

FEBRUARY 2014

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is published monthly by The Church of Jesus Christ of
Latter-day Saints, 50 E. North Temple St., Salt Lake
City, UT 84150-0024, USA. Periodicals Postage Paid
at Salt Lake City, Utah.

To subscribe:

By phone: Call 1-800-537-5971 to order using Visa,
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Online: Go to store.lds.org.

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

To change address:

Send old and new address information to:
Distribution Services
P.O. Box 26368
Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368, USA.
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POSTMASTER: Send all UAA to CFS (see DMM
707.4.12.5). **NON-POSTAL AND MILITARY**

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

Canada Post Information: Publication Agreement
#40017431.

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is to provide the ordinances
necessary for our exaltation in the
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Cover photograph: Christina Smith

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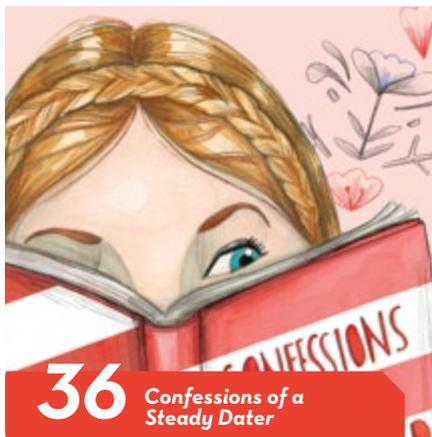
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**By Elder
Robert D. Hales**
Of the Quorum
of the Twelve
Apostles

TEMPLE *Blessings*

The temple's saving ordinances are essential to—and even the central focus of—the eternal plan of happiness.

The temple endowment blessings are as essential for each of us as was our baptism. For this reason we are to prepare ourselves that we may be clean to enter into the temple of God. Temple work is an opportunity to perform our personal endowments and covenants for the living and also perform these same ordinances for the redemption of the dead. It is for this reason we are instructed in the scriptures to build temples and prepare our lives to be worthy to partake of the sacred temple ordinances and covenants.

We have been taught in the scriptures that the personal worthiness required of us by the Lord to enter the temple and to take upon us the sacred covenants therein is one of the greatest blessings available to us in mortality. Then, after taking upon us the covenants in the temple, our



obedience in living the covenants daily is a demonstration of our faith, love, devotion, and spiritual commitment to honor our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and prepares us to live with Them in the eternities. The temple's saving ordinances are essential to—and even the central focus of—the eternal plan of happiness.

The Holy Temple

We need to acquire a testimony of and a reverent feeling for the temple being the house of the Lord. The temple is truly a place where you are “in the world and not of the world.” When you are troubled and when you have crucial decisions that weigh heavily on your mind and soul, you can take your cares to the temple and receive spiritual guidance.

To preserve the sanctity of the temple so that the temple may be

kept pure and to invite the Spirit to bless those who enter the holy temple for their ordinances and covenants, we are taught that no unclean thing should enter the temple. Reverence in the temple is a vital element in inviting the Spirit to reside within it every hour of every day.

When I was a boy, my father brought me from Long Island, New York, USA, to walk on the Salt Lake Temple grounds in Salt Lake City, to touch the temple, and to discuss the importance of the temple in my life. It was on that occasion that I made up my mind that someday I would return to enter the temple and receive the ordinances.

The temple is a sacred edifice, a holy place where essential saving ceremonies and ordinances are performed to prepare us for exaltation. It is important that we gain a sure knowledge that our preparation to enter the holy house and our participation in these ceremonies and covenants are some of the most significant events we will experience in our mortal lives.

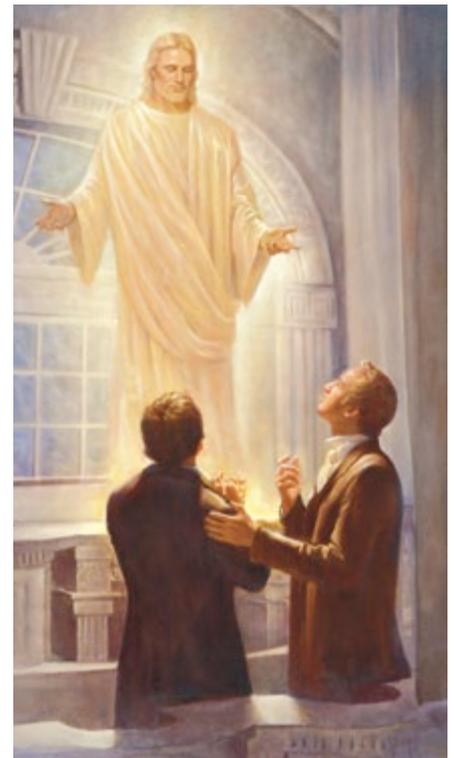
Temple Blessings throughout History

Throughout history, in every dispensation of time, the Lord has commanded prophets that temples should be built so that His people could receive temple ordinances.

The Kirtland Temple was the first temple in these latter days, and it

played an important role in the restoration of priesthood keys. The Savior appeared in glory and accepted the Kirtland Temple as His house. On that occasion Moses, Elias, and Elijah each appeared to commit to Joseph Smith the keys held from their dispensations. Elijah restored the keys of his dispensation as promised by Malachi so that we could enjoy the blessings of the temple in our lives. (See D&C 110.)

The Nauvoo Temple was the first latter-day temple in which endowments and sealings were performed, which proved a great strength to the pioneers as they endured the hardships crossing the plains to Zion in the Salt Lake Valley.



Our preparation to enter the holy house and our participation in these ceremonies and covenants are some of the most significant events we will experience in our mortal lives.

When Joseph Smith was taken to Carthage, it was clear why the completion of the temple had meant so much to him. He knew what was going to be required of the Saints and that to have the strength to endure what was ahead of them they had to be endowed with power—the power of the priesthood.

Our pioneer ancestors were sealed together as families in Nauvoo. Their covenants with the Lord in the Nauvoo Temple were a protection for them during their journey westward, as it is for each of us today and throughout our lives. The ordinances and covenants of the temple are the protection for us in our trials and tribulations in our day and for what we will face in the future. It is our heritage. It is who we are.

For these early Saints, their participation in the ordinances of the temple was essential to their testimonies as they faced the hardships, the angry mobs, being driven from comfortable homes in Nauvoo, and the long and difficult journey ahead. They had been endowed with power in the

holy temple. Husband and wife were sealed to each other. Children were sealed to their parents. Many lost family members to death along the way, but they knew that wasn't the end for them. They had been sealed in the temple for all eternity.


Temple ordinances guide us to our Savior and give us the blessings that come to us through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.



The Temple Ordinances— Endowments and Sealings

Temples are the greatest university of learning known to man, giving us knowledge and wisdom about the Creation of the world. Washings and anointings tell us who we are. Endowment instructions give guidance as to how we should conduct our lives here in mortality (see D&C 97:13–14).

The primary purpose of the temple is to provide the ordinances necessary for our exaltation in the celestial kingdom. Temple ordinances guide us to our Savior and give us the blessings that come to us through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. The meaning of the word *endowment* is “gift.” The ordinance consists of a series of instructions on how we should live and covenants we make to live righteously by following our Savior.

Another important ordinance is being sealed for eternity in celestial marriage. This covenant allows children to be sealed to their parents and children born in the covenant to become part of an eternal family.

The Doctrine and Covenants teaches us: “Whatsoever you seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever



you bind on earth, in my name and by my word, saith the Lord, it shall be eternally bound in the heavens; and whosoever sins you remit on earth shall be remitted eternally in the heavens; and whosoever sins you retain on earth shall be retained in heaven” (D&C 132:46).

When a couple is kneeling at the altar, as a sealer I am aware of my role as a representative of the Lord. I know that what is sealed on earth is literally sealed in heaven—never to be broken if those being sealed remain faithful and endure to the end.

The mirrors on opposite walls in the temple sealing room are angled to create the visual impression of endless images. Looking into these mirrors on one side of the room represents the eternities of time that we have traveled to come to earth. As we turn to the opposite side of the room, we look into the seemingly endless images symbolizing the eternities after we leave this frail existence on earth. The sealing room itself represents our mortal probation here on earth. The lesson to be learned from this temple experience is that we have made the right choices to come to earth and experience mortality and that how we live our life in this brief period will determine how we will live in all the eternities to come.

You are preparing to meet the tests of mortal life. We voluntarily came from the presence of God the Father to this mortal probation with agency, knowing we would have “opposition



in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11). Our objective (see 1 Nephi 15:14) is to take upon us the whole armor of God and withstand “the fiery darts of the adversary” (D&C 3:8) with our sword of the Spirit and shield of faith (see D&C 27:15–18), to endure to the end, and to be worthy to stand and live in the presence of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, for all eternity—to achieve what is called eternal life.

I give you my testimony that God lives; that Jesus is the Christ; and that Joseph Smith, the Prophet of our dispensation, restored the priesthood blessings that allow us to partake of the temple blessings. **NE**

The ordinances and covenants of the temple are the protection for us in our trials and tribulations in our day and for what we will face in the future.

From a Brigham Young University devotional address given on November 15, 2005. For the full text, visit speeches.byu.edu.



Consider what you
want from life . . .

Why Making Choices MATTERS

By Mindy Raye Friedman

Church Magazines

Every day you have choices to make. Some of those choices don't have much to do with your eternal salvation ("What color shirt should I wear?"), and some of them have everything to do with it ("Should I break this commandment?"). You may sometimes wonder, "Do my choices really matter?" Or you may even think, "If no one knows what I'm doing, do my decisions really affect anyone?" The answer is yes! Decisions *do* matter.

Why They Matter

In order to understand why your choices matter, let's go back to the premortal life. When Heavenly Father presented His plan of salvation, not everyone agreed. Lucifer objected to the plan and "sought to destroy the agency of man" (Moses 4:3). Because of this, he became Satan and he and those who followed him were cast out of heaven and denied the opportunity to progress by experiencing mortality. Agency was so important in God's

plan that those who wanted to destroy it were cast out of heaven!

Heavenly Father's plan gives us the opportunity to choose for ourselves because that's the only way we can learn, grow, and become more like Him. One of the purposes of life is to learn to use our agency wisely. But we weren't given agency just to do whatever we want. *For the Strength of Youth* teaches, "While here on earth, you are being proven to see if you will use your agency to show your

love for God by keeping His commandments.”¹ Choosing to keep the commandments shows God that we love Him and are willing to follow Him. The choices we make—including our attitude in making those decisions—are a big part of the test of mortality.

Choosing Good

You’ve been taught repeatedly that choosing to disobey God’s commandments brings consequences. But have you considered that the same is true for good choices? *For the Strength of Youth* teaches: “While you are free to choose your course of action, you are not free to choose the consequences. Whether for *good* or

bad, consequences follow as a natural result of the choices you make.”²

So what are the consequences of good choices? You could probably come up with a large list of blessings that come from making righteous choices. A good place to look for these blessings is in the scriptures and your *For the Strength of Youth* booklet. For example: “If you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life” (D&C 14:7); “observing the Sabbath will bring you closer to the Lord and to your family”³; or “when you are obedient to [the Word of Wisdom], you remain free from harmful addictions and have control over your life.”⁴ Those sound like pretty great blessings, and there are many more you can find.

The Lord said that we “should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of [our] own free will,” and He promised that we can “bring to pass much righteousness” when we do (D&C 58:27). So we should not only avoid bad things but also actively seek to do good things.

Sometimes we get so worried about all the things that we are *not* supposed to do that we forget that obedience also includes doing things we *are* supposed to do. You can probably understand how choosing to break commandments negatively affects your life, but do you understand how choosing to do good things can



DECISIONS DETERMINE DESTINY

“Each of us has the responsibility to choose. You may ask, ‘Are decisions really that important?’ I say to you, decisions determine destiny. You can’t make eternal decisions without eternal consequences.”

President Thomas S. Monson,
“Pathways to Perfection,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 100.



JOIN THE CONVERSATION

THINGS TO PONDER FOR SUNDAY

- What is the role of agency in the plan of salvation?
- How do your good choices affect your life and the lives of others?
- How can small decisions help you achieve your larger goals?

THINGS YOU MIGHT DO

- Write a list of goals you want to achieve now and in the future.
- Look at your list of goals when you have a choice to make.
- Share your experiences at church, at home, or online at [lds.org/go/choicesNE2](https://www.lds.org/go/choicesNE2).

positively affect your life and the lives of others?

Live Intentionally

So how can you make sure you are making good choices? First, consider what you want from your life. Do you want eternal life? Do you want to



MAKE DECISIONS IN ADVANCE

“When I was a young woman, I learned that

some decisions need to be made only once. I wrote my list of things I would *always* do and things I would *never* do in a small tablet. It included things like obeying the Word of Wisdom, praying daily, paying my tithing, and committing to never miss church. I made those decisions once, and then in the moment of decision, I knew exactly what to do because I had decided beforehand. When my high school friends said, ‘Just one drink won’t hurt,’ I laughed and said, ‘I decided when I was 12 not to do that.’ Making decisions in advance will help you be guardians of virtue. I hope each of you will write a list of things you will *always* do and things you will *never* do. Then live your list.”

Elaine S. Dalton, former Young Women general president, “Guardians of Virtue,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 123.

be sealed in the temple? Do you want to serve a full-time mission? Do you want to graduate from college and get a good job? If so, how do you get there? Just like builders need a blueprint to make a skyscraper, you need a plan to build a righteous life.

Write down some of your goals and how you plan to achieve them. Keep that list where you can see it often. Then when you do have to make a choice, you can think about your list to make sure you don’t give up what you want *most* for something you want *now*. Setting goals also makes your choices deliberate and intentional instead of being haphazard, random, or based on circumstances.

How does this really work? Let’s say one of your goals is to serve a full-time mission. And every morning

you have the choice to get up for early-morning seminary or to sleep in an extra hour. Which of those choices will help you to reach your goal? Or maybe you have a goal to read the Book of Mormon by the end of the school year. Then, when you get home from school or before you go to bed, you have the choice of reading your scriptures or doing another activity, like watching your favorite TV show. Which do you choose? Choices like this are before you every day. Keeping your goals in mind will help you make the decisions that will lead you to the things you really want. **NE**

NOTES

1. *For the Strength of Youth* (2011), 2.
2. *For the Strength of Youth*, 2; emphasis added.
3. *For the Strength of Youth*, 31.
4. *For the Strength of Youth*, 25.





By Aaron Chamberlain

A couple of months ago, I was talking to a friend about some struggles in my life. She was kind and listened to me, but after I told her everything, she asked me three questions: “Are you reading your scriptures daily?” I said no. “Are you praying daily?” I said no. She told me this was part of my problem and challenged me to read the Book of Mormon with an open heart and to pray about my questions before I read. I accepted her invitation to read and pray every day. Then she asked her third question.

“What do you see when you look in the mirror?”

I didn’t know how to respond. I finally said, “I see a naïve, lost boy.” That’s what I thought I saw, but she said I was wrong.

Every day for the next few weeks, I thought about that question. It bothered me that she said I was wrong. About what? I realized that I could figure it out if I had regular scripture study with meaningful prayer. It took me a while to establish a schedule where I was reading and praying on most days of the week, but I did.

A few weeks later, some thoughts came to me while I was mowing the lawn. They taught me about the real person I see in the mirror:

I see a young man who decided to come to this earth to face the fiercest evils and the darkest nights. I see a son of God, a child of Heavenly Father. I see a disciple of Jesus Christ, who will always help His followers. I see a young man with family and friends who will stand beside him.

I may feel lost and confused sometimes, but I don’t have to live life alone. Satan may try his hardest to succeed, but in the end he will fail. And in the end, I can see myself walking up to Heavenly Father and hearing Him say, “You have served me well, my son. Welcome home.”

When I had these thoughts, I immediately pulled out my phone and recorded what I’d felt, because I thought I’d forget by the time I found a pencil and paper. For the rest of the day, I couldn’t help but smile.

I told my friend what I had found out, and she was happy I had found the answer. I now understand my relationship with Heavenly Father and know that I never have to be alone. **NE**

Aaron Chamberlain lives in Utah, USA.



Download Posters

To download posters that can remind you of your relationship with God and His love for you, visit lds.org/go/loveNE2.

ILLUSTRATION BY GREG NEWBOLD

THINK BEFORE YOU INK

**VANDALIZING YOUR
TEMPLE ISN'T COOL.**

*"Ye shall not make any cuttings in
your flesh . . . nor print any marks
upon you" (Leviticus 19:28).*

FACTS ABOUT TATTOOS

- Tattoo machines' needles puncture the skin between 50 and 3,000 times per minute, leaving a drop of ink in the skin each time.
- Tattoo ink is placed about a millimeter deep—below the epidermis in the dermis, where the cells are more stable, so the ink will stay there permanently.
- Tattoo removal usually requires at least three to four treatments scheduled eight weeks apart.
- Having a tattoo removed can cost anywhere from many hundreds to thousands of dollars.
- Sometimes scars and discoloration remain even after tattoo removal.



Tattoos and Missionary Service

To find out about how tattoos can affect your service as a missionary, see "Tattoos and Your Mission," at lds.org/go/missionNE2.

Tattoos seem to be getting more and more popular, almost mainstream. Most noticeably, more and more celebrities seem to have them. Sometimes these people even talk about what the tattoos represent and why they got them. They make them seem so *cool*.

So, why do Church leaders counsel us against tattoos (see *For the Strength of Youth* [2011], 6–7)? Is it just a generational thing—older people wishing that younger people would be more like them?

No. That's not it. Not even close.

As with so many things in the Church, the answer is tied to a basic truth. Your body is a temple (see 1 Corinthians 3:16–17), and as President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) said, “A tattoo is graffiti on the temple of the body” (“Great Shall Be the Peace of Thy Children,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 52).

Whether you run marathons or drive a wheelchair, your body is a gift from God, a blessing you have received because you “kept your first estate” as a spirit before coming to this world (see Abraham 3:22–28). This means that you “accepted [Heavenly Father’s] plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and . . . eternal life” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129).

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught, “Because a physical body is so central to the Father’s plan of happiness and our spiritual development, we should not be surprised that Lucifer seeks to frustrate our progression by tempting us to use our bodies improperly” (“Things as They Really Are,” *Ensign*, June 2010, 18).

Most people who have tattoos say they got them in order to express

themselves or show their individuality. They see them as a sign of independence. How ironic, then, that the moment the needle pierces the skin to apply the pigment, they’re stuck with it permanently, regardless of how they may feel about it later—unless they opt to have a costly and complicated procedure to remove it. The fact that tattoos are a *permanent* defacement of your skin (and not simply cool-looking “body art”) is one of the reasons prophets discourage them. “If you have a tattoo, you wear a constant reminder of a mistake you have made” (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 167).

Knowing what your body represents—a blessing, a gift, a temple—helps you know how you should treat it. And just as with our temple buildings, showing respect for it is a whole lot cooler than vandalizing it. **NE**

WHAT IF IT'S JUST PART OF MY CULTURE?

Even though tattoos and piercings may be part of your cultural tradition, you will be blessed if you follow the counsel of Church leaders. For instance, here's an experience from a man from Samoa:

“When I was a young man, my dad talked to me about the tribal band tattoos that are common. . . . Dad said, ‘Don’t participate in any of that. You’re a child of God before you’re Samoan, before you’re a big, tough guy from the islands.’ That is something I have always remembered.

“. . . Sometimes we have to have the courage to turn from these [cultural] practices and to the teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (Morgan Sa Mataalii, “The Gospel Comes First,” *Ensign*, June 2011, 71).

WHAT IF I KNOW PEOPLE WITH TATTOOS?

If you know people with tattoos, don't judge them for it. That would just push them away. Be kind, and be their friend. If the subject of tattoos comes up, rather than condemning their decision to get a tattoo, talk about why you treat your body the way you do. Learning about who they are and what kind of gift their body is may help them feel the Spirit and come closer to the Savior.



A Step in the Right Direction

In the classic book *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice comes to a crossroads. When the Cheshire cat appears, she asks him, "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?" The cat answers, "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to." Alice replies, "I don't much care where—" To which the cat says, "Then it doesn't matter which way you go" (Lewis Carroll [1992], 76).

Fortunately, we don't have to rely on fictitious felines to figure out what life's all about.

We know that we want to live with our Father in Heaven again one day, and we have something that tells us how to get there—the scriptures! For example, as you take a look at Moroni 10:32 (this year's Mutual theme), we're told to "come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness."

Becoming "perfected in [Christ]" may seem a little daunting, but it's really the result of small, daily choices rather than one big action you take. And there's a simple activity to help you and your family see just how that happens on your pathway to perfection—a perfect object lesson for family home evening.

1 Get Ready . . .

Start your lesson by reading Moroni 10:32 and talking about what it means to "deny yourselves of all ungodliness." Ungodly decisions are ones that make us less like Christ. And we deny ungodliness by resisting the temptation to do evil and by avoiding things that keep us from feeling the Spirit.

So how should we act instead? The next part of the scripture has an answer: "Love God with all your might, mind and strength." We show love to God by serving others, keeping the commandments, and honoring our covenants with Him.

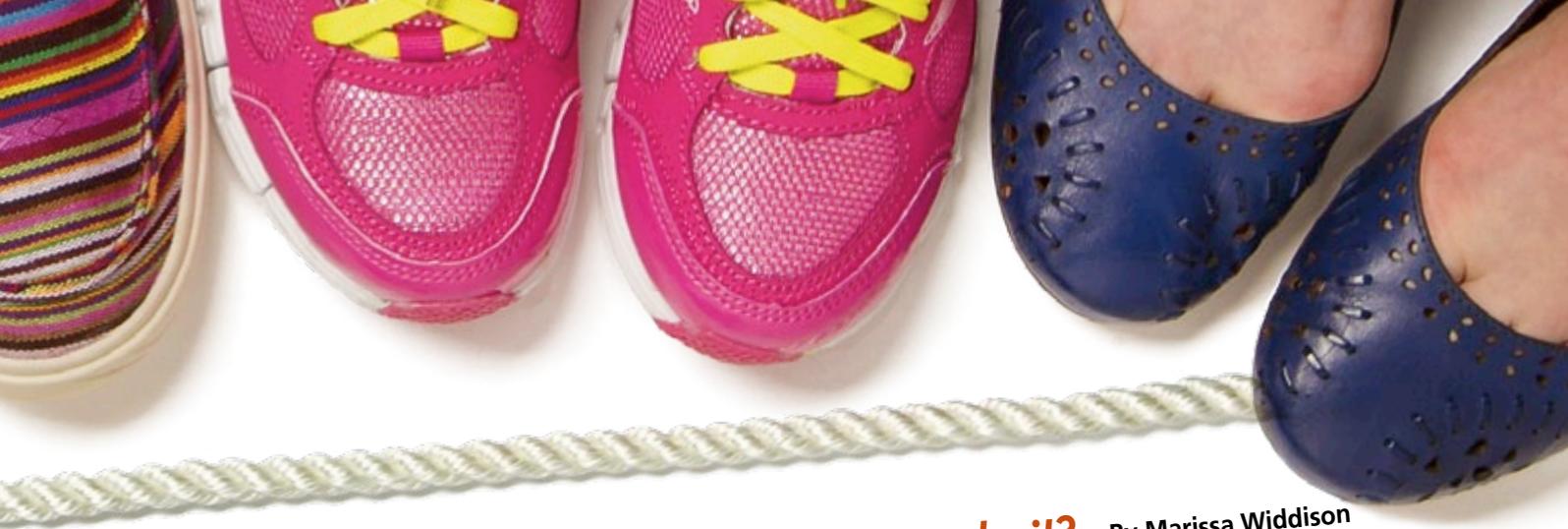
Now look at the rest of the verse. Notice how the word "perfect" is repeated. It's our goal to become perfect, but that can only happen with the help of Jesus Christ. As we come to Christ by replacing ungodly actions with obedience and love, we can become perfected in Him.

2 Get Set . . .

Now it's time for the activity, which works best in a large room. At one end of the room, display a picture of Jesus Christ. Several feet away, mark a line where all of your family members can line up side-by-side.

Next, you'll need a bowl and lots of slips of paper. Hand out the slips of paper, and on each one have family members write either a decision that would bring a person closer to Christ or away from Him. Remember to think about the needs of your family members as you create the slips. Have your family members include more papers representing good choices than bad ones.





The goal is in sight—will your choices help you make it?

By Marissa Widdison
Church Magazines



3 Go!

Once the papers are filled out, put them all in the bowl. Each player will then take turns drawing a slip of paper from the bowl and then moving toward or away from the picture of Christ based on what's on the paper—good choices lead you one step closer, and poor choices take you one step back.

Make sure there are plenty of slips of paper for everyone in your family to make it to the Savior! Here are a few examples to get you started:

- I invited a classmate to church to hear me teach a Sunday lesson.
- I told Mom thank you for driving me to soccer practice.
- I prayed this morning, even though I was really grumpy when I woke up.
- I played video games instead of reading my scriptures before bed.

4 Wrap Up

To make this activity as meaningful as possible, make sure to tie the activity back to Moroni 10:32, along with other scriptures you find on the topic. Ask your family members to share their thoughts. You could also ask questions like these to start a conversation:

- What helps you resist temptation?
- What have you done recently to show God that you love Him?
- How can you help one another move closer to Christ each day?

You may also want to discuss any topics from the paper slips that family members may have questions about.

Once everyone's had a chance to share their thoughts, consider closing the lesson by bearing your testimony about how making good choices has helped you. It's one way to take a great step forward together.

Other Ideas

- It's always a good idea to pray to know how best to help those you're teaching.
- Look for relevant quotes from recent general conference talks, such as this one by Elder Ulisses Soares of the Presidency of the Seventy: "We will avoid detours and sadness in our lives as long as we walk hand in hand with the Lord" ("Be Meek and Lowly of Heart," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 10).
- To start the lesson, consider singing "Lord, I Would Follow Thee" (*Hymns*, no. 220).
- Consider talking about the role that the Spirit plays in helping us recognize good choices versus poor ones (see Moroni 7:16–17). **NE**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRISTINA SMITH



Faithful, Loving SERVICE



Christlike service invites the Holy Ghost and brings the promise of peace.

Witnessed the joy of pure, selfless service shown in these pictures of a boy named Elijah giving his shirt to a new friend he met in a remote village of Africa. Elijah saw an immediate need, and then he responded. Like young Elijah, we have the opportunity to render service to others in many ways. We may not need to give others the shirts off our backs, but if we are listening to the promptings of the Holy Ghost, we will know whom to serve and how to help those who are in need.

“Service is synonymous with keeping the commandments of God,” and it represents our love for the Lord.¹ The Savior taught, “If thou lovest me

thou shalt serve me and keep all my commandments” (D&C 42:29); “thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy might, mind, and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him” (D&C 59:5). At baptism we covenanted that we would serve God and keep His commandments (see Mosiah 18:10). As followers of Christ, we always strive to participate in His work, and that involves serving.

Service: The Gospel in Action

Service is the gospel of Jesus Christ in action, and it’s evident in a story I love about Brigham Young. Upon learning that hundreds of handcart

pioneers were stranded on the plains in unbearable conditions, he taught with power in this simple sermon at the October 1856 general conference: “I will now give this people the subject and the text for the Elders who may speak, . . . it is this, . . . many of our brethren and sisters are on the plains with hand-carts, and probably many are now 700 miles from this place, and they must be brought here, we must send assistance to them. The text will be, ‘to get them here.’ . . .

“That is my religion; that is the dictation of the Holy Ghost that I possess, it is to save the people. . . .

“I shall call upon the Bishops this day, I shall not wait until to-morrow,



By Carol F. McConkie
First Counselor in the
Young Women General
Presidency

nor until next day, for 60 good mule teams and 12 or 15 wagons. I do not want to send oxen, I want good horses and mules. They are in this Territory, and we must have them; also 12 tons of flour and 40 good teamsters, besides those that drive the teams. . . .

“I will tell you all that your faith, religion, and profession of religion, will never save one soul of you in the celestial kingdom of our God, unless you carry out just such principles as I am now teaching you. Go and bring in those people now on the plains.”²

“*Save the people*”—that is the command. When we serve others, we are engaged in the work of salvation. As King Benjamin taught, “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17).

Opportunities All Around

We do not need to look very far to find opportunities to serve. Our living prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, taught, “We are surrounded by those in need of our attention, our encouragement, our support, our comfort, our kindness—be they family members, friends, acquaintances, or strangers. We are the Lord’s hands here upon the earth, with the mandate to serve and to lift His children. He is

dependent upon each of us.”³

Our Father in Heaven needs us to administer to the relief of others spiritually and temporally (see Mosiah 4:26). “The greatest service we can provide to others in this life . . . is to bring them to Christ through faith and repentance.”⁴ We set an example of living gospel standards. We share the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We do family history and take family names to the temple for our ancestors. Oftentimes, small and compassionate acts of service like a simple smile, a friendly hello, a warm embrace, or a note of gratitude are all that is needed to lift the heart and cheer the soul. On other occasions, a great sacrifice of time and energy may be required.

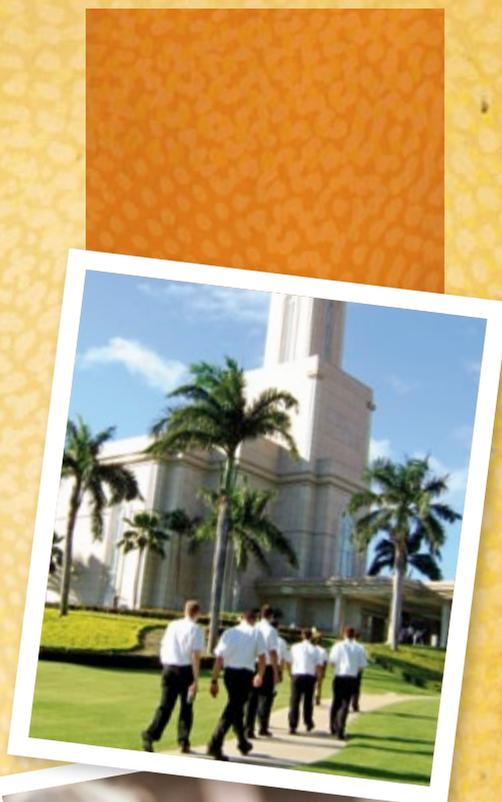
But in every instance, faithful, loving, Christlike service invites the companionship of the Holy Ghost and brings to each one of us the promise of “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come” (D&C 59:23). **NE**

Serving Others

For more ideas on how you can bless others, visit lds.org/go/serveNE2.

NOTES

1. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 706.
2. Brigham Young, “Remarks,” *Deseret News*, Oct. 15, 1856, 252.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “What Have I Done for Someone Today?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 86.
4. D. Todd Christofferson, “Redemption,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 110.



SHARING Home-Return Kits

By Olivet Gasang

Rain poured as a cold wind blew. I saw trees that had been uprooted and lost all their leaves. The power was off in some areas due to damaged electrical lines. The scene before me was now like a haunted place. Everything had been blown away. People were starving for food and longing for shelter.

My heart was filled with the desire to serve. My family and other members of the Church had traveled to a poor community where a typhoon had devastated thousands of homes

and taken thousands of lives. We were there to give relief goods to the victims.

When we first arrived, I had seen the mourning in people's faces. I realized then how blessed we were that our homes hadn't been destroyed.

It was still raining when we started handing out relief packs at a muddy, roofless gym, but that didn't matter to us. The relief packs—sets of plastic trays, kettles, plates, spoons, forks, glasses, and flasks—we nicknamed “home-return kits.” As my family and I handed relief packs to the people, they gave us warm smiles and thank-yous.

The priceless gratitude of the people uplifted me, and I felt the influence of the Spirit. Their smiles manifested that there is hope and

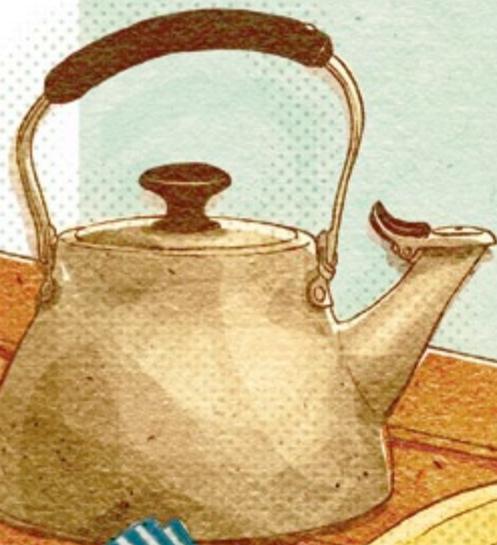
that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ will never leave us and will always bring light to our dark days.

I know that if we serve and love one another, we will gain eternal blessings and inherit Christlike attributes. The blessings of serving do not always come right away, but they will come if we continue to serve others with a sincere heart. I know that “when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17). **NE**
Olivet Gasang lives in Mindanao, Philippines.

AN INSTRUMENT IN GOD'S HANDS

“Often Heavenly Father will meet the needs of others through you. . . . As you devote yourself to serving others, . . . you will enjoy happiness that comes only from giving service. . . . Your capacities will increase, and you will be an instrument in God's hands to bless the lives of His children.”

For the Strength of Youth
(2011), 32, 33.





A Valentine FOR THE BULLY

Could I really be kind to someone who was so mean?

By Emily Stone Barton

As a sophomore in high school, I felt like I was starting to understand who I was and who I wanted to be. I felt pretty good about myself. I had friends and participated in several activities. Even in gym—a class I usually dreaded—we were playing volleyball, something I wasn't half bad at.

One day we were playing an intense game of volleyball. My team was doing OK, but sometimes my teammates would run into each other because no one called for the ball. I tried to encourage them by saying, "Call it!"

One girl on my team got annoyed and told me to stop. I told her I was just trying to help the team, but she still wasn't happy. And she started finding ways to make me miserable.

She spent the next several months openly criticizing me, saying mean things, and bumping into me in the hallway. My emerging self-esteem quickly took a tumble. And because this young woman didn't hang out with a good crowd, I was scared of what she and her friends might do to me. I didn't know what to do except to avoid her when possible.

One night I was in my room alone, crying and praying about what to do. I felt like I should read my scriptures. I opened up to **Matthew 5:44**: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." That night I prayed for the strength to be kind and that her heart would be softened.

After my prayer, I noticed the Valentine's Day candies I'd purchased to give to my friends. I immediately knew what to do.

The next day, I went to class with my bag of valentines. I handed a few to my friends and then walked over to the young woman, placed one on her desk, said, "Happy Valentine's Day," and walked away. My heart was racing as I sat down at my desk.

She never did say thank you, and we did not become best friends. But the teasing stopped. With the help of the scriptures, my prayer had been answered.

I know that as we strive to love, serve, and pray for our enemies, the Lord will bless us. **NE**

Emily Stone Barton lives in California, USA.

Let Your MUSIC SPEAK



MUSIC CAN HELP YOU STRIKE A CHORD WITH OTHERS AS YOU **SHARE WHAT YOU BELIEVE.**

DO YOU SING? DO YOU PLAY AN INSTRUMENT? DO YOU JUST PLAY YOUR IPOD? WELL, NO MATTER WHAT YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH MUSIC IS, THERE ARE WAYS YOU CAN USE IT TO **SHARE WHAT YOU BELIEVE.** HERE ARE JUST A FEW EXAMPLES OF WHAT LATTER-DAY SAINT TEENS ARE DOING TO **SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH MUSIC.**



ROCK ON

Many teens in rock bands would probably tell you that playing rock 'n' roll is its own reward. Beyond that, they probably don't feel they really need a reason for doing it. Well, when six friends in Colorado, USA, formed a band together (Dani K., Jake G., Joey B., Matt N., Michael B., and Scott L.), they set higher goals, and because of that, they also had greater rewards.

For one thing, they wanted their music to lift rather than degrade. "We know that there's a lot of filth we could be playing," says Michael, "but we choose only songs that are clean and uplifting." And Jake adds, "The music we've written is uplifting and clean (not to mention catchy and fun!), inspiring people to build their talents in a manner that will bring others unto Christ."

In addition, they wanted their band's behavior to make an impression—in a good way. "I remember when we walked through the studio doors the first day of recording," recalls Dani, "and our producer was shocked that we were on time, awake, and sober."

Matt adds, "We have covenanted with God to stand as a witness of Him at all times. We have been given wonderful gifts and opportunities, and I want to use them to share the message of the Savior with the world."

The band has also been able to fulfill their goal of serving others in a variety of ways. For instance, they have performed at firesides and other Church events, and they have performed for the sick and injured, both in small, intimate settings and at big fundraising events for large organizations. One of those organizations is special to the band, since it helps those with type 1 juvenile diabetes,

a disease that Jake has had since age four and that Dani was diagnosed with two years after joining the band.

"Our band friends are aware of our medical needs and help us endure the trials we face with the disease," says Jake. "The band has been such a blessing to us and strengthened our friendship."

Their friendship has extended beyond the band experience as well. They've been together at Eagle Scout projects and other major milestones in each other's lives. And their friendship will continue even after they go their separate ways for missions and college.

"My fantastic friends in this band have helped me to live the gospel," says Joey. "This band has given me strength to overcome temptation. I have a testimony of the power and influence that good friends can have."

And Scott believes that their band "is proof that living the gospel can be done anywhere. That is a great comfort to me."



BIG-BAND ALTERNATIVE

When Megan M. of Utah, USA, was younger, she would often hear the same thing whenever her older brother and sister went to school dances. “They’d always go to the dances and then come home and complain about the music,” she says. “Dance after dance, I’d hear them complain.”

As she was approaching the age when she would be able to attend school dances, she wasn’t sure she wanted to go. One day, at a fireside where her stake president was talking about the influence of music, she “had a strong feeling that something had to

be done about my high school dance music. I got straight to work.”

Megan, who plays alto saxophone in the school’s jazz band, noticed how much fun people had at their annual event featuring big-band music and dancing. The thought came to her, “What if the jazz band could play at the homecoming dance? Kids could then dance to an alternative choice of live music instead of disk jockey recordings. They could actually feel the influence of great music at a high school dance and have a great time!”

Her band instructor loved the idea and helped her get it approved through the school administration. Then Megan asked alumni band members to play so that current band members could enjoy the dance.

On the night of the dance, the DJ and the jazz band were set up in different areas. At first, only a few people wandered over to the jazz band, but eventually there was a huge crowd. Some of Megan’s Latter-day Saint friends came by to say hello and then went over to the area with the recorded music. But about five minutes later, they came back.

“I ran over to them and asked why they had come back,” says Megan. “They told me they couldn’t feel the Spirit listening to the DJ music, so they decided to return.”

They weren’t the only ones who had this experience. Megan says, “The next day, I got emails from some of my friends saying, ‘Can we please do that at every dance?? Please!!!’ I even heard that the administration said it was the best school dance they’d ever had.”

RESTORATION SONG

Ariana O. of Queensland, Australia, along with several other students in her music class at school, was given an assignment to compose a song about something uniquely American. “I had a few things going around in my head,” says Ariana, “but the Restoration stood out to me the most. It was something I was passionate about and something I am very proud to be a part of.”

On the Friday after she finished writing the song, the teacher told the students that they would perform their songs the following Monday. “When I went home that evening, I practiced whenever I could so that I could surprise Mum and Dad with what I wrote the song about,” says Ariana. “I had to wait the whole weekend, and I was a

little bit scared as well. I didn’t know how my classmates would react, and I didn’t want them to think I was weird.”

On Monday, the teacher announced the performances. As it turned out, only Ariana and one other group had actually written a song.

“I was nervous,” she says. “One group wrote a song about cowboys and Indians, and I wrote a song about Joseph Smith. The group who wrote their song about cowboys went first, and they were just as nervous as I was, but there were two of them performing. When it was my turn, I said a little prayer and went to the piano. I started playing, and it was like it was just me and the piano. Once I finished, I explained what the song was about, and then I sat back down.”

Though Ariana wasn’t sure how the others felt, she was glad to have shared her testimony in that way. And, she says, “I knew that I had grown spiritually.” **NE**



HOW CAN YOU SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH MUSIC?

Here are more ways that other LDS teens have used music to share the gospel.

- Organize a youth concert and invite friends and neighbors to attend (see an example at [lds.org/go/concertNE2](https://www.lds.org/go/concertNE2)).
- Be a DJ for a dance and play only good, uplifting music.
- If appropriate, play your instrument in church.
- Lead music in church (see [lds.org/go/conductNE2](https://www.lds.org/go/conductNE2)).
- Learn to play the organ, and accompany the congregation in sacrament meeting (see [lds.org/go/organNE2](https://www.lds.org/go/organNE2)).
- Compose music or write songs that are beautiful and uplifting.
- Use your musical talents to uplift the sick, elderly, disabled, or others in need (see [lds.org/go/visitNE2](https://www.lds.org/go/visitNE2)).
- Sing in church—either a solo, in a choir, or just in the congregation, with gusto.
- If school dances play degrading music, organize an alternative dance (see [lds.org/go/danceNE2](https://www.lds.org/go/danceNE2)).
- Practice Church music with your music instructors (see [lds.org/go/pianoNE2](https://www.lds.org/go/pianoNE2)).

What other ways can you think of? Share them with us at [newera.lds.org](https://www.newera.lds.org). Just click “Submit Your Work.”

Everyday Covenant KEEPING

By Ryan Brown

The phrase “keeping your covenants” can sound intimidating, but it’s simpler than you might think.



Here’s a question you might have heard in Primary or when you joined the Church: What happens when we’re baptized? One answer: We covenant with God. Not too bad, right? How about this one: What are some examples of covenants we make with God? Hmm, harder. What about this question: What everyday things help us keep those covenants? Now that’s a good question.

When we’re baptized, we make covenants with God. One thing that can help is to look at covenants in the scriptures and then find small, everyday ways to apply them in our lives. Let’s look at some examples.

“Take upon you the name of Jesus Christ.”¹

Taking the name of Christ upon us manifests itself in several ways. One of the simplest is that we become members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Another is that we are willing to do what Christ would do and share our knowledge of the

gospel with others. Here are some ways you can show that you have taken Christ’s name upon yourself:

- Find opportunities to serve others for Him.
- Fulfill your callings and Church assignments. For young men, home teaching is a responsibility to represent Christ and serve the people you are assigned to visit.
- Ponder what it means to be a Christian and how you can better be a “peaceable follower of Christ” (see Moroni 7:3).
- Make your faith known by sharing your testimony with friends and family and posting gospel-related messages on social media.

“Mourn with those that mourn.”²

If you’re reading this and thinking, “Does this mean I have to cry a lot?” don’t worry. The prophet Alma also uses the phrase “comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (see Mosiah 18:9), which gets at the heart of this promise. It’s really all about compassion, not crying (though sometimes we cry with others during tough times). To keep the promise to comfort and strengthen others, try these ideas:

- Listen to someone who has lost a loved one and express your love for him or her.



HELPING OTHERS KEEP THEIR COVENANTS

“Take a moment to think of another [son or] daughter of God who needs encouragement to get back on the covenant path or who needs a little help to stay on the path. Ask your Father in Heaven about [him or] her. . . . He knows [him or] her by name. . . . Be patient and continue in faith and prayer on [his or] her behalf, and act on the promptings you receive.”

Carole M. Stephens, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, “We Have Great Reason to Rejoice,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 117.



COVENANT KEEPERS

“Covenant keepers are commandment keepers!”

Linda K. Burton, Relief Society general president, “The Power, Joy, and Love of Covenant Keeping,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 113.

- Say something nice to someone who looks lonely or depressed.
- Write an encouraging note to a friend when you know he or she has had a hard day.
- Help others get over a disappointment by letting them know how great they are.

“Have a determination to serve Him to the end.”³

Serving “to the end” might sound kind of gloomy. But this covenant really means that we make a firm decision to always do our best to keep the commandments and serve God. You can have this determination by doing some of the following:

- Continue to work hard at your callings and Church assignments, even when you don’t think your efforts are making a difference.
- Make solid decisions about the commandments. List things that you will *always* do and things that you will *never* do, then stick to

your list. For example: I will *always* pay my tithing. I will *never* smoke.

- Find some way to serve every day.
- Pray to recognize the people you can serve.

“Stand as a witness.”⁴

The scriptures say that we should stand as witnesses “at all times and in all things, and in all places” (see Mosiah 18:9). With the growing gap between the Church’s standards and the world’s ways, it’s more important than ever to follow the commandments and be a witness. For example:

- Live the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*.
- Invite friends to come to church, Mutual activities, family home evening, and other activities where they can feel the Spirit.
- Bear testimony of the blessings of the gospel when friends ask you questions about the Church.
- Don’t lower your standards or make exceptions to the commandments.

“Always remember Him.”⁵

When we’re baptized we promise to “always remember” the Savior. We hear that promise every week when we partake of the sacrament. Here are some ways you can always remember Him:

- Have regular prayer. Pray in your heart, but also take the time to pray out loud.
- Partake of the sacrament weekly.
- Forgive others when you feel hurt or offended.
- When making decisions, think about what Christ would do.
- Place a visual reminder of Christ where you can see it and remember Him. **NE**

Ryan Brown lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
2. Mosiah 18:9.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
4. See Mosiah 18:9.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79.



28 WAYS TO

SPR

SUNSHINE

**YOU CAN SCATTER SUNSHINE EVERY DAY—
NO MATTER WHAT THE WEATHER IS!**

By Rachel Nielsen

One possible meaning of the old Anglo-Saxon word for *February* is “mud month,” and for many youth in the Northern Hemisphere, that name makes sense. It’s the middle of the winter, and the snow and rain and cold can make “mud month” feel like a pretty accurate name. On the other end of the world, however, youth in the Southern Hemisphere are enjoying one of the warmest months of the year, where there’s more than enough sunshine to go around.

Regardless of the climate you’re in, you can bring sunshine into the lives of those around you now and any time of the year. Doing so will bring joy to you and those you interact with.

Here are some ideas to help spread sunshine every day in February. Try them out, or try some of your own. Just try something to bless the lives of those around you.

1. **Smile!**
.....
2. **Tell a family member why you love him or her.**
.....
3. **Find out more about someone you don’t know very well.**
.....
4. **Give a sincere compliment.**
.....
5. **Visit someone who may be lonely.**
.....
Sienna G., 13, from Utah, USA, says, “One of the ways I scatter sunshine is by visiting the sick, lonely, and elderly. If people my mom knows are in the hospital, a retirement home, or a rehabilitation center, we go to visit them. These people love to see the smiling faces of youth.”
.....
6. **Eat lunch with someone who needs a friend.**
.....
7. **Share your testimony.**
.....
8. **Deliver a treat to a neighbor.**
.....

E A D

9. Reach out to a ward member.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said, "Our wards and branches should be places where the Golden Rule always guides our words and actions toward each other. By treating each other kindly, speaking words of support and encouragement, and being sensitive to each other's needs, we can create loving unity among ward members."¹

10. Express gratitude to a family member.

11. Pray for someone.

12. Encourage someone to do something good.

13. "In your morning prayer each new day, ask Heavenly Father to guide you to recognize an opportunity to serve one of His precious children."²

14. Be kind to someone who seems lonely.

15. Share a scripture with a friend.

16. Help someone do something he or she can't do alone.

Brendon P., 17, from Wyoming, USA, picks up his friend Kenly for seminary each morning. Kenly, who has Down syndrome, does not have her own driver's license, so she cannot drive herself to seminary.

17. Text a friend and share what you like about him or her.

18. Teach someone about family history.

19. Be aware of how others could use your help, and act on promptings to serve.

"Often small acts of service are all that is required to lift and bless another. . . . If we are observant and aware, and if we act on the promptings which come to us, we can accomplish much good."³

20. Share a spiritual message through social media.

21. Give a friend or family member a call just to say hello.

22. Communicate with someone "heart to heart" so you can understand and help meet his or her needs.

President Thomas S. Monson has said, "Often we live side by side but do not communicate heart to heart. There are those within the sphere of our own influence who, with outstretched hands, cry out, 'Is there no balm in Gilead?' (Jeremiah 8:22). . . . We are the Lord's hands here upon the earth, with the mandate to serve and to lift His children. He is dependent upon each of us."⁴

23. "Sing some happy song."⁵

24. Do an extra chore around the house.

25. Write a note.

Lucy T., 15, from Utah, USA, says, "In my Young Women class, we were challenged to write a note to one of the widows in our ward. I decided to drop a note off at a widow's house that I pass on the way to piano lessons. This woman loved the note so much that I decided to leave her a note every week. I also started visiting her in person. She tells me hilarious and inspiring stories and sends me cards every holiday. I've made a fabulous new friend."

26. Introduce yourself to someone new at school or at an activity.

27. Ask someone about his or her family to show you care and want to get to know him or her.

28. "The next time you're tempted to groan, you might try to laugh instead."⁶

Rachel Nielsen lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. M. Russell Ballard, "Finding Joy through Loving Service," *Ensign*, May 2011, 47.
2. M. Russell Ballard, "Be Anxiously Engaged," *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 31.
3. Thomas S. Monson, "Three Goals to Guide You," *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 120–21.
4. Thomas S. Monson, "What Have I Done for Someone Today?" *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 85–86.
5. "Scatter Sunshine," *Hymns*, no. 230.
6. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Come What May, and Love It," *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 27.



Fun Dates

{THAT DON'T BREAK THE BANK}

Youth share their ideas for awesome, inexpensive dates.

Ah, the movie theater. A place where for the meager price of a small country you can sit in a dark room, eat a bag of over-buttered popcorn, and learn nothing at all about the people you're spending time with.

In all fairness, movie theaters

certainly have their place. Watching a movie on the big screen can be exciting. Yet it's also expensive! And even if you do find a discount theater, when it comes to deepening friendships, the typical movie theater date doesn't let you discover much more about the people sitting next to you than whether or not they scream during a scary scene.

In *For the Strength of Youth*, you're counseled to "plan dating activities that are safe, positive, and inexpensive and that will help you get to know each other" ([2011], 4).

The next time you plan a date, you might consider putting a little creativity behind your thinking. Simple but creative dates tend to be both memorable and enjoyable.

Why Date?

For starters, why do we bother dating in the first place? Why go through the effort? Well, dating has a lot to offer. As explained in *For the Strength of Youth*, “In cultures where dating is acceptable, it can help you learn and practice social skills, develop friendships, have wholesome fun, and eventually find an eternal companion” (4).

Remember that pairing off for an activity—dating—is reserved for those 16 and older. Also, as explained in *For the Strength of Youth*, “When you begin dating, go with one or more additional couples. Avoid going on frequent dates with the same person” (4).

Ideas for creative, inexpensive dates exist everywhere. Here are a few experiences that youth shared with us.

Board Games with a Twist

Playing board games is a simple date that lets everyone interact and usually results in laughter and good times aplenty. But have you ever considered *acting out* a board game?

McKenna B., 17, from Nevada, USA, put together a murder-mystery dinner date with her friends that was based on the board game Clue®. “It was one of my favorite dates,” McKenna says. “The whole dinner, we were trying to guess who was the murderer.”

They held the dinner at a friend’s house, complete with costumes (from items found at home) and gag props based on the game (which can be made of paper for an inexpensive

option). Yes, that means Colonel Mustard was in the house for real. “It was great,” McKenna says. It was also affordable. “Dates don’t have to be expensive,” she adds. Hers wasn’t, and everybody still enjoyed the evening.

Food, Glorious Food

Dates and dining often go hand in hand. But you can shell out big bucks at a restaurant. Here are a couple of alternatives when it comes to meals and dates.

“I went on a date once where we went grocery shopping,” explains Haley M., 16, from California, USA. “We bought ingredients and went home and cooked a meal. That was really fun. I got to know the people.

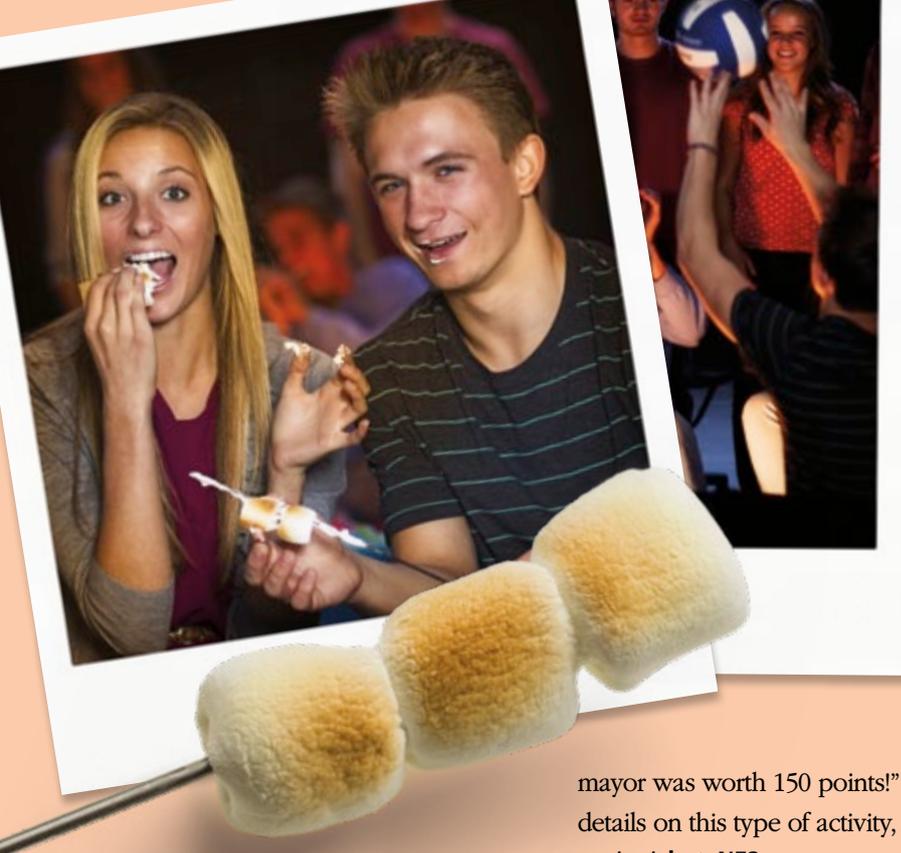
We were doing stuff together.”

Matthew P., 18, from Utah, USA, recalls a formal dance when he and the other guys didn’t have a lot of money to spend on fancy restaurants, but they still wanted to give their dates a three-course meal for dinner.

Their solution was to have the first course, French fries, at a local fast-food place. Course two? Chicken nuggets at a different fast-food location. And the third course? Milkshakes at a third location. “Nobody had to spend a bunch of money,” Matthew says. “The way we did it, everybody enjoyed the dinner.”

Another popular option to consider is to have the dinner “catered” by parents or siblings.





Simple Solutions

Creative dates don't have to be complicated or elaborate in order to be awesome.

Katherine J., 18, from California, USA, lives near the ocean. She and her friends regularly plan bonfires at the beach as creative dates. "We'll cook s'mores and hot dogs. And from there, we'll play games around the fire," says Katherine.

A hot-dog roast doesn't require much in the way of planning. And who doesn't like hanging out around a bonfire? "We always invite a whole bunch of people," Katherine says.

As another example, here's a creative evening that requires no more preparation than imagination and a couple of digital cameras. Katie J., 17, from North Carolina, USA, loves going on photo scavenger hunts with her friends. "We'll pick the most random pictures for the list," Katie says. "We assign point values for the pictures. A picture with the

mayor was worth 150 points!" For more details on this type of activity, see lds.org/go/photoNE2.

Simple, creative dates can be invented in a manner of minutes and can cost nearly nothing. How about feeding ducks at a pond? You're only out a few slices of bread. Or what about holding a snowcastle or sandcastle sculpting contest, using pots and buckets from around the house to help build? A little creativity goes a long way.

'Tis the Season

As one more area to consider for date ideas, remember that holidays offer all kinds of possibilities. You might try a chocolate potluck party for Valentine's Day or cooking a dinner where all the food is dyed green for St. Patrick's Day.

Daniel J., 17, from Utah, USA, once went on a group date during October that involved jack-o'-lanterns. "We carved a bunch of pumpkins and then took them around with bags of candy," he says. At each home they visited, they left a pumpkin and a bag of candy on someone's porch in

hopes of making that person smile. Then they rang the doorbell and ran. "It was really fun," Daniel says.

Brooke H., 17, from Utah, USA, remembers fondly an ugly sweater Christmas party she once attended. The idea for this party was to wear with pride the ugliest Christmas sweater you could possibly track down. "We loved it," Brooke says.

Why not throw your own ugly sweater Christmas party? You could even make treats together at the party and then deliver them to neighbors while caroling in your terrifically horrific sweaters.

Fun Awaits

Ultimately, you don't need to hire a marching band for background entertainment when you plan a date. Nor do you need to do so when asking someone on a date in the first place.

An enjoyable, creative date might be nothing more than a game of kickball or Frisbee at the park. The possibilities are endless. If you're still looking for a jump-start on ideas, visit lds.org/go/dateideasNE2 for a list of cool activities.

Once you try a few dates like these, you might be surprised how long it will be before you decide again to sit in a large, dark room with an overpriced bag of popcorn. **NE**





BECAUSE I ACCEPTED MY TEACHER'S INVITATION, MAKING CHOICES AT PROM BECAME EASIER.

Last February, one of our Sunday lessons was about the importance of making wise choices. My class discussed the value of deciding now what we will and will not do in several situations. We learned that by making our choices *before* the moments of decision arrive, we'll have a stronger commitment to do what's right.

At the end of the lesson, our teacher invited us to go home and make a list of things we will do and a list of things we will never do. I completed the assignment and made

two simple lists. As I continued pondering, however, I felt the Spirit prompting me to add to my list by setting personal guidelines for dating. I want to get married in the temple someday—it's something I'll never be willing to sacrifice. So with that goal in mind, I added to my two lists, including that I'll date only people with high standards.

Soon after, one of my great friends asked me to go to prom with him. Even though he wasn't a Church member, I knew he had high standards and

would help me keep my standards. So I said yes. We went as friends and enjoyed a fun night together. Since we both had high standards, I wasn't tempted to do anything I'd decided I would never do.

Because I followed the Spirit and set these standards for myself, I'm able to look back on prom and be happy about the choices I made. I'm so grateful for my teacher's invitation, because it's helped me keep the temple as my focus. **NE**

Marisa Maxwell lives in Pennsylvania, USA.

DECIDE NOW

For the Strength of Youth counsels you "to date only those who have high moral standards and in whose company you can maintain your standards. Remember that a young man and a young woman on a date are responsible to protect each other's honor and virtue. . . . Go only to places where you can

maintain your standards and remain close to the Spirit" ([2011], 4).

As you consider the opportunities for dating in your life, what decisions will you make? Decide now what you will do so that when the situation arises, you already know how to respond.



More on Making Choices

Learn more about making good choices on page 6 and at lds.org/go/choiceNE2.

NOT DATING?

YOU'RE
NOT ALONE



For Latter-day Saint teens, the modern dating scene can look complicated. Here are a few thoughts and tips to put things in perspective.

So, you're a Latter-day Saint youth, you're 16 or older, and you're able to start dating in groups (see *For the Strength of Youth* [2011], 4). Yet for some reason you're numbered among the many in this age group who don't date. Why? Well, the reasons can be broken down into two basic categories: "I just don't want to date" and "I would like to date, but there are obstacles." Let's look at both of these groups.



**JUST DON'T
WANT TO DATE**



**WOULD LIKE
TO DATE**

I JUST DON'T WANT TO DATE

This group has various reasons for not wanting to date—for instance, they're preparing to leave on missions and don't want to be distracted, or they just plain don't feel comfortable or ready to date. The fact is, dating is not something every teenager absolutely needs to do.

Now, keep in mind that dating can have benefits. As *For the Strength of Youth* says, "It can help you learn and practice social skills, develop friendships, [and] have wholesome fun" (4).

If you don't want to date, you shouldn't completely shun members of the opposite sex, of course. Look for other ways to make friends with them and gain the social skills associated with dating (for instance, Mutual, youth conference, and other activities that help you get to know people in a wholesome setting), because later, "as you enter your adult years," you should "make dating and marriage a high priority" (*For the Strength of Youth*, 5).



I WOULD LIKE TO DATE, but There Are Obstacles

Some obstacles to dating have always been around; others are new and culture-specific. Let's look at seven common obstacles and see if there are any solutions to them.

1. There's nobody to date around here.

Of course, unless you live alone in the middle of a vast desert or something, this isn't literally true. So what's really going on?

Well, for instance, you may look around and see an utter lack of datable people, meaning those "who have high moral standards and in whose company you can maintain your standards" (*For the Strength of Youth*, 4). Though this is unlikely, if it is true, then you're probably right not to date.

More common is the feeling of many LDS teens that the only people they can ask on dates are the few other LDS teens in their area, because the non-LDS teens might misunderstand your intentions (see obstacles #2 and #3 on the next page) and it would take a lot of awkward explanation and coaching to get them to understand and accept the way LDS

teens are counseled to date. If you are in this situation, you could deal with it in one of two ways: (1) make the effort to plan some group dates with good people you know, taking care to ensure that everyone's expectations are the same, or (2) don't date but still

seek out friendships and wholesome fun with a variety of people. As you counsel with your parents, leaders, and your Heavenly Father, you'll be guided to make good decisions.



 **More on Dating**
For advice, stories, videos, answers to questions, and more on dating, visit lds.org/go/dateNE2 and lds.org/go/datingNE2.



ADVICE FROM AN APOSTLE

“When you are old enough, you ought to start dating. It is good for young men and young women to learn to know and to appreciate one another. It is good for you to go to games and dances and picnics, to do all of the young things. We encourage our young people to date. We encourage you to set high standards of dating.”

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “You’re in the Driver’s Seat,” *New Era*, June 2004, 8.

2. Around here, “dating” implies a physical relationship, and I don’t want that reputation.

In many places throughout the world, when youth walk down the halls of their schools, they see quite a few of their classmates hugging, kissing, and so on. For the passersby, it can be quite uncomfortable. But for LDS teens, it also makes dating awkward because this kind of behavior is often what’s expected of “dating couples.” So, for instance, if you were to tell people that you went on a date with so-and-so, they may assume that you and so-and-so had started a physical relationship.

What to do? The best thing is to let your standards be known so that nobody gets the wrong impression about you or the person you go out with. Not dating is also an option, but even then, people ought to know what your standards are. (See also obstacle #3.)

3. “Mormon-style” dating (going out with different people) just isn’t done around here. It’s all about boyfriend-girlfriend relationships. You’ll get a bad reputation if you date around.

This is a tough one, because the culture of much of the world is following a trend in which boy-girl interactions among teens center around “relationships.” So if you tell people you went on a date with Person A one week and then went on a date with Person B a couple weeks later, they might think that you’re

cheating on Person A or that you’re just promiscuous. So what do you do?

Well, you could try to educate people and change their attitudes and judgments (maybe show them the “Dating” section in *For the Strength of Youth*), or you could go ahead and date the way you’ve been counseled to date and just ignore everyone else’s comments. One thing is certain: you should make sure everyone knows what your standards are, regardless of whether you date or not. There should be no question about your character. Then, if you decide to date, people will be less likely to whisper.

4. No one ever asks me out.

This is a very common feeling for young women, who are told that “young men generally take the initiative in asking for and planning dates” (*For the Strength of Youth*, 5). Sometimes it seems that there aren’t a lot of guys who are asking girls on dates or that only certain girls are getting asked out. Whatever you do, don’t ever let these thoughts affect your feelings of self-worth. Not being asked out on dates may be difficult, but it’s not a reflection of your value as a person. Some youth just don’t want to date, so you shouldn’t take it personally if they’re not asking you out. Of course, girls can occasionally ask guys on dates too, so you may consider getting together with other young women to organize a group date—just to get the ball rolling. No matter what, your value as a child of God is eternal and has nothing to do with whether you’re being asked out on dates.



5. I'm too shy.

Shyness is a very real and sometimes crippling feeling for many people. If you're interested in overcoming your shyness so that you can have the confidence to start dating, you can find some good tips in the article "From Shyness to Strength," published in the June 2011 *New Era* and available online at lds.org/go/shyNE2.

6. Dating is too expensive.

For the Strength of Youth encourages you to "plan dating activities that are . . . inexpensive" (4). However, in some places there seems to have emerged a dating culture in which formal and elaborate—and therefore expensive—dates are the norm. This need not be the case (see obstacle #7).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles once gave some advice to young single adults that also applies to teen dating: "The meaning and significance of a 'date' has . . . changed in such a way as to price dating out of the market. I saw this trend beginning among our younger children. For whatever reason, high school boys felt they had to do something elaborate or bizarre to ask for a date, especially for an event like a prom, and girls felt they had to do likewise to accept. In addition, a date had to be something of an expensive production. . . .

"All of this made dating more difficult. And the more elaborate and expensive the date, the fewer the dates. . . . Gone is the clumsy and inexpensive phone call your parents and grandparents and I used to make. . . . Cheap dates . . . can be frequent and nonthreatening, since they don't seem to imply a continuing commitment" ("Dating versus Hanging Out," *Ensign*, June 2006, 12–13).

7. It seems like a lot of work to put together a group date—arranging the group, asking people, planning the activity, and so on.

Sometimes this feeling comes from the unrealistic expectation of what a date should be (see obstacle #6). But sometimes it can seem rather daunting to put forth all of the effort needed just to pull off a simple group date. It doesn't have to be complicated, though. For instance, simply getting together to play board games and eat popcorn can make for a great evening. (For additional creative, inexpensive dating ideas, see "Fun Dates That Don't Break the Bank" on page 26 of this issue.) If you believe the effort is worth it, go for it. And even if you're not so sure, give it a try. In some way or another, these experiences will prepare you for the future, and you may just have a good time. **NE**





TO DATE *or* NOT TO DATE

By Savannah M. Smithson

At my school a lot of people have boyfriends and girlfriends. On my first day of school as an eighth grader, I met someone named Paul. We got along well together. Paul was a great friend.

The next day after school he asked me out on a date. I told him I couldn't, and he asked why. I told him I was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and that we're not supposed to date until age 16. Paul asked why, and I realized that I didn't actually know.

That night I went home and pondered Paul's question. I did research on LDS.org and read my scriptures. I found a quote by President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008): "The Lord has made us attractive one to another for a great purpose. But this very attraction becomes as a powder keg unless it is kept under control. . . . It is for this reason that the Church counsels against early dating."¹

I also looked in *For the Strength of Youth*. It says dating "can help you learn and practice social skills, develop friendships, have wholesome

fun, and eventually find an eternal companion."²

The next day I showed Paul the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet. Other people saw Paul reading it, and my LDS friends helped me answer my classmates' questions. I was happy to have an answer to Paul's question.

For the Strength of Youth says that dating before age 16 and forming serious relationships in our youth can lead to immorality and limit the number of people we meet.³ My mother also tells me that we shouldn't date before 16 because it can distract us from studies and opportunities that can be vital to success in the future. I've seen friends of mine become depressed because of an emotional breakup at age 13.

I was glad I was able to find out for myself why we shouldn't date before age 16 and then give Paul an answer without hurting his feelings. I've made a great friend, and I hope we will be friends for a long time. I am thankful the Lord has given us friends and the opportunity to date at the appropriate age so that we may all one day find faithful eternal companions. **NE**

Savannah M. Smithson lives in Nevada, USA.

NOTES

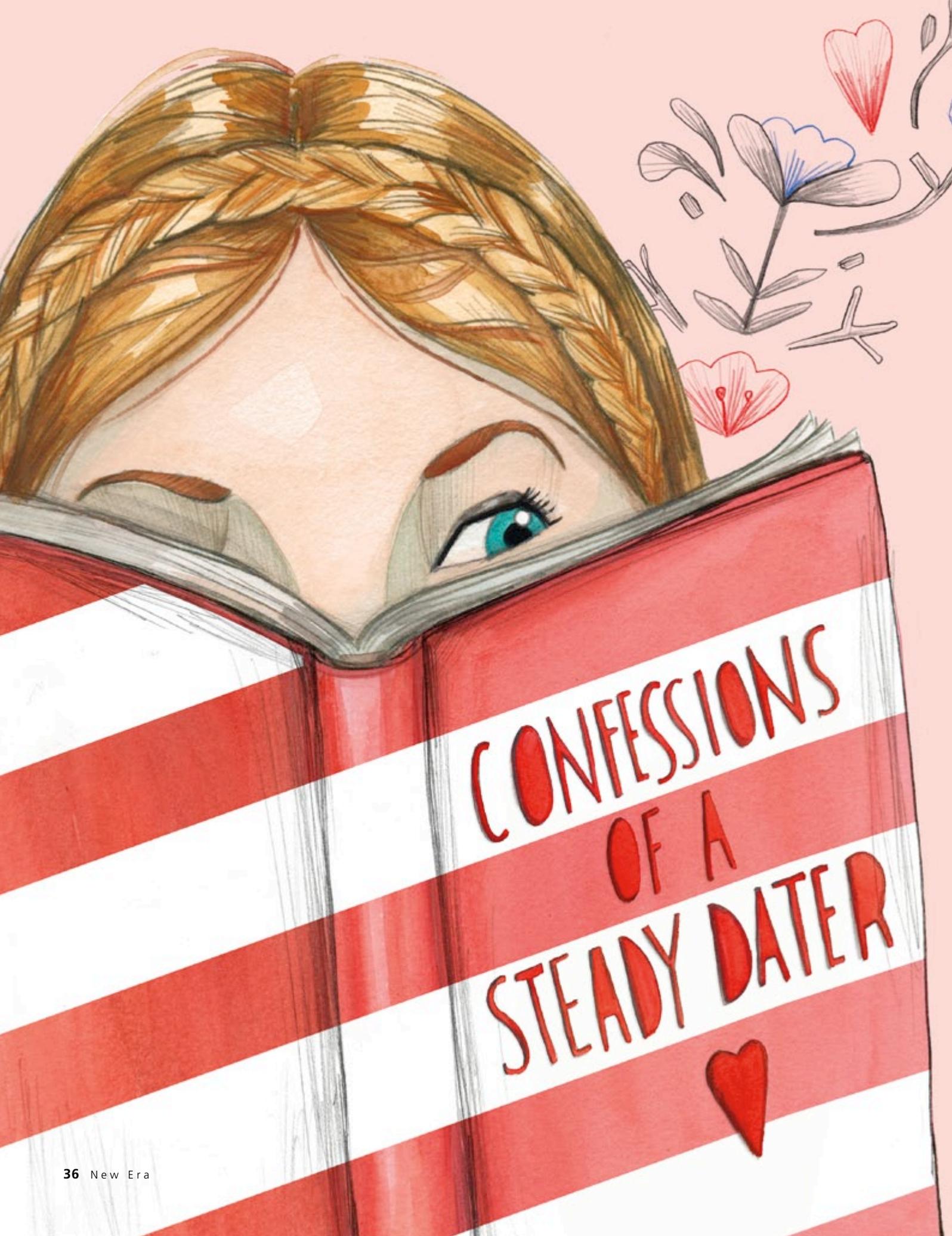
1. "A Prophet's Counsel and Prayer for Youth," *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 8.
2. *For the Strength of Youth* (2011), 4.
3. See *For the Strength of Youth*, 4.

DON'T RISK IT!

Dating or forming a relationship before you're 16 is like riding a roller coaster without a safety strap. It's a dangerous track that's just not worth the risk.

(See *For the Strength of Youth* [2011], 4–5.)





CONFESSIONS
OF A
STEADY DATER





I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY WE COULDN'T BE BOYFRIEND/GIRLFRIEND. WHAT WAS THE BIG DEAL, ANYWAY?

Name Withheld

I never considered myself someone who compromised her standards. I didn't wear immodest clothing or miss church on Sunday. I went to early-morning seminary every day, and being tempted to use bad language was never a problem for me. But dating was different.

Jonathan* and I first met at a summer youth camp. I was friendly, sure, but not really interested in him. Throughout the weeklong camp, we became little more than acquaintances and, at the end of the week, we got each other's contact information. The camp was outside the state I lived in, so when I learned that he lived not only in the same state but also in a neighboring state, I was kind of surprised. I was even more surprised when I received an email from him a few months later.

We began exchanging emails. I didn't see him very often because he lived an hour and a half away, but we maintained a steady friendship for months. Neither he nor I was 16 yet, so going on dates wasn't even on our minds.

IT'S OFFICIAL

Several months later, we saw each other again at the same summer youth camp. By that time, we were both 16. Our friendship progressed, and by the end of the camp, I was sad to see him leave. After we got home, we began talking even more frequently, and a few months later, we were officially dating.

At first, everything was fine. We would take turns driving to see each other twice a month. I became very close to his family, and he with mine. We spent hours talking on the phone or on the Internet every night.

I justified our dating: we were both 16, we lived an hour and a half apart so nothing bad would happen, and even though *For the Strength of Youth* says to "avoid going on frequent dates with the same person" ([2011], 4), it didn't seem like a big deal.

OFF AND ON AGAIN

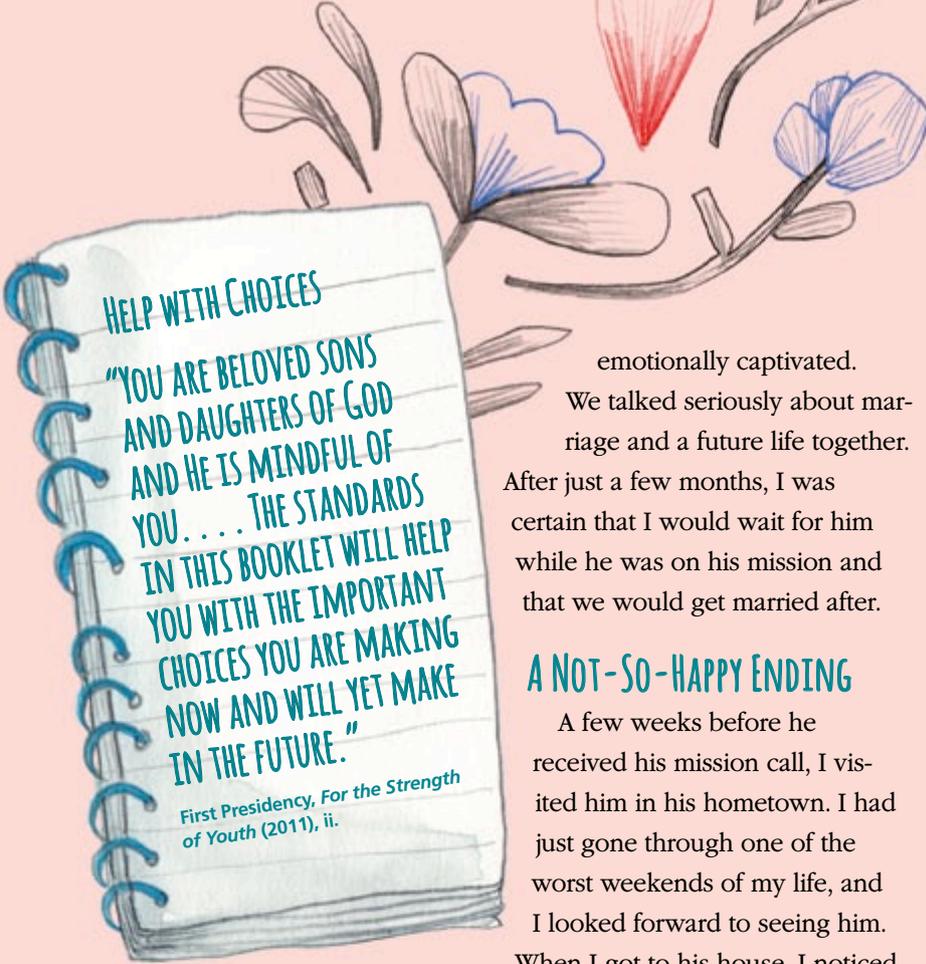
Though we maintained a physical distance, we quickly became emotionally close. After over a year of dating, I felt like we'd grown too close, and I broke it off. I later learned that this had nearly destroyed him emotionally.

We didn't talk to each other much for almost a year. But when we both started attending the same college, it wasn't long until we were talking again. I soon realized how much I missed him, and I regretted my decision to break up with him.

Soon we were dating again. And because we had dated steadily in high school despite the counsel not to, our relationship progressed even faster than it had before. We saw each other every day, and I became

* Name has been changed.





emotionally captivated.

We talked seriously about marriage and a future life together.

After just a few months, I was certain that I would wait for him while he was on his mission and that we would get married after.

A NOT-SO-HAPPY ENDING

A few weeks before he received his mission call, I visited him in his hometown. I had just gone through one of the worst weekends of my life, and I looked forward to seeing him.

When I got to his house, I noticed he was acting a little strange, but I didn't think much of it. He wanted to go for a drive, which wasn't unusual, but I felt uneasy. After driving for a little bit, we stopped.

"I don't think we should date anymore," he said.

I was stunned.

He went on. He told me he didn't love me anymore and that he didn't want to marry me when he got back from his mission—he didn't even want to date me.

I left feeling angry, upset, frustrated, but mostly just heartbroken. I cried the entire way home, angry with myself for investing two years in someone who ended up not loving me.

For months I didn't let go. I held onto the idea that he would change—that suddenly he would love me again, just as suddenly as he had decided that he didn't. I couldn't concentrate on classes. I wouldn't let myself have fun. I constantly felt hurt and depressed.

During that time, I studied the scriptures

more than I ever had before and prayed fervently every day asking for help through this trial. I desperately wanted the Lord to take away my pain. It didn't go away all at once, but my pain did start to lessen. I began to let the Savior heal my broken heart. And I began to see what I had done wrong.

STANDARDS: A SAFE GUIDE

When we first started dating in high school, I didn't immediately see the negative consequences of not following the guidelines in *For the Strength of Youth*. Life actually seemed pretty great. I was doing well in my classes, and Jonathan and I were having fun. But after we broke up, I realized what I had missed out on. I sacrificed better relationships with my family and friends because I was so focused on my relationship with Jonathan. I caused myself a lot of pain because I was too emotionally involved too young. And even though my decision to steady date as a youth hadn't led me to violate the law of chastity, I left the relationship emotionally hurt. Had I followed the standard instead of thinking I was an exception to the rule, I could have avoided these trials.

After this experience, I learned a very valuable lesson. The Lord gives us standards not to prevent us from progressing but to guide us safely through this difficult life. I know that when we follow the standards, even if we don't understand why they're there, we will be protected. **NE**

More Help

For more on why you're counseled not to steady date in your teens, see "Unsteady Dating" at lds.org/go/unsteadyNE2 and "But We Were in Love" at lds.org/go/inloveNE2.

I feel such a **strong attraction** to the opposite sex that **I'm scared** I won't be able to **control my thoughts** and **actions** when I start **dating**.

What should I do?

First of all, realize that you're normal. The intensity of the attraction you feel is probably no different from what others feel. Secondly, do all you can to control your thoughts. Part of your

difficulty may be that you're allowing yourself to dwell on impure thoughts about the opposite sex. Controlling your thoughts can be hard, but you can do it.¹ Third, keep perspective. At your

age, dating is meant to be about having fun and getting to know a variety of people—not about serious relationships. And, as you are counseled in *For the Strength of Youth*, “When you begin dating, go with one or more additional couples. Avoid going on frequent dates with the same

person” ([2011], 4). Following these guidelines will protect you and should give you less cause for fear.² **NE**

NOTES

1. For advice, see “Worthy Music, Worthy Thoughts” at lds.org/go/worthyNE2 and “Serious Questions, Serious Answers” at lds.org/go/answersNE2.
2. For more, see the video “Chastity: What Are the Limits?” at lds.org/go/chastityNE2.

Why do we need to **receive our endowment** in the temple **before** serving a **mission**?

Both anciently and in modern times, the Savior sent forth His servants into the world after they were “endowed with power from on high” (see Luke 24:49; D&C 43:15–16; 105:33). We receive this blessing through the ordinances and covenants of the temple.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has explained that “this ‘power of godliness’ [D&C 84:20] comes in the person and by the influence

of the Holy Ghost.”¹ Temple ordinances and covenants give us power, protection, and gifts through the Spirit. The Lord wants to bless you with these things whether you serve a mission or not. But if you have chosen to serve a mission, He especially wants to ensure that you have these blessings before you go because, among other things, your ability to teach and testify as a missionary will be enhanced through these blessings and through what you are taught in the temple.

In addition, as a missionary you will teach people about and invite people to receive the ordinances and covenants of the temple. It therefore makes sense for you to have received the ordinances you will be

inviting people to work toward as they come unto Christ. **NE**

NOTE

1. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Power of Covenants,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 22.





Knowing the Purpose of Life

Imagine that a parent or teacher gave you a rather difficult and involved task but didn't tell you what it's for or why you're doing it. Being left in the dark in this way may cause you some confusion and uncertainty, and you might not do the greatest job. If, however, you learned about the reason and purpose for the task, you would likely be able to tackle it with greater confidence and clarity.

Our Heavenly Father has not left us in the dark about the purpose of this life, and our knowledge of His plan helps us see clearly what we should do and why we should do it.

One concise statement of Heavenly Father's purposes is in Moses 1:39. This scripture is quoted frequently in general conference and other settings because it helps us see God's love for us and our place in His plan. It also points to the Savior's role in accomplishing the dual purpose of providing immortality (through resurrection) and the possibility of eternal life with Heavenly Father (through the Atonement).

Another scripture, 2 Nephi 31:20, has also been mentioned a lot in general conference and tells us some of the qualities we must possess and things we must do in order to fulfill the Father's plan and receive His promise of eternal life.

This month your Sunday classes will focus on the plan of salvation. As you study the conference talks in the November 2013 *Ensign*, at conference.lds.org, and in the lessons at lds.org/youth/learn, think about how the speakers' knowledge of the plan of salvation helps them teach a principle clearly. Look for scriptures like Moses 1:39 and 2 Nephi 31:20 that help us understand this plan.

Hang, Download, or Share

Give yourself an easy reminder to prepare for your Sunday lessons on the purpose of life. Just place these cards in your scriptures, locker, or bedroom. You can also download or share them online at lds.org/go/cardsNE2.

For behold, this is

• • • •

MY WORK *and* MY GLORY

to bring to pass

THE IMMORTALITY AND ETERNAL LIFE

of man.

Moses 1:39

BACKGROUND TEXTURE AND PHOTOGRAPH BY TRYFONOV LEVGENI/ISTOCK/THINKSTOCK

WHEREFORE, YE MUST PRESS FORWARD
WITH A STEADFASTNESS IN CHRIST,
HAVING A PERFECT BRIGHTNESS OF
HOPE, AND A LOVE OF GOD AND OF
ALL MEN. WHEREFORE, IF YE SHALL
PRESS FORWARD, FEASTING UPON THE
WORD OF CHRIST, AND ENDURE TO
THE END, BEHOLD, THUS SAITH THE
FATHER: YE SHALL HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.

2 Nephi 31:20

MURMUR
MUR MUR
MUR MUR

"Laman, I'm
afraid you have
a heart murmur."

"Wow, Dad! You're really
good at this game! Now it's
my turn . . . Dad . . . Dad?"



RYAN STOKER



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY



RANDY GLASBERGEN



ARIE VAN DE GRAAFF

“The temple is so far away
that I don’t get
to attend very often.

How can the
temple be
a bigger part of
my life today?”

If you do your best to attend as often as you can, the Lord will be pleased with your efforts. When you can’t attend the temple, there are many things you can do to make the temple a bigger part of your life:

- **Live worthy to enter the temple.** Living up to the standards needed to enter the Lord’s house means we are always ready to be in His presence.
- **Plan to receive your own endowment and be married in the temple.** Setting a goal to receive these essential ordinances will keep you focused on the temple.
- **Dress modestly.** This will help prepare you to receive your own endowment.
- **Study scriptures relevant to the temple** (for example, Exodus 26–29; Leviticus 8; D&C 97; 109; 110; 124:25–42; Moses 2–5). The October 2010 *Ensign* was all about the temple too.
- **Learn about your ancestors** (visit FamilySearch.org) and see that temple ordinances are performed for them.
- **Ask others what the temple means to them** and share your testimony that the temple truly is the house of the Lord.
- **Help make your home like the temple:** “Establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God” (D&C 109:8).

You could prayerfully choose one or two of these ideas to try this month. They will help you feel the Spirit and learn more about the temple. **NE**

Think How Temples Bless Your Life



If we take temples for granted, they are far from our hearts. We need to think of the blessings the temple can bring us and go when we can. Even if you are only able to make a few visits a year, you can make them more meaningful by bringing family names or fasting. The Spirit in the Lord’s house is special—you want to make your visit count.

Benjamin S., 18, Utah, USA

Remain Pure and Worthy



The temple brings happiness in my life today. As I go to the temple, I learn more about our Heavenly Father and

Jesus Christ. My labors in the temple strengthen and refine my spirituality. I gain a better understanding of our purpose in life. The temple brings me courage in handling trials and temptations and gives me strength to overcome my weaknesses. The temple is the only place where we can be sealed together as eternal families, so I will prepare to enter the temple and remain pure and worthy.

Mickaella B., 16, Philippines

Keep the Spirit of the Temple

It takes seven hours for me to get to the Frankfurt Germany Temple, so my family and I can go only twice a year for one week at a time. But when I have an additional opportunity to go,

I take it because I know that it will be a great blessing. I keep the spirit of the temple by reading my scriptures every day. I use my temple recommend as a bookmark. Each time I see my recommend, I ask myself questions to make sure I am worthy of attending the temple. This strengthens me and helps me feel the Spirit. Even though the temple is far from home, I can still strive to live as if I could enter every day.

Lise G., 17, France

Prepare Yourself



Attending the temple two or three times a year is good, so long as we do so with a sincere and pure heart. We can encourage our Church leaders to organize trips to the temple. When we are not able to attend, let's try to prepare ourselves so that when the time comes, we can go with great joy. Our lives are busy, but prophets have promised that if we go to the house of the Lord, we will be blessed.

Krista L., 16, Paraguay

Display a Picture of the Temple

Try framing your favorite picture of the temple with the words "I will go inside someday!" Put it in your room so you can see it every day. Make a list of things you will do and not do so you can be worthy to enter the temple. Put the list next to the picture.

Christian J., 13, Idaho, USA

Read in Your Journal about Past Temple Visits

Write in your journal about your time at the temple and then read these pages when you are home. This will help you remember the feelings you had. It is especially important to record personal revelation. When I was attending the temple, I tried to listen to the Spirit very carefully because He is always ready to help us learn. Every time I listened, I discovered new truths about Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father as well as about temple work. When I focus on spiritual things while in the temple, I value it even more and the temple becomes very meaningful in my life.

Ol'ga Z., 18, Belarus

Do Family History



I think that doing family history work is about as close as you can get to being in the temple without being in the temple. You can give the names that you find to people in your family or



BE TEMPLE WORTHY

"May we always be worthy of holding a temple recommend. May that be one of

our objectives in life, to consistently and regularly sit before our priesthood leader and declare our worthiness to have this tangible evidence that the Lord approves of the type of life we are living and finds us worthy to enter His holy house.

"... If we are always worthy of that recommend and can truthfully answer the qualifying questions, we are on our way to the greatest gift the Lord has given us. May the Lord bless us that we may firmly resolve to always be temple worthy."

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "My First Temple Recommend," *New Era*, Apr. 2013, 4.

ward to take to the temple. If you do family history and keep your house a holy place, you are going to be close to the temple while you are still miles away from it.

Katelyn B., 13, Utah, USA

For more on this topic, see "Temple Blessings" by Elder Robert D. Hales on page 2 of this issue.

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

UPCOMING QUESTION

"I lost a dear friend recently. How do I deal with the grief?"

Send your answer and photo by March 15, 2014.

Go to newera.lds.org, and click "Submit Your Work."

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

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

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.



CONFERENCE CONNECTION

We need to be strong every day to meet the demands of life. We need constant spiritual nourishment. In the October 2013 general conference several Church leaders taught how prayer and scripture study strengthen our lives.

How can you better remember daily prayer and scripture study?

Well, you might put your scriptures on top of your school backpack. Or you could tape a picture of the Savior on the inside of your bedroom door. Use your imagination. Whatever you come up with, the increased spiritual stamina from regular prayer and scripture study will keep you going strong. For more, visit lds.org/go/scripturesNE2.



Here are thoughts shared by President Thomas S. Monson:

"Allied with prayer in helping us cope in our often difficult world is scripture study. The words of truth and inspiration found in our four standard works are prized possessions to me. I never tire of reading them. I am lifted spiritually whenever I search the scriptures."

"We Never Walk Alone," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 122.

"May we ever strive to be close to our Heavenly Father. To do so, we must pray to Him and listen to Him every day. We truly need Him every hour, whether they be hours of sunshine or of rain."

"I Will Not Fail Thee, nor Forsake Thee," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 87.

DATING 101

The room was abuzz with energy. Nearly 500 priests and Laurels from eight stakes in the Dallas, Texas, area had gathered together for a dating conference. Enough excitement bounced around the room to fuel a small country for a month or two.

For example, one part of the dating conference included a dance. Yet once the music started playing, you could hardly hear the tunes above the constant chatting as the youth continued getting to know one another.

The whole conference was

jam-packed with instruction on wholesome dating practices in accordance with Church teachings.

They had a musical skit about dating. Youth speakers spoke about dating from male and female perspectives. The conference also featured Brad Wilcox, a member of the Sunday School general board, who spoke about how young men and young women can form proper and appropriate bonds. He emphasized that the dating experience should be fun and should leave lasting, happy memories.



Sophia B., a Laurel who attended, said, "Sometimes we think we're missing out, but hearing Brother Wilcox's message helped me realize it's really not worth the emotional pain of turning from our standards."

This was the third annual dating conference for youth in the Dallas area. The youth and



leaders who plan these conferences hope to combat troubling trends and ideas surrounding dating among teenagers today. One trend at many high schools these days is the tendency to date one person exclusively.

Jacob C., a priest, explained, "The world sees *dating* as having a boyfriend or girlfriend

WE'VE GOT MAIL

GRATEFUL FOR ANSWERS

I wanted to say thank you so much. The *New Era* is amazing. I just thought I would tell you that your hard work answers prayers. This week a friend did some things that hurt me deeply. I was frustrated, scared, and confused about what to say to fix things.

Overwhelmed, I opened the *New Era* hoping for some answers. I opened to the Questions & Answers section in the February 2013 issue, where I found exactly what I needed to hear and the confirmation I had been praying for.

Hailey B., 16, Utah, USA

and being together all the time. When talking about dating with my friends at school, I usually have to translate what it means to me."

For the Strength of Youth teaches, "Avoid going on frequent dates with the same person" ([2011], 4).

Throughout the conference, youth were able to surround themselves with good friends who follow the same dating standards. They met youth from surrounding areas, received great instructions on dating, and had a fun time all in one setting.

GROUP DATE IDEA: A "BIGGER, BETTER" RALLY

Can a single pencil hold the power to make your wildest dreams come true? Not likely. However, you might be surprised at its potential during the course of a single evening.

For a fun and inexpensive group date, consider planning a "bigger, better" rally. This is similar to a scavenger hunt. You split a large group up into two smaller groups, head out to visit the homes of friends and families you know, and then come back at the end to compare results.

In this game you have a single goal: to keep trading whatever you have for something that is bigger or better. Each team starts out

with the same object: a pencil or some other small item. Then you visit as many friends and families you know as you can in the agreed-upon time limit to make as many trades as possible. You might go from a pencil to a pair of used pliers to a skateboard, and so forth.

Those simple pencils can turn into incredible things by the end of the night! Consider donating whatever you end up with at the end of the activity to a local charity or thrift store.



MY FAVORITE SCRIPTURE

Alma 32:21 "AND NOW AS I SAID CONCERNING FAITH—FAITH IS NOT TO HAVE A PERFECT KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS; THEREFORE IF YE HAVE FAITH YE HOPE FOR THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN, WHICH ARE TRUE."

This scripture really helped me in my life to stand firm and be strong, especially in my speech, in my testimony, in school, and in other aspects of my life.

Kristin P., 17, Iloilo, Philippines



DANGER! STAY INSIDE THE RAILINGS

One day, while driving along a road in California's Sequoia National Park, I noticed a turnout for Moro Rock. I've always enjoyed hiking, climbing, and exploring, so I decided to check it out.

At the turnout, a short 10-minute hike takes you to a large granite outcropping overlooking a huge river valley with sky-piercing peaks in the distance. I quickly made my way past throngs of other people on the trail. After a few quick turns, I was standing on the summit. The view was great, but I was disappointed because there were metal railings everywhere! I couldn't really explore the location like I wanted to.

I thought I was an experienced hiker, so I found the railings to be a little offensive to my sense of what was safe. In some cases, the placement of the railings seemed so arbitrary, and the straight lines of the railings prevented me from following along the curves of the rock. In a few places, the railing seemed to stop short of what would be an interesting spot to look over. For a moment I considered crossing over the barriers, but as I read the warning signs, I decided I'd better stay inside the railings.

A few months later, I noticed a news article about two people who fell off the rock and died. I immediately

thought, "How could anybody die at Moro Rock with all those railings around?" Then it struck me: they had gone outside the railings!

I have since thought how the railings at Moro Rock are a lot like the standards of the Church. Sometimes we may think their placement is arbitrary or that we don't need to follow them, but we should respect the standards whatever they are. We don't need to know exactly why a standard is given in order to appreciate that it is there. We should be thankful that prophets have marked the dangerous points along the path so we can stay safe from danger.

Sullivan R., Nevada, USA

IT WASN'T TOO SMALL FOR PRAYER

Last year, I was a freshman in high school and was having a really stressful year. I was involved in many extracurricular activities that took up much of my time and energy. One of these activities was being on the speech team. In speech competitions, you can choose to compete in several categories. I was competing in two categories that year.

Toward the middle of season, however, I realized that I was not being as successful as I wanted to be because of the stress I felt trying to prepare for both events. I wanted to quit the category I enjoyed least to pursue the one I enjoyed the most, but I was unsure if that would make my coaches think I wasn't committed enough. I talked to my dad, and he encouraged me to ask the Lord for advice.

I felt that talking with Heavenly Father about this would be silly because it was such a small issue, but I heeded my dad's counsel anyway. I prayed very hard, asking God to help me know what to do. I told Him how stressed I was, and I let Him know that I needed comfort and guidance. As I finished my prayer, I could feel warmth spreading over me. I thought of the scripture that says, "Be strong

THE DEER ENCOUNTER

On a snowy Friday night, I was driving home from a friend's house. As I was driving, I was prompted to pull over to the side of the road, and without much thought, I did. But after a moment, I began to wonder why—I didn't see any danger ahead.

At church I had been taught about recognizing promptings from the Holy Ghost, and I never felt a prompting as strong as this, but I still wasn't sure if the feeling came from me or from the Spirit.

After sitting in my car for about 10 seconds, I decided to continue home. The streets looked clear. Then, out of nowhere, a group of deer jumped into the road ahead of me—about 10 seconds away at my previous speed. If I had not stopped when prompted, I believe I would have hit the deer, totaled my car, and probably been hurt.

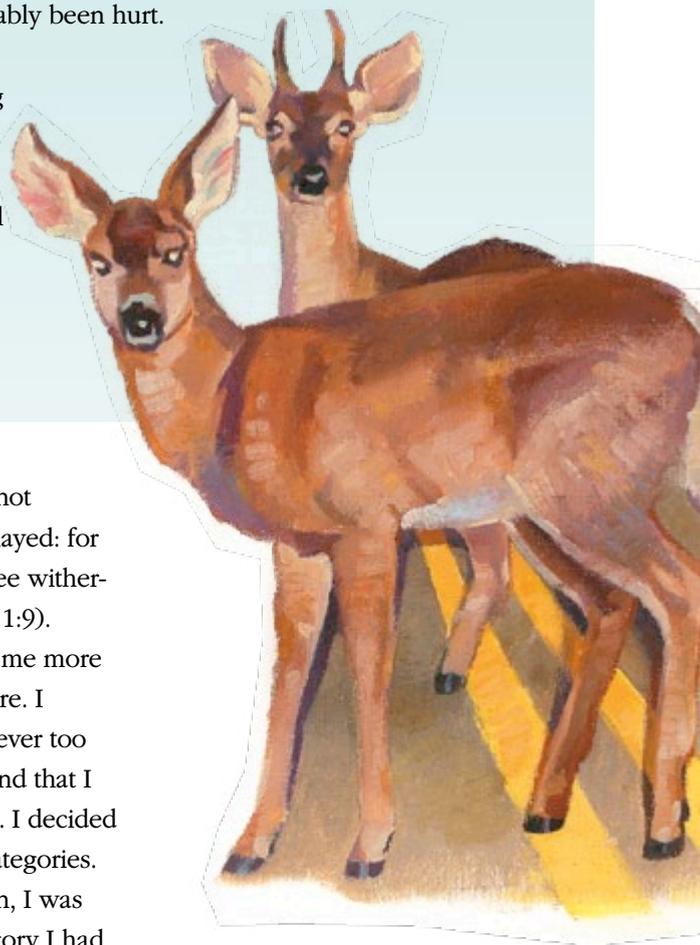
After this experience, I realized what a blessing it is to have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. I am grateful that the Holy Ghost not only warns us but also comforts and teaches us.

Parker J., Utah, USA

and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:9).

This scripture comforted me more than any scripture had before. I learned that no problem is ever too small for Heavenly Father and that I can turn to Him at any time. I decided to continue on with both categories. And at the end of the season, I was most successful in the category I had thought of quitting.

Sarah M., Minnesota, USA





By Elder
L. Tom Perry

Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

HOW TO FILL YOUR BOOK OF LIFE

Come to you with a question about eternal memories you are building in your lives. Are they followed by the comment “I wish I had,” or can you say, “I’m glad I did”?

Reaching back into history, if we could select just one principle that would especially contribute to the “I’m glad I did” memories, what would it be? It would be the principle of obedience.¹

We all make daily entries in our book of life. Occasionally we examine the entries we are making. What kind of memories will flood your mind as you examine the pages of your personal entries? How many pages will contain “I wish I had” entries? Will there be entries of procrastination and failure to take advantage of special opportunities? Will you find entries of thoughtlessness in treatment of family, friends, or even strangers? Will there be

those of remorse resulting from acts of unrighteousness and disobedience?

Fortunately, each day brings a clean, white page on which to change entries from “I wish I had” to “I’m glad I did” through the process of recognition, remorse, repentance, and restitution. Feelings of depression for past acts or missed opportunities will be outshone by memory banks filled with exhilaration, enthusiasm, and the joy of living.

As you examine the memorabilia you have put into your book of life, will you find the ones prescribed by the Lord in being obedient to His laws? Will there be baptismal certificates, priesthood ordinations for both the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods for the young men and Young Womanhood Recognition certificates for the young women, and, of course, a letter of honorable release from a full-time mission? Will there be current temple recommends, tithing receipts, a marriage performed in the holy temple, and acceptance of priesthood and auxiliary calls?

My counsel to you is to fill up your memory bank and your book of life with as many “I’m glad I did” activities as you possibly can (see Mosiah 2:41).

Find the commitment and discipline to seek after those positive

experiences that will lead to liberty and eternal life. It is my witness to you that God lives. It is by conforming our lives to His law that we will find true happiness here and eternal opportunities in the life to come. **NE**

From a Church Educational System fireside given on November 1, 1992.

NOTE

1. See the accounts of Alma the Younger (Mosiah 27; Alma 29, 36), Adam and Eve (Moses 5:4–11), Samuel and Saul (1 Samuel 15:9–11, 13–14, 20–24), and Nephi (1 Nephi 3–5). See also D&C 130:20–21.

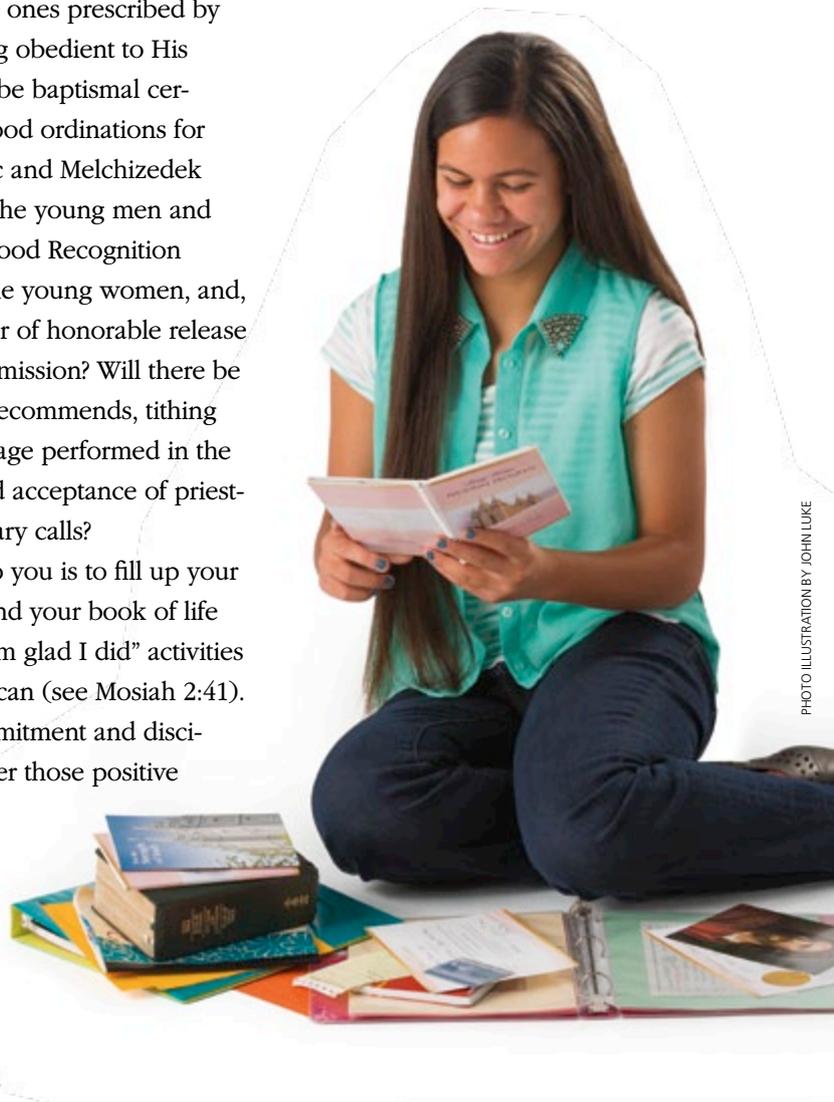


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN LUKE

Our everyday
DECISIONS

WILL
IMPACT
OUR

Lives
IN SIGNIFICANT
WAYS.

A SEEMINGLY SMALL DECISION . . .
CAN HAVE FAR-REACHING, EVEN ETERNAL,
CONSEQUENCES.

Elder Kevin S. Hamilton of the Seventy, October 2013 general conference

WHAT'S ONLINE



SCRIPTURE MASTERY ACTIVITIES

If you're looking for help in answering your friends' questions about the gospel, then don't forget the scripture mastery verses! They cover a wide range of topics that can help you respond to most gospel questions, especially when you memorize them. To help you commit them to memory, check out the Scripture Mastery Activities website with games and helps at scripturemastery.lds.org.



THE SAVIOR— OUR ANCHOR

Just like rock climbing alone and without gear can be dangerous, living your life without the help of the Savior can have disastrous consequences. Find out more in "A Secure Anchor," a Mormon Messages for Youth video, at lds.org/go/anchorNE2.



SAFETY AND PROTECTION



Have you ever wondered how you'll survive spiritually in the increasingly wicked world? President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, shares comforting advice on how to find strength and protection, along with an experience where he was protected in World War II. View the Mormon Messages for Youth video "Enemy Territory" at lds.org/go/safeNE2.