

THE **New Era**

FEBRUARY 2010

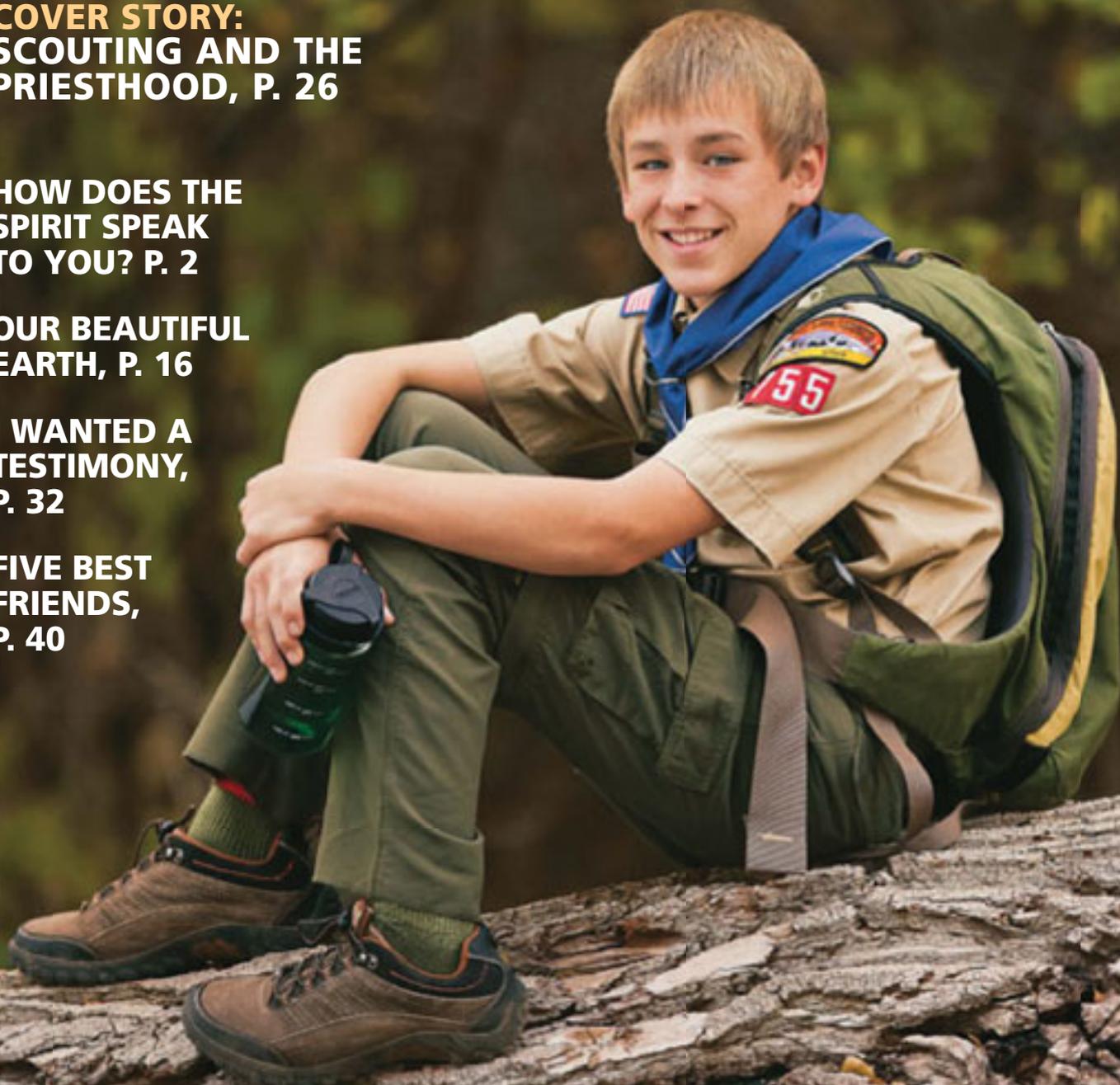
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reserved. Periodicals Postage Paid
at Salt Lake City, Utah. The *New
Era* (ISSN 0164-5285) is published
monthly by The Church of Jesus
Christ of Latter-day Saints, 50 E.
North Temple St., Salt Lake City,
UT 84150-3220, USA.

POSTMASTER: Send address
changes to Distribution Services,
Church Magazines, P.O. Box
26368, Salt Lake City, UT 84126-
0368, USA.

Canada Post Information:
Publication Agreement #40017431.



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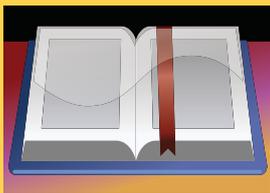
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The New Era Magazine
Volume 40, Number 2
February 2010

Official monthly publication for youth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

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50 E. North Temple St.
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Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA

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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.

Cover: Scouting celebrates a milestone. See "A Pillar Supporting the Priesthood," p. 26.

Cover photography: Matt Reier (front) and J. Tyler Bates (back)

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How Does the **SPIRIT** Speak to Us?



*The Spirit is a voice
that one feels more
than hears.*

By President Boyd K. Packer

President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

We do not have the words—even the scriptures do not have the words—which perfectly describe the Spirit. The scriptures usually use the word *voice*. That does not exactly fit—it does, but it doesn't. These very delicate, fine spiritual communications are not seen with our eyes nor heard with our ears; it is a voice that one *feels* more than *hears*.

We cannot communicate spiritual knowledge with words alone. We can, with words, show one another how to prepare for the reception of the Spirit, and the Spirit itself will help: “For when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men” (2 Nephi 33:1).

When we experience a spiritual communication, we are wont to say within ourselves, “This is it. Now I understand.” That is what is meant by those words in the revelations; and thereafter, words are adequate for teaching about spiritual things if they are carefully chosen. Nephi explained it this way:

“Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:3).

Should an angel converse with you, neither you nor he would be confined to corporeal sight or sound in order to communicate. For there is that spiritual process described by the Prophet Joseph Smith by which pure intelligence can flow into our minds and by which we can know what we need to know without either the effort of study or the passage of time, because that is revelation (see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 132). We talk about confining on little computer chips vast amounts of information; through the processes of revelation and through this language of the Spirit, tremendous amounts of inspiration and information can be given to us instantly.

The voice of the Spirit is described in the scriptures as being neither loud nor harsh, not a voice of thunder,

neither a voice of great tumultuous noise, but rather as still and small, of perfect mildness, as if it had been a whisper, and it can pierce even the very soul and cause the heart to burn.

The Spirit does not get our attention by shouting. It never shakes us with a heavy hand. The Spirit whispers. It caresses so gently, indeed, that if we are preoccupied, we can't feel it at all.

Occasionally, the Spirit will press just firmly enough or often enough for us to pay attention; but from my experience, most of the time, if we do not heed the gentle feeling, if we do not listen with those feelings, the Spirit will withdraw and wait until we come seeking and listening, in our manner and our expression.

I have learned that the very impressive and miraculous spiritual experiences come very infrequently. Something is amiss if they come too intensely and too frequently. The question then arises, from whence come these experiences? Remember that there is a counterfeit.

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

I know that the gospel is true; the Spirit is there. If you rely on that, you will be doing the work of Him who is our Redeemer, who wrought the Atonement, whose Church this is, who lives. You will be blessed of the Father. Of these things I bear witness and invoke His blessings.

You'd think there would be a better way for one the Twelve to bear testimony, but we're left to bear it in the same way our little grandkids do in Primary—just to say we know it's true. But I know that He lives. I know His voice when He speaks. I know Him, and of Him I bear witness. **NE**

From an address delivered at a seminar for new mission presidents on June 19, 1991

The

MIRACLE



I had a severe case of scoliosis—extreme curvature of the spine. I asked to have the faith I needed for a miracle to take place in my life.

I Needed

By Nicole Levi

*I kept hoping and pleading for a miracle.
But my prayers weren't answered in the way
I expected.*

A couple of months before my sophomore year in high school, my mom took me shopping for school clothes. While I was trying on a shirt that was probably a couple of sizes too small for me, I decided to model it for my mom and act like I wanted it. When I opened the dressing room door, my mom's reaction was not what I had imagined.

"What's that hump on your back?"

"What hump? It's just a shirt."

My mom studied my back then immediately called and scheduled an appointment for me to see a specialist. The look of concern on her face scared me.

Days later, in the specialist's office, we learned that I had a severe case of scoliosis, extreme curvature of the spine. There are four levels of scoliosis, and mine was a level three. If I could decrease the curve to level two, then I wouldn't need surgery. We began doing everything we could, but the curve of my spine was increasing. The next step was to try a back brace. My first day of school was the day I was fitted.

The brace was very uncomfortable. I had to wear a layer underneath, or the brace would leave a nasty rash. I also wore a layer over the brace so it wouldn't rub holes in my nice school shirts. Wearing that many layers in Arizona wasn't the easiest thing to do. There were days I left school early because of heat exhaustion. Other days I came home feeling hideous and gross. At times I would lie on the floor for hours because it hurt to move. I tried to be brave, but I often cried myself to sleep. It all seemed

too much for me to handle.

Classes were hard. I remember days I would pray the seminary hymn was one I knew, since I was unable to reach the hymnbook from under my desk. In traffic safety class, my brace kept me from driving in reverse because I couldn't turn around. I dropped my pencil during tests and couldn't pick it up. Dance used to be my favorite class, but it became my hardest. My mom helped me dress every morning. She even tied my shoes for me.

Through all this I persisted in studying my scriptures. Every night I prayed with a fervent heart for a miracle. In my journal I described days where the pain was unbearable, but I always, on every page, reminded myself of my Savior. "I know He'll help me get through this," I would write. "Someday He'll give me my miracle."

Halfway through the year, things began looking up. I was preparing to receive my patriarchal blessing, and I had a strong feeling that somehow this blessing could be my miracle. I attentively listened as the patriarch said, "Remember, Nicole, faith works miracles." An overwhelming sensation burned inside of me. I had been praying for a miracle since day one. I thought for sure my miracle was coming.

For once, I couldn't wait for my next doctor's appointment. I just knew that the X-rays would be good. But when the day arrived and the doctor walked in and posted my X-rays, I felt complete shock. The curvature of my spine was worse than ever. I didn't understand. I was praying, reading my scriptures, keeping a journal, and fasting. I was doing everything to keep my faith and my testimony strong. What was I doing wrong?

That night I knelt by my bed and poured out all my thoughts and feelings to my Father in Heaven. I told Him



Surgery may not have been the miracle I was expecting, or even hoping for, but it was the one I needed. Thinking of my Savior is what got me through my hardship.

of the pain I was in and how confused I was. I asked to have the faith I needed for a miracle to take place in my life.

After many prayers, we found a different doctor. The X-rays in his office were, unfortunately, the same. His first words to me were, "So, I bet you were expecting a miracle."

I just nodded my head.

The doctor began explaining his procedure for surgery, then he said exactly what I needed to hear. "Surgery," he said, "is the miracle." That overwhelming sensation began to burn inside me once more.

I accepted the option of surgery. Of course, there were still challenges, but I recovered faster than any of my doctor's other patients. I knew my Father in Heaven blessed me and answered my prayers. Surgery may not have been the miracle I was expecting, or even hoping for, but it was the one I needed. It was the one I learned the most from.

Words can't explain in full detail all this experience brought me. Words can't describe the pain, the heartache, or the daily challenges. Most of all, words can't describe the closeness I felt to my Savior.

It doesn't matter how many things you're doing right; adversity will still come. Just think of everything our Savior went through, and He was absolutely perfect. Thinking of my Savior is what got me through my hardship. It was the most painful time in my life, but because of Him, I was happy. **NE**

THEY ARE TEN COMMANDMENTS

NOT TEN SUGGESTIONS.

(See Exodus 20:1–17.)

Be STRONG

Pressing forward ♩ = 72-84

1. When the world ___ and its ___ temp-ta - tions seem to
tries to ___ con - vince ___ you ___ to

call you by name, ___ be strong. Be strong. — When they quest -
make the wrong choice, ___ be strong. Be strong. If in the noise

- ion ev - 'ry-thing ___ you put your faith in ev - 'ry day, ___ be strong. ___ Be ___
— that's all ___ a - round ___ you ___ can't hear the Spir-it's voice ___ be strong. ___ Be ___

strong. ___ And when your tri - als seem ___ like they're ___ too hard ___ to bear,
strong. ___ And when you stand ___ for some - thing right ___ and stand ___ a - lone,

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re-mem-ber some - one else ___ stands by ___ you who's al - read - y been there. ___ Be
 re-mem-ber some - one else ___ stands by ___ you in our heav-en - ly home. ___ Be

strong ___ and of good cour - age! ___ Be not a-fraid. ___ Stand firm in the faith. ___ For the

Lord ___ will be with us wher-ev-er we go. Be His. Be one. Be strong! ___ 2. When the world

strong! ___

NEmore To download an MP3 of this song, go to ABrandNewYear.lds.org.

LEADING *the* WAY

When the Calderón children joined the Church, they led the way to great changes for their family.

By Melissa Merrill

Church Magazines



The children of the Calderón family started a great transition for their family. Jared, age 15, was the first to join the Church, followed a year later by his sister, Angie, 13. Their parents joined the Church three years after Angie's baptism.

At first this family from Costa Rica had no idea how much the gospel of Jesus Christ would change their lives. They were introduced to the Church by a family member in 2002, and for many months afterward the Calderóns regularly invited the missionaries to their home so they could learn more. As they did so, the family experienced a transformation—a true conversion.

A Richer Spiritual Life

Before the family joined the Church, the Calderóns were concerned that Jared and Angie were having a hard time getting a moral and spiritual education in a world that downplays religion.

The gospel, the Calderóns found, had answers to the problems they were facing. "When we came to understand the gospel and started applying its

Jared (left) was the first of the Calderóns to join the Church, in 2003. His sister, Angie (right), followed a year later. Their parents and younger brother joined in 2007.

teachings, that knowledge changed the way we lived,” says Brother Calderón. “We learned who we are and how we can return to our Heavenly Father. Because of what we found, we have lived a richer spiritual life.”

It wasn’t always easy to accept readily what they were learning from the missionaries, but as they tested gospel principles, they gained a testimony of them. “As we learned about gospel standards,” says Sister Calderón, “we tried to stay within the boundaries of worthiness. I gave up drinking coffee. (And I drank plenty of coffee before then!) We made goals as a family to not swear, to speak kindly to each other, and to keep other good principles.

“The main sacrifice we made was our pride,” she continues. “We had to learn to be humble, but as we’ve tried to learn and live with humility, we’ve received many blessings and experienced great progress as individuals, as a couple, and as a family.”

Looking toward the Temple

The family then began preparing for additional covenants and ordinances in the temple. “We knew that baptism was just the first step,” says Sister Calderón. “We set a goal to continue to progress, including going to the temple and being sealed as a family so that we can someday live with our Heavenly Father.”

In preparation for their temple sealing, the whole family spent time praying and fasting. Jared also participated several times in performing baptisms for the dead. Then on May 10, 2008, the family was sealed in the San José Costa Rica Temple.

Jared remembers what he felt that day. “When I entered the sealing room, the Spirit was so powerful. It felt so right to be there with my family,” he says.

His brother, James, recalls having to wait for a long time before he could enter the sealing room, but, he says, it was worth it: “I felt a lot of joy and happiness. I continue to feel happy knowing that I can be with my family forever.”

The Influence of Covenants

While the family made many changes in their lives to prepare for temple ordinances, they are finding that the ordinances are, in fact, *changing them*. For instance,

Angie remembers that before their family was sealed, she told her mom that she did not want to be married in the temple. “I didn’t understand the promises then,” she says. “Now I see the bigger picture, and I have a bigger goal. I *do* want to marry in the temple. I want to have my own family someday and live with them eternally.”

Another change Angie has experienced is having an increased desire to do family history and temple work for her deceased ancestors. She and her mother visit the family history library at their local meetinghouse to research these names. Angie has a great feeling of love for her ancestors. She is always willing to do family history work.

Jared has also noticed an adjustment in himself in the way he treats his family. He explains: “When you go to the temple, you see things more clearly. I have felt the Spirit guide me to treat my parents and siblings better, to maintain a good relationship with them. There have been times where I have felt upset and was convinced that the other person was wrong, but when I remember that we are an eternal family, I realize that it’s not worth it to argue over petty things.

“Besides,” he adds, with a wry smile, “if I am going to live with them forever, I had better get used to them.”

Great Happiness

The Calderóns realize that *making* covenants isn’t enough—it’s also essential to keep them. They are trying to keep reading the scriptures and keep praying together. They go to church and fulfill their callings and support each other. “Those things help us remember what we have promised and bring us lots of blessings, both spiritually and temporally,” says Sister Calderón.

The family has continued and will continue to face challenges in their lives, but covenants have made a huge difference in their perspective. Looking back at the decisions his family has made, Brother Calderón feels great happiness: “As we learned about the gospel and have lived it, we have developed a conviction, a certainty, that this is the gospel of Jesus Christ, and its direction helps us correctly make important decisions. Our family is coming closer to the Savior. We have progressed spiritually, and we’ve never been this happy in our lives.” **NE**

The Parable of the TREASURE VAULT



Elder Talmage served as an Apostle for 22 years and wrote two Church books that are in wide use to this day: Jesus the Christ and The Articles of Faith. Elder Talmage also published a series of parables—stories taken from his personal experience that teach gospel principles. The following parable was published in the Improvement Era, Oct. 1914, 1108–9; spelling and punctuation modernized.

What is the worth of a soul? It's priceless and must be kept safe.

By Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933)

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Among the news items of recent date was the report of a burglary, some incidents of which are unusual in the literature of crime. The safety-vault of a wholesale house dealing in jewelry and gems was the object of the attack. From the care and skill with which the two robbers had laid their plans, it was evident that they were adept in their nefarious business.

They contrived to secrete themselves within the building and were locked in when the heavily barred doors were closed for the night. They knew that the great vault of steel and masonry was of the best construction and of the kind guaranteed as burglar-proof; they knew also that it contained treasure of enormous value; and they relied for success on their patience, persistency, and craft, which had been developed

through many previous, though lesser, exploits in safe-breaking. Their equipment was complete, comprising of drills, saws, and other tools, tempered to penetrate even the hardened steel of the massive door, through which alone entrance to the vault could be effected. Armed guards were stationed in the corridors of the establishment, and the approaches to the strong room were diligently watched.

Through the long night the thieves labored, drilling and sawing around the lock, whose complicated mechanism could not be manipulated even by one familiar with the combination, before the hour for which the time-control had been set. They had calculated that by persistent work they would have time during the night to break open the safe and secure such of the valuables as they could carry; then they would trust to luck, daring, or force to make their escape. They would not hesitate to kill if they were opposed. Though the difficulties of the undertaking were greater than expected, the skilled criminals succeeded with tools and explosives in reaching the interior of the lock; then they threw back the bolts and forced open the ponderous doors.

What saw they within? Drawers filled with gems, trays of diamonds, rubies, and pearls,

think you? Such and more they had confidently expected to find and to secure; but instead they encountered an inner safe, with a door heavier and more resistant than the first, fitted with a mechanical lock of more intricate construction than that at which they had worked so strenuously. The metal of the second door was of such superior quality as to splinter their finely tempered tools; try as they

would they could not so much as scratch it. Their misdirected energy was wasted; frustrated were all their infamous plans.

Like unto one's reputation is the outer door of the treasure-vault; like unto his character is the inner portal. A good name is a strong defense, but though it be assailed and even marred or broken, the soul it guards is safe, provided only the inner character be impregnable. **NE**

HOW TO BUILD STRONG CHARACTER



Character is the manifestation of what you are becoming. Strong moral character results from consistent correct choices in the trials and testing of life. Your faith

can guide you to those correct choices. . . .

. . . The bedrock of character is integrity. Worthy character will strengthen your capacity to obediently respond to the direction of the Spirit. Righteous character is what you are becoming. It is more important than what you own, what you have learned, or what goals you have accomplished. It allows you to be trusted. Righteous character provides the foundation of spiritual strength. It enables you in times of trial and testing to make difficult, extremely important decisions correctly even when they seem overpowering. I testify that neither Satan nor any other power can weaken or destroy your growing character. Only you could do that through disobedience.

"Our Father's plan is marvelous. Your exercise of faith builds character. Fortified character expands your capacity to exercise faith. Thus, your confidence in conquering the trials of life is enhanced. And the strengthening cycle continues. The more your character is fortified, the more enabled you are to exercise the power of faith."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Sustaining Power of Faith in Times of Uncertainty and Testing," *Ensign*, May 2003, 77.



“How can I convince my friends that our standards are really about freedom and not a burden?”

There are so many choices in life; some are right, and some are wrong. Heavenly Father has given us standards to help us make good choices. When we live the standards, we are blessed and protected (see Romans 8:28; Mosiah 2:41; D&C 130:21). When we don't live the standards, we lose out on those blessings and can be hurt spiritually and sometimes physically.

Those who live gospel standards are not giving up their agency: they are *choosing* to do what will bring them blessings and inner peace. They know that disobedience will only bring problems into their lives—problems they *choose* to avoid.

Church standards, like those found in *For the Strength of Youth*, are based on doctrines, or eternal truths. For example, our bodies are the temples of our spirits (see 1 Corinthians 3:16). A standard based on that doctrine is the Word of Wisdom: take care of your body by eating good foods and avoiding addictive and harmful substances.

Therefore, as you live the standards, you are living in harmony with eternal truths that Heavenly Father has given us. “And the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). **NE**

Obedience Brings Freedom



As I strive to hearken to the words of the prophets, I always receive physical and spiritual blessings from God. I then feel more confident in making choices, and my friends recognize that I paid the price of obedience to obtain this greater freedom. Testify boldly of the blessings you enjoy as an obedient member of the Church. You will convince your friends by your word and example that living your standards does not restrict your agency, but making poor choices often does. The inspired standards point us in a direction to make good choices, allowing many doors of opportunity to remain wide open. My friends often desire that same freedom.

Elder Madsen, 21, Indonesia Jakarta Mission

Explain That You Are Happy



I too was questioned by my friends, classmates, and even my teachers in school about our standards. They said that our Church standards are so strict. Instead of arguing with them, I asked for their time to share with them all about our Church standards. I simply showed them that I am very happy and comfortable living with our standards. I also did not use our standards as an excuse to miss some school activities. Instead, I suggested some ideas for the school activities to follow our Church standards. I also shared with them the advantages of following those standards.

Ailyn L., 19, Davao, Philippines

Invite Your Friends to an Activity



Heavenly Father granted agency to all of His children. Our standards differ from those of the world, and because of this, many times we think we cannot do certain things. But we have the power to choose, and we should always choose

what is best for us so that we do not injure our bodies and our spiritual growth.

Invite your friends to come to a Church activity, and show them how we can do various wholesome and entertaining things without leaving behind our standards. Try to always be in tune with the Holy Ghost, and it will be easier for you to make correct decisions and be a good example.

Amanda V., 18, Curitiba, Brazil

Do What Is Right



Last year I had some friends who did not respect my standards. They told me that I was boring, that my standards didn't let me be free or have fun. I pondered, prayed, and read the scriptures so that the Holy Ghost would be with me and give me more strength. I then decided to tell my friends that I had fun in another way—not smoking, not drinking alcohol. These standards give me a lot of freedom, more than they have, since they are tied to alcohol and tobacco. After telling them this, they understood me. But even so, I decided to change friends. I was alone for some time, but later on I did find some friends with standards like mine, and now I feel good. Heavenly Father is going to bless you if you do what is right.

Belén G., 15, Colonia, Uruguay

Standards Are for Our Welfare

I also have friends who have that kind of perception toward our Church standards. At first I felt somewhat hesitant to explain, but I realized that they won't understand if we don't tell them. Let them know that standards are given to us by the Lord

for the welfare of our souls so that inappropriate influences will not injure us. Standards are like instructions during an examination. If you will not follow them, you will surely fail. And just like in an exam, you can choose to follow or not. In due time your friends will appreciate how immovable you are in keeping your Church standards, and you will surely be blessed.

Cleem L., 18, Tanjay, Philippines

Commandments Protect Us

Commandments that might be viewed as restrictions are actually protections. God has given guidelines to protect us in all aspects of our lives (physically, emotionally, and spiritually). We know a physical law of safety is not to touch a hot stove. Sure, you can touch the stove, but then you will have to live with the consequences of a burn. If you choose to watch bad movies or break the Word of Wisdom, you will have to live with “burns” that are painful. Temptation causes us to shift our focus from the Lord to temporary gratification, overlooking the consequences of our sin. When we make a choice, we choose the consequence, even

if we didn't plan on it. As my mom always says, “When you look to break the commandments, you do have agency and can get your way, but it won't be what you want.” Keeping the commandments will bring me the true happiness I want.

Joseph G., 13, Utah, USA

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



COMMANDMENTS ARE FOR OUR HAPPINESS

The commandments are not a burden or a restriction. Every commandment of the Lord is given for our development, progress, and growth. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: ‘God has designed our happiness. . . . He never will institute an ordinance or give a commandment to His people that is not calculated in its nature to promote that happiness which He has designed.’ ”

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “If Thou Wilt Enter into Life, Keep the Commandments,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 35.

NEXT QUESTION

“I feel so alone at church. How can I learn to feel included?”

Send us your answer and photo by March 15, 2010.

Go to newera.lds.org, click Submit Your Material, and then select Questions and Answers.

You can also write to us at:

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or

New Era, Q&A, 3/10

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THE *Beauty* OF THE EARTH

I have learned firsthand that all things bear record of the Creator.

By J. Tyler Bates

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). I know this simple scripture to be true. I have been blessed to travel the world and learn about the amazing creations of God. Through these travels and my hobbies of scuba diving and backpacking, I have gained a testimony of the supreme creation of the earth.

When people ask what proof there is of God, I think of Moses 6:63: “Things which are in the heavens above, and things which

are on the earth, and things which are in the earth, and things which are under the earth, both above and beneath: all things bear record of me.”

My father’s work has taken our family to a variety of places in the world. As I have traveled with my parents, the Spirit has whispered strongly to me about the glory of God. The feeling I get from the Spirit is overwhelming when I contemplate the creation of the universe, whether I’m exploring Idaho’s mountains or scuba diving in Palau.

As a biology major, I have looked through a microscope and marveled at the complexity of life exhibited by even one-celled microorganisms. All creatures, from the tiny phytoplankton, which produce over 70% of the oxygen that we breathe, to the blue whale, which is the largest living creature on earth, were created by God.



Underwater photography is part skill and a lot of luck, and this is a really lucky shot that I got in Palau.



THINGS WHICH ARE IN THE HEAVENS ABOVE,
AND THINGS WHICH ARE ON THE EARTH, AND
THINGS WHICH ARE UNDER THE EARTH, BOTH ABOVE AND
BENEATH: ALL THINGS BEAR RECORD OF ME.

MOSES 6:63

I became interested in photography because both of my parents like to take photos, and I took many pictures as I was growing up. After I had been scuba diving for a year, I got a digital underwater camera and took a picture of every fish I saw in the ocean. My skills increased with every dive trip I went on, and I also continued to take topside photos and capture the vivid colors of nature.

Not everyone will have the opportunity to see some of these locations firsthand, so I share some of my best photographs with you in hope that you may feel the divinity of God's masterpiece. **NE**

Tyler is currently serving in the Cauayan Philippines Mission.

Left: Coral reefs are among God's most beautiful and amazing creations. Little animals known as polyps grow in clumps. When the previous generation dies, the new generation grows on the remains. These coral clumps grow to form reefs. Coral reefs contain the most species and organisms in the world.

Top right: I like this photo because it shows the shark in a nonthreatening and mysterious view.

Center: An estimated six million of these stingless jellyfish live in a landlocked lake in Palau. With no predators in the lake, the jellyfish have lost their sting and are fun to swim through.

Bottom left: Friendly butterfly fish swarmed my camera. The vienna sausage I baited them with helped.

Bottom right: Three heads of different hard coral and the two flatter corals show the diversity of corals on Guam. It is awesome to see the diversity of the coral reefs.





Top left: I was testing a new underwater camera on objects that didn't move. When I finished my dive and reviewed the photos on the computer, I noticed the narrow field of focus deep within the urchin and the bright blue streaks. It is one of my favorite photos because of the abstract view of an ordinary sea creature.

Bottom left: I have spent many weeks in the backcountry among the rugged mountains carved by God. Azure blue lakes sit perfectly still, surrounded by pine trees. Jagged white peaks protrude from the green forests. When the light is right, the mountains and trees are reflected perfectly, creating the illusion of an upside-down earth.

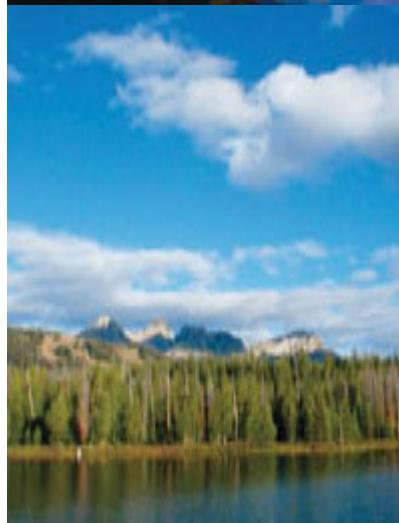
Top right: There was a large ball of these fish on the top of a reef in Palau. I like how this photo has a group of identical fish with one oddball in the middle. It could be symbolic of including others who are different from us.

Bottom center: On a trip to Arizona I discovered how to take macro photos with a narrow depth of focus. I took photos of almost every type of cactus using this technique, and this one looked the best.

Top center: Taken on a trip to Arizona.

Far right: A mountain meadow with the rugged peak rising in the background.

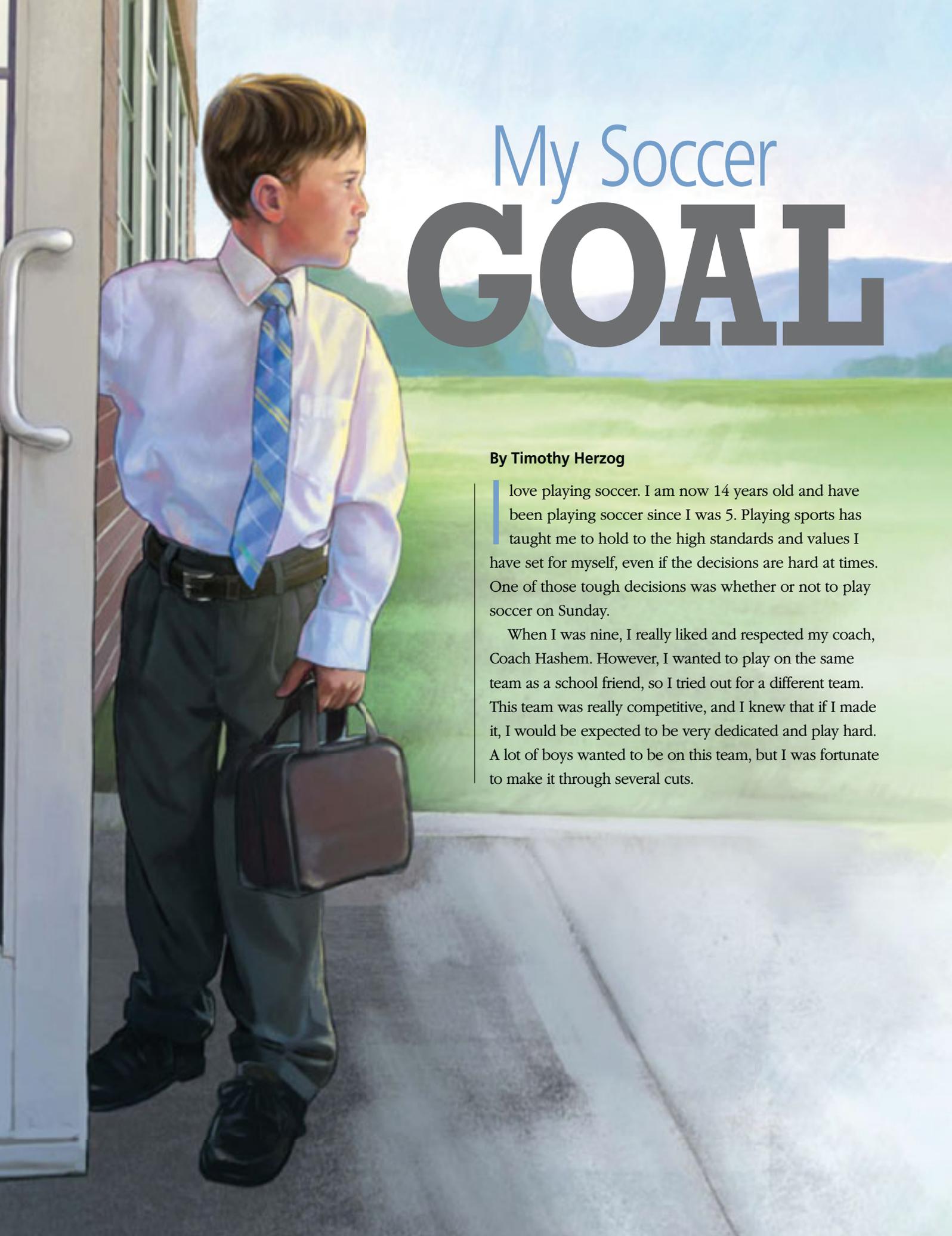
Right center: One of my favorite mountain pictures. My camera is waterproof to 30 feet without housing. I put the camera into the lake and aimed it at the mountains. I was able to capture the cool water level photograph.



THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND THE FULNESS THEREOF;
THE WORLD, AND THEY THAT DWELL THEREIN.

PSALM 24:1





My Soccer GOAL

By Timothy Herzog

I love playing soccer. I am now 14 years old and have been playing soccer since I was 5. Playing sports has taught me to hold to the high standards and values I have set for myself, even if the decisions are hard at times. One of those tough decisions was whether or not to play soccer on Sunday.

When I was nine, I really liked and respected my coach, Coach Hashem. However, I wanted to play on the same team as a school friend, so I tried out for a different team. This team was really competitive, and I knew that if I made it, I would be expected to be very dedicated and play hard. A lot of boys wanted to be on this team, but I was fortunate to make it through several cuts.

*I wanted to play on a competitive team,
but maybe the price was too high.*



The day of the final tryouts came. I played my hardest, and I felt good about it. Afterward, the coach approached my mom and me and said that he would really like me on the team. I was excited. But then he asked, “Can you play on Sundays? I have to be able to field a team for tournaments, and that means that sometimes there will be Sunday play.”

My mom let me reply to the question.

“No, sir, I don’t play on Sundays.” I knew that was the right answer, but it probably meant I wouldn’t get to be on this team.

That night, the call telling me that I was chosen for the team never came. I was very disappointed.

Instead, I joined a neighborhood team with lots of friends. We had a great time the first year and were successful, but the second year the team struggled and sometimes lost focus on the game. I became frustrated. I put my best effort into every game, but we almost always lost.

After one very bad game, Coach Hashem, whose team was doing well, approached me on the soccer field. He asked me how things were going. I said, “Not so good.” I told him I missed my old teammates. Hashem coached with a great deal of skill and always seemed to get the most from his players.

“How would you like to be a guest player for our team when we go to the next tournament?” Hashem asked.

“I would really like that!” I responded excitedly.

“Great!” Hashem said, smiling. “I need to ask you one

question though. Can you play on Sundays?” My stomach muscles tightened. I suddenly felt sick. I remembered what had happened that last time this question had been asked.

I looked at my mom. I looked at my dad. They too waited for my answer. I looked at Hashem.

“No, I’m sorry. I don’t play on Sundays,” I said. “Will that make a difference?”

Hashem stood there for a moment. He had seen the expression of hope on my face fade quickly as I had answered his question.

“No, that’s OK,” Hashem responded. “We probably won’t get to the Sunday finals. We’d love to have you play with us.”

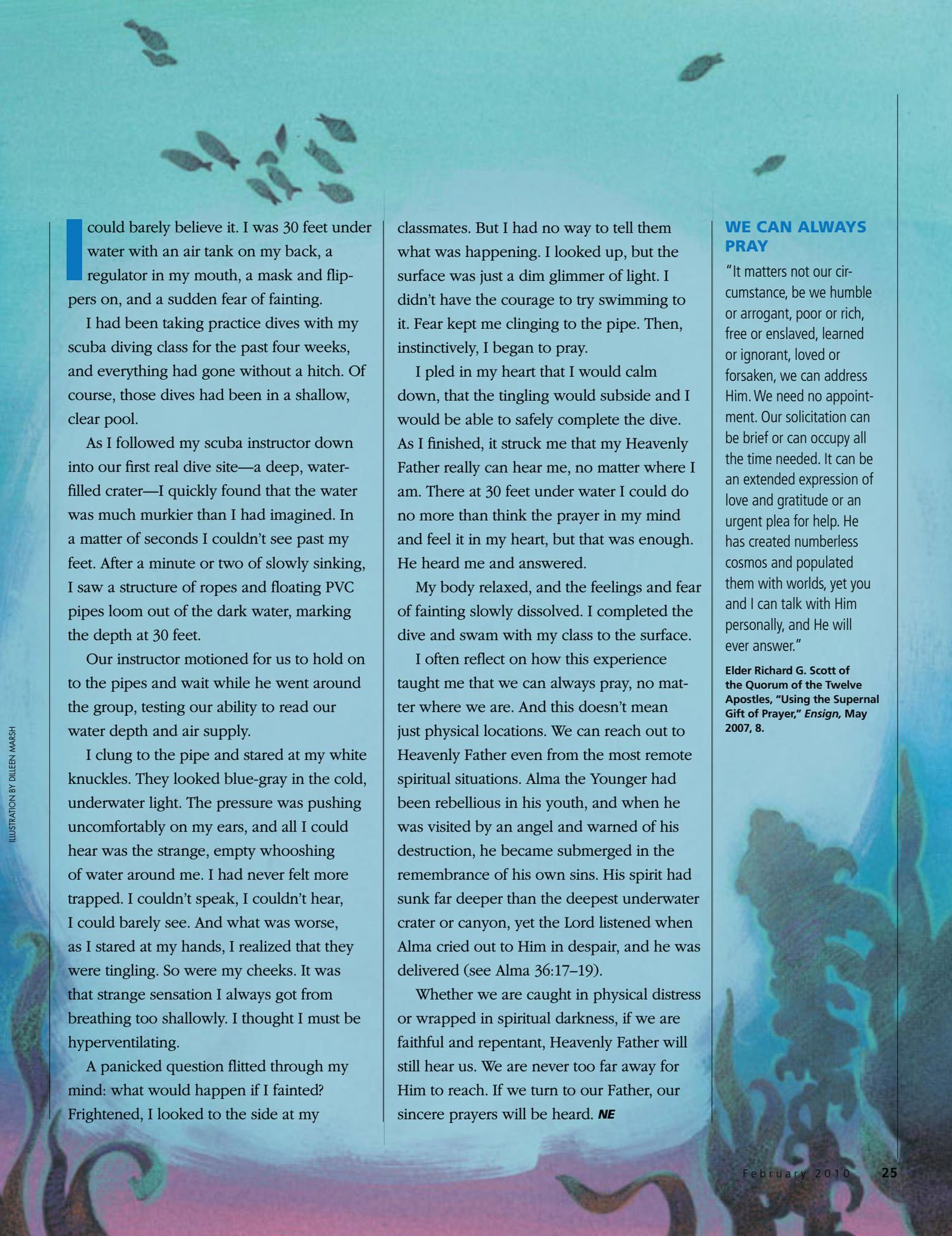
Soon I started practicing with Hashem’s team. The team played with a great deal of intensity, and they welcomed me back. I loved playing with them.

We didn’t win all of our games at the tournament, but we all tried our hardest, and we had a good time. Soon I became a permanent member of Hashem’s team. Though they knew I didn’t play on Sundays, they still appreciated me for what I added to the team on the other game days.

I am now a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood. I still play competition soccer and still choose not to play on Sunday. It has not been a problem for me or for the teams I have played on. I believe in honoring the Sabbath day and keeping it holy. For me this means not playing sports on Sunday. **NE**

PRAYER AT 30 FEET DOWN





I could barely believe it. I was 30 feet under water with an air tank on my back, a regulator in my mouth, a mask and flippers on, and a sudden fear of fainting.

I had been taking practice dives with my scuba diving class for the past four weeks, and everything had gone without a hitch. Of course, those dives had been in a shallow, clear pool.

As I followed my scuba instructor down into our first real dive site—a deep, water-filled crater—I quickly found that the water was much murkier than I had imagined. In a matter of seconds I couldn't see past my feet. After a minute or two of slowly sinking, I saw a structure of ropes and floating PVC pipes loom out of the dark water, marking the depth at 30 feet.

Our instructor motioned for us to hold on to the pipes and wait while he went around the group, testing our ability to read our water depth and air supply.

I clung to the pipe and stared at my white knuckles. They looked blue-gray in the cold, underwater light. The pressure was pushing uncomfortably on my ears, and all I could hear was the strange, empty whooshing of water around me. I had never felt more trapped. I couldn't speak, I couldn't hear, I could barely see. And what was worse, as I stared at my hands, I realized that they were tingling. So were my cheeks. It was that strange sensation I always got from breathing too shallowly. I thought I must be hyperventilating.

A panicked question flitted through my mind: what would happen if I fainted? Frightened, I looked to the side at my

classmates. But I had no way to tell them what was happening. I looked up, but the surface was just a dim glimmer of light. I didn't have the courage to try swimming to it. Fear kept me clinging to the pipe. Then, instinctively, I began to pray.

I pled in my heart that I would calm down, that the tingling would subside and I would be able to safely complete the dive. As I finished, it struck me that my Heavenly Father really can hear me, no matter where I am. There at 30 feet under water I could do no more than think the prayer in my mind and feel it in my heart, but that was enough. He heard me and answered.

My body relaxed, and the feelings and fear of fainting slowly dissolved. I completed the dive and swam with my class to the surface.

I often reflect on how this experience taught me that we can always pray, no matter where we are. And this doesn't mean just physical locations. We can reach out to Heavenly Father even from the most remote spiritual situations. Alma the Younger had been rebellious in his youth, and when he was visited by an angel and warned of his destruction, he became submerged in the remembrance of his own sins. His spirit had sunk far deeper than the deepest underwater crater or canyon, yet the Lord listened when Alma cried out to Him in despair, and he was delivered (see Alma 36:17–19).

Whether we are caught in physical distress or wrapped in spiritual darkness, if we are faithful and repentant, Heavenly Father will still hear us. We are never too far away for Him to reach. If we turn to our Father, our sincere prayers will be heard. **NE**

WE CAN ALWAYS PRAY

"It matters not our circumstance, be we humble or arrogant, poor or rich, free or enslaved, learned or ignorant, loved or forsaken, we can address Him. We need no appointment. Our solicitation can be brief or can occupy all the time needed. It can be an extended expression of love and gratitude or an urgent plea for help. He has created numberless cosmos and populated them with worlds, yet you and I can talk with Him personally, and He will ever answer."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Using the Supernal Gift of Prayer," *Ensign*, May 2007, 8.

A PILLAR SUPPORTING THE PRIESTHOOD

*The Aaronic Priesthood has been
blessed by its relationship with Scouting.
The same can be true for you.*

By Jourdan Strain and Richard M. Romney



Editor's Note: The partnership of the Aaronic Priesthood and Scouting stretches back nearly a century, since Scouting started in the U.S. in 1910 and in the Church in 1913. Aaronic Priesthood bearers can use Scouting as an activity program to apply the values and put into practice the principles they learn in their quorums. In the following stories, we hope you'll see how Scouting serves as a pillar of support to young men as they fulfill priesthood purposes.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN LUKE, © COMSTOCK.COM, AND COURTESY OF ERIK IPSON

HE'S GOT GAME

On a warm August morning in Aurora, Colorado, 30 children armed with brand new soccer balls and kickballs gathered in the local park to play sports and have a good time. But when the game ended, the children and their parents left 150 unused balls behind.

That may sound strange, but 14-year-old Brandon Campbell had planned it that way. Brandon, a teacher in the Fox Hollow Ward, Arapahoe Colorado Stake, knew that his Eagle project would provide the Aaronic Priesthood holders in the ward with an opportunity to bless the lives of children locally and all over the world.

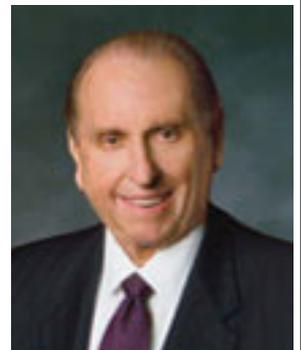
An avid sports fan, Brandon found a way to use his love of athletics to create a project that would benefit children in developing nations. Brandon organized a sports day in his area, and the participants at the event donated balls to a charitable organization that helps communities all over the world establish stable political and social environments. With the help of his family and the youth in his ward and Scout troop, Brandon was able to provide struggling children with a little bit of fun and relief.

Brandon says he's learned the importance of serving others through his Church membership. He notes that giving meaningful service is one of the purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood. "Scouting is the activity arm of the priesthood," he says. "Because of the activity we organized, now kids are going to have things to play with. Helping children is a way of respecting them."

As he progresses in the Aaronic Priesthood and other areas of his life, Brandon recognizes the benefits of Scouting. "I came up with the idea for my Eagle project and organized it," he says. "Learning to be a leader is a big part of Scouting and Church. Learning to be a leader now prepares you to be a leader in your Church callings later. That's why we do it." Brandon and his fellow quorum members were leaders on the field, acting as referees of the games and ensuring the safety and enjoyment of the participants.

So now that he has finished his Eagle project, what's next?

"I've finished my Duty to God requirements as a deacon," Brandon says. "But I'm now a teacher, so I've started working on my Duty to God requirements as a teacher."



NEEDED NOW

If ever there were a time when the principles of Scouting were vitally needed—that time is now. If ever there were a generation who would benefit by keeping physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight—that generation is the present generation."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Called to Serve," Ensign, Nov. 1991, 47.

HOW THE PRIESTHOOD AND SCOUTING WORK TOGETHER

If you think Scouting is just about tying knots and earning merit badges, think again. Here's what eight young men from the Salt Lake Granite Stake who just earned their Eagle award have to say about how Scouting can help them accomplish Aaronic Priesthood purposes.

Be Prepared



“The Church encourages us to be prepared for any emergency that may arise, and ‘Be Prepared’ is the Scout motto. Just like we have to be prepared for physical emergencies, we have to be prepared for spiritual ones as well.”

Kanchi A., 15

It's Up to Us



“We’re responsible for bringing people to the gospel. Scouting gives us opportunities to invite nonmembers or inactive members to start participating in Church activities.”

Sam S., 18

Be a Missionary



“Attitude is important in Scouting and in the Church. You have to have the right attitude. You have to do the right things for the right reasons. Being a Scout is like being a missionary. You have to teach, prepare lessons, and get to the point where you’re not scared to talk to people about things.”

Jacob P., 15

Honesty is the Best Policy



“Members of the Church have to be trustworthy, and a Scout is trustworthy, too. It’s not nice to lie to your parents, your bishop, or your family members. We’re supposed to be honest in our dealings with our fellow man.”

Jacob S., 15

Service Lasts a Lifetime



“Service doesn’t stop with your Eagle Scout project. When you’re showing active kindness to someone, you’re showing active kindness to the Savior. As priesthood holders, we’re responsible for people’s physical and spiritual needs.”

Kazuki T., 15

There's Strength in Numbers



“You can’t do your Eagle Scout project by yourself, and you can’t really exercise the priesthood by yourself. The priesthood is about helping other people, and so is Scouting. They both help you do good works more effectively.”

Naoya B., 19

Act as Christ Would



“As you learn to help others, you grow spiritually and your testimony increases. You’re acting like Christ would when you help those in need.”

Brian C., 13

Knowledge is Gained through Experience



“Scouting is all about gaining knowledge through experience. And that’s what the plan of salvation is about, too—we’re here to gain experience by doing good things for others, which will lead us back to Christ.”

Chris S., 13

HIGH FLYING

When Juan Hernández of Salt Lake City, Utah, looks back on his first visit to church, one word sums up his attitude: apprehension.

“My mom was the first to be baptized in the family. At the time, I didn’t know why. One day she asked me if I wanted to go to church with her to see what it was like. I decided to go with her just so she wouldn’t feel bad.” But thanks to the ward’s Aaronic Priesthood, Juan learned that there was something special about the Church.

One of the young men invited Juan to come to a Scout activity flying planes. Though he had no interest in attending religious meetings, flying planes with the Scouts sounded like too much fun to resist. On the day of the activity, Juan was surprised by how friendly and enthusiastic the young men were. “When we went up in the planes, I forgot that I barely knew these young men. Somehow I knew that they would be good friends to me,” Juan says.

Though Juan didn’t expect to be invited again, the young men surprised him by immediately treating him as a member of their troop. And the more he participated, the more he noticed how happy members of the Church were. Over time, he realized that it wasn’t Scouting that made them so happy—it was the gospel. Juan knew he wanted to be happy like they were, too.

Soon Juan, his father, and his sister took the missionary discussions and decided to be baptized. “All of the Aaronic Priesthood kids were there when my family and I were confirmed. Then my dad and I were ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood,” Juan says. “And when I passed the sacrament for the first time, they were all excited for us.” Because members of the Aaronic Priesthood saw an opportunity to reach out to Juan during his first visit to Church, they were able to better introduce Juan to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Scouting provided the activity that helped Juan to feel comfortable around members of the Church.

“I can see all that the Aaronic Priesthood has done for me,” Juan says. “It has helped me to love God and see the love He has for each one of us. I have learned to listen to the Holy Ghost. And I have learned about one of the biggest blessings of all—that if we live worthily we can be with our families for all eternity.

“Thanks to the leaders, my mom, and the Scouts, I could open the door to our Heavenly Father. That’s how my family and I found that piece that was missing in our life.”



HISTORY OF SCOUTING IN THE CHURCH

1875—The

Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association (YMMIA) is organized to provide spiritual and cultural activities for the young men of the Church.

1911—Church leaders decide that Scouting, with its spiritual background and cultural ideals, has great appeal. The MIA Scouts are officially organized.

1913—The Church formally affiliates with Scouting in the United States as its first institutional sponsor.

2010—The Church sponsors more Scouts and Scouting units in the U.S. than any other organization. Hundreds of thousands of young men are enrolled in groups or units sponsored by the Church.

NEmore

Have you had a great experience with the Aaronic Priesthood and Scouting? Share it with us at newera.lds.org.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY, BSA!

February 2010 is the 100th birthday for the Boy Scouts of America. The organization got started because someone helped a stranger. An American named W.D. Boyce was in London, England, on his way to Africa, when an unknown Scout helped him cross a street to a hotel and refused a tip. The Scout explained he was merely doing his duty and gave Boyce the address of the local Scout headquarters.

On his way back from Africa, Boyce stopped in London and gathered information later used in organizing the Boy Scouts of America. The BSA was incorporated on February 8, 1910.

The same spirit of service shown by that unknown Scout who helped W.D. Boyce is still at the heart of Scouting today.



SCOUTING IN THE PHILIPPINES

The United States isn't the only country with a rich history of Scouting. The Scouting program was introduced to the Philippines in 1914 and has been growing steadily ever since. In fact, the Philippines has one of the largest Scouting organizations in the world. And just like Scouts in the U.S., Scouts in the Philippines are using their experiences to help them become worthy priesthood holders and better citizens in their communities.

The young men of the Dagupan Philippines stake are determined to utilize what they have learned in Scouting as part of their preparation for their future missions. Their eagerness to help others has manifested itself through selfless service for the City Government of Dagupan. According to their stake president, Jose Andaya, the Scout troop is the only religious organization actively volunteering its services to the city government during major community events. The Aaronic Priesthood holders provide crowd control, offer first aid, and even clean the streets during and after the events.

NEmore

For additional information, including an explanation of Duty to God and Scouting, look for links at newera.lds.org.

DUTY TO GOD AND SCOUTING

"I promise you that your achievement of the Duty to God Award will provide you with a living testimony that will sustain you throughout your life.

"Where available, Scouting can also help you in this effort. We encourage you to participate in Scouting. Many of the Scouting requirements can fill goals and requirements of the Duty to God certificates. . . .

"Some of the great blessings of these programs . . . are that as the youth of the Church, you will have a clear understanding of who you are, you will be accountable for your actions, you will take responsibility for the conduct of your life, and you will be able to set goals so that you might achieve what you were sent to earth to achieve. Our plea is that you strive to do your very best."

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Fulfilling Our Duty to God," *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 39.

Protected *from* the Unexpected

By Fernando C. Pareja

After a 61-hour bus ride, our youth group arrived at the Manila Philippines Temple. In celebration of the temple's 20th anniversary, the Davao stake youth had spent nine months preparing for the trip, attending family history classes, being actively involved in Church activities, researching and preparing family names, and helping to raise funds for the trip. There was excitement in the air as the 63 of us got off the bus that Monday night. At the temple patron housing, we held a very large family home evening, with musical performances and spiritual messages, and then tried to sleep.

During the next two days the youth were baptized and confirmed for over 2,000 of their ancestors, giving those ancestors the chance to accept the restored gospel. We didn't feel hungry or tired as we worked hour after hour in the temple. The Spirit was very strong. Some youth had glowing countenances; others had tears of joy on their cheeks.

All too soon it was time to go home. A few minutes into

our journey, the peaceful quiet of the bus was interrupted by police sirens. Outside, we were surrounded by patrol cars, which forced us to a stop. Then we could see police snipers around us, aiming forward. In those tense moments, we learned that the passengers of a bus a few feet in front of us were being held hostage, and the police were using our bus as a shield!

We leaders did our best to keep everyone calm, but some began to panic. In the confusion the police ordered us all to drop to the floor. After several terrifying minutes, we heard a man yelling for us to evacuate the bus. Following orders, we hurriedly got off the bus and went to a nearby vacant building.

For over an hour, we sat in the dark building, praying and listening for gunfire. Then finally we were told we could go back to our bus. The shootout had ended; two hostages and two hijackers had been killed.

We were badly shaken as we resumed our journey. As the shock lessened, however, we realized

We knew the Lord would watch over us on our temple trip. But we didn't realize how much we would need His protection.

we had been protected. Not one of us had been injured, and we knew the hand of the Lord had been over us. We felt a divine presence and wondered if perhaps some of those for whom we had been baptized were close by.

I thought of the scripture that says, "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say" (D&C 82:10), and I was glad the Lord keeps His promises. As we keep the commandments and continue faithfully in our duties, including temple and family history work, we will be worthy of the Lord's blessings—including His protection when we need it most. **NE**





Waiting for My

Testimony

The answer to my prayers wasn't a sudden flash of inspiration. It just took time.

By Carolyn LeDuc

“**T**his time, I'm really going to do it,” I told myself. “This time, I'm going to make it all the way through the Book of Mormon.”

In the past I had read a chapter here, a chapter there, but now I wanted to say I'd read it from cover to cover. “I'll put Moroni's promise to the test,” I told myself, eager to get started. “I'll finally learn whether the Church is true.”

For the next 90 days, I diligently devoured the book's contents. Exultant with joy as I closed with Moroni's farewell and amen, I scrambled to my knees.

Brimming with anticipation, I posed my question: Was the Book of Mormon true? As I waited for a response, a cricket chirped. The air conditioner switched on. My watch intrusively ticked off the seconds as they passed. There was no burning bosom sensation, no chorus of angels, no flash of knowing. Nothing.

I was somewhat perplexed. “Do I just need to read the book again?” I thought to myself. “I guess it couldn't hurt.”

Three months later, again finishing with Moroni's testimony, I leapt to the floor, doubly sure I'd done my part, doubly sure an answer would come. But my hopes were disappointed when, as before, my inquiry was met with silence. Unsure of what else to do, I got off my knees and started over. Again. But even after a third reading, there came no reply. I was confused. Where was the answer I'd been promised?

Not to be defeated, I picked up my scriptures, now with a fraying front cover, full of red highlighted verses and with random pages beginning to slip from the binding. “Okay,” I said to myself, “once more.”

When at last I finished the book for the fourth time in a

12-month period, I didn't immediately drop to my knees. I sat for some time, reflecting on the year. Truly, it had been a remarkable period of growth and change. I smiled, noting to myself that it was common these days for me to feel happy.

I thought about friendships I had formed with wonderful peers who strengthened my faith. I thought about how my family relationships had taken a dramatic turn for the better. I hadn't fought with my siblings in months, and my parents and I seemed to communicate with amazing ease. What's more, schoolwork seemed less stressful, odd jobs had been available to provide extra income, and even my physical fitness had improved.

But the most significant change had been in my spirit. I now looked forward to attending church, gladly paid tithes, fasted and prayed with much greater faith, and could list many times when the Spirit had prompted me to avoid danger, express kindness, or voice truth.

All told, there was little in my life that wasn't drastically better now than it had been just 12 months earlier. “That's so cool!” I said out loud, slipping to my knees.

Bowing my head, I couldn't even ask the question. “I get it,” I said to the Lord. “I get it. The truth of this book isn't always manifest in burning bosoms and visions of angels; it's manifest in the lives of the people who read it and put it to use. I don't need to ask anymore if this book is true. I experience its truth every day I live its teachings.”

This wasn't the answer I had anticipated when I first set out to put Moroni's promise to the test. It was far better. The Lord could have given me a single flash of confirming peace. Instead, He had given me a whole year of it. **NE**



Organization made this big service project work and made it fun. The youth in the Highland Utah West Stake took on a lot of small tasks that made a big difference.



By Mike Lasky and Janet Thomas

It's amazing what you can do when your cleaning crew numbers over 600.

How many dust cloths, spray bottles, brooms, and hours spent pushing vacuums does it take to clean 23 meetinghouses in a single day? The Highland Utah West Stake can answer that question.

On a cold Saturday afternoon in February, 542 teens and 113 youth leaders showed up to help with one big service project. They would be the muscle behind the plans for deep cleaning the meetinghouses in their stake and in six neighboring stakes.

First, the youth leaders were trained by the group responsible for meetinghouse maintenance in exactly how the buildings should be cleaned. Then the leaders trained the young people. To give everyone a burst of energy, the group gathered to receive instructions, assignments, and food. Daryl Chadwick of the Highland 10th Ward said,



THE MEANING

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF MIKE LASKY; BACKGROUND PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN LUKE

“Being asked to serve was so much fun, especially on a full stomach. With as many hands as we had, it made it easier. No one was sitting around. Everyone wanted to serve because they knew their friends would be there.”

Detailed checklists were given to each group on exactly what needed to be cleaned with which cleansers or tools. Teens took great satisfaction in checking off each item on their lists. In fact, the groups cleaned in places that dust barely touched, such as between the pedals on the piano and along the decorative wood around the podium. All the folding chairs and tables were wiped and even the light switches and door handles were scrubbed. It seemed like everything was wiped, dusted, or vacuumed.

As with every activity that includes a lot of teens, most had a great time. Chelsea Heaton of the Highland 23rd Ward was one of those. “It was very satisfying to work hard and know it is appreciated. It reminded me that God’s house is a house of order, and we

When you are with friends, even the task of cleaning 23 meetinghouses in a single day seems possible.



of CLEANING



Thinking about cleaning helped these teens understand more about respect and repentance.

helped to keep it orderly and clean,” she said.

Tanner Bishop of the Highland 35th Ward said, “I know I will treat our buildings with greater respect and appreciation now that I’ve had this chance to clean our buildings. It makes me want to encourage my family and friends to take better care of these wonderful facilities we’ve been given.”

At first, it may not seem like cleaning classrooms and cultural halls and chapels could teach spiritual lessons, but every good effort provides lessons that can be learned. Elise Leavitt of the Highland 23rd Ward found a deeper meaning in the service project. She said, “I discovered that while the buildings appear clean on the surface, each could use some deep cleaning a little more often. I realized that as members of the Church, we are the same. Each of us needs the power of the Atonement to help us in giving our spirits a deep cleaning. I learned how precious our Church buildings are, because they truly are houses of the Lord.” **NE**





RYAN STOKER

"We realize that inner beauty is just as important, so we offer a full line of edible cosmetics."



RANDY GLASBERGEN

"Hold it! Isn't today fast Sunday?"



KEVIN BECKSTROM

"Forget it, pal. We're out of season."



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY

NEmore
See a different Extra Smile online every week at newera.lds.org.

“In all of our stewardship efforts, we follow Jesus Christ.”

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Stewardship—a Sacred Trust,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 93.



YOU'VE BEEN SERVED

More than 200 youth from the Las Cruces New Mexico and El Paso Texas Stakes came together last summer for one purpose—to help those in need. Armed with gloves, water bottles, and sunscreen, they came eager to serve.

Some of the youth painted houses, some moved mounds of gravel, some pulled weeds, mowed lawns, and pruned trees and bushes, while others cleaned up loads of garbage. In all, 4 churches and 57 homes were transformed and beautified during the two-day “Helping Hands” youth conference. Rebecca Daw, a member of the youth committee that organized the conference, said “Service helps both the giver and the receiver. It helps us become better, stronger, more loving people. We need to be out doing stuff, doing hard work.”

Of the 57 families that benefited from the service projects, 52 were not members of the Church. By the time the service projects ended the second day, 7 of these families had requested copies of the Book of Mormon. Along with all the service projects, the youth also enjoyed food, activities, and a closing fireside with a slideshow and testimonies on the second day of the conference.



PRACTICE AND PREPARATION

One Sunday I was asked to play my violin during sacrament meeting.

I was very nervous playing, and my hands and legs were shaking. People in the congregation thought that I played very well, but I felt that I could have done better. As Doctrine and Covenants 38:30 says, “If ye are prepared ye shall not fear.” I learned from this experience the importance of practice.

This applies not only to an instrument but to anything in life. For example, in geometry class I did not understand the material very well. When I practiced hard, it paid off in the end, and I was able to keep up with the material. It is the same with the gospel. If we practice bearing our testimonies, we will do better and not be so nervous or hesitant in sharing them. In fact, I sometimes share my gospel knowledge with my atheist friend at school.

I know that we will do better in life when we practice.

Tifare C., 15, Virginia



HYMN VOCABULARY #5

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

- A. Despot (*Hymns*, no. 272)
1. A large cooking container
 2. A ruler with absolute power
 3. A designated location
 4. A song of praise
- B. Flail (*Hymns*, no. 197)
1. To beat or flog
 2. To run swiftly
 3. To shout or scream
 4. To be unsuccessful
- C. Crag (*Hymns*, no. 97)
1. To complain excessively
 2. A tall tree
 3. A thief
 4. A steep, rugged cliff
- D. Providence (*Hymns*, no. 108, 149)
1. On time or punctual
 2. Adept or skilled
 3. The protective care of God
 4. Feeling great happiness
- E. Reproved (*Hymns*, no. 273)
1. Hindered or slowed down
 2. Repaired or reconditioned
 3. Turned upside down
 4. Reprimanded or punished

To do the quiz online, go to newera.lds.org.

ANSWERS: A2, B1, B1, C4, D3, E4



MOLAS ARE A TRADITIONAL FOLK ART IN PANAMA MADE FROM LAYERS OF DIFFERENT-COLORED CLOTH. THE DESIGN IS FORMED BY CUTTING AWAY PARTS OF EACH LAYER TO REVEAL THE COLOR UNDERNEATH.

THE CHURCH IN PANAMA

In 1941, the first branch was organized for military personnel stationed in the Panama Canal area. Church membership at that time was 100.

In 1961, Elder Marion G. Romney of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave Church literature to the president, Roberto F. Chiari. When the government officially recognized the Church in 1965, missionary efforts began.

The first meetinghouse was completed in April 1970 on the Ustopo island. In 1989, when the Panama City Mission was created, there were 10,400 members in Panama.

Here are a few facts about the Church today in Panama:

Membership	43,703
Missions	1
Temples	1
Wards & Branches	91
Family History Centers	13



BY THE NUMBERS
11,623
Number of sound-producing pipes
in the Tabernacle organ.

MY FAVORITE ARTICLE

Tell everyone what your all-time favorite *New Era* article is. To share your favorite article with other readers go to newera.lds.org and click Submit Your Material.

And as long as you're online, do a search by title and author to find some of these favorites from other readers. Either way it's a win-win deal: you get to share your favorites with other teens, and you just might discover some new favorites recommended by others.

"The Visitor" by Ken Merrell
—Janet T.

"Man's Dominion" by Hugh W. Nibley
—David E.

"House of Holiness" by Richard M. Romney
—Annalisa D.

"Me and the Marry-Go-Round"
—Wendy T.

"The Child, the Boy, the Man Few People Know"
by Elder Bruce R. McConkie
—Marjorie R.

MY FAVORITE SCRIPTURE

I like to read **1 John 2:25** because it reminds me that Heavenly Father has promised we can live forever. And because of the restored gospel, I know that I can live forever with my family if we stay worthy, go to the temple, and keep the promises we make there.
Celesta P., 12, India

Tell us about your favorite scripture in one or two sentences. Go to newera.lds.org and click on Submit Your Material.





Best
FRIENDS
Forever

By Wendy Kenney

It all started with one girl who somewhat timidly started investigating the Church while in high school. When her friend started asking questions, she invited her to go to church with her. That girl then told another friend about the Church, and soon three girls were separately meeting with the missionaries. Touched by the Spirit at the baptism of one of those girls, two more friends started investigating the Church. You could call it the ripple effect, but to Tiffani Phillips, Catlin Nord, Sara Waddell, Christina Hatton, and Kristin Breinholt, the brief period between March 3 and June 4, 2007, remains nothing short of miraculous as all five of them joined the Church, one after the other.

The first step

They point to Tiffani as the one who first started formally investigating the Church. During her junior year of high school, she started dating an LDS boy. She began attending church with his family and eventually started meeting with the missionaries in his home. Gradually, she made some changes in her lifestyle. Her friends noticed, but they thought it would pass. But to Tiffani, it was no fad; her testimony had begun.

Though some friends were openly critical of Tiffani's investigation of the Church, Catlin was genuinely curious. When Catlin started asking questions, Tiffani



Tiffani



Catlin and a missionary at baptism



Sara and Christina at Sara's baptism

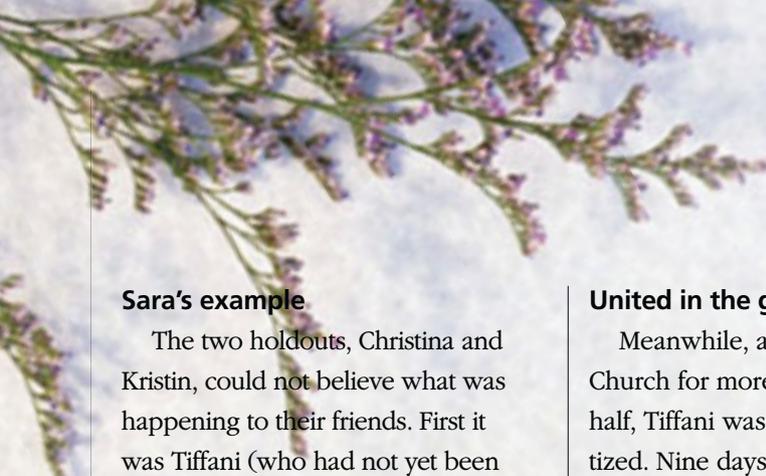
simply invited her to come to church and see for herself. Catlin left the meetings that first Sunday with a copy of the Book of Mormon and an appointment to meet with the sister missionaries. Catlin's testimony grew steadily, and soon she wanted to be baptized. On March 3, 2007, Catlin was the first of the five to be baptized and confirmed.

Bitterness and happiness

Meanwhile, their other friends were increasingly troubled about this "Mormon thing," as they called it, that had so drastically changed Catlin and Tiffani's lives. What they at first tried to ignore had become a source of sometimes bitter criticism.

Enter Sara, another friend. About the same time that Tiffani and Catlin were investigating the church, three of Sara's friends from high school were preparing to leave on missions. Sara couldn't understand what was so important that these young men would put aside a normal life to become full-time missionaries for the Church. She thought she might find some answers if she read the Book of Mormon, so she asked Catlin for a copy. Once she started reading, Sara couldn't put it down. She went to church with Catlin and there met the sister missionaries. One month after Catlin joined the Church, Sara followed her friend's example.

It was the gospel that both tested and saved their friendship.



Sara's example

The two holdouts, Christina and Kristin, could not believe what was happening to their friends. First it was Tiffani (who had not yet been baptized, though they assumed it was inevitable), then Catlin, and now Sara. But Christina and Kristin decided they weren't going to let religion come between them and their best friends, so they supported their friend Sara by attending her baptismal service.

Both Christina and Kristin were totally caught off guard by the Spirit they felt as they watched Sara's baptism and, later, her confirmation. Kristin was so surprised by the powerful new emotion that she later asked Sara what it was. After learning that it was the Holy Ghost bearing witness to the truthfulness of the ordinances of baptism and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, Kristin knew she wanted to start taking the discussions from the sister missionaries.

Christina also experienced something completely unexpected at Sara's baptism. Even though she had told Sara that she wanted to take the missionary lessons, she had started to doubt her decision. When she came to Sara's baptism, Christina was still undecided. But when she met one of the sister missionaries who had taught Sara, her Christlike love erased all of Christina's doubts. Suddenly she knew she wanted join the Church. So Christina returned home to California, took all the discussions, and was baptized a month later, with her friend Sara in attendance at the service.

United in the gospel

Meanwhile, after investigating the Church for more than a year and a half, Tiffani was ready to be baptized. Nine days after Sara's baptism, Tiffani's baptismal service was held.

That same day, Kristin took the first discussion from the sister missionaries who had taught Sara. Less than two months later, with the loving support of her friends, her bishop, and her Relief Society president, Kristin was baptized. The circle was complete.

So in the span of three short months during the spring of 2007, five elect young women were baptized into the Church. As Catlin noted, "It was the gospel that tested our friendship, but it was also the gospel that saved our friendship."

The five friends are often asked to speak at youth conferences and firesides. As Kristin explains, "We share our stories to glorify the truth of this Church and to tell how, in the midst of the bumpy years of high school, we found ourselves strengthened and assured to choose the right."

Here is a brief testimony from each of them:



Tiffani Phillips: "I have been blessed beyond words with amazing people in my life. My family is so important to me, and the plan of salvation is a gift that I will cherish for eternity. The overwhelming feelings I had when I first went to church are undeniable and a constant confirmation that this is the true Church. I have an enduring

connection to my best friends that continues to grow because of our love for the gospel. Their beauty on the inside still takes my breath away. A few years ago, I never thought my life would have taken this path. I am eternally grateful I found the Lord and felt the Spirit that first Sunday in sacrament meeting."



Catlin Nord: "The truthfulness of this Church sometimes testifies to you far before all of the knowledge is found.

I knew this Church was true before I read the Book of Mormon cover to cover, and before I took every missionary discussion. The power of the Spirit in the first discussion, and the sweet thought that I can return to live with my Father in Heaven someday was enough to spark my love for His Church. The Spirit has guided, comforted, and helped me in countless situations. I am so grateful for my Father in Heaven and His Son, my Savior. I will be eternally grateful to Heavenly Father for placing these four beautiful girls in my life. Without a doubt, this gospel has changed our lives and the lives of those around us."



Sara Waddell: "I don't know what it was that made me do it, but I am so grateful I had the courage to ask for a

Book of Mormon and to go to church. I felt the Spirit the moment I set foot in my first sacrament meeting. The plan of salvation gave me the most comfort I have ever felt. I

thought I was happy before, but what I feel now is indescribable!

“I am a firm believer in missionary work and being an example! We should not hesitate to share our testimonies with others. Missionary work is so important, and it can be so simple. The simplest acts can change a person’s life, as I have seen them change my life and the lives of so many others.”



Christina Hatton: “I know that these four amazing girls were placed in my life for a reason. Because of their

example, I found truths I never thought existed. I wouldn’t have been able to overcome the things I did if I hadn’t learned about the Atonement, about the love Heavenly Father has for me, and that even as alone as I had felt my entire life, He had been there. He had never left my side.

“Understanding and applying the Atonement to my life was hard. I didn’t think I deserved it. That was my biggest struggle, but I overcame it though prayer. I turned to Heavenly Father and I never looked back. I gave Heavenly Father my whole heart.”



Kristin Breinholt:

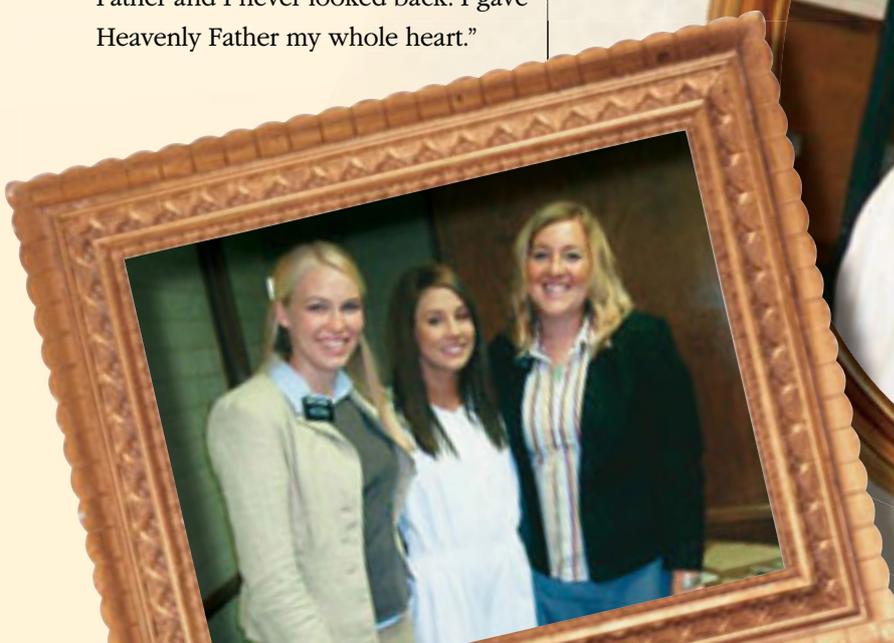
“Through every experience and every situation I have been placed in, my knowledge of the

truth of this gospel has grown. My relationship with my Father in Heaven has grown, and my understanding of the Atonement has grown. One thing I love so much about belonging to this Church is that you can learn so much. When the Lord is ready and knows you are prepared, He is willing to teach you. (See D&C 14:5.)

“The Spirit is contagious. My friends and I are proof of that. The Spirit is undeniable, and as you share it with others, you open the door for them to witness the truth and happiness of this gospel. I am so thankful that my friend Sara invited me to her baptism and confirmation. I will never forget the Spirit I felt there.” **NE**

It started simply—one girl inviting a friend to church. From there, five close friends became Church members, drawing strength from each other and the Spirit.

(Below left) Kristin with the sister missionaries at her baptism. (Below right) Christina and Sara on the day of Christina’s baptism.



KEEP THE TEMPLE IN SIGHT

By Kristen Snyder

“Come on!” Stacy yelled out the jeep window, honking the horn.

“I’m coming, I’m coming,” I called, running out the front door with my arms full of treats for the road.

Stacy and I had been best friends



since the sixth grade. We loved doing all of the same things, which led us to take the same digital photography class that year in high school. For one of our assignments, we decided to drive to San Francisco and take pictures of all the amazing buildings there.

The first part of the road trip was a blast. We listened to music and chatted. Suddenly Stacy pointed to a sign along the freeway that read, “Oakland: 10 miles.” Her eyes went wide. “Hey, should we visit the temple?”

The closest temple to where we lived was in Oakland, a two-hour commute from our town. “I guess we should, since we’re so close,” I replied. Excited, we took the exit off the freeway.

At the end of the ramp, Stacy asked, “Which way now?” We looked around. We had no idea which road the temple was actually on! We just assumed we would see it right off the freeway sitting on a hill. All we knew was that the temple was in the town of Oakland, and we were slowly realizing what a big town it was.

Stacy drove up and down random streets, hoping to see something that we would recognize, but we only found ourselves getting more confused and lost. “This was a bad idea,” Stacy muttered grumpily.

I was about to agree with her, when all of a sudden, I saw it: the golden tip of the temple! “Up there! On top of that hill. Do you see it?” I exclaimed.

“Yeah!” Stacy started to head in the direction of the spire.

We began the process of finding the temple simply by keeping it in sight. We drove up hills, only to come to a dead-end. But instead of getting

POWERFUL QUESTION

By EmmaLee Bateman



Recently one summer I traveled with my family to the East Coast to visit Palmyra, New York. Ever since I was little, I loved listening to the story of Joseph Smith. My family and I went through the visitors’ center near the Hill Cumorah, Grandin’s Print Shop in Palmyra, the Sacred Grove, and the Smith homes. We watched a video about Joseph Smith and the First Vision. While watching, I felt the Spirit telling me that the Church was indeed true. I more strongly came to realize that when Joseph prayed in the Sacred Grove, he wasn’t the prophet yet. He was just a farm boy who knew nothing about talking with angels or the writings of the inhabitants of ancient America. If more people only knew that Joseph Smith started as a confused person in this world, then maybe they would understand the power of the First Vision and Joseph’s seed of faith that turned into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I know that these things are true and that with faith like that of Joseph Smith, we can receive powerful revelation and answers to our prayers. If we just “ask of God . . . it shall be given [us]” (James 1:5). I love the gospel, and I love the story of Joseph Smith, who had the courage to ask a simple question. **NE**

frustrated like before, we simply reversed and backed up, keeping the temple on the hill in sight. Then, we would start down another path, hoping it would eventually lead us to our goal.

The feeling of hope that we had just by keeping the temple in sight was amazing.

We knew we were at least headed

in the right direction, and that filled us with comfort. Eventually we found ourselves in front of the temple gate.

I think of that experience a lot in my life. When I find myself at a dark path and I feel lost or unsure of which way to turn, I remember that if I keep my destination in view, I can eventually reach my goal. **NE**

FOLLOWING THE FEELING

By Cody Tuma

One of my friends, Andrew, is a member of the Church. I have known him since kindergarten. I always knew he was a member of the Mormon Church, but I didn't really know what the Church was about.

In ninth grade a girl, Katie, sat next to me in ceramics. I found out she was a member of the Church also. I became interested in the Church because of my two member friends. I began to ask Katie and Andrew questions every

single day. Of course they were glad to answer my questions because they got to share their testimonies.

One day Katie offered me a Book of Mormon and told me that if I read it, I would get a really good feeling. I declined the book because I was really busy and didn't think I had time to read it. But then in 10th grade I started thinking about the Church again, and whenever I thought about the Church, I would always get this really good feeling inside of me, which I later learned was the Holy Ghost.

I called Katie and told her I would like to get that Book of Mormon. She told me that she had a better idea and

invited me to meet with the missionaries. I knew there was something very special about the Church, because I got that good feeling, so I agreed to meet with them.

Those lessons were the best thing I have ever done. I looked forward to them every week because of the feeling I got inside when I was being taught. When the missionaries invited me to get baptized, I gladly accepted. My baptism was the best event I have ever had in my life. Katie and Andrew spoke, as well as some other member friends I made at church. Ever since I joined the Church I have been very happy. It is my favorite place to be in the entire world. **NE**



WHY Won't You Come to the Party?

By Jek Toon Tan

As a convert to the Church in Malaysia, a country where there are few Christians, I sometimes found it hard to stand up for my beliefs. One day in December, my boss told me that our company would be having an anniversary party at the end of the

to make money or give it up for your stupid beliefs?" When he asked me this, I felt afraid. I knew if I did not drink at the party, I might lose my job. Then suddenly a scripture came into my mind: "I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?" (Isaiah 51:12–13).

Immediately I knew that I should fear God, not my co-workers or my boss. I also realized that my purpose on earth is not to earn money but to grow spiritually. So I answered my co-worker, "I will choose my belief, and you should respect it."

A few weeks later I quit my job. On my last day of work, I had a good conversation with my co-workers. I explained how The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is different from other churches. I told them about my beliefs and my desire to keep the commandments.

About a week later I got another job that pays better than the job I left. My new job also gives me time to prepare to serve a full-time mission.

This experience not only taught me that keeping the commandments will enable me to return to Heavenly Father someday, but it gave me the confidence that no matter what challenges I face every day, the Lord will prepare the way for me (see 1 Nephi 3:7). **NE**



The pressure was on. I had to make a choice.

year that I was expected to attend. I was worried and didn't want to go because drinking alcohol at parties is part of our company culture. I also knew that my co-workers would try to force me to drink.

But my manager was firm that I should attend. I wondered how I would be able to overcome this challenge.

Later, a co-worker stopped me and asked, "Why don't you want to come to the party?" I told him that because of my religious beliefs, I don't drink alcohol.

He replied angrily, "You should worry about the world you live in now, not another world that may not even exist. Do you want

MORMONADS

When I scrolled through the Mormonads online, I noticed one under the subject of materialism. It has a ball and chain, and at the top it says, "Keep Yourself Free" (Feb. 2003). I thought this was a great ad, but it might be even better under the topic of addiction. I've tried to explain to my friends many times that abstaining from things like alcohol, drugs, and even coffee keep me free from dependency and addiction. I like all the Mormonads, and I use them for almost every devotional I give in seminary.

Heather M.

SERVICE

Whenever I read the *New Era*, I feel the Spirit working with me. I really felt it in the October 2009 issue, especially the article "The Joy of Service." When you serve others, you feel good inside and you know you are doing right.

Paige W.

ENOUGH!

I really liked the story "Enough!" in the October 2009 issue. I liked that the missionary stood up for the Church and taught the punk kids about it. I also like The Extra Smile. I cut them out and put them in my backpack to read at school.

Nate C.

PRAYER

Thanks for the article "It Begins with Prayer" (Oct. 2009). My mom is from Canada, and I often visit there during the

*If you choose
your friends wisely,
they will encourage
you to choose
the right.*

summer. My mom and I are the only Church members in our family, and it was cool to read about teens in the Ottawa Ontario Stake. It also gave me some insights into prayer. I needed to strengthen mine, and the article is helping me.

Caitlin M., Oregon

VIRTUE

I am so glad that the Young Women general presidency included virtue as a value. When we heard about it, our stake Young Women presidency took our stake on a hike to the top of a nearby mountain. As soon as we reached the top, all of us in all of our wards, with all of the women in

our families, waved our flags and shouted "We will return to virtue" three times. After that, we made a promise that we would be virtuous throughout our lives.

Lara H., Utah

CHOOSE THE RIGHT

I have just been ordained as a teacher and go to early-morning seminary. A few of us from our youth program attend the same high school. Every day we meet up after seminary and bike to school together. We encourage each other every day to make good choices. When school is over, we all bike home together. I enjoy being around other youth who share my beliefs and hope to one day serve a mission. I know that if I continue to spend time with others who share my beliefs and standards, I will realize this goal. I have a testimony that if you choose your friends wisely, they will encourage you to choose the right.

Darhys S., New Zealand

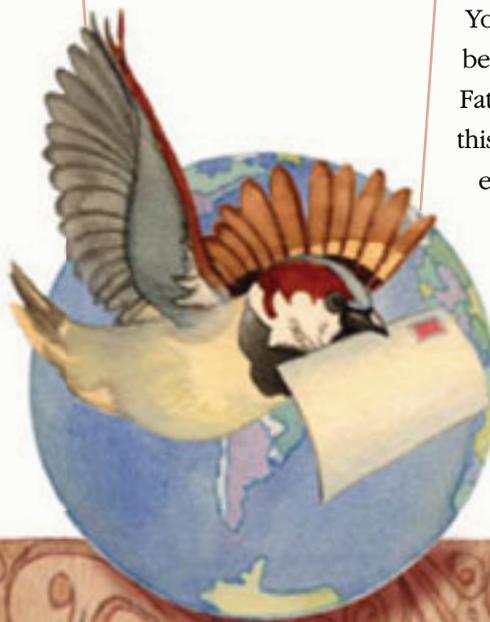
LIFT YOUR PACK

Thank you for the story "He Will Lift Your Pack" (June 2009). I liked this story because when things get hard, Heavenly Father will help us. Thanks for printing this story. I know Heavenly Father helps everyone, and I'm grateful He helps me.

Harison R.

We love hearing from you. Write to us by going online to newera.lds.org and clicking Submit Your Material.

Or you can e-mail us at newera@ldschurch.org or write to New Era, 50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024.





The Things I Know

By Erica Oldroyd

In a world so unimaginably large,
I wonder how God managed to find space for me.
Not just the kind of space my body fills,
Not only the space given me to live in,
But the space inside His heart.
I wonder if He finds it difficult,
To love unconditionally every creature,
From the moment it takes its first breath.
I suppose He doesn't.
But what do I know of God?
What do I know,
Besides that He is wonderful?
What do I know,
Besides that He is loving,
And gentle,
And kind?
What do I know?

I,
A quite ordinary girl.
No different than any other 14-year-old.
What do I know of God?
I suppose I might say,
That every time I have needed Him,
He was there.
And from that I know He is always watching.
I suppose I might say,
That when I felt lonely,
He assured me that I would never truly be alone.
And from that I know that He cares.
I suppose I might say,
That when I cried,
I felt Him crying with me.
And from that I know that He feels my pain.
I suppose I might say,
That He knows all of my faults,
And still loves me.
And from that I know that He is forgiving.
And then after all that,
I suppose I might say,
That God gave me you.
And from that I know He is very generous.
But that isn't all!
I know,
That God wanted me to look at something beautiful,
Every time I woke up in the morning,
So He made a sunrise.
I know,
That God wanted to amaze me,
So He put the moon in the sky.
I know,
God wanted my heart to quicken when I saw His creation,
So He put the waves in the ocean.
As if that is not enough,
I know that God wanted to give us something.
Wanted to give us something glorious,
Something that we never could have received otherwise.
He wanted to give us life.
Here is where I really wonder.
I wonder,
Was it easy?
Was it easy to give His only Son?
That I do not know.
I simply know that He did,
And for that I am eternally grateful.
These things I know,
So you judge,
What do I,
A quite ordinary girl,
Know of God?
I say,
Just enough.



BEHIND THE SCENES

Here at the magazines we are always happy to receive photo submissions for our back page. One day we received a CD full of exquisite photos of underwater scenes as well as mountain vistas. We wondered how a young man living in Idaho could shoot so many images from exotic places and wanted to learn more about this talented photographer. It turned out that he developed an interest in photography from his parents, and because of his father's work assignments, could take advantage of the opportunity to photograph the world around him. He graciously provided explanations of his photos that you can see in this issue.

We are also excited to share more of his work online at www.newera.lds.org.

See *"The Beauty of the Earth"* on page 16.



SEE US ONLINE AT WWW.NEWERA.LDS.ORG