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NOT OF THE WORLD p. 2**

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**BECOMING WHAT YOU
WANT TO BE p. 40**



Here's your
personal
invitation!
Watch for
this symbol each
month during 2011,
and join in as we review
the wonderful features
the New Era has shared
with youth since we
started in 1971.



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BEING IN THE WORLD

*We must do as
Abraham did when he
pitched his tent and
built "an altar unto
the Lord," and not
do as Lot did when
he "pitched his tent
toward Sodom."*



but Not of the World

Sodom and Gomorrah have actual and symbolic significance representing wickedness in the world. The Lord appeared to Abraham and said, speaking of those who lived in Sodom and Gomorrah, “Their sin is very grievous” (Genesis 18:20). Their sinfulness was so great, and those who were righteous so few, that God destroyed these two cities of the plain. Our recent prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, stated: “All of the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah haunt our society. Our young people have never faced a greater challenge. We have never seen more clearly the lecherous face of evil.”¹

Separating evil from our lives has become even more essential since our homes are wired to bring much of what the Lord has condemned into our own living rooms if we are not vigilant. One of the most difficult challenges in our lives is to be in the world but not of the world (see John 15:19). Gospel doctrine makes it clear that we must live in this world to achieve our eternal destination. We must be tried and tested and found worthy of a greater kingdom (see 2 Nephi 2:11; D&C 101:78). We must do as Abraham did when he pitched his tent and built “an altar unto the Lord” (Genesis 13:18) and not do as Lot did when he “pitched his tent toward Sodom” (Genesis 13:12).

Being a Light to the World

We cannot avoid the world. A cloistered

existence is not the answer. In a positive sense, our contribution to the world is part of our challenge and is essential if we are to develop our talents. President Brigham Young (1801–77) said, “Every accomplishment, every polished grace, every useful attainment in mathematics, music, and in all science and art belongs to the Saints.”²

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) challenged members to accomplish more, stating, “We must recognize that excellence and quality are a reflection of how we feel about ourselves and about life and about God.”³

To accomplish the above, members of the Church need to be involved in the world in a positive way. How then do we balance the need to positively contribute to the world and to not succumb to the sins of the world? (See D&C 25:10; D&C 59:9.) Two principles will make a significant difference.

1. Let people know you are a committed Latter-day Saint.

I learned the importance of this early in my career. After finishing my education at Stanford Law School, I sought employment at a particular law firm. No members of the Church were associated with the firm, but the firm was made up of lawyers of character and ability. After a morning of interviews, the senior partner and two other partners invited me to lunch. The senior partner inquired if I would like a pre-lunch alcoholic drink and



**By Elder
Quentin L. Cook**

Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles



If our lives are pure, the Spirit will guide us. Then we will be able to symbolically pitch our tents toward the temple and the covenants we have made to the Lord.

later if I would like wine. In both cases, I declined. The second time, I informed him that I was an active Latter-day Saint and did not drink alcoholic beverages.

I received an offer of employment from the firm. A few months later, the senior partner told me the offer of the alcoholic beverages was a test. He noted that my résumé made it clear that I had served an LDS mission. He had determined that he would hire me only if I was true to the teachings of my own church. He considered it a significant matter of character and integrity.

In my years in San Francisco, I knew some members who avoided letting their associates know they were Latter-day Saints. Invariably they were drawn into compromising situations that could have been avoided had they forthrightly declared what they believed. They symbolically pitched their tents toward Sodom (see Genesis 13:12).

2. Be confident about and live your beliefs.

In our personal lives, we should avoid the sometimes evil and destructive pursuits of the world—especially when they are

contrary to the gospel standards. We should not be caught up in the current trends of society when they are not in harmony with revealed truth.

A derogatory comment occasionally made about members of the Church is: “They are like sheep waiting to be told what to do by their leaders. Why can’t they think for themselves?” While this comment may sound plausible on its face, the truth is that faithful Latter-day Saints, in a thoughtful and prayerful manner, study the doctrines and principles in the scriptures and in the counsel from living prophets and then seek to receive a confirming witness from the Holy Ghost. They don’t have to make every heartbreaking mistake in life. They know what is right and what is wrong. They don’t have to decide over and over again how they will live. They can benefit from the life experiences of all those generations that have preceded them and from instructions from our Father in Heaven and His anointed servants. They can turn away from temptation.

We inevitably must make choices. If we know the doctrines and principles of the gospel, we can make wise decisions. If our lives are pure, the Spirit will guide us. Then we will be able to symbolically pitch our tents toward the temple (see Genesis 13:18) and the covenants we have made to the Lord, and we will be in the world and not of the world. **NE**

Adapted from “Lessons from the Old Testament: In the World but Not of the World,” Ensign, Feb. 2006, 53–55.

NOTES

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Living in the Fulness of Times,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 6.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 196.
3. Spencer W. Kimball, “The Gospel Vision of the Arts,” *Ensign*, July 1977, 5.

Articles of Faith 1:13

The Articles of Faith come from a letter written by the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1842 to an editor named John Wentworth. They were first published in the Church's Times and Seasons newspaper in Nauvoo and have since become part of latter-day scripture.



We Believe

"[This] article of our faith is one of the basic declarations of our theology. We ought to reflect on it again and again. Then, whenever we might be tempted to do anything shoddy or dishonest or immoral, there would come into our minds with some force this great, all-encompassing statement of the ethics of our behavior."

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), "Fear Not to Do Good," *Ensign*, Jan. 2000, 2.

Chaste

"Human sexuality is more than a physical matter. Chastity and fidelity begin in the spirit, not in the body. They are an expression of the condition of our spirit. When our spirit is in tune with godly thinking and gospel truths, we want to live high standards, and our actions reflect that desire. Thus, chastity and fidelity are more than sexual abstinence before marriage and sexual fidelity after marriage. They express the quality of our spiritual life."

Terrance D. Olson, "Truths of Moral Purity," *Ensign*, Oct. 1998, 43.

Benevolent

To be benevolent is to be kind and giving, in a word—to do good. During His ministry Jesus Christ "went about doing good, . . . for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). As you live your life with benevolence, God will strengthen and uplift you.

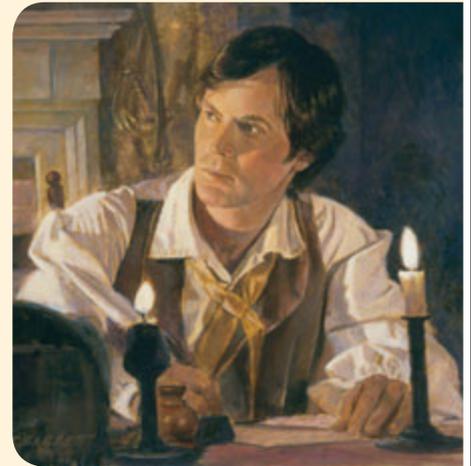
Admonition of Paul

See Philippians 4:8, which is part of a letter from the Apostle Paul to the Saints in Philippi.

13 **“We believe in being ^honest, ^tru^e, ^chaste, ^benevolent, ^virtuous, and in doing ^good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we ^hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to ^endure all things. If there is anything ^virtuous, ^lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.**”

Seek after These Things

Read the “Entertainment and Media” section in *For the Strength of Youth* (page 17). Is the entertainment you choose consistent with these standards and with the thirteenth article of faith? Consider writing in



your journal about how you have been blessed by making good media choices.

Virtuous

“Virtue ‘is a pattern of thought and behavior based on high moral standards’ (*Preach My Gospel*, 118). It encompasses chastity and moral purity.



Virtue begins in the heart and in the mind. . . . It is the accumulation of thousands of small decisions and actions. . . . Virtuous women and men possess a quiet dignity and inner strength. They are confident because they are worthy to receive and be guided by the Holy Ghost.”

Elaine S. Dalton, Young Women general president, “A Return to Virtue,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 78–80.

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

2011 Mutual Theme

“We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things” (Articles of Faith 1:13).



Elaine S. Dalton (center), president; Mary N. Cook (left), first counselor; and Ann M. Dibb (right), second counselor.



David L. Beck (center), president; Larry M. Gibson (left), first counselor; and Adrián Ochoa (right), second counselor.

WE BELIEVE!

By the Young Women General Presidency

We believe that one virtuous young woman, led by the Spirit, can change the world. As a Young Women general presidency, we have observed young women doing what they believe is right, standing as witnesses, living the gospel standards, and truly making a difference. It is amazing what one young woman can accomplish when she is virtuous, listens to the still, small voice of the Holy Ghost, and then acts!

When Joseph Smith wrote the thirteenth article of faith, he expressed everything we can and must seek and become as believers. Joseph Smith knew that we must believe in standards and values and seek after these things in order to have the power and strength of the Holy Ghost. He knew we would need to follow the Savior in word and deed. He knew that doing this would prepare us to be worthy of the blessings of the temple.

Believe in Yourself

How will you do this? How will you lead others in following the Savior's example, living a virtuous life, and preparing for the temple? First, believe in yourself! Your courage and strength have helped you become a leader, and your commitment will make all the difference this year. Your ideas, innovations, and actions can shape the world now and in the future.

Because of the technological world in which you live, you have the ability

to flood the earth with those things that are virtuous, lovely, and praiseworthy. You have at your fingertips the ability to testify of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the entire world. Never before has a generation had such an ability, blessing, and opportunity.

Three Things Plus One—Every Day!

We believe in you. Now is the time to unite and begin a change that will empower you and bless others. We invite you to continue to do three things every single day—plus one.

1. Pray every morning and every night.
2. Read in the Book of Mormon at least five minutes every day.
3. Smile!
4. In addition, we invite you to obey and live the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*. Become familiar with these standards. Share them with others. And *be* an example of the believers.

This year, believe. Believe you are a daughter of Heavenly Father, who loves you and will help you. Believe in the Savior Jesus Christ. He is your light. He is your hope. He is your exemplar and Redeemer. Believe in yourself! Believe in the power of all young women living the standards. All together we can seek after those things that are virtuous, lovely, and praiseworthy. All together we can make a difference in our world.

We believe you are the generation whose belief and actions will change the world. We believe in you! **NE**

BECOMING A FAITHFUL PRIESTHOOD MAN

By the Young Men General Presidency

Before you graduated from Primary, many of you memorized the thirteenth article of faith and hopefully can still recite it by heart. This year we as a presidency challenge you to move beyond simple memorization and truly learn what the Prophet Joseph Smith meant when he said we follow the admonition of Paul. We ask you to carefully study each quality mentioned in the thirteenth article of faith, this year's Mutual theme. We invite you to act upon what you learn. And we invite you to share with others the joy that living these standards brings into your life.

This pattern of behavior is the same one you are using in the new Duty to God program: learn, act, share. Following these three simple steps will help you become a faithful priesthood man.

The thirteenth article of faith states in part, "We believe in *being* honest, true, chaste, benevolent, [and] virtuous" (emphasis added). *Being* is more than

how you act—it is who you are. *Being* honest, true, chaste and so on makes you different from most young men your age. When others see the good qualities in you, they will want what you have. As you learn your priesthood duties and act upon them, you will change. As you go about "doing good to all men," you will bless and change people's lives.

Good Examples

Ben is a great example of helping others and being a blessing in their lives. He looks out for people who are not as popular or don't feel as involved. He thinks of others more than himself. When Kelon moved into Ben's ward, Kelon described his life as "nothing but a party" that was going in the wrong direction. He felt empty inside. But because of the examples of his Latter-day Saint friends and particularly that of his best friend, Ben, he saw there was a better way. Ben invited Kelon to participate in Church activities. At those activities

Kelon noticed there was something different about the young men there. He wanted to be like them. He wasn't sure what it was, but he knew he wanted it. He wanted to be happy like they were.

He prayed to God and knew that he needed to join the Church. Ben baptized his best friend when they were 16. Kelon said of his baptism, "I had finally found peace, and I felt the loving arms of the Savior as I came out of the font. I'm grateful for good friends who live what they believe."

Aaronic Priesthood Power

Doctrine and Covenants 58:27–28 says that "men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause," doing "many things of their own free will" in order to "bring to pass much righteousness; for the power is in them." The power is in you. You have been entrusted with the power of the Aaronic Priesthood. We love you, and we know you can do great things as you become a faithful priesthood man. **NE**

*As you go about "doing good to all,"
you will bless and change people's lives.*



IN THE PRESENCE OF ANGELS

When I was set apart as a missionary, my stake president gave me a promise that at times I would feel the presence of angels and they would protect me.

By Samuel Gould

In 2003 I was called to serve a mission in the Ivory Coast, in western Africa. As I researched, I found that the country seemed to be involved in constant civil war, but I was comforted to learn there was a ceasefire in place. Further comfort came when I was set apart. The stake president gave me a promise that while I was serving, I would at times feel the presence of angels and they would protect me. I was also promised that if I was obedient, I would return home safely.

In the first months of my mission, the mission president counseled us to be prepared. In our apartment in the capital city of Abidjan, we kept a three-day supply of food and water, and at meetings we received training on what to do if conflict broke out.

Still, we were nervous when rebels broke the ceasefire on November 4, 2004. Our mission leaders gave us a 6:00 p.m. curfew. During our last teaching appointment the next day, we heard a sudden explosion. Immediately we ended with a prayer, left the family a chapter from the Book of Mormon to read, and rushed home. The other companionship in our apartment

arrived shortly after us. The assistants phoned and told us not to leave our apartments under any circumstances—not for church or even food. We learned that some French peacekeepers had been killed in air strikes, so France had attacked the military airport, crippling the small Ivorian air force. In reaction, massive riots had broken out across the capital.

Tens of thousands of protesters swarmed the streets, wielding machetes, looting French shops, and breaking into homes where they suspected the French lived. From our window, we could see the violence unfolding. We knew we were in danger because of our white skin.

On Sunday afternoon, November 7, amid the sounds of screaming, gunshots, and explosions, we held a sacrament meeting in our apartment with only four participants. After blessing and passing the bread and water from our three-day food supply, each of us shared a scripture and bore testimony. I read Doctrine and Covenants 84:88: “And whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your

left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up.” As I read, I reflected on the blessing my stake president had given me, and I knew I would be safe.

We were shut in our apartment for a week. Ward leaders and members visited us and brought us food. One member even took messages from us and e-mailed our families, letting them know we were safe for now. These members’ help was amazing! Meanwhile, our families and Church members around the world were praying for our safety. As my family prayed, they felt a calm assurance that I would be OK.

On Friday, November 12, our evacuation began. Ivorian Church members led us through the streets of Abidjan, and though we heard reports of other refugees being harmed, we made it safely through the barricades to the British ambassador’s home. Then British forces evacuated us from the country, and my family’s prayers were answered when they saw two other elders and me on the news being evacuated. In the dark of the night, members took other non-African missionaries to the mission home. From there the



Italian air force transported them to Ghana, where we were reunited.

Despite dozens of attacks on foreigners throughout the country, none of the missionaries were harmed during the riots, and no missionary apartments were broken into. Because we listened to the mission president's counsel, we were safe at home when the riots broke out and we had supplies necessary for our survival. And even more comforting than military protection was knowing we had the Lord's protection.

When we were being evacuated, I found out that on Sunday afternoon after our sacrament meeting, a group of protesters had been preparing to attack our apartment. One of our neighbors shouted, "They aren't French!" but they would not leave. Finally, another neighbor cried, "They're missionaries!" and the rioters dispersed. I again remembered the words, "My Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you," and I realized that I was living the promise from my stake president's blessing. I had seen prophecy fulfilled. **NE**

Note: Conditions in the Ivory Coast have improved since 2004. Nonnative missionaries are now serving there again.

40 Years of Prophetic Messages

*Messages from Presidents of
the Church in the New Era.*

Since the very first issue of the *New Era*, Presidents of the Church have used its pages to deliver their prophetic counsel to the Church's youth. Here are selected messages that appeared in the *New Era* from each of the Church Presidents over the last 40 years.

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1970–72)



I am making a plea for modesty and chastity and for all the members of the Church, male and female alike, to be chaste, clean in their lives, and obedient to the covenants

and commandments the Lord has given us.

"My Dear Young Fellow Workers," *New Era*, Jan. 1971, 5.

President Harold B. Lee (1972–73)



To some it may seem old-fashioned to speak of virtue and chastity, honesty, morality, faith, character, but these are the qualities which have built great men and women and point the way by which

one may find happiness in the living of today and eternal joy in the world to come.

"Conference Excerpts," *New Era*, Jan. 1974, 6.

President Spencer W. Kimball (1973–85)



Immorality does not begin in adultery or perversion. It begins with little indiscretions like sex thoughts, sex discussions, passionate kissing, petting and such, growing with

every exercise. . . .

. . . Beloved youth, for those of you who have erred, the Lord and his church can forgive. . . .

Since [God] is our Father, he naturally desires to raise us up, not to push us down, to help us live, not to bring about our spiritual death.

"President Kimball Speaks Out on Morality," *New Era*, Nov. 1980, 41, 44.

President Ezra Taft Benson (1985–94)



I want to talk to you young people frankly and honestly. . . . You are not just ordinary young men and women. You are choice spirits. . . .

. . . First, I counsel you to live a morally clean life. . . .

. . . Second, I counsel you to stay close to your parents. . . .

. . . Third, I counsel you, in the words of Jesus Christ, to "watch and pray always lest ye enter into temptation; for Satan desireth to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (3 Ne. 18:18).

"To 'the Rising Generation'," *New Era*, June 1986, 4, 5, 6, 8.

President Howard W. Hunter (1994–95)



We hope that you, as young members of the Church, will go often to the temple to perform baptisms for the dead. When the time comes for you to go on a mission

or be married, we pray that you will go to the temple worthily and feel the beautiful spiritual atmosphere that is present in the temple.

"Your Temple Recommend," *New Era*, Apr. 1995, 6.

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1995–2008)



I am going to let your teachers give you the A's that I hope you earn. I want to talk about some B's.

1. Be grateful.
2. Be smart.
3. Be clean.
4. Be true.
5. Be humble.
6. Be prayerful.

"A Prophet's Counsel and Prayer for Youth," *New Era*, Jan. 2001, 7.

President Thomas S. Monson (2008–)

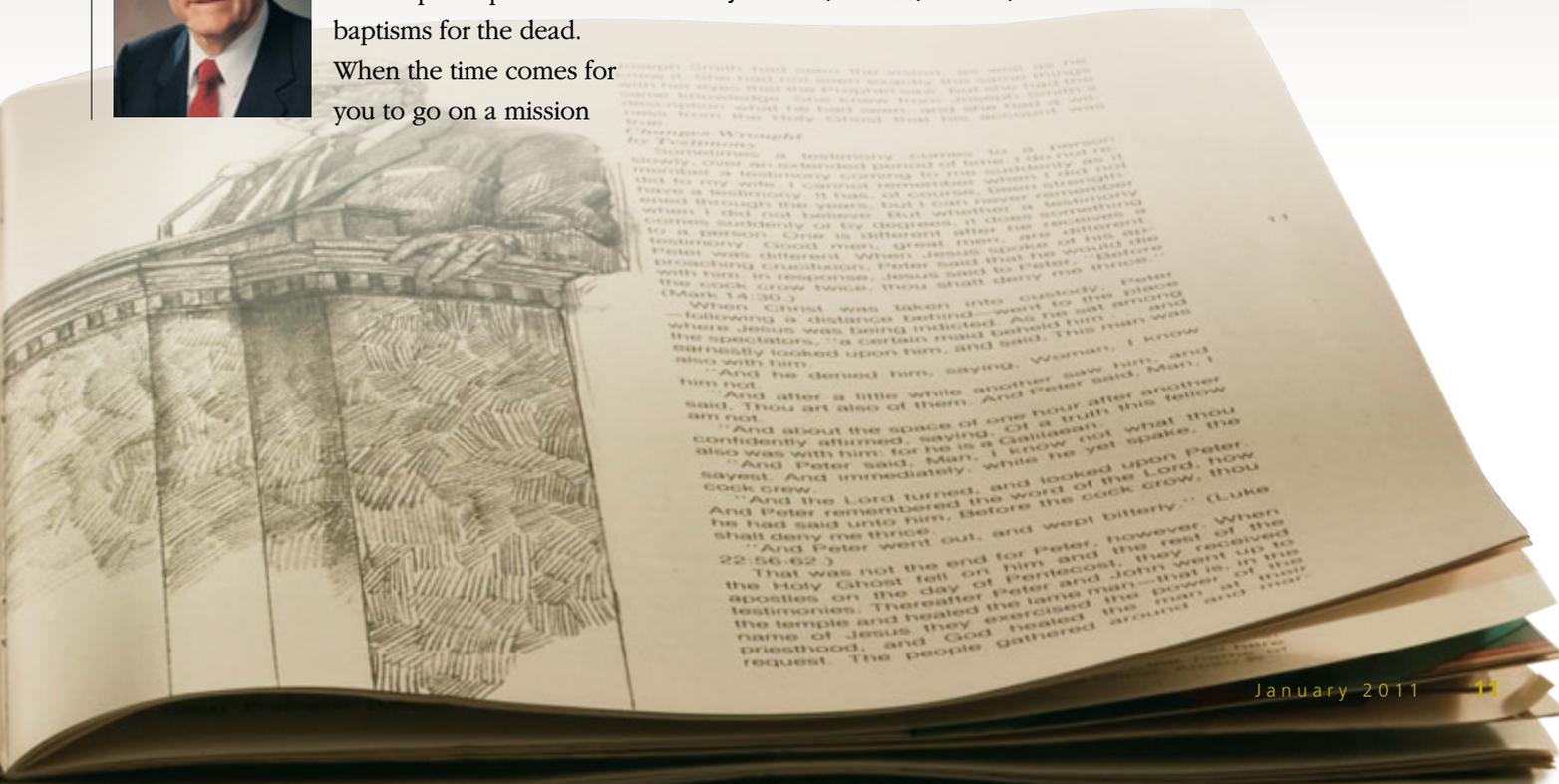


As we look heavenward, we inevitably learn of our responsibility to reach outward. To find real happiness, we must seek for it in a focus outside ourselves.

. . . Ours is the opportunity to build, to lift, to inspire, and indeed to lead.

"The Joy of Service," *New Era*, Oct. 2009, 4.

Residents of the Church show great love for the youth of the Church. That love is evident in the counsel they have provided in the *New Era*, from January 1971 to the present day.





*Voices reading the
audio version of the New Era
are teens just like you.*

LISTEN



Did you know that the Church has been recording publications and manuals for the blind since the late 1950s? Six years ago, David Shaw, the sound designer at LDS Motion Picture Studios thought visually-impaired children and youth should hear the *Friend* and *New Era* read by people their own ages. Now anyone can listen to these magazines read aloud online. The *New Era* spoke with Hayley (17), McKay (15), and Abby Newell (13) about their experiences recording articles each month.

How long have you been recording Church magazines?

Abby: Hayley was 10 and I was 6 when we started.

Hayley: At first it was kind of scary because we had to audition. McKay started a little while after Abby and I began recording. Then came our brother Jacob, who still just reads for the *Friend* because he's 10.

When my voice was younger I only used to read the *Friend*. Now I read both the *Friend* and *New Era*. We've all gotten better over time at enunciating things well and at making our voices go up and down to keep the sentences from all sounding the same.

UP!

By Heidi Lewis

Can you explain the process of recording?

Hayley: We get the script beforehand. It's just the words from the magazines and nothing else. We read through the articles and concentrate on any words or phrases we might stumble over.

McKay: When we get to the studio, Brother Shaw takes us to the recording booth. It's a small room with thick padding on the walls and ceiling so the sound doesn't get out. There is only room for a chair, a narrow desk with a computer monitor on it, and a huge microphone.

Abby: We also put on headphones so we can hear Brother Shaw's instructions from the other room.

McKay: We have to be very quiet in there. The microphone is extremely sensitive. It can pick up the turn of a page, a squeaky chair, or even a pencil writing on a piece of paper. First Brother Shaw takes our voice levels. Every voice has a different range, so it is important to adjust the volume for the sound to come through OK. After we do the voice level, a story will scroll up on the computer screen. Then we start to read.

What do you enjoy about recording?

Hayley: I like reading the longer articles about youth and the interesting things they do.

Abby: It's fun doing "Matt and Mandy" for the *Friend* with my younger brother Jacob. Once they switched it around and had me as Matt and Jacob as Mandy. That was pretty funny. We used to just read the articles, but now they are putting in more special sound effects.

Hayley: Sometimes the messages in the stories you read are really simple, but there is a truth to them that you need in your life.



NEmore

Recordings for the visually impaired are available in several formats, including half-speed cassettes and MP3 files downloadable from the Internet. The entire article, including sidebars, is recorded. To listen to a recording of this and other articles, visit newera.lds.org.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY HEIDI LEWIS AND COURTESY OF THE MORMON TABERNACLE CHOIR



Does everyone in your family record for the visually impaired?

Abby: Everyone but our mom records. Our dad began reading articles for the blind after Hayley, McKay, and I started.

Your dad, Lloyd Newell, is the announcer for *Music and the Spoken Word* with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. What are some interesting experiences you have had with him?

Hayley: Sometimes we go with him on Sunday to the broadcast. Most of the time the broadcast is still held in the Tabernacle, but during the summer, Christmas, and General Conference it is held at the Conference Center. It's fun to go in the back rooms at the

Conference Center. They have an American Sign Language room. I like going there because I am taking ASL in school.

Abby: At Christmastime they have special guest artists. We get to meet interesting people like senators and famous musicians. Sometimes we get to meet General Authorities.

You have had a lot of great family experiences. What else do you like to do as a family?

Hayley: We all play tennis together. Everyone also plays the piano, and Abby clogs.

Abby: I belong to a clogging team. We do solo and team dances and go to competitions.

McKay: We all like to go skiing as a family, too.

Hayley: Every summer we go to southern Utah. My dad loves the hikes.

Abby: We have a lot of fun doing things together as a family.

How has recording the Church magazines influenced your lives?

Hayley: It's not always easy to take the time to record. I might be feeling bad about something in my life, but then I go to read and I realize I am doing something for someone else. I immediately feel better. It's uplifting.

McKay: There are times when I am recording that I really feel the Spirit. I even have to stop reading for a moment.

Abby: I like it because it's something we can do together. It is fun doing what my siblings and my dad are doing.

Hayley: Recording has strengthened our family because we are with each other. We are spending time together. And we love serving as a family. **NE**



Jacob, Abby, McKay, and Hayley Newell—along with their dad, Lloyd—all record Church magazine articles for the visually impaired.



IT'S NICE TO BE
IMPORTANT

BUT IT'S
MORE IMPORTANT
TO BE

NICE

DETAIL FROM SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME, BY CARL HEINRICH BLOCH, USED BY PERMISSION OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIC MUSEUM AT FREDERIKSBORG IN HILLERÖD, DENMARK. MAY NOT BE COPIED

“When people ask me if I’m Mormon, how can I answer in a way that creates a missionary opportunity?”

Sometimes it is surprising to have a friend or even a stranger ask you if you are a member of the Church. Usually it means that they have noticed something about your behavior that has given them a clue to your beliefs. And often what they have noticed is a good thing.

First of all, take their question as a compliment. Feel good that you can answer yes. Then ask them if there is anything they would like to know about the Church. You can rely on the articles of faith, the Word of Wisdom, or *For the Strength of Youth* to give you the information to answer accurately what the Church believes. If the person asking is a friend, you can offer to take them to a Church activity or meeting such as Mutual, seminary, or sacrament meeting. If they ask questions that you don’t really know how to answer, say that you will ask your parents or Church leaders and get the answers they want. If they are truly curious about the Church, you can feel comfortable just answering their questions as best you can. **NE**

Doing the Things I Do



When people ask me if I’m Mormon, I ask them what made them ask. They will typically list off reasons like how I’ve been nice to them or how I’m always doing what’s right.

This usually leads to conversations about why I act the way I do, which gives me a perfect missionary opportunity right there.

Mikayla D., 15, Alaska, USA

Proud to Be a Member



When someone asks you if you are Mormon, you can smile and say yes that you are Mormon and proud of it. That will catch people’s attention and usually start a discussion.

People find it very intriguing that you go to seminary every morning or go to church every Sunday for three hours and enjoy it.

Rebecca G., 15, California, USA

Recite an Article of Faith

I think the best way to respond is with conviction and by asking if they have any questions. Also you can answer by reciting an article of faith. I did this once for a fifth grade teacher on a bus. Have an open mind and heart, and I believe the Spirit will guide you.

Angie W., 12, Arizona, USA

Be a Good Example



Once a person asks you if you’re a Mormon, then that has just become a missionary opportunity. They usually ask because they want to know something about the Church

or to ask a “do you do this” question. Just be a good example to everyone, and that person will see that you are different from everybody else.

James L., 15, California, USA

Who Is Mormon?



If someone asks you if you are Mormon, you could say, “No, but I’d love to tell you about him!” That might raise their eyebrows, and there’s your opportunity to share the gospel. I don’t think most people realize that Mormon is an actual person. We belong to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Mormon is one of the prophets in the Book of Mormon.

Leksi R., 16, Utah, USA

Feeling of Happiness

I was having lunch at school when one of my friends asked, “Why are we here on earth?” My other friend and I, who are both LDS, answered her question and went on talking about it and things related to it. She seemed very interested. We could have talked to her all recess. The feeling of happiness was tremendous.

Renee E., 13, Washington, USA

Listen to the Spirit



Just be yourself and remember to tell them that we all are children of our Heavenly Father. Listen to the Spirit. The Spirit will always tell you what to do.

Derek R., 16, Washington, USA

Keeping the Sabbath Day Holy



There have been times when my friends and teammates ask me various questions about things I do and why I do them.

For example, when my teammates find out I don’t play soccer games on Sundays, some have asked me if I’m Mormon. I tell them that Sundays are special days to me, and I spend them worshipping God and being with my family. Once they know that I’m a Mormon, I know that they are watching what I say and do. This can lead to more opportunities for me to share the gospel with my friends.

Joe M., 17, California, USA

Trying Harder to Be Positive



I would say yes, I am Mormon, and say I believe in God the Eternal Father and His Son Jesus Christ and in the Holy Ghost.

Then I would ask if you want to learn more I could give them a Book of Mormon and tell them about the Church Web site. If he or she was a school friend, I would try harder to be a positive influence and tell them that me being in the Church has made me a lot better person.

Jonathan R., 14, Missouri, USA

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



YOU CAN'T MISS

// When the Lord delivers this person to your view, just chat—about anything. You can’t miss. You

don’t have to have a prescribed missionary message. Your faith, your happiness, the very look on your face is enough to quicken the honest in heart. . . . The gospel will just tumble out. You won’t be able to contain yourself!”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Witnesses unto Me,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 15.

NEXT QUESTION

“At school a lot of people curse and talk about immorality. I want to get away from this bad language, but it’s everywhere. What can I do?”

Send your answer and photo by February 15, 2011.

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

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

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



LEARN AND DO

"The great task of life is to learn the will of the Lord and then do it."

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), "The Great Commandment—Love the Lord," *Ensign*, May 1988, 4.

Some choices are easy: What cereal should I eat? What shoes should I wear? Should I watch TV or read the scriptures?

But other choices are more difficult:

Where should I go to college? When should I go on a mission? Who should I marry?

How can we make these "big" decisions when we don't know what the future holds? After all, we don't want to make a mistake. But if we are going to become like our Heavenly Father, we *have* to learn how, with His guidance, to make important decisions for ourselves.

We know Heavenly Father loves us and wants us to succeed. So when we are having difficulty discerning His will, it may be

because we are doing something to complicate the process. Here are six barriers that might interfere with our ability to receive personal revelation.

1. We haven't made a decision.

Elder Merrill C. Oaks, formerly of the Seventy, tells of an experience he had while serving as a bishop. A young woman in his ward was praying to know if she should marry the young man she was dating, but she didn't feel she had received an answer.

Elder Oaks urged her to continue praying, but he also counseled her to decide for herself. "I told her she was expecting the Lord to make the decision for her," he said, "but He won't do that. Even a decision as important

REMOVING ROADBLOCKS

to Revelation

By LaNae Valentine

*Making decisions isn't always easy.
But it's easier when you get the
obstacles out of the way.*

as marriage requires us to exercise our own agency. . . .

“I told her she must exercise her own agency by studying it out in her mind, making a tentative decision, and then asking the Lord for a confirmation of her decision.”

She eventually got her answer, explaining, “I just began to feel [more and more positive], and I knew that my prayers were being answered” (“How to Get an Answer,” *New Era*, Aug. 2001, 47).

You can't always expect the Lord to reveal things to you if you haven't studied it out in your own mind. It's your job to work through the question, come to a conclusion, and then ask Him if He agrees with you.

2. We haven't learned how to listen.

In our noisy world, we rarely take the time to listen. Good listening, however, takes effort. After studying, pondering, and praying, listen carefully to the Spirit or you could miss the answers you are seeking. Find a quiet, still place where you can approach Heavenly Father in prayer.

President Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles describes the Spirit as “a still, small voice—a voice that is felt rather than heard” (“The Cloven Tongues of Fire,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 8). The Spirit has difficulty impressing a busy, racing, anxious mind. More often than not, whisperings of the Spirit will go unheard if you are too preoccupied to listen. We each could ask ourselves: What could I turn off, turn down, or tune out in order to hear the voice of the Spirit in my life? What could I eliminate from my busy life so that I would have more time to be still, to study scriptures, ponder, and pray?

3. We're too intent on wanting what we want.

Sometimes we don't recognize answers to prayer because we focus so much on our own desires. We don't see that the Lord wants us to do something else—for example, sometimes you may want to act when the answer is to wait. Sometimes, He may want us to step outside our comfort zone, and that may take courage. But



remember, when we seek the will of the Lord, we must be willing to be obedient—we must be humble and ask Him to write His will upon our hearts. It is then that the answer from a loving Heavenly Father can be spoken to the mind by the still, small voice.

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, says he has learned that “answers [to my prayers] were most clear when what I wanted was silenced by an overpowering need to know what God wanted” (“Write upon My Heart,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 86).

4. Our hearts are not prepared to receive His answers.

Elder H. Burke Peterson, formerly of the Seventy, said, “As we go through life, we oftentimes build a rock wall between ourselves and heaven. This wall is built by our unrepented sins, . . . [with] stones of many different sizes and shapes. There could be stones because we have been unkind to someone. Criticism of leaders or teachers may add another stone. . . . Vulgar thoughts and actions may add

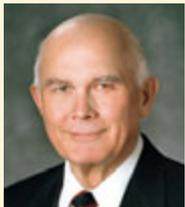
some rather large stones in this wall” (“Prayer—Try Again,” *Ensign*, June 1981, 73).

Because of the wall we might think, “Heavenly Father doesn’t hear,” or “He doesn’t answer,” but it’s because His counsel bounces off the wall *we* built! It is our challenge to tear this wall down, through repentance, obedience, and righteousness. Then we can be in tune with the Spirit.

5. We lack faith or confidence in Heavenly Father.

Sometimes we think that others can receive answers, but we can’t. If so, we can build faith by learning that God lives, that He knows us, that He loves us, and that He has a plan for us. When you pray, picture Him as the kind, wise, understanding Father that He is. He wants you to succeed.

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles teaches that when answers don’t seem to come or come in a way that we don’t expect, we should remember that “sometimes He answers yes, sometimes no. Often He withholds an answer, not for lack of concern, but because



INTELLIGENCE AND EXPERIENCE

"I once heard a young woman in testimony meeting praise the spirituality of her husband,

indicating that he submitted every question to the Lord. She told how he accompanied her shopping and would not even choose between different brands of canned vegetables without making his selection a matter of prayer. That strikes me as improper. I believe the Lord expects us to use the intelligence and experience he has given us to make these kinds of choices."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Revelation," *New Era*, Sept. 1982, 46.

He loves us—perfectly. He wants us to apply truths He has given us. For us to grow, we need to trust in our ability to make correct decisions. We need to do what we feel is right. In time, He will answer. He will not fail us" ("Learning to Recognize Answers to Prayer," *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 30–31).

6. We don't recognize answers when they come.

How often have you had an impression and rationalized it away as your own thought? For instance, when faced with a particular challenge or problem, an impression might come as to what to do about it. Instead of acting on that prompting, many of us second- and third-guess the prompting and begin to doubt that it actually came from the Spirit.

One of our problems is we do not pay

attention to the Lord when He whispers to us on seemingly insignificant things. Then when something big comes along and we really want inspiration, we're out of practice and don't know how to receive it. President Harold B. Lee counseled, "All of us should try to . . . give heed to the sudden ideas that come to us, and if we'll give heed to them and cultivate an ear to hear these promptings we too—each of us—can grow in the spirit of revelation" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* [2000], 51).

Move the Barriers Away

As you go through life, sometimes painful or disappointing experiences will tempt you to build barricades around your heart. Feelings of inadequacy or unworthiness can become barriers if they cause you to turn your heart away from Heavenly Father. Through disobedience, you can roadblock revelation by hardening your heart.

When there are blockades between your heart and the will of your Heavenly Father, you will have difficulty choosing in accordance with God's will.

But you can, like Nephi, pray that your heart will be softened (see 1 Nephi 2:16). That removes a roadblock. You can ask Heavenly Father to heal your broken heart (see Psalm 147:3). That moves another obstacle out of the way. Keep listening to your heart, keep trusting in the Lord (see Proverbs 3:5–7), and He will help you to know what your barriers are and how to remove them. Then you'll be without roadblocks on the road to righteous decisions. **NE**

LaNae Valentine, Ph.D., is the Director of Women's Services Resources at Brigham Young University. This article is taken from a BYU devotional address, "Discerning the Will of the Lord for Me," given on June 29, 2004.

CHOOSE TO CHOOSE

Iwish that as a teenager I had better understood how to discern the will of the Lord for me. Over the years I developed a phobia of making "wrong" choices or "mistakes," so I made decisions by default, leaving things to chance, or asking someone else rather than actively seeking the will of the Lord in my life. The Lord, however, expects us to act.

Here are some scriptures I have found that have helped me to understand that I am free to choose, and how to best use that freedom.

Alma 37:37: "Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good."

Jacob 4:10: "Seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand."

D&C 58:26–28: Agency endows us with the freedom to develop our capacity to make wise choices.

I Hope They Call Me

By Loran Cook

Maybe you've heard the Primary song "I Hope They Call Me on a Mission." There is actually another important children's song about serving a mission. It says: "I want to be a missionary now. I don't want to wait until I'm grown."¹ Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles agrees. He said, "Young people need to commit themselves early in life to the idea of a mission."²

However, knowing you need to serve a mission and feeling prepared to serve are two different things. Where do you start? Strengthening your testimony and knowledge of the gospel are two of the best things you can do. Below are a few ways you can prepare to serve a mission.

1. Faith

We need to grow our faith daily. Jesus Christ taught, "If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me" (Moroni 7:33).

- Study the scriptures. They teach and testify of Jesus Christ.
- Apply faith in meeting personal problems. Having faith in Jesus Christ will comfort you in difficult times and will help you overcome all obstacles.
- Gain a greater control over your body and mind by learning the importance of education, fitness, and health.
- Continue to repent, obey the commandments, fast, and pray to purify your life.
- For young men, exercise faith in Jesus Christ by learning about and fulfilling

your priesthood duties.

2. Spirit

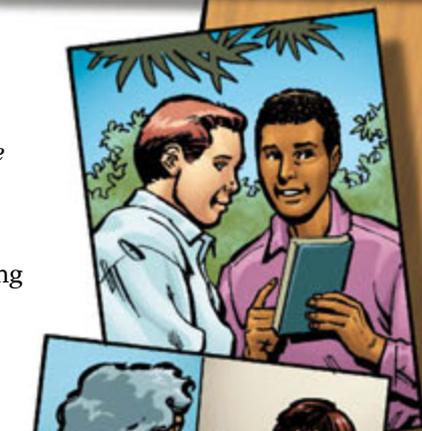
Elder Ballard also taught, "Missionaries need to be morally clean and spiritually ready."³

- Study and follow the guidelines in *For the Strength of Youth*.
- Seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost by fasting, studying the scriptures, and praying for guidance.
- Read about gifts of the Spirit in Doctrine and Covenants 46:11–26. Prayerfully seek to discover your spiritual gifts. Seek the counsel of your parents and leaders to help you develop spiritual gifts.
- Ask yourself, "Are the books I read and television programs and movies I watch uplifting?" If not, think about how you can make better choices for entertainment.
- Learn to listen for spiritual promptings.

3. Love

You need charity, the pure love of Christ, to serve well as a missionary. Loving others is not always easy. It takes service, faith, the Holy Ghost, and courage. Mormon said that you need to pray with all your might to be filled with the pure love of Christ (see Moroni 7:48).

- Pray humbly and sincerely for the ability to love others as Christ loves.
- Show love for your family by doing



on a Mission?

a kind act for each family member. Choose a family member who needs extra love or attention and spend some time with him or her.

- Show your love for someone in need by doing something kind for him or her.

4. Service

King Benjamin taught his people about the importance of service. He said that when we serve others, we are serving God (see Mosiah 2:17).

- Make service a regular habit. You could offer to do the dishes after dinner, help a sibling with homework, talk to someone who needs a friend, or help keep your neighborhood clean.
- Pray for strength and direction in following the Savior's example of service.
- Help your Young Men or Young Women group plan a service activity.

5. Invitation

Alma, one of the great Book of Mormon missionaries, invited those who were not members of the Church to “come and be baptized unto repentance” (Alma 5:62). You can follow his example.

- Be a good friend and example to friends and family members who aren't members of the Church.
- Seek opportunities to teach your friends and neighbors about the gospel.
- Learn the gospel and practice teaching it



Young men, I admonish you to prepare for service as a missionary. Keep yourselves clean and pure and worthy to represent the Lord. Maintain your health and strength.

Study the scriptures. Where such is available, participate in seminary or institute. Familiarize yourself with the missionary handbook *Preach My Gospel*.

A word to you young sisters: while you do not have the same priesthood responsibility as do the young men to serve as full-time missionaries, you also make a valuable contribution as missionaries, and we welcome your service.

President Thomas S. Monson, “As We Meet Together Again,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 6.

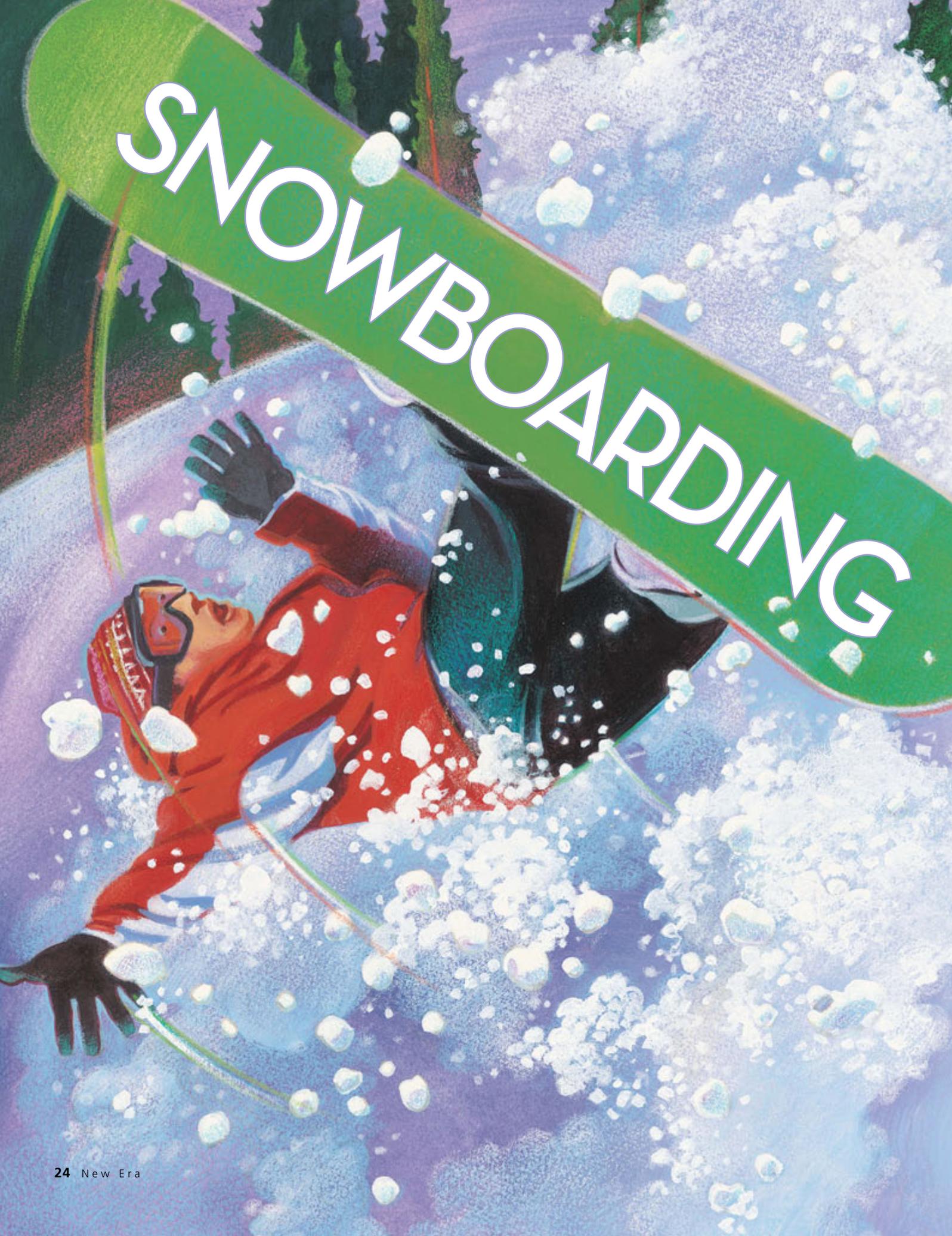
now. Ask your ward or branch mission leader for guidance on how to teach the gospel. If possible, attend lessons when the full-time missionaries teach investigators.

- Study *Preach My Gospel* with your parents for family home evening. You could take turns talking about the lessons, teaching parts of them, and inviting each other to bear testimony of what you learn.

Serving a mission is an important goal to make now, and preparing now will benefit your life every day leading up to a mission. You're never too young to start preparing—you don't have to wait until you've grown a foot or two. **NE**

NOTES

1. “I Want to Be a Missionary Now,” *Children's Songbook*, 168.
2. M. Russell Ballard, “How to Prepare to Be a Good Missionary,” *New Era*, Mar. 2007, 6.
3. M. Russell Ballard, *New Era*, Mar. 2007, 8.



SNOWBOARDING



*I wanted to fly down the mountain,
but first I had a few things to learn.*

By Shane W. Muir

LESSONS

I had just started college when I decided to learn to snowboard. There wasn't snow on the ground yet, and I had no idea how I would learn, but I had recently acquired the gear and had the desire. What I didn't realize then was how learning to snowboard would become an important metaphor for later lessons.

When my friends found out about my recently acquired equipment, they promised to help me learn how to ride my board. We began planning a boarding trip as soon as the local resort opened. I was already envisioning the speed with which I would race down the slopes and the heights I would reach from launching off the jumps.

Finally, the slopes opened, and we loaded up our gear in the back of my Jeep and drove along the slushy roads to the resort. When we arrived, I was immediately impressed by how large everything was. Looking at a map of the runs and being aware of my lack of experience, I determined to learn quickly.

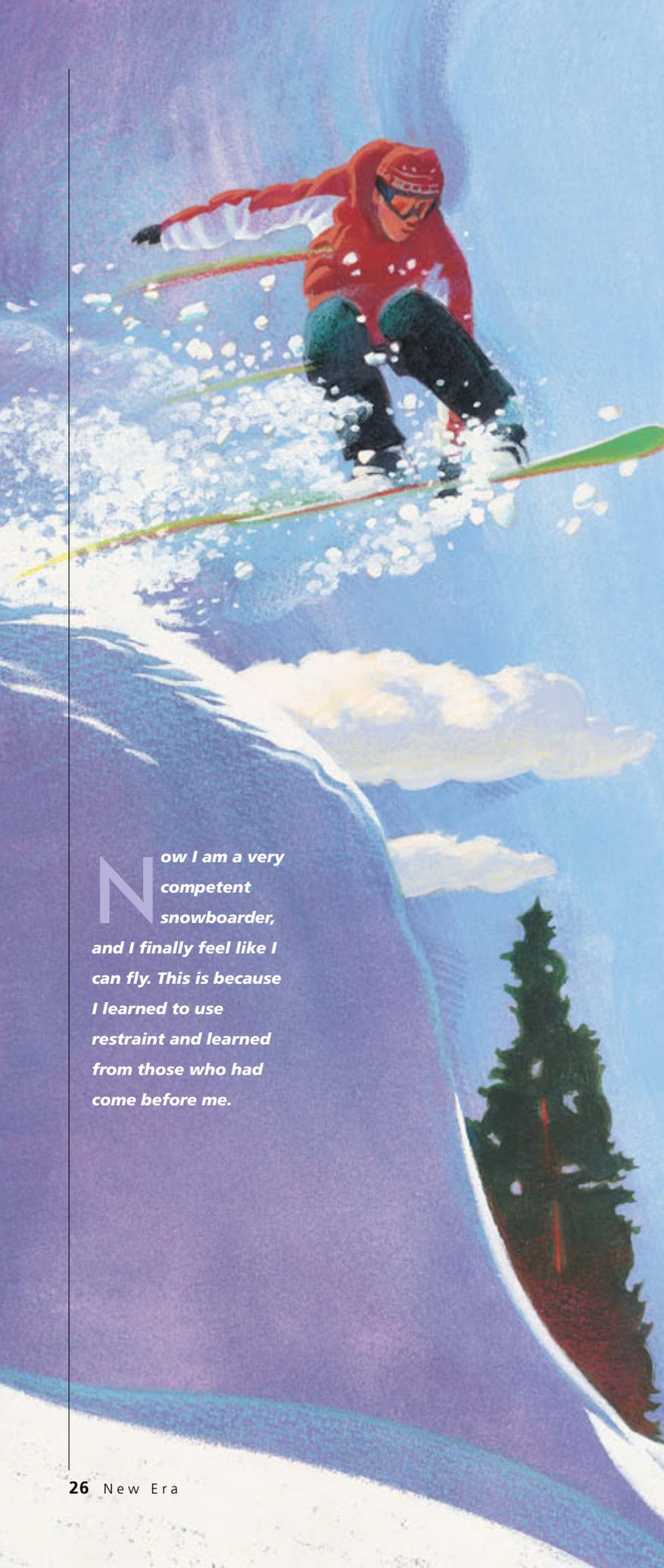
My friends didn't want me to learn on the "bunny hill"—the green run. They reasoned that there wasn't

enough of a slope to get any speed, and without speed I wouldn't learn to board. I went along with their plan and rode the ski lift to a blue run. I listened to the advice of my two buddies and then started down the hill, squatting in a tuck to get more speed.

Speed was one thing I understood. It was simple to go fast down that slope. Unfortunately that was all I could do. I soon caught an edge and face-planted in the snow. There was at least a foot of fresh snow everywhere on the hill, so there wasn't much of a consequence to crashing. That was how I spent the day: racing down the hill as fast as I could go, trying to achieve that flying feeling I had imagined, crashing because I didn't know how to stop, and then jumping back up and starting again. Pretty soon my friends left me and went to tackle the advanced runs—the black diamonds. I had more fun than I expected that day. I didn't mind eating snow frequently if it meant I could zip down the mountain full-tilt.

The next week my family took a weeklong vacation at a different resort with very different snow conditions. The area hadn't received fresh snow in a week, and the entire mountain was covered in a thick layer of icy man-made snow. There were even areas where the snow was so compacted it would have been possible to glide across on skates.

I continued my method of boarding, but it didn't take long before an ice patch surprised me, causing me to lose control of the board and to land so hard on my tailbone



Now I am a very competent snowboarder, and I finally feel like I can fly. This is because I learned to use restraint and learned from those who had come before me.

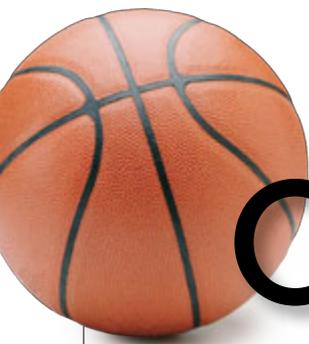
that I couldn't walk normally for two weeks. I limped and slid my way down the hill and went to our room. I thought I would be stuck inside for the rest of the vacation, lying on my side because it hurt too much to sit.

Eventually my stubborn nature got the better of me, and I went back out to the hill before it grew dark—this time with a different attitude. I rode up to the top, slid partway down the hill, knelt down, and watched every boarder who passed by, analyzing their every move and technique. The pointers my friends had originally given me became clear as I watched other boarders implement them. When I felt like I understood a particular technique, I would try it out myself, taking particular care not to crash. I spent hours watching and practicing. It was very slow work, and I definitely didn't have the feeling of flying, but I followed this pattern that entire week.

After that week I had learned the necessary skills to ride a snowboard effectively. My friends couldn't believe the difference when I rode with them again.

It has been several years since that first season. Now I am a very competent snowboarder. I traverse double black diamonds without batting an eye, hit jumps, and zoom down the mountain at incredible speeds, and I finally feel like I can fly. All of this is because I learned to use restraint and realized the need to learn from those who had come before me.

Sometimes in life it seems easier to do things on our own, heedless of the consequences. That doesn't mean that the consequences don't exist or that they won't catch up to us. If we exercise restraint and take the time to learn from those with more experience in life, like our parents and Church leaders, then we can eventually be ready to venture out on our own and take on life's challenges. We can learn to fly. **NE**



ON A ROLL

Ryan Nelson was born with spina bifida, a birth defect that causes different degrees of paralysis. Ryan gets around mostly in a wheelchair, but he will often sit on his legs and scoot around the house. In fact, he uses this method when he plays football in the front yard with neighborhood kids. Ryan loves sports. He enjoyed watching his older brother and wanted to be on sports teams too. He started wheelchair basketball when he was about 5 and tennis when he was 12.

What has tennis done for you? It has opened up a lot of opportunities. I have found success. I went to England and played on the world team cup for tennis. Here at home I play for the Brighton High School tennis team. I think I am the first wheelchair athlete to make a regular high school sports team in Utah. Wheelchair players use spin rather than power. I can play against able-bodied players, but it's hard to beat them. I love playing doubles.

How about basketball?

I play point guard for both of the teams I am on. I'm pretty fast. Most of the other players are in wheelchairs because of injuries, so they sit regular height. I'm shorter, so I have to use my speed. I appreciate my coach, who spent so much time teaching me. Now I like to serve by helping the little kids who are just starting out. Some of them have a hard time, but I enjoy encouraging them.

What would you tell people who are scared to try new things? Just do it, because it opens up so many more opportunities. There is so much more you can do.

Have you ever questioned why this happened to you? No. I know that God has a plan for me. I just know it's supposed to be. It doesn't matter to me anymore.

You are part of another team, your priesthood quorum. What have you learned from them? My testi-

mony has definitely grown from hearing other people's testimonies, mainly my teachers quorum advisers. It's a group of guys who are just amazing. They bear their testimonies almost every Sunday, and it has strengthened mine. **NE**

—As told to Janet Thomas,
Church Magazines



Name: Ryan Nelson

Age: 16

Location: Sandy, Utah

Accomplishments: Ranked 3rd in the USA and 17th in the world in junior wheelchair tennis. Plays on the Utah Wheelin' Jazz adult and junior wheelchair basketball teams.

By Melissa Merrill
Church Magazines

A BEACON *in*



*For youth in the Exeter
New Hampshire Stake,
being a light to others isn't
just a theme for youth con-
ference. It's a way of life.*

the Night



Imagine yourself as the keeper of a lighthouse. It is nighttime and the sky is black. The wind is cold and strong with the scent of rain. Waves crash against the shore.

You know that off in the distance there is one ship, maybe more, searching for the safety of your harbor. They need your bright light as they steer through treacherous waters. The beam from your beacon will guide them safely home.

Youth in the Exeter New Hampshire Stake, which also includes parts of Maine and Massachusetts, live in an area where many lighthouses stand along the shore. They know how lighthouses guide sailors through the waves in spite of darkness and storms. So when the time came to choose a theme for their youth conference, “A Beacon in the Night” held particular significance for them. Not only did it capture their coastal heritage, but it also symbolized the experience of many LDS youth here, who keep their own light bright so that others watching them can find hope.

Many of these LDS teens are the only Church members in their schools. When spirituality is scoffed at, they defend their faith. When others engage in shadowy indulgence, they let their standards shine. For them, being a beacon in the darkness is a way of life. And because they

are like a light shining in the darkness, others look to them to find their way.

Becoming Better Beacons

Because young Latter-day Saints here have such ample opportunity to share the gospel, the youth conference committee decided to focus on being able to do it better. Through service, activities, and workshops based on *Preach My Gospel*, the youth of the stake worked to become an even brighter source of light for those around them.

One portion of the conference was devoted to helping youth be better missionaries—both now and in the future. The committee, along with leaders, developed several workshops, or “modules,” about different aspects of missionary work. Many of the modules were based on chapters in *Preach My Gospel*. They addressed subjects such as studying the gospel, sharing the gospel with friends, and using the Book of Mormon as a missionary tool.

“I learned that it’s important to talk about the gospel in a simple way,” says Brian Clancy. “For example, for someone who isn’t familiar with religion, the term *Holy Ghost* might be an obscure concept. So when I think someone



WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A BEACON

“Although there have always been challenges in the world, many of those which you face are unique to this time. But you are some of our Heavenly Father’s strongest children, and He has saved you to come to the earth ‘for such a time as this’ (Esther 4:14). With His help, you will have the courage to face whatever comes. Though the world may at times appear dark, you have the light of the gospel, which will be as a beacon to guide your way.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “May You Have Courage,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 127.

is feeling the Holy Ghost, it might be better to ask, ‘How do you feel right now?’ Usually they’ll talk about feeling calm, peaceful, or relaxed. And then I can help them understand that what they’re feeling is the Holy Ghost.”

It’s that kind of understanding based on *Preach My Gospel* that Jordan Bratt taught about at the conference. Jordan, who grew up in the Exeter Stake, recently returned from the Florida Jacksonville Mission, so he knew firsthand that *Preach My Gospel* is a powerful resource for full-time missionaries. But he wanted to help the youth realize that they could also benefit from using it now.

“A lot of people think, ‘I’ll look at it when I’m a missionary or when I’m in the MTC,’” Jordan says. “But it is not just a tool for full-time missionaries. Anyone can study it every day. It can help you *today*, right now.”

Receiving the Light

Another highlight of the conference was hearing real-life conversion stories. This was particularly powerful for Anthony Diaz, who joined the Church in 2007.

“I loved Brother Jim Whitney’s class on the Book of Mormon because of the experience he shared and the testimony he gave,” Anthony says. “And I loved hearing from

others who haven’t always been members of the Church. I didn’t know that some of them were converts. It helped me remember my own experience of joining the Church and reminded me how important missionary work really is.”

Anthony treasures his experience of *receiving* the gospel and was grateful to have a better idea of how to *share* it. Then at the end of his class, Brother Whitney encouraged each participant to share a copy of the Book of Mormon with someone they knew. “It’s not as easy as I thought it would be,” Anthony says. “I realized you have to anticipate the kinds of questions people might ask about the Church. You have to be able to answer them clearly and directly, and keep it short and simple. If you don’t know the answer, don’t be afraid to say so. Tell your friends that you’ll find out or offer to introduce them to the full-time missionaries.”

Making Beaches Bright

One morning during the conference, nearby Seabrook Beach was covered with wave after wave of teens in yellow shirts. They were youth conference participants dressed in Beacon-in-the-Night T-shirts who spent the morning collecting trash.

“People would approach us and ask if we



were at some sort of a summer camp,” says Alex Morales. “It was great to be able to tell them that we are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was cool to be with other youth from the Church, showing people that service is an important part of what we’re all about.”

“I remember looking down the beach and seeing all those yellow shirts,” says Bethany Klick. “We were excited to be there, and I noticed that our attitude rubbed off on other people, too. When they saw what we were doing, they smiled and seemed to enjoy the day just a little bit more.”

Following the cleanup, youth and leaders ended the day at the beach with a sandcastle building competition.

Keeping the Light Alive

After the three-day conference ended, youth of the stake came away with renewed dedication to share the light of the gospel. Ashley Ochaeta tells of a riddle she once heard: A man turned off a light before going to sleep, and as a result hundreds of people died. Who was the man? The keeper of a lighthouse.

“We can’t ever turn off our light,” Ashley says. “Maybe we’re the light in our families or to our friends at school. I’ve had friends tell

me that I’m their light, the one who keeps them moving straight and doing good things. Those kinds of comments make me realize how important it is to stay constant.”

Kelsie Belanger says the theme of being a beacon in the night reinforced an experience she had at young women’s camp. “We were identifying constellations,” she explains. “One of our leaders pointed out the North Star. I thought it would be brighter than it actually is. But she said the great thing about the North Star is that it is constant. It is always where it should be. That left an impression on me. I realized that even if you don’t feel your light is very bright, as long as you keep up your efforts, that makes a difference.”

“Being an example is a very real thing here,” says Brian Clancy. “We don’t have many Mormons, so those of us who are members of the Church have a responsibility to do the right things. I’ve noticed that even when the light isn’t on, a lighthouse is still noticeable from a distance. We can be like that here in New England. You don’t have to be constantly preaching to be seen. Our example of doing the right things can still be noticed and still give light to others.” **NE**

Yellow shirts dotted the beach, identifying teens from the Exeter New Hampshire Stake, who were determined to make their light shine through service. Then they dressed up for the final testimony meeting of the three-day youth conference.



TO THE POINT

Why do I need to pray on my own when I already pray with my family?

I imagine that you're struggling with a personal problem. Would you feel comfortable sharing your struggle with a group, or would you prefer to confide in one person in private?

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) taught: "Some things are best prayed about in private, when we don't have to be concerned about time or the confidentiality of our prayers. Prayer in solitude is priceless and profitable. Praying alone helps us to shed shame or pretense, any lingering deceit; it helps us open our hearts and be totally honest and honorable in expressing all of our hopes and attitudes."¹ That which we are not comfortable praying for in our family prayers may be—and often should be—addressed in private prayer.

Our personal prayers allow us to be the most candid with our loving Heavenly Father and discuss the deepest fears

and desires of our hearts. It was when Joseph Smith prayed privately that he received the revelation that began the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Speaking to our Heavenly Father on a one-on-one basis allows us to be more receptive to promptings of the Spirit intended for our benefit.

However, family prayer is also extremely valuable—it allows us to draw nearer to our Father in Heaven and to have spiritual experiences with our family. As President Kimball taught, "The Church urges that there be family prayer every night and every morning."² **NE**

NOTES

1. Spencer W. Kimball, "Pray Always," *Ensign*, Oct. 1981, 4.
2. Spencer W. Kimball, "Prayer," *New Era*, Mar. 1978, 15.



"Thou shalt pray vocally as well as in thy heart; yea, before the world as well as in secret, in public as well as in private" (D&C 19:28).

My family watches movies with mature ratings.

Spending time with them is important, so how do I explain why I don't watch those movies?

Choosing the right with your family can be just as hard as with your friends—sometimes even harder. It's good that you're not willing to compromise your values. Although it may not feel like it now, putting God first in your life will bless your family and allow you to be an example to them. But they are still your family, and it is important to spend time with them. You could suggest other movies you know are uplifting or activities such as games or hikes.

It's important to let your family know your standards in a sincere, humble way. Talk honestly with them about why you choose not to watch certain types of movies. Pray that you will have the strength to communicate this to them and that there will be a spirit of understanding. Hopefully, your family can respect you for this, and you will help keep the Spirit in your heart while keeping bad media out. **NE**



My brother is having a hard time finding out if the Church is true.

How can I help him?

Be supportive of him; he needs to feel love—not pressure—from his family. Consider asking him what his concerns and doubts are. Let him finish telling you all of his concerns before you respond. Perhaps his concerns are social or personal, rather than faith-based. You may not be able to provide all the answers he is seeking, but you can reassure him that solutions can be found.

Ask him to pray with you about his worries and encourage him to pray personally about them too. Be sensitive to the fact that it takes some people longer to receive answers than others, especially if they need to sort through things themselves. You could read with him about prayer and gaining a testimony from Alma 32, 3 Nephi 17, or Moroni 10. Also, you could encourage him to speak with your parents, with your bishop or branch president, or with other faithful members of the Church who have worked through similar concerns.

When prompted, bear your



testimony to him. Let him know how you feel about the gospel.

Last but not least, remember it is the Spirit who bears witness of the truth. To gain a testimony or to realize that he already has one, your brother must learn to recognize the Holy Ghost. This may take time, and it cannot be forced. You can tell him facts all day long, but it is only through a meaningful connection with the Spirit that he will gain a testimony.

Pray for him and encourage him, support him and listen to him, but remember that he is free to choose. He will choose most wisely by following the guidance of the Spirit. **NE**

Help loved ones gain a testimony by reading from the scriptures and teaching them how to recognize the witness of the Holy Ghost.

E-mail your questions to newera@ldschurch.org, with "To the Point" in the subject line.

Tithing



ILLUSTRATION BY TARA MORLEY



First

By Mikenna Warnes

Tithing never seemed like a big deal to me until I had an experience that testified to me how important paying your tithing really is.

My parents have always taught me how truly important paying tithing is and the blessings that come from doing so. I knew it was what I should do, but every time I got money, it seemed so much easier to just keep it all, spend it all, and not pay my tithing. As I got older, I became better at paying tithing but would occasionally forget to pay it here and there. I honestly couldn't see how it could be such a blessing!

This last year, I was earning money just about every week doing odd jobs, and since I didn't have a full-time job, it really was a blessing to have money when I needed things. When I was paid, though, it was always in checks or larger bills. I'd say to myself, "Oh, I'll pay my tithing later when I get some smaller bills." But as time kept ticking away, I fell into a bad routine. Once I got smaller bills, I'd decide that I needed a drink or something out of a vending machine at school, and I'd spend the smaller bills. Every time I'd get paid, the same thing happened, and I wouldn't pay my tithing. I would just spend it.

Then my best friend left on his mission, and I started sending him different things. But for a month, I didn't have any babysitting jobs, cleaning jobs, or anything. One day I went to go get money to send a package to him, but there was no money to be found in my wallet. I was so confused! Where had all my money gone? I thought about all those times I bought drinks, treats, even clothes, and all those things started to add up in my head. I put sending the package on hold.

The next day, I did end up babysitting for one of my neighbors and decided that I would pay my tithing right then and there because I knew I was very behind. I paid it all, the full amount. The next day I went to church, gave that little envelope with my tithing in it to a member of bishopric, and had this really warm feeling inside. I wasn't sure why; I had even less money than I had before.

That night I had three people call me to help them that week, whether it was cleaning, babysitting, or little jobs like that. I agreed to them all, and by the end of the week, I had more money than I'd hoped for. I sent the package and still had money to spare.

I realized something that week. Just paying the 10 percent that our Father in Heaven has asked for opened up a door for me to receive blessings. Since then, I'm in the habit of paying my tithing as soon as I get home and putting it in an envelope. As the week goes by, I add to it so that by the time Sunday comes, I count it, pay my tithing, and it's no longer in my hands.

I can't even begin to explain the wonderful feeling of knowing you've paid a full tithe. I will never go without paying my tithing again now that I know and have gained a true testimony of how important it is to pay not just part of it, but all of it. **NE**

NEmore

To learn what tithing is used for, see "Line upon Line: Malachi 3:10-11" (*New Era*, Sept. 2005, 25).



"Yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored . . ."

"(Sniff) This is my favorite scripture."

"Sure it may be cold, but look on the bright side—there aren't any flies or mosquitoes, and we don't have any dogs chasing after us."



RYAN STOKER

KEVIN BECKSTROM



"What do you mean I can't add it to the 72-hour kit? I've never gone three days without playing my game console before."

ARIE VAN DE GRAAFF



"I just received a text message from the bishop telling me that text messaging during church is not appropriate."

VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY

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

A casual suggestion by a friend helped change my life.

YOU SHOULD TAKE

Seminary

By Lisa Pace

Lisa, you should take seminary," Ashley mentioned casually. Before us were folders displaying lists of class choices for the next school year, when we were starting high school.

I looked vacantly at my friend, finally managing a smile. I hated to tell her, but seminary was the furthest thing from my mind. I was then a less-active member of the Church, as I had been for most of my life. Over the years, I had grown vaguely aware of the gospel but hadn't received a strong testimony of its truthfulness.

As I went home after school that day, the prospect of seminary began to intrigue me. Ashley, as well as my other friends, all seemed very excited to become a part of it. I had a desire to do what my friends were doing, even if I didn't understand what they were doing or why they were doing it. After discussing my plan with my parents and getting their permission, I decided to take seminary my first year of high school.

I didn't know what a profound impact that simple act would have on my life. My first year of seminary changed my life as I began to see myself and others as children of God, loved and cherished. I began going to church on Sundays,

despite my family's inactivity.

I have now finished high school, but I will always be grateful for seminary. During that hour each day, I had my prayers answered and my testimony strengthened. Seminary helped me prepare for a temple marriage and encouraged

me to strive to be a better person.

I know that God cares for each of us. I know that seminary is a blessing that helped me build on a firm foundation in Jesus Christ. I would encourage you to enroll in seminary. It will change your life too. **NE**

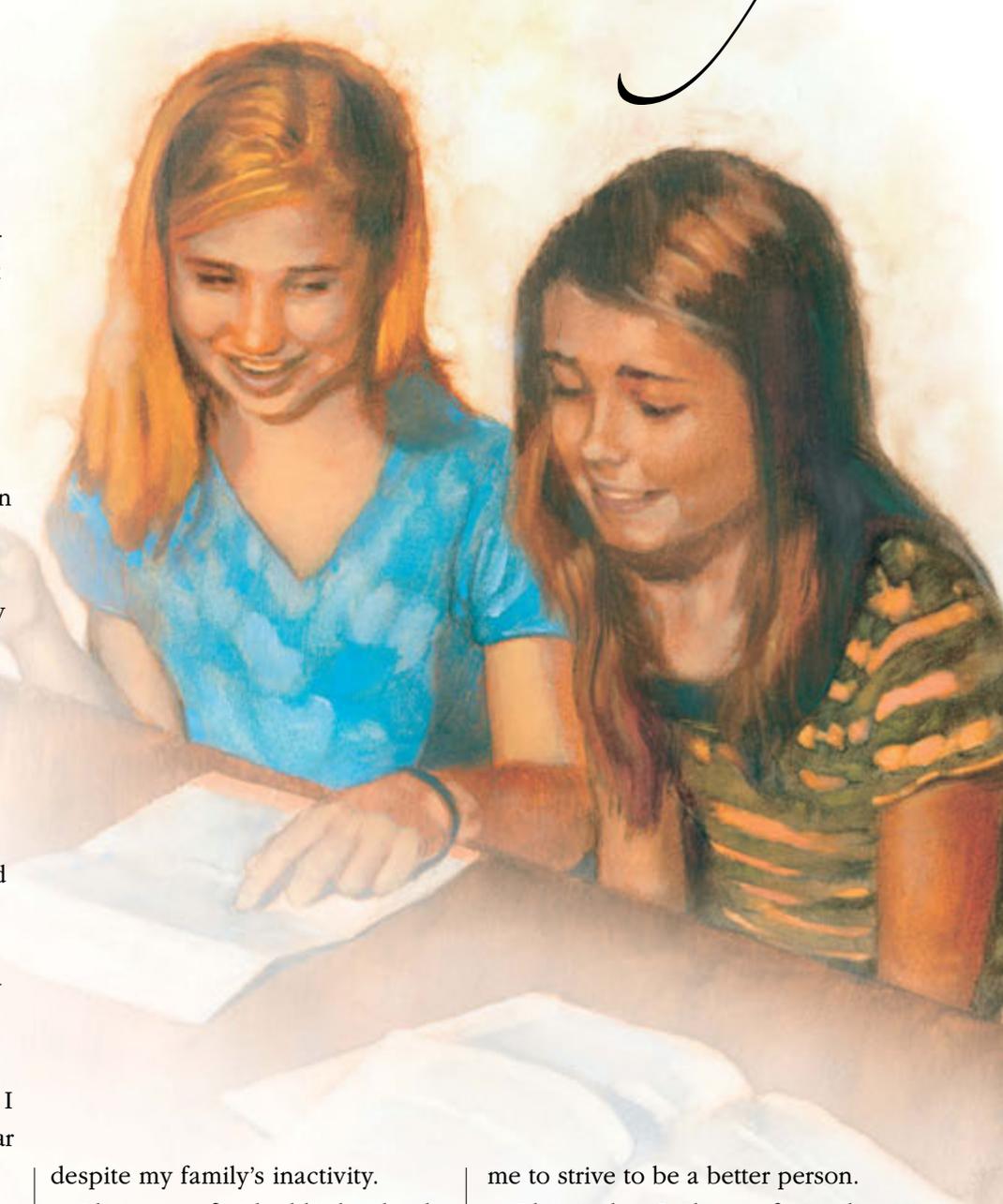


ILLUSTRATION BY DOUG FAKKEL

“THE BOOK OF MORMON IS THE MOST CORRECT OF ANY BOOK ON EARTH BECAUSE IT CENTERS UPON THE TRUTH, EVEN JESUS CHRIST, AND RESTORES THE PLAIN AND PRECIOUS THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN TAKEN AWAY FROM THE TRUE GOSPEL.”

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Watching with All Perseverance,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 41.

BY THE NUMBERS

Number of sacrament cups produced per year.

23



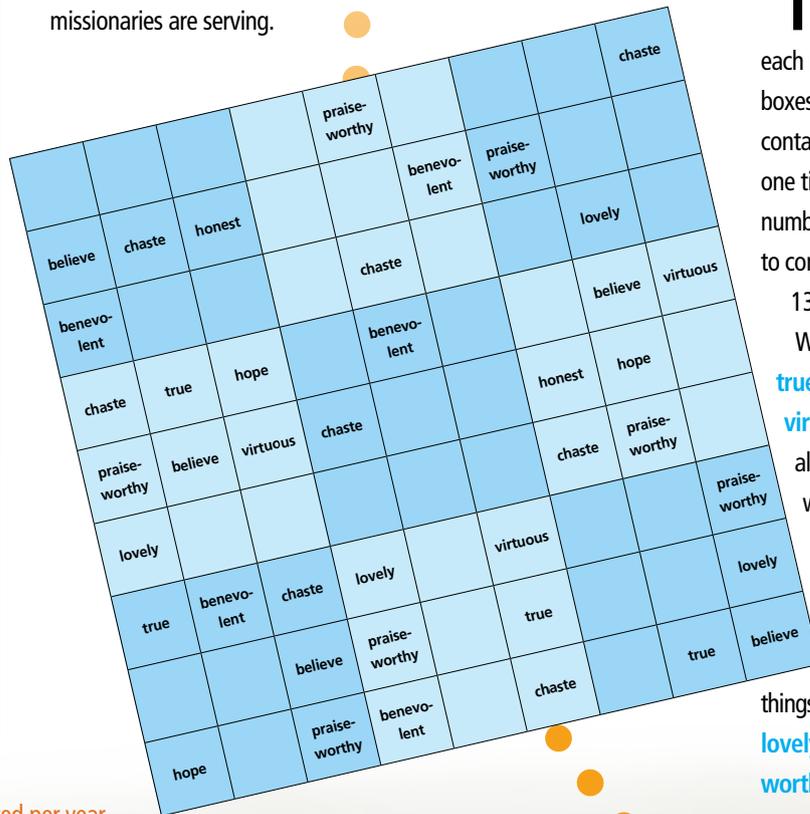
MORE THAN 2,000 TIES

The young women from the Las Vegas Nevada Highland Hills Stake collected more than 2,000 ties as part of a service project. They gathered ties for about five months, then boxed them up to send to the 34 missionaries serving from their stake.



“This project made me realize just how amazing our missionaries are,” said Mary Moody, 16. “Sending ties was the least we could do. Serving our missionaries gave me a tiny glimpse of the joy they must feel as they bring others to Christ.”

The ties are being used for the missionaries, members, converts, and investigators from the more than 20 countries where the missionaries are serving.



MUTUAL THEME: 13TH ARTICLE OF FAITH SUDOKU

The objective of a regular Sudoku is to fill the 9x9 grid so that each column, each row, and each of the nine 3x3 boxes (also called blocks or regions) contains the digits from 1 to 9 only one time. For this puzzle, instead of numbers, use the nine words in blue to complete the puzzle.

13th Article of Faith
We **believe** in being **honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous**, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we **hope** all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, **lovely**, or of good report or **praise-worthy**, we seek after these things.

BYU RE:WRITING CONTEST 2011
Get your pencils (or word processors) sharpened. It's time to prepare your entry for the BYU English Department writing contest for high school students 9th–12th grades (ages 14–18). Cash prizes will be awarded in the categories of short fiction, poetry, personal essay, and critical essay. You can submit one entry per category. Submit your entries between January 1, 2011 and January 31, 2011. Rules and entry forms are available at <http://english.byu.edu/contests>.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE LAS VEGAS NEVADA-HIGHLAND HILLS STAKE, INDIANAPOLIS INDIANA CROSSROADS AND BEECH GROVE WARDS, ROBERT CASEY, AND © ISTOCK

THE CHURCH IN USA—INDIANA

In 1831, Church missionaries arrived in Indiana and organized congregations. The Prophet Joseph Smith visited Greenville for one month in 1832. In 1834, a group of more than 100 members (Zion's Camp) marched through Indiana to regain their lands seized by mobs in Missouri. They peacefully crossed the state from Ohio.

Early Church members held meetings in homes until a hall was rented in 1913. In 1927, a meetinghouse was built and then dedicated by President Heber J. Grant.

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

Membership	41,190
Missions	1
Wards & Branches	98
Family History Centers	29

PEDALING TO THE TEMPLE

After months of logistical planning and bike training, 30 young men, young women, and leaders in the Crossroads and Beech Grove Wards from Indianapolis, Indiana, got on bikes and pedaled from their chapel to the Louisville Kentucky Temple. But this was not just a little Saturday morning ride. The bike trip extended over two days and covered 155 miles (249 km). It was an experience these youth will never forget.

Along the way were devotionals, occasional police escorts, campouts, firesides, overcoming steep hills and illnesses. When they finally arrived, the temple opened an hour early so the youth could have an extra hour to do baptisms; many of the youth doing family names they had brought with them.



MY TESTIMONY OF PRAYER

Prayers are not always answered in the way you hope or expect. Think about what you are praying for and pay attention to what you are feeling. Always remember that the Lord loves you and will answer your prayers. He may already have answered them, and it is a matter of recognizing the answer.

Mary M., 17, England



MY FAVORITE SCRIPTURE

D&C 9:13–14

I like this scripture because it tells us to “be faithful, and yield to no temptation,” and that we need to do the things Heavenly Father calls us to do and we won’t regret it. I know I won’t regret anything He calls me to do.

Elisabeth P., 14, Missouri, USA

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



BECOMING WHAT YOU WANT TO BE



By Elder Don R. Clarke

Of the Seventy

*You can
become any
good thing
the Lord
wants you
to be if you'll
listen to
Him and
follow
the Spirit.*

When I was the mission president in the Bolivia Santa Cruz Mission, one of the missionaries serving with me, Elder Hinostroza, was happily serving in a town near the Brazilian border and wanted to finish serving his mission there. When it came time to make missionary transfers, I felt the impression to change Elder Hinostroza's assignment and sent him to Santa Cruz. He said, "President, why change me when I have only six weeks left on my mission?"

I said, "I think it's the right thing to do."

He looked at me and said, "I'm not so sure." But he was a good missionary and went to work.

Why Santa Cruz?

Shortly after he began serving in his new assignment, he went to teach a family. He finished teaching the lesson, and the lady took out a picture from her wallet and showed it to Elder Hinostroza. She said, "The reason I'm here in Santa Cruz is because I'm looking for my daughter, whom I have not seen in 10 years. Somebody told me that she might be here."

More than a million people live in Santa Cruz. The chances of a mother finding her daughter in a city of that size were very slim. Elder Hinostroza looked at the picture, then looked at the mother. He said, "I know your



daughter. When I served one year ago in another ward, your daughter was there. She's a member of the Church." That night Elder Hinostroza took this mother to find her daughter who had been lost.

Heavenly Father cared so much about one mother and one daughter that He found a way to bring them together again. After that evening Elder Hinostroza called me and said, "I now know the care Father in Heaven has for His children, and I know why I was transferred. That knowledge has changed my life."

Episodes such as this one and many others that I have witnessed make it evident that there is a loving God who looks over us, cares about us, knows who we are, and works in very special ways to give us experiences to let us know how important that relationship with Him is.

He works with us by using the promptings of the Holy Ghost. He works with us seven days a week, 24 hours a day. He doesn't sleep. After we have done our part, He does the rest. He tells us when we are doing right. He tells us when we are making a mistake. He helps us avoid the things that can mess us up. What we need to know is that it doesn't

matter whether we are young or old; Heavenly Father will talk to us if we are willing to listen. He will help us with our goals to become better, to achieve eternal life.

Keep Track of Your Thoughts

A few years ago I visited a family with a teenage son who was looking at a copy of *Preach My Gospel*. I encouraged him to write in

When I write it down and do what I'm impressed to do, He keeps talking to me.

the margins of the book the impressions he felt while reading.

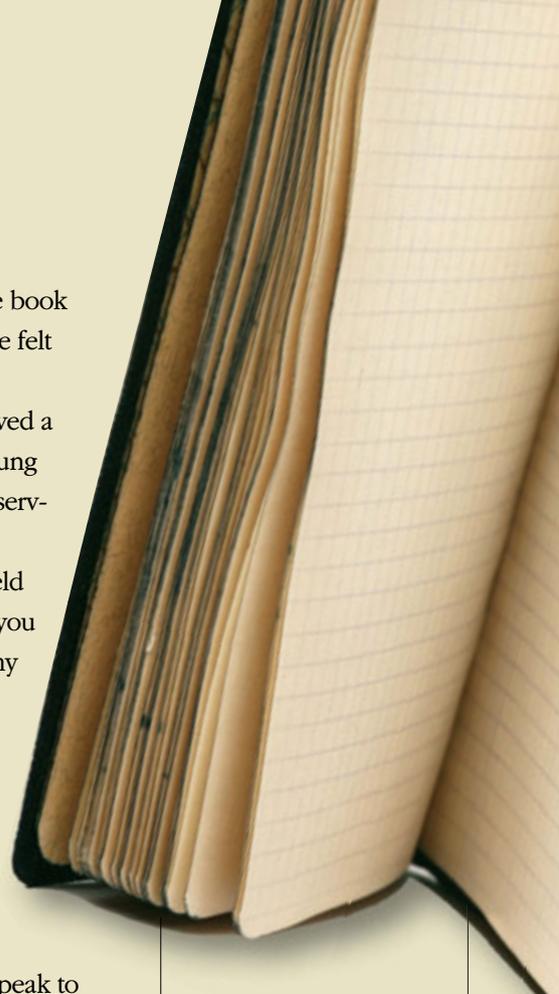
I recently received a letter from this young man who is now serving a mission. He

wrote: "I've been in the mission field for six months and want to thank you for reminding me to write down my impressions. I've just been called to be a trainer, and I have a new missionary companion. When my companion saw my agenda and a small notebook under my pillow, he asked me why it was there. I told him what you taught me: if I would listen, God would speak to me, so I keep it there to write down the personal revelations He gives me.

"The next night at 2:00 a.m. I had an impression come to me, and I wrote it down in my notebook. My companion said, 'Now I understand.'"

I have a little book I carry with me. I call it my book of inspiration. What I have found, just like this elder, is that Heavenly Father does want to talk to me, and when I write it down and do what I'm impressed to do, He keeps talking to me. When we pray, we need to take the time to listen to the inspiration that comes to our minds, instead of getting up right away.

I began writing down impressions from the Holy Ghost when I was on my mission, and it has been reinforced over the years as I have served in various callings. Inspiration will come in so many different ways. It will come when we need to know what to do to help a friend. It will come when we need to know how to do better in school. Heavenly Father



“Learn to read the scriptures so they become a joy and a source of inspiration. In them you will find answers to your problems, especially if you practice the principles they teach.”

Elder Don R. Clarke

Heavenly Father cared so much about one mother and one daughter that He found a way to bring them together again.

We might think, "Maybe I should do this to help a widow," or, "Maybe I should do this to do better in this class." That's the way it works, with just little, simple things.

cares about all those things. He cares about school, He cares about our relationships with our friends, He cares about our relationships with our families. He cares about us going on our missions. He can help us if we will let Him.

It starts out in simple ways. We start off by keeping track of inspiration that comes to our minds. Then we review and ponder it.

Then we follow through by taking action on

the inspiration.

We'll know

it's the right thing

because we will feel peace

about it and

because it will really work to make our lives

better. It's like the experi-

ence Joseph Smith recorded in

the Doctrine and Covenants: "Yea,

behold, I will tell you in your mind and

in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.

"Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation; behold, this is the spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground" (D&C 8:2-3).

If the Holy Ghost can direct Moses to divide the Red Sea and help him know that he can do it, certainly He can help us in our

studies. Certainly He can help us improve our relationships with our parents. Certainly he can help us find good friends. The Holy Ghost can also help us in deciding what paths to take in deciding what kind of spouse or parent we want to become or what our job or vocation should be.

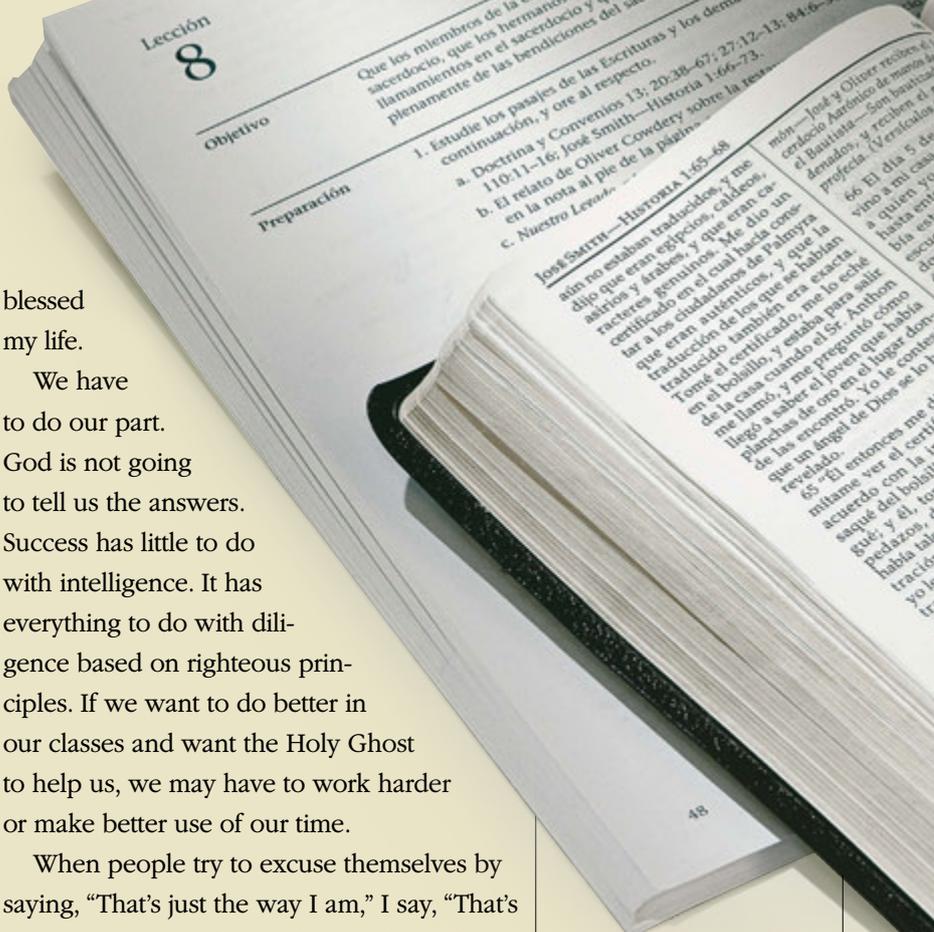
Listening to the Holy Ghost

We start listening to the Holy Ghost by reading the scriptures and following the suggestions found in *For the Strength of Youth*. If we are trying with all of our hearts to be clean and pure, if we are studying the scriptures and praying faithfully, all of a sudden impressions will come to our minds. We might think, "Maybe I should do this to help a widow," or, "Maybe I should do this to do better in this class." That's the way it works, with just little, simple things.

My mother sent me out on my first job: shoveling the sidewalk of two elderly sisters who lived together. And that sidewalk was long. My mother was very smart. She said, "Do it anonymously so that they won't know you did it." I don't know how many times my brothers and I went, but we did it without their knowing. We had to do it early in the morning so we wouldn't be caught. I remember how good I felt. The next time it snowed, my mother didn't have to tell me to go shovel their walk; the Holy Ghost prompted me to go back again.

My brothers and I kept shoveling their sidewalk, and one day they caught us. They became our friends. They even took us to see a semiprofessional baseball team in Idaho Falls. It wasn't much of a trip, maybe 25 miles, but for us it was a big deal. We probably wouldn't have been able to go to a ball game without them.





The Holy Ghost became real to me with that experience. It changed my life. My mother encouraged me to do one good thing, and then the Holy Ghost testified that it was good to keep doing it.

During my junior year in high school the principal asked me to run for vice president of the student body. It was a life-changing experience for me, because I had never considered such a thing before. I didn't say yes at first, but I thought about it, and the Holy Ghost confirmed that it was the right thing for me to do. It scared me, but I ran and won the election. From that time to now, a whole different world has opened up as I gained confidence. Listening to the Holy Ghost helped me know I could become more than I had ever dreamed of becoming.

Learning Spanish

When I was called on a mission to Argentina, I spent three months at what was then called the Language Training Mission. We had a test every Saturday, and I kept getting low scores. I was used to getting good grades in high school, and I was not content with the grades I was getting on my tests at the LTM. The price to get better at Spanish was to get up earlier than anyone else there and practice. At the time, we memorized discussions. When I arrived in Argentina, I had memorized six lessons. When I gave my first discussion, I looked at my companion to see if I had done it right. It was far from perfect, but I felt that the Lord knew I was trying, and He helped me with the language. Learning Spanish was important so that I could serve. I served in Argentina for two years. Later I was called to serve as a mission president in Bolivia for three years and then lived in Central America for three more years, so learning Spanish has

blessed my life.

We have to do our part. God is not going to tell us the answers. Success has little to do with intelligence. It has everything to do with diligence based on righteous principles. If we want to do better in our classes and want the Holy Ghost to help us, we may have to work harder or make better use of our time.

When people try to excuse themselves by saying, "That's just the way I am," I say, "That's not who you are. That's what you have chosen to be. What do you believe you could become?" With the power of the Holy Ghost, you can become whatever you want that is good and right in God's sight. We can become what we should become. It's about enduring. It's about deciding what you want to be and working for it.

How does personal revelation work? It is more than just the idea of positive mental attitude. The Holy Ghost had the power to help me overcome my shyness. He has the power to do what He did for me when I was learning Spanish. I couldn't have done it without His help. The important thing is to do those things that will bring us closer to God. He will show us the way. The doors to our understanding will be open and we will know the pathways we should take to becoming who the Lord knows we can become. **NE**

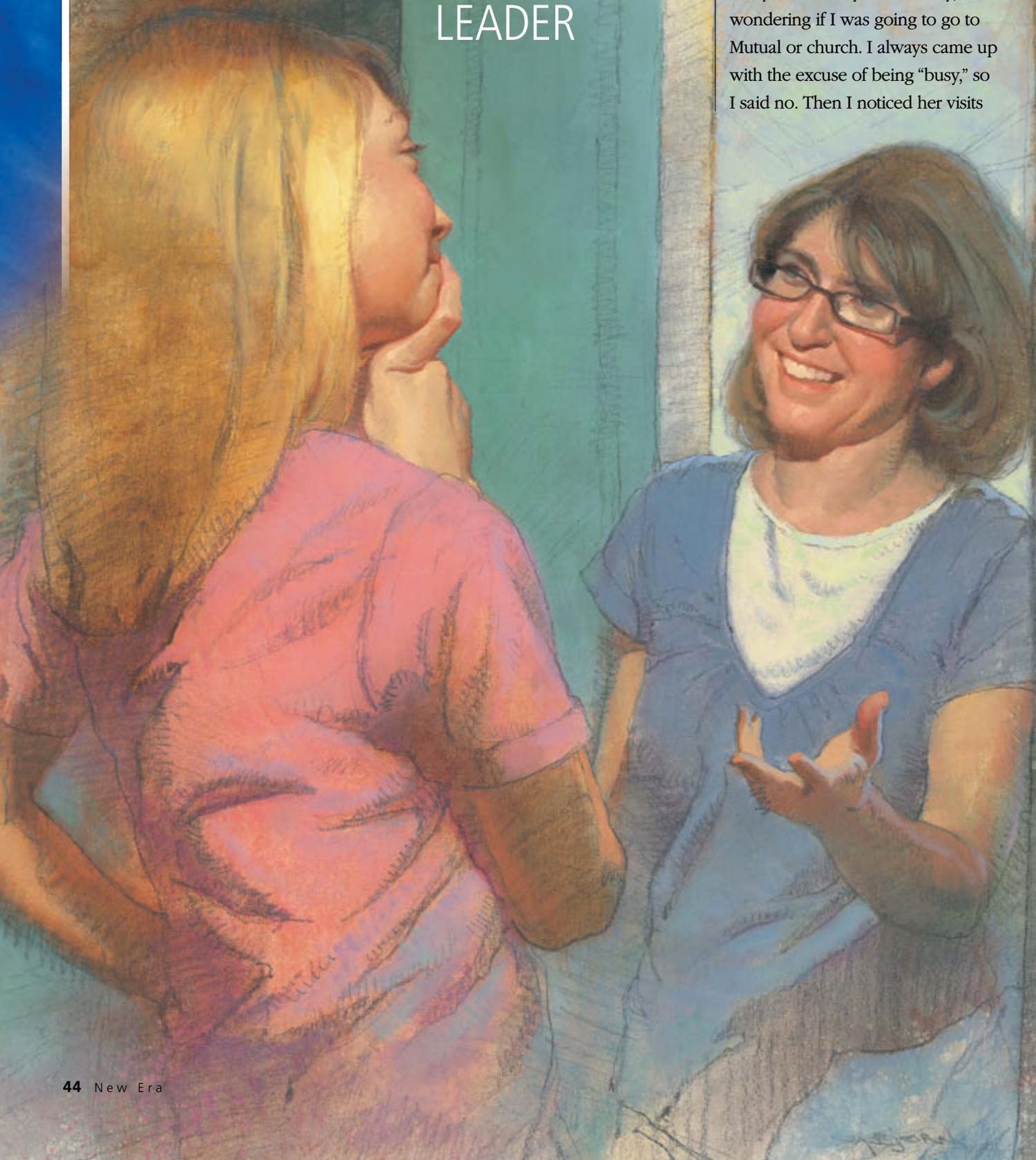
Success has little to do with intelligence. It has everything to do with diligence based on righteous principles.

NEmore

For more thoughts about following the Holy Ghost, see "The 20-Mark Note," by President Boyd K. Packer (*New Era*, June 2009, 2).

MY YOUNG WOMEN LEADER

I have a Young Women leader named Jennifer. She is my inspiration. When I was in seventh grade, she showed up at my doorstep every Wednesday and Sunday, wondering if I was going to go to Mutual or church. I always came up with the excuse of being “busy,” so I said no. Then I noticed her visits



were a repetition. She was showing up every week, so one Wednesday I decided to try going to Mutual.

When I went, I felt so loved. I just loved being there with the other young women and leaders. I went home and cried myself to sleep, I was so happy. On Sunday, Jennifer was at my door again. I said no, so she made me a deal. She said if I went to just Young Women and liked it, she would continue to take me; if not, she would keep bugging me. So I went, and I loved it.

I started getting back into the Church, and I remembered how much I loved the gospel. Jennifer has been there for me through everything. I am so glad that Heavenly Father has blessed me with my leaders, especially Jennifer. She has made such a great impact on my life. I haven't always made the right choices, but I am glad and so grateful that I have her on my side. She has motivated me to become active again. I don't know how I could ever repay her. I thank Heavenly Father that I have her in my life.

I now know how to appreciate my leaders more. I know that they are here for us and they can help us become better young women and men. That's why God blessed us with them.

Kandee F., Idaho, USA

WAS THIS CALLING A MISTAKE?

I was called to be the Mia Maid class president in my ward when I was 15. I was semi-active in the Church at the time and not living the gospel as I

visited Palmyra, New York, with my stake for youth conference in the summer of 2004.

While we were there, we visited Church history sites around Palmyra, including the Sacred Grove, as well as the Palmyra temple. We ended with a testimony meeting in the Church building at the Peter Whitmer Farm. What a testimony-building experience!

I loved standing where Joseph Smith stood. It struck me during testimony meeting that most of the sites were such small buildings that I must have stood in places that Joseph Smith stood, even if it was only for five seconds. But I also know that I don't have to stand where he stood to gain a testimony of him. My testimony of him has been strengthened while I have been alone in my own bedroom as well. But I am grateful that I was able to visit where it all began.

should have been. I didn't feel worthy for a calling like this and prayed about whether I should accept the calling or not. I had a strong feeling that I should. I thought there had to be a mistake. I accepted the calling but continued praying, asking why Heavenly Father wanted me to have this calling.

After I was released I received a letter from my Young Women leader, who told me that she had had an impression that she should tell me



WHERE HE STOOD

I especially loved the peaceful feeling when I stepped inside the Sacred Grove. It is truly a place where God and Jesus Christ have been. The peace there is much like the peace that a temple or Church building brings. It is truly the Spirit.

In the Sacred Grove we split into small groups and went off

with our leaders. They taught us about the First Vision, and we each found a quiet spot to pray. I felt a real peace when I prayed. I felt reconfirmation that the Church is true.

By the end of the youth conference, after visiting all the sites, I learned that I want to know Jesus Christ and that the only way to know Him is to constantly learn of Him and to be like Him. I am so grateful for my chance to learn these powerful lessons while visiting the spot where the Restoration began.

Rachel H., Maryland, USA

that Heavenly Father wanted me to have this calling because He wanted me to be closer to Him.

I will never forget this letter. It has increased my testimony about having a loving Heavenly Father who cares about each and every one of us, no matter what we may have done. I am grateful that my Young Women leader acted upon her impression and helped answer my prayer.

Shannon L., Utah, USA

SINGING WITH ANNIE

When a teacher recommended me to help in the special needs seminary class,

I accepted, but not without some serious doubts. My hesitations were purely selfish but were doubts nonetheless. Many questions ran through my mind: How would I interact with them? What if they didn't like me? Why did they choose me when I had such a busy schedule and wanted to enjoy my time in seminary?

I would love to say that when I went to the class for the first time, all my doubts washed away and I opened my arms to these amazing youth. But I did not. I was standoffish and gave the smallest effort possible.

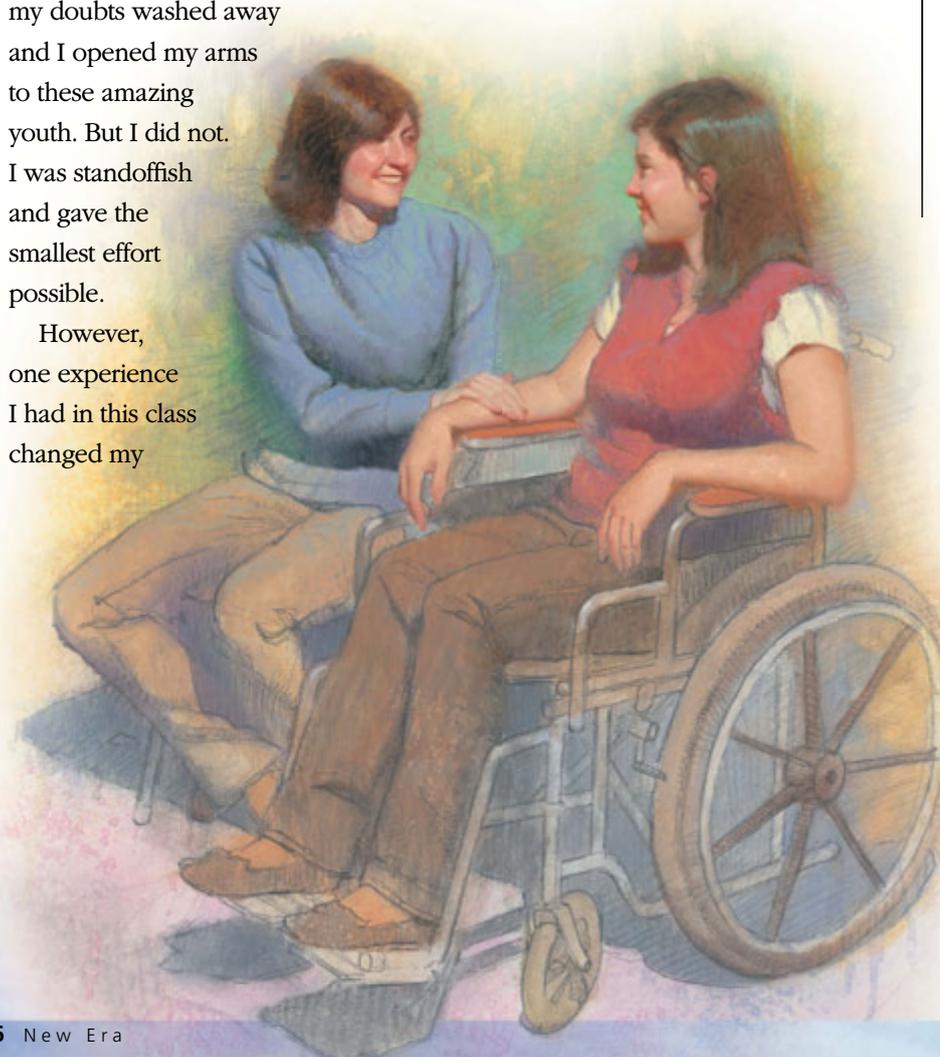
However, one experience I had in this class changed my

perspective. One day, the teacher decided to sing hymns the entire class period. I sat next to a girl named Annie who was severely autistic. She couldn't talk and could hardly even communicate through the very little sign language that she knew. The teacher told me that she loved it when people would pat out the beat of the music to her on her arm or leg, as well as sing to her. After an hour of patting her arm, my arm felt like it would soon fall off. Also, I have always known that I was not blessed with a wonderful singing voice. I get embarrassed to sing in front of other people, because I know I don't sing well. But Annie didn't care. She was so happy,

just sitting there smiling and smiling. Whenever I would stop singing or patting, she would get very agitated and start shaking or moaning. But as soon as I would start singing again, she would be right back to smiling (even if I was noticeably off-key). I felt the Spirit so strong as we sang "The Spirit of God" (*Hymns*, no. 2), and Annie smiled up at me from her wheelchair.

I would often get discouraged in that class because I was not seeing the results of my efforts come out in the students. I am extremely goal-oriented, and I expect clear results from my hard work. But this one experience showed me that if I would just forget myself, I would make a difference for these incredible people. What I wasn't aware of was that they were making a bigger impact on my life by their amazing spirits and the goodness that radiates from them.

Katie L., Utah, USA



Instant Messages features personal experiences, insights into favorite hymns and scriptures, and other uplifting thoughts. If you have a personal experience that has strengthened your testimony and you'd like us to consider it for Instant Messages, please send it to us by going to newera.lds.org and clicking on Submit Your Material.

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HOW TO REGISTER ONLINE

In order to use any of the tracking and journal features of the Personal Progress and Duty to God websites, you must have an LDS Account and then register on the site. To get an LDS Account and register, follow these steps:

1. You'll need your membership number. If you don't know it, you can get it from your ward membership clerk. You'll also need to enter your date of birth.
2. Fill in a profile form with information such as your name, e-mail address, a user name, and a password. You may also need a parent's e-mail address to complete the process.
3. Now you can register by signing in at the Duty to God or Personal Progress website welcome page.





Editor's note: We appreciate the letters we receive and usually print a variety of comments from our readers. In this instance, however, we felt a single letter was important to share, because it provides important insight into how helpful the humanitarian kits are worldwide.

"WE ARE HIS HANDS"

I enjoyed the article "We Are His Hands" in the July 2010 *New Era*. In October 2005 I arrived in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, as a humanitarian missionary. One of my assignments was to take the Cambodian LDS Young Adults into the provinces to poor or remote government schools and put on a puppet show to teach the children how to stay well through good hygiene—clean water, clean hands, and clean food. I realized on our first outing that I would have the privilege of seeing what so many thousands of people Churchwide have never seen—the recipients of the hygiene kits, which were distributed at the end of the puppet show.

At one location I noticed that almost all of the children had something in their hands, around their necks, or even on their heads. I asked what they were, and was told, "Those are the hand towels in your church's hygiene kits." The kits had been distributed two months earlier. Almost

I realized on our first outing that I would have the privilege of seeing what so many thousands of people Churchwide have never seen.

every child there had their towel and used it much like you would a "blankie" or a comforter. It was also used to shield them from the hot sun. I wanted to cry with joy when I understood their appreciation and love for that which was given to them by His helping hands around the world.

I am now back in Cambodia,

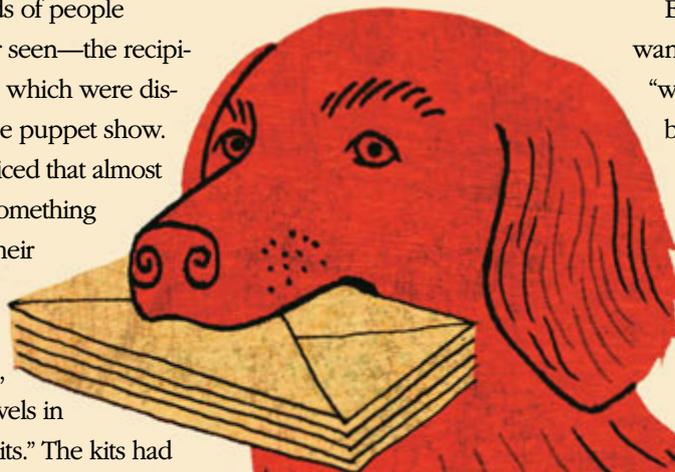
working with an orphanage and continuing with the humanitarian work I started on my mission. Recently the two LDS sisters who run the orphanage realized they had a surplus of school supplies and thought it might be a good idea to share the excess with the children who live in the neighborhood around the orphanage. The orphans were excited to share these school kits with 46 other children. As word went out, 15 more children came to the distribution of the kits. When the orphans heard about the need for 15 more kits, they were immediately ready to share their own kits, and the additional children were served. I know that this act of service brought a feeling of joy to the orphans who are so giving in every way.

Even orphaned or abandoned children want to experience the feeling that comes "when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17).

Margorie King

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

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



Memories of Childhood

By Robert T. Birkinshaw

He's all dressed but his shoes.
He even pulled on his own socks.
It makes no difference
That they're inside out
And that the heel of the sock
Is on the top of his foot
Because he did it all himself.

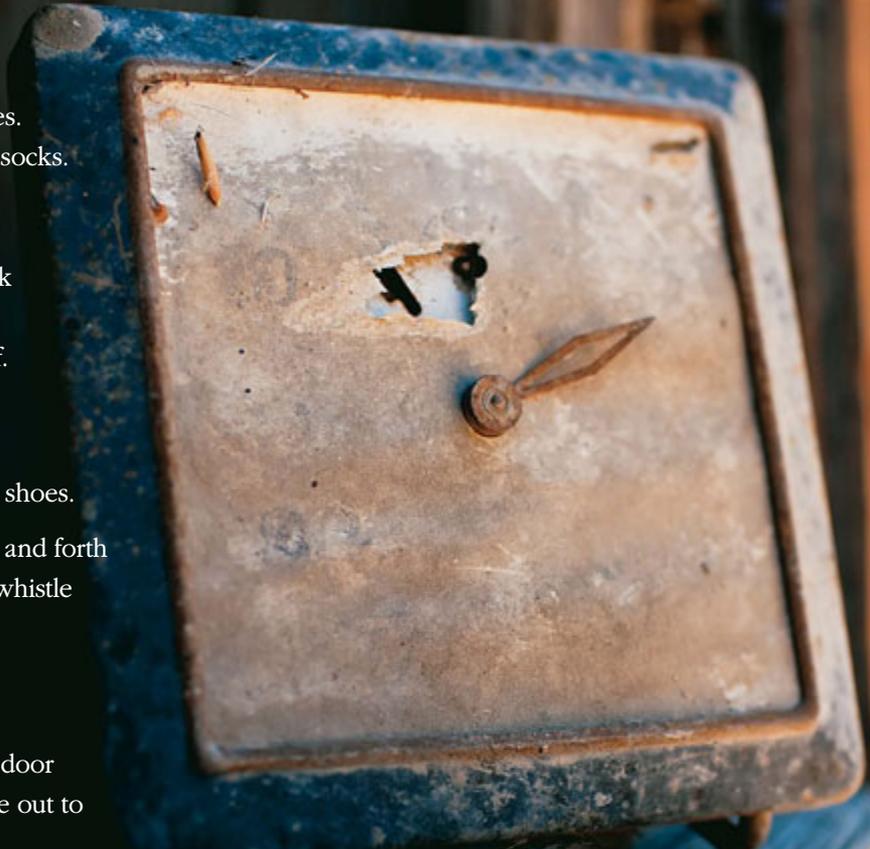
Patiently he sits,
Waiting for his mother to
Finish the dishes and tie his shoes.

Swinging his little legs back and forth
And trying to learn how to whistle
Help him pass the time.

But the sky is blue, and
There is a gentle breeze
Coming through the screen door
Which beckons him to come out to
play.

"How long is a minute?" he asks.
His mother tells him to watch
The clock on the wall to see
The tiny second hand go in a circle.

He wanted to be sure to see, so
He climbed upon a chair and
Traced the movement with his finger.



WHAT'S ONLINE



Looking for some new art for your walls?

With the new year, make some changes to the art on your walls. Go to the new online store at **store.lds.org**. Under Music, Media, and Art, click on Pictures. You can find all sorts of Church art from Mormonads to

Old Testament pictures. You are bound to find some new favorites.

Watch some great videos supporting the 2011 Mutual theme.

Check out all the new videos up on **youth.lds.org** for the new youth theme for the year. These videos can help with your goals for the year and to better understand the articles of faith.

A new app!

The Church just released a second smartphone app: Gospel Library. Mention it to your parents. You can download and access the scriptures, hymns, various manuals, proclamations and more. It's got some nice features that other scripture apps don't have. And it's free.



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