YOUTH MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS | DECEMBER 2020





BE YOUR BEST ELF



CONTENTS



The First Presidency:

Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, Henry B. Eyring

The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

M. Russell Ballard, Jeffrey R. Holland, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson, Neil L. Andersen, Ronald A. Rasband, Gary E. Stevenson, Dale G. Renlund, Gerrit W. Gong, Ulisses Soares

Editor: Randy D. Funk

Advisers: Becky Craven, Sharon Eubank, Cristina B. Franco, Walter F. González, Larry S. Kacher, Jan E. Newman, Adrián Ochoa, Michael T. Ringwood, Vern P. Stanfill

Managing Director: Richard I. Heaton Director of Church Magazines: Aaron Johnston Business Manager: Garff Cannon

Managing Editor: Matthew C. Godfrey Print Assistant Managing Editor: Paul B, Murphy Digital Assistant Managing Editor: Joshua J. Perkey Copyeditor: David A. Edwards

Editorial Intern: Emily Joy Powell Writing and Editing: Ryan Carr, David Dickson, Charlotte Larcabal, Michael R. Morris, Eric B. Murdock, Richard M. Romney, Mindy Selu, Chakell Wardleigh Herbert

Art Director: Jeanette Andrews Design: Fay P. Andrus, Mandie Bentley, C. Kimball Bott, Kelsey Fackrell

Intellectual Property Coordinator: Collette Nebeker Aune

Production Manager: Jane Ann Peters Prepress: Joshua Dennis Printing Director: Steven T. Lewis Distribution Director: Nelson Gonzalez

© 2020 by Intellectual Reserve, Inc. All rights

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

To subscribe:

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

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

To change address:

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

Copyright information: Unless otherwise indicated, individuals may copy material from the *New Era* for their own personal, noncommercial use (including such use in connection with their calling in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). This right can be revoked at any time and for any reason. Visual material may not be copied if restrictions are indicated in the credit line with the artwork. Copyright questions should be addressed to Intellectual Property Office, 50 E. North Temple St., Salt Lake City, UT 84150, USA; email cor -intellectualproperty@ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

POSTMASTER: Send all UAA to CFS (see DMM 507.1.5.2). NON-POSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES: Send address corrections to Distribution Services, Church Magazines, P.O. Box 26368, Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368, USA.

Canada Post Information: Publication Agreement #40017431.



ON THE COVER: Jesus Christ: The True Light, p. 2. Illustration by Brian Call. Hand-lettering by Pauline Grayson.

TO SUBMIT MANUSCRIPTS OR ART:

ONLINE: Go to **newera.ChurchofJesusChrist.org** and click "Submit Your Work."

EMAIL: newera@ChurchofJesusChrist.org

MAIL: *New Era* Editorial, 50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2377, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA. For return, include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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

December 2020 • Volume 50 • Number 12



FEATURES

2 COVER STORY The True Lis

The True Light The account of the first Christmas in the Book of Mormon helps us learn that Jesus Christ is the the true light. Elder David A. Bednar

6 A Blessing of Christmas Tradition A move made Christmas hard, but a young woman found comfort in one tradition.

8 What's on Your List? Set goals and give yourself the gift of

Set goals and give yourself the gift of needed spiritual blessings.

10 Selfish to Elfish A young man helps his dad deliver gifts

to a needy family.

12 He is the Light

While gazing at the stars at Christmastime, a sister missionary learns something about the Savior.

14 12 Scriptures to Help You Seek Christ this Christmas

Learn more of the Savior this Christmas season with the help of these scriptures.

20 Neck-Deep in Sacrifice A young man learned something from saving a cow that fell through a frozen pond.

22 After the Snark Attack People can be mean, but what if we fail to follow the Golden Rule in how we react?

- 28 3 Life Lessons from Moroni The last prophet of the Book of Mormon has some powerful lessons for us today.
- **32** Find and Follow the Right Voices Heavenly Father has made it possible for all of us to know the truth and know what He would have us do.

Elder David P. Homer

36 2020 Youth Theme: You Went and Did!

Youth share their experiences with the 2020 Youth Theme: Go and Do.

39 Light the World

This Christmas season, share an uplifting message and serve others in various ways.

ALSO INSIDE . . .

25 POSTER

- **26** HOME EVENING OBJECT LESSON
- 40 CONNECT
- 42 FUN STOP

44 Q&A

- **46** FIRM FOUNDATIONS
- 48 LAST WORD



By Elder David A. Bednar Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

THE TRUE LIGHT

The account of the first Christmas in the Book of Mormon helps us learn that Jesus Christ is the "light which shineth in darkness" (see Doctrine and Covenants 10:57–61).

The most familiar and beloved account of the Savior's birth is found in the second chapter of Luke in the New Testament. I am filled with gratitude each time I read about Joseph and Mary traveling to Bethlehem, the lowly manger, the humble birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, and angels proclaiming "good tidings of great joy . . . to all people" (Luke 2:10).

The Restoration of the gospel in the latter days provides an important companion account of the Savior's birth in the Book of Mormon. My message highlights this additional description of the first Christmas. As we consider this episode together, I invite you to visualize yourself in these events.

I pray the Holy Ghost will help you liken these scriptures to you (see 1 Nephi 19:23) and fill your heart with the true spirit of Christmas.

THE PROPHECY OF SAMUEL THE LAMANITE

Our account begins in the land of Zarahemla a few years before the birth of the Savior. Samuel the Lamanite came among the people to preach repentance and prophesy of Christ. Now please try to imagine that you are 10 years old and a member of the multitude listening to a prophet of God foretell future events. JESUS CHRIST IS THE "LIGHT WHICH SHINETH IN DARKNESS."



Samuel declared: "Behold, I give unto you a sign; for five years more cometh, and behold, then cometh the Son of God to redeem all those who shall believe on his name.

"And behold, this will I give unto you for a sign . . . that in the night before he cometh there shall be no darkness, insomuch that it shall appear unto man as if it was day.

"Therefore, there shall be one day and a night and a day, as if it were one day and there were no night; and this shall be unto you for a sign....

"And behold, there shall a new star arise ...; and this also shall be a sign unto you" (Helaman 14:2–5).

THE SIGN OF THE SAVIOR'S BIRTH

Please now imagine five years have passed and you are now approximately 15 years old. You can recall clearly the prophecies of Samuel as you consider the present circumstances in which you live.

At that time, the faithful were mocked by unbelievers, who said: "Behold the time is past, and the words of Samuel are not fulfilled; therefore, your joy and your faith concerning this thing hath been vain.

"And it came to pass that they did make a great uproar throughout the land; and the people who believed began to be very sorrowful, lest by any means those things which had been spoken might not come to pass.

"But behold, they did watch steadfastly for that day and that night and that day which should be as one day as if there were no night, that they might know that their faith had not been vain.

"Now it came to pass that there was a day set apart by the unbelievers, that all those who believed in those traditions should be put to death except the sign should come to pass, which had been given by Samuel the prophet" (3 Nephi 1:6–9).

Can we even begin to understand what it might have been like to await the sign of the Savior's coming and also face the dire deadline of death? Would you and I stand firm and steadfast in the faith, or would we waver and shrink?

In a climate of religious persecution and at the tender age of approximately 15, you marveled one evening as the sun went down but there was no darkness.

"And the people began to be astonished because there was no darkness when the night came....

"And they began to know that the Son of God must shortly appear....

"And it came to pass that there was no darkness in all that night, but it was as light as though it was mid-day. And it came to pass that the sun did rise in the morning again, . . . and they knew that it was the day that the Lord should be born, because of the sign which had been given.

"And it had come to pass, yea, all things, every whit, according to the words of the prophets.

"And it came to pass also that a new star did appear, according to the word" (3 Nephi 1:15, 17, 19–21).

The day Jesus was born was a day of deliverance for the believers in the New World. Light as the sign of the Savior's birth literally saved their lives.

LIGHT AFTER DARKNESS

Now, imagine that over 30 years have passed and you are now approaching the age of 50. You can still remember vividly the teachings of Samuel and your experiences as a teenager when the sign of the Lord's birth was given.

One of the signs of Christ's death foretold by Samuel was three days of intense darkness (see Helaman 14:27; 3 Nephi 8:3).

"And it came to pass that there was thick darkness upon all the face of the land, insomuch that the inhabitants thereof . . . could feel the vapor of darkness;

"And there could be no light, . . . neither candles, neither torches; neither could there be fire kindled . . . , so that there could not be any light at all;

"And there was not any light seen, neither fire, nor glimmer, neither the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars, for so great were the mists of darkness which were upon the face of the land.

"And it came to pass that it did last for the space of three days that there was no light seen" (3 Nephi 8:20–23).

What might it have been like to experience those three days of indescribable darkness and then, a short time later, gather with the multitude of 2,500 people at the temple in the land of Bountiful? Can you envision the majesty of the moment as the Savior descended from the heavens and declared, "Behold, I am Jesus Christ. . . . I am the *light* and the life of the world"? (3 Nephi 11:10–11; emphasis added).

To this special assembly at the temple, two of the first words the Savior used to describe Himself were "the light." Samuel predicted a sign of light. The sign of light was given at the Savior's birth. For the people in the assembled multitude, terrible darkness and fear had been dissipated by the true light, even Jesus Christ.

THE SOURCE OF ALL LIGHT

The account of the first Christmas in the Book of Mormon helps us to learn and more fully understand that Jesus Christ is the "light which shineth in darkness" (see Doctrine and Covenants 10:57–61). In every season of our lives, in all of the circumstances we may encounter, and in each challenge we may face, Jesus Christ is the light that dispels fear, provides assurance and direction, and engenders enduring peace and joy.

> JESUS CHRIST IS THE LIGHT THAT DISPELS FEAR, PROVIDES ASSURANCE AND DIRECTION, AND ENGENDERS ENDURING PEACE AND JOY.

Many of our memorable and enduring Christmas traditions include different kinds of lights—lights on trees, lights in and on our homes, candles on our tables. May the beautiful lights of every holiday season remind us of Him who is the source of all light.

l witness that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, triumphantly fulfilled His mortal mission and ministry, and as our resurrected Lord, He lives today. **NE**

From the 2015 First Presidency Christmas Devotional.

A Blessing of CHRISTMAS * ... CRADITION *

There was nothing special about spending Christmas in a new home, but one priesthood blessing changed everything.

By Isabel Toa

was 14 years old when I experienced my first Christmas without snow. My family had just moved from the mountains of Utah to Texas, USA. To me, Texas felt too flat and hot. It was hard to feel the Christmas spirit when I had no friends at my new school and especially when there was no snow on the ground. I felt like I didn't fit in anywhere, so I often felt lonely and sad.

Despite my gloom, Christmas was only a week away, and I was depending on our Christmas family traditions to lift my spirits. The fun activities my family did together in past years always made me feel so happy. Traditions were a big part of how we celebrated Christmas, so I thought I had nothing to worry about. They were called traditions for a reason, so I knew they had to be kept.

KEEPING THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT ALIVE

The days leading up to Christmas crawled by slowly. We hadn't done anything together as a family yet to celebrate, so I was feeling pretty defeated. When Christmas Eve finally arrived, I waited all day for something to happen—anything that would show me that our cherished family traditions could still be kept in our new home. I'm sure I could have spurred these treasured traditions on my own, but I didn't want to. In a way, I was looking for a sign to show me that the Christmas spirit was still alive.

Day faded to night and I grew more and more upset. Tears welled up in my eyes as my family gathered together to say our evening prayers. My entire home felt cold and empty, even with all of us living inside it. Suddenly, my dad pierced the silence with one question.

"Would anyone like to receive a priesthood blessing?"

My heart skipped a beat. I had worried so much about whether or not we would be putting up Christmas lights or baking holiday cookies that I had forgotten about one very special tradition we did every Christmas Eve—we all received a priesthood blessing. Receiving a blessing from my dad in the past always gave me peace, but not everybody in my family enjoyed receiving one. Sometimes my siblings and my mom would say they didn't feel like they needed one. I didn't want to get my hopes up again if everyone else was going to turn it down.

But this time was different. My mom stood up and sat down on the chair my dad had brought out for us.

"I would like one," she said softly.

We were all very surprised, but my dad didn't even hesitate. He placed his hands on my mom's head and began to speak. I could sense how tuned in my dad was to my mom's feelings and personal struggles. He spoke words of comfort and peace to her during this time of change.

I suddenly felt a burning sensation within my chest—almost like someone had lit a match inside of me. I knew I was feeling the Holy Ghost, even though the burning in my chest wasn't the way I had always felt the Spirit before. It was like Heavenly Father was speaking directly to me, and it wasn't even my priesthood blessing!

As my father quietly said "amen" and I opened my tear-filled eyes, I realized that my whole family was crying. We had all heard the Spirit speak to us in a tender and loving way that everything was going to be OK. My mom and dad hugged, and I felt like the raincloud that had been hanging over my head for so long had finally given way to sunshine.

We all received blessings, including me. In my blessing the Lord reassured me He is always mindful of me and wants me to be happy. It gave me feelings of peace and warmth that I hadn't felt since I moved to Texas.

PRIESTHOOD POWER IS REAL

We may not have kept every tradition that year, but we always remembered how it felt to witness the power of God flow through my dad's priesthood blessing. I will always remember how it changed my feelings of sadness to peace and joy. I also learned a valuable lesson about the power of the priesthood. When everything around you seems to be going the wrong way, a priesthood blessing can remind you of the Lord's watchful and loving presence in your life. **NE** *The author lives in Utah, USA.*

WHAT'S ON YOUR LIST?

Stop listing what you want, and start getting what you need.

By Annelise Gardiner and Sam Lofgran Church Magazines

WHAT DO YOU REALLY WANT FOR CHRISTMAS THIS

YEAR? We're talking about more than just presents— what do you really *need*?

A need is something that you must have to survive. At Christmastime, it can be easy to focus on just our physical wants, but what about our spiritual needs?

NEEDED GIFTS

We know that our spirits have constant needs, that gifts like scripture study and prayer help fulfill, but our spirits also have other needs, depending on our circumstances. We've gathered a few stories from youth around the world who discovered what other "gifts" their spirits needed. As you read, think about what gifts your own spirit might need.

THE GIFT OF SEMINARY

Juan R., age 16, from Chile discovered that seminary was something that he needed. "In seminary I learn the truth, and the Spirit gives me wisdom. Anytime I feel the Spirit, I know I'm in the place where God wants me to be in that moment. This is how I feel when I'm at seminary, so I know it's important for me to be there. I always know that going will give me answers to questions or doubts that I have."

THE GIFT OF FRIENDS

Rhoeta M., age 15, from Idaho, USA, discovered that she needed good friends as she was investigating the Church. "When I began attending sacrament meeting, classes, and Young Women, I was instantly greeted by many friendly faces and a caring community. I was included in all the activities, and the new friends I made encouraged me to follow God's plan. They helped me set and accomplish my spiritual goals." After learning more from the missionaries and connecting with her friends at church, Rhoeta made the decision to be baptized. "I am so grateful to have found such good people," she says, "and I'm blessed to have had such an excellent transition into the Church!"

*



THE GIFT OF SERVICE

Julie S., age 16, from Texas, USA, discovered that she needed a calling. "I recently got called as my ward's chorister, and it means that I absolutely have to be on time to church! This has always been a struggle for my family, and this calling not only brings me a lot of joy since I love music, but it also makes my family's Sundays less frantic and more scheduled."

THE GIFT OF THE GOSPEL

Sam D., age 19, from Turkey discovered that the thing he was missing in his life was the Church. "I was baptized at the age of 16, and after that, I started to actually live my life. Everything was more clear. I had a purpose to live."

WHAT GIFTS DO YOU NEED?

These youth were able find what they needed to grow their testimonies, become happier, and come closer to God. After reading their experiences, what have you noticed are some of your spirit's needs? Make a list to help you keep track of them.

GIVING AND RECEIVING

Now that you've identified your spirit's needs, how can you fill them?

Start by setting goals to achieve what you need. Setting goals is a great way to accomplish new things, and the Children and Youth program can help you get started.

Your family can be another great place to find help with filling your needs—both your immediate family and your ward or branch family. Even in Moroni's day, a main reason for having Church meetings was to "speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls" (Moroni 6:5).

And of course, Heavenly Father wants to help you fill your spiritual needs and grow your faith in Him. If you pray to Him, He can help you identify what you need and what goals you can set.

This Christmas, don't wait for someone else to guess what's on your spiritual-needs wish list—set goals and give those needed gifts to yourself! But also, don't hesitate to ask for help to reach your goals. And, since this is the season of giving, look for ways you can help others fill their spiritual needs too.

Don't forget the Rhoetas and Sams in the world. The people around you might never know what they are missing—what they need to become happy and find their purpose—unless you share the message of the gospel with them. That's the best gift anyone could get for Christmas! **NE**



NEED A FRIEND?

Look for other people who need friends and become their friend. Reach out to the other youth in your ward or school classes.

NEED A RESPONSIBILITY?

Reach out to your bishop and ask for a calling. You could also look for ways to serve in your community.

NEED SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT?

Attend seminary. Read your scriptures. Listen to a conference talk. While thinking about my gifts, I became Santa's not-so-eager helper. But then everything changed.

By Scott Reese

ON CHRISTMAS EVE when I was 14, my extended family gathered at my grandma's house to have a Christmas program and do a small gift exchange, just like we did every year. It was fun to be with my cousins and the rest of the family, but I couldn't help but think about all the gifts that were waiting for me back at home. During all the festivities, I was anxious for Christmas Day to come—Christmas, after all, was about opening presents.

But before we could leave, we had one more tradition to take care of: "adopting" a family for Christmas. In the weeks leading up to Christmas, the adults found a family in the area that was in need of help, got gifts for the kids, and then someone in our family would go out and deliver everything to the family on Christmas Eve. I never participated much in this activity—sure, it seemed like a nice idea, but I never even knew the people we were delivering to.

After the festivities ended, we gathered the gifts and put them in my dad's pickup. My dad even put on a Santa suit before leaving. There were a lot of gifts to take, so I got nominated to go with him. I was given an elf hat and became Santa's not-so-eager helper.

But my attitude started to change on the drive over as my dad told me about the family. Their situation was heart-wrenching. Just a few weeks before, the dad had left them, so now the mom had to take care of the four kids on her own. As we drove up to the house, it was all dark. It was almost like I could feel the family's hopelessness coming from the house.

Elfish

elfish to

We knocked on the door. That sad feeling went away as soon as the door opened and the kids saw who had come to visit. They shouted, "Santa's here!"

I stepped into the house with the gifts and felt the Spirit so strongly that I almost started to cry. When I looked over at Dad, I could see he was holding back tears too. The kids were all running around saying things like, "This one has my name on it!" or "This one is for you, Mom!" As we passed out the gifts, I saw that the mom was crying tears of relieved joy. I got the sense she had told her kids that Santa wouldn't be coming that year.

The kids and mom all hugged us and thanked us as we left. My dad and I rode back to my grandma's house in complete silence, neither of us able to express with words what we had just felt and seen. It had been such a rare and beautiful experience, and we were both trying to savor the feeling.

On the drive home, I wasn't worried about my own gifts anymore. I realized that what I had felt was just a small portion of the love Jesus Christ feels for us and that as we serve others, we can help them feel this love too. **NE**



He Is the

Thousands of miles from home, I learned a lesson from pinpoints of light trillions of miles away.

By Laura Fuchs

t might sound strange, but I had always been excited for Christmas on my mission, hundreds or even thousands of miles away from the usual family drama and commercial distractions. Christmas was about Christ, and what better way to celebrate than by helping others come unto Him?

One evening in December, my companion and I were heading back to our apartment after a day of missionary work in La Paz, a magical place on the outskirts of Laoag City, Philippines. I was sitting in the sidecar of a tricycle crammed next to my six-foot-tall companion, and I was just loving life. Cool air whipped past us, reminding me (almost) of snowy Christmases back home—but it still wasn't nearly as cold as I was used to in December.

AOAG

As we rode through the countryside, my eyes focused heavenward. Up above, far from the light and noise of the city, there were thousands of visible stars. But fewer and fewer stars were visible as we approached the center of town, until only the brightest ones could be spotted.

I thought about the light from the stars and Jesus Christ. I thought of the star announcing His birth and Christ Himself, the "bright and morning star" (Revelation 22:16). He is the brightest star, the shining example for all of us. And yet, like those stars I saw while looking out of the tricycle, even He can be obscured



by light pollution. The more distractions, the more artificial light, the less visible the natural light becomes. Out in a province of the Philippines, some stars can still be seen even from the middle of the town, but in megacities like Manila, you can't see a single star at night. The light from advertisements, businesses, and homes all block out the light of distant stars.

The same thing happens when we surround ourselves with distractions and artificial lights. It becomes more difficult to see Christ's light.

This is especially true around Christmastime. It is easy to overbook the holidays and make ourselves as busy as Manila during

rush hour. There are gifts to find, parties to plan, cards to write, and countless performances and events to attend. When we feel that we don't have a spare moment to look up, we might not even realize how obscured Christ's light has become in our lives.

As we light our homes and trees, we can't forget to let the Light of Christ into our hearts. We might want to pause the festivities for a moment to remember what we are celebrating. Christmas is about Christ. He is the light, and if we minimize distractions and look up, we can see Him, ever constant and ever shining for the whole world to see. NE The author lives in Utah, USA.



By Sam Lofgran Church Magazines

We are surrounded by so many trees, lights, gifts, and other festivities during Christmas that it can sometimes be hard to remember what our focus should be on. Jesus Christ is the reason we celebrate this season, and we things each day to include Him in our celebrations. These 12 scriptures would be a great way to study the Savior this month and who Christ is, what He has done for us, and the many gifts He has given us.



2 Nephi 9:21

"And he cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice; for behold, he suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam."

What does it mean to you that you have a Savior?

Mosiah 26:30

"Yea, and as often as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me."

"Nothing is more liberating, more ennobling, or more crucial to our individual progression than is a regular, daily focus on repentance. Repentance is not an event; it is a process. It is the key to happiness and peace of mind."

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







Alma 7:11-12

"And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. "And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities."





Mosiah 16:8

"But there is a resurrection, therefore the grave hath no victory, and the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ."

"The Son, the greatest of all, was chosen by the Father to . . . save the children of God from death by His Resurrection and from sin by His Atonement. This supernal sacrifice is truly called 'the central act of all human history.""

President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, Apr. 2017 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 102).







Luke 1:79

"To give light to them that sit in darkness and *in* the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."







2 Nephi 31:10, 12

"And he said unto the children of men: Follow thou me. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, can we follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father?...

"And also, the voice of the Son came unto me, saying: . . . Wherefore, follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do."

FOR THIS PURPOSE BY YONGSUNG KIM; ILLUSTRATIONS BY JEN TOLMAN AND ANDREW BOSLEY





John 8:12

"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Why do you think Jesus is called the Light?





Doctrine and Covenants 29:5

"Lift up your hearts and be glad, for I am in your midst, and am your advocate with the Father; and it is his good will to give you the kingdom."

What is an advocate? What does it mean to you that Christ is your Advocate?



Ether 12:27

"And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them."





Ether 12:4

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

How do you find hope through Christ? What hope does He give you?







John 15:13-15

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."





2 Nephi 1:15

"But behold, the Lord hath redeemed my soul from hell; I have beheld his glory, and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love."

"Though we are imperfect, He loves us perfectly.... He loves us because He is filled with an infinite measure of holy, pure, and indescribable love.... He loves every one of us, even those who are flawed, rejected, awkward, sorrowful, or broken."

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, then-Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "The Love of God," Oct 2009 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, 22–23).

NECK-

SAC DIFIC

By Jacob Baker Church Magazines

n that frozen morning, I heard shouting and distressed moos in the distance behind me as I ran to get an axe and some rope.

OK, hold on—let's back up for some context.

Two years before that snowy morning, my family had moved from suburbia to a tiny little plot of farmland in Missouri. Our new property had some forested land to explore and a small pond, which was nice, but I wasn't a fan of all the animals that I was now expected to help take care of.

Now, back to that cold winter morning. We could tell there was a problem when one of our poor little cows didn't come to his food dish at the regular time, even after we shook the food in a metal tin. They were trained to come running when we shook the tin. It seemed to be some sort of angelic summons to them, but the tactic didn't work that morning.

We kept waiting and soon heard distressed moos off in the distance. We went to investigate and discovered that the cow had walked out into the middle of the frozen pond and had fallen in. The pond was only about five feet deep, but the cow was quite small and had to bounce on his hind legs to keep his head above the frigid water.

And that's when the yelling started.

My parents directed me to run to our toolshed a quarter of a mile away and bring back an axe that we could use to break up the ice, as well as some rope. The moment I got back to the pond, we tried to use the rope to pull the cow out but quickly discovered a couple of things: one, none of us actually knew how to tie a lasso, and two, the only rope available was closer in strength and size to twine. It seemed to me that our little cow was a goner.

My dad and mom really cared about that cow, so my dad led the charge, axe in hand, and they started to literally chop their way through the ice towards the cow, clearing a 20-foot-long path for the cow to walk out of the pond. Everyone was worried that either the cow would kick my dad or that my dad would accidentally hit the cow with the axe, but somehow the crazy plan worked. The cow didn't drown!

But the worry wasn't over. As soon as the cow got out of the water, he started shivering like an old washing machine on spin cycle. My parents were freezing too, but they were more worried about the cow. My dad ran to get a campfire started in the middle of the field while my mom ran to get some quilts. Us kids corralled the cow close to the fire so that he wouldn't run away. Soon, he warmed up enough to stop shivering and eat some of his hard-won breakfast.

I can't say that I learned to love our farm animals after that wintry day, but I did learn about the meaning of sacrifice in the face of adversity. Making sacrifices is, by definition, never convenient, but I learned that true sacrifice is downright difficult and painful. When you sacrifice for others, the pain you go through is always worth it. Perhaps Jesus Christ thought as much when He was about to be born so He could sacrifice Himself for all of God's children. His love for us was and is stronger than the pain he had to endure for us.

Now that I've experienced sacrifice for a freezing, drowning cow, the Christmas season reminds me how much love our Savior has for us and how much He has sacrificed for our sakes. **NE**

What if you kinda, sorta . . . forgot the Savior's teachings and said something mean?

AFTER THE

By David A. Edwards Church Magazines

POP QUIZ:

ACCORDING TO THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST, IF SOMEONE CALLS YOU A MEAN NAME, YOU SHOULD:



Punch

them in the nose (or, if the interaction is via social media, tell them they're "canceled" and get everyone to stop being their friend). Try to respond with love and respect and avoid <u>contention.</u>

C.



The answer, of course, is **C**. It's obvious—or should be. Unfortunately, we don't always pass this quiz in real life. So, what do we do when we fail to live up to the Savior's high standard?

BACK TO THE SOURCE

First, some basics. Jesus Christ taught the Golden Rule: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matthew 7:12). He also taught, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

This is a high standard, but it's very clearly taught. So when we harshly criticize, judge, or bully people, what are we thinking? Likely, we're not thinking at all; we're just following our natural tendencies—giving in to the natural man (see Mosiah 3:19).

WHEN "IN KIND" IS UNKIND

As in the quiz above, we may sometimes feel like people provoke us into arguments. This is when we're tempted to twist the Savior's teaching and do unto them as they did to us. Reacting with the same treatment someone dished out is called "responding in kind." But when you insult someone who insulted you, "in kind" is unkind. The scriptures call this "rendering evil for evil," "returning railing for railing," or "reviling against revilers" (see Romans 12:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; 1 Peter 2:23; 3:9; 3 Nephi 6:13; Doctrine and Covenants 31:9). As disciples of Jesus Christ, we've been commanded not to do that.

But it's so hard to resist sometimes. It's especially hard when criticism, judgment, insults, and bullying are aimed at us or when it seems like being snarky and belittling is the only way to get anyone's attention or approval.

WHEN YOU'VE BEEN UNKIND

So, what if you've gotten into a nasty fight with someone? Well, even if you know you were right, and even if you "won" the argument and "destroyed" your opponent, you probably don't feel very good about it deep down. That's because the Holy Ghost is telling you that even if your position was right, your behavior wasn't.



HOW DO YOU MAKE THINGS RIGHT? HERE ARE A FEW IDEAS:

PRAY FOR INSIGHT AND FORGIVENESS.

Ask Heavenly Father to let you see your behavior in the right light, and ask Him for forgiveness.

ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOU BEHAVED BADLY.

Say you're sorry if you insulted someone. If the exchange was public (maybe on social media), try to publicly acknowledge your error. It will take humility, but that is what's called for.

CHANGE YOUR HEART.

Examine your feelings about those you aimed your harshness at. Even if you disagree with their views, you need to esteem them as yourself and love them as yourself (see Doctrine and Covenants 38:24–25; Leviticus 19:18). Pray to the Father for the gift of charity (see Moroni 7:48).



CHANGE YOUR ENVIRONMENT.

Try to avoid situations that bring out the worst in you. For instance, avoid places where such discussions take place (certain social media accounts or posts, maybe), or avoid these discussions in circumstances where you're weaker (when you're stressed or tired, perhaps).

CHANGE YOUR WAYS.

Resolve not to express yourself in hurtful ways. Even if it seems like all the cool people are putting others down, don't do it. The Savior didn't say, "Blessed are the cool." He used other words to describe His disciples: meek, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers (see Matthew 5:1–12). You can stand up for something without "destroying" or "canceling" people.

WHEN OTHERS HAVE INSULTED YOU

If someone has insulted you, try to let it go and to forgive them, even if you stop interacting with them. The Lord has commanded us to forgive (see Doctrine and Covenants 64:9–11). As we ask for and grant forgiveness, we can live the Savior's teachings and pass the ultimate test. We'll be happier and hopefully help others to be happier as well. **NE**

CHRIST DRAWS US TO THE TEMPLE.

As you learn more about the Savior, your desire to be in His temple will increase.

Not Ice-olated

With the Lord's help, we can lift even the heaviest, slipperiest burdens.

By Charlotte Larcabal Church Magazines

MATERIALS

- Salt
- Two ice cubes
- A glass or any kind of container filled with water
- Thread

ope. Too hard. This is just too hard." Have you ever faced something that made you feel that way? It may have been a problem with your friends, a scary change in your family, or even something Heavenly Father or His prophets asked you to do. (Early morning seminary, anyone?)

We know we're here to learn, but sometimes that learning requires challenges that just seem way too tough. And you're left feeling about as strong as a flimsy piece of thread.

But as you're about to learn from this home evening object lesson, you're not ice-olated! When we rely on Heavenly Father, we can accomplish even the hardest, coldest challenges!

What to Do

- 1. Fill a glass to the brim with cold water. Drop an ice cube into the water.
- 2. Give a piece of thread to a family member and ask them to try to pick up the ice cube and lift it out of the water using the piece of thread. They probably won't be able to do it. That ice is just too slippery!

Explain that sometimes we face trials that seem way too big and way too difficult for us to overcome. And sometimes Heavenly Father asks us to do things that seem difficult or even impossible. Ask your family member to share times when they've faced a difficult challenge.

Read or ask a family member to read Luke 1:37. Explain that when we stay close to Heavenly





Father and Jesus Christ and have the Holy Ghost with us, things that may seem impossible become very possible.

3. Lay the thread directly on the ice cube and pour some salt on the thread on the ice. (You may need to experiment beforehand to get the right amount of salt.)

Explain that the salt represents the help, strength, and guidance we can receive from Heavenly Father.

4. Grab the thread from both ends and pick up the ice cube! After you successfully pick up the ice cube with the salt and thread, ask your family how we can stay close to Heavenly Father so that He can always help us. Share a time when Heavenly Father helped you accomplish something difficult or strengthened you during a difficult time. NE

HE WILL LIFT YOU AND GUIDE YOU

"In order to be tested, we must sometimes face challenges and difficulties. . . . We feel abandoned, heartbroken, alone. If you find yourself in such a situation, I plead with you to turn to our Heavenly Father in faith. He will lift you and guide you. He will not always take your afflictions from you, but He will comfort and lead you with love through whatever storm you face."

President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018), "Looking Back and Moving Forward," Apr. 2008 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 90).



By David Dickson and Chakell Wardleigh Herbert Church Magazines

From beginning to end, the Book of Mormon is a nonstop ride of powerful eternal truths, amazing promises and lessons, and inspiring examples of faith in Jesus Christ. And the best part is that it's all true! But when we're nearing the end and reach Moroni's chapters, he sure has some of the most powerful truths and life-changing lessons for us! Moroni finishes off the Book of Mormon with his incredible testimony and his personal invitation to come unto Christ and to seek to know the truth for ourselves. But among those powerful statements, here are three additional life-changing lessons we can learn from his final chapters in this fantastic book.





PEEK PAST THE FINISH LINE

There's a satisfying feeling that comes at the end of a tough but rewarding project: snapping the last piece of a jigsaw puzzle in place or turning in a top-notch project at school.

Moroni thought he was finished with his contributions to the Book of Mormon after recording the downfall of the Jaredite nation as found in the book of Ether. He starts with, "Now I, Moroni, after having made an end of abridging the account of the people of Jared, I had supposed not to have written more, but I have not as yet perished" (Moroni 1:1).

The fact that he was still alive probably came as more of a surprise than you might suspect. After all, he was wandering alone, with enemies swarming on every side.

He had extra time on his hands. And in only 10 chapters, Moroni made the most of it. A few of the truths he included are the method of ordaining teachers and priests; instructions for the sacrament (including the prayers); teachings on how to conduct Church meetings; a powerful discourse by his father on faith, hope, and charity; and the sacred promise found in Moroni 10:3–5 that teaches each of us how to receive personal revelation about the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Wow!

In those 10 chapters he hadn't even planned to write, Moroni added critical truths for future readers of the Book of Mormon.

We can all learn from his example. The next time you find yourself with a bit more time on your hands than expected, or when you feel like you've worked hard and most certainly should be done already, is it worth praying and pondering to discover whether there's maybe a bit more you can still contribute?

After all, the whole world was blessed because Moroni did.





REMEMBER THE STONE BOX

If you decided to grow your favorite fruit tree in your backyard, you would have to exercise more than a little patience. Even if it were the right time of year and you had ideal growing conditions, you'd still most likely be a few years out from plucking the first piece of fruit from your efforts.

But that's ultimately doable, right? After all, good things come to those who wait. And even if you're planting some other type of tree that won't reach full maturity for many decades (like an olive tree), you can at least have the satisfaction of knowing your children and grandchildren will benefit.

None of you have anything on Moroni, however. His father's life's work, which became Moroni's work after his father died, wouldn't be yielding fruit anytime soon. Not in 10 years. Not in a thousand. Mormon wrote, "These things are written unto the remnant of the house of Jacob ... and they are to be hid up unto the Lord that they may come forth *in his own due time*" (Mormon 5:12; emphasis added).

Moroni didn't know exactly when this work would come forth, but he probably had a good idea that it was going to be a long way out. He saw a vision of our day and prophesied of certain conditions that would exist (see Mormon 8:35).

This much we know for sure: Moroni wasn't doing this for the good of any of his family or friends or even acquaintances. In some of the most heart-wrenching words ever written, Moroni said: "I am alone. My father hath been slain in battle, and all my kinsfolk, and I have not friends nor whither to go; and how long the Lord will suffer that I may live I know not" (Mormon 8:5). He lost *all* his family. *All* his friends. His *entire* civilization! And when he finished his record, he built a stone box to seal up the sacred record that wouldn't see the light of day for many hundreds of years.

Living righteously creates positive changes in the world. Sometimes those ripples take generations to reach full effect. But Moroni teaches us that we can always trust in God's timing. We only need to do our part.



Let's be real: trials come, life is unfair, and sometimes, everything just hurts. Life is especially hard when we think we've finally gotten through a trial, only for another meteor shower of challenges to pummel us back into the ground again.

Whether we're dealing with anxiety or depression, losing a loved one, or some other challenge, sometimes holding on to faith and hope can seem so daunting. In these difficult moments it's easy to think, "How could things possibly get any worse?"

Well, for Moroni, that was a true statement. Things probably couldn't have gotten any worse for him toward the end of his life. During the hard times, when it feels like there is no reason to keep moving forward or holding on to hope, we can look at his example of unshakable faith in the face of so much devastation.

Some would call Moroni's life tragic. Even though he was faithful, he lost *everyone* he loved. He was the last survivor of his entire civilization. He had to finish his father's record because Mormon was killed before he got a chance to finish. And Moroni was being hunted down by the Lamanites and running for his life when he wrote his book of scripture.

Can you imagine how terrifying and hopeless that situation would be? If someone else experienced the trials Moroni did, they might have been tempted to let go of their faith, to deny Christ, and to blame Heavenly Father for their terrible circumstances. But Moroni didn't. Instead, Moroni kept holding on until the very end (see Moroni 1:3). He kept an eternal perspective to help him face his challenges. He knew what was true and knew that no matter what happened to him, as long as he had faith in the Savior and trusted Heavenly Father, all of the blessings he was promised would be fulfilled one day, and he would be saved by the power of Jesus Christ and the blessings of His Atonement (see Moroni 10).

Now, that is one powerful testimony.

When things seem like they can't possibly get any worse, we can take comfort in keeping an eternal perspective and cultivating Moroni-like faith. If we do so, we are promised we "can do all things which are expedient unto [Christ]" (Moroni 10:23). We can know that Heavenly Father is with us. We can trust that His plan of happiness will provide a way for us to overcome every single tragedy we will face in mortality. And we can surround ourselves with the light, joy, and blessings of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

With an eternal perspective, we *always* have a reason to hope. And we can trust that one day we will all be able to say, "How could things possibly get any better?" **NE**



By Elder David P. Homer Of the Seventy

Share

e live in a world with many voices seeking our attention. As helpful and engaging as Alexa, Google, and Siri are, or as compelling as posts on social media may be, these voices may not always be reliable. As you go through life, it's important that you learn to listen to the right voices and accept the encouragement that comes from them. I had some experiences when I was younger that reinforced these lessons for me.

FIND AND

PROFILE

Chât

Heavenly Father has made it possible for all of us to know the truth and know what He would have us do.

SELFIF

TRENDING

Tweet

E RIGHT VOICES

LISTEN TO ENCOURAGING VOICES

When I was 18, my older brother, John, returned from his mission in England. He was determined to make sure I was also ready to serve. We had adjacent bedrooms, and at night we would sometimes speak to each other after we turned out the lights. One night, John's voice pierced through the darkness.

"Dave, do you know that Joseph Smith was a prophet?" "Of course, John," I replied. John soon went to sleep, but I stayed awake, wondering if I really did know.

A few months later, I visited my sister and her family in Tokyo, Japan. At that time, the Tabernacle Choir was touring Asia. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, traveled with them.

I was invited to be an usher at several performances. One night I had the opportunity to sit with Elder and Sister Hinckley. Afterward, Elder Hinckley reached out to me.

"Now, young man," he said, "you're going to serve a mission, right?"

"Yes, sir," I said.

"Good," he replied.

That was it. But this 30-second interview built upon other experiences I was having. I realized that for me to become a missionary, I needed to have a testimony. So, I started studying the Book of Mormon and the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

One evening, I finished reading a book about Joseph Smith. I remember lying on the floor in my parents' living room. I closed the book and had a peaceful feeling. The Spirit witnessed to me that Joseph was a prophet. I then realized that I needed to tell others about it. This solidified for me the decision to serve a mission.

I'm grateful I not only had the Spirit but that I also had the voices of my brother and Elder Hinckley encouraging me to head in the right direction. My life has been blessed because I listened to their voices.

RECOGNIZE AND AVOID WRONG VOICES

When I was 17, I became familiar with some people who were caught up in some sensational stories about what they thought was historical information on the early days of the Church. As I listened to what they had to say, I felt uncomfortable.

That day I learned that there are many different voices out in the world, and some will try to lead us astray and make things seem different from what they really are. Some will seek to twist and distort the truth. It's important that we spend as much time as we can in places where the Spirit can speak to us.

I was raised in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. As a teenager, I enjoyed walking through Temple Square. Near the temple stood statues of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum. As I looked at the statues and reflected on the sacrifices Joseph and Hyrum made, I realized that everything around me was peaceful. I loved the feeling I had while I was there. I find I can recognize the right voices when I feel settled and feel a degree of comfort and peace, not when voices around me are agitating, loud, or contentious.

TODAY, PRESIDENT RUSSELL M. NELSON, HIS COUNSELORS IN THE FIRST PRESIDENCY, AND THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES ARE PROPHETS, SEERS, AND REVELATORS.

WE CAN TRUST Their voices.
HAVE CONFIDENCE IN TRUSTED VOICES

At 14, Joseph Smith had a question. He read in the Bible that he could ask God and trust the answer he received (see James 1:5). Joseph went to the Sacred Grove to pray. In response to his prayer, Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ appeared to him. Joseph saw the Father point to the Son and heard Him say, "*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). From what Joseph saw and heard, we now have a clear understanding of the nature of our Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ. We also understand our relationship to Them. We can always trust Their voices.

Joseph Smith was God's prophet chosen to restore the Church of Jesus Christ with the ordinances, covenants, and teachings that allow us to learn and grow so we can return to live with Heavenly Father and our families forever.

Today, President Russell M. Nelson, his counselors in the First Presidency, and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are prophets, seers, and revelators. We can confidently rely on their words because they are the Savior's authorized representatives. Their spirituality and experiences give them perspectives that help us. We can trust their voices.

FOLLOW THE SURE VOICE OF THE SPIRIT

Another important voice for us to hear is the voice of the Holy Ghost. This is a sure voice that has been designated to teach us truth and to testify of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

You can confidently rely on answers you receive from the Spirit. The Savior taught that the Spirit "shall teach you all things,

and bring all things to your remembrance" (John 14:26), and "the Spirit of truth . . . shall testify of me" (John 15:26).

Learning to recognize the Spirit is a lifelong quest. In different ways and at different times, He may speak to our "mind and in [our] heart" (Doctrine and Covenants 8:2), "occupy [our] mind[s]" or "press . . . upon [our] feelings" (Doctrine and Covenants 128:1), cause our bosom to "burn within [us]" (Doctrine and Covenants 9:8), fill our souls with joy, enlighten our minds (see Doctrine and Covenants 6:14–15; 11:13), or speak peace to our troubled hearts (see Doctrine and Covenants 6:22–23).

The voice of the Spirit isn't loud. He speaks in a still, small voice (see 1 Kings 19:11–12). But if you are diligent and pay attention, your ability to hear will increase and you will be blessed with strength, direction, and happiness. We are promised that "by the power of the Holy Ghost [we] may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:5).

This may be one reason why President Nelson spoke of revelation in his first general conference address as President of the Church. He said, "In coming days, it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost."¹ The voice of the Spirit is our best defense against the challenges of our day.

We have a loving Heavenly Father, and He has made it possible for all of us to know the truth and know what He would have us do. If we're willing to listen, He'll speak to us. If we're willing to follow His voice, we will find great joy and happiness in our lives. **NE NOTE**

1. Russell M. Nelson, "Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," Apr. 2018 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 96).



"IN COMING DAYS, IT WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE TO SURVIVE SPIR-Itually without the guiding, Directing, comforting, and Constant influence of the Holy Ghost."

<mark>YOU CAN</mark> Confidently Rely on Answers you receive From the spirit.

By Charlotte Larcabal Church Magazines

> he 2020 youth theme was all about getting stuff done. But not just any "stuff"—this year's theme was a call to get up and get going on the Lord's errand:

2020 YOUTH THEME:

You Went

and Did!

"And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father: I will **go and do** the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (1 Nephi 3:7).

Nephi was quite the doer. And so were you! As 2020

comes to a close, take a minute to think about how you "went and did."

How did you do what the Lord commanded? And how did you see Him preparing a way for you? He probably didn't ask you to retrieve brass plates from a well-guarded treasury. But maybe you got up earlier to get to seminary on time. Or maybe you were kind to your sister. It doesn't have to be anything big! Heavenly Father is pleased *every* time we do our best to follow His commandments. And He always gives us the help we need.

Here's how a few of you lived the theme this year.





SCRIPTURES FIRST!

I take a lot of hard classes, so typically I get home from school and am overwhelmed by my workload. By the end of the night, I am exhausted. This leads to superficial scripture study and prayer.

But this year I changed things. I started reading my scriptures *before* doing my homework. This made a

tremendous change in my life. After reading my scriptures, I could get my homework done much faster, and even had extra time after. I've received more guidance on how to face my challenges and even help my friends. As I study the scriptures with the challenges of the school day fresh on my mind, I receive specific guidance for facing those challenges.

The Lord never leaves us alone. As I have prioritized things of God, I have learned that He always prepares a way for us to accomplish the things He commands of us (see 1 Nephi 3:7).



WHAT DO I GET OUT OF THIS?

This year I was invited to take part in a student-led group that looks out for the well-being and mental health of the students at our high school. As soon as I received the invitation, I felt as if the Lord was directly telling me to join this class. But in order to take this class, I would need to drop my favorite

class, weights. At first, I thought, "That doesn't seem as fun as weights. What do I get out of this?"

But as I thought about it, the Spirit guided me and told me, "Nick, it's not about what you can become. It is about what you can help others become."

I now absolutely love this group at school, and I feel as if the Lord has led me every step of the way. I am so grateful for Him and His guidance. I testify that His guidance always leads us down the right paths! Nick S., 17, Idaho, USA

Rozlyn N., 17, Arizona, USA



A PLAN TO INVITE MY FRIEND

My friend has always struggled to fit in and feel comfortable around people. I can relate and wanted to serve her more.

I realized I found my place by going to church. I found the most joy there. I thought the Church could help my friend out too.

I felt prompted to first invite her to a fun youth activity, then to Church on Sunday, then to my sister's farewell, and then to meet with the missionaries.

As we act, Heavenly Father blesses us. When we do our part, He does His. I have seen that in my life. I know that when we "go and do," we are becoming more like Christ. Not only that, but it simply makes you feel good, and God will guide us to where He needs His work done. Hannah L. 16. Utah. USA



SAD AND SCARED TO LEAVE MY HOME

Last year my family moved from Texas to Arizona, USA. We hadn't planned on moving, but we knew the Lord commanded it for our family, so we did.

I was sad and scared about leaving my hometown. I knew that it would be hard but that the Lord would bless me and my family if we did what He

asked. As time went on, I was able to rely on Jesus Christ for comfort, love, and help with meeting new people and going to a new school. As I have done the Lord's will and trusted in Him, my testimony has been strengthened and has grown so much.

Alexa H., 16, Arizona, USA



A Great Work

The 2021 Youth Theme

Now, are you ready for next year? Of course you are. Especially because the 2020 theme was great preparation for the 2021 theme. When you "go and do" as the Lord commands, you're well on your way to "laying the foundation of a great work."

The 2021 Youth Theme comes from Doctrine and Covenants 64:33–34:

"Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are **laying the foundation of a great work**. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great. Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days."

The Lord has a great work for each one of us to do. As you step into the new year, resolve to be obedient to Him, diligent in doing the small things, and ready to do your part in laying the foundation of a great work. **NE**

Light The Vorld ONE BY ONE

START TODAY AT

WHAT AND THE PARTY OF

LightTheWorld.org

Andreia C. 17, Portugal

Right now, I'm a senior in high school, and this year I'm going to apply for college. When I'm old enough, I'm going to serve a mission. I can't wait! I also love the color yellow, and I really like to sing, play the piano, draw, paint, and go on walks.

One of the most spiritual experiences I've ever had was quite simple, but it meant a lot to me. There was a time when I was going through some trials and each day I felt more and more incapable. I felt I should talk to Heavenly Father about it, so I did. I knelt down and spoke to Him as openly as possible. Once I finished praying, I opened the scriptures at random and I opened up to a scripture that really helped me with what I was going through at the time.

In my case, it usually takes me some time to find the answers to my prayers, but this experience was so important to me because it was the first time I received a direct answer. How the Spirit felt was really indescribable. After this experience, my testimony has definitely grown. It taught me that the Lord always answers our sincere prayers, even if it takes time.



PORTUGAL



AZULEJOS Famous for beautiful ceramic tiles used to decorate walls and floors.





Portuguese is the sixth most-spoken language in the world. FAMOUS EXPLORER In 1498, Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama was the first European to reach India by sea.







OLDEST BOOKSTORE

The oldest functioning bookstore in the world is located in Portugal's capital, Lisbon.





In 2011, a Hawaiian surfer rode an 80-foot wave in Portugal, the biggest wave ever surfed.



AARON M., 15, Utah, USA

I helped in the special needs seminary class this year, and I was paired up with a buddy for the whole semester. I could see how much my friendship meant to him. He always smiled and was so excited when I picked him up to go to seminary. He loved going because lots of people at school made fun of special needs students, but in seminary no one did. This taught me that it is important to be kind to everyone, no matter what.



ATTICUS P., 12, Utah, USA

I love playing soccer and making stop-motion videos. Last summer, I turned 11 and was so excited that I could be ordained to the priesthood in a year.

I decided to prepare myself for these ordinances. I became more sensitive to the Spirit and repented of my sins. Soon after, President Nelson announced new changes in the Church that meant I could get ordained before I turned 12! I was grateful I had prepared to receive the priesthood so that I could be worthily ordained at the beginning of this year.

FUN STOP





Hink the Pinks with Boughs of Holly

What's a hink pink (a rhyming word pair) for taking a short sleep after covering gifts in bright paper? A wrap nap! (Yes, the cheese is strong with these. Always.) **Can you figure out the rest of the hink pinks?** Some are more than two words.

- The primary equipment used by the pullers of Santa's sleigh.
- 2. A none-too-fast, eight-passenger vehicle for toting around spherical persons made of frozen water.
- Red-and-white sweet that is shaped like a shepherd's crook and belongs to a super nifty person from Denmark.
- Santa's helper's feeling of personal esteem that comes from having the right waist size for one of his kind.

Answers on page 45.

- A construction demolition side business run by, and named after, Santa's first-listed reindeer.
- 6. The combined odors accompanying the tinkling of small, hollow, metal spheres. _____
- 7. An evergreen without any placards or emblems hanging from it.

- 8. The peril faced by a feeding trough for animals.
- Exhaling vigorously into a small metal object to create a high-pitched note, thus alerting others that you've found more of the kiss-inspiring, parasitic flowering plant.
- **10.** The hoisting of a present.



Some of my friends aren't good influences. Can we still be friends?

> "Set a standard for the rest of the world! Embrace being different! The booklet entitled For the Strength of Youth should be your standard. It is the standard that the Lord expects all His youth to uphold."

President Russell M. Nelson, "Hope of Israel" (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), 16, Hopeofisrael .ChurchofjesusChrist.org.



Share Good Things

If they are my friends, it is my duty to help them to be better, to share the gospel and all the blessings I have

received by living it. If they don't show interest in those good things, I may start to lose them little by little. Even though it is hard, sometimes that is the best thing to do.

Matheus T., 16, Minas Gerais, Brazil

Speak without Fear

My friends know that I belong to the Church. We talked about what is right to do and what is not. Now when my friend is with me, he behaves in an exemplary way, and that makes me happy. This taught me that I should speak without fear.

Diego R., 16, Mexico City, Mexico



Be a Better Influence

I have friends who are not good influences, but that doesn't mean that I don't speak to them. I treat them

with respect and kindness. I do not judge or criticize them. I know that friends can influence our way of thinking and acting and can even determine the person we will become. Whenever I can, I share the gospel with them and invite them to Church activities.

Saireth V., 18, Morelos, Mexico

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



Put God First

Do not be discouraged if your friends do not accept your good example. You should not have to lower

your standards or set aside your beliefs for others; we live to please Heavenly Father, not anyone else. Pray and search the scriptures for guidance, listen to the Holy Ghost's promptings, and most importantly, do not let worldly things cause you to stray away from the strait and narrow path.

Riley E., 15, Manila, Philippines

Stand in Holy Places

I have learned from my Church leaders that we have to stand in holy places, even if we are the only ones. Continue living the standards set in your life and in your heart. Try inviting them to a lesson or sacrament meeting. You can carry the light of the gospel everywhere you go! And above all, show the Savior's love for each of them.

Allanis O., 18, Setúbal, Portugal

What Do You Think?

How can I have the courage to follow through with spiritual promptings?

Submit your answer by January 15, 2021.

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

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.



Wasn't it a bit strange for the brother of Jared to ask the Lord to make stones glow?

First of all, the brother of Jared prayed in faith, believing that he would "receive according to [his] desires" (Ether 3:2). This means that he trusted that "with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37). And the Lord honored his faithful request.

Secondly, the brother of Jared may have been following an earlier example: Noah's ark. The Lord told the brother of Jared that his barges could not have fire or windows (see Ether 2:23–24), but the Bible says that Noah's ark had a "window" (Genesis 6:16). However, the word translated as "window" may not have actually been a window. Some rabbis and other scholars have said the ark's "window" was a shining stone (see Genesis 6:16, footnote a). The story of Noah's ark probably would have been known to the brother of Jared. (The Jaredite record included an account covering the Creation down to the tower of Babel [see Ether 1:3–4].) So the brother of Jared's request may not have been all that unusual.

FUN STOP RASWERS (from pages 42–43): Hink the Pinks with Boughs of Holly: 1. reindeer main gear 2. snowman slow van 3. dandy Dane candy cane 4. Elf girth self-worth 5. Dasher FUN STOP RASWERS (from pages 42–43): Hink the Pinks with Boughs of Holly: 1. reindeer main gear 2. snowman slow van 3. dandy Dane candy cane 4. Elf girth self-worth 5. Dasher Smasher 6. Jingle bells mingle samels 7. sign-free pine tree 8. manger 9. mistletoe whistle blow 10. gift lift Stocking Sorting: See answer at newera.ChurchoflesusChrist.org.



A SINGING TESTIMONY

SISTER YATES and I pedaled down the country road on our bikes. It was December in Taiwan, but most people there didn't celebrate Jesus Christ's birth, meaning there were no Christmas trees or special decorations. Even though we loved where we were, we wished for some Christmas cheer.

As we rode our bikes, we saw an old man sitting on his porch. Sister Yates said, "Let's go talk to that man!"

"Peace and joy come to us again when we hear words sung proclaiming that God's loving promise was kept:
"All is calm, all is bright....
Glories stream from heaven afar;
Heav'nly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ, the Savior, is born!"

President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency, "Gifts of Peace" (First Presidency Christmas devotional, 2016), broadcasts .ChurchofJesusChrist.org. "We won't be able to," I told her. "The older people here speak Taiwanese, and we speak Mandarin Chinese."

"I still want to try," Sister Yates said.

Sure enough, we walked over and introduced ourselves, but he didn't understand.

We were about to walk away when I noticed a book of Christmas songs on his lap. The page was open to the song "Silent Night."

"Look—'Silent Night,'" I said to Sister Yates. "Why don't we sing it with him?"

We started to sing. He joined in, his smile growing wider. Soon the Spirit filled our hearts.

We finished singing and smiled at the old man as we wiped away tears. We had been missing the sights and sounds of Christmas back home, but that rare moment with the old man somehow seemed special. I had been skeptical about talking to him, but I had forgotten that speaking is only one way to share your testimony.

Amanda W., Nevada, USA



What can you do to remember Christ this Christmas?

- 1. Make your favorite Christmas treat and take it to someone who is lonely.
- 2. Put on a Nativity program with your family or friends.
- 3. Look for unique ways to serve each of your family members and friends.
- 4. Write down blessings or miracles that you see in your life each day.
- 5. Watch Church videos about Christmas. Maybe share one on social media that you really enjoyed!

PERSONAL BLIZZARDS

THE STORM came up quickly. It was blinding white. I was driving from one state to another, and I could hardly see. My white-knuckled hands gripped the steering wheel as I searched for any sort of landmark. I felt relieved when I made out two taillights from what must have been a semi-truck. Their red beam gave me something to follow.

I inched along behind the truck for almost an hour. I thought the cars passing me must be crazy for going so fast in this weather. I was certain that I would see the wreckage of one of them farther up the road.

Turns out the people in those cars had a far better perspective than I did. As I started to climb a mountain pass, my little car couldn't keep up with the taillights. When the truck pulled ahead of me, I realized the "blizzard" was actually powder coming off its very snowy top. It was only snowing lightly, and I could actually see the road quite clearly.

Had I seen the whole picture from the beginning, I would have realized that the truck in front of me that I'd thought was a beacon was, in fact, the reason for the storm. Sometimes we get so caught up in our own personal blizzards that we miss the big picture. The Lord knows our big picture, even when we do not. If we trust in Him, we can avoid the personal blizzards that can be so harmful to us, and we can make it through the storm safely.

Kari B., Virginia, USA





CHRISTMAS ART SHOW

IT WAS CHRISTMAS BREAK and I was just relaxing by our fireplace, ready to take a nap. I closed my eyes and seconds later, a bright cheery voice yelled right in my ear, "Look what I made!"

I opened my eyes, and in my face was my little sister and her creation. It was a bright rainbow lump of clay, but not really rainbow anymore, since the colors were all blended together.

"It's a house for Jesus!" she announced. Sure enough, she took the top of the mound off and inside lay a few clay figures that formed what could be a Nativity scene.

She said, "I made it all myself!"

The sculpture made about as much sense as any clay figure made by a five-year-old, so I gave up trying to understand it. I said to her, "Yep, you sure did."

We moved on to the next items in the art show, and she had me guess what each statue was—which was honestly very difficult, since they were all as abstract as the first one.

But I looked back at the clay Nativity and had the overwhelming feeling that Jesus would love it—that if presented with it, He would shower her with praises and put it in a place of honor.

As I sat with her and looked at the rest of her art pieces, I realized that the love we show others, and the time we sacrifice to show love for others, is the true meaning of Christmas.

Brennan T., Utah, USA

Perfect in Christ

By Elder Gerrit W. Gong Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

From an October 2018 general conference address.

piritual light and life come when regular religious observance draws us closer to our Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ. With daily obedience, we find answers, faith, and strength to meet everyday challenges and opportunities with gospel patience, perspective, and joy.

As we seek new and holier ways to love God and help us and others prepare to meet Him, we remember that perfection is in Christ, not in ourselves or in the perfectionism of the world.

God's invitations are full of love and possibility because Jesus Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). To those who feel burdened, He invites, "Come unto me," and to those who come to Him, He promises, "I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). "Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, ... love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ" (Moroni 10:32).

In this assurance "by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ" is also the comfort, peace, and promise that we can continue forward with faith and confidence in the Lord even when things do not go as we hope, expect, or perhaps deserve, through no fault of our own, even after we have done our best.

In various times and ways, we all feel inadequate, uncertain, perhaps unworthy. Yet in our faithful efforts to love God and to minister to our neighbor, we may feel God's love and needed inspiration for their and our lives.

With compassion, our Savior encourages and promises we can "press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men" (2 Nephi 31:20). The doctrine of Christ, our Savior's Atonement, and our whole-souled following of His covenant path can help us know His truths and make us free (see John 8:32).

I testify His covenant path leads to the greatest gift our loving Heavenly Father promises: "Ye shall have eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:20). **NE**





Mormon abridged and compiled the majority of the Book of Mormon (see Words of Mormon 1:3-5).



Became the leader for the Nephite armies when he was only 15 (see Mormon 2:1-2).

Father of Moroni (see Mormon 8:13) and a disciple of Christ (see 3 Nephi 5:13).



plates and **buried them in** the Hill Cumorah (see Mormon 8:3-5, 14).



Moroni fought in the Nephite army with Mormon (see Mormon 6:11–12)



Visited Joseph Smith as a resurrected being (see Joseph Smith— History 1:33).

New Era



COMING JANUARY 2021, For the Strength of Youth magazine will replace the New Era.

Now you and youth all around the world will be able to enjoy inspiring messages and stories in this new magazine to help you build your testimony of Jesus Christ and His church.



