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The *New Era* (ISSN 0164-5285) is published monthly by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 50 E. North Temple St., Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA. Periodicals Postage Paid at Salt Lake City, Utah.

To subscribe:

By phone: Call 1-800-537-5971 to order using Visa, MasterCard, Discover Card, or American Express.

Online: Go to store.lds.org

By mail: Send \$8 U.S. check or money order to Distribution Services, P.O. Box 26368, Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368, USA.

To change address:

Send old and new address information to: Distribution Services, P.O. Box 26368, Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368, USA. Please allow 60 days for changes to take effect.

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

Canada Post Information: Publication Agreement #40017431.

New Era

THE MONTHLY YOUTH MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

August 2015 • Volume 45 • Number 8

▼ IN EVERY ISSUE

2 THE MESSAGE

Lose Yourself in Service

Unless we lose ourselves in service to others, there is little purpose to our own lives.

President Thomas S. Monson

6 THE OBJECT LESSON

Treasure Transformation

What can a laundry booster teach about the gospel's power?

10 SUNDAY LESSON HELP

Recipe for a Happy Family*

The family proclamation gives us ingredients for happiness at home.

19 MORMONAD

Stay True

41 TO THE POINT

Being cool; which parent am I sealed to after they divorce?

42 QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

"My parents were married in the temple, but now they're divorced. I'm angry that they have broken up our family. How do I forgive them?"

44 COME, FOLLOW ME

Marriage and Family*

Find inspiration from Church leaders as you study marriage and family this month.

45 THE EXTRA SMILE

46 INSTANT MESSAGES

Babysitting priority; number one app; family example.

48 FROM CHURCH LEADERS

How to Tune in to the Holy Ghost

There are several things that greatly enhance our ability to understand the promptings of the Holy Ghost.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

49 CONFERENCE POSTER

The Generosity and Mercy of God

President Boyd K. Packer

* Check out this article for support for this month's Sunday lesson theme.



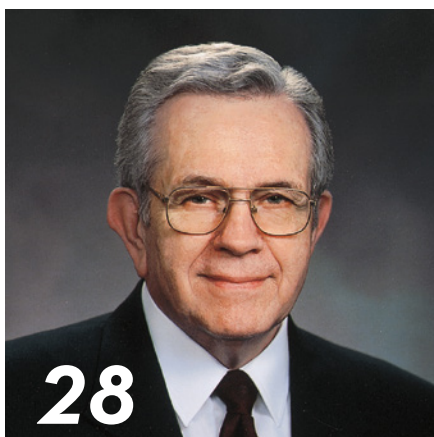
Cover: Flood the Earth through Social Media, p. 30
Cover photograph: Leslie Nilsson

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Online: Go to newera.lds.org and click "Submit Your Work."

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For return, include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.



- 26** **A Blind Horse and Me**
A young woman learned about herself from a bolting horse that couldn't see where she was going.
- 28** **Remembering President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015)**
Learn about an Apostle who loved the Lord and His word.
- 30** **Flood the Earth through Social Media**
I exhort you to sweep the earth with messages filled with righteousness and truth.
 Elder David A. Bednar
- 36** **An Email for Jessica**
To help a friend understand the gospel, a young woman just started typing, "Dear Jessica."
- 38** **Just Be You**
Scared of sharing the gospel? Just relax and be yourself.

▼ FEATURES

- 8** **Ask Papá**
A young woman's search for information about her ancestors led her to someone who usually didn't talk much.
- 14** **Waiting with Faith**
A young woman in Brazil never gave up hope that her parents would join the Church.
- 16** **Finding Hope in a Troubled Family**
Whatever your condition may be, you can have a happy and fulfilled life.
 Elder David S. Baxter
- 20** **The Gospel and Your Personality**
You're unique and valuable. But what if you don't feel like you fit in at church?

- 24** **Make 10 People Smile Today!**
Take the challenge to make a difference through simple kindness and service.







By President
Thomas S.
Monson

Lose Yourself IN SERVICE

*The needs of others are ever present, and each of us
can do something to help someone.*

Jack McConnell grew up in the hills of southwest Virginia in the United States as one of seven children of a Methodist minister and a stay-at-home mother. Their circumstances were very humble. He recounted that during his childhood, every day as the family sat around the dinner table, his father would ask each one in turn, “And what did you do for someone today?”¹ The children were determined to do a good turn every day so they could report to their father that they had helped someone. Dr. McConnell calls this exercise his father’s most valuable legacy, for that expectation and those words inspired him and his siblings to help others throughout their lives. As they grew and matured, their motivation for providing service changed to an inner desire to help others.

Besides Dr. McConnell’s distinguished medical career—where he directed the development of the tuberculosis tine test, participated in the early development of the polio vaccine, supervised the development of Tylenol, and was instrumental in developing the magnetic resonance imaging procedure, or MRI—he created an organization he calls Volunteers in Medicine, which gives retired medical personnel a chance to volunteer at free clinics serving the working uninsured. Dr. McConnell said his leisure time since he retired has “evaporated into 60-hour weeks of unpaid work,





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but [his] energy level has increased and there is a satisfaction in [his] life that wasn't there before." He made this statement: "In one of those paradoxes of life, I have benefited more from Volunteers in Medicine than my patients have."² There are now over 90 such clinics across the United States.

Of course, we can't all be Dr. McConnells, establishing medical clinics to help the poor; however, the needs of others are ever present, and each of us can do something to help someone.

Our Responsibility to Minister

The Apostle Paul admonished, "By love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13). Recall with me the familiar words of King Benjamin in the Book of Mormon: "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17).

The Savior taught His disciples, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but

whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:24).

I believe the Savior is telling us that unless we lose ourselves in service to others, there is little purpose to our own lives. Those who live only for themselves eventually shrivel up and figuratively lose their lives, while those who lose themselves in service to others grow and flourish—and in effect save their lives.

I am confident it is the intention of each member of the Church to serve and to help those in need. At baptism we covenanted to "bear one another's burdens, that they may be light" (Mosiah 18:8). How many times has your heart been touched as you have witnessed the need of another? How often have you intended to be the one to help? And yet how often has day-to-day living interfered and you've left it for others to help, feeling that "oh, surely someone will take care of that need."

Simple Service

You may lament: I can barely make it through each day, doing all that I need to do. How can I provide service for others? What can I possibly do?

Several years ago, I was interviewed by the *Church News* prior to my birthday. At the conclusion of the interview, the reporter asked what I would consider the ideal gift that members worldwide could give to me. I replied, "Find someone who is having a hard time or is ill or lonely, and do something for him or her."³

I was overwhelmed when that year for my birthday I received hundreds of cards and

letters from members of the Church around the world telling me how they had fulfilled that birthday wish. The acts of service ranged from assembling humanitarian kits to doing yard work.

I share with you just a few of the countless notes contained in the many gifts I received. One small child wrote, "My grandpa had a stroke, and I held his hand." From an 8-year-old girl: "My sister and I served my mom and family by organizing and cleaning the toy closet. It took us a few hours and we had fun. The best part was that we surprised my mom and made her happy because she didn't even ask us to do it." An 11-year-old girl wrote: "There was a family in my ward that did not have a lot of money. They have three little girls. The mom and dad had to go somewhere, so I offered to watch the three girls. The dad was just about to hand me a \$5 bill. I said, 'I can't take [it].' My service was that I watched the girls for free."

My birthday cards and notes came also from teenagers in Young Men and Young Women classes who made blankets for hospitals, served in food pantries, were baptized for the dead, and performed numerous other acts of service.

Relief Societies, where help can always be found, provided service above and beyond that which they would normally have given. Priesthood groups did the same.

My brothers and sisters, my heart has seldom been as touched and grateful as it was when Sister Monson and I literally spent hours reading of these gifts. My heart is full now as I speak of the experience and contemplate the lives which have been blessed

as a result, for both the giver and the receiver.

My brothers and sisters, may we ask ourselves the question which greeted Dr. Jack McConnell and his brothers and sisters each evening at dinnertime: "What have I done for someone today?"

That service to which all of us have been called is the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. **NE**

From the October 2009 general conference address "What Have I Done for Someone Today?"

NOTES

1. Jack McConnell, "And What Did You Do for Someone Today?" *Newsweek*, June 18, 2001, 13.
2. Jack McConnell, "And What Did You Do for Someone Today?" 13.
3. See Gerry Avant, "Prophet's Birthday," *Church News*, Aug. 23, 2008, 4.

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