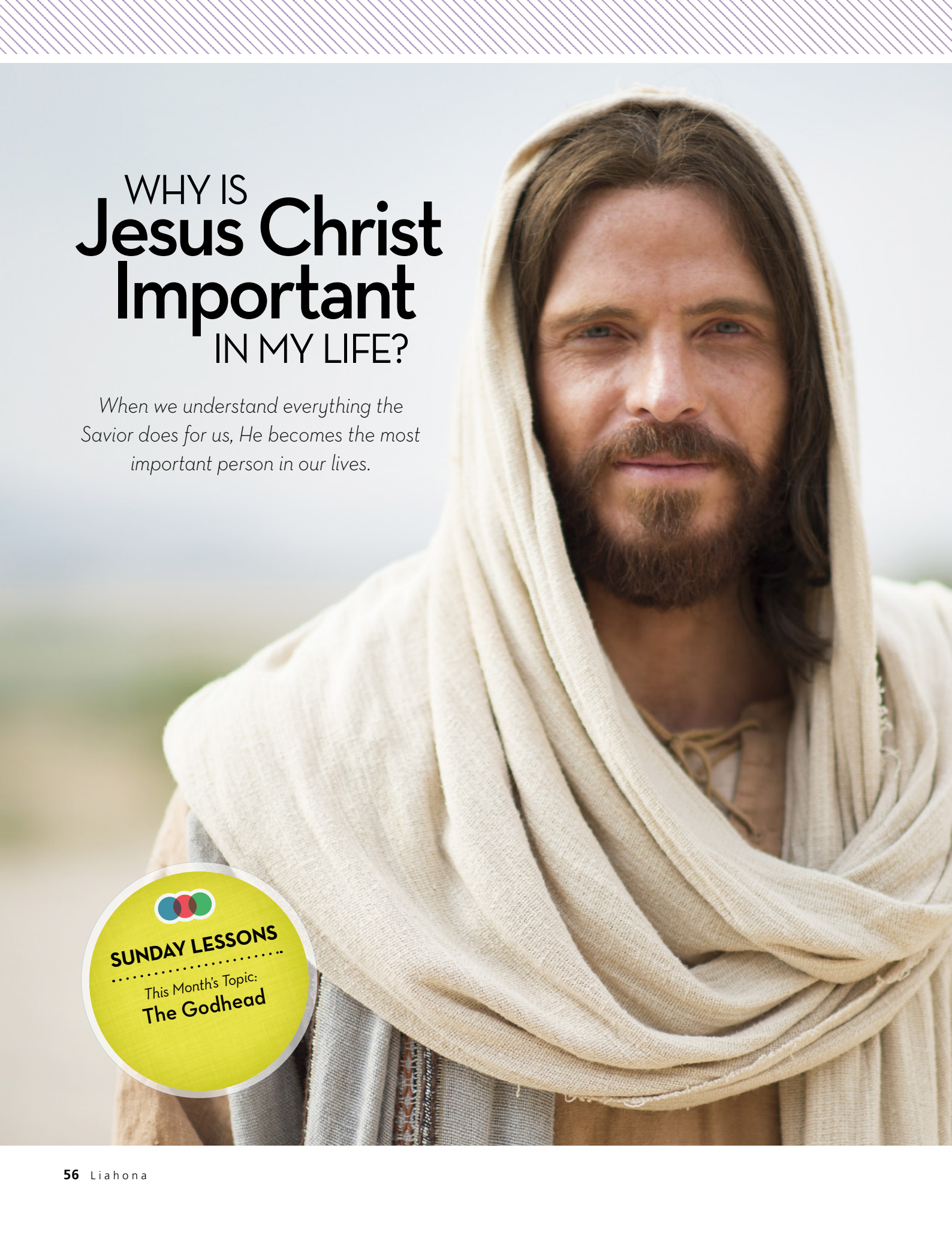
Serving with our might can mean simply doing what we are able to do, both spiritually and temporally, and is outward focused. Whatever our individual talents (from lifting a heavy couch to staying positive in difficult situations), we can use them to strengthen others. Here are some ideas for serving with all your might:

- Ask yourself, “Who can use my help today?”—and do something about it.
- Perform a task for someone, like sweeping a porch, cleaning up a room, or washing dishes.
- Use your talents: fix a vehicle or a computer, beautify a room, create a homemade gift, write a poem.
- Go out of your way to be a friend and a good example.
- Teach someone a skill you have learned.

EMBARK

“Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God,
see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength,
that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day.”
(D&C 4:2)





WHY IS Jesus Christ Important IN MY LIFE?

When we understand everything the Savior does for us, He becomes the most important person in our lives.



SUNDAY LESSONS

.....
This Month's Topic:
The Godhead

By Michael R. Morris
Church Magazines

Recently I read a blog post where the author talked about how the Savior plays a vital role in her daily life. I was happy she was willing to share her feelings, but I was saddened by one reader's response: "He is of no importance whatever in my life—never has been and never will be."

That reader couldn't be more wrong. Sooner or later, all of us will need the Savior. We all make mistakes we cannot fix, experience losses we cannot recover, and face pains, persecution, tragedies, burdens, and disappointments we cannot handle alone.

The good news is that we don't *have* to handle them alone.

"In a moment of weakness we may cry out, 'No one knows what it is like. No one understands.' But the Son of God perfectly knows and understands, for He has felt and borne our individual burdens," said Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. "And because of His infinite and eternal sacrifice (see Alma 34:14), He has perfect empathy and can extend to us His arm of mercy."¹

Jesus is important to us because through His Atonement, teachings, hope, peace, and example, He helps us change our lives, face our trials, and move forward with faith as we journey back to Him and His Father.

Jesus Makes Repentance Possible

One of the reasons Jesus is so important to those who sincerely

try to follow Him is that all of us fall short and need the gift of repentance offered through the Atonement.

When we stumble and fall, Satan wants us to think we're not good enough to get up and get back on the right path. He also wants us to forget that the gospel is "the gospel of *repentance*" (D&C 13:1; emphasis added). But we know that "the grace of Christ is real, affording both forgiveness and cleansing to the repentant sinner."²

The power of Jesus Christ's Atonement is available to each of us, but we have to choose to let it work in our lives. Imagine giving a special gift to a friend—something your friend really needs and something you prepared through personal sacrifice. Then imagine your friend responding, "Thanks, but I don't really want your



gift." How would you feel?

When we don't invite Jesus to help us become clean through repentance, it's as if we're rejecting His gift.

Jesus Teaches Truth

On one occasion, after a number of people refused to walk any longer with Him, Jesus asked the Twelve Apostles, "Will ye also go away?" Peter replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:67–68).



You can find the Savior's "words of eternal life" in the scriptures, the teachings of the living prophets, and the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. They offer a foundation for "happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come,"³ and they guide us safely back to our Heavenly Father and our Savior.

What are some of the great truths the Savior taught? President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, listed four in a recent general conference talk:

- "Our Father has given His children the great plan of happiness."
- "Through the Atonement . . . , we can live forever with our loved ones."
- "We will have glorious, perfect, and immortal bodies, unburdened by sickness or disability."
- "Our tears of sadness and loss will be replaced with an abundance of happiness and joy."⁴

Jesus Offers Hope

When we face serious challenges, sometimes we find it difficult to trust in the Lord. But trusting in Him brings us the hope we need in order to face our challenges.

That's what happened with members of the Gatrell family, who live in Sister Jean A. Stevens's ward. Sister Stevens, first counselor in the Primary general presidency, said the family held tight to the gospel and to their

temple covenants after Brother Gatrell was diagnosed with cancer. Doing so gave them hope in God's promises that they would be together again after this life.

Through the difficult days before her husband passed away, Sister Gatrell said, "I knew the Lord was watching over us. If you trust in the Lord, truly you can overcome any of life's challenges."⁵

The gift of the Atonement gives us the hope of eternal life—something we need when we suffer trials or the death of a loved one.

"Our loving Heavenly Father gave us the gift of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, as our Savior," said President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency. "That great gift and blessing of the Atonement of Jesus Christ brings a universal inheritance: the promise of the Resurrection and the possibility of eternal life to all who are born."⁶

Jesus Offers Peace

If you've ever faced a natural disaster, been the subject of cruel gossip, experienced a life-changing challenge, had a falling-out with a friend, or stood up for what's right, you know you need the Lord's peace. "The peace of the Savior," said Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "subdues the swirling whirlwinds of the world."⁷

During a recent general conference, Elder Andersen shared a story about



a Laurel who was ridiculed and called names for standing up for traditional marriage. Ridicule, she learned, is sometimes the cost of “being true to God and to the teachings of His living prophets.”⁸

But standing up doesn’t mean standing alone. We can always turn to the Prince of Peace when we feel alone or overwhelmed, sad or worried, afraid or worthless. We do so by:

- Praying to Heavenly Father for the Spirit to be with us.
- Reading the Lord’s words in the scriptures and as revealed by living prophets.
- Attending the temple.
- Studying the Savior’s life at church and in seminary.
- Applying His Atonement by repenting of our sins.
- Sharing our testimonies of Him.

When we feel the Savior’s peace, our hearts need not be troubled or afraid (see John 14:26–27).

“Only the Master knows the depths of our trials, our pain, and our suffering,” said President Thomas S. Monson. “He alone offers us eternal peace in times of adversity. He alone touches our tortured souls with His comforting words.”⁹

Jesus Sets the Example

Throughout His ministry, Jesus doesn’t just point the way to happiness—He leads the way. Through His Atonement, He leads us

to love. Through His teachings, He leads us to eternal truths. Through His perfect life, He leads us to the path of obedience.

“The greatest example who ever walked the earth is our Savior, Jesus Christ. His mortal ministry was filled with teaching, serving, and loving others,” said Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The Savior, he added, “invites us to follow His perfect example.”¹⁰

When we understand that the Savior makes possible repentance and resurrection, teaches vital truths, offers hope and peace, and sets the perfect example, He becomes the center of our lives. And with Him as our friend, we have the courage to cast out fear and move forward with faith. ■

NOTES

1. David A. Bednar, “Bear Up Their Burdens with Ease,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 90.
2. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Resurrection of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 113.
3. “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2000, 3.
4. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Grateful in Any Circumstances,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 76.
5. Jean A. Stevens, “Fear Not; I Am with Thee,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 83.
6. Henry B. Eyring, “A Priceless Heritage of Hope,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 24.
7. Neil L. Andersen, “Spiritual Whirlwinds,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 18.
8. See Neil L. Andersen, “Spiritual Whirlwinds,” 19–20.
9. Thomas S. Monson, “I Will Not Fail Thee, nor Forsake Thee,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 87.
10. Richard G. Scott, “I Have Given You an Example,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 35.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Things to Ponder for Sunday

- How has the Atonement of Jesus Christ blessed your life?
- What words of Jesus do you turn to for comfort?
- Can you think of a time when you felt the Savior’s peace through the Holy Ghost?

Things You Might Do

- Record in your journal the next time the Savior’s example or teachings help you choose the right.
- Study the Atonement in preparation for taking the sacrament.
- Share your feelings about Jesus Christ with your family, at church, or on social media.



**By Elder
Robert D. Hales**
Of the Quorum of
the Twelve Apostles

HOW TO ACHIEVE ETERNAL GOALS

I would like to suggest a few of the most important goals in life that will give you joy as you fulfill your mission on this earth—eternal goals that will help you return with honor to your Father in Heaven. They include:

1. **Marry in the temple** and **cultivate** eternal **family relationships** by prayerfully balancing the many facets of life, such as family, occupation, continuing education, hobbies, and entertainment.
2. Faithfully and obediently **live your religion** and be **true to your** baptismal and temple **covenants**, always **treasuring up the good things** of life.
3. **Hold on to the eternal perspective**, remembering that the things of the kingdom are eternal and the things of the world are temporal or temporary.

4. Remember to **give dedi-
cated service** throughout
your life and always **care for
the needy** who may require
your **love** and other **support**.

These are lifetime goals that take focus and time to achieve. Making these goals is not enough; we must **make a plan** to carry them out.

Tonight or tomorrow, **ponder what you want to achieve** in *your* life and what *your* goals should be. Take the time to **write them down** and **review them** throughout the coming years. Then spend a few hours asking yourself what you can do to accomplish these goals today, tomorrow, next week, and in months ahead.

How do you choose and define these important, eternal goals? And, just as vital, how do you make a plan to achieve them? Remember: time is the essential—even critical—element in your calculations. From where you stand now, it may seem that you have an indefinite amount of

time to accomplish eternal things.

Everyone has time; it's true. But just because time passes doesn't mean we are making progress.

"This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors" (Alma 34:32).

The secret is to **choose wisely those activities** that will help us achieve our divinely inspired goals and then have the strength of character and conviction to **disregard what would distract or detain us** from our eternal destination.

I testify that your time on earth will be sufficient to accomplish your preparation and perform the labors of your life's mission—if you **use your time wisely**. And there is no better time to do that than now, in your youth (see Alma 37:35). ■

From a commencement address delivered at Brigham Young University–Idaho on December 11, 2004.

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES

Share how you choose eternal goals and read the experiences of other youth at youth.lds.org.





The CENTER of MY LIFE

I knew of Christ's ministry from the Bible, but could He really have visited the Americas?

By Roberto Pacheco Pretel

When I turned 18, my father allowed me to be baptized in any church I wanted. I wanted to join a Christian church because I'd studied the Bible in several congregations and believed in Jesus Christ.

One day my uncle invited two sister missionaries to our home. They spoke with much conviction about their belief in the Book of Mormon as another testament of Jesus Christ, stating that He had visited the American continent.

On that point, I expressed my opinion that perhaps they were mistaken, since never in my life had I studied about that. One of the sister missionaries, with tears in her eyes and with kindness, said to me, "Brother Roberto, the fact that you do not know the Book of Mormon is true

does not mean that we are mistaken. I know that Jesus Christ loves us and that He was on this continent and that He taught His gospel just as He had in the Holy Land."

They tried to help me with my many concerns and doubts during that first discussion, agreeing that they would visit me the next week.

That night I began to leaf through the Book of Mormon. As I read the title page, one phrase caught my attention: "Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations." I also read 3 Nephi 11 about the Savior's visit to the Americas, and I felt a gladness in my heart. So I did what the missionaries had told me to do: I knelt and asked my Heavenly Father if the book was true.

As I finished the prayer, I felt a

peace and a surety that this was so. For a moment I thought that the tears of the sisters had moved me and caused me to believe in their testimony. So I continued reading the Book of Mormon until a little after 4:00 in the morning. Each time I prayed, I felt with more strength the confirmation that Christ had come to the Americas and that He wanted me to learn more about His true gospel.

Within weeks, I finished reading the Book of Mormon and felt a need to be baptized into the true Church.

Reading the Book of Mormon helped me to grow closer to Jesus Christ and to make Him the center of my life. I am so grateful that the Savior put the missionaries and His Church into my path. ■

The author lives in Arequipa, Peru.

TO THE POINT



I used to be mean,
but I've **changed,**
and I **want to share**
the **gospel.** How can
I overcome my reputation?

First of all, don't let fear stop you. If you have been touched by the Spirit and are trying to repent and change, that is a marvelous thing. Remember, this change happens through the enabling power of the grace of Jesus Christ. With His help, you can become a new person and start to change your reputation. He will also help you share the gospel. Though changing your reputation will take time, it will be worth it. Here are just a few things you can do in that process:

- Apologize to people you know you've hurt.
- Go out of your way to show kindness to people you wouldn't have shown kindness to before.
- Always be sincere and genuine.
- If the people you hang out with are unkind to others, either get them to stop it or stop hanging out with them. Otherwise, people will lump you in with them.
- Consider studying Moroni 7 and praying for charity. ■

The Savior said the **spirit of contention** is of the devil (see 3 Nephi 11:29). What's the **difference** between **disagreeing** and **contending**?

It's normal for people to have different views, and there are times when disciples of Jesus Christ need to stand up in the face of opposition for what we believe. But we need to

state our positions in a positive and factual way without becoming angry, bitter, or insulting. So how do we avoid contentious conflict?

You've probably heard we can "disagree

without being disagreeable." Avoiding contention begins with your motives and desires. The scriptures say that "only by pride cometh contention" (Proverbs 13:10). If you care more about "winning an argument" or "being right," a spirit of contention is almost certain to follow.

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has

taught some ways to avoid contention: (1) "show compassionate concern for others"; (2) "bridle the passion to speak or write contentiously for personal gain or glory"; and (3) "in humble submissiveness, truly [love] God."¹ Then we can have the Spirit of the Lord with us, not the spirit of contention. ■

NOTE

1. Russell M. Nelson, "The Canker of Contention," *Ensign*, May 1989, 70–71.

GIVING THE *Best Gift*

I gave my friend the best birthday present she had ever received.

By Mariela Rodriguez

When I was 13 years old, the prophet asked Church members to read the Book of Mormon in five months, by the end of that year, and promised blessings for doing so. One day as I was reading on the bus, a girl named Cynthia sat by me and asked what the book was. I said it was the Book of Mormon and that it was a special book. I said I wanted to finish reading it before the year ended so I could receive blessings.

She started asking more questions, and I told her she could come to my house so we could talk more about it. She accepted my invitation, and we spent several hours over the following days talking about the Book of Mormon and the Church.

The next Monday, I invited her to family home evening, where I introduced her to the missionaries. They started teaching her the lessons, and she began coming to church and to all the youth activities and other Church meetings.

She decided that she wanted to be baptized, and with her parents' permission, she was baptized on her birthday that year. She said it was the best present she'd ever received. Her mother and siblings attended the baptism. She asked me to sing "The Spirit of God" (*Hymns*, no. 2), and she asked my father to perform the baptism. After she came out of the water, we embraced and cried. I will never forget that day because I felt such incredible happiness.

A year later my family moved away. It was difficult because Cynthia and I had become good friends and sisters in the gospel.

Even though we don't live close to each other anymore, we're still great friends. We talk often on the phone, and recently she called to tell me that her mom was listening to the missionary lessons. This made me happy because before that her mom didn't want to listen to the lessons. Cynthia told me that someday she hopes to go to church with her entire family. She thanked me for introducing her to the Church. ■

The author lives in Texas, USA.



Give Us a Hand!

Every day, children all around the world show they care by finding ways to help others!



COOKIES AND PUPPETS

Our family had a "season of service." My brothers and I made puppets for children in an orphanage. We also took chocolate chip cookies to some firemen and cleaned up at a lake. I'm glad we could serve!

Tobin P., age 9, Idaho, USA



HAPPY SONGS

In our special day of service we visited an assisted living center. When we started singing Primary songs and other songs, people started clapping and singing along. Some of them even danced! We left hugs and cards we made for them.

Leiria District, Portugal



BETTER THAN CHRISTMAS

My mom and dad were exhausted from a long day. I washed and put away the dishes and cleaned the floor, table, and counter. Then I cleaned the living room and the playroom. When my mom and dad woke up, they said it was better than Christmas!

Cambrie G., age 11, Georgia, USA



SEND US YOUR HANDPRINT

How many helping hands does it take to go all the way around the world? Do a good deed and help us find out!

1. Trace your hand on a piece of paper and cut it out.
2. Write about an act of service you did for someone—or an act of service someone did for you. It can be something big or something small.
3. Add a photo of yourself.
4. Ask your parents or an adult to help you send your submission to liahona@ldschurch.org or to the address on page 3.

We'll be collecting helping hands from now until October 2015.

PROJECT SOCK BOX

People without homes get very cold in the winter! Our ward collected warm socks for homeless people in our area. Our sock box overflowed with hundreds of socks for the homeless!

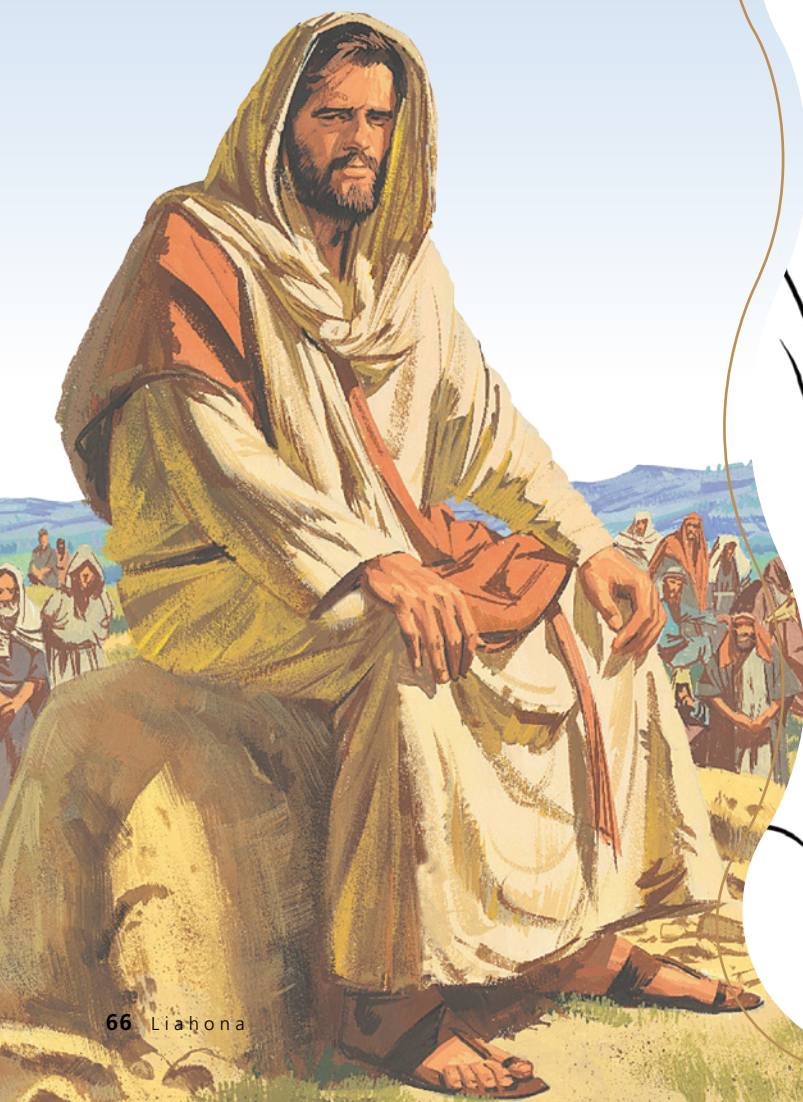
Alberta, Canada



NEW TESTAMENT Scripture Challenge

Jesus told a story about a shepherd who loved his sheep and searched for one that was lost. This year you can learn more about Jesus's teachings in the New Testament. Each time you read one of the scriptures on page 68, color in the next number. If you read every week, you will finish by the end of the year!

Have an adult help you take out this chart or print one from liahona.lds.org. ■





Weekly reading suggestions for the New Testament scripture challenge (see pages 66–67).

WEEK	READING		
1	John the Baptist Prepared the Way for Jesus Christ Matthew 3:1–6; Luke 1:5–25, 57–80	26	The Resurrection of Jesus Christ Matthew 27:52–53; 28:1–20; Luke 24; John 20; Acts 1:3, 9–11; 1 Corinthians 15:5–6, 22
2	The Birth of Jesus Christ Matthew 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–38; 2:1–20	27	Feed My Sheep Mark 16:15; John 21:1–17
3	The Childhood of Jesus Christ Matthew 2; Luke 2:21–52	28	The Day of Pentecost John 14:25–27; Acts 2:1–24, 32–33, 36–47
4	The Baptism of Jesus Christ Matthew 3:13–17; John 3:5	29	Peter the Apostle Matthew 4:18–19; 14:22–33; 16:13–17; 17:1–9; Luke 22:31–34, 54–62; Acts 3:1–9, 19–21; 4:6–20; 5:12–42
5	Jesus Christ Was Tempted by Satan Matthew 4:1–11; Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–13	30	Barnabas, Ananias, and Sapphira; Stephen, the Martyr Acts 4:32–5:10; 6; 7:54–60
6	Jesus Christ Cleanses the Temple Matthew 21:12–14; Luke 19:45–48; John 2:13–16	31	Peter and Cornelius Acts 10:1–11:18
7	Jesus Christ Calls His Apostles Matthew 4:18–22; 16:13–19; Mark 3:13–19; 16:15; Luke 5:1–11; 6:12–16	32	The Conversion of Saul Acts 7:57–60; 8:1–3; 9:1–30; 26:9–23
8	The Sermon on the Mount Matthew 5:1–6:4; 7:12; Luke 6:17–36	33	Paul's First Mission Acts 13:4–11, 14–43; 14:5–10
9	Jesus Christ Teaches about Prayer Matthew 6:5–13; 7:7–11; 26:36–46; Luke 9:28–29; 11:2–4, 9–13; James 1:5–6	34	Paul's Second Mission Acts 15:36–41; 16:16–34
10	Jesus Christ Heals the Sick Matthew 8:5–10, 13; 25:34–40; Mark 1:40–45; Luke 4:38–40; 7:11–17; John 4:46–54; 13:34–35	35	Paul's Third Mission Acts 18:23; 19:1–7, 11–12, 20
11	Jesus Christ and the Sabbath Day Matthew 12:1–13; Mark 2:23–28; 3:1–6; Luke 13:11–17; 14:1–6; John 5:2–16	36	Jesus Christ Will Come Again Acts 1:9–11; Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:1–4, 21–55
12	Jesus Christ Used His Priesthood Power to Bless Others Matthew 14:23–33; Mark 4:35–41; 6:33–44; Luke 9:37–43; Acts 10:38	37	Paul's Letter to the Romans Romans 1:16; 8:13–18, 31–39; 12:3–21
13	Jesus Christ Performed Miracles Mark 2:1–12; 5:21–43	38	Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 1 Corinthians 6:19–20; 12:4–27; 13; 15:20–22, 40–42
14	The Sower and the Wheat and the Tares Matthew 13:1–9, 18–30, 37–43; Mark 4:14–20; Luke 8:11–15	39	Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians 2 Corinthians 4:5–18; 9:6–8; 12:6–10
15	The Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son Matthew 18:12–14; Luke 15	40	Paul's Letter to the Galatians Galatians 2:16–21; 5:22–23; 6:7–10
16	The Good Samaritan and the House Built on the Rock Matthew 7:24–27; 22:34–40; Luke 6:47–49; 10:25–37	41	Paul's Letter to the Ephesians Ephesians 1:3–12; 4:11–16; 6:10–18
17	Jesus Christ Heals 10 Lepers and a Blind Man Luke 17:12–19; John 9	42	Paul's Letter to the Philippians Philippians 1:2–11; 2:12–13; 4:4–13
18	The Good Shepherd Matthew 19:13–15; Mark 10:13–16; John 10:1–18	43	Paul's Letter to the Colossians Colossians 1:9–20; 3:1–16
19	The Unmerciful Servant Matthew 6:12, 14–15; 18:21–35	44	Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians 1 Thessalonians 2:1–12; 4:1–7; 2 Thessalonians 2:1–4; 3:10–13
20	The Ten Virgins, the Talents, and the Widow's Mite Matthew 25:1–13, 14–46; Mark 12:41–44; Luke 21:1–4	45	Paul's Letters to Timothy 1 Timothy 1:12–17; 5:1–3; 2 Timothy 3:1–5, 14–17
21	Jesus Christ Raises Lazarus from the Dead John 11:1–46	46	Paul's Letters to Titus and Philemon Titus 1:1–4; 2; Philemon 1:3–9
22	Jesus Christ's Triumphal Entry and the Last Supper Matthew 21:1–11; Mark 14:12–26; Luke 19:29–38; 22:15–20	47	Paul's Letter to the Hebrews Hebrews 1:1–6; 5:1–4; 11:1–11; 12:1–2
23	Jesus Christ in Gethsemane Matthew 26:36–46; Luke 22:40–46; John 3:16; 15:12–13	48	Teachings of James James 1:5–6; 2:17–18; 3:2–13; 5:12
24	Jesus Christ Is Betrayed, Arrested, and Tried Matthew 26:14–16, 47–27:31; Luke 22:47–23:25	49	Teachings of Peter 1 Peter 1:3–11; 3:18–20; 4:6; 2 Peter 1:2–8
25	The Crucifixion and Burial of Jesus Christ Matthew 27:32–66; Luke 23:26–56; John 10:17–18; 15:13; 19:13–42	50	Teachings of John and Jude 1 John 2:1–6; 3:10–18, 23; 4:7–10; 5:1–3; 2 John 1:4; 3 John 1:4; Jude 1:20–22
		51	The Revelation of John Revelation 1:1–3; 2:7; 4; 12:7–9; 20:12
		52	Come unto Jesus Christ—He Is the Light and Life of the World Matthew 11:28–30; John 4:3–14; 6:35–51; 8:12; 14:6, 15

Doing Something Good with My Time

Clayton W., age 10, Missouri, USA

It sometimes gets really cold and snowy where we live. Sometimes we even get to stay home from school and ride our sleds down a big hill next to our home. One day, when we were getting ready to put on our snowsuits, hats, and gloves, my mother said it was too cold and windy to go

outside. I felt grumpy because we had to stay inside. I started complaining, and my mother said, "You need to go up to your room and find something good to do with your time."

When I got to my room, I thought about what the Savior would want me to do. I decided to memorize the Articles of Faith. When I came downstairs after a few hours, I told my mother, brother, and sisters that I was sorry for being grumpy and that I had memorized each of the Articles of Faith. They were so surprised! I recited each one for them and felt very good that I had put my time to good use.

I think the Savior was happy that I decided to learn more about Him with the extra time I had that morning. I am grateful that He has given me a family and the scriptures to help us learn more about our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. ■



OUR PAGE



My father is the bishop of our ward, and he had an interview with me before he baptized me. I was very happy. I decided to invite my best friend from school and his family to the baptism. They came! I will never forget that special day.

Efrain W., age 8, Spain



I know how to open the family history website and find an ancestor's name. I check if that ancestor needs temple work. This is my part in doing the work of the Lord.

Stephen S., age 6, Philippines



Laura D., age 8, Brazil



SPECIAL WITNESS



**By President
Boyd K. Packer**

President of the
Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

*The members of
the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles are
special witnesses of
Jesus Christ.*

How can THE SCRIPTURES help me?



THE SCRIPTURES . . .

- Teach us where to go and what to do.
- Give us hope and knowledge.
- Help us gain a testimony of Jesus Christ.
- Give us spiritual protection.

Make scripture reading part of your regular routine, and blessings will follow.

If you learn from the scriptures early in life, you will come to know the path you should walk. ■

From "The Key to Spiritual Protection," Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2013, 26–28.

The Secret

By Jessica Larsen

Based on a true story

"There is something all can give"
(Children's Songbook, 236).

Not Ivy! She's a *girl*," Braden whispered behind Adam.

But Adam was team captain for dodgeball for the day, and he had made his choice. "I pick Ivy," he repeated a little louder. Tyler, the other team captain, smirked. Even Coach Garcia looked surprised at Adam's second pick.

Ivy looked surprised too and then shyly stepped forward. Braden groaned.

Ivy wasn't just any girl. She was

the smallest girl in the class. She didn't look very fast, and the ball seemed bigger than she was. "She probably can't even lift the ball," Braden said as Ivy walked over.

"Maybe she'll be our secret weapon," Adam said, trying to sound sure. But that's not why he had picked her. Ivy had once told Adam she didn't like it when they played sports because she was always picked last. The other boys teased Ivy, but Mom and Dad had told Adam that boys should show respect for girls. So he picked Ivy. As

he watched Tyler pick the biggest boy in class, Adam hoped he had made the right decision.

After everyone was on a team, Coach Garcia blew the whistle, and the teams ran to opposite ends of the court. Coach Garcia handed Tyler the ball, and Tyler scanned Adam's team before he focused on Ivy. He pulled back his arm and let the ball fly.

Bam! The ball smacked the ground and bounced without hitting anyone. Adam blinked. Ivy had moved just in time. Everyone around



Weapon



Everyone had underestimated what Ivy could do.

him seemed surprised, but Adam just smiled. Maybe picking Ivy had been a good idea after all.

The game continued. Tyler kept trying to hit Ivy with the ball, but she kept dodging and diving out of the way. No one could hit her with a ball. Tyler and some of his teammates were so busy trying to get Ivy out that they didn't spend much time aiming for anyone else. Adam grinned—Ivy's size actually made her *better* at dodgeball because being small and fast made her harder to hit.

At last Adam's team won the game. "Secret weapon was right," Braden said. "Ivy's pretty good."

"Yeah," Tyler said. "Next time, she's on *my* team. We'll win for sure!" Ivy smiled as she walked back to class, surrounded by teammates.

Adam couldn't stop smiling as he followed the group. He had been nice to Ivy, and he had helped the other boys respect girls a little more. The greatest secret weapon wasn't a secret at all—it was just being kind. ■

The author lives in Arizona, USA.



NO ONE IS DESTINED TO FAIL

"Every person is different and has a different contribution to make. No one is destined to fail."

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, "Help Them Aim High," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 60

A Journey to Learn about Jesus Christ



This year in Primary you will be taking a wonderful journey following the footsteps of Jesus and learning about His life from the pages of the New Testament. Your parents will be studying the same scriptures in their classes too.

Here are some activities to help you and your family learn more about the New Testament together.

IDEAS FOR FAMILY TALK

Why is it important and exciting to study the New Testament? How will learning more about the Savior help us be stronger? Be sure to give each person a chance to share. Afterward you could sing “The Books of the New Testament” (*Children’s Songbook*, 116). You could also make cards and write the names of the books and place them in order.

SONG AND SCRIPTURE

- “Tell Me the Stories of Jesus” (*Children’s Songbook*, 57)
- Matthew 11:29

SCRIPTURE TIPS

Marking your scriptures can help you find your favorite verses later!

You can use a pencil, a pen, or a colored pencil.

Underline verses where Jesus is speaking—or just circle the verse numbers.

Your parents can order a copy of the New Testament for you in English or Spanish for \$2.50 at store.lds.org.

LEARN MORE

Mary and Joseph came here to be counted by the government.

LEARN MORE

King Herod was jealous of Jesus, so Joseph and Mary took Jesus here for safety.

LEARN MORE

Matthew 2:23

LEARN MORE

After Jesus was born, shepherds came here to worship Him.

LEARN MORE

Matthew 2:14

LEARN MORE

Joseph and Mary took Jesus here as a baby, and again when He was 12. He stayed behind and taught men in the temple.

LEARN MORE

Matthew 2:1

LEARN MORE

Mary lived here when the angel Gabriel appeared to tell her that Jesus would be born.

LEARN MORE

The temple built by Herod was in this big city that was surrounded by a wall.

LEARN MORE

This country is near Israel.

LEARN MORE

When Jesus was a young boy, He lived here with Mary and Joseph.

LEARN MORE

Luke 2:42–49

WHERE JESUS WALKED

Take turns choosing one of the “Learn More” cards. Read the fact or find and read the scripture. Then match the card with a location on the map.



Nazareth



Egypt



Jerusalem

Bethlehem





By Rosemary M. Wixom
Primary General President

Abby's Top-10 List

"This is the plan of salvation unto all"
(Moses 6:62).

Once while I was visiting a class of young women, the teacher asked the class to write their top-10 goals in life. Then she asked them to share what they had written. Abby, who had recently turned 12, was sitting next to me. This was Abby's list:

1. Go to college.
2. Become an interior designer.
3. Go on a mission to India.
4. Get married in the temple to a returned missionary.
5. Have five kids and a home.
6. Send my kids on missions and to college.
7. Become a "cookie-giving" grandma.
8. Spoil the grandchildren.
9. Learn more about the gospel and enjoy life.
10. Return to live with Heavenly Father.

Abby had a vision of the plan Heavenly Father has for all of us. When your path is focused on that most important goal of returning to Heavenly Father, you will get there! ■

*From "Taking Time to Talk and Listen,"
Ensign, Apr. 2012, 13; Liahona,
Apr. 2012, 37.*

YOUR TOP-10 LIST

Write down 10 goals for *your* life. Then put them in your journal, on your wall, or anywhere you can see them often.

Jesus Teaching in the Temple

Luke 2:42–47

Glue this page to heavy paper or cardboard. Then cut out the figures and attach them to craft sticks or paper bags. Store in an envelope with the scripture reference written on the front. ■

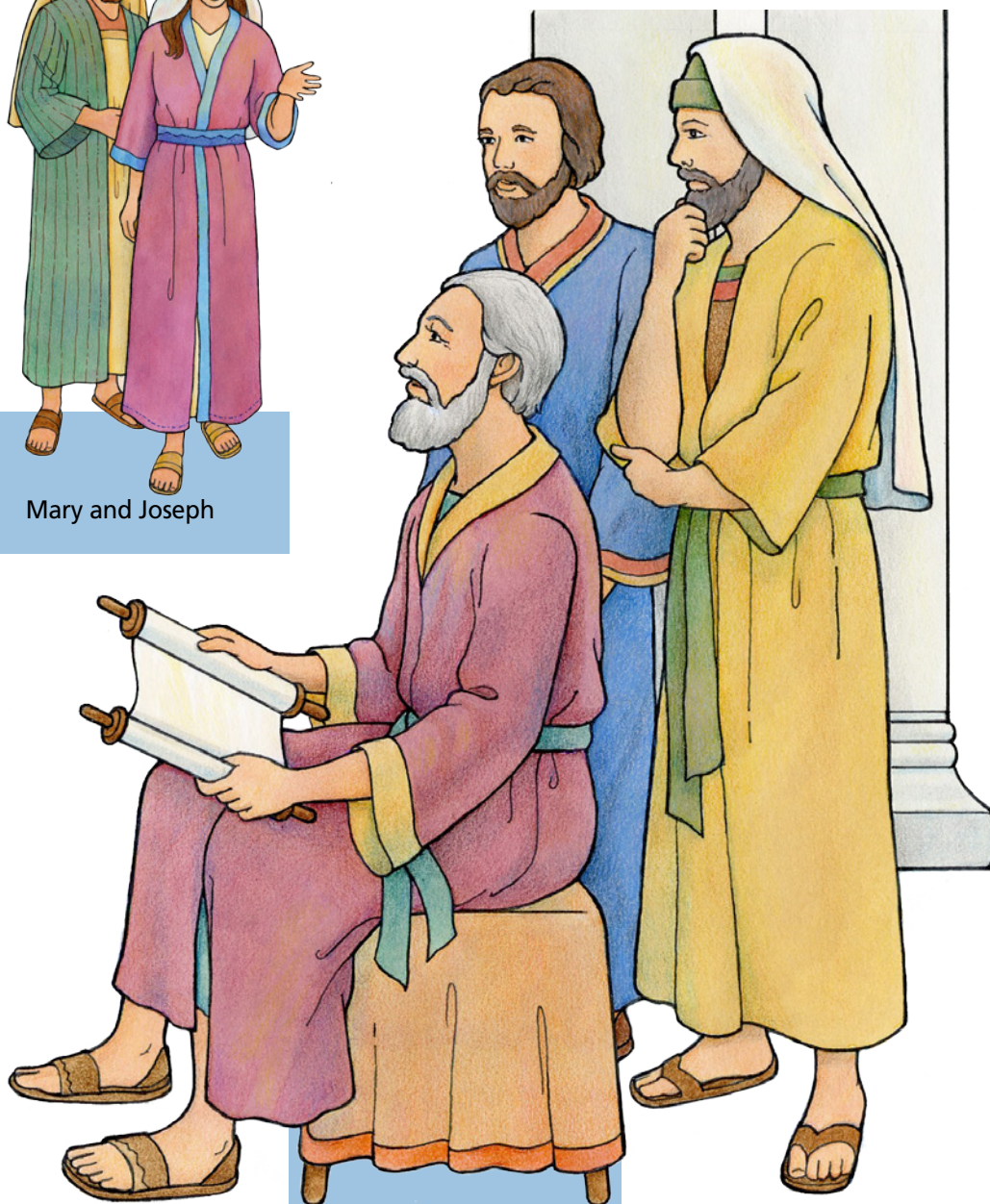
You can print more copies at liahona.lds.org.



Jesus, age 12



Mary and Joseph



Teachers

PRAYER on the

By Mitzy Jiménez Ramírez

Based on a true story

Sofía was almost eight years old. She was getting ready to be baptized. She was learning lots of important things. One thing she had learned about was prayer. She knew she could pray to Heavenly Father anytime. She knew she could pray anywhere.

One day Sofía and her mom decided to visit her dad at work. It would be a long trip. Her dad worked in another town. They would have to ride on a bus, then in a truck, and then in a taxi.

During the bus ride, Sofía fell asleep. She woke up when she

heard a baby crying. A mom and dad with a baby had gotten on the bus. The baby was sick and crying loudly. The baby's parents looked worried.

Sofía felt sorry for the baby. She felt sorry for the parents too. Then she had an idea. She whispered



BUS

in Mama's ear. "Could I say a prayer and ask Heavenly Father to bless the baby?"

"Of course," Mama said with a smile.

Sofía bowed her head and said a silent prayer. She prayed hard. She asked Heavenly Father to bless the baby. She asked Him to help the

baby feel better and stop crying.

Sofía knew that we do not always get what we pray for. She also knew that our prayers are not always answered right away. But in a short time the baby calmed down. Then the baby stopped crying. She seemed

to feel better. Her parents did not look so worried.

Sofía felt warm and happy inside. She was happy for the baby—and for the baby's parents. She knew Heavenly Father had heard her prayer. ■

The author lives in Mexico.





By President
Harold B. Lee
(1899–1973)

HOW CAN I KNOW THAT THE LORD HAS FORGIVEN ME?

How would you answer one who came to you asking that question?

Some years ago President [Marion G.] Romney [1897–1988] and I were sitting in my office. The door opened and a fine young man came in with a troubled look on his face, and he said, “Brethren, I am going to the temple for the first time tomorrow. I have made some mistakes in the past, and I have gone to my bishop and my stake president, and I have made a clean disclosure of it all; and after a period of repentance and assurance that I have not returned again to those mistakes, they have now adjudged me ready to go to the temple. But, brethren, that is not enough. I want to know, and how can I know, that the Lord has forgiven me also.”

What would you answer one who would come to you asking that question? As we pondered for a moment, we remembered King Benjamin’s



address contained in the book of Mosiah. Here was a group of people who now were asking for baptism, and they said they viewed themselves in their carnal state:

“And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified. . . .

“ . . . After they had spoken these words the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience” (Mosiah 4:2–3).

There was the answer.

If the time comes when you have done all that you can to repent of your sins, whoever you are, wherever you are, and have made amends and restitution to the best of your ability; if it be something that will affect your standing in the Church and you have gone to the proper authorities, then you will want that confirming answer as to whether or not the Lord has accepted of you. In your soul-searching, if you seek for and you find that peace of conscience, by that token you may know that the Lord has accepted of your repentance. Satan would have you think otherwise and sometimes persuade you that now having made one mistake, you might go on and on with no turning back. That is one of the great falsehoods. The miracle of forgiveness is available to all of those who turn from their evil doings and return no more. ■

From “Stand Ye in Holy Places,” Ensign, July 1973, 122.

INSIGHTS



How can I find joy when life is difficult?

"So much in life depends on our attitude. The way we choose to see things and respond to others makes all the difference. To do the best we can and then to choose to be happy about our circumstances, whatever they may be, can bring peace and contentment."

Also in This Issue

FOR YOUNG ADULTS

COUNSEL TOGETHER OFT

Use these six principles for successful family councils.



p. 42

FOR YOUTH



p. 48

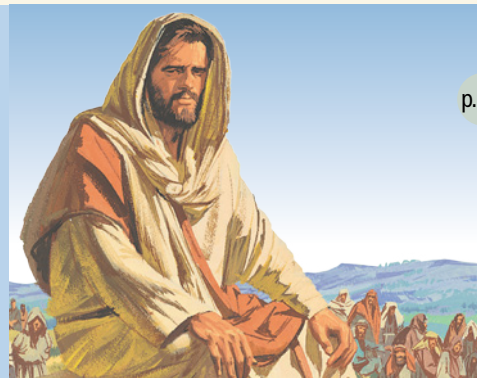
2015 MUTUAL THEME

The Young Women and Young Men general presidencies give insight into Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.

FOR CHILDREN

NEW TESTAMENT Scripture Challenge

Use this coloring activity as you read these verses in the New Testament this year.



p. 66