A man in a yellow long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans is climbing a grey rock face. He is wearing a black climbing harness and is secured by a rope. The background is a textured rock wall.

THE New Era

J U L Y

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of Latter-day Saints*

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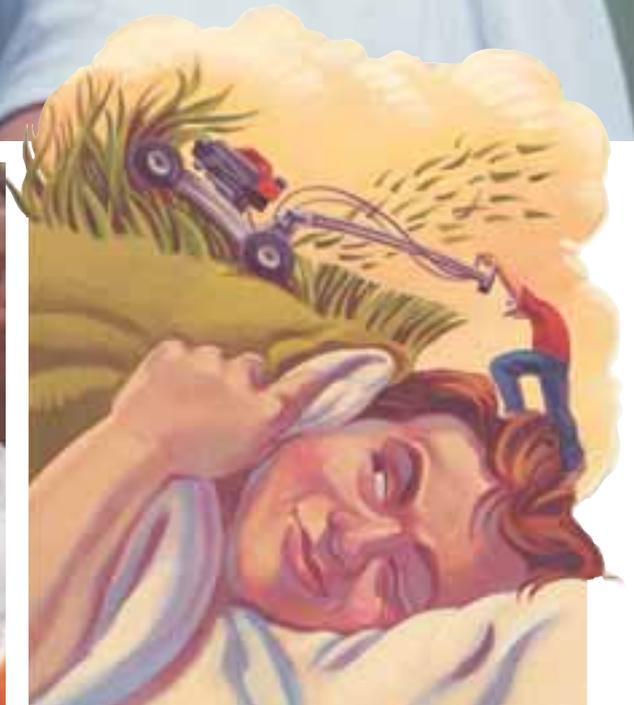
Cover: Jared Burmester
of the Garden Creek
Ward in Arimo, Idaho,
loves the challenge of
climbing. See "Built on
the Rock" on p. 20.

Cover photography:
Adam C. Olson (front)
and Welden C. Andersen
(back)

Having a
rock-solid
testimony is
the goal of youth
in Idaho. See
"Built on the
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All is WELL

BY ELDER DAVID B. HAIGHT
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

My first opportunity to really become acquainted with “Come, Come, Ye Saints” (*Hymns*, no. 30) was in a little stone tabernacle in southern Idaho, where I grew up. Inside that little tabernacle built out of lava rock by the local members of the Church back in the late 1880s, there was a stand, a podium similar to what we have today, and then a pipe organ in the back, similar to the beautiful pipe organ we have in the Tabernacle on Temple Square but smaller. In that little tabernacle, when we sang William Clayton’s “Come, Come, Ye Saints,” I felt the spirit and power of the music would raise the roof. You could feel it because of the power, the faith, and the testimony of the members.

William Clayton’s father was a teacher, and William had received a good education. He was a good penman, he was good with figures, and he was good at writing and keeping records. He was taught and baptized by the Heber C. Kimball missionary group in the early days of the Church in England. They understood and accepted him readily

because of his education and his penmanship. He was just a bright young fellow, 23 years old. Soon he was being used as a secretary, a scribe, or as a bookkeeper by the little organization of the Church there.

He and his wife wanted to go to Nauvoo, so they sailed for America. In Nauvoo he met the Prophet Joseph Smith and other leaders of the Church. They used him in interesting ways again because he wrote a beautiful hand and he was a good speller. They could use a young man of that kind.

All Is Well—If We’ve Done Our Best

After the Martyrdom of the Prophet, William left with the Brigham Young company. They left in February; it was now April. Slogging through the fields with the wagons and the horses and the teams and the rain and the mud in Iowa, they were discouraged. The going was difficult, people were dying, and babies were born. They were moving slowly, only traveling a few miles a day.

So William Clayton wrote, “Come, come,



The Saints were discouraged, the going was difficult, and people were dying. So William Clayton wrote, “Come, Come, Ye Saints.”

ye Saints, no toil nor labor fear.” It was difficult. They were discouraged. “But with joy wend your way. / Though hard to you this journey may appear, / Grace shall be as your day.” He was giving them encouragement to keep going, that the situation would get better.

Then he wrote those wonderful lines, “We’ll find the place which God for us prepared, / Far away in the West.” Even though we’re stuck here in the mud and discouraged, this will all change. If we have the courage and the faith, the Lord will answer our prayers; it will all come about. It gave them hope and encouragement. “We’ll find the place which God for us prepared, / Far away . . . / Where none shall come to hurt or make afraid”—stirring, inspirational words.

And then the last verse, “And should we die before our journey’s through, / Happy day! All is well!” So if we die, we’ve done our best. We’re going to die sometime, as we all know. So “Happy day! All is well!”

“But if our lives are spared again / To see the Saints their rest obtain.” We’ll see if the wagon wheels will stay on and if the rims will stay on the little handcarts and if we can keep up that courage and the strength through our prayers, and we’ll get there. “If our lives are spared again / To see the Saints their rest obtain.” If we get there, then “All is well! All is well!”—if we get there and if we

have the courage to make it work.

All Is Well—If We Live Right

In his journal William Clayton wrote, “I’ve composed a new song—‘All is well’ ” (*William Clayton’s Journal* [1921], 19). I like that original title, “All is Well! All is Well!” which explains our lives if we live as we should. We have the outline, we have the procedures, we have the information, and if we can get there and if our lives are spared again, then we will be able to sing, “All is well! All is well!” That hymn has become the Church’s “national anthem.”

My grandfather Horton David Haight was 15 when the second company arrived in the valley, the company following the Brigham Young company, so he would have walked across the plains. So when we sing of walking with “Faith in Every Footstep,” I have a grandfather who did that. At 15 you were not riding in the wagon; you were out where the action was, hitting the horses and the oxen and doing whatever would need to be done. And the girl whom he later married, Louisa Leavitt, turned 11 when her family arrived in the valley. So Grandmother would have walked across also.

So with that great heritage, I am saying to all of you what a wonderful future we have for the Church, as has been outlined by our prophet. But all of these things are dependent upon how we live, how we accept the truths that we know about, how we live the principles of the gospel, and what kind of examples we become to those people we work and associate with.

All Is Well—If We’re True to the Faith

When I was a young boy, about 12 years old, I loved to play baseball. The only piece of athletic equipment that we had around our house was an old baseball mitt. I thought the great moment in my life would be that I would be playing baseball for the New York Yankees. I would be playing for them in the World Series, the games tied 3 and 3. Now in the deciding game, guess who would get up to





Elder and Sister Haight with their 3 children, 18 grandchildren, and 39 great-grandchildren in 1994. They now have a total of 78 great-grandchildren.

bat? As I stood at the plate, the pitcher would pitch the ball exactly where I'd want it, I'd knock it out of Yankee Stadium, and I would become the hero of the World Series. I thought that would be the great moment of my life. But I want you to know that that isn't true.

A number of years ago I sat in the Los Angeles California Temple in a little sealing room with my wife, Ruby. We had our sons there with their wives—they'd been married for just a short time—and our sweet daughter was kneeling at the altar, holding the hand of the young man she was to be sealed to. And as I looked around the room, I then realized that this was the great moment of my life

because I had in that room everything that was precious to me—everything. My wife was there, my eternal sweetheart and companion. Our three children were there with their eternal companions. And I thought, “David, in your youth you had things all wrong. You thought some worldly event of some kind might be the great event of your life.” But now, I was witnessing that great event. I was there, I was feeling it, I felt a part of it, and I knew in that little white sealing room—clean, sweet, pure in that room—with all of my family there that this was the great moment of my life.

I leave you my love and my witness that this work is true. As Latter-day Saints we need to be true to the faith that we profess. True to it. True to the stirring testimonies that we have been given. True to Him whose name we have taken and to so live and to declare and to help in the spreading of this work. **NE**

From an October 1997 general conference address.



As I looked around the room, I realized that this was the great moment of my life. I had in that sealing room everything that was precious to me.

MAURMURING & MOWING

BY BRETT M. CONDON

“Why do I have to mow the lawn?” I mumbled in frustration. “If she cares so much about it, why doesn’t she mow it?”

It was 8:30 A.M. when my serene world of comfort was interrupted by the gentle, but annoyingly persistent, hand of my mother poking me.

“Brett, before you go out to play today, could you mow the lawn please? When you’re finished, bring me your dirty clothes. I’ll need to do another load of laundry.”

My pillows no longer felt as soft. My blanket no longer gave its usual feeling of security. My eyes couldn’t seem to get in a comfortable position under my now forced-shut eyelids. I was awake.

“Noooooo,” I half-groaned, half-moaned, through a mouthful of pillow as my arms involuntarily felt the need to stretch.

After the denial came protest. “But, but . . .” I stuttered, trying to formulate a reason to stay in bed this early on a Saturday.

Many minutes later, gazing painfully through my brilliantly illuminated window, I was sure temperatures were approaching 200 degrees, and in my weakened condition, I wasn’t sure I could lug our lawn mower up every mountainside of my backyard with what I would call an amiable attitude.

“Why do I have to mow the lawn?” I mumbled in frustration. “If she cares so much about it, why doesn’t *she* mow it,” I dared to verbalize at a mere whisper.

“Breeettt,” came the singsong voice of my mother from the kitchen, reminding me I was to actually get out of bed.

After 20 minutes I was able to pull myself out of my room and into the kitchen, eyes closed and neck straining to hold my head up.

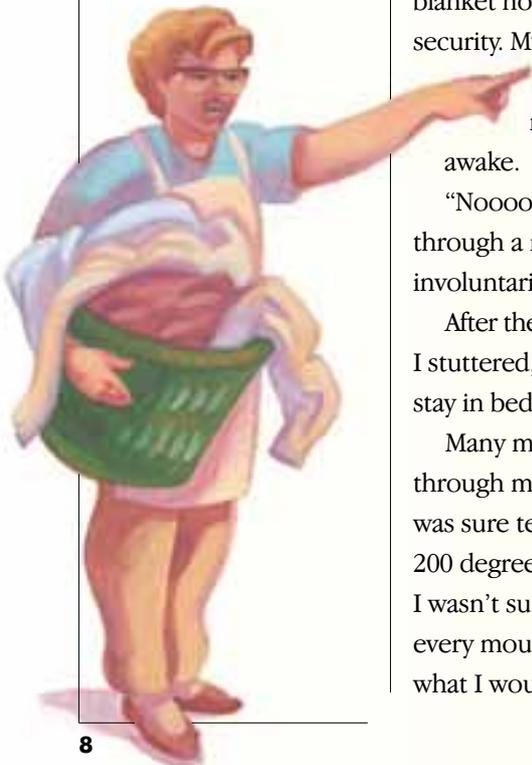
“Mom, *please*,” I pleaded, putting on my most pitiful face in an attempt to garner some sympathy. Mom’s predictable response was, “Brett, just go mow the lawn.”

I walked to the garage. The world was out to get me.

While freeing the lawn mower, I stubbed my toe. “Grrrrraaaarrr,” I growled like an animal, feeling a tantrum coming on.

Half an hour later, sitting on the garage floor glaring at the lawn mower, I was no closer to completing the lawn. Grumbling, I pushed the old lawn mower into the heat of day.

Finally, I started the mower and began to push it back and forth, creating long lines of





I realized that whether or not I mowed the lawn, it still had to be mowed. And my mom really would mow the lawn herself, but she was too busy doing other chores like my laundry.

cut grass. Guiltily I began to realize I'd spent more time sitting on the ground of the garage floor than I had spent mowing most of the lawn.

I realized that whether or not I mowed the lawn, it still had to be mowed. And my mom really *would* mow the lawn herself, but she was too busy doing other chores like my laundry. My mom was like that.

I recalled the time when we had caught her weeding the flowerbeds at a gas station while we were on a family vacation. And the time she was outside in a rainstorm with an umbrella and a hose, guiding the flow of water to make sure all the dirt on the porch was washed away. Our house was always immaculate because of her.

A sudden epiphany hit me: I was so focused on the work *I* had to do, I never considered the work *others* had to do. My mother had never asked me to work while she was lazing about. I guiltily considered the countless times I had

been idly reading a book in a comfortable chair as my mom asked me to lift my feet so she could vacuum under them. I considered the amount of service I had received and the almost laughable amount of service I had rendered. Oh, sure, I had done service projects and eventually all the chores my parents asked of me, but usually unwillingly.

A light went on in my head. To truly give service I would have to do so *willingly*. **NE**

EXTRA! EXTRA!

To read more about serving willingly, see "Getting the Point" by Taylor Woodruff (*New Era*, Oct. 2003) in the Gospel Library at www.lds.org.

See also Mosiah 24:15; D&C 58:26–27; 64:34.

Elder Brett M. Condon is serving full-time in the Florida Jacksonville Mission.



TIPS FOR *terrific talks*

BY MEGHAN DECKER

For many people, speaking in front of others is their greatest fear. As members of the Church, we have many opportunities to speak. The following ideas can help you prepare and deliver a meaningful talk. Remember: “If ye are prepared ye shall not fear” (D&C 38:30).

Preparation

- Start thinking about your topic as soon as you are asked to speak. Don’t procrastinate.
- Pray for insight and inspiration.
- Identify the gospel principles involved in your topic and how they can bring your listeners to Christ.
- Research your topic. Use the words of modern and ancient prophets—from conference and the scriptures—as your primary sources.

Organization

- Plan to start your talk by capturing your listeners’ attention. Sharing a personal experience is a good way to begin and focus your topic.
- Explain how the principles being discussed will bless

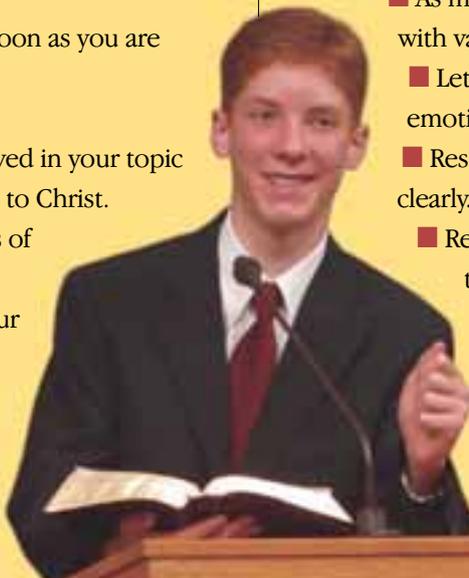
your listeners’ lives and bring them closer to the Lord.

- After explaining the principles, teach how to put them into practice.

Delivery

- Remember you are worshipping the Lord, not trying to impress the congregation.
 - As much as possible, maintain eye contact with various listeners throughout the talk.
 - Let your own voice come through—your emotions, your reactions, your testimony.
 - Resist the urge to race. Speak steadily and clearly. Every word is important.
 - Read the scriptures as real words, the way the writer would have spoken them.
 - Sincere testimony is the most important part of every talk. Let the Spirit speak through you to the hearts of your listeners. **NE**

Meghan Decker is a member of the Kalamazoo First Ward, Kalamazoo Michigan Stake.



A GATHERING IN GHANA



BY MICHAEL AND MARGED KIRKPATRICK

Youth in Ghana
sang and
danced in
native dress to
celebrate a new temple
and a visit from
President Gordon B.
Hinckley.

The coarse dust of the harmattan wind blew across an expectant crowd in Accra, Ghana. Thousands of Latter-day Saints sat quietly, the air swelling with anticipation. They had worked and prepared, and now they were ready. It was time. The prophet was there.

The excitement of the youth in Ghana

had begun months earlier with a request from President Gordon B. Hinckley to get the youth and children involved in the dedication of the Accra Ghana Temple, the first temple in West Africa.

For the youth in the Ghana area, getting involved meant hours of rehearsing native dances and songs and then putting them all









together to create not only the biggest youth activity ever in Africa but a spectacular cultural event for the prophet.

President Hinckley arrived at the Accra Sports Stadium and found almost 1,000 youth, 700 Primary children, and all the full-time missionaries from the area waiting to perform for him. He was welcomed in English, French, and Twi, and with talking drums.

The missionaries started the show by singing "Called to Serve" (*Hymns*, no. 249), and then the youth took over. Dressed in traditional costumes, they were organized within their stakes and districts to represent various regions and villages.

Desmond Ahwireng, a youth, played Anansi, a legendary spider from African folklore. Onstage, Anansi went from village to village looking for all the good things in the world so he could keep them for himself, gathering them into a gourd he carried on

his head. As he approached each village, the youth in that village sang and danced for him and gave him good things like courage, service, love, music, and family.

At the end of his journey, Anansi found the Accra Ghana Temple. The beauty of the temple convinced the selfish spider that he should not keep all the good things he had collected for himself, so he emptied the contents of his gourd to share them with everyone. Anansi's good deed was greeted by 700 Primary children, all dressed in white, singing "I Am a Child of God" (*Hymns*, no. 301).

The youth in Ghana will remember the dedication of this temple. They, like Anansi, love to see the temple and hope its presence there will move them to share the good they have as they continue to follow the counsel of the prophet. **NE**

Michael and Marged Kirkpatrick recently finished serving as directors of Public Affairs in the Africa West Area. They are members of the Holladay 26th Ward, Salt Lake Holladay Stake.

President Hinckley (top) stands in front of the temple cornerstone. The journeys of Anansi (above), a spider in African folktales, created a setting for some of the onstage celebrations.

Q & A

*“Before I gained my testimony,
my friends and I made fun of the Church.
How can I show them I was wrong?”*

NEW ERA

A well-known young man was once in a similar situation. That young man was Alma the Younger.

Though he had spent years leading astray other members, once he realized the Church was true, he spent the rest of his life living the gospel and sharing it with others (see Mosiah 27:32).

In fact, the first thing he did when he realized his situation was to tell everyone about his change of heart. He even went looking for those he might have hurt, “striving to repair all the injuries which [he] had done to the church” (Mosiah 27:35).

Like Alma did, it’s probably a good idea to approach your friends right away to tell them how you feel about the Church. Not only is it the right thing to do to make up for possibly hurting others’ testimonies, but also if your friends start making fun of the Church again and you haven’t told

Let your friends know as soon as possible that you’ve had a change of heart.

Seek out those whose testimonies you might have hurt. Apologize and tell them how much the Church has come to mean to you.

Be the best example you can be.

Share your happiness with others by telling them how the Church has helped you.

them how you feel yet, you will have to work up the courage on the spot to tell them to stop.

Once you’ve *told* them you know the Church is true, you have to *show* them. The sons of Mosiah, who also had a change of heart after persecuting the Church with Alma, spent years among the Lamanites under this command from the Lord: “Ye may show forth good examples unto them in me, and I will make an instrument of thee in my hands unto the salvation of many souls” (Alma 17:11). Your example will go a long way in showing your friends that you really do love the Savior and His Church.

It might not be easy to tell your friends you were wrong. Alma was persecuted for telling everyone about how he had come to feel the Savior’s love. But he wasn’t telling people just because it was the right thing to



READERS

do; he did it because the gospel brought him joy, and he wanted others to “taste of the exceeding joy of which [he] did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost” (Alma 36:24). That’s why we should share the gospel, too.

And just as He helped Alma, the Lord will support you “under trials and troubles of every kind” (Alma 36:27) when you do your best to share His love. **NE**



I would ask my friends if I could talk to them, one-on-one if possible. I would remind them how we poked fun at the Church, then tell

them how I found out it is true, how the gospel has helped me, and how it can help them. Invite them to a Church activity or give them a For the Strength of Youth pamphlet so they know what you stand for.

Rena Klegin, 16,
Plattsmouth Ward, Council Bluffs Iowa Stake

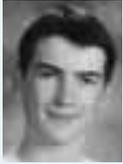


When we gain a testimony we experience a change of heart.

The best way to

show that to our friends is by being a good example. If we follow President Hinckley’s counsel on how we should be, our friends will see how much the Church has blessed our lives and made us happy.

Vanessa and Stephanie Carr, 17,
Weiser First Ward, Weiser Idaho Stake



Invite your friends to go to church with you. Tell them that you really believe in the Church. If they're truly your friends, they'll understand and respect you for your choices. Bear your testimony. If they see how serious you are, they might end up with a testimony of their own. Don't be afraid to ask the Lord for help.

Sterling Whipple, 16, Delta Third Ward, Delta Utah Stake



Whenever someone starts making fun of the Church, stick up for it. Tell your friends about the testimony you have gained. Be an example. The power of being a good example is the best thing we have.

*Kimberly Belnap, 15,
Century Ward, Pocatello Idaho East Stake*

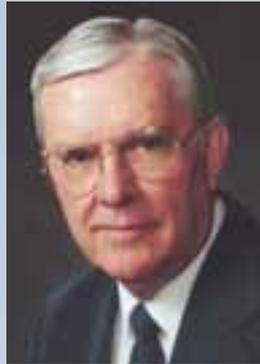
We can always find answers in the scriptures. Alma the Younger and Saul in the New Testament had similar problems. They fixed them by apologizing and repenting when they realized what they had done was wrong. They not only strengthened their testimonies, they helped others come into the Church.

Jessica Nine, 13, Plano Third Ward, Plano Texas Stake



Even though it may be hard, tell your friends you now know the Church is true. Then set the example by living by the Church's teachings.

Elder Tanner Leavitt, 20, Washington Seattle Mission



When we seek to clarify someone's understanding of the Church, our lives—well and faithfully lived—can serve as a magnifying glass through which others can examine the impact of gospel living.”

—Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “How Is It with Us?” Ensign, May 2000, 33.

Tell your friends you were wrong and that you're very sorry you made fun of the Church. It may be hard, but it's worth it. Tell them how much the gospel means to you now. It's the right thing to do.

*Elisabeth Paulsen, 16,
Logan Ninth Ward, Logan Utah Cache Stake*



Explain to your friends that you didn't understand what you were doing before, and apologize for your bad example. Bear them your testimony that you believe the Church is true.

*Chelsea Johnson, 16,
Mingus Ward, Cottonwood Arizona Stake*

New Era and readers' responses are intended for help and perspective, not as pronouncements of Church doctrine.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Send your answer to the question below, along with your name, birth date, ward and stake (or branch and district), and a photograph to:

Q&A, New Era

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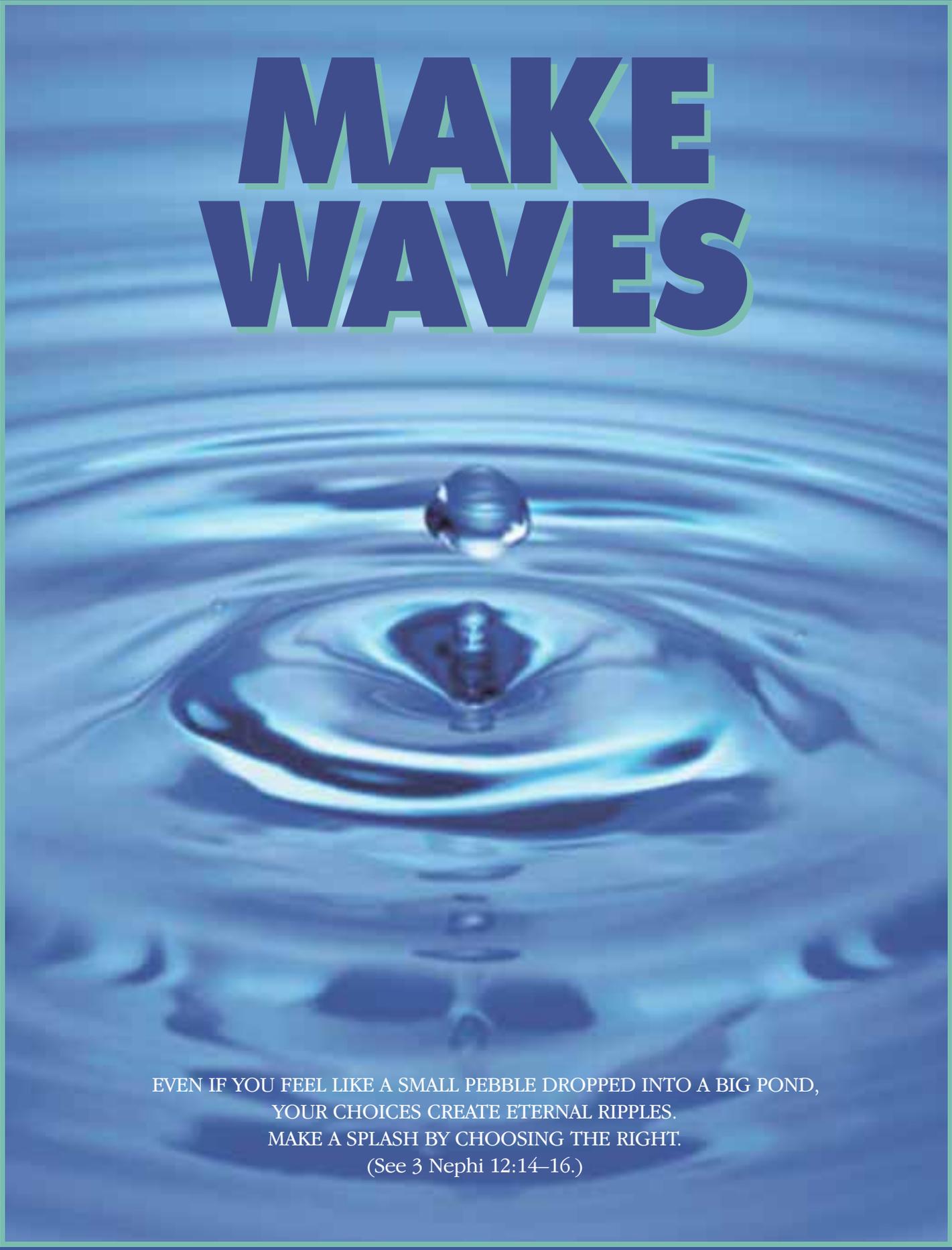
cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org

Please respond by 15 August 2004.

QUESTION

“I'm about to graduate from high school, and I don't know what my next step should be. What should I do with my life?”

MAKE WAVES



EVEN IF YOU FEEL LIKE A SMALL PEBBLE DROPPED INTO A BIG POND,
YOUR CHOICES CREATE ETERNAL RIPPLES.
MAKE A SPLASH BY CHOOSING THE RIGHT.
(See 3 Nephi 12:14–16.)

Built



ON THE ROCK



BY ADAM C. OLSON
Church Magazines

Pain and concentration contorted Clint Smith's features as the 17-year-old clung desperately to the cliff face with one hand. A faint clatter of pebbles meeting the earth reached his ears from some 50 feet below. While climbing the massive granite wall, his feet had slipped from beneath him. Gravity tore one hand from its hold and threatened to unglue the other.

The scene would be frightening if you didn't know that Clint is an experienced climber decked out in safety gear and securely attached to a belay line handled by a man with more than 30 years of climbing experience. After an agonizing moment, Clint got his feet back under him and smoothly ascended the remaining rock to the top.

Though Clint's line would have caught him if he had fallen, there are youth all over the world in a similar predicament—but without similar protection. They're climbing through life, but they aren't secured to the "rock of our Redeemer" (Helaman 5:12). If they fall, there's nothing to catch them. And

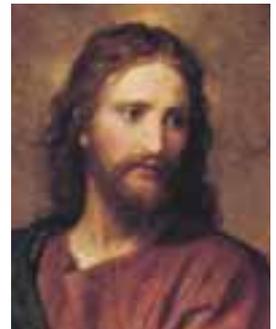
many of them don't even realize it.

A Conference on the Rocks

Over the several years they've been climbing, Clint and his friends have learned that rock climbing is a lot like life. Now the youth in their ward are learning it, too, as part of the Garden Creek Ward's Christ-centered youth conference: "Build upon the Rock."

Idaho's City of Rocks National Reserve is a rock climber's paradise, and it's right in the Arimo Idaho Stake's backyard. The hundreds of granite formations that reach toward the heavens are a natural setting for teaching about the Creator of the world and how His gospel affects our lives.

"Christ and His gospel are unmoving," says Jonathan Boyd, a priest. "They will always be there. They're something you can put your foot on that won't slip out from under you. If your testimony is built on Christ, it becomes like your rope. If your feet slip, the rope catches you and keeps you close to the rock so you don't fall. My testimony has caught me countless times."



Whether learning about building on the "rock of our Redeemer" or enjoying world-class rock climbing, teens from the Garden Creek Ward learned some important lessons at youth conference.



These teens learned that obedience to basic safety rules keeps you safe when climbing—and that obedience is no less important in living the gospel.

An Analogy for Life

The youth found that the parallels between rock climbing and life are numerous. The symbolism is powerful.

“Every time we go climbing,” explains Jessica Ercanbrack, a Laurel, “there’s someone who goes before us to make sure the way is safe and all the knots are tied right. In a way, Jesus has done that for us in life. He prepared the way. He has experienced it so that if we fall, He can help us get back on the path through repentance.”

“When you climb you have a belayer at the other end of the rope who holds you in place,” says Jayson Nielson, a teacher. “Sometimes you can’t see him, but you have to trust that he’s there. He’s there to help you. That’s what Christ does for us.”

“That rope that connects you is His words,” adds Talina Smith, a Mia Maid.

“It’s the gospel and your testimony of it.”

“When you go rock climbing you have to clip onto the rope, or it doesn’t do you any good,” says Clint. “In life we clip onto the gospel through obedience.”

“When we disobey, it’s like climbing without a rope,” Jayson jumps in. “You’re setting yourself up for a big fall.”

“But when you’re clipped on and follow the rope you won’t stray from the climbing route,” Clint says.

“The Savior lets you do it yourself, though,” finishes Jessica. “It’s up to you to make the choices and do the climbing.”

Obedience Is the Key

During the rock-climbing activity, the youth learned that obedience is the key to

building upon the rock of Christ and that many youth are dangling by a fingertip without a safety rope because they don’t realize the importance of obedience.

“Every day we’re faced with choices that make us choose what’s more important to us,” taught Morgan Ercanbrack, ward Young Men president, during an early-morning devotional. “Will you choose immodest clothing or the Savior? Smoking or the Savior? Pornography or the Savior? What we choose decides where we build our house—on the rock or on the sand” (see Matthew 7:24–27).

“I learned that if you obey, your testimony will grow,” says Jayson. “You’ll know what’s right and wrong. If you don’t obey, you find out the hard way.”

Jesus taught: “Therefore, whoso heareth these sayings of mine and *doeth* them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock—

“And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.

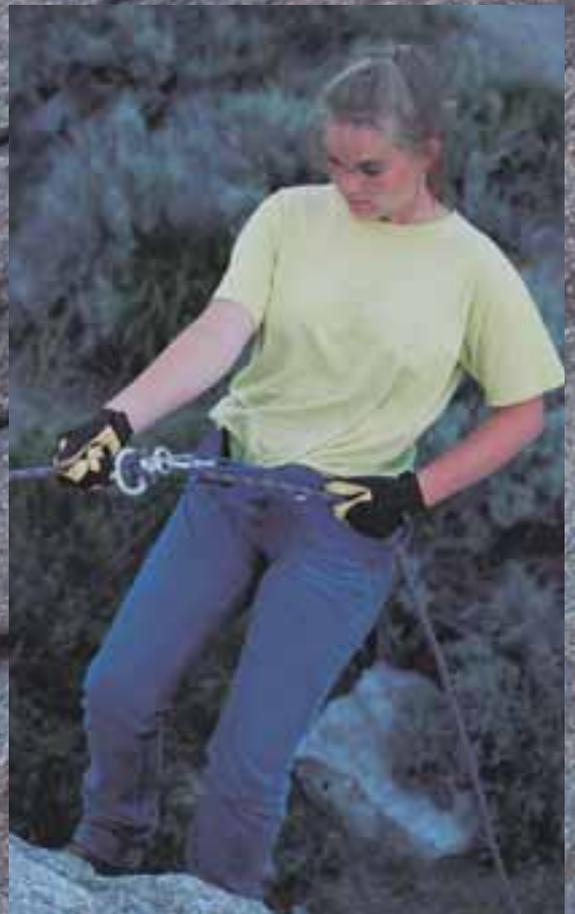
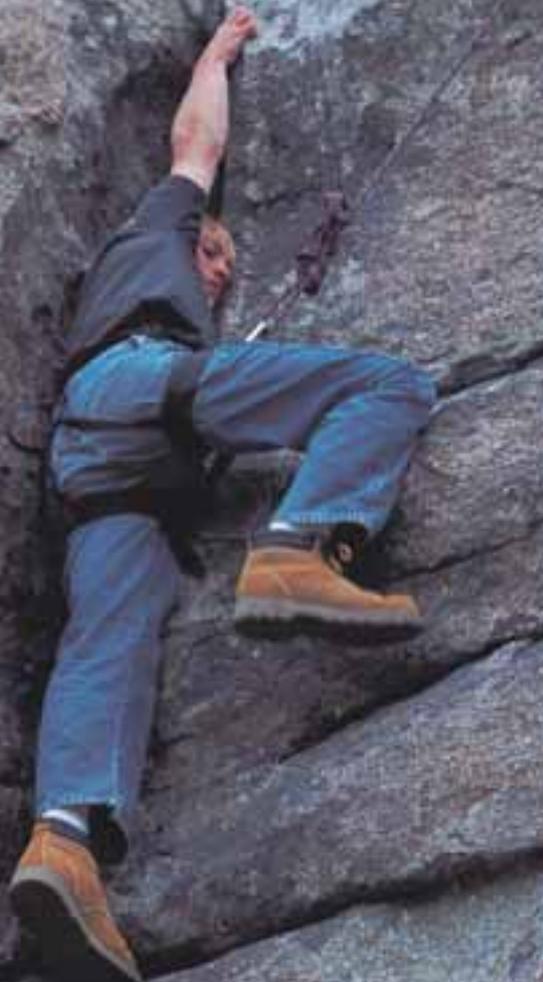
“And every one that heareth these sayings of mine and *doeth them not* shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand—

“And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it” (3 Nephi 14:24–27; emphasis added).

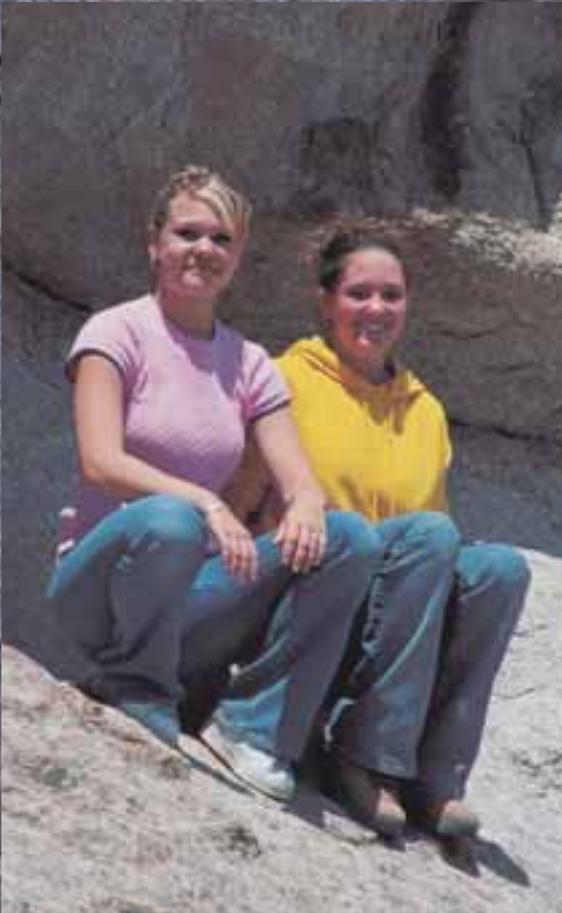
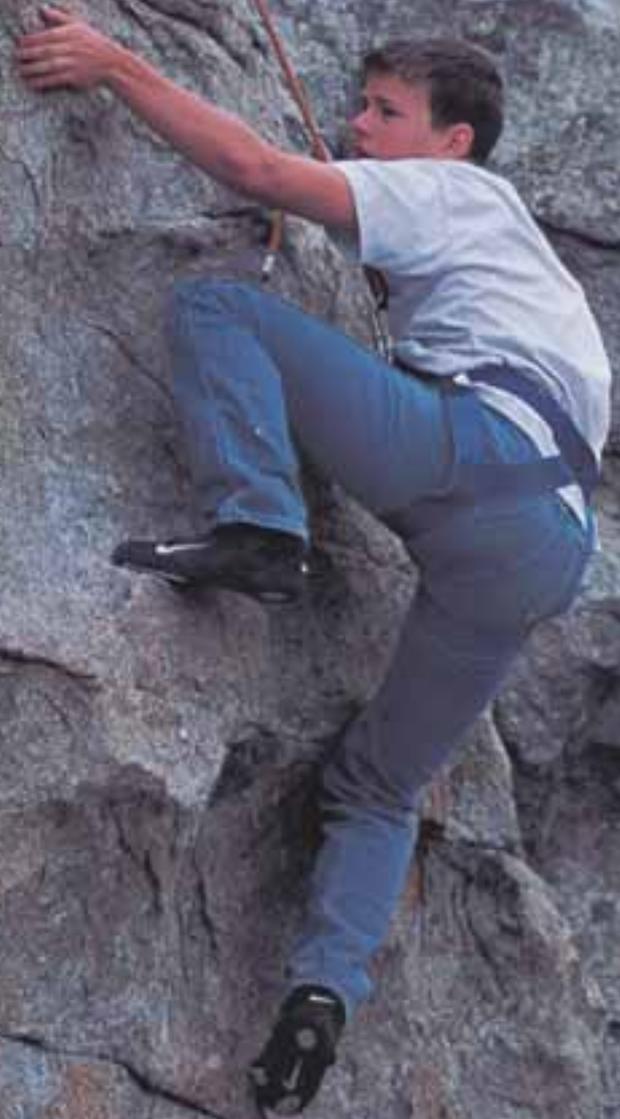
And just like Clint and his friends, if we seek the Savior’s word and obey His commandments, we can avoid a deadly fall and make it to the top of the rock.



For Jake Bastian (center), the activities were physically stretching. Others were stretched by learning new skills and overcoming fears. Talina Smith (left) teaches Alisha Crandall to rappel. Natalie Christophersen (below) lowers herself down the cliff face.



When the youth, like Jonathan Boyd (center), weren't climbing rocks, they were talking about "the rock of [our] salvation" (above, right) or just talking, like Shelby Wheatly and Darcie Clark (below).



ROCK SOLID

1. What does it mean to build on the rock of Christ?



Clint Smith, 17: Jesus Christ is like a rock, because if He is what our faith and testimony are based on, our faith and testimony will stand firm against our trials.



Katie Ercanbrack, 14: It's like the Primary song (see "The Wise Man and the Foolish Man," *Children's Songbook*, 281). If you build your faith upon Jesus Christ, then your testimony will be strong. It won't be washed away. The hardships in your life are like rain; they all build up into floods that will wash away anything built on sand. But the rock—Christ and His gospel—will always be there.



Natalie Christophersen, 16: To me, building upon the rock means finding your security in Christ and knowing that He'll always be there. No matter what I do or what I face, I can always turn to Him. Trials you face can wash your testimony away if it isn't built on Christ.

2. How do we build on the rock?



Jessica Ercanbrack, 16: Obedience is the only way to build upon the rock. Study and understand the gospel so you understand the Lord's commandments. You need to learn to live your life the way He would. To do that you must learn about Him and get to know Him better. Start with the fact that He lived and He loves you. Then you can build on that.



Jonathan Boyd, 16: When you build something on a rock, it's harder to make the foundation—driving footings into the rock is hard. But it makes the house stronger. Following Christ isn't always easy, but in the end it's worth it because what you have built is stronger for the effort.



Jayson Nielson, 15: Seminary really helped me this year. After we began learning about the Savior, my testimony grew stronger. If you obey, your testimony will grow. You'll know what's right and wrong. If you don't obey you find out the hard way.

3. What blessings have come into your life from building on the rock?



Talina Smith, 14: The more obedient you are, the fewer mistakes you make. Your testimony is stronger. You have a stronger foundation. If you follow the commandments, you'll be happier.

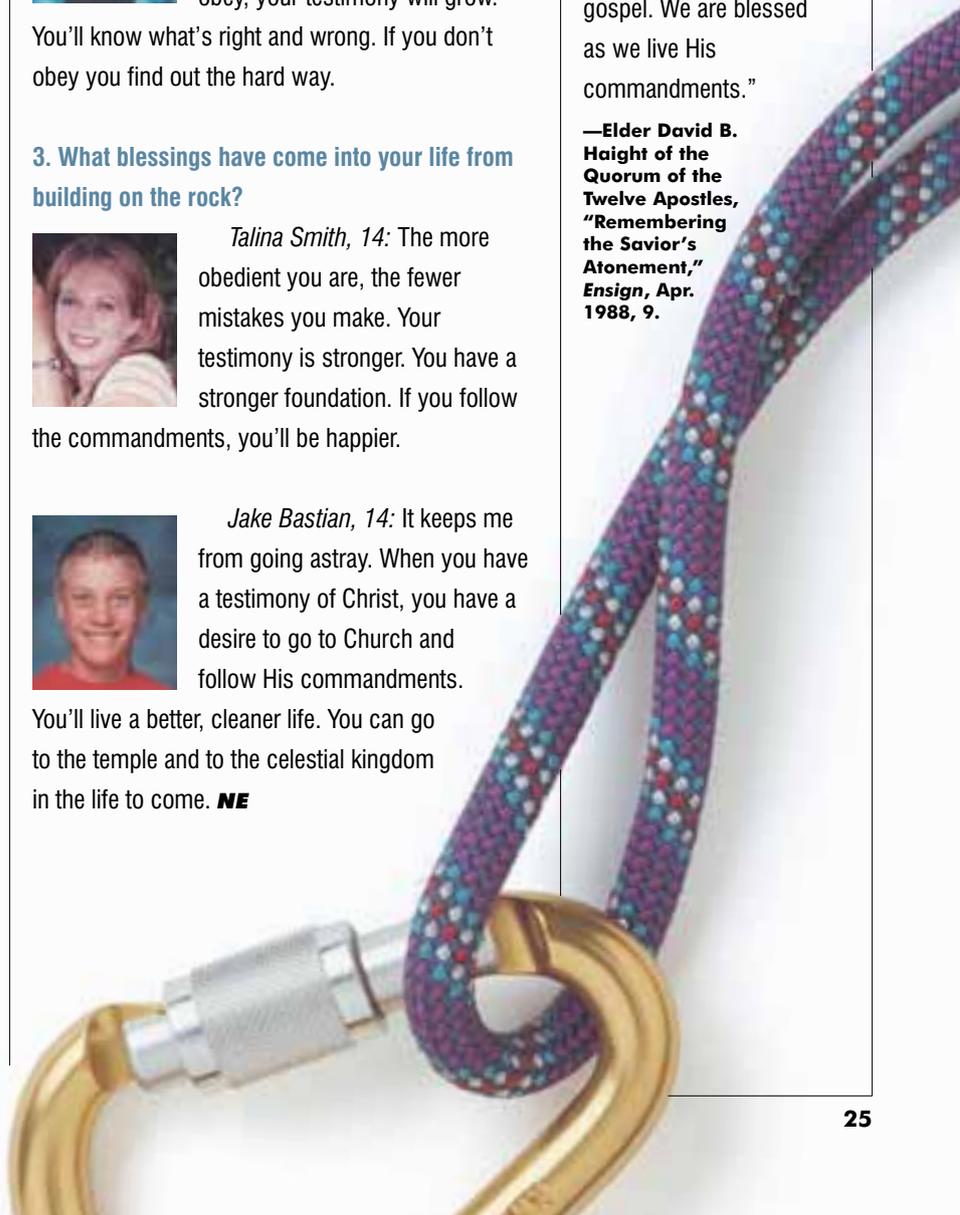


Jake Bastian, 14: It keeps me from going astray. When you have a testimony of Christ, you have a desire to go to Church and follow His commandments. You'll live a better, cleaner life. You can go to the temple and to the celestial kingdom in the life to come. **NE**



"When we act in obedience and always remember Him, we are built on the rock of His gospel. We are blessed as we live His commandments."

—Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Remembering the Savior's Atonement," *Ensign*, Apr. 1988, 9.





BY RAND PACKER

When I was 14, I went camping with some friends. As we sat in a circle talking, one of the guys reached into his pack and pulled out a can of beer. Everyone went silent as he popped the lid and held it high above his head.

“If any of you are men,” he bellowed, “you’ll have a drink with me.” Tilting the can to his lips, he took a large swallow.

All the eyes were on the can as the boy next to him received it in his waiting hand. He didn’t hesitate. He took a swig with great bravado in front of us all. The can moved to the next boy in the circle.

As it moved in my direction, my mind searched for a quick solution, a cool response that would rescue me. I knew what was right and wrong. I knew what the Word of Wisdom said. I knew how seven-year-old Joseph Smith refused any liquor to dull the pain of the operation on his leg.

These things raced through my mind as the can found its way to the third boy. He had not come to be tempted. He thought he was just going camping. As he held the can, I could sense the frantic debate going on in his mind. All eyes were upon him, staring, seeming to demand that he drink as the others had. I could almost hear his cries pleading for his mother to come save him, but she was nowhere to be found. Try as he did, he could not handle the pressure. He took a drink and hurriedly passed the can to my friend—my example—Rick.

My heart was pounding as I realized that I was the next



one in the circle to receive the can. I didn't know how I was going to get out of this one. I imagined that if I didn't take a drink, they would bury me up to my neck in the hills somewhere and let the ants crawl through my nose and ears. "Rick," I thought to myself, "if you take one sip of that, I'm going to slug you."

Rick held the can. He looked at me, and I looked at him. We then both looked at the can he was holding and up at the dozen other faces waiting anxiously.

For a moment, Rick just stared at the can. Then he casually put it down, reached into his pack, and fished around until he found what he was looking for. He raised a purple can into the air for all to see.

"If any of you are men," Rick yelled, "you'll have a drink of grape soda with me!" Rick popped the lid, brought the can to his lips, and tilted his head back dramatically as he drank from it. Then he passed it back in the direction from which the beer had come.

The kid next to Rick found himself holding the soda now. Everyone was staring at him. He gladly drank some and passed it on. As they were enjoying the grape soda, Rick grabbed the beer can and threw it as far as he could. The can, frothing at one end as it twirled in the air, dropped into the gully below.

It takes just one person to stand up for what's right, to stop the darkness from creeping in. Just as one bulb can light a dark room, so can one person chase away the adversary. I'll always remember Rick for the light he turned on for us all. **NE**

Rand Packer is a member of the Edgemont Fourth Ward, Provo Utah Edgemont Stake.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

To learn more about resisting peer pressure, read the following articles in the Gospel Library at www.lds.org: "Making the Right Choices" by Elder Richard G. Scott (*Ensign*, Nov. 1994) and "The Word of Wisdom" by President Boyd K. Packer (*Ensign*, May 1996).

And read Daniel 1 to see how Daniel and his friends were blessed for obeying the Lord's law of health.

A MESSAGE FROM MOLDOVA

With many pioneers in Moldova still in their teens, the Church is offering new hope in this small country by the Black Sea.

BY KARL AND SANDRA FINCH

When you say the name Lilia Carasciuc, you are speaking of two people: a mother and her daughter. Both Lilias are from the Republic of Moldova, a small country next to Romania. And both Lilias are pioneers. They can both claim to be the first Moldovan members of the Church.

Lilia, the mother, was baptized in the United States while she was visiting on a grant from the U.S. government, making her the first Moldovan baptized. That was in May 1997.

Then just six months later in November, her daughter, Lilia, became the first person baptized actually in Moldova. Since she was the first of several to be baptized that day, she treasures the honor of being allowed to be the first to join the Church in her country. Today both Lilias have been members for more than six years.

In the Beginning

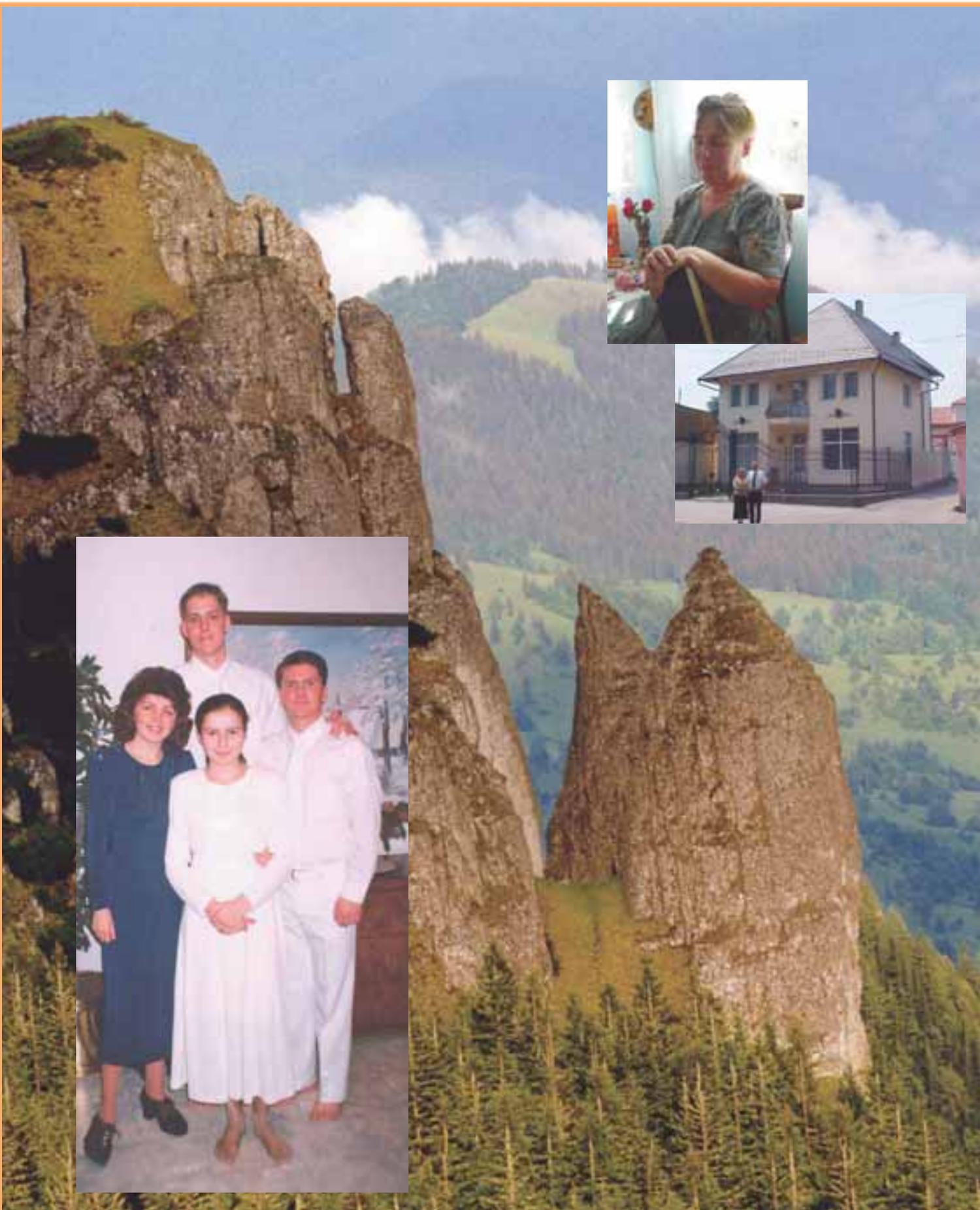
At first the only Church members in Moldova were three Latter-day Saint Americans: John Nielson and Paul and Betty Morris. They met in the Morris' home for sacrament meeting. Two elders from the România Bucharest Mission were sent to Moldova, and then the sheep began to recognize the voice of the Shepherd. Lilia and her mother began attending meetings after Lilia's mother returned from the United States.

The younger Lilia tells the story of her conversion: "I started attending Church meetings six months before my baptism. I had my mother's example this entire time. She introduced me to the Church by giving me a hymnbook. I came to love the first hymn I looked at, 'Love One Another.' I knew then that God wanted me to feel special and loved."



Opposite page: At her baptism, Lilia Carasciuc (center) is with her mother and the missionaries, Elder Williams and Elder Wadsworth. All represent firsts in Moldova—first baptisms and first missionaries.

Opposite page: Eujenia Vacarciuc of Orhei is also a Moldovan pioneer; the new meeting-house in Chisinau.





Chisinau live in concrete high-rise apartment buildings. But in the country and villages, people still live in small self-constructed homes without running water, and many travel by wooden horse-drawn wagons or on foot. The countryside has fertile black soil that produces beautiful fruits and vegetables. The hills, though not high enough to be known as mountains, are covered

Juliana Musteata, Irina Vizitiv, and Mariana Turcanu on a hill overlooking the capital city of Chisinau.

In the six years since Lilia's baptism, the branch has grown to 180 members, with many of the members being youth or young adults. Five young people from Moldova have already served as full-time missionaries and returned. Four more are serving missions now.

These young people love to talk about how the Church has changed their lives. "It makes me want to shout for joy," says Alin

Constantinescu, "when I realize that I belong to the only true Church. A deep feeling of thankfulness pierces my soul every time I think of the love the Lord has for us and the trust He has put in us as pioneers here in Moldova." Alin is now serving a mission in Manchester, England.

"It shows in our countenances that we are a happy people," says Mariana Turcanu, "and it is because of the gospel. It has changed my whole existence here in Moldova."

Other Firsts in Moldova

The small country of Moldova looks like a slice of melon squished between Romania and Ukraine. The nation has about four and a half million people; they speak Russian and Moldovan, a language closely related to Romanian. The people who live in the capital city of

Chisinau live in concrete high-rise apartment buildings. But in the country and villages, people still live in small self-constructed homes without running water, and many travel by wooden horse-drawn wagons or on foot. The countryside has fertile black soil that produces beautiful fruits and vegetables. The hills, though not high enough to be known as mountains, are covered with meadows of trees and grass with patches of bright yellow sunflowers.

The largest branch of the Church in Moldova is in Chisinau. President Ion Virilan is the first Moldovan to serve as branch president. His teenage daughter, Natalia, was among the first five to be baptized in November 1997. And a few months later the rest of her family joined the Church. There is also a smaller branch in the town of Orhei.

A lot of the youth activities organized by the Church have been firsts as well. The branch in Chisinau has had its first seminary and institute classes. The youth have held their first Super Saturday. And best of all, the branch has its first brand-new meetinghouse. The building was dedicated in December 2002 and is a monument to the pioneering efforts in Moldova.



Leading the Way

It may sound a little strange to call such young members of the Church pioneers, but these youth understand they are leading the way for many more from their country. Juliana Musteata says, "Being a modern pioneer in Moldova brings joy and happiness into my heart and soul. I believe that if we work hard, we can influence the growth of the Church. I know that the Lord has blessed each one of us with the opportunity to set an example for others and share the gospel."

"Yes, we are pioneers!" says Gheorghe Zugravu. "It is amazing to be the pioneers of our Lord Jesus Christ. We feel closer to our Savior as we share the gospel here in this country. We are the first, but after us will come many others who will love Jesus Christ as we do. We believe this with the whole power of our hearts."

Taking Care of the Children

Part of their love for the Savior is shown in the ways the young people have chosen to serve. Just like others around the world, the young women in the Chisinau Branch have organized service projects. They made one project a yearly event. For the past several summers,



they have helped care for children at orphanages in the city.

"We young women try our best to make these children's

lives more pleasant," says Natalia Gligor. "We try with all our hearts to offer them love and comfort, to play with them, and to make them understand that there is somebody who loves them. We have a special program that can develop certain abilities. We try to inspire them to be attentive and curious.

They lack many things, both material and spiritual. The spiritual things



Left: Alin Constantinescu and Vasile

Botan are now serving full-time missions. Far left: Young men and missionaries on the grounds of the meetinghouse in Chisinau. Below: Branch president

Ion Virlan with his wife, Nadejda, and daughters, Marina and Natalia.

Bottom: Irina Vizitiv with her brother.



Below: Natalia Gligor, along with the young women of the branch, gives service at an orphanage. Right: Gheorghe Zugravu and Slava Schiopul are keenly aware of their obligation to spread the gospel in Moldova.

that are lacking are more painful, and the wounds are much deeper.”

Irina Vizitiv also helps with the orphaned children. She says, “Families are the biggest blessings of our Heavenly Father. I think through this service project, we have brought some light into the children’s lives. And I know this is very important to my Heavenly Father.” Irina, like many of the youth, is the only member of the Church in her family. She hopes her family will someday accept the restored gospel.

Knowing the Savior

Coming to know their Savior is one of the best experiences these young people have. Katerina Bejan was the first seminary teacher in the branch and is currently serving a mission in England. She says, “I know that Jesus Christ is always with us and that He is the cornerstone of this Church.”

“I love to hear people say, ‘Jesus Christ lives!’” says Mariana Turcanu. “It feels so wonderful to know it for myself. And as sure

as He lives, I know that my Redeemer loves me.”

Slava Schiopul knows many Moldovans are waiting to hear about the gospel. He says, “We must concentrate our lives in obedience to the commandments of



Heavenly Father, yet there are only a few of us here in this country to help each other. However, by this obedience, we grow closer and closer to our Savior Jesus Christ, and He helps us to live in the light.”

Vasile Botan, now serving a mission in Paris, France, sees the Church coming to his country as one step in fulfillment of prophecy: “I know that before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ here on earth, His restored gospel has to be known by every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. I am very happy that this message has arrived for the people of Moldova. In this tiny country, we know God remembers us too.”

Like most pioneers, members of the Church here are struggling economically. The Republic of Moldova is a young country with few jobs or opportunities available. But Moldovans’ acceptance of the gospel of Jesus Christ and their determination to live righteously are their hope for the future. **NE**

Karl and Sandra Finch are members of the Modesto Third Ward, Modesto California Stake. They served a Church Educational System mission in Moldova.



"They're sticky notes. My mom is out of town this week, and she's afraid I'll forget stuff."



RANDY GLASBERGEN

"Hey, I got a letter from home!"

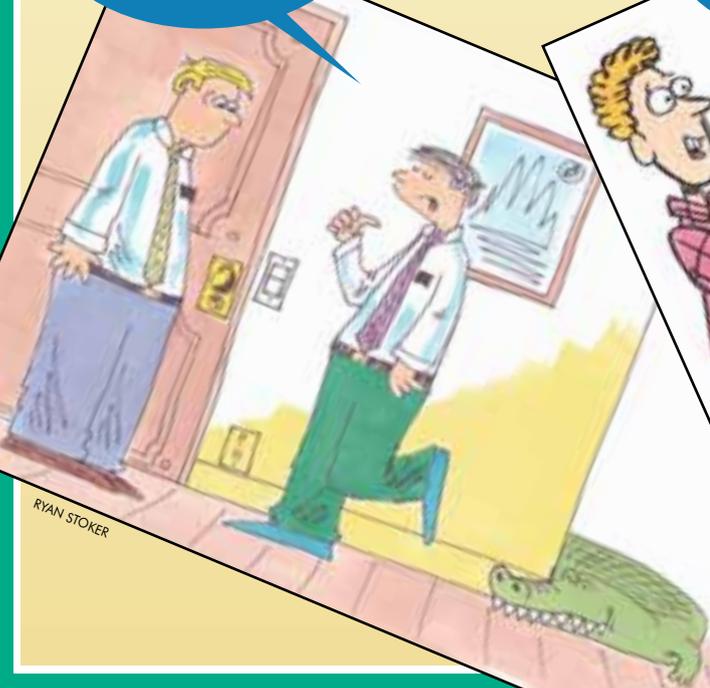


RYAN STOKER

As we studied D&C 137 in early-morning seminary, Lester began reading verse 5: "I saw Father Adam and Abraham . . ." Turning the page, he and his classmates began laughing, which woke up Lester's brother Alvin. But Alvin joined in the laughter, too, after hearing the rest of the verse: "and . . . my brother Alvin, that has long since slept."

Christian Wells, South San Francisco Ward, San Francisco California West Stake

"Hey, I took care of the mice in the kitchen last week. This one is your turn!"



RYAN STOKER

"Hey, Mom, will you sew on my sewing merit badge for me?"



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY



SHARING

BY SHELLEY ASHBY

It could have been a disaster, but instead it turned out to be one of the best girls' camps we had ever held in the Philadelphia Pennsylvania Stake.

The campsite we usually used had mistakenly been double-booked that year, so we were forced, at the last minute, to share Camp Mack with another large group.

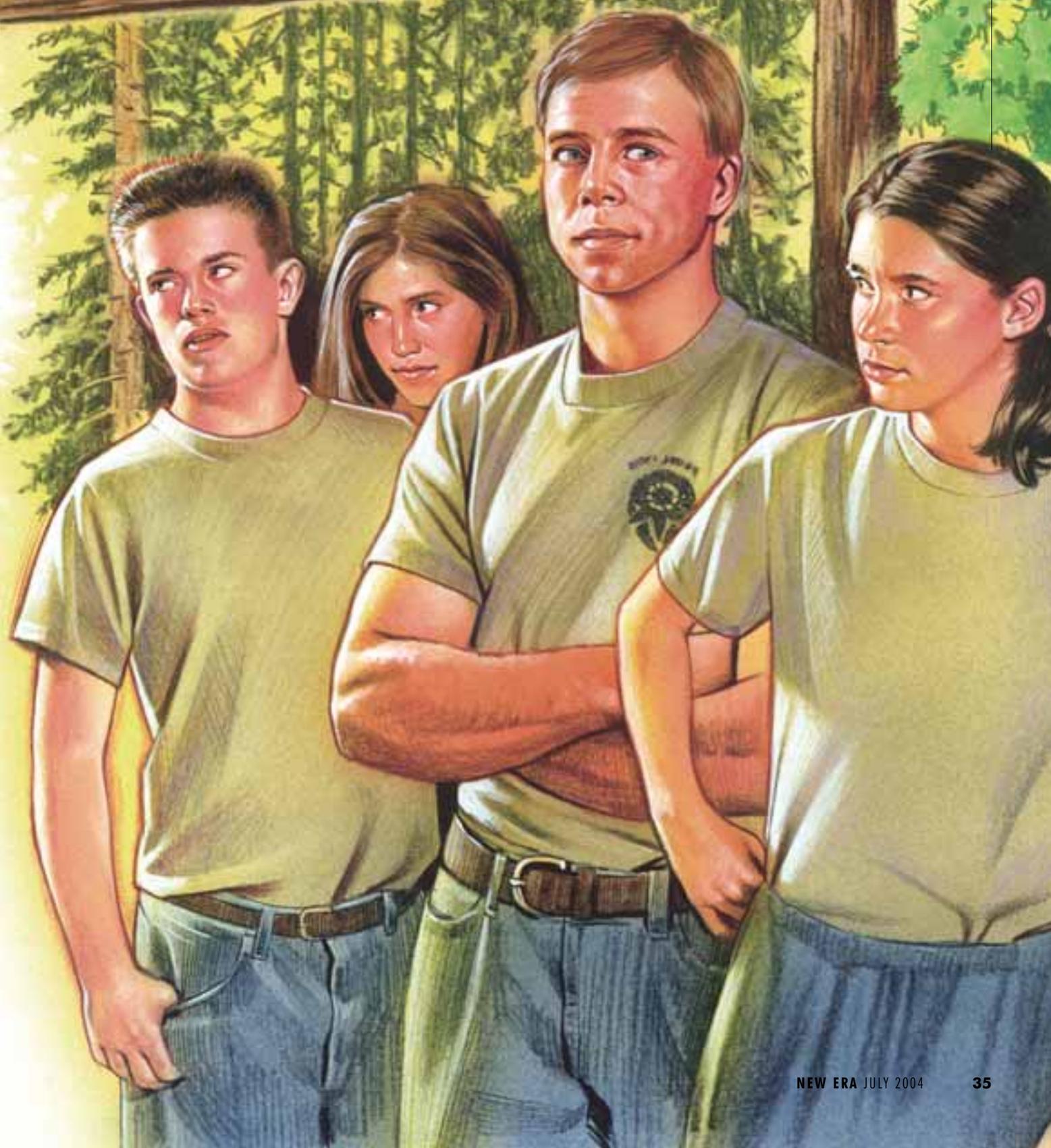
The other group could not have been more different from us. It was a police academy camp for troubled youth, ages 11 to 15. The camp had been set up to teach them discipline and coping skills through rigorous activities led by police officers.

At first, neither group was too excited about sharing Camp Mack. So, with the help of our priesthood leaders, we worked out a schedule with the other camp to try to stay out of each other's way.

The first day, we watched the police academy group drilling, marching, and doing calisthenics. We heard their noise and yelling all day long no matter where we were. They, in turn, kept a watchful eye on us as we did crafts and rotated to different classes.

That first evening our young women were ending the day's activities by singing "I Am a Child of God" (*Hymns*, no. 301). The police academy youth were walking to their sleeping

CAMP MACK



area. They stopped and listened to the music floating through Camp Mack. When the song was finished, the campers walked slowly and quietly to their lodge. What a difference from the yelling we had heard throughout the day.

The second day we tried to keep out of the way of the police academy activities. Both groups continued to watch each other. At the end of the day two, police officers approached some of the Young Women leaders. They wanted to know what we were doing with the girls at camp and why they were so well behaved and friendly. What were our camp goals and philosophies, and what did Latter-day Saints believe? We were thrilled to have them ask these questions and grateful for the opportunity to share the gospel.

The following day the Young Women leaders told the girls that they had been standing as witnesses without even knowing it. They had made a deep impression on the police officers running the other camp.



A GREAT PLACE

Girls' camp isn't just for learning to get along in the outdoors. Camp is a great place to:

- Feel and recognize the Spirit.
- Understand that each girl is a daughter of God.
- Prepare for future roles.
- Live baptismal covenants.

Immediately, our girls wanted to give them a Book of Mormon. We presented an officer with a copy of the Book of Mormon the following night. We assured him that if he would read it and pray for an answer of its truthfulness, it would change his life. The Spirit was so powerful during this conversation that the officer got tears in his eyes and said he had never felt the peace he was feeling then.

By the last day of camp, there was a feeling of friendship between both camps. Their cooks stood side by side with our cooks as they helped each other make breakfast for both groups. The Spirit of God filled Camp Mack that week. What could have been a disaster turned into a wonderful experience for all of us. We learned that when we stand as witnesses of God at all times, in all things, and in all places, the Lord can use us to help Him perform miracles every day. **NE**

Shelley Ashby is a member of the Jarrettown Ward, Philadelphia Pennsylvania Stake.



MY FATHER'S GOOD-BYE

BY SHARON LORE

I remember one of the last sacrament meetings my father ever attended. After fighting cancer for a year, my dad was reaching the end of his life. The opening hymn that day at church was “Come, Come, Ye Saints” (*Hymns*, no. 30).

I peered down the row to look at

my dad. He was crying. I moved down the bench to sit next to him and asked him if he was crying because of the pain or the song. As we sang, “And should we die before our journey’s through,” he looked straight into my eyes, and I knew that he was leaving us.

Now it brings me peace when I finish the rest of the song: “Happy day! All is well! We then are free from toil and sorrow, too; With the just we shall dwell!” This song of comfort is part of my father’s legacy to me. **NE**

Sharon Lore is a member of the Dallas 11th Ward, Richardson Texas Stake.

ILLUSTRATED BY KEITH LARSON



HYMNS FOR YUKI

BY ASHLEY DAY

I had the privilege of spending four weeks in Kofu, Japan, with my good friend Yuki and her family. Having the Spirit as my guide helped me to share my beliefs with Yuki.

One day I purchased a small Church hymnbook in Japanese at the distribution center. A few days later I felt impressed to give Yuki my

hymnbook. I thought about how weird this was because I had purchased the hymnbook for myself and not for her. Nevertheless, I gave her the hymnbook. I felt a little better, knowing I had done what I was prompted to do.

A while later, we were playing music downstairs, and Yuki told me she wanted to sing the hymns. I played some of the hymns on the piano while she sang in Japanese. I had a feeling of pure joy listening to my friend singing the songs I knew so well. Even though I did not know all the words to follow along, the Spirit was strong. I am very grateful I followed the promptings of the Spirit. **NE**

Ashley Day is a member of the Selab First Ward, Selab Washington Stake.



A REASON NOT TO

BY GREGORY MCKEOWN

Hey, McKeown, you don't drink, do you?" Andrew asked loudly enough that everyone around us could hear. I was at a school event I had helped organize, and now the evening looked like it was going to be ruined.

Andrew was a key player on the rugby team, always the center of attention, and he'd clearly been drinking. He often boasted of his immorality and made fun of anyone who was different. It seemed that now it was my turn.

"Hey, Andrew," I said, trying to act cool, but a few people around me were already laughing.

Andrew kept on going: "You don't smoke. You don't do drugs. You don't swear. You don't have my kind of fun with girls. What do you do?"

I felt like hiding in a corner, but instead I tried to hold my ground. "You know I like to have fun," I said. "I just like to be able to remember it in the morning." Some of my friends laughed. "I like to be able to remember and not have to regret it."

Later, the crowd left, but Andrew stayed. He had calmed down by now. He said quietly, "McKeown, I wish I didn't drink either. I wish I didn't do the things I do. But I have no reason

I'M SAFE

BY AMY JOHNSON

One of my favorite scriptures that has helped me out in my times of trials and tribulations is Helaman 5:12: "Remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, . . . when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power to drag you down."

This scripture has taught me that if I build my foundation

on Jesus Christ our Savior and do what is right, even in my difficulties and in times when Satan is pushing on me the most, I cannot fall. I truly believe that Jesus is the rock that we should build our foundation on, that He will always help and guide us. **NE**

Amy Johnson is a member of the Myton First Ward, Roosevelt Utah Stake.

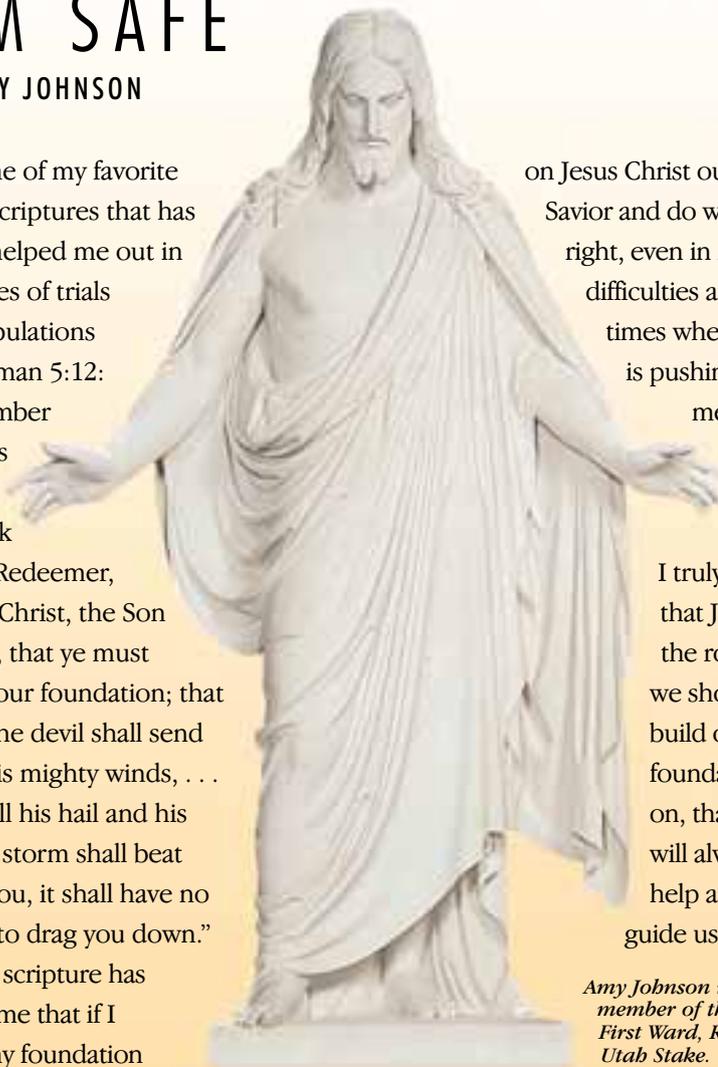
not to. I wish I had some reasons not to." And with that he walked slowly away.

I was shocked. I had no idea he had been watching me. And now it seemed he admired me for standing up for my standards and for having reasons to live right. I have never forgotten that evening.

I have often thought about how being a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is my reason for living right. I've also

thought about how knowing I am a child of God and a priesthood holder gives me the reasons to choose the right when confronted with choices and temptations. When we remember who we are, we have the reasons to say no to evil and yes to the Lord. **NE**

Gregory McKeown is a member of the BYU 141st Ward, Brigham Young University 11th Stake.





PIONEER DAYS!

From 22 to 24 July 1847, the first Latter-day Saint pioneers came into the Salt Lake Valley looking for a land where they could worship God free of persecution. These pioneers and those who followed built up the Church in the American West, and the gospel has continued to go forth among all the nations of the earth. Here are a few ways you can remember the sacrifices of the

pioneers and learn more about them this month:

- If you have pioneer ancestry, read their histories. Their lives have many lessons we can learn from.
- Learn about the first members to be baptized in your family or country. They are also pioneers.
- Memorize a hymn that celebrates the pioneers or the Restoration, such as “They, the Builders of the Nation” or “The Spirit of God” (*Hymns*, nos. 36, 2).

■ See what you can do to become more self-reliant.

You could try learning first aid, growing your own garden, or learning to sew.

■ Volunteer to help clean up a local historical site with a group of youth from your ward or branch for a Duty to God or Personal Progress project.

■ Begin today to write in your journal on a regular basis so your posterity can learn about your life and your faith in God.

HEROIC EXAMPLES

We must be sure that the legacy of faith received from [the pioneers who came before us] is never lost. Let their heroic lives

touch our hearts, and especially the hearts of our youth, so the fire of true testimony and unwavering love for the Lord and His Church will blaze brightly

within each one of us as it did in our faithful pioneers.”

—Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Faith in Every Footstep,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 25.

—Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Rise to Your Call,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 75.

“IT IS BY GIVING OUR WHOLE HEARTS TO THE MASTER AND KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS THAT WE COME TO KNOW HIM.”

TAKE THE TREK



Have you ever wondered what it would have been like to be on the trail with the pioneers? Take the journey with them online.

You can start the trail right from the beginning in Nauvoo, Illinois, or go to one of 39 locations along the way, where you can read pioneers' own accounts of what happened there.

Like this one:

Scotts Bluff, Nebraska

Distance: 738 miles from Nauvoo



"Some Indians came to our camp and my husband in a joking way told one of the Indians, that he would trade me for a pony; he thought no more of it, but the Indian came with the pony and it was no joke to him."

—Priscilla Merriman Evans

At www.lds.org go to the Gospel Library and click on The Pioneer Story.



THE QUILT FACTORY

The Norwich England Stake decided to depart from their usual routine for their annual youth conference. After their Saturday activity, the youth came back to the Lowestoft Ward meeting-house to find that some of their leaders had organized a "quilt factory" and chosen some team leaders and a factory manager from among the youth. Stations were set up for cutting, pinning, sewing, and tying,

and dinner was served in shifts. After watching a Church-produced video about humanitarian aid, the youth got to work.

Their goal was to make 100 quilts from scratch. Three and a half hours later, they had completed 106 quilts, ready to be donated. The Norwich youth had a great time and felt the Spirit as they partook of the atmosphere of service at their youth conference.



COMPOSE AWAY!

The *New Era* is accepting submissions of original gospel-related songs and hymns. If you have written a song you think would bless the lives of the youth of the Church, send your submission to:

In Tune
New Era, Room 2420
50 E. North Temple
Salt Lake City, UT 84150

THE MAN UPSTAIRS

BY MEL JONES

The jungle heat was stifling. My pack and rifle were almost heavier than I could bear. Being a greenhorn in Vietnam, I appreciated my buddy Moose watching out for me and pointing out booby traps along the trail, but his long strides were hard to keep up with. Finally, Sarge called a halt, and I collapsed in the middle of the trail. As we caught our breath, the men started talking about the showers, clean beds, and real food waiting for us at base camp just a few hours away.

“Four niner, four niner, this is Zulu 23. Come in, four niner,” the radio crackled. We all recognized Zulu 23, the code name of the chopper overhead, which we called “the man upstairs.” The helicopter pilot advised us to get off the trail and head into the swamp, a detour that would take three or four days. Visions of beds and food vanished.

I couldn’t believe it when my buddies grimly pulled their things together, preparing to plunge into the swamp. Angrily I started yelling at them. “Hey, you guys, don’t listen to him. What does he know about the jungle? He never even gets his feet wet. The swamp will eat you alive if the Vietcong soldiers don’t get you first. Let’s stick to the trail.”

Suddenly Moose loomed over me, and I was painfully reminded of why the guys called him Moose. He picked me up by the front of my shirt with one hand. With the first finger of his other hand he punctuated his words against my chest. “Jones, when the man upstairs talks, you listen!” He dropped me roughly, and I followed meekly into the swamp.

Three days later we finally dragged into camp. That’s when we learned that a company of enemy soldiers had set up an ambush on our trail. Because of his vantage point, “the man upstairs” could see what was happening and had saved our lives.

A long time ago, our Heavenly Father sent us to this earthly “jungle.” Aware of the many traps and pitfalls we would encounter, He lovingly gave us guides to point these out. These guides are our parents, teachers, leaders, and a living prophet.

From His vantage point, our Heavenly Father can give life-saving counsel through our guides and through the powerful “two-way radio” of prayer. Prayer is not the same

as the field radio I used in Vietnam. You can pray anywhere; its range is unlimited. However, just like the field radio, if we’re not tuned properly, we’ll hear only static and interference. And just as moisture and dirt can damage the radio, sin and rebellion cause serious but not irreparable damage to our “transmitters.” But repentance can clean them. And our “batteries” need constant recharging by obedience and regular attendance at church.

Like “the man upstairs” who guided us in Vietnam, I’m grateful for Heavenly Father’s counsel about the trail ahead. When He talks, we need to listen. I know that if we’ll follow His counsel, He’ll guide us in our journey away from a dangerous enemy and back to His presence. **NE**

Mel Jones is a member of the Thatcher First Ward, Thatcher Arizona Stake.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

To learn more about prayer, read these scriptures: 3 Nephi 13:5–8; 18:18–21; D&C 10:5; 19:38.

In site: Also read the following articles in the Gospel Library at www.lds.org: “The Lifeline of Prayer,” by President James E. Faust (Ensign, May 2002) and “Sweet Power of Prayer,” by Elder Russell M. Nelson (Ensign, May 2003).



IS REVEL

BY ELDER GERALD N. LUND
Of the Seventy

One of the most important challenges of our mortal probation is learning to hear, recognize, and then follow the voice of the Lord.

Part of that challenge is that there is sometimes confusion about personal revelation. Have you heard statements like “How do I know if an impression is really from the Lord or if it is just my own emotions?” Or “I never seem to have a spiritual experience.” Or “I have prayed again and again about this. Why isn’t the Lord answering me?”

I would like to address three questions about personal revelation:

1. What is the voice of the Lord like?
2. How can I distinguish between true and counterfeit revelation?
3. What can I do to enhance my ability to hear, recognize, and follow the voice of the Lord?

“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.” (D&C 8:2)

IT ACTION?

What is the voice of the Lord like?

In Doctrine and Covenants 85, the Lord says, “Thus saith the still small voice, which whispereth through and pierceth all things” (D&C 85:6).

The voice is still. It is small. And it whispers. When you think about that, it becomes clear that hearing the voice of the Lord has challenges. It would be much simpler if the Lord spoke in a voice of thunder or used a microphone and 80-megawatt speakers.

In Doctrine and Covenants 8, the Lord defined what revelation is and how it comes:

“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” (D&C 8:2–3).

“In your mind and in your heart”—think about that. If the Lord spoke something to our mind, how would it come? We would probably describe it as “thoughts.” If He tells us something in our hearts, we would probably describe that as “feelings.”

Thoughts and feelings are the most common ways the Lord gives His children personal revelation. And therein lies a challenge. Every one of us is a stream of thoughts and



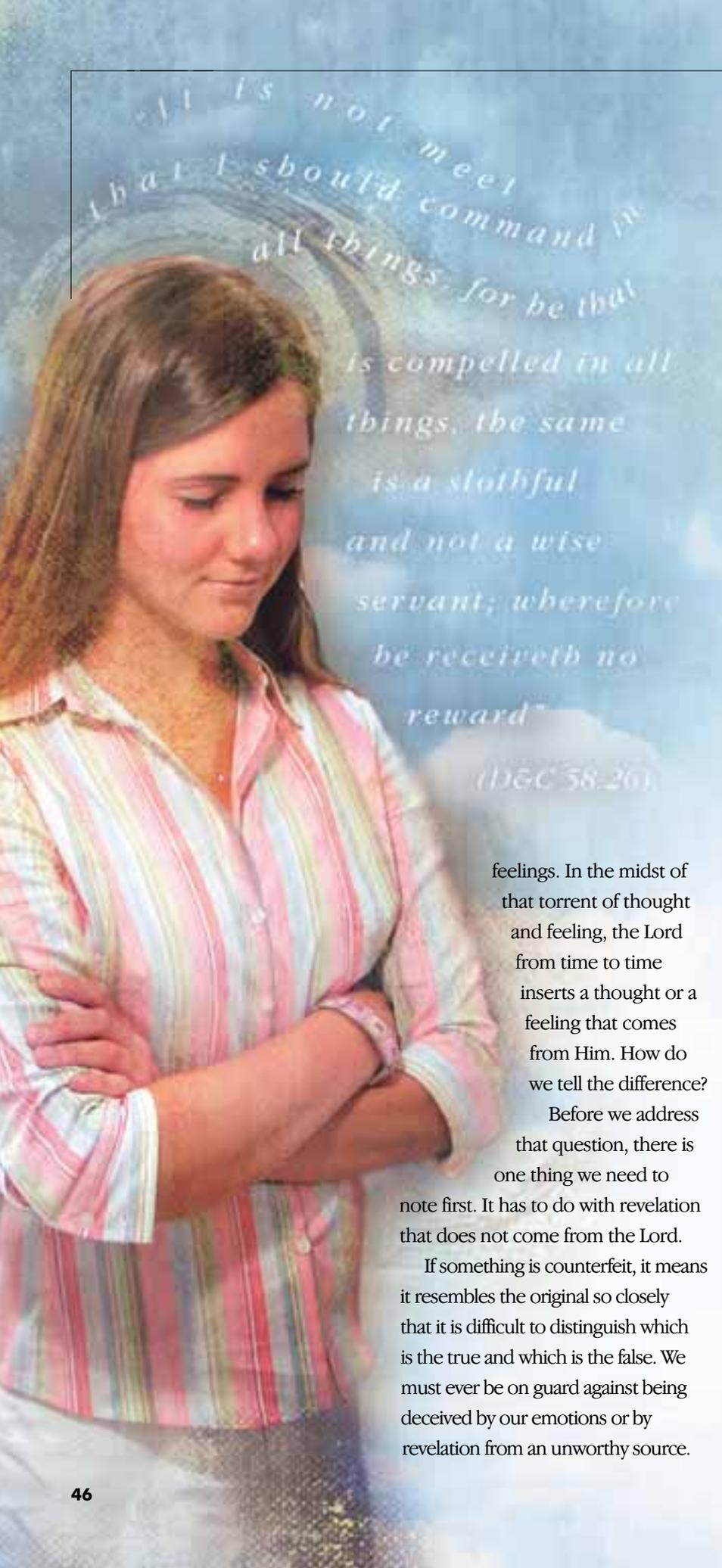
Hearing the voice of the Lord has challenges. It would be much simpler if the Lord spoke in a voice of thunder.

“Thus saith the still small voice,

which whispereth

through and pierceth

all things”
(D&C 85:6).



How can I distinguish between true and counterfeit revelation?

Through the scriptures and the statements of modern prophets, we find principles that can help us determine how to decide if revelation comes from the Lord or from another source. I would like to briefly outline five of those guidelines or principles.

1 *It is God who determines all aspects of revelation.*

We can study and pray; on occasion we can add fasting to our prayers; we can importune the Lord with deep yearnings; we can keep sacred covenants—all of these will help create a climate that fosters spiritual growth. But we must remember that when all is done, it is still up to the Lord to determine when the revelation comes, how it is given, what is revealed, and to whom.

With the utmost earnestness and the deepest of pleadings, the Savior called on His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane to remove the dreaded cup of His coming sacrifice. But that request was followed immediately by these profound words: “Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39). That should be part of every request we take to the Lord. In that simple phrase lies the key to our willingness to let the Lord decide what is best.

2 *The content given in a revelation is more important than the form in which it comes.*

Another mistake some make is to covet the more dramatic forms of revelation. God reveals His mind and will to man across a broad spectrum of experiences. These may range from the very direct and dramatic: the appearance of divine beings, open visions, fire from heaven. Or they may be very subtle: quiet premonitions, gentle thoughts, a feeling of peace. These are by far the most common.

feelings. In the midst of that torrent of thought and feeling, the Lord from time to time inserts a thought or a feeling that comes from Him. How do we tell the difference? Before we address that question, there is one thing we need to note first. It has to do with revelation that does not come from the Lord.

If something is counterfeit, it means it resembles the original so closely that it is difficult to distinguish which is the true and which is the false. We must ever be on guard against being deceived by our emotions or by revelation from an unworthy source.

Nevertheless, not
as I will,
but as thou wilt"
(Matthew 26:39).

We must be careful we don't feel that only the more direct forms of revelation are valid.

3 Revelation from God does not contradict gospel principles or go contrary to established Church policy and procedure.

When there is new doctrine or new procedures to come forth, you will get it in one of three ways:

- a. A formal press conference will be called by the leaders of the Church, at which an official announcement will be made.
- b. It will be announced through the *Church News*, the *Ensign*, or other official Church communications.
- c. It will be announced in general conference by those in authority.

Otherwise, we should be very wary about accepting it, and we should not share it with others.

4 The Lord wants us to use our agency and develop spiritual self-reliance.

The scriptures and the prophets warn us about seeking to be directed in every matter of life. The Lord says:

"It is not meet [it is not proper or good] that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward" (D&C 58:26).

There are some things that don't matter to the Lord; He leaves the choice up to us (see D&C 60:5). Striking the balance between trust in the Lord and spiritual self-reliance is a delicate matter, but it is clear that the Lord does not want us to be spiritual robots who are afraid to move without first being told what to do.

5 A person is not given revelation to direct another person unless they have priesthood or family responsibility for that person.

This principle is described by Elder Dallin H.

Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as the principle of "stewardship in revelation." This means that "only the President of the Church receives revelation to guide the entire Church. Only the stake president receives revelation for the special guidance of the stake. The person who receives revelation for the ward is the bishop. . . . When one person purports to receive revelation for another person outside his or her own area of responsibility . . . you can be sure that such revelations are not from the Lord" ("Revelation," *New Era*, Sept. 1982, 46).

What can I do to enhance my ability to hear, recognize, and follow the voice of the Lord?

There are many answers that could be given to that question: be worthy, pray always, earnestly seek the Lord, follow the General Authorities. But I should like to answer in a little different way.

The Lord's voice is still and small and it whispers. If our lives are filled with "noise," we will find it difficult to hear. We must find ways to reduce the inner noise in our lives and create times of inner stillness and quiet.

There are many sources of inner noise. Some are obvious. Sin can create tremendous inner noise. Anger and contention are a major source of inner noise. Other sources of inner noise are not necessarily bad in and of themselves. Physical tiredness, stress, busyness, apathy, and worry can all create inner noises of their own.





“The Spirit does not get our attention by shouting or shaking us with a heavy hand. Rather it whispers. It caresses so gently that if we are preoccupied we may not feel it at all. . . .

“Occasionally it will press just firmly enough for us to pay heed. But most of the time, if we do not heed the gentle feeling, the Spirit will withdraw and wait until we come seeking and listening.”

—President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Candle of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 53.

Even outer noise can detract from inner quiet. We often live in envelopes of outer noise. This is not a bad thing, but it may interfere at times with the quiet whisperings the Lord wants to give us.

Let me mention one other common source of great inner noise. When we desperately desire something, it creates a great rush of emotion within us. And high emotion can mask or cover spiritual promptings. Even if the thing we desire is a good thing, our “wants” may be so high that we become unwilling or unable to hear the Lord’s will in the matter.

Thankfully, the scriptures and the prophets teach us how to reduce inner noise and create times of quiet and reverence.

Reading and studying the word of God is a great source of inner quiet. You can feel things begin to change. The agitation melts away, and peace comes in its place. I have experienced that time and again in my own life.

Prayer is another source of inner quiet and serenity. I am not talking about the I-have-to-

do-my-duty sort of prayers. I speak of prayers that are consistent, focused, and submissive to God’s will.

We can increase our own personal rever-

ence. In sacrament meetings we can sit quietly and prepare for the covenant-making process offered there. We witness to God that we are willing to “always remember him” (see D&C 20:77, 79). If we keep that covenant, we shall always have His Spirit to be with us.

Finally, deliberately put aside the cares of the world, put aside the rush of our daily lives, and find a quiet place and a quiet

time to sit and ponder and reflect and mediate.

If the voice of the Lord is still and small and it whispers, should it surprise us that His counsel is “Be still and know that I am God”? (D&C 101:16). There is great significance to that simple statement. Only as we are still can we learn to hear the still, small voice. **NE**

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University on 2 December 1997. At that time Elder Lund was a Church Educational System zone administrator.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

To read about how others received and recognized inspiration, read the following articles in the Gospel Library at www.lds.org: “Lead Me, Guide Me,” by Margaret D. Nadauld (*New Era*, Nov. 2001) and “I Said Yes,” by Marilyn Feik (*New Era*, May 1999).

“Be still
and know that
I am God”
(D&C 101:16)

Mutual Activity

• The article, “A Gathering in Ghana,” is a report of a celebration held at the time the Accra Ghana Temple was dedicated. Have a quiz on the operating temples in the world. Post two world maps on the wall and divide into teams to identify the location of temples. Give hints such as how many temples are in Mexico or in South America and so forth. As an additional hint, post whatever pictures are available with the names of the temples covered.

Service Project Suggestion

- Volunteer to clean up a community park, sports field, school yard, or strip of road. Make the activity fun by giving small prizes for the most unusual piece of trash found, the funniest thing picked up, or the most trash collected by weight or volume or in the fastest time.

Family Home Evening Ideas

- If one of your family members has been assigned to give a talk in church, review the steps to preparing a talk in the Idea List, “Tips for Terrific Talks,” on page 11.
- Read together the article, “Murmuring and Mowing,” on page 8. Talk about what each member of the family does to contribute to everyone’s comfort and well-being. Discuss better ways of giving service within the family.

SUNDAY LESSON HELPS

In addition to the Resource Guides (printed in May and November in the *Ensign* and *Liahona*), Young Women and Aaronic Priesthood teachers may find these additional resources helpful in enhancing lessons 26–29.

Young Women Manual 2

Lesson 26 The Sacrament

- John W. Yardley, “Happiness Every Week,” *New Era*, May 2004, 12.
- Britton Roney, “I Was Hoping You’d Come,” *New Era*, May 2004, 26.

Lesson 27 Strengthening Testimony through Obedience

- Athos M. Amorim, “Why Obey?” *New Era*, Nov. 2002, 44.
- Richard L. Evans, “Why All the Rules?” *New Era*, Nov. 2003, 44.

Lesson 28 Agency

- H. David Burton, “Who’s Asking?” *New Era*, Dec. 2003, 38.
- David O. McKay, “Dandy,” *New Era*, Apr. 2003, 10.
- Rosalyn Collings Eves, “What Was I Missing?” *New Era*, Apr. 2004, 42.

Lesson 29 Exaltation

- Keith B. McMullin, “Are You a Saint?” *New Era*, Feb. 2003, 38.
- Carlos E. Asay, “The Temple: The Place for You,” *New Era*, Mar. 1997, 4.

Aaronic Priesthood Manual 2

Lesson 26 Worthy Thoughts

- Q&A: “Bad thoughts come into my mind . . .” *New Era*, May 1989, 16.
- Idea List: “Clean Thoughts,” *New Era*, Feb. 2001, 15.

Lesson 27 The Lord’s Law of Health

- Q&A: “Other players take supplements to enhance their performance . . .” *New Era*, May 2004, 16.
- Rand Packer, “Gulp!” *New Era*, this issue, 26.
- James E. Faust, “The Enemy Within,” *New Era*, Mar. 2003, 4.

Lesson 28 The Sabbath

- Q&A: “Almost all the jobs I am qualified for require Sunday work . . .” *New Era*, June 2004, 16.
- Joseph Richardson, “To Keep It Holy,” *New Era*, Oct. 1997, 35.

Lesson 29 The Purpose of Life

- M. Russell Ballard, “Go for It!” *New Era*, Mar. 2004, 4.
- L. Tom Perry, “A Pattern for Living,” *New Era*, Jan. 2004, 4.

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NERVOUS TO DO BAPTISMS

I just turned 12 in March and got to go to the temple to do baptisms for my grandmother, two great-grandmothers, and two great-aunts. It was my first time doing baptisms for the dead, so I was a little nervous. Then I got my April *New Era*, and it had an article on baptisms for the dead. I also found the same thing happened to another girl. The *New Era* had exactly what we needed.

*Kari Knott, Salida Ward,
Modesto California North Stake*

SAFE AT THE TEMPLE

I am very thankful for the *New Era*. It has helped me in so many ways. I am especially grateful for the article "Safe from the Storm" (Apr. 2004). It helped me realize that going to the temple wasn't just something I was expected to do. I realized that I really do want to go and feel that security and sense of home. We all need wonderful blessings like the temple to guard us from the world.

*Selina Adams, Yucaipa Third Ward,
Redlands California Stake*

EVERY DAY READERS

Thank you for the January 2004 *New Era*. As a family we wanted to commit this year to reading our scriptures every day. With the page that says "I Have Read My Scriptures Every Day During 2004," we have been able to accomplish that goal. We have missed only one day this year. Instead of trying to make up for that day, we left it blank to remind us that we do not want any more spaces left open. Everyone was so excited to mark off the days, and now we are so used to reading every day that sometimes we forget to mark off the day. This has

"We all need wonderful blessings like the temple."



helped all of our children, ages 5 to 12. We started receiving the *New Era* last year when our oldest son turned 12, and we have enjoyed this great magazine. We have also used it for many family home evenings.

I love reading it myself. It reminds me how I loved reading it from cover to cover as a teenager.

*Tina Chadwick, Highland 16th Ward,
Highland Utah West Stake*

MY FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

Thank you so much for the article "Search, Pray, Believe" (Jan. 2004) by the Young Men and Young Women general presidencies. It really helps me to understand our 2004 Mutual theme (D&C 90:24). It gave me ideas for my talks and taught me of the blessing and promise that "all things shall work together for your good," which comes through my obedience. Searching diligently, praying always, and believing in the restored gospel now serves as my formula for my spiritual protection and success. This magazine helps the Latter-day Saints to be their best.

*Liezel Panganiban San Juan,
Santo Tomas Ward, Lipa Philippines Stake*

MORE SMILES, PLEASE

I am writing to you about the jokes section, The Extra Smile. I like the jokes, but I wish that you had a little more. The rest of the magazine is great.

Elliott Adair, Heber Ninth Ward, Heber City Utah North Stake

We love hearing from you. Write us at the following address. Please include the names of your ward and stake (or branch and district).

*New Era
We've Got Mail
50 E. North Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150*

Or e-mail us at

cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org

Submissions may be edited for length and clarity.



TOWARD PERFECTION

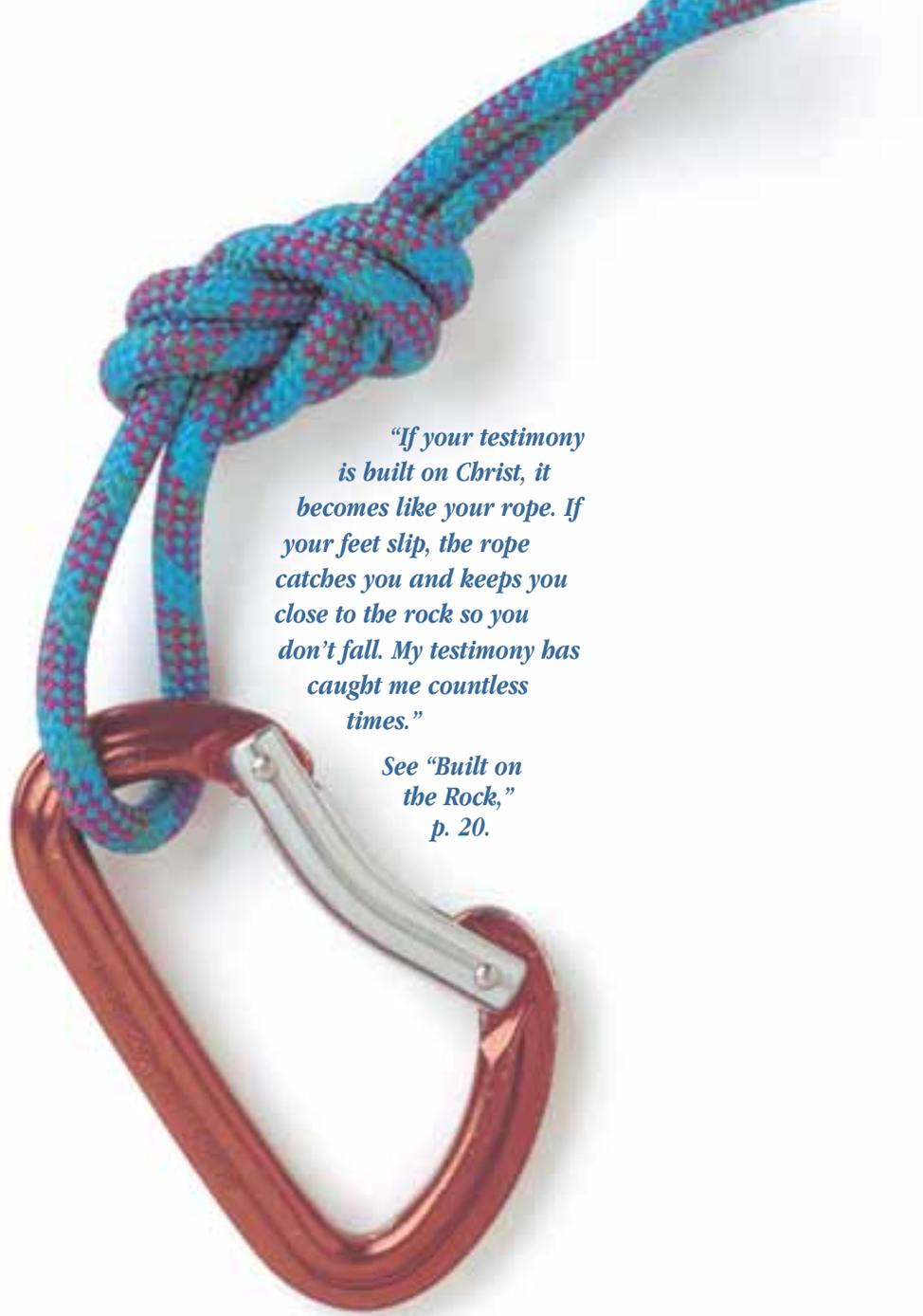
BY JOANNE DEBIASI

I would run,
like gazelles,
ecstatic with movement,
wind at my heels.

Or fly
like the enchanted butterflies,
soaring, stoutly climbing to the clouds
and beyond,
until I grew lost in the stars and forever.

However,
momentarily grounded,
I crawl slowly but steadfastly,
fanning my wet wings,
glad for an eternity
to fulfill my ambitious desires
and sometimes
a little frightened of letting go of
the last strands
of my silken cocoon.

BY BRAD HUNTZINGER



“If your testimony is built on Christ, it becomes like your rope. If your feet slip, the rope catches you and keeps you close to the rock so you don’t fall. My testimony has caught me countless times.”

See “Built on the Rock,” p. 20.