

THE **New Era**

DECEMBER 2012

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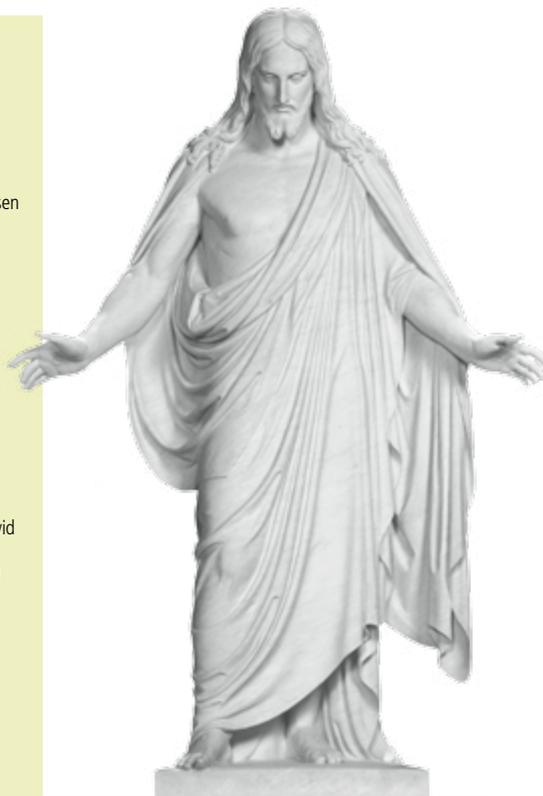
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THE MONTHLY YOUTH MAGAZINE
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OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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CHRIST, OUR HOPE



**By President
Dieter F. Uchtdorf**

Second Counselor
in the First Presidency

*Because of the
life and sacrifice
of Jesus Christ,
we may hope
and be assured
that the ending
of the book of our
lives will exceed
our grandest
expectations.*



See a Video

Watch a short
Mormon Messages
video about this topic at
lds.org/go/122A.



Hope is one leg of a three-legged stool, together with faith and charity. These three stabilize our lives regardless of the rough or uneven surfaces we might encounter at the time. The scriptures are clear and certain about the importance of hope.

I wish to speak of the hope that transcends the trivial and centers on the Hope of Israel,¹ the great hope of mankind, even our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

What We Hope For, What We Hope In

The things we hope *for* are often future events. If only we could look beyond the horizon of mortality into what awaits us beyond this life. Is it possible to imagine a more glorious future than the one prepared for us by our Heavenly Father? Because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we need not fear, for we will live forever, never to taste of death again.² Because of His infinite Atonement, we can be cleansed of sin and stand pure and holy before the judgment bar.³ The Savior is the Author of our Salvation.⁴

And what kind of existence can we hope for? Those who come unto Christ, repent of their sins, and live in faith will reside forever in peace. Think of the worth of this eternal gift. Surrounded by those we love, we will know the meaning of ultimate joy as we progress in knowledge and in happiness. No matter how bleak the chapter of our lives may look today, because of the life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we may hope and be assured that the ending of the book of our lives will exceed our grandest expectations.

The things we hope *in* sustain us during our daily walk. They uphold us through trials, temptations, and sorrow. Everyone has experienced discouragement and difficulty. Indeed, there are times when the darkness may seem unbearable. It is in these times that the divine principles of the restored gospel we hope *in* can uphold us and carry us until, once again, we walk in the light.

We hope in Jesus the Christ, in the goodness of God, in the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, in the knowledge that prayers are heard and answered. This type of hope in God, His goodness, and His power refreshes us with

courage during difficult challenges and gives strength to those who feel threatened by enclosing walls of fear, doubt, and despair.

Hope is critical to both faith and charity. When disobedience, disappointment, and procrastination erode faith, hope is there to uphold our faith. When frustration and impatience challenge charity, hope braces our resolve and urges us to care for our fellowmen even without expectation of reward. The brighter our hope, the greater our faith. The stronger our hope, the purer our charity.

The things we hope *for* lead us to faith, while the things we hope *in* lead us to charity. The three qualities—faith, hope, and charity⁵—working together, grounded on the truth and light of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, lead us to abound in good works.⁶

Never Give Up Hope

Hope sustains us through despair. Hope teaches that there is reason to rejoice even when all seems dark around us.

With Nephi I declare: “Press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.”⁷

This is the quality of hope we must cherish and develop. Such a mature hope comes in and through our Savior Jesus Christ.

To all who suffer—to all who feel discouraged, worried, or lonely—I say with love and deep concern for you, never give in.

Never surrender.

Never allow despair to overcome your spirit.

Embrace and rely upon the Hope of Israel, for the love of the Son of God pierces all darkness, softens all sorrow, and gladdens every heart. **NE**

From the general conference address “The Infinite Power of Hope,” Ensign, Nov. 2008, 21–24.

NOTES

1. See Jeremiah 17:13.

2. See Alma 11:45.

3. See 2 Nephi 2:6–10.

4. See Hebrews 5:9.

5. See Moroni 10:20.

6. See Alma 7:24.

7. 2 Nephi 31:20.

Despite the prodigal son's fears, he returned home to find that his father loved him as much as he always had.

By Christopher Fosse

There's no way around it; the world can sometimes seem pretty scary. All it takes is a glance through a newspaper or a few minutes watching the evening news to start to feel as though everything is going from bad to worse. Likewise, when faced with personal challenges and the choices we'll need to make as we grow older, we sometimes let our fear paralyze us. Thankfully, as members of the Church, we have resources that can help drive away the anxiety and doubt that naturally come when we face the uncertainty of the future. The words of ancient and modern prophets allow us to see things from a more eternal perspective.

The scriptures and general conference addresses, when we study them in faith, can give us something that will help drive away fear and lead us to a brighter future. The scriptures give us hope.

Here are a few scripture stories to remember whenever you feel afraid or distressed.

Scriptural Messages of

HOPE

Examples from the scriptures show how Jesus Christ can lift you up during trying times.



The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–24)

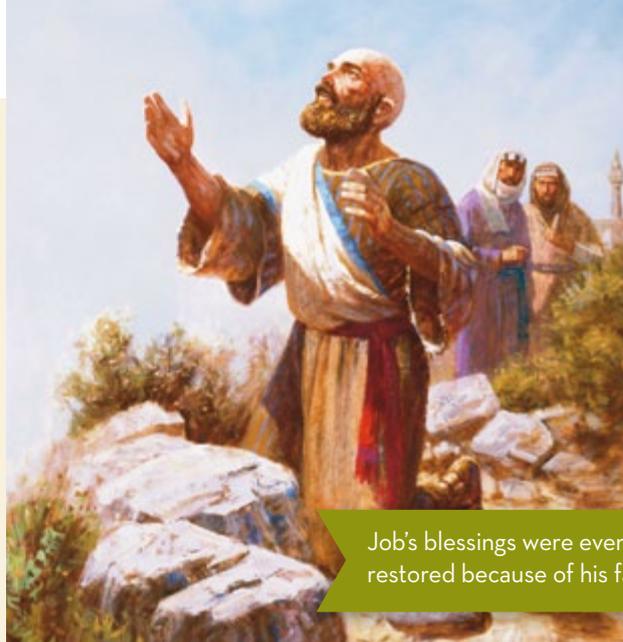
Sometimes we stray from the path of righteousness. Maybe we've made a bad choice and are still being hampered by the consequences. Maybe we've become lazy in keeping our covenants. Whatever the case, it's easy to become discouraged. The way back home may seem daunting.

As with all mortal pains, the Savior understands this feeling and wants to teach us how to overcome it. In His parable of the prodigal son, Jesus Christ described a young man who had made many bad choices. Eventually he saw that his choices had made him unhappy, and he longed for a chance to repent and return to his family. However, he was afraid his family would not be willing to forgive him. Despite his fears, he did return to his family and was shocked to discover that his father loved him just as much as he always had.

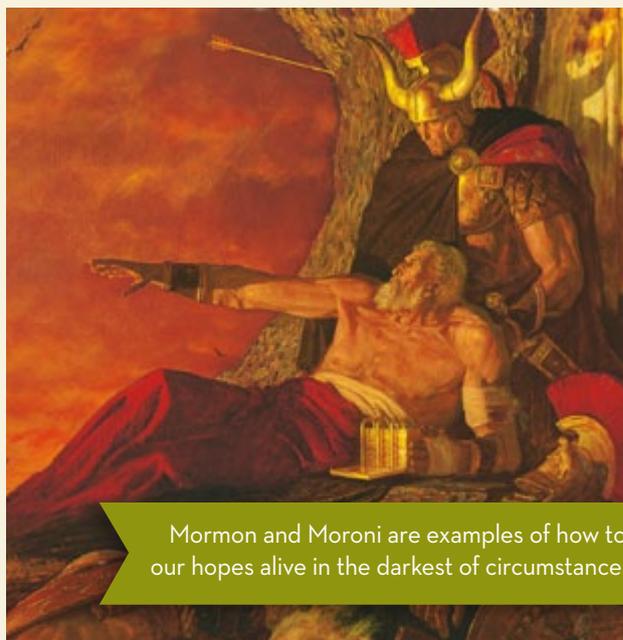
The Savior wants each of us to know that forgiveness is attainable. It might be difficult to make your way back home to Him, but when you do, He will welcome you with joy and love. He wants you back. This understanding—that we can be forgiven and return to our Father in Heaven—is central to the entire plan of salvation (see M. Russell Ballard, “That the Lost May Be Found” *Ensign*, May 2012, 97–100).

The Life of Job (Job 1–42)

Not all of our trials are a result of our own transgressions. Sometimes the Lord allows challenges to come upon us so that we can be strengthened by overcoming them. The Old Testament tells the story of a man who had everything he could possibly want, and then it was all taken away. Job's challenges were bad enough that even his friends and family lost hope for him. His wife even said, “Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die” (Job 2:9). Instead, Job took comfort in his faith. Even after losing everything, Job maintained his hope that eventually everything would be OK, whether in this life or the next. Because of his faith, all of his blessings were eventually restored.



Job's blessings were eventually restored because of his faith.



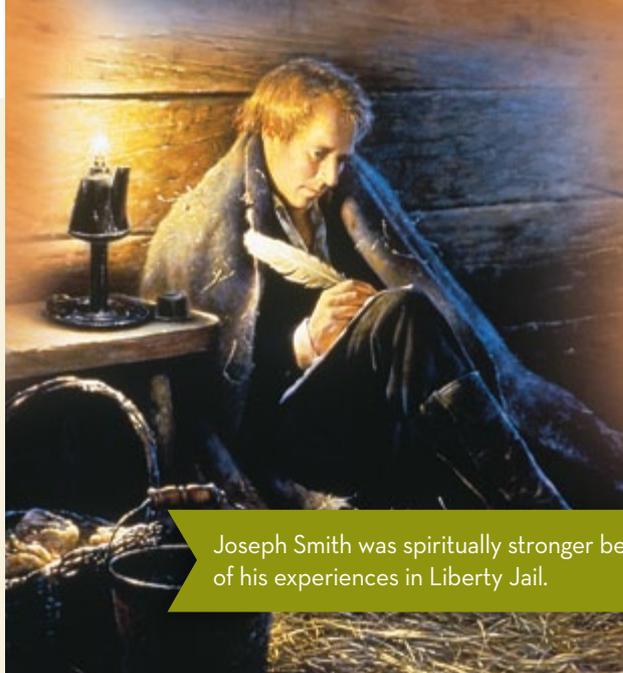
Mormon and Moroni are examples of how to keep our hopes alive in the darkest of circumstances.

Mormon and Moroni's Hope (Mormon 1–2, 7; Moroni 9)

If we ever feel like we live in a world that embraces evil, then we have some small idea what Mormon and his son Moroni must have felt. As the final contributors to the Book of Mormon record, they witnessed their once-great civilization fall into total chaos and horror. In an epistle to his son, Mormon described some of the Nephites' and Lamanites' abhorrent crimes. Nevertheless, Mormon reaffirmed his hope. He had faith in the integrity of his son, and he had hope that although the people might be lost, their descendants might one day be saved through the power of the Lord. Through their conviction, these two great prophets gave us an example of how to keep our hopes alive in even the darkest of circumstances.

Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail (D&C 122)

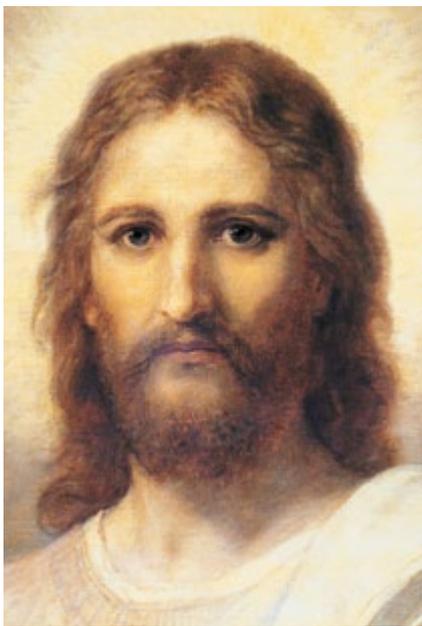
Joseph Smith, the Prophet of the Restoration, learned much about the nature of hope during his life. From his earliest records, we see that he was willing to meet his own challenges with confidence in his Savior and faith in the work. However, the Prophet and several of his friends were unjustly imprisoned in the miserable darkness of Liberty Jail. During their incarceration they were starved, abused, and constantly threatened with death. They were mocked, poisoned, and forced to listen to the drunken boasts of jailors who had harmed members of the Church. Joseph described the place as “hell.” But it was in that terrible place that Joseph received a revelation that would forever change him. Cutting through Joseph’s misery, the Lord gave him comfort. Compassionately He reminded Joseph of the Atonement and added, “The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?” (D&C 122:8). Joseph was a different man when he emerged from the jail, one who was spiritually stronger because of his experiences. Five years later, as the Prophet faced his martyrdom, he retained this lesson of hope. He allowed himself to be led “like a lamb to the slaughter” (D&C 135:4), knowing that the Savior’s Atonement would bear him up in the end.



Joseph Smith was spiritually stronger because of his experiences in Liberty Jail.

In each of these examples we can see that hope and faith go hand in hand. Each builds up the other. Through faith in Heavenly Father and the Atonement of His Son, Jesus Christ, we can gain hope to drive away despair. So if you’re afraid, take a step back and remind yourself of these stories from the scriptures. Remember these words from the Book of Mormon:

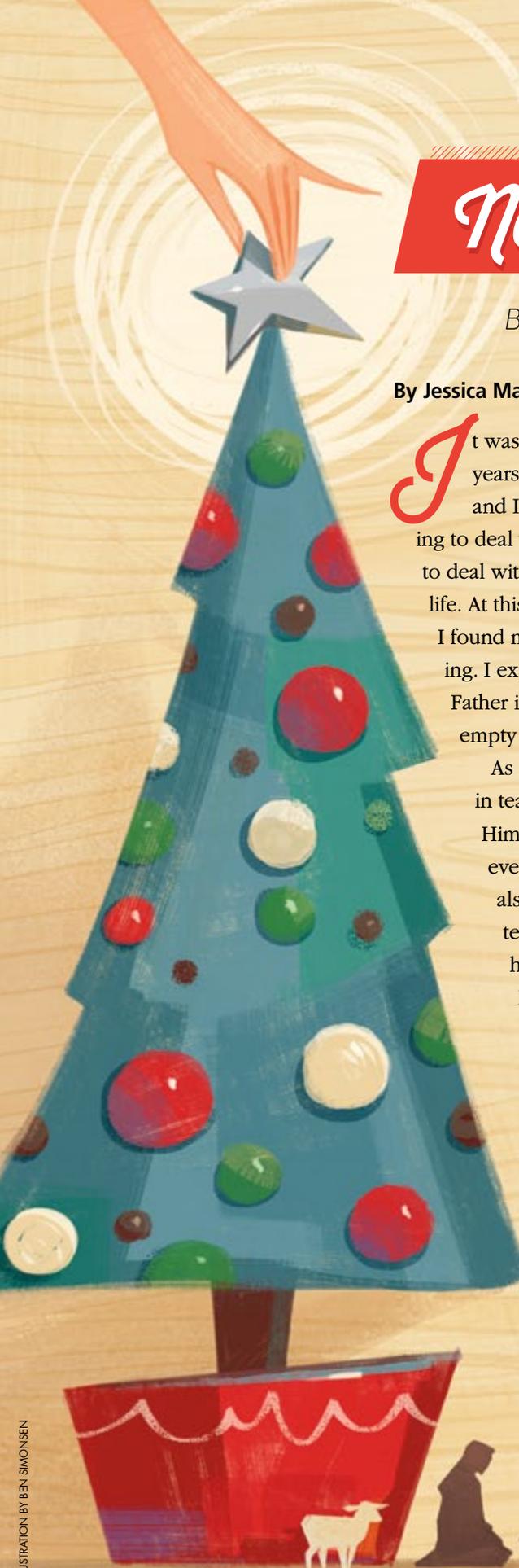
“Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God” (Ether 12:4). **NE**



We Believe in **CHRIST**

As you consider messages of hope found in the scriptures and in the words of modern prophets, remember that our hope comes because of Jesus Christ, and we have the responsibility to bear witness of Him. People who have only a brief acquaintance with the Church may not know that we believe in Christ. We can help others know

that we are Christians (see 2 Nephi 25:26). The best way to let others know what we believe is to bear testimony. When we share our feelings about the Savior in a loving and nonconfrontational way and live worthy as followers of Jesus Christ, the Spirit can touch the hearts of those who are ready to feel it.



Now There Is Hope

*Because of what happened on that first Christmas,
I received the ultimate gift.*

By Jessica Martin

It was Christmastime, and I was 17 years old. My parents had divorced, and I had many stresses that I was trying to deal with. Each day it seemed harder to deal with the simple tasks of everyday life. At this time, when hope seemed lost, I found myself at the seminary building. I explained my frustrations to my Father in Heaven on my knees in an empty classroom.

As I spoke to my Heavenly Father in tears, I felt impressed to thank Him for the beauty of the day and even for the struggles I was facing. I also talked with a caring seminary teacher and asked for a priesthood blessing from my bishop. I began to study the scriptures more thoroughly and read other good literature by our modern-day prophets.

Finally, as I was putting up a humble, two-foot-tall Christmas tree in my room, I placed on top of it a shining silver star that my mother had given me. As I placed it

there, I looked and saw a Mormonad poster with a picture of the Savior that simply said, “Now There Is Hope.” I looked from the star and then back to the painting of the Savior. It suddenly made sense to me. Because of what happened on that first Christmas, because of my Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, there was now hope.

I began thinking of all the gifts Heavenly Father had given me, and joy began to fill my heart. I was grateful and began thanking Him for my trials. I began to view my struggles as gifts given to me to strengthen me, and I thanked Heavenly Father for trusting me enough to give me these trials to overcome.

As I listened to the song “Joy to the World,” I let my mind dwell upon the line “Let earth receive her King!” (*Hymns*, no. 201).

I finally started to understand and receive in my heart the gift of Jesus Christ, the Savior, who paid the ultimate price. This is the gift I received that Christmas. **NE**

Get the Mormonad

Download and print the “Now There Is Hope” Mormonad at lds.org/go/122B.

Teens in Indiana have discovered that service makes a big difference for everyone in the long run.



SEASON OF SERVICE

By David A. Edwards
Church Magazines

When Nick H. was thinking about ideas for an Eagle Scout project, he knew he wanted to do something meaningful and personal—something that represented a unique contribution from him.

“I remember sitting on my couch in my living room and thinking, ‘We all have talents

and skills and abilities. How can we use those gifts from Heavenly Father to bless the lives of others?’” says Nick, 19. As this question went through his head, he thought of his love of running and then asked himself how he could combine serving others with running.



And thus was born an event that has become an annual Christmastime tradition in Nick's community in southern Indiana.

For his Eagle Scout project, Nick organized a 5K run and partnered with a local charity that helps fulfill the needs and Christmas wishes of disadvantaged children. Those who signed up for the race received information about specific children's needs and pledged to fill them. Through an arrangement with a local store, racers could also get discount prices on the items they purchased for the children. In addition, Nick organized donations for a Christmas dinner at his ward's meetinghouse for the families of the children, who would be presented with their gifts there.

Youth in Charge

About 15 runners participated in Nick's Eagle Scout project four years ago. But everyone who participated felt it was so worthwhile that it should be held again the next year. A nonprofit organization was created, and the event has been held each year since. Both Latter-day Saint youth and non-LDS youth have organized the event, which had 300 participants last year, as well as a great deal of community support, including offers from other local churches to host the dinner.

Julia G., 14, who helped organize the event last year, points out that "this is a great organization to serve with because you do it with other youth."

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JENNIFER MCNEELY AND DAVID A. EDWARDS



Nick



Jessica



Luke



Julia

Jessica S., 18, who took on the leadership of last year's event, says, "I never realized just how much actually went into making this come about. If you're 'anxiously engaged in a good cause' [D&C 58:27], you're excited and anxious and stressed sometimes, but it's all worth it because you're doing it for a good cause."

During this time last year, Jessica had a testimony-building experience as she faced a personal challenge. After agreeing to be in charge of organizing the Christmas service project, she learned that her father had been diagnosed with cancer. She wondered if she ought to back out of the event, but she went ahead, she says, because "I had received a confirmation from the Spirit that this service was what I was supposed to do. This experience has taught me about serving others and relying on the Lord in your trials. I've gained a stronger testimony of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and that He suffered for my pains. When I was having a hard time, I was able to find thoughts of peace through the gospel."

Other lessons have come through this service as well. For Nick, who is now serving a mission in Honduras, the story of this Eagle project that grew into so much more is a lesson about what youth can accomplish. "I've noticed the fire of the youth spirit," he says. "It doesn't set boundaries. It doesn't say, 'Oh, this isn't possible.' Teens are innovative, they're creative, they're young, they're vivacious. When they have a righteous goal and have the right mindset, they're going to accomplish it."

Julia's brother Luke G., 18, has been touched by seeing what can happen for the youth themselves when they choose to serve

others. "As youth, we don't always choose what's best for us," says Luke. "Choosing to do something good can make the biggest difference in your life. Just choosing to be involved, even if it's just for a couple of hours at the run or the dinner, can change your whole outlook on life."

Blessings All Around

All of these youth have noticed that service brings blessings both to those who are being served and to those who are serving.

"There's the scripture that says, 'When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God' [Mosiah 2:17]," says Julia. "And my dad has always told me that whenever you're serving others, you're not only helping them, but you're helping yourself. I think that's very true, because serving other people helps you get through your struggles also. I know that service is very important and changes people's lives."

Nick, quoting one of his favorite hymns, says, "'Because I have been given much, I too must give' [*Hymns*, no. 219]. We've been given many blessings and have a responsibility to serve. We're able to learn so much and grow through helping others. It's magnificent how many blessings we receive just from our willingness to serve others."

"I know there are times where I can be selfish or self-centered," says Luke. "But this project gives us an opportunity to do something that not only changes hundreds of children's lives but also our own through serving and leading others."

Coming to Christ through Service

Luke remembers the first time he saw the



A PERFECT EXAMPLE

“There is no better time than now,

this very Christmas season, for all of us to rededicate ourselves to the principles taught by Jesus Christ.

“Because He came to earth, we have a perfect example to follow. As we strive to become more like Him, we will have joy and happiness in our lives and peace each day of the year. It is His example which, if followed, stirs within us more kindness and love, more respect and concern for others.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Because He Came” (First Presidency Christmas Devotional, Dec. 4, 2011), <http://broadcast.lds.org>.

smiles on the children’s faces at the Christmas dinner. He thinks it’s the first time he ever really felt the Christmas spirit. “I don’t think I’d ever cried before because of the Christmas spirit.”

As President David O. McKay said, “The Christmas spirit is the Christ spirit” (*Gospel Ideals* [1953], 551). And these youth have felt the Spirit of Christ through their service.

“I think it’s important to do whatever it takes to be an example of Christ,” says Julia, “to show His love and share His love with everybody.”

Nick has discovered that a life of service has given him a new point of view. “It’s definitely changed my mindset,

my view on people,” he says. “It’s helped me see others the way that Christ sees us, to see the potential in people and the power of hope.”

Through her experiences, Jessica has gained a deeper sense of the purpose of service and what charity really means. “When you think of charity according to the world’s standards, you think of just giving. But we’re taught that ‘charity is the pure love of Christ’ [Moroni 7:47], and when we are showing charity, we are spreading the love of Christ, especially throughout this Christmas season. We’re being examples of Christ through service.” **NE**

1 Corinthians 15:20–22

In these verses the Apostle Paul declares that Christ's Resurrection means that all shall rise again.

now live and one day will die, and those yet to be born and yet to die had just been rescued.

“As the result of Christ’s victory over the grave, we shall all be resurrected. This is the redemption of the soul.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “He Is Not Here, but Is Risen,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2011, 4.

20 But now is ^aChrist ^brisen from the dead, *and* become the ^cfirstfruits of them that slept.

21 For since by man *came* ^adeath, by man *came* also the ^bresurrection of the dead.

22 For as in ^aAdam all ^bdie, even so in ^cChrist shall all be made ^dalive.

Firstfruits of Them That Slept

Firstfruits—the fruits, vegetables, and grains that ripen earliest in the harvest.

Under the law of Moses, the firstfruits were offered as a holy sacrifice to the Lord to show gratitude and devotion. Since the firstfruits are a sign that the harvest has begun and many more crops are yet to come, the Apostle Paul is saying that Jesus Christ was the first from among the dead (“them that slept”) to rise again and that many more will yet be resurrected.



In Christ Shall All Be Made Alive

“I wonder if we fully appreciate the enormous significance of

our belief in a literal, universal resurrection. The assurance of immortality is fundamental to our faith. . . .

“In our eternal journey, the resurrection is the mighty milepost that signifies the end of mortality and the beginning of immortality. . . . We also know, from modern revelation, that without the reuniting of our spirits and our bodies in the resurrection we could not receive a ‘fulness of joy’ (D&C 93:33–34).”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Resurrection,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 15.

As in Adam All Die

Because Adam and Eve fell, all humankind must endure physical death (see 2 Nephi 9:6; Moses 6:48).

Editors’ note: This page is not meant to be a comprehensive explanation of the selected scripture, only a starting point for your own study.



Now Is Christ Risen from the Dead

“No words in Christendom mean more to me than those

spoken by the angel to the weeping Mary Magdalene and the other Mary as they approached the tomb to care for the body of their Lord: ‘Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen’ (Luke 24:5–6).

“With this pronouncement, those who have lived and died, those who



FEEDING THOSE WHO HUNGER

Through small means we were able to meet great needs—both physical and spiritual.

By Dallin C. Wilcox

In December 2004, I was serving as a full-time missionary in Lins, São Paulo, Brazil. The local ward and branch decided to participate in Brazil's annual "Natal sem Fome" (Christmas without Hunger) program. Teaming up with several other entities—including soldiers from the Brazilian army, mail carriers, and members of other faiths—we passed through several neighborhoods collecting food that would later be given to the needy of the city. We also used this as a great opportunity to give out pass-along cards, or "friendship cards" as we called them. About 2,000 cards were given out.

Many of the members commented on the great feelings they had felt as they served and shared the spirit of Christmas under the hot Brazilian sun. It was an impressive sight to see the soldiers handing out pass-along cards from a church they didn't even belong to.

One week later we received 127 requests for the *Joy to*

the World Christmas DVD featuring the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. The next week we received 22 more. My companion and I started teaching these people and were able to enter into many homes as a result of this project.

I will never forget the joy and love of that special project, when we helped spread the gospel and bring relief to many families' hunger. Both spiritual and physical hunger were lessened.

I know that through small and simple things (such as a pass-along card) many great and wonderful things (such as the salvation of the souls of men) come to pass. This experience was evidence that many opportunities surround us during Christmas and other seasons to bring forth this marvelous work and a wonder. **NE**



Your Own Opportunities

The *Joy to the World* DVD and pass-along cards for the DVD are available at store.lds.org.

“How do I answer my friends’ questions about the temple when I don’t know much about it myself?”

It’s difficult to talk about something you don’t understand, and there’s a lot we can’t understand about the temple until we are able to go there ourselves. Outside the temple we are careful in how we discuss temple ordinances because they are sacred. However, we can still talk about the blessings and purposes of the temple. We can tell our friends that in the temple, members learn eternal truths, receive sacred ordinances for themselves, and perform these ordinances on behalf of their ancestors and others who are deceased.

The more you know about temples, the better prepared you will be to answer your friends’ questions. To learn more, talk to your parents or Church leaders. You and your friends can also read the special issue of the *Ensign* on temples (October 2010) and find answers at Mormon.org under “Temples” in Frequently Asked Questions.

You can also share how you feel about the temple. If you have been in the temple to do baptisms or have been on the temple grounds, you can tell your friends about the feeling of peace you had while there.

If your friends ask why the temple isn’t open to everyone, you can explain that because of the sacred work that goes on in the temple, only those who are spiritually prepared and have a valid temple recommend can enter. Before new temples are dedicated, an open house allows people in the community to tour the temple and learn more about it. After the temple is dedicated, anyone can tour the grounds. If possible, invite your friend to a temple open house or to visit the temple grounds with you. **NE**

Be Temple Worthy



I would tell my friends what the temple represents for me: happiness, strength, sacrifice, and eternal families. I would explain how to stay worthy. If they can see that I live my life with the temple as one of my most important goals, they will feel the power of the temple. Everyone can see the outward beauty of the temple, but by living my life the right way, I can show my friends the hope and happiness that going inside the temple brings.

Emma R., 18, Utah, USA

Invite Your Friends to Learn More



Tell your friends all you know—as long as it is appropriate. Tell them we don’t discuss some things about the temple because they are sacred. If they ask something you don’t know, tell them honestly that you don’t know. And if they want to know more, invite them to church and tell them that God blesses those who keep His commandments with more spiritual knowledge. We believe in learning spiritual things line upon line, precept upon precept.

Carmela B., 18, Philippines

Pray for the Spirit to Prompt Your Answer



To answer my friends’ questions, I first pray to Heavenly Father about what to say. It may take a lot of patience, but it is worth waiting for the Spirit to prompt you in what to say. Second, go to church and to the temple baptistry to receive more spiritual knowledge. When my friend asked questions about the temple, I told her

that baptisms are done for our deceased ancestors who didn't have a chance to be part of the gospel while they were alive. Then in heaven they have the choice to accept or reject the ordinance.

Lydia P., 13, Florida, USA

Invite Your Friends to Meet the Missionaries

When friends ask me about the temple, I say that it is the house of the Lord, where we can do special ordinances that keep us close to our Heavenly Father and make it possible for us to return to Him. I also ask my friends if they would like to meet with the missionaries to learn more. If they say no, I write down their questions and ask the missionaries myself. Then I let my friends know what I found out. This way I get to learn more about the temple too.

Kimie H., 13, Montana, USA

Show Pictures of Temples



I love to read books that show temples from around the world. When I had a friend ask me about temples,

I knew that my explanation wasn't enough to help her understand. So I brought my books on temples and showed her what the temple is, the purpose of the temple, and how thankful we are to visit the temple. I decided to invite her to church on Sunday, where the missionaries

and Sunday School teachers could help her learn more.

Jessica A., 18, Indonesia

Talk to Your Parents



Search for answers. Read the scriptures and ask Sunday School teachers. Questions can always be answered;

all you have to do is look. Pray about it! When I have questions about the temple, I ask my parents. They are easy to talk to and are willing to help.

Bryson B., 18, Utah, USA

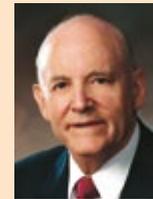
Go to the Temple

If we try to go to the temple as often as we can, we are able to connect with our Heavenly Father better. That means that we can pray to Him about our friends' questions. If we don't know that much about the temple, it means we need to study

more. Each time before going to the temple, study and pray about what you should think about while at the temple. We can then answer questions like "What is the feeling you have at the temple?"

Sara T., 14, Idaho, USA

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



HOLINESS TO THE LORD

"The temple is a place of beauty, it is a place of revelation, it is a place of peace. It is the house of the Lord. It is holy unto the Lord. It should be holy unto us."

President Howard W. Hunter (1907-95), "The Great Symbol of Our Membership," *Ensign*, Oct. 1994, 5.

NEXT QUESTION

"How can I resist temptation?"

Send your answer and photo by January 15, 2013.

Go to newera.lds.org and click "Submit Material."

You can also write to us at newera@ldschurch.org or

New Era, Q&A, temptation
50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.

WHAT ABOUT *Dating?*



By Larry M. Gibson

First Counselor in the Young Men General Presidency

Spending face-to-face time with other people is necessary to build true friendships.

As I have had the privilege to talk with young men and young women throughout the Church, I have often heard that while a great many of you are interested in building better friendships with those of the opposite sex, you often struggle with knowing exactly how to make that happen.

It would seem that with all of the social media, we should easily be better connected than ever before. In ways, however, technology may be causing us to have relationships that are less meaningful. Merely tweeting, texting, e-mailing, and friending cannot genuinely create a well-rounded relationship. Spending real face-to-face time with other people is necessary to build true friendships.

It is time for you, our wonderful youth, to bring back the old definition for when young men and young women get together for a social experience. You may have heard the term; this experience was once referred to as a date.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Many of you have questions regarding dating and the counsel given in the new *For the*

Strength of Youth pamphlet. Here are some of the questions I have been asked, along with answers from this wonderful guidebook.

I'm not sure if I'm ready to date. Are there any special reasons why I should?

Dating is relevant for a number of reasons. *For the Strength of Youth* explains that a date “allows a young man and a young woman to get to know each other better. In cultures where dating is acceptable, it can help you learn and practice social skills, develop friendships, have wholesome fun, and eventually find an eternal companion.”¹

We hear that we should not date before we are 16 and never date anyone seriously while we are young. Why?

For the Strength of Youth says: “You should not date until you are at least 16 years old. When you begin dating, go with one or more additional couples. Avoid going on frequent dates with the same person. Developing serious relationships too early in life can limit the number of other people you meet and can perhaps lead to immorality.”²

A young man wants me to go on a date, but I don't really feel like he has my same standards. What should I do?

For the Strength of Youth teaches: “Choose to date only those who have high moral standards and in whose company you can maintain your standards. . . . Always be kind and respectful when you ask for a date or when you accept or decline one.”³

Sometimes I can't think of any ideas for dates besides watching a movie. What should I do?



SHARE YOUR STORY

Do you have an experience with applying counsel from these guidelines in *For the Strength of Youth*?

- Service
- Sexual purity
- Tithes and offerings
- Work and self-reliance

Please e-mail your experience to newera@ldschurch.org with "For the Strength of Youth" in the subject line. Include your full name, birth date, ward and stake, and parent's permission (by e-mail) to print your response.

For the Strength of Youth gives these helpful principles: "Plan dating activities that are safe, positive, and inexpensive and that will help you get to know each other. Go only to places where you can maintain your standards and remain close to the Spirit."⁴

Those four simple criteria—dates that are safe, positive, inexpensive, and where the Spirit remains close—leave room for many great dates.

As I have reflected with my wife on our early dating experiences, those that stand out most were the times when there was little or no cost, when we were with at least one other couple, and when we were able to have meaningful conversations and interaction.

Protecting Each Other's Virtue

Let me conclude with another important quote from *For the Strength of Youth* and then one last point. First, "Remember that a young man and a young woman on a date are responsible to protect each other's honor and virtue."⁵ As you go on dates, make sure to do nothing of which you would ever be ashamed. As President Thomas S. Monson

taught, "In dating, treat your date with respect, and expect your date to show that same respect for you."⁶

The Difference between Dating and Courting

Finally, although some have defined *dating* as "courting," dating in the Church among youth does not imply that they are "going steady" or can date no others. By Church standards, dating is intended to be a chance for social relationships that can establish many friendships.

As you enter your adult years—after missions for young men—then the Lord says, "Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:11). This is the time that dating becomes courting as stressed in *For the Strength of Youth*: "Make dating and marriage a high priority. Seek a companion who is worthy to go to the temple to be sealed to you for time and all eternity. Marrying in the temple and creating an eternal family are essential in God's plan of happiness."⁷ **NE**

NOTES

1. *For the Strength of Youth* (2011), 4.
2. *For the Strength of Youth*, 4.
3. *For the Strength of Youth*, 4–5.
4. *For the Strength of Youth*, 4.
5. *For the Strength of Youth*, 4.
6. Thomas S. Monson, "Standards of Strength," *New Era*, Oct. 2008, 5.
7. *For the Strength of Youth*, 5.



STANDING UP for 16

Name withheld

Even my friends were making fun of me. What could I do?

In my first year of high school, I rode the bus every morning with my friends. As we traveled to school, we chatted about our teachers, test scores, and our latest crushes. When I turned 16, some of my friends from church who were still 15 wished they could start dating like many of the other people our age.

One day someone said, “I know we’re supposed to wait until we’re 16 to date, but my parents told me I am old enough to decide for myself.”

Another said, “If it’s just asking someone to a dance, it’s not really a date. It’s just having fun with friends.”

My friends turned to me and asked what I thought. Suddenly, I had to decide whether to stand up for this Church standard. At the risk

of sounding self-righteous, I told my friends I had decided not to date before 16 based on the guidelines of the Church because I felt they were there to help us.

A young man declared, “Yeah, but they’re just guidelines. They’re not commandments.”

Even some of my closest friends started making fun of me for thinking the Church standards were so important. I was hurt, and I felt alone.

The entire day, I couldn’t

get the mean words out of my head. Finally, at home I knelt down to pray. As I sat there crying and praying, I felt prompted to read my scriptures. I started to read where I’d last left off:

“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. . . . If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:19–20).

I pondered these scriptures and thought how Christ always stood for what was right, yet He was still persecuted. Suddenly, I felt enveloped by the love of my Heavenly Father. I felt a warmth and comfort in my heart. In that moment, I knew God exists and that Christ’s Atonement is real. I knew I would be OK.

My friends didn’t stop teasing me. In fact, some people made fun of me even more. But I didn’t care. I knew that the standards come from living prophets and that God loves me. “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake” (Matthew 5:10). **NE**



More on Dating

Read more on dating in the *New Era* special issue “Dating for Beginners” at lds.org/go/122C.



BIKE BREAKDOWN

WE WERE HAVING A GREAT TIME,
BUT MY FRIEND AND I BOTH FELT
IT WAS TIME TO LEAVE.

By Chase McPhie

You know the scripture in 2 Nephi 32:5, where Nephi tells us, “The Holy Ghost . . . will show unto [us] all things what [we] should do”? I never really understood that statement until I experienced it.

Some friends and I were out on our bikes one afternoon at a place called the “dirt hills.” It was our favorite place to go. We went there almost every day. It was only about a mile from where we lived, so we

could ride our bikes there. We could literally spend hours on end at the dirt hills, jumping our bikes. It was great fun.

One time when we were there, my friend Tyler crashed his bike. He and his bike seemed to be OK, so we kept jumping. After about five more minutes, I stopped my bike. Tyler came over and asked what was wrong. I told him I had a really strong feeling that we should leave and go home. I felt kind of weird

saying that because we had only been there about 15 minutes. But Tyler told me he felt the same feeling. I knew it was time to go.



LISTEN TO THE SPIRIT

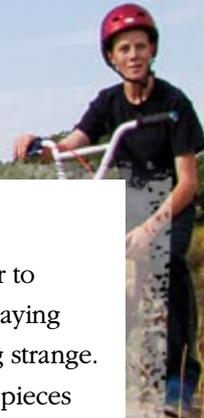
“It is important that our daily activities do not distract us from listening to the Spirit.”

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “How to Obtain Revelation and Inspiration for Your Personal Life,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 46.

As we got closer to home, Tyler kept saying his bike was acting strange. Then it broke into pieces as we reached the corner of the street where we both lived. The pedals fell off and the chain broke.

What would have happened had we not followed the prompting to leave? The Holy Ghost knew it was time to go. He showed us that it was time.

I am so thankful we listened to the Spirit when we did. **NE**



DO I EVEN HAVE A *Testimony?*

One experience during a testimony meeting gave me a lot to think about.

By Hugh Cole

During a recent fast and testimony meeting, I sat on a cushioned folding chair in our little branch building and tried to convince myself to go up and bear my testimony. I don't necessarily get stage fright, but I don't enjoy talking in front of everybody either. Part of me wanted to get up there, and the other part made up excuses not to. The words "I don't even have a testimony" popped into my mind.

I quickly took those words back, if you can do that with thoughts, because I knew it wasn't true. "Of course I have a testimony," I said to myself. "It may not be an extremely great or strong testimony of every gospel topic, but I have a strong belief in some gospel principles."

I started listing them in my mind. "I know that Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost love all of us. I believe that families are extremely important and that through the plan of salvation, families can live together forever."

I had recently turned 14, and my mom told me with a smile, "Joseph Smith was 14 when he had the First Vision." I knew this, but that simple sentence strengthened my testimony of Joseph Smith. I know that he was a true prophet called of God and that he translated the Book of Mormon and restored the gospel.

Not all of this came to mind right then, but in the days that followed I thought a lot about that Sunday. As with my testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith, my belief and testimony of other things didn't grow just because of what I learned or heard but also through things that happened to me.

For example, last October my grandpa passed away. He had been sick with diabetes for a long time. His was the first funeral of a family member I'd been to, and it was a very sad time for my family and me. Being among all of my relatives during the funeral and knowing we would see Grandpa again strengthened my testimony that families are extremely important and play a key part in Heavenly Father's plan. I know that because my mom and dad were sealed in the temple, our family can live together forever. I am so thankful for their choice.

This week my dad taught us a lesson about the Holy Ghost during family home evening. He listed several things we can do to bring the Holy Ghost into our hearts. Among them is bearing our testimonies. He said that it takes courage to bear testimony but that the Lord will bless you with the Holy Ghost for your bravery. This week is a fast Sunday, and I look forward to sharing my testimony with my branch. **NE**



TESTIMONY COMES BY GROWTH

"A testimony is not thrust upon you; it grows. And a testimony is a testimony, and it should be respected, whether it is small or large. We become taller in our testimony like we grow in physical stature and hardly know it is happening, because it comes by growth."

President Boyd K. Packer,
President of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles,
"How Does the Spirit
Speak to Us?" *New
Era*, Feb. 2010, 3.

*"I know
JOSEPH SMITH
was a true prophet
called of God."*

**"I KNOW
Heavenly Father
LOVES US."**

*"I know
FAMILIES are
extremely important."*

**"I KNOW
OUR FAMILY
CAN LIVE TOGETHER
FOREVER."**

**"I KNOW
Jesus
LOVES US."**

**"I KNOW
Joseph Smith
TRANSLATED THE
Book of Mormon."**



1.8 M
(6')

1.4 M
(4'8")



GROWING TOGETHER AS DEACONS

Although they look very different, these two young men have a lot in common.

T Tyler W. is six feet (1.8 m) tall, has red hair, and wears size 13 shoes. Gerrit V. is four feet eight inches (1.4 m) tall, has brown hair, and wears size 2½ shoes. But although they are physically different, their families call them “twins” because they are best friends and have a lot in common.

Gerrit and Tyler are both 12 years old and in the same deacons quorum. They both enjoy playing sports, spending time with their families, and learning new things. They also both have testimonies of the gospel and strive to honor the Aaronic Priesthood. “We need to fulfill our priesthood duties so that we can learn,” Gerrit says.

Both of them enjoy fulfilling those duties by passing the sacrament and collecting fast offerings.

They also help fellowship other deacons in their ward by inviting them to come unto Christ. “If someone’s not there, one of us writes a note to him with all the things we learned at church. Then we give it to him, saying, ‘Please come to church,’” Gerrit says.

Gerrit and Tyler also participate in Duty to God. They have each made plans to read the scriptures more. “It can really help your belief and strengthen your testimony,” Tyler says.

These young men are deacons just like you or the ones you know. There are things that make them different and things that make them similar. But most important, they are both children of God and want to serve Him, united in their priesthood quorum. **NE**

HOW TO BUILD QUORUM UNITY

When you are ordained a deacon like Tyler and Gerrit, you become part of a priesthood quorum. Here are some ideas for how you can help build unity in your quorum:

- Include everyone.
- Do service together.
- Give encouragement.
- Listen to one another.
- Follow instructions from leaders.
- Help each other live gospel standards.

OH, COME, LET US ADORE HIM

“We rejoice in the birth of Jesus Christ, the Light of the World,
who has invited us all to come unto Him and into the light.”

Elder Patrick Kearon of the Seventy, “Come, Let Us Adore Him,”
Ensign, Dec. 2011, 30.

SIMEON REVERENCING THE CHRIST CHILD, BY GREG OLSEN © 1987, MAY NOT BE COPIED





SHINING FORTH *in* ART

The 2012 International Art Competition for Youth invited young men and women around the world to submit artwork that shares their thoughts on this year's Mutual theme: "Arise and Shine Forth." These pieces represent the beautiful submissions received.

In Our Father's Home

Margarita Patana C.
Age 17, Laguna, Philippines

"Because youth can be nurtured and enlightened by the word of God, we can all 'arise and shine forth.' The Book of Mormon can be used as our guide.

"The missionaries represent two of my brothers who are serving missions. I appreciate the light they bring to others and especially the light they have given me."

Refuge

Shaelynn A.
Age 17, Alberta, Canada

"The star in this painting represents Christ's light in all of us and the light of the gospel. This light is shining forth in the darkness, creating a refuge for those who are searching for light. Every night a star shines forth in the darkness and manifests of His majesty, just as we can shine to all those who are searching for Christ."





Eager Eyes

**Samuel B.
Age 16, Utah, USA**

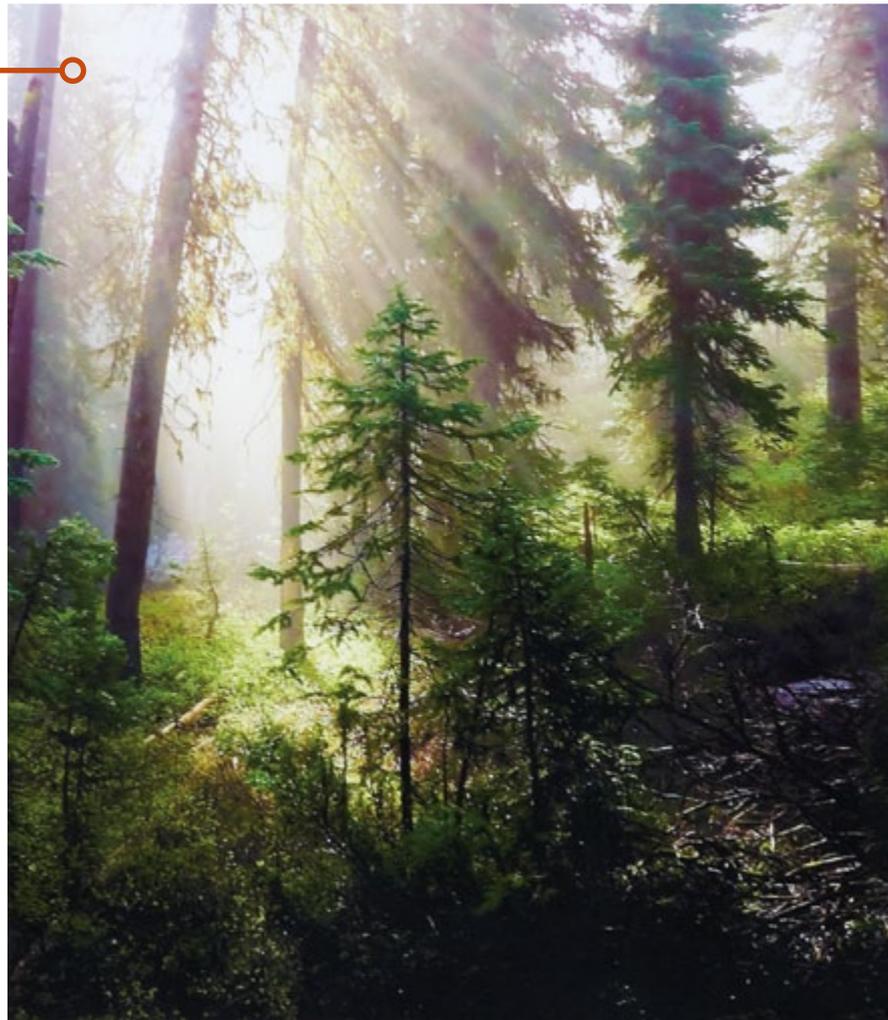
"This painting is about a group of sailors who find themselves lost and confused after a storm, but the lighthouse shines to help guide them. It shows that as we 'arise and shine forth' by following our Savior's example, then we can be guiding lights like the lighthouse."

Through the Mists

**Andrew C.
Age 18, Utah, USA**

"Once while hiking, I looked up and saw bright beams of light descending through the mist and falling upon a young pine tree.

"The truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ are the light in my life, piercing through the dark mists and allowing me to grow and let my light shine forth. I know that even as a young tree grows to great heights, so can I. By letting my light shine forth, I can help others dealing with difficult trials."





On the Way to Early-Morning Seminary

Chih Yun C.
Age 16, Taiwan

"We should study the scriptures diligently and pursue the blessings God has in store for us. In this painting the straight road symbolizes the direction to eternal life, and the light on the road shows the blessings Heavenly Father has given me.

"Feasting upon the word of God daily helps us remain vigilant and make clear judgments."

Stretch with Grace

Emma H.
Age 13, Utah, USA

"The bar represents the iron rod, and the ballerina's hand shows how we must reach toward God.

"I will 'arise and shine' in darkness as I hold fast to the iron rod. Always stretching upward, I will focus on developing my talents to build His kingdom on earth."



Turn Towards the Sun

Claire Effie F.

Age 14, Washington, USA

"A sunflower 'arises' and grows taller than most other flowers. When it feels the heat from the sky, it turns toward the sun and completely opens itself to the sun's rays.

"In this painting, the sunflower symbolizes us when we recognize the Light of Christ and are turned continually in His direction. We should be like the sunflower and grow, arise, and use God's light to shine bright unto the rest of the world."



Spiritual Refuge against the Dark: The Armor of Light, Power of Example

Javic Llave O.

Age 15, Capiz, Philippines

"My art represents the values and good works the youth of the Church must uphold. The background represents the world and its evil influence. It portrays that although we are in the world, we must not allow ourselves to be influenced by what the world offers."

A Call to the Youth

Candace W.

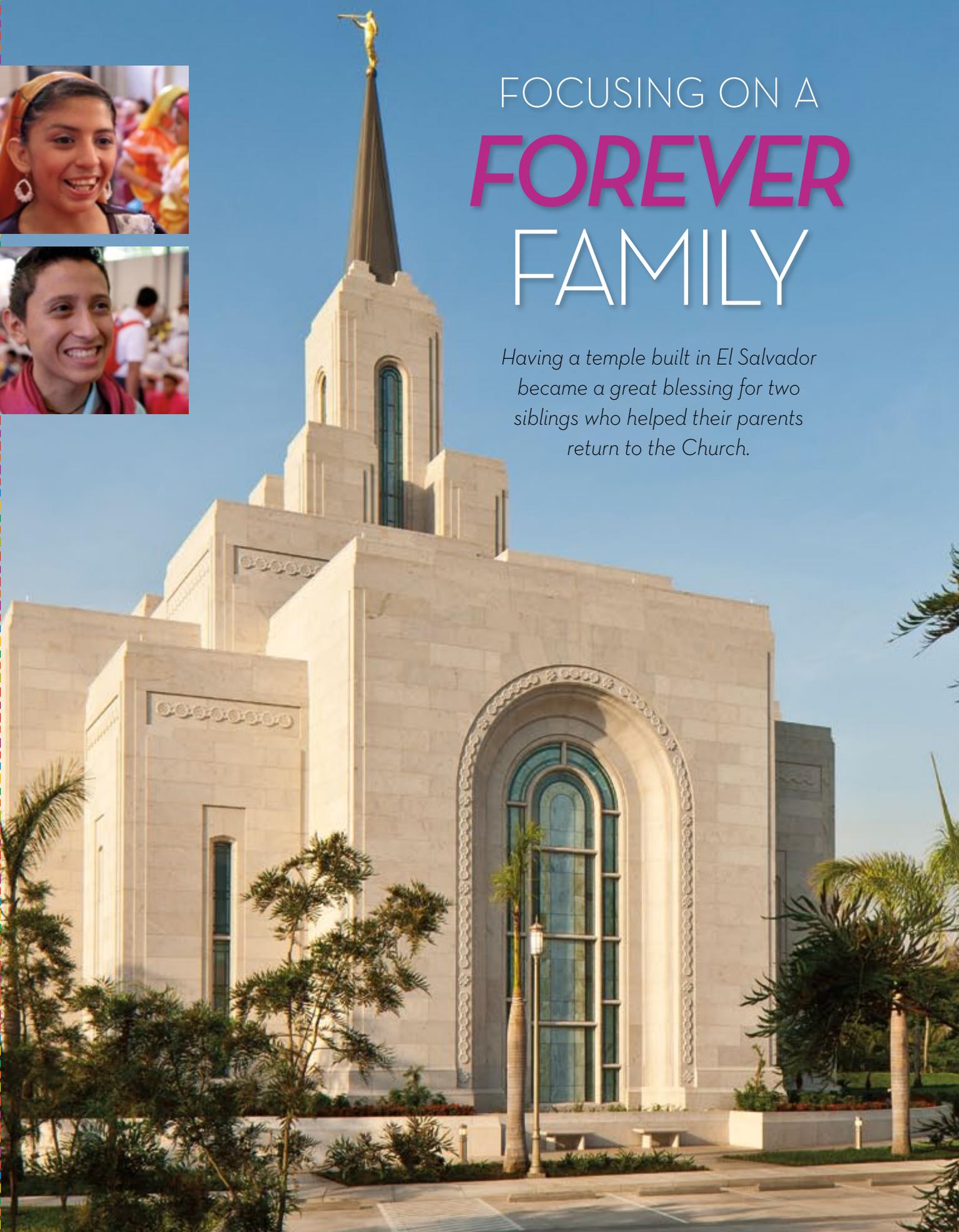
Age 17, Washington, USA

"To me, 'arise and shine forth' means that we need to live our standards daily. By doing so, we will be worthy to enter the temple. The angel Moroni is a symbol for the temple, which in turn is a symbol for the Church. Our good works, as members of the Church, are a shining example to the world—a high standard for the nations."



Read More

To read more about why these artists created these pieces, visit ids.org/go/122D.



FOCUSING ON A
FOREVER
FAMILY

Having a temple built in El Salvador became a great blessing for two siblings who helped their parents return to the Church.

By Mindy Raye Friedman

Church Magazines

Kevin and Jacqueline S., a brother and sister in El Salvador, are the best of friends, and they stick together in everything. They have a great love for the gospel and for their family. They want their family to be together forever.

When Kevin and Jacqueline were younger, people at church would ask their father, “When are you going to be sealed in the temple?” And he would respond, “When there is a temple in El Salvador.”

Praying for Their Parents

However, by the time the San Salvador El Salvador Temple was announced in 2007, Kevin and Jacqueline’s parents had stopped attending church. But Kevin, now 18, and Jacqueline, 15, kept going to church, praying that one day their parents would return.

“I never stopped praying and asking Heavenly Father that they would become active again,” Jacqueline says. “I know Heavenly Father wants the best for us, and He wants us to be an eternal family.”

They also tried to be good examples for their parents. “I never lost hope,” Kevin says. “I always read the scriptures and prayed, and my parents would see me study and leave to go do home teaching visits and to go to Church activities. As I worked to keep the commandments and to progress, my parents saw my example.”

Feeling the Spirit of the Temple

Kevin and Jacqueline’s prayers for their parents began to be answered as the temple neared completion. “When our leaders announced the dedication and cultural

celebration, we invited our parents,” Kevin says. “We told them about the privilege we would have as youth to participate, and this motivated them a lot and helped them progress spiritually.”

In addition to attending the cultural celebration, the family was also able to attend the temple open house.

“Even though my parents hadn’t been going to church, they still view the Church and the gospel as something sacred,” Kevin says. “When we entered the temple, my father began explaining to my sisters and me that when we enter the temple, we wear white and that this is where we perform sacred ordinances.”

Kevin was amazed that his two-year-old sister, who normally has a lot of energy, remained quiet while they were inside the temple, and he noticed how his mother had tears in her eyes as she viewed the different rooms and paintings. When the family entered a sealing room, a volunteer tour guide explained to them that this is where families are sealed together forever.





THE MOST IMPORTANT GOAL

"If you have not yet been to the temple or if you *have* been but currently do not qualify for a recommend, there is no more important goal for you to work toward than being worthy to go to the temple.

"... The all-important and crowning blessings of membership in the Church are those blessings which we receive in the temples of God."

President Thomas S. Monson, "The Holy Temple—a Beacon to the World," *Ensign*, May 2011, 93.

"Our little sister then began to touch each one of us and say, 'My mom, my dad, my Kevin, my Jacqueline,'" says Jacqueline. "It was like Heavenly Father spoke through her to tell us that we are all hers."

"Then she hugged us and started giving us kisses and pointing to the mirrors," Kevin says. "We looked at ourselves together in the mirrors, and it was amazing. When we left the sealing room that day, we made a goal to be able to get back there."

Regaining Perspective

After attending the temple open house, the family began making some changes. "Since we went to the temple, our family has regained perspective," Kevin says. "Since then we have been having family home evening, and our parents are bringing us to church and sitting with us on the front row of the chapel."

In August 2011, Kevin and Jacqueline felt blessed to sit with their parents in the stake center as they viewed the broadcast of the temple dedication.

"When the temple was announced in 2007, my parents were less active, and I thought I would never have the opportunity to be with them at the dedication," Kevin says. "When they were sitting with me, I could really feel that Heavenly Father had answered my prayers. To be there with my family was one of the greatest blessings I have had in my life."

"This experience of the temple has strengthened me," Jacqueline says. "What has strengthened me more than anything is seeing that the temple changes lives, because it helped my parents become active in the Church again. Now we have made the goal that we will be sealed in the temple. I know Heavenly Father wants the best for us." **NE**



ONLINE EXTRA

Watch a video about Kevin and Jacqueline and the San Salvador El Salvador Temple dedication at lds.org/go/122E.



WHEN THERE'S LOVE AT HOME

Kevin and Jacqueline are very close as brother and sister, and they have learned that the bond between siblings can be a very rewarding part of life. Here's how they support each other.

Jacqueline says, "My brother always helps me in my duties at home and at school. I always have his support, and I know without a doubt he loves me and will support me at anytime. When I am sad or feeling down on myself, he is always there to encourage me." Kevin says, "When I feel discouraged, my sister supports me and encourages me. She tells

me positive things about myself, and it makes me feel much better. I have learned a lot from her example. In times when I start to give up on my faith, she tells me to not doubt and that things are going to come out better than I hoped."

These two youth say they enjoy their relationship and the fact that they don't fight like a lot of other siblings do. "You could say that we are weird, but I thank my Heavenly Father for this relationship with my sister," Kevin says.

LOVING *your* SIBLINGS

ALL ABOUT
FAMILIES

These three stories show what your siblings can mean to you.

We know that through the blessings of temple covenants, we can live forever as families.

So how should we prepare ourselves? The answer is simple, even if the action can sometimes be hard: we need to love our siblings. Though it's sometimes easy to forget, we should do our best to support them and show them how much we appreciate them.

The following stories show a few examples. As you read, ask yourself how you could show your love for your siblings and strengthen your family relationships today.

BEING EACH OTHER'S ANGELS

My sister and I shared a room. People would ask me if it was hard, but I would tell them I loved it. Of course, we had arguments. We would sometimes go a few hours without talking to each other over some silly disagreement, but we still loved each other.

There came a time when Laura was struggling. She was having problems with friends and was struggling to keep up with her schoolwork. I didn't realize just how unhappy she was until she confided in me and asked me for advice. I suggested that she should get a priesthood blessing. She agreed.

We asked a member of our ward to give my sister a priesthood blessing. I sat on the couch while Laura sat on a stool in the middle of the room. The words that were spoken were powerful. I'll never forget when the person giving the blessing said that the Lord would always be there for my sister and that He had already sent angels to her. Then the blessing said that one of these angels was me, her sister.

I am so thankful for Laura. She's been an angel for me just as I've tried to be an angel for her, and I know that when we're there for each other, we're helping the Lord in His work.
Crystal M., Idaho, USA





MY BROTHER'S JERSEY

It was a big deal when our high school basketball team advanced to the state championship game. Basketball was my passion; I was always looking for an opportunity to play in a game or shoot hoops with my friends. I was among the starting five my senior year.

We were in the locker room getting ready to warm up for the big game when I opened up my gym bag to pull out my jersey. My heart sank; where was my jersey? Did a teammate hide it? Was this some kind of joke? I looked around the locker room hoping someone's body language or actions could confirm it was just a tease, but to no avail. Reality sunk in. I knew I had left my jersey at home.

My teammates started to realize something was wrong. Everyone's attention was on me when I uttered the words, "I don't have my jersey." Months and months of practice and training were about to be washed down the drain because of my mistake.

Just as I was about to accept my fate, I heard a quiet yet familiar voice from the other side of the locker room. "Here is my jersey." It was the voice of my younger brother. I could play after all! What a sacrifice for my younger brother to make as part of the championship team. Instead of being able to receive recognition for his hard work and practice, he sacrificed so that I could play.

My brother injured his knee the following year and was not able to play again during high school. He felt that he hadn't accomplished much in basketball, but his sacrifice means so much to me.

Christopher N., Arizona, USA

LETTING GO

My brother Bryce and I have been best friends since we were little. I remember afternoons when we'd compete to see who could catch the most bees in a clear plastic cup or he'd "catch" ants on a piece of licorice.

When we were a little older, we read poetry and went for ice cream together, and everyone told us how lucky we were to have each other. Eventually I graduated from high school and went to college 750 miles away. Two years later he followed me. That year together at school was one of the best of my life. It was great to have him close again. But we both knew change was inevitable.

As Bryce's 19th birthday got closer, we would talk for hours about how excited we both were for him to serve. We couldn't wait to see where the Lord would ask him to go. The day finally came, and our family gathered as he read us the letter calling him to North Carolina. He'd report to the missionary training center in less than two months.

Suddenly, the reality that Bryce would be leaving hit me with more force than I'd ever imagined it would. That night I poured out my heart, begging Heavenly Father to send me peace. I would miss Bryce so much. It wasn't that I didn't think a mission was the right choice. We'd both known it was since we were little. I just needed comfort so I could support my brother as he prepared to enter the mission field.

One night, just a few weeks before Bryce would enter the missionary training center, the Spirit was especially strong as I prayed. I cried, telling Heavenly Father all the things Bryce might miss. Then a thought entered my heart: "Shelli, this is just mortality." I opened my tearful eyes and looked up, wondering at its simplicity. I smiled, realizing that we were a family and that the blessings of our parents' temple sealing could hold us together forever. Yes, Bryce was going to miss a lot, but we'd have an eternity to catch up.

The day we took Bryce to the missionary training center was one of the best days of my life. I'd been with him while he shopped for suits and journals, but nothing prepared me for what I saw that day. He was really a missionary. As I hugged him good-bye, I said a silent prayer of gratitude to Heavenly Father for this wonderful young man and all the years of friendship we'd shared. Those years had truly been a gift. And now, the next two years would be a gift to Him.

Shelli L., California, USA



NOTES

from Siblings

When we truly care for our siblings, we are acting the way our Heavenly Father desires us to act. Youth around the world recently told the *New Era* how they have built good relationships with their siblings, including thinking of a sibling as your closest friend, spending time with siblings, or praying for help to be more loving. Here are their thoughts and suggestions.



FILL YOUR FAMILY WITH LOVE

"May our families and homes be filled with love: love of each other, love of the gospel, love of our fellowman, and love of our Savior. As a result, heaven will be a little closer here on earth."

President Thomas S. Monson, "A Sanctuary from the World," Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, Feb. 9, 2008, 30–31.

"My brother Kyle is a good example to me. He makes my lunch every day even though he is up early for seminary. He is very kind and always thinks of others."

Amber R., Ireland

"My siblings are good examples to me, whether they are younger or older. My younger siblings randomly do nice things for me, and my older sister gives me rides. I grow to love my siblings more every day no matter what trials we face."

Samuel C., Nebraska, USA



"For a Personal Progress value experience, I tried for two weeks to change my relationship with a family member in a positive way. I chose my seven-year-old brother. I tried to be very patient, and I prayed for him and also for myself to have the strength to do this. Our relationship got so strong, and we are closer than ever before."

Maria B., Georgia, USA



"My younger sister has helped me many times with projects I have to do for school. Because of those times, I know I can always rely on her to help me whenever I need it. Also, my sisters have given me little notes in the past that said nice things and cheered me up."

Laura J., New Jersey, USA

"I love to talk with my siblings and learn more about them. When we talk together, we share our experiences of each day and have fun being around one another. My sister will sometimes cook for me, and it's great when she does, because she is a fabulous chef. She's taught me a couple of recipes to prepare me for going on a mission."

Joseph A., Georgia, USA





"My little brother Corey finds it hard to clean his room, and I help him clean it. Sometimes I clean it for him as a surprise. Corey asks me to help him when he is scared. From doing things together, I love him more and more every day."

Kyle R., Ireland

"My little sister is amazing! She's making amazing progress on her Personal Progress, she is very modest in her dress and behavior, and she is constantly building her testimony."

Elder Buckmiller, Florida, USA

"My sisters are so wonderful. Most people wouldn't think that this is service, but during my basketball season they would come to every one of my tournaments—they are so supportive and they would always make time for that."

Crystal C., New Jersey, USA

"My little sister is such a great person. She helps everyone, minds our parents, and loves most people she meets right away. She's never shy to tell strangers that we are Latter-day Saints. All of my siblings are very important to me. When we first moved to Nebraska and we didn't know anyone, we kept each other going. My brothers and sisters were and still are my best friends."

Kimberly H., Nebraska, USA

WHAT YOU BRING TO YOUR FAMILY



"Be certain you bring warmth, kindness, understanding, consideration, and a strong love to your eternal family."

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Youth of the Noble Birthright," *Ensign*, Nov., 1998, 74.

"I have only one sibling, my younger brother, but our relationship fills our home with love and appreciation for each other and for our parents. We don't always get along with each other or agree on everything, but we have both learned that service is one of the best ways to not only resolve conflict but also to gain a better understanding of each other so as to prevent future arguments. I often look to my parents as examples for how to better my relationship with my brother. Both of my parents have very close relationships with their siblings, and the importance that my aunts and uncles have in my life has made me realize how the strong relationships that my brother and I are striving for now will carry with us throughout life."

Ellen H., Georgia, USA

"My siblings are extremely important to me. None of my friends at school can be compared to them. My sister always gives me a hug when we see each other in the hallway. I feel very loved whenever I see her."

Kayla J., New Jersey, USA

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

What can you do for your siblings today? Try writing them a note to let them know you love them. Most of the time it is through small acts of service that you show how much you care.

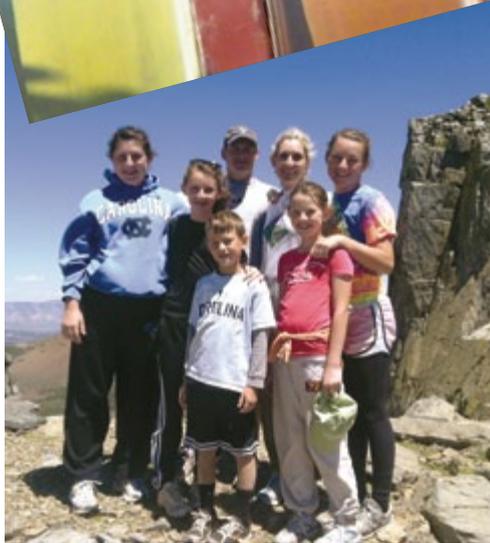




By Hikari Loftus
Church Magazines

Have you ever thought about all the ways you are blessed by being part of a family?

Because of **FAMILIES**



No two families are alike, yet God ordained the family as “the most important social unit in time and eternity.”¹ No matter where you live or what your family is like, the gospel can help you develop stronger relationships and spiritual strength as it brings greater happiness into your family. Read what these teens from around the world have to say about why families are important to them.

Family Is Eternal

Erin K., from North Carolina, USA, and her family (left) have always had one goal in mind: to become an eternal family. However, Erin’s father was not a member of the Church.

“Of course my mom and siblings wanted my dad to share in the blessings of the gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ made us happy, and we wanted Dad to share in that happiness. We also all desperately wanted to be sealed together as a family,” Erin says.

Determined to become a forever family, Erin and her siblings and mother did all they could to keep the commandments and develop strong faith, and they prayed together for their father’s heart to be touched by the gospel.

Though it took several years, Erin’s father was finally baptized and confirmed. Ten days after his baptism, he was able to baptize Erin’s younger brother and sister. Soon their family will reach their goal of being sealed in the temple.





Family Brings Strength and Support

Ever since the passing of their father, Elizabeth B. and her brother, Enaw, of Cameroon, Africa, have relied on their mother. “She has been a source of aid to us ever since our father died. God has blessed us and protected us in everything we do,” Elizabeth says.

Elizabeth’s family (above) rallied together after the passing of her father. Then, after they joined the Church in 2010, Elizabeth and Enaw learned the eternal significance of the family.

“One of the important things we have learned [from the gospel] is about the importance of the family,” Elizabeth says. “The family has been of great importance to me because through my family, I have been able to become what I am today.”

Family Brings Growth and Peace

Adina N., from Switzerland, learned how family members can help one another develop talents as they enjoy wholesome recreational activities together.² Her family plans a monthly family outing where they learn more about each other’s hobbies. “We have the opportunity to give our siblings a deeper insight into our life and our passions,” she says. One time, her father taught the family about dog training (below). “It was nice to see his enthusiasm and how happy he was to share an important part of his life and hobby with us,” Adina remembers.

Through these family activities, Adina has developed many skills. She has also noticed more peace in her life: “The family is a place where I can rest from the stress of every-day life and breathe peacefully, as well as gain strength and know that I don’t have to stand alone in this life. I am thankful for this because the world today is so fast and loud. I am glad I have a place to regenerate and rest.”

Even though their reasons may be different, these teens have found that they can rely on their families for support, peace, and love. **NE**

NOTES

1. *Family Guidebook* (booklet, 2001), 1.
2. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.



DEVOTED FAMILIES

“The most important cause of our lifetime is our families. If we will devote ourselves to this cause, we will improve every other aspect of our lives and will become, as a people and as a church, an example and a beacon for all peoples of the earth.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “That the Lost May Be Found,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 98.



OVERCOMING FAMILY CHALLENGES

Each family faces unique challenges, but there's hope for every situation. Find ideas from these three examples.





WHAT IF I COME FROM A FAMILY THAT'S NOT PERFECT? CAN I STILL HAVE A STRONG FAMILY IN THE FUTURE?

Because family is central to God's plan for each of us and to the Church, we hear a lot about families. We are taught to be good children and siblings and to prepare to be righteous spouses and parents. But what if you come from a family that isn't ideal? Because of your experiences, it may be hard to think you could ever have a family of your own where there's peace and happiness at home instead of anger and contention. Yet it's important not to give up hope. While no family is perfect, a foundation built on gospel principles can lead to joy in the family. When you start to wonder if happy family life is possible in your future, remember the example of Abraham.

Abraham's father was not a righteous man. He associated with men who had "turned from their righteousness, and from the holy commandments . . . , unto the worshiping of the gods of the heathen, utterly [refusing] to hearken to [Abraham's] voice; for their hearts were set to do evil" (Abraham 1:5–6). Abraham's father even tried to have him killed.

But despite his father's example,

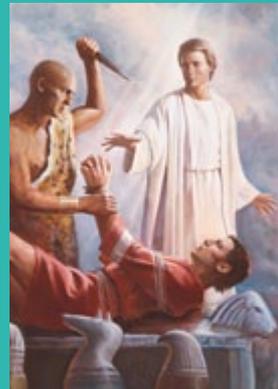
Abraham kept an eternal perspective about the family through his testimony of the gospel. He "saw that it was needful" (Abraham 1:1) for him to pursue a different life from that of his father. He knew "there was greater happiness and peace and rest for [him, so he] sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto [he] should be ordained to administer the same" as a priesthood holder (Abraham 1:2).

Even though Abraham's father was not a worthy priesthood holder, Abraham remained "a follower of righteousness" and desired "to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, . . . to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God" (Abraham 1:2).

Because Abraham stayed faithful to God, studied the gospel, kept the commandments, honored the priesthood, and remembered the plan of salvation, he was able to establish a righteous family of his own. He later became known as "the father of the faithful" and was the "founder of the covenant race" (Bible Dictionary, "Abraham")—a life that was possible because he made a choice to establish a family based on gospel principles.

LESSONS FROM ABRAHAM

- Abraham desired the kind of family life he knew could exist, even though he had been denied it growing up.
- He encouraged his father to live the gospel.
- He studied the gospel and kept the commandments so he could be a righteous priesthood holder, husband, and father.



LIKEN IT

- How does knowing the story of Abraham's family life—both as a son and later as a husband and father—influence you?
- Read about Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price (Abraham 1–3) and the Old Testament (Genesis 11–25), and list his traits. How did he stay strong in the gospel despite his family life growing up? How did he create a different future for his family than he received? How can you learn from his example?
- How do you think Abraham knew so much about the gospel and righteous family life? How can you find similar help and strength from Church teachings and from good examples around you?



WHAT IF MY PARENT REMARRIES AND WE ARE BLENDING TWO FAMILIES TOGETHER? HOW CAN WE GET ALONG?

Jonathan, Ben, Brian, Lara, Brittany, and Shannon became stepbrothers and stepsisters when their parents married. Three more children, Jeff, Katie, and Krista, later joined the mix. They share how they worked to unify their large, complex family.

THE BEST HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

"We hope that when you attend meetings and see seemingly complete and happy families or hear someone speak of family ideals, you will feel glad to be part of a church that does focus on families and teaches of their central role in Heavenly Father's plan for the happiness of His children; that in the midst of world calamity and moral decay, we have the doctrine, authority, ordinances, and covenants that do hold out the best hope for the world, including for the future happiness of [the youth] and the families they will create."

Elder David S. Baxter of the Seventy, "Faith, Fortitude, Fulfillment: A Message to Single Parents," *Ensign*, May 2012, 37–38.

New Parents

Love all family members. "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God" (D&C 18:10).

- I learned to focus on what both my father and stepfather could teach me and to let go of the things I had issues with. —*Brian*

- Loving new parents and siblings didn't mean I was less loyal to my other parents. My mom let us know it was good to accept my new stepmom and then set the example. —*Brittany*

- Don't be afraid to talk to your parents and your stepparents. Make the best of the situation. —*Krista*

New Siblings

Forming relationships with new siblings takes time and patience.

- We realized that we were all in this together, and we learned to accept each other as brothers and sisters. We try not to use the terms "step" or "half." —*Brian*

- Spend quality time together to build unity. We have a lot of fun hanging out together. —*Brittany*

- Learn to accept and appreciate each other, and try not to criticize. Talk about how you feel and forgive each other. —*Lara*

- Talk things out and don't let resentment build. Each member is important, and we need to support one another. —*Katie*

Working through Divorce Issues

You may feel resentment, confusion, or unnecessary fear that somehow you caused the divorce. Putting your faith in the Lord can help you through hard times.

- I had a hard time understanding how my parents could divorce if they loved me. Then I realized that life isn't always "squeaky-clean." Prayer and soul-searching helped me to accept my parents' divorce. —*Brian*

- Let go of anger. Forgiving others will give you peace, clarity of thought, and understanding. If you don't like some things about your family, make a plan to do things differently for your future family. —*Ben*

Support from Others

People around you can help you work through issues that come up.

- My grandparents were always there for me. I knew I could go to their home when I needed to get away for awhile. —*Jonathan*

- My Young Women leaders gave me time and understanding when I needed it. —*Lara*

- Talk to your parents, a leader, a friend, or an older sibling about how you feel. —*Shannon*

- At a family reunion with all my parents and brothers and sisters, I realized that they were a team, they loved us all, and that we would be OK. Regardless of the shape, size, or way our family came about, our hearts know one another and we are a family. —*Brittany*



the Spirit so I know how to act when difficult circumstances come up.

Elizabeth: Never lower your standards, because if you do it for one occasion, then it's easier to bend for others. And I try to be patient with my mother.

Katie: What helps me the most is to look at her like a child of God. My dad gave me a priesthood blessing because I was having a hard time with my mom. In the blessing he said my mom is a daughter of God like me. It really helps to look at her like that. I'm going to help her as much as I can. I can't give up on her. I see her as Heavenly Father's child.

Elizabeth: If you keep going and endure through the trial, it makes you stronger.

Katie: If contention is in the room, just walk away. Don't invite any more of it than is already there.

Elizabeth: Always leave the door open. It's never too late for her to change.

Katie: Yeah, just keep that in mind, as hard as it is. It's never over.

Elizabeth: She can change.

Katie: Know that Heavenly Father knows the desires of your heart. So if you're trying your best to do what's right, though your parents aren't letting you go to church, He knows your heart.

Elizabeth: If your parents don't let you go to seminary, you can do it by yourself in the morning. I did last year; my seminary teacher gave me a book to study with. You can study your scriptures. You can always do something good. And whenever you *are* able be around members at Church activities and meetings, it lifts you up and makes you get through the next week.

Katie: Just know you're not the only one out there. There are others like you. **NE**

3. WHAT DO I DO WHEN A PARENT IS HOSTILE TOWARD THE CHURCH?

Katie and Elizabeth have parents who are divorced and have joint custody. These young women have lived mostly with their mother, and though their father is active in the Church, their mother is openly hostile toward it and does not support their activity in the Church. The New Era met with them and asked them what advice they would have for other youth in a similar situation.

Elizabeth: You have to gain your own testimony.

Katie: Reading the scriptures prayerfully has helped me a ton.

Elizabeth: Conference talks help me. And *Mormon Messages* videos [see lds.org/go/122F]. I love watching *Mormon Messages* and *Mormon Messages for Youth* [see lds.org/go/122G].

Katie: Call upon Heavenly Father for help. I can't do it without praying for strength every day, to help me get through the day and to know what to do, to be in tune with



Read More

For ideas on what you can do in your youth to prepare to be a righteous spouse and parent, see "Your Current Life, Your Future Family" in the June 2012 *New Era* or online at lds.org/go/122H.



YOU ARE LOVED

"Youth whose parents are not members of the Church [and] other individuals in part-member families . . . are covenant members of God's eternal family, deeply loved by Him."

Handbook 2: Administering the Church (2010), 1.4.3.



Gifts YOU CAN'T Wrap



By Elyse Alexandria Holmes

At Christmastime we often focus on giving gifts to those we love. But remember that some of the greatest presents are those you can't wrap. Here are some unforgettable gifts you can give your parents.



Service

One of the greatest gifts you can give is service. Your parents will love it.

- Clean the house.
- Offer to babysit.
- Set and clear the table.
- Make dinner for your family.
- Do the dishes or sweep the floor.
- Help a sibling with his or her homework.
- Depending on the climate where you live, shovel the walkway or weed the garden.



Commitment

Let your parents know you are committing to something important. The best way to show your commitment is to start now and keep going.

- Prepare to serve a mission (for young men). Start now by building up a mission fund if possible.
- Study the scriptures daily.
- Save some of your earnings.
- Go to school without complaint and do your homework on time.
- Attend seminary. If you go to seminary in the morning, wake up on your own.
- Prepare for temple marriage. Make a list of important qualities to look for in a future spouse and then develop those qualities in yourself.

Family Time

Even though you have a busy schedule, make time for your family. Your presence will help support your parents, and they will thank you for your efforts.

- Participate in family home evening (without having to be reminded about it).
- Play with your siblings.
- Be on time for family dinners.
- Talk with and listen to family members.
- Participate in family prayer and scripture reading.
- Spend time with your family instead of just your friends, or invite friends to family activities (with your parents' permission).



Attitude

Your parents will appreciate a good attitude toward them and your other family members.

- Have a positive attitude.
- Don't point out flaws in your parents or siblings.
- Make a habit of saying thank you, even for the small things.
- Write a thank-you letter to your parents for all they've done for you.
- Resolve conflicts with your parents or siblings without anger or argument.
- Count your blessings—literally. Create a list of things you've been able to do because of your parents' support, and share the list with them. **NE**

GRANDPA'S GIFT

By Erin Lee

When my grandpa was first diagnosed with cancer, it was kind of surreal for me. At first he seemed all right, but as his condition worsened, I could tell the pain was getting to him. It hurt me to think about what he was going through.

My family decided to spend Christmas with him and my grandmother. I knew it would be different from having Christmas in our own home, but I could never have guessed how special it would be for me.

When we arrived at my grandparents' home after a long drive, we were greeted by a beautifully decorated house that instantly put us in the Christmas spirit. We had a big dinner together and excitedly admired the festive decorations my grandmother had put up. After socializing and enjoying one another's company, my family returned to our hotel to prepare for the big day. The next morning was Christmas. We were all excited, but we didn't want to

show up at my grandparents' house too early. We thought that Grandpa would be tired from the night before and would want to sleep in. But when we finally arrived, my grandmother said, "Where have you been? Grandpa has been up for hours waiting for you." That's when I knew this Christmas was going to be the best one I'd ever had. My grandpa was so excited for everybody, and his Christmas cheer was contagious.

That Christmas spent with my grandparents taught me something important: Christmas isn't about presents; Christmas is about caring enough for others to want to make their day special, without thinking about what's in it for you.

But even more, Christmas is a wonderful time of year that reminds us to reflect on the love the Savior has for each one of us. I believe that when we are judged and are found worthy, it will be like Christmas—our Father's eyes will light up, He will smile warmly, and He will tell us the best gift we have given Him is the way we tried to live like His Son. **NE**

I had no idea that Christmas away from home could be so special.

We Want to Hear Your Christmas Experiences

What experiences have brought special meaning to Christmas? Write them in your journal and share them with your family, and consider sending them to the *New Era* at newera.lds.org (click "Submit Material").

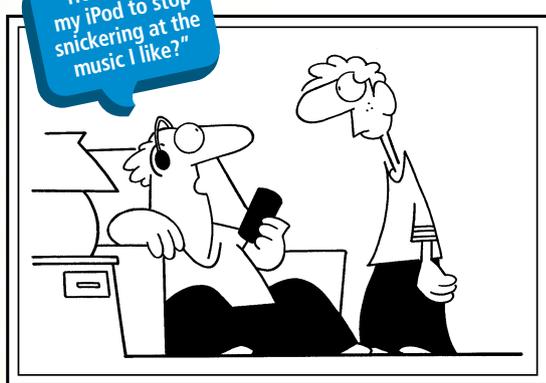


RYAN STOKER

"So, did you get your home teaching done for the month, or do I need to put you on the naughty list?"



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY



RANDY GLASBERGEN

"How do I get my iPod to stop snickering at the music I like?"



KEVIN BECKSTROM

"The words 'cute shoes' and 'missionary work' just don't belong in the same sentence, do they, Sister Alvarez?!"

A SPIRIT OF SERVICE

About two years ago I was living in Mexico City. My family and I were enjoying it there, but we saw a lot of people living in poverty. A wonderful opportunity to provide charity came when we had a little money we felt could be used to help someone else.

That Christmas our stake organized a “Family Help Tree.” We chose a name from the tree and started planning. We couldn’t wait to help this family on Christmas.

One month later, Christmas arrived and our family was ready to deliver the presents. We drove to the address and walked down a dark alley. There were gray, eroded cement walls, a plastic roof, and a wooden door that was too small for the doorway. When we knocked on the door we saw dirt floors and only one couch. There was a fridge that was not plugged in and a little bit of food on the shelves. We then found out that the mom, dad, 9-month-old baby, 4-year-old girl, and 6-year-old boy all slept either on the floor or on the couch and had only two light blankets.

We explained why we were there and then proceeded to give them the presents. The look of joy and happiness on their faces was truly priceless. We gave them a couple of alphabet toys, some food, and last but not least, some warm blankets. They were so grateful. Everyone cried tears of joy. I felt the love of the Savior for this family.

After that humbling experience, I asked my parents if we could use any money that was going toward my gifts for others who are less fortunate, and then my two little brothers asked if they

could too. That moment made it a Christmas to remember. It was truly a humbling event and increased my testimony of service and the love of the

Savior. When we are in the service of others, we are in the service of God, just as it states in Mosiah 2:17.

Hunter S., Virginia, USA



TRULY BLESSED

Our house was getting too small. With my newborn brother, there were eight of us (five girls, one boy, and my mom and dad) living in a three-bedroom house. My family prayed and fasted about it, and eventually we felt like it was the right decision to move to a bigger house in the same town but in a different ward. I was crushed. Yes, it was small, but I loved our little home. I especially didn't want to leave my ward.

After I heard the news, I felt prompted to read the scriptures. I went to my room and opened them up to where I'd left off the day before. It was 1 Nephi 2. When I got to verse 4, I read:

"And it came to pass that [Lehi] departed into the wilderness. And he left his house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold, and his silver, and his precious things, and took nothing with him, save it were his family, and provisions, and tents, and departed into the wilderness."

It hit me like lightning. I, unlike Lehi and his family, got to keep all my "precious things." This reminded me to count my blessings. I realized that my parents wanted the best for our family and that I should remember how blessed I truly am.

Kelsee M., Wyoming, USA

ROLE MODELS

Trying my best to honor and obey my parents has blessed my life tremendously. I consistently make it home before my curfew, I take out the trash every week, and I do any

NEVER TOO OLD

Grandma was 75 years old when she initiated a "12 days of Christmas" secret Santa project with her Sunday School class of 14-year-olds. "How would you like to do something nice for someone?" she asked. Each person in the class, including Grandma, would secretly take treats to Brother Johnson, who had recently lost his wife. "Sometimes," Grandma had said, "people may feel alone and need service even if they are not poor."

Brother Johnson's house was set far back from the road, and there was a wrought iron fence surrounding the property. On the night of her first turn, Grandma parked down the street and stealthily crept up to the door. She placed the package, rang the bell, and suddenly realized she couldn't run fast enough to get away. She quickly crouched behind the car and held her breath. Brother Johnson came to the door, picked up the package, and looked around.

He stepped out into the night to get a better look and came up to

chores I'm asked to do. I also honor them by asking for advice, trusting their judgment, and telling them that I love them whenever I get the chance. The result has been a sweet, trusting bond between us. They give me privileges that a lot of my friends don't have because they know my decisions



the car. Grandma slumped down behind the bumper, scarcely breathing. Brother Johnson gave up the search and went back into the house. Grandma was safe this time.

On the night of her second turn, she found the gates locked. Somewhat relieved that she wouldn't need to crouch behind the car again, she hung the gift on the gate and returned home.

On the night of her third visit, we received a call. "Please," she said, "would you come and help me deliver my secret Santa gift?" We accepted and started toward the house with the gift. We started to laugh when we saw how challenging this house was to approach.

In church that Sunday, Brother Johnson expressed his gratitude that the gifts had made him feel the love of the ward on his first Christmas alone. Grandma will always be our example of compassion and charity and has taught us that you're never too old to serve.

Debbie C., New Mexico, USA

will be good ones. My parents have become not only my best friends but also great role models. I know that we have been commanded to honor and obey our parents for a wise purpose, and I have definitely reaped the benefits of living this commandment.

Michael Z., Idaho, USA

HOW TO GIVE GIFTS TO CHRIST



By President Henry B. Eyring

First Counselor in the First Presidency

HOW YOUTH HAVE APPLIED THIS

"I invite a friend to church, a Mutual activity, or even dinner. A little care can go a long way in helping someone feel they're loved."

Armand F.

"I try to write to missionaries from my ward."

Jenny R.

"Sometimes it's just being a friend to those who need help."

Ryan B.

The spirit of Christmas puts in our hearts a desire to **give joy** to other people. The celebration of Christmas helps us **keep our promise to always remember the Lord** and His gifts to us. And that remembrance creates a desire in us to **give gifts to Him**.

He has told us what we could give Him to bring Him joy. First, we can, out of faith in Him, **give a broken heart and a contrite spirit**. We can repent and make sacred covenants with Him.

Second, you can give Him the gift of **doing for others what He would do for them**. There is a long list of possibilities in the book of Matthew. There we read words from our Redeemer, which we all hope to hear and to speak when we see Him after this life:

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and **fed thee?** or thirsty, and gave thee drink?"

"When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and **clothed thee?**

"Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and **came unto thee?**

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:37–40).

In those words the Lord makes clear what gifts we might give Him out of our gratitude. Each **act of kindness** to anyone becomes a kindness to Him because He loves all of Heavenly Father's children. And because that brings joy to Him, it also brings joy to His Father, to whom we owe thanks beyond measure.

Many of you will in the Christmas season find ways to give food to people who are hungry. As you do, you bring joy to the Lord. Yet He taught us that there is a way to give **an even more priceless and lasting gift**. He said, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). With all the kindnesses we give for Him, the greatest we can offer is to **point those we love and serve toward Him**, the only source of eternal life. **NE**

From the 2010 First Presidency Christmas Devotional address "The Gift of a Savior."

Share Your Experiences

Share *your* experiences in applying these principles and read the experiences of other youth by going to lds.org/go/122J.





The Light Returns

By Allison Hymas

From haunted dreams, the sleeper wakes
With one small, quiet yawn.
How wonderful, for one in dark
To turn and face the dawn.

From starless night, the sun rises
To bring the world new life.
How beautiful, as light extends
Chasing out old fear and strife.

From bitter snows, the spring comes forth;
Life comes to a dying world.
How radiant, as famine ends
And new hope is unfurled.

From times of darkness, a Light now shines,
Brought forth by one young boy.
How glorious, as it fills the world
With its song of truth and joy.

WHAT'S ONLINE



Music Video with Alex Boyé

Alex Boyé and Carmen Rasmusen Herbert (former contestant on *American Idol*) recorded the hymn "Have I Done Any Good in the World Today?" in a contemporary arrangement with an African vibe. Hear the song, download the free MP3, and see their music video at lds.org/go/122K.



Mormon Messages for Youth Video

Just as athletes must stay within lines in order to compete in sports, those who are called to labor in the Lord's work must stay within the lines of worthiness. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles charges young men to be active and worthy to serve as missionaries in the *Mormon Messages for Youth* video "Stay within the Lines" at lds.org/go/122L.

New Sheet Music for Christmas

Celebrate the Christmas season with new sheet music. You can download "Lord of All" by Betsy Lee Bailey at lds.org/go/122M.



THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

THE **New**



Get Ready for a
New Experience
in Sunday Classes
and Quorums

BEGINNING JANUARY 2013



TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE SAVIOR'S WAY

Your experience in Sunday School, Young Women classes, and priesthood quorums is about to change. In January 2013, a new set of lessons called *Come, Follow Me* will be the main focus of your Sunday learning.

You'll find that your teachers will ask you to participate a lot more than they have in the past. And although it may feel awkward at first to share your experiences, you'll see what a difference it makes when you get to hear from your own peers and share your thoughts with them, discover the gospel together, and learn how to apply the doctrines and principles of the gospel.

This approach of learning together focuses on the way Christ taught. He shared real-life examples. He asked His followers questions and let them ask Him questions. He invited them to testify. And He invited them to *act* on the principles they learned. As they did so, they grew stronger in the gospel and were deeply converted. Just like them, as you play a larger part in your learning, you'll be prepared to live the gospel no matter what temptations you face, and you'll be prepared to answer questions about the Church both now and in the future.

Q&A

Why the Change?

This new learning experience will help you be ready to talk about the gospel with your friends, prepare for missionary and family service now and in the future, and deepen your testimony of the gospel. That will happen as you actively search the scriptures, share your thoughts, and accept invitations to apply what you're learning outside of class. In class, you will also hear from the most current teachings of living prophets.

What Do I Need to Do?

You have the opportunity and responsibility to take a major role in your learning by being an active participant rather than sitting back while the teacher does most of the talking in class. As you learn in the Lord's way, you'll:

- Share your experiences and thoughts about the things you're studying, both with your peers in class and also with your family at home.
- Actively search the scriptures and words of the prophets throughout the lesson, talking about what you find.
- Accept invitations given in class to help you live gospel principles throughout the week.
- Pray and study the scriptures on your own each day.
- Invite others to live the gospel through word and example.



What Will Sunday Classes Be Like?

All of your Sunday classes and quorums will focus on a specific theme each month, with lessons based around gospel questions you have. For example, in January 2013, you'll be learning about the Godhead, focusing on questions such as:

- What do we know about the nature of the Godhead?
- How can I know my Heavenly Father?
- Why is Jesus Christ important in my life?
- What are the roles of the Holy Ghost?
- Who am I, and who can I become?

In Sunday School, you'll no longer be studying the scriptures in consecutive order (for example, the Doctrine and Covenants one year and Old Testament the next). Instead, you'll be learning and practicing what it's like to teach the gospel as you have the chance to share your experiences and thoughts about the monthly gospel themes. You'll study principles of teaching and learning, and you'll also have the chance to practice teaching others.

Will This Affect Mutual?

The monthly themes can help you focus your Mutual activities around your learning. Class and quorum presidencies are encouraged to think about the themes while planning Mutual activities. Activity ideas from the lesson outlines can be used as a starting point in that planning. You can view them at lds.org/youth/learn.

How Does This Affect Seminary?

Seminary will continue to focus on a book of scripture (such as the New Testament or Book of Mormon) each year, just as it has in the past.

HEAR WHAT IT'S LIKE FROM YOUTH WHO HAVE TRIED IT

This year, youth in over 40 stakes worldwide have tried this new approach to Sunday learning. And they say it's made a big difference. Hear their experiences in short videos at the websites listed.

"There's more opportunities to share. It's more of a discussion . . . in our class—not



"I have a stronger testimony because I have to gain it [on] my own. I can't rely on the teacher's and everybody else's because in class we're having a discussion about it. I'm not just listening to someone else's testimony. I have to say, 'You know, I want to try that. I want to gain a testimony of that.'"

 lds.org/go/act2013



"At the end of every class, . . . whoever has been teaching the lesson . . . will give us a challenge. . . . So throughout the week we'll have that challenge to become better. And we'll get texts . . . every couple days just to remind us."

 lds.org/go/act2013



"What I love most about it is the learning—it doesn't stop at just Sunday School. You . . . carry on throughout the week. And your teacher gives you assignments, and you need to come prepared for the next Sunday."

 lds.org/go/learn2013



"Once you get going in the right direction, it's so easy to get people into these lessons, because it's just all the rest of the quorum members who really are teaching."

 lds.org/go/teach2013

THE CHURCH OF
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OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Learn More Online

To learn more, visit lds.org/go/youth2013. You can also share your thoughts and read comments from other youth at lds.org/go/talk2013.

