

JUNE 2017

THE New Era

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We want to feature you on our new @LDSYouth page!

(Turn to page 9 to see it.)

Let us know your name, age, and where you're from.

1

2

Tell us something interesting about yourself.

For example, do you feel passionate about skateboarding? Can you hold your breath longer than anyone you know? Do you have a favorite roller coaster? Be creative!



3

Send us these three gospel-related thoughts:

Why do you have a testimony—and how did you develop it? Is there a scripture or a message from general conference that means a lot to you? And what do you love about the gospel?

4

And of course, include a photo or two.

A picture of yourself having fun, doing a favorite hobby, or on top of a mountain! Be sure to follow the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*. And send the best quality picture you can.



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**By President
Henry B. Eyring**
First Counselor in
the First Presidency

The Restoration of Priesthood Keys

*The Savior built His Church on a foundation of apostles and prophets,
who hold all the keys of the priesthood on earth at this time.*

Many years ago I spoke in an ancient theater in Ephesus. Bright sunlight flooded the ground where the Apostle Paul had stood to preach. My topic was Paul, the Apostle called of God.

The audience was hundreds of Latter-day Saints. They were arranged on the rows of stone benches the Ephesians had sat upon more than a millennium before. Among them were two living Apostles, Elder Mark E. Petersen and Elder James E. Faust.

As you can imagine, I had prepared carefully. I had read the Acts of the Apostles and the epistles, both those of Paul and his fellow Apostles. I had read and pondered Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians.

I tried my best to honor Paul and his office. After the talk a number of people said kind things. Both of the living Apostles were generous in their comments. But later Elder Faust took me aside and, with a smile and with softness in his voice, said, "That was a good talk. But you left out the most important thing you could have said."

I asked him what that was. Weeks later he consented to tell me. His answer has been teaching me ever since.

He said that I could have told the people that if the Saints who heard Paul had possessed a testimony of the value and the power of the keys he held, perhaps the Apostles would not have had to be taken from the earth.



That sent me back to Paul's letter to the Ephesians. I could see that Paul wanted the people to feel the value of the chain of priesthood keys reaching from the Lord through His Apostles to them, the members of the Lord's Church. Paul was trying to build a testimony of those keys.

Paul testified to the Ephesians that Christ was at the head of His Church. And he taught that the Savior built His Church on a foundation of apostles and prophets, who hold all the keys of the priesthood on earth at this time (see Ephesians 2:19–20).

The Priesthood Has Been Restored

Despite the clarity and the power of his teaching and his example, Paul knew that an apostasy would come

(see Acts 20:29–30; 2 Thessalonians 2:2–3). He knew that apostles and prophets would be taken from the earth. And he knew that they would, in some great, future day, be restored. He wrote of that time to the Ephesians, speaking of what the Lord would do: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him" (Ephesians 1:10).

Paul looked forward to the ministry of the Prophet Joseph Smith, when the heavens would be opened again. It happened. John the Baptist came and conferred on mortals the Priesthood of Aaron and the keys of the ministering of angels and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins (see D&C 13).

Ancient apostles and prophets returned and conferred upon Joseph the keys they held in mortality (see D&C 110). Mortal men were ordained to the holy apostleship in February of 1835. Priesthood keys were given to the Twelve Apostles in the latter part of March 1844.

Every prophet who followed Joseph, from Brigham Young to President Monson, has held and exercised those keys and has held the sacred apostleship.

Faith and Priesthood Keys

But just as in the time of Paul, the power of those priesthood keys for us requires our faith. We have to know by inspiration that the priesthood keys are held by those who lead and serve us. That requires the witness of the Spirit.

And that depends upon our testimony that Jesus is the Christ and that He lives and leads His Church. We must also know for ourselves that the Lord restored His Church and the priesthood keys through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

And we must have an assurance through the Holy Ghost, refreshed often, that those keys have been passed without interruption to the living prophet and that the Lord blesses and directs His people through the line of priesthood keys which reaches down through presidents of stakes and of districts and through bishops and branch presidents to us, wherever we are and no matter how far from the prophet and the apostles.

Trust the Lord's Chosen Servants

To keep ourselves grounded in the Lord's Church, we can and must train our eyes to recognize the power of the Lord in the service of those He has called. We must be worthy of the companionship of the Holy Ghost. And we need to pray for the Holy Ghost to help us know that men who lead us hold this power. For me, such prayers are most often answered when I am fully engaged in the Lord's service myself.

We can act to qualify for the revelation that allows us to know that the keys are being passed by God from one person to another. We can seek to have that experience again and again. And we must, in order to receive the blessings God has for us and wants us to offer to others.

The answer to your prayer is not likely to be as dramatic as it was when some saw Brigham Young, as he spoke, take on the appearance of the martyred Prophet Joseph.¹ But it can be as sure. And with that spiritual assurance will come peace and power. You will know again that this is the Lord's true and living Church, that He leads it through His ordained servants, and that He cares about us.

If enough of us exercise that faith and receive those assurances, God will lift up those who lead us and so bless

our lives and our families. We will become what Paul so wanted for those he served: "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20). **NE**

From an October 2004 general conference address.

NOTE

1. See *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Seminary Student Study Guide* (2001), 158.



YES, YOU CAN: THE TRUE POWER OF SEXUAL PURITY

When it comes to sexual purity, you might think that the world is full of cans, and the gospel is full of can'ts. But it's just the opposite.



By Charlotte Larcabal

Church Magazines

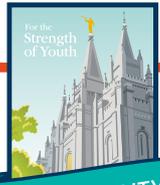
The world is full of cans and can'ts. Think about it: Every day, you are bombarded with what you can do and what you can't do. When it comes to sexual purity, you might think that the world is full of cans and the gospel is full of can'ts. But it's just the opposite.

Today, many in the world may tell you that you *can't* control your sexual urges, that you're powerless

against them, that you *can't* help but give in to those sexual urges and desires. Much of what you'll find on the internet, on television, in movies, and in music celebrates giving up and giving in to temptation and to carnal desires.

How often do you hear things like "I can't resist" or "I lost control" or "I can't stop" in song lyrics?

How often do you see characters on TV give in to temptation with someone?



SEXUAL PURITY

These kinds of messages might lead you to believe that sex is all about satisfying a carnal appetite and giving in to an animalistic drive for pleasure that you just *can't* control. Nothing could be further from the truth.

It's about Selfless Love, Not Selfish Lust

As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught, human intimacy is “the ultimate symbol of total union, a totality and a union ordained and defined by God.” It's a literal union meant to be enjoyed only when a man and woman have also merged their “hearts, hopes, lives, love, family, future, everything” (Oct. 1998 general conference).

Simply put, physical intimacy is ordained of God for the creation of children and for the expression of love between husband and wife (see *For the Strength of Youth* [2011], 35). It's a very unifying and selfless act. Sexual activity outside of marriage, whether it's engaged in with another person or to arouse sexual feelings in yourself, turns physical intimacy into something selfish and carnal.

By keeping yourself sexually pure, you are respecting the sacred unity of marriage and honoring Heavenly Father's plan of happiness for His children. No matter what choices you have made or what temptations you face, you *can* choose to be sexually pure. You *can* be filled with power to resist temptation, and you *can* keep the law of chastity and wait until you are willing to give your whole self in marriage.

The Gospel Teaches: Yes, You Can Be Virtuous!

You are powerful. You are not controlled by your sexual urges. You are a child of God. You have the power to choose and the strength to overcome temptation. You *can* resist temptation, you *can* “listen to the enticings of the Holy Spirit,” and you *can* “put off the natural man” (see Mosiah 3:19). You *can* put aside sexual urges and save them for when you are married.

That's one important message of the gospel: You *can*. Paul writes exactly that in his epistle to the Philippians: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

The same is true for you. You have a Savior and He will strengthen you, and with His help, you *can* be virtuous.

Choose Strength by Choosing Virtue

When we talk about sexual purity, we often talk about virtue, or “a pattern of thought and behavior based on high moral standards” (*Preach My Gospel* [2004], 118). Virtue comes from the Latin root word *virtus* which means strength, power, or courage.

You can be filled with power to resist temptation, and you can keep the law of chastity and wait until you are willing to give your whole self in marriage.

Think about that when you read, “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God” (D&C 121:45). Garnishing your thoughts with virtue means garnishing them with power. We might not be able to control every thought that comes into our minds, but we can control which ones we keep. Remember, “virtue loveth virtue; light cleaveth unto light” (D&C 88:40). Every time you choose a virtuous thought over an impure one, it becomes easier the next time, and the next. You become more and more powerful.

President David O. McKay (1873–1970) taught, “Every action is preceded by a thought. If we want

Heavenly Father gives us commandments to guide us to true freedom and onward to true happiness.



to control our actions, we must control our thinking” (quoted in Thomas S. Monson, “Preparation Brings Blessings,” Apr. 2010 general conference). In other words, when you have virtuous thoughts, you will have virtuous actions and a virtuous life. It’s a simple matter of cause and effect. By choosing a virtuous life, we are actually choosing strength. So what kind of strength do you have when you are pure and virtuous? It’s not the bodybuilder kind of strength. It’s better. It’s even better than the superhero kind. Living a sexually pure and virtuous life enables God to bless you with His power:

The power to stand confidently before Him (see D&C 121:45).

The power to withstand temptation (see Mosiah 3:19).

The power to avoid despair (see Moroni 10:22).

The power that comes with having the Holy Ghost for a constant companion (see D&C 121:46).

True Freedom

Remember, Satan wants you to believe that you will find freedom by giving in to temptation and transgressing the laws of God. He wants you to believe that you

are powerless against temptation, that the carnal desires are too strong, and there’s no point in even trying to resist. Don’t fall for it.

In reality, true freedom is found in following Heavenly Father’s commandments. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Corinthians 3:17). Heavenly Father gives us commandments to guide us to this true freedom and onward to true happiness.

And even if you’ve given in to temptation, you have a path back to freedom and happiness through repentance. Through the Savior and His Atonement, you can be made pure and holy again. Talk to your parents. Make an appointment with your bishop or branch president. If you do so, you can be made clean again. Satan will tell you that you can’t. But you can!

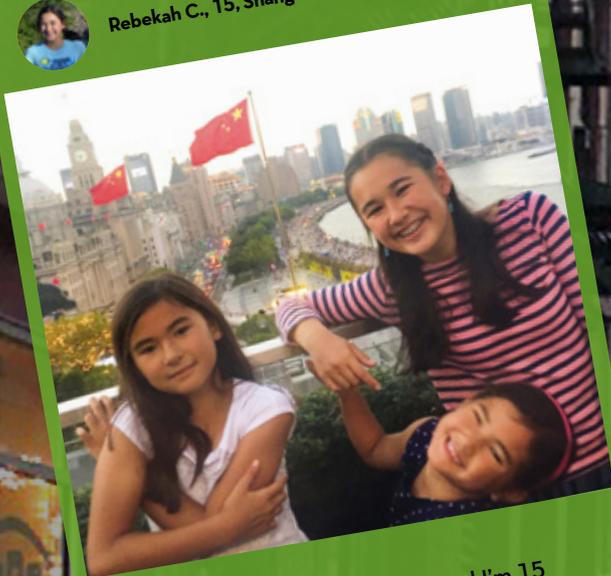
You are powerful, and that power increases the more you strive to live a pure and virtuous life. When the world tells you that you *can’t*, choose virtue and know that you *can*. **NE**

More Info

Check out the video “Chastity: What Are the Limits?” at youth.lds.org.



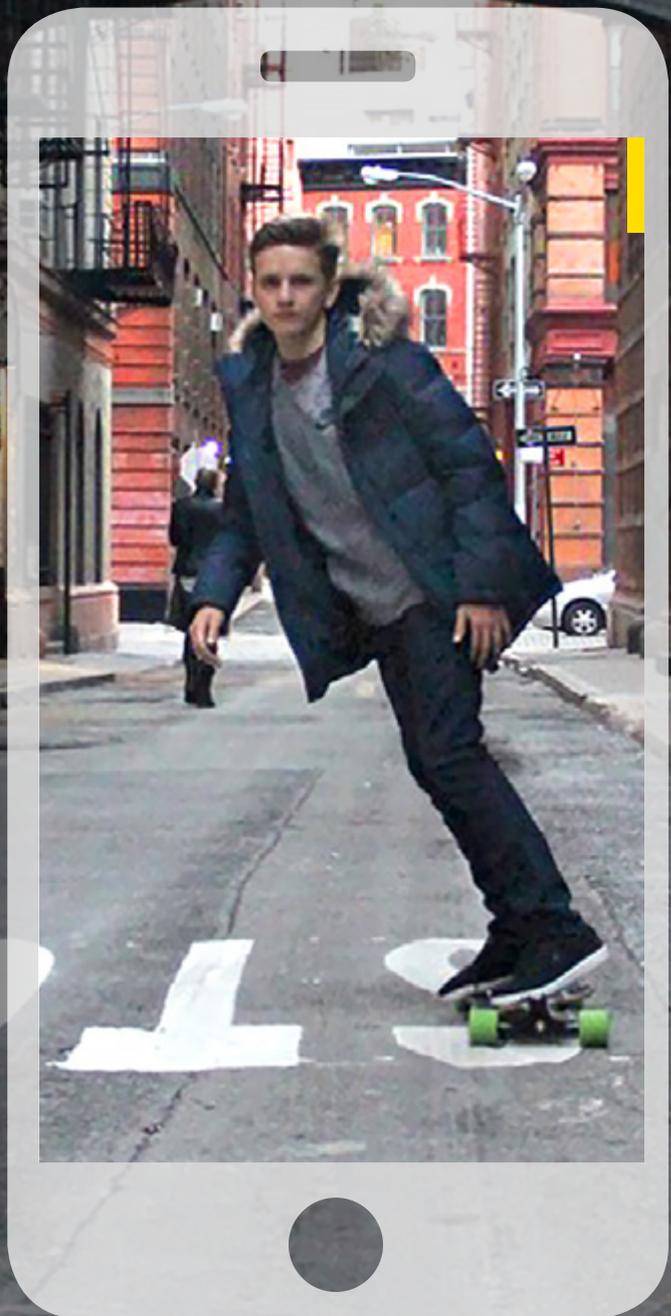
Rebekah C., 15, Shanghai, China



My name is Rebekah C., and I'm 15 years old. I grew up in Michigan, USA, but I live in Shanghai, China! I love rescuing snails from the road after it rains. I have a testimony because I know Heavenly Father is real and that He loves me, and even if I doubt other things, I'll always know that is true.

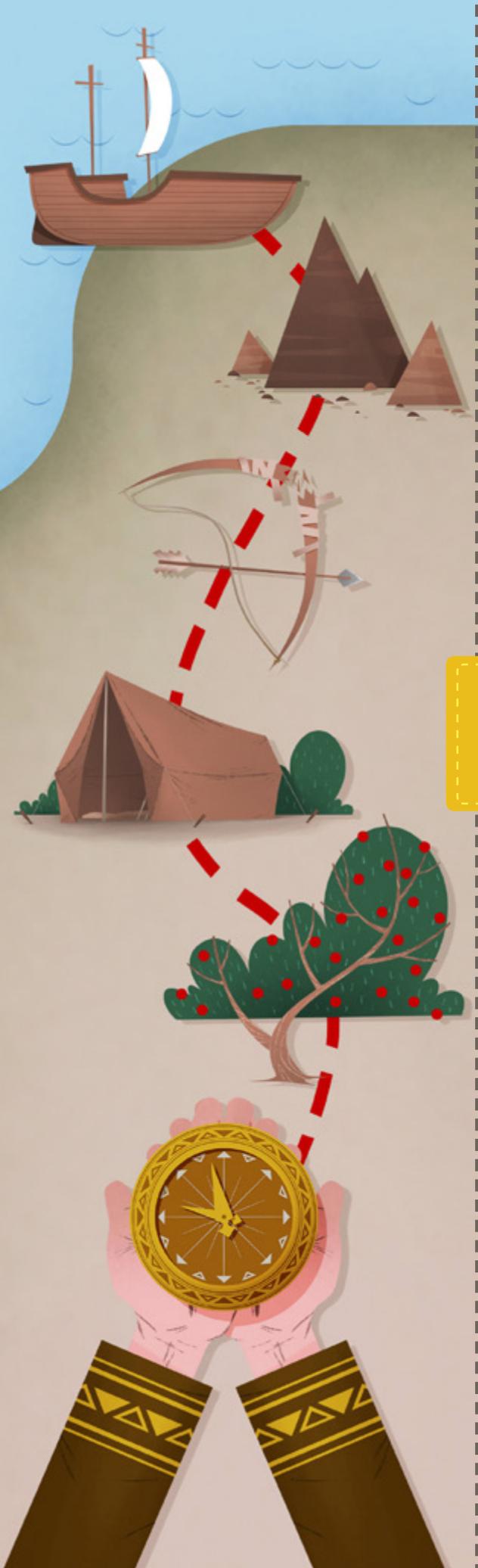
I'm McAllister W. I'm 14 years old and I'm from New York City, USA. It's a busy place with skyscrapers and people, and I love living here. I take the subway to Scouts, and I learned to hail a taxi cab before I learned how to ride a bike! One passion that I have is longboarding along the Hudson River—with a view of the Statue of Liberty!

Something that I love about the gospel is that a lot of it is focused on serving others. I recently helped a sister in our ward move, and that experience helped me recognize that serving people like Jesus Christ would help others' faith grow, and that in turn helps my faith to grow.



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@LDSYouth is all about you! Send your stories and gospel thoughts to newera@ldschurch.org.



YOUR OWN LIAHONA

Wouldn't it be great if you could have a spiritual GPS to guide you? With your patriarchal blessing, you can.

By Richard M. Romney
Church Magazines

Sometimes it can seem hard to get through life. There are so many major things coming your way in the next few years: preparing for the temple, sharing the gospel, choosing a school and a career. And you're only a teenager! Wouldn't it be great if, like Lehi, you could find a Liahona outside your door, an instrument guaranteed to keep you on course if you just pay attention to it?

Actually, there are already many sources of guidance in your life: prayer, scriptures, counsel from parents and leaders, promptings from the Holy Ghost, general conference, and the list goes on. But here's another source to add to your list—a personal Liahona known as your patriarchal blessing. It's personal revelation for you, about you, from your Heavenly Father, who has known you since, well, forever.

Think of your patriarchal blessing as a sort of spiritual GPS, and then some. It not only allows you to know *who*

you are and *where* you are; it can also help you to understand *why* you're here and *where* you should be headed. But remember, guidance from your patriarchal blessing requires use of the same principles that made Lehi's Liahona work: heed and diligence (see 1 Nephi 16:28; Mosiah 1:16).

HEED AND DILIGENCE

What are heed and diligence? To *heed* means not only to hear what is said but to also pay attention to it. A related word is *hearken*, which means to hear *and* obey. So for your patriarchal blessing to serve as a Liahona in your life, you must not only read it, but you must also follow it.

"Scriptures recorded in all dispensations teach that we show our *love* of God as we *hearken* to His commandments and *obey* them," said President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. "These actions are closely connected. In fact, the Hebrew language of the Old Testament in most instances uses the same term for both *hearkening* (to the Lord) and *obedience* (to His word)." ¹

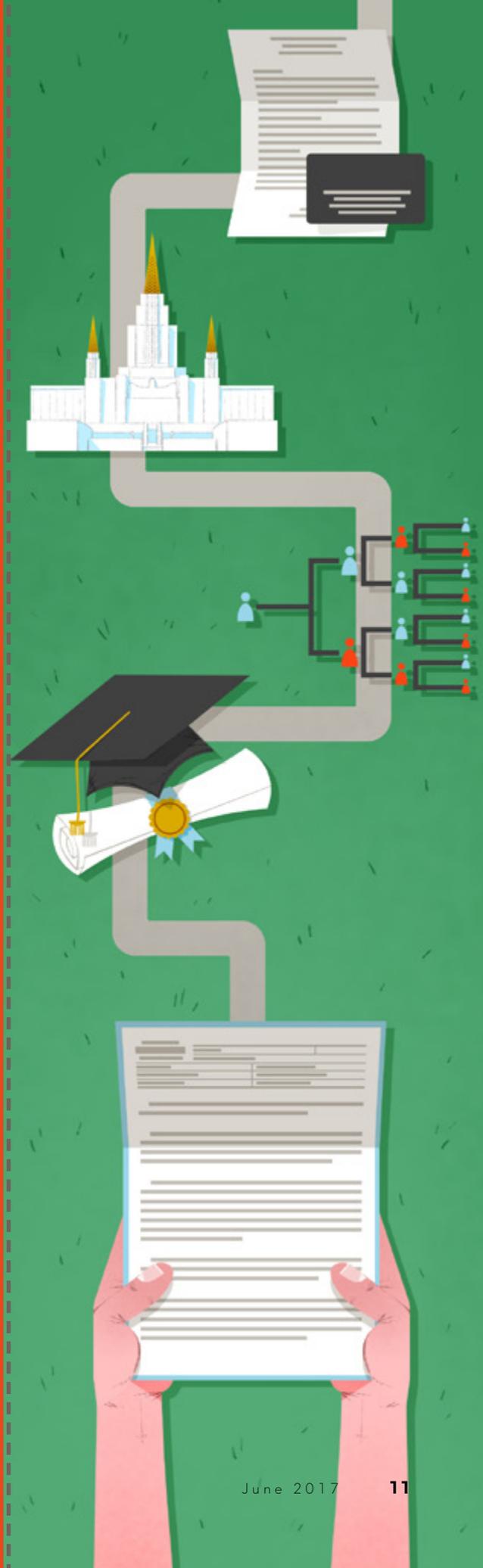
Diligence is another key to learning from your patriarchal blessing. Diligence means being conscientious, attentive, and persistent. It means determined, unflinching effort. "It is to learn what the Lord expects of you, make a plan to do it, [and] act on your plan," said President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency.²

If you want your patriarchal blessing to be helpful to you, study it with earnest, energetic effort; make plans to act upon it; and carry out those plans.

AN EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW

Alma the Younger, counseling his son Helaman, said the Liahona is a "type," or example, for us to follow in our own lives. In Alma 37:38–45 he says:

1. It was prepared by the Lord to show, like a compass, which way to travel.
2. It worked according to faith in God, which allowed "miracles wrought by the power of God, day by day."



3. It used “small means” to accomplish “marvelous works.”
4. If Lehi and his family forgot to exercise faith and diligence, then “marvelous works ceased” and “they did not progress in their journey.”
5. When they became distracted, they did not travel a direct course.
6. It is easy to give heed to the words of Christ, which point in a straight course.

These same principles hold true for your patriarchal blessing. “The way is prepared, and if we will look we may live forever” (Alma 37:46). **NE**

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Listen to Learn,” Apr. 1991 general conference.
2. Henry B. Eyring, “Act in All Diligence,” Apr. 2010 general conference.



PATRIARCHAL PERSPECTIVE

We asked four patriarchs to answer questions about patriarchal blessings. Here are some of their responses.



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO RECEIVE A PATRIARCHAL BLESSING?

“As we attend meetings, classes, and seminary, we are taught doctrines, principles, and expectations that are in common to all members of the Church. But when we receive a patriarchal blessing, it is not common to all—it is specific to one. It is not about what we should do but about what you can do, blessed by attributes or gifts that are divine in origin. A patriarchal blessing is tangible evidence that you have a unique personal relationship with a Heavenly Father who loves you and desires that you return to His presence.”

—Clayne A. Steed, *Raymond Alberta Stake, Canada*



TO GUIDE YOUR WAY
 “Your patriarchal blessing is to you a personal Liahona to chart your course and guide your way.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “On Being Spiritually Prepared,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2010, 5; see also “Your Patriarchal Blessing: A Liahona of Light,” Oct. 1986 general conference.



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KNOW WHAT YOUR LINEAGE IS?

“It helps you to understand that the stories written in the Bible are not just stories about some people and when they lived. Their history becomes part of the history of all people—of people who lived and who will still live. We can better understand their role and our role as we come to know our heritage. The Lord wants His people to know who they are.”

—Vyacheslav V. Protopopov, Moscow Russia Stake

HOW DO I KNOW IF IT IS TIME FOR ME TO RECEIVE IT?

“I met with a young lady recently. She described how she had been thinking about meeting with her bishop [to talk about her patriarchal blessing recommend] for some time. She had discussed her desire with her parents and fasted and prayed to know when she was ready. She told me when we started our discussion that she was still a little nervous, wondering if she was prepared, but said that recently she had felt at peace as she thought about her appointment with me. I told her, ‘That’s your answer. The Spirit brought that peace to your heart.’”

—Keith L. Stapleton, Cartersville Georgia Stake, USA

IS IT ALL RIGHT TO SHARE MY BLESSING WITH OTHERS OR TO COMPARE MY BLESSING TO THEIRS?

“Patriarchal blessings are sacred and personal. They may be shared with immediate family but not shared with or interpreted by others. There may be a time in your life that as you are speaking with someone, a thought or phrase from your blessing comes into your mind. It may be appropriate to share it, not in a boastful or prideful way but as a message that offers hope and encouragement.”

—Keith L. Stapleton, Cartersville Georgia Stake, USA

HOW CAN I PREPARE TO RECEIVE IT?

“The Savior provides the perfect example of preparation. Begin with things He taught us: first, prayer and fasting (see Matthew 14:23); second, studying the scriptures prepares us to receive and understand personal revelation.”

—Emile E. Bailly, Paris France South Stake

HOW DOES INSPIRATION HELP PATRIARCHS?

“I remember the first time I gave a patriarchal blessing. Of course I had pondered, studied, and prepared spiritually. I was nervous, but when the moment came, the Spirit filled the room and removed any fear or restraint. The Spirit helped me to hear the words which came into my heart.”

—Vyacheslav V. Protopopov, Moscow Russia Stake

From his lofty perch, the watchman's piercing eyes scan the expanse before him. In one hand, he grips a long ram's horn to blow at any sign of an enemy approaching. He stands steady, alert, and ready to warn his neighbors (see Ezekiel 33:6–7).

Is this how you imagine the watchman from ancient days? Maybe an older man with a beard? Do you ever imagine the watchman is a teenager? Do you ever imagine the watchman is *you*?

We often talk about the prophets' duty as watchmen, but in the April 2017 general conference, Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles reminded us that prophets shouldn't be the only warning voices.

"In fact, 'it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor' [D&C 88:81]," he said. "We who have received a knowledge of the great plan of happiness—and its implementing commandments—should feel a desire to share that knowledge since it makes all the difference here and in eternity."

He even gave a special call to you.

"We trust that especially you of the rising generation, youth and young adults on whom the Lord must rely for the success of His work in future years, will sustain the teachings of the gospel and the standards of the Church in public as well as in private."

The Lord is relying on you to climb up to the tower and pull out your trumpet. Don't let any fears keep you quiet. It's time to make some noise! But not just any noise.

"This is not to say that we should bang on our neighbor's door or stand in the public square shouting, 'Repent!'" Elder Christofferson said. "Truly, when you think about it, we have in the restored gospel what people, deep down, really want. So the warning voice is generally not only civil, but in the Psalmist's phrase, it is a 'joyful noise' [Psalm 66:1; 98:4]."

So make some joyful noise!



HOW CAN YOU MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE?

JOYFUL NOISE



1 IDENTIFY THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL.

Why does the gospel bring *you* joy? Your personal testimony and your personal experiences are extremely important. Remember, “People may sometimes intellectually question what you teach, but it is difficult to question a sincere, heartfelt testimony” (*Preach My Gospel* [2004], 199).

Ask yourself: Why does repenting bring me peace? How does knowing the plan of Salvation give me hope? Why does following the prophet help me?

“WHEN I READ THE SCRIPTURES,
MY DAY GOES SO MUCH BETTER.”

2 START WITH LOVE.

“The motivation for raising the warning voice is love—love of God and love of fellowman,” Elder Christofferson said. “To warn is to care.”

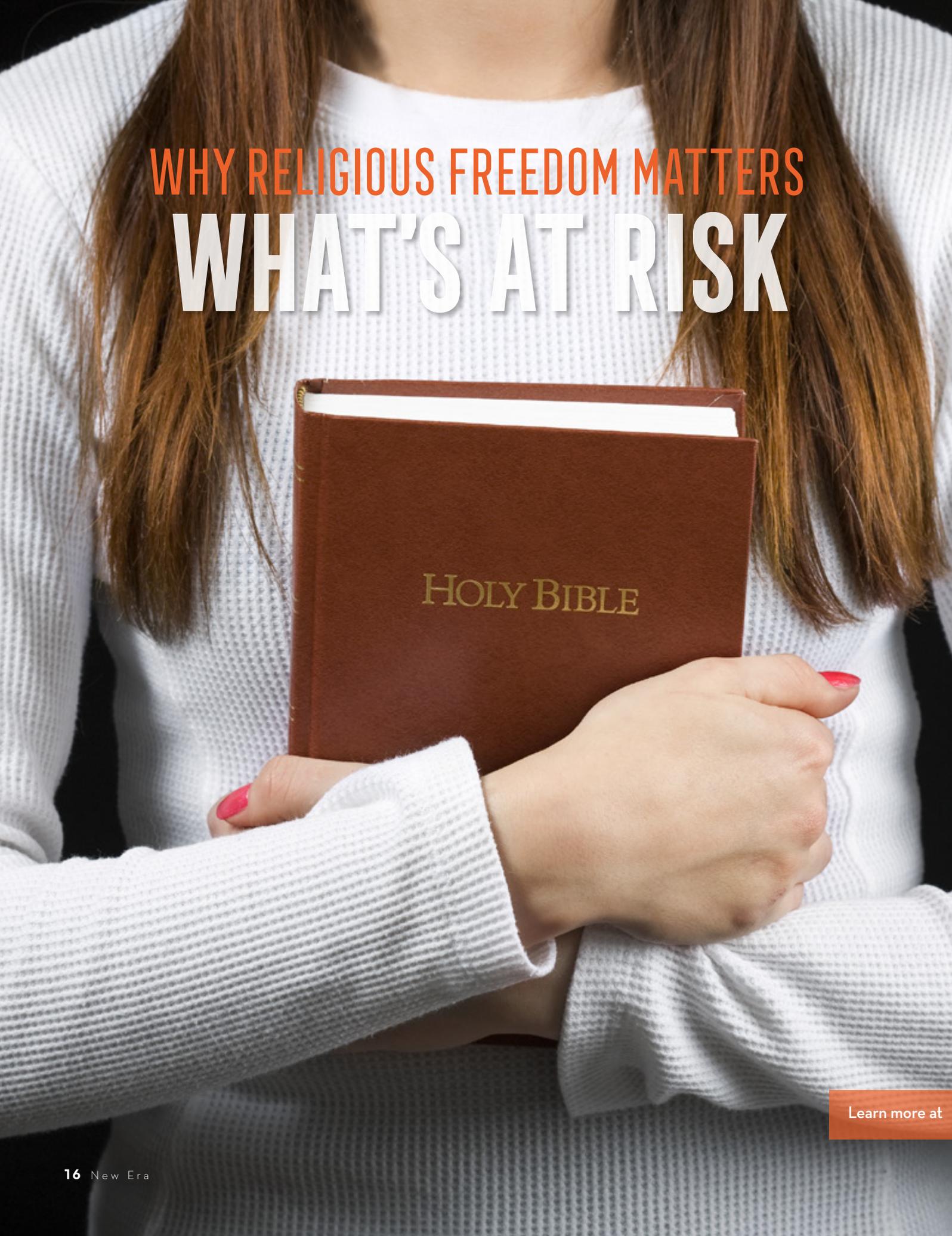
Think about those you care about who aren’t members of the Church. They might not know the things you know or see the things you see. As a watchman, you can help share the light of the gospel with them. If you feel nervous or scared, focus on your love for your friends, because “perfect love casteth out all fear” (Moroni 8:16).

“WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT GOD?”

3 SPEAK UP.

Once again, this *doesn’t* mean you need to bang on any doors or go screaming through town square. But when you have experienced the blessings of the gospel and you love others, you have every reason to “make a joyful noise unto the Lord” (Psalm 98:4). You are the watchman, and it’s up to you to warn your neighbor. Don’t let your friends miss out on the amazing blessings of the gospel.

How will you make a joyful noise? **NE**



WHY RELIGIOUS FREEDOM MATTERS WHAT'S AT RISK

HOLY BIBLE

Learn more at

Freedom to choose. That's what the War in Heaven was all about. We couldn't afford to lose agency then, and we can't afford to lose it now. And that includes the freedom to "worship how, where, or what [we] may" (Articles of Faith 1:11). That's why the Prophet Joseph Smith said:

"I AM BOLD TO DECLARE BEFORE HEAVEN THAT I AM JUST AS READY TO DIE IN DEFENDING THE RIGHTS OF A PRESBYTERIAN, A BAPTIST, OR A GOOD MAN OF ANY OTHER DENOMINATION [AS FOR A MORMON]; FOR THE SAME PRINCIPLE WHICH WOULD TRAMPLE UPON THE RIGHTS OF THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS WOULD TRAMPLE UPON THE RIGHTS OF THE ROMAN CATHOLICS, OR OF ANY OTHER DENOMINATION WHO MAY BE UNPOPULAR AND TOO WEAK TO DEFEND THEMSELVES"

(Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith [2007], 345).

In addition to maintaining religious freedom as an eternal principle (even God will not remove the agency of any of His children), there are some potentially severe consequences if we lose the freedom to worship, speak, and live according to our beliefs.

There's a lot at stake, and this is just a sampling.

You could lose your job or leadership positions for expressing religious beliefs—even outside of work. For instance, CEOs, newscasters, judges, teachers, doctors, professors, firefighters, Olympians, graduate students, and many others have been fired, pressured to resign, or intimidated for donating money or simply saying that they support the traditional view of marriage.

You might be required to hide your religion or perform tasks at work that go against your beliefs. Does it seem fair, for example, that a doctor who opposes abortion on a religious or moral basis be required to perform one even though numerous other doctors nearby are willing? Should you be forced to wear an immodest uniform when it's not necessary for your job function?

You may be required to work on the Sabbath or religious holidays even when others are willing to take your shift and your employer accommodates other non-religious interests.

Youth in public schools may be required to learn about sexual and gender theories that contradict basic Church teachings. Many public schools already teach sex education in a way that's fundamentally contrary to Church teachings, and some have required reading lists with explicit content.

You might not be able to create faith-based clubs on college campuses without being required to let people become club members—or even officers—who oppose the club's religious beliefs.

Churches may be forced to employ people who disagree with or refuse to live core values of their faith, threatening their ability to carry out their religious missions.

Churches could lose their tax-exempt status by maintaining doctrines, policies, and standards that conflict with secular beliefs regarding marriage, family, gender, and sexuality, resulting in a huge increase in costs to build houses of worship or to purchase and provide goods for humanitarian aid.

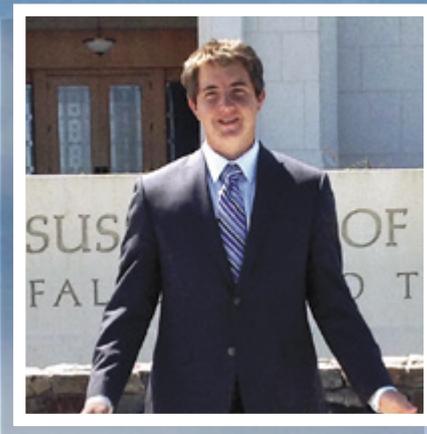
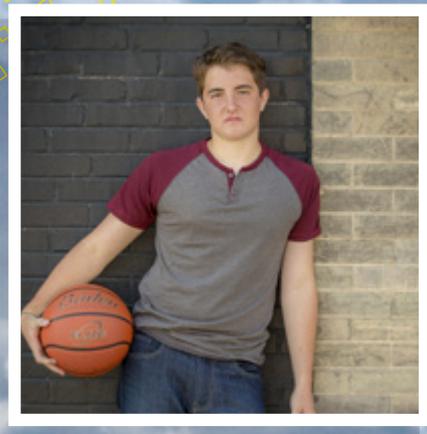
Housing units, such as dorms, at religious colleges could be forced to abandon moral standards that protect privacy, modesty, and morality, denying people the right to room with those who uphold the same standards.

Religious schools that maintain honor codes may lose their accreditation and be denied research funds and even federal student loans and grants, diminishing the value of their degrees, undermining the quality of their education, and making it financially impossible for many students to attend.

As society continues to move away from eternal truths and God-given commandments, we can't predict all the consequences that may result if religious freedom and the right to act on our beliefs are taken away.

So we need to raise our voices to defend religious freedom. If we don't raise them for the protection of religion now, vital religious freedoms will be lost.

When we join the cause together, we can make a difference that will protect religious freedom not just for Latter-day Saints but also for followers of all religions. **NE**



THERE'S A REASON I'M STILL ALIVE

AFTER A MOVE AND A MEDICAL EMERGENCY,
PEYTON **FOUND HIS PURPOSE.**

By Jenni Whiteley

Elder Peyton Burke of Idaho, USA, stands in a trailer piled high with sandbags. He and his companion have been filling them and carrying them all day, placing thousands in front of homes and businesses in their mission area in North Carolina to protect against the flooding of Hurricane Matthew.

A little over a year earlier, this kind of work would have been impossible for Peyton. At that time he was battling a dangerous infection that threatened to paralyze him. On top of that, his family had just moved to Idaho from Oregon, USA, and during the months he was stuck in bed and making daily hospital trips, he relied on his new friends and his trust in God to get him through.



LONELY AFTER A FAMILY MOVE

Just before Peyton's junior year of high school, his dad got a new job in Idaho. The family packed up everything and started the drive. "It didn't really hit me until we started driving that we were actually *moving*," Peyton says. "Then I really got scared." Peyton's mom remembers him quietly crying through a lot of the drive. "In fact, it was one of the only times I've seen him cry," she says.

After the move Peyton joined the school soccer team. Although Peyton met a lot of new people, he had a hard time connecting with them. "It was all scary because everything was new," he says. "The first couple of months were super hard."

But his new friends kept reaching out to him. And it made a difference.

"There wasn't a specific day where everything magically changed," Peyton says. "It just happened slowly and over time as they kept inviting me to hang out with them. I slowly grew closer and closer to all of them."



BATTLING A MEDICAL EMERGENCY

From the time Peyton was little, he loved all sports—but he had dreamed of playing on a high school varsity basketball team. Even though he didn't make the team at his new school, he decided to play on the junior varsity team to prove himself.

Halfway through the season, Peyton noticed that his lower back began hurting, and gradually the pain got worse. For a while, taking a simple hot bath would relieve it. Then one morning Peyton woke up in intense pain, and over the next few days, he could barely walk. Finally, Peyton's mom drove him to the emergency room.

The doctors gave him painkillers. "After that," Peyton says, "I thought things would return to normal soon."

They didn't.

After a scan, the doctor told Peyton that he had a rare condition called a spinal epidural abscess—possibly from a freak hit to Peyton's back during a basketball game. It was serious. If not treated in time, the swelling from the abscess could cause paralysis and even death.

Because the doctors wanted to avoid surgery, they put Peyton on the strongest antibiotics available. A permanent IV was put into his arm to give him internal medication. Peyton had to return to the hospital every day for treatments and tests, and he couldn't go back to school. "I was scared," Peyton explains. "But mostly I was frustrated that I couldn't do anything I'd normally do."

WHOSOEVER SHALL PUT THEIR
TRUST IN GOD SHALL BE SUPPORTED
IN THEIR TRIALS, AND THEIR TROUBLES,
AND THEIR AFFLICTIONS, AND SHALL
BE LIFTED UP AT THE LAST DAY.
ALMA 36:3



THE POWER OF FRIENDS

Peyton's new friends visited him in the hospital after school. They texted, they heart-attacked his room, they helped throw a small birthday party for him, they even brought junior prom to the hospital for him, and they prayed.

"One of my friends, Ellie, would visit me pretty much every single day," Peyton says, "and it was such a big help, strength, and source of joy to me. My friends were so helpful and supportive."

But the weeks of treatments and waiting were still really hard. Peyton turned to the scriptures for comfort. One night, while reading in the Book of Mormon, he came across a passage that reached him: "And now, O my son Helaman, behold, thou art in thy youth . . . [and] I do know that whosoever shall put their *trust in God* shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day. . . . I do put my trust in him, and he will still deliver me" (Alma 36:3, 27; emphasis added).

"I trusted in those verses," Peyton says. "They taught me to look to God, and I knew He would help me get through."

Six weeks later Peyton had a follow-up scan. "I thought and hoped that I'd be declared infection-free," he explains.

The results: the infection had diminished but not been eliminated, and there was potential it would come back. That meant another six weeks of treatment and increasing his trips to the hospital to three times a day. "I was super sad and frustrated. That was really hard."

Finally, after the second round of treatments, Peyton was declared infection-free. "When they told me that I would be able to walk again and I wasn't going to be paralyzed as long as I was careful, I was so relieved. I still pray and give thanks almost every day for the ability that I have to be able to walk and to exercise."



More Hurricane Cleanup

Elder Burke isn't the only youth who helped during Hurricane Matthew. For more, check out Rockwell Palmer's story, "Helping Hands after the Storm," in the January 2017 *New Era* and at youth.lds.org.



MOVING ON IN THE LORD

With life somewhat back to normal, Peyton was eager to play sports again, especially basketball. "I really wanted to play, but I didn't know if my back could handle it. I knew I had to take my question to God. I prayed a lot. Then I started having dreams about playing basketball and getting hit and becoming paralyzed during a high school game. At first I just brushed it off, but I kept having them. Then I started having dreams about me being a dad in a wheelchair.

"I decided I shouldn't play basketball because one day I wanted to be able to play and do stuff with my kids. I felt like I was following a prompting."

The following March, Peyton began his mission in North Carolina. One month later, Hurricane Matthew ravaged the eastern coast of the United States, and North Carolina was in emergency status. Although he had to be careful, Peyton and the other missionaries helped fill and place thousands of sandbags to protect businesses and homes from the floods.

Peyton reflects: "All of my experiences in Idaho prepared me in different ways for my mission. All of my experiences made me physically, mentally, or spiritually stronger, and I've needed all those in helping the people here in North Carolina.

"I've realized that God gave me that trial to humble me and to give me more compassion for other people. This experience also made me a lot more grateful for all the things that I take for granted. There was a reason the Lord preserved me and that I wasn't paralyzed or dead. That's when it really hit me that I was here to help and bless others." NE

The author lives in Idaho, USA.

REAL CONNECTION

A real-life smile to a friend really counts.



♥ 367

♥ 504

♥ 150

♥ 210

♥ 180

♥ 326

♥ 157

♥ 248

♥ 130

♥ 174

♥ 419

♥ 212

♥ 130

♥ 405

♥ 84

♥ 58

♥ 146

♥ 75

♥ 219

♥ 37

♥ 245

♥ 14

♥ 156

♥ 97



By Hadley Griggs

Social media can be great. It can help you keep up with relatives and friends in this fast-paced world, meet new people, and even share the gospel. With a post, you can show your friends and family how good you are at making mac and cheese or share a favorite scripture. Social media can be fun!



Life *in the* SELFIE- SPHERE

Don't get stuck in "me, me, me" mode on social media.





But even though it can be great for keeping in touch, sometimes it can leave us feeling lonely. In fact, some studies suggest that more people than ever before feel alone now, and researchers think it may have to do with all the social media at our fingertips.¹

So, What's Going On?

Think about it: when you take time every day to post on social media about your fun weekend or about that awesome grade on your math test or about how much homework you have, it can be easy to forget about the people around you and start to think only about yourself. After a while, that can definitely start to feel a little isolating.

If we're not careful, our social media experience can become very self-focused. When we post constantly about ourselves, we often get fixated on how we can make ourselves look cooler or more spontaneous or more popular. We can become absorbed in our own image, and that can make us oblivious to the people around us—people who may even need a

friend or need our help. Maybe your little brother is always bored and wants to hang out with you. Or your friend down the street was sick last week and could use some help with the math lessons she missed. If you're busy thinking about yourself, you might not ever notice.

This doesn't mean that posting about yourself is bad! That's part of what social media is all about—letting people know what you're up to. But if you don't pay attention, it can be easy to slip into “me, me, me” mode and fall into the trap of self-absorption.

Service Is the Solution

So how can we avoid this “me, me, me” mode? Well, the Savior has some great advice in Matthew 16:25: “Whoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” We need to take some time off from thinking about ourselves, and instead focus on serving other people! There are lots of ways to do this, and you can even use social media. For example, you could take a photo with a younger sibling and make a post about how



DON'T FORGET Mutual tonight, 7pm. See ya there 😊

Just read my favorite scripture: ❤️
“Whoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” Matthew 16:25. Man, do I need to work on that!

“It is not even enough for us to be convinced of the gospel; we must act and think so that we are converted by it.”
Elder Dallin H. Oaks

great families are. You could post something nice on a friend's page. Or, you could post a reminder about the Mutual activity coming up and ask your friends who's going. And you could always share inspirational quotes or your favorite scripture verses to brighten others' days!

Of course, even with all the great ways to focus on other people through social media, it's also good to take a break from it all and serve and love others the old-fashioned way. Take a step back from posing for your selfies and updating your statuses and instead play a game with a younger sibling, or head down the street and help your friend with her math homework. As great as social media can be, it can't replace face-to-face love and service.

There are plenty of ways to stop thinking only about ourselves and start thinking about other people—you just have to try! **NE**

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTE

1. For instance, see forbes.com/sites/womensmedia/2012/05/24/text-or-talk-is-technology-making-you-lonely/#6efd0680436e or huffingtonpost.com/margiewarrell/social-media-lonely_b_4034744.html.

SOCIAL MEDIA:

WHAT IT'S GREAT FOR AND WHAT IT'S NOT SO GREAT FOR

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF SOCIAL MEDIA—AND AVOID LETTING IT REPLACE IMPORTANT THINGS.

GREAT FOR...



SPREADING SOME KINDNESS
(LIKE POSTING OR COMMENTING WITH COMPLIMENTS).

MEETING PEOPLE YOU NEVER WOULD HAVE ENCOUNTERED IN PERSON AND MEETING NEW FRIENDS WITH SIMILAR INTERESTS.

KNOWING GENERALLY WHAT'S UP IN YOUR FRIENDS' LIVES.



STAYING CONNECTED WITH FARAWAY FAMILY AND FRIENDS
(AND FINALLY BE ABLE TO REMEMBER ALL YOUR LITTLE COUSINS' NAMES).

CAT VIDEOS.
'NUFF SAID.



QUICKLY INVITING PEOPLE TO A SPONTANEOUS HOT-DOG ROAST.



SHOWING EVERYONE YOUR AWESOME NUNCHAKU SKILLS
(OR JUGGLING SKILLS OR SINGING SKILLS OR BAKING SKILLS...).



SEEING PHOTOS OF AWESOME STUFF
(LIKE DELICIOUS-LOOKING BROWNIES).

QUICK-AND-EASY ACCESS TO A MASSIVE TANK WHENEVER YOU WANT TO KICK YOUR MAC 'N CHEESE UP A NOTCH OR NEED HELP BRAINSTORMING AWESOME FHE ACTIVITIES.



NOT-SO-GREAT FOR...

A SAFE PLACE TO GO SUPER DEEP IN A CONVERSATION.

GOING BOWLING OR SWIMMING OR WALKING IN THE PARK, WATCHING YOUR HIGH SCHOOL TEAM PLAY, ATTENDING A THEATER, OR FEELING THE WEATHER



DETECTING SOMEONE'S TONE OF VOICE.



ACTUALLY EATING A BROWNIE.



FINDING AN ACTUAL SHOULDER TO CRY ON.



READING THE EMOTIONS ON SOMEONE'S FACE.



REALLY SEEING THE COMPLETE PICTURE OF WHAT'S GOING ON IN PEOPLE'S LIVES.

GOING ON A DATE



REPLACING FACE-TO-FACE CONVERSATIONS.

MY FIRST TIME AT THE TEMPLE



I wanted to personally attend the temple, not just hear about other people's experiences with it.

By Matias Pedraza

When I was 16, the stake presidency announced that our stake would visit the temple in Buenos Aires, and I was invited to go. I saved money and worked hard to be worthy to obtain a temple recommend.

After I received the recommend, temptations attacked me from every side, all trying to make me lose that worthiness. But I had a desire to attend the temple. I didn't want to just hear the experience and testimony of others; I wanted to have my own experience and testimony.

The night to travel came. Even before getting on the bus, I had thoughts about not going, but I didn't give in. During the 10-hour

trip, I sat by a member of the Church who was very friendly to me. He was around 60 years old. He told me about his life and how happy he was to have gone through the trials he had.

I began to tell him about my life and how I felt very alone because many people had distanced themselves from me because I was following God. He told me, "God will give you a great friend, and that friend will always be there for you. Don't forget it." When he finished saying these words, I felt calm and peaceful because I felt that what he told me was true.

When I entered the temple, the heaviness I was carrying

disappeared. It felt like there was a spiritual embrace telling me, "Welcome, my son. I have been waiting for you."

I felt that the temple really was the house of God, not just a beautiful structure. After doing some baptisms and confirmations, I went outside.

I felt the burdens return, but now I felt like I had the strength to overcome them.

I know that preparing ourselves and leaving everything in the hands of God and giving the best of ourselves to enter the temple is what is expected of us. Then God blesses us abundantly. **NE**

The author lives in Córdoba, Argentina.

Finding and Being TRUE FRIENDS

*Youth from Oxford, England, share their thoughts
about true friendship.*



New Era Staff

From the best friend you've had since you were five to the new student you met in your math class, it's important to have good friends. And as it says in *For the Strength of Youth*: "Everyone needs good and true friends. They will be a great strength and blessing to you" ([2011], 16). But how do you find and keep good friends?

We asked youth in England about what true friendship means to them. Check out some of their stories about their true friends and how those friends have strengthened them. You might find that your own friends are a great strength to you too.

What makes someone a good friend?

Aaron M.: I think you should be excited to see your friends. You should care about them and you should know that they care about you. You can feel comfortable around them. You don't feel like you have to act like someone else when you're around them.

Leighton H.: Someone who supports you and comforts you.

Maddy H.: Someone that you trust.

Rachel P.: I think that a lot of what makes a good friend is having someone who is there for you, who supports you.

Emma F.: My best friend has always been there for me and reached out to me. When I left high school to attend homeschool, she started texting me. She's like, "Hey, what are you up to? We should hang out." And I didn't really have that many friends at the time, and so we just ended up being best friends. She always knows when I'm feeling sad. Somehow, I don't know how, but she just always knows.

"Be excited to see your friends."

What makes true friendship different from popularity?

Seth H.: Friendship is personal, popularity is impersonal. At our school we tend to group people into "popular people," based on their sports ability or maybe, for guys, how many girlfriends they've had. But I think you can have many really good friendships. So if you're nice, you're likely popular too. I think the people that stay popular the longest are the ones that are good friends.

Emma B.: I think it's the way you treat other people, because I've known a lot of popular people that were really rude, and they weren't very good friends with very many people. But then I've also known some really popular people who were nice to everybody. I think that's a big difference. I think it's just the attitude you have. You can't think of people as less than you—because they're not.

Isaac P.: I think if you have good friends, they're going to be friends with you no matter what others think about you. That's what you do when you're friends.

Grace S.: Friends stick together and are trustworthy.



How Do Your Friends Support You?

Hannah P.: I've had friends come to my performances for my show choir when I was in it.

Andrew S.: My friend helped me incredibly with football.

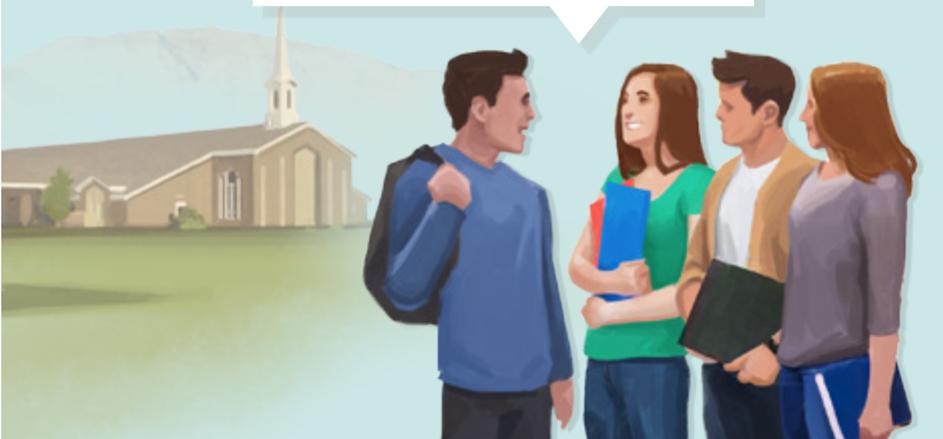
Bella F.: For a religious studies class we went on a trip to a Church meetinghouse, and all the missionaries were there. It was fun. I also thought it was a really good way to choose who my good friends were going to be because you could tell who really respected other people's religions. They'd say things like, "Oh, so you don't swear?" And they'd say, "OK, great, I won't swear around you" and stuff like that. We talked about how we don't drink coffee and stuff, and they said, "OK, we don't have to go to coffee shops." They were just all really respectful.

Emma B.: My friends have just been so open to talking about my religion and saying things like, "You know what, I don't necessarily believe what you believe, but I'm totally open to understand so I can know what you know and what you believe in so I can help you stay strong."

Calvin B.: Since I moved, I haven't really met anyone at school. So all I know are people at church. When we're all at a youth activity, they're nice to me.

Emma F.: When I first moved here, I didn't have very many LDS friends because there weren't that many young women in our ward. I ended up making one friend at an LDS youth convention, and that made all the difference for me in coming to activities. And so she introduced me to her friends, and eventually I had LDS friends, which is helpful.

"They are respectful of other people's religions."



"The end of the first day, everyone already knew my name."



Find Friends Who Value Things That Matter Most

"Essential to your success and happiness is the advice 'Choose your friends with caution.' We tend to become like those whom we admire, and they are usually our friends. We should associate with those who, like us, are planning not for temporary convenience, shallow goals, or narrow ambition—but rather with those who value the things that matter most, even eternal objectives."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Be Thou an Example," Apr. 2005 general conference.

How Do You Create Friendships?

William S.: When one person says hi, and you end up talking, eventually you become friends.

James P.: For me, it's making friends through activities. Like when I went to America on a holiday, I went to the Brigham Young University soccer camp, and I didn't know anyone there. And then at the end of the first day, everyone already knew my name. So just doing activities and going to lunch or helping each other.

Seth H.: Mutual interest—you're interested in the same things as someone else. Doing practical things together is how you start friendships.

A True Friend . . .

Grace S.: A true friend is someone who knows about you.

Andrew S.: A true friend is someone who you can always rely on.

James P.: I think that they are understanding.

Leighton H.: You can be confident in yourself around them.

Calvin B.: A true friend is supportive.

What Have You Learned From True Friends?

Aaron M.: Be true to yourself. You're not going to get real friends when you're not being yourself. If they don't like your standards, then they're not really your friend and not really there for you.

Isaac P.: Listen to what they say. If they're talking, don't ignore what they're saying. Just really focus on them and be there for them.

Emma B.: Something that a good friend does is invite you to things. Even just asking how you're doing. Just asking little questions, as well. The little things are the things that matter.

James P.: You also could be a bit more open, inviting people in your friend group and then meeting other friends. You can still be a good friend. **NE**



“Really focus on them and be there for them.”



By Elder Ian S.
Arden
Of the Seventy

FRIENDS & WHĀN

Learn more about friendship
in the "Friends" section of
For the Strength of Youth.



Choose your friends wisely, and remember that you need never feel alone.

I was born in the small rural town of Te Aroha, New Zealand, which sits beneath a beautiful, bush-covered mountain that became my playground. *Aroha* is a Maori word meaning “love,” and it reminds me of my feelings for my family and friends as I grew up. Apart from my brothers and sister, there were only four other LDS students in my school, so I made friends who were not of my faith but who had similar values and helped each other to be true to what is right.

As a young boy I learned that if you begin to wander down a forbidden path, a true friend puts up a stop sign and helps you do a “U-turn” to get back on the straight and narrow path (see 1 Nephi 8:28).

FAMILY FRIENDS

Many New Zealanders use the Maori word *whānau* (pronounced *’fah-no*) to define family. The word not only embraces parents and children but extends to grandparents,

aunties and uncles, cousins, and even the cousins of cousins. “We’re all *whānau* here,” means, “We’re all family.” The feeling of *whānau* is one of love for one another, caring about each other, serving one another, and never feeling alone. You don’t have to live in New Zealand to have *whānau*; wherever you live, do all you can to build loving, caring family relationships.

“The Family: A Proclamation to the World” reminds us that “successful . . . families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities” (familyproclamation.lds.org). Look at each of these attributes and determine what more you can do to strengthen your family.

Your parents should be counted as treasured friends in whom you can confide and look to for guidance. I encourage you to listen more attentively to them. Many



PHOTOGRAPH OF NEW ZEALAND BY GETTY IMAGES. PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHURCH PUBLISHING SERVICES



GOOD FRIENDS ARE
FOUND WHEN SERVING
AND INTERACTING
WITH OTHERS

kneel at their bed asking for the Lord to protect you and help you make wise choices. I also encourage you to be a friend to your brothers and sisters. My twin brother, Ross, and I were best friends as we grew up, and that bond has remained strong all of our lives. When disagreements come, remember the words of Solomon, “Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul” (Proverbs 16:24).

CHOOSING FRIENDS

Choosing good friends is a big responsibility, as friends can have an eternal influence on you and the decisions you make. When I think of that responsibility, I think of the words of Jacob, “O be wise; what can I say more?” (Jacob 6:12). You would be wise to realize that choosing friends should not be based just on physical appearance or popularity; these have little to do with the quality of a lasting friendship. As the word *make* implies, there is work involved in *making* friends. Try hard not to be the silent person in the corner of the room wondering why nobody is your friend. Good friends are not normally found in secluded corners; they are found while serving and interacting with others. Remember, you are not alone in your quest; others are looking for friends too, so with patience and careful thought,

like-minded young people find each other and lasting friendships are *made*.

WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR IN A FRIEND?

Imagine you are at a restaurant and you are presented with a menu. You read with pleasure all that is being offered and then choose what you would like to have. You have a similar opportunity in choosing your friends. No, they are not literally on a menu, but you can observe potential friends and their attributes and decide whether you would enjoy their company and how they could lift you and how you could lift them. I hope those on your friend “menu” would include people developing Christlike attributes such as those found in chapter six of *Preach My Gospel*. You may ask yourself how closely they match the statements made in the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet. Choose friends with like values and you will find yourselves building one another rather than competing with each other.

Friendship is a two-way street. You will need to be a listener as well as a talker, a giver as well as a receiver, a friend who consoles as well as a friend being consoled. Good friends care about one another, serve one another, share uplifting experiences with one another, have

wholesome activities together, comfort one another, and encourage each other.

Beware of “virtual” or online friends, as they are no substitute for real friends. Secluding yourself in your bedroom on your computer, iPad, or phone in the world of Facebook or Snapchat or spending hours in an Internet café playing games robs you of the social skills needed to make real friendships.

YOU NEED NEVER FEEL ALONE

No one should ever feel alone, and yet there are many who do. When you see someone alone, acknowledge them with a smile and an encouraging word. Be a true Latter-day Saint and include them in your social circle. Invite them to sit with you at lunch or in assembly. To reach out to the lonely is to reach up to God. Certainly the Savior’s invitation to “feed my sheep” (John 21:15–17) is an invitation to reach out to others, including those who struggle to make friends and to “feed” them with kindness. Be a positive class or quorum member who does not gossip, snicker, or ridicule, but one who lives to lift others.

Because you have a Heavenly Father and Savior who love you, you need never feel alone. In those challenging moments in life, remember that your Savior is your saving and redeeming Friend. He knows you by name, and He descended below all for you and can lift you above all that troubles you. When you truly understand He is your Savior, you’ll truly understand He is your Friend (see John 14:14–15).

As a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, you have received the Holy Ghost to bless your life. One of His roles is to be a comforter. As you keep the commandments, you are entitled to the comfort that comes from His still and small yet reassuring voice. When you have the Holy Ghost in your life, you need never feel alone.

Finally, remember that an Apostle of the Lord, Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, assured you that “as you keep the commandments and pray in faith to see the Lord’s hand in your life, . . . He will open your spiritual eyes even wider, and you will see more clearly that you are not alone” (Apr. 2015 general conference). **NE**



**NO ONE
SHOULD EVER
FEEL ALONE.**

THE FIRST STEPS IN MAKING FRIENDS

1. **Know that you are of worth.** Someone would like you to be *their* friend. You have attributes of worth to offer to others.
2. **Choose wisely.** You actually get to choose your friends. Ask yourself, “Who out of all these people do I think I would be most comfortable with?”
3. **Ask the Lord to help you.** The missionaries ask Heavenly Father to prepare people so that they’ll accept them when they meet. You can do the same. Ask the Lord to prepare someone to be your friend and to prepare you to be their friend.
4. **Be patient in the process.** Making friends takes time. It’s a process, so be patient with others and with yourself.

MY DAD'S HANDS

By Jesse Cowley

As my 12th birthday approached, I attended a Priesthood Preview for the boys in the ward preparing to receive the Aaronic Priesthood. The only things I remember about the experience are getting a brand new white shirt and a talk about hands, given by my dad. He spoke of the importance of the priesthood holder's hands and how you must keep your hands clean and use them appropriately to be worthy to use the priesthood of God.

That talk left an impression on me. I don't think I realized this until some years later, but from that point on, I was very aware of my dad's hands.

My dad's hands always seemed to be involved in doing much good.

I noticed his hands as we did different landscaping projects, built a shed, helped move furniture, and did other projects together. His hands were tough farmer hands. Bulky, calloused, worn from farm days of his youth and years of service and work, his hands were well used and yet able to endure any labor they were called to perform.

For my own hands, this was not the case. I viewed the strength and toughness of his hands with awe and thought: "Wow. I wish I had hands like those." I hoped that one day, maybe, I would.

When I was about to receive my mission call, I had an experience with my dad that really impressed upon my heart and mind the importance of worthy hands.

I had the opportunity to accompany my dad to the house of a man we home-taught. This good brother had asked for a blessing. I was not yet a Melchizedek Priesthood holder, so I watched and listened as my dad placed his hands upon the brother's head and spoke the words that the Spirit put into his mouth. I felt the Spirit strongly during the blessing.

Afterwards my thoughts lingered on my dad's hands. Those rough, tough farmer hands had been kept clean by their owner. Because of that, they were able to be an instrument in the Lord's hands to bestow the blessings and power of heaven upon one of many whom my dad cared for. I viewed the sacred power of those hands with awe and thought: "Wow. I want to have hands like those." I knew that soon I could, but I would need to keep them clean throughout

my life to do any good.

My dad has always used his hands for good. He has kept them ever worthy to hold the priesthood of God.

We need to consider how we are using our hands. Are we keeping them clean? Are we remaining worthy of the blessings that come from honoring the holy priesthood?

If we strive to have a pure heart and clean hands, we will have great joy in life through the priesthood, and we will be ready and happy at the judgment bar of Christ (see Alma 5:19; D&C 88:86).

I'm grateful for my dad for setting an example and showing me the right way. **NE**

The author is currently serving in the Virginia Chesapeake Mission.

THEY WERE WORN,
THEY WERE TOUGH,
AND THEY WERE
ALSO EVERYTHING
I WANTED MY
HANDS TO BE.

ILLUSTRATION BY GREG NEWBOLD



Whose Will Was I FOLLOWING?



By Kyle Vorkink

When it was time to come up with some ideas for a song for the 2017 Mutual Theme album, I immediately knew what I wanted to write about: I basically gave up seeing my best friend so that I could focus on my mission. I wanted to write about how even though those were some sad, dark days, I knew it was what I was supposed to be doing.

It's a long story. Right before my senior year of high school, I made a firm decision to follow the standards on dating in *For the Strength of Youth* and not have a steady girlfriend before my mission. I made this decision because earlier in high school I'd had a girlfriend. The relationship started taking up a lot of time, and even though I got the spiritual prompting, "You shouldn't be steady dating right now," I ignored it. Eventually she moved away. After it was over, I realized that the prompting really was from the Lord.

So I decided that in my senior year I wouldn't have another girlfriend. And it made for a really fun year because I made a lot of friends. One girl, though, I started to hang out with a lot. I could tell she liked me, and I started to like her back. But because I had made my decision, I knew what was right. I had to tell her that I didn't

Kyle is one of the youth who worked on the 2017 Mutual Theme album. His song, “Thy Will Be Done,” is about submitting to promptings from the Lord.



want to date. She understood, and we actually became good friends.

When we graduated from high school, I had to make another decision: should I leave for my mission now, or should I go to a year of college first? It was a huge question for me. I had already been accepted to BYU, and I didn't know which timing would be better for me. After a lot of prayer, I felt like I should go to school first.

It was hard not going on my mission at the same time all my friends were. No one judged me too harshly, even though people definitely commented on the fact that I was “still here.” But I know that waiting was the right decision for me and that I was inspired to do it.

I saw a lot of blessings in my life because I felt so much more prepared to go on a mission after a year of college. For instance, I wasn't afraid of the long study schedule in the missionary training center because in college, I was studying all day anyway. It was a great experience having faith in God and in the promptings I got that it was the right thing to do, and then seeing the fruits of it.

I still had another decision to make. My first year of college was hard because pretty much all of my high school friends had already left on their missions. But the girl I'd known my senior year actually came to BYU too, and she and I became even closer. We started hanging out all the time. Even though I didn't want to admit it, I could tell—we were slowly becoming boyfriend and girlfriend.

Part of the way through the semester, I started getting a prompting, “You've got to stop hanging out so much with this friend.” I knew a mission was on the horizon, and I could tell that because we were hanging out all the time, I wasn't focusing on preparing for my mission. Actually, this was making it harder for me to go.

It was a really hard prompting to get, because she was my best friend—and one of my only friends. I prayed constantly to know if it was the Lord's will, even telling Heavenly Father, “This is going to be really hard for me.”

One day I went to the temple and asked Him, and I just *felt* that that was what I needed to do.

So I decided I needed to follow the Lord's will. I finally talked with her about it, and she understood that I needed to focus on my mission. Still, it was a really difficult, emotional experience.

Over the next few days, I felt so much strength and peace from Heavenly Father. I was able to focus on my mission a lot more and started feeling myself progress spiritually much faster than I had before. Scriptures started standing out to me during my personal scripture study—like Isaiah 3:10, which says that the righteous will “eat the fruit of their doings,” which means that if you do the right things, you will reap the rewards. Once again, my testimony of following the Lord's will was strengthened.

The Lord often asks us to make hard decisions. It's definitely easier to say “Thy will be done” when a lot of good things are happening; when hard things are happening, it gets a lot more challenging. When I was going through all of these experiences, I just had to say, “Lord, please give me strength and help me through this.” And I know that He gave me the strength I needed. Everything He did was so that I would be ready for my mission where I could serve Him. I am so glad that I did what He asked. **NE**

The author is currently serving in the New York Utica Mission.



Get the Album

Check out Kyle's song and the rest of the 2017 Mutual Album at youth.lds.org and on Apple Music and Spotify!

FUN STOP

Mind Your Mind

Think it's hard sharing a room with your sibling? That's nothing! Some words have it even worse! They have to share their spelling with another word or words. They can't even dream of the day when the other word moves off to college.

So, if you don't *object* to the *object* of this game, **see if you can find a single word that links the two clues together.** Answers on page 45.

Example:

	“1/60 of a minute.”	←-----→ SECOND!	“silver medal.”
1.	“Daytime is seriously overrated.”	←-----→	“Long and lean and made of wood, baseballs fear me, as they should.”
2.	“Hand me a needle and thread, and I'll hand you a shirt.”	←-----→	“Well, all that rainwater has to drain somewhere.”
3.	“Whoa, dude. You can sing really low.”	←-----→	“Mmm ... earthworms.”
4.	“Sorry, Superman. Nobody can see through <i>everything</i> .”	←-----→	“I wanna hike first down the trail.”
5.	“She sat around sad, brooding all day.”	←-----→	“Turns out, my bike runs even better with gasoline.”
6.	“How small do you want me to chop these onions?”	←-----→	“It's time to let luck decide.”
7.	“Want to meet at the monkey bars on Saturday?”	←-----→	“Not Drive, not Neutral, not Reverse, but ...”

Verses in Verse

Can you finish these scripture-themed poems?



Round and curious, made of _____,
This helped scripture stories come to pass!
(See 1 Nephi 16:10.)



Sixteen, small, and molten from _____,
These brought light to the Jaredite “flock.”
(See Ether 3:1.)



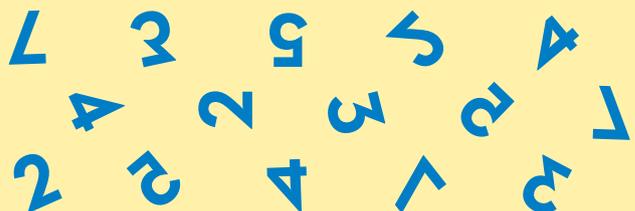
In wind and wave and storm-tossed sea,
The Master calmed waters of _____.
(See Luke 8:22–26.)

Do You Yearn to Take a Turn?

It's time to channel your inner poet. Send your own scripture poem puzzles (verses in verse) to newera@ldschurch.org. We'll print a selection of entries in a future issue of the magazine. Happy rhyming!

Stop! Don't Rotate This Image (Yet)!

Did we stop you from rotating this image soon enough? Whew! That was a close one. Now, go ahead and rotate it—but only with your mind. **See if you can tell if the numbers are simply out of rotation ... or also backwards.** It's a great way to stretch and train that awesome brain of yours. Once you've locked in all your answers, feel free to rotate the image for real to see if you nailed it.



Where should I go to learn the really “deep” doctrine of the Church?

When you hear the word *deep* in connection with gospel doctrine, it’s sometimes meant to suggest something mysterious, obscure, or difficult to understand. But perhaps a better way of thinking about it is to consider which teachings *affect us most deeply*. Our relationship with Heavenly Father, His plan, Jesus Christ’s Resurrection and Atonement, His teachings—these and many others are the “deep” doctrine. God has revealed them to prophets. They’re easy to find. They’re in the scriptures. They’re taught by modern prophets and apostles. The Holy Ghost carries them unto our hearts (see 2 Nephi 33:1). They enlarge our souls, enlighten our understandings, and are delicious to us (see Alma 32:28). They help us build “faith unto repentance” (see Alma 34:15–17). They cause a deep change in us. That’s why they’re deep, not because they’re “out there” or hidden.

This doesn’t mean our study should be superficial. There’s plenty to learn through more study. But as Nephi said, “My soul delighteth in plainness; for after this manner doth the Lord God work among the children of men. For the Lord God giveth light unto the understanding” (2 Nephi 31:3). **NE**



What is the test of this life for people who never hear the gospel—which is the vast majority?

Most people who have lived haven’t had the opportunity to accept the gospel of Jesus Christ in this life.

We believe they will have the opportunity to accept it in the spirit world and receive salvation because of Jesus Christ’s Atonement (see D&C 137:7–9; 2 Nephi 9:25–26). But what does this life mean for them, then?

Joseph Smith explained, “God judges men according to the use they make of the light which He gives them” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 405). This light includes the Light (or Spirit) of Christ, which “is given to every man, that he may know good from evil” (Moroni 7:16). All of us come into this world with some ability to know right from wrong, and we all will be judged by how well we use that knowledge to choose right, including eventually accepting the gospel, whether here or in the spirit world. The way we treat others, the way we respond to whatever truth we encounter—these are important for all of us in Heavenly Father’s plan, even those of us who never learn about the gospel. **NE**

“My friend says she doesn’t believe in God. How can I share the gospel with her?”

There are many ways to share the gospel with her. Your own life is one of the best ways. You are “an example of the believers” in how you act, dress, speak, and treat others (see 1 Timothy 4:12). Keep in mind the following ideas:

- Try to help your friend out of love and respect, not with any hidden motives or expectations.
- Be honest and genuine in your actions.
- Respect her agency.

How you share the gospel with her depends on why she doesn’t believe in God. Some people have had a non-religious upbringing. Others are open to believing, and they will develop faith as they learn how to pray and study the scriptures. And others may have believed in God at one time but then had trials in their lives that made it difficult for them to believe. Try to understand where your friend is coming from. Pray to know how to help her.

You can get a sense for her beliefs by talking about what inspires her and what really matters to her. Build on common ground. For instance, if she believes service is a good idea, you could invite her to a ward service project.

Even though your friend does not believe right now, she is still a good person. As long as she is a good influence on you, continue to be her friend. As you follow the Spirit, continue to invite her to church and to learn more about why God is important in your life because one day she may be open to believing. **NE**

Pray for Your Friend

During my mission preparation, I have had many friends say they do not believe in God. When I hear them say this, I find myself praying for them. They may not believe in God while we are saying a prayer, but if we really believe in God, our love for Him will be demonstrated to others. Our example helps others understand that God really blesses us, that He exists, and that He loves us.

Emanuel L., 18, State of Mexico, Mexico



Be an Example

When I was younger, I was under the impression that the only way to teach the gospel was to full-out preach it, but I was dead wrong because there are countless ways to share the gospel. But through experience I’ve found that if you’ll just be an example of Christ in all the things that you do, then you’ll be surprised by how many people look up to you and believe you. In many circumstances, actions do truly speak louder than any other word could. Lead and teach by example.

Ammon W., 18, Arizona, USA



Talk about Nature

If your friend does not believe in God, you can talk about nature because everything testifies that there is a God (see Alma 30:44). You can also pray for her and study the scriptures with her—for

example, Psalm 19:1. I know that the Holy Ghost will help her receive a testimony of our Heavenly Father.

Sophie K., 17, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo



Start a Gospel Conversation

You can share the gospel in many ways. First, just pray and fast for them so that their heart may open up to the gospel. Then the next time you meet them, open up topics and subjects that lead to a conversation about the gospel. Be sure to invite them to church or activities, and most of all, be friendly. Who knows—maybe someday they'll be baptized along with their family.

Valerie K., 14, Nevada, USA

Share Your Testimony

The gospel changes people's lives. One way you can share it with your friend is by saying how you feel that God exists, for example, in the miracles that you have experienced and that you now experience by the simple fact of waking up every day. Your example to her will be a great testimony of your happiness in knowing the love of God and living the gospel.

Victoria S., 18, Piauí, Brazil

Why Share?

Remember why you want her to believe in God. We don't just share this with people because we want them to be members of the Church.

We do so because they are literally our brothers and sisters. Why do you want your friend to believe in God? Keep that question in mind, pray for strength and charity, be sincere, and if they still say no, then be willing to respect their agency. There's also the chance that they aren't ready yet. But I promise you that if you sincerely want them to know about God, because you are their friend, they will listen. After that, the choice is up to them, and we can't judge them for the choice they make.

Elder Eliot, 20, Japan Sapporo Mission

Share Your Light

Be an example to her. Help her become closer to God through your experiences and testimony. Be the angel she is looking for through your light and influence. Help her see the love of our Heavenly Father has for her, but don't force it on her.

Mason E., 16, Arizona, USA

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



HOW TO GAIN A TESTIMONY

"How does one gain what we call a testimony?"

"The first step in gaining any kind of knowledge is to really desire to know. In the case of spiritual knowledge, the next step is to ask God in sincere prayer. . . .

"As we desire and seek, we should remember that acquiring a testimony is not a passive thing but a process in which we are expected to *do* something. Jesus taught, 'If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself' (John 7:17)."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Apr. 2008 general conference.

UPCOMING QUESTION

"I constantly compare myself to others, especially those who seem to have perfect lives. How do I feel more confident?"

Send your answer and photo by July 15, 2017.

Go to newera.lds.org, click "Submit Your Work." Sign in with your LDS Account and then select "New Era" under "Choose Magazine." Click "Add File" to select your file and your photos, and then click "Submit" to upload.

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.



Priesthood and Priesthood Keys

For help, healing, comfort, counsel, revelation, ordinances, covenants, and other heavenly blessings, our Father in Heaven has given us the priesthood and its keys. These have been restored in our day through the Prophet Joseph Smith. We learned a great deal about these things from Church leaders in the April 2017 general conference. For instance:

- “Kindness, Charity, and Love,” by President Thomas S. Monson
- “Walk with Me,” by President Henry B. Eyring
- “The Greatest among You,” by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf
- “Called to the Work,” by Elder David A. Bednar
- “Prepare the Way,” by Bishop Gérald Caussé
- “The Beauty of Holiness,” by Carol F. McConkie

Find these and more at conference.lds.org

Share These Cards

Give yourself an easy reminder to think about this month's theme. Just place these cards in your scriptures, locker, or bedroom. You can also download or share them online at youth.lds.org.

THE LORD'S WORK IS
NOT JUST TO SOLVE
PROBLEMS; IT IS TO
BUILD PEOPLE.



President Henry B. Eyring
First Counselor in the First Presidency
April 2017 general conference

BRETHREN, WE DO NOT
HONOR THE PRIESTHOOD
OF GOD IF WE ARE NOT
KIND TO OTHERS.



President Thomas S. Monson
April 2017 general conference

A fake punt isn't really bearing false witness.



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY

Don't get me wrong—I love seminary. But for the amount of praying I do during each exam, math is definitely my most spiritual class.



ARIE VAN DE GRAAFF

How can we be "anxiously engaged" when we're Mia Maids? I mean, we can't even date until we're 16!



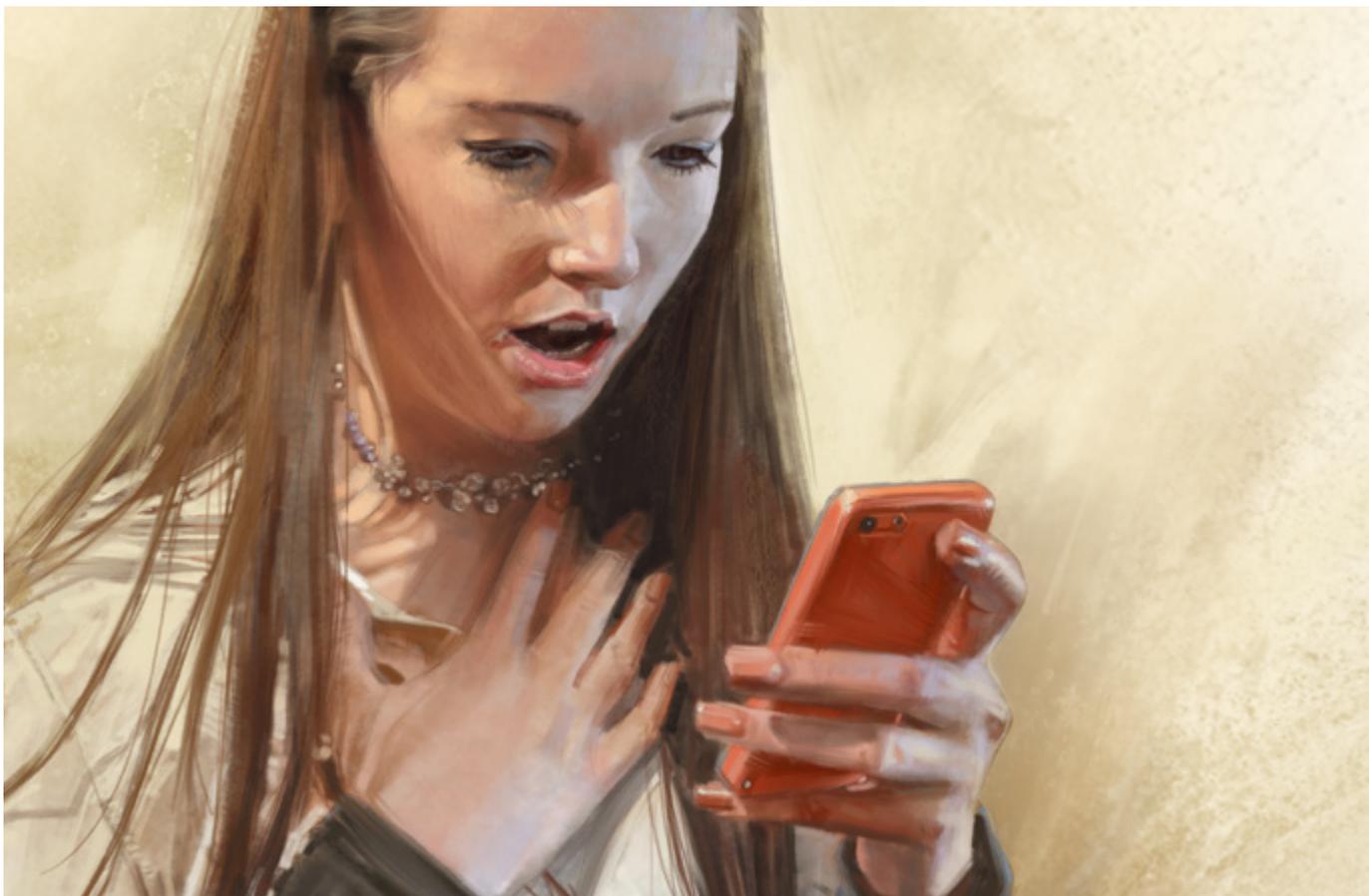
KEVIN BECKSTROM

OK... THAT WAS TWO...



RYAN STOKER

ANSWERS (FROM PAGE 40) MIND YOUR MIND: 1. bat 2. sewer 3. bass 4. lead 5. moped 6. dice 7. park VERSES IN VERSE: 1. brass 2. rock 3. Galilee



FORGIVING MY CYBERBULLY

My friend Nora* created a social media account using the name of my other friend Kate.* Nora used that profile to start harassing people and make fun of my religion and personality. Everyone started blaming Kate for the mean messages.

When Nora later confessed to the fake profile, everyone hated her. She apologized, but I was too angry to forgive her.

One day while reading the

scriptures, I came across D&C 64:9–10: “Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin. I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.”

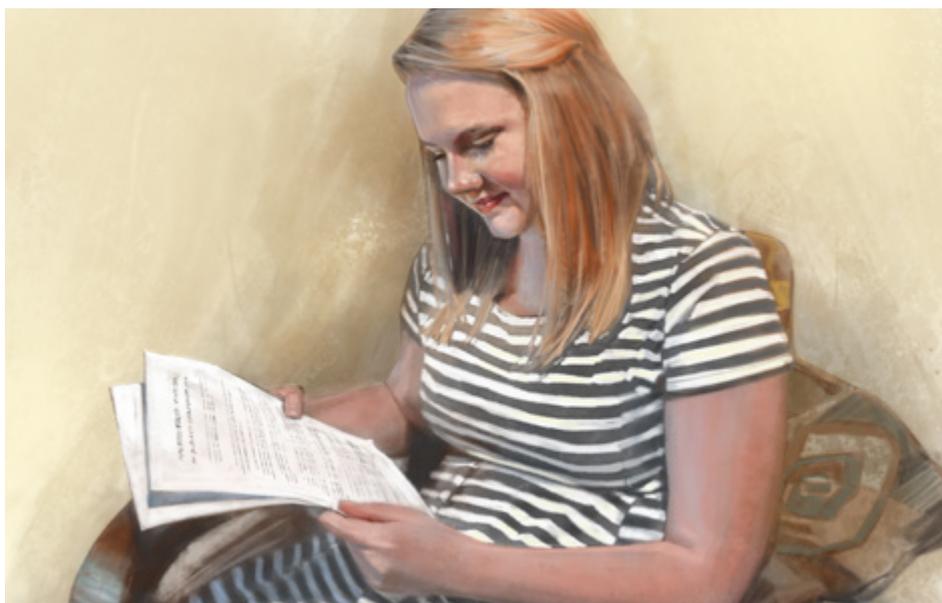
Instantly I thought about Nora. I knew it wasn’t right for me to act so meanly. I prayed and asked my

Heavenly Father to help me forgive her.

Forgiving her wasn’t easy, but I started small. I sent her messages asking her about her day, and I talked to her at lunch. I learned that Nora’s life wasn’t easy. I was glad I hadn’t stayed mad at her. Kate and some others didn’t understand how I could be so forgiving of someone who had insulted me, but I knew that what I’d done was right.

Name withheld

* Names have been changed.



I ASKED GOD AGAIN— AND AGAIN

It was a normal day until later in the evening, when I started getting stomach pains. I've had stomach pain all my life, so it seemed like one of those “stomachaches” that I could pretend wasn't there until it went away.

But then the pain worsened. I lay in bed, sweaty and in increasing pain, and prayed that God would help lift my burden.

There was no answer. I asked God again. And again.

And there was still no answer.

When my mother came in to check on me, I asked her, “Why isn't God answering my prayers?”

She replied, “It might seem like God isn't listening, but sometimes you have to endure trials.”

By this point the pain was lighting every nerve on fire. The night felt as if it dragged on for days. Somehow, I was able to eventually fall asleep.

REMINDED OF MY WORTH

Before I received my patriarchal blessing, my stake patriarch asked me to bear my testimony. When I did it, I cried, which made me feel weak and unimportant. But the patriarch told me that I was crying because I felt the Spirit. There was no need to be embarrassed.

Then when I received my blessing, I felt like God was also telling me that I was not weak. God knows me and loves me.

My patriarchal blessing has been a huge help in my life. When I get very emotional and feel like I'm not important and that no one understands me, I can read my blessing and realize I have worth and a purpose. I am reminded that I can become that amazing person I've always wanted to be.

Brenna B., Utah, USA

When I woke up, the pain had dulled. But I still didn't understand why God hadn't helped me.

One day, I read a talk by Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles entitled “Hope Ya Know, We Had a Hard Time” (Oct. 2008 general conference). One certain part stood out, quoted from Doctrine and Covenants 121:7–8: “My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall

exalt thee on high.” When I read that quote, I remembered Jesus Christ's pain when He atoned for my sins. Our Savior willingly endured this great pain—for us.

Everything aligned. I understood why we have trials. If God took away our pain, we would never appreciate our great moments of weakness. But if, when we experience trials, we endure faithfully, we can be exalted on high.

Kaitlyn E., Illinois, USA



By Elder Dale G. Renlund

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

HOW TO KEEP A MIGHTY CHANGE OF HEART

Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel, we undergo a spiritual change of heart.

Just as with heart transplant patients, however, this mighty change of our spiritual hearts is just the beginning. Repentance, baptism, and confirmation are necessary but not sufficient. Indeed, equal, if not greater, care must be taken with a spiritually changed heart than with a physically transplanted heart if we are to endure to the end. Only by doing so can we be held guiltless at the time of judgment (see 3 Nephi 27:16).

To endure to the end, we need to **be eager to please God** and **worship Him** with fervor and passion. This means that we **maintain faith** in Jesus Christ by **praying, studying** the scriptures, **partaking** of the sacrament each week, and having the Holy Ghost as our constant companion. We need to actively **help** and **serve** others and **share** the gospel with them. We need to be perfectly upright and honest in all things, never compromising our covenants with God or our commitments to men, regardless of circumstances. In our homes we need to **talk** of, **rejoice** in, and **preach** of Christ so that our children—and we ourselves—will desire to apply the Atonement [of Jesus Christ] in our lives (see 2 Nephi 25:26). We must identify temptations that easily beset us and put them out of reach—way out of reach. Finally, we need to frequently biopsy our mightily changed hearts and reverse any signs of early rejection.

Please consider the state of your changed heart. Do you detect any rejection setting in as a result of the tendency of the natural man to become casual? If so, find a place where you can kneel. Remember, more than mortal years on this earth are at stake. Do not risk forfeiting the fruits of the ultimate operation: eternal salvation and exaltation. **NE**

From an October 2009 general conference address.



HOW HAVE YOU APPLIED THIS?

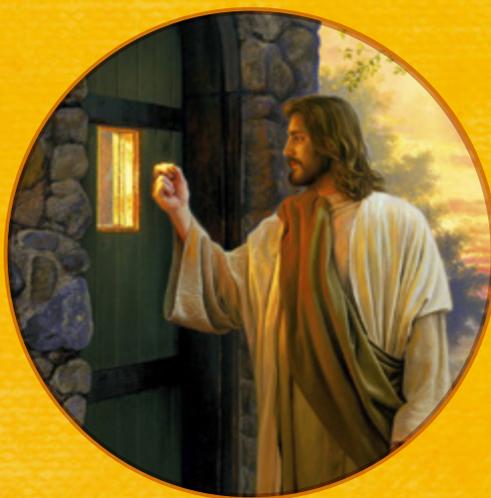
Moroni 7:45, “Charity suffereth long, and is kind,” is one of my guides towards living righteously. Reading this makes me realize the qualities I must have to go back to Heavenly Father’s presence. Every time I read this verse, I gain hope. Hope is essential to have faith and receive the gospel of Jesus Christ. When I read the scriptures, I overcome my anxieties, get answers to my questions, and strengthen my testimony. The companionship of the Holy Ghost as I ponder the scriptures always helps.

Marydelle S., 20, Rizal, Philippines

Share Your Experiences

To share what you do to keep a mighty change of heart and read the experiences of other youth, read this article at youth.lds.org

“BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE DOOR, AND KNOCK:



IF ANY MAN HEAR MY VOICE, AND OPEN
THE DOOR, I WILL COME IN TO HIM, AND WILL
SUP WITH HIM, AND HE WITH ME.”

REVELATION 3:20

“THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST IS FILLED WITH HIS
POWER, WHICH IS AVAILABLE TO EVERY EARNESTLY SEEK-
ING DAUGHTER OR SON OF GOD. . . . WHEN WE DRAW HIS
POWER INTO OUR LIVES, BOTH HE AND WE WILL REJOICE.”

President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles,
Apr. 2017 general conference.

There's a New First Vision Film!

You're probably familiar with the 1838 account of Joseph Smith's First Vision—that's the one in our scriptures. But did you know there are actually nine accounts of the First Vision? That's right! Joseph wrote four accounts during his life, and five of his associates wrote secondhand versions too. We can learn from all of them!



Want to learn more about the accounts of the First Vision? Head to lds.org/topics/essays!

Check out the new short film that includes details from all nine accounts at history.lds.org/firstvision—it's a great way to keep in mind this year's Mutual theme, "Ask of God."

PHOTOGRAPH FROM GETTY IMAGES



THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS