

THE New Era

DECEMBER 2013

A CHRIST-CENTERED
CHRISTMAS,
pp. 14, 19, 48

PREPARING FOR THE
SECOND COMING,
p. 2

MORE THAN
JUST A SIDEKICK,
p. 8

**INSPIRING CHRISTMAS
STORIES AND MUSIC,**
pp. 12, 15, 16

► **Plus,**
When Good Things
Happen to Others
and Bad Things
Happen to You,
p. 20

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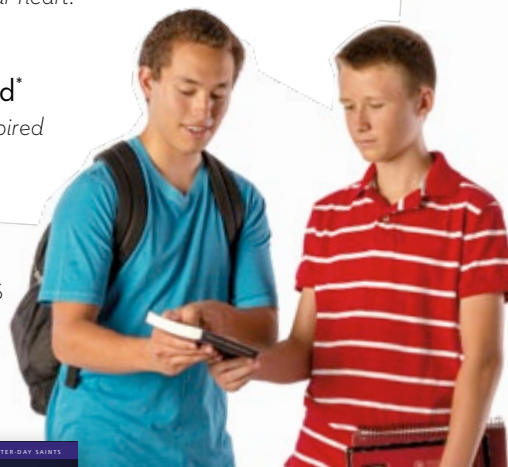
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▼ IN EVERY ISSUE

- 2 THE MESSAGE
Preparing for the Second Coming
Elder Jeffrey R. Holland
The Shepherd knows His sheep, and we must be known in that great day as His followers in deed as well as in word.
- 19 MORMONAD
See the Big Picture
- 28 FOR THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH
The View from the End of the Road
Elder Bradley D. Foster
Repentance sets us free.
- 39 TO THE POINT
Sharing the gospel with a friend who doesn't want missionaries; praying out loud or in your heart.
- 40 COME, FOLLOW ME
On the Lord's Errand*
Member missionaries; inspired home teachers.
- 41 THE EXTRA SMILE
- 42 QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
"How do I resist temptation?"
- 44 WHAT'S UP?
Conference connection; service through song; a favorite scripture; a Mutual activity idea; Christmas crafts in England; Christmas hymn vocabulary quiz.
- 46 INSTANT MESSAGES
A longer-term goal; holiday songs; representing virtue.
- 48 FROM CHURCH LEADERS
How to See the Christ in Christmas
President Dieter F. Uchtdorf
Let it be a season of seeking the Lamb of God.
- 49 CONFERENCE POSTER
Love God and Serve
Elder Timothy J. Dyches



Cover: Focus on the Savior at Christmastime, pp. 14, 19, 48.

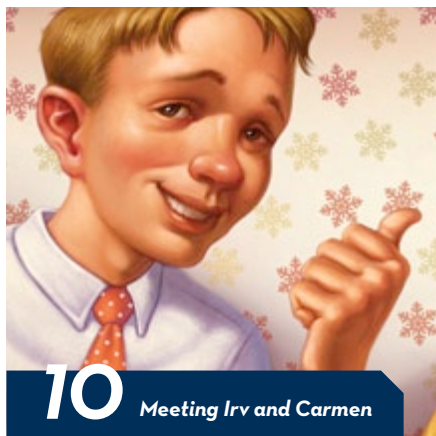
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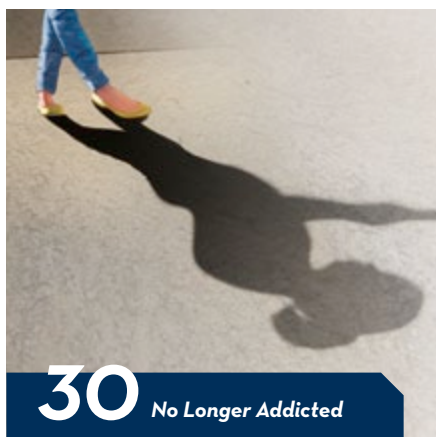
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10 Meeting Irv and Carmen



12 A Favorite Christmas Song



30 No Longer Addicted



36 What's So Important in That Bag?

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

December 2013 Volume 43, Number 12

18 The Gift of Family History
Extending a gift to your ancestors also brings gifts to you.

20 When Good Things Happen to Others and Bad Things Happen to You
How do you cope when it seems others get all the blessings?

24 Standing in Holy Places
Youth around the world share photos of where they stand.

30 No Longer Addicted
A young woman finds peace through the Atonement after being freed from a pornography addiction.

32 Cans for Kailey
An idea in a BYC led to service, caring, and a greater sense of belonging.

36 What's So Important in That Bag?
A young woman on a plane suddenly realized why she needed her carry-on bag at her feet.

38 LINE UPON LINE Moroni 7:16-17
Get insights on how the Spirit of Christ helps us know good from evil.

▼ FEATURES

6 Youth Voices: Serving in the Priesthood
Young men explain why they serve.

8 More Than a Sidekick*
Young men who go home teaching aren't just tagging along.

10 Meeting Irv and Carmen
A less-active, older couple became more than just a home teaching assignment for one young man.

12 A Favorite Christmas Song
A song at a ward Christmas party had quite an effect—because of whom it was sung to.

14 Focusing on Christ at Christmas
Youth share how they keep the Savior at the center of the season.

15 FROM THE MISSION FIELD Surprise Package
One missionary had the holiday blues until something came from the Young Women group back home.

16 In the Silence
Learn this new Christmas song.



32
Cans for Kailey



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



By Elder
Jeffrey R. Holland
Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

Preparing for the SECOND COMING

Great men and women in ages past were able to keep going, to keep testifying, to keep trying to do their best, not because they knew that they would succeed but because they knew that you would.

We are making our appearance on the stage of mortality in the greatest dispensation of the gospel ever given to mankind, and we need to make the most of it.

I love a line from the Prophet Joseph Smith saying that earlier prophets, priests, and kings “have looked forward with joyful anticipation to the day in which we live; and fired with heavenly and joyful anticipations they have sung and written and prophesied of this our day.”¹ Note this similar affirmation from President Wilford Woodruff: “The eyes of God and all the holy prophets are watching us. This is the great dispensation that has been spoken of ever since the world began.”²

I have a theory about those earlier dispensations and the leaders, families, and people who lived then. I have thought often about them and the destructive circumstances that confronted them. They faced terribly difficult times and, for the most part, did not succeed in their dispensations. Indeed, the whole point of the Restoration of the gospel in these latter days is that the gospel had not been able to survive in earlier times and therefore had to be pursued in one last, triumphant age.

A Dispensation That Will Not Fail

In short, apostasy and destruction of one kind or another was the ultimate fate of every general dispensation we have ever had down through time. But here’s my theory. My theory is that those great men and women, the leaders in those ages past, were able to keep going, to keep testifying, to keep trying to do their best, not because they knew that *they* would succeed but because they knew that *you* would. I believe they took courage and hope not so much from their own circumstances as from yours—a magnificent congregation of young people gathered by the hundreds of thousands around the world in a determined effort to see the gospel prevail and triumph.

Moroni said once, speaking to those of us who would receive his record in the last days:

“Behold, the Lord hath shown unto me great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come, at that day when these things shall come forth among you.

“Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing” (Mormon 8:34–35).

One way or another, I think virtually *all* of the prophets



and early apostles had their visionary moments of our time—a view that gave them courage in their own less-successful eras. Those early brethren knew an amazing amount about us. Prophets such as Moses, Nephi, and the brother of Jared saw the latter days in tremendously detailed vision. Some of what they saw wasn't pleasing, but surely all those earlier generations took heart from knowing that there would finally be one dispensation that would not fail.

Ours, not theirs, was the day that gave them “heavenly and joyful anticipations” and caused them to sing and prophesy of victory. Ours is the day, collectively speaking, toward which the prophets have been looking from the beginning of time, and those earlier brethren are over there still cheering us on! In a very real way, their chance to consider themselves fully successful depends on our faithfulness and our victory. I love the idea of going into the battle of the last days representing Alma and Abinadi and what they pled for and representing Peter and Paul and the sacrifices they made. If you can't get excited about that kind of assignment in the drama of history, you can't get excited!

Preparing Christ's Church for His Coming

Let me add another element to this view of the dispensation that I think follows automatically. Because ours is the last and greatest of all dispensations, because all things will eventually culminate and be fulfilled in our

era, there is, therefore, one particular, very specific responsibility that falls to those of us in the Church now that did not rest quite the same way on the shoulders of Church members in any earlier time. Unlike the Church in the days of Abraham or Moses, Isaiah or Ezekiel, or even in the New Testament days of James and John, *we have a responsibility to prepare the Church of the Lamb of God to receive*

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the Lamb of God to receive
the Lamb of God—in person,
in triumphant glory, in
His millennial role.***

the Lamb of God—in person, in triumphant glory, in His millennial role as Lord of lords and King of kings. No other dispensation ever had that duty.

In the language of the scriptures, we are the ones designated in all of history who must prepare the bride for the advent of the Bridegroom and be worthy of an invitation to the wedding feast (see Matthew 25:1–12; 22:2–14; D&C 88:92, 96). Collectively speaking—whether it is in our lifetime or our children's or our grandchildren's or whenever—we nevertheless have the responsibility as a Church and as individual members of that Church to be worthy to have Christ

come to us, to be worthy to have Him greet us, and to have Him accept and receive and embrace us. The lives we present to Him in that sacred hour *must* be worthy of Him!

We Must Be Acceptable to Him

I am filled with awe, with an overwhelming sense of duty to prepare my life (and to the extent that I can, to help prepare the lives of the members of the Church) for that long-prophesied day, for that transfer of authority, for the time when we will make a presentation of the Church to Him whose Church it is.

When Christ comes, the members of His Church must look and act like members of His Church are supposed to look and act if we are to be acceptable to Him. We must be doing His work, and we must be living His teachings. He must recognize us quickly and easily as truly being His disciples. As President J. Reuben Clark Jr. (1871–1961), former First Counselor in the First Presidency, once advised: our faith must *not* be difficult to detect.³

Yes, if in that great, final hour we say we are believers, then we had surely better be demonstrating it. The Shepherd knows His sheep, and we must be known in that great day as His followers in deed as well as in word.

My beloved young friends, these are the latter days, and you and I are to be the best Latter-day *Saints* we can. Put an emphasis on *saints*, please.

When will all of this finish?
When shall Christ appear publicly,



I love the idea of going into the battle of the last days representing Alma and Abinadi and what they pled for and representing Peter and Paul and the sacrifices they made. If you can't get excited about that kind of assignment in the drama of history, you can't get excited!

triumphantly, and the Millennium begin? I don't know. What I do know is that the initial moments of that event began 193 years ago. I do know that as a result of that First Vision and what has followed it, we live in a time of unprecedented blessings—blessings given to us for the purpose of living faithfully and purely so when the Bridegroom finally and triumphantly arrives, He can personally, justifiably bid us to the wedding feast.

My beloved young brothers and sisters, I leave you my love and my testimony that God not only lives; He loves us. He loves *you*. Everything He does is for our good and our protection. There is evil and sorrow in the world, but there is no evil or harm in Him. He is our Father—a perfect father—and He will shelter us from the storm.

Indeed, the only concern I would have us entertain is a very personal one: How can we live more fully, more faithfully, so that all the blessings of this great dispensation can be showered upon each one of us and upon those whose lives we touch?

“Fear not, little flock. . . . Look [to Christ] in every thought; doubt not, fear not.” “Ye have not as yet understood how great blessings the Father hath . . . prepared for you” (D&C 6:34, 36; 78:17).

I leave you my blessing, my love, and an apostolic witness of the truthfulness of these things, that our dispensation will not fail and that those who live the teachings of Christ and do His work will be worthy of an invitation to the wedding feast when the Bridegroom comes. **NE**

From the Church Educational System fireside “Terror, Triumph, and a Wedding Feast,” given on September 12, 2004. For the full text, go to speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

1. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 4:609–10.
2. Wilford Woodruff, in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 3:258; see also Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Dawning of a Brighter Day,” *Ensign*, May 2004, 83.
3. See J. Reuben Clark Jr., *The Charted Course of the Church in Education*, rev. ed. (1994), 7.

YOUTH VOICES

SERVING IN THE PRIESTHOOD

As you learn about your priesthood duties, it's important to know not just *what* your duties are but *why* it's important to do them (see President Dieter F. Uchtdorf's address on this subject at [lds.org/go/123Why](https://www.lds.org/go/123Why)). If you don't understand why you serve, then you probably won't be as motivated to serve. And it's much easier to serve with motivation. As Gary F., 15, from Utah, USA, explains, "While it's good to be doing what you're supposed to do, it helps to know why you're doing it. When you understand why, you want to work harder and do more because you're doing it for an important cause and not just because you're expected to or are supposed to be serving."

So why do you serve? Here's what several young men had to say. Share your thoughts at [lds.org/go/123Serve](https://www.lds.org/go/123Serve).



"We give priesthood service because it's our privileged duty that **God entrusted to us** here on earth. I serve not only because I love the priesthood and love serving but also because while I serve I **feel even closer to my Heavenly Father.**"

Ryan H., 18, California, USA



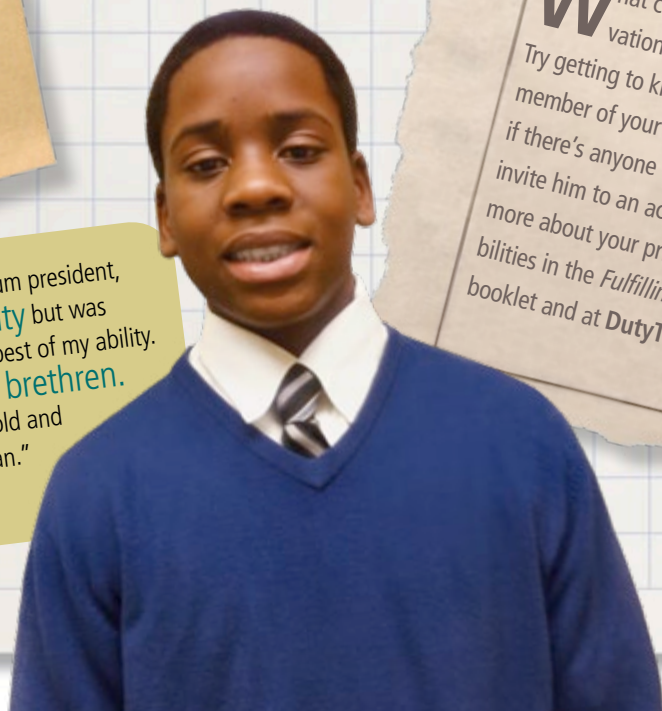
"We serve in our callings because we have been **called by the Lord** through our quorum presidencies or bishop. Thinking about why we serve helps us serve our fellow members. Serving in a calling is something that no priesthood holder should back down from, no matter how daunting the task may seem."

Jayden B., 15, Australia

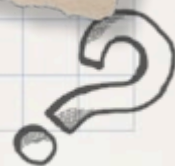


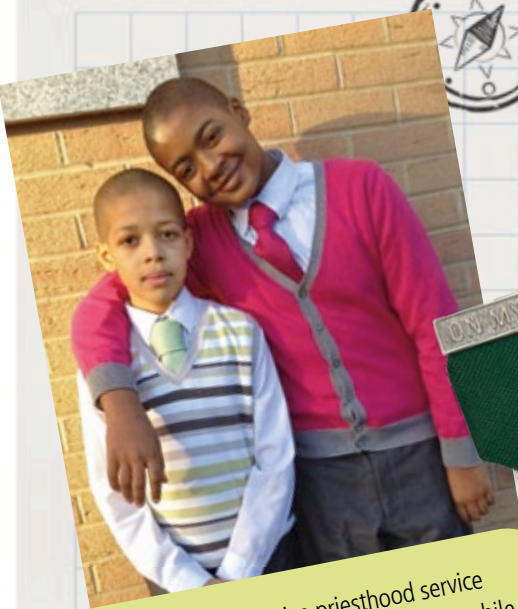
"When I was ordained as deacons quorum president, I found this to be a **great responsibility** but was determined to carry out this calling to the best of my ability. I was **excited to serve my fellow brethren.** Priesthood power is a wonderful gift to hold and has motivated me to serve in any way I can."

Eghosa O., 16, England



WHAT CAN YOU DO?
What can you do to find more motivation in your priesthood service? Try getting to know each individual member of your quorum better. Find out if there's anyone who isn't coming and invite him to an activity. You can learn more about your priesthood responsibilities in the *Fulfilling My Duty to God* booklet and at [DutyToGod.Lds.org](https://www.DutyToGod.Lds.org).





Mormon Messages for Youth Video
See how one young man sought to fulfill his priesthood duty by reaching out to one of his quorum members in the short video "My Duty to God" at lds.org/go/123Duty.



THE WHY OF PRIESTHOOD SERVICE

"From the newest ordained deacon to the most senior high priest, we all have lists of *what* we could and should do in our priesthood responsibilities. The *what* is important in our work, and we need to attend to it. But it is in the *why* of priesthood service that we discover the fire, passion, and power of the priesthood. The *what* of priesthood service teaches us what to do. The *why* inspires our souls. The *what* informs, but the *why* transforms."

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "The *Why* of Priesthood Service," *Ensign*, May 2012, 59.

"Understanding why I give priesthood service helped me become a **better missionary** while acting as deacons quorum president. As new people joined my quorum, I got to **teach them** how a deacon should act and **help them** with their duties. The more I serve, the greater my understanding and desire to serve others become."

Lynden A., 14, England (on left, his brother Mikaeel, 11)

"When I was called as the teachers quorum president in my ward last year, I was inspired to focus many of my efforts on directing other young men in the Scouting program. I wish to **inspire the other young men to yearn for the blessings and lessons** found in the great experience of Scouting. I hope that my actions can serve as a guide for the future young men in my ward."

Joseph Z., 17, Maryland, USA

"The more I can do to magnify my calling and serve the Lord, the happier I can be. For every act of service done in my calling, it seems as though the Lord blesses me tenfold. My calling has also been **a blessing to the lives of others**. I know that because of my service in the Church, my family is blessed and brought closer together. Service in a calling can literally transform your life and **bring sincere, true happiness** to you and everyone else around you. My calling has inspired me to do more and to serve a mission, and for that I am eternally grateful."

Joshua N., 16, Utah, USA



BRINGING THE WHOLE QUORUM

While serving as deacons quorum president in his ward, Austin C. from Idaho, USA, was issued a challenge by a visiting authority to get his entire quorum to attend Sunday meetings. He took that challenge seriously. He says, "I had regular meetings with my quorum presidency. We would meet at my house, start with a prayer, talk about the members of the quorum, and then go on visits. We weren't always warmly received, but we were persistent. Each week we . . . reported to our quorum advisers. . . . They stood ready to help us, but they let us plan the activities and make things happen." After several months, Austin's persistence and the efforts of the rest of his quorum finally paid off. Austin was able to send a letter to the visiting authority to report, "All of the less-active deacons are coming to church. I am starting to get an idea of the kind of work I will be involved in on my mission. Thank you for the challenge. I will continue to work with others that I know and share the gospel with them."

For more on this story, visit lds.org/go/123Austin.

Duty to God
For Aaronic Priesthood Holders

BOOK OF MORMON
ANOTHER TESTAMENT OF JESUS CHRIST

MORE THAN a Sidekick

Think you're only a tagalong when it comes to home teaching? Think again.

"I know how to be a friend as well as a home teacher. I love seeing what I can do to help others."

You've seen it in novels or movies dozens of times. There's a big, scary problem hanging like a dark cloud in the distance. Disaster seems inevitable. Then along comes the hero who beats the odds and saves the day.

Such heroes are often accompanied by a sidekick. This character typically has a few basic skills but mainly exists to toss the hero a weapon when the villains start to swarm.

As a home teaching junior companion, it might be tempting to think of yourself as something of a sidekick in the companionship. After all, your adult companion has been around longer and has more experience than you. So it should be up to him to save the day, right?

Not quite.

When it comes to home teaching, there's no such thing as a superhero

(your older companion) and his sidekick (you)—just two superheroes who can truly change the world together.

No matter who you are and what your background might be, you personally have what it takes to make a big difference in the lives of those you visit.

No Greater Calling

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) said, "There is no greater Church calling than that of a home teacher."¹

Home teachers do so much more than share a spiritual message. They help each family to know they have friends they can call on.

President Thomas S. Monson has said: "A friend makes more than a dutiful visit each month. . . . A friend cares. A friend loves. A friend listens. And a friend reaches out."²

Great friendships, of course, can be formed at any age.

Serving as a Friend

Sean C., a 16-year-old from southern Utah, USA, knows how to be a friend as well as a home teacher. Sean has a



broad range of interests that include competing in rodeo, wrestling, working with cattle, and repairing cars. He also loves cultivating friendships with the people he home teaches.

"I love talking to people and seeing what I can do to help them," Sean says.

His home teaching companion is the bishop of their ward. In one home they visit, the wife is a member of the Church and the husband is not. Sean connected with the husband, Floyd, on their very first visit. As Floyd began talking about his Jeep, Sean perked up. "We just clicked," says Sean.

In the year that Sean and the bishop have visited Floyd and his wife, Sean has strengthened those friendships—including helping Floyd work on engines from time to time.

One of Sean's favorite scriptures is about service: "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17).

Sean explains, "Everybody needs to be looking out to find ways to serve."

Your Spiritual Gifts

We all have spiritual gifts and talents. In addition, we have unique interests and hobbies. Each of us has something special to offer that nobody else can do in quite the same way.

"Every person is different and has a different contribution to make," teaches President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

"No one is destined to fail."³ Home teaching can be an opportunity for you to use those gifts to benefit others.

For example, when it's your turn to share a spiritual message, you might consider praying ahead of time about what you can say that will be most helpful to the people you visit.

Often, you will have a personal experience with a given topic that you can mention with the family. Let your light shine! Share what you know.

You can also find creative and meaningful ways to serve the families you visit. Pretend, for example, that someone in one of your home teaching families wants to learn the guitar. As it happens, you've been playing guitar for years. In this situation, a few music tips from time to time might be as helpful as shoveling snow off their driveway or trimming their trees.

When it comes to home teaching, your senior companion might indeed be a spiritual powerhouse. But make no mistake. You're a child of God and equal to your responsibility as home teacher.

You'll always have something incredible to add. **NE**

NOTES

1. Ezra Taft Benson, "To the Home Teachers of the Church," *Ensign*, May 1987, 50.
2. Thomas S. Monson, "Home Teaching—a Divine Service," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 47.
3. Henry B. Eyring, "Help Them Aim High," *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 60.
4. Linda K. Burton, "First Observe, Then Serve," *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 78.



JOIN THE CONVERSATION



Throughout December, your Sunday lessons will focus on building the kingdom of God. Home teaching is one way to do this, but everyone can build the kingdom of God through everyday acts of service. As you pray for others, the Spirit may bring to mind something you can do. Remember this counsel from Sister Linda K. Burton, Relief Society general president: "First observe, then serve."⁴ How have you found ways to observe and then serve in building God's kingdom? Share your experiences in your ward, with your family, or with other youth at [lds.org/go/123HT](https://www.lds.org/go/123HT).



Make a Difference

For helps on how to make a difference for the families you teach, visit [lds.org/go/123Families](https://www.lds.org/go/123Families).



MEETING IRV & CARMEN

I'd never even seen the Walkers, so I was a little nervous about being their new home teacher.

By Matthew Garrett

I'd never met Irv and Carmen Walker before, and I was nervous about being their new home teacher. But I liked them the instant I met them. Carmen, who was almost blind, had a straightforward and humorous personality that made me feel completely at ease. I was amazed at the things she could do despite her loss of sight. She attended a pottery class and sculpted beautiful bowls and figurines, was part of a women's social organization, and volunteered on a service committee for the blind. Carmen also took care of her husband, Irv.

Irv had experienced numerous strokes and suffered from decreased brain function. He rarely spoke, and when he did it was slow and quiet. He was always smiling though. He loved to pull little pranks—especially on his wife—and he enjoyed making others laugh.

Irv and Carmen hadn't been to church in over 20 years, and because of their physical limitations they had no way of getting there on their own.

As my companion and I began to meet with Carmen and Irv, two things became apparent. First, they'd



MINISTERING THROUGH HOME TEACHING

Part of your calling to minister in the Aaronic Priesthood as a teacher and a priest is to home teach others in your ward. As President Thomas S. Monson taught, “If we are conscientious in our calling [to home teach], we will have many opportunities to bless lives” (“True Shepherds,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 67).

Check out these articles for youth stories about home teaching and for ideas on how to minister to the families you teach.

- John L. Haueter, “Junior Companion,” *New Era*, Jan. 2001, 36; lds.org/go/123Companion.
- Caleb I., “From a Teacher: Partnered with the Spirit,” *New Era*, June 2012, 8; lds.org/go/123Teacher.
- “Ministering That Matters,” lds.org/go/123Minister.
- Thomas S. Monson, “True Shepherds,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 61; lds.org/go/123Shepherd.

forgotten most of the Church’s teachings. Second, they were fantastic people who loved helping others. As we continued to home teach them and discuss the gospel together, we eventually invited them back to church. They accepted, and we began to pick them up on Sunday mornings. They both befriended many ward members and were a great blessing to the ward.

Not long after they started to come to church again, Irv experienced a major illness and was hospitalized. He passed away shortly after. I’ll always be grateful that he was reminded of

Heavenly Father’s love and teachings before he died.

After Irv’s death, Carmen remained a great friend and continued to amaze me with her talents. Over the years many ornaments on my family Christmas tree were crafted by her skilled hands. Eventually, however, her eyesight worsened to the point that she was completely blind and experiencing pain and discomfort. Carmen eventually moved away to be closer to her eye specialist and her children.

I’m grateful for home teaching

because it has allowed me to meet wonderful people like Carmen and Irv. Home teaching has taught me that some of the most amazing people may be less active and living within my own ward boundaries. The key is to befriend them and remind them that they haven’t been forgotten and that they can receive great joy and blessings in the Church. Even though home teaching assignments may change and people may move away, I’ll always remember the friendships I’ve formed through home teaching. **NE**

Matthew Garrett lives in Washington, USA.



A Favorite Christmas Song

By C. G. Lindstrom

I remember it was your typical ward Christmas party: tables covered with red and green butcher paper, dinner served on paper plates, little children running around, and the happy sound of ward members chatting. Somehow, someone had managed to quiet things down to give a blessing on the food, and then everyone ate. The program was about to start.

It wasn't my ward. I had gone with a friend to her ward party, so I didn't know many people. We had wanted to leave early, but her mom convinced us to stay for the program.

The first number on the program was by the Primary children, who walked onto the stage wearing gold-tinsel halos on their heads. They sang a song then bumped and giggled their way offstage, leaving a trail of gold tinsel in their wake.

Two pianists then played joyous songs. The first pianist played "Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful" (*Hymns*, no. 202) without missing a note. The other, a young boy, sat down at the piano and looked mournfully over his shoulder at his mom, who began to quietly count the beat. The boy sighed, turned to the instrument, and played his best version of "Up on the Housetop."

Next on the program was one of my favorite songs—"C-h-r-i-s-t-m-a-s."

I looked up to see a sister with stooped shoulders and one hand held close to her body, walking with an awkward stride to stand beside the piano. She stood with one hip lower than the other and offered a lopsided smile before she began. I admit I wrongfully wondered if the song would be any good.

"When I was but a youngster, Christmas meant one thing," she sang. The song went on to tell how a child learns how to spell *Christmas* and discovers what the holiday is really about.

"*C* is for the Christ child, born upon this day; *H* for herald angels."

Her mouth was slack on one side, and she had difficulty forming the words.

"*R* means our Redeemer; *I* means Israel; *S* is for the star."

Cautiously I looked around the room and studied the faces of her ward members. No one seemed embarrassed. In fact, they sat smiling and listening contentedly.

"*T* is for three wise men . . . ; *M* is for the manger."

She continued singing and turned her face

I didn't appreciate her song until I realized whom she was really singing to.

upward, fixing her eyes on a spot somewhere on the ceiling. After a few moments I looked up too, but I saw only ceiling tiles. When I glanced back at her, though, I noticed tears gleaming in her eyes.

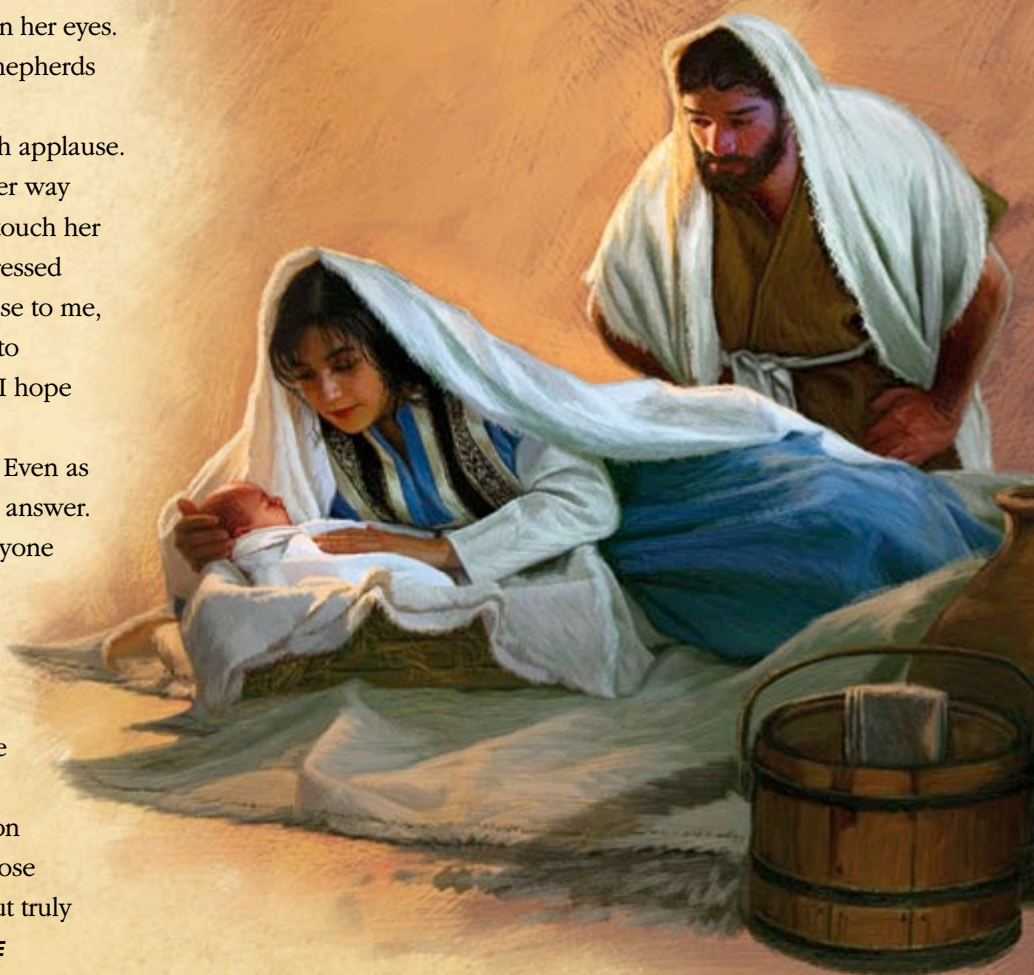
"A is for all He stands for; S means shepherds came."

When she finished, the hall filled with applause. Her cheeks flushed red. As she made her way back to her seat, hands reached out to touch her arm or shoulder as ward members expressed genuine gratitude. One sister, sitting close to me, told her what a nice job she had done, to which she quietly replied, "Thank you. I hope He liked it."

He? To whom had she been singing? Even as I asked myself the question, I knew the answer. I realized she hadn't been singing to anyone in the room. She hadn't performed for the approval of the audience. She had sung to the Savior to praise Him.

Many Christmases have passed since that ward party, and I've heard the song "C-h-r-i-s-t-m-a-s" performed by many well-trained voices. But the version I heard that Christmas, sung by one whose performance was out of the ordinary but truly heartfelt, is the one I remember best. **NE**

C. G. Lindstrom lives in Washington, USA.



FOCUSING ON CHRIST AT CHRISTMAS

With all of the wrapping paper, boxes, and bows drawing us to the more material side of Christmas, it can take some effort to keep our celebrations centered on Christ. But remembering Him is what will help us feel joy during the Christmas season and focus on its real meaning. Read how youth from a ward in California, USA, keep Christ in Christmas, and consider what you can do to do the same.

THE JOY OF CHRISTMAS



"Finding the real joy of Christmas comes not in the hurrying

and the scurrying to get more done, nor is it found in the purchasing of gifts. We find real joy when we make the Savior the focus of the season. We can keep Him in our thoughts and in our lives as we go about the work He would have us perform here on earth."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Christmas Is Love," 2012 First Presidency Christmas Devotional, broadcast.lds.org.

"I keep Christ in Christmas by thinking of my family more than the gifts under the Christmas tree."

Lauren G., 13

"I come unto Christ by reading about Him and pondering why I need Him in my life."

Jensen K., 13



"Our entire family gathers together in the living room and reenacts the nativity on Christmas Eve. It gives true meaning to the season."

Jacob W., 18

"My family has **collected story-books** about Christmas. Some of the stories are from prophets of our Church. We try to **read together** every night in December, and on Christmas Eve we read about Jesus's birth in Luke 2. During Christmastime, we also **invite less-active families** or those not of our faith to go to Church activities or **to see the lights** and shows **at the temple**. As I see them enjoy the spirit of Christmas, I come closer to Jesus Christ."

Quinlan W., 14

"Each morning in December, I say a prayer and ask the Lord to help me feel the spirit of Christmas and **find a way to serve** someone that day. At the end of the day, I think of one act of service someone has done for me and thank Heavenly Father for that service. This helps me keep Christ in Christmas because I am **acting more like Him**. In the process, I find myself partaking in the true spirit of Christmas: the ability to serve and **share the love and light of Christ** with those around me."

Haley M., 16

"My family and I spend time together and keep Christ-centered traditions alive. We **bake plates of goodies** to take to friends and extended families, and we **help a less-fortunate family** in our community. We also **visit the temple** to see the wonderful Christmas programs and the lights. I spend extra time at Christmas **reading about Jesus's life and birth** in the scriptures and thinking about what Jesus did during His earthly ministry."

Bridget W., 16

SURPRISE *Package*

By Craig Lofgreen

While I was on my mission in Taiwan, one Christmas I was feeling a little discouraged. I knew that Christmas should be about remembering the Savior and sharing the gospel, but I was looking forward to getting a package from home and going to the annual mission Christmas Eve celebration to help bring some Christmas cheer into my life. Although the other missionaries in my apartment had already received large packages, by Christmas Eve I still had not received anything.

I was feeling pretty miserable as my companion and I rode our bikes through pouring rain to the mission office to meet up for the celebration. I hoped that a package would be waiting for me, but when we arrived, not only were there no packages, but there were also no missionaries. We were late enough that the other missionaries had already left for the party. I don't believe I'd ever felt so empty, so depressed, and so utterly alone. It did not feel like Christmas.

Sitting in the dark, all I could think about was how lonely and miserable I felt. Tears started to fall.

Then I heard the familiar sound of a motorcycle outside.



I hadn't received a Christmas package from my family, but what I did receive became one of my most memorable Christmas gifts.

It was the evening mail delivery. I looked out and saw the mailman carrying a package to the mission office.

To my surprise, the package was addressed to me. It was from the young women of my home ward. Inside I found the most wonderful, crushed, delicious, three-week-old chocolate chip cookies I'd ever tasted! They were like manna from heaven. My companion and I ate them together, with smiles on our faces and a little more of the Christmas spirit in our hearts.

The young women who put together that package probably had no idea how much it would lift the spirits of a discouraged missionary clear across the Pacific Ocean. The true meaning of Christmas focuses on our Savior, and the Christmas gift from those young women served as a gentle reminder to me that God is aware of our simple struggles. I have since learned even more that there's much more to Christmas than merely receiving gifts. But to this day, that simple package has been one of the most meaningful Christmas gifts I have received, and it's one I will never forget. **NE**

Craig Lofgreen lives in Utah, USA.

IN THE Silence

Earnestly ♩ = 88-96

Words by Susan Evans McCloud
Music by Michael F. Moody

p *mp* 1. In the

si - lence of the ev - 'ning Un - der - neath a win - ter sky, When the
si - lence, in the shad - ows, Lo, the light of truth burns bright. In Thy
sun - rise, sweet with bird - song, In the clar - i - ty of morn, Let me

stars stream forth in splen - dor, Thy com - ing, Lord, is nigh. Oh, will I
peace and in Thy pow - er There will nev - er - more be night! Oh, let Thy
seek Thee, let me find Thee, Let Thy love in me be born! Oh, Sav - ior,

mf *R. H.*

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see Thee in the beau - ty? Will I hear the an - gels sing? Are my
 Saints re - joice to - geth - er, Let our hearts rise to Thy throne, Let Thy
 Lord, come to re - deem us, Let me walk Thy gen - tle way, Let Thy

own gifts pure and read - y For an of - fer - ing to bring?
 love be as a bea - con That will
 mer - cy, all - suf - fi - cient, Light my

rit. *mp*


1. 2. In the

2. 3. guide us safe - ly home. 3. In the striv - ing mor - tal day.

mp *rit.* *mp*

Moroni 7:48

The Gift of FAMILY HISTORY



This
Christmas,
share the joy
of the gospel
with your
ancestors.

By Rachel Nielsen

Everyone thought it was the coolest Christmas gift. My nine-year-old brother had just opened a huge bag of colorful, sticky, squishy toy frogs and threw one at the ceiling, where it stuck for a minute before falling to the floor. Excited, he offered frogs to the rest of us, and soon frogs decorated the ceiling, the walls, and the Christmas tree.

My brother felt so much joy from throwing these frogs that he wanted his family to experience it too. Similarly, when we feel the joy that comes from living the gospel, it's natural to want to share that joy with others. And you can do that by participating in family history, giving your ancestors—and you—gifts that will last for eternity.

Gifts for Your Ancestors

As you seek out your ancestors and take their names to the temple, you will give them an opportunity to feel the joy that comes from living the gospel. Jonathan T., 18, from Pennsylvania, USA, gave his ancestors a priceless gift by doing his family history: “I had the opportunity to bring the names of my grandmother and her parents to the temple, and that truly was a sacred experience. My grandmother lived with my family and me for most of my life. When she passed away, I found so much comfort knowing that because of the Restoration of the fullness of the gospel and the plan of salvation, she and my other ancestors would be able to learn about the gospel on the other side of the veil.”

Gifts for You

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles invited you to experience the Spirit of Elijah by participating in family history, and he promises that as you do, your patriarchal blessing will be more meaningful, your love for your ancestors will increase, your testimony of the Savior will deepen, and you will be protected from the influence of the adversary (see “The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 26–27).

Whitney H., 13, from Idaho, USA, is doing family history, and, just as Elder Bednar promised, she is being blessed through the Holy Ghost for it. “I can feel the Spirit of Elijah working in me,” she said. “I want everybody to feel the joy that I feel from doing family history!” Giving the gift of temple ordinances to your ancestors blesses them and you (see D&C 128:15).

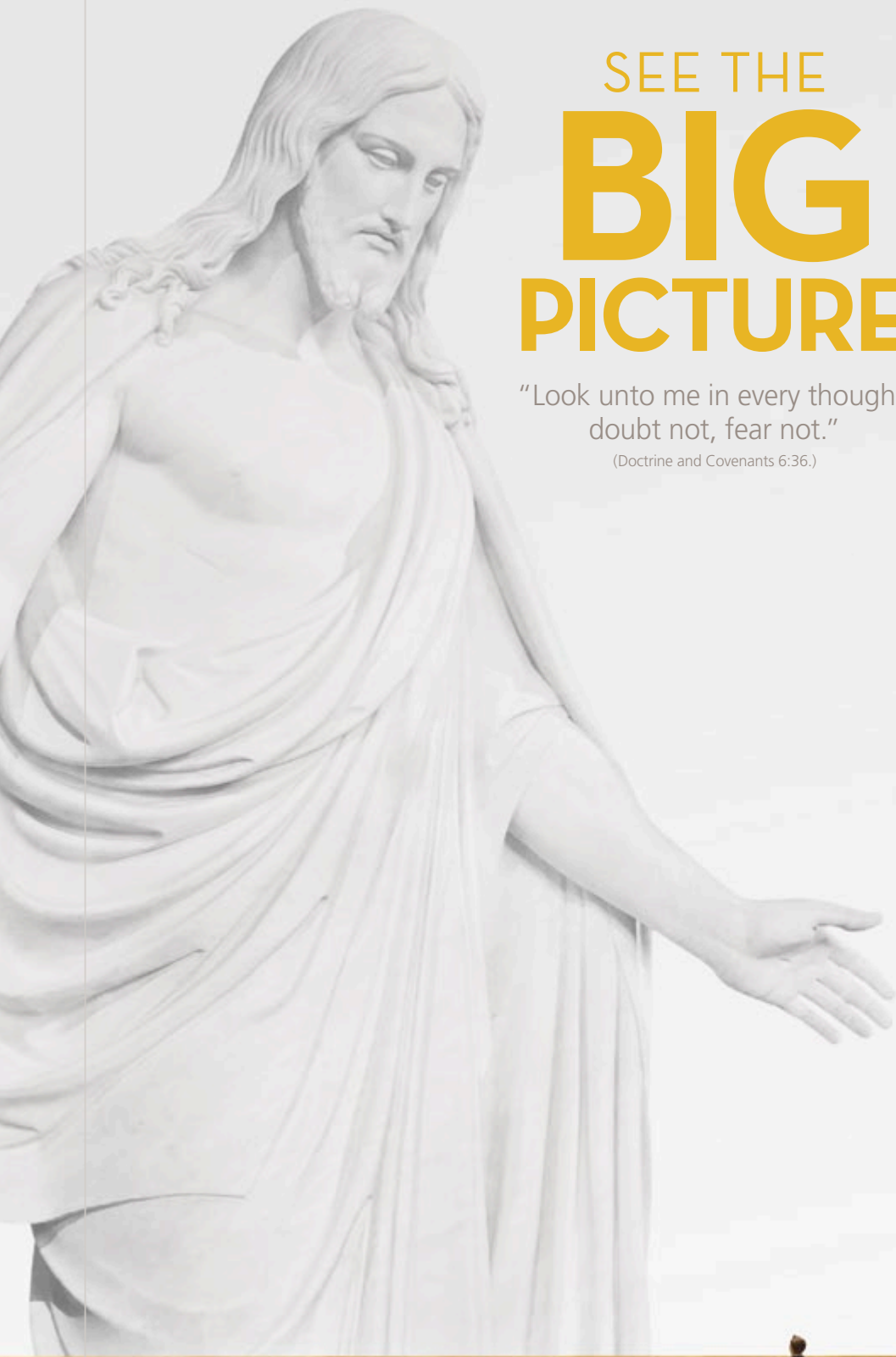
What will you do to bring them that special gift this season? **NE**

Rachel Nielsen lives in Utah, USA.

SEE THE **BIG** PICTURE

"Look unto me in every thought;
doubt not, fear not."

(Doctrine and Covenants 6:36.)



WHEN GOOD THINGS
HAPPEN TO OTHERS

AND BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO YOU



HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH TRIALS—ESPECIALLY WHEN OTHERS SEEM TO GET ALL THE BLESSINGS?

By Joshua J. Perkey

Church Magazines

Imagine you've practiced hard for years to make the long-distance track team. You've done everything you can to prepare, including keeping the Word of Wisdom, with faith that the Lord will bless you for your obedience. But after tryouts, you get cut from the team, and a friend—one who smokes—makes the team.

How would you feel? Devastated? Confused? We all deal with disappointment and tragedy—even when we're doing our best to live the gospel. And it can seem extra hard when others who don't keep the commandments seem to get all the breaks.

In fact, sometimes it doesn't seem to make any sense. After all, you've been promised that God will bless you for keeping His commandments. So why do bad things sometimes happen to people who are doing their best to live as God has asked us to live, and why do good things sometimes happen to people who aren't choosing to do good?

We may not always know why things happen the way they do. But we can trust that Heavenly Father understands. Whether you struggle with envy because of blessings others received, disappointment because of blessings you didn't receive, or sorrow because of tragedy, Heavenly Father can help you find peace.

WHEN GOOD THINGS HAPPEN TO OTHERS

One hard part about seeing good things happen to other people, especially when we feel like we're the ones who deserve the reward, is choosing not to judge others. We may feel envious or jealous, maybe even sad that we were left out. We may wonder, "Why do others get the good things and I don't?"

Well, maybe that's not the right question. We can spend a lot of time wondering why good things happen to other people. But in the end, we can't change what happened. What we *can* change is how we feel about it. If we don't do that, the consequences only hurt us.

As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught, "Envy is a mistake that just keeps on giving. Obviously we suffer a little when some *misfortune* befalls *us*, but envy requires us to suffer all *good fortune* that befalls *everyone* we know! What a bright prospect that is—downing another quart of pickle juice every time anyone around you has a happy moment!"¹

But how do we stop judging others when the feelings seem so real? We begin by realizing that we have the power to choose how we feel.

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has explained it this

Use the
GIFT OF
AGENCY

CHOOSE THE
GOOD

LOOK
FOR THE
BLESSINGS

KEEP THE
COMMANDMENTS

Have the right
ATTITUDE

= DON'T =
JUDGE
OTHERS

CHOOSE
HOW YOU
ACT,
THINK,
AND EVEN
FEEL

way: “As sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father, we have been blessed with the gift of moral agency, the capacity for independent action and choice. Endowed with agency, you and I are agents, and we primarily are to act and not just be acted upon.”²

Another way to stop judging others is to live as the Savior asks us to live. As we strive to keep the commandments, God provides spiritual blessings to heal our hearts, to help us see others and ourselves as He sees them and us, and to walk with Him.

Thus, envy and judgment can be replaced by compassion and peace as we give ourselves in service to the Savior.

WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO YOU

But what about when bad things happen directly to you? How do you handle that? From little things to big things, trials come all the time, and some things can be truly life-changing. Maybe a loved one’s illness is diagnosed as cancer or you were hit and nearly killed by a driver who wasn’t paying attention. In cases like these, doesn’t your anger or frustration feel justified?

Maybe that’s not really the right question, either. What Elder Bednar taught about agency is still true. Each of us can choose how we act, react, think, and even feel. You can choose to be angry at life or at God or even at yourself. But what good does that do?

As Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said, “Distancing yourself from the kingdom of God during a trial of faith is like leaving the safety of a secure storm cellar just as the tornado comes into view.”³

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught, “Peace comes from knowing that the Savior knows who we are and knows that we have faith in Him, love Him, and keep His commandments, even and especially amid life’s devastating trials and tragedies.”⁴

HOLD FIRM TO YOUR FAITH IN THE SAVIOR

Choosing to be unhappy, even when it seems justified because of unfair things that happen, leads to darkness, bitterness, and disappointment. The good things we choose to believe, follow, and act on lead us to Christ and to the peace He offers (see



TWO EXAMPLES FROM YOUTH



Matthew 11:28; John 14:27). Just think of Joseph Smith's example—he endured many great trials because of his faith and devotion to Christ,

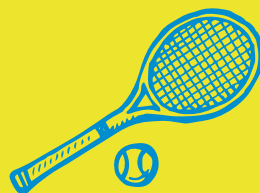
but he always remained true to the Lord and received many blessings and greater knowledge as a result.

No matter what happens, the Savior stands ready to help heal you and guide you. As President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has taught: “There may be some among you who feel darkness encroaching upon you. You may feel burdened by worry, fear, or doubt. To you and to all of us, I repeat a wonderful and certain truth: God’s light is real. It is available to all! It gives life to all things (see D&C 88:11–13). It has the power to soften the sting of the deepest wound. It can be a healing balm for the loneliness and sickness of our souls. In the furrows of despair, it can plant the seeds of a brighter hope. It can enlighten the deepest valleys of sorrow. It can illuminate the path before us and lead us through the darkest night into the promise of a new dawn.”⁵ **NE**

NOTES

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Laborers in the Vineyard,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 31–32.
2. David A. Bednar, “And Nothing Shall Offend Them,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 90.
3. Neil L. Andersen, “Trial of Your Faith,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 40.
4. Quentin L. Cook, “Personal Peace: The Reward of Righteousness,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 33.
5. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Hope of God’s Light,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 75.

How you deal with trials—both in the moment and later—can make a difference in the rest of your life and perhaps eternity. In these two stories, youth share how they found peace during their trials. After reading these stories, consider making a plan to let go of and avoid envy, anger, and judgment by coming unto Christ.



CUT FROM THE TEAM

Malia H. from Arizona, USA, had played on her school’s tennis team for two years. In her senior year, the rules changed, requiring seniors to try out again.

She spent months practicing for hours at a time, even when others quit because of the heat. Then came time for tryouts. She gave it her best, but she didn’t make the team.

“I felt like my heart was breaking. I’d worked for an entire year to make my goals a reality. I was also embarrassed. I was angry. Why didn’t my coach give me a fair chance? Why didn’t Heavenly Father help him choose not to cut me from the team?”

“Struggling to overcome the hurt led me to think about the sorrows of the Savior. He spent His entire ministry in the service of His neighbors, yet He was despised by many of these same people (see Isaiah 53:3–5). Although He was the only person who did not need forgiveness, He willingly suffered the anguish of all sin. With His stripes to rescue me from death, how could I resent the small injustices in life? The miracle of the Atonement beckoned to me, urging me to seek the merciful Son.”



INJURED FOR LIFE

In November 2010, Elder Jeremy Schone was serving as a missionary in Malaysia. One night he and his companion were biking home when he was hit by a truck being driven on the wrong side of the road. Jeremy broke multiple bones, his aorta was torn, his lung collapsed, his brain swelled, and he contracted pneumonia. In short, he should have died.

But time after time, little miracles occurred and he not only survived but also continued to heal. Even so, the recovery was long and painful. “And there will be trials for the rest of my life,” Jeremy says. It would have been easy for Jeremy to wonder why something like that could happen to him, especially when he was serving a mission. But turning to the Savior taught him many things.

“Because of what I learned, I can bear witness that our Savior suffered for all of our trials. As we humbly and faithfully endure our trials, we can be filled with a new spiritual strength—the strength that we will need to endure to the end, the strength that we will need to obtain our exaltation.”

STANDING IN *Holy Places*



1

This year Church magazines invited youth from all over the world to send in pictures that show how they stand in holy places. Take a look at some of the pictures sent in and see what youth did to live the 2013 Mutual theme.



2



3

1 Anytime I'm involved in wholesome activities, especially with my family, I'm standing in holy places.

LaRae R., 16, British Columbia, Canada

2 I stand in holy places when I value things that have eternal worth over the things of the world.

Kirck M., 18, Negros Occidental, Philippines

3 To me, standing in a holy place means doing service. My favorite way to do service is in the temple. I can feel such a strong spirit when I am doing the Lord's work in the Lord's house.

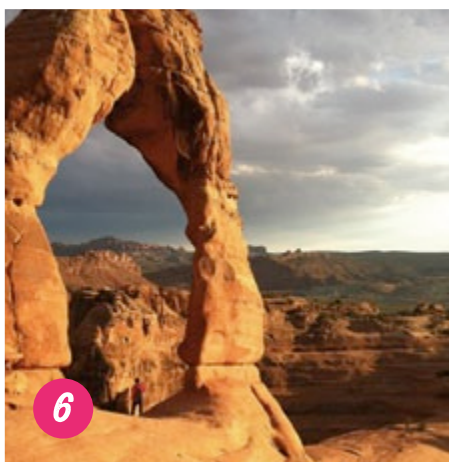
Kiana B., 15, Utah, USA



4



5



6



7

4 I'm standing next to the baptismal font where I was baptized. I consider this font to be a holy place because it's where people make covenants with God and are made new.

Joe-Smith E., 17, Akwa Ibom, Nigeria

5 Whenever I go up to the mountains and am separated from the world, I realize that they can be holy and peaceful places.

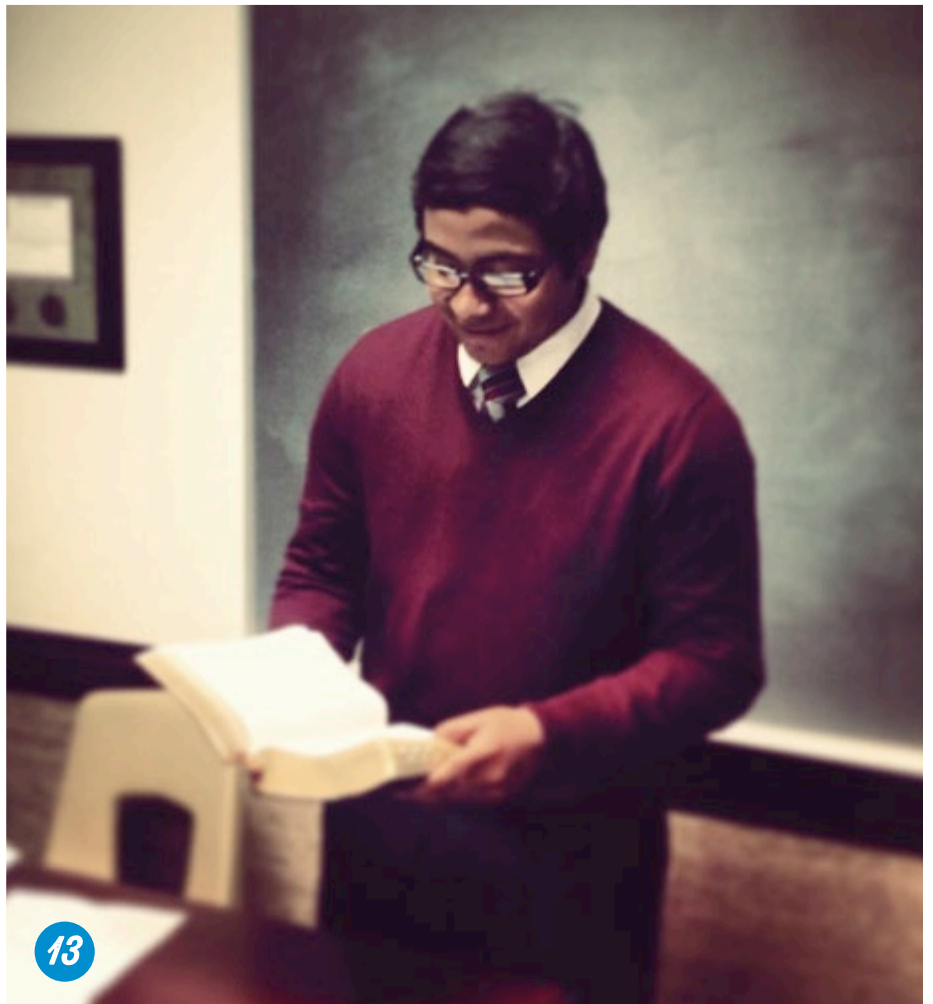
Emma P., 17, Oregon, USA

6 I love the outdoors, and whenever I'm in a place like this (Delicate Arch in Moab, Utah), I feel more connected with my Heavenly Father. Being able to see the amazing things Heavenly Father created for us helps me feel the Spirit.

John T., 18, Utah, USA

7 My home is a holy, sacred place because I feel very happy and peaceful there. And when I read the Book of Mormon, I feel a quiet peace through the Holy Ghost.

Melisa D., 13, Kosovo



8 This is a picture from New Beginnings. For me, the Church building is a holy place where I learn the Young Women values and the principles of the gospel. At church, I also strengthen the friendships I have with young women who share the same faith.
Luize S., 12, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

9 I stand in a holy place when I help people and have fun with good friends.
James R., 17, North Carolina, USA

10 I stand in a holy place when I'm with friends who live the gospel. They help me stay connected to our Heavenly Father and be in greater harmony with the Holy Ghost.
Jonathan N., 17, Buenos Aires, Argentina

11 I stand in holy places when I play the piano in sacrament meeting. The melodies and lyrics of the hymns strengthen my faith and testimony.
Chelsea A., 13, Banten, Indonesia

12 I stand in holy places when I lead the songs in sacrament meeting because I am touched by the beautiful singing of the congregation.
Geovani W., 15, Banten, Indonesia

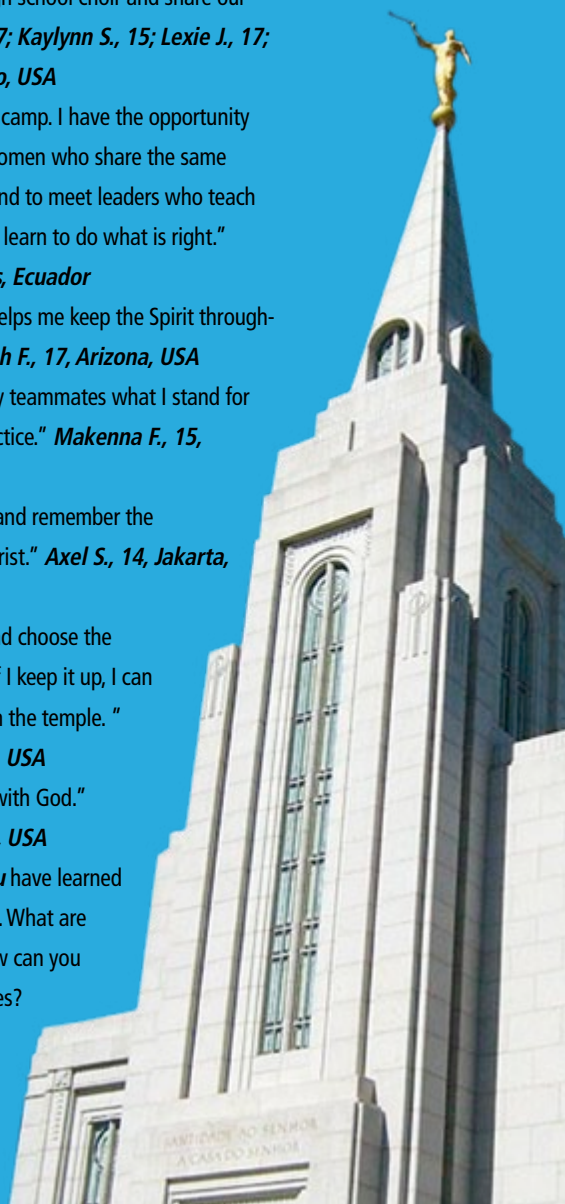
13 I stand in holy places when I teach my quorum on Sundays. I love sharing the gospel.
Ramón M., 16, California, USA

OTHER HOLY PLACES

Here's how other youth completed the sentence "I stand in holy places when . . ."

- "I share the gospel with my friends." *John B., 17, Ceará, Brazil*
- "I stand with the missionaries, because working with them gives me more experience sharing the gospel, and soon I will be a full-time missionary." *Joseph H., 18, Jakarta, Indonesia*
- "I'm on the basketball court and am helpful to my teammates and show good sportsmanship to the players, even to the other team." *Emily C., 12, Utah, USA*
- "We perform in our high school choir and share our talents." *Tanner M., 17; Kaylynn S., 15; Lexie J., 17; Spencer M., 17; Idaho, USA*
- "I go to Young Women camp. I have the opportunity to meet other young women who share the same standards and values and to meet leaders who teach us principles so we can learn to do what is right." *Norma V., 17, Guayas, Ecuador*
- "I attend seminary. It helps me keep the Spirit throughout my day!" *Savannah F., 17, Arizona, USA*
- "I make it known to my teammates what I stand for at my school cheer practice." *Makenna F., 15, California, USA*
- "I pass the sacrament and remember the Atonement of Jesus Christ." *Axel S., 14, Jakarta, Indonesia*
- "I keep myself clean and choose the right, because I know if I keep it up, I can someday get married in the temple." *Whitney H., 15, Utah, USA*
- "I keep my covenants with God." *Mark M., 17, Oregon, USA*

Now think about what **you** have learned from this year's Mutual theme. What are some of your holy places? How can you continue to stand in holy places? Consider recording your thoughts in your journal and at lds.org/go/123Holy.





By Elder
Bradley D. Foster
Of the Seventy

The View from the **END OF THE ROAD**

The message from the end of the road is clear:

“You can do this. And when you do, everything will be better.”

I will never forget you, Bishop.
You saved my life.”

The man who makes that statement today didn’t feel that way in the beginning. As a teen he was scared. He knew he needed to repent. I was his bishop at the time, and he knew we needed to talk. But he was full of doubts.

“What is the bishop going to think of me?”

“Will he keep this confidential?”

“How will I ever look at him again?”

Such worries can feel overwhelming, making it seem nearly impossible to muster the courage necessary to travel the road to repentance.

Looking Down the Road

But let’s take a look at that road. Some parts of repentance are easier than others. One step is recognition. We usually know when we’re doing something wrong; the Holy Ghost helps us sense that.

We must change, and the desire to change is usually strong.

Then the steps get harder. The Lord says we must confess and forsake. It seems pretty easy to confess to Heavenly Father in our prayers. We can correct many sins in this way, seeking forgiveness, making restitution, and improving behavior until the Spirit confirms that we have done all we can.



WE SHOULD SMILE

“Repentance is a divine gift, and there should be a smile on our faces when we speak of it.”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Divine Gift of Repentance,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 38.

But some confessions require that you talk to your bishop or branch president. And that’s where this young man found himself. He needed help beyond his own capacity, and he needed to know the journey was possible.

Hope on the Highway

Those who have traveled the repentance road will tell you that not only is the journey possible but that when you have been there and look back, this is what you are going to see:

You can do this. And when you do, everything will be better.

The Lord commands us to repent because He loves us. Through His Atonement, He paid the price for our sins, and so He knows that repentance sets us free. He will strengthen anyone who turns to Him. Alma taught that to take advantage of the Atonement, we must repent—every one of us (see



Alma 5:33–34). The road may be hard, but a bishop will walk that road with you. There *is* help along the way.

As soon as you start, you will feel relief.

Turn to your bishop. You will find a man who loves you and respects you. The trust you can build with your bishop is profound. It will last forever, and it will help you feel safe with other bishops in the future. You'll be given a different perspective on your predicaments. In his wisdom and experience, and with inspiration from the Lord, the bishop will balance out for you what you thought was the end of the world when it's maybe only a bump in the road.

He will help you to truly understand that the Savior is the Light of the World. By your taking advantage of the Atonement, your life will become bright, your future will be promising, and you will understand that gaining faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is one of the great purposes for coming to live on earth.

Your bishop will help you through this. You will love him and never forget him.

I firmly believe that people who help you in times of crisis become bound to your heart. How much more, then, is a bishop bound to you when he helps you through a spiritual crisis? The Lord can magnify the bishop's kindness and his ability to guide you. Your bishop will be your friend forever.

And for you young men who will one day be bishops or stake presidents yourselves, your experiences with your bishop will train you for that time when you may be on the other side of the desk.


Let me close by telling you a little more about my visit with that young man. "Bishop," he said, "you're going to hate me for what I have to tell you. You'll never be able to look at me again, and if you share what I say with anybody, I'll kill myself."

I said, "I promise I will never betray your confidences. I will take them with me to the grave."

He told me about some minor situations and watched my reaction. When I said, "I know what you're going through. I can help you," he proceeded slowly until he got to what he really wanted to discuss. I reminded him repeatedly that I admired him for confessing and wanting to change. Even though he seemed ready to run at any moment, together we got through what he needed to share.

Was it a big deal? It was to him. But as we talked, he came to better understand the mercy the Lord offers to those who sincerely repent. After that first visit, we worked together, and over time his repentance became complete. Today he still calls me to say hello, and our conversations are happy.

I was privileged to help him learn that we all depend on the Atonement. And I join my voice with his in praise of Jesus Christ, the one who really saved his life. **NE**



*As a young woman,
I never thought
pornography would
be something
I could struggle with.*

I never thought a pornography addiction could be a girl's problem. I was proved wrong when I was about 16 years old. I came across a video of pornography, and since I was alone and curious, I watched it. After that first time, I felt like I had to watch something every day. I became addicted to pornography.

Viewing pornography made me feel bad. I knew it was wrong, but I didn't

NO LONGER **ADDICTED:** My Journey to Overcome Pornography

Name withheld

do anything to change. I was never happy, and I felt dirty and infected with Satan's tempting filth. But I still found ways to watch it just so I could satisfy my appetite. My addiction led to more and more wrongdoings. I lied to everyone: my brother, my mother, and worst of all, the Lord and myself. I would tell myself that one more movie wasn't going to hurt me, one more dirty story wouldn't be that bad.

I still went to church, Mutual, and seminary, but I didn't have the right attitude or the Spirit with me. I was resentful, so I didn't get anything from the lessons. I stopped paying my tithing, praying, and reading the scriptures. I felt guilty, but I still couldn't bring myself to quit. I was bringing myself down every day.

Eventually, my access to pornography was restricted. At first I felt deprived without pornography, but then I realized things had changed for the better. My routine was different. I didn't watch pornography every day. I still had urges to watch it, but I became better about resisting them. Eventually, after two years of being addicted to pornography, I began praying consistently for strength and stopped watching it completely. But I still felt dirty inside. I knew I needed to talk to the bishop. I just couldn't bring myself to do it.

Finally, after hearing a lot of people talk about going through the repentance process and the trials they overcame, I felt that I really needed to

see my bishop. I also realized I was missing out on a great blessing in the Church: my patriarchal blessing.

I made an appointment to meet with my bishop.

I felt ashamed walking into my bishop's office the night of my interview. I was afraid he was just going to look at me and tell me that my case was hopeless and that I had dug myself a hole that was too deep to escape. I was afraid he would never look at me the same. But as I told him my whole story, he gave me a loving smile and listened intently. He really cared about me. After talking with my bishop and working through things, he finally told me I was clean.

My years addicted to pornography were the roughest of my life, but I felt so good leaving my bishop's office and feeling clean. It was as if a weight I had been carrying for years was lifted off my shoulders. I was glad I could receive my patriarchal blessing and worthily partake of the sacrament and have the Spirit again. I felt like a new person. People even told me how different I seemed and that I had a different glow about me. I was happier all the time and had a better attitude about everything.

I know that with the Lord's help we can change and overcome addictions. And we don't need to worry about talking with the bishop, because he will help us as we repent so we can feel clean once again through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. **NE**



WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

"Through the Atonement, you can receive forgiveness and be cleansed from your sins when you repent.

"Repentance is more than simply acknowledging wrongdoings. . . . It includes turning away from sin and turning to God for forgiveness. . . .

". . . If you have sinned, the sooner you repent, the sooner you begin to make your way back and find the peace and joy that come with forgiveness. . . .

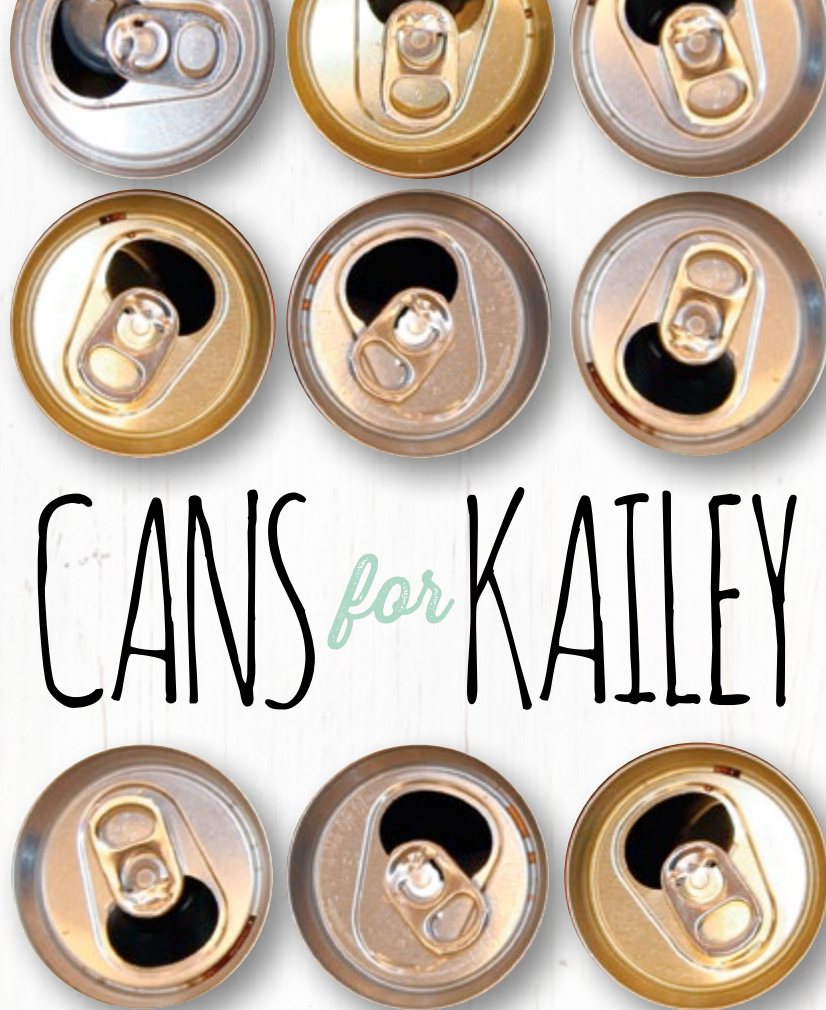
". . . As you strive to repent, seek help and counsel from your parents. Serious sins, such as sexual transgression or use of pornography, need to be confessed to your bishop. Be completely honest with him. He will help you repent."

For the Strength of Youth (2011), 28–29.

Help Is Available

Discover ways to overcome pornography use, find hope, and be changed through the Atonement of Jesus Christ at **overcomingpornography.org**.

At this website you'll also find ideas for preventing a pornography addiction and helping family members who struggle with this addiction.



CANS *for* KAILEY

A deacon and a BYC are helping a young woman who is going blind to see more clearly. And it's helping their ward and community see more clearly too.

By Richard M. Romney
Church Magazines

This is a story of vision lost and vision gained.

It's the story of Kailey I. of eastern Utah, USA, who as a baby was so eager to enter this life that she came early and spent her first four and a half months of life in the newborn intensive care unit. Doctors said she might not live long and that if she did survive, she wouldn't be able to see or speak. She would spend her life in a wheelchair, they said, and she would suffer from cerebral palsy.

Today, Kailey and her parents say that Heavenly Father must have had other plans. The years have been filled with prayer and days of ward and family fasts, multiple priesthood blessings, repeated surgeries, several three-and-a-half-hour drives to doctors, and even a two-and-a-half-month period of total blindness. Despite all that, Kailey is a

vibrant, happy 12-year-old who just advanced from Primary into Young Women.

But her eyes, diseased from birth, have never provided more than limited sight. At age 10, Kailey permanently lost vision in her left eye. Now her right eye—which has a field of vision so small it's like looking through a straw—is getting worse.

Kailey, ever the optimist, has been learning braille, a language that allows her to read by feeling raised dots with her fingertips. "Braille is going to be part of my life," she says. "So I decided to start learning now. That way, I'll have a head start."

But to communicate in Braille, Kailey needed expensive equipment, including a special computer.



The Goal

Though many people in the community—such as those at her father's work as well as in the ward—would have gladly paid for the equipment, Kailey decided she could raise money for the equipment herself by recycling aluminum cans. The problem: it would take *a lot* of cans. When the ward deacons quorum president, Carter N., learned about her goal and dilemma, he came to the rescue and brought others with him.

"My uncle had a metal shed," Carter says. "He said I could tear it down, recycle the metal, and make some money to help Kailey, so I did that with his help. But I kept thinking about her idea to recycle cans. 'Couldn't we collect enough cans to help pay for her equipment?'"

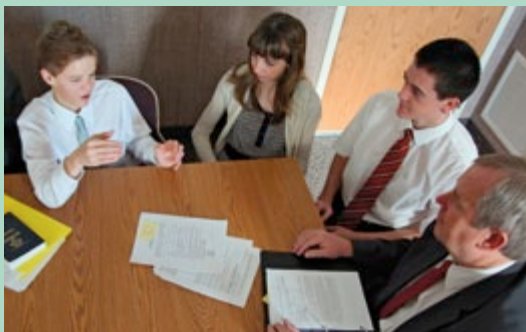
The next Sunday at bishopric youth committee (BYC) meeting, Carter shared his feelings and presented a plan. "The youth and the leaders talked it through," Carter says, "and we all said, 'We can do it'" to help Kailey collect cans. "We've been gathering cans ever since."



BUILD SPIRITUAL UNITY

"Fellowshipping is an important priesthood responsibility. Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood quorums are to act in concert with the sisters under the direction of the bishop to ensure that each person is welcomed with love and kindness. . . . We all need to work together to build spiritual unity within our wards and branches. . . . It is your duty to reach out."

Bishop Gérald Caussé, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, "Ye Are No More Strangers," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 51.



WHAT IS BYC?

BYC stands for *bishopric youth committee*. The bishop presides over the committee, which is composed of the bishopric, one of the bishop's priests quorum assistants, the deacons and teachers quorum presidents, the Young Women class presidents, and the ward Young Men and Young Women presidents. The bishopric may invite others to attend as needed.

The committee usually meets monthly. The bishop may conduct, or he may assign someone else to conduct. Before each meeting, the bishop reviews and approves the agenda with the person conducting, which may include planning ways to:

- Identify the needs of the youth and plan activities that meet those needs.
- Help youth live and promote Church standards.
- Encourage youth to participate in meetings and activities, including seminary.
- Fellowship youth who are investigating the Church, have recently been baptized, or are less active.
- Evaluate past activities to see if their intended purposes were fulfilled.

Committee meetings provide youth leadership opportunities and instruction. "One of the best things I learned by being in BYC is how much we can accomplish when we all work together," says Adam L., 16. "It brings us together to know we're doing something for someone else and it's helping them."

To learn more about BYC,

see *Handbook 2: Administering the Church*, 18.2.9.



A Huge Collection

Gathering may be an understatement.

"The BYC took the idea and ran with it," says Mark D. Holmes, Kailey and Carter's bishop. "The youth made plans, put up posters, and did all the work. The rest of the ward joined in too. Pretty soon people who weren't members of the Church saw us out gathering cans and were eager to get involved." Many businesses invited the youth to put up posters and set out boxes labeled "Kans for Kailey."

Although the original goal was just to recycle as much as possible, during the next few months, more than 14,000 aluminum cans were collected by the youth, the ward, and the community. "The bishop let us store them in his shop building," Carter explains. "We completely filled that, plus a couple of horse trailers." After the cans were crushed to save space, they still filled a storage shed that's 12 feet wide, 12 feet deep, and 8 feet tall.

"At first I didn't think we could get that many cans," says Michael P., 13. "But when people remembered they were doing it for Kailey, they all seemed to have more desire to help."

"We were doing for her something she couldn't do entirely for herself," says Kinsley K., 12. "In a small way, we were following the example of the Savior."

The money collected from the recycling provided more than enough money to purchase the Braille equipment. "I really like the equipment," Kailey says. "I use it a lot."

What's more, the youth, the ward, and the community all gained a vision of what they could do when they worked together.





An Important Welcome

But there's more to the story. Because of her physical challenges, Kailey hadn't always felt like she fit in at church. She and her younger brother Kenston, 10, both have autism, which makes it tough for them to express their feelings and interact with other people. Kenston also has Tourette's syndrome, and so he makes repeated, quick movements and utters sounds that he cannot control. Even though their testimonies of the gospel are strong, Kailey and her family felt like they might be a distraction to others, and so they sometimes left Church meetings early or didn't come at all.

However, when the youth started gathering cans, Kailey joined in every activity. She quickly made friends with the youth and the youth leaders in the ward.

"She joined right in and did everything," says Rachel M., 17. "And by being there, she got to see not only what we were doing, but she experienced our attitudes about doing it as well."

"Kailey's always nice," says Tommi B., 12. "When you see her, she's always the first one to say hi."

"I just want to be friends with everyone," Kailey says. "It really means a lot to me to be accepted."

As Kailey's parents saw how well she was fellowshiped by the youth of the ward, they gained an increased vision of how the ward family could support their family. They felt more welcome at meetings, including bringing Kenston along. Ward members have come to understand that Kenston will sometimes unexpectedly sit in the choir seats and then return to his family after a few minutes or that he may make a noise he can't stop, and they also understand that his friendship is quick and genuine.

"It didn't take long before the youth caught the vision that getting Braille equipment was never really the true goal of this project," Bishop Holmes says. "The real goal was to let Kailey and her family know that we love them and that we need them here to make our ward family complete." **NE**



What's So Important in That Bag?

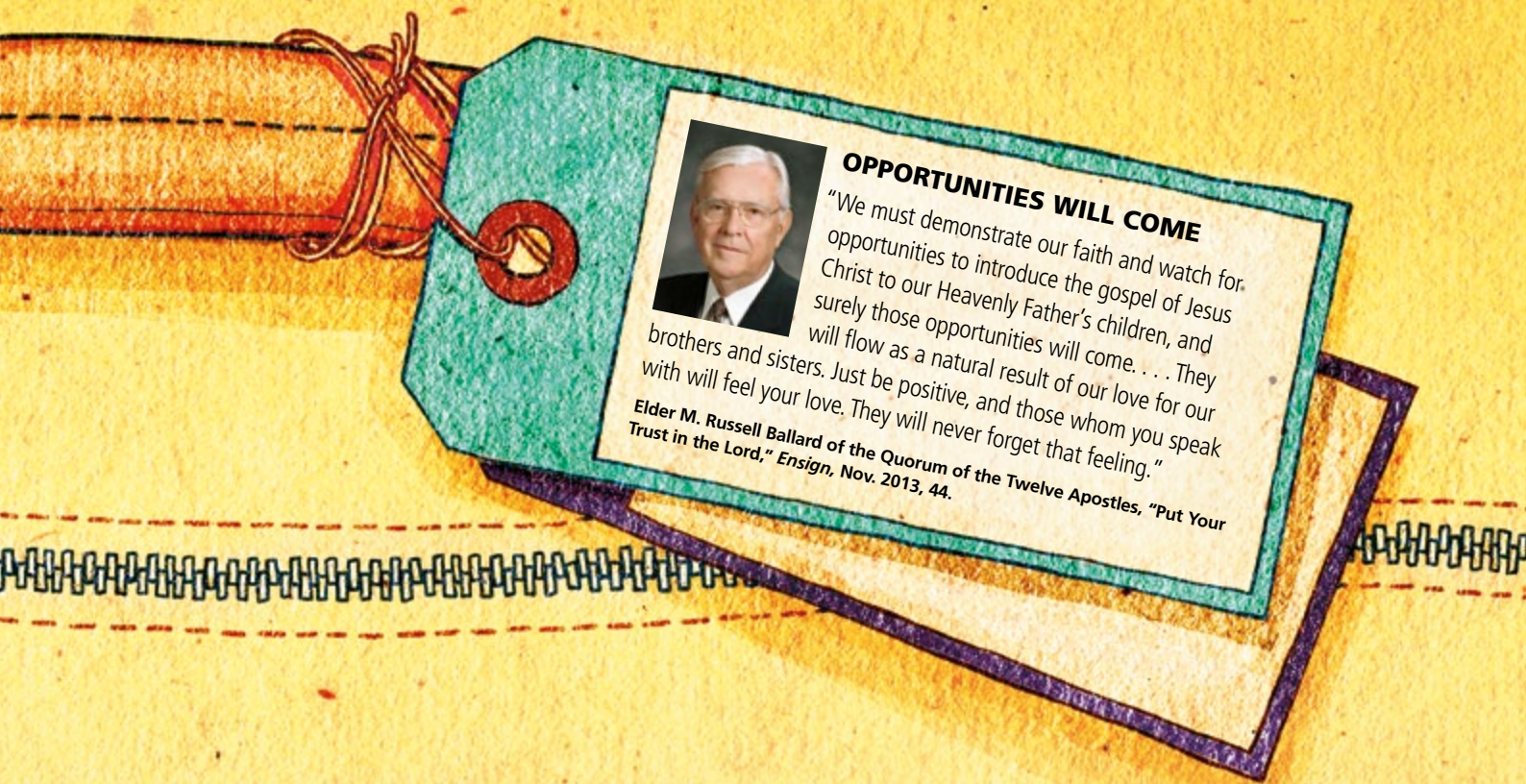
When a young man asked me what I needed in my bag, I didn't realize how much he needed what was in it, too.

By Marnie Lovstedt

It was two days before Christmas, and the airport was full of people. After standing in line to check my luggage and pick up my boarding pass, I was cranky. When I arrived at the gate to wait to board the plane, I couldn't find a place to sit, so I ended up lying along the back wall, using my carry-on bag as a pillow.

The airline I was flying on had open seating, and when it finally came time to board, I scanned the rows of seats ahead of me on the plane in search of an available window seat. The flight was full, but I managed to find a window seat near the back of the plane with only one other person in the row—a young man about my age in the aisle seat.

I climbed over the young man to get to my seat, making no attempt to talk to him because of my bad mood. As I struggled to shove my big carry-on bag under the seat



OPPORTUNITIES WILL COME



"We must demonstrate our faith and watch for opportunities to introduce the gospel of Jesus Christ to our Heavenly Father's children, and surely those opportunities will come. . . . They will flow as a natural result of our love for our brothers and sisters. Just be positive, and those whom you speak with will feel your love. They will never forget that feeling."

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Put Your Trust in the Lord," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 44.

in front of me, my neighbor offered to put it in the overhead storage bin for me. I declined, but I at least mustered enough charity to thank him for his offer.

"What's so important in that bag that you need it with you?" he asked. As I thought about it, I honestly didn't know.

"Nothing really, I guess," I said.

I hadn't thought about what was in my bag. I just knew that I liked to have my stuff with me and not in some overhead bin. This friendly neighbor continued to ask questions, and soon we were talking about where we were going for Christmas and what our plans were. By this time, a man was trying to climb into the middle seat between my new friend and me. But before he climbed over, the young man from the aisle seat slid into the seat next to me.

We kept talking, and by the time the plane took off I found out his name is P.K. He was flying to Houston to see his dad, whom he hadn't seen for years. Then we talked about Christmas traditions. The longer we talked, the more I realized we come from strikingly different backgrounds.

I started thinking about how the Church had influenced my life. Almost as if P.K. could read my thoughts, he asked me how I felt about religion and God. Once he found out I was a Latter-day Saint, he wanted to know what we believed, if I really believed the gospel's teachings, and how I could believe something so intangible.

I quickly prayed in my heart to say the right things to P.K., and I found myself answering his questions and telling him that I really did know the Church is true.

We continued talking until we landed in Texas. Then he said, "I've been searching for all kinds of things in my life to make me happy, and even when I've found temporary satisfaction or peace, I've never been as happy and confident as you seem.

"If what you say is true, then maybe this Church of yours isn't so bad," he said. "You must have been pretty lucky to grow up knowing all this. What you've told me is what people spend their entire lives looking for."

At that moment I realized why I needed my bag with me. I'd brought a copy of the Book of Mormon to give away. I pulled it out of my bag and shared some of my favorite passages with P.K. I felt the Spirit confirm to me that what I was saying was true. The Book of Mormon really can bring P.K. the peace he is looking for because it teaches of Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate source of peace.

That Christmas I discovered how the gospel of Jesus Christ really does make us happy and how blessed I am, as a Latter-day Saint, to know that. After wishing P.K. a merry Christmas, I offered a silent prayer that he would come to know what I know: that the gospel is true and can bring us peace. **NE**

Marnie Loustedt lives in Texas, USA.

Moroni 7:16–17

The prophet Mormon teaches how to know if something is good or evil.



DOETH THE DEVIL WORK

“We are surrounded—even at times bombarded—by the messages of the adversary. . . . Lucifer, that clever pied piper, plays his lilting melody and attracts the unsuspecting away from the safety of their chosen pathway He seeks not just the so-called refuse of humanity; he seeks all of us, including the very elect of God. . . . Lucifer’s methods are cunning; his victims, numerous. . . . I plead with you to make a determination right here, right now, not to deviate from the path which will lead to our goal: eternal life with our Father in Heaven. . . . No temptation, no pressure, no enticing can overcome us unless we allow such.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “The Three Rs of Choice,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 67–69.

PERFECT KNOWLEDGE

In another part of the Book of Mormon, Alma teaches that it’s possible to have a perfect knowledge of *some* things (see Alma 32:34). In addition to the test given in this scripture, you can also try the experiment in Alma 32 to know if something comes from God or not.



EVERY MAN

“Every child of Heavenly Father born in the world is given at birth, as a free gift, the Light of Christ. You have felt that. It is the sense of what is right and what is wrong and what is true and what is false.”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “Walk in the Light,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 123.

16 For behold, the “Spirit of Christ is given to every ^bman, that he may ^cknow good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

17 But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do ^aevil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him.

HIS ANGELS

“The scriptures speak of the devil’s angels. These are those spirits who followed Lucifer and were thrust out in the war in heaven and cast down to the earth.”

Bible Dictionary, “Angels”

SPIRIT OF CHRIST

The Spirit of Christ is also known in the scriptures as the “Light of Christ,” which is different from the Holy Ghost (see Bible Dictionary, “Light of Christ”). What can you learn from these scriptures about the Light of Christ? What other scriptures can you find that teach about this light?

- John 1:9
- John 8:12
- Ether 4:12
- D&C 11:11–14
- D&C 84:45–46
- D&C 88:6–11

JUDGE

“While it is true that you should not condemn others or judge them unrighteously, you will need to make judgments of ideas, situations, and people throughout your life. The Lord has given many commandments that you cannot keep without making judgments. . . . Judgment is an important use of your agency and requires great care. . . . All your judgments must be guided by righteous standards.”

True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference (2004), 90.

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

A friend of mine wants to know more about the gospel but doesn't want to go to church or meet with the missionaries.

I can't answer all of his questions. What should I do?

You can do many things to help your friend, and there are many resources your friend can use to learn more. Though you may not feel confident in your ability to answer all of your friend's questions, you should always show your care and support for him and assure him that there are answers. Here are a few of the things you could do:

- Invite your friend to a family home evening.
- Give your friend a copy of the Book of Mormon, read it together, and invite him to read it and pray about it on his own.

- Invite your friend to Mutual activities or youth conference.
- Take your friend to a nearby temple, especially if it has an adjacent visitors' center, and tell him what we believe about temple ordinances and eternal families.
- Use emails, text messages, posts through social networking, or other ways of communicating to stay in touch and answer questions. You could link him to some of the articles or videos on LDS.org, especially at lds.org/youth/video.
- Go online with your friend and show him the Mormon.org website.
- Give your friend a gift subscription to the *New Era* at store.lds.org.
- As Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles might say, "Ask the missionaries! They can help you!" (see *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 18). Get in touch with them to see if they have any suggestions for you. **NE**

Does it matter whether I say my prayers out loud, or can I just say them in my heart?

The Lord has said we should do both: "I command thee that thou shalt pray vocally as well as in thy heart" (D&C 19:28). In the Book of Mormon, Amulek taught that we should "cry unto [God]" in many circumstances in our lives and that "when you do not cry unto the Lord,

let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually" (see Alma 34:17–27). There is power in praying aloud, so although silent prayers may be more comfortable for you, you should try to give voice to them when you can. **NE**



Member Missionaries

This month in your Sunday lessons, you'll be studying about building the kingdom of God (see lds.org/youth/learn). As many Apostles have recently testified, a huge part of that work is sharing the gospel as member missionaries. But sometimes we hesitate to share the gospel, either out of fear or because we do not understand what missionary work is like, taught Elder M. Russell Ballard.

How can we overcome that fear? As Elder Ballard said, "Fear will be replaced with faith and confidence when members and the full-time missionaries kneel in prayer and ask the Lord to bless them with missionary opportunities. Then, we must demonstrate our faith and watch for opportunities to introduce the gospel of Jesus Christ to our Heavenly Father's children, and surely those opportunities will come."

See Elder Ballard's talk at lds.org/go/123Trust to find ideas to help you be a member missionary today. For more ideas from conference, see:

- Elder Arnulfo Valenzuela at lds.org/go/123Simple
- Bishop Gérald Caussé at lds.org/go/123Member

[REACH] OUT WITH LOVE TO SHARE THE
TRUTHS OF THE RESTORED GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST. . .



WHEN WE
DO OUR BEST
WHEN WE ARE ON
THE LORD'S ERRAND.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles,
October 2013 general conference

H O M E T E A C H I N G

Ours is the

SACRED PRIVILEGE

TO BRIGHTEN, TO TOUCH,
— AND —

to save

THOSE

PRECIOUS SOULS

ENTRUSTED

to our care.



Inspired Home Teachers

One of this month's Sunday lessons for Aaronic Priesthood asks, "How can I be a better home teacher?" If you've wondered the same thing, read President Monson's talk "True Shepherds" at lds.org/go/123Shepherds. Here's some of his inspiring counsel about home teaching:

- "Home teaching is more than a mechanical visit."
- "Ours is the responsibility to teach, to inspire, to motivate, and . . . to bring to activity and to eventual exaltation the sons and daughters of God."
- "Home teaching answers many prayers."
- "Decide now to make whatever effort is necessary to reach those for whom you have been given responsibility."

Read more about home teaching on pages 8 and 10 of this issue.



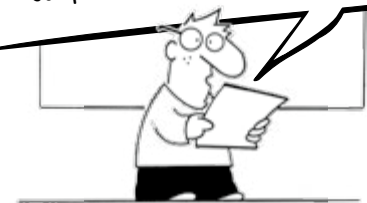
Hang, Download, or Share

Give yourself an easy reminder to prepare for your Sunday lessons on building the kingdom of God. Just place these cards in your scriptures, locker, or bedroom. You can also download or share them online at lds.org/go/123Cards.



RYAN STOKER

"In the 1960s, music groups had names like The Byrds, The Monkees, and The Beatles. That was before computers had spell-checking."



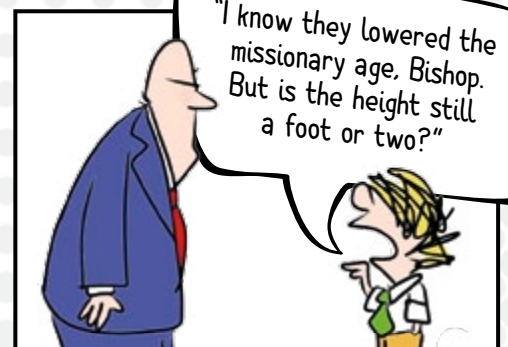
RANDY GLASBERGEN

"How could you give Frosty the Snowman hot chocolate?!"



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY

"I know they lowered the missionary age, Bishop. But is the height still a foot or two?"



JON CLARK

“How do I resist temptation?”

Strange as it sounds, temptation is necessary for our spiritual growth. If we weren't tempted, we wouldn't be able to choose between good and evil (see D&C 29:39). And if we couldn't choose good when offered an alternative, we couldn't grow spiritually (see 2 Nephi 2:11–30).

One key to resisting temptation is consistent obedience. If you give in sometimes, the temptation is harder to resist in the future. If you resist consistently, you get stronger and it is easier to resist in the future. Much of the strength to resist comes from the Savior's Atonement working in your life. As you do your best to learn the Savior's teachings and follow them, the Lord strengthens you to withstand temptation.

The scriptures teach other ways to resist temptation:

“Pray always, that you may come off conqueror; yea, that you may conquer Satan” (D&C 10:5).

“Whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them” (1 Nephi 15:24).

“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” (James 4:7–8).

Also, it's important to know that it's not wrong to be tempted. Even Jesus was tempted. “He suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them” (D&C 20:22). You can look to His example—and the examples of many others in the scriptures—to help you.

Pray for Strength



To withstand temptation, we first need the will and the sincere desire to choose the right. It helps me a lot if I imagine a

situation in advance and then choose the right. Another thing that helps me is prayer. If we will pray for strength, seek out spiritual nourishment, and choose carefully where we hang out, then the Holy Ghost can be our constant companion to be with us and to warn us.

Esther G., 18, Lower Saxony, Germany

Support Each Other



I think that by reading the scriptures daily, praying, exercising self-control, and following the words of the prophet, we can

resist temptation. Resisting temptation strengthens your faith and shows your commitment to Heavenly Father to keep the covenants you have made. Having friends in the Church can also help us because we can support each other. It takes a lot of courage to say no. Remember, “God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). When we overcome temptation, we draw nearer to Jesus Christ and to our Heavenly Father.

Nancy S., 19, Tultitlán, Mexico

Share Your Beliefs

In high school, most of my classmates invited me to drink alcohol and watch pornography. I always said no because I do what the Savior wants me to do. I remember Him and keep

my covenants. Sometimes my friends and classmates do not tempt me because they already know what my religion is. Sharing our beliefs and testimony with others—especially with friends, classmates, neighbors, and family—will lessen the temptation in our surroundings. I know that by living the gospel, we can overcome the temptations in our lives.

Romeo P., 19, Negros Occidental, Philippines

Listen to the Holy Ghost

I have found that when temptation comes, the Holy Ghost tries to warn me to choose the right. Do things—like praying and reading your scriptures—that keep the Spirit with you and avoid places where the Holy Ghost can't come.

Rachel O., 13, Pennsylvania, USA

Stand in Holy Places



My older brother always tells me to “stand in holy places.” I found that this means to stand where temptations are less

present or less severe. My stake president said, “Don’t just resist temptation—avoid temptation.” There will be times when you have to resist temptations, but it becomes easier to live the gospel when temptations are not there to tempt you.

Aaron L., 18, Utah, USA

We Can Decide to Do Right

The gift of the Holy Ghost helps us tell the difference between good and bad and helps us realize when we are being tempted. We should remember that temptations are tests that help us know

when we do right and when we don’t; and we should know that if we follow the Lord, He won’t allow us to be tempted more than we can withstand (see 1 Corinthians 10:13). We always get to decide whether to choose the right road instead of the wrong one.

Juan T., 19, Montevideo, Uruguay

Role-play Choosing the Right



I think it’s important to make up my mind ahead of time about choices I will be faced with. I was unexpectedly faced with a tricky situation, and the outcome was positive because I had already made up my mind that I would not back down from my standards. Even though I am sometimes uncomfortable, my family practices role-playing so I know what to say or do when faced with temptations.

Emelyne P., 14, Wyoming, USA

Have Good Friends

Having good friends who choose the right is something you can do to resist temptation. They set a good example. You can call them if you are tempted.



DECIDE EARLY TO EXERCISE FAITH

“It will take unshakable faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to choose the way to eternal life. . . . It is by acting on that faith we build the strength to do the will of God. And it is by exercising that faith in Jesus Christ that we can resist temptation and gain forgiveness through the Atonement. . . .

“The best time to resist temptation is early. The best time to repent is now. The enemy of our souls will place thoughts in our minds to tempt us. We can decide early to exercise faith, to cast out evil thoughts before we act on them.”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “Spiritual Preparedness: Start Early and Be Steady,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 38, 40.

They will help you choose the right. Good friends can remind you to pray, read the scriptures, and obey.

Sam E., 17, Washington, USA

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

UPCOMING QUESTION

“What should I do when I am
mocked at school
for following
Church **standards?**”

Send your answer and photo by January 15, 2014.

Go to newera.lds.org and click “Submit Your Work.”

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

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

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.

Conference Connection

Last conference, several Church leaders taught about the unique characteristics, divine roles, and strengths of men and women. For example, see:

- Elder D. Todd Christofferson: [lds.org/go/123Women](https://www.lds.org/go/123Women).
- Elder Neil L. Andersen: [lds.org/go/123Priesthood](https://www.lds.org/go/123Priesthood).
- Sister Carole M. Stephens: [lds.org/go/123Know](https://www.lds.org/go/123Know).

As Sister Stephens taught, “We all need each other. Sons of God need daughters of God, and daughters of God need sons of God. We have different gifts and different strengths.”

We all do need each other! The ways to help are endless.

Young men, you can encourage young women in their Personal Progress efforts. You can show respect for womanhood. You can lend a hand—or a listening ear—whenever you’re needed. You can be a righteous example.

Young women, you can also provide righteous examples. You can encourage young men in doing their duty to God. You can compliment them whenever they act as gentleman to show them it’s appreciated. You can support their efforts as they prepare to serve a mission.

And, of course, we can all build friendships at any age.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD M. ROMNEY

Join in the Jubilee

“Join in the jubilee,” the hymn says. “Mingle in song” (“Thanks for the Sabbath School,” *Hymns*, no. 278). Every Sunday for more than three years, a group of youth in Utah have done just that. Not out of assignment or obligation, but out of love for sacred music and a desire to serve, they show up each Sunday at a local care center to sing hymns.

Like many others, Kaden G., 17, started singing at the care center when a friend invited him to join in. “At first I thought, ‘I’ll do it because it’s service,’” he says. “But I found it builds your testimony to sing the hymns. Hymns invite the Spirit. They have a huge influence on people.”

“I love seeing people smile

when we sing for them,” says Allie G., 17. “I love seeing how much they appreciate it when we come, and I love the good feeling we have when youth get together to do something good.”

One of the residents, Nadine Taylor, has responded to the kindness of the teenagers by making pillowcases. “They’re personalized for each of us,” Allie says. “Nadine pulled me aside and asked me what my interests are.” Because Allie loves music, including composing songs, her pillowcase features musical notes. “It’s so detailed and stitched so perfectly,” she says. “It’s awesome to receive a personal ‘thank you.’”

“Mine has a soccer player on it,” Kaden says. “It has my jersey number and color from when I used to play.” Nadine obtained that information from some of the other teens. “I was really surprised,” Kaden says. “It means a lot.”

“I’m grateful that these young people are so dependable,” Sister Taylor says. “They come every Sunday, and their singing makes us feel loved.”

My Favorite Scripture

Philippians 4:13: “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*”

A couple of years ago my little brother passed away. My heart shattered like glass, and I felt so hopeless. When I found this scripture, it brought me comfort and peace. I know that when I place Christ in the center of my life, He will strengthen me. Over the years, I have seen His hand in my life and know that He is there for me every step of the way.

Chantel L., 17, Idaho, USA



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF CHANTEL L.

Mutual Activity Idea: Spreading Yuletide Cheer

Anonymous gift-giving can brighten and add meaning to the holidays both for you and for that special friend or stranger for whom you decide to sneak in some kindness.

If you're planning to give gifts to bless others this year, think about ways you can give service while learning a skill at the same time. For example, what if you gave some handcrafted wooden toys or a small patchwork quilt? Or perhaps a plate of cookies or brownies—made from a new recipe—attached with a kind note to put a smile on someone's face long after the last cookie crumb is gobbled up.

There are bound to be members in your ward or branch with equipment and know-how who can teach you how to make inexpensive but meaningful gifts from the heart. Consider spending some time during the weeks leading up to Christmas to work on creating presents while helping the youth in your ward learn new skills along the way.



Christmas Craft Kits for Kids

Young women in the East Midlands area of England wanted to do something special for the holidays to help out children in their community. Together with their Young

Women leaders, they created 80 different handmade craft kits for children at the local hospital. These kits allow children who are patients to make crafts or do fun activities while they stay at the

hospital. The kits include flycatchers, mobiles, puzzles, paper dolls, and puppets, all of which are ready for the kids to make.

"I was really happy to serve the children," says 15-year-old Bethany H. "The feeling we got was nice."

The young women built the kits during Mutual activities. When they delivered the craft kits, they also brought brand new Christmas decorations for the hospital. The project helped brighten the holidays for all involved. "I'd like to do it again," Bethany says.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF DEBBIE TWIGGER

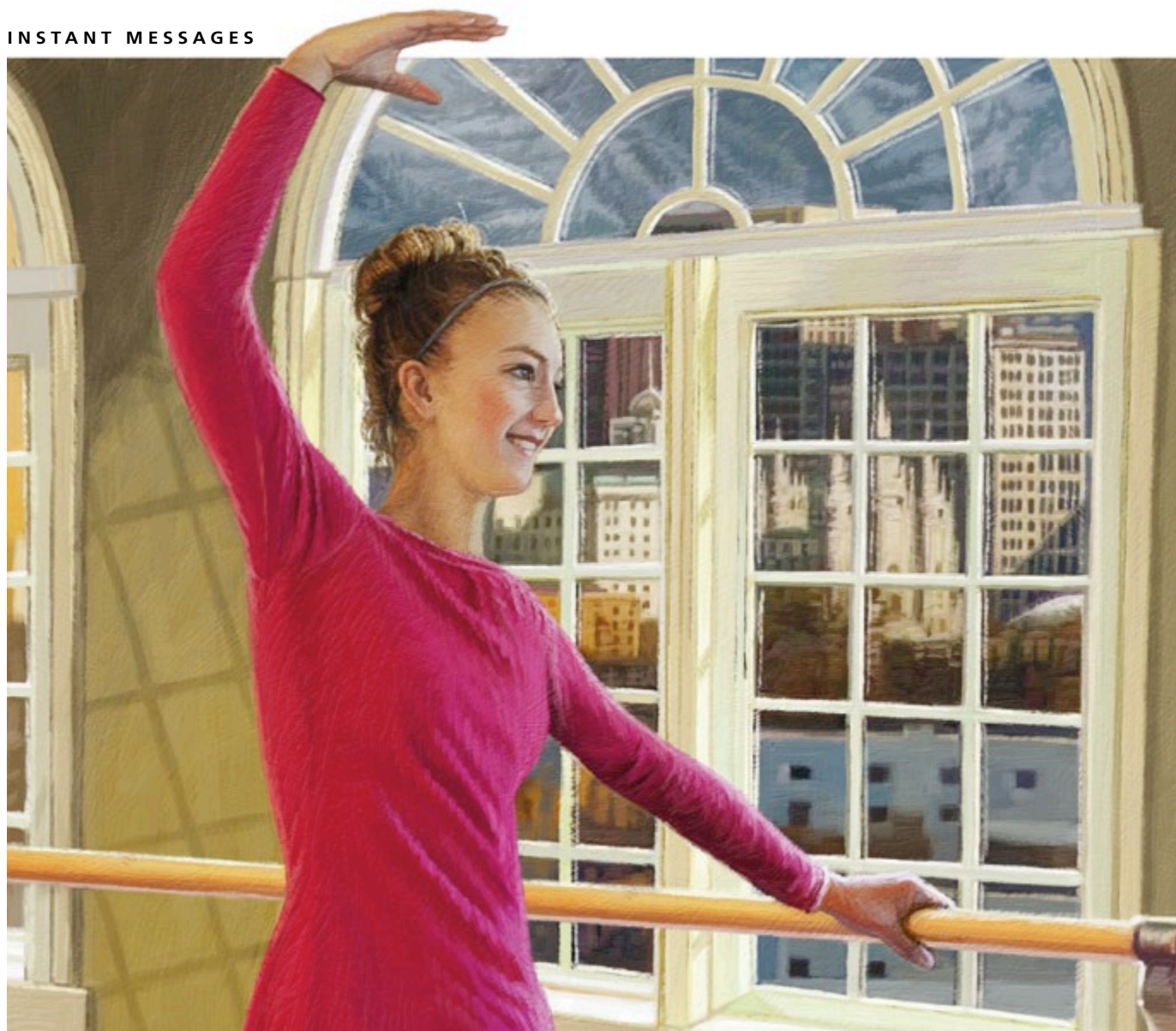


Christmas Hymn Vocabulary

Do you know the meaning of all the words in the last Christmas hymn you sang? Choose the correct definition for each of the following words that can be found in one or more of our hymns.

1. "Belfries" (*Hymns*, no. 214)
 - A. Shepherders
 - B. Fried, bell-shaped potato wedges
 - C. Bell towers
 - D. A type of sweetbread
2. "Radiant" (*Hymns*, no. 204)
 - A. High in elevation
 - B. Vividly bright or shining
 - C. Distant
 - D. Sudden or without warning
3. "Seraph" (*Hymns*, no. 211)
 - A. A thin mustache
 - B. An angelic being
 - C. A rare and precious oil
 - D. A heavenly law-enforcement officer
4. "Cloven" (*Hymns*, no. 207)
 - A. Split or broken apart
 - B. Made with garlic cloves
 - C. Done in haste
 - D. Joyful or happy
5. "In excelsis" (*Hymns*, no. 203)
 - A. Latin for "Be ever with us"
 - B. Latin for "Angels singing"
 - C. Latin for "In eggshell seas"
 - D. Latin for "In the highest"

Answers: 1:C; 2:B; 3:B; 4:A; 5:D.



THE ULTIMATE GOAL

I was a ballet dancer from the time I was a little girl. I took it very seriously and devoted a great amount of time and effort to it. When I reached middle school, I decided I wanted to be a professional dancer, no matter what it took to get there.

One day, my ballet teacher talked to our class about preparing for our future careers. He mentioned that only a small percentage of people who train in dance become professional dancers and that of those professionally trained

dancers, only a very small number end up pursuing ballet as a career. He went on to say that whether or not dancing became our career, we should plan on being the best professionals we could be—the best doctors, teachers, bakers, or whatever else we were to become.

At this time, my ballet classes were held on the top floor of a building that overlooked the Salt Lake Valley. While my teacher was giving this speech, my attention was

drawn to the window—and then to the Salt Lake Temple.

Up to that point, my focus had been on becoming a professional dancer because I was certain that ballet would make me happy. But as I gazed at the temple, I realized that no matter what path my life or career took, being worthy to enter the temple and live in the presence of my Heavenly Father were the only things that were going to fill me with lasting joy.

This realization lifted an immense

burden off my shoulders. Ballet no longer had to be my ultimate goal. It was being worthy to enter God's presence. And unlike professional ballet, there is no limit on how many of us can make it back to live with Heavenly Father forever. Because of the Atonement, we all have that chance.

Kathleen S., Utah, USA

Editor's note: See how you can prepare for temple covenants at lds.org/go/123Temple.

SONGS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Each year the young men and young women from my ward take a caroling trip to a home for people with mental disabilities who don't have families to take care of them. One year, the youth were split into three groups to sing carols to the residents. My group sang to a few older men, who sang along with us. One even helped conduct the songs!

After we finished singing to them, we joined another group of youth who were singing to women ranging in age from young adults to the elderly. Most of the people in our audience were smiling, and some were even singing along. We felt the Spirit as we saw the joy on their faces. They were so happy to have us there, because some of the residents had families who never visited them,

REPRESENTING VIRTUE

For New Beginnings, I was asked to talk about virtue as a Young Women value.

I was supposed to wear something gold to coordinate with its value color, but my wardrobe didn't seem to include that color. After searching through my closet, I located a gold shirt that I hadn't worn in a long time. I tried it on only to realize I'd outgrown it. Looking in the mirror, I thought, "This is probably not a good night to wear something a little too short—I'm representing virtue."

Then it hit me: I'm *always* standing for virtue. Every day I represent virtue and modesty in my attitude, actions, words, and clothing. On Sundays and at youth activities, I can be a model of modesty for the younger girls. As one of the few Latter-day Saint students at my school, I try to dress appropriately, because to others, I represent my religion. Most important, my clothes can show others and myself that I know my body is a temple and

even during the holidays.

After we finished our last song, our ward's Young Women president told one of the elderly women that it was her turn. This woman had a song she liked to sing to every group that visited, and she was eager to share it with us.

As she began to sing her song, the Spirit in the room grew stronger with

that I respect it as such. By dressing modestly, I "stand for truth and righteousness," just as the Young Women motto proclaims.

As I talked about virtue that night, I spoke with confidence. Perhaps my outfit was more yellow than gold, but I felt at peace before my friends, my leaders, and my Heavenly Father. "No matter what I'm doing," I thought, "I always want to dress modestly. I represent virtue every single day."

Dana P., Minnesota, USA

every word. Soon, some of the other women began to join in. I felt tears come to my eyes as we listened.

I doubt anyone in the room could deny that the Holy Ghost was present. We left with a reverent attitude and with a strong feeling of gratitude for the opportunity to serve.

Isaiah C., Pennsylvania, USA



**Share Your Experiences**

Share your experiences in applying this principle and read the experiences of other youth by going to lds.org/go/123See.



**By President
Dieter F. Uchtdorf**

Second Counselor in
the First Presidency

HOW TO SEE THE CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS

Sometimes the most precious and sacred things are right in front of us, in plain sight, but we cannot or will not see them.

This may be especially true during the blessed and precious season of Christmas. This is a beautiful time of the year. Trees are draped with sparkling lights, the stores glitter with dazzling decorations, and the streets bustle with crowds of shoppers seeking gifts for those they love.

All of these spectacular displays and decorations that compete for our attention can be beautiful and uplifting, but if that's all we see, then we're missing something that's in plain sight. Sometimes, despite our best intentions, we fail to see with our hearts that which is essential and most sacred.

In an age when vast amounts of knowledge are at our fingertips, the familiar story of Jesus the Christ can get

lost amid the flood of pressing news or the latest popular movies or books.

Some people are so caught up in the details of running their lives that they don't make time for much else. They might pay lip service to the things of the Spirit, but their hearts are so focused on the world that they cannot see the Christ.

In spite of their good intentions, they miss the **transforming revelations of the Holy Spirit** and thereby miss the only way to receive a certain testimony of Jesus Christ.

This is a season of **rejoicing!** A season of **celebration!** A wonderful time when we acknowledge that our Almighty God sent His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem the world! To redeem us!

It is a season of **charitable acts of kindness** and **brotherly love**. It is a season of being more **reflective about our own lives** and about the **many blessings** that are ours. It is a season of **forgiving** and being forgiven.

But perhaps most of all, let it be a season of **seeking the Lamb of God**, the King of Glory, the Everlasting Light of the World, the Great Hope of Mankind, the Savior and Redeemer of our souls.

I promise that if we **unclutter our lives** a little bit and in **sincerity and humility** seek the pure and gentle Christ **with our hearts**, we will **see Him**, we will **find Him**—on Christmas and throughout the year. **NE**

From a First Presidency Christmas Devotional given on December 6, 2009.



**HOW
HAVE YOUTH
APPLIED THIS?**
See what several youth are
doing to focus on Christ at
Christmas by turning
to page 14.

Let us
LOVE
GOD
and
SERVE
OUR NEIGHBOR
and
STAND
*in holy places with
a life made clean.*

Elder Timothy J. Dyches of the Seventy,
October 2013 general conference

PLEASE ACCEPT THIS CONFERENCE INVITATION



WE ARE SIMPLY ASKING

ALL

members to pray,

KNOWING THAT
IF EVERY MEMBER,

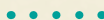
YOUNG AND OLD,

WILL REACH OUT

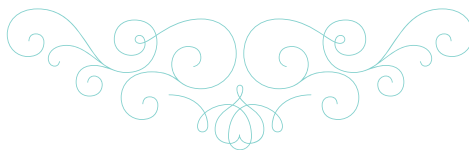
to just "one"

BETWEEN NOW AND CHRISTMAS,
MILLIONS WILL FEEL THE LOVE OF THE
LORD JESUS CHRIST.

And what a wonderful gift to the Savior.



Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles,
October 2013 general conference



THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS