

THE

New Era

JUNE

2002

**SPECIAL ISSUE:
BUILDING
YOUR
TESTIMONY**

**A MATTER OF
SURVIVAL,
P. 8**

**POWERFUL
HOW-TO'S,
P. 40**



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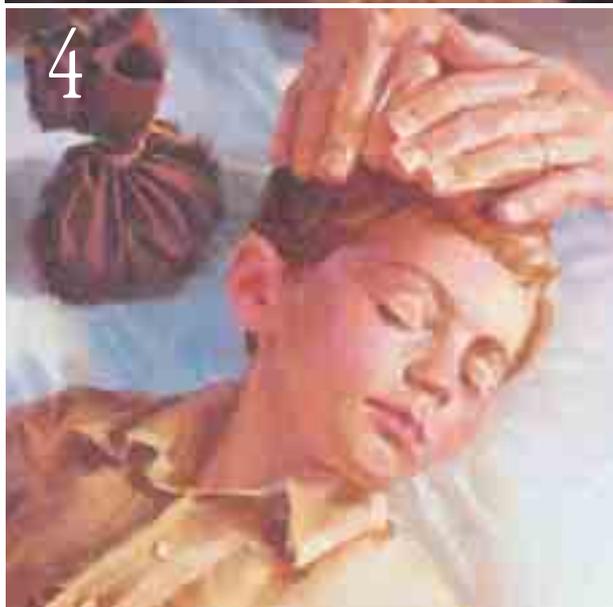
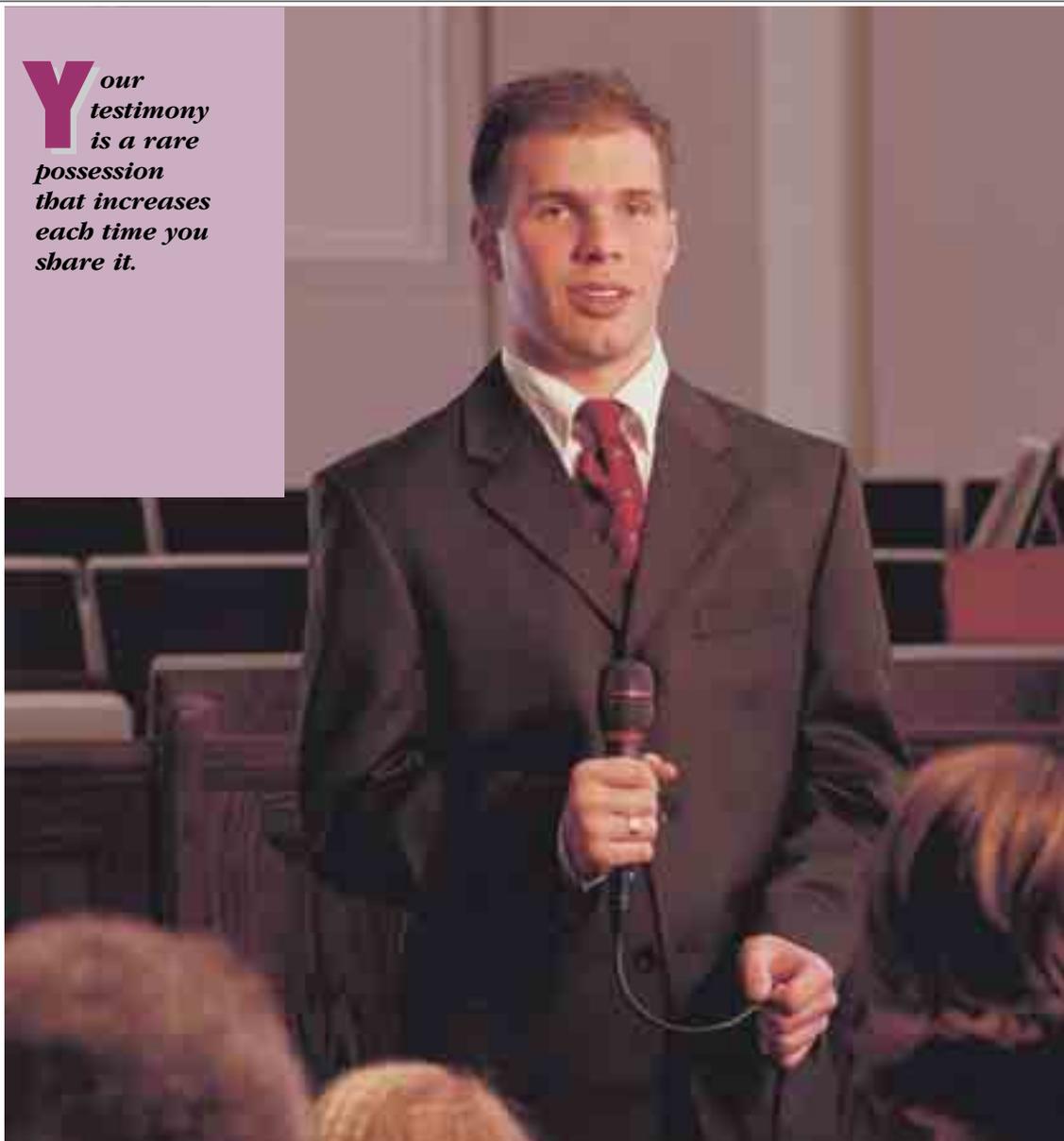
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Cover: *Bearing your
testimony is the outward
expression of something
wonderful that has
happened inside you.*

*Cover photography:
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Your
testimony
is a rare
possession
that increases
each time you
share it.



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SPECIAL WITNESSES

Our apostles and prophets have the responsibility to bear special witness of the Savior. Here are testimonies from the First Presidency of the Church.



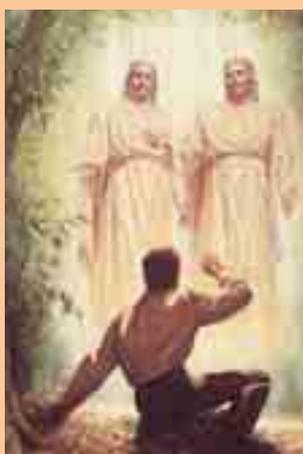
President Gordon B. Hinckley

Of all the things for which I feel grateful . . . one stands out preeminently. That is a living testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Almighty God, the

Prince of Peace, the Holy One. . . .

The earliest instance of which I have recollection of spiritual feelings was when I was about five years of age, a very small boy. I was crying from the pain of an earache. There were no wonder drugs at the time. . . . My mother prepared a bag of table salt and put it on the stove to warm. My father softly put his hands upon my head and gave me a blessing, rebuking the pain and the illness by authority of the holy priesthood and in the name of Jesus Christ. He then took me tenderly in his arms and placed the bag of warm salt at my ear. The pain subsided and left. I fell asleep in my father’s secure embrace. As I was falling asleep, the words of his administration floated through my mind. That is the earliest remembrance I have of the exercise of the authority of the priesthood in the name of the Lord. . . .

That testimony grew in my heart as a missionary when I read the New Testament and the Book of Mormon,



“With all my heart and the fervency of my soul, I testify as a special witness that God does live. Jesus is His Son, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh.”

—President Thomas S. Monson

which further bore witness of Him. That knowledge became the foundation of my life, standing on the footings of the answered prayers of my childhood. . . .

Jesus is my friend. . . . He is my Savior and my Redeemer. . . . He is “the way, the truth, and the life” and “no man cometh unto the Father, but by [Him]” (John 14:6).

Gratefully, and with love undiminished, I bear witness of these things in His Holy name, even the name of Jesus the Christ, amen (*Ensign*, May 2000, 69–71).



President Thomas S. Monson

This loving God who introduced His crucified and resurrected Son was not a God lacking in body, parts, or passions—the God of a man-made

philosophy. Rather, God our Father has ears with which to hear our prayers. He has eyes with which to see our actions. He has a mouth with which to speak to us. He has a heart with which to feel compassion and love. He is real. He is living. We are His children, made in His image. We look like Him, and He looks like us. . . .

With all my heart and the fervency of my soul, I testify as a special witness that God does live. Jesus is His Son, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. He is our Redeemer; He is our mediator with the Father. He it was who died on the cross to atone for our sins. He became



His father gave him a priesthood blessing and took him tenderly in his arms. That was the earliest remembrance he had of the exercise of the priesthood in the name of the Lord. That testimony grew in President Gordon B. Hinckley's heart.



the firstfruits of the Resurrection. “Oh, sweet the joy this sentence gives: ‘I know that my Redeemer lives!’” (*Hymns* no. 136) (*Ensign*, Apr. 1990, 6).



President James E. Faust

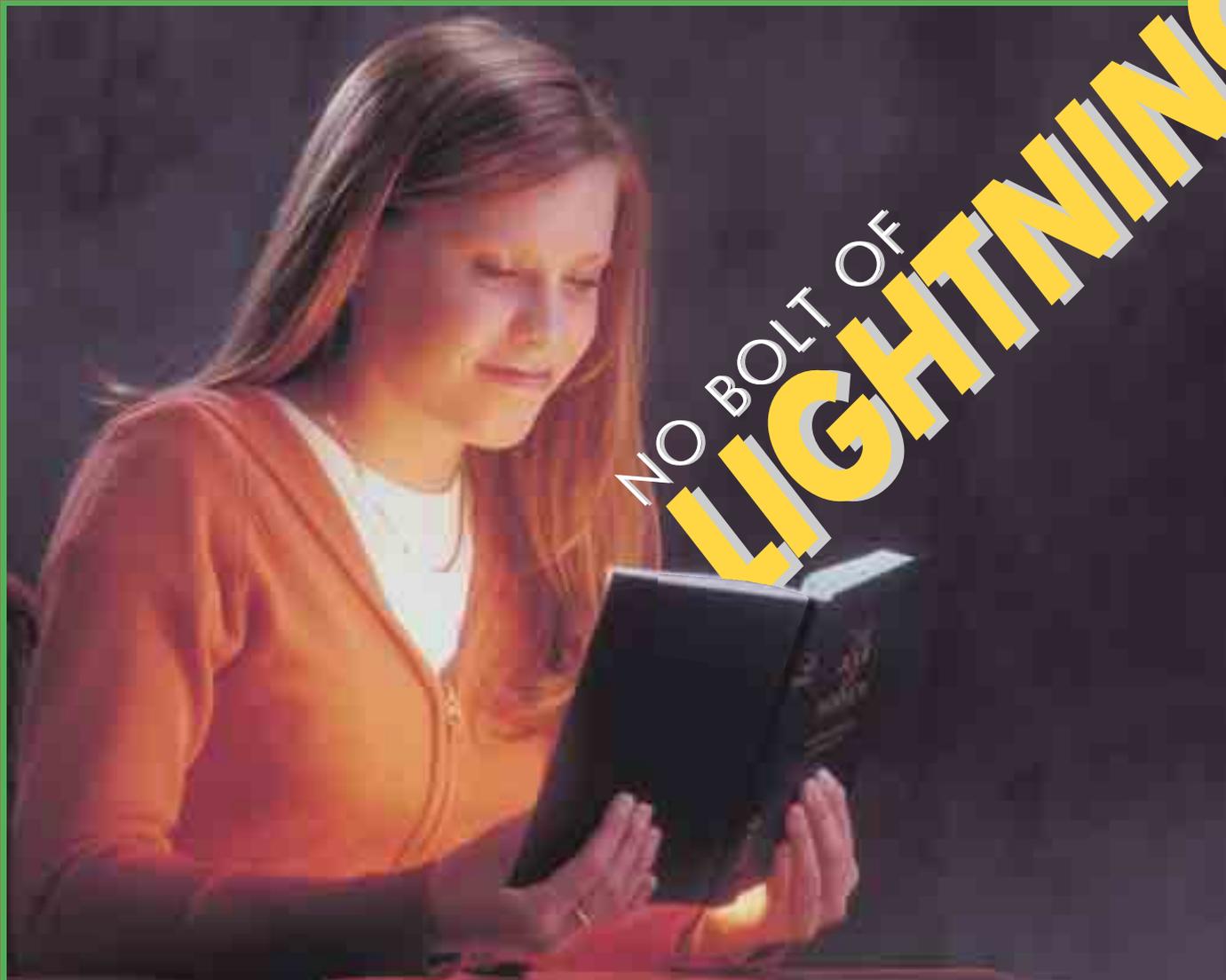
As I look back over my life, I recognize one source of singular strength and blessing. It is my testimony and knowledge that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind. I am profoundly grateful that all of my life I have had a simple faith that Jesus is the Christ. That witness has been confirmed to me hundreds of times. It is the crowning knowledge of my soul. It is the spiritual light of my being. It is the

All his life President James E. Faust has had a simple faith that Jesus is the Christ. His grandmother comforted him and told him that Jesus was watching over us. He felt it was true then, and he still believes it now.

cornerstone of my life.

As one of the least among you but in my calling as one of His Apostles, I testify of the Christ as our Savior and the Redeemer of the world. . . .

The first cornerstone of my testimony was laid a long time ago. One of my early recollections was having a frightening nightmare as a small child. I still remember it vividly. I must have screamed in fright during the night. My grandmother woke me up. I was crying, and she took me in her arms, hugged me, and comforted me. She got a bowl of some of my favorite rice pudding that was left over from dinner, and I sat on her lap as she spoon-fed me. She told me that we were safe in our house because Jesus was watching over us. I felt it was true then, and I still believe it now. I was comforted in both body and soul and went peacefully back to bed, assured of the divine reality that Jesus does watch over us (*Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 53). **NE**



NO BOLT OF LIGHTNING

I think some people wait for an experience to show them that they have a true testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ when really they have had a testimony all along and just didn't realize it. I was one of those people.

I never questioned the truthfulness of the Church, but I hadn't had that moment—that single experience—most Church members live their whole lives to have. I didn't know what I expected: a bolt of lightning, an angel, or a near-death experience.

Fortunately it didn't take something like almost dying to show me I had a testimony of this gospel. For me, it was just a moment of realization while reading my scriptures. I don't recall the passage or the book, but I remember how I felt. It was the same feeling I got while singing a hymn, or speaking to my

Heavenly Father in prayer, or sitting in sacrament meeting listening to the speakers. I had never thought much of that feeling before, but now it seemed it was the only thing that mattered. Again and again, the Spirit had borne witness to me of the truthfulness of the Church.

Now, the simple knowledge that I had of the gospel has become far more to me than just a religion I am a part of. It is everything. It is who I am and what I am. It affects every decision I make. I know I am a child of God. I know my Savior, Jesus Christ, came to earth to atone for all our sins. I know Joseph Smith spoke to our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ face to face. I know this is the true gospel. I know it because I have felt it, and it is only through the Church that I can feel that gift of the Spirit.

No bolt of lightning, no heavenly angel, I just know. **NE**

I wasn't that I doubted—I just hadn't had that amazing experience I thought everyone ought to have. Then it came to me.

By Mandy L. Miller

Spiritual **BONFIRES** of **TESTIMONY**



By Elder
Joseph B. Wirthlin
Of the Quorum of the
Twelve

We are all vulnerable to attack. Are you protected by a bonfire or by a mere candle?

Long ago, travelers used bonfires to keep wolves away. Today, spiritual wolves threaten. Is your testimony burning bright?

Many years ago, large packs of wolves roamed the countryside in Ukraine, making travel in that part of the world very dangerous. These wolf packs were fearless. They were not intimidated by people nor by any of the weapons available at that time. The only thing that seemed to frighten them was fire. Consequently, travelers who found themselves away from cities developed the common practice of building a large bonfire and keeping it burning through the night. As long as the fire burned brightly, the wolves stayed away. But if it were allowed to burn out and die, the wolves would move in for an attack. Travelers understood that building and maintaining a roaring bonfire was not just a matter of convenience or comfort; it was a matter of survival (see *Ensign*, May 1972, 25).

Beware of wolves

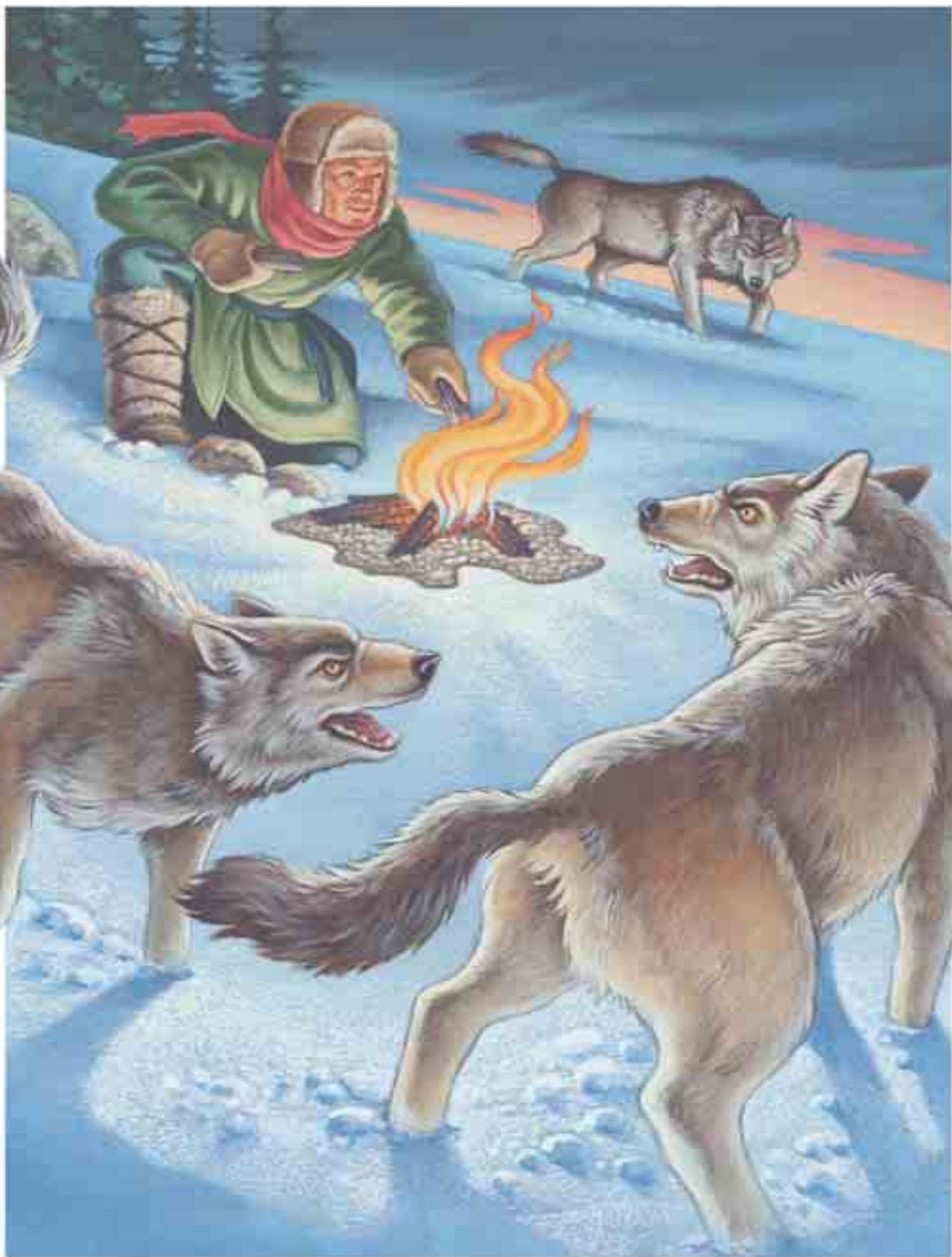
We do not have to protect ourselves from wolf packs as we travel the road of life today, but, in a spiritual sense, we do

face the devious wolves of Satan in the forms of temptation, evil, and sin. We live in dangerous times when these ravenous wolves roam the spiritual countryside in search of those who may be weak in faith or feeble in their conviction. Peter described our “adversary the devil, as a roaring lion [that] walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). The Lord told the Prophet Joseph Smith that “enemies prow around thee like wolves for the blood of the lamb” (D&C 122:6). We are all vulnerable to attack. However, we can fortify ourselves with the protection provided by a burning testimony that, like a bonfire, has been built adequately and maintained carefully.

Unfortunately, some in the Church may believe sincerely that their testimony is a raging bonfire when it really is little more than the faint flickering of a candle. Their faithfulness has more to do with habit than holiness, and their pursuit of personal righteousness almost always takes a backseat to their pursuit of personal interests and pleasure. With such a feeble light of testimony for protection, these travelers on life’s highways are easy prey for the wolves of the adversary.

Peter’s testimony

The Savior understood that many of



A fire remains strong when it has fuel. Faith in Jesus Christ fuels the bonfire of testimony.

His followers would struggle under the rigors of true discipleship; consequently, He taught them how to build burning testimonies. The night before His crucifixion, Jesus shared the feast of the Passover with His twelve beloved Apostles, most of whom had been with Him throughout His ministry. At one point during this sacred evening, the Lord looked upon Peter, His senior Apostle and loyal friend. Knowing what would be required of Peter after the Ascension, the Lord said: “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

“But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy

brethren” (Luke 22:31–32).

Imagine for a moment that you are Peter. Three years ago a holy stranger invited you to set aside your fishing boat and nets, your means of support for yourself and your family, and then asked you to follow Him. You did so without hesitation, and for three years you have continued to follow and to love and support and sustain Him. You have seen Him confound the wise, comfort the weary and the afflicted, heal the sick, and raise the dead to life. You have seen Him conquer evil spirits, calm the troubled seas, and for a few minutes, at least, you even walked on the water toward Him. You were at His side when Moses and Elias appeared to Him; you saw Him transfigured before your very eyes. You have committed your entire life to Him. And now He questions you by instructing you to strengthen your brethren “when thou art converted.”

Peter was surprised. He assured the Lord, “I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death” (Luke 22:33). But Jesus knew and understood. He was not condemning Peter for a lack of conviction; Peter demonstrated his conviction during the Lord’s arrest. Rather, the Savior was telling Peter what he needed to do when his testimony became more secure.

Building your bonfire

As He knew Peter, and me when our testimonies may not be the brightly burning bonfires you may think they are or want them to be. Perhaps in some cases, that testimony is constructed unwisely, built on a social foundation of programs and personalities instead of the sure rock of personal revelation. Or perhaps you have allowed your testimony to flicker gradually through the years of disuse and spiritual complacency.

Regardless of the reason your testimony may be growing dim, the Savior lovingly urges you to come unto Him and become strengthened in Him. Said He to Moroni: “If men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; . . . for if they humble



themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them” (Ether 12:27).

Some people are weak in their faith and testimonies but are not even aware of how precarious their situation is. Many of them likely would be offended at the suggestion. They raise their right hand to sustain Church leaders and then murmur and complain when a decision does not square with their way of thinking. They claim to be obedient to God’s commandments but do not feel at all uncomfortable about purchasing food at the store on Sunday and then asking the Lord to bless it. Some say they would give their lives for the Lord, yet they refuse to serve in the nursery.

The Savior spoke very explicitly about people who “draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me” (Isa. 29:13). His words were: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

“And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt. 7:21–23).

None would want to hear the Lord speak such disappointing words of you. That is why you need to do everything in your power to be absolutely certain that your spiritual bonfire of testimony is burning brightly enough to keep the wolves of darkness away. You can always use more dry kindling. As the Apostle Paul taught, each of us has “come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). None of us has progressed so far in this life that we do not need to continually fortify our testimonies.

I offer three suggestions that will fan the flame of personal testimony as a protection against the wolves of evil that are prowling all around us to threaten our spiritual security.



A solid foundation

First, make sure your testimony is built upon a solid foundation of faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ. Even though we enjoy the fellowship of the Saints and have strong feelings about the inspired programs of the Church, we must remember that we have only one sure anchor for our souls. It is stated in the words of the prophet Helaman, when he taught his sons:

“And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall” (Hel. 5:12).

Sin, on the other hand, is like a bucket of water. It leaves us vulnerable. So repentance is essential.

God has given a promise to those who build and maintain brightly burning bonfires: “Fear thou not; for I am with thee. . . .”

Perhaps you are one of the members of the Church whose first contact with the gospel came through the beautiful music of the Tabernacle Choir. Maybe your life was blessed by the Church welfare program when you followed prophetic counsel to store food and other necessities. These are

marvelous, inspired aspects of the Church that God has provided to help bring His children to Christ. However, they are implements and not ends in themselves. The ultimate focus of our devotion must properly be our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

We often hear of members who have separated themselves

from the Church because some leader, teacher, or member has said or done something to offend them. Others have had their faith shaken when the Brethren have taken a stand with which they disagree. In such cases, I wonder about the faith of those people and whether it was grounded securely in a testimony of the Lord, Jesus Christ, or merely based on their own ideas and social perceptions of what the Church and its members should be.

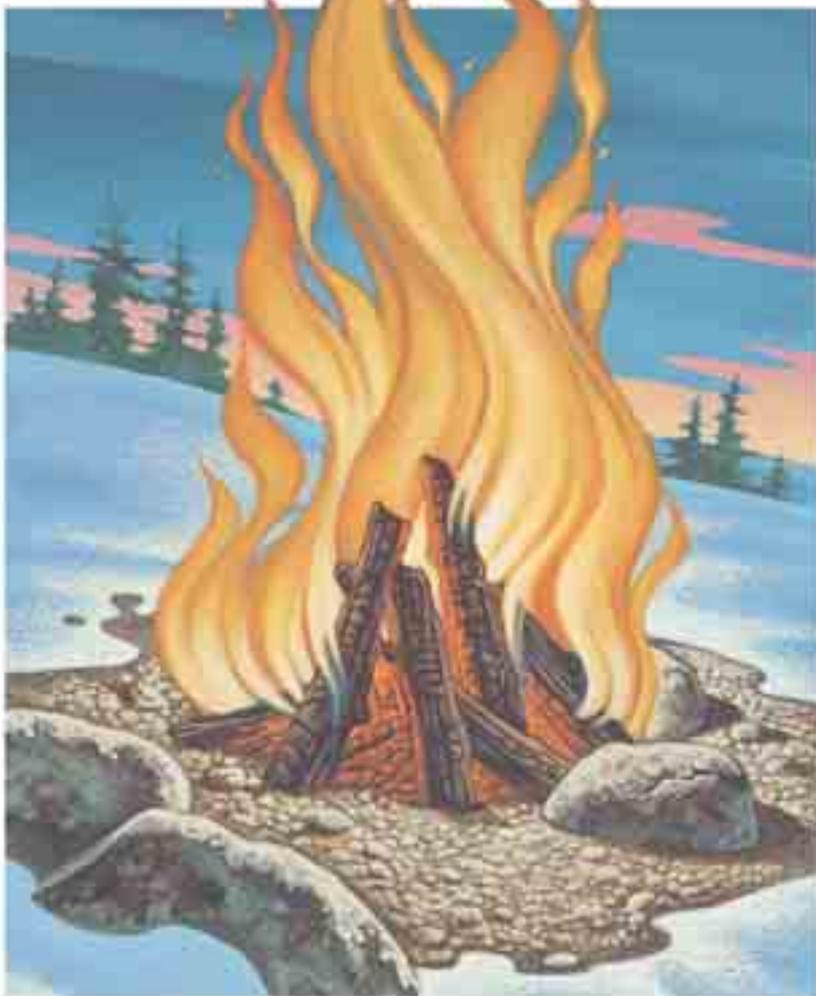
Scripture teaches us: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding” (Prov. 3:5). In His moving prayer recorded in the 17th chapter of John, the Savior taught this profound truth: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). Building a testimony on the foundation of a sincere, personal relationship with our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, and on our faith in them, should be our highest priority.

Sin is like a bucket of water

Anchored with that faith, we are ready for my second suggestion—another layer of kindling on the bonfire of testimony—it is humble, sincere repentance. Few things extinguish the fervor of the Holy Spirit in the heart of any individual more quickly than does sin. It dulls the spiritual senses, diminishes confidence and personal security, and separates the sinner from the Savior. One who carries the burden of unrepented sin is more likely to rationalize additional disobedience. The more sin is rationalized, the greater the possibility of destruction by Satan’s wolves.

Few would argue the potential spiritual risk of major sins like murder or marital infidelity. But what about the person who uses employer’s time to complete personal projects, the person who sneaks into a pornographic movie, the student who cheats at school, the person who criticizes others unfairly, or the parent who thinks family home evening is a good idea—for someone else?

The simple fact is this: anything that does not draw us closer to God takes us away from Him. We have no middle



ground, no foggy gray area where we can sin a little without suffering spiritual decline. That is why we must repent and come to Christ daily on submissive knees so that we can prevent our bonfires of testimony from being snuffed out by sin.

One true light

My third suggestion is that we follow the example of the Savior. He set the pattern.

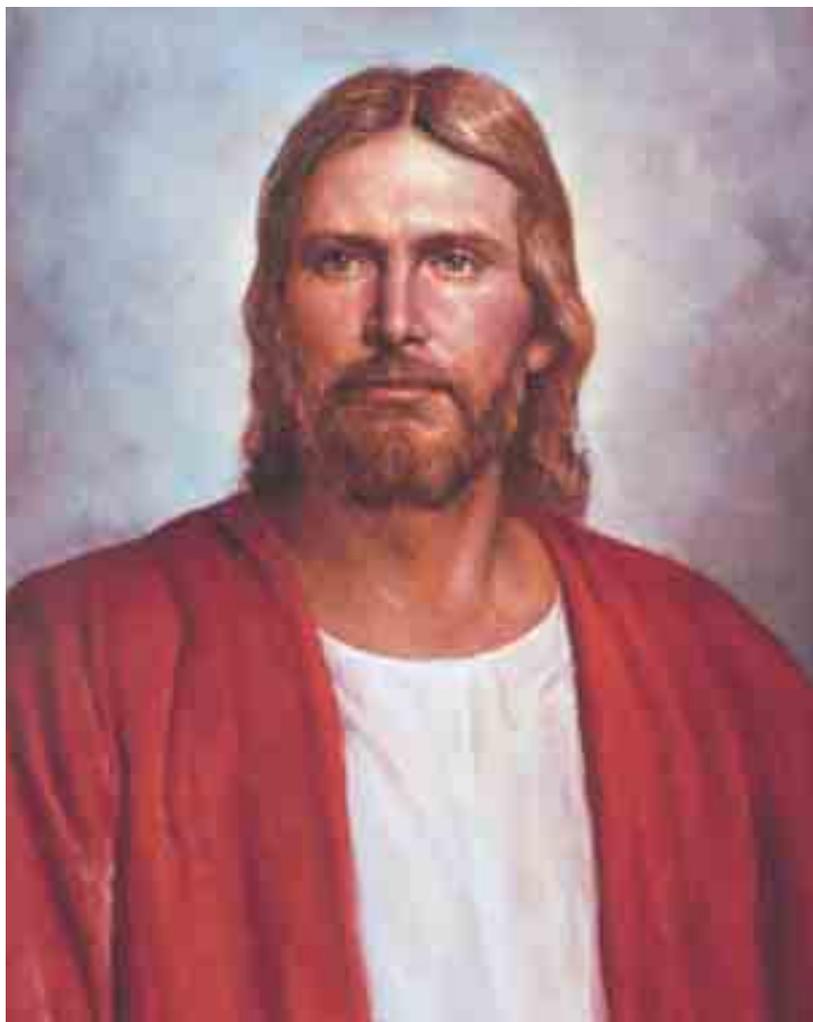
In any pursuit and under any condition, we can ask ourselves what Jesus would do and then determine our own course accordingly. For example, what sort of home teacher would the Savior be? Would He occasionally miss visiting families? Would He visit them without a message? Or would He minister to His families like the Good Shepherd that He is, with constant watch, care, and loving kindness? Deep in our hearts we know what kind of home teacher Jesus would be, just as we know what kind of bishop, teacher, Primary leader, clerk, or youth adviser He would be. Even though we could never in this life measure up completely to His standard of excellence, our attempt to do so will lead us to do far better than otherwise.

Get fired up

We can apply the same principle to other pursuits the same way. What sort of parent would Jesus be? What sort of neighbor, employer, employee, student, or friend? If we live our lives to conform as nearly as possible to the pattern the Savior has set, our testimonies will be fortified continually and our spiritual bonfires will never be reduced to embers.

We live in perilous times. The influence of Satan often appears to be unchecked and overwhelming. Remember the promise that God has given to those who build and maintain brightly burning bonfires of testimony to counter the wolves that threaten us. This is His promise: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will . . . uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isa. 41:10).

The strength of the Church lies in the depth and vitality of the personal



testimonies of its members. Firm, secure testimonies will be the difference between faithfulness and disaffection.

I bear testimony that in order for us to enjoy a happy, rewarding, and spiritual life, we must make sure that our testimonies are built upon the foundation of faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ, humble and sincere repentance, and following the example of the Savior.

I know that our Heavenly Father lives and loves each of His children. His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer. Christ's Atonement provides for all of us immortality and the possibility of eternal life, the kind of life that God lives, if we will repent of our sins and will be true and faithful in keeping the commandments. **NE**

Adapted from an October 1992 general conference address.

Above all, we must follow the example of the Savior. Under any condition, we can ask ourselves what Jesus would do and then follow that course.

My Testimony

Words by Jan Pinborough
Music by Kenneth Plain

Fervently ♩ = 92-104

1. I know my Heav'n - ly Fa - ther lives. I've seen His works; I've
 2. I know the Sav - ior died for me. He loved each child, the
 3. I know a proph - et speaks to - day. I know God heard young
 4. My tes - ti - mon - y leads me on— One step to - day and

felt His love. Each tree and flow'r, each ris - ing sun— All tes - ti - fy: He
 blind set free. With bread and fish, He fed the throng. With might - y words, He
 Jo - seph pray, Sent an - gels and a book to earth, Re - stored His truth to
 then one more— Now flick - 'ring in a cold, dark place, Now burn - ing bright - er

reigns a - bove. So when my path seems lone and dark, There
 calmed the sea. So when my heart is sick and sore In
 guide our way. So when I hear our proph - et's voice, God's
 in a storm. I trea - sure this small light of mine, For

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 use. This notice must be included on each copy made.

is a spark that lights my way. A voice comes whis - p'ring to my
 deep - est night, I feel His hand. My hope, my life His words re -
 love rings sure - ly through my soul. I'll glad - ly heed our proph - et's
 day by day I feel its glow And thank Him for such price - less

heart: "You're not a - lone; God lives to -
 store. I can re - pent and live a -
 words; They lift me up; they make me
 gifts: The things I feel, the things I

mp

day!" I have a tes - ti - mon - y.
 gain. I have a tes - ti - mon - y.
 whole. I have a tes - ti - mon - y.
 know— My pre - cious tes - ti -

1, 2, 3.

mon - y. I have a tes - ti - mon - y.

p

Q & A

*“I think I have a testimony,
but sometimes I have doubts.
Does that mean I really don’t have a testimony?
What should I do?”*

NEW ERA

There is nothing wrong with having questions about your testimony. There is a problem, however, if you don’t look for the answers to your questions, or if you feed your doubts instead of your faith.

Doubts don’t mean you do not have a testimony. Think of them as a challenge to find answers to your questions and to strengthen your testimony.

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–1995) taught that people who have honest doubts can overcome them and gain a stronger faith. “I have sympathy for young men and young women when honest doubts enter their minds and they engage in the great conflict of resolving doubts. These doubts can be resolved, if they have an honest desire to know the truth, by exercising moral, spiritual, and mental effort. They will emerge from the conflict into a firmer, stronger, larger faith because of the struggle. They have gone from a simple, trusting faith, through doubt and conflict, into a solid substantial faith which ripens into testimony” (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1960, 108).

Think of doubts as a challenge to find answers to your questions and to strengthen your testimony.

Pray to know if the Church is true. Nothing will get rid of doubts like the power of the Holy Ghost.

If you have gained a testimony, rely on the fact that your prayers were answered.

Find answers to your questions through personal scripture study and by listening to lessons taught in church and seminary.

Overcome doubts by doing your best to live the gospel.

READERS

I used to have doubts, and I thought I didn’t have a testimony. I searched and pondered the scriptures and prayed to Heavenly Father to help me gain a testimony. It was then that I realized I did, and still do, have a testimony. The best way for you to know you have a testimony is to share it. It will not only remove your doubts, but it will also strengthen your testimony and the testimonies of others.

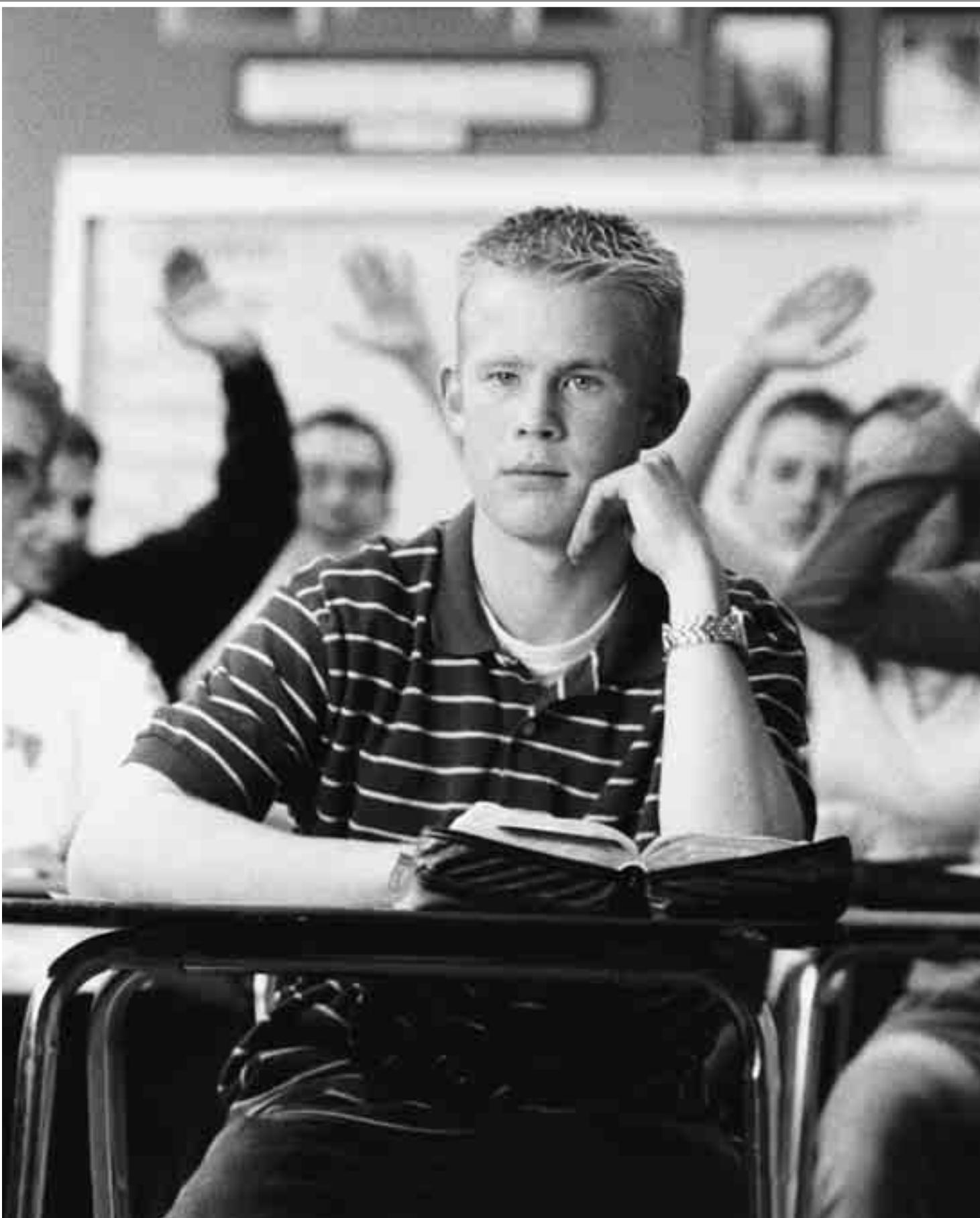
**Sister Ulita Kocovanua, 22
Fiji Suva Mission**



If you ever have doubts about your testimony, ask Heavenly Father to guide you. He will give you a comfort and a knowledge of the truth.

**Josh Miller, 13
Garland, Utah**





Your testimony can be gained or strengthened by living the gospel principle you want to gain a testimony of. If you want a testimony of tithing, pay it. If you need a testimony of prayer, get on your knees. If you want a testimony of the Word of Wisdom, obey it, and see how your life is blessed.

“Oh, if I could teach you this one principle,” said President Boyd K. Packer. “A testimony is to be found in the bearing of it! Somewhere in your quest for spiritual knowledge, there is that ‘leap of faith,’ as the philosophers call it. It is the moment when you have gone to the edge of the light and stepped into the darkness to discover that the way is lighted ahead for just a footstep or two” (*Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 54–55).

If you have never prayed and asked if the Church is true, you are missing a wonderful experience. Nothing will get rid of doubts like the power of the Holy Ghost.

Once you have gained a testimony you should always rely on the fact that your prayers were answered. But, just like your body, your testimony needs constant nourishment. **NE**

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

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Send us your answer to the question below, along with your name, age, and where you are from. Please include a snapshot of yourself that is 1 1/2 by 2 inches (4 by 5 cm) or larger.

Q&A, New Era
50 East North Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150

QUESTION

My brother isolates himself from the rest of my family. He spends most of his time with friends, and he never goes to church with us. How can I reach out to him?

Please respond by August 1, 2002.



“**D**oubts about matters of religion that arise from a lack of knowledge can be constructively resolved. The solutions are instruction, study, and prayer, which result in increased testimony, which drives out further doubts” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 22).

—Elder
Robert D. Hales
Of the Quorum of
the Twelve

I used to feel the same way you do. I didn't know if I had a testimony or not. But then I realized I wouldn't go to church or believe that Christ lived and died for me if I didn't have a testimony. Think of all the wonderful things you've been blessed with and look at the way you live your life, and you will know you have a testimony.



Heidi Olsen, 13
Bountiful, Utah

It's natural to ask questions; that's how you learn. Real doubt only comes when you start being critical. But as long as you want to believe, you will find a way. Hang in there.

Sylvia Belt, 16
Ridgecrest, California

In D&C 10:33 it says, "Satan thinketh to overpower your testimony." If you're having doubts, it could be because the roots of a strong testimony are growing deeper, and Satan wants to destroy that.



Joshua C. Irvine, 18
Riverton, Utah

In 1820 there was a 14-year-old boy who had doubts. But he searched diligently until he received an answer. It is all right to have doubts but not to remain in doubt. Search for answers while walking in faith. Sometimes you have to take a few steps into the darkness to see the light.



Elder Benjamin Traver, 20
New York Utica Mission

WITHOUT A DOUBT



YOU CAN KNOW FOR YOURSELF.
SEEK THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.
(See John 20:24–29.)

TESTIMONY ZEAL IN NEW



ZEALAND



Their country may be kind of isolated, but these teens know they can be as close to the Spirit as anyone else.

Please make sure your seat belt is fastened and adjust your seat back to its upright position. You are about to land in Auckland, New Zealand.

Giant Puhutukawa trees dot the rolling hills around the city. And the boat-flecked sea surrounding Auckland, the City of Sails, is shining in the sun. But the variety in the landscapes,

buildings, and boats is only a reflection of the colorful and varied cultures and personalities of the people of New Zealand.

The youth and other members of the Church are no exception. To the mix of the many things that make up life in New Zealand they add their own main ingredients of faith and testimony.

The first stop

In Auckland is the Panmure stake. And in that stake's boundaries is Bucklands Beach, where Bella Aniterea and Nicolas Purcell live. This morning Bella, a Mia Maid, is giving a talk on prayer in sacrament meeting. There's a good reason her dad, a member of the Howick

The
Hamilton
New

Zealand Temple is only a short walk from the netball court where Natania Katene practices. Her eyes might be on the basket, but her heart is set on the gospel and being temple worthy.

By Shanna Ghaznavi



Nicolas Purcell, Sierra Keung, and Bella Aniterea (below, left to right) are members of the Auckland Panmure Stake. The youth of the Avondale Ward (opposite page, below) get wet in the summer rain even before they enter the temple to do baptisms. It was Jordon King's (far right, below) first time doing baptisms.

Ward bishopric, asked her to give that talk. She says she has a testimony of prayer because she prays.

In preparing for her talk, Bella reread the story of Enos in the Book of Mormon. "He prayed for one whole day, and he prayed for his enemies," Bella recounts. Although she had read the story before, she had never noticed that Enos prayed for his enemies. "I haven't done that yet," Bella says, "but I think I'm going to start today."

And, if you look to the left of the pulpit where Bella bore her testimony of prayer, you'll see Nicolas, a teacher, putting away the sacrament trays after the meeting.

It might sound strange, but Nicolas's testimony of the priesthood began with a head injury. "I was Rollerblading down a hill with a mate, and I hit something and cracked the back of my head open." At 10 inches, the "crack" was more like a canyon, and the doctors said Nicolas would not pull through or he would

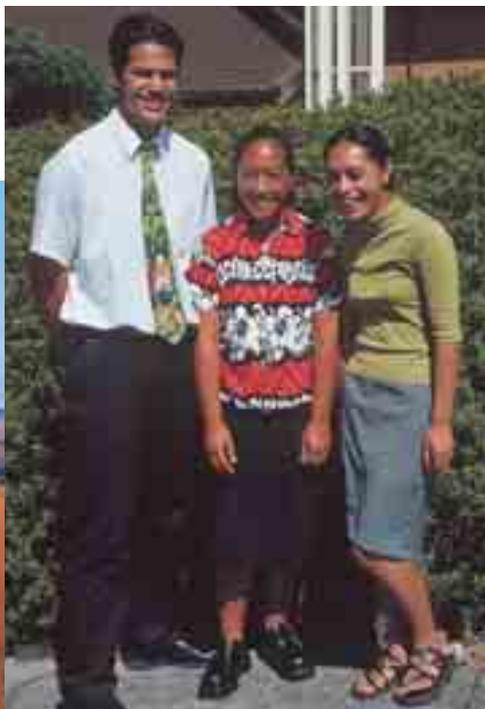
have severe brain damage. A priesthood blessing from his dad and others in the ward proved the doctors wrong. "That experience gave me quite a shining testimony of the priesthood," Nicolas says. The Lord preserved his life through the power of the priesthood, and Nicolas plans to honor his priesthood by serving a mission.

Heading south

Nicolas and Bella's stake is only a hop, skip, and a jump from the Avondale Ward in the Waterview stake. The trip to the temple from there takes a few hours. Nevertheless, the youth of that ward all pile into a minibus so they can do baptisms for the dead in the Hamilton New Zealand Temple.

The road to Hamilton twists and turns, and the Avondale youth sway from side to side as they become even more excited about going to the temple. They look out the windows of the minibus at the rain. It is like liquid sunshine. Warm and wet. There's a good reason the Maori name for New Zealand is *Aotearoa*, or the Land of the Long White Cloud.

After the baptisms, the Avondale youth go to the soggy, green temple grounds. This was Jordon King's first time doing



baptisms for the dead, but she knows how important the work is. “We were there to help the people who can’t do their own work. I got a warm feeling.” And with that warm feeling, Jordon, 12, joined the other youth in their testimonies of temple work.

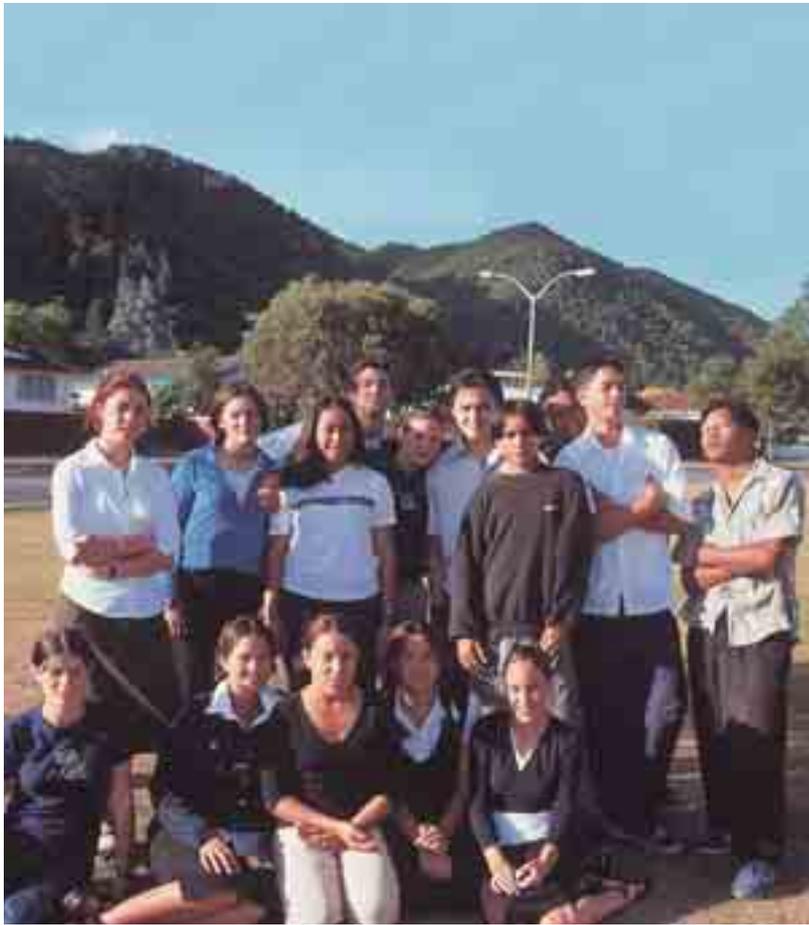
The next step

A little more than a mile from the temple is another gathering of Church youth. Church College is a high school for almost 700 students, most of whom are Latter-day Saints who live in or near Hamilton.

One of those students is Natania Katene, 17. You’ll most likely find Natania working on her shots at the netball court. She knows about determination and hard work—physically speaking. She also knows they are vital for spiritual growth.

Natania, at nearly 6 feet, 2 inches, is on the Church College netball team, but that’s not what sets her apart. “I won’t express my anger on the netball court. I put [my anger] into my shooting,” she says. “I shot really well last year,” she smiles. Natania knows the Lord expects her to use her talents wisely, and she’s trying hard to do that by working on





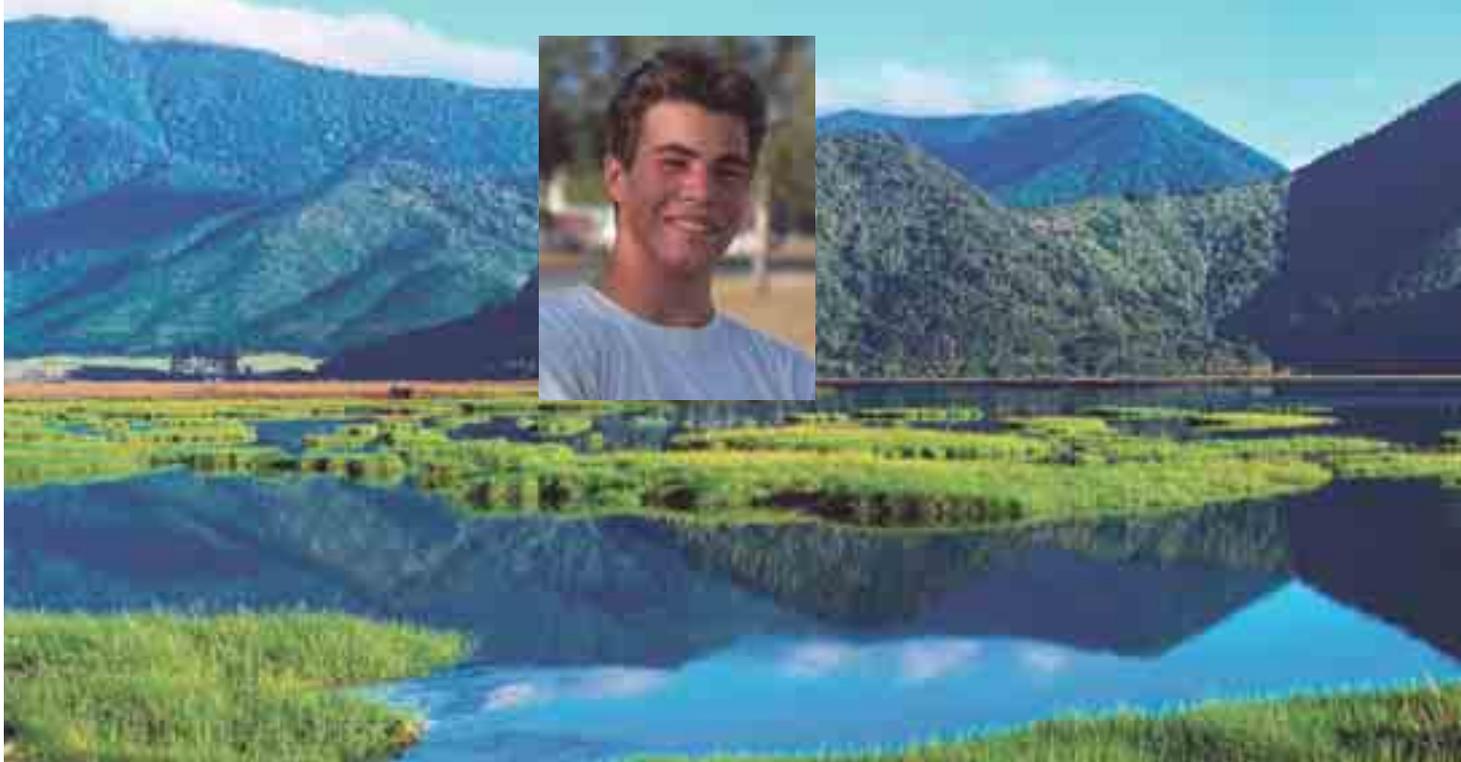
becoming more Christlike and relying on the Holy Spirit.

Almost there

Natania might be a six-hour drive from Lisa Lee, but their hearts are in the same place. Living in windy Wellington, Lisa, 16, depends on the Spirit to guide her as much as the youth anywhere else in the country. And one of the ways she feels close to the Spirit is through reading her scriptures. “I try to look for answers in the scriptures before I look anywhere else,” Lisa says. Her excitement about the scriptures fills the room every time she talks about them—which is very often.

Lisa’s sister, Rachel, isn’t as sure of her testimony as Lisa is. Both girls live in the Featherston Ward of the Upper Hutt New Zealand Stake. “I don’t know if I really do have a testimony,” she says, “but I suppose I must because I try to be obedient.” Rachel, 14, would like to have a testimony of the Book of Mormon like her sister’s but says she hasn’t put as much work into reading the scriptures as her sister has. She knows she needs to work harder at reading the Book of Mormon regularly since she really wants a testimony.

Nathan Prendergast, a priest from



Rachel's branch, agrees. "You can't just sit there and do nothing." Testimony does not stand still. "It's something you have to gain for yourself and then build up. It keeps on increasing."

Nathan gained his testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith using the same formula he suggests to others: work at it. He applied himself in seminary and learned about the Prophet. He said his added knowledge built his faith. "Joseph Smith meant more to me from studying the Doctrine and Covenants," he says. "I have more respect for him because I know more about him."

The last stop

Leaving Nathan in Wellington, your final destination on this short tour of New Zealand is the picturesque city of Christchurch. Christchurch is on the south island of New Zealand, and you can get there by boat or by plane.

Lashana Prouting, 16, lives in Christchurch in the Avonside Ward. Living in a country where few people attend church means she has a lot of missionary work to do. Once she took a less-active friend to a fireside with her to see a video of President Gordon B. Hinckley speaking about the six B's. "I

read [the talk] at least once a week," Lashana says. "I get a lot out of it. It really made me understand more. In the prophet's talk, you could tell he cared."

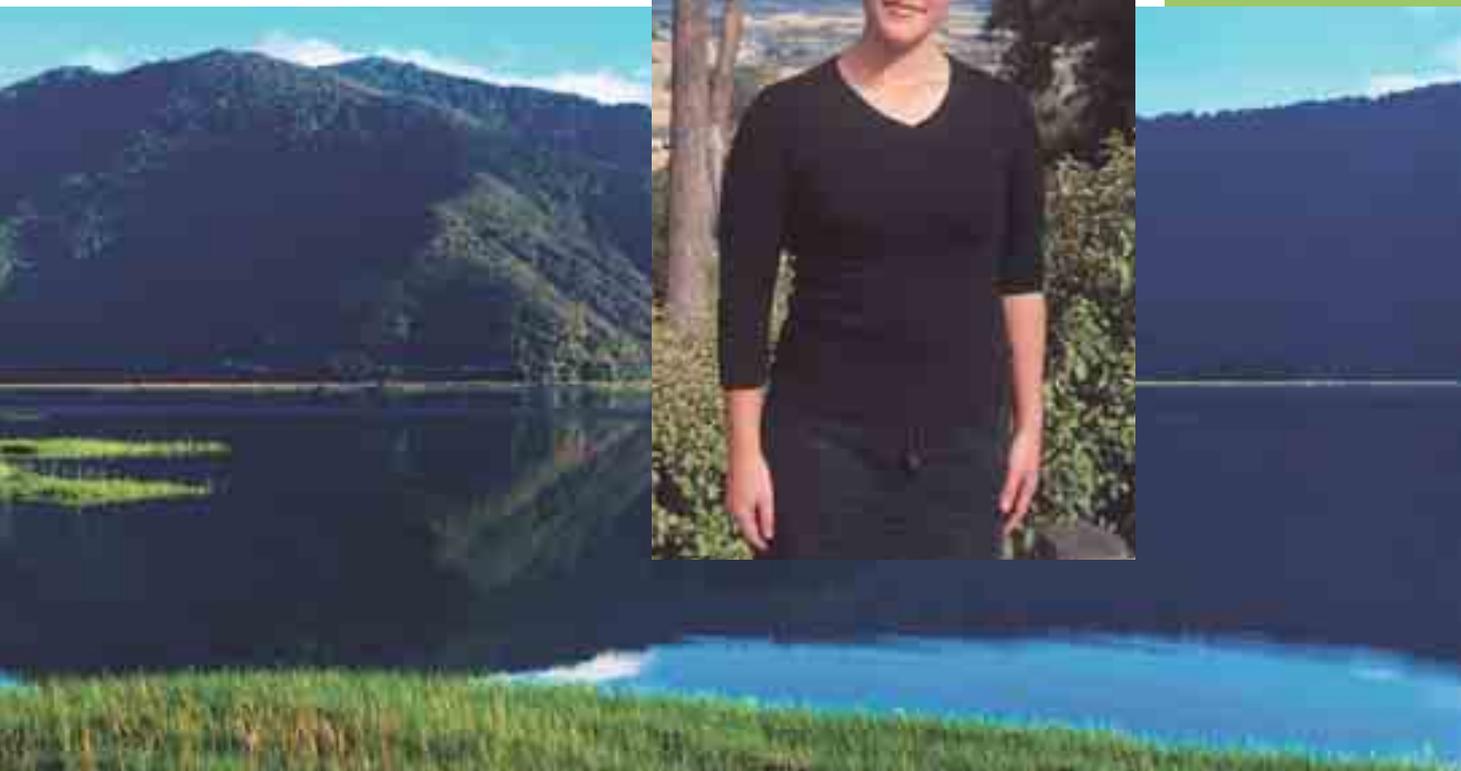
Before President Hinckley gave his talk, Lashana knew he was a prophet, but she says that following his counsel strengthens her testimony of a living prophet.

Destination—testimony

From Auckland to Christchurch and beyond, many of the Latter-day Saint youth of New Zealand are striving to keep their testimonies growing, and they're succeeding. They know the good choices they make bring them closer to the Savior. Lauren Taueki, 17, of the Avalon Ward near Wellington, puts it this way: "I guess we do what's right and what the prophets say and then find out it's right afterward." They experiment upon the word of God, pray, and follow the prophet, and they are never disappointed by the results. **NE**



Youth from the Wellington Upper Hutt Stake (far left), including Nathan Prendergast (opposite page, below), are working on gaining stronger testimonies. So is Lashana Prouting (left), from Christchurch.



How Can You KNOW?

I didn't want to tell him I didn't believe there was a God; I didn't want to let him know how hopeless and bleak the world looked to me.

"Here." He held the book out to me. "This is yours. You keep it."

By Colleen Atwood Riley

He kept using those words, "I know." I wanted to set him straight. How could anyone know without seeing?

I really don't know why I signed up for seminary in 11th grade. Ninth grade was easy enough to explain. My best friend, Mary, begged me. Her mother insisted that she attend, and Mary vowed she'd die of boredom if I didn't go with her. We'd been practically inseparable from the time we were two, so I believed it was my duty to go with her.

Tenth grade was a little more difficult to explain. I registered for seminary with Mary—again because she had to. But her mom remarried before the school year started, and Mary moved to Nevada. That year, although I didn't drop the seminary class, most of the time I didn't attend. I wasn't interested in what the seminary teacher had to offer, and I was lonely without Mary.

By default, I registered for seminary again when I was a junior, mostly because there were no other classes I wanted. So I went and sat in the back of the room, nestled by myself in the corner. Brother Hardy often tried to involve me in the discussions and

scripture reading. Sometimes I participated, but most of the time I declined during our study of the Book of Mormon.

Every day Brother Hardy closed his lesson by bearing testimony to the truthfulness of the gospel. He seemed sincere enough in his beliefs, but each day I grew increasingly irritated at his word choice. He always said "I know." But he couldn't, I thought. He was wrong. He could feel, he could think, he could believe. But he could not know.

After class one day I decided to set him straight. He turned and smiled at me, and his eyes smiled too. "Sister Atwood, what can I help you with?" he asked.

"It's about your word choice," I said.

"Oh?"

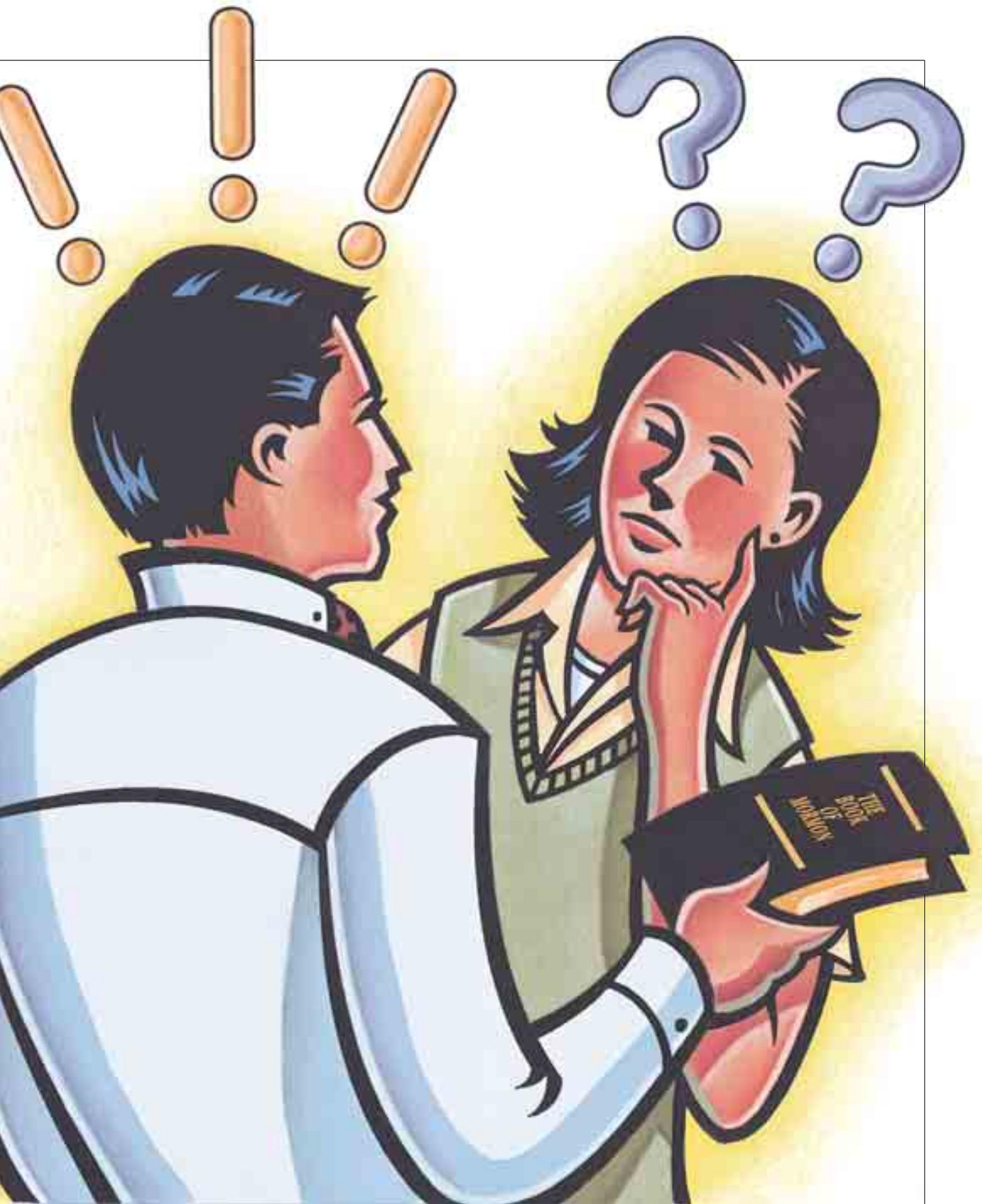
"I'd appreciate it if you'd say 'I believe' rather than 'I know.' You can't know what you can't see." I turned to walk away, certain he'd choose his words more carefully from then on.

"Sister Atwood, wait!" he called out after me.

I stopped and looked at his gentle green eyes. Something about him drew me in, something in his gaze. "What?" I asked.

"Sister," he said softly, "do you want to know?"

I shook my head in disbelief. "But no one can know what they can't see." I



He looked me squarely in the eyes each time he said, “I know.” Always the look was gentle, almost pleading.

didn’t want to tell him I didn’t believe there was a God; I didn’t want to let him know how hopeless and bleak the world looked to me. “No one can know,” I mumbled again, and the conviction of that belief left me lost, lonely, and small.

Brother Hardy reached for a book on his table. “Have you ever read the Book of Mormon, Colleen?”

“No.”

“Do you have one at home?”

“No. I have a Bible. But I don’t read it anymore.”

“Here.” He held the book out to me.

“This is yours. You keep it. Every night before you go to bed, kneel down and pray to your Heavenly Father. He’ll hear you. Even if you haven’t prayed to Him for a very long time. Ask Him to help you understand what is in this book.

Remember, always pray before you read. Read it just like you would those good books I see you with. Read it as if the people in this book are speaking directly to you. Will you do that?”

I shrugged my shoulders and took the book from him. I didn’t want to take his book. But he was so kind I didn’t want to tell him no.

The next day Brother Hardy bore his testimony. And he said “I know” again. He didn’t understand after all. He watched me as I walked out the door that day. I could feel his eyes fixed on me even while he talked to the other students. I didn’t look back.

At home that night I picked up the book. I knew he’d ask me if I was reading it. I didn’t want to lie to him, so I thought about dropping the class as I set the book back on my nightstand.

For the next several days, I went to seminary, dreading the day he’d pull me aside. Although he always greeted me warmly, he never asked me if I’d been reading the book. I began to relax and decided to stay in the class. I even took my turn reading scriptures now and again. The days passed, and, as always, Brother Hardy bore his testimony. He looked me squarely in the eyes each time he said “I know.” Always the look was gentle, almost pleading.

One night, with nothing else to do, I picked up the Book of Mormon and turned the pages. I started reading Joseph Smith’s testimony. Then I

remembered Brother Hardy’s instruction to pray first. So I crawled out of bed and knelt on the floor. “Help me to understand,” I asked simply. I finished Joseph’s testimony and the testimonies of the Three Witnesses. Night after night, I stayed with my plan. Pray then read. Let those in the Book of Mormon speak to me.

Soon the voices were real, and it seemed that Nephi was pleading with me because of the hardness of my heart. My appetite for the book became insatiable, and I read into the wee hours.

In 3 Nephi when Jesus Christ visited the American continent, I felt I was there with them, that I could see and feel the prints of the nails in His hands and feet. I cried. When the Nephites fell away and all but Moroni were slain, I wept again.

Then I read the promise found in Moroni 10:3–5. I put the bookmark in the book, closed it, climbed out of bed and knelt down to pray once again. “Heavenly Father,” I asked simply, “if it’s true, please help me to know and understand.” I closed my prayer and climbed back into bed, my eyes so full of tears that they blurred my vision.

I finished reading the Book of Mormon, then lay awake at the wonder of it. I knew—without seeing or touching—that the Book of Mormon was true. For the first time I knew Heavenly Father and Jesus were real. I knew Joseph Smith had seen God. And by the power of the Holy Ghost, with my spiritual eyes, I too saw Him.

The next day I sat on the front row in seminary. When Brother Hardy finished his lesson by saying “I know,” I said “amen.” He stopped me after class. “It’s been a while, Colleen. How are you coming with the reading?” he asked.

“Oh, I finished it,” I said.

“Good!” He clapped his hands together. “Good! And?”

I looked at the ceiling and shook my head. “And I know,” I choked. “I know.”

In the years since, I have often thought of Brother Hardy. I have wanted him to know that I married a returned missionary in the temple and that I have two fine sons who also will serve the Lord in the mission field. I have wanted Brother Hardy to know how his pebble rippled. **NE**



**knew—
without seeing
or touching—
that the Book of
Mormon was true.
For the first time I
knew Heavenly
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Joseph Smith had
seen God. I knew.**

YOUR *Prized*

How do you know if you have a testimony?



Individual testimonies are the foundation and strength of the Church,” said Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve. “Our testimony provides a guiding light that leads to a commitment which directs our conduct and our way of life. Our testimony is true north on a spiritual compass. It is a moving force that cannot be seen but can truly be felt. It is a burning within that tells us what is right” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 20).

A testimony should be one of your most prized possessions. So, if you don’t feel like you have a testimony yet, gaining one should be a high priority. But how do you know if you have a testimony? What does it take to know that the gospel is true? And if you do have a personal testimony, why should you share it with others? These are some of the questions we asked Latter-day Saint youth from around the world. Their answers may help you understand how to gain a testimony and why you should share it.

“I know I have a testimony because of the feelings I have. The gospel brings me so much peace, and I know that peace I have felt has been because the Church is true. I know I have a testimony because I have studied to know my Savior lives and loves me.”

Jennifer Heyman, 16
Chandler, Arizona

“I know I have a testimony of Heavenly Father, the Savior, and the Church because of the feelings I have after praying and asking. I have felt the Spirit so many times there is no way I could deny it.”

Jennie Harris, 16
Nauvoo, Illinois

“It’s hard to explain, but you will know within yourself. I know for me that my questions about whether the Church is true or not were answered with a warm feeling that made me feel very close to the Lord. Those feelings gave me the knowledge that the Church is true.”

Michael Day, 16
Leigh-on-Sea, England

POSSESSION

How did you gain your testimony?



"I was able to gain my testimony by the help of two people—my father and my Heavenly Father. My earthly father got me to start attending The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and my Heavenly Father gave me the understanding and the facts about the true Church that I was always looking for. All this helped me have a strong testimony."

Michael
McLeman, 16
Isle-of-Lewis,
Scotland



"I was lucky to be born into a Latter-day Saint family, which gave me a base for my testimony. But as I grew older, I decided that I had to know. So, I prayed and fasted. I listened to the teachings of the gospel and felt my Heavenly Father's love surround me. I now know, without a doubt, that the gospel is true."

Chrissy Starks,
17, Papillion,
Nebraska



"I guess I gained a testimony of Christ when my great-grandmother wrote a letter to all our family from her deathbed. She wrote about how the most important and indispensable thing in our lives was our family. I thanked my Heavenly Father for the opportunity I have to see her after I leave this world. Since we were sealed as a family, I will see her again."

Felipe
Amorim, 17
São Paulo, Brazil



"I gained my testimony through prayer and studying the scriptures. Attending church and church activities has also helped my testimony grow. My testimony is especially strengthened when I share it with others."

Lara Pessetto, 16
Dubai, United
Arab Emirates



"I learned about the power of the Holy Ghost at a youth conference. Ever since then, I have been able to feel a testimony growing inside of me—not fast, but slow and steady. When I have had the opportunity to bear my testimony, I have felt it grow even more."

Spencer
Simmons, 16
Jakarta,
Indonesia

Why do you think it is important to share your testimony?



"I think it's important to share my testimony because it helps other people improve theirs, and it helps me feel better about mine."

Amanda Vance, 15
Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, England



"Sharing a testimony is important because when I share my testimony it grows even more. I think it also helps other people's testimonies. When I watch other people who bear their testimonies, it helps mine grow."

Chris Savage, 17
Valencia, California



"The joy that having a testimony brings is so immense it's indescribable. It comforts me every day of my life. That joy gives me such a purpose in life. It is my gift to Heavenly Father to share that joy with His other children and to share the gift He gave to me—my testimony!"

Heather Bateman, 16
Boise, Idaho



"It is important to share your testimony because the truth should be known to all people, and sometimes the only way they will know is if I share it with them."

Krystal Stone, 17
Kaiserslauten, Germany



"As members of the Lord's Church we have the responsibility to share the gospel and be missionaries to bring the world His truth. I love sharing my beliefs and letting people feel the Spirit as I am an instrument in the Lord's hands."

Stephanie Sonksen, 17
Columbus, Ohio

Your Testimony—



“I know Jesus is the Christ and that He lived, suffered, and died for me so I can live in my Heavenly Father’s kingdom again. I know Jesus Christ was resurrected on the third day and that He lives now. I am grateful for everything Jesus and so many others have done for me.”

Trevor
Nancollas, 16
Santiago, Chile



“I know that Christ lives and He suffered for each of us. I’m so grateful for Him. He is the only one who truly knows what we feel like when we are having a bad day or when we are in pain. He knows because He has gone through all of that and much more. Because of the Atonement we are able to repent of our sins and become clean again.”

Heidi Welling, 17
Columbus, Ohio



“I know this Church is true! I love this gospel. I don’t know where I would be without it. I love my Heavenly Father. I am so thankful for the Atonement, and for Jesus Christ. He didn’t have to suffer and die for us, but He did because He loves us. And for that I am so grateful.”

Season
Purcell, 16
Las Vegas, Nevada



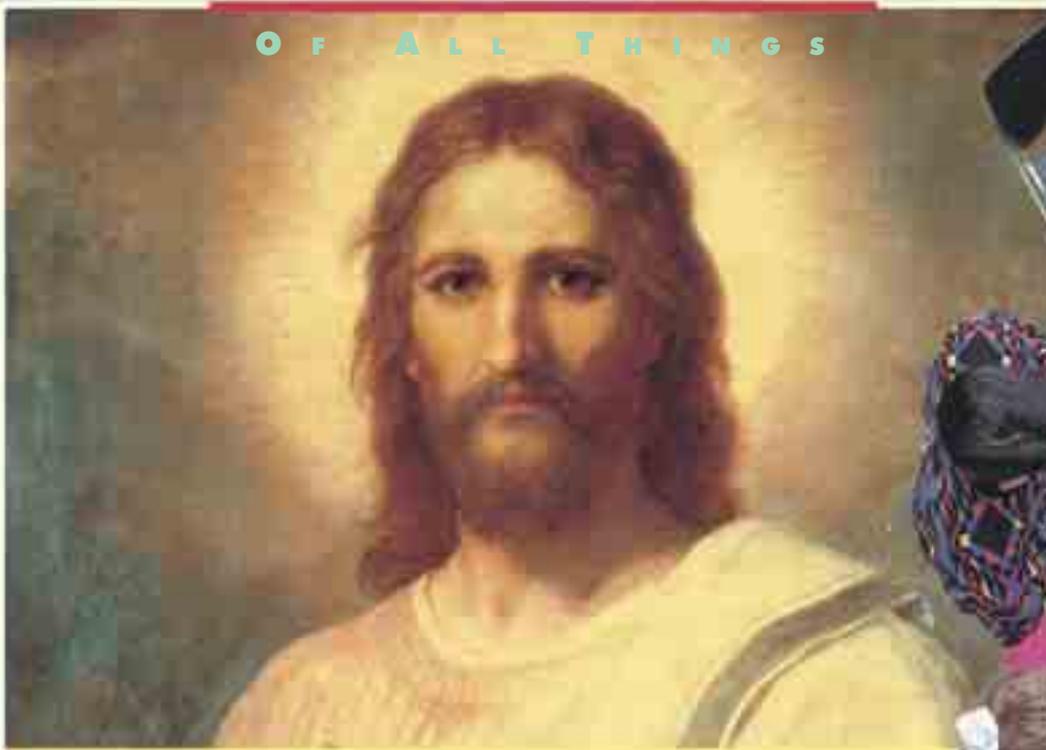
“I have a testimony of prayer. I know if we ask God specific things He will answer us. I simply asked if I was a son of God. I got my answer so strongly when the Young Men sang the song ‘We’ll Bring the World His Truth’ and the words ‘We are as the army of Helaman’ ” (see Children’s Songbook, 172–73).

Daniel Nuño, 17
Modesto,
California



“I know that Jesus is the Christ. I am so thankful for His sacrifice. I am also thankful for my brother who is showing me a good example by serving a mission. I can’t wait to follow in his footsteps and serve a mission. It will be wonderful to have an opportunity to share my testimony of Christ as a missionary for His Church.”

Andy Emory, 17
Santa Barbara,
California



TEST YOUR LDS I.Q.

Can you match these biblical and Book of Mormon prophets to their testimonies of the Savior?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

Paul

Alma the Younger

Nephi

Isaiah

King Benjamin

Abinadi

a. “And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.”

b. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

c. “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

d. “Behold, I say unto you, that I do know that Christ shall come among the children of men, to take upon him the transgressions of his people, and that he shall atone for the sins of the world; for the Lord God hath spoken it.”

e. “He is the light and the life of the world; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened; yea, and also a life which is endless, that there can be no more death.”

f. “I say unto you, that there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of

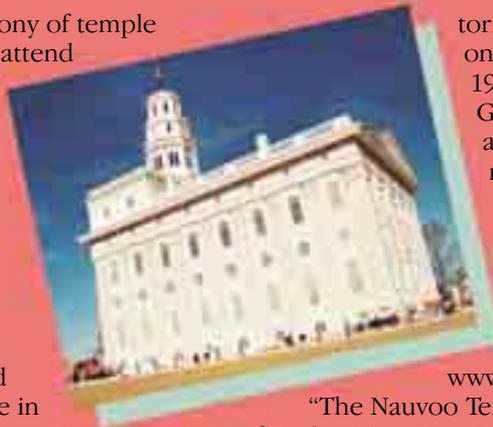
Answers: 1b (see 1 Cor. 15:22), 2d (see Alma 34:8), 3a (see 2 Ne. 25:26), 4c (see Isa. 53:5–6), 5f (see Mosiah 3:17), 6e (see Mosiah 16:9).

LEADERSHIP TIP:

Bearing your testimony to your quorum or class members is a good way to bless their lives and strengthen their testimonies, as well as your own. Being a leader means more than organizing and delegating. It means being an example of faithfulness and obedience, as well.

NAUVOO TEMPLE DEDICATION

Build your testimony of temple work when you attend or view via satellite at stake centers the dedication of the Nauvoo Illinois Temple on June 27. The original Nauvoo Temple was dedicated in 1846, but shortly after its completion the Saints were forced out of Nauvoo. Fire destroyed the inside of the temple in 1848, and, in 1850, a



tornado demolished one of its walls. In 1999, President Gordon B. Hinckley announced the rebuilding of the Nauvoo Temple. To learn more about both the old and the new Nauvoo Temples, check out

www.lds.org and read “The Nauvoo Temple: Cornerstones of Faith” (*New Era*, May 2002).

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



Welcome

We strive to be a warm, friendly, and helpful center
where the friends of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
will find a place to call home.

The Church teaches to explain our beliefs about
God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and the
purpose of life. We also encourage you to visit
our website frequently to learn more about us
and to provide a question of yours.

—About This Site

WWW.MORMON.ORG

Elder Dallin H. Oaks has said that one sign of our conversion is our willingness to share our testimonies of the gospel with others. The Church has made sharing our beliefs easier with the Web site www.mormon.org. If you haven't visited it yet, what are you waiting for?

The site is great to refer your friends to, so they can have their questions answered—especially if talking about religion is difficult for them. The site explains the nature of God, our beliefs, and answers questions like Why is the

family so important to Latter-day Saints? and What is the Church's attitude toward homosexuality?

“It will help us answer the questions of friends directly or by referring them to the site. It will also allow us to send our friends electronic greeting cards that include gospel messages and invitations,” says Elder Oaks (*Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 9).

And don't forget you can also use pass-along cards to introduce your friends to the gospel. They're available at Church distribution centers (on the Internet at www.ldscatalog.com).

“The most precious thing in the world is a testimony of the truth.”

(*Improvement Era*,
Dec. 1968, 84)
—President David O.
McKay (1873–1970)

IN THE LORD'S WAY



**By President
Boyd K. Packer**
Acting President of the
Quorum of the Twelve

**“ must know
for sure that
it is,” I
prayed fervently,
“for if it is not
true, then I’m
not sure that it is
important
whether or not I
come back.”**

On a crowded ship taking a horde of men into battle, I prayed fervently to know of the Book of Mormon’s truthfulness.

During my military service, my crew was sent to Seattle, Washington, where we boarded a ship headed into the Pacific by night. I remember lying on my bunk among the many men and reading my Book of Mormon. Many passages held special meaning for me.

In 1 Nephi 15:11, I read the promise: “If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you.”

When I reached the final promise in Moroni 10:4–5, I blocked it in solid red:

“And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

“And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.”

On a crowded ship taking a horde of men into battle, I explained to the Lord that I wanted to know whether the Book of Mormon was or was not true. “I must know for sure that it is,” I fervently prayed, “for if it is not true, then I’m not sure that it is important whether or not I come back, because things in the world seem to be all undone anyway.” And so I continued to plead for an answer—an answer which, in time and in the Lord’s way, came to me. **NE**



Illustrated by Paul Mann



A REMARKABLE FEELING



By Elder F. Melvin
Hammond
Of the Seventy

We were just boys fresh off the farm. They were seasoned missionaries from another religion. But when I bore my testimony, they were silenced.

I had never really doubted, but that moment was the first time I truly felt the power of the Spirit rest upon me.

When I reflect on my life there has never been a moment when I doubted that the Church was true. In my youth, raised in a Mormon community, testimony was never a question among my peers because virtually all of our activities centered on the Church. Belief was automatic. Without seminary there was almost no dialogue about our knowledge or our understanding of the gospel. The Church was just there and we were a part of it. Then I was called to serve a full-time mission in the Spanish-American Mission, working with the Mexican people.

My companion and I entered the mission field at the same time and for some reason, unknown to us, we were assigned to begin our missionary labors together. Neither one of us knew the Spanish language, and both of us were virtually illiterate in the gospel. (This was before there were any Missionary Training Centers.) We were timid, untrained, and a little frightened, but eager to start to work.

In those days there were very few member referrals. We knocked on doors from morning to night and did our best to communicate with the Mexican people, using a few words of Spanish and a lot of English. For the first time in my life I was required to bear my testimony to nonmembers who had little knowledge or respect for the Church. It

was a challenging and humbling experience.

One day, to our surprise, we met a couple who brought out a Book of Mormon, saying that in their church they also used this sacred book as scripture. We were overjoyed until they began to criticize us and mock the doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We discovered that they were missionaries from another religion who had been serving for 11 years. They were very knowledgeable and skilled in using the scriptures. My companion and I were no match for them. We were just boys fresh off the farm. They totally intimidated us, demeaned us, and tried to destroy our faith. In my heart I prayed for divine help.

Then, as I looked at that couple, a remarkable feeling came over me. For the first time in my life I felt the power of the Spirit rest upon me. Although I was somewhat ignorant, unlearned in the things of the gospel and the world, there was an absolute assurance that I held the holy priesthood of God and that they did not! That I was His minister of truth and they were not! With all the power of my soul I told them that I knew we were just boys and that we were not experts in the doctrine of our religion, but I knew that what we were doing was correct, that the Church was true, and that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. They were silenced. They could not refute my testimony.

The testimony I bore that day was different than any other I had ever given. It was not a passive thing, nor simply an accepted thing. It was real. I knew it. And my testimony which began at that moment has grown stronger and stronger every day of my life. There is no doubt, you see, for it is true! **NE**

I KNEW HE CARED



By Carol B. Thomas
First Counselor in the
Young Women general
presidency

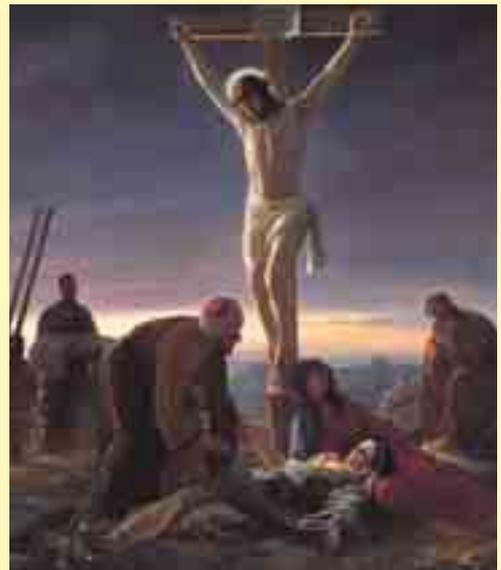
At a difficult time, words of comfort came into my mind, and I knew my Heavenly Father cared and was helping me.

Would I have followed the Savior if I had lived then? Yes, I think I would have loved Him then, just as I love Him now.

As a young child I was taught to pray. I felt a love for the Savior and wanted to feel His Spirit with me. When I was perhaps only seven or eight years old, I remember helping my mother one day and thinking to myself, “If I had lived on the earth at the time of the Savior, would I have recognized Him and been one of His followers?” My testimony was very small then, so I didn’t know what the answer was, and the question continued to concern me as I was growing up.

When I entered Young Women, I loved going to Beehive camp. It was an amazing experience—enjoying the out-of-doors, singing the songs, and listening to testimonies around the campfire. I felt the Spirit of the Lord then and learned to recognize that Spirit. As the years passed, I came to know myself better. My question had been answered. Had I lived when the Savior was on the earth, I felt I would have recognized Him. I would have loved Him then, just as I love Him now.

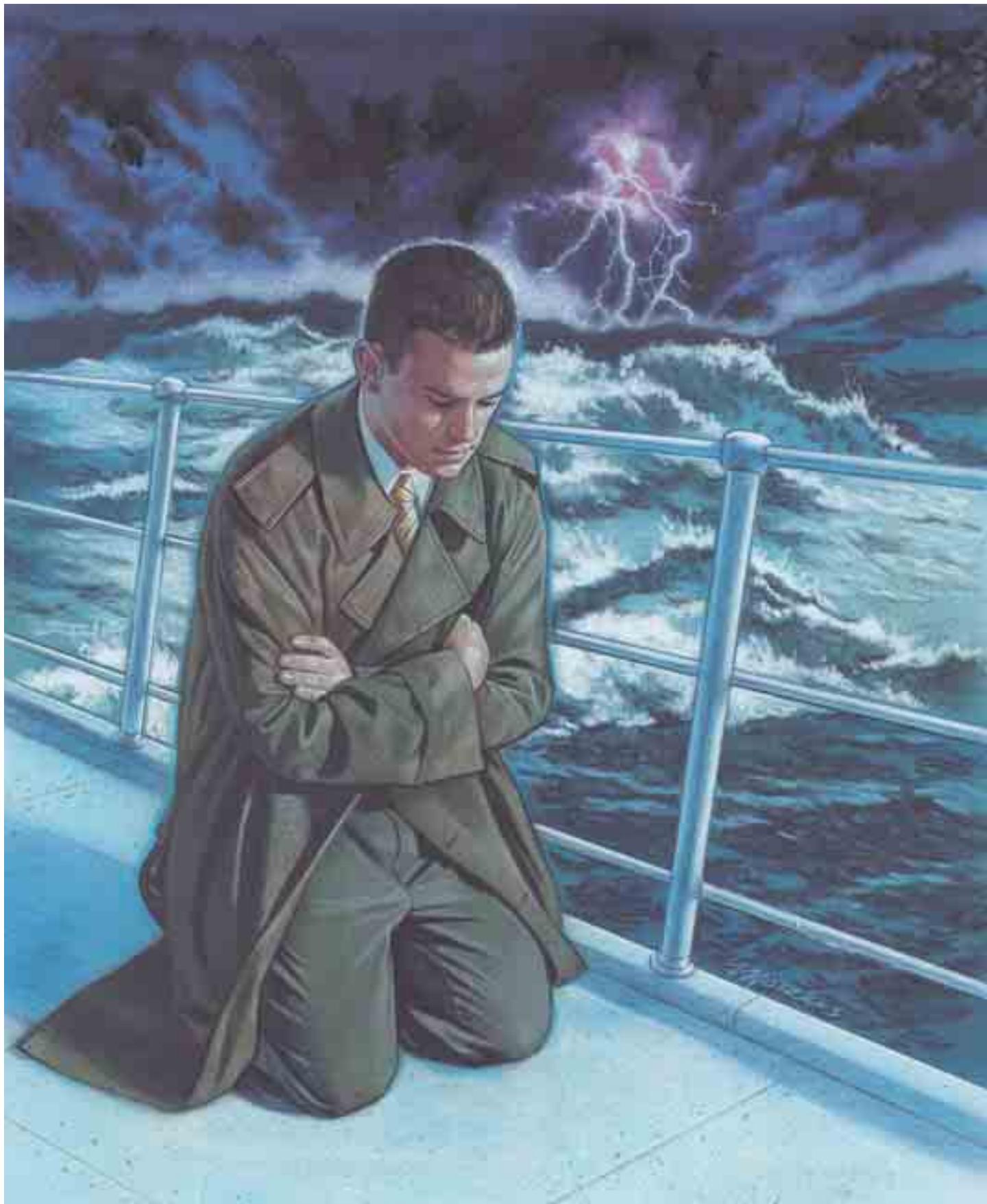
As a teenager, there were many times when I felt the Spirit of the Lord. When I was 16, I participated in a dance festival at the University of Utah’s stadium. It was June, and the sky was completely overcast and threatening to rain. As we were ready to march onto the field with our flags, the opening prayer was given. In the prayer it was asked that the weather be tempered so it wouldn’t rain.



I vividly remember marching onto the field, looking up, and seeing the clouds part. The Lord had answered our prayers, and having watched it happen, I felt the warmth of the Spirit and knew the Church was true.

During this time, I was having difficulty getting along with my mother, as teenage girls sometimes do. I can remember after disagreeing with her once, I went down to the basement to be alone. Full of confusion and remorse, I prayed for comfort. I was still sobbing when in my mind I heard these words, “Blessed art thou, Carol.” At that time I wasn’t understanding my world very well, and I felt like Heavenly Father was comforting me so that I could get through a difficult time. It strengthened my testimony so much to know that He cared.

Throughout my life, I have prayed about most everything. Prayer has been the thread that has kept me close to Heavenly Father and helped my testimony and love for Him grow. **NE**



Hour of CONVERSION

On a storm-tossed ship headed for Germany it dawned on me—I'm going on a mission. Do I truly have a testimony?

The Book of Mormon is our testimonial Liahona (see Alma 37:45). This voice from the dust guides us to know that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and that His Church has been restored.

If you have even a small desire for a greater witness, please do the works of righteousness, trust in the Lord, pray, and anxiously explore the Book of Mormon. I testify that it is the word of God. This iron rod marks the path that will guide your soul to your hour of conversion.

Some years ago while traveling to my mission in Germany, I found myself, in stormy November, aboard a ship sailing from New York to Bremerhaven. The ocean boiled with turmoil. We were all seasick. All we could eat were soda crackers and zwieback, a type of dry toast. I was almost afraid I was *not* going to die!

As the days passed it dawned on me—I'm really going on a mission. Do I truly have a testimony? Am I prepared to bear it "at all times and . . . in all places" (Mosiah 18:9)?

I thought I had a testimony, but now the real trial of my faith was coming. I was going to a foreign land where the only words I could speak in German were *Volkswagen* and *auf Wiedersehen*.

During the voyage I realized my testimony was not a spiritual fire of conviction, particularly of the Book of Mormon. And so I knelt on the cold steel floor of that rocking ship and begged the Lord with my tears. I prayed, "Dear Father, I have to know that the Book of Mormon is true. I have read it, I think I understand it, but I desire the fire which helps a man know that the Book of Mormon is Thy word. Please, Father, help me."

Somewhere on the lonely Atlantic, during those turbulent days, a sweet spirit and peace came to me—"the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philip. 4:7). I received a witness that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, and that supernal event became my hour of conversion.

If you question whether you have a testimony of the restored gospel, I encourage you to read, ponder, and



**By Elder
Robert K. Dellenbach**
Of the Seventy

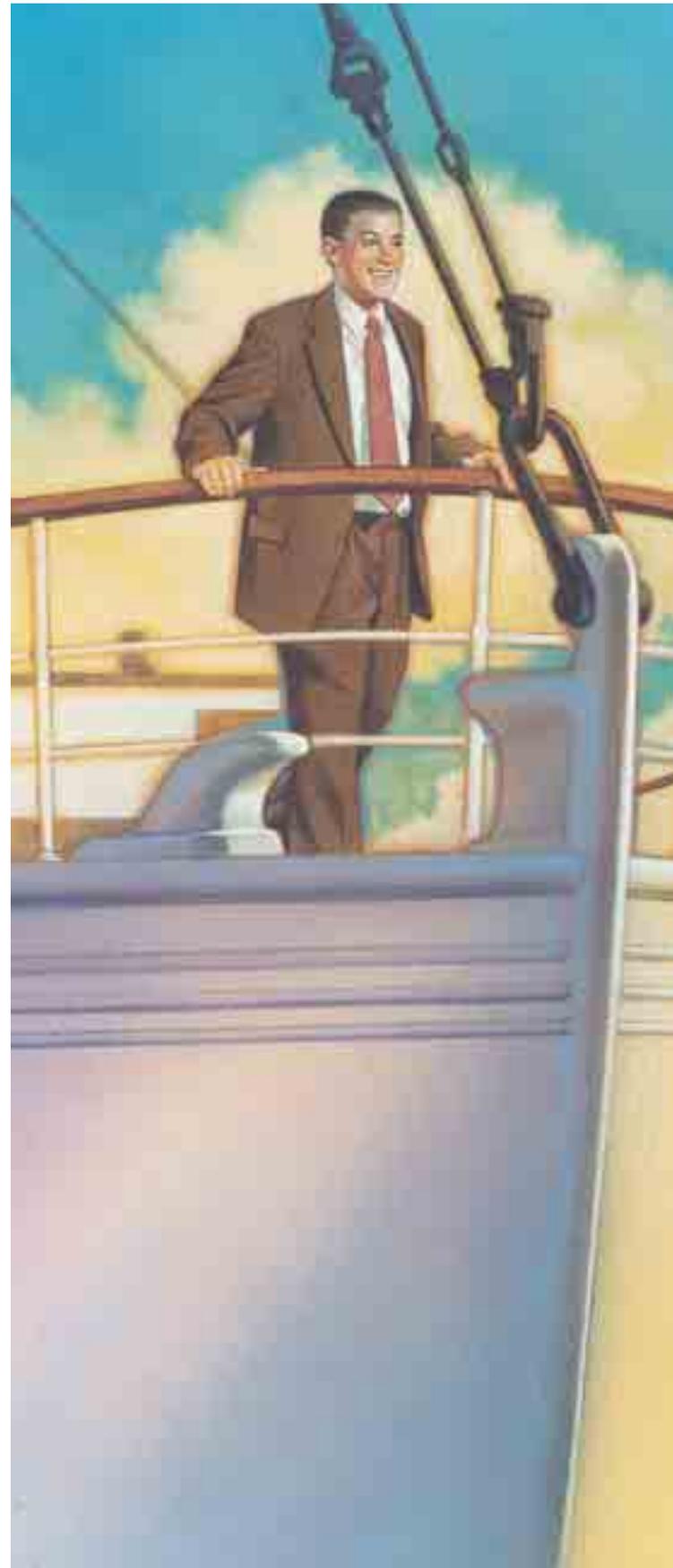
Somewhere on the lonely Atlantic, during those turbulent days, a sweet spirit and peace came to me. That event became my hour of conversion.

study the Book of Mormon. Why the Book of Mormon? Because this holy scripture is the great testifier and converter. This ancient record is a spiritual compass for us to follow. Joseph Smith said the Book of Mormon is “the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book” (*History of the Church*, 4:461).

When you come to know that this testament of Christ is true, you will know that Joseph Smith is the prophet of the Restoration and that Gordon B. Hinckley is the Lord’s prophet today. The Book of Mormon was written for our day to convince us “that Jesus is the Christ” (Book of Mormon title page). If your soul is searching for a more profound testimony of Jesus Christ and His restored kingdom, I suggest, in conjunction with studying the Book of Mormon, there are four steps you can take which will lead you to your hour of conversion.

These four steps are: desire, righteous works, prayer, and trust in the Lord.

A word of caution: Satan wants to stop you. He will try to distract, deceive, and weaken your desire, your righteous works, your sincere prayers, and your trust in the Lord. Do not be afraid. We have already successfully resisted the evil one at another time and place. We had a valiant testimony in our premortal state, and we can resist Satan and awaken that testimony again today. **NE**





FOUR IMPORTANT STEPS

1. Desire

Oliver Cowdery desired a more firm witness of the plates which contained the Book of Mormon record. The Lord said to Oliver, “If you desire a further witness, cast your mind upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart, that you might know concerning the truth of these things.

“Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter?” (D&C 6:22–23). The Lord told Oliver that, first of all, a person needs to have desire.

Alma said, “Even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you” (Alma 32:27).

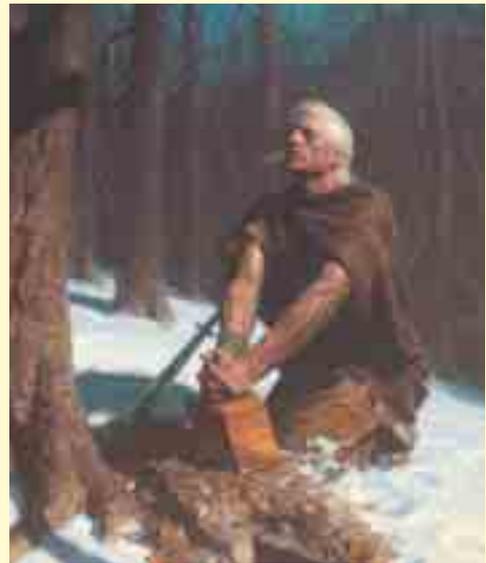
2. Righteous Works

Oliver Cowdery took a positive action. He moved himself from thinking to doing. In my case, while on board that ship, I had more intimately studied and pondered the Book of Mormon. Young Joseph reflected on the Bible, then went into the woods to pray. Moses climbed Mount Sinai. My great-grandmother Nelson boarded a ship in Denmark, with a flock of little children, to join the Mormons in Utah. Righteous works yield a divine harvest. The Lord said, “He who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come” (D&C 59:23).

3. Prayer

As we sincerely pray to the Lord and rely upon His divine whisperings, that still, small voice will come to us (see Hel. 5:30). We will receive a peace, knowing that God has answered our prayers. Remember the peace that Oliver Cowdery received. These spiritual embers can grow into a flame of testimony.

Alma, upon meeting the four sons of Mosiah who had been on 14-year missions, rejoiced at their knowledge of



the truth. He said, “They had searched the scriptures diligently, [and] . . . they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; . . . [and] they taught with power and authority of God” (Alma 17:2–3).

“Ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ,” counseled Moroni, “if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, . . . he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moro. 10:4).

Surely the Lord would not ask us to pray if He did not intend to answer our prayers. “He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6).

4. Trust in the Lord

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding” (Prov. 3:5). We can trust the Lord. He is our truest friend. He always keeps His word. “Dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith,” admonished Ether (Ether 12:6).

May I ask you to extend your trust in the Lord? Take the Book of Mormon into your hands. As you read it, ask yourself: “Could any man write this?” Then ask the Lord, “Is this Thy word?”

TESTIMONY COURAGE

Sharing your testimony—in sacrament meeting or just with your friends—might seem intimidating at first, but each time you do it you will be blessed. Here are some ideas on how to overcome cold feet about bearing your testimony from the 16- and 17-year-old Sunday School class in the Manchester Ward, Hartford Connecticut Stake.

- ◆ Pray for confidence and for the Holy Spirit to be with you as you testify.
- ◆ Remember the Lord has promised you that the Holy Spirit will comfort you and help you know what to say. Trust Him and listen to the Spirit.
- ◆ Hesitation is your enemy. If you just start talking you can get past that initial nervous feeling.
- ◆ Remember to pray and study the scriptures. If you are well prepared, you don't need to be afraid of talking about your testimony of the gospel.
- ◆ Believe in yourself. Even if you aren't a great public speaker, you know the Church is true and that's what really matters.
- ◆ Keep it simple. Bear testimony of the basic truths of the gospel: God lives, Jesus Christ atoned for our sins, Joseph Smith was a prophet, the Book of Mormon is the word of God, and Gordon B. Hinckley is God's prophet today.
- ◆ Write your testimony in your journal.
- ◆ Practice bearing your testimony to your family or others you feel comfortable around.
- ◆ Remember that bearing your testimony is an act of love that blesses those you share it with as well as yourself.
- ◆ Don't worry about what others might think of you. Heavenly Father will be pleased when you testify of Him.
- ◆ That nervous feeling might just be the Spirit telling you to open your mouth and share what you know is true, so don't ignore it. Go ahead and bear your testimony, even if your heart is racing and your palms are sweating. You'll feel much better afterward. **NE**



Sunday
School
class in the
Manchester Ward
Hartford,
Connecticut
Stake.

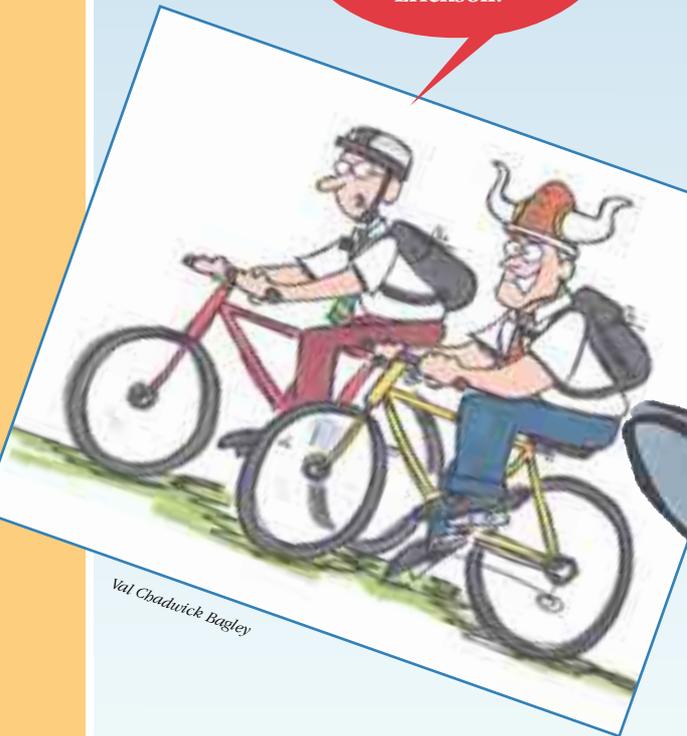
“Whoa! Whoa!
Let’s use *my* alarm
clock, okay?”



Ryan Stoker

“Is it just me
or is fast Sunday
usually the slowest
Sunday of the
month?”

“I’ve been
meaning to talk to
you about your bike
helmet, Elder
Erickson.”



Val Chadwick Bagley



Val Chadwick Bagley

WHEN YOUR *Heart* TELLS YOU THINGS YOUR



By President
Harold B. Lee
(1899–1973)

The time is here when each of you must stand on your own feet. Be converted, because no one can endure on borrowed light.

Let the Spirit kindle the light within you, then share it with others.

The most important responsibility that you, the youth of the Church, have is to see that you are converted. That is number one. In this sense, all of us should be converts to the Church. We should all be converted to the truthfulness of the gospel. Then we can share this truth with others.

What is conversion? Some clues are given by the Lord. In answering a question as to why He spoke in parables, He quoted a scripture from Isaiah: “Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed” (Isa. 6:10).

One is converted when he sees with his eyes what he ought to see; when he hears with his ears what he ought to hear; and when he understands with his heart what he ought to understand. And what he ought to see, hear, and understand is truth—eternal truth—and then practice it. That is conversion. When we understand more than we know with our minds, when we understand with our hearts, then we know that the Spirit of the Lord is working upon us.

I once had a visit from a young Catholic priest. I asked him why he had come, and he replied, “I came to see you.”

“Why?” I asked.

“Well,” he said, “I have been searching for certain concepts that I have not been able to find. But I think I am finding them now in the Mormon community.”

That led to a half-hour conversation. I told him, “Father, when your heart begins to tell you things that your mind does not, then you are getting the Spirit of the Lord.”

He smiled and said, “I think that’s happening to me already.”

“Then don’t wait too long,” I said to him.

A few weeks later I received a telephone call from him. He said, “Next Saturday I am going to be baptized a member of the Church, because my heart has told me things my mind did not know.”

Speaking to persons with a testimony, the Lord has said: “Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do” (3 Ne. 18:24).

When we have a testimony, we are expected to use it for the benefit of others, as Peter was instructed: “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32).



Mind DOES NOT KNOW



All of us have so many opportunities to strengthen others. It may be our own brothers and sisters. It may be our own friends. It may be a neighbor or a new acquaintance. It may even be our own parents. Now that's a great concept, isn't it—parents and youth



This time, instead of quarreling with my mother, I sat down beside her and bore my testimony. The result was amazing.

strengthening one another? Let me show you what I mean.

The president of the Cardston Alberta Temple told me this incident. He said, "A group of young people came to the temple for the first time to do baptisms for the dead. After they had gone through two or three baptismal sessions and were about ready to go back home, I talked to them about their own baptisms. I said, 'After your own baptism, you were told to receive the Holy Ghost, which means that the Holy Ghost will guide and bless you if you are worthy. If anyone should oppose you, or bring harm to you, you can overcome that opposition by the influence of the Holy Ghost.'

"I looked around and saw a pleasant young girl sobbing. She said, 'When I was baptized, my mother cursed me. Every time I would go out she was vile and called me wicked names. When I told her I was going to the temple, she profaned and said I was no daughter of hers. I have

been fasting ever since I left home that here in the temple I would be given a guide and the power to overcome the opposition of my mother. I was going away disappointed. But now, at the last moment, you have given me the key.' A smile lit up on her face as she said, 'I am going to bring Mother within the influence of the power of the Holy Ghost which I have a right to enjoy.'"

Then the president said, "Weeks went by, and a letter came from this girl. The letter said, 'When I returned home and entered the house, mother greeted me similarly to the way she had when I left, by profaning. On other occasions I had fought back, but this time I walked over and put my arm around her shoulder and said, "Mother, I am not going to quarrel with you today. I want you to come over on the couch and sit down beside me. I want to tell you something." This surprised Mother. As we sat down, we touched cheeks so that in actuality the Spirit would emanate from me to her, and I bore my testimony. I told her what a wonderful experience I had had in the temple. And to my amazement, Mother burst into tears and begged my forgiveness.'

"The girl closed her letter by saying, 'We are now preparing Mother to be baptized a member of the Church.' "

"When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," said the Savior. That is my message to you, because it is the Savior's message. Our number-one responsibility is to see that we are converted, and then to convert others.

I would pray that you could feel the love flowing from my soul to yours, and know of my deep compassion toward each of you as you face the problems of today. The time is here when each of you must stand on your own feet. Be converted, because no one can endure on borrowed light. You will have to be guided by the light within yourself. If you do not have it, you will not stand.

May the Lord bless you and clothe you with the armor of righteousness, that you might be able to stand steadfast through whatever trials may be yours in the days that lie ahead. **NE**

Originally printed in the February 1971 New Era.

Creative ideas for using this issue of the New Era.

Family Home Evening Ideas

□ Read aloud the testimonies of the First Presidency starting on page 4. If appropriate, ask your parents, grandparents, or brothers and sisters to bear their testimonies during family home evening. With everyone's permission, consider recording their testimonies to keep with your family history. The words of testimony from those you love can become a valuable treasure in the future.

Young Men and Young Women Activity Ideas

□ With your leaders' approval, prepare as a group to sing the song "My Testimony" on page 14. To learn the song, you might include it in your opening exercises on Sundays or in Mutual during the week. Contact your ward music director for assistance or to see if there might be a time to perform the song for the ward.

Seminary Devotional

□ Come prepared with a tape recorder and a tape you have made ahead of time with several 10-second clips of harmless popular songs or commercials. Avoid inappropriate selections. Ask the class members to identify on a piece of paper each song or commercial as it is played. Then play several 10-second clips of the prophet and General Authorities speaking in last general conference. Ask the class to identify each speaker. Then ask the

class which voices of those you have played are the most significant for us to recognize and to follow. Read together D&C 1:38.

Personal Improvement

□ If you are wondering if you really "know" your scriptures, follow the advice given to the author of "How Can You Know?" on page 26. Decide to pray before you read your scriptures each day so that you will understand the things you are reading and studying.

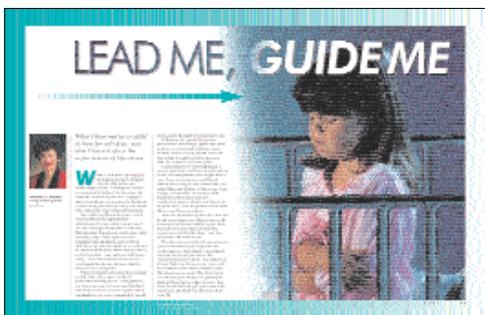
□ You've heard others say that bearing your testimony helps strengthen it. Review the advice in Idea List on page 44. Next time you have an opportunity to bear your testimony, overcome your fears and speak from your heart. You'll not only help strengthen our own testimony, but you might help someone else.

□ Read Q&A on page 16 about having doubts. Take comfort in the fact that having questions and searching for answers can be a wonderful experience. Write down your questions and carry them with your scriptures. Then as the subjects come up in Sunday School, seminary, or family home evening, you can discuss them with your teachers or parents.

□ Carefully remove the poster on page 19 and put it on a wall where you can see it often. Read the story of Thomas in the New Testament in John 20:24-29. Also read Alma 32:21.

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Lead me, guide me

Thank you so much! The *New Era* is a great inspiration to my life. The article "Lead Me, Guide Me" in the November 2001 issue really helped me. I especially liked the part under the topic "A powerful guide." It was about a girl who moved and couldn't find friends, yet the Holy Ghost was there for her and she found some new friends. I really liked that part. I just moved, and I am soon going to have to change schools and leave all my friends. I have friends in my new ward but that's it. Thanks for always publishing a great magazine every month.

Noelle Patterson
Queen Creek, Arizona (via e-mail)

All big helps

I have been reading the *New Era* for a couple of months now. It really does help and inspire me. So many articles from the magazine help me keep my testimony strong and walk in Jesus' footprints. I am so thankful for the scriptures, my family, friends, teachers, and the sister missionaries in my ward. They help me so much. I am thankful our church has a teen magazine that, along with other things, helps me attain my goals.

Chase Barlet
Denver, Colorado (via e-mail)

No fiction, no fluke

I thought it was a fluke in the October *New Era*, but now the November issue arrives and once again no fiction. Sure, the magazine is still great. But it is now less great. The fiction stories, whether by Jack Weyland (he's the best) or whomever, always hit home. They were well-crafted, and at least by my family, well-read. It is very disappointing. Please, bring back the fiction. Where else can we get it?

Par Rasmusson
Winsted, Connecticut (via e-mail)

Offensive dating

I was a bit offended by the article "I Broke My Promise" in the October 2001 *New Era*. It was a wonderful story about keeping promises, but it seemed as though it promoted only

"I am thankful our church has a teen magazine that, along with other things, helps me attain my goals."



dating Mormons, meaning there are probably many nice guys losing dates now just because of their religion. And I don't think that's all too fair. Our religion teaches us not to judge. We should date people because of their respect, their standards, and their kindness, not their religion. I would appreciate it if you would try not to print articles that would be offensive to other faiths so that when someone of another faith reads this magazine they will not think we are judgmental or that we think everyone who is not a Mormon does bad things.

Christina Barrus
Bountiful, Utah

Cleared things up

For many years I have read the Church magazines. When I was younger, there was a desperate scramble every month to see who among my family would get to read the *Friend* first. Now I look forward to reading the *New Era* every month. One special issue in June 2000 focused on missionaries. That was perfect for me. Before reading the articles I had only a vague idea of what occurs at the Missionary Training Center. That magazine made mission preparation clearer to me and much less intimidating. I also play the piano, and I really enjoy the music that is included in the *New Era*. I only wish there were a song in every issue.

Laura Packer
Kirtland, Ohio

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*Or e-mail us at
cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org
Submissions may be edited for length and clarity.*



By Elizabeth Gartner

Floating Along

By Jolee Kay Lloyd

As I lie
with my back against the earth
and watch
the clouds float
gracefully across the sky
in ever-changing form,
I often think about life
and wonder
if I, too, am just
floating along.



*“Our
number-one
responsibility is
to see that we
are converted,
. . . because no
one can endure
on borrowed
light. You will
have to be
guided by the
light within
yourself. If you
do not have it,
you will not
stand.”*

*See “When Your
Heart Tells You
Things Your Mind
Does Not Know,”
p. 46.*