

THE New Era



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By Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf
Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

OUR SEARCH FOR TRUTH

*There is one source of truth that is complete, correct, and incorruptible.
That source is our infinitely wise and all-knowing Heavenly Father.*

Never in the history of the world have we had easier access to more information—some of it true, some of it false, and much of it partially true.

Consequently, never in the history of the world has it been more important to learn how to correctly discern between truth and error.

Part of our problem in the quest for truth is that human wisdom has disappointed us so often. We have so many examples of things that mankind once “knew” were true but have since been proven false.

For example, in spite of one-time overwhelming consensus, the earth isn’t flat. The stars don’t revolve around the earth. Eating a tomato will not cause instant death. And, of course, man actually can fly—even break the sound barrier.

ABSOLUTE TRUTH


The thing about truth is that it exists beyond belief. It is true even if nobody believes it.

We can say west is north and north is west all day long and even believe it with all our heart, but if, for example, we want to fly from Quito, Ecuador, to New York City in the United States, there is only one direction that will lead us there, and that is north—west just won’t do.

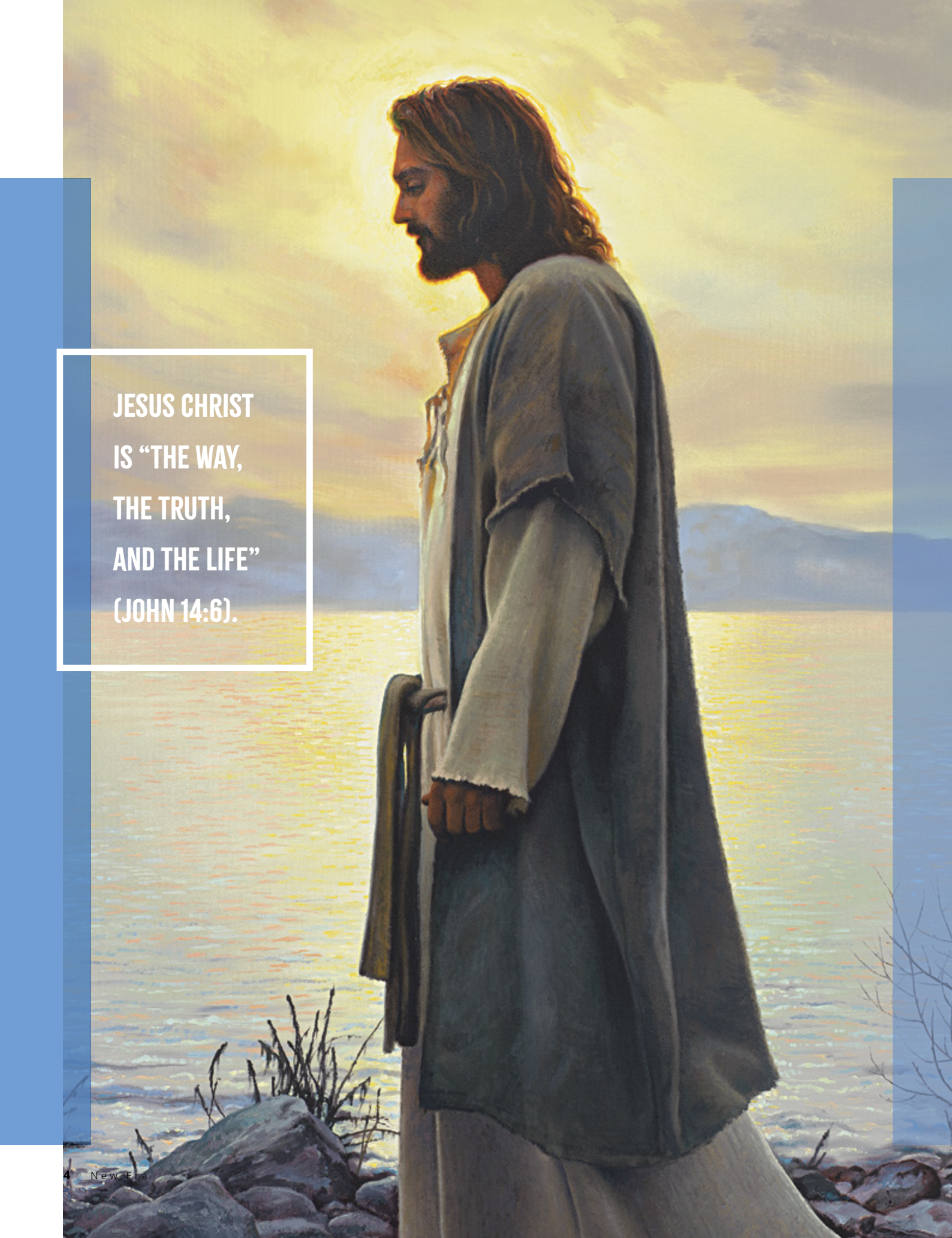
Of course, this is just a simple aviation analogy. However, there is indeed such a thing as absolute truth—unassailable, unchangeable truth.

This truth is different from belief. It is different from hope. Absolute truth is not dependent upon public opinion or popularity. Polls cannot sway it. Not even the inexhaustible authority of celebrity endorsement can change it.

So how can we find truth?

The background of the entire image is a dark blue gradient. Overlaid on this is a complex, glowing digital network of white and light blue dots connected by thin lines, resembling a molecular structure or a data network. In the center, a person's hand is visible, holding a black smartphone. The hand is positioned as if interacting with the device. The overall aesthetic is futuristic and technological.

**NEVER IN THE HISTORY
OF THE WORLD HAVE WE
HAD ACCESS TO MORE
INFORMATION.**

A full-page artistic illustration of Jesus Christ standing in profile on a rocky shore, looking out over a calm lake towards a sunset. He has long, wavy brown hair and a beard, and is wearing a white robe under a greyish-blue cloak. The sky is filled with warm, golden light from the setting sun, reflecting on the water's surface. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative. The image is framed by blue vertical bars on the left and right sides.

**JESUS CHRIST
IS “THE WAY,
THE TRUTH,
AND THE LIFE”
(JOHN 14:6).**

THE ENEMY OF TRUTH

As we all know, it is difficult enough to sort out the truth from our own experiences. To make matters worse, we have an adversary, “the devil, [who] as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

Satan is the great deceiver, “the accuser of [the] brethren” (Revelation 12:10), the father of all lies (see John 8:44), who continually seeks to deceive that he might overthrow us (see Doctrine and Covenants 50:3).

The adversary has many cunning strategies for keeping mortals from the truth. He offers the belief that truth is relative; appealing to our sense of tolerance and fairness, he keeps the real truth hidden by claiming that one person’s “truth” is as valid as any other.

Some he entices to believe that there is an absolute truth out there somewhere but that it is impossible for anyone to know it.

For those who already embrace the truth, his primary strategy is to spread the seeds of doubt. For example, he has caused many members of the Church to stumble when they discover information about the Church that seems to contradict what they had learned previously.

If you experience such a moment, remember that in this age of information there are many who create doubt about anything and everything, at any time and every place.

You will find even those who still claim that they have evidence that the earth is flat, that the moon is a hologram, and

that certain movie stars are really aliens from another planet. And it is always good to keep in mind that just because something is printed on paper, appears on the internet, is frequently repeated, or has a powerful group of followers doesn’t make it true.

THE SOURCE OF TRUTH

Yes, our world is full of confusion. But eventually all of our questions will be answered. All of our doubts will be replaced by certainty. And that is because there is one source of truth that is complete, correct, and incorruptible. That source is our infinitely wise and all-knowing Heavenly Father. He knows truth as it was, as it is, and as it yet will be (see Doctrine and Covenants 93:24). “He comprehendeth all things, . . . and he is above all things, . . . and all things are by him, and of him” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:41).

Our loving Heavenly Father offers His truth to us, His mortal children.

Now, what is this truth?

It is His gospel. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

If we will only have enough courage and faith to walk in His path, it will lead us to peace of heart and mind, to lasting meaning in life, to happiness in this world, and to joy in the world to come. The Savior is “not far from every one of us” (Acts 17:27). We have His promise that if we seek Him diligently, we will find Him (see Deuteronomy 4:29; Proverbs 8:17; Acts 17:27; Doctrine and Covenants 88:63).

THE HOLY GHOST—OUR GUIDE TO ALL TRUTH

Our Heavenly Father knew how difficult it would be for us to sift through all the competing noise and discover truth during our mortality. He knew we would see only a portion of the truth, and He knew that Satan would try to deceive us. So He gave us the heavenly gift of the Holy Ghost to illuminate our minds, teach us, and testify to us of the truth.

The *witness* of truth from the Holy Ghost is available to all, everywhere, all around the globe. All who seek to know the truth, who study it out in their minds (see Doctrine and Covenants 9:8), and who “ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, [will know] the truth . . . by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 10:4).

Yes, your loving Father in Heaven would never leave you alone in this mortality to wander in the dark. You need not be deceived. You can overcome the darkness of this world and discover divine truth.

The Lord knows you; He loves you. The Lord has great confidence in you. He knows your successes, and He is mindful of your challenges and questions in life.

It is my prayer that you will seek the truth earnestly and unceasingly, that you will yearn to drink from the fount of all truth, whose waters are pure and sweet, “a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14). **NE**

From a Church Educational System devotional address given at Brigham Young University on January 13, 2013.

WHEN THE WORLD TURNS UPSIDE DOWN

In the middle of a global pandemic, this high school senior found how to face the future with faith.



By David Dickson
Church Magazines

Luke's senior year was anything but normal. After starting his senior year at the same Mississippi high school he'd been attending since he was a freshman, and with the same friends he'd known since age nine, Luke's family moved to Alabama.

"I wasn't too excited about the move," Luke N., 18, admits. But he still tried to make the most of it. For one thing, he joined the tennis team at his new school.

And then he got to play all of one match before his whole world turned upside down.

Tennis? Canceled. Prom? Double canceled. Attending church? Attending school? Attending seminary?

You guessed it. All canceled.

CALLED TO SERVE . . . EVENTUALLY?

Like the rest of the globe, Luke's daily routine shifted gears in a massive way once the COVID-19 pandemic interfered with just about every area of his life.

I SEE A LOT OF BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE.

"It's definitely been disappointing," he says. For Luke, the biggest heartache of all was not knowing for sure what's going to happen with his mission call.

Not long ago, Luke received his mission call to serve in the Washington D.C. South Mission, speaking Persian.

"*Persian?!?*" he says. "I had no idea that language was even taught at the MTC."

As it happens, there are only three elders in his mission who currently speak Persian. And very few other missions include that language at all.

He started buckling down to learn as much Persian as possible before entering the missionary training center, but then everything missionary-wise got thrown into uncertainty as the pandemic took hold.

BLESSINGS EVERY DAY

It'd be understandable for anybody in Luke's situation to feel discouraged, but he says he finds heavenly help every day. "I see a lot of blessings in disguise."



One of his favorite blessings in disguise was only possible because seminary was held virtually. Due to different start times, he was actually able to attend his current seminary class in Alabama *as well as* his old one back in Mississippi! "That's been kind of cool because I can stay in touch with my friends!"

That's only one blessing, though. "I also have more time for prayer and scriptures," he points out. "And more time to study my language before entering the MTC."

On that note, Luke was fortunate enough to connect, through a social media group, with the mother of one of the Persian-speaking missionaries in his mission. She was thrilled to hear from Luke and offered to send him some language-training tools her son used before his mission.

Luke has been using those tools ever since.

"I love the extra time to study," he says again. "Especially family study in the morning. Now we have more time to do that than we normally did."

FOLLOWING THE PROPHET'S LEAD

The biggest question on Luke's mind has been about what to decide regarding his mission. Like so many others in his situation, Luke has to choose whether to defer his mission call for a year or more, or wait and see if he can go as soon as possible with the original date.

Nothing is certain yet.

For Luke, direction came after watching general conference. "President Nelson and the other leaders were so optimistic," Luke said. "It makes me optimistic too. So, at least for now, I'm going to plan on serving during my normal time."

Luke knows that nothing is certain where COVID-19 is concerned. Even so, he's absolutely certain about something else. "God is at the wheel," Luke says. "He isn't going to let us fail." **NE**



A MOVING TARGET

With the right help, you too can accomplish amazing feats of skill and daring!

By David Dickson

Church Magazines

Sometimes keeping up with the many different demands on your time can feel like trying to maintain your footing on a balance beam . . . In a hurricane.

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was once asked how to keep home life, work life, and family life in balance. His answer was probably unexpected.

"You can't," he said. "So don't worry about it."¹

After a short chuckle, Elder Bednar offered some clarification. "Balance is a false notion," he taught. "You can only do one thing at one time."

He then compared balancing various areas of our lives to an acrobat's spinning multiple plates on the ends of sticks. Each plate requires regular spinning so that it won't wobble and fall.

ONE BY ONE

"Can [the acrobat] get all the plates spinning at exactly the same speed at exactly the same time?" Elder Bednar asked. "Nope. One is always closer to spinning off."

"That's life," Elder Bednar continued. He explained how each of us must keep our various plates in the air by giving them attention as needed.

He also included a caution: "It's probably the case that you cannot spin 17 plates. With the help of the Holy Ghost . . . we can identify the two, three, or four most important plates that always need to be spinning."

If your life feels chaotic and overscheduled, consider that caution from an Apostle. You might need to reduce the number of plates you're trying to keep in motion.

Even after simplifying your life, however, it can still be tough to know how best to divide up your time and energy. That's where one particular word comes in handy.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Let's consider the word *priority* for a moment.

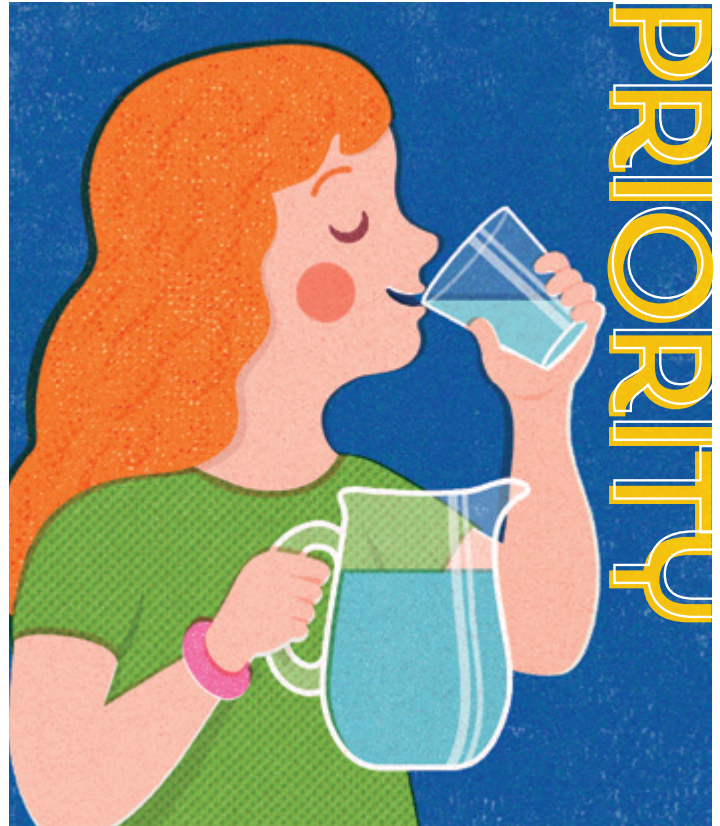
First, pretend you've been outside on a hot summer's day for a long time without water. Maybe you were hiking, playing sports, or just goofing off in the sun. However you imagine it, what you're focused on right now is your incredible thirst—the kind of thirst where your mouth feels like it's been swabbed out with a bag of cotton balls.

So what's the first thing you'd do when you come home? The answer should be pretty clear. You'd take a looong, cold drink of water. And then perhaps fill up your glass again.

Note that you'd find and drink water *before* doing anything else, even if you had a full schedule of activities and were running late. Why? Because it was your top priority.

The word *priority* simply means something you do *prior* to (before) something else. In extreme thirst situations, every other task lines up behind getting a drink of water. Text messages can wait. Homework can wait. Pretty much everything else can wait.

Simple enough, right? But we have a knack for making it more complicated in other situations.



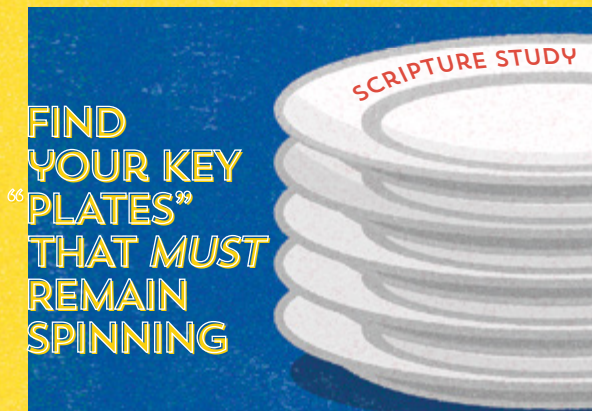
WHEN PRIORITIES AREN'T PRIORITIES

It's one thing to *declare* something a priority. It's quite another to *treat* it as such. For example, someone might *say* that reading scriptures is a top priority. But if scripture study doesn't fit in their schedule

most days, or if it doesn't get squeezed in until the last few minutes of the day before they collapse exhausted into bed, then it's not a *priority* in the real sense of the word.

Once you decide your top priorities—those few key “plates” or areas in your life that *must* remain spinning—do everything you can to schedule them in and don't let anything else bump them out of the schedule.

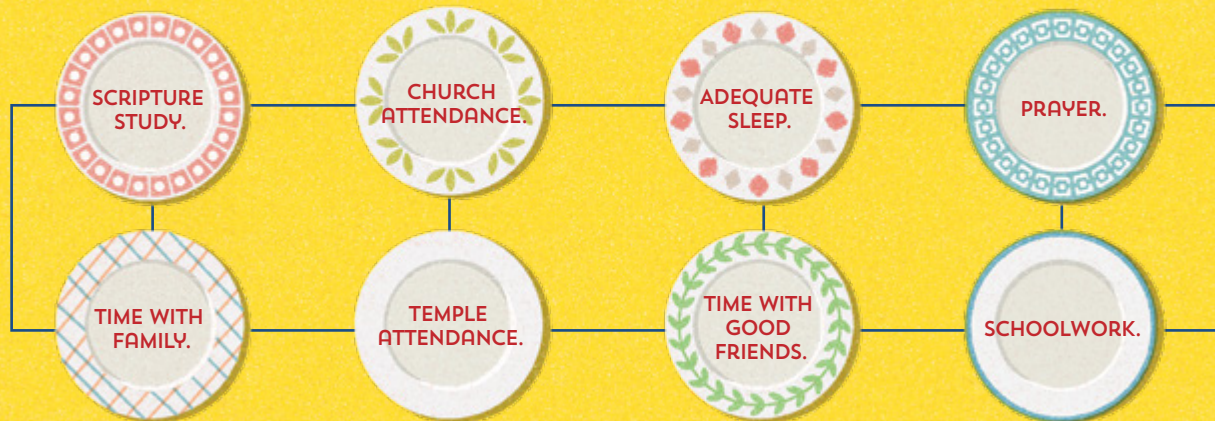
The new Children and Youth program offers a great structure for this approach. As a starting point in personal growth, you might ask yourself: What's the one thing (the top priority) you want to do in each of the four areas of focus? How can you best prioritize your time and energy in these areas?



WHICH PLATES TO SET DOWN?

As Elder Bednar suggested, you might need to drop or trim a few less important items in order to keep the essential areas of your life going strong. So how do you make such choices?

You can start by praying for guidance on what to let go. Occasionally, it can help to begin by listing things you don't want to lose or reduce. Some of these nonnegotiables might be:



After you prayerfully identify the things you don't want to cut out, can you then find other areas where you might step back a bit?



THE MOVING TARGET

One more thought: Balance isn't a one-and-done effort. It's not something you can craft into a well-oiled machine that will then hum away uninterrupted for the rest of your life.

Instead, each phase of your life will require unique focus and adjustments. Your balance of time and energy as a high school student will be much different than as a college student, missionary, spouse, or young parent. It's a moving target. You have to move with it simultaneously.

For example, there will most likely come a day when you don't have to spin the homework plate much at all anymore. But before you high-five your future self, know that there will be another equally important plate to take its place.

Plates will come. Plates will go. Either way, you'll always have plenty to keep in the air. With Heavenly Father's help, you can know how best to choose which plates to focus on.

Just take a deep breath and keep on spinning. **NE**

NOTE

1. David A. Bednar, priesthood leadership meeting, Buenos Aires, Argentina, Feb. 2016; see also Marianne Holman, "Finding Balance," *Church News*, Oct. 23, 2010, 5.



HIS EXAMPLE for CHANGE

By Sam Lofgran & Annelise Gardiner

Church Magazines

As the first member in his family to join the Church, this young man's example mattered.

On a warm day in July 2017, two elders knocked on a door in Cebu City, Philippines. Inside was a teenage boy named Lord Von Cedric (yes, his name actually is Lord), along with his family. The elders asked if they could teach the family the gospel of Jesus Christ. And while Lord's parents said they weren't interested, they were at least willing to listen to what the elders had to say. However, as the missionaries taught, Lord's family realized they wanted to learn more.

After several lessons with the elders, Lord, his two sisters, and his father, Christopher, decided they wanted to join the Church. But there was a problem—only Lord would be able to be baptized. His sisters were still too young, and although Lord's parents lived together as a family, they weren't married—meaning Christopher wouldn't be able to get baptized either.

It was difficult for Lord to decide to be baptized since he would be taking the step alone. However, as the elders taught him, he had faith that this decision would help him be able to share the gospel with his mom, who still wasn't very interested in the Church. He says, "Before, I only knew a little about Jesus Christ. But then, I understood that He is our Savior and Redeemer. I knew He would help me if I followed His commandments."

MAKING A CHANGE

Lord kept working on obeying the commandments once he was baptized and started noticing a difference in himself. He was becoming, in his own words, a "good boy." He decided to specifically work on listening to his parents more. He says, "Before, when Mother told me to do

something, I didn't always obey because it could be tiring. But now I do what my parents say."

He also started making other goals as part of the Children and Youth program. He wanted to learn how to play the guitar, so he asked his dad to help him learn, since his dad already knew how to play. Lord also helped his younger sister, Nicole, set her own goals. She decided that she wanted to help out around the house more, so they worked together to do their chores each day.


As Lord tried to accomplish his goals, his parents noticed how hard he was working. His mom, Jeramie, says, "He has changed a lot. Now he is patient and very diligent. I am so happy that he has personally progressed."

READING TOGETHER

After a few months, Lord and his sister Nicole made a goal they wanted to work on together—they wanted to read the Book of Mormon as a family and finish it by the end of the year. The two kids hoped this would be a good opportunity to get their mom to participate in gospel activities with them.

But Jeramie was at work a lot, so Lord and Nicole came up with a plan—they would read the Book of Mormon and say family prayer after dinner when she was home.

Doing this each night helped Lord's mom become more open to the gospel. Jeramie says, "As we read the Book of Mormon, I started to see how wonderful it was and how it teaches us about Christ."



LORD, his two sisters,
and his father, Christopher, DECIDED
they wanted TO JOIN
THE CHURCH.



Lord worked to live
the gospel each day,
even though this could be difficult
as the only member
of the Church in his family.

MAKING TIME TO LISTEN

Soon Jeramie decided to make a change herself, just as Lord had—she quit her job, which would give her time to go to church. She attended for the first time in June 2019 and immediately could tell there was something good about it. She says, “I felt the presence of Jesus Christ while I was there.”

She also started participating in the missionary lessons, after many invitations from Lord and the others. “Before, my mother did not really want to listen to the missionaries,” Lord says. “She would even leave when they came to teach. My father, Nicole, and I told her to just try to listen, and maybe she would like it. And we were right—she listened, and she liked it.”

Lord’s mom learned more about the importance of marriage as she was taught the gospel, and realized she needed to make that commitment. She and Christopher got married as soon as they could and then started preparing for their baptism. Nicole happened to be turning eight around that same time, so she started preparing to be baptized at the same time as her parents.


AN ANSWER TO PRAYERS

In July of 2019, the baptism day finally came, and Christopher said that the timing made it even more special. “July is important to me because this month two years ago was the first time we went to church,” Christopher says.

Because Lord, Nicole, and Christopher had been waiting for almost two years for their whole family to be baptized, they all felt like their prayers were being answered.

Christopher says, “Since the elders started teaching us, I have seen how we have progressed and how our lives have changed because of the gospel of Jesus Christ. That’s why we will continue to endure to the end.” One way the family is planning to do that is by going to the temple to be sealed as a family in 2020.

Lord is particularly pleased with all the changes that have happened in his family. He says, “I’m so happy that my mother, father, and younger sister were finally baptized. I’m really glad that now all of us are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” **NE**



His younger sister,
NICOLE, set her own goals.
She DECIDED that
she wanted TO HELP OUT
AROUND THE HOUSE more,
so THEY WORKED
TOGETHER to do
their chores each day.

TO DANCE or NOT TO DANCE?

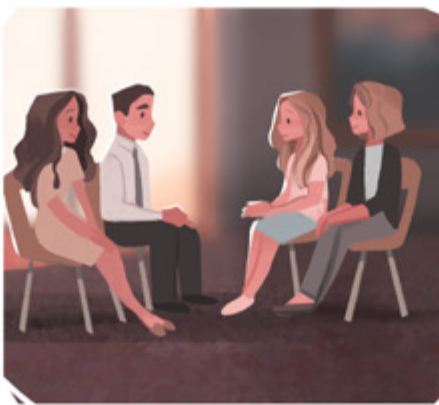
Written by Natasha Andersen • Illustrated by Bethany Standliffe



I'm excited for the dance, but *For the Strength of Youth* says that agency is the ability to choose and act for yourself. What if I just don't feel like dancing with someone? Don't I get to choose whether to say yes or no?

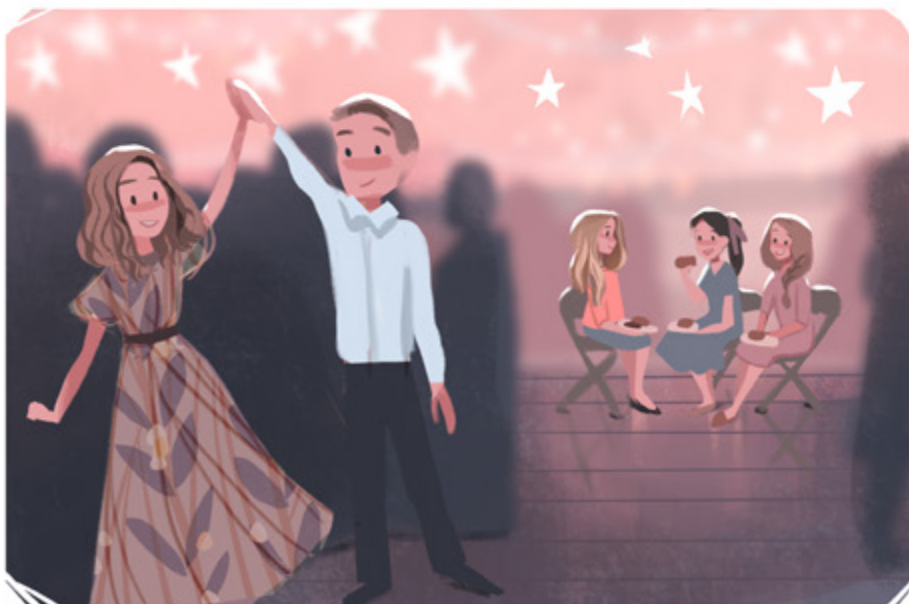
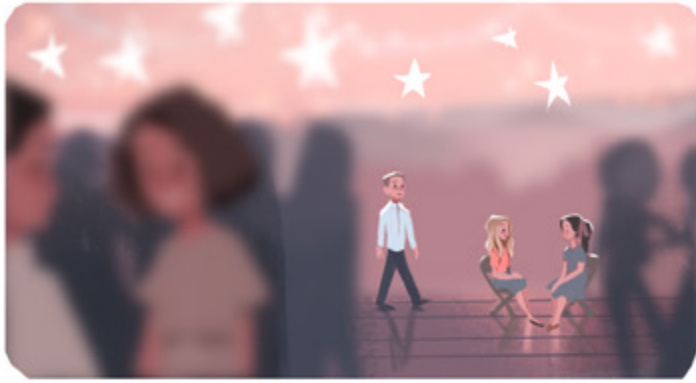


You should always be kind, but I think it's your right to choose. Let's talk to the leaders about this rule.



Thanks for letting us know how you feel. You're right. It's your choice. We understand not everyone will always feel comfortable dancing, but they still want to come.





“Heavenly Father has given you agency, the ability to ... act for yourself.”

For the Strength of Youth (2011), 2.

FOUR TOOLS FOR ANSWERING QUESTIONS

By Heather Bergeson
Church Magazines

I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE TO TURN. After hearing my friends talk about a controversial issue in Church history, I did the first thing I could think of to find answers to my new questions. I searched the internet.

After reading online about this debated topic, I became very confused and even angry. Why had I never known about this? Was the Church trying to hide something? How was I supposed to know if what these people were writing was true or if it was made up?

I felt a lot of fear and uncertainty after reading so many conflicting views. It was scary to realize my faith was being tested. Without noticing it, I slowly withdrew myself from God. At a time when I should've been praying and reading my scriptures the most, I found myself constantly forgetting and then eventually avoiding these habits.

I was trying to discover truth without the help of God—and it wasn't working.

One Sunday I was sitting in testimony meeting and had the strong impression to talk to one of my priesthood leaders about my concerns. After the meeting, I asked my leader if we could talk. It felt so good to finally talk about what was worrying me. I cried as I explained what I had been going through the past few months and my desire to understand the truth.

He patiently listened, and then offered me comfort and advice that immediately lifted a heavy burden from my shoulders; but the most valuable thing he taught me that day was how to respond when you are faced with concerns and doubts about Church history and doctrine.

His advice included some important principles that I developed into four tools any of us can use when we come across materials that seem to undermine our faith:



I was trying to discover truth without the help of God—and it wasn't working.

KEEP A STRONG CONNECTION WITH GOD.

Don't forget to continue to fast and pray for guidance, read the scriptures for revelation, attend church, and worship in the temple. Amidst confusion and doubt, it might sometimes seem like prayer and scripture study are tedious tasks, but they are your most valuable tools. Remember that God is the source of all truth; as you seek to be close to Him, you will be able to find the peace you are looking for.



TALK TO YOUR PARENTS OR LEADERS.

If you ever feel overwhelmed by negative information and don't know where to look next, don't give up! Make sure your parents and Church leaders know what you are struggling with. They can help you find answers to your questions and guide you to reliable resources.



FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH RELIABLE RESOURCES.

Church leaders have given us many resources to learn more about Church history, including those in the scriptures, the Gospel Topics essays found on ChurchofJesusChrist.org, the Joseph Smith Papers, and the Church's official history books, *Saints*. When you know the facts and the Church's official stance on controversial subjects, you will feel more confident when you're confronted with opposition.



HAVE FAITH IN GOD'S TIMING.

While there is a lot of information now available to us, some questions do not yet have answers. We need to "remember that although Heavenly Father has revealed all that is necessary for our salvation, He has not yet revealed all truth."¹ We must have the faith and humility to persevere until we receive a greater knowledge. God teaches us line upon line, and we can experience an increase of faith and hope in the future as we draw closer to Him.



I am so grateful for what I learned through my experience. It was scary and hard at times, but now I know how to search for truth with confidence. I also know that fear and doubt are not of God and don't help me answer my questions (see Doctrine & Covenants 6:36). The accessibility of information on the internet makes it even more important to follow the counsel in Doctrine and Covenants 88:118: "Seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith." As we search for truth in holy places, we can strengthen our testimonies and faithfully endure through trials. **NE**

NOTE

1. *Doctrinal Mastery Core Document* (2016), 2, doctrinalmastery.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



By Elder Richard J. Maynes
Of the Seventy

A FOUNDATION FOR YOUR FUTURE

During your teenage years, you are developing many goals you would like to accomplish in your life. These goals probably include a mission, education, temple marriage, successful careers, and, of course, your safe return to your Heavenly Father's presence in the celestial kingdom.

One of the great challenges you will face in reaching these goals is successfully connecting them to your everyday life. This can be difficult because your time is jammed so full of worldly stuff. You may be involved with both school and activities such as music, dance, sports, or various clubs. Many of you may work a job as well. Mixed in with this hectic schedule are weekend activities such as games, dances, ward activities, and parties. Not only that, but everywhere you go you're bombarded with temptation from peers, social media, movies, video games, and music. Wow! What an adventure!

The real trick in balancing all these things is to keep the eternal big picture in mind. For example: How will your activity this Friday night affect what's going to happen 2, 5, or 10 years from now? You might think that Friday night doesn't have much to do with 2 years from now, but it could, depending on where you are and what you're doing. If you want to reach your potential in the future and become the person the Lord wants you to be, you had better keep the eternal big picture in mind and work on it today.

YOUR FOUNDATION IN AN UPSIDE-DOWN WORLD

The prophet Isaiah saw our day and warned that it would be a day turned upside down. He prophesied: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"

"Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" (Isaiah 5:20–21).

As you grow up in this upside-down world, you have quite a challenge

confronting the various pressures of modern-day life. How will you make it through your teenage years spiritually prepared for your future?

It is important for you to recognize that the foundation of your future, both temporally and spiritually, is being built today. If your foundation is fractured with sin and goes unrepaired, then the structure of your life will be built upon a weakened foundation. Your future will be less secure and certainly more stressful.

One of the great purposes of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to teach us of



AS YOU GROW UP IN
THIS UPSIDE-DOWN
WORLD, YOU HAVE
QUITE A CHALLENGE.



**THE FOUNDATION
OF YOUR FUTURE
IS BEING BUILT
TODAY.**

our eternal potential. One purpose of the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ is to help us reach that potential. We are taught, "It is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation." Our Savior, Jesus Christ, "is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall" (Helaman 5:12).

**SMALL DAILY ACTS MAKE
A BIG DIFFERENCE**

I have yet to meet a businessperson, educator, artist, or athlete who has attained

a high level of excellence who has not successfully connected the vision of their future to their everyday life. A goal or vision that is not connected to everyday life by daily action will most likely become an unrealized dream.

For example: Suppose you have a test coming up in geometry. One of your goals is to get a good grade in that class, so how do you go about reaching that goal? Do you wait until the last minute





**YOU CAN'T CRAM
FOR A MISSION
OR A TEMPLE
MARRIAGE.**

and cram the night before the test? This approach is filled with risk. Instead of truly understanding the material and being totally prepared and confident about the subject, you'll walk into the classroom a little nervous, hoping the teacher will ask only questions you happen to know the answers to. (I'm sure I'm not the only one who has experienced this uneasy feeling!)

Or do you set aside a little time every day to calmly study the subject in-depth? This approach will give you the necessary time to properly understand the material, and you'll have plenty of time to ask the teacher for help if confusion arises. This will result in a deeper understanding of the material and increased self-confidence going into the test.

To achieve any goal—especially celestial goals—continual daily dedication is the answer. Can you protect yourself against the pressures and evils of the world by just spending two hours at church on Sunday? Not likely. It is very difficult to cram for a mission, and it is equally difficult to cram for a temple marriage. Don't take the risk. Be wise. Just as in your studies, a focused daily effort is the only

sure way to come out successful. Prepare yourself daily. Study the scriptures. Communicate with your Heavenly Father in prayer. Attend seminary. Keep yourself clean and prepared. As you do so, you will be at peace, your conscience will be clean, your self-confidence high, and you will know in your heart that your future will be bright and wonderful.

CARRY ON WITH THE LORD'S HELP

The Lord wants you to succeed, and He will be with you. He will help you and support and sustain you in your time of need if you are true to His plan. If you stay close to Him on a daily basis, He will stay close to you, and you will reap untold blessings in every aspect of your life, especially the most important—the spiritual.

It will ultimately be your love of the Lord that will help you commit and then stay true to your celestial goals. I know that the Lord lives and that His desire and hope for us all is a celestial future. **NE**

Adapted from an October 1997 general conference address.



USE THE FORTS



By David A. Edwards
Church Magazines

In the part of the Book of Mormon often called the “war chapters,” Captain Moroni stands out. He’s brave. He’s strong. He’s firm. He’s righteous. He loves the Lord. He loves his people. He loves freedom. He’s filled with passion and zeal for his righteous cause. And he’s also smart, cunning, and full of ingenuity. We can learn a lot from Captain Moroni.

One of the lessons we can learn has to do with how he prepared for war during peacetime. The Lamanites had attacked the Nephites before, and Moroni wanted to make sure his people would be as safe as possible when the Lamanites attacked again. So he prepared by “strengthening the armies of the Nephites, and erecting small forts, or places of resort; throwing up banks of earth round about to enclose his armies, and also building walls of stone to encircle them about, round about their cities and the borders of their lands; yea, all round about the land” (Alma 48:8).

Earlier attacks had exposed vulnerabilities and weaknesses, so “in their weakest fortifications [Moroni] did place the greater number of men” (Alma 48:9). And the cities that had been weakest he gave some of their strongest fortifications (see Alma 49:1–15).

One lesson to learn from Moroni’s preparations applies to your spiritual life. It is simply this: Use the forts. That is, build up spiritual fortifications to thwart the attacks of “the enemy of [your] soul” (2 Nephi 4:28).

WHEN TO START

Some people don’t seem to think about strengthening their fortifications until the enemy has already launched his attack. Perhaps they think they’ll be able to hurry and erect a wall and put all their other defenses in place just in time.

But that’s not how the forts work. You need to *prepare*. That means doing the hard work *before* the moment of trial comes. Make a regular habit of praying, studying the scriptures, and partaking the sacrament. Think about how you will avoid temptation, and decide ahead of time how you will handle situations where you may be tempted.

Preparation is particularly important in those areas where you may have been weak in the past. If a temptation has been particularly hard for you to withstand, you may need to spend some extra effort building up your fortifications there. This may mean thicker walls to put some distance between yourself and the temptation.

For example, if you used to view pornography, set some strict limits on your media and technology use, and enlist the help of others to maintain those limits. Or if you used to swear and tell dirty jokes, stop spending time with people who swear and tell dirty jokes. Then, even if the temptation comes, you’re more prepared.

*Be like Captain Moroni
and build up your
spiritual defenses.*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SASHA KOLESNIK



FORTIFY YOURSELVES

“What are some ways we can fortify ourselves in troubled times? . . .

“We are obedient. . . .

“We trust the Lord. . . .

“We stand for the truth. . . .

“We make and renew our covenants by partaking of the sacrament and by worshipping in the temple. . . .

“We should have integrity in all that we do. . . .

“As we diligently strengthen our fortifications, we become like Jesus Christ, as His true disciples, with our very souls in His protection.”

Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Apr. 2019 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 109–110).

HOW TO BUILD STRONG FORTS

So how do you build up your defenses? You must learn the ways of the forts. How will you build your walls, secure your gate, and arm your city to make sure you can withstand any attack? You'll need to learn the commandments, teachings, and promises your Heavenly Father has given you through the scriptures and modern prophets. You'll need to learn to draw closer to Jesus Christ, have faith in Him, repent, and live His gospel.

Learning these things will take humility and teachability. You'll need to listen to those who know best about these things. That means acknowledging that you don't know it all. People with experience and wisdom, such as parents and leaders, can help you make your spiritual fortifications to the proper specifications through your study and effort. And pay special attention to the counsel of modern prophets and apostles. (For instance, see the counsel from Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles at the left.)

HOW TO MAINTAIN STRONG FORTS

Sometimes the enemy's attacks are so fierce that you may sense a disturbance in the forts. You may notice one of your walls weakening—the temptation is stronger, your firm resolve

is slipping. In such a case, you may need to make an extra effort, but it's worth it. The Lord will bless you with strength if you do. So don't give up.

Moroni knew that it was easier to maintain a fortified city than to try to retake one. That should be your focus as well. Though it's certainly not impossible to reclaim ground you've given up in your spiritual battles, you're better off keeping your defenses strong and not allowing the enemy to gain any advantage.

Just as with physical defenses, when you're maintaining your spiritual defenses, it pays to be thorough. It doesn't do a whole lot of good to have a fort whose walls don't go all the way around the city. The enemy of your soul isn't going to attack from just one direction. So don't leave yourself vulnerable by completely ignoring some aspect of obedience or spiritual fortification. Just because you're doing great at, say, never swearing again or never skipping church again doesn't mean it's now OK to totally skip scripture study or to start reacting unkindly to your siblings.

If you strive to be obedient and repent when you make mistakes and sin, if you keep praying, studying the scriptures, and focusing on your covenants, you'll be happier—and you'll maintain your spiritual defenses. Then the forts will be with you, always. **NE**

*My inspired bishop knew better
than I did what I needed to do.*

A TITHING CHALLENGE

By Stephen Knight

As a child, I paid tithing faithfully without ever thinking of holding back the money for myself. But at 17, I faced a defining moment when I had to decide if being a full-tithe payer was really what I wanted.

As a senior in high school, I'd been working part-time at a fast-food restaurant for a year and a half. At the beginning of the school year, I'd convinced myself that I needed more time for homework, school choir activities, and the rehearsals and performances for a musical in which I'd received a small part at a local theater. So I quit my job.

I had always set aside my tithing as soon as I cashed a paycheck, but a few months before quitting the job, I stopped paying tithing. Instead, I unwisely used the money for other things, putting what was left in my savings account.

In late December, I had an appointment for tithing settlement with my bishop. It turned out to be a very uncomfortable experience. He asked if I was a full-tithe payer. I told him the truth—I was not. I think I owed about \$65. I had twice that much in the bank, but I didn't want to use any of it, because without a job, I needed money for gas, dates, and other "important" expenses.

I thought my bishop would simply encourage me to do better next year and make a note that I was a part-tithe payer. But no. He invited me to make a commitment to pay the Lord what I owed. I wasn't expecting that, and I would not commit. I told him I'd think about it, but I had no intention of paying.

Over the next few days, strange things happened. Until now, the bishop and I had rarely seen each other except on Sundays. But that week, I saw him every day—at the store, at youth activities, and more. Each time he'd greet me with the same question: "Have you made a decision?" And my response was always the same: "No."

After several days of these unusual meetings, I finally realized that the Lord was using my bishop as a reminder for me to do the right thing. In my heart I always knew what I should do, and finally, wanting to be obedient, I withdrew the tithing money from my savings account and paid all that I owed that next Sunday.

Even though I knew I'd done the right thing, I was still worried about having very little money in the bank for the rest of the school year—and no job.

Then came the phone call. Two days after I paid my tithing, the manager of the fast-food restaurant I'd worked at called me. She was desperate. Several employees had recently quit, and she pleaded with me to come back to work—immediately.

Some might say this was just a coincidence, but I knew better. I accepted the job offer with the firm belief that the Lord was now blessing me for being obedient to His law of tithing.

I know the Lord used my bishop, who showed up day after day and wouldn't take no for an answer. Ever since then, I've come to understand, in a very personal way, these words of King Benjamin: "He doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you; for which if ye do, he doth *immediately* bless you" (Mosiah 2:24; italics added). **NE**

The author lives in Arizona, USA.



ELITE ATHLETES AND THE GOSPEL

FIVE ELITE ATHLETES WHO ARE MEMBERS
OF THE CHURCH TALK ABOUT HOW THE GOSPEL
HAS HELPED THEM NOT ONLY IN THEIR SPORT
BUT ALSO IN THEIR LIVES.

ONE of the things that has helped these athletes excel is a willingness to work hard and prepare for the future even when they are not in control of the outcome. Things they can't control: whether or not they made the team; whether or not they win; or even if the events where they will compete may be postponed a year due to a once-in-a lifetime pandemic.

What can they control? How much effort they put into preparing so they could do their best. As you read their stories, think about what kind of effort it would take to reach peak performance in their sport. How about you? What can you do now to be at your best?

CASEY PATTERSON: BEACH VOLLEYBALL

I've never forgotten this line from a conference talk: "Hard work . . . involves going after it 'with all your heart, might, mind and strength' (Doctrine and Covenants 4:2). That alone is the difference between the average and the excellent" (F. David Stanley, "The Principle of Work," Apr. 1993 general conference).

In my sport I focus on being resilient and having a positive attitude. It's easy to look at the kid who can jump higher than you or perform better, but getting a good grasp of your attitude is what really matters. Working hard is the main thing that controls your destiny. It's important to compare yourself to yourself—nobody else.



About Casey:

- Has been playing volleyball for nearly 25 years.
- Has three younger sisters.
- Represents USA.
- Interesting fact: His mom wouldn't let him grow a mohawk until he'd served a mission and gotten married.



JASON SMYTH: TRACK AND FIELD

I was diagnosed with an eye disease when I was eight years old, and over the years my vision has been reduced to less than 10 percent. But I have had many blessings through the sport of running and competing in the Paralympics. A few years ago, an injury resulted in surgery, and I wasn't sure I would be able to compete again. But I was blessed by Heavenly Father to heal well and be able to continue competing.

I know that Heavenly Father loves me and wants what is best for me, and that gives me comfort and reassurance that what happens is what's best for me.



About Jason:

- Has been running for 15 years.
- Has one brother and three sisters.
- Represents Ireland.
- Interesting fact: Participating in elite sports gives him a unique opportunity to share the gospel.

MARY LAKE: VOLLEYBALL

Growing up, a lot of girls struggle with the adversary targeting their self-worth. The world places an emphasis on what we look like, and if you're an athlete, you're being watched a lot. I felt a lot of anxiety playing volleyball at Brigham Young University. Lots of eyes were on me, and it brought up insecurities. I had been praying to get through the doubts that came with those insecurities. It wasn't an immediate answer, but I know that it was those prayers and that time with Heavenly Father that helped me overcome those.

The Spirit reminded me that I am now a different person than I was four years ago. Looking back, I can see times when Heavenly Father's hand gave me experiences and impressions that I have so much more worth than I thought.

I'm so much more than athletics. My mom says I could quit everything that other people label me as, but I could still be a wonderful person and a wonderful daughter. My family treats me like I'm human and loves me for things that aren't athletics. That has allowed me to enjoy my



About Mary:

- Has been playing volleyball since age 7.
- Youngest of six siblings—three sisters and two brothers.
- Represents USA.
- Interesting fact: Loves to crunch numbers and studied accounting at Brigham Young University.

sport more since my self-worth isn't really tied up in how I perform. Volleyball is only a certain number of years of my life, but who I am is infinite.

Younger girls often come to me and talk to me about volleyball. I get a glimpse of who they are and how Heavenly Father feels about them. I just want them to understand that they don't have to be a college athlete or do anything extraordinary to have great value and be loved. My main message to them is to ask Heavenly Father about their worth and realize that it's not connected to any one thing they do.





JACKSON PAYNE: GYMNASTICS

I had a great chance to qualify for the London Olympics in 2012, but in the most important competition, I fell off the apparatus. My chance at the Olympics was gone. I was halfway around the world, and my dreams were shattered.

Shortly after that failure, I decided I wanted to go on a mission. I might not have gone if I had made it into the Olympics, but my mission was one miracle after another. I was so grateful for that opportunity.

The gospel has helped me make right decisions, especially at times when it's difficult to keep my standards. It shapes who I am and all the values that I have.



About Jackson:

- Has been doing gymnastics for about 22 years.
- Fifth of six siblings—three older brothers, an older sister, and a younger sister.
- Represents Canada.
- Interesting fact: Got to shake the hand of President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) at the dedication of the Edmonton Alberta Temple.

BRICKELLE BRO: SWIMMING

I was applying to colleges in 2015, the year before the 2016 Olympics. I was trying to find a college team that would allow me, a disabled swimmer, to train with them in preparation for Rio. Immediately after submitting each application, I would email the head coach of the swim team and give them a short bio and explain that I wanted to train with them. Then I would receive an email back wishing me luck but saying they just did not have the ability to work with me.

My family and I started praying and fasting that I would find a team that would train me. Eventually, a friend told me to apply to Stanford University because the head coach of the women's team was eager to work with Paralympians. I did apply, just as an excuse to talk to the coach and pick his brain. I was so surprised when I actually got in to Stanford. Just a few minutes after receiving an email telling me that I got in, the head coach emailed me and said he would like to work with me to train for the Rio Paralympics. It was a little miracle!



About Brickelle:

- Has been swimming for 15 years.
- Has one brother and one sister.
- Represents USA.
- Interesting fact: When she was little, she preferred playing in the bathtub over going to the park.



Read "Use the Forts" in this issue for some great ideas on how to prepare yourself for the spiritual attacks you might face.



WHEN YOUR FRIEND Struggles WITH PORNOGRAPHY



I'm so glad the Lord prompted me to stop being so judgmental before my friend opened up to me.

Name Withheld

I had known for months that something was going on, but it wasn't until this moment that my friend admitted the truth to me out loud: she had been struggling with pornography for years.

While sitting in the car listening to my friend, I was grateful for her honesty. Don't get me wrong, I felt very sad to know she had been struggling with this for so long. But I was glad that she could open up to me and that I was now able to respond with love and not judge her.

ABANDON NEGATIVE THOUGHTS ABOUT PEOPLE

Pornography is dangerous, destructive, and evil, and we should avoid it at all costs. But completely avoiding any exposure to this evil and its effects is nearly impossible. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said, “Most days we all find ourselves assaulted by immoral messages of some kind flooding in on us from every angle. The darker sides of the movie, television, and music industry step further and further into offensive language and sexual misconduct.”¹

Even if you have never been exposed to pornography, you probably know someone who has. Sometimes, the knowledge that pornography is evil can seep into our perceptions of people with pornography problems. That’s what happened to me at one point. When I was younger, I would hear about people who struggled with pornography and often react with anger and even disgust—not to their face, but inwardly. I couldn’t understand how anyone could get caught up in that stuff. I let my disgust with pornography (which was a healthy reaction) justify my negative feelings toward other people.

But being unkind is never justified. Jesus Christ, our perfect example, sought out the people most despised by others. He spoke with Samaritans, tax collectors, and sinners. The Lord, who “cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance” (Doctrine and Covenants 1:31), “[looks] at us, imperfect as we are, without recoiling in horror and disgust,”² because He knows He can forgive and cleanse us if we repent. So, listening to my friend, I tried to think of how Jesus would respond. The story of how the Savior had compassion on the woman caught in adultery was one of the things that helped me know what to do and say that day (see John 8:3–11).

For More Information

For information, videos, and other resources regarding pornography problems, go to addressingpornography.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



RESPOND WITH LOVE AND COMPASSION

For those strictly living the law of Moses in Jesus’s day, there wasn’t a lot of room for compassion. There were very specific, often brutal punishments for certain sins, and adultery required stoning. When the people brought the woman to Jesus, He wasn’t shocked or disgusted; He showed her compassion. As Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught, “The Savior did not condone adultery. But He also did not condemn the woman.”³ Rather than congratulate the accusers on finding someone guiltier than them, He reminded them of their own sins (see John 8:3–7).

I was in a better place to comfort my friend that day because I had a more mature view of my own sins and weaknesses than I did when I was younger and so judgmental. I no longer felt better than those struggling with pornography, and I’d done my best not to justify my own sins just because they were more “acceptable.” After all, we “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). We cannot allow our knowledge that pornography is evil to distort our view of other people, who are also children of God and whom we should love. Jesus Christ loved others and showed compassion, and we certainly should too (see John 13:34–35).

We should all follow the counsel He gave—to “go, and sin no more” (John 8:11).

GO, AND SIN NO MORE

We should respond with love, but just loving someone with a pornography problem will not be enough. Love is simply the first step. There are some basic things that everyone struggling with pornography needs. Often, they need help overcoming deeper issues that are driving their use of pornography. So encourage them to talk to their parents and to see their bishop. They will have resources and tools to help your friend through this trial. Address the influences around them by supporting them in changes they feel they should make.

For example, if they don't have content blocks on their devices, help them set them up. If they're always tempted at certain times or in certain circumstances, help them make plans to change their patterns. They might benefit from seeing a professional or joining a support group. Point them to addressingpornography.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. Above all, love and support them in whatever they may see as their next step. Encourage them and give them hope as they move forward.



THERE IS ALWAYS HOPE

No matter what any of us has done, we “have *not* traveled beyond the reach of divine love,” Elder Holland has taught. “It is not possible for you to sink lower than the infinite light of Christ’s Atonement shines.”⁴

If you know someone struggling with pornography, don’t give up on them! That moment in the car with my friend was only the beginning of a process that is still going on today as I strive to replace judgment with love in my reactions to people. Reach out with love and compassion just as Jesus Christ would. It will not always be easy; these struggles do not go away overnight. There have been many times when I have helped my friend resist temptation but also many times when she has admitted relapsing. Be patient with your friend and with yourself.

Remember, though, that you can’t repent for them or change them, and you are not responsible for what they do. You can listen, give advice, and encourage. In the end, they have to take their own steps.

Learning to love and understand someone going through something so difficult isn’t easy. But I trust that all the love I give my friend will not be in vain, no matter the length or end result of her journey. **NE**

NOTES

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, Apr. 2010 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 44).
2. Dale G. Renlund, Apr. 2017 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 30).
3. Dale G. Renlund, Apr. 2017 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 30).
4. Jeffrey R. Holland, Apr. 2012 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 33).

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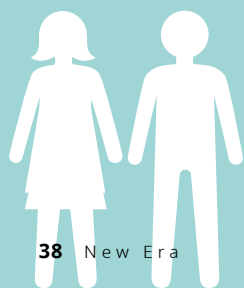


More information at history.ChurchofJesusChrist.org



TALKING to YOUR PARENTS about SEX

Yes, it can be awkward. But your parents are a better source than the internet or your friends.



By Derek Willis Hagey, PhD

Family Services

and Denya Palmer

Welfare and Self-Reliance Services

It's OK to have questions about sexuality. And it's OK to talk to your parents about those questions. You might be surprised about how much they can relate to you and your questions and experiences.

When it comes to sex, what you'll encounter on the internet, in media, and from friends and classmates may be confusing—in terms of both information and morality. Your parents can be the best source of trustworthy and reliable answers about sexuality. They want what's best for you. Chances are, they'll be happy you want to talk to them about this.¹

If you and your parents have never talked about sex, here are some tips:



Spiritual and Mental PREPARATION

- **PRAY.** Ask Heavenly Father to help you know what to say to bring up the topic with your parents.
- **BE BRAVE.** Whether or not you've made a mistake, don't hesitate to ask your parents to help you. They care about you and want the best for you.
- **REMEMBER THAT YOUR PARENTS WERE ONCE YOUR AGE.** They had to navigate growing up too. They will be able to understand and relate to your experience.
- **THINK POSITIVELY ABOUT HOW YOUR PARENTS MIGHT REACT.** Think of a time when they helped you in the past. Imagine the conversation going well.

Practical PREPARATION



- **DECIDE WHICH PARENT YOU WANT TO TALK TO.** While some youth find it easy to talk to both parents together, some are more comfortable talking to one parent alone first. This is normal, especially with a topic like sexuality.
- **SCHEDULE A TIME TO TALK.** Ask your parents to set aside a time to have a conversation. This gives you both time to prepare.
- **MAKE A LIST OF THINGS YOU WANT YOUR PARENTS TO KNOW AND QUESTIONS YOU HAVE.** Having a list of thoughts or concerns can help you remember what you want to talk about. And if there is something you don't cover, ask them to have another conversation.
- **PRACTICE STARTING THE CONVERSATION.** Maybe you want to start by asking a question. Or maybe you want to start by asking your parents to just listen until you're ready for them to respond. (See the "Conversation Starters" sidebar.)
- **TALK WITH YOUR PARENTS ABOUT OTHER TOPICS IN ORDINARY SITUATIONS.** Practice opening up about your normal day-to-day life and activities. You can do this anytime you are together, such as at mealtimes or bedtime.



After You've STARTED TALKING

- **TALK ABOUT THE LAW OF CHASTITY.** It can be helpful to ask your parents about their understanding of the law of chastity. If you have broken the law of chastity, your parents can be a source of support as you repent and connect with the Savior. Ask your parents about their experience with finding joy through repentance.
- **BE PATIENT WITH THEM.** Your parents might feel a little uncomfortable talking with you about sexuality at first too. But they want to help you, and it will get easier as you continue to talk.
- **DON'T BE AFRAID TO HAVE FREQUENT CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR PARENTS.** As time goes on, you might have more questions. This doesn't have to be a one-time thing.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Here are some things you can say to start a conversation:

- "I have some questions. It's kind of awkward to talk about, but can we talk about sex?"
- "How did you learn about sex when you were my age?"
- "I heard/saw something that confused me the other day. Can we talk about it?"
- "Could we schedule a time to talk?"
- "Can I talk to you about something? I think I made a mistake, and I want help fixing it."



YOU CAN DO THIS

At first it might be awkward to talk with your parents or another trusted adult. Remember, your heavenly parents love you and want you to prepare to develop a healthy relationship as an adult. Part of your preparation includes understanding healthy, appropriate sexuality and learning how to communicate about it now. Heavenly Father can help you talk to your parents about sex and other difficult topics as you reach out to Him. **NE**

NOTE

1. There may be valid reasons why you feel you can't talk to either of your parents. In this case, try talking to another trusted adult such as a Church leader.

CONNECT

JOSEPH S.,

17, Louisiana, USA

Until recently, football, school, and church had always been things that I dealt with separately and tried to balance. After the football season, we were having player meetings with my football coach. He talked to me about leadership and how I could be a better leader. He said something interesting I never expected.

He said, "So I know you're planning on serving a mission. You're religious, and you're OK with talking about God. I want you to talk about God with the other players. That's why I coach—to draw people closer to God. I want to see people's lives change. I think you're one of the best players on the team to do this. When you have a chance, why don't you talk to someone about God? Some people may reject it, but it may change someone's life. You never know."

I had never really connected sports and school and religion. But this conversation connected them for me and got me excited and more ready to share the gospel with others. It allowed me to realize that you can be the same person in football and school and at early-morning seminary in someone's home and still be successful. Now that I've connected them, it has made things easier.

This has helped me prepare for a mission. I'm getting more used to talking to people about God, sharing the gospel, and bearing my testimony.

LOUISIANA



BEIGNETS

This square-shaped fried dough covered with powdered sugar is a popular food.



"COOL CATS"

The birthplace of jazz.



STATE CRUSTACEAN

Since Louisiana produces more crawfish than any other state in the country, the crawfish was declared the official state crustacean in 1983.





ALIESE W.,

19, Arizona, USA

One of the talents Heavenly Father has blessed me with is artistic gifts. Most recently I have been learning how to face-paint. This talent has allowed me to bless the lives of others by cheering people up when they are down and by making someone's day with a fun character or design. I know that through our talents, the Lord allows us to bless the lives of others.



ALVIN P.,

15, Philippines

I enjoy spending time with the people dearest to my heart, like my family and friends. I also like to do Wushu, a traditional Chinese martial art.

I feel God's love whenever I realize how blessed I am to have a family and loving friends who are there when I need them. At times when I feel sad and lonely, I realize that someone loves me for who I am and what I can become. I know that God's love is always there for us.



ALLIGATORS

Nearly two million live in the wild.

STATE DRINK

In a tribute to the dairy industry, the official state drink is milk.



ROYALLY NAMED

Named after King Louis XIV.

FUN STOP

Scripture Sudoku

In regular sudoku, the goal is to fill the 9×9 grid so that each column, each row, and each of the nine 3×3 boxes contains the digits 1 through 9 only once. This time, to complete the puzzle, use the nine bolded words from Helaman 5:12:

“And now, my sons, **remember**, remember that it is upon the **rock** of our **Redeemer**, who is **Christ**, the Son of God, that ye must **build** your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty **winds**, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty **storm** shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a **sure** foundation, a **foundation** whereon if men build they cannot fall.”

		storm			build		foundation	
		sure	foundation		rock	Redeemer		
	foundation	rock	remember	sure	Christ		storm	winds
						storm		Christ
	winds	foundation				sure	remember	
sure		Christ						
storm	rock		build	Christ	remember		sure	
		winds			foundation			rock
	Christ		winds		sure	remember		



Presidential Smile

Can you tell which former President of the Church this is, by his smile? Hint: if you get stuck, try asking some of your older relatives or friends in the Church before checking your answer.



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY



JON CLARK

Hink Pink Think— the Sequel

Sure, you solved a bunch of these last month. But the only thing better than one round of groan-worthy pun puzzles is a second round. And you are oh, so equal to the challenge!

1. A small, painful bubble that forms on a female sibling's foot after she's walked and walked and walked in ill-fitting shoes.

2. A brain-teasing puzzle about a folksy violin.

3. Stealthily obtained thin strips of cured and smoked pork, cooked to the perfect sizzle.

4. A heated argument over how to spend the paper money set aside to buy handheld illumination devices for camping.

5. Ardent enthusiasm regarding the round, turning things on a wagon.

6. *Bonus:* A lesser-known, annual celebration where enthusiasts of mosquito repellant embrace one another to mark the occasion.



RYAN STOKER



"I am Super Turtle! Fear me, seventh deadly sin Sloth!" Andrew W.

"When your mom is proud of you for doing the dishes without her asking." Lauren P.

"That's right. I can go over 3 miles per hour." Peter H.

"Tintoretto, the 5th ninja turtle." Josh H.

"I won't be underestimated any longer!" Nina S.

Hero In a Hurry

Here are some of the top responses from the last caption contest. Be sure to check out last month's issue of the *New Era* for the current caption contest, then send in your best punchlines!

"Well, time to save the day again . . . super slowly!" Luke R.

"When your parents ask you to do something important." Mason R.

How do you know that Heavenly Father has forgiven you?



"When we choose to repent, we choose to change! We allow the Savior to transform us into the best version of ourselves. We choose to grow spiritually and receive joy—the joy of redemption in Him."

President Russell M. Nelson, "We Can Do Better and Be Better," April 2019 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 67).



Feeling the Spirit

I know I've been forgiven whenever I am able to feel the Spirit. Especially as a missionary, it's always

important to have the Spirit in our lives. If we're living righteously, we'll always have the Spirit with us, and He'll help us know our standing with God.

Elder Bakker, 23, Brazil Vitória Mission



Reassurance That Christ Is with Me

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus Christ endured all of the pains

and sins of the world so we could be forgiven of our sins and one day be worthy to enter the celestial kingdom. I feel forgiven when I feel a reassurance that Christ is with me and is touching me spiritually.

Alex H., 15, Idaho, USA

Responses may be edited for length or clarity. Published responses are intended for help and perspective, not as official pronouncements of Church doctrine.



Love and Happiness

I love the gift of repentance because I often feel an overwhelming sense of guilt and heartache whenever I

make a mistake. When I take the time to kneel down and ask my Heavenly Father for forgiveness with sincere intent, I am overcome with a strong feeling of love, peace, and happiness! I no longer feel alone, and that is how I know Heavenly Father has forgiven me.

Brynlee H., 17, Utah, USA

Peace in My Heart

Feeling peace in my heart is how I recognize I've been forgiven. I will always remember that I've done something wrong, but this helps me learn not to do it again. The Lord has made us a wonderful promise: "Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more" (Doctrine and Covenants 58:42).

David E., 19, Chihuahua, Mexico

What Do You Think?

"How can I use the gospel to help me overcome depression?"

Send your answer and photo by September 15, 2020.

Go to newera.ChurchofJesusChrist.org, click "Submit Your Work." Sign in with your Church Account and then select "New Era" under "Choose Magazine." Click "Add File" to select your file and photos, and then click "Submit" to upload and send us your file. Or send an email to newera@ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.



How can I gain a deeper testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith's First Vision?

This year, 2020, is the bicentennial of Joseph Smith's First Vision.

To deepen our testimony of this important event, we might:

- Read again Joseph Smith's account of the First Vision in Joseph Smith—History 1:1–26.
- Ponder questions such as, "How would my life be different if my knowledge gained from the Book of Mormon were suddenly taken away?" or "How have the events that followed the First Vision made a difference for me and my loved ones?" (see "Closing Remarks," Oct. 2019 general conference [*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 122]).
- Read about Joseph Smith's other reports of the First Vision (see "First Vision Accounts," Gospel Topics, topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
- Study the new proclamation on the Restoration and have its message written in your heart (see President Russell M. Nelson, "Hear Him," Apr. 2020 general conference [*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2020, 91–92]).
- Study talks from the April 2020 general conference, which commemorated the 200th anniversary of the First Vision.
- Bear testimony of the First Vision to someone.
- Pray for help in deepening your testimony of the First Vision. Through the Spirit, Heavenly Father will give you personalized counsel.



ROBOTS AND REREADING THE BOOK OF MORMON

WHEN PRESIDENT RUSSELL M. NELSON invited us sisters to read the Book of Mormon by the end of the year (“Sisters’ Participation in the Gathering of Israel,” Oct. 2018 general conference [*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 69]), I decided to try. I finally finished reading the Book of Mormon (for the first time on my own!) at 11:55 p.m. on December 31. Then I asked Heavenly Father if it was true. I didn’t really feel anything different, but I shrugged it off.

“I promise that as you prayerfully study the Book of Mormon *every day*, you will make better decisions—*every day*. . . . You will receive answers to your own questions and direction for your own life.”

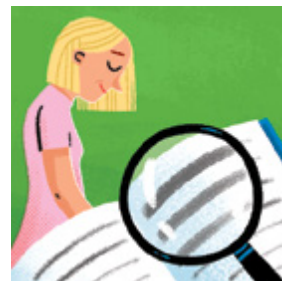
President Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?” Oct. 2017 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 62–63).

As time went on, though, I started getting a bit worried about not receiving an answer. I thought that eventually, I’d feel a *KABLAM*, and I’d just know it was true—but I never got that mind-blowing feeling. I finally reasoned that I might as well read the Book of Mormon again and see what happens. So I went back to 1 Nephi and started over.

At that time, I was a captain on my robotics team. When I’d sit down to read my scriptures, I was often worrying about some aspect of our team. But as I read the Book of Mormon, I began to see how it applied to my problems, and I started to recognize a pattern of the Lord’s hand helping me. It was a huge faith-building experience. I really did know the Book of Mormon was true; I just hadn’t realized it before.

Now I’m reading the Book of Mormon again. As you read it, you can come to know it’s true as well.

Katy B., Rhode Island, USA



What can I do if I don’t get an immediate answer?

1. Have patience and faith.

“Knowledge and understanding come at the price of patience.”

2. Keep actively seeking. Patience doesn’t mean waiting passively. So don’t stop doing all that you can—keep reading, keep praying, and keep hoping!

3. Trust in the Lord’s promises and timing. “The promises of the Lord, if perhaps not always swift, are always certain.” Trust that He will answer in His own time.

From President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, then-Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Continue in Patience,” Apr. 2010 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 56–59).

HIS NAME IS SACRED

ON THE FIRST DAY of history class, the teacher started telling some jokes. I laughed at first, but after a while, some of the jokes he told were kind of offensive and inappropriate. He also kept taking the Lord's name in vain. I started to feel uncomfortable. I knew that I wanted to stand up for what was right, but I had never done anything like that before.

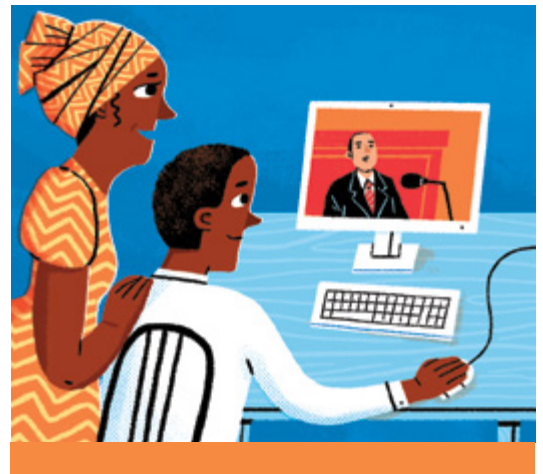
After class, my heart was pounding as I started toward the teacher's desk. I had never been more anxious in my life. I finally mustered the courage to speak. "Hey, I was wondering if you would mind not taking the Lord's name in vain. I would really appreciate it." I anxiously awaited his response.

"OK. What does it mean to take the Lord's name in vain?" he asked, crossing his arms and cocking his head.

My mind went blank. But suddenly words came out of my mouth that weren't my own: "Taking the Lord's name in vain is when you use His name causally in conversation. His name is sacred, so we should respect it."

He looked at me for a while, then simply said, "OK." I felt so happy and peaceful inside. I was so grateful Heavenly Father helped me to say what I needed to say. I'm glad that I stood up for what I believed.

Mosiah M., Utah, USA



BE READY TO SERVE HIM SOON

FROM THE DAY that I joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at age 13, I desired to serve the Lord as a full-time missionary.

I was doing all I could to make sure that I would be ready when the time came. I served in my quorums and callings, and I never stopped looking forward to the day that I would be called on a mission.

In a visit to the temple, I prayed to Heavenly Father and told Him that I wanted to serve a mission. I received an answer that I needed to be ready to serve Him soon. However, I still had two years before I would be old enough. I prayed again and got the same confirmation, but this time I felt that the time was closer than I thought.

One year later, the same month I turned 18, President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) announced that all worthy 18-year-old young men could go on missions. That very moment, I realized that President Monson was a living prophet of God.

I testify that prayers are answered. Our faith in God will grow when we pray and do as He directs us.

Promise O., Abia, Nigeria



How to Avoid Deception

By Elder Gary E. Stevenson

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

From an October 2019 general conference address.

During a visit with Great-Uncle Grover years ago, our two young boys wanted to go outside and play. Uncle Grover said to them, “Be careful—there are a lot of skunks out there.” The boys soon went outside to play.

On our way home, I asked, “Did you see a skunk?” One of them replied, “No, we didn’t see any skunks, but we did see a black kitty cat with a white stripe on its back!”

The boys were unaware that they had seen a skunk. This is a story of mistaken identity—presuming the real thing to be something else. Many today grapple with this same issue on a much larger scale.

Satan, the father of lies and the great deceiver, would have us question things as they really are and either ignore eternal truths or replace them with something that appears more pleasing. He has spent millennia practicing the ability to persuade God’s children to believe that good is evil and evil is good.

The Lord has provided a way for us to resist challenges and temptations, many of which come as a direct result of the deceitful influences of the adversary and his attacks.

The way is simple. God communed with prophets in past ages and gave them commandments designed to lead His children to happiness in this life and glory in the next. God continues to give commandments to our living prophet today.

Obedience to commandments given to our prophet is a key not only in avoiding the influence of the deceiver but also in experiencing lasting joy and happiness.

However, the adversary seeks to trick you. He disguises the destructive consequences of illicit drugs or drinking and instead suggests that it will bring pleasure. He immerses us in the various negative elements that can exist in social media, including debilitating comparisons and idealized reality. In addition, he camouflages other dark, harmful content found online—such as pornography, blatant attacks on others through cyberbullying, and misinformation to cause doubt and fear in our hearts and minds.

May we recognize Satan’s deceptions for what they are. We must continue to be faithful and vigilant, for so is the only way to discern truth and to hear the voice of the Lord through His servants. As we obey the Lord’s commandments, we will always be led in the right way and will not be deceived. **NE**

Captain Moroni

Didn't like violence but **fought to protect** his people.



Created the title of liberty **in memory of God, freedom, and family** (see Alma 46:12).

Mormon said that if everyone were like Moroni, the **powers of hell would be shaken forever** (see Alma 48:17).



Was a **brilliant military strategist**—he prepared his people with armor and built forts that astonished the Lamanites (see Alma 43, 49, 50).

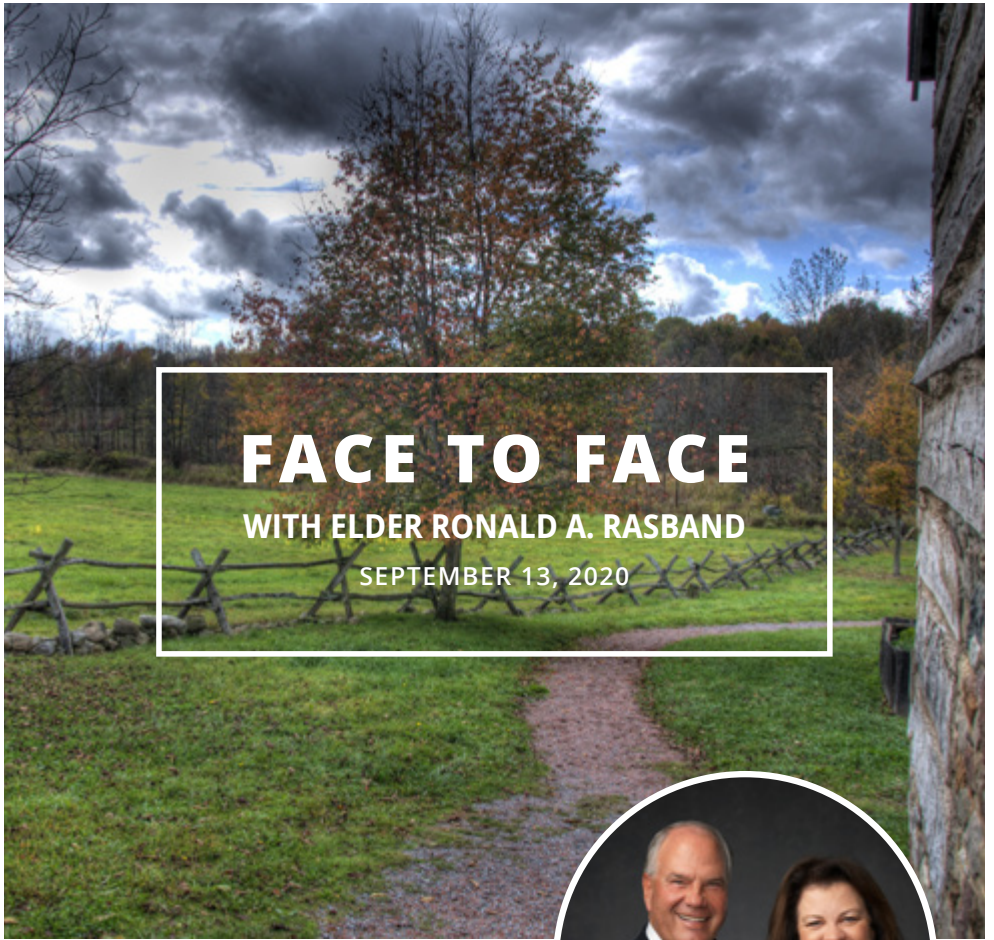


Helped **end a rebellion** (see Alma 62).



Became **chief captain** over all the Nephite armies when he was 25 (see Alma 43:17).





FACE TO FACE

WITH ELDER RONALD A. RASBAND

SEPTEMBER 13, 2020



JOIN ELDER RASBAND AND HIS WIFE in a special event from the birthplace of the Restoration. Broadcast live from Palmyra, New York, on Sunday, September 13, 2020. *For young adults and youth ages 17 and up.*

