

# THE **New Era**

JUNE 2011

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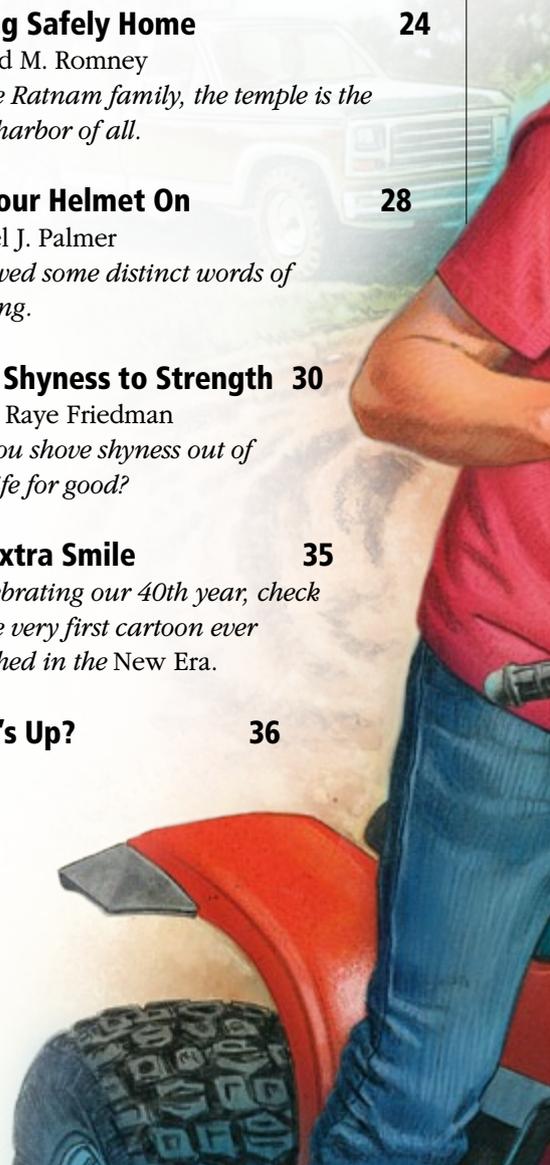
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PUT YOUR HELMET ON p. 28

# Becoming



*How can you make the gospel the core of what you are?*

# CONVERTED

**Y**ears ago when I served as a stake president, a man came to confess a transgression. His confession surprised me. He had been an active member of the Church for years, and I wondered how he could have committed the sin that he did. After some pondering, it came to me that this brother had never become truly converted. Despite his Church activity, the gospel had not penetrated his heart. It was only an external influence in his life.

How can you become converted? How can you make the gospel of Jesus Christ not just an influence in your life but the very core of what you are?

The ancient prophet Jeremiah spoke of the gospel being written in our hearts (see Jeremiah 31:33). Do you want this for yourself? I can tell you how that can happen, but it must be something you want. The gospel cannot be written in your heart unless your heart is open. Without a heartfelt desire, you can participate in sacrament meetings, classes, and Church activities and do the things I will tell you, but it won't make much difference. But if your heart is open and willing, like the heart of a child, let me tell you what you can do to be converted.

## **Lay Aside Pride**

As a first step, you must lay aside any feeling of pride. By this I mean the attitude

that rejects the authority of God to rule in our lives. You hear this attitude expressed in phrases such as “Do your own thing” or “Right and wrong depend on what I feel is right for me.” That attitude is a rebellion against God. Our beloved Creator does not force us to accept His authority, but willingly submitting to that authority is the first step in conversion.

## **Don't Just Read—Study**

For the gospel to be written in your heart, you need to understand it more. That means you will study it. When I say “study,” I mean something more than reading. You should care more about the amount of time you spend in the scriptures than about the amount you read in that time. I see you sometimes reading a few verses, stopping to ponder them, carefully reading the verses again, and praying for understanding, asking questions in your mind, waiting for spiritual impressions, and writing down the impressions and insights that come so you can remember and learn more. Studying in this way, you may not read a lot of chapters or verses in a half hour, but you will be giving place in your heart for the word of God, and He will be speaking to you. Remember Alma's description of what it feels like: “It beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding,



**By Elder D. Todd Christofferson**

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

*An important element of your conversion is serving others. You can help others in a hundred small ways.*



*Most of all, you should pray to be filled with the love of Christ. This love is given to those who ask for it with all of their heart.*

yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me” (Alma 32:28).

### **Pray for Pure Love**

I mentioned praying to understand the scriptures, but your prayers must not be limited to that. In the Book of Mormon, Amulek tells us we should pray about everything. He says, “Pour out your souls [to God] in your closets, and your secret places, and in your wilderness” (Alma 34:26). Your Heavenly Father wants you to pray about your hopes and fears, your friends and family, your school and work, and the needs of those around you. Most of all, you should pray to be filled with the love of Christ. This love is given to those who ask for it with all of their heart (see Moroni 7:47–48). Tasting this love is a major part of your conversion because once you have felt your Savior’s love for you, a love for Him and for your Heavenly Father will grow. You will want to do what They ask. Go often to your closet, your secret place, your wilderness. Ask God to bestow upon you the pure love of Christ. Sometimes fasting will help.

### **Practice the Gospel**

After Amulek talked about prayer, he spoke about another important element of

your conversion—serving others. Otherwise, he said, “your prayer is vain, and availeth you nothing” (Alma 34:28). In other words, to be converted, you must not only open your heart to a knowledge of the gospel and the love of God, you must practice the gospel law. You must look outward and care about others. You can be compassionate; you can be friendly; you can share; you can help others in a hundred small ways. As you do, the gospel of Jesus Christ will become a part of you.

### **A Gift of Yourself**

Let me mention one other thing. As you seek the blessing of conversion, you can offer the Lord the gift of your broken, or repentant, heart and your contrite, or obedient, spirit. In reality, it is the gift of yourself—what you are and what you are becoming. Is there something in your life that is unworthy? When you get rid of it, that is a gift to the Savior. Is there a good habit or quality that is lacking in your life? When you make it part of your character, you are giving a gift to the Lord. Sometimes this is hard to do, but would your gifts of repentance and obedience be worthy gifts if they cost you nothing? Remember, you don’t have to do it alone. Jesus Christ will help you make of yourself a worthy gift.

We have talked of desire, submissiveness to God, study, prayer, service, repentance, and obedience. From these, coupled with your worship and activity in Church, will come testimony and conversion. The gospel won’t be just an influence in your life—it will be what you are. Plead with God in the name of Christ to write the gospel in your mind that you may have understanding and in your heart that you may love to do His will. Pursue this blessing diligently and patiently, and you will receive it. **NE**

*Adapted from an April 2004 general conference address.*

# SIGNS OF THE SPIRIT

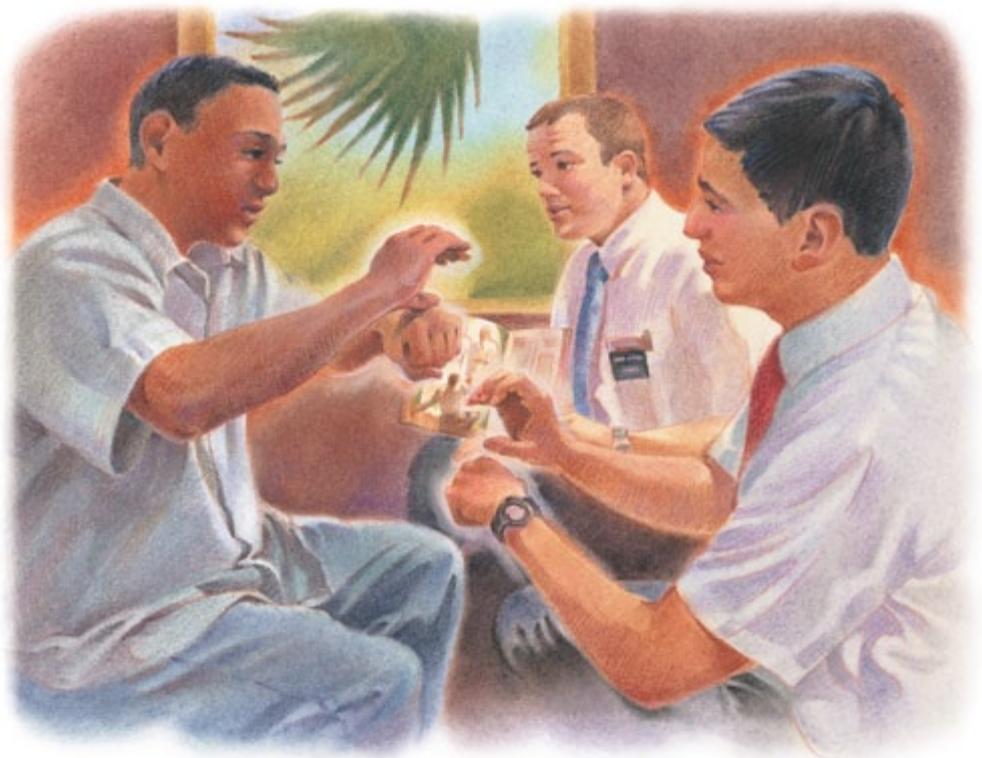
By Pedro Ovalles

Serving a full-time mission in the Dominican Republic, I had just been transferred to a new area that had a reputation of being difficult to find people to teach. When I arrived, we had only one investigator. His name was Oriviades. He had attended church before, but because he was deaf and communicated using sign language, previous missionaries hadn't been able to teach him.

One day my companion and I decided to fast and pray for a miracle that would allow us to teach Oriviades. We set an appointment with him at a time when one of his family members would be available to help translate, since neither my companion nor I knew sign language.

When we arrived to meet with Oriviades, however, none of his family members was there. When Oriviades briefly left to get a chair, my companion and I took the opportunity to pray that the Spirit would guide us. Before we had even finished the prayer, I felt the Spirit's presence strongly.

Oriviades began signing, but we couldn't understand him. We simply smiled at him and looked at each other, trying to figure out what we should do. We decided to write a note indicating a time for our next appointment, hoping that next time



we would have a translator. But suddenly both of us felt strongly that we should stay and try to teach him. "Let's at least try—the Spirit will help us," I told my companion.

We tried using drawings and rudimentary hand signals as we taught the lesson. Gradually we started understanding Oriviades's signs and were able to sign in reply to him. He seemed to understand us perfectly.

We felt prompted to share our testimonies with him. We showed him a picture of the First Vision, and I wrote on a piece of paper, "I know it's true."

Then, using signs, Oriviades

responded, "I know it's true—God told me. I prayed and know it's true."

My companion and I left the appointment with tears in our eyes. I knew that God had allowed us to testify of the restored gospel to this investigator and that the Holy Ghost had carried our message unto his heart (see 2 Nephi 33:1). I learned that we don't need to speak perfectly or eloquently when we share the gospel—sometimes, we don't need to speak aloud.

It's incredible how simple things like fasting, prayer, and faith can work mighty miracles in our lives and in the lives of those we serve. **NE**

By Jennie Bochman

*When it  
was my turn  
to bear my  
testimony in  
family home  
evening,  
I didn't think  
I had one.*

*What am I going to do? I can't  
bear my testimony. I don't  
have a testimony!* I thought.

It was family home evening, and Mom had taught the lesson. "I think it'd be very nice if we all took some time to share our testimonies with each other," she said excitedly. "I'll go first."

At least she started on the other side of the room. It felt like Mom was looking right at me as she began. *Who is Jesus, anyway?* I wondered. I had heard all the stories, gone to Primary, but I still didn't know Him. *What if it is really just a story?* Mom seemed to really feel what she was saying, like she really believed it was true.

Mom ended her testimony, and then it was Tiffany's turn. She began, "I want to bear my testimony. I know the Church is true, I know there is a true prophet. . . ."

*How does she know that? She's only 10!* I thought as I listened to her go on like it was so simple. It wasn't simple, though—not for me. I didn't know if I believed it, any of it. I had so many questions.

# A TESTIMONY OF MY OWN

Tiffany finished, and it was Danny's turn. He sped through bearing his testimony, and then everyone was looking at me.

I thought about just saying I had a testimony. But I decided I would just tell the truth. *They are going to be so mad.*

"Jennie, it's your turn. Would you bear your testimony, please?"

"No. I don't want to. I don't have a testimony. I don't know if it's true. I'm sorry." Dreading what they would say and how they would react, I ran to my room and threw myself onto my bed.

Mom followed quickly and sat down on the bed next to me. She reached forward and gently patted me on the back.

"Jennie . . ."

"Mom, I just don't know if I believe it like you do. I'm sorry, but I just don't know."

"Well, it's about time!" she said.

"What?" Surprised, I sat up.

"You're 13 years old. It's about time you started questioning and searching for yourself. You can't live off of your father's testimony or mine. You have to figure it out for yourself now."

"You're not mad at me?"

"No. It's OK that you don't have a testimony now, but you have to decide what you're going to do about it. You must find out for yourself," Mom said.

"What should I do?"

"Read the Book of Mormon. Then pray about it. Ask God."

"How will I know?" I asked.

"You'll feel it. He'll tell your heart." She smiled, got up from the bed, and left my room.

Moved by my mother's advice, I determined to read the Book of Mormon and find out if what my parents had taught me was true.

A few months later I came to the last chapter in the Book of Mormon. I remember thinking about Moroni's promise as I knelt down beside my bed. I wondered if it really could be that simple.

As I began to pray, a feeling of peace and assurance came over me—so much so that I felt guilty for having even doubted. In that sweet moment, the Lord planted a seed in my heart that has since become a growing testimony of the truth. **NE**





# THE DEAL



By Heather Cullen

When I was 11 years old, I wanted to quit the Church. I was often angry and felt guilty because I couldn't seem to control my temper. Besides that, it seemed the Church had too many rules, and I couldn't see the point of many of them. I told my mom I wasn't going to church anymore, and she told me that if I read the entire Book of Mormon and didn't think it was true, I could quit. I was delighted with this arrangement.

I was very bright and a fast reader. I knew I could finish my reading in less than a week. I planned to zoom through the Book of Mormon in a couple of days, tell my mom I knew it wasn't true, and be free. In anticipation, I cheerfully grabbed the book and began to read. Just as I thought: it was an easy read and as boring as I had imagined. "And it came to pass . . . and it came to pass . . . and it came to pass . . ."

Then I started 2 Nephi 4:15:

"And upon these I write the things of my soul, and many of the scriptures which are engraven upon the plates of brass. For my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them, and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children."

Then to verse 17: "Nevertheless, notwithstanding the great goodness of the Lord, in showing me his great and marvelous works, my heart exclaimeth: O wretched man that I am! Yea, my heart sorroweth because of my flesh; my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities."

I became rapt with attention. I was an avid journal keeper and wrote the things of my soul all the time. Why did he delight in the scriptures? I too felt that God was good and I wasn't. This was a prophet speaking.

I read to verse 27: "And why should I yield to sin, because of my flesh? Yea, why should I give way to temptations, that the evil one have place in my heart to destroy my peace and afflict my soul? Why am I angry because of mine enemy?"

I read on through verse 35. A waterfall of warmth and light poured into the top of my head and filled my body with a sensation I had never felt before. A feeling of confident, joyful knowing. I slammed the book shut and yelped, "No!" But it was too late. My plan had failed. There was no escape now. I knew for myself that the Book of Mormon was true and that God loved me enough to tell me in such a wonderful way. With mixed feelings,

*I could stop going to church . . . if I read the entire Book of Mormon and decided that is wasn't true.*



I surrendered my heart to my Savior, wondering what would become of me now.

I didn't need to worry. I knew God loved me and would help me. I knew He loved me and wanted me to change so I could be happier, not just to fit some rules. I can honestly say that although some years have had their ups and downs, every year has finished more up than the year before as I have studied, pondered, prayed, and delighted in the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is my coach, my friend, my captain, and my Redeemer. All that is wonderful in my life is a gift from Him, and I am thankful that I had a mother who loved me enough to challenge me.

I'm sure that she fell to her knees begging the Lord to save me and send me a blessing that would take me out of her hands and into His. I want that for everyone. I

never let a day pass without reading from the Book of Mormon. **NE**

### THE LORD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

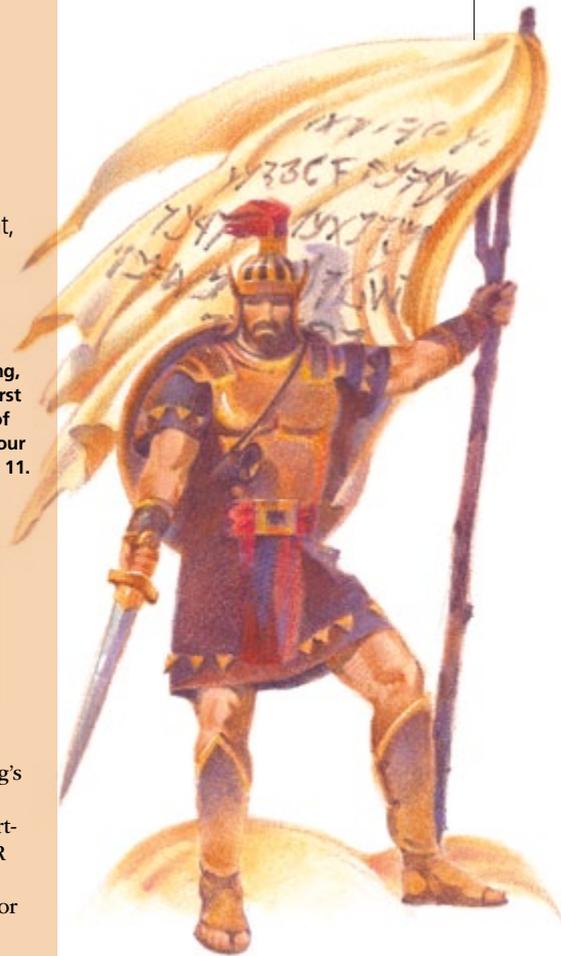
"I will make you this promise about reading the Book of Mormon: You will be drawn to it as you understand that the Lord has embedded in it His message to you. Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni knew that, and those who put it together put in messages for you."

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, "The Book of Mormon Will Change Your Life," *Ensign*, Feb. 2004, 11.



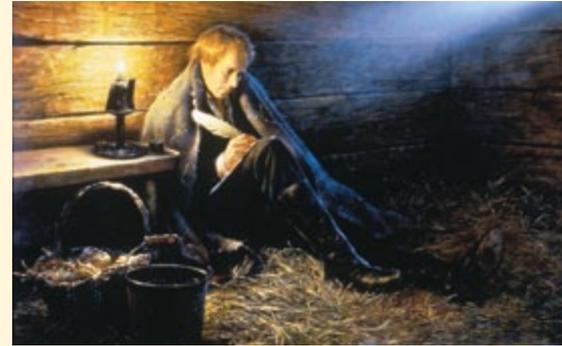
#### **NEmore**

Read President Eyring's full article at [lds.org/go/612](https://lds.org/go/612), or use a smartphone to scan the QR code above for quick access (see page 39 for instructions).



# Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–43

*Joseph Smith taught the Lord's way of exercising priesthood authority.*



## Persuasion

*Persuasion*—encouraging others to believe or do something by reasoning or pleading with them.

## Long-Suffering



*Long-suffering*—patience.

“As the Lord is patient with us, let us be patient with those we serve. Understand that they, like us, are imperfect. They, like us, make mistakes. They, like us, want others to give them the benefit of the doubt.

“Never give up on anyone. And that includes not giving up on yourself.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Continue in Patience,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 58.

## Gentleness and Meekness

Here are some things the scriptures teach us about gentleness and meekness:

- They are among the fruits of the Spirit (see Galatians 5:22–23).
- Gentleness is a mark of the Lord's servants (see 1 Thessalonians 2:7; 2 Timothy 2:24).

begin to exercise 'unrighteous dominion.  
 40 Hence many are called, but 'few are chosen.  
 41 No 'power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the 'priesthood, only by 'persuasion, by 'long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love 'unfeigned;  
 42 By 'kindness, and pure 'knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the 'soul without 'hypocrisy, and without 'guile—  
 43 'Reproving betimes with 'sharpness, when 'moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of 'love toward him whom thou hast reprov'd, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;  
 44 That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of 'death.  
 45 Let thy 'bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the

- The meek shall inherit the earth (see Psalm 37:11; Matthew 5:5).
- Meekness is a sign of faith in Christ (see Moroni 7:39).
- Meekness leads to the visitation of the Holy Ghost (see Moroni 8:26).

## Love Unfeigned

*Unfeigned*—genuine; not faked or pretended.

Has someone shown you genuine love recently? How can you show that kind of love to others? Write about it in your journal.

## Without Hypocrisy and without Guile

*Hypocrisy*—pretending to be something you are not.

*Guile*—deceitful; cunning.

## Reproving Betimes with Sharpness

*Reproving*—scolding or correcting gently; expressing disapproval.

*Betimes*—speedily; early; before it is too late.

*Sharpness*—clarity.

## When Moved Upon by the Holy Ghost



“An inspired, loving rebuke can be an invitation to unity. Failure to give it when moved upon by the Holy

Ghost will lead to discord.”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “Be One,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2008, 8.

*Editors' note: This page is not meant to be a comprehensive explanation of the selected scripture verses, only a starting point for your own study.*

# The Strength to

By Erin Wilde

*When my dad wished he could feel my pain for me, I learned more about our Savior's Atonement.*

**D**uring a youth conference in the Uinta Mountains, I convinced my dad to hike with me to the top of a mountain. While waiting for him, I sprawled out on a rock and fell asleep. However, the medication I was taking at the time warned against staying out in the sun for too long, so when I awoke, I had a pounding headache.

My dad and I headed out, but I knew there was a problem. With every step I took, my head pounded, and I began to feel light-headed and dizzy. I got slower and slower and fell farther behind my dad. All I could think about was the pain I was in and how I wasn't going to be able to finish.

My dad guided me to a rock, where we sat down. When I explained what was wrong and that I wanted to turn around, he offered comfort. He said, "I would do anything to take the pain away from you. I wish I could feel it for you, just so you wouldn't have to feel an ounce of it." He reminded me of my desire to hike the mountain and offered to go slower so that we could finish.

Once again we began. This time I was in the front so I could take it at my own pace. Although the headache was still painful, I was no longer sick to my stomach and dizzy,

and we proceeded to work our way up the rocks.

My dad had just given me an example of true love and of what Christ has done for all of us. Christ took our sins upon Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross so that we, through repentance, might not have to suffer and so that we may return to our Heavenly Father forever and be with our families. I've had many lessons on the Savior's love, but until that moment I hadn't ever truly made that connection. I not only realized how much my dad loved me but also how much my Savior and Heavenly Father must love me.

Later, when my dad passed away unexpectedly, once again I learned the importance of our Savior's sacrifice. Christ died and was resurrected so that I, too, could be resurrected and live with my dad forever. In addition, the Holy Ghost can comfort anyone whenever needed. He not only can be our companion to help us make good choices as He leads and guides us to happiness, but He also comforts us when we are sick and feel too weak to go on. The peaceful spirit from the Holy Ghost is given to those who choose to live righteously and have that blessing in their lives. That gift

# CARRY ON

is given to us by a loving Heavenly Father so that we might not have to feel the bitter pains of mortality by ourselves.

The comfort I received that January night when my dad passed away has not left me. I know that in life we are given trials so that we can be strengthened and made stronger, and through prayer we are given the extra strength needed to complete the task in front of us. This is where growth comes from, and we need growth to strengthen our testimonies and help us progress in our journey. **NE**



**“How can I tell if my trials are meant to help me become better or if they are Heavenly Father’s way of warning me that I am headed down the wrong path?”**

**T**rials can help you become better—no matter what their cause—if you use them to grow spiritually.

Your conscience will let you know if you’re heading down the wrong path. If you feel bad about something you’ve done, pray to Heavenly Father and ask for His forgiveness. Try to fix whatever problems you’ve caused. You might also seek counsel from your parents and priesthood leaders. These steps will help you feel better and get you going in the right direction.

Trials that are not the result of sin can also help you become better. These kinds of trials can test your faith or patience or can teach you about yourself. To use these trials for your growth, ask yourself what you can learn from them and what you can do better.

Your faith can be strengthened during trials if you ask for Heavenly Father’s help. As the Savior did when He was suffering, you can pray “more earnestly” (see Luke 22:44). Heavenly Father might remove the trial, or He can strengthen you to bear it well (see Mosiah 24:14–15). **NE**

## Friends and Family Can Help



One of the ways that Heavenly Father warns me when I am heading down the wrong path is that He will inspire friends or family members to share their testimonies or a personal experience with me. If I feel guilt or a desire to change as they share their feelings, I know that I need to repent and make some changes in my life.

*Luis S., 17, Florida, USA*

## Search Your Heart

Search your heart to know whether what you are doing is truly something our Father in Heaven would want you to do. We have the Holy Ghost in our lives to teach us good from evil. If you seek God and ask, the Holy Ghost will show you what you must do. Whether the trial is to teach or warn, it serves the same purpose: to help you grow and become perfected in Christ if you react with faith and reliance on the Lord.

*Emily B., 18, California, USA*

## The Lord Will Comfort You



Heavenly Father meant for all trials to become strengthening experiences and shape you into a better person. It’s all in how you handle them. I know that some trials seem like too much for us to get through, but they will bless us in time if we have faith. I always try to remember what the Lord told us: “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (John 14:18). With this knowledge you can overcome any trial you face, and you will grow stronger. If you feel like Heavenly Father is warning you that you are headed down the wrong path, have faith

and listen to the promptings of the Spirit so you can hold on to the iron rod. He loves you and always wants you to be the best you can as He helps you through life.

*Olivia B., 18, Minnesota, USA*

### Think about It

I feel the best way to find out the purpose of the trial is to fast and pray about it sincerely. Also try thinking about it. If you overcame the trial, would you become a better person or would you remain unchanged? If you think overcoming the trial will make you better and happier, then you are on the right path.

*Ammon K., 16, Utah, USA*

### Stay on the Strait and Narrow



We should read our scriptures and pray daily, and if we are doing those things and are in tune with the Holy Ghost, God will make it known to us what choices we should and shouldn't make. If you think the path you are going down isn't one your Father in Heaven would choose for you, turn back. Always stay on the strait and narrow.

*Elizabeth P., 15, Pennsylvania, USA*

### Pray to Learn from Trials



Our Heavenly Father always gives us trials throughout our lives, and they are to strengthen us in His gospel and in our faith. If we are on a bad path, that is the consequence of the bad choices we made. Always pray so that God will strengthen you and help you discern

what is good from that trial. I have a firm testimony that the trials Heavenly Father puts in our way are to edify us, to increase our testimony, to help us learn not to fall again, or to help others through our experience.

*Ruddy R., 17, Guayas, Ecuador*

### Trials Can Warn

I think that all trials are meant to make us stronger, even if sometimes it doesn't seem like it. When I was 14, I became ill and had to take eight months off from school and study from home. This trial helped to make me a better, stronger person. It helped me appreciate what I have. Sometimes trials can make us reevaluate where we are going in life, so they can be a good warning bell.

*Jennifer P., 17, North Island, New Zealand*

### Be Patient

If the hardships are a result of breaking a commandment, then it's probably a warning. But if they are out of your control, they may be there to help you grow. I would pray and ask Heavenly Father if there is something you need to change or learn from this

experience, and if so, ask Him to let you know what it is. Pray for strength and comfort. And be patient; the answer may be on its way.

*Michaela P., 17, Idaho, USA*

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



### TO BECOME MORE LIKE THE SAVIOR

"Our Heavenly Father, who loves us completely and perfectly, permits us to have

experiences that will allow us to develop the traits and attributes we need to become more and more Christlike. Our trials come in many forms, but each will allow us to become more like the Savior as we learn to recognize the good that comes from each experience. As we understand this doctrine, we gain greater assurance of our Father's love. We may never know in this life why we face what we do, but we can feel confident that we can grow from the experience."

**Elder James B. Martino of the Seventy, "All Things Work Together for Good," *Ensign*, May 2010, 101.**

## NEXT QUESTION

"I'm overwhelmed when I think about all that I need to do to live the gospel. Where do I start?"

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Responses may be edited for length or clarity.

# TEACH A MAN TO

By Adam C. Olson

Church Magazines

Ezra stopped paddling his small outrigger canoe and watched the sun sinking toward the Pacific on the other side of the bay. For years he had fished these waters with his father, but today he had trouble seeing the familiar sight through his tears.

Today he was alone.

As the canoe rocked gently on the water, he could hear the words his father had often spoken: “Watch carefully, Ezra. Someday when I am gone you will need to know how to support the family.”

Today was the day his father had warned him about and tried to prepare him for. But it had come too soon. He was only 16. He wasn't ready.

## The Responsibility

Ezra idolizes his father. He had waited impatiently for years until his father said that at age seven, Ezra was finally old enough to help him set and check the fishing nets.

Fishing didn't provide a lot of money, but it was enough to feed Ezra, his five sisters, and their mother; support Ezra's oldest sister on her mission in the United States; and help their neighbors. Ezra was even able to begin saving for his own mission.

But now his father was gone. His death was unexpected, and it broke Ezra's heart. Losing his father meant losing his hero, his bishop, his mentor.

But added to the heartache was a terrible realization: the responsibility his father had tried to prepare him for was suddenly his. Ezra would have to support the family now.

## The Prayer

He couldn't even consider fishing that first week after his father's passing. His emotions were too raw. The thought of taking his father's canoe, using his father's nets, and doing his father's work without him was unbearable.

By the following week he knew his family needed him to go, but the burden was overwhelming. For as much as Ezra wanted to be like his father, he recognized more than ever just how far he was from achieving that goal.

“I felt like there was no hope,” he says. “I found it difficult the first time to walk in the steps of my father. As I took the canoe out into the sea, I felt his absence. Those words my father had spoken came back to me, and I felt the weight of responsibility for my family.”

Standing in the shallows of the Pacific, he turned to the only Person who could help him—the One his father had taught him to trust.

“Show me where my father stood,” Ezra prayed. “Help me fulfill my father's wish for me.”

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ADAM C. OLSON, EXCEPT AS NOTED

# FISH

*When he needed help, Ezra, a 16-year-old in Samoa, turned where his father had taught him: to his Heavenly Father.*

***Ezra and his friend Fetu return in an outrigger canoe from pulling in their nets.***

## The Answer

In the early evening silence after that prayer, Ezra felt something change. He felt led to his father's fishing spot, and the things his father had taught him came to mind when needed.

"After that prayer, I felt extra strength," he says. "I knew Heavenly Father would help me."

Just as the Savior showed His ancient Apostles where to cast their nets, Ezra received help too. "I caught a lot of fish that day," he says.

## Like Father, Like Son

Though he had doubted he could do what his father did, Ezra learned that he could do more than he thought.

"It's been a big change in my life—the way I think, see things, and do things," Ezra says. "I realized I can do what my father did."

Ezra has become more like his father than he believed he could. He has followed in his father's footsteps as a fisherman—and as a teacher.

The second week Ezra went fishing, his friend Fetu asked if he could come along and learn. Ezra has taught Fetu how to fish, and Fetu has helped Ezra with his work and kept him company.

"I'm grateful for the opportunity to teach others as my father taught me," says Ezra. "It makes me happy to know I am not only a fisherman like my father but also a teacher."

## Teach a Man to Fish

The saying goes that if you give a man a fish, you have fed him for a day, but if you teach him to fish, you have fed him for a



*Ezra plans to serve a mission. He remembers that Heavenly Father answered him when he called. "I want to be able to answer Him when He calls me," Ezra says.*



*Having to take over his father's role as provider, Ezra says, "I found it difficult the first time to walk in the steps of my father."*

lifetime. Ezra's father certainly did the second.

However, Ezra learned much more from his father than how to fish. He learned that he could rely on his Heavenly Father. This knowledge will serve him throughout his life even better than his ability to fish.

Knowing how much he needs his Heavenly Father's help, Ezra is careful to worthily fulfill his responsibilities as a priest, the office to which his father ordained him the week before he died. He also schedules his fishing so that it doesn't conflict with school and seminary.

What's more, he is saving what money he can from fishing so that one day he can be a fisher of men (see Matthew 4:19).

"During one family home evening, my father expressed his desire that we all serve missions," Ezra says. "That is my utmost goal."

Ezra remembers that the Lord answered him when he called. "I want to be able to answer *Him* when He calls *me*." **NE**

# After the

By Elyssa J. Kirkham

*When their bus and belongings went up in smoke, the youth of the South Jordan First Ward found a way to carry on.*

The young men and women of the South Jordan First Ward stood on the side of a highway in Wyoming as the bus that had been transporting them to Martin's Cove turned into a blazing inferno.

The fire started with an overheated rear wheel and spread, getting so hot that it melted part of the freeway asphalt. Everyone made it off the bus safely, but there was not time to retrieve their backpacks or other belongings. Within 12 minutes the bus had burned down to its metal frame, along with many of the belongings the group had packed for their pioneer trek.

## Pressing Forward

The youth were in shock and sure they would have to forego the trip. This wasn't quite what they had in mind when they'd fasted for a special pioneer trek experience a few weeks before. Most personal items the youth had packed were burned in the fire, including scriptures and journals. A few youth even lost their shoes.

But tents, food, sleeping bags, and other supplies were safely stowed in a trailer separate from the bus. Bishop Brad Wardle confirmed that they had enough supplies to continue the trek, though it would be a challenge. The youth and their leaders had prepared carefully and wanted to continue.

They wouldn't let any hardship keep them from having an uplifting trek. The group rallied, and they chose to have a good attitude.

"Pray and smile," said Walter Evans, a priest from the South Jordan First Ward. "That's pretty much what I did through the whole thing—just pray and smile."

## Rescued by Angels

While the fire burned their personal supplies, the outpouring of love that followed warmed their hearts. When they speak of the trek, most of the group remember first the kindness and generosity they received from others who heard of their hardships and wanted to help. To the South Jordan First Ward, these helpers were rescuing angels.

On the first night of the trek, the couple missionaries at the Mormon Handcart Visitors' Center scoured their cabins to find any supplies they could loan or give to the group, including blankets, pillows, and sleeping bags.

"It just felt like we had a trek experience all our own, and we felt so blessed for our hardships, like the Willie and Martin handcart companies did," said Caleb Clarke. "And while we weren't in dire trouble, we had to be helped by others and rescued by them."

Other rescuers included the American

# FIRE



*Right: The bus after being destroyed by fire.*

*Below: These trekkers learned that they could face adversity with faith and come away strengthened.*



Fork 13th and Heber 11th Wards. They were in the area for their own treks and donated their unused supplies and clothing to the South Jordan First Ward, including socks, shoes, jackets, sunscreen, bug spray, and medical supplies. The spirit of charity and giving stayed with both the rescued and the rescuers.

### **With Steadfast Faith**

Like the pioneers, this group of trekkers had to make do with less. One instance of improvisation was their treatment of blisters: “Everyone had duct tape all over their feet, and we thought it was pretty funny,” said Grace Loertscher. “But when we thought about it, the pioneers didn’t even have duct tape.”

For Michael Broadway, the experience gave him a sense of the spiritual legacy modern Saints have inherited from the pioneers. “When we were pulling carts, going up the

mountain and having fun, I began to feel the Spirit,” he said. “Even though my family are [first generation] members, I realized I still have a pioneer heritage.”

These experiences were a testament of the gospel and the pioneers’ faith. “It just made me think. There is no way this Church isn’t true,” Kailie Fennell said.

### **All Is Well**

“You never know what life is going to throw in front of you, but you can always know that He’ll help you through it,” said Geoff Kroll. “Though our stuff was gone, we still were blessed by people who gave us so much. When you have adversity, know that you’ll come out of it—and when you do, you’ll be better and have a better relationship with Heavenly Father and your Savior.”

The youth of the South Jordan First Ward saw, as the pioneers did, that “sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven” (“Praise to the Man,” *Hymns*, no. 27). Trekkers came away feeling uplifted and strengthened, despite how their trip began. The lesson learned, for many, was that when they had faith, they could face their adversities without fear. As they turned to the Lord, He provided. Like the pioneers, when the trekkers sang “all is well,” they knew it was true (“Come, Come Ye Saints,” *Hymns*, no. 30). **NE**



# THE SACRED GROVE



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN TERFORD

What happened here changed the world. Let it change your life.

# SAILING SAFELY HOME



Every day the fishermen of Visakhapatnam, India, sail out to sea. Most days the waves are gentle, the ocean is kind, and the boats return laden with fish. Occasionally, however, the waters turn rough. Skies darken, menacing waves rise, and the fishermen rejoice just to return safely to their harbor.

Every day the Latter-day Saint youth of Visakhapatnam set out into the world. Most days life treats them well. They gain knowledge, make friends, and return home filled with the joy of life. Occasionally, however, the world turns rough. Discouragement pounds like waves, temptation towers tall, and doubt darkens the spiritual sky. On those days they rejoice as they return safely to their havens of peace, harbors they call home.

By Richard M. Romney

Church Magazines

*Though the seas of life may be rough at times, Latter-day Saint teens in Visakhapatnam, India, know that the harbor of home is a haven of peace.*

## Pictures on the Wall

Two of those Latter-day Saint teens, Naga Bushan Ratnam and Pavani Kotala Ratnam, live with their parents in a small apartment far from town but near the steel mill where their father works. You can tell by the pictures in the apartment what the priorities are. Family photos fill a bookshelf near the front door, and in the sleeping area, pictures of the Savior, the temple, and the First Presidency adorn the walls.

“When I wake up, those pictures are the first things I see,” Pavani says. “When I go to sleep at night, they are the last things I see.”

Pavani believes we all can create havens of peace in our homes. “That’s why I keep things clean,” she says. “That’s one way to make it comfortable for the Spirit to be here.” And at school, “I always have *For the Strength of Youth* in my book bag, so whenever I take up a book, I keep seeing it.”

Naga finds that conversations with his sister bring him peace. “Of course we talk to our parents and seek their counsel on many things,” he says. “Our father is the district president, so we talk with him all the time both officially and unofficially. And we love to talk with our mother. But there’s something special about being able





*Church and family provide safe harbors for the Ratnam family (previous page) and for (clockwise from top left) Sujith, Sandeep, and Hepsiba Batha; Pavani and Naga Ratnam; the Butty family; and other youth from Visakhapatnam, which has three branches.*

travel—all four of them—40 kilometers (25 miles) each way on a single motorbike just to get to their meetings. They talk about prayers of faith for Pavani when she was sick on the day Dad was baptized, about the priesthood blessing Dad gave to seriously ill Naga during school exams, and about the way Dad always counsels with Mom, with them, and in prayer with Heavenly Father when making major decisions.

“I have seen positive changes as our family has grown in the gospel,” Pavani says. “My parents’ example and my brother’s example have guided me as the youngest of the family. I know that Jesus Christ has helped me through every part of my life. I have people around me who help me and love me, and I have the Savior’s love. That love is more important to me than anything else.”

Such love was evident when the family traveled to the Hong Kong China Temple to be sealed. On earth, Naga says, the temple is the safest harbor of all: “It is a place of

holiness. Just thinking about it brings holiness into our home.” And that makes the Ratnams’ apartment a joyous place to be.

### **Scripture Safety**

Hepsiba, Sandeep, and Sujith Batha, who live with their parents in downtown Visak (as locals call the city), say the scriptures are an anchor in their harbor of peace. “By reading the scriptures, we invite the Spirit to guide us in the correct path, to take good decisions in our lives,” Hepsiba says. “We also invite the Spirit into our home when we have family home evening and family prayer.”

In fact, Sandeep says, his mother reminds them “to pray every day while going out and coming in. When she says, ‘Please be thankful,’ that makes me want to be thankful for everything.”

to share with my sister.” When Naga gets upset, Pavani calms him down. Naga is somewhat reserved, so Pavani helps him to be more outgoing.

“But most of all, we strengthen each other in keeping the standards,” Naga says. For example, Pavani will ask Naga for advice about modest clothing. “If he doesn’t think it’s up to Church standards, I won’t wear it,” she says. And they often talk about giving service, both in the Church and in the community. Such discussion is partially responsible for Naga’s dream to someday be a cardiologist (heart doctor). “I want my career to be another way of giving service,” he says.

The Ratnam teens explain that having the priesthood in their home also adds to their family’s well-being. They reminisce about how their father led the rest of them into the Church eight years ago, even when they had to

Sujith says that in addition to their home, another place of peace is in branch meetings, where members learn the gospel together and where everyone is welcome to worship, and in activities where youth with the same standards can strengthen and reassure one another. “The Lord tells us that we are the light of the world,” Sujith says (see Matthew 5:14). “As we gather together, we keep that light burning bright and feel more comfortable sharing it.”

### Happily Home

It was that kind of sharing that brought the gospel to the Butty family. Sisters Sandhya and Sudha Butty and their mother and father can hardly stop smiling—they are so eager to tell about how they were introduced to the Church.

“We joined the Church as a family,” Sandhya explains. “We had been looking for the right church for a long time.

We knew we needed to be baptized. Then one day our father saw two elders. Their name tags said, ‘The Church of Jesus Christ,’ and he knew he had to speak with them.”

Discussions began in earnest. “We learned that, to do the will of the Father, Jesus Christ suffered for us, accomplished the Atonement, and made it possible for us to return to Heavenly Father by following Him,” Sudha says. With that testimony solidly in place, joining the Church seemed like sailing home through friendly seas, and the Buttys have rejoiced in their decision ever since.

Every day the fishing boats sail out from Visakhapatnam. Every day the youth of the Visakhapatnam First, Second, and Gajuwaka Branches set out into the world. All of them can return safely to a familiar harbor. But in the case of the Latter-day Saints, it is a harbor that’s not only safe for now but also secure for eternity. **NE**

### SAILING ON THE FRIEND SHIP

**P**avani Kotala Ratnam has learned a lot about friendship by living the principles of the gospel. “When we joined the Church, I was made fun of in my class at school because I would never cheat. I never told lies. If I was asked to do anything good, I would do it for sure. And I always talked to everyone politely. I had good friends at church, but my school ‘friends’ didn’t like my standards. They told me I was crazy and laughed about me in front of others.

“I talked with my dad and my mom about what kind of friends I should have,” she continues. “Talking to them was one of the best decisions I ever made. They helped me to feel good about myself, to choose friends who built me up, and to try to be friendly with everyone.

“Soon I was talking with everyone—the big guy, the better student—I talked to everybody. I tried to set a good example. In the beginning I didn’t find any friends who encouraged me, and I had a hard time. But my teachers encouraged me. There were times when they asked, ‘What makes you different?’

“Other students kept saying, ‘Why do you behave like that?’ and ‘Why do you talk to that guy when he is not of your social class?’”

But eventually those waves of opposition stopped pounding. “I knew I was different in a good way and that I should be myself and do what is right. I had that determination,” she says.

Today Pavani is known by the other students as a friendly young woman who is a positive influence in her school.



# Put Your Helmet On

*In my excitement to ride that four-wheeler, I heard some very clear words of warning.*

By Samuel J. Palmer

**O**n a rare break from working on our family farm in southern Idaho, my brother, several of his friends, and I went to a motorcycle park outside of Boise, Idaho. We rode up and down the backcountry on our motorcycle for hours, having a lot of fun. It was a wonderful break from the rigors of our busy summer.

One of my brother's friends had a four-wheeler. At the time, four-wheelers were very expensive, so there were very few of them on the trails. Knowing this was a rare opportunity to ride one, I asked the owner if I could take it for a short ride. He kindly said, "You bet!"

Because we had been taking a short break to eat and have a drink of water, I did not have my helmet on when I asked him if I could ride the four-wheeler, so when he said yes, I excitedly climbed onto it without much thought for safety. I pulled the rip-cord ignition and felt the engine come alive beneath me. I was so excited; this was my first ride on a four-wheeler!

It soon turned into a first for me in learning a lesson I had not anticipated that day. I put the four-wheeler into gear, and it lurched forward as if it were just as excited to have me ride it as I was to be on it. Just as it went forward I heard a voice say to me very clearly, "Put your helmet on." I thought the voice was my brother or maybe one of

his friends. I turned and looked at them, but they were all facing away, sitting on the tailgate of our pickup, talking and laughing, paying no attention to me.

I stopped the four-wheeler, got off, and put on my helmet. I thought very little of the voice and its directions until a short time later. Once I was back on the four-wheeler, with my helmet on, I rode up a ravine to access the trails. I had a blast! It was so much fun. After about 10 minutes I began the descent back down the ravine to my brother and his friends.

On my way down I neglected to pay attention to the ruts carved into the trail from motorcycles that had ridden on it after a rainstorm. Unfortunately, the four-wheeler's right front tire settled into a rut, which made a 45-degree turn to the left of the trail in front of me. Before I could apply the brakes, the four-wheeler pulled hard to the left, but I did not. I flew over the handlebars and landed several feet down the trail. I landed directly on top of my head.

Fortunately, I had not been moving at a very high speed, so the impact was not very painful, nor did I hurt myself in any way. As the four-wheeler sat just off the trail, idling quietly, I pulled my helmet off to inspect the damage. I noticed the top of the helmet was scratched



and damaged severely from the impact on the hard trail. In an instant I remembered the voice that had said, "Put your helmet on," and I uttered a quiet prayer of gratitude to my Heavenly Father.

It has been very rare for me to actually hear a voice prompt me, but on that day a voice protected and preserved me. I know it was the Holy Ghost. I do not

know why I was preserved from the harm and pain I might have experienced, but one thing I do know: our Heavenly Father lives and is mindful of all of His children. I know God loves us. I know He loves me. I am deeply grateful for the gift of the Holy Ghost and its protective promptings. **NE**





# FROM SHYNESS

Do any of these situations sound familiar to you:

- *Youth conference makes you uncomfortable because there are so many new people.*
- *You know the answer to a question in class but are afraid to raise your hand.*
- *The bishop asks you to give a talk and you just might faint because you are so nervous.*

If so, then you probably consider yourself shy. So what can you do about it? A look at what might cause you to shy away from certain situations may be your first clue.

**By Mindy Raye Friedman**  
Church Magazines

*Shyness may seem like an immovable barrier. But you can push it out of the way a little at a time.*

## Why Am I Shy?

There are two types of shy people according to Dr. Larry Nelson, an associate professor of human development at Brigham Young University whose research focuses on shyness. The first type of shy people are *physiologically shy*. They are born with a nervous system that is quick to respond in stressful situations and slow to calm back down afterward.

In order for non-shy people to understand, Dr. Nelson uses the analogy of watching a scary movie. The average person enters the theater with normal breathing and heart rate. When the scary part of the movie comes, their blood pressure rises, their breathing becomes more shallow, and their muscles tense. So they

start at a low stress level and then increase.

Physiologically shy people, by contrast, are already at a heightened level of stress before they get to the stressful situation. So when they get stressed, their response is much more elevated than the average person. Their bodies' reactions basically overwhelm them.

Dr. Nelson says about 15 percent of people (almost 1 in 7) are born physiologically shy. However, every year he will ask his students to raise a hand if they think they are shy, and usually more than 60 percent do. So, why do so many people label themselves as shy?

"They think the fact that their heart starts to beat faster on a first date or at a job interview or while speaking in church means they are shy," Dr. Nelson explains. "Well, that's a normal response to those settings."

Another reason for the difference may be because some of those people are *self-consciously shy*. This type of shyness happens often among youth when they become very preoccupied with what other people think of them.

"There are some individuals who are so self-conscious about what others think that they pull back because they are so concerned about negative perceptions or judgments of others on them," Dr. Nelson says.

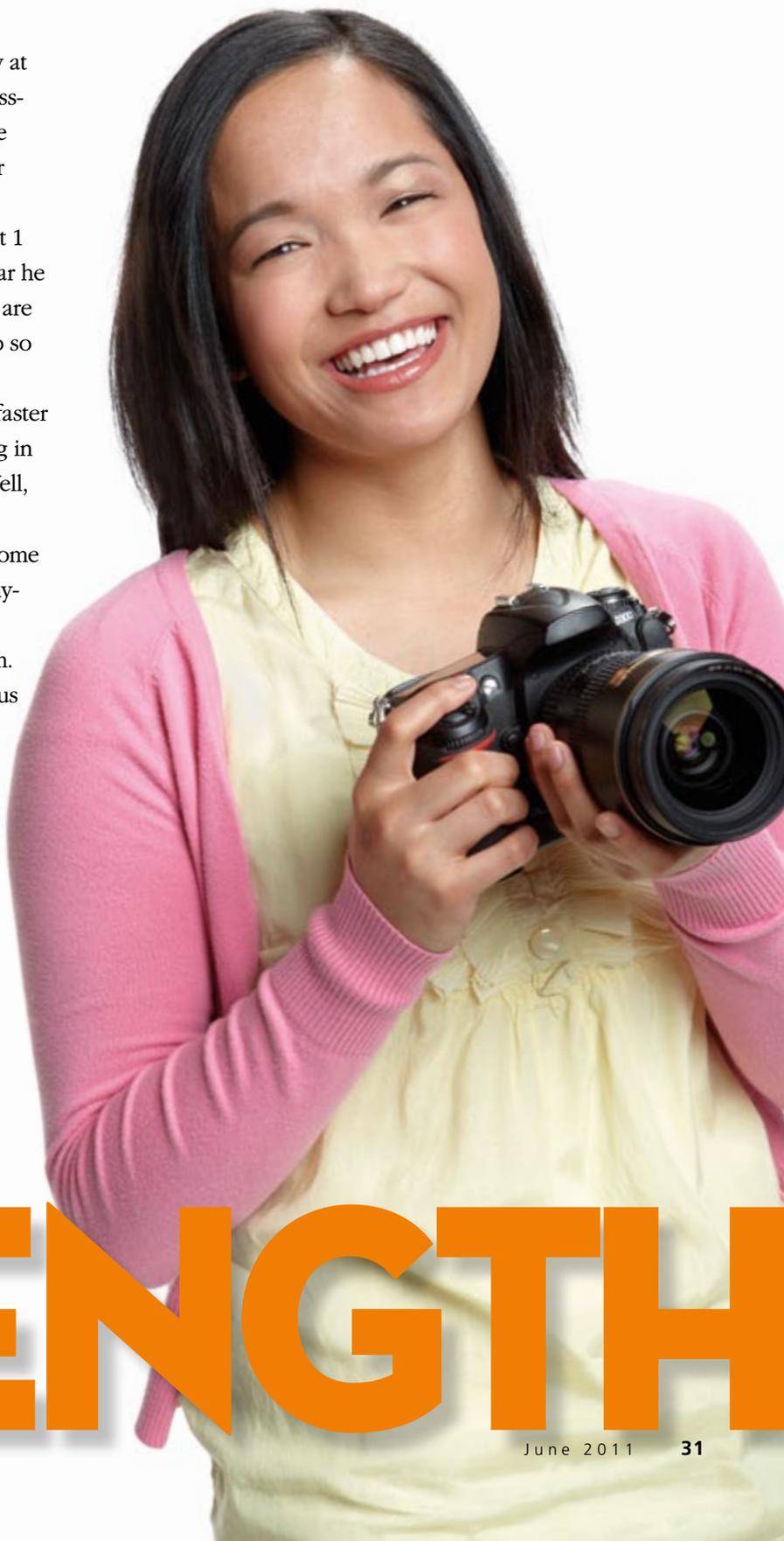
This self-conscious feeling leads to a higher stress response in those situations where they think others may be judging them.

### **Making the Change**

Regardless of which type of shy you are, in order to overcome any weakness, you have to

# TO

# STRENGTH



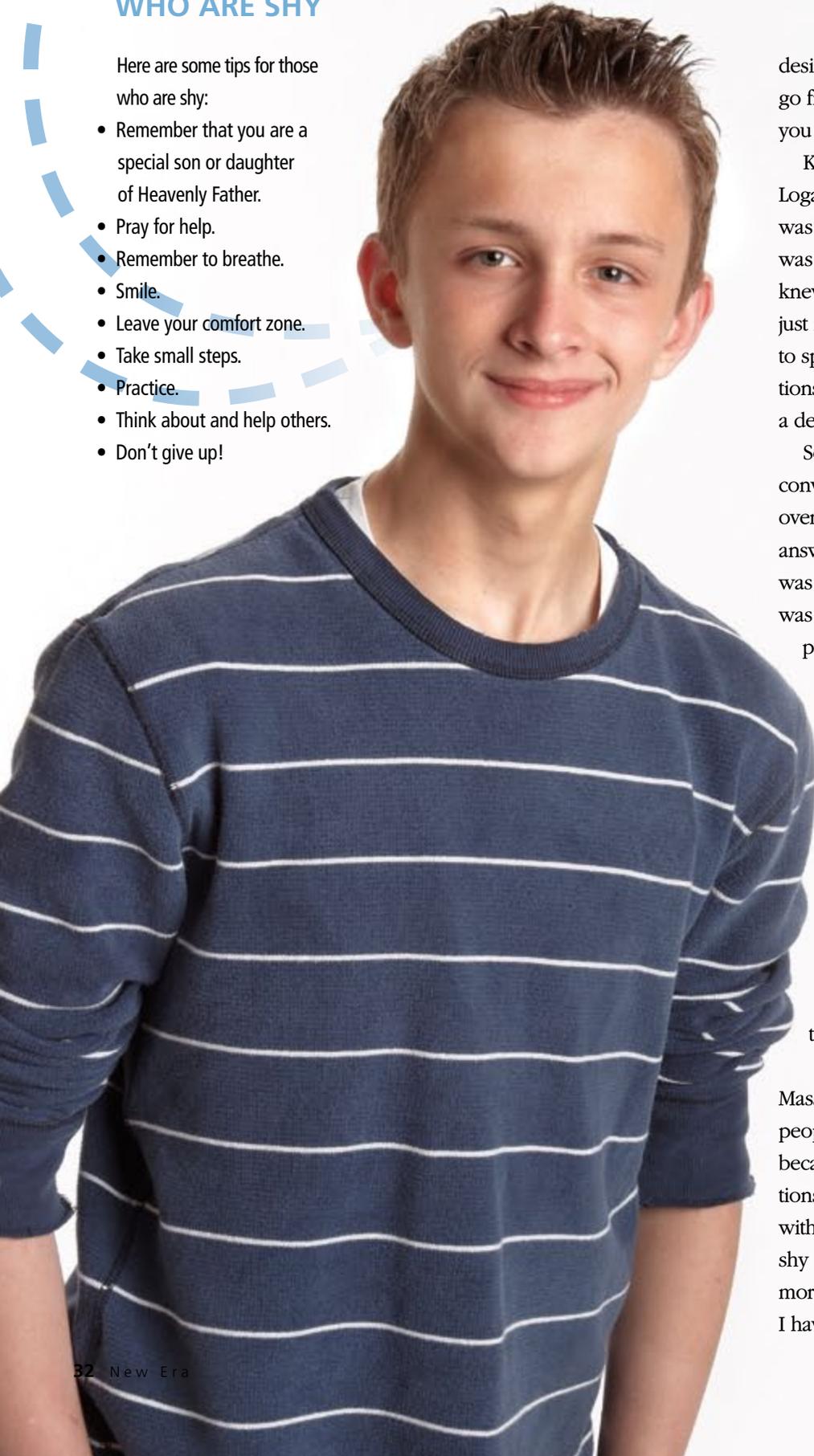
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DEREK ISRAELSON

# TIPS

## FOR THOSE WHO ARE SHY

Here are some tips for those who are shy:

- Remember that you are a special son or daughter of Heavenly Father.
- Pray for help.
- Remember to breathe.
- Smile.
- Leave your comfort zone.
- Take small steps.
- Practice.
- Think about and help others.
- Don't give up!



desire to change and to overcome it. You won't go from being shy to outgoing overnight, but if you start today, you can make progress.

Kallie Sommercorn, 19, who is in college in Logan, Utah, says she used to be shy when she was younger. "I would freeze up whenever I was put in social situations," she says. "I never knew what to say, and I always felt like I would just make a fool of myself." She was also afraid to speak in front of people or to answer questions in class. "Once high school hit, I really had a desire to change this," she says.

So Kallie started involving herself more in conversations. Although she used to stumble over her words when talking with friends or answering questions in class, with practice she was able to overcome most of her shyness. "It was a lot easier when I finally realized that people didn't think what I was saying was dumb."

If you are self-consciously shy like Kallie was, the first step is to realize that shyness doesn't change your divine worth. Often we have a warped view of ourselves and feel like our worth comes from grades or beauty or what we think others think about us. Then we start to compare ourselves to others and lower our self-esteem. Instead, focus on the fact that everyone is a child of God. Stop comparing yourself to others, and it will be easier to form friendships.

Tyler McGill, 15, from Kingston, Massachusetts, is shy when he meets new people. He finds it hard to make friends because it is difficult for him to start conversations, so he tries to find something in common with people. "I have tried to overcome being shy by going to stake activities and participating more and communicating with the youth that I have more in common with," he says.

## From Boulder to Bolder

Dr. Nelson says overcoming shyness is like trying to push a boulder up a mountain. You wouldn't want to push it straight up in one great shove, but you can push it slowly a little at a time. He suggests that those who are physiologically shy should make challenging but achievable goals and then work gradually but steadily at overcoming their shyness.

Nick Reisner, 17, from Midvale, Utah, says he feels shy around people he doesn't know well. But he set the goal of "getting to know people in situations where I don't know them," Nick says. "You need to try to have experiences that get you out of your comfort zone." Nick says that as he became more comfortable, he found that "it became fun to start talking to people."

Anna Melville, 23, an outgoing young adult from San Jose, California, remembers an experience she had when she was 12 and "incredibly shy." She went to a stake youth activity where she just stayed with the friends she knew until one friend brought over some new people.

"One of the new boys asked me a question, and suddenly it seemed like everybody's eyes were on me, and I couldn't think of an answer," she remembers. "At that moment, I panicked and left the room in a hurry. I ran down the hall with tears running down my face and hid myself in a classroom until I calmed down. I just couldn't handle the pressure."

So how did she get where she is today? By pushing the shyness boulder away a little at a time.

"At first I would only hang out with a few people, but slowly, as I did this, I became more confident around others," Anna says. She would tell youth that they need to stretch themselves. "Force yourself to try a new thing, and whether you're successful or not, you'll be better for trying it."



# TIPS

## FOR THOSE WHO ARE NOT SHY

Not shy? Here's what you can do to help those who are:

### DO

- Include everyone in activities and conversations.
- Give compliments.
- Go with shy friends to meet new people.
- Find out about shy people's talents.
- Listen.
- Show genuine interest.
- Do some role-playing.

### DON'T

- Interrupt people when they are talking.
- Point out that a person is shy.
- Force a shy person into a situation where he or she is unprepared and uncomfortable.
- Speak or do things for your shy friend.

## GIVE IT A TRY

I was very shy in high school and did not take advantage of opportunities to enlarge and build my talents. I was afraid to try. . . . Don't be afraid to try. Have confidence in yourself. You won't succeed the first time on anything you do, but successive attempts will bring confidence and the development of new talents."

Elder L. Tom Perry  
of the Quorum of  
the Twelve Apostles,  
"Sharing Family Heritage,"  
*Ensign*, Sept. 2006, 8.

## Take Advantage of Your Strengths

Another way to work on overcoming shyness is to find something you enjoy or are good at that you aren't afraid to share. That is what Allyse Meanea from New Harmony, Utah, did.

Allyse says she is shy around people she doesn't know and that she has a fear of public speaking. "I think people will think the worst of me and that it won't turn out well." But Allyse likes to dance and was given the opportunity to do a solo dance in front of a group of people.

"When I'm dancing, I'm not nervous or shy. I can forget about myself and those people and concentrate on what I am doing. I couldn't talk in front of people, but I can dance in front of them just fine."

## Move Forward in Faith

One thing you can't forget is to involve the Lord in your self-improvement. Pray and remember that the Lord promised that if you come unto Him, He will help you and turn your weakness into strength (see Ether 12:27).

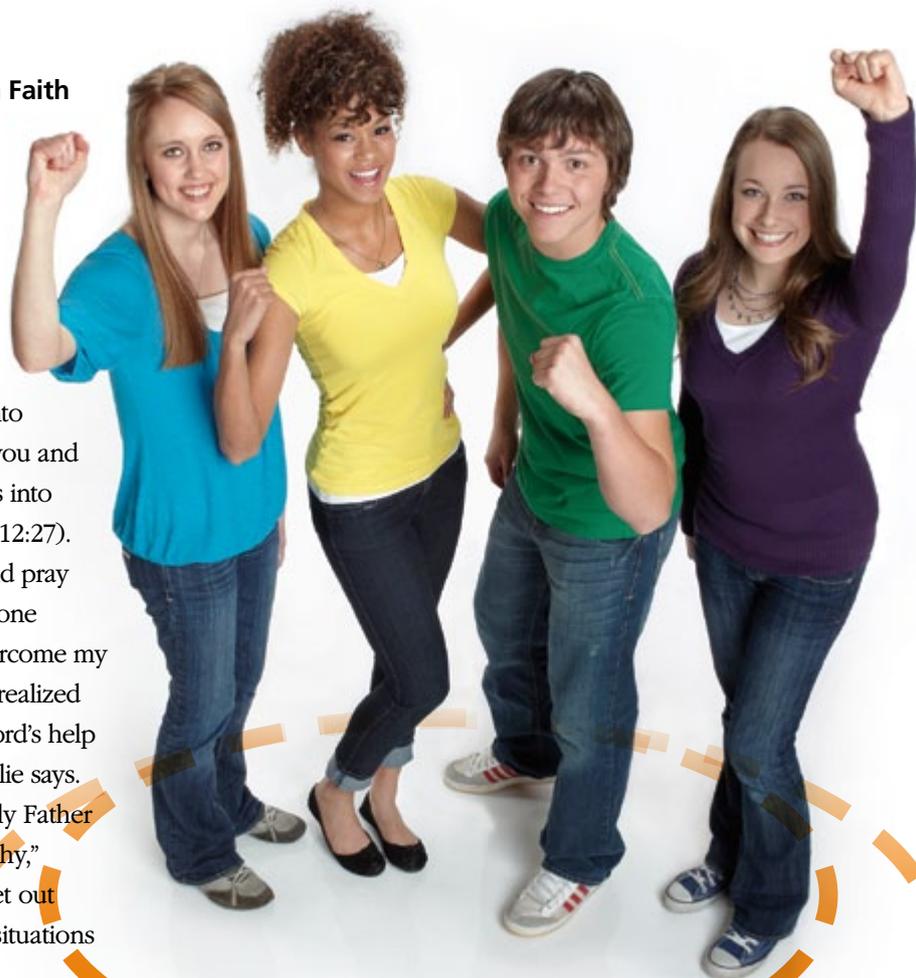
"I would pray and pray and pray that someone would help me overcome my shyness, but then I realized that I needed the Lord's help to overcome it," Kallie says.

"Pray to Heavenly Father for help to not be shy," Nick says. "Then get out there and try new situations

and meet people." The Lord will help you.

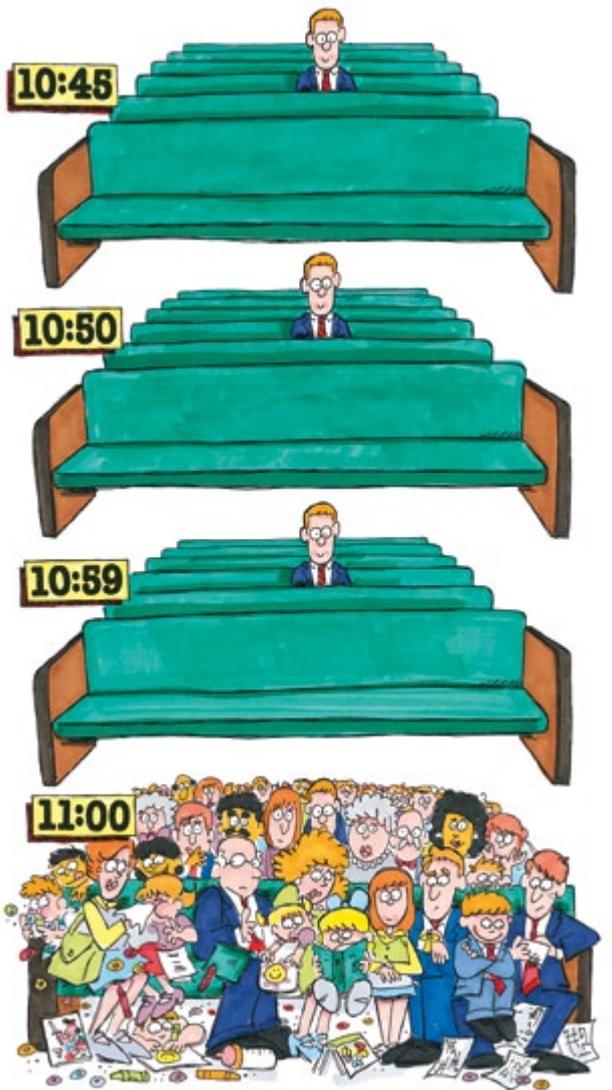
Our life on earth is about progressing. Being shy is a challenge, but overcoming it will help you grow. Don't let your shyness cause you to leave the Church or not go on a mission because you don't want to be put in stressful situations. Get help and work toward your goals.

Your fear and your stress response may never go away, especially if you are one of those people who is physiologically shy. But if you practice, you will learn how to deal with those responses and be successful in stressful situations. Just remember to push the boulder slowly but steadily, make challenging and achievable goals, and keep moving forward. **NE**

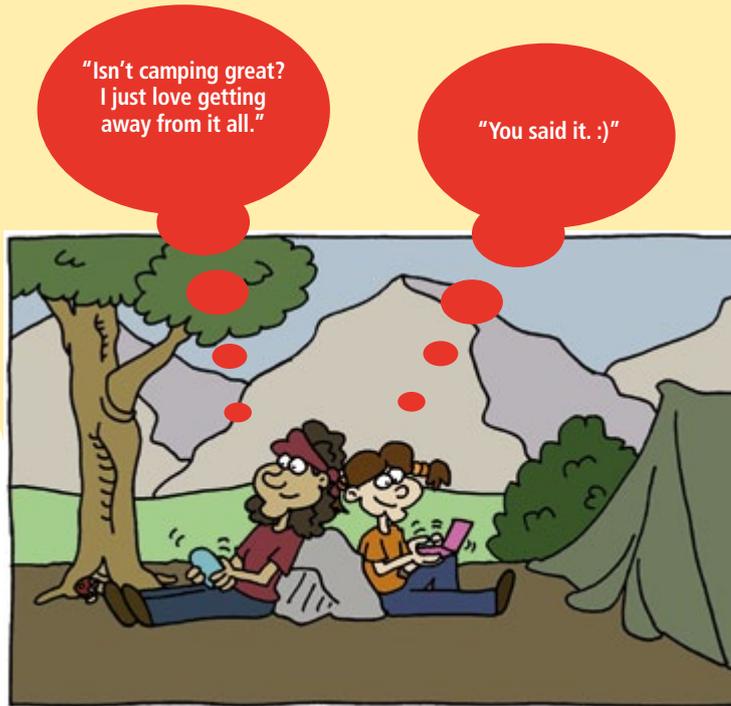




### Mormon Standard Time



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY  
(ORIGINAL CARTOON BY DICK HEATH)



ARIE VAN DE GRAAFF

"Sorry, Tim, but it's not that kind of fireside."



KEVIN BECKSTROM

▲ We've been making *New Era* readers giggle for 40 years. "Mormon Standard Time" was the first cartoon we ever printed. It ran in the very first issue of the *New Era*, published in January 1971, in a section called "Funnies." Two months later, the cartoon section's name was changed to "Mormonisms." And since January 2001 we've been going "The Extra Smile" just to make you grin. Go ahead and laugh a little.

**PADDLE POWER**

Out of the darkness of the early morning came eight rafts of various shapes and designs with their youth crews and supporters. It was the annual raft race for the Auckland New Zealand Harbour Stake, and the first of 12 races was underway.

Races were varied, including combined young men/young women teams and a leaders team. A good day was had by all with the Takapuna Ward young men regaining top prize, the Title of Liberty Challenge Shield.

Work on the Takapuna Ward raft started five months earlier as their deacons, teachers, and priests spent many hours splitting bamboo, heating and bending it into shape, and then lashing every



crossbeam. More than 5½ miles of twine (9 km) was used to tie over 3,000 knots—all of which held the raft together. When all the lashings were completed, it was time to stretch the canvas over the frame.

The young men and women helped sew the canvas at the top. Then it was painted and left to dry. Practices were held at every opportunity if the sea at Takapuna Beach was smooth enough and everyone got in the racing mode. All the boys and girls got closer together, and a really strong brotherhood and sisterhood was formed.

One thing teachers quorum president Hunter Amende learned from all the hard work and paddling was, "There is no / in team."

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF JACOB MARSHALL



## IN A WORD

**Conversion:** Are you converted? To be converted means to be changed, and in a gospel sense, it means that a person has overcome unrighteous desires and has become “spiritually minded” (Romans 8:6) through the power of the Savior’s Atonement and through the power of the Holy Ghost.

The process of conversion includes a change in behavior, but it also is a change in our very nature. It is such a significant change that the Lord and His prophets refer to it as a rebirth, a change of heart, and a baptism of fire. A person who is converted desires to “do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2), does not rebel against the Lord, shares the gospel, and is filled with love.

## THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

**June 8, 1900**

The First Presidency announced the beginning of missionary training classes, one of the foundation platforms for future missionary training programs.



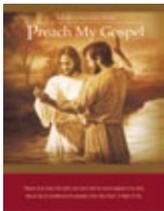
PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTINA SMITH

## MISSION PREPARATION

Why do we study the gospel? The purpose of personal study is to strengthen your knowledge and testimony of the restored gospel. As your own testimony grows, you can then testify to others and teach them the truths of the Restoration. As you prepare for your mission, focus first on the Book of Mormon and other scriptures, and then you

may want to study these other works from the missionary library:

- *Jesus the Christ*
- *Our Search for Happiness*
- *Preach My Gospel*
- *True to the Faith*
- *Our Heritage*



## BY THE NUMBERS

**81,000**

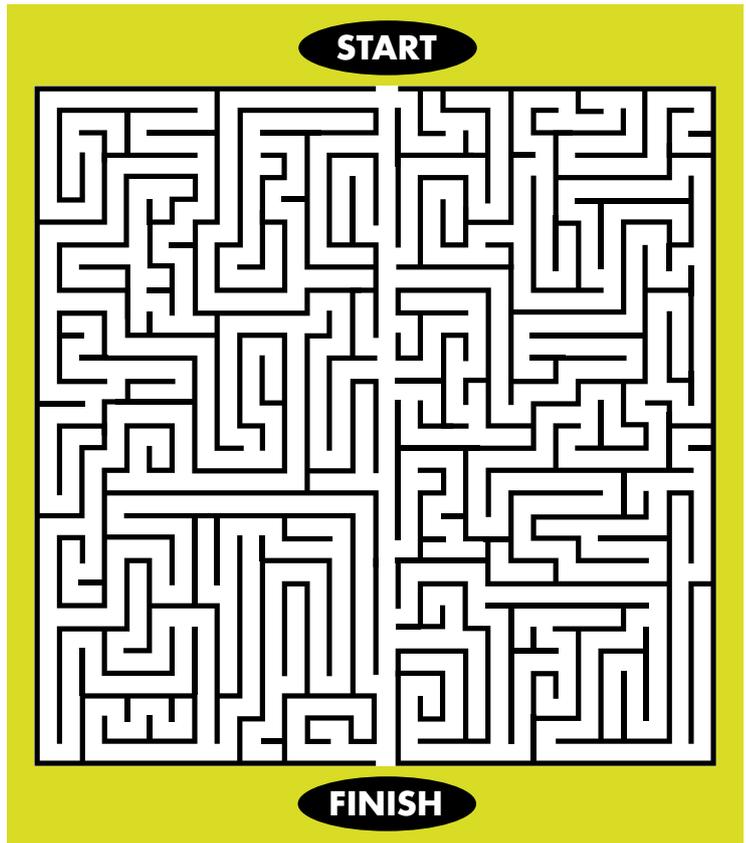
Total number of individuals' names indexed by the youth of the American Fork Utah Hillcrest Stake last summer.

The youth were challenged to use the FamilySearch Indexing program to index 64,045 names (enough to fill up the football stadium at Brigham Young University). In the end the stadium wouldn't even hold all the people whose names were indexed by the youth.

## NARROW IS THE MAZE

“Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14).

MAZE SUBMITTED BY GLENN HARMON



## BE A GREAT DATE

**H**ere are seven traits that can help you and your date have an enjoyable time:

1. Smile and be positive.
2. Be neat and clean in dress and appearance.
3. Show confidence.
4. Be a good listener.
5. Be respectful.
6. Use clean language.
7. Be a good example.



PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE BUNDERSON

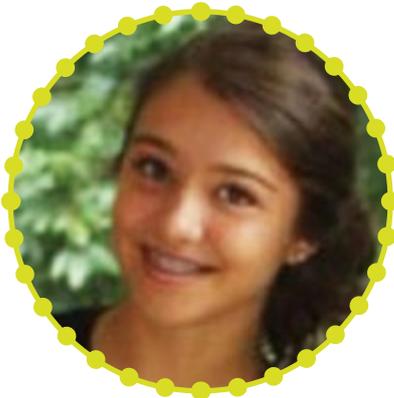
## • LAS CRUCES ENCAMPMENT

“Are we prepared to fulfill our duty to God?” came the call through the mountain air of New Mexico’s Gila National Forest. A resounding “Yes” echoed in the hearts and minds of 60 young men and 40 leaders gathered for a three-day Aaronic Priesthood camp. Forty-one of the boys and 19 of their adult leaders had completed a full year of age-specific Duty to God activities in preparation for this day. The Las Cruces New Mexico Stake encampment, appropriately named “Aaronic Priesthood—Fulfilling Our Duty to God,” was underway.

The nine wards were divided into six groups to participate in six round-robin events: building King Benjamin’s tower and wall climbing, geocaching, mountain biking, team building/missionary preparation, handcart pulling, and service projects. Another key element of the encampment experience was the campfire program each night, followed by ward devotionals around their own campfires. Each campfire program ended with 12 men dressed as prophets teaching the young men how they can magnify their priesthood and do their duty to God by living the 12 principles of the Scout Law.

Valian Fowler, a priest from the Rio Grande Ward, sums up his experiences from the encampment in these words: “I honestly can’t think of a campout when I felt the Spirit stronger. My father is a nonmember, and he came on the encampment with us. It was a great bonding time for us. He was in charge of the service project and spent most of his days at the encampment painting fences and cutting down trees and putting them in the gullies to help prevent erosion. We did many challenging and fun activities, but I can’t think of a time when all of us were smiling bigger and felt the Spirit stronger than when we were doing the service project. It was very challenging. We were all covered in sweat and rain, but I knew that we were doing the right thing. I could feel it in my heart. I finally know what they meant when they said ‘there is no greater happiness than when you’re serving others.’ I loved it.”

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF MICHAEL GILES



### MY FAVORITE SCRIPTURE

**D&C 88:63** “Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”

I like this scripture because it teaches me what I need to do to draw closer to my Heavenly Father and have Him with me at all times.

**Rachel H., 16,  
North Carolina, USA**

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF RACHEL H.

Tell us about your favorite scripture in one or two sentences. Send it to us, along with a photo, by going to [newera.lds.org](http://newera.lds.org) and clicking on Submit Your Material.

# 5 OCCUPATIONS OF MODERN PROPHETS

1. General manager of a printing press
2. U.S. Secretary of Agriculture
3. School principal
4. Manager of a realty business
5. Retail salesman

*Who did that?* 1. President Thomas S. Monson, 2. President Ezra Taft Benson, 3. President David O. McKay and President Harold B. Lee, 4. President Spencer W. Kimball, 5. President George Albert Smith

## WHAT'S A QR CODE?

You may have noticed several QR codes (short for "quick response codes") like the one below in recent issues of the *New Era* and wondered what they are. If you have a camera-enabled smartphone, you can scan a QR code to link straight to a video, article, or website without having to type in its web address. It's so easy! Here's how:

1. Search for QR-code apps in the app store for your smartphone. Free apps are available for most smartphones.
2. Install your selected app to your smartphone.
3. Open the app, and then scan the QR code. Once the QR code registers, the video, article, or website it links to will appear on your smartphone.

Try out the QR code below to head straight to [youth.lds.org](http://youth.lds.org), and check out more QR codes on pages 10 and 41. This is an emerging technology and may not work on all phones. We'd love to hear what you think of the QR codes and if you'd like to see more in the future. E-mail us at [newera@ldschurch.org](mailto:newera@ldschurch.org).



## THE CHURCH IN THE NETHERLANDS



This year marks the 150th anniversary of the first Dutch convert's baptism in the Netherlands in 1861.

Twenty years earlier, in 1841, Elder Orson Hyde was traveling on a missionary journey to Jerusalem; he stopped in Rotterdam and Amsterdam for more than a week and explained the gospel to several rabbis. The first missionaries assigned to the country arrived in 1861. By May 1862, they had baptized 14 people in Amsterdam and organized the first branch.

During the Church's first century in the country, some 4,500 missionaries served there and more than 14,000 people were baptized. Many of these converts emigrated to the United States. In recent years, however, few members have emigrated, and today there are many second-, third-, and even fourth-generation Church members in the Netherlands.

Today, members total slightly fewer than 7,900 in the Netherlands, organized into 38 wards and branches. The first temple in the Netherlands is located in Zoetermeer and was dedicated in September 2002.

## READING—ONE BLOCK AT A TIME

Last year, students from Mesa Skyline Seminary in Arizona agreed to work together in creating a habit of daily scripture reading. They accepted the challenge to read the scriptures each day for at least 15 minutes. For every three days a student did this, he or she could write his or her name on a new wooden block.

As the blocks were earned and marked, they were glued together, eventually forming a replica of an ancient American city the students affectionately called "Zarahemla." After seven weeks of reading and learning, a total of 1,750 blocks were cut, earned, and labeled with a name. The replica city was 12 feet in length, 8 feet wide, with a city wall, four corner towers, a large temple at the center, and hundreds of smaller buildings and shops within.

Building the city of Zarahemla "got me into the habit of reading my scriptures longer," says Marissa Madsen, 16. "I really appreciated seeing something physically being built as a reminder of my testimony growing as I continued to read the scriptures."

Randy Chavez, 17, agreed that the project was a big success. "It was nice to be unified as an entire seminary to achieve one large goal, and I felt excited to do my part. Because of the project, I read more frequently and longer."

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF AARON GOSS



## QUOTES FROM CONFERENCE

"The world will refer to us as they will, but in our speech, always remember that we belong to the Church of Jesus Christ."

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Guided by the Holy Spirit," *Ensign*, May 2011, 30.

# Your Example

*Living the gospel strengthens not only you but others as well.*

I have deep admiration and respect for young men who honor the Aaronic Priesthood. Let me tell you about three of them who come from the Nairobi Kenya Stake in Africa.

## **Martin Becomes Strong**

At age 14, Martin of the Westlands Branch found himself away from his home in Nairobi, attending a boarding school where he was the only member of the Church. In Martin's school, on certain days of the week, only tea and bread were offered for breakfast. With 700 students, school authorities did not have the means to provide a special menu for one, so Martin chose to take water with the bread.

On Sundays he had to attend church with the rest of his

## **Martin**



# MATTERS

schoolmates. There he had to listen to religious teachings he knew were sometimes distorted. From time to time schoolmates would steal glances at him as they talked in low tones about his “strange” beliefs. Occasionally, some would even call him a devil worshipper.

These challenges strengthened rather than weakened Martin. He was greatly encouraged by monthly visits from his parents and frequent messages from his branch president, who always sent the latest issue of the *New Era*. Reading it helped increase his courage to face these trials.

## Joseph Never Misses

Joseph of the Riruta Ward holds the office of teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood. He remains faithful to the gospel despite being the only Church member in a large school in which many of his peers participate in drugs and other evils. Joseph has never missed church. He is always early, and he is clean and ready to serve as assigned by his quorum president and bishop. He helps prepare the sacrament almost every Sunday.

## Humphrey Posts Assignments

Humphrey of the Upper Hill Ward is also a teacher. He was baptized into the Church just two years ago. As Martin did, Humphrey currently attends boarding school. Part of the reason his faith has grown so much since

he joined the Church is that he receives all his seminary assignments by post (by mail), does them, and returns them promptly to his seminary teacher.

When boarding school closes, Humphrey typically has to walk 45 minutes one way on Sundays to get a ride to church. Nevertheless, he is always early at church and ready to serve as assigned.

Whenever he receives an assignment to speak, Humphrey is diligent in his preparation. It is clear to all who listen that he has put much effort into preparing his talk.

## Living the Standards

Today in most of the world, standards of morality continue to erode. Often young people who seek to connect with something good and honorable do not know where to

Joseph



By Elder  
Joseph W. Sitati  
Of the Seventy

## NEmore

Watch the short video “The Magnificent Priesthood” on the influence young men can have as they do their Aaronic Priesthood duty. View it at [lds.org/go/611](http://lds.org/go/611), or scan the QR code below for quick access (see page 39 for instructions).





**Humphrey**

find it. Institutions of learning have bought into the false idea that moral standards are defined personally and are variable.

But by living the standards of your faith, you can help your peers to witness the stability, confidence, peace, and joy that come from the gospel. Your example can help prepare others to be receptive to the teachings of the restored gospel. Duty to God for young men and Personal Progress for young women can help you grow closer to God and earn the trust of adults and peers.

### **The Ultimate Example**

Whether you are a young man or a young woman, you honor the priesthood as you live your life in a way that communicates to your peers and to others around you that you truly follow the Savior. The Savior's life as a young man sets a wonderful example for you. When He was only 12, He was drawn to the work of His Heavenly Father, even as He honored His earthly parents. The scriptures say He taught others in the temple. He astonished older, well-learned people with His understanding of doctrine (see Luke 2:42–52). The Savior demonstrated that 12 years of age is not

too young to begin understanding the deep things of the gospel if we qualify to have the Spirit with us.

The scriptures provide many additional role models of youth who were valiant in their faith: Joseph, son of Jacob; Daniel; Nephi; and others. In addition, we can look to latter-day prophets and apostles for examples in our time.

The restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood is evidence that Heavenly Father trusts the young men and young women of the Church. He expects you young men to use the priesthood to bless His children young and old. You do so by teaching the gospel, baptizing, administering the sacrament, helping the sick and afflicted, visiting homes to strengthen families, and serving as assigned by your bishop or branch president. Through the Aaronic Priesthood service you render, people come to feel the love Heavenly Father has for them. In the same way, you young women can follow the Savior's example by living worthy to go to the temple, serving those around you, caring for those in need, and developing your strengths and talents.

In many units of the Church, I have seen young men going about these priesthood duties with reverence and dignity. I have also seen young women serving with all their heart and soul. Such service and the manner in which it is given strengthens your faith in God the Father and in His Son, Jesus Christ. It can also build the faith of those you serve. **NE**

## **JULIET IS TRUSTED**

**Y**oung women, you set an example in the same way as young men: by living the gospel. As you work on Personal Progress, you will learn principles that will help you to know who you are as daughters of God and what Heavenly Father expects of you.



Juliet is one example. A member of the Westlands Branch, Juliet was baptized into the Church as a child of record. Despite difficult circumstances, including being raised by a single mother with no regular income, Juliet had high values which so impressed school authorities that she was appointed to be head girl of her school. She is literally the most trusted student in the school.

Juliet has learned that she participates in honoring the priesthood by living gospel standards. Her example demonstrates that young men and young women who honor the priesthood can find favor with God and with mankind.

# A Captain for the Cause

By Caitlin Porter

**W**hen I started college, I was prompted to join the cross-country team. The team watched everything I said and did, not only because I was the captain, but because I was a member of the “Mormon” Church.

I was asked questions about the Church constantly. They were amazed that I wouldn’t drink coffee or party on weekends. Before every race we huddled and I would offer a prayer to help us do well. It was great to share my testimony and beliefs with the team.

Our season was ending, and we had one more race in Spartanburg, South Carolina. We stayed at a Marriott hotel, which had a Book of Mormon in every room. I found a teammate reading a copy. When I asked her why she was reading it, she replied that she was interested in what it was about. Excited, I bore my testimony to her of its truthfulness. Many of the other girls on the team had joined us in the room, and they asked me questions about the Book of Mormon.

When we got home I invited my best friend on the team,

*To me, I was just living how I knew I should. But to my teammates, I was different, and they wanted to know why.*

Rosa, to go to church with me. She enjoyed the meetings and felt peaceful there. After that, Rosa came to church almost every week. It was so wonderful to see the gospel touch her life.

About a month later I received an unexpected phone call from a young man on the men’s cross-country team, Brendan. He told me that he had taken the missionary lessons and was getting baptized in a week! I was so happy and thrilled for him. Both Rosa and I attended Brendan’s baptism. Rosa also took the missionary lessons and later chose to be baptized.

Looking back on these wonderful experiences, I am amazed that so many blessings resulted from joining my college cross-country team. I learned you don’t have to be set apart or wear a badge to be an instrument for Heavenly Father. Through my actions and living the gospel, my teammates wanted to know more about the gospel, which led them to baptism. I found that truly “by small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37:6). **NE**

# What SWIMMING Taught Me

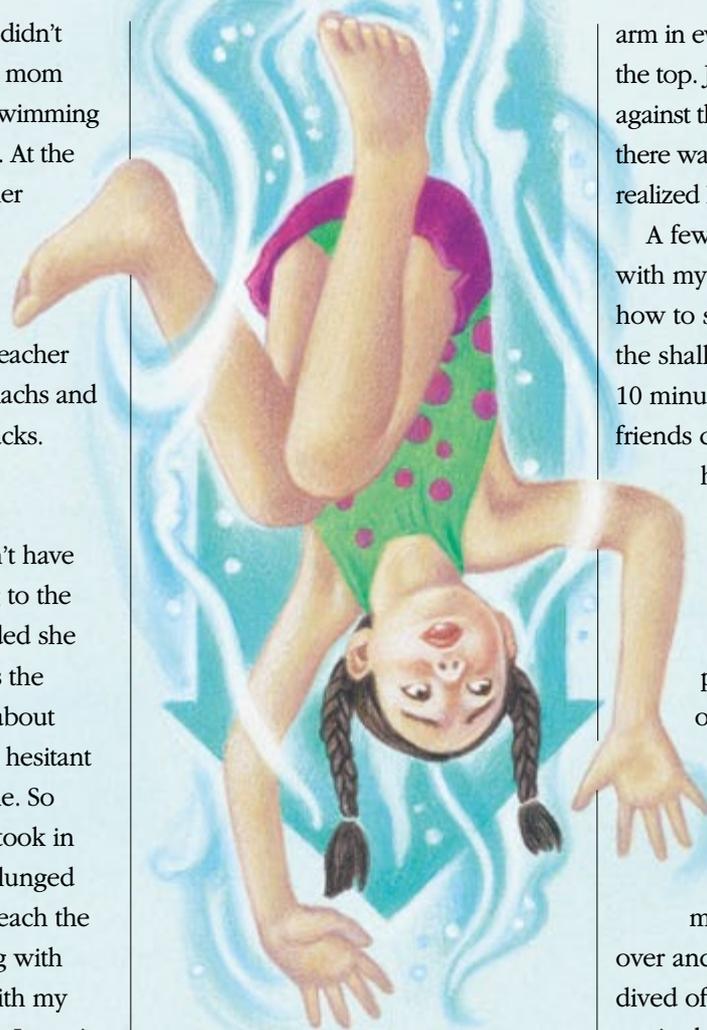
*Swimming taught me that all peer pressure isn't bad. Sometimes it helps you succeed.*

## By Marissa Thompson

I was seven years old, and I didn't know how to swim, so my mom enrolled me in afternoon swimming lessons with my friend Angie. At the end of each lesson, our teacher would take us out into the center of the pool to practice our strokes. We were always safe in the middle since our teacher supported us under our stomachs and we wore "bubbles" on our backs.

### Peer Pressure at the Pool

One day Angie and I didn't have our bubbles on, so we clung to the side of the pool. Angie decided she wanted to try to swim across the corner to the adjacent wall, about four feet (1.2 m) away. I was hesitant at first, but then she dared me. So even though I was scared, I took in as much air as I could and plunged under the water, hoping to reach the other side. Instead of floating with ease as I had done before with my back bubble, I began to sink. I was in a state of panic. I knew I was going to drown. Then I remembered what my teacher had told me a few weeks earlier: "If you lose control while swimming, just stretch one of your



arms straight up out of the water, and someone will come help you."

With this thought in mind, I stretched my arm in the direction I thought was up. I didn't feel any air. I stretched my

arm in every direction, never finding the top. Just then my head bumped against the side of the pool. Angie was there waiting for me. I guess she hadn't realized I was "drowning."

A few weeks later I was at a lake with my family. Still not knowing how to swim, I waded around in the shallow water. I was there about 10 minutes when I saw one of my friends coming into the lake. I was horrified. "What if Stephanie finds out I can't swim?" I thought. I'd be so embarrassed. So I quickly dropped to my knees and began to pretend to swim—I walked on my arms while kicking my feet. Stephanie jumped in the water and began swimming for real. This only added to my embarrassment. After a while she came

over and talked to me. Then she dived off in another direction, leaving me in the wake caused by her perfect, coordinated strokes. I resumed my fake swimming, feeling foolish.

After a few minutes I decided to stop being so scared and try to swim. I was in shallow water, so I lifted my



arms from the ground and started dog paddling. It worked. I floated. It was only for a few seconds, but I floated. I did it again and again throughout the evening. By the time we left, I could dog paddle across the entire lake.

### Peer Pressure Is Powerful

When I think back on these two experiences, I'm amazed by the power of peer pressure. One day it almost made me drown; another day it motivated me to learn to swim. That's how it is with peer pressure—it can either be negative or positive, but it's always powerful.

Peer pressure was one reason the Pharisees wouldn't believe in Christ's words: "They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:43). In his dream Lehi saw people who were ashamed of the Lord because of those who were mocking and pointing from the great and spacious building (see 1 Nephi 8:26–28).

I'm familiar with this negative side of peer pressure—the side that makes people turn away from what they know is right. I've been mocked because of my Latter-day Saint standards. I've had friends who have

wanted me to shoplift clothes, cheat on exams, and be cruel to other people. Instead of wanting me to float and succeed, it was as if they were anchors pulling me down, trying to drown me.

But I've also had friends who have motivated me to do good things—things that have made my life better, not worse. When I was in the eighth grade, my friend Ali convinced me

to try out for drill team for the next school year. This wasn't an easy feat, since the thought of trying out for an activity as a new freshman in a big high school terrified me. Ali convinced me to do something worthwhile that I might never have done without a little encouragement from a friend. And because of this friendly peer pressure, my adjustment to high school life was a lot easier.

Good friends motivated me throughout high school and into college, giving me the courage to run for student council, work for good grades, and nourish a testimony of the gospel. These friends were positive influences in my life. They wanted me to succeed, and they helped me grow.

These experiences have taught me that not all peer pressure is bad, as many people tend to think. It depends on the type of pressure and from whom it is coming. I've learned that when I surround myself with the right kind of influences, I'm less likely to sink into the ways of the world. Positive pressure from the Church and from friends with high standards is the force that has acted like a back bubble in my life, keeping me afloat. **NE**

## THE SACRAMENT MEANS MORE

**W**hen I was younger I wondered how the deacons could remember where to pass the sacrament. I would occasionally see their chart, but that didn't help my confusion. I would watch them crisscross around the chapel and hand the tray to assigned rows. I was envious of them and would often count the years until I was 12. Wow, wouldn't it be awesome to pass the sacrament, I would think.

My day eventually came. It was nerve-racking. What if I messed up? What will happen? With a small amount of time to review the chart, I reluctantly took my seat. I would be passing to my family. Luckily, my dad joined me. Three other boys were

doing it for their first time, too. Their dads also sat with us. My biggest worry was that I was going to drop the tray or mess up and not do my position correctly. Fortunately, I did fine. I was so happy when I was finished. I couldn't wait to pass the sacrament again.

I have been passing the sacrament for a couple of months now. I am even more excited to go to church. I love my newfound freedom in deacons quorum. I am grateful for the sacrament and the sacrifices Jesus made for us. Sacrament meetings seem to pass with more meaning now. I listen more attentively to the talks and seem to get more out of it than before. I know the sacrament has only made my life better, as well as my bond with Heavenly Father. I can't wait to go to church this Sunday.  
**Cole H., California, USA**

## A CHANGE OF HEART

**W**hen I was in the Young Women program, I was one of only two Laurels surrounded by Beehives. Because the other Laurel had athletic engagements each week, I found myself, a lone Laurel, suffocated by so many younger, seemingly immature girls. Our Young Women program was struggling: hurt feelings, drama, and offense were common. For a while no one in our ward wanted to attend meetings.

Then I was called to serve the younger girls at girls' camp. It was a daunting call. I felt intimidated,

## GOSPEL MESSAGING

I have a friend named Jake, who, although he is not LDS, is a strong Christian. This past year we often chatted on Facebook. Jake often asks me questions about our religion, and I will use the scripture masteries to help him understand our beliefs. Jake believes in the Bible, so I often share a Bible scripture mastery and then share a Book of Mormon scripture that goes along with it.

One time he asked a question about our view of heaven. I was able to share the plan of salvation with him and refer to 1 Corinthians 15:40–42 to help him understand. By using the scripture mastery verses, I helped Jake to understand that we believe in the Bible.

Through the Internet I've shared the gospel and my own personal testimony of the Church. Jake often posts religious videos on Facebook

and asks me to watch them.

annoyed, and nervous. But I went. I have never experienced a more miraculous change of heart. In less than a week, I gained a testimony of the divine potential within each and every child of God. The Savior allowed me to share His love for my sisters in the gospel. His eyes illuminated my sight, and I really saw each girl as a beloved daughter of our Heavenly Father. Through serving the girls, the Lord opened my heart, and they became not just the girls in my ward but my girls.

By the end of the week I had the ability to recognize divine qualities

and asks me to watch them. Afterwards, we discuss it, and a few times I've linked him to the *Mormon Messages* channel on YouTube.

Computers can be used for harm. However, we can and should use computers to share the gospel with friends and family.  
**Elisabeth H., New York, USA**

in every girl, and my heart felt like it would burst because of the love I felt for them. Although this change of heart was unexpected, it taught me that charity comes through meaningful service, and it truly is the pure love of Christ.

I promise that miracles do occur through small and simple acts of service. That is a common saying in the Church, but I testify that it is true. I challenge you to serve in the Savior's way and witness the miraculous changes in both yourself and the world around you as you do so. Try it.  
**Jannette B., Utah, USA**



ILLUSTRATION BY G. BJORN THORNELSON, PHOTOGRAPH © IRI

**LISTEN UP!**

As a mother of a special needs child, I was thrilled when I came across the article "Listen Up" (Jan. 2011) referencing—and reminding me—about your audio recordings. Although my son is not visually impaired, it is very difficult for him to follow a story or picture in his mind what is being described. Listening while reading greatly improves both his ability to understand and his enjoyment of the articles. For those of you who take the time to read aloud and put together the recordings, please know the difference you are making with individuals and families.

*Tia S.*

**CAPTIVATING PHOTO**

I want to express my appreciation for the beautiful and inspiring cover art on the December issue. Not only was the picture of baby Jesus adorable, but the look in Mary's eyes was captivating. It really made me think about how strong and faithful she was to take on the responsibility of raising the Savior of the world.

*Megan P., California, USA*

**GLAD I READ**

When I read the article "The Christmas Gift I Didn't Want" (Dec. 2010), I realized that I had been just like the boy who never appreciated his gift. I strive to read my scriptures every day now; I am halfway through the Book of Mormon. I value these true stories of prophets who knew what is right. I am so glad I read that article; it really helped me realize how important the scriptures are.

*Sabrina P., Wisconsin, USA*



*If I rely on  
and trust in  
[the Savior],  
I can get through  
anything.*

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**OVERCOMING FEAR**

The story "My Brother Believes in Me" (Mar. 2010), about a girl dealing with stage fright, really helped me. I'm just like the girl in the story; it's hard for me to stand in front of a crowd of people and talk. I liked the scripture in the story, 2 Timothy 1:7: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear." When I first read the story, I felt peace and that everything will be all right. I still feel scared of standing in front of people, but I know that by trusting in the Savior, I can overcome this fear. If I rely on and trust in Him, I can get through anything.

*Lati V., Utah, USA*

**IT GIVES ME INSIGHT**

I really liked the April 2010 issue on dating. It gave me a lot of insight on things that are coming up in my teenage years. I also like the Extra Smile; I laugh every time I read it. It's good to know that there are people my age reading the *New Era* all around the world.

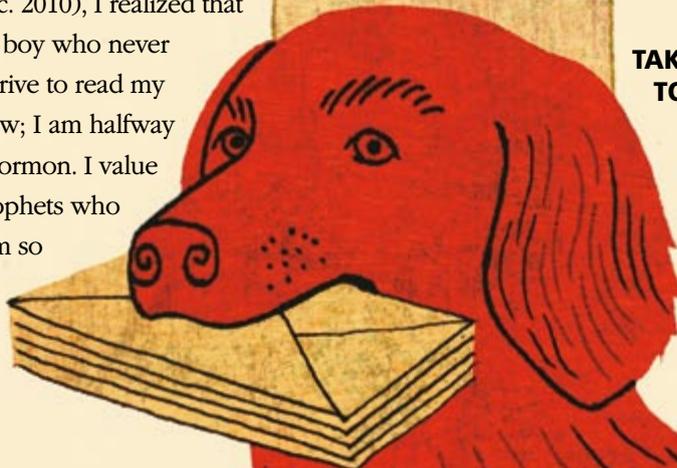
*Christian B.*

*Editor's note: To read articles from past issues of the New Era, go to [newera.lds.org](http://newera.lds.org).*

**TAKING THE MAGAZINE TO SCHOOL**

I would like to say that the *New Era* really helps me; it is so inspiring. It is a great way to bring up the Church with friends. When I bring the magazine to school, some of my friends ask me about it, which is awesome.

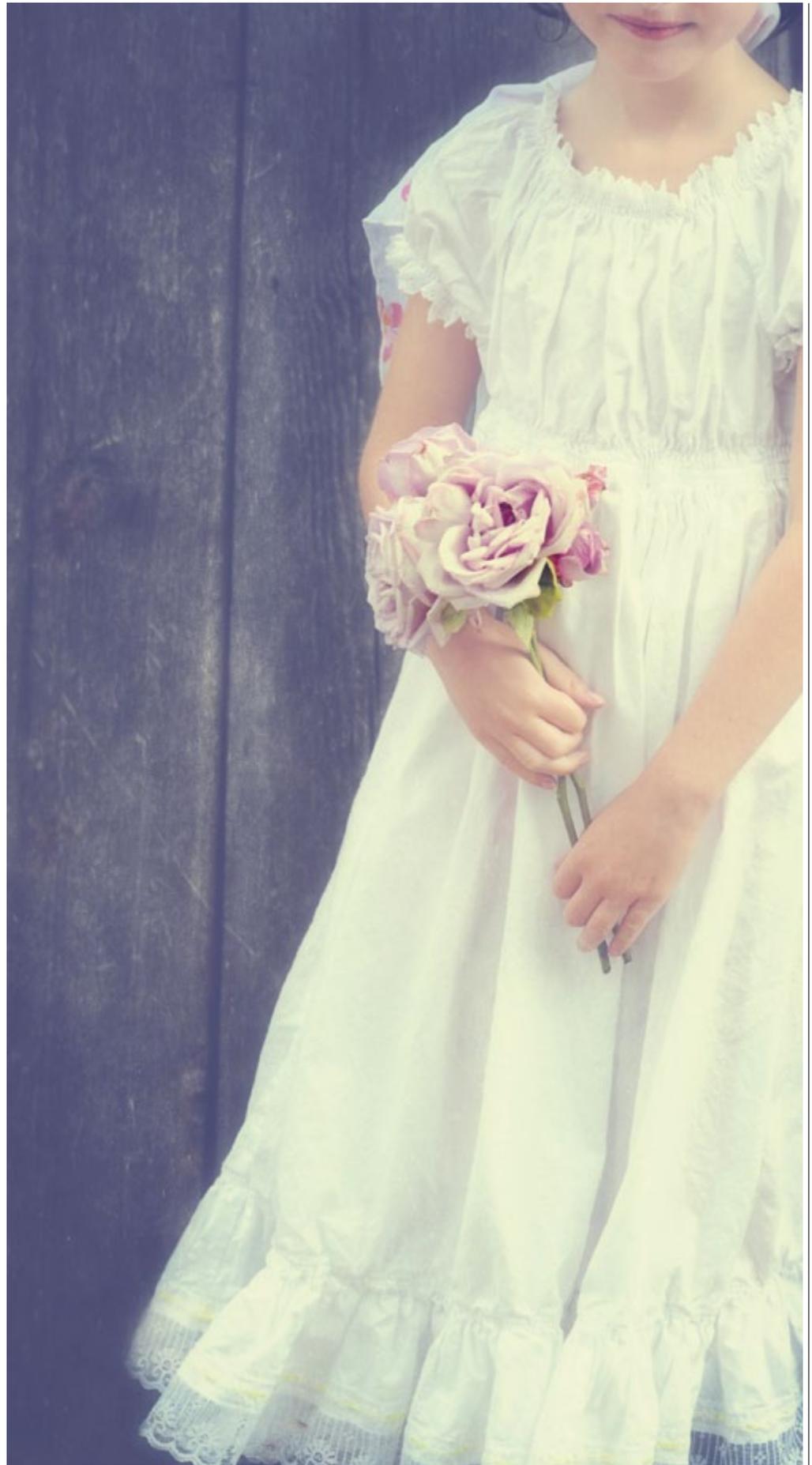
*Amber K., Canada*



## Message of a Rose

By Aimee Sanders

I think of the rose,  
Warm in the morning sun  
And of Heavenly Father.  
I know He is the one  
Who created us all  
And this earth on which we live  
And the rose, just a whisper  
Of all that He does give.



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