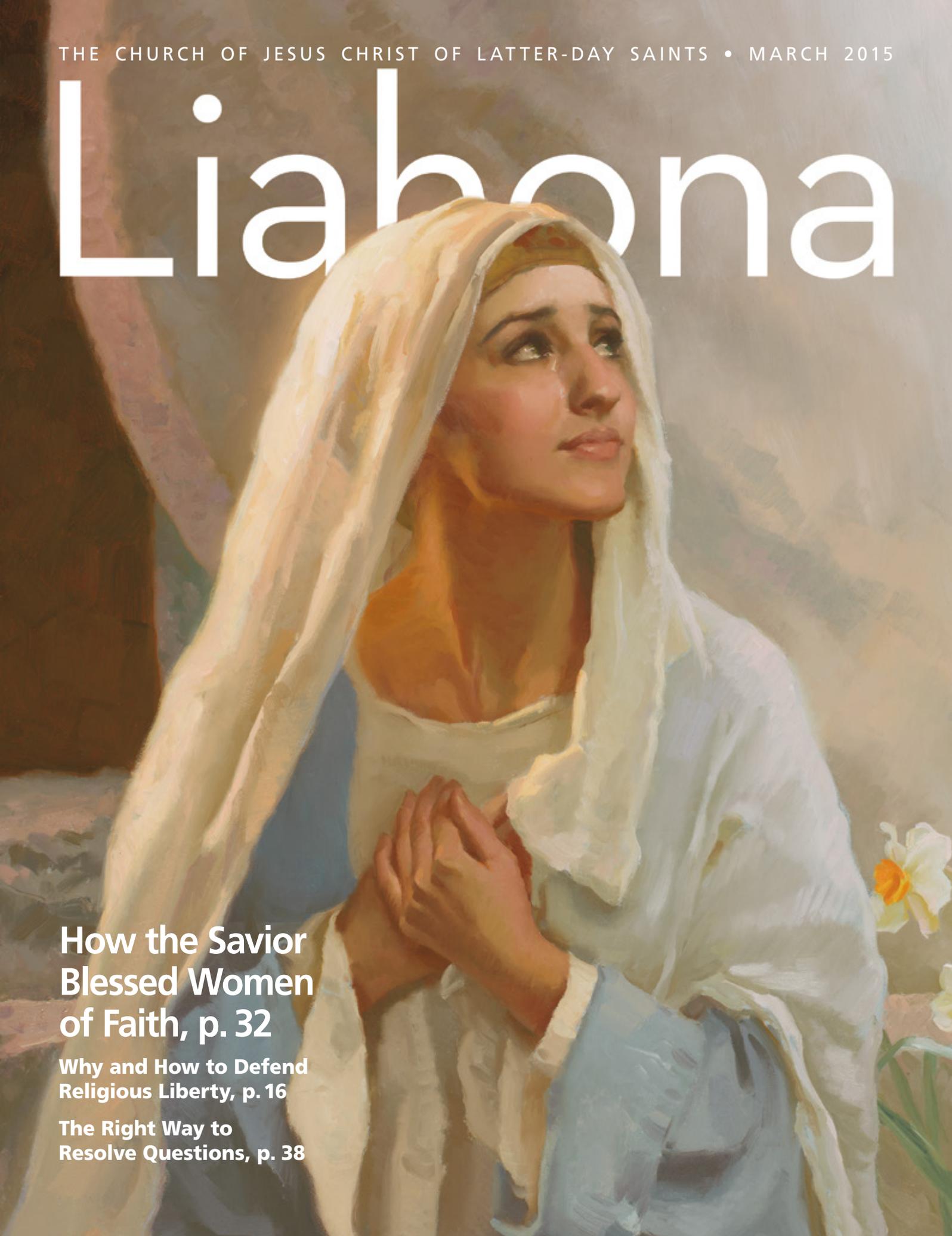


THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • MARCH 2015

Liabona



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Blessed Women
of Faith, p. 32**

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Religious Liberty, p. 16**

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Resolve Questions, p. 38**



*“Verily I say unto you,
If ye have faith as a
grain of mustard seed,
ye shall say unto this
mountain, Remove
hence to yonder place;
and it shall remove;
and nothing shall be
impossible unto you.”*

Matthew 17:20

These mustard seeds, which grow in the pods, are the variety that are found in Israel. The straight pin, which is just over one inch (3 cm) long, is included to show scale.



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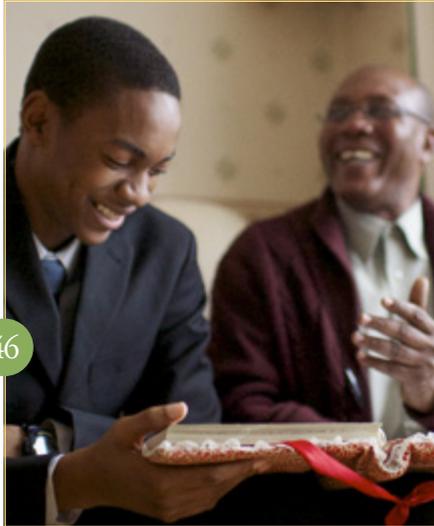
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For subscriptions and prices outside the United States and Canada, go to store.lds.org or contact your local Church distribution center or ward or branch leader.

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

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

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For Readers in the United States and Canada:

March 2015 Vol. 39 No. 3. LIAHONA (USPS 311-480) English (ISSN 1080-9554) is published monthly by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 50 E. North Temple St., Salt Lake City, UT 84150. USA subscription price is \$10.00 per year; Canada, \$12.00 plus applicable taxes. Periodicals Postage Paid at Salt Lake City, Utah. Sixty days' notice required for change of address. Include address label from a recent issue; old and new address must be included. Send USA and Canadian subscriptions to Salt Lake Distribution Center at address below. Subscription help line: 1-800-537-5971. Credit card orders (American Express, Discover, MasterCard, Visa) may be taken by phone or at store.lds.org. (Canada Post Information: Publication Agreement #40017431)

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

Family Home Evening Ideas

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



“When Doubts and Questions Arise,”

page 38: After reading the article, consider discussing as a family the difference between questions and doubts. Read accounts of people in the scriptures who had questions and what they did about them (for example, 1 Nephi 11; Ether 2:19–3:16; Joseph Smith—History 1:10–19; or the references under endnote 1 in the article).

You could ask a few family members to identify a few questions they have. Then use the scriptures, lds.org/topics, or personal experiences to find answers. Cultivating an atmosphere of openness and honesty in the home will help family members feel comfortable voicing questions as they arise.

“Getting Ready for Easter,” page 70:

Before family home evening, you may want to write several everyday challenges on slips of paper. For example, “You start to feel angry when your brother won’t share his toys with you,” or “You notice that dad looks sad when he gets home from work one night.” Ask your children to take turns choosing a slip of paper, reading the scenario, and suggesting how they could be like the Savior in that situation. Introduce the Easter activity in this article and invite each of your children to accept the seven-day challenge to learn about Jesus Christ and follow His example.

IN YOUR LANGUAGE

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

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**By President
Dieter F. Uchtdorf**

Second Counselor in
the First Presidency

ENCIRCLED IN His Gentle Arms

Like many others, I have often been inspired by beautiful works of art and music. One such occasion was when I stood before a masterful painting created by the Danish artist Frans Schwartz titled *The Agony in the Garden*.¹

This achingly beautiful painting depicts the Savior kneeling in the Garden of Gethsemane. As He prays, an angel stands next to Him, enfolding Him in gentle arms, offering comfort, heavenly succor, and support.

The longer I contemplate this painting, the more my heart and mind swell with inexpressible feelings of tenderness and gratitude. I can sense, in small part, what it must have been like to be present as the Savior began His great culminating work of mortality by taking upon Himself the sins of the world. I marvel at the infinite love and compassion the Father has for His children. I am overwhelmed with profound gratitude for what the sinless Son did for all mankind and for me.

The Sacrifice of the Son of God

Each year at this time we commemorate and ponder the sacrifice Jesus Christ made for all mankind.

What the Savior did from Gethsemane to Golgotha on our behalf is beyond my ability to grasp. He took upon Himself the burden of our sins and paid an eternal and binding ransom not only for Adam's original transgression but also for the sins and transgressions of the billions upon billions of souls who have ever lived. This eternal, sacred sacrifice caused "even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit" (D&C 19:18).

He suffered for me.

He suffered for you.

My soul overflows with gratitude when I contemplate the precious meaning of this sacrifice. It humbles me to know that all who accept this gift and incline their hearts to Him can be forgiven and cleansed of their sins, no matter how dark their blemish or how oppressive their burden.

We can be made spotless and pure once again. We can be redeemed by the eternal sacrifice of our beloved Savior.

Who Will Comfort Us?

Though none of us will ever have to experience the depth of what our Lord suffered, we each will have our



He will be more than an angel to us.
He will bring us blessed comfort, healing, hope, and forgiveness.
For He is our Redeemer.
Our Deliverer.
Our merciful Savior and our blessed God. ■

NOTE

1. The priest who spoke at Frans Schwartz's funeral said "his art was divinely endowed and seemed worthier than many a sermon" (Emmie Buchanan-Whitlock, "History of Artists' Lives Gives Greater Context for Exhibit," *Deseret News*, Sept. 29, 2013, deseretnews.com).

own dark and bitter hours—times when our sorrow and grief may appear to be greater than we can bear. There will be times when the weight and remorse of our sins will press mercilessly upon us.

Even so, if we will lift our hearts to the Lord during those times, surely He will know and understand. He who suffered so selflessly for us in the garden and on the cross will not leave us comfortless now. He

will strengthen, encourage, and bless us. He will encircle us in His gentle arms.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

Before you teach, seek the Spirit's guidance to help you understand the specific needs of those you teach. As you share excerpts from President Uchtdorf's message, bear testimony of the Savior and of His redeeming sacrifice. Consider asking those you teach what His Atonement means to them and how they have felt the Lord's comfort during their "dark and bitter hours."

Victory through Jesus Christ

Name withheld

I had a problem with overeating. My repeated bouts of gorging resulted in a harrowing mass of guilt, frustration, and disappointment. I felt so weak when I tried to overcome my problem.

For a long time I neglected the fact that the Savior's Atonement not only saves us but also redeems us and perfects



us, and that this even applies to my obviously imperfect habit of overeating.

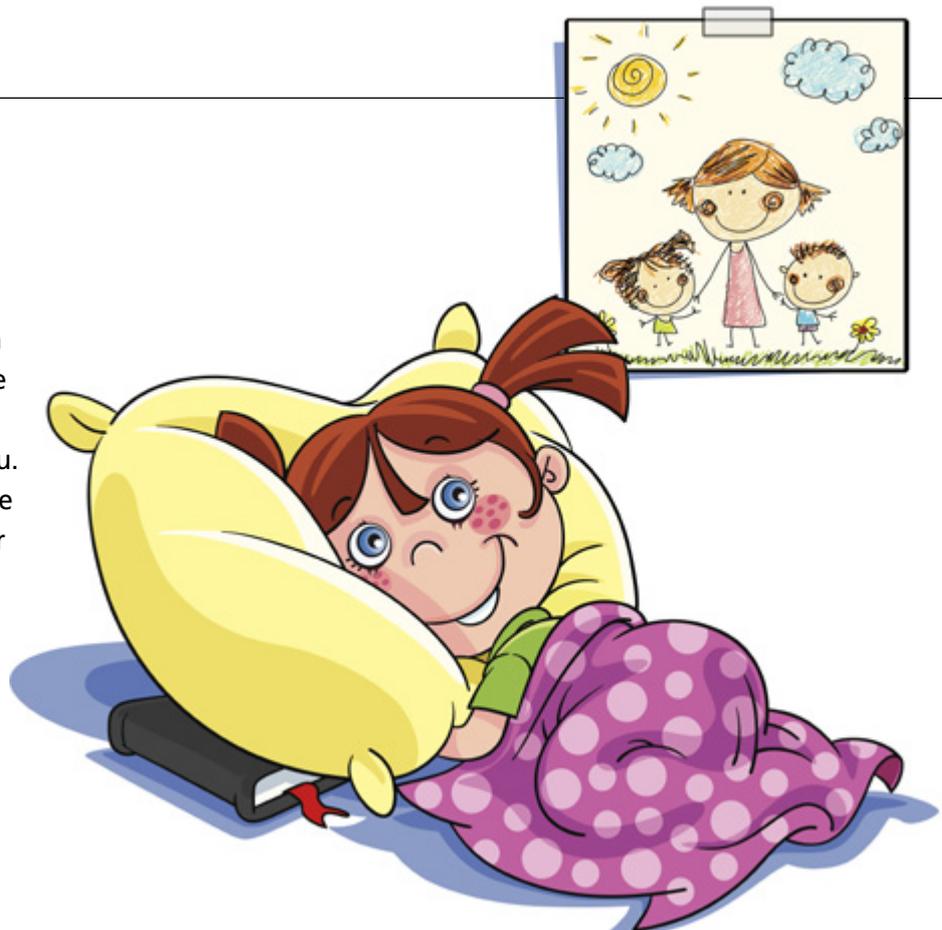
I decided to give myself to my Savior. I prayed. I sincerely admitted my weakness and my need for grace, and then I asked Heavenly Father to bless me with His divine assistance in the upcoming day. That night I felt the assurance of a loving Father that He had the immeasurable desire to help His son and the unquestionable power to fulfill His will.

Since that night, food no longer has the same overwhelming influence over me. I know Jesus Christ is the reason for my success. Just like Paul, I am learning that "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). And I'm trying to never forget another lesson from Paul: "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

CHILDREN

The Savior Will Comfort You

Ask a family member or a friend about a time when he or she felt comforted by the Savior. Try to think of a time when the Savior comforted you. You could draw a picture of the experience and hang it by your bed to remind you that Jesus Christ will always be there to comfort you.



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



The Attributes of Jesus Christ: Long-suffering and Patient

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

Patience is often thought of as a quiet, passive trait, but as President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said, “Patience is not passive resignation, nor is it failing to act because of our fears. Patience means active waiting and enduring. It means staying with something . . . even when the desires of our hearts are delayed. Patience is not simply enduring; it is enduring well!”

In our premortal life, our Heavenly Father prepared a plan for us—His spirit children—and we shouted for joy at the opportunity to come to earth (see Job 38:7). As we choose to align our will with His during our earthly life, He “will make an instrument of [us] in [His] hands unto the salvation of many souls” (Alma 17:11).

President Uchtdorf continued, “Patience means accepting that which



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

Additional Scriptures

Psalm 40:1; Galatians 5:22–23; 2 Peter 1:6; Alma 17:11

Consider This

From the account in Luke 8, how was this woman’s years of patience and then her faith in Jesus Christ rewarded?

Faith, Family, Relief

From the Scriptures

The scriptures tell us that in our earthly life, we should “be patient in afflictions, for [we shall] have many.” God then gives us this comforting promise, “Endure them, for, lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of thy days” (D&C 24:8).

The following Bible story is an example of patience and faith.

“And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years . . . touched the border of [Christ’s] garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch[ed] [stopped].

“And Jesus said, . . . Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.

“And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately.

“And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace” (Luke 8:43–48).

Like her, we can find blessings and comfort, and even healing, as we reach out to Jesus Christ—whose Atonement can heal us.

NOTE

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Continue in Patience,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2010, 57, 59.

OCTOBER 2014 CONFERENCE NOTEBOOK

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

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

DOCTRINAL HIGHLIGHTS



Caring for the Poor and Needy

“A journalist once questioned Mother Teresa of Calcutta about her hopeless task of rescuing the destitute in that city. He said that, statistically speaking, she was accomplishing absolutely nothing. This remarkable little woman retorted that her work was about love, not statistics. . . . She said she could keep the commandment to love God and neighbor by serving those *within* her reach with whatever resources she had. . . . Soberly, the journalist concluded that Christianity is obviously *not* a statistical endeavor. . . .

“So how might we ‘do what we can?’ . . .

“ . . . I pay a personal tribute to President Thomas Spencer Monson. . . . The image of him I will cherish until I die is of him flying home from then—economically devastated East Germany in his house slippers because he had given away not only his extra suit and shirts but the very shoes from off his feet.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Are We Not All Beggars?” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 40, 41, 42.

PROPHETIC PROMISE



Heavenly Blessings

“Perhaps during [hard times], we might find ourselves asking, ‘Do

we really need to obey *all* of God’s commandments?’

“My response to this question is simple:

“I think God knows something we don’t—things that are beyond our capacity to comprehend! Our Father in Heaven is an eternal being whose experience, wisdom, and intelligence are infinitely greater than ours. [See Isaiah 55:9.] . . .

“Part of our challenge is, I think, that we imagine that God has all of His blessings locked in a huge cloud up in heaven, refusing to give them to us unless we comply with some strict, paternalistic requirements He has set up. But the commandments aren’t like that at all. In reality, Heavenly Father is constantly raining blessings upon us. It is our fear, doubt, and sin that, like an umbrella, block these blessings from reaching us.

“His commandments are the loving instructions and the divine help for us to close the umbrella so we can receive the shower of heavenly blessings.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Living the Gospel Joyful,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 121–22.

Fill in the Blank

1. "When we _____ wrong choices, big or small, which are inconsistent with the restored gospel, we lose the blessings and protections we need." (Quentin L. Cook, "Choose Wisely," 48.)
2. "According to the world's standards, following the prophet may be unpopular, politically incorrect,

or socially unacceptable. But following the prophet is always _____." (Carol F. McConkie, "Live according to the Words of the Prophets," 78.)

3. "Lowering the Lord's standards to the level of a society's inappropriate behavior is _____." (Lynn G. Robbins, "Which Way Do You Face?" 10.)

4. "Absolute _____ exists in a world that increasingly disdains and dismisses absolutes. In a future day, 'every knee [shall] bow' and 'every tongue [shall] confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:10–11)." (David A. Bednar, "Come and See," 110.)

A Toolbox for Your Home

Evaluate "your personal use of each tool; then seek the guidance of the Lord to determine how you could

make better use of each one of them." —Elder Richard G. Scott, "Make the Exercise of Faith Your First Priority," 93.

1. Prayer
2. Scripture Study
3. Family Home Evening
4. Temple Attendance



Answers: 1. rationalize; 2. right; 3. apostasy; 4. truth

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

THE GOOD SAMARITAN, BY WALTER RANE, TOOLBOX PHOTOGRAPH BY SCOTT DAVIS

TALKING ABOUT TOUGH TOPICS

By Sheree Lyn Clarke

Clinical psychologist, LDS Family Services

When your children face challenges, it's important to talk to them in ways that will strengthen your relationship with them.

As a parent, you know the value of challenges and trials to your children's growth, but it's still difficult to see your children struggle. These struggles, however, can be a chance for you to build solid relationships with your children as you foster an environment of love at home. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) encouraged parents to provide such an environment: “My plea—and I wish I were more eloquent in voicing it—is a plea to save the children. Too many of them walk with pain and fear, in loneliness and despair. Children need sunlight. They need happiness. They need love and nurture.”¹

There are many difficult issues your children could face, such as bullying, bad language, cheating at school, same-sex attraction, eating disorders, depression, and suicidal thoughts, for example. As a Latter-day Saint parent, you know you “have a sacred duty to rear your children in love and righteousness,”² but how do you go about that when your children struggle with

difficult issues, whether in their own lives or in the lives of their friends? Here are some guidelines:

Ask questions that invite conversation. You can ask a question like this: “It looks like something may be bothering you. Do you want to talk about it?” This question not only acknowledges that you have noticed that something is bothering your child, but it also opens a door for your child to share as much (or little) as he or she chooses.

After your child has shared some thoughts about the issue, your response could be: “Thank you for sharing that with me, and thank you for trusting me with this information. I can only imagine what that must feel like. How can I be helpful?”

These kinds of loving responses tend to open the door to ongoing dialogue. It is important that children know of your sincerity. A hug or a loving look can also help to express genuine, heartfelt concern.

Listen to understand. Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of

the Twelve Apostles said: “The time to listen is when someone needs to be heard. Children are naturally eager to share their experiences. . . . If they try to express their anguish, is it possible for us to listen openly to a shocking experience without going into a state of shock ourselves?

Can we listen without interrupting and without making snap judgments that slam shut the door of dialogue? It can remain open with the soothing reassurance that we believe in them and understand their feelings. Adults should not pretend an experience did not happen just because they might wish otherwise.”³

Show respect. The scriptures give excellent guidance on how to create an environment of love and respect.





Notice some of the key words in Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42: *persuasion* (not force), *long-suffering* (not immediate, forced compliance or impatience), *gentleness* (not loud, aggressive, intense communication), *meeekness* (not proud or domineering responses), *kindness* (not cruel manipulation), and *love unfeigned* (genuine, sincere expressions of love). As we deepen our conversion, “the way we treat others becomes

increasingly filled with patience, kindness, a gentle acceptance, and a desire to play a positive role in their lives.”⁴

Avoid criticism. Latter-day Saint parents try to pattern their lives after the Savior. His interactions were filled with love, empathy, and genuine concern. Even when people had committed serious sins, He called for repentance but did not condemn (see John 8:3–11). Avoid criticizing your

children, which can lead them to poor self-esteem and a lack of confidence; rather, find and emphasize the good in each of your children.

Control your anger. “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty” (Proverbs 16:32), and “the spirit of contention . . . is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger” (3 Nephi 11:29). Anger drives away the Spirit and has

the potential to destroy fragile parent-child relationships. In general conference, President Hinckley said, “I plead with you to control your tempers, to put a smile upon your faces, which will erase anger; speak out with words of love and peace, appreciation, and respect. If you will do this, your lives will be without regret. Your marriages and family relationships will be preserved. You will be much happier.”⁵

Strengthen the relationship. All of these suggestions can be helpful, but if you can’t remember them when you are in the middle of a difficult conversation with your child, simply ask yourself, “How can I use this situation with my child as an opportunity to strengthen our relationship?” Then listen to and follow the inspiration you receive.

Keep trying. Parenting can be very difficult, yet you can succeed if you keep trying. President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) offered these words of encouragement: “A successful parent is one who has loved, one who has sacrificed, and one who has cared for, taught, and ministered to the needs of a child. If you have done all of these and your child is still wayward or troublesome or worldly, it could well be that you are, nevertheless, a successful parent.”⁶ ■

The author lives in South Africa.

NOTES

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Save the Children,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 54.
2. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
3. Russell M. Nelson, “Listen to Learn,” *Ensign*, May 1991, 22.
4. Marvin J. Ashton, “The Tongue Can Be a Sharp Sword,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 20.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Slow to Anger,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 66.
6. Howard W. Hunter, “Parents’ Concern for Children,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 65.

TALKING WITH TEENAGERS

Talking about challenges is difficult enough but can be even more so with teenagers, who are struggling to form their own identities— independent of their parents. Adolescents deal with enormous academic, emotional, and social pressures. Their belief and value systems are sometimes called into question by friends and peers. Their relationships with their parents can become fragile at this stage of their development, and it is not uncommon for teenagers to end up feeling confused, alone, anxious, uncertain, helpless, isolated, and even depressed.

Parents who understand and are sensitive to these developmental challenges can better help their teenagers at a time when they need their parents most.



GRANDPA, FATHER

By Aaron L. West

Church Publishing Services

Picture 3,000 missionaries gathered in a large room. Two thousand nine hundred ninety-nine of them are talking excitedly and looking toward the same spot in the room. Some are on their tiptoes. Some are jumping to snatch quick glances over those on tiptoes. Some are standing on folding chairs. One missionary is sitting on a folding chair, elbows on his knees, hands clasped, head bowed.

That might not be exactly what happened, but that's how I remember it. That was how I felt. I was that one missionary.

As you picture the scene, you might think I was lonely or sad. Actually, I was experiencing one of the happiest moments of my life—a moment that I have been glad to relive many times since then.

I was at the missionary training center in Provo, Utah, preparing to serve as a full-time missionary in the Ecuador Quito Mission. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), who was then First Counselor in the



First Presidency, came to speak to all the missionaries in the MTC.

It was after the meeting that the hubbub began. I noticed that people weren't filing to the doors, so I asked another elder what was going on.

"President Hinckley's grandson is here at the MTC," he said, "and President Hinckley just left the stand to give him a hug!"

With that explanation, the elder stepped onto his chair to get a better view, exclaiming, "Wow! Wouldn't it be great to have President Hinckley as a grandpa?"

I loved and respected President Hinckley, and I had been inspired by his message that day. But in that moment I was struck by a thought that led me to sit on my chair rather than stand on it. In the middle of all that cheerful enthusiasm, I sat still and thought, "I'm sure it would be great to have President Hinckley as a grandpa. But I wouldn't trade my Grandpa Felt or my Grandpa West for him." I lifted my head and felt the warm embrace of gratitude as I reflected on my heritage, my family.

Then another thought came, more powerful than the first: "Besides, I am a son of God." I knew that I, a grandson of a dentist and a factory supervisor, had just as much worth as a grandson of a prophet. Why? The two of us had the same Father in Heaven.

The other 2,999 missionaries eventually walked toward the doors of that large room. I joined them, more prepared to serve the Lord than I had been a few minutes earlier. ■

EVERY TRIAL CAN BRING GREATER FAITH

By Giorgia Murgia

As a seven-year-old, when I learned that my father was killed in an accident, I prayed for a miracle.

When I was a child, one of my favorite parts of the day was waiting for my dad to come home from work. I would look out the window and see him coming, and I would count each of his steps toward the house, looking forward to the joy he brought. I never thought I would have to do without that feeling.

One day when I was seven years old, in my father's place came a man with a somber face who stood at the door and told us that my father had been killed in an accident.

That day I was silent. I looked at my four-year-old brother and my mother, so young and alone, and I did not cry. I didn't think it could be

true, so I went to the window and stared at the street. I began to feel an unbearable force pressing down on my shoulders, a weight that would not let me breathe normally, a pressure that oppressed me.

Not long after my father's death, I went into my room alone at the fading light of sunset and, as I had been taught, prayed to my Heavenly Father. I pleaded with Him to let me see my beloved father again, just to hug him. In my heart I was certain that Heavenly Father could give me this miracle.

That day I didn't get to see my dad or hug him, but I was given much more. It was as if I felt the hands of the Savior on my shoulders. His presence was almost tangible as He removed the weight that pressed down on my chest.

Now, over 20 years later, that relief has never left me. At times I have felt sadness but never emptiness at the loss of my father. I can look back and see how many times



THE SAVIOR CAN HEAL AND STRENGTHEN

"Because of His infinite and eternal sacrifice (see Alma 34:14), [the Savior] has perfect empathy and can extend to us His arm of mercy. He can reach out, touch, succor, heal, and strengthen us to be more than we could ever be and help us to do that which we could never do relying only upon our own power. . . .

"The unique burdens in each of our lives help us to rely upon the merits, mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah (see 2 Nephi 2:8). I testify and promise the Savior will help us to bear up our burdens with ease (see Mosiah 24:15)."

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Bear Up Their Burdens with Ease," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2014, 90.



Now, over 20 years later, the relief the Savior gave me has never left. Many times the Spirit has come to console me, help me, and show me the way.

the Spirit has come to console me, help me, and show me the way to follow the Savior's precious steps. I can feel His presence in my life thanks to that first trial, which helps me see everyday trials with an eternal perspective. I know it is the gospel in our lives that allows us to feel the invisible caress of the Savior's hand.

I have married for eternity, and now my husband and I have three little girls, who bring a taste of heaven into our home. When I see them, I rejoice in the peace and knowledge that every sorrow, trial, and challenge in their lives can bring with it greater faith, new witnesses, and

wonderful miracles. I rejoice in the profound certainty that when they need something beyond what my husband and I can give

them, they will be protected, consoled, and saved, just as I was. ■

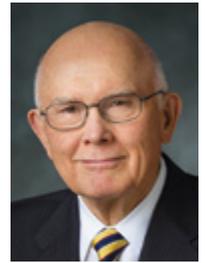
The author lives in Sardinia, Italy.

LEARNING FROM TRIALS

While it is important to pray for strength and help in trials, it is also important to pray to learn from trials. You can pray for "eyes to see, and ears to hear" (Deuteronomy 29:4) the Lord's tender mercies and grace in your life (see Ether 6:12).

Consider writing in your journal some of the lessons you have learned and some of the evidences of Heavenly Father's love that you have experienced during a difficult time in your life.





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

WITNESS AS Witnesses OF GOD

As the “salt of the earth,” we Latter-day Saints must retain our savor by living our religion and by asserting ourselves as witnesses of God.

We live in a world where many deny the existence of God or the significance of His commandments. I hope what I say will help you be more effective in your duty to witness of God and to act for truth and righteousness.

I.

I begin with the first three of our Articles of Faith:

“We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.

“We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam’s transgression.

“We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel” (Articles of Faith 1:1–3).

A great Book of Mormon prophet taught these same truths:

“Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend.

“And again, believe that ye must repent of your sins and forsake them, and humble yourselves before God; and ask in sincerity of heart that he would forgive you” (Mosiah 4:9–10).

In contrast, today many deny or doubt the existence of God and insist that all

rules of behavior are man-made and can be accepted or rejected at will.

Why do I speak of such basic truths as the existence of God and the reality of the absolutes of right and wrong that govern our behavior? Sometimes the most needed things we can teach are things we tend to take for granted. We can neglect simple basic truths because we assume they are understood by all, but they are not. We must stress the fundamental truths on which our beliefs are based. Ultimately, these include the existence of God and the eternal reality of the truths and the right and wrong defined by His teachings and His commandments.

II.

The denial of God or the downplaying of His role in human affairs that began in the Renaissance has become pervasive today. The glorifying of human reasoning has had good and bad effects. The work of science has made innumerable improvements in our lives, but the rejection of divine authority as the ultimate basis of right and wrong by those who have substituted science for God has many religious people asking this question: “Why [is] the will of any of the brilliant philosophers of the liberal tradition [or even the will of any branch of the United States Supreme Court] . . . more relevant to moral decisions than the will of God?”¹

Those who have used human reasoning to supersede divine influence in their lives have diminished themselves and cheapened civilization in the process.

I am grateful to know that there are two methods of gaining knowledge—the scientific method and the spiritual method, which begins with faith in God and relies on scriptures, inspired teaching, and personal revelation. There is no ultimate conflict between knowledge gained by these different methods because God, our omnipotent Eternal Father, knows all truth and beckons us to learn by them both.

Prophecies of the last days foretell great opposition to inspired truth and action. Some of these prophecies concern the anti-Christ, and others speak of the great and abominable church.

Anti-Christ

The Apostle John uses the term anti-Christ to describe one who “denieth the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:22). Today those who deny the existence of God are called atheists. Some of these ridicule the faith of those who believe in what cannot be proven, even as they aggressively deny a godly existence they cannot disprove.

We are prepared for such denials of God by the Book of Mormon’s account of a man named Korihor. In terms reminiscent of the most atheistic writings of our day, Korihor, twice called an “Anti-Christ” (Alma 30:6, 12), taught:

“Ye cannot know of things which ye do not see; therefore ye cannot know that there shall be a Christ.

“Ye look forward and say that ye see a remission of your sins. But behold, it is the effect of a frenzied mind; and this derangement of your minds comes because of the traditions of your fathers, which lead you away into a belief of things which are not so” (Alma 30:15–16).

Korihor also declared “that there could be no atonement made for the sins of men.” His description of the consequence of his rejection of the idea of sin and a Savior is strikingly similar to the belief of many in our time: “Every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature; therefore every man prospered according to his genius, and . . . every man conquered according to his strength; and *whatsoever a man did was no crime*” (Alma 30:17; emphasis added).

Moral Relativism

Today we call Korihor’s philosophy moral relativism. Two observers describe that philosophy as follows: “When it comes to moral issues there are no universally objective right or wrong answers, no inappropriate or appropriate judgments, and no reasonable or rational ways by which to make moral distinctions that apply in every time, in every place, and to every person.”²

This is the belief applied by many in the popular media and in response to peer pressure. “Break free of the old rules. Do what feels good to you. There is no accountability beyond what man’s laws or public disapproval impose



“Humanism makes a man to be god, the supreme being, and the educated human mind becomes the arbiter of all that is true, good and beautiful.”

on those who are caught.” Behind such ideas is the assumption that there is no God or, if there is, He has given no commandments that apply to us today.

Secular Humanism

The rejection of an unprovable God and the denial of right and wrong are most influential in the world of higher education. Secular humanism, a branch of humanism probably so labeled because of its strong alignment with secularism, is deliberately or inadvertently embodied in the teachings of faculty members in many colleges and universities.

For religious people, the objectionable element in the various humanist philosophies is their rejection of the existence of God and their denial of the moral absolutes rooted in His commandments. Thus, the 1973 Humanist Manifesto rejected “traditional

moral codes” and “traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience.” It further declared, “We can discover no divine purpose . . . for the human species. . . . Humans are responsible for what we are or will become. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves.”³

Of course, adherents of humanism, called humanists, have made many positive contributions. For example, they have supported democracy, human rights, education, and material progress. So long as these advancements do not exclude believers, our issue with humanists is their rejection of divine authority and values.

As former BYU philosophy professor Chauncey Riddle has written, “Humanism makes a man to be god, the supreme being,



Nephi was told by revelation that there were only “two churches”: “the church of the Lamb of God” and “the church of the devil.”

and the educated human mind becomes the arbiter of all that is true, good and beautiful.” He also reminds us that humanism “enjoys good press in the world today because most of the writers, publishers, scholars and media people are of this persuasion.”⁴

Many who deny or doubt the existence of God would probably disclaim the philosophy of moral relativism. They would see themselves as having some external standards of right and wrong, though absolute standards not based on belief in God are difficult to explain. Secular humanists, who formally reject “traditional religious morality” and declare their reliance on “the tests of scientific evidence,”⁵ seem to fulfill a Book of Mormon prophecy of those “who live without God in the world” (Mosiah 27:31).

The Great and Abominable Church and Other “Churches”

Book of Mormon prophecies describe the “great and abominable church of all the earth, whose founder is the devil” (1 Nephi 14:17). This “church” is prophesied to have

“dominion over all the earth, among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people” (1 Nephi 14:11). Called “most abominable above all other churches,” this church is also said to act “for the praise of the world” in bringing “the saints of God . . . down into captivity” (1 Nephi 13:5, 9).

Because no religious denomination—Christian or non-Christian—has ever had “dominion” over all nations of the earth or the potential to bring all the saints of God down into “captivity,” this great and abominable church must be something far more pervasive and widespread than a single “church,” as we understand that term today. It must be any philosophy or organization that opposes belief in God. And the “captivity” into which this “church” seeks to bring the saints will not be so much physical confinement as the captivity of false ideas.

Nephi was told by revelation that there were only “two churches”: “the church of the Lamb of God” and “the church of the devil” (1 Nephi 14:10; see also 13:4–6).

This description suggests the contrast between those who believe in God and seek to serve Him according to their best understanding and those who reject the existence of God (see 1 Nephi 14:10).

Other teachings in the Book of Mormon also use the word *church* to signify belief or nonbelief in God. The final chapters of 2 Nephi prophesy that in the last days the Gentiles will build up “many churches” that will “put down the power and miracles of God, and preach up unto themselves their own wisdom and their own learning, that they may get gain” (2 Nephi 26:20). They tell of “churches which are built up, and not unto the Lord” (2 Nephi 28:3), which will “teach with their learning” and “deny the power of God” (2 Nephi 28:4, 5). They will “say unto the people: Hearken unto us, and hear ye our precept; for behold there is no God today” (2 Nephi 28:5).

In the Savior’s ministry among the Nephites, He warned against a church that is not “built upon my gospel, [but] is built upon the works of men, or upon the works of the devil” (3 Nephi 27:11; see also the teaching about the “great and spacious building” in 1 Nephi 8:26–33; 11:35; and 12:18). These warnings are not limited to religious organizations. In the circumstances of our day, they include a multitude of secular philosophies and activities.

III.

Many people who believe in God and the right and wrong that exists because of His commandments experience scorn and mocking from worldly teachings and denial of God that occur in many organizations, including educational institutions and media. Such prophesied challenges are faced by the diminishing numbers of God-fearing people who share our belief in God and the right and wrong that exist because of His commandments. This only repeats what existed at the time of the Savior.

Even as we are “troubled on every side,” we are “not in despair” (2 Corinthians 4:8). We know that our spiritual growth requires “an opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11). We also know that the Lord “seeth fit to chasten his

people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith” (Mosiah 23:21). But the scriptures also teach that He will deliver those who put their trust in Him (see 1 Samuel 17:37, 45–46; Psalm 34:22; Proverbs 3:5–6; Alma 36:27; 38:5).

I will now suggest three kinds of things we can do in response to current conditions, beginning with what is easiest. All of these respond to a great Book of Mormon teaching that we should “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in, even until death” (Mosiah 18:9).

Honor the Name and Influence of God

We are taught to “believe in Christ, and deny him not” (2 Nephi 25:29); to “look unto [Christ] in every thought; doubt not, fear not” (D&C 6:36); and to “talk of Christ,” “rejoice in Christ,” and “preach of Christ” (2 Nephi 25:26). Two ways we can do this are in our private prayers and in our personal greetings.

In our private and family prayers, we should ask God to help us and our neighbors and leaders recognize God our Creator and the right and wrong established by His commandments. We should do this for the good of His children everywhere.

We should also assert ourselves against the current trend to refrain from religious references even in private communications. In recent years the inclusion of religious symbols and reverent words in Christmas greetings and sympathy cards has almost disappeared. When we make choices about these kinds of communications, we should not participate in erasing sacred reminders from our personal communications. As believers, we have a duty to preserve the name and influence of God and Christ in our conversations, our lives, and our culture.

Publicly Recognize the Blessings of God

Support public recognition of the blessings of God. This seeks to counter the diminishing mention of religious faith and references to God and His blessings in our public discourse. Contrast, for example, current public documents and rhetoric of government leaders in the United States with similar documents and words of leaders during America’s

first two centuries. In that contrast you will have evidence of deliberate efforts to edit out references to God and the influence of religion in America's founding and preservation.

What can we do about this? First, we can set the right example in our family and Church teachings by acknowledging the blessings of the Lord in our lives and in our nations. To do this "in wisdom and order" (Mosiah 4:27), we should not seem to deny that our nations include and are blessed by citizens of Jewish, Muslim, and other non-Christian persuasions, as well as by atheists. But we should speak truthfully of the fact that, for example, the United States was founded by persons and leaders who were predominantly Christians and who embodied the principles of their faith in the Constitution, laws, and culture of the nation.⁶

A recent essay by Brother Clayton Christensen, professor at the Harvard Business School and a former Area Seventy, insists that religion is the foundation of both democracy and prosperity. He reminds us that democracy and capitalism both depend on large-scale obedience to the unenforceable and that this prerequisite depends upon religions that teach fundamentals such as "the equality of people, the importance of respecting others' property, and of personal honesty and integrity." Secularism, which aspires to displace theistic religion, has no power or program to provide what Brother Christensen calls "the requisite foundation of extensive obedience to the unenforceable."⁷

Contend for the Free Exercise of Religion

Contend for the free exercise of religion. This is more difficult because it requires cooperative action by believers of various faiths. Where government-guaranteed free exercise of religion exists, we should press government officials to honor those guarantees. Here I will emphasize only two examples of current concern.

The first involves public prayer. Prayer occurs when people address the Divine Being, whatever their concept of God and however they choose to address Him. Regardless of the content of a prayer, which will vary according to the belief of the one who prays, when a prayer is offered in a public setting, it is important as an affirmation or symbol

of a group's common dependence upon and reverence for God. This is the nature of the prayers offered at the beginning of legislative assemblies or council meetings and in oaths administered to precede court testimony or official installations. Whatever the designated pray-er's concept of God and whatever his or her religious persuasion or language of prayer, I hope we will witness our belief in God by the symbol of prayer, wisely and tolerantly administered. That is worth contending for.

Second, we should be alert to oppose government officials and public policy advocates who suggest that the free exercise of religion is limited to "freedom of worship." In the United States, for example, the guarantee of "free exercise" protects the right to come out of our private settings, including churches, synagogues, and mosques, to act upon our beliefs, subject only to the legitimate government powers necessary to protect public health, safety, and welfare. Free exercise surely protects religious citizens in acting upon their beliefs in public policy debates and in votes cast as citizens or as lawmakers.

As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said in a powerful address to a nationwide audience of Christian leaders, we Latter-day Saints are "eager to join hands . . . to guarantee the freedom of religion that will allow all of us to speak out [and act out] on matters of Christian conscience regarding the social issues of our time."⁸

We need to support the coalitions of religious leaders and God-fearing people who are coming together to defend the traditional culture of belief in God and the acknowledgment of His blessings.

IV.

In conclusion, I suggest to all believers everywhere that we have a solemn religious duty to be witnesses of God. We must affirm our religious faiths, unite to insist upon our right to the free exercise of our religions, and honor their vital roles in establishing and preserving and prospering nations.

I remind my fellow Christians of the solemn teaching of the Apostle John:



We need to support the coalitions of religious leaders and God-fearing people who are coming together to defend the traditional culture of belief in God and the acknowledgment of His blessings.

“And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world” (1 John 4:3).

The consequence of our failing to speak out as witnesses of God is evident in our Savior’s teaching about the salt that has lost its savor. Mixed with other substances—just as we can be diluted by the values of the world—it loses its unique influence on the mixture of the mass. As the Savior taught, “It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men” (Matthew 5:13).

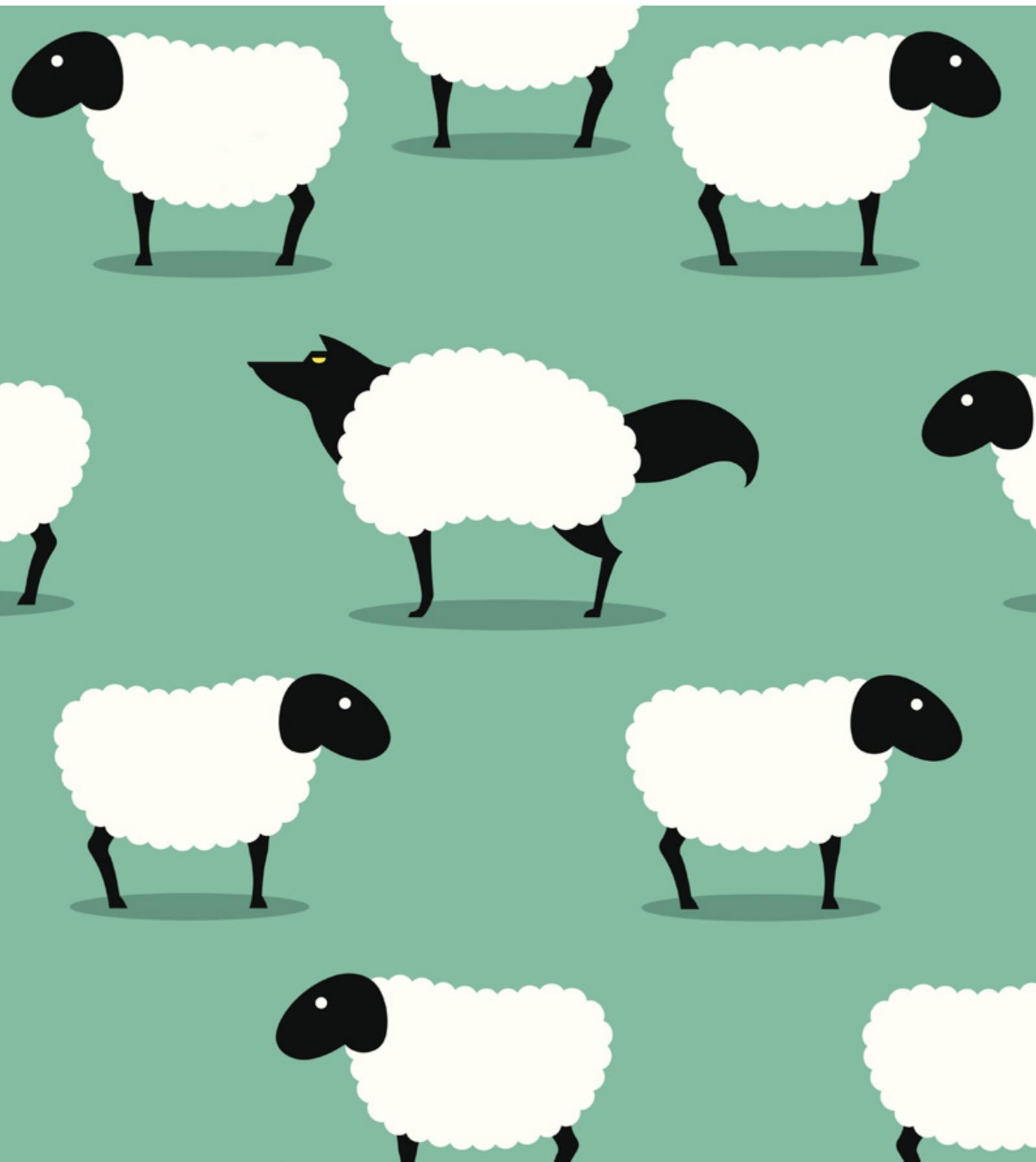
As “the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13), we Latter-day Saints must retain our savor by living our religion and by asserting ourselves as witnesses of God. When we do so, we associate ourselves with those who will enjoy

the ultimate victory of truth and righteousness, when “every knee shall bow . . . and every tongue shall confess to God” (Romans 14:11) and to the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we worship and whose servants we are. ■

From a devotional address, “Witnesses of God,” delivered at Brigham Young University–Idaho on February 25, 2014. For the full text in English, go to www2.byui.edu/DevotionalsandSpeeches.

NOTES

1. Stephen L. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion* (1993), 226; see chapter 11 generally.
2. Francis J. Beckwith and Gregory Kousser, *Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air* (1998), 12–13.
3. In Paul Kurtz, ed., *Humanist Manifestos I and II* (1973), 14, 15–16.
4. Chauncey Riddle, *Think Independently: How to Think in This World but Not Think with It* (2009), 120, 121.
5. In Kurtz, *Humanist Manifestos I and II*, 16.
6. See John A. Howard, *Christianity: Lifeblood of America’s Free Society, 1620–1945* (2008), 51.
7. Clayton Christensen, “Religion Is the Foundation of Democracy and Prosperity,” see mormonperspectives.com/2011/02/08/religion-is-the-foundation-of-democracy-and-prosperity.
8. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Standing Together for the Cause of Christ,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2012, 46; *Liahona*, Aug. 2012, 26.



Satan's Rebellion

What is the true nature of what Satan proposed in the premortal council?

By Mark A. Mathews

Seminaries and Institutes

When I was a young man, I began noticing a curious tendency among some Church members. When they saw a situation where rules were agreed upon and consequences for disobedience were applied (for example, in Church discipline, parental discipline, or enforcing mission rules or standards of conduct at Church schools), they would often say, “But isn’t that like Satan’s approach? Aren’t they forcing people to be righteous?”

This response was surprising to me at first—how could someone think that practices approved of by the Lord and His Church could be part of “Satan’s plan”? I have since come to realize that misunderstandings like this about Satan’s rebellion and the War in Heaven are actually quite common, as are hasty accusations of what looks like that plan today. Unfortunately, these doctrinal misunderstandings can lead to damaging results.

For example, these misunderstandings could lead some parents to think they cannot encourage their children to attend church. They can lead Church members to support the legalization of serious moral sin. And these misunderstandings can even lead some Church members to think that making and keeping covenants and commitments of obedience is somehow contrary to God’s plan when, ironically, such covenant obedience is central to God’s true plan of salvation.

What the Scriptures Say

Some ideas about what Satan proposed in the premortal world appear to come more from tradition than from actual

revelation on the subject. As a result, it is helpful to return to the scriptures themselves to find out what the Lord has actually revealed on this important matter. In the scriptures, the primary source on what Satan proposed is in the first verses of the fourth chapter of Moses:

“And I, the Lord God, spake unto Moses, saying: That Satan, whom thou hast commanded in the name of mine Only Begotten, is the same which was from the beginning, and he came before me, saying—Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor.

“But, behold, my Beloved Son, which was my Beloved and Chosen from the beginning, said unto me—Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever.

“Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down;

“And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice” (Moses 4:1–4).

The Father of All Lies

From these verses it is clear that our Heavenly Father did not ask for volunteers to invent and present different and competing plans of salvation, as some have assumed.

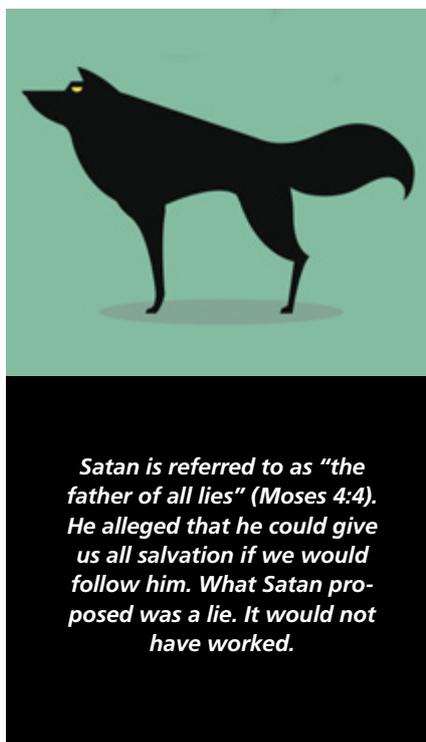
Rather, it was our Heavenly Father's plan, and He presented it to His spirit children who were gathered in the Grand Council in Heaven. Jesus Christ, who was "chosen from the beginning" to be the Savior in that plan, humbly proposed that Heavenly Father's plan be sustained, saying "Father, thy will [i.e., plan] be done." It was in this setting that Satan made an unwelcome and arrogant proposal to change Heavenly Father's plan so that it provided universal salvation for everyone (see Moses 4:1). Before we discuss how he claimed to accomplish this, it is important to note that Satan is referred to in these verses as "the father of all lies" (Moses 4:4). On another occasion he is called "a liar from the beginning" (D&C 93:25). We would be absurdly naïve to assume that Satan was telling the truth when he made this exaggerated claim of universal salvation.

If we understand Satan's character and history, it would be more appropriate to view him as the first con man trying to sell us a product that he knew he could never provide. He alleged that he could give us all salvation if we would follow him rather than the plan our Heavenly Father had created for our salvation and which was upheld by our Savior Jesus Christ.

What Satan proposed was a lie. It would not have worked. It was not a viable alternative to Heavenly Father's already perfect plan, but rather it was a trap set to ensnare and deceive people into following Satan. It was, in the end, a plan of damnation, not a plan of salvation.

Destroying Agency

Importantly, these verses of scripture do not clearly state *how* Satan proposed to carry out this lie. All that the scriptures state is that it would "destroy the agency of man" (Moses 4:3). President J. Reuben Clark (1871–1961), First



Counselor in the First Presidency, suggested two main possibilities for what Satan proposed to do and reminded us that neither would have worked. He explained: "As I read the scriptures, Satan's plan required one of two things: Either the compulsion of . . . man, or else saving men in sin. I question whether the intelligence of man can be compelled. Certainly men cannot be saved in sin" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1949, 193; quoted in *Doctrines of the Gospel Student Manual* [2010], 15).

Although neither of these possibilities would have worked, we see elements of each in Satan's efforts and tactics today. For example, compulsion and force are used today by tyrants seeking power over nations and by political activists who seek to limit religious freedom and compel society to accept sinful behavior. The Lord has specifically condemned the exercise of "control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness" (D&C 121:37).

However, the Lord also explained that power and influence can be used to encourage righteousness by loving persuasion, righteous reproof, and appropriate consequences (see D&C 121:41–43). This important clarification shows that carrying out proper Church and parental discipline, enforcing rules and standards in missions and Church schools, and establishing righteous laws in society are all practices approved of the Lord and not part of "Satan's plan." Honoring agency does not mean embracing anarchy.

The second possibility for how Satan proposed to save everyone is described in the Bible Dictionary: "Lucifer and his followers wanted salvation to come automatically to all who passed through mortality, without regard to individual preference, agency, or voluntary dedication" ("War in Heaven"). In other words, another interpretation is that Satan proposed to save us all, no matter what we did. This

would destroy agency by rendering it useless. If consequences of our choices were all removed and everyone received the same reward, our choices become meaningless and our agency is destroyed.

This interpretation of how Satan proposed to save us is also seen in many of his efforts and tactics that we are familiar with today. Satan is constantly promising people that they can live a life of sin and still be saved or that they can find happiness in wickedness. This seductive message of easy salvation and a lifestyle of sin is very popular today, as was Satan's proposal in the War in Heaven, when "many followed after him" (Abraham 3:28).

We can see by these examples that Satan's approach has not changed much since premortality. Satan continues to lie to people by promising them that if they follow him they will be saved or be happy or whatever else they want to hear. He also continues to use compulsion to try to force his unrighteous views and practices on others. Thus, "the warfare is continued in mortality. . . . The same issues are doing battle, and the same salvation is at stake" (Bible Dictionary, "War in Heaven").

A Plan of Rebellion

Perhaps the simplest way to describe Satan's plan is not based on speculative theories about what Satan proposed to do but on what his plan led him and his followers to actually do—that is, rebel. The scriptures repeatedly state that Satan openly rebelled against God. For example, the Lord declared that "Satan rebelled against me" (Moses 4:3); "an angel of God who was in authority in the presence of God . . . rebelled against the Only Begotten Son" (D&C 76:25); and "he rebelled against me, saying, Give me thine honor, which is my power" (D&C 29:36).

From these verses it is clear that Satan's proposal was not an innocent suggestion to amend God's plan. It was a rebellion, a revolt, an attempted mutiny to dethrone God and take over heaven. Those who followed Satan declared war in heaven and made themselves enemies to God. Their agency was destroyed because they refused to choose

"liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator," and instead chose "captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27). As a result, "a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from [God] because of their agency" (D&C 29:36).

In other words, the simplest way to view Satan's plan is as a plan of rebellion and disobedience to God. In contrast, God summarized His plan in these words: "And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them" (Abraham 3:25). In addition, "We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel" (Articles of Faith 1:3). Thus, God's plan is a plan of obedience and righteousness, while Satan's plan is one of disobedience and rebellion.

Recognizing the Plan

Properly understanding the difference between God's plan and Satan's goals will help us more clearly discern who is and who is not *really* following Satan. It will help us avoid accusing those who encourage righteousness and advocate obedience of following Satan's plan when they are actually following God's plan. It will also expose the true followers of Satan's plan today.

Those who protest and rebel against God and His prophets, those who seek to change God's plan, those who demand a lowering of the standards of righteousness and seek to compel others to accept immoral behavior, and those who seek to deceive people into believing that wickedness is happiness and that we can find salvation in sin, all support different elements of Satan's rebellious strategy.

May we follow Heavenly Father's true plan, a plan of salvation "through the Atonement of Christ" and by "obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel" (Article of Faith 1:3). ■

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To give feedback about this article or any article in the Liahona, please email liahona@ldschurch.org.





**By Elder
Ulisses Soares**
Of the Presidency
of the Seventy

HOLD ON TO THE ROD

If we exercise faith and diligently obey the commandments of the Lord, we can more easily choose the right.

I know a good member of the Church who had a difficult experience while in college. He was invited to a party at the house of a classmate. My friend's college professors were also invited, especially those who were friendly to the students. The party seemed inviting and secure.

When my friend arrived, however, he quickly realized that the atmosphere was not what he had expected. Students were drinking, smoking, using drugs, and doing horrible things in every corner of the house. He became concerned and decided to leave, but the party was being held far from his home. He had gotten a ride with friends, so he had no way to leave on his own.

At that moment he prayed silently to the Lord, asking for help. After some pondering, he felt that he should go outside. He followed his feelings and stayed outside the house until the party had ended.

During the ride home, his friends talked about the horrible things that had happened during the party. My friend felt

uncomfortable with the situation. It was not easy for him to bear.

However, when he partook of the sacrament the next day at church, he felt calm, peaceful, and certain he had made the correct decision. He realized what it means to grasp the iron rod and not let go, even in the mists of darkness. He understood clearly what Nephi had taught his brothers when he said that “whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction” (1 Nephi 15:24).

Imagine what might have happened had that young man, out of embarrassment, not been strong enough to hold on to the iron rod. As a result of this and other decisions in his life, he married a young woman in the temple, formed a righteous family, and became successful. He serves faithfully in the Church today and seeks to be a good example for his children.

The Natural Man

It is not easy to face daily temptation. We are all exposed to an environment that is hostile to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We live in a world that is deteriorating morally. Media and technology invite us to participate in destructive and life-shattering activities that oppose our beliefs and the values of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Pressures from friends who do not share our values, or who share our values but are weak in their faith, push us to participate in degrading behaviors. On top of this, we have to deal with the natural man that exists in each of us.

The Guide to the Scriptures defines the natural man as “a person who chooses to be influenced by the passions, desires, appetites, and senses of the flesh rather than by the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Such a person can comprehend physical things but not spiritual things. . . . Each person must be born again through the atonement of Jesus Christ to cease being a natural man.”¹

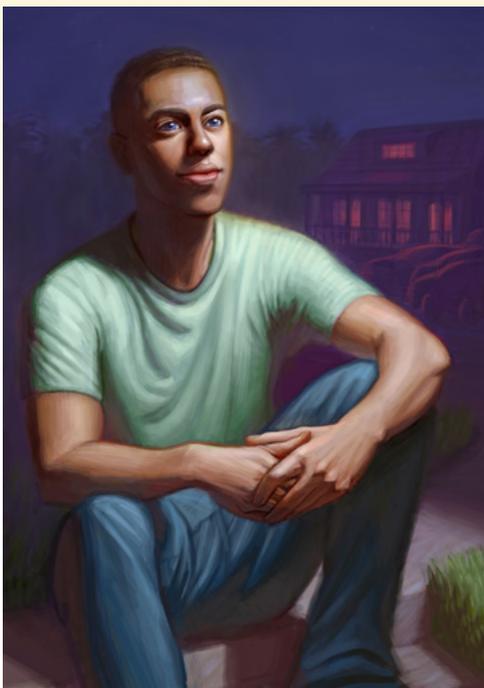
President Thomas S. Monson often quotes a simple adage that can help us avoid the distraction of temptation and keep us moving in the right direction: “You can’t be right by doing wrong, and you can’t be wrong by doing right.”²

If we exercise faith and diligently obey the commandments of the Lord, we can more easily choose the right.

The Light of Christ

The prophet Mormon taught his people:

“Wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in



My friend felt that he should leave the party and stay outside until it had ended. He realized what it means to grasp the iron rod and not let go, even in the mists of darkness.

Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

“But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him” (Moroni 7:16–17).

Our Heavenly Father has given us the Light of Christ, which is the “divine energy, power, or influence that proceeds from God through Christ and gives life and light to all things.”³ It helps a person choose between right and wrong. This gift, in conjunction with the companionship of the Holy Ghost, helps us to determine whether a choice places us in the territory of the Lord or behind enemy lines. If our behavior is good, that is evidence that we are being inspired by God. If our behavior is bad, that is evidence that

we are being influenced by the enemy.

My college friend used these two gifts. The Light of Christ helped him to identify what was right, and the Holy Ghost guided his decision about which path to follow. These two gifts are available to those who hold on to the iron rod.

The Gift of Repentance

Let us imagine that for some reason we have been deceived or confused by temptation and end up committing sin. What should we do? If we fall into temptation and sin, we have to reconcile ourselves with God. In the language of the scriptures, we must repent.

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught:

“When we sin, we turn away from God. When we repent, we turn back toward God.

“The invitation to repent is rarely a voice of chastisement but rather a loving appeal to turn around and to ‘re-turn’ toward God [see Helaman 7:17]. It is the beckoning of a loving Father and His Only Begotten Son to be more than we are, to reach up to a higher way of life, to change, and to feel the happiness of keeping the commandments. Being disciples of Christ, we rejoice in the blessing of repenting and the joy of being forgiven. They become part of us, shaping the way we think and feel.”⁴

Repentance is a wonderful gift available to all who desire to return to God and allow Him to mold their lives.

We were born with the seed of divinity in our spirits because we are God’s children. This seed needs to grow. It grows as we exercise our agency in righteousness, as we make correct decisions, and as we use the Light of Christ and the Holy Ghost to guide us in the decisions we make during the course of our lives. This process takes time, and it is not possible to shape our lives from one day to another.

Recognizing our dedication and perseverance, the Lord will give us what we are unable to obtain by ourselves. He will shape us because He sees our efforts to overcome our imperfections and human weaknesses.

In that regard, repentance becomes part of our daily lives. Our weekly taking of the sacrament—to come meekly, humbly before the Lord, acknowledging our dependence upon Him, asking Him to forgive and renew us, and promising to always remember Him—is very important.

Sometimes in our daily efforts to become more Christlike, we find ourselves repeatedly struggling with the same difficulties. It is as if we were climbing a tree-covered mountain. At times we don’t see our progress until we get closer to the top and look back from the high ridges. Don’t be discouraged. If you are striving and working to repent, you are in the process of repenting.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “Overcoming bad habits or addictions often means an effort today followed by another tomorrow and then another, perhaps for many days, even months and years, until we achieve victory.”⁵

As we improve, we see life more clearly and feel the Holy Ghost working more strongly within us. For those who are truly repentant but seem unable to feel relief, continue keeping the commandments. I promise you that relief will come in the timetable of the Lord. Healing requires time.

Let us maintain an eternal perspective by overcoming the natural man, judging by the Light of Christ, seeking guidance from the Holy Ghost, repenting when we fall short, and allowing our Heavenly Father to transform our lives into that which He has planned for us. ■

From a devotional address, “Becoming a Work of Art,” delivered at Brigham Young University on Nov. 5, 2013. For the full text in English, go to speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

1. Guide to the Scriptures, “Natural Man”; scriptures.lds.org.
2. Thomas S. Monson, “In Harm’s Way,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 48.
3. Guide to the Scriptures, “Light, Light of Christ”; scriptures.lds.org.
4. Neil L. Andersen, “Repent . . . That I May Heal You,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 40.
5. D. Todd Christofferson, “Recognizing God’s Hand in Our Daily Blessings,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2012, 21; *Liahona*, Jan. 2012, 29.



A PROMISE TO ALL

“The Savior wrought the Atonement, which provides a way for us to become clean. . . . Those who will repent and forsake sin will find that His merciful arm is outstretched still. . . . The result of His sacrifice is to free us from the effects of sin, that all may have guilt erased and feel hope.”

President Boyd K. Packer,
President of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles,
“The Reason for Our
Hope,” *Ensign or Liahona*,
Nov. 2014, 6, 7.



THE SAVIOR'S RESPECT FOR Women

By Robert and Marie Lund

In a day when women were generally treated as inferior, John's Gospel reveals that Jesus Christ treated women with compassion and respect and that, as Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated, “the world's greatest champion of woman and womanhood is Jesus the Christ.”¹

This article focuses on the following women in the Gospel of John: (1) Mary, the mother of Jesus (see John 2:1–11; 19:25–27); (2) the Samaritan woman at the well (see John 4:4–30, 39–42); (3) the woman taken in adultery (see John 8:1–11); and (4) Mary Magdalene (see John 20:1–18). Although the life experiences of these women ranged widely, John highlights the Savior's understanding of the varying circumstances of their lives, and he records the blessings that came to each woman because of her faith in Jesus Christ.

By studying Christ's interactions with women in the book of John, we can better understand our potential relationship with Him.

Mary's Faith Preceded the First Public Miracle

John introduces the reader to Mary early in his Gospel. His account of Jesus Christ's first public miracle at the wedding in Cana contains a tribute to Mary's faith.

Mary's position at the wedding was likely one of responsibility.² When the guests "wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine" (John 2:3). This passage suggests that when Mary turned to Jesus Christ for help, she may have been respectfully expecting a miracle.³

In response, Jesus Christ said, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come" (John 2:4). In Joseph Smith's inspired rendering of this verse, the Savior asks Mary what she wants Him to do and promises to do it.⁴ The title *woman* may sound harsh and disrespectful to a modern reader; however, its use here by the Savior was likely meant to convey the opposite meaning.⁵ One scholar explains, "'Woman,' or, rather, 'Lady,' is in Greek a title of respect, used even in addressing queens."⁶ It was as though He said to His mother, "My lady, whatsoever you ask of me in faith, I will grant it unto you." This account shows that the Savior was interested in the routine pressures that women faced. Jesus Christ honored His mother by offering to help her with her burdens and responsibilities.

The account then records Mary's continued faith as she directed the servants to obey Jesus Christ: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it" (John 2:5). The water pots were filled, and the Savior turned the water into wine in response to Mary's request to help provide for the guests at the wedding. What a beautiful lesson we learn from Mary: when in need, seek after and trust in Jesus Christ, who has all power. Like Mary, Latter-day Saint women today can rely on Jesus Christ in faith when they are feeling overwhelmed with their responsibilities.

This brief account not only teaches the power of Mary's faith but also confirms Jesus Christ's true identity as the Son of God through His first public miracle. The next woman John introduces to the reader is the woman of Samaria.



What a beautiful lesson we learn from Mary: when in need, seek after and trust in Jesus Christ, who has all power.



Because of her faith, the Samaritan woman received a witness from the Spirit and desired to testify that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah.

Jesus Christ Showed Respect for a Woman from Samaria

The account in John 4 attests to Jesus Christ's respect toward all women, regardless of their nationality or religious background. Some Jews viewed the Samaritans as "more unclean than a Gentile of any other nationality"⁷ and shunned interactions with them. Not only did Jesus Christ set aside the traditions of the day, but Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has acknowledged the honor the Savior bestowed upon this woman: "The first time the Lord acknowledged Himself to be the Christ, it was to a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well."⁸

After traveling in the heat of the day, Jesus Christ stopped to rest and obtain water. The Savior initiated the conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well by asking for a drink. Gradually, through the conversation, she gained a testimony of His divinity. John records that she first addressed Jesus as "a Jew," then "Sir," then "prophet," and finally as "the Christ" (see John 4:9–29). Her increasingly respectful choice of titles indicates that she developed faith in Jesus Christ and was converted.

The Savior taught her that He had "living water" (John 4:10) and that those who drank from it would never thirst. Puzzled, the woman inquired further. Jesus Christ then revealed the Samaritan woman's past life and her present sinful relationship. Although she may have felt embarrassed, perhaps she also felt that Jesus Christ spoke with respect, because she thoughtfully responded, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet" (John 4:19). Her sins already revealed, with nothing left to hide, the woman exercised faith in Jesus Christ as He taught her. One of His responses can be a key to gaining salvation: "Woman [or, my lady], believe me" (John 4:21).

Because of her faith, the Samaritan woman received a witness from the Spirit and desired to testify that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah. Leaving her water pot (symbolic of her worldly possessions), she went to the city and proclaimed, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4:29).

Becoming an instrument in God's hands, the Samaritan woman's faith and missionary zeal helped soften the hearts of others to accept Jesus Christ.

By featuring this experience, John shows that the Savior is aware of women and knows the details of their lives. Furthermore, He respects all women regardless of their background. For women who don't feel that they have a relationship with Christ or feel like an outcast in their own society, this account shows that Jesus Christ knows each woman's challenges and can accept and lift her. John's Gospel emphasizes this point by teaching about Christ's compassion for the woman caught in adultery.

Jesus Christ Showed Compassion for the Woman Taken in Adultery

John 8 contrasts the ruthless treatment of the woman by the Pharisees with the gentle respect and compassion that Jesus Christ showed her. Perhaps in an attempt to allow the Pharisees to realize and retract their harsh treatment of the woman, the Savior "stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not" (John 8:6). The act of "writing on the ground was a symbolical action well known in antiquity, signifying unwillingness to deal with the matter in hand."⁹

Nevertheless, the scribes and Pharisees continued to pester Jesus Christ and embarrass the woman. Out of compassion for the woman, Jesus "lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground" (John 8:7-8). Standing exposed and self-condemned, the accusers one by one shamefully filed out, leaving only the adulterous woman to face Jesus.

To her credit, the woman stayed at the side of Jesus Christ instead of fleeing. She likely felt lifted and strengthened by the respect with which Jesus treated her. He asked, "Woman [or, my lady], where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:10-11).¹⁰



To her credit, the woman in John 8 stayed at the side of Jesus Christ instead of fleeing. She likely felt lifted and strengthened by the respect with which Jesus treated her.



Mary Magdalene was chosen as the first person to witness and then be commissioned to testify of the resurrected Savior. The Lord continues to rely on women in our day to stand as witnesses of Him.

Again, John's Gospel testifies that Jesus Christ treated women with compassion and respect, regardless of their sins. Inasmuch as all have sinned, we can gain great hope from the example of this woman who exercised faith in Jesus Christ. Just as the Savior showed empathy to this woman under troubled and distressful circumstances, He comforted Mary Magdalene when He found her in tears at the garden tomb.

Mary Magdalene Was Chosen as a Witness of the Resurrected Christ

John is the only Gospel author who identifies the first person to see the resurrected Lord, showing that valiant and capable women can receive great spiritual manifestations. John records, "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre" (John 20:1). Seeing that the stone was taken away, Mary ran to obtain help and to alert the Apostles that Jesus's body was missing. She found Peter and John, who ran to the sepulchre and found only the burial clothes. Then the two Apostles left, leaving Mary alone at the garden tomb.

Mary was weeping in the garden by the sepulchre: the thought of not knowing what had happened to the body of the Lord may have overwhelmed her. Although the Savior appeared and spoke to her, she did not initially recognize Him. But then "Jesus saith unto her, Mary" (John 20:16). Something caused her to know that it was her Savior. "The recognition was instantaneous. Her river of tears became a sea of joy. It is He; he has risen; he lives."¹¹ After witnessing the resurrected Lord, Mary was asked to testify to the Apostles that He was alive.

Although the disciples were initially skeptical (see Luke 24:11), Mary's witness must have had some impact. Later, the disciples were gathered to discuss the events of the day, likely pondering the testimony of Mary, when Jesus "stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you" (John 20:19).



This experience emphasizes Jesus Christ's high regard for women, because Mary Magdalene was chosen as the first person to witness and then be commissioned to testify of the resurrected Savior. The Lord continues to rely on women in our day to stand as witnesses of Him. Elder M. Russell Ballard has declared, "Our dispensation is not without its heroines. Countless women from every continent and walk of life have made dramatic contributions to the cause of Christ. . . . My question is, 'Will you be one of those women? And will you men who hold the priesthood answer the same call?'"¹²

We Can Follow Their Example

Through faith in Jesus Christ, we can follow the example of these women in the writings of John. We can trust that the Savior understands the routine pressures of our lives and can help carry our burdens. We can believe Jesus Christ will lift us notwithstanding our transgressions. In addition, we may know that Christ can succor us in our deepest sorrows, sufferings, and anguish. ■

The authors live in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. (1916), 475.
2. See Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (1965–73), 1:135.
3. See James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 145.
4. See Joseph Smith Translation, John 2:4 (in John 2:4, footnote a).
5. See James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 144–145.
6. In J. R. Dummelow, ed., *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (1909), 778.
7. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 172.
8. M. Russell Ballard, "Women of Righteousness," *Ensign*, Apr. 2002, 66; *Liahona*, Dec. 2002, 34.
9. In Dummelow, ed., *Commentary*, 788–89.
10. The Joseph Smith Translation adds that from that moment on, the woman glorified God and believed in Him (see Joseph Smith Translation, John 8:11).
11. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 4 vols. (1979–81), 4:263.
12. M. Russell Ballard, *Ensign*, Apr. 2002, 69–70; *Liahona*, Dec. 2002, 38–39.



WHEN Doubts AND Questions ARISE

Questions are a critical part of our eternal growth, and searching for answers in the Lord's way can bring us closer to our Heavenly Father.

By Adam Kotter

Largely because of the Internet, it is not uncommon for members of the Church to encounter ideas that challenge their beliefs. Some members find the questions raised to be disconcerting and wonder whether it is acceptable to have a question about their faith.

It is important to understand that it's good to have questions. In fact, asking questions in faith is essential to our spiritual progress. However, sincere questions are not the same thing as doubts.

Questions versus Doubts

What, then, is the difference between a question and a doubt? Questions, when asked with a sincere desire to increase one's understanding and faith, are to be encouraged. Many ancient and modern revelations have come as the result of a sincere question.¹ The scriptural injunction to seek and to ask in order to find is among the most frequently repeated. Sincere questions are those asked with the "real intent" (Moroni 10:4) to better understand and more fully obey the will of the Lord.

A sincere questioner continues to be obedient while searching for answers. By contrast, I have seen that when people doubt their beliefs, they often suspend their commitment to commandments and covenants while waiting

for answers. The doubter's posture is generally to withhold obedience or limit it, pending resolution of the doubts.

There is no suggestion in the scriptures or the teachings of the prophets that encourages doubt. In fact, the scriptures are full of teachings to the contrary. For example, we are enjoined to "doubt not, fear not" (D&C 6:36). And in Mormon 9:27, we are encouraged to "doubt not, but be believing."

One problem with doubt is the intent to obey *only after* the uncertainty is resolved to the satisfaction of the doubter. This is the attitude personified by Korihor, who said, "If thou wilt show unto me a sign . . . then will I be convinced of the truth" (Alma 30:43).

The power of doubt to destroy faith, hope, and even family is diminished the minute one sincerely says, "I will do the things the Lord has commanded, whether my questions are resolved quickly or ever, *because I have covenanted to do so.*" The difference between a faithful "I will keep the commandments *because . . .*" and a doubtful "I will keep the commandments *if . . .*" is of powerful and eternal import.

The Lord's Pattern for Receiving Answers

As a network engineer, I have to follow strict guidelines if I want my computer networks to be able to communicate with other networks. Sometimes these rules can seem

tedious, but when each network engineer follows the same standards, we are able to create something more powerful than each of us working on our own could.

Likewise, if you seek an answer to a spiritual question from the Source of all knowledge, then you have to follow His rules to get the answer. This process requires at least a desire to understand the truth and a willingness to follow God's will (see Alma 32:27). Otherwise, you run the risk of talking yourself into the answers you want to believe rather than receiving true answers from God.

It is perfectly normal to feel concern and uneasiness when confronted with an unfamiliar idea, especially if it challenges a strongly held belief. What matters is not letting that uneasiness turn us from our covenants during our search for answers. I have learned from personal experience that we cannot turn our back on God and then expect Him to answer our questions on our terms. It takes faith to continue keeping the commandments while our uncertainty is being resolved. It may be tempting to withhold or limit our obedience pending convincing resolution of our concerns, but this is not God's way.

In practical terms, we must first ask ourselves, "Am I willing to do what it takes to get an answer from the Lord, or do I simply want to do things my way?" The Savior Himself taught this pattern when He said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17).

So the first step in resolving questions is to stand "steadfast and immovable in keeping the commandments of God" (Alma 1:25). Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles asked:

"How do you remain 'steadfast and immovable' during a trial of faith? You immerse yourself in the very things that helped build your core of faith: you exercise faith in Christ, you pray, you ponder the scriptures, you repent, you keep the commandments, and you serve others.

"When faced with a trial of faith—whatever you do, don't step away from the Church! Distancing yourself from the kingdom of God during a trial of faith is like leaving



Distancing yourself from the kingdom of God during a trial of faith is like leaving the safety of a secure storm cellar just as the tornado comes into view.

the safety of a secure storm cellar just as the tornado comes into view."²

Elder Andersen also taught that "faith . . . is a decision."³ The Lord will not force your intellect or your obedience. You must choose faith intentionally! That choice does not violate your intellectual honesty; it is evidence of eternal and divine respect for your agency.

Questions Increase Understanding

Some incorrectly suppose that having sincere concerns about Church history or doctrine is evidence that one is not living up to the standards of the Church. Having questions does not mean you are guilty of some great sin. Questions are a part of life and are necessary for our progression and increased understanding. The concern is not if we develop questions but if we keep the commandments as we work through the process of revelation that leads to answers.

Be aware that Satan can magnify our doubts or lead us to justify our sins. The Holy Ghost will prompt us with uncomfortable feelings when we sin, and we can either repent or reject these promptings. As doubts arise, it may be useful to honestly ask yourself, Is there something I am doing or desiring that is contrary to the gospel? If you answer yes, seek help from your bishop. It can make all the difference! Letting your doubts justify your sins is never a successful substitute for repenting.

Some people also stumble over statements made by Church leaders that have turned out to be incorrect, not about doctrine but in their personal opinions. For example, President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) wrote in the first edition of his book *Answers to Gospel Questions*, “It is doubtful that man will ever be permitted to make any instrument or ship to travel through space and visit the moon or any distant planet.”⁴

Later, following the Apollo moon landings and the death of President David O. McKay, Joseph Fielding Smith became President of the Church. At a press conference, a reporter asked him about this statement. President Smith replied, “Well, I was wrong, wasn’t I?”⁵

As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles observed: “We [can] consume such precious emotional and spiritual capital clinging tenaciously to . . . an incident in Church history that proved no more or less than that mortals will always struggle to measure up to the immortal hopes placed before them.”⁶

Searching in an Uplifting Way

Volumes of books have been written and countless hours have been spent exploring the story of the Restoration. This often leads to an increased understanding, but it can also prompt uncomfortable questions, especially when we don’t understand the motives of the people at the time. It is also easy to get bogged down in searching for historical

facts that may be misunderstood or lost to us now, but it is always possible to get real and relevant information from the One who understands all.

This is perhaps the most important key of all: *when we are firm in keeping our covenants and living true to the light we have, the Lord will bless our lives and give us inspiration.* I have felt these tender mercies; they are very personal, direct experiences between us and our Heavenly Father. They are light and knowledge. No amount of reading or studying third-hand experiences can match the power of first-hand experiences given to us by the mercy and love of our Father.

Questions will continue to come up as we pursue a course of daily scripture and other gospel study. When the Lord wants to teach us, He will often do it by giving us a question to ponder. Answers come by being faithful to our covenants and serving others as we study, because that is the pathway to having personal experiences that, over time, provide the answers to all questions. ■

The author lives in Georgia, USA.

Answers to many gospel questions can be found at lds.org/topics.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Genesis 25:21–23; Exodus 3:11–22; Mosiah 26; Alma 40; 3 Nephi 27; Doctrine and Covenants 76; 77; 138.
2. Neil L. Andersen, “Trial of Your Faith,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 40.
3. Neil L. Andersen, “You Know Enough,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 14.
4. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions* (1958), 5 vols., 2:191.
5. Personal reminiscence of David Farnsworth; the press conference took place on Jan. 23, 1970, six months after the moon landing.
6. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Laborers in the Vineyard,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 32.



DOCTRINAL CERTAINTIES

“I can live with some human imperfections, even among prophets of God—that is to be expected in mortal beings. I can live with some alleged scientific findings contrary to the Book of Mormon; time will correct those. And

I can live with some seeming historical anomalies; they are minor in the total landscape of truth. But I cannot live without the doctrinal truths and ordinances restored by

Joseph Smith, I cannot live without the priesthood of God to bless my family, and I cannot live without knowing my wife and children are sealed to me for eternity. That is the choice we face—a few unanswered questions on one hand versus a host of doctrinal certainties and the power of God on the other.”

Tad R. Callister, Sunday School general president, “What Is the Blueprint of Christ’s Church?” (CES devotional, Jan. 12, 2014); cesdevotionals.lds.org.

YOU MUST PRAY

On January 12, 2010, Heavenly Father showed me His power after a four-story concrete building collapsed around and on me following a terrible earthquake that devastated Haiti.

While I was crying out under the weight of the rubble, a peaceful voice spoke to me: “Jimmy, why don’t you pray instead of shout?”

I couldn’t stop shouting, however, because I was afraid I was going to die within a few minutes. The voice, which sounded like a good friend motivated by a great desire to help, spoke to me again: “Jimmy, you must pray.”

The pain in my legs was becoming unbearable, and I was running

out of oxygen in the darkness that surrounded me. The voice came one more time: “Jimmy, you must pray.”

At that moment I stopped resisting. In a feeble voice I said: “Heavenly Father, Thou knowest my strength, and Thou knowest how long I can bear this pain. I ask Thee, please take this pain from me. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.”

Immediately after uttering this simple prayer, I fell asleep. I don’t remember what happened after that, but when I awoke from a profound sleep, the pain was gone. A short while later, rescuers found me as they searched for victims among

the ruins of my office building.

Afterward I learned that of the five employees on the second floor of the Port-au-Prince building where I worked, I was the only one who came out of the debris alive. Because of my injuries, I lost one of my legs and spent several months in the hospital. But I know that the Holy Ghost prompted me to pray and that Heavenly Father answered that prayer.

I can testify that Heavenly Father answers our prayers in His own way and according to His own desires—wherever we are and whenever we pray. ■

Jimmy Saint Louis, Haiti



WHAT I LEARNED CHANGED MY HEART

After the death of our 18-year-old son, Jaxon, I reflected deeply on the quality and direction of my life. I had a child in the eternities, and I had an intense desire to live my life in a way so that someday we could again enjoy our family relationship. I also wanted to better understand the scriptures so that they would guide my life.

I am not quite sure when my interest in the heart began, but it was fueled by the hope of seeing our son again. As I read the Book of Mormon, I began to notice how the heart was used symbolically as the condition of a person's life or a people's direction or condition.

Every time the heart was mentioned, whether hard or soft, I would make a little red heart in the margin. I began to see patterns. When the hearts of the people were softened, they had strength to handle adversity, their love for others increased, and they became kinder and gentler. I learned that repentance is what changes hearts as we call upon the Savior and His atoning sacrifice.

I enjoyed a wonderful journey through the Book of Mormon. What I learned changed my heart, which has changed my life. What I learned has also helped me in my professional work as I assist couples through their

challenges. I have come to understand that I can teach and remind couples about the common principles that bring marital satisfaction and true intimacy. But until they bring a soft heart to their marriage, change has little chance of occurring or enduring.

Since the time I made the hearts in the margins of my Book of Mormon, I have returned often to reread those passages and have continued to learn from those verses. I have even found new heart passages that I missed on the first reading, which reminds me that there will always be something new in the scriptures to learn, understand, and apply.

Most significant, I am reminded of the love of my Heavenly Father and my Savior. Because of that love, I will have my family forever. I know this with all of my heart, for which I am deeply grateful. ■

Darcy Logan, Alaska, USA



The pain in my legs was becoming unbearable, and I was running out of oxygen in the darkness that surrounded me.



After quickly cleaning and buffing my companion's shoes, I would carefully put them back where they were.

MY COMPANION'S CELESTIAL SHOES

Years ago, after leaving the Provo Missionary Training Center, I arrived in Florida feeling prepared and excited to get started in the mission field. When I met my new companion, we had many of the same interests and our companionship seemed like a perfect fit.

After a few weeks, however, I noticed some differences. For example, I was ready to go tracting every day, but my companion was not so enthusiastic about knocking on doors. In fact, even though he was the senior companion, he chose not to do much of it.

I also noticed that my companion seemed to talk a lot about himself. His family was financially well-off, and he had experienced many things

that I, coming from lesser circumstances, had not.

These things started to develop some uncomfortable feelings inside of me, almost to the level of resentment. Harboring resentment toward my companion affected me spiritually, especially while I was attempting to teach the gospel. I had to do something. At first I considered talking to my companion and simply venting all my frustrations. But I chose a different approach.

Each morning my companion and I would take turns showering and preparing for the day. While he was in the shower, I decided to sneak over to the foot of his bed and shine his wingtip shoes. After quickly cleaning and buffing them, I would carefully put his

shoes back where they were. I did this every morning for about two weeks.

During this time I noticed that my resentment began to leave. As I served my companion, my heart began to change. I said nothing to him about my little act of service. One day, however, my companion mentioned that he must have been blessed with "celestial shoes" because they never seemed to get dirty.

I learned two great lessons from this experience. First, I learned that the real problem was within me—even though the catalyst for my feelings came from outside. My companion was fine.

Second, I knew that we generally serve those we love. But I didn't realize that the same principle works in reverse: we come to love those we serve. ■

Michael Reid, Arizona, USA

I RECOGNIZED THE PROPHET'S VOICE

One Sunday night about three months after I had moved from my native Mexico to the United States to attend school, I flipped through several radio stations trying to find some good Sunday music. As I listened to several local stations, I heard a familiar voice and stopped.

I suspected that the voice was that of President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), who was President of the Church at the time. I realized that it was odd for me to be able to distinguish his voice. I was accustomed to listening to general conference, Church Educational System firesides, and other Church broadcasts through the voice of a Spanish interpreter speaking over the speaker's voice. Yet somehow I knew the voice on the radio was that of President Hinckley.

I wasn't yet fluent enough in English to understand what he was saying, but I listened to the talk on the radio anyway. His voice brought a feeling

of peace. When the talk ended, the radio announcer said, "We have just heard President Gordon B. Hinckley."

I knew that the Lord speaks through His servants and that whether the message comes by His voice or that of His prophets, it is the same (see D&C 1:38).

I thought about how unusual it was that I had recognized President Hinckley's voice. Having done so made me realize that I always want to be able to recognize the voice the

Lord uses to communicate with His children—regardless of the source.

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me," the Savior said (John 10:27).

In a world filled with many voices—many "stations"—to flip through, I hope I can always be attuned to recognize the voice of my Shepherd and His servants and to be willing to follow their counsel. ■

Miriam Ruiz, Utah, USA

As I listened to several local stations, I heard a familiar voice and stopped.



What We Learned Parents

Young adults share how they are using the lessons they learned from their parents.

from Our

DILIGENT WORK

In my home I learned to work hard. My family used a system we called the "diligence list." At the beginning of the month, we received a list of various chores, such as doing the dishes, caring for the horses, and so on. We checked off the chores as we completed them, and then at the end of the month, we were given an amount of money for our diligent work based on how many check marks we had on the chart. From this I have learned to work diligently and to be careful with money.

Peter Stegeby of Västerbotten, Sweden



RIGHTEOUS PARENTHOOD

As a single parent, my mother had many things to do, but she always took time to help me, comfort me, or simply listen to me. Knowing that she was always there was invaluable, and I want to give that to my own children in the future.

When my mother remarried, her new husband chose to become the father of my older brother and me. Soon afterward, a little sister joined our family, but I have never felt the slightest difference in the affectionate and loving way he has taken care of us all as his own. Thanks to his attitude, my older brother and I have been able to grow up in a strong and unified family with the priesthood in the home. The day we were sealed as a family was very special. His loving example has taught me that a father isn't just something you are—it's something you become.

Amanda Cornelius of Stockholm, Sweden



DIVINE PROTECTION

When I was a child, my dad worked far away and always came home when it was pitch dark. I would stay awake until he came home. But one day he was very late, and I couldn't reach him on the phone. I was very scared. I remembered that my parents had taught me to pray always and to ask for help whenever I was scared, so I knelt down and prayed that my father would return home safely. To my surprise, as I ended my prayer, I heard my dad's bike outside. I was so grateful to my Heavenly Father for watching over my father.

As a young adult, whenever I'm confused or scared, the first person who comes to my mind is Heavenly Father. I know He is always with me and He listens to my prayers.

Rohini Krishnan of Bangalore, India

PRAYER

One night I went in my parents' bedroom to ask my dad something, but he was kneeling in prayer, so I left and returned a few minutes later to find him in the same position. I decided to get ready for bed, thinking he would surely be done praying when I was finished with my bedtime routine. I returned to my parents' bedroom about 10 minutes later to find him still praying! Seeing that example from my father strengthened my testimony. He was truly pouring his heart out in prayer to Heavenly Father.

Jen Hansen of Idaho, USA



TEMPLE MARRIAGE

I'm grateful that my parents shared the story of their relationship with me. They became good friends at age 14, and they grew up and learned together. With time, their friendship developed into true love, and they were married in the temple. I plan to follow my parents' example of marrying in the temple and hope that I will experience happiness and true love as they have.

Pasăre Ana Maria of Prahova, Romania





A CHRIST-CENTERED HOME

Jesus Christ has always been at the center of my parents' relationship. They focus on creating a home where the Spirit resides and set a high priority on family scripture study, family prayer, and family home evening.

My mother was called to visit teach a young mother who was struggling after a recent divorce. I often came home to my mom babysitting this woman's two young boys. Occasionally we would stop by this woman's home as we were running errands, and my mom would leave a note at the door. I am so grateful for my mom's example that charity "seeketh not her own" (Moroni 7:45).

My parents are always learning and using their new skills and knowledge to build up the kingdom of God. Because of their example, I have made education a priority in my own life. The example of my parents led me to marry a man who also has Jesus Christ at the center of his life.

Rachel Nielsen of Utah, USA

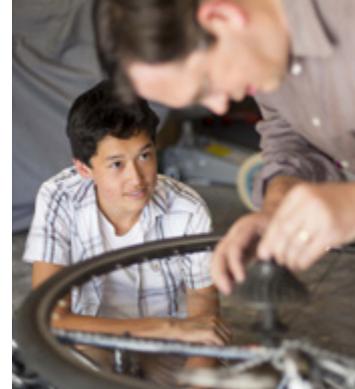


RELIANCE ON HEAVENLY FATHER AND JESUS CHRIST

My dad can repair just about anything. As a teenager, I asked him how he was able to fix things so well. He said, "Before I start working, I say a prayer to ask Heavenly Father to help me. Then I go to work." His example has taught me to be humble and to seek heavenly inspiration.

When my mother has felt disheartened, she has sought healing and peace at the Savior's feet. When I have had similar moments, she has encouraged me to draw on the power of the Atonement. As a young adult, I continue to find the Savior's peace and reassuring love by following her righteous example.

Isak Malm of Jönköping, Sweden



YOUNG ADULTS

DIVINE NATURE

When I was young, my parents planted within me the pure love from my Father in Heaven. I began to know Him as my mom sang "I Am a Child of God" (*Hymns*, no. 301) to me, and over time my parents' examples have been my greatest inspiration to come to know and love my Father in Heaven through service and by faithfully attending Church meetings and activities.

Marlin Ortega Vásquez of Managua, Nicaragua

A New Destination

By Amancay Kotecka-Miño

Sometimes my life feels like one continuous plane flight. My mother is Ecuadorian and my father is Polish. I was born in Ecuador, but when I was 10 years old we moved to Spain. We lived there just two years. When I was 12 that plane took off again, this time for Poland. I yearned for stability, friends and family nearby, and to be done with good-byes.

Initial Encounters with the Elders

There was knocking at our door. I opened it to find two young men standing there. Tactlessly, I closed the door before they could say anything.

“Open the door again and say you are sorry,” my father’s voice commanded from the back of the house. “We did not teach you to treat people this way!”

Feeling a little ridiculous, I opened the door. “I’m sorry,” I mustered.

“I want to know about you, about your beliefs. Please come in,” my father invited. The young men introduced themselves as missionaries

from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Reluctantly, I listened to their message—at age 13, I had no choice but to participate.

For four months those missionaries visited my home, teaching the doctrines of the restored Church of Jesus Christ. “We respect and admire your courage, but we will never change our religion,” my father finally told them, and we never saw those elders again.

A Desire to Find the Truth

Two years passed, and changing family circumstances forced me into a profound sadness. My father had left Poland in search of work so our family was divided. I felt desperate, searching for God. My prayers became more sincere, pleading with Heavenly Father to help me find His presence.

One day my mother told me, “Some person by the name of Garling asked for you. I told him to call back next week.” She knew that it was a missionary and wasn’t interested in the message, so she didn’t feel it necessary to respond quickly.

My whole life felt like never-ending plane rides. I yearned for peace and stability but never found it until I truly turned to the Lord.

That Friday night I again heard knocking at the door. This time I gave the emissaries a sincere welcome and a smile. “You are welcome in my home, but you need to know I will never become a Mormon,” I told them.

These elders taught me anyway—every Friday afternoon for six months. Loads of my mom’s cookies and thousands of questions later, all my deepest questions began to be answered. It seemed like every time the missionaries visited, another piece of life’s puzzle came together. Intrigued, I finally did what the elders had asked me to do: pray and ask Heavenly Father if their words and the Book of Mormon were true. They assured me that God answers prayers.

Confirmation and Hesitation

As I prayed and studied the scriptures more deeply, these doctrines became sweet to my soul. For months I hesitated, feeling that I needed solid evidence, needed to know everything about the gospel before joining this Church. Finally, the words of the

world and became fearful that my choice to be baptized wouldn't be accepted by loved ones.

Little by little, mistakes and decisions made me deaf to the whisperings of the Spirit. My scriptures ended up in the deepest part of my trunk and I even stopped praying.

That prayer marked the beginning of my return to the Church, which I knew would require repentance. That Sunday, for the first time in nearly a year, I attended sacrament meeting. The next day I again decided to be baptized.

The Lord helped me through my difficult process of returning to what I had once known to be true. I now define those difficult circumstances as some of the sweetest blessings from God. He did not forget me. He listened to my prayers and waited for me to recognize His answer. He helped me through all the suffering I endured, strengthening and protecting me. In the process I gained greater clarity on the meaning of Christ's divine mission and His Atonement.

I was baptized in April 2011. My plane has taken off since—I now reside in France, which means more changes. However, I am now grateful to Him for my life and for the circumstances that He had me live through. Because of my testimony of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, I now understand that I am not alone, no matter what destinations life brings next. I don't know if my plane will take off again. The only thing I do know is that my new destination is that straight path that leads to life eternal with Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. ■

The author lives in France.



Savior in John 20:29 spoke to my soul: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." I decided to be baptized.

My parents required that I wait until I was an adult to be baptized, but the time waiting helped in my progression and knowledge of the gospel. Sadly, as my baptism date drew closer, I lost confidence in my answer. I got into the things of the

The Blessing of Repentance

My life was not turning out—too many tears and disappointments. It was hard to understand why my family had to undergo so many trials. Right before my last year of high school, my parents had to leave Poland. The prospect of relocating again caused me anguish. Finally, I again knelt in prayer, truly meaning my words: "Heavenly Father, Thy will be done, not mine."

STRENGTH BEYOND OUR OWN

*The enabling power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ
strengthens us to do and be good and to serve beyond
our own individual desire and natural capacity.*



**By Elder
David A. Bednar**
Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

I suspect that many Church members are much more familiar with the nature of the redeeming and cleansing power of the Atonement than they are with the strengthening and enabling power. It is one thing to know that Jesus Christ came to earth to die for us—that is fundamental and foundational to the doctrine of Christ. But we also need to appreciate that the Lord desires, through His Atonement and by the power of the Holy Ghost, to *live* in us—not only to direct us but also to empower us.

Most of us know that when we do wrong things, we need help to overcome the effects of sin in our lives. The Savior has paid the price and made it possible for us to become clean through His redeeming power. Most of us clearly understand that the Atonement is for sinners. I am not so sure, however, that we know and understand that the Atonement is also for saints—for good men and women who are obedient, worthy, and conscientious and who are striving to become better and serve more faithfully. We may mistakenly believe we must make the journey from good to better and become a saint all by ourselves,

through sheer grit, willpower, and discipline, and with our obviously limited capacities.

The gospel of the Savior is not simply about avoiding bad in our lives; it also is essentially about doing and becoming good. And the Atonement provides help for us to overcome and avoid bad and to do and become good. Help from the Savior is available for the entire journey of mortality—from bad to good to better and to change our very nature.

I am not suggesting that the redeeming and enabling powers of the Atonement are separate and discrete. Rather, these two dimensions of the Atonement are connected and complementary; they both need to be operational during all phases of the journey of life. And it is eternally important for all of us to recognize that *both* of these essential elements of the journey of mortality—both putting off the natural man and becoming a saint, both overcoming bad and becoming good—are accomplished through the power of the Atonement. Individual willpower, personal determination and motivation, effective planning and goal setting are necessary but ultimately insufficient for us to triumphantly

complete this mortal journey. Truly, we must come to rely upon “the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah” (2 Nephi 2:8).

Grace and the Enabling Power of the Atonement

In the Bible Dictionary we learn that the word *grace* frequently is used in the scriptures to connote enabling power:

“[Grace is] a word that occurs frequently in the New Testament, especially in the writings of Paul. The main idea of the word is *divine means of help or strength*, given through the bounteous mercy and love of Jesus Christ.

“It is through the grace of the Lord Jesus, made possible by His atoning sacrifice, that mankind will be raised in immortality, every person receiving his body from the grave in a condition of everlasting life. *It is likewise through the grace of the Lord that individuals*, through faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ and repentance of their sins, *receive strength and assistance to do good works that they otherwise would not be able to maintain if left to their own means.* *This grace is an enabling power* that allows men and women to lay hold on eternal life and exaltation after they have expended their own best

efforts” (“Grace”; emphasis added).

Grace is the divine assistance or heavenly help each of us desperately needs to qualify for the celestial kingdom. Thus, the enabling power of the Atonement strengthens us to do and be good and to serve beyond our own individual desire and natural capacity.

In my personal scripture study, I often insert the term “enabling power” whenever I encounter the word *grace*. Consider, for example, this verse with which we are all familiar: “We know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23). I believe we can learn much about this vital aspect of the Atonement if we





will insert “enabling and strengthening power” each time we find the word *grace* in the scriptures.

Nephi’s Example

The journey of mortality is to go from bad to good to better and to have our very natures changed. The Book of Mormon is replete with examples of disciples and prophets who knew, understood, and were transformed by the enabling power of the Atonement in making that journey. As we come to better understand this sacred power, our gospel perspective will be greatly enlarged and enriched. Such a perspective will change us in remarkable ways.

Nephi is an example of one who knew, understood, and relied upon the enabling power of the Savior. Recall that the sons of Lehi had returned to Jerusalem to enlist Ishmael and his household in their cause. Laman and others in the party traveling with Nephi from Jerusalem

back to the wilderness rebelled, and Nephi exhorted his brethren to have faith in the Lord. It was at this point in their journey that Nephi’s brothers bound him with cords and planned his destruction. Please note Nephi’s prayer: “O Lord, according to my faith which is in thee, wilt thou deliver me from the hands of my brethren; yea, even *give me strength that I may burst these bands* with which I am bound” (1 Nephi 7:17; emphasis added).

Do you know what I likely would have prayed for if I had been tied up by my brothers? “Please get me out of this mess NOW!” It is especially interesting to me that Nephi did not pray to have his circumstances changed. Rather, he prayed for the strength to change his circumstances. And I believe he prayed in this manner precisely because he knew, understood, and had experienced the enabling power of the Atonement.

I do not think the bands with which Nephi was bound just magically fell

from his hands and wrists. Rather, I suspect he was blessed with both persistence and personal strength beyond his natural capacity, that he then “in the strength of the Lord” (Mosiah 9:17) worked and twisted and tugged on the cords, and ultimately and literally was enabled to break the bands.

The implication of this episode for each of us is straightforward. As you and I come to understand and employ the enabling power of the Atonement in our personal lives, we will pray and seek for strength to change our circumstances rather than praying for our circumstances to be changed. We will become agents who act rather than objects that are acted upon (see 2 Nephi 2:14).

The Savior Knows and Understands

In Alma chapter 7 we learn how and why the Savior is able to provide the enabling power:

“He shall go forth, suffering *pains* and *afflictions* and *temptations* of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the *pains* and the *sicknesses* of his people.

“And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their *infirmities*, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their

infirmities” (Alma 7:11-12; emphasis added). The Savior has suffered not just for our iniquities but also for the inequality, the unfairness, the pain, the anguish, and the emotional distresses that so frequently beset us.

There is no physical pain, no anguish of soul, no suffering of spirit, no infirmity or weakness that you or I ever experience during our mortal journey that the Savior did not experience first. You and I in a moment

of weakness may cry out, “No one understands. No one knows.” No human being, perhaps, knows. But the Son of God perfectly knows and understands, for He felt and bore our burdens before we ever did. And because He paid the ultimate price and bore that burden, He has perfect empathy and can extend to us His arm of mercy in so many phases of our life. He can reach out, touch, succor—literally run to us—and strengthen us to be more than we could ever be and help us to do that which we could never do through relying upon only our own power.

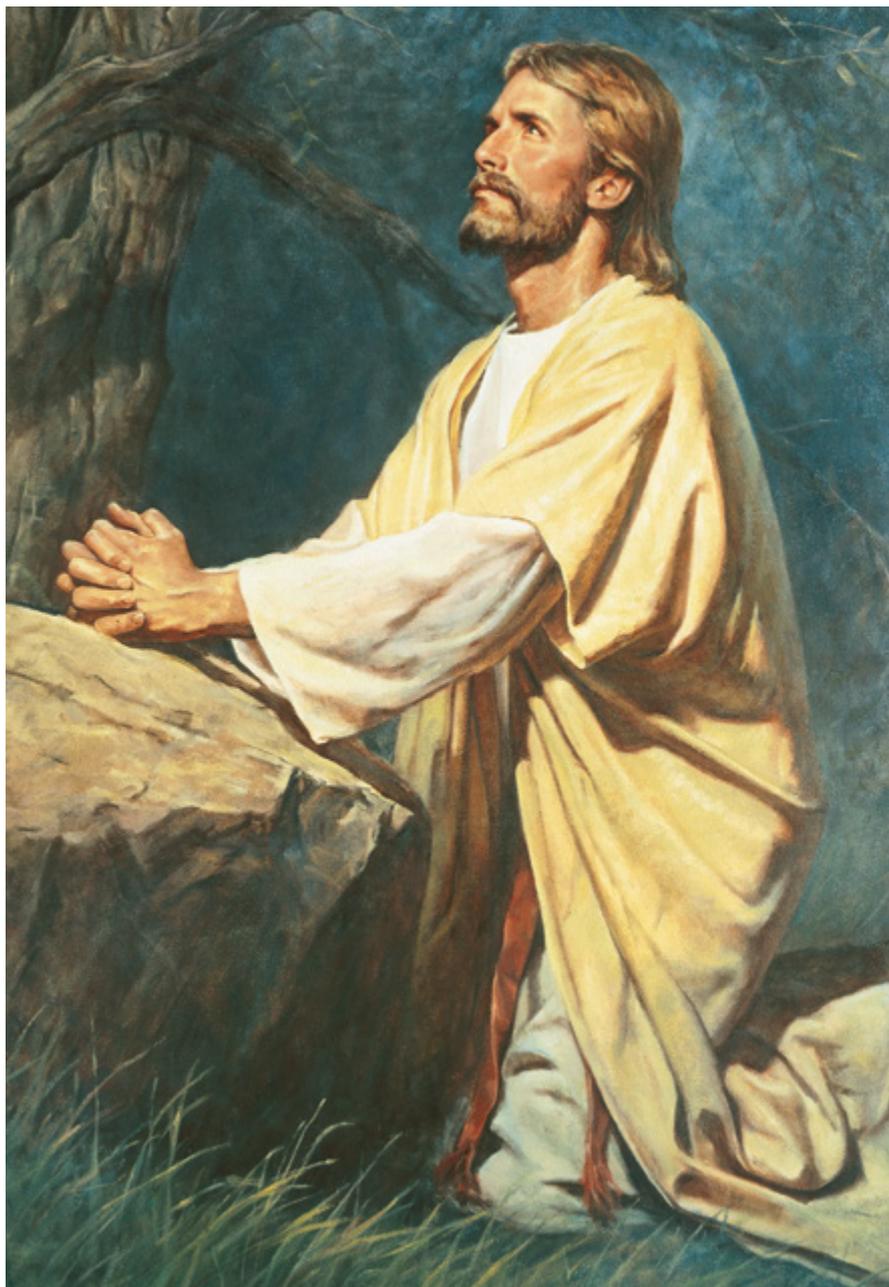
“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).

I declare my witness of and appreciation for the infinite and eternal sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. I know the Savior lives. I have experienced both His redeeming power and His enabling power, and I testify that these powers are real and available to each of us. Indeed, “in the strength of the Lord” we can do and overcome all things as we press forward on our journey of mortality. ■

From “The Atonement and the Journey of Mortality,” Ensign, Apr. 2012, 40–47; Liahona, Apr. 2012, 12–19.





By Randall L. Ridd
Second Counselor
in the Young Men
General Presidency

Don't Judge WHO IS READY

*You never know who
is ready to receive the
gospel.*

I'll always remember the dinner at my 40th high school reunion. I was anxious to see old friends I hadn't seen in years and find out what had happened in their lives since high school.

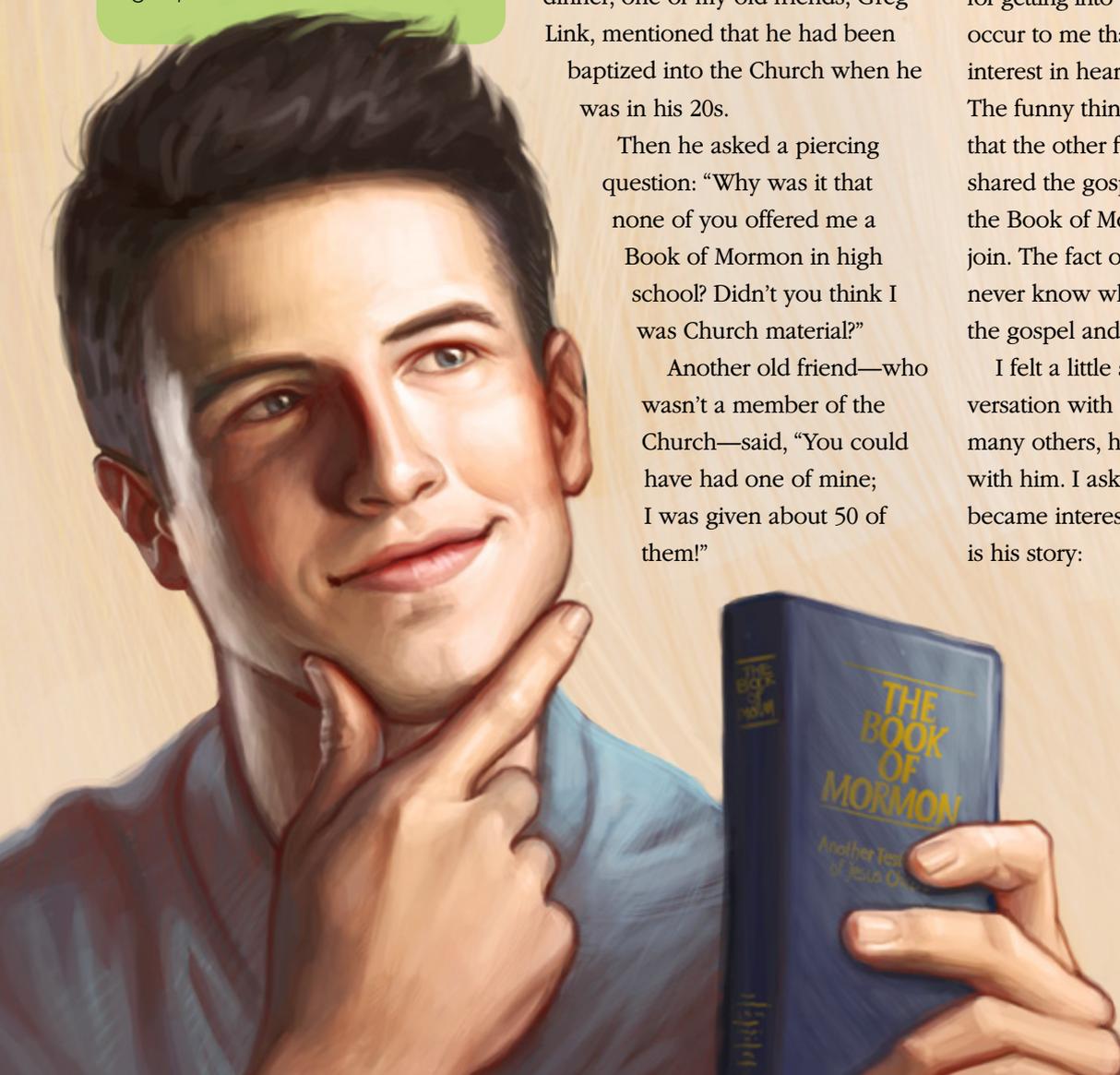
While we were chatting at a table with 8 or 10 other classmates during dinner, one of my old friends, Greg Link, mentioned that he had been baptized into the Church when he was in his 20s.

Then he asked a piercing question: "Why was it that none of you offered me a Book of Mormon in high school? Didn't you think I was Church material?"

Another old friend—who wasn't a member of the Church—said, "You could have had one of mine; I was given about 50 of them!"

I was stunned. Back in high school, if you had told me that Greg would be baptized and become a successful motivational speaker, I wouldn't have believed it. I really liked Greg. He was the kind of loyal friend you could count on when you needed him. But I knew he liked to party, and he had a knack for getting into trouble. It just didn't ever occur to me that he would have any interest in hearing about the Church. The funny thing was, I had believed that the other friend, with whom I had shared the gospel and given a copy of the Book of Mormon, would one day join. The fact of the matter is, you just never know who is ready to accept the gospel and who is not.

I felt a little sheepish after that conversation with Greg because I, like so many others, hadn't shared the gospel with him. I asked him how he finally became interested in the Church. Here is his story:



My family moved to Salt Lake City, Utah, when I was about 11, but I didn't join the Church until I was 24. Looking back, I can see why no one shared the gospel with me. I was not a golden contact on the surface. Actually, I was a bit of a rowdy kid. I got into fights and got into trouble at school regularly.

I had a number of LDS friends, but only one ever talked about the Church. And that was because I teased him about reading the Book of Mormon when he babysat.

I was curious about things, though. My mom took me to a local Christian church. I once asked them why Jesus hadn't come to the Americas. They kind of laughed at me for asking such a question, so I didn't ask anything else about it.

Years later I decided to visit the

visitors' center on Temple Square in Salt Lake City. There was a diorama on Christ in America. Suddenly I remembered my questions about that topic from my younger years. That's when the Spirit hit me, and I knew I was ready to listen.

The example of my friends from high school stayed with me. In fact, the people I respected most were LDS. Randy Ridd and his wife both went to my school. They were always great examples, very good people. That made a big impact on me later. I thought, "If Randy believed this was real, it must be important."

I don't know what might have happened if they had shared more about the gospel at the time. I might not have been ready. But looking back, I wish they had. I know it would have had an impact on me.



THE LORD PREPARES HIS CHILDREN

"The Lord loves all of His children. He desires that all have the fulness of His truth and the abundance of His blessings. He knows when they are ready, and He wants us to hear and heed His directions on sharing His gospel. When we do so, those who are prepared will respond to the message of Him who said, 'My sheep hear my voice . . . and they follow me' (John 10:27)."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Sharing the Gospel," *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 9; *Liahona*, Jan. 2002, 9.

I feel so grateful that my example had a positive impact on Greg. I would feel even better, though, if I had done something about it at the time. If I had shared the gospel or the Book of Mormon or even just invited Greg to an activity, it could have changed his life. He may have joined the Church sooner. Maybe he would have even served a mission.

I've learned that being a good example is

truly important, but so is the responsibility to share the gospel. The Lord has commanded us to do so: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

So don't be afraid to share. What's more, don't be too quick to judge who is ready and who is not. You might just be surprised whose heart has been softened, even if that interest is hidden deep down where you can't see it. ■

HAVE COURAGE TO SHARE THE GOSPEL



It takes courage to share the gospel with a stranger. Just ask a new full-time missionary. Sometimes it takes even more courage to ask your friends if they'd like to know about the Church, the Book of Mormon, or our beliefs.

You wonder: What if they're not interested? What if they're offended? What if they make fun of me? What if they say they hate me and never want to see me again?

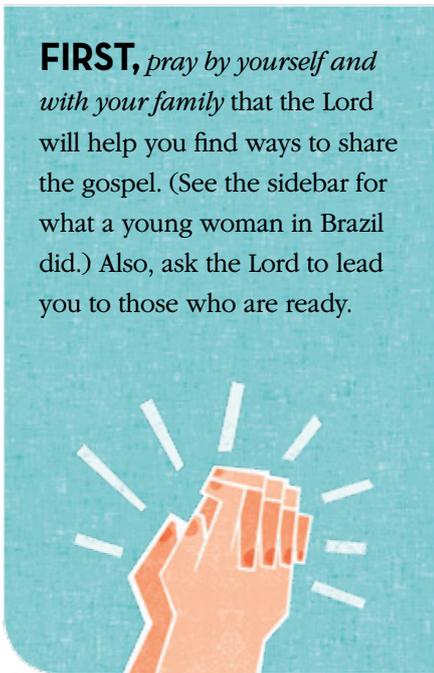
Don't worry. That's really not likely to happen. Your friends will probably just say, "No, thanks." But don't be surprised if some respond, "Sure, tell me more"—especially if you're living the gospel.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said: "We are members of the restored Church of Jesus Christ, empowered and sent forth by the Lord Himself to find, nourish, and bring safely into His Church those who are seeking to know the truth."

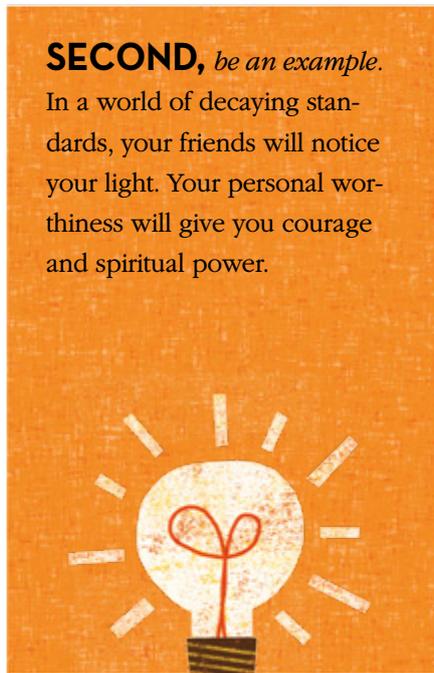
From that perspective, sharing the gospel is "simple and clear." But, Elder Ballard admitted, "missionary work can be challenging and sometimes frightening."

How can we overcome that fear? Elder Ballard suggests three ways below:

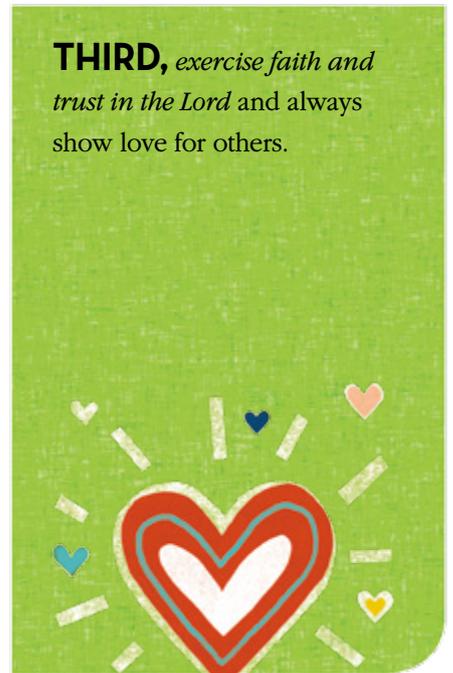
FIRST, *pray by yourself and with your family* that the Lord will help you find ways to share the gospel. (See the sidebar for what a young woman in Brazil did.) Also, ask the Lord to lead you to those who are ready.



SECOND, *be an example*. In a world of decaying standards, your friends will notice your light. Your personal worthiness will give you courage and spiritual power.



THIRD, *exercise faith and trust in the Lord* and always show love for others.



“Some members say, ‘I’m afraid to share the gospel because I might offend someone,’” Elder Ballard said. “Experience has shown that people are not offended when the sharing is motivated by the spirit of love and concern. How could anyone be offended when we say something like this: ‘I love the way my church helps me’ and then add whatever the Spirit directs?”¹

The duty to share the gospel belongs to all members of the Church—including you. So be brave and let the Lord bless your efforts. ■

NOTE

1. M. Russell Ballard, “The Essential Role of Member Missionary Work,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2003, 38, 39–40.



THE COURAGE OF BELIEVERS

“With the courage of our convictions, may we declare, with the Apostle Paul, ‘I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ’ (Romans 1:16). And then, with that same courage, may we follow Paul’s counsel: ‘Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity’” (1 Timothy 4:12).

President Thomas S. Monson, “Be Strong and of a Good Courage,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2014, 69.

THE MOST PRECIOUS THING I HAVE

By Mariana Santos

At our multistake youth conference, we all received a Book of Mormon and were invited to give it to someone. I wanted to give mine to my favorite pop singer.

When I found out he was giving a concert in my city, I thought this would be the perfect opportunity. Each of his concerts has a lottery that selects 15 fans to go backstage and meet him. It’s nearly impossible to be selected, but I entered anyway.

A few weeks before the concert, I wrote my testimony in a Book of Mormon and prayed. I explained to Heavenly Father that the odds were against me and that I needed His help.

As soon as I said “amen,” my cell phone rang with a call from the singer’s office. I had been selected!

Backstage on the day of the concert, I presented the singer with the book. He opened it and read my testimony: “I spent a lot of time thinking of a valuable, useful present for you. I realized that I needed to give you something that was valuable because of what it contained and not because of its price. This is the Book of Mormon; it is the most precious thing I have. It will be for you too if you read it.”

He gave me a hug and said he would read it. I couldn’t hold back my tears!

It’s a rare experience to give a Book of Mormon to a famous person. But sharing the book should be a common experience. I could have given it to a school friend, a neighbor, or anyone else.

Giving a Book of Mormon, bearing our testimony, speaking about the Church, and being an example are our duties. We should never be ashamed to share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The author lives in Brazil.



REMEMBER

It's Their Choice

Agency applies to everyone, including those you invite to learn about the Church.



INVITE OFTEN, AND INVITE EVERYONE.

Since it's impossible to know in advance who will or won't be interested in the gospel, share your invitations regularly and share them with as many as you can, paying particular attention to promptings of the Spirit. We succeed as missionaries when we invite people to learn and accept the truth.

As you invite others to learn about the gospel, it's important to realize that they have agency to choose whether or not to accept your invitation. Your success is not measured by their response; it is measured by your commitment to share.

So if success isn't measured by who said yes or who got baptized, what *should* you focus on as you create goals for missionary work? Set your sights on what *you* can do rather than on how others respond. Remember, you have agency too. You can choose to:



REMAIN FRIENDLY.

If someone declines an invitation to learn more, continue to be courteous and kind. Maintain friendships as long as standards are high. Extend Christlike love to everyone you can, even if they don't understand everything you believe and do.

STAY FAITHFUL.

The Savior said it best: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Love the gospel and live the gospel, and sooner or later you *will* find people who want to know why and who are prepared to accept the gospel.



FAITH TO SHARE

“We respect each person’s choice and timing. The Lord said, ‘Let every man choose for himself’ (D&C 37:4). A person’s lack of interest need not diminish our bonds of friendship and love. Whether or not the invitation is accepted as you invite others to ‘come and see,’ you will feel the approval of the Lord and, with that approval, an added measure of faith to share your beliefs again and again.”

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “It’s a Miracle,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May, 2013, 79.

How to Be a Successful Missionary

Looking for other tips on how to be a more successful missionary? Check out 10 great ideas on pages 10–11 of *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004).

BE PATIENTLY PERSISTENT.

As shown in the story at the right, sometimes it takes many invitations before the timing is right. Continue to open the door, continue to be friendly, and don’t become discouraged. The Lord is aware of your efforts and He will bless you. (See D&C 98:2.) ■

I ASKED AGAIN AND AGAIN

By Meiry Susana da Silva Rosa

I knew we are all supposed to share the gospel, but I had never had any success. Then, during a Spanish course I was taking, I met a young man named Tiago. We became friends and often walked home from school together. One day we passed an LDS chapel that had recently been built.

“I have been a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for several years,” I said. I shared with him some of the things that we believe, and told him how much my family and I have been blessed because of the gospel. I invited him to attend meetings that coming Sunday at 9:00 a.m.

Sunday arrived and I anxiously waited, but he did not come. During the week, I invited him again. This continued every week for two or three months. He always gave me a reason why he hadn’t shown up: “I slept late,” “I was tired,” “There were problems.” But I kept asking him anyway, and he didn’t seem to mind.

One Sunday morning I sat down on one of the benches toward the back of the chapel. There were still a few minutes to go before the meeting began when someone quietly called my name. I looked toward the door, and there was Tiago!

“Didn’t I promise you I would come one day?” he said. He attended sacrament meeting, and to my surprise, stayed for the rest of the meetings and seemed pleased when I introduced him to the missionaries. He began meeting with them regularly. Tiago and I continued to talk as we walked home from school, but our conversations were about the truths he was learning. I was able to answer questions and bear my testimony. Finally, he gained a testimony of his own and joined the Church.

Today I am a full-time missionary in the Brazil Santa Maria Mission. Before I left for the mission field, Tiago also submitted his application to be a full-time missionary, and he is now serving in the Brazil Manaus Mission.

I recently received a letter from him. “Thank you for inviting me again and again to come to church,” he wrote. “I will be eternally grateful.” I am happy not only to share the gospel each day but also to know that Tiago is doing the same.

The author is from São Paulo, Brazil.



Try these 11 easy ways to share the gospel in everyday conversations.

EXTEND INVITATIONS AND FOLLOW UP

If you want to share the gospel but are nervous or aren't sure how to do it, this article is for you. Sharing the gospel is more than just inviting your friends to meet with the missionaries. That's a great idea, but there are so many other things you can do to "invite others to come unto Christ" (*Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* [2004], 1). And it's easier than you think. Maybe a football analogy will help.

Good players know how and when to pass the ball to their teammates to give them an opportunity to move forward. Inviting others to learn about the gospel is like passing the ball, only instead of giving them an opportunity to score a goal, you're giving them an opportunity to come unto Christ.

Here are a few ideas to get you started. Pray for inspiration and be creative as you adapt these ideas to fit your friends' interests or situations. Then cheer them on!



Invite a friend to Mutual

You have a friend who is obsessed with sports. So when you hear that this week’s Mutual activity is a sports night, you realize it’s the perfect opportunity to invite her along.

Invite a friend to watch general conference with you

You’re listening to a talk from general conference on your MP3 player while you walk to school. A friend asks what you’re listening to. You tell her the truth—you’re listening to the words of a living prophet of God. “What does that mean?” your friend asks. You explain about modern prophets and apostles and then ask your friend if she would like to join you in April to hear what those leaders are saying.

Share an article from the Liahona

One of the articles from a recent issue of the *Liahona* reminds you of a conversation you had with one of your friends. You share your copy of the magazine (or an online link) with him and invite him to read the article.

Tell someone about the Book of Mormon

Your ward has a goal to read the Book of Mormon by the end of the year, so you take your scriptures to school. One of your friends notices your book and asks you what it’s about, so you explain what the Book of Mormon is and share your testimony of it.

Read Kenneth’s story later in this article to see what happened when he saw a Church member with a Book of Mormon at school.

Invite a friend to go to a Church dance

Your best friend invites you to hang out this Friday, but you have a Church dance that night. Instead of just rejecting his invitation, you invite him to the dance!

Invite a friend to church

You’ve been asked to teach part of a lesson on Sunday. When a friend asks what you’re up to this weekend, instead of skipping over your Sunday plans, you explain that you’ll be teaching part of a lesson at church. Your friend is curious, so you invite her to come with you so she can hear you teach.

Show your friends Mormon.org

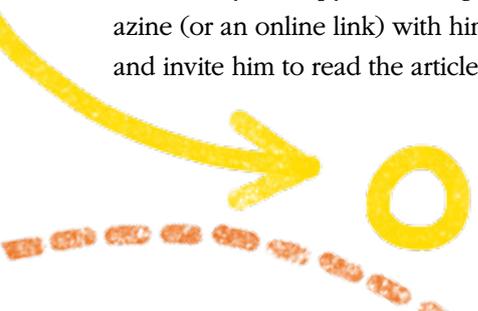
Your friends have a lot of questions about our beliefs, so you show them Mormon.org to help answer their questions.



INVITE AND FOLLOW UP

“It is my testimony that as we work together, seeking the one, inviting, and following up with trust and faith, the Lord will smile upon us and hundreds of thousands of God’s children will find purpose and peace in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Following Up,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 81.





SMALL STEPS ON THE PATH TO CONVERSION

On the first day at my new school, I noticed a girl who was different from the others. She had a hard home life, and she was always teased by the other students. Because her locker was next to mine, I soon got to know her better. She was nice, but she had a bad habit of swearing.

I explained to her my beliefs and the standards taught in *For the Strength of Youth*. She was very interested. I invited her to Mutual for a few weeks, and she worked hard to overcome her swearing habits.

I eventually gave her a copy of *For the Strength of Youth* and a copy of *True to the Faith*. The next day at school she said she'd learned so many new things in those two booklets. I invited her to Mutual that night, and as we were cleaning up afterward, she said, "Hannah, can I get baptized?"

I froze. I'd never helped someone join the Church. For a moment I simply stood there—I couldn't speak—but finally I took her hand and walked her over to a member of the Young Men presidency, who helped my friend get in touch with the missionaries so she could start preparing for baptism.

I felt so good that my friend had decided to be baptized. To think that I'd helped her along the path of conversion was wonderful. I immediately began brainstorming how to help others take the same path.

Hannah Christensen, Idaho, USA

Share a scripture in a text message

During your morning scripture study, you come across a verse that would be really helpful for a friend who has been having a hard time lately. You send her a text message letting her know that you were thinking about her and came across a scripture that she might like.

Invite someone over for dinner

Dad is making his famous spaghetti this week! You notice a new student at your school who doesn't seem to have many friends, so you decide to invite him over for family dinner. If it's a Monday night, you might even ask him to stay for family home evening afterward.

Ask a friend to help you work on a Personal Progress or Duty to God project

As you plan your big project, you realize that you'll need help, so you decide to ask some of your nonmember friends to help. This can give you the opportunity to explain why you serve, and you can also have fun serving together.

Give a friend *For the Strength of Youth*

If a friend asks why you live by certain standards, give him a copy of *For the Strength of Youth* and talk about how living the standards has helped you feel happier.

Read Hannah's story in this article to see how she shared this booklet with a friend.



WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEARN ABOUT MY RELIGION?

There was something different about Apryl. I couldn't put a name to it, but whatever it was, it was a good difference. I eventually discovered she was a Latter-day Saint.

One day at lunch, I sat down at a vacant table—vacant except for Apryl's books in a small stack. On top of the stack was the Book of Mormon. I reached over and picked it up.

"I'm looking at your book," I told Apryl when she arrived a few minutes later with her lunch tray. "OK," she said, looking a little surprised.

I read a few pages and was fascinated. I believed in God, but I also considered myself a science-oriented

person. What I read, however, had a ring of truth to it. It really could have happened. And if it really did happen, then what? It stirred my soul to think about it.

When the lunch period ended, I returned Apryl's book to her and went to my next class. I was excited about what I'd read in the Book of Mormon, but I was still too shy to talk to her about it.

A few weeks later, Apryl approached me during study hall with a serious look on her face. "Are you really interested in learning about my religion?" she asked. I was, and I told her so. "There's a special

meeting this Friday for people who want to know about our Church," she said. "I wondered if you might want to go."

I did. At the meeting, the mission president explained some basic doctrines of the Church. Everything he said made sense to me. Soon I began taking the missionary lessons. I wasn't instantly converted, but after fasting and praying, I received my testimony and was baptized.

My life is very different from what it would have been had I not embraced the restored gospel. And it's a good difference.

Kenneth Hurst, Alabama, USA

Don't forget to follow up

After inviting, the next step is to follow up. In football, the best players know their job isn't over once they pass the ball—they have to keep moving and get open.

Following up can be as simple as asking what your classmate thought about the scripture you shared or how your friend felt after coming to church with you.

For an example of how following up changed a young man's life, check out Kenneth's story.

When you follow up after inviting others to learn about your beliefs, you're showing that you care about their happiness. They'll sense your sincere desire to help and they'll feel comfortable asking you more questions in the future. ■



*Was this a
secret Luisa
should keep?*

Telling

By David Dickson

Church Magazines

Based on a true story

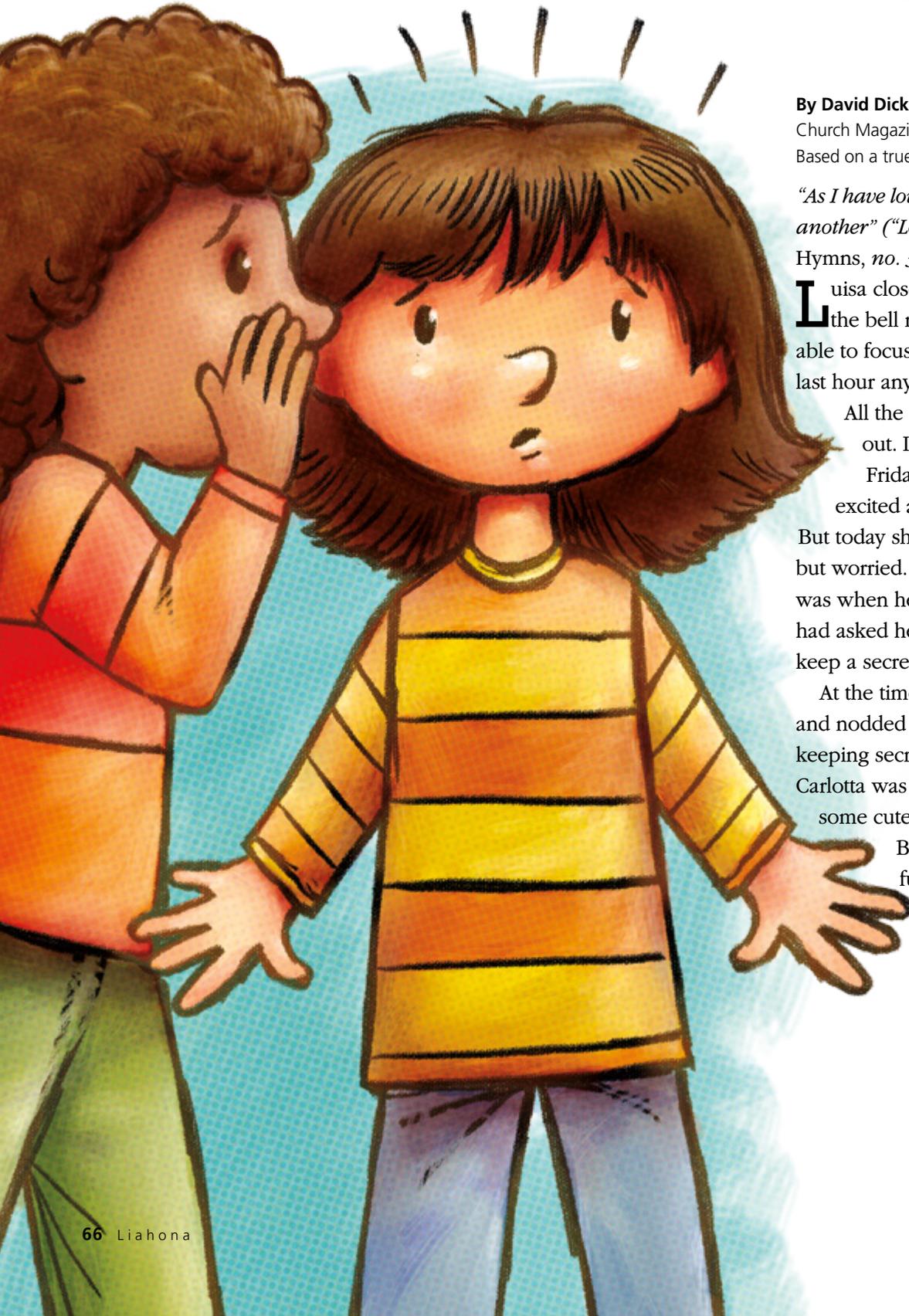
“As I have loved you, love one another” (“Love One Another,” Hymns, no. 308).

Luisa closed her math book when the bell rang. She hadn't been able to focus on the problems for the last hour anyway.

All the other students rushed out. It was the last class on Friday. Normally Luisa felt excited about the weekend too. But today she couldn't feel anything but worried. Not since lunch. That was when her best friend, Carlotta, had asked her a question: “Can you keep a secret?”

At the time, Luisa had leaned in and nodded eagerly. She was good at keeping secrets. She thought for sure Carlotta was going to tell her about some cute boy she had a crush on. But Carlotta's secret wasn't fun at all.

A voice interrupted Luisa's thoughts. She blinked and looked up from her desk. “Did you



SECRETS



"A friend cares. A friend loves. A friend listens. And a friend reaches out."

President Thomas S. Monson, "To the Rescue," *Ensign*, May 2001, 50; *Liahona*, July 2001, 59.

have a question about your homework, Luisa?" her teacher asked. All the other students had already left the room.

"No," Luisa answered. She met her teacher's eyes. She just *had* to tell somebody! But Carlotta had made her promise not to.

"I've gotta catch the bus," Luisa said quickly. She put on her coat and hurried out into the cold winter air.

The whole bus ride home, Luisa felt so nervous inside she could hardly stand it. Her chest felt tight, like it was hard to breathe.

Luisa couldn't stop thinking about Carlotta's secret. At lunch Carlotta said she had been doing something that was dangerous. Luisa could still hardly believe what she'd heard. She thought she knew her best friend! She couldn't imagine Carlotta doing something scary like that. When lunch ended, Carlotta had made Luisa promise never to tell anyone.

But what if Carlotta got hurt?

Luisa tried to block out the laughing and talking around her in the bus as she closed her eyes and prayed in her heart.

"Please, Heavenly Father, help me know what to do. I don't want my friend to be mad at me. But I don't want anything bad to happen to her either. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen."

The walk home felt longer than usual. Wouldn't Mom be able to tell something was wrong when Luisa got home? What should she say?

Looking at the snow on the ground, Luisa remembered the snowball fight she and Carlotta had started with some other kids at the park last week. That was so much fun! She thought about the other things she and Carlotta loved doing together. Hanging out. Hiking. Doing homework. Playing sports.

What would it be like if Luisa told her secret and Carlotta didn't want to be her friend anymore? The thought made Luisa's stomach twist

into an even tighter knot.

Then she had another thought. Right now the most important thing was what was best for *Carlotta*—not what Carlotta might think about *her*. Carlotta needed a true friend, a friend who would help her be safe. Luisa knew Jesus always did what was best for others, even if some people didn't like Him.

Luisa knew what she needed to do. She had to talk to Mom about it. She would also call Carlotta and tell her how worried she was and that a grown-up needed to help. Maybe then Carlotta would talk to her mom too.

Luisa's heart felt lighter as she walked up to her front door.

"Mom?" she called as she went inside. "Can we talk?"

Carlotta might end up being mad, but Luisa knew this was the right thing to do. She would be a true friend.

Some secrets were too important to keep. ■

By Jan Pinborough
Church Magazines

WHEN Should I Tell?



If somebody is—

- Playing a dangerous game
- Taking medicine that isn't his
- Eating, drinking, or sniffing something strange
- Hurting her body
- Doing something he doesn't want adults to know about

If somebody—

- Tries to get you to do anything from the list above
- Shows pictures of people without clothes
- Asks you to look at or touch his or her body or let him or her look at or touch your body
- Asks you to keep a secret about something that makes you feel bad
- Is bullying or talking disrespectfully to you or someone else—in person, by text, or online

If something—

- Makes you feel unsafe or uncomfortable
- Doesn't seem right or gives you an “uh-oh” feeling
- Listen to the Holy Ghost and trust your feelings!

Whom Should I Tell?

- A parent, grandparent, or guardian
- A schoolteacher or counselor
- A Church teacher or leader
- An older brother or sister
- A doctor
- A friend who can help you tell an adult

You don't need to feel alone with a secret. An adult can help you know what to do. Keep telling people until you get the help you need.

Be brave! You are strong. Speaking up can help you and others be safe! ■

SPECIAL WITNESS



By Elder
Robert D. Hales

Of the Quorum
of the Twelve
Apostles

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

Why should we **LISTEN** to general conference?



From "General
Conference:
Strengthening Faith
and Testimony,"
Ensign or Liahona,
Nov. 2013, 6–8.

I promise that if you
will listen, you will feel
the Spirit.

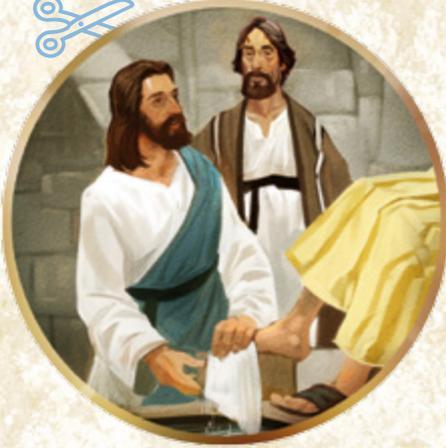
We can hear the
word of the Lord meant
just for us.

Through general
conferences our faith
gets stronger and our
testimonies grow deeper.

If you pray with a real
desire to hear your
Heavenly Father's voice
in the messages of
conference, you will find
that He has spoken to
you to help you.

Getting Ready

Jesus Christ set a perfect example for us to follow. You can use this activity to learn more about Him and to get ready for Easter. Start on number 1 the Sunday before Easter. Each day, read about Jesus and answer the question. Then cut out the matching picture and add it to the chart.



1. Jesus washed the feet of His disciples and comforted them by saying, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). What could you do to serve or comfort a friend today?

2. During the Last Supper, Jesus taught His disciples to take the sacrament. He told them, "This do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). What is one way you can be more reverent during the sacrament?



3. When Jesus began the Atonement in the Garden of Gethsemane, He did what Heavenly Father wanted Him to do, even though it was very hard. He prayed, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). What is one way you can be more obedient at church, school, or home?

for Easter

4

4. When people hurt Jesus during the Crucifixion, He said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Why is it important to forgive other people?



5. Jesus made sure His mother would be taken care of after He died. He told John, "Behold thy mother," or to treat Mary as if she were his own mother (John 19:27). What could you do today to help your parents or caretakers?

5



6

6. Just before He died, Jesus prayed to Heavenly Father and said, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). How can you make your prayers more special?



7. After He died, Jesus came back to life! This is why we celebrate Easter. Christ visited His disciples after the Resurrection and said, "Be not faithless, but believing" (John 20:27). Why is Easter so important?

7



INSTANT

Based on an interview by
Richard M. Romney
Church Magazines

My name is Magnolia. I go to a ward where we speak Spanish. One day Mia came to my Primary class. She speaks only English. I wanted to help Mia feel welcome, so I decided to help her. I would be her *interpreter!*

LOTS IN COMMON

We both just got baptized and confirmed. We both like music, especially hymns and Primary songs. We both like family home evening. And both of us like to read stories in the Friend and the Liahona.

KEEPING UP

At first it was hard to keep up when I was interpreting for Mia. Then the teachers slowed down to give me time. We all felt good that we could help Mia.

An interpreter translates words that someone is speaking into a different language.

GIVE US A HAND!

How do you show your love by helping others? Trace your hand and send us your story and photo, along with your parent's permission. Visit liahona.lds.org or email liahona@ldschurch.org.

MAGNOLIA

Understanding

WHISPERED HELP

My name is Mia. My parents speak Spanish, so we went to the Spanish-speaking ward. I couldn't understand what people were saying. Magnolia saw that I was frustrated. She moved over next to me and whispered English in my ear.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

Tips from Mia and Magnolia:

If someone:

- Is new at church or school, help her feel welcome.
- Doesn't go to church very much, invite him to go with you.
- Is being bullied, stand up for her. Tell your teacher.
- Seems lonely, invite him to join you.
- Needs a friend, ask her to be your friend. With your parents' permission, invite her over to play.

If you speak more than one language, offer to interpret.



MIA

GOOD FRIENDS

After Primary, I asked Magnolia if she would be my friend. She said yes. From then on, Magnolia was my friend and my interpreter. She helped me make other friends too.

DO WHAT JESUS WOULD DO

Everyone can help people, just like Magnolia helped me. Pray. Heavenly Father will help you know who to help. It's just like the song, "If The Savior Stood Beside Me" (Friend, Oct. 1993, 14). We can try to do what Jesus would want us to do. ■

The Story of the Wise Man and the Foolish Man

WHAT IS A PARABLE?

A parable is a special kind of story. It tells about simple things, like a rainstorm or a pearl, that are familiar. Jesus told parables to help people understand spiritual truths. One parable is in Matthew 13:44–46. What does it teach about how valuable the gospel is? Can you find other parables?

By Jean Bingham

One day Jesus wanted to teach people how to stay strong even when hard things happen. He told them a story about a big storm, a wise man, and a foolish man. When the storm came, the wise man's house did not fall down because it was built on a rock. But the foolish man's house fell down because it was built on sand.

Jesus was teaching how important it is to have faith in Him and follow His teachings. When we build a strong testimony, we will be strong enough to stand, no matter what hard things might happen. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

ROCK OR SAND?

Write activities like the ones below on strips of paper. Take turns choosing and reading them aloud. Discuss why doing each one would be like building a house on rock or sand. How can listening to prophets help us follow Jesus's teachings and make wise choices?

Reading scriptures together	Cheating on schoolwork
Taking a dare	Including someone who is new
Going to church	Using bad words
Blaming a mistake on someone else	Playing a game with a sister or brother
Doing your homework	Sharing with others
Showing respect for others	Spending many hours on computer games
Telling the truth	Taking something that isn't yours
Staying quiet while someone is being bullied	Praying every morning and night
Listening to general conference	Including someone who is left out

ROCK ART

Choose a smooth rock. With a marker or paint, write "Jesus Christ" on it. Talk about why it's so important to build our lives on His teachings. Keep the rock in a place where you can see it often.



SCRIPTURE TIP

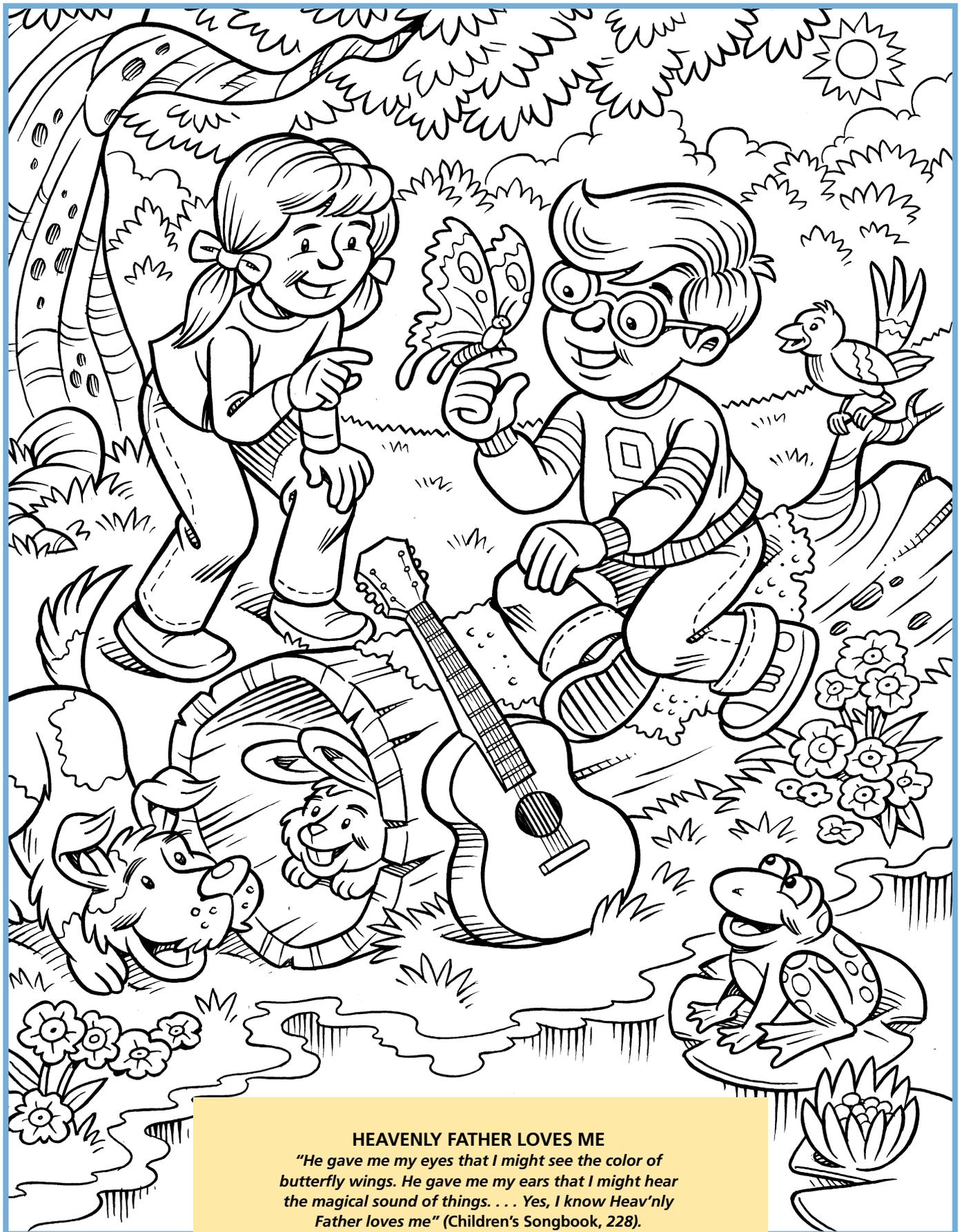
The Book of Mormon can help us understand the New Testament. Read Helaman 5:12. What did you learn about the meaning of the word *rock* from reading that verse? Look up "Rock" in the Guide to the Scriptures to see if you can find any other verses that help you understand more.

FAMILY TALK

Read Matthew 7:24–29 together. You could also draw a picture of the story. Then you could talk about these questions: What things in our life are like the rain and wind? How could making decisions according to what is popular be like building our house on sand? How does following Jesus's teachings protect us and make us as strong as a house built on a rock? Talk about ways you can build your faith in Jesus Christ.

Song: "The Wise Man and the Foolish Man" (*Children's Songbook*, 281)

Scripture: Matthew 7:24–29



HEAVENLY FATHER LOVES ME

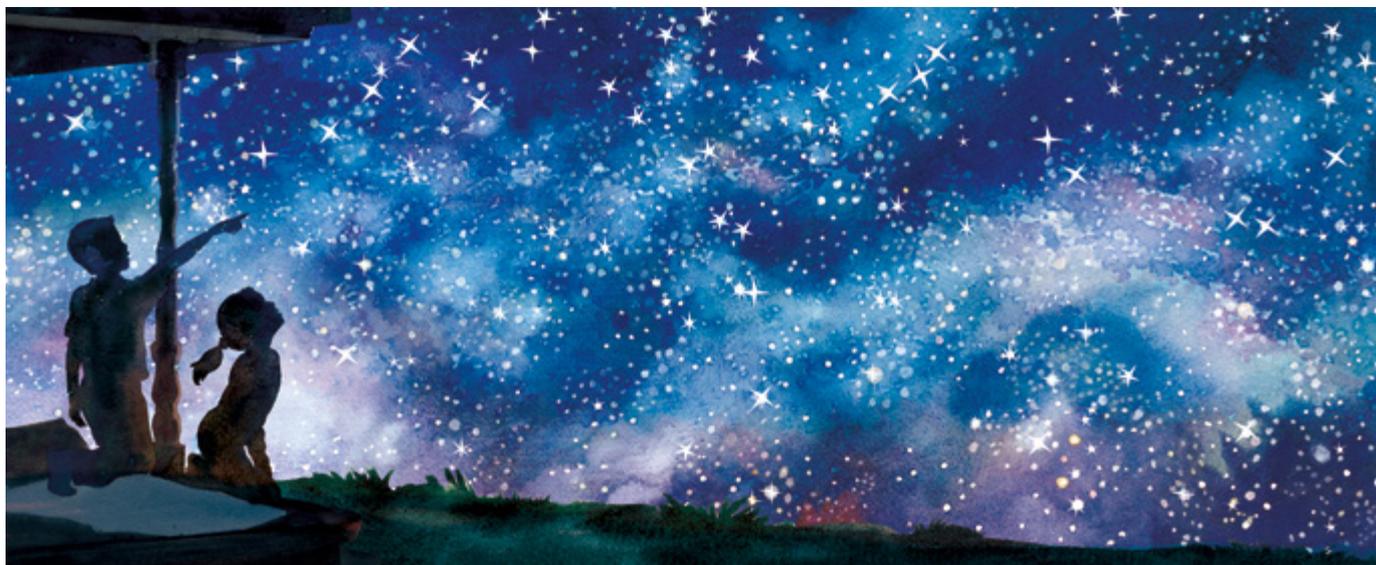
"He gave me my eyes that I might see the color of butterfly wings. He gave me my ears that I might hear the magical sound of things. . . . Yes, I know Heav'nly Father loves me" (Children's Songbook, 228).



SCRIPTURES under the Stars

By Bonnie L. Oscarson

Young Women General
President



“The Spirit will guide, and deep inside, I’ll know the scriptures are true” (Children’s Songbook, 109).

When I was young, my brothers and I liked to sleep outside during the summer. We would spread our sleeping bags on the patio, then find constellations in the stars and listen to crickets as we fell asleep.

One night my older brother Larry and I were out on the patio. We stretched out and looked up at the stars. Larry wasn’t usually very talkative, but that night he said he wanted to tell me some stories. He told me stories from the Book of

Mormon, starting with Lehi and his family leaving Jerusalem.

I had heard stories from the Book of Mormon in Primary before, but when Larry told them, it was different. It felt more real. As I looked up at the stars and listened to my brother, I felt very warm and happy inside. Though I didn’t know it then, I was feeling the Holy Ghost telling me the Book of Mormon was true.

A few months later, I found a book of illustrated stories from the Book of Mormon at our house. When I started reading, I got the same warm, comforting feeling

that I’d had when Larry told me the same stories.

Years later, when I was trying to decide if I had a testimony, I was a little disappointed that I had never had a big or strong answer. Did this mean I didn’t have a testimony? Then I remembered how I felt when my brother told me stories from the Book of Mormon, and I knew that I *did* know the Church was true.

A testimony doesn’t always come in one big moment. Usually it comes in a lot of small, quiet moments when the Holy Ghost whispers to us that these things are true. ■

Saturday Sleep and Sunday Smiles

By Miche Barbosa

Based on a true story

*"I always have a happy feeling
when I go to church"*

(Children's Songbook, 157).

Mara loved making people smile. She made her schoolteacher smile when she raised her hand to ask questions. She made her sister, Marcella, smile when she said nice things to her.

Then Mara would smile too. It felt good to help other people be happy.

But there was one time each week when Mara hardly ever smiled. That time was early Sunday morning. That's when

Mara and Marcella were always the most tired. Rushing around to get ready for church made them extra grumpy. Then there was the long walk to church. It was more than a mile away! Mara and Marcella often got





there late. They would miss the first part of Primary.

“We miss you when you’re not here on time,” Sister Lima said one day. She was the Primary president of their ward in Brazil.

Mara knew she should get to church on time. But how? Then Mara got an idea. The next Saturday night, Mara decided to try something new.

Instead of sneaking bedtime snacks after dinner, Mara brushed her teeth. Most days Mama had to remind the girls to turn off the TV and go to bed. Even then they would play and whisper under their covers until late at night. Sometimes they stayed up so long they could hardly keep their eyes open. They had to wiggle to keep from falling asleep.

Tonight Mara put on pajamas and hopped right into bed. Mama didn’t even have to remind her. She started looking

at the pictures in the front of her Book of Mormon.

“What are you doing?” Marcella asked.

“A test,” Mara said. Her mind was full of happy thoughts. Plus she was already feeling sleepy.

The next thing Mara knew, the sun was peeking through her window. It was almost time to get ready for church. Instead of feeling yucky, Mara felt great. Her head didn’t feel

fuzzy. Her body didn’t feel tired.

She got to Primary even before some of the leaders.

“Thank you for being such a good example to the other children,” Sister Lima said.

Now it was Mara’s turn to smile. She decided she would always go to bed early on Saturday. That way she would be able to spread smiles all Sunday long. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.





By Elder Orson F. Whitney (1855–1931)
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

BUILT UPON THE ROCK

There is no book big enough or good enough to preside over this Church.

Many years ago there came to Utah a learned prelate of [another] church. . . . He had been to a “Mormon” sacrament meeting and had much to say in criticism of our method of administering the Lord’s Supper, particularly our use of water instead of wine on such occasions. He said it made him shudder when he saw the people sipping the water; and he pointed out the fact, for it is a fact, that according to the Bible, the Savior, when He instituted the sacrament among the Jews, used wine, declaring that it was His blood or that it represented His blood. I could add that the Book of Mormon also states that the Savior used wine when He introduced the sacrament among the Nephites.

My . . . friend, whether he knew it or not, had hit upon the great distinguishing feature that differentiates God’s Church from all other churches under the sun—in this, that while they are founded upon books and traditions and the precepts of men, this Church is built upon the rock of



Christ, upon the principle of immediate and continuous revelation. The Latter-day Saints do not do things because they happen to be printed in a book [of scripture]. They do not do things because God told the Jews to do them; nor do they do or leave undone anything because of instructions that Christ gave to the Nephites.

Whatever is done [officially] by this Church is because God, speaking from heaven in our day, has commanded this Church to do it. . . . That is the constitution of the Church of Christ. If we use water instead of wine in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, it is because Christ has so commanded [see D&C 27:1–4].

Divine revelation adapts itself to the circumstances and conditions of men, and change upon change ensues as God’s progressive work goes on to its

destiny. There is no book big enough or good enough to preside over this Church.

In saying this, I speak with all due reverence of the written word of God, that which is printed in the books, part of which may be obsolete, having fulfilled its purpose and been laid upon the shelf [such as animal sacrifices; see 3 Nephi 9:19–20], while the other part is virile, full of life, and applicable to our present state—our present degree of development. But even this part must be interpreted aright. No man ought to contend for what is in the books, in the face of God’s mouthpiece, who speaks for Him and interprets His word [see D&C 1:37–38]. To so contend is to defer to the dead letter in preference to the living oracle, which is always a false position.

What the Lord said to the Jews and Nephites 2,000 years ago or what He said to the Latter-day Saints 50 or 60 years ago has no force whatever at this time unless it agrees with present-day revelation, with the Lord’s most recent instructions to His people through His chosen or appointed servants or servant; and they who ignore this fact are liable to get into trouble. ■

From an address delivered in general conference on Oct. 7, 1916, as reprinted in “Built upon the Rock,” Liahona, June 2010, 12–13.

INSIGHTS



What is the father's role in parenting?

"Fathers give blessings and perform sacred ordinances for their children. These will become spiritual highlights in their lives. Fathers are personally involved in leading family prayers, daily scripture reading, and weekly family home evenings. Fathers build family traditions. . . . Memories of these special times together will never be forgotten by their children. Fathers hold one-on-one visits with their children and teach them gospel principles. Fathers teach sons and daughters the value of work and help them establish worthy goals in their own lives. Fathers set an example of faithful gospel service. Please remember, brethren, your sacred calling as a father in Israel—your most important calling in time and eternity."

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Finding Lasting Peace and Building Eternal Families," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 44–45.

Gather with Family, Friends, and Neighbors

For the 185th Annual General Conference of
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

April 4–5, 2015: General sessions for all members

March 28, 2015: The general women's session for women and girls age eight and older

April 4, 2015: The priesthood session for men and boys age 12 and older

All sessions are held at the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, and broadcast to meetinghouses throughout the world. You can watch or listen to conference live in many languages on LDS.org and in limited languages on BYUtv, Mormon Channel platforms, and the LDS general conference YouTube channel. Archives of the addresses will be available on LDS.org and the Gospel Library app.

