

The cover of 'The New Era' magazine for August 2005 features a photograph of several young men, likely missionaries, kneeling in a garden. They are focused on tending to various plants, including purple and pink flowers. One man in the foreground is holding a small object, possibly a seedling. The background is a soft-focus green field. The magazine's title 'THE New Era' is prominently displayed at the top in a large, orange, stylized font. Below the title, the month 'AUGUST' and the year '2005' are printed in a smaller, yellow font. On the right side of the cover, three article teasers are listed in bold, yellow text.

THE New Era

AUGUST

2005

**COVER STORY:
MISSIONARIES
SERVING WHILE
SERVING, P. 20**

**BREAKING THE
PORNOGRAPHY
HABIT, P. 16**

**WHY READ THE
BOOK OF
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**VIDEO GAME
STRATEGY, P. 26**

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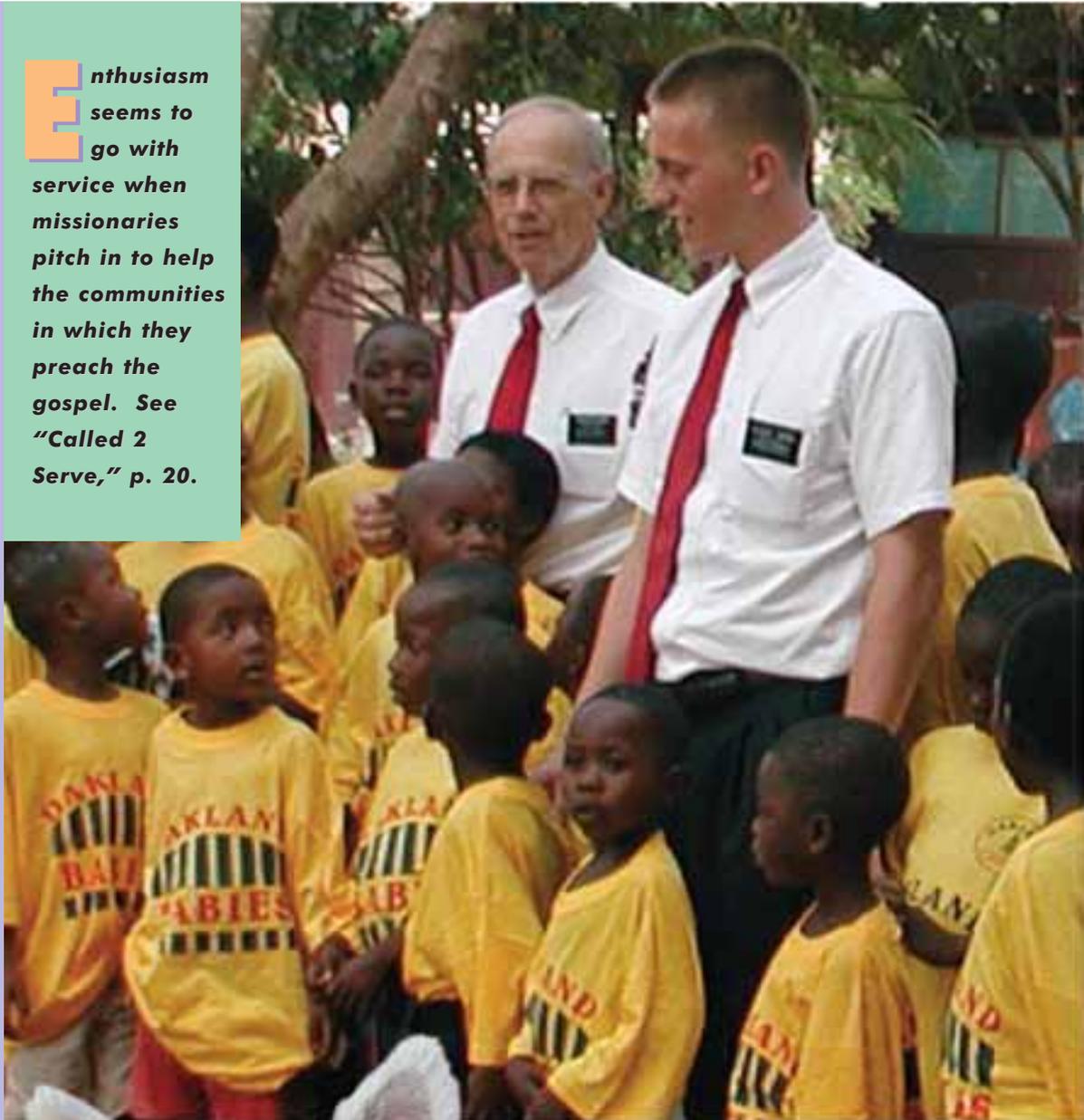
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Cover: While planting
flowers, full-time mission-
aries (from left) Sisters
Katherine Christensen
and Hannah Hicks and
Elders Jamie Cairns and
Adam Evans also plant
gospel seeds. See "Called
2 Serve," p. 20.

Cover photography:
Robert Casey (front) and
PhotoDisc © 1998 (back)

Enthusiasm
seems to
go with
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pitch in to help
the communities
in which they
preach the
gospel. See
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Your Right to CHOOSE THE

BY ELDER DIETER F. UCHTDORF
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



Our successes are influenced by our choices in this life and by the motives that lead to these decisions.

Your testimony of Jesus Christ and His restored gospel will help you to choose the right at all times and in all circumstances.

As Church members, we have the ultimate goal of achieving immortality and eternal life. The Savior has already provided for part of this goal to be achieved: immortality has been brought to pass for all of God's children here on earth. Now we are working on achieving the second part of that goal: eternal life, God's greatest gift to us (see D&C 14:7).

We read in the Book of Mormon the necessary preconditions to reach this lofty goal: "Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; . . . and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; . . .

" . . . then are ye sanctified in Christ" (Moroni 10:32–33).

Our successes are influenced by our choices in this life and by the motives that lead to these decisions.

Motives Influence Actions

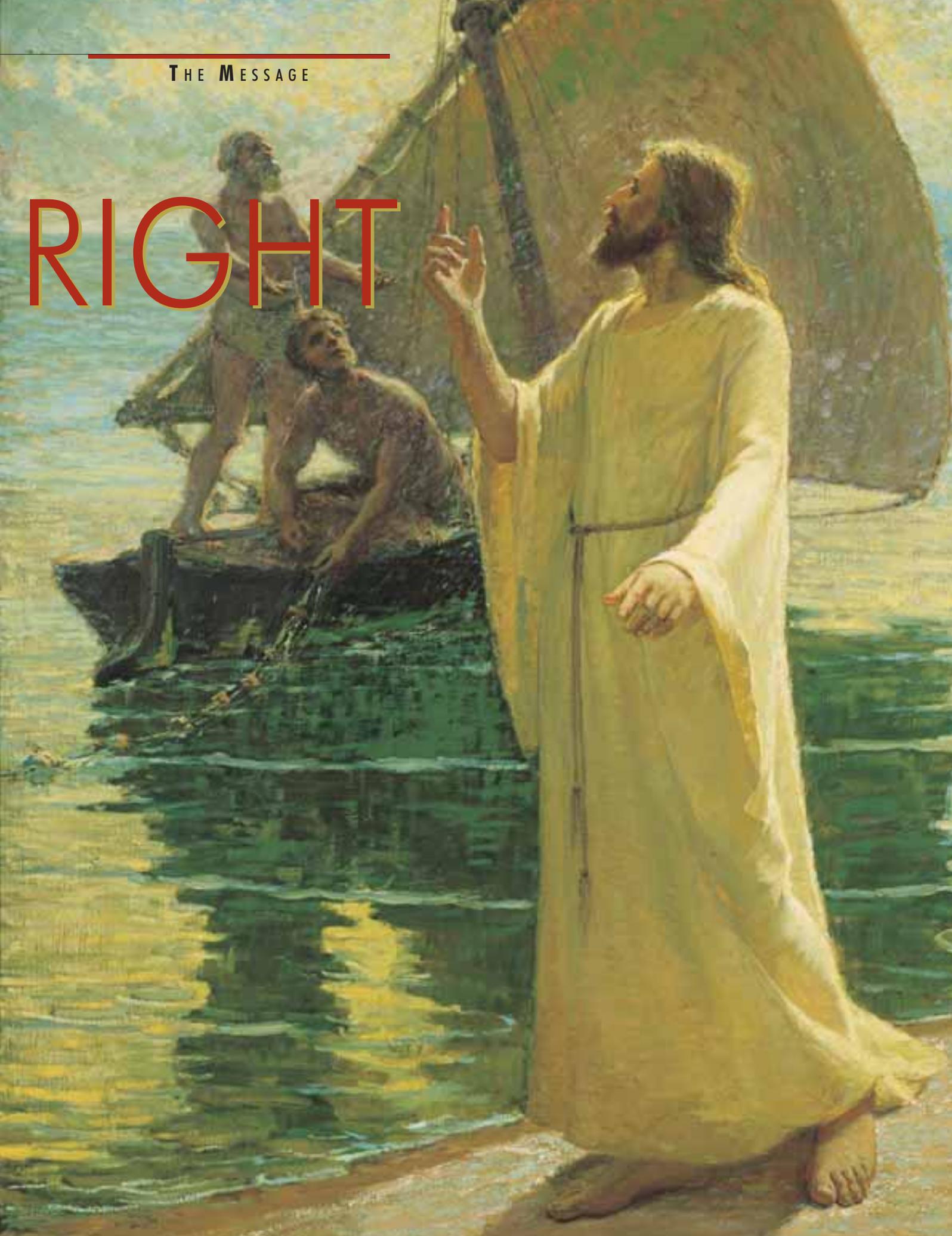
Let me share with you a personal experience. After the turmoil of the Second World War, my family ended up in Russian-occupied East Germany. We had fled from Czechoslovakia before the Russian front and lost everything during this terrible war. In the town of Zwickau, East Germany, my family learned about the restored gospel and joined the Church. At that time I was only six years old and the youngest of four children. The Church made an indescribable difference in our then very difficult lives. Even in these trying times, with extreme financial hardship, we were a happy family because of the Church.

Later, as a 10-year-old boy, I attended fourth grade and had to learn Russian as my first foreign language. Initially it was quite difficult, but as time went on I seemed to manage all right.

When I turned 11, we had to leave East Germany overnight because of the political beliefs of my father. He was seen as a dissenter by the Communist government, and his life was endangered. We were refugees again and had lost everything for the second time.

THE MESSAGE

RIGHT



Now I was going to school in West Germany, and the Russian language was not appreciated there at all. We were in the American-occupied part of Germany, and in school I had to learn English. Somehow I could not learn it. To learn Russian was difficult, but English was impossible. I even thought my mouth was not made for speaking English. My teachers had a hard time with me. My parents were desperate. And I knew English was not my language.

I agonized through those school years, helped and encouraged by kind and understanding English teachers, but I just couldn't do it. It wasn't my thing!

At this time, my dream in life was to become a pilot. Almost daily I rode my bicycle to the airport. I could picture myself in the cockpit of an airliner or even in a military jet fighter. This was definitely my thing!

I eventually learned that to become a pilot, I needed to speak English. Suddenly, the resisting condition of my mouth changed. I was able to learn the language. Why? Because of a strong motive!

Our motives and thoughts ultimately influence our actions. Jesus repeatedly emphasized the power of good thoughts and proper motives: "Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not" (D&C 6:36).

In Proverbs we read, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7).

From young Joseph Smith we can also learn that the right motive was crucial for the success of his mission. When the angel Moroni appeared to Joseph and instructed him about the coming forth of the gold plates, Moroni repeated over and over again that Joseph's motives must be true.

Joseph said Moroni taught that "Satan would try to tempt me. . . . I must have no other object in view in getting the plates but to glorify God, and must not be influenced by any other motive than that of building his kingdom; otherwise I could not get them" (Joseph Smith—History 1:46).

What a great lesson in doing things for the right reason.

Keys to Success: Our Testimony, Our Motives

Our own prospects for eternal advancement are closely influenced by learning to put in the center of our motives a very personal testimony of the Savior Jesus Christ and His restored gospel. The Prophet Joseph Smith declared, "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" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 121).

How did the young Prophet Joseph Smith arrive at his strong testimony? How did he manage this great transition from a farm boy to a prophet of the Lord?

Let's use him as our example. He was a teenager when he studied the scriptures. During this time many questions arose. He wondered, he pondered, he asked, and he received answers.

Build your testimony the same way: study the scriptures, increase your knowledge of the gospel, and search for answers in the scriptures. If you have doubts or fears, invest the time and energy to find the answers in the scriptures and in the written words of our prophets. Contemplate, meditate, ponder, and pray.

Go to our Heavenly Father in prayer; communicate with Him daily. Draw close to Him, and He will draw close to you. Ask about your studies of the scriptures, about your feelings and your questions, and He will answer. He is waiting, He is real, and He is there. Use the gift of the Holy Ghost. Believe in the power of prayer.

It takes effort and time. Be patient; it is worth it. You can do it. You are not alone in this; others went through this before. Remember, it is easy to doubt and question, but it is a sure sign of maturity and responsibility to search prayerfully for answers.

Always remember to walk tall, for you are sons and daughters of God. Your lives will be fruitful, and you can overcome any fear or doubt if you only have the right



How did the Prophet Joseph Smith arrive at his strong testimony? He studied the scriptures. When questions arose, he wondered, he pondered, he asked, and he received answers. Build your testimony the same way.

motives, which will give you the power to stay on the road to true achievement and a solid testimony.

What Our Testimony Needs to Include

To build the foundation for your own testimony, you have to use material recommended by the greatest character builder there is: Jesus Christ. These materials include faith, truth, prayer, obedience, honesty, and accountability.

In building your own testimony, invest your time, your brain, and your talents. Be focused, study it out, be in tune with the Spirit, and then pray to receive confirmation. Every one of us needs to find a very personal

testimony of the following:

- A living Father in Heaven
- The Atonement of Jesus Christ
- The Prophet Joseph Smith
- The Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ
- Our living prophet today, even President Gordon B. Hinckley

What Is a Testimony Good For?

This testimony, or firm belief and assurance in your heart, will be a solid foundation, an overarching motive in all you accomplish in your life. It will be a constant source of confidence and motivation. Your testimony provides you with a reason for gladness. It

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Moses, Joseph Smith,
and Brigham Young.
The words of the
prophets help us
make the right
choices.



PAINTING BY WILLIAM WHITAKER

will help you cultivate a spirit of optimism and happiness. Your testimony will help you to choose the right at all times and in all circumstances. It will give you peace of mind, His peace. If God is with you, who can be against you? (see Romans 8:31).

Your testimony will be the strongest motive to select the right path and direction in your educational and vocational endeavors. It will help you to not live below your privileges and possibilities. Your testimony will one day even help you to choose your eternal companion.

You are to do the choosing here and now during this exciting and wonderful time on earth. Moral agency, the freedom to choose, is certainly one of God's greatest gifts next to life itself. We have the honorable right to choose; therefore, we need to choose the right. This is not always easy.

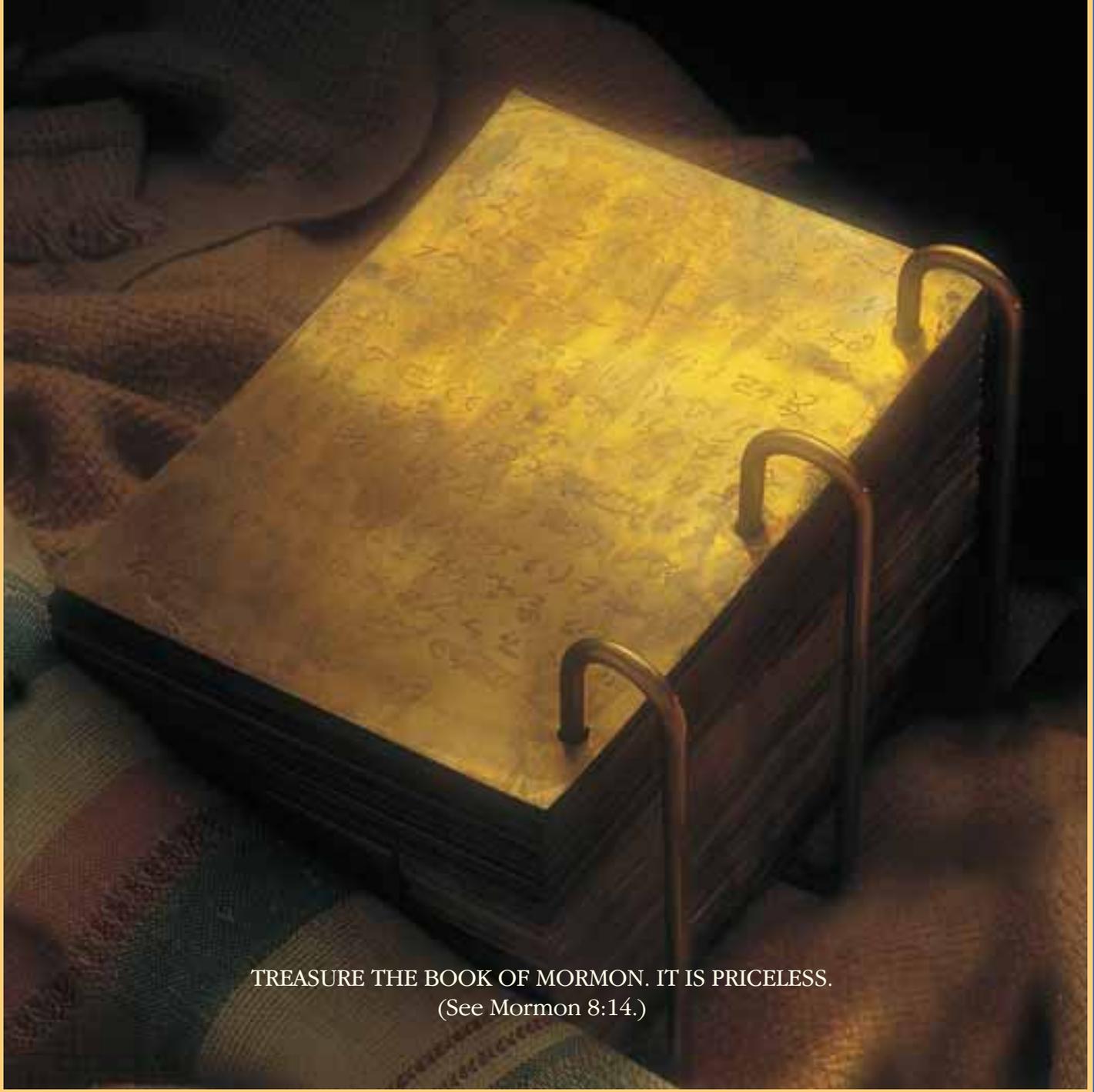
We are blessed to live in a time when we have a living prophet—President Gordon B. Hinckley—just like during the times of

Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joseph Smith, and Brigham Young. The words of the prophets help us make the right choices of our own free will. As we refine and solidify our testimony by listening to the prophet's voice, we will joyfully follow his counsel and guidance. In the scriptures we read, "For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith" (D&C 21:5).

The Lord will bless you as you follow His counsel and guidance given through prophets. Go forward and become the valiant men and women of Zion you were prepared to be. The Lord has a great work for each of you to do. "Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations" (D&C 115:5). He trusts you, and He calls and relies on you to stand taller and shine brighter in these challenging but wonderful days. **NE**

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University—Idaho on March 13, 2001.

WORTH MORE THAN
**ITS WEIGHT
IN GOLD**



TREASURE THE BOOK OF MORMON. IT IS PRICELESS.
(See Mormon 8:14.)

599 BAPTISMS

BY WILSON ARLEY OCAMPO

When I was 18 I was the first in my family to find the restored gospel. After my baptism I began to really understand how the gospel could help my family.

As a result of these feelings I started to do family history, and my love for my ancestors grew as I worked and exercised my faith to find them. My desire to find them was so strong that on several occasions I traveled to my ancestors' places of origin. Each trip brought new experiences, and my heart was turned to my ancestors (see Malachi 4:5–6).

Some time later I was called to serve as a family history consultant in my ward. My heart began to expand, and I began to love the ancestors of each person in my ward. As I searched parishes, archives, and libraries, I came to better understand the purpose of redeeming the dead.

Once I had my family history computer disk in my hands, I realized that the most important part of the work was still missing. I needed to go to the temple and provide my family beyond the veil with the ordinances that would enable them to be saved and join my family's generations for eternity.

I was able to go to the temple when I went on my mission to Cochabamba, Bolivia. I began preaching the gospel in October 2000. A few months later my

Inspired by a growing love for my ancestors, I did family history work for hundreds of them.

companion and I visited the temple with the youth from the ward where we were serving. I took my disk and was able to provide 599 names for ordinance work.

While I served as witness, my companion baptized the young people on behalf of my ancestors. What great joy I felt. The Spirit was with me, testifying of the truthfulness of what

we were doing. I could feel my ancestors' happiness and gratitude.

But there were other ordinances that still needed to be done. Because there were so many names, I turned them over to the temple. But I kept the names of my great-grandparents and their children, and later that month my companion and I, with the help of other missionaries, performed the work for them.

I am grateful to my Heavenly Father because, although I was far from my country and perhaps thought that I would baptize only the living, I was also able to participate in the work of redeeming the dead.

I am still trying to bring more souls to Christ and encouraging others to seek out their ancestors. I love this work, and I know that it is true and that Jesus Christ lives and loves us. **NE**

Wilson Arley Ocampo is a member of the Envigado Ward, Medellín Colombia Belen Stake.



THE GIRL IN THE MIRROR

NAME WITHHELD

“We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam’s transgression.” —Articles of Faith 1:2

As I looked in the mirror I pictured myself mangled and bleeding in a coffin of twisted metal. The image seemed almost real, and I didn’t want to think about it.

Do we have time before dinner for our walk?” said Mr. Knight (names have been changed) from his wheelchair.

“Of course,” I responded, “I always have time for a walk.”

As I rolled my 90-year-old friend through the front door of the nursing home and across the street, we talked about skiing, slopes, and snowdrifts. Mr. Knight had been on ski patrol until an accident forced him to retire at age 86.

On our walks, I’d pour out my senior-year problems, and Mr. Knight would tell me stories several decades old, giving me courage to face the mountains of life that he had already conquered.

“So,” Mr. Knight asked, “did you have a date last night?”

“Yep,” I responded, dreamily thinking of the good-looking guy I had gone out with.

“Well, how did it go?”

“Great! He is so cool! I can’t believe he actually wants to date me!” I said, bubbling over with excitement. Brock was the star of the high school swim team. He was every girl’s dream boy. He wasn’t an active member of the Church and not exactly a good guy

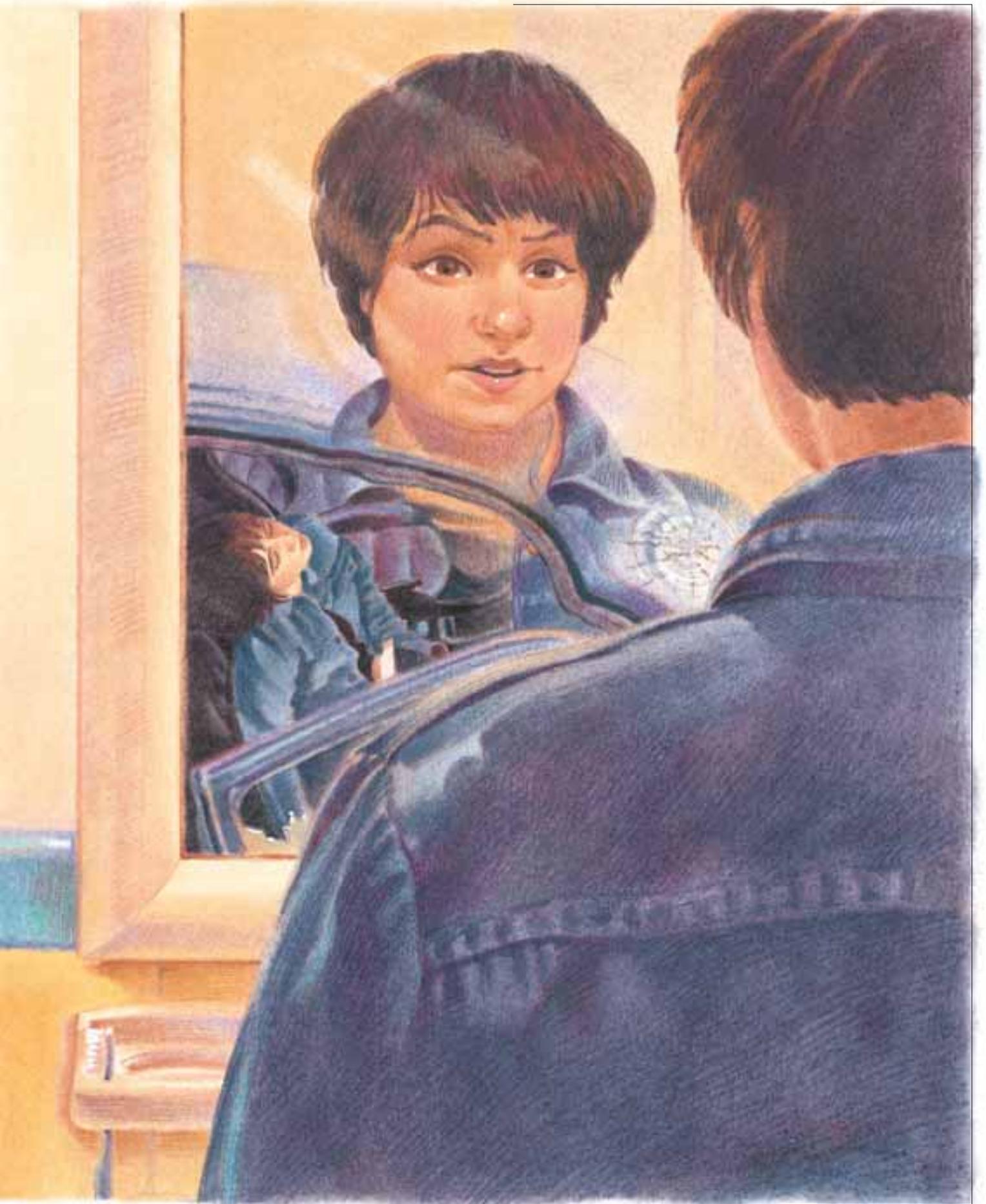
either, but he was incredibly good looking, and I was flattered he had asked me out. I thought as long as I didn’t do the bad things he was doing, I could still go out with him and have fun. Brock’s good looks hid many of his flaws.

I kept hanging out with him even though my parents weren’t crazy about the idea. I rationalized to them that his habits didn’t have any effect on me. Not surprisingly, they didn’t agree. When I told Brock this, he promised me he had quit drinking and smoking. But after a while, I could tell he was lying.

My parents taught me I should only date guys worthy to go on missions—guys who could one day take me to the temple. Brock was definitely not that type. Still, I had a hard time separating the excitement from the impending trouble.

As the weeks went by and I kept going out with Brock, I started lying to my parents about where I was going. And even though I wasn’t the one drinking or smoking, I knew I had crossed into a danger zone.

After going out with Brock one night, I sneaked into my house and headed to the bathroom to wash off my makeup. As I





THE SECOND ARTICLE OF FAITH

“We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam’s transgression’ (Articles of Faith 1:2). This not only means that we will not be punished for what Adam did in the garden, but also that we cannot excuse our own behavior by pointing a finger to Adam or anyone else. The real danger in failing to accept responsibility for our own actions is that unless we do, we may never even enter on the strait and narrow path.”

—Elder F. Burton Howard of the Seventy, “Repentance,” *Ensign*, May 1991, 13.

looked in the mirror I met a scrutinizing eye.

“Well, here you are,” scolded my reflection. “I see you finally made it home tonight.”

“Of course I made it home,” I countered.

“Surprising, though,” the girl in the mirror continued, “don’t you think? Brock was so drunk. It’s amazing he didn’t crash.”

I pictured myself mangled and bleeding in a coffin of twisted metal. The image seemed almost real, and I didn’t want to think about it.

I lashed back at the image in the mirror: “Quit overreacting! You’re starting to sound like my mother!” I slammed my fist against the light switch, and brushed my teeth and washed off my mascara in the dark.

After yet another week of sneaking around, fighting what I knew I should do, it was time to see Mr. Knight again. I tried to act natural, but Mr. Knight knew I was in trouble.

“You’re in a mess because you’re breaking the rules,” he said.

“What rules?” I asked, innocently raising my eyebrows.

“Your rules and God’s rules. When people go against the laws they know, they are sinning.”

If I had heard this from anyone else, I would have felt as if they had called me a sinner. Yet I knew Mr. Knight loved me and cared about my happiness, so I listened to what he had to say.

“You know that lying to your parents, even stretching the truth a little, is wrong. You know that lying to yourself is wrong. You know that dating someone who drags you down is wrong. You can’t expect to stand barefoot in the snow and not get cold.”

“Mr. Knight, I’ve lied so many times though. I don’t know how to start telling the truth. If I tell my parents the truth now, they’ll ground me until I graduate.”

I was afraid of facing the truth. I thought if

I told the truth, I’d spend my senior year dateless and friendless.

“Mr. Knight, I’m not sure I *can* fix this mess.”

“Trust me, you can. Remember, you don’t have to do this all by yourself. You need the help of the Lord and His Atonement.”

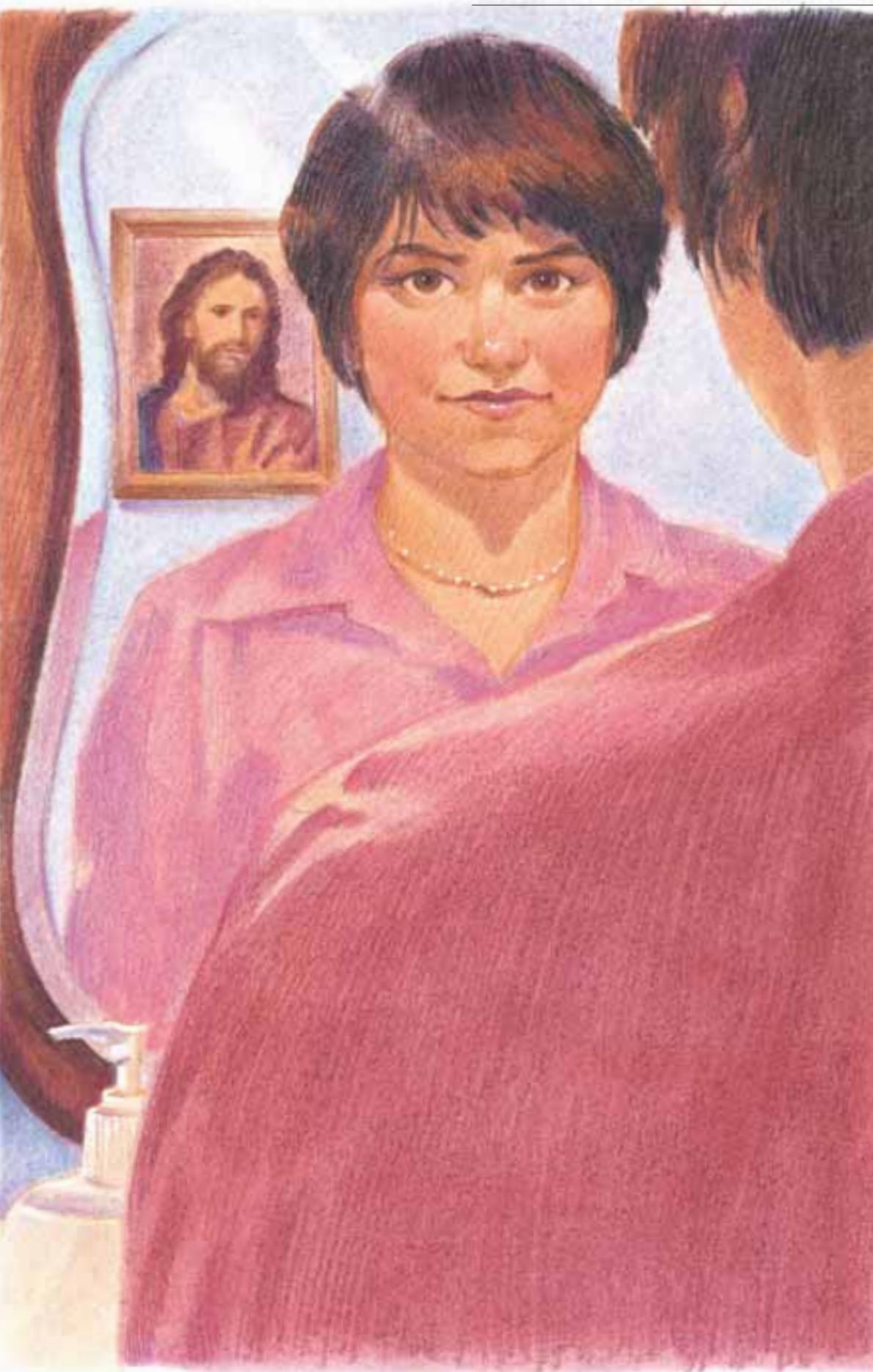
“Hey, this isn’t a big enough problem that I need to repent. I don’t need the Atonement. Remember, I’m not the one smoking and drinking.”

“I know, but you still have things you need to change. Repentance means changing, and it’s possible because of Christ’s Atonement. You need to repent because you’ve broken God’s rules.”

I stopped pushing the wheelchair, realizing for the first time that I had offended God and not just myself. Now, instead of fearing my own face in the mirror, I was afraid of facing the Lord. I knew He was aware of everything I had done. I wanted to bury myself under a mountain.

Mr. Knight gave me instructions on how to get back to where I needed to be. I told my parents the truth about going out with Brock behind their backs. I knelt and told the Lord the truth. Still, a confession wasn’t enough. I changed my behavior. I quit dating Brock and only dated guys who lived Church standards. Lots of kids at school teased me, telling me I was stuck up, but I knew that what I was doing was right. Most importantly, faith and hope returned to my life, replacing the guilt and despair I had felt.

My fear of being friendless and dateless never happened. By being true to myself, I found friends who were true to me. Mr. Knight helped me see the need for the Atonement in my life so I could change and look at myself in the mirror. When I look to Christ and then look at myself, I am able to recognize in my reflection something of divinity and what He expects me to become. **NE**



Mr. Knight helped me see the need for the Atonement in my life so I could change and look at myself in the mirror. When I look to Christ and then look at myself, I am able to recognize in my reflection something of divinity and what He expects me to become.

How could an experience with a broken refrigerator teach about the Atonement of Jesus Christ? Find out next month in the Articles of Faith series.

Q & A

“Pornography is ruining my life. But every time I try to quit looking at it, I fall again. What can I do?”

NEW ERA

Pornography, like drugs, is addictive and may be too powerful to overcome alone. Somebody who will support you in changing this behavior needs to know about it. Your bishop or branch president, your parents, and LDS Family Services (lds-fshelp@ldschurch.org) can all help; they need to know what is going on before a habit of looking at pornography progresses and becomes an out-of-control addiction. They will be kind, patient, and understanding because they want what’s best for you.

Your bishop or branch president can help you overcome pornography. It will begin to lose its grasp on you as you talk to him about it. You can also ask him or another Melchizedek Priesthood holder for a blessing.

While others help you with this problem, there are some things you can do yourself:

- Find spiritual strength by praying and reading the scriptures daily, attending church and seminary, and keeping the

■ **Pornography is powerfully addictive, so get some help in overcoming it. The Lord, your bishop or branch president, your parents, and a professional counselor can all help.**

■ **Replace this problem with positive and uplifting activities.**

■ **Do your best to consistently live the gospel. That will invite the Holy Ghost into your life and help you desire to do what is right.**

■ **Avoid situations where you will be tempted, and change your thoughts as soon as an unclean thought enters your mind.**

commandments. Healing comes from the Savior, and it comes through His Atonement, which will apply in your life as you repent. Over time, consistent righteous living will convert you so that this temptation will no longer appeal to you.

- Avoid situations where you know you will be tempted. Don’t use the Internet alone. Throw away inappropriate videos or magazines. Turn off the television.

- You can’t simply avoid looking at pornography. You must avoid it *and* do something positive in its place. You could play sports, read wholesome books, listen to good music, spend time on a hobby or interest, or be with your family and friends.

- Set goals to progress in the gospel. Overcome pornography so it won’t stop you from worthily enjoying blessings such as serving a mission, marrying in the temple, and if you are a young man, serving in the priesthood.

Despite your best efforts, at first the



temptation to look at pornography will keep coming up. When it does, immediately change your thoughts and the situation. Invite the Spirit by praying, singing a hymn, and reading the scriptures. If you pause to think about whether you will give in or resist, the problem will likely win.

If the temptation wins from time to time, don't lose hope! All is not lost. No matter how long it takes, you can overcome this problem with your best efforts and the help of the Lord and other people. **NE**

READERS

I too have had a problem with pornography. I have found some things that help me resist the temptation. When I read my scriptures and pray daily, the temptation is much less. If I am feeling weak, I will turn off my computer and do something else. Sometimes I have had to find people to be around to keep my mind off it. I work to find other things to think about because if I start thinking about pornography, it's much harder to avoid acting on those thoughts.

It's hard work, but the Lord will help you. He loves you, and He will forgive you as you work to repent.

Name withheld



If you really want to stay away from pornography, pray and fast for God's guidance. Whenever the temptation comes to mind, read your scriptures and think of Christ and the words of the prophets.

Ejokeoghene Faith Imoh, 19,

Mini-Okoro Ward, Port Harcourt Nigeria Stake



To stop looking at these abominations, deeply repent from the bottom of your heart. Pray, fast, and read the scriptures more, and ask for help from Heavenly Father and local

leaders. The Lord will help you overcome because He loves the sinner but not the sin.

Rodrigo Barros Soares, 19,

Nilo Wulff Ward, Porto Alegre Brazil South Stake

First, don't give up hope! The Lord desires to help you. Pray for His guidance, and never forget He wants you to pray to Him no matter how deep in sin you get. Second, talk to your parents about your problem. They can help you avoid tempting situations. Then talk with your bishop. He loves you and can help you think of ways to overcome your temptations and get you onto the road of repentance.

Matt Smith, 18,

Oak Forest Second Ward, Layton Utah North Stake



Always remember that you are a son or daughter of our Father in Heaven. Make Him the center of your life so you will not fall into Satan's trap.

Enroll in seminary or institute; teachers can help you make good choices. The Church also provides us with good magazines to read.

Maria Veronica S. Peñafiel, 15,

Bata Ward, Bacolod Philippines North Stake



Stay away from the Internet as much as possible. That is where Satan will tempt you the most. Do not socialize with people who discuss pornography. That will tempt you to view it again.

Kyle Rushton, 13,

Crescent Valley Ward, Tacoma Washington Stake

Try blocking all porn sites from your computer. But if one accidentally pops up, turn off the computer and



An important step in obtaining the cure for spiritual poison is to get on your knees and ask Heavenly Father to forgive you. Pray for the desire to do what is right. Pray for the courage to talk to your parents and the bishop. . . . Regardless of your fears, they will continue to love you. You don't have to do this alone. . . . Parents and leaders can provide valuable encouragement and support."

—Elder David E. Sorensen of the Presidency of the Seventy, "You Can't Pet a Rattlesnake," *Ensign*, May 2001, 41.

study your scriptures until you stop thinking about it. Throw away anything that portrays pornography or anything close to it. Try to spend time with people who will encourage you not to look at pornography.

Lauren Semadeni, 17,

Skyline Ward, Queen Creek Arizona East Stake

Seek direction from your bishop. Together you can establish goals that will spiritually edify you. You will discover that the pleasures of the world are fleeting and the joys of the gospel are eternal.

Moisés Francisco da Silva, 18,

Brazlândia Ward, Brasília Brazil Taguatinga Stake



Pray to the Lord. He will not leave you without help, but you have to continue fighting the urge.

Try not to stay up too late because the temptation will be stronger.

Try to read the scriptures every night before bed. If you're going to use the computer, have someone by your side.

Natalie Hill, 16,

Harrogate Ward, York England Stake

Responses are intended for help and perspective, not as pronouncements of Church doctrine.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Send your answer to the question below, along with your name, birth date, ward and stake, and a photograph (including your parent's written permission to print the photo) to:

Q&A, New Era

50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420

Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA

Or e-mail:

cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org

Please respond by September 15, 2005.

QUESTION

"Why is life so hard? Will I ever get a break from trials? How can I endure?"

CHICKEN BONES

BY APRIL ANDERSON

My dog loves chicken bones. At least, she thinks she does. Every time we have chicken for dinner, she will sit quietly at the side of the table, waiting for a handout. We tell her that chicken bones aren't good for her, that they splinter and she could choke. But there she stays, persistent, hoping for chicken bones.

When I was in the 10th grade, I had a similar problem. I saw a group of people I thought were pretty interesting and decided I wanted to be friends with them. I began talking to them and spending time with them. I ignored the warnings of my friends and parents to stay away from this particular group.

Soon I began dressing like them, listening to the same music, going to the same places. Gradually my attitude began to change, my language became increasingly vulgar, and I made choices I would never have

considered a few years earlier. I lost many of my old friends, my parents no longer trusted me, and I lost my good reputation. At the time, I pretended I was happy.

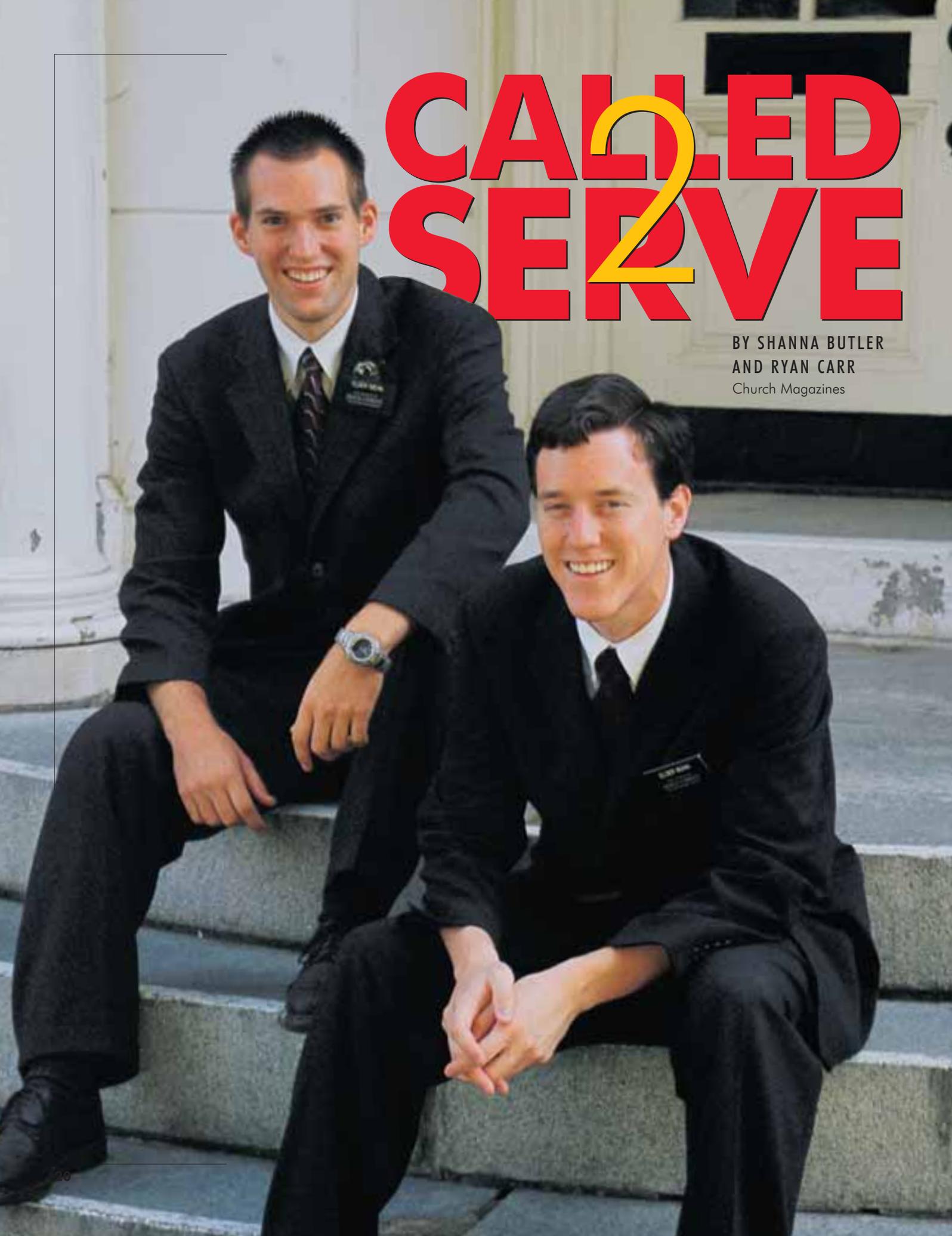
The time came when I realized I wasn't happy at all. I had gained everything I thought was important and lost everything that really was: my family relationships, my true friends, my reputation, my self-respect, and my faith in God. I had choked on a chicken bone.

It has taken a long time to repair the damage done by that chicken bone. I still struggle with its influence at times. I realize now that my parents' and friends' warnings were given to me out of love. They weren't trying to restrict me; they were trying to help me.

Everyone will have their own chicken bones to deal with. But we are blessed to have the scriptures, the prophets, our leaders, teachers, friends, and parents to point out where those chicken bones are and what to do about them. We just have to choose to listen and obey. **NE**

April Anderson is a member of Hill Spring Ward, Cardston Alberta Stake.



A photograph of two young men in black suits and ties sitting on stone steps. The man on the left is sitting on a higher step, leaning forward with his hands on his knees. The man on the right is sitting on a lower step, with his hands clasped in front of him. Both are smiling. The background shows a white door with a window.

CALLED SERVE

BY SHANNA BUTLER
AND RYAN CARR
Church Magazines

Missionaries give several hours of service each week in the communities in which they live. Here are a few of the service projects missionaries around the world are doing.

From soup kitchens to libraries to hospitals, the missionaries of the Connecticut Hartford Mission help in a variety of situations.

Missionaries find great satisfaction in giving their time to the communities they live in. Not only is their service a break from their usual routine, it's a chance to get to know their community members in a different setting. Some places where these missionaries volunteer have had various missionaries volunteering for years.

Elder Biehn, who volunteers with his companion, Elder Bohn, reshelving books at the Noah Webster Library in West Hartford, says, "It's a great opportunity for us to meet people where they don't feel threatened by us."

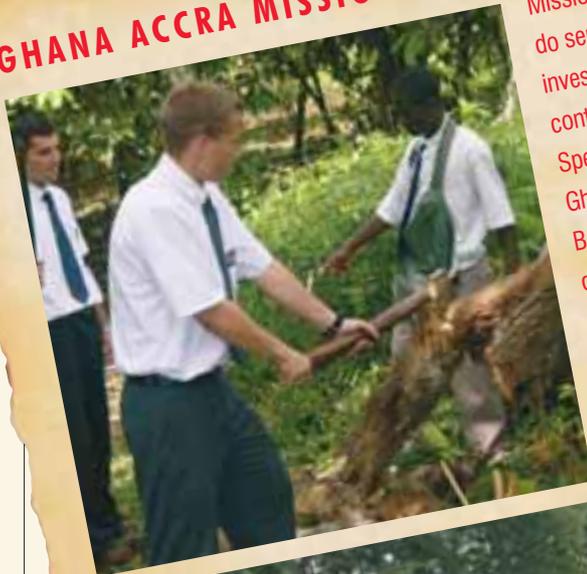
The missionaries also say it's great to feel needed and that they are really doing good. "It's an opportunity to do something and see the effects of what you're doing," says Elder Whitney, who serves with his companion, Elder Campbell, at the Meriden Soup Kitchen, in the basement of a Baptist church.

Elders Campbell and Whitney say they learn about other religions there and about other



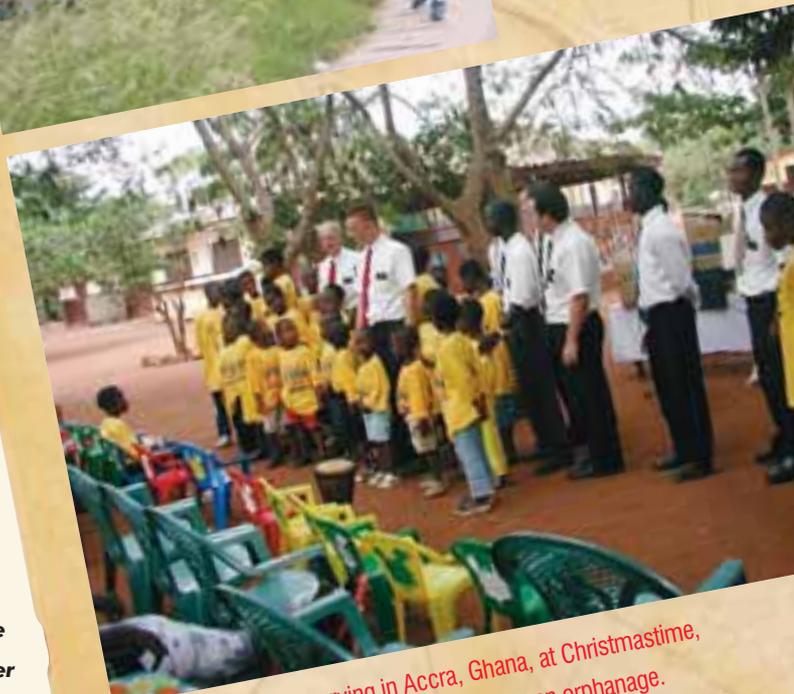
Opposite page:
Elders Biehn (left) and Bohn give service at the Noah Webster Library in West Hartford, Connecticut.

GHANA ACCRA MISSION



Missionaries in Africa often do service projects with investigators and new contacts. Elders Turnbull and Spencer, serving in Korforidua, Ghana, help their friend Benjamin Boateng cut down dead trees and harvest cocoa beans (left).

Missionaries help because they truly care about the people they serve and the communities they live in. Some full-time missionaries in Accra, Ghana, took time on their preparation day to help clean up litter along the public streets (left). The city's mayor expressed appreciation for their assistance.

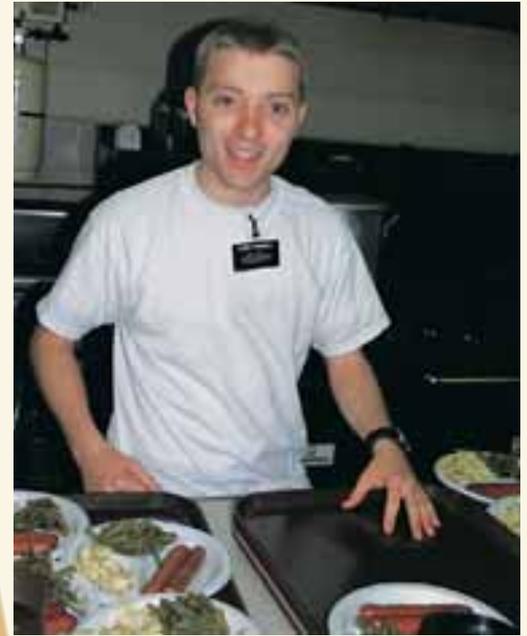


These missionaries, serving in Accra, Ghana, at Christmastime, brought donated food and toys to children in an orphanage.

MISSOURI ST. LOUIS MISSION

Missionaries in this mission do a variety of service projects, like reading to the blind, doing yard work, helping at nursing homes, and working at a food bank.

Working with Habitat for Humanity, Elders Bailey and Cummings helped build a home and a shed (left). A few days before the elders started working on the home, they met an investigator at church and began teaching him. It turns out that he was the man whose home they were building. Before the house was completed, he joined the Church. Elder Peterson and Elder Warren spend a few hours each week sorting food, clothing, and other items at a thrift store called Feed My People (left).



Above: Elders Campbell (top) and Whitney serve up breakfast at the Meriden Soup Kitchen in Connecticut.

things, like how to serve customers and cook for large numbers of people.

The Hartford missionaries agree that they not only get satisfaction from their weekly service, they also learn new skills. For instance, Elders Martinez, Finch, Baranowsky, and Farnsworth, who serve at the YMCA in New Britain, have learned how to clean. They spend most of their time there raking, mopping, sweeping, and dusting.

And the people they serve and serve with are very grateful for them. "Everybody loves these guys. They're definitely role models," says Cindy McCool, who works with volunteer services at the Bristol Hospital. Kelley Boothby, who

NIGERIA PORT HARCOURT MISSION

When a fire last year burned a housing complex, leaving 20 families homeless, LDS Charities stepped in to help. The families found homes to stay in temporarily in the community and at a chapel. And the Church donated canned and fresh food,

stoves, lanterns, sheets, pillows, and mattresses. These supplies were dropped off at the Mini-Okoro chapel, where they were given to the families by full-time missionaries Elders Obadan and Abu and local Church leaders (below).

The parents of one family with 11 children shed tears of gratitude when they received their supplies. Another family said the whole community celebrated with them when the family returned with their supplies.





Elders Baranowsky and Finch (above), along with Elder Martinez (right) and his companion Elder Farnsworth, help clean up the New Britain YMCA.

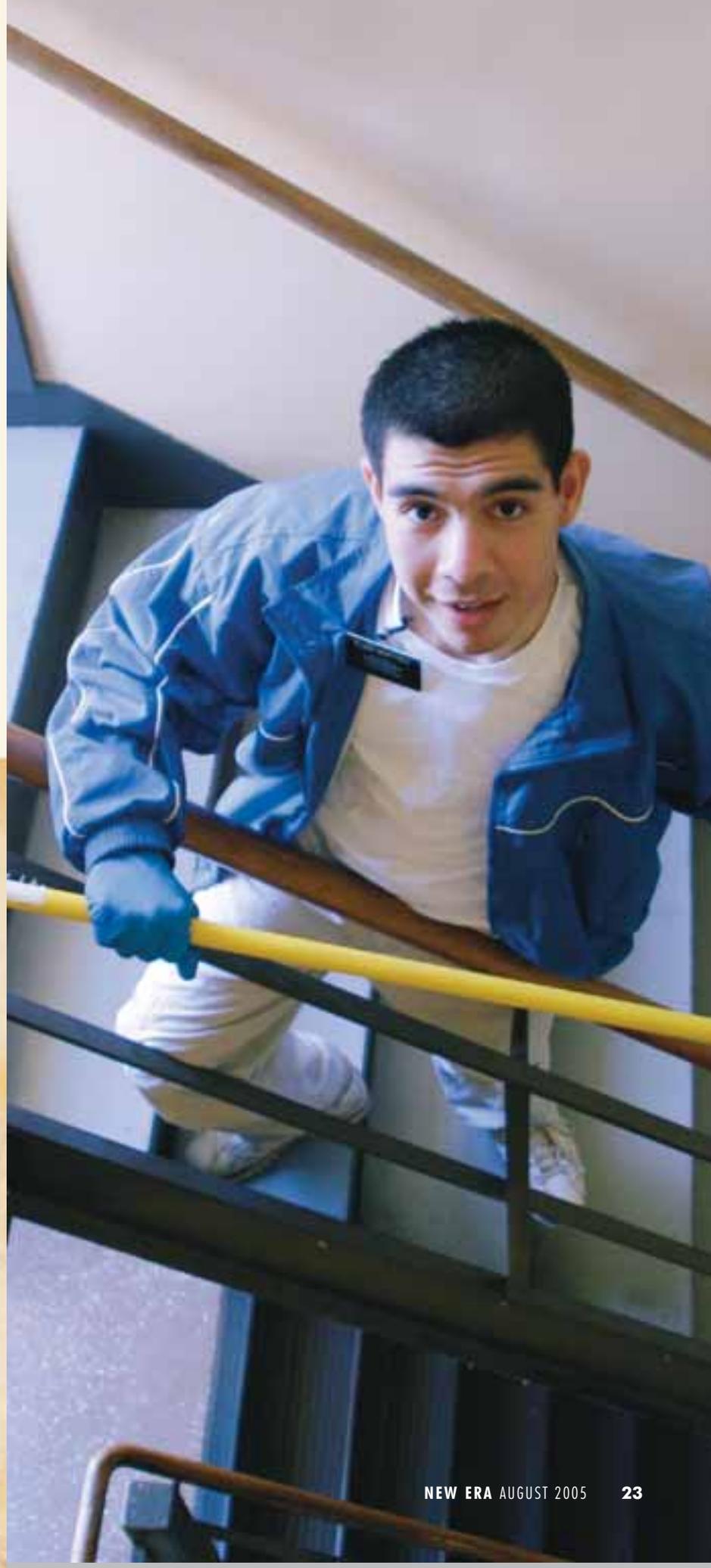
manages volunteers at the Hartford Hospital, says the missionaries are “the favorites of the favorites. They are willing to do anything that anyone asks of them, and that’s a huge help.”

Whether they’re filing or wheeling patients to their cars, these missionaries are definitely examples when they volunteer. And their

EL SALVADOR EAST MISSION

Some of the full-time missionaries in the Ilopango Zone—(from left to right) Elder Monterroso, Elder Payne, Elder Albino, Sister Rivera, and Elder Cammack—do a puppet show to teach children to eat healthy foods and to avoid tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and other addictive substances.

The missionaries gave the puppet show at a local hospital and in a parking lot of a large supermarket. Those who saw the show, including members of the hospital staff, enjoyed it and appreciated the missionaries’ efforts.





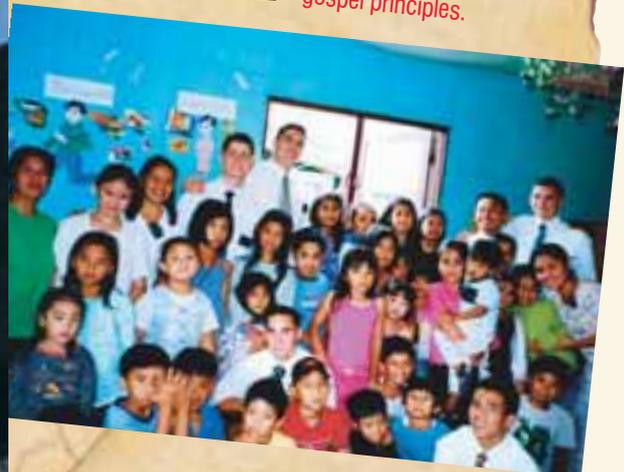
Left: Elders Peterson and Lyon along with Elders Carlson, Reid, and Palmer (above) serve at the Hartford Hospital.

examples have prompted people to ask them to share the gospel with them and have encouraged less-active members to come back to church, even though the missionaries don't actively proselyte when they are

PHILIPPINES BAGUIO MISSION

Missionaries volunteered to help build the town hall in Manoag, Philippines (below).

Eight missionaries from one zone helped teach students ages 6 to 12 about improving their health (below). They taught about hygiene, exercise, a proper diet, and avoiding harmful substances. Some of the students' parents asked the missionaries questions, which gave them an opportunity to share some gospel principles.



volunteering in the community.

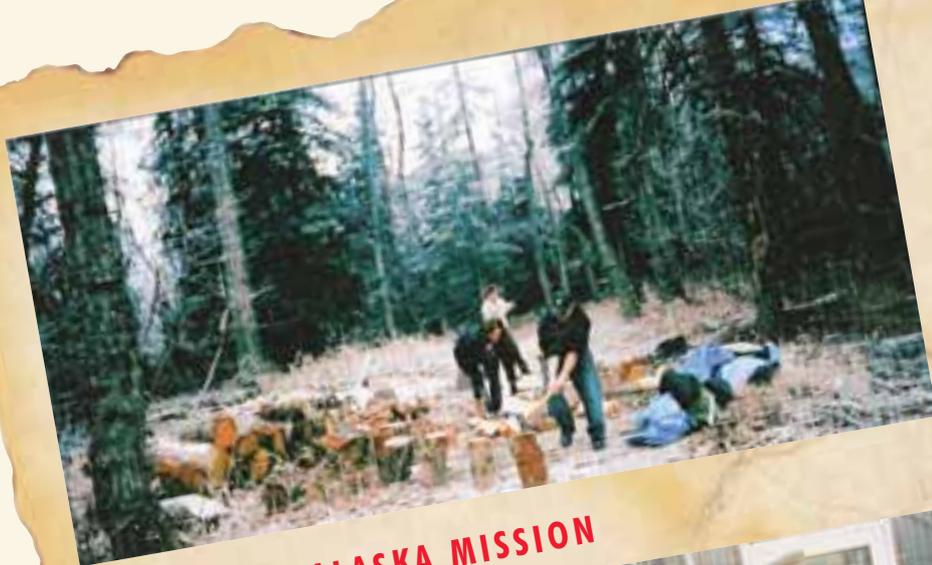
Elder Nelson, who serves at the Bristol Hospital with his companion, Elder Biehl, admits, "It makes you feel good as well—not just those you are serving."

Elder Carlson, who volunteers with five other elders at the Hartford Hospital, gets to the heart of why these missionaries really love to serve: "Serving your fellow men is the same as serving God. Serving is really the key to coming to know Jesus Christ. That's why we serve people wherever we can."

Why Serve?

One elder in Alaska named some benefits of serving in the community: "As missionaries we not only learn skills that may be helpful later in life, we also learn the joy and blessings that come from giving to others' temporal needs." Whether full-time missionaries serve by teaching the gospel or by sorting clothing at a humanitarian center, they find joy in knowing that when they "are in the service of [their] fellow beings [they] are only in the service of [their] God" (Mosiah 2:17). **NE**

Below: Elders Nelson and Biehl help assemble crutches at Bristol Hospital, Connecticut.



ANCHORAGE ALASKA MISSION

In the cold Alaskan winters, people need wood to burn in their fireplaces. For their weekly service, Elders Fjelsted and Leha'uli went to a local sawmill that has extra wood. They chopped it, piled it into members' trucks, and delivered the wood to single mothers, older couples, people with disabilities—anyone who needed a little extra help. Those people always mentioned how grateful they were.

These elders also volunteered at a food bank, where they packed food for the needy, and at an elementary school, where they read to the children.

"Our service is making a difference in the community," Elder Fjelsted says. "People are recognizing us and the Church for the good we do. It is also leading to some teaching opportunities that we hope will help build the kingdom of God in Alaska."



While the Anchorage Alaska Temple was being remodeled, local missionaries helped clean the temple for their service project (above). From left: Sister Lewis, Elder Evans, Sister Olsen, Elder Rasmussen, and Elder Olivare.

At the Iditarod dogsled race, missionaries helped stack bales of hay along the route and prepare pallets of supplies for the dogsled mushers (below).





BY STEPHEN F. POWELL

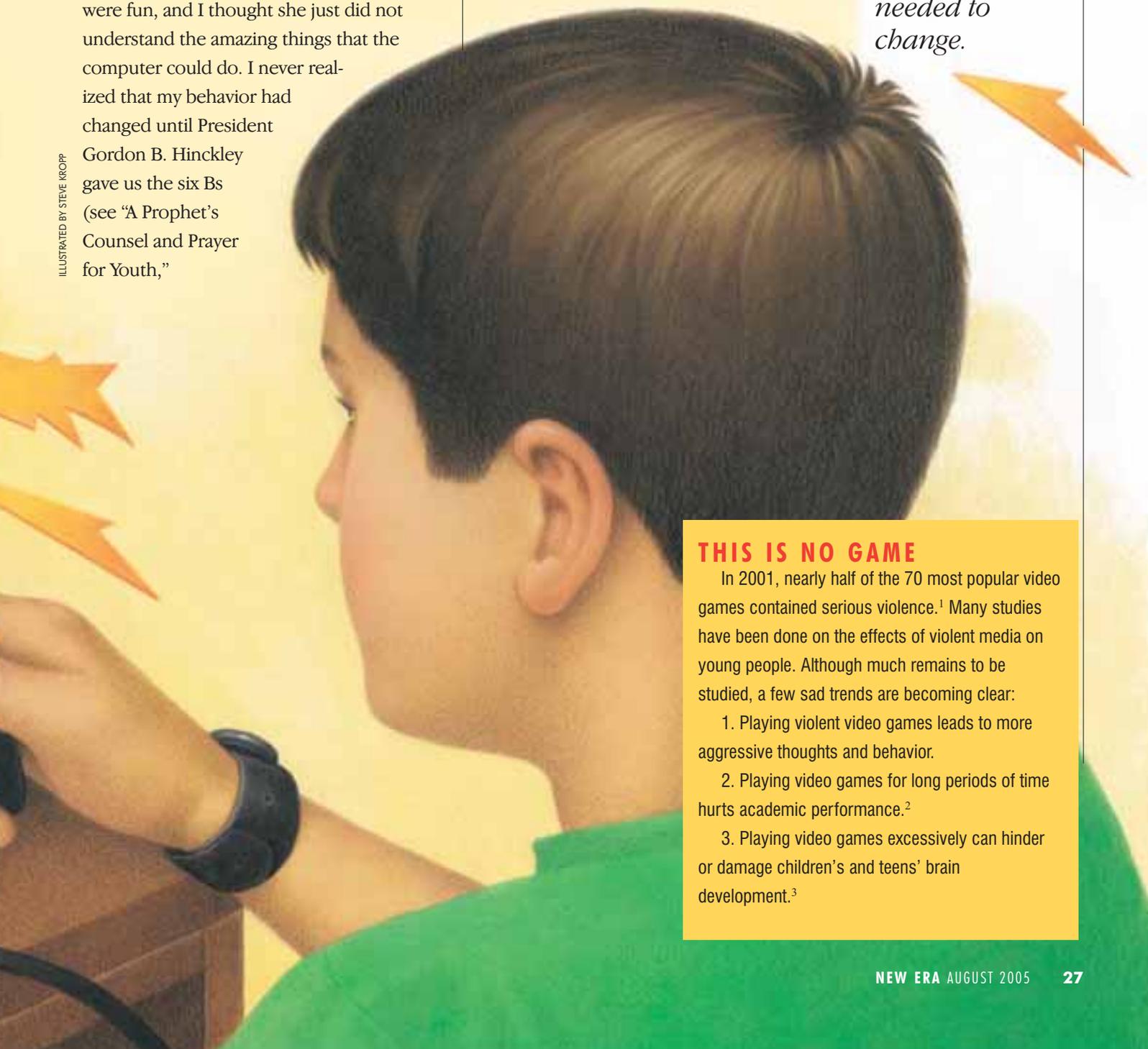
My friends and I were really into video games. The games we played were not driving games or sports games. We spent most of our time playing violent games that tried to show us what war was really like. My mother had been trying to get me to stop playing them, but the games were fun, and I thought she just did not understand the amazing things that the computer could do. I never realized that my behavior had changed until President Gordon B. Hinckley gave us the six Bs (see “A Prophet’s Counsel and Prayer for Youth,”

New Era, Jan. 2001, 4).

I started to notice that after playing those violent games, I could not be nice to people. One time, after playing a game, a friend asked me if he could get something out of the refrigerator. I responded to him very rudely. I thought I was joking, but he didn’t.

Playing violent video games was turning me into a person I didn’t want to be. I needed to change.

ILLUSTRATED BY STEVE KROPP



THIS IS NO GAME

In 2001, nearly half of the 70 most popular video games contained serious violence.¹ Many studies have been done on the effects of violent media on young people. Although much remains to be studied, a few sad trends are becoming clear:

1. Playing violent video games leads to more aggressive thoughts and behavior.
2. Playing video games for long periods of time hurts academic performance.²
3. Playing video games excessively can hinder or damage children’s and teens’ brain development.³

Listening to the prophet and my parents could have saved me a lot of heartache. When I finally gave up those games, I started being more successful at school, work, home, and in my friendships.



EXTRA! EXTRA!

For more on this topic, see “Finding Peace” (*Ensign*, Mar. 2004), by President Thomas S. Monson; “It’s ‘Only’ Violence” (*Ensign*, June 2003), by Brad J. Bushman; and “Mixed Signals” (*New Era*, June 2001) in the Gospel Library at www.lds.org.

I felt horrible for being mean to him and making one of my best friends feel bad. I never wanted to hurt anyone after that.

I could not “be smart” or “be humble,” as the prophet has told us. These games distracted me from studying. I spent all of my free time playing these games so I could be better than everyone else. Playing these games built up a lot of pride in me, and I could not control myself from making fun of the people I had beaten. After a few weeks of feeling horrible after playing games like these and feeling horrible about the things they influenced me to do, I resolved to never play a violent game ever again. It didn’t matter if the game was just a little violent or a lot; I would never play a game with violence in it.

I have tried this for a while now, and I see blessings for doing so all around me. Giving up these games has allowed me to do so much more. I went from having no job to having a full-time job, from starting to lose friends to making more. I can spend more time on school and my studies. I have even started to write a short story that I enjoy.

I have found that listening to your parents and the prophet can save you a lot of heartache. The simple phrases “be humble” and “be smart” have made me a new person. I believe that as I continue to stay away from violent games, I will be blessed. **NE**

Stephen F. Powell is a member of the Garland Third Ward, Richardson Texas Stake.

NOTES

1. Internet, www.safeyouth.org, “Media Violence Facts and Statistics.”
2. Findings 1 and 2 are taken from “Video Games and Aggressive Thoughts, Feelings, and Behavior in the Laboratory and in Life,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Apr. 2000, vol. 78, no. 4, 772–90.
3. Tracy McVeigh, “Computer Games Stunt Teen Brains,” *The Observer*, Aug. 19, 2001.

BE A GAMING GURU

The *New Era* wants you to be an expert gamer. No, we *don’t* want you to be able to beat every opponent or game you play, but we *do* want you to be an expert about the games you choose to play and how long you choose to play them.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said, “Just as we exercise great care about what we take into our bodies through our mouths, we should exert a similar vigilance about what we take into our minds through our eyes and ears” (“Windows of Light and Truth,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 77).

And Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said that we all need recreation, but we should not let “things get out of balance. It is not watching television, but watching television hour after hour, night after night. Does not that qualify as idling away your time? What will you say to the Lord when He asks what you have done with the precious gift of life and time? Surely you will not feel comfortable telling Him that you were able to pass the 100,000-point level in a challenging video game” (“Be Strong in the Lord,” *Ensign*, July 2004, 14).

CHOOSING VIDEO GAMES

- Know what the game ratings mean, but also rely on your own judgment. Even if a game rating says the game is suitable for everyone, ask yourself if it is appropriate according to Church standards.
- Try renting a game before you buy it.
- If there are inappropriate themes on the cover of the game or in its advertising, it’s safe to assume the game is also inappropriate.
- Stay away from games where your character is the “bad guy.”



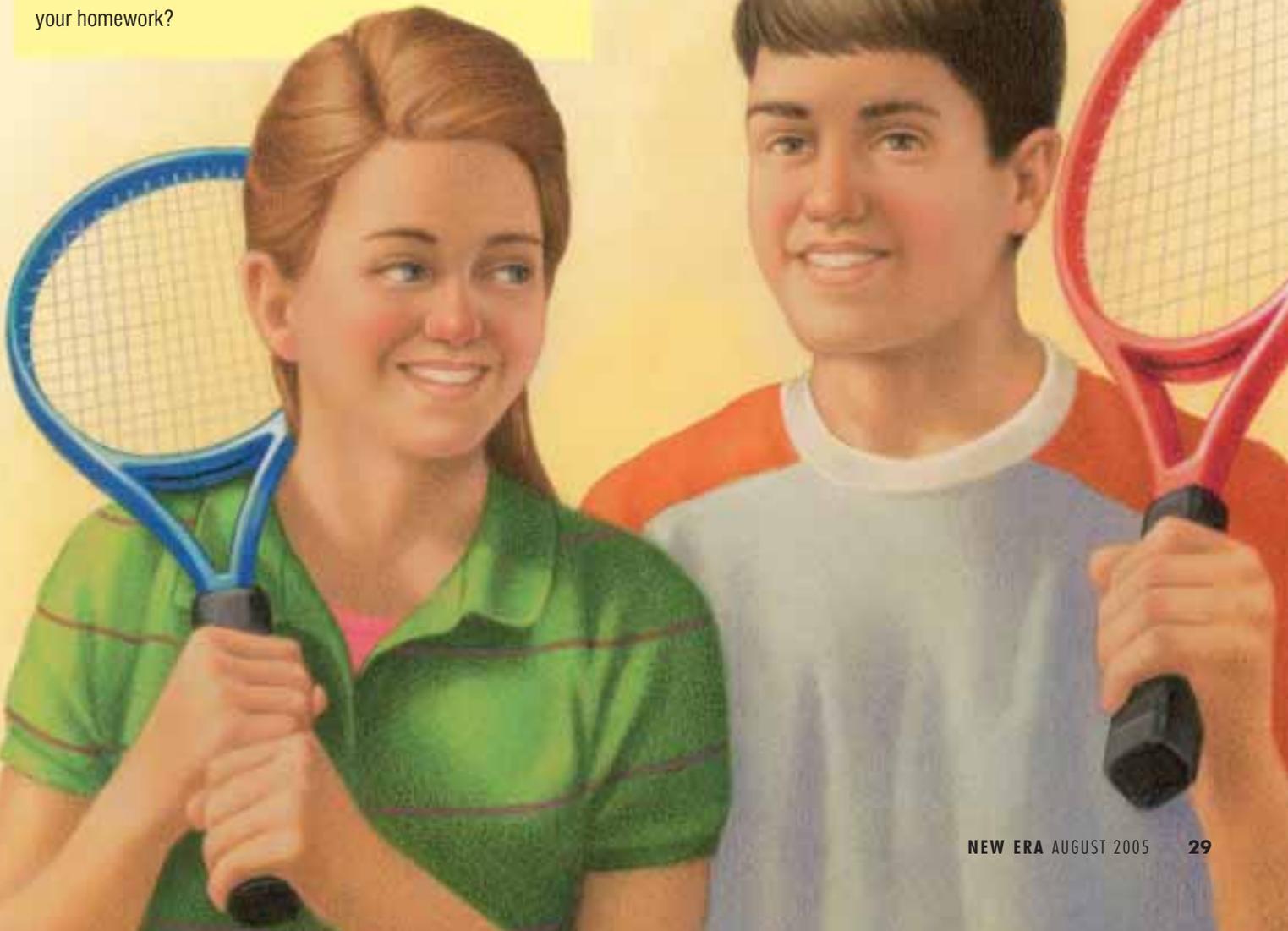
PLAYING VIDEO GAMES

- When you do play video games, try to play games that make you think.
- Instead of playing games by yourself, play games with others who share your values.
- Limit game playing to a reasonable amount of time. Set an alarm to remind you of when you had planned on stopping.
- Use video games as well-earned recreation, not as an escape from things you are supposed to be doing.
- If a game makes you feel bad or think bad thoughts, that's a good sign it is keeping you from feeling the Holy Spirit. Get rid of that game!
- Before you start playing a game, see if there is anything else of value that you could be doing. Do your parents need help with a project? Have you fulfilled any responsibilities you have in a Church calling? Have you done your homework?



“Depictions of violence often glamorize vicious behavior. They offend the Spirit and make you less able to respond to others in a sensitive, caring way. They contradict the Savior’s message of love for one another.”

—*For the Strength of Youth*, 19.



The PLACE to Be

BY JANET THOMAS
Church Magazines

For young single adults in Europe, institute outreach centers are the best choice.

For Vishakha it all started in India. That was where Vishakha Ram was invited to go to something called “institute” with a friend. She hesitated because she didn’t really think religion was her thing, but she finally agreed. On her first visit, she found a small class studying about preparing for an eternal marriage. Vishakha was amazed. “They were actually talking about these things. I grew up as a Hindu, and we don’t have the concept of eternal marriage. But in this class it was interesting to me because



everything was so pure and clear. It was just like looking at pearls. It was really beautiful.”

Vishakha didn't have the opportunity to join the Church in India because she went to Berlin, Germany, on a student exchange program. But she remembered the Church and the institute class she had found so interesting. When she arrived in Berlin, she called the missionaries, and they also took her to institute. She arrived just in time to see a great change take place at the Berlin institute. The Church had finished building a new institute addition adjoining the stake center. This shared building provides room for sports such as volleyball and basketball, a kitchen, a lounge, a library, and plenty of classrooms. The center would now support a new emphasis called institute outreach.

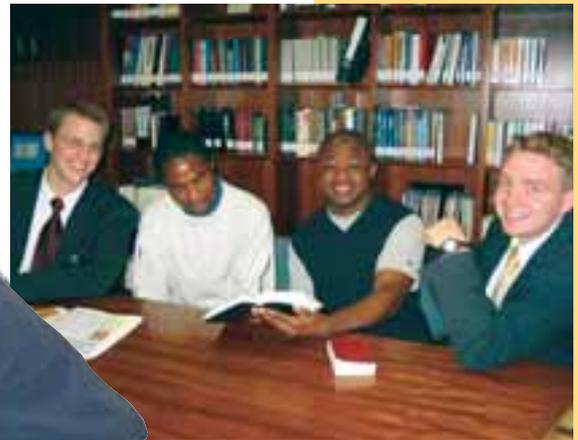
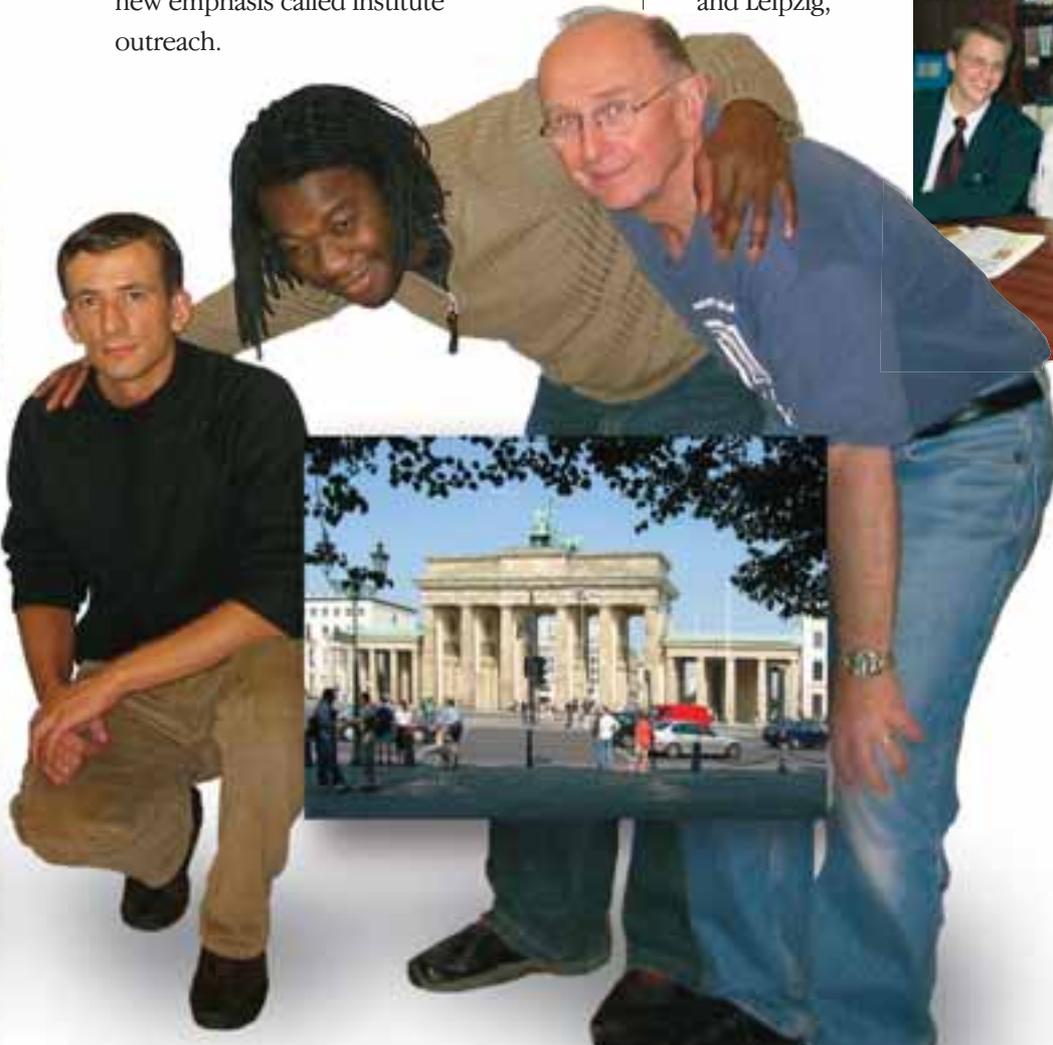
A Warm Welcome

A little over a year and a half ago, a grand experiment began in central Europe. The question was, How were Church members to support and strengthen active young single adults, reactivate those who had slipped into inactivity, and attract more of that age group to the Church as converts?

The answer: Reach out to young single adults; give them a place to feel comfortable, a place to socialize, and a place to be taught.

The first step was to make sure a suitable facility was available for a variety of activities and classes. Very quickly, four were opened. Called institute outreach centers, the four centers are located in Copenhagen, Denmark, and in Berlin, Hamburg, and Leipzig,

Decorating for a dance at the Berlin institute are (from left) Reza Sorkhriel, Christina Marinkovic, Vishakha Ram, Sister Parrz, Sister Siddoway, Miroslav Rimac, Sam Ali, and Elder Alexander. Below: Elder Abbott and Elder Frioux teaching. Bottom: Christina Marinkovic was drawn to the Church by institute activities. Inset: The Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, Germany.





Above:
Classes
at institute, such as this Church history class, help fill the hunger for knowledge about the Church.

Opposite page:
Zula Tenges found the Church through the outreach center.

Germany. Another was added later in Düsseldorf, Germany. Fifteen others are being developed in Germany and Scandinavia. These centers are open either all day or all afternoon and evening. Young people can just drop in, come for classes and activities, use the library and computers to study, or get together to fix dinner so they won't have to travel all the way home and then come back to class. For some, the distance is too great to make it home after school or work and then make it back for institute class or activities.

Institute outreach center describes both a place and what happens there. It is a friendly welcoming place where young single adults can come to learn, to find friends with the same beliefs, and to feel comfortable as they make their way back into full activity. It also serves as a place where missionaries can bring investigators who are in this age group.

Elder Karl and Sister Deanna Webb, the missionary couple called as area coordinators for the institute outreach centers, explain: "This is where young people can come for all kinds of activities, a place to be fellowshipped and feel the Spirit. It is a place to come to be reintegrated into the Church."

Changing Missionary Work

The *outreach* part of the institute outreach center is missionary work. A companionship or two of missionaries plus a full-time

missionary couple are assigned to each center. They are to focus their energies on the 18- to 30-year-olds—active, less-active, or nonmember. For that reason, the centers—which are a joint effort between the stakes and the Church Educational System—are in cities with universities and a large number of young people.

Just having somewhere specifically for young people has already made a difference for missionary work. Elder Webb tells of two missionaries who were on a university campus contacting young single adult students. They were turned down flat by the first 10 people they contacted. Then they changed their approach, mentioning the wonderful new center nearby for young single adults where there were all kinds of activities and classes. The missionaries reported having serious conversations with 28 of the next 30 people they contacted.

Zula Tenges is one young woman whom the missionary outreach touched. She came to Germany from Mongolia. She wanted to learn English and found a course offered at the institute. "The class was free," says Zula. "I was liking that. I met some elders, and they taught me about the Church. I wasn't really interested in religion, but I wanted to understand more about Christianity."

Zula, 21, from the Tiergarten Ward, was drawn into the activities and the friendship she found at the Berlin institute. "It was so cool at institute. I have so many friends. Many of them are now on missions. That was a great place to get to know the Church." Zula was baptized a little more than a year ago.

A 40-Year-Old Love Story

One of the advantages Christina Marinkovic, 23, from the Tiergarten Ward, sees in having a full-time missionary couple in the

center is the example these lifelong Church members are to the young single adults.

Christina was first brought to institute by her sister. “I wasn’t interested at first,” says Christina, “but I had a good feeling. It was good to see young people who make good decisions and do the right things. And they have fun. They have fun without alcohol. That was for me a little miracle. Now I am the same way.”

Christina has come to know Elder Thomas and Sister Marilyn Alexander, the missionary couple assigned to the center. “They make institute so much better. We can see a good example of how it is to be married for a long time. It’s good for me to see that a husband and wife can be happy for 40 years and in love with each other. They still flirt. It’s so sweet to see.”

Birgit Pless, 24, of the Dahlem Ward, agrees: “Institute is a beautiful place and has a great spirit. We have couple missionaries there who are wonderful. It is a relaxed and fun place.”

And it fills immediate needs. In Hamburg, one young man was struggling to become active again. He was unemployed, and the couple missionaries spent a lot of time helping him to do his résumé on the computer. He became comfortable with them and with being at the institute center and became fully active again.

A young man who had been stationed in Leipzig with the military found the outreach center and became a regular at class and activities. The military life was so different from his home life that he longed to be around those with his same ideals. “One particular evening,” says Elder Griffiths, “he arrived just as the activity at the center was breaking up. We asked him why he had bothered to come when it was so late. He replied, ‘I had to come. I needed it.’”

Back to Vishakha

Just a year and a half since her baptism, Vishakha, 26, from the Lankwitz Ward, was called as student council president at the institute. Now there are activities or classes nearly every night of the week at the Berlin outreach center. She is attending the Church history class with 25 other students. For their institute, Vishakha says, “the class is mighty big.” She is excited to get some more

activities going, more chances to go out to museums and concerts, more fun activities like playing games, maybe an evening to watch movies, and more testimony meetings. “So far,” says Vishakha, “there hasn’t been a dance course. We want to do that.”

The outreach centers are beginning to bear fruit. Young single adults are finding a refuge, a place that fulfills their needs. If they are the only members in their families, they can attend family home evening at the center. If they need someone to turn to for good advice, they can find a listening ear. If they want to have fun without worrying about having their standards challenged, they can find such activities at the center. And as they desire to learn more of the Lord and His Church, they can take classes.

The outreach centers are there to help in whatever way is needed. They become safe shelters from the storms of life, a place to find peace. **NE**

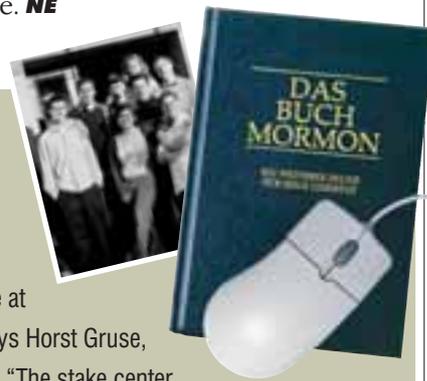


GROWING AND PROGRESSING

“We want to create a young single adult culture at the outreach centers,” says Horst Gruse, institute director in Berlin. “The stake center was remodeled, and the institute was added on. The facility is available to serve nearly 120 young single adults in the stake.

“A missionary couple serve as leaders. We hold family home evening and classes on religion, leadership, marriage preparation, and scripture study. There are practical classes such as the teachings of the living prophets, English or other language classes, and mission preparation. We ask returned missionaries to teach them. And we have a stake sports center, dances, barbecues, service projects, and larger events such as concerts and lectures.

“We’ve seen a new enthusiasm for the work and a special focus on this outreach to the less active and nonmembers.” **NE**



LEFT: GROUP PHOTOGRAPH BY KARL AND DEANNA WEBB, RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH OF GERMAN BOOK OF MORMON BY NATHAN CAMBELL, PHOTOGRAPH OF COMPUTER MOUSE BY WELDEN C. ANDERSEN



IT HAPPENED IN AUGUST

August 12, 1850: The first 15 converts to the Church in Copenhagen, Denmark, were baptized by Elder Erastus Snow (right) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.



August 5, 1861: Latter-day Saint missionaries first arrived in the Netherlands (right).

August 1, 1970: The Ecuador Mission was organized. Now Ecuador has three missions, 31 stakes, and a temple (below).



TO GUIDE US TODAY

Latter-day Saint William Fowler, a convert from England, wrote the lyrics to “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet” (*Hymns*, no. 19). President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) noted that the hymn was first sung in a meeting while he was on his mission in

England; he served from 1860 to 1863. Brother Fowler set the words to the tune of Caroline Norton’s “The Officer’s Funeral March.” She might be surprised to find that her music written for a fallen soldier now praises the living prophet of God.

“Let your minds be filled with the goal of being like the Lord, and you will crowd out depressing thoughts as you anxiously seek to know him and do his will.”

—President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994),
“Do Not Despair,”
Ensign, Oct. 1986, 5.



August 24, 1977: President Spencer W. Kimball (left) dedicated Poland for the preaching of the gospel.

WRITE AWAY!

This is to you returned missionaries out there. What do you wish you had known before your mission? Write down your advice to help youth better prepare for their missions and send it to:

New Era, What I Wish I Had Known
50 E. North Temple St. Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA

Or e-mail it to: cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org

HELPING WITH HUNDREDS OF HYGIENE KITS

Last December, youth in the Marston Lake and Littleton Fifth Wards, Littleton Colorado Stake, prepared 200 hygiene kits for the Humanitarian Center in Salt Lake City, to distribute throughout the world. Each hygiene kit serves a family of four for one month and contains four toothbrushes, two combs, two hand towels, two bars of soap, and one tube of toothpaste.

Corey Crellin (right), a teacher in the Littleton Fifth Ward, helped coordinate the project as part of a Duty to God requirement. Corey said that he was “glad to be able to lead a

project that can affect people around the world.”

Just five days after the youth project, one of the largest earthquakes in

105 years caused a tsunami that killed more than 150,000 people in Southeast Asia. The youth then realized how inspired the project was.

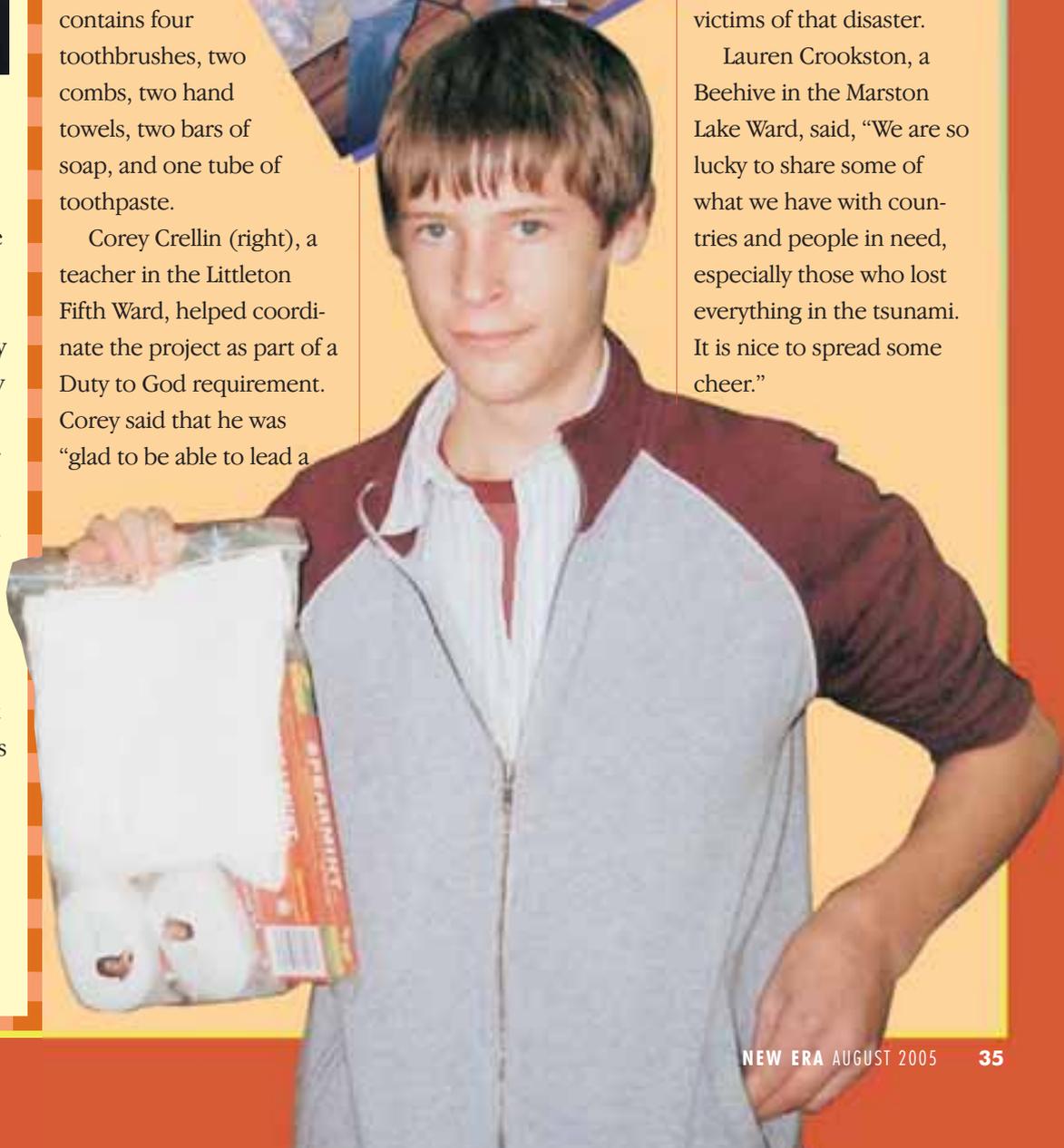
Members of the Littleton Colorado Stake followed the example of the Marston Lake and Littleton Fifth Wards’ youth by making an additional 2,300 kits for the victims of that disaster.

Lauren Crookston, a Beehive in the Marston Lake Ward, said, “We are so lucky to share some of what we have with countries and people in need, especially those who lost everything in the tsunami. It is nice to spread some cheer.”



BEYOND YOUR ABILITIES

When you serve in the Church, you have the blessing and the responsibility to call on Heavenly Father for guidance. Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said that in your calling “you have access to more than your natural capacities, and you do not work alone. The Lord will magnify what you say and what you do in the eyes of the people you serve. He will send the Holy Ghost to manifest to them that what you spoke was true. What you say and do will carry hope and give direction to people far beyond your natural abilities and your own understanding” (“Rise to Your Call,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 76–77).



TIME *for* ETERNAL THINGS

BY ADAM C. OLSON
Church Magazines

With so much going on, how do these LDS teens find time for the gospel when schedules are as crowded as the densely clustered skyscrapers of Hong Kong?

Nathan Yeung, a priest in the Victoria First (English) Branch, Hong Kong International District, spends about an hour a day at early-morning seminary, seven hours at school, another hour traveling to and from school, two to three hours per day doing homework, and another two to three hours a day practicing the piano, studying martial arts, playing on his school basketball team, or singing with a school choir. If he eats breakfast on the run and spends only an hour at dinner, that leaves about eight hours a day for everything else, including sleeping.

But this story isn't about Nathan and everything he's doing, because most of the youth in his branch are just as busy doing just as many interesting things.

Lesa Lai, a Laurel, keeps a similar schedule, except school lasts a half hour longer, travel is one hour each way, and it's volleyball, soccer, or track—depending on the season. For Shan Singh, a priest, it's rugby and

serving as vice president of the student council.

It's the same story for Alice Andersen, Celestine Yeung, Musashi and Chihiro Howe, Chelsea and Casey Messick, and the other young men and young women in the district.

These youth are typical of many Latter-day Saint teenagers around the world who seem to balance on the circus high-wire while juggling Church activity, family time, school, jobs, and extracurricular activities. How do they pull off such a difficult act without falling into the trap of missing what is most important?

How Do They Do It?

That's the million-dollar question. "It's all about priorities," says Chelsea, a Laurel. "If you make time for the most important things, everything else falls into place."

Chelsea, Nathan, and their friends in the Hong Kong International District are learning that it's easier to find balance when



For Shan Singh (left), Nathban Yeung and his sisters, Celestine and Irene (left inset), and all of their seminary friends (below), making time for spiritual things is a priority.





your feet are firmly planted on a solid gospel foundation. They have recognized the importance of making personal time for the gospel. “That is the most important part of my day,” says Nathan. “If I don’t read and pray and go to seminary, my day is bad.”

“Most of our friends at school aren’t members,” says Lesa. “So it’s up to us to make personal time for church. I try to read my scriptures every day and listen to Church music.”

Sometimes prioritizing means giving up something good to make time for something more important. “I had to give up my job because I was too busy,” says Chelsea. The others have all run into similar situations.

Make Family a Priority

Along with the gospel, a top priority for these young men and women is family. “Family is important,” says Casey, a teacher. “I know I can always turn to them for help. I can trust



To Casey and Chelsea Messick (left) and Alice Andersen and Lesa Lai (above), family support is important in handling busy loads, so they plan time to be with family members.

them. I know I can be with them forever.”

But sometimes finding time together is tough. “It’s not just my schedule,” Lesa notes. “We don’t get much time together because my siblings are gone a lot too, and my dad travels a lot.”

So with their families, these youth have had to find ways to *make* time for each other. “I used to go out a lot with friends on weekends, but now I try to save that time for my family. I see my friends on school days,” says Celestine, a Mia Maid. “And when my dad is home, we all try to accommodate his schedule.”

Each of the youth agrees that weekends are most often free for family time if carefully planned. “Especially Sunday,” Chelsea says. “Sunday is for family.”

“I try to make sure I have time for them whenever they’re planning something,” says Nathan. In addition, his family always tries to have dinner together. “And family home evening is important.”

“Family home evening helps keep us together,” Musashi, a teacher, agrees. “And we try to plan family activities on Saturday. It’s important to make time for family, because the goal is to be with them forever.”

Good Choices Bring Blessings

Balance is only one of the blessings that come from setting spiritual growth as a top priority.



GOOD OR ESSENTIAL?

“When things of the world crowd in, all too

often the wrong things take highest priority. Then it is easy to forget the fundamental purpose of life. Satan has a powerful tool to use against good people. It is distraction. He would have good people fill life with ‘good things’ so there is no room for the essential ones. Have you unconsciously been caught in that trap?”

—Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “First Things First,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 7.

“Making time for the gospel is good for the spiritual part of your life,” says Musashi. “It helps your testimony grow.”

It’s also important because it helps you set a good example, according to Shan.

“Other people can tell when you’re living the way you should,” he says. “Sometimes I’ll get questions from my friends because of the way we live.”

“If I don’t read and

pray and go to seminary, I’m not prepared when missionary opportunities come,” says Nathan.

For Chelsea, it’s about remembering the real reason we’re here. “Doing things like praying and reading scriptures is a reminder that Jesus Christ should be the center of your life. Remembering that affects everything you do,” she says.

“Otherwise, it’s easy to get so busy you forget why we came.”

When we remember to focus on the Savior, we realize that life isn’t about walking the high-wire while juggling different activities, but it’s about standing on solid ground. As Helaman said, “Remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; . . . which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall” (Helaman 5:12). **NE**

Living amid the hustle and bustle of a large city keeps young members of the Church busy, but it hasn’t kept them from building a solid spiritual foundation.



WHY WE ASK PEOPLE TO READ THE BOOK OF MORMON



There is a unique relationship between feelings of spirituality among missionaries and their study of the Book of Mormon.

BY ELDER JAY E. JENSEN
Of the Seventy

In giving copies of the Book of Mormon to sincere seekers of truth, we provide an opportunity for them to put Moroni's promise to the test and receive their own revelations from God.

An experience, repeated many times during my time as mission president and again as branch president at the Missionary Training Center, confirmed for me the truth of Joseph Smith's statement that "the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book."¹ From time to time, one of my missionaries would sit with me, and our interview would go something like this:

"President, I seem to have lost my enthusiasm for missionary work lately. I haven't felt very spiritual either."

"Can you be more specific in what you have been feeling?" I would ask.

"Oh, I just haven't been feeling positive, excited, or enthused about doing the work."

"Have you felt this way long?"

"For about the last three weeks."

"Has something happened personally that we need to talk about?"

"No, President. I am keeping all the mission rules. I get up on time. I read scriptures daily. I am currently reading the Old Testament. I say my prayers. My companion and I get along well. I really can't find

anything that is out of order."

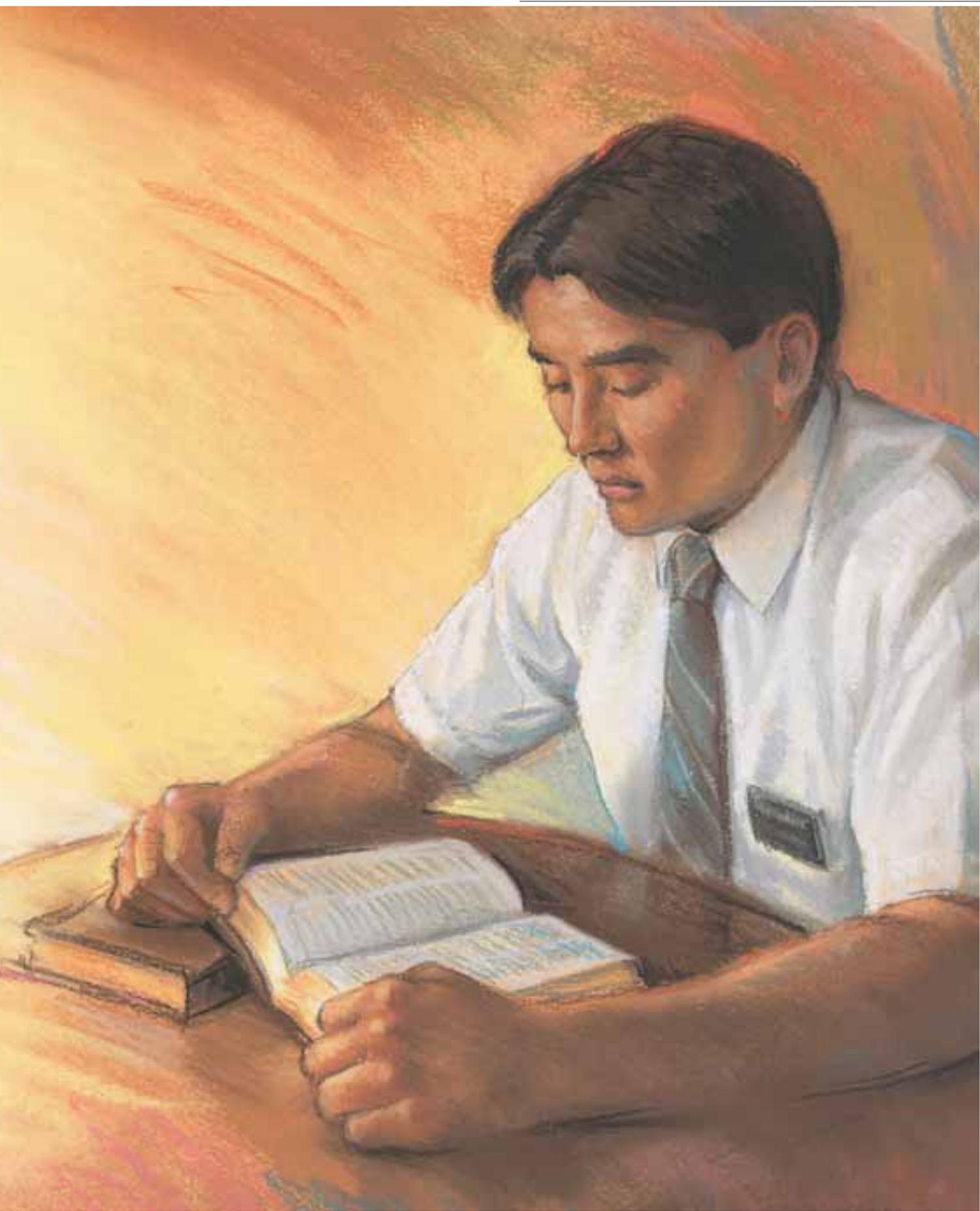
"Are you reading the Book of Mormon as part of your scripture studies?"

"No."

"I would like you to try something for several weeks and then give me a call. In addition to your regular study in the missionary gospel study program, try reading and studying at least one chapter from the Book of Mormon a day."

Two weeks later the missionary would call and report that things were fine and his spiritual intensity had returned.

The unique relationship between feelings of spirituality among missionaries and their study of the Book of Mormon is not surprising to me. President Boyd K. Packer pointed out that "spiritual development is tied very closely to a knowledge of the scriptures, where the doctrines are found."² And nowhere else is the doctrine taught so clearly, so dramatically, or so effectively as in the Book of Mormon. Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) stated that God "has placed in our hands the most effective, compelling, and persuasive missionary tool ever given to any people in any age. The name of this tool is the Book of Mormon."³



The Keystone of This Work

The effectiveness of the Book of Mormon as a witness of the existence of God and the divinity of Christ springs partly from its mere existence, unexplainable without reference to the hand of God. The Book of Mormon represents the keystone of this latter-day work, the stone that supports all other stones in the arch. If the keystone is removed, the arch crumbles. With the keystone of a testimony of the Book of Mormon firmly in place, the assurance comes that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is God's church, that Joseph Smith was a prophet, that modern revelation guides the Church, and that God is today a God of miracles as in ancient times.

Of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith said, "A [person] would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book." And so it is. There is

great motivating and sanctifying power in the words of the Book of Mormon. Alma experienced what many of our missionaries do today in changing lives through the power of the word of God. Alma went "among the people of Nephi, *that he might preach the word of God unto them*, to stir them up in remembrance of their duty, and that he might pull down, *by the word of God*, all the pride and craftiness and all the contentions which were among his people, seeing no way that he might reclaim them save it were in bearing down in pure testimony against them" (Alma 4:19; emphasis added).



A Greater View

Have you ever gone mountain climbing? You pause periodically to view the valleys below you. As you ascend, you have a good view. As you continue to climb, the good view changes into a greater view. Likewise, compared to the Bible, the Book of Mormon gives a greater view of Jesus Christ and His Atonement. As affirmed by the Lord, “there are many things engraven upon the plates of Nephi *which do throw greater views* upon my gospel” (D&C 10:45; emphasis added).

There are doctrines taught in the Book of Mormon that can be seen with a greater



view than in the Bible, such as the law of mercy and justice; the doctrines of agency, the Fall, and the Redemption of Christ; the reality of Satan and how he operates among peoples and nations; the principles of faith, hope, and charity; the purpose and necessity of baptism and the redemption of little children; and the doctrine of the resurrection.

It is for this reason that we try to place a Book of Mormon in the hands of all seekers of truth. We desire that others may also have a greater view and appreciation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. More importantly, we know that those who read the Book of Mormon with an open, seeking mind are candidates to receive their own confirming revelation from God about the truthfulness and reality of His latter-day work. “And if ye shall ask with a sincere heart,” Moroni promises, “with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of [the Book of Mormon] unto you” (Moroni 10:4).

That is what we do for sincere seekers of truth—we provide an opportunity for them to put Moroni’s promise to the test and to receive their own revelations from God.

Thus, the Book of Mormon continues its onward mission of being the great keystone for countless millions who have come and will come to know the work of God in these latter days. Well did the Prophet Joseph Smith say that “the Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.” **NE**

From an August 1984 Ensign article.

NOTES

1. Introduction to the Book of Mormon.
2. “Agency and Control,” *Ensign*, May 1983, 67.
3. “The Book of Mormon,” in Conference Report, Apr. 1961, 38.

Of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith said, “A [person] would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”

4 HEAVENLY HELPS

BY CHARLES W. DAHLQUIST II
Young Men General President

When my counselors and I met with the First Presidency, President Hinckley said, “We know our youth are faced with horrible, terrible temptations that would lead them astray. We must do everything we can to not only help them be prepared to overcome those temptations, but to help them understand that exercising right choices brings joy and freedom now and in the future.”

Making choices is not always easy, especially with ever-increasing temptations. But, more than ever before, many positive options are now available to us—if we are willing to choose them.

For Your Strength

As we face temptations and challenges, we are not left alone. Our Heavenly Father has given us many things to help us to overcome those temptations that would draw us down. May I mention just a few.

1 *The plan of salvation.*

Before we came here, we were with a kind Heavenly Father who loves us very much. His plan, the plan



Heavenly Father has blessed us with many things, like the scriptures, to help us overcome temptation and make good choices.

of salvation, gives us our agency. On the other hand, Lucifer said he would guarantee that we would all come back to our Heavenly Father, but there would be no agency. How grateful I am for this wonderful opportunity to have agency.

There was a war in heaven between those who followed the Savior and those who followed the devil. The war between good and evil continues today. With regard to that war, the First Presidency has warned:

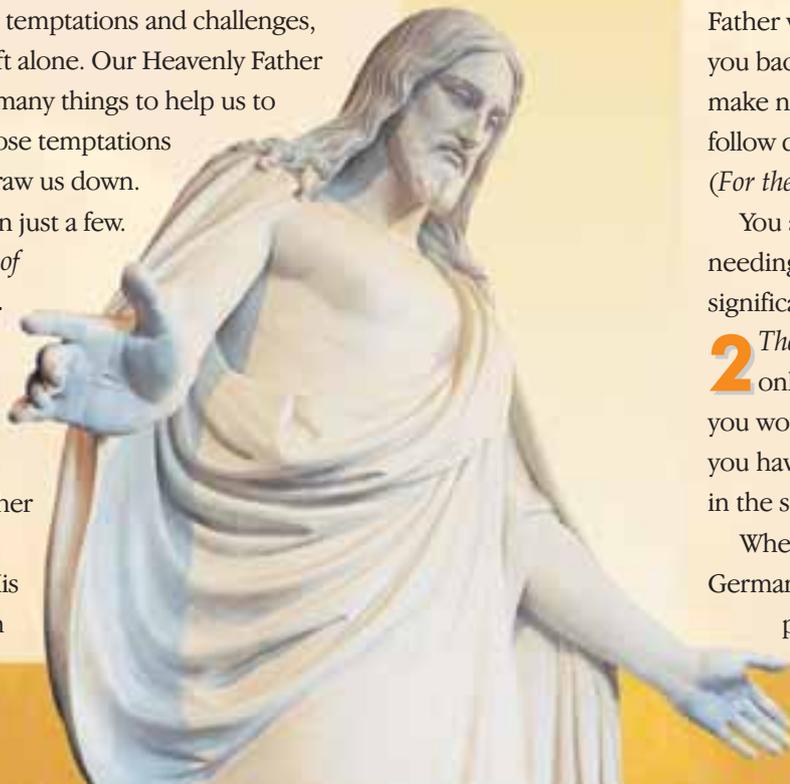
“You are choice spirits who have come forth in this day when the responsibilities and opportunities, as well as the temptations, are the greatest. You are at the beginning of your journey through this mortal life. Your Heavenly Father wants your life to be joyful and to lead you back into His presence. The decisions you make now will determine much of what will follow during your life and throughout eternity” (*For the Strength of Youth* [2001], 2).

You and I stand in the middle of this fray, needing to make decisions that will have significant eternal consequences.

2 *The scriptures.*

I hope that you would not only read the scriptures every day, but that you would use them in solving problems. If you haven’t learned already, there is an answer in the scriptures for every problem.

When I was a mission president in Hamburg, Germany, a number of years ago, I had a thorny problem I was dealing with and didn’t





know what to do. I was reading the scriptures when I came to 1 Nephi 18, where Nephi is building a ship. He says, “Now I, Nephi, did not work the timbers after the manner which was learned by men, neither did I build the ship after the manner of men; but I did build it after the manner which the Lord had shown unto me; wherefore it was not after the manner of men” (v. 2).

And then this great verse, “And I, Nephi, did go into the mount oft, and I did pray oft unto the Lord; wherefore the Lord showed unto me great things” (v. 3).

As I read that, a wonderful feeling came over me. I knew I had to go to the mount if I was to receive the answer to that prayer. The problem was, there are no mountains in northern Germany. But the feeling was so strong I knew I needed to go someplace, so I went to the sea.

For two days I walked along the beach of the North Sea, even though

We live in a
noisy world,
yet the most
important voice
we can hear is a
still, small voice—
the Holy Ghost.

it was late in the fall, and it was cold, rainy, and windy. I prayed and pondered, and because I went to the mount, the Lord whispered. I have a firm witness that the answers are in the scriptures if we take time to listen.

3 *The gift of the Holy Ghost.* We live in a noisy world. With cell phones and with beepers going off all the time, and with temptations almost shouting for our attention, it’s interesting that the most important voice we can ever hear is a still, small voice.

When I was a stake president, there was a women’s conference by satellite broadcast. As it started, we had the video, but all we could hear was Korean.

And so, as a stake president, I pondered what we should do. As I thought about it, I noticed that under the Korean voice, there was a quiet English voice in the background. So I went to the pulpit and said, “Until we solve the problem, if you will listen carefully for the quiet English voice, you will be able to understand the conference talks. If you get distracted even for a minute, you will lose the message.” For 10 or 15 minutes, until we solved the technical problem, we were able to enjoy that message by listening to the quiet voice.

When all the world seeks for peace, there is a wonderful answer to the question “Where can I turn for peace?” It’s important to remember, “Be still and know that I am God” (D&C 101:16).

4 *For the Strength of Youth.* This pamphlet helps us define what is right and wrong. I fear that many of us take it for granted. I carry the small version in my wallet. I challenge you to make sure that you never go anywhere without the *For the Strength of Youth* card. It is translated in 56 languages because it’s so important that this message go all over the world.

With this message comes a wonderful promise from the First Presidency: “We promise that as you keep these standards and live by the truths in the scriptures, you will be able to do

your life's work with greater wisdom and skill and bear trials with greater courage. You will have the help of the Holy Ghost. You will feel good about yourself and will be a positive influence in the lives of others. You will be worthy to go to the temple to receive holy ordinances. These blessings and many more can be yours" (*For the Strength of Youth* [2001], 2–3).

These standards encompass the challenges that plague youth today: dating, language, sexual purity, agency and accountability, dress and appearance, entertainment and media, making the right choices, just to name a few.

As we live the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*, we feel joy. That's what Heavenly Father wants for each of us—that we feel joy and happiness.

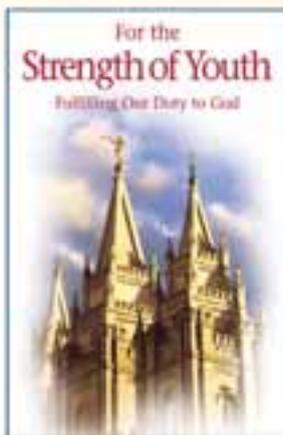
Decide Now

When I was getting ready to graduate from high school, my friend and I wanted to go to the senior all-night party. It seemed like everybody else was going, so we asked his father, who was our stake president, if we could go.

He said, "Absolutely not. The Holy Ghost goes to bed at midnight." Now, he knows the Holy Ghost doesn't go to bed at midnight, but he also knows what tends to happen after midnight. Then he said something I will never forget: "Find something positive to do that you'll be able to think of in years to come."

We put our heads together and organized a progressive dinner. We went from one house to the next and had a wonderful evening. With planning and a well-placed suggestion from a caring priesthood leader, we were able to stay in holy places while our friends were in jeopardy of being subject to temptations.

Sometimes even with planning you're still not able to avoid uncomfortable situations. On these occasions, it's important to already have fixed in your mind what's in the scriptures and in *For the Strength of Youth*. Someone once said, "Five minutes before the dance is



For the Strength of Youth helps us define what is right and wrong. As we follow the standards described in it, we feel joy.

no time to learn the fox-trot." And that's true with regards to standards.

Remember the story of Joseph, who was sold into Egypt, and Potiphar's wife? When Potiphar's wife tempted him, Joseph fled, even though it must have been a very difficult situation. He said, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9).

I remember the story of one young woman who was put in a similar situation. She was out on a date with a young man. He went out to a remote area, parked the car, turned the key off, and began to move over to the passenger side.

She said, "Stop where you are. I am not that kind of a girl. You take me home, or I will walk." She was seven or eight miles away from her home. Later, she said, "I was never more frightened in my life when I made the decision, as well as when he took me home, because we were going 90 miles an hour down that country road." And yet she had already made her decision.

My Challenge to You

I challenge you to look for and prepare positive activities that will allow you to celebrate these wonderful days and yet allow you to stand in holy places, being with good friends with similar standards and avoiding late hours and places that would tempt.

Do as I do and carry the small version of *For the Strength of Youth* with you. Read it and reread it. Commit it to memory. And then let it go deep in your heart, that you might be prepared, just as Joseph was and just as that young woman was.

Thank you for your goodness, for standing true and faithful. May you feel the joy that comes from living the gospel. May God bless you to feel the love of a kind Heavenly Father. He knows you by name. He hears your prayers. Even when you feel alone, you are not alone. **NE**

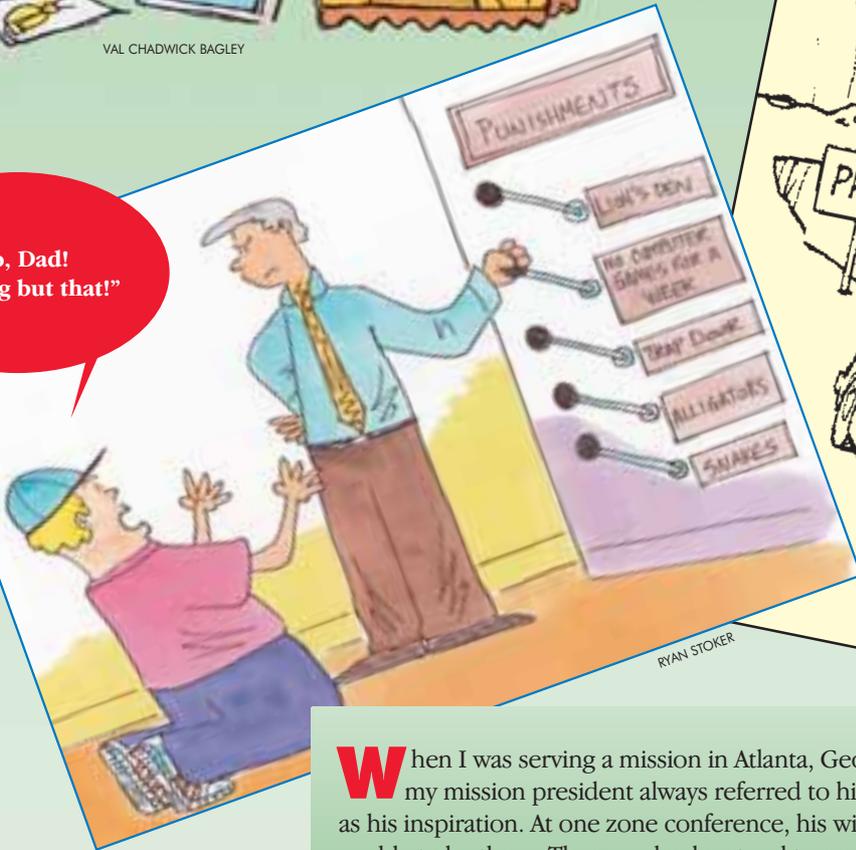
From a youth devotional given on May 12, 2004, in the Salt Lake Tabernacle.

THE EXTRA SMILE



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY

"No, Dad!
Anything but that!"



RYAN STOKER



GLENN BERNHARDT

When I was serving a mission in Atlanta, Georgia, my mission president always referred to his wife as his inspiration. At one zone conference, his wife was unable to be there. The zone leader stood to open the conference and said, "Our mission president is here, but his inspiration is not."

—Julia Sadleir, Del Cerro Ward, San Diego California East Stake

Mutual Activity

• Try your hand at writing poetry. Divide into groups of 8 or 10. Start by giving each person a piece of paper and pencil. Have each person write a single line about any subject. Hand each paper to the next person. Have that person write the second line, then fold the paper so the top line is covered but the second line can still be read. Pass to the next person who writes the next line. Continue folding the paper so only the last line written is exposed. Keep passing the paper until everyone has a chance to write on each paper. The passing ends when each paper returns to the original owner. Unfold and read the “poems” aloud.

End the activity by reading several good poems. The inside back cover of past issues of the *New Era* can be a source.

Service Project Suggestion

• Under the direction of your ward or branch leaders, check with the full-time missionaries serving in your area. See if they know of some needs for service that the youth in your ward or branch could fulfill.

Family Home Evening Ideas

• Does your family play too many video games? Read “Game Over” on page 26. Discuss ways to keep video game playing under control. Make a family resolution to avoid games that bring out bad feelings or behavior.

• Use the poster on page 9 as a visual aid. Have each family member tell one of his or her favorite stories from the Book of Mormon. If young children are in your family, perhaps you can help them act out an incident from the Book of Mormon.

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SUNDAY LESSON HELPS

In addition to the Resource Guides (printed in May and November in the *Ensign* and *Liabona*), Young Women and Aaronic Priesthood teachers may find these additional resources helpful in enhancing lessons 31–35.

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Lesson 31: Service in the Church

Wilson Arley Ocampo, “599 Baptisms,” this issue, 10.
 Q&A: “Help! I’ve just been called to be the president of my Mia Maid class. . . . How do I handle this new calling?”
New Era, Aug. 2000, 16.

Lesson 32: Service in the Community

Shanna Butler and Ryan Carr, “Called 2 Serve,” this issue, 20.
 Megan Willis, “Service with a Wink,” *New Era*, Jan. 2005, 26.
 Lacey McMurry, “Think Big,” *New Era*, Dec. 2004, 12.

Lesson 33: Each Person Is Divine and Eternal

Q&A: “. . . Since I’m not as smart or good-looking or talented as everybody else, what can I do to gain confidence and feel better?” *New Era*, Apr. 2005, 16.
 Poster: “Be Loyal to the Royal Within,” *New Era*, Nov. 2004, 19.

Lesson 34: Avoiding Dishonesty

April Anderson, “Chicken Bones,” this issue, 19.
 Howard W. Hunter, “Be Honest with Yourself,” *New Era*, July 2003, 36.

Lesson 35: Dating Decisions

Thomas S. Monson, “Whom Shall I Marry?” *New Era*, Oct. 2004, 4.
 Susan W. Tanner, “Make Dating Smooth Sailing,” *New Era*, Oct. 2004, 28.
 Name Withheld, “Courting Disaster,” *New Era*, Feb. 1998, 34.

Aaronic Priesthood Manual 3

Lesson 31: Choosing an Eternal Companion

Thomas S. Monson, “Whom Shall I Marry?” *New Era*, Oct. 2004, 4.
 Brad Wilcox, “Just Hanging Out,” *New Era*, Aug. 2001, 8.
 “The Do’s of Dating,” *New Era*, Nov. 2000, 15.

Lesson 32: Preparing for the Temple Endowment

L. Aldin Porter, “Come to the Temple,” *New Era*, Oct. 2004, 8.
 F. David Stanley, “The Most Important Step,” *New Era*, June 2000, 20.

Lesson 33: Celestial Marriage—A Preparation for Eternity

The entire October 2004 *New Era* special issue is on preparing for temple marriage.
 Q&A: “My parents were married in the temple, but now they’re divorced. . . .” *New Era*, July 1994, 16.

Lesson 34: Obedience

Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Your Right to Choose the Right,” this issue, 4.
 Richard Moore, “My Trust Fund,” *New Era*, Oct. 1999, 34.

Lesson 35: Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

Kirk Sheldon Wilkinson, “My Brother,” *New Era*, Jan. 1996, 12.
 Stephen E. Robinson, “Believing Christ,” *New Era*, Apr. 1994, 46.

ALWAYS GOOD

I'm so grateful for this magazine and for all the time and effort put into making it. Every time I open it, I can always find something that helps me stick to and improve my standards. Whether it's in an article, Q&A, Instant Messages, or even in a *New Era* Poster, there's always something good I can apply to my life. The *New Era* is also my escape from worldly things and helps me think more on spiritual things. Thank you so much for providing the most valuable magazine ever. I really appreciate it!

Heather San Diego, Ashley Heights Ward, Gilbert Arizona Higley Stake

WRITE ON

Thank you so much for the January Idea List; it has really helped me. I had a hard time writing in my journal, but that Idea List helped me to start writing in it. Thank you so much!

Xan Rogers, Del Rio First Branch, Eagle Pass Texas District

TESTED AND TAUGHT TOO

I really enjoyed "You'll Be Tested and Taught" (Feb. 2005). I felt the Spirit strongly as I read it. I have also had similar experiences.

Robert Hales, Plantation Ward, Fort Lauderdale Florida Stake

WORDS OF OUR LEADERS

Thank you very much for this wonderful magazine. I have always looked forward to reading it every month. Everything in it has interested me so much, and I have learned a lot from it. The first place I open each time is the Message. I am always happy reading the inspiring words of our leaders.

Njinaka Reginald, Onitsha First Branch, Onitsha Nigeria District

MY ANSWER

It's amazing how the Lord works. I had been going through a phase in my life where I had no self-worth, thought I was ugly, and didn't think I had any talent. When the April *New Era* came, I sat down to have lunch and decided to read it while I ate. I flipped through the pages to Q&A, because that is the first thing I read. There was my answer. The Lord had sent it to me through the *New Era*, because He knew I always read it. Thank you for doing such a good job on the *New Era*. It is surely an inspired work of the Church.

Name withheld

COOL SECTIONS

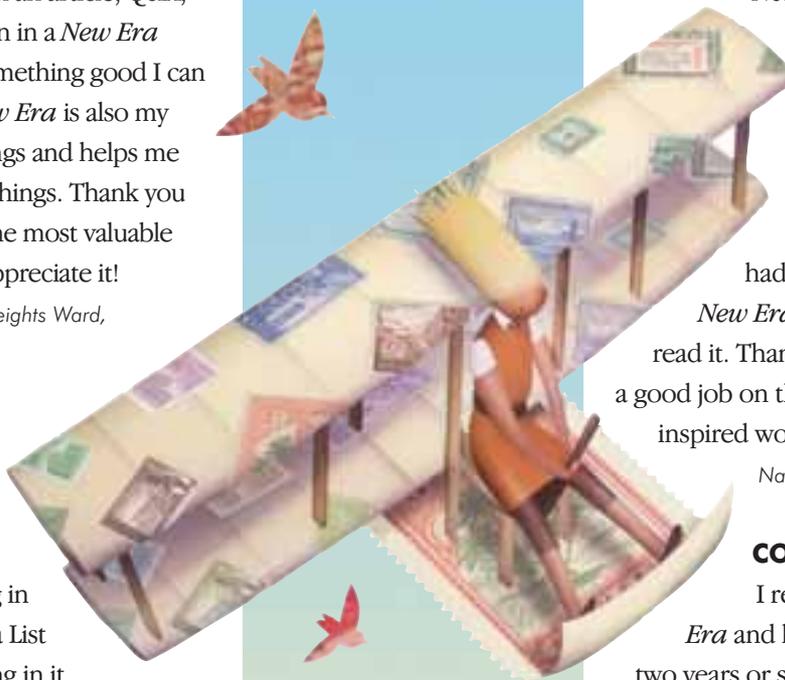
I really enjoy reading the *New Era* and have since I was 12. That's two years or so. It has given me that extra boost when I have needed it the most and also given me great counsel that I hope not to forget. One of my favorite sections in the *New Era* is Q&A. It's cool to see what other people think and how they solve their problems. The little laughs section is pretty cool too. Almost all the time you have one or two good missionary jokes in there. Of course there's always the good selection of talks and stories to go along with that. Thank you and keep up the good work.

Kiefer Hatch, Fort Worth Fifth Ward, Fort Worth Texas Stake

We love hearing from you. Write us at the following address. Please include the names of your ward and stake (or branch and district).

*New Era
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*Or e-mail us at
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Submissions may be edited for length and clarity.*

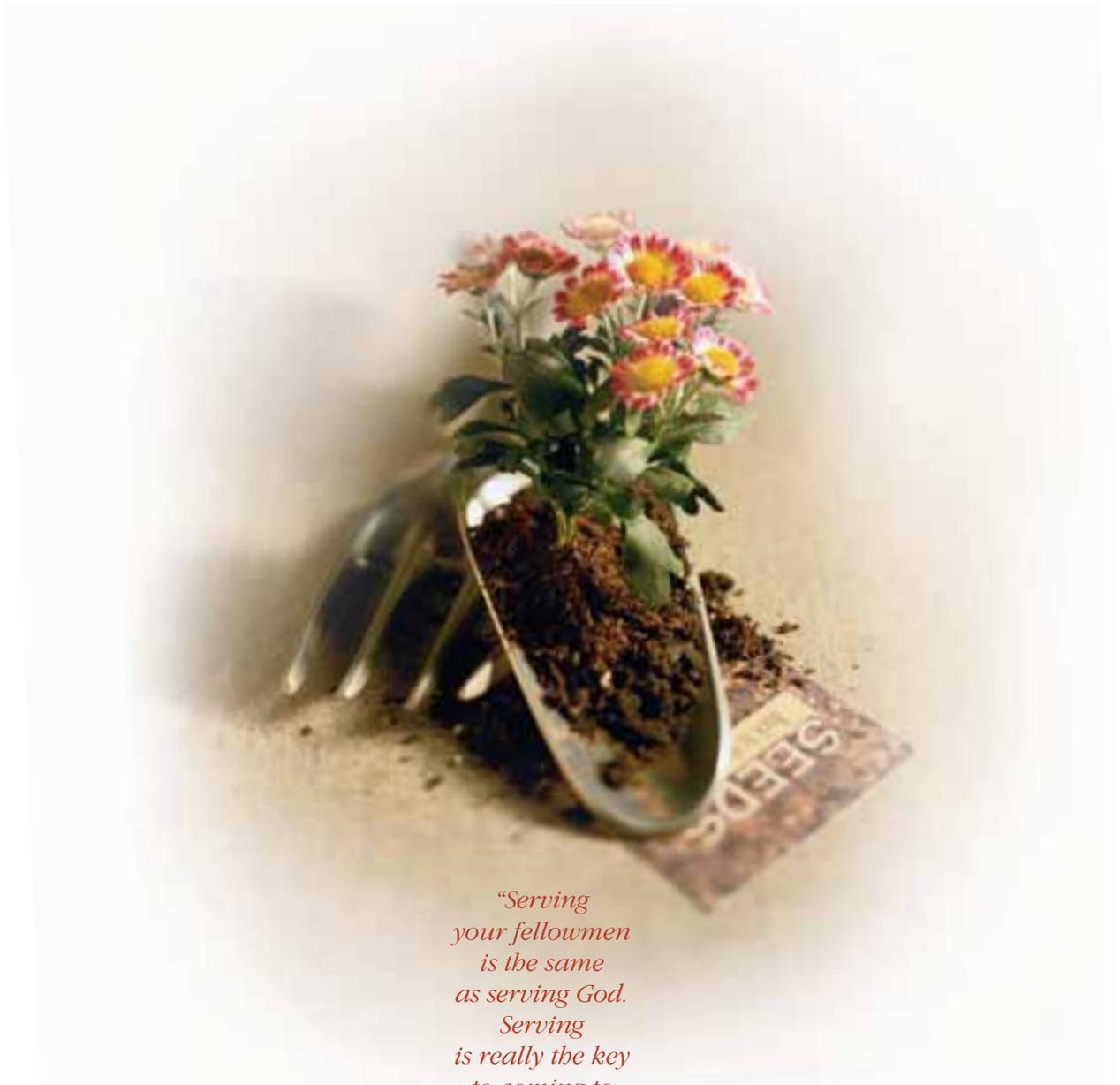


"Every time I open the New Era, I can always find something that helps me stick to and improve my standards."



REMEMBER
BY WILLIAM BRODEGARD

It is amazing being a missionary.
I get to see miracles from God firsthand.
The gospel we teach changes lives.
It moves hearts and desires.
The things we teach are like whispers from back home.
When we get done teaching, the people accept readily.
It is as if they have always known it.
Sometimes it is as if they have forgotten a song,
And when they hear someone singing, it comes right back,
And we can't help but sing too.
I don't think we teach as much as
Help people remember.



*“Serving
your fellowmen
is the same
as serving God.
Serving
is really the key
to coming to
know Jesus Christ.
That’s why
we serve
people wherever
we can.”*

See “Called 2 Serve,” p. 20.

