

THE New Era

JULY 2013



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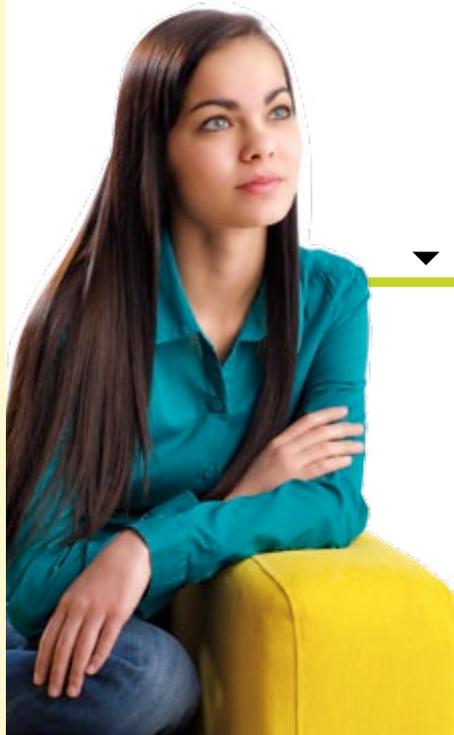
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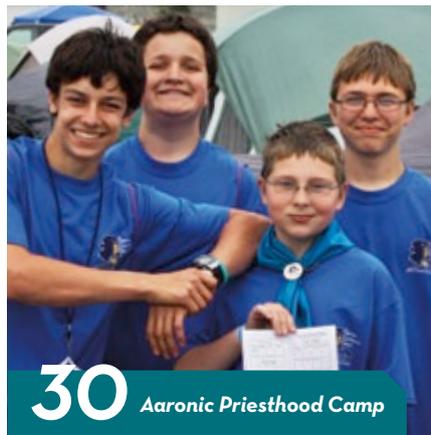
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“What is the right thing to do here? And what is the right thing to say?”





**By Elder
Jeffrey R. Holland**
Of the Quorum of
the Twelve Apostles

CONVICTION WITH *Compassion*

How we respond to people and situations has to reflect the full breadth of our religious beliefs and our gospel commitments.

Some time ago I was invited to speak in a stake single-adult devotional. As I entered the rear door of the stake center, a 30-something young woman entered the building at about the same time. Even in the crush of people moving toward the chapel, it was hard not to notice her. As I recall, she had a couple of tattoos, a variety of ear and nose rings, spiky hair reflecting all the colors now available in snow cones, a skirt that was too high, and a blouse that was too low.

Was this woman a struggling soul, not of our faith, who had been led—or even better, had been brought by someone—under the guidance of the Lord to this devotional in an effort to help her find the peace and the direction of the gospel that she needed in her life? Or was she a member who had strayed a bit from some of the hopes and standards that the Church encourages for its members but who, thank heaven, was still affiliating and had chosen to attend this Church activity that night?

However one would respond to that young woman, the rule forever is that in all our associations and actions, we must reflect the full breadth of our religious beliefs and our gospel commitments. Therefore, how we respond in any situation has to make things better, not worse. We can't act or react in such a way that we are guilty of a greater offense than, in this case, she is. That doesn't mean that we don't have opinions, that we don't have standards, that

we somehow completely disregard divinely mandated “thou shalt” and “thou shalt not” in life. But it does mean we have to live those standards and defend those “thou shalt” and “thou shalt not” in a righteous way to the best of our ability, the way the Savior lived and defended them. And He always did what should have been done to make the situation better—from teaching the truth, to forgiving sinners, to cleansing the temple. It is no small gift to know how to do such things in the right way!

So, regarding our new acquaintance of unusual dress and grooming, we start, above all, by remembering she is a daughter of God and of eternal worth. We start by remembering that she is someone's daughter here on earth as well and could, under other circumstances, be my daughter. We start by being grateful that she is at a Church activity, not avoiding one. In short, we try to be at *our* best in this situation in a desire to help her be at *her* best. We keep praying silently: What is the right thing to do here? And what is the right thing to say? What *ultimately* will make this situation and her better? Asking these questions and really trying to do what the Savior would do is what I think He meant when He said, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24).

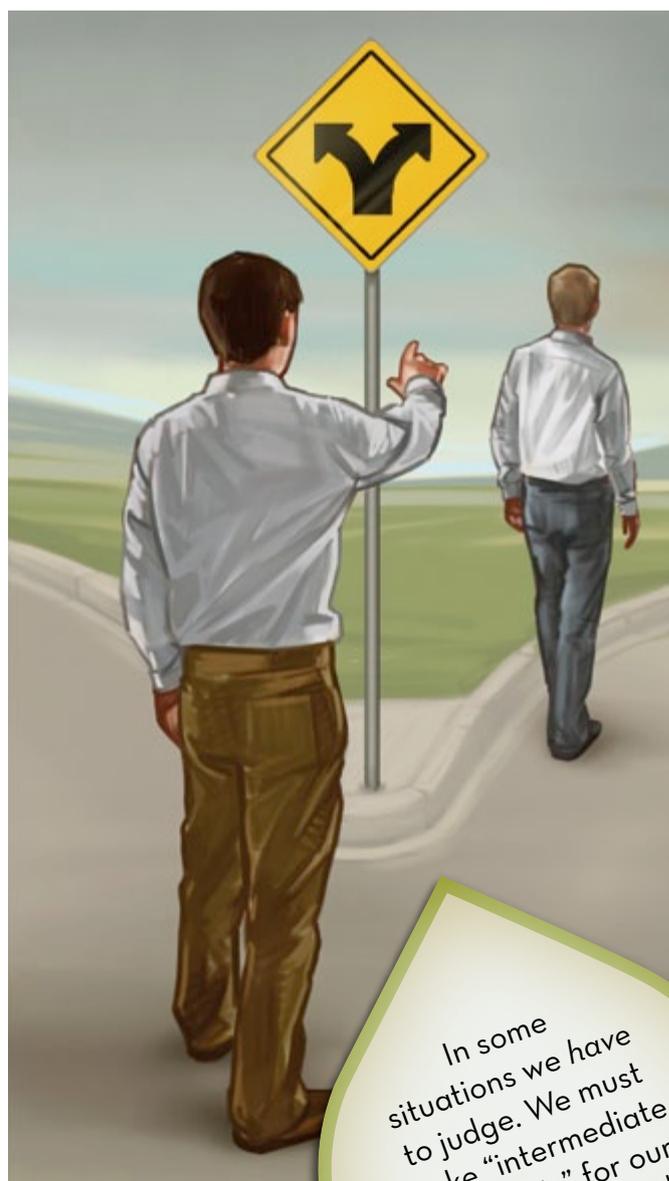
Having said that, I remind us all that while reaching out to and helping bring back a lamb who has strayed, we also have a profound responsibility to the 99 who didn't

stray and to the wishes and will of the Shepherd. There is a sheepfold, and we are all supposed to be in it, to say nothing of the safety and blessings that come to us for being there. My young brothers and sisters, this Church can never “dumb down” its doctrine in response to social goodwill or political expediency or any other reason. It is only the high ground of revealed truth that gives us any footing on which to lift another who may feel troubled or forsaken. Our compassion and our love—fundamental characteristics and requirements of our Christianity—must *never* be interpreted as compromising the commandments. As the marvelous George MacDonald once said, in such situations “we are not bound to say all we [believe], but we are bound not even to look [like] what we do not [believe].”¹

When We Must Judge

In this regard, there is sometimes a chance for a misunderstanding, especially among young people who may think we are not supposed to judge anything, that we are never to make a value assessment of any kind. We have to help each other with that because the Savior makes it clear that in some situations we *have* to judge, we are under obligation to judge—as when He said, “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine” (Matthew 7:6). That sounds like a judgment to me. The unacceptable alternative is to surrender to postmodern moral relativism, which, pushed far enough, declares that ultimately nothing is eternally true or especially sacred and, therefore, no one position on any given issue matters more than any other. And in the gospel of Jesus Christ that simply is not true.

In this process of evaluation, we are not called on to condemn others, but we are called upon to make decisions every day that reflect judgment—we hope good judgment. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles once referred to these kinds of decisions as “intermediate judgments,” which we often have to make for our own safety or for the safety of others, as opposed to what he called “final judgments,” which can only be made by God, who knows all the facts.² (Remember, in the scripture



In some situations we have to judge. We must make “intermediate judgments” for our own safety or for the safety of others.

quoted earlier, that the Savior said these are to be “righteous judgments,” *not* self-righteous judgments, which is a very different thing.)

For example, no one would fault a parent who restricts a child from running into a street roaring with traffic. So why should a parent be faulted who cares what time those children, at a little later age, come home at night or at what age they date or whether or not they experiment with drugs or pornography or engage in sexual transgression? No, we are making decisions and taking stands and reaffirming our values—in short, making “intermediate judgments”—all the time, or at least we should be.

“Don’t Others Have Their Agency?”

Young people may wonder about the universal applicability of this position taken or that policy made by the Church, saying, “Well, we know how we should behave, but why do we have to make other people accept our standards? Don’t they have their agency? Aren’t we being self-righteous and judgmental, forcing our beliefs on others, demanding that they, as well as ourselves, act in a certain way?” In those situations you are going to have to explain sensitively why some principles are defended and some sins opposed *wherever they are found* because the issues and the laws involved are not just social or political but eternal in their consequence. And while not wishing to offend those who believe differently from us, we are even more anxious not to offend God.

It is a little like a teenager saying, “Now that I can drive, I know I am supposed to stop at a red light, but do we really have to be judgmental and try to get everyone else to stop at red lights?” You then have to explain why, yes, we do hope *all* will stop at a red light. And you have to do this without demeaning those who transgress or who believe differently than we believe because, yes, they do have their

moral agency. But never doubt there is danger all around if some choose not to obey.

My young friends, there is a wide variety of beliefs in this world, and there is moral agency for all, but no one is entitled to act as if God is mute on these subjects or as if commandments only matter if there is public agreement over them.

I know of no more important ability and no greater integrity for us to demonstrate than to walk that careful path—taking a moral stand according to what God has declared and the laws He has given but doing it compassionately, with understanding and great charity. Talk about a hard thing to do—distinguishing perfectly between the sin and the sinner! I know of few distinctions that are harder to make and even harder sometimes to explain, but we must lovingly try to do exactly that. **NE**

Adapted from a CES devotional given on September 9, 2012. For the full address, visit cesdevotionals.lds.org.

NOTES

1. George MacDonald, *The Unspoken Sermons* (2011), 264.
2. See Dallin H. Oaks, “‘Judge Not’ and Judging,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1999, 6–13.





MAKE THE CHOICE:

FRIENDSHIP

By Paul VanDenBerghe
Church Magazines

At the end of the “Friends” section in *For the Strength of Youth*, the question is posed, “What kind of friend am I?” ([2011], 17). Here’s a quiz to help you consider how you’re doing at becoming a good example and friend.

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, **in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity** (1 Timothy 4:12).



Quiz



More on Friendship

For videos, articles, Mormonads, and more on friendship, visit lds.org/go/73Friend.

In Word

A friend who isn't a member of the Church asks why you spend so much time at church—even when it's not Sunday. What do you say?

- a. Shrug and say, "I don't know."
- b. Tell him your mom and dad make you go all the time.
- c. Explain how learning about the gospel with your friends at church makes you happy, and invite him or her to the next Mutual activity.

In Conversation

A group of friends start gossiping about one of your friends who isn't there. What do you do?

- a. Stay quiet and hope they don't say anything about you.
- b. Laugh and share something else you've heard.
- c. Ask them nicely not to talk about people behind their backs, and then smoothly change the topic.

In Charity

At the last minute, your friend finds out she has to mow her lawn before she can go shopping with you. What do you do?

- a. Leave your friend and go shopping. She can catch up.
- b. Try to help her get out of it somehow.
- c. Offer to do the edging while she mows the lawn.

In Spirit

You're in a Sunday School class talking with your friends about the weekend when your teacher comes in ready to start the lesson. What do you do?

- a. Just keep talking until the teacher finally asks you to stop.
- b. Scoot closer together and whisper.
- c. Stop talking and give your full attention to the teacher so you and your friends can listen. You also offer to give the opening prayer.

In Faith

One of your friends at church says he is not sure he really has a testimony. What do you say to him?

- a. Tell a joke to quickly change the subject.
- b. Tell him he'll probably get one on his mission.
- c. Explain that a testimony often comes gradually as we learn more about the gospel and sincerely seek the truth. You then bear your testimony and encourage him to study and pray to receive his own testimony and think about what he already does know.

In Purity

One of your friends says she is going out with someone who is pressuring her to become physically intimate. What do you do?

- a. Act like you didn't hear her and say nothing.
- b. Say something like, "I'm sure you'll do the right thing."
- c. Explain that you believe physical intimacy should be reserved for marriage. You encourage her to focus on building friendships while dating others with high standards.



If you answered mostly (a), you may want to pay a little more attention to your friends' interests and concerns. Be there for your friends when they need you.

If you answered mostly (b), friendship is obviously important to you—just remember that true friends help each other be their best selves.

If you answered mostly (c), you're well on your way to becoming a great example and friend. **NE**



Our Perfect Example

"We become [the Savior's] friends as we serve others for Him. He is the perfect example of the kind of friend we are to become."

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, "Faithful Friends," *Ensign*, July 2010, 4.

PROPHETS SPEAK UP FOR MARRIAGE AND CHASTITY

Their counsel from the April 2013 general conference sent a clear message of eternal doctrines to the world.

When Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was in college, the Church's standards and the world's standards were not far apart. But since then, the gap has grown wider and wider as the world has strayed from eternal truths.

"I could not have imagined how far and how fast the world would move away from God," said Elder Hales during the April 2013 general conference. "And yet the standards of Christ and His Church have not moved. . . . When we understand and accept this, we are prepared to face the social pressure, ridicule, and even discrimination that will come from the world and some who call themselves friends."¹

The gap between the Church's standards and the world's standards is especially large when it comes to the use of the sacred powers of procreation. But thanks to revelation, Latter-day Saints understand that marriage and the law of chastity remain eternally important.

The Importance of Marriage

The Lord has revealed that our bodies are central to the plan of salvation, including our eternal happiness. That is why Satan "seeks to frustrate our progression by tempting us to use our bodies improperly,"² said Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

When it comes to intimate relations and the divinely appointed means by which mortal life is created, God's law remains constant despite Satan's efforts to undermine that law.

"Marriage between a man and a woman is the authorized channel through which premortal spirits enter mortality. Complete sexual abstinence before marriage and total fidelity within marriage protect the sanctity of this sacred channel,"³ Elder Bednar taught.

"The power of procreation is spiritually significant. Misuse of this power subverts the purposes of the Father's plan and of our mortal existence."⁴

Elder Bednar added that marriage between a man and a woman is essential to the plan of salvation.

"The unique combination of spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional capacities of both males and females was needed to enact the plan of happiness. . . . The man and the woman are intended to learn from, strengthen, bless, and complete each other."⁵

DETERMINE TODAY

Decide today that you will keep the law of chastity and honor the doctrine of marriage. Consider what you can do to fortify yourself against the false teachings of the world and help others do the same.

Defending against Attacks

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that for children of God to substitute their own rules for His laws regarding marriage and the use of procreative powers “is the height of presumption and the depth of sin.” He said that loss of respect for the sanctity of marriage is weakening the family and “causing widespread damage to society.”⁶

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, added, “The family, the fundamental organization in time and eternity, is under attack from forces seen and unseen. . . . If [Satan] can weaken and destroy the family, he will have succeeded.”⁷

President Packer said one of the ways Satan is seeking to destroy the family is through widespread tolerance for immorality. “The permissiveness afforded by the weakening of the laws of the land to tolerate legalized acts of immorality does not reduce the serious spiritual consequence that is the result of the violation of God’s law of chastity,”⁸ he said.

Importance of Standing Strong

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled, “Don’t

rationalize away future happiness by taking shortcuts instead of applying sound gospel principles. . . . Your great potential and ability could be limited or destroyed if you yield to the devil-inspired contamination around you.”⁹

If we stand “obedient and strong on the doctrine of our God,” Elder Hales taught, “we stand in holy places, for His doctrine is sacred and will not change in the social and political winds of our day.”¹⁰

Those who stand strong and obey the law of chastity will be blessed—that is the gift of obedience.

As President Thomas S. Monson said, “The Lord has provided guidelines and commandments to help ensure our spiritual safety so that we might successfully navigate this often-treacherous mortal existence and return eventually to our Heavenly Father.”¹¹ Honoring the law of chastity and the doctrines of marriage and family are two things that keep us safe and also allow us to live worthy of and receive the blessings of the temple. **NE**



NOTES

1. Robert D. Hales, “Stand Strong in Holy Places,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 49.
2. David A. Bednar, “We Believe in Being Chaste,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 43.
3. David A. Bednar, “We Believe,” 42.

4. David A. Bednar, “We Believe,” 42.
5. David A. Bednar, “We Believe,” 41–42.
6. L. Tom Perry, “Obedience to Law Is Liberty,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 87.
7. Boyd K. Packer, “These Things I Know,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 7.

8. Boyd K. Packer, “These Things,” 8.
9. Richard G. Scott, “For Peace at Home,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 29.
10. Robert D. Hales, “Stand Strong,” 51.
11. Thomas S. Monson, “Obedience Brings Blessings,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 90.



READ MORE FROM THESE TALKS AT CONFERENCE.LDS.ORG.



HONESTY & INTEGRITY



By Elder
Christoffel
Golden Jr.
Of the Seventy

*As a disciple of Christ,
these personal attributes
are expressions of who
you actually are.*

At a conference championship game of American football, Joseph B. Wirthlin had what he called “a defining experience” during a crucial play.

“The play called for me to run the ball up the middle to score the go-ahead touchdown,” he said. “I took the handoff and plunged into the line. I knew I was close to the goal line, but I didn’t know how close. Although I was pinned at the bottom of the pile, I reached my fingers forward a couple of inches and I could feel it. The goal line was two inches [5 cm] away.

“At that moment I was tempted to push the ball forward. I could have done it. . . . But then I remembered the words of my mother. ‘Joseph,’ she had often said to me, ‘do what is right, no matter the consequence. Do what is right and things will turn out OK.’

“I wanted so desperately to score that touchdown. But more than being a hero in the eyes of my friends, I wanted to be a hero in the eyes of my mother. And so I left the ball where it was—two inches from the goal line.”¹ Elder Wirthlin (1917–2008) later served as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Doing What Is Right

Elder Wirthlin's decision is an excellent example of someone who would not compromise his integrity. Honesty and integrity test our character. They require a person always to do or say the right thing no matter the circumstances or what others may think.

One of the standards in *For the Strength of Youth* is honesty and integrity. As Latter-day Saints and followers of Christ, you are expected to "be honest with yourself, others, and God at all times. Being honest means choosing not to lie, steal, cheat, or deceive in any way. . . .

"Closely associated with honesty is integrity. Integrity means thinking and doing what is right at all times, no matter what the consequences. When you have integrity, you are willing to live by your standards and beliefs even when no one is watching."²

Becoming a Disciple

Our purpose during this probationary state of mortal life is to become "a saint through the atonement of Christ" (Mosiah 3:19). To become a saint is nothing more or less than becoming a true disciple of Christ. This is not as difficult as you may suppose; you probably already know how to do it. However, it does take effort, and sometimes this effort requires a great deal from us. But it can be done.

The Book of Mormon teaches, "For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that

he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God" (Moroni 7:16).

As a disciple of Christ you can discover how to speak and act by asking yourself, "What would Jesus do?" Impressions will follow, and as you act on these impressions, you will receive a witness for yourself that you have acted correctly. However, it is also true that sometimes you may need to wait for a while to see the true consequences and blessings of your honest actions.

Being Completely Honest

For the Strength of Youth reminds us: "Dishonesty harms you and harms others as well. If you lie, steal, shoplift, or cheat, you damage your spirit and your relationships with others.

Being honest will enhance your future opportunities and your ability to be

Daily prayer, scripture study, and applying the teachings of living prophets build honesty and integrity in us.

guided by the Holy Ghost."³

The true measure of sincere integrity and complete honesty is what you do when no one is around to know what you think, say, or do. As true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, we cannot be or do less than the Savior has shown us. We have the incomparable gift of the Holy Ghost. The Savior taught, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

Our Savior has also given us great power that comes from daily prayer, scripture study, and reading the words of the living prophets and apostles. These positive daily practices build honesty and integrity in us. Remember, as a disciple of Christ and a member of The Church

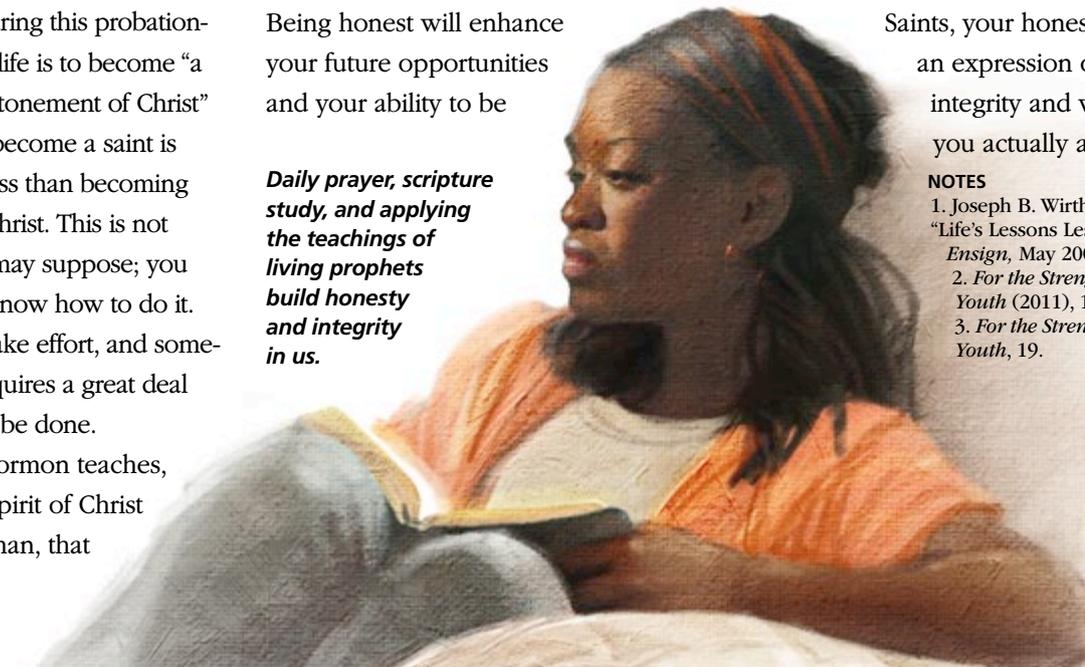
of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

Saints, your honesty is

an expression of your integrity and who you actually are. **NE**

NOTES

1. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Life's Lessons Learned," *Ensign*, May 2007, 46.
2. *For the Strength of Youth* (2011), 19.
3. *For the Strength of Youth*, 19.





RETURNED WITH HONOR

I didn't want to be a thief, even by accident.

By Valerie Best

After my classes finished in the late afternoon, I stopped by a tiny antique store just before I made my way home—an errand I wanted to finish despite the increased intensity of the rain. I was the only person in the store, and the woman working there helped me with the lamp I'd had my eye on.

As she opened a shopping bag, I noticed a display of brightly colored bracelets on the counter. I reached for one just as she placed the lamp into the bag. She brushed the display, and about half the bracelets clattered to the floor. She looked a little flustered but finished ringing up my purchase. I left the store, umbrella in one hand, bag with a lamp in it in the other.

I walked home, took off my wet boots, and put on some music. As I took the lamp out, I noticed something at the bottom of the bag. It was a red bracelet. It must have fallen from the display into my bag. I smiled, thinking how much this moment was beginning to resemble a story from the old Young Women manual: *"Then Valerie thought of the lesson they'd just had in Laurels class."*

I tossed the bracelet on my bed and plugged in my lamp. It created a warm glow in the gray afternoon. I looked out the window. It was raining even harder, and the snow on the ground was turning to dirty slush.

I looked at the bracelet. It was cherry red. I slipped it on my wrist. The price tag swung—\$20. Of course I would return it. It never entered my mind not to. I pulled it off and put it on top of a pile of books I'd been meaning to put away. I walked into the other room to make a cup of hot chocolate.

Then I walked back in.

How long had I put off dealing with those books anyway? A while. How long would that bracelet be there if I put off taking it back?

My *intention* was to return it. But when would that be? Would I wait so long that I would feel awkward returning it? Would I forget about it?

I hesitated a little more. I looked out the window again. I thought about how my feet had just warmed up. I thought about my delicious hot chocolate.

Then I grabbed the bracelet, pulled my boots back on, and headed back out.



When I arrived at the store, the woman was helping someone else. I stood and waited. When she finished, I pulled the bracelet out of my coat pocket, explaining how it had come to be there. She looked sort of surprised, a little confused, said thank you, and that was it. She didn't offer

me a reward for my honesty. She wasn't excessive in her thanks. And no one else was around to see it.

As I walked home, I thought about how I'd always considered myself an honest person. It is a quality I value and look for in others. But real honesty, like real love and real charity, is

an active attribute. However honorable and true my intentions, I only became an honest person when I put those rain boots back on and acted on my intentions.

I felt my bare wrist inside my coat and smiled a little. **NE**

Valerie Best lives in New York, USA.

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

Reverence is how we feel, not just how we act; sitting silently while our thoughts wander may not be enough. But when younger siblings or other children are being disruptive, it can be difficult to stay quiet and focused on the sacrament or speaker, let alone feel reverent.

Help your siblings be reverent by doing quiet activities that don't distract them from listening. During hymns, have them help hold the hymnbook and follow the words with their finger. During talks, have them draw a picture about each speaker's topic.

Talk to your siblings before the meeting about how important the sacrament is, and show it by the way you act. Help your siblings understand how reverence feels.

If your siblings are disruptive during sacrament meeting, don't get so distracted or frustrated that *you* forget to be reverent. If you can't get them to quiet down, focus on your own personal reverence. Listen carefully to the talks, take notes, and set a good example. **NE**

Value the Sacrament



Talk to your younger siblings about sacrament meeting throughout the week, and make sure they know that you look forward to attending it on Sunday. After sacrament meeting, review the messages and bring them back to life outside of the chapel. If the speaker shared a funny joke, perhaps you could recount it to spark an interest in the meeting and then go on to review what the speaker testified of. Set an example of reverence and appreciation for the sacrament while in the meeting by not only sitting quietly, but also by taking notes, etc. Set an example by thinking and talking about sacrament meeting throughout the week.

Alex B., 18, Utah, USA

Show Love

Be a good example. You are a hero to your younger siblings. They look to you for guidance and direction. Sometimes it seems like they don't pay attention, but they do. If they are goofing off, just remember to show them love.

Caleb Y., 13, Idaho, USA

Be an Example



I may not have little siblings, but during sacrament meeting I sit with people who do. So I always try to be an example by letting them see me be reverent, and soon they'll do the same. Being an example can remind you that you

should always be on your best behavior because someone is always watching, whether it's a small child or Heavenly Father.

Katie E., 14, California, USA

Quietly Entertain



Something that you can do to help your younger siblings be reverent during sacrament meeting is to prepare quiet activities for them to do. I made a little book with pictures of scripture heroes for my little brother to look at throughout sacrament meeting. Even if he doesn't look at it all the time, my little sister does! Another option is to be friendly to your siblings. You can even just sit by them and make sure they're comfortable or help them pretend to lead the music when you're singing the hymns. Younger children tend to be more reverent and quiet when they're not bored or uncomfortable.

Meredith S., 13, Utah, USA

Bring Church Magazines

I have three younger siblings, and they are sometimes a bit jumpy in their seats. Being the oldest brother, I try to be an example to them by sitting reverently in my seat, listening to the talks, and singing the hymns. Another great way is to bring a copy of the *Friend* or *New Era* to the meeting. They might not be listening to the talks, but at least they are learning about the gospel in a way they can understand.

Cole B., 14, Iowa, USA

Be Patient



Be a positive influence on your younger siblings. Don't move away from them or show anger toward them when they behave irreverently. Sit beside them and patiently tell them (without being overbearing or bossy) how to be more reverent when you find it necessary. Remember that although it may not seem to you that they are being reverent enough, they may actually be making a real effort to do better.

Kyrsten M., 13, Kentucky, USA

Look at Pictures



I have three younger sisters and a baby brother who can get restless during sacrament meeting. One Christmas I asked for Mormonad cards. I put them in a little photo



SHOW LOVE AND RESPECT

"Let us never depreciate the value of our own personal example of being a living

witness of the love and respect we have for Him whom we call 'Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace' (2 Nephi 19:6)."

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Serve God Acceptably with Reverence and Godly Fear," *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 72.

album that would fit into my purse, so I could take them to church with me. When my sisters start to get noisy, I pull out the Mormonads and they look at the pictures quietly. I also plan to add pictures of the temple, my family, and Jesus with little children.

Olivia Q., 14, California, USA

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

UPCOMING QUESTION

"My friend feels like Heavenly Father has abandoned her. She doesn't feel the Spirit. How can I help her?"

Send your answer and photo by August 15, 2013.

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

You can also write to us at newera@ldschurch.org or *New Era*, Q&A, Spirit
50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.



FAMILY *History* LEADS YOU *to the* TEMPLE

I thought my family history had already been done by other relatives. Then I went online and found out it had only just begun.

By Nicole Boekweg

I always thought my relatives had already traced our family history back to the beginning of time. So in the October 2011 general conference when Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles invited youth to work on family history in order to take names to the temple, I didn't think I would have much success in finding names. But something in his talk made me want to try, and I sat down at the computer to figure out how to find my ancestors.

Within 15 minutes, I found someone. His name was Stephen Barker, and he was the youngest member of his family. All of his temple ordinances had been performed except one—he was the only child who hadn't been sealed to his parents. Suddenly I thought, "What if that were me? What if I were the only child not sealed to my family and I had waited hundreds of years for the opportunity?" I gave his name to my parents so they could go to the temple and do the work for him. I have never felt the Spirit so strongly, and that is when I knew I needed to keep doing family history.

Since then, I have learned that family history is fun! I never expected that such great joy could come from family history. I feel close to my ancestors and have often felt them guiding me to find their records. I know that when Heavenly Father asks us to do something, He will provide a way for us to accomplish the task (see 1 Nephi 3:7). We, as youth, have been called to help in this glorious work.

FINDING THE NAMES OF MY ANCESTORS

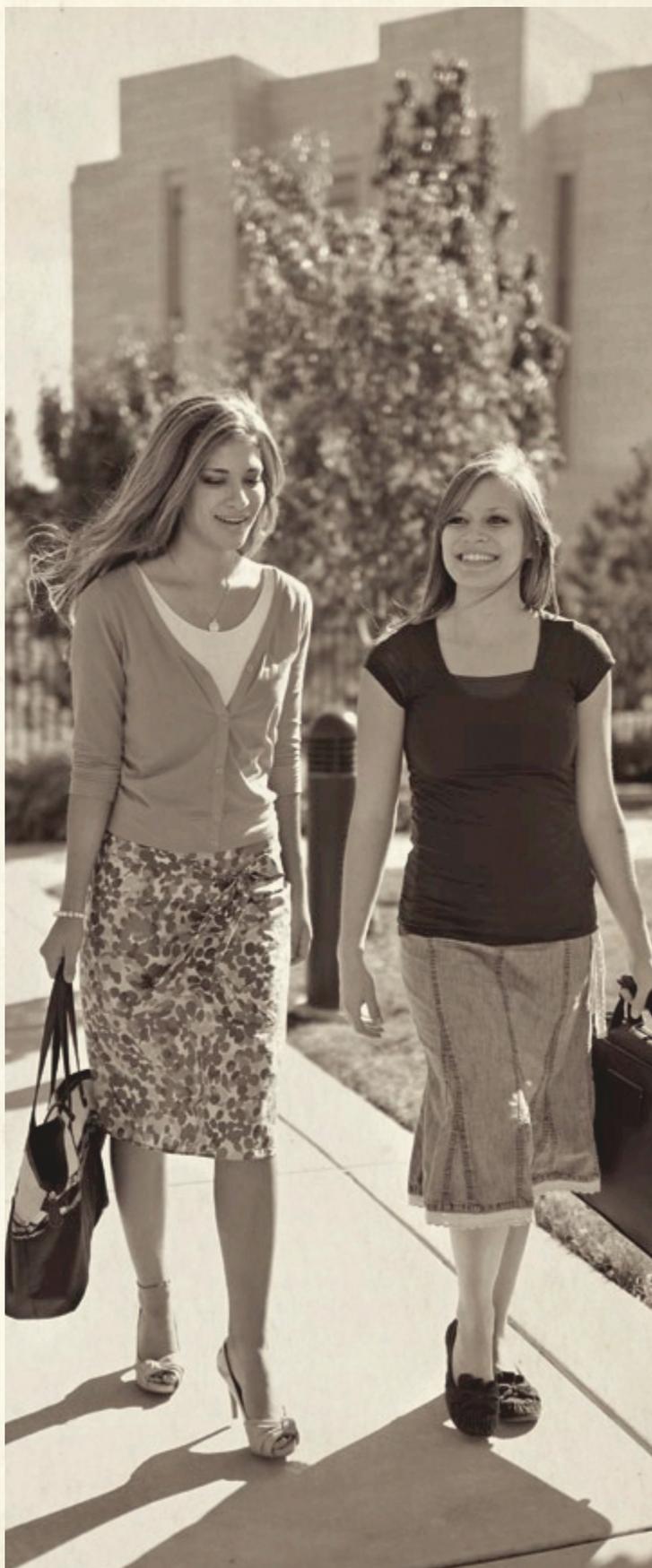
I work on my family history in many different ways. First, I search through my family tree. I have the names of many ancestors who have already been added to

my tree but have not yet had their temple work done. The real fun comes when I search out names myself. Usually, I go to Family Tree at familysearch.org and look for my family names, and then I add them to my tree. Honestly, it's very simple once you sit down and try it. I continue to trace back through all the centuries until I find families that need ordinances done. When I am really in tune with the Spirit and try to find my family, it seems I am guided to them.

GOING TO THE TEMPLE

Once I find the names of family members who need their temple work done, I reserve the ordinances, print the sheet with their information, and then use it to print their ordinance cards off at the temple. In order to do the baptisms for the family members I have found, I usually go to the temple every week. I also attend our youth temple nights, where everyone there helps complete the baptisms and confirmations. Then, I give the names to extended family members, who have helped me complete a lot of temple ordinances for my ancestors. I also make sure that I get all of the cards back for my own records.

I have found so many names of ancestors without ordinances that my effort to do their temple work has become a ward effort. The adults in my ward come and get stacks of cards from me and take them to ward temple night after the baptisms and confirmations are complete. The bishop has told me that the numbers at our ward temple nights have increased in anticipation of helping me with this work. It has been amazing to see the excitement that this work has brought to others in the ward. Family history has affected so many more people than just me. I never would have imagined this would happen when I sat down at the computer that first day.





YOU HAVE BEEN PREPARED

“My beloved young brothers and sisters, family history is not simply an interesting program or activity sponsored by the Church; rather, it is a vital part of the work of salvation and exaltation. You have been prepared for this day and to build up the kingdom of God. You are here upon the earth now to assist in this glorious work.”

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 27.

JUST ONE PERSON CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

What if you lived at a time when the Church was not on the earth? What if you had accepted the gospel in the spirit world and had waited hundreds of years to be baptized? With family history and temple work, you can be the person who will give someone that chance. There are doubtless many people waiting in the spirit world to receive their temple ordinances.

“The worth of souls is great in the sight of God” (D&C 18:10), and finding even one person makes a difference. One of my favorite scriptures is this: “And if it so be that you should labor all your days . . . and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father” (D&C 18:15). This is what makes family history worth it. When you take the name you have found to the temple, you feel like your ancestors are saying, “Thank you for finding me.” **NE**

Nicole Boekweg lives in Utah, USA.



Getting STARTED

Getting started on family history is easy. Go to lds.org/youth/family-history/discover to watch videos that will help you learn how to find your family names, share correct information about your ancestors with others, and take their names to the temple to have their work done. You can also hear what other youth have to say about their experiences. For instance:

“There is a special spirit when searching for ancestors. Like others, I started this right after hearing Elder Bednar’s words. I had tried many times before to do family history, but it is now so much easier than before. It takes only a few minutes out of your day. I have already found many who need their temple work done. . . . We as youth are obligated to use our abilities with technology to research and increase our workload with the Church. I know that this work is of God.”

Elder Trevor Larsen, 19, New York Rochester Mission

“The first time I went to the temple, I was nervous and excited. When we got there, I felt a warmth. I never wanted to leave. Dressed in white, I waited and thought about my baptismal promise. I did 10 family names that day, including my great-great-great grandmother’s, whom my mom and dad had spent three years to find. It felt so good to make it possible for my ancestors to progress.”

Emmalee D., 13, Idaho, USA



What You’ll Need

For more information about an LDS Account, which you’ll need to begin working on your own family history online, see page 23.

Elder Paul V. Johnson of the Seventy as a young boy (far right, second row) with his family.

MORMONAD

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CODY BELL. IDEA COURTESY OF PAT DOYLE

TAG! YOU'RE IT.

"Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God
ye are called to the work."

(See D&C 4:3.)

ELDER YOUNG

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



Capturing YOUR FAMILY Stories



Family history involves keeping a record of your family today.

When you hear about family history, you may think about poring over records or searching the Internet for information about your ancestors. Or you may think about deciphering names as you participate in indexing. But there's another way to do family history that you may not have thought about. It's keeping a record of your family right now. Your own history is family history!

WHY *share* STORIES?

If you've worked on family history, you probably know that in addition to names and dates, you sometimes find stories about your ancestors. These stories are often the most interesting information available, because they not only tell you the who's and when's of your ancestors, but they also give you insight to what their lives were really like.

Sharing your family's stories will give your descendants a glimpse into what your life and your family are like. You will also be grateful in the future when you have stories recorded to tell to your own children. You may not think your memories will fade, but you never know what you'll forget if you don't record it somewhere. And as you work on recording your family stories, you may even discover things you never knew before.

WHERE *do I* START?

Decide what kinds of stories you want to share (see the list below) and for what purpose. You can start with your own memories and then start asking your family members. They may have a different perspective on a story you already recorded, or they may know some stories that you don't remember or weren't there for.

Your family probably has some favorite stories—the ones you always talk about or the ones your parents told as bedtime stories. Well, has anyone ever written them down? These stories may be a good place to start. Get all sides of the story, and then record it!



HOW *do I* TELL STORIES?

Everyone tells stories differently. The way you tell a story is your own and will reflect the person you are. Don't worry if you think you don't write perfectly. You and your descendants will be happy you preserved the stories and won't care about grammar. But keep a few principles in mind as you write.

Start with the who, what, when, where, and why of the story. Some stories may not have all of these elements, but it will at least get you started thinking or help you know what to ask if you are interviewing other family members about a story.

Explain the situation fully. You may think everyone knows who the people in the story are, but your grandchildren may not know who "Uncle Bill" is. Similarly, they may not know about the places you are talking about. The more detail you include, the easier it will be for those experiencing the story later to know what was really going on.



HOW *do I* RECORD STORIES?

There are various ways for you to record your family stories. Of course you can always write them down, but you can also record someone telling the stories on a video or audio recording. You could also include photographs in the record or ask your family members to draw a story how they remember it. Be creative! **NE**

WHAT STORIES SHOULD I SHARE?

Here are some ideas for family stories you can record. Can you think of others?

- A vacation you went on
- An incident that made you all laugh
- A memorable family home evening
- A difficult time that strengthened your family
- Your earliest memories
- Things your family likes to do together
- Your typical schedule on a weekday
- Pets your family has had
- How your family came to live where you are
- How your parents met
- What happened when each child was born
- How your family was introduced to the gospel
- Milestone events in family members' lives (baptisms, missions, marriages, etc.)



My Summers by THE TEMPLE

Great blessings came as my family used our vacation time to attend the temple each summer.

By David Isaksen

I grew up in Norway. The nearest temple was in Stockholm, Sweden, an 8- to 10-hour drive away. Needless to say, any trip to the temple took careful planning and deliberation. Our stake planned two visits to the temple for the youth each year; several wards would rent a bus and go to the temple for a weekend. It was fun to go with other youth, but my family and I wanted to go to the temple together sometime.

So one year we decided to go to Stockholm during our summer vacation. It was a great experience, and it soon became a pattern for our summers. We would camp at a campground close to the temple. Each morning we would get up early for a baptismal session with other families from Norway who had come to the temple. Afterward we would play football and go swimming at the campground.

These summers are sacred memories for me now. Although we didn't live close enough to the temple to go there each month, it was always a

special occasion when we could go. And even though the car ride was long and tedious, the Lord blessed us for our sacrifice. The spiritual experiences I had at the temple helped me develop my love for the temple and its ordinances. They also brought us closer together as a family.

One special experience I remember was when I was going through a little rebellious period. It felt like I could see so many of my parents' flaws, and I felt that they had no right to counsel me how to live my life. Although I lived worthy to go to the temple, I was questioning my father's role as the head of our family. But when we went to the temple together to do baptisms and confirmations, I felt the presence of a sweet spirit. As my father laid his hands on my head to confirm me on behalf of people who had passed away, I felt the Spirit confirm to me that he was acting by the true authority of the priesthood. This made me realize that although my father was not perfect, he was still a good father and I was blessed to be

his son. I felt I needed to repent of my rebelliousness and try to see the wisdom and love of his admonitions.

These many years later those summers by the temple still shine in my memory. The temple has become one of the truly beautiful places of the world, like the Waters of Mormon were for the people of Alma: "How beautiful are they to the eyes of them who there came to the knowledge of their Redeemer" (Mosiah 18:30). **NE**
David Isaksen lives in Utah, USA.

BLESSINGS OF THE TEMPLE

What blessings have you experienced as you've gone to the temple?

Consider sharing your feelings with a family member or writing about them in your journal.

10

COOL THINGS

YOU CAN DO WITH AN LDS ACCOUNT

You may have been to **LDS.org** before, but did you know even more options are waiting for you when you register for and sign in with an LDS Account? Try out these 10 great features, which you can access through the “Tools” menu (unless otherwise noted).

1. ACCESS YOUR FAMILY HISTORY CHARTS, create your family tree, and prepare family names for temple work.



(Visit familysearch.org.)

2. USE YOUR WARD AND STAKE DIRECTORY to find contact information for local leaders and ward members. (An LDS Tools app is available for mobile devices.)



3. WORK ON PERSONAL PROGRESS AND DUTY TO GOD ONLINE, including tracking your progress and keeping a digital journal.



(Visit PersonalProgress.lds.org or DutyToGod.lds.org.)

4. MARK UP, HIGHLIGHT, AND TAKE NOTES ON a digital edition of the **SCRIPTURES** and other Church publications. (An LDS Gospel Library app is available for mobile devices.)



5. DO FAMILYSEARCH INDEXING to help a lot of people with family history in a short amount of time.



(Visit indexing.familysearch.org.)

6. RECORD SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS, inspiration, or goals with the “Notes and Journal” feature (also available on the LDS Gospel Library app).

7. LEAVE COMMENTS

on articles and videos at youth.lds.org.



8. VIEW YOUR WARD CALENDAR to find out what's coming up.



9. READ YOUR WARD NEWSLETTER for messages and information from your leaders.

10. REQUEST A COPY of your patriarchal blessing or those of your deceased ancestors.

HOW TO CREATE AN LDS ACCOUNT

To create a free LDS account, go to ldsaccount.lds.org and click “Register for an LDS Account.” You’ll need to provide your membership number (which you can get from your ward clerk) and your birth date. Youth under age 13 will also need a parent’s membership number or email address to register.



There are lots of ways to keep Church standards and still build relationships with the opposite gender.

What Can We Do

IF WE LIKE EACH OTHER?

WHEN YOU'RE NOT YET 16

You're at your first Church dance when it happens. You just worked up the courage to ask the new girl to dance. She's recently moved into the ward, and you simply want to say hi to welcome her and get to know her better.

And that's when you discover the two of you share the same love of volleyball, have the same taste in music, and enjoy the same favorite ice cream. She even laughs at your jokes. That's when you realize you *like* her—and, unless you are wildly mistaken, that she likes you too.

Gulp.

Now what? You're not old enough to start dating. Obviously, it's time to flee the dance, rush home, and immediately start pretending you never met. You might also want to change your bike route to the park so you don't have to pass her house. Right?

No, actually. In fact, you don't need to do any of these things. Even if dating is still far away, you can always make a new friend.

As explained in *For the Strength of Youth*, "Everyone needs good and true friends. They will be a great strength and blessing to you. They will influence how you think and act, and even help determine the person you will become" ([2011], 16).

Sometimes it might be easy to misinterpret dating standards to mean that we can't even form friendships with members of the opposite gender before we're 16. But if we follow that way of thinking, we might miss out on rewarding friendships. So, yes, you can become friends.

Does that mean it's all right to start hanging out nonstop with your new friend, doing everything together, from having homework sessions to going on long walks in the park? No. That strays into dating—even steady dating—no matter what you might call it instead.

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS



"Your circle of friends will greatly influence your thinking and behavior, just as you will theirs. When you share common values with your friends, you can strengthen and encourage each other."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Preparation Brings Blessings," *Ensign*, May 2010, 65.

Here are a few suggestions that can help you know when your friendship is following correct standards:

- **Consider intent.** So much comes down to intent and motives. Ask yourself: is the only reason you're planning an activity with a group of friends so that you can spend time exchanging glances with one friend in particular? If so, that's moving beyond friendship.
- **Don't pair off.** Let's say you are planning a board game night at your home (with parental supervision, of course). As it turns out, three boys—including yourself—and three girls can make it. Mathematically speaking, that's three pairs. Do you need to hurry and find a seventh person to avoid the accidental pairing? Not necessarily. "Pairing off" doesn't refer specifically to whether or not you have an exact number of boys versus girls. For example, you could easily have 5 girls in a room with 12 boys and still end up with several couples pairing off—focusing their entire time and attention on each other. You avoid pairing off when everyone is talking with everybody else. Yes, you can enjoy activities with friends of both genders. Yet when a group of friends gets together, make sure everyone feels included. The moment any two start ignoring the rest of the group, that's when pairing off begins.



- **Discuss with parents.** When it comes to friendships and activities with the opposite gender, it's best to work out specific guidelines and rules with your parents.

dating, go with one or more additional couples" (4). Yes, you can go on dates with her. But the Church counsels youth to go in groups rather than date one-on-one, so make sure your date includes other people.



- **Frequency.** You know you should "avoid going on frequent dates with the same person" (*For the Strength of Youth*, 4), so what constitutes "frequent"? No more than one date a month? One every six months? How about a nice annual outing to the ice-cream parlor every first Friday in September? In some cultures, going out even one time signifies a serious relationship. It's best to work out specifics with your parents and through prayer. As with many gospel principles, the Church provides guidelines with dating, but it's always up to each of us to seek the Spirit to know how best to follow those guidelines. Yes, you can go on more than one date with the girl from the dance. But you still need to find the proper balance in the frequency.
- **Friendship first.** As you enter the dating years, you'll find that forming good friendships is even more important than before. Good friends are a blessing at any age. Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught, "Each day of your life, strive to enlarge your own circle of friendship" ("Be Thou an Example of the Believers," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 48). So yes, while you can indeed date each other when you're both old enough and each committed to following Church standards, forming true and uplifting friendships—not finding a boyfriend or girlfriend—remains one of the most important talents we can develop in this life. **NE**

AFTER YOU TURN 16

OK, the big birthday is finally in the rearview mirror. You are now old enough to ask the intriguing girl from the dance on a date (she turned 16 a few months earlier). Now what? Keep these ideas in mind:

- **Group dates.** As you are counseled in *For the Strength of Youth*, "When you begin

Dating: Keep It Casual

For more on casual dating vs. steady dating, as well as forming good friendships, see "Unsteady Dating," *New Era*, Apr. 2010, 38–42; or visit lds.org/go/73Dating.

A lot of people cry when they feel the Spirit, but I don't. Is there something wrong with me?

Crying is not the only—or even the most common—manifestation of feeling the Spirit. 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” (in *Preach My*

Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service [2004], 99).

The Spirit of God brings peace and clarity to your heart and mind, as well as other positive emotions, such as love, joy, meekness, and patience (see D&C 6:15, 23; 11:12–14; Galatians 5:22–23). If you are experiencing these kinds of things, you can be confident that you are feeling the Spirit, whether your emotions cause you to cry or not. **NE**

What exactly is a sexual transgression?

All sexual relations outside of marriage violate the law of chastity. This includes intercourse; touching the private, sacred parts of another person's body, with or without clothing; arousing sexual feelings in others or yourself for the purpose of gratification; viewing or sending pornography; reading pornographic literature; deliberately dwelling on sexual thoughts; and talking or texting about sex in an explicit manner with the intent of arousing sexual feelings. (See *For the Strength of Youth* [2011], 35–37.)

That being said, you

probably already have a good idea of what is and isn't a sexual transgression. You simply need to commit to stay pure. As President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) said, “There is a line which you must not cross. It is the line that separates personal cleanliness from sin. I need not get clinical in telling you where that line is. You know. You have been told again and again. You have a conscience within you. Stay on the Lord's side of the line” (“Be Ye Clean,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 48). Staying on the Lord's side of the line is worth it because of the blessings it brings (see Elder David A. Bednar, “We Believe in Being Chaste,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 41–44, or lds.org/go/73Chaste). **NE**

POWER IN COVENANTS



When you hear the word *covenant*, what comes to mind? If you said, “A two-way promise with God,” you’d be right.

But a covenant with our Heavenly Father is also much more. In that sacred promise, there is power, strength, safety, and peace. When you take time to think about the covenants you have made and will make in your life and when you keep your part, you begin to feel and live differently. Covenants influence the way you act and inspire you in your choices.

Here’s how covenants have made a difference in the lives of some youth.



Marcus A., 17, Utah, USA

“A covenant keeps you on the strait and narrow path, helps you live life better, and gives you a better understanding.”

“The fact that I have made covenants with Heavenly Father has given me opportunities to grow spiritually and to be a more faithful member. Every time I’m going to do something, I think of the covenants I’ve made with our Heavenly Father and ask myself if I am keeping the promises made with Him when I was baptized and when I received the priesthood. The covenants I’ve made with

our Heavenly Father help me stay strong in the gospel and one day return to Him.”

Efrain V., 14, New Zealand



I received the priesthood. It was the same happiness. I had a huge smile on my face when I realized I had made a covenant with God. When I hear kids making fun of the Church, I remember the happiness and I remember it’s a covenant with God and not with people.”

Bradford A., 16, Arizona, USA

“I remember when I was baptized—that was the happiest I had ever felt because that was my first covenant. Next was when

“Making covenants brings us and our families so many blessings. For example, being baptized brings us the ability to change, to be better. The covenants that we make with our Heavenly Father build the faith we need to remain true to the gospel.”

Naomi A., 15, Jalisco, Mexico



“This past summer I went to the temple often to do baptisms for the dead. By keeping my covenants by going to the temple and doing what’s right, I was blessed. I was really stressed with final exams. I went to the temple, and it just made everything better. Keeping my covenants makes life so much easier and a lot happier.”

McKenna M., 18, California, USA

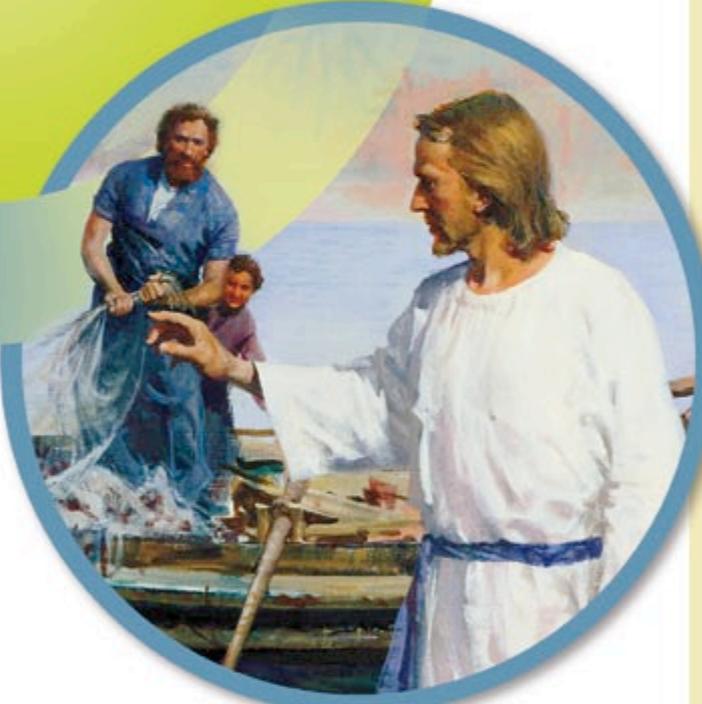
“My first day as a deacon passing the sacrament, I was very nervous. Then I remembered the day I was baptized, and I felt the Holy Ghost. I automatically felt calmer and was able to do it well.”

Seth A., 12, Mexico City, Mexico



SUNDAY LESSONS
This Month's Topic:
Ordinances and Covenants

**A covenant is
 a promise, and it's also
 a whole lot more.**



**JOIN THE
 CONVERSATION**

Throughout July you'll be studying about ordinances and covenants in your priesthood quorums and Young Women and Sunday School classes. Make a list of the covenants you have made and hope to make. What does that list tell you about how you want to live? Consider sharing your thoughts with others by testifying at home, at church, through social media, or with other youth at lds.org/go/73Covenants.



**DIVINE
 COVENANTS
 MAKE STRONG
 CHRISTIANS**

"I urge each one to qualify for and receive all the priesthood ordinances you can and then faithfully keep the promises you have made by covenant. In times of distress, let your covenants be paramount and let your obedience be exact. Then you can ask in faith, nothing wavering, according to your need, and God will answer. He will sustain you."

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Power of Covenants," *Ensign*, May 2009, 22.



"I've received a lot of blessings from keeping my covenants. Because of my baptismal covenants, the Holy Ghost has helped me make decisions.

The covenant when you receive the priesthood is a commitment to use the priesthood to help others and serve. It helps your testimony grow when you serve."

Erik N., 15, Alberta, Canada

"You can't just do anything you want and expect God to uphold His side of the promise. He expects so much out of you because He knows the potential you have. It really holds me to a higher level."

Jolee H., 15, Colorado, USA

PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHRISTINA SMITH AND CRAIG DIMOND © IRI; DETAIL FROM CHRIST CALLING PETER AND ANDREW, BY HARRY ANDERSON © IRI



By Matthew Garrett

Camping has “young men” written all over it. They love fire, s’mores, and stories told around the campfire. They display their rugged side as they skip showering and also skip rocks in icy lakes that they’ll jump into as soon as their friends dare them to. Plus, there’s something about being out in nature that puts life in perspective and forms friendships quicker than a group of deacons can devour a bag of trail mix.

For hundreds of young men in Alaska and part of Canada, however, camping means even more than this. Armed with sleeping bags, bug repellent, and an unlikely camping accessory—the *Fulfilling My Duty to God* booklet—these young men have also learned that camping can be mission preparation. Some young men travel to the camp by small planes, others by bus, and some even by ferry (Alaska is 500 times the size of Rhode Island!), but all leave with the knowledge that the time to prepare for a mission is now.

Duty to God and Mission Prep

These young men in Alaska, USA, have realized that the principles taught in *Duty to God* are the same as those



AN AARONIC
PRIESTHOOD CAMPOUT
IN ALASKA LED TO
MORE THAN COOKOUTS
AND MEMORIES—
IT ALSO LED TO
MISSION PREPARATION.



of a missionary and that activities ranging from rock climbing to taking bush plane rides can be centered on those principles in ways that will benefit them as missionaries.

For example, Adam N. shares that one of his favorite activities at the camp, constructing knives, “taught me that just like our knives, our testimonies must be sharp, clear of rust, and ready to use, so that we will be prepared.” Focusing on doing your duty to God helps you prepare spiritually to serve the Lord whenever He needs you.

Jalon W. said, “The camp motto of ‘prepare, covenant, and serve’ helped me with my choices of going on a mission and serving others. Before going to the camp, I had some doubts if going on a mission was the right choice for me. In part because of experiences at the camp, I know now that going on a mission is definitely the right choice.”

At the camp, each young man was invited to sign his name on a banner if he felt that he could commit to serving a mission. “Being around other young men and discussing missionary work made me even more excited to serve the Lord on a mission,” said Dahlin L.

As fun activities became preparatory experiences, the young men’s testimonies of missionary work grew like flames leaping from a campfire.



Are You Prepared?

“Within two short years, all of the full-time missionaries currently serving in this royal army of God will have concluded their labors and will have returned to their homes and loved ones. For the elders, their replacements are found . . . in the ranks of the Aaronic Priesthood of the Church. Young men, are you ready to respond? Are you willing to work? Are you prepared to serve?”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Come, All Ye Sons of God,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 66.



As Josh H. said, “Being around the other young men impressed upon me a burning desire to serve a worthy mission.” Added Ryker S., “The camp taught me how young men should be preparing *now* to enter the mission field ‘on the run.’”

The Restoration and the Priesthood

Whether the young men were the only Aaronic Priesthood holders in their remote Alaskan branches or members from a large ward, nearly all of them said that being with the other young men in a gospel-centered environment, especially at a fireside on the Restoration, was more memorable than any leisure activity. As Dakota B. put it, “For me, the

also happened to fall on the anniversary of the martyrdom of Joseph Smith. Micheal T. commented about the fireside: “It was inspiring to feel the Spirit so strongly testifying of the power of the priesthood. [Attending] the fireside and seeing the other young men strengthened my testimony. It’s always inspiring and encouraging to see others living their standards. The priesthood is real.”

As the young men in Alaska learned, worthy Aaronic Priesthood holders of today are the mighty missionaries of tomorrow. Preparing for the future begins right now. Planning for a mission requires dedication and service, sacrifices the young men of Alaska and western Canada are willing to make. By learning their duty

WORTHY AARONIC PRIESTHOOD HOLDERS OF TODAY ARE THE MIGHTY MISSIONARIES OF TOMORROW.

most memorable and profound moment of the camp was learning about the Restoration and singing ‘Praise to the Man’ (*Hymns*, no. 27). I will never forget the powerful experience of over 1,000 priesthood holders singing together.”

Adding to the mood of the unforgettable fireside was the fact that it

to God and living righteously, these young men will be ready to handle obstacles more trying than the Alaska tundra. Says Porter B., “Even though the camp is over, we will continue to live worthily and support each other wherever we may be. We will prepare to covenant and serve.” **NE**

Matthew Garrett lives in Washington, USA.

WE ARE
under covenant both to

Lift Up
THOSE IN NEED
and to be

Witnesses
OF THE SAVIOR
as long as we live.

[See Mosiah 18:8–11.]

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the
First Presidency, "'Come unto Me,'"
April 2013 general conference



FOLLOW
in the footsteps of
OUR SAVIOR,
whose example and teachings
DEFINE THE PATH
for every follower
OF JESUS CHRIST.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks
of the Quorum of the Twelve
Apostles, "Followers of Christ,"
April 2013 general conference

Your Covenant to Always Remember Christ

This month, your Sunday lessons will focus on ordinances and covenants (see lds.org/youth/learn). Each week as you partake of the sacrament, you renew your baptismal covenants and promise to "always remember Him" (see D&C 20:77, 79). But how can you always remember Christ when you have so many other things to think about throughout the week, such as your homework or activities with family or friends? Is He supposed to be in your thoughts every moment?

Well, the answer has a lot less to do with whether you can concentrate on your algebra equations and your baptismal covenants at the same time and a lot more to do with how you live. Are the choices you're making ones that Christ would make? Are you following His example in your everyday life? As you strive to live as a follower of Christ, that's one way you can honor your covenant to "always remember Him."

So, what can you do to live more fully as a follower of Christ, to always remember Him in your actions? You'll find lots of inspired ideas as you prayerfully study these talks from the most recent general conference:

- "'Come unto Me'" by President Henry B. Eyring
(lds.org/go/73Joy)
- "Followers of Christ" by Elder Dallin H. Oaks
(lds.org/go/73Follower)
- "A Sure Foundation" by Bishop Dean M. Davies
(lds.org/go/73Sure)

As you read or watch these talks, study what they teach about the ordinances and covenants you're discussing in your Sunday lessons. Are there stories you can share in your classes or quorums or with your family? Are there things you can do to help others make and keep sacred covenants? What can you do to better keep your covenants? As you seek Christ, the Spirit will guide you in your study and help you know how you can fulfill your covenants and always remember the Savior.

Share These Cards Online

As you talk about ordinances and covenants this month, consider using these cards in lessons or on social media. You can even hang them in your bedroom or locker to remind you about your gospel study throughout the month. Download or share them online today at lds.org/go/73Cards.



FAVORITE FAMILY HOME EVENINGS

M

CAUTION



Share Your Stories

Tell us about your favorite family home evenings by going to newera.lds.org (click "Submit Your Work") or emailing us at newera@ldschurch.org.

SPIRITUAL SUPERHEROES

This year amazing superheroes came to visit our house on Monday nights! Each superhero resembled a member of the family, had a special superpower, and taught an important testimony-strengthening lesson that encouraged us to improve our relationships with one another.

For example, one week Media Man taught us how to shield our eyes from inappropriate movies, TV shows, and magazines. Another week Fit Miss explained how we could develop superhuman strength by exercising regularly. Bee Still, a superhero dressed as a bumblebee, taught us how to stop buzzing around and *bee* reverent at church and at home. Word Girl explained when and how we could give more compliments to each other. Thankful Girl, Do It Yourself Dude, Scripture Scholar, No Sass Lass, Missionary Man, and other superheroes also attended our family home evening lessons.

I am grateful that my family members thought deeply and carefully about what problem in the family they wanted to address as a superhero. We all looked forward to family home evening, and we had a wonderful time during each superhero visit. I am grateful that each time we pondered

a problem in our family, Heavenly Father inspired us with an idea to teach one another more effectively. These are superhero memories we will cherish forever. **NE**
Victor W., USA

MY BROTHER'S TESTIMONY

My mother works every evening from 3:00 p.m. until 11:00 p.m. Even though she couldn't be home on Monday nights, my older brother and I decided to hold family home evening by ourselves—just the two of us. My brother was inactive for eight years, but he had been attending institute recently and decided to give the message one Monday night. He shared a spiritual thought from the Book of Mormon that I had never considered, even though I had taken four years of seminary and had worked on my Personal Progress. The spirit I felt was just as I had hoped it would be when the time came that I would have a worthy priesthood holder in my home.

I'm grateful Heavenly Father gives me the opportunity to strengthen my family every week through family home evening. I love the gospel of Jesus Christ, and I'm glad that I had this humbling family home evening experience with my brother. **NE**
Isadora A., Brazil

ENLIGHTENED IN THE DARK

I will never forget the family home evening lesson we had during a power outage. Without power we could not read anything, and I thought that family home evening was going to be a disaster.

"How will we have family home evening without being able to read a message from the Church magazines, or how will we be able to sing from the hymnbooks without light?" I thought to myself.

Fortunately my sister came to the rescue. She had the great idea for us to sing the hymns we knew by heart and then share what we had learned the Sunday before. We all shared a principle and learned from one another. In my opinion, learning together is the purpose of family home evening. I am certain that the Lord was very pleased that we kept the commandment to have family home evening, even without lights.

I know that the Lord doesn't want us to return to His presence alone. He wants us to return with our families, and He wants us to do everything possible so that this happens, including holding weekly family home evening. **NE**
Hérica S., Brazil

These experiences show how family home evening can be uplifting—





By David Dickson
Church Magazines

FORGIVING

THE ONE IN THE MIRROR

*If we have repented
and feel that the Lord
has forgiven us, why is
it sometimes so hard
to forgive ourselves?*



IMPROVING ONE STEP AT A TIME

For many people living in modern times, it's difficult to imagine life without electric light. A dark room can instantly become flooded with light at the flick of a switch. Simple tasks that not so long ago needed to wait until dawn or had to be done by the low flicker of candlelight can now be accomplished easily with the aid of an invention that was anything but easy to perfect.

Thomas Edison worked several years and tried more than 1,000 different materials before he found a suitable filament (the thin wire at the heart of a lightbulb) that could provide long-lasting, affordable light. Ever the optimist, Edison viewed each material that didn't work as a mere stepping-stone toward finding one that would. And once he did, the world was never the same.

LOOKING INWARD

There are countless other inspiring stories about athletes, thinkers, artists, and more who knew how to learn from their mistakes and keep trying. Try, try, try, and then succeed—it's a storyline we seem never to tire of hearing. Unless, however, the hero of that particular story happens to be ourselves.

In terms of keeping the commandments, far too many of us demand uninterrupted perfection of ourselves.

This is like expecting to create the next million-dollar invention without ever needing to adjust an original design concept or hoping to win a grand championship victory without losing a single game during the season. When we sin and fall short, too often we fail to forgive ourselves and keep trying.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, taught: "When the Lord requires that we forgive all men, that includes forgiving ourselves. Sometimes, of all the people in the world, the one who is the hardest to forgive—as well as perhaps the one who is most in need of our forgiveness—is the person looking back at us in the mirror."¹

A SOUL TRANSFORMED

But how can we do that? A study of the life of Ammon, the Book of Mormon prophet, can add perspective.

Ammon's missionary experiences among the Lamanites are as miraculous as they are inspiring.

From defending the king's sheep, to preaching to King Lamoni, to helping bring the gospel to an entire nation, Ammon's life and ministry remain one of the great inspirational stories in all of scripture.

And yet Ammon was not always the righteous, faith-filled man who preached in power to the Lamanites. He made mistakes—serious ones. As one of the sons of Mosiah, Ammon was once numbered among those who went about "seeking to destroy the church, and to lead astray the people of the Lord, contrary to the commandments of God" (Mosiah 27:10).

Ammon, along with his brothers and Alma the Younger, were so disruptive to the work of God that an angel of the Lord appeared unto them, speaking "as it were with a voice of thunder, which caused the earth to shake upon which they stood" (Mosiah 27:11), calling them to repentance.

Clearly, Ammon had serious transgressions for which he needed to repent, and he did. Yet what if he had failed to forgive himself? What if he had never gone on his mission, believing that it was too late for him? If he had not, then he wouldn't have been able to rejoice with his brethren many years later over their success among the Lamanites. "Now behold, we can look forth and see the fruits of our labors; and are they few?" Ammon asked his brothers. "I say unto you,



RECLAIMED

Elder Shayne M. Bowen of the Seventy taught how the Atonement can reclaim and

sanctify our lives. Watch the short video “Reclaimed” at lds.org/go/73Reclaimed.

Nay, they are many; yea, and we can witness of their sincerity, because of their love towards their brethren and also towards us” (Alma 26:31). Thousands came to the truth as a result of their missionary efforts.

THE DANGER OF DISCOURAGEMENT

Even with such clear counsel from Church leaders and examples from scripture, some of us still believe we are an exception to the Atonement, that we are past saving. We can’t manage to drop the heavy burden of our own guilt, even after sincere repentance. Some may even stop trying.

After all, why bother picking yourself off the ground if you’re only going to fall again? At

least, that’s what the adversary would have you think.

Such a line of thought is not only

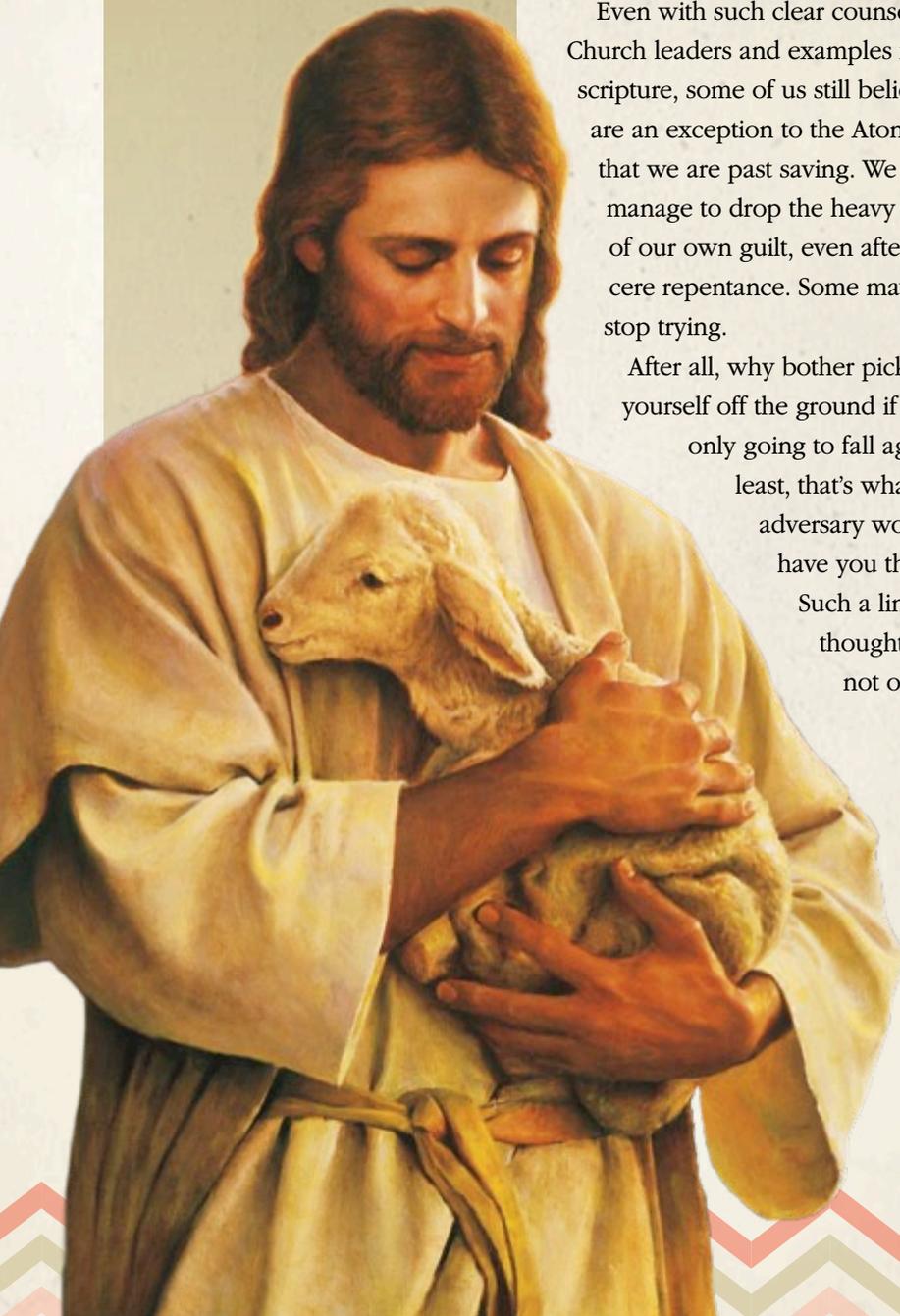
spiritually and emotionally crippling but utterly false.

The scriptures teach us that the Savior’s Atonement is infinite and available to all. “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18). We *can* succeed. We can try again. And we have the Lord’s help every step of the way.

IT’S NEVER TOO LATE

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has offered clear counsel against giving up on ourselves. “However many chances you think you have missed, however many mistakes you feel you have made or talents you think you don’t have, or however far from home and family and God you feel you have traveled, I testify that you have *not* traveled beyond the reach of divine love. It is not possible for you to sink lower than the infinite light of Christ’s Atonement shines.”²

Elder Holland teaches us further to keep an eye toward God’s goodness: “The formula of faith is to hold on, work on, see it through, and let the distress of earlier hours—real or imagined—fall away in the abundance of the final reward.”³



PERMANENT MARKER

By Dani Dunaway Rowan

The marks of our mistakes don't have to be permanent. Having clean hands is worth it, even if it's painful.

FILLED WITH HOPE

While sin can never be taken lightly, repentance is real. Forgiveness is real. The Savior's Atonement gives us a chance to start over with a clean slate. Just as Ammon found forgiveness, you can too.

We can indeed hope for brighter days. The Apostle Paul taught, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Romans 15:13).

Because of the gift of repentance, we can all believe in ourselves again. **NE**

NOTES

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "The Merciful Obtain Mercy," *Ensign*, May 2012, 75.
2. Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Laborers in the Vineyard," *Ensign*, May 2012, 33.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Laborers in the Vineyard," 32.

A week after graduating high school, I moved to the other side of the country to live with my older sister's family for the summer before I started college in the fall.

I made a few friends, most of them older and in college. One Saturday night two of my new friends picked me up to go hear a good band that was playing at a local club.

As we parked, I started feeling a little nervous, but I didn't want to object and ruin the evening. We entered the club, and the man behind the counter looked at my driver's license. Without warning he swiped a black permanent marker across the knuckles on both of my hands.

I looked down in surprise. I realized he had marked my hands to show that I was too young to buy alcohol at the bar.

I was immediately uncomfortable. People were drinking and smoking.

I'm sorry to say that I didn't have the courage to leave right then. After about 30 minutes, one of my friends asked if I was feeling OK. I told him I had a headache from the music and smoke. He offered to take me home, and I gratefully accepted.

I rushed into the bathroom at my sister's house and scrubbed at those black marks until it hurt. I would be taking the sacrament with these hands

the next day, and I desperately wanted them to be clean. However, two faint black lines remained visible on my raw, pink skin.

Before I went to bed, in prayer I asked forgiveness for not having the courage to leave—and more appropriately, for not having the courage to never go inside in the first place. I promised Heavenly Father I would never allow myself to get in that kind of situation again.

The next morning I was able to remove most of the rest of the marker, and my hands were almost completely clean when I took the sacrament. I thought of how sin is like those black marks. It takes effort and can even be painful, but we can repent and have our sins removed through the power of the Atonement and be clean from the black marks in our lives. **NE**

Dani Dunaway Rowan lives in Utah, USA.





By Elder
James B. Martino
Of the Seventy

A Sincere **HEART** and Real **INTENT**

I learned as a teenager that curiosity alone is insufficient reason for the Lord to answer our prayers.

When I was 16 years old, my parents joined the Church. After they were baptized, they invited the missionaries to begin teaching me and my three brothers. Two of my brothers were soon baptized, and my younger brother was baptized as soon as he turned 8. I chose not to get baptized, however, because I still had a lot of unanswered questions about the Church.

Finding Out for Myself

As time went on, I continued to meet with the missionaries, and on one occasion, they asked me if I had any questions. When I said that I did, he replied, “Before I answer your questions, I want you to first answer one of mine. If you can answer it, then I will answer yours.”

I said, “That’s fair.” So he asked, “Can you tell me if the Book of Mormon is the word of God?” When I responded that I didn’t know, he said, “Then I can’t answer your questions yet. You have to find out for yourself if it’s true. I don’t know if you’re sincere in wanting to know or if you’re just curious. If you’re sincere, you’ll find out.”

I’d heard enough people tell me that the Book of Mormon is true, but I knew I had to find out for myself. Sadly, I wasn’t sure at the time whether God even heard our prayers, let alone answered them. That’s probably because the first time I prayed about the Book of

Mormon, I prayed to know that it isn’t true. No wonder I never got an answer!

Clearly, I had not asked “with a sincere heart [and] with real intent,” as Moroni teaches (Moroni 10:4). That real intent meant that I couldn’t find out just because I was curious to know. I had to really *want* to know. And if I found out it is true, I asked myself, was I willing to be baptized? Was I willing to change my life? Was I willing to do the things the Lord wanted me to do?

Experimenting on the Word

Fortunately, that wise elder returned the following day and said, “Let’s talk about how you’re going to get your answer.” I said, “Good,” because I really didn’t know how to get an answer. He opened up the Book of Mormon to Alma 32, and we started in verse 27. We talked about how the seed would grow and about the things I would feel. I didn’t have that swelling in the breast that Alma describes. But Alma also said the seed, or the word, would begin to “enlarge my soul” and “enlighten my understanding” and become “delicious to me” (Alma 32:28). I understood those feelings.

From that day on, I began reading the Book of Mormon with



a sincere heart. And I told myself, “If I find out it’s true, then yes, I’ll join the Church. I’ve got to; I’ve got to follow what I know is true.” As I continued to study the Book of Mormon, I knew that my mind was being enlightened with an understanding of the Atonement of the Savior that I had never had before. I felt good when I was reading, and what I read began to be delicious to me. It began to enlarge my soul with an understanding of the plan of salvation. I even began to have that swelling of the breast that Alma talks about. I knew it was true; and so, as promised, I was baptized.

“You Already Know You’re Supposed to Go”

I started college at the University of Texas in Austin and began to contemplate serving a full-time mission. This became another test of how well I could couple a sincere heart with real intent. I was definitely curious to know the Lord’s will about my missionary service. But as I had learned while investigating the Church, curiosity alone is not sufficient. I was convinced that the answer to my question about serving a mission would be revealed in my patriarchal blessing, so I traveled to San Antonio, where the patriarch pronounced my blessing. There was, however, no mention of a mission. Driving home, I reasoned that maybe the Lord didn’t want me to serve. But then I felt impressed to pull off the road. I walked over to a grove of trees and knelt down. As soon as I commenced my prayer, the words that came into my mind were very clear: “I didn’t have to tell you to go. You already know you’re supposed to go.”

I’d been a member only about a year and 10 months when I went into the mission field in Guatemala and El Salvador. It was there that I learned what it meant to consecrate my life to do what the Lord wanted me to do. My mission was my preparation for the rest of my life. Had I not gone on a mission and learned what I did there, I might never have had the opportunities that I have today. Today I am living in Guatemala again, where I serve in the Central America Area Presidency.

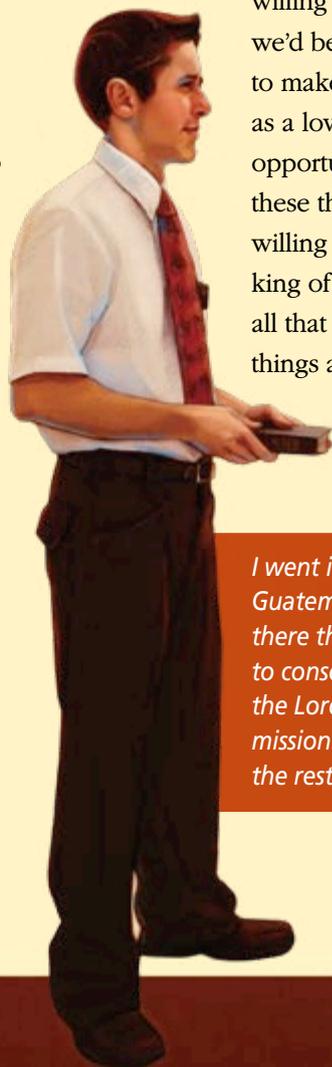
I love being back among the people who meant so much to me in the development of my own testimony.

The Responsibility of Revelation

Moroni tells us that “by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things” (Moroni 10:5). But he does not promise that you’ll know something is true just because you’re curious. You have to have a sincere heart and real intent. You have to be willing to make a commitment to change once you receive your answer. Revelation is a gift from God, and it’s not to be taken lightly. When we receive revelation, we also receive a responsibility to do something with that revelation.

I believe that Heavenly Father, in a merciful way, does not give us revelation when we’re just curious and not

willing to act upon it, because then we’d be held accountable if we failed to make the change. In His own way, as a loving Father, He’s given us the opportunity to find out for ourselves if these things are true, but we have to be willing to say, like Lamoni’s father, the king of the Lamanites, “I will give up all that I possess” to know that these things are true (Alma 22:15). **NE**



I went into the mission field in Guatemala and El Salvador. It was there that I learned what it meant to consecrate my life to do what the Lord wanted me to do. My mission was my preparation for the rest of my life.



RANDY GLASBERGEN



KEVIN BECKSTROM



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY

ARIE VAN DE GRAAFF

Conference Connection

In the April 2013 general conference, Church leaders talked about the importance of strengthening family.

- “As we give devoted service to Him, He draws closer to those we love in our families” (President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “Come unto Me,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 24).

- “The prophetic counsel to have daily personal and family prayer, daily personal and family scripture study, and weekly family home evening are the essential, weight-bearing beams in the construction of a Christ-centered home” (Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “For Peace at Home,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 29).

You can strengthen those “weight-bearing beams” in your family. When you follow prophetic counsel, such as participating in family scripture study or family home evening, you help build a Christ-centered home. Find more ways to strengthen your family at conference.lds.org and in a new Mormon Messages video at lds.org/go/73G.



They Know It, Live It, and Love It

When Sister Ann M. Dibb, former second counselor in the

Young Women general presidency, spoke in the October 2012 general conference about a T-shirt she'd be proud to wear, youth throughout the world took the idea and ran with it. Such T-shirts have cropped up all over declaring: “I'm a Mormon. I know it. I live it. I love it” (“I Know It. I Live It. I Love It,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 10).

Many youth had gospel conversations with friends as a result of wearing their shirts. Here are a few of their experiences.

The young women from a ward in Virginia, USA, wanted to create these shirts for Mutual and then wear them to school. Emily C., 14, had recently moved from out of state. Many of her friends at school didn't yet know she is a member of the Church. “A lot of my friends pointed out my

shirt and thought it was so cool,” Emily says. “They asked a little bit about the Church, and I told them about the temple.”

In California, USA, an entire seminary group decided to wear their shirts to school on the same day. “A girl at school asked me about my shirt, and we were able to have a religious discussion,” says Rachael P., 15.

Another seminary student

from the group, 17-year-old Hunter C., explains that a friend asked him, “Do you really love it?” To which Hunter answered, “Yes, I do.” Hunter's friend then asked follow-up questions about the missionaries.

Creating and wearing such a T-shirt might be a simple act, but as we learn in Alma 37:6, “By small and simple things are great things brought to pass.”



A Woman of Great Love and Faith

As you may know, Frances J. Monson, wife of President Thomas S. Monson, passed away on Friday, May 17, 2013. You can learn more about her life of service and love at lds.org/go/73FJM and lds.org/go/73NR.



My Favorite Scripture

John 3:16–17: *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*”

“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”

I find this scripture so comforting. It brings me so much joy to know that God loves me so much that He sacrificed His Only Begotten Son for me and everyone else who was, is, and will be on earth.

Rachel C., 16, Wallonia, Belgium

WE'VE GOT
MAIL

Importance of Modesty (from youth.lds.org)

I love this article! [See “Dress and Appearance: ‘Let the Holy Spirit Guide’” at lds.org/go/73Dress.] Modesty in dress and appearance is so important for us and to Heavenly Father. I believe everyone is happier and more comfortable when we dress in a way that shows respect for our bodies, our temples. I love the quote that was mentioned, “Through your dress and appearance, you can show the Lord that you know how precious your body is. You can show that you are a disciple of Jesus Christ and that you love Him.” I know our bodies are *temples* and are sacred and special—we were created in the image of God! We need to make sure others can tell that we respect our bodies and that we *know* we are children of God by how we look on the outside and how we present ourselves. Thanks for this awesome article!

Sarah Alisyn R., 15, Arizona, 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 Your Work.” Or leave a comment on any article at youth.lds.org.

You can also email us at newera@ldschurch.org or write to New Era, 50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA.

Mutual Activity Idea

Nature Golf—a Fun Fit for Any Outdoor Setting

Here's an easy-to-plan activity that works well in nearly any nature setting. Whether you're in a thick pine forest, at a beach, or on a stretch of desert without a tree in sight, the crowd-pleasing game of nature golf can always be played with minimal preparation and maximum fun. Nature golf relies on a little imagination, because you create your own golf course as you go. (*Safety tip:* As with real golf, first make sure there are no people, vehicles, buildings, etc., anywhere near your line of sight as you play.) Here's how it works.

First you need something to toss, because you'll be throwing your “golf ball” rather than hitting it with a golf club. Pinecones work great as makeshift golf balls, as do small

sticks or tennis balls, depending on the type of terrain (small sticks are more gentle around trees, whereas sand can withstand the momentum of a thrown tennis ball). If you use pinecones or sticks, you can tie them with different colored threads to identify each person's object in case two of them land close together. Once you have your objects, each member in the Mutual group takes a turn picking the next “hole” for each stretch of the course.

“OK, everyone, see that crooked oak tree up the hill? We've gotta hit the patch of weeds just to its left!”

That's all there is to it. Take turns lobbing your “golf balls” throughout the course, and keep score with each toss equaling a golf swing. Try making a 9-hole course or even an 18-hole course if you're feeling ambitious and have enough time on Mutual night. It's a fun event that combines physical exercise with an outdoor activity—and one that's sure to be a success.





IT WAS THE SAME CHURCH!

The first time the missionaries stopped by my house, only my brother Charles was there. As they discussed the Restoration, my brother felt the Spirit and accepted a copy of the Book of Mormon. Before Charles began reading the book, I saw it and asked him what it was and where he got it. Charles explained everything to me, including how he felt meeting with the missionaries.

I thought it all sounded ridiculous and ordered Charles to return the book. I persuaded my family to support me, and they agreed that the Book of Mormon was unacceptable in our house.

The next time the missionaries came by, Charles was gone. I returned the book and told them to leave. They told me that I would need the book someday. This caused me to drive them away in a rude manner.

Not too long after this, a childhood friend whom I had always admired invited me to a Church activity. I refused. He and another friend kept inviting me to church, and when they offered to pick me up, I eventually agreed. Imagine my surprise when I entered the Church building and saw the same missionaries that I had driven away! I had no idea it was the same Church!

The bishop of the ward befriended me that day, and I started to attend church more often. With a lot of love and support, I eventually started to read the scriptures. Thanks to friends, loving leaders, and the scriptures, I was eventually baptized. Since then, both my brother and I have served missions in our native Africa. Even though we may face the same rejection I dealt to those missionaries that day, I know that if we are faithful and persistent, Heavenly Father will bless our efforts and we will be able to share the gospel.

Obedience K., Zimbabwe

FINDING FORGIVENESS FOR MY SINS

Being in high school can make living the gospel pretty difficult; at least, it seemed that way to me. There were very few members at my school, and I just didn't seem to get along with them very well. The group of friends that I usually hung out with was far from "the right kind of friends," but I really seemed to get along with them.

Soon, I started to fall away from the gospel and my Heavenly Father. I stopped attending church and Mutual activities and started using bad language. I eventually realized that I needed to change—I needed to become the kind of young woman Heavenly Father wants me to be. But I doubted that I could actually be forgiven for turning my back on the gospel and on Heavenly Father.

Then I remembered the story about the adulteress from John 8; she had committed one of the worst sins possible, but Christ invited her to repent. I realized that if repentance and forgiveness were possible for her, then I could also repent and be forgiven. That night I knelt down and prayed—for the first time in a long time—asking for Heavenly Father to forgive me. I was immediately wrapped in warmth.

SMILES ONLY

There is one important thing I want you to do," said my seminary teacher, Brother Matthews, as we walked out the door together. He grabbed a pen and a sticky note and drew a smiley face on it. He then stuck it on the door. "This is to remind you to smile only." His idea seemed touching and genuine, but I still could force only a half-smile. "I can't wait to see the day when there will be a happy you," he said as I left.

As I walked to school, I couldn't help thinking about the difficulties posed by this little challenge. It seemed like a lot of work for something so simple. Besides, you can't force yourself to smile and be happy, can you? The days went on and there was still no improvement in my face. I wanted to please my seminary teacher, say that I was happy, and get it over with. I knew, however, deep down, that I wasn't truly happy. I had to truly commit to this task.

As I set a daily goal of smiling more, I began to notice a gradual change in my life. I began to be more optimistic and upbeat. I found myself becoming better

I know now that repentance is possible. Satan will constantly try to make us believe that we can't be forgiven, but I know from personal experience that this is wrong. Repentance can be incredibly difficult, but Heavenly



about avoiding gossip and other teenage behaviors that can destroy happiness. Looking back, I am able to see that simply smiling not only changed my attitude but also helped me make more friends. By "smiling only," I was able to have a more positive attitude, and other people seemed to enjoy being around me more.

Heavenly Father doesn't want us to be unhappy. He wants us to have joy here on earth. Smiling is a way to see true happiness in yourself and in others. I am so grateful for a Heavenly Father who wants me to be happy. I still keep the motto "smiles only," and it continues to make my life better.

Chantelle W., Utah, USA

Father loves us and wants us to return to Him. He wants us to be the best we can be, and He will do anything He can to help us if we let Him into our lives.

Angela H., California, USA



By Elder
M. Russell Ballard

Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

HOW TO SOLVE PROBLEMS

In my office I have a little plaque that reads, “Above all else, brethren, let us think straight.” These were the last words in mortality spoken by my grandfather Melvin J. Ballard.



If understood and properly practiced, the principle of learning to think straight can help you be successful in your journey through mortality. I recognize that all of you are thinking. My charge to you is to develop the skill and the capability of thinking straight.

How do we learn to think straight? The book of Proverbs has a little guide that might be helpful: “Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise” (Proverbs 19:20). I would suggest that straight thinking probably begins with straight listening, with **careful listening**, with accurate listening. As you receive counsel and instruction, **extract principles** that will be eternally important in your lives and then **make them part of your lives**.

It is important to **act slowly**. **Know the facts**. Fact finding sometimes requires **patience, time, and very careful consideration**. We can learn to be careful, fact-oriented thinkers, or we can become sloppy, inconclusive thinkers.

To be good at anything at all requires a lot of **practice** and skill in making decisions. The more one is exposed to the necessity of making decisions, the better one’s decision-making process becomes.

In all of this, the Lord has given us some very wonderful counsel: the problems of life, whether they be in business, government, social life, or

church activity, can best be solved by following this little formula:

“Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me. But, behold, I say unto you, that you must **study it out in your mind**; then you must **ask me if it be right**, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right” (D&C 9:7–8).

We have much for which we look to you, the youth of the Church. You just can’t imagine the conversations that go on at the Church headquarters about you. We worry about you; we pray for you. Not that we don’t trust you; that is not the case at all. We just want you to be ready. We want you to be prepared. We want you to be able to think straight in this very crooked-thinking world.

There are many things going on all about us at almost every level—international, national, local—that are going to require the **soundest and the most solid-thinking generation** that our Father in Heaven has ever raised. We believe **you can be that**. We want to do our part as your leaders. We want to sustain you and to help you. We want you to become the very best you.

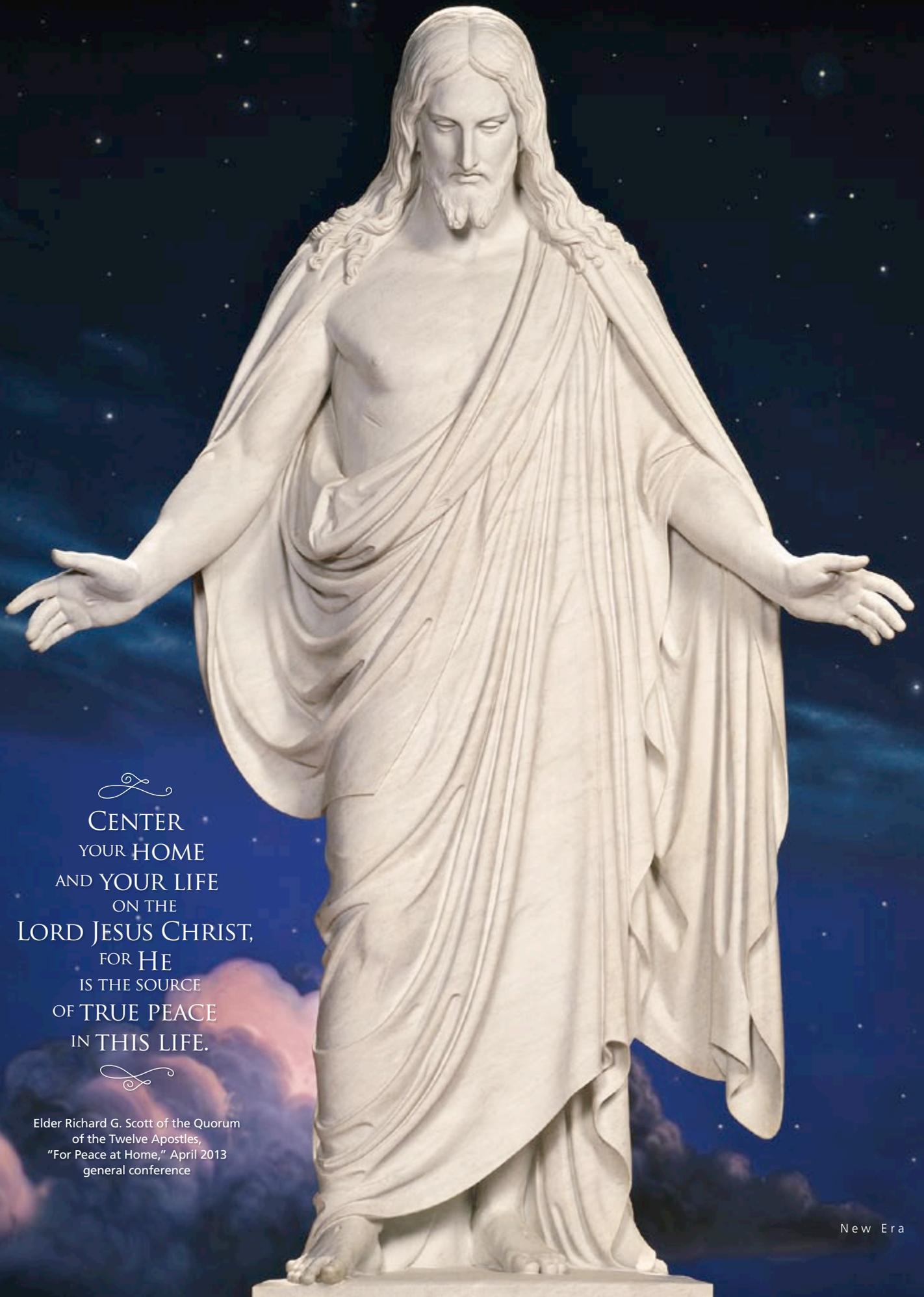
Straight thinkers, my brothers and sisters, do not make serious mistakes in life. Make this principle part of you so you will be a great source of power for the building of the Church in the future.

Adapted from a BYU devotional address given on November 29, 1983.



Share Your Experiences

Share your experiences in applying this principle and read the experiences of other youth by going to [lds.org/go/73H](https://www.lds.org/go/73H).



STATUE BY ALDO BEBECHI, LOCATED IN THE NORTH VISITORS' CENTER ON TEMPLE SQUARE, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

CENTER
YOUR HOME
AND YOUR LIFE
ON THE
LORD JESUS CHRIST,
FOR HE
IS THE SOURCE
OF TRUE PEACE
IN THIS LIFE.

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles,
"For Peace at Home," April 2013
general conference

WHAT'S ONLINE



Piano Player. YouTube Sensation. Blind.

If you were to hear about an amazing piano player making a wave on YouTube, would you picture someone blind? You might if you've heard about Kuha'o C. from Hawaii. This 15-year-old prodigy recognized a talent and developed it, serving as an organist and accompanist in his ward. He knew how to share his gift to strengthen his ward and community, and now he's using his gift to bring the joy of piano music to the world. Watch his story, "Extraordinary Gift," at lds.org/go/73Gift.



Family History Miracles

"I'm never going to find a family name to take to the temple." Sound familiar? It did for one young man who was ready to give up on doing his family history—until his Young Men leader provided an important reminder: the stories you hear about older people receiving miracles in their family history service are not reserved just for the older generation. As you participate in family history, you'll see miracles too. Check out how this young man was blessed in "You Will Have Divine Help in Family History" at lds.org/go/73FH.



Feeling Alone?

If you feel alone, remember that you have a source of strength that surpasses all—the gift of a Savior and Redeemer who atoned for you and knows exactly how you feel. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles reminds us that "because Jesus walked such a long, lonely path utterly alone, we do not have to do so." Hear more of Elder Holland's message in the video "None Were with Him" at lds.org/go/73Holland.