

# Liahona

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### *Isaiah*, by Ernest Meissonier

*Elder Randall K. Bennett of the Seventy teaches that we should pay careful attention when apostles and prophets quote from or bear witness of the words of other apostles and prophets (see page 42 of this issue). Many modern and ancient prophets have testified of the truth of Isaiah's words, including Nephi (see 1 Nephi 15:20), Jacob (see 2 Nephi 6:4), and Abinadi (see Mosiah 14).*

*Isaiah's words, however, have an even greater advocate. Of the prophet Isaiah, the Savior Himself told the righteous Nephites, "Great are the words of Isaiah." He admonished them to "search these things" and then emphasized, "A commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently" (3 Nephi 23:1).*



Liahona, March 2012

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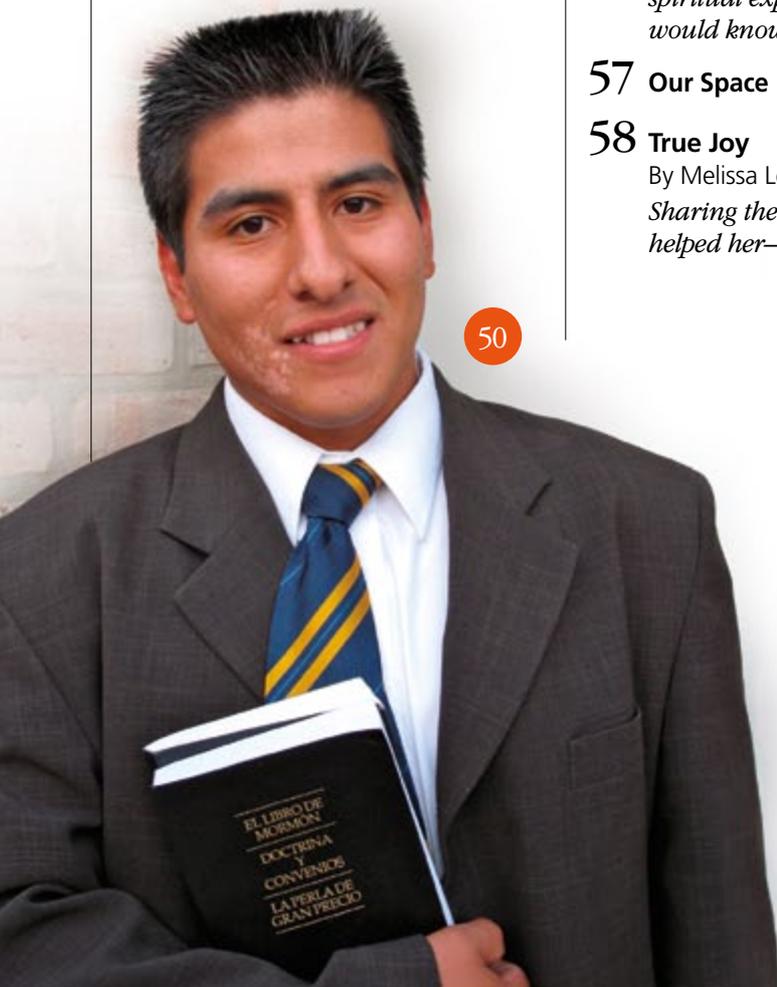
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## FOR ADULTS

Brother Barrionuevo listens to general conference talks as he walks to school (see page 10). You too can download audio versions of the talks at [conference.lds.org](http://conference.lds.org).

## FOR YOUTH

You can use your computer skills to help with family history. See "A Call for Indexers Worldwide" on page 34 and visit [indexing.familysearch.org](http://indexing.familysearch.org).

## FOR CHILDREN

General conference is coming up next month! (See page 64.) Get ready for it by visiting [conferencegames.lds.org](http://conferencegames.lds.org).

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The *Liahona* and other Church materials are available in many languages at [languages.lds.org](http://languages.lds.org).

By President  
Dieter F. Uchtdorf  
Second Counselor in the  
First Presidency

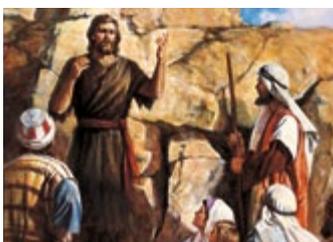
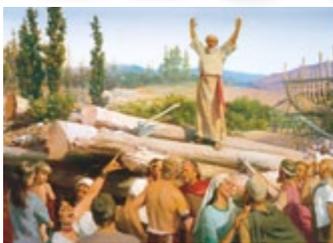


# WHY DO WE NEED Prophets?

**B**ecause Heavenly Father loves His children, He has not left them to walk through this mortal life without direction and guidance. The teachings of our Heavenly Father are not the ordinary, predictable, run-of-the-mill kind you can pick up in paperback at the local bookstore. They are the wisdom of an all-powerful, all-knowing celestial Being who loves His children. Encompassed in His words is the secret of the ages—the key to happiness in this life and in the world to come.

Heavenly Father reveals this wisdom to His children on earth through His servants the prophets (see Amos 3:7). From the days of Adam, God has spoken to His children through appointed oracles who are charged with revealing His will and counsel to others. Prophets are inspired teachers and are always special witnesses of Jesus Christ (see D&C 107:23). Prophets speak not only to the people of their time, but they also speak to people throughout all time. Their voices echo through the centuries as a testament of God's will to His children.

Today is not different from ages past. The Lord does not love the people of our day any less than in past times. One of the glorious messages of the Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ is that God continues to speak to His



children! He is not hidden in the heavens but speaks today as He did in ancient days.

Much of what the Lord reveals to His prophets is intended to prevent sorrow for us as individuals and as societies. When God speaks, He does so to teach, inspire, refine, and warn His children. When individuals and societies ignore their Heavenly Father's instructions, they do so at the risk of trial, torment, and toil.

God loves all His children. That is why He pleads so earnestly with us through His prophets. Just as we want what is best for our loved ones, Heavenly Father wants what is best for us. That is why His instructions are so crucial and sometimes so urgent. That is why He has not abandoned us today but continues to reveal His will to us through His prophets. Our fate and the fate of our world hinge on our hearing and heeding the revealed word of God to His children.

God's priceless instructions to humankind are found in the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. In addition, the Lord speaks to us through His servants, as He will again at the upcoming general conference.

To all who wonder if such a thing can be—who might



ask, “Is it possible that God speaks to us today?”—with all my heart I invite you to “come and see” (John 1:46). Read the word of God as found in the scriptures. Listen to general conference with an ear willing to hear the voice of God given through His latter-day prophets. Come, hear, and see with your heart! For if you seek “with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, [God] will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 10:4). By and through this power, I know that Jesus Christ lives and directs His Church through a living prophet, even President Thomas S. Monson.

Brothers and sisters, God does speak to us today. And He desires that all His children listen to and heed His voice. As we do so, the Lord will bless and uphold us greatly, both in this life and through the worlds to come. ■

## PROPHETS AND APOSTLES SPEAK TODAY

The divine work of the prophets and apostles never ceases. Between general conferences, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles continue to teach and minister to the world. “Prophets and Apostles Speak Today,” a section of [LDS.org](http://LDS.org), documents the ongoing ministry of these Church leaders with videos, photos, and articles (available in several languages).

Learn from them about their ministry. Listen to and read their testimonies of the Savior. View and read about their messages of love and hope to members wherever they bear witness, whether at Church headquarters in Salt Lake City or as they fulfill assignments throughout the world.

Visit [LDS.org/study/prophets-speak-today](http://LDS.org/study/prophets-speak-today) to learn more about prophets and apostles speaking today.

# YOUTH

## Led by a Living Prophet

By Christy Ripa

When I was 16, I had the opportunity to attend general conference in person for the first time. My family was living in western Oregon, USA, and we drove to Utah to attend conference and to drop off my older brother at the missionary training center.

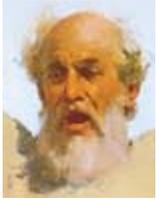
I went to the conference with a desire to be taught by the Holy Ghost. As a result, I received a manifestation from the Spirit that I probably would

not have received had I not prepared myself.

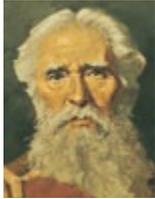
During one of the sessions, everyone stood and sang the congregational hymn, "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah." As we sang, I had the distinct impression to look around the Conference Center. I did and was struck by the power of the unity of the thousands of people there as we all raised our voices in praise to God.

Then I had an experience where I felt like Nephi when he saw the vision of the tree of life, for the Spirit told me, "Look" (see 1 Nephi 11–14). I looked at President Thomas S. Monson and felt that the unity of the Church existed because we are led by a living prophet. Through the witness of the Holy Spirit, I know President Monson is the true prophet for our day, and I know that Jesus Christ leads this Church through him.

# CHILDREN



**Noah**  
Go right



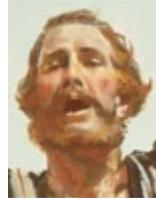
**Moses**  
Go down



**Mormon**  
Go left



**Moroni**  
Go left



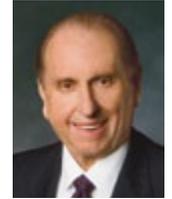
**John the Baptist**  
Go right



**Peter**  
Go right



**Joseph Smith**  
Go up



**President Thomas S. Monson**  
Go up

## Following the Prophet Makes Me Happy

Heavenly Father has given us prophets to guide us and teach us so we can be happy.

Find your way through the maze by following the instructions provided by each prophet. Match each picture in the maze with the one from the list above that tells you which way to go.



FROM LEFT: DETAIL FROM NOAH'S PREACHING SCORNED, BY HARRY ANDERSON © IRI; MOSES THE LAWGIVER, BY TED HENNINGER © IRI; DETAIL FROM MORMON ABRIDGING THE PLATES AND MORONI BURYING THE PLATES, BY TOM LOVELL © IRI; DETAIL FROM PREPARE YE THE WAY, BY HARRY ANDERSON © PACIFIC PRESS PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION, MAY NOT BE COPIED; DETAIL FROM HE IS RISEN, BY DAN BURR; DETAIL FROM PROPHET OF THE LORD, BY DAVID UNDSLEY, MAY NOT BE COPIED.

Study this material and, as appropriate, discuss it with the sisters you visit. Use the questions to help you strengthen your sisters and to make Relief Society an active part of your own life.



Faith, Family, Relief

## Daughters in My Kingdom

We are daughters of our Father in Heaven. He knows us, loves us, and has a plan for us. Part of that plan includes coming to earth to learn to choose good over evil. When we choose to keep God's commandments, we honor Him and acknowledge our identity as daughters of God. Relief Society helps us remember this divine heritage.

Relief Society and its history strengthen and support us. Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president, said: "As daughters of God, you are preparing for eternal designations, and each of you has a female identity, nature, and responsibility. The success of families, communities, this Church, and the precious plan of salvation is dependent on your faithfulness. . . . [Our Heavenly Father] intended Relief Society to help build His people and prepare them for the blessings of the temple. He established [Relief Society] to align His daughters with His work and to enlist their help in building His kingdom and strengthening the homes of Zion."<sup>1</sup>

Our Father in Heaven has given us specific work to help build His Kingdom. He has also blessed us with the spiritual gifts we need to accomplish this specific work. Through Relief Society, we have opportunities to use our gifts to strengthen families, help those in need, and learn how to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said



of discipleship: "By patiently walking in the path of discipleship, we demonstrate to ourselves the measure of our faith and our willingness to accept God's will rather than ours."<sup>2</sup>

Let us remember we are daughters of God and strive to live as His disciples. As we do so, we will help build God's kingdom here on earth and become worthy to return to His presence.

### From the Scriptures

Zechariah 2:10; Doctrine and Covenants 25:1, 10, 16; 138:38–39, 56; "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" (*Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129)

### What Can I Do?

1. How can I help my sisters reach their potential as daughters of God?
2. How can I apply in my life the counsel and warnings given to women in Doctrine and Covenants 25?

### From Our History

On April 28, 1842, the Prophet Joseph Smith said to the sisters in Relief Society: "You are now placed in a situation in which you can act according to those sympathies which God has planted in [you]. . . . If you live up to your privileges, the angels cannot be restrained from being your associates."<sup>3</sup>

Recognizing the power of Relief Society to serve others and to help individuals increase in faith, Zina D. H. Young, third Relief Society general president, promised the sisters in 1893, "If you will dig in the depths of your own hearts you will find, with the aid of the Spirit of the Lord, the pearl of great price, the testimony of this work."<sup>4</sup>

#### NOTES

1. Julie B. Beck, "Daughters in My Kingdom": The History and Work of Relief Society," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 112, 114.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "The Way of the Disciple," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2009, 76.
3. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 4:605.
4. Zina D. H. Young, "How I Gained My Testimony of the Truth," *Young Woman's Journal*, Apr. 1893, 319.

# October 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 study the October 2011 general conference, you can use these pages (and Conference Notebooks in future issues) to help you learn and apply the recent teachings of the living prophets and apostles.



*your*  
**DREAM**  
*come true*

## STORIES FROM CONFERENCE

### The Golden Ticket

**O**ne woman wanted more than anything else to marry a righteous priesthood holder in the temple and be a mother and a wife. She had dreamed about this all her life, and oh, what a wonderful mother and loving wife she would be. Her home would be filled with loving-kindness. Never a bitter word would be spoken. The food would never burn. And her children, instead of hanging out with their friends, would prefer to spend their evenings and weekends with Mom and Dad.

“This was her golden ticket. It was the one thing upon which she felt her whole existence depended. It was the one thing in all the world for which she most desperately yearned.

“But it never happened. And, as the years went on, she became more and more withdrawn, bitter, and even angry. She could not understand why God would not grant her this righteous desire.

“She worked as an elementary school teacher, and being around children all day long simply reminded her that her golden ticket had never appeared. As the years passed she became more disappointed and withdrawn. People didn’t like being around her and avoided her whenever they could. She even took her frustration out on the children at school. . . .

“The tragedy of this story is that this dear woman, in all her disappointment about her golden ticket, failed to notice the blessings she *did* have. She did not have children in her home, but she was surrounded by them in her classroom. She was not blessed with a family, but the Lord had given her an opportunity few people have—the chance to influence for good the lives of hundreds of children and families as a teacher.

“The lesson here is that if we spend our days waiting for fabulous roses, we could miss the beauty and wonder of the tiny forget-me-nots that are all around us.”

**President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Forget Me Not,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 121–22.**

#### Questions to ponder:

- What might be your “golden ticket,” and how is it hindering your ability to see the blessings you already have?
- What are the “tiny forget-me-nots” you might be overlooking in your life?

Consider writing your thoughts in a journal or discussing them with others.

Additional resources on this topic: Study by Topic on [LDS.org](http://LDS.org), “Gratitude”; Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Happiness, Your Heritage,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 117–20.

To read, watch, or listen to general conference addresses, visit [conference.lds.org](http://conference.lds.org).

## Beloved

Every one of us is more beloved to the Lord than we can possibly understand or imagine. Let us therefore be kinder to one another and kinder toward ourselves.”

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Waiting upon the Lord: Thy Will Be Done,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 73.

## Prophetic Promise

Once you have studied the doctrines and principles of the Churchwide welfare plan, seek to apply what you have learned to the needs of those within your stewardship. What this means is that, in large measure, you’re going to have to figure it out for yourself. . . .

. . . You must do in your area what disciples of Christ have done in every dispensation: counsel together, use all resources available, seek the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, ask the Lord for His confirmation, and then roll up your sleeves and go to work.

“I give you a promise: if you will follow this pattern, you will receive specific guidance as to the *who*, *what*, *when*, and *where* of providing in the Lord’s way.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Providing in the Lord’s Way,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 55.

## You’re Invited

I invite

*Who:* “the young people of the Church

*What:* “to learn about and experience the Spirit of Elijah.

*How:* “I encourage you to study, to search out your ancestors, and to prepare yourselves to perform proxy baptisms in the house of the Lord for *your* kindred dead.”

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 26.

### STUDY CORNER

## Drawing Parallels: Repentance

Speakers in conference often teach some of the same principles. Here is what four speakers said about repentance. Try looking for other parallels as you study conference talks.

- “If any of you has stumbled in your journey, I want you to understand without any question whatsoever that there is a way back. The process is called repentance.”<sup>1</sup>—President Thomas S. Monson
- “You may in time of trouble think that you are not worth saving because you have made mistakes, big or little, and you think you are now lost. That is *never* true! Only repentance can heal what hurts.”<sup>2</sup>—President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
- “Whoever you are and whatever you have done, you can be forgiven. . . . It is the miracle of forgiveness; it is the miracle of the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup>—Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
- “Only through repentance do we gain access to the atoning grace of Jesus Christ and salvation. Repentance is a divine gift, and there should be a smile on our faces when we speak of it.”<sup>4</sup>—Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

### Notes

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Dare to Stand Alone,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 62.
2. Boyd K. Packer, “Counsel to Youth,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 18.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, “We Are All Enlisted,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 45.
4. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Divine Gift of Repentance,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 38.

# PREPARING FOR **GENERAL** **CONFERENCE**

*Our family learned that studying general conference can invite the Spirit into our lives on a daily basis.*

**By Mark A. Barrionuevo**

**M**y family and I find that the best way to prepare for the next general conference is by immersing ourselves in the counsel given in the previous one. When my wife has a free moment, she reads the conference issue of the *Ensign*. Then she strives to apply the teachings she learns. For example, she told me that Elder David A. Bednar's talk on improving the quality of our prayers has helped her more earnestly seek charity in raising our two rambunctious sons.<sup>1</sup>

Reviewing the last conference is something I try to do too. As I walk to school each morning, I listen to one address and then ponder and pray, allowing the teachings of the prophets to settle in my heart and mind. I converse with Heavenly Father regarding my upcoming day and my responsibilities as a husband, father, Latter-day Saint, student, and citizen.

One morning Elder L. Tom Perry's talk "Let Him Do It with Simplicity" felt especially pertinent to my circumstances.<sup>2</sup> Elder Perry applied the principles taught by Henry David Thoreau in *Walden* to simplifying our lives by fueling spirituality and obtaining relief from the stress of the

world. Because of the demands of my schooling, family outings for us are precious and rare. One summer prior to Elder Perry's address, however, we visited Walden Pond, spending a reflective moment inside a re-creation of Thoreau's cabin. We made the most of that afternoon by wading in Walden Pond and building sand castles on the beach. After returning home, our family thanked Heavenly Father for His creations that we had enjoyed together.

Months later as I trudged down snow-covered sidewalks, I recalled that sweet summer day. As a result of that experience and Elder Perry's message, I more clearly understood how spending time with my family is crucial to living a deliberate gospel-centered life.

In addition to listening to talks individually, on Sunday mornings our family listens to a conference talk on our computer as we get ready for church. Once my wife and I even found our four-year-old asking our younger son to be quiet so he could listen to President Thomas S. Monson.

The teachings of our Savior through the mouths of modern prophets are a blessing to our family. Seeking to include the prophets, seers, and revelators in our daily lives has opened the



way for the Holy Ghost to become our constant guide. We indeed echo the words of the hymn: “We thank thee, O God, for a prophet.”<sup>3</sup>

By frequently studying the counsel given in general conference, my wife and I have a stronger grasp on the recent teachings of the Lord by the time the next general conference

comes around. We are spiritually edified and are more fully prepared to receive His current teachings through His servants the prophets. ■

#### NOTES

1. See David A. Bednar, “Pray Always,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 41–44.
2. See L. Tom Perry, “Let Him Do It with Simplicity,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 7–10.
3. “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” *Hymns*, no. 19.

## FOCUSING ON CONFERENCE

In addition to studying past conference addresses, consider these ideas to help you learn from the current conference:

- Pray and fast to receive answers to your prayers through the words of the speakers.
- Approach conference with specific questions in mind.
- Complete all chores, shopping, and other errands before conference so you can focus on listening.
- Get good rest the nights before conference so your mind will be ready to receive inspiration.
- Take notes of the impressions, promptings, and insights you receive.

## MORE ON THIS TOPIC

The following articles are available at LDS.org:

1. Paul V. Johnson, “The Blessings of General Conference,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 50–52.
2. “Preparing Our Children for General Conference,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2009, 23–27.

# WE SUSTAIN OUR Leaders

**L**atter-day Saints believe that Jesus Christ Himself is the head of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He calls, through inspiration, prophets and apostles to lead His Church. The Lord has given these leaders authority to call others to serve in the Church, such as members of the Seventy. Apostles and Seventy extend callings to stake presidents, who call bishops, who call members to serve in various positions in their wards. Thus priesthood authority and revelation guide Church callings from the Churchwide level to local congregations.

We have an opportunity to sustain—support, help, pray for—each of these people in their callings. We indicate our willingness to do so by raising our right hands when their names are read to us in general conference, stake conference, ward or branch conference, or sacrament meeting. Raising our hands is a sign to us, to them, and to the Lord that we will sustain them.

Raising our hands to sustain someone is not like voting that person into

office. The person has already been called by the Lord to serve in that calling by one who has the priesthood authority to extend such a calling. Our sustaining is a vote of confidence in the person, because we recognize that he or she has been called of God through priesthood leaders we sustain.

We can sustain the General

Authorities and our local leaders and officers in several ways:

- By our faith and prayers in their behalf.
- By following their counsel.
- By helping when they ask us.
- By accepting callings they extend to us.

Sustaining our leaders is evidence of our goodwill, faith, and fellowship. ■



BELOW: PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN LUKE; RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH BY LESLIE NILSSON; PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY CRAIG DIMOND AND WELDEN C. ANDERSEN

3. We sustain our leaders by following their counsel.



2. We can show, by raising our hands, that we will sustain our local leaders and others who are called to serve us.



1. We sustain the General Authorities of the Church.



4. We sustain our leaders by accepting callings, for callings are extended to us “by those who are in authority” (Articles of Faith 1:5).



5. We sustain our leaders by praying for them (see D&C 107:22).

“You will all abide the pledge you have given to the Lord and to one another by the uplifted hand, that you all mean to uphold and sustain these officers in all these various organizations, that . . . you will do everything you can to help them, to benefit them, bless them, and encourage them in the good work in which they are engaged.”

**President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918),  
Teachings of Presidents of the Church:  
Joseph F. Smith (1998), 218–19.**

For more information, see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), chapter 24; and *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith* (2011), chapter 6.



LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF LDS CHURCH ARCHIVES; RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPHS BY TOM SMART, STUART JOHNSON, AND GERRY AVANT; COURTESY OF DESERET NEWS; GENERAL CONFERENCE PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND

# Have I Done Any Good in the World Today?

## LIFE EXPERIENCES OF PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON

By Heidi S. Swinton

I was serving with my husband, then the president of the England London South Mission, when the phone rang on June 18, 2008. It was President Thomas S. Monson. He began in his usual friendly fashion, one of the trademarks of his ministry: “How is the mission? How is your family? How is jolly old England?” And then he paused and said, “I have been talking with Frances, I have prayed about it, and I would like you to write my biography.”

Needless to say, I was honored and immediately overwhelmed. He then suggested that if I got started the next morning, I could be halfway done by the time we came home. We had one year left of our three-year call.

President Monson teaches, “Whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies.”<sup>1</sup> I have come to appreciate that promise.

How do you write about the life of a prophet? You begin not at the keyboard but on your knees.

I recognized early that this would not be a

typical biography outlining dates, times, places, and travels. It was the account of a man prepared before the world was and called of God “to guide us in these latter days.”<sup>2</sup> *Humbling* is the best description. *Daunting*, *challenging*, and *consuming* follow close behind.

The Lord has said, “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38). Hearing the Lord speak through His prophet since Thomas S. Monson’s call to the holy apostleship in 1963 is where I began. I spent months reading the hundreds of messages President Monson has given in myriads of settings. I read biographies of all the Presidents of the Church and of many noted religious leaders. I studied the early Church in Scotland, Sweden, and England, where President Monson’s ancestors hail from; the Depression that so influenced his youth; and World War II and its aftermath with a divided Germany. (President Monson spent 20 years supervising this area of the



**Left: President Monson—then Elder Monson—on the steps of the Church Administration Building in 1967. Above, from top: In his office in 2011; with Elder M. Russell Ballard at the groundbreaking of the Joseph F. Smith Building at Brigham Young University in 2002; at the Laie Hawaii Temple rededication in 2010; with his wife, Frances, following the April 2008 general conference.**



**Top: A portrait of President Monson in the 1960s. Above: With members and missionaries in Germany. Below, from left: As bishop of the Sixth–Seventh Ward with his counselors; talking with Boy Scouts; visiting the Tongan Mission in 1965.**



Church.) I read his autobiography prepared in 1985 for just his family and later his daily journal of 47 years. I interviewed Church leaders who worked with him in many parts of the world and members who were touched profoundly by his ministry. I engaged a dear friend and history scholar, Tricia H. Stoker, to help with research. She had served on the writing committees of several *Teachings of Presidents of the Church* manuals and understood how to research the life of a prophet.

I interviewed President Monson in monthly video conferences from England and then, after returning home to Utah, in person while working from his office for 14 months. In every case I felt his warmth, as if we were sitting down at the kitchen table. He spoke of childhood and family, his call by President David O. McKay (1873–1970), and the influence of mentors like President J. Reuben Clark Jr. (1871–1961); President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973); and Elder Mark E. Petersen (1900–84), to name a few.

He learned Christlike living at home, where charity—the pure love of Christ—compassion, and a desire to lift and bless the lives of others were the standard and where, though his parents did not read him the scriptures, they lived them.

His focus on serving the one reaches back to his growing up on the west side of Salt Lake City, “between the railroad tracks,” as he likes to say, in the bottom of the Depression. His neighbors and friends had little in terms of material goods, but they had each other, and that was enough. Many close to him, including some of his favorite uncles, were not members of the Church. Religious affiliation held no barriers; he came to love people for people. His parents opened their hearts to everyone. President Monson has never left those moorings.

He is an unusual man who has reverence for everyone he meets and who is interested in their lives, worries, and challenges. He relates to a visiting dignitary from a foreign country with the same attention he does

the man who polishes his desk at night. Clearly, one of the measures of his greatness is that he can relate to anyone and finds he can learn something from each person he meets.

If, as President Monson says, an organization is the lengthened shadow of its leader,<sup>3</sup> then the desire to lift, encourage, engage, involve, and rescue others one by one is our mandate. This way of living mirrors the example of the Savior, who “went about doing good, . . . for God was with him” (Acts 10:38).

President Monson has long been calling us to be more like the Savior. When I interviewed President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, he confirmed what I had come to understand. President Monson, he said, “is more Christlike than the rest of us.”<sup>4</sup>

For more than half a century, President Monson has given the suits off his back to the destitute. He has sat at the bedside of the ill and elderly. He has given countless blessings to people in hospitals and in their homes. He has turned the car around to make a quick visit to one friend and rushed from meetings to speak at the funeral of another. (If you ask him how many he counts on that list of friends, he will say, “At least 14 million.”) He will go to someone in a wheelchair who has a hard time coming to him, “high-five” a group of teenagers, and wiggle his

*Put simply,  
President  
Monson does  
what most  
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think about  
doing.*

ears at deacons on the front row. He exhibits great reverence for the lives of those he describes as “unnoticed and unrecognized,” known to few but their Father in Heaven.

Put simply, President Monson *does* what most people only *think* about doing.

His messages are filled with true accounts (he never calls them “stories”) that teach gospel principles. He explains: “The actions whereby we demonstrate that we truly do love God and our neighbor as ourselves will rarely be such as to attract the gaze and admiration of the world. Usually our love will be shown in our day-to-day associations with one another.”<sup>5</sup>

In all his ministry around the globe, perhaps some of the most gripping experiences were the years he supervised the Church behind the Iron Curtain. When my husband and I finished our mission in 2009, we went to Germany to walk the ground President Monson walked, talk to the members he so loved, and feel the influence of his years of service. What we found were hearty priesthood holders who wept as they spoke of his consistent visits, his love for Jesus Christ, and his encouragement and concern. We stood in the now-abandoned, dilapidated factory building in Görlitz where in 1968 President Monson stood at the podium and promised the haggard East German Latter-day Saints all the blessings that the Lord had for His children—if they were faithful. That day they sang with such fervor: “If the way be full of trial, Weary not! . . . Jesus never will forsake us, Weary not.”<sup>6</sup> He had come under the direction of the First Presidency to the Saints’ rescue. Two decades later, with the Berlin wall still standing, these East German Latter-day Saints had stakes, meetinghouses, patriarchs, missionaries, and a temple. And then the wall came down, and the Saints were reunited with their families and as a country.

President Monson often says, “There are no coincidences” as he makes the point that his experiences in life have taught him to always look for the Lord’s hand.<sup>7</sup>

One of the great East German leaders was Henry Burkhardt, who worked closely and was with President Monson for two decades at the scene of all the pivotal



events in that country. Brother Burkhardt was a man who served so faithfully and at such great risk all those years behind the Iron Curtain as the Church's representative to the government. He served, among other positions, as a Church leader and as president of the the Freiberg Temple.

I asked him what stood out in his mind as the singular moment in President Monson's ministry. I expected him to mention the meeting in Görlitz, the dedication of the country in 1975, the organization of the first stake, the dedication of the Freiberg Temple, or the meeting with Herr Honecker, East Germany's highest Communist official, when President Monson asked permission for missionaries to enter the country and other missionaries to leave the country to serve in other lands. Given the death squads that patrolled the wall, the query sounded almost ludicrous, but Herr Honecker responded, "We have watched you all these years, and we trust you. Permission granted." Which one of these events would Brother Burkhardt choose?

Tears began to flow down his cheeks as he responded: "It was December 2, 1979." I couldn't register in my mind a major event attached to that date. "Tell me about it," I said.

"It was the day President Monson came to East Germany to give my wife, Inge, a blessing." President Monson had a weekend without an assignment, and he flew from the United States to Germany for just that purpose. Sister Burkhardt had been in the hospital for nine weeks with complications from surgery, and her condition was deteriorating. President Monson had recorded in his journal, "We joined our faith and our prayers in providing her a blessing."<sup>8</sup> He had gone thousands of miles with his only free time in months—to the rescue.

"Let us ask ourselves the questions," he has said, "Have I done any good in the world today? Have I helped

***Right: President and Sister Monson at the dedication of the Nauvoo Illinois Temple in 2002; President Monson speaking at the April 2008 general conference, when he was sustained as President of the Church; at the cornerstone ceremony for the Oquirrh Mountain Utah Temple in 2009; with a longtime friend in Ontario, Canada, in June 2011.***

*President Monson is constantly reminding us to reach out to one another.*

anyone in need? What a formula for happiness! What a prescription for contentment, for inner peace. . . . There are hearts to gladden. There are kind words to say. There are gifts to be given. There are deeds to be done. There are souls to be saved."<sup>9</sup>

Such is the ministry of President Monson. He is always reaching out to the weary, the lonely, the faint hearted. As Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles says, "The Lord had to make Thomas Monson big because of the size of his heart."<sup>10</sup>

When the prophet dedicated the Curitiba Brazil Temple on June 1, 2008, he called a lad up to assist him at the cornerstone ceremony. A photographer suggested someone take off the boy's hat for a picture. The boy had no hair and was obviously undergoing cancer treatments. President Monson lovingly put his arm around him and helped him place mortar on the wall. One of those accompanying the President mentioned it was time to go back in the temple to finish the dedication on schedule. President Monson shook his head. "No," he said, "I want to call up one more." Looking over the crowd, he settled on a woman at the back, and as their eyes met, he motioned for her to come forward. He put his arm around her and with loving care escorted her to the wall to finish the cornerstone sealing.

The day after the dedication, Elder Russell M. Nelson of



the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who had also been at the dedication, asked President Monson how he knew the woman was the boy's mother.

"I didn't know," he replied, "but the Lord knew."

It was not many months later that the boy

died. Elder Nelson says: “You can imagine what [the experience at the dedication] meant to the mother of that family. That was the Lord’s way of saying, ‘I know you, I am concerned for you, and I want to help you.’ That’s the kind of man we’ve got in this prophet of God.”<sup>11</sup>

At a time when texting and e-mailing have replaced sitting down together, President Monson is constantly reminding us to reach out to one another. He shared this message through the words of a member who wrote him a letter: “The prayers of people are almost always answered by the actions of others.”<sup>12</sup> He often points to the counsel from the Lord: “I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up” (D&C 84:88). President Monson appreciates that so often *we* are those angels for each other. Alma committed the Saints at the Waters of Mormon to “bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light” (Mosiah 18:8); President Monson is calling us to live that covenant.

I have been the recipient of his bearing up others’ burdens. There came a time when he could see the weight of the responsibility of his biography weighing me down. He invited me into his office and with the gentlest and kindest voice said, “How can I help?”

My heart could not resist his overture, and I poured out my feelings of inadequacy, the intimidating nature of the task, and the volume of material to capture, organize, and synthesize. I wanted so desperately to get it right—for him. Our exchange was one of my most precious mortal

experiences. I felt like I was at the Pool of Bethesda and the Savior had lifted the drape and reached down to bear me up. President Monson understands the saving power of the Atonement and counts it a privilege to be sent by the Lord to bear up another.

“Reach out to rescue the aged, the widowed, the sick, the handicapped, the less active,” he has said, and then he has led the charge. “Extend to them the hand that helps and the heart that knows compassion.”<sup>13</sup>

His regard and interest in others are a measure of his testimony of the Savior Jesus Christ: “By learning of Him, by believing in Him, by following Him, there is the capacity to become like Him. The countenance can change; the heart can be softened; the step can be quickened; the outlook enhanced. Life becomes what it should become.”<sup>14</sup> ■

#### NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Duty Calls,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 44.
2. “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” *Hymns*, no. 19.
3. See Kellene Ricks, “BYU Leader Begins ‘Lord’s Errand,’” *Church News*, Nov. 4, 1989, 3.
4. Boyd K. Packer, in Heidi S. Swinton, *To the Rescue* (2010), 1.
5. Thomas S. Monson, “To Love as Jesus Loves,” *Instructor*, Sept. 1965, 349.
6. “If the Way Be Full of Trial, Weary Not,” *Deseret Sunday School Songs* (1909), no. 158; see also Thomas S. Monson, “Patience—a Heavenly Virtue,” *Liahona*, Sept. 2002, 7; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 61.
7. Thomas S. Monson, in *To the Rescue*, 60.
8. Thomas S. Monson, in *To the Rescue*, 1.
9. Thomas S. Monson, “Now Is the Time,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2002, 69; *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 60.
10. Richard G. Scott, in *To the Rescue*, 162.
11. See *To the Rescue*, 521.
12. In Thomas S. Monson, “Be Thou an Example,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 45.
13. Thomas S. Monson, Salt Lake City South Stake Conference Broadcast, Oct. 18, 2009, unpublished.
14. Thomas S. Monson, “The Way of the Master,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Jan. 2003, 4.



FROM LEFT: PHOTOGRAPHS BY CRAIG DIMOND, LESLIE NIELSSON, MATTHEW REIER, AND GERRY AVANT

*This article is excerpted from an address delivered during a regional stake and district conference broadcast to Africa on November 21, 2010.*

# The Gospel Culture

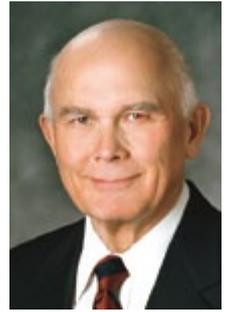
In the famous movie *The African Queen*, two refugees from World War I violence in East Africa are trying to reach the relative safety of Lake Victoria. After surviving many near disasters, their boat, *The African Queen*, is stranded in a marsh. Unable to tell which way the current is flowing and surrounded by high growth, the two refugees become disoriented and discouraged. At the end of their energy and faith, they are about to give up and die.

Then, in a moment of high drama, the camera through which we are viewing their peril rises, and with new perspective we see their true location. Out of sight to them, but just a few meters away, are the long-sought liberating waters of Lake Victoria.

The gospel of Jesus Christ explains our journey in mortality and shows us our destination in eternity. Like the refugees on *The African Queen*, we are fleeing evil and disaster. There are obstacles all around us. We labor hard to reach our goals. Sometimes we see no signs of progress. We can become exhausted and discouraged. We may even lose sight of our destination. But we must not give up. If we could only see above our current circumstances and know our true location on the journey to eternal life, we would realize what great progress we are making.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD M. ROWNEY





**By Elder  
Dallin H. Oaks**  
Of the Quorum of the  
Twelve Apostles

*This gospel culture comes from the plan of salvation, the commandments of God, and the teachings of the living prophets. To help its members all over the world, the Church teaches us to give up any personal or family traditions or practices that are contrary to this gospel culture.*





*The gift of the Holy Ghost is the gift God has given to sustain us in our difficult journey through mortality when we walk by faith.*

## Relying on the Holy Ghost

Fortunately, our Savior has given us a direction finder and guide that will help us even when we cannot see beyond discouraging obstacles. I refer to the gift of the Holy Ghost. But we must be willing to use and rely on this divine gift, and we must keep it in good repair.

President Wilford Woodruff (1807–98), who served as President of the Church during some of its most difficult times, taught this about the importance of the Holy Ghost: “Every man or woman that has ever entered into the church of God and been baptized for the remission of sins [and received the gift of the Holy Ghost] has a right to revelation, a right to the Spirit of God, to assist them in their labors.”<sup>1</sup>

President Woodruff explained that “this Spirit reveals, day by day, to every man who has faith, those things which are for his benefit.”<sup>2</sup> This is the gift God has given to sustain us in our difficult journey through mortality when we walk by faith.

If we are to have this precious guidance, we must keep the commandments. President Woodruff taught: “The Holy Ghost will not dwell in an unholy tabernacle. If you would enjoy the full powers and gifts of your religion, you must be pure. If you are guilty of weakness, follies and sins, you must repent of them; that is, you must thoroughly forsake them.”<sup>3</sup>

The Lord has commanded us to attend sacrament meeting every week to partake of the sacrament (see D&C 59:9–12). When we do that, repenting of our sins and renewing our promises to serve the Lord and always remember Him and keep His commandments, we have the precious promise that we will “always have his Spirit to be with [us]” (D&C 20:77). This is how we can see beyond the obstacles and discouragements of this life to guide us to our heavenly home.

President Thomas S. Monson has declared: “We are surrounded by immorality, pornography, violence, drugs, and a host of other ills which afflict modern-day society. Ours is the challenge, even the responsibility, not only to keep ourselves ‘unspotted from the world’ (James 1:27) but also to guide our children and others for whom we have responsibility safely through the stormy seas of sin surrounding all of us, that we might one day return to live with our Heavenly Father.”<sup>4</sup>

Truly we need the guidance of the Spirit, and we must be diligent to do those things necessary to have the companionship of that Spirit. Specifically, we must keep the commandments, pray, study the scriptures, and repent weekly as we partake of the sacrament.

## A Distinctive Way of Life

As a way to help us keep the commandments of God, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have what we call a gospel culture. It is a distinctive way of life, a set of values and expectations and practices common to all members. This gospel culture comes from the plan of salvation, the commandments of God, and the teachings of the living prophets. It guides us in the way we raise our families and live our individual lives. The principles stated in the proclamation on the family are a beautiful expression of this gospel culture.<sup>5</sup>

To help its members all over the world, the Church teaches us to give up any personal or family traditions or practices that are contrary to the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ and to this gospel culture. In this we heed the warning of the Apostle Paul, who said that we should not let anyone “spoil [us] through philosophy . . . after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8).

When it comes to giving up false traditions and cultures, we praise our younger people for their flexibility and progress, and we appeal to our older members to put away traditions and cultural or tribal practices that lead them away from the path of growth and progress. We ask all to climb to the higher ground of the gospel culture, to practices and traditions that are rooted in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Many African traditions are consistent with the gospel culture and help our members keep the commandments of God. The strong African family culture is superior to

that of many Western countries, where family values are disintegrating. We hope the examples of love and loyalty among members of African families will help us teach others these essential traditions in the gospel culture. Modesty is another African strength. We plead with youth elsewhere to be as modest as most of the young people we see in Africa.

In contrast, some cultural traditions in parts of Africa are negative when measured against gospel culture and values. Several of these concern family relationships—what is done at birth, at marriage, and upon death. For



*We praise our younger people for their flexibility and progress, and we appeal to our older members to put away traditions and cultural or tribal practices that lead them away from the path of growth and progress.*

example, some African husbands have the false idea that the husband rests while the wife does most of the work at home or that the wife and children are just servants of the husband. This is not pleasing to the Lord because it stands in the way of the kind of family relationships that must prevail in eternity and it inhibits the kind of growth that must occur here on earth if we are to qualify for the blessings of eternity. Study the scriptures and you will see that Adam and Eve, our first parents, the model for all of us, prayed together and worked together (see Moses 5:1, 4, 10–12, 16, 27). That should be our pattern for family

life—respecting each other and working together in love.

Another negative cultural tradition is the practice of *lobola*, or bride price, which seriously interferes with young men and women keeping the commandments of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. When a young returned missionary must purchase his bride from her father by a payment so large that it takes many years to accumulate, he is unable to marry or cannot do so until he is middle-aged. This conflicts with the gospel plan for sexual purity outside marriage, for marriage, and for child rearing. Priesthood leaders should teach parents to discontinue this practice,

*When we follow the commandments of the Lord and the counsel of His leaders regarding marriage, we can call on Him to bless us in all other things.*



and young people should follow the Lord's pattern of marriage in the holy temple without waiting for the payment of a bride price.

Some other cultural practices or traditions that may conflict with gospel culture are weddings and funerals. I ask you not to make plans in connection with weddings and funerals that would cause you to go deeply into debt. Avoid extensive travel and expensive feasts. Excessive debt will weaken or prevent your ability to pay tithing, to attend the temple, and to send your children on missions. Make plans that will strengthen—not weaken—your future Church activity.

### The Importance of Marriage

We live in a wicked world. In saying this, I think first of the willful taking of life, which has occurred so frequently in tribal and national conflicts in Africa and elsewhere. God has also commanded that we not rob people of their property by stealing or fraud. Another great wickedness is the violation of the commandment "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14) and all the related commandments by which God has revealed that the great powers of procreation—given for His purposes—should be employed only within the bonds of marriage. It is sinful to engage in sexual relations outside of marriage.

We live in a day when marriage is looked on as an option, not a necessity. For example, unwed mothers give birth to 40 percent of all children now being born in the United States. Many people live together without marriage. The children born from those relationships do not have the security of parents committed to one another by the marriage God ordained for our first parents in the Garden of Eden.<sup>6</sup>

Marriage is essential, but in Africa and in other nations, we must ask, what kind of

marriage? There are formal marriages authorized by law, and there are various customary or tribal marriages that can be entered into and discontinued without much formality. The Lord's standard—formalized in the requirements we have for sealing a marriage in the temple—is a marriage that is as permanent as the laws of man can make it.

I reaffirm the counsel Church leaders have given that husbands and wives should not separate for long periods, such as for foreign or other distant employment. In too many cases, such separations are followed by serious sin. Separations lead to the breaking of eternal covenants, which causes heartache and loss of blessings. In modern revelation the Lord has commanded, "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else" (D&C 42:22). When we follow the commandments of the Lord and the counsel of His leaders regarding marriage, we can call on Him to bless us in all other things.

### The Blessings of Tithing

Tithing is a commandment with a promise. The words of Malachi, reaffirmed by the Savior, promise those who bring their tithes into the storehouse that the Lord will "open . . . the windows of heaven, and pour [them] out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." The promised blessings are temporal and spiritual. For tithe payers, the Lord promises that He will "rebuke the devourer" and that "all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land" (Malachi 3:10–12; see also 3 Nephi 24:10–12).

I believe these promises apply to the nations in which we reside. When the people of God withheld their tithes and offerings, God condemned the "whole nation" (Malachi 3:9). Similarly, I believe that when many citizens of a



*I believe that when many citizens of a nation are faithful in the payment of tithes, they summon the blessings of heaven upon their entire nation.*



*Now that the Church is strong in its center stakes, we counsel members to remain, to build up the Church in their homelands. We encourage this by building temples all over the world.*

nation are faithful in the payment of tithes, they summon the blessings of heaven upon their entire nation. The Bible teaches that “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (Galatians 5:9; see also Matthew 13:33) and that “righteousness exalteth a nation” (Proverbs 14:34). This much-needed blessing can be called down by faithfulness in paying tithing.

The payment of tithing also brings the individual tithing payer unique spiritual as well as temporal blessings. During World War II my widowed mother supported her three young children on a meager schoolteacher’s salary. When I became conscious that we went without some desirable things because we didn’t have enough money, I asked my mother why she paid so much of her salary as tithing. I have never forgotten her explanation: “Dallin, there might be some people who can get along without paying tithing, but we can’t because we are poor. The Lord has chosen to take your father and leave me to raise you children. I cannot do that without the blessings of the Lord, and I obtain those blessings by paying an honest tithing. When I pay my tithing, I have the Lord’s promise that He will bless us, and we must have those blessings if we are to get along.”

As a lifelong recipient of those blessings, I testify to the goodness of our God and His bounteous blessings to His tithing children.

### **Building Up the Church**

As we seek to establish the Church in Africa and other nations, we must have third- and fourth-generation faithful Latter-day Saint families in our leadership and membership. Faithful Latter-day Saints who move to another country weaken the Church in their homeland. Of course the Church does not *forbid* its members from moving from one place to another to better themselves, but it has been many years since

the Church has *encouraged* such emigration.

Long ago, Latter-day Saints were encouraged to gather to Zion in America to establish the Church and build temples there. Now that the Church is strong in its center stakes, we counsel members to remain, to build up the Church in their homelands. We encourage this by building temples all over the world.

Following the Lord’s way is not easy. The Lord has warned us again and again, directly and through His servants, that the world will hate us for doing things differently—the Lord’s way (see John 15:19).

The good news is that when we do the Lord’s work in the Lord’s way, we are assured of His blessings to help us. “I will go before your face,” He has said. “I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up” (D&C 84:88).

### **Loving One Another**

How grateful we are for the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. It tells us who we are. When we understand our relationship to God, we also understand our relationship to one another. This includes our relationship to our spouse and our children—eternal relationships if we keep the commandments and make and keep sacred temple covenants.

All men and women on this earth are the offspring of God, spirit brothers and sisters, whatever their color or citizenship. No wonder God’s Only Begotten Son commanded us to love one another. What a different world it would be if brotherly and sisterly love and unselfish assistance could cross over all boundaries of tribe, nation, creed, and color. Such love would not erase all differences of opinion and action, but it would guide each of us to focus our efforts on cooperative actions with

our neighbors rather than on hatred or oppression of them.

I affirm the great truth that our Heavenly Father loves all His children. This is an immensely powerful idea that children can begin to understand through the love and sacrifice of their earthly parents. Love is the most powerful force in the world. I pray that every parent is providing the kind of loving example that encourages the rising generation to understand the love of God toward them and the great desire of our Heavenly Father that all of His children on earth do what is necessary to qualify for the choicest blessings of eternity.

We have His gospel, and we need to keep the commandments to enjoy His choicest blessings. I bear testimony of this and ask the blessings of our Heavenly Father upon each of you. ■

#### NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* (2004), 49.
2. *Teachings: Wilford Woodruff*, 51.
3. *Teachings: Wilford Woodruff*, 54.
4. Thomas S. Monson, "Heavenly Homes, Forever Families," *Liahona*, June 2006, 67–68; *Ensign*, June 2006, 99–100.
5. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
6. See *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.



*What a different world it would be if brotherly and sisterly love and unselfish assistance could cross over all boundaries of tribe, nation, creed, and color.*



# Visiting Teaching

UNDERSTANDING  
THE POWER  
OF MINISTERING

*Our Heavenly Father needs us to follow a higher path and demonstrate our discipleship by sincerely caring for His children.*

**D**uring Christ's mortal life, He ministered to others. As we desire to be His disciples, we must look to Him as our example. He taught, "The works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do" (3 Nephi 27:21). The New Testament is filled with examples of Christ's ministering. He revealed to the woman of Samaria that He was the Messiah. He healed Peter's mother-in-law. He restored the daughter of Jairus to her parents and Lazarus to his grieving sisters. Even as He suffered on the cross, the Savior "expressed concern for His mother, who by then was likely a widow in need of watchcare."<sup>1</sup> On the cross, He asked John to watch over His mother.

## By the Relief Society General Presidency



Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president, said: “Through Relief Society [and visiting teaching] we practice being disciples of Christ. We learn what He would have us learn, we do what He would have us do, and we become what He would have us become.”<sup>2</sup>

### Understanding the Power of Ministering

Ministering and providing relief to others have always been the heart of Relief Society. “Throughout the years, Relief Society sisters and leaders have learned one step at a time and have improved in their ability to watch over others,” said Sister Beck. “There have been times when sisters have focused more on completing visits, teaching lessons, and leaving notices when they have stopped by their sisters’ homes. These practices have helped sisters learn patterns of watchcare. Just as people in the time of Moses concentrated on keeping long lists of rules, the sisters of Relief Society have at times imposed many written and unwritten rules upon themselves in their desire to understand how to strengthen one another.

“With so much need for relief and rescue in the lives of sisters and their families today, our Heavenly Father needs us to follow a higher path and demonstrate our discipleship by sincerely caring for His children. With this important purpose in mind, leaders are now taught to ask for reports about the spiritual and temporal well-being of sisters and their families and about service rendered. Now visiting teachers have the responsibility to ‘sincerely come to know and love each sister, help her strengthen her faith, and give service.’”<sup>3</sup>

Our Relief Society history, *Daughters in My Kingdom*, and *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* teach us how we can follow a higher path and demonstrate our discipleship:

- Pray daily for those you visit teach and their families.
- Seek inspiration to know the needs of your sisters.
- Visit your sisters regularly to comfort and strengthen them.
- Contact your sisters frequently through visits, phone calls, letters, e-mail, text messages, and simple acts of kindness.
- Greet your sisters at church.
- Help your sisters when they have an illness or other urgent need.
- Teach your sisters the gospel from the scriptures and the Visiting Teaching Message.
- Inspire your sisters by setting a good example.
- Report your sisters’ spiritual and temporal well-being to a Relief Society leader.<sup>4</sup>

### Focusing on Ministering

We are the Lord’s hands. He is dependent upon each of us. The more we see our visiting teaching assignment as one of the most important responsibilities we have, the more we will minister to those we visit.

1. We will provide experiences that invite the Spirit and help our sisters increase in faith and personal righteousness.
2. We will care deeply about those we visit and help them strengthen their homes and families.
3. We will take action when our sisters are in need.

Following is the example of Maria and Gretchen—visiting teachers who understand the power of ministering. Here we can see that now visiting teachers have the opportunity to visit separately or together. They can count their “caring” whether or not they visit together and give the message. They can take appropriate action without being asked. They



## ACHIEVING THE MIRACULOUS

“When we strive with faith nothing wavering to fulfill the duties appointed to us, when we seek the inspiration of the Almighty in the performance of our responsibilities, we can achieve the miraculous.”

President Thomas S. Monson, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 91.

can actively seek, receive, and act on personal revelation to know how to respond to the spiritual and temporal needs of each sister they visit.

Rachel was expecting her first baby and had to remain in bed for most of her pregnancy. Her visiting teachers prayed for inspiration to know the best ways to help her. Maria, who lived nearby, was able to help at Rachel's home on most days before work. One day she cleaned part of the bathroom; the next day she cleaned the rest of it. Another day she vacuumed the living room, and the next day she made lunch for Rachel. And so her ongoing ministering continued as she did laundry, dusting, or whatever Rachel needed.

Gretchen phoned Rachel often to brighten her day. Sometimes they talked and laughed. Other times Gretchen and Maria visited with Rachel at her bedside and shared their testimonies, scripture reading, or the Visiting Teaching Message. And after Rachel's baby was born, they continued to help her.

Throughout this time, Maria and Gretchen also worked with the Relief Society presidency to coordinate other care Rachel and her family needed. The Relief Society presidency counseled with the bishop and the ward council so home teachers and others could provide additional assistance.

Ministering became sweeter as these sisters developed love for one another and as they shared spiritual experiences. As visiting teachers we can follow these same patterns and principles of ministering and receive the same blessings.



## Ministering as Christ Did

“As committed disciples of the Savior, we are improving in our ability to do the things He would do if He were here,” said Sister Beck. “We know that to Him it is our caring that counts, and so we are trying to concentrate on caring about our sisters rather than completing lists of things to do. True ministry is measured more by the depth of our charity than by the perfection of our statistics.”<sup>5</sup>

As visiting teachers we will know we are successful in our ministry when our sisters can say: “My visiting teachers help me grow spiritually. I know my visiting teachers care deeply about me and my family, and if I have problems, I know they will help me.” By following a higher path as visiting teachers, we are participating in the Lord's miraculous work and accomplishing the purposes of Relief Society to increase faith and personal righteousness, strengthen families and homes, and help those in need. ■

## NOTES

1. *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 3.
2. *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 7.
3. Julie B. Beck, “What I Hope My Granddaughters (and Grandsons) Will Understand about Relief Society,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 112.
4. See *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 123.
5. *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 112–13.

# HOW HAS VISITING TEACHING BEEN STRENGTHENED?

Following is a summary of the changes to the visiting teaching program. We encourage Relief Society leaders and visiting teachers to read chapter 9 of *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* to review the specific details of these changes. We also encourage you to read chapter 7 of *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* to gain vision, insight, and understanding of the power of ministering and its essential role in visiting teaching. (These two books can be found online at LDS.org.)

ASSIGNING VISITING TEACHERS	
1. The Relief Society presidency, not just the president, is responsible for visiting teachers.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.2.2.
2. When a Relief Society leader gives a sister her visiting teaching assignment, the leader helps the sister understand that visiting teaching is an important spiritual responsibility to fulfill.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.5; 9.5.1.
3. The Relief Society presidency conducts ongoing training for visiting teachers on how to be more effective in ministering to those they visit. Training can be given in Relief Society on the first Sunday of the month or in another Relief Society meeting.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.5.

COUNSELING WITH OTHERS	
1. The Relief Society presidency meets regularly with visiting teachers to discuss the spiritual and temporal welfare of those in need and to make plans to help them. Visiting teachers may assist the Relief Society presidency in coordinating short-term or long-term service for sisters in need.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.5; 9.5.1; 9.5.4.
2. The Relief Society presidency counsels together regularly to discuss the spiritual and temporal welfare of those in need.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.3.2; 9.5.4.
3. In ward or branch council meetings, the Relief Society president shares appropriate information from visiting teaching reports so that ward or branch leaders can counsel together on how to help those with spiritual and temporal needs.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 4.5.1; 5.1.2; 6.2.2.
4. The bishop or branch president may invite the Relief Society president to ward or branch priesthood executive committee (PEC) meetings as needed to coordinate home teaching and visiting teaching assignments.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.3.1.
5. The Relief Society presidency and the young single adult leader meet regularly to ensure that visiting teaching assignments help address the needs of young single adults.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.7.2; 16.3.3.

## ORGANIZING AND OVERSEEING VISITING TEACHING

<p>1. The bishop or branch president and the Relief Society presidency counsel together and prayerfully consider local needs to determine the structure of visiting teaching. (Sisters should not be organized in groups for the purpose of visiting teaching since they minister to individual needs.) The bishop or branch president approves each assignment.</p>	<p>See <i>Handbook 2</i>, 9.5.2.</p>
<p>2. Where possible, the presidency assigns sisters in companionships of two. <i>Handbook 2</i> provides other options to meet local needs. The presidency counsels with the bishop or branch president about using the following options:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Temporarily assigning only home teachers or only visiting teachers to certain families. Or leaders may alternate the monthly visits of home teachers and visiting teachers.</li> <li>b. Asking full-time sister missionaries to help with visiting teaching on a limited basis, with approval of the mission president.</li> </ol>	<p>See <i>Handbook 2</i>, 9.5.2; 9.5.3.</p>
<p>3. Visiting teaching is not just a monthly visit; it is ministering. To watch over and strengthen sisters in their individual needs, visiting teachers have ongoing contact with them through visits, phone calls, e-mails, letters, or other means.</p> <p>Leaders give special priority to ensuring the following sisters are cared for: sisters coming into Relief Society from Young Women, single sisters, new members, recent converts, newly married sisters, less-active sisters, and those with special needs.</p>	<p>See <i>Handbook 2</i>, 9.5.1; 9.5.2.</p>

## REPORTING VISITING TEACHING

<p>1. Visiting teachers are asked to report special needs and service given—in other words, their ministering. Count the caring instead of just counting visits.</p>	<p>See <i>Handbook 2</i>, 9.5.4.</p>
<p>2. The Relief Society president gives the bishop or branch president a monthly visiting teaching report. This report includes the special needs and service rendered by visiting teachers and a list of sisters not contacted.</p>	<p>See <i>Handbook 2</i>, 9.5.4.</p>

# DAUGHTERS *in My Kingdom*

## Making a Difference

In the foreword of *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society*, the First Presidency encourages readers “to study this book and allow its timeless truths and inspiring examples to influence your lives.”<sup>1</sup> Following are testimonies from some men and women for whom this inspired book has made a difference:

“There is a spirit in this book that is tangible. I could actually feel it changing my heart.”

—Shelley Bertagnoli

“Reading *Daughters in My Kingdom* has inspired me to be a more devoted husband and father and to keep my covenants with greater dedication.”

—Aaron West

“As I read about the Relief Society sisters in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, they became real to me and I felt their faith. They knew that as we

serve others with the pure love of Christ, we become what the Lord wants us to be. That is the purpose of Relief Society, and it applies to everyone—single or married, young or old. It applies to me.”—Katrina Cannon

“I have lived in Chile, Argentina, Brazil, and the United States, but wherever I go, I know I am part of a wonderful circle of sisters—a heritage of strong, faithful women.”—Marta Bravo

“Working on *Daughters in My Kingdom* as a graphic designer was a rare and extraordinary experience. In our first meeting, Sister Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president, bore her testimony to us that the book was coming forth under revelation and the instruction of living prophets. From that first day, revelation guided everything. Every time any one of us read from the book’s pages, we were touched by the Spirit and changed for the better. It happened to me, and I watched it happen to editors, designers,

illustrators, production artists, and press employees.”—Tadd Peterson

“I realized that I am a part of something better. As I draw strength from Relief Society, I can become something better also.”—Jeanette Andrews

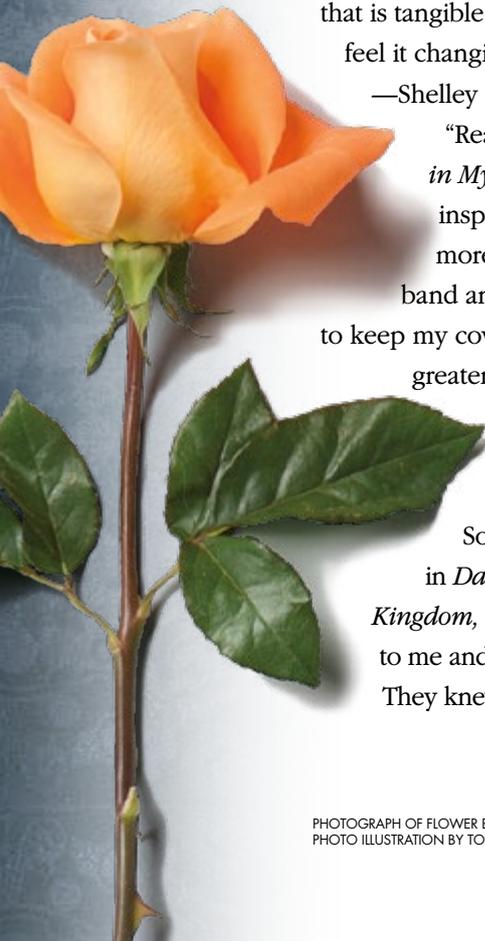
“This history is a powerful resource that can help men and women around the world to recognize the value of women as daughters of God and their significant role in His kingdom.”—Susan Lofgren

“I once thought that I had to be like everyone else. Now I realize that each sister has different circumstances, strengths, and weaknesses, but each sister is important.”—Nicole Erickson

“*Daughters in My Kingdom* has had a profound impact on me as a bishop. I bear testimony of the great power that comes when the Relief Society and the priesthood are inseparably yoked together.”—Mark Staples ■

#### NOTE

1. *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), ix.





# A CALL FOR INDEXERS WORLDWIDE

*Since the introduction of FamilySearch indexing in 2006, over 800 million records have been digitized. But the work is not done, and the need for indexers worldwide is growing.*

**By Heather F. Christensen**  
Church Magazines

**W**hen Hilary Lemon of Utah, USA, returned home from her mission, she had a few months before she would start school again. Looking for ways to productively use her time, she began to help with online FamilySearch indexing. She started indexing in English but soon realized there were indexing opportunities in other languages—including Portuguese, the language she had learned on her mission.



## FAMILYSEARCH IS EASY TO USE

**A**long with the rest of the youth in the Chorley England Stake, Makenzie, age 15, was invited by her stake presidency to index 200 names. “Two hundred turned into 2,000!” recalls Makenzie. “It’s really fast and easy to index. There are prompts to help you understand names and places. I’ve shared my knowledge of indexing with my family and friends by showing them how to create their own account and demonstrating how simple and enjoyable it is.”

“Since I served my mission in Portugal, I was interested in the indexing projects listed for Brazil and Portugal. My interest spiked when I saw a project from Setúbal, Portugal, one of the areas where I served,” says Hilary.

Hilary is one volunteer who is helping meet FamilySearch’s ever-growing need to index records in non-English languages. Like the other 127,000 active volunteers, Hilary is extracting the names and events of those who have passed on so that members can find the information they are seeking and complete their ancestors’ ordinance work in the temple.

### What Is Indexing?

FamilySearch indexing is the process of reading digitized versions of physical records—such as census, vital, probate, and church records—and typing the information they contain into an online searchable database. Through this work, indexing volunteers make it possible for members and other family history researchers to easily locate their ancestors’ information on the Internet.

Indexing has brought a simplicity and ease to family history work. “In the past if you were looking for relatives, you had to wind through microfilm. When you found a family

member you were looking for, you might be able to find connecting names. So you would rewind and wind the microfilm again and again,” says József Szabadkai, an indexer in Hungary.

Today FamilySearch continues to gather historical records from governments and record custodians all over the world. But instead of simply filming the records and making the films available to researchers, FamilySearch employees scan them into the indexing program. Volunteers pull up these images on their computers and type in the information as they see it. In this way, the information is digitized and can be found through the search function on FamilySearch.org while researchers sit in the comfort of their own homes.

### How Far Has Indexing Come?

Since FamilySearch indexing’s introduction in 2006, volunteer indexers have made significant progress—transcribing about 800 million records thus far. But the work is far from done. The Granite Mountain Records Vault in Salt Lake City, where the filmed records are stored and protected, contains some 15 billion records—and more records are constantly being added. These records





## FINDING TIME FOR FAMILY HISTORY

Many people can't seem to find time to work on family history. Jonni Sue Schilaty of Utah, USA, found a way to fit indexing into her schedule. "I love indexing!" says Sister Schilaty. "When my husband and I take road trips, I download batches to my laptop, then go offline while I'm in the car. When we arrive, I go online, upload the completed batches, and then download more for the way home. I take advantage of every minute I can to index and find that these car trips work well for me."

hold information about billions of people from over 100 countries and include more than 170 languages.

Robert Magnuski, a Church-service missionary and active indexer from Poland, is experiencing firsthand the demand for more non-English volunteers. "Due to partition of the country from 1772 to 1918, Poland's records were kept in four languages: Russian, German, Latin, and Polish," he explains. Because most of Poland's indexers speak Polish, they started by indexing the Polish records. This still leaves work to be done on the Russian, German, and Latin records. With the help of volunteers worldwide who have experience with various languages, family history seekers throughout the world can find their ancestors—no matter the language their vital information was recorded in.

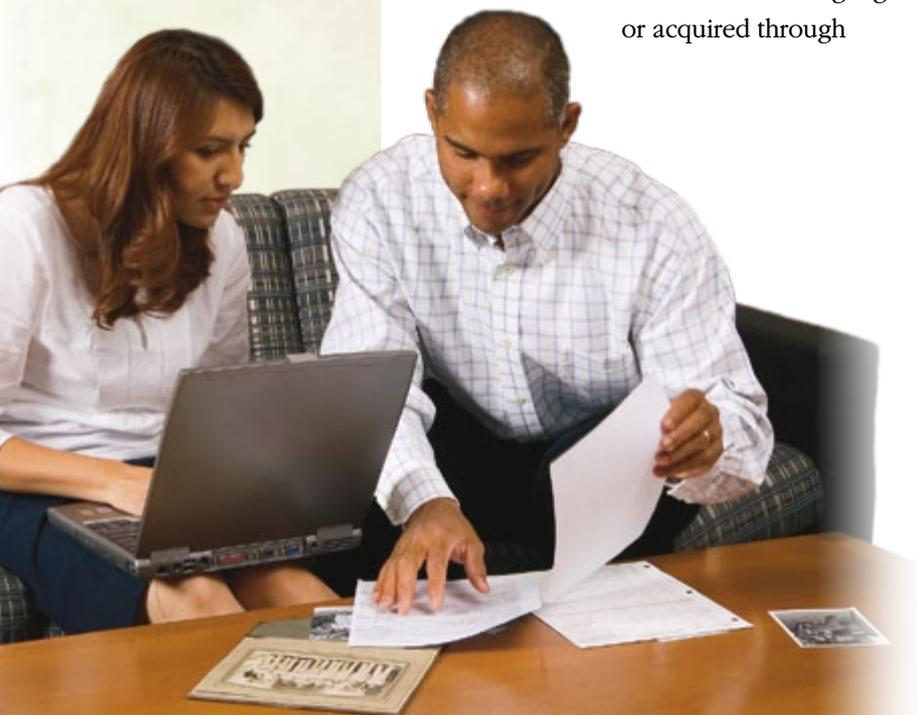
To make these records accessible, the indexing program has been made available online in 11 languages: Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Swedish. People who speak any of these languages—whether it's a native language or acquired through

missionary service, schooling, or other training—are encouraged to sign up and begin indexing records.

### How Do I Get Started?

Getting started as a volunteer indexer is quick and easy. Follow the instructions at [indexing.familysearch.org](http://indexing.familysearch.org) to download the program onto your computer. Next, set up an account, and then select a group, or "batch," of records to index. Records have been grouped into small batches of 20 to 50 names to allow volunteers to spend as little or as much time as they would like indexing. Each batch takes about 30 minutes to complete, but you can stop partway through and return to it later because the program will save the work you have done. If you are unable to finish the batch within a week, it will automatically become available for others to complete.

Batches from countries around the world are being provided for indexing as records from those countries are acquired by FamilySearch. Brother Szabadkai is from Hungary, but he began indexing records in English and Afrikaans until records from his own country were available. "It was one of the happiest moments when the first Hungarian batch was announced in the beginning of 2011," says Brother Szabadkai. "Many Hungarian members—young and old—have registered and become 'maniac' indexers since that time." Brother Szabadkai's enthusiasm stems from the hope that many of his own ancestors will be found as these records are transcribed. "As we build up this



fantastic database, we will be able to find more of our family names, saving time and helping our ancestors receive their saving ordinances faster.”

### What If I Don't Have the Latest Technology?

In various parts of the world, obtaining a computer and Internet access presents a challenge for some who are eager to index. This is the situation leaders in the Mexico City Zarahemla Stake faced when they decided to get the youth involved in indexing. Because not all of the youth had computers in their homes, stake leaders decided to reserve a local school's computer labs after hours for them to use.

The youth then worked to index Mexican census records from 1930. “As the youth reviewed the documents,” says Bishop Darío Zapata Vivas, “they imagined people moving from house to house collecting all this information without knowing that someday their efforts would assist the Lord's work of bringing 'to pass the immortality and eternal life of man'” (Moses 1:39).

Through the creative efforts of the stake leaders to obtain the needed technology, the youth and other members of the stake were able to index over 300,000 records within one month.

As demonstrated by the youth of the Zarahemla stake, if you don't own your own computer, you can still participate. The indexing program can run on any computer with Internet access, including at other members' homes, in family history centers, at



meetinghouses, and even at schools or libraries where permissible.

### The Blessings of Indexing

The Portuguese documents Sister Hilary Lemon indexed were baptismal records from over two centuries ago. The pages were faded and the elaborate handwriting was hard to read, but she persevered through the project as she thought of the names on the page as people waiting for their work to be performed in the temple.

“More than once as I indexed, I felt a sweet, firm impression that one day a Portuguese Latter-day Saint would open up that baptismal record that I had indexed and find his or her ancestor,” says Hilary. “Now that a temple is planned for Lisbon, Portugal, I know that there will come a day when the members there will find their ancestors because of the work that's being done through FamilySearch indexing.”

With the help of volunteers like Sister Lemon, more records will be preserved and the way will be opened for those who have gone before to partake of the full blessings of the gospel. ■

*For more information, please visit [indexing.familysearch.org](http://indexing.familysearch.org) or contact your ward or branch family history specialist.*

### ANYONE CAN INDEX

Indexing is designed for people in all stages of life—including students, stay-at-home moms, businesspeople, or retirees. David and Bernice Blyde served seven full-time missions and are settled at home in New Zealand, where they continue to serve. “There is always something you can do within the Church to keep busy and active,” says Sister Blyde. “Indexing has fulfilled that need for us.” Since 2009 Sister Blyde has indexed over 180,000 names. “It's exciting to be engaged in this wonderful resource,” she says. “This work is vital to finding our ancestors and giving them the opportunity to progress.”



## YOU SPEAK RUSSIAN?

**A**lthough we were very busy, my husband, Daniil, and I decided we should visit the Preston England Temple one more time before the end of 2009. It takes two buses and almost six hours to get to the temple from the small Scottish town where we live.

The morning we planned to leave dawned cloudy and rainy, but we were happy to be going to the temple. While we waited an extra hour to

catch the second bus at the transfer point, it began pouring rain and getting cold.

However, the hope that we would soon be in the temple warmed our hearts. When we arrived in Preston, we felt a strong impression to go immediately to the temple. We were hungry and dripping wet, but we listened to the Holy Ghost.

When we entered the temple, a friendly temple worker asked for our temple recommends. He took off his glasses and looked again at the names on our recommends.

“Are you from Russia?” he asked in astonishment.

“Yes,” we answered, a bit surprised at his reaction.

“So you speak Russian?” he asked.

“Of course,” we said.

He then picked up the telephone and called someone.

*When we arrived in Preston, England, we felt a strong impression to go immediately to the temple.*



Soon the temple president approached us. Through his glasses, we could see he had tears in his eyes. “You are angels from God!” he said with a smile, asking that we follow him. We followed him and soon saw a confused young missionary with temple workers standing around him.

It turned out that this missionary was from Armenia and spoke Russian. He had been called to serve in the England London Mission but had not yet learned English. There was not a single Russian-speaking person in the missionary training center adjacent to the temple. On that day he was supposed to receive his endowment, but temple workers had been unable to communicate with him—that is, until a thoroughly soaked Russian couple walked in.

Daniil immediately asked to accompany the young missionary. The missionary was overjoyed and later said he had felt a special spirit when we arrived.

I am grateful that despite our busy schedules and the rainy weather, my husband and I still decided to visit the temple that day so we could help a Russian-speaking son of God in Great Britain. I am grateful for temple blessings, which brighten our lives with a special light and purpose. I know that if we will heed the promptings of the Holy Ghost, He will lead us back to our heavenly home—just as He led my husband and me to the house of the Lord that day. ■

Anna Nikiticheva, Scotland

## I NOTICED THEM NOT

While recently reading the Book of Mormon, I came upon the following admonition: “Why do ye . . . suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not?” (Mormon 8:39).

Instead of feeling the peace and comfort I usually find in the scriptures, I was overcome by a lingering feeling of sadness. I had long recognized that I am not a particularly observant person. I had allowed myself to get so involved in my life, my callings, and my family that I just didn’t notice the challenges other people were having.

I knew I wasn’t doing all I could “to bear one another’s burdens, that they [might] be light; . . . to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:8–9). I wanted to change; I wanted to be better. I simply didn’t know how. I prayed that the Lord would help me.

My answer came in an unexpected and unwanted way when I contracted a chronic illness. It slowly took away all my cumbersome busyness. As the disease progressed, I had to give up my outside activities, my callings, and my Church attendance. I’m housebound, I’m lonely, and I feel unnoticed.

I pray that someday the Lord will heal me. When He does, I promise



*I prayed that the Lord would help me be a better person. My answer came in an unexpected and unwanted way.*

myself that I will never be so blind again. When I arrive at church, I will look to see who is sitting alone and who is not attending that day. I will take time each week to overcome my shyness and visit somebody who is sick or afflicted or just in need of a friend. I will love my brothers and sisters every day—not just on Sunday or during Church activities.

I will remember and, I hope, be worthy to hear the Lord’s approbation: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40). ■

Shelli Proffitt Howells, California, USA

## I DIDN'T WANT TO SERVE

**W**hen I was 11, at a regional conference in Johannesburg, South Africa, President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) shook my hand and said, “You’re going to go on a mission and be a fine missionary someday.”

Most young men would have cherished those words forever. Not me. For the next 10 years I had no desire to serve a mission. I was more concerned with success in sports and my social life. I thought that giving up two years would throw all that away. During interviews with my branch

and stake presidents, I would come up with excuses as to why I didn’t want to serve.

At 21, still with no desire to serve a mission, I visited my family in the United States, in Iowa. They had moved there the year before. While in Iowa I had the chance to go to the Winter Quarters Nebraska Temple with the local singles branch. I wasn’t endowed, so I figured I’d perform baptisms for the dead.

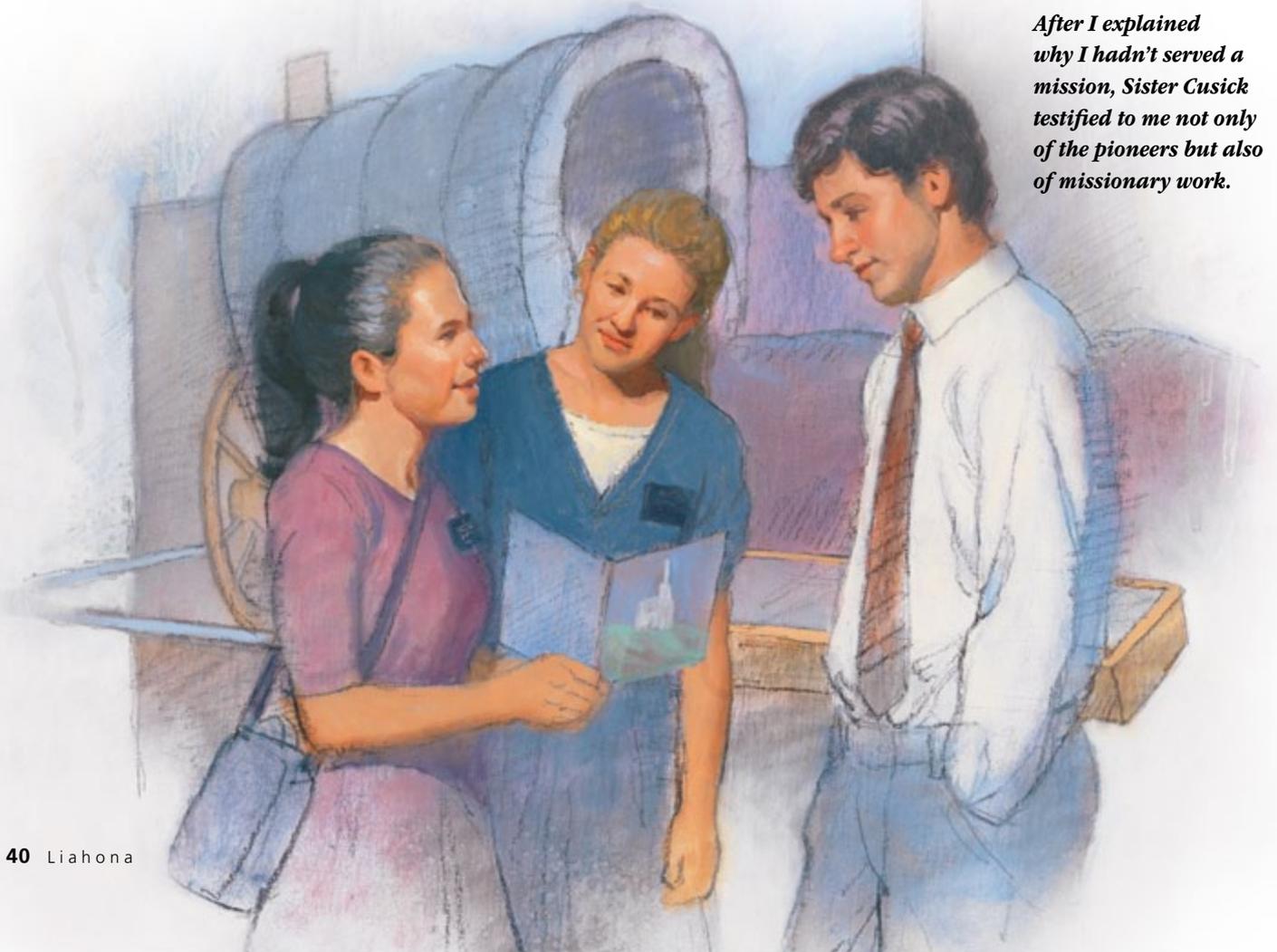
Upon arriving at the temple, I discovered there was no baptismal

session scheduled for the afternoon. I thought, “Great, what am I going to do for the next two and a half hours?”

I decided to go to the Mormon Trail Visitors’ Center across the street. After watching a 15-minute movie about the pioneers, I was greeted by two sister missionaries who were going to take me on my own personal tour. After learning a little bit about me, Sister Cusick asked why I hadn’t served a mission. The usual excuses came flying out. Sister Cusick then testified to me not only of the pioneers but also of missionary work.

After the tour I sat in the temple waiting room, thinking. Suddenly,

*After I explained why I hadn’t served a mission, Sister Cusick testified to me not only of the pioneers but also of missionary work.*



my excuses for not serving a mission became a stupor of thought. The Spirit testified strongly that I should serve a mission. From the time I started talking to the sister missionaries, everything had changed inside me. The Spirit testified to my heart what I needed to do.

Months later I found out that the still, small voice had told Sister Cusick that I needed to have my own tour. She didn't know why, but the Lord had plans for me.

I served in the California Ventura Mission—the greatest mission in the world—and built some wonderful friendships that I hope will last through the eternities. I didn't believe President Hunter for 10 years, but he knew exactly what he was talking about.

My life changed completely, all because a sister missionary acted on the promptings of the Holy Ghost. ■  
Neville Smeda, California, USA

## THE LORD IS MY SONG

Since I lived in a small Arizona town with a predominantly Latter-day Saint population, missionaries and Church members often approached me about the Church. They frequently invited my children and me to attend church, read the scriptures, or both. I had no interest in accepting their invitations but politely thanked them for their interest in my family.

As I got to know the woman I would later marry, she told me she

was a Latter-day Saint. I admired her spirituality and agreed to attend church with her after we married. True to my word, I started attending regularly and even enjoyed the atmosphere and camaraderie. But even though I studied the scriptures, attended church, and prayed alone and with my family, I still doubted God's existence. No matter how hard I tried, I felt as though I couldn't shake my agnostic roots. Because I felt no closer to God than when I had started, I declined all invitations to be baptized.

After I had attended church for six years, my father, who had been in the U.S. Army, passed away suddenly. My family and I wanted to have taps played at the grave site, and since I am a professional musician, I was asked to perform the song. I had performed at hundreds of grave site ceremonies, but because this was my father's service, I knew it would be different for me. I also knew from my mother's funeral that my heightened sense of emotion would affect my ability to play. I was determined not to let my emotions interfere with the music as they had during her service.

Minutes before the ceremony started, I nervously tried to warm up. Just a few practice notes had escaped my lips when I realized I was repeating my previous failure. Tears formed and I started to cry. My sobs impeded my breathing. How would I be able to perform?

I wasn't concerned with accolades for myself, but I did want to honor my father. As I started to play, I found I couldn't take a complete breath. It was uncharacteristic of me to ask for help, but at this point, I didn't know what else to do. The first note that came out was weak. Inwardly I pleaded with my Heavenly Father: "Please." As I played the second note, my lungs filled with air, and the sound rang out of my horn with a startling, beautiful tone. Throughout the rest of the piece, I played well beyond my ability. When I finished the last note, I was suddenly out of breath and choking for air through my tears.

As a musician, I am aware of my strengths and weaknesses. Simply put, I couldn't have played that well even under the best of circumstances. It was obvious to me that Heavenly Father had answered my plea and blessed me with the strength and ability to honor my earthly father. I was given a special witness that Heavenly Father answers us in a manner that we can understand. His answer in my time of need helped me realize that He had always been eager to communicate with me.

After several months I cleared my agnostic hurdle and joined the Church. Although it was a leap of faith to be baptized, I knew that Heavenly Father would bless me. My experience while playing taps taught me that He will answer my prayers according to my needs and understanding. ■

Tom Sullivan, Arizona, USA

By Elder  
Randall K. Bennett  
Of the Seventy



# Follow THE PROPHET

I met the angel who would become my wife at an institute party the second night I was home from my mission. Although Shelley and I grew up in Canada several hundred miles apart and had never met before, we got to know each other well over the following months. When I had proposed three times and been turned down because she was committed to serving a mission, she finally accepted my proposal after I promised her that we would serve missions together after raising a family. She accepted an engagement ring on December 22, 1976.

But in the days that followed, both of us felt unsettled—not about marrying each other but about the ring. Let me explain.

## A Decision to Follow the Prophet

In the weeks leading up to our engagement, Shelley and I had spent significant time talking about how we wanted to raise our family and what we wanted our marriage to be like. One of the things at the center of that discussion was our determination to always follow the prophet.

Two months before we were engaged, we listened to lots of talks at the October 1976 general conference reinforcing the principles of self-reliance. This was a topic that

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) and others had been consistently teaching for several years. Both Shelley and I had grown up knowing the importance of growing a garden, having a supply of food, and being generally prepared. But in that general conference, the theme of preparation seemed especially prevalent. Some speakers made reference to the Teton Dam flood that had occurred in June. Among them was Barbara B. Smith (1922–2010), the Relief Society general president, who emphasized the importance of self-reliance—specifically, acquiring a year’s supply of food, as was counseled at the time.<sup>1</sup> President Kimball, in the closing session of the conference, reminded Latter-day Saints of the scripture in Luke 6:46, where the Savior says, “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” President Kimball then exhorted the Saints to let the messages of conference follow them into their “homes and . . . future lives.”<sup>2</sup>

After our engagement, as Shelley and I contemplated the beginning of our marriage and family life, these messages were ringing in our ears. Unbeknownst to each other, both of us were thinking about how to start home storage for our family. To obey the counsel of



*An engagement ring usually represents a commitment. But for my wife and me, not having an engagement ring represented our commitment to the Lord and His prophets.*

that time, we needed to start acquiring a year's supply of food. But how were we supposed to do it? We were students—and would be for years to come—and didn't have a lot of money. The Holy Ghost gave both of us, separately, the same answer: we needed to sell the engagement ring.

But how was I supposed to ask Shelley to do that? I had *just given* her the ring. What would she think about my asking her to sell it so we could buy some oats and flour and rice? Meanwhile, she was worrying too. What would I think, she wondered, if she were to approach me about selling the ring I had picked out for her? Would it hurt my feelings?

But the prompting each of us had felt was too strong to ignore, and the more each of us thought about it, the more glaring that diamond ring became. When Shelley raised the subject a few days after Christmas, I was relieved that she had arrived at the same conclusion I had. In many ways, it was a tremendous confirmation to both of us about the choice of whom we were going to marry. To know that our priorities and values were in sync with the other's and with the prophet of God was tremendously reassuring. I was so grateful for her willingness to make such a sacrifice to follow the prophet.

Please don't misunderstand me and

please don't sell your rings! Buying or wearing an engagement ring isn't wrong. In fact, our married children all have lovely and appropriate rings. There are many ways we can follow the prophets and apostles and apply their counsel to our personal lives. But because the Spirit had directed *us* to follow the prophet by selling our engagement ring, in our case the choice was between keeping the ring and following the prophet. This helped us establish two patterns in our home from the very beginning: following the prophet and following the personal, spiritual promptings we received.

### Responses to Our Decision

The jewelry store where I had purchased the ring was closed for about a week following Christmas, but at the first opportunity after it reopened, I went to talk to the jeweler. I fully expected him to refuse to offer me a refund; after all, the ring had been worn and was considered used. I prepared myself for this reaction and expected to have to sell the ring secondhand at a significant loss. But to my amazement, the jeweler's heart was softened. I walked out with cash in hand—and my mouth hanging open in astonishment at how the Lord had opened the way for us to be obedient.

Not everyone received our decision so well. When our friends—including those who were members of the Church—learned what we had done and saw the small leather band I'd fashioned for Shelley to wear, they

told us we were crazy. Other women Shelley's age couldn't believe she'd been willing to do what she had done. Very few were encouraging or supportive.

Shelley was strong and knew that she would be OK no matter what people thought; she had confidence in knowing that she was following the prophet. And that was more important than anything else. But the Lord provided us with a tender mercy in the form of two friends who helped us feel that we weren't alone.

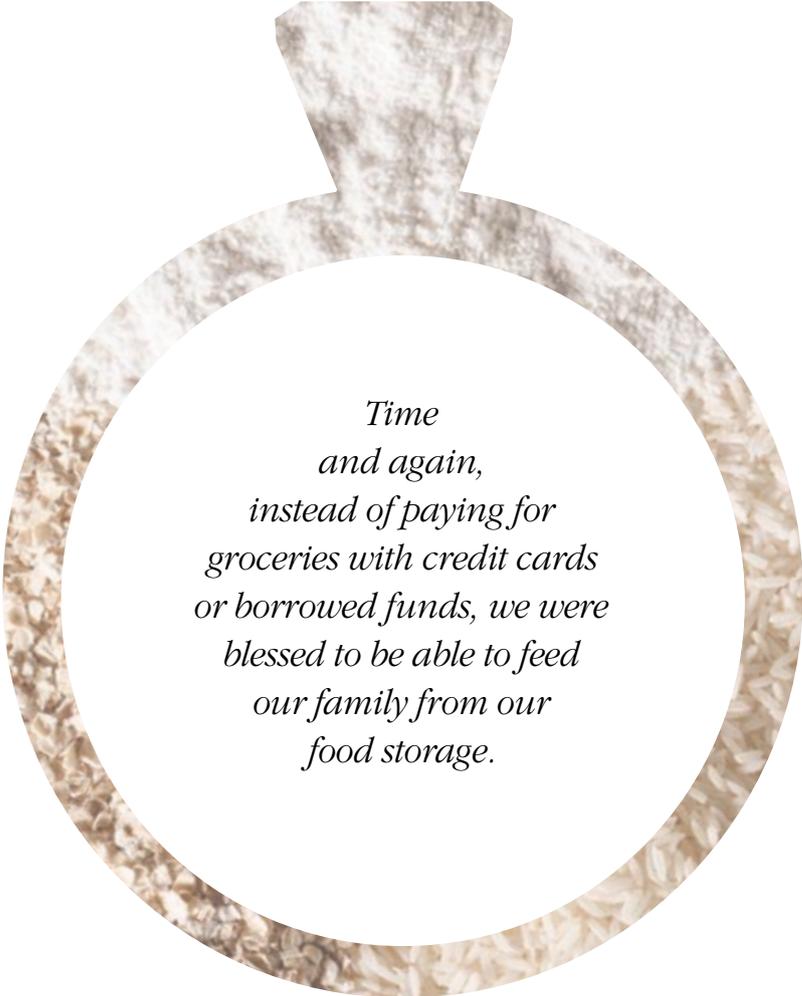
My friend Bob and I had introduced Fran to the Church in high school. All three of us later served missions, and after Fran returned from her mission, she and Bob became engaged. When they came to share their good news with Shelley and me, we learned that instead of buying an engagement ring, they had also decided to use the funds to buy food storage. It was interesting to all four of us that the Spirit had directed us to do similar things. Our commitment to following the Holy Ghost and the living prophet added a new dimension to our friendship, which has lasted more than 40 years.

### **Blessings from Obedience**

Shelley and I began buying basic foods for our home storage in January 1977 and continued to purchase bit by bit until we were married in April of that year. Prior to our wedding, we stored the food at my parents' home.

Shelley wore the leather band as a wedding ring for a long time while I finished undergraduate studies and then dental school. Over the course of pursuing education, our family moved many times. We became accustomed to lugging buckets of wheat from apartment to apartment, house to house, and city to city. Our friends started to avoid us every time we moved, but in later years, we felt profound gratitude for having followed the counsel of Church leaders.

When I graduated from dental school and began a dental practice, Shelley and I had two children and literally no funds. Gratefully, we were able to live on part of what we had



*Time  
and again,  
instead of paying for  
groceries with credit cards  
or borrowed funds, we were  
blessed to be able to feed  
our family from our  
food storage.*

acquired in food storage just before our marriage. Our obedience to prophetic counsel blessed our lives again more than a decade after we were married, when I had completed more schooling and was in an orthodontic residency. We were again out of money, and instead of paying for groceries with credit cards or borrowed funds, we were blessed to be able to feed our family (which now included four children) from our supply.

In the years since, we have been blessed in many other ways by heeding the prophetic word. We have learned not to question the validity of what the prophets and apostles teach or to wonder if it makes sense.

We have learned that by acting—and acting immediately—on their counsel, our lives are blessed.

### Learning to Listen to the Prophetic Word

Some might call our actions blind obedience. But we have the Lord's personal promise that the prophets will never lead us astray.<sup>3</sup> Knowing this helps us hear their voices as we would hear His own (see D&C 1:38).

We've also learned that living prophets typically *invite* us to do things; they don't often use words like *command* or *exhort*. Their way is kind and gentle, but that doesn't give us an excuse not to follow. When Shelley and I have taken invitations as commandments, we have always been blessed.

We have also learned to discern their direction by listening for such phrases as "I've been pondering . . ." or "Something that has been on my mind is . . ." or "I feel to tell you . . ." or "Let me offer some counsel about . . ." or "It would be my hope that . . ." These and similar phrases are clues to help us know what is on the minds and in the hearts of the Lord's anointed servants.

One other thing that helps us hear the Lord's voice as we listen to prophets and apostles is to pay especially close attention when they quote other prophets or apostles. The Lord has taught that He will establish His word by the mouth of two or three witnesses (see 2 Corinthians 13:1; D&C 6:28).

Because the message of self-reliance was repeated so many times in that general conference before we got engaged, my wife and I felt that the message was particularly pertinent for us at that time. We were inspired to follow that counsel in a visible way. However, following the prophet isn't always about outward displays of devotion; often our obedience manifests itself in smaller, more personal ways. Regardless of whether others know about our obedience or not, the Lord does. And He will bless us for our obedience and open ways to make it possible.

Today Shelley wears a traditional wedding band, but she has kept her leather one as a keepsake all these years. To us it is a symbol of our early decision to make always following the prophet's counsel an integral part of our family life. Now as we watch our children raise their children, we are grateful that faithfully following the Lord's prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, is part of their family life as well. To us this obedience is a wonderful legacy and is as tangible a token of covenant keeping as an engagement ring might have been. ■



*Today Shelley wears a traditional wedding band, but she has kept the leather one (below) all these years. To us it is a symbol of our early decision to follow the prophet.*



#### NOTES

1. See Barbara B. Smith, "She Is Not Afraid of the Snow for Her Household," *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 121–22.
2. Spencer W. Kimball, "A Program for Man," *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 110.
3. See Harold B. Lee, "The Place of the Living Prophet, Seer, and Revelator" (address to seminary and institute of religion faculty, July 8, 1964), 13; Marion G. Romney, in Conference Report, Oct. 1960, 78; *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, ed. G. Homer Durham (1946), 212–13.

**Is there a limit  
on repenting?  
If I have to ask forgiveness  
for the same thing  
over and over,  
will I reach a limit  
at some point?**

**T**here are two things to remember here: (1) God's mercy is indeed infinite, and (2) true repentance means forsaking your sins.

On the one hand, because of the infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ, repentance is available to everyone, even those who have made the same mistakes many times. As the prophet Alma said, "Behold, [the Lord God] sendeth an invitation unto all men, for

the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you" (Alma 5:33).

On the other hand, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "Repentance is a thing that cannot be trifled with every day. Daily transgression and daily repentance is not that which is pleasing in the sight of God" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 73).

So what is the key to repentance? As the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith, "By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them" (D&C 58:43). And as Alma taught, "Whosoever repenteth shall find mercy; and he that findeth mercy *and endureth to the end* the same shall be saved" (Alma 32:13; emphasis added).

In other words, you must confess and forsake your sins and try to be faithful until the



end of your life. If you are having trouble overcoming a particular sin, don't give up on yourself in the mistaken belief that there's a limit to sincere repentance. Seek help from your parents and your bishop or branch president. Their love, support, and counsel can help you as you strive to remove sin from your life and draw closer to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. ■

## Can nonmembers take the sacrament?

As you know, the bread and water of the sacrament are meant for Church members so we can renew our baptismal covenants. However, we should not do anything during sacrament meeting to prevent nonmembers from partaking of the sacrament.

It's good to invite non-member friends and family to church, and we want them to feel welcome and comfortable in our meetings. It would be helpful to prepare them for sacrament meeting by explaining the purpose of the sacrament and what will happen during the meeting. If they ask whether they should take the sacrament, simply tell them that they may choose to do so

but that it is intended for Church members, who are renewing their baptismal covenants.

As Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said, "The ordinance of the sacrament makes the sacrament meeting the most sacred and important meeting in the Church" ("Sacrament Meeting and the Sacrament," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 17). We should help nonmembers understand this important ordinance, ensuring that they also feel comfortable at our meetings. ■

## Do animals have spirits?

### What happens to them after they die?

Yes, animals have spirits (see D&C 77:2–3). Of course, there is a major difference between animals' spirits and our spirits—we are begotten

sons and daughters of Heavenly Father, and they are not.

And according to the Prophet Joseph Smith, there are at least some animals in heaven. He said:

"John saw curious looking beasts in heaven; . . . actually there, giving glory to God. . . . (See Rev. 5:13.) . . .

"I suppose John saw beings there of a thousand forms, that had been saved from ten thousand times ten thousand earths like this,—strange beasts of which we have no conception: all might be seen in heaven. John learned that God glorified Himself by saving all that His hands had made, whether beasts, fowls, fishes or men; and He will glorify Himself with them" (in *History of the Church*, 5:343).

So, although we don't have a complete understanding of what happens to animals after they die, we believe that they will enjoy some kind of salvation and immortality. ■



TAKE CARE OF  
**YOUR  
TEMPLE**



Healthy choices make a healthy you.  
(See D&C 89.)

# Amos 3:7

*This verse teaches us about the essential role of prophets.*



### The Lord God

“Because our Father loves his children, he will not leave us to guess about what matters most in this

life concerning where our attention could bring happiness or our indifference could bring sadness. Sometimes he will tell a person such things directly, by inspiration. But he will, in addition, tell us these important matters through his servants. . . . He does this so that even those who cannot feel inspiration can know, if they will only listen, that they have been told the truth and been warned.”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “The Family,” *Liahona*, Oct. 1998, 12; *Ensign*, Feb. 1998, 10.

### He Revealeth

How does the Lord communicate with His prophets? There are many ways, including:

- Inspiration through the Holy Ghost (see 2 Peter 1:21).
- Visions and dreams (see Numbers 12:6; 1 Nephi 8:2).
- Visitations by heavenly beings (see Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17; D&C 110:8).



### His Servants the Prophets

“Repeatedly the scriptures declare that the Lord gives His commandments

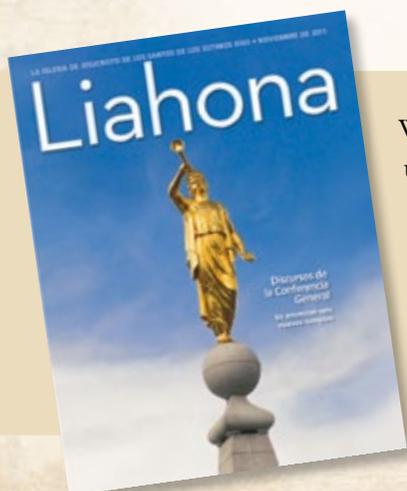
to the children of men through living prophets. No committee, assembly, or any other authority has the right to dictate to Him doctrine that is contrary to His law. God’s eternal blessings are contingent upon our obedience and adherence to the word of the Lord that is revealed to us through His holy prophets.”

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “We Believe All That God Has Revealed,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 88.

city, and the people of the land? shall there be evil in the city, and the LORD hath not done it? 7 Surely the LORD GOD will do nothing, "but he <sup>b</sup>revealeth his 'secret unto his servants the "prophets. 8 The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the LORD GOD hath spoken, who can but "prophet?"

### His Secret

The original Hebrew word used in the Bible for *secret* literally means “counsel,” so it has to do with the Lord’s plans or intentions.

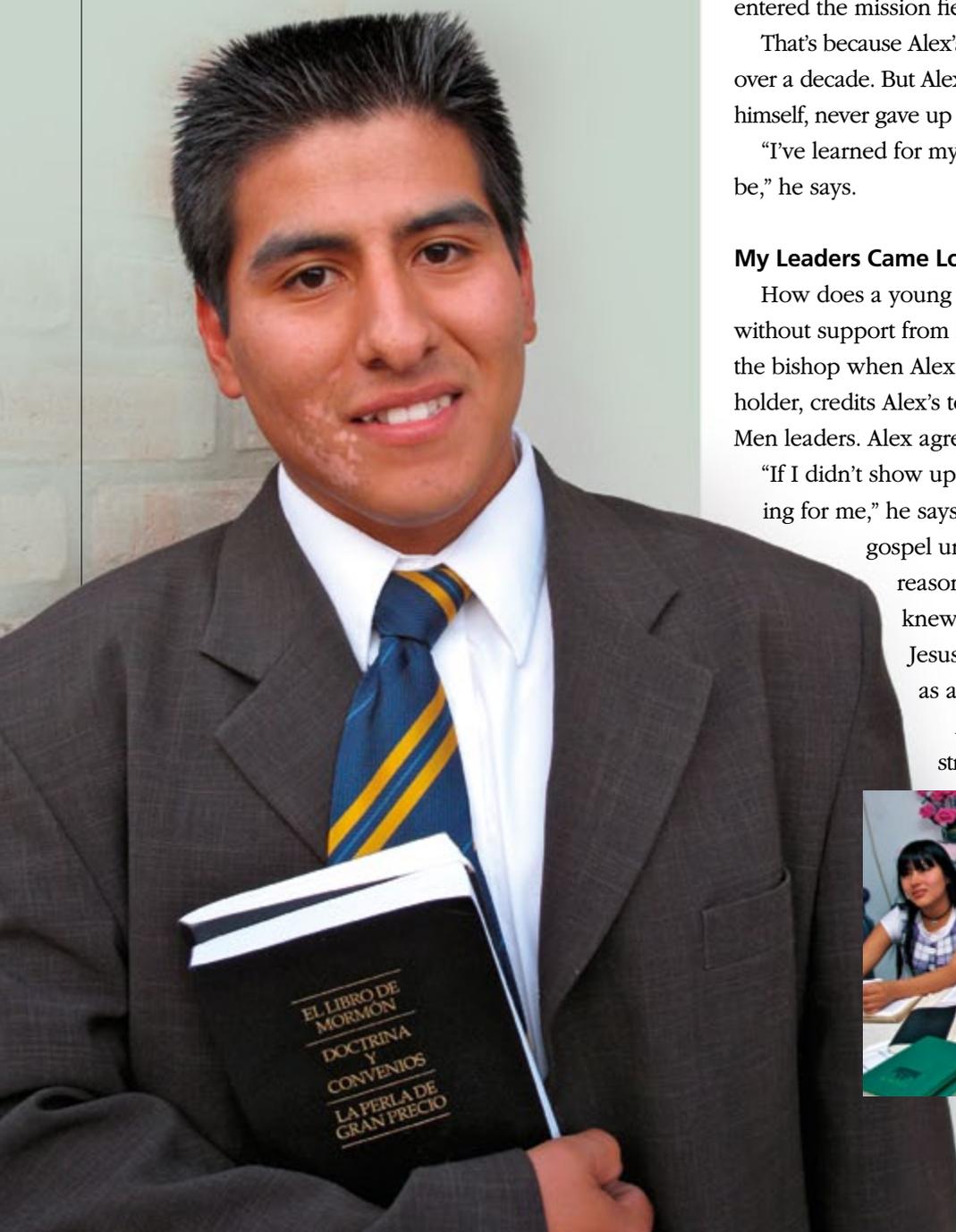


What have living prophets and apostles asked us to do recently? Review the latest general conference (see [conference.lds.org](http://conference.lds.org)) and consider writing in your journal the things you feel prompted to do as a result of what the Lord’s servants have said.

*Editors’ note: This page is not meant to be a comprehensive explanation of the selected scripture verse, only a starting point for your own study.*

# ALEX'S Great

*For Alex Escobar, holding up his light has made an eternal difference for his family.*



**E**ight years ago, when Alex Escobar was a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood, he committed to serve a full-time mission. At the time, he never could have imagined that his father would be his bishop when he entered the mission field.

That's because Alex's father hadn't been to church for over a decade. But Alex, who was then attending church by himself, never gave up on him—or on the rest of his family.

"I've learned for myself how important example can be," he says.

## **My Leaders Came Looking for Me**

How does a young man stay active in the Church without support from his family? Mario Sayas, who was the bishop when Alex was a young Aaronic Priesthood holder, credits Alex's testimony and his dedicated Young Men leaders. Alex agrees.

"If I didn't show up on Sunday, my leaders came looking for me," he says. "Little by little I learned about the gospel until I had a strong testimony. Another reason I kept going to church is that I knew that only through the gospel of Jesus Christ could we be happy forever as a family."

Achieving that goal meant staying strong even when some of his



# Example

church friends in Córdoba, Argentina, wavered.

“There’s a lot of temptation to break the Word of Wisdom and the law of chastity,” says Alex, who drew strength from counsel he received from Bishop Sayas. “He said, ‘The only way to qualify for a worthy wife is to be worthy yourself.’ That has helped me a lot.”

Alex’s testimony was strengthened further following a dream he had in which he was called on a full-time mission. He began preparing but didn’t wait until he was 19 to begin sharing the gospel, starting with his own family.

“Alex always prayed for and encouraged his family,” says Bishop Sayas. “And he would always encourage his older brothers to attend church. The effort to bring his family back succeeded because of Alex.”

## “I Was the Hardheaded One”

When Alex’s father, René, thinks back on the 13 years he spent outside the Church, he laments what he missed.

“Those years were very difficult,” he says. “Sometimes I couldn’t help but think about the time I was losing by not enjoying the marvelous life the gospel offers.”

The Escobar family had joined the Church in Córdoba when Alex was a child. They stayed active until moving back to their native country of Bolivia shortly after Alex’s baptism. While in Bolivia, they forgot “what the gospel means to our lives,” René says.

When they returned to Córdoba two years later, Alex’s mother, Carmen, occasionally attended church with the couple’s four children. But René, an avid football player, spent Sundays sleeping off Saturday’s games and associated activities—activities that often meant breaking the Word of Wisdom.

“I was the hardheaded one,” he says. “At times I thought I was completely lost, which we think when we no longer have the companionship of the Spirit.”

What finally turned René around was the realization that his example was hurting his children. “My sons were like orphans who attended church by themselves because their father was not active,” he recalls.

“I began to examine my life and the effect my example was having on my children,” says René, who is grateful that the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ allowed him to repent. “I realized I wasn’t living up to my responsibilities as a father. All these things helped me remember the Lord, get on my knees, and ask Him to help me return.”

As René’s faithfulness and testimony grew, a series of callings followed. Several years after reembracing the gospel, he received an impression that the Lord had prepared him for an important new calling.

“The result is that my father is my bishop,” Alex said.

## The Importance of Example

While Alex served in the Argentina Resistencia Mission, everyone missed him, but they were grateful he was sharing his example with others. And they’re grateful for having been sealed in the Buenos Aires Argentina Temple in 2009.

“It was Alex who was always working with us and with ward members on our behalf,” Carmen says. “They told us he was always praying for his parents to return to church. We’re grateful he didn’t give up on us.”

Bishop Escobar is happy that Alex is the first missionary he sent into the mission field after being called as bishop. “It’s exciting to have a son serve,” he says. “We all missed Alex, but I’m the one who missed him the most. He is the one who supported me.”

If Latter-day Saints are good examples, Alex says, others will eventually take notice. “If we are happy and content in the Church, others are going to want to partake of our happiness. If we endure and move forward, miracles can occur.” ■

By Elder  
Richard G. Scott  
Of the Quorum of the  
Twelve Apostles



# HOW CAN WE MAKE THE MOST OF TEMPLE ATTENDANCE?

Each member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is blessed to live in a time when the Lord has inspired His prophets to provide significantly increased accessibility to the holy temples.

Because I love you, I am going to speak to you heart to heart, without mincing words. I have seen that many times individuals have made great sacrifices to go to a distant temple. But when a temple is built close by, within a short time, many do not visit it regularly. I have a suggestion: When a temple is conveniently nearby, small things may interrupt your plans to go to the temple. Set specific goals, considering your circumstances, of when you can and will participate in temple ordinances. Then do not allow anything to interfere with that plan. This pattern will guarantee that those who live in the shadow of a temple will be as blessed as are those who plan far ahead and make a long trip to the temple.

I encourage you to establish your own goal of how frequently you will avail yourself of the ordinances offered in our operating temples. What is there that is more important than attending and participating in the ordinances of the temple? What activity could have a greater impact and provide more joy and profound happiness than worshipping in the temple?

Now I share some additional suggestions of how to gain more benefit from temple attendance.

- Understand the doctrine related to temple ordinances, especially the significance of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>
- While participating in temple ordinances, consider your relationship to Jesus Christ and His relationship to our Heavenly Father. This simple act will lead to greater understanding of the supernal nature of the temple ordinances.
- Always prayerfully express gratitude for the incomparable

blessings that flow from temple ordinances. Live each day so as to give evidence to Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son of how very much those blessings mean to you.

- Schedule regular visits to the temple.
- Leave sufficient time to be unhurried within the temple walls.
- Remove your watch when you enter a house of the Lord.
- Listen carefully to the presentation of each element of the ordinance with an open mind and heart.
- Be mindful of the individual for whom you are performing the vicarious ordinance. At times pray that he or she will recognize the vital importance of the ordinances and be worthy or prepare to be worthy to benefit from them.

Sometimes when I hear a choir during a temple dedicatory service, I experience a feeling so sublime that it elevates my heart and mind. I close my eyes, and more than once, in my mind, I have seen an inverted cone of



individuals beginning at the temple and rising upward. I have felt that they represent many spirits waiting for the vicarious work to be done for them in that sanctuary, rejoicing because finally there is a place that can free them from the chains that hold them back in their eternal progress. In order to achieve this end, you will need to do the vicarious work. You will need to identify your ancestors. The new FamilySearch program

makes the effort easier than before. It is necessary to identify those ancestors, qualify them, and come to the house of the Lord to perform the ordinances they are longing to receive.

What a joy it is to be able to participate in the work of a temple! ■

*From an April 2009 general conference address.*

**NOTE**

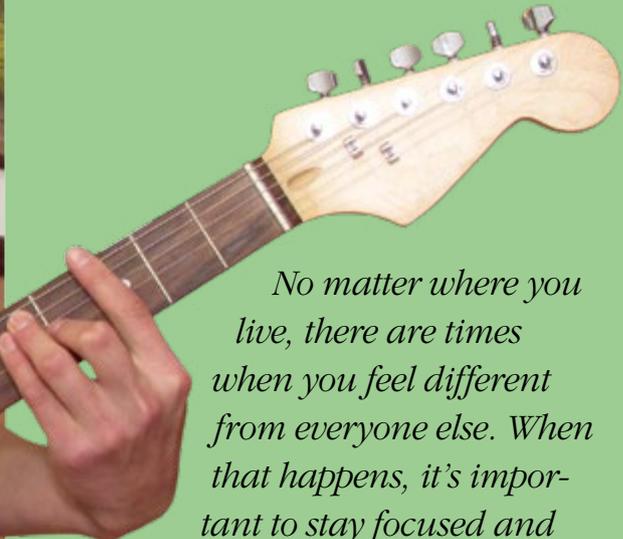
1. Studying sections 88, 109, 131, and 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants would be a good place to begin.

***What activity could have a greater impact and provide more joy and profound happiness than worshipping in the temple?***



# ALONE BUT **NOT ALONE**

By **Joshua J. Perkey**  
Church Magazines



*No matter where you live, there are times when you feel different from everyone else. When that happens, it's important to stay focused and do what's right.*

**J**uan Cabrera, an 18-year-old from Cuenca, Ecuador, knows what it's like to be different. He's one of only a handful of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in a city of around 500,000 people, and the pressures to give in to temptation are pretty high. But Juan knows that there is a source of strength greater than any temptation.



## Developing Focus

Juan's parents taught him as a child to follow standards that bless his life. These helped him grow and develop his talents. "Since I was little, I set goals in Primary and Young Men to learn instruments," he explains. "I play the violin, flute, piano, and now the guitar. I like the guitar most of all."

Juan also set personal fitness goals based on *Fulfilling My Duty to God*. Over the years he has studied taekwon do, swimming, and gymnastics, and he was even on his school's running team.

"I love to learn. That's why I always took the challenge to learn a new instrument or sport, to learn something more," he says.

These goals also supported a larger objective. "Everything I've done, all that I have studied, all the physical preparation, all the goals I've set—everything has been with the object of going on a mission," he explains. "And going on a mission is just part of another goal: to be sealed in the temple and become a good husband."

## Learning to Say No

Even with such deep focus, Juan knows that it's not easy to stay on target. A few years ago he gained a lot of strength from older young men in his ward. But most of them have moved or have started attending elders quorum, leaving Juan with

few Church friends to support him when things got hard. During those times, Juan sought strength from his parents and siblings—and from his Heavenly Father.

"You feel a little alone sometimes because you have different standards, a different way of living, of treating other people, of seeking different things in life. But the truth is," Juan adds confidently, "you are never alone. We always have prayer, and we can always draw closer to our Heavenly Father. I have always prayed to have the strength to do what's right, to have the courage to stand up to my friends when they do things that aren't right.

"And you know what?" he continues. "Sometimes my friends have told me they admire my example and the strength I have to say no."

## Standing Firm

Some of the temptations that Juan faced were easy to reject. He could easily say no when a friend would invite him to drink alcohol. That was a clear violation of the commandments.

"But there are times when the temptations are more subtle," Juan explains. "As it says in the scriptures, sometimes it's disguised [see Matthew 7:15]. The temptations can appear as though they are nothing bad because they don't appear to break a specific commandment. That's when you have to pray to be aware of what's going

on so that you don't get confused. The Spirit has helped me understand this many times when something is wrong or when people are trying to get me to do bad things."

As Juan prepares for his mission, he has made some new friends in the Church who support him.

"I'm an example for other youth now, and this has been a blessing for me," he says. "It helps me understand that the effort to be strong, to be faithful, is worth it." ■



*Top: Juan with his family. Above: One of the four rivers that flow through Cuenca.*

By Stephanie Gudmundsson

# MY EVERY DAY TESTIMONY

*My testimony comes from living the gospel day by day and not from one miracle moment.*

When I was growing up, I always looked for a miracle moment to prove to myself

I had a testimony. I would hear story after story about miraculous moments when people learned without a doubt the gospel is true. The stories ranged from standing up to temptation or danger, to leading hundreds of people to the Church through small and simple acts, to times when the scriptures would flip open to answer life's dilemmas. My favorite stories were about someone headed home at night, bypassing a danger unknown to them until the next day. I heard stories about miraculous healings or angels protecting people. I could hardly wait until it was my turn to have such a moment. I expected to see angels and lights that would tell me I had a testimony of the Church.

My parents taught me to pray, go to church, read the scriptures, dress modestly, live a clean life free from worldly influences, and trust in the Lord. I had the confidence to live right.

I just wanted to be able to prove I had a testimony and have someone notice me for it.

In family home evenings or in Sunday School, we would practice lines that would help us stand up to peer pressure. I couldn't wait to use these lines. For example, I imagined hanging out with my friends. Someone would pull out some alcohol and pass it around. The beer can would be handed to me, and all eyes would be looking in my direction. The pressure would mount. I would stand up and say, "No! I am a Mormon, and I don't drink!" All the kids would be in awe. No amount of their persuasion would convince me. Soon the party would disperse, and someone special in the crowd would tell me I had impressed him so much with my firm stance that he wanted to learn more about my church. Angels would sing praises, and I would be filled with light.

It never happened. No one ever tempted me like that. They seemed to already know my standards by the way I lived. To my disappointment, my "glory moment" never came to pass.

But now I know that having a testimony does not have to come from angels appearing. My testimony comes from living the gospel day by day, feeling the witness of the Holy Ghost, and enjoying the simple blessings that come from obedience.

I know who I am. I know God loves me. I know the Savior atoned for my sins. This is my testimony. Knowing this brings me peace of mind.

I can't say I have had a miraculous moment when I knew the Church was true, but I am happy to know I *do* have a testimony. So, until that moment when angels appear to me, I am going to be satisfied with living a pretty normal life with the simple blessing of knowing the gospel is true. ■



## AN INSPIRING SCRIPTURE

- Whenever my mother wants to give us an inspiring message from the scriptures, she quotes Alma 37:37. She has shared it so many times that when she begins to read it, we say it with her because we have it memorized.
- I often wondered why she keeps sharing that with us—yes, we know already that we have to pray and be thankful in our daily lives. But what touched my heart most was when I finally realized that my mom just wants us to never forget that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ are always watching over us.

Every time I'm in the midst of trials and tribulation, I never forget to read that scripture. I always remember how loving Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ are. I need to be thankful for all my blessings. I will always remember how my mom changed my perspective on praying and being thankful even in trials.

Hannah M., Philippines

## WHY I AM SERVING A MISSION

Missionary work is great!

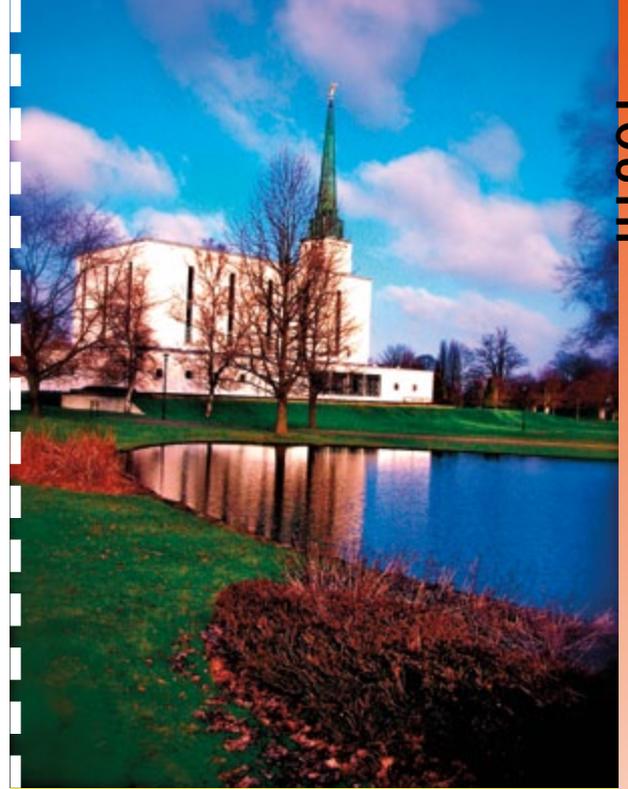
One of the reasons I decided to serve a mission is because of a missionary assigned to my branch at home. One time I asked him, "Elder, why did you serve a mission and leave your work and family?"

He answered, "Brother, there are two reasons I went on a mission. First, I love God. Second, I love the people who have not yet heard about the gospel of Jesus Christ."

(See Mosiah 28:3.)

Because of that missionary, I am now serving a mission.

Elder Perez, Philippines  
Baguio Mission



I took this photo of the London England Temple when my family went there with my brother as he received his endowment before going on a mission. I was so proud to see my brother go to the temple.

As they were in the temple, I walked around the peaceful grounds, focusing on Heavenly Father. You don't necessarily have to be inside the temple to feel close to the Lord. I reflected on how beautiful the Lord's house is and how I can't wait to one day receive the blessings of the temple.

Seeing the joy on my brother's face as he came out of the temple was a testimony-strengthening experience. I felt of his love for the Savior and could tell that temple blessings are like no others.

This stunning picture reminds me of this special day and helps me focus on doing what's right. I framed the picture and hung it in my bedroom so I can be constantly reminded of the importance of living worthy to one day enter the Lord's house and receive my own endowment.

I uploaded the photo onto my Facebook page, and I have received so much positive feedback from others. Everybody who sees this picture just loves it, and it has even generated opportunities to tell people about the gospel.

Emily M., England

*Who could I share the gospel with? I had just the person in mind.*

# TRUE JOY

By Melissa Lewis

**A**nd if it so be that you should . . . bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!” (D&C 18:15).

As my bishop read this verse, my heart jumped. I could see myself at the baptism of someone I had introduced to the gospel. My friend would be so happy, and everyone would know that my friend was going to be baptized because of me. My joy would be great.

Angela’s name instantly came to mind. She was my best friend, and she needed the gospel. I was certain that hearing the gospel and knowing she was a daughter of God would help answer her questions and build her up.

The next day I asked, “Hey, Ang, my church is having a barbecue on Saturday. Would you like to go?”

“Sure,” she responded, “that sounds like fun.”

She attended, and over the months, I continued to invite her to every Church activity I could think of. After every activity I would ask her, “So, Ang, what do you think?” This led to discussions about eternal principles. I

was happy. Any day I would be able to reap the blessings Heavenly Father had promised.

On a winter night just before Christmas, Angela and I decided to take a walk around the Washington D.C. Temple. The Holy Ghost encompassed us as we walked, and I knew she could feel something.

“So how do you feel?” I asked.

“I feel like I want to be baptized. . . . Wait,” she cautioned when she saw the excitement in my face. “I can’t be baptized now, and I can’t have the missionaries come and visit me. My parents would never allow it. But will you teach me everything you know?”

Taken back, I answered humbly, “Yes, I’ll try to teach you everything I know.”

Later that night I thought about the promise I had made. Everything I knew? But what if I didn’t know enough? Was my testimony strong enough? Did I really know the gospel was true?

I decided I would start the very next day to learn everything I could about the gospel, to gain a real testimony of its truthfulness.

With vigor I started reading the scriptures every night. My prayers became more heartfelt as I pleaded for both Angela



ILLUSTRATION BY JULIE ROGERS



and me to know the gospel was true.

Slowly the results came. In our discussions I was sometimes led by the Spirit to say things that I hadn't thought of until that moment. My testimony grew stronger as I bore it. The scriptures became real to me.

My parents were there to help me. They were a valuable resource, and I learned to love and appreciate them more.

Five years later Angela still isn't a member of the Church. If I judged myself according to my eighth-grade expectations, I failed. I did not sit at a baptism and receive the "joy" of everyone's praise as the one who had brought a friend to the gospel. However, my expectations have changed. I have brought my own soul closer to God. Even if Angela never joins the Church, the studying and teaching I did were not in vain. She learned more about the gospel, and sharing it with her converted me. And it helped me to be more effective in sharing it with others.

The joy promised in the Doctrine and Covenants does not mean worldly praise. My joy is great because I know my Savior better and have gained a strong testimony of His gospel. ■

# The BEST Football



*“Jesus said love ev’ryone; treat them kindly, too” (Children’s Songbook, 61).*

**By Angie Bergstrom Miller**

Based on a true story

**I** clenched my fists, bit my lip, and kicked the ball that was rolling toward me. Then I frowned as I watched it soar out of bounds instead of going into the goal.

A girl named Nan had been standing by the fence watching our game. She ran to pick up the ball, tripping in her excitement. Everyone laughed. No one thanked her as she threw the ball back to us.

I felt guilty. I knew Nan wanted

to play, but I didn’t want to be the one to invite her.

Nan was quiet, with messy brown hair, thick glasses, and a squeaky voice. She didn’t have one friend in our whole class. It wasn’t that I didn’t like her. I had just never talked to her.

That afternoon our teacher announced that she was going to move our desks around. She would make a new seating chart.

The room buzzed with excitement. My best friend, LeAnna, and I smiled at each other.

Just then Caroline leaned toward me. “I heard Nan tell Mrs. Martin she wants to sit by you. Gross!”

I sat in shock. “Why me?” I wondered. I had never been mean to Nan, but I had never been nice to her either.

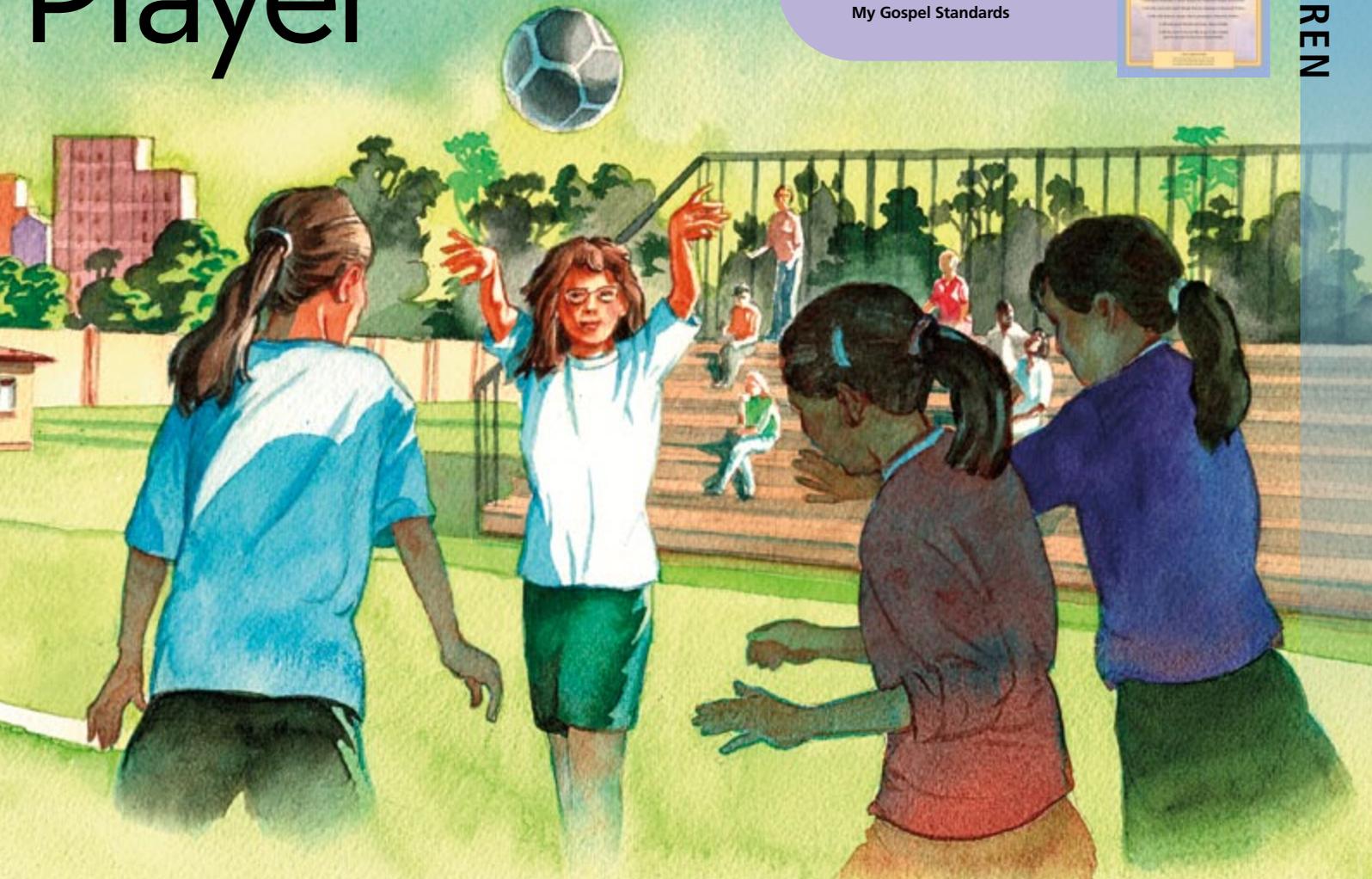
“Tell the teacher you don’t want to sit by her,” Caroline whispered. “Otherwise no one will want to sit by you.”

I looked at Nan. Her head was lowered. She must have known what everyone in the room was thinking.

# Player

"I will seek good friends and treat others kindly."

My Gospel Standards



Mrs. Martin called me up to her desk. I knew Nan was a child of God and that Jesus said to love everyone. But if I became friends with Nan, everyone would think I was weird.

"Who do you want to sit by?" Mrs. Martin asked me.

"LeAnna," I said. That was easy. Mrs. Martin smiled. "Would you be willing to sit by Nan too?"

I looked down at the floor and whispered, "I'd rather not."

Mrs. Martin looked surprised. "Are you sure, Angie?"

"Yes," I muttered.

The next day our desks were rearranged. I sat by LeAnna. Nan was across the room. The two girls sitting by her pushed their desks away from hers so it looked like she was sitting alone. She looked like she was going to cry.

A few weeks later Nan changed schools. A girl in my ward went to that school, and I asked her if she had met a new girl named Nan.

"I think so. What does she look like?" she asked.

"Well, she's really quiet. Her hair is

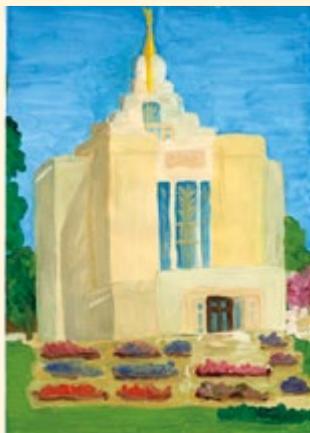
messy, and she wears thick glasses. No one in my class liked her."

"Really? It must not be the same girl," she said. "The new girl I know is really fun. Everyone likes her. She's a great football player."

I thought about the day Nan had watched us playing football. She only needed a chance and a friend. And I could have given her both.

That day I made a promise to myself to always be nice to everyone and never let a girl like Nan slip by me without trying to be her friend. ■

# Our Page



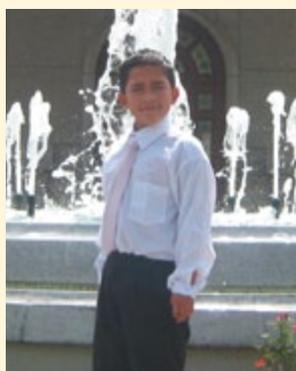
Nastya L., age 12, Ukraine



Tina M., age 10, Congo

## HOW HAS FOLLOWING THE PROPHET MADE YOU HAPPY?

**T**ell us how following President Thomas S. Monson's teachings has made you happy. (You can read or listen to his latest general conference talks in the November 2011 *Liahona* or at [conference.lds.org](http://conference.lds.org).) Submit your response at [liahona.lds.org](http://liahona.lds.org) (click "Submit Material") or e-mail your response to [liahona@ldschurch.org](mailto:liahona@ldschurch.org), with "Follow the Prophet" in the subject line. Please include your full name, age, country of residence, and parent's permission.



## THE SPIRIT CAUSED MY HEART TO BURN

**I** love going to church. I feel the Spirit there. One day in

Primary we talked about the modern

prophets. Later I was watching the movie *Legacy* at home, and I liked the story of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Watching the scene when a man gives the news of the Prophet's death, I felt really sad. Then the Spirit caused my heart to burn, and I felt that Joseph Smith was truly a prophet of God and that he restored the true Church.

In January I was at the temple in Guayaquil, Ecuador, with many of my family members. I felt so much peace and happiness that I did not want to go home when it was time to go.

I know that Heavenly Father lives and loves us, that Jesus is the way to return to Him, and that Joseph Smith was a prophet.

**Aron C., age 10, Colombia**

## PAYING TITHING MAKES ME HAPPY

**I** help my father clean our house, and I receive money every month for helping.

Instead of spending all my money, I set aside 10 percent for tithing and give it to the bishop. I feel good after I pay my tithing because I know the money goes to take care of the chapel and to buy books and many other things. I know that Jesus Christ gave us everything, and when we pay tithing, we give back to Him. I feel happy when I pay my tithing.

**Nicholas P., age 5, Brazil**

*I love to go to the temple, and I can't wait until I turn 12 so I can receive the priesthood and go to the temple to perform baptisms for the dead.*

**Humberto V., age 11, Mexico**



# CHOOSE the Light



By Elder  
Gerrit W. Gong  
Of the Seventy



*“If your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you” (D&C 88:67).*

**W**hen I was a little boy, I was sometimes afraid of the dark. I often heard strange sounds at night. Before I went to bed, I would lock all the doors and check under my bed. I looked in my closet too. I wasn't sure what I was afraid

of, but I still felt fearful sometimes.

As I learned to pray, I felt great comfort and peace. I noticed a feeling of light, and I knew that I would be safe and well.

One of my earliest memories is also of light. When I was young, my brother and I were sealed to our mother and father in the Salt Lake Temple. I remember my family and others dressed in white, the great light in the temple, and the peace I felt that day.

Even though these are memories from years ago, I remember what it is like to be afraid in the dark and the joy I felt in the light of the temple. When we seek to live the gospel, we are filled with light, and there can be no darkness in us. Light and faith do not coexist with darkness and fear. When we are filled with light, we feel happy and peaceful and safe. I hope we can always choose the light. ■

You can use this lesson and activity to learn more about this month's Primary theme.

# Living Prophets Teach Me to Choose the Right

**C**ristina watched President Thomas S. Monson on the screen in her stake center during general conference. He was talking about being kind to others. Cristina had a warm feeling as she listened. She knew President Monson was a prophet of God. She thought about Leah, a girl at school who was unkind

to her. She decided she would be nice to Leah and try to be her friend. Cristina wanted to follow the prophet's teachings.

Before Jesus Christ was crucified, He called the Apostle Peter to lead His Church. Peter received revelation for the Church and led the people of Christ in the right paths.

Today, President Thomas S. Monson leads the Church, just as Peter did.

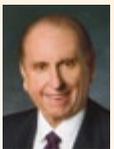
Listen carefully when the prophet speaks. His teachings can help you with problems and challenges you may have. He will always lead you down the right paths, and you will be blessed when you follow him. ■

## CTR GAME: GETTING TO KNOW OUR CHURCH LEADERS

**T**he Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is led by 15 living prophets. The President of the Church, his two counselors in the First Presidency, and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are all prophets. Can you match the pictures of the First Presidency and Twelve Apostles to their names? Cut out the podium on page 65

and the pictures below and mount them on heavy paper. Cut slits in the chairs where shown and put the General Authorities in their correct chairs.

When you watch general conference and one of these men gives a talk, you can move his picture from his chair to the podium.





Henry B. Eyring  
First Counselor



Thomas S. Monson  
President



Dieter F. Uchtdorf  
Second Counselor



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

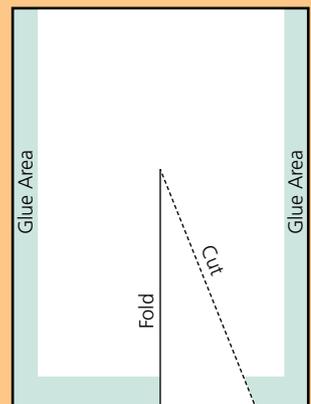


Neil L. Andersen

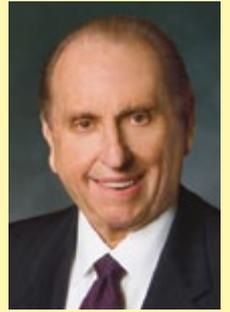


## JUST YOU

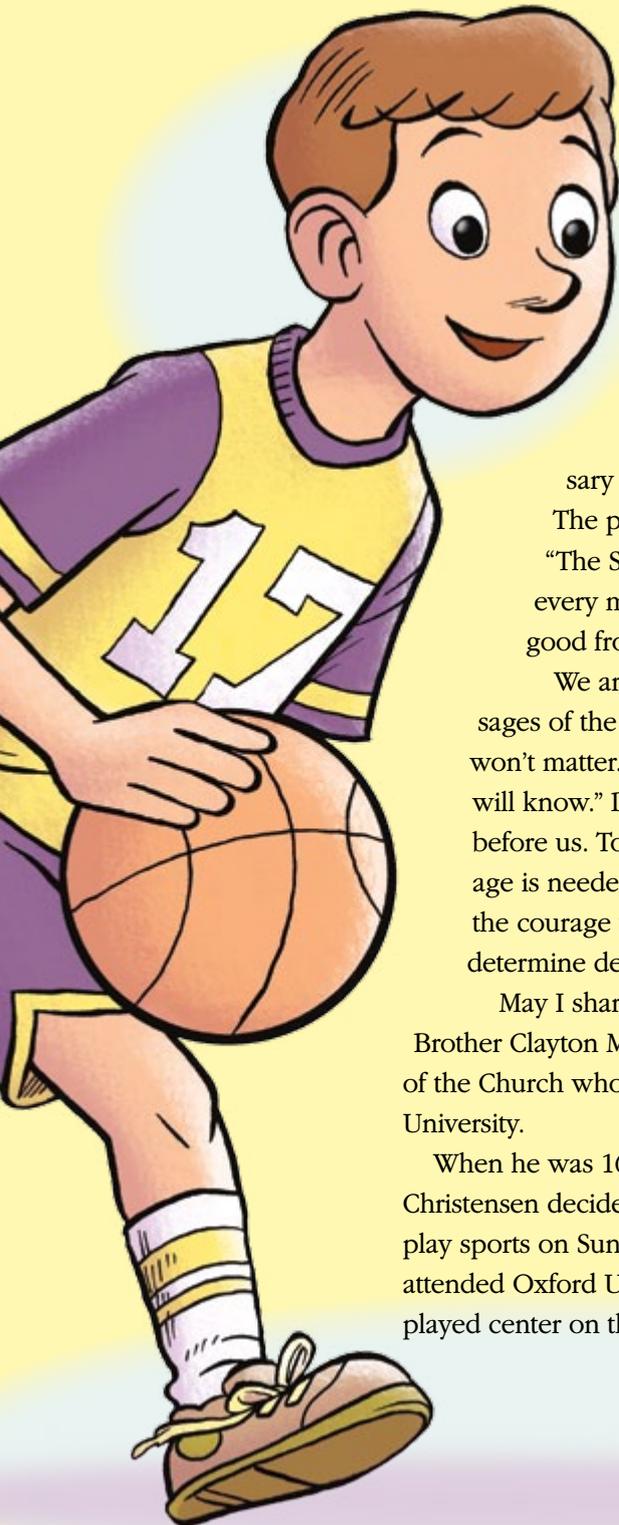
You can make a frame to hold the picture of President Thomas S. Monson. Cut out the picture, frame, and frame back. Mount them on heavy paper. Fold and cut along the lines on the frame back. Glue the sides and bottom of the frame to the frame back. Slide in the picture of President Monson.



# Decide RIGHT NOW



By President  
Thomas S. Monson



**I** am so grateful to a loving Heavenly Father for His gift of agency, or the right to choose.

Each of us has come to this earth with all the tools necessary to make correct choices.

The prophet Mormon tells us, “The Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil” (Moroni 7:16).

We are surrounded by the messages of the adversary: “Just this once won’t matter.” “Don’t worry; no one will know.” Decisions are constantly before us. To make them wisely, courage is needed—the courage to say no, the courage to say yes. Decisions do determine destiny.

May I share with you an example of Brother Clayton M. Christensen, a member of the Church who is a professor at Harvard University.

When he was 16 years old, Brother Christensen decided that he would not play sports on Sunday. Years later, when he attended Oxford University in England, he played center on the basketball team. That

year they had an undefeated season and went to the championship tournament.

They won their games fairly easily in the tournament, making it to the finals. Then Brother Christensen looked at the schedule and saw that the final game was on a Sunday. He went to his coach with his dilemma. His coach told Brother Christensen he expected him to play in the game.

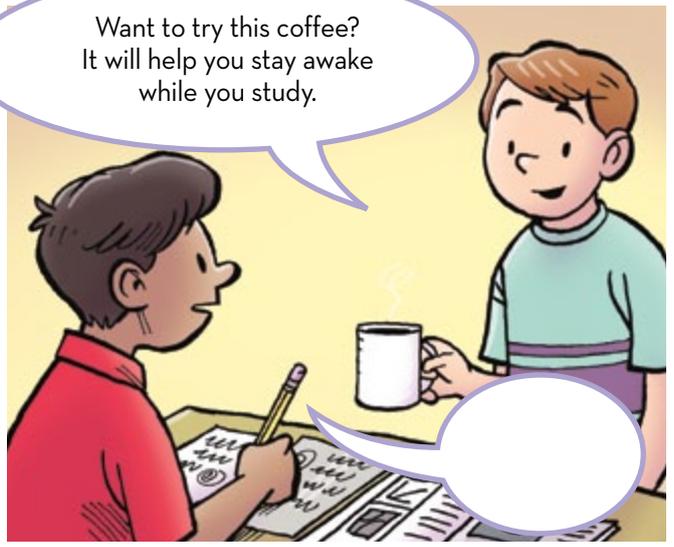
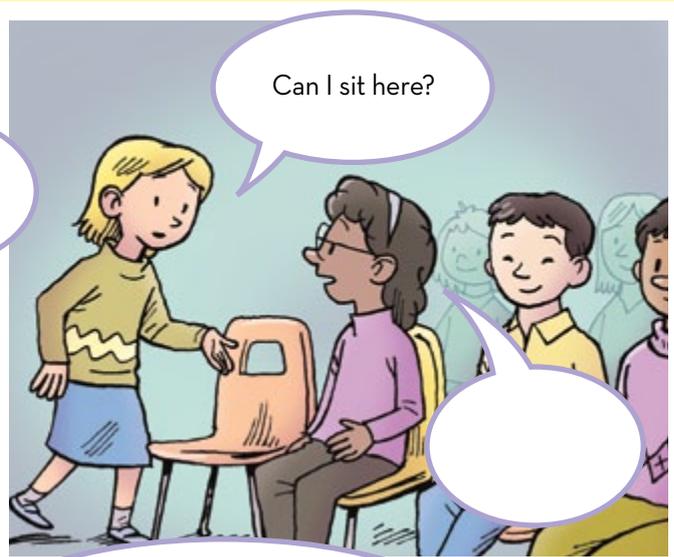
Brother Christensen went to his hotel room. He knelt down. He asked his Heavenly Father if it would be all right, just this once, if he played that game on Sunday. He said that before he had finished praying, he received the answer: “Clayton, what are you even asking me for? You know the answer.”

He went to his coach, telling him how sorry he was that he wouldn’t be playing in the final game. Then he went to his Sunday meetings.

Brother Christensen learned that it is easier to keep the commandments 100 percent of the time than it is 98 percent of the time.

I plead with you to make a determination right now not to deviate from the path which will lead to our goal: eternal life with our Father in Heaven. ■

*From an October 2010 general conference address.*



**YES OR NO?**

**P**resident Monson says it takes courage to say yes to good choices and no to bad ones. For each situation above, write either *yes* or *no* to show a courageous answer.

**100 PERCENT PUZZLE**

**P**resident Monson says it's easier to choose the right 100 percent of the time instead of choosing the right some times but not other times. Fill in the numbers to make each column and row add up to 100. Each missing number ends with either 0 or 5.

45	5		20
10		15	
30		25	5
	20	30	

# Abu Learns Honesty

By Ann P. Smith

Based on a true story

**A**bu sat outside watching people walk by on the street in front of his house.

Abu was very hungry. Marian, a woman who was selling sweet biscuits, was near him, walking back and forth in the street. The biscuits looked delicious in their brightly colored wrappers. Marian carried them in a pan on her head. Abu really wanted a package of those biscuits. He knew they would be very good.

Marian stopped and set the biscuits down right in front of Abu.

"She knows I am hungry and has put the biscuits here for me!" he thought. He quickly picked up a package of biscuits.

Just then, his father saw him. "Abu, what do you have?" he asked.

"Papa, I'm so hungry! I need some biscuits," Abu said.

Papa gently took Abu into his arms. "Abu, I want you to have some biscuits," he said. "But you cannot take things from other people without asking or paying for them. Did you ask Marian if you could have some of her biscuits?"

*"Honesty should start with me in all I say, in all I do"*  
(Children's Songbook, 149).

"No," Abu said, looking at the ground.

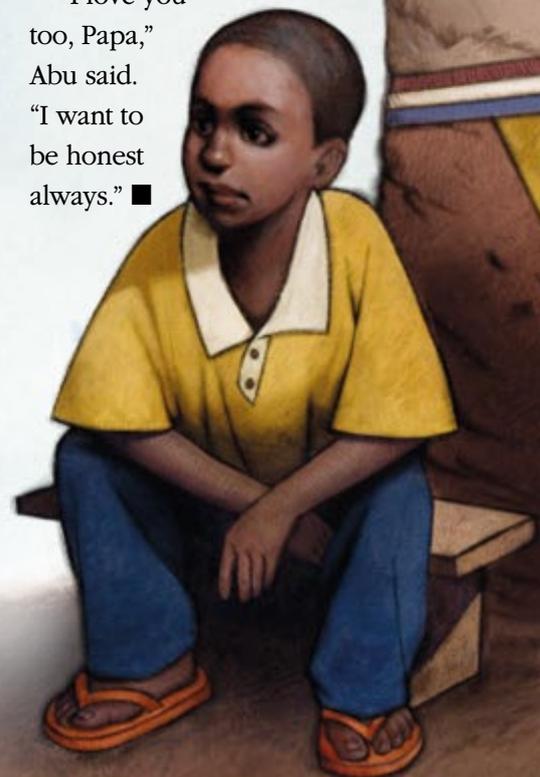
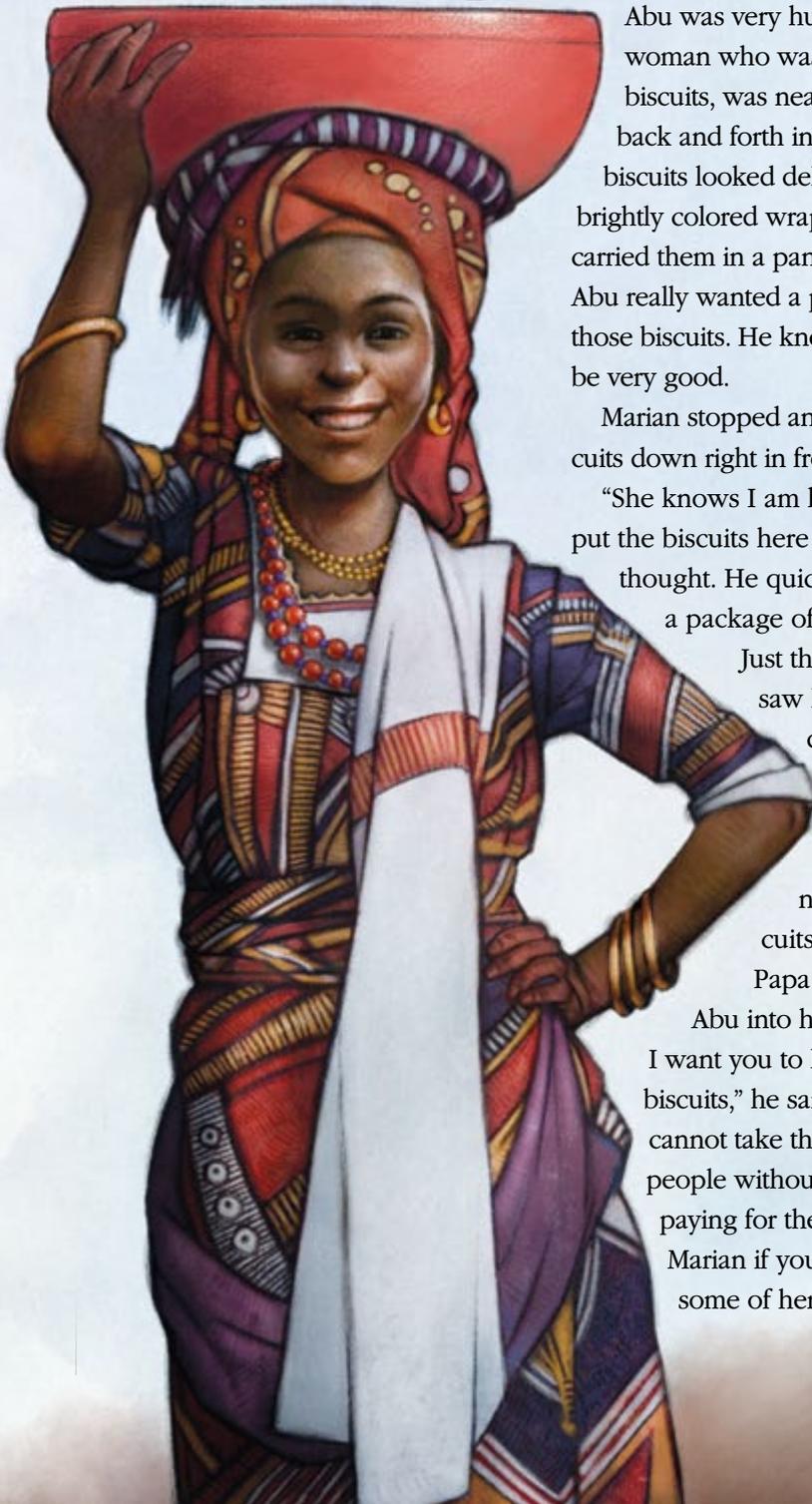
"Let's give Marian back this large package of biscuits, and I will buy you a small package. I want you to learn to be honest. Do you know what that means?"

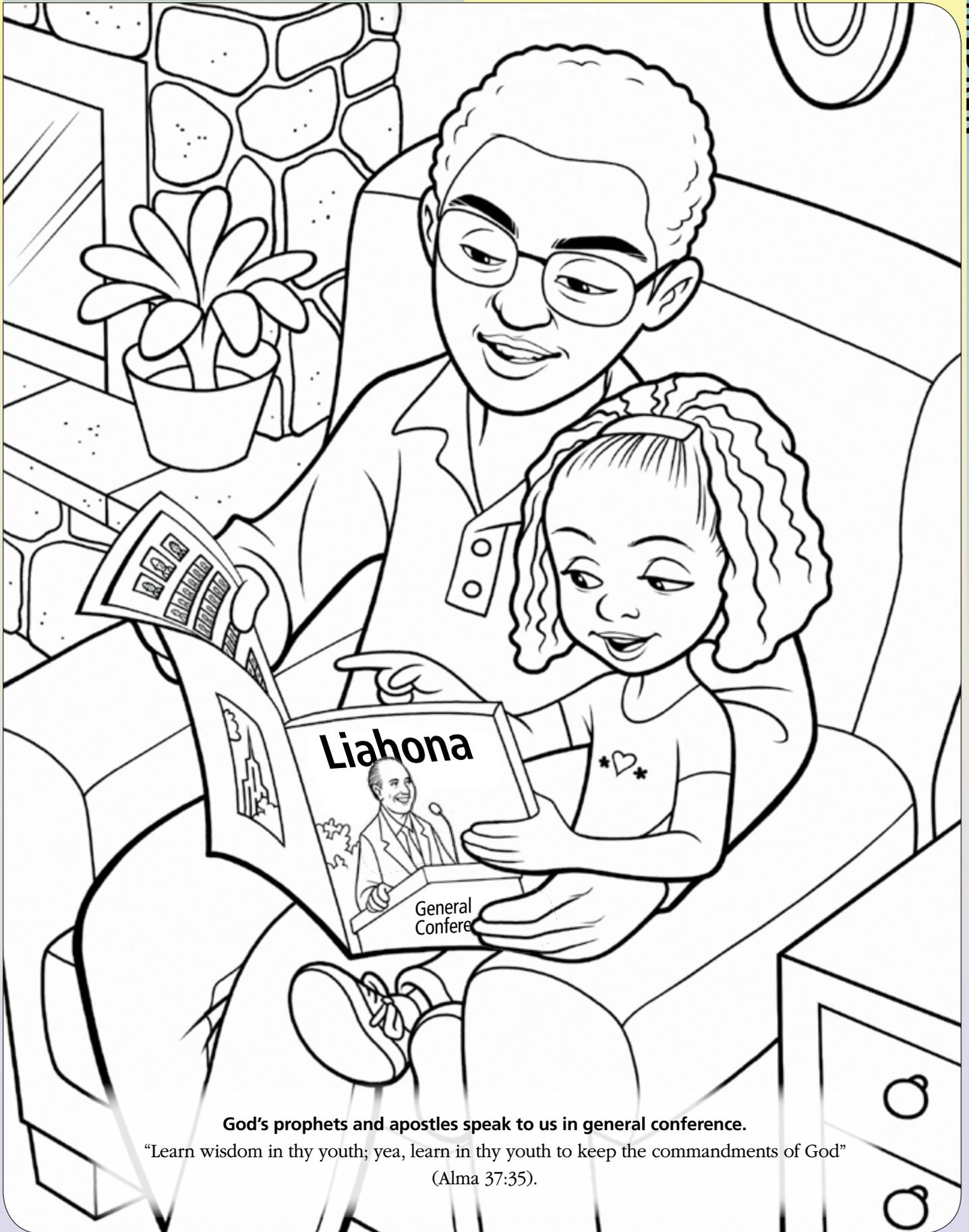
"Tell me, Papa," Abu said.

"It means to do the right thing," Papa said. "It means to pay for things instead of stealing. It means to tell the truth instead of lying. It means to do what you say you will do. So we will pay Marian for a package of her biscuits. Marian needs the money to buy food for her children. I love you, Abu, and Heavenly Father loves you too. And He is happy when you do the right thing."

"I love you too, Papa," Abu said.

"I want to be honest always." ■





**God's prophets and apostles speak to us in general conference.**

"Learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God"

(Alma 37:35).

# Feeling the Holy Ghost

By Chad E. Phares

Based on a true story

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

1.

Benson, where are you? It's time for bed.

I don't want to go to bed.

2.

Why not?

Because there is a ghost in my room.

4.

Dad, what is the Holy Ghost?

3.

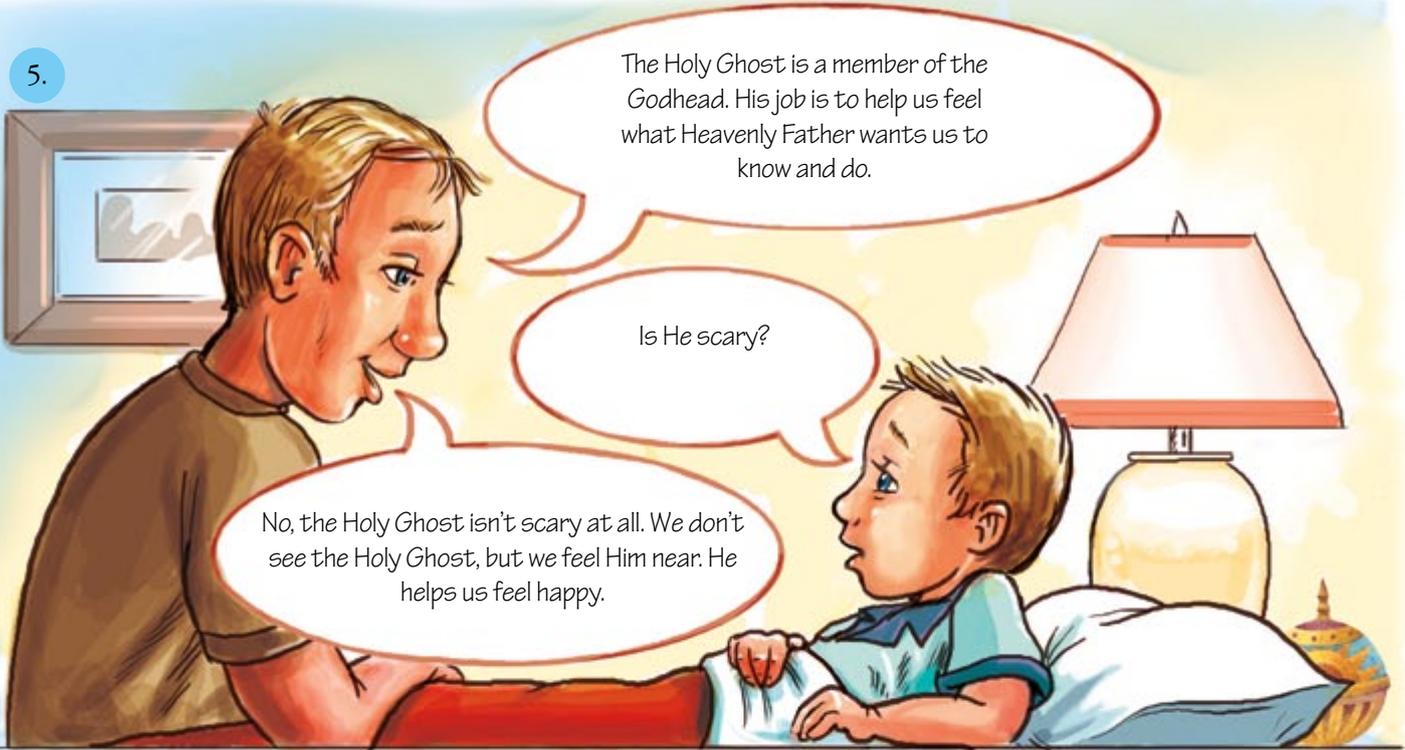
There is not a ghost in your room.

Are you sure?

I promise.

That's a good question.

5.



The Holy Ghost is a member of the Godhead. His job is to help us feel what Heavenly Father wants us to know and do.

Is He scary?

No, the Holy Ghost isn't scary at all. We don't see the Holy Ghost, but we feel Him near. He helps us feel happy.

6.



All right, now close your eyes. It's time to go to sleep. I love you.

I love you too. And I think I feel the Holy Ghost.

**Helps for Parents:** Talk with your children about some of the ways they can feel the influence of the Holy Ghost. Ask them how they feel when they choose the right and do things that invite the Holy Ghost to be near.

## INVITING THE SPIRIT

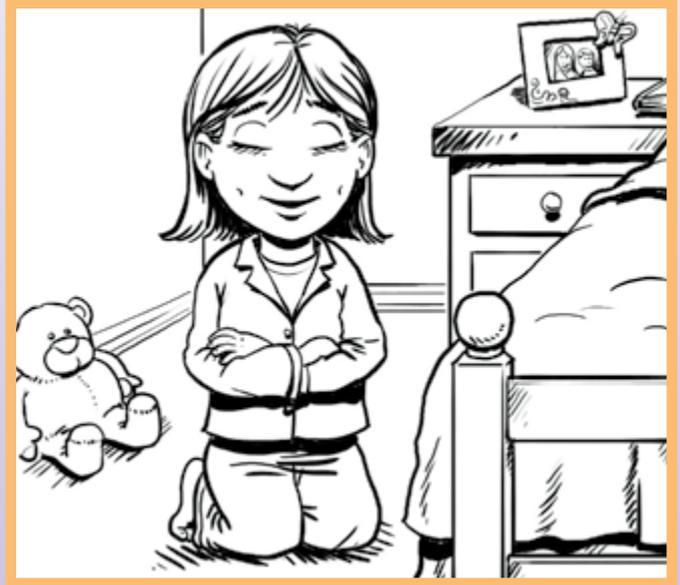
By Hilary Watkins Lemon

**Y**ou can do many things to invite the Holy Ghost to be with you. The pictures below show four ideas. Pick one idea and make an extra effort to do

it. Then tell someone about how you felt as you did it. Color the picture for that idea and then try the next one.



1. Sharing



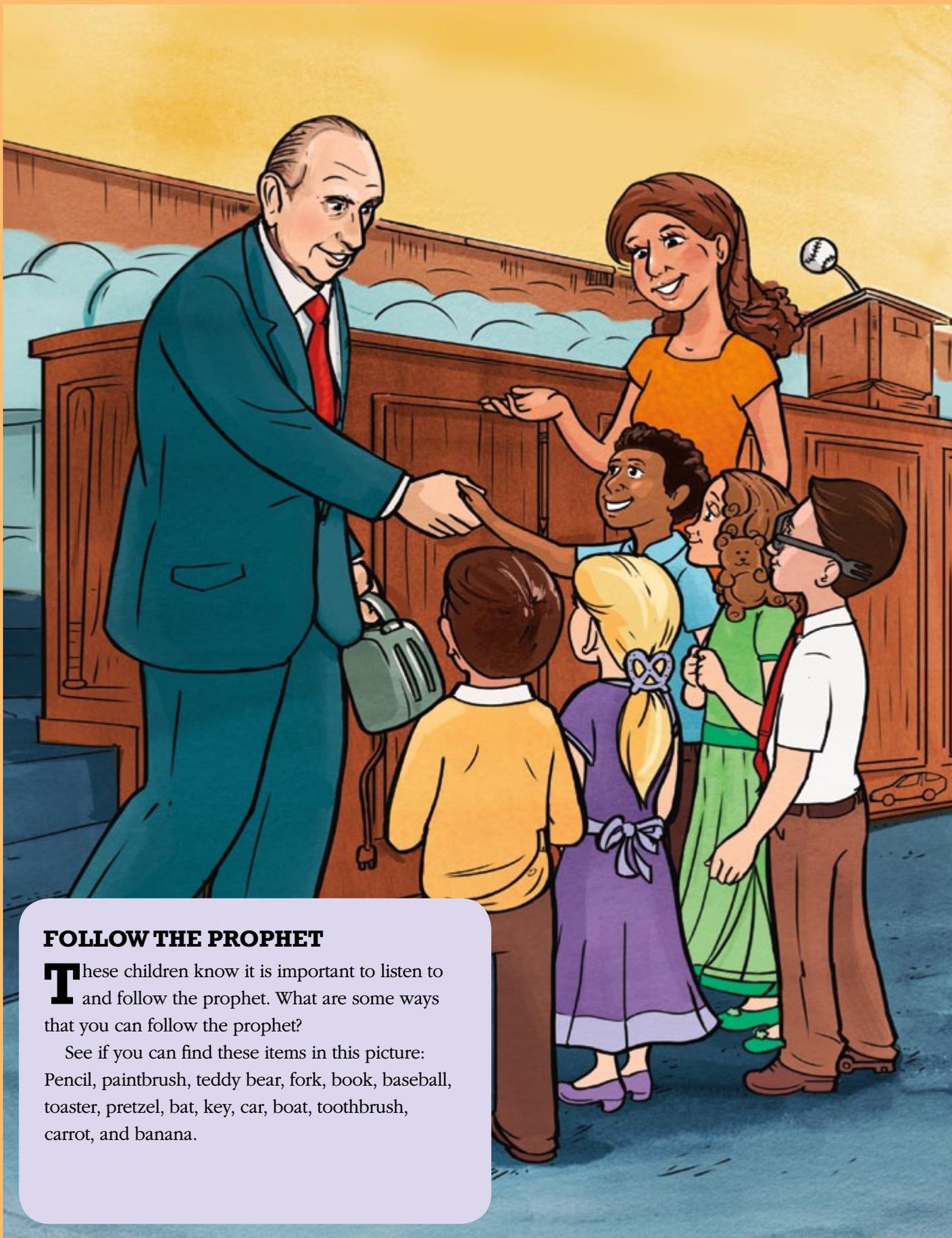
2. Praying



3. Helping



4. Singing



### FOLLOW THE PROPHET

**T**hese children know it is important to listen to and follow the prophet. What are some ways that you can follow the prophet?

See if you can find these items in this picture: Pencil, paintbrush, teddy bear, fork, book, baseball, toaster, pretzel, bat, key, car, boat, toothbrush, carrot, and banana.

# News of the Church

Visit [news.lds.org](http://news.lds.org) for more Church news and events.

## Fund Helps Members Worldwide Receive Temple Blessings

By Heather Whittle Wrigley

Church News and Events

Since the time he entered the Manila Philippines Temple in July 2001, just before leaving for his mission to Singapore, Riaz Gill of Pakistan knew that he wanted to return to the temple so he could have an eternal family.

In 2007, his wife, Farah, was baptized, but funds were tight and they didn't know when they would be able to make the trip to the temple, more than 3,500 miles (5,700 km) away. With the birth of their son, Ammon Phinehas, in 2009, their desire to be sealed in the

***Riaz Gill, his wife, Farah, and son, Ammon Phinehas, were able to attend the Manila Philippines Temple and be sealed as a family in 2010, thanks to the Church's General Temple Patron Assistance Fund.***

temple grew even stronger, and late in 2010, with help from the Church's General Temple Patron Assistance Fund, their prayers were answered.

"Going to the temple with my family has helped to make my testimony stronger," Brother Gill said. "After our temple visit, it seems like I have more to give to the Lord. . . . The temple visit was so good and faith-promoting, it is hard to express in words."

While there, Brother Gill was also able to perform ordinances for his father, grandfather, and father-in-law, who have all passed away. He had the work done for his mother, and he was sealed to his parents.

"It has been a great privilege for me and my family to visit the temple," he said. "I want to give my special thanks with a lot of prayers to the leaders who made this temple trip possible."

Since 1992 the fund, sustained 100 percent by member contributions, has been a way to provide a one-time visit to the temple for members living outside of the United States and Canada who otherwise would not be able to go. Members wishing to donate to

the fund simply write "Temple Patron Fund" on the "Other" section of the normal contribution slip. Individuals can also donate to the fund through LDS Philanthropies.

During general conference in October 2011, President Thomas S. Monson encouraged members to contribute to the General Temple Patron Assistance Fund saying, "There are still areas of the world where temples are so distant from our members that they cannot afford the travel required to get to them. They are thus unable to partake of the sacred and eternal blessings temples provide" ("As We Meet Again," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 4–5).

"The intent of this fund was to help those clearly in parts of the world where it would be more challenging to attend the temple," said Elder William R. Walker, Executive Director of the Temple Department. "The one-time provision is to provide for an individual to receive his or her own ordinances."

Some of the greatest demand, Elder Walker said, comes from Africa, the Pacific, and Asia. Stake presidents and mission



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF RIAZ GILL

presidents make recommendations to their Area Presidency, which administers the fund on a country-by-country basis.

During 2009 and 2010, approximately 4,000 members used the fund to travel to a temple for the first—and possibly the only—time.

Elder Walker said that in order to bless as many lives as possible, they “look at the temple where [they] can get the most economical airfare. That means it’s not always based on proximity or even on whether or not the temple is in their area.”

Each member who uses the fund is expected to make some sort of sacrifice or contribution.

“In some places just getting a passport would be expensive and very difficult,” Elder Walker said. “So in some areas, where members have to leave their country to go to the temple, they have to supply their own passport to be able to use the fund. In some countries, it’s just a set amount of money. To some it may not seem like much, but for them it may be all they could save in six months.”

Elder Walker said that those who contribute to a goal generally find they appreciate it more. “In almost every case people have done their best to contribute and have been richly



blessed, and they have not taken it for granted,” he said.

In addition to making it possible for people to go to the temple, the funds are also used to purchase seven sets of garments for each individual so that they can honor their covenants once they return home.

President Monson’s statement during conference was the first time the fund has been announced over the pulpit by the prophet. That, coupled with the growing demand on the fund, will most likely lead to an increase in donations, Elder Walker said.

“We still have people coming into the Church, and we’ve not nearly satisfied the needs in many areas,” he said. Citing the counsel from President Howard W. Hunter (1907–1995)

in 1994 that all worthy members carry a temple recommend, (see “The Great Symbol of Our Membership,” *Tambuli*, Nov. 1994, 6; *Ensign*, Oct. 1994, 2), he continued, “We have many faithful members of the Church who have current temple recommends but who have not yet been to a temple and don’t have an immediate prospect of going to the temple.”

Elder Walker said President Monson’s announcement of the fund came from his love for temples and his sensitivity to the Saints who are the primary beneficiaries of the fund.

“When you go to these far-away places, you get the feel for the people and the challenges they have,” Elder Walker said. “This fund will be to the blessing of many people.” ■

**Manila  
Philippines  
Temple**



*Students attend seminary in Wetterau, Germany.*

## Worldwide Seminary Program Anchors Students in the Gospel

By **Melissa Merrill**

Church News and Events

**M**ilton Reis of Portugal goes to the local chapel. Frazer Cluff of Tasmania, Australia, attends at home with his mum as his teacher. Lauren Homer of Utah, USA, walks across the street to attend during second period of high school every other day; Ben Gilbert of Vermont, USA, participates weekly, right before Mutual; and in Alabama, USA, McKenzie Morrill attends daily via web conference. Daun Park of Korea participates at 10:00 p.m., while Jamie Greenwood of New Mexico, USA, gets up at 4:00 a.m. to be able to get to her 5:15 a.m. class on time.

All of these teens—and nearly 370,000 others like them—are following prophetic counsel to make seminary a priority in their lives.

The seminary program, which celebrates its 100th anniversary this year, has been implemented differently over time, and even today individual needs and local circumstances often necessitate adaptation. But across time and distance, one thing remains the same: gospel study is helping anchor teens in their testimonies of the Savior and His gospel.

When Milton Reis, 17, of Portugal, first began participating in seminary, a small group of youth met together

each Saturday because many of them participated in sports and other extracurricular activities that required training and other events daily.

Now, however, Milton attends seminary during the week—sometimes before school and sometimes after. For Milton that means waking up earlier, and in some cases giving up social opportunities in the evenings in order to attend class.

Even so, Milton doesn't see seminary as a sacrifice. "It's more like a privilege," he said. Milton hopes to follow in the footsteps of his sister, who is currently serving a mission, and seminary is one of the ways he is preparing. "Through all of these challenges, I know it is worth it," he said.

Dia Lacno, 18, of the Philippines, was baptized at age 14 and began attending seminary soon after. She expected class to be like a typical school course, where she had homework, lectures, and the pressure that accompanies them. Instead, she said, "seminary gives me the strength to overcome all those loads that I get from school. Whenever I attend seminary, I feel replenished and at ease."

To read of the sacrifices and successes of seminary students around the world, search "Seminary Program Anchors Students in the Gospel" at [news.lds.org](http://news.lds.org). ■

*To read about a seminary 100th anniversary fireside with President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, that took place on January 22, visit [news.lds.org](http://news.lds.org).*

## Prophet Urges Young Adults to Be a Light

On November 1, 2011, at a Brigham Young University–Provo devotional, President Thomas S. Monson admonished listeners to “be a righteous example.”

Quoting the Apostle Paul from the New Testament—“Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12)—President Monson expressed his desire that members of the Church be a light to the world.

“What is light?” he asked. “I prefer the simple ‘something that illuminates.’ Providing an example of righteousness . . . can help to illuminate an increasingly dark world.”

He acknowledged that for many, the light has dimmed almost to the point of being extinguished. Ours, he said, is the responsibility to keep our lights aflame for others to see and follow, which requires that we must believe.

“It is up to each of us to develop the faith necessary to survive spiritually and to project our light for others to see,” he said. “Remember that faith and doubt cannot exist in the same place at the same time.”

Some of the best ways to gain and keep faith, President Monson explained, are to read and study the scriptures and to pray frequently and consistently.



**During his address at a Brigham Young University–Provo devotional, President Monson urged members to read the Book of Mormon and find out the truth of it for themselves.**

“Have you read the Book of Mormon? Have you put to the test the promise found in Moroni?” he asked. He urged those in attendance to set aside time each day to find out for themselves if the Book of Mormon is true, “for it will change your heart, and it will change your life,” he said.

Quoting 3 Nephi 12:16—“Let your light so shine before this people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven”—President Monson explained that Christ is the “‘true light, which lighteth every man who cometh into the world’ (John 1:9), a light which ‘shineth in darkness’” (John 1:5).

He concluded: “Our opportunities to shine are limitless. . . . As we follow the example of the Savior, ours will be the opportunity to be a light, as it were, in the lives of those around us.” ■

*For additional information on recent addresses and visits the members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have made, please see prophets.lds.org and news.lds.org.*

## Ethiopian Members Assemble Hygiene Kits

More than 70 Church members gathered at the Meganagna meetinghouse in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on October 1, 2011, for approximately five hours to assemble 5,000 hygiene kits for their fellow Ethiopians affected by the Horn of Africa drought.

The project is part of the Church’s effort to help the people living within the Ethiopian borders.

**Members and missionaries in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, help assemble 5,000 hygiene kits to be delivered to fellow Ethiopians affected by the Horn of Africa drought.**



PHOTOGRAPH BY SISTER ROBIN O’CROWLEY

## New Leadership Training Video Library Available

As an interactive supplement to the updated *Handbook 2: Administering the Church*, the Church's Priesthood Department has announced the Leadership Training Library, an online collection of short training videos that highlight the principles taught in the manual. The new resource is available now at [leadershiplibrary.lds.org](http://leadershiplibrary.lds.org). Portions of the library will be available in 11 languages this year.

## Chile Celebrates 50 Years of Missionary Work

During October 2011, Chile commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Church's formal missionary work there with a weeklong celebration.

The Chile Area Presidency sponsored the commemoration and spoke at the event on Saturday, October 15, that culminated the celebrations.

It brought some 20,000 members to Santiago's Santa Laura Stadium, where talks, songs, a play, and cultural dances commemorated the Chileans' acceptance of the gospel and the growth of the Church. ■

## Leaders Address Latino Saints in November Broadcast

Elder Claudio D. Zivic of the Seventy and Elder Gary B. Doxey, Utah South Area Seventy, spoke at a Church-sponsored devotional for Latin American members titled "En la luz de Su amor" ("In the Light of His Love"), held on Sunday, November 13, 2011.

Thousands of Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking members of the Church and their friends attended the devotional at the Conference Center and in meetinghouses in North, Central, and South America.

For eight years the Church has provided annual inspirational events focused on the growing Latino community of Saints, an initiative that has included Christmas concerts, devotionals, and stage plays. The 2011 devotional marked the first time that the annual program was broadcast live to meetinghouses outside the United States.

## Honduran First Lady Meets First Presidency

The first lady of Honduras, Rosa Elena Bonilla de Lobo, met with President Thomas S. Monson and President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, on Tuesday, November 8, 2011, a meeting she called "a great privilege."

During her visit to Church headquarters, she also toured Temple Square, the Family History Library, the Conference Center, the Church Humanitarian Center, and Welfare Square.

She explained that the Church was helpful recently during terrible flooding in Honduras. "Just two weeks ago you delivered 90,000 tons [81,600 tonnes] of food for the people who were affected by the rain and flooding, and this is one of the many things you do," she said. "I now have faith that the Church does not have borders or limits in their ability [and] commitment to help those in need." ■

***The first lady of Honduras, Rosa Elena Bonilla de Lobo, toured Church facilities in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, on November 8, 2011.***



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**It Brings Sweet Words**

The *Liahona* brings the words of the prophets to the members of the Church scattered all over the world. When I read the *Liahona*, I feel the Spirit and I receive guidance. It helps me know the things I ought to do. I am grateful for the magazine—it changes my way of living through the sweet words it brings me.

**Mariana da Graça Augusto, Mozambique**

**Messages Strengthen and Renew**

I love reading the *Liahona* magazine—my testimony is strengthened and renewed when I ponder the messages of the living prophets. The Spirit testifies to me that their messages are revelations and the will of our Heavenly Father. I know He has called prophets to lead us during this time.

**James Russell Cruz, Philippines**

**Come to the Rescue**

I have been touched by President Thomas S. Monson’s counsel to all of the Saints to come to the rescue of those who have become less active. I have felt the influence of the Holy Ghost because of the prophet’s message.

**Guillermo Vasquez Ocampo**

*Please send your feedback or suggestions to [liahona@ldschurch.org](mailto:liahona@ldschurch.org). Submissions may be edited for length or clarity. ■*

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

**“Have I Done Any Good in the World Today?”** page 14:

Consider opening by singing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet” (*Hymns*, no. 19). Read the article together or select your favorite sections beforehand to read. Ask family members what they learned about President Thomas S. Monson. Hand out pencils and paper so everyone can write down his or her testimony of President Monson as the living prophet. Invite family members to strengthen this testimony through sincere prayer. Consider closing by singing “Have I Done Any Good?” (*Hymns*, no. 223).

**“A Call for Worldwide Indexers,”**

page 34: Read the article beforehand. During family home evening, explain why FamilySearch indexing is an important part of family history work and why there is a need for more indexers. If you have a computer and Internet access at home, log on to [indexing.familysearch.org](http://indexing.familysearch.org). Set up accounts for family members who haven’t indexed before and spend some time indexing together.

**“Follow the Prophet,”** page 42:

Summarize the article for your family. You may want to read together the last section of the article, “Learning to Listen to the Prophetic Word.” Review the phrases that Elder Bennett says can help us discern the direction prophets give us. Invite family members to listen for these phrases in general conference next month. Consider closing with your testimony of following the prophet.

**“Alone but Not Alone,”** page 54: Start by asking if family members ever feel alone as they strive to live the Lord’s standards. How do they combat these feelings? Share the story of Juan Cabrera. Consider inviting someone to share how he or she has kept the commandments when others did not and how he or she was blessed for that obedience.

**“Decide Right Now,”** page 66: After reading the article, answer the questions under “Yes or No?” with your children. Then think of more scenarios that require choosing between right and wrong and ask what they would do in each situation. ■

**Inspired by the Nursery Manual**

The family home evening I remember best started with an activity in the nursery manual. Together with our little girls, my husband and I enacted an activity verse. We read: “If you’re very, very tall, Heavenly Father knows and loves you. If you’re very, very small, Heavenly Father knows and loves you. Tall, Small, Tall, Small, Heavenly Father knows and loves us all.” While we read, we made ourselves small or tall and pointed out that whatever our stature, Heavenly Father loves us. (See *Behold Your Little Ones* [2008], 9.)

The girls and my husband then went to get some fruit tarts, and we ate them together. The girls had so much fun that they wanted to repeat the small-and-tall activity during the week.

The beauty of family home evening is its flexibility. Ours are usually short and simple for our young family, but we try to teach our girls fundamental principles such as love, kindness, and praying together. ■

**Valentina Portolan Simonovich, Italy**

# MOVING ON AND MOVING FORWARD

By Michelle Guerra

I had just gone through some dating heartache and was spending a lot of time at my sister's. Inevitably we ended up eating junk food, watching TV, and taking naps. Waking from one of these naps, I remarked, "I don't think we're very good for each other." We laughed, but that night I thanked Heavenly Father for the realization that I was using my sister as a security blanket and prayed for greater understanding of what I might do to move forward with my life. Over the next few months, that prayer was answered as I gained understanding one concept at a time.

The next day, while attending a Relief Society meeting, I noticed a particular scripture: "Others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well. . . . Therefore, wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion!" (2 Nephi 28:21, 24). I had always read these verses as describing the proud who went through the motions of worship. I had not considered myself as being at ease in Zion by spending so much time with my sister. But I began to realize that instead of seeking healing, I'd sought comfort. I resolved then to try harder to get out of my comfort zone.

The resolution helped, but stepping out of my comfort zone made me more aware of my inadequacies, which led me to feel more critical of myself. When I mentioned these



*I prayed for understanding of how to heal a broken heart. Little by little, I came to see that another kind of broken heart was the answer.*

feelings to a friend, he commented, "Isn't forgiving ourselves great?" His comment helped me desire to better forgive myself of my shortcomings—without becoming complacent like those who are "at ease in Zion."

One day I was struck by Mormon 2:13–14: "Their sorrowing was not unto repentance, because of the goodness of God; but it was rather the sorrowing of the damned, because the Lord would not always suffer them to take happiness in sin. And they did not come unto Jesus with broken hearts and contrite spirits." I came to understand that my feelings of failure were stunting my personal growth, and I began to ponder what appropriate sorrow would entail. It was in Sunday School that I found my answer.

Our teacher drew a line on the chalkboard, labeling one end, "Being too hard on ourselves" and the other end, "Eat, drink, and be merry." We talked about avoiding either extreme. I wondered what words would be in the center of the line, and the Spirit guided my thoughts to the phrase "a broken heart and a contrite spirit." It seemed to me that the solution to a tendency to be too hard on oneself might be described as a contrite spirit—one that is repentant, accepting of the Lord's help, and grateful for His mercy. The remedy for being at ease in Zion might be called a broken heart—one that is justly motivated to change and to heal.

The Savior taught, "Ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:20). I am grateful to know that as I seek the Lord's help to avoid being at ease in Zion and to avoid harshly judging myself, I am offering an acceptable sacrifice to Him—a sacrifice that helps me move forward with my life. ■

**T**his year many issues of the *Liahona* will contain a set of Book of Mormon scripture figures. To make them sturdy and easy to use, cut them out and glue or tape them to heavy paper, small paper sacks, or craft sticks. Store each set in an envelope or bag, along with the square that tells where to find the scripture story that goes with the figures.



Abinadi



Alma



King Noah and his priests

**Abinadi and King Noah**  
Mosiah 11–17



If, as President Thomas S. Monson says, an organization is the lengthened shadow of its leader, then the desire to lift, encourage, engage, involve, and rescue others one by one is the mandate of every Latter-day Saint. This way of living mirrors the example of the Savior, who “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). To learn more about our prophet and his ability to reach out to rescue, see Heidi S. Swinton, “Have I Done Any Good in the World Today? Life Experiences of President Thomas S. Monson,” page 14.