

New Era

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

HOW THE BOOK OF MORMON IS THE KEYSTONE OF OUR RELIGION

It is impossible to overstate the role that the Book of Mormon has played from the beginning of this dispensation—and the role it will continue to play.

Joseph Smith said once “that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man [or woman] would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”¹

“The Prophet Joseph’s expression that the Book of Mormon is ‘the keystone of our religion’ is a profound and crucial observation. A keystone is positioned at the uppermost center of an arch in such a way as to hold all the other stones in place. That key piece, if removed, will bring all of the other blocks crashing down with it. The truthfulness of the Book of Mormon—its origins, its doctrines, and the circumstances of its coming forth—is central to the truthfulness of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”²

It is impossible to overstate the role that the Book of Mormon has played from the beginning of this dispensation—and the role it will continue to play as the basic declaration of the truthfulness of the gospel as restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Let me share with you three reasons why the Book of Mormon is “the keystone of our religion.”



The keystone is the center stone that holds an arch together. If the keystone is removed, the whole arch will collapse.



THE KEystone OF THE RESTORATION

“Everything of saving significance in the Church stands or falls on the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and, by implication, the Prophet Joseph Smith’s account of how it came forth. . . . Either the Book of Mormon is what the Prophet Joseph said it is, or this church and its founder are false, a deception from the first instance onward.”³

The Book of Mormon is “the keystone of the restoration” because everything we teach has its roots in the Prophet Joseph Smith’s first experiences in the Sacred Grove and the Hill Cumorah. Everything that we have flows one way or another out of his original testimony.

THE KEystone OF OUR DOCTRINE

We have wonderful doctrine in the Bible, but the Book of Mormon plays a role in establishing doctrine, teaching doctrine, expanding doctrine and underscoring doctrine that is not available anywhere in either the Old or the New Testament.

Regarding the Atonement, the teachings of Nephi, Jacob, and their father, Lehi, as well as King Benjamin, Alma and Amulek, and many others exceed anything in the Bible on that subject. I love the Bible, but it is the Book of Mormon that is truly majestic regarding the Savior’s Atonement.

Consider also the scattering and the gathering of Israel, faith, baptism, and the resurrection. The Book of Mormon is the keystone of our doctrine because it gives us so much that had been lost from the Bible about these fundamental doctrines.

THE KEystone OF OUR TESTIMONY OF CHRIST

If you were to ask someone, “Who is the main character in the Book of Mormon?” they might be confused. The Book of Mormon contains a thousand years of history for the Nephites as well as the history of the Jaredites. It is unlikely that one figure will come to the forefront over such a long period of time. They may say, “Well, perhaps it’s Nephi, or maybe it’s Alma, or maybe it’s Mormon, or perhaps Moroni.” It isn’t any of those.

The principal character in the book is Jesus Christ. From the first page to the last, it was intended to be so. That’s what the title page says. That’s what the book was designed to be—a declaration that “Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God” (title page of the Book of Mormon). Christ is everything in this book.

A SPECIAL MESSAGE

At the end of the Book of Mormon, when Moroni is alone, weary, and heartbroken, he still wrote of faith, hope, and charity. Moroni said, “I remember that thou hast said that thou hast loved the world, even unto the laying down of thy life for the world. . . . And now I know that this love which thou hast had for the children of men is charity” (Ether 12:33–34; see also Moroni 7:38–48). That definition of charity is at the heart of the Atonement of Christ. Jesus Christ loves us perfectly, and His love lasts forever. That’s why we can say that real charity, His charity, never faileth (see Moroni 7:46).

Life has its share of fears and failures. Sometimes things fall short. Sometimes

people fail us, economies fail us, businesses or governments fail us. But the message of the Book of Mormon is that the one thing in time and eternity that will not fail us is the pure love of the Lord Jesus Christ as manifest in His Atoning sacrifice. He never fails us.

The message of the Book of Mormon is that Christ does not fail us. His salvation will not fail, His ordinances will not fail, His Church will not fail. This is the dispensation of the fullness of times. The restored gospel will never be taken from the face of the earth again. That is the message of the Book of Mormon.

As a witness of the Lord Jesus Christ, I bear witness of the Book of Mormon that led me to Him. I found the Lord Jesus Christ within the covers of the Book of Mormon as a 19-year-old missionary, walking through the rain and the mud of England, riding a bike with mud clear up the back of my coat and over the top of my head, tracting in cities that had never been opened, with baptisms that did not come for a long time. Those nights I went back to No. 3 Gilmore Road and read and read and wept. I knew that Jesus was the Christ, that the Book of Mormon was true, that the gospel had been restored. If the folks in England didn’t understand that, then I would just keep knocking on their doors until they did.

I know the role the Book of Mormon has played in the message of the Restoration. I understand how urgent it was for heaven to get it into the Prophet Joseph’s hands. I understand what it will yet mean in preparing the way for Christ to come, to rule and reign as Lord of Lords and King of Kings. It is a witness,

it is a declaration from cover to cover, from title page to final verse, that Jesus is the Christ and that the gospel has been restored. **NE**

From an address given at a seminar for new mission presidents on June 26, 1997.

EVERYTHING
OF SAVING
SIGNIFICANCE
IN THE CHURCH
STANDS OR
FALLS ON THE
TRUTHFULNESS
OF THE BOOK
OF MORMON.

NOTES

1. Introduction to the Book of Mormon; see also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 64.
2. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, (1997), 344–45.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 345.

◀ EXITING ▶

By Scott Braithwaite, PhD
Department of Psychology, Brigham Young University

Big argument headed your way? It's time to turn around.

Have you ever seen road signs that say, "Do Not Enter," "Danger," or "Wrong Way"? These signs can prevent a driver from making a big mistake. They communicate the urgent need to change course to avoid serious harm.

In relationships, there are danger signs that reveal when a conversation is headed toward trouble. We've all gone down these wrong paths before. After a disagreement, we feel hurt, and we suspect that the other person does too. We wish we could have a do-over.

Why wasn't it clear that we were heading toward trouble?

NEGATIVE EMOTIONS AND UNKIND WORDS

When we feel strong negative emotions, we often feel emboldened to say things we later regret. These emotions make us feel so right that we stop listening to the other person. We want to win. We want them to not only see our point of view but also acknowledge that theirs is wrong.

Our emotions can also make it easy to assume that the other person's motives are more negative than they really are. That's why our regrets about the conversation usually come later, when the emotion subsides. Then we can more clearly see how we were misguided and unkind. Anger and "grievous words" go together (see Proverbs 15:1). But we've been told: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but [rather] that which is good [and] edifying" (Ephesians 4:29).

WARNING SIGNS

So what are the signs that we are about to get into a damaging argument? Here are some important ones:

- You feel really angry (genius, right?).
- Your words are condescending or belittling.
- You're calling the other person names or using hateful language.
- You assume you know what the other person "really means" (i.e., mind reading).
- You feel like trying to talk is hopeless and you want to escape.

All of these indicate we are on the wrong road and we should change course.

If we see these danger signs, what should we do? Call a time-out!



DANGEROUS

CONVERSATIONS



“TIME-IN”

Coming back to talk about it—calling a time-in—matters because we don’t deal well with problems by avoiding them. We need to address the issue, but we want to do it under better conditions.

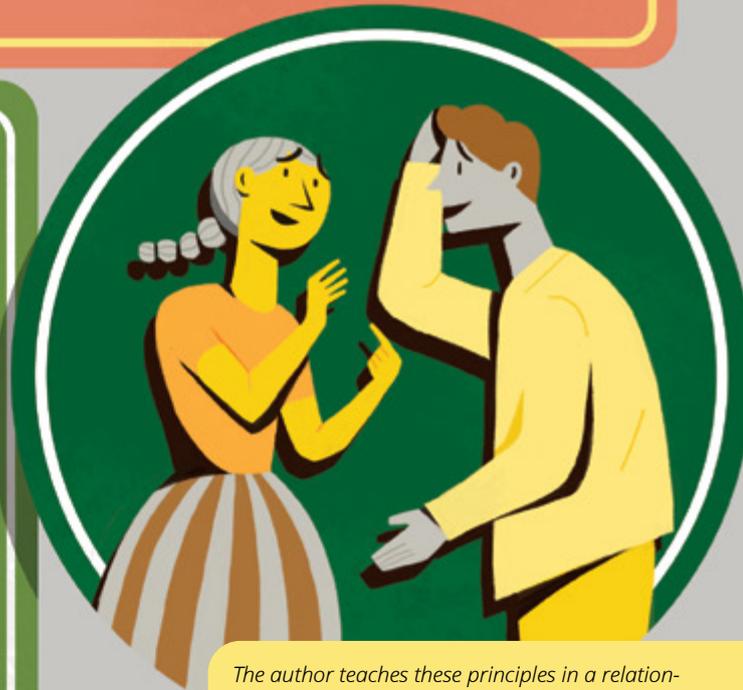
Most of the time, with people we love we can have a constructive conversation if we’re not overwhelmed with negative emotions. So, next time your conversation feels like you are speeding past a “Do Not Enter” sign, choose to put on the brakes and call a time-out until the danger signs disappear. **NE**

“TIME-OUT!”

Calling a time-out is not merely escaping a conversation. Instead, you’re choosing to avoid a destructive interaction with a plan to talk later, when you can do a better job. It’s one way of being “slow to anger” (Proverbs 16:32). Sometimes we think that the best way to keep our relationships healthy is to stick with a conversation, no matter what. But that’s not always the case. Sometimes, especially when we feel a lot of negative emotion, continuing to talk is likely to do more damage than good.

The best way to call a time-out is to say something like this: “I’m worried that if I keep talking I’m going to say things that I don’t mean. Can I take a little bit of time to collect my thoughts and come back and talk about this with you soon?”

Notice that you called a time-out on yourself, and not the other person? Calling a time-out on the other person won’t work as well (for instance, “You are out of control and acting like a child! I’ll talk to you later when you can grow up!”).



The author teaches these principles in a relationship education seminar along with colleagues Howard Markham and Scott Stanley.

My BRAND NEW, Old Family

If you let it, there's nothing the gospel can't change.

By Leonardo Conceição

The missionaries held up a photo. "What do you see?" they asked. "A happy family," I answered. "Are all families happy?" I shook my head no. "You've seen *my* family," I explained.

I was a 16-year-old living in Brazil, where I had lived all my life. The missionaries had been teaching me for several weeks, but nobody else in my family wanted to listen. During that time, the missionaries had often seen my family fight and argue. My family and the grinning family in the photo had nothing in common.

One of the elders said, "Well, maybe your current family isn't this way. But you can build your future family differently."

When we ended the visit, they asked me again to pray about what we'd been studying. As always, I didn't exactly promise to do so. I enjoyed how I felt when the

missionaries visited, and the gospel made sense to me. But I was afraid of the answer I might receive. If the gospel was true, I would have to make a lot of changes.

A NEW CHOICE

After the elders left, I couldn't stop thinking about happy families. Ours wasn't even close. My dad wasn't in my life. My relationship with my mom wasn't great. Grandma was the one who took care of us, but none of us behaved like a family

the way the missionaries taught. None of us expressed love to each other or even spent much time together.

All my life I promised myself I would be a good dad someday. I would be the parent I never had. Yet as the missionaries taught me, I started realizing that I was doing the same things my parents did at my age. I stayed out late, did whatever I wanted, and lived like a rebel. Without meaning to, I was repeating the same story.

It was time to ask God.



**THE GOSPEL SHOWS US HOW
TO IMPROVE OUR FAMILIES,
NO MATTER WHAT OUR FAMILY
SITUATION LOOKS LIKE.**



When I finally prayed, I received the answer I had expected all along. The Church is true! Now it was time to make a choice.

A NEW ME

My grandmother had to give permission before I could be baptized. She was against it, but I persisted.

“Grandma, which Leonardo do you prefer?” I asked. “The one who was out drinking and smoking and coming home late? Or do you prefer who I am now? These changes are because of the gospel.”

Grandma finally agreed, and I was baptized and confirmed. From that moment, something interesting began to happen in my family—something I didn’t realize fully until a few years later.

A NEW FAMILY

Right before I left for my mission to southern Brazil, Grandma attended stake conference with me. Afterward we held a small testimony meeting with family and friends. To my surprise, Grandma wanted to say something.

“Ever since Leonardo joined your church, my family started becoming a *real* family,” she said. She then listed ways our entire family had grown closer: We now spent time together. We started saying “I love you” to each other, when we never had before. The fighting and arguing stopped. Real friendships developed among all of us. We had more to eat and were blessed with abundance in other areas.

I had noticed these changes too, but I hadn’t realized the timing could be linked back to when I was baptized.

“I may not be a member of your church,” she said, “but I am a friend

of your church. And I know our family has been blessed because of Leonardo’s choice.”

A NEW UNDERSTANDING

I could hardly believe it! And yet, as Grandma spoke of how our family had grown closer, I suddenly remembered the photo the missionaries had shown me years before. Back then, I thought my only way to have a happy family was with my future family.

But I was wrong. My current family was happy! We had grown to love each other.

Maybe none of my family members will join the Church in this lifetime. But even if they don’t, I know that God has already blessed us in so many ways. The gospel of Jesus Christ shows us how to improve our families, no matter what our family situation looks like. **NE**

The author is from Brazil.

COME
FOLLOW
ME

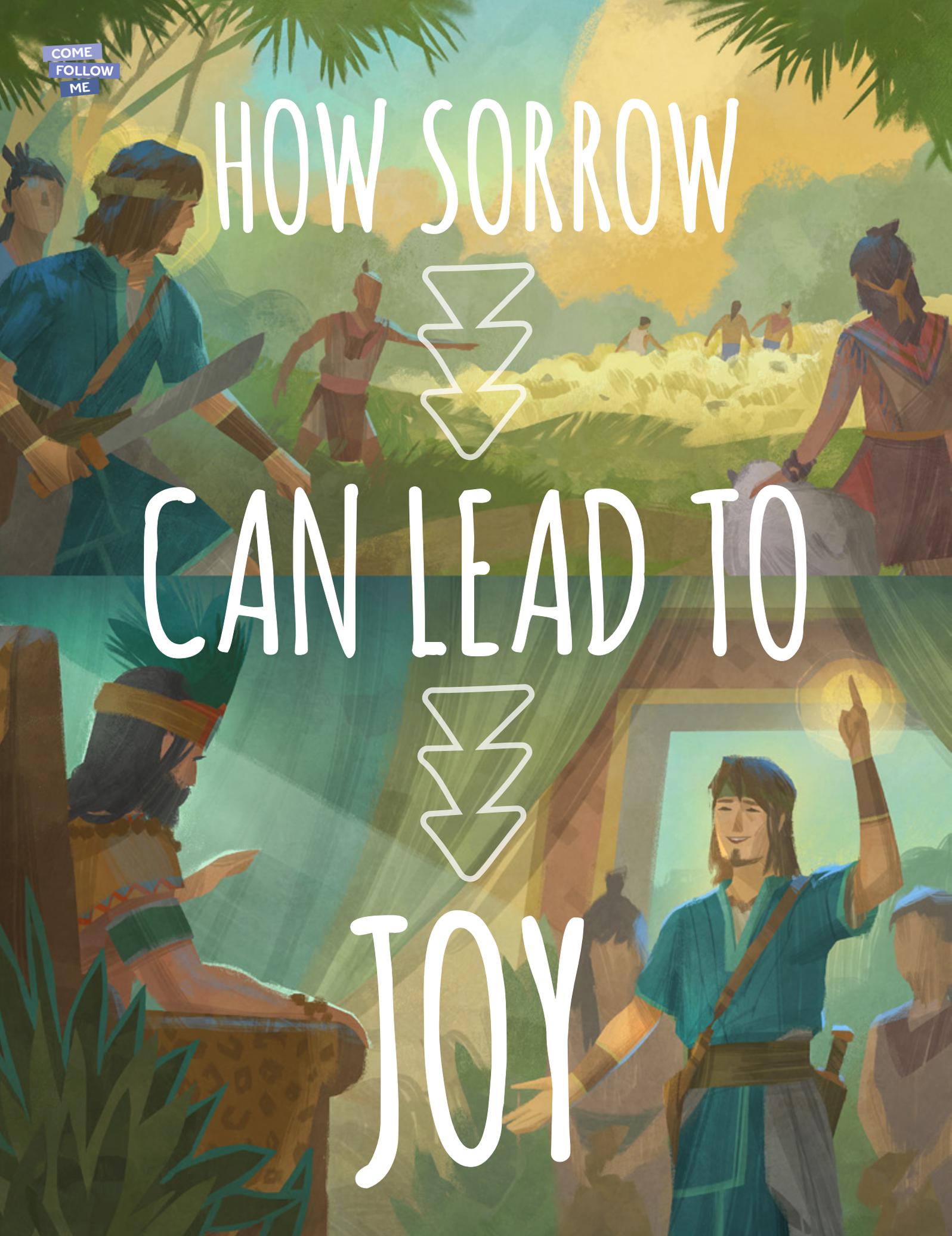
HOW SORROW



CAN LEAD TO



JOY



By Laura Fuchs
Church Magazines

I used to think of sadness as a universally bad thing. Why would you want to be sad or see others sad? It's either awkward or just an all-around downer, right? But then I started to notice an interesting pattern in the scriptures: when people were sad, missionaries often got excited.

PREPARED TO HEAR THE WORD

The first example I noticed was when Ammon was taking care of King Lamoni's flocks. People came to scatter the flocks and get Ammon and the other servants in trouble. It was something they had done before, and so the other servants got upset. They knew that King Lamoni had put many servants to death for losing the flocks. You can almost feel the fear in their voices when they said, "Now the king will slay us, as he has our brethren because their flocks were scattered by the wickedness of these men." They were terrified! "And they began to weep exceedingly, saying: Behold, our flocks are scattered already" (Alma 17:28).

To me, it sounds like a pretty sad sight. But Ammon's reaction threw me off guard. "Now when Ammon saw this his heart was swollen within him with joy." Swollen with joy? What was he thinking? "I will show forth my power unto these my fellow-servants, or the power which is in me, in restoring these flocks unto the king," thought Ammon. "That I may win the hearts of these my fellow-servants, that I may lead them to believe in my words" (Alma 17:29).

Another time a missionary gets excited about people being sad is just a few chapters later. This time the missionary is Alma the Younger. A large group of poor people came to him as he was preaching. They were all feeling down because they had been cast out of their churches and mistreated. Their leader asked Alma, "What shall we do?" (Alma 32:5). Just at the moment when I started to feel sorry for them, I read Alma's reaction—he was super happy! He immediately stopped teaching the people he had been teaching and turned to these others. What did Alma see that made him so happy? "He beheld that their afflictions had truly humbled them, and that they were in a preparation to hear the word" (Alma 32:6).

Both King Lamoni's servants and the humble Zoramites were ready to hear God's word, which would be the gateway

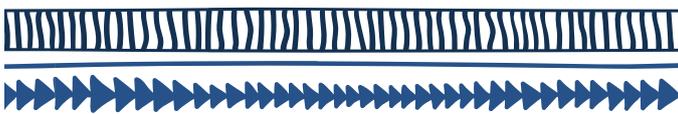
SADNESS AND JOY: THEY'RE OPPOSITES, RIGHT?
BUT SOMETIMES ONE LEADS TO THE OTHER.





"FOR THEIR SORROWING WAS NOT UNTO REPENTANCE. . . . THEY DID NOT COME UNTO JESUS WITH BROKEN HEARTS AND CONTRITE SPIRITS, BUT THEY DID CURSE GOD, AND WISH TO DIE."

MORMON 2:13-14



COME, FOLLOW ME: ALMA 32-35

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, then-Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said, "Godly sorrow inspires change and hope through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Worldly sorrow pulls us down, extinguishes hope, and persuades us to give in to further temptation" ("You Can Do It Now!" Oct. 2013 general conference [*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 56]).

The *Come, Follow Me* reading for this month covers the story of Alma teaching the Zoramites who were humbled and ready to receive the gospel. As you read their story, consider what you can learn about the relationship between humility and godly sorrow. How can you strive to make sure that when you make a mistake, your reaction is to be sorrowful *unto repentance*?

to experiencing godly sorrow if they showed a willingness to change and repent as they accepted the message of the gospel (see 2 Corinthians 7:10).

THE WRONG KIND OF SORROW

By the time I got to Mormon, I thought I understood the pattern. Clearly these missionaries were excited because the sad people they were seeing were humbled and ready to hear and follow God's word. Of course, I now thought, it's good for them to be sad! That means they're looking for something to bring them happiness. So when I read about the Nephites who lived during Mormon's time being super sad, I thought I knew what to expect. When Mormon saw their sorrow, he said, "My heart did begin to rejoice within me" (Mormon 2:12). Yes! They were going to change and repent, just like the people Ammon and Alma taught.

But wait, in just the next verse things shift dramatically. "But behold this my joy was in vain," said Mormon, "for their sorrowing was not unto repentance. . . . They did not come unto Jesus with broken hearts and contrite spirits, but they did curse God, and wish to die" (Mormon 2:13-14).

Whoa! What a difference from the first two stories. Their circumstances were similarly terrible, but there was one big difference: these Nephites refused to change. They were upset "because the Lord would not always suffer them to take happiness in sin." They wanted to keep doing what they had always done, just without the consequences. That's why Mormon calls their sorrow the "sorrowing of the damned" (Mormon 2:13)—because they had stopped their own progression by refusing to believe that righteousness, not sin, would make them happy.

TWO OPTIONS

Often when we are in misery, whether through our own choices or through other circumstances, we have two options: to humble ourselves and listen or not. We can wallow in bitterness, repeating our mistakes, with the hope that we eventually become desensitized to them (like Mormon's people). Or we can choose to turn to the Lord, realize our mistakes, and work with our Savior to change them. Repentance is only a sad thing when we insist on seeing it the world's way. When we do it the Savior's way, He will lift our guilt, wipe away our tears, and set us on the path to true healing. **NE**

AN EXAMPLE FOR MY FAMILY

Written by Haley Yancey
Illustrated by Norman Shurtliff



“Willingly help in your home.
... Join your family in family prayer, family scripture study, and family home evenings.
... If your family does not do these things together, pray and study the scriptures yourself. Your example may encourage your family members to join you.”

For the Strength of Youth (2011), 14–15.



I KNEW THAT VOICE

*At the triathlon,
an unexpected
voice cut
through the
noise of the
crowd.*

By Heather Johnson
Church Magazines

The summer before my senior year in high school, I decided to participate in my hometown's Olympic-length triathlon. I had always been a runner, so the 10-kilometer run portion didn't worry me too much. And I liked cycling, even though 40 kilometers seemed like a long time to be on a bike. What I was really concerned about was the 1.5-kilometer swim, but as I trained over the summer, I became more confident in all three events.

The night before the race, my dad helped me set up my swim-to-bike transition. We made sure everything was placed just right so I could get to biking as quickly as possible after I got out of the water.

At 7:00 the next morning, I jumped into the cold river to begin the race. In less than 30 minutes I was out of the water and getting ready to begin the bike course.

Thousands of people were competing, and even more people were there to cheer the racers on. I knew my family members and friends were along the course somewhere, but I didn't know where, and I didn't think I could pick their voices out of the large cheering crowd surrounding the transition zone. Just as I was about to hop on my bike, a voice cut through the noise.

"Heather, the chain is off your bike. Heather, put your chain back on. The chain is off your bike."

It was different from all the other voices that were yelling and cheering the triathletes on. That voice stood out to me because I knew and trusted that voice. It was the voice of my high school cross-country coach. I looked down, and sure enough, my chain was off. I quickly put it back on and began riding. A few hours later I had successfully completed my first Olympic-length triathlon.

Had I not heard my coach, I would have figured out pretty quickly that the chain was off my bike. But I probably would have figured it out with my right foot clipped into my pedal pushing down hard to get my momentum going. Without the anticipated resistance from my chain plus the fact



PHOTOGRAPH FROM GETTY IMAGES

that I was accident-prone, I most likely would have fallen over onto the pavement. It wouldn't be a race-ending or even a serious injury, but I would have had a skinned-up knee and elbow, along with a big hole poked in my confidence. I was grateful for my coach.

I had spent many, many hours at cross-country practice listening to his instructions. If we spend time where the Spirit is present, we will know what He sounds like. When we attend church and seminary, study the

scriptures, or watch uplifting media, and we pay attention to how we feel, we are then ready to discern the voice of the Spirit from the other voices and feelings we are exposed to.

When we take the time to learn to recognize the voice of the Spirit and then follow His promptings, we avoid pain—of all types—and we are able to make more efficient progress on our eternal journey. If we mess up, we can always pull the gravel out of our knees and get back on our bike. But isn't life so much more pleasant when we can avoid things like that?

Swimming, biking, and running for a total of 51.5 kilometers—even without picking gravel out of my knees—pushed me toward my physical limit and helped me grow. Mortality will do the same thing to us—we don't need to make life more challenging by ignoring the promptings of the Spirit.

That day on the triathlon course, my parents were at the race supporting me, but they couldn't be everywhere. I needed help from someone else (in this case, my coach) who saw what I didn't notice. The Spirit can be that someone for us wherever and whenever we are worthy and willing to listen. And if we listen and obey, we will successfully "run . . . the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). **NE**

Choosing the
STRAIT AND NARROW
over the **BROAD WAY**



*There were two paths in front of me, and I knew
there was only one way to know which one to take.*



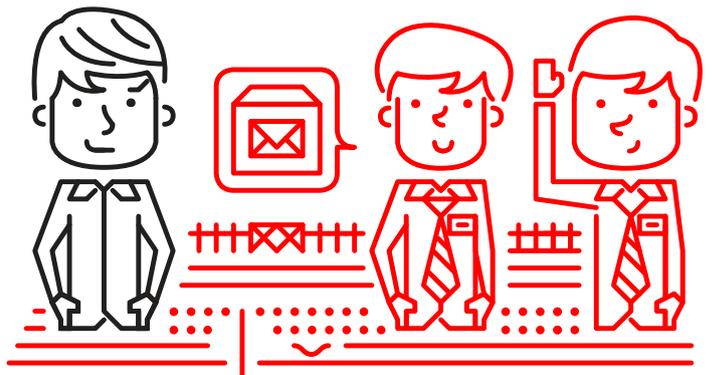
By Elder
Takashi Wada
Of the Seventy

I grew up in Nagano, Japan, with my parents. Religion was a part of everything that my family did. My father knelt before the Buddhist altar every morning and night. I didn't think of Buddhism as a religion—it was our way of life. It would have been easy for me to remain Buddhist for the rest of my life, but God has proved to me many times that the easy or popular way is not always the best way.

Textbook or Holy Book?

As a teenage boy, I struggled a lot with my identity. I wondered why I was on this earth and who I was supposed to become. When I was about 13, the principal of my school gave every student a copy of the New Testament with English and Japanese side-by-side. "It isn't for religious purposes," he said. "It is a very good translation, so use it to study English." When I opened it up though, it gave scripture references for when you feel lonely, need answers to your questions, or are struggling. I could relate to all of those situations!

I read about Jesus Christ. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). "Take up [your] cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). The words resonated with me even though I didn't fully understand them. I wondered who Jesus Christ is and what it means to have Him as a Savior. I wondered if I was the only one feeling such a connection to what was supposed to be a textbook.

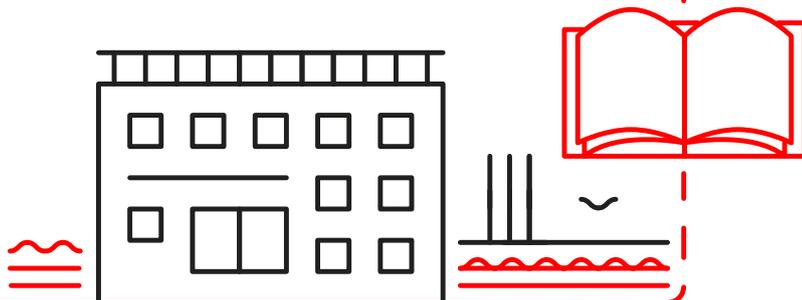


Run Away or Stay and Listen?

A few years later I met some missionaries for the first time. My parents had warned me about the young Christians who were going around preaching. As I was walking home, a tall American missionary with a kind smile stopped me. I didn't know what to do. I was afraid he would talk about his church. If he had, I might have run the other way! All he asked was how to find the post office. I told him and then walked home.

As I walked away, I felt something. If I see the missionaries again, I thought, I will talk to them.

Not long after that, I ran into a different set of missionaries. I was shocked that God would hear and answer the prayers of a boy like me, until I read about Joseph Smith. I had read in the New Testament to pray always, but God appearing to a man? It felt both radical and right. Rather than run away, I set up an appointment to have them teach me.





Make Excuses or Discover the Truth?

A month into meeting with the missionaries, they invited me to be baptized. I didn't want to turn them down, but I was hesitant to leave the tradition of my parents and everyone around me. There were two paths before me, and I knew there was only one way to know which one to take—I had to pray like Joseph Smith. I asked Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, if the things the missionaries had been teaching me were true.

That was my turning point. From then on, I knew for myself that the restored gospel is true. No one could take that knowledge away from me. I knew which path to follow, and nothing could change that.

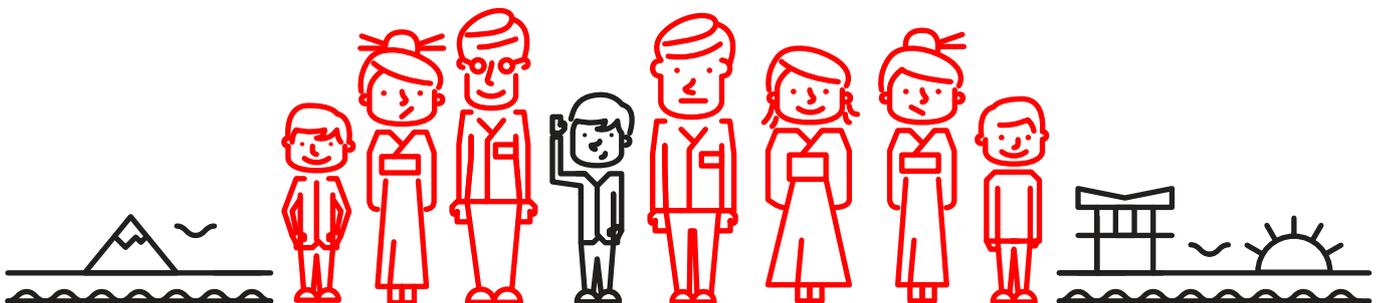
I had many questions when I was younger. I learned that I am a child of God, He loves me, He has a plan for me, and He wants to answer my prayers. This knowledge changed my entire perspective on life. I learned that who I am and what I do is significant.

Blend In or Stand Out?

Before I learned that I was a child of God, I wanted to blend in with everyone. I was afraid of standing out. But after I learned that I am a child of God, I realized I can stand out; I can be different.

Praying and realizing that I am a son of God gave me the courage to explain my feelings to my parents, but they didn't quite understand. They thought I was rebellious and too immature to make the decision to be baptized. They were

embarrassed that their son was following this strange religion rather than their traditions. I knew who I was and what I wanted, but I also wanted to honor my parents and hoped they would honor my religion.



Honor My Parents or Ignore Their Concerns?

I explained my situation to the sister missionaries. They had an idea—they could come talk to my parents so that they would feel better about this religion. I told them I was afraid my parents wouldn't want to talk to them. Then one of the sisters suggested that we fast together.

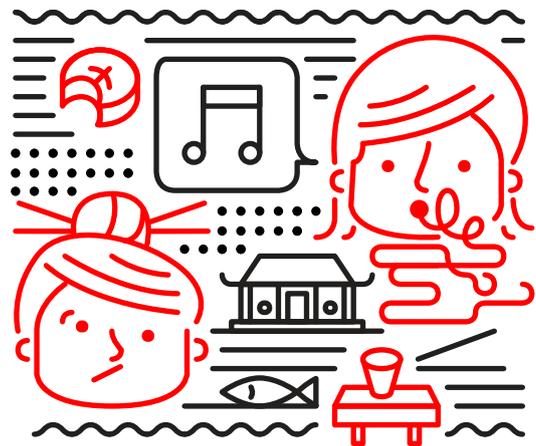
When I didn't eat breakfast, my mom was worried. "Why didn't you eat?" she asked. I explained that I was fasting, and that made her even more concerned.

"First you are going to this no-man's land of religion, and now you are not eating. I'm worried. I'm shocked! I'm going to call those missionaries."

She did call the sisters, and somehow they got themselves invited to our house for dinner!

We had a great time. The missionaries taught my parents the hymn "I Am a Child of God" (Hymns, no. 301), and we sang it together. My father loved that. After dinner with the sisters, neither of my parents was worried about me going to church. And I felt I was able to honor them by living the gospel because it really encompassed everything they had taught me. I thought if I loved them long enough and treated them kind enough, eventually they would understand. It took 35 years after my baptism, but my mother was baptized and went through the temple just a few years ago!

Knowing that I'm a child of God has impacted many of my life decisions. I also know that as we follow the Spirit and do what Heavenly Father asks of us, even when it seems hard, He will bless us. That is always the best choice. **NE**





MY Hidden
BLESSING

I didn't think I was ready for my patriarchal blessing, but Heavenly Father knew how much I would need it.

By Thomas Petrunaro

I was born in Fontana, California. Both my mother and father struggled with substance abuse, and they divorced when I was 18 months old. As I grew up, I found fellowship and safety in each of the four Christian churches within walking distance of my home. When I was 13, I watched an advertisement for a free Book of Mormon and decided to order it. This eventually led to my baptism in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. My parents didn't seem to care one way or the other about my joining the Church.

About a year later, I attended a special youth fireside where the stake patriarch spoke about patriarchal blessings. I had never heard of them. I was only 14 at the time, and I figured it would at least be another two years before I was mature enough to even think about getting mine.

Two weeks later, Brother Clark, my neighbor, was driving me to early-morning seminary and said, "Thomas, Sister Clark and I have been thinking about you and wonder how you felt about the patriarchal blessing fireside."

"Getting a patriarchal blessing sounds wonderful," I said. "I hope to get one when I'm mature and ready!"

"You could start thinking about getting one sooner," he said. "It can really help you through difficult circumstances."

"I'm sure you're right," I replied, "but I'm afraid if I got it too soon, it wouldn't be everything I wanted it to be."

A few days passed, and Brother Clark brought it up again. "I know we're only your neighbors and don't have the right to receive revelation for you, but we believe you should get your blessing."

Though I was touched by his thoughtfulness, I was still unsure. However, the following Sunday, my bishop called me into his office and said, "Thomas, Brother Clark has told me his feelings about your blessing. I have prayed about it, and I agree with him. I feel very strongly that you should get your patriarchal blessing. Please reconsider."

With all the courage I could muster, I said, "OK, I'll do it. I hope I'm ready."

"I'm glad," the bishop replied, "because I made you an appointment with the patriarch this evening."

The blessing was a sacred experience, and Heavenly Father exceeded my desires that day. But this isn't where my story ends.

Five days later, I received the hard copy of my blessing in the mail. That same day, my mother and stepfather sat me down and informed me that they had made some decisions. In the time since my baptism, they had built up a great dislike toward my membership in the Church. They told me they were sending me to my dad's house in Las Vegas and handed me a bus ticket.

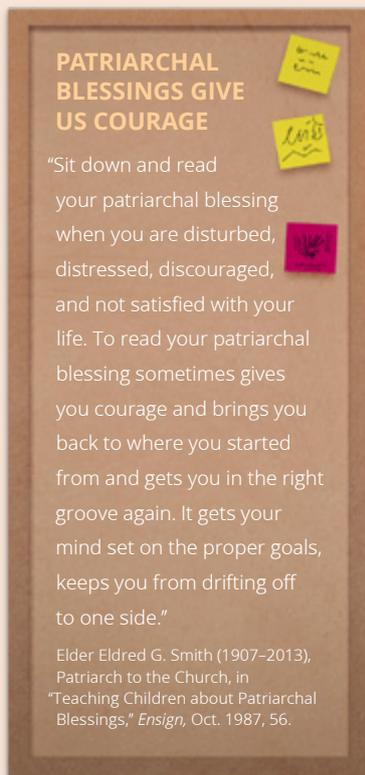
The following day, I arrived at my dad's. The first thing I did was look up the nearest meetinghouse for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. But my dad yelled, "You are no longer a Mormon! Got that? John Smith was not a prophet, and the bronze plates are a hoax!" He then took my scriptures and Church magazines and wouldn't allow me to talk to anyone from the Church.

I went to my room devastated. But I suddenly remembered the envelope I had tucked into my jacket pocket the day before. My patriarchal blessing! My parents had taken a lot of things, but they didn't know anything about patriarchal blessings. I was overjoyed.

For the next three and a half years, I wasn't allowed to set foot in a Latter-day Saint building. Having my patriarchal blessing was crucial for me during this time.

I know that God could foresee the struggle I would have in the coming years in high school and beyond. I am so glad I did not put off receiving my blessing because of my fears and assumptions. My patriarchal blessing truly is a great blessing from my Father in Heaven. **NE**

The author lives in Virginia, USA.



Discover and share your family history, photos, and more at FamilySearch.org.



GOING BEYOND THE NAMES

This teenager taught her high school class about family history and why it's cool to learn about our ancestors.

By **Richard M. Romney**
Church Magazines

Grace W., 15, of Alabama, USA, loves family history. So she was delighted when, on vacation, she was able to visit the Church's Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. Little did she know that her visit to the library would later become the subject of a report at school.

"At the end of the year, my English teacher gave us an assignment to do a creative report on a subject of our choosing," Grace explains. Family history immediately popped into her head.

She remembered that her interest in family history began when ward leaders challenged each of the youth to bring a family name to the temple for baptisms for the dead. But Grace went beyond just finding names. "I think it's really cool that you can learn where your ancestors are from, what they've done, things like that," she says. "And then to be able to offer them the opportunity to receive baptism and confirmation is incredible!"

Grace was fascinated with old family photos, so she began by gathering some from a variety of sources—parents and grandparents, family history sites, and scrapbooks. She decided she would project family photos onto a screen as a video background during her oral report. The final report included:

- Research that shows 60 percent of Americans are interested in family history.
- A quote from President Russell M. Nelson: "People throughout the world, once little concerned with family history, now search for the roots of their ancestral heritage using technologies unavailable a century ago."¹
- Her personal experience visiting the Family History Library, plus an invitation to visit it someday.
- Information about FamilySearch.org and the resources and information available there, with an invitation to go online and discover something about your ancestry.

"I listed a lot of websites you could use, where all you have to do is type in your name, and it will help you get started," she said. She talked about how family history helped her in her history class too. "By knowing where your ancestors lived, you can see how history affected them."

The report went well. "A lot of my classmates thought it was cool that you could figure out who your ancestors were, what kinds of jobs they had, or who you can link to, like fifth cousins," she says. Several classmates expressed interest in learning more, and so did her teacher.

"At first, I was afraid people would think that family history is complicated or boring," Grace says. "But I found out we can help other people see that family history isn't a mystery," she says. "And it's a way to let them know a little bit about the Church too." **NE**

NOTE

1. Russell M. Nelson, "Thus Shall My Church Be Called," Apr. 1990 general conference (*Ensign*, May 1990, 17).



EVEN WHEN IT RAINS, YOU CAN STILL THANK GOD FOR THE SUNSHINE. CHOOSE TO BE GRATEFUL, NO MATTER WHAT COMES YOUR WAY.

GRATITUDE





LOVE CROSSES BORDERS



Youth in California, USA, and Tijuana, Mexico, reached across barriers to love, serve, and be one in the gospel of Jesus Christ together.

Compiled by Brooke H. Reynolds

What would be a good reason to get up early on a Thursday morning during summer break? For hundreds of youth from Orange County, California, USA, and Tijuana, Mexico, the reason was simple: a youth conference unlike any they'd ever experienced.

That morning, the youth from California boarded buses and crossed the border to gather with the youth in Tijuana. From the moment they got together, the youth from both countries hugged and high-fived each other. Throughout that first day of the conference, they performed baptisms together in the Tijuana Mexico Temple, worked side-by-side at an orphanage, played games together, and enjoyed a makeshift soccer game.

On Friday, the youth, in conjunction with a charitable organization in Mexico, helped build four homes for four deserving families in Tijuana. With hammers, paintbrushes, and sweat, they saw a house take shape through their hard work.

At the end the day, they were able to present the keys to each family, and each home was dedicated to the Lord. Each family was also given a framed quote signed by the youth and leaders that read, "Se necesitan manos para hacer una casa, pero se necesitan corazones para crear un hogar" ("It takes hands to make a house, but it takes hearts to make a home"). The youth and the families were equally blessed through this service.

HOUSE BUILD: A

The family consists of Jose (father), Cecilia (mother), Sara (28), Ruth (18), and Suri (12). Their home had been destroyed by termites, and they had lost most of their possessions in torrential rains.

All day long, the family worked side-by-side with the youth. Cecilia's tears of joy flowed all day long as well.



THROUGH THESE ACTIVITIES, I REALIZED THAT LIVING GOSPEL TEACHINGS IS SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL, THAT HEAVENLY FATHER LOVES US, AND THAT SHARING OUR TESTIMONY HELPS US IMPROVE OUR FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST AND IN OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

Ángela L., Tijuana, Mexico





MY TESTIMONY WAS STRENGTHENED BY THE MEXICAN YOUTH'S LOVE AND HOW STRONG THE SPIRIT IS THERE. NOW THAT I'M BACK, I'M GOING TO TRY TO SHARE A SMILE AND A LAUGH WITH MORE PEOPLE. IT'S NOT EVERY DAY YOU CAN BUILD A HOUSE, BUT YOU CAN ALWAYS SHARE A SMILE.

Luke S., California, USA



HOUSE BUILD: B

Estefania and her two children, Camila (5) and Diego (2), had been living in an extremely small, one-room home with five other members of her extended family.

As she was handed the keys to her first home, Estefania was brought to tears. She thanked the youth for this act of love and service. To her and her family, it represented the love of her community and the hope of a brighter future.



I REALLY LOVED HOW WE APPLIED THE SCRIPTURE "IF YE LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS" (JOHN 14:15) THROUGHOUT ALL THE YOUTH CONFERENCE BY SERVING OTHERS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE VEIL, LEARNING HIS WORD, SHARING OUR TALENTS, AND LOVING SOMEONE WE DIDN'T REALLY KNOW AND DIDN'T HAVE THAT MUCH IN COMMON WITH. WE ALL KNEW WE ARE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF GOD AND WE ALL ARE THERE FOR THE SAME PURPOSE—TO LOVE JESUS CHRIST.

Ernesto G., Tijuana, Mexico



MY FAVORITE PART OF YOUTH CONFERENCE WAS DEFINITELY THE SERVICE. EVERYBODY WAS PUTTING THEIR HEARTS INTO BUILDING THIS HOME FOR THE FAMILY, WITH A SMILE ON THEIR FACE. SERVICE IS AN EXCELLENT SOURCE OF JOY.

Trevor D., California, USA



HOUSE BUILD: C

In this family are Roberto (father), Micaela (mother), Gloria (daughter, 13), Esther (daughter, 10), and Abraham (son, 8). Roberto works as a cook six days a week. Micaela raises her children and makes foam flowers to sell to stores and schools.

Two years ago, Roberto started going back to church with his family. He felt God's love and felt the need to serve and love others, so each Friday he would bring hundreds of burritos and flavored water to migrant groups from Central America. He feels that God always blesses him for his service and that his new home is one such blessing. But he was even more excited about the incredible gratitude, love, and unity he felt among the youth.



EVEN THOUGH THE CALIFORNIA YOUTH DIDN'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT DANCING TO MEXICAN MUSIC, THEY MADE THE EFFORT TO DANCE AND REALLY TRIED TO LEARN. I KNOW THAT THESE ACTIVITIES FORM ETERNAL FRIENDSHIPS THAT LAST FOR A LONG TIME AND ARE THE MOST REAL.

Lilly A., Tijuana, Mexico





JESUS CHRIST REALLY LOVES EVERYONE AND HE BLESSES HIS CHURCH IN EVERY AREA OF THE WORLD. I AM GOING TO MAKE IT A GOAL TO SERVE SOMEONE EVERY DAY, EVEN IF IT'S HARD. SERVICE IS ALWAYS WORTH IT.

Noelle L., California, USA



HOUSE BUILD: D

Nancy, a recent college graduate, was living in a rented home about the size of a small bedroom. For years she had two great desires: to teach elementary school and to own her own home. The dream of teaching was close to coming true, and now (after she had volunteered 500 hours helping build houses for others, by the way), Nancy's dream of a home came true. Tears of joy flowed steadily down Nancy's face as she expressed her deep thanks.





I TRULY BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE TO SERVE GOD'S CHILDREN TO REALLY FEEL HOW MUCH HE CARES ABOUT US. MY FAVORITE PART OF THIS SERVICE TRIP TO MEXICO WAS SEEING AND FEELING THE LORD'S LOVE RADIATE THROUGH THOSE WE WERE SERVING AND THOSE I WAS SERVING WITH.

Hailey M., California, USA



IT STRENGTHENED ME TO KNOW THE GOSPEL IS FOR EVERYBODY. KNOWING I AM NOT ALONE, THAT THERE ARE MORE PEOPLE LIKE ME IN THE CHURCH WHO HAVE FAITH AND BELIEVE IT IS TRUE, HELPED ME STRENGTHEN MY TESTIMONY. I LOVED TO SEE ALL OF US PERFORMING SACRED ORDINANCES AT THE TEMPLE.

Jose Abraham W., Tijuana, Mexico



In the evening, the youth enjoyed teaching one another their customs. One of the highlights for many of the California youth were the beautiful dances the Mexican stakes performed in traditional costumes.

Firesides were also held throughout the conference, translated into Spanish and English.

As the conference concluded on Saturday, the youth gathered for a morning fireside where youth from both countries combined to sing "Come unto Christ." They sang in both English and Spanish, and many felt that this was the culmination of the entire conference—Latter-day Saint youth coming together, united as one, with the common goal of following their Savior. **NE**

The author lives in California, USA.

Searching for STRENGTH IN QUARANTINE

This has been a scary time we're in, but if we can focus on the Savior, we will find peace.

By Fiona Wolf

I've always lived in Germany with my family except for when I was an exchange student in Utah a few years ago, where I was introduced to the Church by my loving host family. I'd never heard about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints before, but during that year in Utah I learned a lot about the gospel and started developing a testimony.

When I came home, I was a little scared about what my parents would say when I told them I wanted to be baptized, but thankfully they supported my decision. I'm the only member in my family, but they're very respectful of my beliefs. I was glad that I quickly found friends in my new ward and stake here in Germany.

This is a very scary time we're in right now. Schools are shut down, Church meetings are suspended, and temples are closed. Getting used to this new routine of being in quarantine has been difficult. The load of homework I had seemed unmanageable at first. I've been scared about the safety of my extended family members, especially my grandparents. But I've had to remember that living on this earth means that we will go through hard things.

After being in quarantine a while, I've been able to see some good aspects, like getting to sleep in and make my own schedule. One thing that's helped me stay positive during quarantine is doing things with my family, even though at first it was hard being with each other all the time and we sometimes had small fights. But now it's great being all





“No matter what kind of storm is battering us— regardless of whether there is a solution to it or whether there is an end in sight—there is only one refuge, and it is the same for all types of storms. This single refuge provided by our Heavenly Father is our Lord Jesus Christ and His Atonement.”

Elder Ricardo P. Giménez of the Seventy,
Apr. 2020 general conference.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Depending on your circumstances, you may have experienced a change in lifestyle. Here are some things people have done while quarantined or social distancing:

1. Create a schedule. When you have things planned out for your day, you have a lot more purpose and get more done.
2. Find some new hobbies. You could try baking, drawing, reading, building puzzles, or anything else you can think of. Get creative!
3. Take time to go outside each day, if it's possible where you live.
4. Use your extra time for spiritual things you might not have had time for before. Write in your journal, study the scriptures, do family history, and read conference talks. And check out the Gospel Library app for other resources.
5. Take time to call or video chat with someone you haven't seen for a while, like your friends or grandparents. They probably have as much free time as you do!

together. My 12-year-old sister and I have tried some cool new recipes and baked lots of cakes and cupcakes together during the last couple of weeks.

I also try to spend a lot of time outside where I can enjoy the beautiful weather and the blossoming flowers. Being outdoors just makes it so much clearer to me that our Heavenly Father and our Savior created this all for us. It helps me feel so much more connected to Them when I am out in nature.

Another thing I've done is try to focus on my spiritual well-being by reading my scriptures more often and more thoroughly. It really helps me to not be so sad about the things that are going on but to keep my eternal goal in mind.

Elder John A. McCune of the Seventy said during this last general conference that the Savior will provide the needed support, comfort, and peace if we come unto Him.¹ So if we want Him to hear us and help us, we need to show Him that we trust in Him. We need to open up to Him about our hardships, and He will help us. I believe that everything happens for a reason and that if we trust in Jesus Christ, this experience will only make us stronger.

Since we all have struggles and things can be very hard right now, it is so important to focus on the good things that are happening and also on Jesus Christ. I know that if we focus on the Savior and our relationship with Him, we will feel more peace, happiness, and joy, even in hard times like these. **NE**

The author lives in Saxony-Anhalt, Germany.

NOTE

1. See John A. McCune, Apr. 2020 general conference.



MAKING GOOD USE OF YOUR TIME

When you put the Lord first, there's room for the rest.

By **Natasha Andersen**
Church Magazines

MATERIALS

- A clear jar
- Sand, gravel, rice, or pebbles
- Larger stones (about the size of golf balls, or about 5 cm across)

PREPARATION: Measure out your ingredients beforehand by putting the larger rocks in the jar first. Add just enough sand (or gravel, rice, or pebbles) to fill the jar to the top. You might want to shake the jar as you add the sand so that it fills in more empty space. Now dump the rocks and sand into separate containers before you teach this lesson.

How many different activities fight for your attention every day? We all have the same 24 hours to spend, but how we choose to use that time makes a big difference!

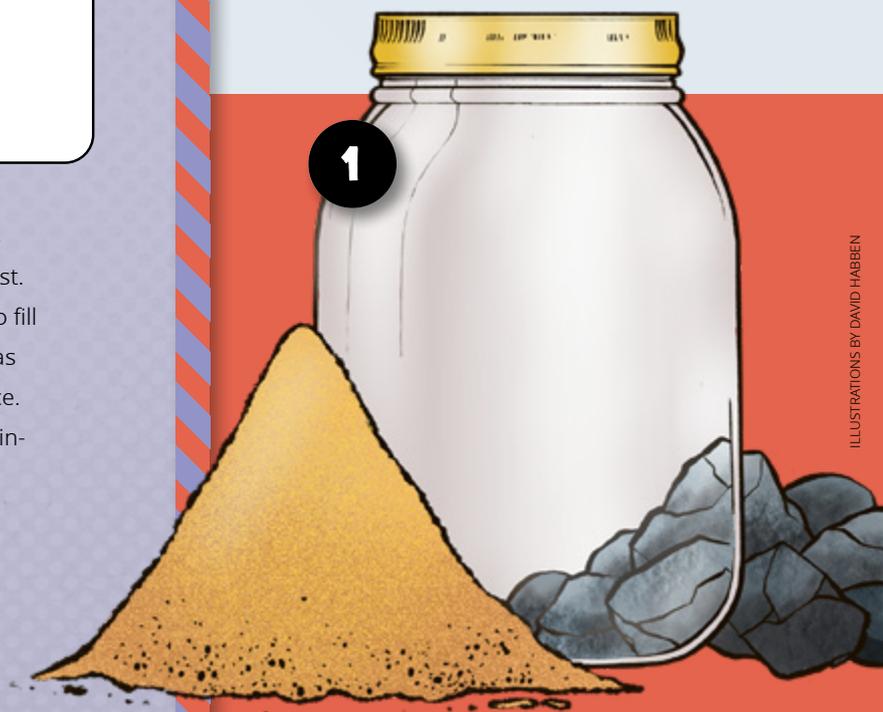
President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has said: "The number of good things we can do far exceeds the time available to accomplish them. Some things are better than good, and these are the things that should command priority attention in our lives. . . . We have to forego some good things in order to choose others that are better or best."¹

In this activity, you'll demonstrate what happens when we make the Lord's work our first priority.

1. FILLING TIME

There are lots of good activities we can use our time to pursue. Ask your family to share some of the things they spend their time doing each day.

Explain that the jar represents time. The rocks



ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID HABBEN

and sand represent the different things we can do with our time: the larger rocks stand for things the Lord has asked us to prioritize, like scripture study, service, temple and family history work, and church attendance, while the sand symbolizes other good activities, like doing homework and spending time with friends.

2. PRIORITIZING OUT OF ORDER

Pour all the sand into the jar first, then add the larger rocks on top. When you add the sand first, there isn't enough space for all the larger rocks—just like how when we prioritize other activities over the things Heavenly Father has commanded us to do, we may run out of time for the things that are most important.

3. FALLING INTO PLACE

Jesus Christ commanded, “Seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38 [in Matthew 6:33, footnote a]).

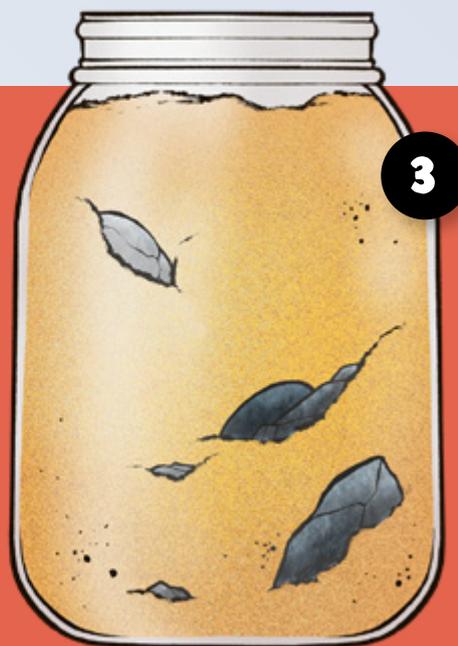
Discuss how you can prioritize your time by seeking the kingdom of God *first*.

Empty your jar and start over with the same items. Younger siblings may want to help. Have them put the larger rocks in the jar first. As you add the sand after, watch how it fills into the extra space around the larger rocks until all the sand fits inside.

Ask your family what they think this promise from President Russell M. Nelson might mean: “As you consistently give the Lord a generous portion of your time, He will multiply the remainder.”²

PUTTING THE LORD FIRST

When we seek to do God's will *first*, He helps us to have enough time for other necessary and uplifting things. So if you're struggling to find enough time to finish homework, develop your talents, or get the sleep you need, ask the Lord what you can do to prioritize your time according to His plan. Set goals together as a family to put the Lord's work—and your relationship with Him—first each day. **NE**



NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks, Oct. 2007 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 104, 107).
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Stand as True Millennials,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2016, 29.

WHEN BAD LUCK HAS

“OUR LIVES ARE LIKE
A CHESSBOARD,
AND THE LORD MOVES
US FROM ONE PLACE TO
ANOTHER—IF WE ARE
RESPONSIVE TO
SPIRITUAL PROMPTINGS.”

Elder Ronald A. Rasband



The automotive stars were beginning to align. I had just returned from a camping trip that involved lots of driving through rural areas. All at once, my car stopped working. The engine shut down and I coasted to a stop . . . right in front of the metal shop where I worked. Weird timing.

Because I had conveniently stalled out across from the place where I worked, I was able to push the car into the driveway without paying for a tow truck. A coworker connected some charge cables, and a bit later I could drive to a mechanic. They replaced a bad alternator.

A couple of weeks later I took an even longer road trip, this time visiting my parents out of state. I had a grand time, once again enjoying a journey without car trouble. That is, until I got back into town and once more drove past where I worked. At that point, my engine shut down. Again. Just as before, I coasted to a stop in front of my workplace.

Double weird. With a side helping of almost eerie.

As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

once said when something similar happened to him, “Obviously the most precise laws of automotive physics were at work.”¹

Another push up my employer’s driveway, another battery charge, and a short drive to the mechanic revealed that they had unknowingly placed a faulty alternator in my car. They replaced it for free and I was soon back on the road.

For my vote, both cases of car trouble were a type of blessing we don’t always recognize.

A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE

Sometimes “bad luck,”² as we call it, has excellent timing. Things would’ve been much worse if I’d broken down in the wilderness on my camping trip or along an empty highway while driving to visit my folks.

In the Book of Mormon, Ammon demonstrates this principle in rather dramatic fashion. Shortly after becoming King Lamoni’s servant, he experiences a setback that should’ve caused him to tremble with fear. Robbers had scattered the king’s flock that

COME
FOLLOW
ME

GOOD TIMING



Ammon and the other servants were protecting.

As it happens, the other servants *were* trembling: “And they began to weep exceedingly, saying: Behold, our flocks are scattered already” (Alma 17:28).

At first glance, the timing appeared to be awful. Ammon was trying to make a good impression and was only three days into the new job when disaster struck. Worse still, the king had a recent history of killing servants after sheep went missing.

Instead, Ammon viewed the I-can’t-believe-this-is-happening, first-week-on-the-job disaster as a chance to make it the best first week ever: “Now when Ammon saw this his heart was swollen within him with joy; for, said he, I will show forth my power unto these my fellow-servants, or the power which is in me, in restoring these flocks unto the king” (Alma 17:29).

You know the rest of the story. Through his faith, and with God’s strengthening power, Ammon turned a setback into a powerful missionary opportunity that ultimately helped convert many people throughout the kingdom.

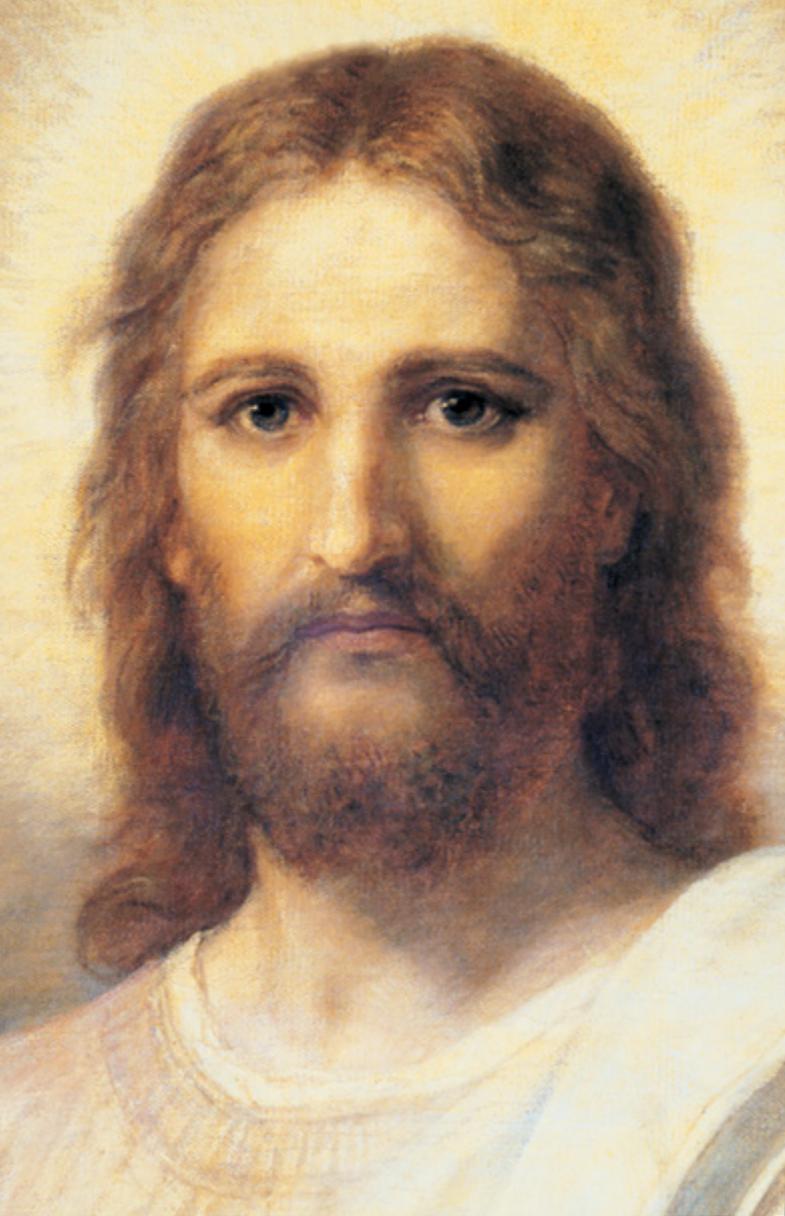
A TIMELY SIGN

Another and even more dramatic example of this principle in the Book of Mormon took place many years later. An entire population of Christians in that area was about to be killed for their beliefs. Samuel the Lamanite had prophesied of the sign that would be given of the Savior’s birth—a night with no darkness.

Wickedness dominated the land. Things became so corrupt that “there was a day set apart by the unbelievers, that all those who believed in those traditions should be put to death except the sign should come to pass, which had been given by Samuel the prophet” (3 Nephi 1:9).

That’s right—the unbelievers thought they could put a deadline on a miracle. Yet in one of the best-timed “lucky coincidences” ever, the very day that the unbelievers set ended up being the day God had chosen to give the sign (see 3 Nephi 1:12–15).

Of course, such timing was anything but coincidence. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles once taught: “*Coincidence* is not an appropriate word



IN GOOD TIMES AS WELL AS BAD, YOUR LIFE MAY BE BLESSED BY DIVINE GUIDANCE MORE THAN YOU MAY REALIZE.



to describe the workings of an omniscient God. He does not do things by 'coincidence' but . . . by 'divine design.'³

GOD'S GUIDING HAND

In good times as well as bad, your life may be blessed by divine guidance more than you may realize.

"Our lives are like a chessboard," Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, "and the Lord moves us from one place to another—if we are responsive to spiritual promptings. Looking back, we can see His hand in our lives."⁴

In my own life, considering just the timing of various trials, car problems are a small piece to a much larger puzzle. I've lost track of how many times I've become sick right before a vacation instead of during one. Or came into extra money at the same time as an extra expense. Or met someone who helped me right when I needed it the most.

This life was designed to include trials that help us learn and grow. If we are keeping the commandments and following spiritual promptings, we'll be blessed in spite of our trials. And during those trials, you can choose to look for God's loving hand in the details. Did the timing of a trial soften its sting? Did Heavenly Father ease your burden in other ways? Did He provide you with extra strength to carry your burden?

If you look for that evidence of God's love, you will surely find it. As President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) said: "God's love is there for you whether or not you feel you deserve love. It is simply always there."⁵ **NE**

NOTES

1. See Jeffrey R. Holland, Oct. 1999 general conference (*Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 37).
2. Luck is defined as "the chance occurrence of situations or events either favourable or unfavourable to a person's interests" (Oxford English Dictionary, "luck," oed.com).
3. Neal A. Maxwell, "Brim with Joy" (Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 23, 1996), 2, speeches.byu.edu.
4. Ronald A. Rasband, Oct. 2017 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 55).
5. Thomas S. Monson, "We Never Walk Alone," Oct. 2013 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 124).



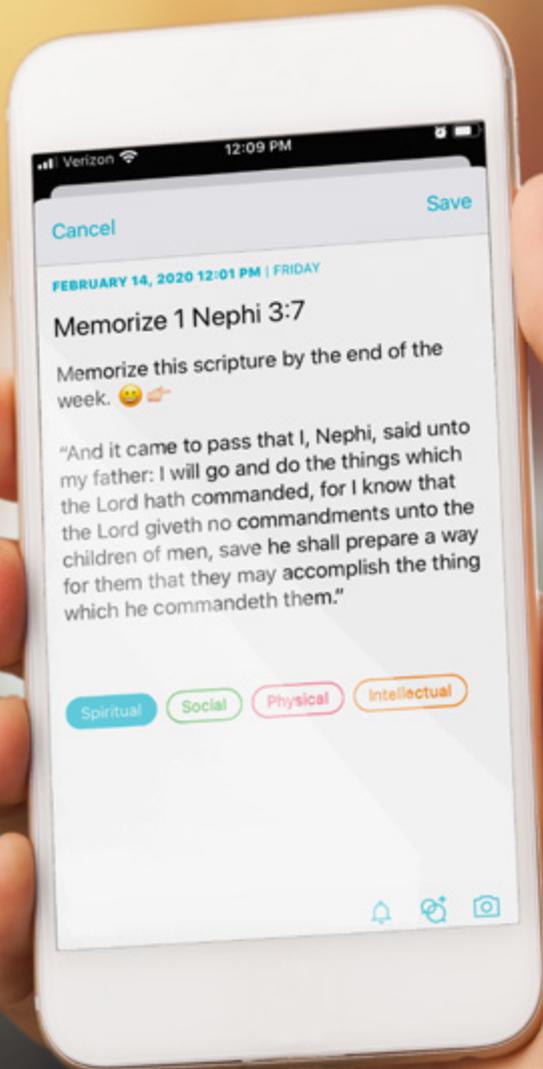
Going for the Goals

One of the best things about the Gospel Living app is how easy it is to make goals! Here's a quick refresher on how to use it:

GOSPEL

LIVING

APP



STEP 1: Go to "My Life."

STEP 2: Click on the blue + button.

STEP 3: Select "Create New Goal."

STEP 4: Write your goal in the space provided.

STEP 5: Set a reminder.

STEP 6: Save your goal.

OTHER FEATURES

Categories: You can assign categories to your goal. Is your goal spiritual, social, intellectual, and/or social?

Reminders: You can set one-time or repeated reminders that can remind you daily, weekly, or monthly. These will show up in your Today tab for you to check off.

Share: You can share your goal with any of your circles, such as your household, class, or quorum.

Photo: If you want to make your goal more visually inspiring, you can add a photo to it! You can take a picture in the app or upload one from your library.

Progress bar: If you set an end date for a goal, it will appear with a progress bar. Each day you check off your goal, the progress bar will move forward.

CONNECT

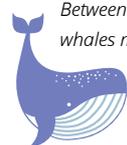


DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

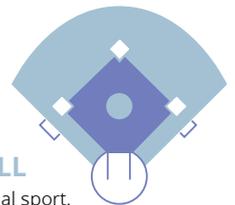


THE OLDEST UNIVERSITY
in the Western Hemisphere is in Santo Domingo. It was founded in 1538!

WINTER HOME OF HUMPBACK WHALES



Between 2,000 and 3,000 whales migrate to the warm water to breed each year.



BASEBALL
is the national sport.

ADRIANA T.,

17, Dominican Republic

More than anything, I love to cook. I make pastries, cupcakes, little cookies, meat and rice dishes—anything, really! I also like to teach classes. I love it whenever I'm invited to teach a Young Women class.

I came to the FSJ conference because I had a question I wanted answered. I have a scholarship to go to college, but I feel that I should serve a mission. If I go, I'll lose my scholarship. But if I stay and become a teacher, I can work and pay for my schooling at the same time. During FSJ, one sister talked about her patriarchal blessing. I'm preparing to receive my own patriarchal blessing now, and I hope that when I receive it, I will know better what Heavenly Father has planned for me. I love the youth programs and FSJ because they strengthen youth. Because the truth is, we all need peace.

For a while after I was baptized, I would stop going to church, then go back for a while, then stop again. But members of the ward visited me and invited me to come back. They told me the Church and the members missed and needed me. I decided to come back, and I've been active ever since. I realized how much I needed the Church. I can pray to Heavenly Father and feel good, and I can feel the Spirit. And so here I am!



JAMESON P.,

17, Philippines

Growing up, I've loved immersing myself in athletics. I even played as part of the mayor's team in our local basketball games. Recently I've also been more engaged with music. The Church has not only strengthened me spiritually, but it has also further developed my interest in these things. Now, as I continue to play sports and share my talent of singing along with other friends, I am more strengthened to use my talents and skills to invite others to come unto Christ.



HANNAH M.,

15, Utah, USA

Hi! My name is Hannah. I do theatre and play soccer! I do lots of plays and musicals and get to help out in my school's drama department. I also LOVE the temple, and for my birthday I got to go to my favorite temple, the Manti Temple! I have a lot of rehearsals, and I know when I go to the temple it keeps me calm, makes me happy, and helps me through tough times—and long rehearsals!

ONE TEMPLE

The Santo Domingo Dominican Republic Temple—the first in the Caribbean.



FIRST MISSIONARIES

came in 1978.



COCOA

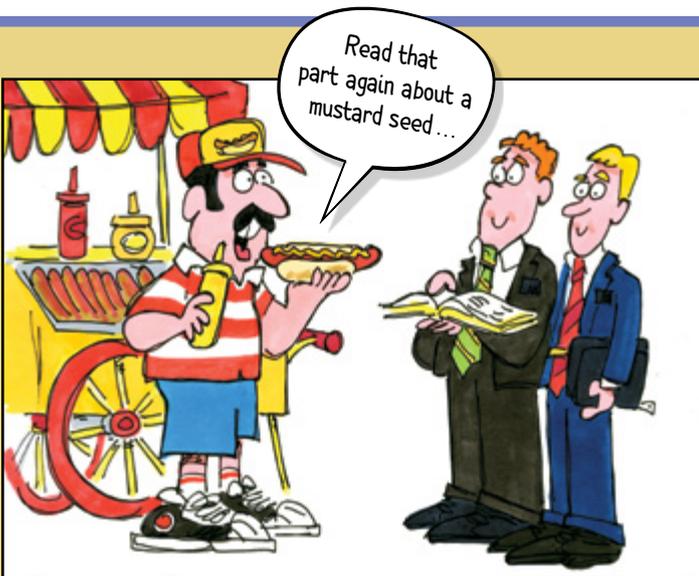
The country is one of the top producers of cocoa in the world.



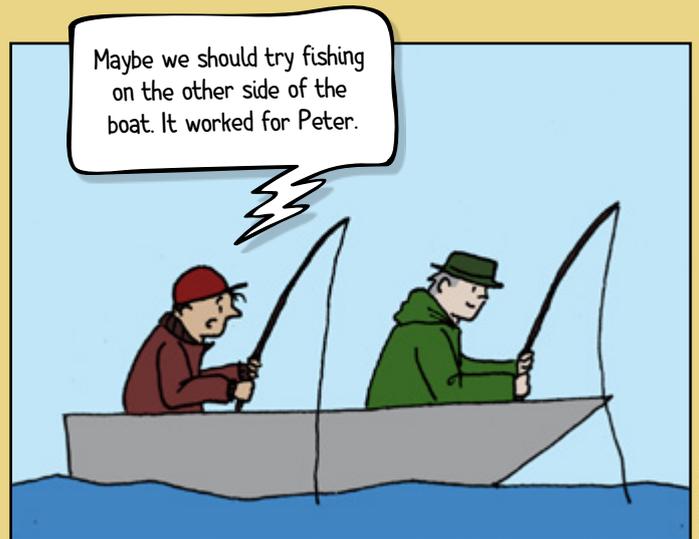
FUN STOP

A Keen Eye Doth Deception Defy

These pictures are pretending to be exactly the same. But you're too cunning to be fooled by such blatant trickery. **Can you spot all 10 differences?**



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY



SUMMER BIRD

Hink Pink Think

A hink pink is a rhyming answer to a riddle. For example, what might you call a paperback thief? A book crook! Too easy? Try this one: When a cat or dog quickly and gently reaches to touch a male pioneer's headgear made of dried grain stalks. A straw hat paw pat. (Groaning and eye-rolling are encouraged at all times when solving hink pinks.) **Can you figure out the rest?**



- 1 A job fixing broken pipes and leaky faucets, but only during the hottest months of the year.

- 2 Wheat, rice, barley, rye, oats, millet, sorghum, and corn planted in the broad, unbroken expanse in the middle of the United States.

- 3 What someone selling cobs of corn might yell to a territory's first settlers.
" _____, _____!"
- 4 The bottom two removable compartments of your dresser (right under the folded t-shirts) that you set aside for storing chocolate bars, graham crackers, and marshmallows in order to be ready for a cookout at a moment's notice.

- 5 The initial formation of a music group that performs inside of a manually pulled carriage.

- 6 What you're left with after a severe windstorm forces your camping dwelling to lean a bit to one side.

- 7 Something poisonous to large draft animals.

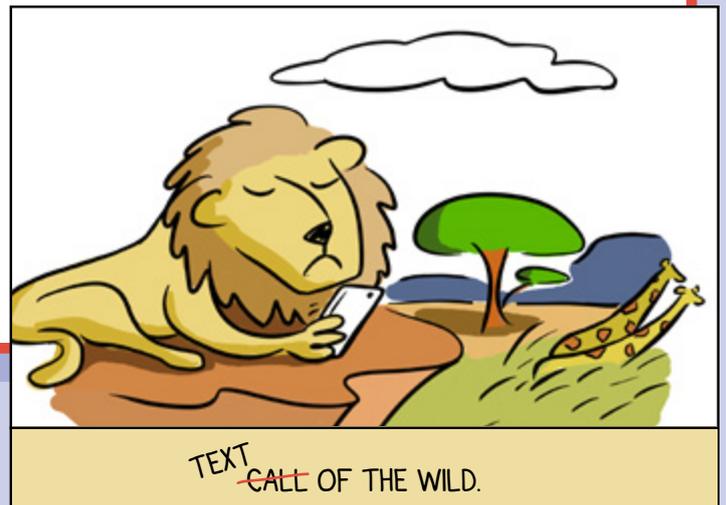
- 8 When you see a shooting star the night before a lake outing, and you use the occasion to ask the universe to help you catch some trout in the morning.

- 9 A horse- or ox-drawn conveyance for scaly, fire-breathing monsters.

- 10 What a large male red deer curls up inside, zips up to his chin, and then sleeps through the night in after crying himself to sleep from a bad day.

- 11 Advanced machinery built in service of a long, arduous journey (such as the wagon odometer invented by William Clayton and Orson Pratt).

- 12 The worm who slept in, missed the early bird, but got snatched up and used on a hook anyway.



Answers on page 45.



“It’s so easy to play on my phone rather than do homework or study the scriptures. How can I stay focused?”



“I know our greatest happiness comes as we tune in to the Lord (see Alma 37:37) and to those things which bring a lasting reward. . . . I urge each of us to take those things which rob us of precious time and determine to be their master, rather than allowing them through their addictive nature to be the master of us.”

Elder Ian S. Ardern of the Seventy, Oct. 2011 general conference (Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2011, 32).



Use Reminders

Put a reminder on your phone for when you get home so you don’t get distracted by it. Set a

certain time for homework and scripture study and keep those habits to get the important things done first.

Megan J., 15, Utah, USA



Make a Schedule

I make a schedule for everything—reading the scriptures, my prayers, and my time to use

my cell phone. I know that as I do the things Christ wants me to first, other things will be added. Don’t forget that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ love you and want you to live in the world, not of the world, as you distinguish right from wrong.

Letícia C., 14, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil



Follow Church Accounts

I personally follow lots of Church accounts. So even though I spend a lot of time

on Facebook, Instagram, or other social media, it’s not time-wasting because I read uplifting and inspiring words. I even get updated with new happenings in the Church, and I also get answers to my questions.

Jamille T., 19, Tarlac, Philippines



Delete the Distractions

Delete all your social media apps or anything that is distracting you. I have found that when you don’t have

access to those apps, you focus more on what’s important. It not only helped me in my studies, but I found myself less hooked on social media and more interested in the real world.

Michael S., 21, California, USA



Prioritize

It's easy to lose a lot of time using social media and end up leaving things like scripture study and schoolwork for later. But it's clear this isn't using our time how we should. We can never forget that regular scripture study is much more important than an entire afternoon spent on Facebook or other social media. So when we have to make our choices, we should remember to prioritize what is most important and not things that are only momentary.

Kailani R., 17, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

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



Why do we fast? What is the purpose of fasting?

Fasting (going without food and drink for a period of time) is an ancient practice. We believe it must have existed among believers from the very beginning. The purposes of fasting include:

- Developing spiritual strength, including resisting temptation.
- Developing self-mastery, making our spirits masters of our bodies.
- Showing humility.
- Showing sorrow.
- Enhancing prayer.
- Obtaining spiritual knowledge and testimony.
- Obtaining spiritual guidance.
- Helping the needy.

As President Russell M. Nelson has taught: "Fasting helps your spirit to develop dominance over your physical appetites. Fasting also increases your access to heaven's help, as it intensifies your prayers" (Oct. 2013 general conference

[*Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 107]).

In addition, the law of the fast also has the purpose of helping those in need (see Isaiah 58:3-11). Today, we are asked to skip two meals and give an offering of at least the value of those meals. Our generous fast offerings go directly to helping the poor and needy, and we are blessed as well.

As President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency has taught, "In [the Lord's] Church we are invited to help Him as He cares for the poor in His way, and . . . He promises everlasting blessings will come from our helping Him" ("Is Not This the Fast That I Have Chosen?" Apr. 2015 general conference [*Ensign or Liahona*, May 2015, 25]).

To learn more about fasting, see Gospel Topics, "Fasting and Fast Offerings," topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org; Bible Dictionary, "Fasts."

What Do You Think?

How can I stop questioning my self-worth?

Send your answer and photo by August 15, 2020.

Go to newera.lds.org, click "Submit Your Work." Sign in with your Church Account and then select "New Era" under "Choose Magazine." Click "Add File" to select your file and photos, and then click "Submit" to upload and send us your file. Or send an email to newera@ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.

FUN STOP ANSWERS (from pages 42-43): A keen eye both deception deity: blue spot on graffiti, color on graffiti, spot on dog's head, color on sunglasses, mustache, center of paisley pattern on bandana, spots on dog's legs, frog under skateboard, cat's tongue, skateboard wheels, **Hink Pink Think:** 1. summer plumber 2. Great Plains eight grains 3. "Buy an ear, pioneer!" 4. smores drawers 5. handcart band start 6. bent tent 7. oxen toxin 8. fish wish 9. dragon wagon 10. weeping stag sleeping bag 11. trek tech 12. late bait.



A PERSISTENT PROMPTING

ONE DAY WHILE doing missionary work in the dusty streets of Kenya, my companion and I talked to a lady. She accepted the pamphlet we gave her but told us not to return.

A few days later we found ourselves on that same street, and we had a prompting to follow up with her. I asked myself, “Why are we going back when she told us not to return?” But we obeyed the prompting.

She was surprised when we got there but said that she was happy to see us. We began to teach

“As we honor our covenants and keep the commandments, as we strive ever more consistently to do good and to become better, we can walk with the confidence that God will guide our steps.”

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve, “The Spirit of Revelation,” Apr. 2011 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 90).

a lesson, but it soon turned into an argument. My companion and I closed the lesson with a prayer and left, immediately agreeing not to go back. But the very next day, we *again* had a strong prompting to return. I didn’t want to go back, but my companion said we should listen to the Spirit. So I swallowed my pride, and we went back. When we got there, I was shocked. The lady seemed like a different person. Her countenance had changed, and she was willing to listen to what we had to say. During our next visit, she asked us when she could be baptized.

Four weeks later, she was baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. After her confirmation, she embraced us and told us that she was ever so grateful we came back. I’ve learned that we should always listen to and act on promptings. Heavenly Father does prepare His children to receive the gospel, and He uses all of us to find them through the Holy Ghost.

Leaha M., KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

How can I better follow spiritual promptings?

1. **Pray for guidance.**
The Lord will direct you through the Holy Spirit (see Alma 37:37).
2. **Be humble.**
Meekness invites the Spirit (see Moroni 8:26).
3. **Don’t hesitate.**
The natural man tempts you to put off or ignore promptings (see Mosiah 3:19). Don’t second-guess when a good thought comes!
4. **Act immediately.**
Commit to always respond immediately to promptings from the Spirit (see Thomas S. Monson, “The Spirit Giveth Life,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 68–70).

THE REASON FOR RULES

I WAS EXCITED to go to youth conference, but then I found out there were lots of rules—for example, no cell phones and no going outside alone. It seemed like adults were constantly keeping an eye on us. But I had a great time, made a lot of friends, worked on a service project, and learned about the gospel.

During a testimony meeting on the last day of youth conference, one of the leaders talked about how much he loves us, the youth in the stake.

If you love us, why do we have so many restrictions here? I thought. At that same moment, like he could read my mind, he answered my question.

Leaders put rules in place, he said, not to annoy us but for our safety. The moment he said that, I was touched by the Spirit. I understood that Heavenly Father gives us commandments for the same reason. They are not to annoy us; they are to help us return safely to Him (see Doctrine and Covenants 82:8–10).

The Holy Ghost touched me and helped me to know that this is true.

Serge P., Île-de-France, France

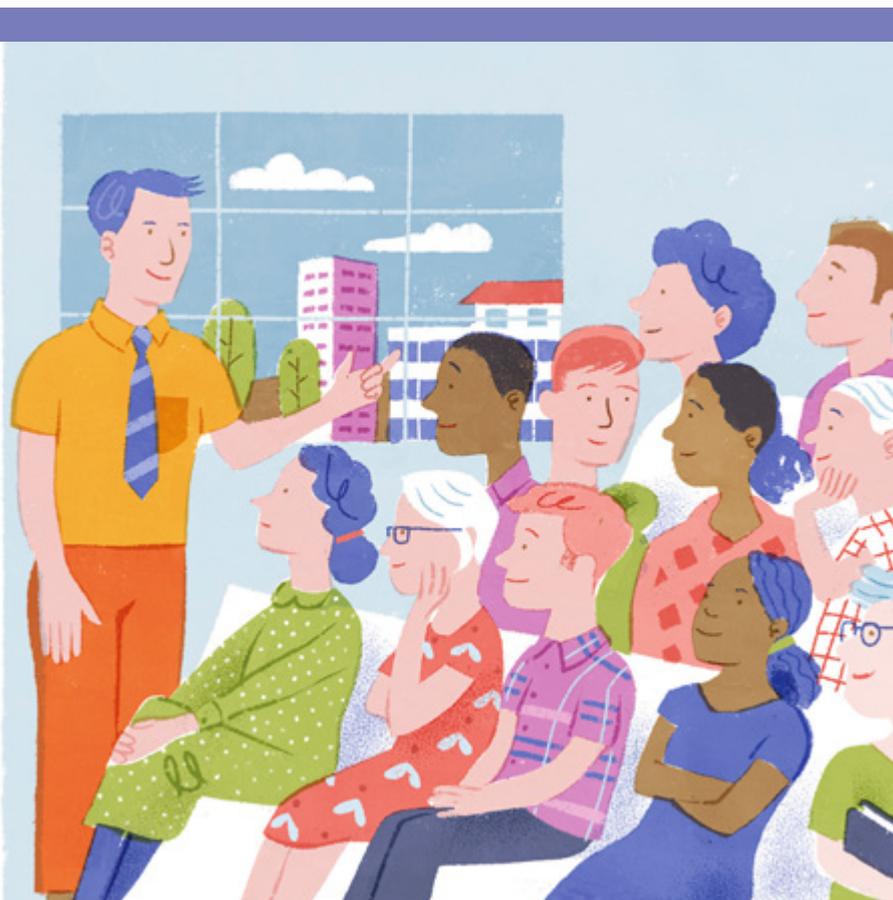


WHEN COULD I JOIN THE CHURCH?

WHEN I WAS AROUND the age of five, my dad lost faith and decided to leave the Church. It was really hard, especially when I turned eight. I was so excited to get baptized, but then my dad said no. He wanted me to wait until I was older so that I really knew that I wanted to commit. And so I watched as my friends were baptized. I remember being confused—if the Church was true, why was I being stopped from getting baptized? As a teenager, it was so hard seeing all the youth go to the temple because I wanted to go so badly. It was hard not being able to take part, but I always knew I would get my chance!

In May 2019, I was finally baptized at age 16. I remembered the many experiences I've had feeling the pure joy of the gospel and gaining a testimony. It was a very special experience, and through all the troubles I had getting to that day, I knew with all my heart that the gospel is true and always has been.

Trinity C., Colorado, USA



Testimony and Conversion

By Elder David A. Bednar
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

From an October 2012 general conference address.

An important lesson about the connection between testimony and conversion is evident in the missionary labors of the sons of Mosiah. “As many as were brought to the knowledge of the truth, through the preaching of Ammon and his brethren, according to the spirit of revelation and of prophecy, and the power of God working miracles in them—yea, . . . as the Lord liveth, as many of the Lamanites as believed in their preaching, and were converted unto the Lord, never did fall away.

“For they became a righteous people; they did lay down the weapons of their rebellion, that they did not fight against God any more. . . .

“Now, these are they who were converted unto the Lord” (Alma 23:6–8).

Two major elements are described in these verses: (1) *the knowledge of the truth*, which may be interpreted as a testimony, and (2) *converted unto the Lord*, which I understand to be conversion to the Savior and His gospel. Thus, the powerful combination of both testimony and conversion unto the Lord produced firmness and steadfastness and provided spiritual protection.

A testimony is spiritual knowledge of truth obtained by the power of the Holy Ghost. Continuing conversion is constant devotion to the revealed truth we have received—with a heart that is willing and for righteous reasons. Knowing that the gospel is true is the essence of a testimony. Consistently being true to the gospel is the essence of conversion. We should know the gospel is true and be true to the gospel.

To set aside cherished “weapons of rebellion” such as selfishness, pride, and disobedience requires more than merely believing and knowing. Conviction, humility, repentance, and submissiveness precede the abandonment of our weapons of rebellion. Do you and I still possess weapons of rebellion that keep us from becoming converted unto the Lord? If so, then we need to repent now.

I promise that as we come to a knowledge of the truth and are converted unto the Lord, we will remain firm and steadfast and never fall away. **NE**

Amulek and Alma



They were **powerful missionary** companions who taught the gospel to many people.



God gave them power so they **couldn't be killed** or kept in prison.



Amulek was converted after an angel told him to **receive a prophet** (Alma) into his house.



Alma compared **faith in God's word** to planting a seed that will grow as we nourish it.

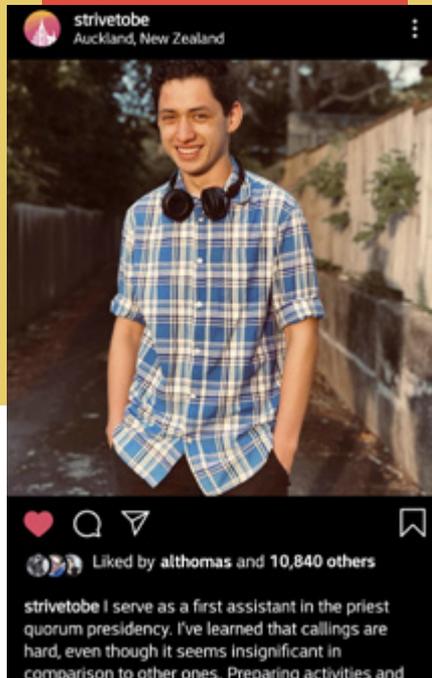


Alma had a **mighty change of heart** after being visited by an angel of God. (See Alma 8–16, 31–36.)



Strive to Be

Insta-Inspired!

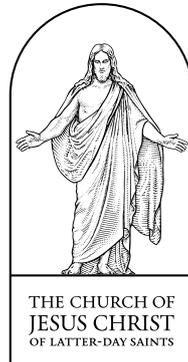


@StriveToBe

Want an inspiring breath of fresh air in your Instagram feed? The @StriveToBe Instagram is all about youth, for youth.

- Get pictures, testimonies, and stories of youth from around the world who are striving to be more like Jesus Christ.
- Get wallpapers.
- Get music for youth.
- Get a youth angle on what you're studying in the scriptures for *Come, Follow Me*.

See it all at the @StriveToBe Instagram.



THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS