

THE **New Era**

JULY 2012

A photograph of three young people working in a field of hay bales. A young woman with long red hair, wearing a white hoodie and blue jeans, is leaning over a hay bale on the left, reaching out with her hands. A young man in a plaid shirt and blue jeans is in the center, looking towards the camera. Another young man wearing a light-colored cowboy hat, a teal button-down shirt, and blue jeans is on the right, reaching up towards a hay bale. The scene is set outdoors under a clear blue sky.

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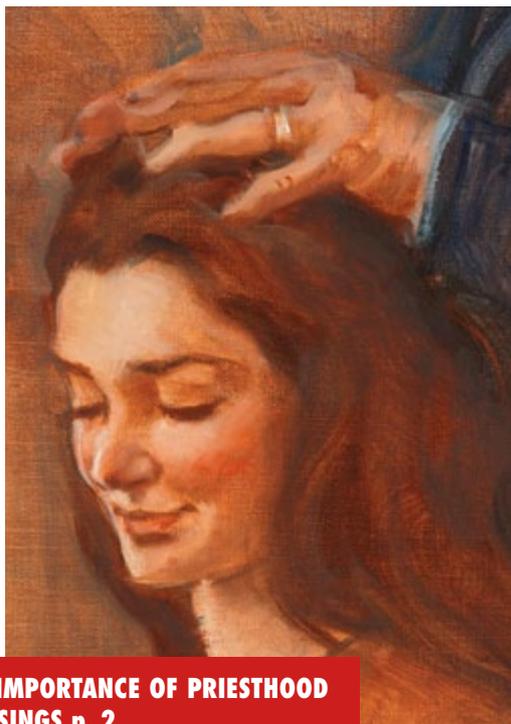
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reserved. Periodicals Postage Paid
at Salt Lake City, Utah. The *New
Era* (ISSN 0164-5285) is published
monthly by The Church of Jesus
Christ of Latter-day Saints, 50 E.
North Temple St., Salt Lake City,
UT 84150-0024, USA.

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

Canada Post Information:
Publication Agreement #40017431.



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The New Era Magazine
Volume 42, Number 7
July 2012

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

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To Change Address:

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

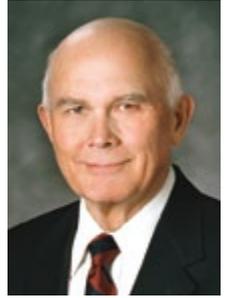
Cover: Serving the community for Mutual activities. See page 10.

*Cover photography:
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By Elder
Dallin H. Oaks
Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

The Importance of PRIESTHOOD BLESSINGS

A priesthood blessing is a conferral of power over spiritual things.

In a priesthood blessing a servant of the Lord exercises the priesthood, as moved upon by the Holy Ghost, to call upon the powers of heaven for the benefit of the person being blessed. Such blessings are conferred by holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood, which has the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the Church (see D&C 107:18, 67).

Examples of Priesthood Blessings

There are many kinds of priesthood blessings. As I give various examples, please remember that priesthood blessings are available for all who need them, but they are given only on request.

Blessings for the healing of the sick are preceded by anointing with oil, as the scriptures direct (see James 5:14–15; Mark 6:13; D&C 24:13–14; 42:43–48; 66:9). Patriarchal blessings are conferred by an ordained patriarch.

Persons desiring guidance in an important decision can receive a

priesthood blessing. Persons who need extra spiritual power to overcome a personal challenge can receive a blessing. Priesthood blessings are often requested from fathers before children leave home for various purposes, such as school, service in the military, or a long trip.

Blessings given in circumstances such as I have just described are sometimes called blessings of comfort or counsel. They are usually given by fathers or husbands or other elders in the family. They can be recorded and kept in family records for the personal spiritual guidance of the persons blessed.

Priesthood blessings are also given in connection with a priesthood ordination or with the setting apart of a man or woman for a calling in the Church. These are probably the most frequent occasions for priesthood blessings.

Many of us have requested a priesthood blessing when we were about to embark upon a new

responsibility in our employment. I received such a blessing many years ago and felt its immediate comfort and long-term guidance.

Significance of Priesthood Blessings

What is the significance of a priesthood blessing? Think of a young man preparing to leave home to seek his fortune in the world. If his father gave him a compass, he might use this worldly tool to help him find his way. If his father gave him money, he could use this to give him power over worldly things. A priesthood blessing is a conferral of power over spiritual things. Though it cannot be touched or weighed, it is of great significance in helping us overcome obstacles on the path to eternal life.

It is a very sacred responsibility for a Melchizedek Priesthood holder to speak for the Lord in giving a priesthood blessing. As the Lord has told us in modern revelation,



“My word . . . shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38). If a servant of the Lord speaks as he is moved upon by the Holy Ghost, his words are “the will of the Lord, . . . the mind of the Lord, . . . the word of the Lord, . . . [and] the voice of the Lord” (D&C 68:4).

But if the words of a blessing represent only the priesthood holder’s own desires and opinions, uninspired by the Holy Ghost, then the blessing is conditioned on whether it represents the will of the Lord.

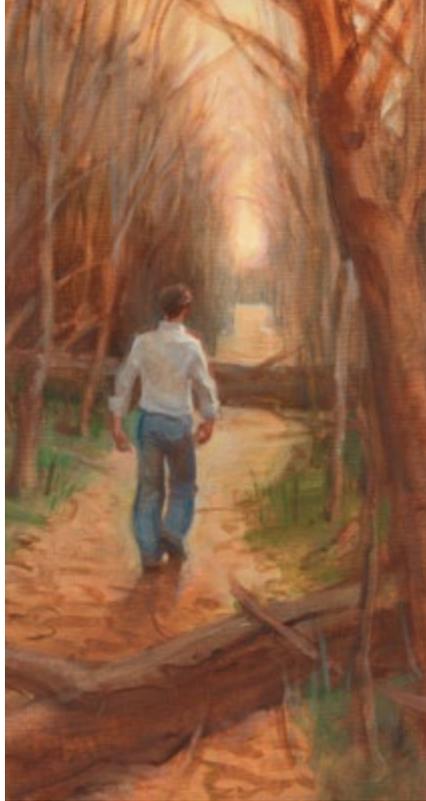
Worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holders can give blessings to their posterity. The scriptures record many such blessings, including Adam’s (see D&C 107:53–57), Isaac’s (see Genesis 27:28–29, 39–40; 28:3–4; Hebrews 11:20), Jacob’s (see Genesis 48:9–22; 49; Hebrews 11:21), and Lehi’s (see 2 Nephi 1:28–32; 4).

In modern revelation, parents who are members of the Church are

commanded to bring their children “before the church,” where the elders “are to lay their hands upon them in the name of Jesus Christ, and bless them in his name” (D&C 20:70). This is why parents bring babies to a sacrament meeting, where an elder—usually the father—gives them a name and a blessing.

Priesthood blessings are not limited to those blessings spoken as hands are laid on the head of one person. Blessings are sometimes pronounced on groups of people. The prophet Moses blessed all the children of Israel before his death (see Deuteronomy 33:1). The Prophet Joseph Smith “pronounced a blessing upon the sisters” working on the Kirtland Temple. He also blessed “the congregation.”¹

Priesthood blessings are also pronounced on places. Nations are blessed and dedicated for the preaching of the gospel. Temples and houses of worship are dedicated to the Lord by a priesthood blessing. Other buildings may be dedicated when they are used in the service of the Lord. “Church members may dedicate their homes as sacred edifices where the Holy Spirit can reside.”² Missionaries and other priesthood holders can leave a priesthood blessing upon homes where they have been received (see Alma 10:7–11; D&C 75:19). Young men, within a short time you may be asked to give such a blessing. I hope you are preparing yourselves spiritually.



A priesthood blessing is of great significance in helping us overcome obstacles on the path to eternal life.

Experiences with Priesthood Blessings

I will mention some other examples of priesthood blessings.

About a hundred years ago, Sarah Young Vance qualified as a midwife. Before she began serving the women of Arizona, a priesthood leader blessed her that she would “always do only what was right and what was best for the welfare of her patients.” Over a period of 45 years, Sarah delivered approximately 1,500 babies without the loss of a single mother or child. “Whenever I came up against a difficult problem,” she recalled, “something always seemed to inspire me and somehow I would know what was the right thing to do.”³

In 1864, Joseph A. Young was called on a special mission to transact Church business in the East. His father, President Brigham Young,

blessed him to go and return in safety. As he was returning, he was involved in a severe train wreck. “The whole train was smashed,” he reported, “including the car I was in to within one seat of where I sat, [but] I escaped without a scratch.”⁴

As I speak of priesthood blessings, I have a flood of memories: I remember my sons and daughters asking for blessings to help them through the most stressful experiences of their lives. I rejoice as I recall inspired promises and the strengthened faith that came when they were fulfilled. I feel pride in the faith of a new generation when I think of a son, apprehensive about a professional examination and unable to reach his faraway father, seeking a priesthood blessing from the most accessible priesthood holder in his family, the husband of his sister. I remember a confused young convert to the Church seeking a blessing to help him change the self-destructive pattern of his life. He received a blessing so unusual I was astonished when I heard the words I spoke.

Do not hesitate to ask for a priesthood blessing when you are in need of spiritual power. **NE**

From an April 1987 general conference address.

NOTES

1. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 2:399.
2. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 20.11.
3. See Leonard J. Arrington and Susan A. Madsen, *Sunbonnet Sisters: True Stories of Mormon Women and Frontier Life* (1984), 105.
4. Joseph A. Young, in *Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons*, ed. Dean C. Jessee (1974), 4.

A Promise AND A PRAYER

By Pablo Mireles Betts

What amazes me about the Book of Mormon is the great and eternal change it causes in people even before they are members of the Church. As a missionary in the Mexico Cuernavaca Mission, I saw this great change firsthand.

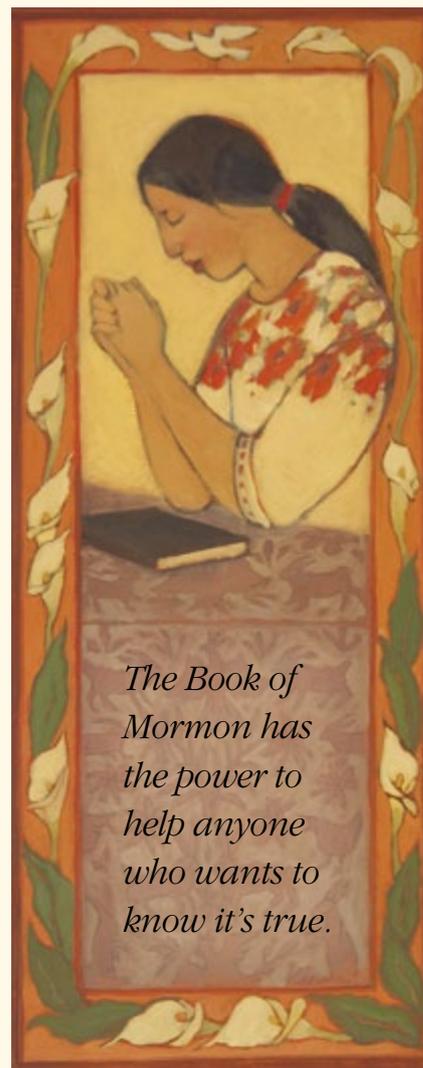
When I had been on my mission for six months, a member of the branch referred my companion and me to teach a 20-year-old woman and her family. The young woman didn't understand what Latter-day Saints believed and asked us many questions. Knowing that the Book of Mormon answers questions of the soul, we gave her the book and shared the promise it contains about praying sincerely to know if it is true.

For three weeks she attended church, and we continued meeting with her. We didn't know that she had already taken an important step: she had prayed about the Book of Mormon. During one particular lesson, she told us of her experience. She had been thinking a lot about the lessons we were sharing, and she

desired to pray on her own. She knelt down and asked God if the Book of Mormon was true. The peace she felt after praying encouraged her to read more of the book. While reading, she felt the Spirit sweep over her.

Recounting her experience, she told us, "I felt more special than I had ever felt before. Something began to fill all the empty space I had in my life that nothing else could fill. I felt so happy that I began to cry. I couldn't believe what I was feeling, but I knew that my Heavenly Father had answered me, that He knew me, and that He loved me enough to listen to me and answer my prayer."

I felt so much joy in my heart when she recounted her experience. I knew I was on sacred ground on that occasion. The Holy Ghost confirmed to me that her words were true. From her testimony I was reminded of the great love our Heavenly Father has for us; He loves us so much He has given us the Book of Mormon as an instrument to know Him and His truth. When we obey



The Book of Mormon has the power to help anyone who wants to know it's true.

the principles found in the Book of Mormon, our lives will change.

I still remember how that lesson ended. The sister asked us, "What happens now that I know the Book of Mormon is true?"

"Be baptized," we responded.

Her reply was simple but reflected the firmness and simplicity of her testimony: "Then I will be baptized."

The Book of Mormon has the power to help us find happiness and peace. When we read it, we will develop a firm determination to live the gospel of Jesus Christ, just as this sister determined to follow the example of the Savior into the waters of baptism. **NE**

What Is PURE TESTIMONY?

By Elyse Alexandria Holmes

Your testimony is probably stronger than you realize.

You're sitting in testimony meeting. As you watch members of the congregation stand up and bear their testimonies, you feel as though you should too. But what do you say? And what if you start crying while you're up there? Or what if you *don't* start crying? You may begin to question if you even have a testimony. Or maybe you're unsure of what your testimony is. Here are some guidelines to help you know what a testimony is and is not.

A Testimony Is a Conviction, Knowledge, or Belief in a Truth

"Pure testimony" (Alma 4:19) begins with pure belief. Your testimony is a spiritual witness of what you believe or know to be true (see D&C 80:4). When you share your testimony, the purest and most powerful parts will come from words like *know*, *believe*, and *testify*. If you can say with sincerity, "I know the Book of Mormon is true," you can have power to change lives and invite the Spirit to touch others.



President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "Waiting on the Road to Damascus," *Ensign*, May 2011, 70.

SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

"Those who diligently seek to learn of Christ eventually will come to know Him. They will personally receive a divine portrait of the Master, although it most often comes in the form of a puzzle—one piece at a time. Each individual piece may not be easily recognizable by itself; it may not be clear how it relates to the whole. Each piece helps us to see the big picture a little more clearly. Eventually, after enough pieces have been put together, we recognize the grand beauty of it all. Then, looking back on our experience, we see that the Savior had indeed come to be with us—not all at once but quietly, gently, almost unnoticed."

Imagine you have a large box filled with puzzle pieces created just for you. Using the picture on the front of the box, you try to put the puzzle together.

When two pieces of your puzzle fit together, you know they belong. Testimonies work in a similar way. As you have spiritual experiences, different pieces of your testimony will start to fit together, and you will come to believe or know certain truths about the gospel.

Even if you don't know right now if everything about the Church is true, Heavenly Father will bless you and help you learn as long as you have a righteous desire to know and you sincerely try to learn.

A Testimony Is Personal

As you work on your puzzle, your family and friends may periodically help you put it together. But in the end, it is your unique puzzle to build and protect. You may rely on the faith



of your parents or friends sometimes, but as you have more spiritual experiences, you can maintain your own testimony.

As you grow in the gospel, it is important to develop a testimony of your own. Just as two people would have different approaches to assembling a puzzle—maybe one person puts the edge pieces together while another begins matching colors—we each build a testimony through beliefs and experiences in an order unique to us.



TESTIMONY



HERE'S WHAT YOUTH HAVE TO SAY ABOUT PURE TESTIMONY

"Sometimes the greatest testimonies are the most childlike testimonies. The greatest testimonies are really when you testify that Jesus Christ lives, that our Heavenly Father lives, and that He loves us."—Matias C., Argentina

"I believe it is important to have a pure testimony because you're able to use that testimony to bring others into the gospel."—Quaid H., Australia

"A testimony is the biggest anchor you have. No matter what happens around you, if you have a strong testimony, you'll be able to face problems with a better attitude."—Zane V., California, USA

"I think a pure testimony needs to be something that you found out yourself and that you truly believe in. And when you share your testimony, you can touch others, and that can strengthen their testimonies as well."
—Zamagomane M., South Africa

If you're unsure about anything, sincerely pray for guidance and truth. Often prayers are not answered in the way we might expect, so keep your eyes and heart open for answers.

A Testimony Is Continually Growing

Just as you can't take a completed puzzle out of the box without doing any work, you can't expect your testimony to come all at once. You learn, piece by piece, the truthfulness of the gospel.

Maintaining a strong testimony requires constant effort. As you continue to work on increasing your knowledge of the gospel, the Holy Ghost will bless you in your efforts and your testimony will continue to grow. **NE**

Frequently Asked Questions about Bearing Your Testimony

Do I have to share a story or experience when I bear my testimony?

People often share stories or personal experiences when they bear their testimonies, and these can be a great way of describing how a testimony grew. But a story is not a testimony. A short, relevant story can help you illustrate a point, but make sure to include *how* that story enlarged your testimony and *what* gospel truths you learned from that experience. A

testimony is what you *know* about the gospel, not about where you've been or what you've done.

Elder David A. Bednar
of the Quorum of the



Twelve Apostles taught: "A testimony is what we know to be true in our minds and in our hearts by the witness of the Holy Ghost (see D&C 8:2). As we profess truth rather than admonish, exhort, or simply share interesting experiences, we invite the Holy Ghost to confirm the verity of our words."¹

Also, be careful about the experiences you share. Some are deeply personal to yourself or others, including stories about sin, repentance, and sacred spiritual experiences. Stories like these should not be shared in a public setting unless you feel prompted to. When you do feel prompted, keep them general, focusing on what you learned from the experience rather than the specific details of what happened.

Do I have to express thanks or love in my testimony?

While it is not inappropriate to express love or appreciation when you bear your testimony, these expressions are not considered a testimony. Testimonies focus on what you have learned spiritually about the gospel. Expressions of love or gratitude should not replace a testimony.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, "[I] worry that too many of our members' testimonies linger on 'I am thankful' and 'I love,' and too few are able to say with humble but sincere clarity, 'I know.'"²

Do I have to cry or show emotion to have a *real* testimony?

Many people cry or show emotion when they bear testimony or feel the Spirit strongly, but not everyone has the same emotional reaction when he or she feels the Spirit. You do not have to express emotion the same way as others when you bear testimony.

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) said:

"I get concerned when it appears that strong emotion or free-flowing tears are equated with the presence of the Spirit. Certainly the Spirit of the Lord can bring strong emotional feelings, including tears, but that outward manifestation ought not to be confused with the presence of the Spirit itself."³

If I'm not sure I have a testimony, do I still try to share it?

It's easy to feel like your testimony isn't strong enough or worth sharing, but as you share your testimony, you will find how much of a testimony you really have! Do not be afraid to bear your testimony. You will find that the more you share your testimony, the more it grows.

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said:

"It is not unusual to have a missionary say, 'How can I bear testimony until I get one? How can I testify that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and that the gospel is true? If I do not have such a testimony, would that not be dishonest?'

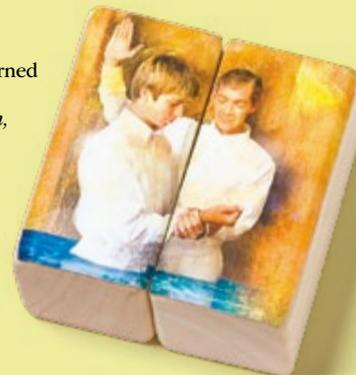
"Oh, if I could teach you this one principle: *a testimony is to be found in the bearing of it!*

"Somewhere in your quest for spiritual knowledge, there is that 'leap of faith,' as the philosophers call it. It is the moment when you have gone to the edge of the light and stepped into the darkness to discover that the way is lighted ahead for just a footstep or two."⁴

NOTES

1. David A. Bednar, "More Diligent and Concerned at Home," *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 19.
2. M. Russell Ballard, "Pure Testimony," *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 41.
3. Howard W. Hunter, in *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 99.
4. Boyd K. Packer, "The Quest for Spiritual Knowledge," *New Era*, Jan. 2007, 6.

If you've ever asked yourself these questions, here are some answers.



STRENGTHENED THROUGH SERVICE

*Service can
bless your life
in more ways
than you
may realize.*



By Brittany Beattie
Church Magazines

It's Wednesday night, and the youth of one eastern-Utah ward have gathered for Mutual. But you probably won't find them in the church building or at a leader's home. You'll more likely see them at a neighbor's house, repairing the roof or chopping wood.

They've discovered the meaning behind the message in Matthew 16:24–25, that our lives become the best they can be only as we serve others. That's exactly what these youth are doing—not just on Mutual nights, but throughout the week as well. And they see their lives changing because of it.

Serving the Community

For example, consider the young men. Hauling 50-pound bales of hay may seem like a lot of work, but these young men prefer this type of service activity for their Mutual nights. In fact, nearly all of their recent Mutual activities have been spent serving their neighbors and community, from moving furniture to filling sandbags and making hygiene kits. The young men have discovered as quorums how to assist the bishop in “administering . . . temporal things” (D&C 107:68) to meet the needs of the people in their community—a main part of fulfilling their duty to God. And they each enjoy it for different reasons.

One main reason is seeing the joy their service brings to others. Seth A. likes how service “helps make other people's lives easier.” Justin J. points out that what may seem small to you may be huge for others: “You do something that you think is so simple, but that person was having a hard time that week or was stressed out, and that one simple thing you did makes things so much better for him or her.”

Another benefit of service-oriented Mutual activities is that they strengthen the priesthood



quorums. “Instead of worrying about ourselves and thinking what the quorum will do to make itself better,” says Zach S., “we do service—and that in itself makes our quorum better.” Brontae H. says, “Doing service together lets us see how other quorum members react to different things. So we know their strengths and weaknesses, and we can learn what we need to do for them.” The same lessons hold true with what they learn about themselves. As



President Henry B. Eyring taught: “When we join hands to serve people in need, the Lord unites our hearts” (“Opportunities to Do Good,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 25).

Serving in the Temple

The youth of this ward also make sure to serve those in the spirit world. Once a week, both the young men and the young women wake up as early as 4:30 a.m. to go to the temple (sometimes traveling in below-freezing temperatures) to do baptisms and confirmations for the dead before school. It's a tradition that started with the Laurels and priests but has now extended to more youth in the ward. In the first half of the year, the ward has already performed temple work for 4,000–5,000 people. And it was all in response to President Thomas S. Monson's conference message that challenged youth to attend the temple regularly. (See “The Holy Temple—a



Beacon to the World," *Ensign*, May 2011, 93.)

Tucker S. says, "I know those people don't have the opportunity to do their temple work, so they need us to do it." And Emily W. reminds us that we have a special role to play in this work: "It's a service project for those who can't help themselves, and there aren't that many people in the world who can do this project."

Serving in the temple has blessed both those whose work is being done and the youth themselves. Tyler M. has noticed how it gives him strength throughout his day. "When you go to the temple in the morning, you realize what's important. You don't get all of this stuff thrown at you right off. You get to focus on what's really important first. And then when you're already focused on the Spirit and the gospel, everything else for the rest of the day just falls into place."



Cairo N. says, "This year my testimony has grown a lot more. Before, I just would think, 'I believe this because that's what my parents believe.' Now I'm starting to build a testimony of my own because I'm going to the temple and I'm starting to understand how it feels to be in the kingdom of God."

Michelle S. says that attending the temple has helped her "start to see the bigger picture of what I want for my life. I say, 'Temple marriage or no marriage.'"

Most youth have found that temple attendance has helped them in temporal ways in addition to the spiritual blessings. Seth says, "My everyday life changed in the most dramatic ways. My grades went up and my athletic performance changed. I could discern more. I could understand people's feelings and my own feelings better."



What Will You Do?

Not all communities will have access to the same service projects, so talk with your parents and leaders to decide what kinds of service activities work for you.

Making Time to Serve

It's not always easy to get to the temple regularly, but these youth think it's worth the sacrifice. Dallin S. says, "When you're tired, you just want to sleep in because you think that will give you the energy you need. But going to the temple makes it so you have much more energy and everything is so much better in your life."

Even if some youth can't participate in the morning because of extracurricular activities, they still look for ways to go to the temple. "There's always time," says Emily. "Even when I was on drill team and couldn't go in the morning, there would be other wards going after school or later at night or even on Saturdays, and so I'd be able to go with them."

Jalysa M. reminds us, "It's totally worth it in the end. When you look back, these are the experiences that mean more than whatever you're missing. The temple is way more important than those other things."

Serving the Lord

As these youth talk about their service activities, their love for service and the way they are drawing nearer to the Lord is clear in their words and expressions.

Michelle says, "I have learned to love those we are serving, and my testimony has grown like never before. I can tell a difference in the way I interact with others." Cairo adds, "There's a great feeling of the Spirit to help you make good choices. It helps me to be more like Christ."

The more they serve, the more these youth want to continue to serve. Amanda C. says, "Every time [we serve], I realize the importance of each of us. I feel more love for my fellow brothers and sisters. I feel excitement to do what God wants me to do—excitement to serve Him."

When asked if he would encourage other youth groups to focus on service activities for Mutual nights and temple attendance, Brontae answered, "Definitely. The biggest reason I would encourage them to do so is because of what King Benjamin taught in Mosiah 2:17, that when we're 'in the service of [our] fellow beings [we] are only in the service of [our] God.' So when we're helping others, we're really helping God accomplish the work He has for us." **NE**



BLESSINGS FROM TEMPLE SERVICE

Here are just some of the ways these youth say their lives have

been blessed by attending the temple regularly:

- I feel the Spirit, have a clear mind, and know what I need to do.
- I feel calm and relaxed, and I have a warm feeling.
- It strengthens everything, like my testimony. And it helps me with my struggles in school.
- I feel a lot of happiness, the Spirit, and joy.
- It makes me want to befriend everybody.
- My interactions with other people go better.
- It's a lot easier to overcome the temptations of the world.
- I have better decision making and a better quality in my day.
- The worries of the world go away.
- I feel extra energy, and I'm excited for the day's work.
- It helps me stay away from certain friends who aren't the kind of people I want to be around.
- I stopped cussing. It's affected simple choices.
- I make better choices, and I'm just a better person.
- I'm more willing to put effort into family matters.
- I feel closer to God.
- I have a sense of clarity in my life and in my classes.
- I have a greater desire to read my scriptures. It is definitely a refueling of the Spirit.
- I feel really good about myself, and I have a better attitude about things.



“The youth in my ward split into groups. How can we get more unity?”

Being united was so important to the Savior that just before He carried out the Atonement, He prayed for unity among all His disciples and those who believe in their words: “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us” (John 17:21).

But it’s natural that when youth get together, those who already know and are comfortable with one another may often form into groups. While this is not necessarily a bad thing, it can cause some people to feel left out. The first step in building unity is to include everyone in your group. Be aware of someone who might not feel included, and invite him or her to join in—it can make a big difference. And if you’re the one not included, let the others know you’d like to join the group.

A few other great ways to build unity are by serving together, supporting and encouraging each other, and participating in activities together. You might want to bring up the subject in your quorum or class and plan activities that will help you get to know one another’s interests. **NE**

Be Positive



What I find best to do is just be positive. I always keep my head up and smile and try to be nice to everyone no matter what. Also, I try reaching out to different groups of friends.

Ashton T., 14, Arizona, USA

Sit with Someone New



On Sunday in opening exercises, go sit with someone you don’t know very well or you haven’t seen before.

Isabel T., 14, British Columbia, Canada

Do Things as a Group



It is not easy doing stuff with people you don’t know as well as your friends. But doing things as a group with people you don’t know as well can give variety to the activity, and you also have the chance to make new friends.

William W., 14, Utah, USA

Introduce Yourself



Sometimes people are afraid to introduce themselves to other youth they don’t know. Whenever I see this, I introduce myself and my friends to them and invite them to hang out with us.

Danielle H., 15, California, USA

Be a “Service Sister”



In our ward we planned different activities that included the “likes” of particular girls. We also have “Service Sisters,”

where each of us is assigned another girl. Then we write nice notes to her or make treats, and every month we switch girls.

April B., 14, Arizona, USA

Reach Out to Everyone



A more close-knit youth group starts with yourself.

Reach out to everyone.

This may be difficult, but if you open up to

others, they will usually open up to you. Get your friends in on it too! Especially if you’re a priest or Laurel, the younger youth will feel special if you include them in activities outside of church.

Kristen B., 17, Illinois, USA

Plan Meaningful Activities



We started planning activities where we met new people. We played winter Olympics, ultimate Frisbee, and many more games.

And we always had a spiritual thought and meaning to each activity. These activities brought everyone together and we all became great friends!

Megan W., 16, Utah, USA

Make Some Phone Calls

You can make some phone calls and remind those young women or young men how much you care for them. You can also remind them that we are all sons and daughters of God.

Belén C., 16, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Become the Bridge



I found if you are friendly with everyone, people start to accept you into their groups. And once you do that, you can

become the bridge between groups.

By being that bridge, you can start a chain reaction that brings your whole ward together. And it doesn’t take much to start. Just smile and say hi.

Megan C., 16, California, USA

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



OUR GREAT OPPORTUNITY

“We know from experience that joy comes when we are blessed with unity.

. . . It is not surprising then that God urges us to gather so that He can bless us. . . He has established classes, wards, and branches and commanded us to meet together often. In those gatherings, which God has designed for us, lies our great opportunity. We can pray and work for the unity that will bring us joy and multiply our power to serve.”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “Our Hearts Knit as One,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 69.

NEXT QUESTION

“What can I do to help my younger brother and sister be more reverent during sacrament meeting?”

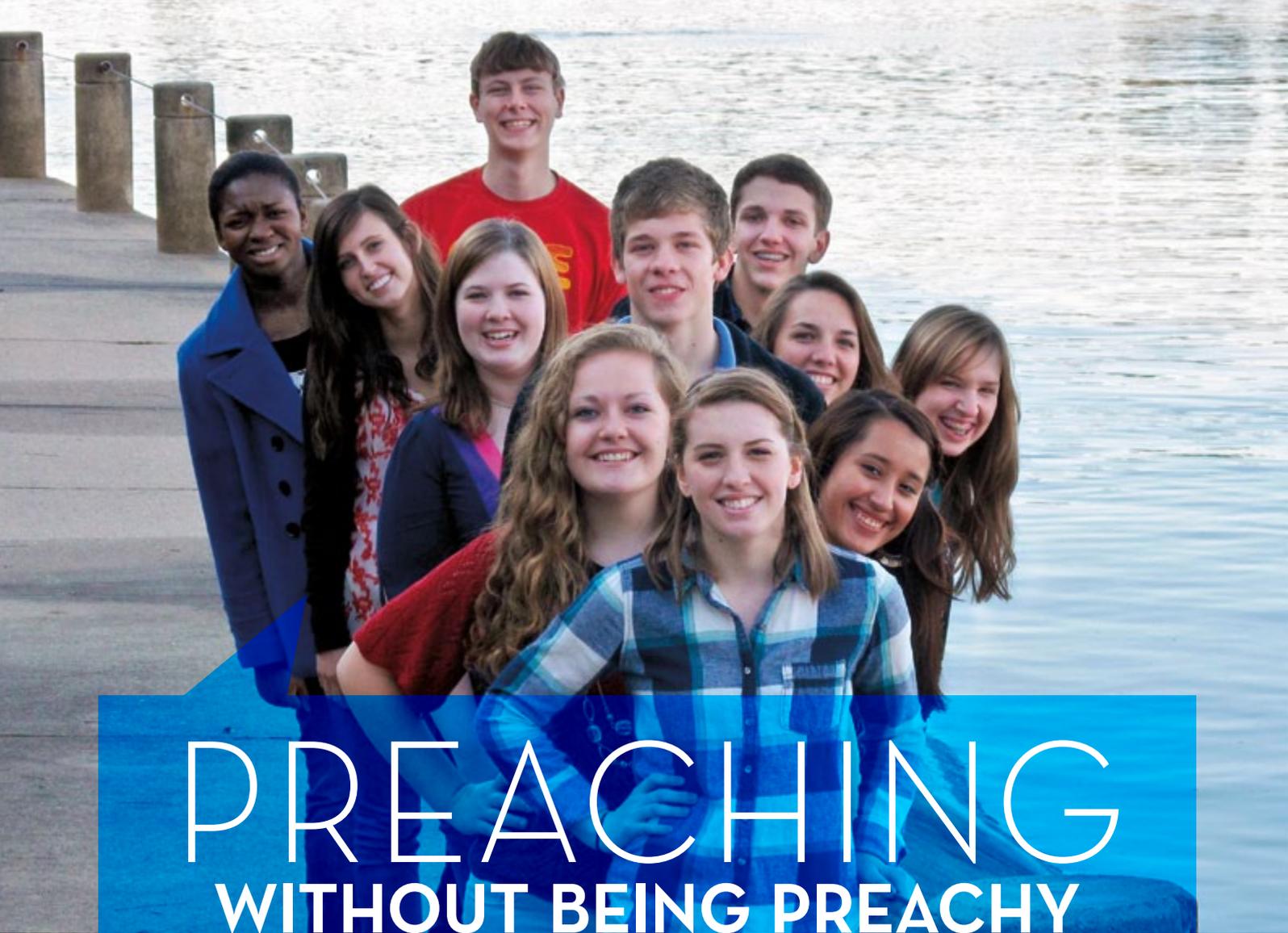
Send your answer and photo by August 15, 2012.

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

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

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

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.



PREACHING WITHOUT BEING PREACHY

Young men and young women in Arkansas have learned how to share the gospel by example.

By Sally Johnson Odekirk

Church Magazines

When Sierra P., 17, moved to an area where few members of the Church live, her new friends wanted to know about her beliefs. This scenario isn't new, and sometimes we may wonder how we can share the gospel with our friends without being overbearing. During a recent conversation with the *New Era*, youth in Arkansas shared what they have learned.



Common Ground

Sierra discovered that she could best answer questions when she asked her friends about their beliefs first and then focused on similarities and differences. "We studied a little about the Church in U.S. history, and that made everyone curious, so they came to me with their questions," she says. "I had an

opportunity to explain the entire plan of salvation to my volleyball team. Some of them realized that we have a lot of faith and are good people."



Carter A., 16, adds, "Relate the gospel teachings to their lives. Don't just throw a lot of facts at them, because 9 times out of 10 they're not going to remember any of them. You have to

WHERE TO FIND ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS YOUR FRIENDS ASK

“When I get questions about what we believe, I go through the Articles of Faith. It helps them to realize that we have a lot in common.” —*Ashley S., 18*

“I usually have a *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet with me, and if a friend has a question, I’ll pull it out and read the answer. I’ve given a few pamphlets out and have marked a couple spots that I thought they should read.” —*Allie H., 16*

“I go to **LDS.org** to get answers to my questions and gain some additional insights. It’s really helpful if you want to know something about an issue that you’re not clear on, and it helps you explain it better to your friends when they have questions. I also invite them to go to church with me.” —*Martina B., 18*

“If I have a specific topic that I’m not really sure about, I go to the Bible Dictionary to see what it has to say, and then I’ll look at the Topical Guide to find scriptures on the subject.” —*Ali H., 18*

“If they sincerely want to know and aren’t just curious, I’ll send them to the missionaries.” —*T.J. R., 18*

Learn More

For more suggestions on how to answer friends’ questions, see “Answering Your Friends’ Questions,” *New Era*, Jan. 2012, 30.

relate the gospel to their lives and to your life.”

“Let your response be warm and joyful. And let your response be relevant to that individual. Remember, he or she is also a child of God.”

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Be Thou an Example of the Believers,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 48.



The Importance of Example

Lauren J., 17, says the best gospel conversations that she has had

with friends at school have happened after they have watched her interact with others and know what her standards are. “You need to develop a strong relationship with others before you can share the gospel with them,” Lauren says. “I try to remember that I’m the only member of the Church my friends know. It helps to know that my actions not only reflect on my family and me but also on the Church. That pushes me to be kind and to represent the Church well.”

“The most effective way to preach the gospel is through example. If we live according to our beliefs, people will notice. If the countenance of Jesus Christ shines in our lives, if we are joyful and at peace with the world, people will want to know why.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Waiting on the Road to Damascus,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 77.

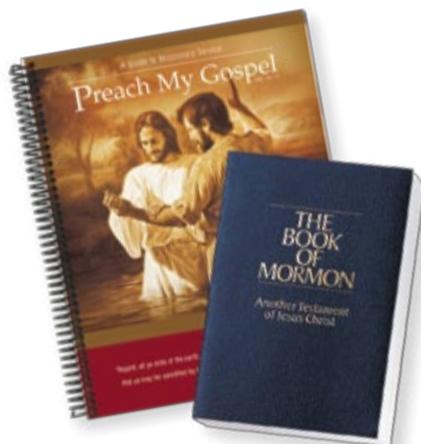


Difficult Questions

Sometimes people like to stir controversy, but these teens know that arguing about religion doesn’t work. Cameron H., 16, says, “I tell them my belief, agree to disagree, and walk away from the conversation. After a while it’s not you trying to defend your religion and your beliefs; it becomes you trying to prove a point. That’s not what I want to do. I’m trying to teach them, not argue with them.”

“Every disciple of Christ will be most effective and do the most good by adopting a demeanor worthy of a follower of the Savior. Discussions focused on questioning, debating, and doubting gospel principles do little to build the kingdom of God. . . . There is no need to become defensive.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Sharing the Gospel Using the Internet,” *Ensign*, July 2008, 63.



MY CHANCE

to

STAND

By Raven Austin Haymond

When I was baptized, I promised to stand as a witness of God. Now I had a big chance to do just that—in Honduras.

I remember the night my father got the call. We were all sitting around the table of our North Carolina home playing UNO, and my father came downstairs with the news. He was going to be a mission president.

When we later found out we would be moving to Tegucigalpa, Honduras, we eagerly pulled out maps and the encyclopedia. In some ways, I was terrified to move to a foreign country right before my junior year of high school. Speaking Spanish was not a problem (I was born in Peru, and my family had lived in El Salvador for seven years). But we had lived in North Carolina for only two years. I finally felt like I belonged, and then this call came. I would have to start all over again. It was thrilling but intimidating at the same time.

Mission life in Honduras was great. I attended spiritual zone meetings, helped the fantastic sister missionaries teach the gospel, and served Christmas dinner to eager young elders. However, school was not going so well. I was doing fine academically and was even on the volleyball team, but I was one of only three North Americans in my grade—not to mention the only member of the Church in my whole school.

Making friends was hard. In a school with no orchestra, no choir, and no art program, I found few outlets for my interests. On top of that, with my LDS values, I did not belong in the dance clubs, where my classmates spent their weekends drinking alcohol. I made friends, but I spent my lunch periods in the library and my weekends at home. And as wonderful as missionaries are, they are not

meant to be the best friends of the mission president's daughter. I was lonely.

In the past, I wasn't outspoken about being LDS, but people figured it out. If they asked, I would tell them. In Honduras, however, the fact that I was LDS was one of the first things people learned about me. I'd meet a new person and the conversation would go something like this:

"So, what does your dad do?"

"Well," I'd explain, "he's in charge of about 200 missionaries for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in this area."

"Oh, cool," they would reply, not really knowing what to say.

So everyone knew, and I didn't mind. Then one day my teacher told me that someone had made a comment about Mormons while I was out of the classroom. Apparently, it wasn't a very nice comment. I'm still not sure why she told me this.

My instinct told me to sulk about it or be offended, but something else in me spoke louder that day. Much to my surprise, I smiled and told her I would be happy to explain about the Church to the class. I knew they had never been taught anything about the Church by its members and that their comments were based on ignorance, not cruelty. My teacher was thrilled at my proposition and arranged an entire class period for me to talk about the Church.

I probably should have been nervous, but with the Spirit's help, I eagerly arrived that day with temple pictures in hand. The Spirit whispered that this was my chance to stand

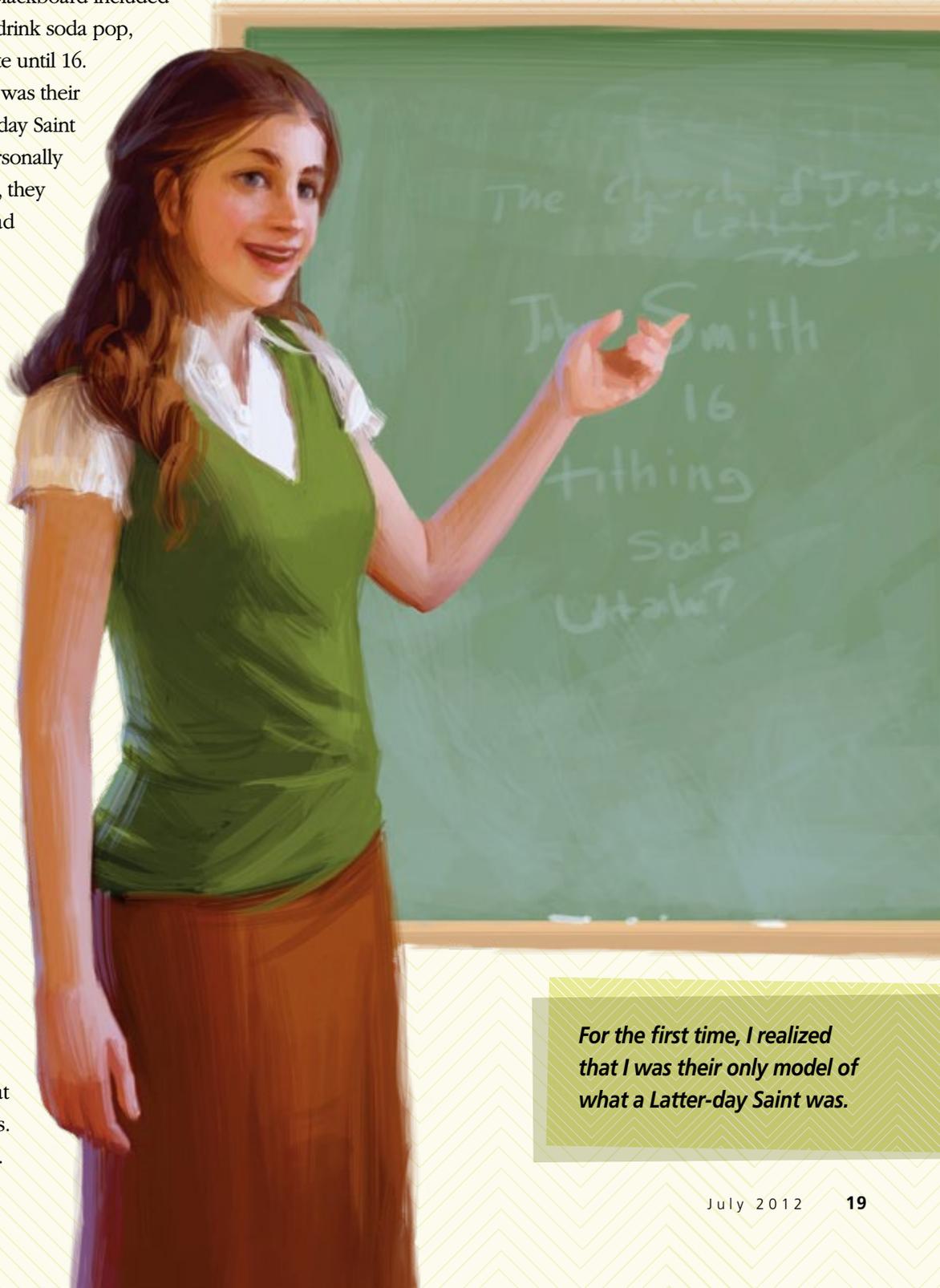


as a witness of God, just as I had promised I would every Sunday since I was baptized at 12.

We arranged the desks in a big circle, and I began. Even the school principal came to listen. I decided to start by having my classmates brainstorm what they knew about our Church. The list on the blackboard included items like John Smith, don't drink soda pop, all live in Utah, and don't date until 16. For the first time, I realized I was their only model of what a Latter-day Saint was. For instance, since I personally chose not to drink soda pop, they assumed that my decision had something to do with being LDS. I was their sole contact with the Church, so that left me with the responsibility of providing a good example for them.

As the discussion continued, we addressed polygamy, the gold plates, the First Vision, and other questions. I loved every minute of it. The Spirit gave me the words to speak, and I knew my classmates were being touched. They might not have been converted on the spot, but at least they were more educated about the Church—a seed was planted. I was filled with a spirit of conviction and testimony. No one was offended by what I had to say. In fact, I believe they respected me more after that for my beliefs and standards. It was “cool” that I was LDS.

Even as the mission president's daughter, I had the chance to be a missionary. After this experience, I could no longer be passive about my values and beliefs; I needed to be an example of the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to everyone I met. I stood as a witness. **NE**



For the first time, I realized that I was their only model of what a Latter-day Saint was.



Self-Reliance:

PREPARING FOR YOUR FUTURE

By Kimberly Richter

Learning responsibility today will open doors for you tomorrow.

You may have noticed a new standard in the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet called “Work and Self-Reliance.”

This section focuses on the importance of learning to work hard and care for yourself while in your youth. Youth around the world share why they know it’s important to develop self-reliance now.

What does it mean to be self-reliant?

The *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet states that you are self-reliant when “you use the blessings and abilities God has given you to care for yourself and your family and to find solutions for your own problems” ([2011], 41).

Matthew W. of South Africa says, “I think you are self-reliant when you don’t need your parents to do everything for you because you know how to take care of yourself.”

Self-reliance is important for everyone. When you are self-reliant, you can depend on your own skills to support yourself and to help others in your family and community.

Why do I need to work?

For the Strength of Youth says, “Idleness can lead to inappropriate behavior, damaged relationships, and sin” (40). Work is the way to live a productive and meaningful life. Ben M. from Yorkshire, England, recognizes this. He says, “When you learn to work, then you understand that you have to work for things even in the Church. You don’t just get there. You’ve got to study.”

Some people believe they should be given certain privileges such as money or food even though they don’t work to receive it. This sense of entitlement is dangerous because it makes people less productive and causes them not to see the value of work.

For the Strength of Youth states, “It is false to believe that you can get something for nothing” (41). Without work, you cannot lead a happy, successful life.

When do I need to become self-reliant?

Becoming self-reliant starts now. When asked why youth need to start learning these skills early in life, Cassidy B. of Utah, USA, said, “There are so many things to learn. You can’t just expect to learn self-reliance in one day. It’s step by step.”

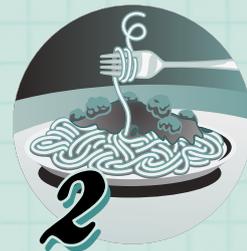
For the Strength of Youth states that “learning to work begins in the home” (40). Parents play a big role in helping you become self-reliant. The best time to form good habits and learn new skills is in your youth. Jayde and Sheridan C. from Leschenault, Australia, share how they have learned in the home. “Every family home evening,” Jayde says, “we set up a list of jobs to do for the week.” Then, says Sheridan, “during the week we help



6 THINGS YOU CAN DO Today



Create and follow a budget to save money for a mission and school.



Cook dinner once a week for your family.



Learn a new computer skill that would be helpful in the workplace.



Practice working hard by striving for good grades.



Help your parents with food storage or emergency kits.



Cheerfully fulfill your responsibilities in the family.



around the house and finish the chores on the list.” Jayde knows this is important for the future. “Some people don’t know how to cook or clean, but in our house we’ve learned. We’ve always helped our mom since we were little.”

If you feel you need to learn more about self-reliance in your home, ask your parents to help you. Help your mom or dad plan and prepare a meal, or ask your parents to help you start a budget and save money for a mission and school. And make sure you’re always willing to do chores without complaining.

How do I make myself do things I don’t want to do?

Self-discipline is an important part of learning to work. Without it you won’t get very far. Self-discipline is your own inward motivation and drive. It’s what helps people work hard at things even when they don’t enjoy doing them. Elder M. Russell Ballard



CARE FOR OTHERS

“All people are happier and feel more self-respect when they can provide for themselves and their family and then reach out to take care of others. I have been grateful for those who helped me meet my needs. I have been even more grateful over the years for those who helped me become self-reliant. And then I have been most grateful for those who showed me how to use some of my surplus to help others.”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “Opportunities to Do Good,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 25.



DO YOUR BEST

“Our Heavenly Father asks only that we do the best we can—that we work according to our full capacity, however great or small that may be.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Two Principles for Any Economy,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 56.

of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said, “You control to a large degree your own destiny. You control your own life. . . . When we apply the ingredient of self-discipline, there is not much that any one of us . . . could not accomplish. . . . If your other goals are righteous, . . . go for them. Make them happen” (“Do Things That Make a Difference,” *Ensign*, June 1983, 70–71).

The best way to develop self-discipline is simply to put your mind to it. Choose to be strong and to never give up. Anyone can choose to work hard.

What blessings come from learning to work?

For the Strength of Youth mentions two specific blessings: an ability to “contribute to the world in which you live” and an “increased sense of self-worth” (40). That second blessing seems unexpected, but think about how you feel when you’ve worked hard on something and done your best. Now compare that to how you feel when you’ve sat on the couch all day doing nothing productive. When you accomplish good things, you see how you can make a difference.

James M. of Kenya shares his experience with work. “We’re living with my grandma and my sister,” he says, “so I often help them, along with my personal studies. Work keeps me busy and helps me avoid bad influences.”

Cassidy shares additional blessings: “Because I have learned to work hard, I’ll have more doors open, more options, and the potential to lead a happier life.”

Although the specific blessings you gain from working hard and becoming self-reliant may be different for you, you will be blessed for your efforts.

Does self-reliance mean doing things alone?

For the Strength of Youth says, “Self-reliance does not mean that you must be able to do all things on your own. To be truly self-reliant, you must learn how to work with others and turn to the Lord for His help and strength” (41). Self-reliance doesn’t mean not asking for help. It means doing everything you can and then getting the assistance you need.

Self-reliance is for you.

Self-reliance will be crucial in your life. You will need it as you go on a mission, go to college, move away from home, and begin a family of your own. Start learning the skills and attitudes you need now—in your youth. You will be greatly blessed as you turn to the Lord and ask Him to help you develop those skills and attributes you’ll need in the future—and today! And as you look forward to your future, you will feel prepared and excited for the next stage of your life. **NE**



LIVE PRINCIPLES OF SELF-RELIANCE

“Self-reliance is a product of provident living and exercising economic self-discipline. From the beginning the Church has taught that families—to the extent they can—need to assume responsibility for their own temporal welfare. Each generation is required to learn anew the foundational principles of self-reliance: avoid debt, implement principles of thrift, prepare for times of distress, listen to and follow the words of the living oracles, develop the discipline to distinguish between needs and wants and then live accordingly.”

Bishop H. David Burton, former Presiding Bishop, “The Sanctifying Work of Welfare,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 81.

“To be truly self-reliant, you must learn how to work with others and turn to the Lord for His help and strength.”



AVOIDING SPIRITUAL DANGERS

“If you will listen to the counsel of your parents and your teachers and your leaders when you are young, you can learn how to follow the best guide of all—the whisperings of the Holy Spirit. That is individual revelation. There is a process through which we can be alerted to spiritual dangers.”

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Spiritual Crocodiles,” *New Era*, Jan.–Feb. 1981, 61.



Watch the video “Spiritual Crocodiles” at lds.org/go/72A.

Beware the WOLVES

Wolves were a huge problem for the pioneer handcart Saints. The Saints were continually aware of their howls at night and their lurking presence. The wolves followed the buffalo on the plains, but many times the buffalo moved on (almost overnight) and left many soon-to-be-hungry wolves in their tracks. Those wolves also followed the pioneer Saints across the plains.

Many pioneer Saints journaled about the wolves, their aggressiveness, and their continual threat. Plus, many Saints were from England, where wolves had been hunted to extinction almost 200 years earlier. So to these Saints, a wolf was a mysterious, frightening animal they had never seen.

Mesmerized Deer on the Film Set

While working on the pioneer film *17 Miracles*, my team and I created several scenes to convey this threat of wolves. We brought in a wolf trainer, and one day he left his wolves in a trailer while we looked for some good places to shoot scenes in the heavily wooded outdoor studio. Even though they are “trained” wolves, they are still wolves and can be very aggressive. They have natural instincts to attack and kill.

Why would the deer move closer to the very wolves that could destroy them?



By T.C. Christensen

We returned a couple of hours later and were amazed to see a deer standing less than 15 feet from the trailer. Her ears were out, her eyes alert, and she was staring at the trailer. She seemed mesmerized.

Normally when you see a deer in that wooded area, the deer sees you, bounds off, and disappears within seconds. This time, not so. The deer was so focused on that wolf-harboring trailer that she didn't even notice us until we were about 15 feet away. She finally noticed our presence and then seemed to come out of her trance and ran off. I asked the trainer if he'd ever seen anything like that before. He hadn't, and he couldn't explain it.

The next morning when the trainer approached his trailer to begin the day's work, to his astonishment he saw close to 15 deer standing in a circle, all the way around the trailer. Like the first deer, they too were transfixed and stared intently at the trailer. Their circle grew smaller and smaller as they each continued to move closer to the trailer. The trainer could hear the wolves inside, pawing and clawing away as they seemed to be saying in wolf language, “Let me at 'em!”

Again the trainer moved very close to the deer before they became aware of him and ran into the nearby woods.

The Unseen Dangers—for the Deer and for Us

I saw a great lesson in that experience. Why would an animal be attracted to and try to get closer to the very thing that would kill it? It seems to go against all reason. With only the trainer's quick flip of the latch to open the trailer, the wolves would have reached the deer before they could take more than a few steps.

There are many times when we could have a similar experience. There are dangerous things in our world. At some point, we may face something that we know is not good for us, and yet we may be attracted to it for an unexplained reason. We may want to get closer to it, even though our parents, leaders, and the Spirit keep telling us to run. We may be curious and want to figure it out and learn what secrets are behind its doors, just like the deer did.

There will be times in life when it's best for us to run from the danger of spiritual wolves. There will also be times when it's best to send the wolves running away from us.

Two Ways to Stay Safe

When moments like those happen in our lives, we must heed the warnings and promptings to get out of the situation. We cannot allow ourselves to get closer to anything that can spiritually kill us. To stay in such a situation is dangerous and can lead only to heartache.

There will be times in life when it's best for *us* to run from the danger of spiritual wolves. There will also be times when it's best to send the *wolves* running away.

That's what pioneer Levi Savage learned to do in the movie *17 Miracles*. His character is uneasy about wolves. Whenever he tries to confront them, they chase him and he chooses to retreat. Then as the film ends, Levi finally overcomes his wolves. He does not run from them. He stands up to them and scares *them* off, yelling, "Never come back!"

Whenever you hear, see, or face the threat of spiritual wolves, run away from them or make them run from you! Beware the wolves. Do not get close. **NE**

T.C. Christensen has helped create many films, including Joseph Smith: Prophet of the Restoration (see lds.org/go/72B), 17 Miracles, and Finding Faith in Christ (see lds.org/go/72C).



TESTIMONY

SHARE IT

“Therefore, hold up your light that it
may shine unto the world”

(3 Nephi 18:24).



TO THE POINT

At what age can you start going to school dances?

If it's the kind of dance where you're expected to be paired up with a specific person (a date), then you should wait until you're 16. If it's the kind of dance where people show up separately and dance with various partners or by themselves (like most Church dances), then you can probably start going to them whenever your parents are willing to let you go. Generally, Church dances are open to those 14 and over. This is a good guideline for you and

your parents to consider.

But aside from the question of age, try to find out what these school dances are usually like. For instance, if you find out that people at these dances often use suggestive dance moves or that the music is often offensive or degrading, don't go. "Attend only those dances where dress, grooming, lighting, lyrics, music, and entertainment contribute to a wholesome atmosphere where the Spirit may be present" (*For the Strength of Youth* [2011], 23). **NE**



For the Strength of Youth says not to participate in “passionate kissing.”
What is that?



The phrase “passionate kissing” in *For the Strength of Youth* ([2011], 36) has to do with the kind of kissing that goes well beyond a peck on the cheek or briefly touching lips. It’s more intense and lasts longer than a brief kiss, and it’s often a step along the path to more serious kinds of physical intimacy, which is why you are warned against it before you’re married. For the kind of dating and relationships you should be experiencing before marriage, it’s wise to hold back with your kisses, especially kisses on the lips.

As President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) once said, “Kissing has . . . degenerated to develop and express lust instead of affection, honor, and admiration.”



To kiss in casual dating is asking for trouble. What do kisses mean when given out like pretzels and robbed of sacredness?” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 281). **NE**

Does the Church support any political parties or candidates?

No. Though the Church generally encourages members to be informed and engaged politically, it leaves each person to decide for himself or herself which people and ideas best represent his or her views. “The Church is neutral regarding political parties, political platforms, and candidates for political office. The Church does not endorse any political party or candidate. Nor does it advise members how to vote” (*Handbook 2: Administering the Church* [2010], 21.1.29). The Church does, however, reserve the right to speak out on moral issues or other issues that significantly affect the Church and its members, including matters related to family, marriage, and religious freedom. **NE**

People sometimes ask me if we believe in polygamy. What should I tell them?

We believe that marriage is between one man and one woman. However, in biblical and more modern times, polygamy (or plural marriage) has been practiced when God has directed it for specific purposes (see Jacob 2:27, 30). This is why Church leaders selectively authorized some plural marriages in the 19th century for about 50 years. It was officially discontinued in 1890 when President Wilford Woodruff directed that no more such marriages should take place. The state of monogamy (one man, one woman) has been the Church’s teaching on marriage ever since.

Today, we oppose the practice of polygamy. Groups who practice it now are not associated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and any person practicing polygamy cannot be a member of the Church. **NE**



SELLING NIGHT CRAWLERS

I learned valuable lessons the night my brother and I sold worms.

By Marcy Goodfleisch

I was thrilled when I passed the driving test and at long last was permitted to drive the family station wagon. My parents gave me a set of keys, which I proudly attached to my keychain, vowing to honor their trust in me. But one evening, while my parents were away, a heavy rainfall and a weak moment tested my good intentions.

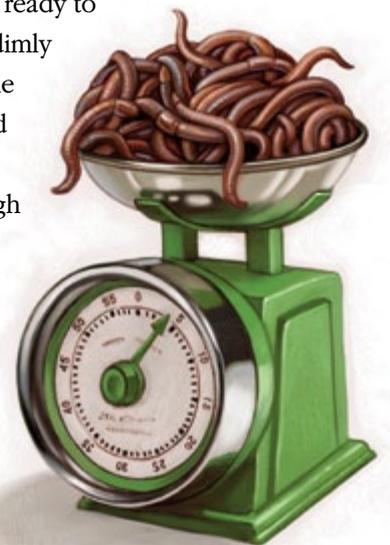
My parents left my brothers and me for a few hours while they ran some errands. It started raining, and soon we saw large puddles outside of the house. We lived in an area surrounded by rich farmland, and whenever the ground was soaked by a good rain, fat earthworms (we called them *night crawlers*) would pop to the surface, almost like magic. When the rain cleared, we could see hundreds of plump night crawlers slithering along the slick mud around our garden and along the walkways.

My brother Bobby wasn't old enough to drive yet, but he approached me with an idea for earning some money from the worms. He'd heard about a place across town that purchased night crawlers for fishing bait. He figured we could collect hundreds of night crawlers from the wet ground, drive to the bait store, sell them, and then be back before our parents returned. I didn't know much about fishing or selling bait, but I knew I shouldn't drive the car without permission. I rationalized that I knew how to drive safely and we wouldn't be gone very long. But first, of course, we had to collect the worms.

It was still damp outside when we gathered flashlights and a few empty cans and began digging through the soft mud in search of the slithery creatures. The plan didn't quite hold the attraction for me that it did for my brother, but I got past my squeamishness and grabbed my share of squirmy night crawlers. We spent some time picking worms from the mud and then realized that we needed to hurry across town to the bait shop. I didn't know where it was, but my brother assured me he knew how to get there.

I followed his directions, and soon we found ourselves driving through dark and unfamiliar streets. We were miles from our home and safety. My brother was determined to sell the worms, but all I wanted was to get back home as fast as possible. Just as I was ready to turn the car around, we saw a dimly lit shed ahead of us, with people standing in line holding jars and buckets. I reluctantly agreed to stop at the shed just long enough to sell the night crawlers.

However, the line moved very slowly, and more time passed before my brother finally made it to the counter where they weighed the worms and paid us for them. We knew we had been gone far longer than we planned.





When we pulled into the driveway, our parents were already home. My heart sank; I knew I would be in a lot of trouble for taking the car without permission. My stomach was tight as I remembered the numerous opportunities I'd had that evening to make better choices. We held our heads low as we entered by the back door, hoping to avoid attention. No such luck. But we were unprepared for the reaction.

Our parents sat at the kitchen table, their faces stricken with fear and grief. Tears poured down our mother's face;

our father's eyes were red, and he was clearly distraught. Rather than greeting us with anger, they both cried out in relief that we were alive and safe. Then they asked where we had been.

WE HAVE THE TOOLS

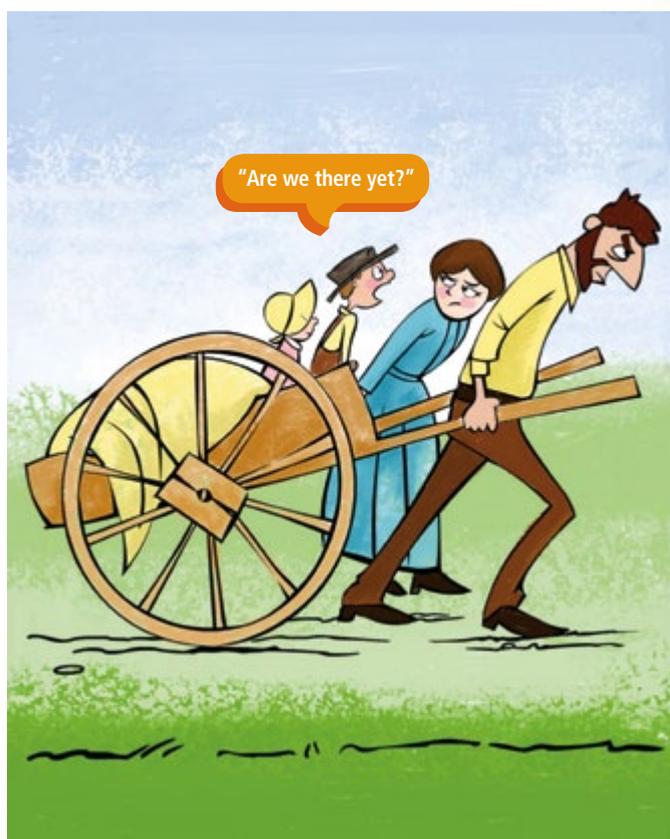
"Each of us has come to this earth with all the tools necessary to make correct choices."

President Thomas S. Monson,
"The Three Rs of Choice," *Ensign*,
Nov. 2010, 67.

I felt very foolish and childish as I offered my stammering answer: "Um . . . we were out selling night crawlers." Their grief and emotion cut me to the soul. I would never knowingly or intentionally have caused my parents such hurt, but I knew I had done exactly that. I was acutely aware that I had not lived up to the trust and responsibility they'd placed in me, nor had I lived up to my own goals.

The lessons I learned that night were far reaching. I had given my parents my word, and I didn't keep it. When we make a covenant with Heavenly Father, we have a responsibility to keep it. Just as my parents were thankful to see us come home, Heavenly Father welcomes us with love when we return to Him.

Eventually the trip my brother and I made to the bait store became part of our family folklore. For years it served as a gentle reminder that we always need to be on the right path. Otherwise, one of our parents was sure to ask, "Were you out selling night crawlers?" **NE**



POWER IN PRAYER

Teens from the island of Cebu in the Philippines tell about receiving answers to their prayers.

From left: Joselito, Joahanna, Rosa, and Ken gather in front of the Cebu City Philippines Temple.



By Paul VanDenBerghe

Church Magazines

Of the tens of thousands of islands on the earth, a cluster of 7,107 of them makes up the island nation of the Philippines in Southeast Asia. A running witticism common in the Philippines notes that while there are 7,107 islands, that's only during low tide. The number of islands actually drops to 7,100 at high tide, when some are submerged below the ocean's surface. So how do the young women and young men of the Philippines keep their heads above water when they're feeling overwhelmed? They turn to Heavenly Father in prayer.

There are times in our lives when we may feel alone, but if we remember that our Heavenly Father is always there for us—always ready to hear and answer our prayers—we can lean on that fact and feel the hope and confidence that knowledge brings.

Prayer Brings Confidence

Joselito B. tells about being assigned to take part in a storytelling contest when he was 12 years old. His teacher asked him to memorize a 10-page script that he would have to perform in front of hundreds of other students and faculty. This can be a daunting task for anyone, let alone for Joselito, who usually gets stage fright.

“So the first thing I did was say a prayer and ask for guidance,” says Joselito. “During my prayer I asked that if I forgot part of the script, I could keep going and make up new lines that would work for my story. After I was done praying, I remembered my favorite scripture from the Bible in the Old Testament. It is in Proverbs 3:6, which says, ‘In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.’”

Joselito was nervous. But he worked hard for an entire week memorizing the script. And he prayed a lot every day. Finally the day of the contest arrived.

During the greetings that opened the contest, Joselito



was still very nervous. “But during the story I was fine,” he says. “I just did my best, and I knew that God would help me. I was frustrated and intimidated because there were so many students, but God answered my prayers.”

Not only was Joselito able to remember the script to his story, but he also performed it so well that he earned first place in the contest. Joselito says, “Prayer is the answer when you have no one around to comfort you. God is always there to help you.”

Prayer Brings Strength

As a young boy growing up in an active Latter-day Saint family, Ken G. had never had much trouble keeping his standards high. But when he started high school, things became harder and Ken sometimes felt isolated from the good influence of his family—especially at school.

“My high school friends were all really close to me even though they were not members of the Church,” Ken says. “We still had a strong connection. The problem was they started doing things that did not follow the standards of our Church.”

At home Ken never had a problem choosing the right, but he says that when he got to school and his family was no longer around to help guide him, he started making wrong choices. “I admit I did things that were not in line with the standards of the Church, so in seminary I always felt like I was the one being talked about in the lesson.”

That's when Ken realized he wanted to make a change, but he didn't feel strong enough to do it on his own. “So I made a resolution to pray for God to give me the strength and the courage to say no to my friends when they did bad things,” he explains. “And I feel that God answered my prayers. It became easier for me to say no whenever my friends asked me to do something wrong or tempted me. I already had the knowledge and knew



A RELATIONSHIP I CHERISH

“Not a day has gone by that I have not communicated with my Father in Heaven through prayer. It is a relationship I cherish—one I would literally be lost without. If you do not now have such a relationship with your Father in Heaven, I urge you to work toward that goal. As you do so, you will be entitled to His inspiration and guidance in your life.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Stand in Holy Places,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 84.



Watch a Video

See a video of Tania’s story at lds.org/go/72D.

what was right and wrong. But then, through prayer, I felt like I had the power and the gift to say no and to do what was right.”

Ken says the most important thing he learned from this experience is that “prayer is a sign of your humility, because you admit to yourself that you are weak and that only God can help you become strong” (see D&C 112:10).

Prayer Brings Blessings

Sometimes we need more than comfort or strength alone; sometimes the blessings we need are more tangible. Tania D. remembers such a time. Her family was facing an especially trying time financially. “It was a Saturday evening, and we had only 40 pesos [about US\$1] left for the week, and we didn’t have dinner or even charcoal for our stove at home,” says Tania. “My mother gave me a list of all these things we needed, and we needed 250 pesos to buy all of it. The first thing we needed to buy was charcoal so we could cook dinner.” Tania could see there was not enough money for everything. Then she realized they would not have money for bus fare to go to church the next day. “I told my mother that we didn’t have enough for the fare to go to church. But my mother is really faithful, and she simply told me that ‘God will provide.’

“On my way to the store I was crying because we didn’t have enough money for everything, and I didn’t know what to do,” Tania says. As she rolled up one of the 20-peso bills and put it into her pocket, she did the only thing she could think to do that would help—she said a prayer. “I prayed to Heavenly Father that we could somehow find a way to accommodate our needs.”

But when she got to the first store, she found that the price of charcoal had gone up from 5 pesos to 20 pesos.

“I was hesitant to buy it,” Tania says, “but I could feel the Holy Ghost whispering to me to buy it anyway, so I did. Now I had only 20 pesos left, but I still had many things to buy, including diapers for my brother and clean water to drink. So I went to the next store to buy food for our meal, and it was too expensive. I reached into my pocket where I put the 20 pesos, and there were five 20-peso bills in the roll. I started crying right in front of the store owner.

“In the end I was able to buy all of the things we needed,” Tania says, “and we had enough for fare to go to church the next day. When I got home, I went to my room and offered a prayer to God to thank Him for the blessing He had given to us. I know that God really lives and answers our prayers, especially those times when we need Him most and we offer a sincere prayer. He really will answer that prayer.”

Prayer Keeps Us near Our Heavenly Father

While we can be certain that our Heavenly Father hears and answers our prayers, we need to remember that our prayers are not always answered immediately and not always in the way we want them to be answered. Our prayers are answered according to God’s will and timing.

Each of these teens from the Philippine island of Cebu has learned that in good times and bad, when we’re in a crowd or all alone, whether it’s high tide or low, our Heavenly Father is always there for us. And if we turn to Him in sincere prayer, He is always ready to bless us. **NE**

PLAYING

to the Crowd

My life was all an act until I decided to change roles.

By Brittany Thompson

For me as a young teenager, school was about putting on an act. You know, the way the bad guy in the movies delivers the smooth, clever lines and comes off super cool in the process? I yearned to be able to do that. I tried to rule the screen just like the best of the bad guys. I pretended my morals were low because I wanted to impress my friends at school. I loved the sound of laughter when I used inappropriate language or joked about people.

I wanted to be the one audiences rooted for. So I figured out how to be a people pleaser. I became a regular comedy act in my biology class, managed to convince my volleyball team I was a party animal, and demolished my reputation as an innocent, naive young woman. I thought, "I don't want my friends to think I'm a goody-goody!"

Since I wasn't actually committing the serious sins people thought I was, I desperately tried to convince

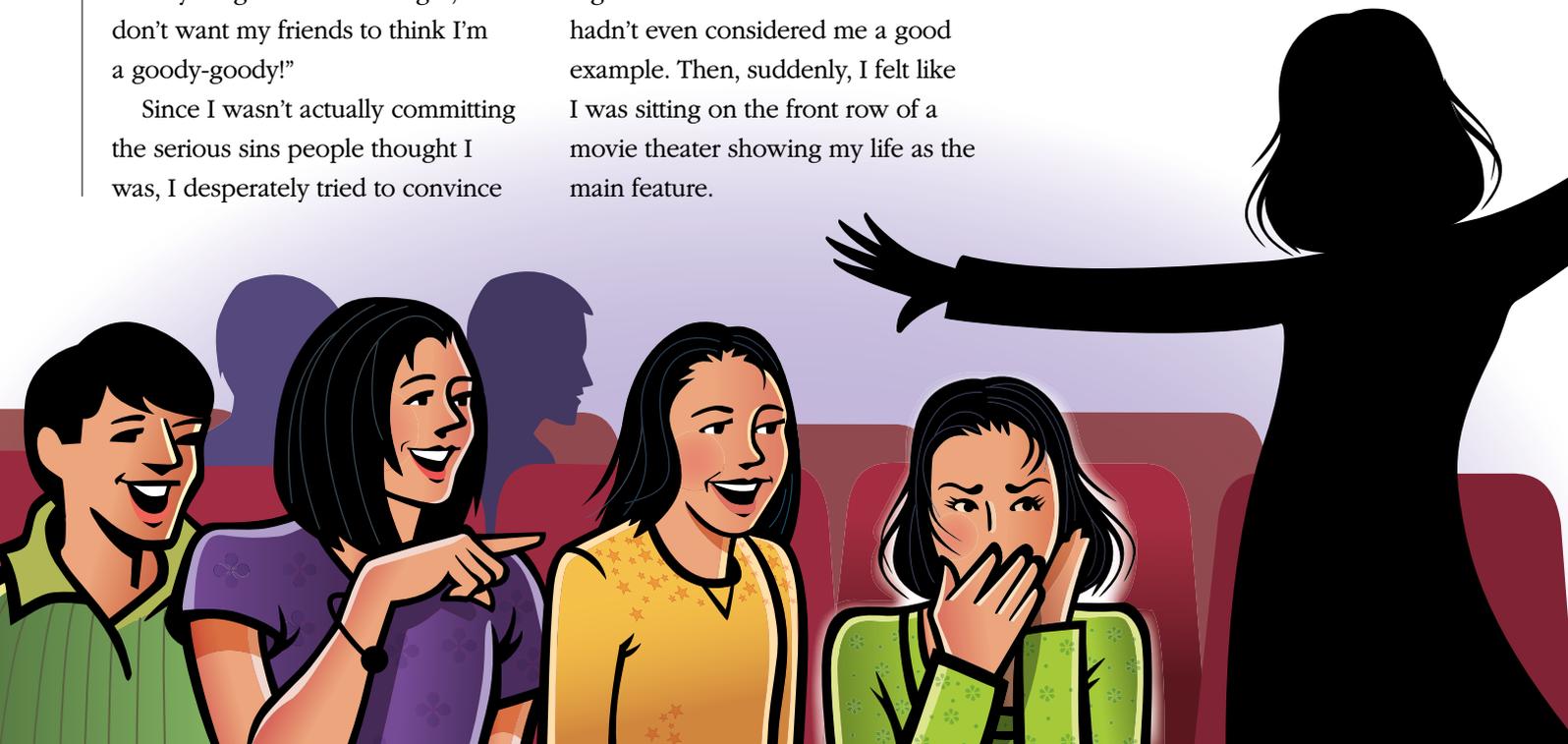
myself that it was OK to have a rough attitude. I was so wrong! My real-life movie-screen hit reached the point that I couldn't stand to watch it myself. The more popular I became, the less I liked the character I played.

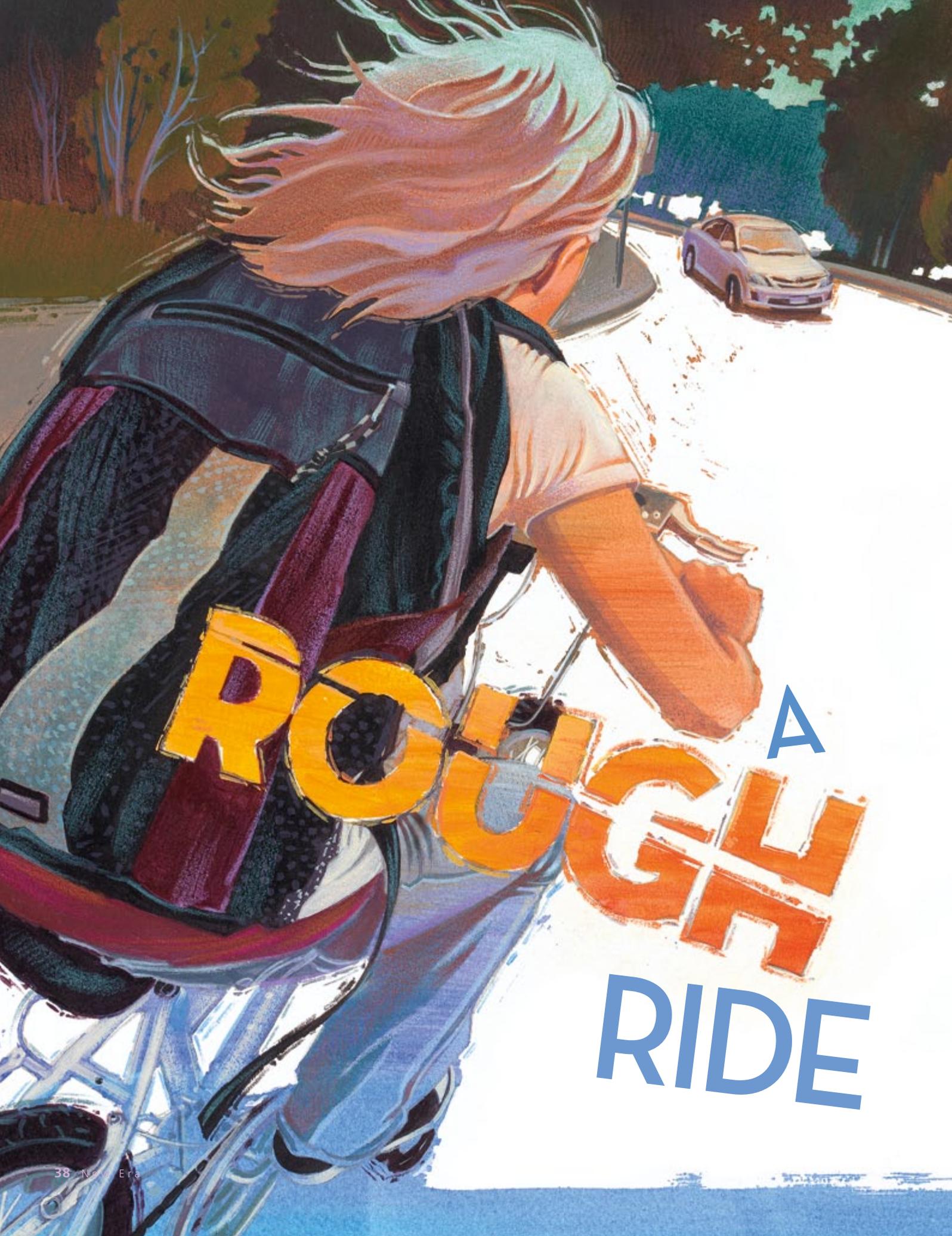
One day, two of my friends were talking about a sweet, friendly athlete named Jennifer who wasn't embarrassed to stand up for her beliefs. One of my friends, the most gorgeous, popular, and smartest girl in the seventh grade said, "Jennifer is so different. I wish I were brave enough to believe in my church like she does. She's the only person I know who lives her life like that." I was stunned.

"How could she say something like that without even mentioning me?" I wondered. "After all, my church has high standards!" I was furious that she hadn't even considered me a good example. Then, suddenly, I felt like I was sitting on the front row of a movie theater showing my life as the main feature.

I reflected on the poor example I had been to my friends. What kind of kid was going to watch me and think, "I wish I were brave and unique like her"? I really disliked who I had become.

Changing my character and reputation was a long process, and I'm still trying to keep my mouth shut instead of blurting out crowd-pleasing insults. But I realized I could make my friends laugh without hurting someone else's feelings, and I could leave the room during a crude joke without being ridiculed. No one has to be a "bad guy" to have lots of friends. I changed my attitudes and behaviors because being at peace with what I believe is so much cooler than trying to hide who I am. **NE**





ROUGHER

A RIDE

I wish I had listened to the warnings of the Spirit.

by Elisa Gonzalez

Another day of school had ended. It was September of my freshman year of high school. I made my way to the rack where I had locked my bike when I arrived at school that day.

As I walked toward my bike, I decided I would take my favorite path home along the top of a hill and down to where my house was located. The thrill of riding down a steep hill with the wind blowing through my hair and past my face was a stress reliever. I could just glide to the bottom of the hill without slowing down because there wasn't a stop sign until the road leveled out.

I removed my bike from its chain and began to ride away from the high school. I had to ride only a block before I reached the street that would take me along the ridge of the hill. As I neared the intersection where I intended to turn, I felt an urge not to. I shrugged the feeling off, and I told myself that I was being silly. The strange feeling subsided after I made the turn, so I figured I was just being indecisive.

I neared another intersection that would provide an alternate route to my house. Again I experienced the same feeling not to proceed, only stronger. I felt pulled toward a zigzagging side street but didn't want to take the extra time getting home. Once more, I shrugged off the feeling.

I reached the next street and turned to ride down the hill. I descended the hill, not touching my bike's brakes at all to achieve a good speed. As I neared one of the cross streets toward the bottom of the hill, a car pulled away from the curb on the opposite side of the street and turned in front of my bicycle. He hadn't even seen me coming. In one horrible moment, I realized why I had experienced those strange feelings. The Holy Ghost had been trying to warn me that I was in danger if I traveled the path I had chosen. I was now in immediate danger, and there was no escape.

The driver of the car now noticed me barreling down the street and managed to stop his car before the impact. At the same time, I was squeezing my brakes trying to slow down as much as I could before I crashed. I started to brace myself for the collision when a feeling came over me and caused me to relax.

My bicycle hit the car on its right front tire. I flew forward off the bike, and the left side of my face hit the windshield. My body did a somersault, and I landed sitting cross-legged on the roof of the car. My bicycle landed 20 feet behind the car.

The driver immediately got out of his car, helped me down, and called an ambulance. I remember blood dripping from my nose while I lay there on the pavement.

It didn't take long for a crowd to gather around the scene of the accident. A family friend recognized me and sat down on the pavement to talk to me until police and paramedics arrived. She was amazed that I was laughing and talking normally.

My parents came to the hospital shortly after I arrived in the ambulance. After the doctors cleaned my face and took some X-rays, I was ready to go home—scratched, bruised, and sore.

As I discussed the entire episode with my parents, I realized how much I had learned that day. Despite my foolishness, my Heavenly Father did not desert me. I also learned the Holy Ghost's promptings are adapted to the demands of the situation. It was because of my stubbornness and doubts that I failed to recognize those promptings for what they were.

I have a testimony that Heavenly Father continues to love us and help us. I pray every day I will be able to recognize the promptings of the Holy Ghost so I may know of my Heavenly Father's guidance and help in my life. **NE**

A M Marvelous



By President George Albert Smith (1870–1951)

George Albert Smith, eighth President of the Church, was born on April 4, 1870. He was called as an Apostle in 1903 and became President of the Church in 1945. He died in 1951 on his 81st birthday. At the time this conference address was given in 1916, the world was in the midst of World War I and George Albert Smith was an Apostle.

It is not necessary for you to be called to go into the mission field in order to proclaim the truth.

Our Heavenly Father knew what was coming when in this latter day He restored the gospel in its purity. He knew of the apostasy in the world among His children and that they had departed from the plain truth, and in His great mercy, He revealed this latter-day work. . . .

Today this body of people, this little handful of God's children, have the responsibility of proclaiming the truth to the millions who are in darkness. This is a great labor. . . . We have the privilege of proclaiming the truth and teaching His gospel. He has led people from all portions of the earth, one here and another there, they have been pricked in their hearts, have investigated and received the truth, and their anxiety has been for those from whom they descended, the people of their own race. Missionaries have traveled throughout the earth as a result, and the truths of the gospel of our Lord have been proclaimed in a convincing manner to many hundreds of thousands of our Father's children. When I speak of the mission field, I realize the great work that is to be accomplished.



I am impressed, my brethren and sisters, with the importance of preparing for the work. It is not sufficient that a boy signify his desire, because of his confidence in his parents, to do what they would have him do, go into the world and preach the gospel; it is not sufficient that he answer the call that our Heavenly Father makes from time to time through His servants for mission service; but it is also necessary that he qualify for the work, search the scriptures, and learn what the Lord would have him know. It is important that our sons and daughters become established in their faith and know as their parents know that this is our Father's work. . . .

Today this body of people, this little handful of God's children, have the responsibility of proclaiming the truth to the millions who are in darkness.

Work for YOU

A dozen men qualified for the work are worth more in the mission field than a hundred who are ignorant of the truth and who themselves have to be taught before they are capable of explaining it to others. The opportunity to teach the gospel will increase . . . , and preachers of the true gospel will be in demand. I know of no better field in which to qualify than right here at home.

Do you realize, brethren and sisters, that . . . there are [millions of] people who know very little about the gospel of Jesus Christ? They are our neighbors, they are our Father's children, they are identified with other churches, or else they do not belong to any church, but I think I am safe in saying that ninety percent of them have no idea what the gospel of Jesus Christ really is. . . . If we, as members of the Church, were keeping the commandments of God, if we put upon the truth the value that we ought, if our lives conformed to the beauties of its teachings, so that our neighbors, observing our conduct, would be constrained to seek after the truth, we would be doing splendid missionary work. . . .

If the gospel of Jesus Christ does not make me a better man, then I have not developed as I should, and if our neighbors not in this Church can live among us from year to year and see no evidence of the benefits that come from keeping the commandments of God in our lives, then there is need for reform. . . . Men and women take for granted

that they know what we believe. Many of them have come into our midst prejudiced beforehand, and for some reason, we do not seem to think enough of their souls to go out of our way to do a little planning to get into their homes and to remove that prejudice and teach them the plain truth. . . .

It is my firm conviction, my brethren and sisters, that unless we stir ourselves more than we are doing, that when we go to the other side of the veil, we will meet

If our lives conformed to the beauties of the gospel and its teachings so that our neighbors, observing our conduct, would be constrained to seek after the truth, we would be doing splendid missionary work.



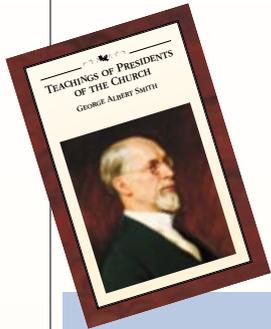
there men and women who have been our neighbors and associates and lived among us, that will condemn us because we have been so inconsiderate of them in not telling them of the truth of the gospel of

 See how several youth are sharing the gospel at youth.lds.org (click on "Videos").

It is important that our sons and daughters become established in their faith and know as their parents know that this is our Father's work.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CODY BELL



LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

This year's course of study for adults in Relief Society and priesthood meeting is taken from *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith*. This month, in particular, has lessons focusing on sharing the gospel with others. With your family, you might want to take this opportunity to discuss how you can prepare for serving a mission and also how you can do missionary work now by sharing your testimony with friends and neighbors. You could start the discussion by talking about specific ways to "do the missionary work that is at our doors," as President Smith encourages in this article.

our Lord. . . . I believe that the mission field . . . at home . . . is the best that we can find anywhere. Many people here, if we will go to them and teach them the truth, will see the beauties of the gospel, because they see some of the fruits of "Mormonism" in the lives of its members, and I feel that we ought to sense the importance of this work. We spend most of our time, many of us, seeking the things of this life that we will be compelled to leave when we go from here, yet there are the immortal souls all around us whom, if we would, we could teach and inspire to investigate the truth and implant in their hearts a knowledge that God lives. What treasure in all the world could be so precious to us, for we would have their gratitude here and their everlasting and eternal appreciation in the world to come. It is a most important mission. . . .

Let us do the missionary work that is at our doors.

One of the very first revelations that was given by our Heavenly Father, as contained in the Doctrine and Covenants, reads as follows:

"Now behold, a marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men.

"Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day.

"Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work" [D&C 4:1-3].

It is not necessary for you to be called to go into the mission field in order to proclaim the truth. Begin on the man who lives next door by inspiring confidence in him, by inspiring love in him for you because of your righteousness, and your missionary work has already begun. . . .

Brethren and sisters, let us do the missionary work that is at our doors. . . . Let us be unselfish in our lives; let us prepare for the work and go out into the world and proclaim the truth, when the opportunity comes, and be the means in the hands of our Father of drawing His children back to Him by teaching them the beauties of His gospel. **NE**

Adapted from an address in Conference Report, Oct. 1916, 46-51; capitalization, paragraphing, and punctuation have been standardized.

By Lindsay Hiller

NEVER

WAVER



I grew up in a city near Seattle, Washington, and was not a member of the Church. When I was 11, I joined a local ballroom dance team that several of my friends were on. The team had started as a youth activity for Latter-day Saints, but it was so popular the instructors kept it going. I didn't know much about the Church, but the instructors and other youth were so welcoming that I didn't care.

My friends invited me to Mutual activities and weekend Church dances. I began to notice something interesting about them: they were always smiling. They were positive, encouraging, and enthusiastic about any opportunity that arose. They had joy that I had never felt.

I wanted to know what made them so happy. During six years of careful observation I learned some interesting things. My friends jumped at the opportunity to help and serve those around them. They never judged their peers for the way they looked, talked, or acted—they accepted everyone. My friends believed in speaking cleanly, acting appropriately, and dressing modestly. They valued their parents and siblings as the most important people in their lives. And most important, my friends had firm testimonies of Jesus Christ that strengthened them in difficult times.

After high school graduation, I said good-bye to these

friends and started college in New York City. It took only two weeks for me to desperately miss what I now know was the Spirit I felt at Church activities and dance classes with my friends. I looked up the closest ward on LDS.org and then walked to the meetinghouse the following Sunday. I met the missionaries and began learning from them.

When the missionaries taught me about Joseph Smith, I knew instantly through the Spirit that his experience was true. Then, when they explained Jesus Christ's sacrifice and how He atoned for us, my heart was filled with gratitude for my Savior and His love for me. Six weeks later, I was baptized and confirmed a member of the Church.

I owe my introduction to the Church to my friends who were so kind and welcoming. They didn't allow their standards to slip when pressure was strong or their decisions were unpopular. Their testimonies were firm and unwavering. They held true to their faith and showed me what it meant to truly live the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I know the importance of always living my standards. Both members and nonmembers need strong examples of friends who refuse to lower their standards. Even when I think no one is paying attention, I will try to never waver. You never know who is looking at your example. **NE**

QUOTE FROM CONFERENCE

“Accept His doctrine by repenting, being baptized, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and then throughout your life following the laws and covenants of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Doctrine of Christ,” Ensign, May 2012, 89.



MAKING THE TREK



MY FAVORITE SCRIPTURE

Ether 15:34

“Now the last words

which are written by Ether are these: Whether the Lord will that I be translated, or that I suffer the will of the Lord in the flesh, it mattereth not, if it so be that I am saved in the kingdom of God. Amen.”

In Ether’s last words that he felt important to pass on to us, he says that he doesn’t care about whether or not he dies or is translated as long as he makes it to God’s kingdom. This teaches us that even though all of the things of this world, such as sports, are fun, they are not even close to the importance of making it to the celestial kingdom.

Ethan T., 14, Washington, USA

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ETHAN T.

Tell us about your favorite scripture in a paragraph or two. Send it to us, along with a photo, by going to **newera.lds.org** and clicking “Submit Material.”

Not many things intimidate Kristine. When her stake planned a pioneer trek, she signed up even though everyone was worried about her and whether she could make it. “But I was fine,” says Kristine.

When Kristine was born, one of her legs was shorter than the other. The femur was simply not there. So Kristine wears a special prosthetic leg. She wears it so well, in fact, that she says, “A lot of people don’t notice or at most ask me if I’m limping. They don’t really know.”

As the stake youth set out on a three-day trek, Kristine was making friends with her trek family and doing her part setting up and packing their handcart. After walking 10 miles the first day, Kristine, along with many others, developed some blisters. But she refused to ride to catch up and kept walking, just like the pioneers.

When it came time for the women in the family to pull the handcart up the steepest part of the trail, Kristine was right there in front. “I thought about the women who had to pull their sick husbands and children up places worse than this,” says Kristine. “I did not know how they could do that.”

But many others were wondering the same thing about Kristine. She had such a good excuse not to go or not to participate, but that isn’t how Kristine is. There are very few things that stop her, and her attitude will carry her far in everything she tries.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF SCOTT BLOTTER



WHAT WE REALLY THINK OF YOUTH

“Something extraordinary is happening. Do you sense it? Truly, as obedience and morality decline in the world, the Lord is sending more exceptional spirits to earth. As a body they excel the average capacity of their forebears. Their potential for personal growth and positive contribution is enormous.”

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Realize Your Full Potential,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 41.



THE CHURCH IN CANADA—ONTARIO

In 1830, Phineas Young traveled to Earnestown, Canada. Though not a member of the Church at that time, he preached about the Book of Mormon. Two years later Phineas returned to Canada, this time as a convert to the Church, along with five other missionaries. Their preaching helped create four branches. Other missionaries, including the Prophet Joseph Smith, visited Ontario in 1833 and 1837.

Between 1830 and 1850, an estimated 2,500 Canadians, mostly from Ontario, joined the Church. Missionary work progressed slowly in eastern Canada until a mission was organized in 1919. The first Latter-day Saint meetinghouse in eastern Canada was dedicated in Toronto in 1939. The Toronto Ontario Temple was completed in 1990.

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

Membership	46,452
Missions	1
Temples	1
Wards & Branches	99

5 SCRIPTURES ABOUT SINGING

- 3 Nephi 4:31
- D&C 45:71
- Colossians 3:16
- Psalm 100:1–2
- Isaiah 49:13

WE'VE GOT MAIL

A Shining Example

Reading “Be a Shining Example” (Jan. 2012) helped me appreciate the blessings I get from doing my callings and living worthily. It made me notice all the times people ask me why I am happy all the time even though I don’t have the “cool” things.

Sage I., 15, Utah, USA

Heavenly Father Cares (from youth.lds.org)

I had been having trouble [one] night and had a long talk with Heavenly Father. The next day I heard this talk [see “You Are Not Forgotten” at lds.org/go/72E], and it confirmed that I knew that Heavenly Father cared and always had an answer to my prayers.

Kyrie Elizabeth G., 16, Utah, USA

We love hearing from you, whether it’s sending us a message or leaving a comment online. Write to us by going online to newera.lds.org and clicking “Submit 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.

A MODEST REWARD

One of my good friends asked me to go to our Senior Ball, and I was really excited to go with him. I wanted to look nice, and I knew I wanted to wear a modest dress. My mom and I shopped at a few stores, and I found a beautiful, modest dress that I was excited to wear.

A group of four couples had decided to go to a nice restaurant for dinner before the dance. My date

and I and another couple arrived at the restaurant first. We chose to be seated at a table while we waited for the other two couples to join us.

About five minutes after we were seated, our waiter came over to our table and asked for our order. Since we were waiting for the other couples to arrive, we were not ready. Our waiter

paused and said, "There is someone in this restaurant who would like to pay for your dinner, and they need to leave soon." My mouth dropped open. The four of us were astounded. We placed our order but asked our waiter to bring our food when our entire party had ordered. After the other two couples arrived, we told them that our meal had been paid for by an anonymous patron of the restaurant.

After we ate our dinner, our waiter brought us the folder for the bill. My date picked it up and, with the other



young man watching, opened it. They both looked up at each other and then looked at me and the other young woman. "This isn't for us. It's for you ladies," my date said. I opened the folder and read a note that was left inside. It read, "Thanks for dressing modestly! You look great!"

We never figured out who was kind enough to pay for our dinner, but it made our dance even more memorable. I had never thought that wearing a modest dress would be noticed by anyone, but I am glad that I made the choice. Dressing modestly is a choice, and this experience made me want to continue to dress modestly.

Rachel Y., Utah, USA

BAPTISM FOR MY GRANDPARENTS

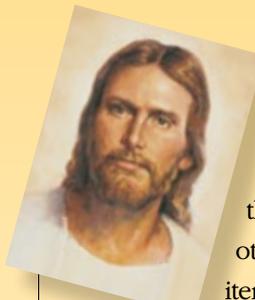
My grandparents weren't members of the Church. After they passed away, my family was able to serve as proxies for their baptism and temple ordinances. It's amazing to know that even though those loved ones we had here on earth are gone, we can still be with them in the next life. Before entering the baptismal font when I was a proxy for my grandma, I was overwhelmed by the Spirit, and I knew that what I was doing was right—not just for me, but also for my grandma. After the baptisms for them, my parents and I felt the Spirit much stronger, knowing that our ancestors can be with us in the next life. I miss my grandparents, but I know that we can all be together one day in the presence of God.

Reinely M., Washington, D.C., USA

A REMINDER IN THE RUBBLE

Last year I had the opportunity to take part in a massive relief effort in the devastated city of Joplin, Missouri, which had been hit by a tornado. I saw and experienced many things, some of which are difficult to even put into words. One particular experience has caused me to do a great deal of pondering.

We were at a house that was completely devastated, searching through what seemed like endless piles of rubble and debris. We were merely trying to see if anything at all was salvageable in this heap of mostly indistinguishable remains that were once somebody's personal belongings. Not much turned up, but in the midst of the work and the commotion, something caught my attention and caused me to pause for a moment. Among the rubble that we couldn't distinguish, I discovered a picture of the Savior.



I stopped for a brief moment, put the picture with the other few salvaged items, and for the rest of the day continued to carry out the tasks we were assembled to perform.

On reflecting about this small and seemingly insignificant event, I've been reminded of a valuable lesson. There in the most devastated, most hopeless situation imaginable, among what seemingly couldn't be salvaged, I found the Savior. His love was evident in the inspiring relief efforts that took place in Joplin, Missouri.

This small moment has reminded me that no matter how hopeless or lost we find ourselves in life, we can always find the Savior. In fact, the Savior Jesus Christ seemed to be the only thing that stood out from the surrounding devastation. I'm reminded of all the times I and others were helped through difficult times by the loving influence of Jesus Christ.

Daniel C., Arkansas, USA

COMFORTED BY THE SCRIPTURES

Last year I attended Especially for Youth (EFY) for the first time. The days were filled with endless devotionals and personal scripture study. I have never felt the Spirit stronger in my life.

However, on the last day of EFY, I was separated from my friends and felt really lonely. I moodily left my spot at the dinner table and walked out of the cafeteria. As I was walking back to my room, I remembered that I was holding the scriptures in my hands. I recalled my parents saying to me that by reading the scriptures, we can be comforted.

I then sat down and began to read.

Right when I had opened my scriptures and began to read, I felt the Holy Ghost. I was overcome with a sense of comfort and joy for the scriptures, and I continued to read. Soon, two people from my group came over and began to read with me. I could tell that they felt the Spirit too.

Ever since that experience, I have had a strong testimony of scripture study and the power and comfort it can give us. I am so thankful for the scriptures and what they can do in our lives.

Matthew H., California, USA

HOW TO PRAY AND SEEK ANSWERS



By Elder
Richard G. Scott

Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

HOW YOUTH HAVE APPLIED THIS

"I try to pray and say thanks when I recognize a blessing. It helps me express my feelings better."

Debora V.

"Thoughts in Sunday School and from friends who have made an effort when I need them have shown me that Heavenly Father knows what I stand in need of and is aware of my feelings."

Skylie D.

Prayer is a gift of our Father in Heaven to every soul. Prayer is most effective when we strive to **be clean and obedient**, with worthy motives, and are willing to do what He asks. Humble, trusting prayer brings direction and peace.

Don't worry about your clumsily expressed feelings. Just talk to your compassionate, understanding Father. You are His precious child whom He loves perfectly and wants to help. As you pray, recognize that Father in Heaven is near and He is listening.

A key to improved prayer is to learn to **ask the right questions**. Consider changing from asking for the things you want to honestly seeking what He wants for you. Then as you learn His will, pray that you will be led to have the strength to **fulfill it**.

Should you ever feel distanced from our Father, it could be for many reasons. Whatever the cause, as you continue to plead for help,

He will guide you to do that which will restore your confidence that He is near. Pray even when you have no desire to pray. That is when you most need to pray. Never feel you are too unworthy to pray.

Often when we pray for help with a significant matter, Heavenly Father will give us gentle promptings that require us to **think, exercise faith, work, at times struggle**, then act. It is a step-by-step process that enables us to discern inspired answers.

His answers will seldom come while you are on your knees praying, even when you may plead for an immediate response. Rather, He will prompt you in quiet moments when the Spirit can most effectively touch your mind and heart. You should **find periods of quiet time** to recognize when you are being instructed and strengthened. Be thankful that sometimes God lets you struggle for a long time before that answer comes.

It is so hard when sincere prayer about something you desire very much is not answered the way you want. The Savior taught, "Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name it shall be given unto you, *that is expedient for you*" (D&C 88:64; emphasis added). At times it is difficult to recognize what is *best* or *expedient* for you over time.

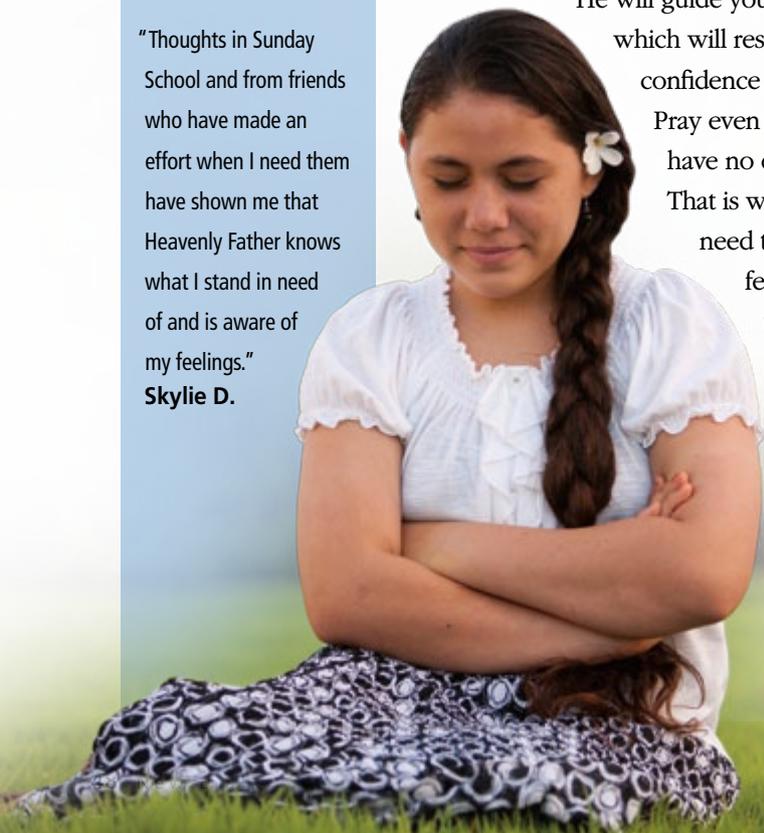
You are asked to **look for an answer** to your prayers. Obey the Master's counsel to "study it out in your mind" (D&C 9:8). Often you will think of a solution; as you **seek confirmation** that your answer is right, help will come. It may be through your prayers, or as an impression of the Holy Ghost, and at times by the intervention of others.

An important aspect of prayer is **gratitude**. When we contemplate the incomparable gift of prayer and the limitless blessings that flow from it, honest appreciation fills our mind and heart to overflowing with thanksgiving. **NE**

From the general conference address "Using the Supernal Gift of Prayer" (Ensign, May 2007, 8–11).

Share Your Experiences

Share *your* experiences in applying this principle and read the experiences of other youth by going to lds.org/go/72F.





Ancestors

By Marli Walker

Wooden wheels cut
through broken ground,
carve snowy trails;
all Zion bound.

A child's cry
a mother's sight
as hunger grows
no food, she knows.

Weary steps
mark frosted plains
cross white-topped mounts
in cold-drenched rains.

A shallow grave
in lifeless sleep
lies a tiny babe
as parents weep.

Numbed feet trod
on frozen sod.
Cold tear-streaked cheeks
white snowflakes meet.

Handcarts pulled
by weary throng
while angels push
in silent song.

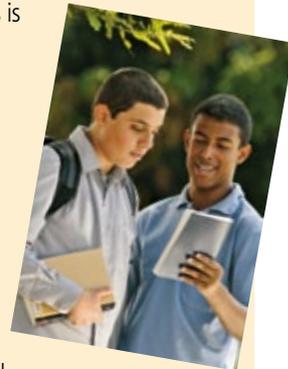
Their faith endures
though trials test.
The courageous pioneer
my life has blessed.

WHAT'S ONLINE

Be a Missionary Today

In “A Marvelous Work for You” on page 40, we’re reminded that we can be missionaries—today—in our neighborhoods.

- See how a family of six brothers is focused on missionary work at [lds.org/go/72G](https://www.lds.org/go/72G).
- Watch how one young woman introduced a schoolmate to the Church after her family prayed for an opportunity to share the gospel at [lds.org/go/72H](https://www.lds.org/go/72H).
- Find advice on sharing the gospel from Elder Russell M. Nelson at [lds.org/go/72J](https://www.lds.org/go/72J).



Share Your Stories with the *New Era*

We want to hear your stories about living the gospel. You can even answer questions that appear in “Questions & Answers” and other articles. Read about the *New Era’s* current calls at [lds.org/go/NEcalls](https://www.lds.org/go/NEcalls). We can’t wait to hear from you.

Dare to Stand Alone

As a Latter-day Saint youth, you’ll often stand alone when you stand for truth. Watch a message of hope and guidance about this subject in a new *Mormon Messages for Youth* video featuring President Monson at [lds.org/go/72K](https://www.lds.org/go/72K).



THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS