

Liahona


A photograph of a woman and a young girl playing in a yard. The woman is crouching on the left, wearing a dark blue patterned jacket, and the girl is standing on the right, wearing a yellow shirt and leopard print pants. They are both laughing as water sprays from a garden hose nozzle held by the girl towards the woman. The background shows a wooden fence and greenery.

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A lit candle in a dark, textured holder. The candle is orange and has a bright flame. In the background, there is a book with text on its pages, slightly out of focus. The overall lighting is warm and soft.

GOD IS NOT SILENT!
HE LOVES HIS CHILDREN.
**HE HAS NOT LEFT
US TO WANDER IN
DARKNESS.**

PRESIDENT DIETER F. UCHTDORF

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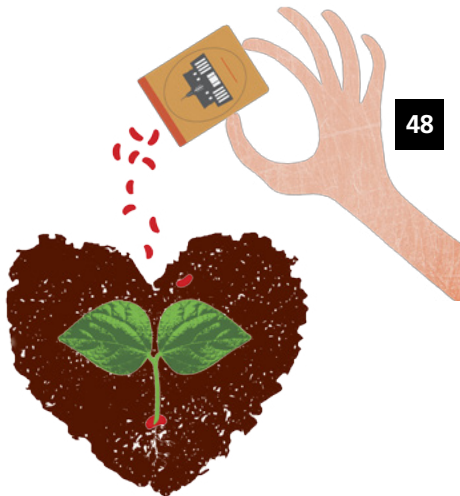
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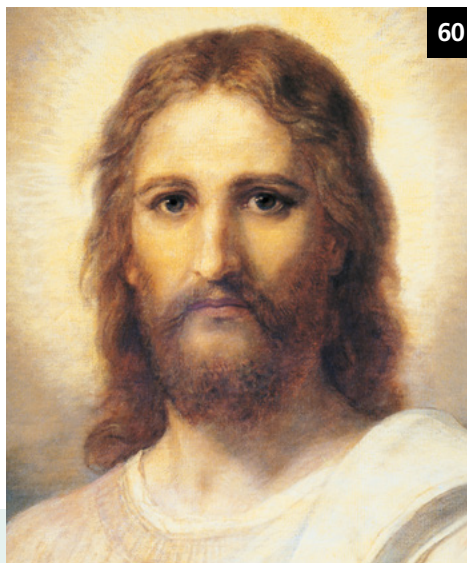
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MARCH 2018 VOL. 42 NO. 3
LIAHONA 14749

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

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Printing Director: Steven T. Lewis

Distribution Director: Troy R. Barker

Mailing address: *Liahona*, Fl. 23, 50 E. North Temple St.,
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0023, 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,
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Romanian, Russian, Samoan, Slovenian, Spanish, Swahili,
Swedish, Tagalog, Tahitian, Thai, Tongan, Ukrainian, Urdu,
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For Readers in the United States and Canada:

March 2018 Vol. 42 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 507.1.5.2).
NONPOSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES: Send address
changes to Distribution Services, Church Magazines, P.O.
Box 26368, Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368, USA.

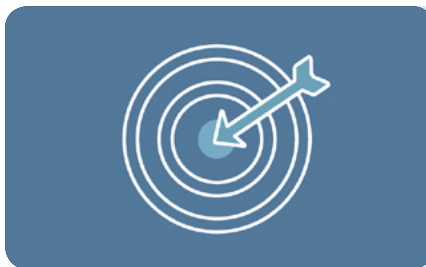
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**By President
Dieter F. Uchtdorf**

Second Counselor in
the First Presidency

THE WORD OF GOD TO HIS CHILDREN

The scriptures tell us that the first thing God did after creating man and woman was speak to them.¹ He had vital information and precious instructions to give them. His purpose was not to burden or worry them but to guide them to happiness and eternal glory.

And that was just the beginning. From that day to this, God has continued to communicate with His children. His words have been preserved, treasured, and studied by disciples of every generation. They are revered by those who seek to know the will of God, and they bear witness to the truth that “the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”²

This has been the pattern since the beginning of time, and the pattern continues today. It is not just a nice Bible story; it is God’s established way of communicating essential messages to His children. He raises up individuals from our midst, calls them to be prophets, and gives them words to say, which we are invited to “receive, as if from [His] own mouth.”³ He has declared, “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.”⁴

This is one of the most glorious, encouraging, and hopeful messages of the Restoration—God is not silent! He loves His children. He has not left us to wander in darkness.

Twice each year, in April and October, we have the opportunity to hear the voice of the Lord through His servants in our wonderful general conferences.

I give you my personal witness that long before a speaker in general conference makes that long walk to the podium, he or she has invested immense effort, prayer, and study in response to the assignment to speak. Every conference message represents countless hours of preparation and heartfelt pleading to understand what the Lord wishes His Saints to hear.

What might happen if we as listeners matched the speakers’ preparation with our own? How might our approach to general conference be different if we saw conference as an opportunity to receive messages from the Lord Himself? Through the words and music of general conference, we can expect to receive personalized answers to whatever questions or problems we might be facing.

If you ever wonder whether Heavenly Father will truly speak to you, I would remind you of the simple yet profound words that our Primary children sing: “[You are] a child of God, and he has sent [you] here.” His purpose is to help you return “to live with him someday.”

If you approach Heavenly Father as His child, you can ask Him with a sincere heart, “Lead me, guide me, walk



TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

During general conference we can receive personalized answers to our questions and problems as we listen to God's appointed servants. Consider discussing the following with those you teach: How can you prepare to receive such answers during general conference? President Uchtdorf encourages us to "diligently seek the Spirit of truth." What do you think that means, and how can you incorporate this into your preparation? In addition to the blessings mentioned in Doctrine and Covenants 21:6, what other blessings come as you prepare to hear the words of the Lord through His servants? You could invite those you teach to write in a journal what the Spirit teaches them in this general conference.

beside me, help me find the way. Teach me all that I must do." He will speak to you through His Holy Spirit, and it is then up to you "to do his will." I promise that if you do, "rich blessings are in store."⁵

The Lord's guidance is needed today as much as it ever has been in the world's history. As we prepare to hear the word of the Lord, may we diligently seek the Spirit of truth so that when the Lord speaks through His servants, we can understand, become edified, and rejoice together.⁶

I testify that "by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against [us]; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before [us], and cause the heavens to shake for [our] good, and his name's glory."⁷ ■

NOTES

1. See Genesis 1:28.
2. Amos 3:7.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 21:5.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.
5. "I Am a Child of God," *Hymns*, no. 301; *Children's Songbook*, 2–3.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 50:21–22.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 21:6.

Preparing to Hear God's Voice



President Uchtdorf explains how the first thing God did after creating man and woman was speak to them and give them precious information and instructions. We get that same blessing in April and October during general conference, when Church leaders address us and give us counsel that the Lord wants us to hear.

Have you ever heard God's voice through His servants during general conference? Have you ever felt like one specific message gave you an

answer you'd been searching for? In a journal, you could write down that experience and how it helped you. Then prepare to hear the Lord's voice this upcoming conference by writing down questions you have and studying them during your scripture study. Pray to Heavenly Father, asking to receive answers and insights during conference. As you listen to the servants of the Lord, focus on individual promptings. What have you learned? How did you feel inspired to change? Write

down those promptings because that's the Spirit speaking to you!

Always remember that Heavenly Father loves you and will guide you in the right direction. As you strive to hear His voice through His servants, you will be blessed and edified.

CHILDREN

Get Ready for Conference!

Use this card to prepare for general conference. Keep the card with you during conference so you can write down what you learn.

- **Write down your questions.**

I am wondering about . . .

- **Pray to Heavenly Father.**

I would like help learning about . . .

- **Listen to general conference.**

I learned . . .





Faith, Family, Relief

Pray for Each Sister by Name

Our love for and inspiration concerning those we visit will increase when we humbly pray for each sister by name.

One sister related that during a difficult period in her life, a phone call or simple text message often came from her visiting teachers on “particularly dark days.” They seemed to know just when she needed a lift. She knew that they prayed for her, both during their visits and on their own.

The scriptures share many examples of men and women who prayed for others by name. Among the most dramatic is the father of Alma the Younger. An angel spoke to Alma the Younger, telling him that his father “ha[d] prayed with much faith concerning thee . . . ; therefore, for this purpose have I come to convince thee of the power and authority of God, that the prayers of his servants might be answered according to their faith” (Mosiah 27:14).

Praying for others not only invokes Heavenly Father’s

blessings upon them but also helps us know how we can bless them too. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, “Praying for others with all of the energy of our souls increases our capacity to hear and to heed the voice of the Lord.”¹

“Think of our combined strength if every sister had sincere prayer every morning and night or, better yet, prayed unceasingly as the Lord has commanded,” said Julie B. Beck, former General Relief Society President.² Praying for those we visit strengthens us as individuals and as Latter-day Saint women.

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, said: “Pray for the

way to know their hearts. . . . You will need to know what God would have you do to help them and to do it all, as nearly as you can, feeling God’s love for them.”³

NOTES

1. David A. Bednar, “Pray Always,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 43.
2. Julie B. Beck, “What Latter-day Saint Women Do Best: Stand Strong and Immovable,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 110.
3. Henry B. Eyring, “Priesthood and Personal Prayer,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 85.



Consider This

What recent inspiration and ideas have come to you as you have prayed for the individual sisters you visit?

Ministering

Rather than provide a specific message, this page will feature a different principle each month to help us minister more effectively to each other. As you pray and seek inspiration, you will know the spiritual message and service each sister needs.



VISITING TEACHERS ARE GOD'S EMISSARIES

By Alice C. Smith



ABOUT SISTER SMITH

Alice Colton Smith (1913–2006) graduated from Columbia

University in 1934. She

and her husband, Whitney, relocated to Logan, Utah, USA, in 1946 to attend Utah State University, where Alice earned a master's degree in sociology and subsequently joined the faculty. As an assistant professor, she taught until the mid-1970s, when she resigned so she could focus more on her service with the Relief Society general board. Sister Smith was called to serve on the Relief Society general board in 1964, serving for 14 years. She brought a cosmopolitan and scholarly perspective to the board.

From 1960 to 1963, the Smiths lived in Vienna, Austria, where they had been called to establish the first Latter-day Saint mission headquartered in Austria.

Alice Smith gave this talk in the October 1969 officers' session of Relief Society general conference; punctuation and capitalization standardized.

This new series highlights the lives of devoted women and their messages, excerpted from the book *At the Pulpit: 185 Years of Discourses by Latter-day Saint Women* (2017). Selected chapters are available at churchhistorianspress.org/at-the-pulpit.

As Jesus climbed the dry hills of Galilee or trod the dusty roads of Judea, he met poverty, disease, afflictions of every kind. He found the sinner repentant and unrepentant. He met the suffering. And out of these experiences and His vast understanding came His compassionate solicitation, “Come unto me.”

In 1830, the Prophet Joseph Smith declared that God is “the same unchangeable God” [D&C 20:17]. So, it is no surprise that on July 28, 1843, 16 women were appointed “to search out the poor and suffering . . . to relieve the wants of all.”¹ Sixteen in a world of millions. But there had to be a beginning. In 1843, 16 visiting teachers; today [1969], well over 100,000; tomorrow 200,000; the day after tomorrow two million.

A few weeks ago, I met a wonderful friend of mine. She has been active in Relief Society for many years. . . . I asked her what she was doing in the Church now. There was a noticeable pause. Then, she answered, “Oh, I’m just a visiting teacher.” Just a visiting teacher! After we parted, I thought,

how would she feel if the Savior . . . said to her, “I want you to be my emissary. I want you to tell the women [you visit teach] that I love them, that I am concerned about what happens to them and their families. I want you to be my helper, to watch over these sisters, to care for them so that all will be well in my kingdom.” If we met after such a meeting, wouldn’t her reply be different? Hasn’t He already called her through His priesthood as surely as if He stood in her presence?

How many of our visiting teachers think of themselves as “just visiting teachers”?

To the visiting teacher is given the great responsibility of searching out those in need. More, she tells all sisters by her visit that someone cares and that God cares.

. . . She should not be someone who rushes in the last day of the month and says, “I’ve just a few minutes—I know you’ve read the message and know it better than I do, and you don’t need it anyway. How are you, and I’ll see you at Relief Society next week.” The visiting

teacher should leave behind her a love that blesses both the visited sister and her home. . . .

. . . Each year as the Church grows, the need for visiting teachers will grow greater. . . . They will help combat the loneliness which plagues our world and impersonality of the big cities. They will look after the stranger, the widow, the orphan, the wounded, and distressed, after all sisters with concerned, loving care. . . . They will help

relieve physical, emotional, and mental suffering. They will aid the sinner and comfort the sorrowing. They will carry a message of gospel love to all our sisters throughout the world. . . .

“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].

God bless the visiting teachers. For when all work together, the yoke is easy and the burden is light.

. . . May it ever be so, I pray.

Amen. ■

NOTE

1. Former Relief Society Handbook, p. 29. See *Handbook of the Relief Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (1931), 29.



WHERE WE FIND RELIEF

By Nettie H. Francis

Relief Society is a place where sisters of all situations can and should find relief as they care for, serve, and love one another.

When my family and I lived in Las Vegas, Nevada, USA, I served for a time as ward Relief Society president. I thrived on the wonderful associations I had with the good sisters in our ward. I loved planning uplifting activities, conducting Relief Society, attending meetings with ward leaders, and serving families.

I spent a significant amount of time going into homes to visit with sisters. I also ministered to mothers who were exhausted, sick, or simply overwhelmed—sisters who needed comfort, both spiritual and physical. I felt fulfilled and needed outside of my responsibilities as a young mother of six children.

Then my life suddenly changed.

My husband accepted a job promotion in another state. Within a month we packed up and left our home in sunny Las Vegas for a small rental house in cold Casper, Wyoming. The

same week that we moved, I found out I was pregnant—with twins!

The night we arrived at our rental home, I became violently ill. I remember lying in bed hardly able to move while I watched my husband manage our children and unload our moving van. That was the beginning of the worst physical challenge of my life. For the next four months, I couldn't keep a meal down and barely had enough energy to serve my family, care for our children, and—sometimes—make meals.

As my husband adjusted to his new job, I adjusted to our new town and enrolled four of our children in school. Our tiny rental home was cramped, and for several weeks we lived out of boxes. I would send our school children out the door every morning and then spend the day on the couch while my two toddlers played nearby.



One morning after the children had left for school, the doorbell rang. One of my toddlers opened the door, and there stood a sister from our new ward's Relief Society presidency. She was holding a basket of items and had her own daughter with her. She had come to welcome me to the ward.

I was mortified.

There I was, still in my pajamas, lying on the couch with a bucket beside me. My two partially dressed toddlers were playing on the cluttered floor amidst boxes that still needed to be unpacked.



BE THERE FOR EACH OTHER

"To be sisters implies that there is an unbreakable bond

between us. Sisters take care of each other, watch out for each other, comfort each other, and are there for each other through thick and thin."

Bonnie L. Oscarson, Young Woman General President, "Sisterhood: Oh, How We Need Each Other," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2014, 119.

family. My difficult pregnancy ended with the birth of two beautiful children. And the kind Relief Society sister became my close friend and continues to strengthen and uplift me with her testimony and example. I often reflect on the difficult morning of her first visit and feel grateful that she fulfilled her calling.

I testify that we are "all beggars" before God (see Mosiah 4:19). Our circumstances may change at any moment, bringing us to a new realization of how much we depend upon our Father—and upon those who serve us for Him. I know now more than ever that Relief Society is a place where sisters of all situations can and should find relief as they care for, serve, and love one another. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

This wonderful sister came in and set her basket down on a corner of the table. Then she sat in our cluttered living room and visited with me—asking all about me and our family.

As we talked, I felt humbled. Just a month earlier, I had been in her position, visiting people and offering aid. Now the tables had turned. I was flat on my back in a messy house in desperate need of relief. I was lonely, overwhelmed, and dealing with a situation larger than my abilities. I was one of those sisters who needed help. The Lord had quickly and successfully

reminded me that I needed Him and the help offered through His servants.

After she left, the sight of her welcome basket on my table gave me relief and light. During the next few weeks, I savored the contents of the basket and was grateful for our budding friendship as she visited again and again, offering help and support during those difficult months. I gained a new appreciation for the hope and relief that one sister can bring to another.

A few months later we bought a home big enough for our growing

OCTOBER 2017 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 2017 general conference, you can use these pages (and Conference Notebooks in past and future issues) to help you study and apply the recent teachings of the living prophets and apostles and other Church leaders.



DOCTRINAL HIGHLIGHT

Sacred Time and Space

The Sabbath day and the temple, respectively, are a *sacred time* and a *sacred space* specifically set apart for worshipping God and for receiving and remembering His exceeding great and precious promises to His children. As instituted by God, the principle purposes of these two divine sources of help are exactly the same: to powerfully and repeatedly focus our attention upon our Heavenly Father, His Only Begotten Son, the Holy Ghost, and the promises associated with the ordinances and covenants of the Savior’s restored gospel.

“Importantly, a home should be the ultimate combination of time and space wherein individuals and families remember most effectively God’s great and precious promises.”

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Exceeding Great and Precious Promises,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 92–93.



OUR DIVINE WORTH

“The Spirit will confirm to each of us individually our divine worth. . . .

“Let me point out the need to differentiate between two critical words: *worth* and *worthiness*. They are not the same. Spiritual *worth* means to value ourselves the way Heavenly Father values us, not as the world values us. Our worth was determined before we ever came to this earth. . . .

“On the other hand, *worthiness* is achieved through obedience. If we sin, we are less worthy, but we are never worth less! We continue to repent and strive to be like Jesus with our worth intact. . . . No matter what, we always have worth in the eyes of our Heavenly Father. . . .

“ . . . If the love we feel for the Savior and what He did for us is greater than the energy we give to weaknesses, self-doubts, or bad habits, then He will help us overcome the things which cause suffering in our lives. He saves us from ourselves.”

Joy D. Jones, Primary General President, “Value beyond Measure,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 14, 15.

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



REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE

"Remember that you are of the royal house of the kingdom of God, [sons and] daughters of Heavenly Parents, who reign throughout the universe.

"You have the spiritual DNA of God. You have unique gifts that originated in your spiritual creation and that were developed during the vast span of your premortal life. You are the child of our merciful and everlasting Father in Heaven, the Lord of Hosts, the One who created the universe, spread the spinning stars across the vast expanse of space, and placed the planets in their appointed orbits.

"You are in His hands.

"Very good hands.

"Loving hands.

"Caring hands.

"And nothing anyone ever says about you can change that. Their words are meaningless compared to what God has said about you.

"You are His precious child.

"He loves you.

"Even when you stumble, even when you turn away from Him, God loves you. If you are feeling lost, abandoned, or forgotten—fear not. The Good Shepherd will find you. He will lift you upon His shoulders. And He will carry you home."

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "Three Sisters," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 17.



SISTERS, TURN ON YOUR LIGHT

"When you keep [God's] commandments, He can use you in His work. His work and glory is the exaltation and eternal life of women and men.

"The prophets are calling on us, my sisters. Will you be righteous? Will you articulate your faith? Can you bear being distinct and different? Will your happiness in spite of your trials draw others who are good and noble and who need your friendship? Will you turn on your light? I testify the Lord Jesus Christ will go before us and be in our midst."

Sharon Eubank, First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency, "Turn On Your Light," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 9.

FILL IN THE BLANK

Use the November 2017 issue or visit conference.lds.org to read more of what these speakers said.

1. "Heavenly Father will help us love even those we may think are unlovable, if we ____ for His aid." —Neill F. Marriott, "Abiding in God and Repairing the Breach."
2. "Many of us are on amazing journeys of _____. . . . Please ask yourself: What is your final destination? . . . Is your journey leading you to that 'multiplicity of blessings' the Savior has promised?" —M. Russell Ballard, "The Trek Continues!"
3. "The Book of Mormon is one of God's priceless gifts to us. It is both sword and shield—it sends the word of God into battle to fight for the hearts of the just and serves as an arch ____ of the truth." —Tad R. Callister, "God's Compelling Witness: The Book of Mormon."

Answers: 1. plead; 2. discovery; 3. defender

THE REASON FOR OUR HOPE

Heavenly Father has an eternal plan to bring you home to Him. His Son, Jesus Christ, has been with you and will continue to be with you each step of the way.



LIFE BEFORE BIRTH

In our premortal life, Heavenly Father presented to all of His spirit children His plan for helping us become like Him. The plan required a Savior to help us overcome physical and spiritual death. Jesus Christ offered to be our Savior and give our Heavenly Father the glory (see Moses 4:1–2).



CREATION

Under His Father's direction, Jesus Christ created a beautiful world for us (see Colossians 1:15–16; 3 Nephi 9:15). "The vast expanse of eternity, the glories and mysteries of infinite space and time are all built for the benefit of ordinary mortals like you and me" (Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "You Matter to Him," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 20).



LIFE ON EARTH

On earth we are no longer in God's presence, but the gospel of Jesus Christ can guide us. Although we sin from time to time, the Savior can heal and forgive us when we repent. He suffered "even more than man can suffer" (Mosiah 3:7) so we could overcome our sins without being condemned by them! (See Mosiah 4:2; Alma 42:14–15.)



LIFE AFTER DEATH

At death, our spirits and bodies separate, awaiting the Resurrection in the spirit world. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ overcame death for all of us, allowing us, if we are faithful, to be reunited with our families and Heavenly Father. “The spirit and body shall be reunited again in its perfect form” (Alma 11:43) and live forever. (See 1 Corinthians 15:22; 2 Nephi 9:4–13.)



JUDGMENT DAY

Jesus Christ will be our judge. He who has been our advocate with Heavenly Father will deliver a perfect, loving, merciful, and just judgment. He will judge us not only for what we did, said, and thought but also for who we became—how Christlike we are. (See 2 Nephi 9:15; Mosiah 4:30; D&C 45:3–5.)



ETERNAL LIFE

Those who come unto Christ and receive all necessary ordinances, such as baptism and temple ordinances, and are faithful to the commandments will inherit eternal life in God’s presence. This blessing comes “through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah” (2 Nephi 2:8; see also Mosiah 15:23).

SUNRISE

By Don Jensen

This life is not the end; there is much beauty and happiness and joy to come.

The winter morning was clear and cold in the predawn hours as I began the morning chores on my dairy farm. My mind was heavy as I reflected on the events of the past week. Tragedy had struck our small valley. An old high school friend of mine, along with his young son, his teenage daughter, and three of her friends had been killed in a terrible car crash. My children had been friends with the girls in the accident. Our family, and many others, had spent the week grieving this tragedy along with the families involved. We had attended three funerals already that week and would be attending the

final funeral, for the father and his two children, today.

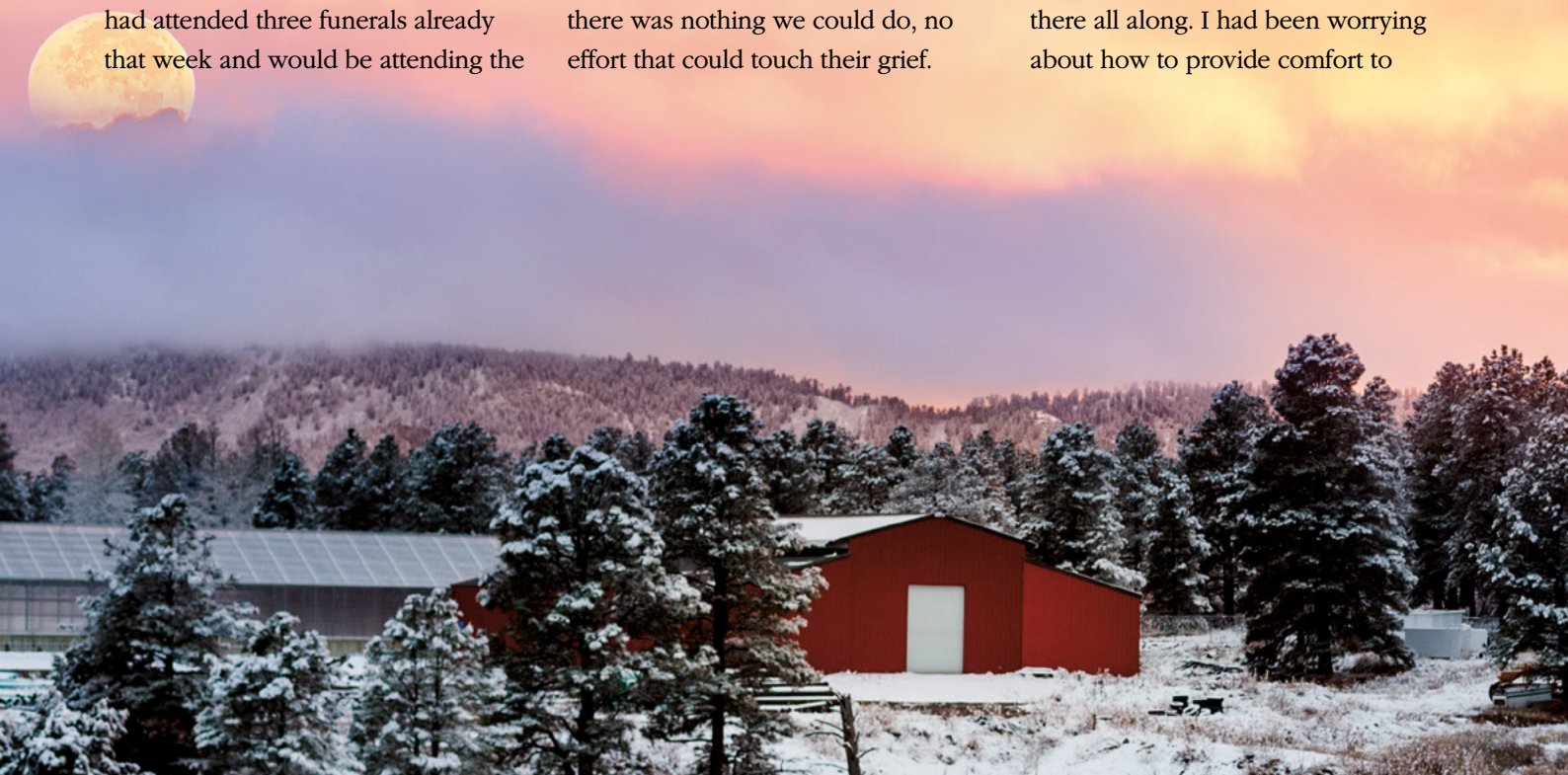
I was struggling with two main questions as I came to terms with what had happened.

First, I grieved for and wondered why these young children would be taken before they got to experience so much that life has to offer. They would not grow up, marry, serve missions, have children, and experience so many other joys of mortal life.

Secondly, although I felt that we as a community wanted so much to offer comfort to the families, it seemed that there was nothing we could do, no effort that could touch their grief.

As I worked, I was surprised by a visit from the father-in-law of my friend who had died. As a fellow rancher, where the work never stops, he needed to buy a calf immediately. After the transaction was made, we talked for a while about how he and his family were doing. I voiced to him my wish that I could do something more for them. I felt so helpless to ease their pain. But I was impressed at how calm and peaceful he seemed in spite of what his family was going through.

Suddenly I realized that the answer to one of my questions had been there all along. I had been worrying about how to provide comfort to



my grieving friends, forgetting that true comfort and peace comes from the Holy Ghost. These families were blessed with an added measure of that comfort from Heavenly Father that only He can provide. I knew that they were receiving the Lord's comfort, spoken of in the Book of Mormon:

"He will console you in your afflictions, and he will plead your cause . . .

"O all ye that are pure in heart, lift up your heads and receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love; for ye may, if your minds are firm, forever" (Jacob 3:1-2).

After we said goodbye, I stepped out of the barn and noticed the full

moon setting in the western sky. It was a beautiful sight. Then I turned around and saw the sun rising in the east. It was as if the whole sky was alive with color. The setting moon had been lovely; the rising sun was breathtaking. As I paused to think about this contrast, it came to me that no matter how beautiful and happy we think our mortal lives are, they pale in comparison to the beauty and happiness that lies ahead if we are faithful and obedient. I realized that those who had died had not really lost anything. They had been valiant in their life on earth and would be going on to greater experiences and joys.

Later that day, I attended the final funeral with my family. We met that day in an overflowing tabernacle, literally bursting at the seams with the support of an entire community. That day and for some time after, the people of our valley experienced a special peace. Parents held their children a bit closer, and we realized that our earth lives are short and we must express our love to family and friends more often. I was reminded of the Lord's love for us and the beauty of the plan of salvation. This life is not the end; there is much beauty and happiness and joy to come. ■

The author lives in Idaho, USA.



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

WHEN EVIL APPEARS GOOD AND GOOD APPEARS EVIL

*How the adversary tries to mischaracterize
and undermine the blessings of living
according to the Father's plan.*

One of the most cunning aspects of the adversary's efforts to thwart our Father in Heaven's plan of happiness is his deceitful teaching that there is no evil influence or devil (see 2 Nephi 28:22) and his attempt to redefine evil as good and good as evil, darkness as light and light as darkness, and bitter as sweet and sweet as bitter! (see 2 Nephi 15:20).

This is sometimes called a paradigm shift—"when the usual way of thinking about or doing something is replaced by a new and different way,"¹ thus portraying things to be exactly the opposite of what they really are. In his classic novel *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis wrote from a senior devil's point of view. Lewis inverted traditional values using irony and satire to make evil appear good and good appear evil.²



In this vein, I had a provocative meeting with an internationally recognized advertising expert a few months ago. We were discussing the influence of evil and the consequences of bad choices.

He envisioned an interesting hypothetical account of Lucifer meeting with an advertising agency. The adversary described his dilemma: he and his followers had rebelled and rejected the Father's plan and had come to understand that they could not prevail against God. Lucifer understood that while the Father's plan was about joy and happiness, his own plan resulted in grief and misery. The problem, Lucifer explained to the ad executive, was how to attract followers.

It was determined that Lucifer's only hope of success was to achieve a paradigm shift or values inversion—in other words, to characterize the Father's plan as resulting in grief and misery and Lucifer's plan as resulting in joy and happiness.

The Word of Wisdom advocates wholesome health practices with a promise that those acting in obedience to the divine command “shall receive health . . . and shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge.”

This hypothetical meeting serves a useful purpose. The truth is, not only do the enemies of the Father's plan attempt to undermine the doctrine and principles of the plan, but they also attempt to mischaracterize the blessings that flow from the plan. Their basic effort is to make that which is good, righteous, and joyful seem miserable.

I will discuss some of the adversary's efforts to mischaracterize and undermine the blessings of living according to the Father's plan.

Word of Wisdom

Over the course of a lifetime, I have seen the lives of many of my friends blighted and sometimes destroyed by alcohol. An alcohol culture isn't just about Church doctrine; it is also about the health and happiness of everyone. Latter-day Saints can be an important voice in educating society about the consequences of this issue.

In the Father's plan, the Word of Wisdom—given because of “evils and designs . . . of conspiring men”—provides health principles. It is “adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of all saints.” It sets forth particulars, including that “wine or strong drink [alcohol] . . . is not good.” Tobacco and hot drinks (tea and coffee) “are not for the body” (D&C 89:4, 3, 5, 8–9).

This revelation also advocates wholesome health practices with a promise. It promises that those acting in obedience to the divine command “shall receive health . . . and shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge” (D&C 89:18–19).³

The distortion that the adversary utilizes is clearly illustrated by his advocacy for tobacco and alcohol.

Even the hypothetical advertising agency would have a hard time casting tobacco in a favorable light today. The Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44) received the Word of Wisdom by revelation in 1833. In 1921, President Heber J. Grant (1856–1945), inspired by the Lord, called on all Saints to more fully live the Word of Wisdom.⁴ At the time, mass marketing and glamorization in the movies made cigarette smoking appear fashionable, sophisticated, and fun. It wasn't until 1964, 43 years later, that the Surgeon General of the United States concluded, “Cigarette smoking is a health hazard of sufficient importance in the United States to warrant appropriate remedial action.”⁵

The statistics today with respect to cigarette smoking are not in dispute. Smokers are more likely than non-smokers to develop heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer. Smoking is estimated to increase the risk of lung cancer by 25 times.⁶

So what the adversary portrayed as fashionable, sophisticated, and fun has in fact resulted in misery and untimely death for millions of people.



Alcohol is another example. Over many years I have followed a research project that commenced in the 1940s. Initially, 268 men attending Harvard University were periodically studied over their entire lives. Later, others, including women, became part of the study. The goal of the original study was to find out about success and happiness.

This study contains three significant insights. First, adult happiness has a high correlation with childhood family happiness, especially love and affection from parents.⁷ Second is the importance of a healthy, stable marriage to lifelong happiness.⁸ Third is the negative effect of alcohol on marital and lifetime success and happiness. Alcohol abuse touches one-third of families in the United States and is involved in one-fourth of hospital admissions. It plays a major role in death, bad health, and diminished accomplishment.⁹

A recent *Washington Post* front-page article based on U.S. federal health data reported that “women in America are drinking far more, and far more frequently, than their mothers or grandmothers did, and alcohol consumption is killing them in record numbers.” The article concluded that

“the current and emerging science does not support the purported benefits of moderate drinking” and that “the risk of death from cancer appears to go up with any level of alcohol consumption.”¹⁰

In the past few years, many universities across the world have been trying to diminish alcohol use because of its connection to serious antisocial behaviors, including sexual assault and serious health concerns, especially from binge drinking. The terrible impact of alcohol on young brains is now medically established.¹¹

In reciting primarily personal health issues, I have not attempted to categorize other serious consequences of alcohol use such as accidents while driving under the influence, men trying to excuse physical and sexual assaults because of alcohol impairment, and the effects on fetal brains from alcohol use by women during pregnancy.¹²

As if cigarette smoking, alcohol abuse, and an opiate epidemic¹³ were not harmful enough to society, we now see the forces of evil pushing legalization of recreational marijuana.



Family Choices

Family choices follow a similar pattern. In the Father's plan, the role of families is clearly set forth.

In "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," we read: "The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁴

It is fairly common in today's world, in another paradigm shift, to trumpet alternative choices in a positive way that are in direct conflict with this plan and that are unfavorable to marriage and family:

- The choice for both women and men to put education and careers ahead of marriage and family.
- The choice to purposefully have no or few children¹⁵ or to terminate pregnancy when it is inconvenient.

- The choice to engage in immoral conduct as a substitute for the sacred institution of marriage.

The adversary has targeted women and has painted motherhood as a dead-end road of drudgery. He has targeted men and has painted fatherhood as unimportant and fidelity as "old school." The alienation and objectification created by pornography is an example of immoral conduct being substituted for the sacred institution of marriage. It underscores the horrific turning from truth and righteousness that the adversary seeks.

Inappropriate alternative choices are painted as appropriate in helping to achieve the worldly goals of freedom and equality. As a result of such choices, the average number of children a woman will bear in her lifetime is declining dramatically. It is estimated that 46 percent of the world lives in countries in which the fertility rate is below 2.1 children—the rate necessary for the population to remain stable. Most European and Asian countries are below this level. Italy and Japan are both at about 1.3 births. Japan is expected to decrease in population from 120 million to about 100 million by the year 2050.¹⁶

This worldwide decline in population has been described by some as a “demographic winter.”¹⁷ Many countries are not having enough children to replace the generation that is dying.

Let me share one other reality that is of great concern to me. I had a sobering experience in Jerusalem in 2016 at the Children’s Memorial, which is part of the World Holocaust Remembrance Center. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and I, together with two American Jewish leaders, laid a remembrance wreath. It is believed that more than one million Jewish children were killed during the Holocaust.¹⁸

As I experienced the museum, I was overcome with emotion. Standing outside to regain my composure, I reflected on the horror of the experience and suddenly realized that in the United States alone, there are as many abortions every two years as the number of Jewish children killed in the Holocaust during the Second World War.¹⁹

The Jewish children were killed because they were Jews, and there is no analogue to this in all history, but the intensity of my feeling was about the loss of children. Bringing children into the world is a sacred part of our Father in Heaven’s plan of happiness. We are so numbed and intimidated by the immensity of the practice of abortion that many of us have pushed it to the back of our minds and try to keep it out of our consciousness. Clearly the adversary is attacking the value of children on many levels.

Abortion needs to be approached carefully. This is a problem that will probably not be solved by personal condemnation or judgmental accusations. Some have cautioned not to judge a ship—or men or women—without understanding the length of the voyage and the storms encountered.²⁰ I might add, many who engage in this deplorable conduct do not have a testimony of the Savior or knowledge of the Father’s plan.

However, for those who believe we are accountable to God—and even for many of those not of our faith—this has become a tragedy of monumental proportions. When you combine it with the demographic winter we just explored, it is a serious moral blot on our society.

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) taught: “Supreme happiness in marriage is governed considerably by a primary factor—that of the bearing and rearing of children. . . . The Church cannot approve nor condone . . . measures which . . . greatly limit the family.”²¹

With respect to the number and spacing of children, the health of the mother must be considered, and the decision should be made prayerfully by husbands and wives.²² Such decisions should never be judged by outsiders. Some faithful Saints are not able to have children or may not have the opportunity to marry. They will receive every blessing at the ultimate banquet of consequences.²³

Nevertheless, Lucifer has supported abortion and in a horrific paradigm shift has convinced many people that children represent lost opportunity and misery instead of joy and happiness.

As Latter-day Saints, we must be at the forefront of changing hearts and minds on the importance of children.

The Father’s plan is established through families. Every family member is important, and their roles are beautiful, glorious, and fulfilling.

The attacks on the family I just described ultimately result in grief and misery.

The Lord has declared that His work and His glory is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). The plan is established through families. Every family member is important, and their roles are beautiful, glorious, and fulfilling.

The family proclamation could not be more clear about the consequences of choices inconsistent with the Father’s plan. It unequivocally proclaims, “We warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals,

communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.”²⁴

This clearly sets forth the ultimate banquet of consequences and the cumulative impact of choices not in accordance with the Father’s plan of happiness.

In all marriages and in raising children, there are challenges and sacrifices. But the rewards both in this life and in the eternities are breathtakingly beautiful. They emanate from a loving Father in Heaven.

Prospering in the Land

A familiar scripture found throughout the Book of Mormon has two parts. It reads, “Inasmuch as ye shall keep

- Seeking the kingdom of God first.
- Working, planning, and spending wisely.
- Planning for the future.
- Using wealth to build up the kingdom of God.

Lucifer’s Objective

In addition to portraying blessings as misery, Lucifer seeks to undermine the Father’s plan and destroy faith in Jesus Christ and His doctrine. The assault on the Bible and the divinity of Jesus Christ has never been more pronounced in my lifetime than it is today. As the scriptures predicted, Lucifer is using many devices to accomplish this objective.

It is one thing to be misled by the adversary. It is another to be one of his mercenaries. Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said it beautifully: “How tragic it is that so many mortals are mercenaries for the adversary . . . and are . . . bought off at such low prices. A little status, a little money, a little praise, a little fleeting fame, and they are willing to do the bidding of him who can offer all sorts of transitory ‘rewards,’ but who has no celestial currency.”²⁵

There is probably no better example of the impact of mercenaries than Lehi’s vision of the tree of life and the great and spacious building in the Book of Mormon. Those in the building pointed fingers at those who had grasped the rod of iron and even partaken of the fruit of the tree. The partakers became “ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost” (1 Nephi 8:27–28).

Thus, bad choices result in a banquet with bitter, rancid, nasty, and miserable results.

Compare this to the glorious banquet of consequences promised to you who are faithful. You will “be filled with the glory of the Lord” and “sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of” your body, and all that the Father hath will be given to you (D&C 84:32, 33; see also verses 34–38).

In such a banquet of consequences, the spiritual food we feast upon is delicious, savory, sweet, succulent, nourishing, and fulfilling and will allow our hearts to

The assault on the Bible and the divinity of Jesus Christ has never been more pronounced in my lifetime than it is today.

the commandments of God ye shall prosper in the land.” The second part reads, “Inasmuch as ye will not keep the commandments of God ye shall be cut off from his presence” (see, for example, Alma 36:30). It is clear that having the blessing of the Holy Spirit through obedience is a principal element of prospering in the land.

In addition, sacred teachings of the Church establish having sufficient for our needs as the best measure of temporal prosperity. Lucifer’s paradigm shift here is to elevate the seeking of great wealth and the acquisition of highly visible luxury products. Some seem absolutely driven to achieve the lifestyle of the rich and famous. Excess wealth is not promised to faithful members, nor does it usually bring happiness.

As a people, Latter-day Saints have indeed prospered. Wise financial principles include:



rejoice. When we “come unto the Holy One of Israel, and feast upon that which perisheth not, neither can be corrupted” (2 Nephi 9:51), we can follow the narrow path and the straight course that will bring us to the Holy One of Israel, “for the Lord God is his name” (2 Nephi 9:41). ■

From a devotional address, “A Banquet of Consequences: The Cumulative Result of All Choices,” given at Brigham Young University on February 7, 2017. For the full address in English, visit speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

1. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. (2003), “paradigm shift,” [merriam-webster.com](https://www.merriam-webster.com).
2. See C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (1942).
3. See Jed Woodworth, “The Word of Wisdom,” in *Revelations in Context: The Stories behind the Sections of the Doctrine and Covenants*, Matthew McBride and James Goldberg, eds. (2016), 183–89; “The Word of Wisdom,” June 1, 2013, history.lds.org.
4. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Heber J. Grant* (2002), 188–97.

5. *Smoking and Health: Report of the Advisory Committee to the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service*, PHS publication no. 1103 (1964), 33; see also *The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General* (2014), [surgeongeneral.gov](https://www.surgeongeneral.gov).
6. See “Health Effects of Cigarette Smoking,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, May 15, 2017, [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).
7. See George E. Vaillant, *Triumphs of Experience: The Men of the Harvard Grant Study* (2012), 108–9.
8. See Alvin Powell, “Decoding Keys to a Healthy Life,” *Harvard Gazette*, Feb. 2, 2012, news.harvard.edu.
9. See Vaillant, *Triumphs of Experience*, 292. By comparison, a separate long-term study of active Church members had positive results (see James E. Enstrom and Lester Breslow, “Lifestyle and Reduced Mortality among Active California Mormons, 1980–2004,” *Preventive Medicine*, vol. 46, no. 2 [Feb. 2008], 133–36).
10. Kimberly Kindy and Dan Keating, “For Women, Heavy Drinking Has Been Normalized. That’s Dangerous,” *Washington Post*, Dec. 23, 2016, [washingtonpost.com](https://www.washingtonpost.com); the conclusion quotes Robert D. Brewer from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention alcohol program.
11. See “Fact Sheets—Underage Drinking,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Oct. 20, 2016, [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).
12. See Anne Schuchat, “The CDC’s Recommendations to Help Prevent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders,” *American Family Physician*, vol. 95, no. 1 (Jan. 1, 2017), 6–7, [aafp.org](https://www.aafp.org).
13. See “Inside a Killer Drug Epidemic: A Look at America’s Opioid Crisis,” *New York Times*, Jan. 6, 2017, [nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com).
14. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
15. “The percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds with no children living with them more than doubled since 1967” (Emily Schondelmeyer, “No Kids in the House: A Historical Look at Adults Living without Children,” U.S. Census Bureau, Dec. 20, 2016, [census.gov](https://www.census.gov)).
16. See *World Fertility Patterns 2015*, United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2015, 6, [un.org](https://www.un.org); “Birth and Fertility of the Resident Population,” Istat (Italian National Institute of Statistics), Nov. 28, 2016, [istat.it](https://www.istat.it); “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010–2050, Buddhists,” Pew Research Center, Apr. 2, 2015, 6–12, 102–111, [pewresearch.org](https://www.pewresearch.org); Adam Taylor, “It’s Official: Japan’s Population Is Dramatically Shrinking,” *Washington Post*, Feb. 26, 2016, [washingtonpost.com](https://www.washingtonpost.com); and Ana Swanson, “Japan’s Birth Rate Problem Is Way Worse Than Anyone Imagined,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 7, 2015, [washingtonpost.com](https://www.washingtonpost.com).
17. See *The New Economic Reality: Demographic Winter*, BYUtv, [byutv.org](https://www.byutv.org).
18. See “Plight of Jewish Children,” *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, [ushmm.org](https://www.ushmm.org).
19. See Reproductive Health: Data and Statistics: “Abortion,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, May 10, 2017, [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov). I recognize that the number of abortions has declined in recent years, but the number is still extremely high.
20. Sometimes attributed to Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881); see *Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops* (2010), 17.3.1. This section provides limited abortion exceptions involving rape, incest, health of the mother, and severe defects of the baby.
21. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 328–29; see also *Eternal Marriage Student Manual* (Church Educational System manual, 2003), 14–18, [LDS.org](https://www.lds.org).
22. See Gordon B. Hinckley, *Cornerstones of a Happy Home* (pamphlet, 1984), 6, [LDS.org](https://www.lds.org).
23. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 1.3.3.
24. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” 2.
25. Neal A. Maxwell, *Things As They Really Are* (1978), 42.

JOURNEY THROUGH THE Ancient Tabernacle

As in modern temples, the symbolism in the tabernacle can teach us about our journey back to God's presence.

For thousands of years, temples have been a place where God uses priesthood ordinances and sacred covenants to teach His children eternal truths about His plan of salvation.

During their travels in the wilderness, the people of Israel were commanded to build a tabernacle so that God could “dwell among them” (Exodus 29:46). “*Tabernacle* literally means ‘place of dwelling’ and was so called in the belief that God literally lived within its sacred confines. When Israel camped, the tabernacle was set up in the precise center of the camp (symbolizing the idea that God was to be the center of his people’s lives).”¹

Consider these items in the tabernacle and what they can teach us about our return to God’s presence.

NOTES

1. *The Life and Teachings of Jesus and His Apostles* (1979), 390.
2. In Paul’s epistle to the Hebrews (chapters 8–10), the tabernacle is used to teach how the great High Priest, Jesus Christ, “by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (9:12). Because of this redemption, we are also able “to enter into the holiest [place] by the blood of Jesus” (10:19).



Tabernacle: The tabernacle consisted of three divisions through which one must pass to reach the presence of God: the outer courtyard, the holy place, and the Holy of Holies (see Exodus 25–30).



Altar: The law of Moses set forth the sacrifices to be offered here, foreshadowing the Savior and His “great and last sacrifice” (see Alma 34:10). Sacrifice can also symbolize our repentance—giving up our sins and offering a broken heart and contrite spirit (see 3 Nephi 9:19–20; Guide to the Scriptures, “Sacrifice”).

Laver of water: Before entering the holy place, priests used the brass laver of water to wash their hands and feet (see Exodus 30:19–21), reminding us of our need to be clean as we prepare to return to the Lord’s presence (see 3 Nephi 27:19–20).

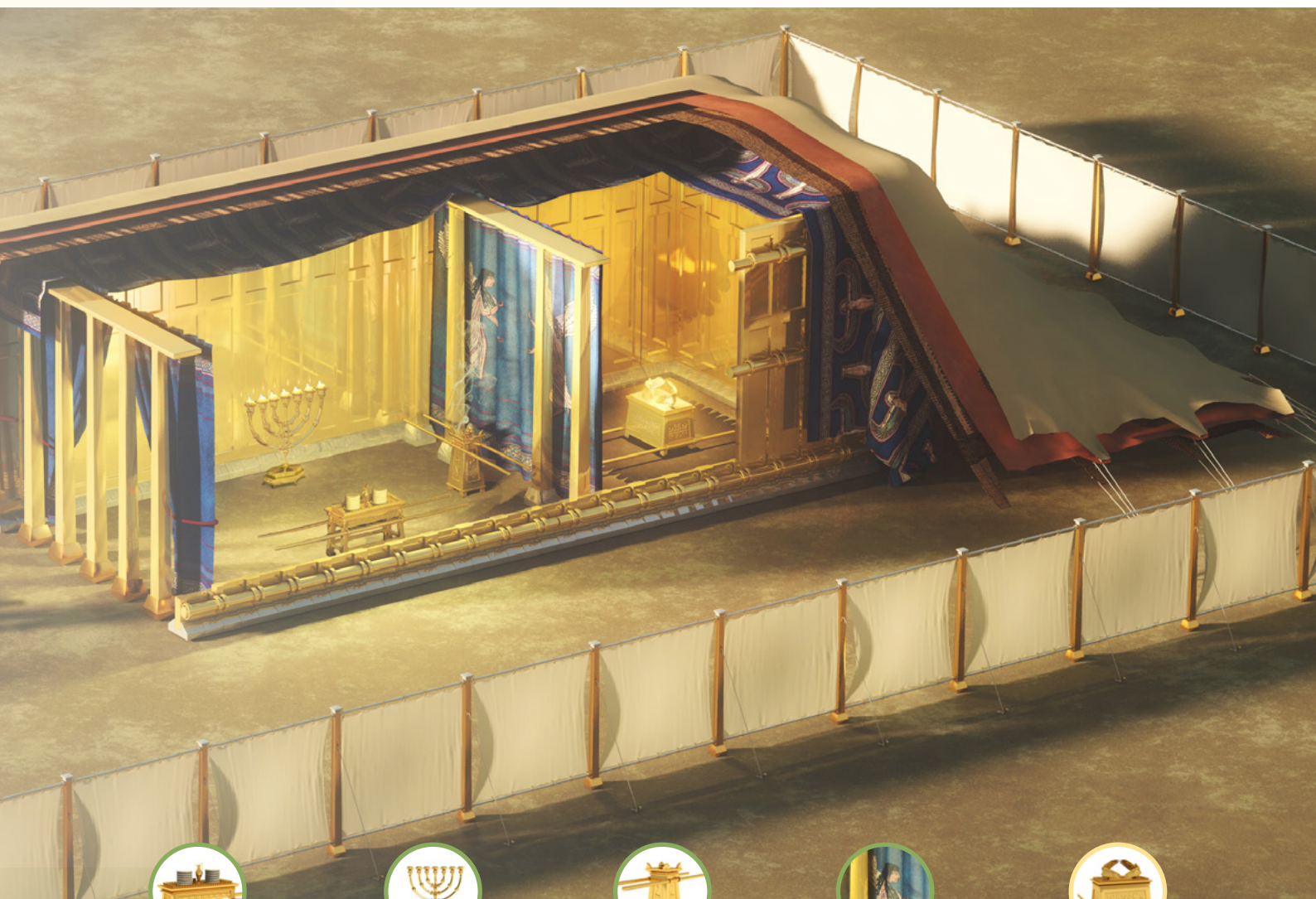


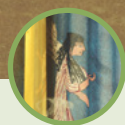
Table of Shewbread: Twelve loaves of unleavened bread were placed each Sabbath on the table of shewbread, a word meaning “bread of the presence” in Hebrew (see Exodus 25:30). The loaves were eaten in the holy place every Sabbath as “an everlasting covenant” (see Leviticus 24:5–9).



Candlestick: The seven lamps burned pure olive oil, providing light to the holy place (see Leviticus 24:2–4). This can remind us of the Light of Christ and the Holy Ghost, the sources of spiritual light.



Altar of Incense: The priests burned incense each morning and night on an altar placed before the veil. The ascending smoke can represent prayers ascending to heaven (see Revelation 5:8).



Veil: The high priest entered the Holy of Holies through a veil. Cherubim, or angels, were embroidered on the veil (see Exodus 26:31–33; D&C 132:19). The veil can remind us that as we are now veiled from God’s presence, the great High Priest—Jesus Christ—can part the veil.



Holy of Holies: The high priest entered this most sacred part of the tabernacle once a year, on the Day of Atonement. The Holy of Holies represented the presence of God and contained the ark of the covenant, the lid of which was called the mercy seat. “There I will meet with thee,” the Lord told Moses, “and I will commune with thee” (Exodus 25:22; see also Exodus 29:43; 30:36).² ■





By Elder Erich W.
Kopischke

Of the Seventy

Family

THE FOUNTAIN OF HAPPINESS

The concept of family and family life as a true source for happiness has been terribly weakened in recent decades. The traditional family is under attack from many different sources worldwide. (On page 18 of this issue, Elder Quentin L. Cook discusses some of those attacks.) But there are other pitfalls and risks that relate even to some of us who know about the importance, divinity, and eternal destiny of the family.

Influenced by the world and its enticements, the increasing desire for self-centered fulfillment, and the inclination for comfort or for making things easy, we put the family and our happiness under stress. All too often, happiness in our life is defined by the quality of our “all-around carefree package,” which we hope to achieve and retain in a “low-investment, high-return” mode.

*Ponder the doctrine
of eternal families,
and come to know
for yourself what
really matters most.*

But life does not work this way. It was never intended to be easy. The Lord said through the Prophet Joseph Smith: “For after much tribulation come the blessings. Wherefore the day cometh that ye shall be crowned with much glory” (D&C 58:4).

Ordained of God

The Lord has clearly revealed how to develop and retain strong families. We all are invited to study and apply the principles set forth in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” Additionally, we need to recognize that drawing personal strength and happiness from family life requires sacrifice and faith.

The family proclamation states “that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.” It further states “that God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force.”¹

For many people, the image and purpose of the family has drastically changed. Increasingly, society is adopting the so-called “soul mate” model of marriage, which focuses on the needs and feelings of adults as opposed to those of children. As a result, many enter marriage after a long-standing relationship rather than moving forward after an appropriate courtship. Finding the perfect match, testing a relationship by cohabitation without the benefit of marriage, or securing a lavish lifestyle that will be backed by a robust prenuptial agreement have become common practices among many before finally deciding to marry.

Scripture and modern-day prophets teach us otherwise. We build our marriages on the foundation of chastity and fidelity, with the intent to establish and rear a family. President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) taught: “There are many who talk and write against marriage. Even some of our own delay marriage and argue against it. . . . We call upon all people to accept [traditional] marriage as a basis for true happiness. . . . Basically marriage presupposes a family.”²

When my wife, Christiane, and I were young, these were the words of our living prophet, and we trusted and followed his advice. We knelt across the altar of the Bern Switzerland Temple, being only 20 and 22 years of age, respectively. We were worthy of the covenant, we had no

real clue of what to expect, we had no work experience or finished education, and we were quite poor.

All we had in abundance was our love for each other and a lot of naïve enthusiasm. But we began building our world together. We did not postpone having children, and we needed to support each other in getting our education. We strongly believed in the Lord’s promise that “if ye do

keep his commandments he doth bless you and prosper you” (Mosiah 2:22).

And He did. When we married, Christiane was in nursing school. Our vision included having her finish her degree, but at the same time we also made a conscious decision to begin fulfilling our dream of having a family. As

a result, our first child was born about two weeks before Christiane passed her final exam as a certified nurse.

Now, nearly 40 years later, we are grateful that we could build our family together. Our faith in God and our relationship with each other have become unshaken as we have seen the hand of the Lord guiding us through the process of building our kingdom in mortality. This kingdom will continue to grow forever and ever.

Be Willing to Sacrifice

For our vision of happiness, we both were ready and willing to sacrifice. We accepted the divinely appointed roles of the father “to preside” and “to provide” and of the mother to provide “for the nurture of their children.”³ Julie B. Beck, former Relief Society General President, stated: “The priesthood role of fathers is to preside and pass priesthood ordinances to the next generation. The priesthood role of mothers is to influence. These are essential, complimentary, and interdependent responsibilities.”⁴

Helping one another in a marriage and family as equal partners does not mean we always do the same things or do everything together or in equal shares. We understand and accept different roles given to us by divine design as outlined in the proclamation on the family. We are not

We need to recognize that drawing personal strength and happiness from family life requires sacrifice and faith.

following the world in what is described as “emancipation,” in which both husband and wife live only to fulfill their own self-interests. We are living the principles of the gospel; husbands and wives complement one another, and families strive for unity and unselfishness.

Some of you may say: “Well, our situation is different. The world today is not ideal. There must be room for exceptions.” True, but I am attempting to teach the rule or the divine ideal and let you deal with exceptions as you walk the course of your life.

In the vision we had for our family, we wanted Christiane to stay home to rear our children. This meant sacrifice. Shortly after we learned that a baby was on its way, Christiane reminded me of the mutual decision we had made even before our wedding day that she would immediately stop working outside the home as soon as a baby was born. I tried to escape what I knew would be additional responsibility by mentioning that she was contributing one-third of our family income. She answered simply, “I will take care of the children, and you take care of putting food on the table.”

I knew she was right; we had discussed it long before. It was in tune with our vision of family life, it was in tune with the words of the living prophets, and it felt right. So she gave up her well-paying career as a nurse to be close to the children and to meet their daily needs, and I had to get my act together to provide food and shelter. The Lord blessed us to be able to fulfill this aspect of our vision.

Other important matters, such as parenting, teaching, mentoring, cleaning, or even diaper changing, we did together as often as circumstances allowed. This division of labor occurred because it had always been part of how we envisioned our family life.

Christiane and I found that as we have acted in faith and have trusted the Lord, He has helped us to do His will in His way and according to His timing. Now, I have to say that His way did not mean that everything turned out immediately the way we thought it would. Sometimes we had to be patient, sometimes we had to put in extra effort, and sometimes it even seemed that the Lord was testing our seriousness. However, our vision always has inspired us and has been the foundation of our most important decisions.

One thing Christiane and I always envisioned was to be with our children in the celestial room of a temple as a prelude for the eternal joy and glory we hope one day to experience. Over the past several years we have taken one child after another to receive temple ordinances, symbolically returning them to our Heavenly Father after teaching them the principles of righteousness. We have accompanied three of our children to temple altars as they have married their sweethearts, and we anticipate more temple weddings to come.





Nothing has provided more happiness and satisfaction in our lives than the joy we have found in one another and in our posterity. Once we understood that these are just the beginnings of our eternal progression and therefore only the very first levels of our joy and happiness, we were—and are—willing to sacrifice all we have to live the doctrine of the family and to see our vision fully realized.

I invite you to ponder this doctrine and to come to know for yourself what really matters most. This type of happiness is at the heart of our existence. And the happiness that stems from congenial relationships among husband, wife, and children always grows.

Implement Your Vision

After you have studied the doctrine of the family and have established a vision for your happiness, you have to become serious about implementing your vision.

The initial rejections I received in my courtship with Christiane made me a little discouraged. I had just about

decided to begin a fruitful career as a young single adult in the Church, but one day I had a special spiritual impression. I was participating in an ordinance in the Swiss Temple when I heard a voice in my heart saying something to this effect: “Erich, if you do not seriously strive to marry and enter into the new and everlasting covenant, all these teachings and promised blessings really make no difference for you.” It was a wake-up call that I received at the young age of 21, and from that moment I tried even harder to be worthy of that blessing.

I invite you to set personal goals regarding your vision. In *Preach My Gospel* we read: “Goals reflect the desires of our hearts and our vision of what we can accomplish. Through goals and plans, our hopes are transformed into action. Goal setting and planning are acts of faith.”⁵

Do not trifle with sacred things. Once you reach a marriageable age, don’t just date for fun. Never compromise your eternal birthright by doing anything that would deprive you of making the most important covenants in

the temple. As you treat every date as a potential eternal companion, you will never do inappropriate things that would physically or spiritually harm your date or compromise your own worthiness and darken your vision. As you remain worthy, your spiritual perception will never be dimmed, and you will always be entitled to the whisperings of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost will encourage you and confirm the correctness of these most important decisions in your life, even if at times you are scared to death.

Hold yourself accountable to the Lord with respect to your vision and goals in life. If there is something you need to repent of, don't hesitate a second to do so. Both this life and eternal life are too important to "procrastinate the day of your repentance" (Alma 13:27; 34:33). Follow the invitation of a prophet of God, who encouraged us to "ask the Father in the name of Jesus for what things soever ye shall stand in need. Doubt not, but be believing, and begin as in times of old, and come unto the Lord with all your heart, and work out your own salvation with fear and trembling before him" (Mormon 9:27).

I recognize that some of you, given your circumstances, may need to adapt the ideal vision of a family to fit your personal situation. But I have learned that the Lord will help us as we act in faith and follow the ideal to the extent possible.

The Principle of Finishing

The gospel of Jesus Christ includes a most comforting component. It is the *finishing* or *completing* aspect of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Moroni admonished us to always stay on the right way, "relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who [is] the author and the finisher of [our] faith" (Moroni 6:4).

Because of our faith in Jesus Christ, we can pursue the course in life we need to take. But if we stumble because of weakness or missed opportunities, He will reach out to us, fill in the gap, and become the finisher of our faith. He

stated, "For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts" (D&C 137:9).

From *Handbook 2* we read, "Faithful members whose circumstances do not allow them to receive the blessings of eternal marriage and parenthood in this life will receive all promised blessings in the eternities, provided they keep the covenants they have made with God."⁶

I testify that the Lord meant what He said when He stated that "it is not good that the man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18) and that His ultimate desire for all of His children is that they receive "a fulness of joy" (Moses 7:67). Therefore, always keep your vision before you and "strive for the ideal of living in an eternal family. This means preparing to become worthy spouses and loving fathers or

mothers. In some cases, these blessings will not be fulfilled until the next life, but the ultimate goal is the same for all."⁷

I know there are as many different life circumstances as there are people in the world. I know there are differences in cultures, traditions, and expectations. However, these doctrines and principles are eternal and true, and they stand independent of our personal life situations.

I have every confidence that as you sincerely ponder and prayerfully consider these doctrines and principles, you will be able to develop a personal vision for your life that will be pleasing to the Lord and lead to your greatest happiness. ■

From a devotional address, "What Do You Envision in Life?" delivered at Brigham Young University on December 2, 2014. For the full text in English, visit speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

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Chapter 2

Hear Him

This is chapter 2 of the new four-volume narrative history of the Church titled Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days. The book will be available in 14 languages in print, in the Church History section of the Gospel Library app, and at saints.lds.org. The next several chapters will be published in upcoming issues until volume 1 is released later this year. Those chapters will be available in 47 languages in the Gospel Library app and at saints.lds.org.

Joseph rose early on a spring morning in 1820 and set out for the woods near his home. The day was clear and beautiful, and sunlight filtered through the branches overhead. He wanted to be alone when he prayed, and he knew a quiet spot in the woods where he had recently been clearing trees. He had left his ax there, wedged in a stump.¹

Finding the place, Joseph looked around to make sure he was by himself. He was anxious about praying out loud and did not want to be interrupted.

Satisfied he was alone, Joseph knelt on the cool earth and began to share the desires of his heart with God. He asked for mercy and forgiveness and for wisdom to find answers to his questions. “O Lord,” he prayed, “what church shall I join?”²

As he prayed, his tongue seemed to swell until he could not speak. He heard footsteps behind him but saw no one when he turned around. He tried to pray again, but the footsteps grew louder, as if someone was coming for him. He sprang to his feet and spun around, but still he saw no one.³

Suddenly, an unseen power seized him. He tried to speak again, but his tongue was still bound. A thick darkness

closed in around him until he could no longer see the sunlight. Doubts and awful images flashed across his mind, confusing and distracting him. He felt as if some terrible being, real and immensely powerful, wanted to destroy him.⁴

Exerting all his strength, Joseph called once more to God. His tongue loosened, and he pleaded for deliverance. But he found himself sinking into despair, overwhelmed by the unbearable darkness and ready to abandon himself to destruction.⁵

At that moment, a pillar of light appeared over his head. It descended slowly and seemed to set the woods on fire. As the light rested on him, Joseph felt the unseen power release its hold. The Spirit of God took its place, filling him with peace and unspeakable joy.

Peering into the light, Joseph saw God the Father standing above him in the air. His face was brighter and more glorious than anything Joseph had ever seen. God called him by name and pointed to another being who appeared beside Him. “This is My Beloved Son,” He said. “Hear Him!”⁶

Joseph looked into the face of Jesus Christ. It was as bright and glorious as the Father’s.

“Joseph,” the Savior said, “thy sins are forgiven.”⁷

His burden lifted, Joseph repeated his question: “What church shall I join?”⁸

“Join none of them,” the Savior told him. “They teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of

godliness, but they deny the power thereof.”

The Lord told Joseph that the world was steeped in sin. “None doeth good,” He explained. “They have turned aside from the gospel and keep not my commandments.” Sacred truths had been lost or corrupted, but He promised to reveal the fullness of His gospel to Joseph in the future.⁹

As the Savior spoke, Joseph saw hosts of angels, and the light around them blazed brighter than the noonday sun. “Behold, and lo, I come quickly,” the Lord said, “clothed in the glory of My Father.”¹⁰

Joseph expected the woods to be devoured by the brilliance, but the trees burned like Moses’s bush and were not consumed.¹¹

When the light faded, Joseph found himself lying on his back, looking up into heaven. The pillar of light had departed, and his guilt and confusion were gone. Feelings of divine love filled his heart.¹² God the Father and Jesus Christ had spoken to him, and he had learned for himself how to find truth and forgiveness.

Too weak from the vision to move, Joseph lay in the woods until some of his strength returned. He then struggled home and leaned against the fireplace for support. His mother saw him and asked what was wrong.

“All is well,” he assured her. “I am well enough off.”¹³

A few days later, while talking to a preacher, Joseph told him about what he had seen in the woods. The preacher had been active in the recent religious revivals, and Joseph expected him to take his vision seriously.

At first the preacher treated his words lightly. People claimed to have heavenly visions from time to time.¹⁴ But then he became angry and defensive, and he told Joseph that his story was from the devil. The days of visions and revelations had ceased long ago, he said, and they would never return.¹⁵

Joseph was surprised, and he soon found that no one would believe his vision.¹⁶ Why would they? He was only

fourteen years old and had practically no education. He came from a poor family and expected to spend the rest of his life working the land and doing odd jobs to earn a meager living.

And yet his testimony bothered some people enough to ridicule him. How strange, he thought, that a simple boy of no consequence in the world could attract so much bitterness and scorn. “Why persecute me for telling the truth?” he wanted to ask. “Why does the world think to make me deny what I have actually seen?”

Joseph puzzled over these questions for the rest of his life. “I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me,” he later recounted, “and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true.”

“I knew it, and I knew that God knew it,” he testified, “and I could not deny it.”¹⁷

Once Joseph discovered that sharing his vision only turned his neighbors against him, he kept it mostly to

himself, content with the knowledge God had given him.¹⁸ Later, after he moved away from New York, he tried to record his sacred experience in the woods. He described his yearning for forgiveness and the Savior’s warning to a world in need of repentance. He wrote the words out himself, in halting language, trying earnestly to capture the majesty of the moment.

*Joseph knew he had seen
a vision. God the Father
and Jesus Christ had
appeared to him in a
brilliant light.*

In the years that followed, he recounted the vision more publicly, drawing on scribes who could help him better express what defied all description. He told of his desire to find the true church and described God the Father appearing first to introduce the Son. He wrote less about his own search for forgiveness and more about the Savior’s universal message of truth and the need for a restoration of the gospel.¹⁹

With each effort to record his experience, Joseph testified that the Lord had heard and answered his prayer. As a young man, he learned that the Savior’s church was no longer



In this grove that still stands today near the Smith family home, Joseph knelt in prayer to know which church to join.

on the earth. But the Lord had promised to reveal more about His gospel in due time. So Joseph resolved to trust in God, stay true to the commandment he had received in the woods, and wait patiently for further direction.²⁰ ■

A complete list of works cited is available in English at saints.lds.org.

The word *Topic* in the notes indicates additional information online at saints.lds.org.

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PORTRAITS OF FAITH

When Christian discovered his grandfather's talks, he had no idea they would mean so much to him and his family.

CODY BELL, PHOTOGRAPHER

Christian Karlsson

Buskerud, Norway

My mom gave me a box of old pictures. One of the surprises in this box was my grandfather's journals. Many entries are short and succinct and include simple things like the price of gasoline, bananas, or fish.

Along with his journals, the greatest treat was the careful records of the talks Grandpa gave in church.

In his talks, Grandpa shared his thoughts and feelings and the struggles he faced investigating the Church. He had to humble himself to pray about joining the Church. He received an answer and acted on it.

It is amazing to share Grandpa's firsthand accounts with my wife and children. They've never met him, but his words are reaching them 30 years after his death.

DISCOVER MORE

See more about Christian's journey of faith at liahona.lds.org.

Find more stories of faith in the Media Library on LDS.org.

Learn how you can preserve your own family's memories and photos at FamilySearch.org.

SEARCHING FOR ANCESTORS AND FINDING TRUTH

I was interested in learning about my Italian ancestors, so a few years ago I began researching my genealogy. A day did not go by that I did not do some research to find them. Eventually, I found the birth record of my third great-grandfather from Italy. Finding his record touched me in such a way that I felt I should continue searching for my ancestors.

As I did, I found many ancestors I had never even heard of. I also met a young woman through social media named Ingrid Zanini. We suspected that we might somehow be related because we share the same last name. During our conversation, Ingrid told me that she was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She talked to me about the Church, and said she would send me a copy of the Book of Mormon. As soon as the book arrived, I began reading it.

One day at work, a young woman named Erika noticed that I had the Book of Mormon with me. I will never forget the expression on her face—she was so happy and excited. She asked if I was enjoying the book

Finding my third great-grandfather's birth record touched me in such a way that I continued searching for my ancestors. As I searched, I found something more.

and if I would like to go to church with her and her brother. Two weeks after receiving the Book of Mormon, I attended church for the first time.

The lesson that day in Sunday School was on baptisms for the dead and the importance of family history.

I was very interested. I met the

missionaries and attended a meeting about family history that afternoon at the stake center. As I investigated the Church, I could feel the presence of my ancestors, and I felt encouraged to learn more.

When the missionaries invited me to be baptized, I paused to think about everything that had happened since I began doing my family history. Being introduced to the gospel and learning about the eternal importance of family history could not have been just a coincidence. I accepted the missionaries' invitation to be baptized.

I still do family history, and I am grateful to know that my efforts in searching for my ancestors can now bring eternal blessings to them because I found the gospel of Jesus Christ. ■

Yuri Siqueira Zanini, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



REACHING OUT TO ANNA

Some years ago, I taught the six-year-olds in Primary. Anna was listed on my roll. I knew the family well enough to know that her parents had separated and she lived with her father. They rarely came to church.

I stopped by the house to meet Anna and her father and to invite Anna to Primary. Anna seemed interested, but she never came. Every Sunday morning for weeks, I called her home to invite her to Primary. No one ever answered the phone, but I always left a message telling Anna how happy I would be to see her in Primary.

One Sunday morning, Anna was there. Her father had helped her get ready for Primary in her best Sunday dress and then he dropped her off at the church. Happy to see her, I welcomed her and helped her get to know the other children in the class.

We had our lesson, sang songs, and had a coloring activity at the end of class. As the children were leaving, Anna came to me and dropped a crumpled piece of paper in my hands. At first, I thought it was trash. I was about to throw it away, but the Spirit prompted me to unfold it. Anna had written me a note on the paper. In a six-year-old's handwriting, it said, "I love you."

Anna didn't know me enough to love me. All she knew of me was a voice on her answering machine inviting her to Primary. But that small

effort to reach out to her helped Anna know that someone cared about her and wanted to help her feel the Savior's love.

I saw Anna in Primary once in a while and her father began coming to church occasionally as well. But when circumstances changed again for their family, we didn't see them as often.

Anna had written me a note. In a six-year-old's handwriting, it said, "I love you."

I have thought about Anna over the years. With all my heart I hope she remembers her time in Primary. She may remember some of what she learned, but I hope far more that she remembers feeling the love of the Lord, the comfort of the Spirit, and the love of a teacher. ■

Margaret S. Lifferth, Utah, USA



HAD GOD FORGOTTEN ME?

I had searched everywhere. Twice I had driven from the office to the fabrication yard seeking the essential parts needed to complete a crane we were shipping to a military installation. It was scheduled to ship in two days—just in time to meet our contracted deadline. My company would face serious penalties if we did not meet our commitment.

I entered the office storeroom and once again looked for the missing parts. I inspected every box and reconfirmed that the parts had indeed been ordered.

It was too late to reorder the parts and still meet the deadline. I was discouraged. I headed home, still trying to figure out how to resolve the problem.

I said a quick and empty-hearted prayer before bed and tried to get some sleep. In my mind I retraced the steps I took earlier that day, hoping I would remember something I missed. I tossed and turned until 3:00 a.m.

Finally I sat up. I looked down at the pillow I placed on the floor to remind myself to pray. I didn't feel like praying. I had prayed all day but felt

that nothing I said was making any difference. Had God forgotten me?

Having nowhere else to go, I slid to my knees and began to pray. I asked Heavenly Father if He was aware of my situation. "Heavenly Father," I pleaded, "*Thou* knowest where the missing parts are. Couldst Thou let me know too—today?"

Later that morning, I walked to my office. I set my briefcase on my desk and felt that I should check the storeroom one last time. I entered the storeroom and looked over the boxes

I inspected every box in the storeroom and still couldn't find the missing parts. I didn't know how to resolve the problem and still meet the deadline.



I had checked and rechecked the day before. A large box caught my eye. Something didn't look right.

A closer look revealed that it wasn't one box but two boxes nested together. I lifted the top box from the one below. In the bottom box, I found the parts! I said a prayer of gratitude and returned to my office to notify the fabricators that the missing parts had been found.

Suddenly, I realized that I had not just found the parts, but I had also discovered that Heavenly Father knew where I was and that I was important to Him. God had not forgotten me, and He never will. ■

Edwin F. Smith, Utah, USA

MY DREAM COME TRUE

I was born in Hong Kong, China. When I was young, I dreamed of living in a beautiful country surrounded by nature.

After I grew up and got married, my husband and I moved to Australia.

He was a skilled mechanic and was granted a work visa, which allowed us to stay in Australia for four years. When we both became employed, we received an additional four-year extension on our visas.

During this time, we worked to improve our situation so we could apply for permanent residency. We couldn't afford to pay for English classes, but a brother and sister in our ward helped us learn. Still, at the end of eight years, it looked like we would have to leave Australia. We fasted and prayed to find a way to stay. Our ward fasted and prayed for us as well.

Our situation looked hopeless. We started to pack and make plans for our return to Hong Kong. One night a friend called and asked about our visas. We explained our situation and he told us that he knew an immigration agent who might be able to help.

The next day we visited with the agent. He quickly put our minds at ease. He would submit the papers for an extension on a

different visa—a permanent-residency visa that required us to move out of Sydney and into the countryside.

We moved to a city about one and a half hours north of Sydney. We found a home close to a chapel, surrounded by lush green Australian foliage. We loved our new home and ward.

Soon we were granted temporary visas. My husband and I continued to pray. He fasted every Sunday for six months. We read the scriptures daily and attended the temple weekly.

Then one day we received a call from the immigration agent. We needed to return to the office in Sydney and hand in our passports. They were handed back to us stamped with an approval for permanent residency. We thanked Heavenly Father for this blessing. We had faith that our prayers would be answered, and they were. And my dream of living in a country surrounded by nature had come true. ■

Valencia Hung, New South Wales, Australia

From Coast to Coast: Our Journey to the Temple

Editors' note: This story is a reminder of what a young couple sacrificed to be sealed for time and all eternity. We hope it will inspire you to make temple marriage a priority in your own life.

By Efraín Rodríguez

In October of 1979, the day after we were married in a civil ceremony, my wife, Maria Ondina, and I left our hometown of Arequipa, Peru, near the shores of the Pacific Ocean, to travel to the São Paulo Brazil Temple, on the Atlantic coast, to be sealed. We were the first couple from Arequipa to travel by land to be sealed in the

newly dedicated temple—the first built in South America. We had planned to make the round-trip journey in 10 days, but in the end, it took us almost 30 due to a dangerous political climate. I didn't know how it would work out—all I knew was that I had made a promise to God that after my mission, I would get sealed to a worthy woman.

Arequipa to Juliaca to Puno

After a nine-hour journey by night, we arrived in Juliaca, Peru. It was Thursday, and we still needed to get stamps in our passports and exit permits so that we could leave the country. The following day was a national

Although we had little money and a perilous journey ahead, my wife and I knew that we had to be sealed in the temple.

holiday, and government offices would be closed for the rest of the weekend, so we arrived in line at the Bank of the



When we finally got to the counter at 11:00 a.m., the gentleman expressed concern. “Sorry,” he said. “We don’t process these kinds of documents here. You will have to go to our office in Puno.” We were both surprised and frustrated—Puno was 45 minutes away.

After struggling to find a taxi, we made it to the office in Puno by 1:30 p.m. The doors were already closed. I knocked the iron doorknockers together as hard as I could. A very upset man opened the door and asked, “What do you want?” I said a silent, fervent prayer and looked this stranger in the eyes. “Sir,” I said, “I’m a Mormon,

After finding the manager, Rosa, I explained our situation. She politely responded, “Those forms are processed by three different employees, and I think everyone has left.” But all three men were still there, and she enlisted them to stay late to help me.

The first man asked me for forms I didn't have. "You're supposed to have gone to the Ministry of Economy, bought six forms, and brought them here for processing," he explained. "You'll have to wait until Monday."

“I’m Mormon, and I am going to the temple in São Paulo, Brazil, to be married. And you can help me.” He no longer seemed to be in a hurry. He looked in every drawer and finally located the longed-for forms. The next clerk quickly checked them and stamped our passports.

At the next window, as I paid the exit tax in U.S. dollars, the cashier seemed to take great pleasure in saying, "I'm sorry. See this sign?" A sign on the wall read, "Dollars not accepted." Our plan was about to fail—there was nothing I could do.

“Take the payment,” I heard Rosa say from behind us. The cashier accepted the money and gave me the documents. We were on our way!

Heading into downtown La Paz, Bolivia, it was getting dark when rocks began hitting our bus. Through



the windows we could see angry people in the streets, throwing rocks and putting up barriers to stop the traffic. Our bus continued moving swiftly to the center of town. That night was the start of a revolution in Bolivia.

We got off the bus and began looking for a hotel. The only one we could find was very expensive, but after repeating my explanation to a good man who worked there, he boarded us in the hotel's cleaning supply room very cheaply. He placed a mattress on the floor and gave us blankets to protect us from the cold and the sounds of gunfire that echoed outside all night.

We left early the next morning, frightened and hurried. On our way to the bus stop, we saw soldiers supported by tanks firing rifles at those protesting the revolution.

Fuel was beginning to run scarce, and instead of three bus departures a day as usual, only one was being

announced. The seats had sold out days in advance. I found the manager and said the words I had used with everyone else: "Sir, we are Mormons, and we are going to the temple to get married. And you can help us." He asked, "Where do you need to go?" "Cochabamba, sir." He opened a drawer and pulled out two tickets. I could see there were no more. "Hurry up," he said, "the bus is about to leave." Our suitcases seemed weightless, and our feet barely touched the ground—in our hands we held that day's blessing.

Cochabamba to Santa Cruz

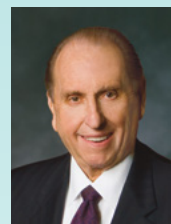
We arrived in Cochabamba amidst more chaos from the revolution. We found a market filled with tents, where a kind fellow Peruvian let us wash up and then store our suitcases while we went to the bus terminal. Using our same plea, we made it

standby onto another bus and arrived days later in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, near the Brazilian border. For three mornings, I went to the train station to ask if there would be any departures. The answer was always no. But on the fourth day, news spread that a train would be leaving soon for Brazil.

By this point, we were running out of money. I shared my concerns with my wife, who firmly replied, "Even if we have to arrive by foot or on the back of a donkey, we're going to make it." Her reply made me happy. I wasn't unsettled about money for the rest of the trip because our confidence was placed in our faith.

As we talked, an old lady walked toward us. She stopped in front of my wife and said, "Young lady, wouldn't you like two tickets for today?" My wife practically ripped the tickets out of her hand. I paid the old woman, and she vanished among the crowd. It took us





WORTH EVERY SACRIFICE

"Those who understand the eternal blessings which come from the temple know that no sacrifice is too great, no price too heavy, no struggle too difficult in order to receive those blessings. There are never too many miles to travel, too many obstacles to overcome, or too much discomfort to endure. They understand that the saving ordinances received in the temple that permit us to someday return to our Heavenly Father in an eternal family relationship . . . are worth every sacrifice and every effort."

President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018), "The Holy Temple—a Beacon to the World," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 92.

a few seconds to realize that the Lord and His angels were still by our side.

Santa Cruz to São Paulo

When we finally arrived at the São Paulo Temple thanks to one last ride from a friend we made on the train, the temple lodging was closed. Resigned but happy, we made ourselves comfortable on a couple of benches outside the temple. There it was, just as beautiful as we had dreamed it would be, with the statue of the angel Moroni on top. It was now midnight, and we cried as we hugged, tired and wet from the falling rain. We didn't feel the dampness, the hunger, or the cold, just an indescribable sense of happiness for being so close to the house of the Lord. We had been obedient, and there was our reward.

While we were basking in that moment, someone tapped me on the

shoulder. It was one of my former mission companions, who had been sealed in the temple that day and was returning from dinner with his wife. He let us stay in their apartment that night, and the next day he was a witness to our sealing, performed by the temple president himself. How beautiful it was to see my wife in the celestial room, all dressed in white.

With a loan from my missionary friend and help from the temple president, we made the return trip in less than five days, without any delays—and with only \$20 dollars to begin a life with my wife, Maria Ondina, as my eternal companion. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.



Planting Gospel Seeds in My Mother's Heart

By Sonia Padilla-Romero

I joined the Church when I was 14 years old. My parents granted me permission to be baptized, but neither of them were interested in joining or even learning about the Church.

For more than 10 years, I yearned for my family to know the happiness I felt in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. I invited the missionaries and members to come over for dinner. My family was taught the missionary lessons multiple times, but nothing changed. During that decade, I attended church, received my endowment, and served a full-time mission without any family support.

When I returned home to Mexico following my mission at Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, I lived with my mother. (My parents had divorced while I was in high school.) I started working at the Mexico Missionary Training Center, so I cleverly invited her to come meet

the elders and sisters I was teaching. I subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) invited the missionaries serving in my ward to join my mother and me for dinner. I did everything I could to get her around missionaries, hoping that she might ask more about the gospel, but my efforts all seemed in vain.

I think she met every single set of missionaries I associated with during that three-year period, and still nothing happened.

In 2008, I moved to the United States to pursue a degree in nursing. Toward the end of the year, following extensive renovation, the Mexico City Mexico Temple held an open house. I urged my mother to go see what the temple was all about while she had this opportunity. After much prodding on my part, she agreed to make the 70-mile (113 km) drive to attend the open house.

When I spoke to her next, she gushed about what an amazing

**I did everything
I could think of
to teach my mom
about the Church,
but a temple open
house made all the
difference.**

experience she had had. She talked about how, in the celestial room, she felt something beautiful but indescribable. She told me that she had plans to return again. In fact, she was able to go many more times during the remaining weeks of the open house. She even attended the cultural celebration prior to the temple's rededication.*

IMAGE FROM GETTY IMAGES

The next time we talked on the phone, Mom told me she was going to invite the missionaries to teach her. Seemingly out of nowhere, she was asking questions and paying attention in ways that I had so long been hoping for. When I went home at Christmastime during my school break, I noticed that she was different. While she had always been kind and compassionate, there was a deep change in her—a conversion.

I returned to school amazed at what was taking place. A week later, Mom called and said, “Sonia, I just wanted to know when you’re coming back to Mexico, because I’m getting baptized.”

I was so excited, so happy! I flew home in February for her baptism. It was amazing to me to watch her attend church, to see her accept and serve in a calling, and to grow in the gospel. I knew that she knew it was true.

It was also powerful to hear her pray. I was especially touched to hear her pray for me and my safety just before I returned to the United States. There is nothing like a parent’s prayer for a child.

Why didn’t things happen sooner? I don’t know. Maybe my mother needed to have seeds planted in her life before she could accept the gospel. Maybe the temple touched her in a way and at a time that my earlier efforts couldn’t have. Seeing the Lord work in my mother’s life reminds me of times I have seen His hand in my

own life, and it gives me great hope for what He can unfold in the lives of my other family members.

My mother is now endowed, and every time we go to the temple together, I can tell she feels touched in the temple, just as she did when she attended the open house. I know that the Lord is aware of us and that He guides our lives. When I let Him lead my life, I end up in the right places. When I follow my own will, it takes longer and is generally harder. I prefer to let the Lord surprise me and show me what great things He has in store. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

* The Mexico City Mexico Temple was rededicated on November 16, 2008, by President Thomas S. Monson and, following a second renovation, was again rededicated on September 15, 2015, by President Henry B. Eyring.



THE BLESSINGS OF THE HOLY TEMPLE

“I invite you to make the blessings of the holy temple the beginning and the end of each missionary’s experience, including your own. By and through you, the temple will become a place of gathering for all those who join the fold of Christ.”

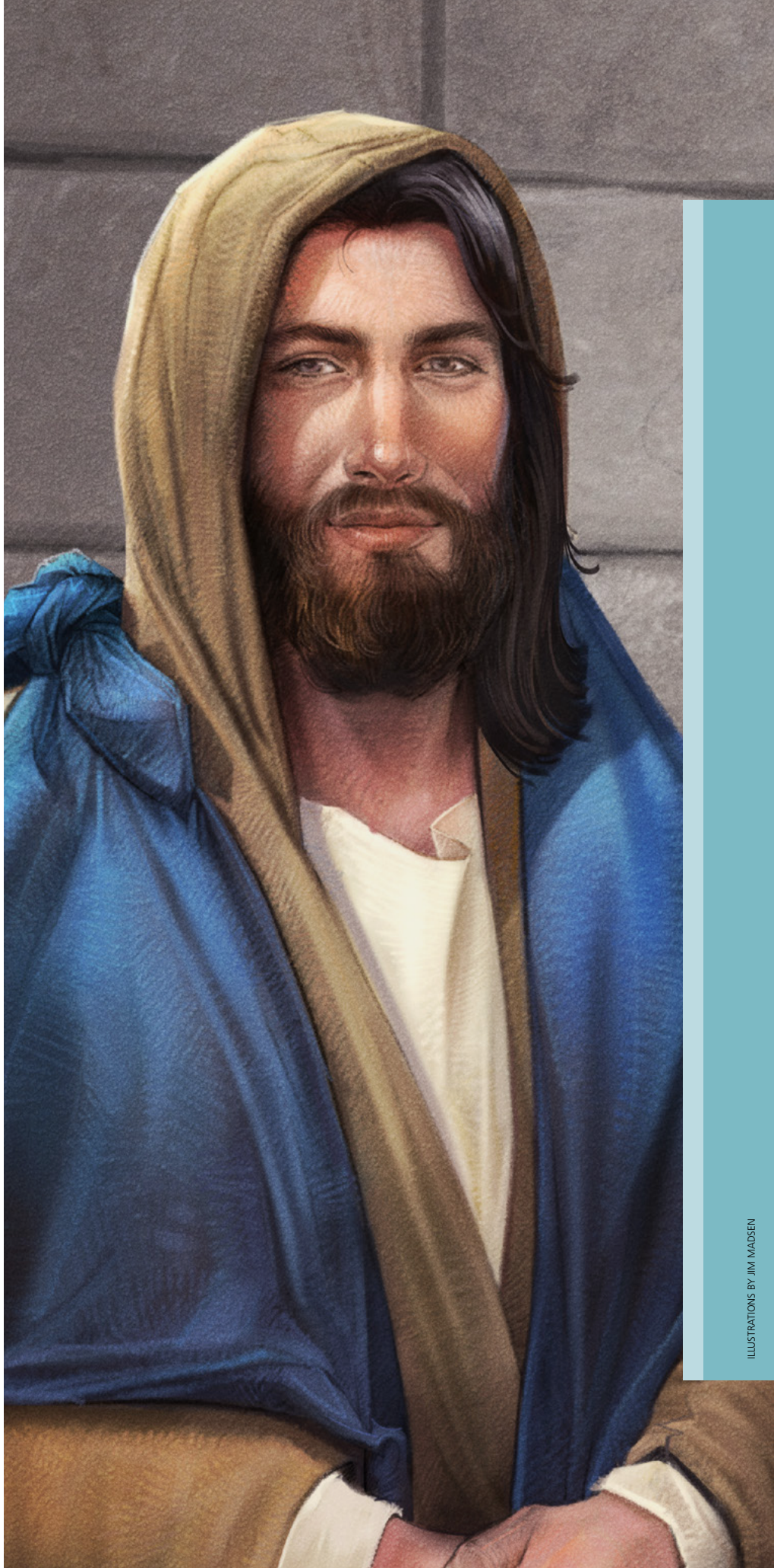
Bishop Gérald Caussé, Presiding Bishop, seminar for new mission presidents, June 27, 2015.





JESUS IS THE CHRIST

THE
TESTIMONY
of
LATTER-DAY
PROPHETS



ILLUSTRATIONS BY JIM MADSEN

PREMORTAL LIFE

The Lord Jesus Christ invited, “Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me” (D&C 19:23). As you know, this verse is this year’s Mutual theme scripture. Have you thought about how you will learn of Him and listen to His words?

One way we learn of Him is through the Presidents of the Church; as latter-day prophets who have been called to be special witnesses of Christ, they have testified, and continue to testify, of the Savior’s divine premortal, mortal, and postmortal roles in Heavenly Father’s eternal plan.



“We know that salvation is in Christ; that He was the Firstborn Son of the Eternal Father; that He was chosen and foreordained in the councils of heaven to work out the infinite and eternal Atonement; that He was born into the world as the Son of God; and that He has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”¹

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972), 10th President of the Church



“The Son of God . . . had the power to make worlds, to direct them. He came here as the Only Begotten Son to fulfill a mission, . . . to bring about salvation to all mankind. By giving His life He opened the door to resurrection and taught the way by which we could gain eternal life.”²

President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973), 11th President of the Church



“Jesus Christ was and is the *Lord God Omnipotent*. (See Mosiah 3:5.) He was chosen before He was born. He was the all-powerful Creator of the heavens and the earth. He is the source of life and light to all things.”³

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), 13th President of the Church

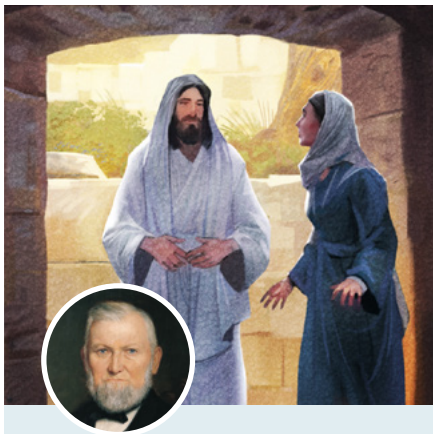


HE IS OUR REDEEMER

“With all my heart and the fervency of my soul, I lift my voice in testimony today as a special witness and declare that God does live. Jesus is His Son, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. He is our Redeemer; He is our Mediator with the Father. He loves us with a love we cannot fully comprehend, and because He loves us, He gave His life for us. My gratitude to Him is beyond expression.”¹¹

President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018), 16th President of the Church

MORTAL LIFE



“The object of Christ’s mission to the earth was to offer Himself as a sacrifice to redeem mankind from eternal death. . . .

“There is no being that has power to save the souls of men and give them eternal life, except the Lord Jesus Christ, under the command of His Father.”⁴

President Wilford Woodruff (1807–98), fourth President of the Church



“Jesus is the Redeemer of the world, the Savior of mankind. . . .

“He came to teach us the character of God, and by example and precept pointed out the path which, if we walk in it, will lead us back into His presence. He came to break the bands of death with which man was bound, and made possible the resurrection by which the grave is robbed of its victory and death of its sting.”⁵

President Heber J. Grant (1856–1945), seventh President of the Church



“Jesus Christ has influenced humanity more than anyone else who ever lived. . . .

“ . . . He healed the sick, restored sight to the blind, cast out evil spirits, restored life to the dead, provided comfort to the oppressed, spread the good news of the gospel of love, testified of the Father, taught the eternal plan of salvation, and laid the ground-work for an organization that would provide for the salvation of man—His Church.”⁶

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), 12th President of the Church

POSTMORTAL LIFE

"The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it."⁷

President Joseph Smith (1805–44), first President of the Church

"He vanquished death, hell and the grave, and arose triumphant as the Son of God, the very eternal Father, the Messiah, the Prince of peace, the Redeemer, the Savior of the world. . . . He triumphed over all, and forever ascended to the right hand of God."⁸

President John Taylor (1808–87), third President of the Church

"I bear solemn and grateful witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. Certainly He is the center of our worship and the key to our happiness. Let us follow the Son of God in all ways and all walks of life. Let us make Him our exemplar and our guide."⁹

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95), 14th President of the Church

"I cannot be grateful enough for the Atonement wrought by my Savior and my Redeemer. Through His sacrifice at the culmination of a life of perfection—that sacrifice offered in pain unspeakable—the bonds of death were broken, and the resurrection of all became assured. Beyond this, the doors of celestial glory have been opened to all who will accept divine truth and obey its precepts."¹⁰ ■

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), 15th President of the Church

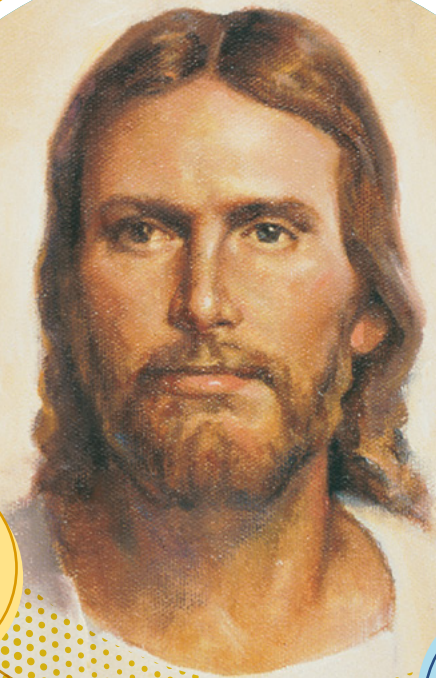


NOTES

1. Joseph Fielding Smith, "Out of the Darkness," *Ensign*, June 1971, 2 (capitalization standardized).
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* (2000), 18.
3. Ezra Taft Benson, "Jesus Christ: Our Savior and Redeemer," *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 6.
4. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* (2004), 69–70, 74 (capitalization standardized).
5. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Heber J. Grant* (2002), 223, 224 (capitalization standardized).
6. Spencer W. Kimball, "The True Way of Life and Salvation," *Ensign*, May 1978, 6 (capitalization standardized).
7. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 49.
8. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* (2001), 43–44.
9. Howard W. Hunter, "Follow the Son of God," *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 87 (capitalization standardized).
10. Gordon B. Hinckley, "My Testimony," *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 52.
11. Thomas S. Monson, "Looking Back and Moving Forward," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 90.

Facts about JESUS CHRIST,

Jesus Christ . . .



You . . .



"Was in the beginning, before the world was" (D&C 93:7).

"Waxed [grew] strong in spirit" (Luke 2:40).

"Increased in wisdom . . .

"And stature,

"And in favour with God . . .

"And man" (Luke 2:52).

"Continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness" (D&C 93:13).



"Were also in the beginning with the Father" (D&C 93:23).

Are getting stronger in spirit by both *learning* and *applying* gospel principles.

Are increasing in wisdom through education, good decisions, and experience.

Are growing physically.

Can gain Heavenly Father's favor by keeping the commandments.

Can gain the trust of your parents and others by showing increased maturity and responsibility.

Can also receive a fulness through Jesus Christ—if you keep God's commandments (see D&C 93:27).



Facts about YOU

Understanding some facts about the Savior and His life can encourage us to believe that following Him really is possible.

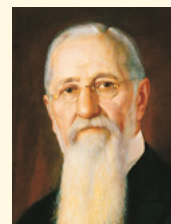
By David A. Edwards

Church Magazines

In every way, Jesus Christ is far greater than any of us (see Isaiah 55:8–9; Abraham 3:19). It was no accident that He was the Father’s “Beloved and Chosen from the beginning” (Moses 4:2) and that He obtained the glory He has.

But we shouldn’t think that the Savior’s greatness sets us so far from Him that His invitation to follow Him feels like a call to do the impossible. Modern revelation helps us see just how attainable the goal of following the Savior’s example really is.

Here are some facts about Jesus Christ and some facts about you. These can help you see that you can indeed follow the same basic path He did to obtain a fulness of the blessings Heavenly Father has in store for you.



LINE UPON LINE

“If Jesus, the Son of God, and the Father of the heavens and the earth in which we dwell, received not a fulness at the first, but increased in faith, knowledge, understanding and grace until he received a fulness, is it not possible for all men who are born of women to receive little by little, line upon line, precept upon precept, until they shall receive a fulness, as he has received a fulness, and be exalted with him in the presence of the Father?”

Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith (1998), 153.

“Received not of the fulness at the first, but received grace for grace” (D&C 93:12). This means that He didn’t have a complete knowledge of His identity and mission when He first came to earth, nor did He have all power. He grew in knowledge and power from God as He obeyed.

“Was in all points tempted like as we are, . . .

“Yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

Didn’t have a full knowledge of your identity and purpose when you were born but have grown in that knowledge gradually. Through the Holy Ghost, God gives us spiritual knowledge and power “line upon line, precept upon precept” (2 Nephi 28:30).

Are tempted.

Have sinned (as all people have)—but can be cleansed from sin through Jesus Christ’s Atonement by repenting, being baptized, receiving the Holy Ghost, and partaking of the sacrament.

Of course, other facts about Jesus Christ can show you how you are or can be following Him (for instance, He was baptized, and you have been—or can be—too). And learning about Jesus Christ can help you see that when it comes to your path in this life, He truly “marked the path and led the way, and ev’ry point defines” (“How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” *Hymns*, no. 195). ■





By Elder
Claudio R. M. Costa
Of the Seventy

FOLLOW THE PROPHET

Every blessing I have today started with a testimony of modern prophets.

I was baptized in June 1977, when I was 28 years old. What made me accept the gospel is the faith and knowledge I gained about modern prophets.

When I was 12 years old, the missionaries met me and my family—my parents, brother, and two sisters—and they talked about family. They said that Church members have a family night and explained family home evening.

My father said, “Thank you for coming, but we are not interested.” I was very sad, but he explained: “Son, we have *seven* family nights in our family, and they told us that we need to have only *one*. They have nothing to teach us.”



I read about the First Vision . . .



Five years later, when I was 17, I got a job in another city and lived alone. While I was away from home, the missionaries knocked on my parents' door again. This time, my family listened and was baptized. When my parents told me, I said, "I have no interest in religion right now."

Another five years passed, and I came to stay at my parents' home while I was changing employment. My father was the ward mission leader, and every afternoon the missionaries would visit him briefly to update and coordinate plans. One day they asked him, "Who is that young man there?"

He said, "That's my older son."

"Is he a member?"

"No."

"We need to talk with him."

But I said, "No, I'm not interested."

LEARNING ABOUT JOSEPH SMITH

Then one day my father agreed to let the missionaries teach a lady in our home. They came around 5:00 in the afternoon and began teaching her—and they knew that I was in the next room making a sandwich before leaving to see my friends. They taught about a boy prophet—Joseph Smith—and the First Vision. And from the other room, I listened.

When I eventually left the house, the Spirit started to work in my heart and some questions came into my mind: "Why don't you do what the sisters taught this lady? Why don't you study the history of Joseph Smith and ask the Lord if he was a prophet?" And I said to myself, "I'm happy. I'm doing good things. I don't need it." But the Spirit started to wrestle with me, and I decided not to see my friends that night. I went back home.



and the baptism of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and the Prophet Joseph Smith's testimony.

I asked my mom, “Where can I read the history of Joseph Smith?” She gave me her scriptures and showed me the Joseph Smith—History, and I read and prayed. I read the first paragraph, pondered, and asked Heavenly Father if what’s there is true. I did this with every paragraph until I completed the whole thing. My heart was anxious for an answer. I read and prayed all night, until 9:20 the next morning.

The Lord revealed to me that Joseph Smith was a prophet. I had a very sacred experience. As I finished praying, I promised that I would find the missionaries and be baptized because I had this sure knowledge.

I told the sisters, “I need to be baptized now.” They explained the lessons I needed to have and commitments I needed to make. But I said, “I don’t want to lose a single day with the knowledge that the Lord has given me that Joseph Smith was a prophet.”

The sisters called their zone leader. He agreed to an accelerated schedule for the lessons. He scheduled the baptismal interview and told me he’d also need to talk to the ward mission leader, and I said, “Don’t worry, I’ll talk with the ward mission leader. He’s my daddy. He’s been praying for years for me to be baptized.”

My baptism was an experience I will remember forever. What a sweet and wonderful feeling. I felt that I was a

new man. I was clean. I felt so close to God, and I was very happy.

FOLLOWING THE LIVING PROPHET

Because I have a firm testimony about what happened in the Sacred Grove in 1820, I have always been active in the gospel and the Church. I started to serve, fulfill callings, and give all that I had to the Church.

Two weeks after my baptism, my stake president called me as the leader of the young single adults in my stake (though I had to ask him what a stake is). In another two weeks, I was organizing a regional singles conference. This was the best singles conference in the history of the Church, because I met my wife there.

One year later we were married. We have been happily married for 38 years now. We have four children and 10 grandchildren, and all the blessings we have are because of a decision we made. Before we married, I asked her, “Will you support me in being absolutely 100 percent obedient to the living prophets?” She said, “Yes.”

After I was baptized, the first talk I heard from the prophet, President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), was about being self-reliant and being wise with your money. He also said to provide a good education for your



I followed the counsel of President Kimball.



This helped me provide a good education for my children.

children.¹ These two things have been taught in our family and have been great blessings. My children are in good situations today—not because I’m so smart; I just chose to follow the prophets.

I love to serve the Lord and my fellowmen because that’s what I learned from the prophets.

GAINING YOUR OWN TESTIMONY

Follow the prophets. Listen to their words and practice what they teach, and you will be happy. My faith and knowledge about the Church and the gospel came from my testimony that Joseph Smith was a prophet.

I love Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. It’s my desire to be with Them forever. That’s why it’s important to listen to the prophets—they know the way back to the presence of God.

I think all young people should read the history of Joseph Smith with real intent, with an open heart and an open mind, and ask Heavenly Father. And I am sure the Lord will give the answer, as He gave to me. If you read the version we have in the scriptures, you can gain a strong testimony. Then you can read the other versions too.²

Joseph Smith saw the light, he saw God the Father and Jesus Christ, and They spoke to him. This is divine knowledge that comes from God, through the Spirit.

After you’ve had this confirmation in your heart, set a goal to know the words of the living prophets. Study their words in the scriptures, general conference, *For the Strength of Youth*, Church magazines, and LDS.org. Learn their counsel in seminary, Sunday School, and quorum or class meetings. Make goals based on prophetic priorities. Then just do it.

You will feel closer to the Lord. You will feel your intelligence expand for school and for all things. And remember you are never alone. You have supportive people around you who are ready to help, including your bishop or branch president. And the Lord and His Spirit will be with you. ■


NOTES

1. See Spencer W. Kimball, “Welfare Services: The Gospel in Action,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 76–79.
2. See “First Vision Accounts,” Gospel Topics, [topics.lds.org](https://www.lds.org/topics).



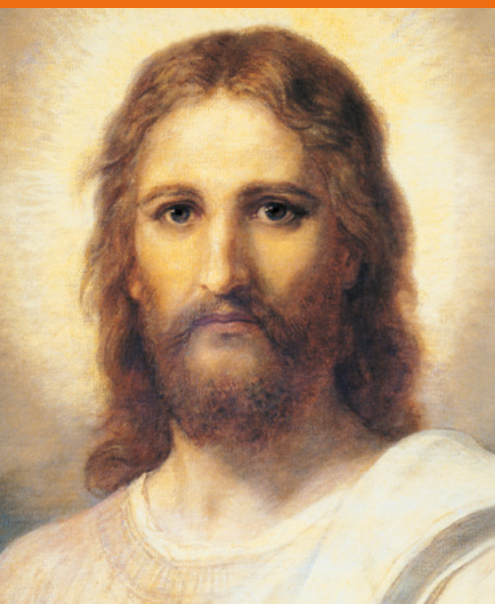
Following prophets has blessed my family.

THE KEY TO FORGIVING MYSELF



It had been five months, and I still couldn't forgive myself. Ever since slipping up and doing something I was ashamed of, I felt like I was on a downward spiral. My shame kept building anytime I did something else I thought was wrong. I couldn't feel at peace.

I didn't need to keep punishing myself because Jesus Christ had already atoned for my sins.



PHOTOGRAPH FROM GETTY IMAGES; CHRIST'S IMAGE, BY HEINRICH HOFMANN

I had prayed for forgiveness and had even felt that God had forgiven me. But I just couldn't forgive myself. How could I when I had sinned? I kept beating myself up over and over again, preventing myself from moving on.

While I was feeling this way, I went to a summer youth conference where we focused a lot of our studies on the Savior's Atonement. One day I came across a passage in the Book of Enos that said: "Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed.

"And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away" (Enos 1:5–6).

That was powerful for me. I realized that, like me, Enos had done something wrong and needed forgiveness. He even described his struggle to seek forgiveness as a wrestle before God (see Enos 1:2). But eventually, after praying through the day and night, Enos felt peace. And when he asked, "Lord, how is it done?" the Lord replied, "Because of thy faith in Christ" (Enos 1:7, 8).

That was it! Enos had faith in Jesus Christ. If Enos could let the Savior erase his guilt, why couldn't I let Him bring that same peace into my life? From that point on, every time I felt that I couldn't forgive myself, I thought of Jesus Christ's love and forgiveness.

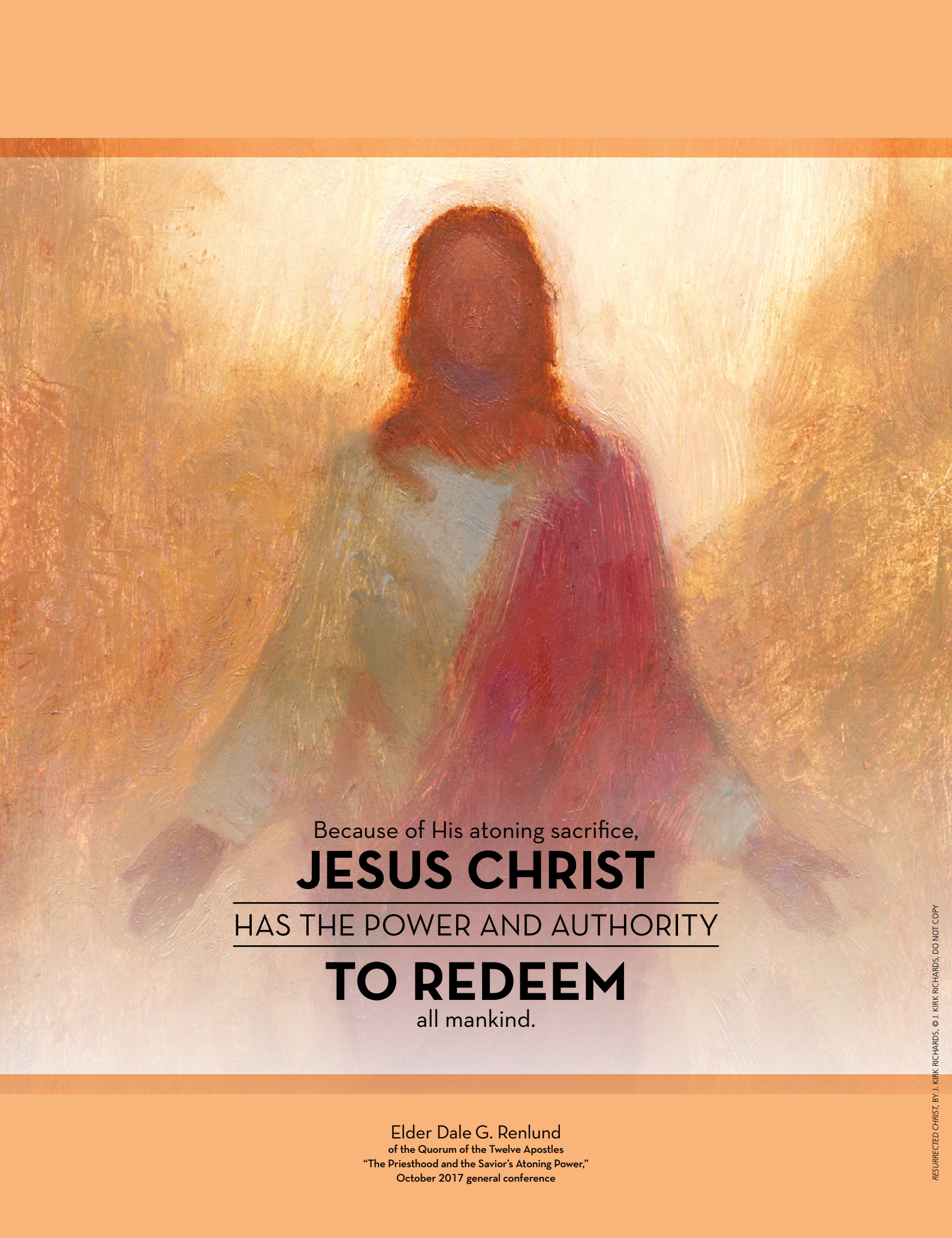
I prayed for the ability to let go of my bad feelings and to stop feeling so ashamed. It took some time, but after many prayers, I stopped feeling so terrible all the time. I finally felt peace.

This experience taught me a lot about Christ's grace. After I sinned, I felt godly sorrow, prayed, repented, and felt a confirmation that God had forgiven me. Yet I still kept punishing myself. I eventually realized that I didn't need to keep making myself suffer for committing that sin because Jesus Christ already paid for it through His Atonement. It must have been hard and painful for Him, but He was still willing to suffer so that I don't have to.

I've since learned to rely on Jesus Christ and let His peace fill my life by strengthening my relationship with Him and my Heavenly Father. I try to pray and read the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon, every day. I try to participate in uplifting activities and good media.

I still make mistakes, but I know if I repent and keep doing my best, Jesus Christ will bless me with His grace. When I rely on Him and on Heavenly Father, guilt and shame does end. I now know the peace that comes from having faith in Jesus Christ, and I am stronger because of it. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.



Because of His atoning sacrifice,
JESUS CHRIST

HAS THE POWER AND AUTHORITY

TO REDEEM
all mankind.

Elder Dale G. Renlund
of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
"The Priesthood and the Savior's Atoning Power,"
October 2017 general conference

TO THE POINT

How do I know if I've fully repented?

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught that “repentance means striving to change” and that “real change may require repeated attempts.” He has also said that “for our turning to the Lord to be complete, it must include nothing less than a covenant of obedience to Him,” which is contained in the baptismal covenant and the sacrament (“The Divine Gift of Repentance,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 39). Full repentance also means making up for any harm you did to others. In addition, the Lord has said that a person who fully repents of his sins “will confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:43). You should confess all sins to Heavenly Father and serious sins to your bishop as well. (When in doubt, talk to the bishop. He’s there to help.)

After doing these things, a way to know you’ve fully repented is to see and feel the effects of repentance—changes in your desires, feelings, outlook, relationships, and behavior. And, most importantly, full repentance will bring the companionship of the Holy Ghost. ■

Choosing a spouse will be a big decision, and it makes me nervous. How will I know I've made the right choice?

Deciding whom to marry is something that can affect your happiness in this life and in the eternities. But it shouldn’t cause you the kind of anxiety that could eventually paralyze you. You can have peace and joy about this decision if you keep the commandments and follow good counsel. Here are a few things that Church leaders have frequently taught about this:

There are many potentially “right” choices for whom you could marry. Get to know a lot of people. Date people with high standards. Live worthy. When you’re a young adult, date the kinds of people you could go to the temple with. A potential spouse is someone you get to know well enough to know if you could enter covenants with Heavenly Father together. Get advice from your parents. “Study it out in your mind” and then “ask [God] if it be right” (D&C 9:8). The confirmation you receive may come in a variety of ways, but the other person must also have a confirmation. Once you’ve committed to each other, you work to become each other’s “soul mates.” ■



OUR SPACE



“I’M GLAD YOU INVITED ME”

On my first date with Nate, I was surprised to learn that he wasn’t a Latter-day Saint. He was very polite, but when I got home, I wasn’t sure if I would go on another date with him.

The next week, Nate called to see if I’d like to go out on New Year’s Eve. “I’m sorry, Nate,” I said. “That’s a Sunday night, and my family and I are watching a broadcast from the First Presidency.” I felt the spark of a

prompting and added, “You are welcome to watch it with us if you’d like.” I was shocked when he said yes.

I felt the Spirit so strongly as the prophet encouraged us to set resolutions that would enable us to draw closer to Christ. Nate listened to every word. After he went home, I felt calm and peaceful. The next morning, he called me.

“I wanted to thank you for inviting me over last night,” he said. “All

my friends were having a party, and I didn’t want to go because I knew there would be some bad stuff going on. I’m glad you invited me. I feel great.”

I felt the Spirit telling me that I had done the right thing. Being friendly helped Nate feel the blessings of righteous living. I know that God cares about all of us and that He will always enable us to choose the right. ■

Rachel H., Texas, USA



1

Three Languages

My daddy is from Hong Kong, and my mommy is from Guangxi, China. I speak three languages—Cantonese, Mandarin, and English. In my branch, we speak Cantonese and Mandarin in sacrament meeting, and we combine with an English-speaking branch for Primary.

Hymnbook Helper

Every Sunday I help the missionaries pass out the programs. I make sure everyone gets one. If someone doesn't have a hymnbook, I take them one so they can sing.

2



Ready to HELP!

I try to let my light shine by being ready to help! If something needs to be done, I'm ready!

Hi,
my name
is Aaron,
from British
Columbia,
Canada.



Future Missionary

I'm excited to go on a mission someday. My Primary teacher said that we could start saving money now. So I've been saving money in my mission piggy bank.



3



4

Praying with Grandpa

I know that prayer is very important. When my grandpa stayed with my sister and me when my parents were out of town, I made sure that we always said our prayers.



5

Getting It Done

Sometimes we have activities at church, and I always stay to help put the chairs and tables away. When we have the Primary sacrament meeting program, I like saying my part.

HOW CAN YOU SHINE?

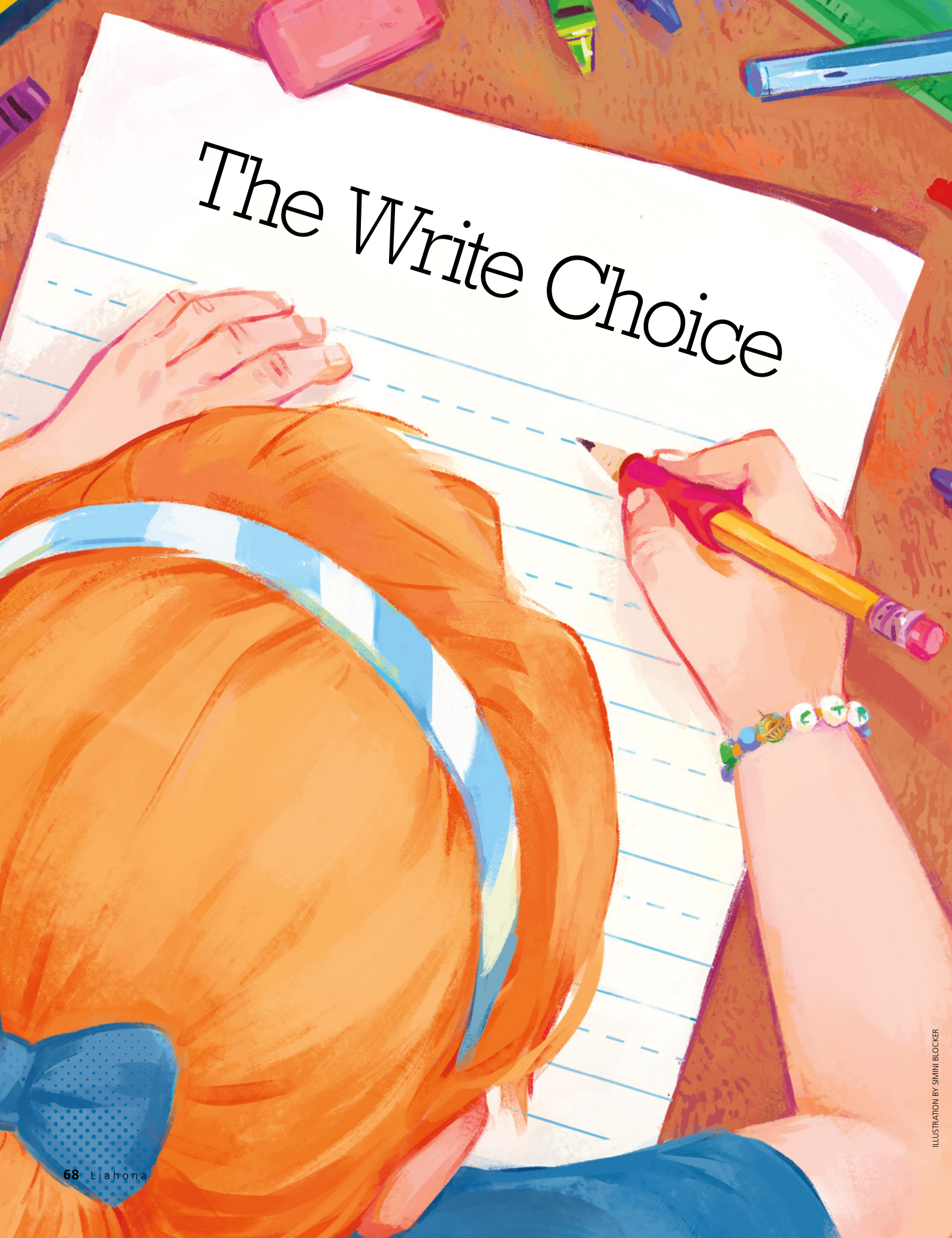
- Help put up or take down chairs in Primary.
- Look for someone at church who needs a friend.
- Pick up trash.
- Make sure everyone has a hymnbook.
- Help your family remember to pray.

SEND US A STAR!

How do you let your light shine, as Jesus asked us to do? Email us a photo of your star with your story, photo, and parent's permission at liahona@ldschurch.org.



The Write Choice

An illustration from a top-down perspective showing a child with long, wavy orange hair tied in a ponytail with a blue polka-dot bow. The child is wearing a blue and white striped shirt. Their right hand, adorned with a beaded bracelet, holds a yellow pencil with a pink eraser and is writing on a sheet of white paper with blue horizontal lines. Their left hand rests on the paper. The paper is on a wooden desk. Various school supplies are scattered around: a pink eraser, a blue pencil, and a green pencil are visible at the top, and a purple pencil is on the left.

By Justina Lichner

Based on a true story

“And they are free to choose” (2 Nephi 2:27).

Justina sat extra tall in her seat. She placed her new pencils right at the top of her desk. Today was the first day of school. She’d met her classmates and drawn a fun picture.

Then Mrs. Werner said, “Time to work on writing!” Mrs. Werner handed out papers to the class. “You have 30 minutes to work on this. Then we’ll go to recess.”

Justina gulped. “Oh no. Writing already?” she thought.

Last year Justina had a hard time with reading and writing. All of her friends seemed to like it. It wasn’t so hard for them. What if this year was like last year all over again?

Justina picked up her pencil. She looked at her paper. Her stomach sank. All the other students were writing. Except for her.

She wanted to talk to Mrs. Werner. Would she be mad that Justina was having trouble? Even if she was, that still sounded better than writing.

Justina walked to her teacher’s desk. “Mrs. Werner? This is harder than what I did last year. I don’t think I can do it.”

Mrs. Werner didn’t look upset. She smiled at Justina. “Do what you can. You might be surprised at what you can do! You can’t always choose what you’re good at. But you can always choose how hard you try.”

Justina walked back to her desk. She thought about what Mrs. Werner said. “I can choose to try.” That was like what she learned in Primary. Her class read a scripture that said we are “free to choose.” That meant we could make our own choices. Heavenly Father trusts us to make good choices. He promises to help us when we make mistakes.

Could school be different this year? Maybe she could *choose* to make it different! Justina picked up her pencil.

She looked at her paper. Her stomach relaxed. “OK. I’m going to do this,” she thought.

The recess bell rang. Justina wasn’t finished yet. But she was more than halfway done! She raised her hand. “Can I stay and keep working? I’m so close to being done!”

Mrs. Werner smiled and nodded.

Justina finally handed in her paper. Her hand ached a little bit. Even her brain hurt! But she was smiling. She had never worked so hard on writing before.

The next day the class worked on reading. Mrs. Werner asked everyone to read for 20 minutes. Justina tried again. She opened her book and sounded out the words.

Justina started making choices every day. She chose to read. She chose to write. Maybe reading and writing weren’t so bad!

She even chose to go to the library. She checked out books. Last year she would have never done that. Soon she was reading all the time. And it was actually fun! And the more she read, the better she got at writing.

When Justina got older, she was glad she chose to work hard in reading and writing. Because now those were some of her favorite things to do. ■

The author lives in Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany.



ALL GROWN UP

Hi, I’m Justina! After I learned to love writing, I just kept on doing it. I wrote in high school. Then I went to college to learn more about writing. Now I’m a writer! I get to write stories, like this one about my challenges as a kid. I’ve written for magazines, websites, and newspapers.



Always

By Jordan Wright

Based on a true story

"I always want to be with my own family, and the Lord has shown me how I can" (Children's Songbook, 188).

Seth bounced up and down in the back seat and sang a crazy song. "Please settle down, Seth," Dad said. "I need to focus on driving."

"I can't settle down," Seth said. "It's just so awesome!"

Dad smiled. "I'm glad you're excited to meet your new baby brother."

When they got to the hospital, Seth raced to Mom's room. He knew where it was because Mom had been there for five days already. She had to stay at the hospital because Baby Caleb was sick, and Mom was a little bit sick too. Seth had asked to see Caleb at least a bajillion times, but Mom always said, "Not yet." She said that the doctors would decide when Caleb was strong enough for a visitor.

Today the doctor had called. Today was the day!

When Seth walked into Mom's hospital room, she was already holding Caleb. Seth ran over to see his new baby brother. Caleb was tiny. He looked way

smaller than Seth's baby cousins. And there was something different about his nose and ears. He looked like a little elf!

"Hi, honey," Mom said. "Come wash your hands, and then you can hold the baby."

Seth washed his hands with special soap. He climbed onto the hospital bed next to Mom. She leaned over to hand him the baby. Dad helped Seth put his hands in just the right place.

Seth looked down at Caleb. "Hi, Caleb," he said. "I'm your brother, Seth. You're going to sleep in my room, and I can show you all my toys, and we can play at the park."

Baby Caleb looked right at Seth. Seth thought he was the best baby ever.

When Seth's arms got tired, Dad took a turn holding Caleb. Mom held one of Seth's hands and looked into his eyes.

"Seth," she said. "Do you remember in Primary when you learned about the plan of salvation?"



Brothers

Seth nodded. That had been a good day. Sister Lopez had a moon and a star and a big planet earth on sticks. Seth got to hold the sun.

“Do you remember how we lived in heaven before we came to earth and how we are going back to heaven when we die?”

Seth nodded again.

“Baby Caleb is still very sick. And the doctor says that he won’t live very long. He is going to die soon and go back to heaven.”

Seth looked at Mom. He looked at Baby Caleb in Dad’s arms. Then he frowned. His throat felt tight. “But I love him. I want him to stay here and share my room and play with me. Doesn’t he want to stay too?”

Mom put her arms around Seth. “Of course he wants to be with us. We’re his family. But he will see us again.”

“He will?”

Mom nodded. “Dad and I were married in the temple. We were promised that our family could be together forever. You and Caleb will always be our children.”

“That means that Baby Caleb will always be your brother,” Dad explained. “And you’ll see him again in heaven.”

Seth was sad. He felt kind of mad too. But he thought about meeting Baby Caleb in heaven and smiled just a little. He reached out and rubbed Baby Caleb’s soft hair. “We’ll be brothers in heaven? That’s awesome.”

Mom kissed Seth’s cheek. “It is awesome.” ■

The author lives in Iowa, USA.



NO TRUE ENDINGS

“In [Heavenly Father’s] plan there are no true endings, only everlasting beginnings.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Grateful in Any Circumstances,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2014, 77.



“Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind, is not dead. He lives—the resurrected Son of God lives—that is my testimony.”

By Elder M. Russell Ballard

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

From “The Atonement and the Value of One Soul,” Ensign or Liahona, May 2004, 86.

I CAN READ THE SCRIPTURES

The Abrahamic Covenant

After you read a scripture passage, color the matching numbered areas on the picture!

1. Abraham 1:1–2
2. Abraham 2:3–6
3. Abraham 2:8–12
4. Genesis 13:14–18
5. Genesis 17:3–8
6. Genesis 17:15–19
7. Genesis 18:10–14
8. Genesis 21:1–3



God made a covenant, or promise, with Abraham and Sarah that they would have children and that God would bless them. Abraham and Sarah didn't have children for a long time. But they were still obedient. When Abraham and Sarah were almost 100 years old, they had a son! Heavenly Father blesses us when we are obedient, and those blessings come when Heavenly Father knows is best.

☐

Memorize Abraham 2:9.

☐

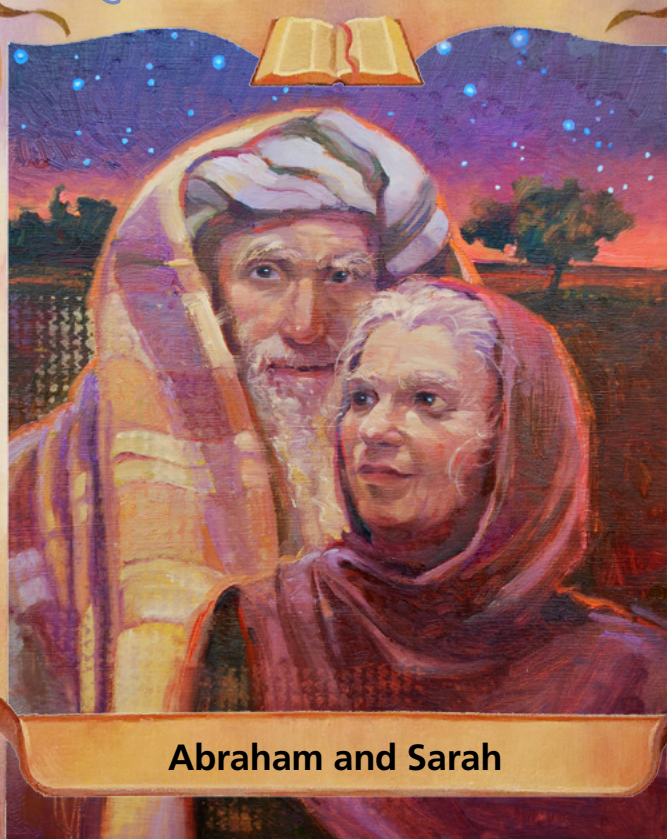
Think of something you can do today to be obedient. Write about what you did and how you felt.

☐

Watch chapter 8 of the Old Testament videos at scripturestories.lds.org.

☐

I can be obedient by ...



Abraham and Sarah

Gethsemane

(Simplified)

With feeling ♩. = 44-48

Words and music by Melanie Hoffman

Chords: Dm C Am B^b C B^b

Je - sus climbed the hill to the gar - den still. His steps were heav - y and slow.

Chords: Dm C Am B^b C Dm

Love and a prayer took Him there to the place on - ly He could go.

Chords: C F C F B^b F C

Geth - se - ma - ne. Je - sus loves me. — So He went will - ing - ly

Chords: B^b C Dm (C) (Dm) C

To Geth - se - ma - ne. He felt all that was sad,

Chords: Am B^b C B^b

wick - ed, or bad, all the pain we would ev - er know. While His

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This notice must be included on each copy made.

Dm C Am B^b C Dm

friends were a-sleep He fought to keep His prom-ise made long a - go.

C F Dm C F B^b F C

Geth - se - ma - ne. Je - sus loves me. So He went will - ing - ly

B^b C Dm C F C

To Geth-se - ma - ne. The hard - est thing that ev - er was done, The

B^b C F C B^b C F C

great - est pain that ev - er was known, The big - gest bat - tle that ev - er was won -

B^b F C B^b F C Dm C F

This was done by Je-sus! The fight was won by Je-sus! Geth - se - ma - ne.
Geth - se - ma - ne.

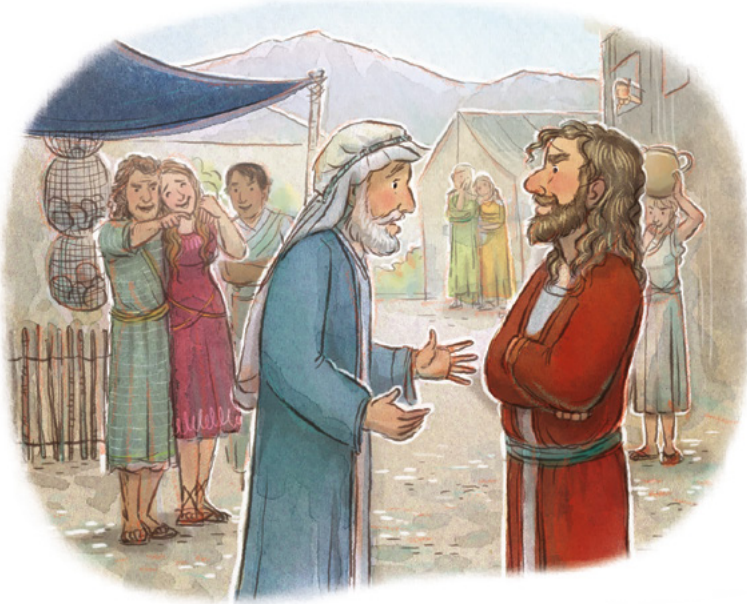
B^b C F B^b F C B^b C Dm

Je - sus loves me. So He gave His gift to me in Geth-se-ma - ne.
Je - sus loves me. So He gives His gift to me from Geth-se-ma - ne.

Watch a sing-along video for this song at children.ids.org. Click on "Music" and "Sing-Along Videos."

Noah

By Kim Webb Reid



A long time ago, people on earth were making bad choices. God sent a brave prophet named Noah. He told the people that they should repent and love God. Did they listen? No! They kept doing bad things.

God told Noah that He would get rid of the bad things on the earth. God told Noah to build a big boat called an ark. Noah gathered his family and animals inside the ark. Then it started to rain.





It rained for 40 days and 40 nights.
The whole earth was covered with
water! Noah and his family and the
animals were safe inside the ark.

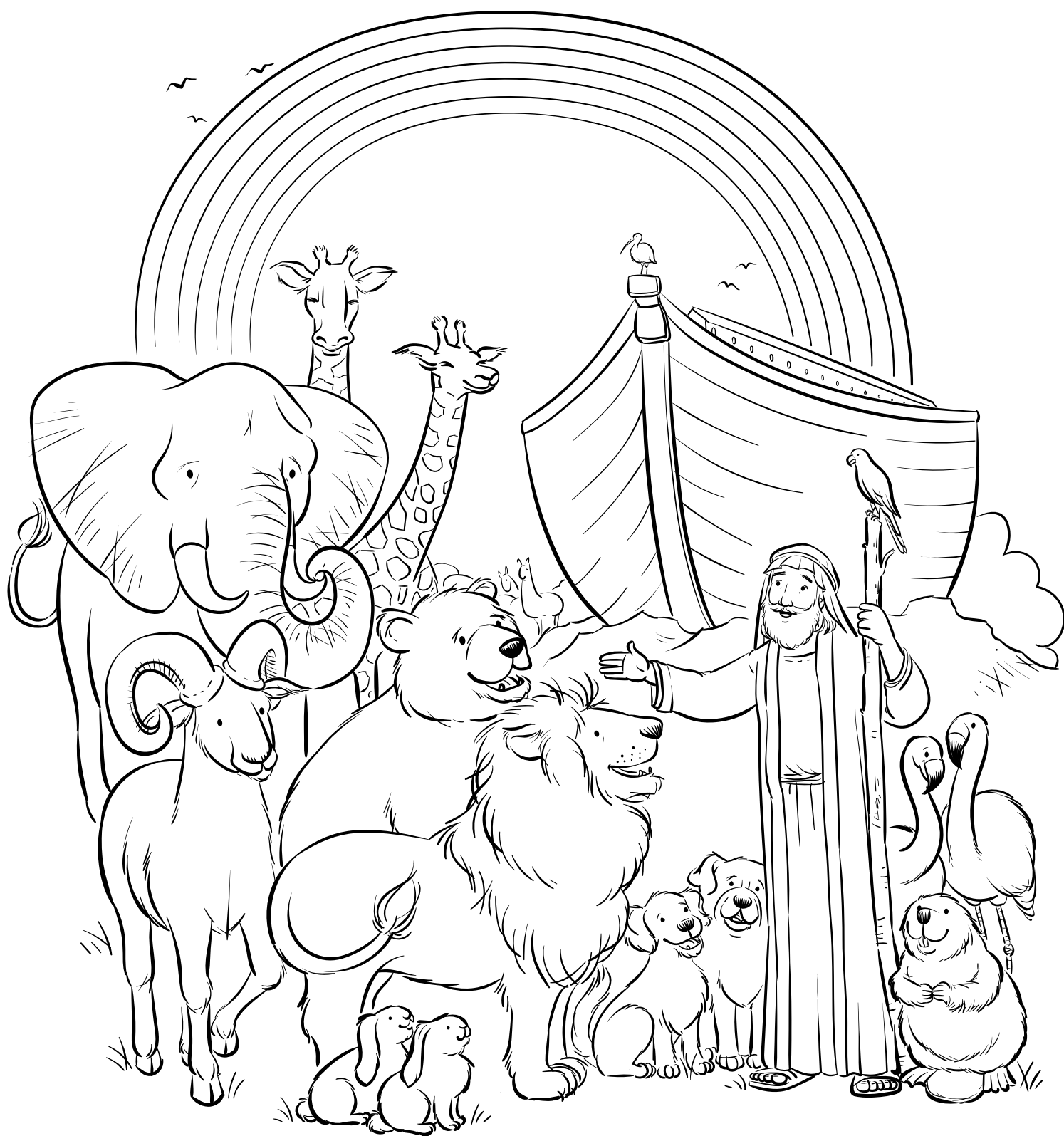
Finally the rain stopped. The
floodwaters went down. Noah
saw a rainbow in the sky. God
promised to never flood the
whole earth again.





I can be like Noah and listen to Heavenly Father. I know God keeps His promises. I am blessed when I obey His commandments. ■

Heavenly Father Keeps His Promises





By Elder
Robert D. Hales
(1932–2017)

Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

HE WILL MAKE OUR BURDENS LIGHT

The Savior's redeeming power would transform human existence if we would let it.

I have a great love for the scriptures. I love reading about the mortal life of Jesus Christ. There is so much in His life that can lift and inspire, and strengthen us in our times of need. To me, one of the most sacred chapters in all the scriptures is John chapter 17. The entire chapter is an intercessory prayer offered by Jesus Christ to His Father. He says, in effect, “If only the world could know you as I know you.” He tells His Father that He has done everything He has been asked to do.

Sometimes we forget how remarkably obedient the Savior was. Everything that He did, everything that He said was out of obedience to His Father. His seeking out and caring for the poor, the calling of His disciples, His teachings both in the land



of Palestine and in the Americas—all these things were done because His Father had commanded Him to do them. He had no personal agenda. He said, “I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me” (John 8:28). What a perfect example of obedience!

In the choices we make in life, we need to know the Savior. His simple admonition “Come . . . follow me” (Matthew 19:21) could transform human existence if we would let it. He has the power to make our burdens light if we will turn to Him.

As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I have the opportunity to bear

testimony as a sacred witness of the Savior. My greatest desire is that my testimony might penetrate the hearts of those who hear it.

I know that Jesus Christ lives. I know that He guides and directs His Church by revelation through His prophet in this very day and time. If we will have faith in our Savior, He will see us through our trials and tribulations, and we will be able to endure to the end and return to His presence after this mortal probation. He lives and knows and loves each one of us. He so much wants to bless us if we will come unto Him. ■

From “Special Witnesses of Christ,” Ensign or Liahona, Apr. 2001, 12–13. To watch Elder Hales deliver this message, “Jesus Christ Is the Perfect Example of Obedience,” visit prophets.lds.org and select “Special Witnesses of Christ.”



Jorge Cocco Santangelo '16

**GETHSEMANE, JESUS IS MY LIGHT,
BY JORGE COCCO SANTANGELO**

"[Jesus] went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done" (Matthew 26:42).

Also in This Issue

FOR YOUNG ADULTS

From Coast to Coast:

My wife and I saw
miracle after miracle on
our arduous journey across
South America to
be sealed in the temple.

Our Journey to the Temple

p.44



FOR YOUTH

p. 50



JESUS IS THE CHRIST:

THE TESTIMONY OF LATTER-DAY PROPHETS

You can "learn of [Christ]" (D&C 19:23) by reading
these testimonies of the Presidents of the Church.

They are special witnesses of Him and His divine role
in Heavenly Father's plan of happiness.

FOR CHILDREN

Ready to HELP!

How can you help your children find small but
meaningful ways to serve those around them?

p.66



THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS